

# GHOSTS IN THE MACHINE

WHY AND HOW  
PLACEMAKERS  
CAN RE-ENCHANT  
THE CITY

## CHAPTER 9



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*“The onus in the 21st century will not be ‘diversity of culture’, but ‘diversity of spirituality’. As religion is increasingly privatized, for fear of feud, fanaticism and market irrelevance... it will behave the architect, the planner to design public space that mediates the spiritual instinct to communality and transcendence. The communing of streetscape, landscape, building, skyline enjoins the citizen to commune with projects and entities and re-establishes trust with others... The effect of architecture and space on the entire person, in the advent and presence of other persons is universal. It gentles the civic creature. It can gentle disparate cultures and peoples by the vocabulary of the sublime, bringing them to the point of awe, gratitude and mutuality by shared space, making such space sacred.”*

Pier Giorgio Di Cicco, Poet Laureate of the City of Toronto, 2004- 2009

## **Are we not missing something?**

In his definitive book *The City: A Global History*<sup>2</sup> Joel Kotkin asks the question ‘what are cities for?’ He tells us that, throughout time, successful cities have thrived on their ability to perform three principal functions: giving their citizens security; hosting and concentrating their need for commerce; and enabling the creation of sacred space. To mainstream opinion in the placemaking professions the third of these may come as a surprise – significant, yes, but surely not of the same order as the others. Yet Kevin Lynch said long ago, a cityscape is merely the skeleton upon which we construct the ‘socially important myths’<sup>3</sup> that sustain us and give us meaning.

Those sacred repositories of powerful myths have, of course, taken many forms over the 5000 years or so that we have been living in cities, ranging from temples, ziggurats and pyramids to shrines, cathedrals and mosques. In more recent times, citizens have also invested non-religious places such as monuments, museums or plazas with an equivalent weight of metaphysical significance, perhaps as shrines to the nation state or some other ideology. Whilst nowadays we are also seeing signs that people want to imbue spaces or places in their cities with meaning which owes allegiance to no formal or organised belief system at all but which is, nevertheless, of a broadly spiritual, transcendental or non-rational nature.

Philip Sheldrake, in *The Spiritual City*<sup>4</sup> makes the argument that in modern times it is now no longer strictly necessary for people to huddle into a city for security. Nor, given the growing virtuality and globality of our economic systems, do we necessarily need to do our trading in a physical urban market space. However, our need for making sacred spaces, or places of spiritual meaning, is as strong as ever and the city remains the place that we most likely choose to do it.

But, were you to trawl through the thousands of web-pages, journals, books, guidance notes, strategies, master plans and educational curricula generated by the placemaking professions each year, you would be hard-pressed to find any but a few which make even passing reference to these supposedly central aspects of the human condition. Whether you subscribe to any particular religion (which I don't) or have a more general interest in the non-material side of life (which I do) or are even a confirmed atheist, one could not deny that numinosity has a powerful direct and daily effect upon the lives of many and, indirectly, upon many more.

I can only conclude that in not taking account of these matters in the way they conceive, design and create our cities, our placemaking professions are guilty of wilful and risible blindness and that, in turn, will result in bad practice, stunted cities and blighted lives. In admittedly more temperate terms, the doyenne of cosmopolitan urbanism, Leonie Sandercock agrees, identifying a paradox at the heart of planning:

*“The work of urban, social, community, environmental, and even land-use planning is fundamentally a work of hope, the work of organising hope. And this work often takes place in the face of despair... But where does this hope come from, if not from some kind of faith? Hence I must ask myself, and my profession: are we not missing something important by not talking about this thing...?”*<sup>5</sup>

And, for confirmation, she draws upon an illustrious predecessor, Lewis Mumford, who pronounced that *“the segregation of the spiritual life from the practical is a curse”*.<sup>6</sup>

In this chapter I can't even hope to do justice to all the many ways in which the non-rational and the non-secular impact on city life, or why they need to rise up the agenda of the placemakers. The organised religions can and should speak for themselves (albeit that many of them have probably been equally neglectful in failing to evolve an 'urban agenda'). So I will restrict myself to thinking about how the non-institutional elements of human numinosity should, must, and can be integrated into the way we make and use our cities.

I want to explore what I believe is the fundamental human need for enchantment. The yearning we have to live in a world where absolutely everything is not already known, explained, formalised and pre-determined, but where some things remain surprising, mysterious, or even magical. I wish to describe a world of streets, spaces and buildings which we share with ghosts.

Before doing that though, I should firstly say why I think it is important – particularly in this book devoted to social and cultural interaction – that the non-rational and even the spectral should be taken more seriously. Firstly, I would point to one other important factor which has enriched the cities of which Joel Kotkin writes. The really successful cities have not only absorbed and tolerated an enormous variety of people, but they have mastered the alchemy whereby the active mixing of those diverse peoples becomes their very fuel and life-blood.<sup>7</sup> Secondly, they have achieved it by offering a vision of community that is capable of promoting coexistence between strangers and between diverse city functions, to find a shared code of social behaviour, rather than simply demanding uniformity and conformity.<sup>8</sup> In other words, a vision of the ‘the good city’ which interweaves the ethical with the efficient and blends the pragmatic with the mystical.

## The Rational City

The founding fathers (and it is ‘fathers’) of urbanism have much to answer for. Those patriarchs of the Chicago School dissected the city in which they sat and drew some troubling and far-reaching conclusions from what they thought they were seeing.<sup>9</sup> Louis Wirth saw Chicago, and by extension all other modern metropolises, as machines which absorbed simple, rustic people, assimilated and homogenised them and then transformed them into a disciplined workforce and citizenry:

*“There is a city mentality which is clearly differentiated from the rural mind. The city man thinks in mechanistic terms, in rational terms, while the rustic thinks in naturalistic, magical terms.”<sup>10</sup>*

But these early celebrants of the Rational City not only had an agenda about rural/urban and traditional/modern disparities, but a loosely-racialized one too. Robert Park wrote about his problem with ‘Obeah – the magic of the black man’, worrying that new migrants to Chicago from the West Indies were bringing with them backward superstitions which had already been eradicated from the city’s native black population.<sup>11</sup>

Whilst Park would have thought himself a liberal and sought distance from the racial supremacists of his day he can be seen, with hindsight, to be evincing a degree of cultural chauvinism. He is part of a long tradition of urbanists who accept beyond doubt that the modern Western city is not only the greatest ever manifestation of human civilisation, but one which can only succeed by removing the ‘otherness’ of its newcomers and reprogramming them for a new, improved way of being. It is a form

of civic assimilationism and secularity which finds its roots in the idealistic revolutions of the Enlightenment and which, for example, still lives on (in tortured intransigence) as the governing creed of France, amongst others.

In his essay *Magic, Mentality and City Life*, Park sets as clear a definition of rational modernist urbanism as one could wish to find:

*“The embodiment of rational thought is the tool, the machine in which all the parts are manifestly designed to achieve a perfectly intelligible end. The primitive man lives in a vastly different world, where all the forces about him are mysterious and uncontrollable, and where nature seems as wild, as romantic, and as unpredictable as his own changing moods.*

*The mentality of the modern man, on the other hand, is based upon the machine and upon the application of science to all the interests of life - to education, to advertising, and, presently, perhaps, to politics. The culture of the modern man is characteristically urban, as distinguished from the folk culture, which rests on personal relations and direct participation in the common life of the family, the tribe, and the village community.”*

He does however concede that:

*“We are all disposed to think in magical terms in those regions of our experience that have not been rationalised, and where our control is uncertain and incomplete.*

*The reason the modern man is a more rational animal than his more primitive ancestor is possibly because he lives in a city, where most of the interests and values of life have been rationalised, reduced to measurable units, and even made objects of barter or sale.”<sup>12</sup>*

And thus he undermines his own complacent logic with a glaring tautology – the city is rational because we made it so, and living in it makes us rational, except for those times when we are not.

On such shaky ground as this though, have many of the edifices of modernist urbanism been lashed together. But what grieves me most is that even over recent decades, as its more bombastic manifestations have gradually been dismantled in the name of a more humanistic approach, urbanism has retained this central flaw – its negligence of, or uneasiness with, the magical.

Let's try and reset the balance.

## The Non-Rational City

Who says the city is not full of magic?

### **Magic and mystery**

Many might think that the very people who seem to have the greatest stake in the city of reason and who are the first to proclaim that there is no alternative – have actually been the necromancers of some of its most unfathomable mysteries.

Let it never be forgotten that, when the dust had settled from the financial crash of 2007/8, it was revealed that the denizens of the starchitect-designed towers of London's Square Mile, had triggered it with exotic products, such as Credit Default Swaps, which were not only beyond the comprehension of both the public and the industry regulators, but of the very people who had created them. Such levels of incomprehension cannot be put down to technical complexity but surely reside in another field entirely – of sorcery.<sup>13</sup>

But we actually only need to walk the streets outside our homes to encounter the irrational, as Jonathan Raban observed of his native London:

*The city-dweller is constantly coming up against the absolute mystery of other people's reasons.*

At the time of writing he was mesmerised by a supposed logic which dictated that London's overriding economic need required every highway, street and public place to be clogged with private cars and commercial hauliers from dawn till dusk. As a pedestrian this confronted him with constant inconvenience and pollution and frequent danger to the extent of feeling his once-familiar city was now on an alien planet.

*"We live in a world which is patently not of our own devising, in which we are perpetually baffled and inconvenienced by people we don't know and whom we suspect we wouldn't like. By contrast, the supposedly irrational life of the village seems logical and simple, its causes and effects clear and direct, its patterns of friendship, deference and hostility reassuringly predictable... [the rustic] far from being primitive and magical, seems much saner and more straightforward than the perverse and complicated metres of city life".<sup>14</sup>*

Let us be absolutely clear here that Raban is not seeking to opt out of the urban. He's a proud urbanite,

but is trying to expose the fallacy that the city is founded upon, and wholly dictated by, the appliance of reason and the extirpation of magic. Sadly, over 40 years later the myth sails serenely on, i.e. that reason might inadvertently have created the congestion caused by the internal combustion engine, but the further application of science has now solved it. There is little or no acknowledgement that something else called *spirit* – of the human soul and of the place – might also have played a part in people demanding to take their neighbourhoods back from the grip of the car.

### **Re-enchanting the City**

So, if we needed and believed in magic once, where did it go and how can we get it back?

It was Max Weber who first pointed out that one of the corollaries of modernization had been a process of disenchantment (Entzauberung) - the cultural rationalization and devaluation of mysticism.<sup>15</sup>

One or two major contemporary figures have acknowledged the spiritual, not least Jürgen Habermas, although he has tended to concentrate only upon the institutions of organised religion.<sup>16</sup> The Canadian Charles Taylor, whilst also being one of the most articulate exponents of modern urban interculturalism, has made a direct connection between the spirit within us and the spirit of place:

*“The presence of something beyond (what we call today) the ‘natural’ is more palpable and immediate, one might say physical, in an enchanted age. The sacred in the strong sense, which marks out certain people, times, places and actions, in distinctions to all others as profane, is by its very nature localizable, and its place is clearly marked out in ritual and sacred geography. This is what we sense and often regret the passing of, when we contemplate the medieval cathedral.”<sup>17</sup>*

So whilst I have said that I am, in this chapter, more concerned with non-institutional re-enchantment, than with the churches, mosques and temples, there can be no denying their physical presence and social and increasingly political influence in contemporary cities. Even in my early career as a rigorously secular community development activist, I was often obliged to note that in the urban wastelands I frequented, hollowed out by neoliberalism and picked clean of traditional associations of working class solidarity, the last place standing – and still hoping - would often be the church or madrassa. And, of course, one cannot ignore the burgeoning economic impact in urban localities of the ‘mega-church’ and ‘mega-mosque’.<sup>18</sup>

However, Phillip Sheldrake, for one, sees spiritual regeneration beyond the houses of God. He finds it in the public realm, where:

*“Re-enchantment seeks to make public space more than a context for human socialization created purely by consumerism or tourism. Rather, we should work imaginatively and experimentally with public space to make it the medium for a transformation of imagination and behaviour through protest gatherings (non-legislative politics), art, education and entertainment.”*<sup>19</sup>

## **Spirit of Place**

The reader may by now be asking what can the placemakers learn from opening up their minds to the spiritual and the non-rational, and how can they transform it into practical ways of working. But before I steer the reader towards these shallower and more navigable waters, I shall get us there via the depths and an even more uncharted and disconcerting route. I wish to focus the mind of the place-making professional upon the topic of ghosts.

I was first alerted to the connection when Leonie Sandercock launched her ground-breaking book *Towards Cosmopolis: Planning for Multicultural Cities*.<sup>20</sup> She threw down a challenge to the place making professions, saying that as we moved irrevocably into a condition of global migration and super diverse cities, it would not be enough for planners merely to learn a few new techniques. Nothing short of a whole new way of thinking, understanding, and expressing place making would do, and she argued for:

*“an expanded language of planning which includes a focus on the city of memory, the city of desire, and the city of spirit, for an epistemology of multiplicity which includes at least six ‘ways of knowing’ in addition to the scientific and technical knowledge which has been the profession’s bread and butter; and for a transformative politics of difference.”*<sup>21</sup>

Placemakers who have made the transition to this new world have had to acquire a new ‘cultural literacy’ in order to communicate, and make practical sense, of the all the expressions of memory, desire and spirit which they encounter in an average city neighbourhood. I tried to formalise this in my book *The Intercultural City*.<sup>22</sup> This included recommendations for how placemakers could become better listeners; how they could gather richer knowledge through asking new kinds of questions; how to begin to read the city through the many and varied eyes of the people they shared it with; and how to cope with ambiguity, intangibility and mystery.

Even then however, I admit to having rather failed to seriously engage with the spiritual and the spectral.

In the interim, though, I have come to realise that these things matter so much to so many people that to ignore or to dismiss them is wilful neglect - as unprofessional, in its way, as erecting a structure without first checking where the water and power utilities are located.

*“Ghosts - that is, the sense of the presence of those who are not physically there - are a ubiquitous aspect of the phenomenology of place. Although the cultural language of modernity usually prevents us from speaking about their presence, we constitute a place in large measure by the ghosts we sense inhabit and possess it. The meaning of a place, its genius loci, depends upon the geniuses we locate there.”*<sup>23</sup>

Some places, of course, wear their hauntedness on their sleeves: the ancient monument, the castle with a dungeon where unspeakable things are said to have been done, a crime scene from within living memory, or even the neighbourhood pub that now stands empty and forlorn. Planners have evolved certain sensitivity towards such sites and act accordingly so, as much as possible, to go with the grain of local sensibilities. But this is but the tip of the iceberg, and we should also be aware that individuals and groups are consciously living alongside all manner of other, more personal ghosts. It is not the planner's responsibility to know of all them, still less to fully understand their significance, nor even all the ways in which they influence people's outlook and actions. It is enough for the place-makers to appreciate that they are there, to acknowledge that they may go some way to explaining why people often react in ways the placemaker was not expecting, to respect their presence, make space for them in the process.

At this point, the harassed placemaking professional may be forgiven for responding that, with a seemingly endless list of considerations which they already have to take account of, they might happily pass over something which they can neither touch nor see. Michael Mayerfeld Bell reminds us that whilst ghosts may seem not to be in the real world, they are undeniably of it (and that placemakers undoubtedly have ghosts of their own):

*“The ghosts of place are, of course, fabrications, products of imagination, social constructions. The ghosts we find in places are always our ghosts, that is, ghosts of our own imaginations. Because they are our ghosts, what we make of them is what counts. They may conjure up in places, but it is only people who can conjure them up. Although we generally experience ghosts as given to us, it is we that give ghosts to places [...] Ghosts are political”.*<sup>24</sup>

...and so is placemaking.

## Practical applications

So let us turn to some examples of the many ways in which this emergent world is being explored and mapped, and how the placemaking professions may participate. In an attempt to impose some structure on what is still an embryonic scene I will focus on four areas of practice that interest me. Firstly there is an overtly spiritualist approach and I will highlight the work of a group of Canadian planners and thinkers around Leonie Sandercock. Secondly, in order to demonstrate that I am not seeking a science versus spirit dichotomy, but rather a continuum, I highlight people who are blending aspects of urban psychology with neuroscience and technology. Thirdly I touch on the growing passion of people to seek magic and mystery in the city, who variously dub themselves place hackers or urban explorers; but also highlight people who seek to re-enchant the city, not through adventurous discovery of the unknown, but reappraisal of the known and mundane: the psychogeographers. Finally, and with a nod to this present volume on 'bridging cultures' I reference practice, including my own, which seeks to uncover transcultural memories and spectres as grounds for community development.

## Spirituality in Planning

A group of researchers and activists has emerged at the University of British Columbia and on the streets of Vancouver devoted to a new way of conceiving and doing urban planning and placemaking founded in principles of a broadly spiritual, rather than religious nature. One strand exemplified by Michael Anhorn explores the sensibilities and competences that a planner needs to work where a diverse array of spiritual beliefs are present.<sup>25</sup> The first step he emphasises is for the placemaking professional to look inwardly to achieve *Self-awareness* of what nourishes them as people and motivates them as practitioners. Only with a grounded and critical honesty about their own identity can practitioners begin to enter into deep conversations and relationships with others about potentially divisive or controversial issues. Anhorn's practice is founded in work to open a dialogue around the historic acquisition, and claims for restitution, of land once occupied by First Nation peoples.

Anhorn also calls for a much deeper understanding of *Listening* to others, and for planners to unlearn the misconception that if one shows another that one is seriously listening to them it implies that one is agreeing with them. He advises planners to introduce into their practice the use of techniques, particularly *Ritual*, both as a way of making processes more memorable and meaningful, and in order

to connect with people in whose lives ritual still plays a more prominent role than in the lives of westerners. One way to achieve this empathy is through the use of *Myth and Storytelling*, particularly to enable people to explain in ways which are most evocative to them, their true feelings about the meaning of particular places or events.

Meanwhile Maged Senbel starts from a concern with ecology and planetary sustainability, and the paradigm of the modern city as a voracious consumer of resources, egged on in its fantasies by ambitious architects and planners. He asks how spirituality can create buildings and cities of conservation by a coming to terms with simplicity and asceticism. He urges urbanists to rise to the challenge of designing places which inspire awe, but which do it through engendering humility and reverence rather than delusional fantasy and bombast.<sup>26</sup>

## The Ghost in the Machine

In juxtaposing the rational and non-rational city and seeming to privilege the latter, I would not wish to leave the impression that there can be no rapprochement between affairs of the head, the heart and the soul. I'm convinced that there can and – if placemaking professionals are to make progress – there must be. So I will briefly recount two examples where placemaking professionals are striving to meld the emerging tools of the 'the Smart City' with a more affective, non-cognitive sensibility.

An Austro-German team led by Peter Zeile has set itself the task of discovering whether technology can help the advocates of people-centric and bottom-up planning by tracking and measuring peoples' emotional response to their surroundings.<sup>27</sup> Their project *Urban Emotions* aims to provide a human-centred approach to extracting contextual emotional information through technical sensor data (measurements from calibrated bio-sensors) and human sensor data (subjective observations by citizens). Testing people as they move through different urban contexts and environments, they are doing this in four steps: (1) detecting emotions using wearable sensors, (2) 'ground-truthing' these measurements using a smartphone-based app *The People as Sensors*<sup>28</sup> in near real time, (3) extracting emotional information from crowdsourced data like Twitter (detecting the type of emotion), and (4) correlating the measured and extracted emotions and analysing patterns. The results, they claim, can be used in urban planning for supporting decision-making and the evaluation of ongoing planning processes.

In Toronto, neuroscientist Colin Ellard is working in a similar vein. His recent book *Places of the Heart*<sup>29</sup> explores how our homes, workplaces, cities, and nature have influenced us throughout history, and how our brains and bodies respond to different types of real and virtual space. By investigating what science has gained from new technologies, the book assesses the influence these developments will have on our evolving environment and asks what kind of world we are, and should be, creating. The experiments he makes at the Urban Realities Laboratory<sup>30</sup> involve subjecting people to a fully immersive experience with virtual reality headsets, which he describes as magic. As his subjects are confronted with a perplexing variety of physical and emotional conditions – ranging from bland, corporate non-places to hyper-stimulatory environments, he measures their responses with brain sensors and skin conductance monitors as well as their own verbal expressions.

Clearly, in both these cases we need to be aware that there remains between the world of neuroscience and the realm of the spiritual a substantial grey area. It is a zone of both collaboration and passionate disagreement and some will maintain that these are two cultures that can never be bridged. We shall see.

## Psychogeography

Whilst coming from a very different starting point, Maged Senbel describes a place not dissimilar to that first held up for critique by the French Marxist Guy Debord: *The Society of the Spectacle*.<sup>31</sup> With vivid prescience of our contemporary cities Debord argued that the history of social life can be understood as ‘*the decline of being into having, and having into merely appearing*’, and this condition, according to Debord, is the ‘*historical moment at which the commodity completes its colonization of social life.*’

The relevance to us of Debord’s 1960s Situationists is they opened a new field of thinking about urban space called Psychogeography, which is now undergoing a remarkable revival in interest. Less a discipline than a state of mind, it is attracting people from many walks of life who share a disenchantment with the contemporary city. For some it is the stealthy (or not so stealthy) creep of surveillance, security and privatisation into the public realm. To others it is a yearning for surprise and mystery in environments which has been rationalised to create predictability and optimal efficiency. Some might also describe it as a search to reinstate the ‘spirit of place’ to those which have lost it.

One strand is the Urbex tendency (variously known as urban exploration, place-hacking or ruinology) characterised by illicit, and sometimes dangerous, incursions into parts of the city which may

have been abandoned or neglected or which are explicitly prohibited.<sup>32</sup> Whilst at extremes this can tail into reckless machismo or ‘ruin porn’ voyeurism, the mainstream of people doing it have much to teach the placemaking professions in being more aware of the value of liminal spaces. Many of the people who seek and enter these places (‘leaving nothing but footprints, taking nothing but pictures’) are looking for sacred space that they cannot find in the conventional places, or looking to commune with the spirits of those who once occupied them. They also do a valuable service to communities which are perhaps feeling unexpressed trauma with the callous sweeping away of places of work or of housing.

Another strand of psychogeography is less concerned with rediscovering the extraordinary than with reanimating the ordinary and utterly unremarkable spaces in our lives. By employing many tricks and techniques (some complex but others remarkably simple) designed to jolt us out of our routines of travelling and seeing, these walking *Dérives* can be revelatory. One example is the *Psychogeographic Destination Kit*<sup>33</sup> published by the *Bureau of Unknown Destinations* and, whilst this encourages us to seek out places unknown to us, it is equally applicable to exploring our own neighbourhood. It could quite easily be adopted by an urban planner to energise the imaginations and conversations of anyone from groups of residents and school children to (if they dare) a municipal planning committee or a group of developers.

The key point of psychogeography is that it gets people outside and on to their two feet, and this can have a remarkable effect upon both the head and the heart:

*“Urban walking is a way of contacting the ghosts and levels of a city, the past and the future... The solitary walker soon gathers with him a commonality of other walkers behind, all whispering and talking in his ear, and trying to seduce him to turn right into this mystery or turn left into that building, go up that church tower. You’re aware of them, and I don’t think you can do that any other way than by walking”.*<sup>34</sup>

## **Transcultural Memory Work**

It was in the process of contributing a chapter to a recent edited volume devoted to the broad expanse of current psychogeographic practice in the UK that I was first able to document a related practice as an urban therapist.<sup>35</sup> My placemaking and intercultural work takes me to many parts of the world, including the countries of origin of many of the migrants and refugees who have found a new home in my own town of Huddersfield.

It is not uncommon for writers to summon spectral metaphors to express the complex emotions felt by migrants who leave one place (perhaps under duress) yet retaining a longing for it, whilst simultaneously embracing the promise of the new. Most diasporic communities have constructed 'foundation myths' for their presence in other lands which sustain them, often through many generations and these include the ghosts of those who went before.

Whilst appreciating the therapeutic benefit of this I have been troubled by the potential of it to essentialise a community, making it hyper-sensitive to its own story whilst ignorant or dismissive of those of other minorities. In extreme cases, where there are two or more groups which have experienced trauma, this can develop into a 'competitive victimhood'.<sup>36</sup> My current practice is based on the premise of conducting actual and virtual psychogeographic *Dérives* in parts of my hometown frequented by generations of migrants and through neighbourhoods in Eastern-Central Europe, the Indian subcontinent and the Caribbean islands in order to connect with the spectral and spiritual trails that they have followed and left behind. My aim in particular, through deep mapping, historical research and interviewing, is to identify experiences which emphasise the *commonalities* between the migrant communities (and the host community) rather than the *specificities*.

I am convinced that the current 'refugee crisis', and Europe's extreme difficulties in facing up to both its causes and consequences, is a spectre which is haunting the continent, would it but admit it. Its impact will be played out in the streets of Europe's cities, and in my work I hope to uncover materials and insights which will help placemakers to come to terms with this. I am now working upon a book to this end as well as filmic collaboration with a fellow contributor to this current volume Ana Godinho de Matos.

Remaining on the theme of building cross-cultural understanding through urban exploration and memory I should also raise an inspirational example from the nearby city of Bradford. Irna Qureshi is a freelance researcher in this city of over half a million people of which about 25% are of mainly Pakistani Muslim in origin. Irna has grown up straddling this cultural dichotomy aware of both its rewards and challenges. In particular Bradford can be said to be haunted by events which took place in July 2001 when the Manningham district was convulsed by violent ethnically-aggravated riots following provocation from right wing extremists. Perhaps as a strategy to deflect attention away from a deepening Muslim/Christian divide Irna embarked on historical research on another community which had once had a substantial presence in the city, but had almost dwindled to nought – the Jews. She uncovered rich materials particularly on people, businesses and places of worship centred upon

the Manningham district and with this she decided to construct a narrated and animated walk.<sup>37</sup> Participants were able to download the narrative on to Mp3s and listen through headphones as they walked. Periodically the walk was brought to life with actors playing ghostly figures from Bradford's Jewish past. The walk finished at a building unknown to most Bradfordians - its last active synagogue.<sup>38</sup>

Through the walk, awareness of the plight of the synagogue started to spread. Its roof was leaking and the congregation were too few and impecunious to do anything about it. Word eventually reached Zulfi Karim, the secretary of the Bradford Council of Mosques who contacted Rudi Leavor, chairman of the synagogue, and the two quickly struck up a rapport. Zulfi resolved to seek help through his extensive Muslim network and, in short order, the money was raised to repair the roof. This act of communal kindness across a supposedly intractable political and religious divide attracted widespread attention.<sup>39</sup> For the placemakers it offers inspiration as well as some practical techniques for invoking neglected forces in order to rebuild a mixed community that others have written off.

In conclusion, I have set out in this chapter to raise awareness of a strange land. It seems to sprawl alarmingly across some of our traditionally-held boundaries as well as embracing much terra incognita. It takes in apparently disparate and even antithetical elements such as spirituality and neuroscience, and demands of placemakers that we make a leap of faith to embrace the ghosts in our lives, whilst evolving empirical tools to enable tangible improvement to places and the lives of people. It remains a vague, and undoubtedly, a daunting territory, but growing numbers are beginning to map it from various angles. Of course its greatest quality is that it will never succumb to a comprehensive cartographic subjugation nor reveal all of its secrets. This concerns me not, as I know that the value of passing through this territory is not what we can conquer and domesticate, but the new relationships and insights we will make along the way.

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<sup>2</sup> Kotkin, J. *The City: a Global History*. New York: Random House Digital, Inc., 2005, PP xvii-xx.

<sup>3</sup> Lynch, K. *The Image of the City*. Massachusetts: MIT press, 1960, P4.

<sup>4</sup> Sheldrake, P. *The Spiritual City: theology, spirituality, and the urban*. London: John Wiley & Sons, 2014, P5.

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