

Can social enterprise provide an alternative organisational
model to enhance local
Christian social action?
A Practitioner Action Research Study.

Valerie Barron

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I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

Abstract.

For the last eight years I have worked as a community practitioner in the Durham Diocese, in North East England. Living and working in low-income communities since the 2008 recession, I have witnessed the violent consequences of austerity in a region that has consistently had some of the highest poverty rates in the country. The Christian groups I work with have stepped up to respond to the challenges in their communities, as they have across the United Kingdom, providing support such as foodbanks, debt relief and holiday clubs, predominately through a charitable model of service provision.

The United Kingdom has seen a rapid growth in the numbers of social enterprises established to support their communities. Despite a substantial body of research into both Christian social action and social enterprise, the intersection of these two practices has been the subject of scarcely any exploration. This research aims to address this and has been conducted by, with, and for Christian community practitioners.

The research adopted a combination of grounded theory and action research. Layers of data were gathered through open ended in-depth interviews, focus groups and, the primary research site, an ethnographic study located in a community project in North East England.

The key findings are that the Christian social enterprises were created from a belief in a more just society and aimed to make the market economy fairer, more inclusive, and environmentally friendly. Therefore, the social enterprises provided an alternative response to charitable amelioratory approaches as they sought to tackle the causes, not just the symptoms, of oppression. The emerging organisations typically aim to provide spaces of belonging where participants feel valued, empowered, and able to share and develop their talents and passions.

The origins of social enterprise have been evident since the sixteenth century as part of the history of Christian response to need. This research provides a new model to enable practitioners to reengage with this radical asset-based practice.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

We see on the one side a considerable number of people enjoying a great many of the good things of life with singularly little regard to the needs of others, and we see on the other side a vast amount of real want and destitution.... This is a state of affairs with which the Christian cannot rest content. (Temple, 1912: 24)

This research is the work of a Christian community practitioner who cannot rest content with the inequality that was familiar to William Temple over one hundred years ago, witnessed daily in the Diocese of Durham in North East England.

In November 2018 Philip Alston, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, visited Britain to explore the impact of austerity in the poorest communities, including those in the North East. His damning report highlights that, despite the United Kingdom being the world's fifth largest economy, one fifth of its population (14 million people) live in poverty, and 1.5 million of them experienced destitution in 2017 (Dept Work and Pension, 2020; Fitzpatrick et al., 2018). These numbers include individuals living in: 'relative poverty' - defined as living on a household income less than 60% of the national median wage; 'persistent poverty' - if they live on this income for more than three years; and 'severe poverty' - if they earn less than 50% of the average annual wage (McGuinness, 2017).

Living in poverty must not be reduced to economic debates but be seen as the ability to participate in society.

Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary patterns, customs and activities. (Townsend, 1979: 31)

Alston drew attention to the disproportionate impact upon groups, including working class children and young people, asylum seekers and refugees, low waged women, and those with disabilities (Alston, 2019).

The bottom line is that much of the glue that has held British society together since the Second World War has been deliberately removed and replaced with a harsh and uncaring ethos. A booming economy, high employment and a budget surplus have not reversed austerity, a policy pursued more as an ideological than an economic agenda. (Alston, 2019:1)

The 2008 global financial crash provided successive governments an opportunity to impose the latest iteration of austerity (Bramall, 2013). Austerity policies were accelerated, supposedly to reduce the public deficit, however, the ideology is widely understood to be part of a larger political strategy to roll back the state (Taylor-Gooby, 2012). More than a decade of austerity in the United Kingdom has resulted in 'the deepest and most precipitated cuts ever made in social provision in the history of the British State' (Taylor-Gooby, 2013: viii).

One fifth of people in the United Kingdom living in poverty has been described as political violence, and the people most affected by austerity are 'not only struggling under the financial strain but are becoming ill, physically and emotionally, and many are dying' (Cooper & Whyte, 2017: 1). I have witnessed personally and professionally the violence of austerity.

Not all communities across the United Kingdom have been impacted equally by austerity. Declining life expectancy is typically lower in urban areas in the North, including Leeds, Newcastle, Manchester, Liverpool, and Blackpool (Rachid et al., 2021). The North East has seen levels of child poverty rising faster than any other region, with rates in parts of Middlesbrough and Tyneside increasing by over ten percentage points (Hirsch & Stone, 2020).

As a community practitioner in the Durham Diocese in North East England, I engage with, and live in communities that are anxious and unclear about their futures. With a further and deeper recession predicted in response to the pandemic (Tolhurst, 2020), and the full impact of Brexit still unknown, we are living through a period of immense change. In my work I support predominantly Anglican congregations and Christian community projects as they explore ways to respond to the often desperate situations in their communities. I have sat with women sobbing with humiliation when visiting a foodbank, I have shopped for cheap school uniforms with mothers at the end of the summer holidays and I have witnessed funerals of suicide victims after having their welfare payments sanctioned.

It is within this context that this research is situated. I was angry. Angry about the injustice, angry at the lack of improvement for many communities and angry about the way the institution that I worked for responded. However, like Adam Dinham (2016), I am amazed by the lack of anger in the churches and projects where I work.

I've been surprised by how positive some of the response to austerity has been over the last few years, and I guess there is another side to this, which I want to encourage reflection on too: there must be lots of anger. So, the question is where is that anger? Where has it gone? How's it being used? It's important that we don't end up whistling in the dark. (Dinham, 2016: 15)

William Temple scholar, Matthew Stemp, highlights the role of emotions, particularly rage, as a motivating force for climate change activists.

Emotions are slippery things, if they are things at all. In line with its Latin roots (*emovere*, to move), it is common to refer to 'emotion' as something 'inside' people that moves them to act. (Stemp, 2021)

In 1981 at a National Women's Association Conference the radical anti-racist feminist Audre Lorde's keynote speech was anger. Lorde challenged the audience to recognise and use their anger which 'is loaded with information and energy' for change (Lorde, 2019: 121). The energy for this research comes out of my anger and the need for change. However, it is a hopeful anger that believes change is possible.

Hope is crucial to the act of protest: hope is what allows us to feel that what angers us is not inevitable, even if transformation can sometimes feel impossible. (Ahmed, 2014: 184)

This research is a product of my energy for change as I explore, with hope, one possible alternative response, social enterprise, in the recognition that our mixed economy of welfare is not fit for purpose and is failing the most marginalised in our country.

The United Kingdom has relied upon a 'mixed economy of welfare' to address social problems and deliver services, through a combination of public, private, household and family, occupational and third sector provision (Powell, 2007). Increasingly churches and Christian charities have been part of the mixed economy of welfare provision. Research carried out by the Church Urban Fund and Theos in 2014 estimated 10 million adults use church-based community services (Bickley, 2014). More recent data found that 77% of Anglican churches were involved in one or more forms of social action, representing involvement in a total of 35,000 individual projects (Church of England Statistics for Mission, 2020). According to research from New Philanthropy Capital, there are nearly 50,000 faith-based charities in the UK, out of a total of nearly 188,000 registered charities, with the Christian and faith-based sectors growing disproportionately quickly over the last ten years (Wharton & de Las Casas, 2016). It has also been recognised that faith groups reach parts of the community with whom other third sector organisations are unable or unwilling to work (Powell, 2007).

Despite this mixed economy of welfare, there is a crisis of provision in the United Kingdom which requires innovative solutions, as Hilary Cottam (2018) highlights in her book *Radical Help*.

The blunt truth is that we have reached the limits of our post war services and institutions. The welfare state is out of step with modern troubles, modern lives and much of modern public opinion. A set of institutions and services that are designed for a different era is now threadbare and beyond repair. We cannot fix these systems, but I think we can recover the original intention and reinvent it for our times. In this way we can create something new – in fact, this is already happening. (Cottam, 2018: 14)

Geoff Mulgan (2020), a pioneer in social innovation, sees crises as moments that have potential to fuel social imagination, and he urges social scientists to play a role in looking forward. The deeper the crisis, the more likely it is that people will ask not for a return to normal, but for something different and better. The latest crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, is challenging the current status quo. In a blog he wrote:

The crisis has forced actions that were scarcely imaginable six months ago. Could we use the crisis to rethink systems that are no longer fit for purpose, and discard of zombie orthodoxies that have outlived their usefulness? And could we rekindle a forward-looking social science that combines rigour and imagination? I hope we can. (Mulgan, 2020: para 15)

Therefore, there is an urgency for research that challenges embedded institutional responses and explores innovative ways of working and develops 'new ideas that work to meet pressing unmet needs and improve peoples' lives' (Mulgan, 2007: 7).

Christian individuals and groups are part of a rich history of social innovation including co-operatives (Simmons and Birchall, 2008), the Fairtrade movement (Anderson, 2015) and credit unions (Jones, 2008). There are, at present, small but growing pockets of engagement in this radical tradition in the UK (Bickley, 2017) and we need to understand and build upon these.

What is needed is not more but different – new ideas, new approaches new practices. Many of the great social achievements of religious traditions have not been realised by doing the same thing more, but by pioneering and applying a new approach. (Bickley, 2017: 12)

This research investigates the role social enterprises can play as Christians engage in innovative responses to tackle social problems, gathering data from organisations in England with a focus upon the North East. While the research has an ecumenical aspect, as far as research participants are concerned, my context is within the Church of England and consequently, the research reflects this bias. A limitation of this research is that, while it includes data from one Scottish social entrepreneur, it does not included data from Wales or Northern Ireland.

Social enterprises encompass a wide range of organisations (Simmons, 2008) evolving from earlier forms of non-profit, cooperatives and mainstream business (Defourny and Nyssens, 2010; Sepulveda, 2015). Consequently, a bewildering array of definitions and explanations of social enterprise exist, has resulted in a

fluid and contested concept contracted by different actors promoting different discourses connected to different organisational forms and drawing upon different academic theories. (Teasdale, 2012: 99)

This diversity results in a definition based around the lowest common denominator: 'organisations which trade to achieve their social objectives' (Peattie and Morley, 2008: 8). The British Council definition is adopted for the purposes of this research:

Social enterprises are businesses whose primary purpose is addressing a social or environmental challenge rather than creating profit for owners or shareholders. They bring together the entrepreneurial skills of the private sector and the values of public service. They deliver positive social impact through their means (i.e., how they conduct their work) and ends (i.e., what they achieve). (British Council; 2022)

The broad and varied definitions are explored further in Chapter 4.1 of this thesis.

An important note for this research context is that social innovations need not be entirely new. Macdonald and Howorth (2018) explore the roots of social enterprise and discover that activities that nowadays would be described as social enterprises, have been evident since the sixteenth century and have long been part of a Christian response to need.

The reviewed histories were explicit about the religious affiliations of individuals and groups, particularly highlighting the role of Christian philanthropists. There were few examples of non-Christian affiliations among the proponents. (Macdonald & Howorth, 2018: 17)

Hence, there is an argument that establishing a social enterprise should not be regarded as an unorthodox prospect, a departure from accepted charitable practices, but rather as re-engaging in the rich radical history of Christian care for those marginalised in society.

In John Pearce's book *Social Enterprise in Anytown* (2003), the author paints a picture of a mythical 'Anytown' describing the role social enterprises play in the local economy. The story of Anytown

fuses together many real-life stories of social and community enterprises into an ideal that was seeking to better the quality of life for local people rather than create personal wealth for individuals. The failure of 'Anytown' to include any faith-based organisations in the description is surprising, given their welfare activities in many communities (Finneron & Dinham, 2002). The radical vision that Pearce introduced, a political economy based on third sector values, was obviously not a space that he envisaged faith-based organisations populating, despite their historic contribution to their development (Macdonald and Howorth, 2018).

Research by Adam Dinham (2007a) explored whether there was a role for faith based social enterprise. This research, looked at in more detail in Chapter 4.6, highlighted two key needs if the faith-based social enterprise sector is to grow. Firstly, faith-based organisations need to have vision, capacity and confidence and secondly, action on the ground in communities needs to be better connected to local, regional, and national policy agendas. This research aims to respond to the first need highlighted and is within a Christian context.

I am engaging with this research as a practitioner. Practitioner researchers aim to produce knowledge that will enhance practice (McNiff, 2017) and will 'transcend mere knowledge generation to include personal and professional growth and organisational and community empowerment' (Herr & Anderson, 2005: 1). I also engaged with this research as an ordinary theologian who has 'received little or no theological education of a scholarly academic or systematic kind' (Astley, 2002: 56) and values the theology present in Christian communities (Gutierrez, 1974).

This research explores the role of social enterprises in Christian social action and aims to generate the kind of knowledge that will be a resource for others working in the field and which 'contributes to sustainable personal, social and planetary wellbeing' (McNiff, 2017: 17). This knowledge can be used to develop new futures, and be a resource for social hope (Rorty, 1999). It also aims to enhance

conversations and practice that encourage Christian practitioners to engage with alternative responses to local poverty as they work to be part of building a more equitable society.

In July 2019, the research data collection began with four informal in-depth interviews with established Christian social entrepreneurs, two in London, one in Birmingham and one in County Durham. These interviews were transcribed and analysed. An eight-month ethnographic study in a project in County Durham provided deep data collection during the shift to developing a social enterprise. Two focus groups, one in Listen Threads and the other at Shildon Alive were also conducted. In November 2019, an event in Sunderland brought together nineteen Christian social entrepreneurs to reflect upon the belief and values underlying the creation of social enterprises.

The research plan was to visit four further established Christian social enterprises, to retest the themes and deepen the data. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions this was not possible. Therefore, three online interviews were conducted with Christian social entrepreneurs in Milton Keynes, Birmingham Cumbria. The final interview took place in Sunderland when restrictions were lifted. Data from these later interviews has been integrated with the initial data in Chapter 5.

The complex, cyclical and messy nature of doing grounded research has been reflected in the chapters of this thesis, with emerging themes being brought into conversation with existing literatures and theologies.

The aim of Chapter 2 is to critically reflect upon the research process (Kincheloe, 2008) and the influence the researcher brings to this process (Charmaz, 2014). Chapter 3 reviews the practice of Christian social action today in the United Kingdom and the historic, theological, economic, and political factors that have shaped this work. This chapter includes responses to the current mean and violent times (Cooper & Whyte, 2017; Cloke et al., 2017; 2020). Chapter 4 explores the history, growth and values of social enterprises. Christian engagement in social enterprise is also reviewed. The data collected from the experiences of eight Christian social entrepreneurs is presented in

Chapter 5. One of the themes that emerged from these interviews is that establishing a social enterprise is a creative process. An eight-month ethnographic study of a project in the North East of England provided an opportunity to research this creative process through close observation. This data is presented in Chapter 6. The ethnographic study also allowed a detailed analysis of leadership within this one setting which is presented in Chapter 7. The COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity to observe how the research participants adapted their social enterprises during the crisis. Several online interviews with research participants provided a snapshot view of this adaptation, highlighting a shift to emergency provision during this period. This data forms the basis of Chapter 8. The penultimate chapter brings together data relating to the Christian beliefs and values that influence practice within these social enterprises and how these beliefs and values are navigated and expressed. The key values that underpin the social enterprises in this research are a belief in shalom, reciprocity, belonging and empowerment. The final chapter and conclusion bring together the learning from this research and present the findings in a way that supports Christian practitioners in engaging with innovative responses to social problems through social enterprise.

The key findings from this research were:

- The social enterprises provided an alternative to the predominant amelioratory, charitable approach. To varying degrees, they encompassed a more radical community practice as they moved beyond responding to the symptoms of austerity and aimed to challenge some of the root causes.
- An asset-based approach to community engagement aimed to provide spaces of belonging, reciprocity, and empowerment.
- The beliefs and values that emerged in these organisations were described as arising from the Christian tradition. While not exclusively Christian, they differ from the beliefs and values associated with a charitable approach.
- In most of the research settings there remained a reliance on a hybrid model of income generation comprising grants, charitable giving, and earned income. The social enterprises did not provide a solution to income challenges.

1.1 Dresses and cakes; hidden gifts



As I sit huddled up on the sofa with Fatima flicking through photos of her lost home in Syria, she stops at an image of an ornate dress. As we zoom in, the delicate golden needle work becomes apparent in the carefully crafted garment. 'I made it' she proudly explains, and then goes on to show me further items, all skilfully and lovingly crafted. Her face begins to light up as she describes the small business she ran from the back room of her home in Eastern Syria. A room that was now rubble. In the picture, remnants of the cottage industry could just be picked out. Watching Fatma describe her little business I reflect that I have never, in our two-year friendship, seen her so animated and vibrant. When I ask her why she had never shared this with me before, her simple answer was 'why?'. It is no longer part of her story. She is now a Syrian refugee living in a remote part of Gateshead, trying to make ends meet for her family. When people do ask her about her previous life, it is to learn more about the atrocities and then sit with tears in their eyes, as she recounts the horrors. Nobody is interested in her sewing machine. Could I help her set it up again? I could lend her my old machine and she could start sewing. 'I have no space here, and who would I sell to living so remotely?'. I could see that but did drop the machine off just in case.

Later that day, on the same estate I sat next to a young mum watching the kids play football. She was upset about the cost of the school uniform that she had been required to purchase for her daughter to move up to secondary school. 'I could really do without it at the end of the school holidays'. I knew she had a little part time job, but like much work round here, it is not well paid. I asked her what she enjoyed doing. 'Oh I love cake decorating, and I think I am quite good, as friends and family buy them from me'. When I asked her why she didn't try to make more of a business out of it she said, 'What, up here? Nah, could never get that off the ground'.¹

¹ These are two accounts that influenced my critical consciousness. Stories of poverty and hardship conflicting with skills, talents, and passion.

Chapter 2. Taking a step back

Before we engage in the complex process of knowledge development, it is important to 'take a step back' and to critically reflect, rather than passively accept, externally imposed research methods and the embedded philosophies that underpin them (Kincheloe, 2008). Reflection and 'reflexivity' are closely allied but should be differentiated: '...reflective processes are characterized by acute observation and analysis of roles and context. Reflexivity takes this critical work a step further and also interrogates the position of the 'self' who observes' (Walton, 2014: xii, n.1). This chapter incorporates both reflection on the research methodology and reflexivity on my role within the process.

The underpinning philosophy of this research is the belief that truth and knowledge, and the way it is perceived, is constructed by individuals and communities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is in opposition to the positivist epistemologies of natural sciences which assume a fixed, stable, and external reality. The constructivist views reality as being open to a variety of different interpretations. Human knowledge construction does not lead to universal truths, nor can it be regarded as a linear or tidy process (Kincheloe, 2016). A critical constructivist position regards all knowledge as temporally and culturally situated (Kincheloe, 2005). To interpret this constructivist ontology, the researcher must be 'involved with the research process and not as a distant observer, but as an active participant and co-creator of the interpretive experience' (Swinton & Mowat, 2006: 35).

Research is an interactive process shaped by his or her own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race ethnicity and by those of the people in the setting'. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013:11)

My critical examination of the research process has been enriched by the variety of feminist scholars whose theories, even though they are always partial and contested, have acted as an intentional counter to dominant theories about human experiences and strategies for change. They have demanded a critical examination of the research process, prompting new questions around power

dynamics and relationships to be asked, resulting in greater reflexivity in the research process and more equitable power relationships within research (Fonow & Cook, 2005; Askins, 2018).

Feminism is not just a theory; it is a commitment to social justice that entails a political perspective on our work. Feminists call researchers to think critically about aspects of our research that tend to go unexamined and discussions of methodology: whose questions are we asking and who is benefitting from the answers we discover through our research. (Sprague, 2016: 195)

One of the distinctive values drawn upon by many feminist researchers and scholars is a commitment to work with those on the margins of society (Davis & Craven, 2016; Sprague, 2005). This emphasis on the margins includes not only those marginalised by gender but also by race, class, nation, sexuality, ability, and other areas of difference, and aims to challenge such marginalisation. Feminist researchers and action researchers desire not to simply produce a scholarship about those with whom we work, but also bring about change and/or social justice (Askins, 2018).

Researchers sit within the research process and are the constructors of knowledge and therefore bring their experiences and preconceptions into the process (Charmaz, 2014). The first part of this chapter focuses upon my positionality as a practitioner researcher including the role of academic voice. To avoid accusations of gross self-indulgence or romanticising the self (Atkinson, 1997; Atkinson & Silverman, 1997), the process of reflexivity will focus primarily on the values from a Christian community development practice and my positionality within the research process. The focus then turns to how the research was performed, the methodology, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, and research presentation.

2.1 Practitioner research

This research emerged out of questions about my community development practice within Durham Diocese in the North East of England. Practitioner researchers are concerned with inspiring new practices and developing theory (McNiff, 2017).

Practitioners research their own practices, which is different from most traditional forms of research where a professional researcher is doing research *on* rather than *with* practitioners. Traditional researchers tend to stand outside a situation and ask, 'What are those people over there doing?'...Action researchers however, are insider researchers. They see themselves as part of the context they are investigating, and ask, individually and collectively, 'Is my work going as we wish? How can we improve it where necessary?'...The kind of theory they produce is dynamic and developmental and communicated through their actions as well as their words. (McNiff, 2017: 10)

To ensure good practitioner research, Heikkinen et al. (2016) suggest five principles for validation. The first principle is the principle of historic continuity which recognises the historic evolution of the practice that requires the researcher to be well-informed of the traditions and history of their context. Chapter 3 explores the history of Christian social action, while section 4.1 in Chapter 4 pulls together historical links with Christian engagement with social enterprises. The second principle for validation is that of reflexivity which necessitates practical wisdom. This reflexivity is evident throughout the research through critical reflection and is introduced in this chapter which takes a step back, to reflect on the researcher and research process. The third principle concerns dialectics which recognises the social construction of knowledge and requires different voices and interpretations and values the co-creation of meaning/understanding. This principle has been achieved by engaging different voices from various locations in the United Kingdom. The research aimed to include ecumenical voices, however, my context is within the Church of England and consequently, the research reflects this bias. A limitation of this research is that, while it includes data from one Scottish social entrepreneur, it does not include data from Wales or Northern Ireland. Findings have been shared

and validated with participants. The principle of evocation means the research stimulates a person to think about things in a different way. This principle was evident from data gathered throughout the research process specifically as a new social enterprise develops (Chapter 6). Achieving this principle will materialise as the findings are shared. The final principle is workability which asks whether the research is useful, what the social consequences are and does the research result in change. As a community practitioner this principle, with its focus upon positive social change is particularly relevant. These five principles will be revisited in the conclusion as a reflective checklist to ask whether this has been good practitioner research.

It is the principle of dialectics and the principle of workability that are critically reflected upon through the consideration of the academic voice.

2.1.1 Academic voice

This research unapologetically positions itself in what Schön (1983) refers to as 'the swampy lowlands' of practice rather than the high ground occupied by intellectual elites, and aims to produce knowledge that is usable, relevant and accessible. Therefore, careful consideration must be paid to the role of voice within the research and this thesis. Voice is a conscious decision the researcher must take related to how they want to be heard by the reader (Humphrey et al., 2014). Central to this consideration is that if this research aims to make change, it must be heard and understood. Writing is not a neutral activity, it is a power and has the potential to create knowledge, manipulate, disarm, and destroy (Fleischman, 1998). The definition that Humphrey et al. (2014) adopt in relation to voice is particularly appropriate for my context.

A personal style that communicates the author's stance towards events reported and the author's relationship to the audience. (Humphrey et al., 2014: 111)

As a practitioner researcher the most valued audience is other practitioners within the field, including those who have helped to co-create this research. Action research aspires to be useful and to create

social change. Therefore, I have attempted to make my writing as accessible as possible, thus reducing barriers to engagement. This approach presents the dilemma of meeting the requirements of the gatekeepers of academic success, while trying to maintain a sense of identity (Mitchell, 2017). The conflict between usefulness and understandability is argued passionately and bluntly by Gloria Steinem in an interview with Cynthia Gorney.

These poor women in academia have to talk this silly language that nobody can understand in order to be accepted, they think. If I read the word “problematize” one more time, I’m going to vomit. If I hear people talking about “feminist praxis”—I mean, it’s *practice*, say *practice*. But I recognize the fact that we have this ridiculous system of tenure, that the whole thrust of academia is one that values education, in my opinion, in inverse ratio to its usefulness—and what you write in inverse relationship to its understandability. So I think the answer to it is to look with some compassion at the situation in which the women who are writing this gobbledygook find themselves and to say, “How can we solve this?”

Well, one way we can solve it is to get a better exchange going between activism and academia, so that the academics are putting their glorious intellectual powers to work on researching real problems. (Gorney, 1995: para. 5 & 6)

These reflections on academic writing are also personal. A diagnosis of dyslexia eighteen months into the research process, initiated deliberations upon the power and accessibility of academic writing, and my response to these issues. Dyslexia has been described as a gift (Davis & Braun, 2011) and within the research setting it provided opportunities. During my time at ‘Shildon Alive’ (my primary research site) dyslexia was a factor in breaking down barriers, especially where many of the participants were also dyslexic or admitted struggling with reading and writing. It enabled me to challenge the belief that further and higher education was only for the privileged, despite the local university’s reputation of exclusion and toxic attitudes (Parveen, 2020). However dyslexia has also been challenging, including for my writing confidence and understanding authorship (Kinder &

Elander, 2012) which has resulted in producing a vulnerable researcher (Ballamingie & Johnson, 2011).

Attention to language in writing is crucial to understanding power relations, privilege, and inequality in society (Paxton, 2012). As a key focus of this research is power, privilege and inequality, the process and writing of the research is just as important as the findings (Campbell & Wasco, 2000). This debate is also relevant to theology that must mediate between the discourse of faith and that of wider society in 'ways that are accessible and comprehensible to an ever more fragmented and sceptical body politic' (Graham, 2014: 237).

For the reasons of power, usability, and dyslexia, I have sought to embrace an accessible writing style because 'if our writings are not easily accessible to those who share our goals, we have failed' (Wolf, 1992: 11). My writing seeks to challenge the power of academic writing (Kenyon, 2020). Therefore, I am writing from the space from which I speak (Koobak & Thapar-Björkert, 2014) and in a manner that makes me visible to the reader (Mitchell, 2017).

2.2 Community development practitioner

I have engaged in this research as a practitioner researcher and a community development worker, and therefore it is important to reflect upon this practice and the impact this has on the research process. However, there is little consensus between activists, practitioners, policy makers and academics about what community development actually is, and consequently 'it is always historically situated, ideologically contested and a contextually specific set of practices' (Meade, Shaw & Banks, 2016: 6). Therefore, there arises inherent contradictions in anything calling itself community development (Mayo, 2011). Contradictions that should be seen as a creative dynamic to be expected and exploited rather than as a dilemma to be resolved (Shaw, 2011).

Community development is one form of the models of community work that encompasses different approaches including community action, community service delivery and community planning

(Popple, 1995). It is a growing activity for Christian communities in the United Kingdom (Dinham, 2007b).

Faith-based community development is a way of empowering communities to work for change. It springs from a holistic view of the community, which values and dignifies everyone. It focuses particularly on disadvantaged and excluded communities and groups, enabling people to develop skills and confidence, and participate actively in bringing about change.

(Ahmed, et al., 2006: para. 1)

The overarching purpose of community development is to promote social justice through a practice that places great emphasis upon participation and empowerment (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2011). These three core values are prominent within this research and consequently need deeper clarification.

2.2.1 Social Justice.

The high levels of poverty in communities in the North East is just one of the injustices witnessed in my practice. I align myself with critical community development that regards social problems not as misfortune but as injustice (Freire, 1996), a result of structural inequality (Butcher et al., 2007). This radical approach

is committed to the role of community work in achieving transformative change for social and environmental justice, and develops analysis and practice which moves beyond symptoms to the root causes of oppression. (Ledwith, 2011: xv)

‘Social justice is at the heart of this transformative practice yet is an ambiguous term – a “feel good” term that almost all can subscribe to’ (Piachaud, 2008: 33). In this context the notion of social justice is entwined with an understanding of the common good. The papal encyclical *Gaudium et spes* (1965) describes the common good as:

the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily. (Pope Paul, 1965: para. 26)

Central to a biblical understanding of the common good is a belief in human dignity, that every human being is infinitely valued and loved in the eyes of God. This is a recognition that:

every person is related to God before they are related to anything or anyone else; that God has defined who they are and who they can be by his own external purpose...This means that whenever I face another human being, I stand on holy ground when I encounter another person. (Williams, 2007: para.13)

The common good challenges us all to consider what it means to be human and whether we consider that as an individual pursuit or 'whether we believe that our humanity is constituted most profoundly by our relationships, such that our personal wellbeing includes reference to the fact of our sharing a common life together' (Bradstock, 2015: 27). The notion of common good founded in Catholic social teaching stresses that the good of each individual is deeply related to the good of others. Pope Francis has said that

The many situations of inequality, poverty and injustice, are signs not only of a profound lack of fraternity, but also of the absence of a culture of solidarity. New ideologies, characterised by rampant individualism, egocentrism and materialistic consumerism, weaken the social bonds, fuelling that 'throw away' mentality which leads to contempt for, and abandonment of, the weakest and those considered useless. (Pope Francis, 2014: para.5)

It is within this understanding of the common good that this section will look at three perspectives on justice relevant to this thesis, justice as fair distribution (Rawls, 1971), justice as freedom (Sen, 2006) and justice as the restoration of relationships (Cooper, 2020; Rieger, 2016).

Western liberal political philosophy primarily focused upon distributive justice, most notably John Rawls (1971) *A Theory of Justice*. Rawls summarised his general concept of social justice as:

All social primary goods – liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the social basis of self-respect – are to be distributed equally unless equal distribution of any, or all, of these goods is to the advantage of the least favoured (Rawls, 1971: 303).

Rawls focuses several principles of justice. Firstly, all people are entitled to an extensive set of basic liberties, these primary goods include income and wealth and the social basis of self-respect. Secondly, that an equality of opportunities should result in positions of responsibilities should be open to all. Finally, that an inequality of distribution of these primary goods must only be allowed when advantages to the worst off in sociality. His framework is one of justice as fairness, built upon a social contract tradition resulting in mutual advantage. Rawls attempts to construct a theory of justice by inviting participants to step away from their own particular viewpoint to consider what would be a fair way for people of different worldviews to cooperate. By doing this he claimed that conception of the principles of justice stood independently of any moral or religious views.

Amartya Sen (1999, 2009) rejected this utilitarian and resource-based concept of social justice arguing that Rawls's theory, among other things, was too abstract and unworkable. Sen's alternative theory of a just society is based upon the freedom people have to fulfil their potential as human beings, their real opportunities to do and to be what they have reason to value (Sen, 2009). The *Idea of Justice* frames it thus:

In contrast with the utility-based or resource-based lines of thinking, individual advantage is judged in the capability approach by a person's capability to do things he or she has reason to value. A person's advantage in terms of opportunities is judged to be lower than that of

another if she has less capability – less real opportunity – to achieve those things that she has reason to value. The focus here is on the freedom that a person actually has to do this or be that – things that he or she may value doing or being. Obviously the things we value most are particularly important for us to be able to achieve. But the idea of freedom also respects our being free to determine what we want, what we value and ultimately what we decide to choose. (Sen, 2009: 232)

Therefore, Sen develops a theory of justice that is not centred around redistribution but rather around freedom, ‘the freedom that we actually have to choose between different styles and ways of living’ (Sen, 2009: 227). While Sen has been reluctant to specify a list of capabilities believing it would automatically create a hierarchy, which Martha Nussbaum (2003) disagreed, proposing a list of 10 capabilities. These ten capabilities are: Life; Bodily health; Bodily integrity; Senses, imagination and thought; Emotions; Practical reason; Affiliation; Other species; Play; and Control over one’s environment.

The focus on human agency and dignity within a capability approach to justice can be vision of Christian human flourishing (Deneulin, 2010).

The church in Sen’s company allows for the empowerment of a people, as individuals and as communities, to establish priorities for themselves. The church becomes the watchdog that jealously guards the right for communities and peoples to exist in their uniqueness and to make decisions that help them enhance life within that community. It is important that each community sets its own agenda within their own terms. (Tenai, 2016: 9)

However, Sen’s approach to justice has been criticised for being too individualistic (Deneulin & Stewart, 2002), in that it focuses on what individuals and not groups can do and be, a criticism which is disputed (Robeyns, 2017).

According to Thia Cooper (2012; 2020), liberation theology has two central priorities, working with the powerless and action; and is therefore an important inclusion in this research. The root cause of injustice is the imbalance of power relations and the misuse of power between humans.

Injustice is any imbalance of power between human beings. To achieve justice requires right relationships between human beings. Justice requires change by all of us within and beyond economics. In order to achieve justice, humans have to act. The central goal or value of the struggle toward a new earth is justice. This new earth, with its goal of justice, will transform relations within community, so that each of us can have abundant life. (Cooper, 2020: 51)

Joerg Rieger (2009) asserts that the theology in Judeo-Christian religions is an important contribution to the debate about justice, as it builds upon the experience of the marginalised and powerless, discovering the Divine there. He believes that from the perspective of those most marginalised, justice might be redefined as being in solidarity with those who have been excluded from community and relationship. This notion of justice is most common in the texts of Old and New Testaments where justice has a particular concern for the restoration of relationships with the marginalised.

In this context, restoration of relationships with the marginalised is not simply a social issue or the moral consequence of faith: rather, the quality of faith itself, and the relationship with the divine are closely connected to the restoration of relations among the people, since the distortion in relations to others gets reproduced as distortion in relations to God and vice versa. (Rieger, 2009: 137)

Rieger's notion of justice reshapes the relationship between theology and economics in a number of ways that are relevant for this research. For example, in the way that it emerges from lived experiences, values productivity and focuses upon restoration of relationships and power imbalances.

The theories of social justice presented here each bring important considerations to this research. Do social enterprises help distributive justice? Do they allow the individuals to be free to develop their capabilities? Finally, do they provide spaces where relationships are restored, and power balances reshaped? This emphasis on the restoration of unequal relationships for a more just society lead us to the next values that shapes community development practice, that of participation and empowerment.

2.2.2 Participation

Participation, according to Saul Alinsky, is key for human dignity and success, and he argues:

To give people help, while denying them a significant part in the action, contributes nothing to the development of the individual. In the deepest sense it is not only giving but taking – taking their dignity. Denial of the opportunity for participation in the democracy. It will not work. (Alinsky, 1971: 129)

However, out of a growing understanding of the shortcomings of this top-down approach has emerged a discourse and practice of participation.

The broad aim of participatory development is to increase the involvement of socially and economically excluded marginalised people in decision making over their own lives (Guijt & Shah, 1998: 1).

A ladder of citizens' participation (Arnstein, 1969) is often adopted by community development practitioners (Butcher et al, 2007).

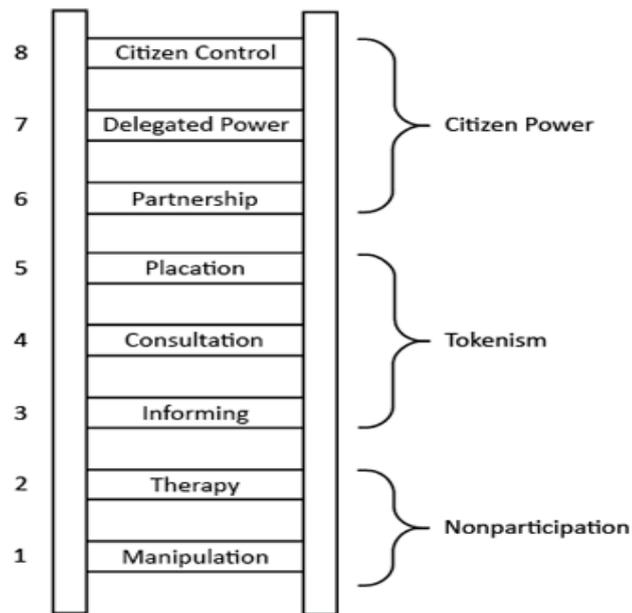


Figure 1. Ladder of Participation (Arnstein, 1969)

The history of community development practice can be mapped on this ladder from the exploitative practices that manipulated communities moving up towards a more participatory approach. I would argue that my practice in the North East aims for a partnership approach, for example working with mums to plan a holiday club in the community. However, in much of the church social action I witness partnership can be tokenistic as the projects are planned, delivered, and controlled by members of the church or project.

Participatory development aims to increase the involvement of marginalised people in decision making over their own lives. However, uncritically embracing the methods fails to recognise the power dynamics and that participation has the potential for tyranny (Cooke & Kothari, 2001).

Participation has therefore become an act of faith in development, something we believe in and rarely question. This act of faith is based upon three main tenets: that participation is intrinsically 'a good thing' (especially for the participants); that focus on 'getting the technique

right' is the principal way of ensuring the success of such approaches; and that considerations of power and politics on the whole should be avoided as diverse and obstructive. (Cleaver, 2001: 36)

Cooke and Kothari's (2001) edited collection: *Participation: The New Tyranny*, documents conversations between development practitioners about the potentially harmful and manipulative impact of participatory development. While not wanting to be labelled as anti-participation they urge a more critical exploration of the role of power within the discourse of participation.

Further critical engagement with a participatory discourse is between the state and community. Emejulu (2016) asserts that the participation discourse in Britain since 1992 is a tool for the ongoing neoliberal project of welfare retrenchment. Participation results in community development taking on the burden of service provision.

The value placed upon participation must be engaged with critically and while this research has aimed to be participatory, the power dynamics within the research context must be acknowledged.

2.2.3 Empowerment

Empowerment comes with the commitment to reshape power relationships and yet:

the term is used loosely, without regard to the variety of meanings and flavours of power that make it up, rendering it as a standardised and meaningless jargon instead of a subtle and nuanced word with deep implications for development policy and practice. (Chaudhuri, 2016: 121)

Feminists typically redefine power as empowerment or 'power to' (Yoder & Kahn, 1992). From this view, 'power is the ability or capacity to do things' (Norsworthy, McLaren & Waterfield, 2012: 62). Using this definition as a starting point helps us to recognise how access to power (or lack of access) accounts for the disadvantage, exclusion, and oppression of some groups over others.

An understanding of power is crucial not only within community development practice but also within the research process and will now be considered.

Lukes (1974) identifies three dimensions of power. Firstly, power over, as decision-making where the powerful can directly dictate the decisions of the less powerful. This dimension requires communities to organise or mobilise to build collective power to affect their will.

Secondly, those with power set an agenda which the less powerful operate and therefore crucial decisions may not get to the decision-making stage in the first place. This form of power can be recognised in community development practice where even the process of targeting certain communities as in need of interventions is in itself an expression of power (Cruikshank, 1999). During my first week in post, I visited the congregation in Easington Colliery in the East Durham Coalfields. When I asked them to describe their community, I was told that 'they come here, do stuff to us and leave'. They told a story of well-meaning local authority workers, agencies and charities who come 'to fix our community' but leave when finances or contracts end. This story was one I heard repeatedly. Influenced by deprivation indices, resources are targeted at communities like Easington Colliery but fail to include local people in the solutions (Greig et al., 2010).

The third dimension describes the situation where the powerless internalise and take for granted what is and what is not possible. This dimension can be understood through the writings of Gramsci (1986). Gramsci (1986) critiqued the assumptions that the ruling classes maintain power by force or coercion as far too simplistic. He focused attention upon the importance of the dominant ideologies that reinforce beliefs of what is 'natural' and 'given'. This 'hegemonic' power ensures dominant attitudes are internalised and accepted as common sense and allows the maintenance of the status quo. Hegemony is analysed as 'the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance but manages to win the active consent of those whom it rules' (Gramsci, 1986: 224).

A recent example of Lukes' third dimension of power has been the narrative surrounding austerity. Since the Thatcher administration of the 1980s, successive governments have pursued aggressive neoliberal agendas which have resulted in the UK being one of the most unequal societies in the western world (Equality Trust, 2017). Post-recession policies of austerity have resulted in a deepening of these divisions, creating particularly harsh living conditions for the economically marginalised (Cooper & Whyte, 2017; Dorling, 2017). Stigma has been used as a 'hegemonic' power that is important for this research. For Tyler, stigma is an 'inscriptive form of power which operates through the axis of race-class', whilst also being a 'mechanism of patriarchal power' (Tyler, 2020: 49). Stigma, according to Tyler, has been deliberately adopted by those in power to control socially undesirable groups of people and facilitate policies that maintain and deepen social inequalities, in this context, the implementation of austerity policies. This theme will be revisited in Chapter 3.5.1 as the role of the church in the stigmatisation of poverty is considered.

As noted above, we live in one of the most unequal societies in the Western world, where one fifth of the population (14 million people) live in poverty, and 1.5 million of them experienced destitution in 2017 (Dept Work and Pensions, 2020; Fitzpatrick et al., 2018). How do we hold this in tension with the notion of empowerment, the power of individuals to act?

The empowerment of the poor differs fundamentally from the empowerment of other social groups. For the ultimate aim of empowering the poor must be the eradication of poverty: an end to the poor, and not simply an acceptance into the social world from which they are frequently excluded. (Novak, 1996: 92)

Consequently, despite the significant rise in the empowerment discourse, we must engage with the notion critically (Humphries, 1996). While community action may have limited power over centralised decisions that are taken that impact poverty, the opportunity for individual empowerment 'opens up

the potential for collective political/citizenship strategic agency, which can in turn further empower both individuals and groups' (Lister, 2004: 174).

A main motivating factor behind the research is the need for church social action to be more focused upon social justice, empowerment, and participation. However, It is essential to engage with these discourses and practices critically. As a community development practitioner, it led me to question whether social enterprises could provide a model that upheld these values.

2.3 Personal positionality: feminism, faith, and hybridity

All research processes are a manifestation of power and therefore have political implications that demand the researcher studies the information they get, how they get it, and interpret it in the light of different effects of power (Charmaz & Mitchell, 1997: 210). Therefore, as part of the research process, it is important to reflect on how my presence in the field influenced and/or changed people and practices and equally how their presence influenced me, intentionally or otherwise (Fine, 1994). Sprague's (2016) critical perspective assumes that all knowledge is interested and therefore, we must acknowledge the self-interest within the research process, of both researcher and participants. The researcher therefore cannot be hidden from the research and Sprague calls for the researcher's voice to be present as part of a multivocal text arguing that a 'passive voice amounts to hiding the exercise of power' (Sprague, 2005: 24). Making the author's voice clear shows 'the researcher's involvement with the phenomena' (Charmaz & Mitchell, 1997: 210).

I have deliberately represented myself, the researcher, in the first person as 'a way of acknowledging that the voices of researchers and those whom we research are not the same yet are interconnected' (Gilgun, 2005: 259). While recognising that no methodology will completely diminish researcher power, the participant is not without their own power in the research process, for example the power to participate (Sprague, 2016). I have adopted two tools to reflect upon my positionality within the research: Hyphen-Spaces (Fine, 1994) and a heuristic (Pavia, 2015).

Fine argues that a researcher's work is in the hyphen between the self – other (researcher - respondents) and thus we need to study the hyphen (working the hyphen) to explore 'how we are in relation to the context we study and with our informant, understanding that we are all multiple in those relationships' (Fine, 1994: 13). Building upon Fine's work, Cunliffe and Karunanayake (2013) suggest four hyphen-spaces that represent points of reflection in the participant – researcher relationships; namely insider-outsider, sameness-difference, engagement–distance and political activism–active neutrality. Houtbeckers (2017) introduced a fifth hyphen-space while working as an ethnographer in a social enterprise, that of hope-hopelessness. I will now seek to apply this aggregated hyphen-space model of critical research into my own research and reflection process. The table below presents this application in my own words.

<p>Insiderness–Outsiderness: Is the researcher indigenous to the community being studied? Does the researcher have an ongoing role in this research site or work primarily outside the site? Do the respondents perceive the researcher as one of us? Does the researcher feel at home within the research site?</p>	<p>I have lived in the North East for 16 years and am married to a North Easterner who was brought up in a large mining village. I was not indigenous to any of the communities being studied. I have an ongoing relationship with the research site in Durham Diocese although would not be regarded as ‘one of us’, I would hope to be seen as a trusted colleague through my association with Durham Diocese and the Church Urban Fund.</p>
<p>Sameness-Difference: Is the researcher similar to the respondents in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, cultural language, meaning, social values identity, etc?</p>	<p>I identify as a white, middle-class, heterosexual, Christian woman in her mid-fifties. This positions me similarly to many of the participants in terms of religion, ethnicity and cultural language. Born in Nottingham, my accent and background make me different and my Midlands accent has been described as ‘posh’.</p>
<p>Political Activism-Active Neutrality: Is the researcher involved in agendas of respondents? Does the researcher intervene and/or play an active role in the struggles of respondents? Is the researcher orientated towards social/organisational change or political action?</p>	<p>The values I have adopted are ones of social justice and equality, anti-discrimination, community empowerment, collective action and working and learning together. I am an active community organiser in the North East and have worked on issues including the Real Living Wage campaign.</p>
<p>Engagement-Distance: Is the researcher engaged with participants in their activities? To what degree is the researcher emotionally involved? What part do respondents play in generating knowledge? Are any elements of the research co-created between the researcher and respondent?</p>	<p>By adopting an action research methodology, I am intending to engage with participants in the research field as they work with me to generate knowledge as a collaborative approach. As I care deeply about the research field, the challenge is to remain conscious and reflexive in knowing how my involvement or emotions influence the data collected and to be accountable to this.</p>
<p>Hope-Hopelessness: Is the researcher hopeful about the opportunities that arise in the research field? Do they believe that the social enterprise can make the change required?</p>	<p>I have witnessed through the research many positive stories of social enterprises, so my starting point is one of hopefulness. I have also seen the capacity, capability and commitment needed to ensure the success of these enterprises and am less hopeful, knowing the reality of the church in the North East, that it is a suitable model.</p>

Table 1. Multiple Researcher-Respondent Identifiers (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013; Houtbeckers, 2017)

2.3.1 Religious positionality

All arguments in favour of the legitimacy of my struggle for a more people-oriented society have their deepest roots in my faith. It sustains me, motivates me, challenges me, and it has never allowed me to say, 'Stop, settle down, things are as they are'. (Freire, 1997: 104)

Over the past few years there has been growing inclination among development circles towards giving greater importance to religion in shaping people's values (Deneulin & Rakodi, 2011). This has resulted in criticism of development practitioners and academics for failing to analyse their ontological assumptions (Atif, 2014), alongside a growing trend within social sciences to an increased openness to and positive appreciation of spirituality and religion (Bennet, Graham & Pattison, 2018). This has led to calls for researchers to declare their theological presuppositions and objectives (Ward, 2012).

Denning, Scriven & Slatter (2020) highlight reasons that participatory researchers should pay greater attention to faith positionalities; arguing that they influence how our research is developed, conducted, and concluded, and that they shape our roles and relationships with research participants. Finally, they acknowledge that fieldwork shapes and changes the fluid and multifaceted nature of faith positionality and while being a researcher with faith is complex they argue that faith positionality is a helpful dimension of research rather than a limiting one, and that 'all cultural, social and historical geographical researchers should reflect upon their faith positionality' (Denning et al., 2020: 1).

Having had no previous theological education, I am engaging in this research as an ordinary theologian (Astley, 2002). It is important that theologising is not only thought of as applicable to a minority of Christians, usually seen as the intellectual elite (Sykes, 1983). Laurie Green encourages the theological competence of all the faithful doing theology in his work on 'doing theology,' affirms

the theological competence of all the faithful and identifies the role of the person he calls the 'conventional theologian' as articulating Biblical and theological resonances, but neither initiating nor censoring the local theologians (Green, 2009).

The process of describing oneself as 'Christian' is often misleading and confusing (Day, 2011) and a lack of precedent results in scholars failing to set out their religious positionality (Pavia, 2015). Researchers who have set out their religious positionality have adopted a mixed method of journaling, autoethnography, and spiritual life writing to assist their scrutiny (Walton, 2014). I have engaged with Pavia's (2015) heuristic as a reflective tool for this research. The table below is my interpretation and application of this.

Stage of research		
Ethical issues/ principles	Researcher's religious positionality	I attend an Anglo-Catholic church that aims to be inclusive. The Church of England's mark of mission that I most closely align with is 'to seek to transform unjust structures of society' rather than 'to respond to human need by loving service' (Anglican Communion Office, 2020).
Primary research	How do my experiences with faith/religion and my attitude to faith/religion affect my purpose and motivation for conducting this research?	The key values in my community development practice are participation, empowerment, and reciprocity stemming from my belief in equality (Genesis 1: 27), giftedness (Romans 12: 3-8), and relationality (John 15: 15). These beliefs were influential in motivating me to ask whether social enterprises are a model of social change that is more closely aligned to my beliefs.
Research design and approval	How do my experiences with faith/religion and my attitude to faith/religion affect my recruitment of participants?	I work for a network of community development officers employed through the Church Urban Fund. My networks are ecumenical and interfaith, working with people of all faiths and none. While aiming for an ecumenical sample of participants the research is bias towards my position within the Church of England.
Data analysis and collection	How do my experiences with faith/religion and my attitude to faith/religion affect my identification with and presentation of participants?	The values of empowerment and participation aligned to my faith (and my professional identity as a community development worker) affects my identification and representations of partnerships.
Writing up	How do my experiences with faith/religion and my attitude to faith/religion affect what I choose to include and exclude in my final presentation of data?	My role affiliates me closely with the Church of England in Durham Diocese, the Church Urban Fund and William Temple Foundation. This network excludes other Christian social outreach networks in the UK.

Table 2. A heuristic for encouraging reflection of religious positionality (Pavia, 2015)

The values and beliefs I bring to the research setting from my community development practice and my Christian faith influence the questions being asked (why they are being asked and for whom?) and the methodology adopted. Reflecting critically upon these and making them visible will allow a deeper engagement with the knowledge produced. This research adopts a form of Christian realism that engages with non-theological disciplines and empirical research, and critically avoids any form of religious imperialism ‘that seeks to pre-empt the process of exploration and discovery that should constitute the development of faith-based responses to current social economic and political challenges’ (Baker et al., 2015: 248). It is a theology that mediates between the discourse of faith and that of wider society in ‘ways that are accessible and comprehensible to an ever more fragmented and sceptical body politic’ (Graham, 2014: 237).

2.4 A grounded theory and action research methodology

A qualitative methodology was employed as the appropriate means to understand the complex realities that exist within a particular context, allowing the researcher to 'study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998: 2). This interpretivist, naturalistic approach is for some the only way to address many of the questions within an entrepreneurial field (Gartner & Birley, 2002).

My research employed numerous data gathering strategies influenced by community development practice. Key factors determining a methodology were that it should aim to use a 'bottom-up' inductive approach, be collaborative, and develop practical knowledge for democratic social change. A combination of constructivist grounded theory methodology and action research encompassed these aims. Rand (2013) argues that combining grounded theory and action research is particularly useful within professional research as they share a number of significant characteristics. These include turning personal understanding into shared knowledge, being pragmatically orientated, and enabling the bridge between action and learning to be explored.

Grounded theory is a method of qualitative inquiry that sees researchers developing inductive theoretical analysis from their data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Further data collection then tests and retest these theories. The research practice consists of gathering data, coding, categorising, comparing, theoretically sampling and developing core categories to generate theory.

Kathy Charmaz (2014) developed grounded theory and chose the term constructivist 'to acknowledge subjectivity and the researchers in the construction and interpretation of data' (Charmaz, 2014: 14).

If we... start with the assumption that social reality is multiple, processual and constructed, then we must take the researcher's position, privileges, perception and interactions into account as an inherent part of the research reality. (Charmaz. 2014: 13)

The core principle of constructivist grounded theory is that humans actively construct new knowledge, and that therefore this participatory worldview can provide research that aims to solve problems – i.e., action research.

Action research is an umbrella term which encompasses a variety of knowledge fields, but at its core is a reflective approach in which knowledge is generated in a participatory manner to solve social problems and provide social development. It is:

...development-orientated learning through collaborative engagement with real problems based on questioning and insight and critical reflective thinking. (Rand, 2011: 42)

Researchers employing action research share a commitment to democratic social change. They start not with a theory but with a problem and aim to 'transcend mere knowledge generation to include personal and professional growth and organisational and community empowerment' (Herr & Anderson, 2005: 1). The working definition of action research by Reason and Bradbury (2008) is

Action research is a participatory process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (Reason & Bradbury, 2008: 5)

This combination of action, reflection, theory and practice is appropriate for this context as the research aims to work collaboratively to support communities to flourish.

It has been argued that working with participants should require an ethics of reciprocity, an ongoing process of exchange with the aim of establishing and maintaining equality between parties and the underlying virtues of mutual respect and trust, accountability, reflexivity and dialogue (Maiter et al.,

2008). Recalling the different modes of participation in research articulated by Biggs (1989), the mode of participation engaged in this instance lies between collaborative and consultative. This model has clear synergies with Arnstein's 'ladder of participation' introduced in relation to community development in Chapter 2.1.2.

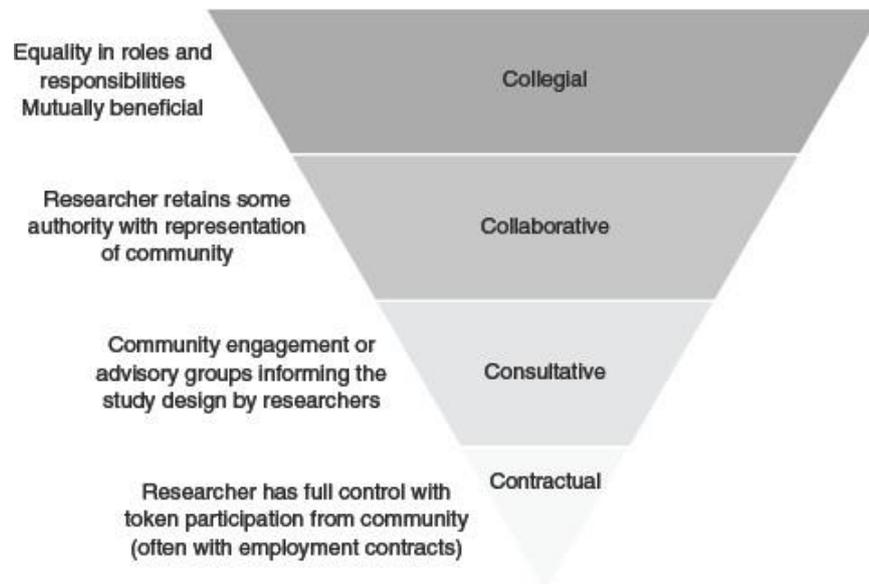


Figure 2. Modes of Participation (Biggs, 1989)

Conscious of the power dynamics associated with participatory working (Cooke & Kothari, 2001), the ethics of this approach are explored in Chapter 2.7.

The methodological approaches embraced in this research are cyclical and therefore there is not necessarily a straight line between theory and practice (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). Hayes (2000) points out that grounded theory research isn't simply a process of looking at the data and developing a theory from it but rather, it is a:

cyclical process in which theoretical insights emerge or are discovered in the data. Those insights are then tested to see how they can make sense of the other parts of the data, which in turn produce their own theoretical insights which are then tested again against the data, and so on. (Hayes, 2000: 184)

This spiralling process can also be witnessed in action research and represents Kolb's Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) of 'observe – reflect – act – evaluate – modify – move in new direction'. The spiral which appears to consistently move forwards, is not, however, necessarily the best way of depicting the research process, which in practice is often messier. Such representations can be too neat compared with the reality of professional practice; often in practice, the stages overlap or there is a movement backwards and forwards.

Action research is particularly relevant to this research as it has been recognised as a valuable approach in the context of social entrepreneurship as it allows multiple stakeholders, perspectives, and opinions to be studied alongside an evaluation of the economic, social, and cultural impact of the enterprise (Tasker, Westberg & Seymour, 2010). The approach has also been developed by theologians to allow the democratisation of theology as it is shaped by practitioners (Cameron et al., 2010).

While data relating to beliefs and values was collected throughout the whole of the research process, a specific event was arranged to allow practitioners to reflect and to talk about God in their practice (Cameron et al., 2010). The event brought together nineteen Christian social entrepreneurs from Scotland and England in Sunderland in November 2019 (Appendix 1). The format of the event was influenced by Cameron et al.'s (2010) methodology that combines practical theology and action research in the form of Theological Action Research (TAR). This research methodology brings the theological voices into conversation.

Theological Action Research is, at its heart, a way of bringing the 'ordinary' voices of life and faith into conversation with other theological voices, so that a wider conversation can be entered into. It is in this *conversation* between biblical and church traditions, faith life and experience, and diverse experience that we can, together, discern what the Spirit is saying to the churches. (Watkins, 2019: para. 3)

The interactive and participatory approach uses conversations about practice to reveal the theology. There are limitations to this methodology which may require supplementary methods for engagement as Swinton and Mowat (2006) acknowledge in their participatory research with people with learning disabilities. Cameron et al. (2010) suggest that TAR benefits from the involvement of formal theologians, theological educators and the theologically trained as part of the research team. However, 'their participation is not as experts but as participants in the conversation' (Cameron et al., 2010: 76). This research consulted with formal theologians and a practical theologian as participants of the practitioner event. They were asked to summarise and reflect back at the end of the event as it was agreed that having intellectual elites contributing too early could impact data collection (Schön, 1983).

As an ordinary theologian I have intentionally listened to and valued the voices of other ordinary theologians and taken seriously 'the theology and theologising of Christians who have received little or no theological education of a scholarly academic or systematic kind' (Astley, 2002: 56). Attempting to understand lay beliefs through their 'God-talk' (Astley & Francis, 2013) democratises theology through 'the work of the people' (Graham et al., 2005: 3) and upholds the stance of liberation theology that every person can be a theologian as there 'is present in all believers – and more so in every Christian community – a rough outline of a theology' (Gutierrez, 1974: 3). This grounded approach to developing theology that emerges from conversations and practice is to be encouraged (Stevens, 2016; 2017).

The emerging theological themes gathered throughout the research process have been brought into conversation with other relevant theological voices. Cameron et al., (2010) propose that developing theology entails bringing four theological voices into dialogue. The first is the 'normative' voice found in the theological canon. Secondly, the 'formal' theological voice developed from theologians who have studied and written about the tradition. Thirdly, the 'espoused' theology which expresses what the group says it believes although it should be noted that the espoused practice is often what the

practitioner ‘believes’ they are doing and may not reflect ‘actual’ practice (Cameron et al., 2010). Finally, an ‘operant’ theology derived from reflection on the practice. These four voices are overlapping and interrelated, not discrete and in later iteration of the model Watkins (2020) adapts the model to reflect their interrelatedness.

These four voices are not discrete, separate from one another We can never hear one voice without their being echoes of the other three (Cameron, 2013:54).

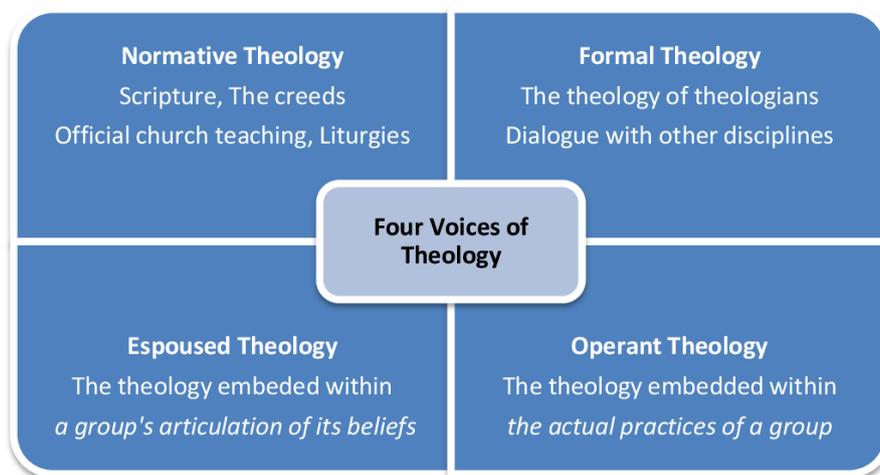


Figure 3. The Four Voices of Theology (Cameron et al., 2010)

The methodologies adopted have been influenced by the intersection of my community development practice and the beliefs and values that arise from my Christian faith. They place importance on the power of the voices of individuals and communities with which I work, encourage participation and collaboration to produce the knowledge presented, and reflect the active approach of the communities who have contributed to this research. They reflect the power of the voices of individuals and communities I work with.

2.5 Data collection

Data was collected from participants chosen because of their significance to the research focus. Charmaz (2014) suggests that theoretical sampling is best used when some key concepts have been discovered. The nature of the link between theory and sampling is set out by Jennifer Mason:

Theoretical sampling means selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your research questions, your theoretical position...and most importantly the explanation or account which you are developing. Theoretical sampling is concerned with constructing a sample...which is meaningful theoretically, because it builds in certain characteristics or criteria which help to develop or test your theory and explanation. (Mason, 1996: 93-94)

There are obvious omissions from this research sample; voices and practices I have failed to engage with. As stated, the sample is ecumenical but focused upon the Church of England, where I work and worship, and does not include participants from Wales or Northern Ireland. Further research to explore points of convergence/divergence from the findings of this research are needed.

In July 2019, data collection began with informal in-depth interviews with established Christian social entrepreneurs, two in London, one in Birmingham and one in County Durham. An eight-month ethnographic study in a project in County Durham provided deep data collection during a transition to developing a social enterprise. Two focus groups, one in Listen Threads and the other at Shildon Alive were also conducted. In November 2019, an event in Sunderland brought together nineteen Christian social entrepreneurs to reflect upon the belief and values underlying the creation of social enterprises.

The research plan was to visit four further established Christian social enterprises, to retest the themes and deepen the data. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions this was not possible. Therefore, three online interviews were conducted with Christian social entrepreneurs in Milton Keynes, Birmingham Cumbria. The final interview took place in Sunderland when restrictions were lifted.

2.5.1 Open ended, in-depth interviews

Intensive qualitative interviewing fits grounded theory methods well because they are both

open-ended yet directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet unrestrictive. Researchers adopt intensive interviewing precisely because it facilitates conductive and open-ended, in-depth exploration of an area in which the interviewee has substantial experience. (Charmaz, 2014: 85)

Values of empowerment and participation sat uncomfortably with the 'pseudo-conversation' characteristic of mainstream interviewing practices, which feminist researchers view as masculine in their emphasis upon detachment and control (Oakley, 1981). These power dynamics have been restructured by feminist scholars through disclosure, where both the participant and the researcher share information about their identities or experiences (Aitken & Burman, 1999; Oakley, 1988). Other feminists have argued that increased disclosure and intimacy during the research relationship may be exploitative because the researcher ultimately takes the participants' stories for use as data under the guise of a more informal conversation (Stacey, 1988). Furthermore, the researcher tends to have more power than the participant over which identities to disclose and which to keep hidden, and thus she or he can continue to hide behind the professional researcher identity (Aitken & Burman, 1999). Interviews were conducted in a relaxed atmosphere; permission to record the interviews was requested before the meeting. Personal information about my background and my interest in the research was disclosed at the beginning of the interview to help build rapport (Oakley, 1988). The only prepared interview question was to ask participants to tell me the story of how their social enterprise emerged. The interviews took between thirty minutes and an hour, were recorded using a digital recorder and backed up with field notes and a research diary.

This research attempted to capture my participants realities as fully as possible by 'letting research participants speak for themselves' (Lincoln et al, 2011: 123).

2.5.2 Focus groups

Focus groups are useful in assessing the attitudes, feelings and experiences of groups who have been marginalised or silenced within society (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007). The dynamic that develops in a focus group is commonly termed the 'group effect' (Morgan, 1996). This 'group effect' can open up discussions around sensitive areas producing discussion and debate that may help to challenge and denaturalize assumptions. The negative side of group dynamics is that minority voices may be silenced by the majority. Madriz (2000) found that among low income women and women of colour, focus group approaches and collective testimonies foster more speaking up than do individualistic methods such as interview formats.

Three focus group settings were used to gather data during this research.²

1. A small group of young girls at 'Listen Threads' shared their experiences of the social enterprise using visual methods. I was given strict instructions that it had to be fun as other researchers had come in 'and asked us about our feelings which was boring'. Using large pictures, we looked at the interests, practical skills and knowledge they had developed through engagement with 'Listen Threads'. We then considered how these assets could be useful in the future (Appendix 2).
2. As part of the ethnographic study at 'Shildon Alive', a group of thirty volunteers and staff at 'Shildon Alive' reflected on what had gone well, what could have gone better and their hopes and fears for the following year.
3. The final focus group was an event I arranged in Sunderland. The event brought together a group of nineteen Christian social entrepreneurs from Scotland and England. The format of the event was influenced by Cameron et al.'s (2010) methodology combining practical theology and action research in the form of Theological Action Research (for a detailed description see Chapter 9).

² A further focus group to bring participants together to reflect upon the findings of the research was postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

2.5.3 Ethnographic study

These data gathered from the interviews and focused groups required thicker description (Geertz, 2002). Therefore a eight month ethnographic study began in August 2019 enabling exploration of the 'micro-truths of the social entrepreneurship experience in ways which account for the nuanced influence of organisational and institutional context' (Newth, 2018: 684). Ethnography is an approach to social science fieldwork and writing which 'draws upon the close observation of and involvement with people in a particular social setting and relates the words spoken and the practices observed or experienced to the overall cultural framework within which they occurred' (Watson, 2011: 205-206). Further complementary methods were adopted such as interviews and focus groups in order to build a deep situational understanding (Watson, 2011).

Over recent years, there has been a call for more use of ethnography within social enterprises (Newth, 2018) to provide deeper, contextual data in a field that has largely been dominated by positivist research (Hindle, 2004). Researchers, with notable exceptions, have settled upon interview-based inquiries and qualitative, case-based explorative research designs (Sassmannshausen & Volkmann, 2016).

Mauksch et al. (2017) highlight that ethnography can help us to disentangle some of the dichotomies that exist within social enterprises. Firstly, between the dual purpose of social mission and financial sustainability (Doherty et al., 2014) which can result in blended values (Nicholls, 2009). Secondly, between the social enterprise discourse and the day-to-day practices. Social enterprises are presented as an ideal approach to solving social problems and this is affirmed by policy makers and academics (Dey & Steyaert, 2010). Yet a constant thread that runs through ethnographic research is that there is a 'notorious gap between these dominant discourses of social enterprise and the way in which these discourses are appropriated and reproduced in practice' (Mauksch et al., 2017: 118). Thirdly, the account of individuals versus collective representation. Early academic debates focused on documentation of 'great men' (Spear, 2006) and then turned to narratives of sheer hard work by dedicated individuals (Amin, 2009), with the collective response being side-lined.

Ethnography is also an opportunity for research to facilitate dialogue through participation and reinforcing that ‘one should learn while doing it – and so should the researcher’ (Mauksch et al., 2017:122). Hill, O’Connor & Baker (2017) assert that volunteer ethnography, while having its own challenges, allows appreciation of a context in a way no other method does, and should therefore be the norm.

My engagement as a volunteer at the community project ‘Shildon Alive’ aimed to bring reciprocity into the research relationship (Maiter et al., 2008), and allowed me to both carry out data gathering and also give back to the project (Hill, O’Connor & Baker, 2017). On average, I spent one day a week volunteering, in whatever capacity was required. The project had just rented new properties which were to be developed into a community supermarket and take-away, so initial work and later my roles included working on the till, helping in the kitchen with washing up and keeping the shop stocked. Volunteering began in August 2019 and ended abruptly in March 2020 when COVID-19 restrictions were put in place. I was open about my role as a volunteer researcher and was often introduced as ‘Val who’s doing some research about our project’. Visitors may have been unaware of my researcher status, which created ethical challenges (see Chapter 2.7).

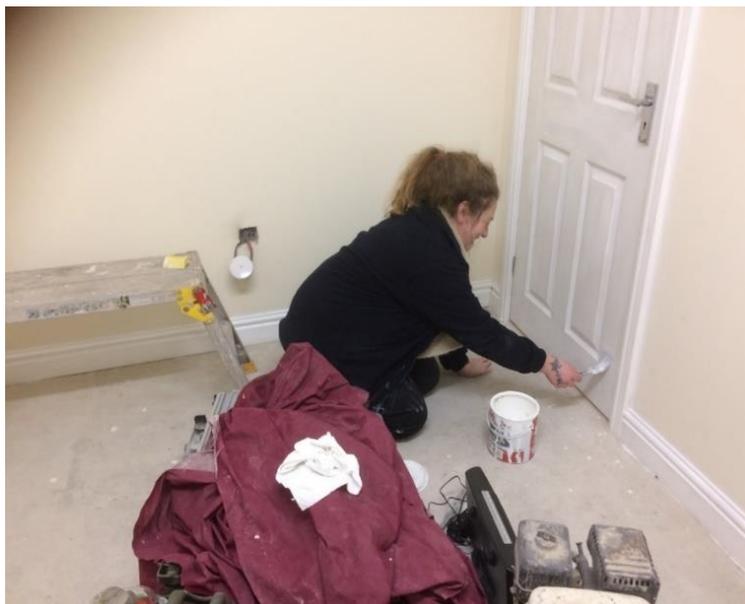


Figure 4. Volunteering allowed relationships to develop

Participating as an insider-outsider researcher allowed an experiential knowing through direct encounter and was inclusive of emotions, feelings and imagination (Langmead, 2017). I felt like one of the team and enjoyed the relationships and companionships this allowed (Gilmore & Kenny, 2015). Kayleigh Garthwaite (2016c) describes having to negotiate anxieties, emotions and attachments while working in a foodbank in Stockton-on-Tees. This became particularly challenging during lockdown, when staff and volunteers at 'Shildon Alive', to whom I felt attached, contracted the virus. The staff were still supporting the community in Shildon but due to lockdown restrictions I was unable to volunteer outside my community.

2.6 Data analysis

The process of analysing data is one of the most important and difficult in the research process as it is the 'pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data' (Charmaz, 2014: 113).

For the grounded researcher, the process of collecting and analysing data runs in parallel, as opposed to traditional research methods where data is collected and followed by analysis. (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Through a process of coding as data is collected, interpretive labels are assigned to concepts, ideas, constructs, or themes that arise from the data (Saldaña, 2016).

The process of coding 'generates the bones of your analysis. ...[I]ntegration will assemble those bones into a working skeleton' (Charmaz, 2014: 113). Saldaña (2016) lists no fewer than 40 different approaches to coding, and highlights that there is no one recognised best practice in coding 'but as each qualitative study is unique so the analytical approach used will also be unique'.

The data gathered throughout this research was initially coded line by line using a combination of Vivo Coding, Process Coding, and/or Values Coding to attune myself to participant perspectives and

actions. Vivo coding utilizes direct quotes from participants rather than the researcher's interpretation and was the primary coding method adopted during the interview stage. Values Coding highlights the values, beliefs and attitudes that are held by participants. This approach to coding was particularly important in this research as the Christian beliefs, values and attitudes underpinning the social enterprises began to emerge. Process, or action coding notes the action in the data. Conceptual action such as experimenting, collaborating and reflecting were important to capture through process coding.

Line-by-line examination of the transcripts and field notes was conducted to promote a more trustworthy analysis: Initially this was carried out through examination of the written transcripts (for example coding Appendix 3).

Concerns that my dyslexia would negatively impact this critical stage of the research required the inclusion of additional processes. A decision was taken not to use auto coding as it did not remove the dependency upon the written word. Rather a process of 'oral coding' was adopted (Bernauer, 2015). Audio recordings were listened to repeatedly over several days to gain intimate knowledge of their contents, to extract significant quotes, and to document emergent codes, themes, and concepts.

After this initial coding, a process of focused coding then searches for the most frequent or significant codes to develop the most salient categories in the data corpus and 'requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense' (Charmaz, 2014: 138). The categories that emerge were then revisited in later learning cycles. This iterative process between data and theory involved a constant revisiting of themes that had emerged from previous learning cycles and then bringing these themes into conversation with existing literature. Eventually the final theory was developed.

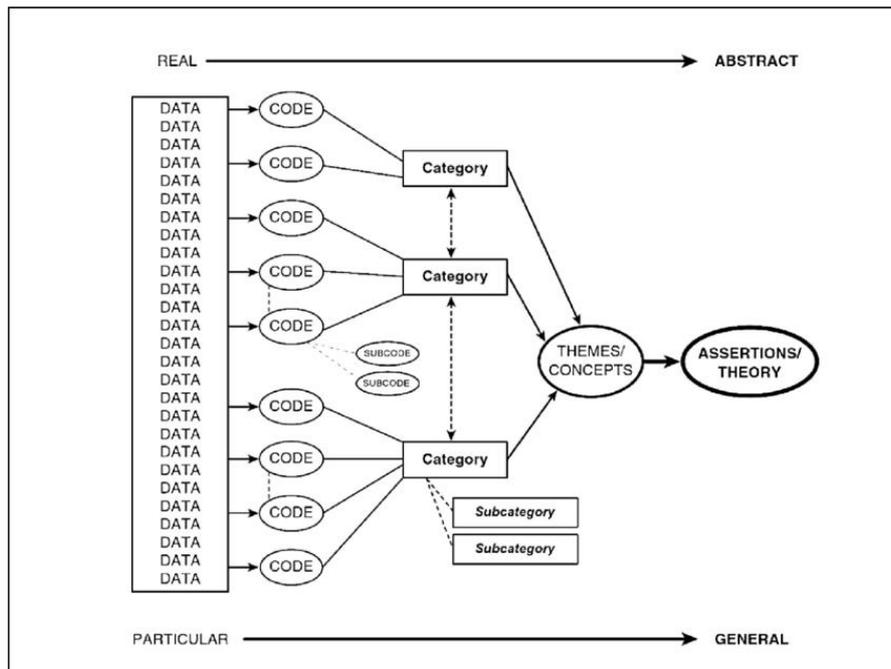


Figure 5. Streamlined code to theory model (Salanda, 2016)

A constructivist grounded methodology emphasises reflexivity, therefore the reflections and insights captured form part of the coding process. This reflective process involves:

...thinking critically about what you are doing and why, confronting and often challenging your own assumptions, and recognizing the extent to which your thoughts, actions and decisions shape how you research and what you see. (Mason, 2002: 5)

The writing of memos assists the process of working towards a solution and reflections on 'your coding processes and code choices; how the process of inquiry is taking shape; and the emergent patterns, categories and subcategories, themes, and concepts in the data – all possibly leading toward theory' (Saldaña, 2016: 44) (Appendix 4).

2.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations traditionally cover areas such as maintaining integrity and doing no harm to individuals at all stages of the research process, the rights of participants to information, privacy and anonymity, data storage and disposal.

An approach of 'everyday ethics' was adopted, which stresses the situational nature of ethics, with a focus upon qualities of character and responsibilities attached to particular relationships (Banks et al., 2013). A philosophy of reciprocity and empowerment were also key to ethical considerations in the research. Sarah Maiter et al. (2008) argues that the notion of reciprocity, the ongoing process of exchange with the aim of establishing and maintaining equality between the researcher and researched, can provide a guide to the ethical practices of community-based participatory action research. This requires investment in establishing and maintaining relationships, analysis of power and self-interest.

Durham Community Research Team (2011) identified six broad themes relating to ethical challenges in Community Based Participatory Research which provided a reflective tool that I was able to use throughout the research.

1. *Partnership, collaboration, and power.* As all participatory research involves collaboration, attention must be paid to how power is distributed, and control exerted. My role within the diocese gave me privileged access to community projects and my academic status added to this power. During the ethnographic research, at 'Shildon Alive', I intentionally scheduled time to build relationships while chopping vegetables, washing the floors, and working on the till. This time helped me to feel part of the team, built trust and allowed me to explore the questions that were important to the volunteers and employees.
2. *Blurring the boundaries between researcher and researched, academic and activist.* My research relationship with staff and volunteers at Shildon Alive and role as a researcher had the potential to be blurred with my role as a community development worker in the diocese.

To mitigate this, my work colleagues supported the staff and volunteers with issues outside of the research remit.

3. *Community rights, conflict, and democratic representation.* While most ethical codes focus upon the rights of individual subjects, community research raises the challenges of extending these rights. Defining the community and who represents their interests creates issues (Wallwork, 2003). In the case of the ethnographic research the community was defined by those working, volunteering, and visiting the social enterprise.
4. *Ownership and dissemination of data, findings, and publication.* Feminist researchers have highlighted the importance of the co-production of knowledge. Communities, not individuals, produce knowledge and it is vital to recognise the numerous participants in this knowledge production. Kye Askins (2018) uses the accreditation 'et al' in her work.³ The data collected by this research is available for the use of the participants. All participants were invited to comment on their own transcript and clarify information prior to publication (Sprague, 2005). They were not given access to other participants data.
5. *Anonymity, privacy and confidentiality.* All participants received verbal and written information sheets covering data collection, storage and disposal (Appendix 5). Consent forms were read through with participants and signed (Appendix 6).⁴ Considering that a philosophy of reciprocity lies at the heart of this project, it was important to discuss anonymity with the participants. There is a presumption - widely held in the culture of research - that good ethical practice requires automatic anonymity for participants (see British Sociology Association, 2002). Anonymity prevents genuinely acknowledging the collaborative research process and limits the research impact in developing networks.

Developing such an approach opposes the 'ethical hypochondria' characterising qualitative research culture, where 'automatic anonymity' is limiting the potential of research to travel, connect people and engage the public imagination. (Sinha & Back, 2014: 473)

³ My preference would be to use 'et al' for this thesis.

⁴ Easy-read format forms were used for all participants.

Participants were assured that they would have access to their own data before publication (excluding other participants data) and there was universal agreement that individuals and organisations could be named. Written and verbal communications clarified that participants were under no pressure to take part in the research or to continue with the process.

During the ethnographic study it was shared amongst the staff, volunteers and regular visitors to the project that I was conducting research. However not every visitor to the takeaway and shop were aware. No data was collected from these visitors.

6. *Institutional ethical review process.* This research was granted ethical approval from Goldsmiths, University of London in 2019. This was achieved despite the challenges of moulding the participatory research design into the required ethical format (Manzo & Brightbill, 2007).

The ethical considerations are a continual process of everyday ethics which require a high degree of reflexivity throughout the research process, not simply an action to achieve institutional clearance.

2.8 Presenting the research

The traditional structure of a post-graduate thesis (being a literature review, methodology, research design, findings, and conclusion) has historically been based on the 'structural template of positivism' (Stapleton & Taylor, 2004). This positivist approach is challenged by action researchers who call for creation of new practices of thesis representation that more accurately reflect the research process (Davis, 2007). Action and ground-fed research is a continuous cycle in which the learning is not only situated at the end of the process, rather it emerges throughout. It is not a linear process that can be tightly designed in advance because action research:

is not just research which we hope will be followed by action! It is action which is researched, engaged and re-researched, within the research process by participants. (Wadsworth, 1998: 9).

My interest in social enterprise was initiated by observations and conversations within my community development practice in Durham diocese. As a grounded researcher, bracketing out all previous knowledge on the research topic is impossible (Glaser, 2016), as is the absurdity of trying to be a 'theoretical virgin' (Clarke, 2005: 13). Charmaz's constructivist view (2014) is that a literature review can be done first if one's stance is critical, reflective and grounded in reflexivity. However, in line with grounded theory, the literature review was developed in response to the data collected. The iterative connections between data and theory involved a constant revisiting of themes that had emerged from previous learning cycles and then bringing these themes into conversation with existing literature.

Hence, action research demands alternative ways to account for the fact that it is a continuously changing enquiry (Dick, 1993). A method of presentation has therefore been adopted for this thesis which allows the patchwork and messy nature of the process to be accurately represented. Davis (2007) takes a narrative approach to presenting her research, in which she highlights three action cycles and interweaves the literature review and data analysis and interpretation. This research consists of five learning cycles influenced by a Critical Community Development framework developed by Butcher et al. (2007) containing four interlocking concepts: critical consciousness, critical theorizing, critical action, and critical reflection.

The following table, adapted from Davis (2007), sets out the learning cycles in this grounded action research and forms the framework for the presentation of this thesis. I felt it was valuable to include the first two learning cycles as they demonstrate the beginnings of a critical reflection on Christian social action and the critical theorising of new approaches (these have been represented in blue font). However, no data was collected in these learning cycles and it is important to note that research commenced with data collection in the third cycle.

Learning cycle	Knowledge development	Research techniques	Related literature review	Reflections/questions emerging from action research cycle
1. Critique of church social action	2015 onwards, work as a Community Development worker in Durham Diocese.	Observation and informal conversations in the North East and through national networks.	Church Social Action, historic and present. Charity versus social justice debates.	Reactionary responses often shaped by historic practice. Pastoral focus that struggles to empower and fails to challenge injustice. Funding model is insecure and leads to mission drift. Are there more empowering, participatory and sustainable models?
2. Imagining alternative futures	July 2018 Event in Gateshead and six-week social enterprise training for churches.	Observation. Questions raised at events and training.	What are Social Enterprises? Position in social economy? What are their values? Church engagement?	Growing interest in using business models as a tool for social action. Anxiety expressed about suitability and capacity of churches to develop this model. Lack of research, networks, and resources. What can we learn from established Christian/church Social Enterprises?
3. Lessons from established Christian social entrepreneurs	July 2019 to August 2020. Learning from established social entrepreneurs.	5 in person interviews. 3 online interviews. 1 Focus group	Asset Based Community Development. Empowerment. Tensions in social enterprise.	Using a business model can be empowering, asset based and tackle injustice. However, it requires different skills and mindset to those often found in the church. How can we develop usable resources and support networks and challenge a 'charity/service' mindset?
4. Work alongside new social enterprise in North East	August 2019 - April 2020	Ethnographic/participatory approaches	Leadership. Creative process. Bricolage.	The creative process of developing a social enterprise was a process of bricolage. Leadership was collective and very influenced by context. Community tensions impacted income generation.
5. Practitioner gathering	Ongoing plus practitioner event November 2019.	Operant and espoused theological data gathered.	Justice. Belonging. Reciprocity. Empowerment.	The key themes emerging from operant and espoused theologies differed from a more charitable approach. How can regular theological reflection become established practice?

Table 2. The evolution of and research strategies involved in my action research

The first learning cycle aims to develop a critical consciousness through a critique of the role Christian communities play in responding to need (Chapter 3). The second learning cycle is a process of critical theorising (suggesting alternative futures) which embraces social enterprises (Chapter 4). These two learning cycles have been framed within the research corpus as they arose from questions, observations and reflections gathered through practitioner engagement. The research began with interviews with established Christian social entrepreneurs (Chapter 5). The ethnographic study provides the setting for the next two learning cycles as I follow a Christian project in the North East of England as it adopts an entrepreneurial approach to social action. The first of these learning cycles focuses upon the creative process involved in establishing a social enterprise (Chapter 6). The next chapter incorporates the data relating to leadership at 'Shildon Alive' (Chapter 7). Chapter 8 comprises the data collected during the COVID-19 pandemic and Chapter 9 develops data around the beliefs and values that underpin praxis.

2.9 Conclusion on taking a step back

Conducting research is a political activity and, as such, requires the researcher to take a step back and reflect upon influences which shape knowledge production. There are several themes woven through the research highlighted in this section.

- As a practitioner researcher, my community development values of social justice, participation and empowerment have influenced how and why the research was carried out.
- The methodology aspired to embrace these values although due to the messy nature of carrying out research, plus the COVID-19 pandemic, they have not always been attained.
- Community development practice that begins with lived experience and works for change has resulted in the integration of a grounded and action research methodology.
- The cyclical nature of grounded action research impacts how and when learning occurs, and this has been reflected in the presentation of learning cycles.
- This thesis has aimed, as much as possible, to embrace an accessible writing style for the reasons of power, usability, and dyslexia.

The influence of feminist researchers, their concern for equitable power relationships within research process and a commitment to social justice should be framed as taking a step forward for research, rather than as this chapter is titled, taking a step back!

Chapter 3. Christian social action; critical reflections

As an organiser I start from where the world is, as it is not as I would like it to be. That we accept the world as it is does not in any sense weaken our desire to change it into what we believe it should be - it is necessary to begin where the world is if we are going to change it to what we think it should be. (Alinsky, 1971: xix)

To change the world, we must always begin from the world as it is. The aim of this chapter is to present my understanding of the social, economic, and historical factors at play, to break through prevailing mythologies and to reach new levels of awareness: a process of conscientisation (Freire, 1996). This concept of conscientisation, is the foundation of community cultural development and is defines as,

...an ongoing process by which a learner moves toward critical consciousness. This process is the heart of liberatory education. It differs from 'consciousness raising' in that the latter may involve transmission of preselected knowledge. Conscientization means engaging in praxis, in which one both reflects and takes action on their social reality to break through prevailing mythologies and reach new levels of awareness - in particular, awareness of oppression, being an 'object' of others' will rather than a self-determining 'subject'. (Goldbard, 2006: Glossary)

To break through prevailing mythologies and reach a new level of awareness, Rieger (2004) recommends a process of missional 'inreach' in which we take a deep look at ourselves and our practice and ask how we may be part of the problem. How may our practices, beliefs and values have contributed, and continue to contribute, to the oppression of others?

Before we can become part of the solution, we need to develop a self-critical attitude that helps us reflect on how we have come to be (and still are) part of the problem. Mission as inreach leads us to a new look at ourselves, at our interconnectedness with others, which

includes an awareness of how the suffering of others is related, inversely, to our success.
(Rieger, 2004: 221)

Rieger's (2004) practice of mission as inreach is proposed as a focus for international development, however, local community development has been accused of a lack of critical practice resulting in 'actionless thought' on one hand and 'thoughtless action' on the other (Johnson, cited in Shaw, 2004: 26). This accusation could be applied to some well-intentioned but reactive Christian social action; I include my own practice in this critique. As congregations and faith-based organisations find themselves on the frontline in many communities, it is important to take stock, critique practice, and develop solutions based on reflective theory rather than simply reacting to need, funding opportunities or government agendas.

Community work is too often drawn into the latest fashions of government policy agendas because that is where the funding is, rather than developing and maintaining a clear analysis to inform action. ...Increasingly, the emphasis on training seems to be on skills to the exclusion of thinking about the theory. I think that practice is dominated by the policy and political context rather than creating it. (Craig, quoted in Shaw, 2004: 42)

This chapter aims to provide a space to critically reflect upon Christian social action in the United Kingdom. The chapter begins by exploring what is meant by two key terms Christian social action and faith-based organisation. A brief history of Christian social action is then presented. The focus then shifts to current context, that has been described as violent times (Cooper & Whyte, 2017). A critical exploration discovers two dominant discourses within this context, an amelioratory discourse, which aims to make things better (often described in terms of 'charity') and a transformative, or 'radical', discourse, which aims to tackle the injustice that is causing the issue. These two discourses are reflected in the third and fourth Anglican Marks of Mission 'to respond to human need by loving service' and 'to seek to transform unjust structures of society' (Anglican Communion Office, 2020).

Throughout these critical reflections, the work of international development practitioners and academics is brought into the conversation where its principles also have relevance to local Christian social action. While this chapter has attempted to include the practice of a broad range of denominations, the focus is predominantly related to my context, the Church of England.

The conclusion of the critical reflections on Christian social action is that, while welfare provision has been influenced by historic and theological narratives which position the practice within a charitable service delivery model, new practices are emerging which challenge the power between the giver and receiver and tackle the injustices that always sit behind the need for charity (Cooper, 2007).

3.1 Christian social action and faith-based organisations

The UK government describes social action as 'people coming together to help improve their lives and solve the problems that are important in their communities' (Cabinet Office, 2015: 2). Christian social action is a broad practice ranging from the individual responses of Christians, through to more formalised activities that sit under the churches' umbrella, like toddler groups and luncheon clubs, and finally to the initiatives and projects that are established as Christian faith-based organisations (Sefton & Buckingham, 2018). Bickley, (2017) describes congregational social action as relational, in that it is orientated towards building community rather than service provision, incarnational, in that it emphasises being part of the community, and spiritual, as individual and collective religious commitment are galvanising forces.

When this social action is developed into a distinct organisation it is often described as a faith-based organisation. Faith-based organisations are defined as 'any organisation that refers directly or indirectly to religion or religious values and that functions as a welfare provider and/or as a political actor' (Beaumont, 2008). These organisations exist within 'the dance between religious belief and development' (Clarke, 2011: 1). The term faith-based organisation is used cautiously within this research as it tends to overlook the significant differences in belief systems and focuses primarily on similarities (Clarke, 2011; James, 2009). The term has also been criticized as it perpetuates an

artificial dualism between the organisation with a religious affiliation and those without a 'world religion' affiliation – whilst in reality all organisations work within a belief system (Hancox, 2019). Research into the UK homeless sector found that while faith was an important motivating factor, service users found it difficult to distinguish tangible differences between 'faith-based' and 'secular' projects (Johnsen, 2014). Johnsen observes that there are more similarities between faith-based providers and secular providers than differences, while at the same time differences between faith-based organisations can be extreme. 'Taken together, these findings problematise FBO typologies, and highlight the complexity and fluidity of the concept of "FBO" itself' (Johnsen, 2014: 426).

In light of the problems in categorising FBOs, Frame's (2020) typology which includes secular organisations has been adopted here, recognising that 'in some contexts, "secular" is not always absent of religion' (Frame, 2020:143). Although referring to an international development context, Frame's typology is also helpful when considering local faith-based organisations (see Table 1).

	FBO: faith-centred (FC)	FBO: faith-affiliated (FA)	FBO: faith background (FB)	FBO: faith-secular partnership (FSP)	Secular NGO: faith accommodating (SFA)	Secular NGO: secular (S)
Self-description (mission statement or other public presentation)	Includes an explicit reference to faith	Faith references may be either explicit or implicit	May have implicit references to faith (e.g. references to values)	No reference to faith in mission of the partnership	No faith content, but references to values are often present	No faith content, but references to values are often present
Founded/ organised	For the purpose of providing a development, care-related, or other service; by faith group and/or for faith purpose	For the purpose of providing a development, care-related, or other service; by faith group and/or for faith purpose	For the purpose of providing a development, care-related, or other service; may have historic ties to a faith group or purpose, but that connection is no longer strong	For the purpose of providing a development, care-related, or other service; faith partners founded by faith group or for faith purpose; no reference to faith identity of founders of the secular partner; founders of the partnership may or may not be religious	For the purpose of providing a development, care-related, or other service; possible reference to faith identity or spiritual views (if any) of founder(s)/organiser(s)	For the purpose of providing a development, care-related, or other service; no reference to faith identity or spiritual views (if any) of founder(s)/organiser(s)
Management/ leaders	Faith commitment typically a prerequisite	Normally share the organisation's faith orientation, but explicit faith criteria may be considered irrelevant or improper	Faith criteria considered irrelevant or improper	Required to respect but not necessarily share faith of the faith partners	Belief or non-belief of all leaders respected	Faith criteria for leaders considered irrelevant or improper
Staff	Faith commitment is important; most or all share organisation's faith orientation; faith commitment may be an explicit selection factor for tasks involving religion, but may be less important in other positions	Staff are expected to respect but not necessarily share the faith orientation of the organisation	Little to no consideration of faith commitment	Staff expected to respect faith of the faith partner(s)	Belief or non-belief of all staff respected	Faith criteria for any staff considered improper
Organised faith practices of personnel (prayer, devotions, etc.)	Faith practices often play a significant role in the organisation; personnel may be expected or required to participate	Faith practices are optional and not extensive	Faith practices are rare and peripheral to the organisation	Faith partners may sponsor voluntary faith practices; secular partners do not	Typically, no organised faith practices, but organisational culture respects the personal faith choices and activities of staff	No organised faith practices
Faith content of programme	In addition to acts of compassion and care, faith content is integrated into the programme, or offered along with, or adjacent to, provision of care; beneficiaries may be encouraged or possibly expected to participate in this faith programming, but may also have the option not to participate; beneficiaries may also be invited to faith activities outside the programme parameters	The faith component is primarily in acts of compassion and care; programme includes little (and entirely optional) or no explicit faith content; staff may invite beneficiaries to faith activities outside programme parameters or hold informal faith conversations with beneficiaries; faith-related programming may be initiated by programme staff, rather than administration	No explicit faith content in the programme; faith materials or resources may be available to beneficiaries who seek them out; the faith component is seen primarily in the motivation of individual staff members and/or volunteers; faith-related programming may be initiated by programme staff, rather than administration	No explicit faith content in programme activities designed by secular partners; faith partners may supplement with optional faith resources and activities	Culturally valued faith-related content may be occasionally included among programming; organisation is open to engaging with religious actors where contextually relevant (e.g. religious leaders invited to organisation to give a talk); organisation helps facilitate clients' religious preferences (by taking them to church, etc.)	No explicit faith content in programme activities, but organisation may help facilitate clients' religious preferences (by taking them to church, etc.)

Table 3. Faith Based Organisations - Secular Typology (Frame, 2020)

Frame's (2020) typology is a convenient tool to contextualise this research, with participants situated somewhere between the faith affiliated and faith/secular partnership typology. It is also useful to highlight a weakness in this research, none of the participants described themselves as faith centred; further research is required in this area.

Positioning organisations within this framework is problematic in that boundaries were not as clearly defined as a typology would suggest.

categorizing development actors by type arbitrarily positions them, limiting understanding of their complexity and fluidity in different contexts. (Smith, 2017: 69)

Therefore, the typology should be engaged with cautiously and with an understanding of its limitations.

3.2 A brief history of powerful providers and influencers

The golden rule of 'Love thy neighbour' and the basic principle of compassion are common to all the major religious systems and have been at the heart of Christian social action for centuries (Armstrong, 2009). This action sits alongside the influencing role that Christianity has played shaping British social policy including the welfare state (Jawad, 2012). This section only has scope for a brief review of the history of Christian social action, highlighting themes that are relevant to this research.

This long history of helping those in need both at home and internationally (Musgrave et al., 1998), has been shaped by historical, political, and social contexts (Göçmen, 2013). As an institution with power and privilege the church has provided welfare for those in their communities (Jawad, 2012; Prochaska, 2006; Dinham, 2007b). Since the Middle Ages the church has provided practical care, such as administering relief to the poor during the reign of King Henry VIII (Kahl, 2005); the Poor Law of 1601 (Whelan, 1996) and provision of poorhouses (Innes, 1998).

The Victorian period saw a growth in philanthropy in the expanding industrial areas through individual church leaders, newly founded associations, and the growth of Nonconformist churches (Prochaska, 2006). The physical church was seen by some, particularly within the Church of England, as an exclusively sacred place which 'had the effect of reducing its significance in the lives of many parishioners until the church became a resort for the devout rather than a resource for the community' (Knight, 1995: 61).

Christian communities provided schools for the poor, visiting societies and mothers' meetings, which were run out of their churches, chapels, and homes.

Soup kitchens, maternity charities, creches, blanket clubs, coal clubs, clothing clubs, boot clubs, medical clubs, lending libraries, and holiday funds expanded the expression of Christian service. (Prochaska, 2006: 19)

Most of this work, Prochaska (2006) observes, was carried out by women who, while not holding leadership roles within the church, were responsible for this largely voluntary aspect of the church's work.

The twentieth century provided the period when responsibility for social welfare began to shift to the state away from Christian communities providing services (Jawad, 2012). The interconnectedness between Christianity, democracy and social policy during this time is described by Prochaska (2006).

In a representative democracy, social policy had shifted from the local to the national, from the religious to the secular, and the parish and the congregation bowed to the constituency...the ministerial, civil-service state had dislodged civic pluralism, whose foundations lay in Christian notions of individual responsibility. The shift from voluntary to state social provision was significant not only for social policy but also for religion. Christian

institutions were conducive to the growth of grass-roots democracy, but democracy in its representation form proved less conducive to Christianity. (Prochaska, 2006: 150)

An additional factor in the post World War II decline of religious charities was the physical destruction of religious infrastructure, rather than post war 'egalitarianism' or a decline in actual religious belief. The war had drained the church of personnel and members, with thousands of priests becoming war chaplains while the Women's Voluntary Services, established by the government, had taken women away from their parish volunteering (Prochaska, 2006).

The development of the post-war welfare state saw the reduction of Christian welfare provision (Prochaska, 2006). Christian beliefs around welfare, including notions of individual responsibility, have shaped social policy and continue to do so (Jawad, 2012). This included the development of the welfare state, despite the secular perceptions.

Davis et al. (2008) argue that the Church of England played a crucial role in the political momentum for a universal welfare state through such events as the Malvern Conference and the publication of the then Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple's book, *Christianity, and the Social Order* (Temple, [1942] 1976). In this, Temple set out three principles that should guide post-war Britain, freedom, fellowship, and service. Under these three principles Temple (1942: 100-1) went on to set out six key social objectives of the post-war government.

- Every child should live decently and with dignity and within a family.
- All children should receive an education that develops their aptitude and is centred around Christian worship.
- Every citizen should have a secure income that enables them to maintain a family and home.
- Every citizen should have their say in the conduct of the trade or business that relies upon their labour, and that this is directed at the welfare on the community.
- Every citizen should have sufficient daily leisure time.
- Every citizen should enjoy freedom of worship, speech, assembly and association.

The role of practical Christianity in forging secular reformers, and thereby influencing the climate of ideas that shaped the post-war welfare state, has since been recognised (Pierson & Leimgruber, 2010).

By the 1980s there was a growing recognition that the state had failed to tackle poverty (Townsend, 1979; Dept of Health & Social Security, 1980) a view supported by the Archbishop's Commission on Urban Priority Areas report, *Faith in the City* (1985). Churches were once again encouraged to re-engage with disadvantaged communities as governments' localism agendas began to recognise faith communities as valued partners.

The Archbishop of Canterbury commissioned an enquiry that resulted in the publication of *Faith in the City* (Archbishop's Commission on Urban Priority Areas, 1985). The pro-poor report observed that 'people are excluded by poverty or powerlessness from sharing in the common life of our nation; (Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission, 1985: 359). The report criticised the government for failing to tackle poverty and challenged the government's emerging neoliberal thinking of free market and 'trickle down' economics, leading to a senior minister, Norman Tebbit, accusing it of being 'Marxist' and 'irresponsible'. The criticism in the report was remarkable as it came from the established church and to

many in the political establishment, this looked like an attack from within and a betrayal of the traditional notion of the Church of England as the 'Tory party at prayer'. (Dinham, 2008: 2166)

The report requested some measures to address the structural causes of poverty, such as an independent inquiry, to be commissioned by government, to review the relationships between income support, pay and taxation. However, the Church of England's own response was to establish the Church Urban Fund, employ more youth workers and redistribute funds to urban areas. A response that

reflected a deeply ingrained and cautious Anglican instinct that has over generations preferred a theology of good works to a theology of transformation as the appropriate expression of true religion. (Garner, 2004: 28)

Twenty years later when *Faithful Cities* (Commission on Urban Life and Faith, 2006) was published, the political context, on the surface, looked very different. A New Labour government had been elected in May 1997 with a commitment to reform the welfare state. They aimed to achieve this by what they claimed was a new and distinctive approach that differed from the neoliberal new right methods of Thatcherism and from the left wing. It has been argued that this 'third way' was not distinctive or new with continuatives with the Conservative policies outweighing those of Old Labour (Powell, 2000). This period heralded the establishment of a new relationship between government and faith-based agencies due to 'the pressing need for productive and respectful engagement between the public authorities and faith communities' (Home Office, 2004, foreword).

Faith groups were part of this agenda as they moved back into the public policy spotlight and gradually returned to the field of welfare provision (Cairns et al., 2007; Dinham, 2009; Dinham & Lowndes, 2009; Farnell et al., 2003; Furbey & Macey, 2005). In March 2005, the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, made a speech to Christian leaders in which he urged them to be 'more confident in proclaiming' their work in local communities and he told them 'I would like to see you play a bigger not a lesser role in the future' (Blair, 2005).

While the government identified faith communities as a neglected resource in urban regeneration, they regarded them as a homogenous group, failing to recognise diversity and differences in values and practices (Furbey & Macey, 2005). Others questioned the capacity of faith groups to play a major role in public policy implementation (Cairns et al., 2007; Smith, 2004). Smith (2004) argued that the government's real motivation for greater faith-based engagement is simply an outworking of a kind of 'functionalist' view of religion. Rather than the claims that faith-based organisations are best

placed to deliver services, Smith regarded the move as a cost-cutting initiative designed to co-opt faith groups into serving the government's political aims.

Dinham (2008) argues that the two reports produced by the Church of England, *Faith in the City* (Archbishop's Commission on Urban Priority Areas, 1985) and *Faithful Cities* (Commission on Urban Life and Faith, 2006), highlight the shift away from criticising the government and reflects an acceptance of the logic of the 'Third Way'. Therefore, the Church of England

should now be understood, therefore, as predominantly associated with meso-level community interventions and not at the macro level where a critique of the political could occur. (Dinham, 2008: 2163)

As the Church of England is considered to be the heart of the Anglican communion, as well as being the national church of England, Dinham (2008) feels this shift may have resonances more widely amongst debates about the distribution of wealth and power within societies. The Church of England, in common with all the faith traditions, has a higher visibility platform for influencing that debate than at any other time in decades. In this sense, it can be argued that *Faithful Cities* missed an opportunity and colludes with systems it ought to critique.

The global financial crisis of 2008 and the election of a Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government in 2010 set the scene for the latest iteration of Christian social action. After three decades of welfare retrenchment and localism, the policy decisions taken in response to the crisis by the new government were to have drastic and violent consequences for the most vulnerable in our communities.

3.3 Current violent and mean times.

The 2008 global financial crisis set the stage for the newly elected Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government's iteration of localism. The idea of The Big Society was presented as a novel

initiation, however, it continued policies introduced by New Labour, particularly regarding building capacity in the third sector and moving towards a mixed economy of welfare (Alcock, 2010; Smith, 2010). This latest localism, unlike the Third Way, was not accompanied by significant government investment and has been described as 'austerity localism' (Clayton, Donovan & Merchant, 2015; Featherstone et al., 2012). This 'truly radical localisation' (Conservative Party, 2010: 14) was at the centre of the UK coalition government's political agenda alongside marked austerity, as government simultaneously enacted a programme of dramatic spending cuts. The localism agenda was built upon three main pillars: empowering local communities; increasing competition within public service provision; and promoting social action that amounts to an asset transfer from central and local government onto communities themselves (Clayton et al., 2015). The emphasis on localism was to promote neighbourhood-based public policy strategies along the lines of 'participative communitarianism' (Jacobs & Manzi, 2013: 34). This view of localism has been challenged by those who regard it as 'responsibility without power' (Peck & Tickell, 2002: 386), employed to roll-back the state through the 'now familiar repertoire of funding cuts, organisational downsizing, market testing and privatisation' (Peck, 2010: 22). The promotion of 'self-help' and 'voluntary action' resulted in a rapid expansion of the third sector (National Council for Voluntary Organisations, 2012: 17).

Austerity localism is framed around a narrative that the local third sector will provide more appropriate and empowering provision in response to austerity. The reality is very different.

The political landscape in which the third sector has been obliged to operate has restricted both its ability to cover the gaps in provision caused by austerity and the rolling back of the state, and the ability for the third sector to empower its users. This ultimately results in an increase in generalised insecurity as more people feel that they have fewer places to turn for support, rather than an empowering and empowered third sector, as recent governments have claimed. (Dagdeviren, Donoghue & Wearmouth, 2019: 157)

Other commentators, while recognising limitations of localism, highlight opportunities it provides for new progressive ethical and political spaces that can shape localism from below (Featherstone et al., 2012: 179-180). The positive pathways allowed by localism include ethical spaces of responsibility such as foodbanks (Williams, Goodwin & Cloke, 2014), and direct appropriation of governmental structures by local groups seeking progressive outcomes such as community takeovers of local facilities as social enterprises (Wright, 2013).

Our argument suggests that the political agenda of austerity localism and the Big Society has opened up cracks in the landscape of local governance for emergent ethical and political spaces that seem to work against the dominant formations of the neoliberal. (Williams, Goodwin, & Cloke, 2014: 2810)

The radical measures that have been imposed through a neoliberal politics of austerity disproportionately disadvantage the most marginalised members of our society (Hastings et al., 2015; Portes & Reed, 2018). Rather than conceptualise these 'meantimes' as simply growing inequality, austerity politics is structural violence that means the:

...people most affected by austerity cuts are not only struggling under the financial strain but are becoming ill, physically and emotionally, and many are dying. (Cooper & Whyte, 2017:1)

Vickie Cooper and David Whyte (2017: 1) describe 'the devastatingly violent consequences of government policy conducted in the name of "austerity"'. Contributors to their book document the violent impact of policies on housing and benefits, welfare provisions, and regulation of working conditions. These policies have direct and negative impact upon child health and mortality, and mental health and suicide (Dorling, 2017; 2018; 2019), with austerity being blamed for an estimated 130,000 preventable deaths in the UK between 2012 and 2017 (Hochlaf et al., 2019).

Other commentators have described living in 'meantimes' (Cloke et al., 2017; 2020). These 'meantimes' have given rise to a resurgence of right-wing ideologies resulting in explicit and violent othering (Carlson & Ebel, 2012) leading to a rise in nationalism (Bieber, 2018).

By 2018/2019 the number of people living in poverty in the United Kingdom had risen to an estimated 14 million people (22% of the population), which includes four million children (Dept Work and Pension, 2020). These numbers include individuals living in: 'relative poverty' - defined as living on a household income less than 60% of the national median wage; 'persistent poverty' - if they live on this income for more than three years; and 'severe poverty' - if they earn less than 50% of the average annual wage (McGuinness, 2017).

The UK has a welfare system that provides a poor level of earnings replacement and benefit levels, bearing no relation to the actual costs of living (McNeil et al., 2019). This, along with a rise in low and insecure work (Sharpe, 2019), are key factors in the rise in poverty, and a growing number of people having insufficient income to live on.

One of the consequences of not having enough income to live on is food insecurity. Food security is defined as:

...access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life and includes at a minimum: a) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and b) the assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (e.g. without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, and other coping strategies). Food insecurity exists whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain. (Anderson, 1990: 1560)

The rise in food insecurity (Lambie-Mumford, 2017; 2019; Cooper et al., 2014) has been to such an extent that it is estimated that more than 8.4 million people in Britain live in households that experience food insecurity, 5.6% of people aged 15 or over in the UK reported struggling to get enough food to eat and a further 4.5% reported that, at least once, they went a full day without anything to eat (Taylor and Loopstra, 2016). A joint report from the Trussell Trust, the Church of England, and the charities Oxfam and Child Poverty Action Group found that food bank users were more likely to live in rented accommodation, be single adults or lone parents, be unemployed, and have experienced a 'sanction', where their unemployment benefits were cut for at least one month (Perry et al., 2014). In-work poverty, disability, and unemployment rates were all associated with higher incidences of usage (Loopstra et al., 2019).

Data published by the Department for Work and Pensions (2021) on household food security in the United Kingdom shows that:

- Universal Credit is the single highest contributory factor, by a considerable margin, in driving levels of household food insecurity in the UK.
- More than 4 in 10 households in receipt of Universal Credit (43%) experience low or very low food security – over five times the national average of 8% across all households.
- Households in receipt of state benefits in general terms experience far higher levels of household food insecurity than the general population.
- One in four households on any income-related benefit experience low or very low levels of food security, including: Income Support (36%); Jobseekers Allowance (37%); Employment Support Allowance (31%).
- One in four households in receipt of Carers' Allowance and more than one in five households in receipt of Personal Independence Payments experience food insecurity.

Families that rely upon free school meal provision see household budgets stretched during the school holidays, this is commonly referred to as holiday hunger (Long et al., 2017). This lack of adequate levels of healthy and nutritious food during the school holidays (Garthwaite, 2016b;

Graham et al., 2016; Graham et al. 2019) results in child hunger and parental stress (Stretesky et al., 2020).

The response of Christian groups to food insecurity is explored later in the chapter.

Previous waves of Christian social action were set in the context of the church having greater power and influence in the United Kingdom and globally, however, the current post-secular context provided a very different climate, offering new challenges and opportunities.

3.3.1 Within post-secularity

Today, as John Atherton (2003) noted, we are faced with the 'double whammy' of working with marginalised communities and being a marginalised church.⁵ Despite evidence showing a continuing linear movement from 'the relatively religious to the rather secular' (Woodhead, 2012: 374) and many more people in western societies believing but not belonging (Davie, 1994) the predominance and influence of religion has shifted. Secularisation theories that prevailed in the mid-twentieth century (Berger, 1967) predicted that as societies modernised, the power and influence of religion would be consigned to the private sphere where 'religious institutions, actions and consciousness, lose their social significance (Wilson, 1982: 149). However, this has not been the case and as religion finds itself returning to the public square, the assumption about modernity and secularisation are no longer plausible (Berger, 1999). The debates around secularisation are becoming more nuanced recognising that 'hushed up' voices of faith in the public sphere (Cloke & Beaumont, 2013) are becoming heard again, resulting in a complex blurring of sacred-secular boundaries (Beaumont & Baker, 2011).

The work of German philosopher and sociologist, Jürgen Habermas, has been influential in shaping the post-secular conversation, stating that 'postsecular self-understanding of society as a whole in

⁵ I use this terminology of marginalisation with caution: the lived experience of marginalisation is central for those experiencing it who may not relate to this positionality. It also assumes the centrality of the 'other', an assumption of wellbeing and wholeness away from the margins.

which the vigorous continuation of religion in a continually secularizing environment must be reckoned with' (Habermas, 2005: 15).

Habermas (2008) regards our western post-war society as being on a special path as we navigate the tensions between the influence of diverse world views, ranging from secular to religious. These diverse world views include increasing anthropocentric scientific interpretations and the growing influence of religion particularly in post-colonial immigrant societies like the UK.

Cloke et al. (2019) deliberately emphasises the concept of postsecularity as a condition of being, as opposed to post-secular as a specific time-space concept.

Rather we envisage postsecularity as a more context-contingent bubbling up of ethical values arising from amalgams of faith-related and secular determination to relate differently to alterity and become active in support of others by going beyond the social bubble of the normal habitus. These ethical values are marked by an explicit 'crossing-over' of religious and secular narratives, practices, and performances that become visible in key geographical expressions of overcoming difference; in certain spaces devoted to care, welfare, justice, and protest, and in certain expressions of dynamic subjectivity characterised by greater degrees of in-commonness and heightened care for the common good. (Cloke et al., 2019: 3)

The growth of religious social action within post-secular society sees faith groups sitting between a rock and a hard place according to Elaine Graham (2014).

We find ourselves between a 'rock' of religious resurgence - or at least renewed visibility - and the 'hard place' of secularism. And it's the paradoxical, often uncomfortable, space in between these two contradictory trajectories that is of interest to me. How do we handle the unprecedented co-existence of these two discourses? And, in particular, how do people of faith give an account of their motivations and values in a world that is more sensitive than

ever to religious belief and practice, yet often struggles to accommodate it into secular discourse. (Graham, 2014: 237)

This tension is visible when it comes to secular funders' failure to recognise the diversity and complexity of faith groups, viewing Christian and other faith groups as a homogenous cohort, and failing to appreciate the great variations between denominations and congregations (Furbey & Macey, 2005). One of the 'hard' places of secularism and a challenge for faith groups is the fear of proselytism, the attempt to persuade someone to change their religion. Proselytism is often used in a somewhat vague way, it is usually related to two specific concerns – firstly that service provision will be conditional on religious activity or adherence, and secondly that activities will be accompanied by coercive forms of faith-sharing. These concerns may not be entirely baseless, but evidence suggests that this is often significantly overstated (Bickley, 2015).

Even at a time of retrenchment in welfare spending, which has seen more and different groups involved in the delivery of public services, many public representatives and service commissioners still cite religious proselytism as a barrier to closer relationships with faith-based agencies. (Bickley, 2015: 9)

The concerns that social action could be used as a tool to proselytise, as a corrupt form of religious witness was addressed in the 2005 Papal Encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*:

Charity, furthermore, cannot be used as a means of engaging in what is nowadays considered proselytism. Love is free; it is not practiced as a way of achieving other ends. But this does not mean that charitable activity must somehow leave God and Christ aside. For it is always concerned with the whole man. Often the deepest cause of suffering is the very absence of God. Those who practice charity in the Church's name will never seek to impose the Church's faith on others. (Pope Benedict XVI, 2005: EN31)

This tension between not leaving God and Christ aside while at the same time not proselytising leaves many faith-based organisations between (as the quote above from Graham states) between a 'rock' and 'hard place'. In practice, a study into faith-based homeless services found that:

Homeless people do in fact often find it difficult to discern tangible differences between avowedly 'faith-based' and 'secular' projects, given a blurring of boundaries between the religious and the secular. (Johnsen, 2014: 413)

This secular orthodoxy in the homeless sector made it difficult for service users to find a place to discuss, engage and explore faith.

The current climate of mean and violent times combined with postsecularity provides both challenges and opportunities for Christian social action, which will now be explored.

3.4 Christian social action in response to the violence of austerity

The notion of the Big Society was to give power to local communities, including faith groups, to deliver services. The reality was that faith-based organisations struggled to meet the needs effectively and in ways that they felt were appropriate (Lambie-Mumford & Jarvis, 2012). This positioned them, as with other community practices, in ambiguous spaces as they found themselves both working for and against the state (Craig, 1989).

As noted in Chapter 2.2, my community development work embraces often contradictory practices. Emejulu (2016) explores these micropolitics by analysing community development as discourse to

position community development as a social and political construct bounded by power relationships, identities, and social practices and contested by subjects seeking to preserve, oppose or transform their identities or the rules of behaviour. (Emejulu, 2016:7)

This section will explore the often-opposing discourses and related practices and reflect the conversations that I engage with in Durham Diocese.

The first, and dominant, discourse positions community development practice in the United Kingdom as an institutional practice of the welfare state (Emejulu, 2016). The second discourse is one of transformation, which seeks to develop new forms of citizenship and radical democracy. The position of power within these two practices will be considered.

3.5 An amelioratory discourse, working in the state.

This first discourse sees community development being promoted to:

serve imperial agendas, manage social change in the interests of the powerful, facilitate self-help in order to legitimize reductions in service provisions, shifting responsibilities from the public sector to the voluntary /NGO and community sectors. (Craig, Popple & Shaw, 2008)

This narrative can be traced back to the roots of community development where the practice was adopted by British colonial authorities between the First and Second World Wars as an instrument to serve the powerful through distinct political and economic purposes of mass education and social welfare in the colonies, a dual mission of 'civilising while exploiting' (Mayo, 2011: 75).

Since 2008 much community development in the United Kingdom is an amelioratory practice that responds to, and allows, deep welfare retrenchment as faith groups, along with others in the third sector, have responded by providing services and goods to those in need. This shift in welfare provisions from state to third sector has presented the dominant discourse within my practice. Providing these services positions community development as a tool to redefine social relationships 'in order to reconcile citizens to the new order of a marketized and privatised public life' (Emejulu, 2016: 139).

Christian social action has seen 70% of churches running three or more organised activities for the benefit of their local communities (Sefton & Buckingham, 2018). An estimated 10 million adults use church-based community services (Bickley, 2014) including provision of debt advice (O'Toole & Braginskaia, 2016; Barclay & Orton, 2017) and foodbanks (Garthwaite et al., 2015). According to research from New Philanthropy Capital, there are nearly 50,000 faith-based charities in the UK, out of a total of nearly 188,000 registered charities, with the Christian and faith-based sectors growing disproportionately quickly (Wharton & de Las Casas, 2016).

The National Church and Social Action Survey found that:

UK churches have increased the average number of volunteer hours on social action to 114.8m per annum. This is an increase of 16.8% compared with two years earlier and 59.4% compared with four years ago. (Knott, 2014)

Christians have responded to the violence of austerity in a variety of ways, but particular attention has been focused upon food insecurity (Lambie-Mumford & Dowler, 2014; Power et al., 2017). Food insecurity is one manifestation of the violence of austerity in which faith groups have been at the frontline of welfare provision. The Christian-led Trussell Trust Foodbank Network distributed 1.9 million food parcels in the year 2019-2020 (Trussell Trust, 2020). This shocking figure does not include the food provision by the 651 independent foodbanks in the UK (Butler, 2017). Research by the Church Urban Fund (Sefton & Buckingham, 2018) revealed that 93% of Church of England churches were involved in some way in the provision of food banks. This comprised of a third of congregations who said they provided volunteers and 69% provided supplies or financial support.

Another service in response to food insecurity that has been established over the last five years, is holiday clubs that aim to help families feed children during school holidays (Graham et al., 2018). These clubs are situated in economically disadvantaged areas, however, they are disproportionately white and English/British and often fail to support ethnic minority and other priority communities (Mann et al., 2018). Consequently, many children who are eligible for free school meals have no access to school holiday programmes (Machin, 2016).

This increase in Christian social action has not been without its challenges, the primary one being funding the work.

Findings from the UK Giving report (National Council for Voluntary Organisations/Charitable Aid Foundation, 2019), 2019) show that the proportion of people giving money to charity either by donating or via sponsorship has seen a decline between 2016 and 2018 (69% to 65% in 2018). Although fewer people report that they are giving money, those who do give are giving higher

amounts. Overall, the total amount given to charity in 2018 remains largely the same as 2017 at £10.1 billion. Much funding for church social action is a result of individual giving (often described as 'Christian stewardship') and a significant proportion also comes from wider fundraising efforts by the congregation (Church of England, 2021). The ability to fundraise to a sustainable level from within their faith groups led Bull, Las Casas and Wharton (2016) to conclude that this makes faith groups particularly resilient to changes in funding. Here lies the obvious contradiction as:

...the greatest community needs often arise in parishes with high levels of socio economic disadvantage, which rarely have large bases of parishioners able to give high-value individual donations. (Parker & Morgan, 2013: 208)

The impact of spending cuts rapidly impacted faith-based voluntary groups in deprived areas, as highlighted by a Church Urban Fund (2012) report *Survival Strategies: A Survey of the Impact of the Current Economic Climate on Community Organisations in the Most Deprived Areas of England*. The report was based on a survey of small community-based organisations in the 10% most deprived areas of England supported by Church Urban Fund since 2008. Of the 250 community organisations in the research, 78% reported a rise in demand for their services over the previous 12 months and a similar figure (76%) stated that securing a regular stream of income was a 'major issue' for their organisation. However, there were signs of adaptation and collaboration, with increased time and resources placed on fundraising, a greater willingness to work in partnership with others, and more dependency upon volunteers to provide services. This volunteering capacity is cited as a strength of the church with approximately 114.8 million volunteer hours being spent in 2014, a rise of 59% since 2010 (Knott, 2014). The value of this volunteer effort was estimated at over £3 billion per year (Cinnamon Network, 2016). These perceptions of churches full of volunteers, is challenged by evidence of declining congregations of old ladies who are dying and not being replaced (Day, 2017). The capacity of the church to provide human resources from shrinking, aging congregations and reduced numbers of clergy is also compromising its capacity to engage with social action (Church Urban Fund, 2015).

The focus upon the voluntary sector to meet public need is problematic, as the sector, just like the state and market, faces limitations (Salamon et al., 2000). These limitations are philanthropic insufficiency (lack of funds); philanthropic particularism (limitations created by the narrow set of causes supported by donors); philanthropic amateurism (resulting from services run by volunteers); and philanthropic paternalism (limitations to services caused by the perception of problems as seen from the perspective of the donors/trustees/workers/volunteers, rather than as viewed by the service users).

This situation has been exacerbated by disproportionate governmental cuts to the third sector during austerity (Kane et al., 2014). Voluntary sector organisations located in more deprived local authorities are likely to suffer most due to the combined effect of cuts in government funding in these areas and their greater dependency on statutory funding (Clifford, Geyne-Rahme, & Mohan, 2013). Yet, as research from the Church Urban Fund discovered, it is in these low-income communities that churches are the most active (Sefton & Buckingham, 2018).

Although faith groups find themselves engaged in a period of heightened third sector activity, the reality is that they are still not filling the gap left by the cuts to welfare provision (Brown, 2014), and unlike previous periods of welfare provision, Christian communities in the United Kingdom no longer have the same levels of privilege of power and resources they once had.

3.5.1 A critique of the amelioratory praxis

The historical missiology of good works is often described in terms of 'charity', deriving from the Latin 'caritas' meaning caring, compassion or love. The dominant practice within Christian social action has been providing services or resources; a charitable practice. Good works and charity provided by the church can be ineffective or at worse do harm, and despite donating money, goods, and countless volunteer hours, as noted, poverty levels in the United Kingdom continue to rise.

Charity is only needed when a situation of injustice exists. On its own, charity is not enough; it leaves the person 'giving' with the power. It does not ask how to achieve a just system, where no one holds greater economic, political, radical, or other types of power over another human being. (Cooper, 2007: 175)

Thia Cooper (2007) highlights two primary arguments against the charitable approach prevalent in Christian social action, namely, the power relationships that disempower the receiver, and that it diverts attention, resources, and energy from the underlying social justice issues.

This discourse has been embraced, often unquestioned, and is the result of a belief that the rolling back of state provision of welfare is unavoidable, the historic institutional practice of providing charity, and a theological imperative to 'serve the poor'. The results are practices that while amelioratory do not tackle the underlying issues.

As discussed in Chapter 2.2.3, stigma has been deliberately adopted by those in power to control socially undesirable groups of people and a key moment in the stigmatisation of the poor in England was the enclosures of common land, in which the parish church participated (Tyler, 2020). In E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) the historian details how the transformation of a feudal agricultural England into a capitalist state was characterised by the mass enclosure of land, which began in the fifteenth century and spanned many centuries. Utilitarian arguments for greater agricultural efficiency were used by social elites to justify the enclosure of land. This resulted in the poor of the parish being transformed from entitled and rights-bearing subjects, who had access to common land to grow food and graze animals, into dependants who relied upon the charity of parish (Thompson, 1963). The parish was both responsible for the poor while at the same time complicit in their stigmatisation, 'designing rogues, who, under various pretences, attempted to cheat the parish' and whose 'whole abilities are exerted in the execution of deceit which may procure from the parish officers an allowance of money for idle and profligate purposes' (Thompson, 1963: 243). The work of historian Keith Snell's *Parish and Belonging:*

Community Identity and Welfare in England and Wales (2006) builds on Thompson's assertions claiming that the inhabitants of eighteenth and early nineteenth century parishes, who themselves were enduring an economy of scarcity, viewed with suspicion a stranger who may lay claim to community resources. The concerns that a pauper had not contributed to poor rates resulted in xenophobic attitudes, and stigmatisation.

The second type of power evident in this amelioratory approach to community development is positional. The provision of services and good which aligns itself with charity and has been described as a top down approach where the recipients have little or no part in planning or delivering (Greig et al., 2010).

Within this service model approach to community work the power remains with those who are setting the agenda in which the less powerful operate and therefore crucial decisions may not get to the decision-making stage in the first place (Luke, 1974). This form of power can be recognised in community development practice where even the process of targeting certain communities as in need of interventions is in itself an expression of power (Cruikshank, 1999).

To understand the power dynamics between the giver and receiver, the historical positioning of Christian social action is important. The motto of a colonial past 'We Know What is Right for the World' continues to influence practice. This model of Christian social engagement that has historically dominated mission is influenced by the Christian diaconal mode of 'service to the poor' (Korten, 1990). Wells describes this as 'working for' the person:

...in that the person has not been the instigator of the work or an active participant in it, it has been done on their behalf to enhance their wellbeing. (Wells, 2015: 23)

In *Toxic charity: how churches and charities hurt those they help (and how to reverse it)* Lupton, (2011) he claims that despite all our efforts to eliminate poverty we have succeeded only in making our poor communities poorer by disempowering them and destroying personal initiative.

...yet those closest to the ground – on the receiving end of this outpouring of generosity - quietly admit that it is maybe hurting more than helping. How? Dependency. Destroying personal initiative. When we do for those in need what they have the capacity to do for themselves, we disempower them. (Lupton, 2011: 3)

He goes on to argue that by giving those in need what they could be gaining from their own initiative is maybe the 'kindest way to destroy people' (Lupton, 2011: 4), yet we fail to recognise this as we have avoided thoroughly evaluating our charitable work.

We may mean well, our motives are good, but we have neglected to conduct care-full due diligence to determine emotional, economic, and cultural outcomes on the receiving end of our charity. Why do we miss this crucial aspect in evaluating our charitable work? Because, as compassionate people, we have been evaluating our charity by the reward we received by the served. We have failed to adequately calculate the effects of our service on the lives of those reduced to the objects of our pity and patronage. (Lupton, 2011: 5)

Lupton's hard-hitting message was partly influenced by the US multi-million dollar industry of short term mission trips which take young people out to developing countries, or as he refers to it 'poverty tourism', but his argument is relevant for our local context in the United Kingdom (Kuhrt, 2022). He acknowledges that not all charity is toxic and in times of catastrophe, it is lifesaving but we must move on to the long and complex work of long term development.

This lack of moving on to longer term development work is, according to David Korten (1990), as a result of a lack of theory.

In the absence of a theory, the aspiring development agency almost inevitably becomes an assistance agency engaged in relieving the more visible symptoms of underdevelopment through relief and welfare measures. (Korten, 1990: 113)

In response to this, Korten (1990) developed a theory; a typology of Christian development responses to poverty which he believed reflected how the problem of poverty was understood. In times of crisis the response is immediate, focused upon the individual or family, with the development agency as the chief actor providing a service. While this response may be appropriate initially, he argues for a shift towards small-scale self-reliant development projects which take 3-5 years, focusing upon the neighbourhood and seeing the development agency working with the community to mobilise for change. Korten's model is a shift towards more participatory, longer term self-reliant social action, a shift which has been described as a move from a theology focused upon identity towards a focus on agency (de Grunchy, 2003).

This focus upon agency is central to the solution Lupton (2011) describes in his Oath for Compassionate Service:

Never do for the poor what they have (or could have) the capacity to do for themselves.

Limit one-way giving to emergency situations.

Strive to empower the poor through employment, lending, and investing, using grants sparingly to reinforce achievements.

Subordinate self-interests to the needs of those being served.

Listen closely to those you seek to help, especially to what is not being said - unspoken feelings may contain essential clues to effective service.

Above all, do no harm. (Lupton, 2011: 128)

The key element of this oath is 'people before programmes', which Loudon (2020) cites as the first rule for Christian activists.

All the techniques, schemes, organisations and so on that we operate for social change mean nothing if they ignore the people who are at the heart of them. (Loudon, 2020: 11)

This patriarchal approach can be viewed as a dominant historic and missional narrative and an active influence on practice today. Many food banks are run and equipped through local church networks and provide spaces of encounter where predominantly middle-class volunteers support 'poor others' (Lawson & Elwood, 2013). This approach situates the Christian in the position of the 'doer' who is working for the other (Wells, 2015) and while there may be occasions that this 'emergency relief' is justified, they have been criticised for embedding a power dynamic between the giver and receiver and therefore separating those who 'need help' from those who 'help'. This can create demeaning experiences, resulting in feelings of humiliation and stigma for the receiver (Hamelin et al., 2002; Garthwaite, 2016a; Richies, 2002; Tyler, 2020).

An important voice from the Anglican community asking critical questions about power in Christian social action local mission is Rev Dr Al Barrett (whose asset-based approach to ministry is explored in Chapter 3.5.1). Barrett argues that the normative espoused theology often encountered within church social action is that of feeding the hungry and welcoming the stranger, in the spirit of Matthew 25,⁶ the words attributed to Teresa of Avila,⁷ or the parable of the Good Samaritan. All of these highlight the value of spontaneous, selfless, compassionate giving, regardless of the consequences, and positions the Christian as the doer while:

⁶ 'For I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' (Matt 25: 35-36)

⁷ 'Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes with which he looks in compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.'

...our neighbour, on the other hand, is imagined, explicitly or implicitly, as passive, receptive, 'in need'. (Barrett, 2015: 6)

Barrett and Harley (2020) draw on the work of Bishop John V. Taylor (1992) who uses the temptation faced by Jesus in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11) to highlight the powers that come with being a provider, possessor, and performer. Taylor warns that while none of these powers are evil, they are seductive, and seduction can quickly corrupt. The power of the provider can make us feel good about our generosity, at the expense of the self-respect of those on the receiving end. The power of the possessor can quickly slide into a control-freakery that imagines it always knows best, always has to be in the driving seat, always has to be the one taking the initiative. And the power of the performer can become an obsession with being seen and heard, being 'successful' and convincing others of your significance.

My experience of many practices that identify as community development 'can be seen as an oppressive social practice of imposing undemocratic and disrespected identities onto local people – in the name of the self-determination of those very people' (Emejulu, 2016: 154). However, there is a growing discourse centred around rapprochement, radical receptivity and hopeful re-enchantment, emerging through engagement with practices such as asset-based community development. These approaches, while sitting within an amelioratory framework, are challenging some of the power dynamics within the practice.

3.5.2 Spaces of rapprochement, radical receptivity and hopeful re-enchantment

It is too simplistic to simply dismiss Christian social action charitable responses as one-way giving from powerful providers, which fails to tackle injustice. Christian social action can provide spaces of rapprochement, radical receptivity and hopeful re-enchantment (Cloke et al., 2019).

Rather than automatically characterising charitable cross-subsidy in the city entirely as a light weight sop to the middle class conscience, we might pause to reflect on the possibility that in amongst this apparent charity there is scope for in-common encounters in which alterity is attended to in ways that can make deep impacts on conscience, ethicality and political conviction, and in registers where *caritas* and *agape* find anarchic expression that can disturb the scrambled economies of marginalisation and exclusion through performances of receptive generosity. In these kinds of ways, the flow of economic, social, and sometimes spiritual capital into the spaces of care in marginalised areas of cities develop socio-spatial connections which unsettle not only perceived religious/secular boundaries but also geographical ones. (Cloke et al., 2019: 14)

Cloke et al. (2019) emphasise how social action spaces of welfare and justice can provide exciting spaces of postsecularity, building vital bridges between participants' differing worldviews, in what can be seen as a 'messy middle' (May & Cloke, 2014). They highlight three significant themes of postsecularity; receptive generosity, partnership of rapprochement and assemblages of hopeful re-enactment (Cloke et al., 2019).

Radical receptivity shapes the notion of generosity (Coles, 1997) around the concept of post-secular *caritas*, in which no theological or secular position can claim absolute privilege. Coles describes post-secular *caritas* as an act that seeks transformation through attentive listening, relationship building and careful tending to place.

The question involves a partly agonistic, partly co-operative – always transfiguring – dialogical effort with others to discern what is lower and what is higher; to discern how these differences and distances might be brought together and held apart such that we might become more receptive of their gifts, more capable of giving, less resentful and revenge-seeking, more radiant. This entwinement of giving and receiving is the precarious elaborating foundation of well-being and sense. (Coles, 1997: 22)

Postsecularity has also provided opportunities for partnerships of rapprochement (Cloke et al., 2019; Cloke & Beaumont 2013) where individuals and groups cross the boundaries between secular and religious orientation in the public arena, allowing 'new forms of partnership between the religious and the secular' (Cloke et al., 2016: 498). Forms of rapprochement emerge from collaboration between social groups with different religious and secular orientation which Cloke (2011) witnessed in the provision of services for a homeless community.

This willingness to work together with different people for different people was a key characteristic of the service landscape. Faith groups welcomed co-workers with no religious persuasion, and visa versa, in a rapprochement of ethical praxis forged out of the necessity to provide a response to the need of homeless people in the city. (Cloke, 2011: 238)

The final theme of post-secular spaces is hope, hopeful re-enchantment. Within these 'meantimes' Cloke et al. (2019) ask where the spaces of hope can be located.

We point to the landscape of possibility presented by postsecularity as one hopeful terrain in which both resistance to neoliberal austerity and ethical and political alterity are being performed. Moreover, within this terrain, we argue that hopefulness is vested in rather ordinary spaces of care, welfare and justice – noticeably ambivalent spaces which typically are assumed to be shaped by neoliberalism and redolent of its subjectification of voluntarism and charity. (Cloke et al., 2019: 1)

A growing discourse around an asset-based approaches to community development are embracing a practice of radical receptivity, rapprochement, and hope.

3.5.3 Asset Based Community Development

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is a methodology for community development that encourages Christians to recognise that they are not merely service providers to fix problems in the community, but rather exist to work relationally, building instead on community assets (Eckley, Ruddick & Walker, 2015).

Developed by international development experts, Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), and expanded by McKnight and Block (2010), ABCD is built upon the premise that all individuals and places have assets and gifts to contribute and that sustainable change comes from within communities. It works on the basis that when people come together and combine their assets then communities will be made stronger.⁸ The approach is developed around three characteristics; firstly, it is asset-based, built upon the belief that everyone has something to give those around them regardless of their income, where they live or their academic achievements. Secondly, it is internally focused, believing that strong sustainable communities cannot be built from the top-down or outside-in but as a place-based solution that concentrates upon the capacities of local people, institutions, and associations. Thirdly, it is relationship driven, with the process of identifying, connecting, and mobilising local assets stemming from listening to and talking with others in the community.

Cormac Russell is central to the Asset Based Community Development narrative in the UK. In outlining his '12 Domains of People Powered Change', Russell argued for the 'economics' of asset-based approaches, claiming that 'restoring bonds among people can be a cost effective and practical point of leverage for solving some of the most pressing social problems' (Russell, 2011: page). Russell called for 'handmade and homemade solutions' and suggests that 'care is the freely given gift of the heart' that cannot be effectively delivered by the state (Russell, 2011: page). ABCD is not without its critics as the approach does not challenge the neoliberal structures that 'perhaps

⁸ In the United Kingdom, the rise in ABCD across a range of social policy areas, particularly in social welfare and public sector reform was in response to the Coalition Government's austerity program (MacLeod & Emejulu, 2014).

inadvertently, privatise public issues such as poverty, inequality, and asymmetries in power' (MacLeod & Emejulu, 2014: 437).

One of the key advocates of Christian Asset Based Community Development in the UK is Rev Dr Al Barrett (2015; 2017). Through his ministry in Firs and Bromley, Birmingham, Barrett advocates community building as a spiritual practice:

We've learnt, as we've journeyed with our neighbours and learnt and practised the language of ABCD, that our neighbourhoods are rich in 'assets' or gifts: the passions, skills and knowledge of our neighbours themselves; the diverse, often under-the-radar 'associations' (most without constitutions or agendas or even 'meetings' as such) that connect people together and amplify their gifts; the local 'institutions' who choose to act as 'treasure-chests' rather than self-defensive 'fortresses'; the gifts and economies and ecologies of the place itself; and the stories of our neighbours and our neighbourhood, individual and shared. (Barrett, 2015: 2)

During 2017, a group of Durham clergy and community practitioners in Durham Diocese met regularly over an 18-month period to explore what adopting an ABCD approach would look like in their context. The research revealed a shift in mindset, from seeing people as problems to be fixed, to communities of gifted, passionate, and talented people (Bramley, 2017).

However, over the last five years I have witnessed and encouraged a shift in this amelioratory discourse to one that moves beyond the symptoms to the causes of oppression to engage with a transformative or radical discourse.

3.6 A transformative, or radical, discourse.

It has been argued that a dominance of the amelioratory practice is often at the expense of seeing poverty as a justice issue and concern for the poor should be taken beyond the individual and local (Thacker, 2015; Taylor, 2003; Cooper, 2020). There is a lack of critical voice present, for example in foodbanks, towards injustice in the food system (Dowler & O'Connor, 2012) or the lack of universal state welfare (Poppendieck, 1999; Riches, 2011). An understanding of poverty as structural inequality must be addressed (Shannahan, 2019).

While there are many in the church who speak out against injustice, the majority of Christian responses both at home and abroad are at the small-scale local projects which might in some cases serve the person in front of us but fail to address the wider social issues that perpetuated the cause of their distress. (Taylor, 2003: 62, 71-72)

The second community development discourse that influences practice is transformative or radical and is

is committed to the role of community work in achieving transformational change for social and environmental justice, and develops analysis and practice which move beyond symptoms to the root causes of oppression (Ledwith, 2011: xv).

There exist many examples of Christian individuals and groups attempting to challenge and change structural injustice both at home and internationally. Christian leaders have historically used their power, position and influence, to challenge injustice on behalf of others, often as a result of personal encounters (Garner, 2004).

However, questions remain around the extent to which the Church of England, with its close relationship with monarchy, government and the middle classes, has been able to mobilise the working class sufficiently (Pacione, 1990).

This continues today with examples including the current Archbishop of Canterbury calling for a more just economic society (IPPR, 2018) and The Bishop of Durham, Rev Paul Butler, challenging the government around issues of child poverty in the House of Lords (Butler, 2020a).

Campaigning has and remains a strand of Christian social action relating to injustices nationally and internationally. Many Christian international development campaigns and agencies such as Christian Aid, CAFOD and Tearfund have successfully engaged faith and non-faith groups in actions such as Jubilee 2000, Make Poverty History and Enough IF. Critics have questioned the effectiveness of these campaigns and accused them of reinforcing an outmoded reality of global development (Kirk, 2012).

Christian communities have been central in establishing Poverty Truth Commissions that bring together commissioners with experience of living in poverty with local policy makers in order to 'speak truth to power'

The key principle behind a Poverty Truth Commission is that decisions about poverty must involve people who directly face poverty: Nothing About Us Without Us is For Us (Cooper, 2021: 9).

These transformative practices are built upon a radical collective Christian history which includes, for example, the relationships churches had with Friendly Societies (Weinbren, 2006).

Radical responses are part of the historic missiology of the church (Allen, 2016) and when there are injustices, public theology has a role to speak truth to power (Graham, 2017). However, what constitutes truth and where is power located are often difficult to agree upon (Smith, 2020).

The methodology I engage with in Durham Diocese for transformational change is broad-based community organising. Over the last ten years Christian groups have working with those of other faiths, and none, to tackle injustices such as low wages (Bretherton, 2010; Ritchie, 2019).

3.6.1 Broad-based community organising

Community organising is a participatory approach to community development and social action that faith groups have been engaging with for over twenty years in the United Kingdom (Furbey et al., 1997). The principles of community organising are built upon the work of Saul Alinsky (1971). Alinsky, working in disadvantaged communities in Chicago, recognised that those who are excluded from the decision-making processes that affect them, have the power, through being organised, to act together in the defence and pursuit of the common good. Participation is fundamental to his methodology as 'the denial of the opportunity for participation is the denial of human dignity and democracy' (Alinsky, 1971: 123).

Alinsky's breakthrough was to reverse the logic of paternalistic reform by wresting control away from the professional do-gooders and handing it over to the people they were supposed to help. Alinsky transformed community activism from the liberal, elite-led endeavour it had become around the 1900s into something he hoped would be more hard-headed and democratic. (MacLeod, 1993: 4)

His model for social change targets the causes and not the symptoms of marginalisation, beginning with the individual experiences, and developing local leadership to achieve social justice. This participatory approach sees issues emerging through a process of relationship building and active listening.

Although an agnostic Jew, Alinsky's distinctive feature of his work and legacy is its adoption by faith groups. Bretherton (2010) examines the involvement of churches in community organising, asking whether it constitutes an example of place-based, time-intensive political action that sustains and actualises human dignity. His conclusion is that 'Alinsky's approach represents a generative and faithful form of political witness in a religiously plural liberal polity' (Bretherton, 2010: 72). Rev Angus Ritchie, a community organiser in East London for over twenty years, suggests that the limits of both 'secularising liberalism' and far-right populism need to be replaced by a new 'inclusive populism' in

which religious and non-religious identities and institutions work together in public life (Ritchie, 2019), bringing people together with different beliefs and values to work for the common good.

However, as with all models of change, Alinsky's broad-based community organising is not without its critics. The inclusion of institutions that can pay annual dues is problematic, in that it excludes cash-strapped organisations and individuals that are not part of an institution. There is also a concern that community organising could provide a platform for regressive groups (Barclay, 2013).

Asset-based community development and community organising are alternative, long term collective initiatives providing spaces of receptivity, rapprochement, and hope.

3.7 Conclusion and reflections on Christian social action

This chapter has critically reflected upon Christian social action in the United Kingdom, appropriating debates within international development where applicable. The welfare provision by Christian congregations and organisations has been influenced by historic practice, theology, and the position of state welfare provision. The last twelve years of austerity localism have seen Christians along with other faith-based organisations responding to the violence of austerity. The care and compassion during these 'meantimes' have been criticised for failing to recognise the agency of those we support or to tackle systemic injustice. However, within this practice, spaces of radical receptivity, rapprochement and hope have emerged.

Viewing Christian social action through a community development lens, two distinct discourses have led to varying practices; a discourse of amelioration that focuses on the symptoms of injustice, and a discourse of transformation which asks the why question and looks to tackle the root causes (Ledwith, 2011). Neither praxis is exclusive, and overlaps are evident which was emphasised by research in London and the North East exploring Christian responses to debt (Barclay & Orton, 2017). The interactive sessions (provided by Money Talks) across London and North East England engaged approximately 580 people from Christian charities, ecumenical groups and congregations.

The responses that emerged from the data included individual debt support, providing opportunities for saving, low-cost loans through credit unions and advocating for change through community organising and campaigning. The complexity and divergence of responses often by the same groups and individuals challenges the dichotomy between amelioratory and transformative actions.

The two approaches are evident in the Anglican churches 'five marks of mission', which have been widely implemented as an effective tool to understand contemporary Anglican mission (Anglican Communion Office, 2020). The third mark of mission, 'to respond to human need by loving service' can result in operant practice that focuses upon the symptoms of injustice. The fourth mark of mission, 'to seek to transform unjust structures of society' demands a more radical response that advocates and works for political or societal change. The marks were adopted by the General Synod of the Church of England in 1996, and many dioceses (including Durham) and other denominations apply them to inform and shape missional visions and practice. The division between charity and justice is particularly important for practice when three quarters of the clergy state that poverty is mainly due to social injustice while only a fifth of regular churchgoers agree, rather believing that laziness is the root cause of poverty (Church Urban Fund & Church Action on Poverty, 2012).

The power of being a provider must be navigated with care and engagement and must not be at the expense of working to transform the unjust structures of society.

When we want to help the poor, we usually offer them charity. Most often we use charity to avoid recognising the problem and finding a solution for it. Charity becomes a way to shrug off our responsibility. (Yunus, 1999: 237)

This chapter has critically reflected upon Christian social action historically and highlighted two current discourses, an amelioratory (or charitable) and transformative (or radical). It has also emphasised engagement with new ways of working that put people before programmes within both discourses, namely asset-based community development and broad-based community organising.

The next chapter will theoretically explore whether social enterprises could provide a creative model of Christian social action that retains the positive themes of post-secular spaces, while also challenging injustice.

Chapter 4. Social enterprise – an alternative future?

The time is certainly ripe for entrepreneurial approaches to social problems. Many governmental and philanthropic efforts have fallen far short of our expectations. (Dees, 2001: url, para. 1)

Critical theorising puts forward practical models with a critical theoretical base to better understand the current situation and to suggest alternative futures and strategies for change (Butcher et al., 2007). As discussed in the previous chapter, much church social action has historically located itself in providing welfare or relief within a charitable framework. However, shifts to long term participatory, relational, and radical practice are evident. The aim of this chapter is to explore the literature considering this shifting practice and ask how a social enterprise can further enrich Christian social action in the United Kingdom.

The social enterprise sector in England has some of the most developed institutional support structures in the world (Nicholls, 2010). This support is closely linked to the New Labour Government (1997-2010) and the political influence within the co-operative and community business movements which advocated development of social enterprise (Brown, 2003; Ridley-Duff & Bull, 2011; Teasdale, 2012). During this period the purported benefits of social enterprise were expanded dramatically, and it was claimed to contribute to a wide range of government agendas (Office of the Third Sector, 2009). Recent research claims that the value of the sector had been grossly underestimated, as it failed to include larger enterprises, and the sector is worth £60 billion to the UK economy employing 2 million people and representing 3% of UK GDP (Gregory et al., 2018).

The growth in social enterprises over the last twenty years has led commentators to ask why Christians are not engaging in greater numbers (Gregory Jones, 2016), what the role is for faith based social enterprises (Dinham, 2007a), and whether social enterprises represent significant promise for 'faithful economic practice' (Sampson, 2018).

These questions were echoed during discussions at an event organised as part of this research in Gateshead in July 2018 (Appendix 1). The event 'Reimagining Church Social Action; The Role of Social Enterprise' involved participants from predominantly Anglican churches in the North East. Most had little engagement with social enterprises but were interested in exploring alternative approaches to church social action. The event included round table discussions and, in keeping with a grounded research approach, the questions asked create the framework for this literature review. Participants asked about the nature of social enterprise, where they sit within welfare provision, why they have emerged, the underlying values shaping them, how they can aid community engagement, and whether Christians are engaging. Relevant literature will be brought in to discuss these questions.

4.1 What is a social enterprise?

Regardless of growing interest in the practice of social enterprise over the last twenty-five years (Borzaga & Defourny 2001), there is still a problem around conceptualising these organisations (Simmons, 2008, Teasdale, 2012, Spear, 2001), with different meanings being adopted around the world (Kerlin, 2010). Gordon insists that the diversity of traditions makes a single definition of social enterprise a 'fool's errand, a Sisyphean pursuit of a shifting mirage' (Gordon, 2015: 27).

The definition adopted for the purposes of this research is:

a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximize profit for shareholders and owners. (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011:2)

Social Enterprise UK (2020) encourages practitioners to consider the following:

- Your business has a clear social or environmental mission that is set out in its governing documents.

- You are an independent business and earn more than half of your income through trading (or are working towards this).
- You are controlled or owned in the interests of your social mission.
- You reinvest or give away at least half your profits or surpluses towards your social purpose.
- You are transparent about how you operate and the impact that you have.

However, Fitzhugh and Stevenson (2015) suggest there is a more insightful way of looking at social enterprises, rather than through clinical description, and that critical debate and disagreement is to be encouraged.

They can be seen as organisations that involve strongly held (explicit or implicit) political and social beliefs and priorities and therefore debate and critical engagement are not only likely but absolutely vital. From this point of view the common complaint that the sector is always disagreeing with itself is actually a source of richness and potential. By disagreeing, people are looking beyond a standardised view of what is useful and making sure to ask the key ethical questions required by any human action: in what context are they or could they be useful, what does useful mean, to whom and by what means? (Fitzhugh & Stevenson, 2015: 161)

The framework of social enterprise contains many types of organisations, with different legal structures and different descriptions and terminology. However, involvement of strongly held (explicit or implicit) political and social beliefs is a significant aspect of this research when considering how these beliefs coincide with Christian beliefs and values.

In John Pearce's seminal book *Social Enterprise in Anytown* (2003), he described social enterprises as being positioned along nine dimensions or 'continua', along which their situation will shift over time.

1. **From very small to very large.** Social enterprises can be very small local initiatives which in some way reduce the cost of living and/or provide a local service. At the other end of the scale sit large mutual organisations such as building societies, large housing associations and credit unions, many of which started as small local enterprises.
2. **From voluntary enterprise to social or community business.** A voluntary enterprise will depend almost entirely on volunteers while the community business employs a greater percentage of staff. The assumption according to Pearce is that social enterprises should move along this continuum and aim to be more viable by employing paid staff.
3. **From a dependency upon grants and subsidies to full financial independence.** Organisations vary from those dependent upon grant income to those who can be self-sustaining through marketplace income generation.
4. **From people-orientation to profit maximisation.** Most social enterprises are people-centred in that the outcome of their social aims and the way they achieve these have the wellbeing of employees and volunteers as well as target groups central to their objectives. A small number of social enterprises prioritise financial profit which is directed to their beneficiaries.
5. **From informal to formal economic activities.** Pearce's broad definition of social enterprises includes local economic activities such as Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS) and time banks. These informal schemes based around barter or the exchange of services is an important first step for some people as they establish more formal economic activities and should be encouraged.
6. **From mono to multifunctional.** At one end of this continuum are social enterprises that focus upon one activity, although there may be a number of income streams associated with the social aims. At the other end are multifunctional enterprises that generate income through an assortment of trading activities and projects. This approach, Pearce argues, can make the social enterprise sustainable and develop a stronger and more skilled central management capacity.

7. **From voluntary organisation to social enterprise.** Pearce recognised that, increasingly, voluntary organisations were developing trading activities to supplement their income. Some of these organisations redefined themselves as social enterprises and now business thinking has infiltrated the third sector and more voluntary organisations are looking to trading activities to build a more sustainable future.
8. **From radical to reformist.** The reformist social enterprise, according to Pearce, serves as an extension to the private and public sector, providing services that these sectors fail to address. The radical social approach analyses the situation from a political stance; seeing social enterprise as an alternative way of doing things, evolving a political economy based on third sector values. This is an important debate as 'resolution of this particular debate will be important because, ultimately, social enterprise probably cannot effect real and lasting change or introduce new or dominant systems while at the same time collaborating with the existing order' (Pearce, 2003: 51).
9. **From individual to collective initiative.** This dimension describes how the social enterprise came into being, either as a result of a passionate and energetic individual or a group of people. Again, the boundaries are blurred with individuals being supported by others and the collective seeing individual leaders emerge.

Social enterprises encompass a wide range of organisations (Simmons, 2008) and consequently, there exists a bewildering array of definitions and explanations of social enterprise resulting in a:

fluid and contested concept constructed by different actors promoting different discourses connected to different organisational forms and drawing upon different academic theories. (Teasdale, 2012: 99)

A critical engagement with this fluid concept, embracing the broad nature of social enterprise, is more realistic than searching for encompassing definitions.

4.2 Where do social enterprises sit within the economy?

Pearce (2003) divides the economy into three distinct sectors, each with their over-riding values. The first system (or private sector) is essentially profit-driven, maximising return to private shareholders, founded on competition and celebrating individual gain. The second system (public sector) is about re-distribution and planning within the public service, based around democratic institutions. The third system is about citizens taking collaborative action, centred on 'principles of self-help and mutuality, of caring for others and of meeting social needs rather than maximising profits' (Pearce, 2003: 26). He positions social enterprises within this third, or voluntary, sector.

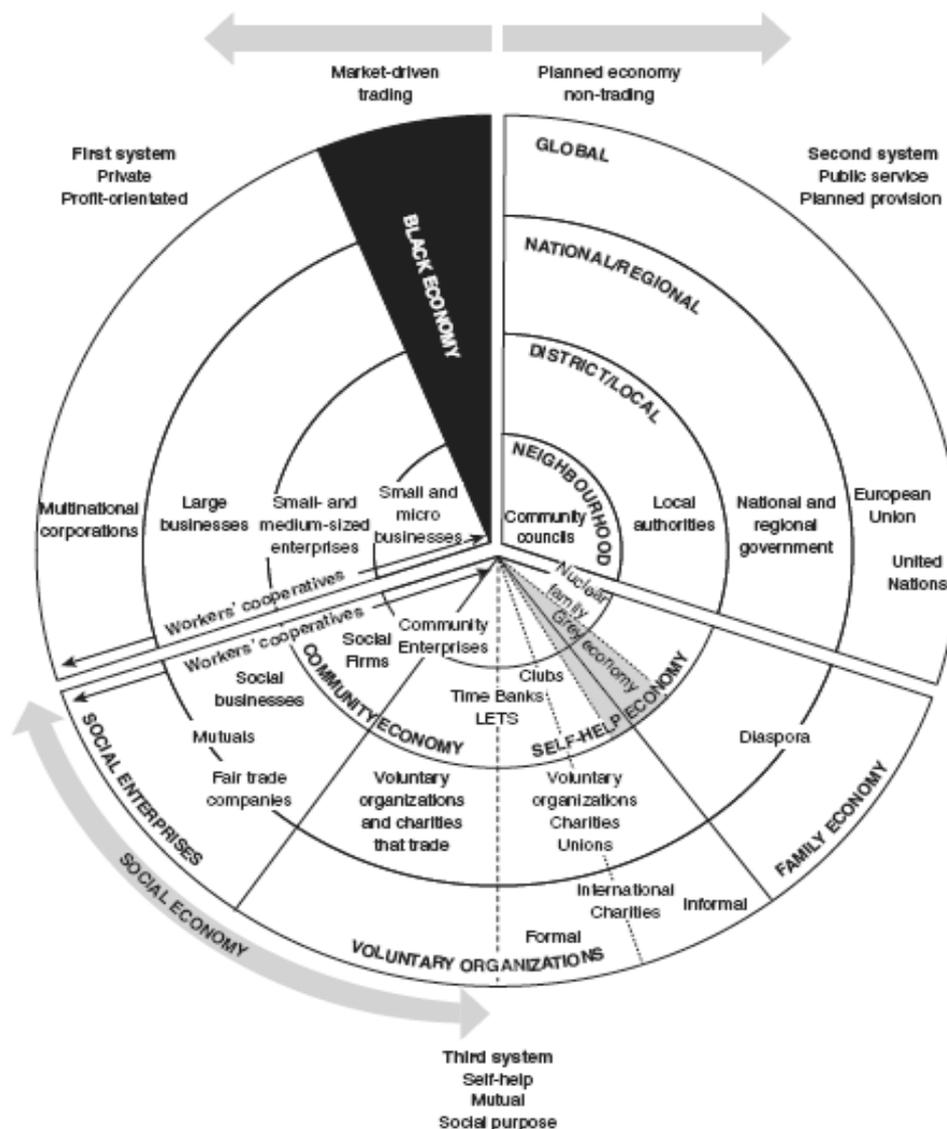


Figure 6. Three Systems of the Economy (Pearce, 2003)

Pearce recognises the importance of the informal local economy such as family, local clubs, and diaspora, and his model remains influential both in the UK and internationally (BALTA, 2007; Lewis & Swinney, 2008). Pearce's (2003) visual representation is beneficial for the purposes of this research as it places social enterprises alongside charities which include churches and related projects.

Furthermore, Pearce's model also provides a useful analytical tool to highlight the ebbs and flows between systems. Kay et al. (2016) identified that proportionally less is being spent on public services, and a growth in outsourcing has led to a shift in emphasis from the second to the first and third system. This could benefit the development of the social economy although questions around capacity and accountability to cope with this trend remain (Kay et al., 2016).

Laville and Nyssens (2001) argue that while the origins of social enterprises are based in reciprocity and thus form part of the third system, their strength is in their ability to tap into all three economic principles and systems. Additionally, their long-term sustainability depends on their ability to 'continuously hybridise the three poles of the economy so as to serve the project' (Laville & Nyssens, 2001: 25). Viewing social enterprise as a hybrid organisation that straddles conventional categories of private, public, and non-profit sectors, has been developed further (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Billis, 2010). Billis (2010) states that while these organisations possess significant characteristics which fit with more than one sector, they have their roots in just one, which influences their distinct principles.

Hybridity is not therefore just any mixture of features from different sectors, but according to this view, is about fundamental and distinctly different governance and operational principles in each sector. (Billis, 2010: 3)

In light of the Christian social action explored in the previous chapter, applying this theory would expect Christian social enterprise to be rooted in the third sector while adopting principles and practices from other sectors.

The hybrid nature of social enterprise means that social enterprise organisations differ from traditional non-profits by virtue of the centrality of trading income as part of their private business models (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Smith, 2010). Social enterprises intend to re-invest most of the surplus they create back into their business and, in some forms, they can deliver a dividend or profit to key community stakeholders. Thus, they exist to create social impact through trade, rather than solely to serve a social mission. According to Smith (2010), hybridisation represents an 'adaptive response' by third sector organisations to the turbulence caused by an increasingly uncertain funding and political environment.

4.3 Why do social enterprises emerge?

The last twenty to thirty years have seen a huge growth in social enterprises in the UK with estimates that approximately 471,000 small businesses have been established as such (Stephan et al., 2017).

The motives for developing these organisations can be broadly put into two camps, a radical camp, and a reformist camp (Pearce, 2003) or as Ridley-Duff and Bull describe it, as:

...those who 'seek to subvert the logic of the free market and change relationships between money, land and people', and those that 'accept [free market capitalist] globalisation and use it to advance social entrepreneurial enterprises'. (Ridley-Duff & Bull, 2011: 103)

Reformist examples include non-profit organisations that adopt commercial practices because it is an accepted way of doing things, rather than the best way to meet revenue shortage (Dart, 2004). These dominant practices are implemented across the board rather than maintaining a distinctive identity and there is some concern that social enterprises in England will become indistinguishable

from the state institutions that foster and fund them (Nicholls & Young, 2008 Nicholls & Teasdale, 2017).

Critics of the reformist camp have cautioned that, as in the charitable sector, attention could be diverted from the structural reforms that are necessary to solve the problems in our society (Cho, 2006) and caution must also be taken against social enterprises becoming 'creatures' of public funding through their delivery of welfare services (Peattie & Morley, 2008).

Neglecting the political and value-laden character of social entrepreneurs' activities and goals, and the problems they attempt to ameliorate, may not only make us fail to recognize the possible dark side of social enterprise, but also may prevent it from fully realizing its potential for positive social change. (Marti in Mair et al., 2006: 17)

The radical camp, by contrast, includes practitioners that regard social enterprises as promoting an alternative economic system. However, caution must be taken to avoid uncritically viewing social enterprises as a solution to healing the existing system (Ridley-Duff & Bull, 2016).

A radical approach to social enterprise aims to change the social order (Fontan & Shragge, 2000), achieving social justice for those who are marginalised (Amin, 2009) and challenging the political and socioeconomic systems for the benefit of the planet (Dobson, 2007). Radical social entrepreneurs are also those from mainstream businesses and public services in that they embed a collective, accountable governance structure.

They will focus on challenging preconceptions about the purpose of business and the 'naturalness' of doing business in particular ways. They will seek to gain respect for ideas of working collectively and in communities, through self-help and mutuality, for the value of networks of people and on the quality and relevance of the goods or services they provide. They are radical because they are not claiming to be 'business as usual' with a social twist,

but instead they try to convey how the production of quality outcomes is tied up in power, alternative governance and management processes and the genuine transformation of micro and macro economies. (Fitzhugh & Stevenson, 2015: 158)

Martin and Osberg (2015) position themselves as radical practitioners; however, they argue that social entrepreneurs can be contrasted with social service providers and social advocates in that they:

both take direct action and seek to transform existing structures. They seek to go beyond better, to bring about a transformed, stable new system that is fundamentally different from the world that preceded it. (Martin & Osberg, 2015: 9-10)

Fitzhugh and Stevenson (2015) interviewed approximately forty influential and experienced social enterprise practitioners, thinkers, policy makers and supporters for their book *Inside Social Enterprise, Looking to the Future*. They were surprised how many of the interviewees quoted books that call for greater equality such as *The Spirit Level* (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010) and asserted that many of those working in the sector in the UK are to a greater or lesser extent pursuing goals such as tackling inequality or humanising the economy and would thus be regarded as radical.

The growth of the number of social enterprises in the UK over the last 30 years is a combination of the increased support, the political context, and austerity localism. Social enterprises have been established as a radical or reformist response to this context.

4.4 What are the values underpinning social enterprises?

As discussed, social enterprises are hybrid organisations straddling the private, public, and non-profit sectors from which very different values and practices arise. Each of these sectors has a dominant logic and Billis (2010) presents organisational templates for the categories of private, public, and non-profit organisations. Private sector organisations are guided by market forces to

maximise financial return, owned by shareholders, governed according to size of share ownership, and generate revenue from sales and fees. Organisations in the public sector are guided by the principles of public benefit and collective choice, owned by citizens and the state, and resourced through taxation. Finally, non-profit sector organisations pursue social and environmental goals, are owned by members, governed by the private election of representatives, staffed by a combination of employees and volunteers, and generate revenue from membership fees, donations and legacies. Specifically, non-profit distributing organisations are legally prohibited from distributing any residual 'earnings' to those with a managerial or ownership interest (Hansmann, 1980). Billis (2010) argues that an organisation will have its roots and primary adherence to one sector, and as discussed in Chapter 2, for churches this is the non-profit (charitable) sector.

Gordon (2015) details the distinct values and purpose of social enterprises, tracing back to different historical traditions. While all the traditions have contributed to what we call social enterprise, each 'represents dissatisfaction with current circumstances, the identification of unmet needs (explicit or implicit), and a desire to both meet those needs and change things for the better' (Gordon, 2015: 14).

Engaging with Gordon's typology is a useful tool to reflect upon the historical tradition, its related values and purpose, and to explore where Christian social action may position itself. A social enterprise will not sit squarely within one tradition.

SE tradition & purpose	Basis	Central Values	Primary beneficiaries	Primary income source (s)
Mutual	Co-operation & mutuality	Worker/customer solidarity	Members	Earned contracts
Community	Community & voluntary association	Community solidarity	Community	Grants, public contracts, earned
Altruistic	Charity and philanthropic	Individuals and organisational giving	Individuals and groups in the community	Philanthropy, trading (primary, ancillary, small, non-primary)
Ethical	Alterity, sustainability & radicalism	Ethics, conscience and touching the Earth	Local & wider community, world	Trading contracts, grants
Private Market	Business & enterprise	Private profit, customer & social benefit	Owners, shareholders (community?)	Earned contracts
Public statist	Public social enterprise	Public service	Service users, community	Public contracts, earned

Table 4. Key Aspects of the Six Traditions of Social Enterprise (adapted from Gordon, 2015)

As discussed, Christian social action should avoid being seen as simply another service provider (Eckley, Ruddick & Walker, 2015), therefore we should exercise caution if focusing on the last two typologies. While co-operatives are shaped on the principles of reciprocity and mutuality, they exist primarily for the benefit of their members and not the wider community.

The values Gordon attributes to altruistic, ethic and community traditions are more closely aligned to the practice visible through Christian social action. The altruistic tradition has historical roots within the charity and philanthropy traditions so embedded in the workings of the church. The purpose of this altruistic social enterprise would include improvement of the individual or group's health, education or welfare, or the alleviation of poverty. Once again, the primary beneficiaries are

communities and individuals. However, these beneficiaries are not included in the collective decision making.

Community enterprise adopts many of the values aligned to community development; the focus is upon a geographical location, and they can be defined as trading organisations, combining both commercial and social activities. The key characteristics are that they are owned, led, and controlled by local stakeholders of an area of benefit, and their surpluses are not distributed to members and directors of an organisation, but are reinvested or applied for community benefit (Pearce, 2003).

In some ways, this debate about social enterprise is really about what kind of a society we want to live in and how we interact and provide goods and services fairly and in a way that serves the interests of society as a whole. The argument...is that the solution is perhaps 'local'. (Kay et al., 2016: 231)

The third tradition that church social action could engage with is the ethical or radical tradition, which embraces a utopian vision seeking to fundamentally transform exploitative market systems.

It could be argued that all Christian social action is a response to social injustice; whether this comes from a place of wanting to work with their community (Community tradition), work for their communities (Altruistic tradition) or challenge unjust systems (Ethical Tradition). Gordon's framework can help engagement with this 'fuzzy concept' of social enterprise (Markusen, 1999: 870).

4.5 Are social enterprises an effective tool for community development?

Social enterprises have been heralded as an innovative tool to transform disadvantaged people's lives by successive UK governments since the late 1990s (DTI, 2002; Pearce, 2003; Teasdale, 2010).

Furthermore, research shows that some social enterprises can equip disadvantaged people for the mainstream labour market through training (Aiken, 2007) and do this in a cost-effective manner (Smallbone et al., 2001). Social enterprises can also have a positive impact on mental health, self-esteem/resilience, and health behaviours, and can reduce stigmatisation, all of which contribute to health and wellbeing (Roy et al., 2014). Despite this, little is known about the impact of different forms of social enterprise (Peattie & Morley 2008).

Pharoah et al. (2004) distinguish four ideal types of social enterprise which Teasdale (2010) argues will impact on exclusion in different ways.

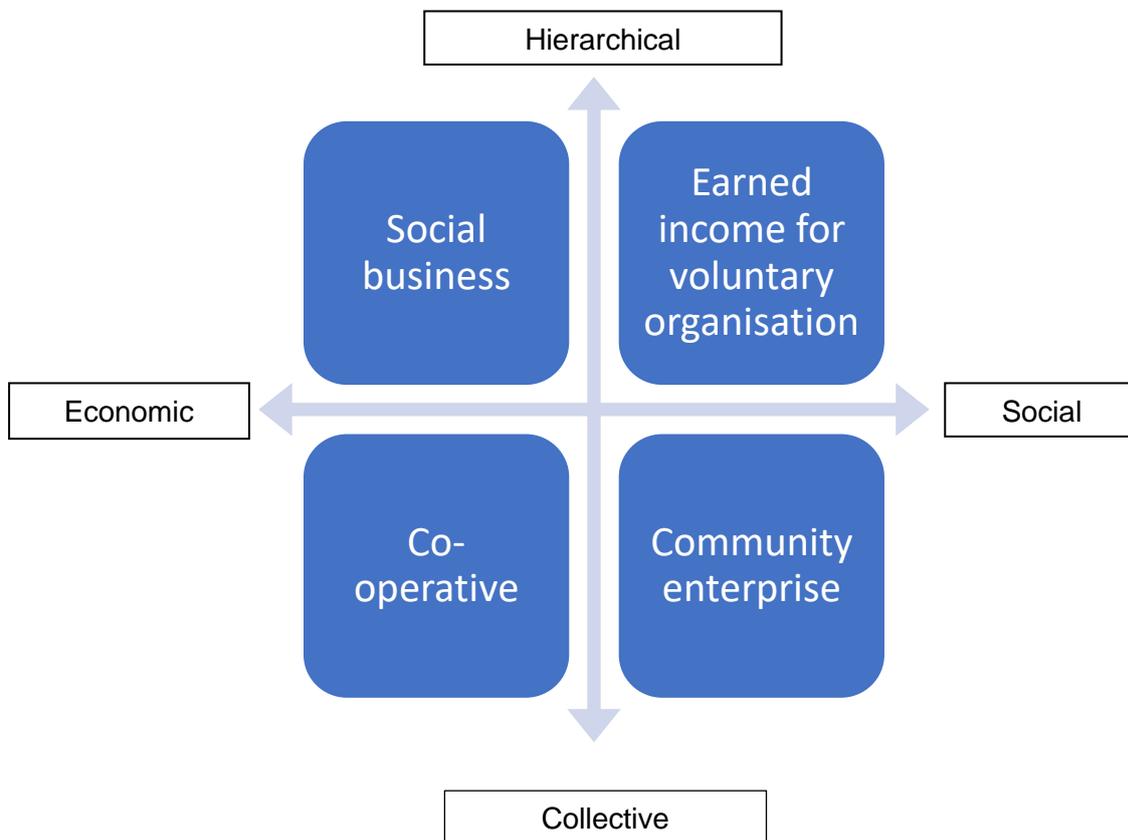


Figure 7. Conceptualising Social Enterprise Organisational Forms and Discourses (adapted from Teasdale, 2012)

This model reflects the issues experienced at an operational level, revealing tensions between the social inclusion of beneficiaries and the need to generate income. It also highlights the mixed method

of income generation that for some social enterprises includes grant funding and charity (non-profit/community enterprise), while for others the reliance is solely on earned income (social/community business). Research has shown that 100% trading income is an unrealistic aim for community-based social enterprises working with severely disadvantaged groups and geographies and therefore mixed income streams are encouraged to reduce the dependency upon trading (Pearce, 2003; Wallace, 2005). A trading threshold below 50% is considered as on a journey towards social enterprise (Smallbone & Lyon, 2005), while others argue that the cycle of development is more fluid with peaks and troughs of consumer spending and grant cycles (Seanor et al., 2013).

At an organisational level this tension is reflected in balancing the need for trading income against the social inclusion of beneficiaries (Pharoah et al., 2004). While organisations whose income is derived from grants or charitable donations may find their social action shaped by donors, social enterprises must operate within the constraints of the market (Pharoah et al., 2004).

Using a case study approach, Pharaoh et al. (2004) observed that economic orientated social enterprises provided more employment, compared with more socially orientated enterprises which provided space for excluded individuals to bond together, leading to social inclusion within a group. The management structures also impacted the social outcomes with hierarchal decision-making processes appearing to be better placed to deliver services to excluded groups. However, social enterprises that included marginalised people in a collective decision-making process were able to support these individuals in linking with others, becoming a 'bridge' in the community and resulting in greater social inclusion.

The following section pulls together some of the critical debates around social enterprise creation.

4.6 A Critique of social entrepreneurship.

As discussed, the meaning of social entrepreneurship varies greatly, however, it is generally said to alleviate social problems, to catalyse social transformation, or to make conventional businesses behave more responsibly (Mair & Marti, 2006).

There are calls for a more critical engagement with social entrepreneurship rather than thoughtlessly embracing the sector as a worthwhile pursuit (Dey & Steyaert, 2010; Cho, 2006). Dey and Steyaert (2010) consider how research has challenged myths of social entrepreneurship, highlighted the political effects it creates and described how it is part of the normative narrative.

This section will reflect upon these critiques in relation to the research agenda. One of the most powerful and popular myths in the third sector concerns resource dependency theory which holds social enterprise up as a solution to cutbacks in public spending. As a result of financial pressure, non-profit organisations have no other option than to accept that

they must increasingly depend upon themselves to ensure their survival [...] and that has led them naturally to the world of entrepreneurship. (Boschee & McClurg, 2003: 3)

If this were the case this opportunistic approach would see organisations dipping in and out of entrepreneurial activities depending on the state of grants and donations. However, research by Kerlin & Pollak (2010) found that commercial revenue was not a factor in filling the void for losses of other income streams. Consequently, they challenge the assumption of why social enterprises emerge, concluding that 'rather than a deliberate effort to subsidise declining revenue from discrete resources' (Kerlin and Pollak, 2010: 3), commercial activities are a result of a theoretical shift in the sector.

This theoretical shift is part of a normative shift that sees the market as a means to solve problems that neither the state nor the not-for profit sector could solve, and consequently the voluntary sector is witnessing a shift towards 'a normative ideology surrounding market-based solutions and business-like models' (Eikenberry, 2009: 586). Bassel & Emejulu, (2014) contend that community organisations must engage critically with a social enterprise, conscious of the hegemony of neoliberalism which will see them forced to mimic the ethos and behaviours of private sector organisations. By developing earned income strategies organisations also risk weakening their appeal to donors who feel that they are not needed (Eikenberry, 2009).

Social enterprise research has tended to turn a blind eye to the political effects it creates, and is part of, and there is a danger that social entrepreneurship might end up addressing the symptoms of the capitalist system rather than its root causes (Edwards, 2008). As in the charitable sector, attention could be diverted from the structural reforms that are necessary to solve the problems in our society (Cho, 2006) and caution must also be taken against social enterprises becoming 'creatures' of public funding through their delivery of welfare services (Peattie & Morley, 2008).

4.7 Christian involvement in social enterprises

Most people are hungry for innovation. We are hungry for new ways of living and doing things that can chart better paths forward. We are hungry for innovation because we know that we are facing challenges that are 'complex', problems that are 'wicked'. These words convey that our challenges and problems intersect in ways that make them more difficult to address than just being 'complicated' or 'hard'. Indeed, our challenges and problems intersect so deeply that we need multiple strategies because no single approach can 'solve' the challenge or 'fix' the problem. ...We have a looming sense that too much of our world is in a state of degeneration or disruption, that older institutions and patterns of life are decaying and dying. We have a sense that we need something new. (Gregory Jones, 2016: 90-91)

In *Christian Social Innovation: Renewing Wesleyan Witness*, Gregory Jones (2016) claims the church is hungry for innovation to address what isn't working. However, we have become preoccupied in managing what we have and are being shaped more by fear than hope. In *Doing Good Better: The Case for Faith-based Social Innovation* (2017), Bickley argues that religious institutions and faith communities, who already have a strong track record in helping those in need, should consider how social innovation can help them achieve greater impact in response to a range of social problems.

Religious social action needs to find new ways of responding to social problems in systemic, scalable and sustainable ways. Religious groups, organisations and networks need to learn how to 'do good better'. They should make greater use of the concept, language and practices of 'social innovation'. (Bickley, 2017: 7)

Church-based social action is a growing area of the social economy that is largely dependent upon a charitable mode of operation. Poole (2010) envisages a more radical role of the Church in social enterprise and asks:

how the Church might use its involvement to help re-shape the market, particularly through innovative business models and social enterprise structures that use the power of the market mechanisms to help the poor both in the developed and developing world. (Poole, 2010:168)

While a relatively new term, social enterprises can be recognised in the historical tradition of church mission and social engagement. MacDonald and Howorth (2018) trace the roots of social enterprise and highlight the story of Thomas Firmin, the son of a Puritan minister during the time of the Plague. Rather than providing charity, Firmin provided the unemployed poor with raw materials for 'continuing their usual occupations' (Owen, 1965: 18). By the 1670s, Firmin had established a significant quasi-social enterprise employing 1,700 spinners 'in addition to flax-dressers, weavers and others' (Owen, 1965: 19). The founder of the Salvation Army, William Booth, provided training for 'fallen' women in

London in a quasi-social enterprise approach to the growing problems of urban housing provision. Hanbury Street cottage for fallen women in London was set up to become self-supporting as quickly as possible: those who received assistance learned to pay their way (Whelan, 1996). By 1894, this model had become widespread within Salvation Army provision and over 1,000 people were employed within such vocational schemes (Whelan, 1996).

In Spain in 1941, a newly ordained Catholic priest, Father Arizmendi, was sent to Mondragon, an area of high unemployment in Northern Spain. When the school refused to take all the local children, Father Arizmendi organised door to door collections to fund a new technical school. From this act grew a co-operative that has been revered globally, made it the wealthiest region in Spain and raised a steady supply of capital for new co-operative ventures. By the turn of the century, 24,000 of the towns 28,000 inhabitants had a stake in one or more of the co-operative ventures and benefited from profit sharing arrangements (Long Island University, 2000). Father Arizmendi was lauded for the democratic design of the banking and governance systems (Whyte & Whyte, 1991), which were based upon Catholic social doctrine, prioritising labour over capital (Ellerman, 1984).

A more recent example is Traidcraft. Established by two Christian students from Durham University during the 1970s, it became a pioneer business for the Fairtrade movement in Britain. Traidcraft is a trading business whose founding principles are to provide a Christian response to poverty through trade. More than 80% of their volunteers are regular churchgoers who sell Fairtrade goods at the back of churches, in village halls, small high street co-operatives and from their homes (Traidcraft, 2008).

Individual church leaders Nic Frances (2008) and Andrew Mawson (2008) also developed social enterprises, Mawson as a URC minister in Bromley by Bow, and Frances an Anglican priest in Liverpool. Both stories are of individual passion for changing the world for those marginalised in their communities, and their account tells of a move from charity towards more of a business approach to solving the problems they encountered. These are accounts by social entrepreneurs who:

are driven by an overarching desire to improve society...They are movers and shakers – people who are not satisfied with the status quo and are always trying to make things better. They care, and they are action orientated. (London & Morfopoulos, 2010: 2)

The focus is often on an individual social entrepreneur, but as Bickley (2017) reminds us, the strength of faith-based social action is that it is at collective congregational level.

A report by the Plunkett Foundation explores how seven rural places of worship set up social enterprises (Payne & Withers, 2017). Some of the case studies were from low-income communities with initiatives including a community shop and launderette. The research found that not only were the places of worship more sustainable, but there was an increase in community engagement. The authors emphasise the need for high quality support and promotion, to ensure good practice is shared and built upon.

Over fifteen years ago, The Faith Based Regeneration Network UK (FbRN) and partners came together to explore what social enterprise meant for people of faith. The research carried out by Dinham (2007a) brought together participants from different faith groups to participate in five seminars across England (including one in Newcastle). The questions they asked were: Is there a role for faith-based social enterprise? Is it already happening? What works? What doesn't work? How do faith groups themselves understand social enterprise and do they want to engage in it? While the participants were from different faith backgrounds, 77% of the 233 taking part identified as Christian, therefore a strong Christian bias influenced the findings. The findings revealed a clear set of challenges and difficulties for faith engaging in social enterprise. There was a real sense of lack, including skills, resources, partnership skills and capacity, governance know-how and adaptability, time, staff, and volunteers. From their data a sense of fear also emerged. A fear of not knowing how to professionalise, of competition with others, of getting on the wrong side of legal obligations, of risk taking, of a resulting disjunction between business aims and values, of what is known being

swamped by what isn't known and finally a fear of failure. There was also a sense of ignorance about what social enterprise is, how to do it and what effects it could have. The research produced a long list of recommendations for faith groups and governments.

The recommendations relevant to this research were:

- develop and disseminate examples of good practice.
- extend and consolidate supportive networks.
- engage in business planning training.
- work with already established social enterprises.
- use community visioning techniques to identify the product or service most needed.
- use congregational development techniques to identify opportunities, needs and skills amongst the community.
- pray and reflect.
- provide guidance on good governance.
- develop local partnerships.
- be inclusive – involve people broadly through steering and planning groups.

Dinham (2007a) also discusses the need for a statement of the values for engagement with social enterprise. A deeper understanding of the underpinning values could help counter prevailing anti-entrepreneurial attitudes, with images of an entrepreneur being perceived as responsible for and the product of a 'highly competitive and materialistic form of individualism' (Casson et al., 2006: 10), which exist within wider society as well as the church.

Michael Volland's research (2015) helps to develop an understanding of why entrepreneurial activity within the church can be met with a degree of suspicion. The research listened to the experiences of clergy any with entrepreneurial backgrounds in Durham diocese.

I suggest that Christians who respond hesitantly or negatively to language around entrepreneurship are likely to have less of an issue with entrepreneurship when it is

conceived as a co-operative, mutually supportive, non-competitive approach to life and work (and all this implies for Christian ministry and mission) rather than as competitive, individualistic wealth creation. (Volland, 2015: 19)

Volland identified factors that aid the exercise of entrepreneurship within ministry, including using accessible language, creating a shared vision, having the courage to go beyond the church and experiment, and building networks to share entrepreneurial expertise within the wider church.

This attitude, plus the belief in the value of charity, is a challenge for Christian engagement in developing social enterprises, reflecting the negative perception of entrepreneurs which in turn identifies barriers to being an entrepreneurial minister which are relevant to this research.

4.8 Conclusion and reflections on social enterprise as an alternative future?

This chapter has highlighted how construction of social enterprise is ongoing and shaped by different languages and political beliefs (Teasdale, 2012). Rather than focusing upon the wide-ranging definitions the attention has been on the strongly held political and social beliefs within these organisations (Fitzhugh & Stevenson, 2015). Whether these beliefs align with beliefs that underpin Christian social action and community development is a fundamental question for this research.

During a conference entitled 'Faith in Social Action: Where Next?', Professor Adam Dinham highlighted the importance of exploring how social enterprise relates to community development within a faith context.

Community development is more important than ever because it is politically committed to social justice – and there are crucial questions about community development's continuing feasibility in contexts where funding has to be secured through other models – namely social enterprise and philanthropy. Thinking through how these models relate to – or undermine – each other seems pressing. (Dinham, 2016: 14)

This literature review has critically theorised how the social enterprise model relates to, or has potential to relate to, Christian social action and community development.

Gordon's typology (2015) provides a reflective tool for this conversation by looking at the values associated with different traditions. These include values of individual and organisational giving (Altruistic Tradition), community solidarity (Community Tradition), and challenging unjust systems (Ethical Tradition). There is a continuum between the individual charitable, mutual, and radical social enterprises. This range of responses is reflective of Christian social action and community development practice, as described in Chapter 3. Radical social enterprises aim to promote an alternative economic system (Ridley-Duff & Bull, 2018; Pearce, 2003) and often arise from conversations about the type of community we want to live in together (Martin & Osberg, 2015). This is in comparison with more reformist approaches which see social enterprises adopting commercial practice because it is either an accepted way of doing things, in accordance with a neoliberal agenda, or to generate income (Dart, 2004; Pfeffer & Salanick, 2003).

Section 5 of this chapter explores how social enterprises have been encouraged as a way to transform disadvantaged people's lives by successive UK governments despite there being little known about the impact of different forms of social enterprise (Peattie & Morley, 2008). This is in common with Christian social action and community development.

This chapter has highlighted calls for greater social innovation within Christian communities (Bickley, 2017), with academics and practitioners linking this innovation to the development of social enterprise (Gregory Jones, 2016; Lupton, 2015; Poole, 2010). There is a small but growing number of social enterprises established by Christian communities, a sample of which are included in this research.

The church is an organisation that is deeply and daily shaped by its historical traditions and, as we have seen, social enterprise is part of this history. Re-connecting with this story of radical engagement with the market economy is fundamentally important if we are to respond in today's context and to challenge the dominant narrative and practices of Christian social action.

In *Social Enterprise in Anytown*, Pearce (2003) sets out a vision where social enterprise could be an integral part of a thriving local and social economy. He conceptualises the social economy in a legalistic sense; to include social and community enterprises including building societies, credit unions, Fairtrade companies, housing associations, time banks, and workers' cooperatives. The local church could hold an exciting position within this vision.

The question of how Christians shape this discourse around the values central to their faith is fundamental to this thesis. Volland (2015) calls for the church to identify, deploy and invest in mission entrepreneurs, lay or ordained, as a potential resource for ministry and mission. We require a body of praxis to underpin this engagement, and the next chapter begins to explore this through the experiences of Christian social entrepreneurs.

Chapter 5. Learning from Christian social entrepreneurs

The research process began by interviewing four Christian social entrepreneurs, this data was further enriched by interviews with four different participants later in the research process. The aim was to build an inductive picture from the experiences of practitioners who have developed and/or supported social enterprises in the United Kingdom. The participants came from various locations (two in Birmingham, two in East London, two in County Durham, one in Milton Keynes and one in Cumbria)⁹ and practices, five managers/directors of social enterprises and three consultants. The sample developed from a combination of snowballing and respondent driven sampling.

The open ended, in-depth interviews, (as described in Chapter 2.3.1), resulted in nine dominant themes emerging:

1. Community engagement as a catalyst for change
2. Radical social innovation
3. Developing expertise and confidence through collaboration
4. Creating a culture of experimentation and adaptation
5. Spaces of belonging
6. Spaces of reciprocity and empowerment
7. Spaces of tension
8. Spiritual capital
9. Navigating and expressing Christian values - this final theme has been included in Chapter 8.

In line with the grounded theory approach, discussions of these categories have been interwoven with relevant research literature.

⁹ This first fold of data was collected on 17.07.2019 and 18.07.2019. Five interviews were conducted in person and included visits to the social enterprises. Three interviews were conducted via Zoom – a cloud-based video conferencing service with a record function.



Figure 8. Participants and Key Themes from First Cycle of Learning

These were the interviewees:

Jane Barret was a key founder in establishing Listen Threads, a Social Enterprise on the Bromford Firs Estate in Birmingham. Jane is a youth worker who has a passion for working with young women on the estate where she and her husband (the local Church of England vicar) live. Listen Threads is an ethical clothing line which has been designed, produced, marketed, and sold by local girls who are part of a youth project. The name was chosen by the girls as it reflected the social aims of the enterprise; that everyone deserves to be listened to and valued. Their website (www.listenthreads.com/about-us.htm) sets out the main social aims which are:

1. To inspire hope, so that young women can overcome the challenges they experience.
2. To listen to young women and enable them to increase confidence and self-esteem.
3. To provide young women with employment support and opportunities.
4. To raise funds for supporting young women through high quality youth work.
5. To care for the environment in all areas of the enterprise.

Jess Butler is café manager at Bethnal Green Mission Church in East London. The mission at The Beehive café is to offering hospitality alongside working with volunteers, with the aim of empowering, giving skills, and providing employment opportunities.

Nikki Dravers is the managing director of REfUSE which she helped to establish. REfUSE is an ethical social enterprise that aims to challenge levels of food waste by intercepting food before it becomes waste and turning it into healthy, accessible meals, served on a 'Pay as You Feel' basis in their community café on the High Street in Chester-le-Street, County Durham. Alongside the café, they run pop-up restaurant events, campaigns, a school's project, and a grocery box scheme.

Tim Evans is a trained youth worker and joined Worth Unlimited in 2003 and became the Director of Strategy and Vision in 2019. Worth Unlimited is a national youth project whose mission is to mobilise people of all ages, particularly young people, to make their unique contribution to building strong well connected resilient communities. There are nine branches across England, each delivering programmes and projects which are tailored to their local context. Many of these have developed social enterprises including Listen Threads, Gear Up (a bike repair enterprise), and Worth Furniture (a re-use and re-cycling project in Walthamstow).

Martin Lawson heads up the consultancy team of a social impact company whose mission is to connect capital and social enterprise. Martin has worked in both the for-profit and not-for-profit worlds doing acquisition, strategy, and organizational development work. His current focus is working with social organizations and enterprises from early-stage start-up to mature growth in a UK and international context. He is a trustee at Clean for Good and is a tutor on a Christian charity's pioneer training course

Stephen Norrish is Director of the Milton Keynes Christian Foundation, a charity that aims to grow people and community through eight social enterprises. These social enterprises provide locally

grown food, honey and eggs, affordable childcare, hand-made products. They also restore and sell donated bicycles, run a forest school, and community café.

Tim Thorlby was part of the founding team for Clean for Good and is currently the managing director. Clean for Good is a business with a social purpose, to provide cleaners in London with decent, ethical jobs. The company pays the Real Living Wage,¹⁰ directly employs their staff, has no zero-hour contracts, and invests in training, management and development.

Kate Welch is the Chief Executive of Social Enterprise Acumen CIC (SEA), a consultancy in the North East of England that provides capacity building support and advice to existing or would-be social entrepreneurs looking to develop their concept or grow their business. Kate established her first social enterprise in the Coalfields in East Durham to support people to find employment. Kate has contributed to UK Government departments on social enterprise policy, was awarded an OBE in 2008 for services to social enterprise in North East England, and is an active member of a local Methodist Church.

5.1 Community engagement as a catalyst for change

The social entrepreneurs explained how engagement with their local community provided a catalyst that led to the development of social enterprises. Community engagement provided opportunities to better understand the experiences of local people, this knowledge was gained through a variety of listening and storytelling activities.

The congregation members of St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe Church in East London learned about the lived experiences of their community through the process of community organising with one-to-

¹⁰ The Real Living Wage is the wage rate necessary to ensure that households earn enough to reach a minimum acceptable living standard as defined by the public. It is calculated annually by the Resolution Foundation and overseen by the Living Wage Commission. The rate in 2021- 22 is £11.05 per hour in London and £9.90 in the rest of UK (Cominetti, 2021). The rate is calculated and adjusted annually.

one conversations in their community. It was through these conversations that many stories of poor working conditions and wages were heard from cleaners who worked in the City of London.

In Milton Keynes, Stephen described how all their enterprises emerged from listening to their community.

'And the approach was very much to be engaged and present within communities, to listen to what was going on. A process of discerning, what was felt to be God's activity, through the things that we were hearing within local communities, and then developing with those communities, practical ways of continuing to engage, but also to provide some mechanisms for addressing the things that were emerging.' (Stephen)

This community engagement resulted in social enterprises emerging.

'And the kernel of the enterprise...has always started either from something that's emerged within the communities we're working with, or literally somebody from the community who knows about us has come in and said, what you doing something about this? Can we do something about that with you? And we work with them.' (Stephen)

Listen Threads is a youth project whose central aim is to provide a space to listen to young women on the local housing estate. Their social enterprise reflected their listening process.

'We want every young woman to feel listened to, we want them to have their stories heard and we want them to feel valued...I asked the girls if they wanted the business to have a social aim, they came up with the idea of Listen Threads which was a reflection of their

mentoring experience...and they said “We want every young woman to feel listened to, we want them to have their stories heard and we want them to feel valued”.’ (Jane)

In Bethnal Green, the congregation had listened to stories in their neighbourhood and recognised the transient nature of their community. Jess commented how it had also been important to build upon the story of Bethnal Green Mission Church and their founder Annie Macpherson in the 1860s. Annie developed a ‘Home of Industry’, where homeless children and women could find shelter, warmth, food and drink, as well as an opportunity to learn new skills.

The story of REfUSE began when a group of students from different churches started to live in a community house, offering emergency accommodation to people in need. They would cook and eat together, and it was through the process of sharing food that personal stories of lived experiences were shared and community built.

Kate first established a social enterprise after listening to the accounts of people looking for work in ex-mining communities in East Durham.

‘I just heard from people more and more and more, I can’t do that. I’ll never be able to get a job. Why would anybody give me a job? And what I was hearing was people just not having any self-belief, any sense that they were of any value in society.’ (Kate)

This community listening aimed to ensure that the resulting social enterprises were influenced and shaped by local people and context.

The social entrepreneurs’ interviews in this cycle of learning described how, in different ways, their organisations had emerged after a process of community engagement. This community

engagement, which took different forms, ensured that the social enterprises were influenced and shaped by local people and context. Finlayson and Roy (2019) have shown that social enterprises that originate outside communities and are facilitated by external actors can be potentially disempowering, particularly when social enterprise development does not necessarily align with community needs. Aligning with the community as observed in community development practice, listening not only to values and empowers the individual but provides motivation for change, with practitioners placing the 'story at the heart of the deeply personal and the profoundly political' resulting in collective action for change' (Ledwith, 2011: 61).

Voice is an expression of self-esteem; it is rooted in the belief that what we have to say is relevant and of value. If we are not heard with respect; our voices are silenced. My point that the simple act of listening to people's stories, respectfully giving one's full attention, is an act of personal empowerment, but to bring about change for social justice this process needs to be collective and needs to be situated within the wider structures. (Ledwith, 2011: 62)

This initial finding highlights the importance of engaging with the local community to really understand the issues.

Martin and Osberg (2015) argue that for social entrepreneurs to transform existing systems they must begin by understanding the world.

The paradox of social transformation is that one has to truly understand the system as it is before any serious attempt can be made to change it. (Martin & Osberg, 2015: 18)

Lived experiences which are gathered through community engagement are catalysts for different responses to change; whether through community education, community organising or charitable responses. The next theme highlighted how participants moved away from these responses to exploring a more enterprising response.

5.2 Radical social innovation

As discussed in Chapter 4.3, social enterprises are an emerging response to reductions in available resources and as the practice becomes the accepted way of working (Pfeffer & Salanick, 2003; Dart, 2004). This was not revealed in any of the interviews and was not seen as an appropriate starting point as Tim from Clean for Good explained:

'Churches tend to start talking about business and social enterprise when they want money and I understand the need for that but it's not the best place to start. It isn't a great reason and certainly can't be the only reason to talk about enterprise "Oh I need some money and don't have any grants". The best businesses don't come from those conversations.' (Tim)

In several cases, this was because a charitable response was not seen as appropriate. Nikki described how the charitable systems set up to respond to food poverty were not only legitimising the problem of food waste but making it worse.

'This charity stuff is a nice idea but actually it's causing me to go to [a local supermarket] and say "Thank you so much for this food that you're wasting, it's going to feed the homeless", and somehow that idea of it being a charity was entrenching the problem in the system because the supermarkets were able to say "Oh no we don't waste food, we give it to charity" and then waste more food and it being part of the model.' (Nikki)

This comment from Nikki highlights some of the contradictions within the food aid discourse. The narrative from the receiver's perspective has shifted from charity to justice, from feeding the poor to challenging the unjust food system. Yet the same practice is ongoing, surplus food is being given to the third sector to feed those experiencing food insecurity.

The issue of low pay and poor working conditions that was being faced by cleaners in the East of London required an alternative response other than charity, with Clean for Good aiming to achieve social justice for marginalised workers.

'The problem is an economic and social injustice in the marketplace. The marketplace is not working properly, there is a bunch of people that are not being paid well and not being treated properly. That is unfair, nobody is asking for charity.' (Tim)

The congregation at St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe held a meeting where two suggestions were made: to set up a drop-in facility that would provide pastoral support; or to establish an ethical cleaning business. The latter approach was taken.

'I am delighted that the church's' instinctive reaction was "Let's start a business" that would create the types of jobs that they felt the cleaners should have and not to feel sorry for them and set up a charity; that was one of the suggestions, to set up a drop in café where they can all come in and moan.' (Tim)

Kate Welch regards the charitable response as not valuing individual contributions and that providing employment opportunities sets people free.

'Having a job gives you so much more than being a benefit recipient. And I also I've never liked the term beneficiary. I've never liked that sense of somebody feeling as though they have to beg for something almost...I don't like the sense of I'm being very magnanimous and I'm giving you things because actually, how does that make the poor person on the other end [feel] helped. Help the oppressed in whatever way we want to, you know, set the prisoners free. Let's do all of that. But actually, if we do it in this kind of old-fashioned charity type model,

we're not really setting people free. And we're not really giving people the opportunity for them to live their whole life that they could live. So, the social enterprise bit, I think, comes from the fact again, so its valuing [and] in some ways is the sense that everybody's contribution is of equal value.' (Kate)

Martin had witnessed social innovation working when people were prepared to look at things in a way that weren't seen as central to the church.

'I've seen it working well is when the church, you know that Christian subculture, is prepared to look at, and think about, things that are a little bit less core.' (Martin)

An important finding was that interviewees highlighted that setting up a social enterprise was not always an appropriate response.

'The church, [has] got quite a significant asset base. And it's normally pretty reluctant to do anything to mobilize that to support social enterprise. I think there's quite a few opportunities, I think, again, you know, it's rather naively talked up sometimes ... the fact that you've got a 19th century building in the community doesn't necessarily mean that it's the ideal place to run a ... mums and toddlers club or a co working space' (Martin).

Choosing the most appropriate response was summed up by Tim from Clean for Good:

'I think business can be a very good thing, it can be a very, very powerful force for good if it is used properly. It can also be a very damaging if it's done badly. Just as charities can be very damaging, and I think people don't realise this. They automatically presume charity good, business bad. That is a very common church narrative...charity is a fabulous thing if

it's done in the right way, at the right time, for the right purpose and the same is true for business, it can be fabulous if it's done in the right way, at the right time, for the right purpose.'
(Tim)

Social innovation involves breaking normal patterns (Munshi, 2010; Noruzi et al., 2010). This recognition resulted in a process of social innovation which created:

a novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals. (Phills et al., 2008: 39)

Social innovation was visible through all the participants' accounts as they explained how they had moved away from the normal patterns of response adopted by the church. Charitable actions were not seen as the most appropriate action, and in some cases could exacerbate the problem.

Geoff Mulgan, a recognised pioneer in the field of social innovation, acknowledges the long history of 'innovations that are both social in their ends and their means' (Mulgan, 2019: 10). In his book *Social Innovation, How Societies Find the Power to Change* (2019), Mulgan recognises the role of individual innovators. However, to affect far-reaching change collective innovation is necessary, for example feminism, LGBTQ+ rights or environmental movements. It is these collective changemakers that have their roots in ideas growing out of discontentment. Whether individual or collective responses, both approaches also rightly:

emphasise the importance of ideas-visions of how things could be different and better. Every successful social innovator or movement has succeeded because it has planted the seeds of an idea in many minds. (Mulgan, 2019; 13)

An organisation must generate capacity to create creative solutions to social problems (Ko et al., 2019) and leadership support, directly or indirectly cultivating the problem solving capacity of the workplace (Carmeli et al., 2013).

The social enterprises represented by this research held a vision of what they wanted to change, including low wages, educational exclusion, food waste or young people's mental wellbeing. They also recognised that collaboration and development of business skills helps to realise the vision.

5.3 Developing expertise and confidence through collaboration

All the interviewees recognised that specific skills and a knowledge base were required to set up a social enterprise and that gaining this entailed collaboration.

Tim from Clean for Good didn't feel that clergy necessarily were the right people to lead these enterprises due to the lack of business management experience, time, capacity, and continuity of ministry. Therefore, collaboration was important during this developmental phase.

'Clergy are almost never the right people to run businesses because they don't have the skills. If you are going to go down this route you have to ask who are the people with the right skills to do this; they may be in the church. Start with what skills are needed, if nobody has those in the congregations you will have to go out to look for them. We are fussy about ensuring the right people with the right skills run our churches, it is the same for our businesses. They are equally difficult things but very different.'
(Tim)

The different skills and knowledge required to set up a social enterprise can be very stressful as Tim from Worth Unlimited explained:

'When you're having to manage your money month by month, have we achieved the targets that we set ourselves? Have we got the right structures in place to be able to do that? So, it's been an adventure, it has added stress points, I would say.' (Tim)

Consequently, specific training, recruitment or consultation was needed to fill the gaps. Listening Threads had support from their sponsoring organisation and Jane completed social enterprise training. The Beehive employed a manager with the specific business skills and the congregation of St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe collaborated with a consultant from the Centre for Theology and Community.

Tim from Worth Unlimited explained that outside collaboration was important when working with youth and community workers who, while passionate about the social impact, had developed few business skills. Equally, getting business support when either the Christian context or social impact isn't fully understood by those participating was also challenging. Tim felt that a sustained level of business support, especially during start-up phase, would have reduced the stress of a vastly different way of working at Worth Unlimited. This point was reinforced by Martin:

'I don't think you can necessarily just go out and find some business people to support that process...I've seen a lot of misdirected Christian social enterprises, where someone's just come in with a business perspective and said, "Oh, you know, the obvious thing to do is this, you should do that", or whatever. And I think it under sells the, the kind of delicate complexity there is sometimes.' (Martin)

A lack of relevant support could adversely affect the start-up of faith-based social enterprises. Martin was cautious about the lack of business planning within faith communities, which he linked to the widespread assumption that because it is a faith motivated action, all will be fine.

'I think there sometimes is, in some communities, some sub sectors of the church, a lack of rigor in thinking, because the kind of easy appeal is "Ah well, it's alright, to it's a faith motivated thing. It'll all work out fine". Which is sometimes the teaching of the Church as well... you know. I think that can both lazy or dangerously naive, and sometimes this thinking, can adversely affect faith-based start-up and social enterprise approaches.' (Martin)

The theme that developed through these interviews was that while there was expertise in social welfare provision, a degree of collaboration was required to acquire the social enterprise expertise, and therefore social enterprise advisers that understood the faith context were important.

Many of the participants had been inspired by other social entrepreneurs. Stephen had taken a sabbatical and travelled to Europe and Scotland visiting social enterprises. Nikki had met the leader of the Real Junk Food project and then taken part in social enterprise training over a year during which she met other social entrepreneurs before establishing REfUSE.

'I can't remember where I first came across social enterprise, but I found the school of social entrepreneurs and they were advertising for their first venue cohort, where you had to go and pitch an idea and they gave you £4000. I got a random idea which I developed throughout the year; one day of training every two months looking at what a social enterprise could look like. Such a good year and I got to meet so many other people who were entrepreneurial.'
(Nikki)

This exposure to the thinking and experience of others was an important factor in helping people believe what they can achieve.

'It's around people feeling that it's a thing you can do. So, there's definitely the role models, the examples, the case studies, the more people are exposed to what other people are doing, the better it is because then they start to believe that they can. I would love to do some positive psychology work with churches first.' (Kate)

Social enterprise development is often portrayed as a series of almost spontaneous events, however:

Sometimes the establishment of a community enterprise appears to have been a spontaneous event. Local people get together, talk, plan, and organise. More usually someone, from within the community or from outside, feels that 'something' ought to be done but is unsure of how to start taking the initiative. (Pearce, 2003: 83)

This collaborative behaviour is an important factor in social entrepreneurial development (Lurtz & Kreutzer, 2017).

When engaging in the process of social venture creation, it seems important for a nonprofit organization to accept its core competences and acquire additional business like core competences needed in a social venture, for example, through collaboration with corporations. (Lurtz & Kreutzer, 2017: 110)

Context is also important for social enterprise development (Mazzei, 2017) and consequently, collaboration with agencies, consultants and individuals that had an insight into Christian values and organisational structures was seen as key.

As the enterprises developed, participants described a process of experimentation and adaptation.

5.4 Creating a culture of experimentation and adaptation

A theme of experimentation and adaptation began to emerge from the interviews. Nikki explained how during the start-up phase they had experimented with different venues and menus.

'We set up our first pop up, which was taking over a cafe, in Durham city centre, we fed almost 220 people the first time; we collected food over two weeks and filled my living room and got a whole load of volunteers together to cook a meal together; it was amazing and we did monthly pop up meals in cafes and church halls and we'd get like 100 people a time.'
(Nikki)

Nikki went on to explain that as well as using this time to adapt what they were doing it also gave them confidence.

'We adapted the way you order your food and the way you paid...our menus and how we recruited and trained volunteers, and yes it gave us confidence.' (Nikki)

This controlled experimentation gave Nikki and her colleagues from *REFUSE* the confidence to take bigger risks, with Nikki leaving her job to concentrate upon the social enterprise and raising £15,000 to rent and refurbish a property. But this experimentation often felt chaotic as Nikki explained.

'The day before we opened the cafe, like we were almost ready, I was here in the evening. we'd thought that we would have a team meeting in the morning and then have the afternoon off so we feel energetic and ready for the next day, but 11pm I was still here fixing lightbulbs, sorting out the disabled toilet and I went to turn the lights out and there was a big puddle and the toilet was leaking! when we opened the coffee machine wasn't working, and it wasn't

fixed until 9am the day before so customers were coming in and we were being trained how to use the coffee machine and someone ordered soup and we didn't have any bowls so someone had to run to the shop! There is always stuff we are learning and changing and apologising about. We have different people in all the time so we are constantly changing and adapting.' (Nikki)

Jane from Listen Threads experimented with many different entrepreneurial ideas before the youth project found the thing they wanted to take forward – fashion.

'We did lots of creative activities, candle making, jewellery making, cake making; looking for something to sell and really got absolutely nowhere.' (Jane)

It wasn't until the project funding ended that the young women told Jane they wanted to develop a social enterprise that focused upon fashion. The Beehive also experimented, in their case with menus, coffees and prices, until finding a business model that suited their context. This included a mug of tea for £1, ensuring their pricing was affordable as possible.

Stephen stated how, at Milton Keynes Christian Foundation, confidence in navigating risks had developed over time. At the beginning of the year a small group of local artists approached Stephen as they had nowhere to store their large pieces of work. This initiated a conversation to find solutions that would be income generating for the artists and allow the young people to benefit from the experienced artist.

Experimentation involved taking risks, adopting new approaches that may or may not work. Lurtz and Kreutzer (2017) conducted a longitudinal study of a Christian international development organisation that aimed to tackle child poverty through transformational development, humanitarian aid, and advocacy, to understand entrepreneurial orientation. Entrepreneurial orientation captures

the practices an organisation uses to engage in new ventures or to enter new markets (Covin & Slevin, 1991; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). They highlight the complex nature of risk taking and innovation of non-profit organisations. Their findings demonstrated how the varied contexts of the organisations impacted innovation and experimentation. Research participants who were working abroad tolerated high levels of risk taking as employees were used to taking risks in their daily work in developmental regions. This was in contrast with employees in head office who manifested concern about financial risk taking as they were entrusted with donors' money.

Generally, a donation that reaches beneficiaries directly is perceived as money well spent by donors; thus, money invested in an entrepreneurial venture, with its inherent uncertainty of outcome, is viewed with greater scepticism. (Lurtz & Kreutzer, 2017: 109)

This cycle of learning did not gather deep enough data to reliably learn about attitudes to financial risk taking, although the issue of the costs of the sweatshirts at Listen Threads reflected a cautious and considered approach. Responsibility to donors (Gras & Mendoza-Abarca, 2014), is relevant to this research where congregational donations contribute to the hybrid nature of income generation. Further research into the relationship between income source and experimentation in Christian social enterprises would help develop a deeper understanding of these hybrid organisations.

Providing a space for experimentation was a theme that arose as the entrepreneurs adapted their activities to provide spaces of belonging, reciprocity, and empowerment within their social enterprises.

5.5 Spaces of belonging

A major theme that arose from the data was that of belonging. All the social enterprises worked with people they regarded as marginalised, economically and/or socially. Milton Keynes Christian Foundation worked with young people who Stephen described as '*not having much fun in formal*'

education'. This included young people who had been excluded from school, young offenders, or young people with learning difficulties.

The social enterprises were spaces that aimed to be spaces of belonging, that were inclusive, where passions and talents could be shared, and participants empowered. Belonging was important; whether employees, volunteers, or customers.

Making the spaces inclusive was reflected in the menus at Beehives and REfUSE where the incomes were supplemented with additional catering and higher priced products.

'A lot of the vision of the cafe is to make our menu really accessible pricing so it's very competitive in this area where you wouldn't be surprised if your coffee costs you £3. We keep our pricing as low as we can. We sell builders tea for £1.' (Jess)

The drinks at REfUSE include instant coffee for no charge.

'We want it to be a space for all, so we have a fancy coffee machine that sells flat white and latte and also instant at no cost.' (Nikki)

Alongside inclusive pricing arrangements, the spaces provided a sense of belonging through participation. Volunteers at The Beehive developed skills and shared their talents in a supportive environment.

'Our volunteers have been our biggest success story and we have one volunteer who has been through a recovery programme and lives in supported accommodation and he does lots of activities in the week, one of which is coming here and volunteering; he's now gone

and got employment and I feel we were one of the important steppingstones to that employment, being in a safe environment with access to pastoral care as well as training.'
(Jess)

There was a real sense of belonging at Listen Threads. During my visit I was told by participants that the social enterprise provided “*a positive environment where I can be myself*” and that it was “*a place to build self-confidence*”. On the day I visited, one young woman said that it ‘*made me get out of bed*’. After admitting that she had been in bed for five days, she said it was the knowledge that the group were relying on her and after several phone calls from her friend, that she had come to the project. On arrival, she was fairly detached yet as soon as she started threading¹¹ she was laughing and joining in the conversation.

This example of ‘bonding social capital’ was a key finding of Bertotti et al.’s (2011) research into a social enterprise café in a disadvantaged area of London. ‘Bonding social capital’ refers to the relationships with family, close friends, and neighbours. ‘Bonding social capital’ helps people to ‘get by’ (Putnam, 2000; Buck et al., 2002) and is likely to be high in disadvantaged areas (Putnam, 2007). Their research highlighted that the manager of the community café played a considerable role in developing social capital, which emphasised the importance of the individual’s skills, attitudes, and background. ‘Bridging social capital’, which refers to relationships that develop between individuals and groups from different ethnic, geographical, and occupational backgrounds, was less evident in the café.

Data from this research, however, did see individuals from different backgrounds in these spaces. This was either a result of the inclusive pricing structure or the nature of volunteers and employment in the social enterprises. For example, The Beehive and REfUSE intentionally provided volunteering

¹¹ Threading is the process of putting the design onto a t-shirt or hoodie.

opportunities for non-traditional volunteers (Burgess & Durrant, 2019) and, as Jess stated, they aimed to provide a steppingstone to employment.

Roumpi, Magrizos, and Nicolopoulou (2019) show that the caring nature of these organisations drives the choices regarding the synthesis of the workforce in social enterprises. The authors suggest that social enterprises, regardless of the nature of their social mission, are likely to hire 'disempowered' or marginalised individuals (Roumpi, Magrizos & Nicholopoulou, 2019). Work integrated social enterprises are increasingly seen as a solution to the issues of work placement for vulnerable people by providing employment for those 'with psychological and physical disability, people with substance abuse, other disability, long-term unemployment, disadvantaged young people, immigrants, women and those with low education' (Borzaga & Depedri, 2013: 91).

The social enterprises in this research aimed to provide spaces where participants felt they belonged and could therefore participate. This power to act allowed gifts, talents, and passions to be shared.

5.6 Spaces of reciprocity and empowerment

All the social enterprises in this research were inclusive of people who were economically, educationally, or socially marginalised. This intentional inclusion was reflected in a theme of reciprocity and empowerment in business planning and participants were encouraged to share their skills, talents, and passions as Jane from Listen Threads explained.

'If social enterprise is about releasing the gifts, skills and passions of local communities and congregations, there has to be some level of risk and some level of "let's do it" which is part of God's mission in that place.' (Jane)

Engaging with marginalised groups provided an opportunity to build a business plan around the skills, talents, and passions of participants. At Listen Threads, after experimentation with other ideas, conversations with the young women revealed their passion for fashion from which emerged their business focus.

'We had conversations about what they really wanted to do, and fashion was a common theme for that particular group, despite their fashion ideas being very different from each other.' (Jane)

As a result of participating in Listening Threads the young women had gained knowledge in business skills, social media, order management, and customer service.

At *REFUSE* it was deemed important to value customers regardless of their financial capacity to purchase food.

'All the people that come in, the idea is that we are valuing them not by what coins might be in their pocket but the times, skills and energy that they bring.' (Nikki)

Building upon participants' skills and passions was seen as an empowering process by both affording agency and through the purchase transaction as Jane described:

'At the best it is where the power lies, it lies with the girls even in little ways in that they didn't want to make hoodies, they wanted to make sliders, and interaction with a customer allows them to do something they haven't done before...[There is] empowerment through the transaction of buying; somebody is buying something they have produced.' (Jane)

Being able to contribute to the social enterprise was also very empowering and inclusive for the young people at Milton Keynes, according to Stephen.

'And our sort of approach is for them all to contribute in the way that they can...for some of them that's quite profound. And for others, you know, it is, you know, being a worker within the enterprise, but they're still contributing, and it's still something that they're part of, and something that's very different for them, because their experience of school is usually one where they feel uninvolved, and uninvolved, because they're struggling with the education and therefore they are usually on the fringe of any group that's in school, and usually getting into trouble because of that.' (Stephen)

Clean for Good is built around the skills and talents of the cleaners they employ and invest in. The employees were empowered by being paid a Real Living Wage, given regular hours, and training. And as Tim says, they are:

'given respect, recognition that they are worth. They work hard, they get respect for their work; no charity involved.' (Tim)

These values of equality and empowerment were reflected on the organisation's website.

Clean for Good enables cleaners to thrive, not just survive. Every cleaner is viewed and treated as a person with skills and potential. We want to promote the idea that cleaning is a respected and dignified career. We care about our employees and want to enable them with the skills and confidence to progress not only within our company, but in their life. (Clean for Good, 2021)

For Tim at *Worth Unlimited*, social enterprise offered a unique and different way of working with young people.

'It's got lots of possibilities to it in terms of tapping into people's gifts and skills, which is what we're about helping older young people in particular find their way in the world that's got possibility to it. We've had a lot of schools really like what we do because it provides a kind of work experience etc in a working environment, but one that's supportive.' (Tim)

From a community development perspective, the themes of reciprocity and empowerment resonate with an asset-based approach that builds on the skills, talents and passions within a community (Chapter 3.5.1).

It was through engaging with other social entrepreneurs that Nikki began to question how empowering charity could be.

'I got to meet so many other people who were entrepreneurial and looked at how charity wasn't that empowering, and Social Enterprise is so much more empowering. I met someone in Leeds who set up a pay as you feel model, the Real Junk Food project. We knew as soon as we went in that direction that this was what we wanted to do.' (Nikki)

Academic literature has stressed that economic outcomes, such as equipping disadvantaged people for the mainstream labour market through training (Aiken, 2007) has side-lined the more subtle wellbeing indicators such as building self-confidence, self-respect (Tanekenov, Fitzpatrick & Johnsen, 2018), and social capital (Bertotti et al., 2011).

The fifth United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. There is evidence that this is being achieved through a range of social enterprises across the world (Richardson, 2017). Richardson highlights five ways in which women in Brazil, India, Pakistan, USA, and UK were being empowered through social enterprises including creating jobs (and therefore economic empowerment), developing skills, providing counselling and support services, and giving them a voice in their community. For the women who helped to set up these enterprises, 75% said it had increased their self-worth, 56% reported that it had made them more able to make their own choices, and 64% claimed it had increased their self-confidence.

However as discussed in Chapter 2.2.3 the empowerment of those living in poverty must ultimately be the eradication of poverty (Novak, 1996) and with the exception of Clean for Good, the social enterprises were not achieving this.

As noted in Chapter 4, social and economic aims often sit in tension in social enterprises, this was a theme that arose in the interviews.

5.7 Spaces of tension

The interviewees expressed how balancing the social objective of the social enterprises with the need to generate an income had been challenging. This tension between economic and social objectives was notable at The Beehive:

'We have one guy who comes and falls asleep in the café and it's great that you know your staff are on board with it and will support them, but it's also a tension as you have to look after your other customers who may not be as comfortable with that.' (Jess)

At Beehive, they have considered these tensions and developed problem solving strategies that allow them to continue with the flow of the business while ensuring people feel cared for. There is

usually a member of staff who is not on shift during the busy time who can spend time having a conversation with someone and caring for them.

'I will often walk and talk with, so we don't disturb the normal coffee flow. You just want them to leave knowing they are cared for and loved and that they can come back. But also, there's the reality that we are busy.' (Jess)

Jess explained how this tension came from unexpected places.

'You have endless capacity for those you feel deserving but when it is someone complaining because they don't have their flat-white quick enough, that stuff is more challenging, and those people are just as loved and as just in need of peace as those with chaotic backgrounds.' (Jess)

However, there were challenges to being an inclusive organisation as Nikki went on to explain:

'Our manager has to deal with things no other manager would have to - like clearing up disgusting things in the toilet or having to ask someone to leave. There is a recurring lady who has incontinence so we have to say if she can stay as it is really bad and has turned customers away; customers have sat down and left again because of the smell. How do we balance the idea of getting a grant to get a support worker and also run a café? 100% (other than money) that is our biggest challenge. The constant tension between providing a really good service and really good food as well as a really good volunteer experience.' (Nikki)

There was a recognition that their business plan may have to be adapted to include a support worker.

'Within the cafe people come in and have been taking a lot of drugs and are swearing. So we recruited a cafe manager but we are looking for funding to employ a support worker because the volunteers have support issues themselves and the manager can't be expected to be producing really good food as well as supporting volunteers.' (Nikki)

The challenge of income generation in low-income communities was an issue at Worth Unlimited.

'They're in an income deprived community. And so, making them grow commercially, whilst keeping the social impact? Like that's a big challenge.' (Tim)

For Listen Threads, this tension became apparent when discussing the products, they marketed.

'The issue of using ethically sourced clothing which was a significant part of the learning journey...we had talked about ethically sourced cotton and how it was produced and we wanted to have transparency throughout the supply chain if the voices of women were important. Then when we went into the whole aspect of child labour the girls were like "oh no".' (Jane)

This decision that the young women made resulted in a more expensive product that was harder to sell on the estate and consequently they needed to develop alternative markets. On the estate it was hoped that the social investment would be important.

'There is something about the story of the enterprise that is important locally, so that people understand the social aim even if they don't buy from the enterprise, when a sale is made money remains local. They know that if there is there is a girl who is having challenges on the estate, they can come to Listen Threads.' (Jane)

Ultimately, Jane regarded the importance of Listen Threads in social rather than economic terms.

'Whether Listen Threads ends up being a money-making enterprise it will always be a brilliant bit of youth work, the social impact will always be there regardless of how well the business does. Worst case it may end up being a project rather than an enterprise, but the aim is that it generates money.' (Jane)

There was an acknowledgement from Tim of the importance of both the social and financial objectives at Worth Unlimited

'So, you know, social enterprise. I think, when done well has been both purposeful and profitable. Either just because if either of those elements don't exist, then there's probably something's probably going to come unstuck at some point.' (Tim)

A common feature in existing social enterprise research is the tension between social mission and financial goals (Doherty, Haugh & Lyon, 2014). This tension was evident at ReFuse:

'So the tensions are financially we don't make as much as a normal cafe would make and we have more costs as a normal cafe who would just go to Mackro once a week and buy some things where we have a full time member of staff just managing the food, driving round, collecting and managing food. So, we have less income and more costs.' (Nikki)

Social enterprises offer a unique context to explore ethics of care or justice because on one hand, they are founded and operated by caring people, but on the other hand, they have to manage an increasing tension between their social and financial missions (Doherty, Haugh, & Lyon, 2014).

Dees (2012) explores the two cultures that are at play within the field of social enterprise, the old culture of charity and a more contemporary culture of problem solving.

Both have their roots in our psychological response to the needs of others and are reinforced by social norms. They can work hand-in-hand or they can be at odds. (Dees, 2012: 321)

He believes that the success of social enterprises requires an integration of values from both cultures. Dees emphasises the importance of:

the spirit of charity to bring sufficient passion and private resources to the table. (Dees, 2012: 329)

Replacing it completely with rationality would be counterproductive. Dees suggests several solutions towards building a new culture for the social sector including religious authorities empathising with the importance of problem solving. The culture of charity is more prevalent in this research context however, the participants had shown a critical understanding of the problem, and the underlying causes which resulted in the emergence of a social enterprise.

While acknowledging Dees' assertions, I would also suggest that these are debates that occur throughout the third sector, and while not confined to social enterprise, the challenge between the two cultures may be more visible in such organisations.

The emphasis upon income generation varied between organisations. Employees at Clean for Good were dependent upon a viable business and after three years of trading they were expected to break even and with over 40 employees and no grant subsidies.

Milton Keynes Christian Foundation had a mixed model of income generation as Stephen explained.

'About 40 - 45% of our income comes from training of young people in one form or another. Now, the 45% comes from enterprise income, and then the other 10% comes from things like grants and other benefits in a normal year.' (Stephen)

Martin recognised an anxiety among Christian groups for anything other than grant funding.

'[There] is quite a lot of money around at the moment for community development and hybrid models funding, where some is grant and some is investment. And I think that sometimes, certainly in a Christian context, sometimes there's an anxiety, or nervousness about anything other than a grant funding.' (Martin)

Pharoah, Scott and Fisher (2004) emphasise that, due to the hybrid nature of social enterprises, grants provide a major source of funding and, as discussed in Chapter 4.6, the myth of resource dependency theory is important to consider (Kerlin & Pollak, 2010). Furthermore, funders create a culture of dependency through the conditions they attach to their grants. This is an important finding as faith-based organisations consider social enterprise development in response to a lack of grant funding or as a means for financial independence (Dinham, 2007a).

Social enterprises are at risk of mission drift due to the diverse, and often conflicting, social and economic aims (Ebrahim, Battilana & Mair, 2014). It has also been a central concern of research on organizational governance in the social sector – which may be understood as “the systems and processes concerned with ensuring the overall direction, control and accountability of an organization” (Cornforth, 2014: 5).

A further tension was highlighted by Tim at Clean for Good, the tension between charity and business.

'They automatically presume charity good, business bad. That is a very common church narrative...Charity is a fabulous thing if it's done in the right way, at the right time, for the right purpose and the same is true for business, it can be fabulous if it's done in the right way, at the right time, for the right purpose.' (Tim)

This research didn't have the capacity to explore the tensions within the church congregation when a more business approach to social action was adopted. However, Michael Volland's (2015) research found entrepreneurial activity was met with a degree of suspicion within the church and created barriers for church leaders to being entrepreneurial.

5.8 Spiritual capital

The themes that have been explored thus far help to explain how Christian practitioners developed and ran social enterprises, but not why. Why was a sense of urgency, passion, and excitement expressed in the interviews? Why, when things were difficult, did people carry on and where did they get strength during these periods?

'I am really passionate about this idea that food poverty is a massive social issue and food waste is a massive environmental issue and if we try to answer one problem with the other, that is just a sticking plaster over a gaping wound. ...I wanted to be making more of a song and dance about it.' (Nikki)

At Beehive, Jess was passionate about building community in a transient place.

'I was hungry to do something in my community. I used to think Bethnal Green has become a village to me whereas before I just lived here. Now it's like...wow it's so local you get to know people and a community...now I really feel part of it. What is exciting is that it has done this for customers too.' (Jess)

Compassion has been recognised as a positive motivational force for social entrepreneurs (Miller et al., 2012), and has been shown to positively influence social innovation performance through creative solution generation capacity (Ko et al., 2019). However, participants in this research referred to their Christian faith as a motivating force. Participants described how, particularly when things were tough, their faith had been important. Martin spoke about the added value of having a faith.

'There's definitely some added value from having a faith dimension in any kind of social enterprise or start-up, you know, and often they are start-ups, not always, but it's a cold and lonely situation (?), right, being an entrepreneur. And I suspect, and I, you know, I know others who would probably have better context for this than me that in some cases, people's faith is one of the things that keeps them going when it feels hard work, or impossible.'
(Martin)

The importance of faith when things were difficult was reiterated by Nikki.

'My faith has been so important throughout; just knowing that there's a God that's like cheering me on (laughs).' (Nikki)

The motivating force and energy that comes from beliefs, values and worldviews is conceptualised as spiritual capital. Developed as a social policy tool by Baker and Skinner (2006), and critically developed further by others (Cloke & Beaumont 2013), spiritual capital refers to the deeply

motivating power of religious belief and faith to shape one's actions and stance within the public sphere.

Spiritual capital is the set of values, ethical standpoints and visions for change held by both individuals, groups, and institutions...shaped not only by systems and practices of belief, but also by engagement with wider sets of relationships (broadly defined) and the sense of meaning and purpose derived from work-based and other activities (sometimes referred to as the 'spirit' or 'soul' of a business). Spiritual capital is often the source of motivation for other forms of capital (e.g. social capital and its emphasis on the importance of trust and norms as the basis for conducting any form of progressive or enhancing human activity). It includes...how beliefs inform values...where we fit in what we do.' (Baker et al., 2011: 6)

Spiritual capital that participants derived from their Christian faith was clearly a motivating factor initially and during tough times, when faith was turned to as a support. The beliefs and values at the heart of the organisations I studied are explored in Chapter 9, which includes how these were navigated and expressed.

5.9 Conclusion and reflections after learning from Christian social entrepreneurs

The findings support the view that the social enterprises in this research developed from a radical rather than reformist agenda (Pearce, 2003), envisioning a society that is more inclusive, sustainable and fair. This was achieved from different traditions and ideal types (Gordon, 2015; Pharoah, Scott & Fisher, 2004). The following table situates the social enterprises in this research.

Ideal type	Example	Tradition (Gordon 2015)	Primary Purpose	Main income source	Decision-making process	Degree of user involvement	Initiative created by
Social Business	Clean for Good	Ethical	To establish an ethical cleaning company in London	Cleaning contracts	Board and Managing Director	Low	Concerned congregation responding to local need. Developed by Centre of Theology and Community
Community Business	The Beehive	Community	Hospitality, accessible prices, a space for people to meet	Café sales and hiring out of space	Team of paid and volunteer workers	Moderate	Congregation at Bethnal Green mission church building on a legacy of industry and hospitality
	Milton Keynes Christian Foundation	Community	To provide opportunities for young people who have struggled in mainstream education	Mixed earned income and public contracts		Moderate	Individual entrepreneur after networking.
Community Enterprise	Listening Threads	Altruistic	To provide a space where every girl is listened to while	Selling clothing and sliders	Youth worker and young women	High	Young women on Firs and Bromford estate,

			developing entrepreneurial skills				supported by youth worker
Ethical	REfUSE	Ethical	Challenge food waste and food poverty	Café sales, events	Board and project leads	Medium	Two Christian friends with broader support from local churches

Table 5. Case studies and their approximation to ideal types of social enterprise and traditions

(Pharoah, Scott & Fisher, 2004; Gordon, 2015)

The initial interviews with eight Christian social entrepreneurs produced several themes that, in line with building a grounded theory, will be explored in greater depth as the research develops. The key themes from these initial findings were:

- Change was inspired from the stories of lived experiences within the community.
- Social justice was a theme running through the data. The focus on social justice and a vision for a better future positioned these social enterprises as radical organisations.
- Setting up a social enterprise required new and different skills and knowledge. Consequently, collaboration with external advisors and/or specific training was important during the start-up phase. Collaborating with partners who understood the faith context was important.
- All participants recognised that developing a social enterprise was a lengthy and ongoing creative process. The Beehive focused on building their business and adapting their model over the first year before feeling able to really look at developing their social objectives. These periods were times of continuous experimentation and adaptation.
- All of the social enterprises worked with people who found themselves marginalised in society. The social objectives of the organisations aimed at making sure participants, and employees and customers, felt that they belonged. This was evident through practices of reciprocity and empowerment where skills, talents and passions were valued and shared.

- There were tensions within the social enterprises, particularly between the social and economic objectives. Having been developed from organisations whose history, values and practice is dominated by a philanthropic narrative, the social goals were more influential.

None of the interview participants spoke about setting up a social enterprise with the primary aim of being financial independent, as was anticipated by Dinham (2007a). Rather, there was a more radical agenda, to shift the market economy to be more just and more inclusive.

Concerns around the market economy have been explored by theologians, as it 'offers one of the greatest challenges to Christianity just as Christianity in its own turn challenges that context by its refusal to be fully integrated into it' (Atherton, 1992: 21). This, despite Max Weber's infamous thesis setting out the connection between protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism which governed what might be termed the individual's business attitudes and aptitudes. Weber's (1930) account of the rationalisation of time and processes, the individual work ethic and acquisition of capitalist spirit, for him represented the revolution from an economic traditionalism to capitalist modernity. His preoccupation with Puritanism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the development of commercial capitalism that focused upon the middle class failed to recognise that it was at this time that Methodism obtained the greatest success with the working classes (Thompson, 1963).

Atherton (1992) rejects both a Christian conservative response to the market, that is fundamentally committed to the market, and a radical position, that rejects capitalism and the market economy. While stating we must learn from these different positionalities, he adopts a liberal approach which accepts the market economy but is also aware of its limitations and social consequences.

Affirming the market as the best available economy in the contemporary context is now an essential part of Christian social witness. To do so is to reject the economic determinism of

both libertarian and Marxist ideologies. It is to face up to economic necessities, and to work for purposeful change in relation to these constraints. (Atherton, 1992: 213)

Atherton's petition to Christians to work for purposeful change to shape the market can provide an opportunity for solidarity, to work with people from all faiths and none. For example, a commitment to genuine concern for others is at the heart of realigning exchange and marketing practices (Karns, 2008). Higginson's (1997) writing on ethics provides a reminder of the important function that business performs in society. It 'creates wealth by manufacture of products or provision of services and so adds value to the...resources that God has given the world' (Higginson, 1997:7). The core of his argument is that business operations are not as ethically problematic as is often assumed. He describes competition in business as being likely to be characterised by courtesy, respect, and encouragement to excel, and believes that standards in business life compare favourably with other areas of life. Furthermore, that it would be difficult to bring a Christian critique to 'best practice' business operations but, as in all walks of life, companies and individuals often operate at lower levels of practice than this.

The social entrepreneurs described spaces where an ethic of justice, with a view of ensuring the fair and equitable treatment of all people, sat alongside an ethics of care (Botes, 2000). This ethics of care was not through the dominant praxis of charitable giving but rather through a belief in belonging, reciprocity, and empowerment.

This first cycle of research gathered data from social entrepreneurs working in a variety of settings in England, from which key themes began to emerge. However, social enterprises have been described as a performative enactment, i.e. as a kind of doing rather than a form of being (Mauksch et al., 2017) and consequently this research required methods that enabled data to be collected on the daily performance of social enterprise. The next cycle of data was gathered from an ethnographic study of an emerging social enterprise in the North East of England. The established themes from

this cycle of learning will be developed through a micro understanding of the everyday practitioner in the field as they put theory into practice and shift to a more enterprising way of responding to the stories from their community.

Chapter 6. Ethnographic study in the North of East England

How does a Christian organisation, with established charitable methods of practice, shift to become more enterprising? As acknowledged, Christian social action has been largely positioned in a charitable framework, so what then are the challenges and tensions in transition to more enterprising approaches? To help answer this question and enrich the data gathered in the first cycle of learning an ethnographic study was conducted. The setting was an established charity in the North East of England, where for eight months I engaged as a volunteer ethnographer (Hill O'Connor & Baker, 2017).¹² One day a week was spent working alongside staff and volunteers, initially helping to decorate and stock the premises, latterly working on the till and in the kitchen.

Shildon Alive is a project in Shildon, County Durham, which would be described as having a faith background (Frame, 2020). Established by the local parish church, a drop-in service provided advice and support alongside a food bank. Throughout 2019/2020 the project shifted to generate an income through a community supermarket and takeaway.

This chapter initially sets the area context, the North East of England, a region of the country that has changed rapidly over the last forty years, is politically peripheral, and has high levels of insecure work and poverty resulting in challenging social circumstances for many communities. The chapter then explores two environments relevant to this research, third sector (including social enterprise), and churches.

The ethnographic research enabled data to be collected from Shildon Alive that builds upon, and adds to, the themes that emerged from the first cycle of learning. Further data concerning the creative process of developing a social enterprise and leadership was also gathered.

¹² The imposition of COVID-19 'lockdown' in March 2020 cut short the ethnography with a congregational focus group being cancelled.

Leadership will be discussed in the following chapter.

6.1 A biography of the North East of England

Travelling across the North East of England can feel like a journey through time. There are places apparently trapped in a past time yet having to cope with the challenges of the present. There are other places which are very much of the present and which seek disengagement, detachment, from the past. There are communities which are part of the contemporary 'mainstream' and others which have been left behind, marginalized and excluded. The North East is a region of fragments, a region shaped by an industrial past, then fractured by the upheaval of deindustrialization and, now, a patchwork of places of renewal and of decay. (Robinson, 2002: 317)

To capture and generalise a community, let alone a region, is impossible. This inability to generalise is relevant in the North East of England where within a few miles one can travel from feudal town built around a medieval castle to a post-industrial ex-mining village. Places have biographies, in the same way individuals do, and process specific identities (Warren, 2017; Warren & Garthwaite, 2014).

These biographies have been shaped by the intersections between environment, history, politics, culture, and economic and social policy. (Warren, 2017: 656)

Warren (2017) argues that it is important to recognise and appreciate these special biographies if there are to be more innovative and effective social policy interventions. A snapshot biography of the North East context for this research requires an overview of the third sector, including social enterprise, and the established churches in the region.

6.1.1 A rapidly changing place

Forms of modern life may differ in quite a few respects – but what unites them all is precisely their fragility, temporariness, vulnerability and inclination to constant change. (Bauman, 2012: 2)

Bauman (2012) argues that change is occurring more and more rapidly in the ‘modern’ world and introduces the term ‘liquid modernity’. The continual need to be in a state of preparedness has resulted in change being the only permanence, and uncertainty being the only certainty. A real sense of rapid change hangs over the North East with the landscape physically, economically and socially being completely reshaped over the last forty years. Such change hasn’t occurred with a single event (although many would cite the day their local pit or shipyard closed), but rather with a process played out across many decades.

By far the most dominant historic legacy that shapes the regional landscape is that of industrialisation (McCord, 1979). The rich seams of coal, mined on a small scale for centuries, transformed the region during the nineteenth century. The huge coalfields of County Durham and south-east Northumberland supported ‘carboniferous capitalism’: iron, steel, shipbuilding, heavy engineering, and chemicals (Mess, 1928). These industries needed large labour forces and thousands of people migrated to the region. New towns such as Middlesbrough and West Hartlepool emerged, and scores of pit villages were developed. The last eighty years have seen a gradual, though not steady, eroding of the industrial base. The inter-war depression had a severe impact upon the North East (Wilkinson, 1939; Goodfellow, 1940; Priestley, 1934) and was followed by wartime re-armament and post-war reconstruction. The decline accelerated during the recession and the restructuring that took place in the Thatcher years. By the end of the twentieth century, most of the old industry had disappeared as a result of complex factors such as the strength of foreign competition, overcapacity,

underinvestment and disinvestment, poor business management, and, particularly in the case of coal mining, vindictive restructuring by government.

Coping with decline has been the central theme of this region's story for many years...the region has not gained a new *raison d'être* to take the place of its former role as industrial heartland. Moreover, the region has been seen, negatively, as unfortunate, requiring sympathetic support - not as a place with great promise and potential. (Robinson, 2002: 318)

Professor Ray Hudson, a political geographer at Durham University, draws upon thirty years of research in the region in *Rethinking change in old industrial regions: reflecting upon the experiences of North East England* (Hudson, 2005). Despite the rapidly changing context of the region the 'traditional' economy has left a legacy of habits, routines and behaviours that continue to shape the social and economic landscape. These practices are slowly changing, most notably the local nature of the economy, the dependency upon waged labour, and established gender divisions (Strangleman, 2001).

The old industrial economy was very local with settlements being constructed close to the place of work.

Occupational identity and community identity, norms and values are produced and reproduced within the context of workplace and community networks. (Strangleman, 2001: 259)

Strangleman (2001) explored notions of networks, place, and identities in former mining communities with much of his fieldwork conducted in Easington Colliery, County Durham. Networks that were originally forged around occupation were still important as were those based around place. The collective workforce of an ex-pit village like Easington Colliery was tied to place, and isolated from

others in the same position. The familiar networks remained important after the pit closures, especially as work patterns and responsibilities shifted, for example, support for childcare. Strangleman's (2001) research was carried out in the same community described in Chapter 2.1.2, members of the community explained that agencies 'come here do stuff to us and leave'. However, Strangleman (2001) draws attention to the agency exercised within these communities, even when options are limited.

The proximity of home and work in the old industrial economy meant that the commute to work was typically by foot and there was a marked reluctance to travel far to work, with even small distances seen as unreasonable.

In many ways, the region remains a series of small discrete, and spatially bounded labour markets, rather than forming an integral labour market in which people are linked to employment opportunities across the region. (Hudson, 2005: 587)

This locally focused labour market is compounded by low levels of car ownership, and inadequate and expensive public transport provision (North East Chamber of Commerce, 2017; Hanley, 2019).

Public transport is a vital enabler of the North East of England's economy. In a region with the lowest level of household car ownership outside of London – 29% of homes have no access to a car – an efficient, easy-to-use public transport system does not just provide an alternative; for many it is the only option they have. (North East Chamber of Commerce, 2017: 7)

This has resulted in people in the North East spending a greater proportion of their income on transport than most other parts of the UK (Stacey & Shaddock, 2015).

Hudson (2005) notes a continued culture of dependency upon waged labour and employment by others. An expectation of being employed by others rather than being self-employed exists and, while Hudson doesn't see an absence of entrepreneurial attitudes and ambitions, these are not being channelled into establishing new enterprises (this is explored further later in this chapter). Hudson found that while many considered investing redundancy money into small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) they often resorted instead to investing in their homes after considering the local economic climate too risky. Such behaviour is seen as underpinning the persistent failure of state policies aimed at developing local entrepreneurial activities.

The strict gender divisions established as part of old industrial economy have broken down. As male employment in shipyards, steelworks and coal mines began to disappear, the new jobs that were created targeted female waged labour, for example clothing, consumer electronics, and a range of service activities (Hudson, 2005). As has recently been argued in connection with the South Wales steel industry, industrial loss has shaped working-class communities, masculinities, and femininities for five decades or more.

The region's collective past still shapes its future and influences the ways in which that future is conceived and envisioned. Industries change; develop; adapt and sometimes disappear altogether; however, it is clear that the ways of life; attitudes; practices and expectations that they helped to establish do not. (Warren, 2017: 657)

Warren (2017) emphasises that being 'post-industrial' is about more than just economic change; rather it is a slow, deep, social and cultural transformation. This transition creates tensions between the 'residual' and 'emergent' cultures that are evident in the North East.

Policy and governance in the North East are impacted by the geography of being a peripheral place in relation to the seat of power, London.

6.1.2 A peripheral place

The UK is more regionally divided than any comparable advanced economy (Raikes, Giovannini & Getzel, 2019), and is one of the most regionally unbalanced countries in the industrialized world (McCann, 2020). The North East is England's most marginal/peripheral region, with Newcastle upon Tyne being 300 miles away from London (and other parts of the region over 370 miles away). The only other comparable region is Cornwall and the Scilly Islands (whose principal cities are much closer to the capital). Applying Rokkan's analysis of peripheries as distant, different, and dependent is helpful when considering the region (Flora, Kuhle & Urwin., 1999). Rokkan argues that centres are privileged places stating that:

Centres can be normally defined as *privileged locations* within a territory. To identify a centre...ask yourself a few simple questions. Where do the key resource-holders most frequently *meet within* a territory? Where have they established *arenas* for deliberation, negotiation (and) decision making? Where do they convene for ceremonies for the affirmation of identity and where have they built *monuments* to symbolise their identity? (Flora, Kuhle & Urwin, 1999: 110, authors emphasis)

Rokkan defines peripheries as more than simply geographical location in that 'peripherality will be expressed constantly in the daily lives of the inhabitants of the areas and by the nature of their links with the groups in the centre' (Flora, Kuhle & Urwin, 1999:114-115).

Elcock (2014) applies Rokkan's theory to the North East of England. He argues that as a peripheral region 'its needs and requirements have tended to be neglected by the highly centralised Government at Westminster and Whitehall' (Elcock, 2014: 330). Elcock regards the instability of local and regional institutions, which have been repeatedly reshaped by central governments, as a key

factor in the region not being able to represent its needs and wishes (Raikes, Giovannini & Getzel, 2019).

The feeling that the needs and requirements of the region have been neglected and the North East is 'a place that doesn't matter' has been expressed recently through the ballot box in both the European Union (EU) Referendum and the General Election of 2019 (Beynon & Hudson, 2021). Disenchanted Labour voters backed leaving the EU in June 2016,¹³ reflecting Darvas's (2016) theory that high inequality and poverty helped trigger the Brexit protest vote.

The voting decisions in Teesside stemmed from a

rooted localised experience of neoliberalism's slow-motion social dislocation linked to the deindustrialisation of the area and the failure of political parties, particularly the Labour Party, to speak for regional or working-class interests. (Telford & Wistow, 2020: 553)

Bromley-Davenport, Macleavy & Manley's (2019) focus groups and interviews with older white working-class male voters in Sunderland highlighted how economic stagnation and the experience of different forms of marginality led to a nostalgia for times past, and a mistrust of political elites amongst this cohort.

While disenfranchisement and disillusionment are regarded as influences on recent voting patterns (Goodhart, 2017), Hudson (2021) believes that rather than reducing inequalities, they will be further amplified post-Brexit. Rodríguez-Pose (2018) believes that place-sensitive territorial policies are needed in areas of the country that believe they have no future. However, they need also:

¹³ Only 1 of the 11 regions in the NE voted to remain in the EU with Hartlepool seeing 69.9% voting leave. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/eu_referendum/results/local/s

to stay clear of the welfare, income support and big investment projects of past development strategies if they are to be successful and focus on tapping into untapped potential and on providing opportunities to those people living in the places that 'don't matter'. (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018)

Due to its strong dependency on trade with the EU, the North of England is economically the part of the UK most at risk in the post-Brexit environment (Los et al., 2017). A recently leaked report predicted that the North East will be the region worst hit after withdrawal of the UK from the EU, a drop in economic growth of 16% is estimated (Ashmore, 2018). Brexit creates a further dynamic in a place already facing challenging times.

6.1.3 A place facing challenging times

There is no disputing the challenges facing communities in the North East. Along with other areas in the North, ten years of austerity has disproportionately impacted the region's resilience and in doing so, its capacity for recovery (Johns, 2020). The latest report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *UK Poverty 2022*, highlighted the North East, along with the West Midlands, as having the highest poverty rates in the country at 25% (JRF, 2022).

In these areas the high poverty rates are driven by comparatively lower earnings, with a higher proportion (33%) of in-work adults in lower-paid 'routine' occupations compared with the rest of the UK (27%) and a higher proportion of working-age adults not in work (27%, compared with 23% for the rest of the UK on average). (JRF, 2022: 26)

The report emphasises the increase in poor and insecure work (Jaccarini & Krebel, 2020) where despite employment 'you end up with nothing' (McBride, Smith & Mbala, 2018: 210). Poor job quality is serious problem in the North of England where an estimated 21.5% of jobs are paid below the real living wage (ONS, 2021). The North East has been labelled the UK's zero-hour contract capital

(Kelly, 2017). Since 2015, the growth of in-work poverty has been linked not only to low wages but reductions in benefit levels which have left families with little protection to cope with their low earnings, additionally, rising housing costs have taken a greater share of their income (Innes, 2020).

In-work poverty is the problem of our times. Most people in poverty now live in a family with someone in work; a dramatic change from 20 years ago. Among working-age adults in poverty, three-fifths are either in work or live with someone who is. Work should be a route out of poverty. But, for many families, having someone in work is not proving enough to keep their heads above the rising tide of poverty. (Innes, 2020: 2)

The North East has consistently higher rates of unemployment than other UK regions, and currently has the highest unemployment rate of any region in the UK. In January 2021, the unemployment rate in the North East was 6.4%, compared with a national average of 5%, with Hartlepool seeing a rate of 8.8% (ONS, 2021).

A low-waged economy, higher than average unemployment figures, and inadequate benefit remuneration obviously has an impact on child poverty rates. The North East currently has the second highest rate of child poverty of any English region, with 35% of children in the region living in relative poverty (Round & Longlands, 2020). This average figure masks the fact that in a number of communities the rates are over 60% (CPAG, 2019). The impacts of child poverty are also more widespread in the North East. A higher proportion of children live in households which go without things like heating, an annual week's holiday, hobbies and leisure activities, or school trips, and consequently poor outcomes for children's health and secondary school attainment are evident (Bradshaw, 2020).

Austerity has been shown to be a significant factor in suicide (McVeigh, 2015; O'Hara, 2017), therefore, it is not surprising that the North East has the highest rate of any region and has been described as the suicide capital of England (ONS, 2021b; Kelly, 2021).

Austerity has resulted in reduced capacity to respond to these challenges with poorer places, including the North East, having fewer public services and less basic infrastructure (Gray & Barford, 2018). Cuts to the public health grant have been three times higher in the North East compared with the South East (Thomas, Round & Longlands, 2020).

Communities in the North East are experiencing growing social and economic challenges, alongside reduced capacity within the public sector to respond. This void is partially filled by a vibrant and growing third sector in the region.

6.1.4 The third sector in the North East

Since 2008, Professor Tony Chapman has been leading a longitudinal study of the third sector in the North East. The findings from data collected between September and December 2019 identifies (Chapman, 2020):

- an estimated 7,200 third sector organisations in the North East.
- an estimated 38,250 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees.
- 154,400 volunteers who deliver 11m hours of work. The replacement value of such work by volunteers would be between £91m (at National Minimum Wage) and £148m (at 80% of average wages).
- that numerically, the majority of the sector comprises micro and small organisations, with annual incomes of below £50,000. This is where most church-based social action projects in the region sit. These small organisations only account for 6.1% of third sector income.
- that medium-sized organisations with annual incomes of between £50,000 and £250,000 form almost 15% of the sector.

- that organisations in the region have varying attitudes to income generation; larger organisations deliver public service contracts, while many smaller ones will not, because it is not relevant to their objectives.
- evidence of hardening attitudes against the delivery of public sector contracts in the North East of England. Factors which discourage them from applying to deliver public sector contracts included needing more information and support to apply for contracts.

The most significant finding from Chapman's (2020) research was that about a quarter of the third sector organisations in the North East earned up to 20% of their income, with 16% earning more than 80% of their income. The most common source of earned income is renting space in their buildings (31%), followed by the provision of 'paid for' services by individuals (26% - such as sports training, leisure classes, ticketed events, etc.). About 17% of third sector organisations have retailing or hospitality businesses, such as community cafes or shops. The size of organisations has a bearing on their involvement in trading.

While Chapman (2020) acknowledges that there will be challenges ahead for the third sector in the North East, with organisations having to adapt and change, he believes that the passionate individuals within the sector will ensure a future exists.

The crisis produced by Covid-19 is causing serious alarm in the Third Sector. What we know from Third Sector trends is that civil society is occupied by thousands of organisations that want to make the world a better place. They are led and run by committed, determined and independent-minded individuals who want to get on and do things their own way. These people do not give up easily. (Chapman et al., 2020: 18)

6.1.4.1 Social enterprises in the North East

The achievements of social enterprises depend on the context from which they emerge and operate (Mazzei, 2017) as politically, culturally, and geographically determined organisations (Teasdale, 2012).

Building upon a tradition of ethnographic research on social economies (Amin, Cameron & Hudson, 2002), Mazzei (2017) explored how trajectories within the social economy, the role of local institutions, culture, and assets shape the social entrepreneurial climate.

It could be argued that a differentiated approach in policy development, sensitive both to varying historical trajectories and constraints and possibilities these represent for future development is required with better academic scrutiny of the development of appropriate policies. (Mazzei, 2017: 2782)

Mazzei's research compared two city regions in the North of England, Tyne and Wear and Greater Manchester, and concluded the Tyne and Wear social economy was more aligned to mainstream statutory provision. Community participation has tended to be through formalised channels of trade unions, churches, and political parties, so the social economy could be said to be more managed and aligned to policy priorities (Hudson, 2005). The emergence of social enterprise in Tyne and Wear was a reformist response to need and the failure of the state or the market to provide for its own citizens (Teasdale, 2012), rather than a radical 'alternative' proposal to economic engagement. It should be noted that Mazzei's research was conducted in Tyne and Wear, not County Durham where the research settings are (Chester-le-Street and Shildon).

A significant amount of funding has been invested in the North East for social enterprise through initiatives such as the European Regional Development Fund and Local Economic Growth Initiative. The networks of support for social enterprise in Tyne and Wear did not develop from community

action but rather were established or appropriated by local government organisations, and therefore have grown more aligned to local policy priorities in the absence of other types of support. Once funding ceased the networks began to suffer, to the point that, as one commentator noted, 'they are now falling apart' (Chief Executive, Newcastle SE quoted in Mazzei, 2017: 2771).

An analysis of the annual assessment of the entrepreneurial activity, aspirations and attitudes of individuals carried out across a wide range of countries, including the UK, shows that social enterprise activity in the North East began to grow from 2002 onwards, following increasingly positive perceptions about entrepreneurship in general (Harding, 2006). One of the local commentators noted:

Mostly they [social enterprises] have developed in the last 2/3 years here, from changes in the funding to the VCS [Voluntary and Community Sector]...Fundamentally there are two reasons for this: one is a greater understanding of the business model and two the change of funding to the CVS [Council for Voluntary Service]. (John King, Business Support Team, ONE North East quoted in Mazzei, 2017: 2772)

The evolution of social enterprises in Tyne and Wear is shown to have been more 'managed' by statutory agencies, in terms of funding, support and endorsement. The North East has a divided and competitive third sector, where processes restrict resourcefulness (Clayton, Donovan & Merchant, 2015). Across the North East of England as a whole, 4.8% of the third sector described themselves as a social enterprise with Northumberland reporting the highest in the region at 8.1% (Chapman, 2017).

Social enterprises potentially have much to offer the North East, with 31% of social enterprises working in the top 20% most deprived communities in the UK, 59% of social enterprises employing

at least one person who is disadvantaged in the labour market, and 41% of social enterprises creating jobs in the past 12 months, compared to 22% of SMEs (Chapman, 2017).

However, if we are to really understand local social economies, a more nuanced insight is needed (Moulaert & Nussbaumer, 2005) with a focus on social enterprise and place (Muñoz, 2010).

6.1.5 Churches in the North East

Scholarly literature sees the North East as experiencing the same trend, declining church congregations that it depicts for Britain as a whole. Data suggests that in 1989 there were 1496 churches in the North East, but in 2010, only 1348 – a decline of 10%. (Brierley, 2014)

Research for the Centre for Church Growth into new congregations in the North East found that the region has seen a growth in new churches (Goodhew & Barward-Symmons, 2015).¹⁴ The research discovered that 125 new churches have been founded in the North East of England between 1980 and 2015, with a usual Sunday attendance at these churches totalling around 12,000 people of all ages (the authors acknowledge this is a substantial figure, but say considerable efforts were taken to guard against overcounting). Much of the growth was in the cities and linked to migrating population. Further research is needed in this area of church growth and social enterprise which is out of the scope of this research. The existing research, however, suggests that a correlation between social action and church growth in that social action leads to church growth (Rich, 2020).

6.1.6 New opportunities through ‘levelling up’?

The history and legacy of a place are important in understanding the future potential of any place ‘without falling into the trap of equating path dependency with a deterministic iron law of history’

¹⁴ A ‘new church’ was defined by seven qualities: (1) It is Trinitarian (2) It was founded during or after 1980 (3) It is a new entity, not a rebranding of an existing congregation (4) It meets for worship once a week or more (not necessarily on Sundays) (5) It has a name and a clear identity (6) The majority of members see it as their major expression of church (7) It has ten or more people on average at its worship, per week (Goodhew & Barward-Symmons, 2015).

(Hudson, 2007: 1158). The biography of the North East of England has been shaped by a changing industrial landscape and its peripheral position to power. These have resulted in a region that has faced sustained and growing inequalities over the last 40 years and has been a victim of the UK's 'great growth divergence' (Martin et al., 2021).

Like previous administrations, the current Conservative government pledged to level up the country as a central plank of its election manifesto, yet, like previous commitments, it is failing (Webb et al., 2022). Two years after these commitments, the left-leaning thinktank, Institute for Public Policy Research North, propose that devolved power is the key to levelling up.

The government faces a choice. It can continue to steer economic and social development from the centre, through the same institutions and mechanisms that have time and time again failed to rebalance the economy. Or alternatively, as we suggest through our missions, it can finally let go of power to truly level up the country – building on the wealth of positive initiatives that already show how places in the North have the ambition and ingenuity to level up from the grassroots and build a fair, sustainable and prosperous future. (Webb et al., 2022: 6)

The history and legacy of the North East paints a picture of a marginalised region that has faced challenging times and will need to continue to adapt.

The eight months of ethnographic study took place in this context.

6.2 Shildon Alive – creating a Christian social enterprise

This ethnographic study was carried out over an eight-month period between August 2019 and April 2020 in a Church of England project, Shildon Alive.¹⁵ Shildon is a town and civil parish in County Durham with a population of 9,976 (Office for National Statistics, 2011). It is described as a rural setting due to population size and being situated in a sparse setting (DEFRA, 2016). Built around the growth of railways, its last major employer, the railway works, closed in 1984 with the loss of 1,750 jobs (Lloyd, 2015).



Figure 9. Men leave the Shildon Wagon works on April 15, 1982 (Lloyd, 2015)

Shildon is part of the Bishop Auckland parliamentary constituency which was represented by a Labour MP for 84 years until the 2019 general election which saw an 9.5% swing from Labour to Conservative resulting in a Conservative candidate taking the seat. Hudson (2021) attributed this swing away from Labour to an insensitivity to the concerns of voters within the Party.

¹⁵ I have used the name of the project and participants with full consent. Initial pre-research conversations highlighted the importance of a reciprocal relationship and for the research to assist the learning of the organisation (Maiter *et al.*, 2008). The uniqueness of the project would make anonymity of people and place difficult.

In the north east of England, the former solidly Labour constituencies of Bishop Auckland, Blyth Valley, North West Durham and Sedgefield returned Conservative Party MPs in the 2019 general election. While all these areas suffered badly as a result of the Thatcherite assault on the nationalised industries, job losses in these industries began there in the 1960s. People there had been living for decades with a sense that governments of both major political parties were insensitive to their concerns, Labour (in both its Old and New guises) because it took their votes for granted and the Conservatives because for many years they could not envisage winning these seats. (Hudson, 2021: 18)

The town is remote and rural; places that have been recognised as having fewer resources and institutions, and less economic diversity and access to large markets for social entrepreneurs – a ‘rural penalty’ (Miles & Morrison, 2020; Roundy, 2019; Malecki, 2018).

The parish of St Johns, Shildon is one of the most economically-deprived parishes in the country ranking 451 out of 12,382 (where 1 is the most deprived parish), with 34.9% of children and 27.1% of old aged pensioners living in poverty (Church Urban Fund, 2020).

Shildon Alive was established in 2012 as part of the Faith in the Community initiative which resulted in six faith-based community development projects in Durham Diocese (Robertson, 2011). Members of local church communities worked with non-churchgoing residents and aimed to provide unique opportunities to address issues of social justice for both individuals and communities (Robertson, 2011). All six projects were intentional about being rooted in the values that come from their Christian faith but were not confined to church buildings and community halls. The projects adopted a Church Related Community Development (CRCD) approach.

Through CRCD people can develop skills and confidence and actively participate in change...in the context of disadvantaged and excluded communities. CRCD works with those, who at first sight, appear to have little or no power to make real changes in their community. It encourages people and groups to work with others and act collectively on common concerns. (Bacon, 2004: 10)

The Faith in the Community projects were built around a conservative or functionalist model of society which involves a communitarian emphasis on enabling people to exercise mutual rights and responsibilities, without challenging the general order of things.

St Johns, Shildon secured funding and rented a small property at the end of the High Street which was set up as a drop-in to access computers, debt and advocacy advice, a credit union, and a food bank.

Initially the project was very closely tied to the church through the parochial church council (PCC), but over time this shifted, for practical reasons, as the Vicar Rev Canon David Tomlinson explained:

'It was very closely tied to the church at that point. We didn't have a separate management committee, with the PCC in effect handling all the decision making. that quickly became obvious that that wasn't a practical way to move it forward. Not because the PCC here were difficult; they were a great PCC but simply because of time. There wasn't time on a PCC meeting to deal with the issues we had to deal with; it just wasn't realistic. So, I moved the PCC to a kind of governance model.' (David, Shildon Alive)

This meant establishing a management group of trustees that consisted of members of the Parochial Church Council, the community, and the newly appointed project manager, Paula.

In July 2018, Paula attended the Church Social Action and Social Enterprise event in Gateshead. She then joined six-week social enterprise training that autumn. It was during this training that the project was given the opportunity to rent three adjacent properties on the High Street, that would allow them to move out of their cramped premises at the other end of the street. Part of the property was formally a fast-food takeaway. During the social enterprise training, Paula used the takeaway as a hypothetical example and began to explore an enterprising approach, developing a business plan. During the summer of 2018, the project moved into these properties.



Figure 10. Bishop of Jarrow opening the new premises.

On 27 April 2019, Shildon Alive's new premises, containing a community supermarket, takeaway, and hub, were opened by the Bishop of Jarrow.

The credit union was situated in the first building, the second was used for advocacy work and in the evening a youth project met there. The third building held the community supermarket and takeaway. As members of FareShare North East, delivery drivers delivered good quality surplus food to the project on a Friday. This food was used to prepare healthy homemade meals in the takeaway and to fill the community shelves where a donation was requested from shoppers.



Figure 11. Shildon Alive Community Supermarket and takeaway.

The data collected over eight months reflected and built upon the data from the first learning cycle, although it also allowed more contextual and nuanced description as it was a more in-depth observation of a faith-based organisation adopting a more enterprising approach to the issue of food poverty.

6.2.1 Lived experience as a catalyst for change

The initial phase of the charity and the later development of the social enterprise were influenced and shaped by the lived experiences of people in the community. The town council offered the church four allotment plots and the vicar decided that it would provide a good space to listen to the community. Working with partners, including the local town council, the church developed the plots. A family fun day provided an opportunity to ask visitors what they liked about Shildon and what could be better. Despite a horticulturally disastrous first summer due to the wet weather, time spent working together allowed a deeper understanding of some of the issues in Shildon. As David explained:

'We began to refine what the community was saying to us on what we could do. And there was a real demand for a safe place where people could be supported to overcome some of

the challenging issues that they didn't feel supported in. Particularly advocacy, debt advice and unemployment...The only place in Shildon where there were computers you could use was the library...there were only three and they were very old.' (David)

The conversations and relationships developed in this first phase of the project shaped and refined the initial period of the project. Their first building was close to the church, on the main street, and operated as a drop-in service, advocacy support, debt advice, computer access, a credit union, and foodbank.

Paula's lived experiences reinforced the stories they heard from the community in relation to food poverty and stigma:

'I've always been passionate about feeding people even from a little girl. I used to do ninety hours a month pioneering as a missionary for my religion.¹⁶ I'd be on Woodhouse Close estate...and I would meet people even then, who were hungry. I think even then I wanted to feed people. I would go out and buy people food. I remember once I called on a girl and she didn't know how to look after her little boy, and he was underdeveloped. He had dog poo on his feet, and I put him in the sink and washed his feet. She had no food in the cupboards for him, she was feeding him sweets. So, I popped down to the shops and got some sausage and beans' (Paula)

Paula also had lived experience of having to make-do with food that others saw as food waste:

'I've gone through stages where my Dad has been really poorly...He was a teacher, and we weren't earning any money as a family. My mum would say "We've got £3, let's see how

¹⁶ Paula came from a Jehovah Witness background but was no longer practising and identified as a Christian.
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much we can get out of the food waste". My entire life has been around how to make the most out of food, so I think that's just stuck with me through life.' (Paula)

Her desire to tackle food poverty without stigma, and to minimise food waste shaped many of the objectives of their social enterprise.

During my first interview with the newly appointed chef, Dan, he shared that he had lived in food poverty for several years, but his pride prevented him from asking for help or visiting a foodbank. He felt his lived experience would allow him to engage with visitors to Shildon Alive.

'Years ago, when we had our Leo, the first one, I was on jobseekers at the time and there wasn't a lot of money going round, I used to eat jam and bread and crisps, just to feed Leo with his milk and stuff; so me and my partner lived like that and if this sort of place was open back then it would have helped massively.' (Dan)

Dan felt that this lived experience made him more empathetic:

'Yes, I sort of have empathy with them; I have been there, I have done it and it's not a nice place to be in.' (Dan)

His commitment to the project was obvious with Dan volunteering with others to clean the takeaway over the weekend. As well as addressing food poverty, Dan's lived experience also shaped his approach to providing opportunities for local people to gain experience and training. Having left school with minimal qualifications, a chef offered him the opportunity to train with him, a move that Dan felt was a gamble for the employer but one that turned his life around. He often described his desire to provide the same chance for other young people in Shildon.

The lived experiences of people associated with Shildon Alive in conjunction with the issues their community were facing, were an agent for change, a catalyst. Toomey (2009) notes that:

these catalysts can come in the form of individuals, organizations or even entire communities, working together for a common purpose. The main objective of the catalyst is to spark a new idea or action, with the hope or expectation that it will lead to a change in a given direction. (Toomey, 2009: 188)

These personal and community experiences, that shaped Shildon Alive, were also highlighted in Munoz et al.'s (2015) research into community-led social enterprises in rural Scotland. They found that community development practices, including listening and relationship building, were important to identify needs and opportunities. They also recognised the importance of a project manager who used a community development approach and often acted in ways similar to the 'catalyst' identified in community development literature (Toomey, 2009), but tailored to facilitating social entrepreneurship (Munoz, Steiner and Farmer, 2015).

However, this new action required different skills and capabilities to develop the social enterprise. Therefore, a process of collaboration, networking, and training was engaged in.

6.2.2 Collaborative development of business acumen

Why did Paula and the team at Shildon Alive explore novel solutions in response to the stories they were hearing rather than applying existing solutions to the social problems? Shildon Alive was an established community project, with a good reputation, strong partnerships, and a reliable income. Similar projects in the region were not altering their practice.

Two responses that emerged from the interviews in the previous learning cycle were that participants were inspired by other social entrepreneurs and that they had the time and space to critically reflect upon their practice.

Paula attended the Church Social Action and Social Enterprise event I organised in Gateshead in July 2018. At this event local Christian social entrepreneurs (including Nikki from REfUSE) shared their stories. The participatory event provided an opportunity to be inspired by other social entrepreneurs and critically reflect upon existing practice.

At the event Paula signed up for six-week social enterprise training. The training facilitator was Kate Welch from Social Enterprise Acumen, who was also a participant in the interviews. Kate understood the geographical and theological context in the North East. Twelve people from Durham Diocese attended, including community workers and clergy. The six-week training (see below) was adapted from the secular format generally provided by Social Enterprise Acumen to include spaces for theological reflection and discussion.

The first week focused upon coming up with the idea, the issue they wanted to change. Participants shared stories about their community which were at times personal and challenging.

	Topics Covered	Self-Directed Learning (Homework)
Pre-start Session	Coming up with the idea	Research into the problem you want to solve.
Session One	What is a social enterprise? Jim Collins Hedgehog model – passion for a social cause, solutions, resource engine How different social enterprises operate What problem in society do you want to solve?	Information from the local area about the size of the problem, any personal experience/anecdotes you can collect.
Session Two	Planning a social enterprise Using the social business model canvas to develop and capture ideas for a social enterprise. This session works on all of the nine elements of the canvas to explore customers, products and services and your relationship with them as well as how the business will operate, who it needs to work with, and how the money will work for costing and pricing.	Completion of your own social business model canvas.
Session Three	Who will buy? This session extends on the social business model canvas with more detail on value proposition design. This looks at the detail of customers and their lives and how the enterprise can develop products and services to meet their needs	Completion of your own value proposition design canvas.
Session Four	Telling your story This is an interactive session with all learners having an opportunity to develop and tell their social enterprise idea/story to others in a supportive and non-threatening environment.	Practising your pitch so that you can tell your story to funders, customers, or supporters.
Session Five	Managing the Money Understanding income and expenditure including fixed and variable costs. Breakeven point, the importance of knowing how much income you need to make a profit. Start-up costs – what do you really need? What systems do you need in place.	If starting an enterprise work on budget template.
Session Six	Getting Started How to trial a social enterprise. Pop ups and road testing Finding start up finance – grants for individuals/groups, crowdfunding, loans and other ways of raising money	Preparing funding applications.

Table 6. Kate Welch's Social Enterprise Training Plan, (Autumn 2019)

During the first session, participants were introduced to the hedgehog model (Collins, 2001) to use as a tool to help clarify the aims and objectives and begin to build a business plan.

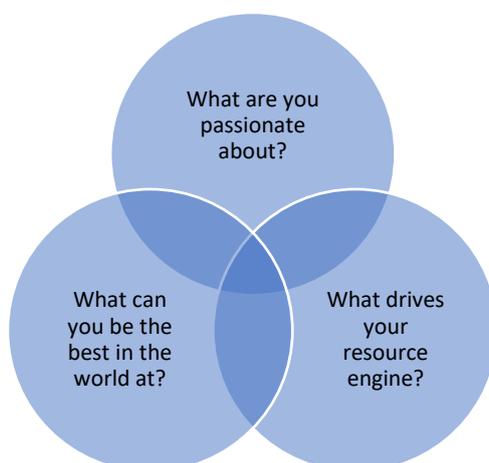


Figure 12. Hedgehog Concept (Collins, 2001:91)

What are you passionate about? Passion, according to Collins, was understanding what your organisation stands for (its core values) and why it exists (its core purpose). The groups taking part in the training preferred to think of the second question in terms of their mission in the community and purpose was often discussed in terms of calling – ‘What is God calling us to do/be in our community?’ Paula described being passionate about responding to food poverty but equally struggled with the stigmatisation people experienced in their project when receiving a foodbank parcel. Alongside this, Paula expressed an anger about the amount of usable food that ends up in landfill.¹⁷

What can you be the best at? This question is asked to help an organisation understand its unique contribution. Paula and colleagues explored this with an asset-based approach. What

¹⁷ WRAP (2020) estimated annual food waste arisings within UK households, hospitality & food service food manufacture, retail and wholesale sectors in 2018 at around 9.5 million tonnes.

are the gifts and talents that made us uniquely placed within our community? They felt that Shildon Alive was uniquely placed for several reasons; it had been an established charity for seven years and therefore was well known, trusted, and had built good partnerships within the town. It had a core group of volunteers that worked alongside the staff, and it had been offered the opportunity to expand by renting three adjacent properties on Church Street.

What best drives your resource engine? The final question focused the attention on the resources needed. Shildon Alive had been successful in winning a large National Lottery bid that year; this financial injection allowed the project to hire a part-time chef and allowed a degree of security to experiment with a new approach. The food sold in the takeaway and supermarket would bring in extra resources and the aim was that this would provide a sustainable income over time.

The aim of the social enterprise was to create a space for all local people to have access to affordable food – therefore reducing stigma - while at the same time cutting food waste. The goal was to develop a community supermarket and takeaway utilising food waste from FareShare North East.

After refurbishment, the first building provided space for the credit union alongside computers for customers to use. The second building had two small offices and therefore was ideal for advocacy work. The final building was the takeaway and plans to develop a small community supermarket were also intended for this space. Internal doors joined all three properties with separate doors onto the High Street.

There were a number of collaborations that allowed the team at Shildon Alive to develop and strengthen their business acumen. Kate Welch, who facilitated the training course, was an

experienced social entrepreneur who understood not only the context geographically but also the faith based setting.

Accounting became more complex and nuanced as the work grew, and the volunteer treasurer who came in two days a week initially found the process challenging as extra income streams had to be accounted for. The processes she used were adapted to incorporate the additional income streams. She resisted using online business tools. Collaboration with REfUSE at the beginning provided support and inspiration around using food waste, as did a training course that Dan and a volunteer attended in Glasgow.

Chapter 5.1.4 highlighted the importance of collaboration as a key element of social enterprise development, in particular, collaboration with others with understanding of the local and faith context. Findings from the ethnographic study at Shildon Alive echoed these findings, that a credible outsider or expert is needed that understands both local, faith and national social entrepreneurial context.

6.2.3 Creating a culture of experimentation and adaptation

The social entrepreneurs in the first action learning cycle described periods of experimentation and creativity; this was certainly the case in Shildon Alive. Initially the project had engaged with a social entrepreneur who wanted to provide healthy food from food waste. The partnership would allow her to use the kitchen facilities for her business while providing a small income for the project. After a few weeks it became apparent that the chef had a lack of local knowledge of food likes and dislikes and, consequently, it was felt that there wasn't a market in the town for her produce. It was agreed that the partnership wasn't working and new options were explored. Using existing grant funding, the project advertised for a chef, and the

importance of understanding the local context was key to the appointment. Dan's experience and connection to the town made him an ideal candidate.



Figure 13. Daily Specials Board

For board members, staff, and volunteers, developing a workable business plan involved a period of experimentation which was referred to as a 'messy month'. The time frame was unrealistic, with experimentation a daily factor, but calling it a 'messy month' encouraged staff and volunteers to try new things out and reflect together on their progress. Much of the informal reflection took place during lunch breaks. A decision was taken not to firm up the aims of the project until there was a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of different initiatives. The initial aims of the project were blurred with participants having a variety of expectations. Conversations about food sustainability, food waste, being an inclusive supermarket, and tackling food poverty were regular discussion points. Throughout all these negotiations the social goal was dominant, often at the expense of income generation.

There was also much experimentation around the menu. Having trained as a chef producing gourmet pub food, Dan had to adapt to both his new customers and the unreliability of food coming in. His creative background within the restaurant sector initially saw more elaborate dishes being offered on the daily specials. Requests for more 'home cooking' resulted in him changing the menu. He also began to develop more confidence in developing dishes around FareShare deliveries, cutting down on the need to buy extra produce. The daily menu consisted of specials for between £1.50 and £3.50, alongside a healthy homemade soup that could be purchased for a donation. Sandwiches and fast foods were also on offer.

When questioned about creating an environment that allowed experimentation and risk taking, Paula highlighted the role of the vicar (David) and the financial cushion provided by a lottery grant.

'David has always encouraged me. He has never told me what to do but has always encouraged me and has praised me when I have moved forward; it's given me the confidence. He has never criticised me but has been really positive when I have taken a leap of faith. [Do you think having Big Lottery funding allowed you to take more risks?] Oh definitely; I suppose we were taking baby steps with the community garden, but we didn't have the capacity to rent a shop; we needed the Lottery money to make that happen.' (Paula)

The vicar also had intentionally allowed Paula to experiment.

'I think I've always backed Paula up, even when I haven't agreed with her, because I don't, I haven't always agreed with everything that she has done.' (David)

During the time I was with the project, several experiments were proposed including working with the local GP surgery to provide meals to patients in their homes – this idea came from a gentleman who came in to buy his elderly father a meal. He explained that he lived away but as his father was ill, he had to come over to buy his meals. These plans to build and experiment further came to a sudden halt on 23 March 2020 when COVID-19 shifted focus of the project (this is explored in Chapter 8).

Whitelaw (2012) notes that a culture of volunteering can be hesitant to incorporate risk taking. However, data from this research indicates that having permission givers within the organisation and providing a fixed time for experimentation can help to provide a space of experimentation and risk taking for staff and volunteers.

The following two themes, spaces of belonging and spaces of reciprocity, relate to the environment that Shildon Alive was aiming to provide through their social enterprise.

6.2.4 Spaces of belonging

One of the most important issues for the staff and volunteers was how to make the ‘new’ Shildon Alive a place for the whole community and to shift away from being seen as a project solely for those needing support; thus, aiming to reduce stigma. Conveying this message to the community proved a challenge. Comments on the Facebook page included “*Is Shildon Alive for anyone to pop in or do you have to be homeless?*” A visitor to the project commented “*I thought it was just a supermarket for poor people, but this is great*”.

In light of these and other comments, I was asked if I would do some listening on the High Street. I asked staff and volunteers to join me in this listening, however, they felt people would be more honest with their answers to an outsider. Together we came up with three simple

questions that we thought would begin a conversation and over a two-week period fifteen informal interviews were conducted.

The three questions were:

1. What do you know about Shildon Alive?
2. Who is it for?
3. Have you ever visited, and if so, what was your experience?

The majority of interviewees still regarded it as being just for people in need, one gentleman saying that he had wanted to visit the takeaway for lunch but felt he earned too much so had gone round the corner for fish and chips. During these interviews, it was commented that the free shelves outside the project gave the impression that it was a charity and not a business too. This comment was discussed, and the shelves were moved inside.



Figure 14. Donated produce after towns leek show

Staff and volunteers felt there was growing evidence that the more 'normal' shopping experience was helping to reduce the stigma of food insecurity. There was not the referral system, as evident in many foodbanks, and the message was always an environmental one, with #feedbelliesnotbins used as the hashtag on social media.

Some days there was more on the community shelves than others and on Friday afternoons, when FareShare delivered, the shop was busiest.

On one occasion, a comment was made about which door people were using, or rather not using, to access advocacy support. The property originally consisted of three properties and these each had a door onto the High Street. The first was being used for the credit union, the second for advocacy support and the final door for the community supermarket and takeaway. It was noted that people were using the supermarket entrance, often purchasing something, and then, while paying at the till, asking to see the advocacy worker. While not wanting to question this behaviour directly, the staff and volunteers felt that the stigma of accessing support was reduced by this subtle change. It was felt that the unintentional benefit of the layout was that there was a reduction in the stigma and shame felt by visitors accessing support as they were less visible.

Conversations around reducing stigma through empowerment and agency were often linked to customers having choice. When the project previously responded to food insecurity with a foodbank there had been limited opportunities to allow people to decide which food they needed or wanted. Leading up to Christmas 2019, there was an increase in foodbank referrals and the project trialled a new approach which incorporated the supermarket and the foodbank to allow increased food choice. The Facebook post at the end of December 2019 summarised the change.

After working at Shildon Alive for nearly 6 years you see lots of sadness, embarrassment, frustration and tears when someone is in crisis and needs food support. So we decided to try and make it easier to access and also offer people choice which is often denied when giving a food parcel.

Stage 1 (foodbank)

On Christmas Eve we tried our team's ideas out, allowing the individual to choose 2 items off each shelf in our food store...success! People loved the choice, one lady asked if she could take an extra bag of pasta instead of any meat products as her little girl loved pasta! Another young carer who had to make lots of her own meals asked for extra tinned pineapple and cereal so she had stuff she could easily grab and go. One single dad with 3 children let us know that all of his children didn't eat soup, but loved beans, that was an easy swap! We always have loads of both.

Stage 2 (community shop)

Then the person is offered a voucher for our community shop, this can be spent on anything extra they need, such as nappies, toilet rolls, hot meal from our takeaway etc. This was well received with every £5 shop quite different from the last, fresh orange, pizza, stock cubes, just to give you an idea. The shop is for everyone in the community to access and any profit made goes straight back into stock for the shop.

Stage 3 (fridge and shelves for all)

We then show the person the fridge and shelves, we collect food surplus from lots of local businesses and the shelves are full of bread, fruit, veg and other items, we let them know that they can use the shelves whenever they want and that we suggest a donation of £1 per basket to cover our volunteer drivers, but make sure they know we don't expect anything off them that day. Definitely more smiles than tears on Christmas Eve, roll on 2020.

The pictures below are of our project, any comments or questions welcome 😊

Figure 15. Shildon Alive Facebook Post. (29 December 2019)

Active decisions were made by leaders to facilitate a relational space where volunteers and staff sat down together to share lunch every day. Tables were set out so that visitors to the project could spend time with volunteers. There was typically a member of staff or volunteer in the shop to welcome people, and while customers were waiting for food Dan would be enquiring about family members.

Having been an established project for many years stories of stigma began to influence conversation and practice. The vicar, David, was very conscious that Shildon was stigmatised as a low-income community.

'I don't like talking about poverty in the community that I live, because no one in Shildon really saw themselves as poorer. They saw themselves as people who lived in Shildon. And likewise, they didn't see themselves as part of a deprived community, which, you know, the IMD stats indicate.' (David)

Paula was also angry that often food given to charities was second rate as this story about food collection from the supermarket during COVID-19 shows:

'Their food champion got quite angry with me for not picking up their food waste, when all they were giving us was 'use by' packets of vegetables that we couldn't use and a few loaves of dried bread and I wasn't going to put a member of staff in a vulnerable situation to pick up a few loaves of bread. I emailed to say that one of my members of staff had waited 35 mins and we were going to leave it now. I understand his anger because he's angry as the systems are in place, but it's like we should be grateful for this bit of food. [Do you feel you're being given the scraps?] Yes, that's what it feels like.' (Paula)

Over the years the staff and volunteers had witnessed, and personally experienced, the stigmatising impact of austerity especially in the foodbanks when asking for support. These feelings of shame and stigma in relation to the violence of austerity have been noted by Garthwaite (2016a; 2016b) and Tyler (2020). To acquire, what has been referred to as, 'anti-welfare common sense' political figures and the media highlight rare, unusual and at times fanciful stories of problematic behaviour to ensure punitive and divisive policies become more palatable and even desirable by the general public (Jensen and Tyler, 2015). Narratives of those experiencing poverty as being workshy, lazy, and responsible for their own predicament are so persuasive that even those experiencing deep poverty subscribe to their 'truth' (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013). These narratives are woven into a common-sense psyche

through programmes such as *Benefits Street* and *Life on the Dole* which present a highly edited and partial depiction of life on benefits (Jensen & Tyler, 2015; MacDonald & Shildrick, 2014; Tyler, 2015).

Through this process of 'othering' (Lister, 2004), a growing and significant proportion of the population allows those in power to continue a neoliberal agenda, which benefits their self-interest.

As such poverty propaganda is a mighty political tool that orchestrates widespread consent for a political system that affords punishing life opportunities for significant numbers of its citizens whilst continuing to bolster the weight and strength of the cushions that protect the few. (Shildrick, 2018: 793)

This poverty propaganda that permeates our communities and leaves individuals feeling stigma and shame when they require support also directs the attention away from structural causes of poverty (Tyler, 2020; Garthwaite, 2016a; Lambie-Mumford, 2019).

As noted in Chapter 3.2, the Church has been party to the use of stigma to control groups in society since enclosures of common land resulted in the poor of the parish being dependent upon parish charity. The aims of providing a space of belonging for all attempts to reverse the stigma associated with charitable giving.

Belonging necessitates opportunities to contribute. Shildon Alive provided a setting for participants to share their passions and skills, a space of reciprocity.

6.2.5 Spaces of reciprocity and empowerment

The shopping experience was also perceived as more empowering when the staff and volunteers reflected together. Picking up a basket at the door and donating at the till not only was a more 'normal' shopping experience compared to visiting a foodbank, but visitors were also given more agency in what they chose, and very often produce was bought from the supermarket and supplemented with items from the community shelves. While I was on the till one morning, a regular customer who had in the past required food assistance came in. He filled his basket from the 'shelves for all' but also bought a tin of soup. This simple act of buying something, appeared to make the visit an empowering one. Through the process of purchasing something a more reciprocal relationship was enabled. This was expressed by several foodbank users who, when times were better, came in to buy things and said how important it was to support the shop when they could.

Shildon Alive had depended upon a loyal group of volunteers over the previous seven years. Some of these volunteers were from St John's congregation, others were members of the wider community. Their roles included packing bags for visitors to the foodbank, welcoming and chatting to visitors, working on the allotment. The opening of the supermarket and takeaway required a change in roles. Some volunteers found roles that allowed them to use their skills, such as cooking. New skills such as food hygiene, preparation, and operating the till had to be learnt which was at times challenging for them and the staff.

Empowerment of volunteers and staff was a central social objective of Shildon Alive. After two months of volunteering a single mum was put on food hygiene training and began to take on more roles within the kitchen. The local college used the project as a work placement for a young man with autism who came with his carer. He was taught knife skills, food preparation, how to operate the till. His carer expressed how important this time in a workplace environment was and how much he looked forward to it.

Shildon Alive attracted what Burgess and Durrant (2019) describes as 'non-traditional volunteers', people who may be on low-incomes or benefits and described themselves as having long-term physical or mental health problems. This contrasts with food banks as potential spaces of encounter where predominantly middle-class volunteers come into contact with 'poor others' (Lawson & Elwood, 2013). Volunteers told of their social isolation and had little engagement with other community organisations, although many had originally been users in Shildon Alive.

Dan explained how being given a chance was important to him due to his experience.

'Yes when I applied for the breakfast chef position at a hotel and I didn't know anything, I wasn't great on food and I didn't know much about cooking but I had the willingness to learn and the sous chef said "Oh we could train him up and he'll be good" and he sort of said "Right I will take him under my wing" so that's how I got into cooking.' (Dan)

This experience influenced the emphasis Dan put on training and giving people a chance.

'It's sort of part of the focus on giving everyone a chance and it doesn't matter who they are; if they know stuff or don't know stuff you train people up, teach them the basics of cooking and just be calm about it really, rather than saying "If you don't know about it see you later" it gave us this thing of you can help people like he helped me, like at the time I knew nothing, so I can do that in here as well.' (Dan)

I suggested that it was important to him that he gave people a hand up as well as a handout.

‘Yes give them some skills so when they are looking for jobs they can say “Ah I have helped out at Shildon Alive shop or kitchen” or whatever and they can go into a new job and say “Look I know the basics” and then hopefully that will kick start a career for them.’ (Dan)

These spaces of reciprocity provided environments for staff and volunteers to have ‘power to’, the ability or capacity to act (Norsworthy, McLaren, & Waterfield, 2012). The parallels with asset-based community development, as described in Chapter 3.5.1, are noticeable. The solutions to community issues exist within the community through the abundant skills, passions and talents. Shildon Alive could be described as an asset-based social enterprise.

However, ensuring these social aims were central to the social enterprise was one of the factors that caused tension within Shildon Alive.

6.2.6 Spaces of tension

Shifting to a social enterprise resulted in a number of tensions between the social and financial aims, among other commercial residents in the High Street and with volunteers. There were two main tensions during this period; first, between the social and business aims of Shildon Alive and, second, the relationships with other food providers in the town.

The tension between social and financial objectives became apparent when discussing issues such as the price of a product. There were many factors to consider when pricing the food. The primary consideration was affordability to the lowest income members of the community. The next consideration was whether it was sold elsewhere in the town, and if so, for how much? This caused some ethical decisions for the staff and volunteers. While not wanting to undercut local businesses, it was important to attract customers. A further consideration was

around packaging; as one of the aims was to reduce waste, and this included packaging. A decision was taken to source bottled milk from a local supplier which was more expensive than carton milk sold in the High Street and therefore didn't sell as well as hoped. This tension between the social and financial goals were captured by a delivery one Monday morning when a large delivery of gourmet sandwiches and wraps was donated from the food festival in Bishop Auckland. These were intended for the community fridge and yet it was obvious that the donation would reduce takeaway income, yet not using the sandwiches would add to food waste and deny customers high quality wraps and sandwiches. After much discussion, a decision was made to put the food into the community fridge, in the knowledge that lunchtime income would be reduced. This situation was one of many which saw social objectives taking priority over financial gain.

The hybrid nature of the organisation caused tension in the High Street as it was felt that the competition was unfair. Grant funding resulted in lower prices for some products that were also available in other shops.



Figure 16. Community Fridge

When Paula was asked about the challenges since opening the supermarket and takeaway her prime concern was the tensions that had developed on the High Street.

She clarified that most businesses were supportive but there were two or three who saw Shildon Alive as a threat and were irritated by the pricing policies of the supermarket and takeaway. She felt that promoting it as an ethical response to food waste would help to navigate the tension.

'There will be backstabs about the price of something or something we have done. I don't know how to combat it other than keep bashing the focus on the food waste side of it and get people in that way. I am planning on doing free food for kids during the whole six weeks holidays and that will get a backlash, I don't know why but it will. I will probably do free delivery takeaway or 'pay as you feel' for elderly residents and that will come with some hate.' (Paula)



Figure 17. Takeaway Menu

These 'backlash' concerns were visible through the project's Facebook page:

I don't mind playing devil's advocate but when this was thought up did you realise that you had a sandwich shop over the road that is actually the livelihood of two families and that this could possibly put them out of business because they have overheads that you don't? (Shildon Alive, 2019)

Paula replied:

If you want to call in and talk about our social enterprise ideas please do. The kitchen is also a great training facility, teaching adults and children valuable cooking skills. All profits will go back into the social enterprise to hopefully employ local folk, make our town busier and make our advocacy services sustainable. (Shildon Alive, 2019)

There were very few social media conversations criticising the project and supportive comments were posted by community members defending the project. These incidents, while upsetting to staff and volunteers, provided an opportunity to restate the social objectives while engaging with the concerns. Staff and volunteers reflected on these Facebook incidents and had discussions about how and if these community tensions could have been avoided. While some felt that more conversations along the High Street could have helped, others expressed the opinion that there would always be objectors in the community.

The consequence of these tensions and staff's concerns about community relations resulted in advertising being scaled back especially on social media. Paula said she was probably over thinking it "*but people will say we should stay as a charity*".

Farmer and Kilpatrick (2009) note the challenges relating to the potential impact of a new social enterprise on the fragile ecosystem of existing rural business and found that success requires efforts to gain buy-in from the wider community. New rural enterprises need to fit with the community's values, culture, and social mores (Frith, McElwee & Somerville, 2009), which can make it difficult to start disruptive ventures. Where proposed business operations are in a very small community, the need to tread very carefully when introducing change is heightened by Whitelaw (2012) who found service users suspicious towards social enterprises run by their neighbours, which caused stress for staff. While users of Shildon Alive stated that the changes were positive, the staff and volunteers, on the occasions there were negative tensions, did find relationships with the wider community stressful. Paula and I discussed how gaining buy-in from the business community was not given enough consideration during the start-up phase, although others in the project community thought tensions were inevitable.

David, the vicar, recalled the project had experienced opposition from a few people in the past and that relationships with the local council helped to placate issues.

'We did have opposition from the community; people thought we were attracting drug addicts, alcoholics, and those kind of and people that they didn't want to see. There was particularly no support from one or two other businesses. You know, who were quite malicious towards us in the beginning and complained about us to the council, that kind of stuff. But we had kept the council completely in the loop from the very beginning about what we were doing and how we were going to do it. So, they have always been a valued partner... they were absolutely on side anyway. But you know, there were those things to overcome.' (David)

Providing an inclusive and participatory organisation was challenging at times as the charity began to be seen as a business.

Paula spoke about some of the challenges facing volunteers and volunteer recruitment as new skills were required in the supermarket and takeaway.

'Some of our volunteers really haven't had the skills, there is only about three volunteers that could do front of house...I think it doesn't matter how much you put in some people will never be good at customer service roles. Maybe that's something to do with my recruiting...I am not sure how you get round that problem with volunteering but surely every project has that problem of volunteer issues.' (Paula)

Dan had no previous experience of volunteer management and didn't expect it to be as hard or to take as much time and energy as it did. The tension between the social needs of volunteers and the needs of the business were difficult for Dan at times.

'Each individual has their own problems...if I have an issue I will talk to someone but I won't let it get in the way of work but I have noticed with some volunteers they have issues at home and they bring it in which leads to them coming to talk to me to sort it out and trying to get the work done, get stuck in while I am dealing with it...at the end of the day it's a business. There is work to be done and it's getting that confidence in people and trying to sort out their issues whilst working which is quite draining to be honest.' (Dan)

Negotiating these new and different tensions required specific leadership abilities which are explored in the next chapter.

After a period of experimentation, Christmas 2019 provided a collective opportunity to stop and reflect.

6.2.7 Reflecting and looking forward

Before Christmas 2019, six months after the community supermarket and takeaway opened, Shildon Alive held a celebration event. Having recognised that there had been a lot of change for staff and volunteers, the management board felt it was important to thank people and celebrate. The event was attended by more than 50 people including staff, volunteers, local councillors, and clerical staff. Dan prepared a buffet, awards and gifts were presented, and I was given a 15-minute slot to gather data.¹⁸ Using post-it notes, four questions were asked: what had gone well in 2019; what we could have done better; what are your hopes for 2020; and what are your fears?

Most responses expressed that the move to the new premises had gone well; it wasn't apparent whether this was a response to the larger and smarter environment or the shift in ways of working. One response mentioned the 'refocusing to a social enterprise' as a positive move, while another that the 'growth of the community supermarket' had gone well but that this had involved 'taking risks'. Responses also highlighted the importance of the social relationships within the project with 'friendship, support and laughter' noted as being important.

More varied answers were gathered to the question of what could have been done better. Responses included: increasing resources through fundraising, being more self-sustainable, or boosting donations to the foodbank and clothing bank. Other comments highlighted the stigma that continued to prevent Shildon Alive being regarded as a place for all the community.

¹⁸ I was given strict instructions not to use more than 15 minutes as this was a celebratory event.

People stated the challenge as 'getting the message out that Shildon Alive is for every resident' and that some 'people are too proud to come in'.

The most common response to the question around hopes for 2020 was growth, more resources, providing more jobs and supporting more people. A couple of respondents hoped that in 2020 they would be in a position to close the foodbank, and another hoped that visitors would be able to continue to choose their own food. One person stated 'better recognition from other businesses', reflecting the continued tensions between local traders and the project.

The fears for 2020 fell into two categories: failure of the project due to lack of funding or the failure of the social enterprise. There was fear around the economic and political environment within the town, such as 'people will lose more jobs' and there could be 'growth in the need for foodbank'.

Paula had hoped that the social enterprise would replace the foodbank but came to the conclusion that a mixed approach to tackle food poverty was still required.

'I still think we need a three strand respond to food poverty; in my naivety I thought we could get away without a foodbank and just let people use the shop but it's financially not viable.' (Paula)

The overall atmosphere was positive with people congratulating each other, laughing at mistakes, and talking with hope for 2020. The feeling expressed was that although it had been tough and hard work, it had been worth it. There was excitement about what 2020 had in store!

6.3 Conclusion and reflections: social enterprise as a creative process

To assume there is but one way to develop social enterprise is to limit what is possible by recognising ambiguity and paradox. (Seanor et al., 2013: 339)

Setting up a social enterprise has been described as a performative exercise in which the practitioners navigate the competing aims of the social and enterprise (Mauksch et al., 2017). This ethnographic study is one example of the creative process of beginning to develop an income generating model of social action in the North East of England. This local narrative within a community development setting, demonstrates the potential to make links between interpersonal, organisational, and policy domains (Froggett & Chamberlayne, 2004). For example, a greater understanding of social enterprise as a model of Christian social action will encourage organisations such as the Church of England to engage and create policies to support this work.

Gathering data over eight months aimed to produce an honest and in-depth understanding of the complexity and ambiguity of creating a Christian-based social enterprise which can be missed by short term research that doesn't embed itself in the culture and activity of the organisation. If we are to really understand the grit in the pearl that makes social enterprises so valuable, researchers need to evidence the context of failure, doubt, weakness, and humility. Building upon the learning from the first action learning cycle the main new theme to emerge during this start-up phase was a creative process. Initial ideas and plans were creatively adapted on a daily basis, which appeared chaotic and messy but were important in the creative process, especially when resources were scarce.

With only initial observations of Shildon Alive, people could be forgiven for describing a setting with limited resources, for example, too few staff or volunteers with business acumen, or customers with limited financial resources.

Janssen, Fayolle and Wuillaume (2018) suggest that bricolage is the most appropriate approach to consider social enterprises that operate in resource constraint environments. The term bricolage refers to a French expression which denotes craftspeople who creatively use materials left over from other projects to construct new artefacts. To fashion their bricolage projects, bricoleurs used only the tools and materials at hand (Levi-Strauss, 1966), a mode of construction opposed to the ways of traditional engineers who followed procedures, and had a list of specific tools to carry out their tasks.

Bricolage in social entrepreneurship is defined as 'the making do with any resources at hand to provide innovative solutions for social needs that traditional organisations fail to address in an adequate way' (Janssen, Fayolle & Wuillaume, 2018: 450). Witell et al. (2017) suggests that bricolage is based on a set of four specific capabilities: (a) actively addressing resources' scarcity; (b) 'making do' with what is at hand; (c) improvising recombination of resources; and (d) networking with external partners. Being able to adapt, improvise, make do and network - bricolage capabilities - can explain why some organisations are more resilient when facing resources scarcity (Witell et al., 2017). The 'adaptive capacity' of bricolage has been recognised as particularly important for resilience of rural social enterprises (Steiner & Atterton, 2015).

Key to the bricolage at Shildon Alive was food; everyday food that other people regarded as waste, and was destined for landfill, created wholesome meals. It often involved making do with what was at hand. Dan wouldn't know what was being delivered and this was often supplemented by food donated from the local allotments. A process of creating with whatever

was at hand was always going on in the kitchen. Times of the year, such as post-Christmas, were quiet with less money available in the town, so menus were adapted. Opening times were experimented with, with breakfast clubs and Saturday openings both tried out. Saturday mornings were less successful while, after adapting the menu, the breakfast muffins were very popular with young people on their way to school. The market for products was shaped by the geography; Shildon is a small market town, and with many residents living on a low-income. Again, the staff and volunteers engaged with what was at hand, building relationships with the local health centre and school, providing party buffets for local organisations.

There were two shifting narratives co-existing and interweaving during the research period. Firstly, a shift from the focus on food scarcity to one of abundance and secondly, the shift from conversations about being a charity to being a social enterprise. The motivation behind these two shifting narratives was that the project should be regarded as a place for all the community. One of the key drivers of establishing the community supermarket and takeaway was to respond to food insecurity in a way that reduced stigma and was not seen as somewhere only 'the poor' visited. Religious communities responded to those struggling with scarcity of food in their communities (Dowler & Lambie-Mumford, 2015; Garthwaite, 2016b; Lambie-Mumford & Jarvis, 2012). These charitable responses are framed in terms of poverty, insufficiency, and shortage. Staff and volunteers were acutely aware that the process of collecting a food parcel from a foodbank resulted in feelings of embarrassment and shame. Research carried out by Garthwaite (2016a) in a foodbank less than twenty miles away from Shildon found that recipients of food aid felt shame, fear, and embarrassment, with stigma being cited as a reason for not accessing support. One of the values underpinning Shildon Alive was a belief in abundance. However, although being a charity implied to many that engagement was predicated on a deficit model, people visited Shildon Alive to receive support or goods. The volunteers and leaders were aware that this perceived deficit model presented a barrier for engagement and that those who did engage with the project may feel stigmatised. It was

believed that if Shildon Alive was used by all the community it would reduce the practice of ‘othering’ between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and through which social distance is established and maintained (Lister, 2004). The use of surplus food in the new space allowed a rebranding from a charitable response to food poverty to an ethical business response – which could be engaged with by all the community regardless of income. This resulted in local GPs and other professionals using the takeaway as they expressed support in preventing food waste.¹⁹

The Christian beliefs and values, operant and espoused proved an important foundation during a period of change and experimentation. The data relating to the beliefs and values have been included in Chapter 9. The lack of theological literature in relation to social enterprises necessitated the adoption of business frameworks and language; these failed to engage, and at times alienated staff and volunteers.

The question arising from this learning cycle is how to develop an accessible and relevant theological framework; this will be explored in the next learning cycle.

This learning cycle has been valuable in that it has allowed a deeper understanding of the complexity, messiness and tensions when shifting to a more enterprising model of social action. Through the ethnographic study of one such project in the North East of England, there are themes that correlate with the data collected during the first research cycle. For example, providing spaces of reciprocity, empowerment and belonging, creating a culture of experimentation and adaptation, and the tension between social and financial objectives.

¹⁹ Caution has been raised around the use of food waste for charitable food assistance as this repositions food excess as being more desirable and less disturbing, and ‘religious organizations, in turn, become middlemen in rescaling and decriminalizing excess and transforming it into a virtue’ (Salonen, 2018: 1).

Shildon Alive had engaged in a creative process that had seen the problem solving and charitable approaches working well at times and in tension at others, an issue recorded by others (Dees, 2012). As the project shifted from a charitable response to a more enterprising approach there were tensions from volunteers, church members, and the community, especially those who felt their businesses would be impacted by the new venture. These dissenting voices slowly abated as the new ways of operating were experienced in person and a few volunteers decided to step back. Occasional criticisms on social media continued.

This creative and adaptive environment had been led by both individual and collective leadership within the project. The individual leaders were influenced and driven by a combination of personal histories, context, and spiritual capital, while the collective leadership supported and gave permission for experimentation and risk taking. New leaders were also developed throughout the period. The following chapter allows a deeper exploration of the role of leadership within this Christian Social Enterprise.

Chapter 7. Leadership in Christian social enterprise

Engaging in ethnographic research at Shildon Alive provided data to closely examine the role of leadership within an emerging Christian social enterprise. This close-up view has been supplemented with data relating to leadership gathered from the first learning cycle.

The social enterprise sector lacks a deep understanding of the role of leadership, with researchers generally focused more on entrepreneurship (Jackson, Nicoll & Roy, 2018). Leadership narratives have been adapted from the private and public sectors and, while similarities exist, there are different challenges that arise from complexity and ambiguity. Caution must be taken in seeking learning and legitimacy from the private or public sector, especially when social enterprises are being established as a result of failings from these sectors.

Some care therefore needs to be taken as to what extent social entrepreneurship offers an alternative to existing forms of social change, or to what extent it is simply the extension and intrusion of 'business' into the 'social' and political arenas. (Grenier, 2006: 138)

If social enterprises aim to challenge the dominant concept of the mainstream, rather than reflect it, leadership within these organisations should originate from practices that are effective within both the social and business economies (Amin, Cameron & Hudson, 2002).

Theologians have cautioned against an undiscerning embracing of secular wisdom and practice. Percy (2018) has been a leading critique of extensive adoptions of practices from other sectors.

Most denominations are not alert to the dangers of uncritically inculcating management and business-think into our systems and structures. (Percy, 2018: para,10)

Therefore, within this research context there is an additional dimension to consider, that of Christian models of leadership.

However, Jackson, Nicoll & Roy's (2018) model does consider the complexities and challenges of leadership within this sector and explores the distinctive nature and points of convergence and departure from other sectors. They develop a framework to consider the multi-faceted nature of leadership in a social enterprise which provides a relevant heuristic for this research; leadership through person, position, process, performance, place, and purpose.²⁰

This chapter will apply Jackson, Nicoll & Roy's (2018) secular framework to the findings and bring it into conversation with Christian models of leadership. They identify six different lenses through which to explore the various dimension of leadership, and I use these lenses as the heading for each of the sections in this chapter.

7.1 Leadership through person

This lens asks who has the *informal* power, focusing upon individuals, their characteristics, qualities, and personality.

²⁰ These are an expansion on Grint's (2005) leadership framework (person, results, position, and process).

The underlying assumption is that a particular person can and should create leadership because of their particular characteristics and qualities such as superior knowledge, skill and experience or special values, beliefs, motives and charismatic presence. (Jackson, Nicoll & Roy, 2018: 75)

The 'leadership through person' lens highlights leadership as an individual activity: 'an exercise by a person who encompasses various qualities or traits that have been traditionally associated with "leaders"' (Grint, 2005: 33). This lens highlights the importance of aspects of leadership which derive primarily from who we are, our personality, our values and beliefs about the world including authenticity and humility, courage and calmness, self-confidence and risk-taking, and a strong 'moral compass' and belief system (Gravells, 2012).

On my first day of volunteering at Shildon Alive, Paula greeted me with a paintbrush in hand as she managed volunteers and negotiated with contractors. This summed up Paula's attitude to leadership. She was often described as 'living and breathing Shildon Alive' and spent much of her time off at the weekend picking up food waste, or shopping for the supermarket. Paula's family often helped in the project with her daughter taking a real interest in community development



Figure 18. Paula negotiating with contractors

Paula's management style was one of rolling her sleeves up alongside staff and volunteers including painting rooms, collecting food, and cleaning out the fridge. She was often found working in the shop front which allowed her to greet shoppers, she had a natural connection with customers and would enquire about their wellbeing (or of their family). When customers appeared distressed, Paula would enquire quietly whether they needed to chat to someone and would arrange advocacy support.

The driven entrepreneur is motivated by individual circumstances as well as their own traits with over half of entrepreneurial activity being in response to personal or community hardship (Paton, 1989). Paula's lived experiences (Chapter 6.2.1) endorse the relationship between individual circumstances and motivation for change.

The development of the social enterprise was a demanding period for Paula, who described feeling physically and emotionally exhausted, and calm leadership within this period was difficult at times.

The picture that emerges...is someone who lives in a whirl of activity, in which attention must be switched every two minutes from one subject, problem person to another: of an uncertain world where relevant information includes gossip and speculation. It is a picture, too, not of a manager who sits quietly controlling but who is dependent upon many people, other than subordinates, with whom reciprocating relationships should be created: who need to learn how to trade, bargain and compromise. (Stewart, 1983: 96)

These aspects of 'being' sit alongside aspects of 'doing' which derive primarily from learned skills and knowledge. These include managing performance, communicating authenticity, building a strong team, delivering results, and taking responsibility (Gravells, 2012). Alongside the social enterprise training, Paula had a broad and extensive range of learned skills as a community development practitioner. Muñoz et al. (2015) highlight how the project manager in a community social enterprise in Scotland used community development approaches as a catalyst for more entrepreneurial responses to issues. The importance of learned skills was highlighted by other research participants (Chapter 5.3 & 6.2.3), several of whom recognised that while they felt confident in social welfare provision, incorporating this into a social enterprise necessitated new skills and knowledge. Collaboration, training, and consultancy were adopted to meet these gaps in expertise.

Initial reflections upon Paula's leadership through person may describe it using the notion of servant leadership. Servant leadership was developed as a theory by Greenleaf (1977) and is pertinent to this context as it is based upon religious teachings with leadership practices modelled by Jesus being cited as the basis for Greenleaf's initial theory (Keith, 2018).

The servant-leader is servant first...It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is *leader* first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions...The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature. The difference manifests itself in the care by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. (Greenleaf, 1977: 15)

Servant leadership would provide a natural framing for the reflections on leadership as it has been adopted to describe social entrepreneurs (Petrovskaya & Mirakyan, 2018) and workers in faith-based organisations (Ortiz-Gómez et al., 2020). The personal traits associated with servant leadership - altruism, humility, integrity, empathy, and trust (Petrovskaya & Mirakyan, 2018), also emerge from the data. Additionally, the aim of servant leadership is the flourishing of those being served which would also reflect the leadership observed in Shildon Alive.

Do those served grow as persons: do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what is the benefit on the least privileged in society, will they benefit or at least, not be further deprived? (Greenleaf, 1977: 27)

This altruistic approach initially appears to describe well the leadership demonstrated by Paula and other leaders, the social entrepreneurs in this research; they were Christian leaders who wanted to serve others and God. The notion of servant leadership is one that challenges hierarchical power relationships by positioning the leader as a servant. Servant leadership was not the approach used at Shildon Alive, while Paula did serve others, and demonstrated many of the qualities associated with servant leadership, she still maintained power. This

power was both informal through person, and formal through her position as the project lead. The concept of servant leadership neglects to recognise the wider power structure, encompassing race, gender, sexuality, age, and class, within all of the social enterprises that determines who is a servant leader and who remains a servant (Liu, 2019). Therefore, while servanthood may be one of the characteristics within these social enterprises, it did not provide an accurate or comprehensive description of what good leadership would entail (Cole, 2009).

Observing Paula's leadership through person portrays a 'heroic', 'energetic' and 'driven' agent of social change (Dees, 2001), although this was only a part of how leadership was created at Shildon Alive. There were formal power structures within the organisation which were also influencing practice.

7.2 Leadership through position

This lens looks at the positions people hold within the organisation and who has the *formal* power. Leadership through position has been associated with a hierarchical and vertical activity; exercised from 'top-down' (Grint, 2005). Shildon Alive, along with other examples here, sits within a charitable model with an historically entrenched governance system that legitimises the authority of a select group of leaders. Ridley-Duff and Bull (2016) argue that:

the logic of charitable law reinforces the view that employees are subordinate to a board, taking on the role of servant in the master-servant relationship, reinforcing a unitary workplace culture. (Ridley-Duff & Bull, 2016: 277)

Leadership through position was present through the positional power held by Paula and the board of trustees. Although the formal power ultimately sat with the vicar and the board of trustees, they did not use this hierarchical power to assert leadership within the organisation.

Instead, they used their power to support and empower Shildon Alive's staff and volunteers – for example, through advocating to the wider congregation for giving them space to experiment and take risk – rather than not allowing them autonomy and dictating to them how things should be done (as leadership through position would suggest).

The trust built up between the board and those with management roles in the project provided an environment for a more pluralist approach, where competing values, interests and objectives were navigated (Ridley-Duff, 2007). However, ultimately, key decisions needed approval from the board or vicar.

From my practice as a community organiser, I have witnessed the unease when discussing power. Power within the church is often regarded negatively, with the deployment of power through leadership being seen as the antithesis of leadership demonstrated by Jesus (Lewis-Anthony, 2013).

Leadership is an alien virus ingested by the Christian host. It seems to be reasonable...but fatally flawed by its roots in violence, the will to power and destruction...it is antithetical to the model ministry and challenge of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. (Lewis-Anthony, 2013: 263)

Yet, as noted in Chapter 2.1, if power is reframed as the ability or capacity to do things (Norsworthy, McLaren & Waterfield, 2012), it is neither morally good nor bad (Nye, 2011). In fact, it has been argued that we should regard power as a gift from God, that when used appropriately can enable human flourishing (Crouch, 2013). This view of power being used to support the empowerment of others and to enable human flourishing is replicated in models of community development and organising (Ledwith, 2011; Alinsky 1971).

Rev. David Tomlinson used his position and power to build the capacity to do things by challenging the mindset within the congregations. His power was used positively as a permission giver and encourager, especially during the times of experimentation and risk taking. This was particularly evident during the start-up phase when Paula was confident of David's support and backing (Chapter 6.2.3). While Tim Thorlbury felt that clergy were not the right people to run social enterprises (Chapter 5.3), they should be encouraged to use their position and power to be accommodators, as Martin explained using the language of pioneers.

'Pioneers and pioneering...is really quite tightly linked often to entrepreneurial behaviours. And one of the things they talk about in terms of church leaders and others is that they need to at least be, even if they don't fully align them, they at least need to be pioneer accommodators. (Martin)

From the data gathered at Shildon Alive, leadership through position was not the most appropriate lens to adopt. Rather than use their hierarchical position to assert their ultimate leadership, the vicar and the board of trustees used the power that came with their positions to enable staff and volunteers to act.

Leadership should be empowering. It is the process of giving power away, not collecting it. It is moving the power to influence into the hands of the people we are leading so they can pursue the mission. Like God's leadership, it is a relationship that cares enough to walk patiently with people towards a shared purpose. (Wright, 2000: 135)

It is to this relational view of leadership, leadership through process, that we now turn to. This is a clear alternative to leadership through position or person and may be more appropriate for social enterprises to adopt.

7.3 Leadership through process

How is leadership created? This is the primary question posed by this lens, which explores the dynamic relationship between leaders and followers. This relational understanding views leadership not as a trait or behaviour of an individual leader, but as a phenomenon generated in the interactions among people (Fairhurst, 2009).

Exploring leadership through process recognises the intrinsic collective nature of leadership, and focuses on how, in some contexts, leadership is co-created through an unfolding, dynamic and relational process (Ospina & Ukhl-Bien, 2012).

Leadership within Shildon Alive was weighted towards leadership through process. Decisions were constantly being checked and run by other staff members and volunteers; decisions as small as 'How much do we sell these baked beans for?' through to bigger decisions around opening at the weekend. This 'sense checking' process not only kept the leadership decisions from being escalated to the board but also helped to develop new leaders. This was particularly the case for Dan. Despite having come from a working environment in the private sector, where hierarchical leadership through position predominated, within Shildon Alive he was being supported through process leadership to develop his own leadership skills. Other volunteers required greater support to develop skills and confidence in order to take on leadership roles, including opening up and managing the till, which they were encouraged to do.

A collective relational leadership was present at Listen Threads, where the process of developing new leaders was evident. Young women were taking on specific tasks within the social enterprise, such as social media or marketing, and leading them. Clean For Good provides leadership training for the employees and REfUSE also developed volunteers to lead by creating roles within the café. The process of collective leadership is time consuming and complex, but when successful the results can be amazing (Caulfield & Brenner, 2020), with staff, volunteers, and participants given the power to act within these enterprises.

This relational process of leadership aligns to Parkinson's (2020) definition of Christian leadership:

A relational process of social influence through which people are inspired, enabled and mobilized to act in positive, new ways, towards the achievement of God's purposes.
(Parkinson, 2020: 98)

Parkinson (2020) attempts to understand Christian leadership by bringing contemporary secular and sacred leadership thinking into conversation. He highlights the significance of growing and developing others and fostering collaboration. This positions the leadership approach as an asset-based one that recognises that giftedness within a community creates a developmental culture.

Practically and theologically, organisations such as the Church of England may aspire to embody a more empowering, enabling model of collective leadership. However, the hierarchical nature and history of the organisation often results in the dominance of leadership through position. This was not reflected in the data from these faith affiliated organisations.

Leadership as a collective relational process is one that can 'generally enable groups of people to work together in meaningful ways to produce leadership outcomes' (Day, 2000: 582). This was evidenced within Shildon Alive on a practical day to day level.

7.4 Leadership through place

Jackson, Nicoll and Roy, (2018) emphasise how important context and culture are in creating leadership. Thus, the notion of place is central to developing leaders in a community-focused social enterprise. Stinchfield, Nelson and Wood (2013) consider that strong sustainable communities cannot be built from the top-down or outside-in, but as a place-based solution, building on the capacities of local people, institutions and associations. While not minimising the need for external forces, they claim that the primary importance is local leadership and creativity. For a social enterprise to succeed it is important that the local context is known personally, in order to be responsive to the market.

All the staff and volunteers at Shildon Alive lived, or had lived, in Shildon, many having been born there. This connection with their community was beneficial in the process of identifying, connecting, and mobilising local assets. Knowledge of individuals, families, and the community helped in decision making and handling different situations – for example, knowing who had ducks and chickens when there was food waste appropriate to feed these birds, understanding how the community would engage with promotional material, and being aware of who was having a difficult time. There were also well-established and strong local relationships with other agencies and organisations within the town. This became most visible during COVID-19 when in responding to food insecurity in the town, the team worked with new volunteers, the town council, and local schools (Chapter 8.2).

Leadership through place requires listening to and knowing the community. This was also particularly evident in Firs and Bromley where Listen Threads is based, and where staff and volunteers all lived. The lack of connection to place was one of the inspirations for The Beehive to build community in a transient place (Chapter 5.1).

The evidence gathered from Shildon Alive also highlighted how certain dynamics associated with a place could have a negative impact upon leadership. The establishment of the community supermarket and takeaway on a small high street was met with criticism from local businesses and individuals. These were often taken personally and seriously, and impacted leadership in relation to issues like marketing and promotion.

Leadership was also influenced by the cultural associations with the parish church. Voices from within the congregation and wider community expressed the view that the church should do charity. This was clearly reflected through Paula's cautiousness when advertising or posting on Facebook.

'I have a fear of advertising and being criticised in the town for taking away business as we should just be a charity. I know as soon as I put anything on Facebook there will be a backlash from proper businesses who don't get the funding we get. I know it will come so I am very cautious, which holds us back in making more money.' (Paula)

Tensions resulted from the geographical and cultural/historical positionality of the project, which in turn impacted the organisational leadership. What was sold, how things were advertised, and the narrative shared in the community and congregation reflected this. The market for their products was shaped by the context, as Shildon is a small market town with many residents living on a low income. Again, the staff and volunteers engaged with what was

at hand, building relationships with the local health centre and school, and providing party buffets for local organisations.

The data from this research highlights that local people's understanding of community needs, assets, and 'what will work around here', helps rural leaders to adapt policy initiatives to local geography, history, resources, and existing infrastructure. Skerratt, (2012) suggests that rural social entrepreneurs need to skilfully navigate between the local and extra local contexts. Although context is 'experienced' locally through exercising social relations, it also operates 'vertically' and involves understanding of the policy, legislative and social enterprise sectoral landscape. Rural social enterprise leaders require familiarity with local cultural norms so they can navigate the tensions between what local people believe should be provided by the state, and what is provided by citizens (Skerratt, 2012).

One of the key assets many faith-based services bring is that they are embedded in their communities, and, as Liz Carnelly of the Near Neighbours programme points out, are 'not just outsiders coming in to tell them what to do' (Bridwell & Timms, 2013: 39).

Shildon Alive was an Anglican project that has a deep connection to place through the parish system, the place where an 'ecology of care' and an 'eschatology of belonging' are enacted (Rumsey, 2017).

Being embedded in place (or parish) provides both an opportunity and limitation for the development of a social enterprise (Welter, 2011; Amin, 2002). The data collected highlighted that the geographical context had a direct impact on the leadership, and also on the performance at Shildon Alive.

7.5 Leadership through performance

When looking at leadership through a lens of performance we are asking 'What is achieved by leadership?'.

This is arguably the most complex and problematic question that social enterprises face. It encompasses both a quantitative 'results-oriented' dimension that acknowledges outputs and outcomes and the qualitative yet even more critical task of acquiring and maintaining legitimacy in the eyes of the social enterprise's diverse stakeholders. (Jackson, Nicoll & Roy, 2018: 80)

While social impact measurements are routinely adopted by social enterprises, they are centred primarily on the impact and outcomes of the organisation and not its leadership, which is more problematic to measure (Gibbon & Dey, 2011). The contradictory nature of social enterprise – managing the juxtaposition of social mission and business outcomes - has resulted in a paradoxical model of leadership (Smith et al., 2012). During Shildon Alive's start-up phase, leadership was only measured in relation to income generation. The performance of the organisation was measured through financial accounts which saw a steady increase in takings. The figures reported broke down the income from the takeaway, the shop, and donations from the community shelves. At board meetings these were responded to with encouragement as a picture of a growing business was presented. This all changed with lockdown.

Leadership through performance is particularly problematic during the start-up phase when entrepreneurial spirit can be destroyed when leaders attempt to create order out of chaos (Collins, 2001). Collins (2001) recognises that when organisations are starting up, to maximise the ethics of entrepreneurship there is a low culture of discipline. The leadership process at

Shildon Alive gave permission and encouragement to experiment and this was key to the entrepreneurship during this start-up period.

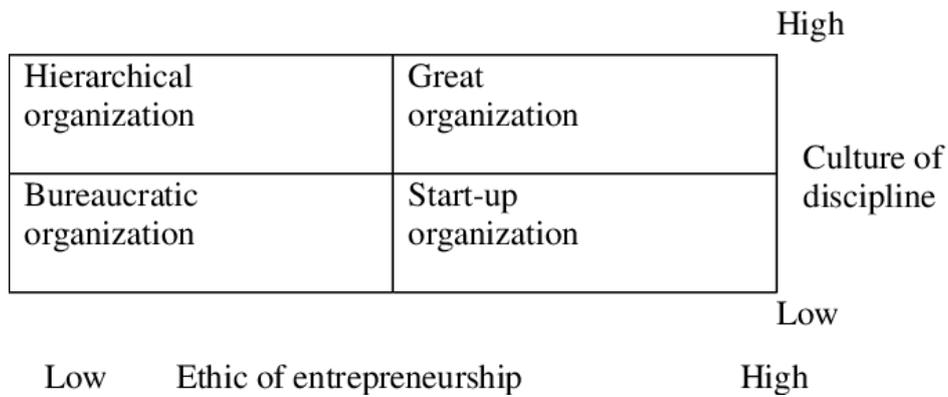


Figure 19. The Good to Great Matrix of Creative Discipline (Collins, 2001)

For the Christian, a focus upon leadership through performance must come with a warning. Firstly, what is being measured, and therefore valued? Is it an economy of counting in, how many people attended, and money received, or the economy of giving out, valuing what happens beyond the walls of the church? (Barrett & Harley, 2020). Second, Bishop Taylor (1992) warns of the temptation of being a performer (Chapter 3.4.1).

Leadership through performance arose as the weakest lens in the smaller and emerging social enterprises, with leadership through purpose a more dominant influence.

7.6 Leadership through purpose

An exploration of leadership through purpose is central to understanding the motivations, values, and ideologies that shape the individual and collective. This is a major consideration

for this research which asks how Christian values, ideologies, and motivations influence leadership in social enterprise.

This lens of leadership will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 9 considering all the data relating to beliefs. There were four questions that emerged from my coding of the data gathered in relation to leadership through purpose.

1. What is the purpose of the project?
2. What are the values underpinning the purpose of the project?
3. What was the motivation for this purpose?
4. How is the purpose communicated to the community and other stakeholders?

One of the key values that emerged from the data was the concept of abundance.

'And the reason that we called it Shildon Alive was because it was a link to the outcome that you might have life and life in abundance. And so, it was about saying that, you know, we're about abundant life...so for me to therefore, focus on abundant life was a way of saying that as a church, we're about celebrating the good news that is the gospel.' (David)

This Christian value influenced the name of the organisation, and how it was talked about, with narratives around poverty being avoided.

It was important to articulate the new purpose of Shildon Alive to the staff, volunteers, congregation, and other stakeholders within the community. Pronouncing a purpose was more straightforward when the project was initially set up as it sat in a clearly defined charitable space. However, as this shifted and the leadership began to experiment, articulating this

purpose was more problematic. The purpose was intentionally not expressed within a deficit model, although funding applications had often relied upon this.

The approach taken at Shildon Alive with stakeholders, many of whom were not religious, was to communicate purpose personally and physically – by inviting people to come and see.

‘And having the support of key funders has obviously made a massive difference. We couldn’t have done it without this support...we’ve always tried hard to keep them all on board. So I would invite them to do all sorts of things, every time we did anything that was involved with press or the several times we were on television or we had a video any of that kind of stuff, we would share it with all of our funders to say, you know, look how great the projects are, and really worked hard at those relationships - and that certainly paid off.’ (David)

While leadership through purpose was an essential element of Shildon Alive, this was navigated and expressed through the added lens of leadership through place. This navigation was influenced by the individuals, the market, and the audience. The purpose behind Shildon Alive came out of a theology of abundance. This was held in tension with the challenging realities of life for many of the participants, and the language and focus that funders required.

Leadership through purpose requires a continual reengagement with the values, motivations, and ideologies to ensure decisions and directions remain true to these.

7.7 Conclusion and reflections on leadership

The eight months spent at Shildon Alive allowed a close-up perspective on the role of leadership within a Christian project to be gained at a point when the project was developing

a more enterprising approach to community issues. While only an ethnographic study of one context, data gathered from the preliminary interviews with a range of social entrepreneurs enriched the findings from Shildon Alive.

Shildon Alive is a community project affiliated with the Church of England which many would argue is an institution dominated by leadership through position. Within the Church of England, leadership is associated with episcopal positions and delegated authority to the parish priest.

All the lenses of leadership described by Jackson, Nicoll & Roy (2018) were present at Shildon Alive to varying degrees. The dominant form of leadership uncovered in this ethnographic study was leadership through process. Leadership was used to give power away and empower others, resulting in a collective and relational approach to leadership. As a project where community development values prevailed, the presence of participation and empowerment through leadership was perhaps unsurprising. Leadership through process aims to develop new leaders, a role that Geiger and Peck (2016) assert is important for the local church. They believe that the local church could become the 'leadership locus' within a community, developing leaders for both the church and community. This reflects a broader view of leadership, seeing Christians as people of influence, people equipped by the church to be leaders in various aspects of life. They state:

Because a local church exists to serve her community, to bless the world, and to be a light to the nations, then the leaders developed in each local church are developed for much more than each local church. In the church we are recruiting leaders to a mission bigger than the small ones the world offers. Whether we lead our homes, companies, or churches, our mission is always bigger than the organization we lead. (Geiger & Peck, 2016: 7–8)

Encouraging leadership in the social enterprise sector is more challenging than other sectors because of the levels of complexity, ambiguity, and the lack of an established theoretical and practical knowledge base (Jackson, Nicoll & Roy, 2018). This complexity intersects with the influence of Christian leadership within the social enterprise. As discussed in Chapter 6.7, Volland's (2015) research highlighted a number of factors that would aid entrepreneurship within church leadership, including using accessible language, creating a shared vision, having the courage to go beyond the church and experiment, and building networks to share entrepreneurial expertise within the wider church.

However, none of the social enterprises in this research were directly led by church leaders, although they did have positions on the boards. Positional power was evident, although this form of leadership was used to empower others and support the shift to a more enterprising organisation. Those with positional power were important as permission givers and enablers. This was particularly important when central stakeholders such as the congregation or governing bodies may be resistant to a shift in practice away from the dominant charitable model.

The leaders that were being developed at Shildon Alive through their participation in the social enterprise were growing confidence, capability, and capacity. The COVID-19 pandemic saw the whole operational practice including the role of leadership shift dramatically, as described in the next chapter.

Chapter 8. COVID-19 – learning from the crisis

Social enterprises are at the forefront of solutions to the crisis: on the health and social care frontline and providing crucial community support to the most vulnerable (Darko et al., 2020: 1)

At the beginning of 2020, the world was engulfed by the Coronavirus pandemic which is continuing to have massive societal ramifications. Data from the UK government state that by 22 March 2022, there have been 20,093,762 confirmed cases of the virus resulting in 163,511 deaths²¹ (UK Government, 2022a & 2022b).

Research carried out with low-income families by the Church of England and Child Poverty Action Group, found that 8 in 10 respondents to an online survey reported a significant deterioration in their living standards due to a combination of falling income and rising expenditure cause by the pandemic (Howes et al., 2020). The Bishop of Durham, Paul Butler, who speaks for the Church of England on matters relating to children and families, said in a foreword to the research report:

This report sets out in stark detail how for many families it has been a constant struggle. It bears out what churches have experienced first-hand in every community: that families have been placed under huge strain; that the worst off have again been worst hit and, for many, things now could get worse rather than better. In these unprecedented times, we all need to ask ourselves urgently how we can help our neighbour. It is also imperative that the Government does all that it can to protect

²¹ Number of deaths of people who had had a positive test result for COVID-19 and died within 28 days of the first positive test.

families and children by implementing the practical recommendations in this report.
We all must play our part. (Butler: 2020b)

The pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated the entrenched inequalities in health, food security, employment, and education.

COVID-19 does not strike at random - mortality is much higher in elderly people, poorer groups, and ethnic minorities, and its economic effect is also unevenly distributed across the population. The economic fallout is likely to be felt for years. Without concerted preventive action worse off families and communities will be disproportionately affected, increasing health inequalities in the UK and globally.
(Whitehead, Taylor-Robinson & Barr, 2021: 1)

The editorial from the British Medical Journal highlights some of the challenges of the pandemic in relation to groups in society that have all been adversely affected, the elderly, poorer groups, and ethnic minorities. Restrictions imposed by national government have had a disproportionate impact upon lower income communities epidemiologically, socially, and economically.

The impact of COVID-19 on household incomes so far has been highly unequal. Not only have those on the lowest incomes or in insecure work been worst affected by the economic impact of the crisis so far, but the pandemic has exposed how little compensation those who lose their jobs receive through our social security system.
(McNeil, Jung & Hochlaf, 2020: 4)

Inequalities in health have existed for many decades and have led to unjust consequences in morbidity and mortality. These have become even more apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the pandemic disproportionately impacting disadvantaged individuals from black and minority ethnic groups, and poorer socioeconomic backgrounds (Mishra et al., 2021).

COVID-19 has had a fundamental effect on the work of all sectors of the economy, including the social enterprises in this research. Utilising the relationships developed throughout the research, data was collected to discover how this impacted the small group of social enterprises taking part in the research. The key question of interest for this research was how the social enterprises had adapted during a crisis situation to the challenges and opportunities presented in a period of unprecedented community need. Data were gathered from Shildon Alive, Clean for Good, The Beehive, and Listen Threads. Remote methods such as online interviews and email correspondence were necessary as lockdown restrictions and social distancing rules prevented any face-to-face engagement.

Four dominant themes arose from the data: crisis and closure; a shift from income generation to welfare provision; resources invested in maintaining and building relationships; and, finally, lockdown providing a period for planning and reimagining.

8.1 Crisis and closure

On 23 March 2020 the UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson ordered a national lockdown urging people to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives. The closure of all non-essential shops and employees being ordered to work from home where possible had an impact upon all the participants in the research.

At The Beehive the difficult decision to close was taken.

'Before lockdown was announced we were committed to staying open in a takeaway capacity for our customers and the community – however, as staff members became ill, travelling into Bethnal Green became more of a challenge and we couldn't rely on customers to observe social distancing guidelines, so we began to realise the most responsible thing to do was to close. We didn't want to be seen to be encouraging people to leave their homes.' (Jess)

This decision was taken primarily for the safety and wellbeing of the staff, although financial considerations were also important.

'It took a while to come to terms with this decision, but we soon realised that our staff were safer and more helpful signing up for local mutual aid WhatsApp groups where they lived. It was also less of a financial risk for us as a small business and more sustainable for us in the long term. As an example - in the 2 weeks before we closed our staff's hands were painfully red raw from so much handwashing, and we needed time and space to strategically plan a way to make our premises COVID-safe.' (Jess)

Businesses in London closing had an obvious knock-on effect on Clean for Good and was causing anxiety as Tim explained:

'The business climate is not good though and lockdown goes on, so emerging out of lockdown will be even more difficult, I think. We have lost a number of contracts already as clients succumb to financial pressures of their own - not all businesses and charities are returning to their offices, and some of our clients are making redundancies of staff.'

Most of our clients remain closed, even now, and of those that are opening up, not all are opening up every day (yet) so don't want a full service. So, our future remains very uncertain.' (Tim)

Lockdown also resulted in closure for Listen Threads.

'So I think what happened quite quickly was, because I wasn't meeting with the girls, we kind-of went into a bit of a shutdown really and thought...right, we can't do any shipping, we can't touch anything, we can't gather [so] I'm just going to stop it. And that's felt really sad.' (Jane)

The pandemic has had a devastating impact upon the Third Sector. Researchers at The Centre of People, Work and Organisational Practice (CPWOP) have been producing a monthly barometer report for the community and voluntary sector. The October 2020 report consisted of online responses from 697 organisations, 180 of which identified as social enterprises.

COVID-19 is having a major impact on the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE). Demand has gone up and income down, leaving some organisations 'fighting for survival', as they try to navigate the challenges that the pandemic has thrown at them. (CPWOP, 2020: 3)

However, this crisis did not result in permanent closure for the social enterprises that I am featuring in this research; all of which have survived at the time of writing.

Social enterprises survived thanks to their creativity, entrepreneurial mindsets and sheer determination to continue providing vital goods, services and support. In spite of acute challenges including difficulties accessing support, 65% are now expecting to retain their position or grow. (Darko et al., 2021: 1)

While providing communal spaces was prohibited, many of the entrepreneurs began to consider how they could provide support for the communities they worked with. A shift to welfare provision was noted.

8.2 A shift to welfare provision

The pandemic saw UK household spending broadly drop as leisure activities, eating out, and holidays were restricted, resulting in financial saving. This has not been the case for low-income families, who have seen their basic living costs surge (Brewer & Patrick, 2021). This surge coincided with the drop in income experienced by many households with the introduction of the Government's furlough scheme which failed to replace 100% of income.

Shildon Alive immediately shifted the focus of its operations to providing food aid. During the first week of lockdown, they worked with the local primary school and agreed to be the collection point for the schools to provide packed lunches for children entitled to free school meals.

However, the take-up for this scheme from local parents was low, which challenged one of the project's key aims of reducing food waste. So new and innovative ideas were adopted that included telephone ordering and free meals for children from the takeaway.



Figure 20. Free School Meal Bags and COVID Takeaway Menu at Shildon Alive

'I think because we had loads of stock in the shop, and we had our systems in place we haven't struggled with food supplies. even in the biggest crisis we emptied the shop and we got in contact with our suppliers. We struggled with a few items like everyone did, like toilet rolls and pasta but everyone did...soon as that settled down there was no issue with stock, because of the relationships we have built up with suppliers and businesses.' (Paula)

Initially Shildon Alive has not a member of FareShare but during lockdown the benefits of membership became apparent.

'We were too small and didn't have enough of a supply chain, we weren't members of FareShare, we hadn't seen the value in that. I was quibbling about £100 a month for two years...what was I playing at? the stuff we get is unreal; the older people over the

last few months that have loved the fresh orange juice; we have had loads of that.' (Paula)

The hybrid nature of social enterprises enabled them to tap into public and third sector funding streams and shift their practice to one of service provision. The business relationship that had developed with a local wholesaler pre-pandemic proved really significant for Shildon Alive.

'The Bookers relationship is one of the best ones, the stuff they write off for us because we buy from them, that's a business relationship which is huge. I don't think they would give it to us if we hadn't got that business relationship. They are writing off thousands of pounds of stock and we are putting that into people's parcels; it's all really good quality food at wholesale level, I would definitely like this to develop. The quality of the food we are getting is unreal and if we hadn't started a social enterprise none of that would be happening.' (Paula)

Paula was aware that the *'project was going back to charity and away from social enterprise'*, as they once again found themselves providing and delivering food parcels, but the relationships and business acumen developed over the preceding eighteen months had resulted in better quality and more nutritional food aid.

Shildon Alive, focused upon providing emergency food through a partnership with another local social enterprise.

'Everyone has a mixed model...people have shifted to the social needs as it's an emergency situation, and the fact that you can respond in different ways is one of the strengths of the model.' (Paula)

Both providing examples of how the business models were shifted quickly to focus upon social outcomes. This shifting was highlighted by Darko et al.'s (2021) research.

Social enterprises have proved uniquely positioned to be both relatively resilient to the crisis – and able to swiftly adjust their business models, in particular to respond to societal need. (Darko et al., 2021)

At Listen Threads, Jane swiftly adjusted their business model to produce garments to raise funds for the National Health Service by adapting the Personal Protective Equipment acronym (PPE).

'And so I decided to design the PPE t shirt. And we use the slogan person with the power to be extraordinary...we had a real flurry of that through April, which was really, really nice, quite encouraging. And we put half of the customer costs towards the charity. So I think we contributed to the making of about certainly, certainly over 10 masks, because they were really quite expensive to produce.' (Jane)

However, Jane was very conscious of the shift in power dynamics between herself and the young women. The situation necessitated a shift from leadership through process (Chapter 7.3) that aimed to empower and build new leaders to one of leadership through position (Chapter 7.2).

But in terms of power dynamics, I think I feel like I've turned into the role of a provider. And the sense of collaboration has (?)been really disconnected. Because when we

gathered together, we'd all have ideas, throw them into the pot and create something. Whereas that's been really, really missing.' (Jane)



Figure 21. Garments used the PPE Acronym

This shift in mission or missions drift, occurred as a result of social enterprises deviating from their social mission due to being overly concerned with their economic goals (Ebrahim, Battilana, and Mair 2014; Cornforth 2014). However, this shift was, according to Bacq and Lumpkin (2020) is framed as mission agility as the relationship between the social and economic mission is reimagined.

To what extent does a sudden shift in societal needs expose the boundary conditions of mission drift and reveal the need for “mission agility” instead?’ (Bacq & Lumpkin, 2020:3)

The benefit of being a hybrid organisation was really being able to adapt quickly to welfare provision, and build upon the relationships and skills developed through being a social enterprise.

8.3 Relationships – building and deepening

The pandemic has seen relationships between individuals, other charities and local authorities shift and deepen. Building and maintaining relationships with their community was a focus of many that I spoke to including Jess, from The Beehive

'We have used the time to write letters to our customers that we organised through our social media channels and members of the team have written blog posts to try and maintain a sense of community online.' (Jess)

The Beehive had to close due to restrictions, however, Jess described how another initiative developed to build and maintain relationships.

'Something good to come out of the lockdown has been our Wednesday gardening sessions where we have invited customers and friends of The Beehive to come and help us with weeding and cleaning up Paradise Gardens next to the cafe - it is the council's responsibility but needed some extra attention and it has been a positive opportunity to build community whilst maintaining a social distance.' (Jess)

Jane's concern about the girls she worked with led her to carry out door-to-door deliveries every week, maintaining the relationships, checking on their wellbeing and providing activities.

'I've stayed in contact with all of them. And I would say the mentoring is still strong...And so, I guess the thing, the things I've provided have been very much about wanting to promote positive wellbeing around what I saw, I mean, as cliched as it is

I've given them all colouring books and gel pens with an additional grant. And it's things like that, things that might just help you get through. And there was one week I dropped all around boxes of popcorn with a little card and lots of letter writing to them just going I hope you're okay, you know where I am. And you've got this, that sort of stuff. So there's been there's definitely been a sense of connection, but it's been very, very different.' (Jane)

Lockdown resulted in many people being isolated, which had a big impact upon mental health and wellbeing (Cowie & Myers, 2021; Dahlberg, 2021). Maintaining relationships with people who may be alone or vulnerable has been the focus of practice, alongside provision of food and resources.

The crisis has seen an increase in collaboration between different parts of the charitable sector working together in new ways, as noted in the Relationships Project research.

The most comprehensive and successful social responses have been highly collaborative, and the best collaborations have emerged in areas where there were pre-existing structures and relationships. (Robinson, 2020: 12)

Relationships were developed and deepened with local authorities, especially where the potential to provide food to vulnerable people was being improved developed. This reflects findings from research conducted for the All Party Parliamentary Group on Faith and Society (Baker et al., 2020). Data were collected from 194 local authorities, with an additional 55 in-depth interviews in ten sample authorities. The findings found that the number and depth of collaboration between local authorities and faith groups had increased significantly during the pandemic. Local authorities had a new appreciation of the agility, flexibility, and

professionalism of local faith groups and faith-based organisations as demonstrated in their response to the pandemic. The response of faith groups including provision of buildings, food banks, networks, information sharing, befriending, collecting, cooking and delivering food, and providing volunteers were regarded as integral and essential to the COVID-19 response by local authorities. As a result of these positive experiences, the researchers were able to conclude that:

the pandemic has both significantly increased local authority partnerships with faith groups and opened up a 'new normal' in the relationships between them: a civic and policy space characterised by relationships of trust, collaboration and innovation in which local authorities function more as enablers towards faith communities, rather than commissioners, funders or regulators. (Baker et al., 2020: 4)

This finding is important going forward as faith-based projects, including social enterprises, look to build on and develop strategic partnerships.

Periods of lockdown provided leaders an opportunity to reimagine the future.

8.4 Reimagining the future

Lockdown provided a pause in activities for some that allowed for reflection and planning. As noted in Chapter 7.1 leadership is busy and often chaotic, with little time to reflect and plan (Stewart, 1983). For a number of the social enterprises, the imposed closure allowed space and time for forward planning and imagining.

Jess spent time during lockdown imagining the future for The Beehive.

'I have spent a lot of the furlough time dreaming about what The Beehive might look like when we reopen - there is a big divide between our customers who have a disposable income and those to whom a £1 builders tea is stretching their budget. Many of our customers are really excited about who we are as a community cafe and it would be exciting to explore ways for them to invest in what we are doing.'

'My mind has been buzzing about ways we could host supper clubs with a difference. Perhaps other Bethnal Green businesses might be up for clubbing together to host monthly community lunches over the summer holidays for local families who would normally get free school meals. Or dinners for elderly people who live alone. We could host in The Beehive or community hall downstairs and different local restaurants or even our team could cater.'(Jess,)

The pause in activity gave Jess time to invest in a training programme for leaders which challenged her to think critically about her leadership role and the health of the business.

'I have also had time to reflect on how chaotic and busy my weeks managing The Beehive have been, so if we're going to branch out into reimagining how we serve our community I need to manage my time more effectively and delegate tasks. There is a running joke that I spend half my week making houmous, so I need to rethink my skills and tasks in the week and make sure other members of the staff team are empowered and upskilled.' (Jess)

Jane also spent time re-imagining the future and trying to recruit brand ambassadors.

'Because I mean, I think the reality is, we're teeny weeny. And there's always one of our biggest selling challenges has been reach. So just wanting to extend that reach, but equally wanting people who believe in the cause, believe in what we're about and can talk to us and talk to others about what we do. Wear the gear, wear the gear proudly. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. So yeah, so that's the plan. And obviously, if they get the opportunity to potentially upsell on our behalf, so I don't know what that might look like. But if they want to do a market stall with our stuff, that would be great if they had the opportunity to do a party at their house, like the old school Tupperware parties, you know?' (Jane)

Jane was critically reflecting on the social enterprise and planning a branding review, looking at social media and their customer base.

'Actually, the research in terms of our customer base is that everybody is a woman like you and me. And so women who have got, but have got kind of some level of education, some level of disposable income, that want to support a cause, and understand the challenges that young women experience and possibly a bit have experienced and sort of have some level of experience of the inequalities women have everyday just because of their gender. Yeah. And that's, that's the stuff we stand for.'
(Jane)

Research has shown that there has been a surge of interest from communities and individuals in the ethics of business, with the result that 'nine in ten UK businesses are making efforts to become more ethical in response to growing pressure to curb and eliminate social or environmental harms resulting from their operations' (Hill, 2021). Social Enterprise UK have witnessed an above-average increase in the number of registrations, accelerating from the middle of 2020.

The last year has seen a jump in interest in social enterprise. As well as a general rise in consumer interest in socially and environmentally inclusive business models, and growing engagement on socially and environmentally inclusive activity in core business, there has been a significant rise in community interest company (CIC) registration over the last 12 months. (Social Enterprise UK, 2021: 1)

8.5 Conclusion and reflections from a time of crisis

The coronavirus pandemic is expected to decimate the charitable sector in the UK unless the government takes drastic action (Wood, 2021). Since March 2020 there has been a spike in demand for the services and support that many charities provide at a time when revenues have been severely reduced (Pro Bono Economics, 2020).

Research has found that the social enterprise sector was at the forefront of responding to the crisis, yet they also struggled as they fell between the gaps of support packages from the Government (Darko et al., 2020).

Their relational position within communities and their capacity for 'mission agility' has uniquely positioned them to provide welfare assistance (Bacq & Lumpkin, 2020). This was witnessed at Shildon where the new relationships developed with the private sector since establishing as a social enterprise proved invaluable, for example with the local meat wholesaler.

Bacq & Lumpkin, (2020) also emphasised how the hybrid nature of income generation strengthened the organisations' long-term sustainability during this period. This was a key finding from this research cycle during COVID-19. The hybrid funding model nature enabled them to adapt and tap into a variety of income streams, local authority grants, charitable

donations, and crowdfunding, alongside earned income. These varied forms of grant funding have allowed the majority of social enterprises who participated in this research to continue operating while they shifted their activities to meet social aims rather than income generating.

Another important finding from this period of research was that the wellbeing of people who belonged in the social enterprises as employees and volunteers was a focus for many of the leaders, with efforts being taken to maintain and build these relationships when physically gathering was not possible.

The final finding was that while some of the staff were very busy during lockdown, mainly providing food, others had quieter periods enforced upon them. Both Jess and Jane used this period to reflect and plan, considering some of the issues and challenges and ways to build their enterprises when they were finally allowed to open.

As discussed in the introduction crises are moments that have the potential to fuel social imagination as people look for new ways of working rather than a return to normal (Mulgan, 2020). This crisis saw the social entrepreneurs in this research both responding and reimagining. How much reimagining to 'rethink systems that are no longer fit for purpose, and discarding of zombie orthodoxies that have outlived their usefulness' (Mulgan, 2020: para.15) has taken place will become apparent over the months and years.

Chapter 9. Developing an operant and espoused theology

Theologies are developed as people act and reflect in communities. No issue or action is decided by one individual, or hierarchically: the issues are worked out collectively. The role of the formal theologian, minister or scholar is to draw together the threads of this reflection, to write academically, to introduce new audiences to these themes. (Cooper, 2012: 363)

The aim of this chapter is to draw together the threads of belief and values that are woven through the collective practice within the social enterprises in this research. My role as the researcher has been to facilitate this collective action and introduce the themes that have arisen.

Garvey and Williamson (2002) highlight that those values are not just disembodied guides to the rules we should follow:

They are woven into the textures of our working lives, shaping both the means and ends of what we do. They are built into the patterns of our working relationships and the ways we value and manage people. (Garvey & Williamson, 2002: 68)

The exploration of these threads is further developed by data gathered from a bespoke event that brought practitioners together to reflect specifically on the theologies underpinning their practice (Chapter 2.3.2).

Why was it important to navigate the beliefs and values within a Christian social enterprise? Primarily, because it emerged as a key theme of this grounded research, therefore it was important to search beneath the surface to establish how beliefs and values were integral to

the organisations. The social enterprises provided messy places where people with different world views were adopting practices from business and faith traditions. They were geographies in which the boundaries between the secular and religious were blurring.

These interactions between the secular and religious see the church and the world interacting in a manner that has been described as a 'blurred encounter' in which the

complex and messy nature of a realist theology that attempts to remain grounded in the activity of creating those alternative spaces that also relate to the practices and insights of the Christian tradition. (Reader, 2018: 112)

Secondly, as discussed in Chapter 3.5, Christian social action can provide exciting places of postsecularity (Cloke et al., 2019), spaces of alterity, where people with secular and religious beliefs come together (Coles, 1997). The social enterprises in this research were no different. They provided spaces where forms of rapprochement emerged between social groups with different religious and secular orientations (Olson et al., 2013).

Therefore, it is important that communities of faith, including social entrepreneurs, explore these blurred encounters, ensuring a theological understanding of praxis to ensure they 'practice what they preach' (Graham, 2000: 106).

Finally, despite the roots of social enterprise being traced back to sixteenth century Christian practice, there has been a lack of academic focus around belief and values in these settings (Macdonald & Howorth, 2018).

Studies of twenty-first century social enterprises are often silent on religious affiliation, which might in part be because of a more secular society and individuals being less open about their beliefs. We would challenge researchers to interrogate religious

affiliations more closely and to ask questions about beliefs. The histories suggested that religion was important for social enterprise and philanthropy as a motivator for action and inclination towards specific types of action but also importantly, in determining approaches, models and attitudes. (Macdonald & Howorth, 2018: 17)

As described in the methodology chapter (Chapter 2.2) the developing theology entails bringing four theological voices into dialogue (Cameron et al., 2010). This research brings the operant and espoused theologies into conversation with appropriate formal, and occasionally normative theologies. As noted in Chapter 2.4 these voices cannot be considered as distinct entities they are overlapping and interrelated. There is also challenge due to an asymmetry of authority between the voices with formal theologies having an expertise for a well-recognised authority. Watkins (2020) believes that it is the normative voice that is seen as holding the most authority, and therefore is the most problematic, representing as it does the... - the whole weight of the long historically discerned Christian tradition (p 48).

There are further weaknesses in developing a theological framework using the operant as 'voice' due to the highly subjective and selective nature of the data included.

Social scientists and ethnographers themselves struggle to give a proper, faithful accounts of the complexities of practice in what, ultimately, are representations of practice, and largely verbal ones at that. Nonetheless, there is a proper intuition for many practical theologians...that it is only giving the most detailed, careful, thick description of practice that we can be appropriately authentic to our commitment to these practices as theological authorities. (Watkins, 2020: 47)

The data collected is, therefore, interrelated with formal and normative theologies and will generate a subjective, but as authentic as possible, theology within this context.

Two theologians who have reflected on the role and impact of social enterprise provide the formal theological voice identified in Cameron's typology (Cameron et al., 2010). Sampson's (2018) thesis offers the beginnings of a theological account of social enterprise as faithful economic activity through the language of gift and reciprocity. Sampson engages with the recent theology of Pope Benedict XVI and Barclay (2017), to show how Christian theology offers an account of gift and reciprocity. He concludes that incongruity and mutuality offer a theological account of the distinctiveness of social enterprise as faithful economic activity. Sampson's thesis is explored further in Chapter 10.3.

Krinks (2016), compares the theologies of William Temple and John Milbank, in relation to social enterprise. Temple regarded the state mechanism as the vehicle for social change, while Milbank's 'Radical Orthodoxy' valued transferring power and social action away from the state to community level, implying a proactive deep engagement with social enterprise.

The operant and espoused theologies comprised both 'hard' and 'soft' dimensions (Stokes et al., 2016). The hard dimensions according to Stokes et al. (2016) can include logos, mission statements, the style of buildings, dress codes, organizational structures, profit targets, performance, and productivity procedures. The 'soft' dimensions can include the espoused attitudes and organisational rituals, such as moments of corporate prayer and biblical reflection that were interspersed at regular intervals in the life cycle of the social enterprises themselves.

The participants in this research adopted a variety of practices to navigate and express their Christian values during their planning and delivery of social enterprise.

At Beehive, the pastor, his wife, and a friend of the business would help the team discern how to respond to some of the challenges within the café. They have also just started a Sunday evening gathering which will allow them to discuss, reflect on and pray for the issues that have

occurred in the previous week. Tim, from Clean for Good, receives personal support from the clergy involved in the Centre for Theology and Community. Clean for Good has ensured that the Christian values are protected formally by setting up three founding Christian charities which, as shareholders, each hold a golden share which cannot be sold, and therefore protect the vision and the social purpose of the business.

Nikki described REfUSE as coming from a 'faith background' according to Frame's (2020) typology. The staff team and board are all Christian and she felt the vision for ReFuse came out of a shared faith.

The leaders and management at Shildon Alive identified as Christian, and staff were expected to respect Christianity even if they did not share the faith. During my time with the project, faith wasn't regularly part of the conversations among volunteers, although prayer and reflection was included at every board meeting and led by the vicar.

Expressing beliefs and values varied between the organisations. The websites for Clean for Good, The Beehive and Milton Keynes Christian Foundation articulated how their social enterprises had their roots within a Christian community, and Worth Unlimited explains what being a Christian organisation entails, including their inclusion policies. REfUSE and Listen Threads made no reference to the beliefs and values that shaped their social enterprises. There were differences in how explicit or implicit the organisations were about their religious views, positioned between a 'rock' of religious visibility and the 'hard place' of secularism (Graham, 2013).

How do people of faith give an account of their motivations and values in a world that is more sensitive than ever to religious belief and practice, yet often struggles to accommodate it into secular discourse. (Graham, 2013: 237)

The social enterprises in this research had adopted a variety of approaches to express the values and beliefs that underpinned their work. The decisions relating to how they expressed beliefs and values were influenced by the need to engage with customers and partners. The social entrepreneurs expressed concerns relating to barriers for engagement with Christian organisations, and, whether real or not, these concerns influenced practice. For example, although Milton Keynes Christian Foundation was explicitly a Christian organisation, Stephen explained that they avoided using religious language in their values.

'One of the things we're really keen to do is to not to use religious language. Yeah. So we've got three values, and they are ...people and all things have essential value and inherent potential. All people and all things can need to contribute, learn and grow. And the third one is all people in all things are connected and interconnected.' (Stephen)

Milton Keynes Christian Foundation was one of the only participating social enterprises in this research that acknowledged their Christian roots while asserting their inclusive practice.

Our roots are within the Christian community, but we work, learn and play together with people of all faiths and none; celebrating diversity and welcoming people from all parts of our community. (Milton Keynes Christian Foundation, 2022)

Clean for Good tell the story of how the church founded the organisation, and the beliefs and values behind the organisation, although these are not presented from a faith perspective.

The company was founded in the Parish of St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe, in the City of London. When the church looked into the cleaning happening in their parish, they found a surprising number of low-paid cleaners, working in less-than fair circumstances. ...Clean for Good enables cleaners to thrive, not just survive. Every cleaner is viewed and treated as a person with skills and potential. We want to promote

the idea that cleaning is a respected and dignified career. We care about our employees and want to enable them with the skills and confidence to progress not only within our company, but in their life. (Clean for Good, 2022)

While the values and beliefs were present on social media and websites there was a disconnect with the espoused values that emerged from the data.

Theological reflection emerged as an important practice to addressing this disconnect with the espoused values and to help navigate beliefs and values. This was carried out in varied ways in the different settings.

At our practitioner gathering (Appendix 7) Reverend Richard Frazer²²referred to this grounded theology as back-to front theology that you *'bump into'* as:

'this idea of back to front theology, because a lot of what we've done and developed at Greyfriars over the years has been some intuitive, instinctive work, we're not really kind of thinking, oh, you know, let's think about the theology and apply it here because that just doesn't work. It doesn't engage people. So, if we read stuff in a book, and then try and apply it. It's a nightmare. People just don't engage with that sort of thing. But what I have found is that there are stories from the bible that really resonate with what I am trying to do.' (Richard)

Providing regular time and space for theological reflection was not a practice which was evident from the data collected. Rather, a more ad hoc process was employed, often in

²² Rev. Dr Richard Frazer is chair of the Grassmarket social enterprise in Edinburgh and vicar at Greyfriars Kirk in the city. Grassmarket Community Project has been developed in partnership by Greyfriars Kirk (Church of Scotland) and the Grassmarket Mission. They operate a community café and woodwork and tartan social enterprises, they also offer a range of social integration and educational activities for members aimed at enhancing life skills and developing confidence.

response to concerns and issues that arose. This reflective practice is explored further in Chapter 11.1.1.

The central belief expressed by the participants that emerged from the data is the importance of social justice. The society we live in is unjust, and the practices of the social enterprises aimed to challenge this injustice on a local level. This belief in justice was described in terms of 'Shalom', adopting ideas from the Hebrew scripture concept of the same name. 'Shalom' is variously interpreted as salvation, justice and peace (Yoder, 2017). Embedded in this dominant theme was a belief that people, places and things were of value. Out of this central belief arose three further beliefs from the coding of data: a belief that participants should feel that they belonged; a belief in the talents, skills and passions of people, everyone has something to contribute; and that the social enterprises were spaces where people had the opportunity to have a voice and agency. There existed a belief in belonging, reciprocity, and empowerment within these organisations. These themes were more prominent in some contexts than others, some were explicitly expressed (espoused), while others were more evident in practice (operant).

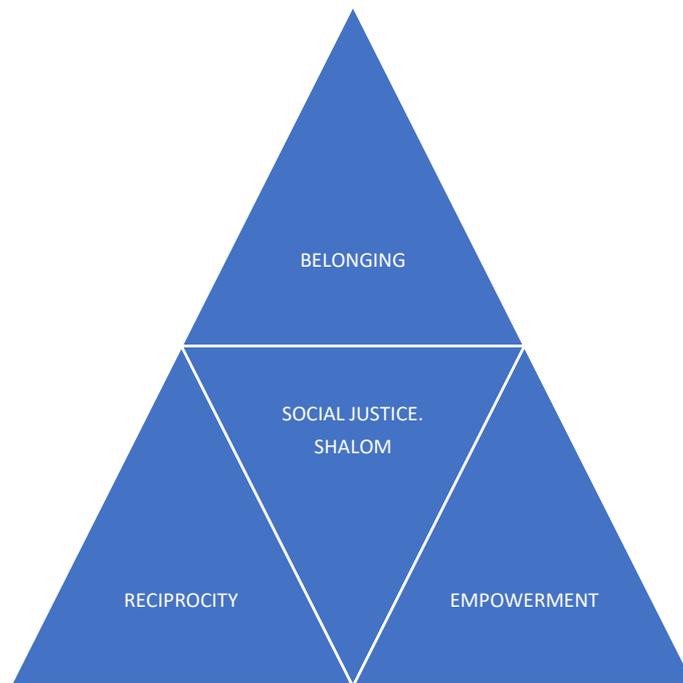


Figure 22. Embedded Beliefs and Values in Christian Social Enterprise

The emerging espoused and operant beliefs in social justice, belonging, reciprocity and empowerment are now brought into conversation with formal theological voices developed from theologians who have studied and written about the tradition (Cameron et al., 2010).

9.1 A belief in social justice – Shalom

The social entrepreneurs in this research were engaging in the market economy with a firm belief in transforming the current system. The central belief that emerged from this research was that the world was not as it should be, there was an injustice that Tim from Worth Unlimited described in terms of 'Shalom'.

'Shalom...that's the driving theological sense. And the whole premise of the shalom stuff is, things being the way that they should be, things being in harmony with each other. Things being whole, people being complete, so treating people as whole people, and communities as whole places and seeking...the shalom of the city into which

you've been placed, and in it, shalom in its wholeness, in its completeness, is yours.'

(Tim)

This quote from Tim captures the belief of social justice adopting the notion of 'Shalom'. This notion of 'Shalom' – the world as it should be - positions us as sitting in the permanent tension between this, and the world as it is (Alinsky, 1971). This tension is explored by Bretherton (2010) who also turns to Jeremiah 29 through engagement with the Augustine image of two cities, Babylon and Jerusalem, the 'earthly city' and the 'heavenly city'.

Also seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile.
Pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare, because if it prospers, you too will prosper. (Jeremiah 29:7 NIV)

Central to the challenge from Jeremiah 29 is the command to remain engaged in the public life of the city, in an attempt to transform it. Bretherton gives Community Organisers and Fair Traders as examples that '[peruse] the peace of Babylon, all the time recognising that this peace is a contingent, relative, and earthly peace' (Bretherton, 2010: 4). This research would add social entrepreneurs to the list as they aim to transform the injustice that is imposed through the market.

The goal of systemic change was evident in the interview with Stephen Norrish from Milton Keynes Christian Foundation. Stephen referred to American social enterprise academics Martin and Osberg, (2007), who claim;

Social Entrepreneurs...can be contrasted with both social service providers and social advocates in that social entrepreneurs both take direct action and seek to transform the existing system. They seek to go beyond better, to bring about a transformed,

stable new system that is fundamentally different than the world that preceded it.
(Martin and Osburg, 2015: 9-10)

Referring to this quote Stephen said:

'And I, that's, for me, a pretty good definition of the kingdom of God. And, and Jesus's mission in terms of, you know, the kingdom of God is actually trying to transform the current system.' (Stephen)

The current system that these Christian social enterprises were aiming to transform in their locality were the social and economic injustices of the market economy.

For Perry Yoder (1987) 'Shalom' is the Bible's word for salvation, justice and peace. The nature of the peace Yoder refers to is a positive peace, which includes material prosperity that allows human flourishing, peaceable and just social relationships within and between communities, and moral health between people.

As discussed in Chapter 2.1.2, from a liberation theology perspective, the root cause of injustice is the imbalance of power relations and the misuse of power between humans (Cooper, 2020). Data gathered from this research connects with Rieger's (2009) notion of justice that sees restoration of unequal relationships as central to a more just society.

First, because justice is now linked to the detailed lived experiences of people who have not benefited from the free market economy; rather than a focus on grand theories of justice, individual experiences shape the narrative. The social justice issues facing the low paid cleaners were very different from those experienced by young women in Birmingham or low-income families in Shildon. Their lived experiences, and therefore the injustice they experienced differed, and consequently radically different solutions were needed.

Second, justice should consider a radical re-interpretation of the value of productivity and not place an emphasis on the common focus of unequal distribution. The pandemic has highlighted the value of the productivity of low-paid key workers like cleaners. By developing a new awareness and valuation of their productivity 'it might lead also to a new awareness of God's own mysterious productivity in places where we might least expect it' (Rieger, 2009: 138).

Third, justice is primarily concerned with restoring broken relationships with those who are marginalised and is the initial step in the search for solidarity. The notion of a preferential option for the poor, initially developed by Latin American liberation theologians, has often been misunderstood according to Rieger to exclude the rich. Those that benefit most from the free market economy also need help (or grace), as they are most beholden to the system, they are unable to step out of.

The energy and productivity that bubbles up from the underside of the economy – God's own location in Christ's ministry, death and resurrection – provide some help by pushing towards justice, not in punitive or redistributive ways, but by initiating the transformation of relationships. (Rieger, 2009:139)

The restoration of relationships with those who are marginalised is a key learning point for this research. The social enterprises provided spaces and opportunities for relationships to be built between those who benefit from the current economic systems and those who are disadvantaged by them. For example, Shildon Alive was slowly beginning to attract new customers from local businesses at lunchtimes, and new relationships were developed. The creative social enterprises used their products to share stories and raise awareness among customers, which could allow relationships to develop. Injustice was not being challenged

through campaigning or activism, which can fail to restore relationships with marginalised communities.

Finally, biblical justice is understood as solidarity, which was most evident through the practice at Clean for Good, which was established in solidarity with low paid cleaners in London.

'We are actually UK fair trade, we don't describe ourselves as that but in principle that's what we are, we cost more because we pay more, our terms and conditions are more generous, we invest more in management, so we are looking for customers willing to pay more for ethical and moral.' (Tim)

At Listen Threads, through conversations about poor working conditions for women in the textile trade, the young women decided in a movement of solidarity, to purchase garments from an ethical producer despite the products being more expensive.

'We wanted to have transparency throughout the supply chain if the voices of women were important.' (Jane)

Rieger and Henkel-Rieger (2016) develop the notion of solidarity into 'deep solidarity' when describing a situation where 99% of us who must work for a living (including people who are excluded from the job market), realise that they have this in common. Deep solidarity recognises that the system works for the few rather than for the many, and that nothing will change unless more of the many come together. It also recognises that our different religious traditions can help us imagine and reimagine deep solidarity.

At the heart of worship in Israel is the Exodus from the conditions of slavery in Egypt; this tradition ties together the three Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Interreligious dialogue is a live option not only because of shared traditions but

also because deep solidarity helps us deal with our differences. In fact, differences become an asset when the resources of our different traditions are allowed to make their specific contributions to the struggle. (Rieger, 2017: 361)

Rieger's framing of Judeo-Christian justice allows a deeper analysis of the operant belief in social justice that underpins the social enterprises in this research. Rather than campaigning, activism or revolutionaries, there was a conservative-radical political response (as explored in Chapter 4.4). This involved engaging in the market economy, rejecting economic determinism of both libertarian and Marxist ideologies, and working for purposeful change *within* the current system (Atherton, 1992). There was no expressed belief in the need for revolutionary change, replacing the present social system with an alternative system, or the necessity for transformation of the basis of the economic and social system (Gutierrez, 1974). Rather, an evolutionary approach to change was seen as the way to make systems more just.

A belief in social justice through a radical response that aimed to change the current situation was rooted in a prophetic ministry which was unlike the dominant amelioratory praxis within the church. Establishing a charitable response to social issues remains the dominant Christian response to the violence of austerity (Chapter 3.4), yet as the data from this research shows (Chapter 5.2), the social enterprises looked to radically innovate despite the dominant culture.

The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us. (Brueggemann 1978: 13)

However, while they were part of the solution, Martin was cautious about seeing social enterprises as the whole answer.

'I think where social enterprise can play a part in in...reimagining a little bit about what market economics might look like, I don't think social enterprise is the answer at all, I just, I just think that it could be part of a better picture.' (Martin)

As Martin commented, social enterprise will not tackle all the challenges of the market economy, but it can play a part in making it a better place.

The notion of 'Shalom', therefore, is to provide a society where all can flourish, and this requires challenging injustice. The social enterprises in this research have engaged in the public life of the market economy with the aim of systemic change.

9.2 A belief in belonging

The political narrative for organisations, especially those engaging with marginalised communities, has been one of inclusion. Spaces and practices should aim to be welcoming and inclusive. Practical theologian John Swinton, through his work with disabled people, encourages us to shift our praxis from one of inclusion to one of belonging, and to reframe our practices from political to loving.

To be included you just need to be present. To belong you need to be missed.

This is the fundamental principle, which lies behind authentic Christian Community for all people. (Swinton, 2012: 184)

Swinton (2012) claims that belonging requires a mode of friendship with people often very different from ourselves and is shaped by principles of grace rather than principles of likeness (Swinton, 2012).

An operant belief in belonging was evident in this research as geographies were created where staff, volunteers and visitors were deeply known, cared about, and missed when not there. This belonging was described in a number of settings, including The Beehive in terms of love.

'You just want them to leave knowing they are cared for and loved and that they can come back.' (Jess)

For Jane, this was part of what she felt God was asking of her at Listen Threads.

'Having an unconditional time...and love for the girls and, like, wanting to do life with them. And that for me, it was really important, because I believe that's what God asks of us. So, I think, yeah, it's a very vocational thing.' (Jane)

During the time I spent at Listen Threads, one of the young volunteers failed to attend. Her colleague spent time on the phone, encouraging her to come and explaining how she was missed. The shift at Shildon Alive was to ensure that the whole community felt they belonged, and that it was not only a space for those who were struggling. Both Jess and Nikki knew the regular customers by name and would spend time with them, especially with those who were alone.

Over recent years much of the dialogue relating to Christian social action, particularly within the Anglican church where I sit, has been shaped by the notion of 'being with'.

Sam Wells (2015) proposes that the fundamental human problem is isolation. He explores the theological significance of the thirty years Jesus spent in Nazareth to argue that the primary role of Christians is to be in relationship with one another.

God's fundamental purpose is to be with us – not primarily to rescue us, or even empower us, but simply to be with us, to share our existence, to enjoy our hopes and fears, our delights and griefs, our triumphs and disaster. (Wells, 2015: 24)

Yet, what emerged from this research was a belief in a deeper and more enriched engagement, centred more around belonging than simply 'being with' or inclusion.

Andrew Rumsey's *Parish; An Anglican theology of place* (2017) provides a worthwhile theological perspective to reflect upon leadership through place in this context. Rumsey makes a vital point that within an Anglican context, the natural boundary of place is not the congregation, rather the parish. The parish is the place where an 'ecology of care' and an 'eschatology of belonging' provide the ground where anything from creative approaches to homelessness, to restoring bonds between the local society and the natural environment, are imagined and enacted (Rumsey, 2017).

This belief in belonging overlaps a belief that we all have gifts, talents, and passions to share – the value of reciprocity.

9.3 A belief in reciprocity

The social enterprises in this research all provided places for employees, volunteers, and customers to develop and share their gifts, talents, and passions. In the kitchens at Shildon Alive, volunteers were given permission to create their dishes and local gardeners shared their produce. The young women at Listen Threads used their passion for fashion to influence the products that were made. Clean for Good celebrated the skills of cleaners, and at The Beehive 'barista' skills were shared. Milton Keynes Christian Foundation began their enterprises from the interests and skills of the participants, including bike maintenance and beekeeping.



Figure 23. Signage at REfUSE.

The 'Pay as You Feel' model adopted by REfUSE allowed an economy of reciprocity as customers were valued:

'not by what coins might be in their pocket but the times, skills and energy that they bring.' (Nikki)

This belief was clearly articulated in the café.

Reciprocity stems from a belief that we are all made in the image of God and therefore have assets, gifts, and talents to share (Mathers, 2018; Barrett, 2013; 2018; 2020). This shift from a narrative of deficit, poor people, and deprived communities, is referred to by Walter Brueggemann (1999) as the 'liturgy of abundance', a song of praise for God's creative

generosity. This belief in abundance was clearly stated David at Shildon Alive as a value underpinning the project (Chapter 8.6).

This abundance enabled everyone to share and give of their gifts, as Tim from Worth Unlimited explained.

'God gives everybody gifts, if you really believe that, in acts that God gives gifts to, to that, you know, pours the Spirit on all flesh, all that stuff, then, then God has empowered gifts in everybody. And so everybody's got something to share and to give. And that can be in economic justice as much as it can be in anything else, like in life.'

(Tim)

For Kate social enterprises provided a setting where contributions were valued and:

'the sense that everybody's contribution...is of equal value.' (Kate)

From a belief in abundance stemmed the conviction that we all have skills and talent to share, and that ultimately there is enough for everyone.

'And if we're about enabling abundant life to happen in life in all its fullness, to use, Jesus, then I can't see how economics is not part of what it means to live an abundant life. You know, if I thought about myself, work gives me the chance to support my family, to feel worthwhile and purposeful in the world. It makes me feel that I'm sharing something good in the world. You know, all the things that work, gives me, a network of people that I wouldn't otherwise have. But if you think about this idea of productivity work, then I think that's part of being human.' (Martin)

We believe that all people and all things have an essential value and inherent potential, need to be contributing, learning, changing and growing, and are connected and interdependent.’ (Stephen)

This abundance was highlighted by Richard from the Grassmarket through the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman, who despite being seen as ritually unclean and having no status, is asked by Jesus to share her water.

‘People have agency, they have capacity, they have energy, they have entrepreneurial skills, they have all sorts of stuff that gets kind of lost and suppressed and written off. But Jesus asked this woman, can you help me? And I think that’s, that’s hugely important in terms of recognizing that there are the assets that we need for doing things, for transforming our local economies, for enabling people to flourish, for enabling our communities to reimagine the whole social economy. All the assets that we need are already there; they are there in people with their energy and their passion and enthusiasm.’ (Richard)

The emerging espoused and operant beliefs in reciprocity are now brought into conversation with formal theologies through the work of Sampson (2018), whose thesis includes the work of Pope Benedict XVI (2009), Barclay (2017), and Barrett (2013).

Sampson’s (2018) thesis *The Promise of Social Enterprise: A Theological Exploration of Faithful Economic Practice* offers a theological account of the distinctiveness of social enterprise as a faithful economic practice. Engaging with Pope Benedict XVI’s (2009) encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* and Barclay’s *Paul and the Gift* (2017), Sampson develops an understanding of gift as ‘incongruous’ and moves towards a ‘telos of mutuality’ which he suggests provides at least the beginnings of a theological framework for describing and

'performing' social enterprise. Drawing on *Caritas in Veritate* (Pope Benedict XVI, 2009), Sampson highlights the emphasis Pope Benedict places upon intermediary organisations, encouraging hybrid forms of commerce to civilise the economy. Benedict's emphasis is on the reciprocal nature of these organisations.

Alongside profit-oriented private enterprise and the various types of public enterprise, there must be room for commercial entities based on mutualist principles and pursuing social ends to take root and express themselves. It is from their reciprocal encounter in the marketplace that one may expect hybrid forms of commercial behaviour to emerge, and hence an attentiveness to ways of civilizing the economy. Charity in truth, in this case, requires that shape and structure be given to those types of economic initiative which, without rejecting profit, aim at a higher goal than the mere logic of the exchange of equivalents, of profit as an end in itself. (Benedict, 2009: 24)

Pope Benedict recognises the importance of hybrid organisations such as social enterprises to civilise the economy, primarily through the centrality of gift and reciprocity.

Pauline scholar Barclay (2017) claims that the top-down, one-way gift associated with many Christian traditions was unknown in the Greco-Roman world. Barclay locates gift and reciprocity within the Greco-Roman context, recognising that the 'proper expression of gift is reciprocal exchange' (Barclay, 2018: 51). In a society where approximately 90% of the population lived in relative poverty, Barclay argues that mutuality and reciprocity were necessary for survival. Those with resources were more likely to invest publicly in buildings to demonstrate their wealth, than to give to the needy. Therefore, Barclay identifies the dominance of a 'reciprocity model' of horizontal, two-way, communal giving and receiving. Although today's economic structures are very different, the goal of Christian charity should be to create networks of mutual gift and mutual dependence (Barclay, 2018).

The image of mutuality in Paul is the metaphor of the body. ²³ Barclay argues:

'Need' is a strong word: it betokens vulnerability, exposure, the necessity to receive. Thus, all the parts of the body are bound together both in gift and in need. The gift and return here may not be bilateral: there are more than two parts to the body, so gifts will circulate around the body in both direct and indirect forms of reciprocity, a system that an anthropologist might dub 'generalized reciprocity'. Thus, what I give may not be matched by a return gift from the recipient but by a return from elsewhere in the community: as gifts circulate among us, everyone is constantly in the process of both giving and receiving. (Barclay, 2018: 18)

This circulation of gifts is particularly relevant when considering Shildon Alive and REfUSE. Gifts were given and received in a complex web of reciprocity, food could be donated by a member of the community (a physical gift), this food prepared into a free meal for children during the school holidays (a further gift), by a volunteer (a gift of time and talents). The volunteer in turn may be receiving training from a member of staff (gift of knowledge and time), and so the circulation of gifts within and throughout the community continues.

Moving from biblical and systematic sources of theology to ones that are more closely associated with practical theology, asset-based community development embraces the value of abundance as we spend time with people, getting to know them and discovering their passions and gifts (Chapter 3.5.1). Barrett (2013) makes the connection between a Christian theology of reciprocal gift giving and the principles of asset-based community development with its focus upon the abundance within a community.

²³ 'The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you", nor can the head say to feet, "I have no need of you"' (1 Cor 12: 21).

ABCD invites us to practise the same liturgy of abundance in our own neighbourhoods: to open our eyes to the ways God has blessed this place and this people with goodness, vitality and fruitfulness. It may be in the place itself, in the stories that it contains or in the webs of relationships that knit it together. It certainly begins by recognising the wealth of gifts of the people who inhabit it and the marks of the 'image of God' that define each and every one of them. (Barrett, 2013)

From a more economic perspective, the added value that the social enterprises bring to this value of abundance is an economic exchange which can see both parties conferring mutual benefit (Steedman, 2018).

The good news is that we can live life abundantly without accumulating wealth, although those of us with privilege may not think so. There is enough for all of us to live life abundantly and justly, when we orient ourselves toward relations with others and away from accumulation. We can reorder the economy similarly so that poverty and wealth are both reduced from their extremes, in order for each human being to live. (Cooper, 2020: 50-51)

A belief in reciprocity was evident in all the social enterprises in this research. Spaces were created that allowed and encouraged participants to share their gifts, talents and passions, and in turn receive. Being able to contribute added to their sense of empowerment.

9.4 A belief in empowerment

As discussed in Chapter 2.1.2, empowerment, or the power to, is the ability or capacity to act (Norsworthy, McLaren & Waterfield, 2012). The beliefs in empowerment emerged through the data relating to economic empowerment and participatory empowerment.

Empowerment was visible through an ability for people to participate in the market economy through a praxis that allowed choice, affordable products, or Living Wage. Economic empowerment was the central value at Clean for Good, giving staff agency and dignity in their lives because of receiving decent wages and working conditions.

Participants, whether employees, volunteers, or customers, were given the power to influence the development of social enterprise. This was particularly evident in the data from Shildon Alive. One of the key factors behind setting up the community supermarket in Shildon was the desire to move away from a disempowering and humiliating response to food poverty in the town, and instead to provide a space where people had the power to shop and choose the products they needed. Deliberate decisions were taken to make the shopping experience as normal a customer experience as possible, including baskets at the door and payment at the till. Visitors were referred to as customers, not clients or recipients. A commitment to empowerment was evident at Listen Threads where the young women were key to influencing the purchasing, design, and marketing process. Jane described the power the girls had in deciding what to create and the feeling of empowerment that came through selling their products (Chapter 5.6).

For Kate, agency was key to maintaining dignity and this belief was shaped by her Christian faith.

'At the end of the day, Jesus himself wants to help the lame to walk. So, they didn't have to sit there and beg...So you know some of those power tools...[it's] almost about being able to give people that agency and that opportunity back to live their life to the full. (Kate)

The menus available in REfUSE, Shildon Alive and The Beehive all provided a broad range of options that included affordable choices, and in the case of Shildon Alive and REfUSE there

was an option to 'Pay as You Feel'; ensuring there was no financial exclusion. The price structuring aimed to provide visitors with the ability or capacity to act and was therefore empowering.

During our practitioner event in Sunderland, Rev. Richard Frazer referred to the story of Bartimaeus as an example of when Jesus empowered the most marginalised in society ²⁴.

'Now, I have this idea in my head for everyone that was with Jesus that they see this and think "what a crazy question" because he's blind is a beggar and you're asking what he wants, it is obvious what he needs. Is it obvious what people need, don't think it is actually? So often in our attempts to be supportive of people, in our attempts to be transformative in our communities, we make so many assumptions. We just think we already know what people need without ever asking them the question. And so, one of the things that we have tried to do as we've developed this project is to say that we are not experts. And in fact, we're not. We just basically want to find out what people want, what people need for how can we sort of co-work with you who've been discarded, who've been overlooked, been pushed to one side, you've been told you're worthless time and time again, by people in authority and sometimes by people in their own families, and sometimes schools, goodness knows what. What do you want?' (Richard)

The key part of the passage for Richard was that Jesus asked what Bartimaeus wanted, rather than presuming he knew the answer.

²⁴ 'Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means "son of Timaeus"), was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stopped and said, "Call him". So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you". Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see. "Go", said Jesus, "your faith has healed you". Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.' (Mark 10:46-52 New International Version)

Thia Cooper (2020) argues that the use of power is one of the most important considerations within theology and development and I would argue this is as relevant for local development. The theme of empowerment (or agency) is embedded in what Anna Ruddick (2020) describes as personhood.

Theology that affirms personhood of every human being and missional models that respect it and give space for people to exercise their agency I believe are essential for human flourishing. (Ruddick, 2020: 40-41)

While a belief in agency and empowerment is central to community development practice, they are not always as visible in Christian social action where a service delivery model of engagement can remove power (Eckley, Ruddick & Walker, 2015).

9.5 Conclusion and reflections upon a preliminary theology of social enterprise

My brother, you are familiar with the usage of the Roman Church, in which you were brought up. But if you have found customs, whether in the Church of Rome or of Gaul or any other that may be more acceptable to God, I wish you make careful selection of them, and teach the Church of the English, which is still young in the Faith, whatever you have been able to learn with profit from the various Churches. For things should not be loved for the sake of place, but places for the sake of good things. Therefore, select from each of the Churches whatever things are devout, religious and right; and when you have bound them up as it were, into a sheaf, let the minds of the English grow accustomed to it. (Bede, 1:27)

Bede's words (written in what is now Durham Diocese, over a thousand years ago) encourage us to be open to finding new and better ways of being a church, through a practice that honours place, people, and God (Dackson, 2012).

The aim of this cycle of learning was to gather the data relating to the beliefs and values underpinning the social enterprises, to reflect how they do, or do not, honour place, people, and God. This drawing together of the threads woven through this research allowed a preliminary grounded theology of Christian social enterprise to emerge.

The social enterprises in this research are best described as a combination of 'faith affiliated' and 'faith background' organisations (Frame, 2020), with values rooted in Christian beliefs. The organisations may have historic ties to faith groups, and although these may no longer be strong, the influence of Christian beliefs and values is evident. For example, Clean for Good and Shildon Alive were both established by the local parish church; members of the board, staff and volunteers would describe themselves as Christian, yet the organisations' governance is no longer linked to the church.

Research by Baker and Power (2018) demonstrated that Christian beliefs, values, and worldviews shaped praxis in the workplace as they:

fed into the wider environment as a form of background influence – a quietly humanising and nondescript variable that can work to mitigate the worst impacts of isolation and dehumanisation. (Baker & Power, 2018: 486)

The beliefs that emerged from this research, are belief in justice ('Shalom'); a belief in belonging; a belief in reciprocity and a belief in empowerment.

These beliefs and values are not distinctively Christian values or owned by Christians, they are beliefs and values that intersect with community development praxis, which build communities based on values of justice, equality, and mutual respect (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2011). They also intersect with the values discussed in Chapter 6.4 that underpinning 'secular' social enterprises (Gordon, 2015). The social enterprises in this research are distinctively Christian because of the relationship between the beliefs and values with the Christian faith espoused by the social entrepreneurs.

Importantly, the belief and values that emerged from these social enterprises diverge from the dominant normative and espoused theology of Christian social action which is discussed in Chapter 3.4.1. This practice is principally built upon the values of spontaneousness, selflessness, and compassionate giving regardless of the consequences, and positions the Christian as the doer. The beliefs and values discovered through this research are challenging this dominant Christian missiology.

The espoused and operant theological themes arose from putting marginalised people and places at the centre of the business model. The current market economy neglects to value creation, leaving individuals, places and goods marginalised and appearing worthless. The social enterprises studied were established to, in a modest way, oppose the current system. This came out of the second core belief – that of justice. The world is not as it should be, and the social enterprises aimed, in small and local ways, to challenge this economic injustice. This was described in terms of 'Shalom' and resulted in a commitment to work with those that have been marginalised by current economic, political, and social systems, and to transform unjust structures of society (Church of England, 2017). This is engaged with through a relational mutual praxis that aims to make participants feel valued and empowered.

The belief in social justice created three further beliefs that were evident through an operant theology in these spaces. Firstly, a belief in belonging that requires a mode of friendship with

people often very different from ourselves, and is shaped by principles of grace rather than principles of likeness (Swinton, 2012). Secondly, belief in reciprocity; that we all have assets, gifts, and talents to share (Mathers, 2018; Barrett & Harley, 2020). This asset-based approach embedded in a belief in 'liturgy of abundance' (Brueggemann, 1999) is a turn away from the service delivery model (Eckley, Ruddick & Walker, 2015). Finally, a belief in empowerment emerged from the data; the social enterprises provided spaces where participants have the ability or capacity to act (Norsworthy, McLaren & Waterfield, 2012). This ability to act was evident through economic empowerment and participatory empowerment.

The theology that has emerged is a liberating praxis that puts those on the margins central to the organisation, by creating spaces of belonging where giftedness is valued and participants have the power to act.

With growing numbers of people finding themselves marginalised and separated from the ability to participate in society (Atherton, 2003), the market with its values of individualism, self-interest and efficiency is often seen as a cause of, rather than a solution to marginalisation. By contrast, these organisations see engagement with the market as a solution, through this radical practice of social enterprise. The practitioners sit within a system that excludes many in their communities and adopt a 'hopeful imagination' of how the world should be (Brueggemann, 1978), and how the current system could be changed. There was a 'hopeful realism' which suggests a remedial rather than a revolutionary approach to change. Thacker describes those who engage with this approach as 'patient revolutionaries' (Thacker, 2017: 181).

At the beginning of this research a theological concern was expressed at the event in Gateshead '*Reimagining Church Social Action; Putting Social Enterprise in the Picture*' which questioned the appropriateness of engaging in the world of business and markets for social change.

The Church seems to have little difficulty engaging with “caring” professions but relates far less well to the world of business.....it seems to have difficulty accepting that there is potential for good and evil in all professions. (Harpman, 1999: 1)

This view was reiterated in the first interview with Tim from Clean for Good.

‘They automatically presume charity good, business bad. That is a very common church narrative...Charity is a fabulous thing if it’s done in the right way, at the right time, for the right purpose and the same is true for business, it can be fabulous if it’s done in the right way, at the right time, for the right purpose.’ (Tim)

Martin felt that social enterprises are sometimes regarded as “*not really a Christian thing*”, the data gathered would refute this and say that social enterprises are absolutely a ‘Christian thing’. A belief in the value of creation, justice, belonging, empowerment and reciprocity affirms that social enterprises provide an appropriate missiology for Christian practitioners.

This conclusion emphasises that, while some Christian commentators regard the world of markets and business with scepticism (Gutierrez, 1974) the beliefs and values discovered through this research provide a model of social change that can be engaged in with the confidence of ‘practicing what they preach’ (Graham, 2000: 106).

As this research has shown, developing a social enterprise is not an easy option; becoming established takes time and involves constant experimentation, which can make practitioners feel vulnerable. Chapter 10 develops a model that practitioners can adapt according to their context, but that will encourage others to look at this alternative model of social action.

Chapter 10. Critical reflections and a preliminary model of Christian social enterprise

'Church is very quick to pull charity as a tool out of its toolbox but hardly ever pulls business out of its toolbox. The church nearly always reverts to charity simply because it's the tool that the church understands the best. Business sits on the shelf, but business is a really important powerful tool so part of my passion at the moment is to try understand what I can do to try and help the church understand how and when business is entirely the best tool to use.' (Tim T)

The above quote is from the first interview conducted for this research. Tim from Clean for Good's comments captured the motivation and aims of the research, to help the church better understand another tool in the toolbox – business in the form of social enterprise. The research process has provided the privilege of listening to and working alongside Christian practitioners who are passionate about sharing their experiences of setting up and supporting social enterprise as an alternative model to the charitable approach more often adopted by the church. This research has been conducted by, with, and for Christian community practitioners with the aim of gathering information that will benefit and revise practice or develop a new understanding (Greenwood & Levin, 2007).

The aim of this chapter is to provide a model to support and encourage other practitioners to explore when and how social enterprises could enrich their Christian social action.

The context for this research is working and living in low-income communities in Durham diocese in the North East of England, where the violence of austerity is an ever-present backdrop to daily life (Cooper & Whyte, 2017). Alongside other faith groups and third sector organisations, Christians are increasingly responding to the impact of this violence in our

communities. This Christian social action has delivered a combination of responses, from individual informal acts of kindness to more organised projects predominantly engaging in a charitable model of service delivery. This charitable approach is shaped by government agendas and funding streams (Craig et al., 2004), alongside a historic practice and an assumed theological and historical narrative to 'serve the poor' (Barrett & Harley, 2020; Korten, 1990; Wells, 2015). As a practitioner, the lack of critical reflection around this dominant missiology resulted in a personal 'disquiet', particularly in relation to the power within Christian social action and the lack of attention given to the underlying social injustice (Cooper, 2020; Shannahan, 2019; Taylor, 2003; Thacker, 2017). This disquiet alongside the anger described in the introduction were the driving force behind this research to explore alternative models of Christian social action.

As a practitioner who participates in broad based community organising, this thesis starts by considering the world as it is, with the aim of developing critical consciousness (Alinsky, 1971; Butcher et al., 2007; Freire, 1996; Goldbard, 2006). It adopts the concept of mission as inreach and asks how I may be part of the problem by critically evaluating the history of Christian social action in the UK, and how that has influenced current practice (Rieger, 2004). Taylor (1992) argues that Christians are tempted to take the role of the provider, possessor, and performer, which I believe continues to shape social action today. Critics accuse this paternalistic approach of diminishing human worth, which places the recipient in a position of not being able to contribute or challenge injustice, consequently hurting those we aim to help (Lupton, 2011; 2015). Barrett and Harley (2020) assert that this one-way missional flow needs to be interrupted using a process that is mutual, shares stories and builds deep relationships with those on the margins. Despite this critique, faith-based social action has a positive role in today's post-secular context, providing receptive generosity, partnership of rapprochement, and assemblages of hopeful re-enactment (Cloke et al., 2019). In Chapter 3 two emerging practices which encourage such engagement are described, asset-based community

development and community organising. A further emerging theme for Christian community practitioners is social enterprise.

Chapter 4 considers whether social enterprises can provide an alternative organisational model to enhance Christian social action in the United Kingdom. The literature review found a bewildering array of definitions and organisational forms that draw on different academic theories (Teasdale, 2012). The values associated with different social enterprise traditions is a beneficial starting point within this context. The typology developed by Gordon (2015) provides a reflective tool for this conversation by looking at the values associated with different traditions. These include values of community solidarity (Community Tradition), individual and organisational giving (Altruistic Tradition), and challenging unjust systems (Ethical Tradition). The other relevant starting point highlighted in Chapter 4.3 was whether social enterprises were created to generate more income (Pfeffer & Salanick, 2003; Dart, 2004) or for more radical reasons beginning with a vision of the type of world we want to live in (Martin & Osberg, 2015).

Pearce (2003) defines nine dimensions, or continuum, to describe social enterprise. His continuum provides a valuable reflective means for capturing the scope of the small sample within this research. An additional tenth dimension relating to the type of faith-based organisation has been incorporated (Frame, 2020).

1. **From very small to very large.** Most social enterprises represented in this research were at the smaller end of the continuum, though Milton Keynes Christian Foundation and Clean for Good were larger organisations.
2. **From voluntary enterprise to social or community business.** The dependency upon volunteers was greater in the smaller enterprises, Listen Threads and REfUSE. Milton Keynes Christian Foundation sat in the middle of this continuum and the social business Clean for Good employed all staff.

3. **From a dependency upon grants and subsidies to full financial independence.** Except for Clean for Good and Beehive, there was a reliance upon grant income to supplement earned income. Clean for Good was financially independent after three years, while Beehive took a year. During the COVID-19 pandemic the shift to deliver services, especially food, saw an increase in grant dependency for REfUSE and Shildon Alive to supplement a reduced earned income. This hybrid model of income generation proved to be very important during the pandemic (Chapter 8.2).
4. **From people-orientation to profit maximisation.** All the social enterprises were heavily people centred, with the wellbeing of volunteers, employees and beneficiaries part of the stated aims. At times it was recognised that this could negatively impact profits, however, as people-orientated organisations this tension was accepted (Chapter 5.2).
5. **From informal to formal economic activities.** Formal economic activities dominated the sample in this research, although in the case of REfUSE this had begun as informal economic activity – sharing food together.
6. **From mono- to multifunctional.** Milton Keynes Christian Foundation is a multifunctioning enterprise, with several different enterprising activities sitting within the organisation. The remaining social enterprises focused on one activity although in the case of REfUSE there were a number of income streams (café and outside catering) associated with the social aim.
7. **From voluntary organisation to social enterprise.** None of the participants in this research had developed trading activities which would by themselves create enough income to build a more sustainable future.
8. **From radical to reformist.** The social enterprises in this research would all sit towards the radical end of the spectrum. They were exploring alternative ways of shaping the market through good jobs for cleaners, inclusive coffee houses, responding to the conflicting issues of food poverty and food waste, or allowing

young people marginalised from mainstream education to develop their skills and passions (Chapter 5.2 and 9.1). They were not established to simply generate income, a reformist response.

9. **From individual to collective initiative.** The social enterprises emerged as a collective response to community issues. Many passionate individuals, such as Paula, Jane and Nikki, were key in management and leadership, however, they were collective initiatives.

10. **From faith centred to secular organisation.** The social enterprises in this research would most closely align with faith-affiliated organisations (Frame, 2020). They were all founded by Christian groups with varying degrees of connection to local congregations. Support from local churches was important, especially during the start-up phase, although as the organisations became more established this relationship became more distant in several cases. Further research is needed into faith-centred social enterprises.

Pearce's continuum has been adopted to demonstrate both the variety and breadth of social enterprise, and how social enterprise differs from more traditional responses adopted by the church. It also helps to highlight the gaps in this research, for example, further research is required into social enterprises that sit in different positions on these ten dimensions, particularly more evangelical Christian organisations.

Chapter 5 presents the emerging themes from the first cycle of data collection, after interviews with eight Christian social entrepreneurs. The emerging narrative showed that community engagement was a catalyst for change and that the organisations were responding to local issues. This process can also be recognised in more charitable responses to community issues, for example, setting up a foodbank. However, the next stage of the process, social innovation, was critical in moving away from the dominant organisational response. Innovative

questions explored how to solve the problem faced in communities where providing charity was not seen as a solution. Nikki from REfUSE felt that taking charitable donations from supermarkets would legitimise a system that produced so much excess. Congregation members at St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe recognised that rather than charity, justice was required for low paid cleaners. This period of social innovation was reinforced by networking with other social entrepreneurs, either informally or through training and consultancy. Collaboration and development of business acumen emerged as crucial factors from all the social entrepreneurs during this development phase (Chapter 5.3). This collaboration allowed participants to gain confidence and witness alternative approaches first-hand. Establishing the social enterprises was a creative process that required a culture of experimentation and adaptation. Risk taking, experimentation, and adaptation were part of the daily experience for leaders, staff, and volunteers (Chapter 5.4). The resulting social enterprises aimed to create places of belonging and empowerment, where participants skills, talents and passions were valued. However, providing this often resulted in tension between the social and economic aims of the organisation, with the social aims dominating practice. These social enterprises were established by groups of people influenced by their Christian faith. Chapter 5.8 describes how participants' faith provided spiritual capital, especially when faced with difficult circumstances.

The themes that emerged from the first research cycle were developed in greater detail during the principal research setting, Shildon Alive in County Durham. The ethnographic study provided thick descriptions from a church-affiliated project as it shifted to adopt more entrepreneurial approaches. Engaging as a volunteer ethnographer allowed learning through participation with the aim of reciprocity within the research relationship (Hill O'Connor & Baker, 2017; Mauksch et al., 2017; Maiter et al., 2008). Working alongside staff and volunteers for eight months as a participant observer allowed closer examination of the initial themes. It highlighted the messy and experimental nature of creating a social enterprise, which

necessitated considerable risk taking. The project lead was instrumental in encouraging this risk taking, as were the trustees who acted as permission givers. During the creation of the social enterprise at Shildon Alive the participants found ways to work with the available resources to provide innovative solutions for their community needs. This is described as a process of bricolage (Janssen, Fayolle & Wuillaume, 2018). This period also permitted a close examination of the role of leadership as the social enterprise was created. While individual leaders were a key driving force, the importance of collective leadership was also highlighted. Leadership was also affected by the context (place) and by the beliefs and values underpinning the social enterprises (purpose).

After much reflection it was decided to include data gathered during the COVID-19 pandemic to explore how these organisations responded during this period. This research cycle included three online interviews and four email exchanges. It was important to learn how the social enterprises had responded in a crisis: was the organisational structure advantageous when responding to emergency situations? How did they continue to engage with and care for those that belonged in their social enterprises? For some, the pandemic resulted in closure, while others adapted their social aims to be involved in emergency welfare, often through food provision. The pandemic saw practitioners reflecting upon the future and how their social enterprises were to adapt in a way that would ensure social change. The main learning from this period was the importance of the hybrid nature of income generation in many of the organisations. This allowed flexibility and during the months when earned income dropped applications for grant funding ensured the new social outcomes were achieved while also aiding the organisational resilience.

The penultimate chapter brings together data relating to the beliefs and values that underpinned the Christian social enterprises in the research. A theme around a reflective practice began to emerge with participants sharing how spaces and times were sought in

which to reflect theologically. This was often in response to challenging situations, for example when money went missing at REfUSE or when there were challenging customers. Board members, pastors, and colleagues reflected on these issues, often in the moment. Only one social enterprise, The Beehive, described beginning to set time aside to reflect and pray together in a weekly dedicated slot.

Building on data gathered through the interviews and ethnography, a practitioner event was held in Sunderland to allow conversations about God in practice to triangulate the relevance of the theological data. The central theme to emerge from the combined data was a belief in social justice, which was described in terms of 'Shalom'. This belief in social justice was underpinned by a belief in the value of people, places, and things. From this core belief arose three interconnected beliefs, a belief in belonging, a belief in empowerment and a belief in reciprocity.

The key finding was that the Christian practitioners were socially innovative and developed social enterprises as radical responses, driven by a belief in justice. The emerging organisations aimed to provide spaces of belonging where participants felt valued, empowered, and able to share and develop their talents and passions. They were radical asset-based organisations.

The categories and themes that have emerged through the research process are now drawn together to generate a preliminary model to encourage and support practitioners to establish social enterprises as part of their Christian social action.

10.1 A Christian model of social enterprise

Throughout the research data has been coded, and gradually ideas or themes have arisen from it (Saldaña, 2016). The most significant themes will be expanded upon to build a new grounded praxis-based model of Christian social enterprises.

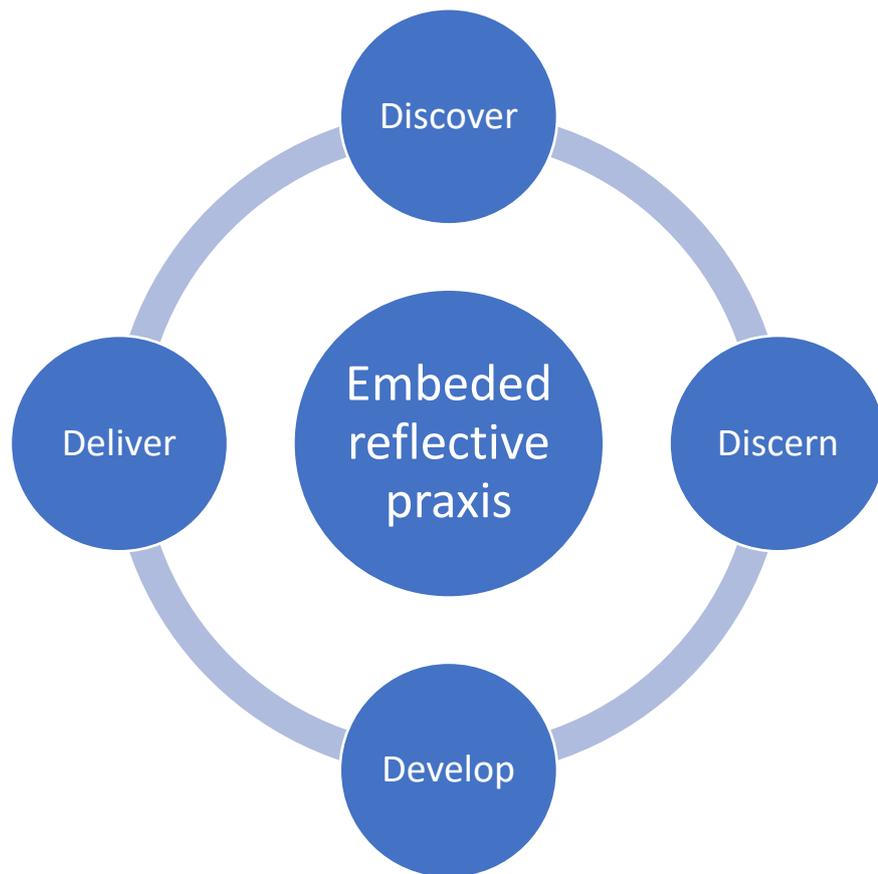


Figure 24. A Grounded Model of Christian Social Enterprise

The table below demonstrates how these themes emerged from the data, providing a grounded practice-based model.

Category	Examples	Theme
Reflective practice	Theological reflection with church leaders. Informal reflective conversations. Planned gatherings including theological reflection.	Embedded reflective praxis
Lived experience as a catalyst for change	Intentional listening - One-to-one conversations, meeting with partners, local authority, and businesses. Casual listening - social media, being present in the community.	Discover
Social innovation	Reflect upon the root causes of the problem. Inspiration from other social entrepreneurs.	Discern
Collaboration and networking	Advice and support from external agency. Support from other social entrepreneurs.	Develop
Training	Participation in social enterprise training.	
Leadership	New leaders developed. Leadership influence by process, purpose, and place.	Deliver
Geographies of belonging, reciprocity, and empowerment	Participants were encouraged to share and develop skills, talents passions. A collective leadership approach resulted in staff and volunteers having the power to act.	
Experimentation.	Continual adaptation of price, product, delivery, as understanding of the market develops.	
Income generation	Hybrid model of income generation. Most of the social enterprise in this research remained dependent upon grant funding.	
Tension	A moving away from founding congregation. Between social and economic needs. Expectations of Christian social action.	

Table 7. Emergent Themes within the model of Christian Social Enterprise

10.1.1 Embedded reflective praxis

One of the questions that continually appeared in field notes was ‘So why am I describing this as a *Christian* social enterprise?’. The conclusions drawn from the research were that the beliefs and values that underpinned these organisations, while not exclusively Christian, had evolved from the beliefs and values of the creators who described themselves as Christian. These beliefs and values were woven into the texture of the organisations and shaped both the means and the ends of what happened, and the way people were valued and managed (Garvey & Williamson, 2002). For example, David (vicar at Shildon) spoke of a belief in abundance ‘*that you might have life in life in abundance*’ (Chapter 7.6). This ‘liturgy of abundance’ (Brueggemann, 1999) was evident in all the social enterprises. Tim E described the driving theological theme of Worth Unlimited, as being a belief in ‘Shalom’ (Chapter 9.1). The beliefs and values which emerged were operant and espoused within these faith-affiliated enterprises.

How did the social enterprises safeguard a link between the Christian beliefs and values that underpinned their organisations and day-to-day practice? As discussed in Chapter 5.7, reflection took place through individual and collective processes and was predominantly ad-hoc, for example in response to issues such as challenges with customers. Providing space and time to embed a reflective praxis varied within the research areas; some being more formal and intentional than others. Mentors were important to many of the practitioners, especially when navigating tensions within the social enterprise (Chapter 5.7).

Reflecting upon the data I would advocate for a discipline of reflection that connects with everyday reality/experience/context and/or a specific problem (Bennett et al., 2018). Embedding a reflective praxis that is in dialogue with the defined values and beliefs of the organisation, while not always explicit, is a significant activity within these organisations.

Herein lies a tension. The social enterprises in this research provided spaces of rapprochement which saw collaboration between social groups with different religious and secular orientations (Olson et al., 2013; Cloke, 2011). This came out of a belief in belonging, a belief the creators of these organisations have embedded in practice. This belief in belonging is held regardless of whether participants in the social enterprise identify as Christian or not. The social enterprises identified themselves as faith-affiliated organisations, where staff (and I would add volunteers) would be expected to respect but not necessarily share the faith (Frame, 2020). The tension emerges from providing a place of belonging, reciprocity, and empowerment, where participants can contribute while not necessarily sharing the same faith orientation. So how can the faith-shaped values, beliefs and attitudes within these workplaces (Baker et al., 2011) be navigated through an inclusive approach? The resources provided by practical theologians to support and encourage reflection on practice presume a Christian viewpoint of participants (Cameron et al., 2010; Graham, Walton & Ward, 2005; Green, 2009; Watkins, 2020). Gaston (2017) adapts the pastoral cycle to be more inclusive of his neighbours of other faiths to reflect his interfaith ministry yet fails to include those of no faith.

Here I want to explore the practice of an inclusive and receptive approach to reflection. The pastoral cycle adopted by Green (2009) is a valuable starting point for this. Green (2009) adapted Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle to develop his reflective cycle and this will be further adapted with an aim to allow people with different beliefs and values to have the ability to act within the process.

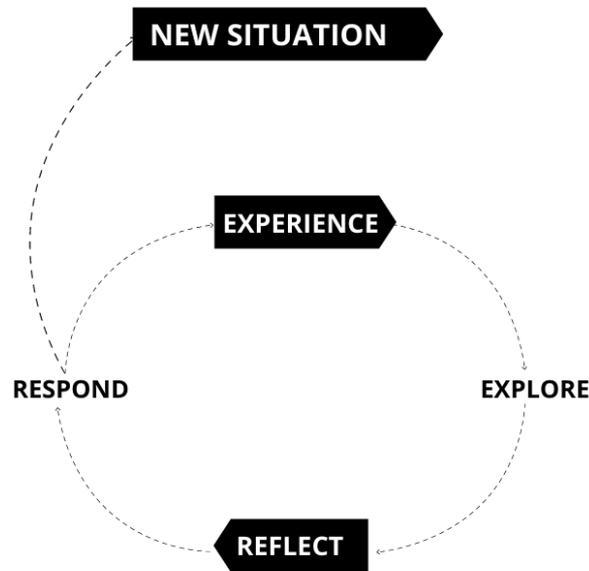


Figure 25. The Doing Theology Spiral (Green, 2009)

The cycle begins with experience, not engaging in a detailed analysis of the situation but 'instead simply making sure that we really are conscious of the feelings, emotions and impressions that the experience engenders in us' (Green, 2009: 19). From the data collected in this research these may be the feelings, emotions, and impressions Paula (Shildon Alive), felt when having to respond to some of the backlash from the community, or Jess (The Beehive) felt when having to deal with difficult customers. This stage includes listening to how others feel about the situation, a process Jane (Listen Threads) adopted when she listened to the young women's feelings about empowering other women through their purchasing of sweatshirts. When the immediate response to an experience is over, the group can move to process its significance and explore the experience in more depth. This stage allows the group to do so 'by immersing themselves in a thorough analysis of the situation to go alongside their stories and allows their earlier feelings to be opened up to a new line of factual enquiry' (Green, 2009: 21). This explore phase was exhibited at Listen Threads when they compared the cost of sweatshirts from different suppliers. Having built a deeper description of the situation

through the exploring phase, the cycle moves to the reflective stage. It is in this phase that Green (2009) feels the group works to discern how the Christian faith relates to the issue.

Bible study, prayer, worship, hymns and songs, the creeds and councils of the Church, the theologies of times past, the present social teachings of the Church and the great themes of faith like salvation, creation, sin, thanksgiving, and so on: all of these and much more will be at the groups disposal as it engages in 'Reflection' upon Experience and Exploration phases of their work. (Green, 2009: 21)

This is the part of the cycle that must be approached with caution to allow participants, regardless of their beliefs and values, to participate and feel heard and valued. Engaging with Christian resources may be appropriate in certain situations. For example, Jess described reflecting with her pastor on experiences at The Beehive, and their newly established weekly prayer meetings provided a time to reflect upon the issues that had arisen during the week. However, the social enterprises provided spaces of belonging, reciprocity, and empowerment for people of all faiths and none, therefore explicit Christian theological reflection may exclude some participants. Paula provided spaces for informal reflective praxis, often over the lunchtime breaks. Conversations often returned to the underpinning values and beliefs, for example to be a place of belonging for everyone in the community, without explicitly engaging Christian resources.

Relationships within these social enterprises were key to ensuring an inclusive reflective practice, regardless of faith background. Participants were known, and therefore the appropriateness of how, and when, to engage with Christian resources was understood, in order maintained a sense of belonging.

After the 'Reflection' phase comes the moment to 'Respond'.

This is where faith and action really do go hand-in-hand as theology becomes concrete again, and clashes out in experience. The group sets about experimenting with a range of different responses to see what works best in practice, given the new insights derived from all their theological reflection. (Green, 2009: 23)

The choice of action has been a response based in the faith and therefore, Green (2009) regards this, however ordinary, as a 'spiritual' activity since it has arisen from a desire to see God's will be done. Having completed the cycle, the new situation will prompt new insights and questions, creating an opportunity for a further cycle.

As already recognised, these social enterprises provide spaces of rapprochement, which bring together people of different beliefs and values. Therefore, embedding a reflective praxis which allows alternative voices to be valued should be performed carefully and sensitively, and may at times require forgoing of Christian literacy and resources to ensure participants feel they belong.

This reflective praxis should be embedded throughout the process of creating and delivering a social enterprise. At times there may be daily issues that require a reflective practice, other times less so. Some of the issues, such as the pricing of products, may involve a few volunteers discussing how pricing relates to their belief in belonging (Chapter 6.2.6). Other issues, such as creating a business plan that ensures all customers feel they belong may require a more in-depth reflective process including management and board members.

Embedding a reflective practice is important to navigate the tensions within the social enterprises but as Dinham and Shaw (2012) highlight, can also provide a tool for measuring impact. Their research was in responses to the diversity of faith-based social action and language to describe this action. They argue for a 'bottom-up' reflective praxis to 'support and empower local faith communities to be heard on their own terms' (Dinham & Shaw, 2012: 126). Adopting reflective practices, they claim, would allow faith-based organisations to provide evidence to partners about their contribution while also allowing internal reflections on their impact and identifying need and gaps.

Having described the importance of embedding a reflective praxis, four further themes that emerged to create the proposed model are addressed below.

10.1.2 Discover

The social enterprises in this research had emerged from, and been influenced by, lived experiences of people in the local community. These lived experiences included social isolation, mental health challenges, poor experiences with mainstream education, low wages, and food poverty. A process of listening and storytelling was evident, akin to community development or community organising practice.

Obtaining an understanding of a community's needs and resources and discovering its strengths, weaknesses, history and aspiration is a central component of community practice. (Smalle & Henderson, 2003: 123)

Community practitioners adopt specific processes, skills, and techniques to discover more about their community including auditing, profiling, or appraisal (Smalle & Henderson, 2003). However, the process of discovery highlighted in this research was more organic in most

situations, stemming from being part of the context and, in many cases, active community members.

Stephen from Milton Keynes Christian Foundation acknowledged that the organisation embraced aspects of community development including participation and empowerment.

'We still use, I would say, a community development 'ish' type model, but as a way of engaging with the local community and enabling them to participate effectively. And, also, to be part of the solutions to the issues that they are feeling within their communities.' (Stephen)

This process of discovery is important for us as Christian communities to grapple with 'widespread *obliviousness* that prevents us - or some of us, in fact - from seeing and acknowledging aspects of reality, including multitudes of our human kin and other non-human creatures' (Barrett & Harley, 2020: 27; emphasis in original). Ledwith (2011) offers several approaches to gathering stories for collective action for change. Her Freirean-feminist-anti-racist approach includes methods that were evident in this research.

- **Listening:** taking experiences seriously as the bedrock of action/reflection, using stories as a basis for empowerment. The listening process that the congregation of St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe engaged with, provided stories that saw the beginning of the Real Living Wage campaign and subsequently Clean for Good. Over time, the personal stories shared at Listen Threads provided the foundations of their social enterprise. Community groups that aim to be spaces of equality, reciprocity, respect, and dignity, can provide the setting for sharing stories.

- **Writing and telling:** using stories as reflection and a tool for understanding the issues. While not their personal stories, the stories of food waste and food poverty were used by Nikki at REfUSE and friends as their critical consciousness developed.
- **Noticing:** 'extraordinary re-experiencing the ordinary' (Freire & Shor, 1987: 93). Feminists claim feelings and emotions as legitimate knowledge. This was particularly evident in Shildon Alive where the feelings and emotions within the foodbank provided a catalyst to explore alternative responses to food poverty.

The questions that were asked through this process of discovery ultimately shaped the resulting social enterprise. Questions used in community organising such as '*What is putting pressure on you, your family and your community?*' result in more deficit answers. For example, in the case of Clean for Good, the answer was the pressure that low paid cleaning jobs was putting on family life. While questions like '*What are you passionate about?*' or '*What are your skills and talents?*' produce asset-based answers. This was the case at Listen Threads where the young women were passionate about fashion and had creative skills and talents. Neither are mutually exclusive, and both questions are asked in the light of a belief in a community's capacity to solve its own problems.

As we have acknowledged, many of our communities feel 'done to', as agencies and organisations deliver their projects and programmes and then disappear (Chapter 2.1.2). The businesses in this study worked with people that were marginalised and/or were situated in places that were marginalised, but through a process of listening and relationship building, business models developed into spaces of agency and empowerment for individuals and community.

Rather than a starting point of 'What am I passionate to change?' a collective process of discovery is needed to ensure that the social enterprise will be relevant, community focused,

and participatory. It also helps Christian communities move away from the praxis of provider, performer, and possessor (Taylor,1992) towards a more asset-based approach. A correlation with Asset Based Community Development (Chapter 3.5.1) is a central thread evident throughout the research.

The challenge for Christian communities is to explore how best to learn about their community. Certain stories in the community will be well known, but whose stories is it important to listen to, and whose are we not hearing? The lived experiences of the cleaners within a congregation in East London were not being heard until an intentional listening campaign, as part of a community organising process, was conducted.

These stories must be used for discernment and reflected upon, to determine the most suitable response.

10.1.3 Discern

After the process of discovery, participants expressed a passionate desire for change. The socially innovative responses to the issues came after a period of discernment.

As noted in Chapter 3.3 there is a vast array of responses to these mean and violent times and therefore:

continual reflection by local activists is needed on which model/s of action are most appropriate for their local context, capacity and theological outlook. Such reflection can encourage potential and current activists to consider a range of options and to take into account the perspectives and actions of others on this issue, including how their

own role within this context links and contributes to this wider picture. (Orton & Barclay, 2019: 508)

The discernment in this research resulted in a more innovative response than dominant charitable approaches.

Nikki from REfUSE was passionate about the disconnect between food poverty and food waste, Jess talked about being passionate to build community in Bethnal Green. This discernment, while at times initiated by an individual, was a collective process, engaging members of a congregation, community, or youth project. Meeting established social entrepreneurs through training or networking, also emerged as an important factor during this period.

It was during this discernment period that social innovation became evident, with new ideas being posed to improve people's lives (Mulgan, 2007), breaking with the normal responses (Cottam, 2018). It is this social innovation that some commentators have argued is missing from religious groups, organisations, and networks (Bickley, 2017). Bickley sees the size of congregations and charities as a barrier to innovation as:

Religious social action is delivered through small charities and congregations that have limited capacity for innovation. The place-based nature of religious social action is an important advantage, but this kind of activity needs to be augmented by institutions that will enable and support innovation. Mediating institutions need to put innovation and impact at the heart of their agendas. (Bickley, 2017: 7-8)

In contrast to Bickley's (2017) concerns, this research actually highlighted the ability of small groups of people to be innovative. Listen Threads, REfUSE, and Shildon Alive were all small organisations. The data suggests this allowed them to be innovative, to experiment and take risks in a way that potentially they couldn't if the organisations were larger. I would argue that the mindset, rather than the size of organisations or congregations, was key to innovation in this research.

The examples in this research saw how social innovation led to radical solutions, that aimed to disrupt the logic of free market (Ridley-Duff & Bull, 2011). The social innovation was radical in that it was challenging the market in the way it treated low wage workers (Clean for Good), the exclusive nature of coffee houses in London (The Beehive), the ethics of fashion lines (Listen Threads), the exclusion of young people who had been failed by mainstream education (Milton Keynes Christian Foundation), and tackling the failure of the market to reduce food waste while tackling food poverty (Shildon Alive and REfUSE).

A social imaginary, that explored how the world could be a better place to live, was evident through these responses. After a period of discernment there was a shift away from the charitable response that dominates Christian social action, to a justice-based response; a move from 'responding in loving service' to 'challenging unjust systems' (Anglican Communion Office, 2020).

This research recognises that setting up a social enterprise is not the right option for every situation and choosing the appropriate response is important, as Tim from Clean for Good commented:

'Charity is a fabulous thing if it's done in the right way, at the right time, for the right purpose and the same is true for business, it can be fabulous if it's done in the right way, at the right time, for the right purpose.' (Tim)

The importance of a charitable approach became apparent during COVID-19 when there was a shift in the welfare provision from many of the social enterprises.

These discernment processes were often a collective action, there was careful questioning around the nature of the problem that was being solved and whether a charitable response was appropriate. Networking with social entrepreneurs helped to develop more innovative solutions to solve the issues.

10.1.4 Develop

From the data in this research, an account of the creative process of developing a Christian social enterprise has emerged.

The research has highlighted the importance of recruiting or developing the appropriate skills during this development stage. This was achieved either through collaboration with outside consultants, training existing members or volunteers, or targeted recruitment. Listening Threads had support from their sponsoring organisation and the project lead had completed enterprise training. The Beehive employed a manager with the specific skills to run a business. The congregation of St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe sought advice from the Centre for Theology and Community which resulted in Clean for Good.

One important finding was the importance of engaging with individuals who understood the faith context. For example, Kate from Social Enterprise Acumen who supported and provided

training during the establishment of REfUSE and Shildon Alive, is a member of a local Methodist congregation and supports many Christian projects in the North East. Martin Lawson made the point that it was important to collaborate with people who know the delicate complexity of a faith-based social enterprise. Understanding the context during the incubation period allows a reframing of secular concepts, adoption of appropriate religious language and concepts, and an opportunity for embedding reflection (Chapter 6.2.2).

Training was also highlighted as important during this development stage, both in providing a learning environment and allowing ideas to be encouraged and nurtured by participants. Research by Phillips et al. (2019) recognised the relational imperative for social innovation has been recognised, as ‘going alone won’t work!’ (Phillips et al., 2019: 315). Based on insights from both in-depth interviews and a quantitative empirical study of social enterprises, they found that social entrepreneurs worked collaboratively with their stakeholders in the ideation stage of social innovation. They highlight the need for networking and stakeholder involvement to develop capacity and confidence.

None of the social enterprises were being led by church leaders. Tim, from Clean for Good, didn’t feel that clergy were necessarily the right people to develop these enterprises due to lack of business management experience, limited time and capacity, and issues relating to continuity of ministry. Therefore, the right people needed to be employed to lead the business. However, during this development period, church leaders played an important role as permission givers (Chapter 7.2) and in helping to shift the mindset within a congregation (Volland, 2015).

Religious social innovators report feeling marginalised within their own networks – they have to be intrapreneurs before they can be entrepreneurs, championing their cause and approach within their own networks. Clerical leaders are important gatekeepers

and decision makers. The success of an innovation depends on capturing their attention and convincing them of the need to redirect their resources. (Bickley, 2017: 9)

This development process may see the social enterprise move away from the congregation where the ideas were germinated, and this may also be a physical departure as suitable premises are sought, as in the cases of Shildon Alive and REfUSE.

The development process was messy and complex, with some participants feeling they '*stumbled across social enterprise*' (Richard) while for others it had been a more intentional process. The importance of engaging with consultants that understand the context, particularly with regard to faith, was a key learning from this research. The specific skills and knowledge in developing a social enterprise and the complexity of doing this within a faith context had required specialist support in all the examples in this research. Confidence and capacity were also developed through visiting and networking with other social enterprises/entrepreneurs, again, where the context is understood.

10.1.5 Deliver

The development process involved experimentation which at times felt risky. This was most obviously observed at Shildon Alive but was also described in other settings. Experimenting with products, markets, and pricing had been a constant feature during the set-up phase, where collective decisions were taken. There was a degree of permission giving from the board at Shildon Alive to 'just have a go' during this development stage. The projects recognised that this development stage would take time, and periods were ring-fenced as times of experimentation and risk taking, with permission to fail. The Beehive gave themselves a year to experiment and become a sustainable business while at Shildon Alive we

optimistically talked about a 'messy month' of experimentation. At REfUSE a team setting up a pop-up café helped to mitigate the risk while trialling their methods. The realities were that the experimentation, adaptation, and risk taking were a constant factor in the social enterprises, as social and market influences fluctuated.

Social enterprises' narratives are dominated by stories of great men and women with these 'leader-centric' accounts failing to recognise the importance of the developing capabilities throughout the organisations. The social enterprises in this research were inclusive of what Burgess and Durrant (2019) describes as 'non-traditional volunteers', people who may be on low incomes or benefits and may have described themselves as having long-term physical or mental health problems.

All the social enterprises were built upon the skills and interests of participants. There was a commitment to working with volunteers in a manner that allowed them to share their skills, talents, and passions. This required volunteer development, through one-to-one daily support and more organised training. The young women at Listen Threads were interested in developing fashion items, and their creative talents were developed through product design and marketing campaigns. Kitchen volunteers at Shildon Alive not only developed catering abilities but were encouraged to share their culinary experience. Barista skills were developed at The Beehive and at Milton Keynes Christian Foundation, social enterprises were built around participants' interests such as beekeeping and bike maintenance. This approach saw the combination of asset-based community development and social enterprise; seeing the solution within our communities and working with what's there to build community responses. This approach differs from the service delivery approach adopted in certain types of Christian social action (Eckley, Ruddick & Walker, 2015).

The social enterprises were places where, to varying degrees, leadership capacity was developed. The employees at Clean for Good were developed to be managers, and training courses were offered alongside volunteering opportunities. The young women at Listen Threads began to show leadership, taking responsibility for certain parts of the entrepreneurial process such as marketing, managing social media, or in the case of one volunteer, developing into the manager of the project as a whole. Volunteers at Shildon Alive were gradually encouraged to take on more roles, including opening up the supermarket and managing the till.

According to Social Enterprise UK (2020), social enterprises are income generating and aim to earn more than half of income through trading (or are working towards this). This research highlighted the reliance on a mixed model of income generation comprising grants, charitable giving, and earned income. This approach proved important for the organisations' sustainability, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic which saw consumer spending drop during a period when social needs rose, grant income allowed for activity to continue (Chapter 8).

Important learning from this research is to embrace a collective relational leadership style and within this, look for ways to develop new leaders within the social enterprises. This includes encouraging staff and volunteers to help shape the organisation, share their gifts, talents, and passions. This will help the organisation to become a place of belonging and empowerment, where participants are not just included but feel they can contribute and will be missed when not there. The final learning was that the creation of a social enterprises takes time and adaptation therefore permission must be given for experimentation and risk taking.

10.2 Christian social enterprises: a re-engagement with a radical asset-based praxis

'There is no alternative' was a slogan adopted by Margaret Thatcher to defend free market neoliberalism, spending cuts, and a rollback of the welfare state. However, as set out in Chapter 3.3, this blind belief in the lack of any alternatives has resulted once again in mean and violent times (Cooper & Whyte, 2017; Cloke, May & Williams, 2017). The last fourteen years has seen two major crises inflicted upon marginalised communities, austerity and latterly COVID-19. As discussed in the introduction, crises are moments that have potential to fuel social imagination as people will ask not for a return to normal, but for something different and better (Mulgan, 2020). There is a search for alternatives within the current economic, social and political system.

As a community development practitioner, I became aware of this search for alternatives at an event I facilitated in Gateshead in July 2018 *Reimagining Church Social Action; The Role of Social Enterprise*. Participants from churches and faith-based organisations in the North East of England took part in round table discussions and affirmed anecdotal evidence; there was a growing interest in alternative solutions in the form of social enterprise.

This interest in alternative solutions grew out of a concern for maintaining income for social action, as was predicted by Dinham back in 2007.

Jaded by the never-ending cycle of struggling to find next year's funding whilst at the same time plan for the long term...Social Enterprise can seem like an attractive option where it promises a constant stream of income. (Dinham, 2007a: 12)

However, this research has shown that the promise of a constant stream of income was not the motivation behind the social enterprises in this research, which emerged as more radical than reformist.

The key findings from this research were:

- The social enterprises provided an alternative to the predominant amelioratory, charitable approach. To varying degrees, they encompassed a more radical community practice as they moved beyond responding to the symptoms of austerity and aimed to challenge some of the root causes.
- An asset-based approach to community engagement aimed to provide spaces of belonging, reciprocity, and empowerment.
- The beliefs and values that emerged in these organisations were described as arising from the Christian tradition. While not exclusively Christian, they differ from the beliefs and values associated with a charitable approach.
- In most of the research settings there remained a reliance on a hybrid model of income generation comprising grants, charitable giving, and earned income. The social enterprises did not provide a solution to income challenges.

I now return to the three questions posed by reflections in Chapter 2.2.1 to determine how successful the social enterprises in this research were at tackling injustice, how radical they were. Did social enterprises help distributive justice? Did they allow individuals freedom to develop their capabilities? Finally, did they provide spaces where relationships are restored, and power balances reshaped? It could be argued that to varying degrees all the social enterprises were tackling injustice within the current social, economic and political system. For example, Clean for Good was tackling income inequality, allowing employees the freedom to develop their capabilities and restoring power imbalances within the workplace. Listen Threads and Milton Keynes Christian Foundation were providing freedom for young people to

develop the things they valued doing. Finally, by providing places of belonging for all the community, Shildon Alive, ReFuse and The Beehive were restoring relationships and rebalancing power.

These social enterprises were being established in response to the failure of the state or the market to care for people, places, and things. Research participants had moved away from a dominant amelioratory approach currently so embedded in Christian social action, and while there were aspects of the one-way charitable gift (Barclay, 2017), this was not the dominant approach, for example the free food available at Shildon Alive and ReFuse, this was not the dominant approach.

These social enterprises were radical in that they were seeking to subvert the logic of the free market (Ridley-Duff & Bull, 2011). This radical stance to community development saw the practitioners moving beyond the symptoms to the root causes of the issue (Ledwith, 2011). This radical approach to social action is part of our Christian mission as defined in the Anglican fourth mark of mission 'to seek to transform unjust structures of society' (Anglican Communion Office, 2020).

A practitioner and action research approach was adopted for this research, with the aim of producing knowledge for 'organisational and community empowerment' (Herr & Anderson, 2005: 1). In Chapter 2.1, Heikkinen, de Jong and Vanderlinde's (2016) five principles for the validation of action research were set out. Firstly, the principle of historic continuity which recognises the evolution of the practice. As noted in Chapter 4.6, social enterprises are historically linked to Christian practices and, rather than engaging with social enterprise as a new organisational model, activities that nowadays would be described as social enterprises have been evident since the sixteenth century and were part of a Christian response to need (Macdonald & Howorth, 2018). Christians have a history of engaging in the market for social

good, through the Fairtrade movement, co-operatives and credit unions (Anderson, 2015; Jones, 2008; Simmons & Birchall, 2008). The second principle for validation is that of reflexivity, which has been evident throughout the research and writing-up process. Opportunities have been provided for research participants to reflect collectively (Chapter 2.3.2) and through the open-ended in-depth interviews (Chapter 2.3.1). The third principle concerns dialectics, which recognise the social construction of knowledge. As this research has been situated in 'the swampy lowlands' of practice (Schön, 1983), careful consideration has been given to the use and inclusion of voices. The research process has been inductive and relied upon different voices and interpretations and values the co-creation of meaning/understanding. The setting for gathering data from different voices has been from Christian social entrepreneurs primarily based in England. A limitation of this research is that while it includes data from a Scottish social entrepreneur it does not include data from Wales or Northern Ireland. Further research including voices from different Christian and faith backgrounds is also needed.

The fourth principle is evocation. Has the research made people think differently? The final principle is workability. Has the research been useful and made change? These last two principles are more difficult to quantify at present, however the model created from this grounded research will provide a tool to assist evocation and workability. I am working with two further projects in the North East as they explore creating a social enterprise. The aim is to use this research to help Christian practitioners to think differently and make change, therefore, the extent of evocation and workability will become apparent over time.

In 2007, before recessions, pandemics, and Brexit, Dinham asked whether there was a place for faith-based social enterprise? (Dinham, 2007a). After three years of listening to and working with practitioners, I would conclude that social enterprises can provide a framework that has potential to enrich Christian social action, through a radical asset-based praxis.

Atherton (1992) argues that the market economy poses one of the greatest challenges to Christianity, yet we should be encouraged to engage in our market economy with the aim of making it more equitable and fairer. Living in a society where growing numbers of people are finding themselves marginalised, separated from the ability to participate in society with its values of individualism, self-interest, and efficiency, the market is seen as a cause of, rather than a solution to, marginalisation. However, this research has concluded that the world of business is a space where Christian communities could, and should, engage, and social enterprise is one route to achieve this. Our faith traditions and the commonality of work provide a deep solidarity for action (Rieger & Henkel-Rieger, 2016). The values, beliefs, and attitudes that are rooted in faith have shaped these social enterprises to provide countercultural businesses.

This research is situated within a rapidly shifting context. I began from a critical community development perspective, as a practitioner who was exploring more empowering, inclusive, justice-centred approaches to Christian social action in our communities. The end point for this research is to provide a social imaginary for more innovative responses in a post-pandemic country (Mulgan, 2020).

This research promotes reframing the conversation about social enterprise in terms of a re-engagement with a radical practice. This radical praxis was combined with an asset-based approach. The social enterprises were established to provide places where community members talents, knowledge or passion were shared.

As set out in the introduction, this research has been the product of my anger and a hopeful imagination for an alternative to the violence of austerity in my communities. This sweatshirt,

produced by the young women at Listen Threads, is my uniform in social enterprise settings. As a Christian community development practitioner who aims to 'Inspire Hope', this research concludes that social enterprise can offer one route to achieve this and should be engaged with as an alternative model of Christian social action to the dominant charitable approach.



Figure 26. Listen Threads Sweatshirt, 'Inspire Hope'

Chapter 11. Appendices

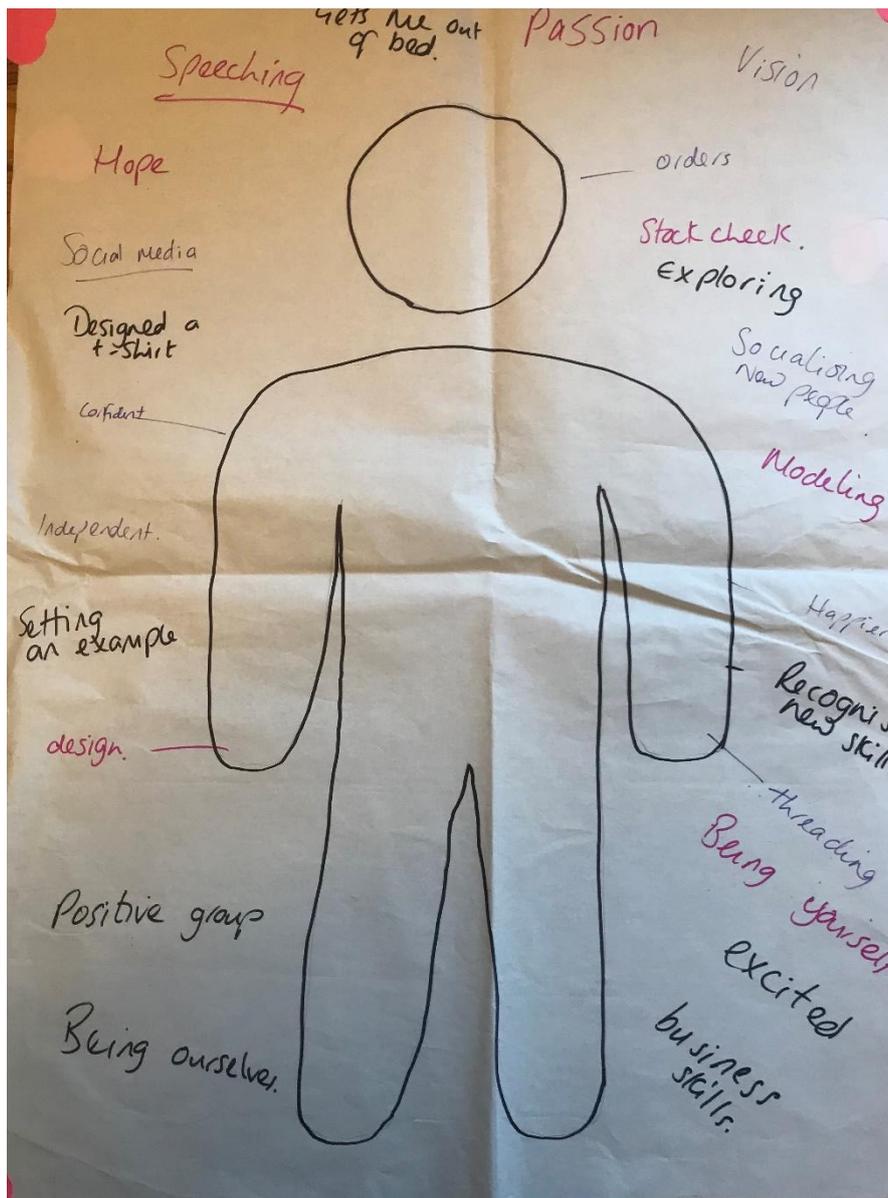
11.1 Appendix 1. Agenda for 'Reimagining Church in Action'

Event

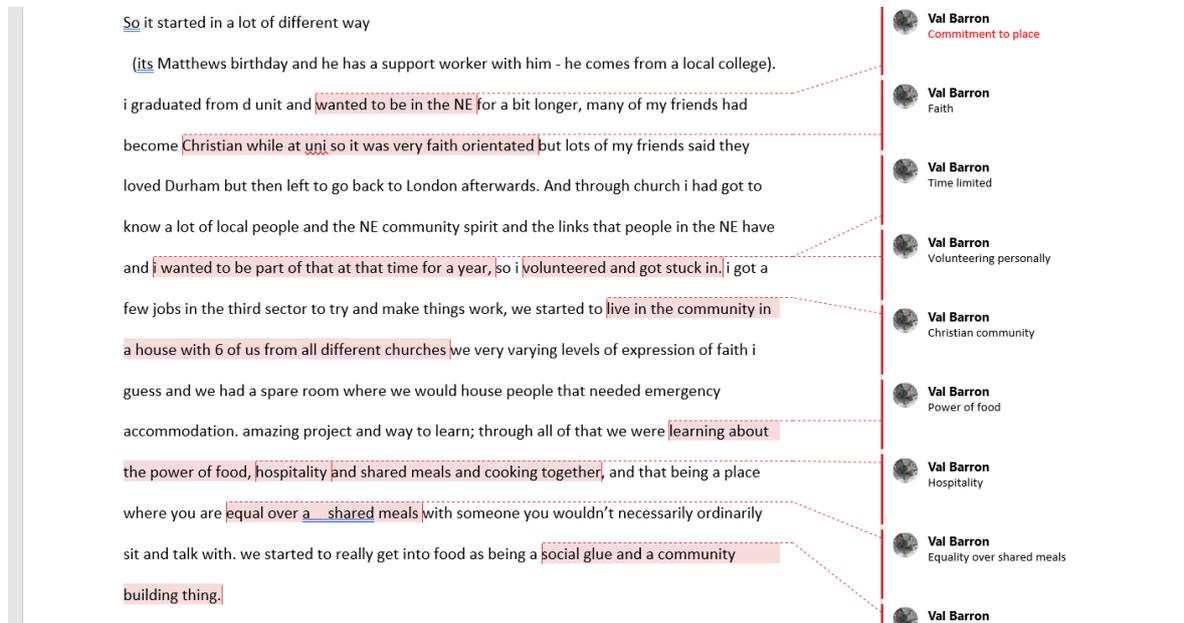
10.00	Welcome	
10.05	Charity or Reciprocity? Some biblical resources What are the issues we experience working with a one-way gift model?	Prof John Barclay
10.45	Social Enterprise? How can things be different What are the advantages or barriers to this approach?	Kate Welch OBE
11.30	Making our Economy more kingdom shaped How do we shape the public debate locally?	Prof Chris Baker
12.10	Local Examples of Christian Social Enterprises	REfUSE
12.30	Lunch provide by REfUSE	
13.00	Reimagining Church in action How can the stories we have heard relate to our context?	Val Barron
13.20	For the good of the region? How can the church can exist for its community, when busy, vulnerable and small?	The Ven Peter Robinson
13.50	Closing Comments	Canon Sheila Bamber

11.2 Appendix 2. Focus group data from Listen Threads

'What do you get from being part of Listen Threads Social Enterprise?'



11.3 Appendix 3. Example of Vivo, Process Coding, and Values Coding (Salanda, 2016)



11.4 Appendix 4. Example of memo taking from Shildon Alive.

28 August 2019.

Memo

29.8.19 - Second day of take away.
 Shildon - first day of supermarket.

Paula - fears - concerned about reception at high street - has relationships in local shops but others have complained on FB re taking business away: "Do you think it will work?"

Cherishly support
Anxiety - wants community to know open for all not just "the poor"

charity v. enterprise
 Sponsor family scheme - voucher to spend in supermarket.
 community bridge / party = giving + free food for donations (used white there)

local
Experienced - big
Keen to plan for future
 Dan = local passionate about food poverty as experienced it when he was 17 (used food bank) local relationships mean he can drop excess "Groggs" products off with those he knows
 Has to be creative as unsure of food waste getting.
 Some perhaps frozen for food bank

Dream in six months to be sustainable in kitchen to make enough profit to employ other than community + train. Particularly passionate about giving young people opportunities/skills as his experience was someone taking a gamble on him

Young people volunteering - learning food hygiene customer service skills. Didn't want to go back

11.5 Appendix 5. Information sheet: example from practitioner gathering

GOLDSMITHS University of London

Department of Department of Social, Therapeutic and Community Studies (StaCS)

Participation Information

Title of Study. What is the role for Social Enterprises in Church Social Action?

Invitation.

I am conducting research into social enterprises and their role in church social action and would like you to take part. Before you agree it is important that you understand why I am doing this research and what is involved. Please read this, discuss with others if you wish and feel free to ask any questions you may have. Take time thinking about whether you want to take part. Thank you.

Why am I doing this study?

Over the last ten years churches, along with other faith groups have been doing much more to support people in their communities, including foodbanks, drop-ins, holiday clubs etc. This has been largely funded by donations and grants. Social Enterprises are a business that generate income in order to do social good and a model that many charities are adopting. I am doing this research to ask how social enterprises can support church social action.

Why have I asked you?

I am asking all participants attending a practitioner event on 19th November 2019 at Houghton-le-Spring Sunderland.

Do you have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Audio recordings, notes and photos will be taken during the Practitioner Event on 19th November 2019

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There is no known risk in participating in this project. You should only share what you want to and not feel that you have to discuss anything you don't feel comfortable sharing. If, for any

reason, you feel upset or in need of support at any time in the process, please let me know or contact your project lead the we will signpost you to the support services available.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

We hope that participating in the study will be a positive experience in that we will be helping to answer a question that many churches are exploring across the UK. The research will help to provide support and resources for other church-based projects that are considering a social enterprise as part of their social action.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential by anonymising individual and project details unless you give permission to use your details and project details in the research. If you give permission, you will be sent the relevant section of research before publication to ensure the content is accurate; you will have the opportunity to discuss content.

If you would prefer not to be identified any information about you which is used will have your name and project removed so that you cannot be recognised from it.

Audio recordings will be transcribed with any information that could identify you removed.

All data will be stored, analysed and reported in compliance with the Data Protection Act.

All data will be destroyed at the end of the project.

However, if any information is disclosed that someone may be at risk, we are legally required to report this to an appropriate authority.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research will form part of my postgraduate thesis which will be completed in Autumn 2020. You will be offered the opportunity to look over the relevant chapter before completion and copy of the thesis after submission.

Thank you.

This research has been approved by Department of Department of Social, Therapeutic and Community Studies (StaCS) at Goldsmiths University of London

You will be given a copy of this information sheet and a signed consent form to keep.

Contacts for further information

11.6 Appendix 6. Consent form

Department of Social, Therapeutic and Community Studies (STACS)

Goldsmiths, University of London

New Cross

London SE14 6NW

Phone: +44 (0)20 7919 7201

Email: stacs (@gold.ac.uk)

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Is there a role for Social Enterprises in Church Social Action?

Please read the Participant Information Sheet and take time to consider whether you would like to participate. Please ask me any questions you may have and if you are willing to take part please complete this consent form.

Thank you.

Val Barron

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet datedfor the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I agree that this form that bears my name and signature may be seen by a designated auditor.
4. I agree that my identity will be protected at all times (my name or the name of the project will not be used unless I give permission).
5. I agree to take part in the above study.

11.7 Appendix 7: Practitioner Gathering in Sunderland



Chapter 12. References

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