The Ragpicker's Topology: Towards a Photographic Practice for Surveying Urban Character

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This thesis represents partial submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Royal College of Art. I confirm that the work presented here is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Abstract

This PhD concerns the use of the term 'character' in relation to urban landscapes and how this can be captured through the lens of a camera, particularly in sites of renewal. 'Character' is a word that describes the way we discern and comprehend places. It appears frequently in landscape policy documents and is often applied broadly to refer to a diversity of issues for consideration in urban sites where change may take place. These include tangible, calculable matters such a topology, land use, pattern and grain, as well as less tangible features such as heritage, memories, associations and feelings.

When places within cities are developed or renewed, they are often observed optically through a range of systematic surveying processes which largely address physical, constructed forms and the ways in which these relate to one another. High-resolution aerial photography is used to assist in this process and can provide sweeping views of urban landscapes in close detail. Conversely, the topographic photographers of the late nineteenth century famously regarded the metropolis as a series of cryptic topographies, which could be understood through the fragmentary perspectives of human beings at street level. In the early 1960s the Townscape pioneer Gordon Cullen developed these ideas by photographically collecting, categorising and analysing our experiences of walking through cities. Cullen created a 'Casebook' of tenets for consideration in urban design which, unlike the formal photographic mechanisms that we often apply in site research today, were more concerned with playful explorations into how we perceive cities through everyday incidents and encounters.

This PhD formulates a framework for understanding, analysing and then applying these more personal, ethereal facets of the built environment in photographic site research processes. This is informed by a close reading of the work of lens-based investigators of the urban who have explored the notion of character within the built landscape in a range of ways. The practice-based research synthesises these methods through a photographic enquiry into three related sites of contemporary redevelopment: Mercado de Arroios in Lisbon, Mercado do Bolhão in Porto and Mercado dos Lavradores in Funchal. An extensive survey of these urban markets, involving numerous investigative 'photo-walks', took place over a period of three years. The resulting portfolio of images is intended to question how new lens-based methodologies can be used to collate, discuss and substantiate the characteristics of urban places undergoing renewal.

Acknowledgements

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Supporting work

The following material has been submitted digitally as the practice-based element of this research:

- A 172-page book (printed and bound) entitled *The Ragpicker's Journal*, which details the creative process of this project.

- A 12-minute documentary video entitled *Mise-en-scène do Mercado*, depicting the markets which acted as fields of study for this research and how these were photographically recorded.

- A portfolio of 26 photographs.

Fig. 1. *Preposition*, Dan Brackenbury, 2019

Introduction

The author of this research comes from a graphic design background and works primarily with lens-based media. His work has been concerned with ways in which to interrogate the hidden narratives embedded within urban space, through photography and film, for several years.

Much of this practice has focused on exploring the transience of places in cities as they evolve during intense periods of development and renewal. For example, his recent photographic monographs and short films have reflected on the separations, divisions and detachments that exist throughout the built landscapes of London, New York and Hong Kong, and the impact that these features have had on each city's inhabitants.

The author's creative approach often involves acknowledging his position as an outsider as he peers in on the happenings of cities from afar, in order to consider the relationship between people and architecture. His work contemplates how citizens interpret the urban environments that they encounter in their daily lives and considers strategies for detailing the individuality and identity of buildings and local areas. Developing new ways to photograph and film the specificity of urban places has led to an interest in understanding their so-called 'character' and the diverse methods by which this can be surveyed.

Building upon these concerns, this PhD analyses the use of the term 'character' in relation to urban landscapes and how this can be captured through the lens of a camera, particularly within the context of renewal. The practice-led element of the research is a photographic portfolio of visual characteristics within three urban markets in Portugal that are each undergoing different types of redevelopment. The portfolio was assembled through frequent visits

to these sites, involving numerous investigative 'photo-walks', over a period of three years.

The European Landscape Convention (2016: 2), states that a landscape is 'an area, as perceived by people, whose *character* is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors' (emphasis added). 'Character', in this sense, is a term that describes the way we discern and comprehend places. As a result, it is a word that appears frequently in political agreements and landscape policy documents. It is often applied broadly to refer to diverse issues that require consideration in sites where renewal or development may take place (Tudor, 2014; Warnock & Griffiths, 2015). These issues include, but are not limited to:

- **Natural factors**, such as geology, landforms, air, climate, soils, flora and fauna

- **Cultural and social factors**, such as land use, settlements, safety and movement

- **Aesthetic factors**, such as forms, structures, patterns, textures and colours

- **Historical factors,** such as heritage, landmarks, listed buildings and monuments
- **Psychological factors**, such as memories, associations and preferences

- **Experiential factors**, such as smells, sounds, touch and feel

Much research has explored these constituent meanings of 'character', the way we experience them and how they can come to affect our relationship with places (Dovey, 2009; Dovey et al., 2009). However, there are very few methodologies or frameworks that can help us to observe, capture or evidence this information visually, and little research exists into how photography can act as an investigative tool to assist these processes.

This PhD will respond to the above issues through the following research questions:

- How can photography be used to help catalogue specific features and experiences that contribute to the character of an urban landscape?

- How might such a process be structured through an investigative walking methodology?

- In what ways could the resulting assemblage of images help to substantiate the character of urban sites undergoing renewal?

The *Routledge Handbook of Landscape Character Assessment* outlines that:

> 'character' reflects the multi-sensorial and multi-faceted nature of landscape, and landscape's essential concern for people's relationship with place.
> (Fairclough et al., 2018: 21).

Various visual strategies have been developed to engage with these concepts within urban landscapes, particularly when they undergo renewal. Today, 'character statements' and 'character appraisals' are regularly produced by local authorities to address the distinctiveness of urban spaces as they anticipate change. Such documents also routinely apply various lens-based approaches as a way of organising physical information and triangulating the dimensions of space.

These topographic records tend to scrutinise the material forms of built environments from elevated perspectives and observe the activities that take place therein. For instance, recent advances in photographic surveying technologies, such as drones, have proven to be useful tools to help evaluate the physical make-up and geometry of landscapes and their terrain (Liang et al., 2017; Milligan, 2019). However, in certain instances these lofty vantage points have been criticised for their commanding capacity to scrutinise urban space in sweeping, clinical detail. In this sense, such views also have the potential to overlook the character that they seek to record (Nelson et al, 2019; Watkins et al., 2020).

Discourse surrounding how photographic technology can be used to capture urban character has been taking place since the mid-nineteenth century. During this period, cultural institutions across Europe sought out pioneers of the new visual medium of photography to catalogue the disappearing heritage of their cities. The Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris employed photographers such as Charles Marville and Eugène Atget to meticulously photograph the old buildings of the city in this period before they were destroyed or decayed into ruin. Walter Benjamin (2008) later spoke of these photographers as almost voyeuristic private detectives who would walk, wander and explore urban areas that were anticipating change. This photographer-detective would also implement systematic procedures to decode the hidden narrative of the street, glancing in on its ambiguities and puzzles from shadowy alleyways and candid vantage points. For these reasons these photographers can be considered *investigators* of life's curiosities in specific corners of the city, as opposed to formal *surveyors* of its physical properties (Salzani, 2007).

These investigative methods can be seen to re-emerge within urbanism and the concept of 'Townscape' in the early 1960s. The Townscape movement,

popularised by the *Architectural Review* (*AR*) during the intense period of construction that took place in Britain during the post-war period, celebrated cities as environments with varying uses that often incorporated surprisingly diverse architectural styles. Its proponents, such as the editor of *AR*, Hubert de Cronin Hastings, were interested in moving 'away from an overly schematic functionalism and towards a more nuanced understanding of function in relation to existing urban sites' (Raynsford, 2015). Perhaps the most significant product of this movement was Gordon Cullen's *Townscape* (1961) which communicated how these concepts might be experienced by people walking through towns and cities.

Townscape's focus on aesthetic and 'picturesque' ideals has also been linked with conservationist attitudes towards heritage protection. However, it has similarly been argued that while authors such as Hastings embraced the Townscape movement as a moralistic and didactic campaign, Cullen's approach can be understood conversely as a more personal and populist manifesto for creating urban places that are exciting and engaging for those who use them (Engler, 2015).

Cullen devised a way of exploring and viewing the urban terrain in a way that involved the collecting of signs and symbols that helped to communicate the uniqueness of those places. Through his process of walking and wandering in the built landscape, Cullen assembled a similar vocabulary to that of theorists of Gestalt psychology, who used terms such as 'figure-ground', 'continuity', and 'connection'. He used this lexicon to describe his optical experiences of perception and the ways in which he cognitively discerned and viewed the city. Cullen devised terms such as 'punctuation', 'incident' and 'enclosure' to express his visual understanding of places and the way human beings may experience such environments.

Cullen drew attention to the notable architectural details that are embedded within the city's fabric. He focused primarily on the material ingredients that contribute to urban distinctiveness and which offer the pedestrian a sense of encounter as they walk through a town centre (Montgomery, 1998).

Cullen (1961: 7–8) noted that it was important to

> take all the elements that go together to create the environment […] and to weave them together in such a way that drama is released. For a city is a dramatic event in the environment.

In this statement Cullen outlines how architectural details, and the experience of engaging with these, was critical to understanding the uniqueness of an urban locale.

Fig. 2. *The Boston image derived from sketch maps.* In *The Image of the City*, Kevin Lynch, 1960

Kevin Lynch's approach, which emerged in the United States during the same period, focused on the psychology of the city-goer and their mental processes of interpretation. Lynch developed a planning methodology which consisted of workshops with local residents in Boston. He asked his research associates, and local Boston residents, to go into the city and collect observations from their explorations. He interviewed participants, inviting them to produce mental maps, referred to as *sketch maps*, which detailed their experiences of walking through the city and interacting with the landmarks that they encountered. These maps, later drawn up by Lynch into more refined topologies, provided the researcher with personal qualitative data about the ways in which people navigated the city on foot, what they remembered about their walks and which urban facets were most important to their understanding of the environment. Khamsi (2012) notes that through this process Lynch was striving to build an objective account of the city out of the cognitive images formed in the minds of its citizens.

A key component that Cullen's and Lynch's approaches had in common was the way that they assembled a vision of urban character by focusing on innocuous details that were encountered when walking through the city. Both Cullen and Lynch were interested in what happens when these details are put together, as well as the resulting image of the city that was created through such processes.

Collecting small details in order to create a wider vision of our surroundings has connections with the philosophy of phenomenology, which explores human consciousness and the way that we perceive the world (Bakewell, 2017). An integral aspect of Martin Heidegger's writing on this subject was the importance of the objects that appear in our lives, or what he referred to as *das Ding* (Heidegger, 2019). Andersen (2018: 85) asserts that 'Heidegger [was] concerned with the meaning of the thing, as of a simple object like a jug, and how it relates to our reality and being-in-the-world'. Bakewell (2016) proposes that in this sense, phenomenology is largely concerned with the process of *describing phenomena* or looking at everyday objects as if for the first time and expressing what we see. The outcome of this process allows us to consider the elements, or characteristics, that combine to create the habitat in which we live.

For instance, the work of architect Juhani Pallasmaa has demonstrated how phenomenological concepts can be applied to the observation of the built environment. Like Lynch and Cullen, Pallasmaa (1996, 2005, 2011) believes that the architectural image is closely related to the way in which we experience architecture itself. He feels that we should try to look at the city with curiosity, as if through a child's eyes, and take note of the factors that influence us and impact upon our lives. Pallasmaa does not translate these ideas into a visual methodology in the same way that Lynch and Cullen did. However, he does underline that phenomenology can be adopted as a theoretical framework that can take account of architectural meaning. He advocates a process of 'pure looking', in which

> the phenomenology of architecture is thus 'looking at' architecture from within the consciousness experiencing it, through architectural feeling (Pallasmaa 1996: 450).

Theorists such as Yi Fu Tuan (2001: 6) have stated that by formally observing the world in this way, and by appreciating the constituent 'things' that make up our habitat, we are able to build a more informed relationship with our environment. This, he argues, is what ultimately distinguishes space from *place*: 'what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value'. In essence, by describing the phenomena that we see around us, through the methods that Cullen, Lynch and Pallasmaa

Fig. 3. 'Infinity', *Townscape*, Gordon Cullen, 1961

propose, it is possible to understand their emotional significance to human beings and how they contribute to the creation of *places* which contain character.

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Cullen is particularly relevant to this research because of the structured methods of observation that he employed, as well as the way he photographically collected aspects of urban character. In *Townscape* (1961) he lists a set of *visual precedents* (Engler, 2015) that exist in towns and cities, all of which offer engaging experiences for those who encounter them. The author uses photographs to illustrate these precedents and provides short captions to describe what they are. Included in the list are features such as *focal points*, *incidents*, *texture*, *anticipation*, and *mystery*.

Cullen intended this list to act as a model that could be reproduced by individual architectural practitioners or urban designers (Engler, 2015). Elwall describes this as a

> […] thesaurus of photographic exemplars [where]… perhaps most impressive of all is the way the photographs combine to form a narrative
> Elwall (2012: 682)

Elwall suggests that, in addition to providing a visual database for individuals to recreate and add to, this sequence of fragmentary details can also be understood as the elements of a narrative which unfolds when a person moves through an urban area.

Many polemics, manifestos and theses on urban form were published during the 1960's, yet *Townscape* (1961) is one of the very few that has remained in print. The enduring contemporary relevance of Cullen's strategies suggests there is significant creative potential in returning to his practices of urban exploration today (Engler, 2015). This PhD builds upon, reworks and revises these ideas and approaches, applying them as a new photographic method to engage with the visual notion of 'character' in sites of renewal. This practice-based research process takes place within the context of three urban markets in Portugal. The covered market appears in one form or another within most European cities. Many have altered significantly in recent years as a result of economic stresses, with some being forced to close altogether. Others have been renewed and renovated into new shopping colonnades and fast-food outlets, usually very different from their traditional incarnations.

These circumstances can be seen particularly clearly in cities in Portugal today and this has been observed by the author of this project throughout his time living in the country. In the areas surrounding Lisbon's Mercado de Arroios, Porto's Mercado do Bolhão and Funchal's Mercado dos Lavradores, redevelopment is either anticipated or taking place, and like the remains of medieval Paris in the late 1800s, they are living examples of urban change. The EU's URBACT Programme (2015: 9) states that urban markets 'can play an important role for the sustainable development and revitalisation of a city and its neighbourhoods'. Thus, it is intended that the research presented here will provide practical lessons that can inform processes of urban renewal more

broadly, expanding our understanding of how to photograph such places in cities and the facets that make them unique.

Atget's photographic process in Paris was likened to that of a *chiffonier* ('ragpicker'). As Baudelaire described, this was an urban wayfarer who picked up and hoarded pieces of detritus from the street. Baudelaire described the ragpicker thus: 'He catalogues... He sorts things out and makes a wise choice; he collects' (Baudelaire, quoted in Sontag, 1979: 61).

Atget and his fellow topographic photographers from the era were like ragpickers because they were known for gathering offcuts of the city's fabric and piecing together a vision of the built environment during a period of great change. Cullen's Townscape approaches were similar, in that his walking explorations allowed him to reassemble a photographic vision of the city from the bits and pieces of the urban terrain that we tend to overlook. Amidst the tumult of post-war construction, Cullen presented a compelling and relatable story of the modern city through his collection of snapshots, sketches and captions.

Reappropriating such strategies today and adopting these methods of visual enquiry in contemporary urban settings can enable us to assemble similar material fragments in landscapes of renewal, creating a 'sample book' of visual features representing their current condition. Cullen's work demonstrates that documents of this kind may potentially provide a type of visual evidence that can help to convey the characteristics of a place before it alters and becomes different from what it was before. In the methodology chapter of the thesis, the term 'ragpicking' is therefore reappropriated to refer to the process of photographically collecting visual fragments on walks through the built landscape in order to piece together an evolving atlas of urban character.

The fact that each of the markets that act as case-study sites will be likely to change in the near future means that a photographic survey of their distinctive idiosyncrasies and characteristics may be a compelling, and even urgent, concern. Once recorded, the resulting visual material from this study can then be used to substantiate the specificities of these locations. In the same way that the nineteenth-century topographic photographers collated a body of photographic imagery that detailed the narratives, lived experiences and human perceptions of their cities, this research provides lens-based evidence of the city as it can be observed and felt by individuals on the ground.

Chapter 1 will establish the context of the project by defining how we understand the term 'survey' and the way in which character is currently addressed through site research processes. Contemporary photographic approaches and recent technological advancements are discussed, particularly with regard to detailed composite and aerial images. The implications of these expansive, elevated methods for viewing cities in spaces of renewal are considered, along with a discussion of the visual material that they provide.

Exploratory, human-authored photographic approaches from the past are then analysed in contrast with these technologies. Starting with the investigative methods of the nineteenth-century topographic photographers, the thesis considers the unique benefits of photographs that offer more concise and fragmentary perspectives of cities than those enabled by recent technology. The discussion then explores how such photographs are examples of 'open texts' because they leave significant room for interpretation (Eco, 1979). The potential in returning to these equivocal photographic frameworks in site research today is reflected upon.

The meandering, flâneurial approaches of topographic photographers such as Atget have been well documented (Salzani, 2007); however, there has been less discussion on the practical use of these approaches in urban surveying. Section 1.3 discusses walking as a research method, with a particular focus on the ways in which a ground-level investigation can lead to a more personal, human-orientated view of a city. A range of frameworks to help structure 'site-walks' are considered, along with their viability for use in this project.

The process of using neighbourhoods in cities as testbeds for studying urban form is often entangled in ethical complexity (Pink et al., 2015). This can be observed particularly in instances where researchers descend on such sites as outsiders with little prior knowledge of, or connection with, the circumstances of these places. In order to take these challenges into consideration, Section 1.4 reflects upon several historical research projects on urban change. The discussion analyses the methods of these investigations and how they impacted on local communities.

Chapter 2 explores specific processes of photographic surveying that have led to detailed and nuanced investigations of urban sites during periods of change. The discussion focuses on a range of photographers of the urban who have explored ways to convey the fragmentary perspectives of people in cities. The relationships between these modes of photographic investigation are examined and their potential applicability to the fieldwork is noted.

The chapter focuses on two specific sources that will guide and inform the structure of the practice-based methodology for recording the field-study sites. First, Cullen's *Townscape* (1961) is unpacked and considered in terms of its relevance to understanding the notion of character. Second, the systematic practices used by Michael Wolf to explore and codify the ways human beings interact with the architecture of cities are considered. The historical significance of these two practitioners, their long-term impacts on urbanism and their playful, almost ludic photographic techniques are broken down and scrutinised.

Chapter 3 introduces the way in which municipal markets in states of renewal will act as case studies for this research. A discussion of the present-day politics surrounding these environments is set out and an existing framework for reading markets as sites of contestation is introduced. A typology of the common aesthetic features that can be found in recently redeveloped markets

further hints at how homogeneous design approaches have tended to be used to attract similar demographics.

Lisbon's Mercado de Arroios neighbourhood market; Porto's grand Mercado do Bolhão and Funchal's colourful and lively Mercado dos Lavradores are outlined as the main sites of enquiry. Detailed overviews of each of these markets are offered, including descriptions of their architectural features, their social and political histories, their current physical conditions, the various ways in which they have been used and their potential futures.

Chapter 4 outlines the 'ragpicking' methodology for the photographic explorations that took place in each of the markets. An adapted, linear version of David A. Kolb's experiential learning circle is used as a framework to structure the enquiry, and each consecutive phase of the practice is discussed in relation to this plan. The four main stages of the study are broken down, along with the key tasks, assignments and forms of research embedded within them. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the potential risks that might emerge when the methodology is put into practice. Issues such as voyeurism and the subsequent co-option of photographic material are reflected upon as possible traps that could derail and harm the practice-led element of this project.

Chapter 5 describes how the practice as research unfolded, along with an outline of the observational work, both photographic and written, that emerged through the fieldwork exercises. The discussion starts by describing the ways in which the sites were initially surveyed, before moving on to address the systematised photographic collation of characteristics within each site, informed by the visual precedents within Cullen's *Townscape* (1961). The chapter further outlines how these processes of enquiry led to a new, original portfolio of images, designed as an addition to Cullen's own 'Atlas of the environment' (1961: 195).

Each of these consecutive chapters explore, to some degree, the ways we experience cities and the features that coalesce to form our perception of them. In his essay 'Das Ding' (1971: 166-167) Heidegger calls for us to reassess the world around us with fresh eyes, while reinterpreting the everyday objects, characteristics or 'things' that exist within our lives and which are external to our thinking minds. Heidegger asks: 'What in the thing is thingly? What is the thing in itself?'. These straightforward and frank questions are provocations to formally interrogate the conditions, circumstances and context of the artefacts most familiar to us in order to glean a deeper understanding of our surroundings.

Similarly, the research outlined below generates photographic signposts which can direct our gaze towards, and help us to cross-examine, the facets that make up the character of a place. While these features may remain intact during periods of change, finding ways to photograph them is a critical endeavour because they may equally adapt, evolve, mature, transform, decay or simply

disappear. In this way, the outcomes from this research assist in navigating the things to be mindful of, the things to take care over, the things to talk about, the things to experience and the things to watch in urban sites anticipating renewal.

I Context

1.1 Urban renewal and surveying

The survey, as used in urbanism and architecture, is defined by Gorse et al (2020: NP) in the following terms:

> Images of the site, structure, or building [are] recorded and logged with notes for future reference. The survey may be conducted prior to development taking place showing the condition of the land and surrounding buildings. Surveys can also be undertaken during the construction period to record progress and the actual construction of components.

We can therefore understand a photographic survey as a process of visual data collection which can later be used to account for the specific properties of a given site. 'character statements' are matter-of-fact survey documents that are used to describe the main built facets that stand out in an urban area and are often used for reference in locales where renewal will occur. There is no standardised framework for such documents, but they often rely on an approach called Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), which, in changing urban contexts, tends on focus on physical features, built details, the ways in which public space is used and the history of notable architecture. While developed in the UK and commonly applied in British cities, LCA is now being used more frequently in other countries, particularly within Europe (Fairclough et al, 2018).

Character statements often look closely at features such as conservation areas, listed structures and monuments of interest, discussing these built elements in relation to their surrounding landscapes. In addition, structural typologies are examined, along with the range of architectural styles and building materials that can be found within the local area. Such information can help to ensure that new developments are planned in keeping with the forms, textures and colours of the architecture nearby.

Fig. 4, 5, 6. Colour-coded conservation area maps showing listed buildings in three separate character statements: Town Hall Square Character Statement, Leicester (2015); Brighton Old Town Character Statement (2017); City and Queen Square Character Appraisal, Bristol (2009)

Generally, the images in character statements appear to give a holistic and impartial overview of the tangible properties of the built landscape. For this reason, colour-coded maps and aerial photographs are often used as illustrations because they can offer broad, objective perspectives of the terrain within a given area. Satellite images are also employed to indicate the land use of specific sites within local neighbourhoods. Such expansive photographic mechanisms can now be used to record landscapes from above in increasingly fine detail, particularly as the technology develops and the image resolution becomes higher.

Fig. 7, 8, 9. Satellite images with graphic overlays denoting land use in three separate character statements: City Docks Conservation Area Appraisal, Bristol (2011); Croydon Borough Character Appraisal (2015); Elephant & Castle Opportunity Area Characterisation Study (2011)

As satellite imaging becomes steadily more central to documenting metropolitan areas undergoing change, software such as Zephyr 3D can now allow aerial photographs to be stitched together to create sweeping composites of urban topologies. Google applies similar technologies to create photo-realistic, 3D maps of cities around the world, which are constantly being updated and are thus ever evolving. Google gathers aerial images by using aircraft fitted with several cameras, each facing in a different direction, in order to gain a range of views of the ground below. Google surveyors fly over cities in zigzag formations to gather numerous overlapping photographs before technologists spend time removing details like clouds, human beings and vehicles from these images. Google is then able to use this material to construct a vast three-dimensional image of the urban terrain through the process of photogrammetry.

Fig. 10. Google Earth image of The Royal College of Art in Kensington Gore, Google, 2020

The Google Earth platform also allows users to see how cities have altered over time. For example, Sengupta et al. (2019) explored how Google Earth Engine could be used to map how urban land had been reclaimed across a range of different coastal cities in China over the course of several decades. Their study revealed the unfolding narratives of urbanisation in these regions and the way coastlines in cities such as Shanghai have expanded in recent years. The authors assert that Google Earth is therefore 'a powerful long-term analytical tool' (Sengupta et al., 2019: 10) to catalogue such data over an extended time period.
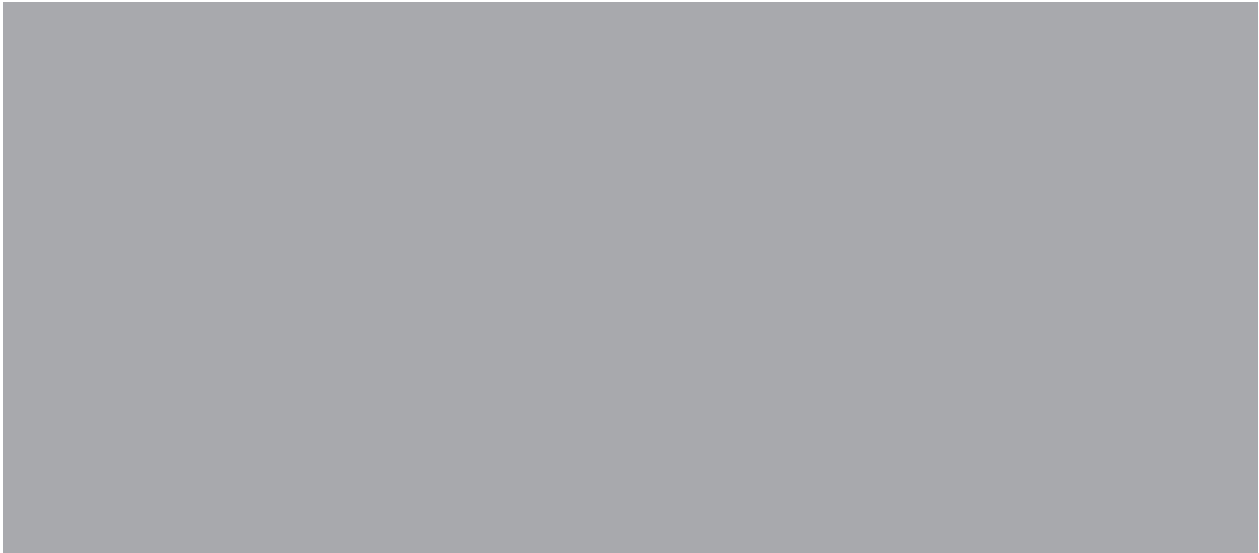
Fig. 11. *Change[s] in night-time light data over four years (2014–2018) over reclaimed land (1)*
Shanghai, (2) Tianjin, (3) Shenzhen, incorporating visuals from Google Earth, Sengupta et al., 2019

A similarly meticulous surveying method currently gaining in popularity and scope is the process of LiDAR scanning, which can now offer views into the interior and exterior dimensions of structures and how they sit within urban landscapes in exact detail. LiDAR scanners incorporate powerful lasers which track in a horizontal motion in conjunction with a mirror which rotates around a vertical axis. This technology can sweep across broad landscapes and record vast amounts of visual data within a very short space of time. Precise three-dimensional models, or 'point clouds', can then be produced, which allow designers to create detailed 3D-imaging renders of real-world landscapes. Once constructed, these models can be explored in a highly immersive way, like a free-roaming computer game. Virtual reality headsets can also be used to glide through such environments, bringing scanned landscapes to life as uncanny digital renderings of the real world.

Çakir et al. (2021) discuss how the technology has recently become a far more accessible tool in landscape research, as mobile devices such as the iPad Pro can be used to create low-fi LiDAR scans of urban environments. The authors conducted a characterisation survey of an urban forest in Clemson, South Carolina, and noted the surprising level of detail that emerged from their study. The low cost and readily available nature of these technologies also means that processes such as LiDAR, that were once complex, can now be crowdsourced because they require little to no training. Detailed 3D scans of urban areas are therefore likely to become more interlinked with the ways in which spaces in cities are surveyed before renewal starts.

Fig. 12, 13. *3D Forest prior to segmentation* and *iPad LiDAR data divided into terrain cloud and vegetation cloud.* Çakir et al. (2021)

What these ever-expanding, and increasingly accessible, technological views of cities have in common is that they observe physical topologies, as well as the movements and occurrences unfolding within them. They establish elevated viewpoints that offer a panoptical outlook of the terrain below. The field of vision offered by these technologies is rapidly developing, evolving and broadening. As the hardware and software become ever more efficient at capturing vast amounts of visual data within cities, visual perspectives are also becoming increasingly domineering. Watkins et al. (2020) state that

> The intrusion [of drones] into the urban environment is relatively new and the ability to photograph and video from a relatively distant location and to then effectively disappear from sight is causing justifiable concern.

The authors of this statement reveal how new surveying technology such as drones can monitor the urban landscape from an elevated distance in disturbingly omniscient and anonymous ways. Such technologies have also led to progressively more commanding, 'Archimedean' perspectives of urban space, focused on achieving an objective, almost God-like outlook on the world below. These comprehensive and all-encompassing forms of optical surveillance therefore have little regard for the differences between public and private space (Nelson et al., 2019). As mentioned above, one of Google's solutions to this issue has been to remove people and vehicles from cities in order to automatically anonymise images. Yet, this detachment means that they can also fail to offer tangible insight into the human complexity of what is occurring at ground level. The technology inadvertently sterilises the urban terrain by extracting key aspects of its character.

If we have access to such a comprehensive set of visual data at our fingertips, via a pocket drone or tablet, for instance, it could be argued that human-authored street photographs and street surveys are now futile and unnecessary in architectural practice. In addition, the act of surveying a site on foot with

a camera is now regarded as a somewhat anachronistic and less reliable and relevant way of researching an urban area than a comprehensive aerial appraisal. This has arguably affected the very meaning of the word 'survey' in the fields of urbanism and architecture: it now tends to refer to detailed technological photographic mechanisms rather than street-level photography.

However, the practices discussed here are, for the most part, technocratic mechanisms that are employed by large companies and governmental organisations to capture broad urban expanses. These computer-driven photographic apparatuses are denotative: they are often good at detailing clear, definable subjects through far-reaching images that are aesthetically homogeneous and non-specific. What they lack, however, is the discerning, connotative analysis of an individual person behind the lens, capturing the image directly, engaging with human life and choosing what to look at and why. In response, the following section proposes how person-centred, street-level photographic surveying can assess the notion of character through visual enquiry in subtler, more nuanced ways.

1.2 Photographic details of the city: open texts

The technologies detailed above are now critical to understanding how urban areas are built, maintained and developed. They provide evidence about how city spaces are inhabited and offer practical information about how such landscapes have changed and might evolve in the future. However, they are less useful at conveying the lived experiences of human beings because they tend to look widely and openly at the city rather than drawing attention to specific details within it.

Sontag (1979: 79) notes how the photographer of the street, like Baudelaire's ragpicker, has the acuity to find such details, revealing the significance of 'urban debris' which most people dismiss as 'without interest and relevance'. Atget was one such 'ragpicker' and was accomplished at drawing attention to the extraordinariness that could be found within the everyday facets of nineteenth-century Paris. His photographs of incidental urban details were often ambiguous because they were fragmentary glimpses, left open to interpretation and inviting discussion about what was taking place within the frame.

Fig. 14. *La maison no 5 de la rue Thouin,* Eugène Atget, 1910

For example, in Atget's topographic image *La maison no 5 de la rue Thouin*, a lone boy stares out in front of a derelict street corner. The composition alone raises several questions about both the subject and his surroundings. The child has clearly been invited to pose for the long exposure, whereas a passer-by simply dissolves into a shadow from the past. By placing the boy firmly in the centre of the frame Atget tells us that this character has an ambiguous significance. However, little contextual information is provided about the wider urban setting except for the title. Therefore, the viewer may be prompted to ask questions in order to comprehend what they are looking at, such as: *Who is this unknown child? What is the relationship between this boy and the decaying structures that enclose him? Was this once his home? Does he work here?* Umberto Eco (1979) refers to similar examples of ambiguity in literature and art as 'open texts' that require a deeper reading in order to be understood more fully.

Timothy Wray asserts that images such as *La maison no 5 de la rue Thouin* are open texts because they linger in our mind, provoke questions and actively engage our imagination. Wray proposes that in order to answer these questions we must scour the scene for clues, which can point us towards a set of assumptions. Furthermore, by becoming so active in its reading, we almost become part of the image itself. Wray suggests that this process is similar to the way that an archaeologist might attempt to reconstruct an ancient artefact from fragmentary pieces of earthenware.

As the archeologist builds a picture of the past from such fragments, so too does the viewer of a photograph creatively complete the scene, becoming implicated in its reading. We thus locate ourselves in the image, just as when we look out of window from a lit room at night we see our own reflection collaged upon the shadowy outside world. (Wray, 2012: 109).

Wray might argue that Atget has systematically orchestrated this process in *La maison no 5 de la rue Thouin* in order to create a dialogue between the viewer and the image. In this sense Atget is not simply recording the old buildings of the city, as he had been employed to do. Rather he was collecting fragments of life for his audience to discern so that they could consider the facets that contribute to the local character of the area (Sontag, 1977).

With this in mind, Atget's images offer an alternative lens through which we can gaze at the city: one which is not firm, authoritative and literal, but which is instead malleable, uncertain and equivocal. When viewed in this way, such photographs can create an experience of immersion, absorbing the viewer and inviting them to navigate their own way through these streets.

Intriguing connections can also be observed between Atget and more recent photographers working in regions of Africa and Asia, such as Andrew Tshabangu and Fan Ho. These photographers were not necessarily familiar with Atget's practice but were responding to the city in similar ways – ragpicking in the rubble of the street and extracting clues for the viewer to descry and detect.

Fig. 15 The everyday urban bustle passes in front of a butchery, evoking Atget's images of Parisian shopfronts. *Butchery, Traders and Taxis*, Andrew Tshabangu, 2003

Fig. 16. A collage of white patches on the side of a building are the backdrop to a passer-by on the street. The playful relationship between the architecture and the human figure in the foreground echoes the framing approaches of Atget described above. *Pattern,* Fan Ho, 1956

In this way Atget, and his more recent counterparts, employ partial, fragmentary images to encourage their audience to imagine what it feels like to stand in a certain corner of the city at a certain time. Paeslack speaks of the value of fragmented urban photographs, stating that 'This imaginary allows us to think about the city beyond its physicality' (2013: 33).

Atget was known for extracting and collecting fragmentary details of the city. A synonym for *detail* is *characteristic* and thus his practice can also be understood as a quest to engage with the evolving character of his city. The rationale for returning to Atget's arguably dated, analogue processes today is therefore because it offers the opportunity to look closer at the meaning of urban character and the components from which it is made up. Atget, his topographic colleagues, and more recent urban investigators such as Cullen, were ragpickers who collated the overlooked fabric of the street itself, understanding the power and potential of this material as data in urban research. *La maison no 5 de la rue Thouin* is an image that demonstrates how a piecemeal photographic glimpse of a street can evoke vivid and illuminating interpretations in viewers. In this way, such photographs are potentially cogent tools for reading places within cities and deciphering our complex relationships with them.

1.3 Walking as method

A key aspect of Atget's methodology in Paris was that he photographed the city whilst walking its streets exploratively on foot. The process of walking through cities in order to gather qualitative data has long been of interest to researchers investigating the city (Pierce and Lawhon 2015), with many of these discussions revolving at some point around the act of *flânerie*. The flâneur, like the ragpicker, was an urban figure identified and observed in nineteenth-century Paris by Baudelaire. However, unlike the ragpicker, the flâneur was an upper-class, privileged citizen of Paris. He was a bourgeois male dandy who would slowly contemplate the city through the act of strolling or idling. Benjamin considered Atget to be a flâneur of sorts because of his propensity

to wander urban environments, analysing and deciphering the observations he made therein. Jenks & Neves (2000: 1 – 2) describe the role of the flâneur and the relationship between this figure and the social sciences:

> *The flâneur* introduces a phenomenology of the urban built around the issues of the fragmentation of experience and commodification, opening the way for a micro-sociology of the urban daily life; the observation of the trivial, the ephemeral and fleeting should lead to a critical analysis of the structural features of urbanity and modernity.

This socially inquisitive way of looking at the trivial, 'the ephemeral and fleeting', can be seen in the works of later photographers such as Gyula Halász (also known as Brassaï). He was a journalist and writer who learned the art of photography in order to depict his investigative urban explorations of Paris in the late 1920s. In his book *Paris de nuit* (1933) Brassaï develops a flâneurial photographic approach very reminiscent of Atget. Like his predecessor, Brassaï walked with no specific direction but was guided by the poetic sounds, movements and associations that drew his attention. Through this interpretive process Brassaï searched for a set of photographic scenes that expressed the city's singular atmosphere after dark. He became so highly regarded as a documenter of the city that his friend Henry Miller referred to him as 'the eye of Paris' (Brassaï', 1995).
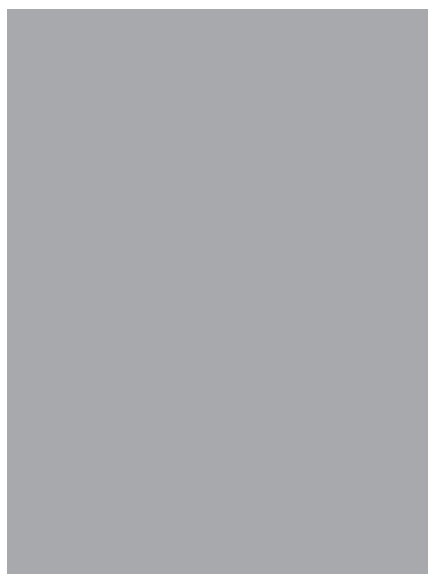
Fig. 17. *Parisian Cobblestones*, Brassaï, 1931

The Situationist movement established by Guy Debord in the late 1950s in many ways built on the tradition of walking as a way of understanding the Parisian metropolis better. The Situationist International advocated the act of walking or meandering along chance and unplanned routes through the urban landscape on trips referred to as the *derive,* or 'drift'. Debord felt that by setting aside our normal rational selves when walking through urban space we could be drawn more closely to the peculiarities, divergences and variations within its terrain (Andreotti, 1996). Psychogeographers such as Peter Ackroyd (1985), Will Self (1996) and Iain Sinclair (1998) developed these notions further in the 1980s and 1990s through their vivid first-person accounts of the streets of London and the hidden histories, narratives and subcultures that they encountered therein.

Discussing the way that everyday citizens walk in cities, Michel de Certeau (2011) draws comparisons with the act of speaking. He states that the act of stepping out in the city gives us an opportunity to identify with its vernacular in the same way that we adopt and embrace the words that we use in our speech. De Certeau highlights how the act of walking offers the citizen scope, freedom and manoeuvrability within the city, in the same way that language offers us the capability to enjoy these privileges when we express ourselves verbally. He says that walking is an intriguing process because it offers us, first, the opportunity to take possession of our surroundings; second, the agency to act out our lives as we wish; and third, the opportunity to engage with our environment and form contractual understandings with the wider world.

Expanding these ideas, Pierce and Lawhon (2015) propose ways in which walking can be incorporated in theories of urban geographic research. They refer to this approach as *walking as method.* This is a process which can be used to study those attributes of a city space that are less discussed, inconclusive and unremarked on. Pierce and Lawhon explain how the process can guide the urban researcher as they investigate the city on foot. They propose that walking in this manner can offer a platform to engage with incidents and encounters, both physical and metaphysical, that punctuate the topography of the city.

> walking allow[s] for a particular experiential flow of successive moments of detachment and attachment, physical immersion and mental wandering, memory, recognition and strangeness (Edensor, quoted in Pierce and Lawhon 2015: 657)

In this sense, walking is a process which can immerse us within our surroundings, also allowing our minds to wander and draw forth memories and associations. This ruminative act can provoke us to think about the innocuous,

abstract and less obvious features of the street and to consider, perhaps more thoughtfully, how these contribute to the character of the urban space.

According to Solnit (2014: 23), the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard used the process of walking to undertake a kind of 'botanising', in which, instead of plants, he observed and collected human personas. Frisby proposes that such methods of walking-based observation and collection can help to align 'insignificant details and seemingly fortuitous events into a meaningful constellation' (quoted in Salzani: 185). This statement reveals how walking offers a framework to collect and gather the overlooked, neglected and disregarded fragments of the city and to assess their symbolism and significance. Frisby's *meaningful constellation* is a product of walking, resulting in a type of assemblage that helps us to interrogate what we find and to carefully analyse these features, enabling us to view the city and its constituent parts in a new light.

In summary, walking will be an intrinsic aspect of this study for a variety of reasons. The flâneurial practices of photographic surveyors such as Atget are evidence that walking as a research method has been documented and discussed in relation to photography since the nineteenth-century. Walking and photography are therefore interlinked exploratory tools which have been thoroughly tried and tested in the field of urban design for more than a century.

The Situationists demonstrated that walking offers an adaptable framework for traversing and exploring urban sites in a highly inquisitive and probing manner. The process can be formal, rigid and systematically organised, or it can be free, meandering and improvisational. More recent psychogeographers such as Sinclair have taught us that walking can also allow us to make very personal reflections on urban place and that we can tell stories about our relationships with the built landscape by documenting these processes.

De Certeau's writing emphasises that the act of walking can be a liberating experience that makes the nuances and complexities of the city accessible to us to engage with. Like talking, walking gives us the capacity to manoeuvre and express ourselves in relation to our surroundings. Pierce and Lawhon take this further in their suggestion that walking can be adapted into a qualitative research method. They assert that walking allows us to become submerged within urban space, allowing our minds to wander, and take in moments of strangeness that are difficult to describe, before subsequently reflecting upon these experiences.

Solnit's anecdote about Kierkegaard 'botanising' the landscape further demonstrates that the process allows us to pick things out from what we see during our explorations and collect them. Like Baudelaire's ragpicker, we can use walking to create an inventory of what we discover, even if the things we find are seemingly unimportant at first glance. By photographing and keeping

note of what we find on our travels, we can assemble a visual collection of characteristics within the urban landscape which can be assessed, analysed and classified at a later stage.

1.4 The ethics of charting urban change

In his book *Ethics for the City* (2018), Richard Sennett points out that the word 'city' has traditionally had two meanings, both expressing unique things about the way that we relate to the built environment. He notes that this duality can be observed in the definitions of the words 'ville' and 'cité' in the French language. Originally, he states, 'ville' referred to the metropolis and 'cité' to a smaller locality within it. Later, in the sixteenth century, the word 'cité' developed a new meaning and began to describe a 'sort of collective place-consciousness' (2018: 1–2).

Sennett proposes that this now archaic definition should be used once again because it distinguishes the two most critical aspects of cities: the physicality and assembly of the built landscape (ville); and the way in which we emotionally interpret this material (cité). The difficulty with these meanings is that the two concepts do not necessarily exist harmoniously. This is because citizens live their lives in certain ways that urban planning policies cannot necessarily account for or predict. This tension, Sennett argues, presents urbanists with a problem of representation: should they consider civic ways of life as precious entities that need to be preserved, or should they try to alter them in certain ways?

Charles Marville was a photographer whose work, to some degree, did both of these things. He was employed by the city of Paris in the mid-nineteenth century to photograph the medieval Parisian streets that were gradually being eroded and in some cases removed. In addition, he was tasked with depicting how Georges-Eugène Haussmann's new boulevards were making a positive impact on the city, and show how they had created a new, uniform structure and control that aligned the with the government's military ambitions (Pinkney, 1958).

Fig. 18. *Boulevard Haussmann, de la rue du Havre*, Charles Marville, c. 1853

There are few people visible in Marville's photographs, as he chose to depict street scenes and architecture in a precise manner, uncluttered by the messy

unpredictability of humans. Yet the landscapes do not necessarily feel vacant, and the presence of people can almost be sensed. People are suggested and implied within these landscapes, meaning that we can place our own vision of the city's inhabitants within the images.

On the one hand Marville's depictions of old and new Paris show a city modernising and transforming into a grand, spacious and ordered urban topology. On the other hand, the photographs are a poignant depiction of a traditional way of life being dismantled and replaced by clinical precision and discipline. In some ways the images can be co-opted to convey both arguments. This subjectivity, some argue, is the danger inherent in using photography as a way of mapping urban change. Some critics have proposed that a more scientific visual methodology is required in order to limit such ambiguity, thus providing a 'window to quantitative reality' (Kimball, 2006: 279).

In 1886, while Marville was photographically mapping the changing landscape of Paris, the social reformer Charles Booth was mapping the changing economic conditions within London's individual districts. He embarked on a large-scale project to chart the incidence of poverty in the city, which was collated with 17 volumes and subsequently published as *Inquiry into the Life and Labour of the People in London* in 1902.

Booth felt that census data was often flawed because the scale of the surveys that were conducted meant that the information gathered was out of date when it was finally published (Simey & Simey, 1980). Booth's methodology involved using inspectors to visit households in specific London communities and to note their economic conditions on a scale of 1–9.

Fig. 19. Colour-coded poverty map of Oxford Street, Charles Booth, c. 1888

The study resulted in vivid, colour-coded maps that are much like the land-use diagrams that are incorporated within character statements/appraisals today (see Fig. 4, 5, 6). Booth charted the living circumstances of families across the city, from what he termed the 'Lowest Class. Vicious, semi criminal' to 'Upper middle and Upper classes. Wealthy'. Whilst the study was important in

depicting the social topography of London at that time, his work was criticised for over-simplifying the complex conditions of these streets at ground level (Englander, 2003). Many felt that Booth's maps were too general and lacked the subtle observations needed to truly convey what was happening in these areas on a human level.

Shortly after Booth's study, the first volume of the Survey of London was published by fellow social reformer Charles Robert Ashbee, who felt impelled to create a record of London's most important architectural structures during a time of great urban change (Zemgulys, 1999). The Survey consists of detailed descriptions of each of London's districts and continues to be added to and amended to this day. The Survey charts the architectural history of each area and its most notable buildings with scientific precision. However, the prose that is used to outline these locations is highly descriptive and exhaustive in terms of detail, creating evocative visions and placing the reader mentally within the location depicted. Reading the Survey of London is almost like walking its streets with a highly knowledgeable tour guide. The illustrative prose draws some parallels with the field of psychogeography, which would emerge in the latter half of the twentieth century, because of its immersive qualities and its ability to vividly locate the reader within a richly detailed space.

Although it contained highly expressive descriptions of built environments, the conditions and experiences of the people who populated these areas were largely omitted from the Survey of London. Much like Google Earth today, the focus was on the physical forms of the architecture itself, rather than the communities that inhabited such places. In these ways Booth and Ashbee applied methods that were mainly concerned with the context of the '*ville*', detailing the overall models and structures of the broader city: the subtle entanglements of the '*cité*', its people and their experiences, were somewhat secondary in the studies of these researchers.

In contrast, the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago, also known as the Chicago School, that built upon the work of these social reformers, had a mission which was much more engaged with the individuals they encountered in their research (Merriman, 2015). They conceived of the metropolis as a type of city-laboratory that could be analysed and observed scientifically. The School was influential in bringing theoretical approaches together with first-hand research methods adopted from the field of anthropology. Critical of the swift and sometimes flippant approach of the socially active 'muckraking' journalists of the time, the Chicago School opted to work in a slower, more methodical manner. Researchers integrated themselves into communities for extended periods of time, carrying out detailed interviews with urban citizens. The interaction of ethnic and social groups within Chicago, and the impact that these had on the broader politics of the city and its people, were among the main concerns of the research published by the School (Merriman, 2015).

A notable Chicago School project by Harvey Warren Zorbaugh focused on the relationship between the towering financial institutions of Chicago and the poorer neighbourhoods that adjoined them, specifically the Near North Side. This research resulted in a book entitled *The Gold Coast and the Slum* (1929). Large sections of the book are transcriptions from interviews that Zorbough carried out in these communities. Sennett (2018) notes that Zorbough writes from a position of neutrality, giving the subjects of his research a platform from which to detail their experiences. In this sense the community members he speaks to are like co-authors of the research, and his book becomes a container that can deliver their messages to the administrators, politicians and journalists who might not otherwise hear about issues of this kind from such people.

Fig. 20. Photograph illustrating *The Gold Coast and the Slum,* by Harvey Zorbaugh, c. 1929

Chicago School projects like *The Gold Coast and the Slum* continue to have a broad impact on the fields of sociology and anthropology and emerging fields such as digital ethnography. Contemporary researchers such as Sarah Pink cite the school as critical to forming our current understanding of what constitutes terms such as 'locality'. Pink et al. (2015) assert that the School demonstrated the advantages of researchers visiting places of interest on foot and either returning frequently or staying for extended periods of time. By engaging with such environments in these ways, their individual uniqueness and social complexity would emerge more clearly. Pink et al. (2015) further acknowledge that this understanding of locality through first-hand, immersive research methods is one of the major legacies of the Chicago School.

In 1961 Jane Jacobs published her classic text *The Death and Life of Great American Cities.* The book emerged at roughly the same time as Cullen's *Townscape* (1961) and Lynch's *Image of the City* (1960). Their similarity in terms of subject matter and approach means that these texts are often spoken about in relation to each other (Engler, 2015). Jacobs' work was arguably more overtly political than Cullen's and Lynch's, as it sought to comment upon, widely criticise and even 'attack' (Jacobs, 1992: 3) current US planning policy. One of Jacobs' primary arguments is that urban regeneration initiatives were not taking into account the circumstances and requirements of citizens. To underpin this argument Jacobs details the experiences of people who are relocated when

low-grade housing is 'renewed' and often re-homed in anonymous apartments, far away from their original communities. Friedmann (2010) notes how commonplace such stories of community displacement have become within situations of urban redevelopment since the text was first published. We can therefore understand that this issue of uprootedness has a tendency to emerge repeatedly at different times and in different geographic locations.

In order to study the multifarious conditions of a city in flux, the architect, academic and educator Robert Venturi also advocated immersion into the field of study. In 1968, Venturi, his academic colleagues at Yale School of Art and Architecture, and a number of his architecture students, visited Las Vegas to conduct a survey of what they considered to be a 'non-city' that had curiously emerged and extended out of the famous Las Vegas Strip. They conducted a vast range of studies during their time in the city, gathering a variety of taxonomies that described the recurring visual features that they encountered along the way. Photographic specimens of casino signage and gas stations were scrutinised and analysed in terms of the impact that they made on the image of the street. The vast body of work that they collated during their visit to the city was published in a text titled *Learning From Las Vegas* (1972) and is still cited as a major advancement in the ways that we now observe and photograph urban areas.

Fig. 21. Aesthetic commonalities of casinos on the Las Vegas Strip, Venturi et al., c. 1972

Venturi led a team of investigators visiting a city thousands of miles from their East Coast institution in order to dissect the city's form and functions, and they were applauded for the breadth of data that they collected. However, as outsiders, the researchers were also criticised for the way in which they treated Las Vegas as an academic subject. In the preface to the book the authors recount the 'unhelpfulness' (Venturi et al, 1972: xii) of the local decision-makers and the negative messages about their project that were published in the local Las Vegas press. These stories may hint at a broader discontent with the ways that architectural and ethnographic studies sometimes observe places and their

communities as 'guinea pigs' to be academically examined and analysed. Such approaches can be detached from the socio-political contexts of environments where people live, exemplifying how the '*ville*' can sometimes take the focus away from the '*cité*'.

Similar criticisms of detachment have been applied more recently to the work of two French photographers, Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre, and in particular to their studies of disintegrating architectural structures in the city of Detroit in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. The photographs in their book *The Ruins of Detroit* (2010) present the city as elegant, even beautiful, in its decay. Crumbling theatres and once grand public libraries falling into disrepair are displayed as poignant artefacts of an opulent city now destroyed. The peeling paint and tumbling plaster are details to be appreciated in their picturesqueness.

The idea of celebrating the ruin as an object of beauty has been around for some time. Sontag (1979: 79–80) suggests that older buildings, like old photographs, often look more attractive when they are unkempt and falling apart, stating that '[…] many buildings, and not only the Parthenon, probably look better as ruins […]'. This fascination with architectural relics or remnants that evoke a remembered, more prosperous past is a theme that we can see recurring in photography from Marville's time up to the present day (Paeslack, 2013).

Marchand and Meffre's work was instrumental in creating an aura of mystique around Detroit, inspiring several documentaries and photographic projects that explored the abandoned architecture of the city in the late 2000s and 2010s. Many of these projects were deemed to be examples of 'ruin porn', or photographic works that in some ways seemed to romanticise and glorify the decay. For example, the local novelist Jeffrey Eugenides (2011: 7) criticised such works for discussing decay in 'abstract or poetic terms […] acting as though they were bringing us the news about ourselves'.

Fig. 22. *United Artists Theater in Detroit*, Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre, 2010

However, it can also be argued that an outsider can see things that local people might not (Hay, 1998). The fresh eyes of a newcomer can sometimes

appreciate the significance of artefacts and details that might seem mundane and normal to a local person. In this way it can be useful to employ researchers and surveyors who are less familiar with the subjects of their research. Marchand and Meffre were criticised for looking at Detroit as a place of 'otherness', but this very detachment also allowed them to see and appreciate things that might have otherwise been overlooked.

Like many such photographic works that have come before it, the project can be viewed in dual contexts and co-opted to suit specific arguments. To some, these photographs are elegant, historical documents of a specific period of the city's history, while to others they are unhelpful beautifications of a very negative aspect of the city's condition during a period of struggle.

Noting the debates and publicity that can emerge around photographic projects documenting urban change, local authorities and developers sometimes commission urban photographers to make photo-essays of places anticipating renewal in order to contribute to a dialogue about the future of these locations. *A Peckham Poem* (2019) is a photo-essay on Peckham by the photographer Nick Turpin, which was financially supported by the development group Bywater Properties. The work explores the present-day gentrification and redevelopment taking place in this London district. It was created over several months, on several return visits to the area. Turpin says of *A Peckham Poem*:

> With this Street Photography project I have tried to capture the present whilst referencing the past and alluding to the possible future round the corner. This is the perfect time to see Peckham transforming in front of our eyes (Turpin, 2017: NP).

In this statement Turpin emphasises that the purpose of the project is to consider how redevelopment is affecting the area. The collection of images depicts a rapidly changing urban setting, whose future may or may not hold positive outcomes for its local residents. Turpin's captions are intriguingly ambiguous, hinting at hope and prosperity but also uncertainties and anxieties amongst the local community. In one image, Turpin depicts an exhibition opening in the area. The caption on Turpin's website reads simply 'A new commercial art gallery has its launch on Rye Lane: the space was previously an Employment and Training Centre' (Turpin, 2017: NP). This touches eloquently upon one of the most recognisable traits of urban change: *gentrification*.

The use of this term can be traced back to the middle of the twentieth century and has come to describe an underserved urban area experiencing a type of

renewal that benefits a wealthier, more advantaged incoming community, while the original inhabitants of such places are priced out. Smith's (1998: 198) often-cited definition describes this as a

…process by which central urban neighbourhoods that have undergone disinvestments and economic decline experience a reversal, reinvestment, and the in-migration of a relatively well-off middle and upper middle-class population.

Fig. 23. *Commercial Art Gallery Opening on Rye Lane*. Nick Turpin, 2017

With *A Peckham Poem* (2017) Turpin exemplifies how to chart processes of urban change such as gentrification through a balanced approach informed by an understanding of local context. Like the topographic photographers of the nineteenth-century, Turpin was commissioned to conduct a survey of a changing urban landscape by a large civic institution in order to convey a specific message about the city. However, like Charles Marville, Turpin is careful to avoid his work being appropriated in order to depict an overly positive image of the area. The photographs and their captions are therefore ambivalent in terms of tone. Turpin's documentary-style practice is also highly descriptive of the place but not methodical and clinical like some of the work produced by the new reformers. Like the Chicago School publications, Turpin's project required that the researcher was immersed in the terrain of the area, gaining a familiarity over a period of repeat visits. With an approach that is similar to that of Venturi and his peers, Turpin develops his own visual methodology for expressing the specificity of the locale through this process. However, *A Peckham Poem* does not romanticise the present conditions of the area and its past. Learning from the criticism of works by artists such as Marchand and Meffre, the series is forthright and simple in its depiction of the place. The images are not overtly aestheticised and present the landscape in an elegant, yet informal and realist manner.

In these ways *A Peckham Poem* goes some way to demonstrating how urban change can be photographed in a way that is appreciative of the social and political difficulties that are often inherent in such studies. For Turpin, his project is partly a continuum of the projects about urban change that have come before it. It seeks out a new mode of representation while acknowledging the approaches that others have tried and tested in the past. The work demonstrates that this holistic awareness is critical to planning a study about urban change with an ethical mindset. Turpin does this by giving attention to the specific complexities of the '*cité*' whilst also keeping an eye on the broader circumstances and physical condition of the '*ville*'.

This way of balancing a study of the '*cité*' with a more general understanding of the '*ville*' offers useful lessons which can be applied in the practice element of this research. Like a yin-yang symbol, these two aspects of the city are fundamental to its existence and are at the same time interdependent. One of the objectives of this research is to explore how photography can be used to draw attention to the complexities of the '*cité*' through site-based walking investigations. However, in order to do this it is necessary to remain mindful of the material status of the '*ville*'. By appreciating the conditions within the urban landscape more broadly, a study of its more specific experiential features at ground level can be better informed and thus remain more relevant. This approach can help researchers to avoid making assumptions, as well as to acknowledge and retain a sense of the bigger picture throughout the course of an urban field study.

II Citéography

This chapter discusses various photographic approaches that have engaged with the subject of urban character through forms of investigative enquiry. The photographic methods discussed here exemplify a type of locative searching, in which the elements that make a place singular and special, such as its characterising features, are shrewdly sought out with a camera.

The etymology of the word 'city', as discussed in Chapter 1, can be traced back to the French '*cité*', which refers more specifically to the collective sentience of urban citizens and their cognitive reading of the built landscape, whereas the '*ville*', in contrast, denotes the form and function of the city in a physical sense (Sennett, 2018).

This section focuses on photographers whose work attempts, in various ways, to engage with the *cité*. Presented within the context of this research, the practitioners below will thus be referred to as 'citéographers'. We can define a citéographer as a photographer who is occupied with the way people experience and interpret the urban landscape, and how this can be observed through the interaction between human beings and architecture.

There have been innumerable progressions, procedures and methods within the medium of photography in relation to the context of urban identity over the past 180 years. The camera has been, and continues to be, used as a tool to depict our interaction with the character of cityscapes in an ever-evolving way. The approaches discussed here express how lens-based innovations, and novel ways of seeing, have provided new information regarding the way people inhabit, interact with and change the fabric of cities through their behaviour. This chapter will attempt to discuss how these techniques can be built upon to inform our visual perception of the urban environment today.

2.1 The varying approaches

As noted in the previous chapter, the history of photography and the history of intense urbanisation are narratives that can largely be told in parallel (Krieger, 2004), particularly if we consider the work of the early topographic photographers of the mid-nineteenth-century. The Society for Photographing Relics of Old London was one of many significant organisations during this period which were actively recording the crumbling historical architecture of their respective cities in the wake of the Industrial Revolution.

A key topographic photographer operating in London during this time was Henry Dixon, who was active in the late nineteenth-century. Dixon's photographs have an ambiguity and theatrical arrangement that echoes the

practice of French photographers of the era such as Atget. His photograph of the Oxford Arms coaching inn captures a lone figure in an archway standing in a patch of sunlight beneath an aging pub. The buildings dominate the image, blocking out the sky and engulfing the viewer in the architectural landscape.

Fig. 24. *The Oxford Arms Coaching Inn*, Henry Dixon, 1875

'New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape' was an exhibition at the International Museum of Photography in Rochester, New York, in 1975, which referenced the work of topographic photographers such as Dixon and explored how these approaches have persisted over time. The purpose of the exhibition was to draw attention to photographic projects that explored the impact of contemporary construction on landscapes. The exhibitors were given space to present exactly ten prints which communicated the fundamental qualities of their practice. These works were mainly devoid of human presence, concentrating instead on spaces that had been reorganised, transfigured or reshaped by the intervention of human beings, particularly through the engineering of human-made, industrial structures.

Lewis Baltz's approach relied heavily on diffuse light, systematic framing and precise compositional details combined with an absence of human interaction. The flatness of his photographs prevents the viewer from looking beyond the mid-range of the scene. Images such as *Construction Detail, East Wall, Xerox, 1821 Dyer Road, Santa Ana* draw the eye towards the materiality of the structure depicted. The image is divided into quadrants of textures, and almost resembles a Rothko painting, with its tactile patchwork of concrete, paint and plaster.

Fig. 25. *Construction Detail, East Wall, Xerox, 1821 Dyer Road, Santa Ana.* Lewis Baltz, 1974

Adopting freer, more intuitive approaches akin to the nineteenth-century topographic photographers, Marc Atkins and Sophie Calle have reminded us of how photographic flânerie can continue to offer detailed ethnographic data about the underlying structure of the modern city through periods of rapid development. Kramer and Short (2011: 331) assert that

> flânerie's dynamics lend themselves to moments of intense social change and therefore are once again appropriate responses to the social, visual and architectural upheaval of 21st-century cities.

In *Liquid City* (1999) Atkins photographs London in a fluid, diaristic manner, surveying the city's hidden byways, cut-throughs and backwaters as he explores this terrain with the writer Iain Sinclair. The photographs act as illustrations to Sinclair's wandering psychogeographic prose, albeit not in a direct, literal sense. The images and the text weave in and out of each other, never quite aligning but giving an impressionistic flavour of the city's texture, 'memories and remnants' (Sinclair & Atkins, 1999: 1) as it experienced the rapid development and economic investment of the late 1990s.

Fig. 26. From *Liquid City*, Marc Atkins, 1999

Sometimes the flâneur can be said to apply rules or tenets to their urban explorations in order to carry out an ethnographic study of modernity (Coates, 2017). Calle is a conceptual artist who uses photography to document anomalous aspects of her life and to interrogate ambiguous questions using creative constraints, often through narratives or sequences of images. In her book *Double Game* (1993) Calle initiated a creative dialogue with the author Paul Auster, in which he sent her ambiguous instructions on how to live her life in New York. These notes vary widely and include directions such as '[…] think about the things around you more than you think about yourself. At least while you're outside, walking down the street on your way from here to there' (Calle & Auster, 1993: 241). Calle photographically records her responses to these commands, giving a very personal, anecdotal account of her perspective on New York City: but they are initiated in a sinister way through the explicit instructions of a surveiller.

Fig. 27. From *Gotham Handbook*, Sophie Calle, 1993

Similarly personal and human focused in his approach, the Indian documentary photographer Raghubir Singh (1942-1999) used small-format colour photography to discreetly hone in on the rush and flutter of urban scenes in a candid, almost covert manner. Images such as *Pedestrians, Kemp's Corner, Mumbai, Maharashtra* find beauty in the mundane, uneventful corners of the city. This process echoes the practice of early street photographers such as Paul Martin, who explored ways to remain unnoticed in order to stealthily snatch scenes of everyday spontaneity as they passed quickly by. Martin was one of the first street photographers to make use of smaller, more discreet photographic technology, utilising a camera called a Facile, which looked like a large box, or parcel.

Fig. 28. *Pedestrians, Kemp's Corner, Mumbai, Maharashtra.* Raghubir Singh, 1989

Fig. 29. *St Paul's from Bankside.* Paul Martin, 1893

Like Martin, Berenice Abbott was strongly committed to the idea of developing new, more effective methods for photographing the ever-changing landscape of cities. She states in her 1941 book *A Guide to Better Photography*:

> To capture the spirit of the modern city with hurrying crowds, congested traffic, skyscrapers, the photographer has to create new points of view ... Angle shots imported from the movies, bird's-eye views, worm's-eye views, rooftop views, are all a part of the complete envisioning of the city's complex architectural stratifications.
> (Abbott, 1941: 22)

Some of Abbott's most famous images of New York are dynamic, dizzying compositions taken from the roofs of skyscrapers, which interrogate the often prescriptive and predictable nature of the medium by presenting new, unusual framing techniques. Some of these lofty views are similar to the modern aerial views of cities which we have become very accustomed to in recent years.

However, when Abbott produced her skyscraper images, photographs such as these would not have been seen before. As a result, they would have looked very unusual and radical when first exhibited.

Fig. 30. *Aerial View of New York by Night*. Berenice Abbott, 1932

Margaret Bourke-White (1904-1971) was a contemporary of Abbott's and a pioneer of the 'straight photography tradition', a movement which focused on the essential qualities of the photographic medium and avoided wider political statements. Unnecessary contextual detail was omitted and the emphasis instead lay on shape, form and compositional structure. One of Bourke-White's most notable works was her commission from the Otis Steel Company to document the production line in their steel-making factories. Whilst challenging the gender roles of the period by working in a strongly masculine environment, Bourke-White also developed innovative new processes for photographing in such extreme conditions. This innovation informed the way that she photographed urban scenes. Her images of Prague from the late 1930s echo the experimental, Modernist approaches being explored by Berenice Abbott, as she too looked for new angles and perspectives in order to depict modern cities in a manner that best expressed their movement and flux.
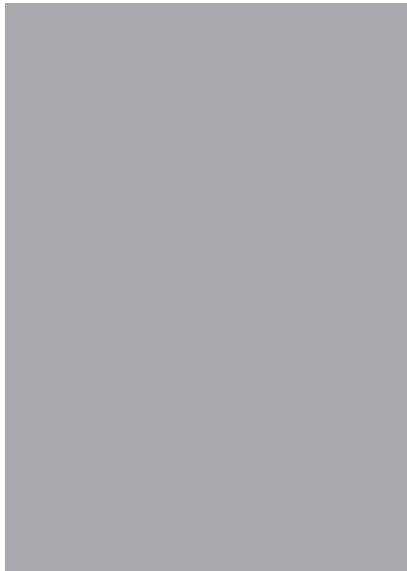
Fig. 31. *Prague*. Margaret Bourke-White, 1938

Similarly fascinated by the motion and verve of the city, Henri Cartier-Bresson asserted that photography was, to him, the process of capturing concurrently 'the significance of an event as well as of a precise organisation of forms which give that event its proper expression' (Cartier-Bresson, 2014: 18). Cartier-Bresson advocated a meticulous approach to composition, in which every physical feature of the photograph had to be perfectly positioned and framed. Meanwhile, in the same fraction of a second, a particularly remarkable and distinctive moment should be captured. The precise structural arrangement of the photograph should communicate exactly why this fleeting occurrence was politically or socially meaningful, and worthy of our attention. The carefully balanced phenomena within these snapshots became known as 'decisive moments'. Photographic theorists have subsequently suggested that this approach was a reaction against the frenzied, hyperactive temperament of the modern city and its inhabitants, who navigated their environment unmoved by the significance of certain incidents and experiences. Lenman (2006: 160) notes:

> Out of the chaotic, unceasing flux of the visible world, the decisive moment appears as an instant of equilibrium perceived by the photographer through the camera's viewfinder. In such an instant, compositional resolution is seen to represent the psychic dimension of underlying social and political realities.

The term *à la sauvette* is derived from the practice of illicit street vendors, who covertly sold their wares away from the gaze of the authorities. These traders had to be effective sellers but also sharply alert, ready to pick up their belongings and run at a moment's notice. Cartier-Bresson's words were carefully selected, suggesting that the photographer should be invisible and crafty, and also adaptable, nimble and alacritous. The process can be seen clearly in his iconic photograph *Derrière la Gare Saint-Lazare* (Behind the Gare Saint-Lazare). Here, a silhouetted running figure hops over discarded material in the street in order to avoid a large puddle. The photograph captures the instant before the serenity of the water will be disrupted, as a large impending splash will inevitably transform the equanimity of the composition.
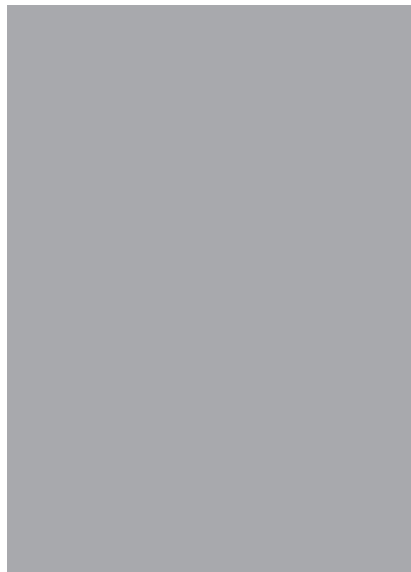
Fig. 32. *Derriere la Gare Saint-Lazare, Paris.* Henri Cartier-Bresson, 1932

Perhaps the antithesis of the decisive moment is the type of photograph that has been deliberately orchestrated. Such staged scenes are often lit and composed in a theatrical or cinematic manner and can broadly be split into two categories: first, images that have been intentionally set up; and second, images that appear to have been staged but are, in actuality, depictions of real life.

A notable proponent of the former approach is Gregory Crewdson, whose photographs of characters captured in the dreamscape hinterland of American suburbia are created through large-scale collaborative processes that resemble film productions. The resulting images are highly cinematic, with many evoking a wide establishing shot from a moody drama or TV mini-series. The 'fakeness' of these images are clearly deliberate, creating an almost mythical artifice for the audience to ponder over and search for clues in. Crewdson's photographs also are somewhat reminiscent of Edward Hopper's portraits of pensive characters isolated or enclosed within the indifferent coldness of the surrounding architecture.

Fig. 33. From *Beneath the Roses*, Gregory Crewdson (2008)

Fig. 34. *New York Office*. Edward Hopper (1962)

Philip-Lorca diCorcia's work could be said to exist within a similar realm to Crewdson's, because of its theatrical qualities; however, his means of production are far less elaborate. Some of his images are deliberately staged and some are merely constructed through an aesthetic that only appears to be set up. In his famous series *Streetwork* (1993–1998) the photographer hid flashlights in the street furniture of cities around the world. DiCorcia then waited for his subjects, usually anonymous passers-by, to enter the light cast by these strobes before taking his photographs. As with Crewdson, diCorcia's work is sometimes referred to as 'cinematic', but the artist is known to reject this description, arguing that his photographs *suggest* stories, rather than *tell* them in the way that films do (Sidley, 2016).

Fig. 35. *Paris.* Philip-Lorca diCorcia, 1996

Taking photographs in busy urban areas can often be a challenging process for those trying to depict the freneticism of the street. With so much happening, in such close proximity, it can be difficult to select a subject to focus on, especially one which helps to convey the rush and energy of a busy street corner. One approach that some photographers take is to simply embrace the chaos of the city and allow this to inform a distorted type of image that depicts an abstract vision of the terrain.

One photographer well known for this approach is Daidō Moriyama (b. 1938). Moriyama trained as a graphic designer before abandoning the medium in favour of the relative freedom and diversity offered by photography. Moriyama was heavily influenced by the confrontational street aesthetic of William Klein and the energetic movement and intensity of Shomei Tomatsu's photojournalism. Aspects of Moriyama's work also relate directly to Robert Frank's *The Americans* (1958): both photographers spoke of their fascination with the beat writers of the 1940s and '50s. Moriyama said of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*: 'the narrative is always moving, always looking at different things at the same time' (Quoted in Hudson, 2012: n.p.). The same could be said of Moriyama's gaze: it is constantly shifting and glancing, never still enough to draw focus before moving onto the next subject.

Fig. 36. From *Farewell Photography*, Daidō Moriyama, 1972

Moriyama's explorations of Tokyo were almost like hurried reconnaissance through the urban landscape. The term 'reconnaissance' derives from the French '*reconnoître*', meaning 'to recognise', a word which, in turn, evolved from the Latin '*recognoscere*', meaning 'to know again'. Today, in English, the word is sometimes shortened simply to 'recce' and is used as a military expression to observe a geographic region in order to ascertain information about the enemy or to gain intelligence which might afford the strategic upper hand in a conflict. A 'recce' is often an exploratory duty carried out by a 'scout' who is posted ahead of the main company to retrieve this topographic data, either on their own or in a small team.

'Location scouts' are also used in the film business to explore potential real-world settings where scenes might be shot. A director of photography and their team will often scout a range of a locations before settling on the right environment within which to tell their story.

The film director Stanley Kubrick famously employed his assistant, Manuel Harlan, to conduct a massive photographic location scout of London back-streets, in extraordinary depth, to discover potential shooting locations for his final film, the neo-noir *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999). This specific recce is particularly notable because it was unusually comprehensive: Harlan estimates that he shot roughly 30,000 photographs for the project over the course of a year. The project included typologies of subjects as diverse as doorways, toy shops, mortuaries and costume shops, photographed as potential backdrops to appear within the film (Ronson, 2012). For one part of this process, Harlan photographed the 1.8-mile-long Commercial Road in London in its entirety. Kubrick did not want the vertical lines of the buildings to converge so the photographs were taken on a ladder, which was shifted along the street, 12 feet at a time. Finally, the photographs were printed and taped together to create a giant, all-encompassing panorama.

Fig. 37, 38, 39. The Commercial Road panorama. Manuel Harlan, 1997

This immense cache of photographs is housed in the Kubrick Archives at the London College of Communication, and they were visited in person during the research stages of this project. Sifting through the images is a somewhat overwhelming experience, due to the sheer volume of material, but it is immediately apparent that there is structure and rigour to the way in which the images were collated. The Commercial Road explorations are perhaps the most intriguing part of this collection because they document a very specific part of London in intricate detail, in some ways recalling Atget's extensive portfolio of images of Paris, created a century earlier.

Fig. 40. The more exploratory 'recce' photographs, taken in the back streets adjacent to Commercial Road. Manuel Harlan, 1997

Some of the photographic investigations undertaken by Harlan during this process abide by ordered directives and precise procedures, but others are divergent and meandering. While the panorama has been intricately composed and assembled, Harlan also appears to have wandered the back streets leading off Commercial Road more freely on several occasions. There is an unfettered quality to these images, which allows for more serendipitous observations. It was perhaps this combination of the two contrasting approaches, initially strict and exacting before becoming more drifting and transient, that allowed the photographer to conduct a true '*reconnoître*' of East London.

2.2 Analogues of reality

By discussing each of these approaches together, we can assess how the work of these citéographers tends not to grapple with the subject of urban character in a general sense, but instead focuses on capturing smaller ingredients that may contribute towards it. Therefore, these approaches can be understood as a search for *particles* of the city's character, rather than an attempt to reproduce a more holistic, objective depiction of its image. In many cases the city has been perceived through the lens of these photographers and subjected to their authorial perspective before emerging not as a fully formed portrayal but as slightly peculiar fragmentary glimpses. We can then think of this type of photography as a form of spatial decryption, where the complexities of the urban terrain are assimilated and dissected by the photographer before being presented to an audience as 'open' (Eco, 1979) paraphrased visual questions for them to contemplate and decode.

These photographs are not straightforward snapshots, intended to offer realistic evocations of the city; instead, they are diversely weird and offbeat ways of framing urban spaces. In this way they contrast heavily with the more rational, pragmatic photographic portrayals on a broader scale that are often used in landscape research today (outlined in section 1.1). Thus, this discussion of the citéographer may serve as a useful alternative photographic framework to discern the nexus of habitations, interactions and alterations that affect the fabric of cities and the way that daily life unfolds within them.

On this subject, diCorcia notes that 'The world is too elusive to pin down in a photograph. The image has to create its own world, hopefully self-contained, an analog of reality, not a mirror of it' (quoted in Short et al., 2019: 154). Here the photographer highlights that trying to capture or reflect the reality of life in cities is an unattainable goal: more worthwhile is an endeavour to reimagine the world through enigmatic yet succinct modes of representation, in which people are encouraged to search for the signs and symbols that are embedded within certain landscapes. Through this process, the photographer and the viewer can engage in a game where together they assemble pieces of the city's ever-evolving bricolage puzzle.

2.3 Two references to guide the practice-based methodology

This chapter will now focus on two particular investigators of urban character, one whose work was based in the Townscape movement and architecture (Gordon Cullen) and one whose work was based in photography (Michael Wolf). Cullen and Wolf both applied numerous techniques of enquiry to probe the specificity of urban landscapes. A range of these approaches will be discussed before reflecting on them in relation to the practice-led element of this study, discussed in Chapters V and VI.

Cullen and Wolf developed comprehensive visual 'toolkits', containing a diverse range of tactics to offer a visual reading of the city. Through the application of these tools, their work, to some extent, embodied each of the investigative approaches of the citéographers discussed in the previous section.

Cullen and Wolf acted as decryptors of the built landscape, designing new methods of urban enquiry: walking the city in order to discern, detect and extract the specificities contained within its precincts and corners. To return to Benjamin's metaphor, they were like detectives roaming the street on foot, spying somewhat voyeuristically on features of urbanity, collating this as evidence and then setting out it out as visual testimony to be considered forensically in front of an audience or forum. Their visual outcomes were therefore designed to be somewhat open to interpretation, raising questions and spurring on public debate.

In addition, Cullen and Wolf were both keen strategists who applied specific rules and procedures to their investigations. These rules were critical to the way that they organised their urban studies and gave them clear parameters which helped them to avoid veering into circuitous diversions or meandering without direction. The precepts and principles that guided their work also gave focus and substance to their enquiries, allowing them to pick out particular details within urban architecture and to consider how these affected people's experiences. The aim here is to discuss these approaches and to understand how they can inform a practice-based methodology for photographing urban character in sites of change today.

2.4 Townscape: a thesaurus of photographic exemplars

Cullen's work and legacy in urbanism was broad and wide-ranging, but as a writer on, and practitioner of, Townscape approaches, he was concerned with how to describe our multi-layered encounters within an urban area through visual explorations conducted at street level. With these optical approaches, Cullen sought to draw forth the 'elusive qualities [that] affect the emotional experience of, and reaction to, places […] [its] "character"'(Jivén & Larkham, 2003: 69).

Cullen was known variously as an architectural draftsperson, illustrator, commercial artist, renderer, consultant or even, in his own terms, 'metabuilder' or 'archibuilder'. He was thus relatively unique as a voice in urban design because of the way that he bridged the gap between the distinct fields of drawing, collage, urban photography and planning. He outlined a type of observational blueprint for people to find, document and discuss distinct characteristics that can be located within a town or cityscape. He invited people to adapt and rework these approaches and expressed an interest in people finding their own ways to depict the urban topography.

It is important to acknowledge certain controversies that have surrounded the Townscape movement and the ways in which fault has been found with such primarily visual approaches. One negative view is that optical polemics like *Townscape* (1961) have eschewed the complex politics, psychology and structures of people's relationship with the built environment. Such commentators have noted how Cullen's writing instead places emphasis on the pleasing exterior elements of buildings and urban form, underlining the romantic and sentimental nature of the writer's work. Some argue, further, that his ideas were innately superficial and have ultimately contributed to a broad acceptance of highly decorative architectural practices such as facadism (Jivén & Larkham, 2003). Particularly prevalent towards the end of the twentieth century, facadism is a practice whereby the traditional exterior walls of a building are preserved in front of an entirely new, often architecturally unrelated structure. The so-called 'benefit' of this decorative approach is that the exterior walls of buildings can be protected and continue to make an important contribution to the identity of a street scene or general townscape (Curl & Wilson, 2016).

It is also possible to see a correlation between the Townscape movement and the strict heritage protection rules implemented in the 1960s and 1970s in the United Kingdom, which ultimately limited the ways in which architects could innovate and experiment with design in certain areas. In this way, we can identify a conflict between the Townscape movement in urbanism and the Modernist movement in architecture (Sennett, 2018).

However, in contrast to the conservative image with which he is often associated, schemes such as that illustrated below in *AR* in 1951 demonstrate how Cullen integrated his strategies for observing the character of the urban

landscape into modern and often radical designs for new urban spaces. This energetic redevelopment proposal for the South Bank in London evidences how the ideals of the Townscape movement could appreciate the ingrained features of a place that make it unique while also envisioning playful, modern ways in which it might change significantly in a manner that enhanced, rather than displaced, these elements. We can see from such schemes that Cullen's intention may not have been entirely concerned with preserving the picturesque qualities of the urban terrain. Instead, his work can be read as a manifesto advocating the recognition of architectural features which are significant and calling for city-goers to engage in a dialogue as to why they are so.

Fig. 41. 'South Bank Translated', Gordon Cullen, *Architectural Review,* 6 August 1951

One of his primary concerns was the experience of someone travelling on foot through a built area. In order to convey the experiences and the encounters that a pedestrian might stumble upon on a route through a town centre, Cullen would casually walk sites of interest and look for facets that he felt to be important in various ways. He would encourage his colleagues to do the same, and through this process they sought to 'achieve an integrated and vital urban landscape [such] that no details however small should be passed over as not worth bothering about' (Browne, quoted in Elwall, 2012: 677). This quote, from an article in *AR* in 1953, reveals that a key guiding principle for Cullen and his colleagues was to explore how the 'things' that they encountered on their walks acted as integral building blocks to their environment. For this reason, and in a similar way to the phenomenologists working during the inter-war and post-war periods, the writers for *AR* felt that everything, no matter how trivial, should be regarded as significant and interrogated as such. This perhaps explains why Cullen's work has at times been linked to the field of phenomenology, and in particular Heidegger's notion of 'gathering', in which the disparate features that make up our surroundings are assessed in order to expound upon their meaning. The phenomenological theory of the 'disembodied eye' is also particularly relevant to Cullen's approach, as this explores the significance of sight in relation to the other senses as a means of perception (Engler, 2015).

It was perhaps because of this ocularcentric perspective that Cullen felt the most powerful and direct apparatus to collate his compilation of visual exemplars was the camera. While drawings do appear in *Townscape* (1961), most of the images are photographs. Cullen would hone in on a specific facet within a place and explore its context and relationship with its surroundings, as well as its unique location and significance in the environment. The style of this photographic material is simple and direct, and, unlike his drawings, there is little authorial intervention in the images. While his sketches are elegant renderings of the architecture, they are also interpreted through his distinctive, almost cartoonish draftspersonship. However, the photographs in *Townscape* (1961) interrogate their subjects through a vividly inquisitive lens. This process has an almost scientific sense of enquiry embedded within it, in which architectural objects and street furniture are presented as specimens to be probed, analysed and critiqued.

Cullen's writing is also suffused with photographic terminology. Words such as 'focal point', 'composition' and 'juxtaposition' are descriptors that underline the intrinsic relationship between his writing and the photographic medium. Photographs and places are both spoken about with similar words and phrases, suggesting that, to Cullen at least, Townscape is an entity that can be viewed and read through processes that are like those we employ to interpret a photograph.

Elwall (2012: 679) also highlights the importance of 'irregularity, visual richness and surprise' in the design and photography that appeared in *AR*. Through these graphic approaches Cullen and his colleagues presented the impactful, strange and unexpected features of the city through a style of photography and design that reflected the way we might come across such features in real life.

Another reason that Cullen may have placed so much emphasis on the potential of photography as a device with which to read the urban landscape was because, in the lead-up to the publication of his book, photography had evolved into a much more accessible and democratic art form. Smaller, high-quality cameras, such as Cullen's favoured Leica, were becoming more popular with professionals and amateurs alike. This fed into Cullen's belief that Townscape should be an egalitarian movement in which people, regardless of their background, should be invited to participate and have their own say. For Cullen and his colleagues, the relative ease and availability of the photographic medium made it a perfect tool with which to start collecting visual precedents on a larger, more public scale (Engler, 2015).

Townscape (1961) contains a section described by the author as a 'Casebook', which sets out to collate the ingredients that can combine to make a city 'a dramatic event'. This is divided into three distinct sections: Place, Content, and Functional Tradition. Within each of the sections Cullen provides a set of features that make a vital contribution to a characterful urban environment.

To illustrate these exemplars Cullen uses photographs of architectural details accompanied by short, one-paragraph captions. Some of these photographs were his own and some were taken by his colleagues.

The section of 'Place' in *Townscape* concerns someone's reaction to their position within a built environment and the feelings that they might encounter as a result, such as being hemmed in or vulnerable. Cullen proposes that we should consider the urban from

the point of view of the moving person [...] [because then] it is easy to see how the whole city becomes a plastic experience, a journey through pressures and vacuums, a sequence of exposures and enclosures, of constraint and relief […]
(Cullen, 1961: 10)

Here Cullen explains that the experience of walking through a town or city can be a somewhat undulating and rhythmic experience, in which the pedestrian is introduced to a range of physical forces that have an immediate cognitive impact which can affect their mood and sense of safety. There are 45 visual precedents in this section, which the author uses to make his point. Examples such as 'Grandiose Vista' (Cullen, 1961: 41) are firmly physical entities which are relatively straightforward and recognisable and thus need little explanation to define their function. However, within the same section, the author also touches upon less tangible and more abstract features – such as 'Mystery', which he describes as a place 'where anything can happen or exist, the noble or the sordid, genius or lunacy' (Cullen, 1961: 51). The photograph that Cullen uses to illustrate this statement is an ambiguous shot of a man in a suit turning a corner in the street and disappearing into shadow. This exemplifies how, to Cullen, the notion of 'place' was a highly experiential ideal that could manifest in both corporeal and incorporeal ways, but which was indeed possible to observe optically.
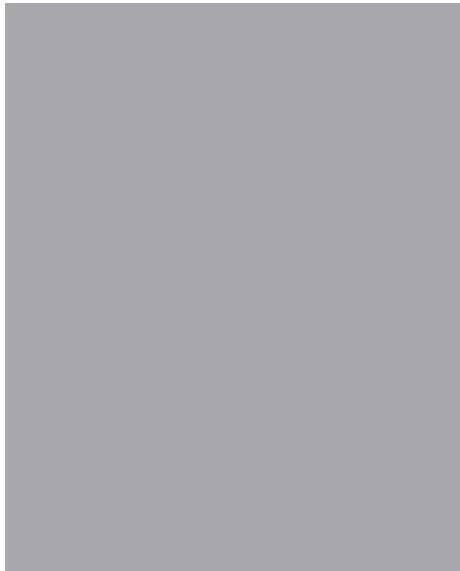
Fig. 42. The visual precedent of 'Mystery', *Townscape*, Gordon Cullen, 1961

In his second section of the Casebook, 'Content', Cullen discusses the physical elements that contribute to the fabric of a built environment, and which can affect our perception of it. With 'Content', Cullen explains, 'the environment […] resolves itself into not conformity but the interplay of This and That' (Cullen, 1961: 11). From this statement we can see that interaction and the relationship between things as they exist in the urban landscape are of particular importance. Many of the visual precedents in this section are objects that tend to stand out amidst their mundane surroundings. When viewed from a more artistic perspective such precedents are almost like Duchamp's 'readymades', or everyday physical entities that, when titled and presented as significant, become elevated to something more meaningful. The photograph that Cullen uses to depict the precedent of 'Entanglement' helps to convey this idea further: a relatively unremarkable ornate Victorian lamppost. Yet, when labelled and presented in the book next to an image of a stag's horn it suddenly develops a complex visual connotation. Cullen thus describes the lamppost as a 'visual conundrum', something that catches the eye and demands thought and attention from the viewer.

Fig. 43. The visual precedent of 'Entanglement', *Townscape*, Gordon Cullen, 1961

The final section of the *Townscape* Casebook is entitled 'The Functional Tradition' and refers to the inherent nature of the vernacular apparatus that adorns a built landscape. Cullen says that 'Functional Tradition' is 'the intrinsic quality of things made […] which create the environment [...] it is unequivocal, pithy and wonderfully economical' (Cullen, 1961: 87).

In this section the author draws our attention to the practical and utilitarian components of the street, such as fences, railings and steps, which are often overlooked because they are so commonplace. He argues, however, that when these features are applied in certain unexpected ways, they have the potential to change the syntax of the landscape. For example, the witty image of a sans-serif street sign for 'Sans Street' demonstrates how sharp, clear lettering can characterise the side of a building, deliver an unintended pun (the font itself is sans serif), and create something surprising out of the mundane.
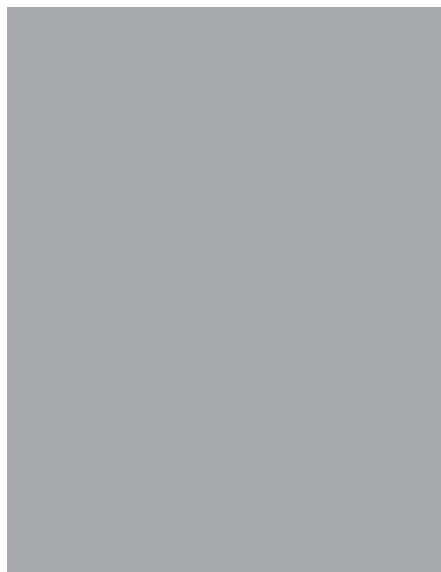
Fig. 44. The visual precedent of 'Lettering', *Townscape*, Gordon Cullen, 1961

We can see from these examples that Cullen's approaches offer, in a sense, guidance on how to photograph the character of the built environment. Of particular interest to this study are the ways in which Cullen draws on the terminology and language from the Townscape movement to identify and describe 'pieces of street furniture or other urban appurtenances' (Elwall, 2012: 677): his precise labelling of urban features, his photographic approach involving walking and exploration and his descriptive and his lyrical way of discussing imagery are all examples of this.

2.5 The vernacular furniture of Michael Wolf

The photographer Michael Wolf was a visual collector of urban features, whose body of work consists of projects within strictly defined parameters. A resident in Hong Kong for many years, his photographic methods revolved around exploratory walks that led him to notice patterns and recurring themes in the environment. Typologies of a wide variety of subjects in the city drew his gaze and he would order these into sets of images, often presented in structured grid compositions when they were exhibited. Wolf was an inherently curious photographic practitioner who developed a way of discreetly examining the unfolding human drama of the city, a bit like an inquisitive wildlife photographer stalking exotic animals in the jungle. Much of his practice explored the impact of architecture on people and attempted to identify the features that made the experiences of encountering urban places distinctive in certain ways (Wolf, 2017). For this reason, Wolf could be described as a phenomenologist of the urban, in much the same way as Cullen. He attempted to look at the urban landscape with a child-like curiosity, questioning every detail regardless of how important or unimportant it might seem on the surface. Like Cullen, Wolf also had a strict set of visual principles which guided the structure of each project that he undertook, that involved presenting his images together in aesthetically consistent groups (Baker & Wolf, 2005).

Perhaps one of Wolf's best-known projects is *Architecture of Density* (2012) which looks at the elevations of gargantuan apartment buildings in Hong Kong and their proximity to each other. Unlike the work of fellow German architectural photographer Andreas Gursky, Wolf does not manipulate the images of these buildings. The proportions that we see are accurate, yet the incredible scale of the structures is almost unfathomable and hyper-real. One of the techniques that Wolf applied to create this effect was to frame the buildings in such a way that no other elements disrupted the architecture (Milner, 2014). For example, neither the sky nor the street below appear in the compositions. Because of this, there is no indication of where the buildings begin and end, creating a highly disorientating visual experience. Wolf (2012) himself explains that this produces a sense of claustrophobia, trapping the viewer in the scene and preventing their eyes from being able to escape.

Fig. 45. *Architecture of Density #28*. Michael Wolf, 2008

Looking at the images and walking these environments in real life are similarly disorientating and visceral experiences, suggesting that Wolf employed these methods to give us a sense of what it is like to inhabit these spaces in person. We can also discern something of the impersonal and machine-like qualities of the architecture, which is depicted as vast and cold. It has been noted that the bold vertical lines that repeat at different widths almost resemble barcodes, again bringing forth the feeling of repetition in this part of the city and presenting the buildings as mechanistic, even robotic (Hall, 2011).

In *Transparent City*, in contrast, Wolf looked at the pellucid nature of the Chicago skyscraper. Where *Architecture of Density* was about surface and exterior and specifically observed the opaque veneer of the Hong Kong tower block, *Transparent City* looked inside the glass walls on the Chicago skyline (Hall, 2011). The very subject of these two projects contrast with one another, thus drawing attention to two characteristics that are very specific to the downtown areas of each of these megacities: in Hong Kong the buildings are dense and hard, with sharp, vivid and often colourful opaque exteriors; in Chicago the skyscrapers appear more spacious, open and translucent, especially at night when lights are switched on and interiors become much more visible from outside.

Fig. 46. *Transparent City #87B*. Michael Wolf, 2007

By photographing with a large format camera at twilight, Wolf was able to depict the structures of the exterior architecture while also exploring the interiors of rooms in which the lights were switched on. These illuminated spaces show another dimension to the buildings, offering an opportunity to appreciate the outside and peer inside at the same time. In this way, we can observe the towers as if they are dolls' houses, and the inner world of the skyscraper, often a mysterious and closed-off territory for most city-goers, is prised open for all of us to see.

One of the more contentious aspects of the project is the fact that the people who appear in the images are seemingly unaware that they had been photographed. This is one of several examples in which a degree of unsettling voyeurism can be seen in Wolf's work, which one critic described as 'jarring moments of intimacy' (Fenstermaker, 2019: n.p.). In a tangential project that used the same large-format images of Chicago skyscrapers, *Transparent City: Details* zoomed in to pixelated close-ups of specific windows on these buildings. The images eavesdrop on the often strange behaviour of people who believe themselves to be alone, in their own private worlds. Photographed on the precipice of the 2008 financial crisis, bankers can be seen looking dismayed and isolated, exclaiming silently and resting their heads on their desks.

Fig. 47. *Transparent City Details #7.* Michael Wolf, 2007

Wolf's series *Tokyo Compression* is a stark, unflinching observation of the ways in which people are routinely squashed into tiny spaces in cities and how this is simply a fact of everyday life. Peering into subway trains in the Tokyo rush hour, Wolf took many of the images on a platform at Shimo-Kitazawa station, where a single track offered the photographer a clear vantage point and the ability to get very close to the passengers when trains stopped (Macdonald, 2017). In this series, the subway train acts like a microcosmic representation of human movement and personal space in the modern city. The photographs convey much about Tokyo's hot, overcrowded and dense character. It is an uncomfortable set of images to look at because the people depicted cannot avoid Wolf's gaze, and some are clearly unhappy about being photographed. In this way, the images explore the invasiveness and the ethical complexity inherent in such documentary projects, along with the sometimes questionable role that we play as viewers when looking at them (Orvell, 1992).

Fig. 48. *Tokyo Compression #24.* Michael Wolf, 2010

The images are also particularly striking for their colourful, painterly qualities, which somehow lend the scenes an otherworldly atmosphere. In image #24 of the series, a young woman's face appears enigmatically through the window of a train, obscured by condensation. The woman's eyes are closed, and she appears to be peaceful, almost serene, as she is swallowed up by the darkness and mysterious density of the carriage. The lapis blue of her scarf adds a striking note of intensity to the abstract, textured surface, recalling one of Gerhard Richter's 'squeegee' paintings. As with Richter's portrait *Ella* (2007), the anonymity of the human subject is hypnotic, and the veiled, distorted surface of the image heightens this sense of the unknown.

Fig. 49. *Ella*. Gehard Richter, 2007

Upon closer inspection, further elements in Wolf's photograph reveal themselves: in particular, we can see his reflection, cast like a spectre over the window of the train. The photographer appears intense: studying and focusing on the task at hand, viewing his subject in a bold, emotionless way, like a scientific inspector. The act of revealing himself in the image also has the effect of making us, the viewer of the photograph, reflect on our own position as we stare at a trapped figure who is helpless to avert our gaze. Wolf's silhouette is our own face as we peer into the image trying to make sense of the scene and build a story of this woman in our own minds. Wolf's identity, anonymous and curious, reflects our own spirit of enquiry as we stare into the unknown.

While living briefly in Paris, Wolf found that he was unable to explore the city with the investigative approach he had been able to take in cities like Hong Kong, Tokyo and Chicago. In an interview with *Foam* magazine, the photographer explained how he struggled to find intriguing and unusual subjects because everything was so familiar. He noted how photographers such as Robert Doisneau and Cartier-Bresson had already thoroughly surveyed the city, meaning that any new photo project here was in danger of appearing trite and clichéd.

Wolf's strategy to counter this potential hazard was to attempt to look for a new angle on the city. He found this through the use of Google Street View, a wayfinding tool which was then in its infancy and which he swiftly repurposed as a new kind of photographic surveying instrument. Wolf looked closely at small geographic regions on the Street View platform, scouring areas for 'scenes', or unfolding events, looking into windows of buildings, paying attention to reflections and peering into dark, shadowy alleyways. Wolf photographed these scenes on the screen of his computer with a medium-format camera, explaining that his authorial intervention came when he cropped the image in a way that would make the viewer pay attention and look more closely.

One photograph hones in on a strange scene with a woman smoking a cigarette outside a door, which is slightly ajar. Like all the human figures appearing in Google Street View, her face has been automatically blurred out, removing her identity while making her ghostly and characterless. In the doorway, a figure appears to be looking at the subject, but the woman seems to be unaware that she is being watched. Wolf brings an ambiguity to the scene, creating a sense of menace, allowing the image to be read and understood in a variety of ways.
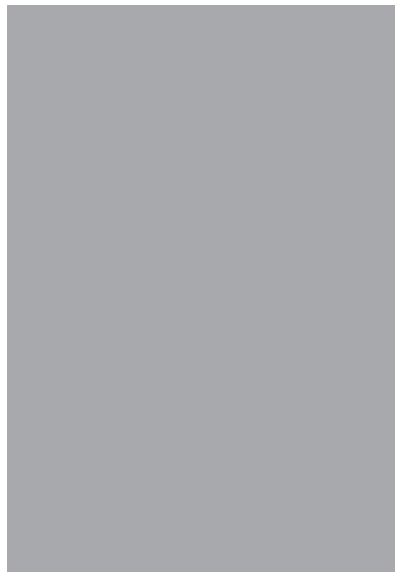
Fig. 50. From the series *Paris Street View*. Michael Wolf, 2010

Throughout the time he lived in Hong Kong Wolf also produced a range of typology-related projects which drew attention to recurring incidents that he found on walks and explorations through the city. According to Wolf, each of the projects individually dealt with specific aspects of the city's rich vernacular culture (Wolf, 2014). Many of Wolf's subjects were found on walks through the labyrinthine back streets of Kowloon and would form what he referred to, and published, as *Hong Kong Back Alley Encyclopedia*. One of the functions of this collection was that it reimagined the utilitarian purpose of seemingly everyday objects in the street as a type of vernacular sculpture (Wolf, 2015). The

taxonomy itself was published in several volumes, each focusing on different examples of a common object discovered in this little known and overlooked network of small streets. Objects such as mops, umbrellas, plants and chairs featured in these volumes.

One volume, *Hong Kong Informal Seating Arrangements*, explored the imaginative ways in which old furniture is sometimes arranged behind buildings for workers to congregate on in their breaks. These chairs, some of which had been refurbished in strikingly utilitarian ways using simple available materials, were repurposed by Wolf and presented as artistic installations. While the objects had been originally created for highly functional purposes, Wolf draws attention to these arrangements and the chance forms and compositions that they create (Wolf, 2015).
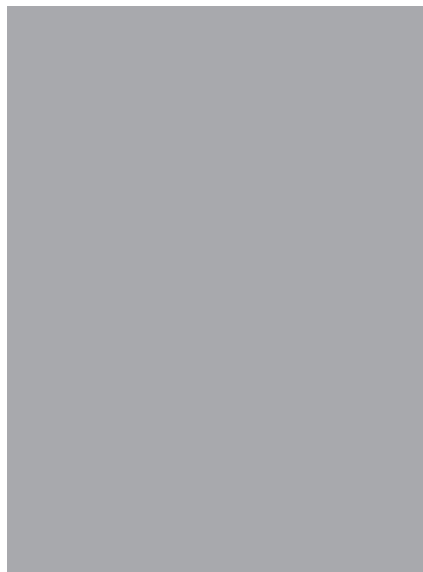
Fig. 51. From the series *Hong Kong Informal Seating Arrangements*. Michael Wolf, 2014

In another volume, Wolf focused on laundry that had fallen off washing lines outside apartment blocks and landed in unusual places. A common sight throughout the city, the images might be very ordinary to a resident of Hong Kong. However, Wolf's phenomenological gaze picks out these forgotten fragments and addresses their significance. When they are collated and presented in this way it is clear that they depict a recognisable physical characteristic of the local environment. The lost laundry is significant because its occurrences add moments of colour, humour and serendipity to the repetitive grey architecture of the city.

It is intriguing to observe how Wolf struggled to find drama in the Paris landscape because it was such a culturally familiar place. Conversely, Hong Kong was perhaps more unpredictable and exotic and thus a more fruitful terrain to investigate. This aligns with Jakle's theory that the character of a location is often easier for visitors, rather than locals, to evaluate and discuss. This is because tourism 'involves the deliberate searching out of place

experience' (Jakle, 1987: 8). As tourists or visitors to a new environment, the weirdness we encounter piques our interest and allows us to create a vivid visual relationship with such places.
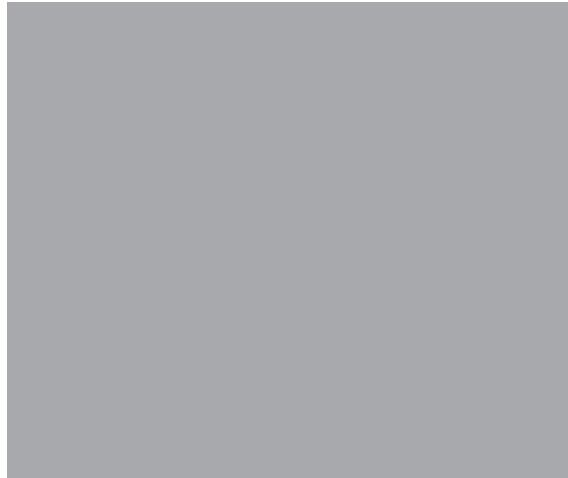
Fig. 52. From the series *Hong Kong Lost Laundry*. Michael Wolf, 2019

Wolf's practice offers a pertinent set of approaches to consider when attempting to draw up a methodology for photographing the character of urban places anticipating change. Of particular significance to this study are Wolf's way of interrogating the form of architecture and its visceral impact on people; the way he challenged the ethics of photographing urban citizens carrying out their daily lives; his approach to walking and exploration on foot; the systems that he employed to identify and catalogue patterns within the urban landscape, and his phenomenological approach to analysing the significance and meaning of seemingly everyday objects in the city.

2.6 Findings

In summary, both Cullen and Wolf applied structured protocols to their projects, yet their work avoided being formulaic and administrative. Instead, the photographic approaches discussed in this chapter each tend to express a type of child-like curiosity and a keenness to engage light-heartedly in the practice of urban exploration. These methods embody an almost naïve mindset of inquisitiveness, which allows for an open reading of the city, while also demonstrating a heightened, wide-eyed awareness of the significant features and characteristics that can exist in urban areas (Pallasmaa, 1996).

Through these somewhat recreational approaches, Cullen and Wolf almost 'gamified' the process of urban photographic investigation. Avedon and Sutton Smith (2015: 419–426) describe a game as an:

…exercise of voluntary control systems in which there is an opposition between forces, confined by a procedure and rules in order to produce a disequilibrial outcome.

By working within structured, controlled parameters that differ from conventional modes of urban representation, and by creating equivocal photographic depictions of cities, Cullen and Wolf created a type of disequilibrium in our understanding of such spaces. In this sense, the two practitioners were using the photography and the city to play a game.

Applying acts of 'play' as tools to help develop our understanding of cities may have potential as a research method in that they can offer platforms for social, economic and personal discourses where people can 'invent – to dream up solutions to problems [they] may not yet even know they had' (Brown & Vaughan, 2010: 200). The 'playful' photographic approaches employed by both Cullen and Wolf were deliberately malleable, accessible and adaptable. Many of their game-like strategies can therefore be replicated, copied and reapplied in a broad range of urban contexts to help people discover encounters and surprises in spaces where things may seem normal, unremarkable and familiar. The work discussed in this chapter frequently attempts to highlight the extraordinary features embedded in such environments through whimsical photographic practices that we all have the potential to engage with.

Cullen, in particular, strove to place these egalitarian ideals at the forefront of his work. He felt that the city belonged to the citizen and that we each inherently have a say in how it works. In this sense, he wanted people to understand themselves as existing within the city and creating a vision for it at the same time (Engler, 2015). The practice as research detailed in the latter part of this thesis asserts how the 'playful' photographic strategies discussed here can be applied to enable an understanding of the notion of urban character. More specifically, Cullen's and Wolf's methods of citéography will be repurposed and transposed into three examples of a contemporary real-world setting of urban contestation and change: the market.

III Fields of study

3.1 Markets as case studies for urban character in flux

The covered market is a vivid exemplar of the 'lifeblood' of a city, where citizens assemble to connect, interact and exchange (González, 2018). URBACT is an initiative of the European Union's Cohesion Policy, where cities work together to identify good practices which can improve urban policies. Their 2015 report into the redevelopment of European urban market districts states that

> urban markets all share some things in common: they happen in local communities, they provide a source of jobs and local wealth, they provide a link to local produce and products, they embrace the way people live and work in communities, and they are also shop windows for cities and different areas of cities in general. In short, markets breathe life into cities. (URBACT, 2015: 5)

In these ways, the areas that surround markets are often a bellwether for the economic and social state of the cities in which they exist. The covered market is a nucleus of retail activity and social interaction, and when the streets surrounding these urban sites suffer, we can sometimes observe that the city itself is suffering too. Likewise, if a central market district is a hive of movement and investment, we might notice that this is reflected in the wider metropolitan landscape (Roe et al., 2016). In this sense, determining a visual methodology for expressing the character of such locations is a pertinent architectural concern, with the potential to reflect a sense of the condition of the city itself. Furthermore, by establishing ways to visually record the character of the urban covered market and its locale, we can use this as a framework for understanding more about the identity and character of other districts within the broader urban landscape.

It is difficult to define specifically what is meant by the term 'market', but Seale (cited in González, 2018: 2) proposes that it is an area

where material and intangible flows – of people, goods, times, senses, affect - come to rest, terminate, emerge, merge, mutate and/or merely pass through, and are contingent and relational to each other

Here, Seale explains that the common ways in which the market is used, and the understandings of it as a site, are multifarious and complex, with unique meanings and associations for the various community members who interact with it. Movement is key to Seale's definition, which describes how objects and human beings pass through such spaces in acts of ever-changing and developing interaction. Therefore, we can understand markets as places in flux, which are regularly used by different people from different social and economic backgrounds. They are a platform for social exchange as much as commerce, and act as critical nodes of community interactivity in cities.

Covered markets were originally introduced as a civic means to bring order, unity and neatness to the haphazard and incongruous nature of informal street markets, where community trade traditionally took place (Seale, 2016). Up to the nineteenth-century, street markets were often messy, noisy, and even dangerous places. Large-scale city planning initiatives such as the Haussmannisation of Paris introduced the market hall or '*halles*' as a place where everyday commerce could be more easily controlled and would not interfere with the arrangement and harmony of the street (Pinkney, 1958).

At its most basic level, the market hall or covered market came to be understood as a delineated public space, underneath a canopy, where goods were bought and sold. This meaning still holds true, but today they are also regarded as spaces where an old-fashioned, more community-oriented type of retail is practised (González, 2018). In this sense, urban markets are where people sometimes go to shop for fresh produce in a traditional manner, where direct customer-trader interactions are considered an important part of the shopping experience. These interactions contrast strongly with the ubiquitous aspects of consumerism and commercialism within most supermarkets, high streets and shopping malls.

In some market locations these traditional ways of conducting commerce are under threat. González identifies a conceptual geographic framework consisting of three analytical 'lenses' that help to identify ways in which covered markets can be understood and observed as contemporary sites of contestation and change. First, she discusses 'markets as the frontier for processes of gentrification' (2018: 10), where intense renewal has changed the socio-economic contexts of such spaces, often in negative ways imposed by force on an area.

González's second lens describes 'Markets as spaces for mobilisation, contestation and debate over public space and the city' (2018: 13). In such examples, the changes that occur are challenged by communities. The market can then be used as an emblem of the political conflicts occurring across the landscape of the city.

The third lens that González proposes is 'Markets as spaces for building alternative and counter practices of production and consumption' (2018:15), in which markets can potentially act as sites of social inclusion. In these ways, markets can embrace people who may be alienated by the impersonal aspects of modern urbanisation.

Large-scale research projects, such as the EU-funded initiative *Contested Cities* (2016), reinforce González's claim that upheavals such as gentrification, social and political turbulence and alterations to urban use tend to clash with the primary ways in which such markets originally operated.

Today, the very meaning of the word 'market' can be seen to be changing in an urban context, as many such spaces are transformed into higher-end street-food outlets catering almost exclusively for wealthier middle-class customers. Such changes of use sometimes alienate the broad community of people that used to visit these markets, as well as the communities that exist nearby (Guimarães, 2019). Arreortua and Campo (2018) characterise this as a type of 'gourmetisation' that has shifted the ways in which consumers see and understand market spaces in cities. However, the word 'gourmet' can be misleading as it refers to high-end cuisine. Another, perhaps simpler, term to describe the situation in which markets are adapted from sites of traditional commerce to take-away food halls, might simply be the neologistic verb 'food-halling'.

The popularity of food-halling may have emerged partly from the trend for independent street food outlets that started to become very popular in the coastal cities of Portland, Seattle, Los Angeles and New York in the early 2000s (Newman & Burnett, 2013). During this period, car parks and disused urban plots of land were temporarily given over to food trucks and snack kiosks at certain times of the week. These acted as start-up businesses for catering companies and restaurant entrepreneurs who could not afford permanent bricks-and-mortar sites.

Food markets of this kind adopted an open-plan structure that was similar to the traditional hawker centres that are common in cities throughout Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia (Henderson et al., 2012). More recently these have been heavily commercialised. Instead of open-air venues, investors and developers have noticed opportunities to renew large industrial and retail spaces as well as covered markets that are, in some cases, struggling to maintain and build their customer bases (Arreortua and Campo, 2018).

The trend for street food and the growing success of popular food markets, such as Borough Market in London and Pike Place in Seattle, have inspired many imitations in other parts of the world. These sites vary in size, but their functions, aesthetics and target markets exist under a clear brand identity and are generally uniform in their execution.

Similar market food-halling projects have recently emerged in various large cities in the Global North. Sites such as Essex Street Market in Manhattan's Lower East Side, the Seven Dials Market near London's Covent Garden and the Mercado de Campo de Ourique on the outskirts of Lisbon's historic centre are very similar in their design approach. Of particular theoretical relevance here is the potential to read these market food halls through González's first analytical lens. With this approach, the author describes how certain markets can be understood as zones of displacement, caused through intense and concentrated processes of gentrification (2019: 6). The author argues that these circumstances arise when markets and their

…traditional role of supplying affordable produce and sustaining livelihoods [is neglected] in search [of] higher value activities. Thus many street vendors are being displaced from central urban areas and marketplaces are pivoting towards high end consumers and tourists. Marketplaces, therefore, are at the frontier of wider processes of gentrification, displacement and dispossession that we can see happening in cities across the world.

In this way, we can understand the character of these markets as undergoing a process of dispossession. The open, convenient, community-oriented identity of the market is remodelled for use by only a small, privileged section of society. These places thus become similar to members' clubs, airport lounges or expensive hotels, because they are no longer open to all and there is no longer a universal right of access to all citizens. Admittance to such areas is thus reserved for elite customers who can afford its products. Therefore, the territory becomes the property not of the city itself, but of the development firm or brand that have attached their own identifying mark to its character. These markets thus become available only to a certain demographic, which is very different from the communities who originally embodied their character.

In certain instances, we can take note of these occurrences by paying attention to the commonalities that exist within the execution of their design. Below are

several examples of aesthetic features that are often included, in a relatively homogeneous way, throughout the styling of their interiors. [Note that these photographs were taken with a mobile phone for the purposes of reference only: they are not part of the photographic practice outlined in Chapter IV]:

Uniform Signage
A common typographic approach is used throughout the food hall to identify individual vendors. This adds a neatness and a uniformity to the arrangement of the vendors' spaces but means that the personality of each company may sometimes struggle to stand out.

Fig. 53, 54, 55, 56. Uniform signage examples at Essex St Market, New York, Mercado De Alges, Lisbon, TimeOut Market, Lisbon and Seven Dials Market, London, Dan Brackenbury, 2020—2021

Common eating areas and long wooden tables
Food halls usually have a large common eating space in the central area of the site. There appears to be a trend for long, high wooden benches as opposed to individual tables and chairs.
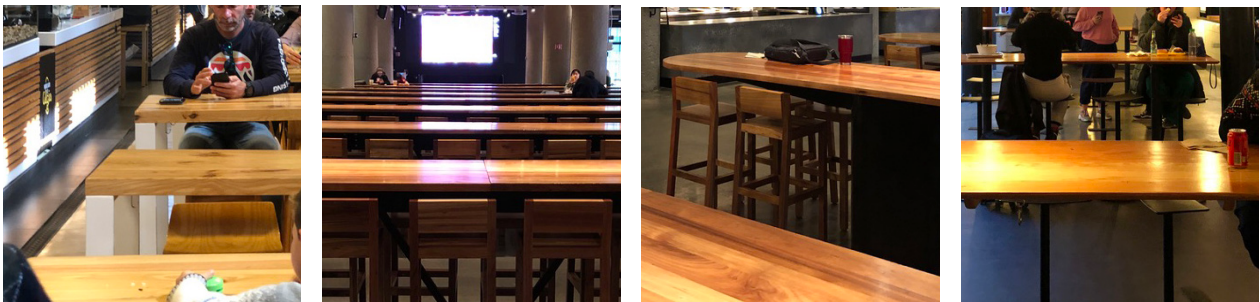
Fig. 57, 58, 59, 60. High, long wooden tables at Mercado De Alges, Lisbon, TimeOut Market, Boston and Seven Dials Market, London, Dan Brackenbury, 2020—2021

Delineated areas of exclusivity
In addition to market stalls and kiosks, many new food halls also house bars and restaurants that are detached or separate from the main concourse, somewhat like airport bars and lounges. Open windows and panelled walls frame the social interactions taking place inside. This creates the suggestion that such units are more exclusive than the businesses to be found in the main market.
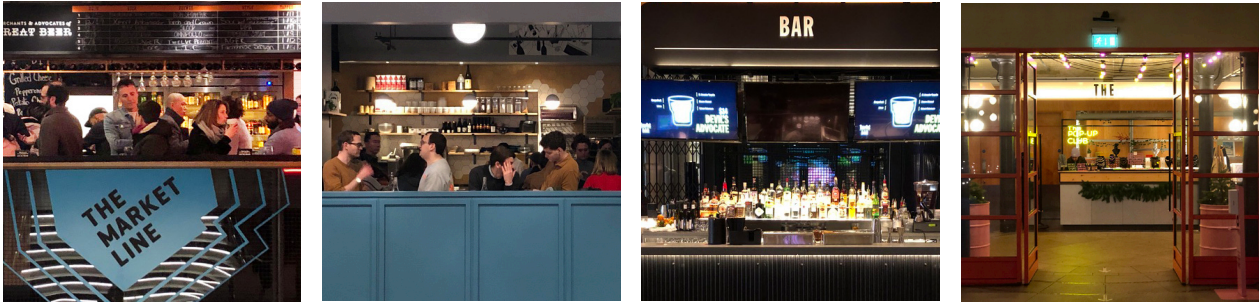
Fig. 61, 62, 63, 64. Exclusive areas at Essex St Market, New York, TimeOut Market, Boston and Seven Dials Market, London, Dan Brackenbury, 2020—2021

Dim lighting

New food halls are often lit with dim yellowish tungsten, which adds to the rustic modernity of the aesthetic. The darker common areas are even reminiscent of large bars or nightclubs, perhaps in order to appeal to a particular audience.
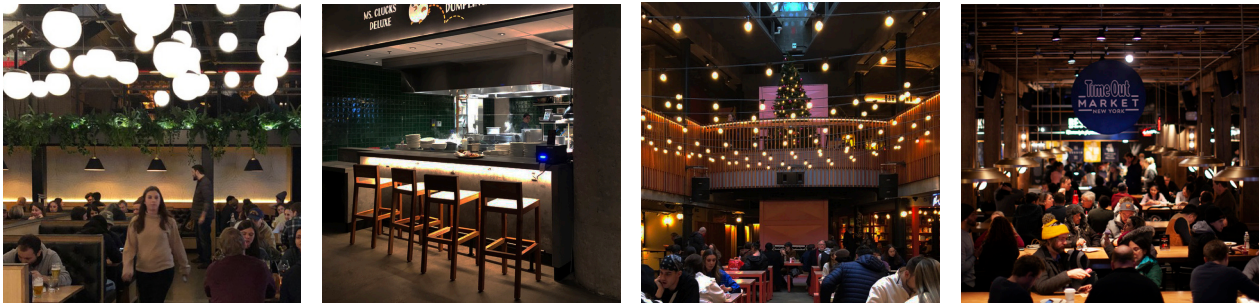
Fig. 65, 66, 67, 68. Dim lighting at Essex St Market, New York, TimeOut Market, Boston, Seven Dials Market, London and TimeOut Market, New York, Dan Brackenbury, 2020—2021

Muted colour palettes

The general colour palette incorporates dark browns and greys, as well as wood textures and metallic trims, perhaps hinting at the industrial function of the original sites.
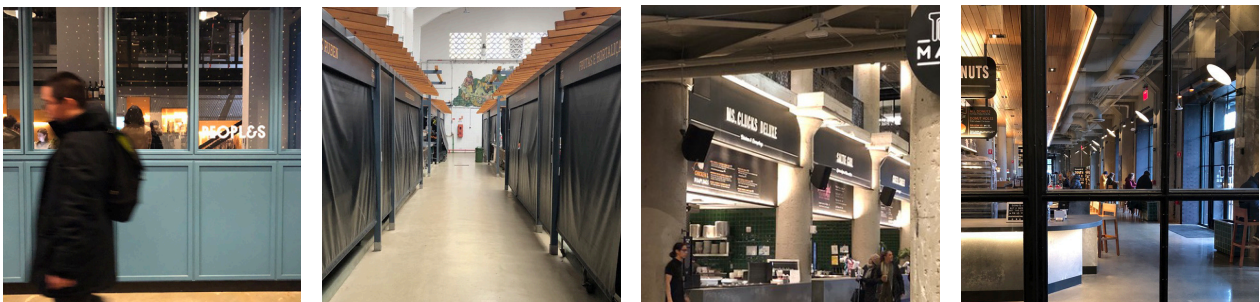
Fig. 69, 70, 71, 72. Muted colour schemes at Essex St Market, New York, Mercado De Alges, Lisbon and TimeOut Market, Boston, Dan Brackenbury, 2020—2021

Neon

The muted walls, fixtures and lighting mean that colour can be used to create accents that draw the visitor's eye to certain corners of the market and specific businesses. Neon is commonly used to express these spots of colour in vivid ways.

Fig. 73, 74, 75, 76. Neon signage at Essex St Market, New York and Seven Dials Market, London, Dan Brackenbury, 2020—2021

Traditional market motifs as props

While original features of these sites are often scarce, the market aesthetic is created nostalgically through the use of traditional paraphernalia such as food baskets, tiled walls and meat-hooks.
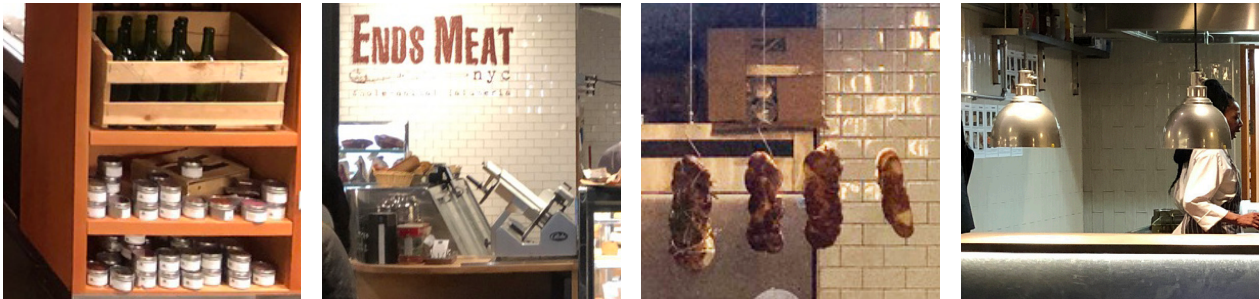
Fig. 77, 78, 79, 80 Traditional market motifs at Essex St Market, New York, Dan Brackenbury, 2020—2021

Hand-written typography

The homely, traditional market theme is also emphasised with the use of chalked blackboard menus and handwritten typography.

Fig. 81, 82, 83, 84. Handwritten typography at Essex St Market, TimeOut Market, Lisbon and TimeOut Market, New York, Dan Brackenbury, 2020—2021

Clinical, clean, open spaces

Renewed food halls tend to be more ordered, spacious and formal spaces than those we might associate with traditional covered markets. Wide corridors, carefully arranged seating and clearly delineated spaces create a more structured system than the dynamic sprawl of goods and trade that was traditionally a characteristic of markets.

Fig. 85, 86, 87, 88 Uniform, open spaces at Essex St Market, New York, TimeOut Market, Lisbon and TimeOut Market, Boston, Dan Brackenbury, 2020—2021

It is intriguing to note how many of these features, such as industrial colour palettes, neon, and handwritten typography, hark back to the aesthetics of a traditional marketplace. It is possible to understand this as a stylistic strategy, designed to convince customers that they are in a 'market' rather than an exclusive retail area. González refers to this a type of nostalgic commercial approach where these locations are 'branded as authentic consumption experiences' (2019: 1). In this sense, sites like the TimeOut Market in Lisbon might not be markets at all, but are presented as such through advertising trickery. González suggests that there is a certain fakeness in the way that these places are revitalised and repackaged, exploiting a nostalgic desire for the rustic tactility and wholesomeness of markets as they once were, while simultaneously disenfranchising those who originally used them.

By identifying the visual approaches that are often adopted in processes of gentrification such as food-halling, we can begin to understand the tried and tested aesthetic approaches that are sometimes incorporated into the renewal of markets. Noting these visual themes draws attention to the sameness and the imitative qualities of many such developments. With this in mind, it is easy to imagine how the experiences of walking into a market in Boston may soon be a very similar sensory experience to walking into a market in Shanghai (Arreortua and Campo, 2018; Guimarães, 2019; González, 2018; González, 2019).

The urban covered market was once a site that could channel and project the specificity of its surrounding neighbourhood (Seale, 2016). Markets have also traditionally functioned as individual localities in and of themselves, operating as sites of homeliness and community spirit. One of the major problems with gentrifying processes such as food-halling is that these aspects of a market's identity are sometimes replaced by a formulaic visual language, with the capacity to remove its once unique, distinguishing characteristics.

Through González's three-stage analytical framework, we can reflect on how these urban development trends change the core fabric of a market's character in both positive and negative ways:

As outlined above, we can see how marketplaces can be read as sites that are at the forefront of urban gentrification processes and the ways they engage new audiences while simultaneously alienating others.

In addition, González also explains how such environments can act as landscapes to prompt debates about the use of public space in urban areas and how citizens can become personally invested in such processes.

The author further notes how markets can also function as places where alternative processes of production and consumption can be trialled. Each of these analytical lenses proposed by González will be used to explore the contemporary conditions of the three case study sites for this research, outlined in the following section.

3.2 Urban markets in Portugal

The markets where the fieldwork for this research was conducted were chosen because they are each experiencing certain aspects of renewal, which can be seen affect their character in various ways.

The financial downturn in Portugal had significant repercussions for cities and urban communities but this was little documented outside of the country. The ongoing impact of the 2008 recession, the vast number of urban buildings that are still uninhabited, as well as the struggle to occupy these spaces, are issues that continue to affect cities in Portugal. In many instances, covered markets, and the streets that surround them, are evidence of this painful economic ordeal. However, in several cases they have also become beacons of a new, more prosperous future for underutilised public space and are at the forefront of Portugal's urban development plans (Guimarães, 2019).

The author of this project has lived in Portugal since 2015, observing these changes taking place at first hand and noting their impact on wider metropolitan areas. Monitoring the development of marketplaces across the country over several years has revealed how they can give unique insights into the ways in which Portuguese cities are evolving. Watching these markets undergo redevelopment also highlighted how one particular renewal project had initially led the way. This food-halling venture created a blueprint for other similar sites to follow and is therefore largely responsible for many of the construction processes and generic alterations taking place within other Portuguese markets today.

In 2014, TimeOut renovated the Mercado da Ribeira at the Cais do Sodre in Lisbon. One half of the large wholesale fruit and vegetable market was adapted to become an open-plan food hall with some 35 street-food kiosks

serving various kinds of local and international cuisine. The site quickly became a very popular tourist destination, attracting several million visitors per year. As a result, the market has sparked an intensive period of gentrification that continues to transform the surrounding area (Guimarães, 2019).

While many covered markets in Portuguese cities still lie vacant or underused, the economic achievement of the TimeOut food hall at the Mercado da Ribeira has proven that these structures can be modernised and refurbished in a way that allows new businesses to move in and thrive. While this example has inspired many similar markets to pursue renovation, the ongoing impact from 2008 is very visible in the areas that surround them.
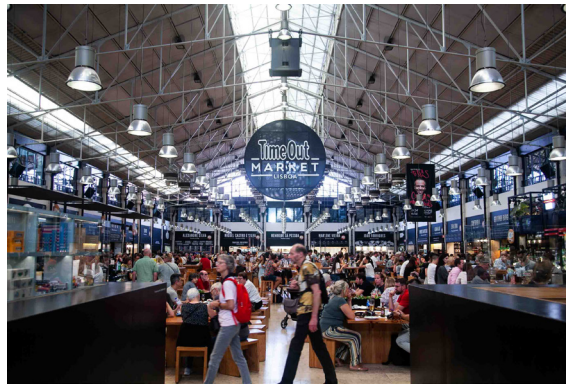
Fig. 89. TimeOut *Market, Lisbon*. Dan Brackenbury, 2019

This situation in Portugal represents an environment of urban ambivalence, visible across much of Europe, in which urban areas are transformed into new, revised versions of themselves. As such changes take place, it can be easy for us to forget what these areas were like to begin with, what made them unique and what elements contributed to their specific, underlying character.

The sites that will be explored in this enquiry vary in size and weekly footfall. However, the author has watched first-hand how they are each experiencing developmental change to some degree and are at differing stages in this process. It was for these reasons that these sites were selected as the defined areas to be photographically investigated within this enquiry.

- Mercado de Arroios in Lisbon was renewed in 2013 and is currently experiencing the effects of rapid gentrification in the surrounding area, which has begun to encroach on the site of the market itself.

- Mercado do Bolhão in Porto is a grand neoclassical building and major cultural landmark in the centre of the city. In 2018 it was closed for a large-scale renovation project and the market stalls and traders were moved to a temporary site in the basement of a shopping mall.

- Mercado dos Lavradores in Funchal, on the island of Madeira, is popular and lively but showing signs of wear, which has prompted voices in the community to point to examples of successful markets on the mainland and ask whether this market should be renewed in a similar manner.

This section will consider the varying contexts of uncertainty and transformation occurring within each of these sites. The precariousness of the 2020 pandemic and its ongoing aftermath has also cast a shadow over the future of these locations, adding to the doubts and dilemmas that they all face regarding their renewal. The discussion below will attempt to convey how these changeable circumstances offer unique opportunities to explore the objectives of this research: in particular, to document aspects of character in contemporary sites of change and to use this learning to propose how character can be discussed and utilised within a new model for photographic surveying.

3.3 Mercado de Arroios, Lisbon

Replacing the Mercado do Poço dos Mouros fresh produce market, that was deemed to be unhygienic, the Mercado de Arroios was designed by the architect Luís Benavente and constructed in 1942. At this time, the site was considered to be one of the most modern and well-served markets in the whole of Portugal. Features such as an on-site slaughterhouse and irrigation taps for quick cleaning of the entire market floor made the building highly functional and cutting edge. One of the more dramatic architectural facets of the building is the large ceiling windows that draw in natural light from the outside. These windows, along with the crisp white walls, minimalist in-built tabletops and sharp, angular hallways also gave the building a Modernist quality that would have seemed quite futuristic and unusual for an urban market during that era. Perhaps as a result of these innovations, the structure was recognised as a 'building of cultural interest' in the late 1980s.

Fig. 90, 91. *Mercado de Arroios*, c. 1946, photographer unknown

The market has always been an intrinsic feature in the local community, as its form determines the layout of the residential streets nearby. The market building is circular and acts as the nucleus of the street system which spreads out from its perimeter. The scale of the market is very much in tune with the

neighbouring apartment blocks, houses and shops in the adjacent streets. In this way the building does not overpower or command the area, as many historical markets do, but instead feels almost domestic in size. The form of the market is therefore part of the neighbourhood, rather than a dominant force affecting it from outside.

The Mercado de Arroios is situated one block away from the Alameda Plaza, one of the main squares and green spaces in the city. Alameda is a major junction station on the Lisbon metro and serves the north/south green line and the east/west pink line, a few stops from the historical and touristic quarters of Rossio and Baixa-Chiado. It is also home to Instituto Superior Técnico, meaning that the area is populated by many students. Alameda is a place that commuters and tourists pass through on their way to the city centre. It is not itself a tourist destination and is mainly frequented by locals rather than visitors.

Fig. 92. A 3D satellite render of Mercado de Arroios, the network of streets that radiate out from it and their proximity to Alameda on the right, as seen on Google Earth, 2020

Market trading takes place on the inside of the building on weekdays, and the main types of produce sold in the market are fresh fish, fruit and vegetables. Many of the vendors have been at the market for generations and there is a strong sense of tradition that runs through the community that sells here. The stalls themselves are simple and functional and many of them do not have signs. Some periods during the week are busier than others, but most mornings the market has a somewhat sleepy feel to it. As a result, the acoustics echo like they might in a large, quiet indoor space like a church.

In 2015 the market started to undergo a small-scale renovation which improved much of the infrastructure, fittings and services. This renewal process did not seek to change the usage of the market and for this reason most of the original vendors were able to return once works were completed. The physical environment of the market is still very much unchanged.

González (2018) outlines how we can observe the ways in which new and divergent modes of production and consumption can be seen occurring in many market renewal projects. Such processes are beginning to take place at Mercado de Arroios, where a major proposal has been made to alter the roof of the building in order to install a hydroponic greenhouse. The initiative is to be run by the Lisbon Farmers start-up and the aim of the project is to grow an

estimated 90 tons of pesticide-free vegetables and herbs yearly, which would be sold and distributed in the market below. The designers also plan to create an educational space for schoolchildren to visit and learn about the dynamics of food production and distribution. It is proposed that this concept may initiate a renewal on a larger scale involving the construction of new retail units within the building itself.

Fig. 90. The exterior of Mercado de Arroios as it is today, seen from Google Street View, 2018

Fig. 94. A render of the hydroponic greenhouse and renewal project proposed for the Mercado de Arroios. Image courtesy of Lisbon Farmers / cmjornal.pt, 2016

The units currently on the outside of the market building are now mainly occupied, with many having been recently inhabited by new small independent businesses. One particularly successful example is a café called Mezze, an enterprise set up to offer jobs to Syrian refugees. The business has garnered much attention and has been the subject of numerous newspaper articles and blog posts. The restaurant is nearly always busy at lunchtimes and in the evening. A new pizza parlour, a few doors along, was until recently also experiencing a flurry of popularity and media attention, according to the owners.

It is clear that these renovations and proposals, as well as the influx of new commerce in the area, are driving the early stages of gentrification. One of the main contributors to this has been Airbnb, which has changed the landscape of the community as numerous apartment owners have put their properties up for short-term rental online. The local population is therefore quite transient, with many people passing through and only staying for short periods of time. These ever-temporary inhabitants contribute to a sense of anonymity and impermanence which permeates the area. In this regard, González's first

analytical lens to read the place as a 'frontier for processes of gentrification' (2018: 10) is particularly relevant here and reflects similar changes happening across the city.

Visitors passing through or spending time in Arroios often head straight for the more tourist-focused districts in the centre of the city. This might explain the fact that there is more space inside the market than there are vendors and paying customers to fill it. It may also explain why traditional businesses such as cafes and restaurants struggle to attract customers, with younger generations choosing to frequent newer, trendier outlets nearby. There is an indication that these businesses are on borrowed time and that the rising tide of gentrification will absorb them all in due course. There are also many empty retail units in the streets near the market, which are now relics due to the lasting impact of the 2008 recession.

Despite the economic unpredictability that area has contended with in recent years, the market continues to operate and drive new business. It is still recognised as an architecturally significant site with an important heritage, and there is a defiant community working in and buying from traditional businesses within the building. There is little doubt that the market will continue to transform and adapt in times to come.

3.4 Mercado do Bolhão redevelopment site, Porto

Closed for renovation since 2018, this is one of the most famous and historically significant markets in Portugal, perhaps because of its grand neo-classical structure. Currently under renovation, the market sits within the heart of the city centre in Porto, close to the Rua de Santa Catarina shopping thoroughfare, which is bustling and very popular with tourists. This is a traditional quarter of the city, containing many ornate Portuguese buildings and churches such as the striking Capela das Almas, the façade of which is covered in delicately painted Azulejo tiles. There are many cafes and restaurants that spill out into the streets nearby, creating a sociable vibrancy to the area. Lunch is probably the busiest time of day, when most of these eateries are filled with tourists and locals.

Fig. 95. A 3D satellite render of the Mercado do Bolhão, as seen on Google Earth, 2020

Taking up an entire block, Mercado do Bolhão was designed by António Correia da Silva and built in 1914. Much like the striking Câmara Municipal de Porto (Porto City Hall), also designed by Correia da Silva, Mercado do Bolhão is a major architectural landmark in the city. It is particularly celebrated for the elegant way in which the elevation of the structure negotiates the incline of the street on which it sits. The doorways and windows that vary subtly in scale on the outside of the building almost trick the passer-by into thinking the ground is flat. For these reasons, along with its striking Beaux-Arts detailing, it is considered by some to be an architectural masterpiece and is proudly regarded by the people of Porto as one of the city's gems.

Fig. 96. The exterior elevation of the Mercado do Bolhão, demonstrating how the building elegantly negotiates the incline of the street on which it sits, courtesy of Nuno Valentim Arquitectura e Reabilitação Lda, ND

The structure has shops arranged around the outside of a large central courtyard, which was traditionally a destination for locals to buy fresh produce. The market stalls included butchers, fishmongers, greengrocers and florists. Most of these vendors have been temporarily relocated to an underground site in the basement of a shopping centre nearby.

When it was fully functioning, the market was an important meeting place for people to socialise. Many of the stands doubled up as informal cafes and bars, where patrons would congregate at lunchtimes and weekends. One of the most recognisable structural aspects of the space were the black canvas canopies that stretched the length of the courtyard, covering the stalls and creating a sense of enclosure where outdoor spaces were transformed into intimate interiors.

Fig. 97. The ageing and ramshackle canvas canopies in the main courtyard of the Mercado do Bolhão prior to renovation, photographed from the second-floor balcony, courtesy of Nuno Valentim Arquitectura e Reabilitação Lda, ND.

Another striking architectural feature that makes the building somewhat unique is the upper balcony, on the second floor, that encircles the courtyard. This acted as the perfect vantage point from which to observe the comings and goings of the trading below, where the market itself became a spectacle to be watched and appreciated. In the mid-twentieth century a bridge was also built that connected both sides of the gallery, splitting the vista of the courtyard in half but creating an even more immersive perspective from which to gaze at the hustle and bustle on the market floor.

One of the factors that led to the initiation of the renovation work was the fact that the market itself was suffering from hygiene issues. The iconic canvas canopies and eaves in the balconies were becoming increasingly more challenging to maintain. The warren of back rooms and storage areas tucked away on the ground floor and in the basement were also facing similar threats from vermin. It was felt that these problems were so deep rooted that market needed a major overhaul in order to transform into a modern functional market that was clean and safe for all who used it, particularly the vendors, who were deemed to be at risk.

There were several hurdles that the municipality faced when the decision was made to put the renewal process into effect, which sparked heated disputes and protests within the local community. Here we can see that the market embodies the conditions described in González's second analytical lens, which describes how markets can fuel 'debate over public space and the city' (2018: 13). A key challenge that the council faced, with this in mind, was safeguarding the traders who had been selling their products in the market for generations. The livelihoods and rights of these traders were the subject of civic discussion for several years. The architectural plans for the renovation itself were also highly contentious, and took a long time to agree upon. The initial idea was to place a roof over the entire market and make it an entirely indoor space with an expansive car-parking area beneath. This solution was nearly approved but eventually fell out of favour politically, delaying the works further.

Eventually the architect Nuno Valentim was appointed to oversee the renovation. His studio felt that it was critical to maintain the Beaux-Arts skyline of the building and to allow it to remain an outdoor space, as these were inherent features of the structure itself. Responding to the success of other market renewal projects, such as Borough Market in London, Valentim's plans also sought to find inventive approaches to reintroduce the canopies in a modern way. According to Valentim, the old market is gone, but what replaces it will be an attempt to offer an honest and faithful reinvigoration of a space that contains a significant amount of social capital for many people.

This large-scale renovation plan has also affected the nearby streets, where empty buildings are currently undergoing significant redevelopment. The city council has invested heavily in the renewal of the area and the projected rise in tourism prior to 2020 was perhaps a significant factor in this decision.

Fig. 98. *Mercado do Bolhão renovation site, Porto*, Dan Brackenbury, 2019

3.5 Mercado Temporário do Bolhão, Porto

In 2018, when Mercado do Bolhão was closed for renovation, its traders were offered the opportunity to relocate to a new temporary site until the works were completed. Not all the traders were able to make the move, but the majority did.

Fig. 99. A 3D satellite render of the La Vie shopping centre where the Mercado Temporário do Bolhão is located. The original market can be seen to the left of the image, as seen on Google Earth, 2020

The new temporary location is a large storage space underneath the modern Bolhão La Vie shopping centre, accessible through a side door and down an escalator or through the main concourse of the mall itself. It is nearly directly opposite the original market and there are large typographic signs pointing towards it from the street. The site itself is very different from the place that the traders occupied in the original market. It is beneath ground level, the light is entirely artificial, there are no windows, and it is not possible to look in from the street. The majority of passing pedestrians walk straight into the shopping mall, rather than the market, which suggests that, despite the highly visible signage, the market is still somewhat hidden and is no longer a destination for visitors to seek out.

Fig. 100. The La Vie shopping centre and the unassuming entrance to Mercado Temporário do Bolhão as seen on Google Street View, 2019

The traders who are located in the temporary site reflect the diversity of vendors who were installed in the original market. Fruit and vegetables, cheese, fish and meat, as well as flowers and textiles, each have their own allocated 'zones'. It is still possible to eat in the market and there is a space at the entrance, behind the escalators, where little food stalls have been set up to serve the lunchtime trade.

The official branding of the city of Porto was revamped in 2015. It was designed by Studio Eduardo Aires and garnered much praise when it was introduced. It consists of simple line illustrations and blocky sans-serif typography over a plain white background with a blue grid that resembles graph paper. According to the studio, this design evolved out the patterns of the iconic blue Azulejo tiles that can be seen on the exteriors of buildings throughout the city. This branding solution visually defines the underground market and has been pasted uniformly onto many of the available surfaces within the site. Each of the traders have a branded sign hanging above their stall and most of the typography and signage that exists throughout the market conforms to this visual identity. It is very stripped back and minimal, reflecting the clinical, industrial design approach that has been taken with the interior of the space itself.

Fig. 101, 102. The Mercado do Bolhão website (left) and the official Porto Municipality website (right), both carrying the official Porto city brand identity, designed by Studio Eduardo Aires, that appears throughout the Mercado Temporário do Bolhão. Accessed 2020

The layout of the market is straightforward, with each of the main types of produce allocated a zone. Narrow corridors link these zones together. The grid-like structure of the layout resembles the grid within the branding and feels somewhat mechanical and repetitive.

Fig. 103. The bright, fluorescent strip-lighting and bold blue Porto city branding that has been applied uniformly to many of the surfaces in this underground location. Dan Brackenbury, 2019

Apart from the uniform branding, the feature that makes the most significant visual impact is the lighting. Where the original site benefited from natural light and the dramatic shadows cast by the canvas canopies, the temporary site is very different because it is cast in a sharp, white fluorescent lighting that is highly luminous. This has the effect of giving the space an almost antiseptic quality that is akin to the interior of a hospital or factory environment. It is somewhat at odds with the friendly, intimate atmosphere that could be found in the original site.

Despite this difference in atmosphere, the traders have sought to make the most of the space that they have been given and the vibrancy of the original Bolhão market is still manifested by the traders, their stalls, their products and the regular visitors. As has always been the case, lunchtime is the busiest point in the day and the cramped, improvised food hall tucked away at the back of the market fills up with local people during weekdays. Although it lacks much of its usual tourist footfall, there is a buzz here at lunchtime, and it is intriguing to note how some of the bustle of the original market has been brought to this new, stark, somewhat alien environment

One of the strangest aspects of walking around this temporary site is the empty corners and 'non-spaces' that the designers of the market clearly struggled to occupy. As a visitor it is easy to unintentionally leave the main market space, because there are many vacant corridors, and a wrong turn can easily lead down a blind alley. In some instances, these strange areas have been filled with improvised seating, more branded hoardings or mirrors. These elements give the landscape an unsettling, otherworldly feel, especially as there are no windows to help with orientation.

Factors such as the spartan nature of the interior – its fluorescent lighting, branded surfaces and stripped-back corridors – underline the fact that the space is temporary and removable. Everything here has been arranged and organised in such a way that it can be dismantled and transported easily. It is a space designed to house many small businesses whose livelihoods affect the entire local community, but it is not necessarily designed to make them feel comfortable and supported. Nor is it a space that is particularly visible or accessible to the outside world. It is slightly off the beaten track and not a place that pedestrians would easily stumble upon. At its core, this provisional market is therefore highly utilitarian and temporary and there is a level of uncertainty that extends throughout the space, which is potentially unsettling for the vendors who are located here. Nonetheless, there is ample evidence of the strong, vibrant and resilient community that maintains this market throughout its period of temporary relocation.

3.6 Mercado dos Lavradores, Funchal

Mercado dos Lavradores (Farmers' Market) is nestled on the edge of the old town of Funchal, Madeira. A mountainous Portuguese island in the Atlantic, Madeira is a 90-minute flight from Lisbon and is thus a peripheral territory with its own unique cultures and customs. Its economy largely relies on tourism, and there are many hotels in the city centre, as well as a harbour where cruise ships dock regularly. The economic effects of Covid-19 hit the city of Funchal particularly harshly because the steady influx of tourists suddenly disappeared. Many shops and restaurants in the old town were boarded up and closed. Only in late 2021 were there signs that some were beginning to re-open or change hands.

Fig. 104. A 3D satellite render of the Mercado dos Lavradores in the old town of Funchal on the island of Madeira, as seen on Google Earth, 2020. The harbour is visible on the bottom left of the image.

The structure of the market dates from 1940 and was built in the Modernist 'Português Suave' ('smooth', or 'soft') style, a nationalistic architectural movement that emerged during the dictatorship of Oliveira Salazar. Suave architecture was borne out of the Salazar government's desire to create a modern, yet recognisably uniquely Portuguese, style of architecture in the 1930s and '40s. Buildings created in this manner tended to incorporate both modern engineering practices and references to traditional Portuguese

buildings. Mercado dos Lavradores was designed by the Português Suave architect Edmundo Tavares, who lived on the island from 1932 to 1939 and designed several recognisable structures there in this period. One feature of the Mercado, proudly cherished by the local community, is the blue-tiled Azulejo frescoes on the exterior of the main entrance and inside the main fish market hall.

The fish market is a visual spectacle and is one of the reasons why so many tourists flock here. The local catch is traded every morning, and in peak seasons, such as the months of April and May, when tuna is abundant, the amount of produce increases, as does the amount of trade and the number of regular visitors. During this period hundreds of people come and go through the main market hall on an average morning, with the sounds of animated haggling and brisk movement echoing around the walls. The movement and activity of the market make it almost a spectator sport, and watching these comings and goings is a popular pastime for tourists and locals alike. People often gather at the top of the main stairway, which offers a sweeping view across the entire hall, to watch the morning trading in action.

Fig. 105. The rear entrance to Mercado dos Lavradores, leading to the fish market, as seen on Google Street View, 2009

Saturday morning is usually the busiest time at the market, as this is when the vegetable stalls, selling produce grown on farms in other areas of the island, are set up in the courtyard. Arriving at the market through the main entrance, visitors immediately enter this main trading area. The upper floors here contain more fresh produce stalls as well as balconies where people can look down at the hubbub below. Shops selling tourist trinkets and souvenirs circle the courtyard, and cafes offer the opportunity for people to sit close to the action and enjoy the exuberance of the market from a slightly quieter, more detached position. There are several trees in the courtyard that integrate seamlessly with the market stalls. The dappled light and leafy greenery impart a naturalistic, organic tone to the environment.

One defining aesthetic feature that stands out when the visitor wanders through the market, at both busy and quiet periods, is the quality of light and how this affects the atmosphere of both the courtyard and the fish market. Shards of bright, intense sunlight flow into the fish market through the large

windows, illuminating the vendors and their wares in dramatic ways. These shine like spotlights, drawing attention to scenes of action. The courtyard, much brighter and more open to the elements than the fish market, is drenched in the intense morning light, which regularly reaches temperatures of over 30°C in the summer months. For this reason, the vendors cover their stalls with large green umbrellas, arranged in playful, haphazard ways.

The upper floors and corridors that surround the courtyard house various shops that cater mainly for tourist trade. There is more space than there are businesses who can afford the rent here, and as a result there are several empty units, particularly at the ends of the corridors and in less busy areas where the footfall is lower. This adds to the slight feel of deterioration about the building and has led to voices in the local community proposing that the market needs an update.

Local entrepreneurs and cultural organisations such as Fractal Funchal have also attempted to vary the use of the market by running music nights, craft sales, exhibitions and film screenings. Here we can see the effects that are described within González's third lens: 'Markets as spaces for building alternative and counter practices of production and consumption' (2018:15). This alternative approach to trading has had the effect of drawing in new audiences, highlighting how visitors can be attracted if the market is able to adapt in certain ways. One such recent event was 'Como no Mercado', (Like the market) which turned a vacant space above the fish market into a makeshift food hall where local culinary enterprises were able to set up temporary pop-up stalls. This indicates, perhaps, that the municipal management is testing out new, innovative ways to reimagine the site in the near future.

Fig. 106. The Como no Mercado food festival, taking place in a vacant space above Mercado dos Lavradores, Funchal. Image courtesy of Como no Mercado, 2021

3.7 Summary

From these descriptions we can begin to understand the various kinds of uncertainty that each of these markets face, along with their distinctive architectural conditions and contexts. Upheavals such as degradation, reconstruction, relocation, contestation, abandonment, fluctuating numbers of visitors, gentrification, and changes of use have added to a sense of

precariousness for these sites, which must be addressed thoughtfully by those charged with planning their renewal. It is also clear that each of the sites will have to adapt in order to survive the impact of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic. The character of each of these locations in the future is likely to be very different from that of the places described above. It may therefore be possible to understand the potential implications of these alterations if we apply González's analytical 'lenses', discussed in the previous chapter.

First, each of the sites are at the forefront of large-scale gentrification processes that are currently affecting cities in Portugal. The adoption of similar food-halling models to those used by TimeOut in Lisbon, and the impact of expanding commercial forces such as Airbnb, prove that other market sites in Portugal may start to look relatively similar in years to come, while also catering for somewhat different demographics.

Second, the complex political negotiations that took place around the renewal of the Mercado do Bolhão exemplified how the use of these locations can fuel public debate about the broader consequences of urban renewal throughout the city. The protection of traditional trade within the market has also been of significant interest to the community. This shows that it is important to acknowledge how the treatment of prominent public spaces such as markets can affect a city's very identity.

Third, creative local events such as Como no Mercado at the Mercado dos Lavradores in Funchal and the proposal to turn the upper floors of the Mercado do Arroios into a hydroponic farm demonstrate that such spaces can act as exciting testbeds for new, non-standard forms of production and commerce.

The purpose of this enquiry is not to use photographic documentation to protect these areas from change, because it is clear that renewal can, and should, be used as a positive force to enhance and revitalise such spaces in ways that can address uncertainty and offer stability.

However, as with the medieval streets of nineteenth-century Paris, there is a sense of urgency surrounding the fact that these sites will soon be transformed. They contain emblematic features of the cities of which they are a part and are thus repositories of unique local character. They are also withstanding the pressures, threats and reverberations of contemporary urban change, representing key examples of wholesale renewal. Contemplating the essential qualities of these urban spaces will inform the ways in which they can maintain their distinctiveness into the future. It is for these reasons that it is important to learn from the topographic photographers of the nineteenth-century in order to devise practicable methods for *investigating* the potentially endangered character of these market districts.

The photographic field studies that will take place in these locations will identify and collect together certain features that combine to create their character. Such details can be documented, catalogued for posterity and

made publicly accessible. This photographic material can then act as visual research to inform the redevelopment of these areas as the planning process moves forward. Much like González's analytical 'lenses', these photographic investigations will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of such markets. A deeper awareness of their contemporary conditions and use will, in turn, inform a richer debate around how they will change in years to come. It is clear that conversations around gentrification, discourses on public use and plans for future development will affect how these sites evolve and mature in the future. It is intended that the photographic products of this study will support, animate and illuminate such discussions.

IV Methodology

4.1 The 'Ragpicker' methodology

Like Kierkegaard, Cullen can be said to have employed the act of walking to 'botanise' features within the landscape of the city. However, where Kierkegaard's subjects were people, Cullen's subjects were the architectural details in the urban landscape that lend a place its character.

Cullen listed the encounters that he felt were the most effective at doing this, but he did not refer to them collectively with a noun. A neologistic term that could be used to refer to these features is 'Optics' which, in the political sense, can be defined as the way in which an event or course of action is perceived.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Cullen divided his Optics into three subjects: Place, which 'is concerned with our reactions to the position of our body in its environment' (1961: 9); Content, 'An examination of the fabric of towns: colour, texture, scale, style […] the interplay of This and That' (1961: 11–12); and Functional Tradition, 'structures, bridges, paving, lettering and trim – which create the environment' (1961: 87).

By categorising the features of the built landscape in this way, *Townscape* (1961) acted a guide for planners and architects to design characterful urban form. The Optics that were used to illustrate this guide will be reappropriated for the purposes of this research and used as a methodology for photographing urban character. Cullen's Optics will essentially act as signposts for things to look out for and appreciate in sites of urban change today. In this way the Optics can act as a type of logbook of the more subjective elements of a landscape at ground level, ones that are often overlooked or neglected in site research.

This process will be referred to as 'Ragpicking'. The ragpicker, as noted in the introduction, was a Baudelairean figure in nineteenth-century Paris, later compared by Susan Sontag to the topographic photographers of the era. The ragpicker was described as an eager accumulator of the city's discarded debris, strategic in the manner that they would 'catalogue' – 'sort things out' – 'make a wise choice' – 'collect' (Baudelaire, quoted in Sontag, 1979: 61).

Both Cullen and Wolf used such an approach to acquire a knowledge of how it feels to experience a particular urban place through a process of exploratory *learning*, and this enquiry will do the same. The format for this methodology has therefore been adapted from the pedagogic structure of David A. Kolb's experiential *learning* circle (Kolb & Fry, 1974).

Coming from a background in psychology, Kolb was particularly concerned with the educational methods of understanding that people adopt as they work. In particular, he focused on the ways in which we organise and reflect upon new information and how we apply order and meaning to fresh experiences (Bassot, 2015).

Kolb's process consists of four specific stages arranged in a circle, conveying the systematic and cyclical ways in which people learn. Kolb adopted the structure of a circle because he felt that this offered the opportunity for individuals to 'jump in' to the process of learning at any stage, according to their own particular preferences. However, Kolb felt that, in general, the best place to start was from a position of gaining 'Concrete Experience' or actively doing something which triggers further enquiry. Following on from this, the next stage is 'Reflective Observation', where the learner reviews these encounters through a process of contemplation. The third point on the circle is 'Abstract Conceptualisation', in which the learner formulates a discourse around what they have found and begins to construct a body of understanding. In the final stage, 'Active Experimentation', the learner begins to put their new command of the subject area into practice.

Fig. 107. Kolb's Learning Circle, as presented in Bassot, 2015: 43

The cyclical format of this methodology is intended to provoke repetition and encourage students to work through the process of learning in a manner that evolves over time. However, this is problematic for a PhD methodology, which would generally benefit from a clearly defined start and end point. Nonetheless, Kolb's four stages may be appropriate for this research because they can embody many of the approaches set out by both Cullen and Wolf. As such, the circle has been reworked for the purposes of this enquiry and flattened into a linear, sequential procedure, with a clear beginning and a clear conclusion.

Diverge / Converge

Review — Reassess — Review

Concrete Experience — Reflective Observation — Abstract Conceptualisation — Active Experimentation

Serial Vision — Collecting Optics — Organising, adding, editing — Assembling
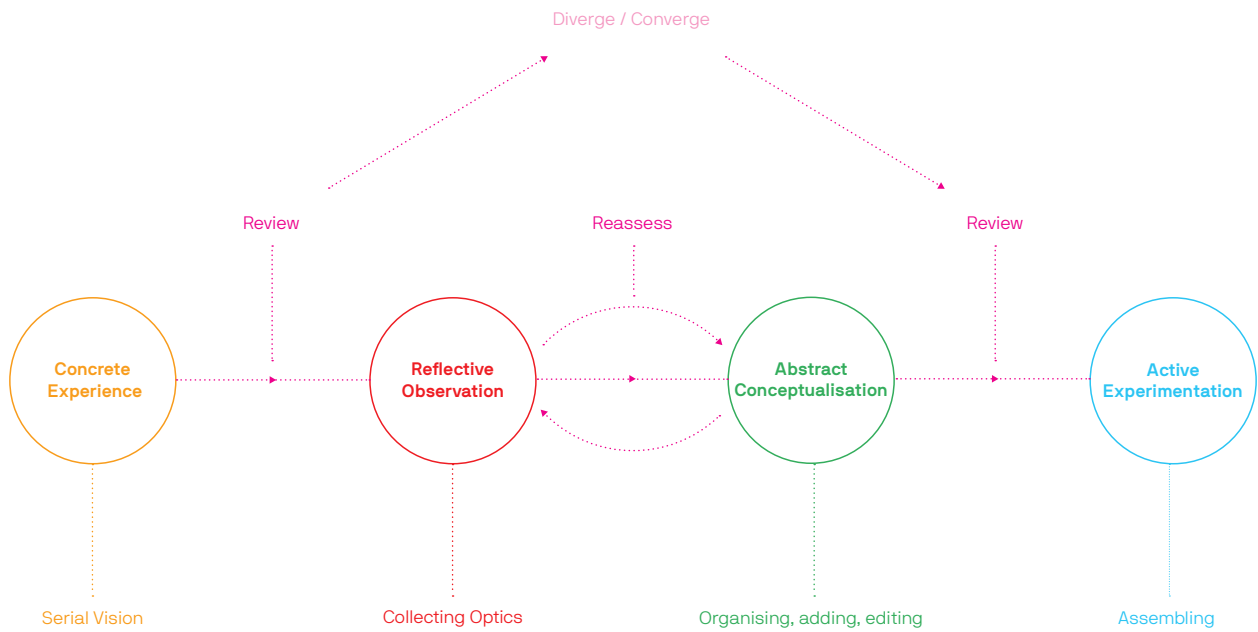
Fig. 108. A methodology for a four-stage photographic process of investigation, adapted from Kolb's Learning Circle. Dan Brackenbury.

We can see from the diagram that the four main stages of Kolb's process have been placed sequentially in a line, one after the other. Each stage has been assigned a specific investigative task which relates to the particular act of learning involved.

There are also regular thresholds at which to review the work undertaken and the data that has been collected up to that point. After the first review, the enquiry expands and diverges in terms of the type of photographic material that is gathered. Later in the process, the material becomes more focused and specific, at which point the investigation converges upon significant themes and distinct results.

The four individual stages of this methodology are as follows:

Concrete experience: Serial Vision
The gaining of 'Concrete Experience' is achieved through the initiation of site-based investigations. 'Initiation' here refers to both the verb and the noun. In the sense of the verb, 'initiation' is defined as the point of causality, where a process or set of actions is set in motion. The noun can be defined as the event of a person being introduced to a place, project or community.

The combination of these two meanings can be understood as a period of exploration and an exercise in becoming acquainted with an area. In their walking methodology, Pierce and Lawhon (2015: 659) state that, to begin with, the researcher should start with a process of initiation because this enables them:

[…] to relatively quickly get his or her feet on the ground, gain some level of confidence, and see emerging questions based on contrast with what is familiar.

In practice, this simply involves informally walking the sites in question repeatedly and coming to understand 'the lie of the land'. No photographs are taken during this part of the process.

The walk moves onto a more applied approach for exploring the terrain, adopting aspects of the surveying methods outlined in *Townscape* (1961). Cullen walked his sites while noting the views and engagements that he came across on the way, calling this approach 'Serial Vision'. In practice, this involved walking a direct route through a location, stopping to observe the principal visual events encountered, and then plotting where these appeared on a map. Cullen stated that 'The even progress of travel is illuminated by a series of sudden contrasts and so an impact is made on the eye, bringing the plan to life' (1961: 17). The Serial Vision process is useful because it offers a chance to consider the successive viewpoints that punctuate the space, drawing specific attention to key points in the environment.

There are numerous entrances and exits to each of the markets, meaning that this process can be repeated through different routes and flows, broadening the image of the site and the ways in which life moves through it.
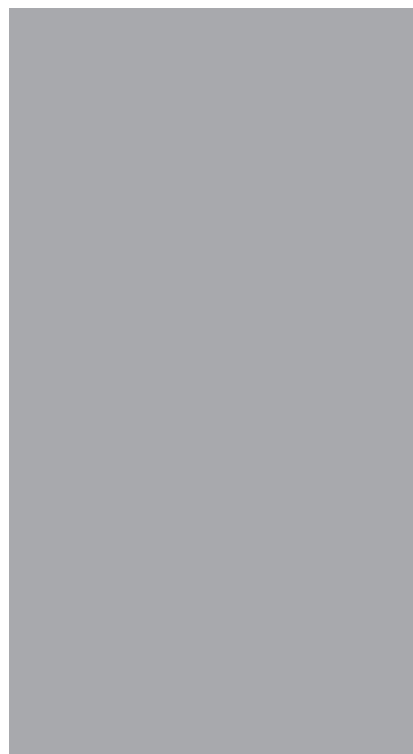
Fig. 109. Serial Vision, *Townscape* (Cullen, 1961: 17)

Cullen describes the Serial Vision method as a process that provides a 'sequence of revelations'. When exploring an area and walking at a uniform pace, these revelations become markers that provide points of intrigue on the route. They are the initial landmarks that allow the place an opportunity to make an impact on someone, and they thus help to create the notion of 'Concrete Experience' described in Kolb's learning circle.

Reflective observation: Collecting Optics

Kolb asserts that after the stage of 'Concrete Experience', the learner enters a process of reflection. They are encouraged to do this in a formal, orderly and structured manner whereby findings can be identified and commented upon.

During this stage Cullen's Optics were sought out in each of the markets before being catalogued and noted. The Optics in *Townscape* (1961) were extracted from the book and plotted out on a single A0 poster, which was used as a map to navigate the sites in a structured way (see below).

Fig. 110. Poster of Optics compiled from *Townscape* (Cullen, 1961)

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This poster guided and directed a set of photographic walks on each of the sites, leading the explorations towards specific points of interest in each location. For example, Cullen speaks about the feeling associated with encountering moments of 'enclosure' in the city. Passages like this acted as clues, or riddles, which described things to hunt for:

> […] outside, the noise and speed of impersonal communication which comes and goes but is not of any place. Inside, the quietness and human scale of the square, quad or courtyard (Cullen, 1961: 25)

This lyrical passage speaks of a familiar type of confined built feature that can be found in many urban precincts. Whilst vivid, the writing is at the same time somewhat vague, and deliberately imprecise: it evokes rather than defines a place. In this way, Cullen is inviting the reader to relate the idea to their own memories and experiences, rather than pointing towards a singular location.

The Optics in *Townscape* (1961) were therefore taken as rough 'pointers' to conjure and elicit images rather than informational 'waymarks' to specify and demarcate tangible properties. In this sense, it was up to the investigator to (mis)interpret the language and apply their own conceptions about the conditions of each environment. In addition, the subjectivity of the researcher's own experiences, cultural influences and predispositions were embraced rather than ignored, as they helped to create a unique lens through which to see the places in question.

This was a divergent phase, so a broad wealth of material was gathered. Once the Optics were collated, short captions were written to accompany the photographs. Notes were made about the findings, and their significance within the location itself was considered.

Abstract Conceptualisation: Organising, Adding and Editing

Kolb talks about this third stage in the learning circle as the point at which knowledge is built in order to confirm ideas. In essence, this is where reflection moves into conceptualisation and where research can be built upon and begin to lead into practice. This is arguably the most creative point, at which the learner can begin to assimilate their findings and start to use them to construct a new perspective on the subject.

The third stage of the fieldwork therefore involved assessing the Optics that had been accounted for so far before organising these into sets, editing this information and refining them into a more distilled and precise volume of findings.

Potential themes were noted and defined and relationships between the images were also observed, detailing patterns, connections and correlations. As this took place, the amount of material was edited down significantly. The research then converged on particular images that moved beyond Cullen's Optics and began to point towards a new, complementary chapter to his Casebook.

As the methodology diagram above shows, this is intended to be an iterative process that develops over time. If the researcher finds that they are unable to refine the material into defined sets of images and find new Optics, they can return to the previous stage and repeat the activities within the 'Reflective Observation' phase until enough relevant photographic data is gathered.

Active experimentation: Assembling
The final part of Kolb's learning circle involves assimilating the findings gathered thus far and using these to create new knowledge through a process of invention and experimentation.

The 'active experimentation' of the Ragpicking methodology concerned the process of building an assemblage from the photographic fragments that had been collated. The pieces of the puzzle were placed together to form new, personal and unique perspectives on each of the sites in question. It was impossible to state what form these findings would take until the fieldwork was carried out: as a result, the final stage of the Ragpicking process was left intentionally open and adaptable.

In his conclusion to *Townscape* (1961), Cullen states that 'Our first move in creating a system must surely be to organise the field so that phenomena can be filed logically in an Atlas of the environment' (1961: 195). The culmination of this project is a response to this call to action. The Optics collected on each site, and the descriptions that accompany them, have been compiled into an outcome which is broadly termed an 'atlas of the environment'.

The practice, as well as the commentary on the practice, are a demonstration of how the procedural, playful and inventive methods of photographic investigation employed by both Cullen and Wolf can be reappropriated as relevant contemporary models to photograph elements of character in urban landscapes. This methodology is therefore intended to complement the traditional approaches we normally use to assess the character of urban spaces (discussed in Chapter 1.1—1.2). The resulting photographic material provides information about the less tangible and more subjective character traits that are often difficult to point out and discuss in urban research.

Cullen invited the reader to make revisions and additions to his *Townscape* precedents, provoking them to create their own casebooks in their own places. Similarly, the 'atlas of the environment' produced by this study acts as

a provocation. It is intended that this material can be adapted and reworked in other urban locations facing similarly uncertain futures, in new subjective and intuitive ways.

4.2 Traps

It has been noted above that a range of criticism has been levelled at often well-meaning photographic investigators of the urban, particularly when primary research has been carried out by outsiders. This methodology acknowledges these comments, appraisals and debates, in order to ensure the work produced is well-reasoned and takes account of these ethical challenges.

We can think of these problems as traps. One definition of the word 'trap' is a trick in which you can be convinced into doing something unintended and which goes against your initial aims (Oxford Dictionary of English, 2010). There are several 'traps' that, in this sense, could affect this project by leading the research towards accidentally conveying a standpoint that was not intended. It is important to be aware of these things because such 'traps' could potentially negate the usefulness of this methodology.

Othering
As explored above, the perspective of the outsider is often useful in site research because newcomers to a location may notice significance in unremarkable details that are overlooked by locals (Jakle 1987). However, there is also an inherent danger in ethnographic photography: visiting researchers exploring a space have been known to 'look in' on their subjects in an act of colonial inquisitiveness. This issue is discussed in photography and sociology in numerous contexts, but such processes are sometimes referred to as 'othering' and can arguably be seen, for example, in the more 'private […] awkward' (Fenstermaker, 2019) urban imagery of Wolf.

Edwards (2008: 162) describes this colonial aspect of othering, stating that:

> The colonizer sees the Other as a two-dimensional creature without any depth or capability for lived experience. One of the chief catalysts of this discourse is/has been the apparatus of surveillance —the camera.

The author is stating that the lens of the camera has been, and continues to be, used as an oppressive tool to surveil humans as objectified subjects who lack agency. Edwards further argues that the photograph sometimes offers the impression that its human subject can become understandable and familiar to a spectator, whereas in actuality, it impossible to truly know a living, breathing person from a single image.

Attempting to address complex issues such as poverty and class through photography alone can therefore lead to justifiable criticism in terms of superficiality. As such, it is important to take the complex nature of the human context into account and to use this understanding to underpin, explain and justify photographic studies of people and the places within which they are situated.

Voyeurism

Street photography has been spoken about as an inherently voyeuristic and ethically dubious medium in which human subjects are sometimes depicted without their consent (Azoulay, 2008). This was brought up in a well-documented court case in Paris in 2008, in which Neji Bensalah took the Magnum photographer Luc Delahaye to court for photographing Bensalah on the Paris Metro without his knowledge and distributing his image without his authorisiation (McClean, 2011).

Ultimately the court ruled in favour of Delahaye, referring to the European Convention of Human Rights and stating that an artist has the right to convey their knowledge and ideas through their work. The court explained that Delahaye's photography was an act of such expression.

While European law may favour the right of the photographer to employ their artistic will, even if this affects the privacy of the citizen, there is also perhaps a moral responsibility to act with sensitivity towards the person being photographed. Azoulay (2008) describes the 'civil space of photography' as the delicately balanced distribution of power between the photographer, the subject and the spectator. An aspect of Bensalah's complaint involved the reproduction of the image and the fact that it had been printed and used in the production of a film without his permission. In this way, the power of the photographer outweighed the power accorded to the subject.

One lesson to learn here is to ensure that the power of the author does not dominate and affect the agency of the subject and that any commercial use or commodification of a person's image should be discussed in advance.

Romanticisation

Chapter 1.5 explored how photographic investigators of place have occasionally been drawn toward the aesthetically striking, exciting and picturesque qualities of a given landscape, while less attention is given to its context. The example of 'ruin porn' in projects such as *The Ruins of Detroit* (Marchand and Meffre, 2010) demonstrate how a visually dominating approach can be critiqued for romanticising spaces of decay and demonstrating a lack of enquiry into the underlying conditions of the actual place and its history.

Lyons (2018) explains that 'ruin porn' can be considered a type of modern-day sublime, engaging with the predetermined destruction of humanity and the beauty that lies therein. The term 'porn' indicates that this movement of photography involves a certain degree of obsession, whereby decaying

subjects are simplified into an alluring world of deteriorating make-believe environments. Through this process, the scenes depicted become somewhat idealised and detached from reality. As a result, their significance, as well as the human realities that they actually represent, can become lost.

It has been argued that 'ruin porn' can fetishise architectural decay, but it is also important to note that photographs such as those in *The Ruins of Detroit* (2010) are records that convey a significant moment in a city's history. Such records can act as evidence for resistance, which can empower communities and give a voice to movements of change (Lyons, 2018).

Nonetheless, the danger with photographic practices such as 'ruin porn' is that they can involve the beautification of scenes where people's lives are being affected in negative ways. In this sense, striving for a more accurate depiction of reality, one that is less heavily focused on aesthetics, and which enquires more closely into the context of a site, would help to avoid the pitfall of romanticisation.

Subsequent co-option of photographic material

While some photographic works about place can indeed offer citizens material for resistance, it can also be said that the same images can sometimes be co-opted and used to support arguments that conflict with the initial intention of the photographer.

Rosler (2006) explores how photographers such as Dorothea Lange were employed by the US Works Progress Administration to vividly depict the hardships experienced by communities during the Great Depression. The writer argues that these images, however, failed to challenge the conditions that they depicted and thus helped to reinforce the general notion that charity was the solution to such issues, as opposed to significant changes in government policy and political reform.

Azoulay (2008) asserts that the meaning embedded within photography is only revealed through interpretation and that this can lead to unreliable readings. Therefore, we can understand that at a certain level the misreading may be inevitable once a photograph is presented to an audience because its meaning can be understood in a variety of ways. We can further argue that if a photograph depicts human existence within a place in a particularly potent way, then it is more likely to be subjected to such co-option because people will seek different ways of using it to support certain arguments. In some ways, this is an unavoidable aspect of the photographic depiction of cities.

However, it is perhaps possible for a photographer to seek to prevent their work from being co-opted to support a line of reasoning that conflicts with their original intention. One way to do this is through the written word. By captioning photographs, images are more intrinsically linked to the author's own objectives, yet still allow the viewer an open reading.

In summary, these examples demonstrate that there are a range of hazards to be aware of when undertaking a lens-based project which explores the everyday living and working environments of human beings. A failure to be aware of these issues can result in an author accidentally conveying a skewed message, which can deviate dramatically from the meaning they originally intended. It has been important to remain mindful of these dangers when exploring the markets and putting the Ragpicking project into practice.

The author of this research was an outsider not initially familiar with the markets, and it was right and necessary that the study of these locations should take this into account. Being an outsider is a position which is impossible to escape; however, it is possible to at least *attempt* to avoid falling into the associated traps of othering, voyeurism, romanticisation and co-option. This was done by taking the time to appreciate the intricate context of these environments, planning the framework for the photo-walks carefully and understanding the various ways in which the documented material could inadvertently be interpreted and reapplied to support certain outlooks and perspectives.

V The Ragpicker's Topology

5.1 Ragpicking in practice

This section is written in the first person as opposed to the third person, which is used elsewhere in the thesis, because it refers directly to my reflections on the photographic process.

The investigative photographic stages of the methodology outlined in the previous chapter led to the development of a range of practice-based research outcomes, specifically a photographic portfolio of prints, a book, a short film and a series of site-based projections.

The photographic portfolio of prints were created as a new, contemporary addition to the three existing sections of Cullen's *Townscape* (1961). These new Optics responded to a particular theme that I discovered during the Ragpicking process and which was found to be common to each of the market sites. The photographs, printed at 20 inches by 30 inches, are a large-format, tactile outcome that allows the viewer to get close to the images and interrogate them in detail.

The book, entitled *The Ragpicker's Journal*, was designed as a log which outlined the creative journey of this project in an almost diaristic manner, using text and images. This hand-bound publication was created as a way to structure the extensive body of visual material collated from the practice-based research into a condensed, orderly record that could be revised and further developed in the future.

The short documentary film was constructed as a visual essay that combined moving image footage with stills from the portfolio. This material was edited together as a narrative in order to introduce the audience to the landscape of the markets, while my reflective voiceover detailed the process of engaging with each location and what I found along the way.

I wanted to ensure that the final body of work was not exhibited in a way that detached the images from the places that they depicted. As such, a series of projected installations returned the portfolio of Optics back to the context of one of the markets. The projections appeared on the walls, staircases and corners of Mercado dos Lavradores during early trading hours. Visitors, as well as various vendors, passed by and observed the projections quietly while daily life continued nearby.

Each of these practice-based outcomes is outlined in detail in sections 5.2—5.5.

The first stage in the Ragpicking process was to conduct 'Serial Vision' walks in order to build a familiarity and spatial understanding of the locations. While on these walks, I used a 50mm lens because of its so-called 'normal' qualities. In photography the term 'normal' refers to a lens that offers a field of vision similar that of the human eye (Berman & Cronin, 2018). By taking various walking routes through the sites, I was able to observe how people move through the spaces in routine ways, as well as considering the main thresholds, points of movement and areas of activity within these landscapes. I stopped at the junctures that stood out and took a photograph from the point of view of a person moving through the space on foot. I then plotted these photographs onto a plan of each of the sites. I conducted various Serial Vision walks in each location, exploring the multiple pathways that could be taken through the markets. The process was unique at each site and produced varying results.

Serial Vision: Mercado dos Lavradores, Funchal
This is an example of a Serial Vision walk that I undertook in Funchal early one Saturday morning in September. The walk begins at the south-east corner of the market, which is often used as a goods entrance. From the street I move into a quiet, dark hallway, before encountering a change of level and a small flight of steps into the grand hall of the fish market. I then turn left towards another staircase where I encounter shoppers walking towards me along the same route, although this path is not demarcated on the floor. I walk up a stairway and see a small congregation of people standing at the top looking out, observing the trading in action. At this point I turn left into the vegetable market, a totally different, open, colourful and organic courtyard filled with trees, vegetable stalls and sunlight. I finish my walking route in the middle of the courtyard at a plinth, from which the main entrance/exit of the market is visible beyond.

This walk alone pointed to a number of useful areas of interest which would prove to be significant when I started the process of gathering Optics. The change of level and entranceway into the fish market hall, the subtle unmarked walking routes, the observation area at the top of the steps and the change in atmosphere, light and colour when moving into the vegetable market courtyard were details that I noted and chose to investigate further. This walk drew me to discovering a range of individual Optics from *Townscape* (1961) such as *possession in movement*, *advantage*, *viscosity* and *pinpointing*.
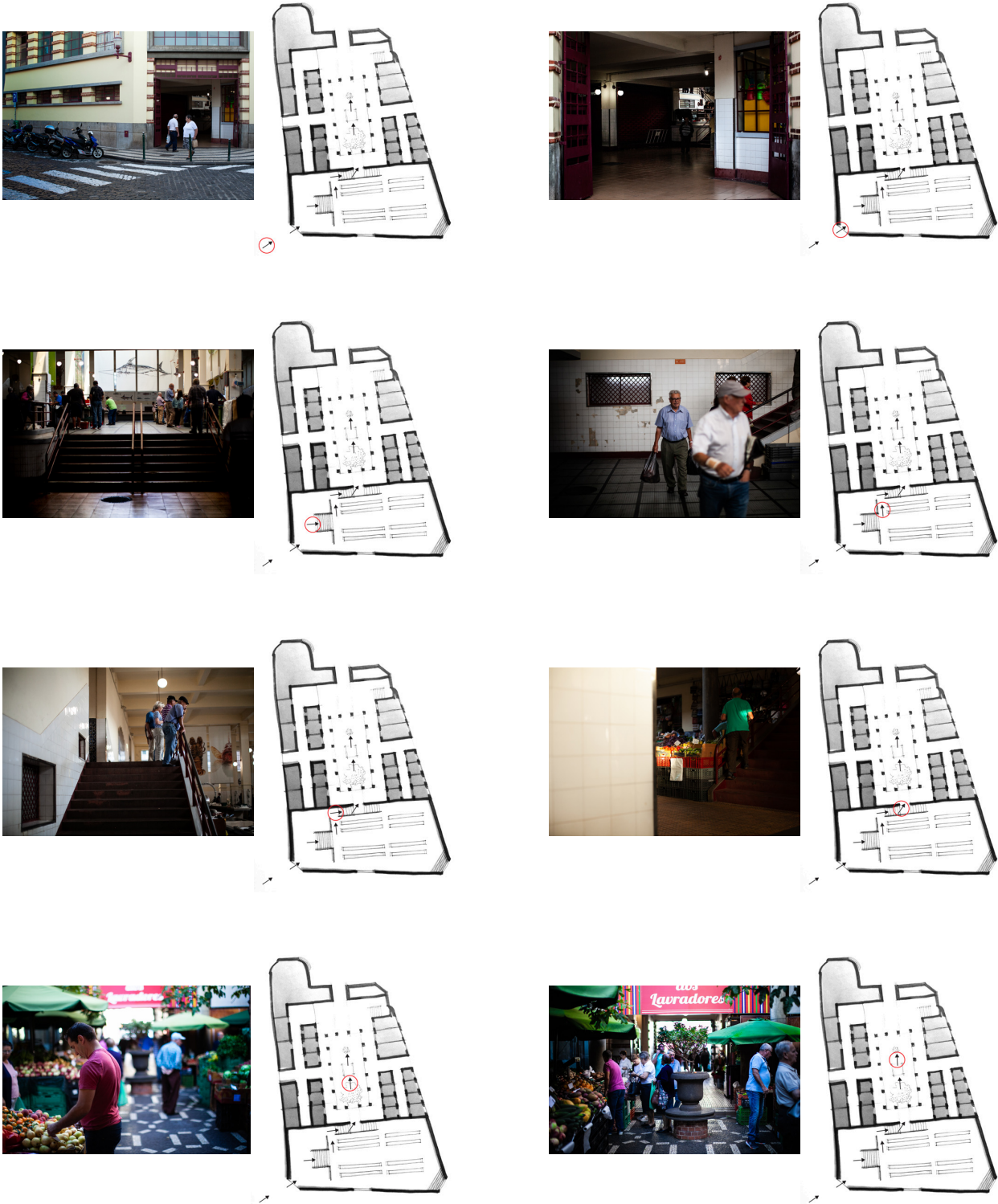
Fig. 111. *Serial vision walk, Mercado dos Lavradores.* Dan Brackenbury, 2019

Serial Vision: Mercado de Arroios, Lisbon

This is a Serial Vision walk at the Mercado de Arroios, which takes place on a weekday morning in February. I start on the road outside one of the entrances to the market; the interior of the market is not visible from this position and the entranceway is blocked by a goods delivery van. I then cross the road and enter the hallway and stop at the automatic doors. I enter the rotunda and look through into the courtyard of the building. I then begin to loop around the market before my route is interrupted at the fish counters, where traders are unpacking ice and fresh produce from bright orange crates. I manoeuvre through these obstacles and complete my loop around the market before exiting via the same doorway that I entered through. My path is blocked again at the doorway by a trolley, and the goods vehicle at the entrance is still visible beyond.

What I took away from this walk was the unique circular structure of the market, which invites visitors to loop around the site. This can be a somewhat disorientating experience, as it is often difficult to locate yourself within the building and find the correct place to exit the market. The counters and general furniture within the market are somewhat repetitive, and each corner on the main path looks fairly similar. However, certain interventions, such as goods crates and trolleys, stopped me in my tracks and made me reassess my surroundings. Another intriguing observation that was revealed here was the relative sparseness of the market floor compared to the Mercado dos Lavradores. When encountering occupied spaces where action is taking place, these incidents tend to stand out amidst the quietude and general sleepiness of the market interior.

Fig. 112. *Serial Vision walk, Mercado de Arroios, Lisbon*, Dan Brackenbury, 2019

Serial vision: Mercado do Bolhão redevelopment site, Porto

The Serial Vision walk that I undertook at the Mercado do Bolhão redevelopment site in Porto was different from my initial explorations on the other market sites. This is because the Mercado do Bolhão is undergoing a large-scale renovation process and I was only permitted to visit with a chaperone for a limited period of time one weekday afternoon. The walk was therefore far less serendipitous and intuitive than the explorations of the other sites. The route was determined by the areas that I was allowed to walk through and the hazards that I was instructed to avoid, as well as the places that I was guided towards by the chaperone. Due to the construction, the market was not in operation and the only people on site were contractors. This was largely an empty shell of a building with little evidence of how the working market had once operated.

I start this walk at the entrance to the market and my gaze is instantly drawn to a large hole in the corner of the entrance, along with the texture of the cement splattered around it. We then walk into the main courtyard, which is completely open and largely taken up with excavation machinery, before turning left into the west stairwell. We walk past the barriers and onto the staircase, which is very dark, lit only by small shards of light passing through gaps in the blue canvas hoarding wrapped around the exterior scaffolding. At the top of the stairwell we stop to look over the eastern side of the market and the balcony opposite. We then turn right and follow the balcony around the courtyard. At the southern end of the market, I stop to assess the courtyard in its entirety and the enormous cranes towering over the site. At the eastern stairwell, I pause to look back at the unmistakable Beaux-Arts roof and the archway of the western stairway from which we had just emerged.

This walk was an important introduction to the space, a building site in full operation and a historical structure stripped right back to its skeleton. Although large-scale works were in operation, the site was still recognisable and many of its most distinctive features, such as the dramatic archways at the top of the eastern and western stairwells, remained visible. New and temporary features, such as the light passing through the scaffolding and the beams in the open rooftops were equally intriguing to observe.

Fig. 113. *Serial Vision walk, Mercado do Bolhão redevelopment site, Porto*. Dan Brackenbury, 2019

Serial vision: Mercado Temporário do Bolhão, Porto

The Serial Vision walk at Mercado Temporário do Bolhão in Porto starts on the bustle of the street, outside the La Vie shopping centre, near the entrance to Bolhão metro station, on a January Saturday morning. The large typographic sign at the main entrance to the market is bold and highly visible although, stripped back and nondescript, it dissolves into the advertising cacophony of the street and could easily be passed by unnoticed.

Once inside the entrance, visitors are led down the escalators to the bright, fluorescently lit corridors of the market itself. Descending the escalators feels like a strange journey into the unknown. The harsh white artificial lighting and bare interior is noticeable as soon as you enter the space. Past the deli counters on the right, I follow the corridor through the vegetable market on the left and into the fish market ahead. The bright tones of the counters, the strip-lighting and the branded grid flags hanging from the ceiling are uniform throughout this route.

Once past a very minimal waiting area, the path leads ahead into a fairly abandoned non-space at the far end. Here the city branding (the familiar white grid over a blue background) creates a strange linoleum carpet. This unusual flooring, combined with the emptiness, the lack of people and the mirrored walls at the end of the hallway, create a bewildering environment to navigate.

What stood out from the experience of this walk was the clinical nature of the temporary interior. The vivid white and blue tones evoke hospital corridors and intertwine in strange ways, making it easy to get lost. From these observations, I was then curious to explore the ways in which the liveliness and community spirit of the vendors interacted with the starkness of the highly artificial and temporary nature of this environment.

Fig. 114. *Serial Vision walk, Mercado Temporário do Bolhão, Porto.* Dan Brackenbury, 2019

The experience of conducting Serial Vision walks in each of the locations was illuminating because it introduced me to the specific conditions of the environments, such as the lighting, how busy the places were, how the places were used at different times of day, which areas were easier to walk through, places that were atmospheric for various reasons and places that were clearly of little significance. With this information I was able to identify the locations that were important to return to at the latter stages of my Ragpicking visits when I would take more photographs and look more specifically for Optics to compile and collect.

Walking investigation
Conducting the Serial Vision walks on each site broadened my awareness and developed my understanding of these spaces. I had also made note of the areas that I needed to return to and investigate more closely. It was at this point that I started using Cullen's *Townscape* (1961) as a kind of guidebook to steer my photo-walks in each location. I would review the book before each walk and list a number of Optics that might appear within the area of the site that I was looking at that day. I would make a mental note of these, but would also write them down in a small notebook which would accompany me on my walks. At the end of the walk, I would identify which Optics I might have discovered, and which ones were difficult to find.

Fig. 115, 116. Notes from walking investigations at Mercado dos Lavradores (left) and Mercado de Arroios (right). Dan Brackenbury, 2019

On some walks I would attempt to photograph only one or two Optics and focus on gathering a typology of these examples, like Wolf's 'vernacular furniture' series discussed in Chapter 2. The set below develops the occurrences of *Pinpointing* at the Funchal market, which Cullen describes thus:

The illumination halfway up the structure draws our attention outward and upward. What is this mystery of the commonplace? At least it takes our eyes off our toe-caps. Even the most ordinary means can be harnessed to the task of arousing in us the sense of otherness through the use of light, through pointing the finger. It is not the thing pointed out but the evocative act of pointing that arouses the emotions. (1961: 37)

The term *Pinpointing* refers to instances where serendipitous spotlighting highlights certain details within the environment. Fragments within the landscape can take on a more significant meaning when naturally illuminated in such a vivid way. Once I discovered this Optic, I searched for more examples of it. I realised that examples were present all over the Mercado dos Lavradores site and spent a day looking for as many as I could. Once I had completed this photo-walk I reviewed the images on my computer and started to assess which ones were more effective in capturing the essence of the concept and which most fully illustrated Cullen's words. I decided that this Optic was one that I would return to, gathering more images and building this typology as the project developed and evolved over time.
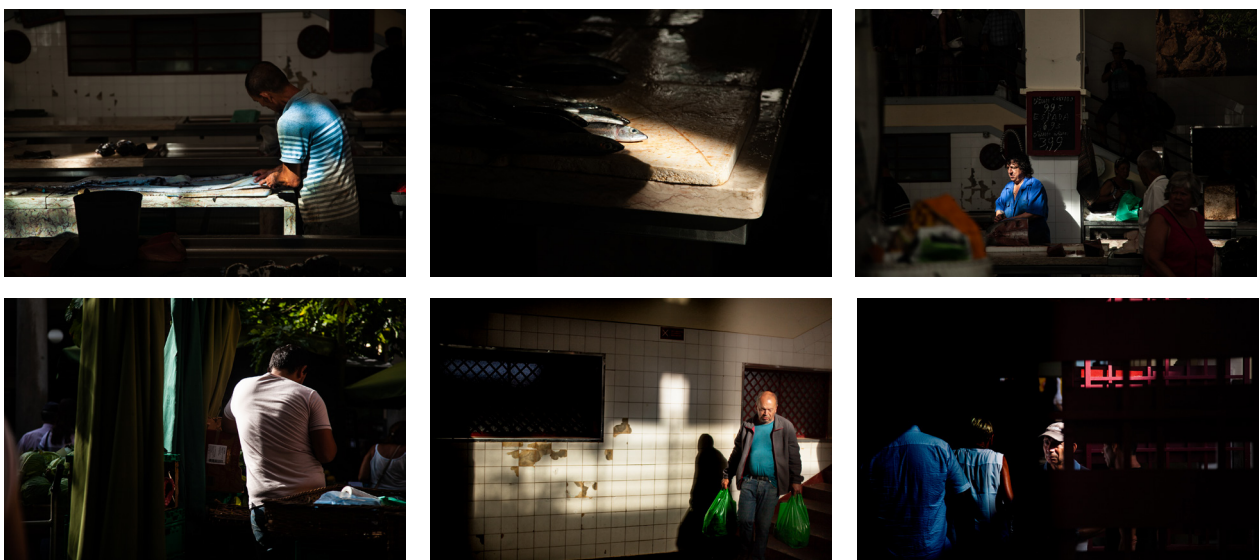

Fig. 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122. *Pinpointing, Mercado dos Lavradores.* Dan Brackenbury, 2019

On other occasions my approach in the field involved a more instinctive mode of photographing, whereby Optics were discovered by chance, or where I did not realise I was observing an object of significance until much later in the

editing process. In these examples, the photo-walk was not planned in advance and there was no pre-defined agenda for Optics that I was specifically looking for. Instead, the process involved exploring more freely and photographing in a way which allowed me to be drawn to details that caught my eye.

The advantage of working in this more casual, spontaneous manner was that I could respond freely to events, experiences and scenes that might pop up unexpectedly. On these looser, meandering walks I tended to opt for a zoom lens, normally a 24–105mm or 70–200mm, as this offered me more flexibility to respond in a range of ways to whatever incident might cross my path, or which I might see from a distance. Using a zoom lens in this way also allowed me to step back from the action and blend in more subtly with the bustle of the market, instead of having to move closer into the subject intrusively, as is often the case with a shorter prime lens.

Editing and organising

After exploring and photographing the sites repeatedly, I started to assess the body of photographs that I had amassed. It was at this point that I began the process of editing and organising the images, as well as considering which ones would act as suitable illustrations of the Optics in Cullen's list. I had printed out many of the images along the way and mounted them on the wall of my studio in different sets. I decided that I would try to find at least one image for each of the Optics in *Townscape* (1961). After filtering out the images that I considered to be less successful, I was left with a shortlist of images. I then created one folder for each of the Optics. I carefully reread Cullen's description for each of the Optics and then sifted through the images, dragging and dropping the photographs into the corresponding folders one by one. This was a slow, laborious process but effective because it allowed me to clearly organise the visual data from my walks. The result was 82 folders, one for each Optic, each containing an average of ten images. The images were then colour-coded according to their potential. The final editing stage involved looking at each of the folders independently and returning to the description of the Optic before reflecting on which image best conveyed the words in the description.
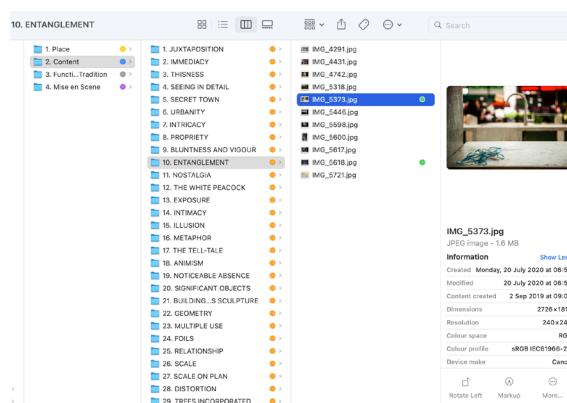
Fig. 123. Detail of how the Optics were organised and colour-coded in folders during the editing process. Dan Brackenbury, 2020

Over the course of the project I managed to find examples of most of Cullen's Optics and collated these within a type of organic, evolving compendium. This consisted of cut-out images from the *Townscape* Casebook, juxtaposed with my own images. Juxtaposition in visual media such as cinema means to place things close together for contrasting effect (Rabiger, 2008). By observing the contrasting qualities of my contemporary responses next to Cullen's originals, I was able to demonstrate how the concepts and approaches in *Townscape* (1961) could be reinterpreted and reapplied as relevant visual research methods within urban areas today. The entire collection was printed and detailed within the supporting journal, which is discussed in section 5.3. Three sample pages are provided below.
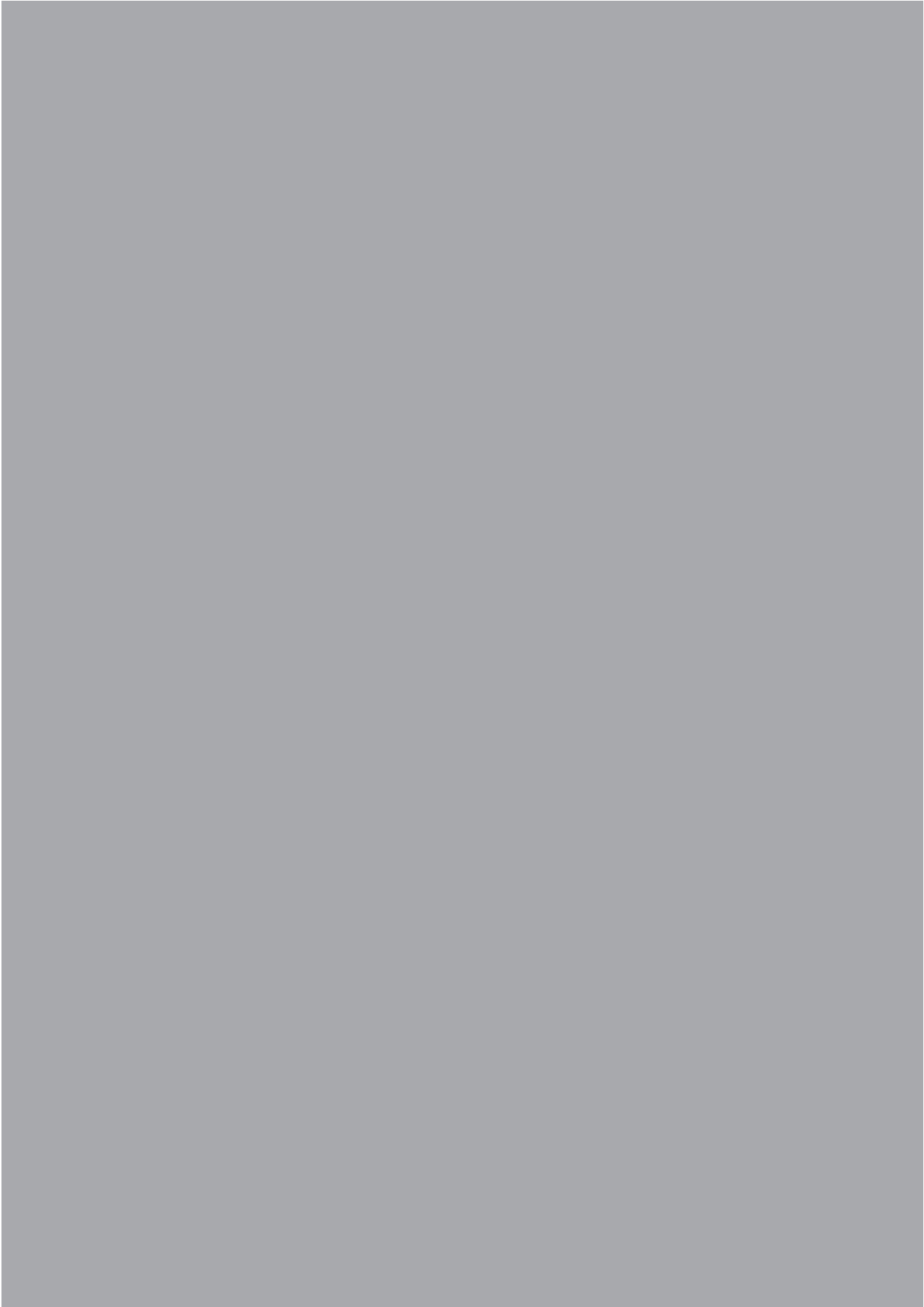
Fig. 124. Collage of Cullen's original Optics of Place, combined with new original photographs
taken during the Ragpicking exercises. Cullen, 1961/Dan Brackenbury, 2021
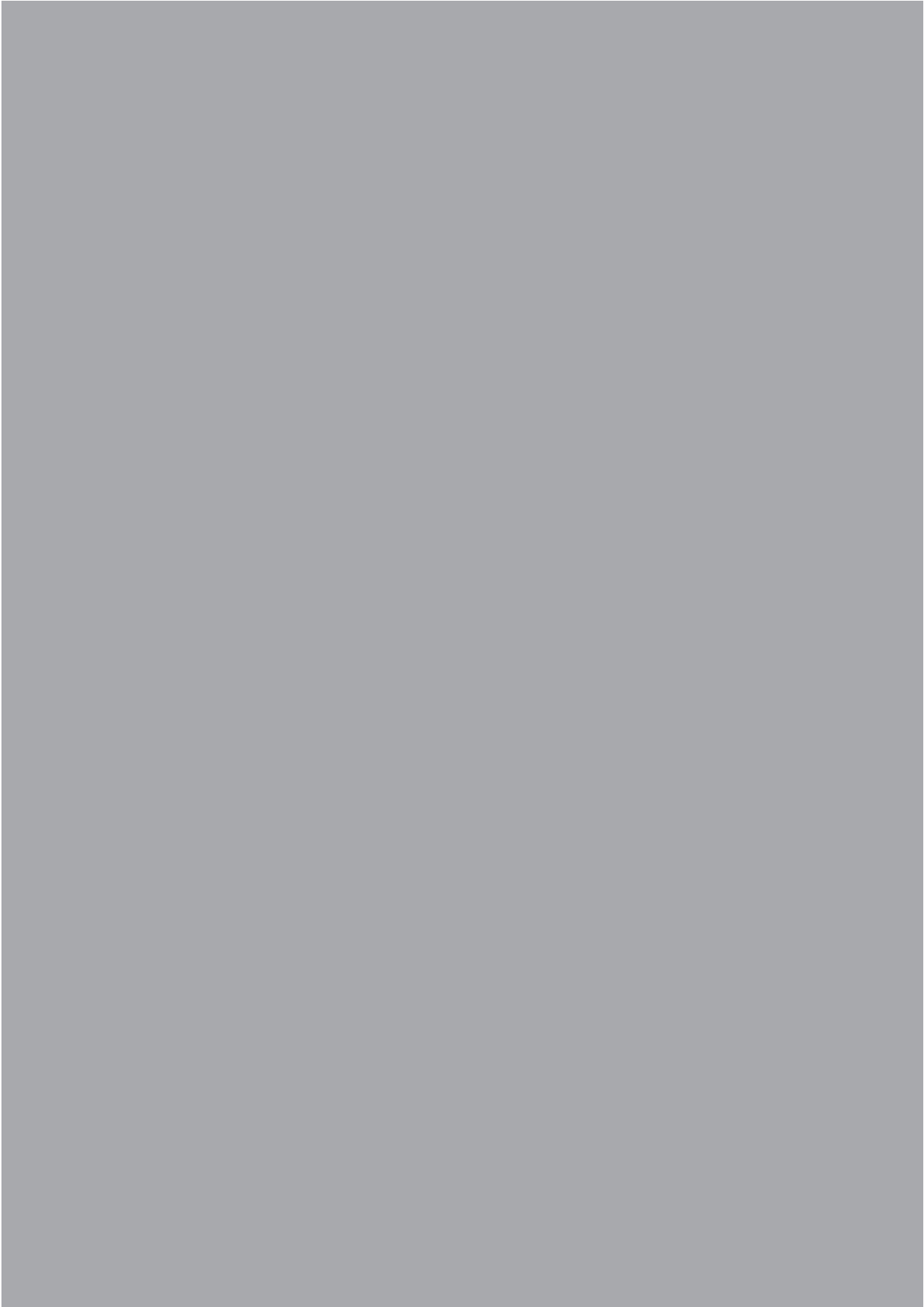
Fig. 125. Collage of Cullen's original Optics of Content, combined with new original photographs
taken during the Ragpicking exercises. Cullen, 1961/Dan Brackenbury, 2021
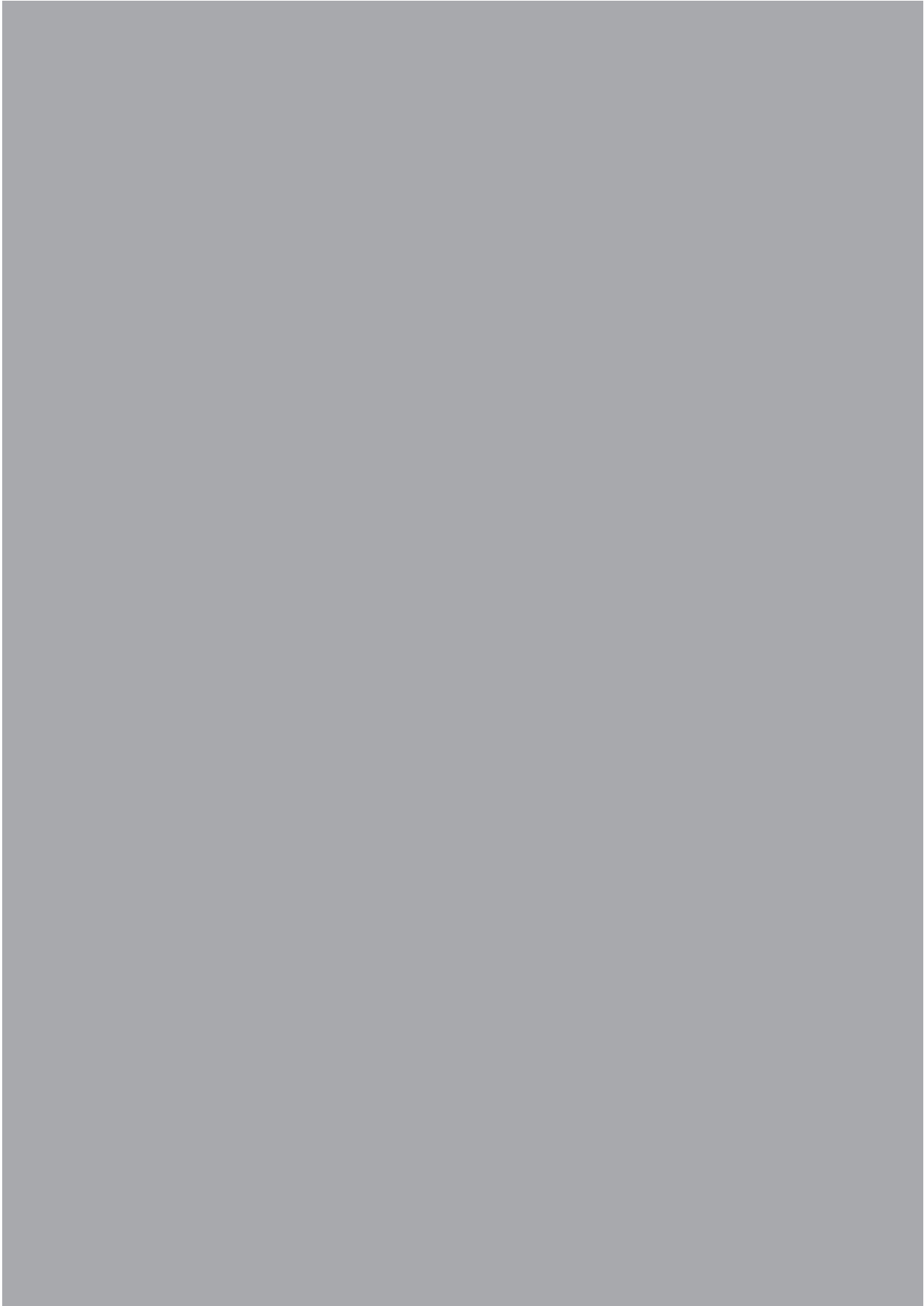
Fig. 126. Collage of Cullen's original Optics of Functional Tradition, combined with new original photographs taken during the Ragpicking exercises. Cullen, 1961/Dan Brackenbury, 2021

5.2: Final photographic portfolio

Cullen proposed that readers should add to his Optics in order for them to have a significant impact, and ongoing influence, on the design and regeneration of urban spaces. On this point, the author stated firmly '[…] it is this glorious sense of communication that we all need. For God's sake say something!' (Cullen, 1961: 195). I responded to this call to action by creating my own series of photographs. The intention is that this portfolio of images could add to and complement Cullen's existing sections of Place, Content and Functional Tradition in his book. These images are intended to act, in part, as a *new* set of Optics to complement Cullen's *Townscape* (1961). In this sense, this photographic material is a response to Cullen's suggestion that his work was just the beginning of an ongoing, evolving project.

While exploring the markets and trying to capture examples of Cullen's Optics, I discovered that I have a tendency to frame and light subjects with a sense of drama. Many of the photographic practitioners that I had read about and researched in Chapter 3.1 also applied such theatrical techniques in their own work, drawing out the equivocation of the environment and raising questions about its content.

This visual approach is noticeable in Wolf's work, particularly in images such as this shot from his *Hong Kong Flora* series. These plants have been thoughtfully positioned and cared for anonymously by residents of the street, and we are left to ponder their significance. The photographs are like pieces of visual testimony that speak about the presence and absence of human beings in the city. With a confined viewpoint like this, the observer of the image must subjectively envisage what is not shown and perhaps begin to wonder about the wider panorama of the street and its inhabitants.

Fig. 127. From *Hong Kong Flora*. Michael Wolf, 2014

I noticed that I had made a creative decision to take photographs of details that are fragmentary, theatrical and enigmatic in a similar way. This was perhaps because such images are open to interpretation and can potential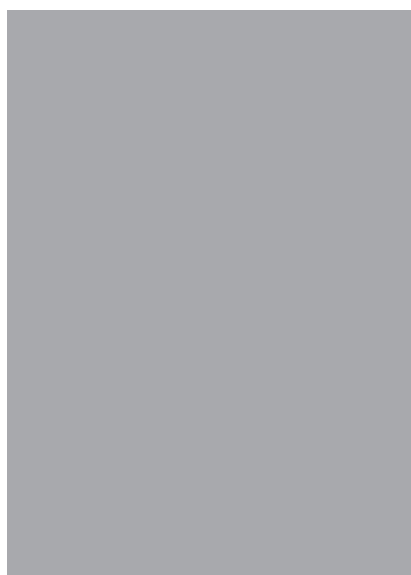ly lead to a discussion about what information is contained within the frame, as well as what exists outside it. This photographic approach is akin to a process of dramatic staging, where the precise arrangement of the objects in a scene can support a narrative, raise tension, draw forth questions and trigger imaginative responses from an audience.

I noticed that theatrical scenes such as these reappeared throughout the body of images that I had compiled within my field studies of the markets. In a way, I had been subliminally drawn to these occurrences, and clearly they had a significant part to play in the way that I saw and experienced these locations. As a result, I decided that this should be the subject of my own portfolio of Optics.

Mise-en-scène is a French term that first originated in the world of theatre and translates to English as 'putting on stage'. The term denotes the objects and features that might be collectively arranged within a production to create the scenery. In the twentieth century the term was adopted by cinema theorists, such as the writers of the French New Wave film journal *Cahiers du Cinéma*, to refer to the staging of a shot. These theorists were interested in the physical elements, such as setting, props and lighting, that are contained within a film frame and the often unconscious messages that they might convey (Hayward, 2017). In the final photographic material presented here, this term is used to refer to aspects such as these which can be found within the natural or incidental staging of a built environment and which can create a sense of drama in the landscape.

The final portfolio is therefore entitled *Mise-en-scène do Mercado* and consists of 26 Optics, roughly the same number as the average in each section of Cullen's *Townscape* Casebook. In order to discuss the body of work here in a concise way, I present ten of the photographs below.

Accompanying each image is a short supporting caption, which is not intended to offer a categorical description of the photographs. Instead, to borrow Geoff Dyer's words describing the discourse of John Berger, these supporting statements exist to 'encourage [each] picture to speak for itself, to sort of verbalise what the picture is seeing' (Dyer, quoted in Cagney, 2021: n.p.).

A threshold beckoning us forth, like a velvet curtain that is slightly open. A muffled hubbub can be heard drifting out, summoning the pedestrian to peer inside and explore the commotion unfolding within.

This scene of a goods entrance to Mercado dos Lavradores embodies many of the theatrical qualities that I had come to discover on my walks. I realised that the large iron gates were alluring for some reason, and I spent time observing them from different angles. From a front-on perspective the doorway seemed to resemble a kind of introduction to the arena of the market itself. Every now and then a market vendor would squeeze through this gap between the gates carrying goods inside, disappearing into the dark corridor within. The sounds of the market in full flow also added another layer of intrigue to explore. In this way the gates were like the threshold to an unknown landscape where something unusual was taking place. To some degree the gates are the foreword to the project: the image that sets out the theatrical theme of the series while also inviting the viewer to come inside and explore the sites in question.

Fig. 128. *Curtain Raise*. Dan Brackenbury, 2020

A momentary intermission that will pass very soon. When the encroaching bustle and buzz return, they will change the dynamic of the atmosphere beyond recognition.

The markets that acted as the subjects of this study are generally busy and hectic places, especially during the height of trading, which is usually early on a Saturday morning. Within the commotion and stir of the market, it is still possible to find quieter moments where people take the opportunity to escape from the crowds. Often these occasions of calmness occur when vendors or buyers decide to step back from the demanding activities that they were engaged in. Watching people during these moments can reveal how it is possible to discover calming environments for recharging, even amidst the rush of business and commerce. This market vendor is enjoying such a place as he drinks his morning coffee. The sunlight is gently reflecting off the counter inside the café, bouncing softly onto his face. The light and atmosphere of this corner of the market have a serene quality at this time, which offers a certain amount of space for this person to contemplate what they need to do before returning to work. However, there is also a sense that this moment of pause cannot last and will soon be interrupted.

Fig. 129. *Entr'acte*. Dan Brackenbury, 2019

Omniscience

The act of looking down from above, surveying the action unfolding below in a commanding manner where the broad view, along with our agency and imagination, provide the opportunity to call the shots on what takes place before us.

The upper reaches of a theatre auditorium are sometimes called 'the gods' because they offer a sweeping overview of both the audience and the stage. Here a man is leaning on a railing at the top of a flight of steps, enjoying a commanding perspective of the entire fish market hall. The man appears to possess an element of power because he can see more of the landscape than anyone else nearby, with a panoptical range of vision that enables an almost all-seeing, all-knowing omniscience. The physical posture of the man leaning forward adds a domineering quality to what is already a somewhat unsettling image of a person watching while others are unaware.

Fig. 130. *Omniscience*. Dan Brackenbury, 2019

A strange illusory alcove in a recess beyond. A hypothetical and anomalous place somewhat detached from time.

In Cullen's Casebook, the Optic *Insubstantial Place* is the incorporeal environment that can appear when walls are replaced by mirrors or screens. Cullen outlines that by dissolving structures in this way 'an intangible space is created which seems to have the property of receding as one advances [...] The sense of space [...] exists throughout like a scent which hovers' (Cullen, *Townscape*, 1961: 31). Such a place is created, perhaps accidentally, in a far corner of Mercado Temporário do Bolhão, where several stalls sit uninhabited. This area might have been an undesirable place for vendors to be sited because it is the point furthest away from the main entrance. This area has the feeling of a dead end about it, which might have been why the designers installed mirrors here, perhaps with the intention of extending the space, opening it up and making less claustrophobic. The result, however, especially at quieter moments in the day, is rather peculiar. An uncanny, deserted corner appears and the grid-patterned linoleum flooring stretches outwards into strange geometric formations. This is a somewhat reminiscent of a quiet labyrinthine hallway that you might encounter in a sci-fi or horror film.

Fig. 131. *Limbo.* Dan Brackenbury, 2019

Aftermath

The concise arrangement of one or two objects within a space that epigrammatically indicate a commotion has recently occurred.

Cullen points out the importance of the *incident*, or forms that demand our attention, stating that their practical value is 'to entrap the eye' (Cullen 1961: 44). In this case our gaze is captured by a sudden gory intervention in the fish market at Mercado dos Lavradores. During tuna fishing season the market hall is filled with fresh catches that are left sitting in unlikely places. Their carcasses leave behind pools of blood, splattered across the plain beige and grey marble surfaces of the trading area. The functional, utilitarian furniture here is almost like a blank canvas that exists to highlight such colourful disturbances. These are violent sights that might be perturbing to a passer-by, a tourist or a visitor, but which are entirely mundane and unimportant to someone familiar with the market and its goings-on.

Fig. 132. *Aftermath*. Dan Brackenbury, 2019

Scope

The serendipitous arrangement of environmental elements that create a direct view into a tonally contrasting place. The perspective through these windows reveals the main character from an overheard anecdote told just out of earshot.

This image was taken on a sleepy weekday morning at the Mercado de Arroios. Life taking place on the street outside the market can be seen unfolding when glancing through the vacant retail units on the perimeter of the circular building. Peering through this series of internal windows and disused spaces creates a kind of telescopic view into the world beyond. Cullen explains how architecture can, in this way, create an internal and external dynamic between what is occurring inside and what is occurring outside: 'the interplay between a known here and a known there […] it is lyrical in the sense that it is perpetually out of our reach, it is always There'. This glimpsed snapshot is a tiny fragment of a story about a person going somewhere, a narrative that we'll never know or understand in full.

Fig. 133. *Scope*. Dan Brackenbury, 2019

This is the candid emptiness that occurs when people are absent from a setting that should be occupied. The action is clearly happening somewhere else and this austere scene provokes us to look for it.

Cullen speaks about the feeling that a human being might experience when they find themselves in stark, open space that is unprotected and offers little in the way of shelter, both literally and figuratively. Cullen lists some of the features that can create this phenomenon: 'Emptiness, a great expanse [...] geometry, these are some of the elements that create the feeling of exposure' (Cullen 1961: 69). A combination of these factors can be observed at an improvised eating area at the far end of Mercado Temporário do Bolhão. The rich blue squares on the floor serve as a type of foil to the harsh white wall and antiseptic, pale furniture. It is not an inviting place to sit and enjoy one's lunch, partly because there is little else nearby. For this reason, the people who sit at the table will immediately be the sole inhabitants of the area and will be very much on show as a result. The pandemic perhaps reminded us that we are a largely a sociable species and we draw comfort from being near others. This might be because we are more secure and at home when others are close by. Spaces such as this seem, in some ways, to neglect this understanding of human sociability and create social distancing through chance rather than by design.

Fig. 134. *Vacancy*. Dan Brackenbury, 2019

Inset

A scene within a scene or a set within a set. An arrangement of prudently organised items that result in a contained locale which exists independently of its wider surroundings.

Wandering around the redevelopment site at the Mercado do Bolhão, the network of backroom storage areas were intriguing spaces to explore. These strange corners became small warehouses for building materials during the renewal works. A pile of bricks in the corner of one of these rooms stands out, like an installation in an art gallery or a site-specific sculpture by Joseph Beuys. Offset by a small pile of dirt which has been swept up to its right, a broom rests elegantly against the bricks, softly illuminated by a green fluorescent bulb hanging, some distance above, from the high ceiling. Cullen asserts that some 'Common objects often achieve distinction by reason of their self-contained force as sculpture […]' (Cullen 1961: 73). The author is explaining that certain materials in the landscape have an inherent strength or energy which allows them to assert themselves, rising above their surroundings and attaining a type of prominence like that of a sculpture. This photograph highlights how such examples can be found in even the most unlikely of places.

Fig. 135. *Inset.* Dan Brackenbury, 2019

A chance moment of naturally occurring tension. Such events materialise frequently in cities but often happen just out of sight, concealed and unacknowledged.

Sometimes the mere arrangement of physical objects at a particular time in an urban environment can combine to create a sense that something is about to happen. In the cinema, the act of suspense is critical to maintaining the attention of the audience as the story plays out in front of them. In the same way, a surprising, suspenseful occurrence can affect the enjoyment that we might derive from a simple walk through an environment such as a marketplace. The suspense in this scene emerges from a sink which is slowly filling up with water. At this point in time the water has reached the top of the sink and is about to overflow. The passer-by is then left with the option of waiting and seeing how the situation evolves or moving on before a potentially chaotic scene materialises. This is a familiar spectacle for those who like to stand and watch the entropy of life unfolding in cities and appreciate the excitement of events descending towards chaos.

Fig. 136. *Suspense*. Dan Brackenbury, 2019

Foreboding

Many of the more memorable encounters that we have in urban areas are those that create a sense of fear or apprehension that something bad might happen. This is a heightened awareness of what is around us and the danger that those elements may pose.

Occasionally, on a walk through an urban area we will stumble upon a place that we should probably not have entered. In these instances it is often best to move on quickly and return to a place of safety as quickly as possible. More alert and streetwise city-goers have an internal alarm bell that rings when this happens, telling them that something is wrong and that it is time to get away. Sometimes it is an event that triggers this alarm, a feature that is built into the fabric of a place, or simply something about the way an environment *feels* when we stand in it or walk through it. Normally this type of foreboding is experienced after dark, but it is also common to encounter it during the day. On a walk through the lower levels of the Mercado do Bolhão building site, I discovered this storage room – it drew my attention because of its unsettling qualities. This might have been due to its shadowy corners, the stark blue fluorescent lighting, the sheer emptiness and abandonment, or the four narrow pillars that created a kind of sacrificial altar in the middle of the room. In any case, I definitely experienced an alarm indicating that this was not a place to stay in for long.

Fig. 137. *Foreboding.* Dan Brackenbury, 2019

5.3 The Ragpicker's Journal

I made the decision to put the photographic material from this project together into a book because it allowed the creative process to be documented in a physical format that could be easily read and referred to.

Fig. 138. *The Ragpicker's Journal*. Dan Brackenbury, 2022. Printed and bound by Estúdio Bulhufas. Photograph by Estúdio Bulhufas

The purpose of creating the book was not to show the portfolio as a refined and complete body of images. Instead, it is intended to act as a type of work-in-progress that can evolve in the future. It was therefore important that the book did not feel fine tuned or precious but more practical and accessible: something to be used rather than looked at as an artefact.

Fig. 139. *The Ragpicker's Journal*. Dan Brackenbury, 2022. Printed and bound by Estúdio Bulhufas. Photograph by Estúdio Bulhufas

I refer to the book as a journal because it sets out the key stages of the Ragpicking process that I undertook during the fieldwork. I wanted the practice to be presented clearly and concisely, without descriptive passages that might make the work seem over-refined. The format, slightly smaller than A4, was chosen so that the book can be handled easily and potentially used as a functional source in future research. The pages are uncoated and held together with an open Swiss binding, which is also intended to express the unfussy, sketchbook-like quality of the publication.

I start with Cullen's Optics from *Townscape* (1961), which are juxtaposed against my own photographic interpretations of these ideas. The layout here has been informed by the playful, irregular pages of *AR* in the 1960s. Cullen influenced the way that the magazine adopted this varying and whimsical graphic approach, which somewhat reflects the unpredictable and disjointed nature of cities and the visual surprises that they offer. I did not want to mimic the graphic design of *AR*, but instead somehow channel their inventive aesthetics as a method to present the spirit of enquiry within my own work.

Fig. 140, 141. *The Ragpicker's Journal*. Dan Brackenbury, 2022. Printed and bound by Estúdio Bulhufas. Photograph by Estúdio Bulhufas

The second section in the journal is a simple and straightforward presentation of the final *Mise-en-scène do Mercado* portfolio and the accompanying captions. I wanted to convey how this section was a result of the preparatory work that goes before it. I also wanted to outline how the images in *Mise-en-scène do Mercado* were a response to Cullen's methods and how they could be seen as a type of unofficial accompaniment to the urban investigations that he undertook in the 1960s.

Fig. 142. *The Ragpicker's Journal*. Dan Brackenbury, 2022. Printed and bound by Estúdio Bulhufas. Photograph by Estúdio Bulhufas

The final section in the journal documents the morning when the images were projected in situ at Mercado dos Lavradores (detailed in Chapter 5.5). The photographs of these projections are printed full bleed, almost reaching off the edge of the spreads and out of the book. This was to convey the way the research is intended to expand beyond the printed page, living on in the environments of the markets themselves.

Fig. 143. *The Ragpicker's Journal*. Dan Brackenbury, 2022. Printed and bound by Estúdio Bulhufas. Photograph by Estúdio Bulhufas

5.4 The portfolio as a film

In addition to the photographic prints and journal, I decided to adapt the portfolio into a film, because this would allow me to personally convey the journey of the photographic process and how this unfolded in time.

I do not speak in a diaristic manner about the photographic methods that I applied to gather the images. Instead, I present the images one by one as an unfolding timeline, accompanied by a narration of the captions. The film is intended to act like a performance lecture, or a slideshow which takes the viewer through a travelogue of each of the markets and the characteristics that I discovered within them.

Creating a type of documentary film in this way allowed me to set out a concise verbal introduction to the subject area. I was also able to conclude the portfolio with a closing monologue, summing up my experiences and reflecting on what the process may have revealed about the markets. Working with the structure of a film was a useful exercise because it allowed me to bring the practice and the theory together, along with my commentary, as a single creative element.

While taking the photographs I had also gathered a large amount of film footage. My camera can shoot moving image as well as stills and at various points on my explorations I would switch between the two modes. I initially did this as a way to record my process and remind myself of the context in which certain photographs were taken. However, as the project went on, I discovered that the moving image material was able to support the still images by offering more visual information about the movement and physical

interactions within these environments. When assembling the photographs for the portfolio, I realised that certain moving image sequences could sit next to the photographs and help to punctuate the body of images by setting the scene, establishing tone and building rhythm.

Fig. 144. Still from *Mise-en-scène do Mercado.* Dan Brackenbury, 2022

The film format also allowed for the introduction of sound, an entirely new dimension, which offered the possibility of expanding the photographs into a more sensory experience. I did not want the sound to contrast with, or divert away from, the content within the images or my narration, so the soundtrack is built up of subtle sound effects and clips of music which have been chosen to complement the visuals and make them slightly more immersive. Presenting sounds alongside the visuals to allowed me to further convey the bustle of the markets and what it feels like to stand within these spaces at certain times.

As outlined above, the *Mise-en-scène do Mercado* portfolio is primarily concerned with the theatrical scenes that I discovered within the markets. The compositional approaches and lighting that I applied when taking these photographs seemed to subconsciously heighten this sense of drama. As a result, some of the images almost look like stills from films and it therefore seemed appropriate to acknowledge the way in which they draw upon the stylistic conventions of cinema by editing them together into a piece of moving image.

Fig. 145. Still from *Mise-en-scène do Mercado.* Dan Brackenbury, 2022

This film is not intended to be openly accessible or available online for all to see. In a sense it is too personal to be shared with the wider world and would not make sense if listed publicly on a platform such as YouTube. The film exists to affirm and underpin the procedures undertaken throughout the creation of the *Mise-en-scène do Mercado* portfolio. It is intended to expand the context and background of the market sites, detail the journey of the photographic process and reflect upon what this creative endeavour has achieved.

5.5 In situ projections

It became clear that one of the main practice-based outcomes of this project should be a piece of curatorial design that allowed the material from the photographic portfolio to sit within an appropriate context. The portfolio had emerged as a collection of playful topographic images concerning the character of these locations. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, character is a largely subjective phenomenon that relies heavily on the interpretation of the individual.

The act of exhibiting the photographic material would mean that the portfolio could be read as a series of 'open texts' and left to be understood, analysed and decoded in a range of ways by the public. In this sense, the photographic material would belong not only to me but also to the markets and the people within them. It was therefore imperative to design a curatorial format where the work could be shown in an environment that related strongly to the markets themselves.

I explored the possibility of exhibiting in gallery spaces in Porto, Lisbon and Funchal and identified whether a small event could take place within one of the empty retail units near the markets. This kind of public event might have allowed me to give closure to the project and offer a sense of finality to the photographic process. An exhibition of this kind would have also given me the opportunity to present the work to a new audience, listen to perspectives on the subjects depicted within the images and to discuss the material in a cultural setting.

After considering these various exhibition possibilities, I returned to the core values and aims of the project to decide on the best way to proceed. One of the tasks I had set myself at the beginning of this research was to explore how the character of an urban environment anticipating change could be substantiated through photographic means. It became clear during the Ragpicking process that the purpose of gathering the images was not necessarily to pursue a refined set of artistic outcomes but to trial an investigative photographic approach. For this reason, a conventional exhibition may have miscommunicated the rationale behind the project by presenting the photography as a finalised series of artworks. I therefore decided that the project was not well suited for display in a typical gallery environment and decided to rethink ways to share the images in *Mise-en-scène do Mercado* with the world.

After various discussions on the subject, I decided to develop a low-key and more playful way to display the images. While an exhibition in a gallery may have introduced the work to a new audience, this audience might have also remained detached from the setting itself. I remembered Eugenides' criticism of the Detroit 'ruin photographers' poeticising the city 'from far afield' (2011: 7) and ruminating on its condition at a distance. I decided that any public presentation of the work should instead be integrated into the context of the setting and presented in situ.

Requiem for Detroit? by Julien Temple (2010) is a documentary film that applied this kind of approach in order to sensitively detail the narrative of a rapidly changing urban landscape. In the film, Temple applied various visual techniques to juxtapose images of Detroit as it once was, with depictions of its present-day circumstances. Temple projected stock documentary footage of the city taken during the prosperous era of car manufacturing in the 1950s and 1960s onto the sides of buildings currently facing a very different economic future.

Fig. 146. Still from *Requiem for Detroit?* Julien Temple, 2010

In this way, the conditions of the city are not being analysed and debated symbolically from afar, as they might be in a conventional documentary, but are instead reflected onto the structure and anatomy of the urban environment. The documentary itself thus becomes amalgamated into the built composition of Detroit and, to some extent, becomes the property of the city and its citizens.

I decided to address the subjects of my practice-led research in a similar way, by returning to the markets and re-integrating the photographic material back into the landscape from which it had derived. Like Temple, I wanted the images from my research to be a physical part of the city and its form rather than lyrical emblems or romantic ideals to be observed in a totally unrelated setting.

With these goals in mind, I contacted the Chefe de Divisão of the Mercado dos Lavradores and gained permission to show the photographs in the context of the market itself. Working with a small wireless projector, I visited early one Friday morning in November 2021 and projected the photographs in various

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corners of the building shortly before trading started, as the market was slowly coming to life. The purpose was not to display the images for people to admire as artworks, but to note the existence of the Optics which had been discovered through the Ragpicking process and to quietly acknowledge the significance of these findings.
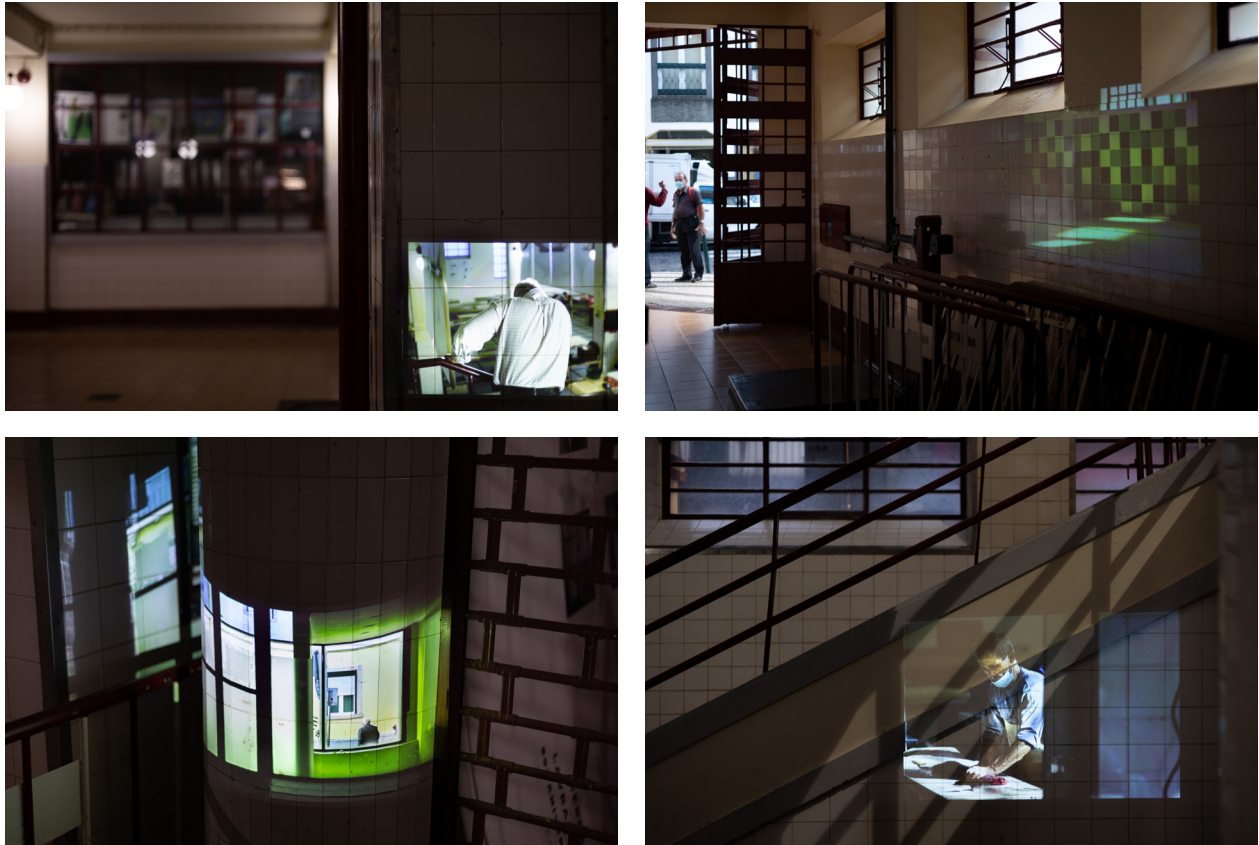

Fig. 147, 148, 149, 150. Projections in Mercado dos Lavradores. Dan Brackenbury, 2021

It was intriguing, but perhaps not surprising, that the tone of the images seemed to match the architecture of the market, complementing the colours and the lighting of the balconies, shop fronts and stairwells where the projections took place. For this reason, the photographs did not seem to dominate these spaces but instead sat unassumingly within them.

The impermanent act of projecting the photographs onto the fixtures within the market interior also seemed to be more ephemeral than simply presenting them as framed prints on a wall, capturing the transience and fleeting nature of the scenes depicted within the images. While there were no captions to support the photographs when they were shown in this way, the narratives and ideas within the scenes seemed to be underpinned by their backdrop and surroundings.

There was also a performative aspect of showing the photographs as a sequence of projections that would appear briefly over the course of one morning, which evoked the theatrical theme within the photographs. One of the purposes of this event was to show the *Mise-en-scène do Mercado* Optics

as a set of tableaux which could be witnessed and observed in the same way that an audience watches a play. People could observe as anonymous spectators, witnessing something that would never occur in quite the same way again.

Fig. 151. Projection in Mercado dos Lavradores. Dan Brackenbury, 2021

The projections were free to be noticed and discussed or ignored and passed by. Either of these responses seemed perfectly valid and appropriate within the context of this environment. The projections caught some attention from a small audience of locals and tourists passing through, who stopped to discuss the images quietly. However, the movement within the market was not interrupted and life went on as normal while the images were being displayed. As a result, the projections became somewhat assimilated into the architecture and subtly merged with the scenery to become part of the fabric of the market itself, if only for a short period of time, before I put the projector away and disappeared back into the crowd.

The exhibition was therefore not a one-off event, but one which lives on as a piece of curatorial design that is versatile in the sense that it can be reappear in related settings at other times in the future. In this way, the exhibition acts as a piece of practice as research which, unlike a gallery show, can be easily packed away and reassembled in other relevant environments that are intrinsically related to the subject matter. For example, Nuno Valentim, the architect responsible for the renewal of Mercado do Bolhão, has proposed that the projections could be shown at the soft re-opening event of the market. A timely installation of this kind could trigger conversations about the identity of the site and the ways in which its character may continue to develop in the future.

VII Conclusion

The image below is the Optic of *Recital* from *Mise-en-scène do Mercado*, which engages with a fundamental aspect within this body of research: what we can find when we take the opportunity to stop and look.

Fig. 152. *Recital*. Dan Brackenbury, 2021

The image depicts a fishmonger busy at work on an unremarkable morning at the Mercado dos Lavradores in Funchal. He is completely focused on the job at hand: gutting a long scabbard fish that has been freshly caught in the ocean off the island. The fishmonger is partially illuminated by the bright, sharp morning light cutting through the large first-storey windows and bouncing off the chopping board onto his face. The reason that the photograph was taken was because there was something captivating about the scene that was unfolding. The movement, the form, the composition and the lighting made this an important act to watch, almost akin to a kind of musical performance.

Once a scene like this has been identified and photographed, we can then return to the image and discuss what makes the episode within the frame meaningful. In this case, we can note how the design of the space offers us the opportunity to watch people at work, to observe their craft and appreciate the care and skill involved in preparing their produce for sale.

Recital thus encapsulates some of the key motivations embedded within this research. It is an equivocal, fragmentary incident occurring within a particular urban space anticipating its potential renewal, which tells us something specific about the way this environment operates. If we read it through the framework of Cullen's *Townscape* Casebook it can also be seen as a photograph that acts as evidence pertaining to a characteristic of this location, and which we can therefore refer to in terms of its value, expressiveness and consequence.

The image is therefore an example of *das Ding*, similar to Heidegger's jug, a mundane peculiarity in our environment that should be acknowledged, looked at and reviewed as if we are seeing it for the first time (Andersen, 2018). It is through these practices that we can then consider our sense of '*being-in the-world*' (Muminovic, 2015: 298), in much the same way as Baudelaire's ragpicker, who collected fragments in order to build a picture of the whole (Thompson, 1997). This process of assemblage, juxtaposition and analysis can then allow us to work towards the overarching aspiration that Cullen asserts in the final pages of *Townscape* (1961: 194): to 'assist […] in charting the structure of the subjective world'.

Building on the various constituent approaches practised by the citéographers discussed in Chapter 3, the Optics in *Mise-en-scène do Mercado* attempt to grapple with incidents, encounters and experiences that are ambiguous, intangible and irrational and which are not normally discussed in site research. In this way, the portfolio is intended to serve as a type of affirmation that such things do exist, are noteworthy and can indeed be captured and collected, no matter how elusive they may seem. Locating them through the Ragpicking methodology, and presenting them sequentially as a series, offers the opportunity to point towards them referentially, as opposed to generalising about them hypothetically from afar.

One limitation of this research was the fact that the author was the sole-practitioner responsible for photographing each of the locations. This meant the images and their captions came from the mind of one person, restricting the notion of character to a single perspective. Exploring the notion of 'character' in urbanism revealed the word to be associated, in many ways, with highly subjective concepts (Dovey, 2009; Dovey et al., 2009). Therefore, a future approach will benefit from involving other photographers in the process. This would allow researchers to act as a team, collectively responsible for reading the environment in a range of ways. By sharing the practice within a troupe of ragpickers, the methodology will enable a variety of interpretations and understandings of character, rather than just one.

As outlined in the earlier sections of this thesis, planning policy documents can be seen to discuss the idea of urban character in terms of a type of built physiognomy which, in some cases, needs to be identified, as well as protected and enhanced in instances where change is occurring (Mageean, 1998). Local planning literature and landscape appraisals can therefore create a desire to view character as a corporeal entity that we can touch and feel, or a manifest

property which can be demarcated and spelled out. However, the process of undertaking this research has revealed that urban character can also be viewed as something more multi-layered and indistinct. Character, in all its complex forms, thus requires a more subtle and percipient system to discern and explicate with clarity, along with a coherent range of methods for documenting such features.

One of the problems with policy documents such as character appraisals of an area is that they sometimes view the notion of character in a relatively unequivocal way, which can be defined through observable physical features. One of the key messages that has emerged from this practice-led research is that character should instead be regarded as a nexus of issues, born out of both aesthetics and experiences, which must be debated in order to be understood (Cullen, 1961; Dovey, 2009; Pallasmaa, 2005). The Ragpicking methodology, outlined above, exemplifies a framework that can therefore strengthen, enrich and advance such dialogues.

In order to cultivate a conversation around character, the Ragpicking approach was developed in a way that allowed for replication and adaptation, meaning that it can now be revised and applied in sets of other public spaces anticipating renewal. The methodology has been designed to work in public places that have a significant impact on civic identity: destinations that people visit, work in and pass through every day. The approaches set out here can therefore be reworked in similarly distinct urban contexts, such as train stations, parks, waterfronts, libraries, municipal buildings, shopping precincts and residential areas. Forming a visual assemblage such as *Mise-en-scène do Mercado* through the Ragpicking process can provoke people to articulate aspects of what they see and feel when they encounter such places.

In local authority documents such as character appraisals, the Ragpicking methodology could be employed to help identify and discuss photographic depictions of noteworthy urban details, observations and experiences. As demonstrated above, the process could then allow us to better identify features that are important to protect or enhance in a local area (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019).

These endeavours can therefore inspire the development of new, ever-evolving photographic assemblages, illuminating characteristics experienced by urban citizens and acting as organic visual archives which develop over time. The material produced through this practice-based research exemplifies how such approaches can be used to substantiate the character of certain places within a city. As such, this project, and others that follow, will allow us to consider the things that add richness, humanness, and drama to our cities. The work here demonstrates how these features, facets and fragments can be photographically sought out through a type of urban reconnaissance that, in the original meaning of the word, strives to *know the place again*.

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