Socio-ecological place-shaping: performative sacred values as enablers of local urban transformation

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Revd Gillian Beatrice Reeve

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MA. The University of Manchester

MProf. University of Chester

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an in-depth case study of Faiths4Change, a small environmental intermediary organisation and their close relational network based in the UK. The research is grounded epistemologically in social constructivism and new materialism, adopting a post-structuralist, assemblages theory approach to explore the place-shaping values of Faiths4Change. The research addresses an urgent question in the context of the climate emergency; how do values enable transformative, social-ecological place-shaping practices? This is an acknowledged research gap in sustainability studies, and the research approaches this question from an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing primarily on the four academic fields of urban studies, sustainability studies, the sociology of religion, and public theology.

The thesis provides research-led insights into performative sacred values and how they can enable local, socio-ecological place-shaping transformations. The research suggests that the place-shaping of Faiths4Change and their relational network can result in 'a sacred (re)imagining of place', through three value-centred processes: listening to the eco-system (seeing in the round), creative assemblage building (the art of the possible) and embodying a sacred (re)imaginary of place (a shared journey of re-connection). The three processes are captured in a cyclical place-shaping model that describes a creative and innovative approach to bottom-up urban place-shaping. This shows how Faiths4Change break open their foundational Christian values into broader and more open sacred values that facilitate creative assemblage building.

The research is local and specific but gathers data from varied projects and draws on the insights from both Faiths4Change and their relational network. The place-shaping model captures broader guiding principles of place-shaping, and these insights may be of relevance to local communities, urban networks, and urban policymakers. The final two chapters reflect on the research from two urban research conversation, firstly the contribution of religion in urban contexts from the perspective of postsecularity and secondly urban policy and governance directions.

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FIELD RESEARCH TRANSCRIPTS: CODING ABBREVIATIONS

The following coding is used for all direct quotes from the field research interviews and workshops used in the thesis.

(P_:)	Phase of field research (1, 2 or 3)
(P_:1,2,3…)	Phase of field research and a number code for interview participants, in phase 1: 1- 3, and in phase 2: 1-25
(P_:W_)	Phase of field research and a corresponding workshop with number

1   Introduction

1.1   Background to the research

This research explores socio-ecological place-shaping through the work of an urban intermediary organisation and its relational network. Faiths4Change is a small environmental organisation based in the city of Liverpool in the UK. The city has persistently high levels of social deprivation, compounded by the ongoing financial constraints for the local authority and other agencies that limit their ability to invest adequately in the needs of local communities. Local authority spending has been severely restricted by the loss of central government funding over the years, meaning that the role of civil society, voluntary organisations and intermediaries have become increasingly important in the support of local people and communities. Urban intermediary organisations such as Faiths4Change work in complex urban networks to bring together partnerships with local communities, charities, voluntary agencies, faith communities, anchor institutions and others. The term 'anchor institution' refers to large organisations that have an important presence in local areas, with ties to a particular place by their mission, histories, physical assets, and local relationships. Anchor institutions include local authorities, religious institutions, and NHS trusts.[1] Intermediaries typically operate in the liminal zones between such anchor institutions and have a role in acting as connectors and facilitators (Beveridge, 2019; Hamann & April, 2013). The role of intermediaries in urban networks is currently under-researched, and therefore this research project provides greater insight into their working practices. This is important because intermediaries are seen to act as brokers who can negotiate and disseminate knowledge and other resources (Beveridge, 2019, p. 187). This research takes a narrow and deep look at one urban intermediary organisation and their relational network, and through an in-depth case study of Faiths4Change makes explicit the values and practices that inform their socio-ecological place-shaping collaborations.

The research is rooted in my reflective practice working long-term in urban contexts as a health professional and a faith-based practitioner, working alongside individuals and communities with specific challenges and needs. My experience in a local community in Liverpool prompted this research, drawn from a short time of working alongside Faiths4Change during my training as a

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[1] The National Organisation for Local Economies. *What is an anchor institution?* https://cles.org.uk/what-is-community-wealth-building/what-is-an-anchor-institution/ - retrieved 10.02.2019

curate in city centre churches. One church was in long-term decline and at risk of closure, and the rector approached Faiths4Change to explore what could be done with the derelict garden as a last attempt to find a new vision and local connections. I was doubtful that a charity with four part-time staff could turn things around, but in a matter of months there was a significant transformation both to the physical space and to the growing connections made with the local community. This experience prompted a series of questions about Faiths4Change: How can such a small charity with four part-time staff effect such significant place-based transformation? How do environmental values and practices re-connect with local communities in ways the local church has failed to do? What values underpin the work of this environmental charity and how do these inform their practices? How does the 'faith' element of their name connect to their work as an environmental charity, since they stated they were not a religious charity and their staff did not express any clear faith affiliation?

These reflections and questions steered the theoretical framework of the research, with a decision to centre the research on the fields of sustainability studies and religious studies. This framework suspended any foregone conclusions regarding the significance of religion to the values of Faiths4Change since at the start of the research this was very unclear. However, religious studies was a highly relevant field because it provided a strong academic foundation through which to examine values. The research could have adopted an alternative framework to sustainability studies including Asset Based Community Development or faith-based community engagement, and some connected themes and insights emerge in the research findings. However, the research focusses on an environmental charity and the research question centres on environmental values from a socio-ecological perspective and therefore sustainability studies was the most appropriate central research feild. The inclusion of religious studies provided a strong platform for the research of values but did focus on faith-based organisations. This allowed themes related to faith to emerge from the data rather than positioning faith at the centre of it from the start.

1.2   My positionality as a researcher

As a research practitioner, I consider my positionality in the research to be a mixture of insider and outsider. I worked occasionally with Faiths4Change for about eighteen months between 2018-2019 when I was a part-time curate for a group of churches in Liverpool city centre. However, the field

research began after I left my curacy and Liverpool in December 2019. My insider perspective from working with Faiths4Change was a significant advantage when the Covid pandemic drastically changed my planned field research. In adapting my approach to online interviews and workshops, I feel I gained significantly from my own experience in Liverpool with Faiths4Change and from my knowledge of one of their projects.

I am an ordained, pioneer minister in the Church of England, currently working as a Senior Chaplain at a University. Bishop James Jones founded Faiths4Change when he was Bishop of the Liverpool Diocese, and this connection to the Church of England. I was unaware of this at the start of my research and it adds complexity for me as a researcher. As someone licensed in the Church of England, this could make it more difficult for me to be critical of the institution and it could shape my perspectives. It may also influence how interviewees view me and these issues required ongoing reflectivity throughout the research.

The research question builds on my research interest in intermediary organisations working in urban networks. For years I led a faith-based organisation in the night-time economy of a UK city, working closely with a diverse urban network including the local council, faith groups, the emergency services, and local bar staff and nightclub door staff. I reflected on this experience through an MProf. in Practical Theology, centred on my complex relational network and the entangled web of power relations that variously enabled and constrained my practice. My PhD research question builds on my interest in better understanding how people and organisations navigate complex 'in-between spaces' in urban governance networks. My experience in Liverpool directed my thinking towards socio-ecological transformation and the literature review revealed the research gap in socio-ecological place-shaping and the opportunity for the doctorate to combine thinking from sustainability studies, urban studies, the sociology of religion and public theology to build an interdisciplinary research project.

1.3   Limitations to the field research and the covid pandemic

A significant challenge and limitation to the research that was beyond my control was the covid pandemic. My initial plan was to undertake an ethnographic study located in specific project sites, involving participant observation, interviews and workshops. However, the pandemic meant that

during the period of the field research limitations were in place on the movement and gatherings of people and as a result none of the Faiths4Change projects were open. This meant the research methodology had to be completely re-thought and the research project presented in this thesis is entirely different from the initial plan. In place of an ethnographic study, this research examines socio-ecological values from an assemblage perspective, using the case study of Faiths4Change to examine their values from a relational network perspective. Covid restrictions meant that the exploration of assemblages in terms of artefacts, landscapes (beyond existing photographs), and the use of participant observations were all impossible, and the research may have included these methods under normal circumstances. There are further reflections on the limitations of the research in the conclusion of the thesis in chapter 8.

1.4   The research approach and emerging themes

As a post-structuralist research project grounded theoretically in Assemblage Theory and New Materialism, the research aimed to capture the values of Faiths4Change that informed their practices alongside their network relationships in the complex interactions and flows of urban contexts. The three phases of the field research gathered data from, Faiths4Change, their relational network, and from workshop discussions in the third iterative phase. Emerging themes became refined through ongoing thematic analysis that identified three key processes captured in a place-shaping framework: Listening to the eco-system: *'seeing in the round'*; Creative assemblage building: *the art of the possible'*; and Embodying a sacred (re)imaginary of place: *'a shared journey of (re)connection'.* Further reflection on the research themes developed the framework further, with a cyclical place-shaping model that best captures the emergent and progressive flow of the place-shaping processes.

1.5   Performative values and the sacred re-imagining of place

At the start of the research, I had little understanding of Faiths4Change as a charity nor of the relevance of religion to their work beyond my own experience with them in the local church in Liverpool. This experience demonstrated their skills as an environmental charity to build positive relationships with a local faith community but I was curious about their links to faith, that were nuanced and largely hidden. Adopting religious studies alongside sustainability studies broadened the research literature on values both theoretically and in terms of research methodologies.

However, adopting religious studies was not for the purpose of focussing on Faiths4Change from a faith-based perspective, indeed if this had been the case then a faith-based theoretical framework would have been more appropriate. The use of religious studies as a lens through which to study the values of sustainability emerges directly from academics within the field of sustainability itself (see chapter 2, 2.6.5). Religious studies provides helpful theoretical insights into the nature of values and the research methods used to explore them beyond the more structurally focused approaches of sustainability studies. However, early in the field research, it became clear that Faiths4Change had a strong set of Christian foundational values that continued to resonate in some ways with the current values of Faiths4Change. However, the research suggests that their Christian religious roots have been broken open and translated into more accessible performative sacred values, that connect more easily and widely with their relational network in the context of postsecularity. The research adopts the concept of 'performative values' because the research findings emphasise the embodied nature of the values of Faiths4Change, making a clear distinction between values and practices problematic. The concept of 'performative values' draws on insights from scholars including Day (2010); McGuire (2008); Oceja et al. (2019) who emphasise the performative nature of values, described by Oceja et al. as 'the expression of human tendencies which guide behaviour through their relationship with attitudes, motives, norms, or beliefs' (2019, p. 749).

1.6   Reflecting on the research findings

As a highly interdisciplinary research project, the research is rooted in urban contexts and the local governance networks that operate within them. Intermediaries such as Faiths4Change operate in these complex networks and they have to navigate the ongoing shifts and power dynamics within them. Chapters 6 and 7 are reflective chapters that expand on two key insights from the research and consider how the research engages with these broader research topics. Chapter 6 reflects on performative sacred values and their potential contribution to urban place-shaping. This is particularly significant in the UK contexts where postsecularity is opening up new discourses and collaborative working. Chapter 7 explores the research findings from an urban policy governance and policy perspective, reflecting on the gap between the research and current place-based policy and the challenges and opportunities that this presents.

2   Literature Review

2.1   Introduction

This literature review is highly interdisciplinary and draws primarily on four academic fields, urban studies, sustainability studies, the sociology of religion and public theology. The review is thematically organised to allow greater interaction across the disciplines, and it has six broad themes: urban theory; contemporary UK cities and networked governance; civil society & intermediary organisations; place, space, and urban policy; sustainability studies and socio-ecological place-shaping; and religion, belief, and values. Each section explores the theme from the perspective of the research question, highlighting relevant issues, identifying research gaps, and building a platform for this PhD research project.

Socio-ecological place-shaping is receiving increased academic interest in sustainability studies, but research into the values that underpin practices remains significantly under-researched. Sustainability studies literature and research have typically focused on structures, systems and practices, but scholars are now recognising a research gap and the need to give more attention to values because they are understood as deep leverage points for sustainable change (Ives, Freeth, & Fischer, 2020). The new interest in values is also seen more broadly in other academic fields where greater attention is being given to how beliefs, values, and worldviews inform individual and collective behaviours and practices (Baker & Power, 2018; Cloke, Baker, Sutherland, & Williams, 2019). This research addressed this specific research gap, adopting theoretical insights from the sociology of religion and public theology to interrogate the central research question; how do values inform the practices of urban socio-ecological place-shaping? This question is of great importance because there is research evidence that values can provide deep leverage for change, and such leverage may be vital in addressing many serious social and ecological challenges in urban contexts. The research explores the relationship between the values and practices of place-shaping, in order to provide research-led insights that are enabling of the social and ecological transformation of urban places.

The research focuses specifically on the values and practices of Faiths4Change, an intermediary organisation engaged in socio-ecological place-shaping in local communities in the North West of

England, UK. Faiths4Change is described as an 'intermediary' because of its positionality as an organisation that navigates complex 'in-between spaces' in community networks and urban partnerships with institutions, charities, local authorities and others (Beveridge, 2019). Central to their practices is the building of collaborative partnerships and relationships, capable of harnessing a variety of existing and new resources. The research aims to better understand how the 'inner' values of such an organisation interact with and inform the practices of socio-ecological place-shaping. The research addresses a significant research gap, with the aim of better understanding the deep leverage points for socio-ecological transformation. Given the serious socio-ecological challenges facing local communities and nations, the research is relevant to all those actively committed to such work including policymakers, local authorities, urban institutions and networks, faith communities, charities and voluntary agencies, and people in local communities.

The contemporary socio-ecological challenges for urban areas are well documented along with the unsustainable growth of cities resulting in significant social and ecological pressures (J. Clarke, Corner, & Webster, 2018). The socio-economic impacts of austerity in the UK following the 2008 financial crash resulted in dramatic cuts to local authorities, with significant struggles to deliver local community services beyond the statutory requirements (Beatty & Fothergill, 2014). Added to these pressures are the ecological crisis and the realisation that the social challenges for urban communities and local and global environmental challenges are inextricably connected. Since 2020, the socio-ecological situation for local urban communities has deepened significantly, due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the continuing cost of living crisis in the UK. There is a new urgency in addressing a key question; how can we best address the serious social and ecological issues in ways that are mutually beneficial for local people and the planet?

2.1.1 An overview of the literature review

This literature review is highly interdisciplinary and thematically structured to draw together knowledge and insights, and to promote discussions from an interdisciplinary perspective. This aligns well with the research on urban, socio-ecological place-shaping and the many different theoretical perspectives that contribute to an understanding of it.

The literature review begins by considering urban theory, and sections 2.2 and 2.3 explore ways of understanding the urban, cities, and the relational networks that are active in local urban

communities. The urban context is highlighted in the research because it is relevant to the many, diverse relational networks that Faiths4Change operates within. Whilst rural contexts will also have some local networks, there is sufficient difference in terms of complexity and diversity to make this distinction relevant. Section 2.2 acknowledges the complexity of defining the 'urban' and explores its significance despite these challenges. The research question directs the literature review towards research that explores cities 'from below' and to post-structuralism as a theoretical approach that is well suited to exploring complex networks and assemblages. Section 2.4 considers the nature and role of intermediary organisations and their place in the broader field of civil society.

Sections 2.5 and 2.6 focus on the heart of the research, and section 2.5 explores the concepts of place, place-shaping and socio-ecological transformation, primarily informed by sustainability literature. It considers existing research on place-shaping values and various models of place-shaping. Key thinkers in the field of the values of sustainable place-shaping are identified, including Horlings (2019), K. O'Brien (2013) and Ives et al. (2020). Horlings (2019) led an expansive four-year European study that includes an exploration of the values in socio-ecological place-shaping and highlights the need for ongoing research. One of its studies led by Moriggi (2019) highlights the important role that values play in place-shaping but is too broad to provide detailed insights. My research builds on this with an in-depth case study, narrowly focused on place-shaping values.

Section 2.6 explores the complex field of religion, belief and values through the fields of the sociology of religion and public theology, chosen for their focus on the social, practical, and lived nature of religion and belief. Adopting a thematic approach this section considers the key themes of religion and belief; belief, unbelief, and the pluralism of de-differentiation (Woodhead, 2016a); the contemporary religious landscape of the UK; and beliefs and values.

2.2   Urban theory

Urban theory can be considered a sub-set of social theory and describes a range of perspectives and interpretations of the urban world that aim to provide an understanding of urban life (Parker, 2015). Theoretically, there are many ways to understand and study urban life, and even the term 'urban' is a complex and contested one. The notion of 'the urban' as a specific and discrete context for study has become significantly problematised in recent decades and indeed the whole field of urban

studies has undergone significant change and challenge. Urbanisation across the globe has resulted in major changes; at the beginning of the 20th century it is estimated that about 10% of the world's population dwelt in towns or cities but by 2030 it is estimated that up to 60% of the world's population will be urbanised (Parker, 2015). The massive expansion of cities has seen the merging of huge metropolitan areas, challenging former dichotomies including urban vs rural and urban vs sub-urban (Tzaninis & Boterman, 2018). With over half the world's population now living in cities, urban processes impact the whole globe, and 'the rates of growth, diversity of the population, and complexity of their activities, as well as the scale of the problems (and possibilities) they pose, are breathtaking' (Bridge & Watson, 2011, p. 1). Concerns about both urban social inequalities and the environmental crisis mean there is an urgent need to better understand the 'complex interplay of related but contradictory processes marked by the uneven development of capitalism as well as by manifold, specific social and political determinations' (Schmid, 2018, p. 592).

In urban theory, it is increasing acknowledged that earlier theoretical approaches were Western centred in their thinking, and more global perspectives and the vast growth of global cities challenge previously narrow approaches (Paddison & McCann, 2014; Robinson, 2011). It is now widely acknowledged that 'the urban' is not a pregiven, self-evident reality, condition or form (Brenner & Schmid, 2014). Instead, urbanisation can be understood to be in constant change and flux, 'a process of continual socio-spatial transformation, a relentless "churning" of settlement types and morphologies that encompasses entire territories and not only isolated "points" or "zones" within them' (Brenner & Schmid, 2014, p. 750). These insights have had a significant impact on how cities are researched.

Urban theory has had a complex and discontinuous evolution through many varied schools of thought, which makes it 'unamenable to an account of its linear evolution around a single theme' (Savage, Warde, & Ward, 2003). However, Parker (2015, p. 4) suggests that urban theory tends to address one or more of 'the four C's' – culture, consumption, conflict and community (interpreted in their broadest sense) – with culture including systems of belief. Harding and Blokland (2014) assert that in all urban theories, there are two key over-arching debates: the place-process debate and the structure-agency debate. Any urban research needs to be clear about the theoretical perspectives taken concerning these two debates, and chapter 3 considers the theoretical

understandings of place-process while the structure-agency debate is explored further in this section of the literature review.

A key consideration for urban research is whether cities will be viewed from above or from below, which is steered by ontological and epistemological assumptions. Research projects need to determine how a city is conceptualised and analysed in terms of both scope and scale, which will dictate the type of socio-spatial analysis undertaken. Traditional urban social theory views cities from above, asking questions about the development and structure of cities and why they develop morphologically. These approaches emerged from the early work of Engels and the Chicago School (Paddison & McCann, 2014). The 'cultural turn', however, encouraged the research of cities 'from below', with greater sensitivity to the need to capture many different perspectives. Paddison & McCann suggest that some of the most vibrant and profound insights into cities and social change have come from research that combines top-down and bottom-up approaches, in ways that can 'unravel urban social processes…[and] show how the experience of urban living varies' (2014, p. 9). This research project adopts a bottom-up approach to urban research because it is most appropriate for the analysis of the specific, local practices of the intermediary organisation. It enables close analysis of their values and practices and the broader relational networks that they relate to and work alongside at a local level. But at the same time, it remains alert to the broader top-down processes that inevitably exert both positive and negative influences on local place-shaping.

Hannigan and Richards (2017, p. 2) note that 'whilst urban commentators generally agree that we now live in a world of cities, there is considerably less agreement on how to interpret and understand the contemporary urban condition'. The 'spatial turn' of the 1970s resulted in the analysis of space and place being central to social theory and this informed the research of cities. Henri Lefebvre (1991), the French philosopher and sociologist, has been highly influential across many disciplines, bringing attention to how space is socially produced, including the 'trialectics' of spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space. Lefebvre, along with other key theorists including Harvey (Harvey, 1993) and Castells (Castells, 2000), developed new categories and methods to analyse modern urbanisation flows and processes. These theorists have in common a focus on 'spatial materialisations of the core social processes associated with the capitalist mode of production' (Ren & Keil, 2018, p. xxv). Hannigan and Richards (2017) believe that more recently there has been the emergence of a theoretical fault line in urban studies through

three influential fields of urban analysis: postcolonial urban theory, assemblage theory and planetary urbanism. These are contested by some scholars, and Storper and Scott (2016, p. 1115) suggest that 'they all present an account of the city that poses strong challenges to much if not most hitherto existing urban theory'. They note that postcolonial theory and assemblage theory share similar conceptual approaches in their focus on particularity, localism & difference, and the 'complexity' of socio-spatial arrangements.

No matter what particular focus is taken in the study of the urban, it needs to take into account 'the wide variety of differentiated and polarized situations, conditions and contestations that require contextually specific yet theoretically reflexive investigation' (Brenner & Schmid, 2014, p. 251). Simone and Pieterse (2017) in their detailed analysis of engagement in cities in Africa and Asia adopt the key concepts of 'resonance' (which emphasises the connectivity of different people and places), 'secretion' (which invokes the porosity of predominant forms of power) and 're-description' (which foregrounds the capacity of observers to imagine alternative visions of urban life). The concepts of 'resonance' and 'secretion' link closely to theories of assemblage (McFarlane, 2011) in the emphasis on the complexity and fluidity of urban analysis. Simone and Pieterse (2017), writing from a post-structuralist perspective, encourage an inventive and experimental approach to the research of cities, that in bringing together different domains has the capacity to shed new light on pressing issues. Brenner and Schmid (2014, p. 752) argue for the development of 'new analytical approaches, methods and concepts, including experimental and speculative ones, as well as new visualizations of evolving socio-spatial and socio-metabolic conditions'.

Despite the contested nature of assemblage theory, it is a helpful and appropriate theoretical and methodological lens for this research project that seeks to engage with a multiplicity of human and nonhuman interactions in a flexible and exploratory way rather than through fixed, pre-determined structures. Assemblage theory draws heavily on the thinking of Latour (2005) and Lefebvre (1991), and is promoted by key scholars including Deleuze and Guattari (1988), DeLanda (2006) and more recently McFarlane (2011c). Assemblage thinking has been adopted in urban studies research to capture the socio-materiality of urban life as co-constituted by multiple material and non-material, and human and non-human interactions and flows. It is an approach that can be seen to suit the research's aims to capture the complex processes and relationships of the intermediary organisations. An assemblage methodology enables the research to focus on the 'flows, connections

and becomings whose functioning logic is more about folds than structures, more complex than linear, more recursive than dialectical, more emergent than totalising' (Dewsbury, 2011, p. 149). Assemblage theory as a post-structuralist approach to urban research is discussed further in the methodology chapter.

2.2.1   *Geographies of religion and urban studies*

The 'spatial turn' of the 1970s brought increased interest across many disciplines into religion and its relatedness to space and place, but it was not until the early 1990s that 'geographies of religion' emerged as a sub-field of cultural and social geography (Knott, 2010; Strhan, 2013). By the turn of the millennium, geographies of religion had moved theoretically beyond the boundaries of researching 'sacred places' to a wider perspective of how religion informs every day, lived experiences and practices in complex, contested and fluid ways (Kong, 2010). This challenged a binary distinction between the sacred and the secular, with an increased understanding that 'at the material, symbolic and ideological levels, the separation between sacred and secular is more fluid than rigid, and … urban theories must acknowledge this mutability' (Kong, 2010, p. 212). This shift resulted in a greater focus on the connections between politics, religion and the contestation of space, influenced by Marxist and post-structuralist approaches originating from French theory and critical geography (Knott, 2010). Urban locations, due to their intense social and spatial assemblages, provided a particularly rich context for the exploration of these complex interactions.

Some scholars in the field of geographies of religion have adopted the theoretical concept of the 'postsecular' to examine the complex and contested relationship between religion, secularity, politics and urban space. The term 'postsecular' was first coined by Jurgen Habermas and has been further developed by other scholars including Justin Beaumont, Chris Baker and Paul Cloke (Baker & Reader, 2009; Beaumont & Baker, 2011; Cloke, 2011a; P. Cloke & J. Beaumont, 2012). Habermas (2005, p. 26) described the postsecular as the 'self-understanding of society as a whole in which the vigorous continuation of religion in a continually secularizing environment must be reckoned with'. It is a contested term because of its close alignment to secularisation and also for its over-dependence on a Western worldview. More recent work by Cloke, Baker, Sutherland and Williams (2019) has developed the concept of 'postsecularity of being' that draws greater attention to ethical values. They describe 'postsecularity' as the 'bubbling up of ethical values…arising from amalgams of faith-related and secular determination' (p. 9). Their work is a major contribution towards a wider

theoretical development in the geographies of religion that is more focused on the emergent and varied ways in which 'people act on, dwell in, operationalise, resist, suppress, celebrate and variously live their beliefs' (Brace, Bailey, Carter, Harvey, & Thomas, 2011, p. 5). Brace et al. (2011) adopt the term 'geographies of belief' rather than 'geographies of religion' because the concept of belief provides a more emergent and fluid concept beyond the boundaries of religious affiliations. Beliefs from this broader perspective can be researched as 'emergent geographies of faith and belief that are permeated through but also around organised religion' (Cloke, 2011b, p. 11) and are capable of producing diverse spatialities. These insights emphasise the spatial dynamics of beliefs and values that emerge through complex flows, connections, and networks.

2.3 Contemporary UK cities and networked governance

This section briefly outlines recent developments in national and local political-economic structures and some of the policies that have impacted UK cities, including the development of urban governance and the role of intermediary organisations within these networks. The literature review focuses on Liverpool as a city because this narrows the scope of a vast field of literature and draws out some key issues of particular relevance to this research project. Cities across the world are shaped by wider inter-connected global, national and regional influences that combine with a city's own specific historical, cultural, economic, political and social configurations. Intermediary organisations are embedded into the networks, processes and structures of the city, and they are themselves subject to global, national and local influences.

2.3.1 The city of Liverpool

Cities are not homogenous, and an exploration of Liverpool highlights the particular ways in which the city has developed and been shaped. Liverpool is a northern post-industrial UK city, that over recent centuries has seen 'the extremes of booming growth and prosperity to crippling economic and social decline' (Sykes, Brown, Cocks, Shaw, & Couch, 2013, p. 1). Liverpool as a city took on a major role in transatlantic slavery in the second half of the eighteenth century, accumulating great civic and personal wealth as a result. The scale of Liverpool's involvement is staggering, with half of the 3 million enslaved Africans taken across the Atlantic by British slavers transported on Liverpool ships.[2] Another major influence on Liverpool as a city from a religious and cultural perspective has

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[2] National Museums Liverpool. *International Slavery Museum.* https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/international-slavery-museum#section--collections - retrieved 02.03.2019

been immigration to the city as a major port. Notable to the religious and cultural life of the city has been the migration from Ireland and China, with Chinatown still prominent in the city and the Catholic-Protestant polarity in Christian religion remaining part of some people's identities.

Like many other UK cities, by the 1980s Liverpool was experiencing severe economic decline. In 1981 the 'Toxteth race riots' drew much media and political attention, and a Government report just months before the unrest commented that Liverpool was 'the most disturbing case of racial disadvantage in the United Kingdom…a grim warning to all of Britain's cities' (Fifth report of the Home Affairs Committee, 1981). But the term 'race riots' is contested and Belchem (2014) points out that many leaders in Liverpool at the time refused to label the unrest as racial and instead drew attention to inequalities and extensive deprivation. Belchem (2014, p. 253) notes the words of the Catholic Archbishop Derek Warnock, 'black and white youths were not fighting each other last weekend. They were united against a common foe. There was an explosion of anger against the "powers that be" – local and national'. As a result of the unrest, Michael Heseltine was appointed as the Minister for Merseyside. Sykes et al. note that this resulted in 'the pump-priming of major elements of Liverpool's regeneration and development governance during this period…[and] much of the physical regeneration of the city during the 1980s, including the regeneration of the central docks' (2013, p. 11). More recently, with Liverpool still being identified as one of the most deprived cities in the UK, there has been some ongoing financial investment towards regeneration in recent decades through national and EU funding. Sykes et al. argue that 'regeneration' became the city's dominant, if seldom quantified or questioned, objective' (2013, p. 2). This resulted in significant economic growth from the 1.3 billion investment of national and EU money, spent on economic development funds between 1994-2006, the European Capital of Culture in 2008, and ongoing business development initiatives (Sykes et al., 2013).

The governance of Liverpool has significantly changed in recent years following the devolution agreement in 2015 that saw the creation of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, with £400m of devolved government funds until 2021. The Liverpool City Region LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) and the Combined Authority work together to deliver the Growth Strategy for the City Region.[3] The scale of the ongoing challenge for Liverpool as a city is highlighted in the Liverpool City Council Commissioners report (2022) in June 2022, which estimates the budget gap up to 2025/26

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[3] Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership. *City Region Governance.* https://liverpoollep.org/about-lep/lcr-governance/ - retrieved 21.03.2019

is £98.2 million. The year 2019 was declared as the 'Year of the Environment' and at an Environment Summit, the creation of a Climate Partnership was announced along with a target to reach Net Zero Carbon by 2040 or sooner.[4] Looking ahead, the central vision in the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority plan 2021-24 is for 'a fairer, stronger, cleaner City Region where nobody is left behind'.[5]

But in spite of these changes, Liverpool remains a city with one of the highest levels of deprivation in England, and between 2015 to 2019 they moved from the 4th to the 2nd in ranking on national indices of deprivation according to the proportion of neighbourhoods in the most deprived 10% nationally (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2019). Sykes et al. (2013, p. 18) comment that 'the socio-economic challenges and spatial injustices faced by Liverpool are severe, and the pattern and distribution of these remain stubbornly entrenched. In addressing these problems, governance and communication will be important'. Thompson (2018) believes that a long line of regeneration projects has largely failed in stemming the socio-economic decline in Liverpool, from property-led approaches such as the housing market renewal to area-based initiatives such as New Deals for Communities. 'Such experiments have mitigated but not significantly addressed the city's deep-seated problems' (Thompson, 2018, p. 3).

The challenges ahead for Liverpool are very significant, and a report by two of its universities warns that 'ongoing austerity and Brexit plans in recent years have left Liverpool more dependent and vulnerable than its northern counterparts of Manchester and Leeds, that have a more progressive, cohesive and coherent city regional strategies and governance' (M. Parkinson, Evans, Meegan, & Karecha, 2016).

2.3.1.1   The religious and cultural landscape of Liverpool

Over the centuries, Liverpool has been profoundly shaped physically, culturally, politically and economically by migration and the transatlantic slave trade, and as a global seaport Liverpool was a central hub of the slave trade in the second half of the 18th century.[6] The Christian religion has been particularly influential over the centuries as a source of both division and unity in the city. Over

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[4] Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. *Climate Partnership.* - retrieved 21.02.2023
[5] Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. *A fairer, stronger, cleaner City Region where no one is left behind.* https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/corporate-plan/ - retrieved 10.10.22
[6] National Museums Liverpool. *Transatlantic slavery collection.* https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/transatlantic-slavery-collection - retrieved 02.03.2019

the centuries many people migrated or were trafficked to the city including people from China, Ireland, Africa, Scotland, Wales, Italy, and Israel (Sykes et al., 2013). Belchem (2014, p. 1) describes Liverpool historically as the UK's 'second city of empire', with 'the human and commercial entrepot linking the old world and the new…a vibrant (if not always harmonious) contact zone between different ethnic groups with different needs and intentions as transients, sojourners or settlers'. Belchem believes that Liverpool's 'demographic mosaic' is best understood through three broad processes: imperialism, decolonisation and economic decline. This historical landscape matters in terms of place-shaping because these influences will continue to be woven into places in many different ways.

Amongst the 'demographic mosaic' of the city there is the influence of one migration that has particularly shaped the religious landscape of the city, arising from the mass emigration of people from Ireland during the potato famine of the mid-1840s. It saw '2 million Irish people come to and through Liverpool in a decade, a quarter of the island's population' (Sykes et al., 2013, p. 5). This brought a sharp rise in the Catholic community, which in time would trigger significant catholic-protestant tensions that spanned two centuries until it started to decline in the mid-1970s (Roberts, 2017). But politics continued to be significantly impacted by religion up until that time and 'the city's political representatives were often elected based on their ethno-religious pedigree' (Roberts, 2017, p. iv). Roberts notes that the sectarianism in Liverpool is cognisant with that seen in Belfast and Glasgow, whilst being distinctive in other ways.

The reasons for the diminishing of sectarianism in Liverpool remain unclear and are arguably a whole set of influences including post-war slum clearances, the creation of a strong Liverpudlian 'Scouse' identity, and the non-religiously derived sporting rivalry of the two football teams (Roberts, 2017). Another important influence is the ecumenical 'better together' philosophy, also known as the 'Great Mersey Miracle' that began in 1976. Stanford, writing in The Tablet in 2004 from a Catholic perspective, suggests that it was the landmark partnership of the Catholic Archbishop Derek Worlock and Anglican Bishop David Sheppard that significantly shifted the last vestiges of sectarianism (Stanford, 2004), with the leadership initiative trickly down to grassroots and helping to grow trust in local communities. Roberts (2017), however, comments that it is perhaps the decline in the importance of religion and the two religious institutions that may also have led to the lessening resentment and a replacement of two new institutional 'gods' in the form of Everton and

Liverpool football clubs. Roberts concludes that the decline of sectarianism is complex and multi-faceted and that even though there remains significant Christian affiliation in Liverpool, there is a shift to lighter forms of religious practice with more tribal allegiances becoming less relevant.

2.3.2 *Networked urban governance*

Addressing the complex social, economic, and environmental challenges of cities falls significantly to local authorities, especially where devolution has resulted in the additional transfer of powers, as in Liverpool. The governance of UK cities has changed considerably in recent decades in attempts to find new ways to work more effectively in the context of austerity. 'Governance' is a broad concept used to describe a range of structures and processes of overseeing institutions and sectors, and it is variously applied to local government, the business and corporate world, and the financial sector (Pierre & Peters, 2000). In local government, the shift of language from 'government' to 'governance' signalled a radical change from the unitary and static state with centralised control to an entrepreneurial style of governance in which the state was reimagined as an 'enabler' rather than a direct provider of services (Diamond, 2010; Hudson & Lowe, 2004). These were changes driven by a neoliberal, market economy policy agenda, in which the state steps back and allows competitive processes to identify the most cost-effective provider of services. These policies were initiated under the 'New Labour' government, but 'the implementation of neoliberal and pro-capital economic policy [has been] adopted by all UK governments since 1979' (Grimshaw & Rubery, 2012, p. 107). These policies resulted in increased competitiveness between cities (Jewson & MacGregor, 2018b), meaning that local governance leaders have needed to adopt the role of 'risk takers and creative inventors' (T. Hall & Hubbard, 1998, p. 2). These changes in governance should therefore be seen as part of the 'profound reshaping and reweaving of relations between market, state, civil society and individuals' (Gauthier, Martikainen, & Woodhead, 2013, p. 15), and the new political world is one of 'complexity and multiplicity of levels and types of governance' (Hirst & Thompson 1996 p. 183).

These new approaches to governance have opened new partnerships and collaborative working between the local authority and others including charities, businesses, and voluntary organisations. This networked way of working is very diverse, from formal and contractual arrangements to more informal and loose collaborations (Crouch, 2016; Diamond, 2010). It is promoted on the basis that the public sector is too rigid, bureaucratic, inefficient (Pierre & Peters, 2000), and that more flexible

structures enable greater efficiency and greater investment into regeneration and services (Jewson & MacGregor, 2018a). Networked governance, it is argued, enables 'the articulation and pursuit of collective interests in the 'post-strong state' era' (Pierre & Peters, 2000). However, it is also widely criticised, with some arguing: there is a limited capacity of partnerships to bring progressive reform (J. S. Davies, 2016), that a competitive, business-orientated focus is not best for welfare services (Mazzucato, 2018), there is increased fragmentation of the local state through the internalisation of the market and the transfer of responsibilities to centrally appointed quangos (Collinge & Hall, 2018), there is a tendency to create a system for co-opting institutions into an extended system of repressive control (Jewson & MacGregor, 2018a) and there is a lack of democratic principles and decision making (Deas & Headlam, 2015; Jewson & MacGregor, 2018a). Jewson and MacGregor (2018a, p. 9) also draw attention to issues of power and inclusion, asserting that the key question is 'which interests and which players will be included in partnerships and which will be left out?' Despite these concerns, partnership and inter-agency working are now seen as a primary vehicle for urban policy development and implementation (Collinge & Hall, 2018) resulting in more competitive processes. This competitiveness significantly shapes relationships that are 'marked by dissonance and active negotiation, as multiple actors…turn [neoliberal] ideas to their purpose' (P. Hall & Lamont, 2013, p. 5). Recent research by Sheaff (2018, p. 151) explores the nature of the conflict in partnerships, noting that 'governments, local authorities, markets and partnerships do not operate in identical ways. They reflect differing social interests, sometimes of a conflicting character, which are almost invariably grounded within imbalances of power'.

Despite the challenges in networked governance arrangements, achieving significant change in cities such as Liverpool will undoubtedly require high levels of collaboration and partnership working across organisations and institutions. Research led by two of Liverpool's universities, *'The state of Liverpool city region: making the most of devolution'* (M. Parkinson et al., 2016), highlights the need for greater collaboration and trust between the public, private and community sectors, and also the need for anchor institutions to relate differently and work effectively together. In addition, the report suggests there needs to be greater attention given to values, stating that 'the city region will not be successful unless it is a collective effort…and attitudes and values will be as important to future success as institutions and tools. Trust, honesty, and cooperation are crucial to successful city region working' (2016, p. 77). The call for greater research attention on values emerges across a range of disciplines throughout this literature review, indicating perhaps that in

the face of such significant social and environmental challenges there is increasing recognition of the need to look beneath the surface of partnerships and practice; to better understand the 'why' that informs that 'what' (Baker & Skinner, 2014). A study by da Cruz, Rode, and McQuarrie (2019, p. 6) notes that in the field of urban governance there is a 'lack of empirical evidence on the institutional arrangements that are helping cities adapt to the complexities of social, environmental, and technological change'. This research project contributes to this by making more transparent the role of small intermediary organisations. Small intermediaries can be overlooked in bigger governance structures, but they perform an important role in the boundaries and 'in-between' spaces of governance structures.

2.4 Civil society & intermediary organisations

Literature on urban governance and civil society reveals an ongoing debate on how best to define and describe the many partners and organisations that do not belong to either the state or the markets. In a more schematic division of state, market, and civil society (M. James, 2007, p. 3) there has been an emphasis on the institutions and organisations that shape formal layers of government, bringing public policy and civil society into democratic policy-making. There are inherent problems with this model since it typically privileges the power of larger organisations and fails to recognise and represent smaller groups and a more diverse and complex civil society (Dinham, 2009). Dinham (2009, p. 54) comments that 'this space is deep and wide and that its parameters and boundaries are not easily defined'. He identifies four key spaces of activity in civil society: central Government (and public policy), experts and professionals, users and providers, and individuals, groups and families. Civil society organisations are variously defined in reports and literature, including terms such as the voluntary sector, third sector or informal sector (Gregory, 2018), and the struggles with terminology are indicative of a complex field that defies easy categorisation. Kendall & Knapp (1995, p. 65) describe the voluntary sector as a 'loose baggy monster', expressing uncertainty about where boundaries lie and how to evaluate it as a whole.

With the emergence of a networked approach to governance in the early 1980s (Hambleton, 2015) there has been a greater policy focus on civil society and participatory local governance structures that encourage broader community engagement and greater partnership. James describes this as a shift towards 'a wider mosaic of human inter-relationships', with 'informal networks of association

and friendship… and communities of interests' (2007, p. 3). From this perspective, civil society is seen to have a mediating role with its roots in local community relationships, and it is at this associational form of civil society that faith groups have been increasingly noted for their capacity to build social capital (Baker & Smith, 2010; Cloke et al., 2019).

However, there appears to have been a shift in the government's conceptual understanding of civil society, expressed through the recently published Civil Society Strategy (2018). Instead of focusing on organisations or networks, it chooses to focus on 'sectors' in terms of the public, private and social sectors, whilst acknowledging the blurred boundaries that exist between them. It defines the 'the social sector' simply as charities and social enterprises, which is a significant oversimplification. The research-led, 'Civil Society Futures' inquiry (2018, p. 4), published a report the same year, and this better captures the breadth of civil society by recognising that it extends from 'neighbourhood action to nationally known charity, from communities of faith to social activism, from clubs and societies to self-help and social enterprise'.

The Government's Civil Society Strategy places a strong emphasis on activity, defining civil society as 'all individuals and organisations, when undertaking activities with the primary purpose of delivering social value, independent of state control' (Cabinet Office, 2018, p. 26). Social value is expressed through 'enriched lives and a fairer society for all', seen through 'thriving communities that have strong financial, physical and natural resources' (p. 12). This definition is deeply problematic on many levels. It appears to suggest that individuals and organisations are responsible for the delivery of social value and a fairer society, whilst at the same time suggesting this is independent of state control. The role of the state in creating a fairer society through just policies is worryingly absent. In deprived urban areas such as Liverpool, third sector organisations such as foodbanks and homelessness charities are fully stretched simply to enable people to have the barest essential needs of communities such as food, shelter and clothes. The English Indices of Deprivation (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2019, pp. 13-14) places Liverpool second out of twenty local authority districts with the highest proportion of neighbourhoods in the most deprived 10 per cent of neighbourhoods nationally. Between 2015 and 2019 the number of areas in Liverpool in the most deprived 10% nationally has risen from 134 to 145, and Liverpool is the local authority with the largest number of the most *very deprived* areas, with 31 out of its 298 neighbourhoods being in the most deprived 1% of areas in England. Given these statistics, there

cannot be thriving communities with enriched lives without major reforms to government policy, and the strategy highlights the massive gap between government expectations and the reality on the ground for many local communities. The social value of community-led support in Liverpool is more about helping people to survive rather than thrive, and the report seems to be staggeringly out of step with the realities faced in so many deprived communities of the UK.

2.4.1 Social capital

A term that overlaps with the notion of 'social value' (Cabinet Office, 2018), as discussed above, is the well-established concept of social capital. This term is widely used in the analysis of social and welfare engagement, being explored in various forms including bonding, bridging and linking social capital (Putnam, 2000). Bourdieu defines social capital as 'the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 119). Bonding and bridging capital is seen as the glue that bridges and bonds society together, emphasising relationships in social structures (Hepworth & Stitt, 2007; Putnam, 2000). This places a greater emphasis on relationality and the benefits that flow from this. Various other forms of social capital have been identified, including 'linking' social capital which refers to the ways in which networks and smaller organisations can broker resources either 'vertically' from larger institutions or 'horizontally' through local networks (Custers & Engbersen, 2022, p. 2). Custers and Engbersen (2022, p. 2) note that 'studies often consider to what extent organizational density or the aggregate of different organizations affect social capital, but rarely account for how such effects might differ per organizational type', and this research project can add to research through an individual case study. Section 2.4 explores the nature of intermediaries and their practices in more detail.

However, harnessing social capital is not a panacea for resolving deep-seated problems in communities and Cattell (2001) argues that drawing on social capital cannot ameliorate the underlying systemic causes of poverty. Cattell notes that while social networks and relationships can alleviate poverty and deprivation, they have limits and they are 'no substitute for the more equitable distribution of national resources' (Cattell, 2001, p. 1513). Indeed, the production of social capital itself is complex and may not benefit all parts of a community. For example, Bourdieu (1986) suggests that social capital can promote exclusion due to its association with economic and social

power. Linda Naughton calls for greater attention to be given to the specific geographies and the particularities in which social capital arises and how 'social capital moves according to the intentions of actors exercising power through relational networks' (2013, p. 17). Naughton asserts that social capital is often poorly theorised and understood, too often being 'wrapped up in 'black boxes' which conceal the processes by which these mechanisms operate' (2013, p. 4). She argues that research needs to focus on 'an understanding of the processes operating inside these black boxes when "real" grounded communities and individuals attempt to resolve their problems by accessing and mobilizing resources located in their social networks' (2013, p. 4). Chris Baker extended the concept of social capital to explore religious and spiritual capital (Baker & Miles-Watson, 2008; Baker & Skinner, 2014) and these concepts are explored further in section 2.7.

2.4.2 Faith-based organisations & community engagement

Faith-based organisations have been more visible in networked governance partnerships and networks since the early 1980s, due to the increased dependence on non-state actors to deliver services (Occhipinti, 2015). But despite the significant contribution that faith-based organisations make to civil society, the nature, positionality and contribution of faith actors, communities and organisations in civil society and governance arrangements remain both poorly understood and contested. This section provides a brief overview of faith-based organisations and their often-contested relationships within urban governance, before moving on to explore the complex area of religious environmental activism. Whilst Faiths4Change could be categorised more broadly as a faith-based organisation because of their faith-based roots, they do not now identify in this way and provide no religious statement to align themselves to religion. They overtly state that they are an environmental charity and not a religious one, and it is this complex tension that the research aims to understand better. Therefore, the concept of 'urban intermediary organisation' is adopted for this research, as a term that offers an open category through which to understand values and practices more broadly from the perspective of urban governance and urban networks.

The growing prominence of faith-based organisations in UK urban governance and related community engagement can be viewed from the wider perspective of a 'postsecular' shift in the West and the re-emergence or new visibility of religion in the urban public sphere (Beaumont and Baker, 2011). The concept of 'postsecularity' is explored in greater detail in section 2.7 of the literature review, which focuses on the values and ethics arising from faith-related and secular

amalgams (Cloke et al., 2019, p. 9). The terms 'postsecular' and 'postsecularity' do not signal a universal paradigm shift nor a reversal of secularisation (Cloke et al., 2019), but rather they describe the 'persistent paradox' that is seen in the continuation of secularisation alongside the global resurgence of religion (G. Davie, 2015). This results in a complex public sphere with a multiplicity of voices (Baker & Reader, 2009; Graham, 2013), in which the place of faith actors and organisations in community engagement may be variously questioned, encouraged or decried. Concerns about faith-based involvement include possible hidden agendas, unrealistic expectations, lack of clarity about basic aims, lack of accountability and differing views on equality and inclusion (Farnell, 2009). However, research by Baker and Timms (2020) following the start of the Covid-19 pandemic cites that 67% of 194 local authorities surveyed reported that there had been an increase in engagement with faith societies since the start of the pandemic. Chapter 6 reflects further on this report and a recent follow-up report (Baker & Timms, 2022) in light of the research findings.

Faith-based organisations defy simple definitions and there is considerable debate about how faith-based organisations fit into any models of civil society and whether they form a distinctive category from the third sector or social sector. Clarke & Jennings (2008) describe them as 'any organisation that derives inspiration and guidance for its activities from the teachings and principles of faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within faith'. Occhipinti (2015) favours a typological approach that examines their characteristics, activities, and organisational structures. Research by Rachel Chapman (2009) suggests that the specific identity of a faith-based organisation can be seen in: their underlying basis of values, beliefs, and motivations, the types of needs addressed, the nature of leadership and wider community support, and the interest representation. Occhipinti (2015) suggests that the distinctiveness of faith-based organisations lies in them being effective on the ground and intricately linked to the grassroots, as well as their motivation to serve people and communities. However, others such as Cloke, Johnsen, and May (2007, p. 1090) 'called into question any neat ethical distinction between faith-based and secular ethics of generosity and service'. This is supported by the research of Chapman (2009) that found there are many similarities between faith-based organisations and voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations, and Chapman concludes that the two have the potential to learn and support each other. Therefore, whether Faiths4Change is indeed an environmental charity and a faith-based organisation by association is a matter of debate. This highlights the complexity and fluidity of categorisations such

as faith and no faith, and religious and secular, and section 2.7 considers these categories in more detail.

2.4.3   Religious environmental activism

In recent decades, alongside increased environmental activism in the UK there has been a growth in religious environmental engagement and activism, as seen in the faith members of the Climate Coalition.[7] The potential of religions to make a positive contribution to wider societal challenges is a contested and complex issue, and their potential role in addressing the environmental crisis is no exception. Veldman, Szasz, and Haluza-DeLay (2012) provide a detailed review of the research literature on religion and climate change, and the literature has extended beyond this over the last decade. In assessing the potential of religions to effect change, Veldman et al., (2012) suggest that religions can provide positive motivations and actions but also may provide obstacles and barriers. In terms of barriers, religious views can sometimes discourage adherents from actively addressing environmental problems (Koehrsen, Blanc, & Huber, 2023). The relationship between religion and sustainability is a complex one and Johnston (2014) notes that little attention has been given to the interdependence of sustainability and religion. This gap is important because religion is 'intimately intertwined with many facets of human lives that are not themselves essentially or explicitly religious' (Johnston, 2014, p. 21) and historically religion has played an important part in sustainability discourse (Johnston, 2014, p. 201).

One of the arguments for the positive contribution religions can make is based on the expansive, global reach of religions and their capacity to provide social capital that enables local communities to achieve collective goals (Veldman et al., 2012, p. 259). This capacity to contribute towards social capital was evident more recently in the context of the Covid pandemic, demonstrated through research by Baker & Timms (2020, 2022) discussed previously. Research by Hague (2017, p. 209) argues that community is foundational to how environmental engagement is lived and practised, both in religious and secular environmentalism. Hague suggests that the social context of community is vital to convert motivations into engagement in environmental activism. The centrality of community is supported by Kidwell et al. (2018, p. 2) who propose an integrative framework of eco-theo-citizenship, as a representation of the 'ongoing process of community

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[7] https://www.theclimatecoalition.org/faith-members - retrieved 28.08.23

formation and consolidation' through which 'values, practices and citizenship are articulated in a mutually reinforcing spiral'. Research by Nicinska (2013) on religious environmental groups in the US and UK, suggests that holism, interconnectedness and moral obligation to care for the Earth Community was shared by all the researched groups.

However, research suggests that the role of religion in sustainability discourses and practices can also result in tensions and division. Koehrsen et al. (2023, p. 2) suggest that beneath the surface 'tensions are an inherent part of religious environmentalism', manifested through 'different views and theologies, ambivalences, misunderstandings, and sometimes mistrust.'. Therefore, whilst religious motivations might promote environmental activism, they can also actively promote barriers through a scepticism of scientific evidence of climate change and an understanding of the climate emergency as a welcomed sign of the end times (Koehrsen et al., 2023). In addition, even when religious groups and individuals are motivated to effect positive change, research by Harmannij (2023) on Christian churches in the UK suggests that churches struggle to practically engage with the environment. Harmannij (2023, p. 318) suggests that religious groups and individuals can lack engagement with broader environmental insights and reflections, highlighting the need for them to move beyond their own 'religious bubble' and beyond 'eco-theologies' to engage with areas including science, politics and economics. Other research suggests that even religiously based teaching on the environment is weak, and Lundberg (2017, p. 167) suggests that in the Lutheran Church of Sweden, individual believers did not view environmentalism as something that arose from their involvement with the Church but as something they had learnt elsewhere.

In an urban context, there are additional relational complexities that can add to the tensions within religious environmentalism, such as the relational rivalries, tensions and disagreements described by Koehrsen et al. (2023). Urban tensions may include 'rivalry between different religious traditions, resistance of nonreligious actors, the obduracy of secular institutions, or the marginalization of religion can thwart the impact of religious environmentalism' (Koehrsen et al., 2023, p. 7). However, Kidwell et al. (2018, p. 14) suggest that it is important not to assume that environmental groups are self-contained entities, since such groups 'often have porous boundaries, may share resources, and often have overlapping objectives'. Religious environmentalism is neither a linear nor a smooth process (Koehrsen et al., 2023) and in the contested space in urban governance this is further complexified by a wider range of 'entangled fidelities' (Baker, Reader, & James, 2015). These

entangled and contested relationships are explored further in the section below on intermediary organisations.

Research on religious activism is limited by a lack of research beyond Christianity and from a non-Western perspective (Veldman et al., 2012). This significantly limits insights and perspectives, including those of indigenous religious belief systems and the ways that these belief systems are encoded and embodied in environmental practices that are well adapted to local conditions (Watson & Kochore, 2012). Other research gaps include the more nuanced positions of religious influence on climate activism from outside of or at the margins of existing religious traditions (Veldman et al., 2012, p. 270). Smaller case studies could begin to address this research gap and Koehrsen et al. (2023, p. 14) suggests that 'sustainability transitions can often be helped by the formation of experimental niches, where novel ideas can be tested on a smaller scale'. Kidwell et al. (2018, p. 15) argue that the broader policy discourse on climate change mitigation is too focused on rapid responses, metricised reductions, and short-term projects. This is contrasted with their research on Christian climate care that shows the network's approach can be described as slow, structured and modest. The slowness relates to the time it takes for change to emerge through ''a combination of practical actions, theological values and commitment to cultural change' (Kidwell et al., 2018, p. 21).

Whilst Faiths4Change has its roots in the Christian faith it has a nuanced and complex relationship with religion. In fact, as a charity they actively state they are an environmental charity and not a religious one, but they recognise that faith matters in local communities. Their more nuanced position on religion is what motivates this research on values, positioned within the complex context of postsecularity. Other scholars have also explored this more liminal space where religious and non-religious values intersect in sustainability movements, including Beckham and Gorringe (2013, p. 11) who evaluate the Transition Town Movement and observe that their 'inner transition' aligns closely with what others would describe as 'spiritual matters'. Johnston (2014, p. 186) suggests that religious discourses, metaphors and values are deeply intertwined within sustainability discourses and practices, supporting the approach of this research that includes the exploration of religion but without locating it from an exclusively religious framework. Johnston (2014, pp. 133-159) explores the similarities and differences between religious, interfaith, and secular groups through a set of case studies. This research suggests that given the breadth and diversity of interfaith sustainability

initiatives, each group needs to have clear statements on their core values and beliefs. As such this moves beyond an undefined pluralism to 'an empathetic form of deliberation that highlights stakeholder core values' (Johnston, 2014, p. 134).

This research project positions itself as a narrow and deep exploration of values of sustainability, using a single case study of Faiths4Change as the platform to explore the values they adopt when working with their broad relational network. This adds to previous research by exploring the complex interweaving between religion and sustainability from the margins of religion. In doing so the research does not position itself in a religious activism framework, but instead considers Faiths4Change as an environmental organisation that operates within the complex context of postsecularity where religious and non-religious motivations, values and actions can overlap and interconnect. With this positionality identified, the decision was taken to describe Faiths4Change as an intermediary organisation, as this strengthened an understanding of its positionality in urban networks but did not assume that it was religiously motivated or orientated in its values.

2.4.4   Intermediary organisations

The concept 'intermediary organisation' is closely linked to thinking on civil society and has a long history, being used in the 19th century by Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), a French sociologist and politician (Anjum, 2010, p. 157). In contemporary urban scholarship there is renewed interest in the concept of intermediaries, with some scholars exploring intermediaries from a networked and relational perspective closely linked to Actor-Network Theory (Farias & Bender, 2010; Latour, 1999). Beveridge (2019, p. 181), an urban scholar writing from an environmental planning perspective, describes them as 'in-between actors'; 'intermediaries who facilitate, broker, negotiate and disseminate knowledge and other resources'. Beveridge (2019, p. 187) suggests that to understand intermediary organisations attention needs to be given not so much to structures but to positionality; 'we have to look for those actors in-between others…in the position within a wider network of actors…at the meeting point, between the boundaries'.

Hodson and Marvin (2010) suggest intermediaries use a specific set of capabilities to mediate between different societal priorities and interests. They identify these capabilities as long-term organisational stability and financial support, an organisational culture that is conducive to learning and adaptation to changing circumstances, an effective approach to managing different forms of

knowledge, an ability to develop and sustain networks and communication forums, the creation of symbolic visibility, and embeddedness in the local context. Research by Hamann and April (2013, p. 20), writing from a sustainability studies perspective, suggests that to harness key capabilities the partnerships between intermediary organisations and other stakeholders require specific and 'unusual' leadership skills. They highlight four leadership characteristics: an interest in working and navigating across divergent values, an openness to collaboration, an ability to deal with high levels of complexity and ambiguity, and an ability to view conflict and tension as an opportunity for creativity and innovation. This suggests intermediaries have specific skills that enable them to work in complex relational networks as a means of harnessing resources and transforming social-ecological contexts. This relates closely to various forms of social capital such as bonding, bridging and linking capital (Baker & Smith, 2010; Putnam, 2000).

Hamann and April (2013, p. 12) use the term 'collaborative intermediary organisations', to describe 'organisations that create explicit platforms for deliberation and collaboration between diverse stakeholders and different societal sectors'. They highlight the role of these organisations in bringing together a shared vision, and the 'participatory process used to engage, inspire and mobilise a wide variety of different social actors'. Beveridge (2019) believes that intermediaries are of particular significance for urban studies research due to the 'interstitial spaces' that have been created by network governance. Moss (2009) notes that intermediaries are often 'hidden'; they are concealed within the work of networks because they do not fit into standard categories such as provider or user. This is supported by Thompson (2018, p. 4) who states that 'social innovations are emerging, largely from outside the state and capitalizing on the crisis conditions and opportunities opened up post-2008, in multiple neighbourhood-based projects aiming at urban transformation'. Historically in the UK, anchor institutions such as the local authority, the Church, and the NHS have been central to the delivery of services to local communities. However, both the financial constraints of recession and austerity and a growing public distrust of institutions have severely limited these institutions. Nevertheless, these anchor institutions may still have an important role for intermediaries, and research by Hamann and April (2013, p. 20) suggests that intermediaries may benefit from 'a subtle state of "embedded autonomy" within the broader institutional context'. However, they warn that this is counter-productive if this is too rigid and thwarts space for experimentation and transformational innovation.

Emphasis on the 'in-between' positionality of intermediaries draws attention to the complex relationships they have to navigate, characterised by negotiation and struggle (Hamann & April, 2013) and which by its very nature is both unstable and uncertain (Beveridge, 2019). However, these complex entanglements or 'entangled fidelities' (Baker, Reader, & James, 2015) are not exclusively negative, and Baker suggests they have the potential to be creative and progressive if they move beyond the frustrations and a more 'functionalist level of discourse' (Baker, 2009, p. 120). This is supported by recent research by THEOS (Barclay & Hilhorst, 2019, p. 16) that suggests faith-based broker organisations can play an essential translation role, in being able to recognise faith-specific motivations and also speak in a way that secular partners can understand. Cloke (2011a, p. 238) suggests it is this willingness to work together with different people that creates new 'spaces of rapprochement'. Such spaces can provide a context for challenging existing thinking or practice (A. Dinham & Lowndes, 2009) and can act as a catalyst for the renegotiation of the public imaginary (Weller, 2009).

2.5   Place, space & urban policy

Theoretical understandings of space and place are complex and contested, influenced by a wide variety of disciplines and research approaches. Within the field of human geography, there is a complex web of theories underpinned by certain assumptions about geographical knowledge. Aitken & Valentine (2006, pp. 1-12) summarise these into three distinct philosophical and theoretical groupings: singular intentions (including positivism, humanism, feminism and Marxism); constructing geographical knowledge in relation to the world (including behavioural research, structuration theory and realism) and beyond structure (including post-modern geography, post-structuralist theory, ANT, and post-colonial theory). This wide spectrum of philosophical approaches means that there is no singular, agreed definition of 'place' even among human geographers, beyond a common understanding that people and place are fundamentally interrelated and that relationality is at the heart of any understanding of place (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001, p. 8).

This research project is informed by spatial thinking in human geography that emphasises the transient and social nature of space and place. The 'spatial turn' of the 1970s resulted in the analysis of space and place being central to social theory and for researchers exploring social, cultural, economic, and political relations. Thrift (2003, p. 95) describes space as 'the outcome of a series of

highly problematic temporary settlements that divide and connect things up into different kinds of collectives'. Such scholarship draws attention to social relations and challenges the more territorial notions of place offered by physical geography that emphasise its fixed and bounded nature. The work of Henri Lefebvre (1991) has been highly influential across many disciplines, informing how space is conceptually understood as socially produced through the 'trialectics' of spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space.

Key thinkers on space and place emerged from differing schools of thought, including Harvey, Massey, Giddens and Latour. David Harvey (1993, 2003) is a highly influential Marxist geographer who was one of the first geographers to insist that space is not given and absolute, but created through social practices and processes. Doreen Massey and Linda McDowell (1984) significantly influenced feminist geographical thinking on the intersections between gender, work and space that emerged in the 1980s and early 1990s. Massey's seminal book 'space, place and gender' (1994) extends the concept of spatiality as the product of intersecting social relations; 'the uniqueness of a place, or a locality […] is constructed out of particular interactions and mutual articulations of social relations, social processes, experiences and understandings' (Massey, 1993, p. 66). From this perspective 'places are…constituted of multiple, intersecting social, political, and economic relations, giving rise to a myriad of spatialities' (Hubbard, Kitchin, & Valentine, 2004, p. 7). Massey's work highlighted how space and place were intertwined and distinctively shaped by social power in particular contexts (Massey, 1996).

Anthony Giddens, as a sociologist, has been influential in the geographical analysis of place through his structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) which brings together 'the social and spatial through the conceptualisation of the contextuality of social life that admits the human agency and structure in an integrated framework' (Dyck & Kearns, 2006, p. 94). Dyke & Kearn (2006, p. 95) note that more recent issues of globalization and technological advancement have radically shifted the agency-structure problematic and that 'poststructuralist concerns with difference and identity have deflected attention from material conditions and the "rules and resources" through which structure is realised'. The post-structuralist approach is strongly influenced by Deleuze (1988) and conceives of the world as being in constant flux and continually shaped by multiple processes. As a result 'place needs to become conceived of as fragile entities constantly made and remade through the actor networks that involve people, things, languages and representations' (Hubbard et al., 2004, p. 10;

Latour, 1999). From this perspective 'place is not a location whose character can be explained through reference to wider spatial processes…[but instead] as entities always becoming, in process and unavoidably caught up in power relations' (Hubbard et al., 2004, p. 10). A post-structuralist approach to place, therefore, pays attention to the local and has a focus on the networks, flows and processes that influence and shape it. Such a theoretical understanding is well suited to the aims of this research project, with a context-specific analysis of place through multiple human and non-human influences and relationalities.

2.5.1 Urban place-based policy

Urban places are shaped by economic, social and political changes which means that 'urban neighbourhoods are constantly being reshaped as the urban economy shifts and develops' (Hambleton, 2015, p. 84). A relational perspective of place recognises that people imbue places with meaning and that places are associated with issues of culture, values, and identity. Place is an important concept for urban scholars examining social issues of inequality and deprivation, since place provides a focus for social and spatial analysis. The regeneration of cities following deindustrialisation and the loss of manufacturing has had a huge impact on both place and space, with both place marketing and the rebranding of places central aspects of most regeneration programmes (T. Hall & Hubbard, 1998). This is often at the expense of the needs of local communities (Harvey, 2000), and 'in many localities there has been a remaking of the character of the place in which services and consumption differences have become primary' (Crewe & Lowe, 1995, p. 1881). Lummina Horlings (Prof. of socio-spatial planning) notes that change is not hegemonic and that 'generic processes have spatially differentiated impacts on places and lead to spatially dispersed sustainability problems' (Horlings, 2016, p. 32).

In urban planning and development there have been place-based discussions for many decades, visible through the urban regeneration initiatives of successive governments. O'Brien & Matthews (2016b) chart this long history back to regional policies that were pioneered in the 1930s and which came to the fore with the post-war planning framework associated with the Keynesian welfare state. It was not until the 1960s however that urban development plans became framed within the term 'urban policy', a term that was variously interpreted by incoming governments in ways that have brought 'dramatic shifts in the objectives and character of the urban policy initiatives' (Wilks-Heeg, 2016, p. 10). Bentley and Pugalis (2014, p. 290) note the ongoing tensions that have arisen in

policy between 'people-centred' models that consider people as the primary target of policy and 'place-centred' models that are spatially focused and prioritise the mapping out of 'the potential for the development of the assets in a locality and potential development paths'.

The influence of the New Urbanism movement of the late 1980s brought increased attention to community consultation and the need to root regeneration on the history and culture of particular places (P. Jones & Evans, 2012). New Urbanism was rooted in US policy as a response to 'the social and spatial segregation of the population by race and income, the deteriorating environmental quality, a declining public realm, and the growth of non-place edge-city phenomena characterized as sprawl' (Garde, 2020, p. 453). New Urbanism became influential in UK urban policy and can be seen in ongoing approaches to place-making that 'capitalise on a community's unique assets, inspiration and potential with the intention of creating public spaces, places, events and activities that promote people's health, happiness and wellbeing' (L.G.A., 2017, p. 5). Advocates of New Urbanism, including Talen (1999), emphasise that 'physical design can be used to address the segregation of population by race and income, to encourage a sense of community among its residents, as well to mitigate placelessness' (Garde, 2020, p. 454). Critics however question whether such a focus on physical design is capable of bringing about the desired social transformation, but Talen (2019) points out that critics do not appear to offer alternative models or approaches.

During the New Labour Government (1997-2010), place and 'a sense of place' was deeply enmeshed into policy discourse and became increasingly aligned with notions of sustainability (P. Jones & Evans, 2012). Under New Labour there was a focus on spatial redistribution and place-based approaches, seen through interventions at a variety of levels including the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) that were active in regions including Liverpool (Wilks-Heeg, 2016). At the heart of such place-based models is the decentralisation of economic development powers to enable localities to make decisions and draw together local assets and resources, with an understanding that 'place-based redistributive intervention [is] a critical component of combating uneven patterns of spatial development' (Michael Parkinson & Meegan, 2013, p. 290). The Barca Report (2009), an influential European report on place-based policy, suggests that there are two important characteristics of place-based models; they pay close attention to geographical context in terms of social, cultural and institutional characteristics, and they focus on issues of knowledge in policy intervention. Horlings (2015b), writing from a sustainability studies perspective, argues that healthy

and sustainable cities can be created through the development of 'place-based approaches'. But as well as the strengths of place-based approaches there are also acknowledged weaknesses, notably the lack of devolutionary powers and capacity that is seen as a significant limiting factor in place-based policy developments (Bentley & Pugalis, 2014).

A change of government in 2010 brought a seismic shift for urban places, with the new coalition government bringing in what some academics described as the 'post-regeneration era' and 'the age of austerity' (D. O'Brien & Matthews, 2016a, pp. 27-44). This resulted in the demise of centrally administered urban programmes, such as the RDAs, and the emergence of other initiatives such as Enterprise Zones, Local Enterprise Partnerships and Regional Growth Funds. Bentley and Pugalis (2014) are critical of the Regional Growth Fund, describing it as a 'space-blind' initiative because even though it claimed to be about rebalancing the economy it was actually a subsidy that was undifferentiated both sectorally and territorially. These changes had a profound impact on the funding of place-based initiatives and on many grassroots organisations and charities. Thompson (2018) argues that despite many new initiatives by successive governments (variously labelled as entrepreneurism, enterprise, or innovation), all of them remain fundamentally wedded to a neoliberal ideology. He supports the views of A. Williams, Goodwin, and Cloke (2014) that neoliberal thinking has enduring power over urban policy planning, evidenced at the time through 'austerity localism', local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) and enterprise zones.

Whilst attention on 'place' is common in urban policy planning there is often limited recognition of the complexity and ambiguity of place as a concept. Hambleton (2015a), writing from an urban governance perspective, reflects that place and space are often used without consideration for how they differ. This may be because both space and place are complex and contested concepts even in academia, where they bridge a broad range of disciplinary fields. Bentley and Pugalis (2014) draw attention to the complexity and contextual specificity of place, and the need for this to be reflected in place-specific approaches that are sensitive to factors including institutional frameworks, local networks, relational flows, territorial constructs, and assets and development potentials.

Place-based leadership is viewed as an important way of bringing together people in ways that can provide strategic direction and solutions to problems and challenges. Hambleton (2015, p. 56) describes place-based leadership as a 'new civic leadership' that acts 'to co-create new solutions to

public problems by drawing on the complementary strengths of civil society, the market and the state'. Hambleton identifies five realms of place-based leadership in urban governance: political, public/managerial/professional, community, trade union, and business, and he suggests that it is in the overlap between these realms that innovation zones are created. Place-based leadership and a sense of place remain visible in urban policy approaches, such as in the UK City of Culture programme that has an objective 'to bring people together, build a sense of place and inspire local pride, and to develop place-based leadership, governance and partnerships that are representative and diverse'.[8]

Hambleton calls for a better understanding of place in urban governance, drawing on Tuan (1977) and Castello (2010) for a socially focused understanding of place. Castello emphasises that it is people who imbibe places with meaning, because 'it is, after all, people who make places, frequent them and use them. It is they who make a place into space' (2010, p. 15). Hambleton (2015, p. 82) describes place in its broadest term as 'somewhere that someone cares about'. He argues that attention to place brings a greater awareness that: places exist at many geographical levels, that people can have a variety of attachments to place from fleeting to deep rootedness, and that people can have multiple loyalties to many places. As part of a greater focus on place, Hambleton contrasts place-less leaders with place-based leaders, and argues for more place-based leaders who care about particular places and therefore are informed by people and places in their decision-making (2015, pp. 109-138).

The notion of 'place-making' has more recently become 'a central watchword in culture-led urban planning…understood as the manifestation of space 'lived' and brought into the realm of the human scale' (Ploner & Jones, 2019, p. 271). However, much like the concept of place, placemaking is a complex and contested term and it is variously understood and applied in urban policy. Theoretically, if place is understood to be socially constructed in ways that are highly specific and relational (Massey, 1994), then place-making can be seen as the ongoing making and remaking of place through a complex amalgamation of place-making activities (Cresswell, 2004). Place-making is viewed as an active process, described by Pierce, Martin, and Murphy (2011, p. 54) as 'a set of

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[8] Department for Culture, Media & Sport. (2021). *UK City of Culture 2025 expression of interest: guidance for bidders.* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-city-of-culture-2025-expression-of-interest-guidance-for-bidders/uk-city-of-culture-2025-expression-of-interest-guidance-for-bidders- retrieved 03.11.2021

social, political and material processes by which people iteratively create and recreate the experienced geographies in which they live … Place-making is an inherently networked process, constituted by the socio-spatial relationships that link individuals together through a common place-frame'. These place-making activities and processes are associated with a 'sense of place' that is promoted through strong place-based leadership. The concept of 'a sense of place' derives from the field of geography and brings attention to the complexities of places and the growing sense of 'placelessness' experienced in late capitalism (Beidler & Morrison, 2015, p. 205). It aims to address what Relph (2008) describes as the 'homogeneity on formerly varied cultures and landscapes'. In recent years geographers have drawn on the notion of 'affect' to bring a renewed emphasis on the embodied nature of place. P. Jones and Evans (2012, p. 2320) suggest that 'affect is a valuable concept, therefore, because it reminds us that place construction is fundamentally embodied'. Ploner and Jones (2019, p. 271) suggest that place-making can be understood more broadly as 'the manifestation of space 'lived' and brought into the realm of the human scale (Tuan 1990; de Certeau 2008), the notion of place lends itself well to capturing the performative, creative and poetic dimensions of urban space'. Affect highlights the importance of lived experience and the centrality of local people in place-making and creating a sense of place.

2.5.2   Urban places & inequalities

Urban place and place-making remain important topics of academic scrutiny and evaluation, and they are concepts that can be used to highlight place-based inequalities. Hambleton (2015, p. 17) notes that 'geography plays a critical role in shaping life chances, and this is one of the reasons why…the neglect of place in public policy making is so troubling'. He describes the 'geography of injustice' in three related areas: territorial injustice, spatial injustice and environmental injustice. In terms of environmental injustice, Hambleton notes the work of Isobelle Anguelovski (2013) who highlights how the work for environmental justice in neighbourhoods is closely related to community development, through grassroots initiatives that include fresh food, green space initiatives, recycling of waste and the promotion of healthy living. At a global level, the pressures to respond to the environmental crisis have been complexified by the Covid-19 pandemic, and in the UK there are other specific changes as a result of the implementation of Brexit legislation. The implications of all these issues on urban policies and regional place-based initiatives have yet to be fully revealed, but there is no doubt that it increases the pressures at both the national and local government levels. There is concern at UK Government level that Covid-19 has deepened existing

inequalities in the UK,[9] at a time when the environmental crisis is increasingly impacting local communities across the globe through record temperatures and extensive flooding (UN, 2022). The Johnson government (July 2019- Sept. 2022) re-articulated the 'levelling up agenda' for the North with an emphasis on a place-based approach. In 2021, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (now The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities), launched a £5m pilot project called 'Partnerships for People and Place'. It aimed to bring greater emphasis to place-based policies 'where funding or attention is targeted at a certain place…to tackle specific issues or create desired policy outcomes'.[10] However, the scope of this project is far more limited than previous place-based initiatives such as 'New Deal for Communities' (NDC), a well-documented initiative pioneered by the New Labour government in 1998. NDC focused on some of the most deprived neighbourhoods of the UK, including Liverpool, with thirty-nine partnerships each receiving about £50m over 10 years. The NDC initiative stood out from other initiatives because it had a long-term, ten-year strategic plan for neighbourhoods that was focused on a partnership approach and community engagement (Fordham, 2010). Given the comprehensive assessment and insights from the NDCs initiative, it raises a question of why new pilot projects are necessary and whether they might be a hindrance to implementing what is already known to be ways to strengthen place-based policy in some of our most deprived communities.

Nigel Wilcox (Executive Director of the Institute of Economic Development) commented in 2021, during the Johnson Government, that the Government was 'bringing issues of regional inequality into sharper focus than any previous government in the last 30 years'. However, Wilcox also comments that 'it is 11 years since a Conservative government minister announced the end of the regional development agencies and ever since there has been a rhetoric about regional equality – first around balance, and now about levelling up'.[11] He suggests that if there is to be effective and long-lasting change regionally then there must be longer-term strategies, with a devolution that enables greater policy independence and fiscal/budget determination. Given the considerable instability in Westminster since 2021, with three Prime Ministers and the ongoing challenges of

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[9] UK Parliament Post. (2021). *Economic inequality and recovery.* https://post.parliament.uk/economic-inequality-and-recovery - retrieved 09.10.2021

[10] Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities. (2021). *Partnerships for people and place: guidance for local expressions of interest.* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/partnerships-for-people-and-place/partnerships-for-people-and-place-guidance-for-local-expressions-of-interest - retrieved 03.09.2021

[11] Wilcock, N. (2021). *Six 'must haves' for Boris' levelling up visions.* https://www.localgov.co.uk/Six-must-have-for-Boris-levelling-up-vision/52664 - retrieved 10.08.2021

Brexit, the longer-term strategies needed for the North of England continue to lack sufficient attention.

2.6 Sustainability studies and socio-ecological place-shaping

The socio-ecological transformation of place is an area of interest in sustainability studies and is at the heart of this research project. This section explores key concepts and summarises current thinking and research in the following areas: sustainability studies, socio-ecological transformation and place-shaping, place-based socio-ecological entrepreneurs and intermediaries, the values of sustainability, and a review of research into values in sustainability studies.

2.6.1 Sustainability studies

The academic discipline of ecology is a wide-ranging, interdisciplinary field and can be broadly described as 'the study of the processes that influence the abundance and distribution of organisms, the interactions among organisms and their environment, and energy transformations and fluxes'.[12] It includes a broad range of organisational scales, from molecular, to community, to ecosystem levels, and draws research interest from a wide number of disciplines (Keville, Nelson, & Hauer, 2017, p. 2). Sustainability studies emerged in the 1960s in response to the growing environmental, economic and social challenges visible in urban contexts through the damaging environmental impacts of industrialisation and the pressures on rapidly expanding global cities (While & Whitehead, 2013). In the UK, sustainability is now central to the planning and design of urban places, and the Environment Agency's research (2021) focuses on the need for cities to be fit for the future and resilient in terms of environmental risks. The research highlights the many challenges that cities face, with climate change and population growth exacerbating environmental issues.[13]

Terminology in the field of sustainability is broad, complex and contested, with multi-focal lenses through which issues of sustainability can be researched and reviewed (McKenzie, 2004). Sustainability theory is built on 'three pillars' or 'the triple bottom line': the economic, environmental, and social. However, this has been increasingly criticised for being too narrow and

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[12] Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies. *Definition of Ecology.* https://www.caryinstitute.org/discover-ecology/definition-ecology - retrieved 03.09.2019

[13] Environment Agency, Chief Scientist's Group. (2021). *The state of the environment: the urban environment.* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-environment/the-state-of-the-environment-the-urban-environment#main-findings – retrieved 10.03.23

for placing its primary focus on the economic pillar (Shirazi & Keivani, 2019). Revisionists suggest that there are missing 'pillars' with the most commonly cited being 'culture' (Shirazi & Keivani, 2019, p. 2), which is now included in newer models such as the 'circles of sustainability' that has four categories of economics, ecology, politics and culture (P. James, 2015). As a broad and highly interdisciplinary subject, sustainability studies attracts interest from a wide range of academic disciplines including spatial planning (Horlings, 2015a), geography (Ives et al., 2020; K. O'Brien, 2013), and economics and the environment (Abson et al., 2017). The breadth of sustainability studies as a subject is captured by the UN Sustainability Goals, with 17 goals that are all interconnected and have multiple targets within each.[14]

Since the late 1980s, much of the debate on sustainability has been dominated by an ecological perspective but over the last decade greater attention has been given to the social aspects of sustainability (Åhman, 2013). Littig and Griesler (2005, p. 8) note that 'sustainability research is not just about "natural" processes but also about understanding social processes that concern society's interactions with nature'. Environmental sustainability is inextricably linked to the 'internal' problems of social structure, such as social justice, gender equality and political participation. From this perspective sustainability studies needs to address 'the process by which societies manage the material conditions of their reproduction, including the social, economic, political and cultural principles that guide the distribution of environmental resources' (Becker, Jahn, & Stiess, 1999, p. 4). There is now a growing recognition of the need to support communities to discover more sustainable ways of living and for society to reconnect with nature (Ives et al., 2018). Initiatives such as community gardening have multiple benefits including food production, connecting people to nature, opportunities for learning, therapeutic benefits and the development of social cohesion and resilience (Ives et al., 2018).

Hodge and Hardi (1997, p. 7) assert that different elements of sustainability should be viewed as equally important since 'in general terms the idea of sustainability is the persistence of certain necessary and desired characteristics of people, their communities and organisations, and the surrounding ecosystem… the idea expresses the interdependence between people and the surrounding world'. Adopting a more socio-spatial perspective on sustainability dissolves the

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[14] The United Nations. *Sustainable Development Goals.* https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/ - retrieved 19.01.23

boundaries between economy, environment and the social (Shirazi & Keivani, 2019), and draws attention to sustainability as a lived and embodied form of life with complex spatial and temporal rhythms (Psarikidou & Szerszynski, 2012). Soini and Birkeland (2014) suggest that 'culture' within the sustainability framework has remained under-emphasized and under-theorised. This is supported by Shirazi and Keivani (2017) who highlight the theoretical confusion regarding how social sustainability is defined and understood, as well as practical concerns regarding how it is incorporated into projects and planning processes. This research project examines an intermediary organisation that intentionally combines ecological and social objectives in their engagement with local communities and the research is focused on the values that inform their socio-ecological practices.

Weingaertner and Moberg (2014, p. 2) state that 'there is no single blueprint definition to social sustainability, and the definitions that exist are often derived according to discipline-specific criteria or study perspectives, rather than being general'. Shirazi and Keivani (2017) argue that the lack of a fixed definition for social sustainability is not surprising given the highly interdisciplinary nature of the field and the theoretical complexities of social theory. Their review of research suggests that social sustainability has been conceptualised around seven key principles: equity; democracy, participation, and civic society; social inclusion and mix; social networking and interaction; livelihood and sense of place; safety and security; human well-being and quality of life (Shirazi & Keivani, 2017, p. 1537). Shirazi and Keivani (2017, p. 1526) call for 'more empirical and practical investigations from which more precise and place-specific policy and planning recommendations could be drawn'. They highlight two significant issues that future research needs to consider. Firstly, whilst the literature suggests a high level of consensus on the interconnectivity and co-relation between aspects of social sustainability and urban forms, there are ongoing debates regarding the degree and nature of this interconnectivity. Secondly, they highlight that since social sustainability research is place-specific and socio-cultural-specific, any research findings are local and therefore wider normative assertions are problematic (Shirazi & Keivani, 2017, p. 1541).

2.6.2 Socio-ecological transformation & place-shaping

The term 'socio-ecological transformation' emerges from sustainability studies and combines two of the three traditional pillars of sustainability: economic, environmental, and social.[15] Over the years sustainability studies has increasingly recognised the overlapping nature of these pillars and has recognised other key influential spheres including the political, technological, and cultural. There is considerable variety in the typologies used by academics including political-economic, socio-cultural, socio-ecological, socio-technical, and ecological. The recent IPCC climate change reports (2022a, 2022c) have made a major contribution to the academic field of sustainability studies, with thorough academic summaries and reviews of terminology. The 'Impacts, Adaptions, Vulnerability' report describes socio-ecological literature as often being more systems-based, on society and eco-systems, and considers issues including interdependence, non-linear transitions, and tipping points (2022c, pp. 171-172). As a sub-field of study, the 'socio-ecological' frame continues to develop and shows increasing interest in the role of values within the system and how they might bring about transformation.

The IPCC report on 'Impacts, Adaptions, Vulnerability' (2022c, p. 171) suggests that 'transformation is a pluralistic concept embracing many interpretations, but all focus on the general idea of fundamental change in society as opposed to change that is minor, marginal or incremental'. Theoretically, societal transformation in sustainability studies literature has been explored through various lenses including socio-technical, socio-institutional and socio-ecological perspectives (Loorbach, Frantzeskaki, & Avelino, 2017). The term 'transformation' is typically used to address the need for sustainable solutions, and is distinctive from 'resilience' (that is related to the ability of a system to withstand threats and shocks) and 'transition' (that is more focused on socio-technical systems (IPCC, 2022c; Loorbach et al., 2017). 'Sustainability transition' as a term was originally used to refer to large-scale societal change but is now applied to local perspectives in civil society, within grassroots networks (Loorbach et al., 2017). This brings the meaning of 'sustainability transition' closer to that of socio-ecological transformation. The 'Transition Network',[16] formed in 2005, connects with community work in 50 countries and is closely associated with ECOLISE, 'a European network for community-led initiatives on climate change and sustainability, [that] recognises the

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[15] The United Nations. *Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.*
https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2030agenda-sdgs.html - retrieved 19.03.2020
[16] The Transition Network. https://www.transitionnetwork.org - retrieved 17.02.2020

unprecedented ecological, social, economic and political threats to dignified life on planet earth'.[17] The Transition Network emphasises collaborative initiatives through the concepts of co-creation, co-production, and coalition building.

The concept of 'transformation' places a greater emphasis 'on questions of power, politics, capabilities, culture, identity and sense-making' (IPCC, 2022c, p. 172). The term 'socio-ecological transformation' therefore aligns well with the research's focus on values and the interconnected relationships capable of bringing about change. The term allows space for deeper questions on societal values and their role in enabling transformation at a community level. This attention to the local remains relevant, despite of the global climate emergency, because 'the literature increasingly suggests that the achievement of sustainable development will require transformative change in socio-ecological systems at scales ranging from the community to the globe' (IPCC, 2022c, p. 135).

Karen O'Brien (Professor of Sociology & Human Geography) is a leading academic in the 'inner dimensions of sustainability' (K. O'Brien, 2013; K. O'Brien & Sygna, 2013). O'Brien defines socio-ecological transformation as 'a process and a shift in form, structure or meaning making, that unleashes shared capacities to commit to a world that works for everyone'.[18] This definition provides a foundation for this current research project, which seeks to better understand more about these processes and how they enable the unleashing of shared capacities. Research suggests that sustainable transformation is complex and place-specific, and Horlings et al. state that 'sustainable transformation must accommodate the heterogeneity and diversity of places, thereby supporting place-based approaches to development' (2020, p. 356). Therefore, this research uses a single case study methodology to root learning in a specific intermediary and a particular place.

The term 'sustainable place-making' has become frequently used, combining 'place-making' with 'sustainable development' in order to capture place-based, community-focused activities that combine environmental, social and economic aims (Franklin & Marsden, 2014). This research project focuses on socio-ecological place-shaping, grounded theoretically in sustainability studies and the concept of socio-ecological transformation. 'Place-shaping' is closely related to the term

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[17] https://www.ecolise.eu - retrieved 18.02.2020
[18] ECOLISE: European Network for Community-led Initiatives on Climate Change and Sustainability. https://www.council.science/current/blog/the-how-of-transformation - retrieved 04.04.2021

'place-making', a well-established and more structurally focused concept centred on the planning, design, and construction of places (Hambleton, 2015, p. 91). However, this research project aligns more closely to a post-structuralist understanding of place that emphasises networks, flows and processes, and therefore the term 'place-shaping' better describes the more fragile nature of working in urban places that is always in the state of becoming (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988). Horlings describes place-shaping as 'practices, co-created between people and their environment. In this co-creation, culture plays an important mediating role' (2016, p. 34).

Socio-ecological place-shaping from a post-structuralist perspective is at the heart of this research project, linking it theoretically to an understanding of place as relational and socially constructed (Horlings, 2019). An understanding of 'sustainable place-shaping' is informed by the findings of 'SUSPLACE'[19], a four-year European research project on sustainable place-shaping undertaken by six academic and seven non-academic partners, including Cardiff University and the Welsh Government. The research concluded in May 2019 and the findings were published in a report, *'Sustainable place-shaping: what, why and how?'* (Horlings, 2019). The report analyses data from 15 European research projects under the themes of: inclusive places, resilient places, connected places, greening economies and pathways to sustainability. The research makes a significant contribution to the current gap in empirical research on sustainable place-shaping. The research defines place-shaping as 'peoples' capacities to change the relations that shape space [through specific practices] that become materially visible' (2019, p. 37). This draws attention to the 'dominant processes that 'propel' everyday living' including socio-cultural, political-economic and ecological processes,… 'processes that connect people to places' (Horlings, 2019, p. 44).

The SUSPLACE research findings (Horlings, 2019) provide a platform for this research project, through research-led insights into how the social, economic and ecological aspects of life are linked to places and become concrete in the form of place-shaping practices. The research suggests a new model for sustainable place-shaping, highlighting processes and practices that 'need to be embedded in the characteristics and assets of a place in sustainable ways – thus changing the relationship between people and their environment' (Horlings, 2019, p. 37). The SUSPLACE (2019) research findings conclude that three key processes connect people to places: socio-cultural,

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[19] SUSPLACE: Sustainable Place Shaping. https://www. sustainableplaceshaping.net - retrieved 11.01.2020

political-economic and ecological. It concludes that sustainable place-shaping occurs through the socio-cultural *re-appreciation* of respective places, the ecological *re-grounding* of practices in place-specific assets and resources, and political-economic *re-positioning* towards dominant markets, technology, and policies. Horlings suggests that these processes provide the space for people to position themselves and perform place-shaping practices, 'these practices are rooted in the meanings people attach to place, the material and immaterial assets, activities, and connections' (2019, p. 72). The process of 're-appreciation' explores values, by examining 'how people value their place and reflects on the relations which they are part of'. The researchers suggest that 'if people become more aware ('making sense') of their intentions, values and sense of place, they will be motivated to get involved in their place. This shapes common ground for cooperation between actors with different interests and values' (Horlings, 2019, p. 45).

Whilst the SUSPLACE project has been significant in providing new insights into place-shaping, the research was broad in scope and therefore the attention given specifically to values was quite limited. This is a significant gap since Miller et al. (2014, p. 241) assert that 'inquiries into values are largely absent from the main-stream sustainability science agenda. Yet, at its core, sustainability is a fundamentally ethical concept raising questions regarding the value of nature, responsibilities to future generations and social justice'. This is supported by Ives et al. (2020, p. 1) who state that a 'pre-occupation with external phenomena and collective social structures has led to the neglect of people's 'inner worlds' in terms of sustainability research'. It is here that this research project positions itself, to address this research gap through a narrow and deep exploration of socio-ecological place-shaping values.

2.6.3   Place-based socio-ecological entrepreneurs and intermediaries

One of the SUSPLACE case studies is of particular relevance to this research project. It explores enabling resources of place-based social entrepreneurship through the in-depth qualitative analysis of three 'Green Care' projects in Finland (Moriggi, 2019). Moriggi describes social entrepreneurs as individuals that 'make things happen', 'social actors who imagine alternatives and transform themselves, their relationships and their social context' (p. 2). Whilst Moriggi's focus is on individual entrepreneurs she draws on the research from Westley et al. (2013) on institutional entrepreneurship, which overlaps significantly with the concept of intermediaries adopted by this research project. Westley et al. (2013) suggest that successful institutional entrepreneurs are

change agents operating in complex systems to change beliefs. They do this, Westley et al. suggest, by playing a key role in bringing stakeholders around a common vision, changing the flow of political authority and resources, investing in networks, and mobilizing social capital. In doing this, these institutional entrepreneurs create systems-level disturbance and demonstrate the key skills of being able to 'see' the system and its dynamics and to identify emerging windows of opportunity (Westley et al., 2013, p. 2). This links closely to the concept of intermediaries, which is adopted in preference to entrepreneurship for this research due to the emphasis that 'intermediary' gives to the positionality of organisations in liminal and 'in-between' spaces. For my research project, these insights raise questions about how Faiths4Change as an intermediary navigates complex boundaries and their potential in urban networks to create systems-level disturbance and harness various resources.

Moriggi's research findings identify nine key enabling resources used by three entrepreneurial communities: infrastructural, institutional, material, place-specific, organisational culture-related, social, ethical, affective, and competence-related. The latter three resources are grouped as 'personal level' resources and in her findings, Moriggi (2019, p. 13) reflects that 'ethical motives starkly surface'. She concludes that values including trust, reciprocity and solidarity are central to the entrepreneurs' practice. Her research findings also suggest that entrepreneurs 'not only 'draw', 'mobilize' or 'leverage' existing resources but also create new ones', and she notes that 'intangible social values' promote cross-sectoral partnerships, encourage perseverance and facilitate the net-weaving behaviours resulting in the maintaining and nurturing of social ties (p. 14).

Moriggi's research provides important new insights into socio-ecological place-shaping values but the research lacks depth because the insights were part of a much broader research project. She recognises the need for further studies on values and my research builds on her work and addresses this gap. Moriggi adopts an in-depth, qualitative, case study methodology based on participation and co-creation, involving a mixed methods approach of in-depth interviews, participant observation and co-creation workshops (2019). The in-depth participatory process of both entrepreneurs and their external network of stakeholders enabled multiple perspectives and insights. The co-creation workshops are used as an iterative process that promotes the careful listening to participants and a refining of the data analysis. Moriggi's research methodology informs my research, and this is explored further in the methodology chapter.

2.6.4   Values of sustainability

The importance of values in the processes and practices of socio-ecological sustainability is increasingly recognised in international sustainability studies literature, but there remains a significant lack of research on the 'inner dimensions of sustainability' (including values, emotions, thoughts, identities, beliefs and worldviews) compared to the 'external dimensions of sustainability' (including economic markets, social structures and governance) (Ives et al., 2020, pp. 208-210). This neglect of the inner dimension is significant because there is increased recognition that the inner dimension is also vital for transformation and that 'our inner worlds…lie at the root of sustainability challenges and are fundamental to the solutions to some of the world's greatest challenges' (Ives et al., 2020, p. 208). This viewpoint is supported by Horlings, who edited the European SUSPLACE report, and is a key academic contributor to discussions on values in relation to place-shaping (Horlings, 2014 May 28-30, 2015a, 2015b, 2016). Horlings (2015b, p. 269) highlights the need for more empirical 'value-oriented' research 'in the context of community and regional development, offering insight into people's motivations and driving forces in place-shaping processes, and offering 'valuable' information for place-based governance strategies'. The research recognises the socially constructed nature of values and the complex ways in which they are shaped. Horlings comments that 'values are not self-standing concepts which can be mapped or analysed as atomized issues, but they are intertwined, context-determined, culturally varied and connected to how we see our self and how we perceive our environment and place' (2015b, p. 257). This makes the research of values complex because of their embedded, implicit and often hidden nature.

K. O'Brien (2013, p. 308) refers to 'inside out sustainability' and suggests that 'adapting from the inside out is neither the opposite of, nor an alternative to, current approaches to adaption. It simply draws attention to the subjective, interior dimensions of adaption that are often ignored in research and practice'. The 'inner dimensions of sustainability' are related to individual and collective values, beliefs and worldviews that support behaviours, institutions and systems, drawing attention to the role that our 'subjective worlds' play in both perceiving and framing problems and solutions. K. O'Brien and Sygna (2013) provide a model of sustainable transformation that identify three spheres of transformation: the personal, the political and the practical. It is a model that highlights the importance of beliefs, values, worldviews and paradigms and the role it has in sustainable transformation. K. O'Brien (2013, p. 310) suggests that values are important because 'the

transformative changes required for successful adaption calls for changes in mindsets, and in particular an increased capacity to take on perspectives, view problems from multiple dimensions, see patterns and create innovative alternatives'. Pelling (2010, p. 88) suggests that addressing the environmental crisis will necessitate 'a cultural shift from seeing adaptation as managing the environment 'out there' to learning how to reorganize social and socio-ecological relationships, procedures and underlying values 'in here''.

The importance of values in sustainable place-shaping takes on particular importance when the interior lives of individuals are understood to be 'deep leverage points' that are capable of achieving the most significant changes (Abson et al., 2017; Meadows, 1999). This perspective is a structural, systems-based approach to sustainability, and focuses on tipping points that can bring about significant shifts. Fischer and Riechers (2019, p. 117) draw on the work of Meadows (1999) and Abson et al. (2017), describing the leverages in the system through the four aspects of material, processes, design and intent.

From such a perspective, values, worldviews and emotions are the sources from which sustainability motivations originate and can be maintained (Ives et al., 2020). Abson et al. (2017, p. 32) suggest that the deeper leverage points (known from a systems perspective as 'intent'), arise from 'the multiple, potentially conflicting, sets of worldviews, goals and purposive behaviours within a given system of interest'. Ives et al. (2020, p. 5) assert that 'the inner life, with its values, goals and (often subconscious) desires, can be understood as the deepest driver of behaviour and behavioural change'. But values are not sufficient alone to generate the profound systemic changes needed. Ives et al. (2020, p. 212) suggest that 'any exploration of inner worlds within sustainability science must be done in conjunction with analysis of institutional structures, social context and politics'. This suggests that research on the inner dimensions of sustainability must also give due attention to the external dimensions, including the structures, policies, and systems that influence urban place-shaping.

Sustainability studies research has suggested that deep leverage points such as values are difficult to change in practice, even if the benefits could be substantial (Meadows, 1999), and this has perhaps exacerbated the tendency to focus on practices as shallow leverages that are more easily shifted (Fischer & Riechers, 2019). However recent research by Fischer and Riechers suggests that

the interactions between leverage points may be more complex and less linear than initially thought, and they suggest that there may be 'chains of leverage' and interactions across leverage points (2019, p. 118). Based on this argument they suggest that greater attention, therefore, needs to be given to some 'guiding principles' for a sustainable future, including the possible deep leverages of values orientation, spirituality and religion, and love (Fischer & Riechers, 2019, p. 118). Further research is needed to better understand how values can be deep leverages for change, and this research project uses new methodologies that are capable of providing new insights beyond existing systems-based thinking.

2.6.5 Researching values in sustainability studies

Researching values in sustainability studies presents the field with significant theoretical and methodological challenges. Tadaki, Sinner, and Chan (2017, p. 2) state that 'a significant (if often unspoken) problem confronting environmental practitioners lies in the choice of concepts and associated approaches for describing and analysing values'. Nguyen and Bosch (2013, p. 109) use an 'iceberg model' to describe how systems function, with 'mental models' as the deepest levels of a system and 'the filters through which we interpret our experiences, evaluate plans and choose among possible courses of action'. Abson et al. (2017, p. 32) have adapted a complex model by Meadows (1999) and simplified it into four key areas: parameters, feedback, design, and intent. 'Intent' represents the deep leverages and paradigms shifts; 'the underpinning values, goals and worldviews of actors that shape the emergent direction to which a system is orientated'. Ives et al. conclude that 'the key questions that this domain asks are 'who?' and 'why?'' (2020, p. 4).

Whilst there is now wider agreement that values are a cornerstone of environmental policy, 'there is no corresponding consensus about what values are or which approaches to understanding values are useful and legitimate in particular settings' (Tadaki et al., 2017, p. 1). A focus on values moves sustainability research closer to the field of environmental ethics, a sub-field of philosophy that emerged in the 1970s (Gardiner & Thompson, 2015), and to other disciplines including the sociology of religion which has extensive scholarship on society, culture and values.

Sustainability studies as a discipline is historically grounded in traditional management theories and now draws primarily on systems thinking as a way of understanding the complexity and interconnectedness of economic, social and ecological systems (Amanda Williams, Kennedy, Philipp,

& Whiteman, 2017). But systems thinking tends to use a more 'instrumental paradigm' for analysing values, where they are 'treated as residing "out there" in the environment, able to be mapped and modelled across a landscape by experts' (Tadaki et al., 2017, p. 2). From this perspective, values are 'capable of being objectively measured, quantified and traded-off' (Raymond, Kenter, Plieninger, Turner, & Alexander, 2014, p. 148) and analysis might aim to quantify specific 'value shifts' that are occurring in response to the environmental crisis. A significant conceptual and methodological shift is required for the research of values from an affective, inner dimension perspective (K. O'Brien, 2013). Ives et al. (2020, p. 2) suggest that values as 'the inner life' have been largely neglected as a focus for analysis in mainstream sustainability science because of the unsuitability of traditional scientific tools, approaches and terminologies. Horlings (2015b) calls for a greater variety of methods for researching values including in-depth interviews, ethnographic observation, surveys, thematic apperceptive test evaluation, content analysis and associated literature, analysis of participant self-reporting and recording, psychometric testing, word association analysis, and group participatory techniques.

Ives et al. (2020) suggest that the discipline of sustainability studies needs to connect more with other disciplines that have extensive scholarship on the individual's inner worlds, including the fields of philosophy, psychology, and religious studies. Wamsler et al. (2018, p. 143) support this view, highlighting the need for 'more sustainability research that acknowledges positive emotional connections, spirituality…recognizing that the micro and macro are mirrored and interrelated'. Given the extensive research on beliefs and values in the field of the sociology of religion, they are highly suited to address the research gap. Ives et al. (2020) suggest that attention on values and worldviews opens up many possibilities for further research including the role of spirituality and religion, the influence of different worldviews, and how institutions and organisations that relate to the inner life might promote sustainability (including religious groups and communities, and their institutionalised practices). Ekstrom and Moser (2013) also highlight the importance of institutions and organisations, arguing that they can significantly facilitate or impede sustainability initiatives, and can be a key to overcoming barriers. These insights inform this research project and the decision to centre the research focus on an intermediary organisation rather than on individual actors.

2.7 Religion, belief, and values

This literature review has evidenced a research gap in sustainability research on inner values and how they inform socio-ecological place-shaping practices. It has also demonstrated the need for alternative theoretical frameworks and research methodologies to explore values, due to the limitations of systems thinking to adequately conceptualise and evaluate values from an affective, inner-world framework. Some sustainability scholars, in recognising these limitations, suggest the need to look to other disciplines to fill the gap (Ives et al., 2020), and the sociology of religion and public theology are both highly relevant fields due to their extensive experience in researching beliefs and values. However, the field of religion and belief offers more than methodological approaches, because understanding how religion and belief may influence socio-ecological values and practices is significantly under-researched. Ives and Kidwell (2019) recognise this, arguing that too often religious values are understood from an overly simplistic and fixed framework. They state that 'simply equating religion with certain sets of values does not adequately capture the more complex inter-play of religious belief, belonging, and environmental values. Any serious consideration of the intersection between religion and values for sustainability must not simply force religion into existing value frameworks' (2019, p. 2). Instead, Ives et al. (2020) suggest that there is a need for further research on how institutions and organisations that give attention to the inner life might promote sustainability. More specifically, there is a need for detailed case studies that can bring new insights into how certain values emerge in specific contexts (Ives & Kidwell, 2019), and this research project addresses this gap.

The case study of Faiths4Change includes an exploration of religion and belief because both their roots as an intermediary organisation and their current organisational title suggest an association with religion and faith. The field research aims to better understand their values, including to what extent their values are shaped by religion and belief affiliations. This section considers key themes from the sociology of religion and public theology, but it is anticipated that the field research will inform further reading and exploration according to the research findings. This section provides a starting point, discussing the key themes of religion and belief, belief, unbelief and the pluralism of de-differentiation, the contemporary religious landscape of the UK, and beliefs and values.

2.7.1 Religion and belief

The study of religion includes a broad range of academic disciplines that examine religion from multiple and distinct perspectives, and discussion about the nature and function of 'religion' and 'religions' is contested and complex (Beckford & Demerath, 2007b). This research project draws on the fields of the sociology of religion and public theology since both focus on religion from a social and lived perspective, and this aligns well with the research question. A sociological focus pays attention to the ongoing complex changes and social influences that shape religion, paying attention to 'the myriad ways in which religion at various levels affects the seemingly non-religious aspects of life' (Beckford & Demerath, 2007a, p. 2) Beckford and Demerath argue that any definition of religion is best understood as 'an open-ended, contested and on-going social process' (2007a, p. 2).

The sociology of religion seeks to 'discover the patterns of social living associated with religion in all its diverse forms' and a key focus is to better understand 'the place of religion in the ordering of human society' (G. Davie, 2004, p. 325). This makes the sociology of religion a highly suitable lens through which to explore values and the possible ways that religion and belief influence these. In recent decades, the sociology of religion has paid increasing attention to lived religion and spirituality, and the ongoing, complex relationship between the sacred and the secular. Day (2020, p. 195) observes that the 'lived, everyday beliefs and practices of non-religious people problematizes the secular/sacred and religious/non-religious binary and boundaries'. This research project adopts an understanding that any fixed boundaries such as 'sacred/secular' are problematic, and therefore attention is focused on descriptive and interconnected lived relationships that embody values and beliefs rather than on any fixed or binary categories. But within these interconnected relationships, religion and belief is understood to be important, because 'a turn from organized religion is not necessarily a turn from matters spiritual or supernatural. Indeed, such beliefs and experiences appear to be growing, particularly in countries which are seeing a decline in institutionalized religion' (Day, 2020, p. 199).

Public theology draws attention to the complex and ever-changing relationship between religion and the public sphere. Atherton (2003) suggests this requires the continual reformulation of public theology so that it can adequately capture and articulate this changing context. For example, he argues that the concept of 'the common good' has become irreconcilable with an increasingly plural

public sphere 'that is now dominated by competing narratives'. Atherton observes that this raises challenges for 'ethical discourses', since 'both common good and incommensurable diversities are unable to provide adequate bases for public theology…the former because it cannot cope with diversity and the latter because it cannot promote collaboration of differences' (2003, p. 127). Atherton suggests that what is needed is 'overlapping consensuses' (Rawls, 1993, pp. 133-172) and developing partnerships that are based on 'differentiated solidarity' (Young, 2000, pp. 221-227). Research interest in values opens up new possibilities in the field of public theology, and research by Baker and Power (2018) has contributed to this, adopting the concept of 'beliefs values and worldviews' (BVWs) to explore how an individual's BVWs are translated and negotiated in their business and workplace environments. This is discussed further in section 2.7.4 on beliefs and values.

2.7.2 Belief, unbelief, and the pluralism of de-differentiation

The sociology of religion has extensively analysed the trends of religion in the UK. The data from a YouGov survey on the values and beliefs of the British public in 2013 and 2014 concludes that 'the proportion of people identifying as having no religion is set to equal or overtake that of Christians within a few decades' (Woodhead, 2016a, p. 42). The 2021 census for England and Wales supports this prediction, with the census showing that for the first time that less than half the population of England and Wales (46.2%) describe themselves as Christian. 'No religion' is now the second most common category at 37.2%.[20] An understanding of this data requires a more in-depth grasp of the beliefs and values of those within each category, and Woodhead notes that 'no religion' does not simply equate to 'secular' or 'atheist'. This is supported by research from Bullivant, Farias, Lanman, and Lee (2019, p. 3) who note that 'unbelief in God doesn't necessarily entail unbelief in other supernatural phenomena'. The picture is complex in the context of postsecularity, but Bullivant et al. (2019) also suggest that there is a remarkably high agreement between the categories of 'unbelievers' and 'general populations' concerning the values that are most important for finding meaning in the world and your own life, with family and freedom ranking highly for all.

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[20] Office for National Statistics. (2021). *Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021.*
https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021
- retrieved 03.03.2023

Woodhead (2016a) suggests that old differentiations are breaking down and that Berger's two paradigms of religious pluralism and the pluralism of religious and secular co-existence no longer capture the context in the UK (Berger 2014). Woodhead suggests that a third category is emerging, which is the 'pluralism of de-differentiation', seen through 'a growing proportion of British people [who] now refuse to categorise themselves as either religious or secular and display notably variegated beliefs which are impossible to fit into neat religious or secular schemas' (Woodhead, 2016a, p. 41). Woodhead's findings problematise any simplistic categorisations in terms of religious and secular beliefs and values. This research project, therefore, pays careful attention to how values are both understood and categorised, avoiding simplistic categorisations that would fail to capture this complexity.

The rapidly growing number of 'religious nones' (Woodhead, 2016b) or 'no religion' as described by Bullivant et al. (2019), is viewed as a complex category that cannot be reduced to simple descriptions such as secular or atheist. Woodhead suggests that the largest bloc of religious nones are 'maybes, doubters and don't knows'. Abby Day (2020, p. 44) notes that 'the global north and south is becoming increasingly marked by growing numbers of people who specifically position themselves away from religion and self-identify as having no religion and also, in many cases, as being spiritual but not religious'. But the global picture is complex and there is increased understanding that there is no simple way of capturing this, with Christian decline in Europe being seen alongside growth in Christian Pentecostalism and Islam in other parts of the global south (G. Davie, 2006).

Woodhead observes a 'values gap', between a growing number of liberal people in Britain and an increasingly conservative Church. This gap may explain the increased alienation from religion in the UK, with a shift towards no religion and a search for alternative places and people where values are more closely aligned (Woodhead, 2016b). This links with the notion of disenchantment and re-enchantment (M. Weber, 2011) and the search 'for a more values-driven and ethical public life in response to a post-2008 disenchantment with neo-liberal tactics' (Baker & Graham, 2018, p. 179). This area of research remains significantly under-researched and Baker and Graham (2018, p. 180) acknowledge that what specifically unites people 'is still hazy…but it seems to be coalescing through a willingness to move beyond (but without forsaking) ideological and dogmatic rules and formulae in order to bring about change on the ground'. Exploring such coalescing is the research gap that this research project intends to explore.

2.7.3 The contemporary religious landscape of the UK

Grace Davie describes the ongoing presence of religion in modern Britain as a 'persistent paradox', with secularity continuing to emerge alongside religion that is in many ways newly resurgent and visible in the public sphere (2015). This results in a complex amalgamation of the secular and the religious, and A. Dinham, Baker, and Crisp (2018, p. 4) succinctly capture this in describing Britain as 'more religious, more secular and more diverse all at once'. This complex emerging relationship between religion and secularity can be informed by the concept of the 'postsecular', a term first introduced by Habermas (2005, p. 26) to describe the 'self-understanding of society as a whole in which the vigorous continuation of religion in a continually secularizing environment must be reckoned with'. The postsecular can be a helpful lens through which to analyse this very complex and changing context, but there are some dangers and limitations to the concept. There is criticism of it for being too bound to the secularisation thesis and too Western-centric in its worldview, to the exclusion of more complex global trends (Kong, 2010). Global perspectives are essential for any understanding of cities and places, seen clearly in the earlier study of Liverpool that reflects on how Liverpool has been deeply influenced by its involvement in British colonialism and the slave trade, and the mass migration of Irish people to Liverpool in the 1800s (see section 2.3).

Gauthier et al. (2013) suggest that as an alternative to the postsecular, a more nuanced approach is needed in searching for the 'structural shifts and towing undercurrents' that are linked with changed economic order and associated ideologies. With due attention given to such global perspectives as well as shifts and undercurrents, the concept of postsecularity can still provide a helpful framework for examining the complex cross-over narratives and practices that are embodied in urban partnerships. Paul Cloke, Justin Beaumont, Chris Baker and Andrew Williams have written extensively about the complexity of postsecular spaces, seen through cross-over narratives (Cloke, 2016), rapprochement (P. Cloke & J. Beaumont, 2012), entangled fidelities (Baker, Reader, et al., 2015), blurred encounters (Baker & Reader, 2009) and postsecular ethics of care (Andrew Williams, 2015). Postsecular rapprochement is described as 'a coming together of citizens who might previously have been divided by differences in theological, political or moral principles' for the good of the wider community (P. Cloke & J. Beaumont, 2012, p. 28). Research projects have evaluated partnership engagement in areas including foodbanks (Cloke, May, & Williams, 2016), homelessness (Cloke et al., 2007), a faith-based drug programme (Andrew Williams, 2015), urban regeneration

(Farnell, 2009), and wider analysis of the work of faith-based organisations in social action projects (Beaumont & Cloke, 2012).

New critical thinking has emerged on the concept of 'postsecularity' through a significant work by Cloke, Baker, Sutherland & Williams (2019) on *Geographies of postsecularity: re-envisioning politics, subjectivity and ethics.* The authors explore postsecularity from a new perspective, as a condition of 'being' rather than a postsecular 'time-space continuum', and in doing so they emphasize values, and the 'bubbling up of ethical values…arising from amalgams of faith-related and secular determination' (Cloke et al., 2019, p. 9). The emphasis on 'being' and 'values' aligns well with the aims of the research project. This description of 'postsecularity' is not seen so much as a departure from the original notion of the 'postsecular' but a re-emphasising of an aspect of it. Mendieta and VanAntwerpen (2011, pp. 4-5) note that Habermas stressed the importance of 'translating' the ethical insights of religious tradition, 'since they are key sources of values that nourish an ethics of multicultural citizenship'. Baker and Beaumont (2011) built on Habermas's insights in their exploration of the 'postsecular city', providing insights and reflections on the values, virtues and ethics that shape and inform discourses, relationships and practices in urban contexts. Cloke et al (2019, p. 71) focus on 'the subjectivities of postsecularity', understood as 'the affective desire for a greater degree of in-commonness and the cultivation of sensibilities that prioritise 'common good''. Their thinking highlights the heuristic nature of postsecularity and the 'complex co-assembling in interesting ways between the religious and the secular' (2019, p. 7).

The contribution of religion and faith-based organisations to urban partnerships is described by Chris Baker (2012, 2016) in terms of religious and spiritual capital, with a differentiation made between the 'what' of religious capital (the concrete actions and resources that faith communities contribute) and the 'why' of spiritual capital (the motivating basis of faith, belief and values that shape the concrete actions of faith communities and individuals). Spiritual capital can be viewed as the motivation that lies behind religious capital (Baker & Skinner, 2014) and Baker and Power (2018, p. 474) suggest that it is 'the deeply motivating power of religious belief and faith to shape one's actions and stance within the public sphere'.

Spiritual capital can be seen to give faith groups their distinctiveness but this is rarely discussed in social policy or civil society discourse, instead faith groups tend to be included in a homogenous

voluntary or social sector. Spiritual capital does not appear to be widely discussed in governance discourses and Baker notes that it 'does not always sit comfortably within the mainstream public policy and social welfare discourse' (2012, p. 572). However, there is increasing interest in forms of spiritual capital in areas such as social care, health care and planning, although they do not necessarily use this specific terminology (Baker & Miles-Watson, 2008; Sandercock, 2008; Sandercock & Senbel, 2011). In fields related to health care and welfare services aspects of spirituality associated with wellbeing are being increasingly explored, but there remains some difficulty in articulating and defining the specific nature of this at policy and governance levels.

Postsecularity highlights the need to pay greater attention to the co-assembling and links well to this research of intermediaries as boundary organisations that network widely with others. In terms of research methodology, co-assembling has often been explored using assemblage thinking and associated theories such as Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Farias & Bender, 2010; McFarlane, 2011b). These will both form part of this research project's methodology as they align well with an exploration of values and how they are constructed through amalgamations of secular, spiritual and religious frameworks (Bender & Taves, 2012) that cannot be easily delineated but form complex interconnected assemblages. While such urban assemblages have the potential 'to create new and unexpected realignments between religious and secular sphere', Baker and Graham (2018, p. 179) also caution against an uncritical stance, noting that such co-assemblages are potential catalysts for both regressive as well as progressive forms of volunteering and civic and political engagement. This research project examines such co-assembling from an understanding that it is complex and remains under-researched and unclearly defined.

2.7.4   Beliefs and values

The focus of this research project is to better understand the relationship between the values and practices of an intermediary working across faiths and 'no faith' boundaries and within a network of organisations and institutions. It aims to understand the values that inform their practices of social and ecological place-shaping. Whilst my research project explores values from the perspective of the sociology of religion and public theology, it is important to recognise that academic thinking and research on ethics and values are not exclusively the domain of religion and theology. Many urban scholars from diverse academic fields have considered ethical values and practices that shape cities, including Amin (2006), Sandercock (2003) and Hambleton (2015). Till (2012, p. 6) writing from

a political geography perspective explores the 'wounded city' and the need for environments of care, stating that 'urban space must be understood as inhabited worlds infused with many forms of value, rather than as property or according to capitalist forms of exchange-value only'. Insights from these different scholars highlight the importance of this research remaining open to being widely informed and not making assumptions about values and how they are derived.

Baker and Graham (2018, p. 177), writing from a public theology perspective, explore Calhoun's understanding of the collapse of metanarratives and imaginaries and what they describe as 'the fracturing of these narratives into multiple and often disconnected fragments'. But Baker and Graham note that there may be signs of a creative re-imagining in the public sphere that is bringing such fragments together in ways that express 'new and shared sets of deeper values and principles' (2018, p. 177). The sociology of religion provides key research on values, beliefs and identities, and how these are socially and culturally shaped. Abby (Day) suggests that values can be understood to develop from ideas, when 'a word or phrase that can summarise a way of understanding part of the world around us and indeed ourselves…comes to assume the status of values in which emotion is vested and identity aligned' (2016, p. 11). Day (2016) suggests that values are significant for identity, for the organisation of life and its many relationships, and that when such values are central to a person's identity or social group to which they belong they may be described as beliefs. Day observes that when 'values are described as beliefs then activities often take the form of ritual behaviour' (2016, p. 11). In later research, Day proposes the concept of 'performative belief', a neo-Durkheimian construct that draws on thinkers including Butler and Bourdieu (2011, p. 194). 'Performative belief' explores belief not as pre-formed but as 'a lived, embodied performance brought into being through action…and experienced belonging' (p. 194). From this perspective, beliefs are the product of social action and are closely related to social identities. Day's research addresses the complexity of beliefs and demonstrates the need to dispense with the false binaries of 'religious' and 'secular' and instead explore multi-dimensional and interdependent orientations. This is supported by Margaret McGuire's exploration of the concept of 'lived religion' and the need to re-examine some of the contested definitional boundaries around the concepts of religion and belief that potentially limit research perspectives (2008).

This research project aims to better understand the values and 'performative beliefs' of an intermediary organisation, exploring how they navigate a complex relational space across multiple

institutional, religious and belief boundaries. An example of a research project that aimed to explore values that crossed religious/non-religious boundaries is by Lori Beaman (2017), who examined the practices and values of volunteers at a sea turtle sanctuary. Beaman explores the motivations of the volunteers, and how they understood their place in the world and in the environment in which they live, seeking to better understand how people cooperate across religious/non-religious boundaries and identities. Beaman suggests there is evidence of 'deep equality' that 'looks to the everyday actions of people as foundational to living well together' (2017, p. 11). She suggests that 'the environment or "nature" is a site that reveals differences in the worldviews of religious/non-religious actors as well as potential and realized collaboration' (2017, p. 18). In her conclusions, she highlights some key values expressed in interviews: a shared commitment, awe in the world, care and respect for their work, a focus on equality rather than hierarchy and stewardship, and humility in combining scientific data with an awareness of their limitations as humans. Beaman suggests that what emerges is a way of seeing the world that is marked by collaboration, inclusion, interdependence, respectfulness and equality (pp. 21-23).

In their research on beliefs, values and worldviews Baker and Power (2018, p. 14) argue that BVWs are important because they 'create a disposition towards a social imagination that seeks to affect deep structural change that incorporates emotional, political, social and spiritual dimensions within the public sphere'. 'Worldviews' is a complex concept, but in the field of psychology, it is broadly defined as foundational assumptions and perceptions regarding the underlying nature of reality (Koltko-Rivera, 2004). From a sustainability studies perspective, worldviews inform how environmental issues are perceived, what is considered to be a useful pathway towards solutions, and what is seen as the role and responsibility of the individual (Hedlund-de Witt, 2014). Writing from a sustainability perspective, Hedlund-de Witt (2014, p. 8317) explores the concept of an 'integrative worldview' characterized by 'a self-reflexive attempt to bring together and synthesize elements of other worldviews, or of domains that in other worldviews tend to be viewed as mutually exclusive'. She suggests that in an integrative worldview, 'opposing perspectives are frequently understood to be part of a greater whole or synthesis—on a "deeper level"—resulting in "and-and" rather than "either-or" thinking' (Hedlund-de Witt, 2014, p. 8318).

2.8   Concluding comments

This literature review is highly interdisciplinary and draws together insights from a variety of relevant academic disciplines to thoroughly explore the research question. This has involved sifting through large bodies of literature, including the fields of urban theory, governance, and policy, considering how urban places can be understood 'from below' and how they are shaped through urban partnerships that work in local urban communities. Intermediary organisations such as Faiths4Change are active in civil society, working in the liminal, innovation zones created in networked urban governance.

Three academic fields underpin the exploration of urban place-shaping values, with sustainability studies, the sociology of religion, and public theology each informing the research question and the approach to research methodology. The next chapter outlines the chosen methodology and how it will enable the values and practices of socio-ecological place-shaping in new and innovative ways.

3   Methodology, Methods, and Reflective Thematic Analysis

3.1   Introduction

This research project adopts a qualitative and inductive approach, that is rooted epistemologically and theoretically in social constructivism and post-structuralism. Assemblage theory and new materialism provide key lenses through which place-shaping is examined, with an understanding that place is complex, relationally constructed, and highly networked. The literature review lays out the theoretical grounding for the field research that understands place to be socially constructed (Massey, 1994). This chapter explores in more depth the methodology, methods and thematic analysis approaches chosen and demonstrates why they are the most applicable for the research.

This chapter outlines the three phases of the research plan, which has at its centre a single, in-depth case study of Faiths4Change as an intermediary organisation. The three phases of the research progressively build knowledge on place-shaping practices and values, firstly through a focus on Faiths4Change as an intermediary, secondly through interviews with their relational network, and finally through workshops and an interview that provide an iterative feedback loop on the research findings. The research is strengthened by triangulating the research methods of document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and workshops, giving it greater breadth in terms of data collection and thereby extending the knowledge acquired (Flick, 2007, 2014). Creative arts methods used in interviews and workshops enrich the online process, strengthening the quality of the research data through creative and imaginative approaches.

The methodology for the field research was finalised between February - May 2020, at the start of the coronavirus pandemic that resulted in a lockdown in the UK and many other countries around the world. These events had far-reaching consequences on day-to-day life, and over the first few months it became clear that my plan to do an ethnographic study was unachievable, because of my inability as a researcher to be embedded into local places through participant observation, interviews, and group workshops. By May 2020, I had mapped out an alternative methodology that continued to be centred on the original research question, but with the aim to answer that question in a new way. The new methodology was based on a single case study of Faiths4Change and their relational network, drawing on creative arts research methods to develop imaginative ways to

enrich online interviews and workshops. The research adopts a social constructivist epistemological stance, drawing on a theoretical framework of new materialism and assemblage theory to enable a highly networked and relational research lens. The new research methodology uses online interviews and workshops to elicit an understanding of the values and practices of Faiths4Change. The research methods detailed in this chapter show an innovative approach, using a variety of creative methods to elicit new insights into the values of socio-ecological place-shaping.

Even amidst the unexpected challenges of the pandemic, I remained convinced that my research question on socio-ecological place-shaping was more important than ever to pursue. The Covid-19 crisis exposed the weaknesses of the UK government's place-based urban policy approaches over many years, which had left local communities and public services weakened and poorly equipped for the challenges of the pandemic. The long-term impacts of government economic policy on more deprived local communities and their local community networks have already been explored in the literature review, which highlights the particular challenges for Liverpool as a city. The recession that has followed the pandemic increases social challenges and there is a greater urgency to find innovative ways of achieving social place-shaping transformation to support urban places and their communities. In addition to this, the full impacts of the pandemic on the climate emergency remain unclear. Whilst there were some benefits, such as reduced pollution during lockdowns, there are also reasons to be concerned that economic recession will increase the pressures on communities and governments to pursue unsustainable practices. Given the precarious situation that our environment is already in and the pressing timescale to reduce global warming, any negative change will be significant. Warnings from experts about the climate emergency are being articulated with ever-increasing urgency, with one recent UN report entitled 'the closing window'(UN, 2022).

Given that local intermediary organisations are understood to not only draw, mobilise and leverage existing resources but also create new ones (Moriggi, 2019), a better understanding of intermediaries and their values could provide vital clues into new ways to leverage socio-ecological changes in our challenging urban context. The research focuses on local, bottom-up, urban place-shaping, exploring the values and practices that may enable transformation both socially and ecologically. Chapters 6 and 7 ground the research findings theoretically and practically, chapter 7 reviewing how the research can inform urban place-based policy in the UK.

3.2   The philosophical assumptions and theoretical framework

The research question and the literature review inform the choices made regarding the epistemological and theoretical foundations for the research project. In adopting a relational understanding of place and place-shaping that emerges through complex social networks, social constructivism provides an epistemological stance that underpins the research. Social constructivism aligns well theoretically with a post-structuralist methodology that draws on two specific theories of new materialism and assemblage theory. In this structure, ontological issues (the study of being) are seen to be an integral part of epistemology (the nature of knowledge) since Crotty (1998) asserts that in qualitative research it is often difficult to hold them apart conceptually. New materialism is a post-structuralist concept that challenges known boundaries and blurs structures, and in this thesis, it informs both the epistemological and theoretical framework and is therefore referred to in both sections.

3.2.1   *Social constructivism as an epistemological foundation*

The research adopts social constructionism as its primary epistemological stance; from an understanding that 'all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interactions between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context' (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). Social constructivism is based on the seminal work of Berger and Luckmann (1967) '*The social construction of reality'*, which was influenced by Alfred Schutz (1899-1954) and his exploration of the sociology of knowledge and theory of the foundation of knowledge in everyday life. It is an approach to the social sciences used by a wide range of academic disciplines, meaning that there is no singular definition of the term because it is used so broadly. However, there are certain key principles and Burr (2003, pp. 2-4) cites these as 'a critical stance towards taken for granted knowledge, historical and cultural specificity, knowledge is sustained by social processes, and knowledge and social action go together'.

Social constructionism 'invites us to be critical of the idea that our observations of the world unproblematically yield its nature to us [and] to challenge the view that conventional knowledge is based on objective, unbiased observation of the world' (Burr, 2003, p. 2). Instead, social constructionism asserts that it is in people's everyday lives, through their actions and interactions,

that shared versions of knowledge are constructed. This perspective challenges positivism, logical positivism, and realism regarding the notion of objective facts since knowledge and truth are not understood as fixed nor 'out there' to be discovered. Instead, knowledge is a highly contextual, social and interpretive process, and inevitably co-produced between the observer and the observed since the researcher cannot be 'outside' of the context (Burr, 2003, p. 107). But the construction is not only about human participants because from a social constructionism perspective, the world and all that is in it are viewed as 'crucial participants' in a complex meaning-making process (Crotty, 1998). Social constructionism emphasises the contingent and complex nature of the social world, variously constructed through a multiplicity of human and non-human interactions and flows. The focus is on processes rather than structures, and these processes are influenced and shaped by power relations.

Whilst social constructivism adopts a more inclusive view of the social world, by including the world and all the things in it as participants (Crotty, 1998), nevertheless, there is still a tendency for it to have an anthropocentric emphasis. This research project has a strong ecological commitment and therefore has sought to expand and make more explicit the philosophical assumptions about the material world and objects. New materialism is informed by the 'material turn' and emphasises the materiality of the world, including spaces, places, and the natural and built environment within it (N. Fox & Alldred, 2022). The epistemological implication of new materialism is that matter is seen as active, self-creative and productive, and therefore the boundaries between 'things, objects, human agents, concepts, and texts become more fluid and permeable' (Iovino & Oppermann, 2012, p. 85). From this perspective, human and nonhuman agents enact the materiality of meaning through specific combinations, thereby collapsing conventional distinctions between subject and object. This is important for the research project not just in terms of its epistemology but also ethically since it challenges an anthropocentric worldview that has been so destructive to the material world. It is a worldview that has often been promoted by a hierarchical Christian worldview that places humans above nature rather than as creatures sharing a common home.[21] New materialism as a philosophical perspective re-integrates humans within the environment as an eco-philosophy that establishes a continuum between human and non-human matter (Braidotti, 2013).

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[21] Pope Francis (2015). *Encyclical letter Laudato Si' of the Holy Father Francis*. Vatican.va. https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf - retrieved 12.03.2023

In addition, new materialism extends to abstract concepts such as emotions, values and imagination, recognising that all of these have the capacity for material effect (N. Fox & Alldred, 2022). This epistemological stance is important to the research project because it validates the methodology by providing clear reasoning for the integration of values into the material analysis of place-shaping since these values are assumed to have material effects.

New materialism moves beyond traditional structural and macro-level research of social contexts and instead focuses on the complex multiplicity of continuities, fluxes, flows and 'becomings' of human and non-human assemblages (Latour, 2005). This epistemological perspective, at its most radical, raises deeper ontological questions about 'being'. This is particularly relevant to the ecological impulses of this research project and the search for ways beyond a nature/culture dualism and the anthropocentric worldview that privileges the human and sees the material world as a resource to sustain human life. Critical thinkers, including Rosa Braidotti's (2013) concept of the 'posthuman' and Jane Bennett's work (2010) on 'vibrant matter', point to a relational ontology which 'in place of a human body/mind [is] the "posthuman"… an assemblage of biological, sociocultural, and environmental elements, whose capacities to affect and be affected are contingent upon setting and its relations with other matter' (N. J. Fox & Alldred, 2020, p. 272). Critics suggest posthuman thinking, along with other theories with postmodern roots, can lead to the 'demise of the ethical' (Bauman, 1993, p. 2). However, Braidotti argues that there remains an 'ethics of affirmation' through the 'collective assemblage' of 'we' (Braidotti, 2018, p. 51). Bennett (2010, p. 12) suggests that in modernist thinking there is a fear that losing an ontology of human uniqueness would mean that there were 'no moral grounds for privileging man over germ or for condemning pernicious forms of human-on-human instrumentalization'. Bennett's defence to such concerns is that 'an instrumentalization of nonhuman nature can itself be unethical and can itself undermine long-term human interests' (2010, p. 12). Reflecting on this comment in April 2020, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, the fragility of humans and their interdependence in wider material assemblages is starkly apparent.

3.2.2 A post-structural theoretical framework

Building on an epistemological stance of social constructionism and new materialism, the theoretical framework sets out the specific approach taken to address the research question. It provides a scaffolding for the research, grounding assumptions about reality and making the

decisions to adopt a certain focus of enquiry more explicitly. This is essential for academic rigour and provides the research with coherence, stability and clear direction (Crotty, 1998).

The literature review has clearly explained the need for new research approaches in sustainability studies and as an interdisciplinary review, it has highlighted the research gaps. The research's theoretical framework combines new materialism and assemblage theory, both with underlying post-structuralist assumptions (DeLanda, 2006). Assemblage theory is closely associated with actor network theory and this too informs the theoretical assumptions of the research by bringing into focus the relational networks and the various flows and fluxes that circulate in them (Farias & Bender, 2010). These complimentary theories are brought together to explore the complex assemblages of socio-ecological place-shaping in ways that open up the possibility of new insights that may provide creative thinking for the future.

The limitations of structural analysis for the explorations of socio-ecological values have guided the decision to adopt a post-structuralist methodology, informed by a post-structuralist understanding of cities, place, and socio-ecological assemblages. Poststructuralism is rooted in the 'postmodern turn' and a post-enlightenment belief in the radical indeterminacy of all material and symbolic forms (Susen, 2015). Postmodernism is a contested term in academia, representing a paradigm shift in the understanding of knowledge production and critical enquiry through what is often described as the 'relativist turn'. Influenced by key thinkers including Lyotard, Derrida and Featherstone, postmodernist approaches to the social sciences arose in the 1970s and grew into what might be contentiously described as 'postmodern social theory', with characteristics including interdisciplinarity, situationist, ethno-conscious, socio-conscious and pluralist (Susen, 2015). Poststructuralism in geography emerged in the late 1980s, challenging previous paradigms commonly used by geographers of spatial science, critical realism and humanism (Dixon & Jones, 2004). Key thinkers in poststructuralism include Jacques Derrida who critiqued the very notion of structure and dualistic assumptions of Western philosophy and Michael Foucault who problematised the notion of 'man' and dualistic thinking between subject and object (Cloke, Philo, & Sadler, 1991; Cresswell, 2013). Foucault has been hugely influential in his theoretical contribution, including the concept of 'discourse' which he uses to explore complex social relations of power that both enable and constrain the body and its capacity to be shaped and to act (Hoy, 1986; Rabinow, 1991).

From a spatial perspective, poststructuralism is deeply shaped by the work of Lefebvre and those influenced by his work including Massey, Deleuze and Latour, which has already been explored in the literature review (Dixon & Jones, 2004; Murdoch, 2006). The work of Lefebvre makes explicit that the analysis of representation is a thoroughly spatial task, since 'social relations are constituted in and unfold through spatial distributions, built environments, and spatial significations' (Dixon & Jones, 2004, p. 90). This spatial understanding is significant for the methodology and methods adopted in this research project since it opens up a multiplicity of 'locations' 'as spatial representations that can be creatively assimilated, including linguistic and visual representation (such as speech acts, written communication, painting, photographs), institutional positions and built environments' (Dixon & Jones, 2004, p. 91). This research project explores socio-ecological place-shaping through this poststructuralist understanding of spatial representations, adopting assemblage theory and actor network theory as key theoretical approaches. Assemblage theory was developed by Deleuze and Guattari (1988) and emphasises the socio-materiality of urban life as co-constituted by multiple material and non-material, and human and non-human interactions and flows. Actor network theory is a poststructuralist theory closely associated with assemblage theory and was developed by Michel Callon and Bruno Latour in the early 1980s (Latour, 2005).

Assemblage theory is widely used in geographical socio-spatial analysis, but as with all poststructuralist perspectives it remains a contested theoretical approach in its re-constitution of the social that seeks to blur divisions of socio-material, near-far and structure-agency (DeLanda, 2006). In urban geography, Colin McFarlane has been influential in developing assemblage thinking and its four inter-related sets of processes: the assembling and reassembling of socio-material practices, assemblage as collectives with distributed agency, emergence and the potential for multiple co-existence, and an emphasis on fragility and provisionality (Anderson & McFarlane, 2011). McFarlane describes agency as 'an emergent process that is distributed across the social and the material' (McFarlane, 2011a, p. 215), so that agency is not just about individual members of an assemblage but 'the groups themselves: the milieu, or specific arrangement of things, through which forces and trajectories inhere and transform' (McFarlane, 2011b, p. 655). Assemblage thinking is highly suited to the research focus of socio-ecological place-shaping, with place being understood as a social-ecological construct and 'a site of entanglement between human and nonhuman natures' (Ryfield, Cabana, Brannigan, & Crowe, 2019, p. 4). The theoretical assumption

is that 'as human and non-human lives move, interact, and engage with others through complex temporal and spatial pathways, the symbolic and material places they make also become part of their bodies-selves-environments' (Till, 2012, p. 6). Assemblage thinking can therefore be seen to emphasise the 'heterogeneous, contingent, unstable, partial, and situated' nature of all socio-spatial contexts (Ong & Collier, 2005, p. 12).

Actor network theory (ANT) is closely associated with assemblage theory and the similarities between the two can be seen in the closeness of the Deleuzian concept of rhizomes (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988) and Latour's exploration of material-semiotic networks (Latour, 1999). ANT brings attention to the multiple processes of the relational network, with values and practices being viewed as deeply interconnected through the complex multiplicity of continuities, fluxes, flows and 'becomings' of human and non-human assemblages (Latour, 2005). As part of this 'becoming', values may be viewed as 'politico-ethical' subjectivities that are capable of creating new forms of political imagination and praxis (Blok & Farias, 2016). Blok & Farias suggest that such 'ontological multiplicity does not just point to the different furniture of the human world but to a different way of 'being human' of assembling and enacting humanity'. Researching values from such a perspective involves a creative re-imagining beyond structural boundaries and assumptions, which in terms of socio-ecological transformation opens up the possibility of 'assemblages of re-enchantment…a remodelling of subjectivities away from those inflicted by capitalist hegemony' (Cloke et al., 2019, p. 20). This theoretical framework validates the research methods for evaluating place-shaping through the analysis of relational networks and using remote online approaches. From an understanding that place is socially constructed through an ontology of multiplicity of interactions and flows, then it is possible to better understand place and place-shaping from beyond the more commonly understood material framework. This pushes on the ontological boundaries of our understanding of both the material world and our position as humans, informed by the thinking of people such as Bennett (2010) and Braidotti (2013).

A criticism levelled at ANT is that it provides a flat ontology and that Latour does not address issues of power. Braidotti (2018, p. 42) argues that the flat ontological perspective prevents any analysis of the power relations at work between actors and 'results in the very problematic move to reject the need for any theorization of subjectivity, thus undoing the possibility of a political project altogether'. Acknowledging this weakness in ANT, this research project draws on Foucault's

understanding of power from a post-structuralist perspective. Foucault understands power to be something that circulates in relational, net-like flows and therefore is not possessed but is variously exercised in the network, in potentially productive as well as repressive ways (Foucault, 1980; Hoy, 1986). In addition, Foucault highlights the imbalances of power in society and draws attention to how power flows in day-to-day interactions between people and institutions (Foucault, 1998). These insights broaden the theoretical framework to include power relations and how power shapes the relational networks that flow between the intermediary organisation and other institutional organisations. Beveridge and Guy (2009, p. 72) note that 'to investigate the processes through which actor-networks are achieved, how entities are given form, how relations between these entities are defined and how actions are negotiated, ANT provides us with the concept of 'translation'; a process that is 'about reaching a settlement on the often conflicting priorities of a variety of actors'. This concept of translation can be strengthened by a Foucauldian understanding of power and how it circulates through everyday interactions, networks, and institutions.

3.3 Research methodology

Building on the philosophical assumptions and the theoretical framework of the research, this section lays out the research's methodology as a qualitative and inductive research project framed in a single case study and drawing on creative arts methodologies and methods. The reliability and integrity of qualitative research rely on the researcher being explicit about the underlying philosophical assumptions that underpin the research and the theoretical framework that guides the methodology and methods (Creswell, 2013; Mason, 2002). The task of this chapter is to present the 'researcher's map' (Crotty, 1998) and to explain 'the philosophical grounding for deciding what kind of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure they are both adequate and legitimate' (Maynard & Purvis, 1994, p. 10). These assumptions have been laid out in the opening sections of this chapter.

3.3.1 Qualitative and inductive research

This research project is qualitative and inductive, concerned with the social world and 'the understandings, experiences and imaginings of research participant… the ways that social processes and institutions [work], and the significance of the meanings they generate' (Mason, 2002, p. 1). Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 3) describe qualitative research as 'a set of interpretive, material practices that make sense of the world', and it has an overarching aim 'to understand the

phenomenon or event under study from the interior' (Flick, 2014, p. 90). The research is inductive in nature, building up 'patterns, categories and themes from the 'bottom up'' (Creswell, 2013, p. 45), with a constant back and forth between data and themes as an integral part of the research process. Holliday describes qualitative research as 'an unfolding story' (Holliday, 2007) with the researcher being required to gradually untangle and make reflexive sense of the research finding. But the data analysis will also be informed by an 'inductive-deductive logic process'; reflecting on existing theory and previous interdisciplinary research findings and using complex reasoning skills to make sense of the data collected (Creswell, 2013).

In keeping with qualitative research methodologies, the research plan is highly contextual and specific, aiming to better understand the values and practices of a specific intermediary organisation in particular social contexts. This aligns well with qualitative research that is 'orientated towards analysing concrete cases in the temporal and local particularity and starting from people's expressions and activities in their local contexts' (Flick, 2014, p. 22). As a researching practitioner, the choice of an intermediary rooted in faith is influenced by my own faith affiliation and my interest in practical theology that emphasises the embodied, lived nature of religion and faith. Veling (2005, p. 18) states that practical theology 'is concerned with the unique, the particular, the concrete – this people, this community, this place'. Practical theology, therefore, emphasises the need to understand and investigate a given context and the experiences of those within it (Graham, 2013; Miller-McLemore, 2014).

3.3.2 Reflexivity

'Qualitative researchers today acknowledge that the writing of qualitative text cannot be separated from the author' (Creswell, 2013, p. 215). The positionality of the researcher influences the research at every phase and qualitative research requires a high degree of reflectivity on the part of the researcher. Therefore, in the literature review I have already made explicit my own background and what has influenced the choice of topic, and how the research question gradually took shape (see literature review, 1.2). This reflexivity continues in this methodology chapter, with the ongoing consideration of my 'role and perspectives in the process of generation and interpretation of data' (Mason, 2002, p. 149).

The research project adopts social constructionism as its epistemological perspective, with the researcher and the participants seen as co-producers of knowledge. Reflexivity of my positionality at all phases of the research was essential, since my own experiences, values and perspectives shape the research and therefore need to be explicitly explored (Burr, 2003). The aim is for there to be 'open acknowledgement of the social construction of one's own account as the researcher' (Burr, 2003, p. 110), which makes explicit the role of the researcher in constructing an account that is interpretative in nature. This reflexivity informs my approach to the field research and analysis, with an iterative approach enhancing reflexivity through the ongoing careful listening and analysis through three phases of research. An iterative approach encourages reflection by alternating between the emergent data and existing theory and explanations. It is 'a reflective process in which the researcher visits and revisits the data, connecting it to emergent insights and progressively refining the focus and understanding' (Tracy, 2013, p. 184). This reflective approach is vital in poststructuralist research that pays attention to complex interconnections and seeks to make meaning from them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011)

The third and final phase of the field research involves two workshops and a semi-structured interview, where the research finding are presented to groups of participants from the earlier phases to elicit feedback and discussion. This phase aims to increase the agency of participants and also increases my opportunity as a researcher to reflect further on my analysis, interpretations, and conclusions. This is important in interpretivist research that recognises the researcher's role in constructing knowledge and acknowledges that there is no such thing as 'raw experience' and that all experience is mediated by experience (Maynard & Purvis, 1994).

3.3.3   A Single Case Study: Faiths4Change

The research uses an in-depth single case study and triangulates research methods by combining document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and group workshops. This triangulated approach increases the quality of the research data by giving it greater breadth and validity in terms of data collection and analysis, thereby extending the knowledge acquired through the research (Flick, 2007, 2014).

Case studies draw on a large variety of approaches and methods and they are often used to research specific, concrete entities such as organisations and projects (Creswell, 2013). A defining feature of

a case study is 'a multiplicity of perspectives which are rooted in a specific context or in a number of specific contexts' (Lewis, 2014, p. 52). As a single, qualitative case study, the research provides an in-depth understanding of one specific organisation and as such can be described as an 'intrinsic' case study (Stake, 1995). A single case study may analyse multiple units within the case (Creswell, 2013) and through online workshops and interviews the research explores the practices and values of Faiths4Change through a wide variety of people, projects and localities.

The research question has emerged from my own experience as a practitioner in combination with new insights from the literature review. My own experience draws on my years as an intermediary actor leading a faith-based project in an urban night-time economy, and also in my work as an ordained minister working alongside Faiths4Change as 'an environmental charity rooted in the values and beliefs around the environment that are shared across all faiths'.[22] The charity was established in 2004, emerging out of projects and initiatives on the environment set up by Bishop James Jones of Liverpool.[23] As a charity, Faiths4Change is based in Liverpool but also sometimes works more broadly across the North West of the UK, in Manchester, Cumbria, Cheshire, and Lancashire. It is a small charity with about six part-time staff and an annual income of £98K in 2021.[24] Insights into Faiths4Change as an intermediary organisation are examined further in the first phase of the field research.

I worked in partnership with Faiths4Change while training as a Pioneer Minister between 2018-2019. The project aimed to transform an under-used church hall and derelict garden in the heart of Liverpool into a community base for local people with a community garden that included food growing. This experience was inspirational for me, demonstrating how the social and ecological challenges of deprived urban areas can be addressed together. The garden was transformed on a very small budget through the work of local people, businesses, and other known contacts, and the work resulted in strong relationships being built between those involved and the emergence of a new small group from the local community who met regularly. Faiths4Change place a strong emphasis on partnership, cooperation, and collaboration, working across local communities, faith

[22] Faiths4Change website. https://www.Faiths4Change.org.uk/ - retrieved 05.05.2020

[23] Liverpool City Council. (2017). *Freedom of Liverpool acceptance address by retired Bishop, the Right Reverend James Jines KBE.* https://www.liverpoolexpress.co.uk/speech-freedom-liverpool-acceptance-address-retired-bishop-right-reverend-james-jones-kbe/ - retrieved 20.03.2020

[24] Charity Commission for England and Wales. *Register of charities: Faiths4Change.* https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/4051314 - retrieved 12.03.2023

communities and other organisations including local authorities.[25] Observing the practices of Faiths4Change in the joint project led to my research question, linking together thinking on intermediary organisations, socio-ecological transformation, and beliefs and values.

The research considers the values and practices of Faiths4Change as an intermediary organisation, exploring how their socio-ecological place-shaping practices are informed by their values. A decision was taken not to include other intermediary organisations as comparisons for a number of reasons. Firstly, it ensures that the data is not over-burdened by organisational analysis but instead allows a narrow and deep focus on socio-ecological practices and values. Secondly, there are very few charities that are similar to Faiths4Change as an environmental charity with a faith connection, and so comparisons would be difficult and would add layers of unnecessary complexity. Lastly, I was keen to focus exclusively on Faiths4Change in order to better understand how their work as an environmental charity combined with their faith affiliation and their work with faith organisations and communities. This makes Faiths4Change an excellent case study through which to explore the values of place-shaping from a sociology of religion perspective, drawing on the notion of postsecularity to explore the fluid and complex interactions between values, beliefs and faith. Whilst Faiths4Change have 'faiths' in their title, they do not consider themselves to be a religious organisation and it is this potential ambiguity that makes the exploration of their values particularly interesting.

3.3.4   Creative Arts Methodologies

With the shift of focus from ethnography to online interviewing and workshops, a creative arts methodology was adopted to strengthen the research approach. Creative arts and visual methods bring increased creativity to the approaches to methods used in interviews and workshops (Dale & Mason, 2011; Evans & Hall, 1999), facilitating imaginative ways of exploring and understanding complex material assemblages and making visible the implicit values that shape them. The research's theoretical framework encourages an understanding of the research as a process of co-production of knowledge, a complex assemblage, with the researcher, the participants and the creative arts all being active participants. Jasanoff (2004) suggests that the concept of co-production

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[25] Charity Commission for England and Wales. *Faiths4Change trustees' report and accounts for year ended 30 June 2019.* https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/4051314/accounts-and-annual-returns - retrieved 20.04.22

emphasises interconnectivity and the dimensions of meaning, discourse, and textuality. Co-production 'presents more varied and dynamic ways of conceptualising social structures and categories, stressing the interconnections between the macro and the micro' (Jasanoff, 2004, p. 4). Rowley, Ivinson, Duggan, and Pahl (2022, p. 6) note that art is in fact more than simply 'a player in co-production', 'it is a means of jarring the power blocks researchers and participants are entangled with. Art practices and materials enable dynamic formations of hybrid, fragmented, mixed and generative modes of expressions through which ideas are made present, challenged, contested, imagined and redirected'.

Creative methods strengthen the research by helping to build rapport, enabling the expression of emotion, facilitating tacit knowledge that may be previously unexpressed, and encouraging reflection (Pain, 2012). In addition, visual methods can encourage collaboration and joint theorising, and facilitate empowerment by stimulating participant involvement in conversation (Glaw, Inder, Kable, & Hazelton, 2017). It is now more common for visual arts methods to be used beyond the creative arts fields, and for them to be integrated into approaches by broader fields of social research (Chilton & Leavy, 2014; Margolis & Pauwels, 2011). Visual methods include types of mapping including social and pictorial narrative (Lapum et al., 2015), photography (Holm, 2014), drawings and collage (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010; Norris, 2012), and multisensory approaches (Pink, 2011). Visual methods have wide-reaching research potential, with cultural studies using visual methods to explore cultural significance, power relations, and sociocultural practices (Evans & Hall, 1999). Creative arts methodologies contribute to social sciences research by activating the senses and imagination in ways that 'illuminate the complexity and sometimes paradox of lived experience' and in doing so can support us to see and think differently (Chilton & Leavy, 2014, p. 403). They are seen to open up 'processes of discovery and invention' that are capable of 'creating open and dialogic spaces' (Finley, 2008, p. 2), and this is well suited to this research project's methodology. This 'dialogical space' enables a process of construction that involves the researcher, the researched, and the multiplicity of actants including the creative art.

The use of creative arts methods can be challenging since the boundaries of the research are fluid and flexible. These challenges highlight the need for ongoing reflection throughout the research regarding my own contribution and influence on it. Writing from a social constructivism perspective,

Burr (2003, p. 107) states that 'the task of the researcher becomes to acknowledge and even work with their own intrinsic involvement in the research process…the researcher must view the research as necessarily a co-production between themselves and the people they are researching'. Co-production draws attention to the 'constructed, partial and always contextualised figure of the researched and the researcher' (Dixon & Jones, 2004, p. 95).

Having fully investigated the potential to draw on creative arts methodologies there is a sense of serendipity on my part as a researcher about the enforced changes to the field research. The need to adapt to online methods caused me to consider more carefully how to connect to participants and elicit new insights. This brought creative arts methodologies to the fore and encouraged me to explore an unfamiliar approach. It challenged me as a researcher to build my confidence in this new field, but even more importantly it encouraged me to embrace more fully a poststructuralist understanding of place in its ontological multiplicity. Researching place-shaping without being present in place as a researcher stretched my conceptual understanding in ways that were beneficial to the research. The research's new materialist epistemology draws 'nature and culture, mind and matter into a single arena, [and in doing so] new materialisms radically extend the scope of materialist analysis' (N. Fox & Alldred, 2022, p. 5). Adopting assemblage as a theoretical framework supports a creative approach to the study of the socio-material world, with an understanding that 'thoughts, abstract concepts, memories, desires and feelings also materially contributing to social production' (DeLanda, 2006, p. 5). A creative arts methodology was an important connection for the stretching of my conceptual understanding of the materiality of place.

Four creative arts methods are used in the interviews and workshops, and these are social mapping, photovoice, object selection, and metaphors.

3.3.4.1   Social mapping

In phase 1 of the field research, a social mapping exercise was used in interviews and the workshop as a way of collaborating to identify the relational network of Faiths4Change and through purposive sampling identify people for the phase 2 interviews. The mapping used the interactive whiteboard on Zoom to draw and write out the social network, with all participants being able to add to the whiteboard. At the end of the session, the whiteboard was saved as a png picture file onto the researcher's computer. Mapping can be understood to 'offer researchers a view into how people

see their world, what is important to them…[and] their lived social relations' (Powell, 2010, p. 553). Powell asserts that mapping 'provides vivid representations of places that might otherwise be elusive, hidden or underrepresented' (2010, p. 554).

3.3.4.2   Photovoice

Using a photovoice visual method (Wang & Burris, 1997) participants in the phase 1 workshop and all the phase 2 semi-structured interviews were asked to bring a photograph to the interview (in hard copy or digital form) or to describe any photograph that they felt represented Faiths4Change for them and to say why they chose it or what story lies behind it. Photovoice places an emphasis on the participatory nature of research and in the UK has roots in community social activism (Emme, 2012). For my own research, it was also an important way of listening to participants and the stories they chose to share, and it gave the participants increased agency in directing the research interview or workshop.

The use of images in research is grounded theoretically in the field of semiotics and the influential theorist Ferdinand de Saussure (a Swiss linguist, semiotician and philosopher), with an understanding that a photograph is a sign or signifier that can convey a concept or meaning of that which is signified. Charles Sanders Pierce expanded the concept of signifiers to include icons, symbols and index, with photographs understood to be an icon that physically resembles the signified (S. Weber, 2008). The sub-field of visual semiotics uses images as resources for people to explore meaning making, exploring the relationship between the signifier and the signified. Visual semiotics acknowledges the contextual and interpretative nature of the meaning-making, so that the relationship between the signifier and the signified is never settled (Berger 1972). The use of photography in the interviews enhances the depth of data collected because images have the potential 'to convey multiple messages, to pose questions, and to point to both abstract and concrete thoughts' (S. Weber, 2008, p. 44). The use of photovoice increases the agency of participants as co-producers of knowledge, allowing them to steer the interview through their choice of photograph and the narrative that surrounds it (Holm, 2014). The use of the image can encourage embodied knowledge, thus paying attention to different ways of knowing and providing more accessible ways of putting hard-to-describe things into words (S. Weber, 2008). In this way visual methods can facilitate the drawing out of the tacit knowledge of participants, that may have been previously unexpressed and more difficult to elicit from direct questioning (Pain, 2012). This is

particularly relevant to the research's focus because questioning interviewees about values can be difficult due to the embedded and implicit nature of values.

3.3.4.3 Object selection

Participants were asked to choose one object that represented either Faiths4Change or a project that Faiths4Change had led. They were asked to explain why that object was chosen. The object selection was entirely of the participant's choosing, and the exercise was used as a prompt for them to talk about Faiths4Change.

Artefacts are a rich source of data, as they have 'a story to tell about the person who made it, how it was used, who used it, and the beliefs and values associated with it' (Norum, 2012, p. 24). Objects and artefacts can be analysed in many different ways, but semiotic analysis brings a focus on the meaning attached to the items in ways that may elicit creative discussions on values and practices. Participants were invited to explain why the particular object was chosen and then the researcher will further explore relevant narratives that emerge from this.

3.3.4.4 Metaphors

Tracy asserts that 'metaphors do more than embellish language' because they can provide a vivid picture of experience (2013, p. 212). This creative method complimented the photovoice and object selection methods, and it took a 'forced metaphor approach' (Tracy, 2013, p. 213) where participants were specifically asked to provide a metaphor. Encouraging participants to explain the metaphor was viewed as a helpful way to explore the implicit values of Faiths4Change that would be more difficult to articulate through direct questioning.

These creative methods provided a mixture of options for participants and this variety meant that the research was able to tap into the different learning styles of participants.

3.4   Research methods

The chosen research methods align well with the research's over-arching epistemological and theoretical commitments, and this is important because as Dale & Mason reflect that 'the methods of research we use influence the quality of the knowledge we generate but also importantly its nature and scope' (2011, p. 1). The choice of online semi-structured interviews and workshops, that

make use of creative arts methodologies, is consistent with the epistemological and theoretical assumptions of the research that understand place to be relationally constructed through a multiplicity of human and non-human assemblages that incorporates the agency of creativity and imagination in material assemblages (Bennett, 2010).

The impacts of using an online research project are important to reflect on, although a simplistic, binary distinction between the online and offline social world is a false dichotomy (Kozinets, 2010). Pink et al. (2016, p. 124) note the inseparability of the digital from the non-digital when theorising about locality since 'the digital and material are brought together as part of the same world to create new ways of knowing and being'. However, both Pink et al. (2016) and Christine Hine (2005) emphasise the need for digital research to be reflective in terms of the relationship between the digital, sensory, material and relational elements of the social world and how their relationship with the digital shapes the production of knowledge. The adoption of digital methods in the analysis of socio-ecological place-shaping therefore required ongoing reflexivity on my part as the researcher. The use of creative arts methods was specifically chosen to enrich the online experience and as a way of encouraging participants to explore more creatively and openly.

The field research has three distinctive and sequential phases, each following the same pattern of data collection, thematic analysis, and a period of reflection. The three phases each have a distinct purpose: phase 1 was a knowledge-building phase focused on understanding Faiths4Change as an intermediary organisation (through interviews, document analysis and a workshop), phase 2 gained insights from Faiths4Change's relational network through a series of individual semi-structured interview. Finally, phase 3 was an iterative phase with two workshops and a semi-structured interview to discuss the research findings.

Phases	Methods	Creative Methods	Reflective Thematic Analysis
Phase 1: Faiths4Change	-Document Analysis -Interviews (3) -Workshop (1)	-Photovoice -Object selection -Metaphors -Social mapping	Excel workbook gathers data on themes including creative arts data Ongoing analysis with longer reflective analysis prior to next phase. New themes identified with data. Planning for phase 2

Phases	Methods	Creative Methods	Reflective Thematic Analysis
Phase 2: Relational network	Interviews (25)	-Photovoice -Objects selection -Metaphors	Excel workbook, with worksheets for themes and creative arts data. Ongoing reflective thematic analysis and use of researcher notebook. Extended analysis at the end of phase 2 identifies patterns of place-shaping repeating across the data: listening, assemblage building, and new imaginary of place.
Extended reflective thematic analysis			Reflective thematic analysis reviews data from all themes across phases 1 & 2. A search for key values and practices highlights key words and phrases as a way of refining coding and bringing together interpretative themes. Words and phrases are brought together under key headings. Three key processes capture place-shaping with associated practices and values: listening & seeing, creative assemblages, and a new imaginary of place. A 3-staged process of place-shaping emerges and is developed into a framework. A visual representation captures its cyclical, emergent and fluid nature.

Phases	Methods	Creative Methods	Reflective Thematic Analysis
Phase 3	Workshops (2) Semi-structured interview (1)		Socio-ecological place-shaping as an emergent 3-staged process presented. Comments and questions increased my insights into the relevance of the findings, highlighting importance of gentleness, slowness, the spinning out effects of place-shaping, and the challenges of an alternative philosophical approach to place-shaping in terms of dominant policy positions.

Table 1: Outline of three phases of the field research

The research used three main research methods: document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and workshops.

3.4.1 Document analysis

The first phase of the research included the collection and scrutiny of documents as secondary data sources about Faiths4Change as an organisation, including minutes, reports, drawings, and photographs provided by the Director and the Chair of Trustees of Faiths4Change. Data was chosen on the basis that it could provide information on the development and structures of Faiths4Change as an organisation and give insights into their values and practices. The Director and the Chair of Trustees were in the best positions to identify these documents and to authorise the sharing of them. Supplementary to these documents, I carried out my own online research on data that was in the public domain, including documents available from the Charity Commission, from wider web-based searches, and the Diocese of Liverpool.

Document analysis is particularly applicable to a single case study of an organisation as documents can produce rich descriptions of the organisation (Yin, 2013). This strengthens the research methodology by providing the triangulation of data alongside the interviews and workshops. This triangulation 'can corroborate or refute, elucidate, or expand on findings across other data sources,

which helps to guard against bias' (Gross, 2018, p. 545). Document analysis involves a systematic review of the information, to gain new insights, identify themes and direct further analysis. This was an essential grounding at the beginning of phase 1 of the field research because the history and context of Faiths4Change proved to be highly complex. Document analysis enabled me to have a much better knowledge and understanding of Faiths4Change in preparation for the phase 1 workshop and the phase 2 interviews with their wider relational network.

Document analysis relies on the researcher's interpretative skills and their ability to sift through and select relevant information. This is consistent with the epistemological assumptions of this research project that views the researcher as a co-producer of knowledge. Throughout the document analysis the researcher needs to adopt a critical eye in regard to bias and subjectivity of both the creator and the researcher (O'Leary, 2017), asking questions about the type of document it is and who it is written for, as this may significantly shape its content and tone. This requires the researcher to be highly reflexive.

3.4.2   Semi-structured interviews

Interviews are an appropriate tool to use for the construction of assemblages, drawing together the researcher and participants as 'co-participants in the process of knowledge construction' (Mason, 2002, p. 225). The use of semi-structured interviews was the chosen method because they provided a framework for consistency across interviews in the same phase, but also allowed for flexibility to adapt and respond to each participant's unique contribution (Fielding & Thomas 2008).

Using an online platform for interviews added to the need to ensure that participants were at ease with the process, as there was less opportunity to read body language online. Flick (2007, p. 101) notes that a major issue in the quality of interviews is 'how to adapt to the individual interviewees to give them space to unfold experiences and to build a relation to the interviewer'. Taking this into consideration I was careful to allow a little space for introductions before the interview started and to re-iterate the plan for the interview. Each participant was asked whether they were still happy to proceed before the interview or workshop started.

Online interviewing raises the issue of inclusion because participants may not have access to the necessary technology or may not have the digital skills to access an interactive platform used for

the interviews. To address this, I discussed the means of access in the initial contact email, offering support or alternative modes to enable people to participate. One participant had neither the technology nor the skills to access Zoom, so the person was supported by someone in a Faiths4Change project, who gave them access to a computer and helped the person login to the meeting. Another participant opted for a phone call in preference to Zoom, and it was important to adapt in ways that were responsive to the participant and gave them agency in the process.

In phase 1 the researcher selected the interview participants, with three individuals from Faiths4Change who were most likely to have key insights into the organisation and be able to reflect on its history, development, vision, values and practices. In phase 2 interviews, participants were part of the relational network of Faiths4Change. Participants were identified by Faiths4Change in phase 1, using a social mapping exercise to enable a purposive sampling approach (Morse, 2011). This ensured that the people selected had the most knowledge or were most involved with the projects, and therefore were most able to reflect on the questions and provide insights.

The interviews use the creative arts methodologies of social mapping, photovoice, and object selection to enhance the interviews (Glaw et al., 2017), to promote creative thinking, storytelling and reflexive dialogue and questioning. This approach enabled freer expression that led to a better understanding of the participants' contribution (Lapum et al., 2015). The phase 1 workshop and the phase 2 interviews were framed around some core questions that enabled the analysis of the self-understanding of Faiths4Change to be placed alongside the insights from their relational network. These core questions increased the validity of the thematic analysis and the coding of themes by being able to draw on responses to the same question across participants. At the same time, the semi-structured approach also gave space for follow-up questions where there was a need for further clarity or where an issue raised was of particular relevance to the research.

3.4.3   Workshops

In qualitative, mixed methods research it is common for group interviews or focus groups to be used in combination with interviews, and the exact difference between these two is contested (Morgan, 2011). Focus groups are described by Morgan as 'a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. In essence, it is the researcher's interest that provides the focus, whereas the data themselves come from the group interaction' (Morgan,

2011, p. 6). Workshops are less commonly used as a research method but were chosen in preference to the other two because it aligns more closely with the creative impulses that are at the heart of the research methodology. Storvang, Mortensen, and Højbjerg-Clarke (2018) describe workshops as a creative method where the researcher and participants can focus on a shared topic from the perspective of co-creation and innovation. Ørngreen and Levinsen (2017, p. 79) describe workshops as a method where 'issues can be presented, experimented with, played out, and discussed… the researcher opts for an immersive and collaborative environment where meaning is negotiated'. Whilst workshops are highly collaborative, the researcher still needs to act as a facilitator and this makes the researcher's role a complex one. There is a need for them to act both as a collaborator and a facilitator, and this requires a clear focus on the aims of the workshop and good skills in facilitation, with a proactive focus on the facilitator role (Ørngreen & Levinsen, 2017).

The field research has three workshops. In phase 1 a workshop brought together the Faiths4Change staff team, in order to gathered data on their own understanding of their values and practices through a set of questions, social mapping, photo-voice and object selection. The other two workshops were in phase 3, where the research findings were presented to specific groups of people to get feedback. The first workshop in phase 3 brought together interview participants from one specific project site, with four people from a local church and three staff members from Faiths4Change. The second workshop in phase 3 was a presentation to Faiths4Change as an organisation, with three people from the staff team and four trustees. A third workshop was planned with two participants from local authorities who were interviewed in phase 2. However, only one participant was able to attend and so this became a semi-structured interview, but in terms of purpose and format it was similar to the other two workshops. The phase 3 workshops and the interview enabled the triangulation of feedback on the research findings from three very different perspectives.

3.5 Reflective thematic analysis

The research adopts a reflective thematic analysis approach because it aligned well with the research's post-structural theoretical framework and the need to engage with complexity and multiplicity. The analysis was strengthened by an iterative approach that emphasises the ongoing revisiting and reviewing of data, to assist the connection of data to emergent themes and to

progressively refine the focus and deepen an understanding of the research data (Tracy, 2013, pp. 184-202). Reflective thematic analysis is commonly used in creative arts research because of its ability to identify complex patterns of meaning produced by the research, with characteristics including theoretical flexibility, procedures of coding and theme development, and the potential of coding meaning in terms of what is manifest (descriptive), directly observable (explicit) and latent (implicit) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Consistent with the theoretical framework of assemblage theory, the research analysis aims to identify processes and patterns rather than overarching 'social explanations'. Latour argues that explanations need to be abandoned in the search for patterns that might be described as an 'assembling [of] the collective' (2005, p. 16). This approach requires a high level of adaptability as a researcher, in order 'to follow the actors themselves…[and] to learn from them what collective existence has become in their hands' (Latour, 2005, p. 12). Reflective thematic analysis is well suited to this task.

Dependent on the nature of the research, codes may be pre-set and identified in advance or they may be open and left to emerge from the data analysis (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). There are different ways of generating codes and themes in reflective thematic analysis, but in keeping with the research's social constructivist epistemological commitments these arose through an inductive process (arising from the data itself) rather than a theoretical stance (arising from pre-existing theory). Initially in the research analysis the main themes were taken from the core research question as a way of organising the data, but gradually new and more interpretative themes emerged. This gradual emergence was important due to the embedded nature of values and the expectation that themes would be latent (implicit) in the data, existing at an interpretative level rather than being explicit. Latent themes are described by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 84) as going 'beyond the semantic content of the data, and starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualisations'. Identifying latent themes is a deeply exploratory process (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and therefore requires a reflective approach that allows time for latent themes to emerge.

In essence, the goal of reflective thematic analysis is 'keyness', to be able to identify themes that capture what is important in considering the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is not just about the prevalence of a word or theme, it is about identifying themes that 'capture something important about the data in relation to the research questions and represents some level of

patterned response or meaning within the data set' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). In practice, analysis begins with the initial coding of the data and Boyatzis (1998, p. 1) suggests that a good code 'is one that captures the qualitative richness of the phenomena'. Coding allows the researcher to simplify the data and focus on specific characteristics. During coding, the entire data set is searched for important sections of text, and they are indexed in relation to different themes (King, 2004). Tracy suggests that there are two specific phases of coding, the primary-cycle coding phase and the secondary-cycle coding phase. The primary-cycle coding focuses on what is actually present in the data and is a summary of data content. The task of this stage is to gradually begin to refine codes into ones that are more specific and active. The secondary-cycle coding focuses on synthesising data and themes and moves from descriptive codes to interpretive ones (Tracy, 2013).

In thematic analysis there is a search for common threads and themes that may be explicit or implicit (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). Boyatzis (1998, p. 1) suggests that thematic analysis moves the researcher through three phases of enquiry: seeing the pattern (or capturing a codable moment), encoding the pattern, and interpreting the pattern. There is no easy way to define what makes something a theme, it relies on the knowledge of the researcher and their ability to bring together components and fragments within the data and demonstrate something of significance. As the analysis progresses, the expectation is that themes are gradually refined to identify the 'essence' of what each theme was about (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92). Analysis is therefore ongoing throughout the field research, with observation preceding understanding, a recognisable moment preceding encoding, and seeing something preceding interpretation. Analysis involves a movement from description to interpretation, that gradually brings together broader themes that best capture the patterns and processes present in that data. An iterative approach does not require the entire corpus of data to go through detailed coding (Tracy, 2013), but by being immersed in the data there is the opportunity to continually reflect on the relevance of data, review data not included, and reconsider its relevance.

Reflective thematic analysis has some potential weaknesses, including the reporting of themes that are too descriptive and inadequately conceptualised. Braun and Clarke (2021, p. 2) argue that having a clear research plan is important to address these weaknesses, and in this research project the field research plan was used as a framework to provide direction but also to allow for a degree of emergence without compromising stability. As a researcher I needed to get a balance between

asking questions and giving participants space to express their thoughts and through this to gain insights from each participant's story (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 42). The framework was essential for the integrity of the research approach, ensuring a well-grounded and consistent methodology. Chapter 4 charts the process of coding and theme identification along the journey towards the final description of three processes that capture the three-staged place-shaping framework.

3.6 Concluding comments

The research's methodology and methods are informed by its epistemological commitments to social constructivism and new materialism. Adopting a post-structuralist theoretical stance, place is explored from the perspective of assemblage theory which emphasises relationality, multiplicity, and complexity. The methodology is framed as a qualitative, inductive research approach that holds in tension the careful and thoughtful planning of the research project alongside creative methods that provide space for emergence and fluidity. The three-phased research plan builds a strength of approach by triangulating research methods and including elements of co-production that seek to increase the agency of participants. The clear framework for the methodology, the methods, and the overall field research plan ensured there was sufficient stability and rigour. Ongoing reflective thematic analysis was central to the research plan, so that implicit and latent themes gradually became more visible. An iterative approach to the data analysis strengthened reflectivity, reviewing the findings through the phase 3 workshops and the interview, and by a continual back and forth with existing theory. This helped me to continually ask questions arising from that data and to deepen my understanding as the research progressed.

The next two chapters lay out the research process and findings in detail. Chapter 4 outlines the field research, explaining how the three phases were implemented and the process of thematic analysis that gradually brought new insights into place-shaping processes. The chapter provides clear evidence and an explanation of how the framework for place-shaping emerged from the research data and the thematic analysis, expressed through three, value-centred place-shaping processes, with specific data sets to support them. In chapter 5 the framework is refined further, with a new cyclical model for socio-ecological place-shaping that more fully expresses the emergent, complex, and dynamic nature of place-shaping.

4   Thematic Analysis: Socio-ecological Values and a Place-shaping Framework

This chapter focuses on the analysis of the research data, demonstrating how key themes were identified, refined, and developed. Data analysis was ongoing and progressive throughout the three phases of the field research, and this enabled me as a researcher to gradually extend my understanding of place-shaping and discover new ways of 'seeing' the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The outcome of the analysis is the formation of a socio-ecological place-shaping framework that identifies key performative values in three distinct stages: listening to the eco-system, building creative assemblages, embodying a sacred (re)imaginary of place. These are considered as guiding principles of place-shaping for Faiths4Change and their relational network, embodied in specific ways in particular contexts. This chapter explains each stage of analysis and how the themes gradually developed.

Section 4.1 provides an overview of the approach to the field research, including details of data collection, ethical considerations, reflectivity, and research challenges. Section 4.2 provides a summary of the data collection and analysis at each research phase, showing how themes emerge from the data and are gradually refined. This process is informed by reflective thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and the five stages of: familiarising yourself with the data, generating codes, constructing themes, reviewing potential themes, and defining and naming themes. This meant continually re-reading transcripts of interest, working with detailed summaries on Excel spreadsheets, and collating data on key themes that gradually became refined through the careful ongoing reflection of relevant data.

Section 4.3 demonstrates how the thematic data is refined into a detailed descriptions of the three stages of place-shaping: listening to the eco-system, creative assemblage building, and embodying a sacred (re)imaginary of place. Chapter 5 builds of this socio-ecological place-shaping framework to present a cyclical model of socio-ecological place-shaping, exploring the concept of performative values and how these are embodied in progressive and emergent place-shaping cycles.

4.1 Approaching the field research

The field research had three phases that were sequential and emergent, with social mapping in phase 1 providing the names of participants for phase 2. This purposive sampling approach ensured that those interviewed in phase 2 were part of the close relational network of Faiths4Change, thereby increasing their insights and the quality of the research data. At the heart of the field research was the central research question, 'how do values inform the practices of socio-ecological place-shaping'? This question was the source for six open-ended questions, used as the starting point for interviews and workshops in phases one and two.

- How does Faiths4Change shape place, socially and environmentally? Is there a photo, an object, or a metaphor or story that you could share?
- From your experience, what are the key resources Faiths4Change bring to the socio-ecological transformation of place?
- What role do you think values play in socio-ecological place-shaping work?
- What key values do you observe in the ways Faiths4Change works?
- Does Faiths4Change's 'faiths' affiliation shape things in particular ways?
- With the additional challenges of Covid-19, what do you think may be essential for ongoing social & ecological place-shaping?

The final sixth question tapped into the current context of the research and aimed to gain insights into how Faiths4Change and their relational network might see the challenges ahead following the global pandemic.

The field research planning included ethical considerations and the need to protect the confidentiality of participants and handle data responsibly. A participant information sheet ensured that participants understood the research and their requested contribution towards it. This included information on the purpose of the research, details on how the interview will be set up, the issue of confidentiality, and their option to withdraw at any time from the research. Each participant who agreed to participate was asked to complete a consent form before engaging in the interview or workshop. Following an interview or workshop, the participant's name was replaced with a code to identify them, and these codes were used to store data on any transcripts, analyses or summaries.

All field research data was held on a computer, in a file that was password protected, ensuring that ethical boundaries and safeguards for participants were upheld.

In terms of confidentiality and anonymity, there were two exceptions made, in the full agreement and consent of key individuals. Firstly, Faiths4Change are named in this thesis because, given the specific nature and location of their work, it would have been very difficult to keep the intermediary anonymous. Agreement for this was obtained from the trustees of Faiths4Change early in the research plan. Secondly, Bishop James Jones, the founder of Faiths4Change, agreed to be named in the research. His unique contribution as the founder was important in identifying the foundations of the organisation, but his identity could not be easily anonymised.

4.1.1   Recording, transcribing & collating data

Each interview and workshop used Zoom as an online platform, with the content recorded on an independent recording device. Following every interview and workshop each audio recording was transcribed, and then key content was captured using an Excel workbook as a first stage of analysis. Each data entry had a code to link it to a participant, making it easy to trace all comments back to their original transcript. The entries were direct quotes from interviews and I used notes in Excel to add my observations, such as how the entry might contrast with other data. New Excel worksheets were used for different themes providing helpful summaries of relevant data which enabled me to cross-reference data from different interviews and to connect my comments using notes in specific cells. Two separate Excel workbooks were used for phases 1 and 2 and these were important references for ongoing reflective thematic analysis. This provided prompts for important data that I needed to review and directed me to transcripts I needed to re-read. Some data, such as keywords or phrases, were highlighted because they captured something important in that particular theme. My researcher notebook was used to group data together in different ways and to try to work out the best themes to bring data together. Through this ongoing process of refining data sets, it gradually became possible to capture the essence of socio-ecological place-shaping seen in the work of Faiths4Change.

The Excel workbooks had a separate worksheet for data obtained through creative arts methods, recording visual images, metaphors and detailed stories so that this data could be brought together

and compared. The creative arts material was an important source of ongoing reflection throughout the analysis process and guided the final cyclical place-shaping model (see chapter 5).

Reflective thematic analysis was used to enable the detailed and ongoing review of the data, looking for relevant data present in descriptive, explicit, and implicit ways. Reflective analysis encouraged me as a researcher to be immersed in the data and to constantly review my understanding of it as the research progressed (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The analysis aimed to move from simply organising the data and the descriptive summary of it, to more interpretive themes that captured the essence of place-shaping and the values that inform it. The coding and thematic analysis happened in five key stages, each stage refining previous themes from new insights and new data.

4.1.2   *Reflectivity*

Researching values is challenging because they are implicit rather than explicit and reflect an 'inner dimension' of place-shaping. The use of creative arts methods was important in drawing on imagery and narratives and ongoing reflective thematic analysis required me to let go of structures and explanations that would be reductive and to remain open even when no clear patterns or processes were emerging. The use of PhD notebooks helped me to order my thoughts, ask questions about the data, and helped me connect insights from the data to existing theory by referring back to the literature review. The analysis required a constant 'back and forth' process between the data, existing theory, and my thoughts and questions. For example, at one stage I tried to map out a particular project to show how it emerged over time, but feedback in the phase 1 workshop showed me that the complexity of the emergence made this task impossible. Another example was at a later stage of analysis when I tried to super-impose my research findings onto the existing SUSPLACE model (Horlings, 2019) to better understand how they compared, and in doing so I was able to see more clearly how my research findings produced distinctive and new insights and required a new model to capture the findings more fully.

One analogy used by Faiths4Change became particularly important in my ongoing reflection, that of mycorrhizal fungi beneath the forest floor (P1:W1) and the complex relational web that exists largely unseen but essential to the health and vibrancy of the forest ecosystem (Simard et al., 2012). Simard et al. writing from a forest science perspective, suggest that 'mycorrhizal networks are fundamental agents of complex adaptive systems (ecosystems) because they provide avenues for

feedback and cross-scale interactions that lead to self-organization and emergent properties in ecosystems' (2012, p. 39). This description resonated with the insights emerging from the research of Faiths4Change and their network as an inter-connected, highly adaptable and fluid network which fitted well with this description of a complex adaptive system. Gradually eco-system thinking began to inform my framing and articulation of socio-ecological place-shaping processes. Journaling helped me to make use of the visual imagery data more fully and to use these as a resource for creative and imaginative thinking. Reading more broadly about ancient petroglyphs and sacred socio-ecological imagery strengthened my thinking and encouraged my analysis to be open to imagery, creativity, and art rather than just words and structures, in keeping with my methodology.

At the start of the research, I was aware that my positionality made me both an insider and an outsider in some respects (see chapter 1). This positionality was helpful at times because I was able to bring my personal insights into the research, which was particularly helpful when the Covid-19 pandemic meant the field research had to be entirely remote. Having collaborated with Faiths4Change in the early development of a community garden project, I had some understanding of their practices and values from an insider perspective. This prior knowledge was not viewed as problematic because the research methodology views the subjectivity of the researcher as an integral part of the analysis and the co-production of knowledge (Campbell et al., 2021). However, there was still a need for me to reflect on my positionality and any potential challenges this might present. For example, as an ordained pioneer minister in the Church of England, I had an insider positionality to the Church as an institution, and it was important to consider how this might influence how I listened to and interpreted what was said by some participants from within the institution.

4.1.3 Field research challenges

Even though participants in phase 2 were encouraged to provide a digital photograph or object for the interview (or to email one to me), in practice only one person did. This highlights the potential challenges of using creative methods that require additional planning for participants. However, the photovoice approach was very successful with Faiths4Change in phase 1 who provided four photos, perhaps because they were more motivated and more familiar with their online photo store. Photovoice at stage 1 was highly effective in generating rich data, providing a starting point for storytelling about projects. It confirmed my expectations that it would 'promote active dialogue and

listening [and] provide opportunities for critical reflection' in ways that captured how participants viewed their sense of place and place-shaping (Hodgetts, Chamberlain, & Groot, 2011, p. 301).

Adaptability in phase 2 allowed me to continue to make use of creative methods even when the participants did not bring a photo or object. Instead, I asked the participants to describe an object, provide a metaphor or tell a story that they felt best captured the place-shaping of Faiths4Change. This more creative engagement generated some rich narratives and discussions with participants, and there was a good level of participation in these activities. The creative arts data is explored in more detail in chapter 5.

4.2   Data analysis & thematic development

Data was collected in three distinct phases, with ongoing reflective thematic analysis that helped me to build my insights and knowledge and to develop data sets for key themes emerging.

4.2.1 Phase 1 Field Research & Analysis

The aim of phase 1 was to establish a much better understanding of how Faiths4Change viewed their own place-shaping values and practices. Insights were triangulated using document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and a workshop with the Faiths4Change team. This phase helped me to grow in my understanding of Faiths4Change in terms of its history, its faith roots, and its values and practices in socio-ecological place-shaping. Phase 1 has a limited number of participants, five in total, which reflects Faiths4Change as a small intermediary with just four part-time members of staff. Later in phase 2, the research broadens out to 25 participants in the relational network.

Method	Participants/sources	Purpose
Interview 1	Faiths4Change Staff Member & Member and a Trustee	-To listen to their insights on Faiths4Change as an intermediary -To identify documents for analysis -To discuss the research plan

Method	Participants/sources	Purpose
Document Analysis	*Charity Commission Documents*: 7 Annual Reports (2013-2019) and Financial Accounts (2019). *Documents from Faiths4Change:* 10 case studies/evaluation reports *Online Sources:* related to the work of Operation Eden and Bishop James Jones	-To better understand Faiths4Change as an organisation and their values and practices
Interview 2	Bishop James Jones (founder)[26]	-To explore the roots of the organisation and its foundational values
Interview 3	Faiths4Change Staff Member	-To discuss insights from the documents and complex timelines -To review the research plan and discuss the network of Faiths4Change -To plan the workshop and the mapping of the network to identify phase 2 participants
Workshop 1	3 Faiths4Change staff members (one team member unavailable)	-To use creative arts methods (photovoice and analogies) to explore practices and values of Faiths4Change -To use mapping exercise to identify their close relational network

Table 2: Phase 1: outline of the field research

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[26] Bishop James Jones is named with consent, since it is not possible to anonymise his contribution as the founder

Phase 1 of the research gave me a better understanding of Faiths4Change in terms of their organisational roots and their Christian foundational values, and each of these is discussed below. Insights into Faiths4Change are strengthened by the creative arts data that is discussed briefly below and explored in more detail in chapter 5. Six key themes emerged related to practices and values, these themes were: trusted partnerships, partnerships with faith-based groups, starting with listening and questioning, emergent & creative practices, enabling others, and social and ecological justice. Section 4.3 shows how the themes from all three phases are brought together and inform the final place-shaping framework in section 4.4.

The coding of the data reveals which phase the data emerged from (see coding abbreviations on p. 9).

4.2.1.1   The organisational roots of Faiths4Change

The skills that Faiths4Change have in community engagement and local place-shaping are rooted in the history of the organisation and their extensive experience that has grown over many years. This history is complex and has periods of very quick growth as well as rapid decline. The research highlights the precarious work of intermediaries, who often struggle for survival and at the same time have roles that require a huge level of dedication.

Faiths4Change has its roots in Operation Eden, a 3-year multi-faith, pilot project set up in 2004 by the Bishop of Liverpool at the time, Bishop James Jones, to bring faiths together on environmental projects (J. Jones, 2003). An evaluation at the end of Operation Eden summarised its work in delivering more than 50 community partnership projects, over 600 hours of training, and engaging with almost 1000 people on Merseyside over 3 years.[27] At the end of the pilot project in 2007, a successful bid secured ongoing funding from the Regional Development Agency. Having worked initially in Merseyside, the work expanded to the North West, with newly appointed Faiths4Change teams based in Burnley, Preston, Manchester and Liverpool (P1:1; P1:2). Faiths4Change was able to build on the work of Operation Eden and between 2007 – 2010 Faiths4Change had 4 office bases across England's North West region that delivered almost 6000 hours of training and education, with one-third of these hours being with people considered 'hard to reach' (P1:1). By 2017,

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[27] Faiths4Change. *The history of Faiths4Change and Operation EDEN.* Unpublished organisational document

Faiths4Change were working in areas including Bolton, Bury, Rochdale, Skelmersdale, and Bootle. In Bolton, they were working alongside 49 partners.[28]

This history explains the breadth of skills, the wide relational network, and the extensive regional knowledge of Faiths4Change that is highlighted by the research data. It also brings insight into their ability to reach marginalised communities in ways that others such as local councils and churches recognise that they are often less able to do (P2:1; P2:8; P2:13; P2:18). One participant in phase 2 describes their skills as being able to 'work with the communities to actually shape a local environment that may have been derelict or may have been really left behind' (P2:11). Another participant from a local authority commented that 'they've got this diverse knowledge not only just within the Liverpool City region…and they recognize some of the struggles within the communities' (P2:8), adding that 'they're working with communities that we just haven't even touched. So, I really value their expertise and their support' (P2:8).

In 2010, Faiths4Change and other intermediaries faced significant challenges due to the austerity measures brought in by the newly formed Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government. The Faiths4Change team describe it as a time when 'in some ways, everything known came to an end' (P1:3) and a trustee describes the following years as 'surviving hand to mouth' and likened the challenge to 'running on a log trying to stay upright' (P1:1). The closure of the Regional Development Agency meant the overnight loss of their funding, resulting in redundancies and the closure of offices across the North West. There was scaling back of work and the team shrank from 'a team of seven full-time staff, all well paid, and then it was like, no, actually there's three of us and we're only paid on what we can bring in and deliver' (P1:3). In their efforts to survive a trustee explains that 'we went out to projects to engage ourselves with the projects because we were so focused on keeping the organisation running' (P1:1). Reflecting on this situation in 2020 a team member said 'go back five or six years, and…we were so glad to have work before we became employed. And it was like, well, yes, we'll walk 100 miles over hot coals to get this done. Whereas now, I think we're a little bit more, we can say no, if it's not right, and I think we do know when to kind of put our coats on and leave' (P1:W1). Others in the charity sector echoed these challenges, with one participant

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[28] Charity Commission for England and Wales. Faiths4Change trustees' report and accounts for year ended 30 June 2017. https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/4051314/accounts-and-annual-returns - retrieved 20.04.22

saying pointedly that 'something happened in 2010 to change the world and diminished environmental work on the ground' (P2:13). Many of the long-term partners (including local government, faith groups and other charities) in the network reflected on the struggles of the post-2010 era, of the tenacity and resilience needed, and the reality that some charities simply did not survive (P2:2; P2:4; P2:11, P2:4, P2:10; P2:13).

By 2011, the financial pressures on Faiths4Change meant it needed to become a charity, separate from the Anglican Diocese, in order to successfully bid for new funding streams. It is a time described by the Faiths4Change team with a sense of regret because 'in a way, you know, it was a kind of separation from the Diocese' (P1:3). At this point there was deliberation about the faith affiliation and how it would be expressed going forwards, 'the idea was always bringing people together through the environment, it wasn't delivering the environments in particular faiths, so we wanted it to be all faiths and none, that was the whole idea. So, then we couldn't put the faith angle on it, although we would get it in the name Faiths4Change' (P1:1). The name has a degree of ambiguity about it, and this is viewed as a positive thing that allows space for interpretation. The desire was to engage with people of all faiths and none, without putting the 'nones' off by having faiths in the title. A trustee reflects that 'I think it was Bishop James' suggestion in the end 'Faiths4Change'…it has as the connotation of faith _is_ for change as well, rather than just faiths for change, sort of…there's no apostrophes or anything in it. So, you can make up your own mind, of what the meaning of it is' (P1:1).

The early years as a charity were difficult financially with reduced staffing, and trustees worked on projects in order to keep the charity running (P1:1). But by 2015 new opportunities began to emerge for Faiths4Change through a new relational partnership, due to some significant changes in Liverpool that brought greater involvement in the strategic direction of climate action for the region. Devolution for Liverpool resulted in the formation of the Liverpool City Region (LCR), with a strong focus on the environment and a new strategic investment fund targeting seven key priorities including low carbon. These changes were very significant for Faiths4Change and a member of the team talked of 'a kind of map if you like that I started to develop properly about 2016-17' (P1:3), which contrasted with the previous five years or so when there was more a sense of 'just, okay, we need to see if this is going to work, how it can work' (P1:3).

In 2017, Wirral Council formed a Wirral Climate Change Group (now known as Cool Wirral Partnership) and Faiths4Change became one of the twelve diverse partners involved, including NHS trusts, the police, housing providers, community action groups, and travel and waste management (P1:3; P2:13). A small amount of funding provided by Wirral local authority in 2017 enabled Faiths4Change to start a Faith and Climate Change Network and to run a consultation event with faith communities in the region. This was an important step towards the reconstituting of interfaith forums regionally, including work in Liverpool which had gone into decline since 2010 (P1:3; P1:W1). By 2019 an inter-faith week, supported by Cool Wirral Partnership and a number of other partners, engaged with almost 50 members of faith communities.

The increased activity and funding opportunities for Faiths4Change since 2019 are related to the increased local, national and global attention being given to the environmental crisis, raising it as a priority at a political and institutional level. The 2019 annual report states that 'though seemingly forgotten during the decade of austerity, environmental issues do now appear to be creeping back up the political agenda'.[29] The report also notes two key national targets, the UK government's commitment to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 and the Church of England's vote to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030, all resulting in 'an upsurge in interest and activity [that] has meant a busy twelve months for Faiths4Change'. Locally, Liverpool City Region declared 2019 'The Year of the Environment', and this opened up new opportunities for Faiths4Change to become involved in environmental issues at a strategic level.

4.2.1.2 The Christian foundational values of Faiths4Change

The research reveals that the foundational values of Faiths4Change are firmly rooted in the values, theology, and ministry of Bishop James Jones when he was Bishop of Liverpool. Throughout his ministry, Bishop James was deeply committed to the regeneration of cities and issues of justice, as seen in his role as chair of New Deals for Communities (NDC) in Liverpool (2000-2004) and chair of the Hillsborough Independent Panel (2009-2012). In an interview in 2017 he describes how chairing the Hillsborough Independent Panel 'became the climax of my time as Bishop of Liverpool. It wove together the three foundational values of my ministry – compassion, truth and justice' (Liverpool

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[29] Charity Commission for England and Wales. Faiths4Change trustees' report and accounts for year ended 30 June 2019. https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/4051314/accounts-and-annual-returns - retrieved 20.04.22

Express, 2017). Operation Eden was formed following a three-month sabbatical in which Bishop James studied Ecology, refreshed his understanding of the theology of creation, and 'went to find out what Islam and Judaism were teaching about environmental ethics' (P1:2) (J. Jones, 2003). A research interview with Bishop James highlighted five foundational values of Faiths4Change that were rooted in Faiths4Change from Bishop James's understanding of Christian Mission and what he describes as 'the earthing of heaven': Reciprocal Partnerships; Justice and 'the Moral Imperative to Act'; Listening to communities; Enabling people and communities to shape their own destiny; and Faiths as 'agents of local environmental transformation' (P1:2).

For Bishop James environmental justice is directly connected to Christian theology, 'to desecrate creation isn't just a crime against humanity. It's blasphemy, because it is to undo God's created work in, through and for Jesus' (P1:2). For both Bishop Jones and the Faiths4Change team, environmental and social transformation are inseparable and are about justice. Such a commitment to justice draws individuals and organisations into the political sphere, and Bishop James states that 'governance is about shaping destiny, that can be done at a macro level, national or regional, but it can also be done at a local level, where you put power into the hands of local people to shape their own future. And Faiths4Change does that' (P1:2).

4.2.1.3   Values & practices expressed through creative arts data in phase 1

During the interviews and workshops in phase 1, Faiths4Change used a number of images and metaphors to describe their place-shaping.

- A pile of rubbish (photo) (P1:W1)

- People around a table (photo) (P1:W1).

- A waterway (metaphor) (P1:W1)

- A fruit tree (metaphor) (P1:W1)

- Mycorrhizal fungi (metaphor) (P1:W1)

- A speedboat rather than an oil tanker (in reference to the challenges of working with larger institutions) (P1:3)

- Shared food (photo) (P1:W1)

- Concentric circles, then revised to a spider's web (metaphor) to capture the complexity of the network (P1:W1)

- A community centre (photo) (P1:W1)

It is not surprising that as an environmental charity, many of the images and analogies selected by Faiths4Change to describe themselves were drawn from the natural world: a waterway, a fruit tree, and the underworld of the forest (P1:W1). But what was illuminating was that the stories told around these were not analogies only about growth, but also about change, external shifts and even death. The natural world was engaged with in a way that captured the complexities and unpredictability of place-shaping practices. One of the team describes a waterway and its tributaries, with the weather and the landscape representing external shifts such as the political changes that can 'open up new waterways, new sources of energy in terms of people, and places and connections. Then other ones kind of just, sort of seal off and become a little pool somewhere, or, or maybe dry up and new things grow' (P1:W1).

In another example, the fruit tree analogy revealed more about their values. A team member explained that with a fruit tree 'even if you don't pick the fruit from a tree, it's still got loads of seeds, some of which will drop and start to grow, people take them away and grow them elsewhere' (P1:W1). Rather than the analogy being about growth and strength, it was about allowing things to fall away, to die, and to be taken away to be re-rooted elsewhere. It is about enabling other trees to grow and allowing others to benefit from what has been grown.

Some of these metaphors were a source of ongoing reflection throughout the research analysis and informed the place-shaping cyclical model (see chapter 5).

4.2.1.4   Six key themes at the end of phase 1

At the end of phase 1, six key themes capture the place-shaping values and practices of Faiths4Change. These are:
- trusted partnerships
- the importance of faith in place-shaping values and practices
- starting with listening and questioning

- emergent & creative practices
- enabling others
- social and ecological justice.

These themes and the data arising from them in phase 1 are combined with phase 2 and 3 data and discussed in detail, with their corresponding data sets, in section 4.4.

4.2.2 Phase 2 Data Analysis

Phase 2 analysis aimed to deepen my understanding of existing themes from phase 1, identify new themes, and then to identify the patterns and processes within them and between them. Reflective thematic analysis (Guest et al., 2012) encouraged me as the researcher to continually think about the connections between codes and themes and to see the bigger picture, 'looking for big ideas that permeate the data and links within and across categories' (Gross, 2018, p. 547). In this way, new themes were identified and existing ones refined. The art-based methodology encouraged me to approach data analysis as a process of discovery, capable of creating 'open and dialogical spaces' through new insights (Finley, 2008, p. 2). All of the data from phase 2 was collated using an Excel workbook with worksheets.

Phase 2 involved 25 semi-structured interviews with the relational network of Faiths4Change. Participants were selected by the Faiths4Change team in the phase 1 workshop using social mapping to enable a purposive sampling method. The online whiteboard on Zoom provided an interactive space for a collaborative mapping exercise, where team members discussed their network and added names and organisations of their closest network partners. There was considerable debate among them regarding who was part of their close relational network and the list continued to be added to by the team in the week after the interview, following time for further reflection.

Total invites made	32
Interviews completed	25 (response rate = 78%)
Declined	2
No reply	5

Table 3: Phase 2 Interviews: response rates

<u>Declined: 2</u>

Both represented religious institutions. One faith leader declined the interview but suggested someone else the institution, who took part in the research. Another person was retired from their role and Faiths4Change suggested someone else from the same institution who was interviewed.

<u>No Response: 5</u>

One volunteer who did not have an email address and did not respond to a text message. An individual from a social charity responded initially but was unable to commit to a date due to workload. Three people did not reply to emails.

Interview participants were grouped for analysis purposes according to how Faiths4Change described their identity and positionality. This meant that there was a differentiation between those who were identified from an institutional perspective (e.g., the Liverpool Diocese) and those who were identified as faith-based actors (e.g., vicars) who worked with Faiths4Change on local projects. Those in the 'other' category did not fit any of the groups and were left as 'other' to maintain their anonymity.

Religious Institutions	3
Local Government	2
Environmental Charities	2
Faith-based Actors	8
Social/Educational Charity	3
Sustainability Organisation	1
Faiths4Change Project Volunteers	3
Faith-based Environmental Charity	1
Other	2

Table 4: Phase 2 Interviews: breakdown of participants

Phase 2 used the same six interview questions, arising from the core research question itself, as used in phase 1 (see 3.1 above). This ensured that there was continuity in the focus of the research and it kept data as centred as possible on the key issues. At the same time, the use of semi-structured interviews allowed space for open dialogue and for participants to direct the conversation.

The themes arising in phase 2 overlapped strongly with phase 1 themes and added new insights and depth to the existing six themes of partnerships, enabling others, and listening, emergent & creative practices, the importance of faith in place-shaping values and practices, social and ecological justice. Two new themes were identified, firstly care and carefulness, and transformative practices.

The data sets from phase 2 were combined with the data sets from the other two phases and these are discussed in detail in section 4.4.

4.2.3 Phase 3 data analysis

Phase 3 served as an iterative phase, giving people involved in the research the opportunity to provide feedback on the research findings and the descriptive framework of socio-ecological place-shaping. Two group workshops and an individual semi-structured interview were used to gain feedback from three distinct perspectives: a key local project with participants from a local church and the Faiths4Change team, Faiths4Change staff and trustees, and a participant from a local authority.

Method	Participants	Purpose
Workshop 1	4 members of a church team and 3 members of Faiths4Change team (participants selected by Faiths4Change and church leader)	To gain feedback on the model of socio-ecological place-shaping To discuss new insights specifically related to the local project
Workshop 2	7 members of Faiths4Change - 3 team members and 4 trustees	To gain feedback on the model of socio-ecological place-shaping

Method	Participants	Purpose
	(participants were identified by Faiths4Change team leader)	To discuss new insights from a Faiths4Change perspective
Semi-structured interview	A phase 2 participant from a local authority (a second local authority participant from phase 2 interviews was unable to attend the planned workshop)	To gain feedback on the model of socio-ecological place-shaping To discuss how the research might engage more broadly with local authorities and city governance

Table 5: Phase 3: summary of field research

The key themes from Phase 3 were:

- Place-shaping, time, and slowness

- Place-shaping and gentleness

- Reflections on the creative spinning out of place-shaping

- The framework as an alternative philosophical perspective to dominant policy positions

The insights from this iterative phase was used to further inform the place-shaping framework and cyclical model and the findings are reflected on in the place-shaping framework.

4.3   Connecting themes from all three phases and identifying key processes

At the end of phase 3, themes from all three phases were revisited and some key interviews were re-read to better understand how the themes inter-connected in place-shaping. This stage focused on patterns and processes, looking at how the themes connected through the use of my researcher's notebook to capture the essence and to look for 'keyness'; for example, a word such as 'harnessing' was viewed as too mechanical and instead the phrase 'enabling processes' better captured the essence of what emerged from the data analysis. Tracy (2013, p. 194) comments that the secondary-cycle interpretive phase is demanding, 'requiring a high level of interpretive creativity and theoretical knowledge to identify patterns and groupings'. Attention was given to key narratives that captured the essence of the values and practices of Faiths4Change, and some of these are used

as 'exemplars' in the final analysis, because they embody the essence of place-shaping in a particular way (Tracy, 2013).

The research supports an understanding of place-shaping as a set of emergent processes that unfold over time. This is not a new insight, it is supported in the literature review through other place-shaping models (Horlings, 2019; O'Brien, 2013). Faiths4Change also strongly identify with place-shaping as a process, stating 'it's a process…I think that's where I would keep coming back to, it's a process. And that process is shaped by that kind of initial dialogue, and then that continuous dialogue' (P1:3). This notion of place-shaping as a process is also strongly represented in the research data as a whole, with participants describing place-shaping as:

- 'process and journey…a journey rather than a destination' (P2:15),

- 'moving along a path, emergent' (P1:3),

- 'a long, slow, considered process' (P2:3),

- 'navigating complex spaces' (P2:7),

- 'not delivering in a mechanical way…working in a human way' (P2:13),

- 'a whole series of connections and relationships' (P2:13),

- 'there is no one-size fits all, there is always some adaption that needs to be done' (P2:10),

- 'it feels very much like an eco-system' (re. a community garden) (P2:15),

- 'it emerges over time, continuous dialogue, ongoing connecting with where people are up to' (P1:1).

Key transcripts were reviewed to see how place-shaping emerged over time, looking at specific transcripts that described how place-shaping emerged within a particular project. This process enabled me to have a better understanding of how key processes emerged from a time-space perspective and how the processes fit together. This final stage involved an extended period of reflection on the data, re-reading transcripts, re-reading theoretical insights from the literature review, and engaging with new theoretical material to facilitate my thinking. This deliberative and highly reflective approach resulted in a deepening understanding of the data and themes, through

the continual sifting of the data in ways that were targeted but also flexible and fluid (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Revisiting some key interviews enabled me to see how place-shaping processes repeated in different contexts. Listening was the starting point, as a grounding process that happened early on in projects and it took a similar shape irrespective of the project. Following this, there was a creative assembling stage that gathered people and resources that were highly bespoke to each project. This often relied on the knowledge of the network available and the trusted partners, but it could also be opportunistic and take advantage of the context. Finally, there was a moment when the place-shaping work took shape and transformations became visible in particular ways. Using a description of 'listening', 'assembling' and 'transforming' to capture the three processes, I gradually aligned thematic data to connected stages. Once the data sets for each stage were complete, insights from each stage were used to name each of them: listening to the eco-system, creative assemblage building and embodying a sacred (re)imaginary of place. This included using 'in vivo' codes (Tracy, 2013), phrases used by participants themselves, that added weight to the essence that they were attempting to capture.

- **Listening to the eco-system:** *'seeing in the round'*
  Connected themes: the importance of faith in place-shaping values and practices, starting with listening and questioning, care and carefulness, slowness, and gentleness.

- **Creative assemblage building:** *the art of the possible'*
  Connected themes: trusted partnerships, emergent & creative practices (these are broken down in more detail in the framework).

- **Embodying a sacred (re)imaginary of place:** *'a shared journey of (re)connection'*
  Connected themes: enabling others, social and ecological justice, transformative practices, creative spinning out of place-shaping, and an alternative philosophical perspective to dominant policy positions.

In the place-shaping framework below the three processes are described in detail, through the data from the thematic analysis and other insights from the ongoing analysis. The themes from the three phases of the research were continually refined to best capture a description of each stage and the performative values that underpin them.

4.4 The socio-ecological place-shaping framework

Once the three key processes were identified, data from the key themes was used to bring depth of description to a specific process. For example, the theme of care and carefulness describes one aspect of how the first process of listening was actually embodied. Initially, keywords from the themes were separated into values or practices for each process, aligning with the research question of 'how do values inform practices?'. However, this division quickly became problematic because they were often seen to be overlapping. Further reading connected my thinking with the concept of 'performative values' that aligned well with the data with the practices of place-shaping being seen as the embodiment of values. The concept of performative values is explored in detail in chapter 5.

The socio-ecological place-shaping framework captures the processes of a bottom-up, emergent, and highly networked approach to place-shaping. The next section describes three key processes of place-shaping in detail with key data explored and discussed for each process.

4.4.1 Listening to the Eco-System

Listening to the Eco-System: *Intuitive Listening and 'Seeing in the Round'*
Purpose: *Rooting values, growing relationships, and aligning common purpose*
PERFORMATIVE VALUES Intuitive listening to place: *people, community, land, what has gone before (histories/herstories), shared concerns, common purpose, attentiveness to the margins* A carefulness about geography Asking questions Care for people: *openness, honesty, integrity, respect, treating people equally* Slowing down and gentleness Attentiveness to faith and supporting faith communities

Table 6: Place-shaping Stage 1: Listening to the Eco-system

'Listening to the eco-system' captures the early, exploratory stage of place-shaping that listens to people, the land, the histories and herstories, from a position of respect and carefulness. Faiths4Change aim to 'start where people are at' (P1:3), and that requires what I describe as 'intuitive listening' that draws on their experience, knowledge, and skills to understand and connect with people and communities. This listening shapes how projects emerge and develop and the listening process is returned to continually as place-shaping emerges and further listening is required. The performative values at this stage are highly deliberative, using the group process to begin to find a common vision for the place-shaping plans. Five key performative values are identified at this stage: intuitive listening, a carefulness about geography, care for people, slowing down, and attentiveness to faith and supporting faith communities.

4.4.1.1 Intuitive listening

Place-shaping typically starts with listening, questioning, and group reflection, to find common strands and pathways (P1:1). The Faiths4Change team describe place-shaping as emerging from 'getting to know each other, learning, really listening and hearing' and 'starting with where others are' (P1:1). There is a commitment to listen to others, to local communities, to those already working in a community and to their network partners. One local authority participant noted the skills of Faiths4Change in being able to 'see in the round' (P2:13) and this captures the drawing together that occurs across multiple and complex social, ecological, economic, cultural, and spiritual aspects of place.

This 'seeing' is connected to their skills of listening and relationship building that facilitates a place-shaping that is 'shaped by dialogue, emerges over time, [and has] continuous dialogue, ongoing connecting with where people are up to' (P1:3). For Faiths4Change, place-shaping is viewed as a process and journey that 'emerges over time…[by] connecting with where people are up to, starting where others are' (P1:3). What is clear is that listening is not just a starting point, but that it is embedded into their practices so that there is a constant looping back to listening as place-shaping emerges. This explains why plans are described as provisional and loose plans (P1:W1; P2:21) because there is an openness to keep adapting as they listen. This requires agility and adaptability in their practices as new insights present themselves and a need to remain open to new creative opportunities that present themselves. The resources for projects are often not there at the

beginning, but gradually emerge as assemblages are built and as they identify people and organisations with the vision to help them to get further along the process.

The foundational values of Faiths4Change bring a commitment to social and ecological justice, and this means that much of their listening and 'seeing' is on the margins with 'hard-to-reach' communities (P:7; P2:8; P1:W1) and people with particular life challenges (P2:7; P2:21). The margins also apply to land, with them working on land described as 'drab' (P2:1), 'a useless piece of land on the edge' (P2:3) and land that 'you literally couldn't do anything with' (P2:16). One participant describes their work as 'literally recycling land' (P2:3). This work on the margins requires particular skills and one local authority participant observes that 'what they've shown and demonstrated to that is this ability to regardless of circumstance to kind of make connections and crucially start where people are at' (P2:13)

Listening is understood to be the central foundation for a collaborative and networked approach to socio-ecological place-shaping. It draws out from others their concerns, hopes, and ideas, and in doing so it opens up spaces for creative assemblages to be drawn together. Listening as a performative value is viewed as a gateway into 'a shared journey of re-connection', opening the pathway towards the sacred re-imagining and transformation of place.

4.4.1.2   A carefulness about geography

Faiths4Change describe how place-shaping can often be 'a slow burn' (P1:3), in developing 'hospitality and welcome…and friendship' (P1:1) and place becoming 'a kind of common strand…to welcome people in'. One participant describes their work as 'gentle, patient, organic' ((P2:12). A network participant commented on their approach to place-shaping being 'not too dominant' (P2:3) and another supported this is stating 'they would listen to what our suggestions were rather than imposing what they thought we should do' (P2:23). A faith-based actor describes how Faiths4Change 'brought a little bit of an outside view of what we were doing. sometimes you get lost in your inward-looking world if you're not careful' (P2:1). These comments suggest that Faiths4Change approach place-shaping with carefulness, nudging things forward in ways that allow others to be part of the journey. One participant noted the tensions that are involved in such an approach, in 'not wanting to impose' on others, 'so there's a tension between really wanting to

make a difference, and really wanting to be a force for good and change in and through people and in and through communities' (P2:7).

This careful and intuitive listening shapes the way Faiths4Change work in communities and the attention given to their context, it is summarised well in the phrase used by one participant, 'there's a carefulness about the geography' that was 'unpretentious, authentic…[resulting in] gentle, kind, places' (P2:3). This becomes visible through the 'softness of them, just brings people around them' (P2:6) and the 'valuing of people, and what they can offer, what their experiences are' (P2:13). The carefulness becomes visible through empathy, 'they empathize with the communities they're working in as well (P2:5).

The valuing of people and their carefulness was observed during my time working with Faiths4Change in the early stage of the St Michael's project. I observed the time they spent with the small, elderly congregation, listening to the stories of how the church was when it was a large and thriving community and how the garden looked when it was a lovely space used by the Sunday school. Faiths4Change sat and listened to this small congregation's struggles and their fears; that the church might be closed, the worries about vandalism, and the disconnection that they felt with their local community that had gone through decades of change and redevelopment. This was a struggling church community that had been in decline for many years, and the once beautiful garden was now derelict. A herb garden was added to the plans as a result of discussions with the church community and when the new community garden opened (see chapter 5), Faiths4Change made a meal for the church community on a Sunday after the church service as a celebration of the opening. Building bridges in these ways meant that the congregation had a sense of joint ownership and my own conversations with the congregation showed that they felt a sense of joy in seeing the garden rejuvenated and people using it. This was a 'carefulness about geography' that valued people and their histories/herstories beyond what they were able to contribute.

4.4.1.3   Asking questions

For Faiths4Change the start of creative assemblage building is often a series of searching questions, that Faiths4Change ask of themselves and others. They demonstrate a reflectiveness about how their own skills might combine in assemblages, asking reflective questions such as 'what can we bring in?' and how to find 'the best fit organisation' (P1:3). The team then ask a series of questions

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about the context, 'where are the gaps? who can help fill those gaps? how can we shape the direction that we want to take? and are we part of that journey?' (P1:3). The questions they ask others are not just an information-gathering exercise or to find resources, it is a reflective activity that 'helps people to look at what they're already doing' (P1:3). A participant in the network comments that their approach' is very practical', 'Well, what can we do here? What are the considerations for where people are living? How do those who live next to the river know the risks?' (P2:11). Another person comments that 'what they've shown and demonstrated to that is this ability to regardless of circumstance to kind of make connections and crucially start where people are at (P2:13). Starting with questions is recognised as a time-consuming process when it seeks to engage broadly in specific contents, with one person commenting that '[you] to have that spaciousness and time to listen to different voices. And that's a process' (P2:18).

Questioning can also raise issues of justice with others, in enabling others to act and also in challenging unjust practices and structures. Asking questions is seen to enable others to articulate these concerns, with one faith actor commenting that 'Faiths4Change make that easier, because they say "right we are doing this work" and this enabled the person to then communicate to their congregation 'this is a common concern. You don't need permission, you just need to say this is all our business really' (P2:12). In another situation Faiths4Change and a partner asked questions of the Combined Local Authority regarding trade coming into the port, 'are you aware that, indirectly maybe, there's a kind of knock-on effect, the stuff that's coming through the port is adversely affecting indigenous communities elsewhere? That's not fair is it' (P2:17).

4.4.1.4   Care for people

Their listening is rooted in their care and commitment to local people and local communities, and it involves 'getting to know each other, learning, really listening and hearing…moving along a path and starting with where others are' (P1:1). It includes a sensitivity to what has happened in places before them and 'listening as to kind of what people are already doing' (P1:3). Here we see the enabling that can begin to be transformative, with an approach that seeks to identify what a community is already doing rather than a top-down approach that can so often dis-empower them with new initiatives that are imposed into communities without consultation. The values of Faiths4Change inform the work with people and place, and it results in an ability to make connections that others struggle to make. One local authority participant observed that Faiths4Change could reach

communities that the local authority has been unable to reach, 'they're working with, you know, communities that we as I said, we just haven't even touched…it's their expertise on working with them' (P2:8).

The values of care, gentleness, honesty, integrity, respect, and openness repeated in the data are used as ways of describing Faiths4Change. One participant commented that 'they cared for us…they recognised that faith was important to us' (P2:1), and another participant commented that 'it's the way they present themselves. It makes people trust them' (P2:6). Other comments included their 'honesty, sincerity and integrity' (P2:20), 'integrity and credibility' (P2:8), 'integrity of articulating the urgent issue' of climate change even when it made others uncomfortable (P2:7). One participant noted that 'I didn't feel like they were holding anything back, anything good or bad… they were talking about all that kind of the pressures, people just spoke really openly…they were just so open' (P2:20). This aligns closely with observations about their authenticity (P2:23) and 'an intentional honesty in their communication'(P2:18) and another added that 'I even felt compelled to say something and they listened to me, and I felt heard, heard and valued' (P2:20).

Participants commented on their respect, 'a sense of respect, a respectfulness of place' (P2:23), and 'a respect for the environment' (P2:19). Another participant names inclusivity as one of their key values, 'they're able to bring people together…the whole inclusivity, valuing everybody equally' (P2:4).

4.4.1.5   Slowing down and gentleness

The value of gentleness becomes performative through a place-shaping approach that is described as 'gentle and patient, organic' (P2:12). Others in the network notice an intentionality about the slowness, describing it as 'a new way of existing, slowing their pace' (P2:23). A participant describes how 'they came in and just very gently started to work on that piece of land and then slowly started growing…slowly and laboriously and gently' (P2:3). This gentleness is connected to their desire to enable others and to give agency to marginalised communities and individuals. In describing one of their projects a trustee commented that 'you're talking about the effects on people who have reached the lowest points in their lives' (P1:1). Working closely with people and communities who are so vulnerable shapes how they work, with one participant commenting that 'their core values, I actually quite just like, love… it's all about kindness and bringing people and community together,

and building community, in places that have been stripped of resources and things, and really giving opportunities to communities' (P2:21). The Faiths4Change team recognise that 'it takes time to build trusted relationships' and this means that 'place-shaping can be a slow burn' (P1:3). This slowness points to the counter-cultural nature of the place-shaping that Faiths4Change undertake, and another faith-based environmental charity participant comments that 'slowing down is a radical act' and can be seen in Faiths4Change through 'a spaciousness of time to listen to other voices' (P2:18). 'Listening to the eco-system' is therefore highly counter-cultural because it guides practices that are slow and gentle. This approach is a challenge for some in the network, including faith institutions who feel the pressure to achieve results quickly. One participant from the Diocese noted that 'the slow diligence that carefulness means you're not going to get quick, easy wins… it's quite difficult…they have to come with something else as well, in order for it [their approach] to better sit alongside another approach, which is more dynamic isn't the right word, immediate as well' (P2:3). This comment highlights how counter-cultural a slow and gentle approach is and how the slowness is seen to correspond to a linear and even pace of change. However, insights into place-shaping transformation suggest that there are 'chains of leverage', so that change at one point in a system may precipitate non-linear change across other areas of leverage (Fischer & Riechers, 2019). The need for 'quick, easy wins' may be reassuring in the immediate term but it does not necessarily translate to longer-term, sustainable transformation. For this participant, there is seen to be an either/or choice, 'if we go with the Faiths4Change approach we will not cover enough ground in enough time. And it is as simple as that. But if we ditch the Faiths4Change approach, we won't change culture' (P2:3). Yet the participant also notes that there is a 'gentle determinism' (P2:3) in the work of Faiths4Change, suggesting that gentleness does not assume weakness but can be applied alongside a strong and resolute approach. The research suggests that slowness and gentleness are important aspects of place-shaping but that their potential can be easily overlooked and misunderstood. This issue is considered further in chapter 5.

4.4.1.6   Attentiveness to faith and supporting faith communities

The core value of 'one world, sacred earth' draws Faiths4Change towards faith and faith communities as an important part of the listening phase. Their listening to faith communities and understanding of them enables Faiths4Change to build strong and trusting relationships with them. For faith actors and faith communities, it builds confidence and trust that Faiths4Change care for them and are committed to people and communities of faith. One faith actor commented that

'having faith as a common thread did play a huge part…so, you know, faith does play a huge part in which organisations we choose to work with' (P2:19). Another participant from faith communities commented 'they recognised faith as important' (P2:1), 'it's easier to connect professionally, I love the fact that they're inter-faith and ecumenical' (P2:3), and 'they can be someone who says, 'look, we understand where faith communities come from, and we value that' (P2:11). Faiths4Change are able to build strong, trusting relationships that are valued by faith communities. Those interviewed from faith communities commented that '[they] recognise that faith communities have a role to play' (P2:11) and that there is 'a sense of respect for faith, faith can contribute' (P2:12). Another participant recognised that Faiths4Change being supportive of faith was important to their vision, 'we're hoping that this grows the church, and it wouldn't have worked I think, if Faiths4Change weren't on board with that. But actually, they are totally pro that' (P2:16). The role of Faiths4Change was also important in bringing together people in inter-faith forums such as the inter-faith climate action group, and one person commented that 'organisations like Faiths4Change obviously then fit very much into bringing people together in unity in diversity' (P2:11).

One faith-based participant said they 'felt heard, heard and valued', concluding that 'caring I think that was one thing that stood out in the very first meeting, they were caring…they are very open' (P2:20). A participant from a small faith community said 'they cared for us, they cared for the community building that we were trying to do, they resonated with it. They saw the fact that our faith was important to it, even if they didn't necessarily all engage with it. And they obviously cared for the environment around them and were very ethical, eco kind of people…we have common values and I saw that in them' (P2:1).

Their support and knowledge of faith communities are also important for others in the network who lack those connections. One local authority participant comments that 'if we wanted to try and make connections with the faith communities in our parts of the world…you work through the organisation that's already there' (P2:13) and another participant from a sustainability charity comments that 'working with Faiths4Change seems to have developed a clear understanding of how faith and environment connect' (P2:10).

4.4.2 Creative Assemblage Building

Creative Assemblage Building: *'The Art of the Possible'*
Purpose: *connecting, assembling, identiying resources, sharing ideas*

PERFORMATIVE VALUES
 	
Trusted partnerships and networks:
 	
    long-term relationships, shared practical wisdom, equal footing, making space for others, politically astute, reflective
 	
Optimism in the potential of the local:
 	
Agility and adaptability:
 	
    flexible and provisional plans, quick responses to change, taking opportunities,
 	
Connecting of people and resources:
 	
    bring together new and latent skills and resources, being on an equal footing, managing complexity
 	
Bringing people together around a common task:
 	
    widening participation, galvanising support

Table 7: Place-shaping Stage 2: Creative Assemblage Building

This first phase of 'listening to the eco-system' builds a foundation for the second when Faiths4Change start to build partnerships and draw together resources. Creative assemblage building is guided by 'intuitive listening' and 'seeing in the round' to create context-specific assemblages. The 'seeing in the round' enables Faiths4Change to identify needs, aspirations and hopes, gaps and opportunities as a starting point for dialogue on place-shaping. In this assemblage phase, Faiths4Change draw on deliberative and communal performative values to build trust and bring together assemblages in innovative ways. The research highlights five key performative values at this stage: trusted partnerships and networks, optimism in the potential of the local, agility and adaptability, creative connecting of people and resources, and bringing people together around a common task.

4.4.2.1 Trusted partnerships and networks

Trusted relational networks lie at the heart of the place-shaping of Faiths4Change and they draw people together through shared performative values. It does not mean that all values overlap, but simply that enough do overlap for there to be a strong alignment for place-shaping work. Long-term trusted relationships are particularly significant in the networks' capacity to build assemblages together, with comments from partners including: 'they've been around for a very long time so you trust what they do' (P2:8), 'working with Faiths4Change is quite easy' (P2:10), 'it's just a really lovely experience working with [Faiths4Change team]' (P2:24), 'working with Faiths4Change, you just feel like you've come home' (P2:4). The close relational network demonstrates the ability to create assemblages quickly for particular purposes. An environmental charity participant states simply that 'we are on the same page' (P2:4), and a local authority partner explains that 'we work together really, really well', citing how in producing a shared document that 'there's nothing in our documents that Faiths4Change don't want or we don't want' (P2:8).

Some collaborative work emerges from open conversations within the network, where there is an ongoing dialogue about possibilities and creative new ideas. A Faiths4Change team member shared a conversation with another person in the network, 'we were talking about whether we could develop a faith forest, so working with the church, the faith community to increase tree cover, and how that really relates not just to the Christian faith, but also for the Muslim faith as well. So, we had a really good discussion… we have been talking to the church commissioners. I'm obviously aware of the church, the Diocese… it's a really good solid gem of an idea' (P1:3; P2:4). In this example Faiths4Change have an important role in bridging with religious institutions because of their knowledge of their structures and communication channels. Assemblage building involves 'pulling other people in and actually making the best use of the shared resource' (P2:10), and the skill in building assemblages is having the extensive knowledge and networks to identify who to 'pull in'. The trusted partners show a high level of awareness of what information will enable others, with a local authority participant noting a conversation with Faiths4Change that communicated 'we've got social prescribers here so when you're putting bids in, be aware that they're already here' (P2:8). The effectiveness of the assemblage is dependent on the commitment and trust in the partnerships, with one participant commenting that 'we've put that investment in from our side but equally everyone else has stayed the course or people have joined along the way' (P2:13).

In their place-shaping work Faiths4Change reflect that 'the one thread that links [their project work] and everything else is partnership' (P1:3). Faiths4Change describe their core network as 'rooted groups' and 'trusted, connected people', and these partners are viewed as 'an inner space', 'building block relationships', and relationships that 'stand the test of time' (P1:3). There is a clear recognition by the Faiths4Change team of both the importance of these relationships and of the inter-dependent nature of the network. A Faiths4Change team member notes on their long-term, trusted partnerships that 'they help us to flourish and grow in some way, shape or form' (P1:W1). This flourishing relates to their shared values that are deeply supportive rather than competitive, with an environmental charity participant commenting that 'you don't have to compete to be effective, you can be really effective, and have really strong values. In fact, you can be more effective' (P2:4). The participant contrasted this with the values and practices of other relationships that exist within the environmental sector, 'sometimes you're drawn into a dog-eat-dog world, particularly if it's a competitive funding world, when you've got people scrambling for funds because there's not enough in order to keep their staff employed…the environmental sector can get quite nasty. Even though on the outside, it seems very nice and genteel' (P2:4). The participant notes that the values of Faiths4Change are clearly lived out by its leadership, 'it's definitely not the way Faiths4Change work…there's a really good leadership shown in terms of being really inclusive. And I think through that leadership, it encourages other people to behave and act in this way' (P2:4). The trusted partnerships are counter-cultural in a capitalist context, in terms of being committed to sharing resources, enabling others to flourish rather than competing with them, and having a strong trust between them. These long-term trusted partnerships are seen to be essential for the network relationships, highlighting both their inter-connectedness and their interdependence.

4.4.2.2   Optimism in the potential of the local

Faiths4Change's approach to place-shaping has a distinctive optimism that is described by one participant as 'the art of the possible' (P2:4). This is an attribute that many of the long-term partnership seem to possess with an underlying conviction that change is possible, that assemblages can be built, and that a small amount of funding can be the starting point for bigger things. This optimism gives them the confidence to step into projects that do not have clear pathways or designated longer-term funding or resources, and to allow things to gradually emerge over time. This optimism results in creative, hopeful, and collaborative practices, with an environmental charity participant suggesting that in Faiths4Change there is,

'a willingness to do stuff, a willingness to get involved, bring people together in a really nice, collaborative way. For me, that's probably the biggest resource, I mean you can talk about money and all those other things, but actually, it's the way of working which for me is just the joy of working with [the Faiths4Change team] straight away…but in terms of resource, it's that willingness to, to just see the art of the possible' (P2:4).

This optimism is viewed as a performative value because it is visible and embodied in Faiths4Change and also in some of those who join projects. One faith-based participant comments on the 'virtuous cycles' that Faiths4Change create, 'the people help the space to be well and, you know, which helps the kind of wider environment of the city' (P2:17). One volunteer in a community garden comments that 'when you're a gardener, you're an optimist, because you're always putting something in the ground and think that it's going to grow. So, you have to be optimistic. And you always have to think about tomorrow because, you know, you're sowing this today, tomorrow you're growing something else' (P2:9). It is clear from the interview with the participant that the garden was transformative and facilitated an optimistic perspective. Following a stroke in mid-life, the participant had been unable to work and the garden provided an essential space that supported the person's mental health, describing the gardening project as a space where there is no pressure, where the gardening is more of a support group, and where 'if you don't feel up to it, you can just sit there and watch the birds or just sit there and talk to somebody' (P2:9).

This optimism that Faiths4Change embodies and facilitates in others is grounded in their years of experience. One of their partners describes them as a 'magnetic force…that can galvanise different groups together' (P2:18) and it appears that it is their 'competence, dynamism and push through' (P2:7) that creates confidence and optimism. But the optimism is not naivety nor the belief that anything is achievable, it is also tempered by pragmatism. One of the team members comments that '10 years on…I'm a bit more philosophical I think now…[but] I don't know if we're that much safer… if it doesn't work, and things go in a different direction, that's okay, there's always something else. And I think that's one of the things with having been around a long time' (P1:3). The experience of Faiths4Change appears to promote a confidence in other partners, encouraging the speaking to people in positions of power. For example, in speaking with the combined authority about being more involved in strategic planning, Faiths4Change summarised that discussion as 'we're here, we don't have shed loads of money, or a huge staff and stuff like that. But we've been here a really long time, we're still here' (P1:3). Faiths4Change demonstrate optimism in their work and in their ability

to build local assemblages; it is an optimism that requires both conviction and courage, 'you have to believe it's gonna be ok' (P2:21).

4.4.2.3   Agility and Adaptability

Faiths4Change are confident in their ability to take on small projects and then help them to grow organically in local communities, and other organisations and charities in the network rely on these skills. A local authority participant commented that 'we can't put huge amounts of money in it, it's almost like we'll kick start the project, but we need now to empower the community to take it over' (P2:8). And this is where the 'art of the possible' appears to take shape, a small pocket of funding or a resource such as derelict land can be used to kick start projects and Faiths4Change act as skilled assemblage builders who draw together local communities and other partners to form a bespoke collaborative assemblage. Such assemblages draw in actors and organisations beyond the close relational network, and examples of others involved with Faiths4Change include Health Care Providers and Commissioners, Local Community Voluntary Groups, schools, and further education colleges. Some individuals and organisations are drawn in locally from opportunistic conversations, such as builders working on a building site near to a project (P1:W1; P1:3; P2:W1).

Faiths4Change and their network are highly effective and resourceful in assemblage building together, in part because shared understanding and trust enable them to fast-track the early listening stage. A Faiths4Change team member recognises that with long-term partners 'we've got such a good relationship, it's really easy to just pick up and run with' (P1:3). Others in the close network support this as well, with one network partner reflecting that when working with Faiths4Change 'you can fast track…you can get a bit further on in maybe developing ideas, there's already a foundation there that, rightly or wrongly, is taken for granted' (P2:2). They are seen to work in agile ways within the network, opening up conversations with others and posing questions such as 'do you know anyone who can help us with this?' and 'we've got this starting to shape up are you interested in being involved?' (P1:3). As the assemblage draws together there is ongoing reflection about their own role and a recognition that 'it might be that we're only a little part of that journey at some point' (P1:3). This ongoing reflection is observed in their actions related to a project that they had been involved with for many years. The project had grown significantly and received further funding to develop in new ways, but even though funding was available for the work

Faiths4Change decided that they were no longer the best fit for the growing community project (P1:W1).

In the relational network shared knowledge and understanding of local contexts, of each other's abilities, and of their shared values and collective 'resource bank' (P2:4), means that they can plan and scale up in ways that are highly agile and adaptable. A local authority participant comments that with Faiths4Change 'it's their expertise…working with that group of very experienced and professional people who absolutely hit the ground running' (P2:8). In practice this means that the local authority might say to Faiths4Change 'we'll parachute you in there but we'll make sure all your infrastructure is in place', adding that 'we know that we can leave it in safe hands, if we provide the infrastructure around it and the finances, we know we can leave it in safe hands' (P2:8). This 'parachuting in' is not seen as a top-down approach but rather an enabling of the initial resources that means that Faiths4Change can quickly start work in local communities and begin to let the place-shaping emerge. Within the relational network there is recognition of the bespoke approach needed for each piece of work, with one participant reflecting that 'there is no one size fits all, there is always some adaptation that needs to be that needs to be done' (P2:10).

This adaptability was seen during the Covid pandemic when Faiths4Change had to adapt many of their projects and find new ways of working. A local authority participant notes that their experience has enabled them to adapt well to the challenges, 'they've been able to draw on successes in other projects they've been working in, and they've been able to pool that knowledge together and create something that works' (P2:8). But this ability to be highly responsive and adaptable is more than just experience, it is a skill embedded within their approach to place-shaping as an emergent and evolving process. Their skills of agility and adaptability are continually used in projects, where they work to a loose plan but with an openness to things continuing to evolving over time. In this way the process remains open, enabling it to be shaped by the ongoing dialogue with others and for the complexity of multiple people, skills and resources to connect in loose and fluid ways (P1:3). This means that Faiths4Change have the skills to both anticipate challenges and changes and to respond quickly. One of the Faiths4Change team reflected that even before the first lockdown the team and trustees started to meet weekly to plan for the possible adaptions that might be needed, and as a result within a week of the lockdown starting all their projects had transitioned to online in various forms (P1:1, P2:6).

A Faiths4Change team member notes the complementary nature of such assemblages; 'we're not trying to be them, they're not trying to be us. But we each recognize that we have something that the other can find useful at times' (P1:3). However, some partners in the network are seen to be particularly dependent on the network for their own organisational reach into local communities. A social charity commented that 'we get far fewer people coming to us directly than we do through referral organisations, which would include Faiths4Change. That's our way of accessing communities. And, you know, if they weren't there, if all of a sudden, groups like that were not there, we would struggle to engage our residents at that ground floor level' (P2:5). This highlights both how inter-connected and inter-dependent organisations in the network are and therefore how significant the loss of even one of these organisations might be for the wider network. This means that the network has some vulnerability because the loss of one trusted partner has the potential to ripple across and impact the effectiveness of the whole network. This is discussed further in chapter 7.

4.4.2.4   Connecting people and resources

The connecting of communities and networks is facilitated by Faiths4Change through the sharing of information and knowledge on a wide range of topics including local community issues (P2:8), local networks and organisations (P2:20), where to look for grants and funding (P2:20; P2:16) and ideas on how to frame an activity or project (P2:1; P2:17). This knowledge comes from their own experience of working in a wide variety of projects across a broad geographical network. One of their close network partners cites the St Michael's project as a good example of the way Faiths4Change work, 'how they brought partners together, how they used resources in ...really in a collaborative way. I think it's a great example of the work that Faiths4Change has been doing over the past 17 years' (P2:4).

The ability of Faiths4Change to connect people and resources is related to their years of experience and extensive local knowledge, and the resource bank of the Faiths4Change team is a significant and valued asset for the whole network. A local authority participant describes them as 'very much a kind of enabling, facilitating, drawing together type organisation' (P2:13). A participant from an environmental charity reflects on the contribution of a Faiths4Change team member, 'her understanding of how people in organisations can best connect, I mean, she's got an amazing

network of contacts. And if there's a specific ask we might have, she will readily have ideas of where we can go and who we can attempt to bring in to make the ask as effective as possible' (P2:17). Another faith-based actor comments on their ability to draw others into projects from the locality, observing that they approached local builders who then said, 'here's 15 skips for free and that kind of thing'. This significantly resourced a shared project in ways that the church leader felt they would not have been able to achieve themselves, 'it enabled us to leverage a lot more voluntary assistance' due to 'their ability to network and get volunteers and engage people with the garden' (P2:16).

Faiths4Change brings to the network extensive knowledge of local communities, and they are recognised by a local authority participant as 'the people on the ground who were in touch with what was going on in the community… they've got this diverse knowledge not only just within the Liverpool City region, but much broader than that, and they recognize some of the struggles within the communities' (P2:8). Faiths4Change share concerns and knowledge with the local authority that enables them to be better informed about their local communities, 'they knew of issues in the communities that we just weren't aware of…[and] they're working with, you know, communities that we as I said, we just haven't even touched. So, I really value their expertise and their support' (P2:8).

Sometimes a partner or a funder has identified a need or gap and Faiths4Change are drawn into discussions at this creative assemblage point to build on an idea or discuss initial plans. The creative assemblage building process is intrinsically collaborative, drawing together some of those listened to in the first stage alongside others drawn in later to contribute to a wider assemblage building process. The assemblages are often about bringing together a whole variety of relatively small resources from different people. For example, a local authority partner was able to contribute to a project with some infrastructure resources including small amounts of funding, administration, contacts with wider networks (such as local schools), social media and publicity, printing, and access to local buildings (P2:8). The participant comments that 'we've got the whole communications team and a whole design team…I said don't feel you have to sit down and come up with a whole raft of designs of how this project is going to work' (P2:8). Faiths4Change are then able to make use of those resources through their extensive knowledge of networks in local communities and of local organisations.

Faiths4Change show a high level of creativity in connecting people and resources, and it is their creative skills of assemblage building that enable them to draw resources together in highly effective ways. In the phase one workshop they describe how a project grew from their connection with a 91 year old lady, 'she lived in the end house right by the river [and having chatted with her she joined them litter picking] people would just come out and join us when we were litter picking around it… this is a sort of really positive and strong interfaith and intergenerational response to it' (P1:W1). One participant comments that Faiths4Change 'make places more beautiful but in doing so also more accessible to the community and bringing communities and people together (P2:11). Drawing on a gardening analogy to describe Faiths4Change's place-shaping practices, the faith-based participant reflects on the practices of Faiths4Change that 'it's about planting new seeds, and probably a series of small seeds that grow into something quite significant, quite profound' (P2:7).

4.4.2.5   Bringing people together around a common task

The collaborative work of the network is described by an environmental charity as 'working collaboratively, engaging all of the skills and all of the assets that you have in order to make a better place and make people connect with each other…that sense of place, it's absolutely critical, that's what grounds people' (P2:4). The Faiths4Change network are knowledge rich in terms of a shared understanding of how to work effectively in local communities and how to shape the work they do. A participant comments on them being 'practical, food, diversity of staff, diversity of projects. Practical – 'muddy boots organisation' – 'very much getting involved in stuff' (P2:2) and others comment that they are 'very practical…and able to connect to volunteers in the communities' (P2:11) and are able to 'bring communities together around the sharing of gardening or food' (P2:4). Connecting people and resources is a skill that other appear to lack, 'Faiths4Change make that easier because they say, right, we're doing this work, and we've done this with all these partners. I couldn't have done that really, not having much capacity or many volunteers. I couldn't have done much without Faiths4Change, they were vital really' (P2:12), and another stated that 'Faiths4Change are just brilliant at just coming in and saying, 'right we'll take it from now, we know what we're doing' (P2:8).

One participant notes the important role that Faiths4Change have in 'encouraging places of worship, to consider their carbon footprint' (P2:11) and they are seen to be effective in the ability to 'galvanize an issue of critical importance' (P2:7). This may be particularly important for Faith

Communities because faith-based participant notes that 'there is an element of suspicion among many faith communities, with the secular [institutions], how to how things are being dealt with? will they be listened to? will there be a prejudice towards faith?' (P2:11). A faith actor reflects that often the wider structures of the institutional church do not seem to understand the challenges faced in a local, marginalised community, commenting that 'gathering people together regularly week by week, it's almost impossible…people don't realize how hard it is…unless you live here, you don't understand…money doesn't necessarily help if you can't get volunteers…I think Faiths4Change must get that because they go into all these different places' (P2:1).

The work of Faiths4Change helped this church community because 'they brought things to us that helped us drive little things forward to do with creativity, to do with engagement' (P2:1). This included simple projects that the community did together such as building planters out of recycled palettes for a small courtyard and weekly cooking together for a shared meal. The faith-based participant describes how 'we got some asylum seekers and some of our folk linked in with working on it. And we painted some chairs in the colours of our seven sacred spaces to go around a table in that square' (P2:1). The approach of Faiths4Change was compared with another organisation that came into the community to teach healthy eating by making healthy fruit smoothies, 'but the trouble, what they didn't twig at the time, was that people couldn't afford what they were being asked to do. You know, on an estate like this, you know, Foodbank and things like that are the most important' (P2:1).

4.4.3   Embodying a Sacred (re)Imaginary of Place

Embodying a Sacred (re)Imaginary of Place: *'A Shared Journey of (re)Connecting'*
Purpose: *Enabling eco-systems to flourish*

PERFORMATIVE VALUES
 	
Enabling local communities:
 	
     shared learning, renewing/reclaiming land for communities, developing new skills and resources
 	
Working for socio-ecological justice:
 	
     mobilising a collective voice and influence on socio-ecological issues
 	
Redistributing power:
 	
     passing on decisions, control, land, and projects to local communities, partnerships and networks
 	
Enacting a (re)newed sacred imaginary for life and community

Table 8: Place-shaping Stage 3: Embodying a Sacred (re)Imaginary of Place

This stage of place-shaping builds on the two previous stages and is described as 'embodying a sacred (re)imaginary of place', with performative values being brought together to enable eco-systems to flourish. At this stage, the performative values are viewed as highly communal, in the sense that performativity is centred on the shared common values of a community. This stage is not viewed as a final, perfected end point of place-shaping in any utopian sense, but it is about a restorative process through which people and land show signs of transformation. The final cyclical model of place-shaping captures the ongoing flow of place-shaping, as a set of processes that constantly emerges as places change and evolve.

This stage brings together three elements that bring distinctiveness to the place-shaping imaginary enabled by Faiths4Change: faith, community and climate. The Faiths4Change team view these three elements as central to their work, 'faith and climate because that's more of a unique offer, but also really community-based climate action' (P1:W1). The value of 'one world, sacred earth' captures

these three elements that together transcend binaries such as the religious and the secular and draw together sacred values as a way of being in the context of postsecularity and what Cloke et al. (2019) describe as 'subjectivities of postsecularity'. This is discussed at length in Chapter 6.

This stage of place-shaping is described as an 'alternative' sacred imaginary rather than a 'new' one because it is an imaginary that draws on ancient wisdom and practices and therefore is not 'new' from a global or historical perspective. But it is an 'alternative' to the current neoliberal worldview that dominates the global West and is counter-cultural to a competitive and consumerist imaginary of place and subjectivity. Karen O'Brien (Professor of Sociology and Human Geography) suggests that the environmental crisis is rooted in a relational crisis, seen in our relationship to self, others, the environment and the future. Writing in an online article entitled 'The common thread: it's a relationship crisis', O'Brien observes that 'we miss the connections that many cultures still treat as sacred', and she questions what impact there might be if we 'engage in relationships with conscious attention to values that apply to everyone, such as equity, fairness, dignity and compassion' (2020a). Faiths4Change are an organisation that demonstrates this 'conscious attention to values', illustrated in their value-centred approach to place-shaping.

The creative arts methodology of the research means that the sacred imaginary becomes visible through threads woven in images, narratives, metaphors and stories. The descriptions used in this stage attempt to capture the essence of the transformation, demonstrating how the enabling of a 'shared journey of (re)connection' embodies a sacred re-imagining of place. This stage of place-shaping brings a focus on the core transcendental value of 'one world, sacred earth' and how this becomes performative to enable eco-systems to flourish through four performative values: enabling local communities, working for socio-ecological justice, redistributing power, and enacting a (re)newed imaginary for life and community.

4.4.3.1 Enabling local communities

A local authority participant describes Faiths4Change as 'the embodiment of an organisation that is sort of people focused and…works kind of bottom-up…sees value in people, what they can offer and what their experiences are' (P2:13). The performative value of enabling communities is seen through three distinct ways: shared learning, renewing/reclaiming land for communities, and developing new skills and resources.

- *Shared learning*

Through the performative values of shared learning, there is a deep commitment to work *with* people not *for* people. Faiths4Change described the St Michael's projects as being about 'an inviting of friends into a shared learning' (P1:3). One participant who had observed Faiths4Change in a community setting commented that even though the Faiths4Change team were very gifted in some key areas, they did not focus on their own skills and gifts. Instead, the purpose of activities was to enable others and to 'empower people, giving them confidence', with a participant adding that 'you don't want someone you admire and say, isn't she good at it' (P2:12). This commitment to shared learning means that Faiths4Change encourage others in the community groups to contribute their own ideas and skills, and to lead activities.

Asking questions acts as a way that Faiths4Change invite others into shared learning, by providing the space for discussion and reflection on specific issues. It might be a simple question such as asking people what it feels like to live by a river (P2:11). Questions with faith communities prompt people to consider how their own faith connects to concerns about the environment. One faith-based participant notes that they were grateful to Faiths4Change 'for actually giving me the opportunity to see that part of it [the link between their faith and the natural world], and actually to reconnect to that part even though it's always been there, but to give them greater emphasis to it' (P2:19). Another participant comments on the challenge of getting people in faith communities to reflect on the need for changes to the way they live, 'because I think a lot of us, we do just, we just go along with what we're used to, without questioning it too much' (P2:20).

The shared learning is practical and embodied in ways that enable it to be transformative because they are visible to others, and a participant from a faith-based environmental charity notes that 'embodying [education and learning] helps integrate that more into people's being. But, you know, it has to be education of a certain type…education is reflective' (P2:18). This reflective learning is seen in comments from a participant who was on a placement with Faiths4Change and who describes an activity undertaken in a craft group that 'kind of opened our eyes, she [a member of the Faiths4Change team] pulls out used things [from the bin] like a can and some paper and some foil and she lined them all up. She said, "can you put them in order of how long you think they take to biodegrade? How many years?"…and we were shocked to find that we were mainly

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wrong…actually 60% of that is not recyclable, and it was shocking to us because they were just everyday items' (P2:22). The participant observed that this opened an ongoing conversation in the group about packaging and recycling with people in subsequent sessions showing that they were changing their actions, 'I didn't buy this off the shelf, because I knew that it had too much packaging…I didn't go off taste I went off packaging' (P2:22). Connecting the learning practically to everyday life was seen to bring a shift in both the understanding and behaviours of those in the group.

- *Renewing/reclaiming land for communities*

Faiths4Change are seen by others to be 'literally recycling land' (P2:3), renewing or reclaiming land that is not been used or has become derelict and 'working with communities to actually shape a local environment' (P2:3). There are significant challenges in such a renewing of land especially where local communities lack any connection or ownership to it. One community garden was developed from a church garden that had been derelict for many years and was prone to vandalism and fly-tipping. The church had attempted unsuccessfully to keep people off the land using padlocks on gates, but this had not resolved things. When the garden was being restored, one night some wooden boarding was torn down by young people to use as firewood on bonfire night. Faiths4Change responded by writing a newsletter to the local community telling them about the garden and inviting them to visit, extending a welcome rather than putting up barriers. As a result, some local people visited and then started to join in the gardening and the City and Guilds course as well (P2:9).

This is a good example of how Faiths4Change reach local communities, working *with* communities to find solutions and building a shared purpose together. This is significantly different to the approach of the church, which had become increasingly focused on how to keep people out. Part of the work of renewing land is to build strong connections with the local community so that they begin to value it and care for it. The community garden is continuing to expand through a widening assemblage of partners, including a local school, and with a new area for young adults being cleared by a local housing association that Faiths4Change have been in touch with.

- *Developing new skills and resources*

A trustee comments that all of their projects have involved 'some kind of retraining, some skills, upscaling. There's always some kind of upscaling empowerment through that' (P2:6). The values of Faiths4Change bring a commitment to enable people in the community to use their skills and to develop new ones. Examples of this are, someone good at carpentry making planters (P1:W1), an asylum seeker teaching a local church community to crochet (P1:W1), people from a community group making soup from the vegetable garden (P2:21) and encouraging a Muslim community worker to connect more effectively with the local network (P2:20). Faiths4Change are often facilitating and encouraging the work of others rather than being the ones who lead the learning themselves. One of the Faiths4Change team comments that 'it's never us landing and providing something. It's always with people and the more that gets passed over to those people, the better' (P1:W1). One faith actor reflects that Faiths4Change are 'good at involving others with stuff, empowering them, giving them confidence. So, you want a gentle and patient, organic even, sort of roll out of it' (P2:12).

At an individual relationship level, there appears to be an enabling of people to discover new purpose, especially those who may have found themselves in difficult times. This means that sessions are highly flexible to enable people to engage as they feel able. For one project volunteer whose health impacted how they felt day to day this was very important, 'you don't have to come all day, you can come in the morning if you want or you come in the afternoon or whenever…there's no set this time or that time' (P2:9). Another participant commented on the skills of Faiths4Change in working with a client group that has very complex needs, noting that they 'were able to accommodate everyone's individual needs, as well as the needs of the group and the project as a whole…making everyone feel at ease' (P2:25). The participant added that 'for people who've got addictions [the garden] became a bit of a safe haven, a safe place, somewhere that people could go and almost switch off and find themselves involved in something that brought them peace'. (P2:25).

An important part of the enabling that Faiths4Change do is to make learning accessible for people who may not have the confidence to access learning through other roots. For example, a City and Guilds horticultural course was run in a community garden so that those who took part remained in a familiar context. The lessons were repeated to give people another opportunity to participate, an important practical consideration when engaging with people who may struggle to attend regularly

for many complex reasons. Faiths4Change understand the flexibility needed when working in local communities, and the time needed to grow people's confidence by weaving new learning into a familiar context and the routine of the day. Some people in the local community would just pop in for the lunch, while others would often be there for the whole day. 'We used to come in the morning and harvest all the food for the Foodbank. And then in the afternoon, we used to have our lunch all on a big table with some of the stuff that we'd harvested and we cooked. And we all used to have our lunch and then in the afternoon, the [City and Guilds] course used to start…that was brilliant because everyone was sitting together, you know, on the table eating' (P2:9).

4.4.3.2 Working for socio-ecological justice

Socio-ecological justice is an integral part of the place-shaping work of Faiths4Change and is strongly rooted in their foundational values. There is an understanding that true sustainability is about justice (P1:1), and that this is seen when 'people are able to reclaim their environment and to claim their place in the world' (P1:1). This value informs their engagement, aligning closely with Bishop James Jones and his understanding that in terms of justice, there is 'a moral imperative to act' (P1:2). For Bishop James this moral imperative involves 'putting power into the hands of local people to shape their own future' (P2:2) and Faiths4Change are seen to hold closely to this foundational value. This means that Faiths4Change actively engage with the local authority and the combined authority, questioning and challenging decision-making, arguing for a place at the table to influence decisions on sustainability and climate action, and raising concerns about socio-ecological justice alongside others in the network (P1:3).

People in their close network recognise that Faiths4Change have both the determination and the skills to mobilise others around a common concern. For Faiths4Change these concerns are motivated by their values and concerns for the environment and socio-ecological justice. One participant describes their key place-shaping resources as 'competence, dynamism and push through'. Another participant speaks of their courage and tenacity, 'they roll with the punches quite a lot I think' (P2:3). Part of this mobilisation involves galvanising wider support on issues related to environmental action and campaigns. One participant reflects on their work in this area, saying that 'there's something quite profound about the integrity of saying, we want to galvanize an issue of critical importance. And we are going to push people to do things that they haven't been doing. But we're not going to do it in a rigid controlling way. And I think there's something around that space

that they navigate very, very successfully' (P2:7). Another participant involved with an environmental campaigning charity stated that 'I think it is about claiming the space, anybody can claim it. I tried to do that with my church saying here, we're working together with Faiths4Change. Someone just saying this is a common concern. You don't need permission. You just need to say this is all our business really. So Faiths4Change make that easier, because they say, right, we're doing this work' (P2:12).

Faiths4Change and their network show an ability to navigate the complex and changing political and economic landscape of the city, finding ways to get their voice heard and to get a 'seat at the table' where strategic decision-making occurs. There is a political astuteness, with an alertness to changes and power struggles and the collaborative skills to find opportunities for collective agency. This aspect of their place-shaping work is particularly seen in their relational network with other environmental charities. One participant actively involved in this area comments on the broad coalitions that can come together for specific purposes, 'because of all these informal networks, when something big is on the horizon, they all come together very quickly' and this results in creating 'a head of steam' (P2:10). An example of this collective action is in a campaign for cycling lanes that Faiths4Change became involved with alongside another environmental charity, with Faiths4Change steering the other charity to broaden its network of support to other organisations with a shared interest. This resulted in a letter being sent to the Liverpool City Region 'co-signed by 20-ish organisations who weren't the usual suspects, who weren't just the kind of cycling lobby group. I think that cut the ice when we did have some meetings with councillors and sort of active travel champions at some of the councils or the City Region. They acknowledged that it was useful to them to see that there was this kind of broader support within the community from the alliance of grassroots groups' (P2:17). Following the campaign 'the cycling lobby groups said "thank you for pulling that together, it's not something that we would have done. But we can see that it's beneficial and it's got our voices heard in a place where otherwise it may not have been"' (P2:17). The participant from the environmental charity commented that he had learnt a lot from Faiths4Change in terms of how to dovetail together two perspectives, the grassroots project work with local communities and the 'policy pushing on the strategic perspectives', reflecting that 'it's not an easy thing to do' (P2:17).

Several other examples provided in the interviews demonstrate the network's commitment and capability to find political agency. During the Liverpool City Region Year of the Environment, Faiths4Change successfully argued to be actively involved in the planning process for the year and as a result co-led a listening group. The group's report had 'recommendations that were pretty hefty' (P1:3) and was asked to present it at the Year of the Environment summit. This resulted in Faiths4Change and several other network partners joining the climate partnership for the City Region and this gave them opportunities to raise questions with the City Region on some areas that needed addressing (P1:3, P2:10). In another example, Faiths4Change worked with another organisation to challenge Liverpool City Region on the issue of imports that come through the docks that can be traced to adversely affecting indigenous peoples globally. They found a communication channel through an existing Fairness and Social Justice advisory board, with a participant describing that they were 'looking at ways in which we can suggest to the combined authority, "you have a good track record of ensuring that all your policies and major projects regionally leave no one behind. How about we put it to you that indirectly maybe there's a kind of knock-on effect, the stuff that's coming through the port is adversely affecting indigenous communities elsewhere. That's not fair, is it?"' (P2:10). The research suggests that Faiths4Change are capable of creating 'systems level disturbance' (Westley et al., 2013) at a local level, challenging decisions and finding ways to make their collective voices heard.

There is however, a recognition of the limits of their influence but at the same time a determination to make some impact, 'it's not a space that we're kind of in control of, but it is a space where we can I think it'd be fair to say, bring some non-corporate voices to the table…constantly trying to remind the combined authority there's this gap [on issues related to the environment]' (P2:10). There is a confidence and determination in raising the collective voice within the environmental charities, reflected in the comment 'you don't need permission. You just need to say this is all our business really' (P2:12).

4.4.3.3   Redistributing power

A participant from a religious institution commented that Faiths4Change have 'quite a lot of influence given that they have no power' and observes that they 'influence from a counter-cultural, powerlessness position' (P2:3). This research however suggests that Faiths4Change handle power differently to an institution which may mean that their power is sometimes poorly understood.

Faiths4Change redistribute power rather than centralise it, and they do this in a radical way that can mean they lose influence and agency within a specific project as they hand over leadership to others. The commitment to equipping others and redistributing power is visible in their organisational structures and assets, they do not own any land and they spend a significant amount of time helping others with projects that are not their own. One faith-based participant describes Faiths4Change as like 'strangers in a strange land', but despite their rather nomadic way of working Faiths4Change express a deep sense of belonging and connection with multiple communities and networks scattered across the region (P1:3; P1:W1). However, the counter-cultural nature of the values of Faiths4Change provokes questions and reflections from others. A participant from a faith-based environmental charity points to the intentionality of such alternative practices, suggesting that the purpose is not just to educate people about faith and the environment but it's about a deeper question; 'what's the paradigm that we're living in?' (P2:18).

This suggests that transformative place-shaping requires a redistribution of power because without this there can be no authentic enabling of local communities. Government policy often refers to the need to empower local communities in their levelling up agenda, but to achieve this there needs to be much greater attention given to power imbalances, and the work of intermediaries such as Faiths4Change and their relational network make an important contribution towards this. There is further discussion on the implications for policy in chapter 7.

Faiths4Change are seen to redistribute power in different contexts and these are now reviewed in more detail by examining: urban governance relationships, their trusted relationships network, local communities relationships, and specific groups and individuals.

- *In urban governance relationships*

The relational network demonstrates a confidence in its shared collective resources and a tenacity to demonstrate to others what they can bring to the table. Reflecting on the Year of the Environment, The Faiths4Change team member commented that there was a need to communicate to governance partners that 'we want to be part of the decision making and the shaping of the year…we're not looking for free advertising for our events, we don't need that' (P1:3). The network can be seen in these ways to use collective practical wisdom to navigate complex spaces, and one participant notes that 'sometimes you've got to carefully manage these things' (P2:10).

The commitment to redistribute power means that Faiths4Change work to open doors to others in their relational network, which was seen when they managed to get a seat at the table in the Year of the Environment work. But they didn't just make that argument for themselves. They also spoke up for other smaller charities, 'we're really interested, and there's a whole host of others really interested in being involved in shaping this. Between us, we got loads of knowledge, loads of networks and reach. And we're already doing loads of stuff' (P1:3). When asked whether what they were asking for was the sharing of their events on a calendar, the response was clear, 'no, you misunderstand. We want to be part of the decision-making and the shaping of the year' (P1:3).

- *In their relational network*

Faiths4Change resource their relational network in ways that enable the network partners to have more influence and agency. One participant developing a new faith-based community project commented that the support from Faiths4Change as a bigger and more experienced organisation helped them to grow. Practical advice Faiths4Change had given included discussions on 'running the kitchen, funding opportunities for further work or equipment, managing funds, accountability for money, using spreadsheets etc. So this was very educational for me' (P2:20). Working alongside Faiths4Change was also transformative in a wider way, influencing the approach of the participant in their local context. 'I'm situated quite ideally, to cascade information to many different groups and the community as a whole…I already feel like I've made a start on that element of what Faiths4Change do' (P2:20). The participant observed that in her own context 'faiths often means churches' and working with Faiths4Change had enabled her to engage in networking from a Muslim perspective. In discussing COP 26 events she states, 'I'm thinking we will speak to the other mosques, as part of the Liverpool region…I also thought I have at least good connections with one church but I know they will have connections with other churches. So, I wouldn't just be linking them up with more mosques. I want to be linking them up with more churches' (P2:20).

Another participant from an environmental charity reflected on the 'knock-on effect' of working alongside Faiths4Change who had helped them with networking. This meant that the charity had been able to build up 'the [part of the organisation] that kind of liaises and works in partnerships with other organisations'(P2:17). Their willingness to redistribute power also extends to the way they lead events, such as the way that they led a workshop for Liverpool's The Year of the

Environment 2019. One of their co-leaders for the event comments that 'we wanted a broader church as possible to participate…so what we did, we actually put together a steering group. And we deliberately invited all the players to bring them in the tent. And we made them facilitators on the various discussion groups and tables. So, we made sure we were bringing everybody in' (P2:10). A Faiths4Change team member supported this, saying that 'making space for others, letting others shape questions and direction' was important and for others to know that the following bigger event 'wasn't a fixed deal' (P1:3; P1:W1). A local authority participant from the network, speaking about a different context, commented on how 'modelling inclusivity in leadership changes behaviour of others' (P2:13). This was seen in the planning event because it resulted in a disparate group of people all opting into the shared leadership of an event, a completely different approach to other sub-groups. For Faiths4Change an inclusive model of leadership approach is about 'facilitating not controlling' (P1:W1) and this resulted in a highly effective sub-group whose report was submitted in its entirety to the Combined Authority and also presented at a summit (P1:3).

- *With local communities*

Faiths4Change pass on the leadership of a project to others to such a degree that they realise that in some circumstances 'actually, people might not know they've been at a Faiths4Change event' (P1:W1). Nevertheless, Faiths4Change commit to 'pass on control, we want to empower the people who are in that community to do it themselves', even if they can end up 'feeling a bit in the way' (P1:W1). A Faiths4Change team member comments that on one project 'we had to just sort of step back and just sort of make sure it was happening in a safe way…but people felt like it was theirs' (P1:W1). This 'stepping back' is done repeatedly by the team in ways that require a very firm rootedness in their values. One faith-based participant suggests that a key value of Faiths4Change is 'a huge integrity to the way in which they operate….[what] they're not wanting to do is impose…so there's that tension between really wanting to make a difference, and really wanting to be a force for good and change in and through people and in and through communities' (P2:7). Another participant who had worked closely with Faiths4Change commented that the term 'place-shaping' resonated with our discussions, 'nice phrase place-shaping, because it's not too domineering. It's just giving things a gentle nudge. I like that, I see where you're coming from' (P2:12).

- *Specific groups and individuals*

Faiths4Change continually want to 'pass on control, we want to empower the people who are in that community to do it themselves' (P1:W1). This gives others a renewed sense of agency, purpose

and belonging. A community volunteer comments, 'I really just value the ability to be able to take part in something, sort of it feels like a very worthwhile thing that we're doing there' (P2:14). Being part of the horticulture course has opened up new possibilities for the future for this person, 'when I do want to go back to work, I've got a qualification, another couple of qualifications now. I used to work in [a technology-related field], but I'm not sure I want to go back to that. So, I quite fancy getting to work doing gardening and things like that' (P2:14).

Faiths4Change also redistribute power within communities of people, often in subtle ways that shift the approach to be one more aligned with their values of treating people equally. An example of this is seen in their work alongside a local church-based project, that had been welcoming asylum seekers but doing it in a rather unequal way. A team member comments that 'they were helping people, they were reaching out…[but] essentially any white, old lady was a volunteer and anyone of colour was a participant' (P1:W1). The team looked for ways to shift the project from a value of 'helping the poor and needy' (P1:W1), and the team member explained how they gradually brought in a new approach that 'set out from the start to be just a social space and anyone who came along was a participant on an equal footing. We [Faiths4Change] were there on an equal footing, we weren't leading the group necessarily, we're just facilitating' (P1:W1). This new approach was transformational for the original volunteers, as the whole group sat and ate together and did various activities together. The Faiths4Change team member comments that 'listening to people's experiences challenged them and it changed their understanding [of the experiences of people seeking asylum]' (P1:W1). Learning together through shared activities that were based on the values of listening to people and treating people equally, brought about profound changes. The Faiths4Change team member commented that 'people became friends and people built some long-term relationships, and people shifted to be on an equal footing in that space' (P1:W1).

4.4.3.4   *Enacting a (re)newed sacred imaginary for life and community*

In describing the benefit of the community gardening project, one participant comments that 'the kind of agriculture aspect is actually just part of the bigger picture of general well-being. And it's a kind of virtuous circle. So, the people [the volunteers] help that space be well, which helps the kind of wider environment of the city, but that space helps them [the volunteers] to be well' (P2:15). This virtuous circle brings about transformation that combines the social and the environmental, and that participant states that the garden 'feels very much like a kind of Edenic kind of Paradise, it feels

like a real source of life' (P2:15). This captures a renewed sacred imaginary that place-shaping can inspire and opens people's eyes to see how the social and the ecological are inter-connected and inter-dependent.

The research suggests three key insights into ways in which the performative sacred values of Faiths4Change bring about a sacred re-imagining of place.

- *Performative values, a sacred re-imagining and spiritual landscapes*

The research suggests that there is a distinctiveness in the place-shaping of Faiths4Change and that this distinctiveness arises from their transcendental, communal and deliberative performative values. A participant describes how 'there was a distinctiveness which is interesting…I don't know much about gardens, but I do think I would know that was a Faiths4Change plot. I don't know why….[it's] unpretentious isn't it, something authentic about it' (P2:2). In a conversation about a community garden that had been developed by Faiths4Change, another participant comments that 'it just feels like a gentle, kind place' (P2:2). Their values also shape their relationships, with one participant observing their 'authenticity' and 'an intentional honesty in their communication' adding that they have 'that spaciousness and time to listen to different voices. And that's a process' (P2:18). Values such as listening, care, and gentleness become visible in their place-shaping and capture a 'carefulness about geography' (P2:3). This then has the ability 'to engage, [in ways] that releases the thing that was there but had been latent' (P2:7).

The distinctiveness of the performative values links to the concept of 'spiritual landscapes' defined by Dewsbury and Cloke as open spaces 'that can be inhabited, or dwelt, in different spiritual registers' (2009, p. 696). Cloke and Williams (2018, p. 39) suggest that the notion of spiritual landscapes provides a challenge to consider how practice may be 'co-constructed in the spiritual register', 'with an openness to being affected by something other than the materially present world – something found in the performative presences (and absences) of some sense of spirit'. The transcendental values of Faiths4Change enable them to pay attention to this spiritual register in many different forms and to re-imagine place and build assemblages around these. The landscapes they created are spiritual in the sense that they represent 'embodied practices of being in the world, including ways of seeing that extend beyond sight…it is the performative presencing of some sense of spirit' (Dewsbury & Cloke, 2009, p. 696). The idea of the spiritual being a part of performativity is

coherent with new materialism and the complex multiplicity of continuities, fluxes, flows and 'becomings' of human and non-human assemblages (Latour, 2005), and a relational material ontology described by Jane Bennett (2010).

- *The blurring of sacred and secular boundaries*

The sacred re-imagining of place is embodied through the blurring of sacred and secular boundaries, and Faiths4Change are seen to be a highly skilled intermediary in the complex context of postsecularity. The foundational values received from Bishop James Jones have equipped them well for this role and they make use of their knowledge and relationships with religious institutions, groups and individuals. The research suggests that the performative values of Faiths4Change enables them to build creative assemblages and alternative imaginaries, supporting the research by Cloke & Williams (2018) regarding religion and the opening up of 'alternative imaginaries and practices with the capacity to generate the possibility for new kinds of ethical spaces and subjectivities' (2018, p. 42).

For Faiths4Change, the environment is central but they recognise that 'faith is important' (P2:6) and a part of being in tune with the environment. This means that they actively seek to 'see the environment through the eyes of faith' (P1:3) and that they value the contribution that faith communities make because there is a close sharing of values. Their foundational values draw strongly on the founding values of Bishop James Jones and his Christian faith, and Faiths4Change's foundational values encourage engagement with the sacred. The St Michael's community garden is described as 'an oasis', 'an Edenic kind of paradise, it feels a real source of life'(P2:15) and a 'Zen' place (P2:9). One participant describes the impact of seeing the garden in the middle of a city, 'when you go just walk through the gate, out of Toxteth into a little paradise, it's incredible'(P2:6). Another participant talks of the astonishment when they first walked into the garden, 'it was astonishment, to be honest, it felt like a kind of hidden jewel, and I was like, hang on, nothing from the outside portrays that this is here…[and] it throws into relief the lack of that kind of environment in the near vicinity' (P2:17).

Two community volunteers indicate that their experience in the community garden has resulted in a growing understanding of the sacredness of place. One describes the garden as 'my little Zen place' and sees the garden as a space to bring younger family members, 'she loves it too, it's teaching her

as well' (P2:9). Another volunteer reflects that the garden has helped grow Christian faith, by 'caring for that, for that bit of land, that makes me feel like it's sort of important. The kingdom of God kind of work' (P2:14). Both volunteers stated that Faiths4Change don't start conversations about faith and they both emphasise the inclusivity of Faiths4Change. One reflects that 'it's just open to everybody' (P2:14) and another states that 'everybody's at one...there's no judgment'. The volunteer added that 'some people think that it's, you know, you go there, and it's all about religion and they're going to ram religion down your throat. It's not about that... if you've got religion, that's fine. But nobody rams anything down your throat...they don't speak about religion unless you ask them something. You know that that's the way it is and that's the way it should be' (P2:9). These reflections suggest that the sacred foundational values are embodied as performative values rather than articulated more overtly and that the values open a space for others to explore their own understanding of the sacred.

- *The recovery of an environmental ethic in faith traditions*

The sacred values also support individuals who are part of faith communities, especially in connecting their faith to nature and the natural world. This can be seen in many different contexts including, connecting with a person's faith tradition through the sessions looking at their local coastal area (P2:19), enabling one person to explore their faith through their experience of the community garden (P2:15), enabling a person to reflect on land and the value of land beyond its economic values (P2:16). One faith-based actor expressed clearly how working with Faiths4Change enabled a greater connection between their faith and the natural world, 'it's taken me a while to realize that when you're talking about climate and issues that care of creation is part of it...[but] it's maybe more than that gratitude for creation and not really seeing then the importance of having things like growing areas for people...what Faiths4Change did was make it part of the equation' (P2:23). For this participant a new understanding of how the climate crisis interacts with their personal faith has resulted in a new project to use church land as a community growing area.

One participant from one of the community gardens reflects on the impact of being part of the garden from their own faith perspective, 'it sets us in the bigger picture of God's creation... it brings the God element to it...it names it, it names it in a way that I think, actually is really freeing, and life giving' (P2:15). In contrast to this learning, the participant expressed uncertainty about what being an Eco-Church and an Eco-Diocese really means. 'Liverpool's an Eco-Diocese...we're all still learning about what does this actually mean?' (P2:15).

'What does Eco-Church look like? Does it just mean doing your recycling and talking about it?' Or is it finding a new way to be church? And actually, if you think that Faiths4Change brings together people who have often been trying to overcome big difficulties and are carrying big burdens, and it's helping them carry those burdens. It's carrying them for them, it's sharing them, and it's helping them move beyond that, and freeing them. And actually, that's part of the mission of the church. So, the work that Faiths4Change does, embodies those values of community burden, sharing, growth, and living in God's moving into God's freedom. And in a way, they embody that in a way that actually traditional church structures don't necessarily allow for. So, by partnering with someone like that actually, it can embody the values of the Christian community, in a way, in a new way, in a fresh way, in a different way. that feeds back into what we do' (P2:15).

This person's reflection highlights how understanding grows through practical application and demonstrates how performative place-shaping values can be transformative. The embodied experience of working in a garden makes visible the alternative, sacred imaginary of place that can be difficult to grasp theoretically. It grounds the sacred imaginary in a specific context, a specific place, and demonstrates what eco-system flourishing looks like.

In summary, at the heart of the 'shared journey of re-connection' is a journey that can restore the connection between people, land and the sacred. A community garden is seen to be a therapeutic place, a healing and restorative place, and also a spiritual place. The volunteer explains that 'you can be stressed and depressed and everything else…there's something so soothing and therapeutic…get a load of seeds and sowing them'. The gardening brings purpose and focus through a deep re-connecting of the social and ecological, 'you've got to focus, you've got to concentrate on getting all these seeds, little, tiny seeds in lines. And when you look at the seed, and it's like a piece of salt, when you put that in the ground it grows a big plant that can feed you' (P2:9).

4.5 Concluding comments

The reflective thematic analysis was ongoing throughout the field research, with periods of extended reflection. Adopting an inductive research approach, the core research question was used to generate themes that gradually became refined with data added to them from across all three phases. The use of creative arts methods brought a richness to data collected from the interviews and workshops, with images and metaphors that captured creative place-shaping processes in

highly imageable ways. The in-depth reflective thematic analysis formed a three-staged framework for socio-ecological place-shaping: listening to the eco-system: *'intuitive listening' and 'seeing in the round';* building creative assemblages: *'the art of the possible'; and* embodying a sacred (re)imaginary of place: *'a shared journey of (re)connection'.* Each of these stages has been described through the distinctive performative values that characterise each stage.

Having identified three key processes of place-shaping in this current chapter, chapter 5 explores the concept of performative values and how it relates to the research findings and then presents socio-ecological place-shaping as a cyclical model that captures the ongoing fluidity and emergence of place-shaping, with the core value of 'one world, sacred earth' informing the performative values at each stage of place-shaping.

5   A Value-centred Model of Urban Socio-ecological Place-shaping

This chapter presents a new value-centred, place-shaping model, drawing on the research analysis to evidence three key processes that characterise the bottom-up place-shaping approach of Faiths4Change. It is not a normative model of place-shaping, but a thick description of the local place-shaping of Faiths4Change as an intermediary organisation. The insights add to research on socio-ecological place-shaping and have practical application for practitioners and organisations working in local, urban communities.

Sections 5.1 – 5.3 consider the theoretical implications of the research findings. Firstly, section 5.1 reviews the concepts of values and practices, suggesting that these concepts are indivisible and coalesce in place-shaping as 'performative values'. Section 5.2 considers the core values of Faiths4Change, evidencing how the Christian performative values instilled in the intermediary by Bishop James Jones are broken open by Faiths4Change into transcendental performative values centred on a core value of 'one world, sacred earth'. Section 5.3 explores two key theoretical terms, 'socio-ecological place-shaping' and 'socio-ecological place-shaping transformation' and demonstrates how the research brings new perspectives to each of these terms.

Having set the foundations theoretically, sections 5.4. – 5.6 summarise the new framework and cyclical model, detailing the performative values that characterise each stage. Section 5.5 outlines the final cyclical model of place-shaping that more fully captures the socio-ecological place-shaping of Faiths4Change within an emergent, space-time continuum. Finally, section 5.6. considers how the new model adds to existing research knowledge and theory.

5.1   Values and performativity

This research project considers how values inform practices, seeking to better understand the role of values in socio-ecological place-shaping. The literature review demonstrated growing research interest in values across disciplines, and more specifically in sustainability studies on the role of values in producing deep leverage for change. Following the detailed thematic analysis, I reviewed the three key processes identified, with the aim of dividing each process into discrete values and practices. However, this proved to be a complex task because the values were highly performative

in nature, such as enabling others, gentleness, and listening to communities. The data analysis did not support the drawing of a sharp distinction between values and practices but instead suggested that a set of performative values informed the place-shaping of Faiths4Change, with values and practices inextricably connected. This necessitated a more detailed review of the literature on performativity and values, and a review of the typologies used to describe different types of values related to practice. Values can be explored through many different disciplinary lenses, but I was guided by the research's epistemological and theoretical perspectives, drawing on theoretical insights from both the sociology of religion and public theology.

Whilst values arise from ideas, not all ideas are values. D. Davies (2016, p. 11) suggests that 'many ideas are abstract labels for things both in the tangible world as in the realms of imagination, but values emerge from those ideas becoming increasingly significant for identity, for the organisation of life, and its many forms of relationships'. Research by Oceja et al. (2019, p. 749) concludes that 'values express human tendencies which guide behaviour through their relationship with attitudes, motives, norms, or beliefs'. From a theoretical perspective, values can be understood as representationalist or performative. A representationalist perspective assumes that language and actions describe the pre-existing cultural values of individuals or groups, whereas a performative perspective suggests that sub-cultural values are not pre-existent but emerge from practice linguistically and materially in social action (Sherlock, 2014). Albu (2018, p. 861) suggests that 'performativity-based understandings of values challenge the basic tenet of functionalist approaches that values are distinct from action…overemphasising the dichotomy between 'the walk' and 'the talk''. The performative perspective of values aligns well with the research's focus on place-shaping as an emergent and deeply embodied set of practices enacted in specific places.

The theoretical understanding of performativity was significantly developed by Judith Butler (2011) who extended it beyond a narrower linguistic field to include how a lived and embodied performance can bring into being individual and social identity through material repetitions. Butler (2011, p. 15) states that 'performativity is not a singular 'act' for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms' and therefore values are necessarily altered through performative citations that can variously re-affirm, re-site or resist normative values (Day, 2010; Sherlock, 2014). Sherlock (2014, p. 10) suggests that it is 'less that pre-existing sub-cultural communities 'hold' particular values…[but instead that] subcultural values are performative in that they are continually re-

enacted…and thus re-emerge…through everyday citational practices'. This theoretical understanding of values aligns well with the epistemology of new materialism and social constructivism that underpin the research. An understanding of values from a performative perspective is supported by the research, with Faiths4Change embodying and enacting their values through re-citation and performance. The values of Faiths4Change are not fixed but have changed and developed over time as they have been influenced by organisational structures, people, and sub-cultures.

The sociology of religion explores 'beliefs' and 'values' from the perspective of meaning, experience, and performativity (Day, 2010, 2016). Day (2010, p. 18) contrasts an understanding of performative beliefs with propositional beliefs, with performative beliefs being an integral part of identity and social context, 'a way of framing who 'I' am relative to 'you' here and now'. Performative beliefs are therefore rooted and embodied socially, and Day suggests that social contexts and social relationships 'all contribute to how beliefs and identities arise in specific places and times, meaning that any universalistic, or individually centred concepts of belief are problematic and contested'(2010, p. 28). Beliefs and values are very closely aligned terms, and in this research the term 'transcendental values' is used to express 'the way in which people describe the values they perceive as central to their own sense of identity and to the meaningfulness of the social group to which they belong' (D. Davies, 2016, p. 11). Beliefs and transcendental values explore meaning and identity, and these may draw on religion but will also be beyond the boundaries of religion, with a wide range of influences including political, environmental, social, and cultural ones.

In sociology, there has been extensive research into shared social values and there are many different typologies for social values. From an ecological perspective, Kenter et al. (2015) describe seven categories: transcendental values, cultural and societal values, communal values, group values, deliberative values, other-regarding values and value to society. Three of these categories resonate with the research's focus and findings and offer a typology through which to better understand the performative values of Faiths4Change: transcendental values, communal values, and deliberative values.

- Transcendental values

'Transcendental values are often associated with ethics and normative beliefs, which are shared culturally' (Kenter et al., 2015, p. 89). These transcendental values are viewed as 'guiding principles' rather than being contextually specific, and they may be latent rather than explicit. Oceja et al. (2019, p. 752) use the term 'transcendent-change value profile' (TCP) to define 'the readiness to engage in those challenges that can make the world a better place'. In keeping with a performative vantage point, transcendental values are not viewed as fixed but as relatively enduring values that are performative and open to change in various ways.

The term 'transcendental values' is used to describe the 'one world, sacred earth' core value that acts as a guiding principle for Faiths4Change. Their transcendental values represent a breaking open of religion in the context of postsecularity, with sacred values being a more open concept that informs their organisational and social identity and their social actions. This is discussed further in chapter 6.

- Communal values

Communal values are viewed as 'values held in common by members of a community (e.g., geographic, faith/belief-based, community of practice or interest), including shared principles and virtues as well as a shared sense of what is worthwhile and meaningful' (Kenter et al., 2015, p. 88). Faiths4Change are seen to bridge and belong to a number of distinct communities from within their relational network. These include environmental networks, specific faith communities, the Liverpool Diocese, inter-faith networks, and specific local community project communities. The research suggests that Faiths4Change used their performative values to facilitate and enhance distinctive communal values in specific localities and communities from a socio-ecological perspective. The research suggests that these communal values emerge slowly as a community comes together for a common purpose such as a community gardening project.

- Deliberative values

Deliberative values are described as 'value outcomes of a deliberative process; typically, but not necessarily, a deliberative group process that involves discussion and learning' (Kenter et al., 2015, p. 88). These deliberative actions are process driven and they capture the emergent process that

occurs in context-specific place-shaping projects, where deliberative values inform the processes of listening and shared learning to facilitate new ways of seeing and a new vision for place-shaping.

This typology of values captures three distinct characteristics of performative values seen in the place-shaping of Faiths4Change. The three categories of values overlap and none are viewed as fixed or unchanging, instead they are continually re-enacted in everyday practices (Sherlock, 2014). These performative values inform the vision, identity, social relationships, actions, and priorities of the socio-ecological place-shaping of Faiths4Change.

5.2 The core values of Faiths4Change

The research suggests that the core, transcendental values of Faiths4Change have evolved and emerged over the years since the establishment of Operation Eden in 2004. Such emergence is theoretically supported from a performative perspective (Day, 2010). The research captures the shift from the Christian foundational values instilled by Bishop James Jones as the founder to the current, broader transcendental values of Faiths4Change.

5.2.1 The foundational core values instilled by Bishop James Jones

The foundational core values of Faiths4Change are rooted in the Christian faith and Christian theology, articulated by Bishop James Jones as 'the earthing of heaven' and 'a moral and theological imperative to act' (P1:2). These foundational values are highly performative and this is significant to their capability to change and emerge over time. This contrasts with 'propositional values' of religion, viewed as 'truth-claims about reality' (Day, 2010, p. 10) and a more dogmatic and authoritarian understanding of religion (Baker & Graham, 2018; Woodhead, 2016c). Faiths4Change emerged from a distinctive Christian tradition of public theology, that integrates theory and practice, the sacred and the secular, and is rooted in social realities and experiences. Public theology is rooted in an understanding that the insights from theology and sociology, psychology and economics must all be 'united in at least as much as they address the human condition in exploratory and interpretative ways' (Atherton, 2014, p. 194; Baker & Graham, 2018).

The public theology of Bishop James Jones was embodied in his ministry that was outwardly focused on issues of social and ecological justice and was centred on partnership working. Operation Eden was one way to express these commitments, as an inter-faith climate action project that brought

together faith communities around a common purpose. Operation Eden was inspired by a three-month sabbatical taken by Bishop James to explore a theology of creation, and he 'went to find out what Islam and Judaism were teaching about environmental ethics' (P1:2) and (J. Jones, 2003). In his interview, Bishop James articulates the values instilled in Faiths4Change from a distinctively Christian theological lens. Partnership and reciprocity are viewed as central to Christian mission, underpinned theologically through the practices of Jesus (John 12 and 13, 'washing but also being washed') and of Paul in Acts and the Epistles (''civis ramanus sum' as a classic example of the Church and of a Christian being in relationship with the wider community and receiving from the community in order he might give to the community') (P1:2).

Bishop James saw the purpose of Operation Eden as being 'to practice a theology of the earthing of heaven, in the Diocese of Liverpool' (P1:2), and therefore the foundational values of Faiths4Change were deeply embedded into the overarching vision for the Anglican Diocese. This attachment to the Diocese shifted when Faiths4Change became an independent environmental charity and when Bishop James left the Diocese. These organisational and relational changes are seen to be fundamental to the shifts in the core values of Faiths4Change.

5.2.2   The core transcendental values of Faiths4Change

The research highlights a significant shift in the core values of Faiths4Change, from distinctively Christian values to transcendental values expressed as 'one world, sacred earth'. One of the staff members describes their place-shaping as being 'from a kind of one world, sacred earth, ecological, however you want to kind of phrase it, but with a root of the environment being central, and the environment as kind of seen through faith communities eyes so it's about social justice as well. It's about economic justice…actually true sustainability is also about justice' (P1:3). One trustee commented on the faith affiliation, 'it draws some people to us. It might have the opposite effect on other people. You sometimes possibly have to explain it. But I don't see it as a bad thing…you know, with it being in the title. In the end, faith is, is important, isn't it. Whatever that faith is, if it's towards a better world then it's an important thing' (P1:1).

Faiths4Change describe themselves as an environmental charity and not a religious one, but their faith affiliation appears to remain very central to their work. They do not align to a particular religious belief as an organisation, but they continue to have a firm affiliation to faiths and religions

expressed performatively through their partnership working. One staff member stated that 'ideally although not always, there is a faith community partner somewhere in the mix of most of what we do. at least one' (P1:3). This is not seen as a functionalist approach or a leveraging to faith, because their values pay attention to the sacred and they have close relational partnerships with many faith communities and a deep commitment to inter-faith working.

They state that 'working with faith communities is a part of our fabric. It's not just our history, it's shaped our values, it continues to shape our values. And it's there in black and white in our charitable objectives. But it doesn't mean we have a particular viewpoint' (P1:W1). Faiths4Change reflect that it is the combining of faith and the environment that gives them 'a unique way in' (P1:3) and 'a unique offer' (P1:W1) as an organisation. They view faith communities as important long-term, stable partners in local communities, 'faith communities aren't going anywhere. You know, even if the church on the corner of the road closes, there's another one two blocks up' (P1:3).

Faiths4Change continue to have a close link with the Liverpool Diocese and with local churches, and they are committed to inter-faith work on climate action in the region. Commenting on the demise and then the renewed establishment of an inter-faith forum in Liverpool years later, a staff member commented, 'it feels like a bit of a homecoming in a way, because it was one of the things that, you know, was James's kind of impetus from the word go, was that connection with different faith communities. As you know because of this shared belief. And it feels like it's taken us a really long time to get back into the flow of that but flow it's doing you know' (P1:W3). This highlights important continuity with the foundational values expressed by Bishop James Jones and his motivation to bring faith communities together to work on environmental projects.

5.2.3   Continuity and divergence in performative values

Whilst there has been a shift from Christian foundational religious values to the sacred, transcendental values now expressed by Faiths4Change, nevertheless many of their performative values remain consistent with those expressed by Bishop James Jones. These include the commitment to inter-faith and partnership working, listening, enabling others, and a focus on justice. Political engagement and the mobilising of people around a common cause continue to be seen in the performative values of Faiths4Change (see section 4.4.2)

However, the performative values of Faiths4Change are different from the foundational values of Bishop James Jones in some important respects. Bishop James Jones related to faith communities from an insider perspective whereas Faiths4Change relate to them from a more outsider and relational network perspective. Bishop James Jones saw the purpose of Operation Eden as to enable faith communities to be 'agents of environmental transformation', and faith communities were viewed as having an important role due to their sense of belonging, security, identity, and the meaning they gain through being part of a greater purpose (P1:2). This represents an optimistic and aspirational view of the role of faith communities, which Bishop James Jones himself recognised was not currently fulfilled (P1:2). Whilst Faiths4Change also view faith communities as important, as rooted groups in local communities, they are articulate about the limitations of faith communities. They note the lack of understanding and action on the environment, their slowness to come together and commit to inter-faith climate projects, and their failure to prioritise environmental actions. A staff member comments on faith communities that 'sometimes knowledge about faith and climate change is not good. Not only is it all there [in their faith's teachings], and they kind of know it, but actually, they're not necessarily living it' (P1:3). Rather than viewing faith communities as 'agents of transformation', Faiths4Change seem more aware of their need of education and facilitation in order for them to be more effective in socio-ecological place-shaping.

The shift from Christian foundational values to sacred, transcendental ones has had a particular impact on the relationship between Faiths4Change and the Liverpool Diocese. Two critical organisational changes appear to have precipitated this change, firstly Faiths4Change became an independent environmental charity and secondly, Bishop James Jones left the Diocese. These shifts resulted in a fragmentation of relationships because of increasingly different values and priorities. The Diocese focused on what is described as a 'galvanising vision', 'more people knowing Jesus the more justice in the world…those two are absolutely intertwined…So we're trying to say, let's come up with galvanizing vision, and means implementing that vision, and stay absolutely true to it... we've got this very driven approach. And if you like, if you fit, that's great. If you don't fit, that's also great, but we're not bothering, you know we're not' (P2:7). The consequence of this 'galvanising vision' has been that support for Faiths4Change and the work of inter-faith climate work became diminished in the years after Bishop James Jones left the Diocese. One participant from the Diocese expresses sadness about 'the years they were not treasured', when they got 'smaller and smaller'

and like a bulb underground in the winter had to hold on for spring. They note that Faiths4Change had to take an approach of 'make yourself invisible and nobody will notice that you are here' (P2:3). This 'invisibility' is thought to relate to Faiths4Change having an office within the Diocese, which continues to this day.

The research suggests that the relationship between Faiths4Change and the Diocese has been bridged more recently through the work that Faiths4Change are supporting on Eco-Church and the Diocese's Net-Zero targets (P1:3, P2:7 and appendix 2). However, the relationship between Faiths4Change and the Diocese remains unsettled. One participant from the Diocese comments that 'what we've never quite resolved is, is Faiths4Change a delivery agency for the Diocese, or is Faiths4Change an independent body that happens to connect in with a Diocesan vision but if it chooses to do other things, it's free to do other things and float off?' (P2:7). This comment highlights the contrast between institutional, structural ways of working and the more fluid, flexible, agile ways of working within the relational network. The Diocese is more focused on organisational structures and boundaries, whilst Faiths4Change work fluidly in relational networks where the focus is not on positionality but on working together based on shared values and collective possibilities. Within the relational network there are permeable borders and continual flux.

It is not only the Diocese as an institution that appears to struggle with understanding Faiths4Change from a faiths perspective. The data collected on the question 'does Faiths4Change's 'faiths' affiliation shape things in particular ways?' produced a wide spectrum of responses from participants (see appendix 2). One participant from a social/educational charity comments that 'when you've got Faiths4Change in your title, that's a pretty big statement of who you are and what you're setting out to achieve' (P2:2), the person adds that if the 'faiths' aspect does shape things then it is very subtle and that there was not a 'spiritual sense' with Faiths4Change that can be observed in other organisations. Anglican faith actors also expressed uncertainty about what the faiths-affiliation represented. One Anglican participant in response to the question said, 'I'm not sure that I know the answer to that. I think they respect all faiths, which is fine. And so do I…it's not an outward expression for them. For me, I might be getting that wrong, but I didn't sense it' (P2:1). Another Anglican participant commented that 'the personnel are not particularly religious, they're quite spiritual. But I think I'd be pushed to say that they're doing it because it's an expression of their faith, I think the impression I've got is that the reason it's called Faiths4Change is because it

was started as a Diocesan project, you know it's kind of based on its history…it's meant to be multi-faith, I haven't seen the huge amount of evidence of that' (P2:16).

However, other participants from a range of backgrounds and organisations were able to express how they thoughts the faith affiliation shaped the work of Faiths4Change, but there was quite a variety of ways of understanding. Participants highlighted four key areas where their faith affiliation was visible:

- their skills in bridging with faith communities (P2:13; P2:5)

- the enhanced trust it brings within the faith sector through shared values(P2:19, P2:20)

- the way that it shapes their priorities and how they 'embody the truth, that actually, stuff is God's it's not ours to own' (P2:15)

- A 'heart and spirituality, an essence' (P2:18)

The research observes that the organisational movement of Faiths4Change out of the Diocese and the shift from Christian foundational values to sacred, transcendental values causes uncertainty and some ambiguity regarding their faith affiliation. This ambiguity could perhaps be a very helpful part of their identity because it creates space for people to connect, not connect, interpret, and embody the 'faiths' aspect in their own specific ways. It also means that Faiths4Change are not drawn into religious or theological debates but are able to remain focused on the environment. This is discussed in greater detail in chapter 6.

5.3   Socio-ecological place-shaping and transformation: a review of terms

The literature review explores both socio-ecological place-shaping and the concept of transformation, highlighting them as complex terms of interdisciplinary interest. From a sustainability studies perspective, transformation can be broadly understood as 'the general idea of fundamental change in society as opposed to change that is minor, marginal or incremental' (IPCC, 2022c, p. 171). The current research builds on existing research knowledge, by informing broader

terminology with am more detailed values-centred understanding of place-shaping and transformation from a socio-ecological perspective.

5.3.1   Defining socio-ecological place-shaping

The literature review draws on the work of Lummina Horlings and the SUSPLACE research project to provide insights into socio-ecological place-shaping. The SUSPLACE research describes sustainable place-shaping as 'peoples' capacities to change the relations that shape space [through specific practices] that become materially visible' (2019, p. 37). The research draws attention to the three dominant processes that 'propel' everyday living: the socio-cultural, political-economic, and ecological (Horlings, 2019, p. 44).

This current research project provides a more specific definition that is focused more narrowly on socio-ecological place-shaping. Informed by the research analysis and the new place-shaping framework (see chapter 4), socio-ecological place-shaping is defined in the research as:

> *'Emergent and collective performative values made visible through new assemblages and partnerships, that enable local community networks to embody a sacred (re)imaginary of place'.*

This sacred imaginary is viewed as an alternative imaginary because it contrasts with the dominant neoliberal imaginary that shapes local urban communities, and this is discussed further in chapter 6. The sacred imaginary emerges through a collective process that is enabled through the performative values of Faiths4Change that prioritise a set of processes that include listening, enabling others, and bringing people together around a common task (see chapter 4). It results in highly distributive power relations, focused on equipping local people and in doing so enabling them to develop new relationships and new skills.

5.3.2   Defining socio-ecological transformation

Current definitions of socio-ecological transformation in sustainability studies are broad and lack focus on the role of values, but there is increasing recognition that values are critical for effective transformations of place. Sacred values may have an important contribution in providing a framework of values able to hold together a complex set of place-shaping processes.

Writing in a blog for the International Science Council, Karen O'Brien (Professor of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo) defines socio-ecological transformation as:

> *'a process and a shift in form, structure or meaning making, that unleashes shared capacities to commit to a world that works for everyone'* (2020b)

My own research adds to this broad definition and reveals how place-shaping values are embodied in a specific context, describing a set of performative values that provide a central core for processes that are capable of 'unleashing shared capacities'. Building on O'Brien's definition and drawing on my own research findings, I define socio-ecological transformation of place embodied and enacted by Faiths4Change as:

> *'An emergent set of complex processes, informed by a sacred re-imagining of place and enacted in local community networks and partnerships, that enable local places to become flourishing eco-systems'*

This definition suggests that place-shaping becomes transformative when a sacred re-imagining enables a set of emergent values-based processes that are enacted and sustained by place-based people, partnerships, and networks. Place-shaping becomes visible through a set of highly emergent and collaborative performative values, grounded in a commitment to a re-sacralising of place and the opening up of creative spaces that enable eco-systems to flourish in new ways. The definition provides a descriptive, qualitative benchmark for transformation rather than a quantitative one, reflecting the research's findings that place-shaping is complex, contextually specific, and emergent. This means that place-shaping transformations cannot be captured by simplistic, pre-defined, quantitative metrics. However, evaluation is essential to provide evidence-based insights and research on transformational values and practices, and the research's place-shaping framework might open up possibilities for new evaluation tools to be developed around key themes.

These new definitions of socio-ecological place-shaping and transformation are not presented as normative nor as an alternative to all other definitions since different academic fields and methodologies contribute towards a broader understanding of place and place-shaping in different ways. Given the acknowledged complexities of place, any search for a singular definition of place-shaping is unrealistic and unhelpful because it will inevitably be reductive. This research adds to an

understanding of place-shaping values, as a neglected area of study in socio-ecological place-shaping, bringing new perspectives to existing theory. The place-shaping framework set out in this chapter outlines three place-shaping processes and the set of performative values that are enacted in each one.

5.4   A new cyclical model of socio-ecological place-shaping

Having considered in detail the three stages of the place-shaping framework and a working definition of socio-ecological place-shaping, this section develops a cyclical representation of the framework to better capture the cyclical nature of place-shaping. The new model integrates the three stages in a non-linear way, showing the ongoing circularity and emergence of place-shaping processes. In addition, the new model positions the 'one world, sacred earth' value at the centre of the processes, as a core foundational value that holds together the other performative values and drives the place-shaping processes. This foundational value, embodied in the place-shaping of Faiths4Change are captured visually through some of the metaphors and photographs used by the team themselves to describe their place-shaping practices. In the ongoing thematic analysis, the creative arts data was revisited and reflected upon in the light of the place-shaping framework.

5.4.1   Creative arts data analysis

The use of the creative arts methods opened up a creative space where participants could immerse themselves in storytelling, and as the researcher I benefitted from data that had a high level of imageability and imagination. This data was helpful to return to during the second stage of analysis to promote my creative thinking and to help me to see things in new ways.

The analogies and the narratives used by participants in phase 1 and 2 to capture the place-shaping of Faiths4Change included:

- a pile of rubbish that was 'an intractable problem' (P1:W1)

- mycorrhizal fungi and the underworld of forests (P1:W1)

- 'beautifying something drab' (P2:1)

- restoring 'a useless piece of land on the edge' (P2:2)

- 'a series of small seeds that grow into something quite significant, quite profound' (P2:7)

- '15 people all sitting huddled on the bench having lunch' (P2:21)

- 'a piece of visual art out of bits of old waste…we are just individual bits, which don't feel we're very special. But when you sew it together with purpose…[there is] a sort of sense of being something really quite precious' (P2:12).

These analogies began to illuminate the values that informed the practices of Faiths4Change and they are viewed as a counter-cultural imaginary of place. Faiths4Change chose three images to describe their place-shaping practices, which were very varied and revealed different aspects of their work and its underpinning values. The three images were: a group of people sharing food, a pile of rubbish that leads to a community project, and the network of mycorrhizal fungi beneath the forest floor.

- *Shared food (photo)*

Shared food was described as 'very, very Faiths4Change', that is 'at the heart of the team' as well as their practice. A team member explained that 'the very first meeting I went to at Faiths4Change, [a team member] asked everyone to bring some food to share… and that's how it always is, everyone brings something to share with the rest of the group' (P2:W1). This story suggests that their performative values are lived practices that are integrated into their lives as well as their work practice.

Two team members chose the analogy of sharing food as an image that captured Faiths4Change and one team member selected a picture.

- A community meal

Figure 1: Photograph of meal in community garden

'[this picture] just summed it up for me because…everyone came and had different abilities and could do different things. But everyone could sit and eat together…have a drink or whatever you wanted to do. And it was just very inclusive. And it was nice to sit there that day. I remember looking around and thinking I don't think that this group of people would be sat around a table eating a meal together in any other context. And I guess the vehicle for bringing it together and bringing the people together in that case was the garden but it could have been any of those activities that Faiths4Change does as well…something that there's all different levels for people to do, but you don't have to be professional at anything' (P2:21)

- *A pile of rubbish (photo)*

Figure 2: Photograph of a pile of rubbish

> *'A huge issue and such an ingrained issue [that] actually still hasn't been sorted, frustratingly…it represents a bit of a hurdle and a bit of an immensity of a problem'. (P1:W1).*

This choice of this photo was a surprising one and even more so because that initial goal of getting rid of the rubbish actually failed. But the detailed story that surrounded the picture enabled me to understand their place-shaping practices more clearly and see the spin-offs that often occurred in projects. Even though the problem persisted long-term, other things emerged from the project and these are ongoing.

Choosing this picture and describing it as 'an immense problem' (P1:W1) reveals an honesty in their storytelling that is counter-cultural, as many organisations may choose to tell stories that focus on their positive outcomes and demonstrate their successes. This image suggests a radical realism in terms of their understanding of socio-ecological transformation, that does not shy away from the

significant barriers and persistent problems. There was an openness to discuss the more uncomfortable issues where interventions have failed, with the team member commenting on the rubbish that 'people weren't really talking about it or really aware of, and actually how to tackle that problem was huge' (P1:W1).

But behind the image and the problem, that remains unsolved, the team then told a story of what emerged from another part of the same project connected to the river, that started with a Community Action Day. The day brought together a wide mix of people in the local community including children, someone in their 90s, the local council, the Environment Agency and a local litter picking group. The project grew from that day to include a variety of initiatives, such as sewing and art workshops, that built relationships and brought people together. One activity that emerged from the project was a book of illustrated stories from different faiths about why water is important to them.

Figure 3: Photograph of a community action day

'A really positive and strong interfaith and intergenerational response'
(P1:W1).

The project continued for about ten years but ended when funding from the Environment Agency stopped and preventative work was no longer funded under DEFRA. One team member commented that 'they [DEFRA] reverted back to an old model of 'we'll come and talk to you if we're going to do anything different in your area'…[but] it doesn't work' (P1:W1).

This image highlights that local socio-ecological place-shaping can face complex barriers, from some very practical local challenges to the impacts of national policy changes. Charities such as Faiths4Change have seen many shifts that have impacted their work and it is this experience that seems to have developed in them both a tenacity and a practical wisdom that equips them to navigate complex social, political, and cultural spaces. In the phase 3 workshop with the Faiths4Change team and trustees, I attempted to map out this project but it proved to be too complex and problematic. The description could not capture all the nuances and the team explained that the project was multi-faceted with initiatives and influences that pre-existed the project itself and were beyond the project. Their response was consistent with their understanding of place-shaping as being deeply interconnected and it was consistent with their values, being reluctant to 'own' projects and activities for themselves because they recognised them as highly collaborative and shared with others.

- *mycorrhizal fungi*

This final analogy is one that I returned to throughout the research analysis because it captures both the complexity of the relational network and also some of the values that were seen to inform the practices of Faiths4Change. The analogy of mycorrhizal fungi is described as 'the underground network that trees have, kind of roots, but that feed into each other's roots, and fungi, and all sorts of other things' (P1:W1). A Faiths4Change team member recounted the life of fungi from the book 'Underland' by Robert Macfarlane (2020) as a metaphor for their place-shaping. I was intrigued by the analogy of these mycorrhizal fungi because it captured the complex network and some of the values of Faiths4Change in distinctive ways and so I read Underland (2020) to explore the concept further.

Mycorrhizal fungi form a vast and complex adaptive system, acting as a below-ground communication network that enables the sharing of information, resources and a variety of nutrients between trees including across species. Sometimes smaller trees will support larger trees

that have a particular nutrient need and there are mother trees that resource the forest and are able to identify saplings that they are related to and share more carbon with their kin. Scientific experiments in forests have demonstrated that removing smaller saplings can adversely affect the health of larger trees because they are dependent on the saplings for certain nutrients. The mycorrhizal fungi not only enable the exchange of nutrients but also sends defence signals to ward off a threat such as aphids. This underground network of nodes and links creates a web that is so dense that there can be hundreds of kilometres of mycelium under a single footstep (Simard et al., 2012).

These images and analogies, alongside the analysis of interviews and workshops, provided greater insights into the place-shaping practices of Faiths4Change. Throughout the research I had reflected on whether Faiths4Change acted as a catalyst for place-shaping and whether their practices involved the harnessing or leveraging of resources as sustainability studies suggest (Abson, 2017). But the research analysis indicates a more complex and organic place-shaping approach. This is discussed further later in this chapter.

5.4.2   *Data from a specific project*

The St Michael's project was selected for close exploration because it was an important project for Faiths4Change and seemed to capture something of the essence of their work. It marked a significant development for Faiths4Change because having worked mainly as an outreach organisation that supports other people's projects, the St Michael's project is being developed as 'a kind of home' and 'a bit of a testbed for all the learning' (P1:W1) for Faiths4Change. The church and garden of St Michael's church are part of a Church of England team parish situated in the heart of Toxteth, Liverpool.[30] In 2018, I spent about a year working as a curate in the parish, working closely alongside Faiths4Change at the start of the St Michael's project.

The church had been in decline for many years prior to 2018 and the option to close the church and sell off the land had been under consideration (P2:16). A parish profile written in 2016 to advertise for a new team rector describes St Michael's as a church that 'offers an almost blank canvas' and it

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[30] St Michael's in the City. https://www.stmichaelinthecity.org.uk/garden - retrieved 05.05.2020

was described to the new team rector as 'a church on palliative care' (P2:16). This description stands in stark contrast with the approach that Faiths4Change took when they started to explore how to work in St Michaels, and they comment on their aim for it be a place 'to kind of share our learning, but also learn from that community, and that community being the church and the church congregation as well' (P1:3).

Early on in the project, Faiths4Change engaged with the small, elderly congregation, attending Sunday services occasionally and talking to them about the history of the church and the things that were important to them. When a decision was taken to start to clear the derelict garden, the Faiths4Change team discussed the new garden design through a series of consultation meetings that were open to the church congregation and the local community. A herb garden was part of the design at the request of the church congregation.

The garden that Faiths4Change inherited was derelict and massively overgrown, but they seemed unphased by the task of clearing it and redesigning it.
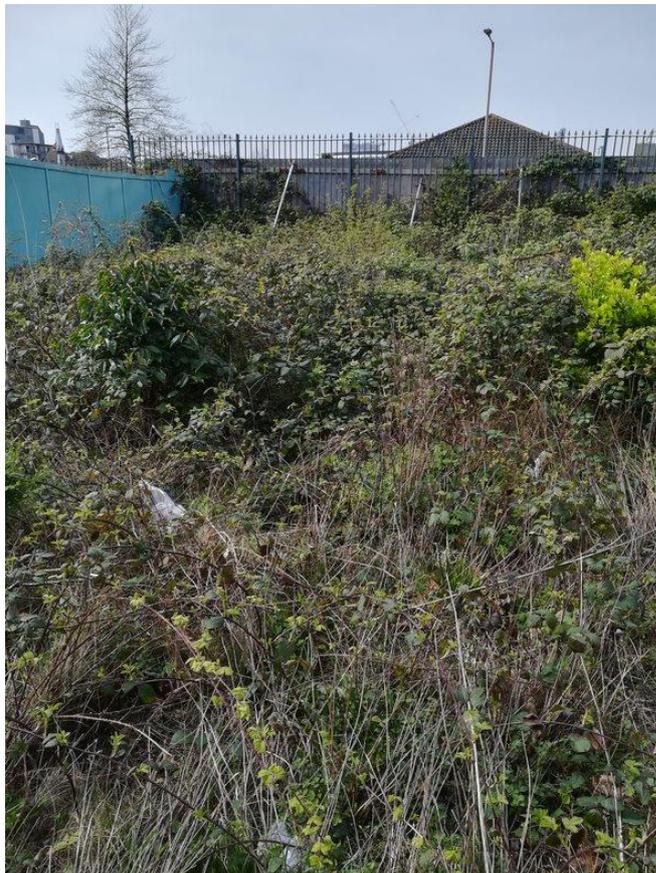
Figure 4: Photograph of the community garden before the project

Within a matter of months, the garden was cleared by the Faiths4Change team, some of their network, and by people that they asked to help them with the project. This included a local builder that Faiths4Change approached to ask for help, and they became key to the project. A Faiths4Change team member explained that 'he just loved coming around, [he brought] some of their wood and one of their guys built beds for us. I think it gives some people, who feel that maybe their jobs are not very meaningful, the opportunity to be generous, …to give something back' (P2:19). Another key person was a volunteer who was an ex-joiner, 'he wanted to do so much because he couldn't work because he'd had a stroke. But he was always like, I'll come and do this' (P2:19). A member of the St Michael's church team reflected on the skills that Faiths4Change have in bringing together people and resources, commenting on 'their ability to network and get volunteers and engage people with the garden…they're just brilliant at working with, going and chatting with local builders and things' (P2:16)

Faiths4Change have been central to a new vision for the church that was not achievable from within the church community itself. One of the church team reflected that 'there wasn't, I think still isn't, a capacity within the congregation to change the way they did things…basically there weren't any church people left' (P2:16). Another participant comments that what Faiths4Change 'contributes to the life of the parish is inestimable, it's like, huge' (P2:15). But the benefits of the relationship are not all one way, they are seen to be reciprocal. The church contributes to the partnership too, in terms of continuity and 'being in it for the long haul' (P2:15) alongside Faiths4Change. One church team member comments that 'what we had was the space. You know, which, looking back, it feels like a proper sort of asset-based thing. And actually, we had the space, which was feeling to us like a burden, but then it was an asset' (P2:16).

Figure 5: Photograph of work on the community garden

The garden gradually took shape with raised beds for growing vegetables and various community groups involved in developing the garden. Faiths4Change brought on board partners including a local college to run a City and Guild horticultural course, a foodbank that was a place for fresh produce, and a craft group that included a free lunch using fresh produce from the garden. One faith-based participant describes the garden as 'a kind of Edenic paradise…a real source of life…a kind of hidden jewel'. The participant reflects on 'the lack of that kind of environment in the near vicinity…[and] how kind of life-giving and affirming just seeing that kind of growing space, not just the greenness, it's the fact that it's being kind of tended, and there's produce being grown, and that there's a real variety of environments in there. It feels very much like a kind of ecosystem' (P2:15). This concept of 'creating an eco-system' resonated with other data and later became a key theme in the analysis.

Figure 6: Photograph of transformation of the community garden as food growing space

One of the volunteers at a gardening project explained the importance of the community project, 'it's my organic therapy, yes that's what it is, and it's been a lifeline for me' (P2:9). The combination of reconnecting people to community, of learning new skills, and of eating together are viewed as powerful transformers. The volunteer explains how 'we used to have our lunch all on a big table with some of the stuff that we've harvested and we cooked…and then in the afternoon [there was] the City and Guilds course [in horticulture] and that was brilliant because everyone was sitting together' (P2:21). One of the Faiths4Change team commented that for some participants they would not have had the confidence to be part of the college course if it was not in their own garden space and with others that they knew. For one person who was an asylum seeker this made a difference because the team member commented that 'we're in a space that they've essentially made or created…so you've got that bit of confidence, I've done this, and in my own space where I feel I can do the course' (P2:21).

One volunteer explained that 'it's not just like gardening, it's like a support group as well because, you know, there's some of us that, quite a lot of us that have got all sorts of problems and issues. But it doesn't matter. Everybody's at one' (P2:9). A faith-based participant involved with the project commented 'what I love about the garden, is that all sorts of people feel a sense of ownership in terms of partnership. They feel like it's their space, like they can belong there' (P2:15). A volunteer explains that the garden is 'my little zen place' and that 'looking after the garden itself has given me a sense of purpose, because I'm unemployed, I have been for about three years now. And because of my mental health problems, I have depression and anxiety. And being part of the garden really helped with that, I have a chance to get outside every week and work towards something' (P2:14).

The garden also has significant wider benefits for the local community by supporting local schools in their learning on the environment and in working alongside other agencies such as foodbanks. During the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, volunteers grew food for the foodbank. It was estimated to be a quarter of a ton in total (P2:9).
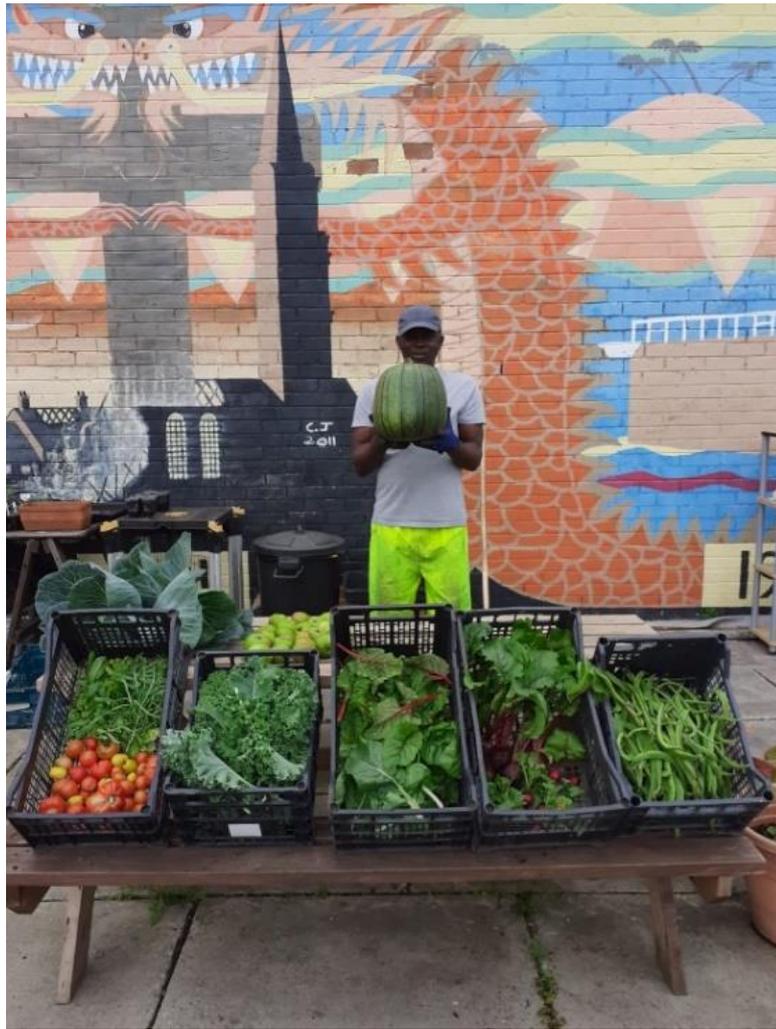
Figure 7: Photograph of produce from the community garden

5.4.3   Cyclical model of place-shaping

The metaphor of mycorrhizal fungi particularly resonates with the research finding and the set of performative values that embody the place-shaping of Faiths4Change. Simard et al. (2012, p. 39) describe these mycorrhizal networks as 'fundamental agents of complex adaptive systems (ecosystems) because they provide avenues for feedback and cross-scale interactions that lead to self-organisation and emergent properties in ecosystems'. The insights of Simard and others were used to inform the final cyclical model of socio-ecological place-shaping.

Cyclical models for place-shaping are found in other academic research, including the work of SUSPLACE (Horlings, 2019) and the three tiers of transformation developed by K. O'Brien and Sygna (2013). This literature review explored how a different theoretical framework shapes these cyclical models that emphasise an emergent, time-space continuum, in contrast with systems-based, structural models (see chapter 2, 2.6). Spirals are ancient symbols with complex, deep meanings and they inform Suzanne Simard's pioneering work (2018). Simard expresses the life of forests and her work within them as an ancient petroglyph, using it to explore her own personal journey with her research. In a presentation, Simard uses the spiral as a cultural symbol to express her discovery of 'balance, awareness, connection, respect, reciprocity, kinship, responsibility, complexity and resilience'.[31] Simard describes the complex adaptive system at work within the soil and she highlights the role of 'mother' trees who share their 'ecological wisdom' with the wider forest community. Simard presents an alternative way of knowing, an alternative epistemology, that is drawn from indigenous peoples and is revealed through these complex ecological relationships and interdependencies. Simard refers to an Aboriginal symbol but there are examples of spirals in petroglyphs across the world.[32] Such petroglyphs are often understood to have religious significance and there is increasing recognition that the values and practices of indigenous peoples are vital in informing new philosophies, ontologies and epistemologies (McGregor, Whitaker, & Sritharan, 2020). McGregor et al. (2020, p. 35) state that 'in contrast to dominant Western society's tendency to view the natural world as a commodity, property or a 'resource', Indigenous understandings are based on regarding the Earth as alive and imbued with spirit'. At an International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples (2022) the Secretary-General of the UN stated that 'I call on member states to implement the United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and to promote Indigenous knowledge for the benefit of all'.[33] A report on the Sacred Headwaters initiative for the Amazon explores the role of Indigenous peoples as 'wisdom keepers' and how 'Indigenous peoples, with their territories in the Amazon Basin, interconnect spirituality, culture, and the elements (earth, fire, water and air)' (Crespo, Soltani, Páez, & Luna, 2021, p. 12). Crespo et al. (2021, p. 15) draw attention to ways in which Indigenous Peoples see nature as family, as mother and as our home,

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[31] Simard, S. (2018). *Lessons for soil from the mother tree and how trees communicate.* 54th Annual Nobel Conference: Gustavus Adolphus College. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_QFDB8Zffg - retrieved 06.04.2021

[32] Drake, A. (2019). *The spiral petroglyphs of Guizhaguina, Ecuador.* https://notyouraverageamerican.com/spiral-petroglyphs-guizhaguina-ecuador/ - retrieved 11.03.2021

[33] Guterres, A. (2022). *International day of the world's indigenous peoples.* United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/observances/indigenous-day/message - retrieved 15.03.2021

with different nations offering a distinctive understanding of the sacred life of the forest and 'its own unique way of expressing the web of sacred life that emerges in its territory'.

Dematte (Professor of Chinese Art and Archaeology) brings some new insights to some ancient petroglyphs from Inner Mongolia, that in her opinion have often been the subject of a narrow interpretative framework that has too great a focus on shamanism and religion in general. Instead, Dematte suggests that the meaning and function of the imagery are likely to be multi-faceted, and that 'even if religion plays a role, other crucial aspects are involved in the creation of images on rocks, and those often have something to do with issues of group identity, land ownership, boundaries and the semiotics of communication' (2004, p. 16). Dematte draws attention to the importance of landscapes because they are often related to issues of 'movement, identity, appropriation, learning and sacrality in relation to place', and for nomadic peoples these signs and landmarks were used 'to reiterate their attachment to a land with which they identified, but which was claimed also by the settled world' (p. 16).

These images and insights encouraged me to find new ways to represent the place-shaping of Faiths4Change and to have confidence in its ability to communicate complex patterns and processes. The mycorrhizal networks and the petroglyphs resonated with my own research findings and how Faiths4Change weave together complex performative values from multiple perspectives including the religious, ecological, land and community perspectives. These new insights inspired the visualisation of the framework as a spiral, that communicated meaning about place and the ways in which places are shaped and transformed.

Transformative Socio-Ecological Place-Shaping:

emergent processes that enable eco-systems to flourish

- Local
- Contextually specific
- Emergent
- Cyclical – with continual flow
- Generative – creates spin-offs

Listening to the Eco-System

'seeing in the round'

Creative Assemblage Building

'the art of the possible'

Embodying an Alternative Sacred Imaginary of Place

'a shared journey of (re)connection'

Figure 8: Transformative, emergent processes of socio-ecological place-shaping

At the centre of transformative place-shaping, the cog symbolises the core values of 'one world, sacred earth' that hold together the complex performative values and propel the practices throughout the place-shaping processes. The in-depth analysis demonstrates how the values inform each stage and create the distinctive practices of Faiths4Change. The place-shaping cycles are in continual flow, so that, for example, the listening to the eco-system is continually returned to throughout the emergent process.

Whilst the cyclical place-shaping model captures the flow, a singular circle is still not able to capture the complex, networked and generative nature of their place-shaping that spins-off and sparks new change in other places and networks. To capture the outward movement of a more generative process, there was a need to represent how new things could spin-off from the original place-shaping work.

Emergent Cycles of Place-shaping Transformation
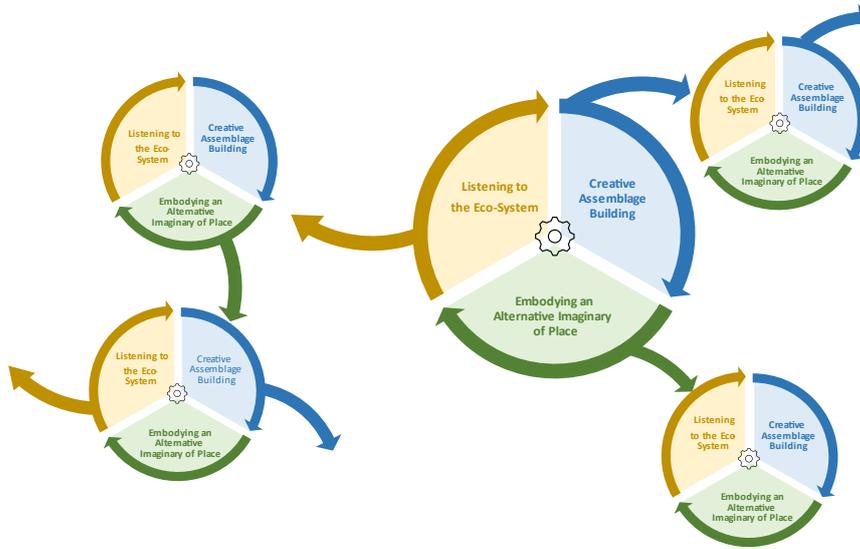
Figure 9: Emergent cycles of place-shaping transformation

This model captures the generative nature of the place-shaping, with spin-offs happening during different stages and continuing outwards. These spin-offs might be new projects, the work of one individual, or an organisation. Projects that Faiths4Change work on are seen to be highly emergent with one project leading to further projects as place-shaping assemblages grow. A local authority participant comments that 'they actually launched their own community cook scheme, and all sorts of things started as a result of working on this project' (P2:8). A faith-based actor notes that Faiths4Change 'came to us originally thinking about asylum seekers. But actually, it soon morphed into more than that' (P2:1). Faiths4Change recognise this in their own practices, with a team member stating that 'quite often, we do more than we set out to do but it's not always in the way that we said we've done' (P1:W1). Projects that begin as a small idea grow into large community-led projects that oversee a whole portfolio of activities in a community centre (P1:W1). A Faiths4Change team member describes how 'we started running a series of pop-up boutiques…but it grew and by the end of the project [when Faiths4Change handed it over the local community leaders] there was a Swap Shop, kid's activities and games, and a few different craft activities, a community cafe and different advice services' (P1:W1).

At an individual level, others in their relational network are inspired to begin their own place-shaping due to their contact with Faiths4Change. One participant commented on the influence Faiths4Change had on her own practice, 'I think I'm going to be better at cascading information… I'm situated quite ideally, to cascade information to many different groups and the community as a whole' (P2:20). A faith-based actor explained how working alongside Faiths4Change helped in 'developing the ability and encouragement to open churches up, to make projects like that. It was very positive…it also allowed me to help manage change' (P2:22). Another faith-based participant was inspired by the work of Faiths4Change and said that they would like to set up a similar gardening project on their retirement (P2:1). Working alongside Faiths4Change can transform people's mindsets and equip them with place-shaping skills. One participant commented how Faiths4Change had enabled them to see how 'one simple idea doesn't come from an army of people who suddenly turn around and say, "we're doing this", it comes from one person to say maybe I'll talk to such and such, because I'm passionate about it. And let's see where it goes' (P2:22). This participant appears to have learnt the essence of transformative place-shaping from Faiths4Change, and this then has potential to spin out in many diverse ways.

5.5 The research's contribution to knowledge and existing theory

Existing theoretical models of place-shaping tend to start with disciplinary fields (socio-economic, political) (Horlings, 2019) or sectors and sector-based leadership (business, local government, trade unions) (Hambleton, 2015). Hambleton (2015), in his focus on urban governance, emphasises the role of place-based leaders that are drawn from civil society, the market and the state. From a sustainability studies perspective, socio-ecological place-shaping research emphasises processes and practices, with Horlings (2015b, p. 258) describing place-shaping as 'practices, co-created between people and their environment'. Whilst the SUSPLACE report (2019, p. 44) recognises the role of values, nevertheless the primary focus of the model of place-shaping is on the broader dominant processes viewed through socio-cultural, political-economic, and ecological processes.

K. O'Brien and Sygna (2013), provide a more integrated model of socio-ecological transformation with greater emphasis on values, identifying three spheres (the personal, political and practical) that are embedded and interact with each other. The personal sphere is described as 'individual and collective beliefs, values and worldviews that shape the ways that the systems and structures (the

political sphere) are viewed, and influence what types of solutions (the practical sphere) are considered "possible"' (K. O'Brien & Sygna, 2013, p. 5). O'Brien & Sygna (2013) emphasise the importance of the interactions between the spheres and the potential for leverage points (Meadows, 1999) that are capable of supporting non-linear transformations. This current research started with a new mindset that begins with networks and relationships rather than sectors and spheres, and the implicit and explicit values that inform place-shaping. The research therefore had to search for patterns and themes and from there build a sense of how they combine in a performative and practical way to inform place-shaping. The research provides new knowledge and understanding of local, socio-ecological place-shaping, by focusing narrowly on values and how they inform place-shaping practices. The cyclical model of place-shaping builds on previous research to develop new insights into a valued-centred approach to place-shaping that is based around three key processes: listening to the eco-system, creative assemblage building and embodying a sacred (re)imaginary of place.

The research responds to an important research gap, expressed by Karen O'Brien at a recent roundtable conference for greater engagement with imagination and a focus on making transparent the underlying values that influence socio-ecological transformation.[34] The roundtable brought together three international academic thinkers: Karen O'Brien (Professor of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo), Ulrich Brand (Professor of International Politics, University of Vienna), and Cheikh Mbow (Director of Future Africa). Cheikh Mbow suggests that 'we need to change our mind structure', moving from top-down to bottom-up thinking that will enable learning from 'real norms and local values'. In a blog post, Karen O'Brien suggests that 'we have to be willing to change the way we think about how change happens, at the individual, collective and systems level, including how changes are interconnected' (2020b). Mbow asserts that what is needed is 'a framework for understanding and for action', through new narratives of transformative actions on the ground that are distinct from the transactional narratives. This research directly addresses these issues.

All of the models described above acknowledge the importance of the interactions between various sectors, spheres and processes, with O'Brien and Sygna (2013, p. 7) stating that 'it is the interactions

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[34] International Science Council. (2021). *What does 'transformation(s) to sustainability' mean today?*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFUr9VD_CQI - retrieved 19.03.2021

across the spheres where the greatest potential for generating non-linear transformation lies'. However, the starting point for each model is based on different sectors and spheres which then move towards integration and the locating of spaces of innovation. Therefore, whilst the models emphasise the movement and inter-relatedness between the various segments, nevertheless the models work to reinforce the long-established boundaries and borders that exist in urban governance and disciplinary fields. This continual focus on structural systems and spheres has resulted in a lack of research into the values of place-shaping and the liminal spaces between sectors and spheres.

A sectoral and segmented approach to place-shaping is visible in urban practices, in ways that impact the interactions and working relationships of individuals and organisations. Meadows (2008) argues that resistance to systemic change can be attributed to the bounded rationality of actors within a system, with different actors working towards different agendas and goals. The research analysis suggests that when place-shaping is led by transcendental, sacred values then this has the potential to bring people together through creative assemblages in new ways. In this way, values can provide an alternative starting point for place-shaping, with 'one world, sacred earth' values embodying a collective sacred re-imagining of place. Such a value-centred approach promotes creative thinking, emergence, and new imaginaries that are co-produced with the local community networks including local people who live in those places. As an intermediary, Faiths4Change act as facilitators who can bring such creative networks together and enable the networks to bring their shared performative values 'into being' (Day, 2010) in unique and practical ways.

5.6 Concluding comments

The new cyclical model of socio-ecological place-shaping and the framework that underpins it represents a significant new contribution to research. Centred on performative values the research suggests how values inform the bottom up, local place-shaping of Faiths4Change as an intermediary organisation. The research suggests that transcendental values, expressed by Faiths4Change as 'one world, sacred earth', act as an important guiding principle for all they do and the ways that they act. The concept of 'transcendental values' aligns closely to values as 'inner dimensions' of sustainability described by K. O'Brien (2013) and provides a detailed case study into the values used by one intermediary organisation. Kenter et al. (2015, p. 97) note that transcendental values are often

latent rather than explicit, and that 'many transcendental societal values are implicit and require group deliberation to be fully brought to light'.

My research 'brings to light' the implicit and latent values that underpin and shape the practices of Faiths4Change as an intermediary organisation. These implicit values are made visible through the qualitative research methodology, which uses creative methods to elicit insights into the performative values of Faiths4Change and their network. The research concludes that place-shaping can be transformative when values are brought together as a set of performative values summarised through the processes of 'listening to the eco-system', 'creative assemblage building' and 'embodying a sacred (re)imaginary of place'. The performative values of the three place-shaping processes embody a sacred (re)imaginary of place that challenges many assumptions about effective place-based practices. Chapter 6 explores the concept of 'the sacred' in more detail and sheds further light on how sacred values can inform place-shaping through a new sacred imaginary of place.

6   Performative Sacred Values, Postsecularity and Emerging Conversations

Chapter 6 considers how the research brings new insights on performative sacred values of urban place-shaping in the context postsecularity . The new place-shaping model describes the sacred values of Faiths4Change and how these become performative alongside their relational network, resulting in the sacred re-imagining of place. This chapter considers in more depth how the sacred is understood in the context of the research and specific ways in which sacred values facilitate urban place-shaping transformations. Firstly, sections 6.1 and 6.2 consider how the sacred is understood and defines a sacred re-imagining of place by drawing on the research analysis. Sections 6.3 and 6.4 then consider how sacred values can break open religion in the context of postsecularity, and how sacred values can subvert and disrupt the dominant neoliberal social imaginary. Finally, section 6.5 considers two recently published papers that suggest a shift in theoretical thinking and practice regarding engagement with religion and the sacred. Firstly, The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) *Sixth Assessment Report: Impacts, Adaption and Vulnerability* (IPCC, 2022c) engages with the importance of values in some depth, drawing on research cited in this literature review and engaging in questions around the role of religion. Secondly, two reports by Baker and Timms for the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Faith and Society (APPG) (2020, 2022) suggest that since the pandemic there has been a significant growth in collaboration between local authorities and faith groups, with faith groups being more systematically involved in service provision. This shift opens up new opportunities in urban governance relationships and partnerships and in chapter 7 the theoretical and practical contribution of this research towards such urban partnerships is discussed further.

6.1   Understanding the sacred

In discussing sacred values and the re-sacralising of place, the research recognises that 'the sacred' like religion is a complex and contested term. Lynch points out that the term 'sacred' is often used without a clear understanding and that in academic and popular usage 'sacred' is often treated simply as a synonym for 'religion' (2014, p. 9). In keeping with the theoretical framework of the research, the sociology of religion is used as a key lens through which to better understand the concept of 'the sacred'. More specifically it draws on theoretical insights from geographies of religion and belief, post-secularity, and lived religion (see chapter 2, section 2.7). This theoretical

framework informs a material, embodied, and spatial approach to exploring the sacred, with an understanding that the sacred can be better understood through an exploration of lived and embodied materiality and the imaginaries that intersect with other imaginaries such as the social, political and cultural (Baker & Dinham, 2018). The research asserts that attending to the sacred can bring about a sacred re-imagining of place that becomes embodied through material, performative values. This sacred re-imagining of place is viewed as transformative in the context of postsecularity, and the complex process of de-sacralising and re-sacralising of religion that are visible in both urban and other landscapes (Cloke & Williams, 2018).

Lynch (2012, p. 14) suggests that 'sacred meanings and sentiments run deep into our sense of ourselves and our world…it is by learning to see the sacred meanings and emotions that power our lives that we can ask about their effects and think again about the sacred forms we might want to nurture and celebrate'. The sacred enables a focus on meaning and meaning making in people's individual and community lives, and this can encourage a sacred re-imagining of place. The purpose of the re-imagining is not to come to a common understanding of the sacred, but to draw together a range of perspectives, meanings and values that enable people to find a common vision that grounds a sense of the sacred of their particular place. In this way, the sacred can bring people together through 'a sense of mutual belonging [that] emerges from a shared sense of sacred reality' (Lynch, 2012, p. 31). That shared 'sense of the sacred' is therefore emergent and unique to a particular people and place, meaning that place-shaping cannot have an entirely pre-determined structure or top-down policy agenda. Instead, the research suggests that if place-shaping is to be effective it needs space to emerge gradually through a set of enabling processes that provide time and space for the unique, sacred identity of a specific place to be re-imagined and developed.

Some ecological and environmental discourses engage with the sacred and the notion of 're-enchantment' and the need to challenge global forces and processes that have brought a dis-enchantment that has 'viewed nature as little more than raw material' (Partridge, 2004, p. 50). But it is also important to note that environmental discourses include views that would reject the contribution of religion towards socio-ecological transformation. Indeed, Christianity is sometimes identified as a central cause of dis-enchantment, with a shrinking of the sacred to exclude all forms of mystery, a neglect of the physical and the body, and an anthropocentric worldview that resulted in a desacralized natural world (Partridge, 2004; M. Weber, 2011). Partridge (2004, p. 51) notes that

'at the heart of much eco-enchantment is a strident critique of Christianity', and although some academics contend that the responsibility of Christianity is an over-statement, it is nevertheless an influential narrative in environmentalism and eco-enchantment. It is important to acknowledge this criticism of Christianity and that some ecological movements and groups would strongly reject a sacred or a sacred re-enchantment narrative. Faiths4Change have developed a network of environmental partners who are comfortable to engaging with Faiths4Change around a sacred narrative, but this does not assume that this is repeated more widely. It is also important to acknowledge that values from many different sources may be used inform socio-ecological transformation.

Where the research does engage with the concept of religion and religious institutions, it does so from the perspective of 'lived religion' (McGuire, 2008) and 'religion of the everyday' (Ammerman, 2014), which emphasise how religion is grounded through social relations in particular places. The notion of 'lived religion' emphasises that religion is neither fixed nor static but fluid, relational and embodied. McGuire (2008, p. 187) comments that 'when we focus on lived religion, we come to a more useful perspective on people's individual uses of religion and other cultural resources for the self-identities and commitments'. These concepts emphasise the openness of the term religion, as well as its performative nature, and this aligns well with the research. Ammerman suggests that 'finding religion in everyday life means looking wherever and however we find people invoking a sacred presence' and this resonates with the research's approach that has listened and draws understanding from people's own varied descriptions of terms including religion, faith, spiritual and the sacred. This approach is supported by Ammerman, who comments that 'if we want to understand religion, we should be looking for the sites where conversation produces and is produced by the spiritual and religious realities taken to be present by those who are participating in these conversations' (2014, p. 197).

The research adopts the term 'sacred' rather than 'spiritual' or 'spirituality' because it aligns more closely with the 'one world, sacred earth' values expressed by Faiths4Change themselves. The term spirituality can be used as a contrastive term to the more dogmatic and authoritarian nature of religion (Woodhead, 2016c), but Faiths4Change do not use 'the sacred' in a deconstructive way that creates distance from religion, but instead they appear to use 'the sacred' as an open and inclusive category that embraces a very wide range of religion, beliefs, and worldviews. This

research grounds an understanding of the sacred from a transcendental, communal and deliberative perspective (Kenter et al., 2015). These three ways of describing the sacred draw together how sacred values as guiding principles or beliefs (transcendental) can become performative through practices and processes (communal and deliberative).This supports McGuire's understanding (2008, p. 199) that when inter-faith groups are brought together around larger ideals but with a continued valuing of 'within-group freedom', a complex practice of bricolage occurs that brings together and blends the diversity. Faiths4Change is seen to achieve this through a complex and emergent set of processes that enable people to enter into a shared journey of (re)connection that begins to embody an alternative and re-sacralised imaginary of place.

6.2   Embodying a sacred (re)imaginary of place

A sacred re-imagining is understood to emerge from within communities themselves and local community networks and partners. A sacred re-imagining stimulates new and creative ideas to flow that beyond what is currently visible and allows space for an optimistic vision with new connections between people, place, and land. It is a re-imagining that brings together a new vision for the flourishing of the eco-system, a flourishing that incorporates both the social and the environmental in a holistic way. Top-down, place-based policy consistently fails to adequately engage with the need for this new imaginary to grow from within the local community, and chapter 7 discusses this in more detail.

The research suggests that engagement with the sacred, from a broad, bricolage perspective (McGuire, 2008), provides a rich source from which to re-imagine place. Such a sacred re-imagining of place can draw on many sources of wisdom, including religion but not restricted to it. Instead, the sacred provides a more inclusive container through which shared values can be held, enriching an understanding of the interconnectedness of people and place, and the values that are embedded in flourishing eco-systems. The research asserts that a sacred re-imagining of place becomes materially embodied through:

> 'a collective process that draws on eclectic sources of place-based wisdoms, including nature-based, indigenous, and religious ones, to enable a (re)newed sacred vision of place and the flourishing of eco-systems'

The sacred re-imagining is a highly emergent process, with each specific place embodying that imaginary in highly contextual and specific ways. It cannot be a top-down process because the wisdoms are strongly rooted in people and geographies.

In discussing the role of religion in sacred (re)imagining, it is important to acknowledge that religious and sacred values are not necessarily progressive nor enabling in terms of transformative values and practices. There is a 'dark side' of postsecular landscapes and a regressive side of religious ethical values in terms of social and political movements that exhibit prejudice and hatred (Cloke & Williams, 2018, p. 44). Therefore, the sacred re-imagining cannot happen in a vacuum, such a re-imagining needs to be informed by a set of transcendental values that can facilitate the re-imagining processes. Faiths4Change demonstrate a set of performative values that aligned well with such a task. The sacred values of 'one world, sacred earth' focus on coming together for social and ecological purposes, so that even if there might be differences in many other ways, these sacred values guide 'the shared journey of re-connection'. The performative values do not guarantee that transformation of place occurs, there is no magical formula, but it is a supportive framework that brings people together and opens opportunities for shared values and common purposes to grow.

6.3   Sacred values and the breaking open of religion

Research on values and sacred values is of particular importance in the UK context where academics are noting a wide societal shift towards values. UK census data over recent decades has charted the major societal move away from religious affiliation, with a rising number of people identifying as 'no religion' and a major shift away from Christianity which has been influential in society in terms of a belief system and a moral and ethical framework (Woodhead, 2016b). Significantly, the 2021 census for England and Wales records for the first time that less than half of the population (46.2%) identify as Christian.[35]   This shift is most marked in the younger generation. Professor Linda Woodhead's research on Generation Z suggests there is a shift from a 'give your life' Christian ethic to a 'live your life' ethic, centred on having individual freedom to discover and express their own life values. Woodhead charts this move towards values more widely in society as well, at an individual,

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[35] Office for National Statistics.(2021). *Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021.*
https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/
religionenglandandwales/census2021 - retrieved 03.03.2023

institutional, and politico-economic level, concluding that 'values are the new religion'. But values do not arise in a vacuum, they come from somewhere, whether that might be family, popular culture or peers, and Woodhead suggests that at best they are 'abstraction and distillations of cultural wisdom'.[36] Woodhead's important insights raise many questions about how individuals, institutions and wider society source and bring together a set of values to live life by. A key question for this research is how to bring together collective values for place-shaping in a context that encourages more eclectic and individual 'live your life' values. This has implications for the work of urban place-shaping and the need to assemble people to work together for the flourishing of the wider eco-system. The research is not suggesting a return to religion in any ideological sense nor is it framing religious sources as superior to other sources. Instead, the research is suggesting that sources of wisdom, including those arising from religion, need to be mined for values that could help society and communities work together towards urgent socio-ecological transformations of urban places.

Bishop James Jones explains the work of Operation Eden and Faiths4Change through a Christian theological framework (P1:2). Faiths4Change have taken these rooted Christian religious beliefs and values and translated them, breaking open those foundational beliefs and values into broader sacred values that enable a wider sacred re-imagining that can connect with a diverse community network. They are seen to move away from 'faith by dogma' and any theological explanation of faith to a 'faith by praxis' approach (P. Cloke & J Beaumont, 2012, p. 41) that emphasises embodied and lived experiences. This shift in Faiths4Change might be viewed as what Habermas (2007) describes as 'assimilation', and a process that 'makes the substance of Christian religious concepts accessible to all citizens, including those of other faiths and none' (P. Cloke & J Beaumont, 2012).

The sacred values of Faiths4Change bridge the dualistic sacred-secular divide and what Lynch describes as the fallacies of both 'the secularist notion that religion has nothing to offer us in terms of substantive wisdom for our lives and the religious notion that secular life is devoid of any substantive moral resource…both are simplistic views' (2012, p. 158). Sacred wisdoms and sacred values breakdown these dualistic constructs and can provide a very important stable centre in the

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[36] Woodhead, L. (2021). *Values are the new religion.* Edward Cadbury Lectures 2021.
https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/ptr/departments/theologyandreligion/events/cadburylectures/
2021/index.aspx - retrieved 27.11.2022

complex and pluralistic public sphere where societies in the West are 'more religious, more secular and more diverse all at once' (Baker, Crisp, & Dinham, 2018, p. 4). The values achieve this because they focus on what Cloke et al. (2019, p. 185) describe as 'religious/secular hybridities' and 'an appeal to alternative ethical subjectivities'.

Faiths4Change have an important role in urban partnerships because they are able to facilitate this 'breaking open' of the religious in ways that allow the 'bubbling up of ethical values' and the enabling of 'cross-over narratives' between a wide variety of urban actors and partners (Cloke et al., 2019, p. 3). This is key to the creative assemblage building that is vital in place-shaping initiatives because the 'breaking open' of religion in this way releases new resources and potentialities due to the creative assemblages that it brings together. Faiths4Change use their sacred, transcendental values to encourage a sacred re-imagining of place, using the sacred as a broad conceptual and ontological container, that can integrate the values of a broad range of actors and partners. When religious values are broken open in this way, they make available sacred wisdoms and resources that can contribute towards a conscious political strategy for the redistributing of power to local communities in ways that transform place.

Faiths4Change appear to thrive in the context of postsecularity and in what describe as 'a highly diverse yet ambivalent terrain' …with 'different types of secularism and the variegated geographies of secularity, religion, and (un) belief' (2019, pp. 183, 155). Their sacred values enable them to open up boundaries between the religious, sacred, and secular, making them more permeable so that communities and partners can explore and discover shared values. The attention of Faiths4Change on the sacred is not seen to be a rejection of religion, but a lowering of boundaries and a broadening out of ontological categories to give wider relational spaces that are accessible and inclusive. They are experts in this religious translation and in the facilitation of 'cross-over narratives' between a diverse range of urban actors, organisations, and institutions. They use their sacred values to reconnect people and place, forming new cross-over narratives and new alliances across religious and secular divides (P. Cloke & J Beaumont, 2012).

Place-shaping is complex and there are sometimes significant barriers to working together at an institutional, networked and community level. In urban partnerships there can be divisions, distrust, a lack of understanding, language barriers and power struggles. Cloke et al. (2019, p. 10) recognise

the importance and challenges of merging religious and secular boundaries 'given that both territories will be required to forgo a privileging of their own position in order to sign up to the pursuit of transformative practices of attentiveness to in-commonness rather than tribal self-interest'. Intermediaries such as Faiths4Change have an important role in navigating people through this messy middle of innovation zones, and their role as translators enables others to overcome some of the barriers to partnership working.

6.4   Sacred values, postsecularity, and the subverting of neoliberalism

The research is informed by an understanding that 'formations of postsecularity are intimately entangled with place, identity, and culture, underlining the importance for scholarship to assess the different types of secularism and the variegated geographies of secularity, religion, and (un) belief that shape and circumscribe the proclivities for postsecularity in different places' (Cloke et al., 2019, p. 155). The performative values of Faiths4Change support the emergence of what Cloke et al. (2019, p. 71) describe as 'the subjectivities of postsecularity', defined as 'the affective desire for greater degree of in-commonness and the cultivation of sensibilities that prioritise 'common good''.

The sacred values expressed as 'one world, sacred earth' can draw together new assemblages and partnerships that can then enable eco-systems to flourish. A sacred socio-ecological re-imagining of place is of particular importance in our contemporary UK context where the corrosive influences of neoliberalism have diminished the sense of belonging in places and eroded the inter-connectedness of life in ways that have been harmful to people and planet. Herbert argues that 'alternative socio-ecological imaginaries form a crucial driving force behind the type of popular mobilisations needed to overturn the immense political and structural barriers to just and sustainable futures beyond ecological crisis' (2021, p. 379). A sacred re-imagining encompasses a new understanding of life and our relationship with others and the natural world. As the global climate emergency becomes increasingly impactful on people's lives there is an urgent need for new socio-ecological imaginaries that can re-orientate and re-envision new ways of living in local places. In the context of postsecularity, where there is increased openness to engaging in religious and sacred dialogues and partnerships at a local governance level, sacred values can provide important shared values to underpin these partnerships.

However, sustainability research recognises that shifting mindsets and worldviews is a difficult task, and there is an urgent need to understand how we might facilitate new socio-ecological imaginaries to support a sustainable future for the planet. The reason this is so challenging is that even those committed to climate action are still deeply influenced by what Herbert describes as 'the colonisation of [our] social imaginary' (2021, p. 337). He notes that this 'restricts capacities to imagine alternative arrangements' and that even activists and others with a vision for change 'are not immune from the pre-occupation of the collective imagination by values and norms of existing society' (Herbert, 2021, p. 337). Larner (2000, p. 5) believes that 'many critical commentators have underestimated the significance of neoliberalism for contemporary forms of governance'. This suggests the importance of partnerships and assemblages that can work collaboratively through their shared values to create 'systems level disturbance' (Westley et al., 2013) at a local level, challenging decisions and practices in ways that are seen to subvert a neoliberal social imaginary (Andrew Williams, 2015; Andrew Williams, Cloke, & Thomas, 2012). But such collective action cannot be solely deconstructive, it also needs to guide the way to a new imaginary through the embodying of alternative values that enable people and places to flourish. The new place-shaping model offers a set of performative values that can be viewed as 'guiding principles' (Grenni, Soini, & Horlings, 2020, p. 417) towards this positive construction of a sacred re-imagining.

Sacred socio-ecological imaginaries can challenge and breakthrough 'the colonisation of our social imaginary' (Herbert, 2021, p. 337) and inspire collective new imaginaries based on a central value of 'one world, sacred earth'. The research captures the performative values of Faiths4Change, and how these values can engage in ways that cause people to reflect on dominant socio-economic worldviews and perspectives. One participant from the faith community noted that 'there's a real shared value in the idea that this land is important beyond its economic value' (P2:16). Another participant commented that 'it feels like a set apart space that actually you could put a car park on…you could sell and build flats…making the church loads of money. [but instead] it becomes kind of beautifully unproductive in terms of outcomes and more productive in terms of healing process' (P2:15). The 'recycling of land' (P2:3), 'beautifying something drab' (P2:1) and restoring 'a useless piece of land on the edge' (P2:2) are all viewed as deeply counter-cultural performative values that subvert neoliberal values. Faiths4Change embody sacred values that challenge a neoliberal, consumerist approach to land and life. These values are seen to challenge faith communities, with one faith-based participant observing that Faiths4Change do not have any land of their own, 'they're

dependent on other people's property, [and on others] allowing them to propagate other people's space. And I think that's quite an impressive thing as well, because that's a massive risk' (P2:3).

When sacred values are at the heart of place-shaping processes they can provide an important challenge to the damaging social and ecological impacts of neoliberalism on urban places. Sacred values are seen to inspire new sacred imaginaries and support new subjectivities described by Cloke et al. (2019, p. 185) as the 'reshaping of desire away from the values of self- interested capitalism towards counter- cultural values of hospitality, generosity, and justice'.

6.5 Academic and practical engagement with religion and sacred values

Increasingly a range of academics and thinkers are recognising the importance of values in socio-ecological transformation and the specific contribution that religion and the sacred can make to those values. Notably, both ecologists and economists are drawing on ancient sacred wisdoms in the search for values beyond capitalism. Suzanne Simard (2021), the ecologist who first identified the important role of mycorrhizal fungi, draws inspiration from the indigenous religions of Canada. Jason Hickel (2020) writing as an economic anthropologist on degrowth, draws on the values of Shamanism.

This interest in religion and sacred values is also opening up new conversations within climate crisis conversations and in local urban governance partnerships. This is a shift noted by one interview participant who stated that 'certainly not that long ago…the regeneration world wouldn't have expected faiths to play a part, only just recently have faiths come back into the picture' (P2:12). This comment captures a wider shift seen through a new level of engagement with religion and faith at a national and international policy level, arguably precipitated by the multiple crises that the UK faces that include the climate crisis, the impacts of the pandemic, and the cost-of-living crisis.

Three recent reports are evidence of the shifts taking place and are of significance to the focus of this research project. Two reports by the All Parliamentary Group on Faith and Society (Baker & Timms, 2020, 2022) focus on the contribution of faith communities during the UK Covid-19 pandemic and demonstrate how in the intervening years faith groups have been more systematically involved in service provision in partnership with local authorities. The third report is

the sixth assessment report on climate change by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The sixth assessment report includes three working group reports and of particular relevance are the findings of working group II, '*Impacts, Adaption and Vulnerability' (2022c)*, and working group III, '*Mitigation of Climate Change'(2022d)*.

6.5.1   The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report 2022: working groups II and III

The IPCC Climate Change 2022 working group reports indicate that there is an increased recognition that religious values may have an important role in responses to the climate crisis. This is a significant shift both in terms of the recognition that values matter and in acknowledging the potential role that religious ethical values may play. The working group III report includes a section on '*psychology, individual beliefs and social change'*, with some reflection on the motivations for change and the 'deeper intrinsic value of concern for others over extrinsic values' (2022b, p. 68). There is recognition that 'religion could play an important role in enabling collective action on climate mitigation by providing cultural interpretations of change and institutional responses that provide resources and infrastructure to sustain collective actions' (2022b, p. 83).

Of particular note for my own research is that the IPCC report also reflects the role religion can play in providing leverage for inner transformations and as a resource for religious symbols or metaphors for transformation. Drawing on academic papers on socio-ecological values, including the research by Ives and Kidwell (2019), there is recognition that religion has a role in providing pathways for inner, values-centred transformations and can provide leverage points for inner transformation towards sustainability (IPCC, 2022b). In the working group paper III, a section on '*psychology, individual beliefs and social change'* the report focuses again on the need to shift values, noting that 'an inner transition within an individual typically involves a person gaining a deepening sense of peace and a willingness to help others, as well as protecting the climate and the planet' (IPCC, 2022a, p. 1737). These comments in the IPCC report suggest that this current research makes a timely and much-needed contribution to this important area of research that is gaining global attention in sustainability policy.

6.5.2   An All-Party Parliamentary Group Report (2020, 2022)

Both APPG reports '*Keeping the Faith: Partnerships between faith groups and local authorities during and beyond the pandemic '* and '*Keeping the Faith 2.0: Embedding a new normal for*

partnership working in post-pandemic Britain' (Baker & Timms, 2020, 2022) draw on research by the Faiths and Civil Society Unit, Goldsmiths (University of London). The 2020 report concludes that the Covid-19 pandemic has begun to shift discourse to a deeper level, with greater political awareness of the vital role that faith organisations and institutions have had in supporting local communities in a wide variety of ways. The research data from 194 local authorities reveals that: 67% of local authorities report an increase in partnerships with faith groups since the start of the pandemic, 91% of local authorities describe their experience of partnership with faith groups as 'very positive' or 'positive', and 93% of local authorities consider wider sharing of best practice in co-production between faith groups and local authorities to be 'very important' or 'important' (p. 4). Professor Chris Baker, the author of the report, suggests that future priorities need to focus on 'deeper co-production of goods and services, rooted in named shared values' (2020, p. 4).

The more recent APPG report (Baker & Timms, 2022) shifts attention from the emergency response needed at the start of the pandemic and reflects on what might support partnership working looking ahead. The report highlights the importance of values, suggesting that 'the capability of faith/secular partnerships to build back better is that 'shared values' are much more likely to lead to 'shared outcomes' (2022, p. 3). The report highlights the importance of promoting innovation and suggests the need for a shift in emphasis from more bureaucratic and technical co-production approaches to those of co-creation that 'demarcate a more radically open space' (2022, p. 43). This research project provides research-led insights that can inform the development of shared values for local place-based partnership working, and chapter 7 considers the potential for small intermediaries such as Faiths4Change to play an important, and often hidden role, in urban innovation zones. The research suggests that investment in such intermediaries and innovation zones could make an important contribution to local place-based innovation.

The research's new place-shaping framework makes visible sacred values as inner transformations and how a sacred re-imagining can be part of a 'virtuous cycle' that enables individual-level and wider social changes that ultimately benefit the climate. Both the IPCC report and the APPG reports draw attention to the importance of values, both at a personal level and a partnership level, and both encourage policy to engage with religious institutions as significant civil society organisations (Baker & Timms, 2020, p. 4; IPCC, 2022b, p. 83). However, values can be a very nebulous concept and difficult to apply practically in contexts such as those referred to in these reports. This research

project therefore makes an important contribution to research by making visible how values can inform practices and demonstrating how sacred values can guide a journey of (re)connection between the sacred, people, and place. But shifting mindsets, values and worldviews is a huge challenge, and Meadows, whose work is influential in terms of leverage points, acknowledges that 'magical leverage points are not easily accessible, even if we know where they are and which direction to push on them. There are no cheap tickets to mastery' (1999, p. 19). This is supported by other UN reports that state that 'a transition to sustainability demands profound changes in understanding, interpretative frameworks and broader cultural values, just as it requires transformations in the practices, institutions and social structures' (UN, 2012, p. 447). Changes to dominant values at any level is hugely challenging because it requires changing the dominant neoliberal paradigm and the constructed hegemony that locks in collective mindsets and values. It is in this context that sacred values and the processes that reconnect the sacred to place can provide deep drivers for change, providing a set of values that encourage the flourishing of people and place. The concept of 'drivers' rather than 'leverages' seems to better describe how sacred values are positioned at the centre of place-shaping and from this stable centre are able to drive forward a set of processes that enable a new socio-ecological imaginary.

However, new socio-ecological imaginaries need time to develop because they involve a radical and profound shift in 'envisioning and progressing the transformation of relationships between human society and the rest of the planetary environment' (Herbert, 2021, p. 374). Khasnabish and Haiven (2015, p. 24) explore the notion of 'radical imagination' as a collective practice that emerges as people work together to find ways to confront the inequalities and injustices of the dominant social order, as a way of opening horizons of possibility and generating movements toward new social worlds. Herbert (2021, p. 379) suggests that new imaginaries become possible by focusing more on socio-ecological imaginaries and 'a processual understanding of space–time', made possible by community assemblies of 'activists, scholars and citizens coming together to envision desired socio-ecological futures'. This research provides a framework for undertaking such collective exercise at a local level, with a new sacred re-imagining of place to guide the three stages of 'listening to the eco-system', 'creative assemblage building' and 'embodying a sacred (re)imaginary of place'.

6.6   Concluding comments

This thesis makes an important and timely contribution to the renewed interest in the UK on the role of faith groups in urban partnerships and in the contribution that values make to place-based transformations. The research provides insights into performative sacred values as a set of processes that can be highly effective in guiding local, place-shaping assemblages and practices. It adds to research on postsecularity by bringing new insights into the 'emergent permutations across religious and secular landscapes' in its variegated expressions (Cloke et al., 2019, p. 185), contributing to the work on 'spiritual landscapes' (Dewsbury & Cloke, 2009).

The Christian foundation of Faiths4Change informed their values, but their religious roots have been broken open and translated into more accessible sacred values that are able to connect well in the context of postsecularity. The sacred values of Faiths4Change act as a centre-point and driver for place-shaping transformations, guiding a sacred re-imagining of place and propelling forward distinctive place-shaping processes. A sacred re-imagining of place is a vital first stage for transformation because it enables new possibilities to emerge beyond the dominating influences of neoliberalism that have diminished local places. Sacred values can provide a strong alternative, that can help communities and local partners to (re)connect with place and find ways to bring together new place-shaping potentialities.

Chapter 7 considers the implications of the research for place-based policy and policymakers. It grounds the research practically, highlighting how sacred values as a set of performative processes can enable communities and partnerships to work together towards place-based urban transformations.

7   Socio-ecological Place-shaping Values: Reflecting on Urban Place-based Policy

This research examines urban place-shaping from the perspective of urban governance and a case study of an intermediary organisation that operates in the complex, liminal in-between spaces of urban relational networks. In positioning the research from this perspective, it recognising the inter-connectedness of urban processes and partnerships and the 'profound reshaping and reweaving of relations between market, state, civil society and individuals' (Gauthier et al., 2013, p. 15) that views the new political world as one of 'complexity and multiplicity of levels and types of governance' (Hirst & Thompson 1996 p. 183). This chapter returns to reflect on urban governance in the light of the research, considering how the research relates to the current UK Government's approach to urban place-based policy. The research is small-scale and local and therefore there is no attempt to suggest that the findings are normative in the findings from specific place-based projects. However, the framework aims to extract underlying values that can serve as broader guiding principles, and these may provide wider insightful reflections on values-centred, place-based transformation.

In August 2023, Local Councils in the UK predicted that each council would face on average a £33m deficit by 2025-26, with an overall £5.2bn shortfall by April 2026 even after 2.5bn of planned spending cuts.[37] These pressures at local government level are at a critical level, and this may open new opportunities for research-led insights to inform conversations and policy directions. Such new opportunities for engagement on issues related to faith and values are supported by three reports cited in chapter 6, the APPG reports 'Keeping the Faith: Partnerships between faith groups and local authorities during and beyond the pandemic ' and 'Keeping the Faith 2.0: Embedding a new normal for partnership working in post-pandemic Britain' (Baker & Timms, 2020, 2022) and 'The Sixth Assessment Report on Climate Change' by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2022). This chapter builds on the evidence of these new opportunities for engagement, suggesting that what is needed is a change of mindset informed by bottom-up place-based thinking. Whilst effecting significant change at a national government level is challenging, nevertheless there may be new opportunities to influence change at a local government level and within some local governance networks.

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[37] BBC News, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-66428191 - retrieved 22.08.2023

This chapter refers to the New Deal for Communities (NDC) initiative (Batty, Beatty, Foden, et al., 2010), a national, long-term place-based initiative that was extensively evaluated, since this has important insights in considering current place-based policy. Section 7.1 begins with a review of the current UK Government's place-based policy, and this has seen a considerable amount of flux in recent years due to the changes in government posts and departments. This section provides a brief overview of two Government documents, the 'Levelling Up the UK' White Paper (Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities, 2022) and the 'Partnerships for People and Place' project (July 2021).[38] The scrutiny of these documents, in light of the NDC evaluation and my research, suggests there is an ongoing over-reliance on a top-down, structural approach to place-shaping and a corresponding lack of engagement with bottom-up, emergent approaches at a local level. Section 7.2 suggests that innovation zones and local intermediary networks are vital for socio-ecological place-shaping transformation, because of their ability to act as 'agents of change' and as facilitators of transformations. The research suggests that highly effective partnerships thrive when they are drawn together around shared values and sacred values that break open religious ones can provide a strong foundation for collaborative partnerships working towards socio-ecological place-shaping transformation.

Section 7.3 considers six priority areas for policymakers involved in local place-based policy, with these insights arising from the research findings and the values that inform effective socio-ecological place-shaping. These priorities pose a challenge to policymakers because they are counter-cultural and require the adoption of a new mindset. It requires a commitment to invest in local intermediary networks that have the local knowledge and skills to deliver place-based initiatives that are effective and sustainable. It also requires a recognition that such initiatives have the potential to 'spin out' in multiple ways beyond specific projects, thereby creating place-shaping transformations beyond the scope of a single project. Place-shaping is complex, emergent, and unpredictable, and using simplistic measures to assess change risks missing impacts and transformations that are beyond a narrow evaluative framework. The six priority areas for policymakers informed by the research are: adopting a new mindset; valuing gentle action; supporting local, trusted intermediary networks;

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[38] Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities. (2021). *Partnerships for people and place: guidance for local expressions of interest.* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/partnerships-for-people-and-place/partnerships-for-people-and-place-guidance-for-local-expressions-of-interest#introduction – retrieved 28.12.2021

listening to communities and 'seeing in the round'; focusing on new and latent resources within local communities; and redistributing power and 'making space at the table'.

7.1   Reviewing the UK Government place-based policy

There is a long and complex history of place-based policy directions in the UK (see literature review 1.5), and over many decades successive UK Governments have tried to tackle the complex challenges involved in developing and implementing policies that will enable urban places to flourish. In July 2021, with the relaxing of the UK Covid-19 restrictions, the UK Government announced a levelling up agenda.[39] Since that announcement, the UK has entered a much more challenging time with escalating fuel costs and a wider economic recession that is putting extreme pressure on local communities, particularly those in more deprived areas. In autumn 2022, the collective impact of the global pandemic, the environmental crisis, and the rising cost of living put added pressure on the Government's levelling up agenda.

The 'Levelling Up the UK' White Paper (2022, p. 50) directly contrasts 'steaming ahead' and 'strong' places that have high levels of income and high growth rates, with 'left behind places' and 'weak' places that have vicious spirals of low income and weak growth. The 'left behind places' are described in stark terms as having 'unsafe and unclean streets, a lack of natural, cultural and leisure facilities, and a loss of civic trust and pride'. Such a narrative sets up a negative, deficit-based way of looking at local communities, and fails to recognise their strengths and the potentialities that lie within them. Furthermore, this 'left behind' narrative reinforces stereotypical images of deprived community that fails to recognise political responsibility for growing regional inequalities and results in increased stigmatising and blame on local regions and communities themselves. Boswell et al. (2020) suggest that deprivation is actually a far more complex picture nationally, with 'nested deprivation' dispersed across the country in small pockets that are often close to affluent localities. My research suggests that transformative place-shaping begins by seeing places differently, which means 'seeing in the round', a values-led approach that starts with careful listening to communities and the building of trusted relationships so that communities can be enabled themselves to (re)discover a new imaginary of place.

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[39] Johnson, B. (2021). *The Prime Minister's levelling up speech in full. https://www.conservatives.com/news/2021/the-prime-minister-s-levelling-up-speech-in-full* - retrieved 13.03.2023

Place-based policy often aspires to empower places by passing on greater control and decision-making to local leaders and local communities, and the Levelling Up White Paper includes the aspiration to 'empower decision-makers in local areas by providing leaders and businesses with the tools they need', with one of their key investments being 'improving communities and place' (2022, p. 16). Alongside the Levelling Up White Paper, in July 2021 the Government announced a new 'Partnerships for People and Place' project. The five-million-pound project is working with 15 pilot projects with an overarching aim to see 'local communities who are empowered to develop and deliver solutions to the problems that matter to them, whilst being supported in an efficient and joined-up way by both central and local government'.[40] The pilot projects aim to improve partnership working through improved coordination between central government, other government bodies and local communities. It is a highly structured, outcomes-orientated approach that uses five key objectives for local projects: analyse, test, connect, learn, and propose. The funding includes having a government department project team (from what is now called the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) in local projects who will lead on issues including management, governance, and co-ordinating a mapping exercise using external consultants. The projects will set measurable outcomes through an early mapping exercise and then use those outcome measures to evaluate the effectiveness of the project on its completion.

The 'Partnerships for People and Places Guidance Document', acknowledges that 'there are many incredible examples of local partnerships across the country coming together to deliver better outcomes for local places and communities'. This current research supports this, as do the APPG reports (Baker & Timms, 2020, 2022) discussed in chapter 6, which show a growth in partnership working between local authorities and faith groups during and beyond the pandemic. But is appears that the Levelling Up the UK White Paper and the 'Partnerships for People and Place' project both fail to learn from previous initiatives such as New Deal for Communities (NDC) (Batty, Beatty, & Foden, 2010)) and the APPG reports (Baker & Timms, 2020, 2022). Government policy continues to have a strong top-down focus and a deficit mindset towards more deprived urban local communities, and this results in approaches such as a 'Partnerships for People and Place' project

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[40] Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities. (2021). *Partnerships for people and place: guidance for local expressions of interest.* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/partnerships-for-people-and-place/partnerships-for-people-and-place-guidance-for-local-expressions-of-interest#introduction – retrieved 28.12.2021

that uses external experts to provide management, governance, and the mapping of local places. This ongoing top-down approach reveals a 'do to' attitude to local communities rather than 'working with' local communities. The NDC evaluation report, the APPG reports, and this research all highlight the need to start from a different position, and all place an emphasis on working with communities by drawing on existing bottom-up partnerships and networks or by enabling the development of new ones. Currently, place-based policy lacks recognition of the potential in such approaches and this is a missed opportunity, supported by the authors of the NDC evaluation who state that 'it is important that policymakers and practitioners learn from the evidence base from this most innovative, intensive and well evidenced of neighbourhood regeneration initiatives' (Batty, Beatty, Foden, et al., 2010, p. 45).

The rest of this chapter considers how the current research can inform new approaches to place-based policy and how it contrasts with current Government place-based policy and practice. Firstly, section 7.2 considers the importance of investing in innovation zones and local intermediary organisations, as important 'agents of change' in local communities. This is a radically different approach and a different mindset to current place-based policy.

7.2   Innovation zones and intermediary networks as agents of change

The literature review considers the nature of intermediary organisations such as Faiths4Change, and the importance of their positionality as 'in-between actors' who 'facilitate, broker, negotiate, and disseminate knowledge and other resources' (Beveridge, 2019, p. 181). Faiths4Change strongly align with this description of an intermediary and an 'in-between actor' that uses this positionality to bring about collaborative place-shaping transformations. Hamann and April (2013, p. 12) use the term 'collaborative intermediary organisations', and this helpfully emphasises the highly relational role that intermediaries such as Faiths4Change play in building diverse assemblages in urban networks. Faiths4Change operate in 'interstitial spaces' that have opened up in networked urban governance (Beveridge, 2019), using their skills to navigate these highly complex and liminal spaces. This liminality is important because it increases their relational network and their ability to bring diverse actors, organisations, and institutions into new, innovative, and creative assemblages. The work of Faiths4Change in liminal innovation zones is especially important for institutions (such as local government and religious institutions) because they often lack agility and networked ways of

working. The positionality of Faiths4Change and their skills in navigating these liminal spaces are central to their ability to build partnerships, identify and assemble new resources, and propel forward change. Through a set of enabling skills, they can achieve significant place-shaping transformations by drawing people together around a core value of 'one world, sacred earth'.

As a key theorist in the field of evolutionary economics, Mazzucato (2018) proposes the theory of 'eco-systems of innovation', that are deeply embedded in a network of actors and institutions across the public, private and voluntary sectors. It places an emphasis on collaboration and the ability to 'co-create value in different spaces with new forms of collaboration focused on problem solving'. These 'systems of innovation' are expressed through dynamic links between different actors that create a more progressive agenda that is open to experimentation and risk-taking (Mazzucato, 2018, p. xxiv). Mazzucato acknowledges that there is a research gap in terms of understanding exactly how such innovative partnerships are 'acted out' in specific contexts, and the current research directly informs this gap. Mazzucato (2018, p. 29) recognises that what is often ignored in the debate 'is the exact role that each actor realistically plays in the "bumpy" and complex risk landscape', and there is a need to better understand how such systems of innovation are actually 'working things out' on the ground (Lazonick, 2019, p. 24), in order to begin to recognise what is critical for the success of innovation strategy and the building of transformative social relations and assemblages. This research uses the case study of Faiths4Change to show how as an intermediary they 'work things out', and how local, urban place-shaping initiatives can create such 'systems of innovation'. The research's narrow focus on relationality and networks (Farias & Bender, 2010; Latour, 2005) and the values that can underpin them, provide detailed insights into the complex relational assemblages that enable such innovation. By intentionally stepping back from structures, the research entered into the messy relational assemblages 'in order to understand and identify the complex entanglements' (Baker, James, & Reader, 2015, p. 256).

The research provides detailed insights into the performative values of Faiths4Change and how they use these skills in urban innovation zones to increase collaborative work and to bring about creative partnerships that can bring about innovative place-based initiatives. Their values inform these practices through the three stages of place-shaping identified by the research, listening to the eco-system, creative assemblage building, and embodying a sacred (re)imaginary of place. Faiths4Change as an intermediary enable others to navigate their way through the messy middle of

innovation zones, with their role as translators of religion and facilitators of 'cross-over narratives' (Cloke et al., 2019) enabling others to overcome barriers to partnership working. Greater attention on shared/sacred values in innovation zones can help develop trusting partnerships and move relationships on from what Dinham describes as 'a pragmatic space in which the relationship of religion and belief to the public sphere is left fuzzy at best' (2020, p. 153). The research suggests that performative sacred values can open up both dialogical and practical spaces that enable more meaningful relationships to grow in what can often be, in the context of postsecularity, 'a rather awkward and contradictory space' (Graham, 2013, p. 53). The research interviews with the relational network of Faiths4Change indicated that partners from outside of faith-based organisations and religious institutions showed that they valued Faiths4Change as an intermediary that could help them understand and navigate religious institutions and faith-based organisations.

Intermediaries such as Faiths4Change, like entrepreneurs, operate in highly complex and fluid contexts and this means they need to be highly skilled boundary or border workers (Larner & Craig, 2005) who are agile and able to use their values to bridge easily across a broad range of groups and institutions, navigating complex spaces and relationships. Research by Hamann and April (2013, p. 20), writing from a sustainability studies perspective, suggests that intermediary organisations working in networks require 'unusual' leadership skills. They highlight four key leadership characteristics that align with my own research insights with Faiths4Change; an interest in working and navigating across divergent values, an openness to collaboration, an ability to deal with high levels of complexity and ambiguity, and an ability to view conflict and tension as an opportunity for creativity and innovation. Faiths4Change demonstrate these key skills of a collaborative intermediary, and these skills help them to navigate complex network relationships that demand the skills of 'open innovation diplomacy' (Hamann & April, 2013, p. 20). They use these skills and their performative values to assemble partnerships, and in so doing they create new potentiality by persuading 'different organisations and ecosystems…to collaborate and bridge the divides that exist between traditionally separated domains' (Baccarne, Logghe, Schuurman, & De Marez, 2016, p. 24; Carayannis & Campbell, 2011).

Faiths4Change have the ability to make connections across and between a very wide relational network including, faith communities, local authorities, and social, educational and environmental organisations and charities. Their ability to cross boundaries is key to their transformative place-

shaping work because it can unlock patterns of working that could otherwise remain segmented and separated. This would seem to be key to the capacity to generate new resources, something highlighted in Moriggi's research (2019, p. 13) that place-based social entrepreneurs have the capability to 'not only draw, mobilize or leverage existing resources but also create new ones'. My research supports Moriggi's findings but suggests that intermediaries are best able to mobilise and leverage resources when they collaborate and work together in trusted networks of intermediaries. These trusted partners support each other, can 'hit the ground running', and are able to form creative assemblages for specific purposes. Therefore, there needs to be a greater investment into local innovation zones and the small intermediaries of long-term trusted partners who work within them. It is not possible to assess the net worth of these small intermediaries independently, because their greatest asset is the relational networks' collective worth and their agile capabilities. Given the socio-economic context of the UK, these skills are vital in releasing greater potential in partnerships. However, for policymakers to invest in small intermediary networks in local innovation zones it would require a significant change of mindset, and it would require a deeply counter-cultural approach, and this is discussed in the next section.

7.3   Five priority areas for place-based policy

The research suggests that Government place-based policy needs to pay greater attention to six key priority areas as a starting point that will begin to shift policy towards enabling more effective, local socio-ecological place-shaping transformation. These six areas are: adopting a new mindset; valuing gentle action; supporting local, trusted intermediary networks; listening to communities and 'seeing in the round'; focusing on new and latent potentialities within communities; and redistributing power and making space at the table for intermediaries.

7.3.1   Adopting a new mindset

The research suggests that intermediaries have an important facilitative role in innovation zones, especially in supporting larger institutions such as local authorities and religious institutions who often lack the agility and adaptability to thrive in those zones. Intermediaries are seen to be critical in urban place-shaping transformations, bringing resources together in innovation zones where creative assemblages can be brought together through intermediary networks. If the capabilities of such intermediary networks are to be fully utilised, then policymakers need a new mindset that is more attuned to networked approaches that engage with complexity and emergence.

Networked approaches to place-shaping require greater attention to bottom-up approaches that can gradually emerge as networks of intermediaries are brought together and focus on creative assemblages. The potential of such a network cannot be fully understood at the beginning of an initiative because the potential becomes visible over time as the place-shaping processes repeatedly cycle round. New possibilities and opportunities can gradually arise in local contexts, as seen with Faiths4Change partnering with builders who happen to be working locally and have equipment and people to clear land as well as leftover resources to build structures such as raised beds for gardens. Unlike more structural approaches to place-shaping that focus on existing resources, intermediaries in innovation zones have the creative imagination to bring new assemblages together and generate entirely new assets. These highly creative, emergent place-shaping processes can also bring unpredictable results and a 'spinning out' effect that has broader benefits, with Faiths4Change explaining that plans are 'normally shifted along the path during the process of the project…quite often, we do more than we set out to do but it's not always in the way that we [had planned to do it]' (W 1). Even if there are certain fixed objectives due to funding, their work often encourages things to emerge on the edges and they actively look for opportunities to shape place in ways that are beyond the scope of the project (P1:W1). Given the economic constraints on both the Government and local authorities, such approaches that are capable of generating new resources are essential.

The research's place-shaping model is therefore understood to be counter-cultural because it has a built-in expectations of emergence as an alternative to a dominant place-based policy that focuses on pre-set targets and narrowly defined outcome measures, as seen in the Government's 'Levelling up the UK' white paper (2022). The measuring of outcomes is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, but such measures need to align closely with the processes of place-shaping rather than attempting to dictate them. As such, any evaluation of place-shaping should allow space for emergence and the unexpected. The use of pre-determined metrics is problematic because it over-simplifies a highly complex set of processes and locks in expected outcomes very early on. This approach risks restricting creativity and emerging ideas, and it also means that outcomes may fail to capture creative work that has emerged on the edges of targeted outcomes. This is illustrated in an interview participant's comment about Faiths4Change, 'they'll see it in the round - they'll obviously deliver what's been asked but…they'll do it in a way which is more likely to

result into wider positive spin-offs and connections' (P2:12). Another local authority participant comments that 'they're not delivering in a mechanical way, which could be easy to do to get your output to tick the boxes to prove you've done the work. But they're working in a human way, which is centred on where these groups are at' (P2:13). Setting outcomes early on in place-shaping processes is likely to miss such creative emergences although Faiths4Change appear adept at meeting the requirements of a contract whilst also being creative around the edges. One team member comments that 'funding bids that are really clear on what we need to do. If we can do extra fantastic, if things can be added on, then that bolsters a project. But there's always a baseline of outputs and outcomes that we will have to hit' (P1:W1).

This highly creative and emergent approach to place-shaping challenges top-down, outcomes-led approaches that focus on plans that anticipate linear, pre-determined change and measurable outcomes. Place-shaping is highly emergent, complex, and fluid, and pre-determined outcomes of change can easily fail to capture where and how change is happening. The place-shaping of Faiths4Change can spin out in unpredictable ways that are difficult to track and identify, and from a post-structuralist perspective place-shaping is likened to the mycorrhizal networks that are highly integrated and inter-connected. This metaphor highlights the challenge because it is impossible to understand the potential of mycorrhizal fungi if you ignore the network and only focus on a single thread of hyphae. The challenge for policymakers is how to embrace such a new mindset and to re-assess the importance and potential of such approaches to place-shaping.

7.3.2   Listening to communities and 'seeing in the round'

The research's place-shaping cycle emphasises 'listening to the eco-system' as essential in place-shaping processes. This listening opens up new conversations, understandings, possibilities and imaginaries. Without taking time to listen there is a lack of awareness of place, and local communities are likely to be marginalised in a process that is too top-down and too prescriptive. But this is not just about local community engagement, this process is also essential for local partnerships to develop and grow. Research in the business field supports this, suggesting that too little attention is given to the importance of interdisciplinary trust. Hakanen, Kossou, and Takala (2011) conclude that trust grows slowly and is vulnerable to roadblocks and that it requires knowledge of each other, rapport and good communication, and should be based on shared responsibilities among network members. The research suggests that Government policy on place

pays too little attention to listening and the vital role it takes in building trusting relationships and in grounding place-shaping work in specific contexts.

The early stage of place-shaping brings people together and allows space for creativity and innovation to be brought into the second stage, but this early stage cannot be rushed. Hakanen et al. (2011, p. 45) suggest that 'informal meetings were very important to build 'we-spirit' and generate innovative thinking'. The research supports this and suggests that policy tends to expect partnership working to develop quickly, without an understanding that the initial listening phase impacts the second phase. Without careful listening there is a lack of opportunity to build trusted relationships and develop shared values. There is also a lack of understanding about places and the many complex influences that have shaped them. 'Listening to the eco-system' enables Faiths4Change and others to see things differently, to reflect, and to draw together varied perspectives on a local place. Deep listening is a reflective action, that does not allow pre-conceived ideas or early impressions to dominate but gives space for new insights and perspectives to emerge.

7.3.3   Valuing gentle action

The research's place-shaping cycle prioritises careful listening and this is deeply counter-cultural because it requires a slow and gentle approach that is attentive to the eco-system and values all that currently exists in a local place. Careful listening aligns with the concept of 'gentle action' (Peats, 2016) that is drawn from a theoretical framework of complexity theory and complex fractals. Gentle action refers to 'new types of activities and actions that can be taken by an organisation that is sensitive to the dynamics of its surrounding environment'. It is gentle because it holds a 'creative suspension' that relates to the holding back of actions until the necessary listening and watchfulness have taken place. For Faiths4Change this 'creative suspension' occurs in the first phase of the place-shaping framework, 'the listening to the eco-system'. This is an essential moment, a gentle approach, that prioritises the 'seeing in the round' and thereby gains the vital knowledge and wisdom for carefully crafted actions. Peat (2016, p. 5) explains that this creative suspension has the effect of 'dissolving rigidities and rendering a system more flexible', and in place-shaping this opens up the pathways for creative assemblage building. Gentle action requires both attentiveness and slowness, so that 'by remaining sensitive to what is going on it may be possible to become aware of the whole nature of the organisation [or place in terms of place-shaping], of its values, the way its

information flows, its internal relationships, dynamics and, in particular, its fixed and inflexible responses' (Peats, 2016, p. 5).

The slow and gentle approach to place-shaping is also essential in giving space for new ideas to germinate and grow, and for resources (both human and non-human) that may be latent in communities to assemble. It allows space for innovations to emerge and for assemblages to 'co-create new values in different spaces with new forms of collaboration' (Mazzucato, 2018, p. xxiv). This highly emergent approach to place-shaping is very demanding because of the uncertainty and lack of control that it gives Faiths4Change in local place-shaping. Investment needs to be high over an extended period of time, until local communities are ready to lead projects for themselves in a sustainable way. This is perhaps the 'faithful diligence' referred to by one interview participant (P2:3). This highly relational approach that invests deeply in partnership working and especially with the local community itself, means that 'place-shaping' rather than 'place-making' best describes the of the work of Faiths4Change. 'Place-shaping' captures a more sensitive and gentle approach, expressed by Faiths4Change through a core transcendental value of 'one world, sacred earth'.

The need for gentle and slow action is deeply counter-cultural and rarely reflected in policy because it is too often focused on short-term goals. Place-based policy often fails to recognise however that slow and gentle action has the potential to be deeply transformative over time, and that it may therefore have the potential for greater and more sustainable change.

7.3.4   *Supporting local, trusted intermediary networks*

One of the striking features of Faiths4Change is their ongoing ability to remain highly agile and adaptable. This has in part grown out of necessity and the need to survive during the years of austerity. But agility and adaptability are also central to thriving in innovation zones where policies, priorities, and funding streams are in constant development and flux. This requires intermediary actors such as Faiths4Change to be highly entrepreneurial, and Faiths4Change collaborate with other intermediaries who also possess these skills. The trusted network of Faiths4Change describe how they share ideas on resources and contacts (P2:17), run things past a partner first (P2:8), get 'a bit further on in maybe developing ideas, there's already a foundation there' (P2:22) and talk about developing a new idea (P2:4). Developing trusting relationships takes time, but this can be highly effective for place-shaping because they are then able to generate networked resources that are

capable of excellent outcomes. Currently, place-based policy stifles this by setting rigid timetables that limit relationship building and pay too little attention to building trust.

The NDC evaluation suggested that there was a need for 'year zero' that was focused solely on tasks such as employing the right people, selecting effective management systems, and establishing processes for community involvement' (Batty, Beatty, & Foden, 2010, p. 41). This insight supports the finding of the research that place-shaping begins slowly and needs to allow space for a new imaginary to emerge through listening and relationship building. The research suggests that this is a vital stage because 'listening to the eco-system' is a careful, gentle, and slow process that ensures the building of strong foundations. The pilots for the 'Partnerships for People and Place' projects are only two years duration, and so this dictates a faster pace and negates the possibility of a 'year zero' and a careful listening approach. But building trusted partnerships and networks is what enables such high levels of agility, because they can come together quickly and be opportunistic in their responses. In the research, long-term trusted partners of small, local intermediaries are seen to operate in an 'entrepreneurial eco-system' (Scheidgen, 2020), with trusted partners operating at a similar level of agility and therefore able to come together and 'hit the ground running' (P2:8). These eco-systems are not static but are in a constant state of flux, requiring networking skills to build relationships, navigate changes, and maintain partnerships. This highlights how complex socio-ecological place-shaping is and the skills needed in the network to bring together assemblages with a high level of agility and adaptability.

The first listening stage takes seriously the particularity of place and grounds place-based approaches into specific context by listening to people's stories, histories and herstories, and by adopting a gentle approach described as a 'carefulness about geography'. The research suggests that intermediaries such as Faiths4Change who are already embedded in local communities are best placed to carry out this listening and facilitating role because they have already got a good knowledge of local communities and have developed some level of trust. A local authority participant interviewed in the research recognised that even though they knew their local communities well they were not the best people to reach them. This highlights the weakness of policy informing the 'Partnerships of People and Place' project, and the use of MHCLG (now Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) project teams to lead central project

management, facilitate conversations, coordinate mapping exercises, and lead evaluations with external consultants.

The research suggests that intermediaries need to be understood as a complex network of highly interdependent people/organisations rather than discrete, independent organisations. The intermediary network of Faiths4Change is made up of many small intermediaries that form a trusted network. This trusted network is essential for effective and highly agile place-based practices, and 'they help [Faiths4Change] to flourish and grow in some way, shape or form' (P1:W1). Policy appears to lack engagement in the potentiality of such networks and of the risks inherent in losing one intermediary that would significantly diminish the work of the network as a whole. This is why networked approaches are so important and policy needs to shift to embrace this.

7.3.5   Focusing on new and latent resources within local communities

The research supports Moriggi's findings (2019) that place-shaping entrepreneurs (or intermediaries as described by this research) such as Faiths4Change are capable of generating new resources through their networks rather than simply leveraging existing ones. This is not reflected in place-based policy that instead appears to assume that places need external resources brought in, such as project teams, in order to bring about change. In contrast, the research suggests that gentle action enabled by trusted partnerships can release new and latent resources from within a community itself. But this approach takes time for new imaginaries of place to emerge, and this is not an approach that aligns easily with place-based policy that leans towards a structured approach and linear, measurable results.

Müller and Trubina (2020, p. 666) suggest that improvisation lies at the heart of cities as sites of 'creative practice that allow not just navigating but, more crucially, tapping the potentialities of the urban as an always unfinished, open project'. Faiths4Change possess these skills of creative improvisation, with an optimistic and opportunistic approach that can identify and assemble untapped resources such as small businesses, entrepreneurial individuals and transitory businesses that are in a locality for a discrete amount of time such as builders. These latent and new resources are key to transformation. Generating new resources and capabilities from within local communities provides stability and sustainability for ongoing place-shaping in the longer term, but it is a slow process that requires a deep investment of time. Generating these new and latent potentialities

within local communities is an intentional act that requires high investment, helping people to develop skills and giving them opportunities to gain experience in leadership. Faiths4Change work in such a way that they do not seek to control the emergence of place and so there is space for people to develop skills. This means over time that they can pass on leadership to others once new potential leaders emerge. They do this through an apprenticeship style of education and equipping, modelling of skills through actions and providing opportunities for education in a highly accessible way. This approach is evident in the research, with a local college running a City and Guilds horticultural course from a community garden alongside the Faiths4Change team. This gave individuals the confidence to participate because the learning took place in their own familiar context. This apprenticeship approach to learning enables the modelling of performative values, so that people not only learn practical skills, but they also learn the socio-ecological values that underpin them.

7.3.6 Redistributing power and 'making space at the table'

Bishop James Jones commented that 'governance is about shaping destiny, that can be done at a macro level, national or regional, but it can also be done at a local level, where you put power into the hands of local people to shape their own future. And Faiths4Change does that' (P1:2). Empowerment is a common theme in place-based policy papers but policies often lack any specific details on how such empowerment can be achieved. Any notion of empowerment relies on the redistribution of power, and without this transfer of power the issue of empowerment puts an unfair burden on local communities to find their own solutions without the shifts in power needed to achieve this.

The UK Government's Levelling Up the UK White Paper (2022) discusses empowering leaders, with the ambition to 'empower decision-makers in local areas by providing leaders and businesses with the tools they need'. However, current Government policy on place pays scant attention to how power will be redistributed and it is often contradictory between the aims it articulates and the plans it implements. For example, the 'Partnerships for People and Place' project [41] expresses the aim to see 'local communities who are empowered', but the project plan is centred on using teams

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[41] Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities. (2021). *Partnerships for people and place: guidance for local expressions of interest.* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/partnerships-for-people-and-place/partnerships-for-people-and-place-guidance-for-local-expressions-of-interest#introduction – retrieved 28.12.2021

from a government department to manage projects and uses external consultants to map places and localities. If policy is to take seriously the issue of empowerment, then policy needs to consistently reflect the re-distribution of power to local networks and communities. Without this, too many barriers will remain at a local level, which will marginalise and disempower local communities and will fail to deliver sustainable transformation.

In the research interviews and workshops Faiths4Change only used the word 'empower' once in interviews and workshops, and their relational network only used it four times. When Faiths4Change did refer to empowerment it was in the context of re-distributing power, 'we want to pass on control, we want to empower the people who are in that community to do it themselves' (P1:W1). Faiths4Change more frequently used words such as 'supporting', 'connecting', 'sharing', 'encouraging', 'shaping', 'inviting', and 'listening' (in phase 1 of the research) to describe their place-shaping in local communities. These words reflect their values, showing a greater emphasis on shared agency and a sensitivity towards power dynamics. The re-distribution of power can be difficult to achieve and therefore there needs to be a clear set of values to guide both policy and practices. The challenges in implementing such as approach are evident even in asset-based approaches to local communities, with research suggesting that asset-based approaches were often not experienced as empowering by the communities involved (Andrade, 2016). Trusted relationships are key to empowerment, and Popay, Whitehead, Ponsford, Egan, and Mead (2021, p. 1257) suggest that there is a need to pay more attention to power dynamics in community settings, and the need for approaches that embody a 'power within' perspective that 'refers to the collective capabilities internal to a community, including recognition of shared values and interests'. However, they emphasise that alongside this communities need to challenge the structural drivers of social inequalities and use 'their emancipatory power to build alliances locally, nationally, and internationally' (2021, p. 1260).

The need to recentre power needs to be more central in place-based policy and then reflected in place-based projects and practices. The motivation to re-distributing power appears to come from the foundational values of Faiths4Change, motivating both individual staff members and the organisation to be committed to pass on agency and resources to others. The transcendental values of Faiths4Change, summarised as 'one world, sacred earth', become visible through their decision-making and their practices. An example of this is when they turned down a large, funded project

because it did not fit closely enough with their own values, 'it wouldn't have worked, our ways of working overall are quite different…we do come at things differently. And I think sometimes you have to recognize…you've done what you can there' (W1:1). Being able to keep giving away power and passing by opportunities to expand is highly counter-cultural, requiring leaders who have clear and stable values to enable this ongoing kenotic practice. The research suggests the sacred values of Faiths4Change strongly support this, seen in the framework of socio-ecological place-shaping that has the enabling of local people and the redistribution of power at its heart. Redistributing power enables communities to find a collective voice so that any mobilising comes from within the community itself, rather than being leveraged by external influences. Such an internal, local community mobilisation releases local communities to identify their own priorities and shape their own places; it results in what Bishop James Jones describes as 'enabling people to shape their own destiny' (P1:2). True empowerment requires a relinquishment of power and a giving up of control so that others are free to make decisions, even if they are choices that those enabling them might choose.

The need to redistribute power extends beyond local communities, and there is also a need for local authorities to redistribute power to local, intermediary networks. This means enabling them to share their knowledge and skills, involving them in decision-making, and giving them a 'seat at the table'. Local intermediaries such as Faiths4Change have deep connections with many local communities and extensive local knowledge, and therefore they have an important contribution to make in local governance conversations. This is a valuable asset for local urban governance leaders who would benefit from having greater input from such small, local intermediaries. Their involvement at a local level could help projects to be sensitive to place-specific issues that can too often be overlooked, supported by wider research suggesting that there is a need to better address that particularity of places and 'take fine-grained geographical distinctions much more seriously' (Boswell et al., 2020, p. 1). This is supported by Jennings, Lent, and Stoker (2018, p. 3) who suggest that there needs to be 'different actions from government at all levels and a final break from the 'one-size-fits-all' policy'.

Place-based policies tend to overlook small intermediary organisations in favour of larger scale interventions, and this is seen in the Government's Levelling Up the UK report (2022) that focusses on the capacity of 'information, incentives, and institutions to deliver profound change'. But small

intermediary organisations embedded in local communities provide an essential bridge to those communities and connect in ways that others find difficult to achieve. If policy does not make strong connections at a local level, then implementation of policy will be severely restricted. The challenges are evident from a Royal Town Planning Institute report that suggests that whilst 'neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their areas…in practice deprived neighbourhoods have been less involved in the neighbourhood planning process, in part because the design of neighbourhood planning may not be inviting for some communities to engage with the process' (Pinoncely, 2016, p. 42). There is a need for such place-based initiatives to be directly informed by local intermediaries at an early stage if they are to better understand how to engage with and reach local communities.

Long-term intermediaries in local communities offer continuity and stability beyond the flux of government policy and their ability to re-distribute power to local communities is crucial to the ongoing sustainability of initiatives. The NDC evaluation suggests that regeneration programmes (and arguably also any government-led place-based initiatives) 'need to provide guidance in relation to legacy and succession at an early stage' (Batty, Beatty, & Foden, 2010, p. 45). This is supported by research from an experienced social enterprise called Renaisi which was founded in Hackney in 1998, with their research concluding that 'it can be 7-10 years before a place-based intervention can begin to demonstrate impact… [and that] throughout the literature the challenge of sustaining programmes beyond their initial funding period is highlighted (Renaisi, 2018, p. 8). Therefore, engaging early on with intermediaries such as Faiths4Change who work long-term in local communities will be vital for the ongoing benefits of any place-based interventions. However, in practice intermediaries such as Faiths4Change sometimes have to argue at a local governance level for a place at the table and for others in their network to join them. Faiths4Change have sometimes needed to make a case for their involvement in local governance meetings, summarised as; 'our argument is you need us at that top table, because we have something significant. You say you have no budget, we don't, but we've got loads of resources and not just me' (P1:3).

If urban innovation zones are to be more fully utilised, greater space needs to be created for highly skilled intermediaries who can listen to the whole eco-system, act as translators between various actors, and facilitate place-shaping processes in complex liminal spaces between organisations, institutions, and urban governance structures. Drawing together urban assemblages is complex, and

Bishop James Jones reflects that partnership working is 'like a game of pick-up sticks: you have to look at every issue, if you move one carelessly you dislodge all the others'.[42] The NDC evaluation (Batty, Beatty, & Foden, 2010) noted that there are substantial challenges in partnership building because it is a highly complex task that takes time, adding that these complexities are often overlooked when policy extols the benefits of partnership working. Many intermediaries such as Faiths4Change have a role to play in facilitating partnership working because as intermediary actors working in liminal, innovation zones they are adept at dealing with these complexities and are agile enough to respond to what emerges.

7.4   Concluding comments

Chapter 6 reviewed three influential reports, from the All Parliamentary Panel Group on Faith and Society and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Baker & Timms, 2020, 2022; IPCC, 2022c, 2022d), that suggest there is increased openness politically and environmentally to engage with faith-based institutions and with faith-based values. This chapter addresses this shift and opportunity, suggesting that the research-led insights on performative sacred values presented in this thesis may provide helpful guiding principles that can be more broadly applicable and able to inform policy approaches in specific ways.

This chapter suggests that there are six important insights from the research that inform urban, place-based local policymakers and open up new possibilities of innovative, value-centred initiatives: adopting a new mindset; valuing gentle action; supporting local, trusted intermediary networks; listening to communities and 'seeing in the round'; focusing on new and latent resources within local communities; and redistributing power and 'making space at the table'. Whilst the obstacles to implementing such changes should not be underestimated, neither should the very significant challenges that local, urban place-based policymakers will face in the years ahead (discussed earlier in this chapter). These pressures provide an opportunity for creativity and innovation, and this research suggests that intermediary organisations such as Faiths4Change and their relational network operating in urban innovation zones may be important actors in such innovation.

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[42] Bishop James Jones. (2003). *On the Mersey beat.* https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/archive/on-the-mersey-beat 2003 - retrieved 10.05.2020

8   Final Comments

At the start of this thesis, the literature review highlights the urgent need for the socio-ecological transformation of urban places, given the levels of urban social deprivation in the UK and the growing global environmental crisis. In concluding this thesis in 2023, the intervening years have brought new and unexpected global challenges and a new sense of urgency for new research to support local, urban socio-ecological place-shaping transformation. The impacts of the Covid pandemic, the escalating environmental climate crisis, the energy crisis, and the cost-of-living crisis are now all placing extreme pressure on local authorities and local communities, and there is an increased urgency to find new and sustainable ways forward. Socio-ecological place-shaping research has increasingly focused on the importance of values and their ability to provide deep leverages for change, but there is a lack of detailed research-led insights on the nature of such values. This research adds to this research gap by providing an example of how values can enable such transformation, making transparent the performative sacred values of an intermediary organisation and how they become embodied through three place-shaping processes. The research contributes to existing interdisciplinary research on values of sustainability by other scholars including Horlings (2019), Ives (2020; 2019), and O'Brien (2013; 2013), providing more detailed insights into performative sacred values that can enable socio-ecological place-shaping transformation.

The research also contributes to the fields of the sociology of religion and public theology, adding to research that charts the ongoing shift in UK society away from religion and towards values that include a broader expression of the sacred and spirituality. The research explores sacred values within the theoretical lens of postsecularity in the UK content and the complex blurring of boundaries between the religious, the spiritual and the secular. The research demonstrates that the foundational Christian values of Faiths4Change have been broken open into broader sacred values that are summarised as embodying 'a sacred re-imagining of place'. These sacred values become performative through three distinctive place-shaping processes, described in a place-shaping cycle as: listening to the eco-system (seeing in the round); creative assemblage building (the art of the possible); and embodying a sacred (re)imaginary of place (a shared journey of (re)connection).

In identifying performative sacred values in this research, I am not suggesting that there is a return to religion in any form nor centring Christianity as the only foundational root for such sacred re-imagining. There is a need for further research to better understand how sacred values for socio-ecological transformation may emerge from the foundational roots of different religions and also from an interfaith perspective. However, even in this research, the breadth of sacred influences on Faiths4Change is notable. The research suggests that Faiths4Change are influenced by many varied expressions of the sacred, seen in their relational network that includes faith actors from different religious perspectives and also no clear religious connection. The sacred re-imagining of Faiths4Change is described as *'a collective process that draws on eclectic sources of place-based wisdoms, including nature-based, indigenous, and religious ones, to enable a (re)newed sacred vision of place and the flourishing of eco-systems'.* The foundational values of Faiths4Change, rooted in the public theology of Bishop James Jones, align well for the breaking open of religious values into more open sacred values. However, Christianity is not homogenous and foundational religious values will be as easily accessible in terms of breaking them open to broader sacred ones.

Faiths4Change break open their foundational religious values in ways that make them broadly accessible to a wide variety of actors and provide an open space where creative assemblage building can bring about this sacred re-imagining as 'a shared journey of (re)connection'. In such a re-imagining, 'the sacred' acts as a broad and inclusive container through which the shared values of a community can become performative and focused on a common goal. The sacred values expressed by Faiths4Change are viewed as 'guiding principles' that can draw people together into broad, creative assemblages that enable eco-systems to flourish. This sacred re-imagining is viewed as deeply counter-cultural to the neoliberal paradigm that dominates much of urban policy directions, and there are acknowledged challenges in influencing policy directions. However, chapter 7 suggests that there may be opportunities for research-led insights to open up new conversations and creative innovation at a local level, with urban policymakers and urban governance networks. These opportunities may continue to expand, given the growing deficits that local authorities predict in the years ahead. The research supports the attention on six important areas for consideration and discussion: adopting a new mindset; valuing gentle action; supporting local, trusted intermediary networks; listening to communities and 'seeing in the round'; focusing on new and latent resources within local communities; and redistributing power and 'making space at the table'.

8.1 Reflecting on my own positionality

In the introduction to the research, I reflected on my positionality as both an insider and an outsider to the research. I was an outsider from the perspective that I no longer worked in Liverpool nor with Faiths4Change, but I was an insider from the perspective of having direct experience working alongside them and being an ordained minister in the Church of England. My positionality as an ordained minister was more significant than I first expected initially because I had not anticipated so many faith actors being in the close relational network nor had I anticipated that the Christian foundational values of Faiths4Change would become a significant thread that pointed forwards to performative sacred values. As such, my insider positionality as a person ordained in the Church of England became more significant as the research developed.

I am conscious that as a person of faith and as a white person with considerable privilege, I have a bias that inevitably influences and shapes the research. This required ongoing reflection throughout my research and this was strengthened by my work as a Senior University Chaplain working in a multi-faith team and with people from a wide range of cultures, ethnicities, religions and beliefs. The iterative phase of the research was an important testing ground for my research findings, providing an important opportunity to listen to feedback from Faiths4Change, a project team including volunteers, and from a local authority participant.

8.2 Limitations of the research

The opening introduction to the thesis reflected on the limitations of the research imposed by the Covid pandemic and the inaccessibility of project sites. Whilst the methodology reflects a concerted effort to mitigate such limitations, such as through the inclusion of creative arts methodology, nevertheless the lack of access to projects is a recognised but unresolvable limitation. Project closures also had the additional consequence of the inaccessibility of local community actors who would have been present in those projects. Faiths4Change work alongside a significant number of people from marginalised groups including asylum seekers, people who are long-term unemployed and people with long-term mental health problems. These are the acknowledged missing voices in the research. Whilst I was able to connect with two people from a local community whose contact details were available through Faiths4Change, this group of actors is significantly under-represented.

The research is a strengths-based design since its focus on performative values that achieve transformation naturally inclines it to a strengths-based approach. The purposive sampling approach used enabled Faiths4Change to identify their close relational network and there is therefore a strongly positive characterisation of Faiths4Change that flows through the research. The purposive sampling approach was chosen because it adds significantly to the depth of the research since the participants have extensive collective knowledge of Faiths4Change and the network relationships. The choice to use purposive sampling was made on the basis that it selected participants who were the most knowledgeable and therefore could generate the best research-led insights, rather than the motivation being convenience sampling and ease of accessibility. If the research had been on a different scale or if it had been a comparative study of various intermediary organisations then the use of random sampling and control groups may have been appropriate, and this may be a consideration for future research.

8.3 Potential future research

The research does not present the place-shaping framework and cycle as a normative model for urban place-shaping but it does suggest that the model contains some guiding principles of socio-ecological place-based transformation that may provide insights more broadly. Further research is needed to assess these guiding principles and how helpful they may be in different contexts of urban place-shaping initiatives.

Further research might include :

- A comparative study of small environmental intermediary organisations, comparing and contrasting their performative values.

- A case study of an environmental intermediary organisation that has foundational roots in religion beyond Christianity.

- A return to my original ethnographic research methodology, examining three place-based projects of Faiths4Change. This would be strengthened by a postcolonial methodology and

methods (Huggan, 2013) that pays close attention to postcolonialism and the environment, and how social and environmental justice are entwined in colonialism (Mount & O'Brien, 2013). It might include a co-production approach that gives agency and voice to the local communities and pays close attention to marginalised voices including asylum seekers and refugees who engage in the projects. Given the history of Liverpool charted in the literature review, in terms of its central involvement in the slave trade and particular racial and religious tensions, a postcolonial research project in Liverpool could be very insightful.

- A research project that focuses on interfaith environmental groups and how they engage with local government networks. This would build on the APPG reports (Baker & Timms, 2020, 2022) and this current research project.

Appendix 1: Ethics Approval Application

Department of Social, Therapeutic and Community Studies (StaCS)
Postgraduate Research Students Ethical Approval Form

CONFIDENTIAL

GOLDSMITHS University of London

Department of Department of Social, Therapeutic and Community Studies (StaCS)
Research Ethics Committee

NAME OF APPLICANT   Gill Reeve

Title of MPhil/PhD Programme   PhD Religious Studies

This form should be completed in typescript and returned to the Research Administrator, Jennifer Mayo-Deman. All students should have read the appropriate guidelines on ethics (such as the BPS, BSA, AAA or ASA) and the ESRC Research Ethics Framework document. The decision of the committee regarding your application for ethical approval will be communicated to you via email.

1.   **Title of proposed project:**

How do the values of intermediary organisations inform practices of socio-ecological urban place-shaping?

2.   **Brief outline of the project, including its purpose:**

This interdisciplinary project examines sustainability issues through a specific focus on socio-ecological place-shaping. It is a qualitative research project that draws primarily on the academic disciplines of sustainability studies, urban geography, and religious studies.

The project addresses a gap in research on the role that values play in place-shaping practices, an area that sustainability studies has struggled to address using more systems-based analysis. This research gap is of significance because in sustainability theory values are considered to be deep leverages for change. This project brings together sustainability theory with theoretical and methodological insights on values from religious studies, to construct an innovative research project.

The aim is to bring new insights into the nature of the values underpinning practices, by focussing on one particular intermediary organisation involved in urban place-shaping in local communities. Based in Liverpool, Faiths4Change (F4C) is an environmental charity rooted in the values and beliefs around the environment that are shared across all faiths. Such intermediaries are important organisations because of their positionality in between institutions and their capacity from this position to harness a variety of resources. Using a post-structuralist theoretical framework of Assemblage and Actor Network Theory, the project explores the broad assemblages Faiths4Change construct on three specific project sites and the values that shape their practices. The insights gained will enabled more

informed discussions and dialogue on socio-ecological place-shaping with a wide range of urban partners. In the evolving context of a COVID-19 world, these key insights will support the re-envisioning and re-development of urban areas that will now face even more significant and complex socio-ecological challenges.

3.   **Description of Methods of Data Collection:**

The methods for this project have been adapted to allow for the social distancing measures that are likely to be in place throughout the planned field research in the summer of 2020. This has meant a change in methods as the planned ethnographic approach, with significant participant observation, is now seeming unviable. In addition, even with some easing of restrictions the projects being researched may not be able to open or will be significantly reduced (bearing in mind that they are community spaces where people often cook, eat and work in allotments together).

The field research originally planned was ethnographic, using the methods of semi-structured interviews, participant observation and workshops. The new approach adopts a case study methodology and is informed by the creative arts and visual methods, aiming to construct the assemblages using a mixed methods approach. This new approach is validated by the projects new materialist epistemological stance which understands vital materiality as a complex network of heterogenous human and non-human actants, that can include the imagination and emotions.

Remaining as close as possible to the research's original methods the new field research continues to use semi-structured interviews and workshops but all are now conducted online, with various visual methods used to enable the co-production of the assemblages. The research will use Zoom as an online platform and the zoom interviews and workshops will be recorded using an external audio recording device owned by the researcher (for the security of the data the zoom cloud facility will not be used). When using the zoom whiteboard facility these will be saved onto the researcher's own computer as a png photo file.

The research is structured in four phases that can be seen as iterative stages of co-production that enable the research data to be refined and shaped by the researcher and the participants. After each phase the researcher will analyse the data, refine the findings and present the new data on the assemblages to the participants at the next phase. The phases are:

1. *Document & data gathering*
   The director and chair of Trustees of Faiths4Change will be asked for copies of relevant documents, reports, drawings and photographs (related to their project work) that will be analysed to inform the researcher about the working practices and values of the intermediary organisation. The analysis of these documents will be informed by existing theory on intermediaries and on BVWs (beliefs, values and worldviews) set out in the methodology chapter. This data will also provide insights to help formulate questions for the semi-structured interviews.

2. *Semi-structured interviews (10 for each of the 3 sites = 30)*
   The semi-structured interviews will take place on-line using Zoom, making use of the interactive whiteboard facility. The interviews will be a maximum of an hour in length.

Three visual methods are used in the interviews: social mapping on the whiteboard to map the social network of the project, photo-voice using a photograph chosen by the participant that best depicts the project, and narrative/story-telling based on an object chosen by the participant as meaningful to them regarding the project.

3. Workshops (1 for each of the 3 project sites = 3)
   Three workshops will be site-specific gatherings of four people from the original ten interview participants. The workshops will use the share facility on zoom to present a summary of the research data in the form of an art collage (see Norris, J. (2012). Collage. In L. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (pp. 95-97). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE). The collage will be constructed by the researcher by combining the photographs, object pictures, narrative, key words and metaphors provided by the interview participants. The workshop will be a maximum of an hour and the researcher will invite the group to add to, adapt or rearrange the art composition. They will also be invited to reflect on the art composition and how it informs their understanding of the project in terms of practices and values. Following each workshop a final art composition for each site will be produced, incorporating the additional contribution from the workshops.

4. Final Workshop with core staff team of Faiths4Change
   In the final workshop the core staff team of six plus two trustees will be shown the final art collages for each site and will be invited to comment and discuss each of them. This final workshop brings together thinking on the three collages as assemblages and in a reflexive process discusses how they provide insights on the intermediary and their values and practices.

   The site-specific art collages will be sent to the participants prior to the workshop to give them the capability to look at all three together during discussions. This also means that the interactive whiteboard can be used to capture reflections and to enable them to write comments, key words or draw during our discussions. The workshop is a collaborative, co-production exercise that through reflexivity and dialogue considers how the art collages might inform an understanding of the intermediary and its values and practices. Visual and textual data from the final workshop will be used to construct one last art collage by the researcher, which will aim to capture insights from the field research, providing pivotal data for further analysis and reflection by the researcher.

I have chosen Zoom as the online platform due to its accessibility for participants, many of whom may not have access to platforms such as Teams in Office 365. In addition, Zoom is a free app on smartphones which would open the possibility for participants to use a phone if they do not have access to a laptop. Ease of access for participants is essential in order that the research can include those most suited to the aims of the research and most knowledgeable about the project work.

I have decided not to do a pilot study for a number of reasons. The cohort of participants for this project is small and specific and therefore finding suitable participants for a pilot would be problematic. In addition, the charity involved in this research runs with few resources and it was felt that to run pilots would demand too much of their time. Instead as the researcher I will prepare carefully all the technological tools that will be used for the research, rehearsing the use of the whiteboard, trialling a recording using the audio device and connecting to

zoom from a smartphone. In my work as a Chaplain for the University of Chester I currently use Zoom every week for social gatherings and worship and I am therefore confident in my use of the technology. Finally, in preparation for the field research I will seek advice from people working in the creative arts to consider how to present that art collages in order that they best capture the assemblages data.

If the research involves human participants (whether living or recently deceased) or animal subjects, please continue. If the research involves historical, textual or aesthetic data or secondary data already in the public realm and does not directly involve the observation or direct engagement with human or animal participants, then please jump to Question 19.

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4.   **Specify the number of and type of participant(s) likely to be involved.**

There will be a maximum of 38 participants but it might be slightly lower as the project site leaders are likely to be core staff team, so the final number is most likely to be 35.
Participants will be selected by the F4C project leader on each of the 3 sites, on the basis they are aware of the most significant people working on or supporting the project. Participants are most likely to be either volunteers who work with the F4C team, people from partnership organisations that work with them such as Foodbank, or people from key institutions that support the work (such as churches or mosques).

5.   **State where the data collection will be undertaken.**

Due to COVID-19 the data collection will be entirely online.

6.   **State the potential adverse consequences to the participant(s), or particular groups of people, if any, and what precautions are to be taken. If any potential adverse consequences, please state how you will address these.**

    a. Security of zoom meetings: Measures will be taken to prevent uninvited people joining the meetings. All meeting will have password for access and for the workshops the researcher will use a waiting room in order to verify each participant before bringing them into the group.

    b. Feedback inadvertently revealing the identity of a participant: In a small group that works together it is possible that comments could identify a person, even though the researcher has anonymised the data. Therefore, after each interview the participant will be given the opportunity to see the analysed data and transcript and to comment, edit and remove any part of it. The same process will be done after the workshops when participants will see the draft art collage and discussion notes and have the opportunity to comment, edit or remove any part of them

    c. The use of photographs: The use of photography raises ethical issues of publicity rights, consent and people's privacy. Photographs chosen for the photo-voice method may include people and thereby risk breaches of privacy and confidentiality if

permissions have not been sought. When asking participants to select a photograph, they will be asked only to choose photos that they have the rights to. In addition, any photographs with people in them must be already in the public domain such as on social media platforms. If participants do not have access to any suitable photographs on the projects, then the researcher will ask them to select a photograph from the F4C facebook page, that has hundreds of photographs.

Any photograph used for the arts collages will blur the faces of people other than the F4C staff team from whom written consent will be sought to use any photos where they are recognisable. This extra measure of confidentiality is put in place because the art collages may be used in public lectures or displays as part of the researcher's dissemination of the research, and therefore extra care is taken over people's privacy even though the pictures are already in the public domain.

7. **State any procedures which may cause discomfort, distress or harm to the participant(s), or particular groups of people, and the degree of discomfort or distress likely to be entailed. Please also state how you will address these.**

   a. Video calls: Some participants may not be comfortable being on a video call and so all participants will be given the option to use audio call on zoom instead. Some participants may not feel confident using social media platforms and therefore support will be given to enable them to connect successfully which may involve some rehearsal zooms to put people at ease with the process before the interview and workshop dates.

   b. Leaving the research part way: Participants who engaged with the interviews may not wish to proceed to the workshops but could feel it is expected of them. When participants are invited to take part in the research it will be explained that they can leave the process at any point and will not be expected to proceed to the workshops if they do not wish to. When invitations to workshops are sent the option to withdraw if they would like to will be clearly stated

8. **State how the participant(s) will be recruited. (Please attach copies of any recruiting materials if used).**

The project uses purposive sampling and the participants for the interviews and the first set of workshops will be chosen by the project leaders of the three project sites. Once the participants have been chosen they will be contacted by email (see letter in appendix A p. 10) inviting them to participate, with an attached participant information sheet (see appendix B p. 12) explaining details of the research planned. If they respond that they wish to proceed, then they will be sent a consent form to complete (see appendix C p. 15) and return by email. This will then be signed by the researcher and a copy sent back to the participant.

9. **State the manner in which the participant(s) consent will be obtained (please include a copy of the intended consent form and cover letter).**

9a. Will the participant(s) be fully informed about the nature of the project and of what they will be required to do?

Yes. Each participant will be given a participant information sheet (see appendix B) which will explain the research in its various phases and what is expected of them as participants

9b. Is there any deception involved?

No everything transparent

9c. Will the participant(s) be told they can withdraw from participation at any time, if they wish?

Yes. The introductory letter makes this clear and it will be reiterated verbally at the beginning of
Every interview and workshop

9d. Will data be treated confidentially regarding personal information, and what will the participant(s) be told about this? How will data be stored and what plans do you have for eventually destroying it?

The introductory letter will include the confidentiality of data and how all data is stored,
Used and eventually destroyed. This information includes: data being held on a secure
Password protected computer; all handwritten notes, audio recording devices and paper
visual images from research will be stored in a lockable filing cabinet; all researched will
be coded to protect participant anonymity and codes only known by the researcher; all
photographs that have people in them will have blurred faces if used in the art collages
(apart from the F4C staff from who written consent will be sought); regular supervision
ensures academic oversight and accountability, the participants will be consulted after
each phase of the data analysis they have participated in and given the opportunity to
edit or remove anything they no longer wish to be included.

All research data will be held securely for a minimum of three years in accordance with the Goldsmith University guidelines, adopted from the UK Research Integrity Office (2009) *Code of practice for research: promoting good practice and preventing misconduct.* After three years when the data is destroyed it will follow appropriate good practice in terms of shredding of any physical paper documents and the permanent deleting of files from hard drives and any audio devices.

9e. If the participant(s) are young persons under the age of 18 years or 'vulnerable persons' (e.g. with learning difficulties or with severe cognitive disability), how will consent be given (i.e. from the participant themselves or from a third party such as a parent or guardian) and how will assent to the research be asked for?

n/a

10. Will the data be confidential?

10a. Will the data be anonymous?

The organisation cannot be anonymised due to its specificity as a faith-related environmental charity in Liverpool. However, the specific contributions of each participant will be anonymised and so will the specific locations of each project sites used for the analysis. The only information given on them will be that they are located Liverpool City Region. Any identifying data will be coded with the coding system will only be available to the researcher.

10b. How will the data remain confidential?

Only the researcher will have access to the coding system, which will be held on a secure password protected computer. The confidential data will never be used for any purposes other than to assist the researcher in the analysis of data and in the writing up of the thesis. It will never be shared for any other purpose.

11. **Will the research involve the investigation of illegal conduct? If yes, give details and say how you yourself will be protected from harm or suspicion of illegal conduct?**

No

12. **Is it possible that the research might disclose information regarding child sexual abuse or neglect? If yes, indicate how such information will be passed to the relevant authorities (e.g. social workers, police), but also indicate how participants will be informed about the handling of such information were disclosure of this kind to occur. A warning to this effect must be included in the consent form if such disclosure is likely to occur.**

No

13. **State what kind of feedback, if any, will be offered to participants.**

This project views participants as co-producers of knowledge and therefore they are fully involved in the analysis through the iterative phases of the research. As a collaborative research project, the participants will individually and collectively view the data summarised by the researcher and shape the analysis through comments and feedback. The final thesis will be made available to participants.

14. **State your expertise for conducting the research proposed.**

I have previously worked as a partner on one of the projects sites over an eighteen-month period. As an ordained curate in the Church of England I have pioneered community engagement projects and worked on multiple community-based projects. My background as a speech and language therapist gives me insight into some of the complex social issues that the projects are seeking to address, such as social isolation for people with long-term disabilities and mental health problems. I have a personal interest in sustainability which motivates me for this research project.

In regard to the use of online research methods, I have considerable experience using online platforms including Zoom (the platform used for the research) in my work as a university Chaplain (see comments in section 3). I am therefore confident that I can use digital platforms effectively and guide participants as needed.

15. **In cases of research with young persons under the age of 18 years or 'vulnerable persons' (e.g. with learning difficulties or with severe cognitive disability), or with those in legal custody, will face-to-face interviews or observations or experiments be overseen by a third party (such as a teacher, care worker or prison officer)?**

n/a

16. **If data is collected from an institutional location (such as a school, prison, hospital), has agreement been obtained by the relevant authority (e.g. Head Teacher, Local Education Authority, Home Office)?**

There is not a relevant authority, but I have discussed the project with the head of trustees of F4C as a charity, who is fully supportive of the project. Following ethical clearance, it has been agreed that I will email the trustees to explain in detail the research plan before the research begins and address any questions or concerns.

17. **For those conducting research with young persons under the age of 18 years or 'vulnerable persons' (e.g. with learning difficulties or with severe cognitive disability), do you have Criminal Records Bureau clearance? (Ordinarily unsupervised contact with minors would require such clearance. Please see College _Code of Practice on Research Ethics_, 2005). Please provide evidence of such clearance.**

n/a

18. **Will the research place you in situations of harm, injury or criminality?**

No

19. **Might the research cause harm to those represented in it? If so, how?**

No

20. **Will the research cause harm or damage to bystanders or the immediate environment?**

    No

21. **Are there any conflicts of interest regarding the investigation and dissemination of the research (e.g. with regard to compromising independence or objectivity due to financial gain)?**

    No

22. **Is the research likely to have any negative impact on the academic status or reputation of the College?**

    No

_____

ALL APPLICANTS

Please note that the Committee should be notified of any adverse or unforeseen circumstances arising out of this study. Significant changes to the research design should be notified to your Supervisor and relayed to the Committee.

Signature of Applicant   Date 16.05.2020

Gill Reeve (Rev'd)

_____

TO BE COMPLETED BY PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR

Please note that the Department Research Ethics Committee should be notified of any adverse or unforeseen circumstances arising out of this study or of any emerging ethical concerns that the Supervisor may have about the research once it has commenced.

Has the student read the appropriate guidelines on ethics (or equivalent ones, such as the AAA or ASA) and the ESRC Research Ethics Framework document? [Approval will not be granted unless the student has demonstrated to the supervisor that they have read such documents.]

Yes (Please circle)

Has there been appropriate discussion of the ethical implications of the research with yourself as Supervisor?

Yes (Please circle)

Are the ethical implications of the proposed research adequately described in this application?
Yes(Please circle)

Signature of Principal Supervisor   **Date 18.05.20**
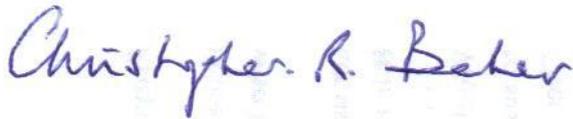
Christopher R. Baker

_____

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE ETHICS COMMITTEE

Comments:

Signature of Ethics Committee Member   **Date**

Appendix 2: Ethics Approval Letter

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Social Therapeutic and Community Studies
New Cross
London SE14 6NW
Email: k.shukra@gold.ac.uk

Gill Reeve
PGR Student
STaCS Department

2 June 2020

Dear Gill

RE: Ethical Approval How do the values of intermediary organisations inform practices of socio-ecological urban place-shaping?

The Departmental Research Ethics Sub-Committee has considered your application for ethical approval for your research into your proposed research topic as above, I am pleased to inform you that ethical approval has been granted but the Committee recommends you make sure:

The research design does not undermine the ability to protect participants' confidentiality and it is important that the limits of confidentiality are clearly communicated to the participants so that they can make an informed choice re their participation.

Yours sincerely,

K K Shukra

Dr Kalbir Shukra
Chair Postgraduate Research Committee

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