



# Interior Landscapes

The Allotment as Heterotopic Third Place

**Spatial Production, Quiet Resistance, and Poetic Modes of Dwelling in  
Place-Based Urban Micro-Communities**

Final Year Written Research  
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# 3

## PREFACE

### Placing the Allotment in Discussions of Interior Space.

The term '*interior*' typically refers to what is inside: enclosed and distinguished from an '*exterior*'. Its meaning extends beyond physical boundaries to include conditions such as privacy, intimacy, or belonging. As a result, theories of interiority cannot be limited to the architectural envelope of a building. Instead, they must account for the socio-spatial processes through which the 'inside' is defined, experienced, and evaluated. These processes can extend to any site that is meaningfully distinguished from an 'outside'.

This dissertation adopts a conceptual and theoretical approach to interior architecture, using the English allotment as a critical case study through which to interrogate what constitutes 'interior space' beyond conventional architectural boundaries. Rather than treating the allotment as a programmatic site, it is positioned as a heterotopia: a spatial condition that exists simultaneously within and outside dominant urban logics. The allotment operates as an inward-facing, self-regulating landscape, yet remains embedded within the wider infrastructural and spatial systems of the city. The research positions the 'interior' not as a strictly enclosed or architectural condition, but as a relational socio-spatial construct produced through use, boundary-making, and collective practice. By engaging with theories of heterotopia and interiority, the dissertation contributes to contemporary debates in interior architecture by expanding the discipline's conceptual field to include marginal, hybrid, and non-built environments as legitimate sites of inquiry.

The following document is structured in two parts. It begins with a written essay that develops the perspective outlined above. This is followed by a detailed methodology and visual diary presenting the research undertaken through fieldwork and archival investigation, documenting the spatial observations and references that inform the dissertation's arguments.



# 4

## VISUAL RECONSTRUCTION

All visual material is authored by the researcher through a combination of hand-produced and digitally edited processes, without the use of generative AI. This reflects the project's commitment to alternative methods of recording spatial conditions through human-produced studies and the use of visual communication as a tool for analysing architectural experience.

This image visually demonstrates the concepts discussed later in the visual essay. Created using 3D modeling and rendering, with post-production and digital collage.





Fig 78. Digital collage of St Ann's in relation to Nottingham City Centre (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

# 5

## ESSAY

**How does St Ann's Allotment function as a heterotopic third place, in which socially produced quiet resistance and poetic modes of dwelling generate alternative forms of social order in contemporary urban environments?**

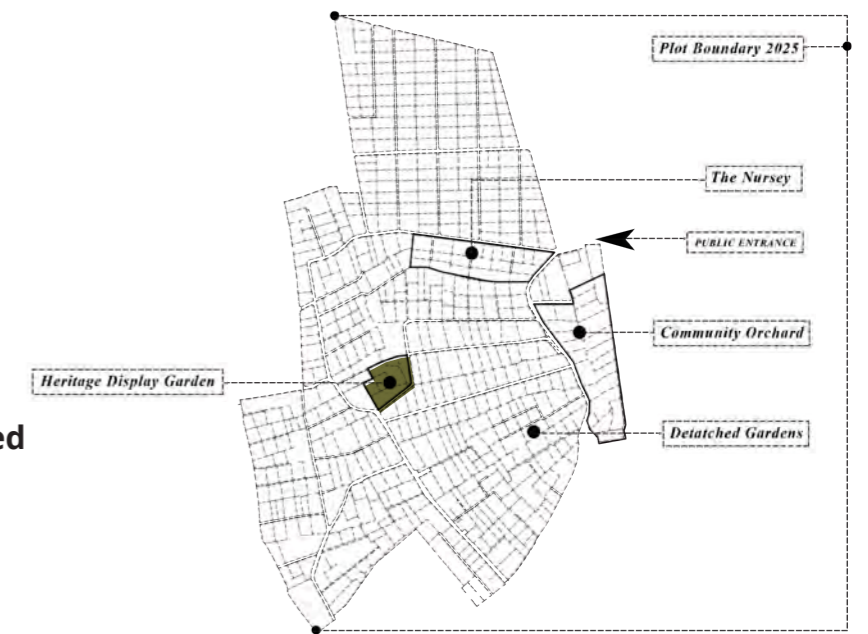


Fig 13. Plot diagram calling out key areas within St Ann's allotment (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

## INTRODUCTION

This essay positions the allotment as a crucial example of a heterotopic third place within contemporary urban environments. In cities shaped by dense development and accelerated daily rhythms, opportunities for genuine communal engagement are marginalised (Zukin, 2009). Yet some sites emerge as exceptions, where alternative social, temporal and ethical orders develop through embodied practice. As Sennett (2018, p.141) notes, such spaces create the conditions in which people can "deepen their experience of collective life", emphasising the role that the built environment plays in shaping meaningful communal interaction.

The research focuses on the experience of volunteering at the heritage display garden with St Ann's Allotment Association (STAA). Qualitative data were gathered through participant observation, practising *Dérive*, and archival research. Through this methodology, the study demonstrates how the allotment is both the product and production of place-based community, providing social capital through spatial autonomy grounded in sensory experience. This approach aligns with phenomenological spatial perspectives, which suggest that space is perceived differently by those who inhabit it, dependent on individual lived experience (Bachelard, 1994; Heidegger, 2001; Lefebvre, 1991).

This investigation conceptualises the heterotopic third place through a layered theoretical framework that considers the social production of space (Lefebvre, 1991), acts of quiet resistance in third places (Butler, 2015; Oldenburg, 1989) and alternative modes of dwelling (Bachelard, 1994). These concepts are then applied at St Ann's Allotments through observational and archival research. It explores how these factors contribute to the classification of the allotment as a heterotopia: a place in society that exists outside ordinary spatial rules (Foucault, 1986).

## 1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 1.1 THE PRODUCTION AND EXPERIENCE OF ARCHITECTURAL SPACE

Architectural space is shaped by human activity, social organisation and ethical engagement, rather than existing as a vessel for human activity. Drawing on Lefebvre's (1991) theory of the production of space, production is a lived and embodied process through which bodies, tools, materials and knowledge intersect to form environments that both shape and are shaped by social relations. Space operates simultaneously as medium and outcome: it reflects political and economic forces while influencing behaviour and social hierarchies. This affective relationship positions architectural space as socially produced and continuously remade through everyday practice.

Heidegger's (2001, pp.143–159) ontological account of dwelling complements Lefebvre's social spatial perspective by stressing that building arises from human attunement to the world. Heidegger suggests we build because dwelling, "the way in which humans are on earth" (Heidegger, 2001, p.145), already grounds existence. Buildings act as structures that "gather the Fourfold", mediating relations between earth, sky, mortals and divinities (Heidegger, 2001, p.152). Space is thus experienced existentially, functioning both as a site of habitation and as a medium through which meaning unfolds.

Bachelard (1994) extends these insights by examining the phenomenological perspectives of lived spaces, suggesting that space is felt intimately and personally as a "world in miniature" (p.6), shaped by memory, imagination and affect, where the physical space acquires meaning through "the life that we live within it" (p.12). The lived experience of architectural space is thus a negotiation of material realities, personal intimacies and perceptions. As Bachelard observes, it is through humans' relationship with their places that imagination is born, for these spaces are "secret gardens of the soul" (p.15).

Taken together, Lefebvre, Heidegger and Bachelard offer a multi-dimensional understanding of space as an interaction between social, existential and imaginative forces. Collective practices inscribe meaning onto environments, while attuned dwelling shapes how bodies orient and respond within them. Simultaneously, imaginative and poetic dwelling transforms these spaces into intimate landscapes where internal reflection and creativity emerge. This perspective frames subsequent analysis of specific architectural sites, such as allotments, as spaces that generate complex affective, social and intimate relationships between humans and their environments (Cele, 2023, p.2).



Fig 79. Visual collage demonstrating a space as socially produced; showing people using tools within the space and the affective relationship between architecture and user communities (Carroll-Parry, N, 2026)



Fig 47. Collage depicting the words 'Not all protest is loud' (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

## 1.2 THE THIRD PLACE AND SPACES OF RESISTANCE

Drawing on Oldenburg's (1989, p.11) original definition of the "third place" as an informal public gathering place outside the home or workplace, this essay focuses on genuine community spaces that emerge through non-capital, everyday practices. Wexler and Oberlander (2017) argue that many contemporary "third places" are deliberately designed as profit-driven "servicescapes", marketing the idea of community space to "possible consumers" (pp.17). This is an example of the neoliberal urban framework, where economic structures prioritise market freedom and privatisation; the state is positioned primarily as a regulator of market conditions rather than as a supporter of collective social life (Harvey, 2006). It therefore becomes increasingly important to examine community spaces that resist these pressures as non-capital, everyday sites of social interaction (Zukin, 2009).

Through factors such as collective stewardship, certain sites enable user communities to engage in a social life beyond institutional or commercial pressures, enabling everyday practices that resist neoliberal urbanism and develop genuine civic forms of belonging and political presence. Following Lefebvre's (1991) concept of the production of space as an ongoing process through which bodies, practices and materials shape environments, Butler's (2015) theory of assembly reframes everyday dwelling as a political act. By collectively inhabiting space as an assembly, individuals assert claims to public space, allowing third places to be understood as sites of subtle resistance (Butler, 2015, pp.2-8). Through collective presence, bodies in these spaces enact claims to social and spatial commons, even in the absence of formal protest (Butler, 2015).

Similarly, de Certeau's (2011) concept of "walkers" highlights how ordinary interactions with urban space can tactically shape and contest it, demonstrating how social life can emerge independently of market or institutional frameworks. Through repeated engagement, these spaces enable distinct relational practices that support alternative modes of community life outside market-based logics (Zukin, 2009), operating in ways more subtle than overt spatial politics such as marches and demonstrations.



Fig 51. Digital collage depicting anonymous people walking around a spatially flat interior, 3D modelled and rendered by the author to demonstrate the feeling of an alienated city (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)



Fig 69. Mapping heterotopias in Nottingham City Centre, with heterotopias shaded in black (Carroll-Parry, N, 2026)



Fig 71. Digital collage of a person within a heterotopia, reflecting on their place in society; 3D modelled and rendered by the author to demonstrate spatial experience (Carroll-Parry, N, 2026)

### 1.3 HETEROTOPIA AND SPACES OF OTHERNESS

Having established that genuine community spaces, or third places, are increasingly threatened and shaped by capitalist market logic (Oldenburg, 1989; Wexler and Oberlander, 2017; Zukin, 2009), we can examine spaces that resist this imposition through Foucault's (1986) concept of heterotopia. Heterotopias are sites that exist within the urban system yet function as "realised utopias", simultaneously part of the city and distinctly "other" (Foucault, 1986, p.24). These are spaces in which the normal rules of time, behaviour and social identity are suspended, reversed or intensified (Vidler, Foucault and Johnston, 2014). In his 1986 essay *Of Other Spaces*, Foucault outlines six principles that characterise heterotopias. To analyse why certain informal social settings are more successful than others at resisting dominant urban norms, this essay focuses on Foucault's Principles 3 and 4: the juxtaposition of incompatible spaces and operation of alternative temporalities (Foucault, 1986).

Principle 3 outlines the juxtaposition of incompatible spaces, in which heterotopias bring together multiple spaces or functions that would normally be separate, allowing diverse activities, experiences and meanings to coexist within a single site (Foucault, 1986, p.25). This produces a unique spatial condition that blurs the boundaries between physical and symbolic space. Within the framework of third place theory, such spaces challenge conventional urban norms by sustaining overlapping practices of labour, leisure and ritual (Foucault, 1986; Lefebvre, 1991; Oldenburg, 1989). Principle 4 discusses alternative temporality, where Foucault suggests that heterotopic sites can be linked to "slices in time" (Foucault, 1986, p.26), allowing users to experience time in non-standard ways. For example, places such as museums "accumulate" time, attempting to contain it within the vessel of a building, whereas sites such as seasonal festivals condense time into short, "intense experiences" (Foucault, 1986, p.26). Together, these principles reorganise how people encounter space and time. They offer an escape from the alienation inherent in urban life, allowing people to

experience themselves beyond their function as "human actors" within economic or social systems (Foucault, 1986; Debord, 1967). In doing so, heterotopias create opportunities for both reflection and respite, supporting a sense of personal and collective agency (Wexler and Oberlander, 2017).

Heterotopias have been critiqued by social theorists such as Harvey, who argues that they often fail to address issues of scale or institutionalisation (Harvey, 2001, p.184). However, attention can instead be directed towards the capacity of such 'other' spaces to support experimentation and localised critique of existing norms (Foucault, 1986; Harvey, 2001). Within this framework, St Ann's is understood as a place-based community in which such experimentation becomes possible. This essay, therefore, adopts the concept of heterotopic third place as a tool to observe "spaces in which life is experienced differently" (Harvey, 2001, p.184), drawing on Spanu's view that heterotopia can work as a framework for analysis, rather than a romanticised label of space (Spanu, 2020).

## 2 APPLYING THEORY TO ST ANN'S

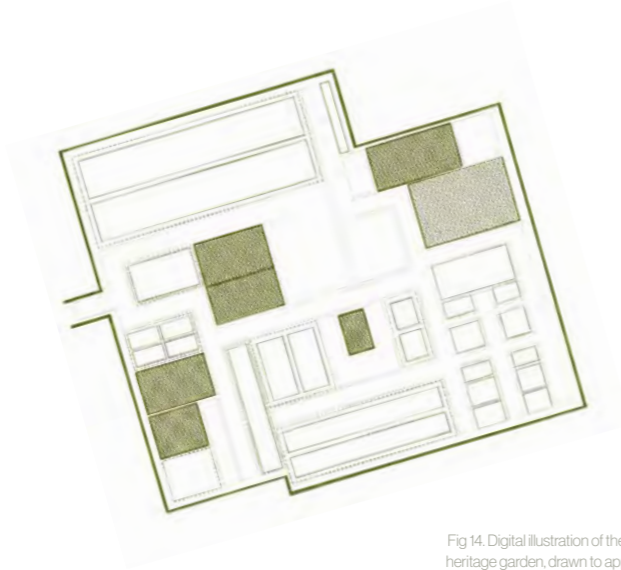


Fig 14. Digital illustration of the site map of the heritage garden, drawn to approximate scale following site visit (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

### INTRODUCING ST ANN'S ALLOTMENTS

St Ann's Allotments were established in the late 19th century, evolving into one of Britain's first allotment landscapes (BBC, 2009). This followed the General Enclosure Act of 1845, which privatised common grazing land and created the need for state-provided small plots for working families to grow food and sustain livelihoods (Acton, 2011). This positions the allotment, even at its very conception, as a place that is both a product of industrial capitalism and a counter-space in which people could sustain forms of social and spatial autonomy amidst rapid industrialisation (Acton, 2011; The Allotment Garden, n.d.).

Today, managed by the STAA, St Ann's functions as a place-based micro-community: small, localised groups of people whose social connections, practices and identities are intimately tied to a specific location (Firth, Maye and Pearson, 2011, p.556). Consequently, the sustainability of this community remains shaped by negotiations between the right to public land, pressures of urban development and the persistence of informal social spaces (Acton, 2011; Crouch and Ward, 1997). The following argument explores how these factors manifest in the present day through the following sections: **(2.1)** St Ann's as a socially produced third place of quiet collective resistance; **(2.2)** poetic dwelling and solitary resistance in collective spaces; and **(2.3)** St Ann's as a heterotopia of inverted social and temporal logics.



Fig 21. Collage depicting the experience of allotment usage in the Victorian era (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

## 2.1 ST ANN'S AS A SOCIALLY PRODUCED THIRD PLACE OF QUIET COLLECTIVE RESISTANCE

St Ann's Allotment functions as a socially produced third place in which quiet resistance emerges through collective presence, embodied labour and everyday spatial tactics (Butler, 2015; De Certeau, 2011; Lefebvre, 1991; Oldenburg, 1989). Drawing on Lefebvre's (1991) understanding of space as produced through lived practice, the allotment is an environment continually evolving through shared routines such as cultivation, maintenance and informal governance. These practices generate a spatial order that differs from dominant urban environments shaped by efficiency, commodification and individualised consumption (Harvey, 2006). As Lefebvre (1991, p.62) observes, "the production of space itself is entailed by the pressure of the world market" – a dynamic which St Ann's collectively resists by producing a space oriented around preserving the landscape and its communities.

McKay (2011) describes the British allotment as "profoundly political" and "anti-capitalist", a framing that aligns with the everyday practices at St Ann's. For users, the purpose of the space is not to generate profit but to occupy it for leisure, with cultivation approached as "an art of manipulating and enjoying" (DeSilvey, 2003). This emphasis on leisure challenges the logic of commodified urban space, highlighting the allotment as a site where social and ecological values take precedence over exchange value.

Within this context, Butler's (2015) theory of assembly provides a framework for understanding how collective presence functions as a political claim without overt protest. The repeated bodily occupation of St Ann's by volunteers enacts a right to land and time through persistence rather than confrontation, reflecting the allotments' historical function as small plots providing access to growing land following the Enclosure Act of 1845 (Acton, 2011). De Certeau's (2011) concept of everyday tactics further clarifies how this resistance operates. Daily practices such as maintaining allotment beds for care of the landscape rather than for capital gain can be interpreted as material assertions of spatial autonomy that subvert the "spiralling urban land market values", challenging the capitalist pressures Lefebvre identifies (De Certeau, 2011; Lefebvre, 1991, p.62). These actions humanise the landscape while subtly undermining top-down logics of planning and control, illustrating how quiet, collective practices shape an anti-capitalist space.

The anti-capitalist ethos of St Ann's is further reinforced through the circulation of food. Produce grown on the allotment is not sold for profit; instead, it is often donated to local food banks or community kitchens, distributing resources to those who need them most (St Ann's Allotments, n.d.). This reflects a gift relationship (Crouch and Ward, 1997), a system organised around mutual aid and a "persistent strand of the critical rejection of dominant society", positioning the allotment as a sort of "horti-counter culture" (McKay, 2011, para.6). This combination of everyday claims to space (Butler, 2015; De Certeau, 2011) and practices of care and cultivation (Crouch and Ward, 1997; McKay, 2011) enacts a modest yet persistent challenge to the capitalist production of urban space.



Fig 46. Digital collage depicting allotment volunteers enacting a claim to green space, demonstrating quiet resistance (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

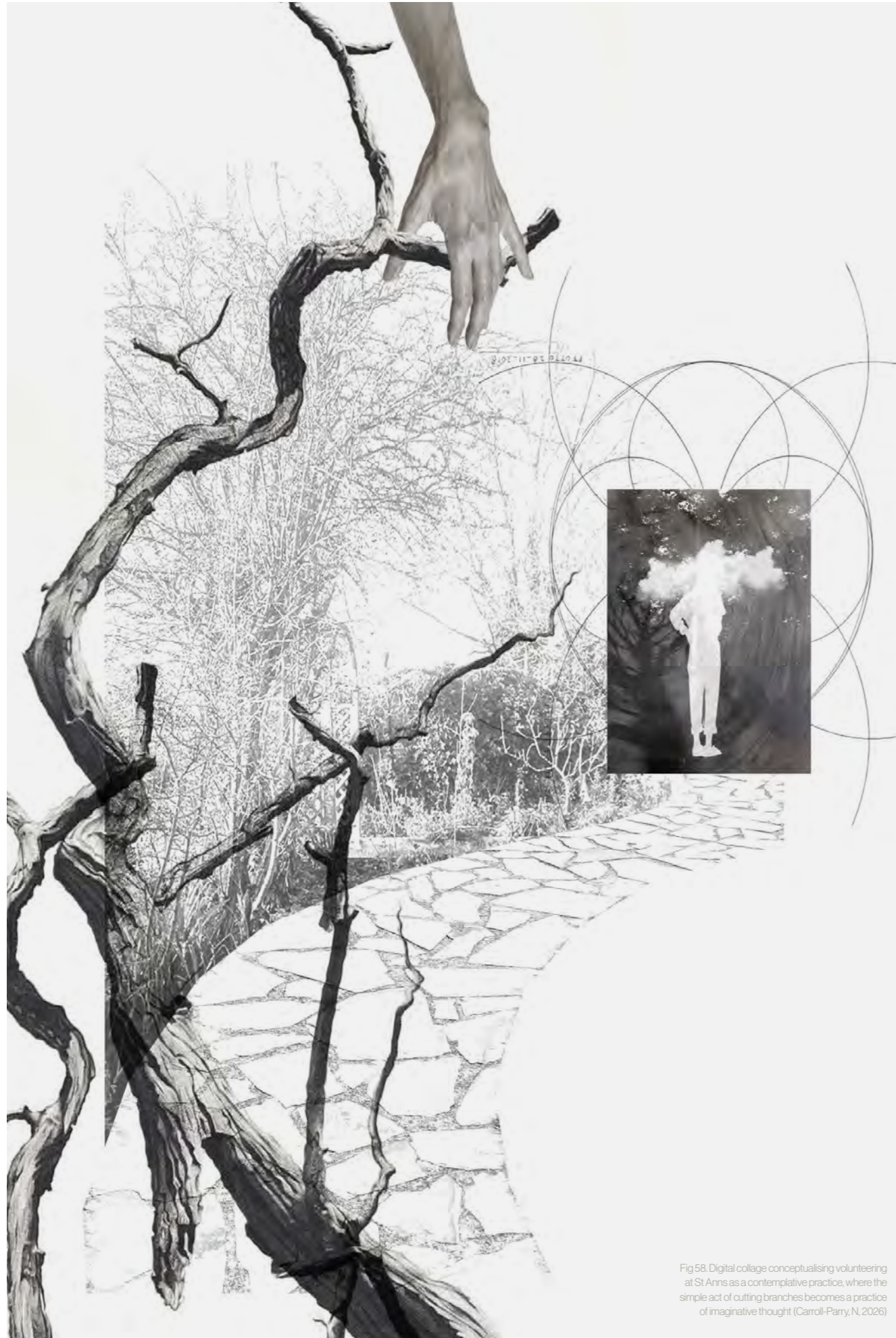


Fig 58. Digital collage conceptualising volunteering at St Anns as a contemplative practice, where the simple act of cutting branches becomes a practice of imaginative thought (Carroll-Parry, N, 2026)

## 2.2 POETIC DWELLING AND SOLITARY RESISTANCE IN COLLECTIVE SPACES

If resistance is performed collectively, how might it be experienced internally? This section argues that resistance is both social and solitary. It is enacted internally through individual engagement with space, time and imagination (Heidegger, 2001; Bachelard, 1994).

This internal dimension of resistance is informed by Heidegger's (2001, p.146) perspective of dwelling, or the "manner in which mortals are on the earth," which he describes as "preserving the Fourfold" (Heidegger, 2001, p.149). Heidegger (2001, p.148) also observes that "mortals dwell in that they receive the sky as sky", broadening the notion of dwelling to living attuned to the natural world and surrendering to its processes, such as "leaving the stars to their courses and the seasons to their blessings." This suggests that engaging with deep ecological time through practices aligned with seasonal cycles of growth and decay can lead to more authentic forms of dwelling (Heidegger, 2001; Ingold, 2000).

Although the STAA occupy space and organise activity as a group, on-site observations indicate that allotment tasks such as weeding or pruning are repetitive, sustained over long periods and performed alone or in pairs. This disperses volunteers into "corners and recesses" (Bachelard, 1994, p.12) throughout the site to engage in such tasks. Is it here that the mind drifts to alternative spaces. As Bachelard notes, "The garden is a place for meditation; the imagination wanders over the paths and the flowers" (Bachelard, 1994, p.162), describing a "oneiric experience" in which one contemplates and connects with imagination within a physical space. Practising daydreaming and poetic dwelling can, on one hand, serve as a refuge or form of escapism, allowing one to "abandon thought" (Treib, 2011, p.17). On the other hand, it enacts resistance by asserting autonomy over internal experiences of time and thought (Scott, 1985, pp.44–45). If capitalist society shapes not only our economy but also our imagination and sense of possibility, then actively engaging in oneiric thought becomes a form of resistance: a way of existing in a better future in the present, framing it as a political act of constructing speculative possibilities (Fisher, 2009). Here, the allotment functions as a physical space that "protects the dreamer" (Bachelard, 1994, p.6), allowing alternative modes of dwelling and shifting resistance from a collective enactment to an existential experience within the poetics of space.

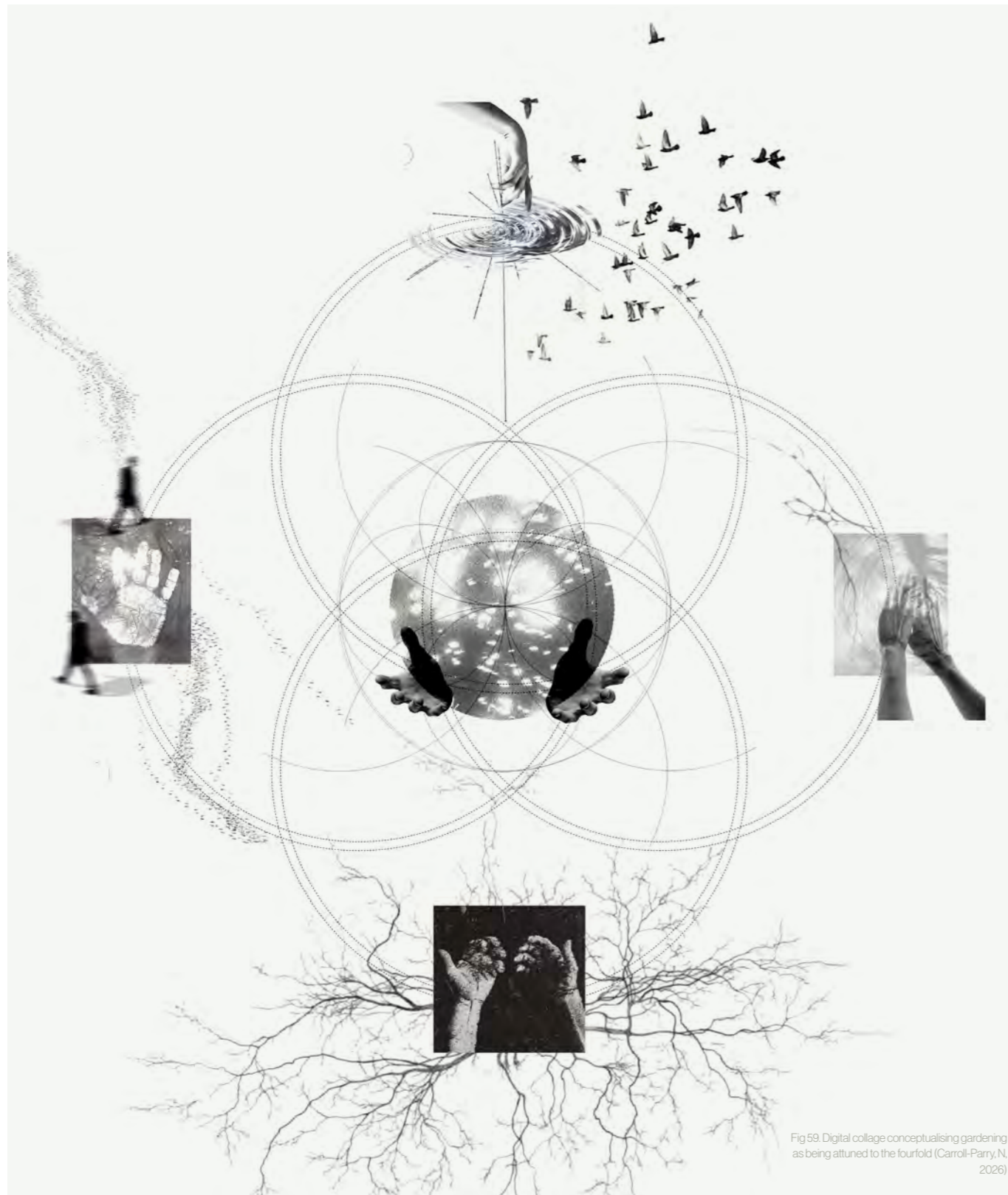


Fig 59. Digital collage conceptualising gardening as being attuned to the fourfold (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)



Fig 60. Poetic landscape moments: feeling the texture of the soil (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)



Fig 61. Poetic landscape moments: the water that breaks the light and reflects onto different surfaces (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)



Fig 63. Poetic landscape moments: the dew that arrives in the morning (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

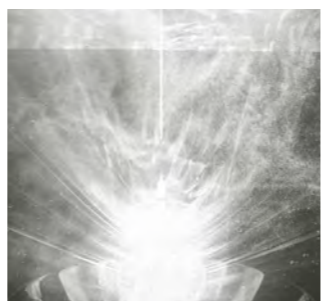


Fig 62. Poetic landscape moments: the sun that shines through the trees (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

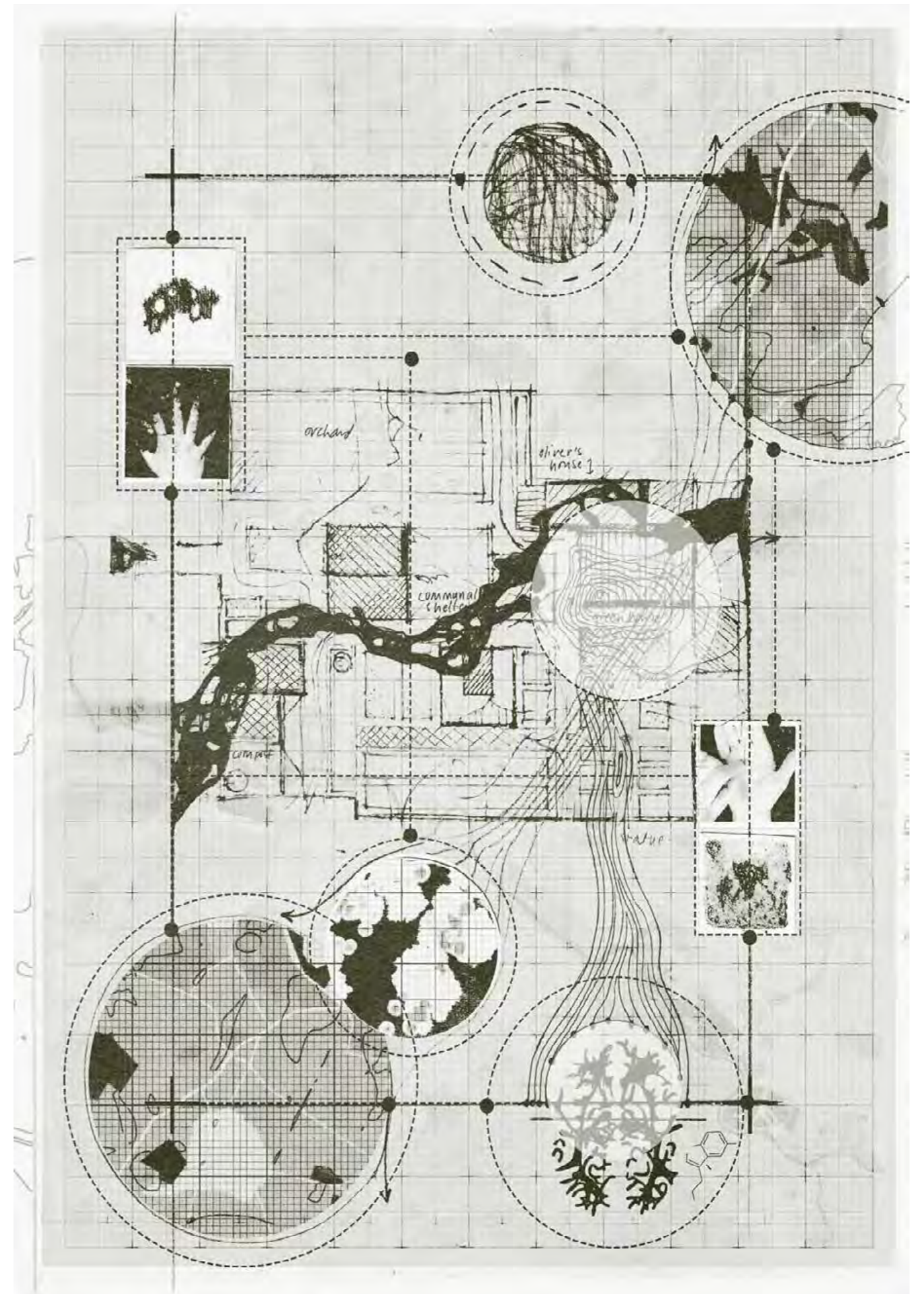


Fig 80. Deep mapping of experience of connection to the landscape within the heritage display garden; combination of hand-drawn and digitally post-produced elements (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

### 2.3 ST ANN'S AS A HETEROTOPIA OF INVERTED SOCIAL AND TEMPORAL LOGICS

The ability of St Ann's Allotment to sustain both collective and solitary forms of resistance can be explained by its classification as a heterotopia: a "counter-site" in which dominant logics, such as those governing social roles or time, are challenged or inverted (Foucault, 1986, p.24). The allotment collapses conventional functional boundaries by combining diverse activities. As DeSilvey (2003, p.443) notes, it is both "private and public, production and consumption, labour and leisure," simultaneously driven by productive, social and contemplative practices. This reflects Principle 3, in which the allotment brings together functions that are 'seemingly incompatible', assembling them within a 'sort of microcosm' (Foucault, 1986, p.26). It operates as a space that mirrors city binaries while challenging the rigid separations through which these categories are understood (Foucault, 1986; Lefebvre, 1991).

Linear, productive time is challenged at St Ann's, reflecting Principle 4: heterotopias operate according to distinct temporalities (Foucault, 1986, p.26). Cumulative and interlocking cycles of weather and seasons structure activity, meaning that it functions within deep ecological time (Ingold, 2000). This requires volunteer participation to "break with their traditional time" (Foucault, 1986, p.26). In this context, traditional time refers to the linear temporality of the capitalist system, which accelerates towards efficiency and production (Harvey, 1989). The allotment, therefore, operates as 'other' by allowing users to dwell within "slices in time" (Foucault, 1986, p.26) that contrast with those of the modern urban environment.

The allotment can be understood as a physical space that "draws us out of ourselves" (Foucault, 1986, p.23). This aligns with Bachelard's idea of dwelling as a form of poetic reverie and contemplation, offering an escape from everyday reality (Bachelard, 1994). The heterotopia perspective extends this argument by showing how the space actively reworks reality, creating a new 'other space' through spatial and temporal contradiction (Foucault, 1986; DeSilvey, 2003). As Lefebvre notes, "a revolution that has not produced a new space has not realised its full potential" (Lefebvre, 1991, p.66), demonstrating why some sites resist the pressures of urbanisation more effectively. From this perspective, it can be argued that the concept of the allotment has "reached its potential" as a non-capital third place through its operation as a heterotopia (Lefebvre, 1991, p.66; Wexler and Oberlander, 2017).



Fig 70. Digital collage depicting the experience of deep ecological time, attuned to cycles, weather, and seasons (Carroll-Parry, N.2026)

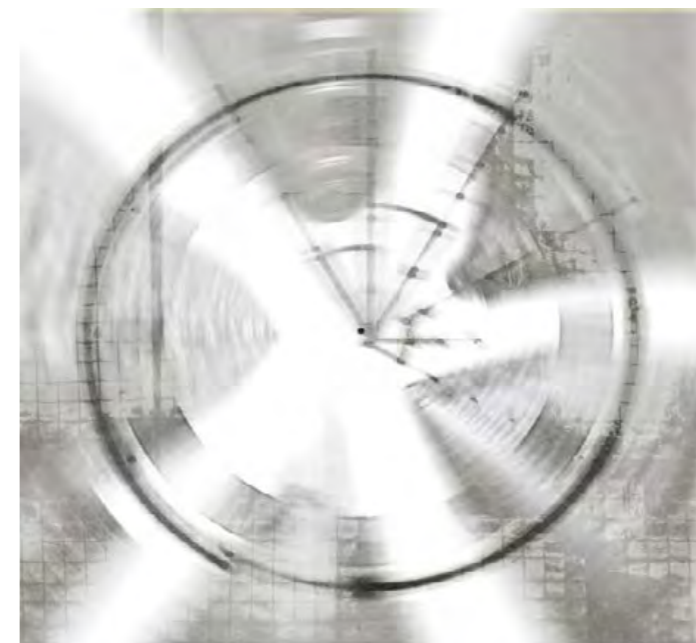


Fig 52. Digital collage of a clock face with a cityscape in the background, depicting linear time within a capitalist urban environment (Carroll-Parry, N.2026)

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

This argument culminates in the definition of a heterotopic third place: an informal social setting that functions as a materialised utopia (Foucault, 1986; Oldenburg, 1989). It exists within the urban environment while operating according to logics distinct from the surrounding city (Foucault, 1986; Oldenburg, 1989). The theoretical perspectives of Lefebvre, Heidegger, Bachelard and Butler position the heterotopia of the allotment as socially produced through the interplay of collective stewardship and imaginative dwelling (Lefebvre, 1991; Heidegger, 2001; Bachelard, 1994; Butler, 2015).

This assertion of a non-capital, socially grounded claim to space acts as a quiet resistor (Butler, 2015; De Certeau, 2011) to dominant capitalist logics, which commodify civic life (Wexler and Oberlander, 2017; Zukin, 2009). Volunteers continually remake the site, producing a lived landscape grounded in care over output (Crouch and Ward, 1997; McKay, 2011). As Sennett (2018, p.141) observes, such spaces allow people to "thicken and deepen their experience of collective life", highlighting the ethical and social significance of small-scale communal environments like St Ann's within contemporary cities. Resistance is also enacted on an individual scale; the site enables one to wander through "the contours of poetic reverie" (Bachelard, 1994). Here, the allotment becomes a place in which "life is experienced differently" (Harvey, 2001, p.184), where the freedom of contemplation and imaginative thought allows one both to escape from immediate reality and to construct alternative possibilities (Bachelard, 1994; Fisher, 2009).

Extending this perspective, St Ann's functions as a heterotopia, reworking social and temporal realities (Vidler, Foucault and Johnston, 2014). It juxtaposes incompatible functions: production and leisure, public and private, labour and contemplation within a single site (Foucault, 1986; DeSilvey, 2003). Users dwell in 'slices in time' (Foucault, 1986, p.23), inhabiting an alternative rhythm of life according to the deep ecological time of the landscape (Ingold, 2000; Nilsson and Wiman, 2015).

As cities continue to intensify (Harvey, 2007), sites such as St Ann's therefore demonstrate the significance of small-scale communal landscapes within contemporary urbanism (Acton, 2011; Crouch and Ward, 1997). In embodying a heterotopic third place, St Ann's Allotment reveals how quiet, poetic practices of dwelling can quietly reorder imposed social structures, reminding us that urban futures rely on both large-scale spatial interventions and the everyday practices through which people inhabit and produce their environments (Bachelard, 1994; Harvey, 2007; Lefebvre, 2008).

The findings position the allotment as a valuable lens through which to reconsider contemporary understandings of interior space by demonstrating how spatial experiences are shaped by practices of dwelling and collective agency. As such, the research contributes to ongoing discussions within interior architecture regarding the social production of space and the expanding boundaries of the discipline itself, while also highlighting the role that adaptive reuse can play in preserving alternative forms of social experience that might otherwise be lost within increasingly homogenised urban environments.



Fig 81. Snippet from visual reconstruction (Carroll-Parry, N.2026)

# PART II

# VISUAL DIARY

## 1

### METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The process began with archival research into Nottingham's allotment history, placing St Ann's within wider political, social and urban narratives of land use, labour and lifestyle craft (BBC, 2009; Acton, 2011; DeSilvey, 2003). This initial research established the historical and political conditions that frame the allotment's continued relevance within conversations around the contemporary use and experience of public space. Key allotment scholarship contextualised St Ann's within wider national patterns. Foundational studies by Crouch and Ward (1988) and Acton (2011) interpreted allotments as culturally embedded working-class landscapes shaped by self-provisioning, autonomy and everyday labour. These works provided a comparative framework for understanding social practices, craft traditions and communal values at St Ann's, situating contemporary dynamics within the broader history of British allotment culture (Firth, Maye & Pearson, 2011; Renewal Trust, n.d.).

This project adopts a critical heritage perspective, recognising that heritage is socially and culturally constructed (Harvey, 2001) and is therefore produced through everyday practices and collective memory rather than official narratives. The allotment is often remembered with pride or nostalgia, symbolising British resilience (Acton, 2011; DeSilvey, 2003). However, this project seeks to explore a more nuanced reading of the allotment by drawing on phenomenological methods to investigate the affective relationships between St Ann's Allotments and the communities who engage with it.

The second stage involved site visits to St Ann's Allotment, during which *dérive*, the Situationist practice of drifting (Debord, 1958), was practised both on the approach to the site from Nottingham city centre and within the allotment grounds. Walking from the main entrance through to the Heritage Garden allowed for an experiential reading of the different plot areas and their changing psychogeographical effects. Observations were recorded through hand sketches and photography, supplemented by images from the St Ann's Allotment Association's virtual walking tour to document inaccessible areas and understand spatial layout while respecting volunteers' privacy. Participant observation was undertaken through volunteering with the St Ann's Allotment Association, enabling first-hand engagement with everyday practices of maintenance and collective stewardship. By limiting photography on site, immersion in volunteering provided a more authentic experience and sensory mapping captured changes in sound, texture and temporal perception as analytical data.

These observations were then critically analysed using urban and critical spatial theory, including the social production of space (Lefebvre, 1991), third place theory (Oldenburg, 2023; Wexler & Oberlander, 2017) and phenomenology of dwelling (Heidegger, 1971; Bachelard, 1994). Everyday assembly was examined as quiet resistance (Butler, 2015; de Certeau, 2011) and Foucault's (1986) concept of heterotopia was applied to understand the site as an 'other space'. This layered approach informed a written essay exploring how St Ann's challenges dominant urban logics through social production, acts of quiet resistance and alternative modes of dwelling.



# 2

## HISTORICAL, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

### ● Research Methods & Methodologies Used

- Archival Research
- Contextual mapping
- Collage



Fig 2. Areas affected by the enclosure of common land (Sutton St Nicholas Parish Council, 2015)

St Ann's Allotments sit within a long social and political history of access to public land in Britain.

Allotments emerged as a response to the enclosure of common land from the sixteenth century onwards when land that had previously been shared was privatised (see Fig. 1) This removed many people's ability to grow food (Allotment Garden, n.d.). As industrialisation accelerated and populations concentrated in towns, allotments became one of the few remaining ways for people without private gardens to maintain a direct relationship with land and food production (Allotment Garden, n.d; Acton, 2011).

In Nottingham, the land known as Hungerhills was divided into small plots - which became St Ann's Allotments - providing detached town gardens for residents with limited access to green space (BBC, 2009; Renewal Trust, n.d.). As the city industrialised around textiles and lace, St Ann's offered a contrasting environment shaped by cultivation rather than factory labour.

During industrial decline, when identity was closely tied to employment, many jobs were lost and with them the place based communities that had formed around those workplaces. The allotments became increasingly important for supplementing functioning as a place based community not organised around work, bringing together people from different neighbourhoods through shared growing practices. (BBC, 2009; Renewal Trust, n.d.).

The history of St Ann's Allotments positions land allotments at the intersection of the right to public land, the pressures of industrial development and the persistence of informal social spaces. They represent a negotiated landscape where access, labour and community have been continually redefined in response to wider economic and political change.

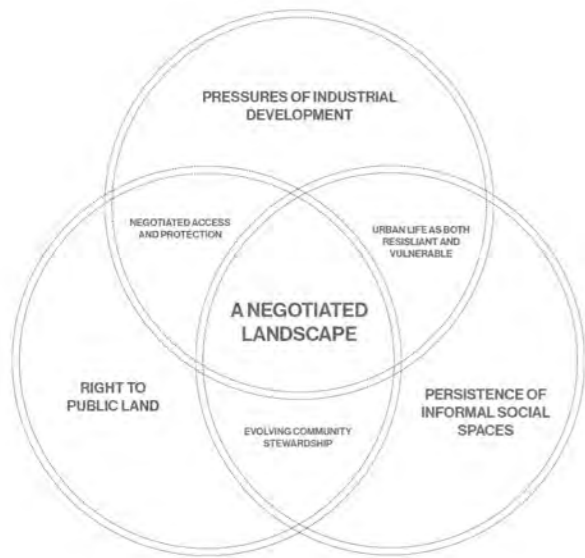


Fig 3. Venn Diagram demonstrating the allotment as a negotiated landscape (Carroll-Parry, N, 2026)



Fig 4. Location map showing St Ann's proximity to the Nottingham industrial hub (Carroll-Parry, N, 2026)



Fig 5. Collage depicting an open landscape with industrial Nottingham in the background (Carroll-Parry, N, 2026)

## How does the changing plot landscape at St Ann's Allotment reflect broader social and political events in post-industrial Nottingham?

By analysing archival maps this study traces how the spatial boundaries St Ann's Allotments have changed from the mid twentieth century to the present day. This is done in order to document periods of expansion, fragmentation, decline as well as community-led regeneration. Reading these maps as well as researching the changing uses of the allotment over time, we can infer evidence of shifting social priorities, politics and changing attitudes toward allotments and communal land in Nottingham.

### ● Research Methods & Methodologies Used

- Archival Research
- Historical Cartographic Analysis
- Critical Heritage Analysis
- Visual Mapping / Analytical Mapping Collage

### ● 1950



Fig 6. Map shading St Anns plots in black circa 1950s (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

#### Observation

Mapping from the mid twentieth century shows St Ann's Allotments as a dense and continuous network of individual garden plots forming a broad town-garden landscape around Nottingham. The majority of plots are clearly defined and actively in use. Following the Second World War, however, allotment usage began to decline as national emphasis on domestic food production reduced (Discovering Britain, n.d.; STAA Heritage Archive, n.d.)

### ● 1980

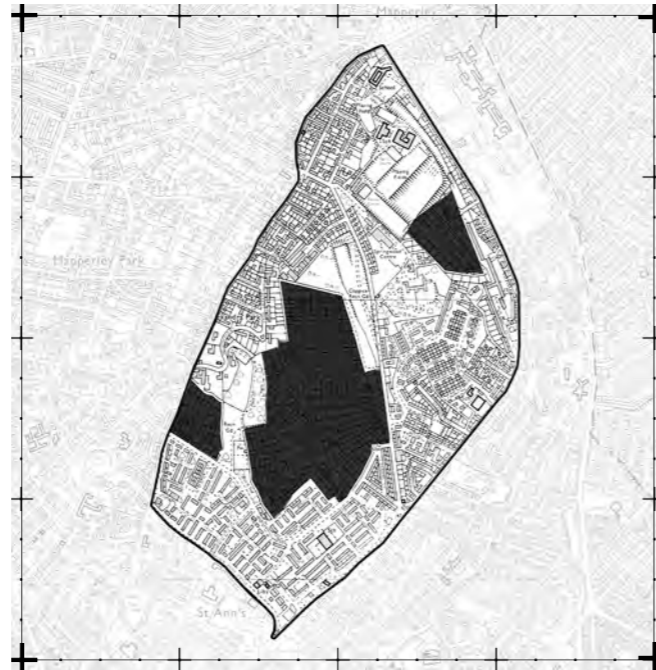


Fig 6. Map shading St Anns plots in black circa 1980s (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

#### Observation

Sections of the former allotment landscape had been lost to housing developments. While the allotments remain, their overall footprint is significantly reduced and fragmented. A lack of funding and council-led priorities to reclaim land for housing contributed to the deterioration of infrastructure. During this period, smaller community groups began to occupy abandoned plots to continue growing food informally, (Discovering Britain, n.d.; Renewal Trust, n.d.)

### ● 2005

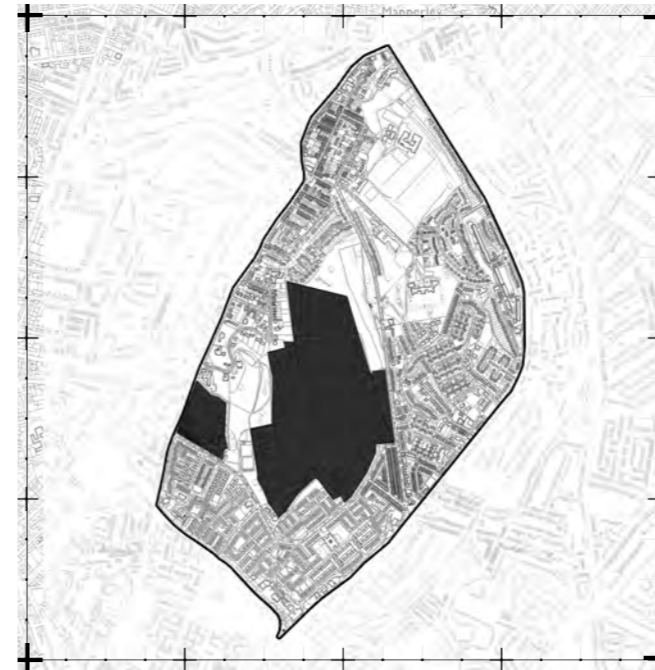


Fig 8. Map shading St Anns plots in black circa 2005 (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

#### Observation

Around 2005, mapping shows many of the remaining plots as empty or overgrown. This represents a low point in allotment usage, characterised by neglect and limited institutional support prior to formal restoration efforts (Renewal Trust, n.d.; STAA Heritage Archive, n.d.)

### ● 2015



Fig 9. Map shading St Anns plots in black circa 2015 (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

#### Observation

From 2006 onwards restoration and regeneration of the surviving allotment. This included reclaiming abandoned land, reviving gardens, and preserving a fragile fragment of the historic urban allotment landscape. This was led largely by community: The renewal trust charity and STAA (St Ann's Allotments). (Renewal Trust, n.d.; STAA Heritage Archive, n.d.) On this map, you can see that the boundary of the plots does not change, as much of the work was to revitalise existing land and make it usable for plot holders and education purposes.

#### Reflection - Critical Heritage Approach

The changing boundaries and internal conditions of St Ann's Allotments reveal how urban land is shaped by shifting political priorities and social values rather than purely spatial necessity (Acton, 2011; BBC, 2009). The post-war decline reflects a broader move away from localised food production (RHS, 2025; Nilsson & Wiman, 2015), while later fragmentation highlights the pressure placed on communal land by housing demands and economic restructuring (St Ann's Archive, n.d.). The period of neglect visible in the early 2000s suggests institutional withdrawal and a devaluation of the allotments as productive urban space (St Ann's Archive, n.d.). In contrast, the later regeneration demonstrates how community-led action can stabilise and protect threatened landscapes (Acton, 2011; Cele, 2023).

**Who currently manages St Ann's Allotments and how does the organisational structure influence the use and community value of the site?**

This page presents a map of St Ann's Allotments showing the location of key areas within the site, including the community orchard, the nursery, and the heritage display garden. Each area is managed by different groups of volunteers who operate collectively under the governance of the St Ann's Allotments Association (STAA).



Fig 10. Gardening for everyone (STAA Allotments, 2025)



Fig 11. St Ann's Community Orchard (STAA Allotments, n.d.)

St Ann's Allotment is maintained by volunteers through the St Ann's Allotment Association (STAA). Weekly tasks across the site reflect a shared interest in keeping the allotment functional, welcoming and accessible. This can create a contrast between the appearance of the sites, where community plots are well maintained and busy, and individual plots, which can look more abandoned. Unlike council-managed plots operated by Hungerhill Developments Ltd (HDL), where leasing and maintenance are controlled by the authority, the STAA ensures active use and care, avoiding the under-utilised conditions often seen on leased sites.

The site functions as a learning space, hosting seasonal workshops and sessions for groups of all ages. These activities are led by volunteers who design and deliver projects that engage visitors with horticulture, ecology and the history of the allotments. The programs foster hands-on participation and provide informal education that strengthens local connections to the site.

**Reflection**

Governance by the STAA demonstrates how community-led structures can sustain urban heritage spaces that may otherwise be neglected (St Ann's Archive, n.d.). The division into volunteer-led sections allows both autonomy and collective oversight, supporting social networks while preserving the historic allotment layout (Firth et al., 2011; Wexler & Oberlander, 2017). By contrast, council-managed systems highlight how administrative control can limit both participation and the long-term social and ecological value of green spaces (Harvey, 2000; Acton, 2011). St Ann's Allotments shows that local stewardship can resist commodification and pressures from urban development, maintaining spaces for both community use and heritage preservation (Cele, 2023; Firth et al., 2011).

- Research Methods & Methodologies Used
- Online Research
- Visual Mapping / Analytical Mapping Collage

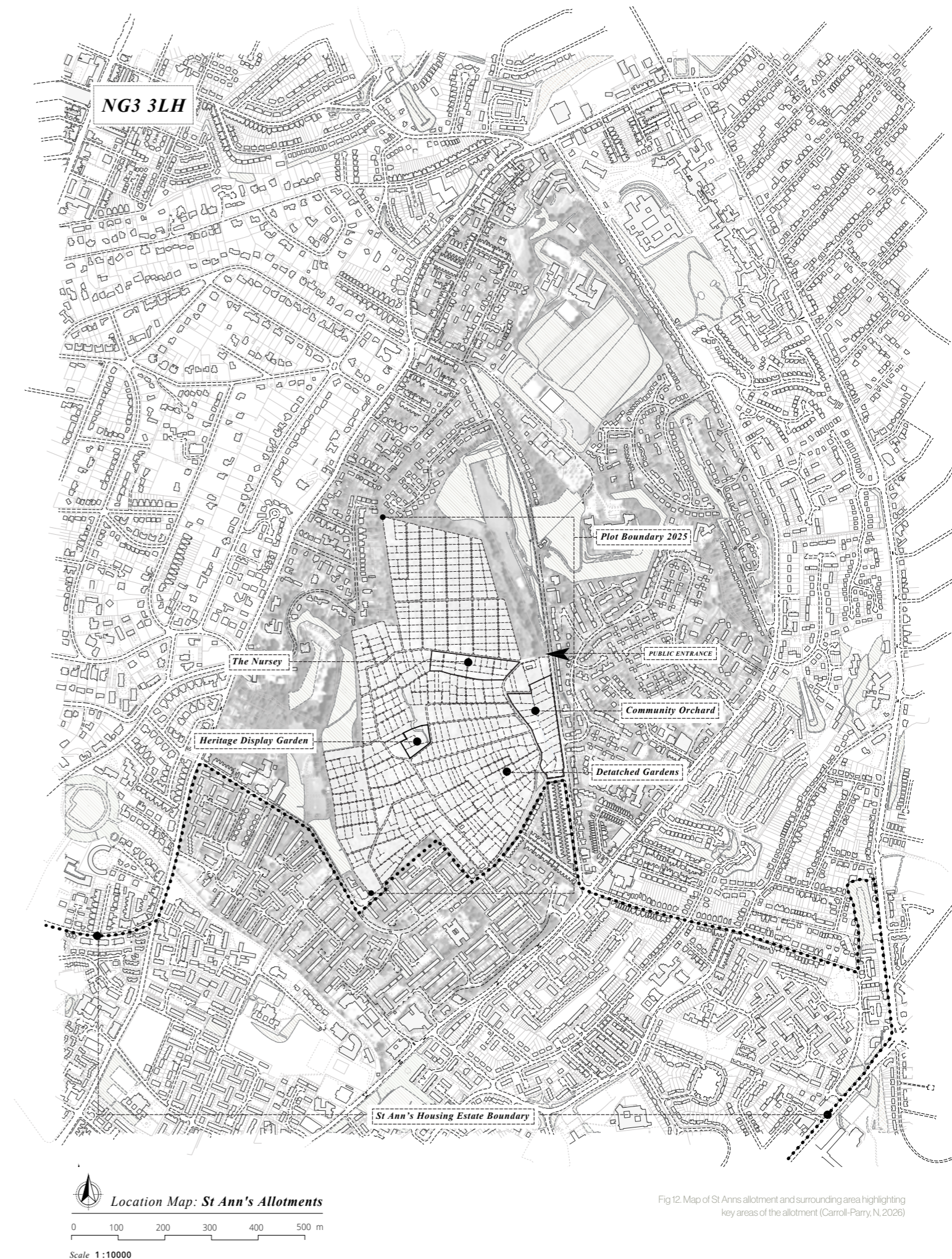
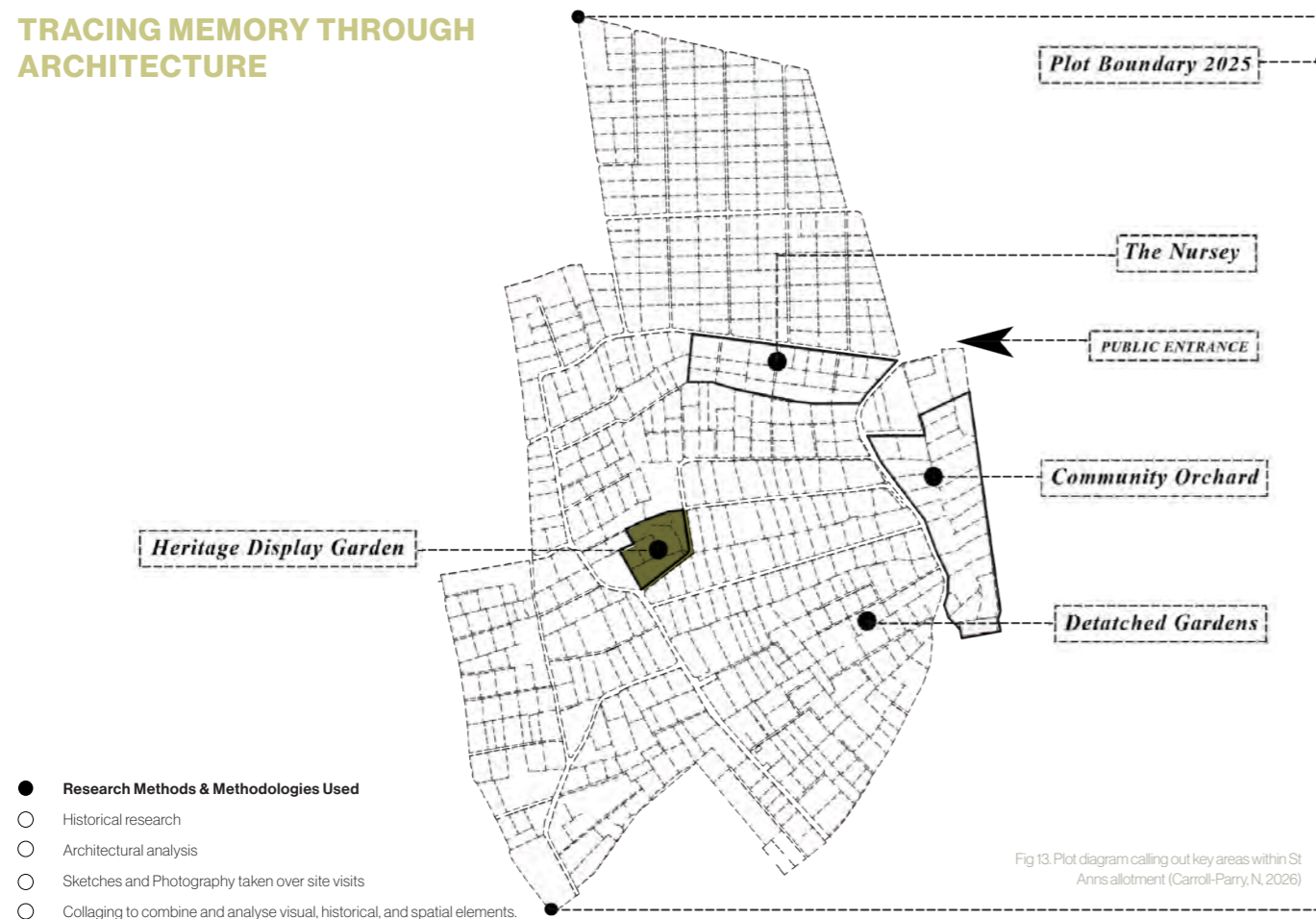


Fig 12. Map of St Ann's allotment and surrounding area highlighting key areas of the allotment (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

# 3

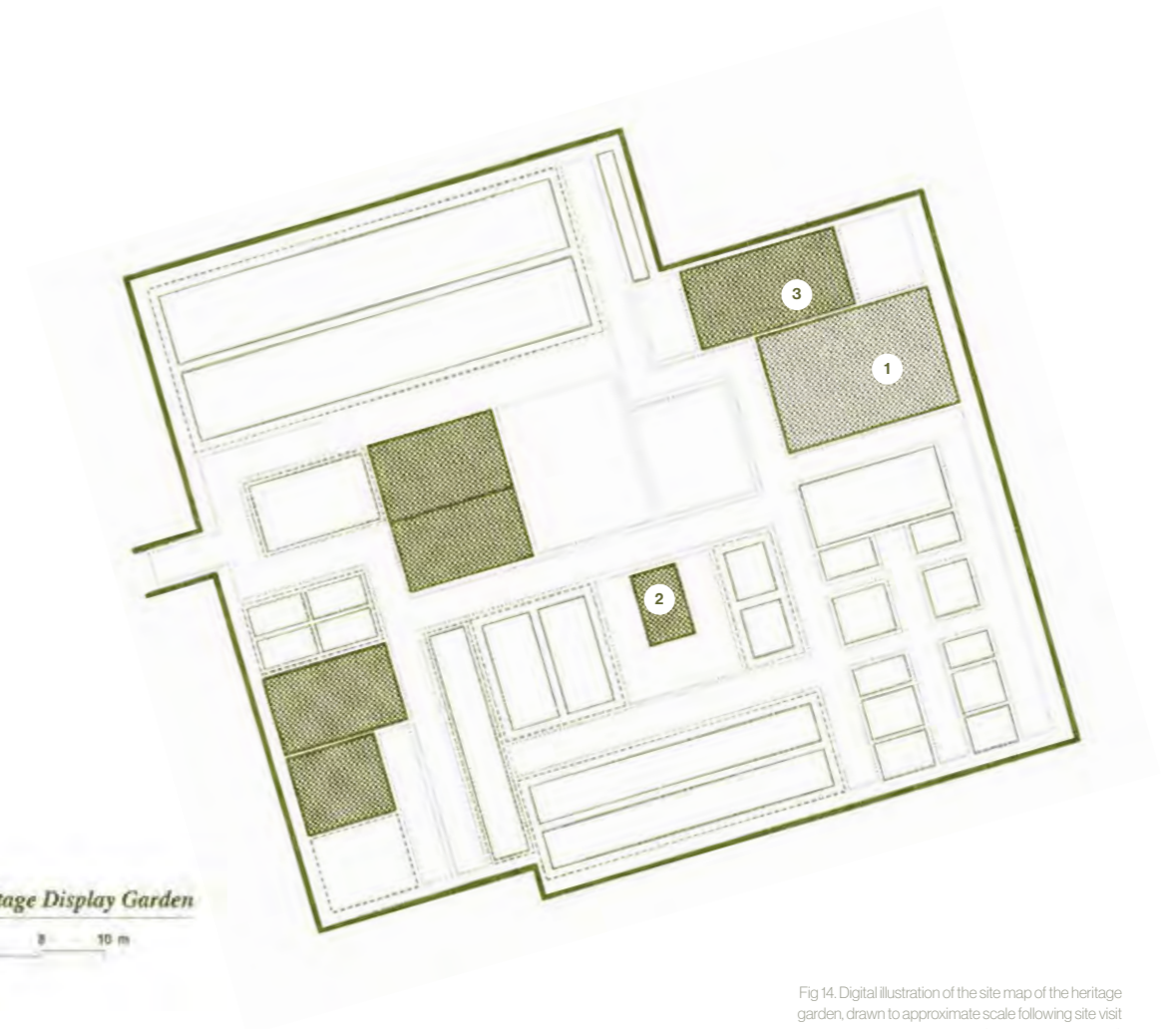
## TRACING MEMORY THROUGH ARCHITECTURE



Due to the sheer size of the allotment gardens, I have chosen to focus my research on a specific area of the allotment gardens to allow for detailed investigation. The Heritage Display Garden is particularly unique in its spatial form, as it preserves distinct slices of time within the site.

This section focuses on identifying traces of memory within the architecture of St Ann's Allotments, drawing on historical research and architectural analysis alongside sketches made during site visits. These studies were conducted at the same time as my visits to the site, but are explored

first in the visual diary to provide a foundation of social and historical context. By examining structures such as the Victorian summer houses, 'Dig for Victory' plots, and contemporary gardening structures, I can understand how the allotments have evolved, how communities have used and shaped the space, and which elements of memory have been preserved or transformed over time. Exploring the architectural traces first allows the diary to establish a contextual understanding of the site, highlighting the social and historical significance embedded in its physical form.



See the site map above showing the heritage display garden, which I constructed after my visit to the site. This highlights the areas of interest that I chose to research further.



Fig 15. Victorian Summerhouse at the heritage garden (Growing Family, 2015)



Fig 16. The Dig for Victory plot in the heritage garden (TourDash, 2025)



Fig 17. An ex-tenant's shed left untouched for years (BBC, 2009)

TRACING MEMORY THROUGH ARCHITECTURE  
1950-1900: THE VICTORIAN SUMMERHOUSE



Fig 18. People on an allotment, c. 1910 (WHW,n.d.)



Fig 19. Hungerhill Gardens c. 1860s, giving an impression of the site in medieval times (Picture the Past, n.d.)

The Victorian summerhouse or greenhouse at St Ann's reflects a time when keeping an allotment was seen as a sign of good morals and health (Acton, 2011; Burchardt, 2002). In increasingly crowded and polluted industrial cities, being able to leave home to spend time at the allotment was a form of escapism and was mainly a middle-class hobby, where the allotment became a place of leisure gardening rather than purely for food production (DeSilvey, 2003; Acton, 2011). Flower shows, particularly those

showcasing roses, became popular, as illustrated by the photo of a group standing in front of their greenhouse proudly holding their blooms (Acton, 2011; BBC, 2009). This was before the development of the St Ann's housing estates, so at this point the landscape of the allotment would have been much more rural and separate from the city as shown in fig. 19 (Nilsson & Wiman, 2015; RHS, 2025).

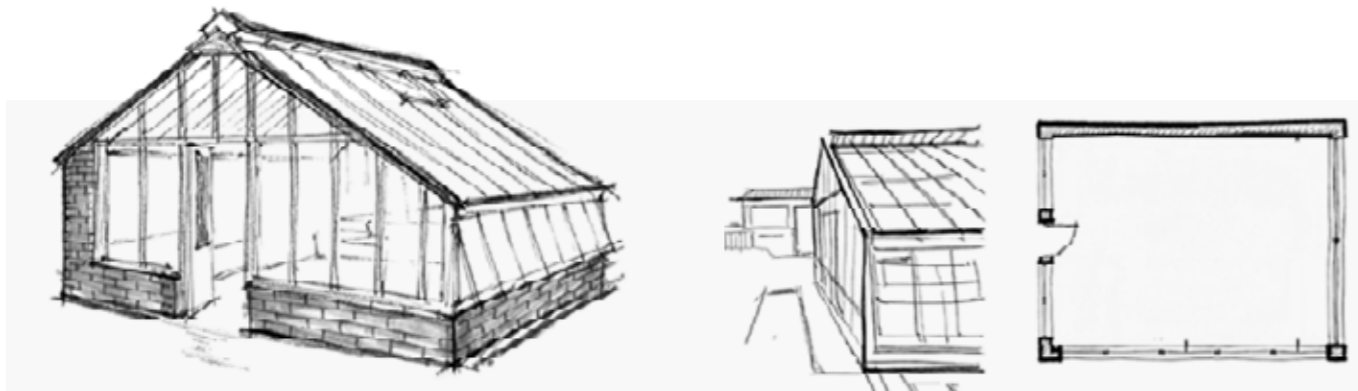


Fig 20. Procreate sketch series of the Victorian Summerhouse in the heritage garden (Carroll-Parry, N, 2026)

These sketches were taken during my site visit, where the Victorian summerhouse still stands, although it has undergone refurbishment. The function of the greenhouse remains the same in a modern context, but the communities that use it have changed over time.



The following collage reconstructs what this space may have looked like by taking an existing photo of the summerhouse at St Ann's and reimagining it in its Victorian context, showing it as a peaceful escape from the industrialised city behind.



Fig 22. Victoria greenhouse at St Ann's Allotments (Growing Family, 2014)

Fig 21. Collage depicting the experience of allotment usage in the Victorian era (Carroll-Parry, N, 2026)

**TRACING MEMORY THROUGH ARCHITECTURE  
1939-1945: THE DIG FOR VICTORY CAMPAIGN**

During both World Wars, the Dig for Victory campaigns reinforced the significance of allotments in sustaining food supply and morale, framing gardening as both practical labour and a collective cultural practice (DeSilvey, 2003; BBC, 2009). As Acton (2011, p. 50) observes, these campaigns became embedded in public memory and established a

paradigm for sustainable living. Allotments helped to supplement rations, boost morale, and foster a sense of national unity and shared effort during times of crisis Acton (2011). This demonstrates how a space of necessary production can also function as a social space, bringing people together through shared practice.



Fig 23. Digital collage depicting the use of the allotment within the Dig for Victory period (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)



Fig 24. Interior of reconstructed air-raid shelter (Carroll-Parry, N. 2025)



Fig 25. Winter allotment plot at St Ann's (Carroll-Parry, N. 2025)

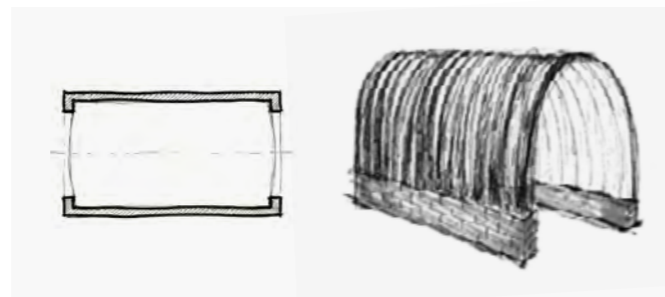


Fig 26. Procreate sketch series of the reconstructed air-raid shelter in the heritage garden (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

This memory is preserved at the heritage garden, where a Dig for Victory plot is still maintained and cultivated using the same growing methods as during the wartime period. This approach enables visitors to learn about these historical experiences while retaining and communicating the site's heritage.

**TRACING MEMORY THROUGH ARCHITECTURE  
1950: OLIVERS PLOT**

During the post-war period, incentives of allotment keeping weakened and was no longer being actively promoted by the state. And so, many plots were left abandoned (Acton, 2011). Their use was maintained by those who reclaimed the land for personal use, such as migrants from the windrush generation who wanted to grow the exotic foods that were not

available in the uk (Palmer, 2023). This demonstrates how the allotment architecture leaves "cultural residues of a complex past." (DeSilvey, 2003, p. 461) acting as a way of preserving cultural identity and memory.



Fig 27. St Ann's regeneration from the Windrush community (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)



Fig 28. East façade of Oliver's plot (Carroll-Parry, N. 2025)



Fig 29. View of the interior of Oliver's allotment plot (Carroll-Parry, N. 2025)



Fig 30. Procreate sketch series of Oliver's plot summer house in the heritage garden (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

The impact of this community is demonstrated on the visit to the heritage garden which is still referred to by volunteers as "Oliver's Plot," named after a former tenant who maintained a plot at St Ann's for over 20 years. The interior of the Garden House was dressed to evoke its Victorian-era use, yet a section is still referred to as the "Windrush Plot," demonstrating how heritage is maintained through memory.

# 4

## VISIT 1: URBAN EXPLORATION

Using the Situationist practice of the *dérive*, or purposeful drifting through urban spaces to observe the psychogeographical effects of the environment (Debord, 1958), I explored the transition from Nottingham's city centre to the outskirts, noticing how the pace, sounds and spatial character gradually shifted as I approached St Ann's

- **Research Methods & Methodologies Used**
- *Dérive*
- Deep Mapping
- Observational Sketches

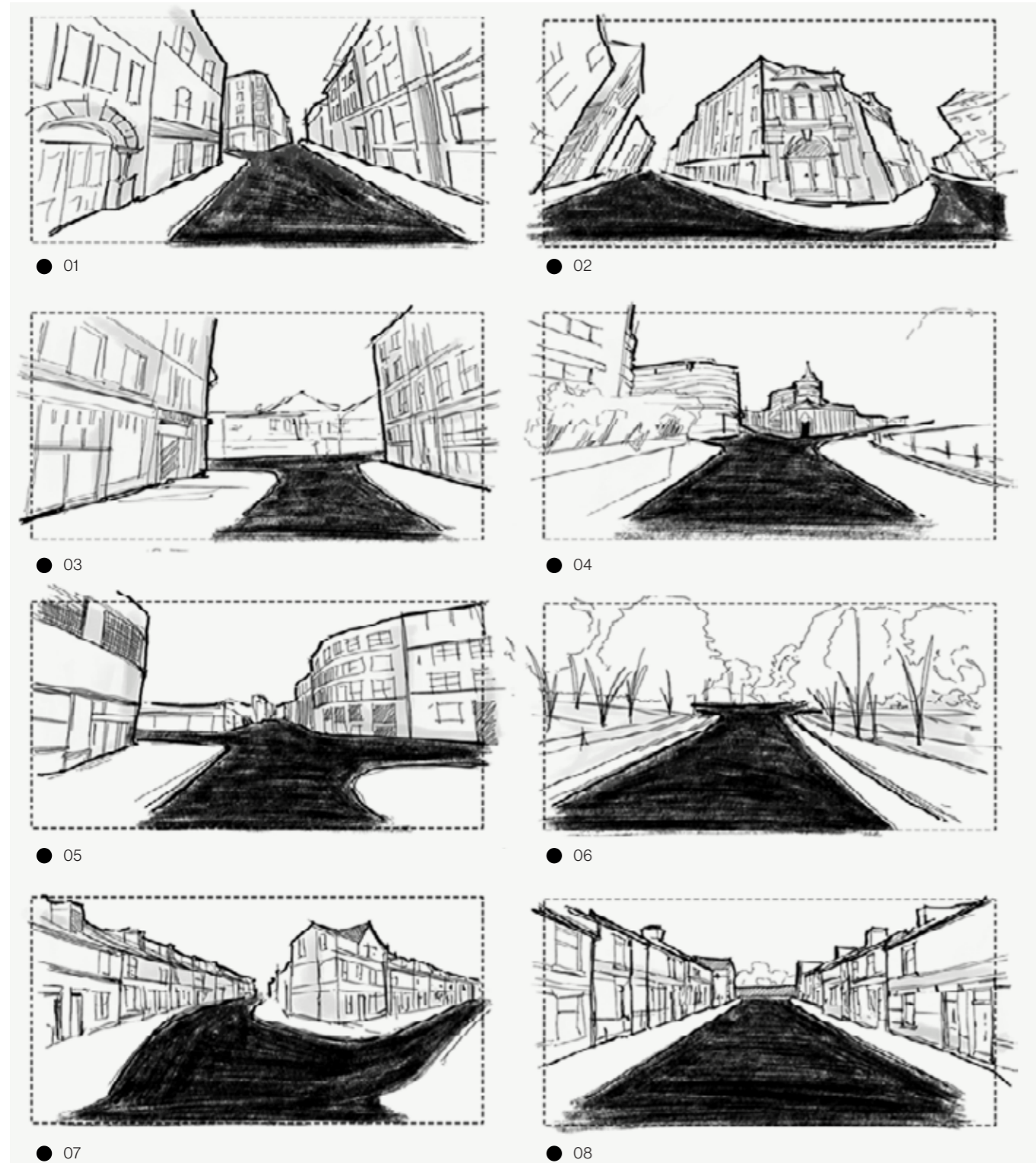


Fig 31. Observation sketch compilation of *dérive* from the city centre to St Ann's allotment (Carroll-Parry, N, 2026)

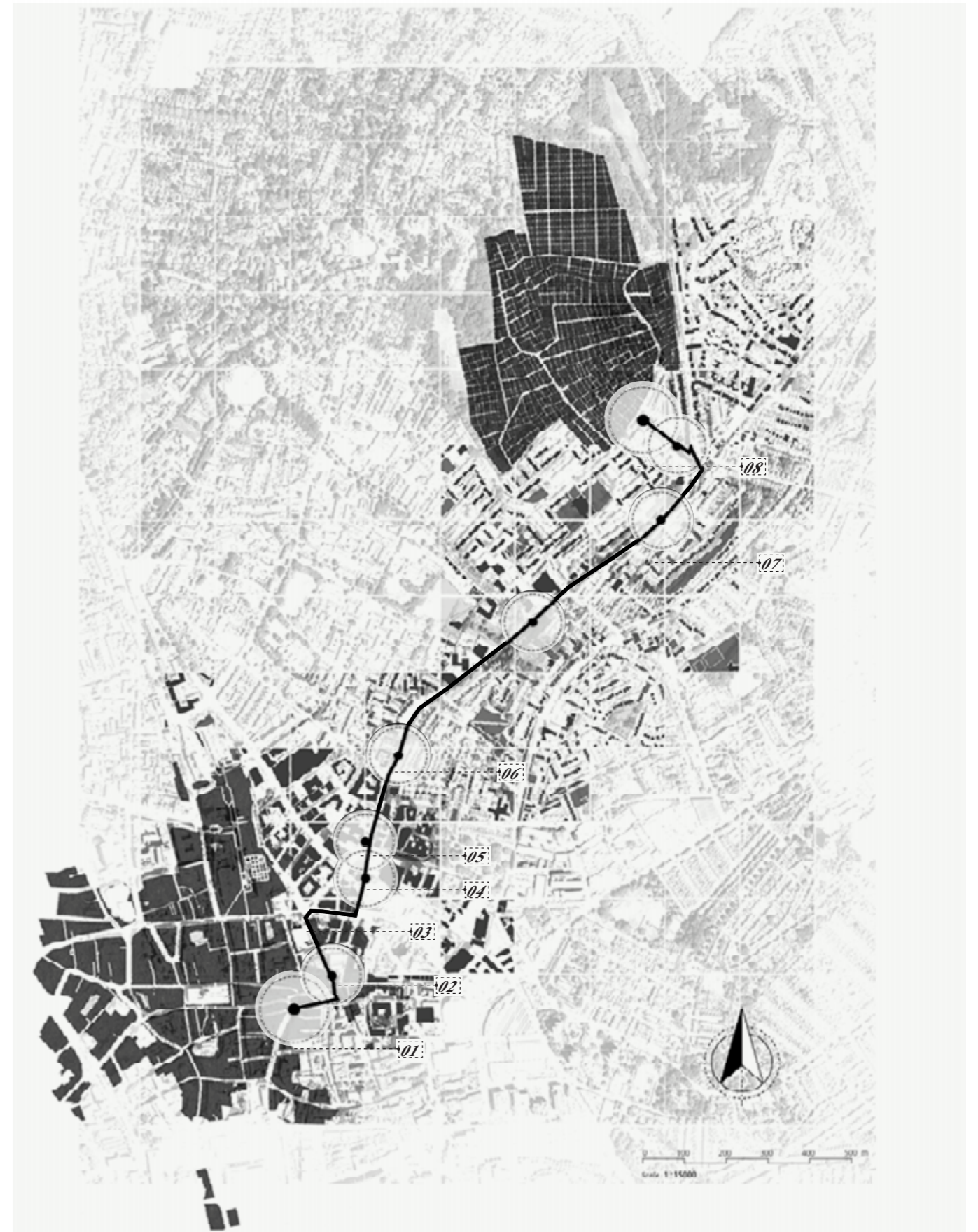


Fig 32. Psychogeographic map marking locations of sketches during initial *dérive*, scale 1:15000 (Carroll-Parry, N, 2026)

### Initial *Dérive*

Once I had selected my site, my first visit consisted of practising a *dérive* from the city centre to St Ann's. I had walked this route before, so I was familiar with the directions, leaving the city centre and making my way north into the St Ann's area. This allowed me to pay closer attention to the changing atmosphere I experienced as I left the city and approached the allotment site. I took sketches along my route to note how I felt during the *dérive*. The map on the left illustrates my route, moving from the Lace Market north towards St Ann's.

● **Research Methods & Methodologies Used**

- Dérive
- Deep Mapping
- Observational Sketches
- Reflective Collaging

**Dérive Reflection**

My main takeaway from leaving the city centre was the change of pace. The sounds of the city slowly faded behind me. Leaving the Lace Market, the area is densely built up, with old industrial lace warehouses that have now been repurposed as part of Nottingham's vibrant art hub, including the Lace Market and Hockley.

As I moved towards the edge of the city, the architecture became more varied, with a mix of modern student accommodation, churches and industrial buildings. The streets started to open up, and the pace of life felt slower.

Further out, the area is dominated by housing estates. The roads are wider and less busy, designed primarily for cars rather than the pedestrianised streets of the city centre. The overall noise level drops significantly, creating a calmer atmosphere as you approach the outskirts.

Once you get through the St Anns housing estates, you walk uphill to reach the entrance of St Anns. As St Anns is not open to the public unless you have booked a tour or are volunteering, I simply observed it from outside. There is a sense of a green space at the top of the hill that feels both apart from the city and yet completely embedded within the surrounding housing estates.

On my next visit, I will keep this in mind when I enter the site and observe how this feeling changes as I cross the site boundary.

**Dérive Response**

To document this, I visualised my route northwards towards St Anns's, using psychogeographic mapping to capture the sensory transition as the mass of the city centre fragmented and the soundscape and busyness of the city slowly dissipated

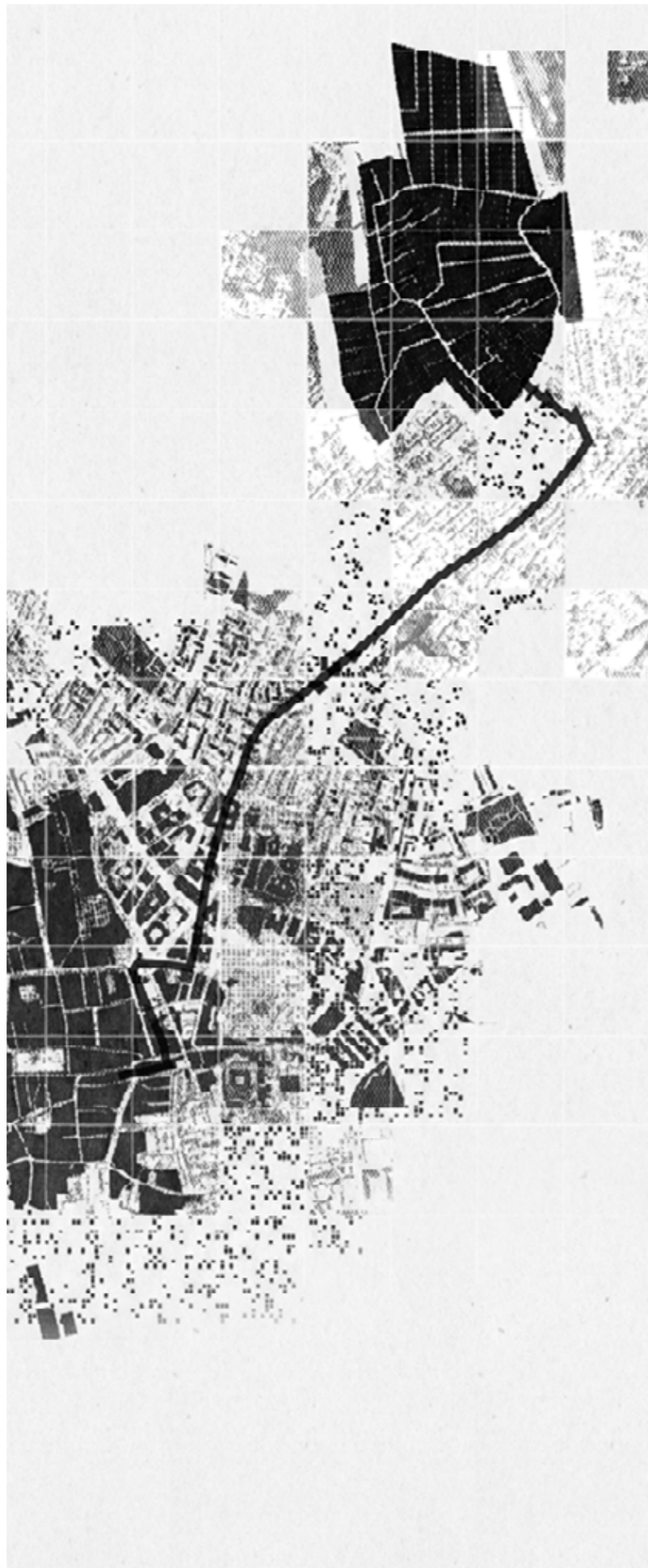
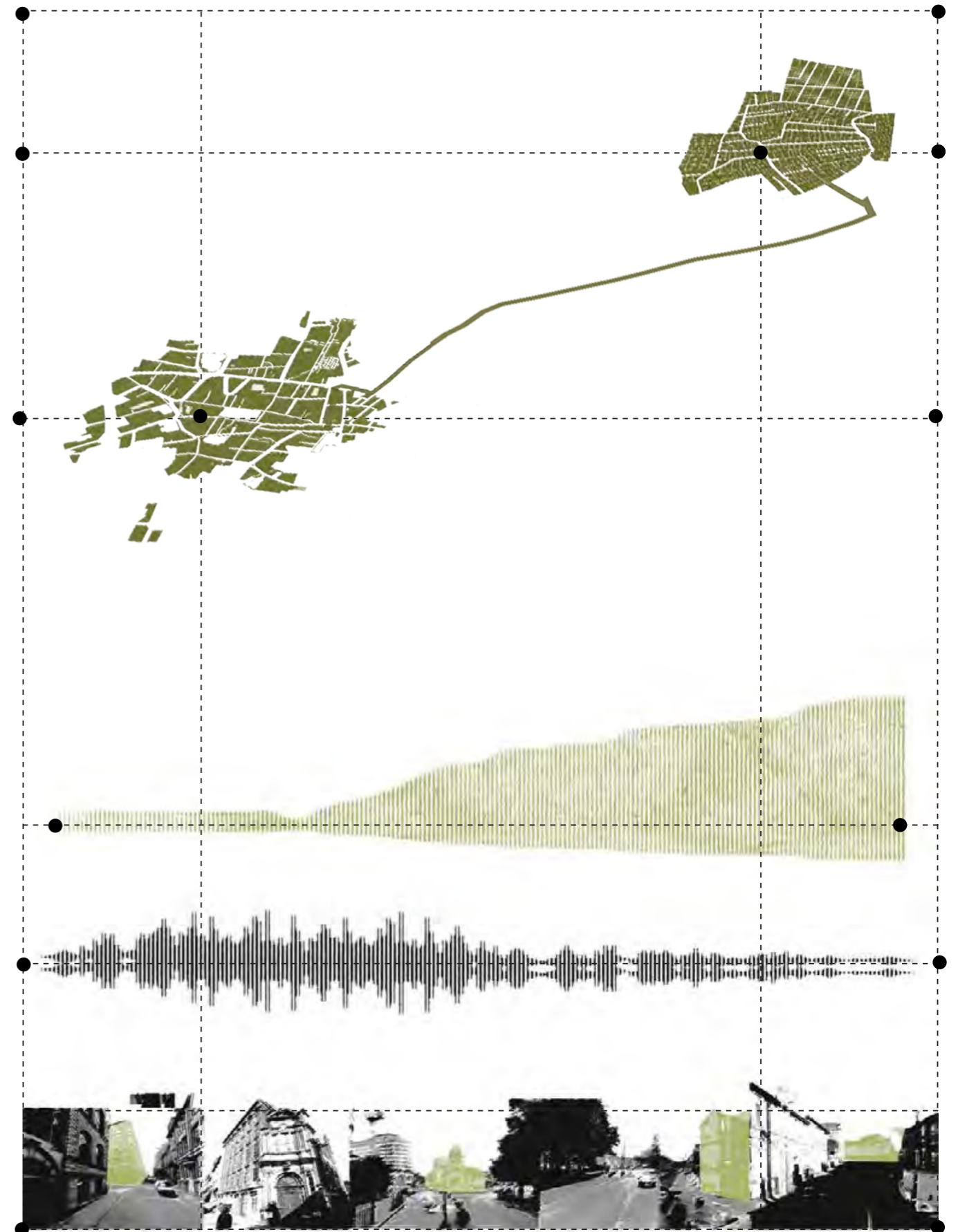


Fig 33. Psychogeographic map of the initial dérive, depicting the city structure fragmenting towards St Anns (Carroll-Parry, N.2026)



This visual demonstrates how the noise of the city reduces while walking towards St Anns, supported by photographs taken along the route. The topography represents the hill that you ascend to reach the St Anns site boundary, enhancing the feeling of leaving the city behind and arriving at St Anns.

Fig 34. Soundscape and topography of the dérive from the city to St Anns allotment (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

# 5

## SECOND DÉRIVE : 'LEAVING' THE CITY



Fig 35. Sensory map of the second dérive visit at St Ann's allotment (Carroll-Parry, N, 2026)

### SECOND DÉRIVE

On my second visit, I was able to access the site by joining a tour that St Ann's offers monthly, where we were shown around the different plots within the site.

Upon entering, there is a tarmac path leading uphill into the garden. As you approach the different plots, this path quickly transforms from an open road into a narrow tarmac path flanked by hedges on either side. Because of the topography and its position on top of a hill, there is no indication of where you are in the city. It is quiet, and any noise from the neighbouring housing estates is masked by the rustling of the trees.

Further into the site, the tarmac path gives way to a dirt track. This creates the feeling of walking along a path in the countryside, rather than somewhere just a 20-minute walk from the city centre.

I have visualised this by producing a sensory map, showing my route through the site and documenting where the textures of the ground changed

This visit helped me to understand the history of allotments and their significance in providing plots for urban workers and residents.

The archival images on the right show how this may have looked historically, and from my walk I felt that St Ann's still holds the same ability to draw you out of the city today.



Fig 36. Walking through the hedges at St Ann's (STAA Heritage Resources, 2020)



Fig 37. St Ann's overlooking the city of Nottingham (STAA Heritage Resources, 2020)

# 6

## SITE VISIT 3: OBSERVATIONS AND URBAN THEORY

On the third visit, I took part in volunteering at St Ann's. Following my observations of St Ann's feeling separate from the city, I was interested in observing the communal experience of the allotments and how it might differ from that of other public spaces due to its psychogeographical sense of being apart. I was also interested in the practice of gardening and its ability to act as a meditative practice, as well as how it might serve as a form of escapism.

ON SITE OBSERVATIONS

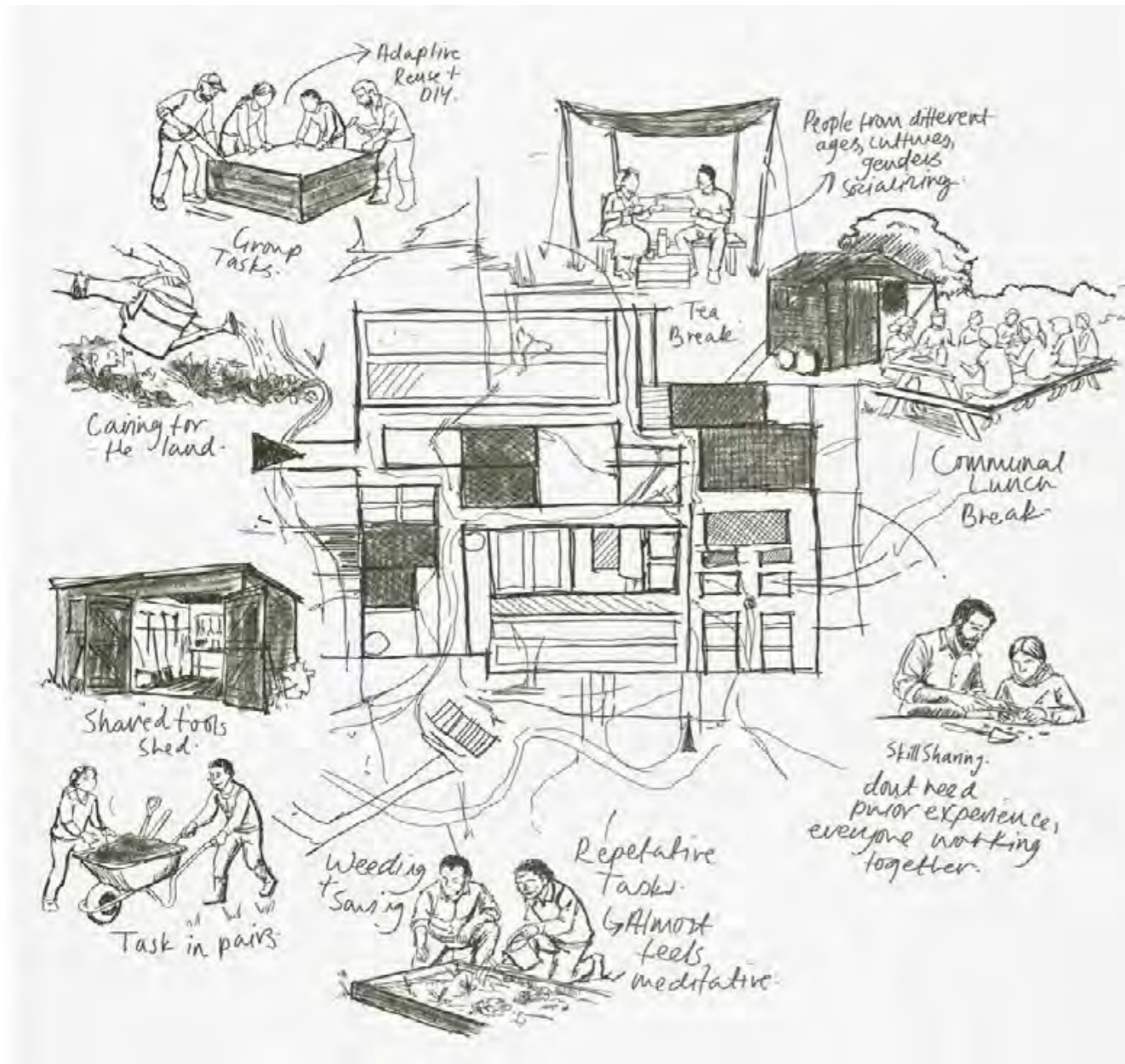


Fig 38. Procreate sketch of the heritage garden site and community activities during site visit (Carroll-Parry, N, 2026)

At St Ann's, I observed a number of communal actions from volunteers. These included a communal tea and lunch break, a shared tool shed available for anyone to use, skill sharing from experienced volunteers to newer ones, and completing tasks in pairs. People of different ages and cultural backgrounds were socialising in an informal setting. This presents St Ann's as a third place in which genuine community exists. It was here that I began to think of St Ann's as a third place that functions better than other third places, which I feel have become commercialised.

**The Theory - Allotment as a Third Place**

This introduced me to reading wider theory about third places, which are defined as informal social settings outside of home or workplace (Oldenburg, 1989). In the modern day, when the boundaries between home and work are increasingly blurred, it is important to study the third places that still persist and are thriving, such as St



Fig 39. Checking the texture of the soil at the HDG (Carroll-Parry, N, 2025)



Fig 40. Pulling weeds at the HDG (Carroll-Parry, N, 2025)



Fig 41. Volunteer preparing a planting bed at the HTG (Carroll-Parry, N, 2025)



Fig 43. Cutting branches with a pruning saw (Carroll-Parry, N, 2025)



Fig 44. Dead hedge constructed by volunteers (Carroll-Parry, N, 2025)



Fig 42. STAA volunteers in the HTG (Carroll-Parry, N, 2025)

At St Ann's, the physical form of the allotment is shaped through collective maintenance where weekly volunteer sessions involve digging, clearing, repairing areas of the site. These repeated actions gradually shape the landscape, showing that the physical form of the site is directly impacted by how many volunteers participate that week.

Material reuse is a visible feature across the site. Structures such as compost bins, plant supports and dead hedges are constructed from reclaimed timber, reused fencing and found materials. These elements are temporary and adaptable and constantly changing. During my volunteering session, I was involved in cutting down trees to construct a dead hedge, providing direct evidence that the spatial design of the site is a social process.

Volunteers have choice which tasks to take part in and are encouraged to suggest ideas. During my volunteering session, I was encouraged to move from different tasks as I please. This creates a practice of negotiation where decisions emerge through discussion and shared interest.

## Theory - Social Production of Space

this is informed by the theory of the production of space

This led me to the understanding that space is socially produced. Lefebvre (1991) offers a theory that spaces are continuously made and remade through social relations. Within this framework, everyday actions such as maintenance, labour, and negotiation are not activities that simply take place within space but are central to its ongoing production (Lefebvre, 1991). This production occurs through a continuous negotiation between Lefebvre's three dimensions of space: the perceived (spatial practice), the conceived (representations of space), and the lived (spaces of representation). The diagram below explains how this triad is enacted at the allotment.

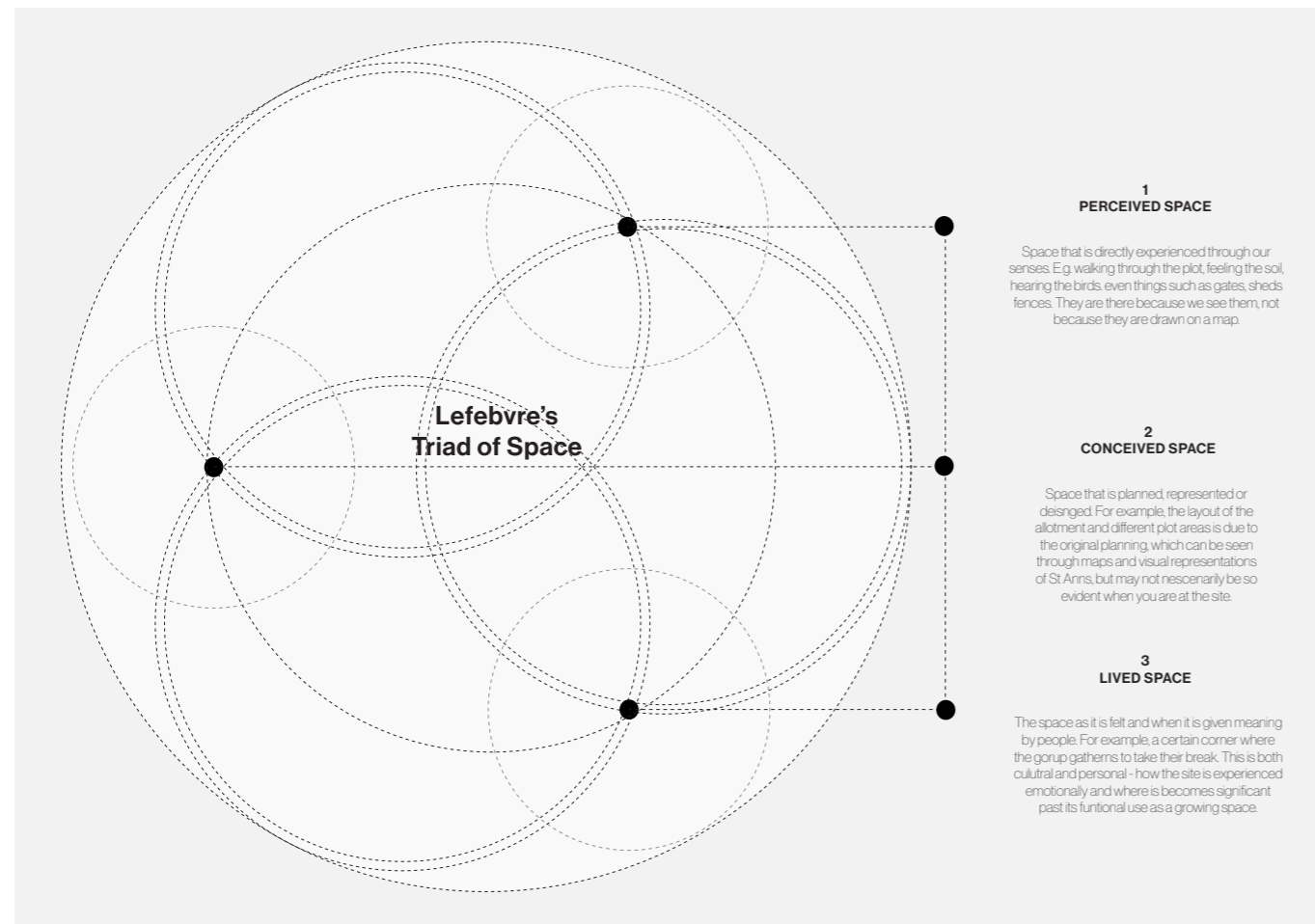


Figure 45. Carroll-Parry, N., 2026. Venn diagram of Lefebvre's Triad of Space outlining examples of Perceived, Conceived, and Lived space at the allotment [digital image]. Created by Author, Nottingham Trent University, p 30

## Observation: Non-Productive Leisure as Everyday Resistance



Fig 46. Digital collage depicting allotment volunteers enacting a claim to green space, demonstrating quiet resistance (Carroll-Parry, N., 2026)

From my observations, the allotment feels like a place of everyday resistance. The slow, cyclical labour and anti-perfection practices seem to reclaim time and autonomy. By occupying the space in numbers, volunteers assert their presence and care. People compost, plant, repair, and build dead hedges, engaging in tasks that are meaningful but not strictly productive in a conventional sense. Weekly and seasonal rituals are repeated, and informal negotiation determines who does what and when.



Fig 47. Collage depicting the words 'Not all protest is loud' (Carroll-Parry, N., 2026)



Fig 48. Wheelbarrow at the heritage garden (Carroll-Parry, N., 2025)



Fig 49. Winter allotment plot at St Anns (Carroll-Parry, N., 2025)



Fig 50. Cutting and reusing branches to build the dead hedge (Carroll-Parry, N., 2025)

## Commodification & Urban Context



Fig 51. Digital collage depicting anonymous people walking around a spatially flat interior, 3D modelled and rendered by the author to demonstrate the feeling of an alienated city (Carroll-Parry, N, 2026)

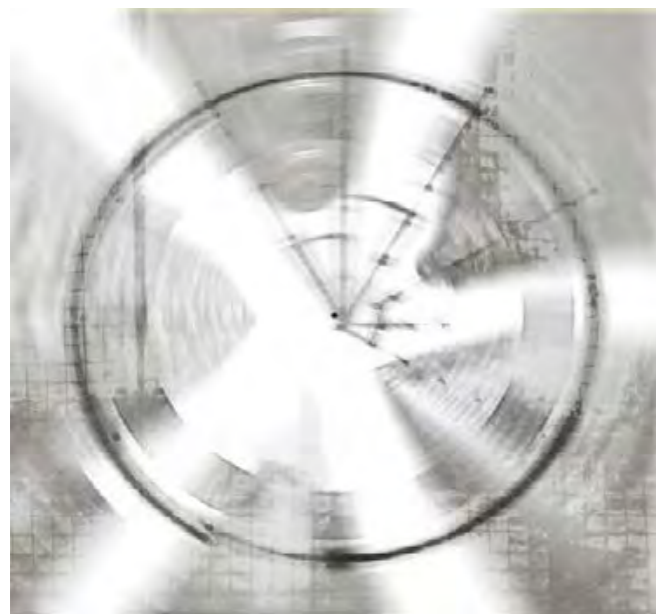


Fig 52. Digital collage of a clock face with a cityscape in the background, depicting linear time within a capitalist urban environment (Carroll-Parry, N, 2026)

### Alienation and the Contemporary City

The type of community experienced at St Ann's contrasts sharply with the conditions of the contemporary city, which Guy Debord suggests produce alienation (Debord, 1958). The commodification of public space has eroded civic life by turning genuine social interaction outside of the home or work into something that can be marketed and consumed (Zukin, 2009; Oldenburg, 1989). Spaces that once supported everyday social exchange are increasingly shaped by transaction, visibility and productivity (Harvey, 2001; Fisher, 2009).

This shift can be linked to several overlapping conditions. A lack of public funding has reduced the availability of non-commercial communal spaces, while social life has increasingly migrated from physical environments into digital ones (Sennett, 2018; Wexler & Oberlander, 2017). As a result, many forms of community now take place in settings such as coffee shops, workout classes or organised events that are tied to payment or personal advancement (Oldenburg, 1989; Zukin, 2009). These spaces often present themselves as community-oriented, yet they remain embedded within an individualist culture where participation is conditional and goal-driven (Fisher, 2009; Sennett, 2018).

The erosion and fragmentation of public life under these conditions is explored visually in the accompanying collages (Debord, 1958; Wexler & Oberlander, 2017).

## Searching London for My Third Place

**What's your third place? We asked Londoners to show us theirs**

The hidden barrier to finding your Third Place and how to overcome it

**Tell us about your 'third place' - where you connect with your community**

# What Is A Third Place? And How To Find One

FOOD AND RESTAURANT TRENDS

**There Is No True Third Place**

Fig 53. Digital collage depicting various headlines from online discourse about third places (Carroll-Parry, N, 2026)



Fig 55. Digital collage depicting contemporary third places as transactional (Carroll-Parry, N, 2026)

### "Third Place" in Online Discourse

Recent online discussions among young people have brought the term "third place" back into wider circulation, reflecting a growing awareness of its absence (McGowan, 2025). This prompted my investigation into the erosion of third places and the social conditions that have contributed to their decline. The contemporary city largely functions through linear, accelerated time (Harvey, 2006), structured around destination, efficiency and consumer culture. While some spaces may appear to offer moments of connection, they are often reliant on transaction, whether financial or social capital understood as a commodity.

This is particularly evident in the rise of networking events that are framed as community spaces but are fundamentally oriented towards work and self-advancement. In this case it could be argued that they cannot be a third place because they are not 'outside of work'. This aligns with view of pseudo-community spaces as outlined by Wexler and Oberlander (2017, p. 15), who suggest that civic life is increasingly shaped by the logic of a capitalist market, and therefore spaces are marketed for community when really they are for capital gain.



Fig 54. Famous Faces and Blue Plaques at Bar Italia, Soho (Camberwell Designs, n.d.)



Fig 56. Digital collage depicting the transformation of the coffee shop from a counter-culture space to a commercial third place (Carroll-Parry, N, 2026)

### Counterculture to Consumption

Historically, coffee shops in the UK functioned very differently. When they emerged in the 1960s, particularly in Soho, London, inspired by the Italian espresso bar, they became accessible social spaces for young people. Affordable and distinct from the pub, they offered an alternative environment shaped by music, youth culture and social diversity. In an area becoming increasingly multicultural through post-colonial migration, the coffee shop operated as a vibrant countercultural space where new communities formed.

Today, coffee is more often acquired on the way to work or used as a setting to meet existing friends. While it may still support social interaction, it rarely functions as a site where new community is produced. This shift highlights how contemporary urban life prioritises movement, productivity and transaction over dwelling, a condition that stands in direct contrast to the social rhythms observed at St Ann's.

Dwelling, Ethics and Poetics



Fig 57. Digital collage demonstrating that gardeners experience individual poetic dwelling experiences while engaging in communal practices (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

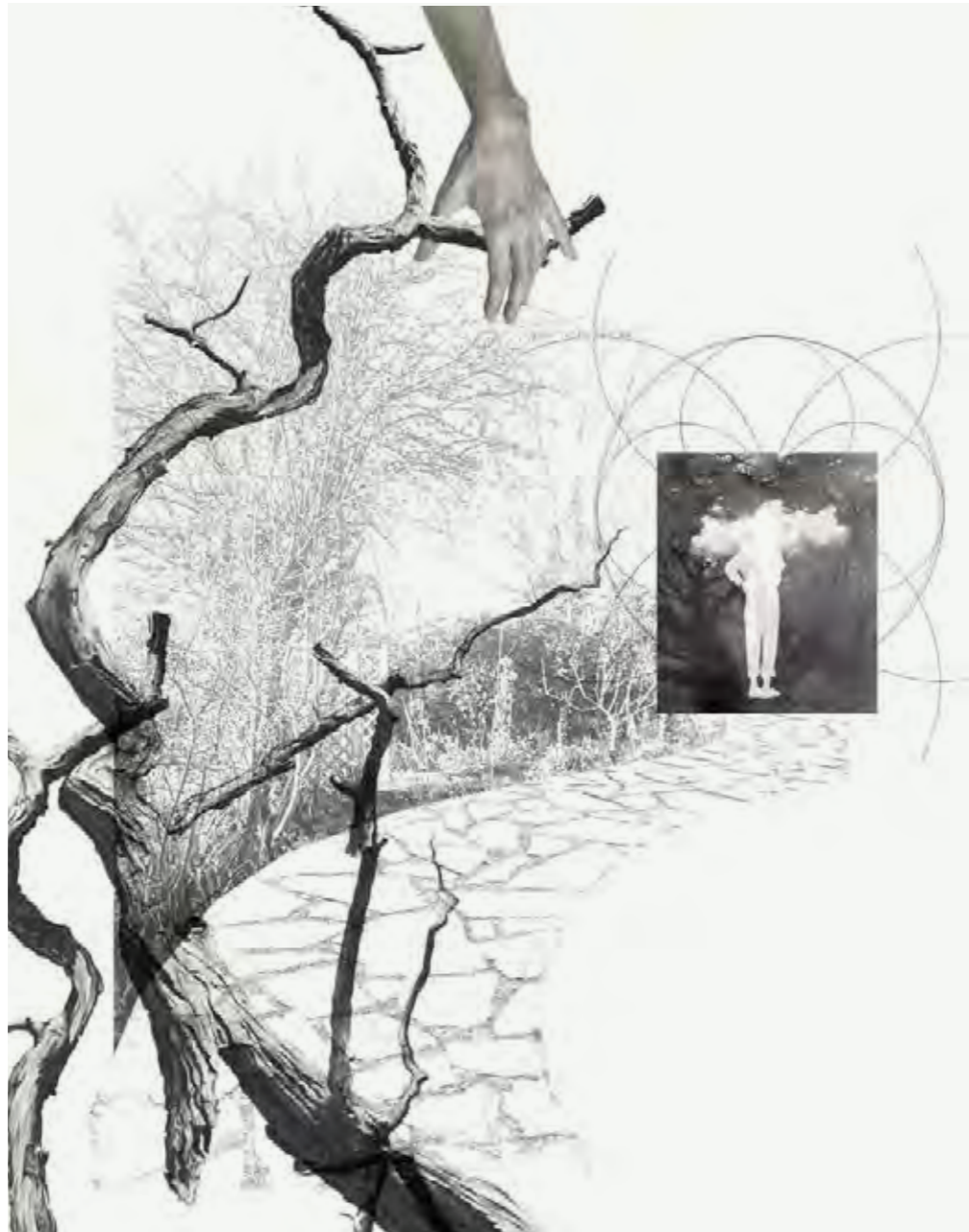


Fig 58. Digital collage conceptualising volunteering at St Anns as a contemplative practice, where the simple act of cutting branches becomes a practice of imaginative thought (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

At site, I observed that although the activity is collective, with people arriving together and working towards a shared goal, allotment keeping involves individuals taking responsibility for specific tasks. These may be social, such as working in pairs or small groups, but they are often carried out alone. I further investigated this form of 'dwelling' through reading spatial theories by Heidegger and Bachelard.

As a result, the allotment operates as both a social and solitary space, where long periods are spent fully immersed in physical work. During these moments of focused bodily engagement, the mind begins to wander, opening up a different state of awareness that allows for daydreaming, reflection or contemplation.

This aligns with theories of dwelling as an ethical and relational mode of engagement (Heidegger, 1971/2000; Levinas, 1980). Intimate spaces support memory, imagination and reflective practice (Bachelard, 1994). Through this lens, the act of creating something such as a dead hedge is transformed from a practical task into one that encourages mental wandering. You may be physically present, but simultaneously engaged in an alternative mode of dwelling. This idea is explored in the collage, which visualises drifting into a contemplative state.

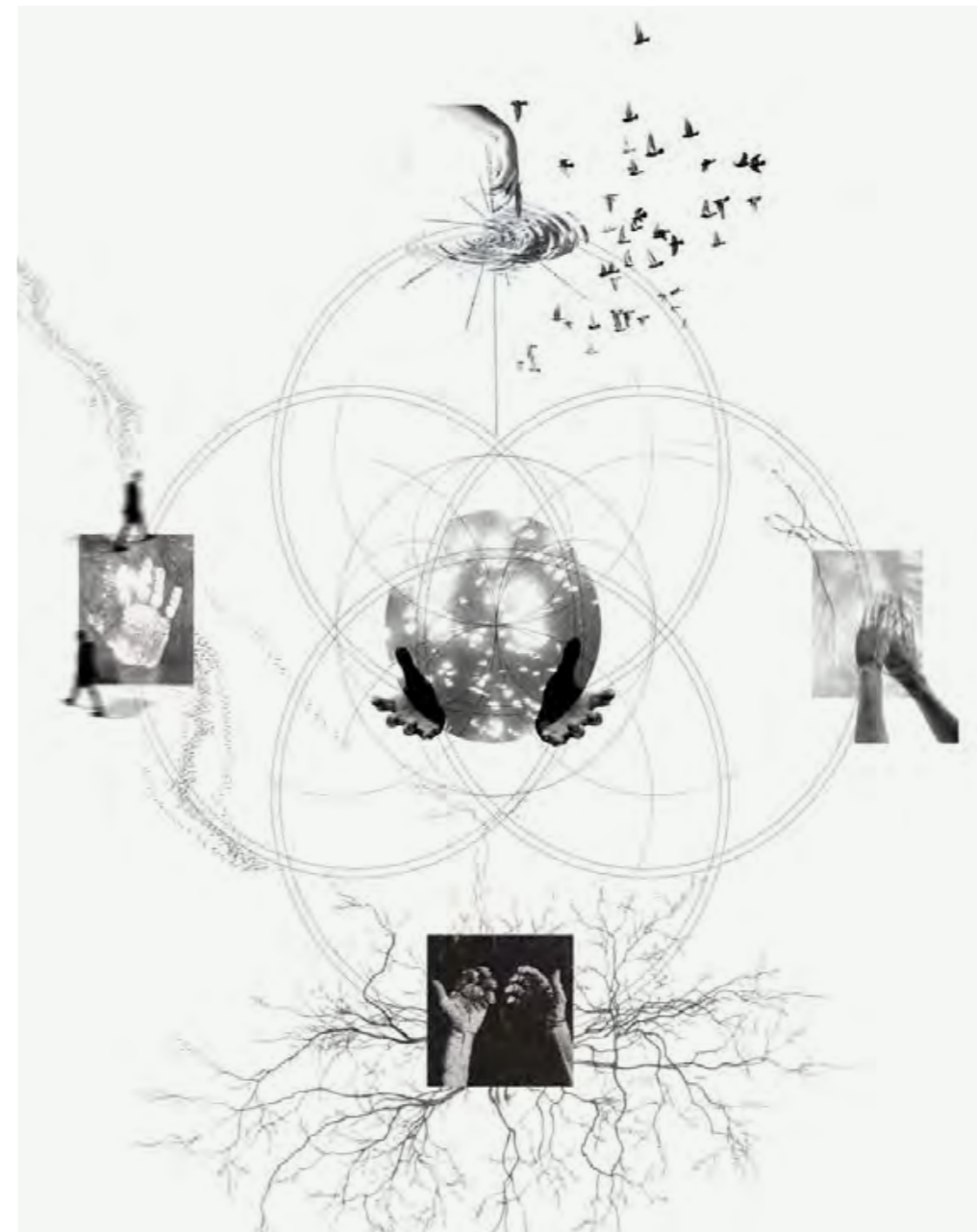


Fig 59. Digital collage conceptualising gardening as being attuned to the fourfold (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

This concept also aligns with Heidegger's account of ethical dwelling, in which he suggests that to truly dwell in the world is to be attuned to the fourfold: the earth, the skies, the mortals and the divinities (Heidegger, 2001). Garden activity attunes the participant to the fourfold through engagement with the earth via growing practices, the skies through work shaped by weather cycles and seasonal change, mortals through reflections on one's own humanity mirrored in processes of growth and decay and the divinities through finding meaning in the power of nature and our reliance upon it (Heidegger, 2001). From this perspective, repeated acts of care for the land shift away from being purely production based and instead become ritualised, actively reinforcing a deeper sense of dwelling (Bachelard, 1994; Heidegger, 2001).



Fig 60. Poetic landscape moments: feeling the texture of the soil (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)



Fig 61. Poetic landscape moments: the water that breaks the light and reflects onto different surfaces (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)



Fig 62. Poetic landscape moments: the sun that shines through the trees (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)



Fig 63. Poetic landscape moments: the dew that arrives in the morning (Carroll-Parry, N. 2026)

With this lens, the allotment is understood as a space that not only provides a social environment, but also deepens our relationship with ourselves through its ritual aspects. These collages aim to demonstrate this: touching the soil like dust, the reflection of water onto surfaces, dust shining in the sun, and the morning dew. These are elements of the landscape that create small moments of poetics.

## Heterotopia as Outcome

While spending time at St Ann's, I began to notice a subtle shift in how people occupied the space. On the allotment, individuals appeared to step outside of their usual social roles. Gardeners were not performing the identities they might hold elsewhere in the city; professional hierarchies softened, conversations slowed and interactions were shaped more by shared care for the land than by status or productivity. This sense of temporarily existing outside everyday social structures prompted me to question how St Ann's functioned spatially and socially and why it felt so distinct from surrounding urban environments.



This curiosity led me to the concept of heterotopia: spaces that exist within society while simultaneously operating according to different rules and rhythms (Foucault, 1986; Vidler, Foucault and Johnston, 2014). Unlike ordinary urban spaces shaped by efficiency, circulation and economic productivity, heterotopias are defined by their difference.

Fig 64. Digital collage demonstrating heterotopia: observing someone leaving the dominant city structure and entering an 'other space' (Carroll-Parry, N, 2026)



Fig 67. Festival bell tents (Carroll-Parry, N, 2023)



Fig 65. The Savoy Cinema, Lenton, Nottingham (Pickering, A, 2024)



Fig 68. Statue in Nottingham Cemetery (Carroll-Parry, N, 2025)



Fig 66. Nottingham Contemporary art gallery, designed by Caruso St John Architects (Caruso St John, n.d.)

Within *Of Other Spaces*, Foucault identifies a range of heterotopias, including festivals, libraries, cemeteries and cinemas, each of which contests social norms in distinct ways (Foucault, 1986). What is particularly compelling about landscapes such as gardens or allotments as heterotopias is that, unlike many of Foucault's examples, they are not interior spaces. Rather than enclosing users within walls, these sites operate through openness, exposure and continual interaction with natural processes.



Fig 69. Mapping heterotopias in Nottingham City Centre, with heterotopias shaded in black (Carroll-Parry, N, 2026)

