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Eve Milburn

University of the West of England

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Do urban explorers retreat back to characteristics of their childhood in order to explore

and re-imagine urban wildscapes of the surrounding city?

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Eve Milburn | 13003569

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Signed:

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-ABSTRACT-

An investigation into how specific motivations behind urban exploration of the city portray certain aspects of one's childhood.

This dissertation explores how urban explorers retreat back to aspects of their up-bringing and childhood when exploring derelict, disused and obsolete wildscapes around the city. Using key literature, psychology videos, and urban exploration forums and blogs, this essay begins to correlate ideas of child behaviour and experimentation to the characteristic of urban explorers.

-COPYRIGHT STATEMENT-

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-TABLE OF CONTENTS-

5.0 REFLECTION AND CONCLUSIONS 35

6.0 REFERENCES 37

7.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY 43

8.0 APPENDICES

-INTRODUCTION-

1.1 MOTIVATION AND INTEREST

"There are 270 functioning stations across our network, but at least 40 Overground and Underground stations still in existence are no longer used for travel."

(Transport for London, 2016)

Very few are aware of the forgotten buildings, tunnels, and, undergrounds in the city surrounding us (Garrett, 2013a). Initial research into the re-use of London's derelict tube stations presented this study with an insight into urban exploration. However, through deeper investigation, it became increasingly apparent that urbex (abbreviation for urban exploration) entails a lot more than just infriltrating the disused undergrounds of London. In fact, it is a discovery of a "TOADS – temporary, obsolete, abandoned or derelict spaces" (Manaugh and Paiva, 2008, p.9) and the idea of occupying space to discover more about the urban landscape and culture that we live in (Garrett, 2013a).

The increased study of urban exploration presented a range of motivations and reasons for participating in the practice. The most apparent at first were:

1. Taking back the rights of the city and public space
2. The chance to photograph architecture, landscape and urban decay
3. Reliving one's childhood through a sense of nostalgia

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Do urban explorers retreat back to characteristics of their childhood in order to explore and re-imagine urban wildscapes of the surrounding city?

This dissertation is an enquiry into how urban explorers re-imagine the city through a practice that has underlying characteristics of formative years.

It will aim to provide evidence for how urban exploration has an undertone of youthful behaviour, as well as offering the idea that exploration may be linked to childhood nostalgia.

Thorough research has provided this study with three key motivations for urban explorer:

- Pretend play
- Connecting with space through history and texture
- Escaping the norms of everyday life

Thus, this paper will use these to provide a careful answer to the topical question.

The intention of this paper is not to suggest that these are the only motivations behind urbex, but simply use them to look closer at how urban exploration has an undercurrent of child-like behaviour through the ideas of play and re-imagining spaces.

It is also important to point out that the term "childhood" in this paper is defined from birth to the age of eight years old. These are the years that UNICEF (2013) state is when "cognitive, social and physical development" is critical in children.

1.3 DEFINITIONS

It is important to define some terms that will be fundamental to this study:

- *Urban exploration: is* "a practise of researching, rediscovering and physically exploring temporary, obsolete, abandoned, derelict infrastructural areas within the built environment without the permission to do so" (Garrett, 2013a, p.1).

- *Urban wildscape:* a term and landscape condition can potentially appropriate many of the spaces described by a host of names in urban design and architectural discourse, including badlands, brownfields, derelict areas, no man's lands; and the characteristics of these areas can be as diverse as the terminology that attempts to define them (Jorgensen and Keenan, 2012, p.201).

- *Urbex:* an abbreviation for "urban exploration" (Garrett, 2013a)

- *Infiltrate:* "A trespass on a live site (one that is not derelict or that has workers on it)" (Garrett, 2013a, p.269).

- *TOADS:* "temporary, obsolete, abandoned and derelict spaces" (Manaugh and Paiva, 2008, p.9).

- *Bunkerologist:* A term to describe urban explorers who "seek out abandoned military bunkers" (Bennett, 2011, p.2)

-LITERATURE REVIEW-

2.1 NOTABLE AUTHORS

It is worth stating that Social and Cultural Geographer, Bradley Garrett, is a crucial author to the research of this dissertation and will be a main point of reference throughout. Upon reading 'Explore Everything: Place Hacking the City' (2013a) many of the references used in this paper were discovered. Garrett's time as an ethnographer has resulted in him being able to become part of the urban exploration community to discover how people work, play and act within society, eliminating the need to write from an outsiders perspective (Garrett, 2013a).

Tim Edensor is another notable author who this essay pays debt to. His extensive research in connecting with ruins, textures and the characteristics of urban wildscapes has offered this paper rich evidence.

Nonetheless, various other authors have contributed to this research dramatically, all with a direct interest in certain themes of this dissertation. Alastair Bonnett has played an important role to providing this paper with knowledge of connecting to memories and places through nostalgia, whilst Ken Knabb has helped form an understanding around the idea of dérive and how the idea of urban exploration has been a tool to explore for many of years (Knabb, 2002).

2.2 UNDERSTANDING URBAN EXPLORATION

In order to understand the reasoning behind the activity, it has been essential to understand the many types of urban exploration. Although all share the same motive to inhabit and re-imagine the spaces around them, there are various activities categorised as urban exploration, such as; parkour, free running, skateboarding, graffiti and street art (Garrett, 2013a). This dissertation will be solely focusing on urban explorers that exploit the cities architecture and security systems through entering restricted and derelict spaces (Garrett, 2013a).

Upon reading more of Garrett's work, we follow a series of interactions with various urban exploration groups, focusing mainly on the 'London Consolidation Crew (LCC)' (Garrett, 2013a). The documentation of personal accounts and memorable conversations with the group provides an insight into the strong friendship, as well as a true reflection of the motives and feelings of these urban explorers.

2.3 PHOTOGRAPHY

There is no defined criteria for someone to become an urban explorer. They come from a wide range of backgrounds, societies and nations, yet, they all have the same desire of adventure (Garrett, 2013a). This is apparent in the series of short films broadcasted on 4OD called Urban Explorers (Urban Explorers, 2016). As we follow these three-minute documentaries, various explorers introduce to us their reasoning behind infiltrating some of the most iconic landmarks of London. Aside from admiring the architecture, views and experiencing adrenalin, the most common theme throughout was the opportunity to photograph (Urban Explorers, 2016). Galagher, an eighteen-year-old explorer from London, states that when he first discovers a potential "climb" he will search for a location to photograph the landscape and view (Urban Explorers, 2016). In order to achieve the perfect photo, photographers use a number of techniques to manipulate the image, (Mullen, 1998) and this in turn is a way of re-imagining the city. Galagher, along with the various other explorers that enjoy documenting their quests through photography, are using it as a way to capture a moment, to "take control of the narrative" (Garrett, 2013a, p. 41), and to tell a story (Mullen, 1998) the way that they desire. Although photography will not be an aspect explored in depth in this dissertation, it is worth mentioning that it is a significant characteristic of urban exploration and crucial for documenting adventures.

2.4 THE PAST

Urban Exploration is a journey, searching for a "more personal sense of the past" (Garrett, 2013a, p.8). It has been suggested that the most "well-trodden" (Garrett, 2013a, p.8) route to urban exploration is through the captivation of buildings and places that no longer have a considered use (Garrett, 2013a). Further research has led me to the personal reflections of Human Geographer, Tim Edensor. In Garrett's video article for the Geography Compass Journal (Garrett, 2009), Edensor discusses the experiences of travelling through ruins, and the power materials and aesthetics have that "draw you towards them" (Garrett, 2009). He continues to explain how the materials presented to the explorer are unfamiliar and this is what allows the explorer to re-imagine the space (Garrett, 2009). Edensor (2007a), in one of his short journal articles; Senses and Society, continues to explore the multiple sensual experiences that can be provoked by entering and moving around a ruin.

 Alastair Bonnett, also in Garrett's video interview, describes such senses as a way of creating an emotional connection to the ruin or space. They encapsulate the explorer into thinking about their own past, the previous users past, or the urban wildscapes past. These all in turn have a "nostalgic content" (Garrett, 2010), leading this literature review to the idea of reclaiming, and rediscovering fond childhood memories and/or adventure and play through the act of urban exploration (Bennett, 2011).

2.5 CHILDHOOD

Alistair Bonnett provides an interesting argument referring to how urban exploration may be a result of repossessing memories of the past. The idea of someone trying to recover feelings that they're in fear of losing, or filling the gaps in their childhood (Garrett, 2009).

Urban exploration, in many cases, is an attempt to re-live fond memories of the past (Bennett, 2011). Bunkerologists are explorers whom link their adventures in order to restore favourite pastimes and to "reawaken the childlike sense of fascination" (Bennett, 2011, p.248). A significant aspect of childhood is the hunger to explore and take risks with no thought to the consequences and outcomes. Urban explorers are re-living these aspects through adventuring in the middle of the night, scheming, and drifting the streets in search for a new adventure (Garrett, 2013a).

The study of child psychology is essential to this essay in order to correlate urban exploration with the behaviour and imagination of children. The collection of child psychology videos produced by Videatives (2011) allows this dissertation to identify how children play and re-imagine objects and space. As well as looking at the psychology behind child play, it is helpful to understand what influences the imaginations of children. *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* (1946) and *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005) portray similarities in the fact that the young characters enter worlds that entice their imaginations and help them escape the norms of everyday life. These stories will be used to support the idea that the characters are in fact exploring for similar reasons as urban explorers today.

2.6 ESCAPING THE CITY

The British Security Industry Authority (BSIA) has estimated that there is "one surveillance camera for every 11 people in Britain" (Telegraph, 2013). Urban exploration is a practice where the participants want to engage with their surroundings and physically connect with the environment (Garrett, 2013b). Edensor (2007b) considers how the body is broken free from the restraints of the modern day, sterile city when entering a ruin. The idea of being able to break-free from the day-to-day norms of society to allow time to re-imagine the city. Although urban exploration may be viewed a modern technique, it is evident that the idea of play and exploration of the urban environment has been around since at least 1956 (Knabb, 2002). This is when by Guy Debord, a member of various avant-garde groups called Situationist International, created a theory called dérive. Aimed at the working class, it was an activity to encourage people to discover more about their surroundings (Knabb, 2002).

-METHODOLOGY-

This dissertation seeks to understand the reasoning, connections, actions and behaviour associated with urban exploration (Salmons, 2016). Therefore, in order to arrive at a conclusion, it has been important to focus on the collection of qualitative data. Qualitative researchers tend to seek specific, pinpointed answers to understand "human experience" (Salmons, 2016, p.2). This type of research will allow this study to distinguish regular patterns in urban exploration (O'Reilly and Kiyimba, 2015).

As this study does not rely on responses from large groups/audiences, nor does it depend on statistical data, there will be no need for quantitative research to take place.

Stewart and Kamins (1993) suggest that the use of secondary research provides a strong foundation of subject knowledge for primary research to progress. The extensive use of academic journals, books and short documentaries will inform the researcher and audience of the main characteristics of urban exploration, in order to answer the research question.

3.1 INTERVIEWS

As well as the study of various journal articles, books and videos, a qualitative, 'standardized open-ended interview' will be conducted (Turner D, 2010). This interview will provide detailed information regarding the participant's opinions and experiences involving urban exploration. Identical leading questions are asked through the course of this type of interview (Turner, 2010), leaving them open-ended in order to influence a more detailed, honest response (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003). To this response, the researcher should have the opportunity to follow with 'probing' questions in order to arrive at an even more in depth answer (Turner, 2010). The importance of carrying out an open-ended interview is to be able to gain personal experiences, emotions, motives and reasoning behind urban exploration. This paper will present a transcript from the voice-recorded interview with a Bristol based Urban Explorer, Matt Marks [see appendix 2], who has been participating in the street art for around five years (Marks,

2016). It is important to gain a true insight into the life of an urban explorer, to gather supporting evidence for the topic of this dissertation.

Although secondary research is time and cost effective, it is important to gain first-hand, primary research in order to attain answers to questions that have not been answered in previous research (Stewart and Kamins, 1993). Stewart and Kamins (1993) discuss how the information collected isn't vital, as long as the concluded information is trustworthy. Through interviewing a regular urban explorer (Marks, 2016), it provides this essay with current and up-to-date opinions and motives towards the field of study.

3.2 MULTIMEDIA

In the interest of answering the proposed question, it has been important to watch various films and videos to help with research. Although reading is important to any research, it has been proven by Khan and Madi (2016) that multimedia is an easier tool of research to use when one has very little background knowledge in said subject. In light of this, it will be beneficial to watch psychology videos that represent child behaviour in order to relate urban exploration to aspects of childhood. As well as psychology videos, this paper will benefit from the study of one fictional book; *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* (1946), and two fictional films; *Alice in Wonderland (2010),* and *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (2005).* They will not only provide this research with an insight into how fiction can influence a child's imagination and perspective of the world, but, also demonstrate how fiction can be used to describe the childhood impulse to explore difficult routes, overcome daunting experiences and obstacles, and re-imagine spaces.

Other visual material such as photographs and screenshots from said movies will be included in this essay. They will be used in order to support the themes explored whilst researching urban exploration. The photographs used will be sourced from urbex

websites and blogs. It is imperative to point out that the online forum "28 Days Later" has been of great help throughout this project in order to understand the Urban Exploration community, as well as gaining an insight into the wildscapes they explore.

-MAIN ARGUMENTS-

Urbex is entering the cities derelict, disowned and redundant architecture in order to make a connection with it (Garrett, 2013b). The research conducted for this study has brought to light various motivations for urban exploration. Many do it for the love of architecture, and being able to experience the process of buildings ageing and transforming in a natural way (Garrett, 2010). For some, it is the fascination of finding items that illustrate a previous use and give explorers the opportunity to re-imagine who the previous occupier might have been (Marks, 2016). Others, it is for the love of thrill, trespassing and being able to take photographs that document one's experience and/or the history of the wildscape (Urban Explorers, 2016), and for many, if not most, to escape the sterile normalities of the city and life (Edensor, 2007b).

Despite all the various motivations behind urban exploration, it is apparent that there is a certain retreat to childhood. The idea of play, and re-imagining spaces and objects so that they present a new use; the thrill of entering places that you know you're not allowed to be entering, with no thought to the consequences (Garrett, 2013a); and, the "yearning for the past" (Bonnett, 2013, p.392) - using child-like actions in order to reconnect with a sense of loss (Bonnett, 2013). Throughout, there is an apparent psychological impulse and undertone of child-like behaviour.

4.1 PRETEND PLAY

Pretend play is an approach for children to gain a better understanding of the world through appropriating space, and using their imagination to create new functions for objects around them. From watching a series of short child psychology videos produced by Videatives (2011), it becomes apparent it is a natural process for children to look at the world around them in a different perspective. The two boys in *Learning through play 3-5 years; Kanopy* (2011) rearrange a variety of wooden, bottomless boxes to create a train to sit in, a pedestal to stand on, spaces to hide toys, and a tunnel to crawl under. The variety of functions they presented the boxes with, in under

five minutes, proves that imagination and creativity can connect one with their surroundings (Videatives, 2011). Much like children, explorers are using urban exploration as a way to connect with their environment to repurpose and re-imagine space. Through entering derelict buildings, ruins and unused space, urban explorers are seeking the opportunity to connect with the past and previous functions of wildscapes. It is evident that there is a strong correlation between urban explorers using their imagination to repurpose and re-imagine space to how they did when they were children.

Exploration, whether a child or adult, is a means of learning. Without the curiosity and desire to push boundaries, experiment and take risks (Garrett, 2013a), there is no desire to learn. There is a child-like instinct in the thrill to seek adventure and explore the environment (Bennett, 2011). Through touching, smelling, tasting and studying their surroundings, children connect with space and objects to become more familiar with the physical environment (Willis, 2016).

4. 2 CONNECTING WITH THE SPACE THROUGH HISTORY AND TEXTURE

4.2.1 TEXTURE

Upon studying various posts on 28 Days Later it is evident that texture and decay is a focal point when photographing sites. Taken by a user called 'Urban Bloody Bear', these images show the interior of Cookridge Hospital in Leeds. It was a place for patients to continue their recovery from Leeds General Infirmary. Closed in 2008, it was sold to developers with the intention for a new housing developments (Urban Bloody Bear, 2016) [See figures 1 to 4].

Figure 1: Photograph by Urban Bloody Bear Explorers (Urban Bloody Bear, 2016)

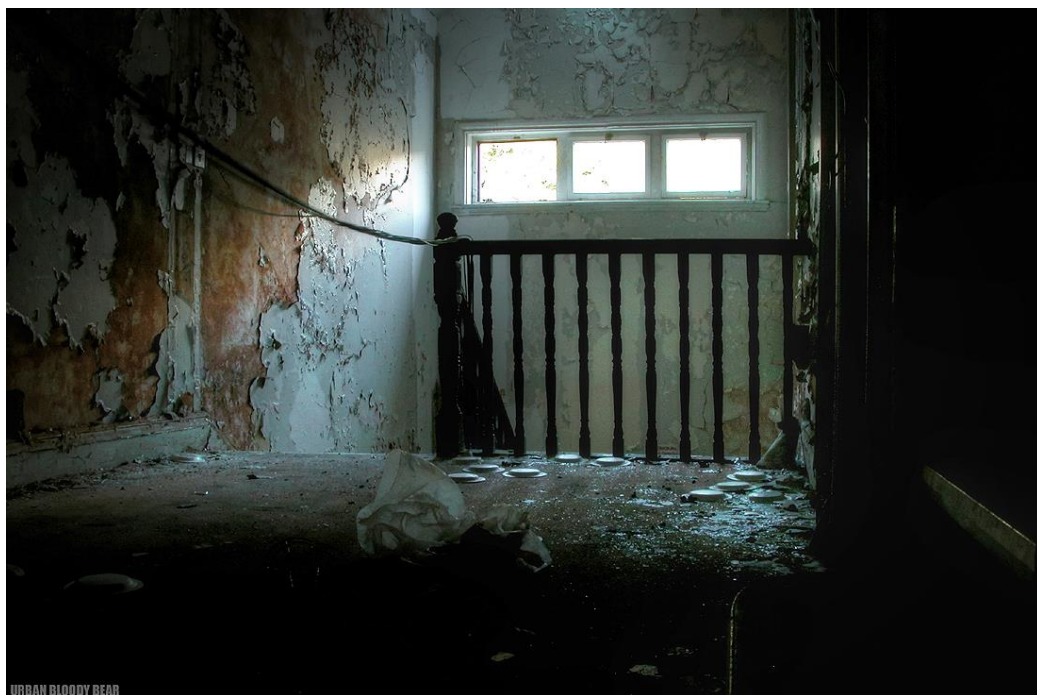Figure 2: Photograph by Urban Bloody Bear Explorers (Urban Bloody Bear, 2016)

Figure 3: Photograph by Urban Bloody Bear Explorers (Urban Bloody Bear, 2016)

The study of textures, materials, nature and decay of the building through urban exploration is significantly similar to the sensual techniques children use to explore their surroundings.

Urban explorers are fascinated by the previous use, occupancy and aesthetics of a space and although initial research is beneficial for connecting on a historical level; materiality, textures and physical state of site is what draws urban explorers even closer (Edensor, 2007a). Marks (2016) quotes in his interview, "places that are stripped back aren't as interesting as the places that have character left in them and some objects that relay history". Whilst some documenters may be content with simply being absorbed within the space, others have the urge to use their senses to carry out a close examination in order to gain a better understanding of how it works (Garrett, 2013a). This sort of exploration relates to how children explore and connect with their environment through touch, smell and taste (Willis, 2016). It enables them to develop their ways of thinking abstractly, as well and encouraging their imagination and creativity (Bruce, 2011).

Similar to urban explorers, children use tactile experiences such as; moving their hands through buckets of pasta, sand and other materials, to learn more about objects and flourish their sensory possibilities (Eyestone Finnegan, 2001). It is evident that both explorers and children both have the same interest in using texture to discover more about their surroundings. From birth children have been learning about the world through sensorial play, the same way that urban explorers are learning about urban wildscapes.

4.2.2 NOSTALGIA

Following an interview with urban explorer Matt Marks (2016), he discusses how participants in the practice dedicate time in order to research potential sites before attempting to enter. 28 Days Later is a well-known urban exploration forum where users can document their adventures (28 Days Later, 2015). Each post begins with a brief introduction to the site and its history. Therefore, it is apparent that users of the website are interested in creating a foundation of knowledge which enables them to connect deeper with the site.
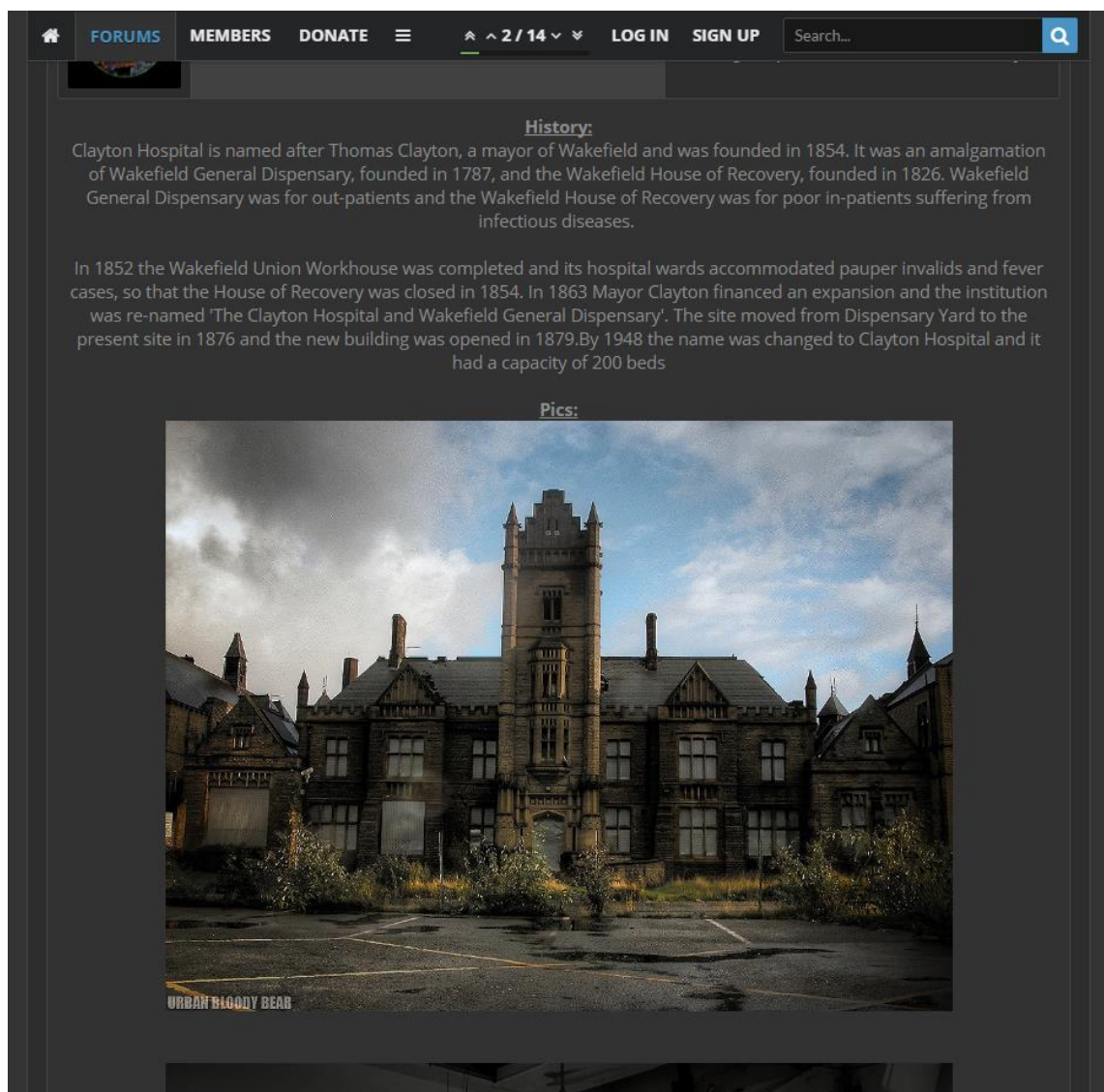

Figure 4: Screenshot from 28 Days Later. User Urban Bloody Bear explaining the history behind their exploration to Clayton Hospital (28 Days Later, 2016)

As defined by Alastair Bonnett (2006), nostalgia is an anxiety and fear that one may be losing some attachment to the past. When entering an area with significant history, it creates a sense of nostalgia, and a desire to connect with the lost past of the space (Bonnett, 2013). Through entering these spaces, and connecting with the history, urban explorers are temporarily re-creating a narrative and use for them.

As well as connecting with the past of the building, it could be viewed that urban explorers are seeking a sense of their own past. One that they are in fear of losing and becoming nostalgic about. During an interview with Matt Marks (2016), it was evident that he re-visits derelict buildings and sites that he used to explore when he was a child as these spaces meant something to him and reminded him of his childhood.

4.3 ESCAPING THE NORMS OF EVERY-DAY LIFE.

"The consumer of consumer society forgetting"

(Shortell and Brown, 2014)

We are living in a world that is constantly changing to try and meet the demands of the productivity and rapid industrialisation. Thus, making it hard to escape from the constant movement and ordering of people and space (Shortell and Brown, 2014). Shortell and Brown (2014) stress the importance of "urban dwellers" adopting a "psychological strategy" to cope with the persistence of the city.

Much like urban exploration, tourism is travelling to, from and around cities and countries for pleasure. However, tourists aren't just those who travel afar, one is a tourist in their everyday life as they experience and sense the world in different ways (Urry, 2002). Edensor explains how tourism is an opportunity to retract from the "stresses and strains" of ordinary routine (Edensor, 2007b, p.120). Through the search for something different, authentic and against the grain, tourists/urban explorers are creating the opportunity to "explore new identities and roles" (Edensor, 2007b, p.120) and this in turn is re-imagining the city and its surroundings. During Matt Marks interview he talks about how climbing cranes was a way for him to detach himself from his daily routine. Through scaling high buildings and objects, once at the top, one is no longer absorbed within the city. They are now the observer. Watching over the city as it continues to buzz is a way of looking at it in a different perspective, thus reimagining it.

Created in 1956 by Guy Debord (Knabb, 2002), dérive was a method of walking that was aimed at the working class to explore the surrounding city. By taking an unplanned route through the urban landscape, one or more persons would drop their everyday relations, leisure activities and work to connect with the environment and the space around them (Knabb, 2002). This draws links to the point that urban explorers escape their normal lifestyle in order to participate in an art form that allows them to re-imagine their city, and connect with it through psychogeography. Although the practices differ in

some aspects, it is evident that urban dwellers have needed to detach themselves from the city long before a more modern consumer society.

The idea of escaping normal life in order to look at things in a different perspective could well be triggered through fictional novels such as; *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) and *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005). Both of these stories follow the journey of children into mysterious, imaginary worlds. At her engagement party, 'Alice' escapes to reconsider her decision to marry a nobleman. As a result of chasing a suspicious looking rabbit, she falls down a hole where she arrives in a bizarre place called the "Underland". This land is filled with talking animals and other magical creatures that symbolise many of her nightmares as a child (IMDb, 2010). Alice was brought to this parallel world in order to escape her difficulties, and help resolve problems faced in the "Underland". Much like urban explorers, this adventure allowed 'Alice' to look at her life and surroundings in a difference perspective.

Figure 5: Screenshot image from *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) movie looking into the hole that leads her to "Underland".
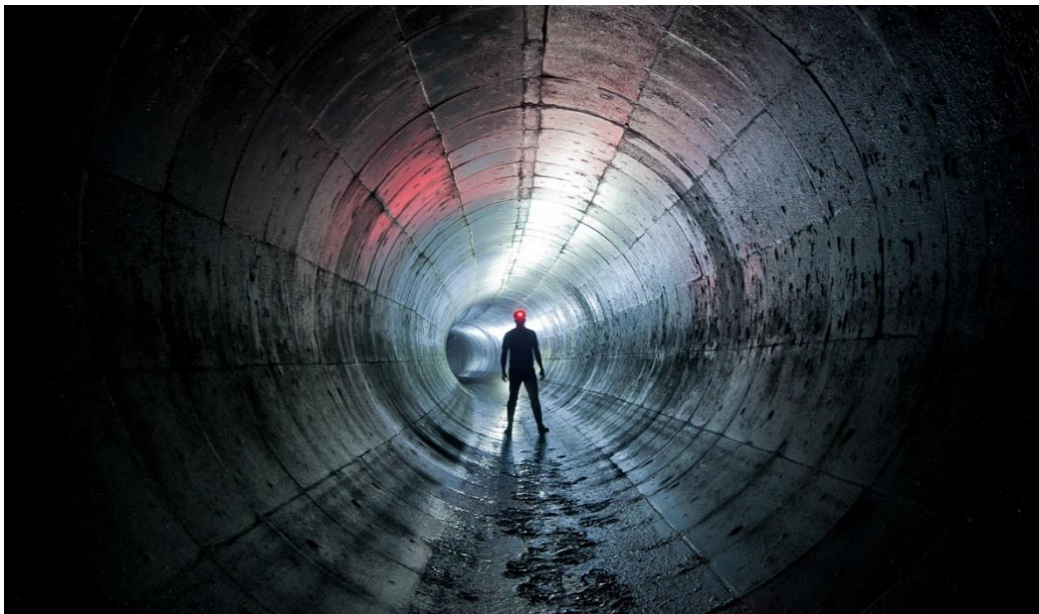

Figure 6: Image of Urban Explorer Bradley Garrett exploring disused tube stations. (Garrett, 2016)

"Alice was beginning to get tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped in the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conservations in it. 'And what was the use of a book', thought Alice, 'without pictures or conservations?'".

(Carroll, 1946)

Even referring back to Lewis Carroll's original *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* (1946) it is clear that 'Alice' is becoming bored of her routine, and is questioning creativity. She wants to explore. After sighting the White Rabbit, "with burning curiosity" (Carroll, 1946, p.3) she follows with no consideration to how she might get out again. This shows that everyone, no matter what age, needs to escape the norms of life, and need to push boundaries in order to experience adrenalin and feed curiosity. Urban explorers resort back to this same sort of child-like behaviour when they are entering restricted spaces. It resurfaces the feeling of childhood play, taking risks and pushing boundaries as a child in order to learn about the surrounding environment (Garrett, 2013b).
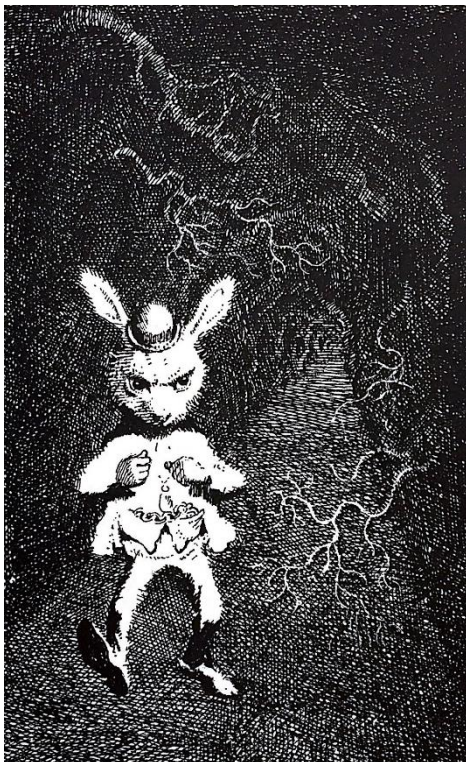

Figure 7: Illustration by Mervyn Peake (Peake, 1946) for Carroll's book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* (Carroll, 1946). Showing the White Rabbit walking through to Wonderland.

Much like *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), the children of *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005) are struggling to come to terms with reality when they are evacuated to London during World War II. During a game of hide and seek, the youngest of the family, 'Lucy', discovers a wardrobe to hide in. This is where the imaginary world comes to light as she moves further and further back, entering Narnia. Urban explorers are sensitive to sharing sites with others in the fear it will become public and spoilt (Marks, 2016). In *The Chronicles of Narnia* (2005), 'Lucy' visits Narnia twice before telling her siblings as she has the same fear (IMDb, 2005). After their adventures in the magical land, the characters take a different outlook on life.

Figure 8: Image of 'Lucy' from The Chronicles of Narnia: Lion the Witch (2005) and the Wardrobe discovering the portal to Narnia.

Figure 9: Image from photography Arran Cross showing a door that leads to his next adventure during his exploration of St. Johns Asylum, Lincoln (Cross, 2013)

Urban exploration is a "later in life manifestation" (Bennett, 2011) of one's younger years and childhood imagination. It could be viewed that urban explorers use their adventures, much like fictional characters, to pull themselves out of reality and look at the city, the site and their lives with a different outlook.

Urbex is a practice that is extremely useful for one to be "drawn out of one's secure routine to encounter the novel, the strange, the surprising" (Sandercock, 2003, p.403) Through being detached from ones' predictable lifestyle, it enables us to re-imagine the city from a different perspective. It is a tool to enter spaces and provide an area for the explorer to detached themselves from the constant movement and change that the city projects. It is vital to sometimes challenge and distract from the normal day-to-day routine (Pinder, 2005) that many of us possess. Through escaping life's norms, we can connect with the geography, history and character of the cities we live in.

-CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION-

36

This dissertation has aimed to express that underneath all motivations behind urban exploration, there is an underlying sense of childlike behaviour, thrill and/or nostalgia.

From using three strong motivational themes regrading urban exploration, it has allowed this essay to correlate specific actions and feelings of urban explorers to those of children. It is evident that the strongest similarity is the idea of pretend play: urban explorers use a form of play to take risks, push boundaries and enter restricted spaces in order to learn more about the city around them (Garrett, 2013a). In some sense, urbex is pretend play for adults.

However, urban exploration and play aren't just about entering spaces and getting inside. The play continues as the temporary occupier is drawn closer to the textures and objects of the space – much like children exploring objects and textures through sensorial play. Nonetheless, it is clear that urban explorers do in fact use the play aspect of their childhood during their explorations to repurpose and re-imagine wildscapes.

It is evident that the nature of exploration has been birthed from childhood fictional films and books. Exploration is clearly a tool used to escape the normalities of one's day to day life, as well as linking to the idea of discovering more about one's surroundings. Although urban explorers may not be aware of demonstrating characteristics of their childhood in their explorations, it is clear that there is an underlying theme of retreating back to aspects of formative years.

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-APPENDICIES-

University of
West of Eng
UWE
BRISTOL

Faculty of Environment & Technology

Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC)

Ethical Review Checklist for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Modules

Please provide project details and complete the checklist below.

Project Details:

Module name	Dissertation
Module code	UBLMSJ-13-3
Module leader	Louis Rice
Project Supervisor	David Littlefield
Proposed project title	Do urban explorers retreat back to characteristics of their childhood in order to explore and re-imagine urban wildscapes of the surrounding city?

Applicant Details:

Name of Student	Eve Milburn
Student Number	13003569
Student's email address	eve2.milburn@uwe.ac.uk

	CHECKLIST QUESTIONS	Yes/No	Explanation
1.	Does the proposed project involve **human tissue, human participants, animals, environmental damage, or the NHS.**	YES	*If the answer to this is 'No' then no further checks in the list need to be considered.*
2.	Will participants be clearly asked to give consent to take part in the research and informed about how data collected in the research will be used?	YES	The participant for the interview will be approached by interview and asked if they are willing to take part in this study. Once agreed, I will ask them to sign an agreement that allows anything they say in the

CHECKLIST QUESTIONS	Yes/No	Explanation
		interview to be used in this dissertation.
3. If they choose, can a participant withdraw at any time (prior to a point of "no return" in the use of their data)? Are they told this?	YES	It will be explained to the participant that they can withdraw from the study at any point.
4. Are measures in place to provide confidentiality for participants and ensure secure management and disposal of data collected from them?	YES	The participant will be informed that nobody, but myself will have access to any of the information they have given.
5. Does the study involve people who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent (eg, children or people with learning difficulties)?	NO	
6. Could your research cause stress, physical or psychological harm to humans or animals, or environmental damage?	NO	
7. Could any aspects of the research lead to unethical behaviour by participants or researchers (eg, invasion of privacy, deceit, coercion, fraud, abuse)?	NO	
8. Does the research involve the NHS or collection or storage of human tissue (includes anything containing human cells, such as saliva and urine)?	NO	

Your explanations should indicate briefly for Qs 2-4 how these requirements will be met, and for Qs 5-8 what the pertinent concerns are.

- **Minimal Risk:** If **Q 1 is answered 'No'**, then no ethics approval is needed.

- **Low Risk:** If **Qs 2-4 are answered 'Yes'** and **Qs 5-8 are answered 'No'**, then no approval is needed from the *Faculty Research Ethics Committee* (FREC). However, your supervisor must approve (a) your information and consent forms (Qs 2 & 3) and (b) your measures for participant confidentiality and secure data management (Q4).

- **High Risk:** If **any of Qs 5-8 are answered 'Yes'**, then you must submit an application for full ethics approval *before* the project can start. This can take up to 6 weeks. Consult your supervisor about how to apply for full ethics approval.

Risk Assessment: Separate guidance on risk assessment can be found on UWE's Health and Safety forms webpage at https://go.uwe.ac.uk/RiskAssessment. If needed, you must complete a Risk Assessment form. This must also be attached to your application for full ethics approval if your project is **High Risk**.

Further research ethics guidance is available at
http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/research/researchethics

8.2 APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interviewer: Why do you describe yourself as an urban explorer and what makes you an urban explorer?

Interviewee: Because I participate in what urban explorers do by seeing unseen spaces, places that are usually closed off by the public and not everyone gets to see as you need to be cunning on gaining entry, or you just have to take opportunities when you see them

Interviewer: If you were walking past a derelict building on your way home from work, and there was an open window, would you go in?

Interviewee: Yes, or definitely make note of it and come back.

"I think what makes me an urban explorer is that whenever I am walking or driving around, I can't help but notice buildings that are potentially derelict, or have something that is hidden in them and is not used. Or access points. I cannot help walking past buildings and looking for access points into buildings". Kind of a hindrance to your normal life really isn't it?

Interviewer: Do you do it because you want to take photographs, or is it also because you want to escape the norms of life and forget about things?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think for most people that do it, including myself, it is like an escape from normal life in a way. When you go into these places and start taking photos you just have a wonder round, and kind of forget about your normal day-to-day life and any stresses that you do have, you just kind of forget. But also I think for me I really enjoy the photography side of it and taking photos and doing some editing and posting them in places. It is kind of documenting the history.

[Talks about church on St. Michaels Hill burning down]

If I hadn't had taken those photos, I don't know if anyone else got in before but, would people have been able to see what it was like up to a month ago?

Interviewer: How long had it been derelict for?

Interviewee: 17 years

The reason I have always had a fascination for that church as his great, great uncle has a war memorial plaque inside. I wasn't 100% sure was still there, my father told me about it, however, I did find it. It had his name on it. And I took some pictures.

Interviewer: How would you describe urban exploration to someone who doesn't know what it is?

Interviewee: Someone who gains entry into closed off buildings, spaces and areas. Who shouldn't really be there but feel that it is kind of their right in a way, to the city, to the area and the history of the place. We aren't really doing anything wrong. We are just taking pictures. And we don't really see a problem with that if you know what I mean? I can see other people having a problem with it though.

Most of the places that I go to is 'civil trespass' which doesn't carry a criminal sentence or anything. However, if you start stealing anything or creating any damage, then that encroaches on criminal stuff, obviously.

But I don't do that, we don't do that. We just go in and take photos really. Just have a good time and chill out really.

Interviewer: What do you do when you're in these spaces?

Interviewee: Just to take pictures, and mingle amongst ourselves and talk about the place.

Interviewer: Do you only ever go in a group or do you go on your own?

Interviewee: I occasionally go on my own. But, I don't really spend a huge amount of time in there if I am there on my own. It's a social thing. It's like if people go to the park and talk among themselves. We do that sort of thing but in these places.

Also, it's a challenge getting into these spaces – sometimes we've attempted five times before gaining entry before. It's just one of those things, working it out. Facing challenges. And when you finally do get inside it's a big payoff, a good reward. And also when you leave the place and no one's chasing you and there's no police cars of anything, it's a good feeling.

Interviewer: Do you do it for the thrill?

Interviewee: Yes, I'd say. But not always. For instance, the church, there was no real thrill, I just really wanted to get in and see what it was like. It's tickled his curiosity for years.

[Talks about his website]

Interviewer: So do you document quite a lot of your stuff on there?

Interviewee: Yeah I would say about 70%. There's a lot of stuff that's in a bit of a backlog of things that I need to put on there, or maybe in time I won't put on there.

Interviewer: It's finding the time to do it really…

Interviewee: Yeah it's finding the time do to it, but also a lot of the places are still accessible and I don't want to put them on for people to see.

Interviewer: Oh so you put things on your website after the spaces you've visited are closed off?

Interviewee: Not always, most of the stuff is still accessible, but a lot of the stuff I want to go back to or don't want to be spoiled by somebody else**.**

There's different levels of explorer. For example, on 28 [days later] there's a non-public section for higher up explorers. People will put stuff on there so that people get to see it before it gets locked up. These are the really good places. Other places that aren't that amazing will just go on the public page straight away.

Interviewer: How do you get into urban exploration?

Interviewee: When I was in college, 9 years ago, we were always passing round links to random websites and things. One day someone passed round a link to 28 days later to a guy that had been to the Longbridge Plant in Birmingham. In 2004, Rover collapsed, a couple of years later some guy got in there and took a load of photos… Half built cars on the production line, lights and machinery still turned on. And I was amazed by that.

The pictures amazed me, it was something so surreal and eerie in a way. So I did a bit more research into it and I came across the whole urban exploration community and thought 'well this is interesting'. I signed up to a page, and took a couple of pictures of some places in Bristol, nothing to that level [of Longbridge] and then I went quiet about it.

A couple of years later I went back on it and I saw that there was a meet up in Bristol and thought 'hmmm I might go along'.

I didn't know what these people were like, I thought it might just be a group of anoraks and strange shady people, I don't know but, I went along and they were much like me.

Interviewer: How long have you been exploring?

Interviewee: About 5 years now.

Interviewer: How often do you go exploring?

Interviewee: There's not really a set day to go. I'd say I try to go at least a couple of times a month.

I like also doing a lot of rooftops and cranes etc.

Interviewer: What are your favourite places to visit and why?

Interviewee: Definitely industrial, old factories and old industry really. Especially things like old power stations, places with old turbines. Basically, the British industry is

gradually slipping away, I think in several decades' time, it will probably all be gone. The time now, is to really see it and document history.

In decades to come when all of these power stations have been flattened, and all of these old factories and businesses have all gone and people have forgotten about and gone and are now houses and stuff, at least someone has been in there and pictured it how it was, kind of like a bygone era.

Industrial architecture is visually pleasing, when it's a bit decayed and what not. The colours, and pastel colours I think is really kind of pretty.

Interviewer: Does it sometimes make you picture what was once there?

Interviewee: Yes, I can't help but think when I am in a lot of these buildings and things what was there before. It does make your mind wonder. Well it does with me anyway…

Interviewer: What has been your favourite place that you have explored and why?

Interviewee: That is a very wide reaching question. I would say for definite, Pyestock.

[talks about Pyestock and his trip to Chernobyl]

Interviewee: I also enjoy climbing cranes. I do like heights, as weird as it sounds, it's quite chilled out up there.

Interviewer: Is that where you get the best photography up there?

Interviewee: I wouldn't say the best, but it's different. Well a few people are doing it now but still, it's different to your normal derelict buildings and things. I like the photo opportunities.

It's quite chilled out up there. Sometimes we take a few cans and stuff like that.

I took a Chinese takeaway up there once.

Interviewer: What do you like most about exploring?

Interviewee: I think the challenges really, and the pay off when you get to the other side because it's always a gamble. I've travelled across the country before with some friends, and we have been hours away and failed – not been able to gain entry.

But, without the failures, the epics wouldn't be epic. That's the way I see it anyway.

Interviewer: What do you mainly look for when you go exploring**?**

Interviewee: Photo opportunities, or to see if there is any history. Places that are stripped back aren't as interesting as the places that have character left in them and some objects that relay history.

Interviewer: What are the main feelings that you experience when you're exploring?

Interviewee: Wonder and amazements. I wonder how some spaces have laid dormant for so long and that no one has been in there for years.

Like Frenchay Hosprital, I used to go into Frenchay Hospital when I was younger, and he re-visited a lot back in 2014 to take more photos of it and see how it had changed.

Interviewer: Do you describe it as a hobby?

Interviewee: Yeah I think it is. Yeah. I just like documenting it really. The photo aspect is one of the biggest things. Research as well. Like, research is a huge part of it. A lot of ground work and a lot of legwork has been put in to research these places.

8.3 CONSENT TO INTERVIEW

Consent to interview

This interview will be conducted as part of an undergraduate dissertation for the BA(Hons) Interior Architecture degree course at the University of the West of England.

All information given during this interview will be confidential and securely stored on a personal hard drive. If the participant desires the voice clips to be deleted after used in this dissertation, it can be arranged.

The participant of this interview may withdraw at any time.

By signing this document, you consent to the interview being voice recorded, and all information given, to be used in said dissertation, as well as being typed as part of a transcript.

Date: 20/10/2016

Name: Matt Marks.

Signed: M. Marks