# Delineating *Slowly*:
# Developing a Socially Engaged Photography Practice to Respond to Visual Representations of Blackburn, Lancashire, UK

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**Abstract**

Motivated by images of the town of Blackburn (Lancashire, United Kingdom) drawn from television and newspapers, the research is a long-form photographic enquiry that contributes to knowledge in the area of socially engaged photography and *slow*. Research activities explore the potential of a Blackburn-based socially engaged *slow* photography practice to generate alternative narratives to media images and narratives (2006-2019) that depict and describe the town as an intersection for cultural issues such as anti-social behaviour. Literature and practice relevant to the research questions and aims are appraised through a contextual review, whilst the impact of the review upon the research trajectory is stated within the written thesis (Chapter 2). Histories, theories and approaches critical to the research enquiry - specifically those relating to socially engaged photography and *slow* – are located, reviewed and appropriated through the contextual review, in order to situate the research methodology within photography practice.

Established approaches for socially engaged photography are synthesised, aiding the development of photographic strategies that are applied during the enquiry: research experiments include photography as autoethnography, *slow*-walking and photography, participatory photography and photography informed by the voice of others. The global paradigm of *slow* provides the research with a specific philosophical identity, influencing the emphasis on place-specific (Blackburn), self-reflective and iterative approaches to photography practice. Influenced by established approaches for socially engaged photography, participation is a defining feature of a practice developed, then applied, in Blackburn.

The research was undertaken through two phases of experimentation. During Phase 1 (Chapter 3) the researcher utilises the practice of autoethnography and the principles of *slow* to establish a photography practice centred on exploring lived experiences set within Blackburn's contemporary

landscape. The approaches utilised during this phase highlight the researcher's experiences as someone who was born and lived in Blackburn, a Blackburner, through photography and reflective writing. The approach to photography during Phase 2 focussed on developing the methodology, realising more refined and confident bodies of photography (Chapter 4). Phase 2 centres upon the development of participatory experiments with co-researchers and local (Blackburn) residents, locating and embedding the voice of others in the design and conduct of the photography. In this latter phase, the principles of *slow* influence a range of activities, dialogues and approaches from *slow*-walking, dialectical conversations and re-photography. The socially engaged *slow* photography practice developed during the enquiry is represented through eight photography experiments; *Expanding the Photographic Interval; The Double Parallax; The Tourist Gaze; Wiki:Blackburn; SelfScapes; Participatory Portrait Photography; Slow Walk; Revisiting the Delineation*. The photographic outcomes of the research reveal new and alternatives narratives, through which Blackburn can be visualised and understood, in contrast to the limited scope of Blackburn's recent portrayal in televisual and journalistic media.

The research methodology was further tested by presenting research outcomes in eleven academic conferences, exhibitions, festivals and public events, locally and nationally. The outcomes generated from the enquiry form part of a number of recent local responses - arts festivals, public talks, photography exhibitions and conferences - initiated by community interest groups and local stakeholders, that respond to Blackburn's recent media portrayal. The products of the research enquiry are the thesis, the photography portfolio and the blog. The thesis is an extensive critical commentary describing the research context, aims and methods, an appraisal of the research outcomes and the contribution it makes to the fields of socially engaged photography practice and *slow*. The photography portfolio contains one hundred photographs, drawn from the range of photography generated during the practice-based experimentation. The images presented in the portfolio exemplify the visual strategies employed during the research activities and includes examples of the photography presented

in local (Blackburn) and national exhibitions. Throughout the timeframe of the enquiry the researcher utilised a blog (Part III: https://jharrisonphd.blogspot.com/) as an online research diary, illustrating the chronology of the research journey.

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Arte et Labore.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### The Research Context

In 2012, the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) broadcast an episode of Panorama that reported on the themes of anti-social behaviour and unemployment (Panorama: *Trouble on the Estate*, 2012). The transmission of this program followed several years of national journalistic and televisual reporting reflecting what the Sun Newspaper (amongst other media) had been describing, since 2006, as Broken Britain (Slater, 2014, p. 954). The producers of *Trouble on The Estate* (Wightman, 2012) situated their television report in Blackburn (Lancashire, UK) describing, in particular, the Shadsworth housing estate in the east of the town, as a place of deprivation, economic inactivity and social disorder. The hour-long film presented images of racist graffiti and boarded-up shops to visualise the program narrative. Following the broadcast, a swell of criticism from local community representatives in east Lancashire emerged on social media and in the local press. Complainants referred to evidence that production staff working for Panorama encouraged the young people featured in the documentary to keep their hoodies up. The approach adopted by Panorama reflected a wider national tabloid theme of hoodie hell, existing in the early 2000s (Jacobs, 2012). *Trouble on the Estate* (Wightman, 2012) now exists alongside several published or broadcast media since the 1970s - such as Granada Television's The National Party (Woodford, 1976), the BBC's *White Fright: Divided Britain* (Hill, 2018) and the Daily Mail's *On the Front Line of Segregation UK (Tweedie, 2016b)* - that have sought to represent a social, cultural and economic dystopia, using Blackburn as a municipal target. The images created or acquired by such sources in their portrayal of Blackburn, those that have attempted to portray social or economic contexts such as ethnic division or anti-social behaviour, are often reduced to simple, yet powerful motifs: the St George's cross; pints of lager; rows of cotton mill-era terraced houses (Scott, 2007) (Wightman, 2012) (Hill, 2018). An expanded commentary regarding Blackburn's media portrayal is provided in Chapter 2 (pp. 75-81).

The context of Blackburn's media portrayal provided a starting point for the design of research questions and the approach to photography experimentation. The researcher was motivated to respond to Blackburn's portrayal through postgraduate doctoral research and set out to examine how alternative narratives to media reporting about Blackburn could be created through a locally-based, socially engaged *slow* photography practice. The contemporary portrayal of the town of Blackburn through journalistic and television media - represented as a nexus for anti-social behaviour, racial division and social isolation - provided a cultural, political and visual subtext for the enquiry. The researcher carried out extensive research into Blackburn, embedding knowledge and understanding gleaned from this activity into a concise history of the town (pp. 52-63), an appraisal of the photography of Blackburn made by local photographers (pp. 64-75) and a reflection on its contemporary photographic and journalistic portrayal (pp. 75-81).

The Research Questions and Aims

Question 1: How have photographic motifs been employed, contemporaneously, in the representation of Blackburn (Lancashire, UK) by television and newsprint media?

Aim:

- Identify, examine and critique contemporary photographic, televisual and journalistic images that portray the town of Blackburn (Lancashire, UK).

Question 2: How can the socially engaged, *slow* photography practice, developed throughout the research enquiry, be situated within a wider academic, photographic and public context?

Aims:

- Appraise the potential of socially engaged photography, *slow* and autoethnography to create alternative narratives (in the context of the research questions).
- Present, contextualise and evaluate the research methodology and the practice based outcomes in an online research diary, in a written thesis and to a range of audiences..

Question 3 (Primary Question): In what ways can socially engaged photography and *slow* be utilised to create alternative narratives to contemporary televisual and journalistic portrayals of Blackburn?

Aims:

- Develop a practice based socially engaged photography methodology that responds to research questions and leads to the construction of a visual (photography) portfolio.
- Utilise established academic and philosophical theories, concepts and practices, such as *slow*, within photography and writing practices.

The research enquiry is underpinned by a contextual review of relevant literature and practice, which informed the design of research questions (p. 11) and the development of initial research experiments (pp. 13-15), providing a historical, theoretical and conceptual foundation upon which the research is positioned (p. 17-22). The research training provided by the University, alongside the outcomes from the contextual review, enabled the researcher to define appropriate research questions and make the critical choice of research methods (p. 11) (pp. 28-41). The development of the methodology was underpinned by the characteristics of practice based research (pp. 25-27), socially engaged photography practice (pp. 28-30) and the philosophical paradigm of *slow* (pp. 30-33). The use of a blog (pp. 35-41) throughout the timeframe of the enquiry and the related, iterative action of blogging, enabled the charting of, and reflection upon, the progress, identity and features of the research activities and functioned as the research diary. The blog, as a product of the research, reflects the experiences of the practice based research, providing a visual chronology of research activities and experiences (Figure 10). Whilst this chapter (p. 50) provides an overview of the purpose and function of both the thesis and portfolio, it is important to state the reasoning behind writing in the third person ('the researcher') throughout the thesis. The earlier experiments presented in Chapter 3 are of a highly subjective nature, where the utilisation of lived experience informs the production of reflective outcomes. In the latter stages of experimentation (Chapter 4), experiences of practice based research, are sometimes presented in the first person (pp. 140-143). The researcher determined that the use of the third person in the thesis would emphasise distinction between real-world experiences of making photography and writing, and the critical, reflective analyses subsumed into the academic discourse (i.e. the thesis).

The most substantial aspect of the enquiry was the design and completion of eight practice based photography experiments (Table 1, p. 45), presented in the photography portfolio (p. 50) (Part II). During the experimental stage of the enquiry (outlined in Chapters 3 and 4), the researcher utilised

theories, concepts and practices from socially engaged photography, autoethnography and *slow*, adopted as part of a long-form photography enquiry responding to Blackburn's contemporary media portrayal. The photography presented in the photography portfolio that accompanies this thesis (Part II) duly represent the visual strategies, languages, and outcomes from the experiments.

In parallel to the early stages of the contextual review of literature and practice, the researcher devised and tested a primary photographic approach that encouraged the researcher to engage in a photography and writing practice, utilising lived experience as a repository from which to draw from. The focus of this practice encouraged self-reflection on the researcher's own history as someone who grew up and still lived in Blackburn, whilst assisting in establishing the academic practice of research activity, in the form of practice-based experimentation and writing up (Harrison, 2015d) (Figure 1). The intent was to establish the researcher's position, in the context of someone from Blackburn devising a research enquiry seeking to explore the town through photography. The researcher reflected upon early childhood memories and experiences, influenced by the early stages of the review of literature and practice. Visiting locations in Blackburn, to make photographs, write simple autobiographical texts and examine secondary sources, helped to contextualise and situate the enquiry both within an academic and photographic context (Figure 2).

In parallel to the early stages of the contextual review, these early experiments - outlined further in Chapter 3 - were central in informing the design of research questions, aims and subsequent experiments and were posted to the blog between October 2015 and February 2016. Figure 3 provides an illustration of the connectivity between these initial research activities and the design of the research questions and aims.

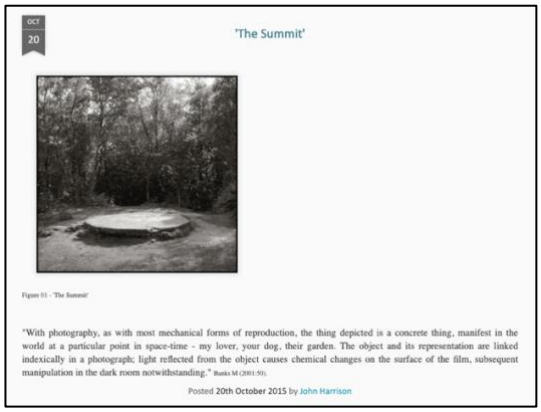


*Figure 1 - (Plate #01): An example of photography made during the design stages of the enquiry (posted to the blog).*

The refinement of a socially engaged photography practice occurred more substantially during the second phase of research activities (Phase 2, Chapter 4), with the researcher exploring participatory approaches to making photography about Blackburn, in response to its contemporary media portrayal. As such, the influence of autoethnography (Phase 1, Chapter 3) was reduced as the researcher drew influence not from their own lived experience, but from the voices of others. The use of online voices (Chapter 3: *Wiki:Blackburn*), engagement with project participants (Chapter 4: *Participatory Portrait Photography*) and co-researchers (Chapter 4: *Slow Walk*) brought about critical changes in the research activities through the use of more outward and participatory approaches. As outlined in the Research Methods section (pp. 28-41), the research enquiry was undertaken over a six-year period and centred upon the development of a socially engaged *slow* photography practice to examine and respond to contemporary television and newsprint media narratives.


OCT
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'The Motorbike'

Figure 01 - 'Motorbike Tracks'

'Reliving these senses stimulates me to recall the overall feeling of growing up in Luray, what Birkerts (2008, p. 13) calls the 'feeling world' of my childhood'.

**Spring Lane (1988)**

'Built in the early 1800's, Griffin Park Lodge and Coach House was built by Thomas Dugdale, who was instrumental in bringing the first railway line to Blackburn. I imagine him as a wealthy man, perhaps a mill owner, but I know for sure that he was once the mayor of Blackburn. The lodge sits within around 50 acres of green fields, playgrounds, woodland and formal gardens situated around the lodge itself. From certain areas of the park, my old house can be seen clearly, through the trees and across the main road that separates the terraced houses from this once-stately home.

I revisited the park in the summer of 2015, my first impressions were dominated by thoughts of scale - had the park shrunk with time? I found myself feeling like a giant, moving across the park in moments, huge thudding strides. I felt disorientated

*Figure 2 (Plate #02) - An example of photography made during the design stages of the enquiry (posted to the blog)*

Photography from the eight experiments were presented at eleven academic conferences and exhibitions (Appendix #01, p. 210) between 2016-2020. The conference papers, exhibitions and lectures presented by the researcher highlighted the issues and concerns of the enquiry to scholarly, professional and public audiences, both in Blackburn and elsewhere (Appendix #01, p. 210). Such opportunities were used by the researcher to gain feedback on the research outcomes and trajectory, whilst enabling the researcher to further develop skills in presenting within postgraduate and professional contexts.

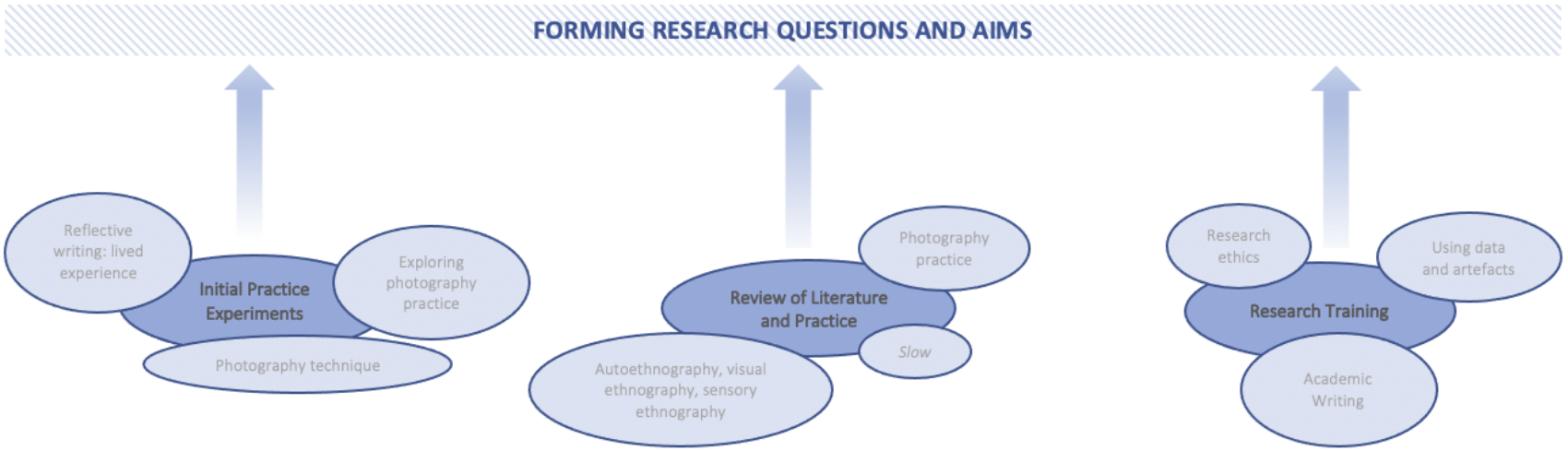


*Figure 3 - Representing the significance of initial research activities in the design of appropriate questions and aims.*

## Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations

### Photography as a Socially Engaged Practice

Literature providing both historical and contemporary perspectives on photography (Benjamin, 1931), (Berger, 2013) (Flusser, 2000) (Sontag, 1979), provided a philosophical foundation upon which research experiments were designed, executed and evaluated. For example, examination of how approaches in photography have adapted, from a social perspective, since its invention in the early 1800s, is presented in Chapter 1 (pp. 28-30) and Chapter 2 (pp. 82-86), influencing the development of the socially engaged photography practice outlined in Chapter 4 (pp. 135-166). The knowledge acquired from such activity aided the researcher in developing socially engaged approaches to photography practice.

Further, questioning what photography has been (Benjamin, 1931), and what it has more recently become (Moschovi, McKay and Plouviez, 2013) (Campany, 2003) was crucial in ensuring the relevance, specificity and originality of research outcomes. Analysis and evaluation of photographic practitioners and practices - for example, the photography of Dracup (Dracup, 2017), Kippin (Kippin, 1995), Lutter (Greenhalgh, 2015), Meecham (Meecham and Jeffrey, 1987), Mellor (Mellor, 1989) and Seawright (Seawright, 2000) - provided a critical function in the articulation of photographic approaches and languages, enabling the practice based outcomes to be contextualised and situated within the wider field of photographic practice. More specifically, the genre of photography connected to this enquiry should be considered as socially engaged *slow* photography – that is, an approach to photography that places emphasis on collaboration with subject/s (Germain and Flynn, 2016) (Luvera, 2019), the linking of the researcher's lived experience to wider social or cultural contexts (Mortram, 2016) (Ryley, 2010) and the use of multiple voices in the production of photographic works (*Laygate Stories* [Photography and Writing], 2021) (Walmsley Griffiths, 2021b). An account of socially engaged photography and *slow*

as methods are outlined in Chapter 2 (Research Methods), whilst the related experiments are presented in Chapters 3 and 4.

## The Slow Movement

The Slow Movement emerged in the mid-1980s as an organised political campaigning group. Carlo Petrini, an activist in the communist group Partito di Unita Proletaria, was the founder of Acrigola, a non-profit organisation concerned with food sustainability: Arcigola (the predecessor of Slow Food) led a successful protest against the opening of a branch of MacDonald's in Rome, near the Spanish Steps, in 1986. The Slow Food organisation agreed its manifesto in 1989, with signatories from 15 countries, leading thousands of global projects in over 160 countries. Other organisations, adopting similar political and environmental aims, emerged at various times during the 1990s and 2000s, including Cittaslow, an organisation that supports projects that aim to improve the quality of life in cities around the world. *Slow* has since become a catch-all term used to describe a range of movements, attitudes, and organised campaigns that are relational in resisting perceived accelerations (and related consequences) relating to homogeneity, digital interconnectivity and globalisation.

The term, *slow* has since been applied in multiple disciplines such as design, fine art, gastronomy, science, research and leisure. Literature in the area of *slow* include; In Praise of Slowness: Challenging the Cult of Speed (Honore, 2005), Slow Ethnography: A Hut with a View (Grandia, 2015), Slow Living (Parkins and Geoffrey, 2006) and Street Flowers – Urban Survivors of the Privileged Land (Collier, 2013). The notion of *slow* is, commonly, not proposed as an opposite of 'fast', but as a way of utilising time differently, or of the economies of scale, or of reflexivity and reflection. Writers and researchers have adopted varying grammatical approaches when writing about *slow*: Slow (Honore, 2005, Pink, 2015), slow (Collier, 2013), Slow living (Parkins, 2004) and slowness (Grandia, 2015). With respect to this thesis, *slow* (italic font, lowercase), rather than slow (standard font) or Slow (uppercase 'S'), is used to

emphasise the phenomenological distinctions between slow as a measure of time and the intentional and unintentional, or reflective and non-reflective approaches utilised in the enquiry. Furthermore, the term *slow* is used in the context of the philosophy and culture of *slow* identified in the thesis. An expanded commentary on *slow*, in relation to the research methodology and to photography, can be found in Chapter 2 (pp. 30-33) (pp. 82-86).

In the context of the research enquiry, *slow* supported the development of the socially engaged photography in placing emphasis on experiencing and exploring the local environment (in this case Blackburn, Lancashire, UK), utilising multiple voices to influence photography practice, and embracing reflective and iterative approaches to practice and writing.

## Autoethnography as Process and Product

Autoethnography is an approach to qualitative research where researchers explore, often through writing, their life experiences in relation to social and cultural phenomena (Custer, 2014, p. 1). The term *auto-ethnography* was first used by anthropologist David Hayano to acknowledge the shift toward western anthropologists conducting local field studies on their own people, rather than those in colonial territories (Hayano, 1979, p. 1). The postmodern era, of seeking to explore other ways of knowing (Wall, 2006, p. 148), led to scholars challenging the conventions of social science research, with regard to how fact and truth was gathered and presented (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2010).

As a method, autoethnography draws from autobiography and ethnography, with researchers writing about past experiences through hindsight (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2010), typically resulting in bodies of text. The application of self-reflection and reflexivity is fundamental to the process of autoethnography, with researchers analysing cultural experiences (Custer, 2014, p. 1), interpreting histories and identities, (Hoppes, 2014, p. 63) through the use of field notes, interviews and artefacts

(Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2010). The product of autoethnography are bodies of text or other artefacts that exist as aesthetic and evocative descriptions of personal and interpersonal experiences, which can be shared with audiences to broaden understanding (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2010).

Autoethnography - as both a *process* and *product* (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2010, p. 1) – influenced the design of the photographic methodology, in utilising the researcher's lived experience in the process of investigation and experimentation. In this vein - and in the context of answering the research questions (Question 3, p. 11) - activities synthesise a range of approaches (for example, photography *and* writing), helping to explore and apply photographic strategies for generating alternative narratives about Blackburn.

Theories such as the Tourist Gaze (Urry and Larsen, 2011) enabled a reconfiguration of the practice approach, demanding examination of the notion of insider and outsider in the context of the researcher's historical and social position. Relatedly, nostalgia – a term used to describe the desire to return to another time (Takvam and Vale, 2016) – influenced changes in the approach during Phase 2 of the experimentation (Chapter 3, pp. 107-114), supporting the analysis of the researcher's experiences during practice based experiments. Similarly, the concept of temporality (Parkins, 2004), revolving around a consciousness of time during the practice of photography, influenced both the design of research experiments and the creative process. The theories and concepts drawn from the range of literature are significant in how collaborative research activities were designed, supporting the creation of counter-narratives through dialectic essays and photography that exposed the complementary and opposing social values of researcher and research participants.

Academic Writing

The form and style of writing created during the enquiry can be described as multifaceted, adapting to the particular contexts and purposes during the timeframe of the enquiry. The use of critical writing – for example, appraising literature and practice (for example, pp. 82-86) – helped to develop the necessary skills required to write the thesis. Reflective writing was used when writing field notes or accounts of experiences (pp. 140-143), helping the researcher to work out problems or issues connected to the use of methods or and approach to photography. The act of blogging represented a concise and more informal approach to writing, intended to be short and in summary and, in the case of the researcher's blog, often created as an accompaniment to photographs posted on the blog (Figure 7).

The researcher applied a consistent approach to writing-up the experiments, leading to the development of a written diary of experiences, ideas, concerns and considerations, presented on the blog. The action of blogging – to undertake reflective writing; post images; cite literature, practice and theories; articulate the syncretic nature of the enquiry; visualise the research journey – was an ongoing approach during the enquiry and facilitated the ongoing creation of text which contributed to the annual monitoring reports and conference papers (pp. 35-41).

During the early stages of experimentation, the use of reflective writing supplemented the photographic approach (for example, Figures 33-35), resulting in personal, written accounts of lived experience. Outcomes from *Expanding the Photographic Interval* (pp. 89-95) and *The Double Parallax* experiments (pp. 95-107) evidence a photography practice where reflective writing is fused with photographic imagery.

Crucially, the writing produced throughout the enquiry provided a critical basis for the reflection upon, and presentation (thesis) of the research activities and outcomes, fulfilling the following roles:

- defining and contextualising the research aims, objectives and questions.
- providing an extensive, critical account of the methods, methodologies, research activities, conclusions, contribution to knowledge.
- contextualising and appraising relevant topics: *slow*; photography and reflexivity; visual language; media ethics and approaches.
- appraising and evaluating the research enquiry in relation to the research aims, objectives and questions.
- reflective writing, influenced by the academic practice of autoethnography (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2010), resulting in the creation of concise personal, written accounts of lived experience.

## Introduction to the Research Methodology

The critical purpose in conceptualising, then designing, the research methodology was to enable the researcher to undertake advanced academic study in the substantive and related fields, meeting the research questions and aims. It was critical, in support of the learning outcomes for PhD study (Graduate Research Support, 2014, p. 27), that adopted methods and applied methodologies stimulated the development of ideas, techniques and approaches which, in turn, contributes new knowledge in the fields of socially engaged photography and *slow*. The methods needed to enable the critical examination of research topics, driven by the research questions and leading to the development and completion of an advanced practice based research enquiry. Within the context of doctoral research, practice *based* is defined as an academic exercise designed to instantiate a given theory and practice of arts research (Scrivener and Chapman, 2004, p. 2). In this respect, the research methods adopted for the enquiry had to ensure the facilitation of new ways of making meaning through practical invention (Barrett and Bolt, 2019, p. 191), such that photographic outcomes emerging from the enquiry offered alternative narratives to those developed by television and newspapers in their representation of Blackburn. In this context, the initial research experiments (Figures 1 and 2) were important in the determination of not only the choice of methods, but in how they would enable the development of an overall methodology in response to the research aims and objectives. A diagram illustrating the research methodology is presented in Figure 4.

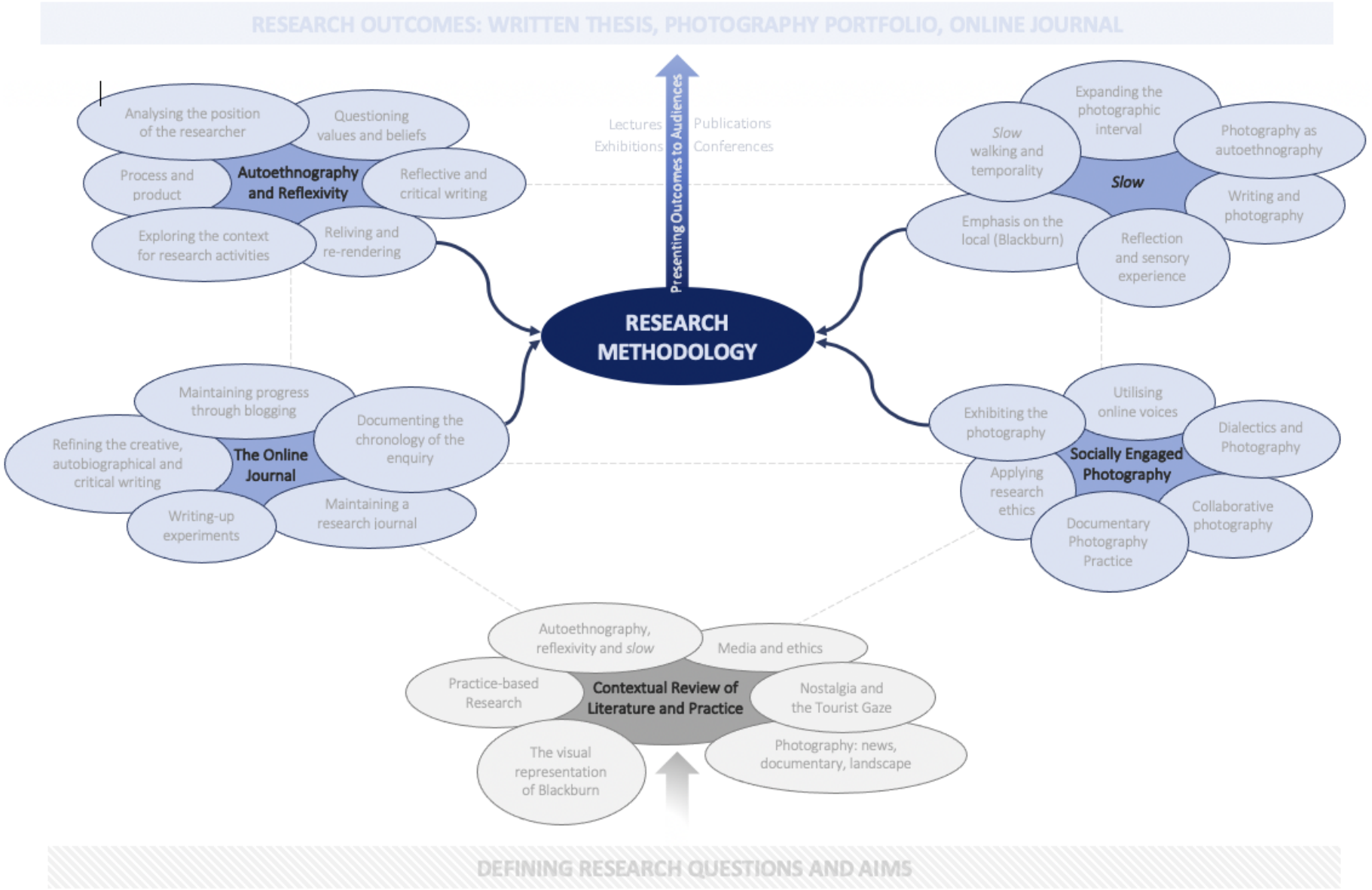


*Figure 4 - Representing the research methods and methodology for the enquiry.*

The diagram provided as Figure 4 provides an overview of the integration of the research methods and the contextual review (in the context of the research questions and aims) and visualises:

- The research journey, from the definition of research questions, through the presentation of outcomes in conferences and exhibitions, to the research outcomes.
- The contextual review of literature and practice as a crucial influence for the development of methods and experiments.
- The specific methods utilised during the enquiry - autoethnography; *slow*, socially engaged photography practice, blogging – and how these come together as components for the overall research methodology.
- The use of a Blog and how the reflective, iterative action of blogging supported the research enquiry through reflection upon the progress, identity and features of the research activities.
- The connectivity between the individual methods, in relation to themes, concerns and practice based experimentation .

The approach to the enquiry sits within the field of creative *practice based* research, whilst the substantive practice method is socially engaged photography underpinned by *slow*. A commentary defining practice based research, below, precedes concise definitions of the adopted methods: socially engaged photography practice, *slow*, autoethnography and reflexivity, the blog. A more detailed commentary on the research methods employed for the enquiry is provided in Research Methods (pp. 28-41).

Practice Based Research

Across the range of *art as research* literature, the terms practice based, practice led and research as practice are often used interchangeably whilst, collectively, emphasising approaches to creative research activity that rely upon artistic expression (McNiff, 2013, p. 3), the use of materials and methods to make meaning (Barrett, 2010, p. 191) and are supported by critical, reflective writing focussing upon the issues, concerns and interests resulting from such approaches (Scrivener and Chapman, 2004, p. 3). Further, in practice *based* research the artist's/researcher's experiences and identity are often inseparable from the making process (Skains, 2018, p. 88), linking the approach to autoethnography and reflexivity. Candy defines practice based research as an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice (Candy, 2006, p. 2) and outlined the epistemological difference between practice *led* and practice *based* postgraduate research:

- Practice *led* research can be presented in written form (without the artefacts being made visible) and leads to new understanding about practice.
- Artefacts produced as the result of practice *based* research will form a central part of the candidate's submission, alongside a written thesis, as a basis of the contribution to knowledge (Candy, 2006, p. 4).

There are several, defining characteristics of the research activities undertaken, both as they were designed and how they were conducted. Such characteristics reflect the broader definitions of practice based research - for example, practice based research in the arts places emphasis on the manifestation of issues and concerns of practice within the visual artefact itself (Skains, 2018, p. 86), be this a photograph, a sculpture or a film. The photographs presented in the portfolio (Part II), therefore, represent the process and outcome of the practice based research enquiry. The thesis focusses on the research context, methods, means of production and related issues or concerns. A key feature of the

blog, which represents the *journey* of the research activities, reflects a crucial feature: the documentation of the experiments and experiences of practice based research (Barrett, 2010, p. 192).

Further, the full complexity and identity of photographic, practice based research activities (which range from artistic to analytical) can only be understood fully when reviewed alongside the written thesis (Skains, 2018, p. 86). The integration of multidisciplinary approaches alongside the photography practice – for example, utilising personal interest and experience (Scrivener and Chapman, 2004, p. 3) and the application of autoethnographic frameworks (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2010) - mirror the generally accepted features of practice based research (Barrett, 2010, p. 5).

Photographs, as a substantive product of this enquiry, are a critical and substantial evidence that define the basis for the contribution to knowledge. The photographic making process, explored across eight photography experiments is presented in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. Approaches include; photography as autoethnography, *slow*-walking and photography, participatory photography and photography informed by the voices of others. Crucially, in respect to the testing of a socially engaged photography practice, the learning that emerged from such activities were presented by the researcher in a range of contexts, and to a range of audiences, throughout the duration of the enquiry (Appendix #01, p. 2010). This included eleven conferences, exhibitions and talks both locally (in Blackburn) and nationally, further highlighting the socially engaged strand of the research. The significance of the photography, as part of the basis for the contribution to knowledge, are presented in the portfolio (Part II). The portfolio presents one hundred photographs, drawn from the overall experimentation phases: whilst the researcher made significantly more photographs during the enquiry than those presented in the portfolio, those which feature in it have been chosen by the researcher to exemplify the issues and concerns of; the approach to the photographic experiments; the theoretical and conceptual foundations that informed the practice based approaches and outcomes; the researcher's lived experience and how this remained integral to the photography during the enquiry.

Research Methods

Socially Engaged Photography

It is important to state that the presentation of an encyclopaedic definition of what social photography practice is – from, say, the perspective of its early historical development from the 1820s, or how the camera has been employed across almost all news and journalistic media since its invention - is outside the scope of the research aims. In this context, however, there are some key examples that join photography's early history with the form of socially engaged photography that has emerged in the last decade.

Photography emerged from the imperialist era. As such, the belief in the importance of technological advancement as a measure of progress (Hershkowitz, 1980 p.7, cited in Wells, 2000, p. 68) motivated an emphasis on pioneers achieving more reliable and higher quality apparatus and materials. Once such reliability and quality were achieved, photography was quickly utilised across a range of situations and contexts, such as: war, travel, medicine and portraiture. Yet, photographs of people other than aristocratic or the privileged often merely reinforced a viewer's belief in native or foreign people as primitive, bizarre, barbaric or simply picturesque (Wells, 2000, p. 68), rather than facilitating questions or concerns about society. Examples from the United Kingdom include William Henry Fox Talbot who photographed workers at his country estate, Hill and Adamson who photographed the fisherman of Newhaven and Charles Negre who photographed chimney sweeps in Paris (Koenig, in Frizot, 1998, p. 347). These photographers were motivated to represent the picturesque and are rudimentary and early examples of photography as a *social* practice. The mobilisation of the photographic process, alongside the emerging reformist movements throughout the 1800s, led to a wider practice and utilisation of photography employed to represent social conditions and concerns. Thomas Annan was commissioned by the Trustees of the Glasgow City Improvement Act in the 1860s to photograph the picturesque but

unsavoury slums in Glasgow (Newhall, 1984, p. 103). John Thompson, a portrait photographer in London following his grand tours of Asia and the Middle East, made photographs of workers and the poor later in his career, making an effort to present his subjects in the wider environmental scene they were living in (Frizot, 1998, p. 349). Yet, whilst the focus of this photography was clearly social in terms of subject matter, such examples reveal an inherent power structure, particularly when considered in relation to the social status of those making the photographs compared to those who were the subject of such photographs: the photographers referenced above are all men, all western and who directed their camera at those in more vulnerable and less fortuitous social positions. In this context, the notion of a socially *engaged* photography practice appears superficial.

Definitions for socially engaged photography place emphasis on collaboration between photographer and subject, and the highlighting of social issues through a participatory photography practice – the process of questioning the role of the photographer and bringing together multiple voices in the production of photographs, is as important as the outcomes that emerge from such as practice (Open Eye Gallery, 2018). Therefore, in the context of the enquiry, suitable examples include Mass Observation and the photography of Humphrey Spender in the 1940s, Jo Spence's political projects as part of the Hackney Flashers group in the 1970s and, more recently, Anthony Luvera's community photography projects (Luvera, 2019). An important strand within socially engaged photography practice is the role of participation in the production or treatment of photography. Julian Germain's focus on collecting and curating photography drawn from catalogues, archives and family albums, provides reflection on photography's place in society and forms links to local history and events (*Baltic Plus | Self-Publishing Artists' Market 2018: Ashington District Star - Julian Germain: Public Talk*, 2018). Crucially, this approach provides a platform for the subjects of photography to help inform the narratives of any subsequent photographic images.

Drawing from such practitioners and approaches, the research enquiry develops a socially engaged photography practice in order to respond to Blackburn's contemporary media portrayal. The design of photography experiments utilised existing definitions for a socially engaged photography practice to carry out a long-form socially engaged photography practice, using the researcher's lived experience alongside collaboration with research participants, in order to respond to the research questions and aims. The foundations for identifying the approach as long-form are provided by two critical facets of the research enquiry. Firstly, the testing of eight photography experiments, carried out over a five-year period between 2015 -2020, utilising a range of voices in the production of photography and writing. Secondly, the research is motivated by televisual and journalistic portrayals of Blackburn (pp. 11-12), with some examples collated during the contextual review illustrating a drop-in and colour-in approach (p. 75-81). Use of this method throughout the enquiry results in photographic outcomes that place emphasis on the value of lived experience in influencing photograph practice, the use of other voices in the production of photography and the impact of a participatory approach to photographic production.

*Slow*

During the early stages of the enquiry, a review of literature on *slow* influenced the design of methodologies and, thus, the approaches for practice based experimentation. The review helped to determine the principles of *slow* as a research method, clarifying how such an approach could be appraised through reflective writing. Given the span of conceptual, theoretical and political writing within the field, the review was narrowed to ensure the scope was specific and relevant to the research aims and objectives. For example, the history of the Slow Food movement is of relevance here only to outline the broader social, political and economic context within which it emerged.

*Slow* has been defined through multiple theoretical and practical applications, such as in agriculture (Tencati and Zsolnai, 2012, pp. 347–348), urban design (Radstrom, 2011, p. 13) and scholarship (Leibowitz and Bozalek, 2018, pp. 992–993). The movement is understood to have emerged from increasing social inequalities and an accelerating culture of speed (Tomlinson, 2007) experienced, mostly, in globally connected cities in the latter decades of the twentieth century. The first formally organised group was Slow Food, established in 1986 by Carlos Petrini. Slow Food was (and remains) an organisation established to combat homogeneity, globalisation and fast-food, motivated, initially at least, by a dispute over the proposed opening of a MacDonald's restaurant at the Spanish Steps in Rome. Essentially, Slow Food became an avant-garde movement against postmodern life which, by 2019, had initiated projects in over one hundred and sixty countries and had over one hundred thousand members. Whilst the explicit philosophy for Slow Food is to seek liberation from the velocity of modern life, the approach specifically champions gastronomic environmentalism and tradition through academic conferences, environmental initiatives and influencing global policy change. Other organisations and research centres such as Cittaslow and Slow Research Lab, emerged at varying points during the 1990s and 2000s as the philosophy expanded into other cultural terroir such as art and science. The strands that comprise the Slow Movement are not formally bound together by a common manifesto or statute but, rather, the philosophy has become a fluid idea which can accommodate and adapt to differing contexts (Holland, 2018, p. 42). What gels the wider movement to the specific gastro-protest that originated in Italy is the aim of engaging in mindful, rather than mindless practices (Parkins, 2004, p. 363) through the critical interrogation of, and resistance to, the values and principles of the contemporary global world (Parkins and Geoffrey, 2006, p. 83).

Critically, *slow* can be understood as a politically motivated desire to resist an *accelerated* pace of contemporary life through the promotion of belonging, community, justice and sustainability (Linder and Meissner, 2015, p. 8). Acceleration - of communication, technology and working patterns - has become a defining characteristic of contemporary society, reinforced by Steve Ballmer's totemic slogan

presented in 2013 to Microsoft Conference delegates: Faster, faster, faster, faster (Hammelehle, 2013). However, it is important to stress that *slow*, in the context of this enquiry, is not defined merely by speed:

> "'Slow' exists not in opposition to 'fast', but as a metaphor for alternative moral economies of scale" (Grandia, 2015, p. 304).

Further, Parkins implies that *slow* can be adopted to enable critical and contemplative reflections and critiques of experiences, temporality, materials and processes:

> "Slow' living at its best envisages more than just a redistribution of time…It points towards an alternative understanding of time itself" (Parkins, 2004, p. 368).

The defining characteristics of *slow* are then summarised as an approach to creativity/design/study/work that utilises sensory experience, values and investment in local qualities, focussing on the notion of temporality in relation to purpose or activity. The proposition, overall, is that *slow* influences coordinated attempts to understand place not only through the concepts of globalisation or localism, but the points where human experience and perception are equally important (Pink and Servon, 2013, p. 453). Such definitions are useful in positioning *slow* alongside the drop-in and colour-in approach adopted by media when reporting on Blackburn (Tweedie, 2016). An alternative approach, to enable the creation of alternative narratives, could see the artist/researcher/writer take account of the approach, whilst encouraging dialogue between cultures and people as part of an ethical approach (Fenton, 2009, p. 54).

The knowledge synthesised from the review of literature and practice was applied to the early experiments, with the aim of creating opportunities to reflect on lived experience. Specifically, the

researcher's use of antiquated photographic technology with long exposure photography, was an attempt to manipulate the photographic process, to slow it down and create opportunities for deep reflection on lived experiences, places of significance and the passing of time.

This experiment (Expanding the Photographic Interval, pp. 89-95) was undertaken directly in response to the research aims, but was an attempt to subsume the principles of *slow* into the research approach, enabling the creation of visual (photographic) and written (autobiography) narratives, whilst providing a research method through which to embark on practice based research. The experience of places in reflecting topics of human experience (Ingold, 2007) was an important aspect of this phase of the enquiry. In this sense, the experience of carrying out experiments was a visceral experience, where attempts to record feelings, sensations and moods (Hayes-Conroy and Martin, 2010, p. 2957) photographically and in written form, were attempted. It was this approach, positioning time, past and present, as important in the process of generating photography and writing, which links firmly with the principles of *slow* gathered from the contextual review of literature and practice.

## Autoethnography

Autoethnography is defined as an approach to research and writing that aims to describe and analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2010). As a research method derived from anthropology, autoethnography shares similarities with ethnographic research but differs in its use of autobiography (Ellis, 2016, p. 12) as a central tenet in the production of political, socially-just and socially-conscious research (Adams and Jones, 2011).

Autoethnography draws parallels with practice based research, in that it accommodates subjectivity, emotionality and the researcher's influence on research (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2010). Referred to as evocative autoethnography, this approach places emphasis on the detail of the researcher's

experience and how this is communicated to the reader. Evocative autoethnography has been presented in several forms, from dance (Katwyk and Seko, 2017), filmmaking (Kesler, 2014) and poetry (Rawlins, 2018), with commonality in the production of aesthetic and evocative *thick* descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience (Ellis, Adams, Bochner, 2011). Autoethnographers retrospectively and selectively write about 'epiphanies' and use these as influence to describe and reflect upon cultural identity and cultural practices and therefore reflexivity becomes a vital component.

Reflexivity refers to the acknowledgement by a researcher regarding their input in constructed research (or practice) situations and narratives (Flick, 2014, p. 542). As a social concept, reflexivity is widely known and explored amongst social scientists. Bourdieu (1992) proposed that sociologists who seek to present truth are in fact always laden with bias, whilst Foucault (1970) argued that man is both a knowing subject and the object of his own study. Similarly, Miller (2013) rationalises in relation to the history of photography, epitomised in the movement from modernist to post-modernist eras:

> "In the context of reflexivity the photographer's imposed rationalisation and explanation of events was finally seen for what it was - an outsider's appraisal of a situation that, potentially, had no possible visual summation" (Miller, Carson and Wilkie, 2013, p. 30).

As a practice, reflexivity refers to how researchers' examine their own beliefs and judgements, during research enquiry. Millar reveals that modernist photographers saw themselves as the epicenter, and the purveyor, of the truth that they were re-telling, further describing the opposing and alternate approach of the post-modern artist who sought to ask critical questions about the researcher's political, economic and cultural position during research or practice based enquiry (Miller, Carson and Wilkie, 2013, p. 32). This approach, of questioning the authority, validity and purpose of photographer, is revealed in the work of Kerry Mansfield (2009).

Autoethnography and reflexivity were key approaches in developing and refining the approaches to photography and writing throughout the research enquiry. Whilst increasingly the overarching methodology moved (at least consciously) away from autoethnography as an explicit strand, and towards the application of a socially engaged practice, the underpinning knowledge of autoethnography and reflexivity assisted in aiding the researcher to explore the significance of their background, opinions and experiences on the design of research experiments and the outcomes of such activities. For example, *Wik:Blackburn* (pp. 115-123)**,** utilises writing produced by multiple, online authors as a form of democratically-produced autoethnography to encourage a more outward, objective approach. Such as approach enabled the creation of photographic and written artefacts that differed in design, context and narrative from earlier experiments.

Online Research Diary: The Blog

Some of the earliest reading undertaken by the researcher during the PhD was within the topics of post-graduate research skills (e.g. Bell, 2010), practice based research (e.g. Candy, 2006) and approaches to arts and humanities postgraduate study (e.g. Wisker, 2007). In parallel, attending the University's research degree training programme provided the researcher with an introduction into how to organise research findings using electronic databases (such as referencing software) and online applications. This training included taught sessions and online materials relating specifically to art and design research paradigms, methods and methodologies (Graham, 2019).

The importance of writing-up as an ongoing activity, particularly in the context of balancing other commitments such as full-time employment (Bell, 2010, p. 39), was a defining influence in establishing the blog (using Google's *Blogger*, a web 2.0 application), established in October 2015 (Figure 5). There appeared to be a strong advantage to blogging in providing both a categorised and chronological order

for the experiments undertaken and a device that assisted the researcher in maintaining timely recording (Ciampa and Gallagher, 2015, p. 884) of ideas, experiments and findings. The blog application would date stamp each post, meaning that the opportunity to review recent progress (by the supervisory team) was freely available, supporting a transparent process of learning (Ciampa and Gallagher, 2015, p. 885). The blog application provided additional functions such as extra sub-pages, allowing the researcher to upload Annual Monitoring Progress Reports, and an option to allow the supervisory team to provide feedback on published posts in the form of comments, outside of scheduled review meetings (Figure 6).


*Figure 5 - The PhD Blog: https://www.jharrisonphd@blogspot.com*

The researcher's familiarity with blended and digital learning approaches (gained from a twenty-year career in further and higher education), and how these now proliferate education across the levels, was drawn upon, to enable a judgement about the type of platform to utilise. The researcher studied journal articles about effectiveness of blogging in facilitating reflection and learning - for example, a case study led by Rabikowska (2008) demonstrated that blogging could assist student learning in the absence of formal structures, such as tutor supervision (2008, p. 9). Other research suggests a link between student engagement and achievement (Mansouri and Piki, 2016, p. 271). Fundamentally, as with any student undertaking a formal programme of study, the researcher recognised the importance of demonstrating learning at the appropriate level - skills such as self-reflection and deep learning

(Rabikowska, 2008, p. 1). Subsequently, the use of a blog (Google's *Blogger*, a web-based application) became a regular aspect of research activity. That is, the activity was embedded in an organisational sense, allowing the researcher to post writing, photographs and other material to a reliable repository for archival purposes and, later, for self-reflection and the refinement of research methodologies.


*Figure 6 - An example of the Blog's 'comments' function*

The advantage of this web 2.0 application included the opportunity to create, amend or remove posts quickly and ensure accessibility and compatibility across operating systems. The first posts published on the blog, in October 2015, identified a methodology for the initial experiments, based upon the research proposal submitted to the University in June 2015. The process of blogging allowed for the photography to be presented alongside the autoethnographic writing (Harrison, 2015c) and, importantly, consolidated by other posts such as the researcher's review of literature and practice (Figure 7).

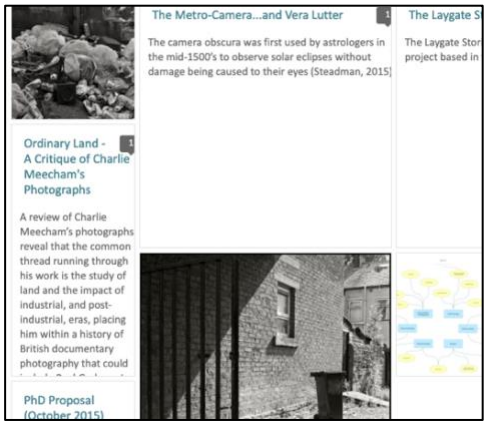


*Figure 7 - Blog posts: practical experiments and literature/practice review*

Whilst blogging facilitated the organisation of ideas, photography and approaches it also evidences academic development. For example, the blog provides examples of the development of research skills during the first 6 months of the PhD. In the post on 18 October 2015 (Figure 8), a descriptive mind-map shows examples of the literature and practice that had been identified and studied. As can be seen, the researcher's understanding of the relevant literature appears narrow at this stage (left), when cross-referenced with the mind-map uploaded on 21 February 2016 (right), demonstrating a greater confidence in linking associated theories and literature with research aims.

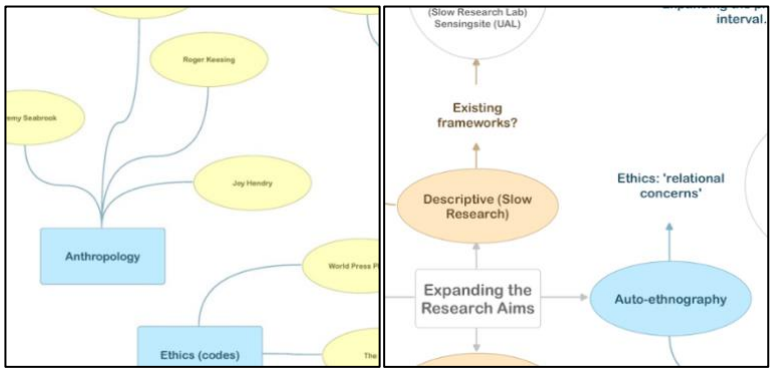


*Figure 8 - Examples of blog posts evidencing postgraduate skills development*

Similarly, the ease by which critical self-reflection could occur assisted in forming conclusions. The ability to navigate through progress, to compare and contrast experiments with those undertaken the

previous year and to consider the development and criticality of academic writing, contributed towards learning and assisted the researcher in evaluating the research periodically, or when required. Critically, the nature of blogging relates to the defining principles of autoethnography in drawing from personal experience to develop understanding on a subject, discipline or culture (Bennett and Folley, 2014, p. 2). In this sense, the method of blogging was highly appropriate for the research enquiry. For example, two posts from the blog, published four years apart, highlight that whilst the autobiography has remained as a research strand, the methodology has shifted from an approach influenced by the researcher's lived experience, to one influenced by a direct engagement with people in the community (Figure 9).

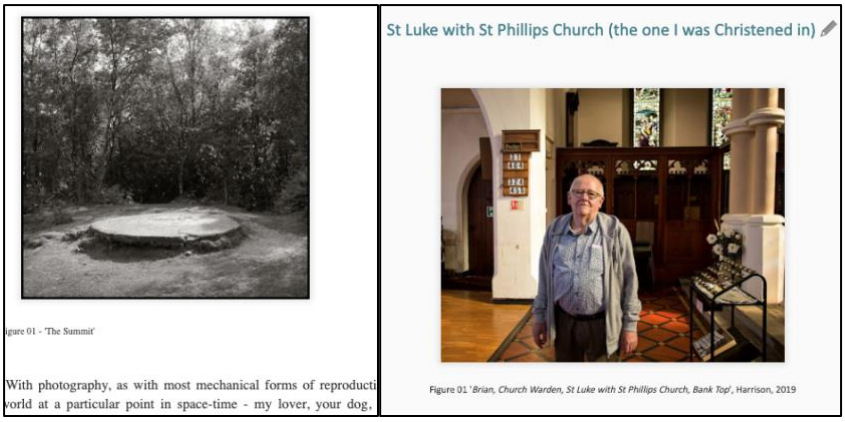


*Figure 9 - An example of how the visual approach and emerging methodology adapted during the PhD, from 2015 (left) to 2019 (right)*

A montage created from the two hundred posts published since 2015 illustrates the ebb and flow of the research (Figure 10). The first six months of the PhD are concerned with the review of literature, practice based experimentation and refinement of the research aims, followed by the focus on photography practice in the middle stages (2018-2019) of the research enquiry. The latter stages of 2019 and early 2020 demonstrate the transition from practice based research to phase of evaluation and appraisal (for example, refining the research questions and creating draft chapters for the thesis). This diagrammatic image could be appraised and evaluated variously, perhaps relating to academic

development, photography and representation, or the adaptability of web 2.0 applications. Of considerable importance to this thesis though, is that the chronological view of the posts, collectively, represents an ontological view of the researcher's practice based PhD research.

The iterative process of blogging, of producing/posting/concluding, mirror the characteristics of *slow*. The *post-reflection-practice-post-evaluate* action driven by the act of blogging reflect the practice of syncretic thinking (Collier, 2013, p. 11). The blog contains over 200 posts, dating from October 2015 to summer 2020 and details the research journey. In this context, it is significant that the longer the research enquiry continued, the more important the blog became in making sense of both the research itself, and the process of finalising the portfolio and the thesis. Furthermore, the blog became an essential tool that, post-enquiry, represents the research journal: an iterative and relevant approach to recording thoughts, observations, developments, write-ups and photographs. Feedback provided in Annual Monitoring events was positive, highlighting the researcher's willingness to write-up research activities and findings as an ongoing practice: the use of the blog supported the development (in quality and in timeliness) of the academic writing produced during the enquiry.

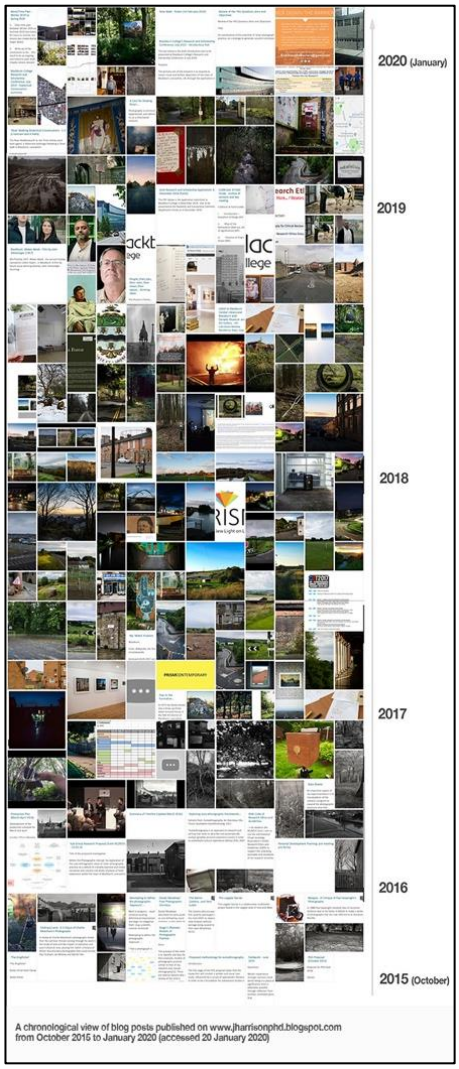


*Figure 10 - A chronological view of blog posts, from October 2015 to January 2020*

The method of blogging contributed to the overall submission of evidence and, specifically, assisted in evidencing the research as a continuous and advanced study providing evidence of originality and independent critical ability (Wisker, 2007, p. 113). The blog, and the posts contained within, exist now as a product of the research enquiry. This product can be evaluated through multiple perspectives, in that it can be analysed as a method, assessed in terms of approach, reflect the experiences of practice based research, or visualised as a chronology of research activities and experiences.

Chapter Synopses

Chapter 1 provides the reader with an introduction to the research enquiry, setting out the conceptual and theoretical foundations and the specific methods utilised. Drawing from a range of texts that appraise art as research, an evaluation of the important academic and practical distinctions between practice *based* and practice *led* research leads to a definition for practice based research as it was applied during the enquiry. The connection between the product of practice based research – in the case of this research that is the visual artefact / the photograph - and the experience of postgraduate research are defined as being interconnected, thus signifying the role of images in representing the issues and concerns of research activities. Putting forward a definition for the researcher's particular approach to practice based research, Chapter 1 highlights the role played by socially engaged photography, *slow*, autoethnography and reflexivity to pinpoint a specific approach to practice based research. The role of blogging in aiding reflection upon, progress with, and evaluation of, the experiments carried out during the enquiry, is situated within an academic context, relating the learning obtained from such a method with relevant case studies at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The chapter provides synopses for each chapter along with a table showing the range of practice based experiments and an experimentation timeline. Overall, Chapter 1 defines the connectivity between the research context and the adopted methods and methodologies in the context of the research questions and aims. The introductory research activities, those that led to the design of research questions and aims, are highlighted, providing an overview of the secondary sources that influenced the first photography experiments.

Establishing the thematic and theoretical context for the research enquiry, Chapter 2 introduces the range of influences for the research in the form of a contextual review of literature and practice. The significance of Blackburn's media portrayal is explored alongside a concise social and economic history of the town, emphasising key events, literary texts and visual media relevant to the research area.

Chapter 2 represents the Contextual review of literature and practice, upon which the thesis and portfolio were developed, placing emphasis on the significance of socially engaged photography, *slow*, autoethnography and reflexivity in the design and development of the research activities. The institutions and online repositories used to collect visual and textual reference materials are set out, defining how the review of literature and practice was developed.

Chapter 3 is the first of two chapters providing the substantive written and visual account of the practice based experimentation, examining how the methodology was developed and refined. Chapter 3 emphasises the importance of photography as a time-based medium, highlighting the dislocation between the photographed and the photograph and the recent, more ambiguous existence of analogue photography, determined by the onset of digital photography. From this contextual base provided by Chapter 2, Chapter 3 provides a detailed account of the early research experiments, defining the transformational impact of the theoretical and conceptual foundations - such as autoethnography - on the researcher's position and presents analyses of the visual and written outcomes generated from the first, testing stage of experimentation (2015-2017). Through this exploratory phase of experimentation, the researcher's experiences of family, friendships and the environment are revealed through photography and reflective writing, helping to establish a photographic practice in response to the research questions (Questions 1-3, p. 11). The chapter concludes by introducing the second phase of research, establishing how the socially engaged practice utilises multiple voices to generate alternative, photographic narratives to the media portrayal outlined in Chapter 2 (pp. 75-81).

Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the research strategies employed during the second stage of experimentation (2018-2020), focussing on how the visual and written outcomes evidence the development of the socially engaged *slow* photography practice. The works of Blackburn-based photographers are linked to the photographic approaches, whilst the outcomes from the practice are related to Blackburn's media portrayal from the 1970s onwards. Chapter 4 provides a reflective and

critical appraisal of the *SelfScapes*, *Participatory Portrait Photography*, *Slow Walk* and *Revisiting the Delineation* experiments, with focus placed on how the research was influenced during this phase by slow, co-research and participatory practices. Crucially, Chapter 4 highlights the dimensions, nuances and perspectives of such approaches upon the trajectory of the research enquiry and in the context of the socially engaged *slow* photography practice. Key to Chapter 4 is an account of how the photographic outcomes represent alternative narratives and approaches to the contemporary image motifs of Blackburn, meeting the research questions outlined in Chapter 1 (Question 1-3, p. 11).

Summary of the Practice Based Experiments

**Table 1**: Overview of Practice Based Experiments

| Date range | Experiment | Figure reference (example) |
|---|---|---|
| *Photography,* Slow *and Autoethnography, Phase 1 (Chapter 3)* | | |
| July 2015 – October 2015 | *Expanding the Photographic Interval* | *The Summit* (Figure 1) |
| October 2015 - September 2016 | *The Double Parallax* | *Marbles* (Figure 30) |
| February 2017 – May 2017 | *The Tourist Gaze* | *Satellites* (Figure 42) |
| June 2017 – November 2017 | *Wiki:Blackburn* | *The River Darwen* (Figure 45) |
| *Socially Engaged Photography, Phase 2 (Chapter 4)* | | |
| January 2018 – June 2018 | *SelfScapes* | *The Forests of Blackburn* (Figure 55) |
| August 2018 - October 2018 | *Participatory Portrait Photography* | *Abdul, Bicknell Street* (Figure 59) |
| October 2018 – March 2020 | *CoBB1ed* (includes *Slow Walk* and *Revisiting the Delineation)* | *Slow Walk* (Figure 66) *Revisiting the Delineation* (Figure 72) |

Table *1* provides an overview of the eight practice based photography experiments carried out during the research enquiry, linking them to the specific chapters in which they are outlined in further detail. The table states the date ranges of the experiments and the titles of experiments as defined in the thesis. An example of the photographic outcomes from the experiments are provided in the Figure Reference column and a summary of the experiments is provided below.

*Expanding the Photographic Interval*

In the early stages of the research the researcher utilised memories from their lived experiences of Blackburn, as motivation for the photography. In this approach, the researcher positions themselves as an insider, navigating an inward and highly subjective approach to photography about Blackburn. The researcher initiated the practice based enquiry through a series of photography experiments that utilised principles drawn from autoethnography and *slow*. The first phase of the experimentation (covering the first four experiments, as outlined in Table 1, above) utilised a focus on inward, self-

reflective approaches. For the *Expanding the Photographic Interval* experiment, the researcher reflected on their lived experience of Blackburn, from which they chose locations and themes to explore through photography and writing. The researcher made photographs in places indexical to specific memories: for example, the making of *The Water's Edge* (Figure 28) involved the researcher reflecting upon a childhood memory, whilst located in the same natural environment that linked to the memory. The experiments are characterised by a socially conscious approach (Ellis, 2016, p. 12), drawing from experiences, relationships, events and social conditions and utilising them for practice based photography research. The photography from this experiment (Plates #01-19) emphasised the researcher's lived experience and remained important through the latter stages of the enquiry to enable a starting point from which to test other outward and objective approaches.

*The Double Parallax*

The experiments continue to utilise principles of autoethnography and *slow*, through the practice of generating photography and reflective writing to describe memories and experiences. The researcher continues to make photographs and writing which centre on the local environment and lived experience, revealing the significance of *slow* on the design and fulfilment of experiments. The researcher experimented with extending photographic exposure times - often to more than ten minutes - creating temporal windows for reflection that the researcher used to write. Outcomes from such experiments – for example, *Yellow Hills* (Figure 33) - explore how the researcher's past and present co-exist alongside utopian and dystopian perspectives on the contemporary landscape of Blackburn, through photographic images and the scanned handwriting produced during the photographic exposure.

*The Tourist Gaze* and *Wiki:Blackburn*

The residential days undertaken by the researcher at Blackburn Central Library's Community History department (pp. 64-75), alongside research into the sociological theory of the Tourist Gaze (Urry and Larsen, 2011), encouraged the researcher to step back from the utilisation of lived experience and consider the views of others: a significant step in terms of the socially engaged practice presented in later experiments. The approach was expressed through the *Wiki:Blackburn* experiment (pp. 115-123), which sought to identify others' view about Blackburn and utilise them as the directing voice in the making of photographs. Using the town's Wikipedia page, the researcher extracted a list of places defined as significant by Wikipedia contributors (for example, *Blackburn's New Bus Station*, Figure 48), from which to initiate an exploration of the town driven by these alternative voices. This experiment developed alongside the researcher's involvement in supporting the digitisation of a historical photography archive (The Talbot Collection: pp. 115-116), assisting in providing the researcher with access to a range of visual and cultural artefacts, directly relevant to Blackburn's photographic history. Overall, the approach draws parallels with a systems approach to making photography (e.g. Power and Chandler, 1996) in using textual artefacts to inform the choice of subject for photography. The outcomes from the experiment, alongside a formal academic paper, were presented by the researcher at The National Festival of Making, at Blackburn Cathedral, in 2017.

*SelfScapes*

An opportunity to participate in a funded research cluster, *SelfScapes* (Dalby Forest, North York Moors), provided the researcher with an opportunity to test the established approaches of Phase 1 (discussed in Chapter 3) in another location, outside of Blackburn. The researcher continued the approach designed for the *Wiki:Blackburn* experiment, in utilising others' views, this time of Dalby Forest, North York Moors, the setting for a SelfScapes conference and art exhibition. The researcher created two portfolios of photography during this experiment. The first was a series of photographs influenced by the Wikipedia page for Dalby Forest, using an extracted list of places determined significant by the

contributors of the article. The second series of photographs produced during the timeframe of the research cluster – exhibited at Dalby Forest between March-July 2018 – portrayed woodland growing in Blackburn's former textiles mill housing areas previously earmarked for Pathfinder funding (a coalition Government initiative, (Hatherley, 2010)). Participation in *SelfScapes* supported the researcher in reflecting on the research methodology and to locate new approaches for the final stages of experimentation.

*Participatory Portrait Photography*

The refinement of the socially engaged photography practice occurred in phase 2 of the experimentation (discussed in Chapter 4). The researcher designed a participatory portrait photography experiment that utilised the researcher's knowledge of socially engaged photography and *slow* gained from the review of literature and practice. The researcher drew from the *Wiki:Blackburn* and *SelfScapes* experiments, utilising principles of *slow* to encourage individuals from Blackburn to reflect upon experiences of their community. The researcher produced guidance for the participants which required them to create writing to accompany their portrait, focussed on their experiences of Blackburn. An ethics framework created by the researcher - approved by the University's Research Support Group - underpinned the approach to this experiment. The outcomes presented the participant's view about Blackburn's representation, with the image and textual narrative exploring aspects such as community tension, connectedness and harmony.

*Slow Walk* and *Revisiting the Delineation*

The researcher's experience of the *SelfScapes* research cluster and participatory photography experiment, influenced the researcher to develop a final experiment to test a socially engaged *slow* photography practice. The researcher worked with a co-researcher to design a photography, writing

and walking experiment (Collier, 2013). As part of this *Slow Walk* experiment, the co-researchers walked along a historic delineation of Blackburn (from the central All Hallow's Spring, to the town's western border at the River Roddlesworth), discussing Blackburn's media portrayal and reflecting on the elements of the landscape which reflected contemporary local, national and global themes. Photographs created by the researcher during the *Slow Walk*, alongside texts extracted from a dialectical conversation between the co-researchers, were exhibited at the British Textiles Biennial *Politics of Cloth Conference* in 2018. Following this, the *Revisiting the Delineation* experiment drew together approaches previously utilised in experiments such as *The Double Parallax*, where the lived experience of the researcher became a factor in where photographs were made. The researcher revisited the route of the *Slow Walk*, making photographs of places they had a personal connection to, alongside new, previously unexplored places. The researcher engages with individuals in the community, working alongside them to create a series of photographic portraits. These experiments were reliant upon investment in the historical and cultural identity of the locality and how this, in turn, influences the development of photographic strategies.

Parts I-III

The submission of evidence for the PhD award constitutes a written thesis (Part I), a portfolio of photography (Part II) and a blog (Part III)**.** The thesis utilises a chronological structure, enabling the reader to learn about research activities in a sense of order reflective of the time they were conducted. With the exception of the use of field notes (pp. 140-143), the use of the third person to refer to the author within the thesis ('the researcher') was chosen due to the highly subjective approach to the research enquiry, particularly, as outlined in Chapter 3. The written thesis references, directly, the content of the portfolio and blog yet also includes references of other, relevant visual artefacts. In the portfolio of photography, photographic works are presented as a sequence of Plate numbers (#01-49) – Plate numbers are referenced within the caption information of the Figures contained in the thesis, to enable the reader to view the larger, higher quality images in the portfolio, where this is required.

The written thesis represents the chronology and circumstances of the research enquiry, whilst the photography practice elements are represented in the portfolio. It is not essential for the reader of the thesis to have the blog available to them, as the thesis provides appropriate accounts of the blog as a method. Therefore, access to the blog is only recommended for those who wish to assess in more detail its design, content and application. Thus, together, the thesis and portfolio adequately describe and represent the completeness of the research enquiry. The portfolio of photography is presented chronologically: experiments carried out in the early stages are presented first, with the final stage of experimentation presented last. The thesis and portfolio of photography are submitted in Portable Document Format (PDF), whilst the blog is available as an online free-access resource (https://jharrisonphd.blogspot.com/), providing access regardless of application software, hardware and operating system. Images presented in the portfolio are rendered into the PDF document as high quality, lossless Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG) files to preserve, as best as possible, the original image quality.

## Chapter 2: Contextual Review of Literature and Practice

### Introduction to the Contextual Review of Literature and Practice

The review of literature and practice began with literature searches to establish previous research studies matching the adopted themes. This included a thesis review, both at local institutional level (University of Sunderland) and a national level via the British Library (Appendix #02, p. 210). This activity was an attempt to assess the potential for the research to contribute new knowledge in the subject area. As an example, *slow* – as a cultural phenomenon or an applied research approach - is a relatively common topic, yet the application or phenomenological underpinning of *slow* within photographic research was narrow and limited to theoretical references or secondary references within postgraduate research enquiries. Such investigation provided early indication of the potential of the proposed research to contribute new knowledge in the subject area.

Whilst the review of literature and practice can be characterised as an extensive contextual and disciplinary review (relational to the research questions), it is not identified as a research method in its own right (Figure 4). However, the critical study of relevant, multidisciplinary theories and concepts supported the choice of methods, and development of an appropriate methodology for practice based research, enabling, through a complex process of experimentation, reflection, iteration and analysis, the creation of alternative narratives revealed through original image artefacts and academic writing. Crucially, the review provided context and scope through which to identify and examine contemporary photographic, televisual and journalistic images that portrayed the town of Blackburn. In turn, the review aided the design and application of an appropriate methodology through which to respond to such images (Question 1, p. 11). The review was an essential foundation for the research enquiry (Wisker, 2007, p. 129), assisting in forming the research questions and, in the context of the contribution to knowledge, establishing the need for the research enquiry.

Whilst the review demonstrates the extent of an *exploratory* strand of the research, it does not cover all literature and practice where research findings could contribute, rather it engages in dialogue with the areas identified as critical in relation to the aims of the research. Further, the knowledge developed from the review is embedded throughout the thesis and not merely contained with Chapter 2: for example, autoethnography and socially engaged photography practice are introduced in Chapter 1 (Research Methods), providing orientation to the reader of the thesis, but are then also referred to in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 to emphasise the connection between practice and conceptual or theoretical foundations. In keeping with the research aims and objectives, the contextual review of literature and practice reveals and explores contexts, histories, practices and theories relating to the field of study, including:

- Blackburn's history
- Blackburn's photographic, journalistic and televisual narratives
- Photography: histories, theories and practices
- *Slow* and *slow* photography
- Socially engaged photography and participatory photography
- Autoethnography

A Concise History of Blackburn

The context for Blackburn's media portrayal is presented within the following concise history of the town. The purpose in embedding Blackburn's history within the thesis allows for the reader to understand - in greater depth than that outlined in Chapter 1 (pp. 9-10) - the key contexts, events, literary texts and visual media relevant to the research questions and aims, whilst responding critically to Question 1 (p. 11) in identifying, examining and critiquing contemporary photographic, televisual

and journalistic images that portray the town of Blackburn. The two sections that follow - *Blackburn's Photographic History* (pp. 63-75) and *Blackburn's Contemporary Media Portrayal* (pp. 75-81) - explore the context further with regard to the town's more recent, media portrayal.

Blackburn is a town in northern England, in the county of Lancashire. Situated along the route of a roman military road linking Manchester to Carlisle, one of the town's most ancient features is All Hallow's Spring, a natural source of water used by local communities as far back as the bronze age (Farrer and Brownbill, 1911b, p. 244). The early history of the parish suggests that Blackburn was an agriculture community (Farrer and Brownbill, 1911a, p. 235), with evidence of habitation in the Anglo-Saxon period found in the former minister of St Mary in the centre of the town. Throughout the medieval period, Blackburn was the administrative centre of the Blackburn Hundred (Beattie, 2007, p. 10), a delineation of forest and hunting ground stretching from Preston in the east, to the border of Yorkshire in the west. This woodland formed a geographical boundary and a delineation of hunting ground owned by King Edward I prior to the Norman invasion in the 11th century. The *Domesday Book* indicates forests to the east of Blackburn that have since been calculated at approximately 225 square miles (2018). Today, much of this type of landscape continues to be found on the outskirts of the town[1].

The significance of Blackburn's geographic location influenced its development as a manufacturer of textiles. Supplies of soft water, brought to Blackburn along a network of rivers and streams, along with ample amounts of rainwater, provided a source of power as well as water for other, water-based industries (Beattie, 2007, p. 4). One such source was the River Roddlesworth, which traverses the westerly border of Blackburn, provided not only a source of water for Blackburn textiles mills but also for related industries such as paper manufacturing.

[1] Blackburn is positioned north of the West Pennine Moors and South of the Ribble Valley and Forest of Bowland.

The town's population grew rapidly during the industrial revolution, with investors and employers utilising the skills of cottage weavers and available labour, resulting in the urbanisation of the town along the route of the River Blakewater, from which the town takes its name. By the late 1700s, the town's population had risen to an estimated 5,000, yet due to rapid growth in cotton weaving (Duckworth, 1999, p. 43), the population had risen to 46,500 by 1851. By this time, Blackburn's architecture was recognisable as emerging from the textiles industry: factories and terraced houses made of red brick, cobbled streets and as many as one hundred and fifty chimneys rising visible across the landscape. The exports from cotton manufacturing included mixed-fibre products such as Blackburn Checks, a blue and white cloth that became most associated with the town (Beattie, 2007, p. 22). By the late 1800s Blackburn had a population of 100,000 and, by the early 1900s, 94,000 looms were in operation (Duckworth, 1999, p. 20).

Blackburn, like many industrial towns of the north of England throughout the 1800s, experienced the boom and bust associated with cotton manufacturing, with workers experiencing fluctuating salaries and working conditions, influenced by the increasing mechanisation of textiles production. Blackburn communities and the wider industries of coal mining and paper manufacturing were dependent on cotton manufacturing as a core industry. Consequently, reductions in trade were felt sharply by the town's mill communities (Beattie, 2007, p. 31). For example, the five-year Cotton Famine from 1861, influenced directly by the American Civil War (1861-1865), significantly affected the price of raw cotton.

Blackburn's cotton industry was at its peak in the early 1900s but its position as a global exporter was in decline. This period of Blackburn's history is evident in films made by local businessmen Mitchell and Kenyon, from 1897 to 1913. Early examples of such films focus on workers leaving the mills after a shift, local football derbies, and people in Sunday dress strolling along tramlines. The films were found in 1984 in a disused shop in the centre of the town and have since been presented by the British Film Institute (BFI) and the National Fairground Archive (NFA) throughout the United Kingdom. What were

initially presented as local entertainment for local people, become important social documents describing life in the North of England during the Edwardian era (Duguid, 2018).

Whilst Blackburn was relatively untouched by aerial bombing attacks during World War II, the impact of the war was felt economically. The town's manufacturing base shifted from textiles to munitions, then engineering, supporting not only the war effort but the period of rebuilding during peacetime (Beattie, 2007, p. 295). Furthermore, the town's infrastructure remained heavily dependent on a declining cotton industry that was competing with other, growing economies such as the United States. Improvements in production techniques further compounded the economic problems faced by the town, as improved mechanisation reduced the required workforce. Between the period from the mid-1700s to the late 1800s Blackburn, from its origin as a small market town, was first transformed into a major contributor to the global textiles trade and, then, latterly suffered a slow, economic decline. The boycott of British goods (particularly textiles), by the Indian National Congress, in response to the impact of imports on India's handloom industry, exemplified Blackburn's dependence on global cotton trading. Whilst Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Blackburn in 1931 aimed to highlight India's claim for independence, Gandhi's visit to a mill in Darwen, to meet unemployed cotton mill workers, expressed solidarity with the plight of those affected by the boycott (Duckworth, 2017).

Between 1931-1971, as families continued to leave the town to seek employment, better paid work or new opportunity, Blackburn's population decreased from 122,792 to 101,825 (Beattie, 2007, p. 301). Whilst the economic decline was somewhat alleviated during the World Wars, when towns with manufacturing infrastructure supported the war effort, the closure of mills continued through to the 1970s - by 1976, there were little more than two thousand looms in operation (Duckworth, 1999, p. 21). Britain's industrial communities were portrayed dynamically through film and writing during the 1950s and 1960s, emerging from Socialist Realism then, more specifically, in the form of Kitchen Sink Realism in the United Kingdom. Blackburn was known to director John Schlesinger, who made a film

about Wakes Week for the BBC in 1957 (Schlesinger, 1957), later directing the northern drama *A Kind of Loving* (Schlesinger, 1962), which utilised locations in the town including the Phillip's factory, which opened in 1931.

The sense that Britain's position as an industrial powerhouse was in decline was reinforced by ongoing national political and economic conflict between Government and unions in the late 1970s - giving rise to metaphors such as 'the sick man of Europe' and 'the British disease'. A sociological text published in 1969, *City Close-Up* (Seabrook, 1971), describes, then evaluates, the impact on Blackburn of mill closures, the introduction of new communities from South Asia and, although more obliquely, the decline of Britain's manufacturing base. At its core, the interviews presented in the text relate the population's bitterness over the impact of globalisation on the economy and cultural landscape of the town, rousing significant local reaction from local political representatives (Jack, 2016) such as Blackburn's elected representative, Baroness Barbara Castle (Seabrook, 2002).

By the late 1970s, an increasing number of strikes and pay disputes, along with the coldest winter since 1962-1963, led to newspaper editors and economists drawing from Shakespeare's *Richard III* (c. 1592-1594) to describe the zeitgeist, thereafter known as The Winter of Discontent (1978-1979). The impact was felt sharply in Blackburn: the unemployment rate increased from 6.5% in 1977, to 15.3% in 1982 whilst other pressures, such as the need to improve housing stock and the availability of education relevant to Blackburn's changing fortunes, further compounded the economic and social conditions. Echoing a national trend of fringe politics during the 1970s and early 1980s, where both liberal and far-right political organisations grew, Blackburn elected a representative of The National Party in 1976. Whilst short-lived, the town achieved notoriety in the national media until it restored the Labour Party in subsequent elections (Seabrook, 2016). This particular context was featured in Granada Television's World in Action programme, *The National Party* (Woodford, 1976), highlighting the rise of right-wing politics in the town and describing Blackburn as a stronghold of the National Party. The programme

focussed specifically on the increasing frequency of racist attacks on communities in wards such as Whalley Range. Broomfield and Churchill's documentary film, *Juvenile Liaison I* (Broomfield and Churchill, 1976) (Figure 23), portrayed a scheme introduced by Lancashire Police to improve future crime rates in Blackburn and remains as an example of Blackburn's emerging media portrayal from the 1970s onwards. The film was banned for 15 years, having been withdrawn by the British Film Institute due to the pressure placed on parents featured in the film by the authorities.

Over three centuries, Blackburn had seen migrants from Flanders, Eastern Europe, Ireland and Russia settle in the town, searching for employment in textiles or the related industries (Seabrook, 1973, p. 38). A growth in economic migration, from rural communities in India and Pakistan - those experiencing fragmentation of agricultural holdings and acute, seemingly insoluble…poverty - led many to seek a new life and better wages in industrialised towns and cities in Lancashire (Beattie, 2007, p. 326). Blackburn's population had risen temporarily, to 106,501, owing to immigration from South Asia from the 1950s onwards, as the local cotton trade sought to employ new workers from a reduced population. The South Asian community in Blackburn grew from 287 in 1951 to 19,700 in 1991, establishing flourishing networks of families and businesses in areas that had previously been populated by white, working class mill workers. Yet, conversely, The Department of Environment Survey census data from 1981 (*UK Data Service Census*, 1981, cited in Beattie, 2007, p.330), reported Blackburn as one of the ten most deprived areas in England and Wales, with decline in the textiles industry affecting Blackburn's South Asian heritage communities disproportionately. The economic context helped to position Blackburn as a central location for acid house raves coordinated by party goers in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The parties, attended by as many as ten thousand people, took place in former textiles mills and reflected a wider political statement against Thatcherism and its impact on the working classes (Kinney, 2020).

Investment in the town over the last three decades, made possible through collaboration between local Government and business leaders, enabled Blackburn to win the City Challenge Competition in 1992, securing £223 million for investment in regeneration schemes. The achievement was significant: the national Indices of Deprivation for the year 2000 positioned Blackburn amongst the most deprived towns in England, with some of its wards in the worst two percent nationally (Communities and Local Government, 2005). The success of the Blackburn Partnership, established in 1988, and the City Challenge Competition enabled the town to secure a further £160 million in the mid-1990s for investment in housing and business infrastructure, including the M65 motorway linking Blackburn with the M6 motorway and towns in Pennine Lancashire (Freeman, 1995). Yet, in 2019, Blackburn was listed as the ninth most deprived town in England (English indices of deprivation, 2019), emphasising the ongoing requirement on sustained investment in social and business infrastructures.

With the UK's manufacturing industries continuing to experience deindustrialisation throughout the 1990s, towns such as Blackburn were involved in new funding initiatives, such as the *Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders* project (Wilson, 2013) in the early 2000s. The aim of this coalition project was to demolish areas of housing in selected northern cities and replace them with public/private initiatives, such as that seen in Newcastle's Byker Estate (BBC News 2010). However, the Government and the project was unsuccessful in attracting 'aspirational' home-owners to these areas and subsequently the project failed – 16,00 homes were demolished, replaced with only 3,000 new homes (Hatherley, 2010). In place of this failed attempt to gentrify parts of Blackburn, the areas left empty by the Pathfinder projects - whilst still betraying visually, at least from the air (Figure 11), the criss-cross network of the industrial-era mill terraces – evidence the policy-induced mutation from brick, concrete and slate, into the beginnings of a new, natural forest: birch, ash and bramble were all beginning to grow over the cobbled back streets and foundations of cotton-era terraced housing.

*Figure 11 - Pathfinder: Whinny Heights, Blackburn, Google Maps, Accessed 08/04/2018: https://www.google.co.uk/maps/@53.7380308,-2.4804904,240m/data=!3m1!1e3*

The race riots that occurred in towns such as Oldham, Bradford and Burnley in 2001 were considered to have been influenced by several factors, including the physical segregation of housing estates, opportunism by extremist groups and other cultural factors including separate educational experiences and places of worship across different ethnic groups (Cantle, 2001, p. 9). Several initiatives were set up to assess the origin of the riots and to seek views about how the Government and affected communities could respond positively and collaboratively. Coincidentally, Blackburn did not experience rioting in 2001 - ongoing work to aid integration through groups such as such as the Interfaith Forum (established in 1999), the 100 Voices project (established in 2006) and the One Voice Network (established in 2015) were considered, at least locally, to have encouraged dialogue between communities, alongside a proactive approach to the social and cultural challenges highlighted by Government reports and statistics (Moseley, 2007).

Journalistic and televisual representation of Blackburn from the early 2000s emphasised perceived divisions between the town's ethnic communities. Blackburn's elected Member of Parliament between 1979-2010, Jack Straw, added to a national debate on integration, specifically on the use of the veil by Muslim women in his constituency (Barlett, 2006). Representatives from community, political and religious groups responded to Straw's comments, some in support, others with criticism. A range of

media reported on the context, including the BBC, The Guardian, the London Evening Standard, and the Daily Mail, in October 2006.

Race and identity was the theme for a BBC Panorama programme in 2007, with an episode focussed on portraying what it suggested was an increasing level of segregation between Blackburn's Asian-heritage and white communities (Scott, 2007). Images used to support the narrative of the programme included the flag of St George printed on t-shirts worn by white men, fans on football terraces chanting, for sale signs, positioned with images of mosques and rows of terraced houses filmed on long lenses (to emphasis scale) and Muslim women wearing the hijab. Following the acquisition of Blackburn Rovers Football Club by the Venky's Group (an Indian conglomerate), ongoing protests by supporters between 2010-2017 were widely reported in UK national media. News reports described the protests by supporters - against the manager, Steve Kean, between 2010-2012, and the club's Asian owners, the Rao family, between 2010-2017 – with an approach both sensational and acerbic. Reporters, journalists and columnists emphasised the hate mob (Dennis, 2012), who they saw as directing ongoing and unnecessary abuse at club representatives, whilst on occasion making fun at the drama of such protests (Cockerton, 2012).

The portrayal of Blackburn's Shadsworth housing estate in 2012, by the BBC's Panorama series, was positioned as an expose of Broken Britain (BBC, 2012), in response to ongoing national concerns regarding anti-social behaviour. *Trouble on the Estate* (Wightman, 2012) had been constructed using footage and interviews recorded over several months, as reporters spent time with a number of families. The programme caused significant local reaction when it was broadcast - community representatives described the production as a 'hatchet job', whilst Jack Straw (Member of Parliament for Blackburn between 1979-2015) wrote to the BBC to complain about the programme's portrayal of the estate as a den of crime, drugs, joblessness and broken families (Lancashire Telegraph, 2012). The images used to construct the opening scenes for the programme included children jumping on

overflowing skips, young people driving motorcycles around back gardens and boys in hooded tops, echoing a wider, national portrayal of anti-social behaviour, including, for example, reporting on the anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) legal mechanism. In October 2012, The Guardian offered column space to former residents of the estate to enable greater balance on what it described as a Shameless-like portrayal (Critchley, 2012). Of concern to those reacting to the programme were the claims from Shadsworth residents that the programme creators encouraged young people to keep their hoodies up and that working families (rather than the unemployed) had been removed from the final edit (Thomas, 2012).

From 2012 onwards, against this backdrop of media reporting, a collaboration intended to increase footfall in Blackburn's town centre led to several new initiatives emerging. A range of local government representatives, designers, education providers, teachers and artists, implemented a strategy to utilise local assets such as unused buildings and Blackburn's industrial heritage in order to create spaces for public engagement and knowledge exchange. The Blackburn is Open project, formed in 2012 by Placeshakers Community Interest Company (http://www.placeshakers.co.uk/), provided local communities, artists and manufacturers with shop spaces and knowledge exchange initiatives, through which to highlight Blackburn's importance as a preeminent making town (Hemingway and Tymon, 2019) alongside promoting the skills of local makers. The impact of the Blackburn is Open was significant: in the period from 2012 to 2019, 12 new bars and restaurants had open in the town centre, Blackburn won the Great British High Street Awards in 2016, and start-up businesses such as Community Clothing - a textiles manufacturing and brand initiative led by designer Patrick Grant – placed further, positive public emphasis on the town as a place of entrepreneurialism, innovation and creativity.

The success of the Blackburn is Open project led to further investment in Blackburn manufacturing, creative and digital infrastructure. The National Festival of Making was launched in 2017, its purpose

of exploring and highlighting making across strands such as design, food, history and manufacturing. Further initiatives – converging local, national and international academic, industrial and political contributors – realised academic conferences focussed on Blackburn's local history[i], exhibitions of artworks created by painters, photographers and sculptors[ii], and funded place projects aimed at reclaiming neglected spaces[iii]. Such initiatives share a common approach in attempting to improve the experience of Blackburn for local communities and visitors, alongside the aim of highlighting innovation, engagement, collaboration and creativity.

Yet, despite such efforts, the BBC Panorama production team returned to Blackburn in 2018 to make a follow-up to the programme – *White Fright: A Town Divided* (Hill, 2018) – highlighting again what producers claimed to have experienced, and witnessed, a decade earlier: a town with an identity crisis resulting from ethnic segregation. Such reporting on Blackburn continues a trend arguably stretching back to the mid-1970s, where various media have utilised the town of Blackburn as a delineation through which to represent UK social themes and/or statistics. Crucially, ongoing debate and activism reported through local and national press and media - and seen in the efforts by stakeholders to initiate counter arguments - are an attempt to analyse, explain, or protest to, the focus on Blackburn as a targeted site of anti-social behaviour, social inequality and racial segregation. Local people (Parveen, 2016) (Critchley, 2012) (Cree, 2013), their representatives (Lancashire Telegraph, 2012), columnists (Jack, 2016), writers (Seabrook, 2002), designers (Hemmingway, cited in Jacobs, 2018b) have all contributed to this debate. More recently, the *Kick Down the Barriers* initiative (2019-2020) offered artists writers and photographers the opportunity to respond to Blackburn's contemporary media portrayal, through creative engagement with Blackburn's communities (Easton, 2020b).

Reflecting upon this aspect of Blackburn's recent history, the photographic outcomes from the research enquiry contribute to local dialogue which seeks to respond to Blackburn's portrayal (as outlined above). In this context, the researcher's autoethnographic, collaborative and participatory experiments

carried out towards the latter stages of the enquiry represent an attempt to generate alternative narratives, through a critical engagement with Blackburn's history, people and places. As outlined in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, crucial to this approach is the importance of *slow* to practice based experiments, utilised by the researcher in order to reflect and respond to their lived experience of the town, alongside engagement with Blackburn's landscape and people. In the context of Blackburn's recent media portrayal, the impact of collating a history of Blackburn drawn from relevant literature and resources, is seen in the outcomes of the practice based experimentation: the contextual review influenced, directly, the photography created during the enquiry, such as the focus for the photography on significant places such as All Hallow's Spring (Figure 49 and Figure 75) and Corporation Park (Figure 46), utilising knowledge regarding the town's social and economic history within the design of the photography.

Blackburn's Photographic History

Gathering historical knowledge about how Blackburn had been portrayed, photographically, was an important aspect of how the researcher's photography was initiated, then refined. Local resources, such as those provided by Blackburn Central Library, became more important as the research progressed. An understanding of *slow,* developed through the contextual review, emphasised the importance of developing knowledge about how Blackburn had been portrayed *locally* and, subsequently influencing the development of research activities (pp. 74-75).

The Library's Community History department provides public access to photographs of Blackburn dating back to the 1850s and includes collections by local photographers whose work has previously been donated to the town's Library. During the summer of 2018 and upon formal request, the researcher was granted several residential days at Blackburn Central Library. Crucially, the study of photographic artefacts held by Cotton Town supported the researcher in engaging critically with historical photography specific to the town.

In consideration of the significant breadth of photographic material available, the researcher chose to closely explore twentieth century photographs: photographs of Blackburn in the nineteenth century, whilst important historical records, reflect typical approaches of this era, often where the photographer selected a landmark as the principle subject, but often ignored the impact of, for example, heavy industry or the welfare of locals. It wasn't until the late nineteenth century that photographers began engaging closer with working class communities – the homes, backstreets, slums and factories of Europe and North America - and, as evidenced in the photographic archive of Blackburn held in Blackburn Central Library (discussed below) this documentary approach was applied to the town much later. Given that photography's reach was initially bound by its reliance on cumbersome technology

and slow film speeds, Wells argues that the emergence of photography as a tool for political campaigning came a little later in the medium's history:

> "During the 1930's the paradigmatic form of documentary was produced: one which casts its subjects within a 'social problem' framework, and argued for a politics of reform, and social education" ( 2016, p.92).

The researcher's interests remained focussed on Blackburn towards the modern and postmodern eras, beyond the eventual decline of the town's cotton industry in the 1960s and through mass immigration and the subsequent rise of right-wing politics in the 1970s. In particular though, the researcher studied images created by photographers who had developed (over a number of years) a larger quantity of photographs, rather than, say, batches of unrelated images made by numerous, unidentifiable photographers. The researcher felt this would better connect to the aim of gleaning knowledge about a photographer's particular vision of Blackburn – for example, Elizabeth Ashworth, (Figure 12) - rather than the focus being on a study of specific known or unknown places and/or people. In support, the researcher applied aspects of the analytical framework developed by Wells (2016, p.35), in particular that any image might be investigated in relation to the intentions of the photographer and the particular context of its meaning or considered in terms of aesthetics and traditions of representations in art.

Elizabeth Ashworth was a member of the Blackburn & District Camera Club from 1941-1995 and, by the time of her death in 1995, was one of the longest serving members in the club's history. Blackburn Central Library received 15 photographs from one of the club's members (John Shorrock) in 2018, and it is believed that they form only a small part of what was believed to be a more extensive collection, now thought to have been lost. Ashworth was a key member of Blackburn's Camera Club and won the annual Windsor Cup more times than any other member. Roy Pickering's transcription of records

relating to the club, *The Short History 1901-2003* (2003), makes several references to Ashworth, suggesting in his conclusion that at the time of her death several members felt she should have been granted an honorary position.

*Figure 12 - Elizabeth Ashworth, at the stables in Billinge Wood, Blackburn, date unknown, C Sharples (photographer), www.CottonTown.org archive, accessed 3 August 2018*

*Figure 13 - Draining of the Locks, 1957, Elizabeth Ashworth, www.CottonTown.org archive, accessed 3 August 2018*

Ashworth's earliest work in the library's collection were made in 1957 and are landscape images of the Blackburn delineation of the Leeds to Liverpool canal. In these photographs, Ashworth attempts to document the draining of the canal (Figure 13), a process deemed necessary in order that the locks can be repaired. This repair work, according to Ashworth's handwritten caption, was undertaken during Wakes Week, a holiday period during the summer for the industrial workers - the term Wake originates from religious feasts or celebrations, but in industrial era Britain, became a term associated with workers' summer holidays (Harling, 2016). Ashworth's photographs describe the landscape of the industrial era: waterways, brick-built factories, chimneys spewing black smoke, men dressed in thick wool jackets and heavy boots.

Contrastingly, Ashworth's photograph of one of Blackburn's cinemas, *Rivalto, Penny Street (*Figure 14*)*, contains several visual elements that allow us to recognise it as an image of its time: the Morris Minor, the neon-lit Joan Crawford film *Berserk* (O'Connolly, 2018), the Art Deco street lamp, the head scarves and buckled shoes. Ashworth depicts Blackburn as a town affected by cultural movements in other parts of the world, arguably as a town moving from modernity to post-modernity, not one detached from it. In the same way writers such as Keith Waterhouse (*A Kind of Loving*, *Billy Liar*) and David Sillitoe (*Saturday Night, Sunday Morning*) also did in the 1960s.


*Figure 14 - Rivalto, Penny Street, 1965, Elizabeth Ashworth, www.CottonTown.org archive, accessed 3 August 2018*

By the 1970s, Ashworth's photographs examine, more critically, the relationship between people and their environment, focussed on the *nature* of place and how people interact with it and with each other, and how forms complemented or conflicted with one another. In *Homes, Mill Hill* (1979), Ashworth shows us the two most familiar (and visually repeated) types of housing connected to the North: the industrial terraced house, and the modern apartment block, looming over a family sitting on deck chairs in conversation. There is a sense of foreboding in how Ashworth has composed this scene, the towers rise up as if growing out of the former mill cottages, dominating them. Ashworth has composed the scene such that the nearest terraced house is one bricked-up, indicating a commentary that this type of home would soon be abandoned in favour of vertical, high-rise housing. Ashworth repeated this visual strategy in *Penny Street, Blackburn* (1975) (Figure 15), but this time chose to include people walking to work, and to and from the town centre shops with their children.

*Figure 15 - Penny Street, Blackburn, 1975, Elizabeth Ashworth, www.CottonTown.org archive, accessed 3 August 2018*

In *Saturday Market, November* (1964) (Figure 16), Ashworth makes photographs on the last day of Blackburn's Open Market. The scene is sombre but dramatic, with straight- faced locals selecting fruits and vegetables in the morning sun. The market is humble, but authentic in a manner which many have tried to replicate in cities across the UK since the Slow Food movement began in the mid-1980s; light bulbs hang from washing lines to illuminate the produce, shelves for the customers shopping bags made from old planks propped up by fruit boxes, produce is described by way of handwritten signs showing their origin and price (e.g. Spanish Onions, 2lb 1'2d), canvas tents suspended from steel girders to keep traders dry in the wet months. The photograph could act simultaneously as a social document, or offer the opportunity to reflect on the nature of contemporary commerce.

*Figure 16 - Saturday Market, November', 1975, Elizabeth Ashworth, www.CottonTown.org archive, accessed 3 August 2018*

Ashworth's images are sensitive to the nuances of the town, thoughtful as to what is included in the camera's frame and, importantly, reflect the motivation of a photographer keen to document how Blackburn's people experienced change, whether encouraged by them or forced upon them, from the 1950s onwards.

There are several dozen examples of Walter Sharples's photography held in the Library's Community History Department. Whilst the prints themselves are limited in terms of caption information, researchers at the Community History Department have dated them from the 1950s to early 1960s. Sharples's photographs tend to apply one of three visual strategies to portray Blackburn. The first is the focus on the 'then and now': re-photography. Sharples used several of his previously made photographs to act as an illustration of how the town's landscape had been altered by demolition or by development. Typically Sharples presenting an earlier scene next to a contemporary one, thus allowing the viewer to compare the two scenes from similar perspectives. In *Leyland Street (*Figure 17*)*, Sharples made two photographs from a slightly different angle and approximately 5 years apart (1957-1962). The only constants are the curb stones, the telegraph poles and the advertising board containing an advertisement for Capston cigarettes (the most popular of pre-war cigarettes). Another photograph presents building works on Railway Road, what would later become the town's British Telecom building in the 1970s. In these photographs Sharples is attempting to capture some of Blackburn's pre-war

architecture before it is redeveloped or demolished to make way for the modern structures that appeared from the 1960s onwards.


*Figure 17 – 'Leyland Street', Walter Sharples, 1957-1962. Accessed 9 August 2018: CottonTown.org*

A recurring motif of Sharples work is the high-rise, featuring in several of the photographs in the Library's collection (Figure 18). Typically Sharples used the high-rise as a tallest, domineering element, one which contrasts with the low-rise housing framed in the lower part of the composition. I imagine that Sharples, like many other photographers in the UK from the 1960s onwards (including Elizabeth Ashworth), were fascinated by these new structures which, for Sharples, clearly offered great contrast with the humble weavers' cottages so common in towns like Blackburn in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

*Figure 18 – Terraced Houses and a Block of Flats, Walter Sharples, 1957-1962. Accessed 9 August 2018: CottonTown.org*

However, unlike Ashworth's photographs, there is a notable absence of people in Sharples's images, and only fleetingly do we see the residents of the town, often portrayed as shadowy characters, their backs to the camera, walking through parkland or watching the world go by. This aspect differs significantly from Ashworth's approach, who seemed more encouraged to make photographs in close proximity to the community she portrayed. In *January Morn* (Figure 19), Sharples captures a hazy morning in the local Corporation Park, where a couple (perhaps man and wife) stroll along the wide pages in between backlit trees. The photograph is black and white and employs the contre-jour technique, used to create greater contrast when shooting in strong, low-lying light conditions.

*Figure 19 - January Morn, Walter Sharples (date unknown). Accessed 9 August 2018: CottonTown.org*

Sharples's images are symbolic, but not as political or cultural rhetoric - he employs the use of simple compositions, applied to uncomplicated scenes, yet, neither are they abstract or surreal in their portrayal of Blackburn. They are symbolic in a *romantic* sense and use well-established compositional rules (the rule of thirds) and techniques to help disguise the limits of the black and white film such as using trees to cover the sky (the difficulty in capturing highlight detail). In this sense, they share compositional techniques employed by England's landscape painters of the Romantic era. However, Sharples's photographs allow for analysis of how industrialised towns such as Blackburn appeared during its transformation, following the decline of, in this case, the cotton industry. Sharples's effort to portray the essence of the physical features of his town, reflecting upon the brutal designs of industrial architecture, and recognising what was left of the remnants of the Victorian period (public parks, civic buildings etc.) ensures that his vision, alongside the photography of Elizabeth Ashworth, is visually and politically distinct from other works held in the Library's collection. More recent archives include the work of Wally Talbot, black and white photography dating from the 1930s to the late 1970s, that document events and newsworthy stories from this period - examples from the Talbot archive include *Blackburn Market Shrimp Seller* (Talbot, 1950) (Figure 20), *Blackburn Show* (Talbot, 1953) and Billenge End Road (Snow Scene) (Talbot, 1957). The Talbot archive is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 (pp. 116-124).

*Figure 20 – Blackburn Market Shrimp Seller, Talbot W., 1950. Accessed 9 August 2018: Cottontown.org*

The appraisal of the library's historical photography provides insight into how Blackburn has been portrayed by *local* photographers (Question 1, p. 11). As outlined above, there is clear motivation by such photographers to document, to record, or to express, opinions about the town through photographic imagery. The themes that emerge focus upon the development of new housing or the renovation of older, industrial sites, how peoples interact with each other and with the landscape, the influence of transatlantic culture upon the local landscape, and the characters found at local venues such as parks, cinemas or markets. Mostly, the photography is observational, perhaps (it can be argued) without the knowledge of those photographed. Yet, there appears to a nuanced understanding of what subjects ought to be recorded (Figures, 14, 15 and 17), indicating a conscious attempt to reveal narratives specific to the town.

*Figure 21 – International Aid Shop. McAllister, S, 2017. Accessed: http://www.shaunmcallister.co.uk/mill-hill-people#14*

More recently, as part of nationally funded arts initiatives (pp. 59-62), photographers local to Blackburn have sought to approach the creation of photography in respect to Blackburn's national media portrayal (Wise, 2021) (Mathison, 2020) (McAllister, 2019). For example, McAllister's work in and around the Mill Hill area of Blackburn demonstrates an approach which places local initiatives and priorities as the central focus for the photography (Figure 21). The photography is an examination of how local people

engage in charitable work, utilising their opinions and views about both Blackburn and the role of charity at a local level, to inform the approach to the photography. Such work reflects a wider shift in approaches to community-based photography, as photographers embed themselves more closely within communities in order to reflect their voices more precisely, alongside interaction regarding the process of making and exhibiting. Such an approach represents an important approach to socially engaged photography, where photographers develop close relationships with the communities and individuals they work with, reflecting their views and experiences not only in the photography itself, but in the manner through which it is communicated to audiences (*Laygate Stories* [Photography and Writing], 2021) (Germain, 2018) (Boora, 2021).

## Blackburn's Contemporary Media Portrayal

During the research enquiry, the researcher considered how Blackburn's portrayal connected to a wider zeitgeist of media presenting the world as one in conflict. Whilst it appears the complexity of the UK's more recent social issues, such as mass migration, the threat of terrorism, and neoliberal austerity measures, can currently be evaluated using a range of new media outlets (such as citizen journalism via blogs), the tabloid reporting on societal issues such as segregation appears consistent with the aforementioned. An example from The Daily Mail's 2016 journalistic feature on racial division in Blackburn, *On the Front Line of Segregation UK* (Tweedie, 2016b), is appropriate in this context. The report ignored the efforts of the community to celebrate its diversity - for example, the inaugural *National Festival of Making* in 2017 attracting thousands of visitors from varied backgrounds to Blackburn's town centre, to celebrate the town's making and manufacturing history – and instead presented key phrases such as "haunted by segregation, "dominated by hilltop Mosques", and "most racially segregated community". One of the photographs used to illustrate this report is consistent with how televisual media has illustrated the landscape and people of Blackburn (Figure 22).


*Figure 22 - 'Muslim families tend to concentrate around Mosques', Minikin, 2016*

Blackburn has repeatedly been the subject of films and television documentaries from the 1970s that place emphasis on social disorder and racial segregation. The emergence of the Social Realism movement from the 1960s onwards (Reisz, 1961) (Richardson, 1961), alongside the emergence of an unflinching photojournalism, influenced the portrayal of underrepresented groups in close proximity (Bulmer, 2012) and with unflinching directness (Chomsky and Griffiths, 2001). Granada Television's *The National Party* (Woodford, 1976) centres upon the frequency of violent attacks against south Asian communities in Blackburn, reflecting a national rise in far right political activism, yet choosing the town as a site within which to explore the trend appeared justifiable: Blackburn was the only town in Britain to elect National Party Councillors in the 1976 local elections. The images created for the television report include a range of now familiar motifs: terraced hours are filmed on long lenses, exaggerating a lack of space between homes. Muslim women are filmed in traditional dress, again, with long lenses, with the backdrop of brick walls and fallen plaster (Figure 23). Whilst throughout the film white people are filmed in their houses, speaking about racial issues, ethnic communities are interviewed on the street, or discreetly from afar - there appears to be little motivation to get as close to them as to those perpetrating the violence or inciting it.

*Figure 23 - A still image from Granada Television's The National Party (Woodford, 1976, 03.46m).*

*Figure 24 – A still image from Juvenile Liaison I (Bloomfield and Churchill, 1976, 01.07m)*

Nick Broomfield's film documentary, *Juvenile Liaison I* (Broomfield and Churchill, 1976), exposed unorthodox youth correction strategies implemented by a sub-division of Lancashire Constabulary and presented a dystopian vision of Blackburn as a site of deprivation and poverty. The impact upon the film's release was profound and it was subsequently banned by the British Film Institute following a screening at the House of Commons. Broomfield's portrayal is unflinching, the camera continues recording as children are shouted at, threatened and even locked in jail cells (Figure 24). Only twenty years previous, Blackburn is portrayed noticeably different in Schlesinger's film *Wakes Week* (Schlesinger, 1957). Schlesinger explores the town during summer holidays (Wakes Week), focussing

on the worker's as they prepare to take holidays on the Fylde coast. Schlesinger's portrayal is sympathetic, almost wistful, highlighting a busyness and excitement as families gather at the train station, contrasting this with images of lone workers closing up shops and shutting factory gates.

With increasing frequency during the 2000s and 2010s, newspaper articles and televisual broadcasts have used Blackburn as a metaphorical hook upon which to hang socio-political tags such as Broken Britain and 'white flight'. Whilst such portrayals of Blackburn are often presented as being explicitly influenced by Government reports or national trend statistics (Cantle, 2001), narratives tend towards being oversimplified, possibly driven by media that publish stories in line with the commercial interests of the publication (Harcup, 2009, pp. 27–29). As such, the approaches employed by reporters and directors can appear to local communities as underinvested, whilst headlines and programme titles veer towards the sensational, reflecting an intensely competitive media environment where editors come up with storylines and leave reporters to colour them in (Fenton, 2009, pp. 56–59).

A typical example of image representations of Blackburn more recently, can be found in an image published by the Daily Mail in 2016 (Tweedie, 2016b) (Figure 22) illustrating a report into the increase in Blackburn's Muslim population and the infrequency of white families in areas where the populations are growing. The photograph and caption work together to support the claims made in the article:

> "Behind us, a hilltop mosque dominates the surrounding streets, crescent moons pointing skyward. Minarets have replaced mill chimneys in Blackburn, once the centre of the cotton industry. There are more than 40 mosques in the borough of Blackburn with Darwen, and about a quarter of its 150,000 people are Muslim" (Tweedie, 2016a).

Rather than choose to produce or utilise images of community cohesion between white and Asian-heritage families in local restaurants, the local markets or Schools, the picture editor opts for an

image of terraced houses (a motif of Britain's industrial mill town architecture) with a mosque as a backdrop. The inclusion of the veiled Muslim women, head down and clutching a bag tightly, seems to be an attempt to evidence a non-western and isolated community, to back up claims such as:

> "[the] Muslim population is heavily concentrated in certain parts of the town, in run-down areas like Whalley Range, Audley and Bastwell." (Tweedie, 2016a)

It appears from such examples that directors and photographers are challenged being able to develop new, contemporary photographic languages for the diverse, post-industrial communities such as those who live in Blackburn. The media that have presented Blackburn in such ways appear to wrestle with the notion of the town as a locale of regeneration and optimism, rather they seem stuck in a repetitive re-telling of the themes that emerged in the 1970s: integration, nationalism and ghettoisation. An example of this is found in the imagery used in the BBC's *White Fright* documentary (Scott, 2007), which attempted to describe a perceived ethnic segregation (motivated by the Cantle Report 2001) by including imagery of St George's flags and dilapidated shops (Figure 25) (Figure 26) (Figure 27). Whilst Blackburn continues to be used as a dystopian poster child by mainstream media (MailOnline Reporter, 2021), as outlined earlier in this chapter (pp. 59-62), such representation remains of concern for those who have contributed positively to Blackburn's recent cultural history (Kinney, 2020),

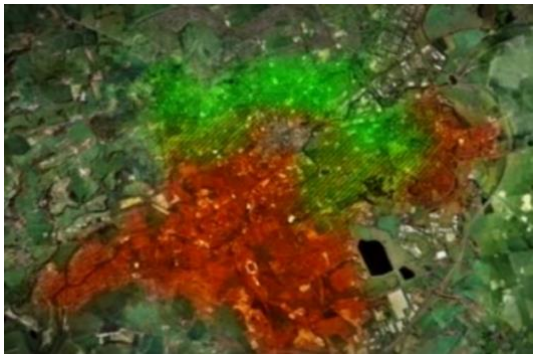

*Figure 25 – A still image from the BBC Panorama programme, White Fright (Scott, 2007, 08.38m)*

*Figure 26 -Still image from Trouble on the Estate (Wightman, 2012, 02.18m)*


*Figure 27 – A still image from White Fright: Divided Britain (Hill, 2018, 01.18m)*

Summary

Journalistic (newsprint and television) representations of Blackburn have employed a relatively narrow range of imagery through which they seek to illustrate social issues such as anti-social behaviour or urban deprivation. Whilst it is perhaps inaccurate to suggest these images are adopted with nostalgia as an aim, photographic motifs explored earlier in this chapter (as examples, Figure 22, Figure 23, Figure 25, Figure 26, Figure 27) indicate the media's desire to create images consistent with an audience's view of how certain places, towns or issues ought to be visualised. In this sense, an argument can be made that Blackburn, by the early 2000s, had already been imposed with a limited photographic identity (pp. 59-62, 79-80). Certainly, this identity could be suggested to have emerged from a broader photographic language about the north of England, since the early 1900s (Wootton and Brandt, 2009) (Bulmer, in Harrison, 1998, pp. 80–93) (McCullin, in Appleyard, 2019). Recent examples across online

news media evidence a continued emphasis on portraying Blackburn through focus on such elements as dilapidated industrial architecture, fly-tipping in backyards (Cousins, 2021) and figures walking through tightly-packed, cotton-era terraced streets (Parr, 2004) (Agence France-Presse, 2020), suggesting a cycle of familiar motifs used by media and photography practitioners to re-imagine the town.

## Photography and *Slow*

The research questions and aims required the researcher to appraise, then utilise a range of theories and practices relating to photography and *slow* (Question 1, p. 11). Crucial to this was the researcher's understanding of how *slow* and photography may be relatable and, therefore, it is important to establish how *slow* and, conversely, 'fast' photography can be defined. Furthermore, it was also important to explore how *slow* could be utilised, in turn, to develop approaches to respond to contemporary televisual and journalistic portrayals of Blackburn (Question 3, p. 11).

Photography is commonly experienced - and referred to - as a time-based medium. There are multiple supporting arguments for this designation, but central to this is the inescapable, mechanical (and, now, digital) premise upon which all cameras are made: an optical phenomenon where an image is projected through a hole onto a surface opposite an opening (Stewart, 2018) where an image is captured. This reliance, on the directness of light and the ability of a light-sensitive material or device to absorb the projection, results in an image (a photogenic drawing, as described by Fox Talbot) depicting a moment that, forthwith, represents and refers to the past. Thus, not only is the camera's exposure bound by time, but the image itself refers to people, places or objects historically. Whilst photographic technologies have been exploited and subverted for numerous uses and purposes since its invention, our central understanding of the medium is bound, as Sontag suggested, by time's relentless melt (1979, p.15). Further, whilst the digital age has pushed common photographic practice, technologically and experientially, from point and shoot to shoot and share (Moschovi, McKay and Plouviez, 2013, p. 19) it has not - for now, at least - undone this principle condition of photography.

Following on from this premise, an inescapable view is that photographs not only show us objects, people or landscapes retrospectively, but that they echo the notion of time as a measure of motion (Aristotle, 2008, p. 108). In this context, the manner by which photographers have adapted the

photography for their intentions is wide-ranging. To illustrate this point, in *The Decisive Moment*, published in 1952, Henri Cartier-Bresson proposes that the act of photography is successful only within the critical moment that the photographer's intuition and creativity enables a determination of the essential, colliding, co-incidental or conflicting thematic and/or geometric phenomena (Cartier-Bresson, cited in Pollack 1977, p.155). Bruce Gilden's stark portraits of people he encounters on city streets (Gilden, 2019) are, arguably, a more direct and aggressive form of the approach applied by Cartier-Bresson. Gilden's photographs are punctuated by a philosophy of confrontation and present to the viewer, paradoxically, an intimacy in highlighting his subject's shock or unease in the moment of the exposure.

In contrast, some photography practitioners use the medium to experience and emphasise the passing of a much greater interval of time. The photographer Vera Lutter makes pinhole cameras and uses long exposures to capture photographs of the city's presence, light and architecture, sometimes over periods of weeks or months (Schmidtt-Wulffen, 2004). This focus, of the potential of photography to describe the passing of time, rather than a finite or coincidental extract of time, is also reflected in the work of Jem Southam (Southam, 1997), who makes repeated photographic studies of the same landscapes, positioning reflection and iteration as fundamental building blocks in the production of photography.

Whilst such examples are drawn broadly from photography's history, they are intended to punctuate the wide adaptability of photography and indicate the range of perspectives on its function and meaning. Particularly, the contrast between Cartier-Bresson's photojournalism – linking to the modern age of mobile and discrete camera technology - and Lutter's fine art practice – linking to now more antiquated techniques in photographic image-making - illuminate distinctions between what can be regarded in this context as fast and *slow* approaches to photography. Cartier-Bresson and Gilden epitomise a practice where the 'decisive moment' (Cartier-Bresson, 2014) - for example, a remarkable

coincidence of geometry (Cartier-Bresson, 1932) or a human face which satisfies the photographer's dystopian vision of the world (Gilden, 2019) - defines the photographic approach. Conversely, the work of photographers such as Kippin (Kippin, 1994), Lutter (Cooke, 2004) and Southam (Southam, 1997) communicates a narrative of time or change, where reflection on epochs such as industrialisation is the defining characteristic (Wells, 2000, p. 298).

Described by Campany as late photography (Campany, 2003), in an essay which also cites *slow*-ness as a feature of contemporary photography, Lutter (2004), Meyerowitz (2011) and Seawright (2004) are also of significance to the enquiry as recent examples. The photography generated during the enquiry (Chapters 3 and 4) is situated within a broader field of socially engaged photography, but is relatable to late photography (2003), linking to the conceptual framework of *slow* as a paradigmatic element. The photography developed during the enquiry is bound by self-reflection and iteration, where reflections upon memory and the passing of time shape the approach for *Expanding the Photographic Interval* and *The Double Parallax* experiments (Chapter 3). From this inward and subjective starting point, experiments such as *Slow Walk* and *Revisiting the Delineation* utilised local routes within which to explore and examine local identities and cultures.

Campany identifies *slow*-ness and late photography as emerging from photojournalism (a sub-genre emerging from a broader field of documentary photography), influenced by an aesthetic more akin to forensic photography (Campany, 2003). Whilst such an approach is referred to as a recent development in photography practice there are other, much earlier examples, including Roger Fenton's landscape *The Valley of the Shadow of Death* (1855) which, whilst its conception was influenced by cumbersome equipment and a reluctance to set up position in the middle of an active battlefield, illuminates the bleak melancholy of war through the presence of cannon-balls strewn across the valley. Whilst not exacting in approach or aesthetic, Seawright's scrutiny of the battlefield (2017) – albeit one where soldiers commit suicide on home soil following their experience of war, rather than being killed by it –

provide an example of a type of photography that transforms the landscape into political motif, through an approach in which the unseen, the implicit, provides the underlying allegory - this concept influenced the researcher to make adjustments to photography, during the early stage of experimentation (pp. 89-107). The perspectives above echo the theory of parallax, being the difference in the apparent position of an object, resulting from a change in the position of the observer. Whilst the link here is from a philosophical perspective (rather than from the perspective of physics), the difference in how photographers with varying motivations view or portray their subjects links to a fundamental technological feature of photography. The phenomenon of parallax is fundamental to *The Double Parallax* experiment (Chapter 3), where past and present collide during the synchronous process of photography and reflective writing within the contemporary (local) landscapes of Blackburn (pp. 95-107).

Photography's technological and aesthetic dimensions and histories remain crucial to the experience and understanding of the medium. A principle understanding of photography, at least as it was prior to the popularity of digital technologies, emerged from two particular cultural perceptions. Firstly, that the directness of light arrested by camera apparatus - Latin, from *apparare*, meaning 'make ready for' - creates a visual *trace* (Berger, 2013, p. 51) of the subject from which the light omitted. Secondly, the early assumption, or critique, that the process itself is immune to the influence of subjectivity, creating a product which is mere document or evidence (Sontag, 1979, p. 126). More recent technological developments since the 1980s have exerted influence on photography to transcend the fidelity of the mechanical age towards the fluidity of the digital (Moschovi, McKay and Plouviez, 2013, p. 15) and now, perhaps, doing to analogue photography what Delaroche suggested photography had done to painting (Orvell, 2003, p. 81). Despite this terminological shift from analogue photography to digital photography - visible across a range of photography magazine journalism – the aesthetic challenges and ontological understanding of photography are often bound to the aesthetic and rhetorical issues of analogue photography (Bate, 2013, p. 40 in Moschovi, McKay and Plouviez, 2013). So, whilst

photography has become even more mobile in a digital age reflecting, specifically, a 'fast' process of image making *and* image distribution, there remains an inherent and ongoing nostalgia for, or at least the visual appearance of, the artisanal (Sontag, 1979, p. 124) processes of the past (Bate, 2013, p. 41 in Moschovi, McKay and Plouviez, 2013). Such concepts were influential in developing the initial phase of experimentation, where the researcher sought to disrupt the speed and accessibility of photography through the use of antiquated camera technology and slow films speeds, providing an experience of photography punctuated by the researcher's reflections on past and present (pp. 89-107).

Supporting this, the use of autoethnography (pp. 33-35) as a method aided the researcher to reflect upon the significance of their background, opinions and experiences on the design of research experiments and the outcomes of such activities (Chapter 3). As such, autoethnographic/autobiographical writing became part of the practice of photography. The use of written forms as an integral part of the photography (for example, Figure 29), led the researcher to consider other practitioners using textual artefacts either as influence for the photography, or within it. For example, John Kippin's use of words within the photographic image presents a complex interplay between the photograph, the history of the northern landscape, politics and cultures, creating a conflict or forcing conciliation between the subject portrayed and the messages communicated (Kippin, 1995). Mark Power, in his photographic series *A System of Edges*, explores Greater London through the London A-Z street map, a visual and textual reference whose geographical boundary changes with each iteration. This approach, drawing similarities to systems or algorithmically-produced art, generates a distance of the traditional photographer/subject relationship between the concept and the place ultimately photographed, and between the caption/title and the visual referent itself (Chandler and Power, 2007, p. 6). The systems approach to photography was influential for the *Wiki:Blackburn* experiment, where the researcher extracts a list of places from Blackburn's Wikipedia page, from which to explore the town as determined by anonymous, online voices (pp. 108-115).

Summary

The review of literature and practice was focussed on providing a detailed contextual review to support the PhD journey. The researcher utilised a range of resources, from a variety of institutions (see *Appendix #02*, p. 211) focussing on the significant subject areas: photography, *slow* and Blackburn.

The synthesis of literature and information about Blackburn, subsequently developed into a written, concise history of the town (pp. 52-63), provided multiple influences for both the focus of the research and the photography. Locations identified as significant to the town's history (p. 118-123) (pp. 146-153) were explored photographically by the researcher, whilst key events and paradigms relating to the town's social history and media portrayal provided the backbone for the research context and the choice of methods (pp. 11-13) (pp. 28-41). Furthermore, the researcher developed knowledge of how local Blackburn photographers have visualised the town's features and cultures, allowing for critical comparison between such photography and the visual images used by media to portray the town since the 1970s.

The contextual review assisted in developing the researcher's knowledge and understanding with regard to historical and contemporary debates in photography, specifically in relation to how technological developments have impacted on aesthetics and the relationship between photography and *slow* (pp. 82-86) *,* and how approaches for socially engaged photography challenges the medium's long-standing connection to modernism (pp. 17-18) (pp. 28-30) (pp. 73-75).

Overall, the contextual review played a crucial function in contextualising, then underpinning the research and, throughout the research journey, the information was utilised by the researcher for challenge, confirmation, influence and reflection. The discourse generated from the review of literature and practice – analyses of approaches, contexts, practices / practitioners, themes, theories and

methodologies - is embedded throughout the thesis, but particularly in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, underlining the significance and importance of the review for the practice based methodologies formed during the research, the development of academic writing and the conclusions formed from the outcomes of the research activities. Essentially, the review enabled the gathering of the critical information necessary to enable analyses of the relationship between theories, concepts and practices, supporting the researcher in demonstrating and applying knowledge and understanding coherently (Bell, 2010, pp. 102–103), in the context of the research aims and objectives.

As outlined in Chapter 5 (pp. 170-173) (p. 182), the influence of the contextual review maintains the development of new practice and, potentially, research into the locality. Knowledge developed from the contextual review regarding how media has developed and presented narratives about Blackburn – and other, similar towns such as Great Harwood or Todmorden (Harrison, 2021a) - alongside the emerging contemporary discourse about socially engaged photography practice, remain influential. Furthermore, the researcher's practice is directly informed by the experiences and practices that emerged during the research enquiry, enabling the development of specialist knowledge and skills in the field of documentary and social engaged photography practice.

## Chapter 3: Photography, *Slow* and Autoethnography (Phase 1)

### Expanding the Photographic Interval

The contextual review enabled the researcher to consider appropriate theories and perspectives for the research. An aspect of this included the researcher researching theories, concepts and approaches which could facilitate reflection and learning. This was an important aspect in responding to Question 1 and 2 (p. 11), particularly in creating opportunities to compare the researcher's lived experience in relation to Blackburn's media portrayal. Through wider reading on the disciplines of ethnography (visual, sensory), the researcher identified autoethnography as a practice which could support the research aims. As outlined in Chapter 1 (p. 33-35), autoethnography seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno) (Ellis et al. 2010). Relatedly, autoethnography draws parallels with practice based art, in that it accommodates subjectivity and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from them (Ellis et al. 2010). Autoethnographers retrospectively (and selectively) write about epiphanies and use these as influence to describe, and reflect upon cultural identity and cultural practices.

Furthermore, in responding to research questions (Question 1, p. 11), the researcher considered the photographic process as one defined not by fast approaches but through more reflective approaches (pp. 82-86), linking this to their emerging understanding of the principles of *slow* (pp. 30-33). This foundation became an important philosophical position from which the researcher's early practice based experimentation was undertaken. As outlined in Chapter 1 (pp. 45-46), the researcher initiated the practice based enquiry through a series of photography experiments that utilised principles drawn from autoethnography (pp. 19-20) (pp. 33-35) and *slow* (pp. 82-86*). T*he researcher reflected on their lived experience of Blackburn, positioning themselves as an insider and utilising their history to explore locations and themes through photography practice (p. 90).

Within the first three experiments in the enquiry – *Expanding the Photographic Interval* (pp. 89-95), *The Double Parallax* (pp. 95-97) and *The Tourist Gaze* (pp. 107-114) - the utilisation of *slow* and autoethnography served three purposes with respect to the development of the research approach:

- Influencing the researcher in re-connecting to their lived experience of Blackburn, enabling subsequent comparisons between the researcher's experiences and the portrayal of Blackburn identified in the contextual review (pp. 64-81).
- Providing academic (autoethnography) and philosophical (*slow*) foundations from which to test and develop inward approaches to creating photography of Blackburn.
- Facilitating the development of the researcher's writing skills during the experiments (pp. 21-22) and in the write-ups presented in the thesis.

*The Water's Edge* (Figure 29) was the first outcome generated from the application of this approach, outlined below. Reflecting upon an experience of nature from the researcher's past, the researcher visited the location which related to the memory (Witton Park, Blackburn), an area of wetland within the park and a place the researcher once played with friends to look for frogs and newts. The use of autoethnographic principles - particularly the notion of drawing from epiphanies of lived experience - enabled the conscious and intentional utilisation of lived experience as a starting point and central influence for the process of photography.

The design of the approach centred upon the researcher making the process of photography slower - through the use of cumbersome and heavy cameras, slow film speeds, long exposure times – in order to introduce writing as an autoethnographic strand to the approach. Broadly, the aim in doing so was to create a longer interval within which the lived experience, and the process of photography, could be considered critically. The strategy was to disrupt the speed and accessibility of photography, and to

provide an experience of photography punctuated by reflection, linked to the findings of the contextual review (pp. 82-86). By using a large format wooden field camera, the lens set at its smallest aperture (f64), and paired with photographic film rated at 1 ISO, the researcher sought to disrupt the typical conditions that photographers would prefer: availability of light, fast film and easily operable equipment. The aim was to allow for sufficient time to reflect on the subject being recorded by the camera, during the exposure itself, in order to make other complementary written narratives that would further add to the portrayal of the subject matter. The hypothesis was that rejection of the speed of modern technology, replaced by antiquated processes, would support the researcher's awareness of the subject matter (the experience/memory). Therefore, in order to apply a decelerating effect on the photographic process, the researcher created an interval that afforded time for critical self-reflection and writing. Within this photographic interval the researcher wrote as the camera - and the photographic film - was exposed to the scene (Figure 28).

*Figure 28 - Creating reflective writing during the making of a photograph, Harrison (2016)*

The photograph and writing shown in Figure 29 was created in a place linked to researcher's lived experience. Similarly, the story written during the photographic exposure traced the memory of the experience. In particular the story makes explicit feelings, emotions, sights and sounds, which describes a vivid memory linked to a strong sensory experience of nature.

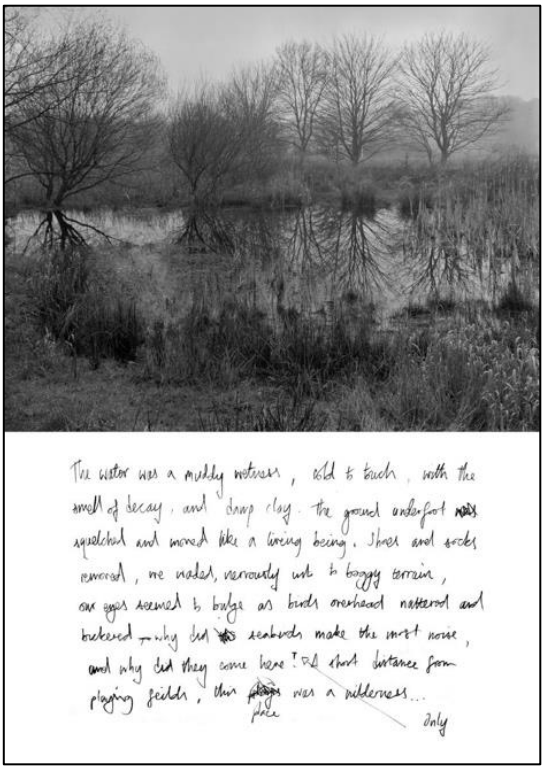


*Figure 29 (Plates #08-09) – The Water's Edge, Harrison (2016)*

During this experiment the researcher produced four photographs, accompanied by four short paragraphs, limiting the writing to the subject matter and bound by the timing of the camera's shutter. The researcher chose to make the first photograph one that would trace the memory of approaching the edge of the water. The calculated exposure was ten seconds and, therefore, there was only enough time to write one short sentence describing the feeling of walking through the wet reeds. The making of three further photographs, ranging in exposure time from twenty seconds to six minutes, further helped in revealing memory. It was during this process the researcher realised that photographs were being made in a chronological order, as was the writing: each exposure and piece of writing provided the next chapter, in order of the memory. The process of writing and making photographs relating to an experience (or memory) enabled examination of childhood experience, through practice based research. Furthermore, during the photographic exposures, the time created by the use of long exposures supported the researcher in reflecting upon how the seemingly mundane act of searching for wildlife, was in fact an important life event. In the weeks that followed the researcher noticed a

greater connectivity to his past and to the environment of his childhood: reflecting upon the writing produced for *The Water's Edge*, the researcher realised that the focus had been not upon the experience of catching and holding the delicate newts and frogs found that day, but of the initial period of time approaching and experiencing the wetland.

> *"The place was a muddy wetness, cold to touch, with the smell of decay, and damp clay. The ground underfoot squelched and moved like a living being. Shoes and socks removed, we waded, nervously, into the boggy terrain, our eyes seemed to bulge as birds overhead nattered and bickered - why did seabirds make the most noise, and why did they come here? Only a short distance from playing fields, this place was a wilderness."*

This stage of experimentation - carried out between November 2015 and July 2016 - utilised six stages as an overall approach, and was further developed during the experiment, *The Double Parallax* (pp. 95-107):

- Reflection upon familiar places and places of significance, those related to the researcher's lived experiences, in order to identify a geographical location to work within.
- The act of walking within a nominated geographical location, searching for a subject to study, waiting for recognition, for a memory to surface.
- Nominating/choosing the angle and camera position. Being aware of the initial reaction to the subject and to composition.
- Making aesthetic decisions (photography); perspective/angle, what to include/exclude in the frame? Considerations include whether the framed image matches the 'stored' view of the place, and whether the frame image helps to communicate, visually, the story to be written.
- The exposure (the interval?) - utilise the space provided by focussing on the memory, from the point of the shutter being opened (using, say, a 10-minute exposure).

- The final stage results in writing about the experiment itself - the researcher's evaluation of the process - aiding the development of future experiments and approaches.

Following several further attempts using the established approach, the researcher became clear that by applying a longer photographic exposure, the written element became more descriptive, more specific even. Conversely, the act of reducing the photographic exposure meant the writing was constrained and even abstracted from that of the memory. For example, the phrase "as I descend" (Figure 30) could refer either to a physical or an emotional descent. The researcher concluded that by reducing the exposure time, the writing became concise, yet abstract. By expanding the exposure, the writing became clearer, but also more representative of the memory.

The photographic and written outcomes from the *Expanding the Photographic Interval* experiment (Plates #05-10), evidence the use of appropriate theories and practices within a photography practice centred on Blackburn. The utilisation of the academic practice of autoethnography and the philosophical paradigm of *slow* directly influenced the creation of specific narratives about Blackburn (Question 3, p. 11). The approach is identifiable as one which draws from the researcher's lived experiences in order to reveal narratives about friendships and experiences of nature, through photography and writing.

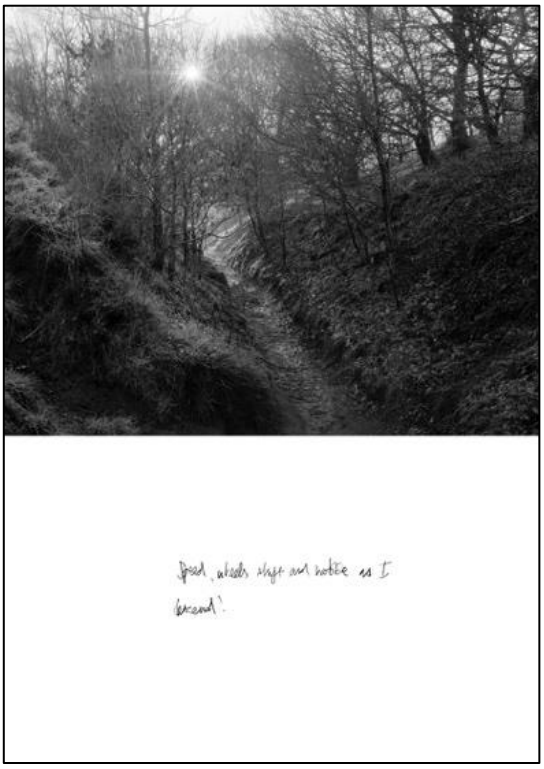

*Figure 30 (Plate #10) – Speed.* Photograph and Autobiographical Writing, *Harrison (2016)*

The Double Parallax

In utilising *slow* and autoethnography to re-render lived experience in the form of photography and writing, the approach draws parallels with practice based art, accommodating subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2010, paragraph 3). However, the issues that emerged from this experiment included the challenge of making the photographs whilst simultaneously dwelling upon, and applying other methodological elements (auto-ethnographic writing). The concentration required to make appropriate, critical decisions during the photography making process, and therefore the need to create a sufficiently long exposure, where no other priorities other than the focus on the scene, was important in order to move organically from one task to the next, without losing focus on the subject matter, and the researcher's memory of it. Further to this, the researcher experienced the approach as one containing multiple perspectives (p. 96) and, as outlined in Chapter 1 (pp. 84-85), the photographic phenomena of parallax was further

considered as a potential conceptual feature of the emerging approach to the photography. The notion of objects appearing displaced or different due to the change in position of the observer can be understood both technically or philosophically. During the final stages of the *Expanding the Photographic Interval e*xperiment, the researcher reflected upon the act of synchronous photography and writing (Figure 32) (pp. 95-98) and how this linked to the notion of parallax : the approach appeared to create a *double* parallax, outlined below:

- Primary: "*As the camera records a latent image, a visual representation on light sensitive film, absorbing light that radiates from the subject itself, I stand, kneels or sits nearby, using a pencil to write a text on paper that relates to that place. Yet I cannot see what the camera photographs and the camera cannot see what the I write."*

- Secondary*: "Within the photographic 'interval' my thoughts shift between memories of the place from the past - feelings, emotions, images of people and objects - and experience sensations and feelings from the present place, reflecting upon how they relate or conflict with each other. Sometimes my memory compares (mirrors?) the present, sometimes the utopian 'past' conflicts with the dystopian 'present'."*

The double parallax was an important feature of this stage of practice based experimentation. In this experiment photography's indexical quality is emphasised through the influence of autoethnographic practice: the photographs and writing jointly form an aesthetic description (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2010, p. 3) of lived experience, with the photograph's location being relational to the memory reflected upon. The photographic and written outcomes describe experiences of the natural world set against the context of life in 1980s Blackburn and the challenges and social interactions that took place within the semi-rural landscape close to the researcher's home. The range of work addresses varying social and cultural experiences, some positive, others less so, and the narratives explored differ from the

contemporary media reporting about Blackburn (Scott, 2007), which focuses on deprivation and division as central themes.

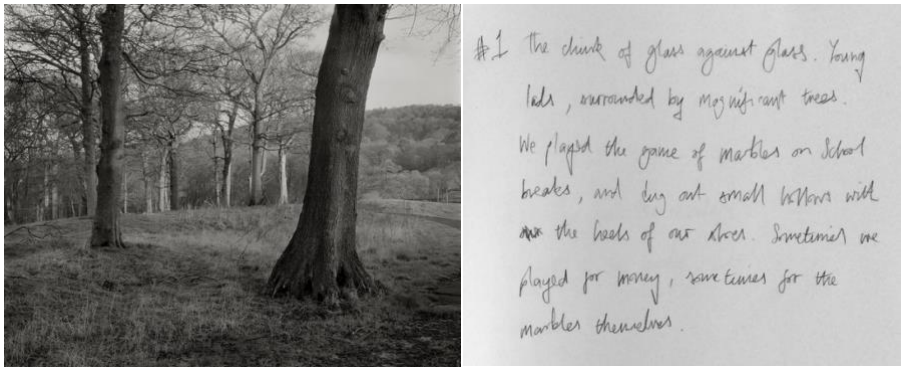


*Figure 31 (Plate #11) - Marbles (with notebook), Harrison, 2016*

Following this stage of experimentation, the researcher sought to explore the use of photography and writing further, proposing that the research would benefit by applying the approach with a greater subjectivity and by situating the photography within other place types, such as the urban environment.

*Figure 32 (Plate #12) - Hancock Street, Harrison, 2016*

The approach used for *The Double Parallax* experiment was recorded by the researcher (John Harrison, 2016) (Figure 34), in order to aid the presentation, contextualisation and evaluation of the research

methodology being developed (Question 2, p. 11). The video, edited to include both the stages of production and the outcomes from the experiment (Figure 33), documents the process of making the photography and reflective writing, specifically revealing the features of the approach and the stages of production. In this example, the researcher chose a specific location drawn from a lived experience – climbing a local summit with friends – within which to make the photography and writing. The influence of *slow* – focussing attention on local features/identities, utilising time for meaningful reflection – alongside the practice of autoethnography – revealing lived experience (an epiphany) through reflection and making - is evidenced through the photography and writing.

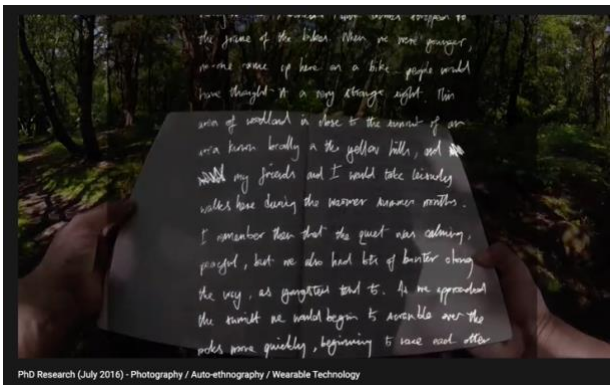


*Figure 33 – Harrison, 2016: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASeE0UMIwDo*

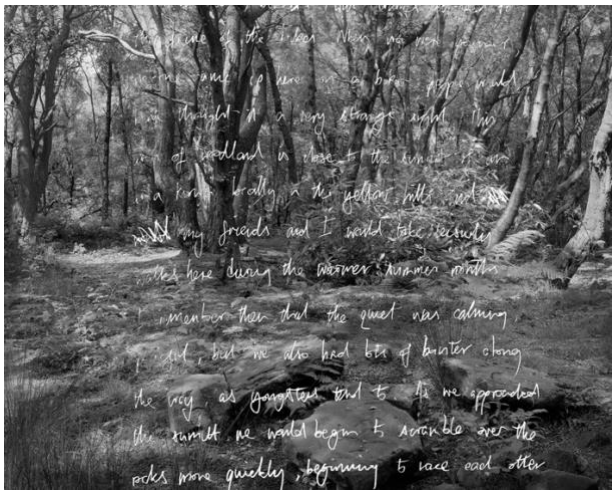

*Figure 34 (Plate #13) – The Yellow Hills, Harrison, 2016*

Up to this point in the enquiry, the narratives revealed through the experiments had focussed upon lived experiences of friendship, play and nature. Subsequently, the researcher began to draw from their lived experience of racism, isolation, illness and addiction in 1980's Blackburn, thus responding more directly to the narratives explored in Blackburn's media portrayal, identified in the contextual review (Question 2, p. 11) (pp. 75-81). The photographs and writing (in the form of short prose or poems) produced focussed on an attempt to describe experiences that took place only meters apart, near to the home the researcher grew up in. *An Errand for My Father, An Errand for Their Father I* (Figure 35) (Plate #14), reflects – and, subsequently, visualises - two conflicting experiences and two conflicting, yet interrelated, social themes. The researcher's experience during this experiment differed to that of *The Water's Edge* (Plates #08-09): retracing and describing memories was not just emotional, but challenging, and centred upon historical reflection of violence, disease and bereavement.


*Figure 35 (Plate #14) - An Errand for My Father, An Errand for Their Father I, Harrison, 2016*

As outlined previously in this chapter, the early phase of experimentation utilised autoethnographic principles to influence the design of early research experiments. The researcher utilised autoethnography to support the writing of past experiences through hindsight, but used photography to reveal, visually, the places wherein such experiences occurred. The pairing of photographs and texts, representing lived experiences, created narratives about the researcher's experiences of Blackburn, focussed on places such as home, a street or a shop. Following this, the researcher committed to

making photography that continued the focus upon such themes, using the previously created work *An Errand for My Father, An Errand for Their Father II* (Figure 36) (Plate #15) as a narrative through which to create new work. Importantly, whilst this new range of photographs focussed on the researcher's lived experience, the approach to creating the photography was considered in relation to places as they existed, rather than as they were recollected. However, the use of autoethnography - specifically how it was applied during the *Extending the Photographic Interval*, and *The Double Parallax* experiments - resulted in the researcher being the central voice in the production of photographic and written narratives. Whilst the approach relates to a socially engaged practice – for example, the linking of the photographer's lived experience to wider social or political contexts (Mortram, 2016) (Ryley, 2010) – the researcher sought to bring the voices of others into the design of the photographic experiments.

Furthermore, the researcher established that it was important to make new photographs in colour. All the previous work had been made using black and white film, being more adaptable in terms of films speed (pp. 89-95). This raised a concern: within photography, black and white images have an established language, often situating the narratives as historical or journalistic (pp. 73-75). The researcher considered that this didn't sufficiently locate the work in the 'here and now', as an alternative to the contemporary images that influenced the enquiry (Chapter 1 and Chapter 2).

*Figure 36 (Plate #15) - An Errand for My Father, An Errand for Their Father II, Harrison, 2016*

The diminishing influence of autoethnography as a conscious, applied practice within the photography, is most notable in the absence of writing to accompany the photography. The researcher considered the written element as a textual artefact, created to describe a personal, historical experience linked to a specific time and place in 1980-90s Blackburn. In order to situate the photography in contemporary Blackburn, the researcher abandoned the written element. This marked a significant change in the approach to earlier experiments, where focus was placed on interpreting the world through a historical lens (through autoethnographic writing) and through the lens of the present (through the photography of places in contemporary Blackburn).

Autoethnography continued to be an influence in a specific manner: the choice of subjects remained linked to the researcher's lived experience (Figure 37) (Plate #15) and central to the locations used for the photography. Yet, *The Double Parallax* experiment was the first point where autoethnography began to have less of a direct impact on the approach: with the absence of the written element as autoethnography/autobiography, the colour photographs reflect a contemporary Blackburn somewhat decoupled from the researcher's lived experience. The researcher purposefully chose a range of places that related to contrasting experiences of life growing up in Blackburn, attempting to make photographs which suggest a wider meaning or history. This strategy (Figures 37-39), of moving away from an inward, highly subjective approach and towards a more outward approach (Question 3, p. 11), was influenced by documentary photographers such as Seawright (Seawright, 2000) and theories of photography explored by writers such as Sontag (Sontag, 1979, pp. 120–121): what is hidden, what is implied, becomes as equally powerful as that of the seen, of the explicit. In this context, fences can become motifs, indicating separation or division, as do blocked doors, security cameras and floral tributes, indicating social unease or an undercurrent of neglect: whilst the narratives reflected mirror those the researcher attempted to convey (for example, Figure 37, social isolation), the photographs can be viewed also as symbolic of the lived experience of others.

*Figure 37 (Plate #16) - Chicken Street, Harrison, 2016*

The photographs made during this stage are, therefore, not merely a portrayal of inanimate objects. Berger (Berger, 2013, p. 57) states, "Photographs are relics of the past, traces of what has happened". Yet, the photographs made between November and December 2016 were not only 'of the past' in the sense Berger describes. The subjects photographed existed (to the researcher) as something other, something from the past, and, yet, are further differentiated from the original experience when photographed by the researcher. Berger describes the unavoidable conclusion of any photographic process: once the exposure is committed, the subject recorded (as either a latent or imprinted image) is rendered moribund. Sontag (Sontag, 2004, p. 15) too describes this ontological effect:

> "All photographs are memento mori. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt".

Then, the act of photography sentences the subject to its death, at least as it was seen or felt by the photographer at the moment of exposure. Sontag (1979, p. 15) recognises this quality and offers the following insight regarding our emotional reaction to viewing photographs, particularly of people and important objects, "Most subjects, just by being photographed, are touched by pathos". But there is another sense by which this mortality is experienced: in making the photographs of those places the researcher was exposed to confronting (and then representing through the subjective use of formal elements such as colour, line, contrast etc.) subjects that had been transformed or transfigured by the passing of time (Figure 38). The textiles building had been demolished – part of the impact of deindustrialisation - to leave only loose stone and rubble.

*Figure 38 (Plate #17) - The Albion Mill, Harrison, 2016*

The proposition is that *these* places had consequently become monuments of the researcher's past and the resulting photographic outcomes were evidence that not only the researcher had stood there, but so too had the materials that made up the subject the researcher was recollecting. Thus, the photographic act became an act of commemoration, a remembrance of place and history - linking to the philosophy of *slow* (pp. 30-33) - and experienced by the researcher as nostalgia. Reflecting this approach, the photograph *We Bring Our Lares With Us* (Figure 39) emerged from a critical and reflective engagement within a contemporary domestic space, one that linked to the researcher's lived experiences and personal connections.

*Figure 39 (Plate #18) - We Bring Our Lares With Us, Harrison, 2017*

Bachelard describes the life-long effect of one's connection to home on thoughts and day-dreams, as interconnected spaces where the imagination comforts itself with the illusion of protection (Bachelard, 2014, p. 27). The researcher considered what outcomes would yield from the utilization of those tenets of *slow* drawn for the contextual review, specifically, embracing a reflective and iterative approach to photography whilst focussing attention upon the local environment (in this case, the childhood home of the researcher). The researcher visited his childhood home several times over three weeks, reflecting on the experiences, sights and sounds of growing up there, prior to making photographs which would attempt to reveal such experiences. In this context, the researcher considered a painting made by John Chapman (a local artist) hung in his childhood home, a constant, visual artifact encountered whilst growing up there. The painting was previously hung in a prominent place, over the fireplace in the sitting room, and still remains there. Following the production of a photograph of the painting, the researcher questioned what it denoted - Barthes describes this as a photograph's mechanical analogue (Barthes, 1993b, p. 17) – and then, further, the connotation? Bachelard's examination of domestic

spaces in *The Poetics of Space* (1958), particularly those relating to the significance of the hut (Bachelard, 2014, p. 25), aided reflection:

> "…each one of us, then, should speak of his roads, his cross-roads, his roadside benches; each one of us should make a surveyor's map of his lost fields and meadows…Thus we cover the universe with drawings we have lived. These drawings need not be exact. They need only to be tonalized on the mode of our inner space" (Bachelard, 2014, p. 33).

Critically, Bachelard outlines a supposition, one that the researcher had hoped to locate in the reading undertaken, that the researcher's photographs (and correspondingly stories) may affect the viewer to consider how this relates to their experiences, to their past, to their present:

> "…I may hope that my page will possess a sonority that will ring true - a voice so remote within me, that it will be the voice we all hear when we listen as far back as memory reaches…Thus, very quickly, at the very first word, at the first poetic overture, the reader who is 'reading a room' leaves off reading and starts to think of some place in his own past" (Bachelard, 2014, p. 35).

Barthes states that the photograph is the perfect analogon (Barthes, 1993a, p. 17) to the reality that the camera (and, of fundamental importance, the operator/photographer) witnessed. An attempt to state that which is denoted by the photograph *We Bring Our Lares With Us* may result (depending on the commentator) in a short list comprising; one end of a table; the top-rails of two chairs; a painting in a frame; wallpaper; pieces of a jigsaw; a radiator. Barthes hypothesis is that to even attempt to describe this denotation is to express a connotation – it is inevitable that in describing a photograph one must co-join the first-order (the denoted) with a second-order message. In the case of this photograph, for example, that of *domesticity*. Furthermore, Barthes expresses in sequence the

connotation procedures in the photographic process that are realized through the photographic production, such as subject choice, format, print quality (Barthes, 1993b, p. 20), separating them into two groups:

> "the first three (trick, effects, pose, objects) should be distinguished from the last three (photogenia, aesthetics, syntax), since in the former the connotation is produced by a modification of the reality itself, of, that is, the denoted message" (Barthes, 1993b, p. 20).

Photography, arguably, is unique in its quality to pass-off as merely denoted a message which is in reality heavily connoted (Barthes, 1993b, p. 21). With respect to *We Bring Our Lares With Us,* the viewer witnesses, at first glance, a scene of typical domesticity (wallpaper, pieces of a jigsaw, a radiator etc.). Yet, the second-order *narratives* of absence, the passing of time and old age offer an account of the researcher's experience when encountering this scene. The minimal elements the researcher included within the frame (unfinished jigsaw, oil painting, empty chairs) hint at antiquity, an abundance of time and of solitude. The approach to photography in this stage - focussing on experiences so closely tied to the researcher's lived experience - was felt to be pivotal in developing the responses to Question 3, in that the narratives being generated from the experimentation thus far differed from the substantive themes and issues resulting from Blackburn's contemporary media portrayal.

Outcomes from Expanding the Photographic Interval and The Double Parallax experiments were presented at the Centre for Doctoral Research *Annual Art and Design Conference*. ('Slow Photography: gazing at, and navigating through, lost fields and meadows.', 2017) and in a group exhibition at PRISM Contemporary gallery in 2017 (Appendix #01, p. 210) (*PRISM Contemporary Launch - John Harrison 'Scatter'*, 2017) (Plate #19). The exhibition included the presentation of three photographs from *The Double Parallax* experiment. Plates #15, #18 and #19 were chosen as they represented the most recent outcomes from the research and were considered (by the researcher) to represent a more

contemporary portrayal of Blackburn (pp. 100-107). The exhibition launched at PRISM Contemporary Gallery (Blackburn, Lancashire, UK), in April 2017, to a range of gallery owners, local artists, commissioning agents and community representatives. The photographs presented were printed on mould-made cotton rag (a link to Blackburn's paper-making past, pp. 54-55) and tacked to wooden panels. The exhibition provided the opportunity for the researcher to evaluate the transferability of the photography within a gallery setting, providing useful feedback for future exhibitions (Appendix #01, p. 210) (pp. 128-129).

In presenting the academic paper for the conference and the photographic works for the exhibition, the researcher was provided with the opportunity to reflect on the impact of the research activities up to that point. Whilst the photography produced during this experiment remained motivated by the researcher's lived experiences, the emergence of an emphasis on Blackburn's contemporary landscape realised the beginning of a new stage in the research. The use of autoethnography as a research method enabled a series of relevant, exploratory experiments, that utilised the researcher's local knowledge from which to engage with Blackburn's history. However, a socially engaged photography practice (pp. 17-19) required the researcher to also utilise multiple voices: the researcher therefore sought to draw from theories, concepts and practices that would enable an integration of this particular characteristic of socially engaged photography.

The Tourist Gaze

Questions 1 and 3 (p. 11) required the researcher not only to develop and explore a socially engaged photography practice, but to utilise a range of appropriate theories, concepts and practices . As outlined in Chapter 1 (pp. 28-30), socially engaged photography places emphasis on collaboration with the subject/s of photography (Germain and Flynn, 2016) (Luvera, 2019), the linking of the photographer's lived experience to a wider social or cultural context (Mortram, 2016) (Ryley, 2010) and the use of

multiple voices in the production of photographic works (*Laygate Stories* [Photography and Writing], 2021) (Walmsley Griffiths, 2021b). The knowledge gained from the review of socially engaged photography prepared the researcher in seeking approaches to photography that integrated such practices in the design of the experiments.

In responding to Question 1 - in utilising a range of appropriate theories, concepts and practices - the contextual review continued to provide new perspectives on academic, practice based and photographic research. As identified in Chapter 1 (p. 20), the researcher drew from *The Tourist Gaze* (Urry and Larsen, 2011) as a potential influence in enabling new photographic approaches:

> "Tourist photographs can violate existing place-myths and contribute to new ones, while commercial photographs mirror photographs by tourists rather than the other way round" (2011, p. 187).

Supporting this notion, Bate (2015, p. 55) states, "to pick up a camera with the intention of showing things 'as they are' in this way can be called an impulse to document". In 2017, the researcher reflected on the photography made during a recent holiday to Italy. A photograph of a tired worker resting in the sun under porticoes in Bologna (Figure 40) was an attempt to *document* the distinct nuance of what the researcher perceived as a historic and vibrant city, one that differed perhaps from common (local) experiences of the north of England. Utilising the review of literature, the research related this experience to a 'tourist gaze':

> "…when tourists see two people kissing in Paris what they capture in the gaze is 'timeless romantic Paris'…fanning out in search of signs of Frenchness, typical Italian behaviour, exemplary Oriental scenes, typical American thruways, traditional English pubs" (Urry and Larsen, 2011, p. 3).

The researcher determined that this idea could support answering Question 2 (p. 11), in responding to the contemporary portrayal of Blackburn through alternative, photographic narratives. Utilising this as a starting point, the researcher began to design alternative approaches to making photographs in Blackburn, following the autoethnographic and introspective approach utilised thus far (for example, Figure 41).

*Figure 40 - Worker Resting (Bologna, Italy), Harrison, 2017*


*Figure 41 – Experimentation with photographic approaches: panoramic photography. Harrison, 2017*

Following the autoethnographic and introspective approach utilised in early experiments (Table 1, June 2015 to September 2016, p. 45), The Tourist Gaze was the first in a series of three experiments

undertaken by the researcher (see Table 1, February 2017 to June 2018, p. 45) that tested the impact, on the photography, of de-emphasising lived experience as an influence on research activities. The notion of the tourist gaze influenced a new photographic strategy, focussed on the researcher as tourist, rather than the researcher exploring Blackburn through lived experiences.

*Figure 42 – Community Garden, Harrison, 2017*

Therefore, the researcher applied the same approach to photography in the Bank Top area of Blackburn as had been employed when making photographs on holiday in Italy. The researcher chose Bank Top due to it being a multi-ethnic area in the centre of Blackburn and one linked to the town's long history as a textile manufacturing base. Historically, the area was an important location for mills and mill housing given its proximity to the major transport routes and the River Blakewater, yet more recently had become a home for communities who emigrated from South Asia and eastern Europe. Another important part of the decision to photograph Bank Top was that the researcher had little experience of it and that this, in turn, would enable the researcher to undertake the photography as someone more akin to a sightseer, an outsider, thus helping to develop a more outward approach to the photography.

The principles of *slow* were again important, with the researcher adopting an unhurried, conscious and deliberate approach during the making of the photographs (Figure 42, Figure 43, Figure 44). As the researcher walked through post-war housing estates and along abandoned rows of terraced streets, the decaying iron-brick factories emphasised the town's abandonment of heavy industry over the previous few decades. The business that now occupied the mills and warehouses, those that previously housed weavers and engineers, was unclear and unidentifiable as being from the north in a way that textiles manufacturing seemed to be. There was evidence of the efforts by community groups to promote sustainability and self-sufficiency, and to raise awareness of health and wellbeing issues.

*Figure 43 - Satellites, Bank Top, 2017 - http://jharrisonphd.blogspot.co.uk/2017/04/the-tourist-gaze-300417.html*

Walking through a social housing development, the researcher witnessed familiar motifs, those applied by mainstream media to describe working class communities such as those living in the Bank Top area of Blackburn - closed curtains, female Muslims wearing headscarves, the flag of St George, youths with hooded tops, metal shutters protecting corner shops – but made a conscious attempt to ignore these within the landscape and focus, instead, on an attempt to photograph an alternative range of objects, structures and signs. The principles of *slow* – the focus on the researcher's local environment alongside

conscious, critical reflection during the making process – remained not only useful, but essential in developing this outward and objective approach to the making of photographs. The researcher documented the experiences of making this work on the blogsite, noting:

> "…reflecting upon my past whilst standing in contemporary places (most of which had changed beyond recognition) I accepted that I was an outsider" (Harrison, 2017d).

This approach, moving away from an inward approach focussed on the researcher's history, was consciously being supplanted with an outward and contemporaneous focus, leading to the development of new photographic works describing new narrative themes - improvised road-side memorials, corner shops that sold cheap international calls *and* tinned peas (Figure 44), post-war houses that appeared able to communicate to each other via wall-mounted satellites (Figure 44). Subsequently, this experience was considered by the researcher to enable a re-education of their hometown, supporting Question 3 (p. 11) in understanding the potential of socially engaged photography and *slow* to create alternative narratives.


*Figure 44 - Global Connectivity and Tinned Peas, Harrison, 2017*

In assessing the photographs made during this short phase of experimentation, the researcher experienced Blackburn more as a foreigner, an outsider, distinct from the experiences of earlier experiments (Table 1, June 2015 to September 2016, p. 45), in which the researcher reflected upon their historical experiences of the town, of being a native, an insider. The researcher reflected on the difference between the narrative emerging from the photographs, compared to those made over the previous 12 months (for example, Figure 30). Now, the photographs were more focussed on aspects of the town that the researcher had previously not engaged with, such as the plethora of architectural styles and influences created by the town's immigration history (Figure 41), eclectic global products sold in shops (Figure 44), self-sufficiency initiatives (Figure 42)and the visibility of home-installed technologies (Figure 43).

The researcher questioned if the themes developed from earlier experiments (Table 1, July 2015 to September 2016, p. 45) were a regurgitation of the sort of narratives about Blackburn identified from the contextual review. The researcher considered photographic imagery made in Blackburn by documentary photographers - Berry (2018), Parr (2017), and Davies (2017) describe the town as one of antiquated street games, daytime drinking in shady pubs, Muslims reading from the Koran and old women wearing headscarves. The narratives which emerge from this form of documentary relate to, and reflect, a wider construct about the north of England common in twentieth century documentary photography (Brandt, 2009) (Bulmer, 2012) (Parkinson, in Harrison, 1998), whose purpose began to be critically interrogated from the 1970s (Wells, 2000, p. 108). Conversely, Blackburn's local photographers, such as Ashworth (Figure 14), Sharples (Figure 18) and Talbot (Figure 20) visualise the town in terms of architectural transformation, cinema-going young couples or tradespeople selling produce on Blackburn's market stalls. Such narratives, arguably, evidence a locally rooted, insider awareness of Blackburn, contrasting from a national image of social and working conditions in the north west of England. More recently, the motifs utilised by more contemporary media define the town,

visually, as a town with a drinking culture ('Trouble on the Estate', 2012), racial segregation (Hill, 2018) or pre-war housing stock (Alamy, in Seabrook, 2018). Contemporary, photographic portrayals, a focus upon dilapidated factories, the litter-strewn back alleys of terraced housing and run-down shops fronts continues (Easton, 2020a) (Wise, 2021). Contemporary local photographers, however, those who seek to develop closer relationships with the communities in Blackburn, immerse themselves in a socially engaged practice in order to reflect the voices of local people. The outcomes from such an approach reveal a network of community ties and positive role models (pp. 60-63) (Mathison, 2020) (McAllister, 2019).

Whilst previously the narratives emerging from the photographic and autoethnographic writing relayed personal histories and experiences of Blackburn (Table 1, July 2015 to September 2016, p. 44), the photographs for the Tourist Gaze experiment were made from a purposefully more distant and instinctual position. By comparison to the visual references referred to above, the narratives expressed through *The Tourist Gaze* photographs relay the themes of community initiatives, eastern architectural forms and digital connectivity, linking to wider twenty first century paradigms of austerity (Toynbee and Walker, 2020), diversity (Asian Image Reporter, 2018) and globalisation (Julian, 2016). Such narratives are distinct to the portrayal of Blackburn identified in the contextual review (pp. 75-81), reflecting that the approach facilitated the generation of alternative narratives to media reporting (Questions 1-3, p. 11). The process and outcomes of *The Tourist Gaze* experiment brought about a reconfiguration to the approaches for the photography, seen in the development of the subsequent experiments, aimed at drawing not from the lived experience of the researcher, but from the views of others.

The Talbot Photography Collection and Wiki:Blackburn

Between 2001-2020, the researcher was employed in an academic role for a College in Blackburn and was made aware of an archive of photographs of the town which was at risk of being discarded by a local photographer. Visiting the photographer, Howard Talbot, the researcher developed a project plan to digitise the archive and develop a range of community initiatives which would promote the photographs and preserve them. The researcher sought support from undergraduate students and photography lecturers to the project and from 2017, the researcher met with the Talbot family to agree a project plan which would utilise undergraduates students in order to digitise the photographic plates, prints and negatives in Wally and Howard Talbot's archive. Undergraduate students scanned, categorised and published (online) thousands of images, a selection of which are now available on the CottonTown website: https://www.cottontown.org/ImageGalleries/Pages/The-Talbot-Collection.aspx. Alongside other colleagues, the researcher led on the development of an academic conference centred on the Talbot Collection, delivered in February 2018, appointing photographic practitioner Paul Hill CBE to lead a plenary about the impact of the Talbot Collection on Blackburn's photographic history. Specifically, the researcher's presentation, delivered to a wide range of artists, academics, historians, local government representatives, professional organisations and community interest groups, outlined the focus of the researcher's photographic research on developing alternative narratives to the town's media portrayal. Subsequently, The Talbot Collection Conference has been featured on the British Photographic History website - http://britishphotohistory.ning.com/events/the-talbot-conference?overrideMobileRedirect=1 - the BBC's *Flog It programme (Series 17, Episode 30)* - https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000fjd2 - and several websites featuring information about the conference – for example, https://blackburncathedral.com/join-us-tour-talbot-archive-stunning-photographic-record-lancashire-life/.

*Figure 45 - The researcher presenting at the Talbot Collection Conference in 2018 to a range of local academics, community interest groups and historians, highlighting the Wiki:Blackburn experiment in relation to Blackburn's media portrayal.*

The impact of the researcher's contribution to the Talbot photography collection, on the research, was important. The reaction from the development of the digital archive of Talbot photographs, generated a significant response from thousands of local residents via Facebook and other social media, many of whom had a story to tell about a particular photograph made by Talbot or wanted to share that they were related to someone in a photograph taken by Talbot. Reflection by the researcher on Blackburn and its photographic history, alongside the photography from *The Tourist Gaze* experiment (Plates #21-23) contributed to the development of subsequent experiments - as outlined previously (p. 111-116), in the early experiments the researcher nominated the places in which to make photographs, motivated by how they were indexical to lived experiences. The *Wiki:Blackburn* experiment - motivated by a deeper reflection on Blackburn due to the researcher's involvement with the Talbot photography collection and the response from local people - was an attempt to test an alternative approach: using the voices of others, rather than the voice of the researcher, to determine which places should be photographed. Alongside the learning developed from the *Tourist Gaze* experiment (pp. 107-114) (Urry and Larsen, 2011) and from local photographers from Blackburn photographic past (Ashworth, 1941) (Talbot, 1950) (Sharples, 1957) the researcher sought to consolidate the position by adopting the others' views about Blackburn as an influence in the design of the research experiments.

The Wikipedia page for Blackburn[2] was considered an appropriate resource in this respect: an information repository defined and edited by thousands of people from all over the world since its online publication in 2003 and resulting in, amongst other elements, broad descriptions of Blackburn's key histories and places of interest. Utilising the Wikipedia article, the researcher catalogued each section into a list that reflected where in the article they appeared, then photographed each place, in turn (for example, Figure 46). This approach was essentially one of being guided to a place by a unknown source, linking this to systems approaches outlined in Chapter 2 (p. 86), sharing similarities in that the researcher experienced Blackburn as exotic, foreign, new and unfamiliar.

*Figure 46 (Plate #24) – Wiki: Blackburn, The River Darwen, Harrison, 2017*

As an example, the link to the foreign can be found in *Corporation Park*, a photograph made by the researcher in August 2017 as part of the *Wiki:Blackburn* experiment (Figure 47). The researcher visited Corporation Park as part of the *Wiki:Blackburn* experiment, photographing the Victorian glass conservatory as a feature representative of the park's rich history. The park appears here as one that has seen better days, or that harks back to a more exuberant and leisurely time. In contrast, the

[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blackburn

occasion of the park's opening in 1857 was attended by 65-70,000 people (the population at that time was only 85,000) and shops and mills closed for the afternoon to allow the locals to celebrate their new public park.

The park's conservatory was opened in 1902 and was constructed to house exotic plants from across the British Empire. However, photographing the rotten iron and through the vandalised glass windows, damp with the typical wet summer of east Lancashire, the researcher was reminded of time spent in the conservatory as a youngster. The researcher was prompted to remember the heat inside, the looming palm trees and spiky leaves. Moving from an inward and personal approach to making photographs of Blackburn (for example, *The Double Parallax,* pp. 95-107) was successful in the context of developing a socially engaged approach to photography: the locations of the photography were not chosen by the researcher yet, conversely, the link between Blackburn's present day and the researcher's past, remained connected. This experience brought about feelings of sadness, at what the conservatory had become, and the researcher felt responsible to present it as it was experienced. This is in contrast to Sharples (Figure 17) who presents a timeless, almost romantic image of the park: the researcher's photograph visualises contrasting themes such as municipality, empire and decay. *Corporation Park* provides a contemporary perspective of Blackburn, yet revealing alternative narratives to those seen in Blackburn's recent media portrayal.

*Figure 47 (Plate #26) - Wiki: Blackburn, Corporation Park, Harrison, 2017*

The use of a predetermined location list developed by those other than the researcher acted as a guide about *where* to photograph, about *what* places in Blackburn others deemed to be important. The researcher was being led by the voices of others – in this case multiple, anonymous online contributors – ensuring the approach was essentially more one of being guided, not choosing where to make photographs. Subsequently this enabled as distancing effect, a *slow* approach, reconfiguring the researcher's position in the making of photographs such as *Blackburn's New Bus Station* (Figure 49): during this final experiment of phase 1, the role of autoethnography was decreasing in influence, whilst the role of collaborators and participants was increasing in significance, supporting more directly the aims of the research in the development of a socially engaged photography practice (Question 3, p. 11).

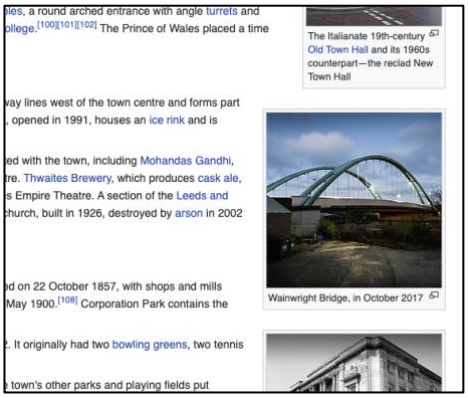


*Figure 48 – The Wainwright Bridge, posted to Blackburn's Wikipedia page in October 2017. Accessed: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blackburn*

In the early stages of the research the researcher utilised memories that acted as a motivation for research experiments. In this approach, reflecting upon the past whilst standing in contemporary spaces - some of which had changed beyond recognition (Figure 38)- the researcher understood their position to be as much of an outsider than an insider. As previously stated (pp. 113-114), the experience of visiting places the researcher had little prior connection to, encouraged a photographic response of greater objectivity: the researcher experienced Blackburn without influence from a memory, and by using other voices to motivate a starting point for the subjects of the photography.

*Figure 49 (Plate #28) – Wiki: Blackburn, Blackburn's New Bus Station, Harrison, 2017*

Subsequently, the visual language of the photographs from the *Wiki:Blackburn* experiment differed from earlier works. The views took the researcher through complex post-industrial structures and over quiet, paved council courtyards: rather than a town defined by social injustice or racial divide, portrayed by television and news media (pp. 75-81), the photographs depict community regeneration schemes, decaying Victorian structures, ancient sites obstructed by urban development and new transportation links built between medieval streets (Plates #24-29). As an example, the photograph of All Hallow's Spring (Figure 50, left) is successful in the context of Blackburn's diverse history (p. 57) and because this ancient site has been so little referred to positively outside of a local history context. The spring, to the East of Blackburn Cathedral, now at basement level, is located in an area that businesses use to store their bins and park company vehicles. When the spring was unearthed and excavated, statues and inscriptions dedicated to the building of a temple in York were found, likely placed there by the Roman 6th Legion of Vitrix. This was the same legion, who were sent to Britain in AD119 by the Emperor Hadrian. With a double dose of irony, the site of All Hallow's Spring was partly built over to create Newspaper House, a media group of regional newspapers including the Lancashire Telegraph, in 1982.

In 2021, the redevelopment of Newspaper House into residential apartments was the subject of reporting by the Lancashire Telegraph into the poor experiences of local residents (Harrigan, 2021).

After making photographs of Blackburn between September and November 2017, the researcher's aim of visually 'mapping' Blackburn through an extracted location list from the town's Wikipedia article achieved something distinct to that of previous experiments. The researcher set out to establish parameters which would support a reconfiguration of approach, putting aside lived experience and historical connections and thus producing visual outcomes motivated through collaboration with others. Importantly, the *Wiki:Blackburn* experiment (Figure 50 and Figure 51) saw the researcher engage in an approach distinct to earlier experiments (as outlined above) as part of the further development of the socially engaged photography practice.

*Figure 50 (Plates #22, right, and #25, left) - Examples of photographic works from The Tourist Gaze (centre) and Wiki:Blackburn (left and right) experiments. Harrison, 2017*

The cycle of the photography resulted in the photographs being exhibited and discussed across several platforms between 2017-2018 (*Appendix #01*, p. 210). The researcher posted one of the images from the experiment, *Wainwright Bridge* (Harrison, 2017c), back into Blackburn's Wikipedia page in 2017 (Harrison, 2017a) (Figure 48). The image has remained on the page through five external user edits and has been selected and viewed over one hundred times since uploading (Wiki pageview analysis, 2021)

– it can be now understood in this context as an accepted and widely seen image of contemporary Blackburn. The photographs that were created from the experiment were presented at both the Talbot Conference (*The Talbot Conference*, 2018) and the National Festival of Making ('The Talbot Exhibition & Talks', 2018) focussed on the portrayal of Blackburn and the research activities being undertaken. The researcher exhibited photographs from the *Wiki:Blackburn* experiment at both events and took part in a plenary chaired by Paul Hill (Table 1, p. 45) (pp. 115-116) that centred upon Talbot's photography against the backdrop of Blackburn's contemporary media portrayal. Feedback on the researcher's paper, provided by participants and attendees suggested that the continued use of other voices in the production of photography would represent a positive response to the films such as the BBC's White Fright: Divided Britain (Hill, 2018). Involvement in these events led to further academic and external opportunities being provided to the researcher, both on a local (*Slow Walk*, pp. 145-153) and national level (*SelfScapes*, pp. 129-135).

*Figure 51 (Plate #29) – Examples of photographic works from the Wiki:Blackburn experiment. Harrison, 2017*

Summary of Findings

Chapter 3 presents a critical, reflective account of the experiments undertaken during the first three years of the enquiry (Phase 1). Initially, the researcher drew from autoethnography and *slow* from which to examine their history and relationship with Blackburn. The approach was designed in order to develop the researcher's authority around the subject, not in a hierarchical sense, rather in terms of the knowledge and experience acquired through experiences of Blackburn (both in the past and the present). Using *slow* as a philosophical underpinning placed emphasis on examining lived experience in specific, local places: this enabled a positioning of this phase of research activity as place-specific (the local: Blackburn). The characteristics of *slow* drawn from the contextual review influenced reflections on memory and the passing of time - these thematic elements were explored during and following the photographic experiments. Overall, Phase 1 of the research represents an attempt by the researcher to establish and test a photography practice, in response to the research aims and the knowledge gleaned from the contextual review.

For the *Expanding the Photographic Interval* and *The Double Parallax* experiments, the influence of autoethnography and *slow* subjectivised the approach to practice based research: the photography and written outcomes are identifiable as being place specific, whilst the narratives revealed through the photography and writing (Plates #03, #09 and #14) connect to experiences of friendship, nature, isolation and illness. The making of *Hancock Street* (Harrison, 2015a) (Plate #12) involved the researcher examining childhood memories and relationships, triggered by being in the place that related directly to those experiences and characterising a socially conscious approach (Ellis, 2016, p. 12). The outcomes from such experiments emphasised the researcher's lived experience - someone with a history of Blackburn – and remained important for the latter stages of the enquiry, enabling a starting point from which to test other, critically objective approaches. Through this phase of experimentation, the

researcher's experiences of family, friendships and the environment were revealed through photography and writing.

The practice of undertaking photography simultaneously to autobiographical writing, placed emphasis on exploring the notion of temporality. The manipulation of the photographic process as part of a practice based experimentation - extending exposure times, often to more than ten minutes - created temporal windows for reflection that, within, the researcher used to write, whilst the camera recorded. The researcher experienced this as a double parallax (primary and secondary), with the past and present coexisting alongside utopian and dystopian perspectives on the contemporary landscape of Blackburn. These early experiments provided the researcher a route into practicing photography within an academic, practice based context, whilst focussing the researcher's attention on generating photographic narratives about Blackburn from photography practice. Whilst the narratives reflected in the photography can be considered *alternative* to the themes identified in the contextual review (pp. 64-75) (pp. 75-81) – reflecting such experiences as games and adventures set within Blackburn's urban and rural landscapes – the specific approach (being a subjectivised reflection on lived experiences) meant that narratives were revolved around experiences in 1980s and 1990s Blackburn, rather than being situated contemporaneously.

During the second year of the enquiry, the focus for the photography responded more directly to the images used by contemporary journalistic and news media when describing Blackburn. Adaptations to the methodology were made, which included the researcher abandoning the use of autoethnographic/autobiographical writing (Figure 36) as a feature of the approach. Whilst the researcher continued to make photographs in places indexical to the researcher's memories, the lack of the autoethnographic/autobiographical text served to expand the possible narrative range of the work: places that related to the researcher's lived experience remained central, but the choice of what subjects, and more critically how to present them, became of greater importance: the role of the

implicit, the unseen (Seawright, 1999) in the framing of the photography, was a distinct feature of this experiment.

The researcher's engagement with their own social experience and memory provided a foundation for the development of a socially engaged photography practice for the enquiry, as defined in Chapter 1 (pp. 17-18) (pp. 28-30). Yet, progressing the diversity of experimentation, a key phase on the research journey was the focus away from personal experience towards more objective positions. The theories of Urry and Larsen (Urry and Larsen, 2011) encouraged the researcher to place emphasis away from lived experience and personal reflections. This phase of research sought to identify other voices that could be utilised to inform decision-making regarding subject choice: the motivation was to engage with Blackburn contemporaneously. The public reaction to the collaborative project undertaken by the researcher to support the Talbot Collection (pp. 115-117) (*The Talbot Collection Conference*, 2018), and including the presentation at the conference itself, motivated a reconfiguration to the practice in line with the aims of developing a socially engage practice (Questions 2-3, p. 11) (pp. 28-30). The researcher considered that seeking the views of others about Blackburn, was a crucial next step for the enquiry.

Drawing from data about Blackburn from an online information repository (Wikipedia), the researcher initiated an exploration of the town informed by alternative voices: in this case the anonymous users and editors of Blackburn's Wikipedia page. The photography generated from this phase differed in language and narrative from earlier experiments such as *The Double Parallax* (pp. 96-108), utilising a more outward approach to how the photography was informed and conducted. Reinforcing this outward approach, a crucial distinction to earlier experiments was in the use of multiple voices – essentially what *others* deemed to be Blackburn's important places. This approach draws parallels with systems art (pp. 87) (Power and Chandler, 1996) in using textual artefacts to inform subject choice and decision-making, thus reducing the influence of the photographer/researcher in the choice of what was/is photographed. Photographic results from the experiment were notably different to those of

earlier experiments: photographs reflected narratives about Blackburn which emphasised not only the post-industrial, but the town's ancient historical sites and Victorian municipal buildings, alongside community initiatives and investment in buildings and infrastructure (Plates #24-29). Such narratives contrast from those identified through the contextual review, which place emphasis on division (pp. 75-76), violence (pp. 76-77) and deprivation (Figure 26).

Feedback from conference participants and exhibition attendees (Table 1, p. 46) (pp. 115-117) emphasised the importance of utilising other voices in the response to Blackburn's media portrayal, encouraging the researcher to further the approach developed during the Wiki:Blackburn experiment. The first phase of the research had established a research and practice position alongside experimentation with techniques and visual languages, providing the academic and practice based foundation from which subsequent experiments were conducted. The learning drawn from this phase, revolving around the integration of multidisciplinary approaches (p. 27) (Barrett and Bolt, 2019, p. 5), enabled the development of skills and knowledge (writing, photography practice, subject knowledge, engaging with other voices) that supported the expansion of ideas in subsequent stages of the research enquiry.

**Chapter 4: Socially Engaged *Slow* Photography (Phase 2)**

The research undertaken during the first three years provided the researcher with an appropriate foundation from which to develop a socially engaged photography practice, underpinned by principles of *slow*. The contextual review, alongside the photography experiments, established a relevant theoretical and conceptual foundation for the first phase of research activities (Table 1: Phase 1, p. 45), built on principles drawn from autoethnography and *slow* (pp. 124-127). The early experiments, outlined in Chapter 3, relied upon an inward approach focussed on the researcher's lived experience of Blackburn, whilst narratives revealed through experiments such as *The Double Parallax* (pp. 95-107) explored topics including racism and addiction. As identified in the contextual review, such themes mirrored the type of social issues reflected in televisual documentary reporting ('Trouble on the Estate', 2012): photographs such as *Hancock Street* (Plate #12) were considered by the researcher to reinforce a negative media portrayal, rather than exploring alternative narratives about Blackburn.

Utilising lived experience to explore personal narratives began to be consciously supplanted with a socially engaged approach, where the voices of others in the construction of the photography began to emerge (pp. 125-127). The output from the *Wiki:Blackburn* experiment (a series of landscape photographs) revealed, amongst other things, Blackburn's community initiatives and sites of historical significance – marking a turning point in the enquiry, focussed upon developing photographs which explored contemporary Blackburn. As outlined in Chapter 3, the researcher assessed that photographs produced during the *Wiki:Blackburn* experiment portrayed the town in an alternative way, emphasising Blackburn's deep history, its connection with the industrial age and the effort of communities to improve its landscape. By 2018, as the practice-based activities increased, the researcher sought further opportunities to present the research to a wider audience, beyond the opportunities provided in Blackburn (for example, The Talbot Collection Conference) as a way of gathering feedback from a

broader range of academic and artists about the research whilst developing, further, the socially engaged approach which emerged during the latter stages of Phase 1 (Table 1, p. 45).

SelfScapes

In January 2018, the researcher was selected to participate in *SelfScapes,* an arts research group funded by Forestry England and York St John University and based at Dalby Forest, on the slopes of the North York Moors (North Yorkshire, UK). *SelfScapes* brings together practitioners from a broad range of disciplines and interests with the aim of investigating body and place as sites for interconnected experiences (Sperryn-Jones, Adams and Harrison, 2021, p. 5) and how, in turn, such experiences can be mediated through art practice and process. Between 2018-2021 the *SelfScapes* cluster has brought together over thirty creative practitioners who, along with SelfScapes coordinators, have delivered research seminars, nature walking events, art exhibitions and accompanying exhibition guides (Sperryn-Jones, 2020) (Sperryn-Jones, Adams and Harrison, 2021). The *SelfScapes* initiative provided the researcher with opportunities to reflect upon the effectiveness and transferability of the research, providing insights into its potential to be adopted in other locations and by other creative practitioners.

The researcher's proposal for the inaugural *SelfScapes* in 2018 placed strong emphasis on utilising the principles of *slow* established during the review of literature and practice (pp. 18-19) (pp. 30-33) (pp. 82-86). The researcher stated an intention to produce three portfolios of photography, each one identifiable as being centred upon a set of themes relatable to the research aims:

- Local boundaries: locating the practice in the Blackburn districts of Whinny Heights and Griffin.
- Exploring alternative narratives about Blackburn: a focus on the narrative of housing renewal projects in Blackburn.

- Exploring Blackburn's landscape: observing and photographing transformations occurring within man-made (urban) and organic (forest) environments.

*Figure 52 - A photograph from the first portfolio of photography for SelfScapes 2018. The researcher utilised text from Dalby Forest's Wikipedia page to explore Dalby's industrial history.*

The further embedding of *slow* into the methodology enabled an approach to photography practice more consciously objective/outward than in earlier experiments (pp. 124-127). Initially, the researcher adopted the approach utilised for the *Wiki:Blackburn* experiment (pp. 115-123), extracting words from the Wikipedia page for Dalby Forest drawn from the 'history' article and using these as a source to inform the photography. As with the *Wiki:Blackburn* experiment, this approach was a part of a conscious attempt to develop more outward, objective approaches to photographic research, led not by the researcher's vision, priorities or preferences, but by the opinions and views of others. Descriptions such as *building tracks*, *breaking ground* and *heavy labour* ('Dalby Forest', 2018), formed by online authors to comment on Dalby Forest's history as an industrial work camp in the 1930s, became mottos which informed the making of photographs (Figure 52). During two separate visits to the forest, in spring 2018, the researcher carried the body of text along fire tracks and through dense woodland, reading and re-reading as a guide for the identification of relatable scenes and objects. The researcher made photographs amongst foresters' work units and near industrial machinery previously

discarded by the edges of forest tracks (Plates #31-32). During the process of making photographs, the researcher reflected on the contrast between the man-made and the natural features of the forest, developing an understanding of Dalby's natural history as being somewhat inseparable from its social and industrial histories. It was during the making of this first portfolio that the researcher reflected upon Blackburn's own history as a medieval hunting ground (p. 53) and, later, as a manufacturing town (p. 53-56), which had significant influence on the photography subsequently produced for the SelfScapes exhibition in June 2018 (*SelfScapes: The Forests of Blackburn* [Photography], 2018).

Following the initial stages on the researcher's response to *SelfScapes* 2018 (as part of the contextual review of literature and practice), the researcher searched for traces of Blackburn's historical forest boundaries (p. 53) using the *Google Maps* application. Meandering, virtually, through Blackburn's streets and town borders (a kind of online, *slow* walk), the researcher identified areas of scrubland, left over from the demolition of cotton mill terraced housing in the Audley district, to the east of the town (Figure 11). The criss-cross pattern of tarmac and foliage had been left empty in anticipation of a new housing development, funded by the Pathfinder Housing Market Renewal project from the 1990s onwards (p. 58). Yet, following the collapse of this coalition Government-funded project, the site was transformed into a new, unintended woodland. There is little media coverage related to this issue and how it still affects the landscape of Blackburn, whilst coverage across national media tends to highlight the impact on larger cities such as Liverpool (MacFarlane, 2012).

The absence of reporting of Blackburn's experiences of Pathfinder encouraged reflection on the similarities between the managed, rural forests of Dalby and the abandoned, urban forests of Blackburn. Subsequently, the researcher made photographs in the Whinny Heights area of Blackburn (the ward of Audley and Queen's Park), evidencing the efforts by Council workers to create organic boundaries by cutting down trees and stacking them across pavements and roads. In Dalby Forest, tracks and clearings are managed by Forestry England employees to create safe and accessible routes

for visitors (Figure 54). In 2018, Blackburn with Darwen's Borough Council's employees had created make-shift organic barriers to stop traffic from entering a former zone of cotton-era housing (Figure 53).

*Figure 53 – An example of the researcher's photographs taken in the Whinny Heights area of Blackburn (2018), showing trees cut down by Council workers, left to form physical borders to the derelict site left over from the collapse of the Housing Market Renewal Project.*

*Figure 54 –Dalby Forest: a view of a fire track leading through the forest, with stacks of spruce trees (left) cleared from the forest (2018).*

Visiting Dalby Forest and Blackburn's Whinny Heights area, within a similar timeframe, encouraged reflection on the similarities and differences between these two environments and helped in formulating the final stage of photography for *SelfScapes* 2018. The photography expanded to other

areas in Blackburn affected by the collapse of the Pathfinder Housing Market Renewal Project, leading to the development of a portfolio of work which was later exhibited in Dalby Forest. The researcher made several visits to the Griffin area (the ward of Mill Hill and Moorgate), framing the organic matter against a backdrop of still-standing red-brick terraces, with the aim of presenting Blackburn's urban woodland to audiences visiting Dalby Forest in the North York Moors national park (Figure 55, Figure 56).

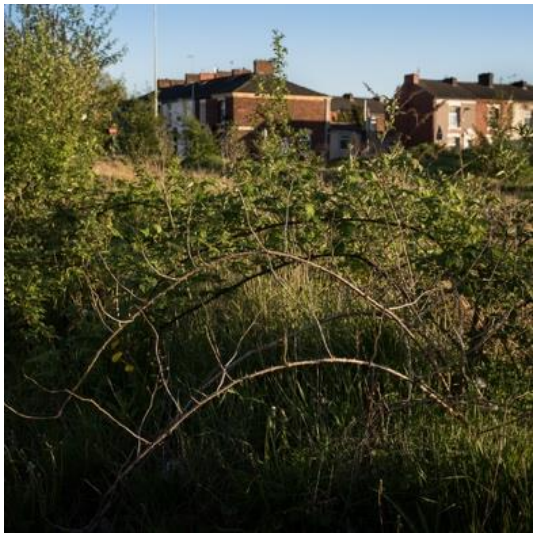

*Figure 55 (Plate #33, left) – The Forests of Blackburn, Harrison, 2018*

The outcomes from the final *SelfScapes* experiment was exhibited at Dalby Forest (Figure 57) between June-July, in 2018, alongside work from other national and international artists (*SelfScapes: The Forests of Blackburn* [Photography], 2018). The photographic outcomes - accompanied by contextual information (*The Meta Forest*, Plate #34) detailing Blackburn's history as a medieval hunting ground and describing the impact of the Pathfinder housing project - were presented on vinyl banners and hung between trees next to footpaths and cycle routes. The aim of the exhibition form was to break up the organic spaces of the forest with images of Blackburn's policy-induced forest (Figure 55 and 56), offering visitors an opportunity for introspection on the contrast between post-industrial abandoned spaces and the managed, yet organic, woodland of Dalby Forest.

*Figure 56 (Plate #33) - The Forests of Blackburn (original edit) , Harrison, 2018*

*Figure 57 (Plate #34) – SelfScapes: The Meta Forest (The Forests of Blackburn(. Installation print banners, Harrison (2018)*

Participation in the *SelfScapes* research cluster was rewarding and useful in the context of the research aims. Firstly, the continued integration of *slow* within an emerging socially engaged practice was utilised in order to emphasise and develop reflection and iteration within the photographic process. This, in turn, helped to further develop the researcher's confidence in utilising *slow* to respond critically to the aims and themes of the enquiry in subsequent experiments (Question 3, p. 11). The photographs from the *SelfScapes* 2018 experiment trace the process of contextualising and making, (Skains, 2018, p. 86) revealing links between what might appear to be seemingly disparate themes and locations. Moreover, the photographs develop an expansive narrative about Blackburn, situating the town within a national

context both thematically (UK housing renewal) and geographically (outside the east Lancashire region) not just in terms of histories, but how landscapes can be transformed with and without human intervention. Whilst the narratives revealed through the *SelfScapes* 2018 photographs are, arguably, not necessarily more positive or optimistic than those referenced in the review of literature and practice (pp. 64-81), the photographs and accompanying text exhibited at Dalby Forest highlight Blackburn's rich history alongside the direct impact of national policy on a local level. Overall, *SelfScapes* provided the researcher with an alternative geographic, academic and cultural experience within which to test the methodology, revealing its adaptability in alternative contexts outside of Blackburn and its potential to develop themes unexplored by national media.

## Participatory Portrait Photography

From the 1980s, postmodernism realised a swathe of new opportunities for researchers and practitioners, who acknowledged and accommodated the complexity of their relationship to audiences, authors and participants (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2010, p. 2). Notwithstanding the paradoxical link to capitalist techniques for increasing worker productivity (Parkins, 2004, p. 371), the emergence of the philosophical paradigm of *slow* from the mid-1980s was developed from a critical response to the postmodern culture of speed (Tomlinson 2007, in Linder and Meissner, 2015, p. 4). Somewhat in parallel, the role of the modernist photographer had been exposed as faulty (Miller, Carson and Wilkie, 2013, p. 30), with the impact of postmodern critiques exposing the photographer's perception and presentation of events as an outsider's appraisal (Miller, Carson and Wilkie, 2013, p. 30). Relatedly, the development of practices such as socially engaged photography emerged from calls for practitioners to question their ability to convey truth and reality (Homer, in Luvera, 2019) in order to locate, then present, alternative narratives for the individuals or communities they work with (for example, Walmsley Griffiths, 2021a). Socially engaged photography can be defined by the use of a participatory or collaborative approach, but also one where the focus of the narrative outcomes of the photography

is centred upon a social issue or concern (p. 29). As identified in the contextual review of literature and practice, socially engaged photography is negotiated in various ways, including collaboration in the way photography is shared (Germain and Flynn, 2016) (Luvera, 2019), the use of lived experience to link photography to wider social or cultural themes (Mortram, 2016) (Ryley, 2010) and voice of others to underpin the design of photography experiments (*Laygate Stories* [Photography and Writing], 2021) (Walmsley Griffiths, 2021b).

The researcher's aim of developing the socially engaged *slow* photography practice, in keeping with aforementioned definitions (pp. 17-18) (pp. 28-30) (pp. 73-75), ultimately motivated the need to work in participation with co-researchers and individuals. The researcher sought to focus upon the development of a participatory project, one that would utilise the knowledge about socially engaged photography and *slow* gained from the review of literature and practice. The researcher drew from the *SelfScapes* experiment (*SelfScapes: The Forests of Blackburn* [Photography], 2018) as a starting point: determining the location of photographs through the use of textual artefacts produced by others. The utilisation of *slow,* previously applied within the *Tourist Gaze* (pp. 107-114), *Wiki:Blackburn* (pp. 115-123) and *SelfScapes* (pp. 129-135) experiments, informed the design of the participatory portrait photography experiment: the researcher sought to emphasise the potential of *slow* to reveal contemplative reflections about community experiences (pp. 31-32). A conscious focus on developing photography that was informed, if not led, by people from Blackburn was to became a fundamental aspect. Overall, the aim of the *Participatory Portrait Photography* experiment was to further develop the socially engaged *slow* photography practice, to expand the approach to work with participants to introduce and imprint, directly, their voices on the photographic outcomes.

The researcher worked with four participants who live in Blackburn, to produce three portraits as part of the experiment. During initial meetings with individuals, the researcher explained the aim of the research and how the experiment aimed to test the potential of a socially engaged photography

practice. The narratives reflected in the town's media portrayal (pp. 75-81) was central to the guidance provided by the researcher – participants were asked to consider their own experiences of Blackburn during the process of making the portrait and producing writing[3]. The first participant, Abdul (a lecturer in sociology at Blackburn University Centre), chose a street in Blackburn that he considered to be important historically, where Blackburn's first Muslim School opened in the 1960s. Coincidently, the area around the location chosen by Abdul was close to an area featured in a photograph used by The Daily Mail in 2016, for a report about segregation in Blackburn (Figure 22) (Minikin, 2016). The researcher and participant visited the area and created two portraits. The first photograph (Figure 58), shows the participant in front of two rows of terraced houses, a mosque, a cobbled street and Blackburn's Town Hall. The image mirrors the type of photographic image utilised to portray Blackburn since the 1970s, as identified in the contextual review of literature and practice (pp. 75-81) (Figure 23).

*Figure 58 - Abdul, Bicknell Street', September 2018.*

Dialogue with Abdul during the making of the portrait led to alternative locations being considered. For the second portrait (Figure 60), the participant was photographed in front of a Mosque's green, glass

[3] Participants were provided with a copy of a *Participant Guidance Sheet* (*Appendix #03*) to inform them of the steps involved in the experiment.

tiles (Bicknell Street, Blackburn), removing the visual motifs of Terraced Houses and Cobbled Streets. It was agreed between researcher and participant that the colour green, symbolic of life and renewal, wealth and harmony, would be appropriate given Abdul's views of Blackburn and what he understood of his role within his community. It is proposed that the removal of the workers terraced houses, the empty street, the municipal buildings, allows for a greater concentration on Abdul as an individual, rather than being representative of a particular urban or social issue. Further, during the making of the first portrait, the researcher purposefully did not advise Abdul on his expression or body position – rather, for the second portrait, he was asked by the researcher to consider his role, his responsibilities and his expectations for the future. Both researcher and participant recognise a greater positivity in the second portrait (Figure 60) that is not present in the first (Figure 58).


*Figure 59 – Minikin G, 'On the frontline of segregation UK', Daily Mail (online), 2016.*

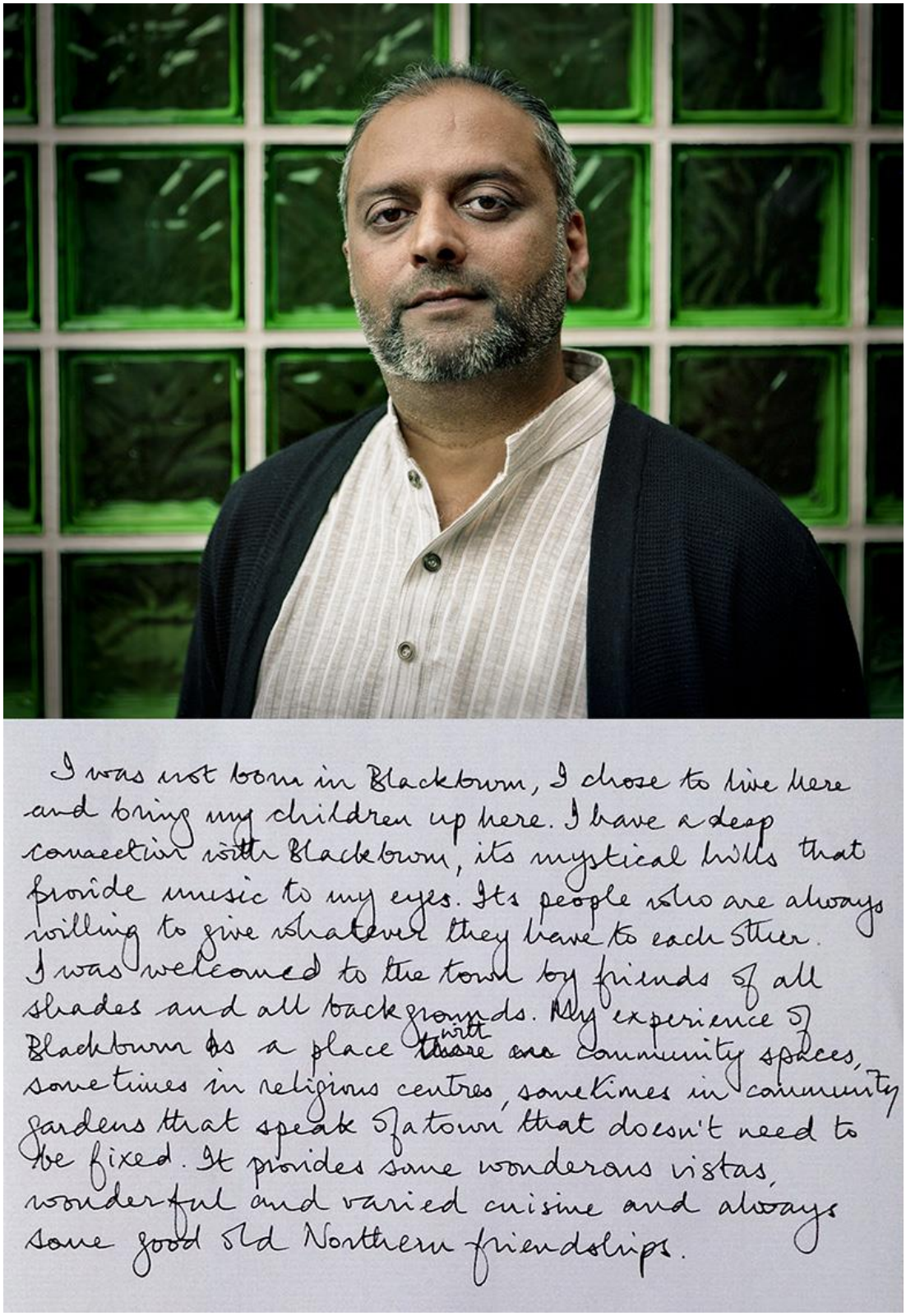


*Figure 60 (Plate #36, left) – 'Abdul, Bicknell Street', September 2018, participatory portrait and writing.*

Utilising the guidance sheet provided to him, Abdul responded to the request for writing. Through this process, Abdul's feelings about Blackburn compliment the portrait that had been made. An extract from Abdul's written response (September 2018) is below:

> "Blackburn is a place with community spaces, sometimes in community centres, sometimes in community gardens that speak of a town that doesn't need to be fixed."

In contrast to the researcher's experience working with Abdul, obtaining the written element from participants generated varying results. Below is a reflection, written by the researcher shortly after photographing Mark at Alker Bottoms Farm in September 2018 (Figure 61), a matter of days after the portrait had been made. The aim was to document the experience whilst it was still prevalent, enabling analysis and reflection in order to evaluate the experiment:

> *"As I approached Alker Bottoms Farm in my car, Mark and his son were emerging from a stone-built workshop full of machinery – car parts, welding machinery, hand tools. As I got out of the car, I took notice of the light: it had been warm and bright in the morning, but was now cloudy but with the light fading somewhat. I shook hands with them both and, from behind me, Mark's wife emerged from the farmhouse with a tray holding three mugs of tea. She kindly asked me if I wanted one, but I politely declined. Joanne handed out the tea to Mark and his son and then I explained why I was there.*
>
> *Their reaction to my aim of photographing Mark was interesting. I introduced them to the background of the research, how I was interested in responding to the types of narratives, visual motifs and themes explored in recent articles and documentaries about Blackburn. I explained that I wanted to engage with those people who were "invested" in the town, those that could, perhaps, provide perspectives that created an "auto-biographical counter-narrative".*

*Furthermore, I explained, I wanted the location and the background to the portrait to be determined by Mark, not by me, and that this would establish a collaborative approach. Mark's son was assertive and immediately pointed out the "subjectivity" of the photographer, implying that my effort to work collaboratively with participants could easily be undermined or eradicated if I saw fit. His argument suggested that he was aware of the inherent power relationship that is formed when a photographer points a camera at a subject. I respected this view, recognised and understood it – but, conversely, I was grateful that it acted as a warning not to assume I was the expert, nor take my position as researcher/photographer for granted.*

*I talked to them for a few minutes about the research and about what I was aiming to do with the work once I had completed it. They all seemed satisfied that my intentions were honourable, and Mark led me down a concrete path, where he said he wanted the photograph to be made. At a farm gate, in between two barns, Mark asked if he could bring one of his cattle into the photograph. The subject was taking a lead on the production of the portrait. We spent a few minutes talking about this animal, how it had been a "favourite", how his wife had asked him not to sell it as part of their shift away from dairy to cattle farming several years ago.*

*By the time I had set up the tripod and mounted on it the wooden field camera, Mark's wife and son had joined us, perhaps to feel involved, perhaps to make sure I was conducting things as I had explained, perhaps because what they had being working on prior to my arrival required Mark's knowledge or effort? I introduced the camera to them and this seemed to engage them – I opened up the lens to let them view me though the ground glass screen, standing where Mark was going to be. They took interest in how the image appeared and I explained the simple theories of light, and the principle of the 'camera obscura'. The place where Mark stood – in front of a barn and a gate – was agreed collaboratively, Mark wasn't bothered about the precise location, but was understanding of my interest in including the barn on the left of*

*the composition. We talked about how to keep the cow in the frame, how to keep it still, whilst I took exposure readings and set the focus.*

*I don't remember much about the point of making the photographs, as no matter how many years of experience I have gathered, this phase of the process is complex, urgent and critical. Within just a few seconds I must set the aperture, cock the shutter, insert the darkslide, engage with the 'sitter' and watch for changes in the lighting conditions: at this point I am almost acting upon an instinct, rather than being conscious of my experience. I made four exposures, one after the other, two with a little flash to illuminate the shadows, two without. I hoped that Mark had remained still for the quarter of a second exposure, and that I had made all the right calculations beforehand. That evening I boxed the latent images ready for posting to the laboratory the day after.*

*I have known Mark and his wife for several years. I have socialised with them on many occasions, but also worked on the farm with them, at least on a couple of occasions (driving the cattle to the farm, moving bales of hay). Yet, the process of making the portrait facilitated new perspectives for me, about how Mark and his wife valued their work, their animals, their roles - I want to use the word 'stoic', but reflect that this is too strong (re: pain), more that they appeared to me on that day strong, resilient and determined. This emphasis differed from how I had interpreted them previously: during the making of the portrait, and for several days after, a feeling of empathy was prominent. Empathy for them as workers rather than friends, for them as a family unit rather than as a couple, as determined entrepreneurs rather than 'farmers'. I suggest, therefore, that the result of making the photograph, of purposefully using equipment and processes that encouraged me to reflect on the process more deeply, of employing a participatory approach to creating images, led to a meaningful experience for me as the*

*researcher. I came away with new perspectives on people previously well known to me and interpreted them as valued and valuable in the context of my research aims."*

Mark provided his written response several weeks after the portrait was made. This was, in part, due to the nature of Mark's work and his responsibilities. The writing produced by Mark focusses on his community and on how he believed others members of his community viewed him and the farm:

*"The farm.*

*The farm is surrounded by houses.*

*I walk round my boundary removing the rubbish – a leather settee, a tent with a selection of empty beer bottles, a children's trampoline, lots of garden waste, lots of litter and the dog muck that is unsightly on a lawn.*

*But that farmer is the one that is "noisy and smelly". The cows spreading their muck all over the nice green hills, spoiling "my view".*

*The farm is surrounded by houses but one day soon the houses will be surrounded by houses."*

What struck the researcher about the written response provided by Mark was how unadorned the narrative was, certainly when compared to the researcher's reflection of the photographic experience. The notions that Mark conveys reflect, in part, the hum-drum routine of farm operation. Yet, also contained within the text, he communicates something about how the urban is protected by the rural, and thus deserves greater respect. It led to the researcher realising that no matter the context of the research aims, participants would, if provided with the opportunity, create personal and political writing which reflects their pressures, priorities and responsibilities.

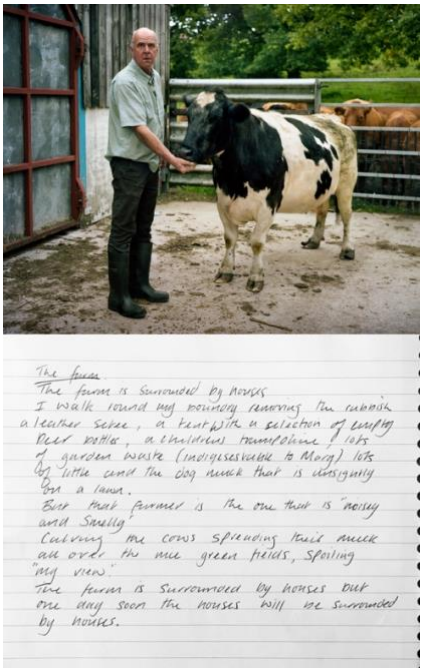


*Figure 61 (Plate #36, right) - Mark, Alker Bottoms Farm, September 2018*

The researcher concluded that by presenting the aim of the research as an attempt at creating alternative narratives about Blackburn, that the written element generated by the participants seemed to express a response to such narratives (Hill, 2018) rather than a response influenced by their real or current experiences, views and/or perspectives. For example, two participants, who hadn't seen the BBC's Panorama documentary '*White Fright: A Town Divided*' prior to their participation, watched the programme after the portrait was made and before they created the written element. The resulting response was highly political and expressed their severe concerns about the state of integration within the town (Figure 62). Whilst views on this issue are indeed perfectly valid, the guidance given to the participants clearly, and substantially, affected the themes of their written response.

Two further important occurrences arose during the trial period. Firstly, participants tended to write to the full word limit stated by the guidance, resulting in pages of writing exploring every aspect of the guidance provided to them (points a. to c. on the original guidance). Again, this was not the intended aim. Rather, the aim was to allow participants the political/personal space within which to

communicate their views, but to provide them a contextual base from which to think their way into the writing. Secondly, at the point of submitting the written element participants seemed concerned – or at least conscientious – about what they had written. One participant asked if what they had written was correct or not?. Another participant thought that the researcher might construe their views as racist for writing about the town's lack of integration across different ethnic groups.

The researcher considered the process to have been successful – participants were understanding and comfortable with the aims of the experiment/research, and each welcomed the opportunity to contribute to how their photograph was made (location and background). The experiment introduced a complexity to the practice, a perceived reduction in the researcher's control of the photographic process and the resulting narrative of photographs and writing. This perceived reduction became, later, a realisation of the development of a stronger socially engaged practice, as the opinions and experiences of participants formed a central and fundamental core to the approach. As outlined in the remainder of this chapter, the *Participatory Portrait Photography* experiment influenced, directly and significantly, subsequent stages of the research.


*Figure 62 (Plate #35) - Kieran and Catherine, Duckworth Street, September 2018*

*Slow Walk*

Between 2015-2018, six distinct approaches for the photography had been designed, tested and evaluated (pp. 45-49). The researcher had benefited from being exposed to a range of practices and approaches not only through the research activities themselves, but through attending and contributing to academic conferences and community events (Appendix #01, p. 210). The application of *slow* in earlier experiments such as *The Double Parallax* (pp. 95-107) established openness, self-awareness and criticality as an approach to photography and writing, reflecting the direct influence of *slow* on the research activities. In experiments such as *Wiki:Blackburn* (pp. 115-123), *Participatory Portrait Photography* (pp. 135-145) and *SelfScapes* (pp. 129-135) the researcher drew from external sources, utilising the voices of others' to create alternative photographic languages and narratives distinct from those identified in the contextual review (pp. 75-81). The outcomes from such experiments were presented to a range of audiences and can be evaluated as being a part of a positive and collective response to Blackburn's media portrayal (pp. 61-63).

In bringing the practice based research phase to a close, the researcher undertook a final stage of experimentation (Table, 1, October 2018 to March 2020, p. 45) undertaken as two, interrelated parts: *Slow Walk* (pp. 146-153) and *Revisiting the Delineation* (pp. 153-166). These final experiments drew from the theoretical underpinnings of earlier experiments yet were designed to test a socially engaged *slow* photography practice in Blackburn, in collaboration with researchers and communities, in order to provide a final portfolio of evidence in response to the primary research question (Question 3., p. 11). Furthermore, this final stage sought to inform the researcher's ongoing photography practice beyond the timeframe of the PhD (pp. 186-187).

Influenced by the outcomes from the *Wiki:Blackburn* (pp. 126-127) and *Participatory Portrait Photography* (pp. 167-168) experiments, in 2018 the researcher sought to develop the practice further with support from a previous research participant, alongside co-researchers who shared similar interests in how Blackburn was being portrayed at that time (Hill, 2018) (McAllister, 2019) ('The Talbot Exhibition & Talks', 2018). The researcher collaborated with three, Blackburn-based practitioners to develop a co-research proposal, designed to support the researchers in presenting an exhibition, locally, of socially engaged photography, design and writing, as a positive response to recent media narratives about Blackburn (pp. 78-81) (Questions 2 and 3, p. 11). Specifically, the researcher intended that the experiment would support the further development of a socially engaged *slow* practice and in presenting outcomes from the experiment to a range of professional and public audiences (Questions 2 and 3, p. 11) (Appendix #01, 210).

A discussion with the co-researchers represented the commencement of the experiment (an extract is provided in Appendix #04, p. 213). Given the geographic spread of the town, the co-researchers chose a route through Blackburn within which to focus their practice, one that linked to its history (pp. 52-59) (pp. 113-114) and that was considered to be representative of Blackburn's varied landscape: town centre commercial developments, historic industrial architecture, urban housing developments and the outer, rural districts. The ancient site of All Hallow's Spring (p. 53) (Figure 76) - situated in Blackburn's historical centre and previously photographed by the researcher (Figure 50) - was chosen as one point of the route, whilst the River Roddlesworth (p. 53-54) - which remains as a source of water for the town's paper-based industries - was chosen as the other, westerly point on the town's border to Preston. The route was also considered appropriate in the respect that it traverses alternative locations to the geographic areas selected by national media (Scott, 2007) ('Trouble on the Estate', 2012) (Tweedie, 2016b) (Hill, 2018) in journalistic and televisual reports on Blackburn. The co-researchers proposed that this route, which navigates diverse communities and environments along Preston Old Road, could also be representative of the larger Blackburn community. Furthermore, in contrast to the

Leeds to Liverpool Canal, this route was, and still remains as, an important transport link for goods in and out of the town, now linking to the M65 motorway (p. 58). A co-practitioner suggested using the term *CoBB1ed* as a title with which to refer to the project, as a literal term representing the postcode for the area the practitioners would work within, but also a reference to Blackburn's industrial past (pp. 52-57) – this term was adopted and used within the final outcomes presented at the Blackburn University Centre's Research and Scholarship Conference in July 2019 (Appendix #01, 210).


*Figure 63 - CoBB1ed Work in Progress Exhibition, Blackburn College, June 2019*

Between December 2018 and March 2019, the researcher and one of the co-researchers, Abdul, undertook three walks along the chosen route (from the River Roddlesworth to All Hallows Spring). The walks traversed distinct areas of Blackburn, from the rural boundaries to the town centre and, initially, they were intended as an orientation, a way of exploring the chosen route in an informal and relaxed way. In bringing together two locals, both invested in Blackburn personally and professionally, to work jointly on a Blackburn-based research experiment, the co-researchers considered the approach in line with definitions of participatory and socially engaged photography (pp. 17-18) (pp. 28-30). The principles of this socially engaged *slow* approach underpinned the design of the activity, emphasised through the observations recorded through photography and writing (Figure 67), the mapping of the route taken (*CoBB1ed - Exhibition Banners, Research and Scholarship Conference 2019* [Graphic Design], 2019) and the underlying aim of experiencing Blackburn in an alternative way, distinct from

town's media portrayal identified in the contextual review. One such example included the choice of geographical area: as outlined in Chapter 2 (pp. 75-81), recent media portrayals and reports have focussed on framing narratives about Blackburn based in places where south Asian heritage or white British residents reside (Figure 25). The choice by the researchers to determine a walking route from the centre of Blackburn (all Hallow's Spring) to the West (The River Roddlesworth) revealed an alternative delineation.

Furthermore, the co-researchers designed the activity as a *slow* walk (Collier, 2013), aimed at exploring their views of their hometown as a collaborative activity. Following several discussions focussed on the co-researchers experiences and opinions of Blackburn, encapsulating aspects such as family histories and experiences of life in Blackburn: the co-researchers walked the route, discussing their experiences of Blackburn in relation not only its media portrayal, but in relation to their own histories. The researcher made a series of photographs during these walks but, crucially, the photographs were informed by conversations taking place along the route. The resulting photography can be regarded as a co-creation, influenced and determined by two Blackburners with deep-rooted connections to the town.


*Figure 64 (Plates #38-40) – Examples of the co-created photography from the second of three, slow walks along the chosen CoBB1ed route, taken in the suburban areas of the route from All Hallow's Spring to the River Roddlesworth, 2019.*


*Figure 65 - (Plates #38-40) - Examples of the co-created photography made during the first (left)) second (centre) and third (right) )slow walks, in areas connected to Blackburn's industrial past Spring), 2019.*

The photographs made during this stage of the *CoBB1ed* experiment (Figure 64 and Figure 65) explore aspects of the landscape that the co-researchers determined as being representative of the cultural, economic or political contexts: ex-industrial brownfield sites being developed into modern housing estates (Figure 65, left, and 73), village green politics in suburban neighbourhoods (Figure 64, centre) and other, distinct nuances relating to communal living (Figure 65, right). The co-researchers acknowledged such contexts through discussions as they walked, whilst the researcher made photographs as an attempt to visualise such contexts (Figures 64-66). As with the *Wiki:Blackburn* experiment, the location of the *Slow Walk* photographs, and the narratives they reveal, represent an alternative portrayal of Blackburn.

During the first walk in December 2018, the researchers discussed the possibilities of undertaking a written conversation to be presented alongside the photographs. As an attempt to reveal the specific learning from the *slow* walk, the researcher provided Abdul with a reflective body of text shortly after completing the first of the three walks. Abdul responded to this starting point prior to the second walk and the written conversation. This continued until a response to the overall walk was completed. The outcome of this dialectical conversation is an extensive written commentary that examines the experience of the *slow* walk (Appendix #06, pp. 216-217). Subsequently, the researcher and Abdul isolated textual vignettes from the written conversation that they regarded as being representative of

the impact *slow* had on their experience of Blackburn. The textual vignettes were also considered by the co-researchers to be representative of the thematic focus of their experience during the *slow* walk.

> *"a slow walk in Blackburn, Lancashire / natural and chaotic 'ebb and flow' / temporality / exchanging ideas about how we were reacting to the world / utilising time in a more critical, unhurried, and reflective way / Blackburn's industrial past / the raggedness of the outer, rural districts and the symmetrical 'neatness' of the town's suburbs / place representing a resistance towards political authority / belonging, familiarity"*

*Figure 66 - Photographs from the Slow Walk, focussed on Blackburn's rural and urban locations. Harrison, 2019*

The textual vignettes reveal the influence *slow* had, firstly, on the experience of the walks but, secondly, on the photography. For example, the contrast between the narrative revealed in Figure 66 (left) - the "raggedness" of Blackburn's rural areas - and that of Figure 66 (right) - revealing a symmetrical "neatness" in Blackburn's inner city housing – highlights how *slow* encouraged a focus on the co-researcher's sensory experiences of the places they walked through, whilst providing a scrutiny of Blackburn's local identities (p. 32) (Pink and Servon, 2013, p. 453) through the making of photographs.

The photographs and textual vignettes from the *Slow Walk* were exhibited at Blackburn University Centre's annual *Research and Scholarship Conference* in July 2019 (Figure 64) to an audience of

academics and the public, as an approach to communicating not only the researcher's photographic vision of Blackburn, but providing outcomes from the *slow* walk and the impact of co-creation on both photography and writing. The researcher exhibited eighteen photographs representing the route of the walk undertaken which were presented alongside the textual vignettes (Figure 63, Figure 67). The banner exhibited for the conference was designed by one of the co-researchers (Mark Thistlethwaite) and featured elements of graphic design that highlighted the route of the walk. Feedback from conference attendees – made up academics, local public visitors and students was positive, particularly around the collaborative use of photography and writing, and the tracing of a local route through Blackburn, informed by the aims of the research.

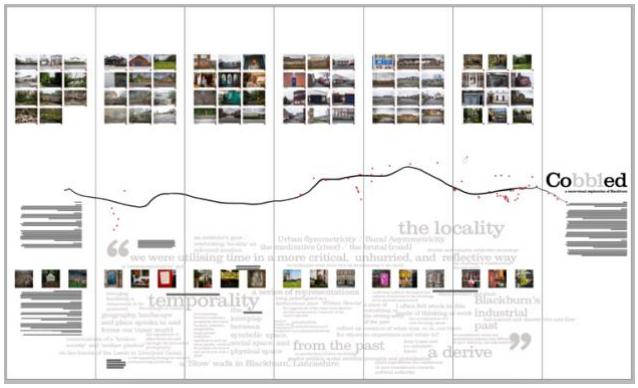


*Figure 67 – The design for the CoBB1ed exhibition, Blackburn College Research and Scholarship Conference, June 2019. Mark Thistlethwaite, one of the co-researchers, designed the exhibition banner.*

*Figure 68 – Following five conference presentations between 2018-2019, the researcher presented at the British Textiles Biennial Politics of Cloth Conference (2019), chaired by Dr Stephen Pritchard (photograph by Ed Matthews-Gentle, Creative Lancashire, 2019).*

Following on from the conference papers, exhibitions and talks delivered to both professional and public audiences in 2018 and 2019 (Appendix #01, p. 210), the researcher delivered a presentation - derived from the *CoBB1ed* experiment - to artists, academics and commissioning agents at the British Textiles Biennial *Politics of Cloth Conference* in November 2019 (Figure 68), highlighting the focus of the experiment and the researcher's overall aim of developing alternative narratives to media reporting about Blackburn. Shortly after the presentation, the researcher was invited to submit a proposal - alongside co-researcher Abdul Hafiz - for a residency position on the *Kick Down the Barriers* initiative (Skellern, 2020), due to the direct overlap between the purpose of the initiative and the researcher's ongoing, postdoctoral research enquiry. The proposal submitted for the residency centred upon creating photography and writing in collaboration with diverse communities, along a route from the Bank Top area of the town, towards the neighbouring town of Preston (the route of the *Slow Walk*). The proposal outlined that diverse communities would be supported to engage in the project through a socially engaged practice, to result in the development of new photographic narratives about Blackburn (Harrison, 2019). Unfortunately, the researcher's application was unsuccessful, however the eventual outcomes from *Kick Down the Barriers* received international attention for challenging the media portrayal of Blackburn (Tucker, 2021). The output from *Kick Down the Barriers* initiative was designed to generate a direct response - through photography, writing and other creative media - to national media reporting that labelled Blackburn as deeply segregated and divided, such as the BBC Panorama programme titled '*White Fright*' (Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery, 2020). Taking place between September 2019 and October 2020, the outcomes from the initiative included a socially engaged photography practice carried out in a delineation of Blackburn (Easton, 2020a) and an exhibition of photographic works at Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery between 2020-2021.

Revisiting the Delineation

Following the exhibition and conference presentations of the *Slow Walk* in 2019, the researcher sought to progress aspects of the proposal originally submitted to *Kick Down the Barriers*, for the research enquiry. During the *Slow Walk*, the researcher had walked in, through or around locations that they had no prior knowledge of, or personal connection to. The ancient woodland lining the banks of the River Roddlesworth (Figure 76, left) was one such example. Conversely, there were several locations that the researcher did have a personal connection to. For example, the researcher encountered a local Church (Figure 77, right) that they attended with teachers and pupils whilst at primary school, for services such as the Harvest Festival. Reflecting on such occurrences, the researcher considered previous experiments such as *The Double Parallax*, an attempt to explore photography as autoethnography, in contrast to experiments such as *Participatory Portrait Photography*, where critical decisions (such as the choice of location) within the photography process were made by the participant. The critical distinction between the approaches is identifiable by the varying levels of control exerted on the photography by the researcher, and conform to socially engaged practice as previously defined in this thesis (pp. 28-30).

This reflection motivated a further (and final) photography experiment influenced by the experience of the *Slow Walk*, whilst utilising the underlying and contrasting positions of the aforementioned experiments, to test a socially engaged *slow* photography practice, underpinned by the philosophical principles of *slow* and the researcher's lived experience of Blackburn.

Extracted from:

*Special Annual Number of*

THE

**Paper - Maker**

AND

**British Paper Trade Journal.**

THE INDEPENDENT AND PRACTICAL JOURNAL FOR THE PAPER TRADE.

Edited by S. Chas. Phillips. M. S. C. I.

Vol. XXXIV. LONDON, 1907. Price, Two Shillings

Page 19:

A VISIT TO AN UP-TO-DATE ENGLISH PAPER MILL

THE STAR PAPER MILL COMPANY, LTD., FENISCOWLES.

(By S. CHAS. PHILLIPS.)

*Figure 69 – Paper-Maker and British Paper Trade Journal: an example of contextual information acquired as part of the research process, Volume 34, 1907, Accessed March 2019: http://www.baph.org.uk/forum/topic/star-paper-mill-feniscowles/*


*Figure 70 – The Star Paper Mill (c.1900): an example of contextual information acquired as part of the research process, Accessed March 2019: https://jepnet.co.uk/genealogy/Star%20mill/index.htm*

Navigating the route for a second time, the researcher explored locations between The River Roddlesworth and All Hallow's Spring, focussing, initially on a brownfield site adjacent to the River Roddlesworth. The area was previously utilised for the manufacture of paper-based products, an industry reliant on waste from the textiles industry in order to remain in production. This former site of the Star Paper Mill (Figure 71) - explored during the researcher's first visit as part of the *Slow Walk* - provided a starting point from which to develop further knowledge about Blackburn's past and present (pp. 146-153). The approach for this final stage of photography practice utilised four aspects of the researcher's overall methodology, developed during the enquiry:

- The collation of knowledge about Blackburn drawn from literature, archives and photography collections (pp. 64-75) (Figure 69, Figure 70), to inform and influence the research activities.
- The application of *slow*, supporting the researcher's awareness of sensory experiences and how these encourage critical reflection on local qualities or issues (pp. 30).
- The influence of autoethnography and reflexivity in exploring the significance of the researcher's personal history, connections and experiences, upon the research activities (pp. 124-127).
- The underlying principles of a socially engaged photography practice, where responsibilities for making or distribution of photography are relocated to participants (pp. 28-30).

*Figure 71 (Plate #37) - Site previously occupied by the Star Paper Mill (opened in 1875), being prepared for five hundred new homes at Feniscowles, Blackburn. Harrison, December 2018*

Figure 71 shows the former gatehouse of the Mill in what appears to be a desolate landscape. Rainwater stands on the surface of the land, highlighting the tracks of machinery and the footprints of workmen, indicating that groundwork is underway. However, there is little information available other than the parameter of woodland in the distance, offering an opposing terrain in contrast to the man-made levelling of the land in the foreground. This first attempt at photographing the former site of the Star Paper Mill, now designated for the development of new homes on the edge of the town's border, elevates the lodge and the forced stream as the dominant elements of the image, but how the lodge

relates to the wider landscape is hidden. During the *Slow Walk*, the co-researchers reflected upon Blackburn's industrial and economic history and how the remodelling of this site represented the rebuilding of the town's identify as a deindustrialised, modern town.

Conversely, upon return to the site in April 2019 (Figure 73), the researcher made a conscious effort to focus on this theme. In particular, photographs made during this visit centre upon industrial fragments that remain scattered over the landscape, now being used as the foundations for new, modern housing for professionals living and working in the region (Figure 75). Due to the outer parameter of housing, trees and shrubs – and perhaps not unlike the social and industrial upheaval that occurred at the time of the Mill's introduction - it is inferred that this landscape is in flux.

*Figure 72 – Photograph of the M65 protests at the site of Star Paper Mill, taken by the researcher. Harrison, 1995.*

In between visits, the researcher drew from their lived experience and reflected upon protests which took place against the building of the M65 in 1995 at Stanworth Valley, an area of woodland surrounding the Star Paper Mill and the River Roddlesworth (p. 53). The researcher attended this protest, making their way through the gates of the factory, along the concourse and into the woods, where protesters had climbed the trees. The experience of attending the protests and witnessing the authorities (police, contractors, landowners) alongside the protesters (locals, campaigners), helped the researcher in further piecing together the site's economic, industrial history and political history. The

landscape subsequently portrayed by the researcher (Figure 73) suggests a contested landscape and one in transition: the earth has been scratched away, buildings demolished, fence lines erected. Yet, the capacity to view the wider terrain (*Wiki:Blackburn*, pp. pp. 115-123) introduces a range of narratives regarding the former and future function of this place. With the industrial buildings cleared almost entirely, the houses on the hill provide perspective and scale, allowing the viewer to reflect upon, for example, land reform, deindustrialisation or, relatedly, suburbanisation. Here, the notion of Blackburn ridding itself of its industrial past, within the foundations of suburban housing and in parallel to modern highways, presents an alternative narrative to the media portrayal identified in the contextual review (pp. 60-63).

*Figure 73 - (Plate #42) - Security lodge, former site of the Star Paper Mill, Feniscowles, Blackburn. Harrison, 2019*

Over a subsequent period of approximately two months, the researcher made several visits to locations along the route (Plates #42-50), making connections with community leaders, workers, volunteers and hobbyists in order to locate people who would freely participate in the experiment. Whilst landscape photographs remained a feature of the *Revisiting the Delineation* portfolio, portraits also became an identifiable feature of the outcomes from the experiment. The researcher approached people in allotments, shops, places of workshop and workshops, in order to introduce the aims of the research and to encourage participation. The researcher visited people on more than one occasion in order to develop engagement and establish trust, providing participants with an overview of the research and proposing working together on a participatory portrait that could support the aims of the research. Figure 75 and Figure 77 provide examples of the photographic outcomes, made possible from the relationships developed by the researcher during the timeframe of the experiment.

*Figure 74 (Plate #42) – Fragments of building material from the former Star Paper Mill, being broken up to form the foundations for a new suburban housing development along the banks of the River Roddlesworth. Harrison, 2019.*

The portraits made during this period adopted a similar approach to that utilised for *Participatory Portrait Photography*: the researcher encouraged participants to suggest the timing, location and framing of their portrait. Whilst the dialogue with participants was more fluid than the formal approach applied in the *Participatory Portrait Photography* experiment - sometimes being undertaken during chance meetings or in subsequent visits to the same location - there was meaningful engagement during the making of the portraits. Participants shared life experiences, declared the things they valued

most in their life and talked about their family or their work. Furthermore, the participants made a genuine effort to understand the researcher's background and the ways their life experience compared or contrasted, developing a rapport and a level of companionship.

For example, the researcher encountered three young mechanics (Figure 77, left) near to the centre of Blackburn one morning. Working at a garage in centre of Blackburn on King Street, the mechanics had relocated from eastern Europe to earn higher wages than they could at home. Whilst they did not wish to be named in the research, they talked freely about their families, those living in Blackburn, how they follow cultural practices from their country to remind them of their home. These participants supported the process of the photography by not only agreeing to be photographed, but by contributing to the direction and location of the photography – they posed together, organising themselves in such a way that they felt comfortable. Alan (Figure 75, left), worked full time in a factory in Blackburn and, during the weekends prior to making the portrait, had constructed a mesh growing tunnel on his allotment at Witton Stocks, in order to obtain a higher yield during the spring and summer months. Alan revealed the pleasure he took in being on the allotment, how it connected him to the seasons and to nature – Alan wanted to be photographed from the road which divided the allotments, looking on to his plot. In the 1980s, the researcher occasionally walked along this road to a local park with friends. Whilst working with Alan to develop the portrait, the researcher reflected on conversations with an elderly gentleman who, on occasion, would offer a cup of tea or fresh fruit from the allotment: the experience of engaging with Alan mirrored the researcher's lived experience of the allotments, a place which encouraged connections with community and the natural world.

Similarly, the researcher worked with Doreen (Figure 75, right) to make a participatory portrait at her place of worship. Doreen lived locally to St Luke's and St Philip's Church and had been a Church Warden for several years. When the researcher met Doreen and Brian (Figure 77, right) for the first time, they were setting up tables and chairs for the Sunday morning service. During conversation, Doreen and

Brian described how the Church had to adapt in order to remain open for parishioners, renting out its rooms to youth groups, Schools and wedding parties in order to provide income.

*Figure 75 (Plate #45, left, and Plate #47, right) – Participants who to shared their life experiences and assisted in making photographic portraits, as part of the Revisiting the Delineation experiment.*

The researcher visited the Church four times during the timeframe of the experiment, engaging collaboratively with Doreen and Brian to produce portraits. Doreen wanted her photograph to be taken in the Chancel, in front of the altar, which she would clean and prepare ahead of service. The experience prompted the researcher to reflect on *their* lived experience of the Church: the researcher attended St Luke's and St Philip's Church as a young boy, with teachers and fellow pupils whilst a primary school. The researcher's memories of the Church during Harvest Festival, for example, revealed hundreds of people gathering in the nave, aisles and transepts. In 2020, services held at the Church totalled, at most, a few dozen people – in this context, the contribution by Church volunteers appeared indicative of an effort to retain tradition and structure with Blackburn's community. When assessing the researcher's experiences during the making of the portraits, alongside the experiences revealed by the participants, the resulting portraits construct a narrative about Blackburn and the people who live there, focussed on the time that they freely give to others, the life they attempt to build for their families, and the priorities that they consider to be important.

The influence of *slow* - identifiable through the conscious and critical balancing of embodied experiences, the emphasis on exploring Blackburn's issues, identities and histories, and the influence of others on the photography - remained critical in both the design and the execution of the Revisiting the Delineation experiment. The photography made during Revisiting the Delineation reveal the significance of the researcher's lived experience in how places and people are engaged with and how they are, subsequently, portrayed. Furthermore, the outcomes of the experiment –the photography and the reflection in the form of written commentary - reflect a positive and conscious engagement in Blackburn, and constitute a participatory approach to photography and an authentic portrayal informed by multiple perspectives.

*Figure 76 (Plate #46) - Examples of landscape photography made during the Revisiting the Delineation experiment, aimed at exploring a delineation (The River Roddlesworth and All Hallow's Spring, Blackburn) of Blackburn. Harrison, 2019.*

*Revisiting the Delineation* is an approach identifiable by the application of a hybrid approach (p. 155-156). Socially engaged photography - as a participatory approach to create photographs that represent the local (Blackburn) - and *slow* - as a way of acknowledging the significance of the research in exploring cultural identities – can be appraised as being complimentary in respect to the aims of the research.


*Figure 77 (Plates #49 and #47) – Examples of portrait photography (left, car mechanics and, right, a Church volunteer) made during the Revisiting the Delineation experiment. Harrison, 2019*

Summary of Findings

The researcher's output from the *SelfScapes* research cluster - funded by Forestry England and York St John University - focussed on a failed coalition government housing project in Blackburn (pp. 58-59) (pp. 131-132). The presentation of the research experiment and the outcomes (pp. 133-135) enabled a testing of the practice based approaches in an alternative setting and to alternative audiences. The researcher produced two small portfolios of photography. The first, created in Dalby Forest, explored further the features of *slow* and the systems approach previously used in the *Wiki:Blackburn* experiment. The second body of work positioned landscapes of Blackburn within Dalby Forest (pp. 133-135), as a critique regarding the distinction between the policy-induced forests of Blackburn, in the setting of Dalby's organic, yet managed woodlands. The outcomes were presented in exhibition at Dalby Forest in 2018, alongside a range of other artwork produced by local and national artists (*SelfScapes: The Forests of Blackburn* [Photography], 2018). The *SelfScapes* initiative provided the researcher with opportunities to reflect upon the effectiveness and transferability of the research, providing insights into its potential to be applied in other locations and to national (rather than local) audiences.

Feedback on the outcomes from the research during this period included how the work may have benefitted from more direct engagement with local (Blackburn) people. Drawing from the experimentation in the early stages of the enquiry, the researcher worked with participants to create collaborative portraits and writing as part of the *Participatory Portrait Photography* experiment (pp. 135-145), responding explicitly to Blackburn's media portrayal, as identified in the contextual review. Participants influenced directly the location for their portraits and worked from guidance provided by the researcher to produce an autobiographical text. The outcomes presented the participant's view about Blackburn's representation, with the image and textual narrative exploring issues and themes such as diversity, connectedness and harmony. Such an approach underpins more recent practice, such

as the photography produced within the *SelfScapes* research cluster (p. 186), where participants develop written artefacts to accompany photography that they co-create. This practice approach also informs more recent photographic strategies adopted by the researcher, as outlined in the Future Works section (pp. 186-187).

Two final experiments brought together the learning from the enquiry up to that point. Working alongside a local co-researcher, a route through Blackburn was nominated, enabling a local and collaborative approach to practice based photography research. The experiment was undertaken as a *Slow Walk* (pp. 145-153), utilising the principles of slow to create photographic and textual outcomes. The *Slow Walk* is identifiable as a co-research experiment, focussed on a collaboration undertaken along a route from the centre of Blackburn to its rural border, walked from west to east. The co-researchers engaged in critical dialogue regarding Blackburn's historical and cultural identify, subsequently represented through a collection of landscape photographs and textual vignettes. The outcomes form this experimentation were presented at the British Textiles Biennial *Politics of Cloth Conference* in 2018 (Appendix #01, p. 210).

The *Revisiting the Delineation* experiment was designed to enable the testing of a hybrid methodology, informed by the approaches of earlier experiments: *Participatory Portrait Photography* (pp. 135-145); *Slow Walk* (pp. 145-153); *The Double Parallax* (pp. 97-107). The experiment is identifiable in the way it integrates a participatory practice, alongside acknowledgement of the embodied experience of the researcher on the practice (pp. 156-161). Central to the final three experiments is the intent to engage with participants who inform and engage with the process of photography, influencing the development of photographic outcomes that reveal alternative narratives to the portrayal of Blackburn outlined in the contextual review (pp. 75-81). The photography created during Phase 2 reveal multiple, alternative topics including land reform (pp. 155-158), village politics (pp. 149-150), community volunteering (pp. 161-166), connectedness (p. 143) and harmony (p. 140).

Chapter 4 provides a detailed account of Phase 2 of the practice based experimentation, building from the initial experiments during the first three years and developing into the socially engaged *slow* photography practice evidenced in the final three experiments (pp. 135-166). The choice of research methods (pp. 28-41) and the contextual review of literature and practice (pp. 51-88) established a relevant conceptual and theoretical foundation for the design of the collaborative and participatory experiments undertaken in Phase 2 of the research (Question 1, p. 11). Exhibition and conference presentations delivered during the timeframe of Phase 2 (Appendix #01, p. 210), alongside the ongoing act of blogging, enabled the researcher to situate their research practice within local and national contexts, appropriate to the themes of the research (Question 2, p. 11). The photographic outcomes that emerged from the experiments in Phase 2 provide a critical and extensive response to the primary concern of the research (Question 3, p. 11) in generating *alternative* narratives - through the research methodology and the photography - to contemporary televisual and journalistic portrayals of Blackburn (pp. 75-81).

## Chapter 5: Conclusions

Three questions were posed for the enquiry, with the primary question (Question 3) directing the researcher to explore socially engaged photography practice and *slow*, influenced by televisual and journalistic portrayals of Blackburn. In this context, the aims of the question required that the researcher collated, critiqued and utilised a range of theories, concepts and practices to support the development of a socially engaged *slow* photography practice.

Question 1: How have photographic motifs been employed, contemporaneously, in the representation of Blackburn (Lancashire, UK) by television and newsprint media?

Aim:

- Identify, examine and critique contemporary photographic, televisual and journalistic images that portray the town of Blackburn (Lancashire, UK).

Summary

In responding to Question 1, the knowledge acquired for the contextual review revealed the typical narratives and visual motifs used to portray Blackburn by journalistic and broadcasting media. The aim of the question was to aid the identification, examination and response to photographic images that portray the town of Blackburn (Lancashire, UK), through photography practice. In completing the contextual review of literature and practice, the researcher utilised sources drawn from film, local history, news media, photography history and photography practice.

As outlined in Chapter 2, several prominent portrayals of Blackburn have been published or broadcast since the 1970s. Television and journalistic reports interrogate social problems using the town as an

exemplar of wider national contexts, such as the rise in far-right politics in the 1970s or the depiction of 'Broken Britain' in the 2000s. Conversely, contemporary portrayals contrast to those from the early and mid-nineteenth century. The documentary newsreel directed by John Schlesinger, *Wakes Week* (Schlesinger, 1957), depicts the town's industrial and leisure culture and is presented in the form of an educational travelogue. Less than twenty years later, Nick Broomfield and Joan Churchill's stark, filmic exposé of criminality (Broomfield and Churchill, 1976), positions Blackburn not only as the subject of a trial unorthodox policing technique, but focuses on the experiences and challenges of vulnerable adults and children living in post-industrial Britain. Such distinctions can also be drawn from national or international movements, such as the emergence of Social Realism and kitchen sink dramas from the 1960s onwards (Reisz, 1961) (Richardson, 1961) and reflected in journalism (including photojournalism), which portrayed the world in increasing proximity (Bulmer, 2012) and with persistent candour (Chomsky and Griffiths, 2001).

Topics of social injustice, criminality and racial segregation emerging from such portrayals have proliferated, particularly from the mid-2000s onwards. In relation to the contemporary portrayals, the rationalisation of Britain's social challenges within the boundaries of Blackburn are evident in the Granada Television documentary, *The National Party* (Woodford, 1976). In this example the increase in violence against ethnic minorities, alongside the rise in far-right political activism, are explored in the streets of Blackburn, yet provide more airtime to white, right-wing, working class men, than it does for the victims on the receiving end of prejudice and marginalisation.

Using Blackburn as an exemplar for the wider national social or cultural issues facing deindustrial towns across the UK remains a feature of contemporary portrayals. *Trouble of the Estate* (BBC, 2012) and *White Flight: A Town Divided* (Hill, 2018) utilise similar visual strategies to *The National Party*, constructing a narrative of tension, segregation and poverty developed from what appears to be a limited, almost regurgitated image portfolio: densely packed industrial housing, St George's flags,

minarets rising from terraced houses, pints of lager and youths wearing hooded tops. Such use of photographic and moving imagery also mirror those utilised in tabloid reporting on Blackburn (Tweedie, 2016b).

Access to resources locally, such as Blackburn Central Library Community History archives, the online Cotton Town archive (www.CottonTown.org) and historical photographs held at Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery, enabled the review of literature and practice to reflect (and to some degree, represent) Blackburn's photographic history in contrast to the aforementioned media portrayal. Between 2017-2019, the researcher worked alongside colleagues at Blackburn University Centre to design and deliver a conference highlighting the work of local photographer Wally Talbot, leading to the researcher presenting papers at conferences between 2017-2018 (pp. 115-117). In itself, the delivery of the project, in overseeing the digitisation and promotion of the archive through television, radio, an academic conference and public talks, contributed to the communication of alternative narratives about Blackburn, by revealing historical photographs of local people and places previously unseen to many of the town's communities (Talbot, 1957). Additionally, the researcher undertook a series of residential days at Blackburn's Central Library, focussed on learning about the approaches taken by local photographer's to portray Blackburn, providing visual references which developed the researcher's understanding of Blackburn's portrayal in recent history: photographers such as Ashworth, Sharples and Talbot explored Blackburn with more romantic and less sensational perspectives, emphasising modern architecture set against industrial structures, market stalls, the town's nightlife, new housing developments and locals walking in municipal parks. The contrast between the image narratives created or utilised by aforementioned media and the images created by local photographers from the 1960s onwards, is distinct (Ashworth, 1941-1995) (Woodford, 1976) ('Trouble on the Estate', 2012).

Led by the identification and evaluation of such references the researcher responded to such themes and visual motifs, through a range of socially engaged, practice based experimentation. Firstly, experimentation was aimed at exploring lived experience through photography and autobiographical writing (pp. 89-95). An appraisal of socially engaged photography (pp. 17-18 and 28-30) (pp. 73-75) and *slow* (pp. 18-20) (pp. 30-33) (pp. 82-86) enabled the researcher to identify key, defining characteristics for the application of early approaches to the photography (pp. 12-15) (pp. 89-95). An emphasis on generating photography and writing focussed on the *local* – the researcher's hometown of Blackburn, Lancashire, UK – determined the research as place specific. As detailed in Chapters 3 and 4, experiments utilising the methods of socially engaged photography, *slow* and autoethnography enabled the creation of photographs that could be evaluated alongside those identified in the contextual review (pp. 64-75)(pp. 75-81).

Question 2: How can the socially engaged, *slow* photography practice, developed throughout the research enquiry, be situated within a wider academic, photographic and public context?

Aims:

- Appraise the potential of socially engaged photography, *slow* and autoethnography to create alternative narratives (in the context of the research questions).
- Present, contextualise and evaluate the research methodology and the practice based outcomes in an online research diary, in a written thesis and to a range of audiences.

Summary

The researcher created and contributed to a blog throughout the timeframe of the PhD. The blog was utilised as the research diary, supporting the researcher to log and upload PhD writing, images and documents to an online repository (Google's Blogger). Over 200 hundred blog posts were added during

the enquiry between 2015 to 2020, reflecting such aspects as research design (Harrison, 2017b), approaches (Harrison, 2018b) and evaluation (Harrison, 2018a). Further, the blog illustrates the reflective and iterative nature of postgraduate study, through an active process of practice-post-reflection-refine-post-evaluate (p. 40). The blog is therefore both a product of the research and a substantial evidence base for the research activities undertaken during the PhD.

Use of the blog supported the researcher in presenting, contextualising and evaluating the methodology, as an ongoing activity. Initial experiments carried out by the researcher from 2015 onwards (Harrison, 2015e) were presented on the blog chronologically alongside concise write-ups that emerged from the contextual review (Harrison, 2015b). This approach enabled reflection upon the results of practice based approaches, in relation to the learning acquired from the contextual review, leading to the development of diagrams that visualised the emerging methodology (Harrison, 2016a). In this respect the blog provided a crucial function: the laying out of research outcomes, the development of postgraduate skills and the mapping of progress, such that conclusions about the effectiveness of approaches could be critically evaluated (Harrison, 2021b). As outlined in Chapter 1 (pp. 35-44), as a research method the blog highlighted both the application of other methods (such as autoethnography), but also the issues and concerns of the research (pp. 39-40), by coupling the outcomes from the practice based experimentation and the contextual review into a visual chronology of research activities (Figure 10). The blog is, therefore, an essential and definable feature of the *practice based* approach developed during the enquiry: the posts describe the researcher's integration of photographic and other, multidisciplinary approaches, whilst drawing from the embodied experiences of research activities (Harrison, 2018b). Such features mirror the accepted characteristics of practice based research, as defined in Chapter 1 (pp. 25-27).

The socially engaged *slow* photography practice developed during the enquiry is represented through the outcomes of eight experiments undertaken between 2015-2020 (Table 1, p. 45). The practice is

identifiable as a long-form socially engaged *slow* photography practice (pp. 178-182), in respect to both the time over which the enquiry was undertaken, the emphasis of the research as place-specific, and the extent to which socially engaged photography practices were embedded in the latter stages of experimentation (*Revisiting the Delineation*, pp. 153-166), generating outcomes which reveal alternative narratives to the portrayal of Blackburn's outlined in the contextual review (pp. 75-81). Whilst the influence of autoethnography was reduced during Phase 1 (pp. 115-123), the principles of *slow* continued to impact on the design of the research experiments into Phase 2 (pp. 146-153).

As outlined earlier in this chapter and in Table 1 (p. 45), the outcomes from the enquiry were presented at eleven academic conferences and exhibitions (*Appendix #01, p. 210*) between 2016-2020. The researcher presented papers outlining the aims of the research, examples of research outcomes and work in progress, to multiple audiences including academic staff (e.g. Blackburn College, Lancaster University, University of Central Lancashire and University of Sunderland), museum and library staff (Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery, Blackburn Central Library), arts commissioners and project leaders (for example, Super Slow Way, National Festival of Making, Kick Down the Barriers) and artists (Mark Adams, Dr Stephen Prichard, Adrian Rifkin).

A range of artistic and creative initiatives have taken place in Blackburn since 2014 (pp. 61-63), some of which were directly in response to the BBC Panorama programme *White Fright: A Town Divided* (Hill, 2018). For example, in 2017, the researcher led the coordination of a conference celebrating the career of local photographer Wally Talbot (p. 73) and presented a paper centred on the Wiki:Blackburn experiment (pp. 115-117). During this conference the researcher took part in a plenary chaired by Paul Hill MBE, where discussions centred on how Talbots's photography presented an alternative portrayal of the town when compared to *White Fright: A Town Divided* (Hill, 2018). In 2019 the researcher, along with collaborators, presented an exhibition from the *Slow Walk* experiment (Figure 67), providing attendees with the aims of the experiment, the geographical delineation the researcher focussed on,

and a commentary which positioned the work as a response to Blackburn's contemporary media portrayal.

There has been a collective response to the town's portrayal, particularly since 2018, represented through a range of activities, of which the outcomes from this enquiry account can be included. The outcomes of research activities, in the form of the written thesis, the portfolio of photography and the blog, contribute to the ongoing response and dialogue regarding Blackburn's treatment by news and television media. Other, more recent local conferences (*Politics of Cloth Community Conference*, 2018*)* and creative initiatives (*Kick Down the Barriers,* 2019-2020) have been an attempt to continue the focus on promoting community integration, using the subtext of Blackburn's contemporary media portrayal.

The researcher's response to Question 2 reveals the context through which the research was designed and within which it is positioned. The written thesis (Part I) presents a critical and extensive commentary, outlining the research design, contextual information, nature of experiments, evaluation of activities and the contribution to knowledge. Further, photographic outcomes from the experiments (Part II) have been presented to a range of audiences, in Blackburn, Newcastle, Sunderland and the North York Moors, representing the research but also representing the possibilities of future works and research opportunities (pp. 183-185).

Question 3 (Primary Question): In what ways can socially engaged photography and *slow* be utilised to create alternative narratives to contemporary televisual and journalistic portrayals of Blackburn?

Aims:

- Develop a practice based socially engaged photography methodology that responds to research questions and leads to the construction of a visual (photography) portfolio.

- Utilise established academic and philosophical theories, concepts and practices, such as *slow*, within photography and writing practices.

Summary

The paradigm of *slow* brought a specific, philosophical identity to the experiments which, when viewed as a whole (Part II), present alternative narratives about Blackburn. Developing an understanding of the ways *slow* and photography practice can intersect, particularly against the notion of fast photography (pp. 82-86), led the researcher to manipulate photography techniques (pp. 89-95) and embed reflective practice and iterative approaches (pp. 95-107) (pp. 153-166) within the photography practice. A fundamental use of *slow* was in encouraging an understanding and appreciation of local issues, influencing the research as place-specific (Pink and Servon, 2013, p. 453) and, more specifically, focussed on contemporary issues in Blackburn. Subsequently, experiments were designed and undertaken as critical and reflective interrogations (Parkins and Geoffrey, 2006, p. 83), motivated by images and narratives presented by national media about Blackburn. As can be seen in the outcomes emerging from experiments such as *Participatory Portrait Photography* (pp. 135-145), *Slow Walk* (pp. 145-153) and *Revisiting the Delineation* (pp. 153-166), the integration of the principles of *slow* into participatory and collaborative research activities, informed critical and reflective experiences with local places, co-researchers and participants. In response to journalistic and television themes identified in the contextual review – anti-social behaviour, ethnic division, hoodie hell, social deprivation (pp. 75-81) - the photography created during the experiments emphasise alternative narratives such as de-industrialisation (pp. 102-103), diversity (pp. 138-140), land reform (pp. 155-159), sustainability (pp. 110-111) and harmony (Figure 60).

The researcher's reading of autoethnography as part of the contextual review resulted in an understanding of the practice as both process and product (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2010), used to

analyse experience (Custer, 2014, p. 1), interpret history or identity (Hoppes, 2014, p. 63) and present findings through photography (Mansfield, 2009). Whilst the photography and writing generated from *Expanding the Photographic Interval* and *The Double Parallax* experiments were not designed to replicate, strictly, established and authentic models of autoethnography (Ellis, 2008), the use of autoethnographic principles is clearly identifiable as an disciplinary imprint on the overall approach (pp. 89-107) and in the photography (Plates #11-14).

The photography generated from the early experiments utilises an inward, highly subjective approach, in order to test out and explore approaches to photography in response to the research questions. The sites selected to be photographed by the researcher are geographically indexical to specific memories, whilst the narratives reflected in the photographic and written outcomes are specific to the researcher's experiences of Blackburn. The narratives revealed through the *Expanding the Photographic Interval* and *The Double Parallax* experiments reflect epiphanies (Ellis, Adams, Bochner, 2011) such as childhood experiences of nature and school games, drawn from the researcher's lived experience of Blackburn. The narratives reflected in the photography are eclectic, ranging from the experiences of nature (pp. 90-93), play (Figure 31), addiction (pp. 97-100) and home (Figure 39). In the context of developing a socially engaged *slow* photography practice, however, the approach (for example, Plates #09-14) was limited to the lived experience of the researcher, situated in the landscape of contemporary Blackburn. Yet, the early experiments were otherwise successful, providing the researcher with an entry point into practice based academic research and focussing the researcher's attention on their lived experience of Blackburn as a subjective base from which to contextualise later experiments.

Reflection upon early experiments enabled a reconfiguration of approach for subsequent experiments, where autoethnography was supplanted at first by a systems approach (pp. 115-123), then by a participatory practice (pp. 135-145), so as to locate and utilise alternative voices in the making of

photography. Further, the impact of projects the researcher was involved in, such as the Talbot Collection (pp. 115-117) ('The Talbot Exhibition & Talks', 2018), led the researcher to seek more outward and collaborative approaches for the photography, upon reflection of the portrayal of Blackburn by local photographers (pp. 64-75). For example, during the *Wiki:Blackburn* experiment, the choice of subject matter was drawn from an online repository and, therefore, the photography was undertaken with an impartiality, contrasting significantly to the approach of earlier experiments. Photographic outcomes represent a visual itinerary of Blackburn's significant places, as determined by global contributors, thus adapting the influence of the researcher by replacing the subjective themes of earlier experiments with themes propelled by anonymous voices. Rather than being defined by social injustice, racial divide or urban degradation, the outcomes present Blackburn as a town of community regeneration schemes, Victorian structures, ancient sites obstructed by urban development and new transportation links built between medieval streets (pp. 120-123).

Phase 2 (Chapter 4) of the research began with a collaborative experience, as part of the *SelfScapes* research cluster (pp. 129-135). The photography practice produced for *SelfScapes* (Figures 55-57) tested the potential of the methodology to be applied to alternative subjects (Dalby Forest) and in an alternative environment. The photography from this experiment explores the emergence of new, rural landscapes in Blackburn in place of former mill terraced houses, the consequence of a failed UK housing policy (*SelfScapes: The Forests of Blackburn* [Photography], 2018). This context is not represented in Blackburn's recent media portrayal (as outlined in the contextual review) and, as such, the outcomes developed from this experiment realise alternative narratives about the town, focussed on Blackburn's political landscape.

The researcher's involvement in the *SelfScapes* research cluster would last beyond the timeframe of Phase 2 (Table 1, p. 45). *SelfScapes* received funding from Forestry England and the Arts Council England for further project work between 2020-2021. The photography generated by the researcher for the

*SelfScapes* exhibition in April 2021 (Figure 78 and Figure 79) utilised aspects of the methodology developed during the enquiry, applying a socially engaged photography approach to develop portraits and creative writing with Forestry England staff based in Dalby Forest. This work links directly to the *Participatory Portrait Photography* experiment in 2018, utilising a the voice of others for the development of photography and writing. The researcher's response to *SelfScapes* 2020-2021 (Plates #52-54) is further outlined in the Future Work section (p. 186-187), connecting the development of the researcher's involvement with *SelfScapes* to the overall conclusions emerging from the research enquiry.

*Figure 78 (Plate #53)- SelfScapes 2021, Dalby's Place-Makers: Environmental Autobiographies, Harrison, 2021.*

*Figure 79 (Plate #55) - SelfScapes 2021, Dalby's Place-Makers: Environmental Autobiographies (installation banner), Harrison, 2021*

The further development of the socially engaged *slow* photography practice (Luvera, 2019) is evidenced by the *Participatory Portrait Photography* experiment (pp. 135-145). Participants determined the location for their portrait and produced writing to accompany the photograph, influenced by the themes of the research. The approach utilised for *Participatory Portrait Photography* experiment represents a significant and critical adaptation from earlier experiments: outcomes respond explicitly to Blackburn's media portrayal, with the photography and written pieces reflecting the narratives of harmony (Plate #36, left), integration (Plate #35) and disconnectedness (Plate #36, right). Overall, the narratives emerging from the experiment do mirror aspects of Blackburn's media portrayal (pp. 75-81), yet expand further, more closely resembling the town's portrayal by local, contemporary photographers (pp. 64-75).

The *Slow Walk* (pp. 146-153) and *Revisiting the Delineation* (pp. 153-166) experiments tested a hybrid methodology, informed by the approaches of earlier experiments: *Participatory Portrait Photography* (pp. 135-145); *Wiki:Blackburn* (pp. 115-123); *The Double Parallax* (pp. 95-107). Participatory photography, autoethnography, *slow* and systems photography formed the socially engaged *slow* photography practice which finalised the practice-based element of the PhD. The approach focussed more intently on Blackburn's contemporary cultures, between All Hallow's Spring in the centre of Blackburn, to the River Roddlesworth on the town's border to the west. Outcomes from the experiment included photographs, writing and design as part of an exhibition representing a practice based research approach emphasising the value of co-research, participation and reflective writing. The narratives revealed through the photography created during the Phase 2 experiments provide an alternative, photographic portrayal of Blackburn, centred upon topics such as land reform, village politics, community volunteering, connectedness and harmony (p. 168). Subsequently, the researcher presented the photography at the British Textiles Biennial *Politics of Cloth Conference* (2018), which included the creators of the *Kick Down the Barriers* project (2019-2021) supported by Blackburn Museum (*Appendix #07*).

Whilst the research aimed, in part, to construct an alternative, photographic language through which to describe Blackburn, the photographs developed from the enquiry do not fully reflect the complexity of the town's cultures or sociality. The researcher's background as a white, male, late-40s Blackburner, manifests as an agency reflected by the themes explored, the manner by which they are explored, and in the photographs made. There are, then, limitations in the overall photographic presentation, which perhaps would have been rendered more successfully with a greater participation by other photographers and participants, over the duration of the practice phase. Furthermore, the portfolio of photographs and the narratives they reveal, are bound within a specific timeframe and within a limited range of locations in the town, much of them informed by the researcher's past and present lived experience. The researcher's position was therefore influential in the choice of subject and the manner of production, to a greater extent than if the choices were made solely by participants (with the photographer acting as, say, a facilitator or technician). Whilst the approaches developed during the enquiry do not conflict with definitions of socially engaged photography (for example, pp. 28-30), they do represent a position within such practice where photographer and participant engage dialectically about how to develop the photography.

Yet, as evidenced through the commentary provided in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, the socially engaged *slow* photography practice developed during the enquiry did lead to the construction of alternative, photographic narratives to those identified in the contextual review (pp. 75-81). The experimentation in Phase 1, undertaken in order to establish and test approaches to photography, provide the foundation for a refined bodies of work being generated in Phase 2. The portfolio of photography (Part II), providing examples across the range of experiments undertaken during the enquiry, represents the issues and concerns of the research and reflects the theories, concepts and practices utilised from the contextual review of literature and practice.

Contributions

The methodology developed during the enquiry is a socially engaged *slow* photography practice, based in Blackburn (Lancashire, UK). As detailed in the summary for Chapter 4 (pp. 160-166), the intentional and critical use of the principles of *slow*, the practice of autoethnography and a participatory approach to photography, influenced directly the design and development of the photography experimentation. The subtext for the enquiry, alongside the influence of *slow*, determined the research as place-specific. Photographs generated from the experiments position narratives such as de-industrialisation, diversity, land reform, sustainability and harmony, against media narratives such as anti-social behaviour, ethnic division, hoodie hell and social deprivation. Taking into account the findings presented earlier in this chapter, it is proposed that the research contributes to knowledge in the field of socially engaged *slow* photography practice, in the following ways:

- The utilisation of *slow* imprinted a specific, philosophical identity on the design and conduct of the research activities, activating a self-reflective and iterative approach to a photography practice situated locally (Blackburn). The nature of *slow*, as a method to disrupt the speed of, and approach to, photography, informed experiments identifiable by reflection, self-awareness and criticality. Reflections upon memory and the passing of time shaped the approach for *Expanding the Photographic Interval* and *The Double Parallax* experiments, whilst experiments such as *Slow Walk* and *Revisiting the Delineation* utilised local routes within which to explore and examine local identities and cultures.

- The integrated practice of photography and autoethnography, as a critical and self-reflective approach from which to generate photography and writing, encouraged the researcher to draw from lived experience in order to create photographic outcomes in response to Blackburn's media portrayal. The synchronous, critical and reflective process of photography and writing, created

within a specific locality, enabled the exploration of lived experience in an inward and highly subjective manner. The researcher applied the theory of autoethnography within a photography practice, to inform critical reflection upon epiphanies (*The Double Parallax)* and, later, towards a re-rendering of the researcher's experience of contemporary Blackburn (*The Tourist Gaze)*. This approach remained a characteristic of the research outcomes, utilised in the *Revisiting the Delineation* experiment*,* where a participatory practice is supplemented by the embodied experiences of the researcher.

- The socially engaged *slow* photography practice - positioned in response to Blackburn's contemporary media portrayal - represents a long-form enquiry involving the integration of autoethnographic and participatory practices. The development towards the socially engaged *slow* photography practice was built upon earlier photography experiments, centred upon the researcher's lived experience, as a contextual base from which to inform later experiments. The voices of others' utilised in the production of photography (*Wiki:Blackburn*, *Participatory Portrait Photography*), aided the creation of alternative narratives that are presented to a range of audiences, forming one part of a positive and collective response, by local (Blackburn) people, to the BBC Panorama programmes *(Hill, 2018).* Duly, the outcomes of research activities were disseminated to professional and public audiences - locally and nationally - through academic conferences, group exhibitions and research clusters.

The overall contribution to research can be summarised as a place-specific, socially engaged *slow* photography practice, defined by critical, self-reflective, iterative and participatory practices, formed together to respond to contemporary image narratives. In this respect, there are two clear uses of the research for those working in practice-based or photographic disciplines. Drawing from Phase 1, researchers/practitioners could utilise the experimental approaches to explore the value of autoethnography and *slow* in photographic research enquiry, especially in such cases where the

researcher/practitioner seeks to explore or establish their history in relation to local place/s, in a self-reflective study or experiment surrounding lived or embodied experiences. Drawing from Phase 2, researchers/practitioners could mirror the range of socially engaged approaches that centre upon the use of other voices in the design and production of photographic practice/s – this would be especially useful where the researcher/practitioner seeks to develop alternative (photographic or written) narratives to previously established or enforced narratives about a place or a community.

Future Work

By March 2020 the experimentation phase of the PhD had come to an end. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on travel, work and research activity in the UK, meant that navigating further photography practice within Blackburn would have been, at best, extremely challenging. The researcher reflected that sufficient results had been gathered between 2015-2020 in order that both the photography portfolio and the thesis could be concluded and, from spring 2020, the researcher began writing up the results.

Whilst the researcher's photographic practice in Blackburn had ended, participation in the *SelfScapes* research cluster, from August 2020 onwards, enabled the continued application of the methodology in a professional context. The design of the researcher's approach for *SelfScapes* 2021 was fundamentally linked to the methodology developed in Blackburn during the PhD enquiry, with the researcher utilising a socially engaged *slow* photography practice (Fryer and Campbell, 2015) (Germain, 2004) (Boora, 2021) to generate photographic and written narratives (Plates #52-55). The output from the researcher's involvement in *SelfScapes* 2021 was realised in a photography exhibition held at Dalby Forest (Figure 57) (Plate #55). The exhibition is accompanied by a website[iv], exhibition guidebook and *SelfScapes* catalogue (Sperryn-Jones, Adams and Harrison, 2021), funded by Forestry England and Arts Council England and includes the work of other participating artists (Adams, 2021) (Dracup, 2021) (Lilleengen, 2021). Crucial to this practice is the responsibility that participants provide to the development of the photography – this quality, or action, where participants inform aspects of production (such as the location for the photography) in dialogue with the photographer - is central to the established definitions for social engaged photography practice, utilised more recently as part of the researchers latest practice, situated in East Lancashire. (pp. 186-187).

In May 2021, following trials for an integrated practice of photography, sound recording and writing, the researcher had begun defining the parameters for a long-form photography practice (Leeming, 2021) (Guidi, 2021) focussed on a conurbation of three, small, historically connected towns in East Lancashire (Plate #40). Initially, this practice was explored within coastal towns such as Blackpool (Plates #56-58), but then brought closer to the researcher's base in the Ribble Valley, UK. The socially engaged photography practice seeks to explore how factors such as Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic impact upon communities and social structures in the towns of Great Harwood, Rishton and Clayton-le-Moors (Power, 2014). The researcher's proposal outlines the collaboration with local communities, writers and historians, supporting the continued development and utilisation of a socially engaged photography practice beyond the timeframe of PhD study. Examples of this work are provided in the portfolio of photography (Plates #59-62).

In autumn 2021, the researcher held initial discussions with the Lead Archivist at Blackburn Central Library (Community History Department), with the aim of contributing photography to the *CottonTown* image repository. At the time of writing (October 2021), the researcher is preparing to provide online public access to a selection of photographic works (1997-2019), including photographs made as part of the PhD research enquiry. Once the transfer of digital versions of the researcher's photographs is completed, they would remain available as part of a new, online photographic resource coordinated by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.

**Table of Figures**

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**Appendices**

Appendix #01: Research Conferences, Exhibitions and Publications (2017-2021)

| Conference/Exhibition/Event | Institution/Body/Gallery | Location | Type | Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Research and Scholarship Conference | University Centre at Blackburn College | University Centre, Blackburn College | Conference Paper | 2016 |
| Art and Design Annual Conference | Centre for Doctoral Research (Northumbria University) | The Baltic, Newcastle | Conference Paper | 2017 |
| 2017 Collaborative Exhibition | PRISM Contemporary Gallery | Blackburn, Lancashire | Exhibition | 2017 |
| SelfScapes | Forestry England and York St John University | Dalby Forest | Exhibition | 2018 |
| Cultural Difference and Social Solidarity Network | Liverpool John Moores University | Blackburn College and University Centre | Conference Paper and Exhibition | 2018 |
| National Festival of Making | Festival of Making Community Interest Group | Blackburn Cathedral | Conference Paper | 2018 |
| The Talbot Collection Conference | Blackburn College and University Centre | Blackburn College and University Centre | Conference Paper and Exhibition | 2018 |
| Research and Scholarship Conference | University Centre at Blackburn College | University Centre, Blackburn College | Conference Paper | 2018 |
| British Textiles Biennial: The Politics of Cloth Conference | Super Slow Way | Blackburn College and University Centre | Conference Paper and Exhibition | 2019 |
| SelfScapes 2018 | Forestry England and York St John University | Online | Publication | 2020 |
| SelfScapes 2021 | Arts Council and Forestry England | Dalby Forest | Exhibition | 2021 |
| John Harrison | https://john-harrison-photo.com/delineatingslowly/ | Online | Portfolio | 2021 |

Appendix #02: List of libraries and archives utilised during the enquiry

| Institution / Library | Department / Service | Topic/s |
|---|---|---|
| British Film Institute | Website (online) | Captions, content, director, producer, broadcast date |
| Blackburn Central Library | Community History Department | Blackburn's (social history and photography) |
| Blackburn Central Library | Cottontown.org | Blackburn's history (photography) |
| Blackburn College | University Centre Library | Photography, politics of place, research methods (Arts) |
| Blackburn College | Library Services: JSTOR (online) | Journal search (e.g. creative practice, *slow*, autoethnography) |
| Blackburn College | The Talbot Collection | Photography archive of Blackburn (W and H Talbot) |
| The British Library | ETHos (online) | Art and photography theses |
| IMDb (Internet Movie Data Base) | Film Database (online) | Captions, content, director, producer, broadcast date |
| Lancaster University Library | Arts and Social Sciences | Research methods (Arts) |
| Manchester Central Library | Not applicable | Photography and media |
| National Science and Media Museum | Insight (photographic archive) | Photography practice |
| University of Sunderland | Murray Library | Research methods (Art and Design), photography theory, photography practice |
| University of Sunderland | Discover (online) | Journal search (e.g. academic writing, practice based research, reflective practice, *slow*) |
| Whalley Library | Inter-loan library service | Visual communication, media and media ethics |
| YouTube | Films and Documentaries | Place-specific film and documentary: Blackburn, 1970-1990. |
| Zotero | Referencing Database | Collation of all source material |

Appendix #03: Ethics Participation Guidance Sheet

# Making visual and written portraits describing the town of Blackburn, Lancashire, UK

Name of Participant / Job Title: _____

Date: _____

Address/Location: _____

Dear Participant,

My sincere thanks for taking part in this photographic project. I am delighted that you have volunteered to be a part of my research, and look forward to finalising the results with you over coming weeks.

During the process of making the portrait/s, you have been asked to produce a written or oral response about the place you live. The writing or oral response could describe an experience, or experiences, connected to the place you live, or perhaps a story you want to tell about yourself or your family. Alternatively, it could be a reflection on your connection, or history, to the place you live.

This written (or recorded) response should be limited to 150 words (a third of a page of A4 paper), but with no minimum – you could prepare as little as one sentence or even just a couple of words, as long as they respond to the ideas above.

The preference is for a hand-written submission that can then be captured (e.g. scanned) as an authentic 'trace' or imprint' of your writing – however, should you wish to make a recording of your words instead then this would be fine too (the researcher will assist you). The approach of capturing a hand-written response would not, of course, stop an electronic transcript being created if required or appropriate.

If you choose to create a hand-written response then please create this on blank A4 paper, with your signature and date, and submit it to the researcher either in person, or posted to the address below::

John Harrison
***INSERT CONTACT ADDRESS HERE***

Again, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your involvement. I am looking forward to seeing the results of our efforts.

John

Appendix #04: Extract from the *CoBB1ed* participant project discussion (November, 2018)

9 November 2018, University Centre at Blackburn College, Room UC010:

Attendees: Abdul Hafiz (AH) – Academic Subject Leader and Lecturer in Sociology, Blackburn College and PhD candidate at Lancaster University / John Harrison (JH)- Head of School for Art and Society, Blackburn College and Postgraduate student at the University of Sunderland (Northern Centre of Photography) / Shaun McAllister (SM) – Lecturer in Photography, Blackburn College / Mark Thistlethwaite (MT) – Lecturer in Graphic Design, Blackburn College

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JH: Provisionally, we have selected a delineation for the research project, linking the centre of Blackburn at Kings Street, through Preston Old Road, to the boundary of the town to the east. Based on the breadth of the subject itself, we have to de*selec*t [areas of the town] in order to *select* a specific delineation which, arguably, reflects the nature of photography, from an ontological perspective. The choice of subjects and of approaches should be open for discussions and to development by the researchers.

AH The delineation made, and how this is just one of thousands of delineations available, is interesting. This choice is a research finding in itself, and allows us to examine our personal relationship to the town. It will be interesting in how, or if, we even counter this position – example, we could ask participants to nominate themselves the places they make photographs in.

SM This idea will answers some of the questions emerging from the BBC's Panorama programme – as the delineation chosen as important historically, in some ways reflecting the nature of, say, the silk road. Preston Old Road was very important in bringing in raw materials to the town, and for exporting out the finished materials.

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Appendix #05: Example of a CoBB1ed project brief (2018)

Sign & Symbols / Welcomes & Warnings: A Phenomenological Appraisal (Section VI)

Abstract:

In *'Out of Time: Fast Subjects, Slow Living'* Parkins states:

"Implicit in the practices of slow living is a particular conception of time in which 'having time' for something means investing it with significance through attention and deliberation"

Literature:

In *slow* research and technological discourses, the reference to the development of steam technology and, eventually, the expansion of the railroads in the United States of America, in the early 19th century, has been used to highlight not only *how* technology is constantly increasing in speed, but also how the users of such technology have been *affected* by it. Parkins states: "the railway was suppressed by the car and then the airplane, the slowness of rail travel became a virtue. Nowadays, rail travel is often offered as “a contemplative, quiet alternative to the hectic bustling of air traveling and frustration of driving". In his analysis of Eadweard Muybridge's experimentation with high-speed photography, Banks (2014) describes how rail travel affected people's perception of time:

> "Thirty-five miles an hour was nearly as fast as the fastest horse, and unlike a gallop, it could be sustained almost indefinitely. It was a dizzying speed. Passengers found the landscape out the train windows was blurred, impossible to contemplate, erased by speeds that would now seem a slow crawl to us." (Solnit, 2003, cited in Banks, 2014)

According to Linder and Meissner the *slow* movement could be understood as "a strategic reaction to today's "culture of speed" (Tomlinson, 2007, cited in Linder and Meissner, 2015). This implies a conscious psychological, and perhaps physiological, reaction that has encouraged *slow* movements to be adopted by diverse groups communities but influenced by the shared experience of modern, fast living. These *slow* movements are global, and seem concentrated in the larger, industrialised cities around the world, such as the *slow* City movement (e.g. *Cittaslow*). Linder and Meissner propose that the commonality which these communities share is a "politically motivated desire to resist the accelerated pace of contemporary life in order to promote values and concepts such as community, sustainability, justice, roots, quality, and belonging".

However, the notion that *slow* research is not to be defined merely by speed is put forward by Grandia: "'slow' exists not in opposition to 'fast', but as a metaphor for alternative moral economies of scale" (2015). Both Parkins and Grandia imply that *slow* approaches (art, food, living, research, science) be adopted in order to provide opportunities for contemplative reflections and critique of experience, materials, processes, and on our *use* of time - Parkins (2004) states:

> "Slow' living at its best envisages more than just a redistribution of time…It points towards an alternative understanding of time itself".

Proposal:

In John's doctoral research, the discourse referenced above was used to identify a framework within which to utilise *slow*-making and research practices. The framework had the following qualities that have been applied through photographic and auto-biographical (textual) approaches:

- Emphasising and concentrating the research on the researcher's locality - what is, what has become? Examining the results through image-culture and linguistical perspectives.
- Appreciating and, subsequently, highlighting an appreciation of our environment, both historically and presently (e.g. experiencing the utopian 'past' through reflective practices, and confronting the dystopian 'now' during site visits)
- Reflecting on temporality: utilising feelings, sensations and memories to 'trace' memory and reflect on the present, in visual and written forms.
- Explore and experience the sensorial opportunities provided by *slow*-making processes, how this approach affects the researcher's representation of the subject, and how a reflexive approach results in responses to the researcher as the 'insider'.

Therefore, this assignment proposes an approach to *making* that utilises these tenets (these values?) of *slow* research. It is proposed that the researchers walk along the delineation (two journeys – boundary to boundary, then reverse the journey), recording their observations, mapping their route, making photographs and taking notes, with the aim of appraising how the delineation communicates to its people through 'signs and symbols'. All the while it is proposed that the researchers be aware of their surroundings, and to be respectful of them, whilst simultaneously appreciating, and responding to, the opportunities for critical discourse and analysis presented during this experience. It is anticipated the result will be a multi-media outcome (e.g. photographic images, reflective/analytical texts, numerical/textual/visual data, maps).

Appendix #06: Extract from the dialectical conversation (2018)

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JH:

I was walking with someone whom I have known almost entirely in a professional context. I acknowledge that meeting a colleague on a cold Sunday morning for a walk is not unusual. Yet, one that brings challenge, companionship, humour and criticality is perhaps less common - to do so with a political, philosophical or phenomenological aim, lesser so? Finally, to undertake a walk along a route well known to me, but within a context of practice based research – i.e. a purpose of acquiring new knowledge through the process of 'making' – provides a unique perspective on the experience of walking along a specific route. The walk was supportive in focussing my mind on three specific areas for reflection, both during the walk and subsequently. The significance (i.e. complexity, duration) of the town's history and, yet, how the present seems (in ways undefinable to me) to be unaffected by its past. The importance of connecting directly within the route (people, places, objects) in conjunction with another practitioner, in order to link environmental, political and cultural contexts to each other. The advantages of photography in providing not only a measure of support for *slow* research (pausing, considering etc.) but also a focus for subsequent analysis (self-reflection, criticality etc.)

AH:

I wanted to share my usage of the term place. In my practice, place represents the resistance of and resentment towards political authority, the territorial bounding used for political administration. I felt that place meant much more for both of us, belonging, familiarity, a uniqueness to be preserved. The notion of place comprises diverse and complex subjective meanings that we as humans derive from the emotions and memories that arise through the interaction between landscape, geography, historical memory, collective imaginaries, biographical/subjective significance and the inner psychic world of the people who live in and are in love with a place. We enrich and make real, such spaces with place specific meanings, creating our own codices. Codices that note the minutiae in

the social changes. These place specific meanings hold power for us, even to an extent that we are prepared to defend the place with all our energies.

I am learning about the *slow* movement, its philosophy and ontological foundations. The idea of *slow*-ness is resplendent with sociological concerns for a post-capitalist society. We were synergistically engaged in a conversation about Blackburn and our own respective practice. The walk inspired me in a number of ways, firstly due to fact that both John and I had a place attachment to Blackburn, we both resented the representation of Blackburn from the outside world, an image that is heavily influenced by its portrayal in the media. Secondly, the intersectional and inter-disciplinary ethos of the research and our own emancipatory emphasis on flourishing chimed with *slow*-ness, equally.

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[i] The Talbot Conference, 2018: http://britishphotohistory.ning.com/events/the-talbot-conference

[ii] The Textiles Biennial Politics of Cloth Conference, 2019: https://britishtextilebiennial.co.uk/workshop/politics-of-cloth-community-conference/

[iii] Take up Space, 2017: https://co-design.blog/take-up-space/

[iv] URL: https://selfscapes.wixsite.com/selfscapes