

Postsecular Planning? The idea of Municipal Spirituality.

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In the contemporary political context, religion is rarely out of the news, usually postulated as a regressive force, battling against modern, liberal Western values. However, in everyday life, and specifically with regards to place value, the situation is more complex. This paper addresses the challenge this context and the attendant notion of postsecularism bring to planning practice. It argues that religious and spiritual values can be rearticulated as concepts which add a substantive positive dimension to planning and its conceptualisation and constructions of place. This is done by developing the notion of municipal spirituality, which draws on the theological conceptions of transcendence and the common good to redefine the value of places whose worth cannot easily be made in instrumental terms. In so doing, it challenges the current antagonistic opposition of religious and liberal democratic values, repositioning religious and spiritual concepts in an inclusive way. The idea of municipal spirituality illustrates how planning could have a role in defending and promoting such places. Further, it demonstrates the importance of engaging in agonistic rather than antagonistic debate, rearticulating the criteria on which places can be valued by planning practice.

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Introduction: planning for sacred space?

From issues of war, terrorism and geopolitics, to concerns over school governance and social care provision, debates about the relative merits or threats of religion dominate contemporary public debate. More broadly, this is framed as a result of the 'clash of cultures'; the 'civilised', 'enlightened', 'rational', secular West versus the 'primitive', 'superstitious', 'dangerous' religious East: in particular, casting Islam as a dangerous anachronistic threat to the shared values of liberty and democracy, drawing on centuries of colonial prejudice and the continued importance of orientalist frames of references within contemporary society (Mishra, 2015). The implications of this are far-reaching. On the global stage, religion is cast as the villain across the right and left of the political spectrum: immigrants with 'their' foreign cultures and practices, threatening cherished ways of European life, or repressive theocrats with neo-mediaeval views on free speech, sexuality and gender roles. This polarising debate allows little room for alternative interpretations: you are either a secularist or an enemy of democracy and freedom, a progressive or religious. The logic argues that accepting any form of religious credence is tantamount to an acceptance of anything which is done in the name of a faith.

However, this polemicized positioning bears little relation to the role of religion and spirituality in everyday life; "(t)he public resurgence of religion is clearly one of the defining features of this century"(Beaumont & Baker, 2011, p5). The role of religion in the West, and simplistic claims of secularisation have long been contended by sociologists of religion (Davie, 1994, Woodhead and Catto, 2012, Heelas and Woodhead, 2005). They argue that the picture is much more nuanced than a linear progression from religious to secular, with patterns of faith, practice and belief increasing in diversity and pluralism rather than simply diminishing. Specifically in the UK, a recent report for the think-tank Theos suggested that

spirituality plays an important role in the majority of people's lives. Countering assumptions based on statistics of declining church attendance, it stated that 77% of adults agreed with the statement 'there are things in life that we cannot simply explain through science or any other means', whereas only 13% believed that 'humans are purely material beings with no spiritual element' (Theos, 2013). This neatly summarises the larger sociological trends to belie the either/or polemic expressed above: some sort of extra-rational understanding comprises a key part of the majority of peoples' lives, even if not expressed in terms of conventional religion. Moreover, when examined more deeply, there is a paradox at the heart of these antagonistic positions: 'in fighting religion, they [atheists] are compelled to forsake freedom itself, thus sacrificing precisely that which they wanted to defend...how many fanatical defenders of religion started with ferociously attacking the contemporary secular culture and ended up forsaking religion itself'(Zizek, 2005, p53-4). Secularism is not merely an observation of a supposed decline of religion, it is "a counter-ideology"(Woodhead, 2012, p4). To reframe this debate, it is useful to return to the difference between agonistic and antagonistic difference in political discourse (Mouffe, 2005). The divide between religion and secularism in the 'clash of civilisations' terminology explained above is conceived as two mutually incompatible world views whose ultimate aim is the annihilation of the other one: so conceived there is limited possibility to get beyond the status quo. However, attempting to rearticulate the issues which are at stake, and redraw the lines of debate on a basis of agonistic politics offers the possibility of change. It offers an alternative to a situation of post-political consensus (Mouffe, 2005, Metzger et al, 2015), with this attendant assumption of an 'end of history' with the secular west as the pinnacle of progress (Petrella, 2012, Watson, 2006). Instead, it potentially facilitates the readmission of religion as a valid aspect of contemporary democratic society, on the basis of a rearticulation of faith and spirituality as something which can be inclusive,

empowering and can present an alternative to the nihilistic tendencies of modern capitalism, and something not exclusively for members of established religions (Critchely, 2012). It can offer a different way of engaging with people and places which, drawing on feminist arguments, aims to “produce inclusive alternatives to humanist individualism and uncritical secularism”(Braidotti, 2008, p8), seeing feminist thought’s long-standing wrangling with the nature of (enlightenment) subject-hood (Scott, 1996) as opening up non-secular standpoints. Moreover, it begins to answer the call that “(a) new common space has to be negotiated” (Mishra, 2015 no pg number), one which specifically goes beyond the dualistic antagonistic positions of religion and liberal democracy.

This paper presents the challenges for planning in this context. It argues that planning policy making, as well as planning research, needs to be able to accommodate spiritual and religious¹ values *beyond* provision of places of worship, and explores the implications this has for developing towns and cities. Specifically, it needs to develop a vocabulary to allow for the protection of places without clear instrumental values, which nonetheless are emotionally meaningful to people, as they allow for connections to something beyond material existence. It reaffirms a civic, collective role in doing this as part of the promotion of the common good (Cruddas, 2015). In so doing, it argues that it is possible for planning to be strengthened, and to throw off “the narrow-minded horizon of possibility set by modernity” (Cloke and Beaumont, 2012, p42) and engage with places in a non-instrumental,

¹ There is not the scope within this paper to enter debates about the difference between ‘religion’ and ‘spirituality’ (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005, Zinnerbauer et al 1997). The terms will here be used interchangeably to illustrate a continuum of ideas about the non-material, sacred and transcendent, rather than allowing the term ‘religion’ to privilege established, organised global belief systems, and the term ‘spiritual’ to mean anything non-secular outside of this. Moreover, each term tends to alienate a different set of readers who subscribe to their own understanding of that term. This is a problematic oversimplification which fits into the dualistic divide which this paper seeks to unsettle.

non-economic way. The paper explores this possibility by developing the idea of municipal spirituality. This is a language of public sacredness; articulating a transcendent sense of place attachment which planning does not currently have; an explicit vocabulary to give presence to.

To do this, the paper first draws on literature about 'postsecular cities' to outline the spatial implications of the 'rediscovery' of religiosity and spirituality. This goes beyond simply arguing that religious people should be included in policy debates, or that planning should provide places of worship. It demonstrates that spiritual and theological notions can challenge our preconceived frames of reference. The argument is that postsecular values unsettle the established instrumental order of policy-making and reason (Tse, 2013, Sandercock and Senbel, 2011, Braidotti, 2008, Ward, 2001) challenging neo-liberal claims to hegemony and the negative influence this has on cities. These ideas are then informed and theoretically grounded by debates from theological literature which considers the interface of theology and society, and its implications for (post) modern (neo) liberalism (Ward, 2001, Millbank, 2006, 2015, Cavanaugh, 1999). It is on this foundation that the idea of municipal spirituality is developed. By challenging the existing dualistic structures of religion and secularism, it offers a new possibility to challenge the dominance of instrumental rationality and economically productive space, or the hegemony of neoliberalism in city development. It does so in a way which goes beyond any one established religion or belief structure, legitimising planning to defend places which support the wholeness of quality of life (McClymont, 2014), articulating spiritual values as open to all, not just 'official' believers, locating them beyond just designated places of worship

To illustrate the implications of these ideas in practice, the paper presents three examples in which the notion of municipal spirituality could provide this language of public sacredness. These are an empirical study into the role of cemeteries in contemporary cities, debates about the designation of Assets of Community Value, and reflections on valuing nature. These three examples illustrate different ways in which religious or spiritual values permeate and structure people's relationship with, and meanings and interpretations, of places.

The Challenges of Postsecularism

Postsecularism "is not a matter of simply turning back the clock or simply opening ourselves up anew to the all-embracing joys of the religious life" (McLennan, 2011, p15), neither is it an absolute rejection of the secular, nor a call to theocracy. It is a broad challenge to the assumption that religion ever became superfluous to society as a whole, and that spiritual values were merely an anachronistic minority interest soon to wither away. From this stems much debate about the continuing and changing influence of religion and theological thinking in contemporary places (for example Kong, 2010, Cloke and Beaumont, 2012, Baker and Beaumont, 2011, and Tse, 2013). This section outlines some of the key challenges to planning raised by the notion of postsecularism.

There is not one agreed-upon definition of postsecularism, as there is little agreement about the meaning of secularism (McLennan, 2010, Cloke and Beaumont, 2012). Secularism can be defined as the reduced influence of religion in society, the disengagement of religion from political decision-making, or a temporal distinction between that which is eternal, and that which is confined to this age: *the secular*. Further, secularism is at times viewed as something geographically contained within Europe, and something that operates at societal, organisational and individual scales. Despite these different approaches to secularism, it is

still possible to argue for the importance of an appreciation of the challenges of the postsecular. This is summarised clearly by Cloke and Beaumont (2012) who argue that postsecularism encompasses “how public consciousness is changing as an adjustment to the continued existence of religious communities in a supposedly secularized societal setting” (p36). For the purposes of this paper, postsecularism therefore encompasses a rejection of the idea that places and policies can be completely free of religious or spiritual values, or that these sorts of values hold no meaning in contemporary planned spaces beyond specific places of worship. Further, the assumed divide between sacred and secular is not absolute, rather it is something to be studied to explore how it is constantly (re)constructed, defended, and performed.

Crucially, postsecularism no longer constrains religion to ‘places of worship’, instead it transgresses simple designations of place-use or identity, making explicit that ‘grounded theology’ (Tse, 2013), or religious understandings, can be present in all settings (Knott, 2005). On this basis, religion can no longer simply be seen (or more aptly, discarded) as a private hobby contained and maintained within individuals. It is a part of public space, and something not easily categorised or contained (Petrella, 2012). This further challenges the established divide between irrational pre-modern religion and rational modern secularism; these categories are simply more fluid than this implies. By accepting the presence of religious and/or spiritual interpretations, fundamentally different understandings of places are rendered possible, modernity’s metanarratives and epistemological conceptions are unsettled, as are its constructions of difference. “The secular gaze is thus seen to focus on the visible and fails to discern the possibilities of the invisible in whatever form” (Cloke and Beaumont, 2012, p39). It is with this ‘invisible’ which planning needs to engage if it is to meet the challenges of postsecularism. Sandercock and Senbel describe this as ‘a radical practice of connecting with awe’ (2011, p88). They go on to argue that a (re)engagement

with spirituality has the potential to transform planning practices, engaging practitioners with a different set of values in decision making; seeing planning itself as “the work of organizing hope”(Sandercock and Senbel, 2011, p87), something necessarily connected to a concept of ‘better’, or desire for different futures. They define spirituality as that which engages with values beyond secular humanism, and connects individuals to a wider sense of being, or of community, as “connecting to other people, and connecting to the natural world”(Sandercock and Senbel, 2011, p88); something beyond the rationally perceivable world, fundamental to meaningful human existence. The idea of municipal spirituality draws on this to articulate and defend these values within planning.

These debates open up the notion of spirituality and its importance in planning beyond church, mosque, synagogue or temple goes: beyond established ‘faith communities’. Postsecular planning therefore is different from engaging with ‘faith communities’ on two grounds. Firstly, it is open to all regardless of designated identity; you do not have to be an active part of any established religious community for it to be meaningful to you. It offers a different understanding of human experience, an engagement with values such as ‘beauty’ and ‘awe’ cannot be expressed instrumentally. It is this intangible sense of transcendent value which municipal spirituality aims to articulate, supported by the claim ‘that although Britain is less formally and explicitly religious as a nation, it is not less spiritual ’(Theos, 2013, p25). Spiritual values do not have to be tied to explicitly articulated or established religious identities. Moreover, they do not have to be dismissed as lesser, because they do not subscribe to an official doctrine: postsecular discourse deliberately challenges these dualistic assumptions and static ascribed identities. Secondly, spirituality in planning deals primarily with places not people. It deals with the public implications of postsecularism; crucially here the idea that religion or spirituality is not something which can be separated away from a rational, secular order in which public space is found. Instead of seeing

religion as attached to certain specific people, spirituality or sacredness is an aspect potentially present in places (Sheldrake, 2001), at times liminal and inexact, but still something which planning could engage with more fully, or even promote. These two aspects- spirituality as inclusive and nuanced, and as something accessed and located spatially- provide the necessary conceptual space for the notion of municipal spirituality which the paper goes on to outline.

Planning and Religion

Currently, however, religion in planning is viewed largely as a facet of diversity and identity, as Gale (2008) aptly puts: “an under-theorised epiphenomenon of ethnicity” (p19). Research mostly covers issues over planning permission for places of worship for faiths other than Christianity (Eade, 2011, Gale and Naylor, 2002) and how religious identities contribute to, and are used, in regeneration and other public participation events and strategies (Dinham et al, 2009, Lowndes and Dinham, 2008, Dinham, 2011). There is nothing in itself wrong with this approach, however, it only goes as far as acknowledging formal ‘religion’; be it as a social category that can be quantified in the form of ‘diversity’ monitoring, or a group which needs or wants a particular building as a place of worship. It does not account for the diverse and unspecified spiritual needs of a wider population, nor does it see how postsecular values can challenge some of the categories it uses. Arguments relating to different values are hinted at in Baker’s (2009) discussion of ‘blurred boundaries’, which draws on notions of religious and spiritual capital. He outlines issues surrounding different meanings of the term ‘regeneration’, stating “the frameworks of political discourse and funding opportunities were not established to allow them [religious groups involved in community regeneration] to express these spiritual and religious aspirations” (p107). Although faith groups were seen as important in regeneration, the

difference in language between them and the funders and policy makers often caused both practical and conceptual problems. This may be based on conflicting underlying rationalities, “(o)ne of the persistently stubborn assumptions of much of recent urban theory and policy seems to be that *religion is external, incidental or peripheral* to the discussion of urban modernity or civic futures” (Hancock and Srinivas, 2008; p620, emphasis added). When planning and urban policy are seen as part of the project of uncritical modernity, there can be little or no room for religious, spiritual or even non-instrumental interpretations of space, linking back to the problematic antagonistic positioning of the secular against the religious.

Further, Gale’s (2008) discussion of the differing way the Muslim community in Birmingham and the local planning authority saw what was deemed appropriate in residential space further demonstrates these issues. Spiritual, or non-instrumental, attachment to, and interpretation of, place is not something that can be easily captured in the idea of a ‘place of worship’. It is something beyond easy categorisation, and could change the whole interpretation, use and management of a location. As Gale (2008) argues “the legislative positioning of the planning system enables planning authorities to confer legitimacy upon one or another use of space, in practice their power to do so is far more relative than a more formal, idealised conception of law would have us believe”(p36). Planning at present only uses an instrumental understanding of religion, one which sees faith and spirituality only in the narrow terms of established organised religion, and the institutional practices pertaining to this. Together, these issues begin to illustrate the need for a wider, more inclusive language of public sacredness which this paper articulates as municipal spirituality.

The notion of postsecularism allows for a less narrow definition of religion which reasserts the possibility of spiritual and religious values *beyond* places of worship, *beyond* privatised individual practice, dissolving the absolute divide between religion and secularism, ready for their rearticulation. As yet, planning is not equipped with a discourse or system to deal with this. This is what the next sections begin to outline.

Theology, Rationality and Spiritual Spaces

To face the challenges of postsecularism, this paper presents the idea of municipal spirituality as a vocabulary for planning to express broader spiritual values of places and spaces, and defend spaces and places which have unacknowledged spiritual value. This concept draws on ideas from contemporary theology that challenge the tenets of liberal (post)modernity from a religious standpoint. Within planning, many authors (Flyvbjerg, 1998, Sandercock, 1998) have usefully critiqued the rationality and modernist assumptions of planning practice. However, to fully embrace the challenge of the postsecular, it is useful to engage with theological arguments which axiomatically engage with the world from a religious point of view. The following discussion highlights how a different epistemological basis for understanding space and planning can be created. These arguments deepen the understanding of spirituality discussed in the previous section to articulate a challenge to the dominance of modernist instrumental thinking complimentary to the broader thrust of counter-hegemonic theorising of the politics of hope (Purcell, 2013, Peck et al 2013). These theologically grounded insights are then used to begin to develop an *inclusive* language of transcendence and the common good; one which embraces the 87% who do not think humans are purely material beings with no spiritual element (Theos, 2013), linking to ideas of 'folk' or vernacular religion (Maddrell, 2013, Primiano, 1995). Such practices, centring

around the lived experiences of religion, are different from 'official', formally recognised, religion. They aim to do "justice to the variety of manifestations and perspectives found within past and present human religiosity" (Primiano, 1995, p42) rather than set up a specific dogmatic definition of religion, which by its nature would be both exclusive and something more easily categorisable, or rejected as counter to liberal rational modernity. By drawing on these ideas to define religion and spirituality beyond active attendance of a place of worship, or membership of an organisation, it is possible to link the theoretical insights of theological arguments to a wider population.

Theologians, like most academics from any given discipline, have 'fundamental differences about what theology is, what modernity is, what Christianity is, and which questions within these areas are to be given priority'(Ford, 1997, p1). Therefore it is as incomplete or generic to talk about what 'theology' is as it is to talk about 'sociology', or 'geography', or even 'planning'. In his comprehensive overview of modern theology, Ford (1997) presents a five-point spectrum between a neo-mediaeval world view in which there is no divide between religion and society, and a liberal secular world order in which religion as a private practice is tolerated. This paper will draw predominantly on works which are classified under the definition 'radically orthodox', at point two of Ford's scale² as they offer the most complete challenge to liberal, secular values and frames of reference (Davis et al 2005, Milbank et al, 1999, Milbank, 2006). Further, the rejection of the tenets of modernism are based on similar post-structural principles to the post foundationalist thought underpinning the aims of

² Writings classified outside of this category are not without use or interest. For example, the works of many Liberation Theologians illustrate how politicised interpretations of Catholic Social Teaching can be put into practice to challenge oppression and poverty, especially in the global south (Bennett & Gowler, 2012, Kirwan, 2012). Further, the paper does not claim to either provide a comprehensive overview of radically orthodox thought, nor to draw exclusively on work fitting this cannon. However, the fundamental benefit of engaging with theological thought is fulfilled in radical orthodoxy's conceptually compelling challenge to contemporary rationalist neoliberalism and/or nihilistic tendencies in postmodern thought.

rearticulation in this paper (Mouffe, 2005, Ranciere, 2001, Laclau & Mouffe, 1983, Metzger et al, 2015): a denial of the possibility of arriving at fixed, definitive meaning within language and society (Grange, 2015). This perspective provides a broad philosophical framework in which to see the potential benefits of ideas of transcendence and the common good, core aspects of municipal spirituality.

Teasingly paradoxical in name, radically orthodox theology offers a dual challenge to liberal modernist assumptions. On the one hand, it presents a re-engagement with pre-modern Christianity and its 'disrecognition' of dualistic divides such as reason and belief, sacred and secular. On the other hand, it offers a critique of the nihilistic tendencies of (post)modernity, and a radical reappraisal of many of Christianity's traditions. Modernity, it is argued, attempts to remove "(t)he hidden, the spiritual, the mystical" (Ward, 2001 p508), denying the possibility of the transcendent: that which is beyond the everyday, material world in which we live, echoing Sandercock and Senbal's (2011) definitions. This logic of modernity therefore makes all things, and places, potentially instrumental or productive. By losing the idea of something beyond the material world, we enter a soulless materialism (Milbank et al 1999) in which everything can be rendered instrumental and potentially profitable, as Cavanaugh, echoing Harvey's (1996) concerns over global capital, argues; "(t)he domination of space becomes detached from any particular localities and becomes a matter of the abstract and universal potentiality of any space to produce profit'(1999, p186). This means that by losing the possibility of transcendence everywhere, or specifically outside of designated places of worship, instrumental and economic rationality can be the guiding universal value everywhere. If there is nothing beyond the material, everything-and-everywhere can be commodified,. Conversely, by claiming the possibility of transcendence everywhere, different values are universally accessible. It is this philosophical challenge - the insuppressible ubiquity of the religious - which distances

radical orthodoxy from other theologians' claims who position their arguments within the constructs and ontology of (post) modern liberalism; and what makes it so appealing as a means of underpinning a critique of the modern hegemony of neoliberal capitalism.

Moreover, this further illustrates the inadequacies of current policy approaches' focus on engaging with 'faith groups' (cf Baker, 2009), and the lack of ability of planning to recognise and define a non-categorical interpretation of religion. For radical orthodoxy, religious groups or persons do not need a seat at the table: the purpose of the 'table' itself is thrown into question. As Ward states 'Christians seek not a space for belief, but allow a practicing belief to produce a space' (Ward, 2001 p514). This is an ontological challenge to secularism, based on a belief that 'there is an objectively right way to be human, grounded beyond and above humanity, and not simply beneath or within it' (Milbank, 2006, p328), or put in another way, there is more to life than material existence, and this 'beyond' informs values and guides (ethical) behaviour. Questions of the substance of this are beyond the scope of this paper, and outside the definition of municipal spirituality: it is the *potential* that it offers as a conceptual possibility: one that opens up a very different space of ethical engagement, which is important here.

For the purpose of this paper, and its aim to develop the idea of municipal spirituality as an inclusive way which planning may engage in the postsecular, two theological concepts are key. These are transcendence and the common good. In short, transcendence is that which is beyond everyday material existence. However, this is not a 'beyond' which is removed and therefore temporary and physically distinct from human existence. In Christian theology, this is explained by the doctrine of incarnation, or the human figure of Jesus. This makes the transcendent, or the divine, present within the material world, diffused within places and our understanding, interpretation and experience of them (Walton, 2015,

Sheldrake, 2001). The relationship of the material world and the divine that this presupposes offers an alternative vision of shared humanity. Cavanaugh (1999) uses this basis to challenge the notion of unity as sameness which is inherent in rational economic concepts of globalisation. He argues that the Catholic notion of Eucharist (communion), through its conjunction of the divine and the material, enacts a version of shared humanity in all its particularity. Instead of reducing all space/place difference to one homogenous global market, it unites all people and places in their differences and specificities: brought together through shared ritual, underpinned by connection to the transcendent. This understanding of a core shared nature in otherness can be useful for a notion of politics that goes beyond exclusive Christian legitimacy. As Critchley, a non-religious political theorist, argues, 'an avowedly immanent conception of a political autonomy requires an appeal to transcends and heteronomy that appears to undermine it' (2012, p9). This means that a sense of transcendence can provide the conceptual glue to hold together a politics founded on notions of freedom and autonomy; it is where these notions come from, and how they can be understood. Specifically to this paper's argument, the presence (or latent presence) of the transcendent within places offers a different rationale for the value of that place. In practice, this could be a different way of valuing places than that in common usage today, seeing the city, in this frame of reference, as 'a multiplicity ordered, though not cancelled out, by unity' (Milbank, 2006 p338).

In turn, this notion of a space for shared values draws on ideas about the common good. Following the concomitant unity and difference of transcendence, questions of the common good ask how we translate our ontological/fundamental beliefs into a meaningful guide for social practice, or shared values. The common good has two aspects: firstly 'a common vision of the human end' (Gorringe, 2011, p40) and secondly, 'the good of being a community or society at all' (Mulligan, 2010, p391). The first raises questions of, or opens a

space for debates about, what a good, or virtuous life looks like (MacIntyre, 1985 Sandal, 2009), linking back to Milbank's (2006) claims of transcendence opening up ethical spaces, discussed earlier. Moreover, it is necessary that these questions are of public importance, not just for private choice. The notion of municipal spirituality supposes a need for ethical engagement, it does not, however, prejudge what this substantively looks like. Secondly, it sees community - of being together in difference, as something good in itself. However, the good of being a community, and striving for a virtuous life, are not meaningful without a sense of the transcendental. A worldly or temporal community may strive for the good, or a sort of utopia, but as an end point, this is always impossible because of the impossibility of total equality - including that of meaning (Schallenberg, 2010). Difference is how we understand the world, ourselves and others, but is never fixed once and for all (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), as Grange (2015, p570) explains "every subject position is a discursive position, no essential meaning is found either in the depths of the subject, or in society". It is only beyond material and discursive existence that fixed equal meaning can be achieved and hence, to aim for this sense of the good and of equality, it is necessary to have a transcendent referent (Critchley, 2012).

The transcendental highlights the simultaneously necessary and unachievable notion of utopia and eschatology. Without this, ethical action in the world proves challenging and reducible to market logics and amoral individualism (Critchley, 2012, Sandal, 2009) The unachieveability of utopia does not stop it being something worthy of striving for, moreover, the centrality of the common good, both in theology and in planning make it necessary.

Through this brief encounter with these theological concepts, and specifically the ideas of transcendence and the common good, a different conceptual framework of place value is

possible. To explore what the implication of this may be for planning, the paper now goes on to define its core idea: municipal spirituality.

Municipal Spirituality: a definition.

For planning to be able to deal with, or even benefit from, the context of postsecularism, and to access the theological critique outlined above, it needs to be able to express the implications of these ideas. By so doing, the paper aims to expand this beyond Christianity, beyond established, formal religion moreover. Current planning practice does not offer a vocabulary to defend or promote places which hold no explicit instrumental value, or more precisely, it cannot articulate the value of the aspect of places which fall outside of this sort of measurement. Because of this, debates are framed around ‘technical’ issues, seeing emotional, spiritual and moral values as beyond their scope (Thomas, 2014). This limits planning’s ability to promote human flourishing (McClymont, 2014), or to value common or universal interests above private ones.³ In the face of this, municipal spirituality offers an inclusive language of public sacredness, rather than rejecting religion as a privatised, under-theorised epiphenomenon of identity. Municipal spirituality describes (an aspect of) a place which allows access to the transcendental, and promotes the common good. The spiritual aspect of this is evident. The municipal part comes from the role of the public sector, state or civic institution in protecting and providing for an undefined and potentially unknown generic public (rather than a specific ‘faith’ community). In the act of this description, it

³ The debates around a Tesco development in Stokes Croft in Bristol demonstrate this vividly. Despite overwhelming, well-articulated community objection, on moral and emotional grounds, the attempts to ‘translate’ these into the sterile language of planning law failed, and the development went ahead. See <http://www.tescopoly.org/campaign/stokes-croft-bristol> and <https://notesco.wordpress.com/> for more details. This case is by no means unique.

names and values something which was previously hidden; unarticulated. It reframes the meaning of a place, countering the hegemonic dominance of instrumental rationality. A place of municipal spirituality gives access to the transcendent, a potentially counter-hegemonic way of being, an alternative set of values underpinned by shared humanity not economic growth. However, a place described as municipally spiritual does not have to be this alone. As illustrated in the examples that follow, places which offer municipal spirituality may have other functions, but this aspect of their being is currently unacknowledged because of planning's lack of postsecular vocabulary, in part stemming from the hegemonising articulation of religion and modernity/democracy as antithetical. This is problematic on two grounds. Firstly, if this aspect of a place remains unacknowledged, their management and future planning may well be flawed (McClymont, forthcoming) because that which is central to their value remains invisible. Municipal spirituality allows the spiritual aspects of a place, currently hidden, woven behind a more instrumental function, to be actively articulated. Without this, the full value of the place cannot be understood. Secondly, the ability to articulate municipal spirituality gives planning another way to challenge the negative impacts of the current dominant discourse of global neoliberalism.

The possibility of conceptualising municipal spirituality comes from the inversion of the liberal order suggested by radical orthodoxy; further it extends the reach of these inversions beyond Christianity to inclusive spiritual space following firstly Critchley's (2012) argument for the need for a transcendent reference for the legitimacy of modern politics. By legitimising places as spaces of municipal spirituality, planning is able to verbalise the value of spaces in which community, and the common good can be expressed and embodied, without the need for their worth to be expressed in economic, or materially functional terms. Planning's role in this as something institutionally above a

neighbourhood is what makes this municipal. It offers spaces for community and the common good, but is not interchangeable with them. On this basis, places of municipal spirituality have the possibility of creating “spaces of ethical identity” (Clope and Beaumont, 2012, p33): bringing issues of morals back into the public sphere, rather than uncritically allowing for community autonomy. By challenging the supremacy of instrumental rationality, judgements over what sort of developments should go ahead can be grounded in an alternative, ethical, framework (MacIntyre, 1985, Sandal, 2009, Watson, 2006).

Places of municipal spirituality are therefore places which allow and facilitate access to postsecular values, spaces with the potential for shared common value, for a purpose which is not commercial, educational, not for leisure, for heritage, for ecosystem service, or for any other practically functional purpose. Often, this may be something latent within a place, which by legitimisation and articulation can be brought to the fore. It allows for an explicit articulation in planning of places that matter to people. In the terms laid out earlier (Mouffe, 2005 Grange, 2015), it rearticulates the established social order which frames religion as a privatised, spatially constrained practice which necessarily follows an established doctrinal path. Religion, as claimed by radical orthodoxy, supersedes liberal modernist frames of reference, or liberal modernist ontology even: it is not something that can be just contained within it, conceptually or spatially. Municipal spirituality takes this position and applies it to place. Moreover, it is about the public implications of the transcendent, not the personal experience of faith. It does not deny that spiritual or religious experience can be extremely personal, and not accord with any more organised doctrines. Instead, it articulates space in which questions about what is ethical or ‘good’ can be raised which ‘helps us to retrieve a language around what it is to live a good life’ (Cruddas, 2015, p88). These are values which challenge an instrumental, neoliberal rationality precisely because they go beyond categorised notions of organised religion, because they are myriad and diverse yet united

by a rejection of the belief that the universe is made up of purely material, rational individuals. In so doing, the language of municipal spirituality transfigures previously sedimented boundaries, no longer leaving spiritual values stranded in places of worship, nor defined or owned by established religions.

The paper now turns to three examples which aim to illustrate how the notion municipal spirituality offers a radical inversion of established values and a useful tool for planning practice. These are cemeteries, assets of community value and nature. These examples offer different ways in which this concept can be employed, and demonstrate that spatial spiritual value goes far beyond official places of worship, and, vitally, that there is a role for planning to engage with in this debate. To claim a place provides for municipal spirituality, or has a value because of its municipal spirituality, it needs to offer that which is non-instrumental, has collective value and is not exclusive to any specific group. It may do several, other instrumental things as well, but the term municipal spirituality is a way of describing these qualities in a place, and defending their worth on this basis. The idea of municipal spirituality gives voice to values which, to many of their advocates, are not adequately defended in current planning practice. Municipal spirituality is precisely not a 'one size fits all' quantitative assessment tool. It is an alternative non-instrumental way of defining place value. The following sections offer tentative examples of how this may be put into practice.

Municipal Spirituality in Practice: cemeteries, community assets and nature

Cemeteries

This section draws on research comprising nine interviews with UK cemetery managers, and photographs from observations of cemeteries across the attendant nine cities. The cities covered include the largest urban areas in England and Wales outside of London to demonstrate a geographical spread of issues in urban areas. They were semi-structured - covering a range of issues relating to the role of cemeteries in the city.

In the UK, the majority of local planning authorities have no visible planning policy for cemeteries, or else do one of two things: classify cemeteries in the same bracket as green infrastructure or open space, and/or state they are suitable for development in the greenbelt. This is problematic on a number of grounds. Firstly, it can leave a real policy gap to guide the (often much needed) development of new sites. Secondly, it conflates their purpose with other uses which are not necessarily compatible, such as dog walking and picnicking (McClymont, forthcoming). Most importantly for this paper, the absence of adequate policy reveals the implications of the current lack of engagement with the postsecular. Cemeteries are places which illustrate the ideas of shared human spiritual experience concomitantly with individuality and uniqueness, paralleling Cavanaugh's (1999) claims about unity and diversity. They are places which illustrate local particularity (be it types of stones, nature, inscriptions, local multiculturalism) and individual decisions (inscriptions on gravestones, both visual and verbal, items of memorability), and simultaneously expresses one of most fundamental shared tenets of existence - death. Even without any explicitly religious narrative, death, and the spaces associated with it, allows - obliges even, the purpose of life to be assessed: '(i)ndependent of religion, there has always been a 'touch of eternity' in the cemetery'(Arffmann, 2000, p125) 'Beliefs and practices

around death and memorialisation are arguably the clearest expression of folk religion, specifically 'continuing bonds' between the living and dead (Howarth, 2000, Maddrell, 2013). These challenge the modernist understanding of death as The End: its "sequestration from life" (Howarth, 2000 p128). Instead of death being an end of a relationship, for many it instead marks a change, and a time when access to the non-material is needed most greatly. Therefore, out of the three examples in this paper, municipal spirituality is most readily visible in cemetery space. The sense of transcendence is apparent from forms of memorialisation. Figures 1 (angel) and 2 (scarves) represent traditional and contemporary grave markings, demonstrating how continuing bonds between the dead and living are maintained, by use of shared symbols. Many managers commented on how their sites were special, different to the rest of the locality's green spaces:

it's like a little bubble, and we're not sort of part of the general world here, it's a special sort of place, and it's not quite heaven, but it's not quite normal' Cemetery manager, Milton Keynes.

Moreover, their maintenance and management can be seen as being done for the common good. Many managers commented on the need to be accommodating to difference and individual wishes, but simultaneously working for a greater sense of the whole community:

'we will not pander to one person's wishes to the detriment of a hundred people, and fortunately being municipal, that's in the council bylaws, so we've got those to support us. There's flexibility of course, but not to the degree of just letting anything happen.' Plymouth, Cemetery manager

The balance between their role as a very public and very private place is critical in this. By reconfiguring the notion of an individual as no longer something which is either subsumed by, or necessarily free of, the universal, the conflict between public and private space is dissolved. The notions of transcendence and the common good necessarily situate individuals within communities- worldly and eschatological - their existence only being possible through their interactions with, and relations to, others. Furthermore, any notion of community, or the common good is made up of individuals. This is visible in cemeteries as it is the collective meaning of the place which makes it acceptable, and 'proper', for any individual to use: conversely, the collective context relies on individuals to shape the particularity of specific place.

Further, public cemeteries represent an inclusive space of community and transcendence. Many managers commented on (religious) diversity as a positive asset, and how 'their' cemeteries were harmonious places (although racist incidents were reported). This was seen as coming about because: 'the public see cemeteries as a place to go, as a place to remember, and they, you know, to, it depends where you go, I mean to a lot of people, cemetery sites are very very sacred, and people don't mistreat them or misuse them', (Cemetery manager, Cardiff).

Finally, in relation to cemeteries as places of municipal spirituality, there was a strong sense of the need to civically provide for bereavement, despite this having a low policy profile, or being something not readily recognised by local government as 'at the end of the day, our main focus is the bereaved, we've got to cater for the bereaved, and regardless of being an area of conservation, a green space, everything else, it's still a burial ground first and foremost' (Cemetery manager, Liverpool). This illustrates the importance of public

provision, and public management of cemetery space. Although not a comment from a 'planner', the same logic of wishing to provide for a civic collective frequently underlines planning practice (Campbell and Marshall, 2000).

Cemeteries therefore offer spaces of transcendence in their continuing bonds with the dead and invocation of possible afterlives. Their paradoxical position as both public and private demonstrates that these concepts are not mutually exclusive, warranting deconstruction and rearticulation. They are spaces of the common good in their connections to local vernacular, and the way they are managed and provided for all. This in turn illustrates their being inclusive; for all faiths and none. Finally, as the second largest sort of greenspace in cities, planning clearly has a role in shaping their development and maintenance. The fact that it does not at present, strengthens the argument that planning needs to extend its vocabulary of values. The idea of municipal spirituality could be used here to express their uniqueness, and different from other sorts of green space/green infrastructure. A clearer articulation of their specific value would allow planning firstly to value them for what they are primarily, and secondly to consider more fully the standard policy implications such as issues of siting, design and compatible neighbouring land uses.

The paper now discusses these ideas in relation to Assets of Community Value (ACV). These are useful to illustrate how transcendental, religious, non-instrumental values are more pervasive in society than just with regards to continuing bonds with the dead: they are expressed within things valued in life too.

Assets of Community Value

The designation 'Asset of Community Values' was enacted by the 2011 Localism Act as part of the community right to bid; an aspect of the 2010 Coalition government's localism

programme (CLG, 2014). Community groups have the right to apply for a local building or open space (other than a private dwelling) to be designated as an Asset of Community Value regardless of who currently owns it. If they are successful, this enforces the owner to undergo a six month moratorium before sale of the asset, during which time the community group are able to attempt to raise the funds necessary to bid for the asset. Although a fairly weak power in terms of community control, it is interesting as an example of the role municipal spirituality could play in the designation process, as community groups have to articulate the value of the place in question. This is specifically the *community* value of the proposed asset, rather than putting this in financial or other instrumental, quantifiable terms. Within these, the idea of municipal spirituality is latent more than explicit. The following section draws on material from online sources (specifically referenced in boxes 1-3 below) which illustrate some of these articulations by highlighting three things. First, discussion about community and monetary value, second, the way in which the concepts of community and the common good are expressed and third, how these proposed assets can provide inclusive spaces.

These examples reveal the expression of emotional attachment to place, not for any specific functional purpose, but as a fundamental aspect of identity, and narrative sense of self (Sheldrake, 2001). Within discussion boards and comments sections on articles, many participants differentiated between their values and relationship with place and those of people or companies wishing to make money from the (proposed) assets as documented in box 1 below⁴.

⁴ Quotes from: <http://friendsofthetumbledownnick.org.uk/tumbledown/the-tumbly-an-asset-of-community-value/>
<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/save-brent-community-assets-from-change-of-use>
http://www.lowestoftjournal.co.uk/news/new_development_in_campaign_to_stop_new_tesco_store_opening_in_pakefield_s_tramway_hotel_1_3689182

This proved long ago that no building in Rushmoor is ever safe from greedy developers ... I have faith, and believe the intelligence and democracy of people power will save the Tumbledown. (Louise)

Let's all work together to save our pub, our town and our borough from those who care for nothing but to make money from it, Louise. (Rossi)

We need to stop developers (who) have no interest in our communities other than removing and replacing our much loved buildings and open spaces with high unattractive high density to make as much money as they can' Queensbury and Kensal Rise Library campaign

The Tramway Hotel is too important to the community to be turned into a shop we don't need' Bob Blizzard,

Box 1

In these examples, it is the building's symbolic significance which is of value to local campaigners. Pubs, community halls and libraries are not just value for the specific services they provide- i.e. beer or books, but because they offer access to a sense of communal, transcendental meaning which purely instrumental services cannot. They offer the possibility to connect with a place not only for its practical purpose.

This is further demonstrated in the following two quotes in box 2 which illustrate the importance of community for and in itself⁵:

A church and a Pub have always been the social point of any village, and long may it continue, without these a Village will surely Die,

We all need to protect our community spaces, because a society without places to congregate isn't a society at all'

respectively

⁵ Quotes from <http://www.cowbitvillage.co.uk/dun-cow-site/>
<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/save-brent-community-assets-from-change-of-use>
respectively

Box 2

From these quotes it is evident that community is not just something instrumental- a means to an individual, material end. It has a higher significance in the value it gives to life, than something that can be expressed by purely instrumental values. Further, community and community buildings are expressed as somewhere inclusive. This is seen in particular in the following quote (box 3) about a successful campaign to list a redundant church as an ACV⁶:

We think we can all pull our resources and assets together to make a difference in the community together so that the space can be utilised by many groups. It would be great to bring different faiths together.

Box 3

The transcendental value of these buildings cannot be reduced simply to tangible empirical need (books could be borrowed or bought elsewhere, as could beer). There is a shared (but not necessarily same) 'otherness' that is beyond human rational experience, and although it may not therefore be readily visible, it is nonetheless vital to community wellbeing as is clearly expressed through these quotes. Further, community as a good in itself is apparent in all these campaigns. It is for the sake of community that they are being fought, rather than community being operationalised to save a service because that service itself is needed. The question of whether community groups are inclusive or exclusive is one that is well rehearsed and beyond the scope of this paper. In relation to the idea of municipal spirituality, community spaces are not exclusive in as much as there are no formal entry requirements, or doctrinal membership requirements, moreover, all can access their 'eschatological' value whilst actively seeking inclusion and diversity. Finally, it is clearly

⁶ Quote from <http://www.plymouthherald.co.uk/Peverell-park-church-granted-community-asset/story-20439911-detail/story.html>

evident that planning can play a part in the maintenance or destruction of such assets, both in terms of enabling public participation and in allowing changes of use or demolition of existing buildings. The existence of ACV legislation illustrates that planning does recognise some non-instrumental values, however, the articulation of their worth is at best weak and patchy. The language of municipal spirituality would develop and deepen the way planning could engage with such concerns, by legitimising the articulation of their value.

Nature

The third section draws on the ideas developed to this point to raise questions about how these could be used to reframe discussions about nature and the environment within planning. These are very tentative and exploratory, and unlike the other sections do not draw upon any empirical material to substantiate their claims. Instead, this section aims to suggest some ways in which these ideas could be developed further. The dominant discourse positions nature/the non-human world as a tangible, physical resource for human use - however wisely, or within any given limits (Eckersley, 1992, Dobson, 1995). However, widely based counterclaims see nature as having value beyond this (Louv, 2009, for example), and in ways which do not rely on functional material benefits. This is most fully expressed in contemporary literature on cultural ecosystems services (Milcu et al 2013). Cultural ecosystem services literature differs from ecosystems services literature more broadly because of a focus on the 'intangibility' of some ecological values. However, the language of this debate remains very technical and quantitative, and although much interesting research has been done under this definition, a major literature review highlighted that 'fewer (papers) acknowledged the need to adapt institutional arrangements to a non-utilitarian perspective' (Milcu et al, 2013, p51). There remains a great philosophical and disciplinary gulf between this research and critical claims of the

environmental justice movement and postcolonial arguments about indigenous land values which more readily identified links between the value of the natural environment and a sense of sacredness (Schlosberg, 2004, Porter, 2013).

Further, these debates illustrate how problematic the current divide between sacred and secular; irrational and rational is for arguments in this area: '(e)nvironmental philosophers may use the argument that nature has intrinsic value, but liberal justice theorist must avoid such a claim, lest they enter the liberal no-fly zone of individual notions of the good'(Schlosberg, 2004, p530). By using the language of municipal spirituality, claims to the good in nature can be made on different philosophical grounds, opening up the aforementioned 'spaces of ethical identity' (Cloke and Beaumont, 2012, p33). This still leaves questions about representation, and how it is possible to know what is in the interests of those who are not human, and on this basis, how legitimate decisions can be made (O'Neill, 2001). However, to argue for the importance of nature on the basis of its sacred qualities, its ability to offer access to the divine or transcendent, and its role as an embodiment of shared common values (the definition of which rightly remains highly contentious) does not either refute, or undermine such questions. The transcendent value of nature (and hence its potential recognition with a notion of municipal spirituality) is particularly important because it cannot be represented or understood within a human frame of reference. It is something beyond fixed articulation; 'essential' meaning expressible in words. Further research is necessary to understanding the implications of these ideas for planning and the valuing of the natural environment.

Conclusions: Municipal Spirituality, postsecularism and Planning

By adding municipal spirituality to planning's lexicon, it gives discursive legitimacy to a different epistemological framework which can challenge the dominance of instrumental rationality. It gives planning the vocabulary to defend and promote places which hold little instrumental worth, or whose intrinsic value is not merely its instrumental one, explicitly permitting a different set of values to be part of the debate.

The three examples presented in this paper demonstrate that the concept of municipal spirituality could articulate and define the value of places which, if defined otherwise, may obscure what is fundamental to them. The research from cemeteries illustrates how planning currently has no clear language to value their specific role, evidenced by the lack of planning policy for cemeteries, in contrast with managers' understandings of the needs of their places and their importance to those who use them. ACV designation offers the public a chance to voice the values that places hold for them, and in so doing, illustrate that non-instrumental need is paramount, centred on notions of community and the common good. In both these cases, the claims to value are spiritually inclusive rather than for a defined denomination or established faith. Finally, the discussion of nature raises some preliminary issues about how this broader language of spiritual values in planning could add weight to arguments about the importance of the environment for its non-economic value, in a way which is founded on a less quantitative based than much cultural ecosystem services work. Moreover, these three examples demonstrate more than spaces for diverse types of personal religious practice: instead they are spaces which have latent *public* spiritual value. There is a cyclical relationship happening here: the space offers something special and

different- non-instrumental. Planning vocalises this by the idea of municipal spirituality- articulates it, and in turn affirms and rearticulates this non-instrumental value, offering its radical potential to connect with the transcendent to all.

All three examples illustrate the problems with the current antagonistic divide between religion and secularism, demonstrating how municipal spirituality offers a challenge to the dominance of economic values, and therefore offers both a different justification for the values of certain places, and opens up spaces of normative ethical engagement. In a society where “what has disappeared is the transcendent reference, and what has taken its place is Mammon” (Gorringe, 2002, p34), municipal spirituality offers a way to challenge this, which does not pitch ‘irrational believers’ against ‘rational liberals’. It illustrates that a society which can promote values of something beyond the material and instrumental can be radical and inclusive, rather than theocratic. Seeing place value in this way quietly challenges the pervasive neoliberalising agenda, rearticulating an agonistic enemy, not as religion, but as those who codify it as exclusive and excluding, and as a tool of limiting human flourishing rather than enhancing it. Allowing access to the radical potential of these theologically informed ideas (to a wider population than those who explicitly define as part of a faith group) is part of municipal spirituality’s strength.

The paper has argued that the concepts of transcendence and the common good offer values which enable planning to engage in postsecular contexts in a productive way. If planning exists to promote a sense of the public interest (Campbell & Marshall, 2000) or anything beyond an individualistic growth agenda, then grounding these ideas in ways which are underpinned by values beyond the material provides a robust challenge to economic logics, supporting counter hegemonic initiatives and politics (Purcell, 2013, Peck et al, 2013, Iveson, 2013) Framing this within the epistemology of postfoundational politics allows

planning to reject an either/or logic about religious and spiritual values, and to see how, through the notion of municipal spirituality, this elevates the grounds on which arguments about the value of places can be made.

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