

# 'Faith' in urban regeneration?

Engaging faith communities in urban regeneration

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and Greg Smith



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*December 2002*

# Notes on the research group

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# Some voices from the research

“Muslim people are quite illiterate about Christianity and Christians are often religiously illiterate about Islam. And secular people are sometimes religiously illiterate about all religions.”

“Let them recognise the value and importance of religion in our lives. If they deny it then they are denying reality.”

“We had a letter from the Director [of social services] saying: ‘We are being told by the government that we need to include people from faith communities. We do not know what this means and are awaiting further guidance, but we assume it means people from black and ethnic minorities’.”

“Some people believe that local authorities are deliberately ignoring or minimising the role of faith communities – and I think that within the current government setting it would be relatively easy to do that if you wanted to. Which is not the same as saying that I accept it is being done.”

“Religion says that, after you’ve done your prayers you go out and get involved in the community ... you have to go out and engage yourself positively with everyone. Put across your community, your faith, and explain and understand what is happening around you.”

“I think there needs to be an environment which is receptive to you in order for you to participate practically. But the experience we’ve had over the last fifteen years or so is that the consultation mechanisms are pure tokenism, and they have not resulted in any concrete outcomes which met the needs of the Muslim community.”

“I think there needs to be a partnership developed; there needs to be inclusion in decision making and processes. I think there needs to be trust established and, yes, if you are going to be developing trust on both sides, I think there needs to be a willingness to say that we are prepared to invest in those faith communities who are trying to touch lives.”

# Introduction

“It’s a difficult one because I’m ninety nine point nine per cent certain that they do make a significant difference and that they could make a significant difference. However, I can’t tell you how. It’s a difficult one because, unless you know who they are and what they are doing, you can’t have a judgement on it – and I haven’t got the faintest idea.... Religion by nature is incestuous, so I’m quite sure that they are doing some great and wonderful things but they are keeping it to themselves.” (Female secular community development worker, Coventry)

## A distinctive focus

Urban regeneration policy in the United Kingdom during the last 15 years has been marked by a growing emphasis on full community involvement. A key government strategy document, reviewing the lessons of past unsuccessful experience, concluded that: “It is now well-recognised that for local regeneration to be effective, communities need to be involved. But too often community involvement is paid no more than lip service” (SEU, 1998, para 2.19). Successful applications to major funding regimes such as the Single Regeneration Budget and New Deal for Communities require evidence of community representation and the community sector is now incorporated into many of the partnerships so central to the new urban governance. In particular, ‘community’ representatives have a formal role in the development of the ‘community strategies’ that are central to the coordinating role of local strategic partnerships.

These developments have prompted a large research literature exploring effective practice in community involvement in urban regeneration. Yet, although much has been learnt through this work, it has also become clear that the practice of community involvement has often fallen far short of initial aspirations and that ‘the community’ has often been a very subordinate partner (Mayo and Taylor, 2001). Particular concerns have been the perceived deficit in the ‘social capital’ of poor districts, difficulties in building the capacity of communities to participate, deficits in the capacity of official organisations in community engagement, and the related reliance on a few ‘community stars’ to provide a community voice.

This elusiveness of community involvement should provoke questions. The initial point of departure for this inquiry, therefore, was to consider whether existing research and policy in this field has identified and engaged with *all* the community networks that might inform and shape the direction of urban regeneration. Or is something being missed? Is all the social capital accounted for? Has all the ‘capacity’ been recognised? These are the considerations that prompted the distinctive focus of this research on a particular and neglected dimension of ‘community’ – the local commitments, solidarities, interests, organisations and social networks that relate to people’s *religious* identities and affiliations.

In addressing this immediate agenda and its highly practical implications, it is impossible to evade questions of power. Hence, in the particular context of ‘faith’, this inquiry underlines and explores inequalities of ‘partnership’ and continuing experiences of

marginality, even in an ostensible age of 'inclusion'. Faith communities are not inert resources to be harnessed by official programmes to an external agenda. Rather, they are active in investing the idea of 'regeneration' with distinctive meanings, and bringing values and working styles to the practice of regeneration that challenge official assumptions and approaches.

### Recognising objections

The preceding paragraph serves as a reminder that the participation of faith communities and their representatives in secular policy is controversial. This was impressed on the research group by three developments within the first five months of the project period: the escalating debate over state funding for faith schools, including one committed to the incorporation of creationism within the curriculum; the civil disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham, in which religious identity was often prioritised over issues of ethnicity, class and gender in reports and analysis; and, finally, the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. Thus, a vision of faith communities as a positive force for social cohesion and progressive social change has recently given way to a more negative and threatening spectre.

An articulate and powerful case has been made against the incorporation of religious organisations into public policy (see, for example, Toynbee, 2000, 2001; Grayling, 2001a, 2001b). This critique has stressed the unrepresentative status of religious groups in a strongly secular British society; the socially reactionary nature of many religious traditions; the inappropriateness of allocating state funding to those with religious values not shared by the majority; social divisions and conflicts provoked by incompatible religions; and the degeneration that occurs in religions that achieve secular power. The conclusion is that religion should be placed "where it belongs – in the private sphere, leaving the public domain as neutral territory where all can meet, without prejudice, as humans and equals" (Grayling, 2001b).

Elements of this critique certainly found resonance in this research inquiry. So, for

example, many church congregations in the study areas are small and, nationally, worshippers of *all* faiths are a minority. Some local faith communities are indeed withdrawn and may also see themselves as being in strong opposition to secular values. It is also the case that some faith organisations have regarded public funding regimes simply in sectarian terms, as a competitive arena offering an opportunity to gain resources for their 'own people'. And it is not difficult to find within faith communities ignorance, misunderstanding and suspicion of other religions.

However, placed against the detailed evidence drawn from the local fieldwork reported here, this critical template also emerges as an abstract and partial caricature, which fails to capture the diversity and complexity of faith communities and their relationships with secular agencies. The critique has certainly been a point of reference for this research, but the work has been designed as an open-ended exploration of the actuality and potential of faith community engagement in urban regeneration, identifying experiences and practices that are positive as well as negative. Several initial arguments can be made for the significance of work in this field.

First, in many of Britain's poorest places religion is an important element in the self-identities of many local residents. Local faith communities and other faith-based organisations often frame strong social networks and constitute important stocks of social capital. Engaging with 'the community' in such neighbourhoods could involve fuller recognition of this. Second, as detailed below, there is also evidence that faith communities or their individual members are already important participants in numerous and diverse activities that might reasonably be defined as 'urban regeneration'. Some of this involves work within official programmes; more is internally initiated and funded. Much of this activity takes faith communities well beyond service to their own members and into the public realm. So, while religion is a private matter for some, for others it involves a strong social and civic commitment. Even where congregations are small, the community contribution of members of faith communities may be disproportionate to their numbers.

Third, members of faith communities are not to be seen as entirely detached from a secular



majority, and their local, and often long-term, presence can rarely be matched by secular officials and researchers. This can inform an analysis (and theology) of the district and the lives that they share with their neighbours, which may be instructive to those working within the dominant assumptions of current regeneration policy and practice. The voices of faith communities are diverse and should not be bracketed simply as reactionary.

Finally, involving faith communities in urban regeneration need not entail support for sectarianism – quite the reverse. This is not to ignore the negative consequences of some faith-based education, nor the competition for resources that sometimes arises. It is, however, to suggest that involvement in practical projects may offer opportunities for the discovery of common ground and be a vehicle for the promotion of understanding and a fuller acceptance of diversity.

It appears, therefore, that a more concerted exploration – one which assesses *both* the potential and the problems of the engagement of faith communities and examines the opportunities and the obstacles – is overdue.

## Aims of the research

Within the field and the controversies sketched above, the specific aims of the research were:

- to locate both good and problematic practice in the participation of faith communities in urban regeneration;
- to identify means by which faith communities might play a wider and more effective part in urban regeneration;
- to make practical recommendations to local, regional and national regeneration agencies so that obstacles to involvement by faith communities can be removed;
- to disseminate experience and guidelines on involvement in urban regeneration through faith community networks;
- to provide a basis for possible further work in this challenging and complex field.

## About the study

In approaching these aims, the overriding objective of the research team has been to capture the experiences and perceptions of people who are variously placed in the relationship between urban regeneration and faith communities. A particular emphasis has been placed on the voices of people at the local level.

The investigation was based on four urban centres, or localities: Bradford, Coventry, the London Borough of Newham and Sheffield. Within each locality the research included a narrower geographical focus on specific districts: Manningham and Girdlington in Bradford, Foleshill and Hillfields in Coventry, Burngreave in Sheffield, and the neighbourhood around Green Street in Newham. However, in each locality, the unfolding fieldwork led us into city-wide forums and to interviewees with valuable insights stemming from their work in, and across, other districts.

All the fieldwork cities and districts are characterised by various patterns of ethnic and religious diversity and by long and ongoing histories of state-funded urban regeneration initiatives. Indeed, between them, our study areas have experienced almost the whole history of regeneration programmes, from the Community Development Projects of the 1970s to more recent programmes, such as the Single Regeneration Budget, New Deal for Communities, Sure Start, Health Action Zones and Education Action Zones. Yet, there are differences between these places that provide an opportunity to encounter a wide range of issues.

Bradford has a very large Muslim population, which is spatially highly segregated so that *neighbourhood* diversity may be less than in the other centres. The city also has a recent history of acute intercommunal tension. Newham has the traditional marked, and increasing, ethnic and religious diversity of East London. Of course, none of the study areas approaches a utopia of interfaith and interethnic equality, acceptance and understanding, but, compared with Bradford, the community relations histories of Newham, Coventry and Sheffield have been characterised by less conflict. Coventry has larger Sikh and Hindu populations than Bradford. Sheffield is

the study centre with the lowest ethnic minority population. But the Burngreave ward is the most ethnically and religiously diverse within the city. Black populations and black-majority faith groups and churches were present, in varying numbers, in all the study cities. More developed sketches of the study localities are presented in Appendix A.

The study centres, therefore, form a purposive sample rather than a set of randomly selected cases. An alternative sample of, say, Oldham, Nottingham, Leicester and Haringey would no doubt have resulted in findings reflecting the particularities of these places. However, while this study can only give direct voice to people within our selected areas, the range of contexts represented by these four places can produce insights applicable in other settings.

Beyond these urban localities, research has also been conducted at the regional and national levels. Here, perspectives have been obtained from national faith leaders (some of whom are members of the government-established Inner Cities Religious Council), senior staff in national secular regeneration organisations, staff in secular regional organisations with a regeneration remit, and members of faith communities engaging with this emerging regional regeneration apparatus. Most of the local faith participants in the project have a leadership role within a faith community or a faith-based organisation but we did interview people beyond those in non-clerical and community-related leadership roles.

The research encompassed traditional 'mainstream' Christian denominations, which are often prominent in urban policy and regeneration networks. In many areas these faith traditions also include or serve many minority ethnic members and local residents. The study also included black-majority churches, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, which are often less well represented within the official regeneration apparatus. One interview was conducted with a group of three Jewish policy researchers with a national remit. The main, although not exclusive, research method was semi-structured interviewing, involving 95 interviewees at local, regional and national levels. A fuller account of the methodology and methods of the research is provided in Appendix B, and a more detailed

listing of the respondent categories is given in Appendix C.

## Report structure

**Chapter 2** explores the policy context in which there has been increased cross-party interest in engaging faith communities in public policy, including urban regeneration. The chapter sets this development in historical context and offers some interpretation of the recent interest in the potential of religious organisations in neighbourhood renewal. The demands of such involvement for both secular and faith-based organisations are reviewed, and the inequalities confronting different faiths and denominations in engaging in urban regeneration are indicated.

This framework informs **Chapters 3-6**, which present the key findings and analysis of the research. Each chapter focuses on specific themes, such as the reactions to policy on faith community involvement, the motivations of faith groups, the resources and understandings of faith communities and regeneration agencies, and the role of religion in enhancing social cohesion or exacerbating conflict. Together, these chapters address the overall research aims presented above. Finally, **Chapter 7** draws on the research evidence to present the main conclusions and identify some implications for policy.

# Public policy and the complexity of 'faith': the research context

"We [the Churches Regional Commission] had a letter from the Director [of social services] saying, 'We are being told by the government that we need to include people from faith communities. We do not know what this means and are awaiting further guidance, but we assume it means people from black and ethnic minorities'." (Female member of Churches Regional Commission)

## The changing place of 'faith'

Religious institutions once played a central role in the direct provision of education, health and social care. In particular, at least in England, the established Church was often the next resort after the family. With its particular relationship with the state, the influence of the Church of England – caring and controlling – often extended well beyond a narrowly 'religious' sphere and pervaded local life through its parochial organisation.

This traditional authority, of course, retreated in the modern age. It is certainly the case that well into the 20th century, both Anglican and nonconformist churches offered important welfare support in periods of economic crisis. Also, the development of public social policy in Britain was influenced significantly by Christian social thought (Farnell et al, 1994, pp 34-7). However, while churches and religious foundations remained an important part of the voluntary sector, especially in education, the role of religious organisations became much more subordinate within a secular welfare state.

The long-term trajectory, therefore, has been one of secularisation, defined as a "long-term process" by which religion "ceases to be significant in the working of the social system" (Wilson, 1982, p 150). Yet, just as Christian religious faith (as measured by participation in services of worship) has entered a period of unusually steep decline, social policy debate has been punctuated by increasing reference to the potential contribution of 'faith communities'. The wider changes in social and welfare policy, from the post-1945 'welfare settlement' towards a greater pluralism and local variation of provision, seem to extend to a new interest in the place of 'faith' in a much more religiously diverse society. Indeed, the very phrase 'faith community' – a comparatively recent addition to the policy lexicon – appears to signal two developments.

First, it may reflect the displacement of Christian religion as a foundation for a 'national community' to the status of just another 'interest' community. Second, as suggested by the quotation at the head of this chapter, 'faith' may be construed as 'non-Christian faith' and minority ethnic status. This may be particularly the case in districts with large minority populations, in which officials are uncertain in interpreting the relationship between the ethnic and the religious identities of many local people.

## Landmarks of policy change

The increasing official interest in the potential of faith communities to contribute to urban regeneration can be illustrated by reference to three landmark developments: the establishment of the Inner Cities Religious Council; the inclusion of a 'faith' dimension in government

regeneration guidelines; and the later development of a much fuller rationale and guidance for statutory agencies in working with faith communities.

### *The Inner Cities Religious Council*

An important early signal of the new official attention to the presence and potential of faith communities was the formation in 1992 of the Inner Cities Religious Council (ICRC). This forum is chaired by a government minister and is now located within the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. It includes representation from five of the largest religious traditions in Britain: Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh. The ICRC is described as a forum in which faith representatives and the government "can work together on urban renewal and social exclusion" (DETR, 2001). It is part of the Urban Policy Unit (UPU), with the role of "taking forward the agenda of the Urban White Paper" and it also "relates to the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit and its work in enabling communities to participate in making towns and cities better places to live in" (DETR, 2001, p 1).

### *National guidelines*

The Secretary of the ICRC is also the Head of the Community Participation Branch in the UPU, with general responsibility for community participation in regeneration. The ICRC's influence was particularly evident in the second edition of the DETR guidance handbook, *Involving communities in urban and rural regeneration: A guide for practitioners* (DETR, 1997), which included a new chapter on the involvement of faith communities. It is current policy that faith issues should be part of the mainstream of community participation and this has been integrated into subsequent guidance to regeneration partnerships. The government's rationale is expressed in the following terms:

Most regeneration partnerships recognise the importance of involving community and voluntary organisations in their work. Most partnerships serving areas with significant ethnic minority populations acknowledge the importance of involving ethnic minority groups. However, despite central Government recognition of the role that

faith communities can play in regeneration, there has been less widespread recognition of the distinctive role that faith communities can play in local regeneration.

In some areas it would seem that there has been a reluctance to involve faith communities in regeneration activities, and faith communities have by design or default been excluded from active involvement. However, the contribution that faith communities can make to regeneration is significant. They can help regeneration partnerships to understand the needs and concerns of people living in particular areas, or groups of people with particular needs.

In terms of their active membership, churches, mosques, temples, synagogues and gurdwaras are often among the most substantial community based organisations within an area. They have as much right to contribute to discussions concerning regeneration as residents' or tenants' organisations. (DETR, 1997, p 149)

Pointing to their local presence, good local contacts and their frequent inclusion of a wide diversity of people, the government identifies faith communities as "a good point of entry into involving the local community". Often involved themselves in meeting the needs of this community, "faith organisations may also be in a position to signpost regeneration partnerships to other contacts in the community; they may even help to organise local involvement" (DETR, 1997, pp 149-50).

### *Elaborating the rationale and good practice*

More detailed encouragement and guidance for local councils working with faith communities and interfaith structures in their area followed in 2002 – the product of a collaboration between the Local Government Association (LGA), the ICRC, the Home Office and the Inter-Faith Network for the UK (LGA, 2002). This document links engagement with faith communities to "the wider context of the modernisation of local government" (LGA, 2002, p 7) and the need for local authorities to address social exclusion and 'reconnect' with local communities (DETR, 1998).

The LGA publication develops a fuller justification for engagement with faith communities, stressing:

the contribution faith communities make to good health, as providers of pastoral care, promoters of citizenship and community development, voices for social justice, and as the locus for gatherings of people in varying economic and social positions, of differing political views, from a range of ethnic backgrounds with shared concerns. (LGA, 2002, p 7)

Specific advantages of engagement with faith organisations advanced in this document include:

- the existing substantial activity of faith communities in their neighbourhoods and communities;
- the local networks, leadership, management capacity and buildings that faith communities can contribute;
- the presence within faith communities of some of the 'hard-to-reach' people with whom present official regeneration initiatives are not connecting;
- the particular willingness of members of faith communities to volunteer and contribute their free time;
- the need to engage with growing religious diversity in Britain and to encourage tolerance and respect;
- the continuing importance of the Christian church structure in many areas (LGA, 2002, pp 7-10).

## Interpreting policy

What accounts for this new interest in 'faith communities' by government? Is it likely to be the transient product of the enthusiasm of a few influential individuals? Or is it an expression of more general processes? And can it be connected to any wider political philosophy?

Certainly, individual influence and action has played an important part in these developments. Most obvious and significant is the endorsement of the Prime Minister. In a widely reported speech to the Christian Socialist Movement in March 2001, attended by representatives of many

other religious traditions, Tony Blair expressed his sense of:

"... a new and vital energy about the practice of faith in the UK. A new and vital energy within the churches and other faith groups about engagement in the communities within which you work and have your being." (Blair, 2001)

The Prime Minister strongly affirmed the present local contribution of faith groups, recognising its motivation in religious belief, and giving his personal backing for new attempts to confirm the status of faith groups as 'partners' with government.

The role of less prominent individuals is also significant. For example, the patching of the rift between the Church of England and the Thatcher administration in the wake of the Church's *Faith in the city* report on Britain's inner cities (ACUPA, 1985) and the subsequent formation of the ICRC owed much to the agency of a senior civil servant who was also an Anglican non-stipendiary minister (Taylor, 2000, pp 4-6). The present research has found several further examples of key individual players in the engagement of faith organisations in regeneration within the emerging structures of regional government, local strategic partnerships and neighbourhood renewal.

Beyond individual initiative, however, interest in the engagement of 'faith communities' has occurred within a wider and transformed context. First, growing social polarisation in Britain, stemming from both global developments and national policy during the 1980s, provoked anxieties regarding 'social cohesion'. Hence, subsequent years have brought a strong policy focus on combating social exclusion. Second, economic, social, political and cultural changes in recent decades have challenged the postwar 'welfare settlement' and the relationships between state, market and civil society in national and local governance. This has been reflected in the advent of a more mixed economy of welfare and multi-agency local governance. As expressed through the 'new' politics of the 'third way', instead of a dominating state or a minimalist state, the future is seen as a partnership between an active civil society and a 'modern' government committed to social investment, partnership and decentralisation

(Blair, 1998, pp 7-8; Giddens, 1998, p 70). Within these wider processes and political agenda, faith communities may be viewed as agents of social cohesion, important building blocks of civil society and valuable partners in the new frameworks and processes of local governance.

The definition of 'partnership' since 1997 has involved a strong emphasis on the incorporation of 'the community' in urban regeneration programmes and wider local governance. Thus, the Prime Minister has identified the government as acting on behalf of a 'national community' as:

an enabling force, protecting effective communities and voluntary organisations and encouraging their growth to tackle new needs, in partnership as appropriate. (Blair, 1998, p 4)

In developing this language of 'community', both British and American governments have drawn on communitarian ideas. There are varieties of communitarianism (Levitas, 1998, chapter 5). Commentators refer frequently to "a strong prescriptive and ethical or moral element in New Labour's communitarianism" (Johnson, 1999, p 92; see also Levitas, 1998, chapter 5; Rodger, 2000, pp 117-18). The community here is associated with shared moral values; it is the place where (within strong families and through effective parenting) social obligations and civic duties are learned, and where self-reliance, mutual aid and volunteering are practised. Community also tends to be viewed as place based, "congealing" around local institutions, including religious organisations and places of worship (Hill, 2000, p 56). Such communities are places characterised by 'social cohesion'.

Other strands of communitarianism define the community less in terms of local moral authority and more as an inclusive social and political entity in which shared understandings are forged through continual deliberation in a variety of settings (Tam, 1998). The government's emphases on capacity building, user empowerment and citizen participation within more inclusive and socially diverse partnerships, signal at least formal engagement with this less conservative agenda. Yet, much recent reference to 'community' involves recourse to models of fixed religious and ethnic identities and local spatial 'communities' rather than recognition of

the very real cultural dynamism that is to be found within minority ethnic (and White) communities ... and inter-ethnic understanding and exchange as a matter of democratic participatory politics – fragile and temporary resolutions springing from the vibrant clash between empowered publics – rather than a matter of policy fixes or cross-ethnic community cohesion. (Amin, 2002, p 2)

As such, current government understandings of the potential role of faith communities in urban regeneration may often embody traditional understandings that engage more with older 'community leaders' and worshippers than, for example, with young people for whom community is often less place based and more complex and fluid. Such experience challenges the approach of both government and many faith communities.

### Enlisting or engaging faith communities?

This sketch of the wider context and the ideas that have informed policy helps to explain the government's interest in involving faith communities in urban regeneration. The qualities of religious institutions are liable to be perceived as highly congruent with those of the 'moral community'. The 'faith sector' constitutes a further participant to increase the inclusiveness of the various deliberative community forums that comprise 'modern government'. Religious congregations and faith-based organisations may be seen as important actual and potential contributors to the newly energised and decentralised civil society and mixed economy of welfare prescribed by the 'third way'. Indeed, these connections were made in the Prime Minister's speech to faith representatives in 2001. He made particular reference to the status of religion as a cohesive influence:

"Our major faith traditions – all of them more historic and deeply rooted than any political party or ideology – play a fundamental role in supporting and propagating values which bind us together as a nation." (Blair, 2001)

Elsewhere in the speech, the Prime Minister made a link between the values of equal worth, responsibility and community central to his 'political creed' and the faiths of those in his audience. He also applauded the community and voluntary activity of religious congregations and organisations, and invited them to play a greater role "as partners, not substitutes".

The association claimed here between the values and priorities of government and those of faith communities in Britain helps to frame many of the issues explored in this study. Some of the research questions permit an assessment of the present scope and character of the current involvement of religious communities and organisations in urban regeneration, and the opportunities and obstacles that they encounter. Inquiry here can yield direct lessons for the detail of current practice. Other questions explore the congruence between government policy, procedures and priorities; the perception of faith representatives of local issues and problems; and the meaning of 'regeneration'. The aim here is still to inform practice, but through the development of a wider critical framework.

The need for this broader assessment should be underlined. The straightforward *enlistment* of faith communities into official regeneration programmes is an unlikely prospect. An image of an homogeneous and easily assimilated 'faith sector' fails to recognise the complexity of 'faith'. The extraordinary diversity, not only between world religious faiths, but also within them, and indeed within particular local congregations, is evident even from a study of just one of the urban areas explored in the later chapters of this report. While the intensity of religious conviction and of the role of religious identity in shaping the values and actions of individuals varies, faith communities are likely to bring to regeneration varied and often strongly independent perspectives, informed by highly varied world-views and social theologies.

In some cases common ground with other faith groups and with secular agencies may be found. But, in addition to civically minded faith groups, there are others that define themselves in opposition to secular values and to other religions. Religion is not to be seen simply in functional terms, as a basis for social cohesion. It may also be a source of deep social conflict or a means of social retreat. Or it may inform a

radical and coherent critique of the official agenda by religious people and organisations long-committed to poor urban neighbourhoods and with wide experience of official regeneration programmes. In summary, faith organisations and their members often bring to the table a strong independence that demands active *engagement* rather than passive enlistment.

The complexity of 'faith' along with the frequent strength and articulacy of religious conviction underline the strong demands that greater involvement of faith communities would place on all parties. They also raise questions concerning the present inequalities between faith communities in participating in urban regeneration. These issues are developed in the last two sections of this chapter.

## Demands of engagement

Significant developments in the involvement of faith communities in urban regeneration would make demands both on secular agencies and on faith communities themselves.

### *Issues for secular agencies*

Secular agencies are likely to encounter in faith communities many of the same issues that are raised in the course of engagement with the community and voluntary sectors in general; for example, the familiar demands of capacity building will be prominent. However, working with religious organisations and their members is likely to demand new skills and awareness.

First, the increasing reference to 'faith communities' in urban regeneration signals an extended inclusiveness in policy. It also appears to reflect an acceptance of religious faith as a distinctive source of social identity and motivation, often neglected in social analysis and policy compared with issues of 'race', ethnicity and class. But care is needed here. The designation of 'faith' as the basis for one kind of interest community alongside many others in a neighbourhood may reflect instead the perceived marginality and 'strangeness' of religion (even of Christianity) in a secular culture. This assignment of faith to a specific and 'appropriate' status may not accord with the way in which, for many

members of faith organisations, faith pervades all their identities and their understanding of the wider world, and the needs of their neighbourhood. On the other hand, the recent emphasis (influenced by wider local and international conflicts) on 'faith' as opposed to 'ethnicity' may also carry the opposite danger of attributing to religious people a fixed, singular and essential identity, which dictates a particular and inflexible range of responses to neighbourhood problems. Therefore, those in key roles within national, regional and local secular regeneration organisations need to be equipped with some understanding of the diverse experiences and perspectives that 'faith' representatives may bring to the table, as well as the more detailed elements of 'religious literacy' that ensure courtesy and trust in everyday work with different religious traditions.

Second, the engagement of faith communities with secular programmes needs to be on the basis of a good understanding of the very considerable work that is often undertaken *already* by faith organisations and their individual members, which can fairly be regarded as 'regeneration'. This activity may challenge official understandings of the scope of 'regeneration'.

Third, although the engagement of faith communities in urban regeneration is associated with an agenda of social inclusion, community and partnership, recent public policy has also been shaped by a countervailing managerial emphasis on performance monitoring and measurable outcomes within precise time-scales. For religious organisations and their members, often particularly committed to 'the long haul' and experiencing 'regeneration' as a slow, informal and tentative process, the strains of partnership may be especially acute. Again this raises important questions for policy makers and those responsible for implementation.

### *Issues for faith communities*

For their part, a more developed role in urban regeneration challenges sectarianism and introversion among faith communities. Rather than viewing public schemes as an arena in which to compete for funds, the demand is for a search for shared values and objectives on which cooperation can be built. This implies the need

for much more developed interfaith understanding and collaboration. The issue of equal opportunities, particularly on the basis of gender and age, may be a field for particular exploration. Sharp questions will be raised in some cases concerning the limits of pluralism in a liberal society.

## Faith inequalities

References to 'faith communities' as one element of 'the community sector', or even to a discrete 'faith sector', should not obscure the very real inequalities between faiths and, within them, between specific denominations and traditions, as they approach engagement in urban regeneration. These inequalities can be summarised as involving differences in status, resources and experience.

Regarding status, Christianity is privileged by its long history in Britain. There are much stronger links between the state and white-majority churches, especially the Church of England. Other faiths and black-majority churches have far fewer connections.

In terms of resources, white-majority churches are confronted by growing financial pressures. Nevertheless, they still possess resources, notably in the form of physical plant, networks, education and training that are not typically available to Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs or members of other Christian traditions. The Church of England, through its diocesan structure and its Church Urban Fund, and the Methodist Church, through its Mission Alongside the Poor initiative, have developed the capacity to support substantial involvement in urban regeneration, informed by developed social theologies.

Consequently, it is not surprising that there is currently considerable inequality between faiths in terms of their actual experience of engagement in public regeneration policy and practice. These inequalities must be recognised and addressed if there is to be genuine engagement with the fullest range of faith communities and organisations.



# Involving faith communities: policies and perceptions

“The Inner Cities Religious Council? Never heard of it.” (Male regeneration officer, Coventry)

“I don’t know whether there is a sort of sincere desire to involve faith communities or whether they see faith communities as a good way into involving black minority ethnic communities.” (Female voluntary and community sector leader, Coventry)

The previous chapter traced the growing interest of the British government in promoting the inclusion of faith communities in urban regeneration initiatives. The Inner Cities Religious Council has been in existence for over ten years to provide a national network of faiths in relation to regeneration matters, and has contributed to these policy developments. Politically, these aspirations received additional impetus in the general election campaign of 2001.

This chapter explores the interpretations of these developments in policy and practice as expressed by interviewees in secular and, particularly, faith organisations at national, regional and local levels.

## Central government and party political statements

Our interviews at national and regional levels reveal a range of views, not all of which are compatible. While there is widespread awareness among professionals of the potential value of faith communities in contributing to the delivery of the government agenda, there is a real concern on the part of faith groups that they

may be little more than a tool of social control in the government’s hands. Some reviewers comment on a general sense of ‘goodwill’ in present policy that belies a lack of in-depth debate on these issues and a clearly articulated and robust policy to address the main tensions.

“There is just a general thing that this is a good idea. The fluffiness of the thinking is extremely damaging, I think, to moving forward. It requires a few people to really cut through that fluffiness and ask some difficult questions. Secular government people are letting the faith-oriented ones get on with it and that is not good.” (Female national community development professional)

Such a debate needs to recognise that faith communities are far from uniform; indeed, there is a level of diversity and difference that calls for considerable sophistication in the policy and practice of urban regeneration.

Two further sceptical notes are sounded. First, it is generally acknowledged that the engagement of faith communities in urban regeneration is a matter for consistent, long-term action. Yet political systems require quick results, especially as elections approach. This is a fundamental problem that affects all community-based regeneration and renewal, not just activity involving faith groups.

Second, some interviewees perceive that these policies are being pressed by members of the government who themselves are ‘people of faith’. The others let them get on with it! Other interviewees, often members of faith communities, observe that many within the structures of government bring secularist

assumptions to the table so that, while outright hostility is rare, policy formulation and implementation still tends to exclude faith perspectives and experiences. To the extent that policy is faith-inclusive, several interviewees detected a more positive approach towards faiths whose adherents are substantially from black and minority ethnic communities rather than the mainstream churches. Others, however, suggested the opposite – that Christianity dominated the regeneration sphere, to the detriment of black-led churches and minority faiths.

For those regeneration professionals and faith leaders operating at the local level, one thing is clear: there is a widespread lack of understanding and awareness of the detail of government policy in this field, an issue that is developed in Chapter 6.

## Regional agencies – perceptions of policy and practice

Interviewees' perceptions of regional activity to engage faith communities were limited. Comment was restricted to those with some knowledge or experience of the London Civic Forum, Yorkshire Forward or Advantage West Midlands. The Churches Regional Commission in Yorkshire has played a significant role in developing policy towards localities and the involvement of local communities, particularly through its contribution to work for Yorkshire Forward on benchmarking community participation in regeneration (Yorkshire Forward, 2000). The Faith Task Group in the West Midlands is moving towards proposals for a 'faith forum' to provide a mechanism for electing and holding to account its two members of the 100-strong regional assembly.

It would appear that local regeneration professionals and faith leaders have little awareness of the interest of regional bodies in engaging with faith communities. Some concern is noted about the creation of the regional development agencies in 1998. Yorkshire Forward and Advantage West Midlands are responsible for the economic aspects of regeneration, while the regionally based government offices have control over the social aspects through initiatives such as the

Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and the New Deal for Communities. The implications for faith groups and regeneration are not yet clear.

## Local government policy and practice

Views on local government policy and practice are sharper and more definitive. The critical tone reported here stems from interviews with regional and national interviewees as well as more local ones, and encompasses comment from both regeneration professionals and faith leaders.

Some interviewees think that local government has an essentially 'secularist' agenda. It is often unclear what this means, although some comment that prejudice and discrimination against faith groups is extensive at the local level. This is discussed further in Chapter 6. Others suggest that there is a failure to recognise faith groups; that where there is recognition there is misunderstanding; and that where there is some understanding there is often rebuff. Interviewees felt that much of local government has still to emerge from a history of paternalism and that pressure from central government is needed to bring about a change in approach. Later chapters report issues raised by faith communities about local policy and practice. In particular, we discuss the, sometimes controversial, matters of funding for religious groups and the experiences of consultation and communication between faiths and regeneration agencies.

## Reactions and readings of policy from faith communities

Interviews with faith leaders at the national, regional and especially local levels reveal a complex, and not necessarily consistent, set of responses to government policy on faith communities and regeneration. However, some things are clear.

First, the reactions of faith communities to government policy are heavily influenced by a strong sense of their own identity. This 'community' is usually neighbourhood based but it is frequently also national and global in scope. These faith communities know that they are part

of poor and relatively disadvantaged neighbourhoods; they know that, in their different ways, they are already sustaining their communities. For them the social infrastructure that they provide is a part of regeneration. Involvement in publicly funded projects and programmes is just a small part of their contribution to the wider community.

Second, the faith leaders interviewed place differing interpretations on government policy concerning faith communities. There is some appreciation of definitional issues; for example: What does government mean by 'faith communities'? Is it a synonym for 'black and ethnic minority'? Does it refer primarily to minority religions? Does it include Christianity?

"I think it is all wrapped up with fear of racial tension and to that extent I think its pretty insincere, to be honest. I think we saw that last summer when they put four million pounds into some pretty superficial schemes and that is still pretty much the extent of the government's interest. It is around trying to prevent embarrassment. I'm pretty cynical to be honest."  
(Regeneration professional, Newham)

Faith leaders are generally alert to the dangers of incorporation by the state. They understand that, for many politicians and civil servants, bringing faith communities to the regeneration table is a device to achieve their aims for disadvantaged neighbourhoods. These factors encourage faith leaders to ask for clarification of policy from government and to express their views with some passion.

"It's lunacy! It's lunacy! You need a programme that is ten to fifteen years minimum and anything else is an immorality really. It's another injustice because you set up people who have failed to fail further because of the expectations of these programmes.... You can't apply targets and outcomes in an area like this. What you need to nurture is process and people, and people are trying." (Female Christian minister/community initiative leader, Sheffield)

Some professionals have understood the need to take time in developing relations of trust:

"Well, I've learnt in regeneration that its not what you say; not what you write; its what you do! You need to be visible and that's how they learn to trust you." (Local housing and regeneration professional, Sheffield)

## Summary

Among many points of detail explored in other chapters of this report, faith leaders have a clear message for government, the regeneration agencies and local authorities. This message can be paraphrased as follows:

"In our communities people are bruised and are living life on the edge, but they know what is best for them. Listen to the voices of the people. If you want to really achieve your outcomes, then initiatives have to come from local communities, including various faith communities. You have to work through people relating to people, face-to-face, so that trust and confidence can grow."

Such a message does not do full justice to the richness of the contribution from our interviewees. But it does crystallise the reactions of faith leaders to official policy on engaging faith communities in urban regeneration. It is a message that will resonate with most communities struggling with disadvantage, whether based on religious faith or not.

# 4

## Faith and action: motivations and responses

“Religion says that, after you’ve done your prayers, you go out and get involved in the community.... You have to go out and engage yourself positively with everyone; put across your community, your faith, and explain and understand what is happening around you.” (Male Muslim local councillor, Sheffield)

The relationship between principles and action is always problematic, not least in the intensely political context of urban regeneration. ‘Keeping the faith’ is an ideal with significance well beyond a religious context, and one strongly challenged by partnership working with its demands for organisational collaboration, flexibility and pragmatism. It might be expected that members of faith organisations will be particularly directed by explicit values and codes of practice, stemming from their theologies, doctrines and traditions. These may provide the impetus and the persistence for a positive contribution. Alternatively, religious doctrines can function like some social theories, as simplifying, distorting and controlling devices, rather than as creative means of understanding, clarifying and empowering.

This chapter is organised in two parts. First, we explore the motivations of faith communities in regeneration, broadly defined, and the theologies and values that, with varying degrees of explicitness, inform them. Second, we review the diagnosis made of local needs by faith communities and their active, often critical, responses to official regeneration programmes.

The discussion will underline the ‘complexity of faith’ identified in Chapter 2. It will also reinforce the need for mutual understanding between secular and faith organisations

highlighted in Chapter 6. However, although faith communities may have distinctive understandings, motivations and approaches (some to the point of self-separation from mainstream society), what also emerges here is not so much their ‘strangeness’ in a secular culture but their recognition of many of the same priorities.

### Theologies and values

What connections are made by people of faith, between their religious world-views and their practical involvement in community life and urban regeneration? Do faith communities bring different priorities to the table? Should they be regarded as different? Or is there substantial common ground with secular understandings?

### *A different kind of partner?*

Some religious people stress a distinctive spiritual dimension in their priorities:

“Secular organisations can change the environment. But they can’t see people’s hearts change.” (Male Baptist minister, Newham)

Even some secular outsiders recognise and value a ‘spiritual’ contribution. In the words of one local councillor:

“[It is a good question for] somebody like myself who is not religious. I think there is something to offer that maybe can be seen constructively.... I think the spirituality – the religion which informs people who

follow a particular faith – that clearly has got something positive to offer. Or the coming together of a faith organisation, and the way of living together, and the approach to life that people have, which is wanting to live in harmony ... well you can't measure that.... You can't tick the boxes on that, or talk about outputs or outcomes, but it is something that is brought by a faith group as compared to a secular group.” (Male local councillor, Newham)

A significant differentiating feature identified by some interviewees is the long history of commitment by many faith congregations to their neighbourhoods. In the particular case of the Church of England, a continuing local presence (reflected in the parochial structure) is often linked theologically to an understanding of the church as one symbol of the closeness of God to the community and its material concerns. Asked for his views on the particular contribution of his faith tradition to the local community, one vicar made this response:

“Well, I think stickability. We can offer a long-term view in the sense that the Church has been around in England for at least 2,000 years and is prepared for another 2,000 years. So we've been here a long time. Equally, I think there are certain common, core issues for communities; for community values that you can press very hard in a Christian community and it will produce a response. Whereas, for other people who might have self-interest or whatever, it might not be so good.” (Male Anglican vicar, Bradford)

However, others interpret any positive contribution that may be made by faith communities not to such spiritual qualities and values but by reference to the wider social and political principles that they share with non-religious people:

“... there are some sections of any community that believe in a particular ideology, and any regeneration process has to map and take them into account and engage them. But the debate is being heavily hindered by giving them moral status, and suggesting that somehow they are more important to be involved than

other sub-sections of the community. I actually think that is highly counterproductive.... It depends on the faith and, again, it's true for sports groups as well – there are certain types of activity in the community that are more collectivist than others and whose underlying value system ... is particularly conducive to looking at communal solutions, to communal problems, as opposed to say an individual sketching club.” (Female national community development professional)

### *Theologies of participation and detachment*

Within the overall diversity of faith, some groups (drawn from all the religions encompassed by this research) hold theologically informed values and priorities in significant accord with secular policies for regeneration and social inclusion. The following quotation illustrates the way in which a particular theology can inform and motivate an agenda for change, which shares many of the detailed priorities of public policy:

“Talk about housing and the Biblical vision, if you look at any stories about houses – build houses with a garden, preferably with a tree in it – that's the Biblical vision of 'Shalom'.... And it's about safety – people want to feel safe in their homes; they want to feel safe in the streets; they want to feel safe when they go shopping; they want to feel safe when they go to the mosque or to the church. And religious people – churchy and all other faiths – feel their centres are vulnerable to attack. And we all talk about solidarity with each other, protecting each other....” (Male Methodist minister, Sheffield)

Of course, while ends may be shared, the means may differ. We shall see later in this chapter and in Chapter 5 that critical and radical social and political theologies may inform sharp challenges to official policy and practice. Nevertheless, there is common ground with secular objectives that distinguishes such faith perspectives from the values and theologies of more introverted, separatist or fundamentalist congregations and organisations, which are much less likely to become engaged in multi-interest secular regeneration processes.

As noted later in Chapter 6, it is important to underline the strong links between faith and ethnicity. For all ethnic groups (including white middle-class people) religion can be an important means by which to protect identity in a perplexing world. For black and Asian people their religion may also be a source for support in the face of racism and discrimination. Others, without an explicit *belief*, may choose the security of *belonging*. In such a context religion can become associated with a fortress or survival mentality and provoke competition, intolerance and hostility in relation to other faiths and to the secular 'world'. In our research, we inevitably encountered some traditions of this kind (although their representatives often declined to participate in the study). Nevertheless, these formed a small minority of the many faith organisations contacted.

### *The spiritual and the social*

Most religious groups recognise some distinction between the spiritual and the secular social world, and usually regard worship as their central purpose and activity. Nevertheless, many of the interviewees articulated theologies and values that expressed a strong integration between these spheres and which informed and motivated their social and political involvement.

"I would identify the doctrine of the incarnation as fundamental, which basically says that, because God takes human life and the environment sufficiently seriously to live amongst, that's what drives us not to be separated from the world but to be engaged with it in every aspect. And that's a fundamental Christian doctrine and understanding, and says that ... we cannot spiritualise away the realities of people's needs. And because we are followers of this person Jesus, and because he showed absolute concern for the physical needs around him just as much as the spiritual needs, that concerns us as well – that's what drives us in the end. We're not an escapist faith at all and it drives us back into reality.... If you want to change the world you have to be ready to be weak.... It's out of weakness and vulnerability, fragility and even death comes true transformation and change of the world. Our understanding of the cross is

fundamental to the way we try to operate. I'm not saying that Christian churches have not tried for power in the past, but we're hopeless at using power and we always get it wrong and we should not seek it." (Male senior Anglican clergyman, Bradford)

Islam too has long rejected the division of life into sacred and secular spheres, while Sikh interviewees introduced us to the concept of *miri-piri*, a rhyming phrase that brings together the worlds of the saint and the politician. But we also encountered or heard about numerous religious organisations that did prioritise the spiritual over the social in their mission. For example, the response of one imam to one of our interviewers was, "Well, to be honest, I don't do social".

### *Theology and regeneration*

Most of the faith groups actually involved in various forms of urban regeneration expressed values promoting social justice and the empowerment of socially excluded people that connected with current government priorities. Such understandings were often rooted in the experiences and the struggles of their own members and neighbours, and these often informed a radical commitment to justice and social transformation.

Few of our respondents spelled out detailed links between their theology and their regeneration work. However, many made connections between the scriptures or tradition of their faith and the specific problems of their neighbourhood. The mosque, for example, has been used for many community activities:

"... but if you look at the Prophet's time, for example, the mosque was a place of worship and it was an education centre. It was used as a court where disputes were settled. It was used as a prison as well. People were tied to the pillar of the mosque. It was used even for martial arts." (Community centre manager and imam, Coventry)

Many interviewees stressed the religious values that motivate and shape their service to others, although for the most part they were cautious about claiming moral superiority.

## Local issues and responses

This part of the chapter completes the movement from a focus on the theologies and values of faith communities to their more immediate perceptions of local issues and problems and their critical response to official regeneration agenda. Do faith communities and their members share with others a common understanding of local needs and priorities? Or, does their engagement in urban regeneration herald inflexibility and sectarianism? Do they offer important distinctive insights and a necessary challenge to established agendas?

### *Shared lives, shared understandings*

The idea of a discrete 'faith sector' can suggest a strong divide between the experiences and understandings of religious people and those of their neighbours. This research challenges such a view. Much more apparent is the extent to which faith communities and their members share the same experiences, confront the same problems and have the same perceptions as other people:

"The kids get mugged very often, sometimes at knifepoint; and sometimes they are sort of lured into drugs. So these are social problems that we face, which are part and parcel of the community as a whole, no matter what community you belong to." (Male committee member, Hindu temple, Newham)

"Generally there isn't anything special because we see ourselves now as part of the mainstream community because 99 out of 100 have made this country our own." (Male local councillor and chair of a mosque)

"Our own congregation is part of that poverty." (Catholic priest, Sheffield)

This shared experience informs perceptions of local needs and problems that are very similar to those of other local residents.

"I think that, largely, our congregation and organisation issues are the same really [as those of others in the district] – certainly for

the congregation. They're most of them out of work and have no prospects of getting into it... They've also got the whole issue of maintaining their existence really." (Male Anglican vicar, Bradford)

Although there was some limited variation in emphasis between faith groups, interviewees from all religious traditions identified local needs and problems across a very wide range: jobs, housing, environment, crime, drugs, education, family and community. Hence, although social and economic problems may be given a distinctive spiritual interpretation, the material emphasis in this list is striking. This shared understanding with other members of the community is reflected in the way in which many faith communities define their local social responsibility.

### *Serving the wider community*

As noted previously, the most introverted and detached faith organisations, which define themselves strongly in opposition to 'the world', are underrepresented in this study. Among the many faith congregations and organisations that *are* included in the research, the shared experience with their neighbours prompts widespread practical engagement with the wider community that goes beyond their immediate membership.

"I believe in a church that is needs-driven. By needs-driven I mean that our ministries and our focus of activities are geared towards human needs, of both the external community as well as the internal." (Male pastor of a black-majority church, Newham)

Sometimes the capacity to look outwards requires adaptability, both of people and of the buildings available to faith communities.

"We certainly have adapted. It's gone from being a church building that expected to have bums on seats on a Sunday to being a building that actually operates six days a week now – seven days a week if the restaurant is working... We have tried to involve the community very much with the things like the English classes..." (Female manager of a multi-use community centre in an Anglican church, Bradford)

While the Church of England has had the greatest capacity to act here, there are examples of such broad social engagement by other faith traditions in adapted premises. Hence, a Muslim resource centre in Coventry

“... soon shifted its emphasis from meeting its own needs to actually being opened to everyone, because they felt that here was an area that was new to them; where people could interact with one another. Maybe a mosque, gurdwara or church can't provide that because it's quite obvious that it's a religious building.... Whereas the resource centre will provide a neutral venue for people to just come in.” (Imam/advice centre manager, Coventry)

Such down-to-earth activity challenges the distinction that is often made between the 'sacred' and the 'secular', and the fears expressed by regeneration professionals. The following combination of 'religious' and street-level language, used in the context of a highly innovative and diverse faith-based community initiative, provides a vivid illustration:

“Out of lots of public meetings came the agenda ... people were saying very clearly they wanted an eating place, a meeting place; they wanted help with money; they wanted help with single parents; they wanted something done about the appalling drugs scene; something done about the kids expelled from school.... And we don't want naff jobs; we want jobs that give us some dignity. By the middle of '97 we hadn't done a thing except give away millions of custard cream biscuits.... God had given us, through the faithful listening to local people, not what we see but what we are told.... Now, I think, in terms of the Kingdom [of God], God is saying: 'Come on, you've got this place, what are you going to do?'. ” (Female Baptist minister and leader of a diverse social initiative, Sheffield)

### *Understanding each other, working together*

Shared understandings and outwardly directed community initiatives are often associated with

an increased emphasis on 'understanding each other' and on the need to work together.

“Everyone has an agenda. There is a sense almost of self-preservation – that we want to preserve what we have, or we have our own personal ideas. But the key to that is to really allay fears, demonstrating integrity, demonstrating that we are actually saying the same things. We do want to see a better world, we do want to see a better community, we do want to actually improve people and improve people's livelihood, their well-being if you like. And we are all working to that end.... And really, what I have found is that, talking and communicating gives better understanding. And that was the key.” (Male pastor of a black-majority church, Coventry)

This quotation underlines an earlier point: that common understanding can develop through awareness of common concerns and through practical activity, perhaps more readily than through dialogue at the level of doctrine and belief. Indeed, engagement in shared practice can be a context for development in interfaith and religious/secular understanding and respect.

“If it is a common goal then all the faith groups will work very well. That's a key for the regeneration of the communities.” (Sikh leader, Newham)

“There is enough within the social agenda to say, 'Let's have a go at this together', or even allowing other faiths into other faiths' territory, like the vicar in Manningham working with communities that are strongly allied to the mosque.” (Senior female Anglican, currently directing a secular regeneration initiative, Bradford)

### *Challenging the agenda*

In both their identification of local needs and in their practical response, many faith organisations and their individual members signal their ability to offer a valuable contribution as partners in public urban regeneration policy and practice. But they are likely to be active and critical partners. Many of our interviewees offered analyses of local needs that involve fundamental



criticism of the current definition and implementation of 'regeneration'. Some of these criticisms relate to specific policies and their coordination. These perspectives are described in Chapter 5. In keeping with the present chapter's focus on the theologies and values of faith communities and their relationship to action, the emphasis in this section is on the criticisms that relate to differences of principle and culture.

A recurring objection is to the distance between the excluded and the 'regenerators'. One interviewee offered this forceful elaboration of the critical viewpoint that some faith communities bring:

"They can give a perspective that isn't always available to people who quite honestly make their bread out of Bradford's poverty and then go to live in relative security in secluded places. This has to change. The money, the wages, the salaries, the opportunities, the ownership of difficulties has to be owned by the people of Bradford – those who live here, who struggle with it all the time. So there's a big cultural shift which needs to be taking place politically for that to happen, and I'm not confident that we're anywhere near that at the moment." (Male Anglican vicar, Bradford)

A similar assessment prompted this definition of role by a Christian member of a city-wide regeneration partnership board:

"I suppose I took on the role of questioning the initiatives from the point of view of those who were excluded." (Male Christian development worker, Sheffield)

Prominent in this 'view from the street' is the sense that, for all the activity and rhetoric, things stay much the same.

"The aims are fine. We can say that we've got together as far as the aims go. We're all wanting to live in decent houses; we all want them to feel safe; we want them to have good schools; to go to decent health facilities. None of that conflicts with what Christian values are, so that's all come together and you feel there is at least a willingness.... Fine – it's a great feeling to

be at that point. But still, really, at the spirit level, you still feel that nothing is changing. You don't see any change. So we are agreed on what needs to happen but ... if you talk to people in [Burngreave] they would say, 'Ah we haven't seen anything change. Nothing changes for me'." (Male Christian faith leader, Sheffield)

This view is informed and given authority by the long-term presence of faith communities in the neighbourhood, as noted earlier in this chapter. This often results in deep understanding of the district and its people and a sense that something is missing in official regeneration programmes. From this standpoint, official regeneration often seems narrow, short term and formulaic.

"I think schemes are trying to force people into that inclusion corridor, which doesn't respect the diversity of the cultures in areas like this.... I think the time-scales that are implicit in the targets that are set by all these regeneration programmes absolutely ignore how far away people are and how long it takes to move from total disaffection and a sense of despair to having the confidence even to engage with or develop the kind of social skills that we use, and don't even recognise that they are skills." (Female Baptist minister and leader of a diverse faith initiative, Sheffield)

In this view, the time-limited output objectives for particular regeneration projects are perhaps hopelessly removed from the long-term work required. In her affirmation of an innovative and diverse project in Sheffield, this respondent highlights the long-term commitment and positive informal qualities of many other faith-based regeneration initiatives:

"There's been a liberation in here, that we don't have to do stuff.... [It] is a fundamental shift. You can't apply targets and outcomes to an area like this. What you need to nurture is process and people."

This holistic approach, encompassing the material, social and spiritual, stresses the need for people, in informal 'safe spaces', to meet across boundaries of ethnicity, religion or age. The emphasis is on informing action through careful and protracted listening to people at the grassroots, learning from them and rejecting

assumptions about cultural fixity in favour of belief in people's ability to change.

This approach shares some important common ground with some secular diagnoses (for example, Amin, 2002). Among young people, at least, experiences at school and exposure to the media serve to mitigate cultural closure. Although strong minority identities have emerged, in part as resistance to racism, there *is* cultural exchange both between ethnic groups and with the cultural mainstream. Hence, there are "multiple and mobile youth 'ethnicities'" (Amin, 2002, p 10). In negotiating these identities and, in the process, reducing "the fear and intolerance associated with racial difference" (Amin, 2002, p 12) is the availability of 'sites' where people can come together to share experiences and explore differences. In terms of policy, this underlines the need for *places* that provide new settings in which dialogue can occur and in which there can be a 'transgression' across the normal boundaries of interaction. At its most immediate this can occur as people 'mix their styles' and extend their tastes in relation to music, clothes, food and film, but transgressions can go deeper and become

... multi-ethnic common ventures [that] can be based within the heart of residential areas. Communal gardens and other ventures run by residents and community organisations (eg community centres, neighbourhood-watch schemes, child-care facilities, youth projects, regeneration of derelict spaces) are a good example ... they can become sites of social inclusion and discursive negotiation. (Amin, 2002, p 16)

This depicts a 'deep regeneration' involving substantial informality, long timeframes and negotiation rather than imposition. What might faith communities have to offer here? Religious traditions and organisations, and their spatial jurisdictions can obviously function as the barriers to 'transgression', promoting defensive certainty at the expense of exploration and growth. However, numerous faith respondents in all our study areas stressed the importance of human relationships in regeneration, and the need for time, space and a non-judgemental atmosphere in which to develop relationships. These understandings often find expression in innovative projects motivated and informed by

religious faith but also challenging to traditional faith approaches as well as public policy.

## Summary

Religious faith is a source of motivation and direction in community activity for many of the people contributing to this research. Although the theologies and values of faith communities are highly diverse, most of our interviewees understand their beliefs as prompting their social participation rather than detachment, and many make strong connections between the spiritual and the social. Hence, while people of faith may assign particular importance to spiritual regeneration and the quality of human relationships in their neighbourhoods, they share the practical and material problems and concerns of their neighbours. These common perceptions, shared across faith and secular community organisations, invite the exploration of urban regeneration as a practical context for greater mutual understanding.

However, many in faith communities apply critical and challenging perspectives to official regeneration programmes. These derive both from their theologies and values and from their long-term local experience, often informed by substantial informal regeneration activity and by their participation in formal programmes.

# Resources, restrictions and resistance: potential and experience

“I think that there needs to be an environment which is receptive to you in order for you to participate practically. But the experience we’ve had over the last fifteen years or so is that the consultation mechanisms are pure tokenism, and they have not resulted in any concrete outcomes which met the needs of the Muslim community.” (Male Muslim community development worker, Newham)

This chapter focuses specifically on the potential and experience of faith communities in official regeneration programmes. The first part reviews the resources that faith communities can contribute. Some support is found for the positive assessment of the potential of faith organisations as “often among the most substantial community based organisations within an area” (DETR, 1997, p 149). But the very real restrictions on action also become apparent. This is underlined in the second part of the chapter as we explore some highly tangible aspects of ‘the engagement gap’ between faith communities and official regeneration programmes, where the restricted resources available to faith organisations sometimes combine with problems of communication and contrasting organisational cultures to produce non-engagement or ineffective engagement. This mixed experience of official structures can provoke disillusionment and resistance and is the subject of the final part of the chapter.

## Resources and activities

This first part of the analysis examines the immediate resources available to faith

communities and, through them, potentially, to the wider neighbourhood. The focus here is on physical and human capital – buildings and people. The range of activities undertaken by these people within these premises is then sketched. Issues of finance and wider ‘capacity’ are considered in the later parts of the chapter.

## *Buildings*

Buildings are immediate and crucial resources for community-based regeneration. In all of our study areas faith-related buildings constitute a significant proportion of the space available in the district for community use. In some cases these premises are of very high quality, designed for a wide range of needs and activities. The Church Urban Fund has been a particular means by which many Anglican churches and parish halls have been adapted to combine worship with community use (Farnell et al, 1994). The nationally significant Gujarat Hindu Centre and temple in Preston is a landmark community project comprising both a place of worship and facilities for education, employment training, recreation and the activities of diverse local user groups drawn from within and beyond the Hindu community.

Such centres, however, are not typical. Members of black-majority Christian churches, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, especially in their early years of settlement, often establish a base by renting or buying affordable meeting places in the form of cinemas, shops, factories or houses. As funds have permitted, many of these buildings have been adapted over the years, often with great persistence and imagination.

"The Bangladesh committee bought a huge building. It was the former H.M. Mercia building. Back in the war, it was used to manufacture ammunitions in Coventry, so it's quite a big building. I think we bought it about four years ago.... The first floor has been turned into a community centre – a venue for weddings and things like that. The second floor is the mosque itself and on the third floor is vacant at the moment and there are plans to do things with it as well." (Male, Muslim community centre manager, Coventry)

However, much of this accommodation is not well located or appointed. Often there is little car-parking space, access for disabled people is poor, and there is a continuing risk of contravening building regulations. Ongoing revenue costs are a pervasive challenge for all faith groups, including the mainstream churches, many of which occupy buildings that are expensive to maintain and are inappropriate for modern purposes. In many religious traditions the use of buildings is restricted by their listed or consecrated status or by trust deeds. In some cases criteria are established which prevent other groups who do not conform doctrinally or culturally to the norms of the hosts' faith tradition from renting or using the premises.

To such religious constraints may be added secular obstacles. Particular frustration was expressed by some interviewees drawn from non-Christian faiths regarding the difficulties experienced in obtaining planning permission for new or adapted premises. In some cases this was the result of difficulties in understanding the planning system and in others there may have been clear conflicts of land use. But such episodes also provoked a sense of discrimination and a perception of a lack of cultural understanding and recognition of religious needs on the part of the planning authorities.

### *People – leaders, members, staff and volunteers*

People of faith communities and organisations – often performing multiple roles as leaders, members, staff and volunteers – are a key and long-term community resource. In the case of white-majority churches a common observation is that:

"The churches have *been* there. I know there has been a certain white flight from churches in the inner city. But, nevertheless, they are there. They're [the clergy] often the only professional living in the area.... And, certainly, even if vicars or ministers come and go, the congregation goes on ... as well as the plant and all the things you've got around you." (Male Christian interviewee involved in regional government)

Much depends on a few active leaders, both clerical and lay. In the cases of Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism the key leaders of community initiatives are not necessarily, or even usually, the 'religious professionals'. For example, while many Christian ministers have diverse roles (including that of 'community leader') and, in some denominations, substantial autonomy, the imam has the task of leading the prayers without necessarily having any wider functions, and has the formal status of an employee appointed by a lay mosque committee. In many cases the appointment of an individual with the required credentials involves recruitment from abroad. Hence, it is quite rare for imams or mosques to have strong links with regeneration networks, even though they may be very active in supporting their worshipping members. The Islamic rejection of the spiritual/temporal duality (see Chapter 4) establishes a duty for Muslims to become engaged with the welfare of their fellow citizens, whether imams or lay people. In our research we encountered several Muslim individuals whose contribution to regeneration work reflected this. In most cases, these were leaders of faith-based Muslim *organisations* rather than leaders with a specifically 'religious' role at mosques. A similar situation exists in many cases within the Hindu and Sikh religions, with 'social action' and engagement being undertaken through faith-based organisations and lay leaders.

Across the faiths, some of these clerical and lay faith leaders are, in secular terms, impressive social entrepreneurs. Yet individual leaders do not necessarily empower the wider membership and may leave a vacuum when they leave. Clerical leaders and many lay leaders within the community are not usually appointed through democratic processes and some are perceived as wielding too much personal power.

Turning to the membership of faith organisations, the largest churches in poorer urban areas tend to be those which have a 'gathered' membership drawn from a much wider area. Some congregations emanate from the 'house church' movement and are outside the more long-standing denominations. Some Hindu, Sikh and black Christian congregations may show a similar departure from the neighbourhood community, with members commuting to worship and associational life from outside the district. Mosques and 'mainstream' Christian denominations tend to be more neighbourhood based. The local churches often have much smaller and ethnically mixed congregations, while other faith traditions are more homogeneous. Membership can be ill-defined and there may be significant numbers of people 'on the edge', taking advantage of the social support and the available facilities and services. Locally-based faith communities usually have few members in professional or managerial occupations.

Beyond the clerical leaders, many faith communities have further posts for paid staff. The numbers here are usually very small, amounting to one or two individuals, although some large organisations may have many more. The posts encompass such functions as management, administration, community development and youth work. Unlike most agency professionals, many of these staff live locally. However, in the main Christian denominations the numbers of new clergy and, more especially, the resources to pay for them have been in decline.

We have seen that all the broad faith traditions encourage social involvement and volunteering. For example, Sikhism places a strong value on voluntary service (*sewa*) rather than simple financial giving. Most of the social activities and the management of local faith communities are heavily dependent on the work of volunteers. Volunteers are drawn usually from a core of highly committed members. The extent of this commitment was illustrated graphically by one interviewee:

"The Church owns this building. It was developed by the Parochial Church Council. The congregation here was [said respectfully] ladies over the age of seventy. They raised two hundred thousand pounds

to build this building, so they were quite an impressive bunch. We have pensioners who tithe – so they give ten per cent of their state pension towards the building. Now I had to go and stop some of them because they were obviously not eating properly as a means of fulfilling their vision. So, yeah, there's a lot of ownership from the congregation – quite positive." (Male inner-city Anglican minister and manager of a large multi-use community centre, Bradford)

The demands on such people, many of whom are women, are heavy, and, especially in the Christian churches, volunteers are often older people. Official regeneration initiatives can often make unrealistic demands on such people.

The ageing profile of many Christian congregations is well documented (see, for example, Brierley, 2001). Churchgoing among younger people is increasingly to be found either in affluent suburban areas or in churches that gather many of their members from beyond the neighbourhood. The latter are often outside the established denominations and many may have less developed local community connections. In the inner-city districts black-majority churches and multi-ethnic congregations often include more young people, younger leaders and volunteers than predominantly white churches. As described in Chapter 6, across all faiths, in a context of rapid social change, there is evidence of disenchantment on the part of many young people with the control exerted by faith elders and a migration either away from faith altogether or towards alternative, sometimes more fundamentalist and separatist, expressions of religious identity. This raises questions concerning the long-term sustainability of the continuing rich community activity of these faith traditions.

### Activities

Despite the restrictions of physical and human capital charted above, the range of activities undertaken by faith communities that may reasonably be defined as 'regeneration' is impressive. Of course, religious people (and indeed perhaps others) would see worship and prayer as profoundly and intrinsically regenerative, and as providing spiritual resources

for wider social involvement (see Chapter 4). Almost all religious groups have a range of activities that provide care, support and development, often for specific age or interest groups. Sometimes these are simply for members of their own congregation, but many activities are extended to the wider neighbourhood. Secondary survey research evidence on Christian social engagement estimated the number of such initiatives in 2001, nationally, as 131,000 (Oley, 2002). Diverse, and frequently imaginative, activity was found in an audit of church-based projects, services and facilities in the Yorkshire and Humberside region. This study identified 6,500 ongoing church social projects, involving over 50,000 church members and 3,000 staff, used by over 150,000 people (Yorkshire Churches, 2002). Across all faiths there are examples of faith buildings, notably the larger community centres, which constitute important and accessible centres for secular, often officially sponsored, classes and activities.

Finally, the social engagement of faith communities extends also to political action. Particular examples of this dimension of activity are the substantial campaigning broad-based community organisations in Sheffield and East London in which members of various faith communities form a substantial proportion of the membership.

The wide range and diversity of social initiatives undertaken by faith communities and organisations conveys the potential breadth of the idea and practice of 'regeneration'. Although there is involvement in public projects, much of the work is informal and long-term, and sometimes it presents a challenge to dominant definitions. These tensions are the subject of the remaining parts of the chapter.

## The engagement gap

The preceding section indicated that many faith communities are engaged in activities that may be regarded as 'regeneration', often with premises that are ill-adapted and through people who are hard-pressed. Some initiatives are related to official schemes, but many are informal, internally generated and enacted within the faith community. This part of the chapter, therefore, focuses on reasons for non-

engagement with public programmes of regeneration on the part of faith communities and their leaders, and experiences of ineffective engagement in formal schemes. The discussion is organised around four key themes: communication, capacity, decision making, and funding and policy issues.

### *Communication*

Many interviewees claimed that poor or inadequate communication typified their experience of official regeneration activity. Consequently, engagement is difficult and flawed or fails to occur at all. Poor communication occurs for several reasons.

First, English is a second language for many members of faith communities and the provision of some material in translation is insufficient compensation. Second, even for those with good English, official documentation is too reliant on jargon and includes difficult technical concepts, daunting even for highly educated people. Third, there is an over-reliance on written communication, with insufficient resources to support outreach workers in the long-term task of building a deep knowledge of the community, listening to people and building trust.

These failures of communication are reflected in successive consultation exercises, which are perceived to ignore the expressed needs of the local community. These experiences engender a sense of disempowerment, damaging the chances of future successful engagement.

### *Capacity*

Lack of capacity was implicit in our discussion of the limitations of human capital above and many interviewees spoke of a lack of capacity to engage with official programmes. Volunteers and staff, already stretched, often lack appropriate training. They also experience difficulty in devoting the time needed to understand and complete complex funding application forms or to attend the frequent consultation exercises associated with many regeneration regimes. The regular requirement to secure match-funding compounds the demands on time, knowledge and skills.

“It’s a total nightmare, an absolute nightmare for a small church. The only way in which we managed to complete the application process was because we had three people in our church ... who had the skills ... to cope with the procedure and we were prepared to put in an enormous amount of time at the critical stages to process the application.... It was really a fluke.” (Male Anglican vicar, Coventry)

There was general recognition among the interviewees of the need to keep careful account of public money. Nevertheless, many were critical of burdensome bureaucracy:

“Someone can have a good idea that this should really happen but they don’t necessarily want to sit there wading through a forty-page form working out how many outputs should occur in quarter two.” (Male community regeneration officer, Newham)

Capacity building is often identified as a positive way of enabling disadvantaged communities to engage with regeneration in their area. However, some respondents warned that this is best achieved by reaching out to the wider community, not just selecting a few individuals who then leave the area and get good jobs elsewhere. Echoing our earlier discussion of leadership in faith communities, some feel that the concept of the ‘social entrepreneur’, for example, can actually lead to the disempowerment of communities.

“The process of capacity building is to extend the activity across a wider group of people.... The social entrepreneur model ... is certainly no more than a start and actually presents more problems than answers. You need to move on from there quite quickly and recognise that community work is ... about building a team.” (Male community regeneration officer, Newham)

### *Decision making*

Effective engagement with faith communities requires that faith group members be represented in the key decision-making bodies involved with regeneration. Interviewees, both faith and

secular, stressed that mechanisms for exchanging information and ideas must be complemented by genuine participation. However, participation is impaired in several ways.

First, constructive collective participation is undermined when divisions occur between different faith groups or when it is felt that a particular group is seen as empire-building or focusing too much on the needs of their own community. Criticisms, familiar in wider community affairs, are made of self-promoting individuals who are unwilling to focus on the demands of detailed work.

Second, faith community participation on boards and committees, as opposed to open invitations to attend general meetings, is limited and patchy. There is little sense of an effective strategic involvement of faith communities. In some cities there appears to be almost no involvement, while in others interfaith umbrella groups have been encouraged to develop and participate. Some faith organisations feel overlooked. This is particularly true in the case of some local strategic partnerships where the extent of faith inclusion is a single Christian representative. This level of involvement is easily interpreted as tokenism, especially by members of other faiths, or as an instance of the lack of ‘religious literacy’ discussed in Chapter 6. One Christian interviewee stressed the present narrowness of religious representation:

“We have been in a position in our organisation, through Churches Together in South Yorkshire, to put up one person to represent the Christian churches, and the [partnership] have said, ‘No, we want someone to represent all the faith groups’, which clearly we cannot do.” (Senior Anglican clergyman, currently in a secular regeneration post, Sheffield)

This relates to a third difficulty. It is not always clear, within or between faith communities, who should speak for whom. Overall, there is a danger, familiar in many other contexts but still more acute in the case of religious organisations, that representation will privilege a male and middle-aged experience. Going beyond these formal leaders to involve informal (often female) leaders requires persistence, time and resources that are often not committed.

Particular issues of representation and involvement in decision making arise at regional level where responsibility is divided between the economic focus of the regional development agencies (RDAs) and the community responsibilities of the government offices of the regions (GORs). Awareness and understanding of regional governance and its role is still lower than that of local government. At regional level the problems and deficiencies of consultation and representation are magnified further. Again it is the Christian churches that are most able to participate. In Yorkshire a Churches Regional Council (CRC) has been a full and active member of the Regional Chamber since 1999 and has a seat on the Regional Assembly for Yorkshire and the Humber. The CRC has been funded by the RDA to develop benchmarks for community participation (Yorkshire Forward, 2000). Individual Christians are quite well integrated in the regional regeneration policy community, but other faiths are much more marginal to policy development.

When all these factors are taken together – the bureaucratic demands, the resources needed to ensure a successful bid and the compromises that need to be made to meet secular objectives – some faith groups decide to focus on their worship and small-scale self-funded activities rather than get involved in formal regeneration programmes. They still feel that they are playing a positive role in their district and contributing to regeneration in a broader sense.

### *Funding and policy issues*

The finance of faith communities and organisations varies. Many are entirely self-funding, principally through the support of their members and sometimes through contributions from central faith or denominational sources. These internally derived funds have often been sufficient to develop their premises and an impressive range of activities and services. Generally, however, funds are scarce. The Church of England is relatively well resourced and finance is a field in which the inequalities between faiths, and indeed denominations (indicated in Chapter 2) are very evident. Even among Anglican parishes, however, funds are seldom plentiful and many churches face pressures for retrenchment.

Interviewees reported several obstacles or sources of discouragement when seeking funds for social projects. First, although the stance of local authorities shows some variation, activities deemed to be 'religious' are not funded. Most faith interviewees accepted that it is inappropriate for the state to finance religious mission or evangelisation. But we encountered frustration at the rejection of funding applications on grounds that were not fully understood or accepted. When faith and action are closely connected (see Chapter 4), distinguishing between 'religious' and 'social' purposes is problematic. Rejection can often be seen as based on discrimination or prejudice.

"We approached a major national funder and they said, 'Because your constitution includes ... the promotion of religion, we cannot fund you'. We said, 'This proposal isn't about that, it's about creating a health centre for people in that area'. They said, 'Well, yes, but if you remove that statement from your constitution then we might consider it'." (Community centre manager and imam, Coventry)

A perceived opaqueness of the rules and procedures governing funding decisions, and a disconnection between 'faceless and pedantic bureaucrats' and the community is the subject of wide complaint.

"[The aims of official programmes] are very similar, that's what's so annoying. You go; you read it and you think, 'wow, that's everything we do ... we have done all of that, this is us!' Then you fill in the forms and they say 'no'. You don't fit the criteria. And you think, 'well what the hell are the criteria?'" (Female manager of a multi-purpose community centre at an Anglican church, Bradford)

However, viewed in relation to principles of equal opportunity, many faith communities encounter obstacles to funding and support, which many (including other faith organisations) would endorse. As discussed more fully in Chapter 6, in some religious traditions there is a long and continuing history of the marginalisation of women, young people, gay men and lesbians, 'sinners' and unbelievers in general, which conflict with secular funding criteria.



A particular tension attaches to employment policy, which many faith organisations see as posing a challenge to their integrity. Some groups are unwilling to employ staff or volunteers from outside their own faith communities and several faith interviewees expressed concern that, by accepting public regeneration money, they would be tied down by ‘secular strings’. Ethical concerns were also expressed by some regarding Lottery or other sources of funding:

“... the Masons offered half a million to put new toilets [in the cathedral], and the bishop said, ‘No way. This is the work of the devil; I couldn’t possibly have Masonic money’.” (Female Anglican priest)

Funding and regeneration policies can be inconsistent, and even contradictory, across and between councils and regeneration partnerships. This ‘flexibility’, goes some way towards explaining the widespread perception of discrimination that we found among faith groups. More positively, however, it enables ways to be found around rules that would otherwise preclude funding such groups. For example, constitutions can be revised, and worship and social facilities separated in order to qualify for funding: “We got a grant for the community centre, but not for the ... temple” (Sikh gurdwara committee member, London). There is no doubt that statutory bodies often make great efforts to assist faith groups to overcome potential barriers:

“It might have been [council officer] who brightly suggested that ... instead of applying for a grant for the church boiler, which also heated the hall, if we put it the other way round and asked for a new boiler for the hall, which also heated the church, then it could be looked at in a different way! It was obvious. We got a £10,000 grant and solved all our heating problems.” (Male Anglican vicar, Coventry)

Thus, most problems noted in this and preceding chapters may be amenable to negotiated solutions, providing there is goodwill and openness to creative resolutions on both sides. However, good motivations are no guarantee of either fair processes or positive outcomes – sometimes quite the reverse:

“... there is prejudice and discrimination endemic in the funding system for absolutely the best of motives, related partly to value systems on egalitarianism and fairness. Because the whole local government movement at its most admirable is terribly, terribly committed to citizenship and equality before the law.... So that is entirely laudable; it just comes out as the most appallingly confused prejudice.” (Female national community development professional)

But it must be acknowledged that there may be issues on which deeply held secular and religious convictions are so fundamentally opposed that compromise is impossible. We return to this in Chapter 6.

## The experience of official programmes

This final part of the chapter develops the preceding discussion of the resources and regeneration activities of faith communities and the factors that create a gap between secular and faith organisations by relating the latter’s experience of actual involvement in official programmes. The discussion also builds on the review of wider criticisms by faith interviewees of the principles and general outcomes of public regeneration programmes in Chapter 4 by focusing on more specific points relating to regeneration practice.

### *The range and complexity of regeneration programmes*

There are many positive examples of people from all faith traditions working with regeneration schemes and achieving real benefits from the funding made available. One of the characteristics of regeneration funding is that there are many different types of funds available at any one time.

“Bradford’s got the lot. You name it – SRBs 1-6, New Deal for Communities, Health Action Zone, Sports Action Zone, Education Action Zone, Estates Action; we’ve had City Challenge in the past. I mean Bradford pretty well gets it all. It’s getting the most Neighbourhood Renewal funding in

Yorkshire and Humber; it's going to get the most Community Empowerment money and it will probably get the most Community Chest money when that comes on stream.... It's what you do with it!" (Senior female Anglican, currently directing a major secular initiative, Bradford)

However, the many schemes and the seemingly large sums of money concerned can also present difficulties for faith communities seeking to engage with them. There is confusion at the different names and what they cover, compounded by the frequent policy changes, new schemes, abandoned schemes and refocused schemes. It is possible to find members from all faith communities that have a reasonable (and sometimes excellent) grasp of regeneration issues but these are very few and Church of England clergy, supported by a diocesan organisation, are most prominent.

### *Location and competition*

As many of the funds are targeted at specific geographical locations, it is not uncommon for community groups to have real needs but find themselves just outside the boundaries of the qualifying areas. Some established faith communities have a building in a particular neighbourhood despite the fact that most of the members of that community travel in from other districts. This is an example of how the existence of faith communities can add value to regeneration areas. Conversely some people report community groups being set up in areas just to take advantage of funding streams that have been announced. This geographical dimension is a further potential basis for the divisive competition for funds noted above.

### *Disillusionment with the impact of programmes*

The large sums of money that are announced when schemes are first launched are seen by some as a 'dangling carrot', used to encourage people to attend consultation meetings and for the aggrandisement of the politicians involved. Often the structure of schemes means that much of the money has been set against existing projects and is not actually available to spend on new ventures. In the initial stages of a project the start-up costs are often high. At this point

faith and other community interests are liable to question the impact of the initiative. Several interviewees were critical of the high levels of remuneration to senior regeneration professionals. The search to justify a regeneration scheme through the achievement of 'quick wins' (highly visible and readily delivered changes) was seen as frequently flawed, with money being assigned to the 'wrong' projects – projects that pass all the tests and perhaps have some limited success, but which are ineffective and unsustainable in the long term. Such experiences provoked a concern among interviewees for the accountability of public bodies in their expenditure.

Most regeneration initiatives have a top-down structure and this includes the setting of targets and outcomes by government, which are not usually negotiable. The increasing emphasis on 'hard' outcomes that are readily measured does not fit well with the 'softer', longer-term needs as seen by faith communities (see Chapter 4):

"When I see people like the TEC coming in or other agencies, it's just reinforcing the fact that ... we need to have delivered and, yes, we ran so many courses and, yes, we did that and we did this. But really nothing has changed ... all they've done is paid [for] salaries and facilities ... our community has not changed." (Male local faith leader, Coventry)

Specific stories were told of regeneration regimes experienced as bureaucratic and tightly scheduled:

"It was a matter of jumping through hoops and you had to go quicker and quicker and quicker.... A day or two before the final, final deadline we were told we were to supply 25 copies of the application form and all the policies and all the documentation that went with it because this was a European requirement. That requirement was just like a little symbol – the fact that we were given a day or two to do it and the fact that it was expected of a little church like this.... We didn't know we were going to get a penny at this stage ... it was a massive risk." (Male local faith leader, Coventry)

This perceived remoteness of those framing the policies is seen as producing policies that do not engage with the finer grain of neighbourhood social structure. For example, one interviewee drew a contrast between the aspirations and employment needs of unemployed minority ethnic graduates in the Burngreave ward in Sheffield and government policy, and questioned simultaneously the quality of jobs actually created:

“A lot of people are qualified, very experienced in corporate work. They want to stay here. They don’t want to move elsewhere, but they can’t get jobs.... With New Deal funding coming into the area, all the jobs that are well paid are going out of the area. The only guaranteed jobs for the people of Burngreave are trainee jobs that almost earn minimum pay rates, which shouldn’t be because there have been people doing that kind of work for a long time.” (Female Muslim community activist, Sheffield)

The coordination of policy was the further object of criticism. The holistic understanding of ‘regeneration’ held by many faith activists (noted in Chapter 4) sometimes prompts them to challenge the degree to which official policies achieve their ‘joined-up’ aspirations.

“Is it really valid to expect crime reduction when you are reducing the resources in the youth service? When you have created an education system that encourages the head-teacher to avoid getting into their school any troublemakers because they impact upon their position on certain tables? We have to ask what is the link between exclusion, poverty, lack of educational opportunities, lack of recreational and other vocational types of training, and crime.” (Male national leader, black-majority Christian churches)

## Summary

This chapter outlines the resources, both buildings and people, that faith communities can bring to regeneration. Across Britain there are thousands of social initiatives which faith

organisations and their members provide or host for their own members and, in many cases, the wider population. Together, these activities reflect a strong commitment to social care and often to a wider civic social and political engagement. Much of this work is informal and self-funded. However, members of faith communities are often prominent in more official regeneration programmes and many religious organisations contribute to the development and implementation of policy.

There are also more cautionary notes that should be sounded. In terms of resources, the buildings and personnel of many faith organisations are not sufficient for any great expansion of activity without external support. Indeed, with ageing memberships, the sustainability even of present levels of activity may be problematic. There are further constraints attached to wider organisational capacities and cultures. These produce an engagement gap with official schemes which is experienced by many community organisations but which may be still more acute in the case of faith groups. Particular issues here are the impaired communication between faith bodies and secular agencies; official funding criteria and the discrimination and lack of understanding in funding processes perceived by some faith groups; and the limited and unequal footing of various religious faiths within decision-making structures and processes.

These tensions, together with the wider issues of principle explored in Chapters 4 and 6, result in very mixed experiences of engagement in official programmes of regeneration. We encountered many interviewees with a long and impressive record of engagement with large public regeneration schemes. However, there is also evidence of wide disillusionment, informed by this experience. Government-sponsored regeneration was criticised by many interviewees on grounds of being too complex; too centrally controlled and ill-attuned to specific local issues; too bureaucratic; not sufficiently holistic and interconnected; and, in many cases, ineffective – producing a collective sense that money is spent but ‘nothing ever changes here’.

# 6

## Cohesion, conflict and exclusion: understandings and misunderstandings

“Muslim people are quite illiterate about Christianity and Christians are often religiously illiterate about Islam. And secular people are sometimes religiously illiterate about all religions.” (Male senior member of the Anglican clergy, Bradford)

In this chapter, we discuss some of the practical and political issues around engaging faith communities in urban regeneration that have arisen in preceding sections of this report. These include, first, misunderstandings and tensions between faith communities and secular agencies; second, exclusion or discrimination on the bases of ethnicity, religion, gender and sexuality; and, third, tension and conflict between faith communities. Underpinning all these sections is the fundamental question of whether participation in urban regeneration programmes could enhance cooperation between ethno-religious communities, or whether it might exacerbate conflict. We begin with an examination of decision makers’ knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and cultures, and the policies on which they operate.

### Official understandings and religious literacy

Regeneration officials are required to ensure that public monies are spent economically, effectively and accountably under ‘best value’ policies. They are obliged to undertake public consultations and to reach decisions that are demonstrably fair and in accordance with ‘equality’ laws. Increasingly, they are expected to engage with faith communities and religious organisations as a means of extending the participation of ‘hard-to-reach’ groups. But the

normative assumption in mainstream English culture – that religion is a private matter that should be separated from politics – provokes discomfort among white regeneration professionals:

“... there is still a vague wariness about any kind of faith ... a feeling that the two don’t mix.” (Male chief executive officer of a voluntary organisation and board member of a regeneration partnership, London)

This partially explains some of the differences in perception between the public and faith sectors. For example, while professionals talked at length about funding and equal opportunities, faith respondents complained of bureaucracy, lack of understanding of religion and culture, lack of consultation and unfair treatment. Does this reflect differing world-views or is it indicative of lack of awareness and religious literacy on the part of regeneration professionals?

### *General awareness and religious literacy*

Lack of legislation with respect to religion, together with the secular nature of British society, means there is no requirement for public sector workers to be religiously literate. Our interviews demonstrated that most officials have only a limited awareness of cultural and faith issues, and are not equipped to appreciate the implications for regeneration projects of, say, Islamic finance or kosher kitchen practice. This can influence funding decisions associated with what officials regard as ‘complex’ religious groups. For example, a senior officer of a national community work agency described how grants panels might feel comfortable with childcare bids from Muslim women’s groups, be

unsure about bids from Muslim men's groups and agonise over bids for separate activities for boys and girls:

"... and that's where I think ignorance comes in, because they see a foreign name. And I think that is also true of Jewish groups – 'Oh, it is an Hasidic Jewish group. Oh, we don't know enough about that to be able to disentangle it and apply principles'." (Female national community development professional)

These principles are discussed below, but it is this kind of confusion that has led members of the faith sector to advocate the need to educate policy makers and practitioners on faith issues and to use outreach workers to ensure effective communication. Religiously literate Christians can also help to enable conversations, build bridges and develop capacity. Some useful initiatives in this area are already underway in the Yorkshire and Humber region (CRCYH, 2001). Elsewhere, improved awareness has informed practice so that, for instance, Single Regeneration Budget partnerships are careful to avoid Friday meetings that would prevent Muslims from attending, to take such religious holidays as Diwali into account, and to ensure that functions include halal and vegetarian provision.

The situation remains imperfect, however, and we were told of the offence and exclusion caused by such things as office cultures involving socialising that presumes the consumption of alcohol or 'disrespectful' talk/behaviour in relation to women; caterers providing 'multicultural' buffets that serve pig-meat on the same plate as other meat, halal or vegetarian food; and the planning of new buildings in which toilets face Mecca. But all these issues raise fundamental questions about equal opportunities in a context of cultural and religious diversity and competition for resources. To what extent, for instance, can, or should, majorities be expected to change their behaviour to conform to minority norms?

Another element of religious illiteracy that not only causes offence but has implications for policy and practice, is the failure to distinguish between ethnic and faith communities. Sikhs are confused with extremist Muslims; liberal Muslims are viewed as fundamentalist, jihadi and

mysogynist; Reformed Jews are not distinguished from ultra-Orthodox ones; Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians are perceived as 'born-again fundamentalists' who are inherently Right-wing and reactionary.

Most of our statutory sector respondents had only limited awareness of the range of faith organisations in their area. Only in Newham and Bradford had a systematic multi-faith directory of religious groups been compiled (by voluntary organisations) and, apparently, even there it was little known or used by statutory bodies. Among both regeneration officials and local councillors we found ignorance of the existence and work of religious groups. This is illustrated by a comment made by a Christian chair of a Single Regeneration Budget board, employed by a voluntary sector regeneration agency, that it was 'indicative' that he did not know the names of local mosques.

### *Assumptions and fears about religious groups*

Notwithstanding the ignorance noted above, regeneration professionals do see the value of working with faith groups as a means of reaching excluded communities:

"... even at the very minimum level, temples and mosques and churches are a very good way of communicating..." (Male regeneration chief officer, Coventry)

The key issue here is widening consultation and participation in regeneration and neighbourhood renewal, and securing representation of interest groups in local strategic partnerships and community forums. However, lack of religious literacy and local contacts in faith communities can reduce this to a matter of chance. Officials can also see the worth of faith groups in delivering services, but there are unrealistic expectations on the one hand and, on the other, a suspicion that religious organisations are not equipped to manage and deliver programmes in a 'professional' way.

Another aspect of the focus on widening participation is the desire in the statutory sector to break the monopoly of mainstream Christianity:

"I think the city is dominated by the Christian church. I don't think it's unwelcoming but it's just the culture, or the sort of institutionalisation of the Christian church in the city. I think it makes it quite hard for other folks to find a way in; to feel welcome." (Female African-Caribbean development officer, Coventry)

This, combined with a view of religion as private and personal, makes it difficult for officials to understand religious faith as a way of living that involves community identities and obligations. The fact that mosques, gurdwaras, temples and Pentecostal missions are not organised on the Anglican parish model adds to officials' problems of locating people with whom they can 'do business'.

Thus, despite their desire to include a variety of faith groups, our interviews show that officials have a range of practical problems and fears in doing so. And, while such matters as 'capacity' can be improved, concerns regarding equal opportunities, the secular/sacred divide, proselytising and the view of religion as a major cause of conflict, are considerably more difficult to overcome. Regeneration professionals are working in a context of ideological liberalism and scarce material resources, yet are confronted by demands from ethno-religious communities for 'special' treatment. How do they reconcile these with legal requirements in such spheres as equal opportunities and race relations? Our interviewees gave these examples of dilemmas encountered in their work:

- What do you do when an Asian project is actively promoting 'forced' marriages?
- Or when a Christian project bans gay men and lesbians from even *voluntary* work?
- Or when a Muslim 'educational' project is for boys only?
- How do you operate inclusively when white women face barriers to Asian women erected by Muslim men?

These sorts of quandaries have resulted in some inconsistent decisions in advancing or withholding funds:

"The funding system in the '80s and '90s dripped with goodwill and ethnic sensitivity.... So, with the best and most ill

thought-out intentions in the world, you fund separatist and religious-based social activity.... The effect is to decrease understanding, to segment society more.... I will give you a classic case.... When [the borough] funded a generalist women's centre ... and gave substantial funding and said, 'You must work with all communities'. And in the same committee meeting approved one African-Caribbean women's centre and three Pakistani Muslim women's centres with the inevitable consequences.... And it was stupid!" (Female national community development professional)

As reported in the previous chapter, some faith organisations perceive funding as a particular context in which wider official suspicion and mistrust becomes evident. These experiences, together with the issues identified in this section, illustrate some of the tensions and misunderstandings that occur between faith groups and secular regeneration agencies.

"I think if I was a politician I would run a bloody mile from this...." (Male national Jewish policy researcher)

## Inclusion, exclusion and discrimination in regeneration

### *Ethnic and faith groups*

Although ethnicity and religion are conceptually separable, we analysed them together because of the correlation between minority ethnicity and faith. For, while not all minority ethnic individuals are religious, a large number of regeneration area residents do not separate faith and community. In the words of a Muslim interviewee in Bradford, "the religion *is* the community" (male Muslim community development worker). Or, as expressed by another interviewee:

"I think ... we are aware that, in a way, if you take the issue of faith community; if you're dealing with Islam and Muslim communities, community is as important as religion. You are a member of a Muslim community. Rather than choosing to belong, you are born into that sense of

obligation.... And so it's as much community belonging as religious affiliation." (Male regional Anglican interfaith adviser, location withheld to preserve anonymity)

This link between ethnicity and faith makes it impossible to determine whether exclusion and discrimination are based on ethnicity or religion or both, and opinions varied among our respondents. Some officials denied discrimination: "No, there's no discrimination as such based on ethnicity or religion, though some people claim there is" (male Muslim local councillor, Newham). Others acknowledged racial, but refuted religious, discrimination: "most conflicts are due to racism, not religion" (female white regeneration official, Newham). Still others linked the two:

"... black groups face double difficulty because there is the religious phobia and the racism and xenophobia against black people. So if it's a black Muslim organisation there is real fear and discrimination." (Male social entrepreneur and consultant, London)

Among faith groups there was widespread agreement that religious discrimination – both general and specific – does occur, although 'explanations' for this varied from ignorance, through racism, to secularism:

"I think that there are those amongst the grant-makers that just can't handle religious stuff." (Male Methodist minister/community organisation team leader, Bradford)

"It is a major complaint that we are dismissed as Christians." (Male Anglican vicar, Coventry)

"African-Caribbean faiths are dismissed as 'Mickey Mouse' religions." (Female African-Caribbean development officer, Coventry)

"It's not the officers ... it's the policy itself that needs changing.... It's institutionalised discrimination against religion ... from a secular society." (Male Muslim community development worker, Bradford)

"We live in a society whose assumptions are essentially liberal and secular. And so the place of faith communities is still contested." (Male senior civil servant)

Overall, then, our research shows a widely shared perception among faith groups that prejudice affects funding allocation. Regeneration officials, however, explained their rejection of applications from religious groups on the grounds that the groups: first, lacked the capacity to manage public funds and deliver outputs in accountable and effective ways (a concern echoed by a number of our faith interviewees); second, were unable or unwilling to comply with equal opportunities legislation; and, third, were unable or unwilling to separate the secular from the sacred.

"We are happy to fund religious organisations but not religious activity." (Male community regeneration manager, Bradford)

However, it should be noted that, although our research points to perceived discrimination against ethnic and religious groups, it also indicates *self*-exclusion by some minority groups:

"... it would be foolish to see, say, Muslim communities in this city, as simply passive victims of exclusion. In some cases they can be. But in reality they have their own priorities, their own agendas." (Male regional Anglican interfaith adviser)

This is in line with sociological evidence that Indians (Christians, Hindus and Sikhs) are more integrated into British society than Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslims (Ballard, 1994; Modood et al, 1997). The fact that in some cities a high percentage of regeneration area residents are Muslims has implications for faith participation in urban regeneration programmes.

## Women

Gender discrimination in Britain mainly favour men and in some ways the regeneration field reflects this. In terms of differential funding of projects, there is no evidence to suggest discrimination against women. However, within many community groups there is a striking gap

between formal (male) and informal (female) leadership which might mask this:

"I think the most active people, the strongest people, the most animated and exciting people are the women.... I don't think, if you look at [community] leadership in Burngreave, it's in the hands of men."  
(Male Methodist minister, Sheffield)

"... there is a real glass ceiling, so that at the level of the operating group, it would be predominantly women; the management group would be fifty-fifty; but when they get to send someone to bang on the doors of the Town Hall then it's middle-class men." (Senior Anglican clergyman, currently in a secular regeneration role, Sheffield)

These quotations illustrate the intersection of gender and class. When ethnicity and generation are added to the equation, we see that younger minority ethnic women are increasingly involved in regeneration programmes, although often in 'gender-specific' work with girls and women. In Bradford, the fact that several Indian (Sikh and Hindu) women hold high-level posts in the regeneration sphere illustrates the need to deconstruct the category 'Asian'. It also confirms research into differential levels of integration between ethnic/faith groups.

But it is the position of women within faith communities themselves that confronts regeneration officials with dilemmas in relation to equal opportunities in a liberal Western framework:

"... the way that faith is operating goes against, and cuts across, a national consensus about, say, the position of women.... The activity that is faith based is also in our view misogynist." (Female national community development professional)

This is a commonly held view among public sector professionals and, although it can be said to ignore the liberating potential of religion, for women as well as men, it also has some basis in reality. Our research shows considerable differences between faith communities in terms of gender equality, but it also intimates that women's progress has not come easily in any of them. For example, most Christian

denominations (black and white) now have women ministers, and congregations and lay voluntary workers are predominantly female. However, women achieving ministerial office in some Christian denominations is the result of a long and bitter struggle, which has hardly begun in, say, Catholicism.

The same applies to minority faiths in which women's contribution to religious services varies along a continuum from full participation to none. Similar observations apply to the status and roles performed by women in the various communities, particularly in terms of decision making. A male Sikh interviewee in Sheffield reported that 80% of social activity is 'governed' by women, who also hold 50% of executive (decision-making) posts. At the other extreme, there are synagogues and rabbis who do not accept women rabbis and draw a strict dividing line between men and women, and mosques that prohibit women from entering. All this illustrates the fact that sexism, like racism, can be overt and intentional or covert, unintentional and institutionalised, as a number of comments from our interviewees demonstrates.

"Our women *choose* to live in purdah."  
(Male Muslim community development worker, Bradford)

"Women are not outgoing, but want to remain within those four walls [home]."  
(Male local councillor/mosque president, Newham)

"Every day [women] look after the kitchen very well, and wherever there is need, they are there. General maintenance, cleaning and hoovering." (Male committee member, Hindu temple, Newham)

All this raises a key issue in relation to gender, faith communities and regeneration. This is that the definitions of some male faith leaders of women's roles and needs may conflict – irreconcilably – with those of both professionals *and* minority ethnic women. We return to the former in our conclusions. The message as far as the latter is concerned is that it is essential for regeneration officials to access women's views directly, rather than assuming that men speak on their behalf. Here, we found a gap between rhetoric and reality. In Bradford, for example, we were assured that consultation systems had



been developed to ensure the participation of minority ethnic women themselves; however, discussion with grassroots workers, women's groups, an English as a Second Language teacher and her students, and an email poll suggested that this is *not* the case.

### *Young people and children*

There appears to be growing awareness in the regeneration field of the desirability of engaging young people and children. Some of this may stem from European legislation on human (including children's) rights and some may be related to growing concern over youth misbehaviour, including the involvement of minority ethnic boys and young men in the public disturbances in northern cities in 1995 and 2001.

Our research uncovered an extensive range of provision for children and young people in regeneration programmes, much of it focused on disaffected, alienated young people. Nevertheless, many grassroots workers feel that young people remain excluded:

"Young people are being pushed further and further to the margins." (Catholic sister managing an education project, Sheffield)

"... the kids that are on the edge haven't had anything.... They are the ones that are going to face early death. And they do – I bury some of them." (Female Baptist minister and leader of diverse social initiative, Sheffield)

Recent regeneration programmes *require* the involvement of young people, and various attempts have been made to obtain this, including invitations to them to take part in decision-making boards, parallel panels and youth parliaments. As with women, there are problems in reconciling the values of some minority ethno-religious groups with those of secular liberalism. Regeneration professionals face considerable challenges in trying to fulfil the government's requirement to involve young people while not offending or antagonising community elders:

"... there's many obstacles because although the young people do want to take part in

different projects ... they are restricted because of their cultural background and their religious background, so it can cause a lot of negativity within the community.... So you have to sort of write to the parents saying ... 'we have no intention of influencing them'.... Because you don't want to be negative towards the religion or else you are going to actually lose the young people and the parents themselves. So it's about getting parental involvement as well, although the parents won't turn up they will respect that you have actually tried to include them." (Male black secular youth worker, Sheffield)

Not only was there widespread agreement on the problems of involving young people, but consultation with them yields some interesting results:

"... another debate we need to have is about how we engage young people in that process, and they don't actually want to be engaged in a formal process. They are too young; they are too innocent; they don't want to know about Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and how it's going to impact on their community because they don't care. They want somewhere to hang around in the evenings and be able to smoke some cigarettes and God knows what else and just have a good time, and if you can give us that then great! So SRB5 is a nightmare." (Female capacity building officer, Coventry)

"... whenever I've asked groups of young people what they want they've just said, 'Well give us a heated bus shelter.... Heat it; light it; put it near the shops'. Two groups – Sheffield and Hull – have both said exactly the same thing: they want a heated bus shelter. Independently ... I've just asked in a class of fifteen-year-olds: 'If you could have anything you wanted on this estate that would make your life better, money no object, what would it be?' Heated bus shelter!" (Female senior government regional officer, Sheffield)

In terms of youth issues *within* faith communities, many of our interviewees across all faith communities spoke of intergenerational tensions and decreasing involvement by young

people in religious activities. Interestingly, most blamed the older generation for this, although some were critical of young people, and others of British society and white professionals:

"... there seems to be a communication barrier coming up now between our youngsters and the first generation, and certainly the religious leaders. They don't want to go to a mosque where the religious leader speaks whatever language and youngsters don't understand it." (Male Muslim community activist, Newham)

"... their ideas are quite often in huge conflict to the more senior members, so there's always tension there. Two years ago all the young people ... went away for a weekend and one of the projects was 'If you were running church, how would you run it?' Spent the whole weekend on it and they did a really good project and outline, and they presented it to the church in the evening service as an idea. It was just blasted out of the water.... There was no engagement ... and since then some of the young people they've really just ... stuck really on the edge." (Male pastor, black-majority church, Sheffield)

"[Communities are] very sceptical about young people's contribution. It's quite interesting since we talk to some older people in the community. Their view quite often is that the problems of young people could be sorted out with a spell in the army! And I get this from Muslim people as well as Christian people, or something similar. People from all religious groups actually." (Male council-employed community regeneration manager, Bradford)

"Our community went to a youth centre and found that their kids were being taken away from them basically, instead of being helped. So, we thought, the youth today are going to be the fathers of tomorrow, and what kind of society are we going to get if we let this carry on? [...] Basically, these workers ... weren't interested in keeping them moral, upstanding individuals. They were more interested in letting them play, have fun, things like

that." (Male Muslim community development worker, Bradford)

Intergenerational differences have long been acknowledged and it is not surprising that these are particularly striking in minority ethnic communities in which the older generation consists of migrants and the younger one of people born or mainly brought up in England. The extent of these may be linked to differing levels of integration into British society, as may the reaction of elders to such change. We found that Sikhs, particularly, seemed to view generational change with pride and stressed their children's achievements in educational and professional terms. In other cases, there is some indication that 'Westernisation' is viewed as a threat to traditional religious and cultural values, as illustrated by the final quotation above.

Gender and generation intersect, of course, so that there are significant differences between older and younger women with the latter increasingly developing careers. However, this does not necessarily imply that achieving equality (however defined) is merely a matter of change over time, for there is growing awareness that some young men are attracted to a highly conservative, patriarchal and separatist variant of Islam. This impacts directly and indirectly on young Muslim women. In Bradford, for example, a Catholic priest told us that he had witnessed young men issuing violent threats against a young woman who challenged their definition of Islam. Also in Bradford, a male Anglican vicar reported being forced to close a women-only project because Muslim women were being violently harassed by young Muslim men.

All this suggests that there is some basis for regeneration professionals' fears of conflict between secular views of equal opportunities and the traditional values of some faith communities. It also suggests that some faith communities will resist engagement in urban regeneration, particularly the interfaith programmes that some see as the way forward. This has implications for the work of regeneration professionals. For example, they need to avoid treating ethno-religious groups as homogeneous entities, undifferentiated by class, gender and generation. Diversity *within*, as well as between, such communities means that there is a danger of exacerbating inequality if professionals assume that older men accurately

represent the interests of, say, women and young people.

### *Gay men and lesbians*

Only four of our respondents mentioned homosexuality – two as an example of interest groups and one in terms of conflict between liberal social attitudes and conservative faith community ones. The fourth, however, referred to exclusion on the grounds of sexuality:

“I don’t know about the other faiths but I know about the more evangelical wing of the Christian church ... and my view is that no matter how much they say their services are available for everybody.... When they on the other hand proclaim very clearly that they will not allow practising homosexuals ... to work or to volunteer in their projects ... I think that speaks volumes.” (Female chief executive officer, Christian voluntary organisation, London)

The silence that we encountered around the issue of exclusion on the grounds of sexuality is surprising, given that most world faiths hold views on homosexuality that are at best ambivalent, and at worst, highly condemnatory. We do not have sufficient data to speculate on the reasons for this lack of comment, which could be highly positive, or extremely negative. However, the quotation raises questions about the rhetoric of inclusion versus the reality of exclusion – questions that have implications far beyond the issue of sexuality.

In the final section of this chapter we look at the issue of community relations and examine areas of conflict as well cooperation between faith groups. We deal with this at both the micro and macro levels.

## **Community relations: conflict and cooperation**

### *Competition for resources*

In addition to the challenges posed by cultural and religious diversity discussed above, there is the problem of competition for scarce resources between, and within, faith groups.

“If you take the largely Asian faiths like Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam, they tend to fight each other over getting funding.” (Male Muslim interviewee, Newham)

“It is not necessarily between different faiths, even: sometimes you will have competing organisations of the same faith....” (Male Sikh interviewee, Newham)

In this context, perceived inequality can be as damaging to interethnic relations as actual discrimination (Cantle, 2001) and we found considerable evidence of such perceptions. In Coventry, it was suggested that refugees were prioritised over people of Caribbean origin; in Newham, Muslims alluded to inequality and prejudice against them; and in Bradford, a white Christian woman suggested that Muslims were favoured over others:

“It [the allocation of funding] shouldn’t be on who shouts loudest and who makes the most fuss and who burns the most buildings....”

Fear of being seen to discriminate between faith groups is sometimes given as a reason for not funding them:

“So they’ll say things like, ‘If we give you the money, what will the Muslims say?’” (Male Anglican vicar, Bradford)

Our observation here is that there may well be valid reasons for refusing funding to religious groups, but fear of offending other groups should not be one of them. This sits uneasily with equal opportunities policy and practice. Competition for resources is not peculiar to ethnic and religious groups – it is intrinsic to a system that allocates resources on the basis of competition between deprived communities. Three Sheffield interviewees highlight this:

“In some ways these funds, which are supposed to bring communities together, actually set communities against each other.” (Male Methodist minister, Sheffield)

“I don’t think government realises how much handing down money in that way can divide communities.” (Senior Anglican clergyman currently in a secular regeneration role, Sheffield)

"... when you start putting bird food on the lawn with a lot of hungry birds, there is not a lot of collaborative, cooperative stuff."  
(Female Baptist minister and leader of a diverse faith-based initiative, Sheffield)

Despite these difficulties, however, our research uncovered numerous collaborative partnerships across ethno-religious boundaries. These range from the sharing of resources (human and material) through service provision, to interdenominational action, sometimes in situations of crisis, such as the riots in Bradford and, in Sheffield, a Muslim-Christian response to the conflict in the Gulf.

### *Global conflicts, local disturbances and race crimes*

Across time and place, religion has been and is associated with extremes of both good and evil, and, when linked to ethnicity, it is a powerful resource that can be mobilised to either unite or divide people. During the period of our fieldwork, four international and national crises occurred that demonstrated the negative use to which religion can be put and which raised sharp questions about the role of religion in contemporary society. These were the terrorist attack on the United States ('September 11'); the disturbances ('riots') in some English towns and cities; the bombing of Afghanistan; and ethno-religious conflict in and between India and Pakistan. Individually, each of these events would have been enough to increase anxiety, tension and hostility in the communities we were researching; occurring in close proximity, they had a profound effect on areas with large minority ethnic populations. A feature of our research in Bradford, for example, was interviewees' preoccupation with Muslim/non-Muslim relationships, which was perhaps due to the fact that the city experienced its second major riots involving Muslim men in 2001, just before our interviews were conducted.

More generally, these crises appear to have raised anxiety levels in minority communities. In Coventry, the fear that rioting 'could happen here' was expressed and, in Newham and Bradford, religious people and buildings were attacked. The source and pattern of such physical violence varies between cities and may build on existing interethnic or religious

tensions. In Newham, for example, interviewees spoke of incidents between African Christians and Asian Muslims, while in Bradford violence between Pakistanis and African-Caribbeans appears to have secular rather than religious roots. There are, however, some commonalities in that most (if not all) of the violence is perpetrated by men, and all of it reflects complex patterns of gender, ethnic and religious identity dynamics. In addition, some of it is linked to issues that are salient in international or global politics. In Bradford, for example, following September 11, Pakistani Muslim youths attacked an Anglican church and its vicar and also a Hindu temple, and in Newham one particularly serious incident was interpreted as being linked to inter-religious conflict in India and another to recent tension between India and Pakistan.

Ironically, in a number of cities, Sikhs and their gurdwaras were particular targets of attack, perhaps because, as a male interviewee in Sheffield put it: "... we look more like the Taliban than the Muslim does!" Overall, however, Muslims experienced the greatest hostility:

"There is a huge, huge prejudice against Muslims. There is taunting; there is hate against Muslims; and everybody is tarred with the same brush. It's the same old story. A small minority of fanatics have spoiled it for the rest of us.... It is horrible. You have to be of the same faith to experience what we go through.... It is terrible." (Male Muslim interviewee, Newham)

Increased hostility towards, and sometimes between, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs is indicative of both racism and ignorance of diversity among 'Asian' groups, although the focus on Muslims may be due to their perceived involvement in global conflicts or their lack of integration into British society (Modood et al, 1997). Certainly, we found a tendency for Muslims to stress their distinctiveness (Coventry) to the point of separatism (Bradford). Nevertheless, it is important not to over-generalise from this, nor to disregard such significant influences as class, ethnic origin, gender and generational factors, Islamophobia and racism.

## Summary

In this chapter we have highlighted some of problems to be overcome if the engagement of faith communities in urban regeneration is to be positive rather than negative. These include:

- first, a lack of religious literacy on the part of regeneration professionals;
- second, the perception by religious groups (Asian, black and white Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh) that they are discriminated against in the allocation of funding;
- third, the difficulties involved in engaging minorities, women and young people;
- fourth, the existence of incompatibility between secular and faith definitions of appropriate gender roles and equal opportunities;
- finally, the competition and conflict within and between faith groups.

Our research cannot provide a definitive answer to the question asked at the beginning of this chapter of whether engaging faith communities in urban regeneration could improve interethnic relations and community cohesion, or whether it might increase divisions and conflict. In this chapter, we have referred to several international and national crises in which religion was implicated and have focused on areas of tension and potential conflict at the local level. But in the report as a whole we have cited numerous examples of impressive collaboration across ethnic and faith boundaries. Collaboration in urban regeneration carries the risk of conflict and competition but may also provide a basis on which understanding and trust can be built in the context of practical activity to address common priorities and concerns.

# Conclusions and policy implications

“I think that there needs to be a partnership developed; there needs to be inclusion in decision making and processes. I think there needs to be trust established and, yes, if you are going to be developing trust on both sides, I think there needs to be a willingness to say that we are prepared to invest in those faith communities who are trying to touch lives.” (Male pastor of a black-majority church, Coventry)

The introduction to this report emphasised the comparative lack of research into the engagement of faith communities in urban regeneration, the complexity of this field and the challenge that it presents to researchers, policy makers and all those involved on the ground. This final chapter, therefore, seeks to achieve a balance: some specific conclusions and related policy implications are developed, but, inevitably, the research has also raised issues and identified areas in which knowledge is lacking. These issues, relating to very real cultural and practical tensions and constraints, are as important as the more definitive research findings. Together, they raise questions for both regeneration agencies and faith communities.

Reviewing the evidence presented in the preceding chapters, the following conclusions and implications emerge.

*Many faith communities and their individual members already make a positive and significant contribution to regeneration work. Faith communities bring important resources to urban regeneration, but these can be overestimated and there are significant inequalities between faiths in their present ability to engage.*

This research confirms in relation to a wider range of major faith traditions what earlier work has shown in relation to the Christian churches – that religious congregations and organisations and their individual members are already engaged in an enormous number and range of activities that can fairly be described as ‘regenerative’. Much of this work is designed to serve the wider neighbourhood, not simply members of the faith community. Hence, often in heavily used premises, many activities are offered to children, young people, older people, women and men, and people with various kinds of special needs. There is also some innovative work supporting the view that engagement with faith communities offers prospects of connecting with ‘hard-to-reach’ people by-passed by formal regeneration programmes.

Official enthusiasm for the enrolment of faith communities in urban regeneration is prompted partly by the perception that they bring crucial resources to the task. Some religious organisations are able to offer large, adaptable and well-appointed community centres, often adjacent to places of worship, offering innovative and inter-linked activities for local people. Sometimes these premises are harnessed for more ‘formal’ regeneration, particularly for publicly funded education and training. In other cases the ‘faith’ contribution is that of individual

people, often with a long and highly respected record in community service and politics and urban regeneration.

However, while religious buildings and people can form some of the most important stocks of physical and human social capital in a neighbourhood, the overall picture is very uneven. Many faith groups operate in old and ill-adapted buildings, which impose great financial burdens on members. Much is achieved through a few, often hard-pressed, volunteers. In the case of the mainstream Christian denominations in particular, many of these people are older and, given the rapid decline in church attendance by younger people, questions of long-term sustainability are raised. Some other faith groups may meet together in a particular building but form 'gathered' communities of members and leaders who have moved away from their original area of settlement. Such dispersal may increase the barriers to involvement in place-based regeneration programmes.

There are also major inequalities in the capacity of different faith traditions to engage in regeneration, especially in formal programmes. The established status of the Church of England and the related networks, its parochial organisation, its diocesan structure and its wider educational and training resources provide the foundation, not only for its own numerous initiatives, but also for the prominence of Anglican clergy and lay members in formal regeneration partnerships. Within other faith traditions, including some black Christian denominations, there may be fewer reserves of influence, experience and confidence on which to draw, although some of the more recently established black-majority churches are highly innovatory in their social projects.

## Implications

- The scale and diversity of social action by faith groups and their members should be recognised and its implications for urban regeneration assessed.
- Faith representation and involvement in official regeneration must extend beyond a token member of the Christian clergy.
- Neighbourhood capacity building can draw on the resources of faith communities. However, the significant differences between faith communities in their ability to engage with official regeneration and access its related resources indicate the need for targeted capacity building for these groups.

*Faith communities and organisations often share many common features and concerns with other organisations within the community and voluntary sectors. But they can bring to regeneration activity distinctive and strong motivations for social action, a particular long-term local presence, the provision of informal settings and activities, and a commitment to listening to local people.*

Much regeneration work contributed by faith communities is typical of the wider voluntary and community sectors: informal, frequently small-scale, self-funded, and with an emphasis on long-term process rather than short-term targets. In the case of faith communities, this 'long-termness' is underwritten by the centrality of worship in their common life. Worship has continued in the neighbourhood even when other activities and organisations have come to an end. This local commitment sometimes reflects an underlying theology of the sacredness, not just of their religious buildings, but also of the wider neighbourhood and its people.

Within this longer-term perspective, although they certainly voiced material priorities in urban regeneration, many faith interviewees in this research stressed the quality of social relationships as essential to a 'good neighbourhood' and to society. Some of the most innovative and powerful work was found in faith-based projects that emphasise human

encounter, as the project workers, often including clergy, live alongside the project users, listening to them, learning from them and building relationships. In many cases, this work is with people 'on the edge', not currently reached by other means. Currently, however, such projects frequently fail to meet official criteria for funding and may be unrecognised.

### Implication

- The close local involvement of faith communities, characterised, at its best, by careful listening to socially excluded people, offers a significant 'grassroots' voice to inform and correct 'top-down' policies.

*Faith communities are highly diverse in their theologies, values and organisation. Engagement with faith communities makes demands on official agencies for 'religious literacy' and long-term encounters for which they are often ill-equipped and ill-informed.*

The varying engagement of religious organisations and people in urban regeneration is related to the diverse theologies that inform social involvement. Frequently, therefore, it is theological understanding that draws people of all faiths into community care and community politics where they are often present in disproportion to their numbers. Their faith informs their engagement, so that distinctions between public and private, sacred and secular are dissolved. Although religious traditions may retain an 'otherness' (including today Christian ones) in the eyes of secular observers, they share many of the concerns of secular community organisations – their members share the same experiences as their neighbours and identify most of the same material priorities for change. If faith congregations and organisations are different, it may be more in the particular anchorage of their motivations rather than in their detailed expression. This offers promise for the integration of faith communities and their members in partnership working with other community groups as well as with statutory agencies. Such observations, however, should not exclude the strong simultaneous challenge and critique which those 'engaging' may make to

public policy and regeneration practice, an issue to which we return below.

Other religious traditions are more separatist – theologically and normatively in firm opposition to secular culture. Detachment may stem also from experiences of exclusion or disadvantage so that faith community life operates as a defensive device for 'getting by'. In either case the implication is that some faith communities are quite unlikely to be engaged in collaborative urban regeneration in the immediate future. This serves as a reminder that, alongside the immediacy of many regeneration targets, there is a much longer-term history and development of local cultures. Gradual engagement may flow from opportunities arising from structural changes and from patient, respectful and sympathetic community development.

All this confronts secular agencies and partners with a challenging and complex field. Effective engagement requires some understanding of the differences within and between faiths in their organisation and leadership structures. For example, the distinction between faith congregations and faith organisations can be important. Presently, the engagement of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims in urban regeneration is usually initiated more readily through working with their community organisations than with temples, gurdwaras or mosques. In approaching religious leaders it is important to recognise the limited parallels that can be drawn between the role (and sometimes the community status) of an Anglican vicar and those of religious leaders in other faiths and Christian ministers in other denominations. Some black-majority church leaders express particular frustration at their apparent invisibility to regeneration agencies.

The evidence here suggests that current levels of 'religious literacy' are low, both within secular regeneration agencies and, indeed, within faith communities in terms of interfaith understanding. Few resources are being committed to engage with faith organisations and their members; most local regeneration professionals interviewed during this research had little knowledge of the government's interest in the engagement of faith communities (see Chapter 3). People at regional levels showed much more awareness of government policy, although faith issues appear still to be marginal in most official regeneration organisations. Where there is awareness, secular



interviewees expressed interest, but also scepticism. Some secular commentators had positive experiences of working with faith communities, while others questioned any privileging of faith organisations over the rest of the community sector and expressed concern regarding the possible Pandora's box that might be opening.

## Implications

- Regeneration professionals need to develop religious literacy and to recognise the diversity that exists within, as well as between, religious traditions and organisations.
- The guidance for local authorities in engaging with faith communities published (late in the fieldwork period) by the Local Government Association (LGA, 2002) should be promoted actively to raise the salience of faith issues in local regeneration. Other written resources, such as those on 'religious literacy' produced in Yorkshire, should also be made more widely accessible.
- However, these materials must be used alongside a more substantial commitment of staff to work with faith communities and interfaith advisers in long-term community development, building trust and deeper understanding. The knowledge and experience of the many people of faith employed in secular roles also needs to be recognised and applied.
- The particular issues and resources required for engaging faith communities in urban regeneration require explicit recognition in the policies, support services and dissemination capability of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, other policy units in central government and the Housing Corporation.

*Many members of faith communities are active and challenging in their approach and require to be engaged, not merely enlisted. They report both positive and negative experiences of involvement in urban regeneration programmes.*

The theologies and experience of faith communities ensure that most will not line up to be enlisted as passive 'resources' to advance an

unmodified government agenda. Rather, they are likely to seek active engagement. Some have knowledge of the government's interest in involving faith communities in regeneration, but this awareness is very uneven, reflecting the inequalities between and within faiths in their present capacity to engage. Many in faith communities express enthusiasm for new opportunities in regeneration, seeing themselves (and wanting to be recognised) as part of the voluntary and community sectors.

However, this research has reported many voices that combine support for the aims of 'social inclusion' and 'community cohesion' with sharp, articulate and radical assessments of the official priorities. Many interviewees were critical in their reflections. The 'engagement gap' between themselves and secular structures and processes is often identical with that described by members of non-religious community organisations. Recurring criticisms concerned token representation; the demands, exhaustion and disillusionment of involvement; a perception that no real local improvements had been achieved; the rigidity, complexity, formality and bureaucracy surrounding official programmes; and the tensions between a rhetoric of inclusion and the perceived power of remote, central decision makers. Many detect potential dangers regarding the perceived continuing paternalism or antagonism of local government and express concern to avoid undue incorporation into the national government's agenda. These perspectives may be accepted as instructive for public policy, or they may lead to official disenchantment.

## Implications

- Faith communities contribute commitment and resources to urban regeneration, but they also bring a challenge to official policies and practices, often based on past and present commitment and experience, which should inform national, regional and local regeneration policy.
- The style and approach of many faith-based regeneration initiatives contrast sharply with official time-limited and target-specific programmes. This underlines the challenges involved in any fuller engagement with faith organisations in public regeneration partnerships.

*Although there are differences between the theologies of the major world faiths, all share an emphasis on peaceful coexistence based on respect for the inherent dignity of all human persons. But cultural and individual interpretations have enabled religion to be used to create and legitimise inequality, conflict and division. This can present regeneration professionals with major challenges in trying to reconcile secular, liberal values with traditional 'religious' ones.*

The positive examples of religion as a force for social justice and community service identified above must be balanced by a recognition of religion as a source of conflict, division and oppression. The historic competition and spatial jostling of Christian denominations in 19th-century British cities is sometimes replayed in a multi-faith era as a competitive struggle for regeneration funds. The presence of 'faith' at the table may also involve demands for separate provision of schools and other services, so raising the prospect of sectarian division. The notion that 'the religion is the community' can signal an association of 'faith' with 'ethnicity' and its symbolic significance in a process of division and exclusion.

This sectarianism is most obvious in cases of extremist interpretations of religion, such as that adopted by some Muslim young men, disillusioned, perhaps, with the traditional authority of their elders. However, this development may only be an obvious example of a much more pervasive gap between religious values and practices and the central values of liberal, secular, Western society.

These tensions are crystallised in the context of funding decisions and employment policy. The issue of whether to fund religious organisations has been the subject of long controversy. It is often difficult to disentangle activities that are religious from those that are 'community-oriented', particularly when the faith organisation itself admits no separation between the sacred and the social. From a secular perspective, the problems are heightened still further with authoritarian organisations that practice discrimination in terms of gender, sexuality and age. Also, to demand religious faith as a condition for employment in community regeneration schemes is in tension with equal

opportunities policies and possible future legislation. From a faith perspective, on the other hand, secular requirements can be (and, from the evidence of this research, often are) construed as reflecting prejudice, discrimination and inflexibility. These tensions arise in relation not only to 'extreme' religious groups but also to 'mainstream' traditions which, in many contexts, qualify as a positive force for regeneration.

It seems, therefore, that the demands of faith engagement in urban regeneration do not simply bear on secular professionals and non-religious regeneration partners. The offer of a place at the table also constitutes a challenge to the exclusive practices of faith communities. It is an offer that some may feel obliged to refuse. Engagement with more formal and large-scale regeneration projects and programmes would raise questions regarding the self-understandings and missions of faith groups and their understanding of each other and secular society. Involvement in regeneration can bring changes that provoke internal disorientation and division. This research cannot answer the major underlying question, posed with full force by wider events during the research period: 'How flexible can liberal society be when faced with inflexibility?' This is a dilemma that is likely to remain central to future attempts to engage faith communities in publicly funded urban regeneration.

Nevertheless, urban regeneration offers a context that may be more effective in promoting interfaith trust and understanding than the long-explored search for doctrinal agreement. In addition to drawing on generic capacity building and support for community organisations, the opportunities for success may be increased by the sharing of successful and unsuccessful experience in interfaith collaboration.

However, there were also interviewees who, while respecting other traditions, were keen to make an impact on their neighbourhoods by utilising their own faith networks rather than interfaith initiatives. Where there is good work in meeting the needs of particular people in a neighbourhood who are not reached by others, it would be counterproductive to make interfaith collaboration a condition of funding. But this is a field for careful and informed judgement, otherwise public investment could be used to increase, rather than reduce, social segregation and tension.

## Implications

- Interfaith collaboration in urban regeneration should be encouraged. The challenge of interfaith working is considerable and is an issue for consideration by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit and other central government units. The Inner Cities Religious Council and the Local Government Association are initial sources of advice. Local and regional statutory agencies may discover helpful local interfaith organisations and advisers, but will need to invest time in research and networking to connect groups with each other and to build trust and collaboration.
- Valuable single-faith initiatives should also be supported or recognised. Decisions here need to be well-informed and based on reviewed funding criteria that combine recognition of the contribution of such activity to regeneration with a clear definition of the proper use of public funds.
- In developing the representation of faith groups the ability of women and young people to articulate their needs must be ensured.

It has been possible in this report to draw on only some of the rich commentary and analysis provided by our interviewees. The research group plans to make further use of this evidence, through dissemination to different audiences and through further writing to develop more fully some of the themes identified here.

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# A

## Appendix A: The study localities

### Bradford

#### *The city*

Bradford Metropolitan District covers a large and diverse area that includes deprived multi-ethnic towns and cities, and highly privileged, mono-cultural ones set in extensive countryside. The overall population is 483,000, of whom 84% are white (1991 Census). Around 240,000 people live in the main urban area of Bradford itself. The majority ethnic groups include people of Irish, German, Lithuanian and Polish origins; minority ethnic groups include people of African-Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani origins. The largest and fastest growing minority ethnic population is of Pakistani origin, the majority of whom come from a handful of villages in the Mirpur district of (Azad) Kashmir.

Residential segregation is so extreme that population statistics are misleading. The majority of people in the main urban area (the 'inner ring') are of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin and Muslim faith. Relatively wealthy white people have left the city entirely; poorer ones live on peripheral estates. Population projections suggest a continuation of this trend, with the Pakistani population predicted to *increase* by 71.7% between 1996 and 2011 and the white population predicted to *decrease* by 6% over the same period (City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council, 1996).

The context of regeneration in Bradford is one of long-term industrial decline, with the eclipse of the woollen mills from about 1970 and further significant losses in engineering and manufacturing industry in the 1980s. There are high levels of unemployment, particularly among

young people and a significant number of Muslims. This is linked to low educational achievement and low skill levels. Bradford has 20 years' experience of regeneration and economic development, has engaged in numerous projects and is the recipient of large amounts of European and domestic funding, for example, 2001-02 – £43 million European funding; £14 million Lottery money; £22 million neighbourhood renewal funding.

#### *Faith communities*

Christianity, particularly the Free Churches, was a significant presence in Bradford in Victorian times, but secularisation and ethnic change has much reduced this. The Christian churches are closely networked, however, and work intensively towards bridge-building and interfaith dialogue. There is an interdenominational 'Inner Ring Group', which meets regularly to share knowledge on the locality; the Lord Mayor has an advisory group of Christians, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs; there are a number interfaith organisations and groups, notably 'The Interfaith Centre' (funded by the Local Education Authority) and 'Interfaith Women for Peace'. There is an immense amount of Christian involvement in various types of regeneration. Bradford has 95 churches (including 'language' ones such as German, Italian, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian); 45 mosques, six Hindu temples and seven Sikh gurdwaras.

## Coventry

### *The city*

Coventry is a city of 300,000 people in the West Midlands, 20 miles south east of Birmingham. Following the Blitz, postwar reconstruction and prosperity was built around the manufacturing industry; particularly auto and machine tool engineering. Labour shortages at this time led to major immigration from Ireland, Poland, the Ukraine, Italy, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Our study focuses on two adjacent areas – Hillfields and Foleshill – to the north of Coventry city centre. These areas have the city's richest mix of people in terms of faith, ethnicity and culture. By 1991 over 12% of the city's people were from minority ethnic populations, rising to 52% in Foleshill ward and 36% in St Michael's ward (which covers Hillfields and the City Centre). Well over half of the minority population had ethnic origins in India, with Pakistanis forming the next largest category. The government's current Index of Deprivation (DETR, 2000) places both wards in the most deprived 5% of the 8,414 English wards.

### *Faith communities*

Muslim residents are concentrated in Hillfields and the south of Foleshill, while the Sikh and Hindu communities are more likely to be found in Foleshill. Most of Coventry's places of worship for Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims are located in the Foleshill/Hillfields area, as are most of the black-majority churches. Churches from the main Christian denominations are also present. Our research identified the following places of worship in the two wards:

- six mosques;
- six Hindu temples;
- six Sikh gurdwaras;
- five black-majority churches and an Asian Christian fellowship – only one has premises that it uses exclusively; the others share with mainstream churches;
- at least sixteen 'mainstream' churches (four Anglican, three Catholic including one serving the Polish community, and nine free or independent nonconformist churches).

In addition to the mosques, temples, gurdwaras and churches there are about a dozen community organisations in Foleshill and Hillfields that have some public association with faith communities and people of faith. About half of these are Christian, with several Muslim and Sikh examples, and a single Hindu example. All advertise that they serve the whole community, irrespective of religion.

## Newham

### *The borough*

The London Borough of Newham (population about 230,000) is situated about five miles east of the city of London. At the 1991 Census Newham suffered the highest overall levels of deprivation of any local authority within England. With the revision of the index in 2000 it was only two places higher in the table. The community is probably the most diverse in England and since 1994 the white population has become a minority. Many people have origins in Pakistan, Bangladesh and various regions of India. There are also numerous people with roots in the Caribbean and many of the countries of Africa together, with growing refugee groups from places such as Somalia, Congo, Sri Lanka, Colombia, the Balkans and Eastern Europe.

### *Faith communities*

The religious life of the borough has been documented in a Newham Directory of Religious Groups (Aston CIU, 1999) which lists nearly 300 organisations. Christian churches of the established denominations have been active in the area for many centuries and have played a significant social welfare role, especially through settlements and community centres. Their congregations, after decades of decline, have tended to grow recently by recruiting members from the black communities. In addition, scores of new churches, mostly black-majority and Pentecostal have been established. Muslim residents now probably account for a third of the population and most of the varieties of Islam are represented in the 25 or so local mosques and various Islamic associations. Sikhs and Hindus settled in the area in large numbers from 1950 to 1975 but more recently have tended to move out

to the suburbs. However, there are at least four Sikh gurdwaras, and three substantial and thriving Hindu temples. There are also a couple of Buddhist centres and a synagogue. Interfaith activity in the borough is not very well developed. Although there has been a Newham Association of Faiths in existence for over 20 years, and an Anglican interfaith officer has been in post for some time, there is no broad-based and representative organisation that spans the faiths. However, the aftermath of the events of 11 September 2001 did produce a significant and successful attempt to bring together large numbers of people from across the faith communities in an event for peace and justice.

## Sheffield

### *The city*

Sheffield is the largest urban district in South Yorkshire. In 1995 it had a total population of 528,000, of which 95% are white and 5% are from a minority ethnic group (1991 Census). Of this 5%, 46% are from South Asia, 31% are of African or Caribbean origin, and 23% are from 'other backgrounds'. The largest single group is from Pakistan (36% of people of minority ethnic backgrounds). There have been significant groups of refugees arriving in Sheffield since 1991, notably from Somalia. Sheffield also has a substantial Yemeni population.

Sheffield is a city with some significant spatial divisions. The north and east contain some of the most deprived wards in the country, while the south and west has some of the most affluent areas. Two thirds of the city's land lies within the Peak District National Park. The areas of the highest deprivation broadly correspond with the inner-city areas where most of the minority ethnic population of the city is to be found. Burngreave has been chosen as the focus of this research as it is the most deprived ward within the city (and the 60th most deprived in England) and has been at the centre of many regeneration projects. It is also one of the most multicultural and multi-ethnic areas of Sheffield, as illustrated by the 23 languages spoken by members of the Catholic congregation alone. In 1991 about 24% of the residents were from ethnic minorities, among whom 12% were Pakistani and 11% from black African or Caribbean backgrounds.

Following substantial industrial decline in the 1980s there have been a number regeneration initiatives in the city including the Single Regeneration Budget, New Deal for Communities and Objective 1 status.

### *Faith communities*

There is a wide range of faith communities and faith centres within the Burngreave area. There are churches of several Christian denominations including the Church of England and the Catholic, Methodist, Baptist and United Reform churches. There are also several black-majority churches. The area also includes a Hindu temple, a Sikh gurdwara and several mosques. The different mosques cater for the different national origins of the Muslims in the area. There are also a number of interfaith initiatives in the city, including interfaith vigils following September 11, Sheffield Inter-Faith (a networking group) and IMPACT (a social action forum).



# Appendix B:

## Research methodology and methods

### Methodology

As explained in Chapter 1, this research has adopted a particular overall approach, or methodology. In seeking to understand the issues raised by the engagement of faith communities in urban regeneration, emphasis was given to the understandings, interpretations and experiences of those involved, from various perspectives and at different levels. In such a relatively under-researched field, this listening strategy seemed especially appropriate.

### Methods

In the course of the work, therefore, several methods were employed that comprise what has been called a 'structured ethnography' (Bryman, 1988, p 89). However, by far the main method employed in the research was the *semi-structured interview* with individual interviewees, and it is interview data that form the dominant source informing the analytical chapters and conclusions of this report.

In addition to the interviews, some element of *observation* was possible at public meetings of regeneration partnerships and community forums. In Bradford, for example, there was participant observation at women's group meetings. Observation was also conducted at a 'regeneration day' convened by Leeds Church Institute, involving speakers representing both secular and faith organisations. In Sheffield members of the research team also observed a day conference of IMPACT – a broad-based community organisation encompassing both faith

and secular organisations. The information and understandings obtained from such events has helped to inform and correct our interpretation of the interview data.

When appropriate, limited use was also made of the technique of *group interviewing*. One such encounter involved a meeting with a women's English as a Second Language class in Bradford. This event led to the undertaking of a small-scale email survey to establish the extent to which minority ethnic women were consulted about regeneration proposals. Informal conversations also took place here with knowledgeable local people not directly involved in regeneration. In Coventry, a group interview of young men enabled a youth voice to be heard.

*Documentary material* was collected throughout the project with a view to developing the picture emerging from the interviews and also to cross-check formal statements against experience and interpretation. Again, this material has served to inform our analysis, but a fuller exploration of this material is a future task.

### The interviewees

Focusing on the semi-structured interviews as our main technique, therefore, we were conscious that we would be interviewing people in a range of agencies and roles, and with widely varying knowledge, expertise and perspectives. This suggested that an attempt to design a single standard questionnaire would be inappropriate. Six different interview guides were produced with a specific range and sequence of questions

tailored for particular categories of respondent. These categories were:

1. *National faith actors*: 'leaders' and activists working for or, in the context of, major faith communities or faith-based organisations, such as denominational officers, nationally recognised experts or consultants, or senior officers of faith-based service organisations.
2. *National secular actors*: senior staff of statutory or secular voluntary sector bodies.
3. *Regional actors*: people who worked for, or were deeply involved in, the activities of the Regional Development Agencies and emerging regional tier of government.
4. *Local faith actors*: the 'leaders' or staff of local congregations and faith-based organisations. Some of these were 'clergy', some paid community workers and some unpaid trustees or volunteer activists.
5. *Local statutory actors*: staff or unpaid members of local authorities, local regeneration partnerships or secular voluntary agencies involved in urban regeneration.
6. *Local residents*: this category and the corresponding interview guide emerged fairly late in our fieldwork as new and interesting contacts emerged, which promised new and important perspectives. These interviewees were local people who did not necessarily have a formal role as 'leaders' in regeneration but who nevertheless had close experience of activities or projects managed by the faith sector.

Respondents were selected to reflect the diversity of faiths in each of the four urban areas, the different levels of secular regeneration structures, and the varying levels (national, regional and local) at which faith actors are placed. Initially, interviewees were selected through formal channels, including secular and faith-based directories. However, to move beyond *formal* post-holders to those playing important roles as *informal* leaders and activists, later interviewees were often identified more informally and through repeated reference to their names in earlier interviews.

## The interviews

The full set of interview guides is available on request. In each of our fieldwork cities we attempted to interview around 20 people and to achieve a broad balance of secular and faith actors. Significantly, in several cases it proved difficult to decide into which of the six categories to assign a respondent, and therefore which questionnaire to use. It was not unusual to find a secular actor who had a strong faith commitment and extensive knowledge of faith communities, or a local actor who also had significant linkages with the regional and national level, or vice versa in each case.

Our interviewing practice was therefore relatively flexible, as we used the guides mainly as a way of initiating and facilitating the flow of conversation. When appropriate, questions were introduced from other variants of the guide. Also, in some cases questions were edited out or added as the scope and limitations of the interviewee's knowledge and experience emerged in the course of conversation. Sometimes the fieldworker's previous relationship with the respondent or local knowledge allowed us to pose probing questions that opened up issues not anticipated in the printed interview guide.

The normal practice in arranging the interviews was to post or email the interview schedule to the respondent in advance, with a covering letter explaining the purpose of the project. All interviews were tape-recorded (with the exception of one during which the power supply on the tape recorder failed) and full transcriptions were made. A draft of the transcript was then sent to the respondent to provide an opportunity for them to make corrections or retract any sensitive or injudicious comments they might have made. In the event, very few of the respondents felt the need to amend the transcript of their interview.

A total of 95 interviews were conducted between June 2001 and April 2002. Details of the range of interviewees and the number in various categories are presented in Appendix C.

## Analysis of the interview transcripts

The analysis of the transcripts was based on applying a coding scheme that listed some 60 relevant categories grouped in 10 main themes (see Appendix D). These categories emerged in the process of team discussions as we engaged in a dialogue between the original research questions highlighted in the research proposal, a series of hypotheses that we proposed in the early stages of the project and the data that was coming in from the fieldwork interviews. Most of the transcripts were coded manually, some directly onto computer. Segments of text were highlighted as relevant to one or more of the thematic codes. They were then transferred for processing to a CAQDAS (computer assisted qualitative data analysis software) program, ANSWR 6.0, distributed as freeware by the Center for Disease Control Atlanta, GA, USA: <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/software.htm>.

Each transcript was marked for the source respondent. Individual sources were also assigned a small number of variables such as location, gender, faith affiliation and sector. This then allowed the segments to be sorted and printed out according to theme, with each segment marked for its source. Where required, selections by source category could also be extracted, for example to group together all comments on a particular theme from respondents in a particular locality, or all respondents from a particular faith background, or all respondents working in the statutory sector. The analysis of the data, therefore, was conducted on a thematic, rather than a question-by-question basis. This allowed us to deal more easily with the unstructured nature of some of the conversation and the difficulty of categorising some of the transcripts into a single source category corresponding only to one version of the questionnaire. On the other hand, the research group was aware that the power of extract selection available through this software could lead to a neglect of the context of the interviewee's words. This issue was a matter for close attention in the final writing and editing of this report as the researchers returned to the actual written transcripts.

# C

## Appendix C: The interviewees

**Table 1: Location of interviewees**

Location	Number of interviewees
Bradford	21
Coventry	16
Newham	20
Sheffield	19
National	12
Yorkshire region	4
West Midlands region	1
London region	2
Total	95

Table 1 shows that roughly a fifth of our local interviews were conducted in each fieldwork city (slightly fewer in Coventry). The remaining interviewees were national or regional actors for the purposes of this study.

**Table 2: Gender of interviewees**

Gender	Number of interviewees
Female	27
Male	66
Mixed groups	2
Total	95

Table 2 shows that (despite an effort to include female voices) over two thirds of our interviewees were male. This reflects the reality of a male majority in formal leadership, both in secular urban regeneration programmes and in faith communities.

**Table 3: Numbers in each category of interviewee**

Category of interview	Number of interviewees
Group of local residents	2
Local faith actor	45
Local secular actor	29
National faith actor	9
National secular actor	3
Regional faith actor	2
Regional secular actor	5
Total	95

Table 3 shows that just under a half of our interviewees fell into our category of 'Local faith actor' and just under 30% were 'Local secular actors'. In practice, however, none of the categories in this table are discrete. We often encountered people who were both 'faith' and 'secular' and/or had local and national roles.

**Table 4: Faith backgrounds of interviewees**

Faith background (where ascertained)	Number of interviewees
Hindu	8
Jewish (group of 3)	1
Muslim	17
Sikh	10
Total all minority faiths	36
No religion/atheist	2
Religion not stated or evident	15
Total no faith stated/ascertained	17
Anglican Christian	17
Baptist Christian	3
Black-majority Church Pentecostal Christian	5
Christian – denomination not stated or evident	3
Church of Scotland Christian	1
Methodist Christian	4
Roman Catholic Christian	7
United Reformed Church Christian	1
Exploring Christian faith	1
Total Christian	42
Total	95

Table 4 shows that just under half of our interviewees (including some in the categories of ‘secular actors’) were in some sense Christians and that among them Anglicans dominated.

Interviewees in secular organisations were not asked about their religious identity, if any. Only 2% described themselves explicitly as agnostic or atheist, while about 16% did not disclose any faith affiliation. Among the other world faiths Islam was represented rather more often than Sikhism, Hinduism or Judaism, reflecting the overall demographic profile of the locations of our research.

**Table 7: Background of faith interviewees by city**

City	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Sikh	Jewish	No religion	Religion not stated/mixed	Total
Bradford	0	7	11	2	0	0	2	22
Coventry	2	2	4	2	0	0	6	16
Newham	3	3	9	3	0	1	1	20
Sheffield	2	3	9	1	0	0	4	19
London region	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
West Midlands region	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Yorkshire and Humber region	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	3
National	1	2	6	2	1	0	0	12
Total	8	17	42	10	1	2	15	95

**Table 5: Broad ethnic category of interviewees**

Broad ethnic category	Number of interviewees
Black	9
South Asian	36
White	47
Mixed group	1
Not known	2
Total	95

Table 5 is not intended as a sophisticated form of ethnic monitoring, and the tables on faith and broad ethnicity are by no means totally correlated. The table shows that just over half our sample was white, reflecting a white predominance in urban regeneration, even in multicultural neighbourhoods.

Table 6 indicates the range of interviewees consulted at each level (national, regional and local) and in each city. Table 7 provides a breakdown of the religious affiliations of faith interviewees by city.

**Table 6: Interviews by type of respondent and city**

City	Faith actors	Secular actors	Group of residents	Total
Bradford	13	7	1	21
Coventry	9	6	1	16
Newham	11	9	0	20
Sheffield	12	7	0	19
London region	2	0	0	2
West Midlands region	0	1	0	1
Yorkshire and Humber Region	2	2	0	4
National	9	3	0	12
Total	58	35	2	95

# D

## Appendix D: The transcript coding scheme

Main code	Sub-code
1. Politics and policy towards engaging faith communities	National government and party policy statements Regional agencies' policy and practice Local government policy and practice Reactions and readings of policy from faith communities
2. The religious literacy and assumptions of statutory organisations	What officials understand about faith Issues around proselytising Issue around equal opportunities Assumptions about funding
3. Values and theologies of faith communities and faith associations and individual 'people of faith'	Openness to whole community v sectarianism/pietism Service/charity/caring ethos Social justice/political campaigning/empowerment ethos Worship/community distinction Specific references to the faith tradition or theology Getting a good deal for your faith community Using involvement to demonstrate that the faith community belongs in the area/city
4. Official structures and programmes for regeneration and their mechanisms and objectives	SRBs, NDCs and Neighbourhood Renewal fund LSPs and community forums Other types of partnership (eg HAZs, EAZs, Sure Start) Regional bodies Awareness of these schemes by faith communities
5. Local needs and issues and responses to them	Economic Housing/environmental Crime, drugs, etc Educational Family Social/community Spiritual/moral
6. Inclusion and exclusion and discrimination in local regeneration practice	Ethnic groups Women Young people and children Faith groups Gay men and lesbian women

<p>7. Community relations – conflict and cooperation between ethnic and faith communities</p>	<p>Disturbances and race crime            Competition for resources            Interfaith activity            Relations <i>within</i> faith groups (especially intergenerational)            Gendered relations within faith groups            Global events and conflicts</p>
<p>8. Resources and capacity of faith communities and faith community organisations</p>	<p>Membership and reach            Buildings            Staff and volunteers            Management and organisational capacity            Grants and funding            Projects and activities            Social entrepreneurs and leaders            Lack of resources for non-Christian or black/Asian groups            Organisational capacity for change, innovation, response to change</p>
<p>9. Stories – people, organisations, projects</p>	<p>Good experiences            Bad experiences            Stories (personal biography)            Stories (organisational history)</p>
<p>10. The engagement gap – cultural differences, barriers to engagement and ways to overcome them</p>	<p>Communication            Funding streams            Involvement in decision making and management            Accountability regimes            Capacity-building initiatives            The distinctiveness of faith perspectives/critiques of secular policy            General congruence/incongruence with official programmes            General level of engagement</p>

Note: SRB = Single Regeneration Budget, NDCs = New Deal for Communities, HAZ = Health Action Zone, EAZ = Education Action Zone.

# E

## Appendix E: Selected publications

The following recent publications provide examples of work being undertaken by faith communities in regeneration and renewal. Also listed is the Local Government Association good practice guide for local authorities.

Ahmed, R. and Salter, J. (1999) *Ethnic and faith community development*, London: The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

The authors “share some of the knowledge that the Community Relations Section of the Royal Borough have acquired through projects in partnership with local ethnic minority and faith communities”.

Finneron, D., Green, L., Harley, S. and Robertson, J. (2001) *Challenging communities: Church related community development and neighbourhood renewal*, London: The Churches Community Work Alliance and the Church Urban Fund.

Practical examples are presented alongside an analysis of church-related community work and its relationship to the national strategy for neighbourhood renewal.

Finneron, D. and Dinham, A. (eds) (2002) *Building on faith: Faith buildings in neighbourhood renewal*, London: Church Urban Fund.

Seven case studies covering five faiths (Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Jewish and Hindu) are presented and recommendations made to faith groups, government and regeneration agencies. This work was partly funded by ODPM Special Grant.

Greater London Enterprise (GLE)/London Churches Group (LCG) (2002) *Neighbourhood renewal in London: The role of faith communities*, London: LCG for Social Action/GLE – available from GLE, 28 Park Street, London, SE1 9EQ.

A report of questionnaire research and analysis of the very large number of projects funded and run by faith groups, including the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh faiths, across the London boroughs.

Lewis, J. (2001) *Faiths, hope and participation: Celebrating faith groups' role in neighbourhood renewal*, London: The New Economics Foundation and the Church Urban Fund.

The book is based on 14 capacity-building workshops held across the country, which brought together people from different faith traditions to explore participation in neighbourhood renewal. This work was partly funded by DETR Special Grant.

Local Government Association (2002) *Faith and community: A good practice guide for local authorities*, London: LGA Publications.

These guidelines are designed to “be relevant to local authorities in both urban and rural areas, and with varying degrees of diversity in the pattern of their local faith communities”.

Smith, G. and Randolph-Horne, E. (2000) *Faith makes communities work*, London: Shaftesbury Society.

A report of interview-based research on the issues facing faith-based community work. This work was partly funded by DETR Special Grant.

Yorkshire Churches (2002) *Angels and advocates: Church social action in Yorkshire and the Humber*, Leeds: Yorkshire Churches (The Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber).

This report documents the substantial scale and scope of church social action in the Yorkshire and Humber region, and complements the present report by providing detailed stories of 18 local projects.