

Ritning till skolhus af trä, för ambulatoriska skolor med 30, 40 och 50 barn.

Fig. 1.  
Framsida.

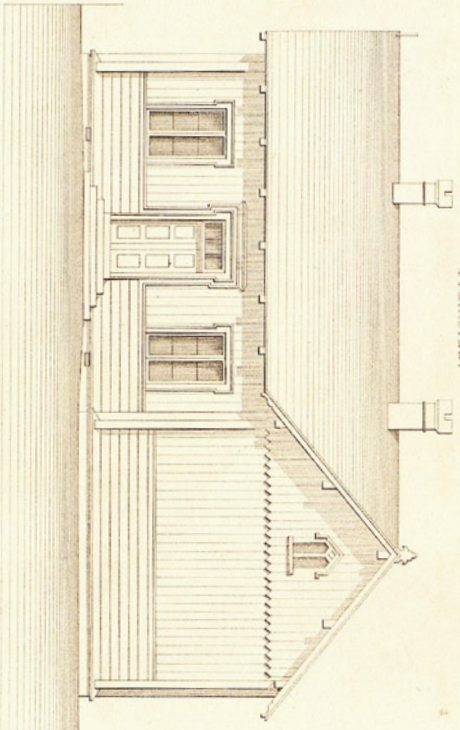


Fig. 2.  
Genomsnitt A-B.

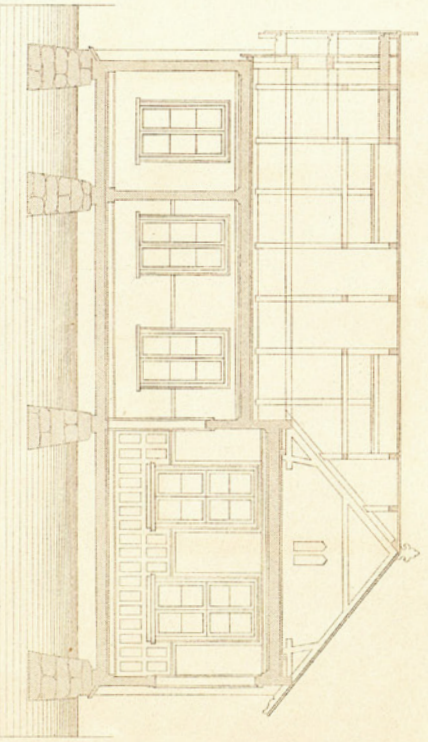


Fig. 3.

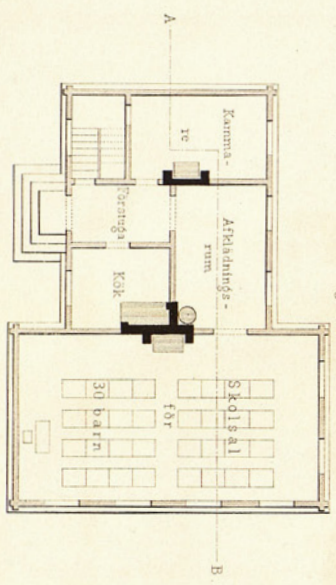


Fig. 4.

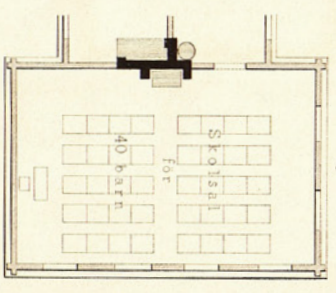
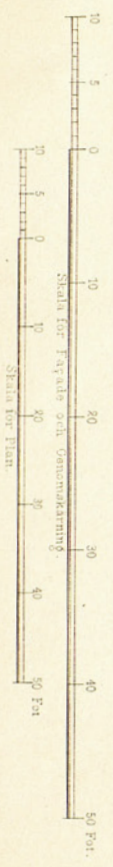
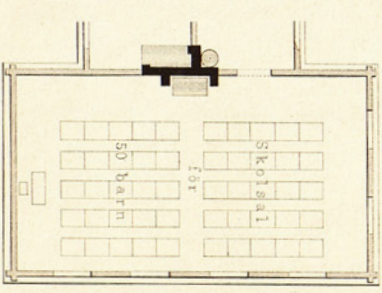


Fig. 5.



— Wilhelm Kardemark, »Grasping sacred space: On geographical perspectives in teaching religion«

— A B S T R A C T —

This article discusses geographical approaches in religious studies and how such approaches may be taken in the classroom. The point of departure for the discussion is scientific literature and experiences as a university teacher. It is argued that a geographical approach to teaching religion allows one to address »lived religion« and questions of religion's materiality.

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— Keywords: religious education; teaching methodologies; religious studies; geography of religion; lived religion

— <http://lir.gu.se/LIRJ>



■—Wilhelm Kardemark—■

■—GRASPING SACRED SPACE. On geographical perspectives in teaching religion—■

■—INTRODUCTION—■

»Location, location, location.« That was the answer my high school economics teacher Mr. Baker gave to himself when rhetorically asking what the three things were that you needed to be conscious of when buying a property. Of course, buying a property and studying religion are worlds apart. Yet, I believe Mr. Baker was onto something crucial, namely the importance of the meanings that are associated with a certain place, the impact of demographic and economic change, and issues about how and by whom a place is used.

Geographical perspectives on religion have been attracting interest of late. Stanley D. Brunn's recent anthology *The Changing World Religion map: Sacred Places, Identities, Practices and Politics*, with its more than 200 articles, is one vivid example.<sup>1</sup> With its section on »Education and changing world-views«, it is also an example of how research on the school subject religious education (RE) has approached geographical issues. Question discussed include the place of religion in schools and curricula and the relation between the education system, the state and religious actors, community and identity. These are all important issues for academic inquiries, since the place of religious education frames and has an impact on what can be taught and how. The impact of geographical location on RE can be seen in the recent study *Crossings and Crosses: Borders, Education, and Religions in Northern Europe*.<sup>2</sup> Such studies are important and can further our understanding of school systems and how local context can affect education. However, from a teacher's viewpoint, what I believe is missing are inquiries into how geographical perspectives can be integrated into education on religion and discussions of teaching methodologies informed by theories of religion and geography.

Attempts to include geographical perspectives into teaching issues relevant to the study of religion are mainly to be found in publications on the teaching of geography. Yet even in this academic context, publications are rare. In one article from the mid-1990s, the geographical diffusion of Islam is referred to as an »excellent example« of a spatial diffusion process useful in teaching the latter.<sup>3</sup> However, the article does not ask how religion may be taught through geography, but rather how the history of religion can be used for teaching geography. Of greater interest is Veronica della Dora's more recent article

»Engaging Sacred Space: Experiments in the Field.«<sup>4</sup> Della Dora, who works in the field of human geography, draws on theories of sacred space and experiences of field trips with geography students to study sacred space in Barcelona. Her discussion of how sacred space can be approached in university education is also relevant for teaching religious studies.

The limited amount of research on how geographical perspectives on religion may affect teaching and methodology necessitates further studies. In the following, I discuss how insights gained from geographical studies of religion may be applied to the teaching of religious studies at university level, and in particular to the training of RE-teacher students. In doing so, I aim to shed light on three seminal questions for planning education: the question *why* a specific topic should be included in teaching, *what* the teaching should focus on, and *how* teaching can be carried through.<sup>5</sup>

In the next section, I provide an answer to the question as to why geographical perspectives are important when designing education in religious studies. In the sections after that, I present two types of study, which in different ways have dealt with issues of religion and geography. This should by no means be understood as a comprehensive overview of studies that integrate geographical perspectives into the study of religion. Rather, the point is to show how geographical issues have been approached in the study of religion, and to draw conclusions regarding the teaching religious studies. Beginning at the micro level, I look at theoretical perspectives on sacred space. Under the heading »Teaching the meaning and making of religious places«, I discuss these theories' implications for teaching religious studies. Moving to the macro level, I then give examples of studies that have mapped and studied religion in specific geographical areas. Following this theoretical section, I turn to the question as to how and why studies like these can work as a resource for teaching.

The arguments offered are highly tentative. As a teacher, I am well aware that it is impossible to form a methodology for teaching that is applicable everywhere and in all its parts. Teaching must always be designed in relation to local challenges, constraints and resources. Hence, the micro and the macro perspectives should be viewed as two levels in a loose framework for integrating geographical perspectives into religious education.

In relation to della Dora's article, the text has a somewhat larger and different scope. Whereas della Dora's work explores and discusses the benefits of field studies in education on sacred space, I engage in broader questions on geographical perspectives in the study of religion.

— WHY GEOGRAPHY? —

A central task for the academic field of geography is to explore understandings and production of places.<sup>6</sup> As such, it is one way to introduce students to how »cultures make sense of space«, in the words of the cultural geographer Mike Crang.<sup>7</sup> Exploring understandings of places and learning general theories on how a place can be studied is not a motif in religious education, either at university level or in high schools. However, helping students, and in particular RE teacher students, to consider geography when approaching religion is, I believe, crucial. By bringing geographical perspectives onto education on religion, it is possible to approach questions concerning the materiality of religion and how religion is lived and practiced in the everyday life, as well as socioeconomic and demographic factors shaping religion. Geographical perspectives remind us that religion takes place somewhere; people experience and interact with places and travel to religious sites as part of their religious practice. This provides an important corrective to perspectives that tend to intellectualize religion by accentuating faith and dogmas, while downplaying what is sometimes termed »lived religion«.<sup>8</sup>

Geographical perspectives can be one way of moderating understandings of religion as something that exists merely in the minds of adherents, or as something revolving around »the man, the book and the faith«, in the words of the scholar of the pedagogics of religion Jenny Berglund.<sup>9</sup> Here, Berglund is referring to Swedish RE textbooks; elsewhere she has discussed how Lutheran Protestantism influences how religion is taught in Swedish schools. She describes RE in Sweden as »marinated« in Lutheran Protestantism, since teachers and pupils »consistently talked about religion as 'faith.'<sup>10</sup> One way to counter this »intellectualizing« tendency, which is probably not unique to Swedish schools, is to develop and use theory on the connection between religion and geography. This can, for example, help teach fundamental yet complex questions concerning the construction of sacred places. Studying the embodied, ritualized, practices in local churches or mosques can be one way to further understandings of how religion is »done« in everyday life, and how places are made sacred through actions and interaction with other people and the built environment. For teachers, theory can indicate what questions are relevant, what materials students might collect and work with, and how they might approach this material. For RE teacher students, experience with different types of material and perspective is crucial, given the intellectualized view of religion Berglund points out. If we wish the next generation of high school teachers to teach religion in a nuanced and theoretically sound way, it would be wise to provide them experiences and knowledge of methodologies that include the lived and material dimensions of religion.

— SACRED SPACE AS HUMAN CONSTRUCT —

Through the investigation of the construction of sacred space, Kim Knott and other religious studies scholars have shown how sacred space can be regarded as the outcome of human labor and mundane forces. In this respect, the production of sacred space does not differ from the production of other types of space and place. Hence, the construction of sacred space needs to be understood in relation to competing interpretations of spaces and localities and struggles for power. This approach, which emphasizes the relational and situational character of sacred space, contrasts with phenomenological perspectives on the sacred and on sacred space.<sup>11</sup>

While phenomenological perspectives on space can provide a starting point for inquiries into experiences of space and the sacred, they can also obscure how sacred space and sacred places come into being. As David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal have argued, the phenomenological approach to understanding sacred space can be described as a »mystification«, since it understands the sacred as interrupting or manifesting itself in space, as appearing at places and striking individuals. This essentialist understanding of the sacred, and hence sacred space, fails to explain or analyze how the sacred is constructed, and thus ignores human agency and cultural and societal forces. It understands the sacred as a force that people can experience and be affected by, not as something that is produced through human interaction and labor. It is a perspective that lends itself to analyses that fail to investigate the influence of power relations.<sup>12</sup>

Chidester and Linenthal point to three dimensions crucial to sacred space and its construction. First, the »ritual« character of sacred space, its emergence as a product of ritual actions that they describe as »a particular type of embodied, spatial practice.« For Chidester and Linenthal, ritualized actions embody and act out the way »things 'ought to be.«<sup>13</sup> As formalized and repetitive symbolic performances, they contribute to the construction of sacred space.

Second, sacred space is »significant space« that, according to Chidester and Linenthal, »focuses on crucial questions of what it means to be human in a meaningful world.«<sup>14</sup> Sacred places materializes understandings of what it means to be human in relation to others through the classification of persons. These places endow or reinforce identity by informing you of who you are in relation to other human, superhuman and subhuman entities. Not everyone can enter all parts of a sacred site, and some persons are regarded as unclean or in other ways unworthy of entering into contact with the sacred. This is most obvious in connection with traditional religious sites, where distinctions in terms of gender and degrees of initiation are common, and where cleansing rituals often take place.

Third, sacred space is »contested space.« One reason for this is its spatial character, which entangles it in competition over how it can and should be used. This is by no means a unique feature of sacred space: space may be viewed as a resource that can be organized and controlled in different ways. Moreover, sacred space is contested and open to a number of different competing interpretations, something that becomes particularly obvious when a certain place is threatened by desecration. Threats of desecration or radically altered meanings make the meanings of a place apparent and may indeed amplify its sacred status.<sup>15</sup>

#### — TEACHING THE MAKING AND MEANINGS OF RELIGIOUS PLACES —

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The relational perspective on sacred space can provide a vantage point for discussions of what makes places sacred and how the sacred can be understood. While discussions based on textbooks and academic articles are necessary for gaining an overview of the academic field and an acquaintance with central theoretical concepts, learning about sacred places should not be restricted to the seminar room or lecture hall. There are good reasons for letting students conduct studies of actual places by visiting them or analyzing materials related to them. As della Dora points out, fieldtrips encourage active learning: students must engage with an environment. It can also serve as means for what she calls »reflective learning«, or »the process of considering what we know or have learnt to know in order to generate new knowledge.«<sup>16</sup> For observational studies, this would mean not only applying theory, but also reflecting on how methods and theoretical starting points affect how a material is understood.

Working at the micro perspective, a number of materials are available for students to collect and analyze, ranging from interviews and observations at sacred places to print and digital material. Public debates on specific places can, for example, be analyzed using sources such as newspapers. These debates can provide insights into how and why the meanings and uses of places are contested, and who champions different perspectives. Focusing on meanings attributed to different places is, of course, interesting in relation to religious buildings or places considered special because of their place in myth or the history of religious traditions and communities. Focusing on the meanings ascribed to places is also, however, relevant to the perspectives, values and ways of life not necessarily perceived as »religious«. Studies doing this can show how material surroundings are imbued with meanings associated with the »sacred«. According to the sociologist of religion Gordon Lynch, the sacred is »what people collectively experience as absolute, non-contingent realities which present normative claims over

the meanings and conduct of social life.«<sup>17</sup> Understood thus, the sacred is related not only to what is traditionally perceived of as religion, but also to other, secular, normative claims and perspectives. Debates on the uses of built as well as natural environment are thus also highly interesting. Controversies over the commercialization of public places in urban areas – to take one example – may reveal contrasting normative claims with regard to citizenship, community and consumption. Discussions on the construction of hydroelectric power stations or highways may shed light on understandings of the relation between humans and nature. These are cases where meanings and uses of places are contested, and where normative claims tends to be more easily spotted. Working with different approaches to the sacred, including this one, enhances students' reflective skills: some concepts of the sacred understand certain places relevant and others not.

Observation studies open up other questions, above all as to how places are sacralized through ritualized practices. Following the ritual studies scholar Catherine Bell, ritualized practices are used to distinguish and privilege some activities over others. Ritual practices are acts that, because they are being performed differently to how things are normally done, receive meaning in a »play of differences«. These practices do not have to be performed at places designed to facilitate ritual practices. Ritual practices make the site special in relation to other sites, since this place, whether a church or a park, is somewhere where something different takes place. This approach, which emphasizes differences in the way people act, dress and interact when performing rituals, is a suitable starting point for the study of how places are made sacred.<sup>18</sup> It is important to help students see how places are made sacred through ritual practices, and to understand how religion is lived; in other words, the relational and material aspects of religion.

Micro-level tasks for students concern, on the one hand, ritualized practices and the segregation of different spaces and, on the other hand, with experiences of places and the meanings ascribed to them. Following della Dora's example of student field studies of scared places, crucial questions deal with how the exteriors look and how – if at all – they differ from their surroundings in terms of building materials, architectural style and use of architectural elements.

Entering the premises, the experience of the place and how space is organized are important. Is space designed for interaction and to bring visitors together, or to lead them in a specific direction? Do aural and olfactory impressions change and what does this signal? Do all visitors – men, women, laypeople and ordained – use all or just some parts of the space? Chidester's and Linenthal's notion of »significant space« is informative here, since it points to the ways in which



identity and space are connected. Studying who uses what parts of the space provides clues as to how identity is performed in a religious context.

Analysis and observation of the ways that people move about, enter and leave a locale can be important for students when inquiring into ritualization and how places are made special. However there is more to it than that. Dress code and people's interaction are equally interesting. Analysis of the ways people dress, greet and talk to each other reveals important aspects of how sacred space comes into being through seemingly everyday means. The study of these things, together with more obviously ritualized practices such as lighting candles, can add to understandings of the material aspects of religion and be a means for students to inquire into how religion is done via embodied actions and in relation to physical objects.

Being on site and trying to catch patterns of how people use place also provides opportunities to study instances of competing use and other »dissonances«. Different types of dissonance – actions and objects that seem out of place – are important for students to study and reflect upon. To identify and discuss objects and actions that seem out of place by asking why something seems odd can further understandings of local religious life. It can also challenge students' perceptions of sacred places. For della Dora's students, plasma screens and electric candles in gothic churches seemed out of place and inappropriate.<sup>19</sup> Judging from my own students' reactions to different churches, just about anything about the architecture and decorations and the way people dress can seem out of place. Some modern Protestant church buildings are described as lacking solemnity, others as being not »cozy« enough; some churchgoers seem to dress up excessively and in other churches seem to dress down; some students comment on the welcoming and easy atmosphere, others are surprised to find icons or images of Mary. This latter dissonance is understandable, given textbook images of Christianity, while others have more to do with the students' lack of experience with places of worship. In many cases, students come from secular backgrounds and have little or no knowledge about how religious places are used in the daily life of a congregation, what needs a temple or church building has to meet on a daily basis, and the traces the different activities may leave. Many seem to understand religion as static and antiquated, and churches as old buildings where modern electronic devices look odd.

— RELIGION IN DEMARCATED GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS —

Zooming out from religion at the micro level, I now turn to the macro perspective and questions of how and why religion can and should be studied. First, I discuss studies mapping religion

in a specific area, before asking how these might be useful for teaching. In terms of teaching and learning about religion, these studies can provide important perspectives. On the one hand, they point to religious diversity and homogeneity; on the other hand, they indicate local challenges and ways that religious milieus have evolved. Many use geographical classifications in order to demarcate an area, others use geographical perspectives and categories to focus on different forms of religion in an area.

Probably the best-known example of the former is the Kendal project, headed by Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead (2005). Here, religion in the English town of Kendal is analyzed in order to ascertain whether a »spiritual revolution« – i.e. when participation in holistic activities is greater than participation in »churched« religion – has taken place.<sup>20</sup> In this study, geography was used to demarcate an area, but for no further analytical purpose. The study provoked great interest and similar studies soon followed. In Sweden, a study was undertaken of the town Enköping in 2004–2005, which focused more on institutionalized religion and the views and values of the inhabitants.<sup>21</sup> In Denmark, the »Pluralism project« carried out in 2002 and 2013 mapped religion in the city of Aarhus.<sup>22</sup> In 2008, Franz Höllinger and Thomas Tripold conducted a study of the districts of Klagenfurt and Leoben in Austria.<sup>23</sup> Their aim was to study the holistic milieu in Austria; part of the project was to map activities and actors in that field. This study was richer and thematically more focused than the Kendal study, since it did not set out to cover all forms of religion but only »holistic«, »spiritual«, »New Age«, and »popular religion«. In terms of geography and religion, their main concern was the differences between urban Klagenfurt and the rural area of Leoben.

An example of the second category – studies using geographical categories as a means to distinguish different forms of religion – is Liselott Frisk's and Peter Åkerbäck's study (2013) of »popular religion« in the district of Dalarna, Sweden. A geographical perspective was used to identify arenas of what they call »popular religion«.<sup>24</sup> To this end, they applied Jonathan Smith's spatial categories of religion »here«, »there« and »anywhere«, originally developed to describe religion in late antiquity. Religion »here« denotes religion in the domestic sphere. This form of religiosity »does not present itself to us as marked off as 'religious' in any forceful manner«, since it is not part of public cults and rituals; rather, it is an important aspect of everyday religious practices outside the public sphere.<sup>25</sup> Religion »there« denotes the sphere of civic and national religion and in Late antiquity is connected to temples. Today, this arena for religious practice would be religion found in churches, synagogues, mosques etc. Religion »anywhere« can take many different forms that share the fact that they are tied to neither

the home nor to official religion in the temple. This is the form focused on by Frisk and Åkerbäck. Their study clearly shows that in contemporary Sweden this category hosts a great variety of religious practices and traditions. What Heelas/Woodhead and Höllinger/Tripold describe as the »holistic milieu« could also be labeled religion »anywhere«: the concept describes religious practices in, for example, health and wellness centers and place like shops where various healing groups meet.

All these studies show that different forms of religion tend to be related to different places. That place, practice and belief intertwine. The Dalarna study makes this intertwining obvious with the help of Smith's triad.

#### — TEACHING RELIGION FROM A MACRO PERSPECTIVE —

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Geographical studies of the kind described are important to teaching not only for the reasons given, but also because they can make religious traditions and organizations visible in a hands-on manner. They exemplify the distribution of religion and the quantity of different religious traditions in demarcated areas. In teaching, geographical studies like these can be used as a starting point for discussions on where to find religion and how research findings can be presented. Information from this type of study can be visualized using maps that include religion and can exemplify to students how religion on a macro scale can be described through the use of different materials. The geographical studies dealt with here can also serve as a vantage point for discussions of appropriate empirical material. Today, sources for mapping studies of religion are easily accessible to researchers students alike. Newspapers and websites of different religious organizations can be used to collect information on the location of religion and the representation of religion and religious traditions in both mediated and physical space.

Writing in *Teaching Geography*, Richard Bustin takes a teacher's perspective on the use of the geographical categories of space that are also relevant in the teaching of religion.<sup>26</sup> His reflection centers on the use of the concepts »firstspace«, »secondspace« and »thirdspace« in teaching geography. Firstspace conceptualizes the built environment – houses, roads, urban growth, etc. – while secondspace is the representational space, dealing with how an area is represented and perceived in media and the minds of people. »Thirdspace is *lived space*: the experience of living in the firstspace mediated through the expectations of the secondspace«.<sup>27</sup> Concepts of space are important when approaching religion on a large scale, since religion or a certain religion tend to be connected with geographical areas or places. The concept of secondspace can be one way to approach the representation of religion, and a

starting point for challenging students' perceptions of religion and their local environment. In teaching, a central question in relation to secondspace is where do we find religion and how does the distribution of religion relate to everyday perceptions of religion in a given area? Are all parts of the city equally »religious« or »secular« in the minds of the students, and what do empirical investigations tell us here?

In the spring of 2015, students in the teaching training program taking religious studies were assigned the task of investigate religion in different parts of Gothenburg, using whatever internet-sources they could get a hold of. They were told to use Smith's triad, but also to relate the information they found on religion to statistics provided by the City of Gothenburg on income, citizenship, health, education, etc. At the concluding workshop, the students presented their findings, and a number of outcomes could be easily observed. Taken together, their limited studies provided an image of the religious diversity in the city, as well as the distribution of religion in Gothenburg. Backed by statistics, the studies highlighted connections between factors such as income and education and religion. Moreover, using Smith's triad, the studies showed distribution within their assigned areas of religion »there« and »anywhere«. However they found no trace of religion »here«, pointing out the limits of the materials used. Nonetheless, their studies provided indications of useful materials for studying and teaching religion, and a »snapshot« of religion in a few parts of Gothenburg. On the basis of the students' reactions, this snapshot was somewhat surprising. On the one hand, it seemed to illustrate almost too neatly theories and studies concerning the class and gender aspects of »holistic« activities, dealt with previously in the course. On the other hand, students were surprised at the extent of religion in the »secular« city of Gothenburg. The image of the city had altered and religion had become part of it.

Working with religion on a macro scale can entail the mapping of sacred places and places for religious activities in a geographical area such as a town or city district. But mapping is not only about putting markers on map. As my own practice indicates, it is also a way to approach the distribution of religion in relation to factors such as income, education and migration backgrounds, and using Smith's triad, for example, to distinguish between different forms of religion.

Mapping studies open up to a number of other themes that can further students' understanding of and ability to analyze the material aspects of religion. For example, how do infrastructural factors such as public transport and proximity to commercial or recreational areas relate to the distribution of religion? What does distribution in relation to infrastructure tell us about the catchment area? Looking at *where* we find

religion enable one to inquire into how sacred space is constructed. Analyzing town planning, legislation, and property prices and maintenance costs is one way to study how worldly, institutional and economic powers affect local religious life.

— CONCLUDING REMARKS —

Religious studies can be taught in a numerous ways. In the above, I have discussed why geographical perspectives on religion should be incorporated into teaching, how these perspectives can be employed, and what topics and materials might be studied using geography as a point of departure. The focus has been on religion both at the macro level, such as the study of a region, town or district, and on the micro level, such as a temple or church. By working with religion on these two levels, the goal is to further students' understanding and analysis of religion as a phenomenon with material aspects. The materiality of religion can be approached in different ways. As I have shown, geographical perspectives are important because they illuminate how the physical environment is used, interpreted and imbued with meaning by corporeal practices. These perspectives can be one way of engaging in questions of how religion is lived and practiced in everyday life.

As I have indicated, the integration of geographical perspectives into the teaching of religion can involve the use of a variety of materials: newspapers, homepages, statistics, observation and interviews. In some cases, it is not only possible, but also necessary for students to work with more than one type of material. In teaching, this can be a challenge, but also a chance to train students to find relevant sources, to distinguish between types of materials that work in relation to some questions but not others, and of course to use theoretical concepts in the process of analyzing. Working with different materials, students also receive training in writing different types of text. A »thick description« of a religious site requires different skills to those needed to describe an area in statistical terms. Hence, the learning activities discussed above can serve as a way of enhancing both generic academic skills as well as skills specific to the study of religion. For RE teacher students, working with the local religious environment provides useful knowledge for their coming professional life; students obtain an image of the sacred places that exist in the area and that may be suitable to take pupils to see. This last point may seem peripheral, but as I reflect on my own experiences of beginning the stressful life of a High School teacher, I would have loved to know at least a few good places to bring my pupils to. —

■ — ENDNOTES —

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26 Richard Bustin: »Thirdspace: exploring the 'lived space' of cultural 'others'« in *Teaching Geography*, 36:2 (2011), 55–57.

27 Richard, Bustin: »Thirdspace«, 55.

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