

Urban Theology Unit / Department of Theology and Religion

MPhil Research Proposal

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**Urban Walking in L11:
Psychogeography and Theology
in a White Working-Class Community**

Introduction / Context

I am an Anglican parish priest living and working in Croxteth and Norris Green, two large housing estates on the North-East edge of Liverpool sharing the postcode L11. Demographically and culturally our area is predominantly white working-class. It is also primarily residential, besides a large leisure park and the remnants of heavy industrial sites.

I have for some time been interested in walking as a method for experiencing and evaluating an urban area and its people, and have employed this since 2004 in a series of 'parish walks' here, which have been recorded and subject to ongoing assessment on a website. This has engaged me with a variety of urban theorists, theologians, and theorists and practitioners of psychogeography, a field which carries the potential to connect these other disciplines in creative ways.

Besides continuing to undertake walks of urban exploration and write about them, I have given papers at conferences and other forums on the related subjects of urban walking and a theology of everyday life. This interest led me, for my sabbatical in 2007, to take a two month cross-country walk through the urban centres of Northern England, which also involved publishing a website and a subsequent book, 'Walking the M62'.

Research Topic

To explore the interface between psychogeography and theology in the particular context of L11. Psychogeography involves deep investigations into the interface between people and their built environment, and offers methodologies and theories which interact with other disciplines such as cultural studies, anthropology, and ethnography. The term Psychogeography was defined by the Situationists, an international political and artistic movement of the 1960s, but as a practice has been part of urban exploration and creative expression for many decades, even centuries.

Whilst some good work has been done on theologies of the built environment, mostly this has been with reference to works of urban planning and architecture rather than the practice of everyday life. It therefore appears to me that this particular proposal focusses on an area of research which has not previously been addressed.

Research Goals

The aim is to investigate critically the ways in which psychogeography may inform theological practice in white working-class communities.

Research Methods

Research Methods would include:

- Walking, including the use of psychogeographical methods;
- Participant observation;
- Interviews - both ad-hoc and structured, with residents and other users of the area, and with theorists and practitioners of psychogeography;
- Participation in relevant psychogeographical and theological conferences and forums.

Research Sources

The main sources for the research would be the people of the area, psychogeographers and other fellow-walkers, urban theologians and theorists of related disciplines - as listed below.

Key Writers and Books on the Topic

Psychogeography / Situationism

Francesco Careri: *Walkscapes, Walking as an Aesthetic Practice*, Gustavo Gili 2001

Merlin Coverley: *Psychogeography*, Pocket Essentials 2007

Guy Debord: *Society of the Spectacle*, Black and Red 1983

Simon Ford: *The Situationist International: A User's Guide*, Black Dog Publishing 2005

Patrick Keiller: *Robinson in Space*, Reaktion Books 1999

Miwon Kwon: *One Place After Another, Site-specific Art and Locational Identity*, MIT Press 2002

Ralph Rumney: *The Map Is Not The Territory*, Manchester University Press 2001

Simon Sadler: *The Situationist City*, MIT Press 1999

Ian Sinclair: *Lud Heat*, Jonathan Cape, *Lights Out for the Territory*, Granta 2003, *London Orbital*, Granta 2003

Rebecca Solnit: *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, Penguin 2001

Wrights and Sites: *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere*, Wrights and Sites 2005

Numerous websites devoted to psychogeography, eg *London Psychogeographical Association*, *Manchester Area Psychogeographic*, *National Psychogeographic*

Theology

E.I. Bailey, *Implicit Religion in Contemporary Society*, Peeters 1997

Walter Brueggemann: *The Land - Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*,

Augsburg Fortress 2002

Timothy Gorringer: *A Theology of the Built Environment*, Cambridge 2002

Norman Habel: *The Land Is Mine - Six Biblical Land Ideologies*, Augsburg Fortress 1995

Joe Hasler: *Mind Body and Estates: Outer Estate Ministry and Working Class Culture*,
National Estate Churches Network

John Inge: *A Christian Theology of Place*, Ashgate 2003

John Vincent: *Developing Contextual Theologies*. Epworth Review 27.3 (July 2000)

John Vincent: *Theological Practice*. Theology 103.839 (October 2004)

Cultural Studies / Ethnography / Anthropology

Michel de Certeau: *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Univ. California Press 1984

Ben Highmore (ed): *The Everyday Life Reader*, Routledge 2002

Henri Lefebvre: *Critique of Everyday Life*, Verso 1991

Joe Moran: *Reading the Everyday*, Routledge 2005

Tony Parker: *The People of Providence*, Eland Publishing 1996

Urban Studies and Theories of Place

Iain Borden (ed): *The Unknown City, Contesting Architecture and Social Space*, MIT
Press 2001

Edward S. Casey: *Getting Back into Place*, Indiana University Press 1993

Doreen Massey: *Space, Place and Gender*, University of Minnesota Press 1994

Doreen Massey: *For Space*, Sage Publications, 2005

David Pinder: *Visions of the City: Utopianism, Power and Politics in 20th-Century
Urbanism*, Edinburgh University Press 2005

Richard Sennett: *The Conscience of the Eye, the Design and Social Life of Cities*, Norton
1992

Philipp Oswalt (ed): *Shrinking Cities*, Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2006