RGS-IBG Innovative Geography Teaching Grant Report 2018

**Inspirational Places, Changing Places**

**Alan Parkinson and Dr. Peter Knight**

**Abstract**

The updated ‘A’ level specifications for first teaching from 2016 introduced a stronger focus on the theme of ‘place’. The grant has enabled work on the creation of a resource which takes some ideas from a unit called ‘Inspirational Landscapes’, taught as a third year undergraduate module (level 6) as part of a BA/ BSc Hons. Geography degree pathway at Keele University. This has been taken as the inspiration for a series of planned resources which connect with, and cover the key content of the ‘A’ level Geography topic of ‘Changing Places’, hence the overall title of the project.

The work has connected with the Places section of the AQA ‘A’ level specification in particular as Alan Parkinson was the co-author and editor of a textbook for this specification.

Following discussions, and a preliminary planning and reading phase/ literature review, an overall plan for a ‘Scheme of Work’ was developed, which went through several iterations. The contents have been linked the work of a number of authors, so there is also a secondary aim to introduce teachers to the work of a number of key authors on our relationship with place, and film-makers and poets who also produce work on the theme of place.

A website was produced, and launched during mid-2017. The project website can be seen on the link below. Some elements of the resource are still being developed, following some trialing of materials with students during this academic year:

<https://aparkinson51.wixsite.com/inspirationalplaces>

The website has a series of sections which can be seen in the navigation below:

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**Description of the project**

The project is planned to exist in the longer term as a website, from where teachers and educators can access teaching materials (and supporting resources). There will also be a reading list and suitable references to support teachers. The links in the document below are ‘live’, and will take you to the relevant sections of the website.

[1. What’s it all about? – (re)presentation of Place](https://aparkinson51.wixsite.com/inspirationalplaces/session-1)

Definition(s) of place

* Types of place(s)

[2. We begin by being lost.](https://aparkinson51.wixsite.com/inspirationalplaces/session-2)

* Rebecca Solnit and the role of maps
* Mental maps / Hugh Brody and Northern cultures
* Atlas of Experience

[3. Temporary (created), 'natural' and cultural places](https://aparkinson51.wixsite.com/inspirationalplaces/session-3)

* Temporary places: Glastonbury Festival
* 'Natural' places: Cley Marsh
* Created places: Northumberlandia

[4. Place and space in art, music and film](https://aparkinson51.wixsite.com/inspirationalplaces/session-4)

* Representations of landscape in culture
* Gamespaces - Minecraft and other games
* 'Isle of Dogs' - Megasaki and Trash Island

[5. The idea of North (and South)](https://aparkinson51.wixsite.com/inspirationalplaces/session-5)

* North-South Divide(s)
* Simon Armitage and the idea of the North
* Midlands

[6. Highs and Lows](https://aparkinson51.wixsite.com/inspirationalplaces/session-6)

* Mountain Landscapes (the highs)
* The Fens (and the lows)

[7. Edgelands](https://aparkinson51.wixsite.com/inspirationalplaces/session-7)

* Boundaries - urban and rural border including Green Belts

[8. Wet and Dry](https://aparkinson51.wixsite.com/inspirationalplaces/session-8)

* Islands - George Mackay Brown, St. Kilda
* Dry spaces

[9. A place of safety – risky and protected places](https://aparkinson51.wixsite.com/inspirationalplaces/session-9)

* ​Risky places

Fieldwork visit - some guidance will appear here linked to the NEA

[10. Your place – final project as an assessment](https://aparkinson51.wixsite.com/inspirationalplaces/final-project)

**Key findings**

This is not a research project as such, so there are no ‘research findings’, but we have had numerous discussions with colleagues, and there has been interest in the approach which connects academic and school geography: this is seen as an area that should be developed further.

I have also had discussions regarding the project with some authors on place, including Tim Dee, who has written the books ‘Four Fields’ and ‘Ground Work’.

There was also interest from our school archivist, who has been involved in projects exploring and mapping the development of The Fens.

There is a growing interest in place, and we have identified some suitable accompanying resources, which will form part of the final resource.

**Final budget**

* Purchase of textbooks on the theme of place to inform particular aspects of the work.
* *A free website hosting platform: Wix, was used to avoid costs of hosting the website and resources once completed.*
* Contribution towards travel to events where the work was presented, including the GA Conference in Sheffield
* Nominal amounts towards time taken for conversations and work on the resources

**Incident report**

No incidents of significance.

Efforts have been taken to ensure that all images used are copyright free, and the authors’ own images are used for website assets.

**Presentations**

The work was presented at the Geographical Association’s conference on 7th April 2017, in a well-attended session.

See this page <https://www.geography.org.uk/Sheffield-2018-session-downloads> and look at Lecture Plus 36 to access session resources and downloads and the presentation that was used: <https://www.slideshare.net/GeoBlogs/innovative-geography-teaching-grant-presentation>

The work was also mentioned at a number of other events:

* Teachmeet Perse School: September 2017
* Teachmeet RGS: November 2017
* Teachmeet GeographyIcons: June 2018 – I discussed some of the ideas in the project with Dr. Phil Jones of the University of Birmingham at this event

There are some forthcoming presentations at the Practical Pedagogies event in November 2018 in Cologne, and the Scottish Association of Geography Teachers’ conference in Stirling in October 2018.

**Publications**

The work has been included in several Webwatch columns of the Geographical Association’s ‘GA Magazine’ with a 5500+ circulation.

Published in GA Independent School SIG newsletter: <https://www.geography.org.uk/write/MediaUploads/Get%20involved/GAISSIG_NotesandQueriesSpring2018.pdf>

Many blog posts were added to the LivingGeography blog, which has now had 5 million views in total.

A Pinterest board has been curated for images related to ideas explored in the project: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/geoblogs/inspirational-places-igt/>

Alan Parkinson

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