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Psychogeographical counter tour guiding: Theory and practice

Dr Alexander J Bridger
University of Huddersfield

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Aims of session

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- Explain the terms psychogeography, counter-tourism and critical psychology
- My approach to counter tour-guiding and the relations to mainstream tour-guiding
- Discuss past counter tours conducted
- Reflect on past work and future plans

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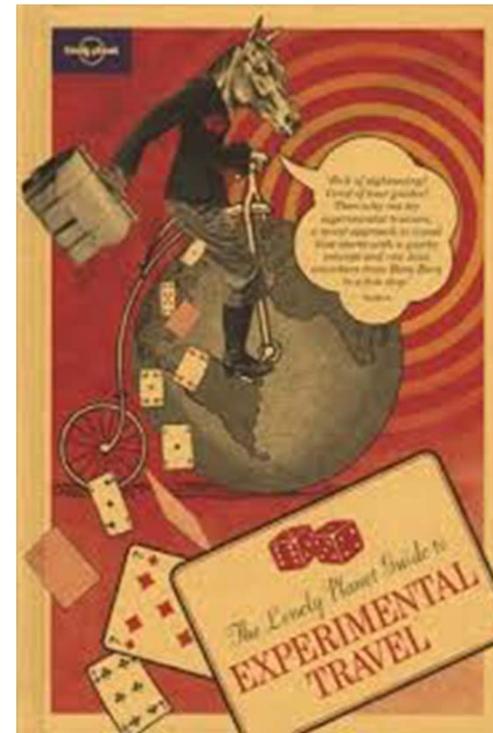
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Counter tourism ... what is it and why do it?

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- History, heritage and power
- It's fun, it's a different way to engage with places and you can learn/see things you wouldn't ordinarily learn/see in mainstream tours
- Group activity and the question of change ... ?



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Theoretical resources – critical psychology

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- Limits of environmental and social psychologies
- Turning towards a ‘politics of place’
- Drawing on ideas from cultural geography, critical psychology, community psychology and outside of academia ...

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Psychogeography and the situationists

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- ‘Psychogeography could set for itself the study of the precise law and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviours of individuals’
(Debord, 1955: n.p).



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Counter touring around Britain on a pedalo University of HUDDERSFIELD

- Ludic games
- Dérive
- Detournement
- Creating 'situations'



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Psychogeography in the UK

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- Exploring places such as Manchester, Leeds, Huddersfield, London, Sheffield, Plymouth, etc.
- Various psychogeography groups and psychogeographers
- What they do and why ...

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A 'how to' guide to psychogeographical tour guiding

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- Choose a location, i.e. Manchester, UK.
- Begin with a theme or a topic you'd like to explore such as surveillance and control (CCTV), consumerism and capitalism (layout of shops in aftermath of IRA bomb) or investigating a period in history (Peterloo Massacre)
- Choose a psychogeography approach like a dice walk or map swap
- Consider questions such as: What does it feel like where you walk? How do you engage with your surroundings? Do you notice any notable changes in ambience? What do you think of the environment? What do you think needs to be changed in the environment? What should the environment look like?
- Document and write up the *dérive*
- Conduct further *dérives*!

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Counter-touring around Manchester

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- My 'Visualising Manchester...' paper
- Site specific study – post IRA bomb and gentrification
- Themes: consumerism and privacy; surveillance and control
- Considering the term 'tourism'



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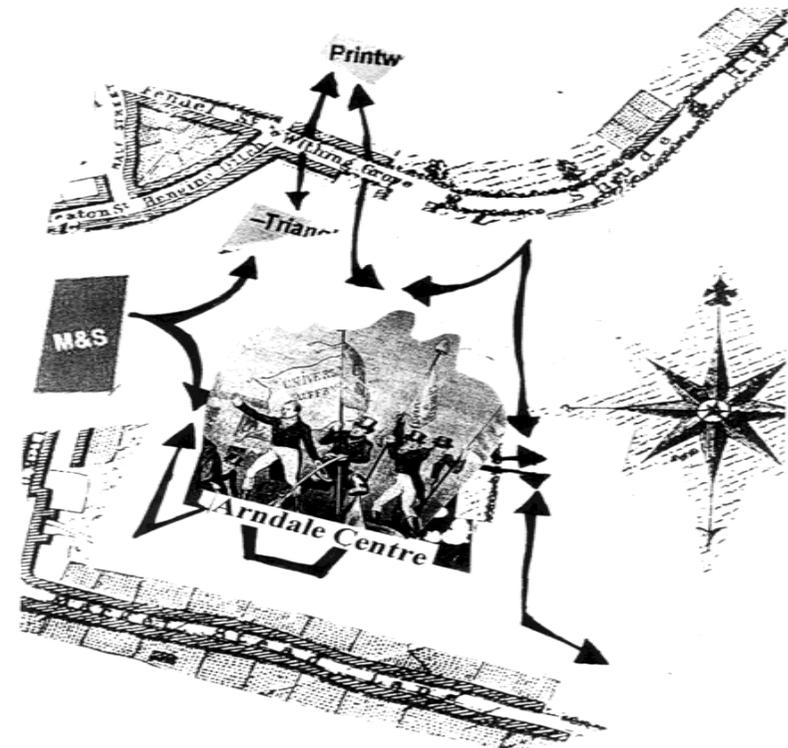
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- Not a 'garden path analysis' (Richards, 1998)
- Extract from dérive report: 'So then having walked endlessly around the Arndale Centre, the food court and the Arndale Market, I decided to walk through the glass tunnel to the building which houses Selfridges and Marks and Spencers. On route, I encountered many visual and textual motifs of consumerism such as 'The centre of your city', being encouraged to 'Shop. Eat. Relax. Treat' and to consider 'shopping, fashion, eating and drinking'. Here is evidenced a new Western discourse of consumption which can be linked to individualism and consumer citizenship' (Bridger, 2014: 88).



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- Contributing to psychogeographical studies
- Form, function and use of neoliberal environments
- Political analyses of environments
- Need for developing further psychogeographical work
- Research making connections with academic, activist and art practice ... participatory research methods and making our work address political issues.

Future work

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- Teaching, writing, psychogeographical events and informing public consultations?

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- Blockholm – A new Stockholm in Minecraft: ‘Blockholm is an exact replica of Stockholm reproduced in Minecraft. All districts, islands, streets, bridges, parks and squares are depicted as in real life with one big exception - we have deleted all the city buildings. Only plots are left. On October 24, we start to build Block Holm - a new Stockholm in Minecraft! Join in and take the first sod! Old Town is the first’ (<http://www.blockholm.com/participate>).



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- The future for tour-guiding ... ?
- Or deradicalisation and recuperation ... ?
- What about 'creating situations' and revolution ... ?

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Any questions?

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