



Research article

A contemporary chiffonier: new models for photographic research in sites of renewal

Dan Brackenbury^{1,*} 

¹ Bath Spa University, Falmouth University, UK

* Correspondence: dan.brackenbury@falmouth.ac.uk

Guest editors: Sarah M. Bassett and Nicholas Pilarski, Arizona State University, AZ, USA

Submission date: 20 April 2025; Acceptance date: 8 August 2025; Publication date: 4 March 2026

How to cite

Brackenbury, D. 'A contemporary chiffonier: new models for photographic research in sites of renewal'. *Architecture_MPS* 33, 1 (2026): 3.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.amps.2026v33i1.003>.

Peer review

This article has been peer-reviewed through the journal's standard double-blind peer-review process, where both the reviewers and authors are anonymised during review.

Copyright

2026, Dan Brackenbury. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence (CC BY) 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited • DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.amps.2026v33i1.003>.

Open access

Architecture_MPS is a peer-reviewed open-access journal.

Abstract

When urban areas are developed or renewed, they are typically examined through systematic surveying strategies that focus on the interrelationships between physical structures. Technological apparatus, such as high-resolution aerial photography, light detection and ranging scanning and artificial intelligence-assisted virtual landscape modelling, now inform such processes, offering precise and expansive views of urban landscapes in exacting detail. In contrast, the late nineteenth-century topographic photographers viewed cities as cryptic topographies, best understood through fragmented, street-level perspectives. Similarly playful approaches to urban photographic exploration were developed in the 1960s by the townscape scholar Gordon Cullen, and more recently by the photographer of cities Michael Wolf. Drawing upon the work of these pioneering urban investigators, this research establishes a new approach for recognising, analysing and applying the personal and ethereal aspects of the built environment that are often overlooked in photographic surveys today. The study is synthesised through a photographic investigation of three contemporary redevelopment sites in Portugal. The resulting body of imagery exemplifies the ways in which strategic

photographic walking methodologies can be used to gather, discuss and validate the characteristics of urban areas undergoing renewal.

Keywords Thirdspace; phenomenology; placemaking; surveillance

Introduction

The word 'character' is a term that is frequently utilised in placemaking to describe the specific qualities of a given area and how we might come to discern and comprehend these facets. We often see the word appear in planning documents and governmental policy outlines in order to refer to a multiplicity of issues. While widely used, 'character' can also be a particularly challenging word to define in regard to discussions around place, especially because it is often regarded as a subjective quality. Therefore, references to a place's character can often be misunderstood and misinterpreted.

The process of landscape character assessment (LCA) is increasingly used as a methodology to address this subjectivity by unpacking the constituent meanings of character and the range of material ways in which it can manifest within specific landscapes, depending on context.¹ The word 'landscape' in this sense can refer to rural and natural areas as well as urban and peri-urban areas. LCA can therefore be a practical and adaptable tool in assessing the underlying features of a given area within a city, particularly when change or renewal may be due to occur. The literature regarding LCA points towards a range of factors, or characteristics, that can contribute to the overarching character of a place. These can include issues around the natural environment such as the geology of a terrain, the climate and temperature of a given area, the soil types and the flora and fauna that grow nearby. The framework also takes cultural and social factors into account. For example, the type of movement that occurs within a site is of relevance, as are the various ways in which human beings utilise the landscape, whether for industrial, commercial, residential or community purposes. The LCA framework also points towards the importance of aesthetic factors within a landscape, such as the material forms of buildings, the range of colours that can be seen and visual patterns and details that might repeat within the environment. In addition, the heritage of a terrain, along with the buildings, structures and monuments that exist within it, are of comparable importance to the ruins and archaeology that may exist underground.

LCA therefore offers a framework for evidencing the elements of character that might exist within a landscape and is often utilised in policy documents such as landscape character statements. These are pragmatic, factual papers, often produced by local councils, to outline the ways in which physical factors affect locations where change may occur. While such statements are largely text-based, the images in these documents tend to be objective and formal, utilising publicly available photographic records from sources such as Google Earth. This material is normally used to help communicate the ways in which sites can be divided into zones. On occasion, landscape character statements may refer to specific architectural features, making use of amateur photographs.

Less commonly, landscape character statements may refer to psychological features such as feelings, atmospheres and memories that people associate with a location. However, the intangible nature of these details makes them difficult to define and evidence, meaning that this aspect of a place's character is often of secondary importance to the more corporeal properties of a location, which can easily be pointed towards and discussed. There is a certain irony to this omission given that, for many, the word 'character' is an abstract and cognitive construct when discussed in relation to place.²

Conveying character

The images utilised within landscape character statements will therefore tend to focus primarily on the structural elements of a place. Photographic material is generally used for simple illustrative means and not as an enquiry process in and of itself. As a result, the visual perspectives of human beings are rarely integrated into discussions around character and the day-to-day movements and interactions of people occurring at ground level can easily become overlooked.

Urban research around the character of a place has not always operated with such a prescribed focus on the physical and structural elements of a location. In the past, photography has been used to detail

urban areas experiencing change in far more exploratory and inquisitive ways. These now-antiquated methods also engaged with the intangible characteristics of a place, such as the atmosphere and the collective memories engrained within it.³ Shortly after the inception of the medium itself, photographic technicians were tasked with detailing the heritage of urban places that were undergoing radical developments in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. The early topographic photographers developed methods to investigate cities through walking and wandering, leading them to look at places in new ways and to draw focus on the viewpoints and experiences of human beings.

Walter Benjamin would later analyse these inquisitive photographic processes and their ability to engage with the meanings and histories embedded with urban areas. For Benjamin, history, and indeed the history of a place, should not necessarily be viewed in a formal, linear and sequential manner. He felt that viewing historical chronology in a neat, orderly structure had the effect of concealing potentially revolutionary cultural events. Instead, Benjamin proposed that history was a more complex and knottier concept to engage with.⁴ He saw history as a varied arrangement of past and present fragments that should be viewed within the current context of the 'now'. Benjamin's concept of now-time or *Jetztzeit* can be understood as a temporal standstill where a constellation of fragmentary events come together at a single moment.⁵ It is through this idea that we can see the past, present and future collide, at once offering a sense of revolutionary possibility for what might come next. Benjamin felt that artistic endeavours such as photography were thus well-placed to interfere with the monotony of progressive historical narratives and offer new perspectives on the world around us.

In reference to the development of photographic technology, Benjamin stated that 'the camera is getting smaller and smaller, more and more ready to capture even the most inconspicuous, most fleeting constellations in themselves'.⁶ In this prescient declaration, Benjamin identified the potential of new, more agile photographic technology as an apparatus to draw together constellations of meaning. As with an arrangement of stars, the form of this constellation can materialise in a manner that is at the same time objective and subjective to the viewer. In this way, the ability of photography to 'capture constellations' provides an alternative to more systematic means of observing objects and the ways they sit within an environment.

In his *Arcades Project*,⁷ Benjamin further discussed the ways in which constellations might be captured, how objects might be interrogated and what they might convey about the environments in which they exist. Benjamin was intrigued by the role of the ragpicker or 'chiffonier', a Baudelairean persona from nineteenth-century Paris. He reflected on how chiffoniers would carefully sift through the detritus of the street, consider the significance of objects and their various potential uses and values. He noted the exactitude and performative process of the chiffonier and reflected on the calculated and shrewd manner in which they would 'catalogue' their fragments; 'sort things out'; 'make a wise choice'; 'collect'.

There are clear links between the fragmentary constellations created by the chiffoniers and their urban counterparts, the topographic photographers of nineteenth-century Paris.⁸ Much like chiffoniers, the topographic photographers could directly interact with the happenings of the street, decide what to explore, trust their instincts in terms of what fragments to collect and subsequently reflect upon their value and meaning. By acting as chiffoniers in this way, such topographic photographers were able to contemplate how citizens engaged with their environments through subtle observation. These photographic practitioners were engaged in a process of learning about the specificity of urban places through walking, observing, collecting and arranging. It was through these means that they became deft surveyors of the city's subtle characteristics.

When considering the far more empirical processes that we now use to photographically research spaces in cities today, it might be pertinent to question whether something has been lost. Perhaps the constellations provided by these arguably archaic photographic approaches to urban research might still be relevant. The now neglected methods of the chiffonier-photographer of the nineteenth century might therefore provide an auxiliary tool in the process of researching sites in cities that are undergoing renewal, alongside the technological apparatus that is now more commonly used in surveying. If implemented appropriately, the approach could offer ways to gather visual data that is less determinate and commanding, but which is conversely more pliable, speculative and empathetic.

Walking methods

There is a lot of literature and research that has engaged with similar methods for directly interacting with urban areas and collating fragments that help to communicate the specificities of places. Famously, Guy Debord and the Situationist International developed a range of site-based methods of enquiry for critically exploring the urban terrain of Paris on foot.⁹ They proposed that the act of ambling along irregular, serendipitous passages through the city would offer the potential to reconsider the context of a location. The group referred to these exploratory walks as *dérives*. Through the process of *détournement*, meaning 'rerouting' or 'hijacking', the cultural elements within a place could be subverted and re-examined. Such walks, although unplanned, were applied with purpose and were therefore not considered to be random. Their key aim was to create situations that challenged established social norms while provoking citizens to engage more critically with the world around them. Much like Benjamin's concept of the 'now', the *dérive* offered the potential for moments of revolutionary intervention in familiar social spaces and unremarkable moments in time.

Pierce and Lawhon's much-cited walking methodology builds upon these approaches and applies them within a range of contemporary contexts.¹⁰ The approach offers a replicable framework for examining the potentially overlooked, disregarded and commonplace features of an area. The authors therefore consider walking an essential form of knowledge production in urban research, which can present immediate insights into the present-day conditions and circumstances of cities.

The human geographer Tim Edensor also states how the processes of walking and observing can provide researchers with an investigative toolkit.¹¹ He discusses the 'experiential flow' that can be engaged with through walking as an investigative process. He asserts that walking can be used in a manner that allows researchers to see the terrain before them as a series of disconnected and connected moments within the landscape. This involves a physical absorption among the material elements of a place, such as its architecture, alongside a type of 'mental wandering' where memories, associations and ambiguities are each given equal significance within the research process.

Engaging with the Thirdspace

The way that Edensor describes the amalgamation of the mental and physical properties of a landscape being brought forth through the act of walking aligns with Edward Soja's concept of Thirdspace. Soja is critical of a dualistic tendency to consider space and place as either concrete and material or cognitive and perceived. Instead, he proposed that we should view space through a trialectic, incorporating a third spatial environment that combined the two.¹² This Thirdspace can therefore encompass in-between spaces that integrate both the first space of our everyday material surroundings and the second space of our intellectual thought processes. The hybridity of this approach allows us to look at environments in a way where social and cultural elements can come together and intermingle. The concept also seeks to embrace spatial inclusion because it is inherently open to all areas of society.

Architects have subsequently come to explore the ways in which Thirdspaces can exist in public settings. We might think of pedestrianised streets, cafes, parks, transport hubs, libraries and waterfronts as organic Thirdspaces because they offer citizens opportunities for cultural interaction, intellectual engagement and social exchange.¹³ In 2023, the architectural practice Studio Saar constructed a building called Third Space in Udaipur, India, for the non-profit organisation Dharohar. The ambitious project is intended to build upon Soja's theories, offering a malleable environment existing somewhere between spatial notions of school and home. The idea is that the building can provide a welcoming environment for young people to engage in a variety of workshop and learning activities with their community.¹⁴

Projects such as this demonstrate that Thirdspaces are common features in cities, frequently sprouting up naturally, but are often taken for granted and will sometimes need to be actively enhanced or even generated from scratch to better serve a local community. The robust character of such environments is critical to their existence but is challenging to explicate. Thirdspaces are also difficult to document and discuss because their hybrid nature makes them complex environments to evidence and record. However, the versatility of photographic methods of enquiry, undertaken through applied walking practices advocated by theorists such as Edensor, may offer opportunities to engage with such environments on a more subtle level.

The citéographe

Lens-based practitioners of these methods may be thought of as 'citéographers'.¹⁵ This is a neologism that describes a photographer who directly seeks to investigate and collect the characteristics of built places, often through investigative walking. The etymology of the word 'city' can be traced back to the French *cit *, which refers to the collective emotional perspective of urban citizens and their psychological relationship with the built landscape. The *ville*, in contrast, denotes the form and function of the city in a physical sense.¹⁶ We can therefore define the 'citéographer' as a photographer who is specifically engaged with the experiences of people and how they interpret the urban landscape, as well as the interactions that occur between people and built structures. In this way, the 'citéographer' is particularly well suited to engage with the Thirdspaces of cities and their multifarious and intermingled characteristics.

Citéography is thus a broad framework that can include a variety of practices. What links these approaches is that they are undertaken by photographers who engage with place through exploratory means. A key feature of cit ography is that it is also a playful and game-like process, where practitioners may adopt rules, systems and strategies to survey and collect fragments of the urban environment through their own specific mechanisms of assemblage.¹⁷ Cit ographers, like chiffoniers, are engaged with a methodical hunt for slivers of the city's character, rather than an attempt to reproduce a more holistic, objective depiction of its overall image.

For example, the photographer of cities Michael Wolf might be said to have been one such cit ographer owing to the practical, inquisitive strategies that he applied to his practice.¹⁸ A resident of Hong Kong for many years, much of his work explored the ephemera that he would encounter on walks through the Delphic backstreets of Kowloon. By tactically collecting and reflecting upon the significance of everyday material arrangements such as makeshift seats, fallen laundry and discarded mops, he assembled a catalogue that he referred to as a *Back Alley Encyclopaedia*. Figure 1 is an image from this series. In gathering examples of these overlooked details, the photographer elevated their significance and demonstrated their critical role in contributing to the character of these intriguing yet largely ignored urban pathways.

Figure 1. An image from Michael Wolf, *Hong Kong Lost Laundry #9*, from *Hong Kong Lost Laundry* (Buchkunst Berlin, 2019) (Source: photo   Michael Wolf Estate)



Another type of cit ographer, who likewise applied playful methods of photographic collection and observation to their investigations of metropolitan sites was the urbanist Gordon Cullen. The theorist was

interested in the ways in which we travel on foot through spaces in cities and the way these experiences affect our perception of the built landscape as it unfolds before us. He pointed towards specific features that a pedestrian might encounter on a typical walk through a city. Cullen felt that the importance of these encounters should not be understated and that town planners should pay close attention to the ways in which we engage with architectural features in public spaces. The writer spent years accumulating examples of these facets and putting them together into a 'casebook', which eventually contributed to his classic 1961 text *Townscape*.¹⁹

Cullen's and Wolf's playful approaches had clear, game-like structures, protocols and parameters. This means that they can easily be reproduced and adapted for application in a broad range of urban contexts to help people discover encounters and surprises in spaces where things may seem normal, unremarkable and familiar. Implementing playful lens-based research processes of this kind, in sites that are undergoing or anticipating renewal, can help to develop a conversation around the specificities of such locations, where citizens can 'invent – to dream up solutions to problems [they] may not yet even know they had'.²⁰ In this sense, the photographic material produced through citéography is not the end goal but instead the starting point for a broader conversation about the peculiar and idiosyncratic details of places in cities. The aim, therefore, is not a political drive for heritage preservation or even to declare that certain features and characteristics should be protected or shielded from change. Instead, citéography can influence the ways in which policy documents, such as landscape character statements, utilise photographic imagery, particularly photographs that claim to engage with the subject of character. In this way, citéography might be used to offer new, more practicable ways for communities, planners, architects and policymakers to engage in a discourse around urban character, where photographs can be used as commentative illustrations. As such, citéography is a framework for detailing the experiences of people in cities and their relationship with the architectural structures with which they interact.

Impact on policy

Policy changes have been implemented in response to photographic evidence. Specifically, photographs that document people's behaviours, experiences and environmental relationships have established this precedent. For example, Dorothea's Lange's expansive body of documentary photography developed for the US Farm Security Administration (FSA) and Resettlement Administration (RA) were critical in conveying the plight of migrant worker communities displaced by the Great Depression. Images such as the iconic 'Migrant Mother' photo series, first published in the *San Francisco News* in 1936, were instrumental in sharing the narratives of specific people affected by this crisis. By rooting such imagery within the public consciousness, the FSA and RA would be able to raise awareness, secure funding and advocate for social safety nets to protect such communities in the future.²¹

More recently, development companies and local authorities have sought the expertise of established documentary and urban landscape photographers in locations where renewal is due to occur. These processes can help such organisations understand the complex and varied circumstances of their sites, while also demonstrating a sense of awareness to the local community. 'A Peckham Poem' (2019) is a photo essay on the Peckham district of London by the photographer Nick Turpin. The project was commissioned by the development company Bywater Properties ahead of its work in the area. Turpin detailed the rapid changes taking place within Peckham and cast a vivid light on examples of gentrification that had negatively affected local neighbourhoods. The photographer spoke of the way in which the project simultaneously posed questions about the conditions in present-day Peckham and the possible futures that lay ahead for the area.²² Projects of this kind exemplify how reflective documentary photography approaches can inform the way urban areas are developed. These projects show how a thoughtful regeneration process can take place when it is based on a more nuanced understanding of a site's current context.

Citéography in practice

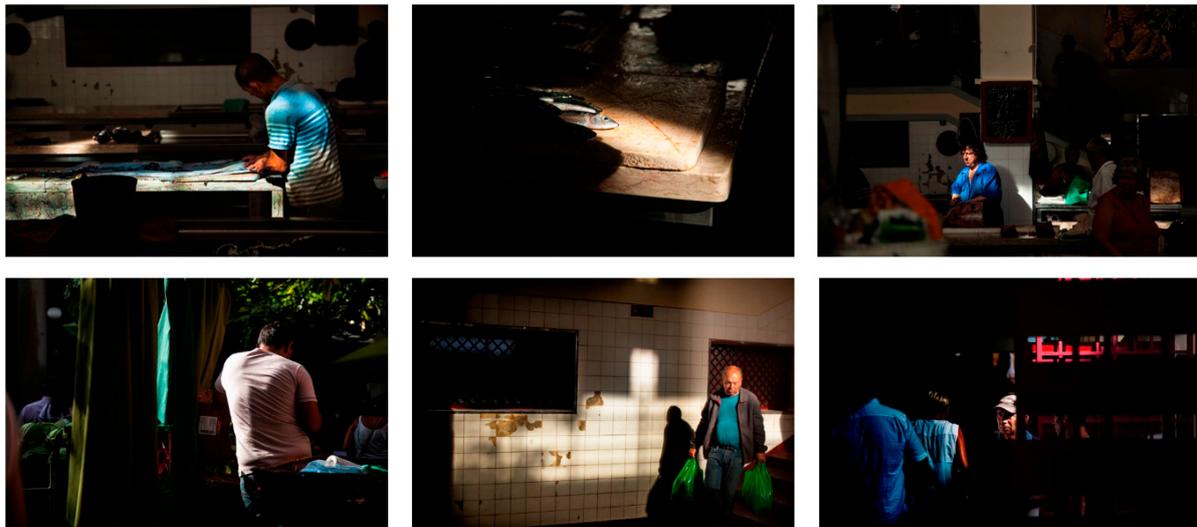
The viability of the citéographer framework was tested between 2019 and 2023, honing in on one particular example of Soja's Thirdspace: the urban market. Three sites in Portugal were selected because they were in the process of rapid redevelopment: Mercado de Arroios in Lisbon, Mercado do Bolhão

in Porto and Mercado dos Lavradores in Funchal. This practice-led research process was informed by Cullen's methodological praxis and was broken down into three specific exercises.²³

First, serial vision walks were conducted at each of the sites. 'Serial vision' was Cullen's method for exploring the ways in which the visual experience of place alters and evolves as the pedestrian walks through it. Cullen demonstrated the process of 'serial vision' with a series of storyboard sketches undertaken on walks through urban areas.²⁴ During these walks he stopped at junctures that punctuated the landscape: where new perspectives opened, where arresting structures caught the eye or where the geometric arrangement of the architecture altered the view. In many ways 'serial vision' engages with the cinematic experience of place, introducing an audience to the geography of a scene and the manner in which characters move through it. The 'serial vision' walks for this project were conducted through following the main passageways through each of the markets and stopping to take photographs at the key visual junctures on these routes, as per Cullen's template.

The second part of the process involved becoming embedded with the markets and searching for visual typologies within the sites through numerous visits. The architectural features or 'visual precedents' that Cullen collated in the *Townscape Casebook* were wide and varying, including tangible, self-explanatory examples of intriguing urban forms and experiences, such as 'texture' and 'lettering'. However, others, such as 'mystery' and 'thereness', were more expressive and ambiguous, requiring a certain level of interpretation from the viewer. Each were described with poetic and somewhat enigmatic captions. During visits to each of the markets, several of Cullen's features were individually sought out, while new examples were also invented. This offered the opportunity to collate typologies such as 'pinpointing' (see Figure 2). Cullen describes this precedent as '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.'²⁵

Figure 2. Examples of 'pinpointing' in Mercado dos Lavradores, Funchal (Source: photo © Dan Brackenbury, 2019–22)



The final part of the research process within each of these markets was to look for a new overarching theme. The visual precedents within the *Townscape Casebook* were divided into three loose sections: 'Place', 'Content' and 'Functional Tradition'. Cullen implored his readers to add to the casebook, rework it and reimagine it in various future contexts, to inform the ways in which urban places were understood, planned and developed. He felt that it was imperative for these conversations to evolve and for them to be based on real-world examples, stating overtly that 'it is this glorious sense of communication that we all need. For God's sake say something!'²⁶. Following this call to action, a new casebook was developed in response to a particular theme discovered within the market sites that made up this case-study. It was through this procedure of enquiry that the markets began to present themselves as a type of stage where routine rituals and performances were carried out daily. The project resulted in a final portfolio of images that detailed these theatrical and performative instances. The body of work was entitled *Mise-en-scène do Mercado*.

The photograph in Figure 3, *Recital*, portrays the work of a fishmonger absorbed in the task of gutting an *espada* (black scabbard fish) on a sunny morning at Mercado dos Lavradores in Funchal. The subject is very much engrossed in their assignment and pays little attention to the movement and bustle happening around him. The man is lit dramatically by a sharp shard of light that enters the market hall through the large first-floor windows and bounces off the marble counters that are wet with seawater. The rationale for capturing this shot was simply because this arrangement of elements combined to produce an arresting scene of drama.

Figure 3. *Recital* (Source: photo © Dan Brackenbury, 2021)



The delicacy of the subject's action, the form of his arm reaching across the length of the fish, the aligned razor-sharp knives, the intricacy of his hand movement and the softness of the reflective light bouncing onto his face coalesce to produce a set-up that evokes a type of performance. There are several such examples of theatricality that appear within this portfolio, and which similarly speak of the relationship between the market vendors, the marketgoers and the architecture. In the case of *Recital* in Figure 3, the performance is reminiscent of someone playing a musical instrument on stage. By collating these examples in this way, we are thus able to discuss why these features are meaningful and what they lend the location(s) themselves. Through such conversations we might note, for example, how this particular space is conducive for watching and contemplating, offering passers-by the opportunity to notice the precision, care and craft of stallholders.

Figure 4 is an image entitled *Sightlines*, which was taken in Mercado Temporário do Bolhão, the provisional underground market that temporarily housed traders from Mercado do Bolhão while the historical neoclassical structure was being redeveloped. For several years, this market was located within the clinical, artificial and cramped confines of a shopping mall basement. The image conveys the compact and restricted nature of this series of converted storerooms, which lacked windows to the outside and were lit only by stark iridescent strip lighting. Despite the industrial nature of the environment, we can see how the trading continued in a manner that expressed the individuality of the vendors, who made the most of their new space and adapted the stark setting to suit the commercial needs of their products as well as the specific personalities of their team. Walking through the labyrinthine corridors of this makeshift market was a strange experience, filled with uninhabited non-spaces and dead ends. Despite this, the market was filled with life and acted as a vibrant short-term home for multigeneration stall owners weathering the storm of renewal. The formal, factory-like layout of the stalls created intriguing perspectives through which to observe the work of the traders, and the interactions taking place between different stall holders. These unusual sightlines also opened up the possibility of unique connections and interactions between passers-by and the vendors themselves.

Figure 4. *Sightlines* (Source: photo © Dan Brackenbury, 2021)



Figure 5 is a photograph entitled *Scope*, which was taken in Mercado de Arroios, a site that was subject to a renewal process in 2017 that repurposed several of its exterior retail units. Today, many of these units are vacant again and renewal is being discussed once more. More recent plans to develop the historic neighbourhood market into a food hall have been ongoing for several years. This photograph was taken with a zoom lens from the inside of the market, peering through an empty shop to the street outside. The various layers of windows within these uninhabited spaces frame a gentleman crossing the road outside. This scene depicts an intriguing interplay between the inside of the market and the exterior world, offering glimpses of the street from within the market itself and vice versa. This heightens a sense of community between the market and the surrounding neighbourhood, and we might suspect that the conditions and contexts of each are therefore deeply entwined.

Figure 5. *Scope* (Source: photo © Dan Brackenbury, 2021)



Concluding remarks

These photographs are useful examples of what citéography can offer as a research method. The scenes are enigmatic snippets of the life and energy of the market on any given workday. There is something typical about these incidents but also something remarkable about them. In this sense, they could be considered critical urban facets that should have their own place within a Cullen-esque casebook. They are also suffused with an atmosphere of doubt because the actions in question may be under threat from the processes of renewal that are affecting these particular markets. For this reason, the photographs have a social currency because they can act as evidence that points towards how human beings instinctively and inherently use these spaces.

Like the examples in Wolf's *Back Alley Encyclopaedia*,²⁷ the images are also phenomenological occurrences in that there is a mundane and everyday quality to the subject matter, but also a sense of noteworthiness.²⁸ The cinematic nature of the images has the effect of drawing attention to each scene and imbuing it with a significance that might not otherwise be present. By seeking out these routine and ordinary features and by reconsidering their importance, we can adopt the persona of a contemporary chiffonier and collate fragments of a location to contribute to an understanding of its meaning. The resulting constellations can subsequently be analysed to ultimately assist in the process of 'charting the structure of the subjective world'.²⁹

Photographs such as these may therefore help us to address experiential and somewhat abstract aspects of site research which are not currently engaged with during processes of renewal and which, as a result, do not appear in documents such as landscape character assessments. Fleeting instances such as *Suspense*, *Aftermath* and *Adagio* in Figures 6–8 exemplify that such things do manifest physically and can be evidenced through photography. Furthermore, scenes such as this can be collated into taxonomies and presented as a body of material. As a public, we are then able to point towards these examples and use them as reference material rather than vaguely discussing them in conjectural ways.

Figure 6. *Aftermath* (Source: photo © Dan Brackenbury, 2022)



Figure 7. *Suspense* (Source: photo © Dan Brackenbury, 2022)



Figure 8. *Adagio* (Source: photo © Dan Brackenbury, 2022)



It is also important to be clear about the limitations of *cit ography*. For example, the practice, as discussed here, is largely a solo process undertaken by a single photographer. Therefore, the material that is produced through these methods will result in a body of work that is restricted to the perspectives of one person. For these reasons, it might be possible to argue that the notion of ‘character’ that emerges

from these photographic enquiries is limited and does not consider the infinite number of ways that people might perceive a place, walk through it and interact with it. A valid criticism of citéography could therefore be that more ambitious and expansive approaches are needed to engage with something as varied and complex as urban character.

However, this approach should not be regarded as the end result in and of itself. The data, imagery and perspectives that develop out of such methods are only a starting point in a wider and more diverse conversation about the underlying specificities of places in cities. These processes are intended to inspire new organic and ever-developing assemblages that might bring the perspectives of urban citizens to light. In this way, the project, and others like it, can allow us to take into account the highly subjective features that embed variety, sensation and spectacle into the metropolitan places that we inhabit, particularly as they evolve.

Notes

- 1 Tudor, 'Approach to landscape character assessment'; Warnock and Griffiths, 'Landscape characterisation'; Fairclough, Sarlöv Herlin and Swanwick, *Routledge Book of Landscape Character Assessment*.
- 2 Dovey, *Becoming Places*; Cresswell, *Place*.
- 3 Salzani, 'City as crime scene'; Krieger, 'Commentary'.
- 4 Benjamin, 'Theses on the philosophy of history'.
- 5 Sahraoui and Sauter, 'Thinking in constellations'.
- 6 Benjamin, 'Short history of photography', 25.
- 7 Benjamin, *Arcades Project*.
- 8 Sontag, 'On photography', 61.
- 9 Debord, *Theory of the Dérive*.
- 10 Pierce and Lawhon, 'Walking as method'.
- 11 Edensor, 'Walking in rhythms'.
- 12 Soja, *Thirdspace*.
- 13 Li and Zhou. 'Dialectics of spatiality', 5.
- 14 Rathore, 'Home, work, and where else?'
- 15 Brackenbury, 'Ragpicker's topology'.
- 16 Sennett, *Building and Dwelling*.
- 17 Alexander, Ishikawa and Silverstein, *Pattern Language*.
- 18 Wolf, *Michael Wolf – Works*.
- 19 Cullen, *Townscape*.
- 20 Brown and Vaughan, *Play*, 200.
- 21 Meister, *Dorothea Lange*.
- 22 Turpin, 'Peckham poem'.
- 23 Brackenbury, 'Mise-en-scène do mercado'.
- 24 Cullen, *Townscape*.
- 25 Cullen, *Townscape*, 37.
- 26 Cullen, *Townscape*, 195.
- 27 Wolf, *Hong Kong Assemblage Deconstructed*.
- 28 Ulrikke Andersen, 'Translation in the architectural phenomenology'; Dreyfus, *Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism*.
- 29 Cullen, *Townscape*, 194.

Declarations and conflict of interests

Research ethics statement

Not applicable to this article.

Consent for publication statement

Not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of interest statement

The author declares no conflicts of interests with this work. All efforts to sufficiently anonymise the author during peer review of this article have been made. The author declares no further conflicts with this article.

References

- Alexander, Christopher, Sara Ishikawa and Murray Silverstein. *A Pattern Language: Towns, buildings, construction*. Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Andersen, Anna Ulrikke. 'Translation in the architectural phenomenology of Christian Norberg-Schulz', *Architectural Research Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (2018): 81–90. [CrossRef]
- Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Benjamin, Walter. 'A short history of photography', *Screen (London)* 13, no. 1 (1972): 5–26. [CrossRef]
- Benjamin, Walter. 'Theses on the philosophy of history'. In *Critical Theory and Society*. Routledge, 1990.
- Brackenbury, Dan. 'Mise-en-scène do mercado', *City* 29 (n.d.): 278–88. [CrossRef]
- Brackenbury, Dan. 'The ragpicker's topology: Towards a photographic practice for surveying urban character'. PhD thesis, Royal College of Art, London, UK, 2023.
- Brown, Stuart, and Christopher Vaughan. *Play: How it shapes the brain, opens the imagination, and invigorates the soul*. Reprint edition. Avery, 2010.
- Cresswell, Tim. *Place: An introduction*, 2nd ed. Wiley-Blackwell, 2014.
- Cullen, Gordon. *Townscape*. Architectural Press, 1961.
- Debord, Guy. *Theory of the Dérive*. Atlantic Books, 1997.
- Dovey, Kim. *Becoming Places: Urbanism/architecture/identity/power*. Routledge, 2009.
- Dreyfus, Hubert L., ed. *A Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- Edensor, Tim. 'Walking in rhythms: Place, regulation, style and the flow of experience', *Visual Studies* 25, no. 1 (2010): 69–79. [CrossRef]
- Fairclough, Graham, Ingrid Sarlöv Herlin and Carys Swanwick, eds. *Routledge Handbook of Landscape Character Assessment: Current approaches to characterisation and assessment*. Routledge, 2018. [CrossRef]
- Krieger, Martin H. 'Commentary: Lessons from Charles Marville—Preserving detail in media documentation of cities, studying that detail in urban research', *Journal of Planning Education and Research (Los Angeles, CA)* 31, no. 2 (2011): 217–19. [CrossRef]
- Li, Xin, and Shangyi Zhou. 'The trialectics of spatiality: The labeling of a historical area in Beijing', *Sustainability* 10, no. 5 (2018): 1542. [CrossRef]
- Meister, Sarah Hermanson. *Dorothea Lange: Migrant mother*. The Museum of Modern Art, 2018.
- Pierce, Joseph, and Mary Lawhon. 'Walking as method: Toward methodological forthrightness and comparability in urban geographical research', *The Professional Geographer* 67, no. 4 (2015): 655–62. [CrossRef]
- Rathore, Rupal. 'Home, work, and where else?' *Disegno Journal* (2023). <https://disegnojournal.com/newsfeed/work-home-and-what-else-studio-saar-third-space>.
- Sahraoui, Nassima, and Caroline Sauter. 'Thinking in constellations. Walter Benjamin in the Humanities'. 2018. https://www.academia.edu/36782348/Thinking_in_Constellations_Walter_Benjamin_in_the_Humanities_ed_Nassima_Sahraoui_and_Caroline_Sauter_Cambridge_2018.
- Salzani, Carlo. 'The city as crime scene: Walter Benjamin and the traces of the detective', *New German Critique* 34, no. 100 (2007): 165–87. [CrossRef]
- Sennett, Richard. *Building and Dwelling: Ethics for the city*. Penguin, 2018.
- Soja, Edward W. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*. Blackwell, 1996.
- Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. Penguin, 1979.
- Tudor, Christine. 'An approach to landscape character assessment'. Natural England. 2014. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/691184/landscape-character-assessment.pdf.

- Turpin, Nick. 'A Peckham poem'. n.d. <https://nickturpin.com/peckham-poem/>.
- Warnock, Steven, and Geoffrey Griffiths. 'Landscape characterisation: The living landscapes approach in the UK'. *Landscape Research* 40, no. 3 (2015): 261–78. [CrossRef]
- Wolf, Michael. *Hong Kong Assemblage Deconstructed*. Peperoni Books, 2015.
- Wolf, Michael. *Hong Kong Lost Laundry*. Buchkunst, 2019.
- Wolf, Michael. *Michael Wolf-Works*. Peperoni Books, 2017.