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Religion as Capital: It may take a miracle!

ABSTRACT

Economic capital has been a fundamental component in shaping power within society as recognised across the sociological spectrum. This paper first identifies the different types of capital, economic, social, religious and spiritual, that shape society. Then the manifestation and operation of spiritual capital today will be discussed, mainly with reference to the beliefs and needs of Black Pentecostal groups illustrated with reference to their attempts to get permission from the city planning authorities to establish churches. Spiritual capital may be seen as comprising a source of alternative power for the weak, as a resource, and potential form of wealth for the poor. But, one must step back and take a more reflexive perspective, for however real all this is to believers: they actually may live in two extremely contrasting realities. They may testify to being sons and daughters of the living God and are promised a mansion in Heaven. But on this earth, they may appear powerless, and may be jobless, and fighting the local authorities over social housing provision. But they believe the power of prayer will change these circumstances through divine intervention. Whether, with time, the forces of religious capital, and associated spiritual power, can actually impact on the exterior host society (as in the Bible) and create observable political, cultural and economic changes, has yet to be seen.

INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses the place of religious, and especially spiritual, capital of power within urban society. First, definitions are given of these different types of capital that have been identified in traditional sociological theory, and that still shape society. The role of spiritual capital as a resource and value bank, or as a source of power and change, is discussed. Religious and spiritual capital may be seen (defined respectively) as comprising alternative sources of power for the weak, as a resource and value bank, and potential form of wealth for the poor. The manifestation and operation of spiritual capital today will be discussed, with reference to the problems that Black Pentecostal churches encounter in their attempts to get planning permission to convert existing premises or develop new buildings as places of worship. They may testify to having salvation and the power of the Holy Spirit but in this world they often seem powerless (Lindhart, 2012), especially when it comes to getting permission for church premises from the planners. But they believe the power of prayer will change these circumstances through divine intervention. The situation will be illustrated with reference to UK planning appeal case examples which show how the continuing operation and power of other types of capital, predominantly economic, but also religious, social and cultural, that restrict the flow of spiritual capital and power onto urban space and society.

DEFINITIONS: MANY CAPITALS

Economic capital has been seen as the predominant form of capital which shapes power within society, as recognised across the sociological spectrum. Marx saw economic

supremacy, and thus capitalism and capitalists, as the main agents of power within society, and an evil power at that. Marx gave no place to religious and spiritual capital within either production or consumption, relegating it to the realms of the superstructure. Subsequently the modern founding fathers of sociology tended to discount religious capital as a primary force within society. For example, religion was generally only seen as a vehicle of the rise of capitalism (Weber, 1964, Tawney, 1966), not as a source of power or as a form of real capital in its own right. Economists across the spectrum from Left to Right continue to see capital, labour, employment and business investment as key drivers of the economy. As will be illustrated, by planning appeal examples, urban planners also strongly believe that planning allocating land and buildings for employment and economic growth are key to urban regeneration and should not be blocked by giving planning permission to other less worthy forms of development.

Weber and other less-deterministic sociologists, such as Tonnies, Durkheim and Talcott Parsons, also acknowledged the role of social capital, in the form of community identity, religious tradition, social class and status, and personal 'habitas' in shaping both society and economic development (Weber, 1964; Greed and Johnson, 2013: chapters 8 and 14; Greed, 2013). By the mid twentieth century, the importance of cultural capital was identified by Bourdieu, Lefebvre and Williams, as another key factor in shaping not only society but the nature of urban space itself (Bourdieu, 1986; Lefebvre, 1974). Religion, belief and spirituality were identified in their work, and that of many more ethnographic theorists, as key ingredients in the creation of culture (Williams, 1981).

In recent years, increasingly both religious and spiritual capital have been identified and defined within post-secular society (O'Sullivan, and Flanagan (eds) 2012). Baker takes a two pronged approach separating spiritual and religious capital (Baker, 2012). He describes religious capital as the resources, beliefs, networks, sense of community, and values that enrich faith groups, whereas spiritual capital is seen as the motivation, faith, spirituality that energises such religious communities. Baker has produced an apt diagram showing the links between spiritual and religious capital, as one is transmitted onto, and feeds back on to the other. However, I want to go further in this paper and suggest that such capital is not only a resource but, like economic capital, it can perform as a source of power and change within society. It may also manifest itself as actual wealth and prosperity too. I am aware of the difficulties of doing this, and need to be reflexive and critical in not only how I approach the topic, but towards my own beliefs coming to the subject as both a Pentecostal and a Planner. One must step back and take a more reflexive perspective (Speck, 2013) on how being a member of these two total subcultures can be resolved within my personal life and academic work, and thus whether I should turn to policy-making or prayer to solve planning problems or some of each.

In the past, religion was a source of great power and wealth, with both the Roman Catholic Church in Western Europe and the Anglican Church in Britain holding vast amounts of capital, land, property, including magnificent church buildings, and of course power (Inge, 2003). Much of this wealth and power was not in the hands of the laity, the ordinary people, but rather an elite priestly class. The church itself, be it Protestant or Catholic, was not marginal but up there with the kings and priests, part of the ruling hierarchy, and often very wealthy too. So it was not necessarily on the side of the laity, or the poor, the fatherless

and widows. In contrast, right through history one can trace forms of alternative church, which included dissenters such as Anabaptists, and ordinary men and women who experienced a more direct spiritual relationship with God, without the mediation of the clergy. Some such may post hoc, be seen as proto-Pentecostals (Gee, 1967; Kay,2000), who arguably possessed their own form of spiritual capital and power, but very little religious capital.

Nowadays many of the historical, European (white) churches are in decline numerically although some still possess a great deal of historical wealth locked into their buildings and treasures, as in the Vatican. Thus like many elderly home owners they are asset-rich but income-poor. Wealth and power in society has shifted to secular organisations and powers, such as banks, governments and multi-national companies. Tawney argued that such the transition from church wealth to individual and corporate secular wealth was the result of forms of Protestantism which encouraged and rewarded hard work (Tawney, 1966). Wealth, business acumen and well being were well-deserved signs of an individual's salvation, and favoured position before God as one of the saved elect, with no need for a separate priesthood to arbitrate who deserved salvation or to take a cut in the proceeds.

Centuries on after the Reformation, the religious justification for corporate and individual prosperity has been lost in the flow of history. One still sees faint echoes of it, for example in the protestations of fat cat bankers that they 'deserve' their multi-million pound bonuses, and also in 'prosperity gospel' teachings. Whereas a great deal of negative criticism has been placed upon the pitfalls of an individualised prosperity gospel, one must remember that many Black immigrant churches start with a much more communitarian approach to religion, and that all rise or fall together. In the Old Testament prosperity was seen as a blessing and a necessity within Jewish society. But it was not individualised and there were clear duties to support the fatherless and the widow, and the stranger. In many countries where the Prosperity Gospel, belief in Divine Healing are strong, there is no Welfare State. Granted tele-evangelists have given the subject a bad name promising 'indulgences' that if people give money they will receive wealth, health and salvation. In contrast, Isaiah, 58, v 10, makes it clear that God will bless those that help the poor, and the oppressed (Beckford,2000). Swirling around this debate is the influence of liberation theology which has been particularly strong amongst charismatic groups in many developing countries, and which is not only pietistic but also political in approach (Gutierrez,2001). If you are poor and powerless in inner London, you may well want to use your spiritual capital to change the world around you, through prayer and social action, to increase local employment, education opportunities, small business growth, better housing, and a decent church building.

Meanwhile, many traditional white Christians still see poverty and a lack of worldliness as signs of holiness, in spite of money, wealth, and business being frequently mentioned in the Bible (Lloydbottom, 2010). Perhaps, like some socialists, they have to be well-off and from a background, where privilege rather than wealth is the main currency, to have such disdain for money. Society now runs on mainly secular lines, and the principles of democracy, equality and well-being for all, seem to be taken for granted both within western welfare state economies and the diversity and equality agenda, with no recourse to religious justification. But cracks have appeared in that no longer can the state, apparently afford to provide prosperity for all its citizens. Following a general decline in the economy, and ongoing

banking crises, nowadays the differences between the rich and poor within society are becoming even more marked.

Global migration from poor to rich countries, to provide much-needed manpower (person power) is now resulting in increasing marginalisation among newer immigrant groups. Many such outsiders are characterised by not only looking ‘different’ but also having their own cultural and religious characteristics, which are out of step with the dominant secular host society. A significant component of these groups are the new wave of Pentecostal Christians who in the case of Britain, have mainly come from previous colonies, firstly in the Caribbean and nowadays from Africa. Ironically many African countries were the subject of intensive missionary activity over the last two centuries and the Gospel took hold, as nowadays large sections of their population comprise very fervent Christian believers. Meanwhile Christians in the sending countries have dwindled to a minority, much to the surprise of many new immigrants.

Many Black Pentecostal immigrants come from countries where there is no welfare state safety net, or right to free health care, and may find they have limited rights in their new country too. So they are more likely to develop a culture of self-reliance, dependence on the extended family, and belief in the power of prayer to intervene into their disadvantaged lives. Many also believe in a full Four Square Gospel, which encompasses mind, body, soul and spirit. (Their faith is not limited to the four walls of the church.) Taking literally the sentence in the Lord’s Prayer, ‘Thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven’ they believe that their material conditions will change as an outworking of spiritual blessing, and that the achievement prosperity, well-being, even wealth, are all part of the Gospel. So their ‘bank’ and ‘capital’ is likely to be their spiritual resources. The means of the production of such capital is believed to be achieved through the mechanisms of prayer, faith, tithing, self-employment, networking, and education.

To flip from my ‘planning self’ to my ‘pentecostal self’, there are many promises in the Bible about the power of prayer to change things, and a long tradition of believers fasting and praying for change. ‘The fervent prayer of the righteous man (and woman) availeth much’ (James 5 v.16), whilst ‘faith is the substance of things hoped for’ (Hebrew 11 v.1). ‘We wrestle not against, not just planning authorities, but principalities and powers’ (Ephesians 6 v.12), so we need to ‘pray without ceasing’ (I Thessalonians 5 v.17). There is a long tradition of weak, powerless people praying for salvation and a solution to what often seem to be completely impregnable barriers and obstacles confronting their pathway. After exhausting all the routes of political lobbying, campaigning and networking, divine intervention through prayer is the only way out.

For the powerless, whose efforts and labour is generally ignored or under-valued, capital accumulation is not based on ‘works’ and self-determination (as in the wealthy Protestant’s ethic) but on belief in miracles and the direct intervention of God for the poor. Goods produced and consumed include healing, well-being, wisdom, strength, salvation, protection, employment, social inclusion, church buildings, community facilities, housing, and also actual personal prosperity. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, so this is a mechanism whereby spiritual capital is operationalised and manifested. To continue the industrialised capitalist analogy, the Holy Spirit is the Steam Engine powering the whole process. In spite

of all this vast amount of pent-up Holy Spirit power, and the best of intentions, many dynamic, expanding Black Pentecostal Churches are finding that their attempts to establish themselves in the community by church building, or conversion of existing vacant premises, fall foul of the planners. A clash of cultures, if not of 'capitals' (economic and spiritual) is played out in numerous planning appeals as illustrated in the following section. Investigating some of these incidences may help us to understand the planners' surprisingly negative attitudes, when, in fact, such churches possess all the right characteristics to foster urban regeneration and renewal.

EXAMPLES: THE WAR OF THE CAPITALS

The Planning Context

In this second part, I want to identify the main attitudinal and policy barriers that have resulted in so many a refusal. There is a lack of national policy guidance on the place of religious buildings and faith groups within strategic urban land-use planning, or on how local planning authorities should deal with applications related to places of worship. The situation is not consistent across the nation as a 'post code lottery' (zip code lottery) is apparent with some local planning authorities taking a more positive view than others towards the 'same' sorts of applications.

One of the key reasons for planning applications for churches not being given adequate value is because 'religion' does not fit in the planners' terms of reference in land-use planning, as informed by the powers of economic, social and cultural capital. Therefore applications from faith groups for religious buildings are dealt with through the lens, and judged by the standards of existing categories, such industrial, commercial, residential and leisure uses. A major report on the planning system's approach to places of worship (CAG, 2008) highlighted the fact that there is no national strategy or high-level governmental policy statement on this matter. Most local planning authorities, at county, city and local district level, do not even have a specific policy statement in their development plan documentation on places of worship. Indeed within the UCO (Use Classes Order) (the nation-wide land-use Zoning Ordinance regulations), there is no special category for 'worship buildings and uses' rather churches come under the same designation (D1) as cinemas, dance halls and other places of public assembly, with no consideration of their different social, moral and religious role in society.

Planners are meant to be advocates and enablers, to encourage community development and regeneration, especially within deprived areas. The Localism Act 2011 introduced by the Coalition government puts great emphasis upon localism, neighbourhood planning and community involvement in the revised planning system. Indeed, in general terms 'the church' (presumably Anglican) is seen as having a valuable role in establishing neighbourhood forums for public participation purposes (Planning, 20.01.2012, article Melissa Mean-Money, 'Pioneering neighbourhood planning - a first-hand view'). But at the same time planners seem rather unsure and edgy as how to deal with churches, Jon Rouse, the chief executive of the London Borough of Croydon and an influential voice in urban planning, has expressed uncertainty as to how to deal with the recent effects of African

immigration (sic) in terms of church provision, although this in a borough whose inner-city areas have had a high level of ethnic minority population since the 1970s! (Planning, 25.02.12). As will be seen, planning applications for church development are generally dealt with on an individualised basis with little reference to the wider strategic, urban, regional and even national implications. In contrast, applications for retail development are always perused in relation to higher-level policy considerations such as the extent of the catchment area, city-wide impact, and local employment and regeneration considerations; even when the churches in question are very large and significant pieces of development.

In the following examples we will observe a battle between the forces of the different capitals, economic, cultural, social and religious to determine the land use and physical content of our towns and cities. One is reminded of Doreen Massey, the urban geographer, as to how power groups shape urban space through '*the reproduction over space of social relations*' (Massey, 1984). The process of transmission is mediated, to a considerable degree, through the role of the planning profession, in determining what should be built where. The beliefs of the main urban decision-makers, including the planners, property developers and politicians are themselves shaped by the dominant world views arising from the relative power of the different capitals, and sadly nowadays religious capital is short on influence. But one could equally argue that prayer is the means whereby spiritual capital can also be transmitted on to urban space, thus reshaping planning policy and giving religious buildings value and their proper place within the built environment.

Methodology and Referencing

A web search was undertaken of all planning applications, appeals and case law that related to 'places of worship' including using key words such as church, gospel, mosque, faith, and the names of the various denominations. I used www.compasssearch.co.uk which in association with the Royal Town Planning Institute provides frequently updated reports on current cases and appeals. I also searched using DCS (Development Control Services Limited) which is a password-only professional planning law site. I looked for relevant articles in the planning press, such as in 'Planning' which can be accessed at www.planningresource.co.uk. Since many of the key cases are related to London, I also consulted the GLA (Greater London Authority) and Planning Aid for London (a voluntary advocacy group). I combined, and triangulated this approach, with a more informal and anecdotal approach of simply talking to people from a range of churches and other faith groups on their experiences and views on the situation. There were many tales of the length of time conversion of buildings takes to a religious takes, for example 6 years to change a fire station to a Buddhist temple, and in Newham, London, 6 years to convert a warehouse to a place of worship, in spite of planning decisions normally being required to be made in 8 weeks. There was also a sense of despair that planners were Biblically-illiterate and had very little idea of what religion, faith and belief means to many of the planned, that is society. Arguably religion, churches, and other faith groups and their buildings, seldom get mentioned in national planning policy, because of the professional culture of planners is based on secular humanism (Greed,2013).

I have arranged the order in which I discuss my examples in relation to the different types of barriers the churches in question are experiencing : firstly economic capital (employment, new businesses, retaining land and buildings for future jobs); secondly the effects of remaining cultural and religious capital (favouring of established churches and any ecclesiastic building that is either old, of architectural importance or named after a Saint!); and thirdly wider social and community capital factors. The power of these capitals is instrumentalised through a range of technicalities being raised to justify refusal of planning permission including: noise, overcrowding, disturbance, social unrest, transport overloading, crime generation, and a whole range of specifics regarding the Building Regulations, Health and Safety, and site-specific planning policy details, such as signage and the ‘churchy’ appearance of the buildings in question.

Economic Capital: A Tale of Two Capitals

One of the most frequent reasons for the refusal of planning permission for churches is because they are seen as taking up space that is allocated for employment and industry. Because of the lack of suitable available premises, such as redundant church buildings or empty public buildings, many new Black Pentecostal churches have resorted to applying to use empty industrial units, often on trading estates on the edge of town, where, to all accounts, there is little demand for occupation by businesses. A web search will soon reveal endless examples of refusals for such ‘change of use’. The argument always given by the planning authorities is that church development will take up valuable space allocated for employment, which itself is seen as vital to urban regeneration and the economy. In contrast, churches are generally viewed as an obstruction, as a negative factor that contributes nothing to the regeneration. Far from acknowledging the needs of such minority faith groups, and far from seeing them as prime movers, change makers and valuable allies in urban regeneration programmes, they and their church buildings were likely to be seen as obstacles to urban regeneration, plan-making and as a nuisance. But there are exceptions, for example, it was stated that ‘rather than seeing the church as an obstacle to regeneration’ the council has ... highly commended the work of the Churches Housing Group in Liverpool (‘Beacons of Excellence’ by Ben Cook, in Planning (30.11.12), although this comment was made in respect of a church housing scheme not the development of an actual church.). (Please note all Planning magazine references to be found at www.planningresource.co.uk).

To give just a few examples amongst scores, it was stated, in respect of one small-scale application for change of use, from industry to church use, in South London, that ‘permanent use of building as church was dismissed over employment fears’ (reported 29.06.2012, DCS 100-077-056) . Another church failed to overturn an enforcement notice against its use of an industrial unit in South East London as a church, the planning inspector stating that the community benefit did not outweigh the conflict with employment policies (29.01.2010, DCS number 100-065-817). But results are not always negative, a minority of applications succeed, giving reason for hope, and also highlighting the inconsistency between different local planning authorities and also the confusion amongst planning inspectors. For example, temporary use of an empty industrial unit was granted to a church in Greater Manchester for two years (DCS 100-078-028, August 2012). Even if churches get planning permission they are not necessarily free of the economic clutches of the planners. For example, the Christ

Apostolic Church Mount Zion, in the London Borough of Southwark won its appeal against being required to pay a new planning levy being imposed on the development, which would usually be raised on commercial property, which seemed totally disproportionate for a small and poor faith group (Planning, 30.11.12). No doubt the appeal was won through the power of prayer and intercession to God rather than through planning law.

Overall, planners are very keen on seeing the economic factor as the key to growth rather than social, religious or cultural factors. It is highly significant that the main battle ground between church expansion and the statutory planning system, seems to be focused upon applications for the use of unoccupied industrial units to church premises as this shows it is a battle between two views of how economic capital is created. The planners still seem to have an old-fashioned attitude to what constitutes the economy, and what might create growth and urban regeneration, in which 'industry' is still given a privileged position. They do not see churches as a source of employment, regeneration or indeed of creativity, although 'creative industries' and entrepreneurial activity may arise from within the church community (Stott, 2012). As explained in previous research (Greed,2011) Black Pentecostal church often provide day care facilities, education and careers guidance and undertake a host of charitable activities and positive interventions in the surrounding neighbourhood, all of which actually contribute to residents finding work and having the housing, education and childcare to participate in the workforce. But urban regeneration, is so obsessed with employment and investment issues, and increasingly with achieving environmental sustainability and 'green' credentials, that often it forgets all about the essential social support system needed to enable people, especially women, to get into the workforce (Greed,2005, 2007).

So to conclude this sub-section, planners do not understand how religious activity interrelates to and supports other policy objectives such as employment, social welfare and housing. Likewise they do not see religion, as a strategic planning matter (like retail or residential development) at urban, regional or national level, in spite of it having very tangible physical built environment implications regarding of land use allocation, zoning and new development. A significant and powerful minority of the planning consultants and advocates who seek to help Black Pentecostal churches are themselves of Afro-Caribbean and African, especially Nigerian, origin. I am fascinated by the very much higher priority given to religion in Nigeria. For example, there is an entire new urban development called Jesus City planned on Christian town planning principles, developed in association with Nigerian property developers in London www.cftchurches.org/jesuscity/map.html. Back in England, regardless of the indifference of the planners, entire housing districts are being restructured around religion such as around Islam Oldham in the North of England, and around Black churches in inner London, as immigrant faith groups make sure they live close to each other and within walking distance of the mosque or church. But 'church' is not seen as an engine of the economy (as Patrick Anderson a planner working at Planning Aid for London has discussed with me). Thus religious capital are not recognised as a change agent, or as a force as potentially powerful as economic capital, because it does not 'fit' into the planners' view of how the world should be. Patrick explained to me that whilst globalisation of economies has actually undermined English industry, hence so many empty industrial

units; it has also created increased immigration and thus the demand for places of worship, a role which the industrial units could readily fulfil. A virtuous circle! But still the planners live in a world in which they sincerely believe that one day 'industry' will re-emerge so they have to save the industrial units for that time.

Cultural and Religious Capital

Cultural Familiarity

To be seen to be acceptable to the planners ideally one should belong to an established, historical, traditional, white type of church, which is already accepted as an essential and familiar part of our national culture. Whilst many newcomer, immigrant black churches are having great difficulty getting planning permission for new buildings or for the change of use of existing buildings, established churches, especially white, middle-class ones generally fare much better. There are five denominations that have special protection and exemptions from many of the rigours of planning law and building control, as established churches, namely, the Church of England (Anglican), Roman Catholics, Methodists and the separate Anglican churches in Wales and Scotland.

In addition there are many large predominantly white evangelical churches which are viewed as highly respectable, even establishment, some of which may even be charismatic in their form of worship and beliefs (the polite white middle class version of Pentecostalism) but are still treated reasonably favourably by the planners. Such churches may also run educational facilities, housing associations, charities, nurseries and almost always some form of coffee bar or drop in centre and an Alpha course (Hunt,2004). They may even have a tradition of social action and involvement in social reform and local politics. Successful planning applications include a new central London office development for OASIS (a major evangelical organisation) as reported in the popular evangelical magazine Christianity, June 2008, page 9 (see www.christianitymagazine.co.uk). Birmingham City Council willingly granted permission for the conversion of a factory building in Frankfort Street, Newtown to a church with educational facilities run by New Creation Ministries which operates from St Cyprian's Memorial Church (Planning, 05,11,2010) [for all Planning journal references see www.planningresource.co.uk]. Note this was a factory, that is an industrial use, but in this case unlike in many Pentecostal church applications, nobody said that essential industrial economic premises had to be retained. In leafy Hampshire, church use restrictions were actually relaxed to enable a new church to provide youth group meetings and other associated activities on its premises, but this was a white church (01.07.2011, DCS number 100-072-266). In contrast, the change of use of a business premises in North London to a community resource centre, namely a church hall, was declared unacceptable as it was seen as undermining the council's employment objectives, and thus employment policy blocked the church hall (16.10.2009, DCS 100-064-425). In previous research I found that there seemed to be less concern with parking controls especially on larger suburban churches (Greed, 2011).

Architectural Merit

Whilst established church congregations are generally tolerated by the planners, what planners like even more is empty redundant churches which are to be commended for their age and quality of architecture. Empty church buildings are seen as a wonderful opportunity for re-use as community centres, housing, art galleries, and even bars and clubs, within the context of regenerating the inner city. Even the churches are complicit in this process, glad to off load their old expensive properties and heating costs. Some 'trendy vicars' even imagine that turning their church into a community centre, and thus removing any sign of ecclesiastical imagery may actually improve their chances of evangelism and bringing people in, but divesting the building of any chance of future use for weddings or other formal religious ceremonies. For example, closed-down 18th century church in the deprived area of Toxteth, Liverpool, namely St James in the City, has been invested in by the Diocese to be redeveloped as a visitor centre and garden, to be completed in 2015 (Planning 14.6.10), hardly an example of a worship use. But one should at least be grateful that the planners do value church buildings nowadays, even if for the wrong reasons, for as Anthony Fyson notes, in the 1970s in the days of Cost Benefit Analysis calculations, a medieval church, which was in the way of a new airport, was valued as only being worth 10,000 pounds (Planning, 17.06.2011). Nowadays the architectural and historical value of churches is valued much more highly but their religious, spiritual, social and community capital is not even counted.

Indeed the emphasis on architectural purity can crush church growth. Some still-lively, expanding churches, located in historical buildings, have found attempts to expand and build on extensions to be thwarted by the planners. For example a three storey extension to a Victorian church in east London was deemed to destroy the symmetry of this listed Bath stone building, admittedly rather ambitious but clearly the need for an extension was the sign of a healthy, growing church (DCs 100-074-444). The problem of extensions is a particular problem for erstwhile poorly-attended Roman Catholic churches which have experienced unprecedented growth in recent years as a result of Polish immigration to the UK, with the new congregants bringing with them much traditional catholic religious capital as well as strong spiritual capital.

Overall, in line with the widely-held false belief that the church is in decline, planners are happy to treat churches as museums, and to conserve them and very happy to see changes of use from churches to night-clubs, restaurants and private houses. A national-chain Italian restaurant, which has taken over a redundant church in Bedminster, Bristol has a banner across the front of the building saying 'we are now open all Sunday' (with no irony intended). A perusal of successful planning applications will show that are lots of conversions from churches to other uses, but not so many in the other direction in spite of a huge demand for this and many controversial cases. Branson argues in 'Planning' in an article on the drop in church attendance, that more redundant church building should be returned to community use (Branson, 2009) giving examples such as St Paul's Church Bristol, built in 1790 and restored through the Heritage Lottery Fund, which was further adapted in 2005 to make space for a circus arts academy. Note this is a majority ethnic minority area where just up the road one can find Black churches precariously holding on to tenancy of industrial units who would have jumped at the chance to be offered such redundant church buildings in the area. But maybe this building was seen as too posh to give to the local residents?

It is not just inner city churches that are being decommissioned, such is the power of cultural capital over religious capital. An 18th Century, Benedictine Abbey in Fort Augustus, alongside Loch Ness was converted was converted into 'the Highland Club, a housing and leisure complex, in 2012 and given an Award for Regenerating Rural Communities as reported in Planning, 20.11.2012. Likewise in view of the lack of affordable housing there is increasing pressure for the Church of England to release redundant churches for conversion to housing. But according to the authors of the CAG Report (2008) on planning for place of worship, without a positive planned approach, there is likely to be a significant national under-provision of worship space. (Smith and Parham, 2010).

But not all architecture is considered culturally acceptable. A proposed mosque with a modest dome and minarets was deemed to be out of place in Lancashire, DCS 100-080-331, and there have been many incidences of such 'foreign' architecture being deemed unacceptable. On the other hand modernistic, and architectural styles that are generally unpopular with local residents, favoured by some established churches desperately trying to appear 'modern and relevant', on the rare occasions when they build something new, probably drive ordinary people away. But some non-established church faith groups fare much better, in terms of architectural acceptability, as they fit in. Appearance is everything. For example, a large Jewish Community Centre, on the Finchley Road in North London, comprising 35,000 square feet on several floors is so well integrated into the built environment, using a contemporary 'office block' architectural style, blending in like a chameleon that one can hardly notice they are there. The building has even won construction awards as a 'green building' (as well as being a totally kosher building) and its large auditorium, entertainment facilities, day nursery and other community amenities are integrated into the body of the building (Crawford,2012).

In contrast, in April 2012, an Orthodox Jewish group in the same area was issued with an enforcement notice to close down a 'home school' based in a residential premises on the grounds of various technical building infringements (DCS 100-076-537). Several more 'religious looking' Jewish buildings have often suffered from stone throwing and swastika daubing. Likewise in past, when Irish immigration was high, the Roman Catholics were careful to place their stain-glass windows high up on the building facade to avoid broken windows. The message seems to be if you are going to be religious make sure your buildings blend in, and limit your religious activities to your church, or synagogue (*schule*) as the state regards religion as a personal belief, to be confined to sacred spaces (Inge, 2003) not something that should leak into the surrounding residential area, and thus affect the wider built environment, by 'looking different'. So it is better to blend in, or is it? Recently, a wealthy Moslem business man, the owner of a large expensive villa in Newport, South Wales, put up a sign on the front wall of the house in two foot Arabic lettering saying 'There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his Prophet' in green neon lighting tubing. The planners immediately issued an enforcement notice, but at appeal the planning inspector argued that the sign was there to bless the house not to advertise a product, so the sign was actually allowed it in February 2013. This is very interesting as various signs on minority churches, conveying messages such as 'Jesus Saves' have been frowned upon by the planners over the years. In my locality I even remember a private householder being cautioned by the planners for displaying a life size Nativity scene in his front garden, and innumerable are the

examples of over-zealous, secularist local authorities banning Christmas decorations or declaring that Christmas such now be called 'Winter Festival' ostensibly not to offend those of other faiths. But when I talk to local Moslems no such offence is found as Issa (Jesus) is also one of their saints so it is quite acceptable for them to send Christmas cards to their customers and friends!

In conclusion to this sub-section, it must be stated that one must be critical of the widespread secular propaganda suggesting that all churches are in decline, which legitimises the cultural capitalist arguments that churches are only architecture, and that they must be converted into housing and other community uses. Contrary to media coverage, there has in fact been a tremendous growth in church-attendance and membership in many inner city areas. Much of this is increasingly being concentrated into black Pentecostal mega-churches, which preach the gospel of salvation, healing and the prosperity gospel. Goodhew (2012) has found that that adult membership of the Anglican churches in the diocese of London has increased 70% between 1990-2010, and much of this growth is due to immigration. According to www.brierleyconsultancy.com, there are 500,00 Christians in black majority churches, and 1 million other Christians in Britain from Black, Asian and other minority groups, who are to be found in majority churches. Around 7,000 new churches have been started since 1980, and in the last ten years more new ones have started than old ones closed down. It is often commented in white evangelical circles that for years the churches prayed for revival, and when it came they missed it because it was black!

Social Capital: Insiders and Outsiders

I want to investigate social capital's manifestation in relation to concepts of community, daily life, and what is seen as 'normal' or exotic, and who is seen as an outsider. Whilst traditional blinkered planners see 'church' as an obstacle to regeneration, not all planners are the same. Government policy-makers, including those concerned with urban regeneration from a more progressive social perspective, welcome the contribution of dynamic new immigrant churches in improving education, reducing crime, and increasing a sense of community and responsibility in depressed inner city areas. Black Pentecostal Churches, and for that matter Moslem and other strong religious immigrant communities are seen as the ultimate manifestation of the equality and diversity agenda (provided they know their place of course). The strong, vibrant spirit manifested by Black Pentecostal churches, typified by Full Gospel Choirs is also very attractive to the media and the music industry, whilst adding urban vitality and 'colour' to the inner city.

But as Zohar and Marshall (2004) comment policy makers are not so keen on the religious fundamentalist aspects of such congregations and want to take the secular benefits and ignore the religious aspects. They note that politicians, especially under New Labour (1997-2010) were very keen to court faith groups, including inner city ethnic-minority churches, in order to use their networks and religious capital resources in urban regeneration programmes. But they were not so keen on the spiritual capital aspects which was either completely misunderstood (by religiously-illiterate secular politicians) or treated with suspicion as likely to be homophobic and out of step with the equalities agenda. This seemed unjust in that

some congregations primarily consisted of heavily-disadvantaged black immigrant groups who were theoretically meant, themselves, to be the beneficiaries of diversity legislation and greater racial tolerance. But the importance of the spiritual dimension needs to be recognised and not suppressed, or separated from the material world, as it is part and parcel of the whole deal, for as Baroness Warsi (one of the few Moslem women members of the House of Lords) has said, *'Those who do God, do Good'*, ([The Daily Telegraph](#), 15.2.2013).

To illustrate the issues, I now return to the KICC saga, having previously covered this church's troubles with the planners in Baker and Beaumont's book which brought us up to early 2011. KICC (Kingsway International Christian Centre) is a huge church of over 12,000 members from 46 different nationalities, which have been seeking to build a mega church which would seat more people than any existing cathedral in Western Europe. The church had to move from its previous premises to make way for the London Olympics with the promise from the planners that any alternative site would be looked upon favourably. But not so. Since then the church has tried to get planning permission on several different buildings and new sites, whilst its congregation remains fragmented and reduced to holding multiple services in a range of scattered venues. Back in 2009 KICC's application for an 8,000 seater mega-church in Rainham Essex (on the outskirts of London), on an industrial estate was refused. They partly chose this site because there were no near neighbours so they could not be accused of causing a disturbance and being too noisy. This application was refused on the grounds that the site was already allocated for industry, although most of the units remained empty.

Subsequently, KICC has put in applications on a range of sites and building closer in, within built up areas. Their most recent strategy has been to take over a redundant cinema in Bromley, inner London and having started using it as a church, in the hope of receiving retrospective planning permission. They are now under threat of enforcement proceedings on a whole series of technicalities. As the local press attests, local residents have expressed objections on a much wider range of criteria. In particular they have expressed concern about 'outsiders' taking over the building, thus apparently depriving existing residents of its use, in spite of the cinema being derelict and unwanted for years. Fears had been expressed by some local residents about noise, disturbance, increased crime and anti-social behaviour taking place, and overcrowding on the pavement (sidewalk) outside (www.crystal-palace-mag.co.uk). In reality nobody has wanted the building for years, the locality has a substantial and long-established ethnic minority population and members of the KICC church are known for their holiness and good works, and are hardly part of the perceived criminal fringe.

The KICC saga had previously raised issues about 'who' is entitled to use the pavement, to travel on public transport and even cycle to church. The Planning Inspector dealing with the previous failed KICC application for the church building in Rainham Essex, actually stated that the church would put too much demand on local bus services (isn't that was buses are for?). This is extraordinary in that nowadays transportation planners are obsessed with getting people out of their cars and on to public transport for 'green' environmental sustainability reasons. In the cinema case too, the [new] planning inspector also raised concerns about too many pedestrians being generated, because many of the congregation would walk to church, as well making as a range of curious comments about the use of bicycles, local taxis and

public transport all being overwhelming for the area. The KICC Christians meant to fly to church on angels' wings? If the building was reopened as an ordinary cinema presumably just as many people would be generated.

This example raises many social capital issues as to what and who comprises 'community' and 'local culture' and what are valid leisure and entertainment uses. Some councils wistfully imagine that inner city cinemas will be popular again, although they cannot compete with the out-of-town multi-plexes in terms of facilities, film choice and car parking provision. But they seem to imagine old cinemas have to be preserved for some future time when people will flock back. Let us make a comparison with a similar age, Art Deco cinema in the affluent Whiteladies Road, Clifton Bristol. Local conservationists have fought long and hard to retain the cinema but have not found a commercial backer to reopen it. The local planning authority has recently granted permission for the cinema to be converted and subdivided into restaurant, bar, and possible housing uses, causing lots of disturbance and the destruction of the entity of the building, and only just preserving its Art Deco architecture. Local residents have expressed concerns about noise, disturbance, and anti-social behaviour. But Whiteladies Road is already lined by many bars and late-night facilities, but presumably because the customers are mainly white, professional clientele with some more affluent students too, they are still seen as attracting the 'right type of people'. Like many city councils Bristol is very keen to promote the 'night-time economy' with delusions of creating Continental style street ambience, and the 24 hour city. In many areas such policies usually results in over provision of licensed drinking premises, with attendant noise, public drunkenness and street urination. As will be illustrated, many applications for church and mosque use in vacant inner city property, are refused on the basis of noise and disturbance, although the congregations are likely to be tee total.

Noise is clearly a subjective factor judged according to the culture, class and race of the noise makers. Noise and disturbance are often used as an excuse for refusal of planning permission. For example a mosque and community hall development failed because the Inspector argued it would draw people in from a wide area and undermine the predominantly quiet residential character of the area, although this application was for the use of an existing redundant church building, in a vibrant, predominantly Muslim inner city area (24.09.10., DCS 100 068 876). Likewise permission was refused to convert a shop in North Yorkshire to a church for a congregation of 75 people. This was refused because of noise concerns but surely influenced by the fact that the shop was actually a unit in a restored old corn mill complex of architectural importance (Planning, 4.12.2009). In these days of high levels of closure of traditional shops, it is significant that religious uses of existing shops such as for Christian cafes, walk in centres, community meeting places are often refused. For example a white Pentecostal church in a market town in Somerset has opened a café on the main street, in an area where there are many pubs and clubs, and seeks to minister to young people, night and day. They have the words 'Jesus Saves' in red emblazoned above their store front windows, which they have argued is the name of their café for trading purposes. But they have had a great deal of trouble from the planners. Directly behind the café they use the rest of the building as a church, and the whole combination of mixing commercial and religious uses along with the Jesus Saves banner has been just too much for the planners to get their heads around. But there has been a proliferation of Pound Shops, pawn brokers, adult shops,

and betting offices, which are often challenged on moral grounds by local residents but still get through. For example, a planning inspector deemed that a loan shop would boost central retail footage in a Lincolnshire seaside resort, in spite of national planning guidance advising against loss of traditional retail uses (DCS 100-076-867 June 2012). Moral considerations are not considered to be 'material considerations' in planning law (Greed and Johnson, 2013, chapter 3).

In just a few applications, the noise factor has not prevented development. For example, on appeal, a change of use of an office in Essex as a black Pentecostal church was allowed subject to extensive noise insulation (03.12.201, DCS 1000-069-677). There have been several cases where expensive sound insulation, double, if not treble glazing, and restrictions on times of meetings have been introduced. Again there is great inconsistency nationally, a postcode lottery, and another application in Essex (12.08.11, DCS 100-73-089) to use an isolated small industrial unit as a place of worship was ruled inappropriate due to the risk of disturbance to local residents, although not located directly within a residential area. Of course noise is relative, we are all used to the church bells ringing and people generally see it as part of our culture and background ambience. But the Iman making the call to prayer is less familiar and acceptable, not that anyone can hear much of anything nowadays above the roar of traffic in our cities.

Sometimes even quiet, elderly white middle class congregations get hammered for noise if they belong to what is seen, in these politically correct times, as a rather questionable fundamentalist group. A little tiny Plymouth Brethren congregation in a village in Dorset, who wanted to hold occasional meetings in a bungalow, in a low density residential area, were told that they were too noisy. This is astonishing seeing as the Brethren do not permit their women to speak and their repertoire of hymns is decidedly on the quiet and traditional side, and often unaccompanied by musical instruments. Subsequently the Brethren have been in the news nationally for making a stand against gay marriage and also have been under investigation by the Charity Commissioners, in spite of their well established reputation as quiet, doers of good works and valuable contributors to both society and community. To be 'born again' is not a good career move either if one is a prominent politician or professional, and such a status has even been used to criticise a planning appellant in Dorset (Planning 09.08.11) over a small alleged planning infringement. In reality it is just as illegal to identify and criticise a planning applicant for being 'born again' as it is to state he is 'gay', or 'black' as personal characteristics should not be material to the planning determination.

Conclusion

As can be seen, religious capital is generally trumped by the forces of economic capital, whilst spiritual capital sits uneasily with both social and cultural capital priorities. But given there is no national policy on these matters, inconsistency rules, which does give some space and hope for the future as the few 'good decisions' set case law precedents for the future. I believe that along with fighting for more equal and informed decision-making at a professional level, we also need to engage the forces of spiritual capital by campaigning, educating, networking: most of all praying for change. The new planning system introduced under the 2011 Localism Act, in theory at least, gives more power and voice to local communities in the production of Neighbourhood Plans. But, only 21 people are permitted to

sit on the newly created neighbourhood forums, to represent on average around 5000 people per neighbourhood, so the chances of Black Pentecostal people getting a place are low although Planning Aid has certainly sought to support unrepresented groups.

Perhaps the established white churches and evangelicals, who previously have had more political influence may increasingly find themselves having to link up more with the black churches to fight stricter local authority PSED (Public Service Equality Duty) requirements. Many are unhappy with the doctrinal and religious freedom implications of the gay rights agenda, especially proposed same-sex marriage legislation being brought forward under the Coalition government (2010). So far it has been black and female Christians who have disproportionately been affected by 'equality' laws which have restricted the wearing of crosses, and exercising of freedom of conscience in the workplace, as epitomised by Mrs Lidele the registrar who lost her job. For the first time many white traditional Christian groups are also facing potential conflict with their local authorities, and even suspicion from the local planners, and councillors (local politicians) if the facilities and buildings they provide or use do not offer equal services for all and are thus seen (crudely, reductionistically) as sure to be homophobic. For the first time they are finding what it is like to be viewed as an 'outsider' even a minority group, which has been the common experience of many black and Pentecostal churches for years (albeit for racial rather than sexual reasons). Perhaps in this process, white churches will become more aware of the discrimination experienced by black churches in respect of the planning application process, and their own privileged position.

In conclusion, there is a need for changes to the planning system, and therefore its culture (Young and Stevenson, 2003 (eds)). Therefore 'religious uses' need to count as a recognised, important and distinct category of land-use and building occupation under planning law. There needs to be national policy guidance on how to deal with applications generated by church growth, along with strategic planning policy statements on the matter in every urban and local development plan, similar to the guidance given say on retail development. Attitudes also need to change on the part of the planners when dealing with minority congregations. Church leaders and community representatives dealing with the planners often feel do not receive the respect they would expect, because they are often seen as 'outsiders' and 'not part of the community' even in ethnic majority areas. Women church leaders in particular experience a lack of recognition of their importance and a devaluation of their potential influence in urban regeneration programmes (Onuoha and Greed, 2003). But they believe the power of prayer will change these circumstances through divine intervention (CARE, 2009). Indeed it is only prayer and fasting that has kept many a planning decision from being even more draconian, but in the future, the power of prayer may yet transform planning policy towards religious buildings.

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