

Excluded Urban Youth and Religious Discourse in the Trans-Local City



Final Project Report May 2012



**Dr Chris Shannahan
Research Fellow in Urban Theology
University of Birmingham
2009-2012**

Introduction

My postdoctoral research fellowship within the Theology and Religion Department at the University of Birmingham ran from September 2009 – May 2012 and was funded by the British Methodist Church. My research fellowship revolved around five overarching aims –

1. To develop a critical but empathetic ethnographic research project focusing on the impact that the experience of multifaceted social exclusion has on the ways in which unemployed young men on a large east Birmingham housing estate think and talk about identity, meaning, truth and spirituality: *'Excluded Urban Youth and Religious Discourse'*.
2. To develop a research project that –
 - a) Deepens and extends understanding and analysis of the experience and spirituality of an under-researched and stigmatised group within British society that informs and challenges debates within sociology, youth studies, the sociology of religion and urban theology about unemployed young men, urban housing estates, 'belief' and 'spirituality' and youth social exclusion.
 - b) Resources community development work (amongst the young men, on the Bromford housing estate, by the Worth Unlimited youth organisation and faith and community groups working alongside socially excluded urban youth in other contexts).
3. To develop a new interdisciplinary, cross-cultural and multi-medium model of Urban Theology that relates to the normative diversity of the twenty-first century city which I began to explore in my PhD thesis.
4. To develop and establish courses on Urban Theology, Religion and Urban Life and Political Theology as part of the undergraduate and postgraduate Theology and Religion degree programmes at the University of Birmingham.
5. To begin the development of a programme of liberative community based education focusing on faith and urban life in the 21st century and aimed specifically at faith groups and community organisations across the West Midlands with a view to developing this as a nationwide 'Faith and Urban Life' community education programme.



Research Project

Purpose

The title of my research project was '[Excluded Urban Youth and Religious Discourse in the Trans-local City](#)' – a project analysing the impact that social exclusion has on the ways in which unemployed 16-24 year old young men (the 'N.E.E.Ts' of public discourse) on a large urban housing estate think and talk about 'identity', 'meaning', 'truth' and 'spirituality'. This research project aimed to achieve four things:

1. To learn about, understand and analyse the ways in which socially excluded unemployed young men with no connection to organised religion think and talk about 'identity', 'meaning', 'truth' and 'spirituality'. This social group is largely un-researched within the field of theology and religion. The sociological research that does exist largely neglects the impact that social exclusion has on the 'spirituality' of such young men.
2. To develop a new model of British Urban Theology arising from the experience of socially excluded young men.
3. To consider whether an understanding of the experience of unemployed young men in Bromford and the discourse of meaning they articulate can help us to engage with the experience and discourse of meaning of hundreds of thousands of other young men living on comparable urban housing estates across the UK and beyond.
4. To fashion an 'action research' project that had measurable social impact – presenting new opportunities for the young men I have worked with, enabling them to 'tell their story' to those with power in their words and to create a climate within which local people might be able to act to improve the quality of life of residents on the estate.
5. To begin the development of resources that can be used by faith and community projects and youth services to engage in an informed manner with socially excluded young men in a holistic way in other urban contexts.

Whilst my original aim was to work alongside a Black majority youth project, a Muslim majority youth project and a White majority youth project the overwhelming focus of my field-work has been on a White majority urban housing estate in Bromford (east Birmingham). This change of emphasis has been beneficial in three ways:

1. It has enabled me to focus in far greater depth on the experience and spirituality of socially excluded unemployed White and dual-heritage young men, thereby gaining a much more

detailed insight into the group of young adults that have become a central focus for UK government social policy.

2. It has enabled me to consider the significance of religious faith and the nature of spirituality in a largely 'post-religious' context, making the project more directly applicable to hundred of comparable urban estates across the UK.
3. It has enabled me to begin to develop British Urban Theology in new and underdeveloped directions. Since its inception in the early 1970s British Urban Theology has largely neglected the experience of working class White young men and the experience and spirituality of people living on large urban and outer city estates. My developing work is beginning to address these communities and contexts.

Process

From September 2010 – May 2012 I spent an average of two days (and two evenings) each week as a participant observer working alongside the [Worth Unlimited](#) youth workers based on the Bromford housing estate in east Birmingham as they carried out their detached youth work and regular group activities. This ethnographic fieldwork was further informed by my own unsupervised presence on the estate and informed by the methodology of action research. Street-based encounters and conversations were supplemented by semi-structured interviews, documentary photographs and workshops held in June 2011 and September 2011 and during the week long 'Bromford Dreams' graffiti spiritualities project in February 2012. During the sixteen months I spent on the Bromford estate I took a large number of photographs which it is hoped will form the basis of an exhibition in the Neighbourhood Centre in Bromford, a city-centre faith centre, the University of Birmingham and the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. These photographs can be viewed by going to <http://www.flickr.com/photos/chrisshannah/>.

The Bromford Estate

- The 1960s built Bromford estate in east Birmingham is 4 miles from the city centre and is 1 ½ miles from west-east.
- Only 1 road leads onto the estate and just 1 bus [last one from the city centre is at 6.00pm].
- According to the 2001 National Census Bromford had a total 'non-white' population of 10% but a dual-heritage population that is three times the city wide average of 2.9%. The 2011 National Census is likely to show a change to these figures indicating a growing ethnic and religious diversity. However at the time of writing 2011 Census data had not been released (due for July 2012 publication).
- There is 1 doctor's surgery, 1 small children's play area, 2 pubs, 3 small general food stores, 2 bookies, 3 chip shops and 1 Indian restaurant on the estate.

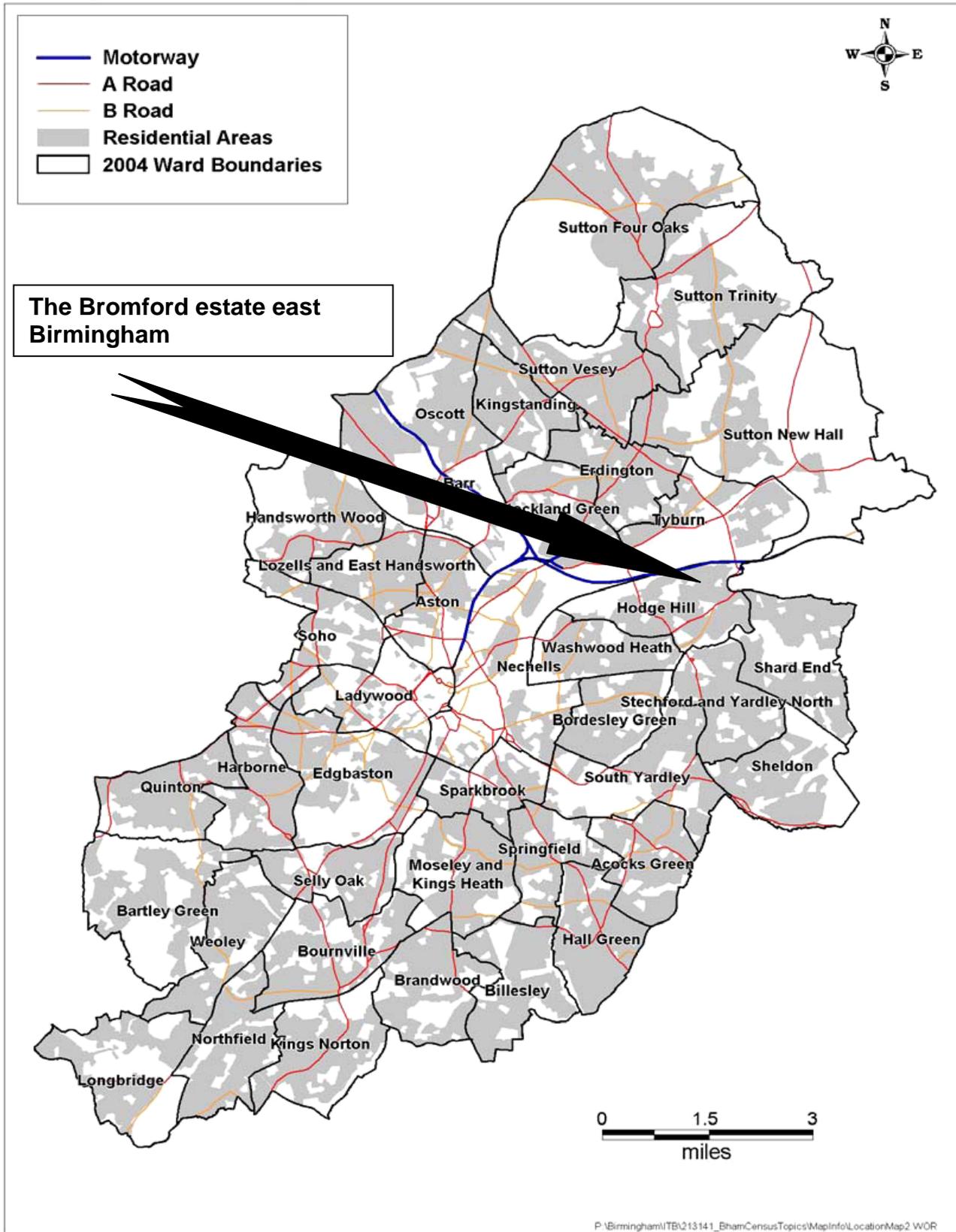
- The estate is ½ mile [in a straight line] from The Fort shopping centre. However there are three barriers which make access impossible: a railway line, a canal and the M6 motorway.
- There is 1 religious building on the estate, an independent evangelical Christian church whose congregation commute to worship. A Roman Catholic Church and an Anglican/URC LEP stand on the edge of the estate. There are rumours that a small Mosque might be built to serve the small Somalian Muslim community.
- There are no significant employers either on the Bromford estate or within walking distance. The area was formerly reliant on manufacturing industry, most of which has closed down in recent years. In November 2011 almost 40% of 16-24 year old men on the estate were registered unemployed and March and April 2012 figures revealed that the area had the second highest level of unemployment in the UK.¹
- More people in Bromford suffer from long-term illness than the average for the city (Baker, Singh and Begaj, 2008, 5 of 8).
- More people die young in Bromford than the Birmingham average, mostly from illnesses which are often related to 'unhealthy' lifestyles, substance abuse and low incomes (chronic liver disease including cirrhosis, coronary heart disease and lung cancer)...(Baker, Singh and Begaj, 2008, 3 of 8).



¹ Web Site <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/nov/17/unemployment-and-employment-statistics-economics#data> accessed 20 June 2012 and House of Commons Library, *Unemployment by Constituency, April 2012*, Research Paper 12/7, 18 April 2012. In terms of youth unemployment in 2012 this is mapped across the UK at Web Site <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/interactive/2011/nov/16/youth-unemployment-map> accessed 20 June 2012.

Where is Bromford?

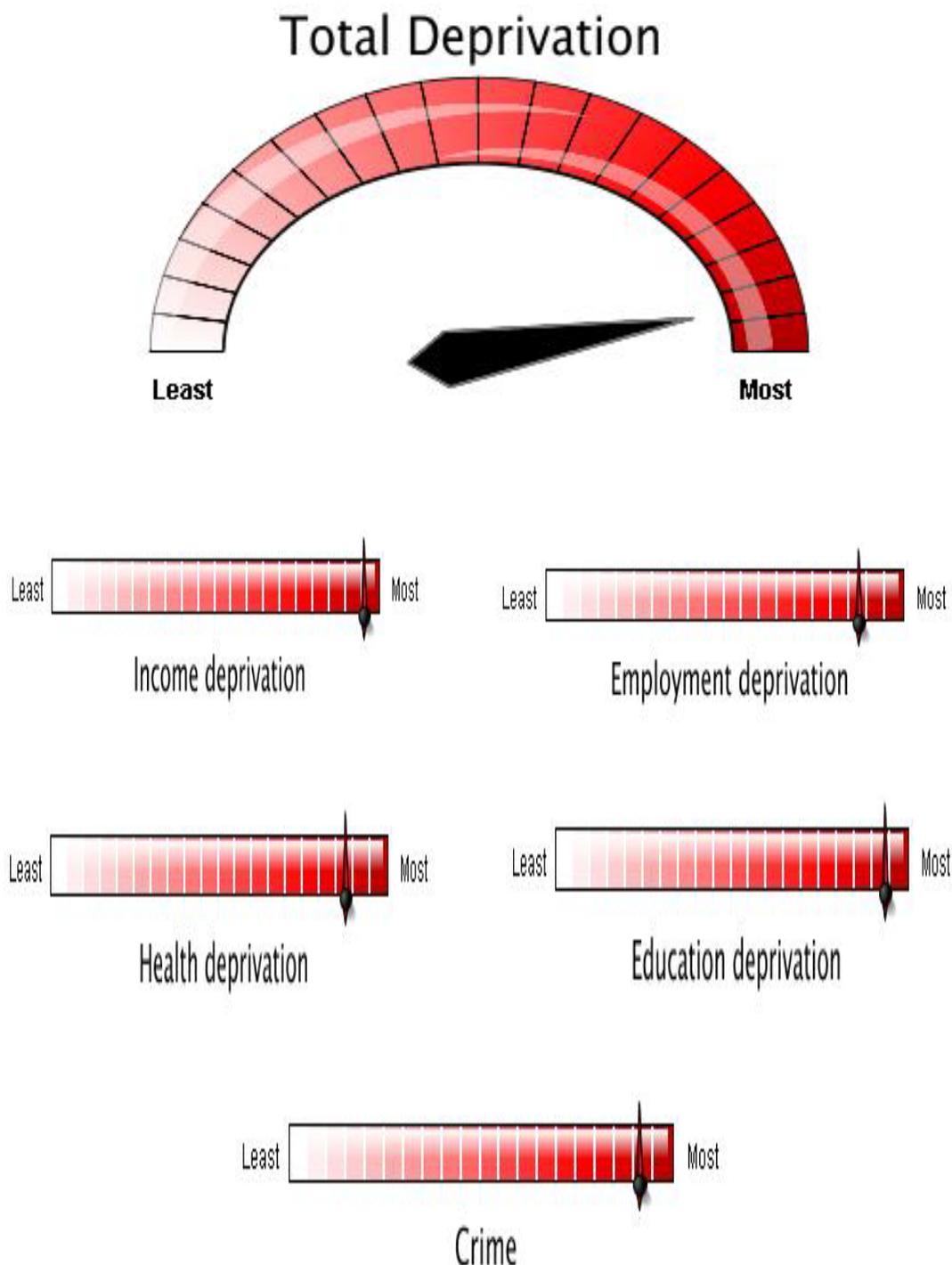
Birmingham Location Map



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Levels of 'Deprivation' in Bromford

According to the 2010 'English Indices of Deprivation' produced annually by the Office for National Statistics (the latest figures available) Bromford is amongst the 2% most multiply deprived of 32,500 local neighbourhoods in England.



Sources: Communities and Local Government; Office for National Statistics; Valuation Office Agency, Indices of Deprivation 2010

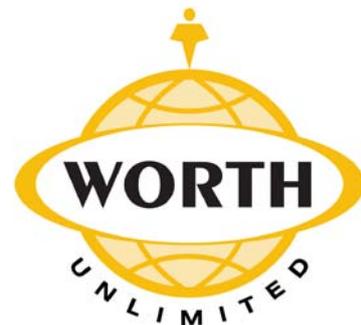
Not the estate 'from hell'...

It would be tempting to depict Bromford as a 'sink estate' as The Daily Mail newspaper did in a 2011 article headlined ['Britain's most workshy community'](#). Such a temptation would be mistaken and would not correspond to the community I have researched for sixteen months. It would also neglect the creativity and selfless community development work that goes on in Bromford such as that spearheaded by the [Worth Unlimited](#) youth project, the Near Neighbours project and the Hodge Hill Unsung Heroes project. It would be to forget that in April 2011 a local area of waste ground was transformed into an adventure playground as a result of the work of local residents.



Hodge Hill Unsung Heroes

*Celebrating Ordinary People who make a Big Difference
in Firs & Bromford, Buckland End and Hodge Hill*



'N.E.E.T' Snapshot Spiritualities

In conversations held between September 2010 and May 2012 the young men alongside whom I have worked have articulated a powerful spirituality of hope and resistance in the face of social exclusion. The quotations below are drawn from a number of far longer conversations and from lyrics that the young men have written in their own rap music –

- I believe in God but He doesn't live round here.'
- 'Bromford's shit and God's a bastard'
- 'I believe in the Bromford. In my music I'm trying to lay down our story'
- 'If you don't get killed you get locked away but there's always a different path to take.'
- 'Love is the basis of reality'
- 'No struggle....no progress....no limits'
- No sword in my hand just my words as weapons. They want to treat like slaves, throw away the key and keep us locked away but I'm about to take the chains off...'
- 'Life is more than money'

'Bromford Dreams' - Graffiti Spiritualities Project

[During February 2012](#) I ran a week-long ['Bromford Dreams' graffiti art project](#) as my fieldwork drew to a close. This initiative arose from a conversation with 'Tek9' and his friend 'Jay' about the artistic graffiti that is emblazoned beneath the M6 and along the side of the canal that runs next to the motorway. The project was an attempt to draw on the young men's creativity in a medium with which they were familiar to create an artistic statement that articulated their experience of life in Bromford, their dreams, their hopes for the future. During the week the young men agreed to include some of their own lyrics on the eight feet by twelve feet graffiti cube which they built, designed and painted themselves - 'No struggle, no progress, no limits...', 'Speak the truth (even if it's against yourself...)', 'Life is more than money...', 'Love is reality.' In a workshop during the week 'Jan' put it this way – 'We all need God, don't matter what name you give Him 'cos we all pray sometime.'

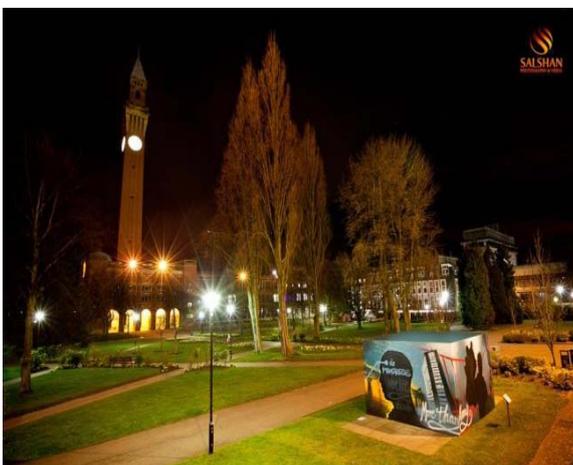
['Bromford Dreams' was a creative partnership between the young men alongside whom I have worked, the University of Birmingham, Arts Council England, the Worth Unlimited youth organisation and the graffiti artist Mohammed 'aerosol' Ali.](#) The project was made possible as a result of generous grants provided by Arts Council England and the University of Birmingham. The project developed in four stages –

1. 'Encounters' – The young men travelled to Sparkbrook (a majority Muslim inner community in Birmingham) to meet the graffiti artist Mohammed 'aerosol' Ali in his gallery ('The Hubb') where they took part in a graffiti art workshop and talked with the artist about why graffiti art was important to them. As part of the day the young men visited a Mosque in Sparkbrook (the first time any of them had been inside a Mosque) and went on a mini-bus tour of public art murals that Mohammed Ali has painted across Birmingham. B.B.C Television interviewed two of the young men, the lead youth worker, Mohammed Ali and myself for the [B.B.C 1 Midlands Today regional news programme](#). The day ended with a short 'Reflections' session where the young talked together about their 'encounters'.
2. 'Designing and Building' – Arising from the 'Encounter' stage the young men spent two days discussing the design of the graffiti cube which the group decided to entitle 'Bromford Dreams'. This design process included a session 'brainstorming' their experience growing up in Bromford, a discussion of the inclusion of their own rap music lyrics on the cube and initial mapping of the design onto a laptop computer. Once the design was agreed the young men built the 12 foot x 8 foot cube (made of heavy duty marine ply wood).
3. 'Painting' – During the final two days of the project the young men painted the 'Bromford Dreams' cube. During this stage I was interviewed about the project for the B.B.C News Web Site.

4. 'Presenting' – On Saturday 18th February a community event was held to unveil and discuss the 'Bromford Dreams' graffiti cube with local residents, religious leaders, youth workers, academics and local politicians.



The 'Bromford Dreams' cube was exhibited outside a local pub on the footpath running alongside the only row of shops on the estate for one month and in March 2012 was [brought to the University of Birmingham where it was on display at the heart of the University campus from March-July 2012](#). On 23rd March 2012 an open-air event was held to formally 'unveil' the cube to the University of Birmingham during which the lead youth worker from Bromford, the artist Mohammed Ali and myself offered short reflections on the project and young man ([Tyrone Morris](#)) half-day performed his own rap music live in front of the cube which was displayed in front of the University library. Following the open-air event a half-day conference was held that was attended by 30 people where the youth worker, the artist and myself presented papers and a young man from Bromford (Joshua Deakin) offered a personal reflection about growing up on the estate.



In July/August 2012 it is planned to take the cube to St Philips Church of England Cathedral at the heart of Birmingham where it will be displayed in the public square outside the Cathedral and form the basis for a number of workshops to be led by myself and the artist Mohammed Ali. Further information including original music, video footage, media coverage, photographs and interview podcasts can be found by going to www.birmingham.ac.uk/bromforddreams

'Grime Gospels'

The graffiti spiritualities project will be followed in early autumn 2012 by a rap music project which it is hoped will be facilitated by the Birmingham based poet Benjamin Zephaniah and the London rap musician Plan B. The project will include song-writing and performance workshops and will lead to the recording of a C.D of original rap music written, performed and produced by young men from Bromford and a series of live concerts to include a performance at the University of Birmingham. The project will also form the basis of a future journal article and part of a chapter in a book that I am currently planning based on my research project.

Undergraduate Teaching

- **Believing in the City** (2010-2011) – 58 students: A new interdisciplinary two semester undergraduate course in urban theology encompassing urban studies, inter-faith studies, social theory, social geography, postcolonial criticism and cultural studies, involving varied assessment approaches and 6 visiting speakers all of whom are engaged in grassroots community work in the city. This was the second most popular undergraduate course in 2010-2011 in terms of student numbers.
- **Political Theology** (2011-2012) – 65 students: A new one semester undergraduate module focusing on the central question of the place of religion in the public sphere and political life and on the development of Political Theology within Christianity. The course introduced students to European Political Theologies, Black Political Theologies, Latin American Liberation Theologies and Islamic Political Thought, as well as examples of current faith-based political engagement and offered students the chance to work independently in groups to present case studies. This was the most popular undergraduate course within the Theology and Religion department in 2011-2012 in terms of student numbers and post-module feedback. Comments included, 'This is what I came to University to do!' and 'The best thing we've done in our degree.'
- **Undergraduate Dissertation Supervision** (2011-2012) – Since September 2011 a total of 8 undergraduate students have approached me to ask if I can supervise their dissertations. I was able to offer agreed informal support and advice to these students and was the sole

supervisor of one student who considered theological responses to the 2011 English 'riots' and co-supervisor of a further 3 student dissertations in Islamic Studies.

Postgraduate Teaching

- **M.A Supervision** (2011-2012) – I supervised one M.A student dissertation (Philosophy of Religion and Ethics) on 'Northern Soul Music as 'Religious' Devotion'. Since October 2010 I have been approached by a number 3rd year undergraduate students asking if there is an M.A programme in 'Faith and Urban Life'.
- **PhD Supervision** (2011-2012) – I have co-supervised one Doctoral Research Student (focusing in Black-British Gospel Music) and was an advisor to a further Doctoral Research Student (focusing on social exclusion and urban youth spiritualities). Over the last 12 months I have been approached by 8 people asking if I could supervise their PhD research into religion and urban life.
- I Received the Head of the School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion's 'Award for Excellence in Teaching' March 2012 (an annual award given on the basis of nominations by students and staff).

Community Education

Birmingham Urban Theology Forum **September 2009-May 2012**

With the support of Professor Martin Stringer I established the Birmingham Urban Theology Forum before the formal start of my research fellowship. The Forum is an example of knowledge exchange. It provides a space for critical reflection on key topical challenges that confront people working for faith or community groups in the city as which raise key theological and theoretical questions for academics in theology and religion and sociology. The Forum has enabled the development of a three ways dialogue: between University and community, between practitioners and academics and between theologians and sociologists and has met three times a year since the beginning of my research fellowship. Since 2009 the Forum has engaged with 200+ workers and volunteers within faith and community groups across Birmingham through our quarterly workshops and my own Blog 'Faith in an Urban World' (<http://faithinanurbanworld.blogspot.com>). Since 2009 Urban Theology Forum seminars have included:

- 'Contested City Space – Theory and Theology in Critical Dialogue'
- 'Beggars of Lahore – Begging and Religion in the Global City'

- 'Picturing Faith in the City' (graffiti art, documentary photography and cityscapes)
- 'Women Negotiating Faith in the City'
- 'Connecting Communities – Faith, Politics and Social Capital'
- 'Demonising Urban Youth'
- 'Faith, Hope, Uncertainty and the Credit Crunch'

Recent Urban Theology Forum seminars have been podcast. Click on link to listen –

- ['Picturing Faith in the City'](#)
- ['Beggars of Lahore – Begging and Religion in the Global City'](#)

To find out more about the Urban Theology Forum go to my web page on the School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion web site (<http://www.ptr.bham.ac.uk/staff/shannahan.shtml>) and click on 'Urban Theology'.

Community Education Pilot Programme

Due to my focus on my Research Project, teaching within the University and attempting to secure a post beyond May 2012 progress in the further development of the 'Faith & Urban Life' Community Education Programme has been limited. It will however form a central part of my projected work beyond May 2012. This will initially take the form of a pilot series of workshops during the autumn of 2012 focusing on the theme 'Signs of a Faithful City'.

Grants Awarded

2011 - 2012:	£3,000.00 from Arts Council England (graffiti art project)
2009 – 2012:	£50,000.00 from British Methodist Church (research fellowship funding)
2009 – 2012:	£3,000.00 from the Grimmitt Trust (supporting urban theology fieldwork)

Research Fellowship Outputs and Outcomes

Books

- *Power to the People: A Theology of Community Organizing* (Routledge, 2013).
<http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415890939/>
- *Voices from the Borderland: Re-imagining Cross-Cultural Urban Theology in the 21st Century*, (Equinox, 2010).
<http://www.equinoxpub.com/equinox/books/showbook.asp?bkid=432&keyword%2520>

Articles

- 'When the edge becomes the centre: How can a hermeneutics of 'insignificance' resource faith-based activism in a plural public sphere?' in the *International Journal of Public Theology* (2013)
- 'Blurred Worlds – Spirituality and Diversity in the 21st century City' in the journal *Crucible* (April 2013)
- 'Aerosol Icons – Graffiti art and urban spiritualities in a 'post-religious' century' in *Political Theology* (2013).
- 'Looking for a N.E.E.T Spirituality', in the *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, (2013).
- 'N.E.E.T Believers? An analysis of 'belief' on an urban housing estate', *Culture and Religion*, (autumn 2012).
- [Ideas Lab podcast](#) - Social Exclusion and Urban Youth Spirituality (March 2012)
- [Birmingham Brief](#) ' Troubled Families or Broke in Britain?', commentary piece on UK government 'Troubled Families' programme (June 2012)
- 'Negotiating Faith on the Coventry Road: British-Muslim Youth Identities in the 'Third Space', in the *Journal Culture and Religion*, 12.3, Autumn 2011, pp237-257.
- [Faith & Urban Life](#) (November 2010) – Interviewed by Mohammed 'aerosol' Ali on the Soul City Radio Show, Unity FM , Birmingham [podcast available]
- [Families and Neighborliness: A Postcard from the Community](#) paper for the 'Faiths for the City: Making a Difference' conference, November 2009, University of Birmingham.
- 'To Serve the Present Age: plotting new directions for inner-city work', (2008) A Consultation Report written for the Birmingham (Sutton Park) Circuit of the Methodist Church.
- 'Babel or Pentecost? Faith, Difference and Freedom in the Twenty-First Century. The Challenge for Public Theology' Article Published in the *International Journal of Public Theology*, Volume 1.3, November 2007, pp364-381.
- 'Methodism as Liberative Praxis' in the book *Methodism and the Future* (London: Cassell, 1999).

Book Reviews in the following academic journals

- Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations
- International Journal of Public Theology
- British Journal of Theological Education

Conference Papers

- November 2011: American Academy of Religion, San Francisco, delivered paper entitled: 'Boundaries and Bridges: Graffiti Art, Rap Music and N.E.E.T Spiritualities'.
- April 2011: British Sociological Association Conference, London, delivered paper entitled: 'Looking for a N.E.E.T Spirituality – Social Exclusion and 'Belief' Amongst Urban Youth'
- April 2010: Association of American Geographers national Conference, Washington D.C, delivered paper, 'Negotiating Faith on the Coventry Road: Young People, Religion and Place'.
- November 2009: Faiths for the City: Making a Difference Conference, delivered paper entitled, 'Families and Neighbourliness: A Postcard from the Community, University of Birmingham.
- July 2008: Institute for Urban Theology: Key-note speaker: Urban Theology: A Critique.

Workshops – 2010-2012

- June 2012: 'Graffiti Art and Youth Spirituality', University of Birmingham Community Day.
- June 2012: 'Looking for a NEET Spirituality' – 'The State we're in – Issues of Social Justice' Jewish-Christian Relations Study Day, Singers Hill Synagogue, Birmingham.
- June 2012: 'Social Exclusion and Hip-Hop Spirituality', King Edwards School for Girls, Birmingham.
- May 2012: 'Graffiti Spiritualities', Student Methodist Society University of Birmingham.
- March 2012: 'Bromford Dreams – Social Exclusion and Graffiti Spiritualities', University of Birmingham.
- January 2012: 'British-Muslim Youth Identities in the Third Space', Islamic Studies Seminar, University of Birmingham.
- June 2011: 'Believing in Bromford', The Hub youth centre, Bromford Birmingham.
- April 2011: Support worker on the community consultation day 'Bromford Dreams'
- November 2010: 'Picturing Faith in the City', Birmingham Urban Theology Forum

'Bromford Dreams' Graffiti Project Outcomes and Impact 2012

1. Visit to ['The Hubb' – Mohammed Ali's art gallery](#), Sparkbrook Birmingham (14th February 2012)

2. Visit to Sparkhill Islamic Centre for the young men from Bromford (14th February 2012).
3. [‘Bromford Dreams’ cube](#) – built, designed and painted by unemployed young men from Bromford.
4. Young men from Bromford performed their own rap music at an event held by the artist Mohammed Ali in his gallery in Sparkbrook (Sunday 19th February).
5. Bromford Dreams cube exhibited on Bromford estate (18th February – 13th March 2012)
6. [BBC Midlands Today TV report](#) (15th February).
7. [BBC News online web site feature](#) (15th February 2012).
8. [UK Wired News feature](#) (15th February 2012).
9. Birmingham Mail article (15th February 2012).
10. [Bromford Dreams You Tube film](#)
11. [Bromford Dreams Flickr photograph album](#) (from February 2012)
12. [‘Bromford Dreams’ web site](#)
13. [Chris Shannahan, Ideas Lab podcast](#) (5th March 2012) University of Birmingham
14. Bromford Dreams cube exhibited at centre of University of Birmingham campus (March-July 2012).
15. [Bromford Dreams welcome event and seminar](#), University of Birmingham (23rd March 2012) – including podcasts of seminar presentations.
16. Live performance of [‘Story of my life’](#) by Tyrone Morris from Bromford at University of Birmingham (23rd March 2012)
17. [University of Birmingham web site, home page feature and picture](#) (March 2012)
18. Chris Shannahan, Bromford Dreams [column on the blog of the journal Political Theology](#) (March and April 2012)
19. [Bromford Dreams feature on Birmingham Methodist District web site](#) (March 2012)
20. Feature on Bromford Dreams in University of Birmingham Islamic Society, March 2012, issue 1.
21. [Bromford Dreams feature in ‘Buzz’](#), University of Birmingham (April 2012)
22. PDF of [‘Bromford Dreams’ project report –Arts Council Web Site](#)

Outcomes and Impact beyond May 2012

1. Establishment of regular dialogue meetings between the young men and the M.P for Birmingham Hodge Hill (the Parliamentary constituency within which Bromford is sited)
2. Interview on Carl Chinn show Radio WM (16th September 2012)

3. Bromford Dreams' cube exhibited at St Philips Anglican Cathedral and accompanying seminar series to be led by Chris Shannahan (August /September 2012)
4. Follow up 'Bromford Dreamers' Music Project (autumn 2012)
5. Podcasts of interviews with the young men to be posted on the University of Birmingham web site as a learning resource for those engaged in faith-based and statutory youth work alongside young men on urban housing estates.
6. Recording of a CD of rap music written by young men on the Bromford estate

Projected Outputs and Outcomes

1. **Photographic exhibition** in faith and community centres across Birmingham, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and the University of Birmingham.
2. **Co-authored book - 'Graffiti Art and Urban Youth Spiritualities'** - to be written as a collaborative exercise between myself, the artist Mohammed Ali, young men from Bromford and the youth workers from the estate.
3. **Resource CD ROM/Workbook** – to be produced as a resource for faith groups, third sector and statutory agencies working alongside socially excluded urban youth.
4. **Reports and Recommendations** – Resource and Educational reports for Birmingham Faith Leaders Group, Birmingham Methodist District, The President of the British Methodist Conference, The Anglican Bishop of Birmingham, The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham, Birmingham City Council and the University of Birmingham
5. **Single authored book - 'Social Exclusion and Youth Spiritualities in the City'** to be written arising from my research project with a view to completion and publication in 2014.

Internet Based Work

Political Theology Blog

Monthly column for the Blog of the Journal Political Theology
<http://www.politicaltheology.com/blog>

Own Web Site

<http://faithinanurbanworld.blogspot.com>

University of Birmingham Staff Web Page

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/tr/shannahan-chris.aspx>

Graffiti Spiritualities Project Web Site

www.birmingham.ac.uk/bromforddreams

Teaching Fellowship

Towards the end of my Postdoctoral Research Fellowship I was appointed as a Teaching Fellow in Urban Theology on a half-time short term contract which took effect from 1st May 2012 and is currently due to expire on 12th December 2012. This exciting post has already begun to present new opportunities for me to develop my research and teaching further. The post revolves around seven elements:

1. **Assistant Director Doctor in Practical Theology programme**
 - Lead Study Days – 28th May, September (Induction day), December
 - Supervisor for four first year DPT students
 - Teach at DPT Summer School – 12th-14th July (Chester University).
 - Teach at Autumn two day seminar –October 2012 (Chester University)
2. **PhD Supervision**
 - Thesis exploring 'Women, Religion and Identity'
3. **Charing of PhD Vivas as required**
4. **Teach 'Believing in the City' 3rd year Undergraduate Theology and Religion module**
5. **Supervision of 5 undergraduate Dissertations**
6. **Development of Community Education Programme arising from Social Exclusion and Youth Spiritualities Research Project**
7. **Development of Bromford Dreams Music Project**

The Future.....

At the time of writing this final Research Fellows report I am not sure about what the future will hold beyond my current Teaching Fellowship. A number of interesting possibilities are under discussion but none are formalised.

It is my hope that I will be able to secure a permanent academic post at the University of Birmingham revolving round:

- The further development of engaged research into religion and urbanisation, urban religious diversity, faith-based political engagement and urban youth spiritualities.

- The further development of courses in Urban Theology and the study of Religion and Politics at undergraduate and postgraduate levels within the School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion at the University of Birmingham
- The full development and launch of a 'Faith and Urban Life' community education programme aimed at faith groups and community organisations initially across the West Midlands.
- The development of stronger links between the School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion at the University of Birmingham and a diverse range of grassroots faith and community groups across the city Birmingham.

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June 2012