Usage guidelines

On Photography and Movement: Bodies, Habits and Worlds in Everyday Photographic Practice

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Abstract

This study is an exploration of everyday photographic practice and of the places that photographers visit and inhabit offline and online. It discusses the role of movement, the senses and repetition in taking photographs. Ultimately it is about photographers and their photographic routines and habits.

Since the advent of photography, numerous texts on the subject have typically focused on photographs as objects. This trend has continued into the digital age, with academic writing firmly focusing on image culture rather than considering new issues relating to online practice. Although various technological innovations have given the photographer flexibility as to how and what they do with their images, the contention of this thesis is that analogue routines have been mostly transposed into the digital age. Nevertheless, there remains a lack of empirical enquiry into what photographers actually *do* within online spaces.

This study is one of the first to address this knowledge gap. Taking a unique approach to the study of photography, it draws upon work in various fields, including phenomenology, social anthropology, human geography and sensory ethnography, to produce an innovative conceptual and methodological approach. This approach is applied in the field to gain an in-depth understanding of what 'doing' photography actually entails.

An in-depth analysis of interviews with and observations of North East photographers reveals how they engage with everyday life in a distinctive way. Habitually carrying a camera allows them to notice details that most would ignore. Online and offline movements often become entangled, and when photographers explore *Flickr* there is a clear synergy with the way in which they explore their local city space. This research is a call to others to give serious consideration to online and offline photography practices, and an attempt to stimulate new discussions about what it means to be a photographer in the world.

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List of acronyms/abbreviations

Computing

API – Application Programme Interface

CMC – Computer Mediated Communication

HCI – Human Computer Interaction

IP – Internet Protocol

MUD – Multiple User Domain/Dungeon

OSN – Online Social Network

UI – User Interaction

UX – User Experience

Phenomenology

NRT – Non Representational Theory

Photography

DSLR - Digital Single Lens Reflex

SLR – Single Lens Reflex

UrbEx –Urban Exploration

PP – Post production

LP – Light painting

FR – Flickr River

***Flickr* groups**

NEEPG – North East England Photographers Group

PROT – People's Republic of Teesside

NPW– Newcastle Photo Walk

Declaration of Originality

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Sunderland or any other institution.

Signature   _____

Printed name   _____

Date   _____

Chapter One

Introduction

Prologue - watching someone doing

On the bottom shelf of the mahogany bookcase at my mother's house sit four large photo albums. They are each about 6 inches thick and are bound in burgundy leather. In faded gold letters on the front are my initials and my date of birth. Inside, there are hundreds of photographs of me from my first days in hospital, to my first Christmas three weeks later and then on to my first steps, playing with my toys, on a fairground ride and eating ice-cream in the park. I was captured a lot on camera in the next few years, probably more than most children because my father was (and is) a professional photographer.

When I was growing up photographs were everywhere, on the walls of the house, in frames and in albums. There were hundreds of other images, negatives and pictures in boxes in the garage and under the stairs, older pictures of musicians and actors who I did not recognise that my father took before I was born. Yet more albums came along that were filled with pictures of my sister when she arrived six years later.

Retrospectively looking at all the photographs in these albums now, I realise how long I have spent posing in front of a camera. I remember my dad's instructions to me from a young age, as clear as they are when he still shouts them today: "keep your head still! Look straight at me, down the lens" followed by the reassuring clunk of the shutter release. This experience is not unique of course; parents notoriously want to capture their child's every move but when one is a photographer, there are many more pictures to be taken.

My father always carried a camera and was forever pointing it at things: buildings, shadows, animals, landscapes, my sister and me. All these years I have been watching him, which has given me a different insight into photographers and their practices. I have witnessed them at work: crouching, focusing, tweaking, leaning, looking and gesturing. I have seen at close hand, how they move their body, the shapes that they make and their connection with the everyday world around them. This study is inspired from that perspective and is the culmination of 30 years looking straight down the lens: watching someone doing.

Going *beyond* the image

> Photography would seem is all about looks. But the best photographs are great because of what does not appear – leading our imaginations to recruit us as participants.
>
> (Deifell, 2007:10)

Deifell is a photography teacher and researcher based in a school for blind and visually impaired children in North Carolina. He began a programme of workshops with the teenagers at his school in the early nineties, which was initially about encouraging an engagement with literacy amongst pupils. It soon became a hugely successful way for them to interact with and communicate their emotions about their everyday environments (home, school) to sighted people and the pictures that were produced as an outcome of the classes were both moving and direct in equal measure.

The work of photography by the blind would at first seem a little surprising given that photography is often viewed as an intrinsically visual medium: surely to do it competently you need your eyes. These teenagers however demonstrated that our environmental interactions are not simply anchored in the visual: far from being dormant, the rest of our senses are an essential part of our daily environmental experiences. The photographs taken by Deifell's students highlight that a consequence of visual domination is ignorance to the wider experiences within everyday life, a theme that Radley (2010) also identified in his work with homeless people and hospital patients. The work of Shinkle (2005, 2008) investigates how our bodies respond to environmental stimuli. In describing affect theory and multi-sensory experience in the context of playing video games, she explains that:

> It is a full body, multisensory experience, temporally and corporeally delocalised, incorporating emotions but not reducible to them. Affect is a way of approaching the 'feel' or intensity of a game, and refers to the *unquantifiable* features of gameplay – those phenomenological aspects of interactivity that are difficult to describe or to model theoretically, but which nonetheless make a game come alive.
>
> (Shinkle, 2005:3)

Shinkle's work is of great interest because it aims to move debate and discussion in video game studies on from 'vision, visuality and rational decision-making. In fact, gameplay comprises a much more complex mesh of perceptual activity.'

(Shinkle, 2008:909). Put another way, vision should be thought about in relation to other things and Sobchack adds that 'any act of vision is constantly – and without conscious thought – informed, to varying degrees, by our other senses… but the others don't just turn off when one or two of them are dominant' (2008:125). This study aims to also go beyond the visual and set out similar arguments in relation to photography. This is not to completely discount the visual however as I believe, like Sobchack, that breaking from this permanent revelry in *only* the visual will allow a more thorough examination of the practice of photography, a position encouraged by Pink *et al.* (2010:4):

> Across a variety of disciplines the visual is now being re-situated as an element of the multisensoriality of everyday contexts… this does not render the idea of 'visual studies' irrelevant, yet it does require us to ask both how the way we approach the visual…when we study visual forms and practices we need to account for the other senses and when we study corporeal practices we need to account for how vision and visual forms are inextricable from these experiences.

Deeply entrenched within photography's philosophy is *looking*, from thinking about what we cannot see or what is left out of the frame to the wider significance of surface value. The *punctum*, or lasting power of the still image, has taken precedence.

In academic terms, photography is a strange hybrid discipline that straddles multiple and diverse areas incorporating anthropology, art history, criminology, media studies, medicine, philosophy and sociology. In general, much of the writing about photography is part of a canon of work that can be broadly labelled as *image led*, with the focus on either a reading of the content (the image itself) or on the photographer themselves (but typically only if they are well known). This is similar to the pattern of other media and arts based disciplines (such as painting or film making) where it is the end result rather than the process involved that is deemed more interesting and up to a point, I would not disagree with this position.

There is a great amount of pleasure to be found in looking at images and in the process of doing this research I have discussed, commented on and viewed hundreds of pictures purely for pleasure. However there are even richer experiences to be found beyond simply looking at photographs.

Defining everyday photographic practice

Cartier Bresson famously labelled his style of photography as the 'decisive moment… a creative fraction of a second when you are taking a picture and you must know with intuition when to click the camera… once you miss it, it is gone forever' (Bernstein, 2004). Whilst I am not questioning the quality and legacy of Bresson's work, I would disagree with the popular fallacy that photography is about a singular moment. I believe it is far more complex than one simple click; images are actually produced through a culmination of different experiences, routines, environments and movements, all of which are essential parts of the multiple layers of practice.

The dominance of the decisive moment in photographic literature is partially down to the practitioners themselves. The participants in this research were particularly animated when discussions turned to their own photographs and those uploaded by others on *Flickr*. They were most comfortable when talking about their own images: *who*, *when* and *what*, whereas my interest, *how* and *why*, was met with some bewilderment. *Flickr* partly functions as an extension of this image hagiography too: it is after all a site dedicated to the storing and sharing of photographs.

Similar to other mass media practices such as watching television or listening to the radio, photography has become completely entrenched within everyday life, regarded as nothing special. It can be done by anyone, anywhere and at any time, on digital and film cameras, on mobile phones and tablet computers. This routine status has meant that the more everyday elements of photography have been ignored. Larsen (2008:143) writes that:

> Photographing is absent from most theory and research jumps straight from photography to photographs. They directly go to the representational worlds of photographs and skip over their production, movement and circulation. The diverse hybrid practices and flows of photography are rendered invisible.

This statement by Larsen is hugely significant, not just for identifying the diversity inherent in photographic practices but for also recognising the image and its *movement* in an everyday context. For far too long the academy has comfortably settled within these cosy 'representational worlds' (as proposed by Larsen) as can

be found in numerous textbooks including *Photography: A Critical Introduction* (now in its fourth edition) by Liz Wells (2004) and *Photography: A Cultural History* by Mary Warner Marien (2002), both of which examine the cultural, theoretical and social impacts of photography but ignore the photographer.

Whilst these texts offer a useful and very broad introduction to photography and the various academic, social and cultural perspectives therein, they make no mention of how it is practiced in the context of everyday life. Despite a picture of someone behind a camera on the front cover of Marien's book, photographers are curiously absent in both texts and when they do appear, they are framed in the context of the individual and the images they have produced.

One of the few pieces of recent research surrounding the habits relating to photography comes not from photography studies but sociology. The work of Shove *et al.* (2007) is ground breaking and in pondering 'The Design of Everyday Life', the authors go some way to underline the importance of issues related to social practice and artefacts, 'analysing and understanding the ongoing dynamics of everyday life' (ibid.:11). There are two areas within this work that are of particular interest to this study. Whilst an historical overview of social practice is not possible here, it is important to underline that practice is more than simply 'what people do' (ibid.:13). The authors state that:

> Doings are performances, shaped by and constitutive of complex relations – of materials, knowledges, norms, meanings and so on which comprise the practice-as-entity… practice theory therefore decentres the central objects of dominant social theories – minds, texts, conversations…'simultaneously it shifts bodily movements, things, practical knowledge and routine to the centre of its vocabulary'.
>
> (Reckwitz cited in Shove *et al.*, 2007: 13)

The second area of interest is the section specifically pertaining to photographic practice and how 'the emergent experiences of taking and sharing digital images accumulate and combine in ways that redefine the character of amateur photography' (ibid.:70). Although the ideas here centre on the camera and the *digital* image rather than just the photographers themselves, importantly the piece gives serious consideration to current issues relating to practice. I would be hesitant to bracket digital practices as completely separate to analogue as the authors have a tendency to do here, however the discussions on taking,

organising, sharing and viewing photographs is long overdue and is a welcome change from the typical (more restrictive) discussions relating to content analysis.

Frustratingly there has been limited research on what photographers actually do when they go out with their camera (Radley, 2010) and even less when they venture online. Van House (2011:125) states 'there remains a relative lack of ethnographically informed research on people's actual, daily practices of photography' with Richter and Sadler (2009:177) adding that 'the way that websites [like *Flickr*] fit into other practices of everyday life is under-researched'.

What sets this study apart is that it *is* interested in the various doings of photography. It examines the familiar places that photographers visited online and offline. It looks at their everyday routines with the camera and the habitual movements and positions that they held with their bodies when taking pictures. Importantly it believes that photographing is the combination of tactility and motion and when out with the camera 'you don't see; you *feel* the things' (Kertesz cited in Seamon, 1990:50). The photographers in this research were doing many different things: walking for miles on end, carrying cameras until their shoulders and necks ached, standing in the cold until their fingers grew numb and their legs were stiff, contorting and crouching to achieve alternative vantage points, squinting and stooping, waiting and watching. In the comfort of indoors they were still exploring, only this time it was via the mouse or the touchpad of their computer, looking on *Flickr*, exploring the various images by others, writing comments or making contacts. It is therefore possible for photography to be considered thoroughly corporeal with or without a camera. The broad phrase *everyday photographic practice* has been used within the framework of these different discussions.

This study does include some images; however it does not explicitly offer any particular reading of their content (see plates 1-12). The *everyday* signifies only that the varied practices are done in a routine and habitual way, rather than referring to the subject matter of the images here. I hope that the different places, movements and habits discussed within this research would be familiar to everyone that has at some point picked up a camera.

However this study only offers a small fragment of what is a hugely popular and global media practice and does not claim to apply to everyone who 'does photography': a label that is frustratingly broad.

The argument that anyone who uses a camera is a photographer is a common one and although Badger and Parr (2007:206) declare that 'we are all photographers now' the issue is more complex than this. In a recent interview David Bailey remarked that 'this might sound pretentious – I don't take pictures, I make pictures. You don't just stand there and take a picture: a chimpanzee could do that' (Schofield, 2009). A similar sentiment was expressed frequently by interviewees, qualified with statements that they were doing (or strove to do) something different from others who owned a camera.

In the context of this research, the word *photographer* comes with specific caveats. All of the participants in this research took photography seriously, either as a hobby, were students at college or university or, in some cases, semi-professional. They used many different cameras and were interested in a broad subject matter. Most carried a camera around with them all of the time through habit in case they came across a photo opportunity and this often altered the way in which they moved around the city. They sought out quiet back streets and deviated from the busy paths around the urban locale, noticing details that other pedestrians missed.

Additionally and importantly for this study, nearly all of the participants also used *Flickr* in a habitual way both to upload their own images and to view the images of others**.** They were comfortable with finding their way around its environs, commenting on images and visiting familiar groups. Zylinska (2010:147) asks: 'how do we cope with the excessiveness and madness of the digital, the uber-democratic proliferation of the available equipment and interesting visual imagery?' Indeed, how do we cope? As both consumers of images and as prolific photograph takers, we have become thoroughly embroiled in the digital age. Our desire to take, store, collect, print and circulate photographs continues without end, from our digital cameras, to computers and smartphones out into the world (Wide Web) and beyond.

Sobchack (1995:136) declared early on that:

> It is not an exaggeration to claim that none of us can escape daily encounters – both direct and indirect – with the objective phenomena of photographic, cinematic, televisual and computer technologies and the networks of communication and texts they produce.

Toward the end of the 1980s, some had predicted the demise of photography: the practice was soon to be eclipsed by home computers, video cameras and associated technology. The 1990s was then prematurely hailed as the era of 'post photography' (Mitchell, 1992; Robins, 1995) with critics quick to declare that 'photography met its own death… at the hands of computer imaging' (Mirzoeff cited in Marien, 2002:485).

However taking pictures 'did not die the death of digitisation' (Kember, 2008:175), and instead quick adaption of equipment to meet consumer demands (cheaper cameras, the rise of the microchip, smaller machines) along with the habit and desire to photograph made it even more popular in the 21st Century[1] Although the technology has been transformed, photograph taking has not particularly altered much in its 150 year history. Indeed I am keen to emphasise that 'new digital amateur photographic practices are better understood as emergent in relation to both older photographic media and technologies' (Pink, 2011b:92).

That said the circulation and interaction with digital images via computers and mobile phones has become an important part of everyday practice and 'represents a fundamental shift in photography's ontological orientation' (Palmer, 2010:159).

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[1] Facebook bought the analogue filter app 'Instagram' for $1 Billion dollars in April 2012, which for many signalled their ambition to strengthen the photographic arm of Facebook. Currently it has around 140 billion photographs on the site and counting: 10,000 times more than the Library of Congress. This data was gathered by the company '1000 memories' an app which offers users digital shoeboxes to store their old photographs encouraging members to digitise their film photographs then tag and label them in different folders. [Online] Available at: http://blog.1000memories.com/94-number-of-photos-ever-taken-digital-and-analog-in-shoebox (Accessed 16th April 2012)

Flickr: neither community nor network

It is beyond the scope of this research to do any sort of comparison with other websites that focus particularly on photography (of which there are many). This study is not an appraisal of *Flickr* (see Cox, Clough and Marlow 2008; Van House 2011 for a more detailed discussion), it is about North East *Flickr*ites, who use the site habitually and the role *Flickr* plays in their life and photography routines. I have been a member of *Flickr* since 2006 and know the site well. I am accustomed to its layout, its language and I am comfortable within its environs. This personal experience was partly the reason I decided to further examine the way that online and offline photography routines crossover.

Other internet sites that focus on photography such as SmugMug and Photobucket (as well as, to some extent Facebook) have a different identity and platform that facilitates how photographs are shared amongst their members. Although they all have photographs in common, *Flickr* has an altogether different character. Unlike other sites, it is centred on randomness and it is the 'exploratory search that lies at the heart of *Flickr'* (Miller and Edwards, 2007:9) which makes it unique and of great interest to this research. The site is organised via folksonomy, where members apply their own tags and labels to order their photographs, promoting a form of organised disorder. *Flickr*'s layout has also been designed in such a way to encourage members to explore the site and search out new photographs, just as they would with their camera offline. This greatly appeals to photographers and I believe this is one reason for its popularity. The theme of exploration takes an important role both online and offline throughout this research.

Although there is an emphasis on sharing content, I would hesitate to label *Flickr* either as a social network or community, although it borrows ideas and practices from both. The social network, although now a familiar phrase, is very broad and difficult to define, similarly online community is a testy subject and both terms are loaded with significance and highly debated (Hampton and Wellman, 2003; Nip, 2004).

Lange (2008:362) explains that at their most basic:

> Social network sites are defined as websites that allow participants to construct a public or semi-public profile within the system and that formally articulate their relationship to other users in a way that is visible to anyone who can access their profile.

In its simplest form, community is often discussed in either physical terms (shared location) or social terms (shared values) however it has a far deeper resonance and power. Describing the intricacies of what a community is and is not, can be highly complex and the main issue in recent times has been 'whether online communities qualify as genuine communities… [however] it is more important to recognize the existence of the new forms of human association on the Internet' (Nip, 2004:424). The thousands of different groups on *Flickr* encourage a feeling of 'distant closeness' (Van House, 2007) amongst members who may not have met each other but can connect through a common interest. Herrema (2011:138) rightly places importance on the 'group' facility on *Flickr* that helps 'foster community practices', nonetheless *Flickr* is simply too large to be regarded as one whole community.

Whilst many groups are themed on local subjects or its members live in close geographic proximity to one another, there are plenty of other groups on *Flickr* that have a generalised subject matter, encourage global uploads and have broad themes. The networks of Twitter and Facebook request and display a certain amount of personal information but on *Flickr* you do not even have to put your real name on your profile.

Although *Flickr* offers the possibility of these connections, members can equally choose to wander alone, simply interacting with the photographs rather than the people that took them. This research will demonstrate in later chapters that instead of a community or a network, *Flickr* functions more like a living, breathing city. The idea of *Flickr* as a place is perhaps controversial but throughout this study, I argue the different ways that *Flickr* is more than simply a site that stores photographs.

Some are still sceptical of the legitimacy of the online places. Gieryn (2000:465) writes that 'websites on the internet are not places in the same way that the room, building, campus and city that house and locate a certain server is a place'. Whilst I realise that there are of course obvious *experiential* differences when people physically access a place, there is much potential in widening discussions about online places and how they are experienced and explored by users.

Gieryn's server room is a good example because it is not really a place either. It is most often locked with restricted access, a room with racks and racks of silently purring hardware which is of little interest to anyone bar a few technicians. Yes it is located in a building, but it is off limits to most and cannot easily be found which makes it less of a place and more a storage space. Not all rooms in the University are like this however, and in the same way not all places online are alike. *Flickr* has a strong presence in the lives of the photographers interviewed for this research and judging by the amount of uploads and interaction between members on a handful of groups here, they are not alone. Chapters 4 and 6 will outline both *Flickr's* role in the everyday routine of the photographers and examine in more depth the complexity of movement and interaction on the site.

More generally Pink (2012:148) notes that 'online materials might be understood as co-constituents of place that become interwoven with other online content and with offline worlds.' Indeed whilst the urban is an important part of this research and the city directly inspires photographers, it also informs their *online* browsing patterns and often these experiences became entangled. Sometimes this was in an obvious way (such as *Flickr* group city gatherings) whilst at other times it was more unexpected (such as finding something in my own personal day to day walks that I had seen before on *Flickr*). The concept of place is later interrogated and defined in more detail in Chapter 2 and throughout the thesis.

Movement: in places, bodies and routines

The seam that stitches the main themes together within this work is movement (which is also conceptually linked to place). Whether it was the habitual movement of the body whilst behind the camera when walking around the city, or on *Flickr* when in front of a computer, movement is at the heart of photographic practice.

Taking photographs is a physical business and it requires constant adjustment of the body to get into new positions and postures with the camera. Whilst on the computer, the body is always moving and interacting and 'the image on the computer screen still demands levels of sensory and embodied engagement: the slight flicker of the screen, the tap of the keyboard, the physical movement of operating the mouse' (Edwards, 2009:31).

Later in this thesis, I liken the process of movements between photographer and the camera, to a dance between them and the machine. Steve Paxton[2], a dancer and choreographer describes 'the small dance… [as] the basic sustaining effort that goes on constantly in the body that you don't have to be aware of… it's background movement, static that you blot out with your more *interesting activities* yet it's always there, sustaining you' (my emphasis, Zimmer, 1977:11). In a similar way photographers make small micro adjustments to their posture and footwork when taking a picture without any realisation that they are doing it, as it is their body that knows what it needs to do.

I emphasise *interesting activities* because it is the everyday movements for Paxton that are just as (if not more) riveting as conventional dance movements. In this research, the everyday activity of picture taking and what the body does whilst doing it is described in detail allowing a unique insight into the different (and underappreciated) processes of photographic and place making practices . Other types of movement also seep into different parts of this research. There was the habitual movement of the photographer online, making small repeated movements on the mouse or over the touchpad, perpetually exploring *Flickr*. The photographs themselves also moved around the site, where they were clicked on and linked in to other pages and groups, creating a tapestry of billions of unique paths.

To state that photography and the image is more about movement than stillness sets this research philosophically apart from others in the field of photography studies and takes a leap into a relatively unknown terrain.

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[2] Paxton and Elizabeth Zimmer in the 1970's and early 1980's pioneered the dance style called 'contact improvisation' where the body and its connection to others is enhanced through free form movement, challenging the more rigid structures of Western dance teaching.

Since the invention of photography the practice has been considered in terms of the still, which connects to deep rooted philosophical discussions on photography and its links to reality, power, ideology, truth and ultimately, death (Barthes, 1982; Sontag, 1989; Batchen, 1997; Bate, 2009). The eloquent sociological and philosophical canon of work relating to photography has frequently glossed over discussions relating to the varied movements present in photographic practice and yet again the focus returns squarely back to the content, the *still* image.

It is time that writing was broadened and room made for new ideas on the varied practices involved with modern photography practices (Edwards, 2009) particularly in the era of sophisticated mobile phones with video capabilities. Pink goes some way in beginning this process and in her pioneering article, *Sensory digital photography: rethinking 'moving' and the image*, forges a new perspective on photography writing that: 'images (as produced and consumed) become intertwined with the trajectories of moving perceiving bodies engaged in continuous perception in a specific environment' (2011a:9). Pink's (re)positioning represents an important shift in recognising the supreme importance of approaching photography as a practice rather than a product: a central theme within this research. Indeed 'photographs are not just representations but are also traces of the world that remain within it' (Radley, 2010:276). With these ideas in mind, I will now introduce the structure and conceptual framework used to extend and strengthen these important ideas on practice.

Conceptual framework

So far, I have discussed a desire to seek distance from the previous historical discussions relating to representation and, more generally, image culture. I therefore had to cast a wider net to find alternative perspectives on practice that would be useful as an approach in this study. With previous discussions centred on movement and the body, it is phenomenology, specifically the writing of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, which resonated most deeply with me. His work has since been reappraised by a number of writers (Seamon, 1979; Ihde, 1990; Thrift, 2008; Moores, 2010) working in diverse disciplinary areas including media studies, technology studies, human geography and anthropology.

Merleau-Ponty never wrote about photography in any detail however his work on perception, body and touch are particularly useful when thinking about the photographer's attachment to their camera and the wider consequences of photography as a way of *being-in-the-world*. More specifically, his work on the *Chaism* is employed in relation to the online and offline crossover as *Flickr*ites explore the city, taking his ideas into new and unexplored territory. These ideas will be discussed in more depth in Chapters 2, 4 and 5.

More generally it is the spirit of the phenomenological *attitude* that recurs throughout this research, which Seamon and Sowers (2008:43) describe as a 'step back from any taken-for-granted attitudes and assumptions, whether in the realm of everyday experience or in the realm of conceptual perspectives and explanations.' At the heart of this study was the urge to look closer at practices to reveal not only how everyday photography is performed but its role within the different lifeworlds of the participants. An essential underpinning of phenomenological investigation is the need to reveal the nature of life as it is lived, for 'to truly know himself in phenomenology one must know the world' (Ihde, 2007:37).

I use this quote by Ihde with caution because it highlights the problem that some have with the universalist tendency of phenomenology, particularly with regard to 'the body'. This point concerns this study too as although there are women on *Flickr* and doing photography more generally, they are not represented to the same degree in this study. Of the 21 photographers interviewed, three were female and although women were present in the group meet ups I attended, nearly every time (bar one instance) the majority of photographers there were men. To be clear, it was never my intention to discuss photography in the context of the 'feminist body politic' (ibid.) which is one of the reasons that the title of this research uses the pluralised form *bodies* to indicate that experiences will always be different for everyone (male or female) involved with photography. There can never be only one 'singular, universally shared realm of familiarity or sociability' (ibid.) and when the participants themselves brought up issues surrounding gender and photography, I have included their comments in the context of the wider discussions.

However I concede that when contemplating practices of walking around abandoned parts of the city or night photography, it is clear that the photographer's 'body' is predominantly male. With these issues in mind, the discussions that relate more generally to *the body* refer to the human body rather than a gender specific one. Whilst I acknowledge the different issues present here, there is no room in this research for arguments relating specifically to women doing photography.

The other disciplines and writers that this research draws upon are broadly connected through ideas relating to practice and more generally they all have phenomenological interests. The writing of Nigel Thrift and other writers interested in Non-Representational Theory are included in discussions relating to the city and bodily movement. Tim Ingold's ideas on perception, dwelling and walking practices are used to consider issues relating to exploration and movement both in the city and online. More specifically his concept of a 'meshwork' is used as a starting point when considering *Flickr* as a complex place that holds a collaborative tapestry of movements. Pink's (2009) work on multi-sensual approaches when doing ethnographic research, alongside the role of place (2008a, 2011b) and movement (2011a) in relation to photography are also applied throughout the thesis. Finally this work utilises the early research of human geographer David Seamon (1979), who was one of the first to think more deeply about the issues surrounding everyday life, time-space routines and movement from a phenomenological perspective. The conceptual ideas relating specifically to the body, its habitual movement and in particular noticing will be discussed directly in relation to photographic practice.

Structure of this thesis

This work can be roughly divided into two parts. Chapters 2 and 3 give an historical overview of the literature widely relating to the conceptual themes found within this research, alongside an analysis and framework of the methodological strategy used. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are the findings of the research and are laid out in a particular order broadly representing how photography is practiced.

Chapter 4 examines the many places and worlds that house the various actions and interactions of the photographer. First there are the established city places, which provide a backdrop and inspiration for photographers and their wanderings with the camera. Next is *Flickr*, a newly formed place that combines many different movements and interactions between photographers and their images. Finally the entanglement between these two places is examined in depth, with discussions combining both an exploration and new direction for Merleau-Ponty and Ingold's work. Within these places and worlds, the photographer and the camera can be found. Chapter 5 reconsiders the relationship and movements between photography and the body. Initially it enrols the senses, outlining the different sensory interactions on offer when the photographer is out with the camera. Later the chapter returns to the online world describing the role of the body as participants explore *Flickr*. If Chapter 5 deals with *how* the body moves whilst doing photography, Chapter 6 outlines *why* photographers make these movements detailing their different habits with their camera: watching the world around them, noticing the hidden places and uncovering the secret details in the city. It finally turns to the role of repetition in the lives of photographers by examining the routine places that they visit with their camera and on *Flickr*. There is of course slippage between each part of the research: routines can be affected by the places that photographers visit, and the body can prohibit the exploration of certain areas.

Throughout this work I examine photography from the point of view of the practitioner. When I went out with the photographers I followed them into places that were both familiar and unfamiliar to them, allowing for a particularly personal insight into their everyday practices with the camera. It demonstrated how their familiarity with their locale directly impacted upon the images they took, whilst also shaping their interactions on *Flickr*. Additionally I also considered the role of their bodies in relation to the camera and the impact of their routines with it, where they went and why they went there. By examining the movements that crossed over between online and offline space, it also allowed me to reflect on the participant's relationship with *Flickr* and how they explore these familiar environments. In different ways this study is about exploration of familiar and unexplored territory: what it means to be a photographer within multiple worlds.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction: filling the gaps

Considering discussions in the previous chapter, it has transpired that as a discipline, photography seems caught between 'art history and film theory' (Bate, 2009:6) meaning that issues and discussions associated with practice historically have fallen through the gap. Ingold (2010:15) explains that within the visual studies oeuvre 'vision has nothing to do with eyesight and everything to do with the perusal of images.' Later, he also notes that this can be remedied via alternative ways of approaching the visual, an encouraging current trend within a variety of different disciplines (Pink 2009, 2010, 2011a).

As a consequence of sidestepping more traditional discussions surrounding the image, this review draws upon on a number of other areas not normally associated with media or photography studies. Therefore the scope of this review is very broad and covers a number of different areas; however more traditional themes have not been included here, namely an historical analysis of photography and online networks. The history of photography is an area that is well-trodden by many writers (Marien, 2000; Wells, 2004) so in the context of this research there was no benefit in simply repeating these arguments at length. There will however be an introductory discussion surrounding the concurrent rise of early photography and the city, establishing a link between the two areas that will become thoroughly entwined throughout this study.

The history of online places is comparatively recent respective to photography, however much research and discussion has been generated from debates surrounding the history of the internet (Hampton and Wellman, 2003). Again, there is little to be gained from revisiting the same familiar material, so work related to these general historical issues has not been brought in here. Nevertheless selected research pertinent to this study (Miller and Slater, 2000; Kendall, 2002; Bakardjieva, 2005) has been included in the later part of this review section. To reflect the shift from traditional analysis of images to alternative approaches to the 'visual', this review will instead outline the complex and interconnected histories of photography, philosophy, technology and the urban.

These entangled histories are not particularly tidy, cannot be easily compartmentalised into separated sections and there is frequent crossover between them. It will trace the parallel development of camera and the urban, exploring the rich ideas found in Walter Benjamin's work, relating both to the Flâneur and his sprawling *Arcades* project.

It will then move into the present time via discussions on technology and its relationship with the urbanite and city space, examining the natural partnership of machines in the metropolis. The theme of the urban will continue into the following section, which will review ideas and literature particular to place and space, walking, dwelling and Non-Representational Theory (NRT). The later parts of the review focus on philosophical material pertaining to photography, phenomenology, technology and the body.

By way of an introduction to these different approaches, there will be a brief debunking of the myths surrounding photographic machines (particularly notions of the body *as* machine) and their association to the philosophy of Descartes. The section will then turn to different ideas that link photography practice with phenomenology, focusing particularly on discussions relating to perception and touch. Finally the chapter will concentrate on ideas relating to technology and the body and the different and complex relationships found within these new technologies. Before this however the review will first venture into the past and examine the parallel growth of the city and photography.

The growth of the city, the growth of photography

> Since the inception of the medium, photography has been used to document the urban experience.
>
> (Jacobs, 2006:108)

By the 1880's photography had successfully become integrated into the modern age. The technology was now extremely advanced and exposures that would have taken several minutes 40 years earlier 'were now reduced to 1/5000th of a second' (Marien, 2002:168). In 1888, the first Kodak camera pre-loaded with film was used

by amateurs to take snapshots of daily family life. The spaces of private and public collided as people sent photographic postcards of themselves to one another (similar to the earlier Carte de Visites) summarising the duality of 'isolation and visibility' (Lalvani, 1996:183) ever present in 19th Century society.

Photography was abundant in advertising and newspapers, science and art; it was used to chronicle wars, for anthropological studies to capture native life in the colonies, for family and artistic portraiture as well as keeping a record of common criminals. The developing cities were also documented for photographic record too and 'as major cities grew in size in the second half of the nineteenth century, extensive urban renewal plans were put into effect... photographic surveys were organised to record the architectural heritage doomed for destruction' (Newhall, 1982:103). The Victorian era had witnessed numerous societal changes in Britain but the most rapid of these was the increase in population and powerful call of the city.

The seeds of urban expansion were sown much earlier on, as Britain was still recovering from the impact of the French Wars and the depression that followed. The parliamentary land reforms, coupled with the increasing 'countryside class consciousness' (Bermingham, 1987:88) led to power divisions and increased poverty in the countryside, triggering mass revolts across rural England as late as 1830, which meant many left the countryside to move to the now burgeoning cities. By the middle of the nineteenth century 'the economy and society of Britain became more extensively urbanised than ever before... spatial continuity was powerful' (Morris and Rodger, 1993:1). The increased industrialisation saw millions relocate to cities that soon began to sprawl far beyond their historical boundaries.

At first 'urban pride and identity were celebrated in an increasingly assertive series of public buildings, squares and statues' (ibid., 1993:8) soon however, the cities were becoming vastly overcrowded and were blamed as the cause of moral decay in society. Economist Henry George believed that 'the life of great cities is not the natural life of man and he must under such conditions deteriorate physically, mentally, morally' (cited in Hubbard, 2006:23) and by now 'the anti-urban tradition was well ingrained in the English mind... in the late nineteenth century the city

itself was seen as a consumer of men' (Dyhouse, 1978:81). It is no surprise then that despite this intense building period and the millions now living in urban dwellings, early professional photographers had, for a long time, ignored the cityscape as a viable landscape to photograph. Instead they chose the way of 'Pictorialism and its grander assumptions about making life an art' (Marien, 2002:237). If photographers were to capture views of the metropolis, it was done through vast city panoramas which only served the perceptive needs of the burgeoning bourgeois and was a 'component in the organising of nineteenth century visual order' (Lalvani, 1996:183). Sennett (1994:323) comments that 'the nineteenth century was spoken of as the age of individualism… individual bodies moving through urban space gradually became detached from the space in which they moved and from the people the space contained'. Rising up from this age of individualism however was the *amateur* photographic movement, which during this time began to flourish. The photographic surveys that began in earnest in 1885 documented all areas of everyday life across the country including the destruction and rebuilding of cities:

> The amateur survey movement emerged from the confluence of two major but complex social shifts: first, a response to the sense of the ever accelerating change in the social landscape and the physical environment and the second, the massive expansion of photography as a pastime.
>
> (Edwards, 2012:2)

Professional photographers in the early part of the 20th Century soon developed an interest in the city and those that dwelled in it, particularly the poor that were living in acutely deprived conditions. The movement of social reform photography (like that of photographer Lewis Hine) rebelled in many ways *against* the rampant individualism within the urban setting and instead pushed for reforms by employers and in law, for better working conditions and the abolishment of child labour[1]. These early work and city portraits were later embraced by a further generation of photographers and inspired much of the later documentary movement here and in America where the 'acculturation to the modern metropolis coincided with the young medium of photography' (Ebner, 2008:192).

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[1] Famously Dr Barnardo in the 1870's used photographs of some of the children living in his homes to fundraise for his charity and raise awareness of the poverty of hundreds of children in the East End of London.

By the end of the 19th Century, substantial changes had occurred in technology, society and the new urban development of cities such as Paris and London which 'enabled the movement of large numbers of individuals… nineteenth century urban designers… conceived of the city as arteries and veins of movement through the cities crowds' (Sennett:1994:324). Importantly, the newly designed city forms pushed a politic of urban order and the streets were too wide for the previous revolutionary blockades. Paris 'became a uniquely enticing spectacle, a visual and sensual feast… a unified physical and human space' (Berman cited in Urry, 2002:125) where 'consumption, recreation and pleasure had been mapped into the city' (Pile, 1996:232). Into these new places stepped the Flâneur.

The Flâneur

Before gazing into the world of the Flâneur, there must be an explanation of why he is included in this review at all. A primary area of interest for this study is how photographers come to know and visualise the city before them. Although the Flâneur never used a camera he does represent a way of knowing the city through a conflicting duality of vision. At first there is a full engagement with his space that he intimately knows, through walking around it. However there is also a detachment, an insecurity that sees him never interacting with the people inside the city.

These different forms and levels of interaction with the urban are of great interest to this study and there are some parallels with the photographers involved with and creating their own visual places, and the singular figure of the Flâneur engaging in his physical urban world.

Sontag links Flâneurism and photography stating that 'the photographer is an armed version of the solitary walker reconnoitring, stalking, cruising the urban inferno' (cited in Urry, 2002:127). However outside of photography, elements of Flâneurism have also been used within a new media/cyber culture context, where web users have been likened to the Flâneur surfing 'in a style of distracted attention' (Cullenberg cited in Lindgren, 2007). Lindgren goes onto state that a new interpretation of the Flâneur is necessary to contextualise it for the Web 2.0

era and its users. He believes that the Flâneur is a far more active figure rather than simply a passive onlooker and when walking in the city he 'not only feeds on sensory data taking shape before his eyes… it is something experienced and lived through' (Benjamin cited in ibid.). This interpretation of Flâneurism is also aligned with the belief of this study, where photographers are active and engaged in the city around which they walk. The Flâneur endures as a lasting metaphor for urban engagement and has a continued impact into modern writing about the visualisation and knowing of the modern city (De Certeau, 1984; Buck-Morss, 1991; Tester, 1994). Perhaps he is popular because 'perception of the new qualities of the modern city had been associated, from the beginning, with a man walking, as if alone, in its streets' (Williams cited in Solnit, 2001:183). Before the concept of the Flâneur was the writing of De Quincey and Blake, who wrote about their habitual roaming of the city (ibid.).

Hubbard understands that the Flâneur 'is both a real figure who inhabited the modern city and as a metaphor for a particular mode of visual apprehension' (2006:102) and he remains 'the cities chronicler' (Ebner, 2008:188). He would 'turn the street into a living room and commits an act of transgression which reverses an established distinction between public and private spaces' (Burgin, 1996:145) as well as becoming 'emblematic of the transformation in the perception of modern subjectivity' (Lalvani, 1996:193).

At the turn of the 20th Century, the figure of the Flâneur loiters in the shadows in most of the writing about the transformation of the city. The Flâneur knew the city by walking around it and inhabiting the bustling streets and arcades of Paris. He was alert to change and more than a 'passive or detached observer' (Reed, 2008:401). He frequently gazed upon the life and movement in the metropolis as if there was 'a kind of frenzied romantic love with the spectacle of the public' (Tester, 1994:10). The Flâneur is open 'to 'objective chance', a category of contingent happenings, and to the measurement of the external environment's impact upon the wanderer's state of mind… to become an instrument of the metropolis' (Sheringham, 1996:86-105). However he was also 'an ambivalent figure… terrified of being swallowed up by the masses… he is in the streets but not of the streets' (Pile, 1996:230).

The Flâneur was not a part of the masses: he was an aloof, privileged gentleman who did not work and mostly spent his days promenading before 'representing the sights and sounds of [the city] in poetry, art or writing' (Hubbard, 2006:102). It is important to highlight here the notion (and difficulty) of gender in relation to the Flâneur too, as he had no female equivalent. Women during this time were confined to specific spaces of the city, such as the arcade shopping centres and department stores whilst the female prostitutes that did wander the streets, were there to be objectified or consumed. Solnit (2001:176) states that 'a man of the streets is only a populist, but a woman of the streets, is like a street walker, a seller of her sexuality'.

There has been much direct criticism of the romanticism surrounding these characters, leading to the calls that the Flâneur is out of touch with modern understanding and consumption of city space (ibid.). However as Lindgren (2007) discussed earlier, there are some useful parallels to tease out regarding interaction and navigation in both the online and offline environments. There is no denying that there is a reflective nature to the modern writing about the Flâneur that is 'harking back to nostalgia for a slower, more definite world' (Tester, 1994:15). For the moment nostalgia will be set aside and the Flâneur is offered as one interpretation of interacting with the landscape of urban space. Interlinked with these ideas and of interest to this study is the writing of Walter Benjamin. His reimagining of the metropolis through his *Arcades* project is where this review will turn to next.

Benjamin's urban dream

Benjamin's *Arcades* project is sprawling and complex, similar to the cities he was attempting to describe. The brave translators of the newest edition of Benjamin's text describe it as 'not a conceptual analysis but something like a dream interpretation… [the project] is a blueprint for the unimaginably massive and labyrinth architecture… in effect a dream city' (Eiland and McLaughlin, 1999:ix–xi). *Arcades* is a substantial text and the newest edition runs to over 1000 pages of notes as well as prose, quotes and ideas pertaining to the culture and design of the Parisian Arcades which Benjamin saw as 'the most important architectural

form of the nineteenth century' (ibid.:ix). The work was never published by Benjamin and was thought to have been completely destroyed when he fled occupied France. The manuscript was later rediscovered but in a highly fragmented and confused state which is perhaps why the emphasis has been put on to the 'dream like' style of writing.

For Caygill (1998:119), Benjamin's writing 'exemplifies his speculative method… the city can only become an object of knowledge indirectly, obliquely reflected through the experience of other cities'. This does, however, leave his writing open to criticism and Buck-Morss (cited in Gilloch, 1996:101) states that 'any argument based [on Benjamin's work] is necessarily tentative due to its extremely ambiguous status as a text'. The style of Benjamin's presentation is fitting to the world he was examining. On walking around the city he notes that 'for two hours, I walked the streets in solitude. Never again have I seen them so. From every gate a flame darted; each cornerstone sprayed sparks and every tram came toward me like a fire engine' (cited in Caygill, 1998:118).

Stewart describes Benjamin's undertaking as 'a nomadic tracing of dream worlds still resonant in material things' (Stewart, 2007:6) whilst Thrift (2004:41) states that 'the cultural construction of the 'dream' spaces of the nineteenth century: the department stores, the hotels, the theatres... such spaces rapidly become *the* urban experience.' The arcades themselves are singled out by Benjamin as the 'urban capillaries' (Sennett, 1994:332) and represent the 'hall of mirrors' (ibid.) that Paris was said to have become, subsumed by a commodity culture only interested in surfaces and reflections. Howes (2005:286) notes that 'the primary mode of consumer culture was that of the visual display' and the era was awash with the 'spectacle of mass production and hyper-visibility, a culture manifested by a vast array of productions' (Edwards, 2012:4).

When the Flâneur preened and paraded through Paris, he was both rejecting and consuming urban life. He had a desire to 'turn the boulevard into an interior… the street becomes a dwelling for the Flâneur; he is as much at home among the facades of houses as the citizen is in his four walls' (Benjamin cited in Serlin, 2009:200). Natural and artificial light flooded into the 'glass roofed arcades…

pulsing life concentrated in small, covered passages with their special shops… and surging clots of people' (ibid.) who were all keen to put themselves on display.

Walter Benjamin was at heart an urbanite, and the city was a source 'vital to his literary production' (Gilloch, 1996:2). Along with Paris, Benjamin wrote about Moscow, Berlin and Naples and 'the modern city… its inhabitants and daily routines are a recurring set of themes in Benjamin's oeuvre' (ibid.). For Benjamin though, city spaces represented the complex, fragmented emptiness of the modern experience in relation to the 'economic production and the cultural sphere' (ibid.:134) which was typified by Baudelaire's earlier creation.Benjamin believed that Baudelaire was an important figure who 'gave voice to the shock and intoxication of modernity; he is the lyric poet of the metropolis' (ibid.).

The creation of the Flâneur and his gaze was in response to the fact that 'no one felt less at home in Paris than Baudelaire' (ibid., 138) so the Flâneur represents the duality of Baudelaire's (and Benjamin's) relationship with the city believing that 'within the banality and ugliness, poetry may be found' (Jacobs, 2006:109). The Flâneur was a consumer but was also consumed: although at first attracted to the city and the crowds, he would eventually be subsumed by the metropolis and the masses that inhabited it.

The photograph was also very much a part of this new order and 'the mass production of images complemented the mass production of styled goods or imitations' (Howes, 2005:285) prevalent in the new consumer epoch accompanied by the 'progressive privatisation of sensation' (ibid.:287). However the photograph also made the private *more* visible and 'the age of photography corresponds precisely to the explosion of the private into the public' (Barthes, 1982:98). This slippage between the public and the private meant that the city itself began to have a dual existence for day and night. Thanks to the new urban design of London, 'the street was made into a means of escape from the urban centre' (Sennett, 1994:332) rather than a place to linger, and the newly designed underground transport system would see that people 'worked, shopped then left for home' (ibid.). Later on Jacobs (2006:117) describes how this legacy lingers on into the end of the 20th Century and the 'post-urban where the city centres have...

evolved into mono-functional zones of office districts, gentrified residential neighbourhoods and historical and cultural enclaves'.

At this point many professional photographers decided to turn their eye away from the city, preferring the comfort of the studio. One photographer that did chronicle the crumbling architecture and empty streets was Eugene Atget, who would later inspire the Surrealist movement as well as the documentary photographer, Walker Evans. 'Atget was a photographer that roamed Paris and its environs… he resisted the fashionable Pictorial photographic style and compiled clear, objective images which he called 'documents'' (Marien, 2002:292). For Benjamin, Atget's photographs acted as a 'further expression of modern alienation' (Jacobs, 2006:111) the emptiness of the city representing how disconnected urbanites had become with their space and each other at the turn of the century. The later American documentary movement would chronicle this problem in rural as well as urban areas on a much larger and bleaker scale.

Benjamin believed that through a reflexive mode, the experience of the city 'was not only geographical but temporal' (Caygill, 1998:119) and the Arcades project was really an effort to know the city and its labyrinths better, to understand its workings from the inside whilst gazing out. Later 'Benjamin describes how through historical changes in modes of perception, definitions of reality can change too... he explains how photography changes the way people see' (Light, 1999:123). Benjamin viewed the city 'not with a disembodied eye, but with an active, tactile and optical perception' (Shaw, 2008:18). This is important because Pink (2008a:180) believes that 'there is in fact a case for re-thinking both *Flânerie* and urban ethnography as a multi-sensorial form of engagement, rather than simply in terms of vision'. Reed also cites Benjamin's work as important within the context of urban theory:

> Benjamin asserted that the fleeting and fragmentary nature of [the city] personality might still be captured through what he called *Denkbilder* or 'thought-images', snapshot reflections of urban life (Gilloch 1996: 38). Using this method, he put forward preliminary characteristics for those places he visited… rather than attaining distance in the hope of providing a scientific description of the city, Benjamin argued that the sketch writer must seek proximity, show attentiveness to those things that might enable enlargement and illumination.

> (Reed, 2008:404)

The important part of Benjamin's process was the layering of urban knowledge. Navigating around the city and showing attention to its many different parts enabled Benjamin to develop a way of knowing or further enhancing knowledge. For some, the city may have its own distinctive personality however as a landscape it is also created by those that dwell inside it, Ingold (2000:198) stating that 'thanks to their solidity, features of the landscape remain available for inspection long after the movement that gave rise to them has ceased'.

Photography additionally allows us to follow the traces of the city's historical landscape as captured by those who were there. The 'camera's eye enables us to observe the Victorian city from almost its earliest years and to catch all its nuances in its prime' (Martin and Frances, 1973:241). There was certainly plenty to gaze upon as the shifting landscape of the city had been completely transformed in the Victorian era, from its inhabitants and its inner workings, as well as the architecture.

Alongside these changes was a technological and visual revolution, which flanked the scientific interest in the physiology of the ocular, leading to the boom of the photographic industry that is still with us. However the gradual impact of industry, mechanisation, standardisation and its 'auguring with the dominion of the masses' (Marien, 1997:169) created some disdain amongst artists and practitioners. At the end of the Victorian era the practice of photography was revealed to have a deeply paradoxical core:

> The idea of photography became saturated with early modernism's melancholy and disillusionment with the course of science. Concurrently, photography embraced the concepts of manageable social progress and the viability of human innovation. At the century's end, photography was both elegiac and progressive – a Janus figure, gazing forward and backward.
>
> (ibid.:168)

Photographers today are still looking forward and back, exploring the Victorian city that still remains relatively intact whilst connecting with different online spaces where these cities are newly recreated, built out of the images they capture.

An interesting idea is presented by Light, who explains that 'in some schools of thought an architecturally correct copy of an ancient architectural feature was considered to be as good as, or even better then, the real thing' (Chitty cited in Light, 1999:117). By the end of the era, Victorians had fully embraced the idea of copies and reproduction. Arcade windows were crammed with mass produced goods for thousands of discerning consumers. The new architecture around the British cities of London, Newcastle and Liverpool copied heavily from a diverse range of eras.

The rich inhabitants of these cities were indeed walking around in versions of architectural dream worlds as the old styles were grafted onto new buildings, which represented the industrialism, imperialism and power of the new Victorian era. This review will now move to explore the city in more depth, looking at its inhabitants and their interactions within the metropolis.

Machines in the metropolis

At the end of the Victorian era, both consumers and Flâneurs paraded around various 'temporal labyrinths' (Caygill, 1998:119) where 'technology subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training' (Benjamin cited in Shinkle, 2008:907). Architecturally, the Victorian legacy still strongly remains in the cities of Sunderland and Newcastle however the nature of their habitation and design has changed considerably over the past 150 years. Whilst this study will not provide an extensive historical review relating to these changes, it would nonetheless be useful to highlight some developments in the technology of modern life and its impact upon the city dwellers experiences. For a deeper philosophical underpinning regarding the city, the review will later turn to the work of Nigel Thrift and Tim Ingold, discussing in more depth NRT in the context of dwelling in the city.

From the early 'street' ethnographies of the Chicago School to Soja's (2000) 'thirdspace', the simulations of Baudrillard's Los Angeles and Oldenburg's (1999) various 'great good places' urban space and its wider meanings, character and impact have been closely analysed across disciplines. Yet whilst the spaces themselves are frequently interpreted and analysed, the different ways people

inhabit and use urban space has often been absent. Narratives focus instead on 'the decline of cities and tell of a decline of reality and of its replacement by simulations... linked to commentaries on the rise of virtual spaces' (Light, 1999:120). Reed (2008:396) concurs stating that 'many contemporary urban theorists… argue that cities are becoming harder to locate, rapidly losing their materiality in the collapse of the distinction between urban and rural and the introduction of transnational flows and networks'.

Light later goes on to argue that there has been an overstated nostalgia by academics about the city (an accusation also made against De Certeau) and identifies the role of technology and particularly the internet, in 'strengthening spatial ties' (Light, 1999:128) rather than eroding them. Reed (2008:396) remarks upon how the city impacts upon on internet usage, concluding that 'often bloggers are surprised by the force and distinction with which urban setting or environment asserts itself'. Technology and the city dweller have long been intertwined and at the beginning of the 20th Century Simmel stated that:

> The emergence of public transportation in the nineteenth century (buses, rail coaches and trams) led to a new way of gazing at the fellow urbanite. Thus, before the entry of these mobility technologies, the urban dweller was not able to or 'forced' to look at her or his fellow consociate for minutes (even hours) without speaking and communicating.
>
> (Simmel,1908 [1998] cited in Jensen, 2006:150)

Later still, Bull (2000) explored this argument in more depth, detailing how iPod users utilize their own personal technology in various tactical urban avoidance strategies. One of the most transformative forms of technology though (in terms of urban dwelling) in modern times, has been the motor car:

> Contemporary global cities and cities in general remain primarily rooted in and defined by automobility as much as by newer technologies. Thus, to understand the ways in which social life might be reconfigured by new technologies of information and communication will require that social analysts take seriously their relation to the car.
>
> (Urry, 2000:737).

Sheller later translates these concerns into thinking about our emotional connection with driving in general and urges us to explore in a deeper way our attachments within society to the automobile and 'following Nigel Thrift we could

conceive of 'non-cognitive thought as a set of embodied dispositions ('instincts' if you like) which have been biologically wired in or culturally sedimented'' (2004:225). Thrift expands on De Certeau's writing on pedestrian navigation in the city, with an interesting discussion on driving; an area he believes is neglected by De Certeau. Urry (2000) also remarks upon the lack of research on the car within the urban environment.

Thrift utilises driving studies by Katz to underline the 'embodied practices of driving and passengering' (2008:77) and writes that driving is becoming 'more closely wrapped up in the body via software and ergonomics... the car becomes a world in itself' (ibid.:85). There are many parallels to be found in the descriptions of the car and the camera. When automobility is described as 'a complex amalgam of interlocking machines, social practices and ways of dwelling' (Sheller and Urry, 2000:739) photographic practices could also be described in a similar way. Thrift (2008:80) asserts that 'practices of driving and passengering are both profoundly embodied and sensuous experiences' which also links to discussions regarding the camera and the body.

Urry (2007:38) also states that in fact 'the driver's body is disciplined to the machine with eyes, ears, hands and feet all trained to respond instantaneously and consistently'. In a similar manner, when they are out with their camera, photographers are using all parts of their body, reacting to their senses and their everyday environment. Taking a wider perspective, this study believes that 'emotional cultures are deeply intertwined with material cultures and technologies' (Sheller, 2004:230) and that photographers are just as emotionally connected to their camera, as the driver is to the car. Cars and our driving habits have been criticised by many urban theorists and human geographers (Urry, 2000, 2007). Adams (2005:102-106) particularly cites the prolific automobile culture as the main reason for the civic divides within the American city:

> Various forums of public discussion and dialogue in cities of the past, as flawed as they were, are increasingly being replaced by a kind of urban-scale aquarium in which vehicular cyborgs swim about... [they] roll about the urban landscape...a handful of pedestrians scurry in the gutters.

.

Whilst the pleasure of car driving may be derived by disconnecting from the outside environment, the opposite can be said for photographers within the same space as carrying a camera actively encourages a direct engagement with the city. Historically, there has always been a mechanical and technological presence within the urban space. City dwellers past and present have become accustomed to technology from the early introduction of electricity and the car, to iPods and the internet, satnavs and hand held GPS devices. Inhabitants of the city interact with these technologies as part of numerous orientation strategies, Willem (2007) noting that 'utterly complex systems can be integrated in our lives and they can be experienced as uncomplicated ingredients of everyday life.' More recently this has extended into the virtual city space, Adams poetically describing that:

> The process of growing up human now involves in most cases a restless crisscrossing of the border between physical space and virtual space. Identity is pieced together from experiences in both worlds, and, as when children carry mud and leaves into the house on the soles of their shoes, then return to the yard with toys in their hands, this boundary crossing is also *boundary blurring.*
>
> (emphasis in original, 2005:17)

As city dwellers become more accustomed to technology within their everyday lives, the representation of the city and its boundaries have slipped with ease into the virtual realm, perhaps because 'the general concepts of path, edge, district, node and landmark that people have long used to structure understanding of the physical landscape can be applied in virtual spaces' (ibid.). This review will now turn to discuss place, straddling both online and offline realms, to offer a brief outline of its uses and meaning in this study.

The meaning of place: a brief expedition

> The Mississippi Delta was shining
> Like a National guitar
> I am following the river
> Down the highway
> Through the cradle of the civil war
> I'm going to Graceland
> Graceland
> In Memphis Tennessee
> I'm going to Graceland
>
> (Paul Simon, *Graceland*)

In Paul Simon's song a musician and his son make a pilgrimage to Graceland, the preserved home of Elvis Presley. Simon considers Graceland a spiritual place that is imbued not only with the spirit of Presley, but also a place that strongly embodies the Southern state of mind, its history, its music and even landscape. In this short verse he cleverly ties together everything identifiable about the American Deep South as a place: the snaking Mississippi cutting through the many historical sites of war and poverty that eventually leads to the music and the riches of Presley. Simon likens his trip to a holy journey and there are numerous other examples of places (not only in a religious context) being more than simply bricks and mortar: they have a meaning and a significance which is deeply embedded in our everyday life.

Places do not have to be buildings though, the verse here describes the car, the delta and the city as different locations as well. Solnit also highlights an alternative perspective on place when describing an ancient Californian tribe. The Wintu people did not describe themselves and their bodies in terms of left and right instead:

> They use the cardinal directions [east, west]…the self only exists in reference to the rest of the world, no you without mountains, without sun, without sky…in Wintu it's the world that is stable, yourself that is contingent, that nothing is apart from its surroundings.
>
> (Solnit, 2006:17)

In these two examples, where people and places have become inseparable, it is clear that people both shape and are shaped by the places they visit and inhabit. The need to make and *be* in places is also a vital part of human nature. Places are personal, created and brought to life through routines and the people that live, dwell and visit them. Certainly if 'location is Cartesian; it is that which computed. Place is what is experienced, it is a living thing.' (Churchill, 2010:66). Places are complex, unique, ubiquitous and vital to our everyday life so much so that 'an individual is not distinct from his place; he is that place' (Marcel cited in Relph, 1976:43). Relph is perhaps a problematic example in this instance however, as he later argues in the same text that in modern life we are 'placeless' thanks mainly to 'mass communication' technology, a position to which this study is naturally opposed (for further discussion see Moores, 2012).

The idea that our understanding of place is negatively impacted upon by technology was later taken up by other media theorists, Meyrowitz (1985) and then Scannell (1996), the latter instead arguing for a doubling of place rather than its erosion by mass media. Place is undoubtedly a highly contested and problematic concept (Cresswell, 2004), often loaded with meaning and significance and used in a multitude of ways. This review does not intend to repeat the long debates relating to place (Gieryn, 2000; Gunn, 2001; Urry, 2004b; Hubbard, 2005) and its various historical definitions and uses. However it is important to note that most examples of place are primarily defined as *physical* location. A wider definition is then required as discussions turn to the online realm and the routines that lie within.

The early work of Tuan (1977) makes some inroads to this end and he broadly notes that 'when space feels thoroughly familiar to us, it has become place' (1977:73). This wider definition is connected to Tuan's later work (2004) on his abstract ideas relating to where places can be situated. For him they can be found anywhere from an armchair, to a photograph and a film (in his own example, *Gone with the Wind*). For Tuan, temporality also extends *into* the image, where 'photographs promote our sensitivity to place – our sense of place… they are also surrogate places in that we can visit and revisit them' (2004:50).

Whilst the notion of surrogate places is controversial from a phenomenological perspective, what can be appreciated is Tuan's view that photographs can function in an alternative way to a simple object. His work points to a new direction, that places can be more than just a location. Massey (2005) views place as a 'constellation of processes… unbounded and constituted through movement' (Pink, 2011b:93). The work of Ingold (2000, 2007, 2008, 2011) is also of importance and worth mentioning here precisely because his approach to place is so distinctive. Ingold (2008:1808) believes that places are brought to life through practice and movement: we are wayfarers not navigators as we move through the world:

> The body, I contend, is not confined or bounded but rather extends as it grows along multiple paths of its entanglement in the textured world. Thus to be, I would say is not to be in place but to be along paths.

If places are 'never finished but always the result of processes and practices' (Cresswell, 2004:37) of the people that inhabit them, then *Flickr* can be conceived of as a place. It is visited in a regular, habitual way by users who intimately know their way around its environs. Indeed 'virtual spaces, created with concerns about the physical environment, are not dissociated from place. Nor are they cyberspaces of retreat... online relationships can be strong and may continue offline' (Light, 1999:127). In the context of this study, the routine way that participants interact with and find their way around *Flickr* confirms the idea that 'particular media environments have become meaningful places' (Moores and Metykova, 2010:185) in their own right. Pink (2011b:101) takes this idea further, stating the potential for photography practice to become actively 'engaged in ecologies of place' a discussion to which this work will later return.

Miller and Slater (2000) sought to rethink notions of online and offline place within their ethnographic study of internet use in Trinidad where they 'questioned the assumptions of the virtual and the everyday or material as distinct realms' (Lister *et al.*, 2003:221). Later still, studies of online interactions highlighted the social ties and behaviour that binds online and offline places (Kendall, 1999, 2002). The caveat here is that online and offline places are experienced in different ways by users but I am not saying that exploring around the city on foot is similar to accessing the same place on *Flickr.* There are, however, points where the online and offline intersect and crossover in terms of use and movement. This review will now move back into the urban place and the entwining that takes place there between 'humans, technologies, cultures and natures' (Thrift cited in Larsen, 2008:145) and examine in more detail non-representational theory (NRT).

The city and NRT

> We must synthesise past and present experiences of our spatial environment with beliefs and expectations about places as yet unvisited and or never to be visited. We must accommodate our worlds of fantasy and imagination.
>
> (Downs and Stea, 1977:4)

Ingold (2000:60) insists that 'environments are constituted in life, not just in thought, and it is only because we live in an environment that we can think at all'. In this study, thinking differently about their everyday environment comes naturally to photographers and interlaces completely with the philosophy of NRT, where the notion of exploring the imaginative in the everyday is of great interest to Nigel Thrift, NRT's main exponent. 'Much of what actually characterises everyday life – the creative moments arising out of artful improvisation on the spur of the moment – will still continue to opaque to systematic surveillance: there will still be strangeness in the commonplace' (Thrift, 2008:87). NRT developed as an alternative approach to understanding how places are interacted with, by those who inhabit them and it 'boosts the content of bare life, making it more responsive, more inventive and more open to ethical interventions' (ibid.:22).

Before an exploration of NRT and connecting philosophies can begin, a short explanation is required into how it can be applied to this study in a meaningful way. NRT relates more generally to 'a social ontology of practice that is an account of social life maintaining that human lives hang together through a mesh of interlocked practices' (Simonsen, 2010:222). NRT has been utilised to understand movement and everyday life in a diverse section of activities from dance, to film studies and driving. As an approach it was developed to counter the focus on 'symbolic representation' (Thrift, 1996:6) within cultural geography. For Thrift 'it is about putting the processes into social life in a real way… taking the static out of culture' (Thrift, 2010:185) and NRT is also interested in exploring the imaginative and unexpected in everyday life.

One key element of photographic practice is finding the unexpected within the familiar, noticing the unnoticed and bringing it to the attention of others. This also extends to the online environment, bringing these unexpected moments and encounters to the surface for others to view. Thrift (2003:100) believes that images themselves are 'a key element of space' and should be seen as tools as part of the everyday 'practice of seeing' (ibid.:102). This highlights another useful strand of NRT, its focus on '*practices… through the establishment of corporeal routines and specialized devices*' (Thrift, 1996:8). Interestingly Schwartz and Ryan (2003:18) extend this argument to photographs, explaining that 'to explore

photography and the geographical imagination is to understand how photographs were and continue to be, part of the practices and processes by which people come to know the world and situate themselves in space and time'.

In many disciplines, the main focus has been on the visual or explicitly on photographers as image makers. Thrift (2010:186) challenges this position saying that 'of course visual is important but it is only one of the registers through which people sense things and in some cases it clearly is not the most important'. Lorimer (2005:84) eloquently expresses that 'with NRT the focus falls on how life takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements… unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions'. Studying practices online and offline within the framework of NRT offers a richer understanding of how 'representations are apprehended as performative in themselves; as doings' (Dewsbury *et al.*, cited in Wylie, 2007:164).

The notion of everyday worlds crossing over and interacting is of great interest to this study, where 'new thinking about place and space involves trying to understand the gaps in the rhythms of everyday life through which new performances are able to pass' (Thrift, 2003:1). *Flickr* is a world that is continually shifting and being rebuilt through new images, groups and interactions between members. The worlds of online and offline are not sealed off from one another but are 'always moving and changing and mutating and communicating' (Thrift, 2010:187). It is this recognition of movement and the lived-in element that makes the NRT approach appealing, particularly when linked to later phenomenological discussions.

Thrift (1996:7) states that 'non-representational modes valorise all of the senses, not just the visual, and their procedures are not modelled solely on the act of looking'. NRT does not reject the visual outright but instead understands there are other ways of knowing the world. Within the discipline of media and photography studies, the main focus of various academic authors has mostly been on photographers as image makers (Marien, 2002; Wells, 2004).

Using the example of Polaroid photography, Buse (2010:203) writes that:

> The '[Photographic materialists] do not take account of equally 'material' photographic practices where the photo object itself may not be what is most important ...as in the case of the *process* of Polaroid image-making, which is a sort of photography of 'attractions.'

He goes onto argue that it was the active participation in the instantaneous moment that made the Polaroid popular, rather than the often low quality image that resulted from it[2]. Following on from this idea Larsen (2008:143) importantly concludes that:

> Photograph*ing* is absent from most theory and research that jumps straight from photography to photographs. They directly go to the representational worlds of photographs and skip over their production, movement and circulation. The diverse hybrid practices and flows of photography are rendered invisible.

Larsen goes on to eloquently highlight the limited way in which photography is often discussed in his area of tourism studies, which is seen by Urry as 'crucial in the development of tourism' (2002:130). Indeed there is an 'ultimate inseparability from tourism's general culture and economy' (Osborne cited in Urry, 2002:130) and photography. Larsen goes on to conclude that 'to study how digital photography is performed in practice we can learn from non-representational geography' (Larsen, 2008:146). This study considers photographic practice in a similar way to Larsen, to understand more fully the meanings and actions of photographers within the everyday urban world. Thrift (2008:25) states explicitly: 'I believe that history is one long stumble into the unknown, and it cannot be tied down and ordered in the way most social theorists imply with their too neat theories'.

Instead of overtly theorizing, NRT openly engages with a more phenomenological approach and believes 'it is [the] multifarious, open encounters in the realm of practice that matter the most' (Lorimer, 2005:84). A fundamental part of this research is to focus on the *doings* of the photographer rather than their final (photographic) representations for example, the photographer using and 'thinking with the entire body' (Thrift, 1996:7).

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[2] There is still a market for Polaroid photography in the digital age and some companies have started to produce the polaroid film thanks to internet campaigns see: http://www.the-impossible-project.com/ (Accessed 14th October, 2010)

MacDougall (2006:2-3) states that:

> There is always tension between these two ways of seeing, between our consciousness of meaning and of being...there is an interdependency between perception and meaning...meaning is produced by our whole bodies, and any images that we make carry the imprint of our bodies.

These ideas also link to earlier discussions on place and *Flickr*, as Wylie (my emphasis, 2007:164) goes on to say that:

> The act of representing… is understood [by NRT] to be *in* and *of* the world of embodied practice and performance, rather than taking place outside of that world… or to put this another way, the world is understood to be *continually in the making.*

Urban entanglements

NRT is particularly interested in everyday urban life where 'cities can be seen as rolling maelstroms of affect' (Thrift, 2008:171). There is an on-going fascination with the metropolis, the urbanites that dwell inside and the paths and rhythms that they both create and follow. Merleau-Ponty (cited in Frers and Meier, 2007:2) states that 'encountering an urban place, one feels the materiality and atmosphere with all the senses and potentials of one's own body, with one's corporeality'. Adams (2005:105) explains that cities are mapped by boundaries and exist as places where:

> Edges are fundamental elements of people's mental image of the cities in which they live along with landmarks, nodes, paths, and districts. Some edges lie like across urban space like a great rift between parts of the city, others act as a 'uniting seam' [that bring] parts of the city together.

For Amin and Thrift (2002:157), the city offers 'unexpected interactions, so continuously in movement, that all kinds of small and large spatialities continue to provide resources for political invention as they generate new improvisations and force new forms of ingenuity.' Their later discussions on the city focusses on how 'we negotiate the city through used tracks and construct imaginaries around them' (ibid.) echoing Ingold's paths and 'tangled lifelines' (2008:1803) that can be found within the urban environment. Indeed, movement and tactics within the city it is a common theme throughout the writing by NRT theorists and many others (De Certeau, 1984; Bull, 2004; Hubbard, 2006).

Pink (2008:179) states that 'Ingold's focus on pathways is particularly relevant for understanding the urban tour, since it permits an analysis of how the making of routes is implicated in the making of place'. Ingold's work has echoes of the pioneering work by Lynch (1960) who described the importance of paths to city dwelling, stating that 'paths are the channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally, or potentially moves… people observe the city while moving through it, and along these paths the other environmental elements [edges, districts and nodes] are arranged and related' (1960:47).

Lynch's early discussions about possible new approaches within urban and human geography, as well as other linked disciplines such as cartography and geovisualisation led to a greater interest in cognitive mapping which 'refers to a process of doing: it is an activity that we engage in rather than an object that we have. It is the way in which we get to grips with and comprehend the world around us' (Downs and Stea, 1977:6). Today associated discussions on wayfinding strategies 'relate to the process of forming a mental picture of one's surroundings based on sensation and memory' (Gibson, 2009:14) and continue to highlight the importance of environmental experience.

What must be noted here however is the complete rejection of the mental mapping model by Ingold and other anthropologists who believe that wayfinding in 'its day-to-day form is based on habit and familiarity linked to activities and perceptions' (Istomin and Dwyer, 2009:30). More generally, wayfinding has become an important research area within the disciplines of architecture and graphic design, where the everyday life, function and experiential quality of buildings and objects are taken into account. The limitations of this study mean discussions into wayfinding cannot be expanded[3]. Earlier discussions on Benjamin highlighted his interest in the 'tracing of [urban] nomadic dream worlds' (Stewart, 2007:6) and knowing the city through the footsteps of the Flâneur.

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[3] There is potential here for expansion by media studies and collaboration with urban geography and cartography, where way finding and the role of media in everyday navigation strategies could be combined.

De Certeau (cited in Thrift, 2008:76) notes that:

> Practitioners employ spaces that are not self-aware; their knowledge of them is blind as that of one body for another, beloved, body. The paths that interconnect in this network, strange poems of which each body is an element down by and among many others, elude being read.

De Certeau's work on habitation within the city and everyday tactics of those who live there indicates that 'other kinds of spatial knowings are possible' (Thrift, 2008:77) and that it is through 'kinesthetic investments (such as walking, bicycling, riding a train or being in a car) [which] orient us toward the material affordances of the world around us in particular ways… [T]hese orientations generate emotional geographies' (Sheller, 2004:228). In particular, walking has stimulated the imaginations of writers, poets and philosophers and 'a century of peripatic walking literature romanticised the walker as one who thinks and perceives differently, positioning himself or herself outside the flow of history' (Adams, 2005:111).

Perhaps this is because walking 'is not simply something we do to get from one place to another, but it is itself a form of engagement integral to our perception of an environment' (Pink *et al.*, 2010:3), an 'activity that creates space to both imagine and experience, at the same time' (Vaughan, 2009:317). Walking is also of interest here due to its association with place making alongside the phenomenological emphasis of the 'engagement of the body and the mind with the world, of knowing the world through the body and the body through the world' (Solnit cited in Vaughan, 2009:316).

It is particularly Ingold's ideas surrounding 'dwelling' which become a useful way to approach how people are entwined within their everyday environments: 'at its most intense, the boundaries between person and place, or between the self and the landscape, dissolve altogether' (Ingold, 2000:56). Bendiner-Viani (2005:469) cites Saegert's interpretation of dwelling as 'an active making of a place for ourselves in time and space... the most intimate of relationships with the environment'. Here different *experiences* count towards 'the rich, intimate ongoing togetherness of beings and things which make up landscapes and places, and which bind together nature and culture over time' (Cloke and Jones cited in Wylie, 2007:157). The city surrounds the photographer and so the natural response is to 'picture it' as a way

of negotiating a place of their own within the crowded city. A key aspect of dwelling for Ingold is that 'through living in it, landscape becomes a part of us, just as we are a part of it' (ibid.:161).

Adams (2005:98) discusses the repetitive feeling of dwelling in the city where 'you step out your door and take a walk... the scene is rather monotonous: house, house, house, street... house, house, house, house'. The findings of this research suggest that the experience of living in the urban place is often repetitive – intimacy perhaps placating modern anxieties when living so close to other individuals. In these instances the '[images] provide techniques for thinking through the 'rhythms of urban life' (Latham and McCormack, 2009:256) and by taking a picture, the photographer becomes an inherent part of their urban surroundings. Their 'photographs intrude on, and become part of, everyday perception' (Wright, 1992:28), a private and public interaction that fuses both history and future together, indeed 'it is through being inhabited... that the world becomes a meaningful environment' (Ingold cited in Wylie, 2007: 157).

Pink (2009:77) discusses Ingold and Lee's work in relation to walking, stating that 'walking as place-making brings to the fore the idea that places are made through people's embodied and multisensorial participation in their environments'. In earlier work, Ingold (2000:57) also emphasised that:

> It is not because of his occupancy of a built environment that the urban dweller feels at home on the streets; it is because they are the streets of his neighbourhood along which he is accustomed to walk or drive in his everyday life, presenting to him familiar faces, sights and sounds.

This quote is of particular interest to this study, which is attentive to people dwelling in two worlds, offline and online. If the comfort of familiarity is bred from habit and not *physical* occupancy of the space, NRT can also be useful when continuing into the virtual world of *Flickr.* The images taken by *Flickr*ites of the city's many faces are actual sites in themselves. The images on *Flickr* become small fragments; stories plucked out by the surrounding cityscape can be read by others which build a sensual, pictorial montage of the metropolis and its landscape, secrets and character.

In viewing the variety of photographs online, researchers can 'develop techniques for thinking through the multi-sensory nature of experiences of urban aesthetics' (Latham and McCormack, 2009:256). It is clear that phenomenology can bring about alternative perspectives to our knowledge of, and relation to, everyday experience. Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009:76) conclude that:

> Phenomenology is critical of modern natural science for having distanced itself – it is claimed – too far from its basis in everyday life, in this way creating an abstract world of its own, without having sufficiently analysed the foundations of ordinary human experience upon which it rests.

This review will now briefly examine the historical context of this distance and turn to the early philosophy of Descartes.

Of body, mind and machine - The camera and Cartesian philosophy

> All the management of our lives depends on the senses and since that of sight is the most comprehensive and the noblest of these, there is no doubt that inventions which serve to augment its power are among the most useful that there can be.
>
> (Descartes cited in Jay, 1993: 21)

> We can better reject the age old assumptions that put... the world and the body in the seer as in a box.
>
> (Merleau-Ponty cited in Hass, 2008:12)

The limits of this review mean that only a short discussion on select elements of Descartes' work can take place, however Cartesian philosophy is a necessary and important *segue* to contextualise earlier discussions about photography and the camera, as well as introduce some of the debates within phenomenology presented in the next part of the review.

The work of Descartes has been extensively written about, debated and criticised by a variety of different writers (Jay, 1993; Carman, 2008) and there is little to gain from repeating all their interpretations and arguments here. Wylie (2007:146) summarises that Descartes believed that 'even when our senses are deceiving us, we are still *thinking*... crucially Descartes' philosophical language and method clearly identifies vision with this cogito, and thereby cements deep associations

between seeing and thinking, and visual perception and certainty.' Carman (2008:15) adds that:

> To think or dream is to think or dream *about* something... that experience is *of* or *about* something - managed to fall through the cracks of traditional philosophical wisdom, thanks in part to the dualism and representationalism of early modern thinkers like Descartes and Locke... ideas or representations were conceived as inner mental tokens.

Descartes and his followers believed that perception 'is built up out of discrete sensations causally activated from 'outside... an internal mental representation' (Hass, 2008:22). Whilst the theories and rationale of Descartes and his supporters still endure after 400 years, much has since been written on the inadequacies and limitations, none more so than by Merleau-Ponty who 'argues that a synergistic or interactionist account of perception is a far more promising paradigm than the age-old scheme of 'representation'... it leaves behind the conceptual and linguistic vestiges of Descartes' dualistic metaphysics' (ibid.:36). Stoller (1997:91) explains that 'it has long been a curious habit in the academy to divide the world into buyers and sellers. This absolutist tendency has created all sorts of cross-cutting distinctions that reinforce the illusion of a classically ordered universe'.

Hass (2008:22) maintains that the issue of separation in the physical sciences, philosophy and psychology stems from the influence of Descartes, summarising that:

> [Descartes] ontological dualism literally cuts one's mind off from the world of things and flesh. It severs mind from body, me from you. One has no direct experience of one's body, or other people, or nature: all one ever has are intellectual judgements that are more or less clear and distinct.

Instead 'Merleau-Ponty's conception of flesh represents an effort to elucidate the manner in which perception erupts from the originary and differentiating encroachment of body and world' (Barry, 1991:392). Merleau-Ponty viewed the body as integral to perception and it is 'my point of view on the world' (cited in Carman, 2008:81), whereas Descartes viewed the body as a 'mechanistic object' (Hass, 2008:79). The consequence of this, as Stoller (1997:82) explains, is the 'sanitization of the consumer image, bodies are depersonalized; they are among any number of realist objects, all devoid of odour, distinction and pain. This

conceit… is central to the on-going disembodied approaches to the human sciences'. One of the initial difficulties of approaching photography practice from a phenomenological perspective was to also overcome the familiar (and overused) metaphor of the 'camera eye'

:

> The camera-eye analogy was established in a central role, explaining and shaping theories, both in psychology and the philosophy of perception. For Descartes it was particularly significant to his philosophy. In terms of dualism, the body/soul dichotomy was followed by the body/consciousness dichotomy. This in turn has implied the separation of eye and mind – consequently identifying the eye, as an organ of perception, with the camera.

(Wright, 1992:20)

Carman (2008:20) explains that 'contrary to the sadly prevailing metaphor, our sense organs are not cameras, and recording devices and our minds are not calculators'. The idea of the camera possessing human qualities can be found in early writing about photography where 'the sun is a draughtsman who depicts landscapes, human types, monuments; the daguerreotype opens its brass lidded eye of glass, and a view, a ruin, a group of people, is captured in an instant' (Gautier cited in Schwartz and Ryan, 2003:2). The writing and discussions on photography frequently slip into romantic anthropomorphism, where the camera machine takes on the characteristics of its user. Collier (1987:4) later notes that 'the camera is an automotive tool, but one that is highly sensitive to the attitudes of its operator' and that 'the camera is an instrumental extension of our senses… an image with a memory' (ibid.:2-3). Thompson (2003:59) suggests too that 'with repeated practice… machine aided operations takes on the character of the operator'.

Why the camera is viewed as more sensitive (than a pen, for example) is down to a variety of historical and mechanical reasons. Maybe it is because there is a need to take 'bodies imaginatively into animate and inanimate objects' (Adams, 2005:114). The camera does appear to mimic human ocular mechanics: the light bouncing off an internal prism-like retina, the aperture of the lens contracts and detracts like the iris, the shutter 'blinks' open and closed.

These seeming similarities however are selective and flawed:

> As our vision is not formed in a rectangular boundary... our vision is only sharp at its 'centre'... the photograph shows objects in sharp focus in and across every plane, from nearest to farthest... we do not, because we cannot - see things in this way.
>
> (Snyder cited in Jay, 1993:131)

More than just optics 'the essence of the image is to be altogether outside, without intimacy' (Blanchot cited in Barthes, 1984:106) and by association, the camera is also viewed as a device that creates distance between the photographer and subject. The camera acts, in the world of 'Cartesian perspectivalism' (Jay, 1993:113), as a detached observer, separating body and vision, just as it is supposed to temporarily sever the object from time itself. Although this view of photography has long been dominant, 'so long as we continue to understand, discuss and model the body as a machine – as an inanimate object constructed of independent systems – we will never understand its life' (Hass, 2008:75). If we therefore view photography as a practice that encourages distance, then the understanding of our interactions and routines with the camera will be overlooked. Lister (2004:314-315) explains:

> The traditional hand-me-down, Cartesian framework for thinking about how we observe the external world is deemed to have become hopelessly inadequate... the question no longer seems to be 'can an observer see clearly from their position? But whether we, as observers, have any fixed or secure position from which to see anything that is material and stable.

Merleau-Ponty calls for a departure from Descartes' view on perception, instead viewing our interaction with the world as a 'synergy...the results of this working together of body, things, others and the world is an interactional field that emerges at the nexus of its participants and which we call experience' (Hass, 2008:36).

A physical example of this can be found in the work by Shinkle who discusses the interactions between the body and video games, stating that gamers experience a kind of 'temporal gap' where the 'body responds to its environment before the conscious mind does' (Shinkle, 2005:4). In later work, Shinkle (2008:911) utilises the concept of proprioception and emotion believing that 'both conscious and unconscious mechanisms support the human organism's embodied interaction with the environment'.

In the context of photography, Wright (1992:27) proposes 'a theory of 'natural correspondences between the photograph and the perceived environment which operates in conjunction with pictorial conventions'. This study wishes to move away from these outdated Cartesian metaphors which view photography as an exclusively 'visual' way of experiencing the world. To find an alternative view, this research will now turn to phenomenological philosophy in more depth.

'Not in Velvet and Flowers alone' – experiencing photography, doing Phenomenology

> [A photograph] is a merger of what's inside your head and what's outside your eyes, and finding a way of synthesising that experience.
>
> (Meyerowitz, 1990:17)

> We cannot imagine how a *mind* could paint. It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings. To understand these transubstantiations we must go back to the working, actual body – not the body as a chunk of space or a bundle of functions but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement.
>
> (Merleau-Ponty cited in Baldwin, 2004:294)

At first glance, Meyerowitz's account of taking photographs is in direct contrast to by Merleau-Ponty's quote below it. It seems that the photographer is advocating the notion of 'inner' and 'outer' worlds that combine when taking a picture, something that phenomenological philosophy (and this study) would take issue with. However, what Meyerowitz is also expressing here is that photograph taking is about knowledge through *experience*: both philosopher and photographer recognising how important this is in relation to the body, vision, and how we perceive the world around us. Merleau-Ponty (ibid.) elaborates that:

> I only have to see something to know how to reach it and deal with it, even if I do not know how this happens in the nervous machine. My mobile body makes a difference in the visible world, being a part of it; that is why I can steer it through the visible.

Earlier discussions highlight the fact that photography is often viewed in purely visual and mechanical terms: photographers are no more than a bundle of rods, retinas and cones, detached from their subject matter and the wider world that surrounds them.

The photographs of Meyerowitz propose an alternative to this view and offer a variety of experiences. His method and attitude towards taking photographs are steeped in emotional connections through his body to the environment that surrounds him. Like many professional photographers, Meyerowitz has a large portfolio of work encompassing studies of people, beaches, public parks and baseball grounds, more recently documenting Ground Zero. His photographs have an interesting paradoxical quality to them, often mixing grandeur and the mundane, sereneness with movement, and uncovering beauty in unexpected (often urban) places.

As documented by Barthes in *Camera Lucida* and by others (Sontag, 1989; Kuhn, 2002) photographs can unexpectedly trigger emotion in the viewer and for a variety of different reasons. However the practice of photography is also a multi-sensual pursuit that involves the body at all times, whether one is taking the picture, posing in front of the camera, carrying equipment, shouting directions to subjects or simply moving around with the camera in an unfamiliar space. Photography is also tactile and there are many other physical elements that add to the overall experience of taking photographs so 'we learn, Merleau-Ponty argues, not by thinking about things but by doing them' (Crossley, 2001:128). This is supported by Meyerowitz (1990:20) who specifically highlights the importance of sensation and touch to his work:

> I was the kind of kid who stroked and loved everything… it's as if there is an *anima* in still things and their liveliness and energy stroke me. And I stroke back… I am holding it in some way, and in that holding response is the caress, that sensuality. You're surprised by the *nature* of sensuality. You never know where you're going to find it. It isn't in velvet and flowers alone.

It is an interesting idea that Meyerowitz explores here, the notion of photography as a way of *holding*. Coincidently this also leaks into the language of photography (*taking* a picture, *holding* a pose) as well as in the viewing and clasping of the final paper copies. Whether consciously or subconsciously, when a photographer captures velvet, flowers or piece of litter on the ground, they are extending their touch and experience of that object through the camera in order to hold it (in all meanings of the word) for others to view later.

The tactile elements found within the practice and experience of photography make them a natural fit within the philosophy and methods of phenomenology. Kozel (2007:xvi) introduces phenomenology (echoing Meyerowitz's earlier sentiments on his work) 'as a return to lived experience, a listening to the senses and insights that arrive obliquely, unbidden… in the midst of life'. Shaw (2008:56) states that an alternative framework for approaching film can be developed from 'Merleau-Ponty's work on body as a foundation for experience.' Importantly the history of phenomenology is deeply entangled with the visual and 'photography has prompted a good deal of phenomenological description' (Sobchack, 1995:141; see also Bate, 2009). In the beginning of *Camera Lucida*, Barthes asks 'what does my body know of photography?' (1984:9). Despite the phenomenological character of this question, it is 'driven by a subjective answer to feel... and it leads him away from photography and to the photograph' (Kember, 2008:185). Seamon (1990) has also tentatively and briefly approached this notion as well, applying the phenomenological philosophy of Heidegger to the images of Andre Kertész.

Although Merleau-Ponty discusses the art of Cezanne at length in his writing on perception, camerawork has been ignored by phenomenology and those behind the camera have remained relatively elusive. This final section of the review has two general aims. The first of which is to understand the many ways that the philosophy and attitude of phenomenology relates to the practice of photography. To begin with there will be a journey into the links between phenomenology (particularly that of Merleau-Ponty) and photography, discussing how his ideas on perception, embodiment and touch directly relate to the taking and viewing of pictures. The second aim of this section is to cast the phenomenological net wider to also include other discussions that directly relate to the other interests of the study including the body and technology, the city, habit and movement, all of which can be associated with wider ideas pertaining to phenomenological thought.

Naturally these debates find their way into wider academic disciplines outside philosophy, notably cultural geography, mobilities and urban studies, sociology, and media studies areas which are included throughout the following sections.

Perception, embodiment, touch

Merleau-Ponty states that 'if habit is neither a form of knowledge nor an involuntary action then what is it? It is knowledge in the hands' (cited in Crossley, 2006:127) and ideas surrounding touch are a common discussion point with phenomenological philosophy. Paterson (2007:2) introduces touch as 'a world of movement and exploration… a carnal world with the pleasure of feeling and being felt… a profound world of philosophical verification… of the co-implication of body, flesh and world'. In a more allegorical sense, Hansen (2006) asks the reader to look *through* the hand when discussing the role of virtual bodies. The practice of photography is dependent on the coordination of hand and eye, working together to successfully produce an image. Before digital technology changed (in part) user interaction with the camera, even the most basic disposable cameras required the photographer to see through a viewfinder or, in better cameras, through the lens directly, physically holding the camera to the eye in order to frame the subject.

The photographer knows the camera through touch, instinctively understanding how to move around it, but also *sees through* the technology in order to capture the image. Hansen later goes onto explain that 'although Merleau-Ponty first understood touch and vision as separate entities that worked in parallel, he later conceived that they instead draw upon one another' (ibid.:76). Both phenomenology and photography are both bound up within complex relationships of vision and seeing, body and mind. In philosophy, the visual sense was privileged mainly due to Descartes who believed that 'sight is the noblest and most comprehensive of the senses' (cited in Ingold, 2000:254).

Whilst the Cartesian approach promotes the 'disembodied gaze' (Wylie, 2007:149) above all else, 'trusting rationality over sensory experience' (Paterson, 2007:24), phenomenology 'takes our sensory presentations to consciousness seriously' (ibid.:21) and challenges the notion of a *visual* disconnection from the world. Wylie (2007:149) states that 'our vision in no way emerges from a detached view point. When we look, what is occurring is an enlacing together of body and world'. For example, the act of *noticing* that occurs when photographers enter and interact with their everyday space means that the photography facilitates a way of being and seeing *within* the world.

Earlier comments made by Meyerowitz suggest that instead of distance, photographers engage with the world in a more heightened way, and that sensation and the senses play an important role in the process of taking a photograph. This is supported by the findings of this research, as discussed in the later chapters.

Although photography at times must privilege vision thanks to its mechanics, photographers utilise all their senses when taking pictures. The urge to capture a landscape, urban vista or portrait reveals a deeper desire to connect with the surrounding space, understand it more thoroughly and to display it so others can come to *know* it too. The camera simultaneously facilitates the photographers' distance and closeness. They are shielded from the gaze of others when behind the camera, yet it is through the camera that their vision is sharper, so they actually see *more*. Through the concept of reversibility we can begin to explore how the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty connects with photography:

> Reversibility...refers to the fact that the body is always *both* subject and object... we can always as subjects perceive parts of our bodies as objects... this is evident as much in the visual as in the tactile... for I both see and am seen... the self is not simply 'in' the world – it is *of* it.
>
> (emphasis in original, Wylie, 2007:151)

Thus photographers enter into their own world, be it casually or with determination, when they pick up a camera. Their connection and understanding of the world is through their camera, yet that does not mean that their vision is detached: instead when looking through the camera, vision and body entwine together. Thompson (2003:14) views camerawork being as exactly that, *work*, writing that 'the practice of photography is repetitive and athletic, enlisting eyes, fingers and other body parts in regular, routine exercise'. Photographers remain grounded *in the world* as their bodies connect with it in order to discover the images they eventually capture by walking through the city: looking, interacting and then capturing their familiar landscape. Merleau-Ponty's work on perception is also relevant when discussing photography. Carman (2008:132) emphasises that 'perception is not a mental but a bodily phenomenon' and Ihde (1990:40) adds that 'perception may be materially extended through the 'body' of an artifact.

Perceptual extension is not limited by the outline of my body or the surface of my skin'. Ihde cites here the (often repeated) example of Merleau-Ponty's blind man's stick that 'has ceased to be an object for him and no longer perceived for itself; its point has become an area of sensitivity extending the scope and radius of touch and providing a parallel to sight' (ibid.). In summary, vision should not be separated from the body, and instead should be 'intertwined within an unfolding differentiation' (Wylie, 2007:152). In the context of this study, it is through the camera that photographers connect with their world, whilst it also becomes an extension of their body. Working the camera is akin to 'working a lasso, like playing a musical instrument, is pure movement or flow… it involves an embodied skill, acquired through much practice… the agent's attention is fully absorbed in the action' (Ingold, 2000: 414).

In terms of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, the practice of photography switches from 'a way of seeing to a specific mode of *being* (a seeing-with)' (my emphasis, ibid.) which develops a different kind 'of sensory engagement with the environment' (ibid.:262). Between the camera and body there comes a new 'coordination of perception and action' (ibid.:353) that 'have overlapping sinews in common' (Carman, 2008:79). The camera may indicate a mode of spectatorship, however photographers are 'firmly participants in the world' (Jackson cited in Wylie, 2007:149) as they seek out the unseen within their everyday environment.

The concept of 'sensing and being sensed' (Carman cited in Paterson, 2007:31) is another key aspect of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological reflection. Massumi (2002:97-98) explains that 'sensation is an extremity of perception. Sensation is a state in which action; perception and thought are so intensely, performatively mixed that their mixing falls out of itself. Sensation is fallout from perception'. Merleau-Ponty (cited in Paterson, 2007:31) emphasises the duality of sensation where:

> The two hands are never touched and touching at the same time with respect to each other. When I press my two hands together, it is not a matter of two sensations felt together as one perceives two objects placed side by side, but of an ambiguous arrangement in which the two hands can alternate in the role of 'touching' and 'touched'.

Merleau-Ponty's discussions on the paintings of Cezanne are helpful here as he maintains that 'the painter's vision is not a view upon the *outside*, a merely physical-optical relation with the world. The world no longer stands before him through representation' (cited in Baldwin, 2004:312). In the same way, photography interconnects vision and touch so these senses cannot be separated. Photographers are simultaneously hiding behind and seeing through the machine and the reversal process completes the sensual circle.

Sobchack (1994:138) continues this idea, stating that 'technologies extend not only our senses but also our capacity to see and make sense of ourselves'. Hansen (2006:80) takes this process further still: 'the human is split between the tactile and the visual... embodied *and* technical; the proto- origin of tactility and vision is the *ecart*, the hinge or gap in which embodiment is conjoined with technicity, interiority with exteriorization' (emphasis in original). This also describes the photographers' progress through life, laying bare their visions for the rest of the world to view. Despite these inherent connections there is also a paradox within the phenomenological approach to sensation. Carman (2008:188) highlights this by making the distinction between how artists view the world, compared to everyone else:

> We do not typically see the way painters see: ordinarily we see *things*, whereas painters see and make visible the visibility of things. Seeing the visibility of the visible requires stepping back from our ordinary naive immersion in things, just as, conversely, seeing things in the ordinary way requires not doing so.

This example could also be applied to the photographer who enters into an altered immersion behind the camera to make the ordinary, everyday landscape more visible for all of us 'thinking magically as if objects literally pass into him' (ibid.:187). However the photographer must also step back in order to see objects differently and there is still some essential element of distance needed when taking a photograph. Not only distance from the action in order to capture it but the need for perspective, to decide what will go into the frame. Personal immersion in the world is temporarily put to the side to make it visible for others.

Ideas around sensation, embodiment and touch can also be applied to the physical element of the image. Edwards and Hart (2004:1) state that 'the photograph is a three dimensional thing not a two dimensional image – photographs are both images *and* physical objects'. In a further example, Buse (2010:201) believes that the success of the Polaroid photograph was down to the fact that 'tactility… is absolutely central: its users shake the print, scratch it, write on it or bend its flexible surface between thumb and forefinger' although perhaps these particular sensations are a little rarer in age of the digital image.

Ihde (1990:73) discusses embodiment in great detail and using the example of optical glasses notes that 'they become part of the way I ordinarily experience my surroundings; they 'withdraw' and are barely noticed… I have actively embodied the technics of vision'. Put in a more general way, 'embodiment is tactile, it involves an active grip on the world. The body is understood in terms of what it can do' (Grosz cited in Thrift, 1996:128). It seems that so often 'sensory experience was regarded as existing on two levels, tending to separate body and mind… the notion of embodiment… resolved this dichotomy to some extent' (Pink, 2009:24).

This embodied knowledge or withdrawal could also be applied to the relationship between the photographer and apparatus where technology, eye and hand unite and the camera withdraws giving a 'polymorphous sense of bodily extension' (Ihde, 1990:74). The relationship between the body and technology is of great interest to phenomenological philosophy and this section will now focus on the writing of Heidegger and others, on technology and its relationship to the body.

Technology and the body
The complex relationship between human and machine, the worlds and interactions that lie therein is of much interest to more recent phenomenological writing. The consequent 'historical changes in our sense of time, space and existential embodied presence cannot be considered less than a consequence of correspondent changes in our technologies' (Sobchack, 1994:137) and now 'technologies… are developed, used and related to by humans in distinct ways' (Ihde, 1990:26).

Even though Heidegger is considered as 'one of the foremost philosophers of technology' (ibid.:31) particularly his writing on 'encounters with entities' (Glendinning, 2007:79) this study will not make his work a primary focus. However there are elements of his principal philosophies which are worth highlighting here, particularly those surrounding immersion and practice.

Heidegger argues 'that people do not exist apart from the world but, rather, are *immersed* in it. This situation always given, never escapable is what he calls being-in-the-world' (Seamon, 1990:35). Importantly he 'does not ground his thinking in everyday *concepts* but in average everyday practice; in what people do and not what they say they do' (Dreyfus and Hall cited in Thrift, 1996:10). Glendinning (2007:78) elaborates further: '[Heidegger] stresses that the worldly aspect to our existence is not an added extra but an essential and irreducible feature of it'. It is also useful to note that Heidegger was particularly critical of the 'ocularcentrism… in dominant Western philosophical traditions' (Jay, 1993:270).

Heidegger's work on ready to hand/presence to hand is of interest in relation to the camera and the body's connection with technology. The photographer's relation to, and interaction with, the camera is literally both ready and present to the hands of the photographer. Many photographers carry their camera with them, so much so that it becomes part of their everyday equipment. When holding the main body of the camera, it becomes a naturalised interaction and the buttons are easily found or sensed by the fingers.

On high specification cameras, the focus is manually controlled by the physical turning of the lens either left or right so the focusing of the camera is a natural response to go closer or wider with vision. These actions are similar to using an indicator stick in a car, where the driver instinctively knows whether to shift either up or down to show a change in direction. This relates back to Ihde's comment about retreating into a particular world. When using a camera, photographers retreat or withdraw from everyday life in order to take a photograph, or to look at it afterwards and Weiser (cited in Hohl, 2009:273) believes that 'the most profound technologies are those that disappear. They weave themselves into the fabric of everyday life until they are indistinguishable from it'.

The diffusion between world and technology is also discussed by Shinkle (2005:6), who applies affect theory to 'rethink existing boundaries between body, environment, technology and self without ontologically diminishing any of these terms'. By exploring and photographing their immediate world, photographers are immersing themselves not only in the practice of camera work but also their wider everyday environment. Seamon (1990:49) explicitly links the images made by Kertész to the 'central aspect of Heidegger's philosophy: people's being-in-the world… [Kertész's] photographs suggest that, in some way, there is a binding in the world beyond its parts and beyond spatial and temporal qualities that we normally take as given and inescapable'.

The images made by Kertész for Seamon encourage a kind of 'phenomenological bracketing' (ibid.) and as the viewer looks and holds the photograph, they are brought into one world and retreat from another. If it is 'the everyday and mundane that constitute most of our lives' (Fincham *et al.,* 2010:6) then:

> The telescopic character of the photographic lens… enables it to show details… to reveal things that would have otherwise been hidden from the naked eye, enable them to uncover the most banal and mundane daily aspects of our life, which we usually do not notice because they have existed all around us.
>
> (Wigoder, 2001:369)

Discussions on Heidegger's concept of *being-in-the-world* inevitably lead to a further examination on the role of the body, both within the technological domain and when moving beyond the physical into the virtual. The body within a phenomenological context is primary in our experience of the world. 'When I think of my body and ask what it does to earn that name, two things stand out. It *moves*. It *feels*. In fact, it does both at the same time' (Massumi, 2002:1). Carman (cited in Paterson, 2007:31) also understands that 'the body emerges in the coincidence of sensing and being sensed, specifically in my sensing my body sensing itself'. When technology is brought in to discussions relating to the body, it is often in deeply sensual terms and 'the human body [has a talent for] extending itself beyond its objective boundaries (Barry, 1991:397).

Barthes (2002:341) describes the feelings that are stirred by the act of driving: 'the bodywork, the lines of union are touched, the upholstery palpitated, the seats tried, the doors caressed, the cushioned fondled; before the wheel one pretends to drive with one's whole body' and this is the moment where 'the identity of the person and car kinaesthetically intertwine' (Thrift, 2008:80).

Crossley (2001:122) explains that knowledge of the world extends beyond the body and empties into the various spaces, whether that is in a car or on a keyboard, and there is a 'pre-reflective sense or grasp of my environment, relative to my body... I can type [on a keyboard] without having to find the letters one by one... this type of knowledge is a practical, embodied, quite remote and distinct from discursive knowledge'. Tomlinson (2007:109) notes that using a keyboard is 'for the most part not a practised ability but… more casually acquired [through] habits and bodily rhythms'. This practised ability is also useful when examining the way in which various members find their way around *Flickr,* their knowledge of this space could be thought of in a similar manner to Crossley's computer. The site becomes an extension of their existing, offline visual world, just as the keyboard is an extension of the typists' hands.

Flickr is a space where looking becomes routine and one become oriented around the site through *both* with the fingertips and the eyes. The body's relationship with computers either through VR, social interaction online or simply doing everyday tasks has been the subject of much discussion. Lupton (cited in Bell 2001:141) highlights that 'in earlier cyber writing, the body is often referred to as 'the meat… the dream of cyber culture is to leave the meat behind and to become distilled in a clean, pure, uncontaminated relationship with computer technology'. Nevertheless, physical reminders always bring virtual experiences back to the body and 'far from being left behind when we enter cyberspace, our bodies are no less actively involved in the construction of virtuality than in the construction of real life' (Hayles cited in Thrift, 1997:141). Sitting in front of the computer for too long leads to a stiff neck and back, eyes become bleary and bloodshot. Kozel (2007:79) remarks that 'the virtual has extra temporal and extra sensory dimensions [whilst] at the same time embedded in actual experience'.

Seidler (1998:28) adds to this, stating that 'the possibilities of embodied knowledge call for a different relationship with virtual space. Rather than a space in which people can hide, it also becomes a space in which people can learn about themselves'. Ihde (1990:41) discusses at length 'the role of technologies in all dimensions of the lifeworld' and labels our interactions mediated through technological 'embodiment relations' (ibid.:72-74). He goes on to say that:

> Embodiment relations are a particular kind of use-context... a specific set of qualities for design relating to attaining the requisite technological 'withdrawal'... the closer to invisibility, transparency and the extension of one's own bodily sense the this technology allows, the better.
>
> (ibid.)

In addition to this, Adams (2005:178) believes that 'the internet's institutional-technological framework clearly supports ways of coming together and being together that are unprecedented and that presumably will lay the groundwork for new ways of relating and constituting the human self'. For Ingold (cited in Pink, 2009:102) 'the eyes and ears should not be seen as separate keyboards for the registration of sensation but as organs of the body as a whole, in whose movement, within an environment, the activity of perception consists.' When the user types and glides around the computer keyboard it quickly becomes an extension of the fingertips and a part of the body, albeit temporarily. It also gives 'the observer new positions with respect to the universe, whether at macro or micro levels' (Ihde, 1990:57).

In many ways, new forms of technology are bringing sensual experiences to the fore in everyday life. Advances in mobile phone technology, personal stereo design and games consoles have brought interactivity and physicality into their design and application. The sensual has even been written into the gadget name, such as Apple's iPod touch. Where we used to tap, prod and punch at our phones and computers, we now stroke and glide over screens and touchpads.

Technology must now feel good to the touch, as well as be pleasing to the eye:

> The principles underlying the design of interactions have become less about calm and invisibility that about celebrating the interactions with the device itself; emotion, experiential quality and bold visibility have become central to the consumer as well as the design process... some mobile devices may look most sexy when not in use and their appearance is as seductive as a *Handschmeichler* [4] inviting touch while simply lying on a table.
>
> (Hohl, 2009:274)

Many of the participants in Bull's iPod study remarked upon how good the device feels like in their hands and ears, aurally guiding them around the city 'like a digital Sherpa' (Bull, 2007:158). The navigation around touch screen technology is only successful through close contact via the fingertips, dwelling within the subtle contours of individual ridges and electrical pulses, and when wearing gloves, technology focused on touch becomes more difficult, and sometimes impossible, to use.[5] Whilst advanced equipment relies on fingertips, in multiple ways all 'tools and machines are *extensions of the body*' (Hacking cited in Fraser and Greco, 2005:25) and quickly become entrenched within everyday life.

Hansen (2006:80) confirms that 'the human from its origin is embodied *and* technical' and Ihde (1993:40) also notes that 'technology plays a role in the primal human experience of environment, but in such a way that is both taken-for-granted and in such a way that it may appear to be functionally (if functioning well) virtually invisible'. This has also been highlighted in greater detail by Bull (2007:2-3) who notes that '[i-Pod users] are in tune with their body, their world becomes one with their sound tracked movements' and they cocoon themselves inside an aural bubble wishing for 'total transparency' (Ihde, 1990:75). Photographic technology has been part of everyday life for some time and 'with the surprisingly easy transition to digital technologies, we have a case study of technologies-in-the-making and the practical activities by which they are incorporated into people's lives' (Van House, 2011:127).

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[4] 'German noun for an object that flatters the hand and is a pleasure to touch' (noted in Hohl, 2009:283)
[5] The solution to using this technology outdoors has been the invention of 'touchscreen gloves' made from conductive material.

Many people are now comfortable using a camera and although we have perhaps lost the tactility of the paper object to some degree, people have become prolific photograph takers and hoarders, albeit in a more binary form. The relationship with photographic technology has not only become deeply embedded within everyday life and routine but people have also come to use it in new and alternative ways. Kozel (2007:73) understands that 'you have to use [technology] because it is in your blood. Technology will move in and speak through you, like it or not' and certainly as society moves into further complex relationships with technology in the 21st Century, it is more important than ever to take these interactions seriously.

Review Summary

Although the image has been discussed in some length by different philosophical and phenomenological theorists from varied disciplines over the last two centuries, when it comes to photography as a practice there has been little interest. There have been only a few research studies relating to how photography is done in everyday life, despite its popularity and endurance as an everyday practice. Therefore, this review has had to turn to other areas, offering a broader summary of the different issues pertaining to the various strands found within this study, mainly the urban, place, phenomenology and photography.

The city was framed as a place of constant movement and interest, where technology has always quickly adapted and appropriated in urbanites in different ways. It is a place that has always fascinated photographers, writers, artists and philosophers who, like the early Flâneur, wander the streets in search of inspiration. From a more distant perspective, Thrift and others interested in NRT are also inspired by the city and what it has to offer in terms of user experience. The review then moved on to phenomenology, primarily the writing of Merleau-Ponty and its wider significance to photography practice, utilising his ideas on perception and the body, which were inspired by the broad brush strokes of Impressionism.

Finally, the review examined the growth and impact of our current relationship with technology, showing how devices have become integrated into our everyday life world and routines. It also highlighted the philosophical implications of this technological familiarity for photographers and their cameras, drawing upon both Heidegger and Ihde's work. This study will now turn to examine the specific methodological issues and ideas pertaining to *experience*, discussing how specific methods can facilitate a new understanding about the photographer's everyday movements, both online and offline, by conducting a multi-sited ethnography.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction - Following 'the threads of cultural processes'

Jiron (2011:40-41) explains that to fully understand different cultures and practices, the researcher must follow the various 'threads' involved, writing that 'an essential part of ethnography involves carrying out fieldwork as a way of being there… [ethnography] has provided more effective methodological means to apprehend urban practices and experiences than traditional methods'. Ethnographic research has developed to signify not simply one approach, but often adopting an array of methods, in a variety of places, studying many different activities. The term 'ethnography' has 'in some fields come to signify a move away from purely textual analysis' (Miller and Slater, 2000:11). In other examples, the idea of the Internet ethnography 'has come to signify almost entirely the study of online community and relationships – the ethnography of cyberspace' (ibid.: 21).

Therefore, it seems that 'if ethnography of the internet is not about writing down the oral other, it may be about capturing and putting down on paper the digital other' (Beaulieu, 2004:20). Certainly researchers are becoming more involved with their participants' digital lifeworld and are messaging, videoing, tweeting, uploading, lurking and logging on to a variety of different websites, communities and blogs to find out more about online places and cultures and those that inhabit and use them (Hine, 2000; Kendall, 2002; Nip, 2004; Cohen, 2005; Boyd, 2007; Davies, 2007; Bardzell and Odum, 2008; Reed, 2008).

Most recent online ethnographies are not purely based within virtual worlds and normally researchers meet up with members of online sites to gain more insight into habits, motivations, routines and patterns of usage in a face-to-face setting. Kendall (2002:16) underlines the importance of meetings between participants and states that 'joining an offline gathering constitutes almost a rite of passage for online participants'. Nevertheless, Hine (2000:48) counters this by stating that 'many inhabitants of cyberspace never have face-to-face meetings and have no intention of doing so' before going onto explain that some researchers feel duty bound in the pursuit of 'ethnographic holism' (ibid.) to interact with their subjects face-to-face.

Regardless of viewpoint, there has certainly been a decisive move away from early academic research surrounding the separation of online and offline interactions. It is now widely understood that 'online situations have roots in offline realities' (Kendall, 1999:58), and in a similar vein 'it is important to remember that all 'Internet research' takes place in an embedded social context… consequently most 'online research' really should have an offline component' (Bruckman cited in Orgad, 2008:52). With this in mind, this chapter will outline the methodological framework developed for, and used within, this study, justifying why different approaches were selected. It begins with an overview of the current trend for locating ethnography within multiple sites of interest, showing the importance of following the different 'threads of process', wherever they may go. It will then go on to examine the changing role of the photograph within ethnographic research.

Next, the discussion turns to phenomenology and demonstrates how a broad phenomenological attitude can be absorbed into ethnographic research, opening up the field to reveal a variety of different experiences. There will then be a discussion on movements within online places, detailing current research trends particular to computers and their users. Finally, these different strands are brought together to outline the specific methodological approach of this study, combining a variety of methods and approaches to examine how photography is practiced in everyday life.

The 'multi-sited' ethnography

Although the 'notion of 'the field' as a geographically defined research area' (Wittel, 2000:2) has diversified and widened to include the virtual domain, it is still true that 'ethnographic research remains firmly rooted in the first-hand exploration of the research settings. It is this sense of social exploration and protracted investigation that gives ethnography its abiding and continuing character' (Atkinson *et al.,* 2001:5). In the past, ethnographers spent many years researching their subjects in the field and much of the early literature focuses on ways of gaining access to, and building trust with, key gatekeepers through a variety of techniques centring on face-to-face contact.

These gatekeepers are still there as members, moderators or administrators of groups and sites but now they are certainly easier to locate or contact directly. Hine (2000:22) believes that 'the popularity of the ethnographic approach to online phenomena probably owes something to the accessibility of the field site to increasingly desk bound academics' and undoubtedly 'access issues... centre not so much on the difficulties of gaining access but on the consequences of access that, initially at least, seems almost too easy' (Walsh, 2004:232). Whilst many studies are labelled generally as ethnographic the 'research is often characterised by fragmentation and diversity' (Atkinson *et al.,* 2001:2) where no two studies take the same approach. Wittel (2000:9) states that:

> Like the objects of ethnographic inquiry, ethnography itself is on the move. It is moving away from 'fields' as spatially defined localities towards socio-political locations, networks and multi-sited approaches. And it is moving from physical spaces to digital spaces.

An increasing amount of research is conducted in and across *multiple sites*, allowing for an incorporation of various movements and techniques into a single study, enabling places and experiences to be understood in greater depth. The multi-sited ethnography builds on an 'ethnographic tradition of studying cultures and their situated practices but it seeks to enable a broadening of the investigation to the study of movement, interactions on the move, connections… and mobility experiences' (Jiron, 2011:41). Larsen (2008:154) simply summarizes that 'multi-sited ethnography privileges routes rather than roots'. This approach is a natural progression from earlier studies (though not all necessarily ethnographies) in the last part of the 20th Century.

The first researchers of online cultures in the early 1990s were mostly preoccupied by questions of identity, community and reality, with the emphasis on *what* was being lost offline in favour of the online word (Turkle, 1995).[1] By the early 2000s research had moved on, looking at selected online communities and Multiple User Domains (MUDs), examining online interactions in a more positive way and developing ideas on how members interacted online *and* offline (Hine, 2000; Miller and Slater, 2000; Kendall, 2002; Kusenbach, 2003; Cohen, 2005).

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[1] Beaulieu (2004) also contends that the notion of community was overly fetishized by early researchers

Now, the current generation of researchers are adding to this expanding field, examining the multiple roles of the internet within everyday life. The multi-sited ethnography emerged from these various approaches and as such is located in many different 'sites of observation and participation [that] cross-cut dichotomies such as the 'local' and the 'global,' the 'lifeworld' and the system' (Marcus, 1995:95). This idea stems from the fact that 'every day practices are complex, multifaceted and creative [and] they demand a complex and multidimensional approach to ethnography' (Stoller, 1997:41-42). Larsen (2008:154) also believes that a 'multi sided ethnography is about following the flows… in and across a particular field'. Wittel (2000:8) adds that 'rather than emphasising the differences between material and digital spaces, we should introduce a more relational perspective and concentrate on the similarities, connections and overlappings.'

Although Chapter 1 highlighted a relative lack of research on photography as practice, the photograph itself has been utilised as a recording tool ever since its invention. Researchers across a variety of disciplines have utilised the camera to document their discoveries throughout history. The next part of this review will give a brief overview of the ways in which the photograph has been utilised by past studies, as well as demonstrating how new research is expanding the potential role of camerawork.

The changing role of photography within ethnographic research
Whilst a full review of the historical aspects of photography's use by a variety of disciplines is beyond the scope of this research, it is useful to put into context the journey of the photograph from 'an isolated, self-sufficient and somewhat eccentric specialism' (Emmison and Smith cited in Pink, 2007:13) to an acknowledgement that 'images play [a role] in the elaboration and enactment of distinctive fieldwork techniques' (Latham and McCormack, 2009:256). Earlier discussions highlighted the multiple roles of photography within society and how the optical was embraced by science, the state, tourism and the corporate world for various means. The photograph soon became a research tool that was 'at the cusp of the scientific, the social and the humanities' (Price and Wells, 2004:23).

Early anthropologists used photography with particular zeal producing images that now make the modern viewer squirm. The photographs of the natives in situ and in the studio can now viewed as 'cultural documents offering evidence of historically, culturally and socially specific ways of seeing the world' (Rose, 2000:556). Modern anthropological research sought to distance itself from Edwardian photographic culture that was 'associated with racial classification… and the culture of collecting and museum display' (Grimshaw and Ravtez, 2005:5).

Edwards (my emphasis, 2006:14) insists that early anthropological photographs should be re-examined and looked '*into* rather that *looked at*', urging anthropologists to think more openly in their attitude toward the visual, a trend that continues today (Da Silva and Pink, 2004). It is worth noting that the rise of sociology as a discipline was parallel to the growth of photography, however the photograph itself was not utilised as a research tool until much later. Harper (2003:3) highlights how the leading European sociologists were 'content to abstract social life into words' rather than pictures and instead 'it was in the US, where sociology was more closely linked to philosophical pragmatism, that photography was introduced' (ibid.)[2]. However, the images were limited in scope and were quietly dropped for more 'qualitatively orientated' textual field work (ibid.). Grimshaw and Ravtez (2005:5) chart the trend more widely, stating that 'the suppression of visual anthropology by an emergent textual discipline was part of a more general denigration of vision within European intellectual culture'. This is not to say that photography was suddenly absent from research texts, instead it was used in a limited, primarily illustrative capacity.

Nevertheless, photography in a research capacity continued on in earnest in various modes, as practitioners continued to capture all types of everyday life at work and at play. Becker (1974:5-6) explains that 'like sociologists, photographers have been interested in contemporary social problems: immigration, poverty, race, social unrest… and less controversial problems, in the style of sociological ethnography'.

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[2] This also follows the consumer market for photographs which was quicker to develop in the US before the practice took off across Europe. Although some early American sociologists used photography to support their written material (mostly by researchers at the Chicago School).

Crucially, the output of photographers such as Bill Brandt, Lewis Hine, Robert Frank or Walker Evans is classified as photo-journalism, art or simply a 'personal vision' (Price, 2004:102) with the emphasis placed on representation rather than investigation[3].

There has been a recent change in academic attitudes when utilising the visual (such as photography, film and video) along with other sensory modes (sound and smell) within multiple research fields. This is due in part to the cheapening of everyday technology and increase in user familiarity of many different modes such as mobile phones and digital cameras, a combination of which allows the researcher and their participants to be more creative, interactive and flexible (Davies, 2007). Pink (2009:23) has charted the 'sensual turn' in cultural geography, anthropology and sociology where 'a strong interest in human experience' has led to a shift from 'the dominance of linguistic, semiotic, and textual models of interpretation' to a 'more phenomenologically inflicted approach' (Grimshaw & Ravtez, 2005:6).

This shift has led to a growing interest in the use of photography to build up a fuller impression of the sensual landscape. Grimshaw and Ravtez (2005:5-6) cite the work of Barbara Stafford, stating that '[she] argues for a conceptual realignment, one that dislodges the disembodied linearity of linguistically based models of interpretation in favour of approaches that encompass the embodied, the sensory and materially grounded dimensions of the visual'. Similarly, when discussing film studies Sobchack (2004:55) argues that 'contemporary film theory has generally ignored…cinemas sensual address.'

Pink (2009:41) believes that there should be an incorporation of 'other ways of knowing, remembering and imagining into academic practice' via the use of the visual as a research tool. Pink (ibid.: 136) also discusses the potential of photography within ethnographic research stating that photographs:

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[3] One exception to this would be the magazine 'Life' which had a number of distinguished photographers and was unflinching in its portrayal of an array of different subjects, from the Vietnam war, to the inner city gangs to celebrity portraits. Their photo archive is hosted on Google and despite going out of print in 1972 is still published online. Available at www.life.com [Online] (Accessed 25th January 2012)

> Have the capacity to bring textures, surfaces and the sensory experience they evoke right up close to the reader: they both invoke embodied reactions and offer routes by which, via our own memories and subjectivities, we might anticipate what it feels like to be in another place.

Photography has now been embraced as a useful tool when carrying out ethnographic research and is in itself an 'abstracting process' (Collier cited in Jenkings, Woodward and Winter, 2008:6; see also Shinkle 2005, 2008). Whilst photographs can link various interwoven narratives together to give a more realistic, first person perspective on the researchers' or participants' lived experience, they have also been applied in other, constructive ways. An example of this would be *photo-elicitation*, a technique pioneered by John Collier Jr. in the 1950's which 'relies on the idea of the photograph becoming a visual text through which the subjectivities of the researcher and participant intersect' (Pink, 2009:93). The use of the photograph in ethnographic research is not only limited to an interview tool. 'The growing interest in areas of ethnographic experience lie beyond the discursive' (Grimshaw and Ravtez, 2005:6) meaning that ethnographers are turning to visual media as a way to examine and act out everyday movements, interactions and practices in multifaceted ways. Beyond the discursive, research has also taken a further phenomenological turn. It is to this work that this review will now focus.

Phenomenological approaches

In the previous chapter, the discussions on photography and phenomenology highlighted how both practice and philosophy could inform the approach of one another, but thus far their paths have not crossed that often. In comparison, there has recently been a decisive move towards a more reflexive form of ethnographic research that specifically cites a 'phenomenological approach'. Shaw (2008:3) neatly summarises that her book:

> Does 'phenomenology' a descriptive pursuit in which, as much as possible one immerses oneself in an experience, to analyse and understand it… phenomenology is a philosophy concerned with the constitution of consciousness… the technical apparatus of photography and film acts as an incursion into the lifeworld, producing a change in consciousness both in relation to reality and the aesthetic experience.

Maso (2001:144) explains that explicit phenomenological ethnographic research tries 'to get close to its subjects in order to capitalize upon their familiarity with the topic of study' but does not assume that they will find 'an underlying, shared and cognitive order' (ibid.) between them. Kusenbach (2003:458) argues that 'to develop a phenomenological ethnography offers the promise of saving phenomenology from the inadequacies of a solely 'philosophical' foundation'. Pink (2009:25) also writes that 'the idea that ethnographic experiences are 'embodied' – in that the researcher learns and knows through her or his whole experiencing body – has been recognized in much existing, methodological literature across 'ethnographic disciplines''.

These disciplines range from anthropology to sociology, film studies, tourism and dance where different aspects of the phenomenological attitude have been embraced. The concept of embodiment is a crucial aspect of sensory based ethnographies permitting the researcher to go *beyond* the written word. Stoller (1997:85) argues that 'embodiment is not primarily textual, the human body is not principally a text; rather, it is consumed by a world filled with smells, textures, sights, sounds and tastes, all of which spark cultural memories' which should be placed at the heart of the ethnographic experience. Kozel (2007:5) continues that 'bodies, thought, imagination, memories, material conditions of life and affect find a voice through phenomenology' whilst Pink (2009:132) indicates that the primary motivations of doing a sensory ethnography is 'to bring researchers and their audiences close to other people's multisensory experiences, knowing, practice, memories and imaginations'.

Ultimately 'ethnographers might still start from a particular field, but they have to trace and move along those connections which are enacted from that field' (Hine cited in Larsen 2008:154). This section will now review a selection of studies with a variety of different approaches which have successfully adapted a number of varied phenomenological elements. The studies by Brindiner-Viani (2005) and Kusenbach (2003) each have a different theme (photography and sociology respectively) but both use similar research strategies and have related phenomenological influences.

Brindiner-Viani (2005:461) believes in 'the idea of careful looking' and uses photography as a tool to help her 'theorise and conduct conversations' in a unique style of ethnography (ibid.). To gain a deeper knowledge about her local neighbourhood and the stories and people contained in it, Brindiner-Viani walked with participants, accompanying them in the style of a 'guided tour' of the places that meant the most *to them*. She states that 'in taking a phenomenological perspective, I have asked people to talk not about the agreed-on histories of this neighbourhood but about places… as *they* have experienced them' (ibid.:461). The use of a similar strategy is employed by Kusenbach (2003:463) who uses the 'go along' method in her ethnography about local urban experiences, explaining that go alongs are:

> A hybrid between participant observation and interviewing [and they] carry certain advantages when it comes to exploring the role of place in everyday lived experience... ethnographers are able to observe their informants spatial practices *in situ* while accessing their experiences and interpretations at the same time.

The strength of in-situ observation is summarised by Wittel (2000:7) who states that 'one does not have to mystify or privilege participant observation… its value for an understanding of social situations, everyday routines and embodied practices can hardly be underestimated'. Brindiner-Viani (2005:461) also incorporates the work of David Seamon, drawing on his phenomenological analysis of the images by Andre Kertész (discussed later in Chapter 6) which demonstrates the power of photography 'to see in detail the small pieces that make up the everyday.'

In a similar manner, Kusenbach (2003:470) is also interested in unearthing the overlooked details of everyday experiences believing that 'go alongs can unearth mundane details too trivial to think and talk about during more formal research occasions'. Sobchack (2008:120) emphasises that this is phenomenology's strongest methodological tool, where importance is placed on 'performing perceptual variations and interrogating one's presuppositions – what seems given and hardly worth mentioning'. A key part of this everyday engagement is walking which, as an ethnographic tool, is now being used by a number of writers as a useful strategy to gain insight and knowledge into patterns of movement and the

participant's relationship with their environment. Pink *et al.* (2010:5) explains that 'the question of the relationship between walking, images and the environment is a rich area for analysis and begs further exploration.' Vergunst (2011:205) also believes it is important to '[look at the connections between] walking and ethnographic fieldwork in perceiving the world in a mobile manner and creating a particular kind of sociability based on shared rhythm of movement'.

Lashua and Cohen (2010:82) highlight that 'strolling through areas of the city provided important examples of a 'discovery of coincidence' (Auge, 2002) triggered by walking.' Indeed it is clear that:

> The city is made of layered environments, entwined with many people's experiences and connections. The urban context is gridded, marked and mapped; there is an impulse to see it as transparent, as knowable as though these marks and maps are where meaning is made and made visible. Yet there is important meaning outside these ordering structures; there are spatial tactics and emotional poetics that interplay with these structured everyday spaces.
>
> (Brindiner-Viani, 2005:459).

Brindiner-Viani then goes on to relate intimate moments she shared with her subjects around the urban area which were enhanced by the experience of the guided tour. Kusenbach (2003:463) also highlights that 'what makes the go-along technique unique is that ethnographers are able to observe their informants spatial practices *in situ* while accessing their experiences and interpretations at the same time'. Furthermore, Pink (2009:79) states that 'while walking with research participants has always been integral to ethnographic practice, in contemporary writing the theoretical and methodological implications of this are coming to the fore'.

The familiarity of everyday places and practices also aligns with non-representational theory (NRT) where 'the main domain of investigation is the absorbed skilful coping of these practices' (Thrift, 2007:127) in an everyday context. Researchers are now beginning to understand that 'the world appears different on the move – we understand it and relate to it in distinct ways from when we are still' (Fincham *et al.*, 2010:1). Taking this on board, this study adopted a similar approach advocated by Kusenbach, Bendiner-Viani and Pink, walking and

talking with *Flickr*ites and accompanying them as they moved around the local cities of Sunderland and Newcastle.

Larsen (2008) believes that, ethnographic, non-representational enquiry gives a new perspective on tourist photography practices, which he believes should also be extended to multiple sites in order to trace the patterns and habits of photo taking abroad (in the home as well as public spaces). Latham and McCormack (2009:256) are interested in 'how photographic images can be understood as non-representational participants in the processes and practices of thinking through cities' their work encouraging us to 'think through the concept of rhythm' (ibid.) and everyday engagement within cities.

Clearly it is important to accompany participants to uncover habits and unseen details which form their photographic practices, revealing the things that they do not notice but do every day with the camera whilst within the urban environment. Brindiner-Viani's (2005:469) strategy of walking and dwelling with research subjects ultimately unlocks the 'emotional content' of everyday environments allowing for a deeper knowledge about their routines and movements. Lashua and Cohen (2010: 80) also utilised a similar strategy explaining that 'walking tours are useful in several regards… the cityscape itself often acts as a prompt… as we move through the urban environment'.

Following movement in online space

Observing and moving with participants in their physical environment is relatively straightforward, however much of the general ethnographic literature does not tackle the more muddy issue of online orientations or the tracing of movement in virtual environments. Ingold (2011:249) notes that 'how precisely we should understand 'movement' through the internet is an interesting question' and one that thus far, not been fully answered. Adams (2005:98) writes 'the movement through physical and virtual spaces is simultaneously a means of extending the self into society and nature and an on-going encounter with the extensions of others'.

Although he goes on to detail the walk around his local neighbourhood, noticing small details and steering the reader through his own *personal* interpretation of the 'geography of interactions... social relations and technological systems' (ibid.: 114) that take place in everyday life, he does not elaborate on similar personal experiences in an online context. To interpret and understand the online movements of others poses a distinct challenge.

Within the (offline) urban environment the researcher can of course physically accompany the participant around their spaces and interpret or question movements, but the biggest challenge for this study was how this technique could be adapted to link with online 'doings'. How does the researcher 'follow' where users go on *Flickr* and observe how they generally get around the site? The answer cannot be found by looking to existing research as there have not been any ethnographic based studies relating to *Flickr* and online orientation by its users. In general, there is a need for more research regarding online photographic practices, not just about the images themselves but about other online features that allow users to interact with the site and with one another in different ways.

Palmer (2010:158) identifies that 'current changes to the ways in which we capture, store and disseminate photographs – and the emergence of online photo-sharing platforms in particular – demand a rethinking of dominant theories of personal photography.' For example 'much previous research has explored how people collaborate around physical photos, however much less is understood about the possibilities provided by the recent emergence of photo-sharing websites' (Miller and Edwards, 2007:1).

One of the main difficulties facing all research in this domain, and more widely across HCI, is the speed at which new applications and websites are being developed – research is, to some extent, always playing catch up with many of the recent technological advances. Whilst there have been a number of studies into the educational, sociological and artistic implications of *Flickr* (Davies, 2007; Lindgren, 2007; Keegan, 2008) there have been noticeably fewer studies from a media or photography studies perspective (Rubenstein and Sluis, 2008; Richter and Sadler, 2009).

The bulk of existing research on *Flickr* falls in the HCI and computing science domains, however there are different issues about how these disciplines have traditionally researched and tested web users. Hart *et al.* (2008) explain that 'in a situation where users are hanging around on a website it further raises the question about the relevance of traditional measures of usability… when evaluating social web services.' Another additional difficulty faced by the researcher in conducting online research, and particularly into larger sites like *Flickr*, is the vast amount of users all using the site in unique ways and 'studies on online social networks (OSN) generally ignore the fact that not all users may be equally active and that the level of user activity… is likely to be highly dynamic' (Valafar, Rejaie and Willinger, 2009). The variances between user interactions on a site the size of *Flickr* are just too big to be able to draw any kind of general conclusion about how *all* members may use the site[4] making this type of research less appealing to HCI studies.

The principle difficulty in researching online interactions, movements and behaviours is that there is no way of really understanding why users do what they do without watching them all on an individual basis and asking them. Computer programmes are not yet sophisticated enough to interpret these behaviours, to understand the different depths and categories of emotion that motivate users such as curiosity or boredom. Kumar and Tomkins (2010:1) concede that 'the evolution [of internet usage] is difficult to observe, partly because of its velocity and partly because user behaviour data is not generally available. Thus we lack an accurate picture of how users engage with the web.' This research can offer some insight into interactions and movements by a group of *Flickr* members, however far more work needs to be conducted in this research area to fully understand the complexities of these online interactions.

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[4] One of the interesting gaps in knowledge about *Flickr* is just how many members there are as Yahoo have never released site membership information, so the true figure is currently unknown in the general domain.

Knitting the threads together: the methodological approach

Discussions within this chapter have established that researcher interaction with the environment and their respondents, be it offline or online, can be successfully approached via a broad phenomenological framework. Just as 'Merleau-Ponty placed sensation at the centre of human perception' (Pink, 2009:26), the modern ethnographer should strive do the same, varying their approach and triangulating different strands of enquiry. This final section will now detail how these different strands of theory and practice were knitted together as a whole, outlining the different strategies that were used in this study to obtain a fuller understanding about how photography is practiced both offline and online.

To find participants I began on *Flickr*, focusing on groups whose name was themed around the North East of England, and particularly in Sunderland or Newcastle, however this search brought up around 2000 related groups with these particular themes. As many of the groups tended to have crossover membership, I hoped that posting a request for interviewees in a selected number of larger groups would result in other members of some of the smaller groups getting in touch as well. In each instance, I asked the permission of the administrator to post calls for interviewees on the group discussion board, which briefly explained my research and how they could contact me via *Flickr*mail.

Unfortunately, the response rate to these initial posts was not particularly encouraging and when only a handful of members had contacted me via email after a month, I decided to change my strategy. I began to look for members who were recently active in the groups and contacted them directly via *Flickr*mail to ask if they would be interested in being interviewed. This direct approach proved to be highly successful with a 100% positive response rate and not a single refusal for an interview request. I also had a number of referrals from interviewees who recommended that I approach other photographers in their groups who they believed would also be interested in taking part. In total this led to 21 interviews, the majority (19) were conducted face-to-face in public settings, near to where the participants either lived or worked.

All participants gave their permission for interviews to be recorded for subsequent transcription purposes. In the remaining two instances, photographers were unable to meet me in person so the interviews were conducted through a series of emails and using the Skype messenger service (i.e. a text-based conversion, not voice), which was an excellent tool. This allowed for a real time discussion to take place, which could also be archived for later transcription. The format of the interviews followed a semi-structured approach, as I did have a set list of questions to ask but the conversations were often free flowing and covered a wide range of topics relating to photography. All photographers were keen to share their knowledge and passion and were very comfortable in answering questions about their experiences with the camera, so each interview lasted at least an hour. The subject of the questions ranged from asking about their history with using a camera, to thinking about their use of *Flickr* and how they became more involved with the site.

Most participants gave me permission to use their first name within the research and only two wanted to be known in the study as their *Flickr* username. Where photographers have the same first name, I have included the first initial of their second name to distinguish between them. As well as recording the interviews, I also made personal observations in notebooks but not all of these were eventually transcribed. Some of this material did end up in the main body of the thesis and is marked as 'author field notes' and the date they were written.

At the end of some of the interviews, I asked if photographers wanted to further extend their participation by allowing me to accompany them for a walk and talk interview on their next outing with their camera, which meant that they were already comfortable with being asked questions about their photography habits. A total of seven individual walk and talks were conducted in and around the Sunderland and Newcastle city environments, and on one occasion further away, at the costal location of Saltburn. In addition to making rough field notes, on several of these outings I also brought my camera with me to take various pictures along the route. This had a dual purpose: to jog my memory about the routes the photographers took around the city and to make the photographers feel more at ease with my presence. I think some of them found it slightly odd to have me

watching them when they were outside and so the camera acted as a natural discussion point. The meeting points were suggested by participants and were often their favourite areas that they had visited before in the city. The material and observations that came from these discussions were both interesting and exciting as it allowed me to see up close how participants took the photographs that they did and gave a huge insight into the physicality of their practice, something simply not achievable through interview alone.

To supplement these walk and talk sessions, I had planned on going to *Flickr* meet-ups which are scheduled on an ad-hoc basis by members on the group sites via the discussion board. Before this study began, offline meet-ups were seemingly very regular, however they happened more infrequently as the research progressed and were not particularly well attended. I can only speculate that this possibly demonstrates the evolution of *Flickr* from an exciting novelty to a more familiar presence in the lives of photographers. Nonetheless, when meet-ups were scheduled, I went along and attended five meet ups in different locations around Newcastle and Gateshead. These were as diverse as going around a heritage train depot, visiting a local park, and attending an outdoor music festival. In all of these instances, the attending photographers all knew about the study, although were not all necessarily interviewees. During the meet-ups I brought along my camera and took extensive fieldnotes which were later transcribed. My observations about various interactions and movements whilst attending these meetings have also been included throughout the thesis.

The final part of the methodological strategy posed the biggest challenge: namely the browse and talk sessions that observed photographers whilst they were using *Flickr*. From the same pool of interviewees, five agreed to take part in the final browse and talk sessions, one of which was conducted in my office in Sunderland and the others in a variety of places across Newcastle city centre. There were obvious restrictions as to who was available for browsing sessions, as most interviewees had commitments during the day. University safety guidelines also meant that I could not go to participant's homes at night, which would have allowed me to observe their browsing behaviour in less public conditions.

Upon reflection, I would have liked to see how they interacted with their own, familiar computer in a more personal environment which is an area for future development. There were initially a few difficulties relating to this method when the sessions started. Most were conducted on my laptop which meant that participants had to adjust to the configurations of the keyboard. As the meetings had to be in public venues, such as libraries and cafes, this meant registering and connecting to their internet WiFi service which often meant setting up a username and password. Although relatively straightforward, this process was often time consuming.

The method adopted in these browse and talks was simple: the participants all logged on to their *Flickr* page and I observed them as they went through their general routine, watching how they navigated the site, interacted with and generally 'hung about' on the site. As they went through their routines, I asked them to talk through what they were doing as they did it, to enable me to further understand more about *why* they went to certain places and used particular features whilst ignoring others. I recorded some of these interviews on digital recorder as well as making detailed field notes to correspond with the audio. Each of the five sessions lasted at least an hour, however many participants noted that they could be on the site all day, casually dipping in and out as they were doing work online or looking at other sites.

There was a great benefit to following the same participants through both the browse/walk and talk sessions. It allowed me to view their interaction flow between camera, city and computer and directly compare their movements between each setting. Furthermore, I felt a more in-depth connection to the photographers and meeting with them more than once allowed me to get to know them better, leading to an even deeper understanding of both their photography routines and the impact of their local city within their everyday life.

Larsen (2008:157) believes that 'ethnography is particularly suitable for exploring practices and flows of photography because it allows naturalistic and situated observations and accounts'. I would argue that this also extends, and can be applied successfully to, online photography practices as well.

Summary of Review

This review has outlined some of the issues and techniques related to approaching and conducting the ethnographic research from a phenomenological perspective, highlighting the usefulness of the researcher revisiting their own experiences, as well as those of the respondents, in detail.

Accompanying respondents as they undertook photographic tasks on their computers, combined with in-depth interviews and observations whilst out and about in everyday environments, offered a fresh and unique insight into everyday practices. 'What is interesting ethnographically is not the result (the photo, the GPS reading), but the technique, or in other words, the way the person interacts with their surrounding objects and landscape according to their shared habits and gestures' (Vergunst, 2011:210). One final, important point to raise here is the distinction often made between the digital and the physical or how 'the offline is treated as that which makes sense of, or explains, the online' (Slater cited in Orgad, 2008:63).

In the context of this research it would perhaps be tempting to say the same, that the photography and interactions on *Flickr* are secondary to the offline context, the physical taking of photographs and the 'doings' of photography. However in reality, there is far more movement or slippage between the two, and this is shown in the later chapters by the examples given by the participants in this study.

Orgad (2008:64) highlights that:

> The methodological move from online to offline relationships with informants, has underscored how methodology informs theory, in particular how the integrations of online and offline methods is interlinked with the conceptual concern with breaking down the dichotomous separation between the 'online' and the 'offline.

This is a theme that will be revisited throughout this work. It was important that the methodology and the ethnographic strategy as a whole reflected these parallel elements and that both were treated with equal importance. This research will now turn to examine these different places and worlds, and the connections between them, in greater detail.

Photographic Plates

Plate 1 Tom Ellefsen 'Quiet Geordie Nights' Copyright

Plate 2 David Warren 'Room with a view' Copyright

Photographic Plates

Plate 3 Darrel Birkett 'Whatever it takes' Copyright All rights reserved

Plate 4 Andy Martin 'Flick my switch' Copyright All rights reserved

Plate 5 Anthony Dorman 'The Doors'

Plate 6 Andy Martin 'Inner City Blues'

Plate 7 Andy Martin 'Corous Steel works by South Gare' Copyright All rights reserved

Plate 8 Richard Hook 'Gateshead' Copyright All Rights Reserved

Plate 9 Richard Hook 'Untitled' Copyright All Rights Reserved
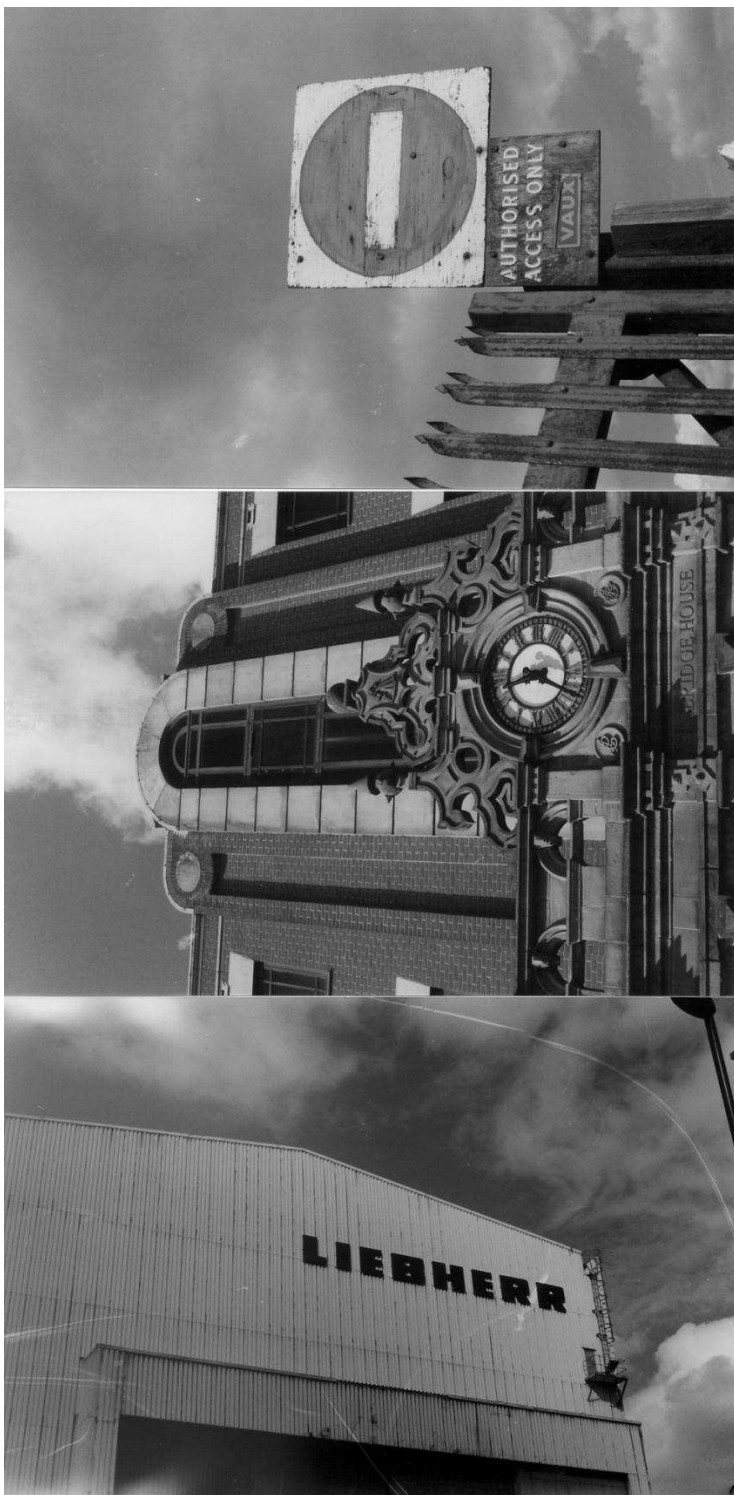
Plate 10 Author field photographs taken in and around Sunderland City Centre
From Top to Bottom: Old Vaux Brewery sign, the former front of the old public pool, Liebherr factory building.

Photographic Plates

Plate 11 the Understudy 'Vaux Confused' Copyright All Rights Reserved
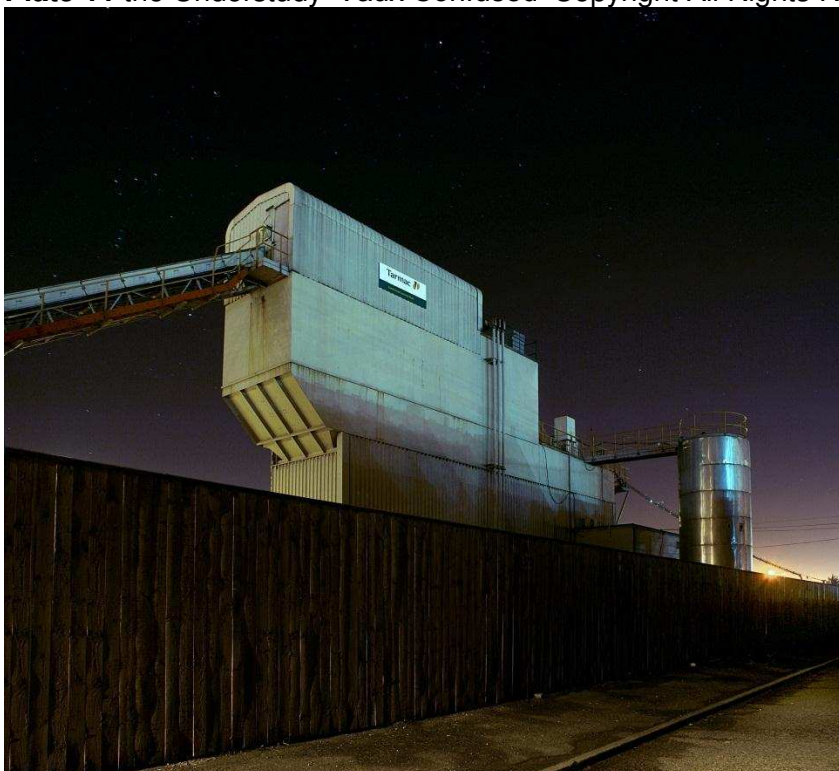
Plate 12 the Understudy 'Tarmac' Copyright All Rights Reserved

Chapter 4

Places and Worlds

Places, worlds and the things in-between

> Encountering places in everyday life, one engages the place with all the senses, interacting with others, with the materiality and with the atmosphere of the place.
>
> (Frers & Meier, 2007:1)

Throughout this research, a variety of places have presented themselves to me. Sometimes I directly sought them out, hunting for them with my camera in areas I already knew. At other times, they found me and I was always surprised at what I found when I stumbled upon them. No matter how well we think we know a place, there are always parts of it about which we know nothing and perhaps will never know anything at all. Newcastle is a city I have lived in for four years and although I can comfortably find my way around its centre, my local knowledge is still limited. In contrast, I was a stranger to the city of Sunderland. As I am based on a campus located on the outskirts of the city, I take the same route in and out each time, never entering the centre. However since walking around Sunderland for this research, I feel that I know it a little better than before but there are still areas totally unknown to me.

Similar to my experience in, and knowledge of, Sunderland, I have also been a member of *Flickr* for a while. Again, I am familiar with many of its different parts but there are areas on the site that I still have not visited. It is in fact through exploring *Flickr* online, I have discovered the various eccentricities and hidden aspects of the cities local to me in an offline sense, and by looking at the many hundreds of photographs online I have without doubt come to know them better. Accompanying these new and historical photographs are discussions and comments by members relating to the local history and personal meaning of the buildings or areas that *Flickr*ites have pictured. This both enriches the experience of being in and allows a deeper understanding of, these different local areas.

Although the terms place and world are used separately here, there is much cross-over between them: there are places within worlds and worlds within places. The distinction to be made here is that places most often refer to the specific areas that photographers visit, whereas worlds have a far broader scope.

Within this research there are many multiple and layered places and worlds to be found. There is the solitary world of the photographers either out with their camera walking in the city, or on their computer in their house. Then there are the local, abandoned, populated, private, public and online places. In this research, the *Flickr*ites were able to find their own way through these different places with relative ease, moving through them many times per day. In this chapter, the different elements of these multiple places and worlds explored by photographers are examined, from the urban to the online.

In the first part of the chapter I focus on the main cities that feature in this research (Sunderland and Newcastle) with an examination of the personal relationship that many of the photographers have with their city. Following on from these discussions, there is an exploration of the places on *Flickr* outlining some of the different areas relevant to the participants in this research. Pink (2009:41) describes place 'as a coming together and 'entanglement' of persons, things, trajectories, sensations, discourses and more'.

To understand additional ideas relating to places and the different *entanglements* within them, this chapter also considers the phenomenological consequences of when both the online and offline cross-over with one another. Ingold's ideas about the meshwork are considered and then adapted to further develop a distinctive approach where *Flickr* is considered to be a tapestry, teaming with movement. This concept allows a fuller exploration of the orientation and interweaving of users and their images within the online environment.

Finally, using Merleau-Ponty's 'The Intertwining – The *Chaism'* as a starting point, I examine how this particular theory can be incorporated into wider discussions involving *Flickr*. Other related phenomenological ideas (such as detached reflection) are also incorporated to allow further insight into the varied relationships users have with the city.

The *Flickr*ites and the city

> Don't you know where to cop? That's what New York Johnny said,
> You should get to know your town, just like I know mine.

(The Clash, *The City of the Dead*) [1]

The city which is 'entangled with different meanings and images' (Frers and Meier, 2007:119) has been a muse to artists, authors and academics alike for hundreds of years and has been the location and subject of some of the greatest novels, photographs and works of art. Whilst an in-depth exploration on the history and identity of the cities featured in this research is not possible here, it is important to briefly highlight why they draw such interest from the photographers in this research in order to contextualise the participants' (and my own) interactions with these places.

When I first arrived in the North East of England, I explored both cities by foot. As a stranger to both places, I found it is the best way to get to know a city and its intimate places. Although both Sunderland and Newcastle have ancient historical roots[2] the fortunes of each city boomed in the early 19th Century from the wealth generated by ship building, coal mining, the railways and merchant trading. This wealth is still reflected in the very grandiose architecture present today, where many of the buildings have oversized doors and windows, vaulted ceilings and sandstone exteriors. In the centre of Newcastle, Grey Street curves down to the Quayside in a glorious neoclassical symmetry, relatively unchanged from when it was first designed in 1830.

Sunderland has the aura of a place of forgotten wealth. The city has a similar recent history to Newcastle and was also a place of great prosperity which burgeoned in size mainly thanks to multiple industries being located on the River

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[1] Quote used as the introduction to 'This is Sunderland' website manifesto. Available [online] at: http://www.this-is-sunderland.co.uk/Home/Home.html (Accessed: 14th January 2012)

[2] Newcastle was first established as a Roman fort, although the name is Anglo-Saxon. Sunderland (until 1719) was part of Monkwearmouth (that lies just on the outskirts of Sunderland city) which was established in 675 AD, home of the Venerable Bede. Local historical information found [Online] Available at: http://www.englandsnortheast.co.uk (Accessed 20th February 2012)

Wear and the two cities (like many others in Britain that lie in close proximity to one another) have a long standing rivalry. In the last part of the 20th Century, Newcastle repositioned itself as a cultural and business hub regenerating different areas of the quayside and city centre. Across the same timeframe, Sunderland has been less fortunate and after years of suffering at the hands of industrial decline, many of its residents as well as outsiders now view the city as being tired and neglected. The buildings and monuments still stand from when Sunderland was once a rich town with a thriving centre, although the grand boulevards and giant banking halls have now been converted into restaurants and bars. The Victorian winter gardens and other large municipal buildings in the centre act as a reminder of Sunderland's former wealth and status.

In contrast to the famous Grey Street heritage area, there are many parts of Newcastle that are in decline. Although the architecture is varied there are many run-down streets and buildings throughout the city centre. However, the different architecture (a mix of Medieval, Georgian, Art Deco, Brutalism, as well as more modern constructions) offers plenty to the photographer in terms of texture, light and character. Some of the buildings (particularly those built in the 1960s and 1970s) are now crumbling away, lying empty and abandoned, but despite the 'eyesore' label, they offer much in the way of photographic opportunity (see Plate 5).

Photographers seem to have a natural connection and attachment to the city. Whilst participants took pictures of a variety of subjects (nature, studio portraits) the majority of images on their photostream were based in and around the city, its architecture and its inhabitants. The city is a place in which they feel comfortable, where they can blend in and explore at their leisure. Anthony told me "I love it in the city, taking photos because of the people… there is such a variety, one end of Newcastle can look quite run down to the other end that looks swanky and modern, you do see a different mix". Andy M explained that "my stuff is more personal attachment to the area and the space as opposed to just taking photographs."

Both Gary and Paul W explained that:

> Natural landscape shots, like fields and trees I can't do, I just look at them and think there is nothing happening but in the city, say with the sun and light there are different shadows at different times of the day so I tend toward more urban than rural shots.
>
> (Gary)

> I do like architecture, but recently I have been getting more into the street stuff, just people going about their business. Living on the fringes of a busy city there is plenty scope for it. I am not one for rural landscapes... I am very much an urban photographer, buildings, people, whatever it is the environment I am happiest in.
>
> (Paul W)

The cities of Sunderland and Newcastle offer a spectrum of different experiences; industrial landscapes lie within the city boundaries whilst coastal locations are also nearby, offering the chance to capture seascapes (see Plates 6, 7, 11, 12). The heavy industry that was once so prevalent in this region still fascinates, whether it is the ruins of a factory or an empty void where a building once stood. The sense of history also permeates the pictures taken by *Flickr*ites and the buildings are a part of their everyday lifeworld.

> Living where I do (in the Ouseburn Valley) local history was going to be a theme... that was really good and I learnt a lot about what was on my own doorstep and some of the fantastic buildings that we have in Newcastle that people just walk past and don't even notice half the time.
>
> (Paul W)

Bringing the unnoticed into view

One of the overarching themes in this research is that the photographer wishes to bring the unnoticed into view (discussed later in Chapter 6) and making sure that other city dwellers do not forget what is *disappearing* from their everyday environment. Since being involved with this research, I have witnessed much destruction and (some) rebuilding of both city centres. In Newcastle, much of the 1960s block concrete architecture has been, or is in the process of being, demolished. In 2011 alone, the Gateshead Car Park (the site is now being rebuilt as a Tesco supermarket), a former tax collection office, known as the Tyne Tower

(now a landscaped green space) and the former Bank of England building in Pilgrim Street (earmarked as a new shopping centre) have all been torn down[3].

In Sunderland, the famous Victorian 'Cherry Knowles' asylum has recently been demolished, alongside dozens of other factories and ship building sites situated along the River Wear. The vast 'Vaux' brewery site (see Plate 11) in the city centre has recently been bought back from Tesco by the council however still remains (at time of writing) undeveloped. Much of this recent history interests participants either from a personal or photographic point of view. Local Sunderland photographer The Understudy explained that his photography stream on *Flickr* is "from a personal point of view, making sure that I didn't forget where my town had recently been, its industrial base. I would say that I am an antiquarian by heart... [I thought] best shoot it before it gets knocked down." Andy M told me "some areas historically are disappearing and it's important to document them but at the same time, my family is from Hendon and the East End, which is where I do a lot of my photos, so there is some emotional attachment there." Paul W noted that:

> I have always had an interest in local history anyway, and I have always lived in Newcastle: Jesmond, Sandyford, Heaton close to the city centre anyway and all the historic stuff that there is, there are some great buildings! It is about making those connections… there is a joy in discovering stuff.

Lynch (1960:3) argues that 'we must not just consider the city as a thing itself, but the city being perceived by its inhabitants'. For many of the photographers in this study, it is important that they can uncover and show alternative and unseen parts of the city, not only to give their photographs a unique point of view, but to document the rapid changes that happen within it. This means that they often turn to the neglected places that local residents eschew. Adams (2005:105) discusses the architectures of difference within the city where:

> Some edges lie across urban space like a great rift between parts of the city, others act as a 'uniting seam' bringing parts of the city together. Edges are also paths, ways to get from one part of town to another.

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[3]The local paper reported both buildings as being 'eyesores' Article [online] available at : http://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/north-east-news/evening-chronicle-news/2011/09/21/pilgrim-street-eyesore-will-be-pulled-down-72703-29460621/ (Accessed 19th December, 2011)

It is often on and around the periphery that interesting places can be found, and photographers often wander the back streets and less well known areas in the city centre. Many photographers exclaimed to me that "people never look up" and often they pointed their camera upward or crouched down on the pavement to find new angles on buildings. When I was out walking with them, my neck quickly became sore thanks to permanently staring upwards at unnoticed details on buildings and monuments.

The strong connection between the photographer, the city and camera, means they can find more in their local area than others may realise, discovering hidden parts that many do not know about. The Understudy told me that "I think it is about location and making the best of what you have got. There is enough in Sunderland." Paul B also commented that "big cities tend to offer more in the way of contrasts and architecture opportunities. I guess, being busier, it's also easier for a photographer to be unseen" meaning they can capture city life as it happens in a more naturalistic way. The images of the city the photographers take are not necessarily to be viewed as picturesque in the formal sense, but are instead representing the many different faces of city life (see Plates 1, 2, 4, 5) and are still aesthetically, very interesting.

Mike commented that in Sunderland "there is some interesting architecture, not always nice but there are some contrasts." Andy M told me that: "It's the atmosphere as well [Sunderland] has a bit of an edge particularly down Hendon and the East End which has a reputation, probably justified at times. I like to think that is reflected in the photos" Similarly Rhona and Gary both told me that: "I think there is beauty in these abandoned buildings it's just a different kind of beauty" (Rhona) and "I will walk down the back alleys, shots of fire escapes, different shadows… I will be in places I am not supposed to be like, taking pictures of derelict buildings." (Gary). However it is not just architecture that is of interest in the city; other factors such as texture, light, people and movement all offer a variety of perspectives and places for photographers to focus on.

Sunderland and Newcastle like most modern cities have two lives, one during the day and one when night falls. Newcastle particularly has a reputation as being a 'party' destination and at the weekend, once the shoppers have scuttled away the night air is filled with other noises: the dull bass thuds from the pubs and clubs, boisterous laughter and singing, the clack of high heels on the pavement. That said, outside of the weekend, the city centre falls eerily quiet during the evening and almost feels uninhabited[4]. Some photographers avoid the city at night but others enjoy capturing the same places transforming into something quite different.

The photography of The Understudy and Andy M is a reaction to the often negative local attitudes toward Sunderland (see Plates 4, 6, 7, 11 and 12). Andy M told me that "if [locals] knew what it was in the past, it was prosperous… people talk it down. The council don't realise the potential is there." Similarly on our walk around the city centre, The Understudy spoke about his disappointment at the many empty sites and wastelands that he sees in Sunderland. Andy M has started a website, the purpose of which is to try: 'And gently edge Sunderland into the limelight and to reveal some of its character. For all its imperfections and often unjustified bad press, I'm proud of my hometown and hopefully this shows in the photos.'[5]

Engaged familiarity

When I observed photographers taking photographs within the cities that they knew, they were naturally at ease with their surroundings. They frequently understood where the best light and locations were and often sought out familiar places, revisiting them on various occasions. These actions are what Heidegger would describe as 'an engaged familiarity' (Blattner, 2006:56) with the world. What is interesting about this particular phrase is that it acknowledges life is often full of repetition, visiting and revisiting the same places, but this does not mean that it is

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[4] Newcastle City Council began the 'alive after 5' initiative in 2010 to try and bring people back to the city centre in the evening with free parking, extended shop opening hours and associated events
[5] Quote from website. Available [online] at: http://www.this-is-sunderland.co.uk/Home/Home.html (Accessed: 14th January 2011)

mindless. Instead photographers are engaging with familiar places in creative and thoughtful ways, they are 'not merely passively situated in their environments' (Pile, 1996:50) instead they are 'active in the creation of meanings… bounded in space and time' (ibid.)

The images that photographers take are not only a creative engagement with the places that they know; they are also an act of rediscovery. The appeal of the derelict city space was strong and in many of our wanderings in the city, we often found ourselves in the quiet or abandoned places. Andy M explained: "people should get off the beaten path and explore the city [but] you need to want to do it. It's curiosity from my end really, to go elsewhere in Sunderland." The paradox here is that although there is frustration amongst many of the photographers that the everyday city environment is underappreciated, it is exactly that abandoned or ignored quality that attracts them in the first place. If it became a hugely photographed place, it would become less interesting. Clearly the local connection creates a deeper link to the city and influences the photographs participants take.

Stepping out into the *unknown* does not necessarily mean one has to travel far and for many, there are places within their home town with which they are unfamiliar[6]. Bound up in the geography of the unknown and the unfamiliar are elements of exclusion and 'the creation of place by necessity involves the definition of what lies outside' (Cresswell 2004:102). Indeed, what does lie outside the places that we know? It is a question that often remains unanswered as so few of us visit places that are truly unknown to us. There are places we know of, yet have no desire to go to and equally there are places we could be curious about but are too scared to enter.

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[6] There are places that we don't know we don't know about too, similar to Donald Rumsfeld's famous quote 'there are things we know we know about terrorism. There are things we know we don't know. And there are things that are unknown unknowns. We don't know that we don't know.' for a fascinating discussion on ideas related to unknown unknowns see Errol Morris's blog [Online] Available at: http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/06/20/the-anosognosics-dilemma-1/#more-53073 (Accessed 1st February 2011)

For some, these unknown places are ones to which they have no access, that are exclusive and that they do not feel a part of, whilst in other cases such places remain happily unknown. There are areas in Sunderland and Newcastle that are out of bounds to the photographer and their camera. These are not only places that are abandoned or boarded up, but areas that are considered to be tough, unsafe for 'outsiders' to walk around, especially with a camera. However, in this research photographers were keener than most to transgress these outside edges and places, to make them known to both the local residents and of course to those on *Flickr*.

Thrift (2003:100) explains that 'images are a key element of space because it is so often through them that we register spaces around us and imagine how they might turn up in the future'. Where will all these images end up in the future? The answer is probably a website like *Flickr* where there is a mixture on the site of old and new, of photographs past, present and I suppose future, of multiple cities and towns. Thus far, discussions have centred on the places that photographers physically go and now this section will turn to another place of interest, *Flickr*.

Welcome to '*Flickr*ville': population, unknown

> Alongside and in dialectical relation with the 'real' built city exists what may be called the 'urban imaginary': a coherent, historically based ensemble of representations drawn from the architecture and street plans of the city, the art produced by its residents, and the images of and discourse on the city as seen, heard, or read in movies, on television, in magazines, and other forms of mass media.
>
> (Greenberg, 2000:228)

The most fitting metaphor for *Flickr* is that of a sprawling city, so big and rapidly expanding that if explored on foot, its outer limits[7] could never be reached. The centre of *Flickr* is the home page that greets the user when they log on to the site and from here there are many multiple pages that can be clicked on, that connect to other parts of the site.

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[7] I once read that Las Vegas county office keep having to produce a new map of the city every few months due to the exponential growth of its suburbs that keep growing so fast out into the desert, they cannot make the maps fast enough.

The most personal place is the 'you' page that details the username, contacts, favourite images, settings and member profile. This part of *Flickr* could be likened to Heidegger's dwelling place or home, 'the ideal kind of authentic existence' (Cresswell, 2004:24) and an utterly familiar landscape. Travelling onward into *Flickr* from here depends very much on the user and their routines within the site.

What loosely tied together many of the people I met on *Flickr* was their membership of the same groups (but they were not necessarily always active in them) with a North East/urban theme. These groups are perhaps described best as the city's buildings and the billions of images uploaded are the bricks, the architecture of *Flickr*. The cityscape of *Flickr* would look like any modern metropolis, with large skyscrapers that house tens of thousands of members and equally small quirky studios, where just a handful of people reside. Despite having this huge place at their disposal, similar to a real city, *Flickr*ites regularly visited the same parts with its familiar buildings and people. They upload photographs of the places that they see, journeys that they make which are local to them. They comment on the photographs of people that they know (but have more than likely never met in person) and rarely stray far from the groups that they join[8].

The size of *Flickr* means that to truly explore parts of it, one needs time to become lost and enjoy the feeling of wandering around its environs built from the billions of uploaded images. Perhaps *lost* is not the most accurate term in this instance, it is more of a temporary disorientation similar to when someone cuts down an unfamiliar side street in the physical world. Although they could end up somewhere unexpected, they can always return back to their starting point. The word *lost* implies a step into the unknown and is therefore often associated with anxiety, as someone who is lost fears that they might never return to a place they know. Although with modern technology such as GPS, it is now almost impossible to become truly lost[9] in the modern urban world. On *Flickr* there are no such dangers.

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[8] Often I found I kept 'bumping' into the same people in different groups
[9] There are of course other ways that we can become lost in mind and in body, see Solnit 2005

Despite its size, *Flickr* feels personal because as the number of contacts and interactions gradually build up and members visit it every day, it soon becomes another part of a daily routine, an example of 'place being pluralized in and by electronically mediated communication' (Moores, 2004:32). Many photographers in this research professed to logging on to *Flickr* daily, depending on their schedules. Some also spoke of the frustration when 'life got in the way' of their planned *Flickr* use and when they were unable to log on for whatever reason, they felt their sense of routine had been disrupted.

Flickr is constructed to encourage interaction and members can comment on any photograph tagged as publicly available. Groups have moderators and admins who oversee the content and have overall control of what appears (this is also monitored by *Flickr* staff) so *Flickr* is a comparatively safe place, which can lead some to think of it as less like a cosmopolitan city and more like a gated community[10]. '[Flickr] isn't just a mirror held up to our society - it's a sanitized, civilized mirror, with the illegal, hurtful and nasty elements largely pruned away' (Colin, 2008). Like other such sites online, *Flickr* offers members the chance to make contact with one another and be sociable both through the images that they post and meeting up to take photographs offline. It is this social aspect of *Flickr* that this section will now focus on.

Flickr as a social world

Chapter 1 outlined why *Flickr* is neither a community in the traditional sense nor a social network. However, there is a clear social element to both discussions on *Flickr* and the offline meet ups that happen as a consequence[11].

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[10] When members join *Flickr*, they can pre-set the safety level of images that they view, meaning they come across inappropriate content (i.e. pornography) less often. Flickr has a management system allowing content to be labelled as 'restricted' and 'moderate' that means those looking for nudes can find them (and post them) without being reported. There are no current figures about the amount of adult content on *Flickr*; however an article in 2007 put the figure at less than 1% of total content on Flickr (see http://www.wired.com/techbiz/media/news/2007/07/flickr). If you do find groups outside the safe settings with some adult content, you can see the group front page but there is a button at the top which reads 'if you've changed your mind about wanting to see this content, you can ESCAPE. Take me to the kittens' Sure enough clicking on it, takes you to a group with only pictures of kittens. Seen at: http://www.flickr.com/groups/422091@N25/pool/ (Accessed 12th April, 2011)

[11] Photographs themselves are social objects too, see Pink 2006, Van House, 2011 for a fuller outline

My personal experience of *Flickr* is that of an open and friendly place where photographers are invited in to join groups, comment on images and mainly keep their photographs public for others to see. Despite participants criticising the site layout or interface as being "clunky", many told me that the power of *Flickr* was in its sociability.

Alastair and Tom explained that:

> The reason I put stuff on *Flickr* certainly early on when I got my pro account was to share things with people. I was really proud of the picture and wanted to show it off and one thing I have learnt now, the stuff that I am not entirely happy with I will upload it and people comment and like the picture… if we are out on a photo walk and someone says to me I really liked that, how did you do that? I get a reward from that. I put it on *Flickr* for people to look at, but that is not always the reason that I take the picture.
>
> (Alastair)

> Another thing with *Flickr* that kind of sucks you in a bit…is getting attention from random people or praise…simultaneously constructive criticism would be great but people are normally a bit reluctant to hand that out even in the groups that I have joined, people rarely say you could do this different.
>
> (Tom)

The relationship between the photographers, their photographs and *Flickr* is a complex one requiring some careful social negotiation. Marking the photographs as public and putting them into different groups signifies that the user would like them to not only be seen by others, but that they would also like feedback on their images. Some photographers target the bigger groups to post into just so they can get more comments. Mike R told me that:

> I might search for a group and see what other pictures are on there and see if I want to post into it, a lot of the time people who have a similar interest, I will look to see where they have posted into… it depends… if the group has only three people then I don't see the point you don't get the exposure but if they have the same interests then you are going to get more of an honest comment back.

Regular *Flickr*ites do not just dump their photographs into the different groups to which they belong. They are selective as to where their work should go, weighing up where they are going to get useful feedback (more likely with a *local* group) against how many members will potentially see their photographs (as some of the *global* groups can have upwards of 10,000 members), although this only really

matters if their goal is to develop a *popular* photostream. Andy M explained this complexity further:

> I was looking to build a website to put my photographs online and obviously *Flickr* is a good way to do that. It's about reaching a wider audience… *Flickr* seems more real; the beauty of it is there is such a variety of people. I have quite a following now, which is a bit embarrassing really, some of the comments I get, it's nice but I don't like the attention - well I do, because I wouldn't be on there, maybe subconsciously I crave the attention!

Popularity on *Flickr* can be judged in countless ways: the amount of views on your page, the number of times your photographs have been added as a favourite by others or even the number of times your images have featured in Explore (*Flickr's* selection of the top 500 photos uploaded that day). The sheer number of users on *Flickr* means that one can easily build up a local and global following relatively quickly. Many of the participants also have their own personal photography sites, connected to their *Flickr* stream which also adds to the number of followers the photographers and their images have.

One of the biggest attractions of *Flickr* was the possibility of making contact with other photographers. I am wary of using the word *friend* here as the loose relationships between users is based on general common interest rather than deeper social ties, although that is not to say that contacts cannot become friends after a period of time[12]. Paul B explained that "[Flickr] is a great opportunity to see other styles and techniques and get inspiration for locations and feedback on my work. I have a number of regular contacts on *Flickr* and have developed friendships with local photographers via *Flickr*."

There were also many examples of offline and online social worlds crossing over. Mike R noted that "I have met people when I am out and I have asked them are you on *Flickr*? They have said yes and added me as a friend on there, or commented on my photos". Chillie 63 told me:

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[12] The use of the word friend on social network sites is very common and in the context of Facebook has now become a verb.

> I have made a few international contacts but I have also met guys that live around here. I am not from Seaham but when I started taking photography a bit more seriously, there are a few good photographers here in Seaham! Or you are down at the beach and someone else is taking a photograph and you ask them, are you on *Flickr*? And get their name then a couple of hours later you are home and look for them on *Flickr*, you make contacts that way.

Flickr allows photographers to make connections globally but it also links up those who live close to one another. This is partly because photographers often take pictures of subjects local to them and when photographers recognise the area in a group or on Explore, they are more likely to make contact. Mike R mentioned how he "met a guy down at Durham… I met him when we were taking some photographs in the same spot and we started talking and he was so intense, it was great to meet someone who was as interested and as passionate as I am."

There are still many local 'traditional' photography clubs running within the Newcastle and Sunderland area and some participants were also members of these. *Flickr* does have many similar characteristics of the traditional club: the photograph is central to discussion, competition is encouraged and members offer advice and criticism of one another's images. Many of these photography clubs also link to *Flickr* as well, so there can often be a crossover between them. There is also the element of exhibition and in many ways *Flickr* could be seen as an extension of a club's 'exhibition' space (Van House, 2007). Tom told me that *Flickr* is a place that I can "show myself" and Mike also explained that he puts his photographs in certain groups to "be seen".

In the past, participants who attended these club meetings have found the atmosphere intimidating. Some participants told me that:

> Photography clubs are all over the place and there are not very many young people in them from my experience anyway, there were ones that I went to that were full of old men! *Flickr* is a bit like a club… I enjoy photography more now I am on *Flickr*.
>
> (Donna)

> When I have been to camera clubs and there are these people there, judges with letters after their names when they were picking pictures out, I was thinking why are they picking those ones out? All these rules that are imposed by photography, rules are there to be broken!
>
> (Gary)

Without having attended any club meetings, it is difficult to make a fair comparison between *Flickr* and other photographic societies, an area outside the scope of this research. Generally the social elements are similar but the size of *Flickr* does allow groups to be far more specific, and can have subjects more in common than just photography or local geography. Paul W told me that: "I think that with our little *Flickr* group we don't like too much formality or organisation. We are all just easy going, slightly geeky!" The Flickr meet-ups I attended as part of this research were relaxed and although all the photographers there knew I was doing research, they were talkative and happy to answer any questions I had about their work. There were clearly strong friendships between some members, forged from both online contact and previous meet-ups but this was not to the detriment of others; the atmosphere was welcoming in all the gatherings I attended.

Flickr is socially complex and there is a correlation between the *Flickr* routine and the relationship to the site (see Chapter 6 for more detail). However at its most basic, *Flickr* simply offers another means for photographers to make contact with one another as photography is typically a solitary hobby. Whilst many photographers enjoy the absorption of doing photography by themselves, the chance to make contact and get compliments on their images is appealing, something that *Flickr* offers in abundance. Many of these layers of interaction are formed through the movement, both on the group pages and via the photographs themselves. It is to the intricacies of movement that this section will now turn.

The threads that bind us – the tapestry of *Flickr*

> Whereas printed images and negatives are under the control of the owner, digital photographs have slipped the bounds of materiality and may have a life of their own, outside the control of their makers.
>
> (Van House, 2011:128)

> Ways of life are not determined in advance, as routes to be followed but have continually to be worked out anew. And these ways, far from being inscribed upon a surface of an inanimate world, are the very threads from which the living world is woven
>
> (Ingold, 2000:242)

Figure 1a

Maurzio Anzeri's *Yvonne* (2011)

Embroidery on photograph

Figure 1b

Maurzio Anzeri's *Nicola* (2011)

Embroidery on photograph

The mediums of photography and embroidery are rarely combined, however when seeing the intricate artworks of Maurzio Anzeri (Figures 1a and 1b) where thread is directly sewn into the surface of the picture, the possibilities are striking. Anzeri finds his anonymous portraits in flea markets and works on the photographs for a long time, first laying tracing paper on top of the image to design his embroidered 'mask', to finally making the small holes in the photograph and then gradually layering the threads over the top. What is most striking about Anzeri's pictures is that although the threads are singular in form, the pattern builds in such a way so that from a distance they take the appearance of a solid shape (for example the crescent shape, coloured red on the face of 'Nicola'). Looking closely at the pictures, we can see each individual hole that Anzeri has made in the paper, the colours of the single threads and the details underneath the embroidery of the photograph itself.

Anzeri believes that "when I begin stitching something else happens, drawing will never do what a thread will – the light changes and at some points you can lose the face, and at other times you can still see underneath it"[13].

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[13]Quote from artist and discussion on his technique available [online] at http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/maurizio_anzeri.htm?section_name=photography (Accessed 1st September 2011)

Anzerri is playing with a number of conventions associated with both forms in a clever and creative way. There are many deeper metaphors present in the images on show, from the masks that we wear when posing for the camera to the fibre and structure of our bodies and muscles. Ingold (2007:61) reminds us that 'the verb 'to weave' in Latin was *texere*, from which are derived our words 'textile' and – by way of French *tistre* – 'tissue' meaning a delicately woven fabric composed of a myriad of interlaced treads' later adopted by anatomists to describe the structure and organs of the human body.

Within the intricate web of embroidery on the front of Anzeri's work, the threads on their own do not hold much significance however together they become a solid design – but what if we were to turn the pictures over and look at the back of them? The solid lines of thread would not be taut but instead may be loose and dangle free, knotted separately or messily intertwined with the many other threads. The wonder of embroidery is that while the back is often a mass of entangled coloured threads that are seemingly random, the front is ordered and neat, and it is through each thread that a singular picture begins to emerge. Discussions in Chapter 1 presented the idea that photographs are produced through movement. The end products of these movements are the photographs, which are posted onto *Flickr* like threads within a kind of moving, interwoven tapestry.

The billions of images on *Flickr* are not connected with one another; instead they are singular entities which have movements and a life of their own. If *Flickr* was a network in the traditional sense, these photographs would be connected point-to-point *to something*, however I think the site is truer to a form of tapestry. Not the kind of traditional tapestry that is a large picture on cloth made from smaller ordered stitches, but rather a collection or bundle of thin threads like Anzeri's experimental artwork, where densely compacted threads are layered on top and beside one another to make a mass or shape. The *Flickr* tapestry is made from billions of images and from a distance they do seem to come together in a coherent way within group pools where they can be tagged via the same subject, characteristics or even camera. When you study *Flickr* closely, however, each photograph leads a separate life from the others and they are singular in character.

Despite their single nature, when images are taken together one can easily get a grasp of the collective work involved which I have attempted to illustrate in Figure 2. This shows screen grabs of pages that contain images tagged with the phrase 'Angel of the North'. When these are put together, an overall picture emerges of the sculpture and different interpretations by photographers of what is a very popular local landmark. The different perspectives collectively become one picture showing the same subject but each photograph is a singular object and until it is put into the group of choice, floats by itself.

Figure 2

Selection of pictures on *Flickr* tagged with Angel of the North
'representing the environment they are part of' (Pink, 2011a:9)

Now, imagine for a moment that every time a photograph 'moved' around in *Flickr* it left a line or was trailed by a coloured thread. It would start to resemble something like Figure 3 which is a simple diagram attempting to show the movements of six photographs on the site. I use the word *move* here in a very general sense. Once placed online, the photographs stay on my personal homepage and they remain there until I take them down but when someone adds my photograph to their collection of favourites, it creates a unique path between their page and mine. Similarly if an image is added to a group page, another unique path is formed between this image and the group pool. My photograph has moved from one place to another with a unique path between each part. There are many other applications on *Flickr* which also carve new paths between photographs including Explore, the blog, *Flickr* maps and calendars.

Figure 3 illustrates the interweaving possibilities of two members using the site and how the paths of individual photographs (but not the photographers

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themselves) cross on the site in different ways. What gradually builds up is a complex tapestry of singular movements and colours which, when multiplied by the number of photographs and users on *Flickr*, becomes an almost dense wall of threads, each one representing separate paths of movement.
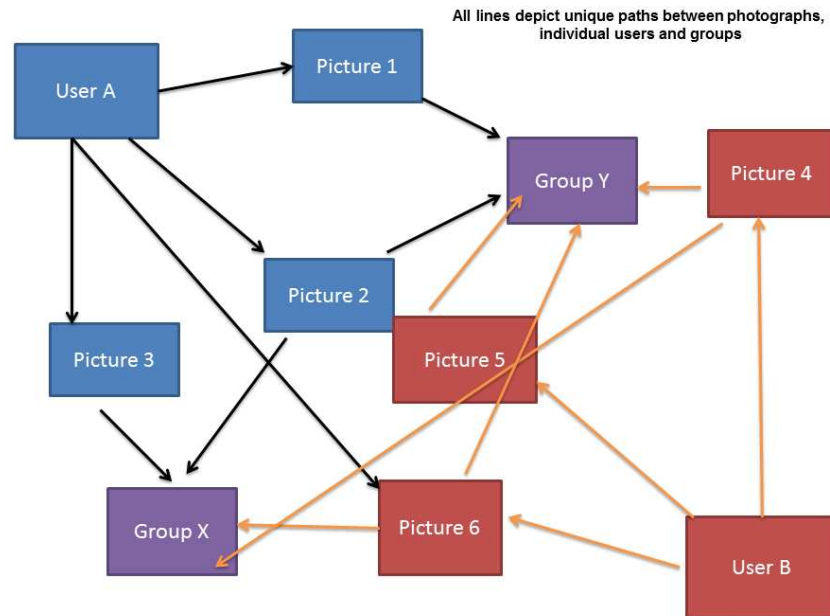
Figure 3
Illustration of the development of image paths within Flickr, forming a tapestry

The discussion here of *Flickr* as tapestry as opposed to a network is an attempt to move to a more tactile understanding about online movements. To construe *Flickr* as *just* a network consisting of thousands of different bits of binary code, each having a start point and an end point, would miss out the pleasure that is to be had when moving around its environs, following the paths users carve as they explore around it. The idea of *Flickr* as a tapestry further develops Ingold's work which considers the world not as a network of points, but as a *meshwork* of interactions, a notion highlighted by Pink (2011a)*.*

Before going into further detail about Ingold's conceptual ideas relating to wayfinding, meshwork and online places, I must be clear that this is an area Ingold has not written about and I am doubtful he would support. Ingold's general attitude toward modern life, particularly in 'modern metropolitan cities' (2007:75), is particularly gloomy.

Accounts of everyday wayfinding frustratingly centre on cultures of the ancient past (Inuit reindeer hunters, Aborigines, medieval storytellers or ancient sea-farers) and specifically those who seem untainted by the more recent onslaught of modernity. In his discussions on transport use, Ingold writes that the modern traveller (as opposed to more ancient kind) is moved 'from point to point *across* its surface' rather than *along it*, like the wayfarer' (my emphasis, Ingold, 2007:79). This observation is important because the only mention that he makes to the online realm is a similar analogy within a footnote in more recent work where he contends that:

> To me, as a relatively inexperienced user, navigating the internet is a matter of activating a sequence of links that take me... from site to site. Each link is a connector, and the web itself is a network of interconnected sites. Travel through cyberspace thus resembles transport. Experienced users, however, tell me that... they follow trails like wayfarers... for them, the web may seem more like a mesh than a net. How we should understand 'movement' through the internet is an interesting question.
>
> (Ingold, 2011:249)

It is indeed a *very* interesting question but one I suspect will remain unanswered by Ingold. The idea that *Flickr* is a place which members inhabit is perhaps something that Ingold might disagree with, nonetheless I intend to utilise his conceptual vocabulary to further the idea that *Flickr* is not simply a network. Instead its members 'make their way *through* a world in-formation rather than across its preformed surface' (Ingold, 2008:1802). The concept of *the network* both as analogy and actual thing has become popular in many different disciplines; the term is widely used in business studies, biology and computing. It has now even become a verb: the ability to successfully *network* with others offers a multitude of social opportunities. However, Ingold (ibid.:1806) criticises networks as the starting point because 'relations it is supposed, are mutually constitutive… relations *between* necessarily presuppose an operation of inversion whereby every person or thing is turned in upon itself prior to the establishment of a connecting link'.

Ingold then goes on to explain an alternative concept to networks, namely 'fluid space', a theory first developed by Mol and Law. Ingold (ibid.) explains that this is where 'substances… flow, mix and mutate as they pass through the medium,

sometimes congealing into more or less ephemeral forms that can nevertheless dissolve or reform without breach of continuity'. This definition is a useful starting point when considering *Flickr* as a particularly transitory place. The site is continually being added to, new paths forming as content is uploaded and users begin to interact with each another and the different photographs on the site. It is these paths of contact and lines of narrative that make *Flickr* such a unique place and give it a lived in, vibrant quality. There has been very little written about the ways in which people move and orient themselves around online sites like *Flickr*, however Ingold's discussion on wayfaring and path making allows for an alternative discussion when considering movement in virtual places.

Importantly he describes everyday wayfinding strategies as 'knowing as you go' (Ingold, 2000:228) in which 'people's knowledge of the environment undergoes continuous formation in the very course of them moving about in it' (ibid.:230)[14]. There are many different routes around *Flickr* and there are endless possibilities for users to find their own unique path. I believe it is the inherent explorative nature of *Flickr* which has led to its success and user loyalty. The culture of exploration on the site is worth mentioning a little more within the context of Ingold's ideas, so it is to *Flickr*'s Explore page that this section will now meander.

"Flowers, birds, grumpy cats and misty water" – Explore's place on *Flickr*

The above quote came from Anthony as we looked through and discussed Explore during our browse and talk session. His comment describes the almost limitless supply of pictures that often have a set of similar themes on *Flickr's* infamous Explore page that for many *Flickr*ites, is a source of wonder, bemusement and loathing in equal measure[15]. For critics that view the era of Web 2.0 as 'an endless forest of mediocrity' (Keen, 2007:5), and thus by proxy will dislike *Flickr* and all other digital photography sites, Explore could be described as a place that encapsulates the predictability and relative benign subject matter to be found on the site.

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[14] Again this theory is not without its critics and anthropologists particularly disagree on Ingold's theories on wayfinding as opposed to cognitive maps. For an interesting examination on these debates and issues see Istomin & Dwyer, 2009.

[15] Further comments and discussion about Explore by participants can be found in Chapter 6.

The Explore function on *Flickr* is explained on the page blurb as:

Interestingness! Besides being a five syllable word suitable for tongue twisters, it is also an amazing new Flickr feature. There are lots of elements that make something 'interesting' (or not) on Flickr. Where the click-throughs are coming from; who comments on it and when; who marks it as a favourite; its tags and many more things which are constantly changing. Interestingness changes over time, as more and more fantastic content and stories are added to Flickr.

(*Flickr*, 2011)

What is played down here is the role of the Explore algorithm, a complex, secret programme devised to shake down *Flickr* like a cherry harvester to find the most interesting photographs from around 720,000[16] images uploaded onto the site every day. The construction of the algorithm is meant to prevent photographers from second guessing how to get their photographs on Explore, leading to wider exposure on the site, ultimately making them and their photostream more popular. Success on Explore is measured through various different factors, from the number of comments on the photograph itself to the amount of comments that members write on the images of others. It can be about how many groups the image is posted into, how many users mark it as a favourite and the number of tags applied to it.

The algorithm certainly seems to reward interaction and participation above artistic skills such as composition and framing. However as the programme is perpetually changing, it is difficult to identify any one particular element that would guarantee that a photograph would be featured. To further add to the mystery, *Flickr* does not alert photographers if their image has been featured and so many will find out second hand or while later combing their page stats and notice a spike in views and click-throughs. This idea of rewarding interactivity as opposed to talent does seem to irk some *Flickr*ites, who are often baffled as to why an image that they view as highly average or boring can be found daily on Explore[17]. Despite these mixed feelings, to be 'explored' is an accolade that is valued within the *Flickr* community as the 500 photographs featured daily on the Explore page do not represent the number of uploads to the site, so there is a positive feeling attached to any image being singled out. Although many of the pictures are similar in style

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[16] Based on an average of 5000 uploads per minute onto the site
[17] Hundreds of comments, discussions and suggestions about Explore can be found on www.flickr.com/help/explore

and content (an indicator perhaps that a machine is doing the picking) there is clearly some enjoyment in repeatedly looking at the same content too, the wisdom of crowds writ large in visual terms. When entering Explore via the front page it gives users a number of options on how to view photographs (shown in Figure 4) on that part of the site. It asks if they wish to 'Explore interesting photos by choosing a point in time' and offers numerous 'places to Explore' including features like the world map, the most recent uploads, the calendar, or the blog.
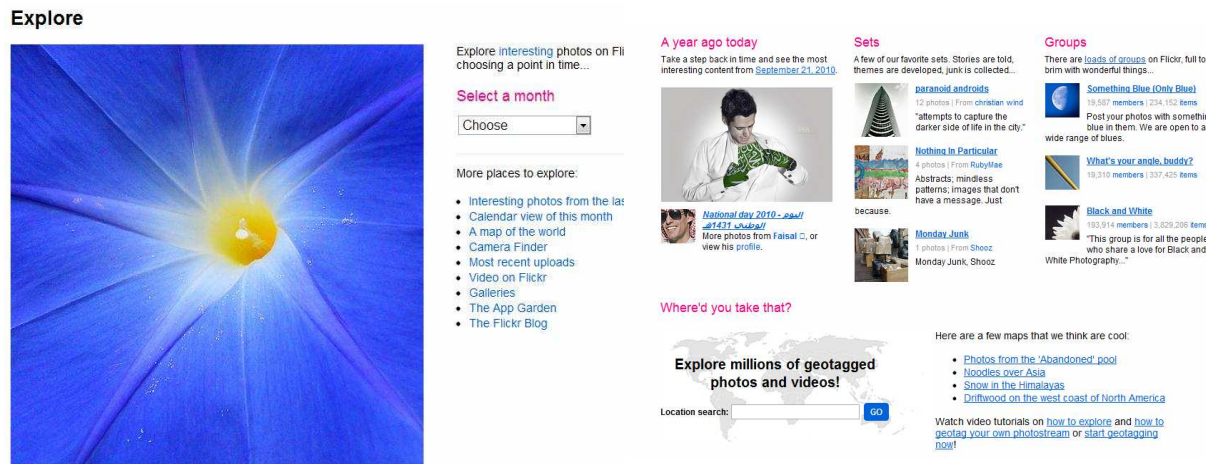
Figure 4

The 'Explore' front page on *Flickr*

It is interesting to note the explicit reference here to *places* rather than *pages*. *Flickr*ites are being encouraged to conceive the site as a *somewhere* rather than an abstract 'thing' or website. The construction of the whole page actively encourages random clicking so users could 'Explore geotagged photos', see photographs from a year ago today or look at a few favourite sets where 'stories are told, themes are developed, junk is collected' (Flickr, 2012). The use of the words *stories* and *collection* here also link to photography and the analogue practices of narration, gathering and revisiting photographs in albums. There are many other ways to get around *Flickr* and through these visit pages (and others) outside of Explore, there is every chance that one could stumble upon the same groups or pictures at random via their own exploration and wandering of the site.

Flickr then, is not simply a server space for images, but it has a meaning and function for the millions of people that use it. It is explicitly presented as a *place*, which is visited frequently and habitually everyday by its users. In this instance 'the

media do not simply occupy time and space, they also structure it and give it meaning' (Livingstone cited in Bull, 2004: 275). The photographers in this study use *Flickr* in a habitual way and use the internet more than other forms of mass media; Mike told me: "I don't watch TV anymore, this [gesturing to the computer] is what I do". The 'this' part is not just fiddling with photographs, tweaking with hue or saturation levels, but posting and interacting with others on the site, looking at other photographs, posting their images into multiple groups, setting challenges, entering competitions, finding favourites and maybe even discovering new places and contacts. There is actually *more* contact and discussion with other photographers on *Flickr* than perhaps there would be in the offline world. If 'every one of us lives in a landscape of his own' (Young cited in Briggs, 1989:6) then *Flickr* also gives users a chance to display and show their personal places and landscapes for the world to see. This chapter will now consider the possibilities of when these places crossover and become entangled.

Flickr and the *Chaism*

From: Chi-as-ma [N. *pl.*][18] [Greek khiasma, cross-piece, from khiazein]
1. Anatomy   A crossing or intersection of two tracts, as of nerves or ligaments

Although Merleau-Ponty was considering the body when writing about the *Chaism* (which was incomplete due to his death) there is scope to extend some of his ideas into the online world and user interaction with technology. *The Chaism* (as the above definition implies) is rooted in the metaphor of criss-crossing or interlacing between one thing and another. The development in the technology of personal computers, digital cameras and mobile phones has meant that there has been a quickening entanglement or intersection between people, technology and everyday environments.

These have become knotted together in a variety of complex ways and as a consequence 'particular media environments have become meaningful places' (Moores & Metykova, 2010:185). *Flickr* in particular gives its users the chance to

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[18] Dictionary Definition [online] http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/chiasm
(Accessed 14th March 2012)

view and become involved in the everyday worlds of others, which are presented both photographically and described in the text underneath. Carman (2008:124) understands that 'Merleau-Ponty believes with body and world, that the two are not distinct things but sinews of a common flesh, threads in the same fabric, related to one another… as a single woven texture'. Similarly, I believe that the individual threads that weave together to form the *Flickr* tapestry are all part of the same world that also functions offline, away from the website.

Clicking through Explore or by typing in random words as tags, threads of other peoples' lives from all over the world, as well as those local to me, can be viewed and I can gain an insight into their everyday lives and habits. Looking at different groups, I can view what they had for breakfast (*Breakfast of Champions*), how they get to work (*My commute*) or what they carry around with them every day *(What's in your bag?*). I can see where they live (*Grim up North, I love North East England*) and how they document its demolishment, abandonment or hidden aspects (*Alternative Sunderland*).

These last two groups are based in the North East and form a part of *my* daily life patterns because they document places and things that I pass on the way to university, work or home. When I look at the various photostreams and recognise where it was taken, the next time I revisit that place, I look out for the picture to understand how they captured that particular image. I suddenly become aware how the photographer's viewpoint and mine intertwine; in a singular moment it was and is *my* landscape, the same one I passed daily, yet now it also is part of someone else's landscape too, but experienced in a different way. There were many instances of offline and online worlds becoming entangled in this research, sometimes deliberately, sometimes by chance. When discussing the photographs on a local *Flickr* group, Richard remarked upon on a picture that had been uploaded of a clamped car, as he was familiar with the image because he was in the same place that morning and "walked past it" on his way into Newcastle.

Other photographers remarked that *Flickr* does influence their photography when they are out with the camera. Rhona told me that "if I have seen something that someone else has taken a picture of [on Flickr] that would make me want to do

something different!" Alastair also said that: "if [the image] was taken on a photo walk, I will make a comment [on *Flickr*] related to the conversation at the time, which make the comments quite random at times!"

Carman (2008:188-189) writes that for Merleau-Ponty 'visibility is neither surface appearance nor sensory stimulation. It is the intuitively felt reality of things disclosed to us as part of a dense, opaque world… in which things show up amid things'. *Flickr* users are interested greatly in things 'showing up' particularly when they have captured something that others may pass by unnoticed. It is not that they physically see differently to others, rather they are more attuned to everyday visibility as the variety of textures within the world open up to them, importantly 'seeing the visibility of the visible requires stepping back from our ordinary naive immersion in things' (ibid.).

Gateshead Car Park

Let me examine these ideas further with an example. On *Flickr* there is a group named *Gateshead Get Carter Car Park demolition* which chronicled the gradual pulling down of the Trinity car park[19] designed by Owen Luder in the 1960s and dominated Gateshead town centre and the surrounding landscape throughout its lifetime. I passed the car park most days when on the way to work and followed the group with interest since joining it in 2009. Sometimes when I walked past the building I took no notice and it was absorbed into my peripheral vision; other times I slowed down my walking pace and stared up at it, thinking how different the place would (and now does) look without it. The site was hazardous, so it was surrounded by chipboard hoardings, which partially obscured passers-by from seeing the building completely.

At the front of the car park there was a giant crane with a 'nibbler' attached, waiting to eat at the concrete. Viewing photographs of the car park on the group site, I directly connected to them because I could locate these images within my own movements and daily routine, combined with the vision of another

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[19] The building was fully demolished in January 2011

photographer and, of course, my own. When I repeatedly walked past the car park, I linked my experiences back to the *Flickr* page and wondered if any other members have come down to the site lately to capture its gradual demise. My experiences and movements are present within these images, even though they are not *my* photographs. Merleau-Ponty explains that:

> The two systems are applied upon one another, as the two halves of an orange…we must habituate ourselves to think that every visible is cut out in the tangible, every tactile being in some manner promised to visibility and that there is encroachment, infringement not only between the touched and the touching but also between the tangible and the visible…since the same body sees and touches, visible and tangible belong to the same world.

<div align="right">(Merleau-Ponty cited in Baldwin, 2004:251-252)</div>

There are two important points to highlight here: the first is that movement is important when discussing vision and the body; the second reveals a rethink about the visual, which is often treated as a separate entity from the body and touch. Merleau-Ponty believes that they are experienced together and that one cannot be pulled away from the other. If 'visible and tangible' belong together, on *Flickr* it is possible to become involved in a double-bind between our digital and everyday worlds, where the digital sits coiled on top of our everyday movements and interactions with environment and technology. To paraphrase Carman (2008:180), the camera 'is not just directed *toward* but embedded *in* the world.'

The pictures on *Flickr* do not simply represent taken moments; they are also interlinked with other sensations and movements, a place where we can see the worldly textures of another's experience. Discussing films, Sobchack (2008:125) states that:

> On the screen we see the roughness of tree bark or the satiny smoothness of the satin gown - but this seeing of 'roughness' or 'smoothness' would be impossible if vision were not intimately informed by our sense of touch… your body knows… we shouldn't be able to feel the texture just by looking but we do.

Merleau-Ponty (cited in Baldwin, 2004:279) further explains that 'the lived object is not rediscovered or constructed on the basis of the contributions of the senses; rather it presents itself to us from the start as the centre from which these contributions radiate'. To illustrate this idea, let us once again revisit the Gateshead Car Park photo stream.

The photographs uploaded over many months mainly depicted the outside of the building due to access issues. Whilst the structure was still sound, despite only being built 40 years ago, it had not weathered particularly well: the concrete was stained, mottled with dabs of masonry paint, graffiti and cracks. At the very top of the structure the huge square windows were still intact, their curved edges giving way to yet more grey concrete. Originally they were there to give a picturesque view to a restaurant that never opened, and being that high up meant the views expanded across Gateshead, Newcastle and beyond. Towards the end of its life, limited access was granted by the local council to photographers to go inside the building, and there are a number of photographs that show how neglected the interior of the building had become.

One striking picture shows an empty chair in front of the large curved windows, pointing out in the direction of the city (see Plate 2). It shows that the floor and walls are damp and dirty and there is a profound sense of emptiness and sadness in the picture, a brooding absence of affection. This photograph brings the viewer a different perspective and reveals a little of the promise that the architects had originally envisaged. People dining in comfort as cars rumbled underneath and the urban landscape sprawled out before them. This picture is filled with different sensations and textures: the synthetic feel of the chair covering, the smell of damp concrete, mingling with the sounds of the traffic below echoing around the room. The empty chair urges the viewer to contemplate the view that will soon be gone as you brush the dust away that has settled on your clothes. The air smells damp and there is a lot of dust in the atmosphere, due to the demolition taking place further below. The amount of light that floods in through the glass makes you squint a little and you bend down to look through the viewfinder once again.

The sensual elements present within this photograph allow 'all of our senses to cooperate, each informing the others' (Sobchack, 2008:125) so when taking as well as viewing photographs 'we visually participate in them' (Carman, 2008:186) rather than take a passive role. Walking past the building again (when it was still standing) I remembered this picture. I stopped to look up at the car park and saw the windows at the top, realising just how high they were. I suddenly understood the sense of space that awaited the visitor, if they had ever been allowed in. In this

example, it appears that there is a triple 'criss-crossing' between individual experiences of physical place, the pictures taken and how that account is received and experienced by others on the site.

A common acronym on *Flickr* is 'WTME' which stands for the *world through my eyes* and it often denotes a picture that reveals something personal, that the photographer wants to share with others. It invites other members to see the subject the way they do, but also to *experience* it as well, going beyond looking. If, as Carman (2008:184) states, 'the painter takes his body with him… it is not a chunk of space or a bundle of functions but the body that is as intertwining of body and movement' the same could be said of the viewer, who takes their own experiences and sensations with them, when looking at a photograph or a painting.

Photography and its critics

Photography is briefly mentioned by Merleau-Ponty in his last published paper 'Eye and Mind' from 1960, which considers painting, perspective and depth but does not discuss photography in great detail. The example he uses is Gericault's famous painting Epsom Derby that (wrongly) depicts the movement of the horses jumping, as the animals legs are fully stretched out both at the front and back. For Merleau-Ponty (cited in Baldwin, 2004:317) these horses 'have in them that leaving-here-going-there quality because they have a foot in each instant'. Carman (2008: 193) goes into more detail, directly criticising photography stating that:

> One could say that photographs reveal too little in capturing a single instant and stripping away the temporal horizons surrounding it, yet one could equally say they reveal too much by exposing what we ordinarily never see and forcing it to our attention… a photograph shows a horse hovering in mid-air, legs tucked under it. *Epsom Derby* by contrast, elicits a sense of real weight and movement, the sound and feel of hooves on turf, though what Gericault literally paints is oversized horses in mid-stride, legs extending (impossibly) both forward and back. The photograph thus reveals both too much and too little –or better, it *merely* registers and exposes and as a result dispels the aura of invisibility that renders the horses in the painting visible *as* horses, galloping across a field on a cloudy day.

I disagree with Carman here, especially his dismissive belief that photography is 'merely' a way of registering reality and I think he is unnecessarily romanticising the paintings of Gericault. A photograph of a horse with its legs tucked underneath

can equally illustrate and evoke the speed and streamlined nature of the animal in movement (such as the early work of Edward Muybridge). Carman's statement also severely limits what photography and painting can and should show (thinking particularly of the early surrealist painters and photographers) and their potential to make different facets of the world around them more visible. If Carman's belief is that the photograph completely eradicates or 'petrifies' movement, what about photographs that are blurred or feature incomplete movement? Or paintings that are in the Hyper-realism style? The texture of movement can be present in images, such as hair being blown by the wind, or the rain falling from the sky as much as the 'feel' of movement that Carman describes, is in Gericault's paintings.

Merleau-Ponty (cited in Baldwin, 2004:316) states that the 'the photograph keeps open the instants which the onrush of time close up' and therefore extinguishes the overlapping nature of the visible that painting brings to the eye. However I think photography makes *other* unseen aspects of the everyday world visible. Instead of stripping away the 'temporal horizons' the photograph can add to them, and the photographer can capture the subtleties of light and shade, expression and emotion, instantly bringing those qualities out for the viewer and the photographer themselves to experience.

Detached reflection

The greatest paradox here of course, is that photography renders the world more visible yet a form of separation is required in order to take a photograph in the first place. From a phenomenological perspective, the photographer becomes both part of the visible landscape but needs distance to capture it so they are simultaneously *of* the world and outside it. The phenomena is recognised by Merleau-Ponty (cited in Baldwin, 2004:11) who writes that as we 'step back to watch the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire; it slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our notice.' Photographers also step back from everyday entanglements in order to capture and reflect what they believe no-one else sees, but of course they are still firmly of the world. Dreyfus (2007:59) asks 'given our basic way of being in the world is to be involved, how is detached reflection possible?' It is telling that

Dreyfus (ibid.:68) does not pin down a definitive answer to this complex question in his writing, but he does go some way to clearing up the debate, writing that:

> We, as embodied are still involved in coping with the world even when we are thinking, only we are involved differently. In action we are fully absorbed in seeking a maximal grip in our task in our situation in the world. When we inhibit this *absorption* and take up the spectorial attitude, we inhibit our tendency to get a maximal grip on objects and tasks and on the current situation, but as embodied we remain fully involved in the world.

The detached reflection of photography does not require the photographer to step fully out of the world but alternatively they simultaneously become absorbed into its multiple strands. Photographers do concentrate on their various subjects as they look through the lens, and certainly become fully absorbed into the task of photographing at that moment.

That is not to say that they are unaware of the world around them during this time, and in fact it is the constant engagement which allows them to capture their images in the first place. Even if they decide not to take their camera with them while venturing outside, the habit that they form of looking at the world in a certain way means that they often remember little details, later returning to the site with the camera (see Chapter 6). For Andy M, when he goes out with the camera: "I am always thinking with photos in mind, it's kind of an obsession. Once you start taking photographs at a regular level you start to see things through a camera even if you don't have one."

Perhaps this is why photographers often pronounce that they 'see the world differently' because (to paraphrase Dreyfus, 2007) they never fully step out of the 'absorbed activity' into the 'spectorial attitude', meaning that they are continuously in some form, absorbed in the task of thinking about or taking photographs. Carman (2008:200-201) notes that 'the cultivated body schema of the artist is a kind of second nature, a set of spontaneous skills, skills that come to feel natural though they are in fact products of years of effort and practice'. The same could be said of the photographers, who day after day venture out and experiment with their cameras to show their urban space in a variety of ways. To follow on, there also needs to be some attention paid to *why* photographers take pictures of the things that they see around them.

When thinking of the images that photographers take, I call upon Dreyfus (2007:63) again to offer some explanation as to why photographers are attracted to certain objects or things.

> When speaking of one's attention being drawn by an object, Merleau-Ponty uses the term *summons* to refer not to an action undertaken by me but to the influence on me of a perceptual object – 'to see an object is either to have it on the fringe of the visual field and be able to concentrate on it, or else respond to this summons by actually concentrating on it.

The photographers interviewed for this study spoke often of the many places and things that summoned their interest:

> I am drawn to industry by default but I go through phases of certain things. Like holes in the wall it's weird but I have a whole set of where the walls have crumbled away. I am drawn to certain things it is hard to put into words.
>
> (Andy M)

> Chris: For me it is mainly shapes, I will look around and see the shadow and shapes of something or reflections…
> EF: Looking for an alternative angle?
> Chris: Absolutely! But I don't go out looking for that but because my eyes are everywhere looking about, I am an inquisitive sort. If I am walking around a town... if you look above the shops and on the pavements there is stuff there. I went through a spell of taking pictures of the corners of things… especially when you are cross processing that enhances the colours of things. I don't plan it though; I just carry it and see what happens
>
> (Chris)

For Andy M, Chris and other photographers, local places are full of multiple opportunities for taking pictures every day. In this sense, when photographers become absorbed into thinking and doing photography, they are summoned by particular objects that attract their attention.

This is not a completely random act, but instead photographers often focus their attention on particular things that may be of interest such as architecture, landscapes or people. Whilst interviewing Chris, I noticed his eyes often glanced over my shoulder at the shadows on the wall cast by the bright winter sun, planning and framing a picture that he ultimately did not take. The effect of 'doing' photography every day is clearly a powerful force that leaks into other tasks that photographers do.

Dreyfus (2007:60) continues stating that:

> When a player is totally absorbed in his task – in flow as an athlete might say – he sees the world as full of opportunities and threats that 'pull forth' appropriate responses from him and he responds to these solicitations bodily, i.e. without any intervening reflection or sense of agency.

When the photographer is fully absorbed in photographing the objects or places around them, it pulls a response which they then capture. The photographer knows that hidden amongst the everyday landscape are the things that make interesting photographs so they are always looking, ready to be summoned. In the cases of Andy M and Donna:

> I don't like boundaries and planning things out. A lot of the places are in Sunderland and they might walk past them every day. I just like to get people thinking really there is a mystery in it [and say] where is that? I didn't realise that was there.
>
> (Andy M)

> It's about finding something different, everyone in Newcastle has probably taken a picture of the High Level Bridge but it's about doing something different but as soon as you do that someone is going to copy you but it is how you learn and if you see something you like you want to emulate it.
>
> (Donna)

This reflection is an important aspect of the photographer's motivation and it follows that *Flickr* is crammed full of pictures that seek to somehow show a different aspect to everyday tasks and environments. This contemplative layer adds yet another dimension to *Flickr* and the *chiasm*: it facilitates the criss-crossing to allow us to see both the inside and outside of multiple perspectives and worlds. We can view these momentary disconnections yet they also act as a personal perspective of the user and their environment, simultaneously reflecting back on the viewer, Carman (2008:191) noting that 'perspective relative orientation of embodied perception allows us to see the world as something separate from us, as independent of our point of view on it, as fully and genuinely real'.

Losing perspective

Perspective is an interesting, complex term and a word loaded with significance, not only when used in the context of photography and phenomenology, but other areas such as art history. In terms of photographic practice, perspective is an important tool to show ability and photographers often try and stretch their skills by

playing with perspective and depth of field in their work. However when perspective is removed from this more literal translation, it becomes more complicated. The famous woodcut by Albrecht Durer in 1525 of a woman behind an artist's 'perspective machine' (a net that acts as a grid of reference) offers the multiple perspectives to the viewer and 'complicates positions of right and erring spectatorship' (Freedman, 1991:1). Naturally it also evokes various issues and discussions relating to *the gaze*. For many art historians, Durer's study was the first to detail the nature of observation by the artist, showing the importance of 'studying' nature.

Durer (cited in Strickland and Boswell, 2007:42) wrote that 'art stands firmly fixed in nature and he who can find it there has it' and it is here we can begin to see a convergence between science, the primacy of observation, and art, whereby perspective becomes all-encompassing and mostly unchallenged until the era of Impressionism. Ingold (2000:15) discusses perspective within the context of cultural anthropology and concludes that 'claims of [perceptual relativism] are founded on a double disengagement of the observer from the world… these claims lie at the heart of Western thought and science… the commitment to the ascendency of abstract or universal reason.' One of the main goals of phenomenological philosophy is to return to other ways of knowing that are not purely derived from reason and science, shaking up the traditional notions of perspective. Merleau-Ponty (cited in Baldwin, 2004:277)[20] writes that Cezanne was a painter who 'wanted to put intelligence, ideas, sciences, perspective and tradition back in touch with the world nature that they must comprehend.

Unlike Durer who observed nature like a scientist, Cezanne became enveloped by the sensations that appeared to him whilst looking at the landscape, understanding something of the world as he felt, rather than following the rules of perspective. His still life paintings positively bulge as a 'piece of nature' (ibid: 276) and the painter famously 'abandoned himself to the chaos of sensations' (ibid.).

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[20] Although unrelated, this sentiment is reminiscent of the early goals by photography's founders, particularly William Fox-Talbot

The idea here is that painting is not *only* about vision but about using the body as well, which opens up similar debates about sensation and photography, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Summary

> If I have seen something that someone else has taken a picture of [on Flickr] that would make me want to do something different
>
> (Rhona)

Places are not fixed and 'are never finished but always the result of processes and practices' (Cresswell, 2004:37). They are transient, continually changing and developing both in the context of *Flickr* and the North East cities in this study. The city place offers much to the photographer in the way of interesting subjects, such as buildings filled with character and history and residents to match. Haldrup (2011:63) reminds us that 'places and paths are not reducible to points and trajectories in a generalized coordinate system but produced through the embodied practice of particular modes of movement or wayfinding.' The city landscape is in a continuous state of flux, with buildings being demolished and new ones being erected whilst down below, the urbanites (and the photographers) find their way around the remains of the past and the foundations of the present. The photographers wander the streets, navigating around the chipboard hoardings and lingering amongst the piles of bricks, capturing the buildings before they disappear.

In parallel, the places on *Flickr* are continually being rebuilt and when one photograph is deleted, more soon replace it. *Flickr* is a familiar and comfortable place for participants and is a complex tapestry woven from the different threads of experience, movement, pictures and text. Here 'the trail winds through, or amidst without a beginning or end as do the waters of a river '(Ingold, 2008:1805) and similarly the paths of the photographs on *Flickr* are 'trails of movement' (ibid.) rather than just lines of binary code. *Flickr* is a tapestry of moving things, 'an ever ramifying bundle of lines and growth (Ingold, 2008:1807) and users are continually moving along paths, that they themselves have created.

Furthermore, once uploaded by the photographer each photograph can take its own path too, drifting into group sites and the favourites page of multiple users. Then there are other images which are never seen by anyone, the digital equivalent of those many abandoned city spaces and rooms. There is then much crossover between online and offline, as the photographer moves through and around the *Chaism* of the digital place. The images and discussions on *Flickr* influence and are influenced by the city, encouraging photographers to find and share new things found in familiar places. Here 'the communality of wayfinding with families, friends, colleagues or fellow travellers, inevitably involves way-showing as we show and share one another's ways through the world in a literal sense' (Laurier and Lorimer, 2011:17). *Flickr*ites get around the city on foot, but they also have another perspective of the city, gained through the different viewpoints of other members through images taken from the tops of buildings to the underground sewers. Larsen (2011:67) comments that:

> Vision is an important, yet not exclusive way of sensing places. The sounds, odours, and tactility of places are also qualities that constitute particular 'senses of place'…visual technologies such as cameras are used not only to represent places and attractions, but also to choreograph and stage practices.

*Flickr*ites know their city thanks to this complex crossover of views, where they can experience a place both in person and through the photographs of another. Pink (2011a:12) asks 'what is [an image] accompanied and intertwined with, as it is produced and consumed?' An image is primarily entangled with places, worlds and bodies and it is to this familiar choreography with the camera that uses both the senses and the body which the next chapter will venture.

Chapter 5

Bodies and Photography

Still, the image moves us[1]: movement, the senses and photography

> A Cinemagraph is an image that contains within itself a living moment that allows a glimpse of time to be experienced and preserved endlessly… Starting in-camera, the artists take a traditional photograph and combine a living moment into the image through the isolated animation of multiple frames.
>
> Beck and Burg named the process "Cinemagraphs" for their cinematic quality while maintaining at its soul the principles of traditional photography. [They are] pushing this new art form and communication process as the best way to capture a moment in time or create a true living portrait in our digital age while embracing our need to communicate visually and share instantly.
>
> (*About* page on cinemagraphs.com)[2]

There is something disconcerting about viewing a cinemagraph for the first time, although it is hard to say exactly why. The models stare blankly into the camera then suddenly their eyes will blink or wisps of hair will flutter. It is unnerving, if not a little creepy, rather like an old ghost story where the portraits hanging on the walls have eyes that move, silently following their victim around. I do not think that animation necessarily adds anything to the content of these photographs; they are simply a gimmick in the already saturated market of fashion photography. However it is interesting to note in the quote above that Beck and Burg place this technology as something belonging to the digital age when the output bears more than a passing resemblance to the *cinematograph* technology (a film camera, projector and developer in one) pioneered by the Lumiere brothers as early as 1895. Stewart (1999:260) explains that:

> The new cinematograph photographic fixity broke away from itself to create motion rather than merely to multiply itself over space…in early screenings the image was held for as long as possible, like a stalled magic lantern slide, until it visibly burst into motion…cinema arrived as a perceived mechanical descendant as well as a present derivative of the photograph.

The work of Edward Muybridge, the first photographer to study both animal and human motion and movement in any great detail, preceded this technology by ten years. His images are very interesting, even if at times his (human) subjects make for uncomfortable viewing.

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[1] Title adapted from Robins chapter title 'Will the image move us still?' - full details in bibliography
[2] Available at: http://cinemagraphs.com/[Online] (accessed 19th October, 2011)

Cresswell (2006:61) reminds us that 'photography had, for a long time been a technology that had extracted stillness from the motion of the world… the enemy of the camera had been the blur of speed.' Muybridge's photography very much captured the zeitgeist and excitement regarding movement and technology. As the newly established railway hurtled passengers across borders, 'visuality would coincide with the speeds and temporalities of both circulation and telecommunication' (Crary cited in Cresswell, 2006:62). Artists also began to use photography early on, as a way of studying figures in movement most notably Degas whose studies of dancers were hued in pastel, bronze and silver nitrate.

In its simplest form, the distinction made between photographs and cinema has been down to movement. Academics within philosophy, film and photography disciplines have written tirelessly about the differences in meaning and form between photographs and cinema (Barthes, 1982; Sontag, 1989; Stewart, 1999; Marien, 2002; Wells, 2004; Bate, 2009). The basic distinction has remained since the time of Muybridge and the Lumiere brothers' pioneering work, namely films move, photographs do not. Historically the photograph has been viewed as an object that communicates a singular instance which, like Cartier-Bresson's decisive moment, freezes time. Rather than petrifying movement, the moving image prolongs it, leading Metz (among others) to conclude that: 'there is a selective kinship of photography (not film) with death [since] film gives back to the dead [through movement] a semblance of life' (Metz cited in Stewart, 1999:37).

Leafing through a variety of texts and numerous history of photography books, little is made of the complex and multiple layers of interaction that make up photography practice as a whole. In part, I think that this is a simple oversight. After all, it is easier to muse upon the meaning and beauty of the black and white imaginings of Ansell Adams and Diane Arbus, the glamour of Mario Testino or the humdrum worlds of Martin Parr, than dissect the more mundane processes of their production. There have been many brilliant and elegant texts on the photograph and image culture and I think there is a certain seduction for writers to become part of this canon. The consequence of this seduction has been that the *doing* of photography has become taken for granted and simply forgotten, but I believe that whilst photographs are interesting and important, they are not *everything*.

Thrift (2010:186) explains:

> One of the problems with representation is that it tends to be a visual register. Of course the visual is important, but it is only one of the registers through which people sense things and in some cases it is clearly not the most important.

Movement is an essential part of photograph taking and whatever the subject, photographs come into being through the photographer moving around in order to take the image (Pink, 2011a). Many have become used to thinking about photography as being still, they have forgotten about the other important factors that are essential to image taking. This chapter outlines the different ways that photographers in this study use their bodies and, more specifically, the role of movement and the body within photograph taking. It uses the Seamon's work to tease out these various entangled processes alongside the work of Thrift, to understand more deeply about the bodily and sensory interactions between the photographer and the camera, the city and one another.

Alongside the interviews, many of the observations in this chapter are drawn from the field notes taken during the walk and talk sessions with participants and the different *Flickr* meet-ups I attended. Both offered a unique opportunity to compare the differences in movements when photographers were together and how they worked when they were alone. The final part of this chapter summarises the role of the body in online places and how these movements relate to the offline bodily movements with the camera in the city. However, it is to the senses that this chapter first turns, highlighting their importance and key role in photograph taking.

Photography and the senses
Movement and the body play a crucial role in every part of photograph taking from the physical walking about the city, to the actual doing of photography which enlists eyes, feet and fingers in various different positions, such as leaning and crouching. Nevertheless, the different sensory dimensions of photographic practice are often overlooked. The senses have been embedded within the practice of photography since its invention, and so touch, smell, hearing and vision all play an important role in everyday photography.

Whether this is when holding the camera in the hands, looking through the viewfinder or screen, wandering around the city, lying on the ground or in other awkward positions in pursuit of the perfect angle, all the senses are involved. This list could be extended even further to include others senses such as 'pain, temperature, mechanoreception (balance), interoreceptors (blood pressure) and proprioception' (Draper, 2011). Although Pink (2009:15) offers a succinct summary of the various academic disciplines that have embraced sensory forms of research, it is notable there has been some hesitation within both media and particularly photography studies to engage with and 'attend to and interpret the experiential, individual, idiosyncratic and contextual nature of research participants sensory practices'. Although there has been some attempt within media studies (Bull, 2000; Couldry, 2006; Moores and Metykova, 2010) to open up discussions, there have been fewer attempts within texts on photography (Garrett, 2010; Pink 2011b) to highlight the different sensory experiences on offer.[3] This section builds on the work of Pink (2009, 2011b) and discusses the various sensations that have become tangled up when doing photography.

There are two[4] senses absent from this section: proprioception and vision. Proprioception is 'the sensory processes responsible for the conscious appreciation of posture and movement, and also to the many sensory inputs involved in unconscious, reflex adjustments of balance, posture, and locomotion' (McCloskey cited in Shinkle, 2008:912) so will be included as part of the next section that specifically relates to movement, the camera and the body. In the context of sensation and the senses however, vision is not as straightforward and its dominance has divided scholars in different disciplines (Jay, 1993; Pink, 2009). Ingold (2000:261) discusses the complexity of vision in great detail and in summary believes that:

> Vision does not yield a snapshot, or even a series of snapshots. It rather yields an appreciation of objects 'in the round'… By 'running our eyes over it' – as we might run our fingers over it in tactile perception – we discover its form in the envelope of movement, that is the continuous modulation of the array of reflected light reaching the eyes.

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[3] Pink has discussed in great length the variety of different senses found within everyday practices see 2005, 2006, 2008a, 2009, 2011a, 2011b
[4] There are thought to be 'at least 21 different senses and counting' see Durie (2005).

It is a particularly apt metaphor that Ingold uses here and vision without doubt is an important part of doing photography.[5] However it is extremely difficult to extrapolate vision as a core sensation, identifying it specifically like smell or cold. Indeed there is an 'inseparable entanglement of the visual in other sensory modes' (Edwards, 2009:35). Ingold (2000:261) goes on to later say that 'the *sensations* of vision are not the same as those of touch or hearing.' For the purpose of this section, the particular sensations that became heightened during the fieldwork while walking around or highlighted during the interviews will feature in detail here. Proprioception will feature in the next section relating to the body. Vision will be discussed later in Chapter 6, relating specifically to habits and routine.

Finally there are two things that I must emphasise here before discussions begin. The first is that although the section is divided up into categories, in no way do I want to imply that the senses can be treated as separate entities. The experiences described involved many different senses working in conjunction with one another (some more subtle than others) to produce a mood or deeper understanding about the places we visited with the camera. The second point leads on from this, which is perhaps the seemingly conflicting nature between discussions regarding the senses *at all* in the context of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of perception. Carman (2008:45) explains that 'Merleau-Ponty criticises the technical redeployment of the term 'sensation' in abstraction from what they are originally called upon describe.'

It is not my intention here to list these different sensations experienced whilst out with the camera in some sort of empiricist way, stripping back 'sensation as a set of stimuli' (ibid.:50) ready to then be processed as a neat visual experience. Instead, I wish to highlight the opposite, that attention to the varied sensory aspects when doing photography allows a comprehension of being-in-the-world that moves away from a purely visual recognition and into a wider appreciation of the different sensual aspects of everyday life.

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[5] Although it can be done without sight, the UK charity Photovoice ran global workshops with blind and partially sighted children and adults to help them express themselves in visual form between 2008- 2010. See http://www.photovoice.org/projects/uk/sights-unseen/ (accessed 19th October, 2011)

In some instances the sensory aspects of photography are inferred from the interviews. Photographers described to me particular moments and sensory elements that were important in shaping their photographic approaches. Ingold (cited in Pink, 2009:27) believes that:

> The perceptual systems not only overlap in their functions, but are also subsumed under a total system of bodily orientation… Looking, listening and touching, therefore are not separate activities they are just different facets of the same activity: that of the whole organism in its environment.

With this in mind, this section will now highlight some of the different *sensations* that are experienced when doing photography which continuously become interwoven with one another, adding to the layers of experience when out with the camera.

The different sensations of photography – a brief prologue

One of the main smells I associate with photography is the distinctive aroma of the darkroom. Although I was taught to develop photographs by my father in a cramped bathroom, my first proper experience of being in a darkroom happened a few years later at my local college, where I spent time developing photographs for various projects. The darkroom is an interesting place in terms of sensual experience because vision cannot be relied upon and instead it is the sense of touch that is heightened.

The trickiest part is getting the film from the camera into the developing canister. Holding on to the film spool in one hand, the film is then fed through the lightproof box via some small sprockets and then immersed with developer solution. Once this awkward part is finished, the safelight can be switched on which instantly bathes everything in an eerie red glow, the eyes gradually adjusting to the semi-darkness of the room. The sense of smell is particularly prominent in the darkroom and it is always advised that the photographer's time is limited in such a confined space, so strong are the chemicals used in the process. After spending a while in the darkroom, the eyes start to become strained and often a headache is brought on by the chemicals.

The odour of developer is very specific and stings the back of the nostrils and throat like vinegar. Despite these slightly unpleasant side effects, the main memory I have of being in the darkroom is tingling excitement. The magic of developing and seeing my images for the first time as they emerged from film onto paper was an unforgettable thrill.

I was reminded of these past experiences when I attended a meet up of the 'Lo-fi' *Flickr* group on a cold January evening in a meeting room above a local pub. We had a guest speaker showing us the basics of developing your own film and we each got a turn at closing our eyes and trying to thread some film through the developing canister. While going over these movements again brought back different memories, it also struck me that the basics of photography rely on touch, not vision. After the speaker had finished, we handled the other equipment and the trays and the tongs each carried the smell of developer which also instantly transported me back to my earlier experiences.

Later on in the evening, we discussed and passed around our own photos and film cameras we had brought along, which became a kind of 'show and tell' of equipment:

> In general smell was quite important tonight and as everyone started comparing their film cameras, the air began to smell like a second hand shop, in that sort of old dust way that can be both partly comforting and slightly nauseating at the same time.
>
> The meeting turned out to be a bit of a tech fest and everyone was comparing their ancient cameras Canons, Olympus, Pentax and these random Russian makes that I had never heard of. There is definitely something about the camera as object… a kind of holding fetish associated with it, particularly the older, heavier models that weigh a tonne when put in your hand and have a satisfying click when the shutter goes off (something that is missing with the toy cameras).
>
> (Author Field notes, 20/01/11)

The musty aromas and touching of the camera here were as much part of the *doing* of photography (in this case lo-fi or film photography), as the pictures themselves.

Smell

Various different smells have infused into this research at different times and in different ways. With the photographers venturing into various (sometimes inhospitable) urban environments, the smells associated with them really became an essential way of making another connection to that place. On a walk and talk with Anthony, we stopped to picture a doorway that was grimy and grey but had an interesting padlock. The air in the doorway was incredibly pungent with the smell of stale urine and while I had to stand back due to the smell, he was unperturbed, and continued taking the picture, getting close to the detail of the door whilst presumably holding his breath.

The aroma of the different cities and places I visited were often carried on the wind. When out with Paul B at the sea front, the overwhelming smell was old chip fat combined with the taste of salt when you wetted your lips. This was in contrast to wandering in Sunderland with The Understudy and Rhona, where the predominant smells were industrial: burning plastic, wood and dust. When Rhona and I first went on an exploration of an abandoned factory building, smell was a key part of the experience. As to be expected, it was very damp which heightened awareness of your steps around the room: the smell of rotting wood and damp carpet meant the floor underneath could be unsafe. The smell also reinforced the abandoned qualities of the room. The dust could be found everywhere and at times was so prevalent that you could feel the chalkiness of the atmosphere in your mouth. This was due to the amount of demolition and land clearing in and around the areas we were wandering.

Pink (2009:145) understands that 'our experiences of other people and places inevitably involve smell' and this is true not just of intimate spaces, but of the larger cities I visited too. The smell of dust that hangs in the air, which enters my nose and throat, now has a sadder taste. When walking around Sunderland with the photographers, I was struck by the vast amount of open wasteland and unused space. Once where proud factories and industry would have stood there are now vast expanses of rubble with large fences around the edges. The olfactory sense when first walking around in Sunderland allowed me to connect with the city's past and present; I can not only see the demolition of the city, I can smell it too as

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particles of dust were disturbed by our photographic explorations. The field photographs that I took on these different and varied tours (see Plate 10) further evoke these sensual memories.

Looking through the images, I can recall the smells of the different places that are of interest to the photographers. In contrast, other smells of the city are more ambient. Before setting off on our walk around Newcastle, Richard and I went to a small café in the covered Grainger Market building, where he sometimes goes on his own to watch people go about their daily business. The specific aroma of the market is really part of the appeal of shopping there, where the raw smell of the butcher stalls mingles with bakeries, pet shops, cafes and vegetable stalls. This just adds to individuality of the market and suffused the watching of the many characters brushing past our table while we were chatting.

Sound

The solid *clunk* of the shutter release in SLR cameras is a distinctive, satisfying sound which signals a machine is at work. Even in cheaper compact cameras and camera phones, they add a phonic replica of a shutter going off to make the experience of using them more authentic. The sound a camera makes reassures the photographer and Donna told me "I love the sound that [the camera] makes, it's a bit sad! You know that it has taken something and you can hear it working, it is that reassurance that it's working that it has taken it straight away." The sound of the SLR camera is quite loud and you can feel the shutter move in the camera when you hold it. Chris said to me that the appeal of using older cameras is that "they have the most amazing click… [with digital compact cameras] you don't get the vibration either". Andy M also commented "using the camera as well… it was a Pentax K1000… it used to make a really reassuring noise… it feels satisfying".

The photographers are reassured by the sound of the camera because of its associations both with quality and practice; the noise signals that they are serious photographers and it both satisfies and comforts in equal measure. Bull (cited in Pink, 2009:18) comments that 'sound has remained an invisible presence in urban and media studies' and you can add many other disciplines to that list, including

photography studies, product design and computing. Think of the distinctive melodic tinkling of the computer or television switching on and off, which serve no other purpose than to reassure the user, infiltrating their everyday sound mix.

Sound is important when doing photography in a practical way as well. When taking photographs, your visual field is often tied up so you rely on your hearing to make sure that you do not get run over by a car or if there are people approaching, you can listen out for them and wait for them to pass. For the photographers who specialise in night photography or that work in dark places (such as tunnels) sound is especially important as the visual sense is partially deprived. When out walking with the photographers, sound made different sorts of impacts on our discussions. When out with Paul B, we were by the sea and the wind rushing past my ears was so strong that at times, I could not hear what he was saying. The wind made the *taking* photographs difficult too: I tried to take a picture of the colourful bunting flapping in the wind, but the noise and force of the wind, almost knocked the breath out of my body as we walked back down to the pier and made my hands shake. Paul B was much steadier and kept himself very still when taking pictures although he did remark to me that he would perhaps not go down to the seafront when it was quite as windy.

Sometimes the absence of sound can also communicate more than its presence. When I went out wandering with The Understudy in Sunderland, what initially struck me was that apart from the usual ambient traffic noise in the city centre, it was eerily silent in the park and down by the river. When he guided me around the different places that he visited with his camera, he brought along pictures that he had taken previously, which were more or less all cityscapes devoid of people. I now realised in the deafening silence around me that there *were* no people to photograph. In contrast to this, Andy M commented that "I like walking along the river [in Sunderland] there is a lot of activity, it was the life of the city until recently, and I feel I sense that". There were traces of habitation when The Understudy and I walked around part of the river, but the amount of broken glass and beer cans told me that this place changes come night fall. When The Understudy explained what would have been here at the start of the 20th century, the silence acted as a reminder of what had disappeared.

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Touch, Temperature and Texture

Whereas smell made a more subtle intrusion as we were wandering inside and out, touch was present both in the interviews (where is it was discussed often) and as we walked. The physical presence of the camera was prevalent to all the photographers whether they were experienced or beginners. Many discussed the 'lugging' of equipment and the bulk of the camera which can sometimes cause aches and pains especially when carrying it for long period of time. Richard told me "if I am just walking around with my camera, I can spend hours [wandering]! You do get tired but I am used to [the camera weight]". Alastair also explained that "I couldn't have done my 365 [challenge][6] without my compact camera it would require too much lumping around." Rhona told me: "I plan to go somewhere and I might not have anywhere particular in mind but the idea is to take your camera out, it is too heavy to take everywhere!"

Being a serious photographer often means carrying a lot of extra equipment: extra lenses, filters, tripods and maybe an extra camera. The weight and presence of this equipment, despite it sometimes being a hindrance to the body when it is moving around, signifies to them and others that they are committed to photography as a hobby and sometimes more seriously as semi-professionals. Both Andy S and Paul W made similar comments stating:

> Yeah, as for lugging equipment I do like to travel light, for ages I stuck with a compact camera (mostly a Lumix TZ3) and a tripod that folded small and I could just hook it off my belt. I do like to go like that but now I have a DSLR, it does pain me to leave it at home, so I usually lug it round with me but I try to restrict how many lenses and flashes I take.
>
> (Andy S)

> I lugged my DSLR camera all around Barcelona and when I got back I had a pain in my neck. So I thought it was time to get a compact camera [a Panasonic LX5]. The three hours around Beamish, we were there from 5-8 and I not only had the camera with the big lens on it, I had 2 flashguns, a tripod, a wide angle lens, a few bits of kit, you are probably carrying an extra stone in weight! It kills your back after a while… afterwards we were all sat on the bus… knackered.
>
> (Paul W)

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[6] The '365' is a photography challenge where photographers take one photo of a different subject every day for a whole year

The physical presence and touching of the equipment signals a different engagement with the world as mentioned by Mike: "when you put that camera around your neck and you feel its weight, you activate something, like I have my photographer's hat on." What Mike is describing here is what Seamon (1979:41) labels as an 'intentional bodily force which manifests automatically but sensitively.' When Mike put the camera around his neck and *feels* the weight of it, this becomes something more than just a physical presence on his body; it also is part of an automatic force that 'guides his movement' (ibid.) when he is outside. There is a bit of a ritual involved here as well, of putting the camera around the neck so the camera is always attached to the body, even if the photographer is not holding it in their hands.

During one North East England Photography Group (NEEPG) meet-up, I noticed that even when the camera was attached to the tripod, photographers always kept the camera strap around their neck as experience has taught them to be extra careful with their kit. The importance of touch and feel of the camera was highlighted by two of the participants that specialise in film photography. Both Chris and Andy M expressed their love of film cameras for the same reasons:

> This is covered in tape [showing me a bashed about Holga camera] cause it leaks light in, and here [gestures to the side of the camera] when you hold it at an angle the back falls out and you have to tape in the batteries as well! I like that you can get vignetting around the sides it looks like an old photograph but taken now. It is the holding of the camera; it is about having something tangible, as well as the photographs after.
>
> (Chris)

> In terms of film it's what I started out with, it feels right. With digital it doesn't quite sit right. There is no physical thing, you don't get negatives or slides it doesn't really exist other than data on a memory card… I don't know it just doesn't feel right.
>
> (Andy M)

In these examples the *feel* of the camera is associated in a wider way with the history of the machine that they are using. The noise and the final output (the 'something tangible' and the 'negatives') are inextricably bound up with the sensation of *doing* film and Lo-fi photography. Interestingly, the feel of the Holga and other toy cameras is not that they are heavy but are in fact incredibly light.

Where you are used to holding a heavy SLR camera, once the toy camera is in the hands, you can barely believe that it is working.

The sense of touch can be further numbed by temperature: severe weather conditions makes photography more difficult in colder months or at night. When Mike R goes out at night, he uses hand warmers to keep the circulation going in his fingers, so he can use the equipment and many of the photographers commented that when taking pictures in winter, fingerless gloves are a must. Andy M said that when taking pictures at night he had to keep walking around so he did not get too cold and to stop his feet from going numb. Mike R later spoke to me of experiences of taking pictures in the dark on a local beach:

> I was doing the light painting shot at the beach and you need the water reflection. So I knew the tide was in the middle of going out and coming back in again and I could hear it in the background, I had my back to the water, anyway I heard this rush behind me and instinctively I ran for these rock pools and obviously they were really deep and I was up to my knees!... But I normally take wellies if I go to the beach so it doesn't stop me from going one place to the next because the best shots are nearest the sea.

The experience Mike R describes of taking photographs at night, summarises the multiple sensorial experiences that can happen whilst doing photography: from the noise of the sea (sound), to the cold (temperature) of the water seeping into his boots (touch), to successfully grabbing your camera from the turning tide (mechanoreception) and the excitement that can happen from the sudden movement of your body (interoreceptors and proprioception). The fact that this story was told to me months after the experience also shows the impact of sensation on experience and learning. This also has further implications for the ethnographer as it is 'through actually engaging in the activities and environments we wish to learn about, that we come to know them' (Pink, 2009: 70).

This section aimed to reveal some of the different multisensory experiences on offer to the photographer and throughout this chapter many more will be uncovered. The different sensations that come together when photographers take the camera out are both surprising and unique, and each participant had different tales of their sensory experiences with the camera to share both verbally and through our excursions.

It is a shame that photographing is so often limited to being discussed in visual terms because these everyday engagements are rich in detail and the experiences of the photographers I interviewed revealed a practice that was exciting and vibrant incorporating many different sensations. When photographs are produced the body is ever present, moving and connecting with the technology and the world it is documenting. Pink (2009:25) puts forward the advantages of an 'emplaced ethnography that attends to the question of experience by accounting for the relationships between bodies, minds and the materiality and sensoriality of the environment' - a position that this research would wholeheartedly agree.

The word photography originates from a combination of two Greek words: 'phos' meaning 'light' and 'graphe' which means to write or *carve*. The idea of photography as carving is interesting here, particularly in Ingold's (2000:126) phenomenological terms where 'the carver does not separate thinking in the head to thinking in the hands nor consequently would he distinguish the products from these respective activities'. Equally if the photographer is 'carving the light' with their camera, there should be little separation between the camera, the body, these movements and the end product, the photograph. It is to the body and the 'dance' that it does with the camera that this chapter now turns.

The Still Point and Geography of the Lifeworld

If we are to contemplate the everyday movements that lie between cameras, bodies and the city, traditional approaches of media and photography studies need to be extended or rethought to address the many different aspects of photographic practice. Couldry (2010:50) suggests that 'we need the perspective of practice to help us address how media are embedded in the interlocking fabric of social and cultural life.' Chapter 1 underlined the variety of disciplines that I draw upon such as photography and visual studies, urban studies and sociology, alongside other less obvious areas such as phenomenology, tourism studies, mobilities research and human geography. It is this final category that this section will focus on, particularly the work of *A Geography of the Lifeworld* by Seamon (referred to hereafter as Lifeworld) alongside the shorter chapter entitled *The Still Point* by

Thrift. To begin with, a short explanation of both pieces and their scope will help put later discussions within this section into context.

The Still Point

The writing of Thrift and his work regarding the many ideas and applications of non-representational theory is included throughout this study, however it is particularly his work 'The Still Point' about dance that is relevant when discussing movement and the body. The piece is quite dense and fragmented in style, which is typical of Thrift's writing, but he does make some interesting remarks regarding dance and embodiment which are relevant to camera use. Frustratingly, the actual dancer and their own movements are missing from this work and it would have been helpful if Thrift had included some observations about dancers and their movements in *Still Point*. Sadly their presence in this piece is purely hypothetical but nevertheless, there are other more in-depth ethnographic accounts of dancing and movement elsewhere which will be drawn upon when later considering the everyday movements of photographers.

Thrift is not the first to have an academic interest in the links between dance and the rhythms of everyday life, both as a practice and analogy. Texts on the subject have been wide ranging as many different disciplines have been intrigued by both the form and enactment of dance (Cresswell, 2006; Haldrup, 2011). Pink (2009:123) highlights Hahn's auto-ethnographic work about Japanese dance whose 'experiences highlight the interconnectedness of corporeal experiences with the analytical process.' The analogy is also present in work about the city, Jacobs (cited in Wunderlich, 2008:133) writing that 'under the seeming disorder of the old city… an intricate ballet in which individual dancers and ensembles all have distinctive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole'. Wunderlich (ibid.:137) himself later explains how 'walking practices support and integrate urban place-ballets' which also relates directly to Seamon's work. Haldrup (2011: 55) helpfully summarises that 'the example of dancing serves to show how mobile practices are policed, codified and choreographed at the same time as they can be mobilised as a means of expression, improvisation

and creativity' later applying it to his own area of interest tourist mobilities and landscapes.

In *Still Point,* Thrift (1997:125) makes it clear that he 'is interested in everyday practices and how they provide, especially through embodiment, alternative modes of being in the world… to touch the invisible in the visible.' He focuses on the body-subject[7] which for him 'jointly configures a number of different realms of experience' (ibid.:141). He then goes onto briefly analyse these experiences and examine the important *body-practices* of dance which he lists as 'ritual, reliving tedious or repetitive tasks, construction of community and leisure' (ibid.:143-144). In this context, the discussions about dance can also relate to photographic practices and the movements therein: the habitual and repetitive interaction with body, machine and the everyday environment becomes a 'way of accessing the world, not just a means of achieving ends that cannot be named' (Radley cited in ibid.). Thrift (cited in Haldrup, 2011:56) sees dancing as summing up 'non-representational approaches to embodied movement and practice' and is a useful way of gaining some insight into the other mundane movements of everyday life.

Geography of the Lifeworld

Although Seamon's 1979 study resonates with more recent trends within human geography and other disciplines, which are themselves frequently turning toward both the sensory and phenomenological aspects of everyday life, his work remains relatively underused. Seamon's interest in phenomenology, movement and habit within everyday routine has recently been revived by diverse subject areas such as urban planning (Wunderlich, 2008) and media studies (Moores, 2006, 2010, 2012) but so far his work has never been applied to the area of photography and visual studies[8]. Moores and Metykova (2010:175) state that Seamon's work is useful 'not only for its conceptual vocabulary but also for its commitment to the empirical investigation of place-making in daily living'.

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[7] See Carman (2008) particularly Chapter 3 regarding Merleau-Ponty and body schema.
[8] That I could find, interestingly Seamon has written on the work of photographer Kertesz, see Chapter 6 for further discussion

Seamon also puts movement as central to his thesis, which resonates particularly with this study. Lifeworld is a study of the everyday complexities 'and inescapable immersion in the geographical world (Seamon, 1979:15) via the 'body ballet [now described by the author as body routine] a set of integrated gestures, behaviours and actions that sustain a particular task or aim' (Seamon, 2006). The distinctive approach of the original text was based in a branch of human geography that came to prominence in the mid-to-late 1970s through authors such as Relph (1976) and Tuan (1977) which 'shifted analytical focus from social space to lived-in place, seeking to supplant the 'people-less' geographies of positivist spatial science with an approach that fed off alternative philosophies – notably existentialism and phenomenology (Hubbard, 2005:42). Seamon particularly utilised the work of Merleau-Ponty to investigate these everyday actions up close. Using the technique of themed 'environmental experience groups' he asked students to think and observe their patterns of movement and habits in their everyday environments via a theme assigned to them every week. Moores (2006) summarises that:

> Seamon's groups can therefore be thought of, in a certain sense, as having engaged in consciousness-raising – seeking to bring 'precognitive 'givens'' (Buttimer, 1976:281) into discursive consciousness through the expression of at least some of these tacitly known things, that enable the skilful accomplishment of everyday practices

It is through the outcomes of these group meetings that Seamon persuasively argues that our relationships with place and habitual routines are more complex and not merely a symptom of automatic reinforcement or a condition of set thought processes (as argued by cognitive and behaviourist theories). Instead Seamon (1979:40) believes that everyday interaction and movement 'arises from the body' which is 'at the root of habitual movement' (ibid.:41). This belief is informed by the work of Merleau-Ponty, whose work Seamon borrows from to explain the role of body subject in the 'first hand involvements with the geographical world [in which] he or she typically lives' (ibid.:16).There are clear similarities here between the work of Thrift and Seamon who both have an interest in uncovering the deeper meanings within routine movements however their approaches are not identical.

What is of interest here is how they both make use of the movement (and metaphor) of dance to illustrate the interesting, yet often hidden, aspects of the taken-for-granted nature of everyday life. The application of Merleau-Ponty's ideas via Seamon's work opens up new ways of thinking about photography, embodiment, movement, perception and the body. For Merleau-Ponty 'perception is not a private mental event, nor is the body just one more material object set alongside others' (Carman, 2008:78). Instead, just like photography, it involves the use of the whole body at all times. It is 'not just some exotic object or process somewhere out there in the world, it is us' (ibid.:95). With these ideas in mind, this section will now turn to bodies and their dance with the camera.

'The dance with the camera' – movements, bodies, cameras

> O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
> How can we know the dancer from the dance?

> (W.B Yeats, 'Among School Children')

Just as Yeats cannot separate the dancer from the dance, the same can be said for the photographer and their camera. Seamon (1979:29) explains that 'phenomenology is as much a process as a product' and the *dance* or movements at the heart of this close relationship mean that during the photographic process, body and machine become entwined. The camera becomes an extension of both the photographer's hand and vision, making them difficult to separate. The dance does not always have to be a solo performance either, and when two or more photographers get together in groups there is an interesting interaction between each other and their cameras. During this study photographers used their bodies in multiple, unexpected ways with the camera but it is not only the *taking* of photographs that uses the body.

Other areas of photography require the body to be fully engaged, such as posing and posturing in front of the camera when your picture is being taken; pulling a rictus grin or getting light spots in front your eyes thanks to the brightness of the flash bulb.

Later still, whether uploading the images from the camera to the computer or even handling the paper copies and leafing through a photo album, the body is always fully engaged when doing photography. Taking photographs can often feel like hard work and it is a very physical pursuit. When out walking with the photographers, we were battered by the wind and rain and wandered for miles. We carried heavy cameras and manoeuvred into isolated and empty places that were damp and dusty. My fingers would grow numb, my wrists and neck often became aching and sore, my legs and feet were tired and even my vision was fatigued having constantly to look through the view finder and close one eye to take a picture.

The body is not only at the centre of photography, it can be seen more widely as 'the site of activity and engagement with the world' (Vergunst, 2011:206). Seamon (cited in Haldrup, 2011:55) describes the nature of the body ballet where:

> Basic bodily movements fuse together into body ballet through training and practice. Simple hand, leg and trunk movements become attuned to a particular line of work or action and direct themselves spontaneously to meet the need at hand. Words like 'flow and rhythm' indicate that body ballet is organic and integrated rather than stepwise and fragmentary

The same basic movements are prevalent when photographers are using the camera as the actions are both constant and repetitive. Camera in hand, they pull the camera close into their body, then hold it up to one eye whilst closing the other, allowing them to hone in on their subject. They then pull the lens manually with the other hand, briefly pausing before pressing the shutter release. These basic movements can of course change depending on the subject or location and to some extent photography is 'an improvisational process of touch' (Haldrup, 2011:56).

The body *on* camera

To consider 'the role of the body in everyday movement' (Seamon, 1979:25) in relation to photography means to also think about its important role in front of the camera as well. Many of the photographers commented on how they preferred more natural looking photographs, which sometimes meant using the camera in more covert ways in order to photograph the body in different poses.

The notion that posed pictures were somehow less authentic (in certain circumstances) was a common theme. Gary was one of many photographers who commented how "you point a camera at someone and they don't act natural they start posing, so we were sat on a park bench and we had a 200 zoom lens and we just start snapping away". Darrel also said "I quite like aspects of street photography and candid shots of people, I am not keen on posed images but I am interested in sitting and watching people but as soon as they see you taking photos people change!" Similarly Anthony told me:

> I just like faces… sometimes I prefer it when it's not posed, so a couple of photographs that I have is street photography with a zoom lens: one of a homeless guy, it looks like he is looking straight at the lens but I was in the shadow, so it was a lucky thing.

Some described how they had found new ways of holding the camera to make it less obvious they were photographing the subject. For example, Richard does not always hold his camera at eye level but sometimes sits it at waist level instead, allowing him to capture more candid shots when doing his street photography, which additionally gives a different perspective on his cityscapes. Lewis explained:

> I still have a medium format camera which is great because to most people it doesn't look like a camera and I don't have to hold it up to my eye and it's got 2 lenses... so you look down it and focus that way… 'cause it has the twin lenses on it [the public] think that it is a film camera so they'll look at it and they are not looking directly at you they are looking past you almost... so it is a lot better.

Something happens to our bodies when we are photographed: without thinking we stiffen as social conditioning tells us to stay still so we become tense and pose, leading to an awkwardness of body language on camera and, for the photographers here at least, a less appealing picture. There was a strong desire by the photographers to capture a more naturalised movement, to capture the body as it *really* moves. Phil said:

> Because I have some big lenses I get a photograph when someone doesn't realise it, not them doing anything embarrassing but faces, expressions. The amount of character in the persons face does depend on the kind of life they have had you used to get a lot of that kind of person working the docks in the 60s and 70s… if he knew you were there, you probably wouldn't get the picture.

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Richard also explained that he has recently taken pictures:

> Of people walking past the partition wall [outside the Gateshead Car Park site] it can be quite an interesting contrast, with colours and get them walking past to get a feel for the type of people who live in Gateshead… I took them from across the road with a longer lens… it's like a stage or a catwalk. The positions that people are get in when they are moving, they wouldn't know they are making those positions when they walk, they are unaware of [me]. Sometimes it's just hit and hope!

In the context of Richards 'catwalk' photographs, the subjects are unaware of being photographed so their movements can be seen to progressively flow. Carman (2009:110) explains that 'our bodies are constantly, though unconsciously and involuntarily, adjusting themselves to secure and integrate our experience and maintain our grip on the environment.' When a camera is pointed toward us this subtly changes the dynamic and somehow interferes. Suddenly we are aware of these adjustments and try to supress them, change them or decide to do something else entirely, which leads to the posing that so many photographers wish to avoid (although the results can be spontaneous and fun, see Plate 8). In this example, capturing the everyday feel of Gateshead as a place includes how the *locals* move and dwell in their everyday space which is also important for presenting a more naturalistic form of everyday still life.

Finding a rhythm, getting into position

The rhythms embedded within photographic practice are deep set and can be summarised as one motion, back and forth. There is a comfort in the act of photography which involves a soothing, but complex and repetitive, coordination between camera, hand and body. The compulsion is not only to take photographs, but the rhythms are bound into the preconscious and habitual experience of *photographing*. Seamon (1979: 39) understands this as 'an automatic unfolding of movement with which the person has little or no conscious contact.' All the photographers I watched at work repetitively stepped in and out in order to capture the image they wanted. They brought their body behind the camera and pushed it forward, then back into the subject, then back out again turning the focus in and out. In a wider sense the habitual notion of movement around the city also meant returning to the same places, again and again.

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Dempster (cited in Thrift, 1997:144) comments how 'the modern dancers body registers the play of opposing forces' and photography is no different, the flow of opposing movement is a part of everyday practice. When thinking more deeply about particular rhythms, they can be found in different areas of everyday life from the clock pendulum to the waves at the shoreline. Their constancy can soothe and their disruption unsettle us because 'rhythms are felt much more than they can be seen or heard' (Vergunst, 2011:212) which does make them difficult to represent in a visual or textual way. Nonetheless the rhythm of photography is worth exploring in a bit more detail here.

The participants in this study utilised every aspect of their body, making subtle adjustments to their footwork and posture when using the camera, whether that was taking a picture of a building or another person. When I was out with Anthony, he was taking pictures for his '100 strangers' project[9] and I noticed that when photographing one subject, he stood on his tip toes and subtly leaned toward into them to get the shot he needed, then stood back once the photograph was taken. He needed to lean forward because he had changed lenses moments before to use something "less intimidating" which meant to get closer to the subject he had to step forward, rather than turn the lens. Although this movement is naturalised, Anthony is aware about using different lenses and their presence when doing portraiture. When discussing a portrait of a cage fighter on his photostream in an earlier interview, he remarked:

> It was actually down in Dean Street when I took the picture and I thought you are quite a big guy so if I slightly dip down then you will look bigger and I suddenly thought that I need to make him look good in some way - so I automatically dipped down. But I used a fixed lens so I needed to go straight into him and I said I need to get close to you and he laughed!

In this instance Anthony also pre-empts the reaction of the subject as he stepped closer. He let them know he understands how a camera can be an intimidating presence when used in close-ups because the photographer has to step into the subject's personal space which can feel intrusive.

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[9] 100 strangers is a popular project on *Flickr* where you take portraits of people you have never met on the street See http://www.flickr.com/groups/100strangers/ (accessed 3rd November 2011)

Anthony here is also using his body to get physically closer to the subject which sometimes leads to a more intense picture and the body also acts as a connection point, its movements and posture drawing the eye. In discussions with Anthony while waiting in the street for subjects to present themselves, I asked him why certain people are more suitable than others. He replied that "it's the character in their face and the way they hold themselves when they approach you".

Vergunst (2011:206) identified that:

> In studying technology the role of the body, those who make something, who use it, are affected by it - is integral. By this reckoning the very distinction between body and tool is blurred and each must be seen in a relationship to the other, in combination.

This complex relationship can lead to tension between camera and the body, Rhona remarked that she can feel self-conscious with the camera:

> That's one reason I probably like [photographing] the abandoned stuff because I am not drawing attention to myself, I can wander around and not worry about at anybody looking at me because you feel like a bit of an idiot walking around [with the camera]... I do anyway!

In a different example, Alastair explains to me how he gets the camera to "do what he wants":

> I have learned how to force [the camera] into doing what I want it to do... and I have learnt not to take the shot that I know I can't capture with it. I couldn't get interesting shots [at a distance with this camera] so you go for something more interesting, like the teacup for example... [takes picture of my coffee cup and voice recorder to show me on the camera] if you force the flash on and change the light settings, then put your finger over the flash and you get the light settings you want... you figure that out over time.

In this instance, Alastair learnt about his camera and its capabilities through both movement and repetition. Stretching a finger over the flash with one hand and taking a picture with the other is quite awkward, requiring a degree of skill. Here the hands and camera successfully interact in order to get the desired photograph and the body is this instance becomes dynamic and intuitive with the camera. Paterson (2008:769) explains that research by Gestalt psychologists on proprioception greatly influenced Merleau-Ponty as 'compared with a grounded spatial framework, the axis of the body is literally 'felt' as upright or tilted, and limbs and their movement are distinguished in reference to this fixed framework.'

Considering Merleau-Ponty's later writing about the body in the world, Carman (2008:127) highlights how 'our perceptions are not sharply divided between inner and outer, for all sense experience is simultaneously open onto the world and reflexively self-sensitive.' Merleau-Ponty believes then that we must always consider 'the bodily point of view' (ibid.:132) and although 'visually [proprioception] is subliminal, I can close my eyes and proprioceptively hone in on the position, the level of tension and relaxation, in any region of the muscular body' (Leder cited in Paterson, 2008:279). Proprioception is both fully integrated and greatly enhanced, as photographers become gradually absorbed into the everyday doing of photography.

The photographers were aware that they had to put their body into unusual positions with the camera to get the desired photograph as the 'co-ordination of perception and action lies at the heart of practical mimesis' (Ingold, 2000:358). This was prevalent when out and about with many of the different photographers and they were instinctive and bold about using their bodies to get the shot they wanted. Darrel spoke about the picture on his *Flickr* stream (see Plate 3) that shows Paul W in the middle of the road with a tram coming towards him as a way of illustrating the extreme measures that photographers will go to get their desired shot. Donna also told me "the more you get into it, the more kit you need to carry and the more you carry you need to keep it dry or whatever… I have got very good at holding a brolly in between my neck and a camera as well!" I viewed first-hand how photographers successfully 'throw their bodies into the performance of meaningful action' (Carman, 2008:111). When watching Paul B during our walk and talk, I noted that he spent a long time getting one shot right, lingering over the subject for different close ups and he took a lot of time crouching or actually sitting on the ground to get at the right level for the picture he was taking.

Anthony explained "sometimes it is just approaching it from a different angle, getting down on the ground, seeing how the world looks from that angle or looking for things such as repetition and pattern." Even though it was wet on our walk and talk session, Mike did not hesitate to get down on his hunkers or lean on damp lampposts to capture the required image.

When out on a group photo walk, Chris often experimented with perspectives by putting his camera on the ground or stepping out into the middle of the road, to use his spinner camera. Similarly with Richard, I noticed he put his compact camera almost at his feet, his arm outstretched to take pictures of the pigeons that were near the monument at which we were sitting. In a deeper way, the photographers' physical engagement with the camera, their style and positioning leads to a further 'understanding about the actual fabric of human environmental experience' (Seamon,1979:18) that they are photographing and ultimately 'the emotional link between person and place' (ibid.:25) is brought to the surface.

Dancing in groups: together but apart

Most of the accounts given here come from either face-to-face interviews or later observations and comments that photographers made when I accompanied them out with the camera. I was aware at the beginning of this research that, more often than not, photograph*ing* is a singular hobby and something people want to do alone. Paul B described photography to me as "solitary yet sharing" and some were not used to having someone with them when out with the camera. Donna believed the reason for this was that "when you go out with family and friends and take pictures they don't realise that you need to be in the same place for ages, fiddling with the settings on your camera and they get bored."

Despite it being a solitary hobby, photographers do occasionally dance in groups. My very first *Flickr* meet-up was with the NEEPG members, who had arranged to meet in a coffee shop in Newcastle city centre. I invited myself along after joining the group a few months before and when I came in I could see the members gathered with their kit in the corner, leisurely chatting with each other. They each introduced themselves giving both their real name and, if it was different, their *Flickr* name, allowing me to put a face to their photo stream. Once we had all chatted for a while and finished our coffee we decided that no more members were coming so we headed outside but where I had assumed we would all stick together, everyone then went their separate ways. This behaviour puzzled me – why call it a meet-up when you are only going to separate again?

This meeting then separating is not unusual, however, Paul B later told me that on meet-ups with the *Peoples' Republic of Teesside* group "they all split up and go their own way, even if there are 30 of us." This particular NEEPG meet-up took place in Newcastle photographing the Chinese New Year celebrations in Chinatown, and some members of the group went away to find a good spot, to get a view of where the procession would eventually come through. I wandered with a few of the others moving between the different members who I could see were dotted up and down the street. They were all taking photographs of various different details, the red lanterns hanging beside the crispy ducks in the restaurant window, the parade of dragons with their yellow fur and gold bells, whirling and moving through the packed throng of people that had now gathered to see the parade.

The photographers were doing a subtle dance of their own but also a dance between one another, carefully trying to move around so as not to get into one another's pictures. They would also look around them to see if another photographer was taking the same picture, then step out and move themselves into a new position or point the camera in a different direction. Donna told me that "I always look around before I move into space and take a shot, I hate it when I am taking a photo and someone walks past, you have to remember that there are other people that want the shot". Another time, when I was out with Tom, we were taking pictures and we both moved around one another, making sure that we did not creep into one another's shots and at one point he even asked "am I stepping in the way?" These same movements were also present at another, smaller meet-up at a local railway yard. Here, as the small cohort of photographers moved around, all were aware of the other cameras, peeking around corners and carefully looking about, aware that their movements could possibly impact on another person's pictures. Alastair attends most meet-ups with another group (*Newcastle Photo Walk*) whenever he can spare the time and commented how:

> With the photo walk's everybody has their own distinct style I am always looking up at the sky and something in it and very close up micro stuff. Sometimes you might mimic another person's style just to do something different.

It is perhaps this reason why photographers feel the need to work alone, even if they are out in a group, as the desire to capture their own 'unique' shot is a habit that they cannot shake off. Later, Alastair went on to say:

> You learn a lot from your peers, teaching you, and sometimes you come back with a grin on your face and you see things and say I am having some of that! One of things about our group is that we don't mind sharing [locations] it just feels that others are a bit protective of things.

The dance that photographers do together is also carefully orchestrated, in part so they can keep a watchful eye on the others to see what they are doing. They are also aware of their own movements, so they can recognise the shot that is being lined up in the camera by another photographer. Not all participants viewed the meet-ups in a positive way, as The Understudy remarked that:

> I am never keen on organised events, the *Flickr* meet I went to, that was my worst nightmare ever! I am not very good in a team and because you have such a variety of levels and the one I went to was a competition… I am quite competitive.

When I asked Richard if he had gone on any meet-ups, he exclaimed "No! And I don't want to it's just odd walking around [with others]!" Rhona also commented that "I considered it but there aren't that many girls in the meet-ups and I find it quite intimidating when it is all blokes." However Donna said that she views the gatherings as a chance to learn more about the photography from those that are there: "I like the [groups] where you can meet people basically and you can go out and there is someone you can talk to." The group dance then, whilst often fun and open, can alternatively be quite tribalistic and competitive, with photographers moving around one another as a way of testing the territory of others, their movements infused with the awareness that others are always watching them too.

Testing the limits of the body

So far it has been established that 'embodiment is tactile; it involves an active grip on the world. The body, in other words is understood in the terms of what it can do' (Thrift, 1997:128) but when contemplating what the body does when taking photographs, it is also worth thinking about what it cannot do and its limitations.

When the sensory and physical elements are combined, the varied movements of the body make photography an all-encompassing dance, but similar to the dancer, the photographer can often get fatigued. At some point, many of the participants commented about the physical strain that photography puts on their body. Donna explained how:

> As soon as you put the heavy lens on, you do hunch over… the other [camera] is too bulky so I carry the compact. I have the wrong bag and when you are taking a picture on a hill or something you start sliding down it with the weight of all the lenses gets you off balance and things… you feel very lop sided and when you get home you are aching from carrying it around.

Mike R also said that "usually [I am out for] a couple of hours, by that time you are either cold, or you have the picture that you want!" There is something absorbing about the physical nature of walking with the camera through an environment which can be dangerous. When discussing walking through underground environments, Andy S noted that "time is really disorientating underground, it seems to go a lot faster, and distance seems longer, you would swear you have walked miles but then when you check on a map it's not as far as you thought". Mike R is a keen outdoor photographer and often goes out at night to make pictures with coloured light (called light painting). Taking these kinds of pictures is incredibly physically demanding as it requires the photographers to swing a light source (sometimes aflame) around the head or the body. He explained that you use:

> Something non-flammable like a dog chain and on the end of it you put a little bit of bendy wire we use a whisk and then on the inside of that you put some wire wool… you put a lighter to it and then you swing it around it looks a lot more dangerous than it is, but last week a spark flew down my neck!

This kind of photography not only takes planning but also skill and preparation, the physical nature of it drains the body of energy. Some of the photographers went to inhospitable places too, in search of Urban Exploration (UrbEx) opportunities. This research is not focusing on the UrbEx phenomenon (see Garrett 2010 for more in-depth discussions) however it was an area that some of the photographers enjoyed and participated in. Edensor (quoted in Garrett, 2010:1451) summarises that urban explorers (who are not always necessarily photographers) 'don't… necessarily want to preserve places, I think they want to experience them.'

Edensor's account is partly true of the photographers I spoke to about their travels into unseen and dangerous places. However it could also be argued that the act of photographing some of these derelict and abandoned buildings is a form of preservation in itself, so they are not forgotten once they are eventually pulled down.

Although he does not view himself explicitly as an UrbEx photographer, Andy M admits that there "is a crossover" with those kinds of images and his own work. Instead he views his pictures of abandoned spaces and buildings in Sunderland as a way to remember "what is there and we don't appreciate and also reminding people of what is left… it is important to preserve the buildings but not let them rot away to nothing". Some of the participants that are interested in this kind of photography also spoke of the secrecy within the scene.

Many UrbEx photographers do like to keep their discoveries to themselves but paradoxically will also put the images on *Flickr.* Others are more comfortable with being open about their locations, Chillie 63 said that "[other UrbEx photographers] will make their photographs public but won't tell you how they gained access to a building or a tunnel". Seamon (1979:49) describes how the body-subject thrives on routine and 'becomes attached to the movements it knows.' However in some cases, some of the photographers in this study 'leave the taken for grantedness of place or situation and extend their horizons elsewhere' (ibid:134) in a bid for new experiences with the camera. This means deliberately disrupting their safer rhythms and visiting other unknown places that brings both the experience of excitement and danger, but leads the body to being pushed and pulled into different and unusual places.

Andy S describes that when discovering one place "the way in we found wasn't obvious and involved much climbing and squeezing". Rhona described how she would love to do more photography of neglected buildings, however "I tend to head to the parks, I would love to do the derelict places at night but I would be too scared I think. I am not super fit either so I don't want to have to start climbing walls with my kit!"

The photographer's body, especially at night is vulnerable to both the elements and the dangers of walking alone, which is perhaps one of the reasons I came across fewer women doing this sort of photography. Mike R told me:

> There is a place down Hartlepool, an old disused works and it is very much in decay, you can see it as soon as you look round. It is slowly being knocked down with a great big high chimney and great big settlement tanks… it is like a really strange world but I wouldn't want to go down there on my own though… it is a bit isolated and a bit rough as well.

Many of the urban locations in this research also had a beach or coast that the photographers visited, which gave another contrasting environmental experience to the relative calm of the urban street:

> If I am taking photographs in winter then you have to keep walking around, it just depends on the exposure really and the space as well, some places are dangerous. The piers are often broken and slippery: one time it was blowing a gale and it was a full moon so I had to crouch down and hold onto the tripod, shouldn't have done it really!
>
> (Andy M)

> I have been hit before with waves a few times with my camera and it has survived. It happened down on the pier and I was trying to get the perfect wave and one just came over and soaked us. Luckily my car was in the car park, I had to walk back drenched!
>
> (Chillie 63)

Photographers not only dance with the camera and with one another but they put their bodies through extremes, pushing and squeezing into positions in order to discover hidden and secret places, going up to great heights or lying flat on the ground in order to get the optimum angle. They carry heavy equipment for miles, leaving them with aching limbs and sore necks and they are sometimes out in the dark, not only having to deal with the cold but experiencing the more insalubrious parts of night-time culture. In every aspect of photograph taking, the body is at the centre, dealing with all these different elements and it 'is our general medium for living in the world' (Merleau-Ponty cited in Thrift, 1997:141). Seamon (1979:48) explains that 'because of the body subject, we can manage routine demands automatically and so gain freedom from our everyday spaces and environments.'

Seamon is partially right here, in that the body-subject is performing routine movements whilst also doing photography, managing large and small movements at the same time. What I also want to argue here is that photographers wish to

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become more enveloped and involved in their everyday environment, using a combination of body and camera to extract *more* from the everyday environment rather than simply "rising beyond" (ibid.) it. The last part of this chapter will move from the camera to the computer, addressing the alternative ways in which photographers use their bodies in relation to photography but without a camera.

'Beating the meat': from camera to computer

The title of this chapter is taken from Vivian Sobchack's (1995) writing on cyber culture and its 'disembodying fantasies' (ibid.:212). Later Sobchack explains how it is impossible to truly 'beat the meat'. In the early imaginations of science and cyber fiction writers, the ultimate fantasy was to leave the body behind and enter into an electronic world through the mind, where it can become entirely lost. In those stories the body is cumbersome and drags the mind down, but eventually it must be returned to, if only briefly before the next adventure can take place.

Online places in these stories offered a sort of dualistic, techno Valhalla, where the mind is strong and, shed of its body, can roam free and be whatever it wants. Outside these literary settings, current users of virtual games and environments are invited by its creators to explore their built imaginary worlds, ultimately for commercial purposes. In adverts for the virtual world *Second Life* users are invited to 'free your mind… enter a world with infinite possibilities and live a life without boundaries, guided only by your imagination.'[10] Ultimately though, no matter where the *Second Life* user decides to go or be in their fantasies, their body remains in front of the computer screen in their first life, responding to the various physical aspects that computers demand from the body (see Galley and Martey, 2009, for more research into avatars on *Second Life*). When using the computer for long periods of time, the body begins to stiffen and soon the back and shoulders become sore, the eyes become tired and drawn from staring at the screen all day. Writing about early discussions on technology and embodiment, Thrift (1997:140) recognises that what is noticeable in early literature:

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[10] Introduction to Second life available [online] at: http://secondlife.com/whatis (Accessed 14th November, 2011)

> Is its lack of sense of embodiment… in most cases, the human body appears but only as a surface to be read for the signs of the effects of new electronic technologies and 'the body as an experiential field disappears from consideration' (Bukatman, 1995:260). Yet what is striking is the embodied nature of the new electronic technologies, the way in which they underline how being, means being in touch with the object world.

Fifteen years after Thrift's discussion on embodiment and play[11], there has been a recent rush of new innovations in computing to include touch in the context of user experience (UX) across different platforms such as smart phones, digital cameras, and personal MP3 players. It is particularly in video game technology that new formations of touch, play and the body are emerging where, far from being forgotten and left behind, the body is put at the centre of experience. Both the Nintendo *Wii* and the more recent Xbox console *Kinect* pledge to 'make you the controller'[12]. The latter uses skeletal tracking, voice recognition and motion sensors allowing players to use and move their body in unique ways for games as well as interact with other Xbox content, such as film (Shinkle, 2008).

In a more everyday context, even if the body is not re-enacting a physical action, it still plays a vital role in the context of computing. For most participants, being on the computer was an integral part of their photographic practice aside from their interaction on *Flickr*. Before uploading their photographs onto their stream, most used some kind of post-production (PP) process to enhance their pictures. Paul B summarised that:

> The PP is an essential (and also very enjoyable) part of the image creation… photography is not just about pressing the shutter; the post-process workflow is as important to the final image as is the viewpoint selection, in-camera composition, physical camera settings, etc. A more "typical" day of photography would probably mean I have four or five hours (weather and inspiration permitting) and then several more - over a few days! - working on the images.

Although during the browse and talk sessions I viewed participants when they were surfing *Flickr*, Mike also me took me through his PP routine where for him, "having the idea comes alive".

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[11] In relation to earlier discussions surrounding dance, many of the bestselling games on these consoles are dance related, multi-player games where users dance to music with guided moves from the avatars on screen.
[12] Xbox in their online promotional video also shows *Kinect* being used in a non-gaming environments and features scientists, schoolchildren and doctors using *Kinect* to learn to play instruments, assisting in operations and for physical rehabilitation for stroke victims see[online] http://www.xbox.com/en-GB/Kinect/Kinect-Effect (accessed 14th November, 2011)

PP is a time consuming and fiddly process and once the photographs were downloaded from his camera, Mike spent about an hour simply tweaking and adjusting the various balances before he was happy with the final photograph. Many photographers discussed the PP side to their photography and whilst some enjoyed it, others found it a chore or did not use it at all, preferring to do what they needed in camera. Andy M prefers to shoot with film, explaining that:

> It can't be copied I suppose, but it is a dying art really. People take hundreds of photos and then get it in Photoshop and get something satisfactory but it's satisfying to know that I haven't messed with the colours or changed anything, that it is what it is.

He still uses a computer in his wider photographic practices, digitising his work to upload onto his photostream, as well as running a website dedicated to Sunderland and the surrounding area[13]. For most of the photographers, PP was an additional but important part of everyday practice, involving long, time consuming stints in front of the computer. Mike estimated that he only uses about 10 per cent of his photographs for PP and then perhaps only 2 or 3 of those will eventually make it in onto *Flickr*. Similarly Darrel told me that out of 100 images, only 20 per cent will eventually make it to the PP stage and "out of the 20 I will do the whole PP thing and then half [will go] onto *Flickr*… I will spend a bit of time with them, they are the ones that are more likely to go up."

The process of adding effects onto the pictures is slow, and can take a few hours or as much as a few days' effort. When Mike was working on the pictures, he concentrated intently on the screen and he constantly scrolled with the mouse wheel, his eyes following the screen up and down in a repetitive motion. Tomlinson (2007:108) describes the 'habitual way of accessing and communicating via keyboards and keypads… practices which obviously involve the body, particularly the hands and the sense of touch'. Sound also played a part and when our conversations became quiet, the only noise was the whirr of the hard drive and the repetitive clicking of the mouse.

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[13]The website is 'a long term on-going project which aims to document the ever-changing industrial and historic landscape of Wearside' [Online] Available at: www.this-is-sunderland.co.uk (Accessed 29th February 2012)

When working with photographs on the computer, Mike's control of the mouse involved the hand and eye working in co-ordination in a similar way to the camera, making small micro-adjustments with the fingers while the head stayed still and focused; he hardly looked down at his hand on the mouse. When using the touchpad on their laptop, the other photographers only had to lightly caress their fingertip over the computer's surface in an even subtler movement. Both with the mouse and the touchpad, their action displayed a 'creative power in the hands' (Seamon, 1979:49) where the movements are seamless, learnt from spending hours fine-tuning their photographs.

They knew their way around their own machines but when the photographers had to also use my laptop to access *Flickr*, it took them a while to familiarise themselves with its configuration and on a few occasions they became audibly frustrated with themselves for clicking on the wrong button. In this instance, 'the body subject becomes attached to the movements it knows… and prefers that movements adhere to their patterns of the past' (Seamon, 1979:49). When these patterns are disturbed it takes a while for the body-subject to readjust, which was clearly the case here and I had to stop and explain to them where certain buttons were in relation to their own keyboards.

The photographers spent as much time on their computers as they did with their cameras and when they were not processing their images (amongst other things) they were uploading photographs onto, or browsing the content, on *Flickr*. Although their actions were similar from before, the movement of the photographers at the computer changed as they interacted with the site. When watching Tom, Anthony and Mike on *Flickr*, their interactions were quick in order to get through the content faster and allow them to see as many photographs as possible. Tom regularly accesses *Flickr* via an application called *Flickriver* (FR) which strips the *Flickr* Explore pages down and just gives him the images (rather than the comments and group information).

This pared-back view means that there is just page after page of images, he just keeps hitting the downward arrow key and the photographs automatically reload. This gives a seamless motion of movement between hand and screen and Tom

tells me: "FR just keeps going and when you get to the bottom of the page it reloads, I stop when I have to go somewhere... or when my vision just can't hold up anymore!" Later I ask Tom about feeling tired after a time on *Flickr* and he agreed that sometimes he gets fatigued from looking at so many pictures endlessly. The nature of the FR application means that Tom does not tend to linger and he later commented that "I don't sit and stare at images". Anthony's movements and interaction on *Flickr* (without the use of FR) were similar to Tom's. As he was scrolling down the content on the Explore page he said "it tends to be really quick when I am selecting images, when I am looking at it… I am drawn to [an image] straight away" and throughout the session he often commented that certain images would get his attention this way.

These online movements and processes can be traced back to equivalent offline ones and whilst the photographer has become accustomed to carefully looking, they are also used to making snap decisions about what they like or do not want to take a photo of. When they like what they see with the camera, they press the shutter release: on *Flickr* they click on the picture. When with the camera they would briefly glance over the back of the camera to see the image, then quickly take position with their body again, ready for another shot. On *Flickr* they quickly browse through the photostream of the photographer, and if they like the photograph click the *favourite* button and move on to the next.

This cross over between movements in an online/offline context is to be expected because the 'body subject can transfer its movements over similar contexts' (Seamon, 1979:50). Merleau-Ponty (cited in ibid.) insists that the behaviourist notion of the passive body and simple learned behaviour is problematic and instead writes that: 'learning is the establishment of general attitude with the regard to the structure or essence of the situation… our experience generates global attitudes.' In the case of Anthony's word choice about selecting the images, he used the word "drawn" many times and he used similar language when out with the camera looking for subjects in the city to photograph.

This was also the case with both Tom, who scanned the pictures on Explore, and Richard, who scrolled through the pictures in his groups (although not through Explore), looking for images that interested them, clicking on the thumbnails and looking quickly over the content.

In contrast, Chris does not often have the time to linger over *Flickr* (he does not access the site that much) and will instead find photographs tagged with specific content to direct his searches, rather than using Explore. He told me that "I am going through a phase taking shadow pictures" so will look for other lo-fi and digital photos that have prominent shadows or shadow in the tag. Like the other photographers, Chris is also drawn to specific images that he likes and will then click through to the rest of that photographer's content to view their other images. I noticed that Chris had a more relaxed attitude when using the site, which is perhaps because out of all the photographers involved in the browsing sessions, he is on *Flickr* the least.

However, I also think that Chris' engagement with film photography and the types of cameras that he uses day-to-day has an impact on his style of browsing on *Flickr*. When working with toy cameras, there is a more serendipitous attitude to taking pictures, a kind of hit and hope strategy. In an earlier interview Chris told me that "I take a lot more care with composition, with digital you just tend to snap and if you shoot it you think I can just take another one, with Lomo you are doing it blind almost and I like that." The nature of using film means that you must be patient and do the work in camera and it is inherently a slower style of photography.

To be clear, it would be a gross over-simplification to simply say that those photographers who do digital rather than film are more likely to engage with *Flickr* and there are many prolific film photographers and groups on the site. Chris uses digital and film cameras and has his own photographic blog. He frequently posts both types of pictures into a Lo-fi group on Facebook, using digital technologies to circulate his work. It is not the case that photographers either use film *or* go digital, and many of the participants in this research used all sorts of cameras, from basic pinhole devices to the latest digital cameras on mobile phones, to take their

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pictures. However, the way in which Chris moved when out using the camera was relaxed and slower and his online movements partially reflected this relaxed approach. Although this section was entitled 'beating the meat' in everyday life, the body is always at the centre of a photographer's world as they venture into the online realm. The central role the body takes in the offline context impacts on their interaction with the computer, either on *Flickr* or when working on their own images. The movements and approaches that they have with their camera are deeply connected to their interaction with the computer. When reviewing pictures of Barack Obama found on *Flickr,* Stallabrass (2009:201) writes:

> The brevity and simplicity of the comments appear to confirm the view that photography is usually looked at rapidly, gutted for some familiar narrative or message, and then abandoned – perhaps for the next image. This is, surprisingly, also true of the photographic enthusiasts and political partisans who inhabit Flickr, though they do occasionally make technical comments or ask about the focal length of the lens used or how an image has been modified.

Unsurprisingly, I disagree with Stallabrass and his haughty derision of *Flickr*, its content and users. The findings of this research reveal that instead of simply gutting and then abandoning images, *Flickr*ites are transferring their movements and bodily routines from offline to online in a more complex way. The photographer in front of the computer is not passive, as Stallabrass suggests, they are actively using their body, combining their skills with movements and familiar gestures to engage with the content on the site.

There is another deeper issue that Stallabrass insinuates: the images on *Flickr* are somehow an extension of 21st Century consumer culture. It is a place we can go to hungrily consume images then just as quickly disregard them, becoming a sort of giant image landfill site, full of hackneyed portraits or sunsets. This insinuation is one reason why this research has decided to turn away from simply reading and evaluating the photographs on *Flickr,* falling into the trap of making assumptions about the content (and therefore the users), missing the richness of interactions and movements on *Flickr* and the role it has in the lives of participants. This work will now move on to examine the role of routine and habit in everyday photographic practice in greater detail.

Chapter 6

Habits and Routines

Walking in circles: the role of habits and routines, in everyday photography

> If you came this way,
> Taking any route, starting from anywhere
> At any time or any season
> It would always be the same

> (T.S Eliot, excerpt from 'Little Gidding')

If the photographic process stems from the body and fans outward into the world, it is through the habits and routines, both online and with the camera when offline, that enables this process to make an impact upon everyday life. The patterns and rhythms of movement that photographers made whilst out in the field were primarily circular and often when we walked together, we literally walked *around*. The circles were sometimes small, other times they were very large and we would walk for many miles in a circular tour, always ending up at where we began. Ingold (2007:98-100) discusses how the Walbiri Aborigines depict the stories of their ancestors as circular spiral drawings:

> What [the circle drawings] describe is not an external boundary within which life is contained but rather the current of life itself as it circles around a focus… emerging from the ground at the focal point, the ancestor walks around… describing an ever-widening spiral, until he eventually heads off… for them life goes on *around* places as well as towards and away.

Here, the circle represents both the journey made as well as a wider commentary on the patterns of movement and repetition found within everyday life. This involves moving around, ultimately returning to the beginning but essentially changed by the *experience*, echoing Eliot's sentiments in *Little Gidding.* The circular, repetitive movement of photography can also be found within the camera itself, in the turning of the lens and buttons to work the machine. Later within this chapter, the different movements that photographers took on our excursions together and in bigger groups will be discussed in more depth.

In this research the words *habit* and *routine* are not used interchangeably and have nuanced differences. Habit is used when discussing the body because habit is formed through movement and is then *performed* instinctively through time, by the body.

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Routines are the everyday series of processes brought about and imposed by the photographers on their everyday lives. So if the photographer's use of the camera is learned through habit, their interactions on *Flickr* are informed through routine or as Seamon (1979:56) would have it 'time-space routines join a wider pattern directed by body subject.' This is a small but important difference, however they are by no means mutually exclusive categories, and routines are often borne from habits and vice versa.

The previous chapter discussed the role of the different sensory elements within photography; however I purposely omitted vision from that category. Discussions relating to vision are instead included here as vision plays a vital role in the habit of looking and *noticing*. *Noticing* is so important in the context of this study there is a dedicated section to it, which additionally interconnects with discussions regarding online looking habits. Paterson (2009:781) notes that 'obviously the non-visual mode of routine wayfinding and navigation involves spatializing the non-visual senses', so alongside vision, the repetitive motion of walking and navigation around city spaces will also be considered.

In addition to these discussions, there is also an examination into the crossover between the habitual way in which photographers navigate and find their way around their city environment as well as when they are on *Flickr*. I agree with Wunderlich's (2008:130) statement that 'a sense of belonging and familiarity grows out of our habitual awareness and interaction with social time-space-routines of everyday urban places', so this chapter examines the habitual way that photographers dwell and move in the city. Continuing this theme, there will also be a consideration into the more reflective qualities to the habitual walking around the city. Solnit (cited in Vaughn, 2009:317) contemplates that 'the rhythm of walking generates a kind of rhythm of thinking, and the passage through a landscape echoes or stimulates the passage through a series of thoughts' and this section will also consider how this rhythm informs the everyday practice of participants in this research. In a more general way, although both media and technology play an important role in everyday routines, they often go unnoticed.

Scannell (cited in Seamon, 2006) believes 'that the media become most significant and successful when they become an integral part of taken-for-granted daily life' (for further discussions on this idea see Scannell, 1992; Moores 2006, 2008). One of the main roles of phenomenological investigation is to uncover the deeper meaning found within the familiarity in the everyday lifeworld or 'the taken-for granted, the felt, unsaid, and sometimes the ineffable or tacit knowledge that emerge through encounters with people' (Paterson, 2009:779). The route to understanding such structures comes in part from examining the role of mass media within habits and routines.

Adding to the broad phenomenological analysis of media use, this chapter focuses particularly on the work of Merleau-Ponty and Seamon, the latter a pioneer in his attitude toward the role of both movement and habit in establishing place within everyday life. The examples in Lifeworld 'clearly demonstrate the significance that media of communication can have… for place-making in daily living' (Moores and Metykova, 2010:177). These discussions build on earlier ideas, particularly considering Seamon's work regarding habitual movements in regard to photographer's offline actions, as well as widening its scope into the online world. To begin, discussions turn to the important habit of *noticing* which was prevalent both in this research and in Lifeworld.

The habit of *Noticing*

> Who would watch empty streets? Such situations are neutral backdrops and normally do not capture the experiences attention.
>
> (Seamon, 1979:106)

> It is the body that understands in the acquisition of habit.
>
> (Merleau-Ponty, 2002:167)

Figure 5a.

Kertész The Daisy Bar, Montmartre, 1930

Figure 5b.

Kertész, West 134th Street, New York, 1944

The photographs taken by Andre Kertész (Figures 5a and 5b) are both of empty streets but here the photographer appears to revel in the emptiness as an opportunity for contemplation. The mysterious and unseen details of everyday life are allowed to rise up to the surface and shake the viewer to attention: long shadows, pavement markings, iron railings and girders, open car doors. Writing later about the photographs of Kertész, Seamon (1990:32) reflects that:

> Kertész's work is significant phenomenologically because it presents sensitive portraits of the way that things and people belong or do not belong to the world in which they find themselves immersed. In one sense, Kertész's photographs are an implicit phenomenological record because they portray the fabric, style and tenor of the *lifeworld* the ordinary, tacit pattern and elements of life's everydayness, normally taken-for-granted but given direct scholarly attention in phenomenology.

It is a shame that Seamon's primary concern here is the reflection on the image, as opposed to Kertész's working practice, which would have revealed much about the photographer and his isolation and loneliness within the different cities that he lived in and walked around throughout his life.

Martin Parr (2011)[1] explains that:

> Several of Kertész's Paris photographs reveal that one of his enduring motifs was a walking, isolated figure silhouetted on the street. If such pictures may have symbolized Kertész's own isolation in the cultural capital where he was not fluent in its native tongue, they were also meant to suggest a story in the act of unfolding visually.

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[1] Artist biography found at: http://www.stephendaitergallery.com/dynamic/artist_bio.asp?ArtistID=6 [online] Accessed 24th November 2011. Martin Parr's work has traces of a similar loneliness and isolation and many of his themes meditate on the urban landscape and the people therein

I would also add to this statement: more importantly these images show the unfolding of movement and space within the urban environment and how photographers engage and reflect on these everyday surroundings. Nevertheless Seamon's main ideas regarding Kertész's work are valuable to this research. Particularly the discussion regarding the photographer's 'immersion' in his everyday life world, and the possibility that Kertész's images are a meditation on the subjects 'place in the world' (Seamon, 1990:59).

To respond to Seamon's quote at the beginning of this section, it is the photographer who is always watching whether the streets are empty or filled with people, if the buildings are in light or shade, whether it is warm or damp, cold or sunny, afternoon or night. As the hundreds of pedestrians walk along the same paths allowing the neutral backdrop of the cityscape to merge with their everyday activities, the photographer is always *noticing*. The focused inattentiveness of the urbanites is one part of their *natural attitude*, the noise, dirt and architecture form part of their everyday 'epistemic wallpaper' (Thrift cited in Willem, 2007; see also Bull, 2007). For the photographers however, the city offers an infinite number of sensual opportunities and they interact with its space in a complex and enhanced way.

On *Flickr*, images of Sunderland and Newcastle have multiple yet striking identities. They can be dirty, gloomy and defaced, or be beautiful, industrial and dramatic - the pictures themselves are varied in texture, subject and viewpoint each peeking through the cracks of the city, showing its multifarious faces and inhabitants. The photographers that live in and around these sites of interest habitually revisit the city because it offers something new to them on each visit. Seamon (1979:108) discusses in some detail 'noticing and heightened contact' which in this case could be specifically applied to the photographer's interaction with their everyday environment. Seamon (ibid.) describes noticing as:

> A thing from which we were insulated a moment before flashes to our attention. Noticing is self-grounded or world grounded…Incongruity, surprise, contrast and attractiveness (or its opposite unattractiveness) are all characteristics that activate world-grounded noticing.

In this instance photography is connected to a form of *heightened noticing* and photographers are often actively engaged in looking for noticeable scenes, people and places. One of the initial ways to investigate how photographers habitually notice things (where other urban inhabitants do not) was to ask what happens when they do not bring their cameras out with them. Andy M explained that "I am always thinking with photos in mind it's kind of an obsession. Once you start taking photographs at a regular level you start to see things through a camera even if you don't have one". Lewis also stated: "when I haven't got my camera, I am always looking around at stuff and I do think, I should have my camera, I can't believe I don't have it!" David also told me that:

> I was stuck in traffic and there was just a glimpse of the Sage building by the railway bridge and I just thought it is such a different view, I have driven down that road for about two years and never noticed it before... and it was a really good view, I need to go back and photograph it!

These different examples all demonstrate that the camera does not always have to be at hand to instigate *noticing* and even when they are without one, photographers are frequently thinking and acting as if they have a camera with them. If they either forget to take their camera, or decide to leave it at home, there was a sense of both annoyance and frustration when they saw a good picture but could not capture it at that moment. Instead of the photographers' awareness 'advancing and retreating like the actions of waves on shore' (Seamon, 1979:103) the effect of the camera is more permanent on their everyday interactions and movement with the environment. For Chris it can happen at any time:

> When my wife is driving and I am looking out the window she says 'you are looking at what to take pictures of!' [I ask if he carries his camera around all the time]… Yeah, at least one! I have two with me today.

Mike also told me that "when I am going out in Sunderland, I go where I think I am going to get good photos… you see the world totally differently… you are keeping an eye out". The Understudy also explained that:

> I walk around, I carry the camera everywhere that is the best thing about digital, you can take the tools of your trade with you and yes, spotting things becomes an annoying habit when you are with other people.

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The annoying part inferred to here is that when participants are out with others (who are not photographers) they often need to stop, get the body into position, work out the picture they want, take the picture (often trying different angles), review the picture and then constantly repeat this process until they are happy, by which time the companion has walked further on, or complained that they are bored.

On one of the Lo-fi meet-ups in Newcastle, the group were taking different pictures of some of the bridges over the Tyne. Chris jokingly told us that because he spent two hours in New York taking pictures of the Brooklyn Bridge his wife is 'banning me from bridges' when using his camera. There were other similar stories:

> My kids and my wife think I am mad, I will be having a cup of coffee and start staring at something and move my head a bit, because I will be interested by a shape, the way the light has hit something, or a reflection whatever.
>
> (Darrel)

> My wife sort-of tolerates my photography but only to a point… so I always have my SE 770i phone camera with me and occasionally my G9. I see plenty of opportunities but can't always react to them. If I'm going out to take photographs I carry pretty-much all of my Canon gear. If I'm simply out I am rarely without my Sony Ericsson phone-cam which I bought for its camera capabilities rather than its phone capabilities. I also have a Canon G9 which is another "out without a camera" camera option.
>
> (Paul B)

In these examples, photography and the habit of noticing encroached on everyday family life whether the individual had their camera with them or not, seeing different opportunities in the shapes and shadows, whilst at the same time turning and moving the body to get a better position in 'an automatic unfolding of movement' (Seamon, 1979:39). In Darrel's case, this noticing happened in an unanticipated way, as although he was not expecting to find a picture in a coffee shop, something subtly changed in the light or movement that others may not have picked up on. He can react to changes with small micro-movements, the body instinctively adjusting and reacting and 'unfolding instantaneously in one smooth flow' (ibid.:109). Merleau-Ponty (cited in Carman, 2008:110-111) notes that 'intentionality of perception depends crucially on the normativity of body schema… we have a *feel* for the kinds of balance and posture that afford us a correct and proper view of the world.' In the case of the photographers in this study, this view is subtly different from the others that they are with.

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Paul B's comment that one of his cameras is his 'out without a camera' option demonstrates that he sometimes is thinking in advance of where he is going and as he cannot always carry the required kit around is preparing for noticing in advance. When I was out with Paul B, at one point he brought out two large DSLR cameras and hung them around his neck laughing that it often gets him attention when he does this out on his own. In his earlier interview he told me that:

> I'd say I am always photographically aware of my surroundings, carrying a camera or not. It's rare that I am not carrying a camera of some sort; if I was without a camera I would wish I was carrying a camera.

What does it mean to be 'photographically aware' of surroundings? It differs from photographer to photographer depending on their preferred subject but what is important for each of them is habitually and intentionally paying attention to the world around them. The end goal is to find an interesting picture within the overlooked details that are scattered around the everyday environment; Donna describes that "when I walk down the street there is texture, there is light and shadow and you think 'oh that would be interesting if I zoom in on it", Phil similarly explained that:

> If you are carrying a camera around with you, you are always looking for something to photograph, it's a strange situation you don't consciously look for a photograph but when you are wandering along something will take your eye and you will look at it, move around, you look at it from different angles and all of a sudden you will see a photograph and you will say I like that, I want to take a picture of it.

The accounts that Donna and Phil give are what Seamon (1979:109) would describe as 'training and interest provid[ing] some control of noticing... but different people notice different aspects of the same environment.'

Where one photographer sees something interesting, another will ignore it and look for something else. Interestingly the description Phil gives above also implies the noticing cannot be forced, and Paul W told me that "sometimes [the NPW group] just wander - sometimes you don't have your photo mojo about with you! You can go out with the intention of taking photographs and it just doesn't happen". The common frustration of the photographer is that wandering can often be fruitless and nothing comes forth.

I would like to say a little more here with regard to emotion, noticing and photography in the context of Seamon's work. There is only one instance of photography specifically being mentioned in Lifeworld:

> Inner state is closely related to noticing. Positive moods enhance noticing. One group member, pleased with the photographs he had done, spent an entire afternoon taking more pictures. 'I was noticing more than I usually do' he said 'and it had something to do with the fact that the photographs had come out so well.
>
> (Seamon, 1979:109)

When questioned about mood and emotion when taking the camera out with them, participants seemed hesitant to directly attribute one factor to their style of photography on a specific day. That is not to discount the role of emotion, as it clearly *did* have an impact on their photography in general, and their noticing in particular. Mike told me that "if I am in a bad mood, I won't go out and if I am in a good mood, I will take more risks and go out". This was also echoed by other photographers and both Chris and Andy M commented how negative emotion had an impact on their photograph taking:

> Yes, I find that if I am not feeling well or in a good mood then I don't take photos I have to be positive about stuff I am an upbeat person anyway but if I have a lot on my mind then I don't tend to take as many photographs.
>
> (Chris)

> I have to be in the mood for it. The summer is a bad time for me because of the light [he prefers night photography]. I might go somewhere and something might happen and it will put us off and I will be in a bad mood and I know I will not take decent photos so I won't bother and just write it off but definitely have to be in the right frame of mind.
>
> (Andy M)

Negative emotion clearly affects the bodily rhythms and processes of the photographer, though it is more difficult to articulate exactly why this may be. One possible reason is that once fully absorbed in the action of photographing, the mind and body become knotted. Soon, full concentration is given over to photography and the individual becomes entwined in the world, their habitual movements flow, in turn creating more noticing opportunities, leading to further absorption, and so on. In regard to habit, Seamon (1979:40) comments that 'movements occur without or before any conscious intervention' so if there is a negative feeling of frustration, this self-awareness somehow blocks this process

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from working. Instead of flowing, the body's rhythm stutters as concentration is lost and noticing then becomes more difficult. Others responded in different ways when asked about emotion and their photography: Paul B and Anthony commenting that:

> I am not an "emotional" photographer. That said, if things look good - or if I think they'll look good - in a photograph then I enjoy taking the photograph and making an image from it. I guess that's an emotional connection.
>
> (Paul B)

> I feel bad if I don't go and take photographs and it can affect my mood if I go out and I might spend all day taking photos and it's the last 10 minutes and I get the unexpected shot. I think people think that it's dead easy but it isn't.
>
> (Anthony)

The notion that photography is easy is a common one and many (particularly when looking at more realist styles of photography) say 'I could do that'[2]. Noticing could also then be viewed as a way of photographers consciously separating themselves as different from other, less dedicated photographers. David told me that "I try and notice things other people wouldn't" which is a common trait amongst many photographers in this research. The 'other people' David talked about here were not just those who took the occasional photograph with their mobile phone but also other keen amateur and professionals.

The skill photographers most appreciate in others is not just the ability to capture a picturesque landscape or portrait, but to see *something* where others have not seen *anything* and create a photographic opportunity through noticing alone. Donna later told me that "the thing on *Flickr* meets is that there is an unofficial competition to see who can get a shot that no one else gets. It is a challenge to get something different to what everyone else is doing." It is here that Bourdieu's ideas surrounding habitus[3] can be utilised, building on the earlier discussions relating to Merleau-Ponty's theories surrounding the body schema and habit.

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[2] This also relates to earlier historical struggles for photography to be accepted as an art form within the academy (Marien, 2002).

[3] Bourdieu used photographs to link his concept of 'lived experience' with issues of aesthetics, taste and class (Van House, 2011:126). See Bourdieu (1984) for further discussions.

Ingold (2000:162) explains that:

> People acquire the specific dispositions and sensibilities that lead them to orient themselves in relation to their environment and to attend to its features in the particular ways that they do…these add up to what Bourdieu calls the *habitus*.

Carman (2008:219) describes habitus as a blend of 'conditionedness and spontaneity', an apt summary that applies to the photographers and the noticing phenomena too. As part of their skillset, photographers have become accustomed to *looking* in order to find interesting things to photograph, which has subsequently formed into a more solid, everyday habit. Anthony and Darrel both identified this link:

> I do go about and think, what would be a good image here? So I will look at a street like this and although it's a big open street, I will look around and look at the patterns of buildings, the repetition and what I will really look for is a person on the street because that is what I find interesting… you do look for an image.
>
> (Anthony)

> I like doing architecture not modern but more historical like castles and stuff like that. Like Grey Street [in Newcastle] before I got a camera, I never looked up so much but there is so much hidden detail that people aren't really aware of around Newcastle, so I quite like that. It wasn't until I got the camera that I started looking all over at anything, all sorts of different things.
>
> (Darrel)

For Bourdieu (cited in Ingold, 2000:162), habitus lives in the type of noticings described by both participants, a spatial and body awareness, or:

> A way of walking, a tilt of the head, facial expressions, ways of sitting and of using implements' – all of these, and more, comprise what it takes to be an accomplished practitioner and together they furnish a person with his or her bearings in the world.

Re-enacting the traces of previous bodily movements, the photographer does not necessarily know what they are looking for until they find it, their world unfolds in front of them and they react to it as part of a wider 'bodily intelligence' (Ingold, 2000:162) that they have 'become attuned to' (ibid.). In essence, 'habitus is always in a state of becoming and never simply being' (Lee, 1997:133) as Chris explains:

> My eyes are everywhere looking about I am an inquisitive sort if I am walking around a town. If you look above the shops and on the pavements there is stuff there. I went through a spell of taking pictures of the corners of things… especially when you are cross processing that enhances the colours of things. I don't plan it though I just carry [the camera] and see what happens.

Watching

Thus far, I have highlighted the complexity of the photographer and their habit of *noticing*; however there is another facet to this strategy that is important in their engagement with the world, which is *watching*. Indeed Stewart (2007:35) notes that in modern life 'watching and waiting have become a sensory habit.' When discussing listening, Ingold (2000:25) writes that 'perception is grounded in an act of attention. Like watching and feeling, listening is something that people *do*'. So is noticing of course, however it is through watching that photographers begin to notice, or to paraphrase Ingold (ibid.:265), it is watching that 'transforms passive looking into active noticing' which more widely connects to the earlier ideas of Merleau-Ponty, about vision as 'a mode of *being*' (ibid.). The participants in this study recognised that they enjoyed watching and it was a part of their general strategy when outside taking photographs.

Richard and Gary explained that "I am a people watcher I was always interested in what was going on before [without the camera] though!" (Richard); "it's getting into [the subjects] head – I have always been a people watcher, even when I go out and have a drink. It is a natural curiosity about the world in general" (Gary).

Anthony also expanded saying that:

> When thinking about it, it is quite voyeuristic I like people watching I could do that all day, watching people pass by. Sometimes you can tell a story with a photograph, you can choose to show the environment or knock it out of focus and choose to show somebody… I just find it very, very interesting to look at a photo and think who is that person?

Seamon (my emphasis, 1979:110) explains that 'noticing involves a direct, attentive meeting between person and world and therefore tends towards an experience of *mergence* than watching.' His work underlines the impact of habit within the everyday lifeworld whilst drawing attention to factors that structure these interactions. He also distinguishes watching from other forms of looking and describes it as 'a situation in which the person looks out attentively upon some aspect of the world for an extended period of time' (ibid.:105). In terms of this study, the photographers detailed how they were pathological in their watching, always on the lookout for their next photograph.

When I was out with Richard, he commented that he "hangs around and waits" so he can see where you get a good view of where people are. Later, when discussing his photostream photographs as well (see Plates 8 and 9), he noted that he often watched (from a distance) to get the photographs he wants.

Seamon (ibid.:106) believes that 'watching establishes an extended span of attention between person and place. To watch is to pay attention at length to the world at hand – to have one's interest occupied as mutually the world receives that interest'. Replace the verb 'watching' here with 'photographing' and we can begin to get an idea of the kind of interactions and exchanges between photographer and the city. The process of watching also becomes involved in the spontaneous planning of a picture, an evolving process between body and vision, where the photographer makes sure that they move their body correctly, anticipating an upcoming shot. Tom, Lewis and Mike all similarly describe this process:

> In my case, taking pictures of the those quiet urban spaces are quite cool; it tends to be a lot of the pictures I like have only one person in them and the photographer is probably waiting on the person to get into the shot, if there is a crowd of people it dilutes it at least that is what I think. If there is a person in the frame then we can picture ourselves in there.
>
> (Tom)

> When you do have [your camera] you just kind of take things a lot slower, walk places sometimes or even try and look ahead and stand or I'll move over there, so then that might be something interesting. You can let everything go over you or you can do this, sometimes you have to almost create a shot, make sure you get into a position if you can see something developing but then sometimes… I will walk past someone faster than I normally would and then come back so they don't notice.
>
> (Lewis)

> Last night I was down by the seafront and there is a cycle path, I don't know why but the light was all hazy, and this guy had a stripy top on and because I was low down you could see straight down the cycle path and all the deviations and I thought, I like that! I could see the angle of the road and I did it again just on the way down here, but the path next to the river and I saw a cyclist coming down and I got ready for him.
>
> (Mike)

In all these examples, the combination of routine watching and movement leads to noticing opportunities. It also points to the idea that noticing is not just a random act but something over which the photographer tries to exert some control.

Through watching, noticing can then be pre-empted, especially when the photographer repeatedly revisits a place they know so, to a certain degree, they can expect what to find. "I used to work as a delivery driver all around the North East and I would see things and note them down. It is kind of just keeping your eyes open for interesting areas" (Andy M). It can also be unplanned, where they intentionally go somewhere they have never been before in order to find photographs. Rhona said that "I have hopped on the metro before and got on and off in different places [she has never been], just taken pictures to see what is there". Both approaches can be fruitful, as thanks to the ever changing light conditions (as many photographers reminded me) you can never take the same photograph twice. "The great thing about carrying a compact is that the light will never be the same. You go back and try and recreate the shot but you are never going to get the same shot, the sky can change." (Donna)

Watching is also important to photographers because it means they are always tuned in to the possibility of photographic opportunities, taking advantage when a chance presents itself. When discussing a picture that he liked on his photo stream (Plate 1), Tom said:

> I just like all the brick and stone, so many lines. Once I sharpened it, all the lines popped. That was just a handheld picture but because of the light. Honestly, there is really nice stuff everywhere you look all the time to me at least it is just a question of translating it into the camera.

For the 'accomplished practitioner' (Ingold, 2000:162), the physical presence of the camera also assists noticing, the weight of the machine on body leading them in a familiar series of habitual movements as 'your perception of objects is already structured by your body and its sense of its own possibilities' (Carman, 2008:106).

Noticing as *presence*

> Eventually, I have become aware about expressing myself: the more you take, the more you look!
>
> (Richard)

Hahn (2007:163) writes that during her research into Japanese dance:

> I have seen many dancers proficiently execute the codified steps of a dance, yet something was lacking… the passion and heightened performance was non-existent. On the other hand, I have watched dancers miss a few steps yet embody a wonderful sense of artistry… I believe it is presence… presence is transmitted in the folds of the lessons, when dancers learn to orient themselves via the senses during lessons; when they learn to expand their awareness.

In a similar way, I believe that noticing is the skill that separates photographers from others, who simply happen to carry cameras around with them on their mobile phones. Much has been written about how 'we are all photographers now' (Badger and Parr, 2007) and on the face of it, one could not disagree, most of the population carry some kind of camera and use it to communicate to friends, share experiences on their photo streams or news feeds. To this end, photography has always been a medium accessible to everyone; however, there is a clear distinction to be made between a person who takes photographs occasionally with their camera at a special event, and the photographers in this research.

As Hahn infers, it is not always necessarily to do with the *quality* of the images but instead the way that the photographers perform photography with their body, their commitment to movement and above all, the presence of noticing. Hahn (2007:163) goes onto say 'I am not certain it is possible to definitively provide a formula for the transmission of presence' and similarly I am not precisely sure how or when photographers begin to notice things, what (to use their words) *draws* them to one subject but not others, what leads them to shoot one moment and ignore another. The participants do not (and could not) take images of everything around them, yet understanding the complex process behind *why* they photograph what they do is still somewhat elusive to me. I do believe it is partly down to a complex interplay between habit and skill and through this, noticing is something awakened within the photographer.

Seamon (1979:106) reminds us that 'at times watching may be more intense as the interest, beauty or excitement of the scene draws the attention and holds it' however like Hahn's dancer, it is a skill that cannot be taught and must instead be learned (transmitted) through practice. In a similar way, the photographers who routinely walk around their everyday environment are noticing but this is also tightly bound within their habitual camera use as well as within their routines in familiar space – each part informs the other. This chapter will now turn to the habits of photographer in the urban environment where 'people's love of watching activity and other people is constantly evident' (Jacobs cited in Seamon, 1979:107).

Carrying the camera

> Habit expresses our power of dilating our being-in-the-world, or changing our existence by appropriating fresh instruments.
>
> (Merleau-Ponty, 2002:166)

The role of noticing was shown to be a prominent feature in the life of the photographer, however in order to notice things at all, they first needed to get out with their camera to begin looking and walking around in the city. This is not to say that all the participants in this research *only* took pictures of the urban environment but the majority of the pictures on their photo-streams, as well as the different meet-ups I attended, were all located in the city. The cities of Sunderland and Newcastle are relatively small compared to other larger metropolitan areas in the UK, so photographers in this study either focused on the places local to where they lived, or in the areas of city where they could get around most easily on foot.

During many of our walk and talk expeditions, the participants took me to the places that they knew, with the exceptions of Rhona, where we visited a building that she had not been to before, and Tom, where toward the end of our walk, I showed him a few buildings in Newcastle that he had never seen before. Later still, we ended up in the Cathedral, where neither of us had been before.

In my journal I wrote that:

> We head down to the quayside and although Tom remarked earlier that he hadn't come down this way before, he now says that he has walked down the hill, or certainly this area before, so he recognises it through walking it again. He comments that doing a walk around like this with me and carrying a camera makes you take a separate way, than how you would normally.

<div align="right">(Author fieldnotes, 07/06/11)</div>

Tom is relatively new to photography and he has been away from the city for a period of time, so he enjoyed the wandering aspect with the camera, revisiting some of the places he had not been to for a while. He told me that he had never been on a *Flickr* meet before but hoped to take part in a local one soon. What is interesting about his comments is in part the recognition of *carrying the camera* and how it guides the direction taken in and around the city. The *habit* of taking the camera when photographers go out guides their movement and noticing strategies. Nearly all the photographers I spoke to discussed carrying some kind of camera around as a naturalised and habitual practice. Yaffa told me that "the DSLR, I don't randomly carry that, but my mobile phone is always on me at a minimum." Paul W also explained:

> I have this [compact] with me 70-80% of the time when I am out of the house. Even when I go to the pub, I always have it tucked away in my coat pocket; you never know what is going to happen! And when I did my 365 a couple of years ago I literally wouldn't leave the house without the Nikon, quite often I would pop out the corner shop for some milk or something and think… where's my camera?! Just because I got so used to carrying it every day for a year.

Andy M also said that "I do carry around my Olympus with me all the time, just in case any opportunities turn up. I am guilty of using the camera phone as well". Photography is clearly a habit that is difficult to break, and in Richard's case it started early on:

> When I was younger, I was stuck in the house, so I would always walk about with it and now it is just habit… I carry my camera with me all the time I just always have it with me. If I don't have a bag with me I feel like something is missing.

In this instance it is not only the habit of carrying the camera but the weight of it that the body has become used to as well. Paul W explained that "I tend to take [the camera] with me, if I am going out shopping or whatever.

I keep a close eye on things that I think will be worth photographing, I will make a deliberate attempt to get over there". Mike also said that:

> If I am going to Whitley Bay or something I will take it with me, but if I am just going to the shops I won't take it. I use it as an excuse to go out for a walk. Which I think is pretty typical of a lot of people. It's a good reason to have the mobile too I can capture things if I haven't brought the camera with me.

Chris similarly said "[the Holga] is my favourite camera by a long, long way and I have had such good photographs from it, so you get used to carrying it around". Carrying the camera has become part of Anthony's daily routine too:

> I take [the camera] to work with me, when I have my lunch I take my camera with me… I just absolutely love it, it's a chance to do something creative for me personally and I quite like the immediate part of it. You can plan a photo or sometimes it's just a quick snapshot. I like to document everything, that's probably why the work is quite varied people, places, objects just anything that I find quite interesting.

When photographers go out into the world, whether they decide to take pictures or not, they always tend to take their cameras with them. Here the camera becomes an extension of the body as well, an instrument that extends both the reach of vision and is incorporated into the wider *body schema*, allowing new insights into their locale. When discussing body and habit, Merleau-Ponty (2002:167) gives the example of the typist, explaining that:

> When the typist performs the necessary movements on the typewriter, these movements are governed by an intention but the intention does not posit the keys as objective locations. It is literally true that the subject who learns to type incorporates the key bank space, into their bodily space.

The same can also be said here for the photographer, who through habit has learned to integrate the camera into their everyday space and routines, both by *using* and *carrying* their camera with them as they walk around. It is to these ambulant routines that this section will now turn.

Walking in the city

> There is a lot of wandering... someone described photography as wandering with a purpose, it is the best way to describe it.
>
> (Lewis)

Earlier on in Chapter 2, there was a short discussion on the links between photography and walking, alongside the rise of the urban pedestrian, the Flâneur, and the invention of the camera and image culture within Victorian society. It seems appropriate here to briefly expand on some of the ideas related to walking as a practice. There has been a recent renaissance on research surrounding walking (Pink 2008a, 2008b; Vaughan, 2009; Vergunst, 2011) however thus far the links between walking, technology and media studies have been scarce. Urry (2007:88) notes that 'walking for pleasure is a distinctive and curious practice within modern societies, enabled by mundane technologies that afford different possibilities for moving in and through the physical social world.'

The main form of portable technology that has accompanied these sojourns in the last 100 years has been the camera, which continues to be one of the most accessible forms of mass media technology and this status is not set to change thanks to the advent of digital, as well as the rise of mobile and smart phone technology. Current software also allows photographers to upload their work in real time onto their preferred social media network feed via their mobile phone, as well as commenting on and viewing the work of others, tracking movements with GPS and geotagging their images on online maps, all whilst on the move. The technology now facilitates an easy transfer between the digital places that photographers browse whilst 'on the go' and the real locations that they visit, with many photographers in this study mixing mobile phone photography, with their digital and film cameras (however few uploaded straight onto their *Flickr* stream, preferring to process their pictures first).

Walking in its many forms is entrenched within photographic practice but it is also of interest to the deeper philosophical discussions within this research. The work of Urry (2007), Ingold (2007, 2010), and Pink *et al.* (2010) is particularly useful here as they have all discussed the importance of walking surrounding issues such as the body, movement, mobility and urban engagement. Despite the famous Sierra Club motto ('take only photographs, leave only footprints') there has been little research on walking and photography practices (Pink 2008b, 2011b are the notable exceptions).

Vaughn (2009:322) describes that 'the walkers' feet as they pass across the earth become an instrument that enables a path, a landscape and a place to become known'. As photographers take to the street and begin seeking out its hidden parts, their instruments are their feet, the camera and their senses. To notice and photograph more, the best pace for photography is walking speed.

Solnit (2001), Urry (2007) and Vaughn (2009) identify many different kinds of walking in both urban and country environments, all for different purposes. The ramblers meander through the rural idylls, whilst the commuter briskly sets the pace on the city pavement. For Solnit (2001:174) 'urban walking seems in many ways more like primordial hunting and gathering than walking in the country' a similar thought to Sontag (1989) who believed photographers within the urban *stalk*, rather than walk. The type of walking taken up by photographers is a strategic, purposeful wander that does not necessarily stick to a chosen path and is guided by the attraction of the unusual and random, as well as the familiar. Sometimes photographers do decide to venture into the well-known tourist spots and here the pleasure is finding something unusual that others before them (or even the photographers themselves) may have walked past unheeded. Gary explained:

> Even when I am not going out to take pictures, I am still looking, I will notice all sorts and think was that there last time? It is like the little space invader tiles around Newcastle, I am told there are 20 but I have only found 5, you find things out that you didn't know before. It is only after walking around Newcastle that you find these things.

Walking around gives the photographer a chance to explore the different elements of the city and embrace its hidden surprises, becoming absorbed in the dual actions of photograph taking and movement. I asked Andy M "do you like wandering?" and he replied "yeah, because you might find something totally unexpected." For photographers who are out with the intentional purpose of taking photographs their pace is much slower and methodical, sometimes the route they follow it is planned but more often than not it is spontaneous. Even although it is normally within a familiar place, their walk turns into more of a meander and frequently spins off in different directions and where the feet lead, the eyes follow, looking around, up at buildings, down on the pavement or at other urbanites.

Darrel told me that:

> I just wander aimlessly! I have an idea, like today [after our meeting] I thought I might go down to the river and get some reflection shots in the water but I get easily distracted and I might go off on a tangent and do something completely different! One of the main things is not knowing what you are going to see, what is going to grab your interest at the time.

The walking that photographers do is dependent on their motivation: a purposeful wander takes the photographer around an unfamiliar, unpopulated area with which they want to familiarise themselves. A more leisurely stroll might best befit an area they know already and are more comfortable in. Both can turn the strange into the familiar and the ordinary into the mysterious, leading the photographer into abandoned and dangerous places too. Andy S takes most of his photographs at night, going underground in various tunnels and sewers in different cities. He explained:

> I never know if I will be able to get back to a place, either due to lack of time or because the accesses used may not be there in future, sometimes when exploring a drain we may walk the length of it so we know how long it is and what the best pictures are, then take the photos on the way back… to be honest most of the time is taken up with the photography, 'my typical' underground experiences are 3-5 hours.

The enjoyment here is not just finding the new aspects of the city to capture; it is the physical walking and the connection made between body, machine, movement and city or, as Seamon (1979:121) describes, 'this perception is a dynamic inner-outer relationship – it is the variegated and fluctuation bond of attention between person and world, body and environment.' Andy S said that:

> Recently when I visited under Sheffield, I did a mile to a mile and a half underground, then walked much of the way back to my car above ground, it was surreal seeing the streets above having just been below, although walking through the streets at night dripping wet in waders is probably surreal enough… walking underground in places you know above is strange, but yes, as I walk above and see the people who have no idea what's below, I do get a smile.

Although Andy's underground exploration practices are more unusual, the time, distance and effort he puts in is common to the other photographers. Many photographers frequently walk many miles in familiar spaces and walking around the better known parts of the city allows photographers find places which remain unseen to others.

Solnit (2001:174) writes that the 'urbanite is on the lookout for particulars, the opportunities, individuals, supplies and the changes are abrupt' and this applies to the photographer too, repeatedly noticing and capturing the changes either at a distance or close up through the lens. The next section will now look at this repetition in more detail and consider the recurrent themes and rhythms of the photographer walking in the city.

The repetitive rhythms and themes of urban exploration

> The dancing spaces of the contemporary mobile worlds are populated by bodies whose mundane performances on the 'floor' are orchestrated by a polyphony of rhythms emerging from mobile objects, text messages, phone calls, images, other bodies in motion, and so on.
>
> (Haldrup, 2011:69)

In discussions on strolling around the town of Diss, Pink (2008b:8) explains that the leaflet she was given about the town's history 'both becomes part of the physical environment in which the walker is participating, and also directs the way in which one participates visually in the environment.' This is also true of the camera which becomes part of the photographer's walking routines within the city, but can also direct the way that the photographer looks and interacts with the urban environment.

One of the things I learnt when interviewing and walking with participants in the city and surrounding areas is that when they venture out, they often revisit the same places and areas. Paul B explained "if I just want to go out with a camera I'll generally end up in Saltburn or Hartlepool, as they are close and I know the opportunities which may be present." Gary also told me "I seem to go to the same areas again it's about getting the photographs that other people haven't got, trying to get a different view." Other photographers also commented that they tended to do the same, as Richard explained: "I like to show Gateshead and the way it is changing, though not necessarily for the better… I really like Jim Forsyth[4] and I

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[4] Jim Forsyth most famously photographed life in Newcastle's West End in the 1950s and 1960s documenting everyday life. Profile available [online]:
http://www.amber-online.com/exhibitions/scotswood-road (Accessed 8th December, 2011)

always thought I would document Gateshead, I have probably taken the same photographs twice over the years." Paul B also told me that "sometimes a revisited location will provide something new in terms of subject matter but almost every time it will be lit in a different way" and Alastair commented that group meet ups "generally end up at the quayside, we have been to the same places a lot of times, you do see lots of different things on different days." Anthony noted that:

> I will specifically go out to an area and you get to know specific areas and specific vantage points that are better than others [and] at certain times of day, lend themselves to different kinds of photos, so yeah I will specifically go out to a specific location even if it's not [for] the location itself- it is just to be somewhere different.

In these all of these examples, local knowledge about the location through repetitive visits impacts upon photograph taking. This knowledge both guides the photographer's movement and the familiarity with the city, meaning they notice changes or alterations to their locale. Anderson and Harrison (2010:7) explain that:

> Humans are envisioned in constant relations of modification and reciprocity with their environs, action being understood not as a one way street running from the actor to the acted upon… but as a relational phenomena incessantly looping back and regulating itself through feedback phenomena… put simply all action is interaction.

The photographer's interaction with the environment also moves in a circular loop, with repeated visits to the same locations, gradually changing the nature of the interaction with the local place. Paul W told me:

> Particularly in the Ouseburn Valley, there is so much change going on. There is a lot of old stuff either being pulled down or redeveloped. It is amazing how quickly you forget what was there, something that was part of the furniture that you don't even notice it and then a couple of years later it is gone and you think, what was there? Or they throw something new up and you try and picture what was there.

The city environment is in a continuous state of change, so as the landscape alters so must the photographer alter their approach and the loop continues on, another sphere to add to the other circular motions of movement made with both feet and camera. In a less positive way, Mike also added "you get sick of going to the same places, you need a change of scene. I take a lot of pictures in parks in the cities because that it what I have access to." Some photographers expressed similar feelings and whilst they enjoyed taking pictures in the city, they did also become tired of going to the same places and needed a change, sometimes only a small one, to stimulate their creativity.

Tom explained:

> I like getting out and about. See even the other day, I thought I will walk into town from where I am down the road where the RVI [a local hospital] is on the left and the park is on the right I normally walk down there, straight into town but when you have the camera you think, I should walk a different way. You think I have walked down this road before I am not going to see anything particularly different but if you go down the other street you might see something good! And I did, I saw these buildings that are new, well new to me, so that's the thing I feel like you should break your routine get a bit of variety anyway, but it pays dividends with pictures.

In this example, Tom has walked the same route to get into the city centre from his home many times but since having the camera he wants to actively explore these familiar places more and more. Seamon (1979:40) explains that 'the habitual nature of movement arises from the body' and although it is Tom's body that is guiding his natural movement here, the presence of the camera triggers an alternative *encounter* which Seamon (ibid.:121) states 'is a better description for the ways we attentively meet the world.' These repetitive encounters are also important in creating a rhythm that allows photographers to both immerse themselves in their environment and start to notice how and where they go. Tom and I walked slowly around in a circular loop through the city: we met at Haymarket metro station, and then slowly ambled our way to the quayside, later returning to the city centre.

My walk with Tom was relatively unplanned and his approach was enthusiastic as he told me how enjoyable it was just walking around with the camera. Although he was familiar with Newcastle he was looking at the city in a different way and certainly 'there is a joy when the familiar yields up the unknown' (Solnit, 2001:174). In comparison, when I went out with The Understudy he had a very clear idea about where we were going and as we walked around Sunderland centre and beyond, he was my guide for the couple of hours we spent wandering the areas that he knew very well. The Understudy had printed out a number of images from his *Flickr* stream to show the pictures he had taken before on this route. When I asked how often he came down to this area, he said sometimes as often as four times per week and there was a quiet pride in the way he spoke about Sunderland, which I felt at times, was also tinged with disappointment as to what it had become.

These two sides were illustrated on our visit to one part of the quayside, just below the famous Wearmouth Bridge. When we walked along the waterside I noticed the giant iron tethers and metal rings which run the length of the bank, along with the remains of the giant wooden structures that were erected during the more prosperous shipbuilding days. Alongside them I also saw the masses of rubbish strewed around from fly tipping and the thousands of empty beer cans and broken glass at the side of the path.

The dereliction and dirtiness of the city was a common theme among many of the photographers who, having walked around the city so much, noticed it more than others. Rhona told me that "I think there is beauty in these abandoned buildings, it's just a different kind of beauty". Anthony and Andy M said that since using the camera:

> I do think I look at things differently and one thing I have noticed going out in the city with the camera is just how dirty it is. I went to New York and couldn't believe how neat and tidy it was! I come to Newcastle sometimes and I think there is loads of rubbish and I never saw that before. Certain areas are not how I remember and things look different. There is something about a wide angle lens that makes something very dull, look quite interesting.
>
> (Anthony)

> It is about seeing the beautiful in the ugly really I suppose, it's about looking closer. In some of the grotty areas you get nice wildflowers but people don't notice that they just write it off as derelict. In the old buildings as well there are some nice features; people should take the blinkers off - rethink your views!
>
> (Andy M)

The features that both Anthony and particularly Andy M highlight here are typical of other photographers and through the combination of walking around, repeatedly visiting the same places and actively noticing their environment, they become somewhat protective of their locale and what others make of it. Richard spoke fondly of Gateshead, an area and its people that "he is proud of". In some ways his style of photography is in part a reaction to the anger he feels at the gentrification of areas such as Gateshead. When discussing the demolition of the Gateshead Car Park and the photographs he took *inside* the building he told me:

> I used to go there all the time when I was younger so after they closed it off I wanted to get back in again, so I got in touch with Thompsons [the demolition company] and got in before they started the demolitions. I loved the building and what it represented, the modernity, the shape it was like a giant robot!

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The photographs Richard took outside and inside the building were part of a strong connection and intimate knowledge with the car park that existed before he picked up the camera. His photographs of this place are informed by childhood routines, local encounters and habitual movement and therefore his pictures of it are infused with an insider's perspective. He later told me "I guess it is just stick with what you know really, the concrete and things: you can't escape it really." Most of the participants were from the areas that they photographed, so their approach to the landscape was based on local knowledge, further adding to the layers of knowing but also *un-knowing* – hoping to 'see it again' through the camera. Most experiences were positive, with the exception of Rhona, who told me that: "I have been here 10 years, there are things I like about the North East but I feel more like a southerner and don't feel like I fit in here". Despite these feelings, Rhona still takes photographs of what she knows and what is familiar: her everyday surroundings.

Getting to know the city

The participants in this research know the city in many ways, both through their feet and their body. Pink (2008b:11) explains that:

> Analysis of the place-making processes of local visual representations, local visual practices and the ethnographer's own visual practices can lead us to a way of understanding the multi-layered nature of how place is constituted and the conflicting but entangled perspectives from which places might be understood and experienced.

The daily encounter with the city both informs and is informed by their photographic habits; the routes that they walk are familiar, yet they are always looking for something new. They nearly always have a camera on them (sometimes several) and are always prepared for photograph taking. Walking is a key factor not only in the mobility of the photographer but in their *knowing* of the city, adding to the layers of experience as 'the photographers leave us not with their walks as poets do, but the fruits of those walks' (Solnit, 2001:190). The photographers here demonstrate that their way of knowing and being in the world is down to their experiences while walking and connecting to it through and with their camera.

Lewis explained:

> It's kind of trying to get those moments of closeness with someone within a busy city… I get quite annoyed by the way Newcastle is portrayed as a party city and people think that it's not very diverse because the city centre isn't… old people and locals feel out of place and it's trying to show their side.

One would think that photographers would soon become bored with their habitual movements, returning to the same place repeatedly. Instead participants spoke of seeing this as an additional challenge, to see if they can find something that they have never seen before. When discussing the photographs of Kertész, Seamon (1990:32) states that 'from a phenomenological point of view [Kertész's photographs] throw into question the usual way in which we know and experience our world, particularly in terms of formal, spatial, temporal and interpersonal experiences.' The way that photographers experience the city is altered thanks to both their routine interaction and movement with the camera.

The routes taken by photographers differed from person to person but they always remained circular and most often they were familiar, sometimes only *partially* unknown. The photographers never took me to truly unfamiliar places on our explorations and we always ended up in places that they knew thanks to the city loops that we walked. However that is not to claim that photographers do not venture into unknown areas with their camera. Some told me of occasions when they had visited places they had only heard of (or seen pictured) online and had not gone in person before. When out with Rhona, we first went to a place she had discovered online, which she wanted to see and experience with her camera.

The photographs she had looked at online had been posted on a local UrbEx forum of an old factory and office buildings down by the river. When we arrived there in person, the factory had been partially demolished but traces of it still remained, in the last remains of the building, the rubble underneath our feet and the photographs online. In this example, Rhona first came to know the building through her online interactions with the photographs, but as she navigated offline through the different rooms, she became even more familiar with the layout. When we got to the physical site, she could directly relate her orientation online to her wanderings with the camera around the abandoned building. The final part of this

chapter focuses on this idea in more detail, exploring the habits and routines of photographers on *Flickr*, examining how they find their way about this vast place and how it relates to their experiences on foot. First though, there will be a brief interlude.

'Dear Photograph'- Old practices, new routines

> While the digital revolution has made it possible to produce pictures in far greater numbers than before, what is most significant about these developments is the possibilities for mass dissemination, the more intensive integration into everyday life and the new options afforded for self-narration and self-representation through images.

(Richter and Schadler, 2010:171)

Before the next section details the online routines of participants, I wanted to briefly contextualise these ideas with a short discussion relating to the impact of the digital age on our routines with photographs as *objects*. Although I made clear in Chapter 1 that I would not focus on the image *per se*, it would be churlish to completely ignore the impact of new technologies and places like *Flickr* not just on practices with the camera, but also what we do with the photographs we take. Indeed 'there still remains a desire for the material object to fulfil specific social functions' (Edwards, 2009:31). The everyday practices of digital photography are still very much connected to our pre-digital routines and we have more or less done the same things with personal photography for around 100 years. There is something interesting however about how swiftly the old analogue ways have become entangled with the new digital ones.

Although digital technologies can give the user flexibility as to where they can take photographs and improve the quality of photographs (such as image stabilisers and face recognition), in terms of practice the routines of analogue have been mostly transposed onto the digital age. For example, many people still only use the camera to take photographs on special occasions (family gatherings, weddings, concerts, parties). The difference that Richter and Sadler (2010) highlight, is that now we can take, store and share *more* photographs than before.

The name of this section is taken from the title of a website asking users to 'take a picture of a picture from the past in the present' (Figures 6a and 6b)[5]. The pictures featured are mostly family photographs or pictures of the photographer as a child, re-photographed in the present day. The site also asks the photographer for a sentence to go along with the image that begins with the words 'Dear Photograph.'

Figure 6a

Dear Photograph

'There's a reason we had to'

Figure 6b

Dear Photograph

'Oh to be young again'

Such is the memorial nature of the photography featured here that many comments are typically simple, poignant tributes to loved ones in the picture. It is not a surprise that *Dear Photograph* has been a huge success for its creator, the reflective and fun nature of the site plays with ideas about images, past and present, in a creative and simple way. However there is also a deep paradox in its popularity as it essentially relies on the paper photograph for its content to then *digitally* distribute the image to a wider online audience. The photographs that feature on the site have been created with the sole purpose of appearing on there and, somewhat ironically, will never be printed but they might be kept[6].

Today, the paper image still endures but photography is mostly seen on and through electronic screens. In the pre-digital era, printed photographs were collected together and labelled (Rose, 2004) in photograph albums while the rest

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[5] Both images available [Online] at: www.dearphotograph.com (Accessed 12th December, 2011)
[6] In a further twist when users upload the content onto the site they sign over the copyright over to the site owner and a coffee table book of these pictures is due to be published in May 2012.

of the photographs that did not make it into the final album were very often relegated unlabelled and without a care into a shoe box, seldom looked at but, crucially, never thrown away. Throwing away a photograph is difficult because of the sentimental associations we have to the physical object (as the website above demonstrates). Personal photographs are often viewed as precious objects, a physical 'thing' that can tie us to the past, sometimes beyond our living memory (Barthes, 1982). Paper photographs are still cherished in wallets and on our walls, nonetheless it is also important to remember that they were (and still are) abandoned in boxes and books.

Rubenstein and Sluis (2008:16) review the impact of the 'networked image' and give an excellent historical overview of the rapid shifts in digital photography in the last 20 years. Nevertheless, later on in the article, they note that it is 'remarkable… that new wave works on photography can do without the persistent questions about representation… however… it is worth remembering that the photograph that occupied the mind of Barthes is a different object' (ibid.). I would take issue with the idea that the old paper photographs which 'rustle in the album' (ibid.) are different (and presumably more authentic) to the modern photograph, taken on a mobile phone or digital camera and viewed online.

Rubenstein and Sluis carry on by stating that 'where Sekula interprets the significance of the strips of light and dark in Stieglitz's fine print, Van House deals with an image that becomes illegible binary data at the press of a button' (ibid.). This comparison is completely misguided as I believe that the difference in the two examples has less to do with *materiality* and more to do with issues of *practice*. Sekula is a critic with an interest in the art and beauty of photographs, particularly as captured on film. In comparison, Van House is interested in something completely different: popular, modern *practices* of photography with various digital technologies not the photographs themselves.

Rubenstein and Sluis, like other academics writing about photography (Stallabrass, 2009) seem to fall into the trap here of stating that when photography is done digitally, it somehow is less important or authentic than the practices on paper. For the last 100 years, writers on photography have done nothing *but*

discuss representation and the image. I believe it is refreshing, rather than *remarkable* that new researchers are considering more relevant ideas relating to what users are actually doing with their photographs *now,* as photography becomes a 'more alive, immediate and transitory practice' (Murray, 2008:147).

An example of the crossover between analogue and digital routines is the thousands of accumulated digital photographs on mobile phones, cameras, gathered on CD's, memory sticks and hard drives that never get looked at. In other instances, copies are also uploaded to sites like Facebook, only helping to double this burgeoning collection. Typically, when photographs *do* get deleted it is inside the camera before they are uploaded and thus are never seen by anyone else; this practice is known fondly as 'chimping', where the photographer (and often the person in the photograph) scan through the recent images taken and delete them as they see fit.

Aside from the issues surrounding camera use, the rise and popularity of the camera phone has inexorably changed the way we treat photographs as objects. Although discussions in this research do not extend to camera phone use that is not to say that the photographers in this study do not use their mobile phones as cameras. Many definitely do[7] and it is an area worthy of far more research as camera phones 'support a diverse range of activities – functional and affective as well as individual and social activities. In other words, their use is much more complex and rich than any simple model of camera phone use would assume' (Kindberg *et al.*, 2005:49).[8]

It is clear that whatever camera is used 'new technology both replicates and extends prior social uses of personal photos' (Van House, 2007:5). With the popularity of digital photography came the rise of the 'pro-sumer', the cheapening of cameras and computer technology.

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[7] On Flickr the most popular 'camera' (i.e. the one that people uploaded their pictures from onto the site) is the iPhone 4 [Online] Available at: www.flickr.com/cameras (Accessed 1st March 2012)
[8] For a recent overview of camera phone use see Villi and Stocchetti, 2011

The expansion of broadband and wireless networks with advanced server capacity and supported platforms, led to the inevitable rise of places on the internet that supported the uploading, exchanging and storing of photographs online. These sites have now become a part of everyday life for the participants and it is to their routines within these places that this section will now return.

Getting into the *Flickr* routine

Taking photographs as routine practice has become fully integrated into everyday life for the participants. However *Flickr* is also a part of their overall photography and daily routines as well. Moores (2006) asks 'is it possible that people have a pre-reflective knowledge and practical consciousness of – a basic contact with or attachment to – media environments, from newspapers and television programmes to internet sites which are regularly at hand in day-to-day lives?' With regard to the *Flickr*ites in this research, the answer is a resounding *yes*.

It is difficult to get an accurate estimate of how long each individual spent on *Flickr*, as it was dependent on daily circumstances such as family and work patterns which changed daily. Often their use was directly tied to their photograph taking, so if they have been out with the camera they spent more time on the site, uploading content onto their photostream. Tom told me that he has "sat for hours (a day) scrolling through images" whereas The Understudy "used to check it [*Flickr*] every day about two years ago but now it's once a week, twice a week". Others told me that: "I spend a lot of time on *Flickr* actually, certainly daily. Generally, though I don't post stuff every day I will just see what other people have posted" (Andy M) and "It depends on work commitments, even if I can't comment I will try and go on there for ten minutes - I like to be on there! It's just looking at other people's stuff" (Donna).

Paul W and Mike R both said:

> I am probably on [*Flickr*] most days not for a huge amount of time; I live on the internet, I work with websites, it is a constant distraction. Even if I am not posting photos, I might just check if someone has made a comment, have look at some of the groups I am in just generally keeping in touch.
>
> (Paul W)

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> I am [on *Flickr*] everyday, if the PC is on I have it running on the background, I usually have a look to see if anyone has uploaded anything new from my contacts and see what it is, maybe make a few comments I will look at what they have done.
>
> (Mike R)

For other *Flickr*ites, part of their morning routine is to log on to *Flickr* as well as other sites. Richard said that most days he would "get up in the morning, have a coffee, read emails, go onto Facebook and check *Flickr*", whilst Anthony logs on "as soon as he gets up" checking *Flickr*, Facebook, his emails and his blog page. Gary is "on every day, in the morning – I'm admin on 12 groups so I check them first, then I look at my contacts and then I will check during the day and then go on for an hour at night." Tom also explained that "I was finding that I was taking better pictures… and people giving you feedback on something that I had put up, feeds into it, so now I am an addict of it! I check it every day, when I am at home". Darrel said:

> I check *Flickr* every day, mostly when I am sitting at work and at home. It's like the other social media thing you get into the habit of checking things every day, twitter, forums, *Flickr*. In the morning I will get a cup of coffee and check the different websites.

Once *Flickr* has become part of someone's daily routine, they come to know certain parts and features of the site intimately. Each photographer had their own unique routine within *Flickr* however there were a few areas they had in common. The first was that most will initially go to their personal group pages and view the photographs that others have posted, checking if any comments have been left on their photographs. Paul B's routine is quite typical of others on the site:

> I like to be on daily, probably for half an hour or so; generally to check on feedback to my shots, help maintain the People's Republic of Teesside group (for which I am an administrator), leave feedback on other photographs or just generally look for inspiration.

Mike also explained that his use became more "like building up a chain of clicks finding favourite photographs through groups, seeing the rest of the contacts photographs, commenting, finding their favourites." Darrel also noted that:

> On *Flickr*, I would look at any feedback that has been posted. I look at the stats; I am interested in what interest's people. The good thing about Flickr is you can find the sources, of what they have searched to find it. I don't use Explore; I will go through some of the groups, any threads, any images that are there. Sometimes I will look at the bottom [where Flickr recommends a group] and click on the images there and have a look.

The feature that participants talked about frequently was the 'comment' button. This allows anyone to type a comment about any picture they see on the site and the fact that anyone can leave feedback to the photographer could perhaps leave them open to abuse. However *Flickr*'s netiquette is clear: say something positive or constructive, or do not comment at all. Many photographers spend much of their time either writing comments or reading them.

Andy M explained "*Flickr* is a very reciprocal environment people want comments back… it is just etiquette I suppose. I do comment on other peoples [work] but only if I like it". Phil said that:

> Every now and again I will write a detailed comment on a photograph and the person comes back to you and says thanks… I have a lot of contacts so I don't always comment. I don't comment for comments sake: I just want to be helpful.

However the problem lies within the sheer amount of pictures that are on *Flickr*: to leave such detailed feedback on each and every photograph would be impossible. Instead, many users instead leave simple two or three word comments such as 'nice shot or 'great capture' which infuriates many of the participants. Their attitude toward the comment function ranges from the positive: "I have had a bad day turn into a good day because you have someone you respect say something nice about your photos. *Flickr* gives you reassurance as a photographer" (Anthony), through to the exasperated: "you get one or two comments like 'oh that's nice' and these comments I cannot stand! I would rather have someone slag it off than saying 'nice shot'" (Gary). Richard told me that:

> I want people to comment honestly on my work and not just say 'nice sky' and things, you do get some people that comment honestly but I think some people are scared. I try and be constructive in my comments.

It is more often the case that when faced with huge amounts of content, users who do decide to comment on an image just want to let the photographer know that they appreciate their efforts, rather than wanting to make an incisive or particularly detailed comment. In his article on *Flickr*, Stallabrass (2009:200) discusses one image of 'a remarkably clichéd sunset' remarking that overall 'the commentary produced is overwhelmingly of a one-line or even one-word ('Wow!') character that shows no debate or development' (ibid.).

In practice, the main function of the comment button is often to allow photographers to acknowledge that the image has been seen and enjoyed, leaving a trace of who they are and perhaps later the comment and views might be reciprocated. Alastair told me that "I like feedback and I am not bothered by comments. If you like it, favourite it, I use it as a book mark. I don't mind people knowing that I like [a photograph], for whatever random reason." Light (1999:128) explains how 'any theory that attempts to overlay a simplistic, unidirectional interpretation on interaction online are likely to find a counterexample' so in response to Stallabrass, for every 'cliché' on *Flickr*, there are countless other surprising images waiting to be discovered.

The other principle part of the *Flickr*ites' routine involves different levels of interaction with the various group pages of which they are members. This can be a combination of different tasks from uploading content onto the group pages, to lurking around and just viewing photographs, to marking favourites or commenting on pictures. The sheer number and variety of groups mean there are too many to list here and it is difficult to even guesstimate how frequently each member interacts with each group. In general the more *local* the group is (such as PROT and NEEPG) to the photographer, the more likely it is that they will upload and interact with the pictures more frequently. This is partially due to a familiarity with many of the places featured alongside a personal connection to the photographers on the site, as many will have met in person during group meet-ups.

When Mike was scrolling through one of the challenge[9] groups in which he was a member, he commented to me that it tends to be "the same old faces that you bump into" on the group pages as of the 4000 members of this particular group, only around 100 or so seem to regularly upload images for the competition. This is also the case for the offline meet-ups too and of the several I attended, it tended to be the same members that both organised and attended on a regular basis.

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[9] These are groups where photographers upload content as part of a competition. The members vote on their favourite image and the photographer who wins often picks the theme of the next competition. Membership of these groups often runs into the 1000's.

Tom commented that "I have been joining a few groups that are 'pick your favourite picture' from the person above you; although I hope that they do it because they like my stuff". Here Tom is referring to the *Flickr* algorithm that weights interaction over skill or content, so the more photographers comment and upload, theoretically the more they are likely to appear on Explore, meaning there can be ulterior motives for photographers joining or interacting with groups. The group pages are an important part of the photographer's social *Flickr* routine and it is often through the group pages (both local and global) that the photographer makes contact with others and becomes inspired.

Tom told me that he joins the groups to "get the ball rolling, get the feedback, get the attention, and to look at stats to who has been looking [on his page]." Some groups[10] also encourage photographers to take images specifically for that group, setting daily or monthly challenges to theme their photographs around a specific subject. In these cases *Flickr* "functions as a verb: motivating, justifying" (Cohen, 2005:887) as much as it is a place where photographers engage with the content. Paul B commented to me that the local groups are changing and now "admins spend their time deleting photographs of the family dog from the group pool because people don't read the upload rules" so time spent moderating the groups can also be a frustrating part of the *Flickr* routine.

It was primarily through interaction with the group content that I could trace the circular nature of participants' routine movements around *Flickr*. I noticed that when clicking quickly on the photographs on his favourite group pages, Anthony continually kept going back, revisiting the group sites and looking at the images there. Similarly Tom went between his personal and group pages and the Explore page. When watching Richard on *Flickr*, after checking his personal homepage, he moved to his group pages to check if anyone had responded to a comment he had left. This section will now examine these movements and exploration strategies in more detail.

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[10] Many of the participants were members of the group 'street photography now' that gives a quote or word to inspire daily uploads.

Enjoying the 'intoxication of curiosity' – Routine exploration and wayfinding on *Flickr*

> "Intoxication" comes over [the Flaneur]; he feels "the magnetism of the next street corner" and he wants to satisfy "the deep human need for daydreaming"
>
> (Benjamin cited in Lindgren, 2007)

> Benjamin was especially interested in how, at particular points in history, the new tasks facing perception are solved slowly and gradually by the reconfiguration of practices
>
> (Thrift, 1997:125)

The way images are sorted on *Flickr* depends on how the users tag their photographs, if they make the pictures public and into what group pools they put them. This form of folksonomy lends itself to a random ordering system which makes the exploration around *Flickr* less formal and more akin to a virtual form of wayfinding. Like the Flâneur that went before them, *Flickr*ites are curious about what can be found through wandering around the site which is actually constructed to make it very easy to become lost or, more accurately, distracted within its environs. I am hesitant at first to use the word distraction here because of its negative connotations as a trivial pastime.

To be distracted is to be drawn away from the important to instead concentrate on the inconsequential. So distraction is viewed here as a positive thing and an alternative way of engaging with the content on *Flickr*. For Ingold (2000:220), places 'exist not in space but as nodes in a matrix of movement… ordinary wayfinding more closely resembles story telling than map-using.' Ingold has never written about movement in and around online environments, however his concept of wayfinding very much lends itself to places such as *Flickr* and how users get around or find their way in the space. Discussing navigation and dwelling in physical space, Ingold (ibid.:230) believes that people's 'knowledge of the environment undergoes continuous formation in the very course of their moving about in it'. In changeable or transient places like *Flickr*, the knowledge of where

things are located, coupled with the unexpected images that can be found in the process of wandering about, mean that different paths are continuously forming.

This research found two main ways in which photographers orientated themselves around the site. To continue the walking analogy, the initial stage of their interaction on *Flickr* was a purposeful walk from one place to another. When they first logged on they did tasks such as finding the photographs that they had commented on to see if others had responded, checking their own images and statistics or completing challenges. Mike described this as the "admin" part of his time spent on *Flickr*, the trivial and boring tasks that he saw as part of the process of being an engaged *Flickr*ite. Once these chores had been completed, their engagement with the site changed and became more explorative. That is not to say that one always necessarily follows the other, there may be a break of hours in between sessions.

It is important to also highlight that the exploration of *Flickr* was not always through the Explore page, some photographers did not use that part of the site at all. Instead, many of the photographers preferred to find their own way through, clicking on images they liked, typing in places they wanted to look at pictures of, or following a chain of pictures from a contacts page or a random photograph they came across while quickly scrolling through. Tom admitted to using the site for longer periods than the hourly browse and talk session that we did, and confessed to getting a form of image fatigue from looking at so many photographs on *Flickr*.

The continuous quick movements of scrolling down the page I noticed with Tom happened with other users as well. During our session, Anthony refreshed the Explore page around 20 times, quickly scanning the page and clicking the 'reload' button. In this instance the hand, eye and computer were synchronised in continued repetitive movement and with both participants there was a definite form of concentrated distraction in their looking practices when exploring *Flickr*. They quickly became absorbed into looking at the images, only making micro-movements with their eyes and their index finger just slightly twitching on the touchpad to move the cursor.

This distraction forms part of the complex interaction with the images and although they were not totally engaged in their content, they scanned the screen for an image that they were "drawn to", in a similar fashion to the earlier *noticing* strategies. When they saw an image they were interested in, they would often go on to explore that photographer's page, looking at the rest of their images and their favourites. In other instances when photographers were exploring *Flickr*, another repeated movement was that of continually going back and forth between different images, their personal page and groups. Sometimes they would open up multiple tabs to aid these movements and then begin to comment on, favourite, or add the chosen photographer as a contact by utilising different tabs. Tom used the *favourite* button multiple times so he can find his way back to the work that "caught his eye" in the first place. He told me "it can get a little like that film Inception… just layers and layers of pages, that's how I end up with loads of *Flickr* windows open". In other instances, *Flickr*ites would keep moving back and forth between pages directly.

These repetitive movements were conspicuous throughout the entire browse and talk sessions and many of them commented on the number of tabs or windows they had open at one time and the amount of repeated clicking that continued to happen throughout the sessions. Ingold (2007:65) details the motions and movements of weaving, stating that 'the line on a surface that is being woven from threads… grows organically in one direction through the accumulation of transverse, back and forth movements in the other'. In a similar way, by moving continually back and forth the photographers are weaving their own threads and carving out individual paths, although in this case they are moving in all directions. Recalling the earlier description of *Flickr* as tapestry, it is these movements from which the tapestry is woven, individuals making small, repeated back and forth movements like a weaver at a loom. In this instance the *Flickr*ite here is:

> One who participates from within the very process of the world's continual coming into being and who, in laying a trail of life, contributes to its weave and texture. These lines are typically winding and irregular yet comprehensively entangled into a close knit tissue.
>
> (ibid.:81)

Like wandering in the city, when users begin to explore *Flickr* there is no set destination or final place they want to get to and the threads begin to weave into one another as they move around the pages, moving backwards and forwards through multiple pages. However, the pages that they navigate around are deeply familiar and they revisit the same places on *Flickr* in a similar way to their favourite urban places. Although walking online to an extent is unplanned, ultimately they are repeatedly exploring the same places (groups and certain features).

In a similar vein, there are features on *Flickr* they never use or visit, just like certain destinations in the city. Richard enjoys "scouting about" on *Flickr* however he is limited in the areas on *Flickr* that he explores and, similar to his offline exploration, he visits and revisits the areas with which he is most familiar. *Flickr*ites have other ways of finding photographs that interest them even if they do not utilise the Explore page. During our session Richard typed *Gateshead* into the search bar to see what had been recently uploaded and tagged onto *Flickr*. He does this quite often in order to see if any photos of interest had been posted, but also as a way of keeping an eye on what he called "his territory". In fact, he said that when he is out and about with his camera in Gateshead and surrounding areas, he gets "very territorial" and is always looking out for other photographs posted on *Flickr*, although he chortles a little at how this sounds when he says it out loud.

Richard's style of street photography is mainly based around the area of Gateshead that is currently being regenerated after a period of some neglect. Richard's territorial position slips into his *Flickr* photostream as his style of photography is combative and it does not shy away from the difficulties facing his familiar local places, such as poverty and dereliction. During our discussions about other users and groups, he scans through the images and says "bridges, bridges, bridges, the angel [of the North], why is everyone so seduced by landmarks?" The rejection of such popular landmarks is visible on both his photostream and his *Flickr* home page, where his groups (both local and global) have an interest in both realism and urbanism in equal measure.

Some photographers do have a more distant relationship with *Flickr*, only using the site if they are uploading pictures. This meant large gaps in their usage which directly affected their connection with the site and emotionally they were less involved. Chris goes on to *Flickr* sporadically, which is always related to uploading images of his digitised film photographs onto the site. Once logged on, he finds he starts "surfing around" which includes looking for pictures that match his interests (film and Lo-fi photography). As he was wandering around his page and photographs, he commented that he "found Flickr difficult to navigate around" and was critical of its layout that, for him, "wasn't logical".

This negative feeling towards the layout of *Flickr* was a common theme among many participants, who did not like using different parts of the interface or thought that it could perhaps be better designed. When Chris was using *Flickr*, he felt that it was "hard to interact" with others and he said that "sometimes I feel like I am in a silo by myself." Initially I was surprised by this comment – how could you feel by yourself with so many others around? Then I contemplated about how frequently I made contact with others on *Flickr* and realised it was not very often. Despite having a few contacts, exploring local groups and using various other applications on the site, on *Flickr* you mostly wander alone. I do comment upon images, and also read the comment stream underneath each picture, but do not take part in group challenges as I do not take enough photographs. I lurk around a few local group pages and *Flickr* does keep me informed of any new uploads by people that I know, but ultimately I wander and inhabit *Flickr* by myself. The threads of the tapestry may overlap and become entangled however they are never connected to each other.

Although Chris and I may be members of *Flickr*, as well as belonging to similar groups, we never actually meet on there but we are separate threads, part of the same tapestry. Ingold (2007:103) understands that in 'this mesh of interwoven lines – there is no inside or outside only openings and ways through.' *Flickr*'s construction, its different environs, its various and infinite paths allows the users on there to find their own, unique way around the site.

Summary

Flickr has changed the relationships that photographers have, not just with their urban environment, but their everyday movements within that space and their routine with the camera. Indeed 'digital places are new leverage points for creating new experiences and relationships that will profoundly redefine our experiences of physical space' (Horan cited in Seamon, 2006). Thanks to the different and varied interactions on *Flickr*, photographers are noticing different things and people around the city, inviting other photographers to join them in the process. *Flickr* has additionally become part of the everyday routine for many people, and their habits with the camera are partially informed by the images they view on the site.

There were many overlaps in photographers' online and offline wayfinding strategies and the way that photographers get around *Flickr* has parallels to their offline walking. In the city there were different kinds of walking, from explorative meander to a more purposeful walk. Online, there was fast paced scrolling and clicking, which was nuanced and direct allowing photographers to instantly pick out the photographs to which they were drawn. Once photographers had settled into a more relaxed browse, they clicked through a range of different groups and images. On *Flickr*, exploration was built from routine encounter whilst in their physical explorations of city spaces, participants did not tend to seek out the unknown parts of the city, revisiting the same territory, always alert to new opportunities brought about by having the camera in their hand. They were always interested in the world around them and even the smallest detail or change in shapes and shadows offered many different photographic possibilities.

Anderson and Harrison (2010:7) explain that 'most of the time in our everyday lives, there is a huge amount that we do, a huge amount that we are involved in that we don't think about and that, when asked about, may struggle to explain.' In a similar vein, much of what is discussed in this chapter is second nature to the photographer, forming part of their walking, browsing and general everyday routines. Noticing, exploring, carrying the camera, moving around the city and navigating through and interacting with the many parts of *Flickr* powerfully combine to make an everyday practice, an extraordinary way of experiencing the world.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Introduction

People aren't doing anything new… they are doing old things in new ways.

(Anderson and Tracey, 2002: 160)

Perhaps it is surprising that this chapter begins with the conclusion that people 'aren't doing anything new' despite the fact that I have used and examined many different digital technologies such as cameras, computers and online sites. Some studies which researched photography have compared film and digital practices either with cameras (Shove *et al.*, 2007) or camera phones (Villi and Stocchetti, 2011). However all photographers, whether using digital or film cameras, must still go out and take photographs, using similar techniques and more often than not revisiting the same places as before.

Various technological innovations have meant that photographers can take more pictures than before whilst doing the old routines in different places. Sites such as *Flickr* have become popular, not just through their innovation, but because they offer a place where photographers can exhibit and compare their work, and discuss their passion for photography – something offered by photography clubs for the last 100 years. Where *Flickr* does differ from the other websites is that its complex construction assists its members to actively explore the images on the site, mirroring their curiosity and noticings with the camera offline. *Flickr* is relatively new but it allows photographers to transfer some of their old routines with the camera to their online experiences, making it a particularly unique place on the web. The findings of this research indicate that the photographers are doing what they have always done, but are doing so in new places.

There were two primary aims at the beginning of this research. The first was to move discussions on photography away from the dominant representations and readings that mostly ignore the other interesting *doings* of the photographer in everyday life. Following on from this, the second aim was to explore the ways in which photographers engage with the world around them and how their practice impacts upon their everyday life, crossing into online places.

I constructed a conceptual framework in line with a move away from visual studies and photograph *as text*. Instead it borrowed from work in a diverse range of fields including human and urban geography, phenomenological philosophy and anthropology working alongside media and photography studies to build an alternative approach to photographic practice.

As the title of this study makes clear, photographic practices are both diverse and wide-reaching and can be found in many different places and worlds, both online and offline. The relationship between the body and the machine is a complex process and the corporeal and sensual interaction between each part builds over time, forming a strong connection with the camera. Naturally, this connection impacts on the everyday routines of the practising photographer. Infused within these various routines was *movement* of the bodies in the urban and online landscape and of the images themselves as they carved their own paths on *Flickr*. This chapter summarises each of the main findings of this study. It also details different avenues for further research into this expanding and exciting area.

Being a photographer changes the perspective of *being-in-the-world*

Shove *et al.* (2007) previously outlined how everyday practices can be construed as complex *performances*. From this perspective the role of photography in the lives of research participants can be seen as partially constructed, as well as a natural, creative process. All the participants in this study took photography seriously and were aware that their attitude to photography set them apart from others who simply happen to carry a camera on their mobile phone (tying in with notions of performance). Taking photographs somehow altered their perspective on everyday life, although they all found it difficult to articulate exactly why this was the case. The more images they took, the more they became involved and interested with photograph taking and other associated areas such as post production and membership of sites like *Flickr*. Seamon (cited in Jiron, 2011: 36) writes that 'it is impossible to ask whether person makes world or world makes person because both exist always together and can only be correctly interpreted in terms of the holistic relationship, being-in-world.'

Certainly being a photographer-in-the-world reveals an interesting paradox: distance facilitates noticing and the photographer needs to step back and become separated from everyday life in order to capture it, yet photography also brings them closer to their city and so they came to better know it through taking photographs. Van House (2007) discusses the notion of *'distant closeness'* to describe the social relationships on *Flickr* and the phrase is also an apt description for the photographer and their relationship with the city.

Movement is crucial to photography

There are many old truisms that still circulate about photography, which can be found in most of the literature about images and image culture. The most enduring of these is that photography is about capturing a singular moment in time and is primarily about *stillness*. However to ignore the role of movement in photography would mean overlooking one of the most important everyday elements of the practice. In the context of the image, movement is often seen as the *enemy* of photography, leading to the unsightly smudging or blurring of a subject in camera. However in the context of practice, photography relies completely on movement whether making small micro-adjustments of the feet or hands when out with the camera, to large movements involving the whole body, such as walking.

I agree with Pink (2011a) who believes that photograph taking and making is made through, and by, movement. Throughout this research, movement was a prominent feature and key theme throughout leading to discussions surrounding the movement of photographs on *Flickr* and user exploration of site: to know it better, users must move around and explore it. The participants themselves commented during interviews about the amount of walking and the unusual contortions they make with their bodies when doing photography. Movement is crucial in the doing of photography whether it is when photographers 'throw their bodies into the performance of meaningful action' (Carman, 2008:111) or simply when walking for hours around the city with the camera. These different actions with the camera led to a routinisation of movement that played a crucial role in forming everyday habits with the camera.

Photography is more than visual: it uses all the senses and the body

Tied to the discussions on movement is another core idea within this study: that to understand photography in greater depth, there needs to be a move away from *only* visuality and a move toward the 'multi-sensory and inter-sensory nature of photographs' (Edwards, 2009:31). The connections that photographers make whilst moving and walking involve the coming together of many distinctive elements, such as the senses and the camera, the body and the outside space. In the context of this study, photographers used all their senses when perceiving objects and within environments in order to successfully take a photograph.

This sensory collaboration is further heightened through walking, as they observe things up close when moving at a slower pace. Whilst doing photography, the human senses co-operate when moving around on foot: the sounds of the city, machines, and pedestrians, or the tingling of the cold in feet and fingers when they are waiting and watching with the camera. These sensations and movements naturally come together when taking photographs, bringing to the fore motor intentionality, or the 'normal unity and integration of our bodily movement and our intuitive awareness of a given, stable environment' (Carman, 2008:117). The movements of photography and walking combine, allowing one action to successfully flow into another.

A phenomenological framework offers a useful approach to photography practice

It was clear from the beginning of this study that if there was to be a move away from the customary discussions regarding photography then an alternative approach was needed. Phenomenology was used because of its emphasis on lived experience as a way of knowing the world and a call to 'return to the things themselves' (Husserl cited in Carman, 2008:14). In its broadest sense, phenomenological philosophy has been utilised to open up discussions relating to diverse areas such as hill walking (Lund, 2005; Vergunst, 2011), driving (Laurier *et al.*, 2008) and film watching (Sobchack, 2008) however no similar study had been conducted relating to everyday photography practice.

There is much potential in this area and Radley (2010:279) highlights 'what pictures portray and what stories narrate are versions of our experience of the world, not constructions of the world that we experience.' Kozel (2007:vxi) summarises the phenomenological method as 'a return to lived experience, a listening to the senses and insights that arrive obliquely, unbidden… in the midst of life'. Phenomenology offers a way of exploring photography and its associated practices by considering the way it is actually done and experienced in an everyday context.

I focused particularly on the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty whose writing on perception, habits and embodiment was particularly useful. Although he never wrote in detail on photography, utilising his work on impressionist painting allowed an interesting parallel to be drawn between the painter's body and that of the photographer. The body was important in the work of Merleau-Ponty and his writing on perception, the body and movement was used throughout this work to explain and consider the relationship between the senses, the body and the camera. There were also other instances when Merleau-Ponty's writing about the body was taken into unrelated areas, particularly his work on the *Chaism*. Regarding online and offline worlds and the crossover between them, there is a 'chiasmic intertwining of the visible and the invisible, the viewer and the viewed' (Merleau-Ponty cited in Lalvani, 1996:21). Also important was the influence of Merleau-Ponty's writing on other authors such as Ingold, Seamon and Thrift. This allowed discussions relating to phenomenology to be opened up within other diverse areas such as online wayfinding strategies, as well as the habits and routines of the photographer.

Photography is a habit formed through routine practice

Merleau-Ponty believed habit was a form of 'embodied and practical knowledge' (Crossley, 2001:127) known *through* the body, which was certainly true in the context of the photographers in this study. The impact of always carrying the camera meant that their body became used to the weight of the machine, which signified that they were *doing* photography.

Most participants routinely carried a camera and some had more than one in the guise of a mobile phone or a compact camera, as well as a larger DSLR. Holding a camera altered routine body movements such as walking pace and when taking pictures, the photographer would slow down and look up at the buildings around them, or even stop completely to step back and watch the different sites unfolding in front of them and their camera.

In the longer term, the habit of carrying the camera impacted on their everyday engagement with the world and every photographer spoke to me about seeing the world differently after using a camera. Part of this process was a form of heightened *noticing* where they would see the unusual within everyday life that others ignored or as Seamon (1979:108) describes 'a thing from which we were insulated a moment before, flashes to our attention.' Even when the photographers had forgotten their camera, they still continued to notice things and vowed to later return to take a picture.

Seamon's work relating to noticing was hugely influential in this instance and his theme of noticing (unique to Lifeworld) has potential for further expansion, particularly in the context of photography. If the habit of noticing flourished offline, this also impacted on the photographer's movement and routines on *Flickr*. The process of being *drawn* to an image on *Flickr* certainly had similar properties to offline noticing strategies. Here the photographer would rapidly click on a succession of images on Explore or in different groups to which they belonged, either marking the image as a favourite or quickly moving to the next one that attracted them.

The movement of hands and fingers on the touchpad or mouse involved small micro-movements and adjustments similar to those that they made with the camera. This process would be repeated hundreds of times throughout one session of *Flickr*. Once they had interacted with the new content, they dropped the pace to a browse and clicked through different images on the site, akin to the habit to slowing down the walking pace offline. The photographers in this study were unaware of the movements they made either in front of a computer or with a camera because they had done them hundreds of times before.

Hahn (2006:22) ponders about 'inscriptions, not messages written and handed down but inscriptions folded into the body through experience.' These different actions are all part of doing photography and like all habits seem natural, an unfolding or flow of movement that stems from the body out into the world.

Photographers know the city through walking around it, visiting primarily familiar areas

One of the main ways I came to understand more about the practice of photography was to accompany the photographers as they walked around and it transpired that they had a natural affinity with the city. Ligget (2007:16) explains that 'the urban encounter… is based on an instant connection… in which the photographer, urban space and the camera are united.' Walking was a crucial element of doing photography and when out on the walk and talk sessions in Sunderland and Newcastle, the participants and I walked for many miles at a time. Earlier discussions in the literature review highlighted the enduring presence of the Flâneur as a way of interpreting how urbanites interact with and know their city and certainly there are some similarities with photography and *Flânerie*. The routes taken by the photographer were not random and were both planned and familiar. Many of the participants commented that there were areas that they revisited frequently with the camera, places that held their interest enough for them to return. Walking around a given area is an important part of being a photographer and gives them a closer bond to different places in the city.

Habit and routine play an important part in everyday urban life. The city is marked by well-trodden paths, routes that are established and repeated on a daily basis by urbanites that walk back and forth along the same lines each day. Although the photographers have their own familiar routes and places that they visit, their wayfinding strategy changes when carrying a camera and often they will deviate from their normal route to find hidden details as part of a wider noticing strategy. Walking is also a key part of the *Flickr* meet-ups where members gather together to collectively walk around.

That being said, once the photographers have agreed on the area that they will visit, they break off from the group and walk around on their own. Most often the meet-ups are located in city centre locations or places that are easy to get to and so many are familiar with the places before they attend. This is partly one reason that the meet-ups do not tend to appeal to everyone: for some photography is better as a private pursuit and walking around alone is more comfortable than sharing your familiar places with others. Ultimately 'there is a subtle state that most dedicated urban walkers know, a sort of basking in solitude' (Solnit, 2001:186). Crucially walking is another way of moving discussions about photography away from the visual. Pink (2008a:180) explains that 'there is in fact a case for re-thinking both *Flânerie* and urban ethnography as a multi-sensorial form of engagement, rather than simply in terms of vision.'

An alternative perspective is needed for further research online

If one of the more straightforward aims of this study was to move photography away from an overtly visual focus, it additionally wanted to develop new ideas and approaches relating to computing, specifically ideas about online places such as *Flickr*, how users move around and get to know them intimately. Research on how users find their way around online or certainly around particular sites is scarce. Work on online environments is overwhelmingly from an HCI perspective which mostly speaks in the language of programming and computing, with one exception in the writing of Van House (2007, 2011).

Whilst research within HCI has generated interesting results, there have been no theoretical or more abstract discussions about *Flickr's* construction or its users from other perspectives; certainly there are no other similar studies to which the findings of this study can be compared. For this reason, other more alternative perspectives were utilised that would not necessarily be associated with online research, in particular, the work of Ingold and his ideas relating to wayfinding and later, the meshwork.

Writing about dwelling and perception, Ingold (2000:229-230) proposes that 'knowledge is cultivated along paths… and that people's knowledge of the environment undergoes continuous formation is the very course of them moving about in it.' When considering movement in virtual places, Ingold's vocabulary is useful because it fits the inherent non-linear structure of online places such as *Flickr*.

Flickr continuously mutates and grows as users interact and connect, generating millions of multiple paths through their daily movements. For this reason, even if the user is familiar with *Flickr* there is always the possibility of finding new areas and connections if they wish to follow them. In Ingold's terms, it is a place where users 'know as they go' (ibid.). Leading on from his work on orientation and movement are ideas relating to the meshwork where Ingold (2008) believes that the dominance of networks (where the emphasis is put on the *connections* between people and things) is flawed. Instead he insists our entanglement and habitation along the trails of everyday life is messier than simple straight connecting lines and is more akin to a knotted meshwork of lines. The word *network* has become embedded within sciences and computing, its everyday use has become popularised by a variety of websites all generally described as social networks.

Elaborating on Ingold's notion of the meshwork I have put forward the idea that *Flickr* functions more like a tapestry, a complex 'bundle of lines and growth' (ibid.: 1807) woven from different threads of movement from the ever growing paths between the images on the site. Crucially, members on *Flickr* are not all simply connected together point-to-point through their membership (most are not linked at all) and their images can move around on separate paths, carving out their own way on *Flickr*.

What must be stressed here is that despite the usefulness of Ingold's conceptual vocabulary in reconsidering movement in online spaces such as *Flickr* (and for that matter, the city) I am not convinced that he would necessarily approve of his work being adapted in this way.

His general pessimism towards, and assumptions about, modernity, new technology and its inclusion and use in everyday life is not only frustrating, but leads me to believe that he would take issue with the parallels I have drawn throughout this work between offline wayfinding on foot and online wayfinding through the fingers via a touchpad or mouse.

Flickr encourages exploration

Despite Ingold's position on modern life and technology, his ideas are interesting and offer a starting point when considering movement, habitation and getting around within online places. This study has demonstrated that *Flickr* is a place where movement and interaction play a key role, however there were other elements that made it different from other sites specialising in photography.

Flickr has pioneered many different features since its inception such as allowing members to label their own work via folksonomy and visualising these trends through tag clouds. Photographers can leave comments underneath the photographs which lends an additional 'verbal textuality' (Palmer, 2010:158) to the images posted. *Flickr* allows *any* user to comment on *any* public photograph on the site and so the size and detail of comments varies depending on the photographer and the image taken. Unlike other sites such as Photobucket, the comment stream is only linked to *Flickr* (and not to other sites like Facebook) and these comments are also separate to the group to which the image has been added.

The emphasis throughout *Flickr* is on connecting and sharing work with others, alongside exploring the rest of *Flickr's* content and its construction has been cleverly engineered to further engage photographers by mimicking the processes of doing photography offline. On *Flickr* visitors and members alike are encouraged to explore all content, in the same way that they would explore offline places with their camera. Due to the way photographs are labelled and sorted, the process is mainly random and there is every chance of finding a photograph in one search, then never coming across it again.

This *uncovering* of content is more akin to when photographers notice things or places in the city, and depending on what they find, this uncovering can lead them in different directions.

This exploration does come with an important qualification: there are numerous ways to search for photographs on the site, going via different tags, favourites, groups, geo-tags and maps or via the content pre-selected by *Flickr* on pages such as Explore, the clock or the calendar. Each user has their own preference and routine as to where they go on *Flickr* and once it has become established they will stick to the same paths. In this sense their exploration of the site is limited to the places which they decide to go. Just like when the photographers walk around the city, their wandering around *Flickr* is selective and they go to the places that they know. However when users do begin to explore their chosen areas of *Flickr*, there is no set destination or final place in mind and they go to where they are *drawn*. Ingold (2008:1808) explains that 'places are formed through movement, when a movement *along* turns into a movement *around'*. *Flickr*ites do not just cross the surface of the site, they move around and through it and it is their explorations and various 'comings and goings' (ibid.) that enable them to become thoroughly entangled with the site, which in turn allows it to develop and grow.

Adams (2005:228) explains that 'new technologies... mediate between people and the world in new ways, with new topologies of connection and new combinations of signs, symbols and signals.' On *Flickr* the different possibilities of new combinations make it an area ripe for further exploration. This section will now conclude with discussions about further work directly related to this research, with areas that have potential for additional exploration.

Further Work

Collaboration between Media and Photography studies

One of the initial aims of this research was to try and bring the disciplines of media studies and photography closer together which, in retrospect, would prove a near-impossible challenge. It is still an area worth developing and whilst it seems the two areas are always destined to be separated by historical differences, there is much potential in them collaborating. As photographic technology increasingly becomes integrated into other devices such as mobile phones and tablet computers, the status, nature and practice of photography is changing and more research needs to examine how this overlaps with previous photography routines.

There also generally needs to be much more research conducted into the everyday practices of photography: not just the taking of photographs but how they are looked at, stored, displayed and distributed. The explosion in the uploading of images to specialist sites such as *Flickr* and other popular sites such as Facebook needs to be explored in greater depth. In this instance, collaboration between media studies and photography would benefit both disciplines by bringing fresh perspectives to each of these new, mass media *practices*.

Potential of 'non-media-centric media studies'

With an emphasis on practice, an alternative paradigm for media and cultural studies is required. Morley (2009:115) summarises that this discipline must:

> Do more to investigate the changing relations between the material and the virtual realms of communications. In doing so, we need to avoid the simplistic periodizations and overdrawn binary divides between the worlds of the "old" and the "new" media.

In this context there is the potential for media studies to be more open and investigate new forms of communication and uses of technology in much more depth, importantly thinking about their connections to and their role social processes.

Reckwitz (cited in Shove *et al.*, 2007:13) highlights that practice theory itself 'shifts bodily movements, things, practical knowledge and routine to the centre of its vocabulary' and there is no reason that media and photography studies should not also utilise a similar vocabulary. This study demonstrates that by looking into practice in more depth, a variety of different perspectives could lead to interesting collaborative work between media studies and other disciplines, such as human geography and computing science.

Moving photography on

If there is to be a move away from the old binary divides then the traditional way that photography is discussed and researched must be opened up and reassessed, further developing a non-image centric approach. This means reconsidering photographic as a practice, but also questioning some of the long held beliefs that are repeated throughout photographic literature, for example the emphasis on the still. The study of photography must move into new territory if it is to stay fresh and be aware of new and complex ways that photography is being practiced in everyday life. Pink (2011a:9) demonstrates how this can be achieved. In the context of bullfight photography she writes that 'photographing [the bullfight] is thus a sensory embodied practice in which the photographer uses his or hers practical experience to become corporeally engaged with the movement of the bull and the performer'. The notion of incorporating ideas such as movement and place into discussions relating to photography is necessary, radical and long overdue. There is further potential to research the new hybrid forms of photographic practice, such as the ways people are engaging with photographic technology and applications through a large array of different devices.

Photography on the move

The work of artist and researcher Jen Southern establishes the potential for work on photography to more literally, move in different directions. Southern's pioneering work experiments with software, smartphone applications, GPS receivers and movement tracing technology.

It demonstrates that artistic ideas can have a practical role in the understanding of place, on where people go and how they move: certainly technology such as GPS 'supports a dialogue with place' (Lowry, Southern and Speed, 2009:135). There is much potential in the idea of further research in relation to movement and photography using GPS. For example photographers could have a unit attached to them as they walk around and their movements traced, to build up further understanding of the different layers of interaction and movement between the photographer, the camera and the city. An adaptation of the tracing software could also be developed to visualise, animate and illustrate these movements showing the actual movements of the photographer[1] on the ground.

There is also further potential in understanding camera phone use, both by casual and more serious photographers. The relatively recent rise of the smart phone has led to higher specification cameras and sophisticated, complex practices that involve personal photography, mobile phones and the internet warrant far more attention and scope for further examination.

More on wayfinding and general orientation online

Whilst there needs to be further study into what is done outside with a camera, there equally needs to be more done on how people get around online: not only how they select and browse the sites they choose but the nature of their everyday movement. This does not just apply to photographers either and despite the fact that many of us now spend more time online than using any other form of mediated technology we still know very little about the emotional side to our online orientations. I believe that in this regard, this research is unique, especially surrounding the online dimension to *Flickr*ites and their orientation around the site.

The main problem stems from the complex interdisciplinary issues related to media studies and computing. Unlike when individual humanities subjects can collaborate with relative ease, computing studies is conceptually very different,

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[1] See the art work of Jeremy Wood for the potential of mapping personal journeys via GPS. [Online] Available at: www.gpsdrawing.com (Accessed 20th February 2012)

often with a different structure and writing style, using dense programming language and equations.

Whilst these problems are not insurmountable (as shown by the work of Southern) they are challenging and future researchers in the humanities will have to find a way of collaborating with both software programmers and data analysts by (for example) learning more about coding. Further work in this area could monitor participants and their movements both through personal diaries and the logging of their internet use over a period of time, building up a picture of where they go online and their complex orientation strategies.

More on *Flickr* and online photography practices

Whilst there has recently been more studies about photography practices online in recent years (Keegan, 2008; Richter and Schadler, 2009; Van Dijck, 2008, 2011), given the sheer number of images on sites like *Flickr* alongside the rise in the use of sophisticated camera phones (such as the iPhone), there is still surprisingly little research conducted in this area.

There is so much more potential for study into everyday photography practices, for example, what do people do with images on their phones once they take them? How long do they keep them for and do they ever forward them on? How do these images differ from those taken on a digital camera? Do we use and treat these photographs differently?

Flickr also has a huge research potential that remains untapped by media and photography studies and whilst there have been a handful of articles that discuss the images and comments on the site (Stallabrass, 2009), research needs to go further and examine more about the users themselves and their daily online practices. Whilst *Yahoo!* does have its own research facility based in Berkley, the research produced is based mostly within an HCI context (here Van House's work (2007, 2011) is a notable and welcome exception).

Moreover, there needs to be further investigation into the way users are developing unique uses for photographic technologies and their role in everyday life and routines, particularly concerning sociable sites such as *Flickr* and Facebook and other new platforms that now support photography, such as Twitter. Pink (2011a:8) explains that 'when we show images this does not involve taking people back but entails a process of moving forward'. It is clear that the academy now needs to engage in a similar process and also look forward, to discover and understand more about the diverse practices that still make photography an important part of everyday life.

Epilogue: Doing something, watching

I walk up the ramp out of Gateshead metro station, its dull tiled interior illuminated by the fluorescent glow of yellow spotlights. My eyes adjust to the early evening light and as I step outside into the town centre I stop to glance up at where the Trinity car park used to stand. In its place is a large metal framework constructed like a giant Meccano set, the steel girders shooting up and across, currently just silhouettes against the dusky amber sky.

There are three cranes sitting idle down below, alongside a couple of dumper trucks that are digging the foundations of what will be an even bigger complex of housing, shops and a Tesco supermarket. The strong smell of freshly applied gloss paint makes me wrinkle my nose and I notice it has been applied to the large chipboard fence that surrounds the building site to keep it out of bounds to pedestrians.

I consider the changes that have occurred here even in the short time I have become familiar with this place, where one large structure was gradually demolished only to make way for another. It has been in a permanent state of building work before the car park was demolished and it has been a while since the locals have been able to set foot on the site. The city is always being rebuilt and reimagined, and has known many changes, with no doubt many more to come.

I hear the familiar clunk of a shutter and turn around to see a photographer shooting the site from a distance, tucked inside a doorway. I smile and turn my back on the building, and continue walking apace down the hill. You will always find a photographer doing something here: watching, moving, and adapting to the city, even once I am long gone.

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