

A Neglected British Estate and An Iranian Refugee

At the conclusion of his editorial '[Place, Time and Identity](#)' in this issue of the journal, Alan Roxburgh states 'The gift of the Spirit... is these amazingly patient, faith filled "others" from Africa, Latin America, First Nations, from beyond the West". Farhad Chermahini was not 'faith-filled' when he first came to the UK. He was a nominal Moslem at that time. From a political family and oppressed by a controlling Iranian regime, he travelled to the UK seeking asylum. Three months later, disorientated by culture shock and lonely, he was open to meet with Christians. He was touched by the life he experienced with them and in worship. He found 'his heart warmed'. He became a Christian and quickly entered into ministry and leadership within a radical denomination, the Jesus Army, which works with marginalized people.

His willingness to take risks took him on a 'Luke 10' mission which was a further turning point. Forty-eight vulnerable hours on the street, tasting homelessness alongside the homeless, brought the gospel to life in his experience. He felt called into church planting and into study. He describes how study (with [Formission College](#)) brought him to a liminal place of ongoing learning and exploring in mission.

As a student, he began to research his own neighbourhood in Handsworth, Birmingham, discovering that the high levels of both diversity and deprivation had deep roots in the history of the place. He found that the poor farmland had never supported a settled village, and the area had become the setting for waves of migrants across many generations, a place for exploitation without investment. Farhad explains that with this insight he 'fell in love' with his neighbourhood and felt called to become rooted and responsive to Jesus' presence there. Is there a tension in holding this rootedness and responsiveness together? In his editorial Alan Roxburgh writes:

Stability is the ground from which God's people finally begin to listen to the people in their communities and attend to the stories the Spirit is gestating ahead of them.

Farhad has opted for stability but also the unsettled, liminal posture of the learner, to be responsive to the call of an unpredictable Spirit at work in his new home.