

UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE
DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING

**FOOTSTEPS INTO THE FORGOTTEN:
CONSUMING OBSOLESCENCE**

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**SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

NOVEMBER 2016

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Publications and Conference Papers

Publications

Anderson, S., Tonner, A. and Hamilton, K. 'Death of buildings in consumer culture: natural death, architectural murder and cultural rape', *Consumption Markets & Culture*, [Forthcoming].

Anderson, S., Hamilton, K. and Tonner, A. 2015. "“See that door with a No Entry sign? Open it”: Exploring Consumer Agency in Contested Place’, in NA - *Advances in Consumer Research*, Volume 43, eds. Kristin Diehl and Carolyn Yoon, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research, pp. 309-313.

Conferences Papers

Anderson, S., Hamilton, K. and Tonner, A. 2015. "“See that door with a No Entry sign? Open it”: Exploring Consumer Agency in Contested Place’, Association of Consumer Research conference, New Orleans.

Anderson, S. 2015. *Alternative Places of Consumption: Understanding Urban Exploration*, Interpretative Consumer Research (ICR), University of Edinburgh, UK.

Anderson, S. 2015. *Consuming Place: Understanding Urban Exploration*, Department of Marketing Doctoral Conference, University of Strathclyde, UK.

**This thesis is dedicated to
the memory of my grandmother Johann C. M. Anderson**

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr Kathy Hamilton and Dr Andrea Tonner, for their unwavering support and guidance throughout the research process. In particular, I would like to thank Kathy for her instrumental guidance and eternal patience towards my theoretical and methodological ponderings, and to thank Andrea for her active involvement and providing her lateral insight into this research. I thank both my supervisors for giving me continued emotional support and the opportunity to collaboratively work together on various publications.

I extend thanks to my mother, Anne C. Anderson, for her continued support during my eight years at University. Thank you for spending hours patiently listening to all the anxieties, confusions and triumphs that peppered this journey. To my partner David, thank you for your unrelenting encouragement and accompanying me into many abandoned locations. Thank you both for your support and love. In particular, I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my grandmother, Johann C. M. Anderson, for her wisdom and vivid memories of the past that inspired my postgraduate education.

I would also like to thank my fellow PhD candidates Amy Goode and Anthea Mendes who provided much laughter and occasional hand-holding over the past three years. Also, thanks to Rory Tracey for many a philosophical discussion over coffee. Finally, I would like to thank my participants who took a leap of trust by participating in this research and for sharing their stories, photographs and secrets.

Abstract

This thesis develops a novel understanding of obsolescent consumption through the context of urban exploration by exploring how consumers engage with the spatialities, temporalities and materialities of obsolescence. Urban exploration is a subculture of individuals who explore and photograph abandoned buildings and is driven by a shared appreciation of ‘beauty in decay’. Whilst growing research examines the end stages of consumption, issues of obsolescence, inactivity and disuse remain under-researched within the consumption domain. Through an ethnography, this research uses in-depth interviews, netnography and sensory ethnographic fieldwork to explore consumers’ experiences, meaning-making and value production from their encounters with obsolescence. This thesis broadens understandings of waste by introducing ‘obsolescent consumption’ as a significant domain in consumer culture where consumers engage with obsolescence for its own sake and values of neglect, termination and alterity. Findings reveal that consumers can reawaken obsolescent spaces and introduce the notion of ‘temporary place-making’ where space transiently transforms into place. Furthermore, this research conceptualises the death of obsolescent objects that deepens neo-materialist discussions within Consumer Culture Theory and moves our understanding beyond intangible value and towards material jeopardy. Finally, this thesis demonstrates how obsolescent things can be returned to marketplace circulation through ‘iconic reintegration’ that is driven by consumers’ attempts to legitimise alternative values of obsolescence and develop societal gift giving as a form of remembrance. Overall, this thesis demonstrates that obsolescence is not necessarily the end stage of consumption, but rather can be the beginning of consumer fascination.

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Epigraph

“We creatures are adrift. Launched upon the tides of history, we have to cling to things, hoping that the friction of our contact will somehow suffice to countervail the currents that would otherwise sweep us into oblivion” (Ingold, 2015: p.3)

“Decay reminds us of an ultimate fate that nothing lasts in this world” (Nate, 26)

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis aims to develop a rich understanding of how consumers engage with obsolescence through the context of urban exploration. The research is positioned within the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) tradition and draws upon ethnographic approaches to develop a rich understanding of how spatialities, temporalities and materialities intersect in consumption. This thesis makes several novel contributions to consumer research. It introduces ‘obsolescent consumption’ as a significant and distinct domain of consumption, advances understandings of place consumption, conceptualises the death of an object and extends understandings of marketplace circulation. It does this by exploring consumers’ meaning-making activities, practices and experiences of abandoned buildings as obsolescent things that have fallen into disuse and out of marketplace circulation. This chapter introduces the research and outlines the structure of the thesis. It begins with the research rationale and continues with an outline of the research aim, research questions and methodology. This is followed by a summary of urban exploration as a consumption activity. This chapter closes with concluding comments.

1.2 Theoretical Rationale: Prioritising Obsolescence in Consumption

Consumer research illuminates how consumption objects shape consumer identity projects (Belk, 1988) and are central to consumer practices of collecting (Belk, 1995), ritual (Otnes and Lowery, 2004) and gift giving (Belk, 2010). However, the disposal of these objects remains under-researched from a consumption perspective (Benton, 2014; Parsons and Maclaran, 2009). This said, a growing stream of research examines the meanings of waste (Tadajewski and Hamilton, 2014; Bradshaw and Canniford, 2010; Parsons, 2008; De Coverly et al., 2008), practices of disposal (Parsons and Maclaran, 2009), recycling (Hawkins, 2001), reuse (Cappellini and Parsons, 2013; Fernandez, Brittain and Bennett, 2011), secondhand consumption (Duffy, 2014), and practices of organising waste (Dion, Sabri and Guillard, 2014). However, existing consumer research on the end stages of consumption has typically focused on conduits of disposal and intentional transformations of waste (e.g. recycling and upcycling), and fails to examine obsolescence within the consumption domain.

‘Obsolescence’ is quintessential of the *end* stage of consumption as it marks an end or death where technology, communication and products are no longer viable (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Existent research on obsolescence originates from disciplines of product design, economic theory and business management, and identifies various forms of obsolescence, including; planned obsolescence (Guiltinan, 2009; Iizuka, 2007; Cooper, 2004), technical, stylistic and programmed obsolescence (Maycroft, 2009) and the obsolescence of peripheral technology (Maycroft, 2015). De Coverly

et al., (2008) highlight the need for research to examine the end stage of consumption because of its environmental impact and cultural significance to consumption habits. Obsolescence is an equally important stage of consumption as an outcome of capitalism (Maycroft, 2015) and a throwaway society (Cooper, 2005). Whilst consumer research has explored contexts of obsolescence in abandoned brands (Muñiz and Schau, 2005), termination of narrative brands (Russell and Schau, 2014), and circulation of disused objects (Epp and Price, 2010), it has not theoretically engaged with obsolescence as an important state within consumption. This thesis highlights the significance of obsolescence to consumer culture and illuminates the spatial, temporal and material components of obsolescence that shape its consumption.

Various perspectives have been used to examine disposed objects. In particular, Türe and Ger (2016) use temporality and materiality to examine the transformation of inherited objects and Parsons and Maclaran (2009) highlight the spatiality in disposition. However, research has yet to explore the potential of combining these perspectives in developing an understanding of consumption. Recently, consumer research has drawn attention to the importance of space and place in consumption (Lucarelli et al., 2015; Chatzidakis, McEachern and Warnaby, 2014; Chatzidakis and McEachern, 2013). Existent research examines how consumptionscapes foster sociality (Debenedetti, Oppewal and Arsel, 2014), shape identity of consumers and places (Johnstone, 2012; Skinner, 2008), and can enable or restrict consumption (Chatzidakis, Maclaren and Bradshaw, 2012). Less research considers what happens to consumptionscapes when they fall into a state of obsolescence, disuse and

inactivity. This thesis aims to deepen understandings of obsolescence within the consumption domain by using a tripartite perspective of spatialities, temporalities and materialities to examine consumers' encounters with obsolescent objects and consumptionscapes. In doing so, this thesis aims to contribute to the diverse terrain of Consumer Culture Theory by illuminating alternative consumptionscapes where values of obsolescence dominate.

In their seminal article, 'Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research', Arnould and Thompson (2005) introduce CCT as a "family of theoretical perspectives that address the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings" (p.868) and identify four thematic domains of consumer research: consumer identity projects, marketplace cultures, socio-historic patterns of consumption, and mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers' interpretive strategies. Despite its typological format, these thematic domains are a group of flexible theoretics that can overlap within a research study (Arnould and Thompson, 2007). As a field, Consumer Culture Theory attempts to synthesise the sociocultural, experiential, ideological and symbolic (Bettany, 2007) elements of consumption. In contributing to the diverse landscape of Consumer Culture Theory this thesis examines consumers' experiences and the meanings they attribute to obsolescence and draws links between their lived experience and larger sociocultural movements of capitalism and deindustrialisation. Overall, this thesis seeks to illuminate the significance of obsolescence in consumption.

1.3 Research Aim, Research Questions and Methodology

This thesis aims to develop a rich understanding of how consumers engage with obsolescence through the context of urban exploration. In doing so, the thesis draws upon three perspectives of spatialities, temporalities and materialities to understand consumers' engagement with obsolescent consumption. This tripartite perspective offers a means to untangle the complexity of obsolescence and provide a more nuanced understanding of consumption objects than is previously acknowledged within the literature. This approach is reflected within the research questions that guide this thesis.

Research Questions

1. How do consumers engage with the spatialities, temporalities and materialities of obsolescent objects and consumptionscapes?
2. What meanings do consumers ascribe to obsolescent objects and consumptionscapes?
3. How do consumers produce value from their encounters with obsolescent objects and consumptionscapes?

This thesis uses an ethnographic research design that enables the researcher to become immersed within the context of study over the twelve-month data collection period. Specifically, it uses a sensory ethnography of abandoned buildings, netnography of urban exploration online communities, and in-depth interviews with urban explorers. Further details are presented within Chapter Four that supports the application of these methods for researching urban exploration.

1.4 Research Context: Urban Exploration

This thesis uses urban exploration as a context to examine how consumers engage with obsolescence. Urban exploration is the discovery and exploration of hidden, restricted, and derelict places in the built environment which are not publicly accessible (Garrett, 2011). Urban exploration involves complex practices of researching place histories, discovering access to sites and the physical exploration of derelict buildings. Often called ‘UrbEx’ or ‘UE’, urban exploration also includes exploring abandoned buildings in the rural environment, despite its namesake. Within this thesis the term ‘abandoned building’ is used for a range of derelict, ownerless, decaying, urban and rural structures that have fallen into disuse, obsolescence and ruination. These places are often referred to as ‘ruins’ or ‘modern ruins’ within literature. This thesis uses this ruin terminology when referring to existent literature, and uses ‘abandoned building’ when discussing fieldwork and participants’ accounts. This distinction is used to acknowledge that not all locations

of urban exploration exist in ruination, but rather may be temporarily derelict or disused.

Urban explorers act as archivists by textually and photographically documenting the history and decay of these often forgotten structures that they share with global online community forums. Importantly, urban explorers practice a shared ethos of 'take only photographs, leave only footprints' that prevents them from altering or damaging these sites. Urban exploration is often committed illegally as explorers are rarely authorised to access sites. Across the cultures represented within this thesis (UK, US, Canada, Italy, Germany, Netherlands), trespass is illegal. In the UK, trespass can either be in breach of civil law for private property, or criminal law for property belonging to the Queen, railway companies and defence organisations. Garrett (2014) considers urban exploration as a form of recreational trespass that allows individuals to act against the constricting forces of society. It is a highly dangerous activity that often requires explorers to scale buildings without ropes, descend into disused tunnels or carefully avoid electrical train-lines.

Urban exploration has also re-established a cultural fascination with urban decay. This aesthetic appreciation of decay has appeared in a number of art exhibitions, such as the Resistance Gallery's exhibition of 'Beauty in Decay' (2010) that featured urban explorer photography, Tate Britain's 'Ruin Lust' (2014) of traditional to present-day ruin art, 'Unframed Ellis Island' by JR (2014) and the Lighthouse's 'Nobody's Home' (2016) exhibition by John Mayer of abandoned Highland farm crofts. This has renewed the alternative aesthetic appreciation of decay. Further,

several films have been released, such as *Urban Explorers* (2007), *Urban Explorer* (2011) and *Depraved* (2011), and television programs created, such as LifeStyle's (2016) 'My Dream Derelict Home' and Channel 4's (2016) 'Hidden Britain by Drone' and 'Escape to the Chateau' that all document the mundane yet hidden places of modern society. Furthermore, Red Bull, the energy drinks company, has fostered links between their brand and urban exploration by creating a selection of film shorts called 'URBEX: Enter At Your Own Risk'. These recent examples highlight the popularisation of urban exploration from its once subcultural underground roots.

Sociocultural Roots of Urban Exploration

Since its beginning, urban exploration has remained a relatively underground scene with individuals rarely sharing their urban pursuits with wider social networks, family members or work colleagues. This remains the case for some explorers who use aliases to hide their explorer identity from public view. However, the increasing popularity of urban decay imagery and urban exploration stories within the media has encouraged explorers out of the darkness and into the limelight. The roots of urban exploration have been traced back to numerous accounts of individuals exploring subterranean tunnels and skyscrapers in the Western world. In particular, the late urban explorer Jeff Chapman (aka Ninjalicious) published a timeline of urban exploration that commences with Philibert Aspairt's exploration of the catacombs of Paris in 1793 where he sadly died unable to find his way out (Ninjalicious, 2015). Extending into the 19th and 20th centuries urban exploration has

been linked to Walt Whitman's 1861 exploration of the Atlantic Avenue Tunnel in Brooklyn and has been inspired by the Dadaist movement and La Résistance Française. Notorious groups of urban explorers formed in late 20th century, such as the San Francisco Suicide Club and the Cave Clan of Melbourne. Collectively this created the rise of urban exploration as a subculture in the 1990s (Ninjalicious, 2015) with the publication of zines, newsletters, books, photography and websites. Urban exploration was primarily driven by countercultural, anti-establishment values and ideologies of resistance to the commercialisation of public space (Garrett, 2012). These values were rife during the 1990s and early 2000s, but have dissipated amongst the mainstream popularisation of urban exploration. It is important to examine this shift and consider the popularisation of urban exploration into mainstream culture.

Urban explorers' fascination with contemporary ruination shares common ground with dark tourism, but it is important to recognise the differences that exist between these consumption activities. Lennon and Foley (2000) define dark tourism as any tourist experience associated with death and distress, and encompass earlier terms of thanatourism, black spot tourism and atrocity heritage under this umbrella term (Strange and Kempa, 2003). Locations of dark tourism can include various sites, such as war museums and memorials (Stone and Sharpley, 2008), battle sites (Strange and Kempa, 2003), locations of famous deaths (Alderman, 2002; Rojek, 1993), disasters and social atrocities, such as the World Trade Centre terrorist attack, and the Holocaust death camps (Beech, 2000). These postmodern spectacles (Rojek, 1993) have become increasingly commodified (Stone, 2012) where sites are staged

to create spectacular narratives. For example, Chronis, Arnould and Hampton (2012) demonstrate how Gettysburg is staged as a place of death, sacrifice, defeat and loss. In contrast to the staged environments of dark tourism, urban exploration sites are unmediated and unprotected by service providers and often lie derelict, abandoned by their owners.

Urban exploration and the related genre of ruinophilia are linked by a common fascination with failures of capitalism, disaster and destruction. Similarly, dark tourism has historically been driven by an allure of death and social malaise (Edwards, 2016; Seaton, 1996). However, much research suggests the growing fascination with death is a post-modern phenomenon (Muzaini, Teo and Yeoh, 2007; Foley and Lennon, 1996). Hartman (2014) attributes the recent rise in dark tourism to social and political turbulence whereas Ashworth and Issac (2015) suggest it reflects a general rise in leisure and heritage and could be an outcome of increasing scholarship attention. Research suggests that consumers use dark tourism in various ways; to alleviate the impact of death and enable exposure to violence and taboo (Stone and Sharpley, 2013; 2008), to learn about history (Biran, Poria and Oren, 2011), to co-create and express a national identity (Tinson, Saren and Roth, 2015), to simulate affective states (Ashworth and Issac, 2015; Podoshen, 2013) and experience unmediated reality reflecting a cultural fascination with dystopia and disaster (Podoshen et al., 2015). Similarly, research suggests contemporary attraction of ruination is driven by social obsession with failures of capitalism and apocalyptic futures (DeSilvey and Edensor, 2013). Despite these similarities, urban exploration involves illegal trespass and exploring places without permission. This restricted

access distinguishes urban exploration from dark tourist activities that typically have permission-based access provided by tourist agencies. Instead, urban exploration is deeply subcultural and challenges the commercialisation of public space

Urban Exploration Community

As a group, urban exploration is typically dominated by white males. This said, increasing numbers of females are visible within the community as it becomes more mainstream. The narrow ethnic demographic of urban explorers is unsurprising as the subculture is typically considered to be a Western phenomenon. Garrett (2012) also reports the subculture has elements of racism and homophobia. Despite the narrow ethnic representation and gender bias, urban explorers have a range of occupations, education and class backgrounds. This is further discussed within Chapter Four.

Urban exploration shares commonalities with community literature within Consumer Culture Theory. Urban explorers appear as a mnemonic community (Zerubavel, 1996) that share images of the past despite having no experience or personal connection with that period (Nguyen and Belk, 2007). Following Muñiz and O'Guinn's (2001) definition of brand communities; urban explorers share consciousness of kind in their shared appreciation of ruin photography, enact shared rituals and traditions evident in codenaming places and following the ethic of 'leaving only footprints' and share a common moral responsibility to protect the

locations of these vulnerable places from metal thieves, vandals and the media. Further, as a community they create value (Schau, Muñiz and Arnould, 2009) by adhering to explicit and discursive rules about sharing information, enact skills and competences in physically exploring ruins, and have emotional commitments to protect and record these ruins. Like other subcultural communities (Belk and Tumbat, 2005; Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995) the community is hierarchical and fragmented into smaller territorial groups that explore places together. However, whilst they recognise the difference between members and non-members (such as 'noobs' for new members, and 'secca' for security services), they do not share a communal bond with the whole community. As such, urban exploration emerges as a highly fragmented mnemonic community that gather together to exchange and share in their common fascination with places of decay and obsolescence.

1.5 Outline of Thesis

This thesis contains seven chapters. As detailed, Chapter One introduces an overview of the thesis and its theoretical positioning. There are two literature review chapters. Chapter Two examines the space and place of consumptionscapes and consumers' experiential encounters within the marketplace. Chapter Three examines the consumption of material culture, explores theoretical understandings of waste, disposal and materiality, and provides a brief summary of existent literature on

ruinophilia. Chapter Four details the methodology that guides this research. This chapter discusses the philosophical underpinning of the research, its positioning within consumer research and Consumer Culture Theory, and its use of Tim Ingold's relational approach. It also details the various ethnographic methods used during data collection, analysis and interpretation.

There are two findings chapters. Chapter Five examines the allure of abandoned buildings and consumers' experiential practices of discovery, place-making and imagination that occur during urban exploration. Chapter Six examines consumer guardianship practices, the materiality of obsolescent objects, gift giving as a form of remembrance and how obsolescent objects are reintegrated into marketplace circulation. Chapter Seven closes this thesis by detailing the various contributions to consumer research and Consumer Culture Theory, highlights potential avenues for future research and offers concluding reflections on the research process.

1.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter provides a brief overview of the thesis to follow. It highlights the research rationale that drives this research and positions the thesis within the research tradition of Consumer Culture Theory. It outlines the aim, research questions and methodological approach adopted within the study and introduces the research context of urban exploration. Finally, it provides an outline of the thesis structure.

Literature Review Introduction

The literature review is divided into two chapters. Chapter Two explores consumer research literature on the spaces and places of consumption that provides a theoretical foundation for understanding abandoned buildings as alternative consumptionscapes. Chapter Three reviews consumer research literature on the consumption of material culture and draws upon diverse literature streams of anthropology, material culture studies and social archaeology to illuminate the materiality of abandoned buildings as obsolescent objects of consumption. Rather than forming a separate chapter, issues of temporality are integrated into both chapters and address the temporality of consumptionscapes and temporality in consuming objects. Together these chapters provide a theoretical foundation of how the guiding perspectives of spatialities, temporalities and materialities intersect within obsolescent consumption.

Chapter Two: Spaces and Places of Consumption

2.1 Introduction

Consumer research has increasingly acknowledged the importance of space and place within the marketplace. This evident in recent calls for a more complete understanding *in* and *of* place (Chatzidakis, McEachern and Warnaby, 2014) and conference roundtables addressing spatial theory and place consumption (Lucarelli et al., 2015; Chatzidakis and McEachern, 2013). This literature chapter examines the variety of consumer research that contributes to understandings of space and place. It begins with a brief outline of the conceptual distinctions between space and place and continues by examining how these concepts are discussed within consumer research. This discussion is categorised by the main theoretical frameworks used within each study, including; sites of exchange and sociality, locations of spectacle and play, consumptionscapes that spark the imagination, settings of liminality and sacredness, locales of resistance, and environments of identity and gender. This chapter closes with concluding comments that position abandoned buildings as alternative consumptionscapes.

2.2 Space, Place and Time

Conceptualisations of space and place remain contested for their overlapping meanings and ambiguous forms. The following sections outline a brief summary of the origins and contemporary developments in conceptualising space and place.

2.2.1 Place

The distinctions between space and place can be traced etymologically. Our understanding of place stems from the word ‘topos’ meaning known, bounded and inhabited (Malpas, 2012; Grosz, 1995). As such, place is often considered to delineate particularity and limited locality (Escobar, 2001). Whilst conceptualisations of place remain contested (Cloke and Johnston, 2005), it is broadly conceived as a particular, lived space (Agnew, 2005) that people make meaningful from undifferentiated space through interactions, practices and dwelling. Sherry (1998) suggests place is a consumed space where human activity transforms space into place. As such, place is often considered as a form of space (Sherry, 2000). Adhering to this particularistic view of place, Visconti et al. (2010) suggest places are sites of meaningful experience, dwelling, social interaction, memory, identity and belonging. Similarly, Chatzidakis, Maclaren and Bradshaw (2012) argue “as space becomes place, it produces webs of meanings and connections between people, thereby bringing a sense of community and identity which in turn paves the way for collective action” (p.498). This aligns with Tuan’s (1977)

suggestion that “[w]hat begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value” (p.6). In following Sherry (1998), this thesis understands place as a consumed space where meanings and human action converge in the creation of place.

Cresswell (2004) identifies three waves of thought on conceptualising place: ideographic, social construction and phenomenological. First, ideographically places are understood as unique entities that are distinguished by particularity and distinct features. Second, places are considered as social constructions, outcomes of culture and exist because of human capacity to create and consume meanings. Places are distinguished from each other through culturally constructed and subjectively given meanings (Gregory et al., 2009). Third, phenomenological approaches postulate that place grounds lived experience where place proceeds people and all knowledge stems from our emplacement in the world (Tuan, 1977). From this final perspective, places are understood as a way of being-in-the-world that shapes our experiences because human action is always emplaced (Casey, 1996). Tuan’s (1974) notion of topophilia, as “the affective bond between people and place” (p.4), highlights the interdependence of nature and culture, and the unity between people and place. Similarly, Heidegger (1978) introduces the notion of *Desien* where dwelling is a matter of place that unites natural and human worlds. Phenomenological accounts of place have often been critiqued for being overly essentialist and exclusionary (Cresswell, 2004). Indeed places as sites of interactions and social relations can foster exclusion and divisions between people, yet these issues are more prevalent in spatial theorising (see section 2.2.2). In addition to these waves identified by

Cresswell (2004), processual approaches regard place as a constantly becoming human product that involves the reproduction of social and cultural activities (Pred, 1984). This approach is particularly important in conceptualising the spatial and temporal qualities of obsolescent consumptionscapes as it reveals movement in the production of place. This theoretical positioning taken within this thesis is further explored in section 2.2.3.

The materiality of place is also contested within literature (Cresswell, 2004). Agnew (1987) argues that place is a meaningful location that is distinguishable from space based on three features: 'location' where places are defined by fixed points that can move but always maintain wholeness, 'locale' as a material setting for social interactions to take place, and 'sense of place' whereby people have emotional and subjective attachments to places. Based on Agnew's (1987) definition, places are often assumed to have material form, yet Cresswell (2004) argues that materiality does not imply physicality as even imagined places have imagined materiality through their visual representation. In other words, materiality can stretch beyond the boundaries of physicality. Cresswell and Hoskins (2008) argue that place has two elements: materiality whereby a place has tangible form, and a 'less concrete' realm of meaning whereby a place is defined by human action, speech and emotion regarding a particular place. As such, places have varying degrees of materiality and can be simultaneously tangible and intangible.

2.2.2 Space

Etymologically, the notion of space stems from 'kenon' referring to a void and 'chora' meaning formless, receptacle, or container. Space emerges as an abstract concept that accounts for area, length and volume (Crang, 2005). As such, space is often treated as a representational notion where absolute space accounts for fixed spatial points that form political boundaries, terrains and regions represented on maps (Gregory et al., 2009). For example, the landscape is a space that is viewed externally from the outside, whereas place is viewed from the inside (Creswell, 2004). In contrast to the dense meanings attached to place, Creswell (2004) suggests spaces are realms without meaning. Indeed, Visconti et al. (2010) conceive space as desolate, anonymous, liminoid zones and nonplaces.

In distinguishing between space and place, de Certeau (1984) argues place is "an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability" whereas "space is composed of intersections of mobile elements" (p.117). In this sense, place offers fixity, security and belonging, whereas space is more dynamic and captures the movement and flux of contemporary life. For de Certeau (1984) "space is a practiced place" (p.117) that prioritises social activity and mobility as important features that distinguish space from place.

Space is more than social practice. In their review of spatial theorising in consumer research Saatcioglu and Corus (2016) suggest critical and Marxian perspectives conceive space as "a site of diverse meanings, conflicts and inequality" (p.234).

Saatcioglu and Corus (2016) draw particular attention to Harvey's (2006) territorial injustice where powerful institutions proliferate spatial inequality for inhabitants of space, Lefebvre's (1991) production of space that focuses on the interrelations of power and space, and Soja's (1996) spatial typology. Soja (1996) introduces three notions of space; firstspace refers to physical and material elements of space in the built environment, secondspace refers to an imagined space that exists in symbolic representations of how institutions determine the uses and features of space (such as urban plans and gentrification projects), and thirdspace refers to the lived space of inhabitants and how they use and control the space. Saatcioglu and Corus (2016) highlight the conflict between use values and exchange values within thirdspace and suggest it is a space where "social space finds meanings and becomes a concrete reality around which multiple ideological conflicts arise" (p.236). This focus on sociality in space has relevance to understanding obsolescent spaces where social action has departed, yet conflicts over its use or disuse persist. Further, in relation to research questions two and three, this view of space highlights the importance of understanding how obsolescent spaces are used and exchanged in the development of meanings and value production.

Space emerges as a site of social practices that occur at higher macro levels of society, relating to issues of power struggle, agency and structure. Agnew (2005) claims space represents fields of practice at a top-down level where actors exert control over others, whereas place represents the encounters people have with other people and things at a bottom-up level. In other words, discussions of place are often related to daily practice at a local level, with space referring to larger macro

structures in society. In particular Saatcioglu and Corus (2016) point to issues surrounding how spaces should be used in society and highlight the institutional domains of urban planning, community development and policy makers as key players in shaping societal space. This has particular resonance to this study that considers how consumers engage with the obsolescence of abandoned buildings. Whilst an abandoned building can be understood as a place of particular meanings, histories, memories and a site of past belonging, it can also be understood as a space of economic and social failure that has led to its demise. As such, consumptionscapes can be places and spaces simultaneously. For example, following de Certeau's (1984) distinction between space and place, a shopping mall is a place of consumption filled with brand meanings, consumer meaning-making and exchanges of sociality and commerce, yet it can equally be a space of resistance as consumers boycott brands or oppose retail homogenisation of their local community. As such, space and place overlap within consumption.

The term 'spatialities' is used within this thesis to delineate the theoretics of space and place, rather than narrowly accounting for the notion of space. This thesis considers space as a dynamic zone of social practices that can be representative of abstract dimensions, boundaries or regions, and can be used to explain macro structures that shape geographical dimensions. Rather than understanding spaces as realms without meaning (Cresswell, 2004), spaces are characterised by sociality, movement and activity where meanings are present but are more fluid, transient and in flux. In contrast, places are understood as consumed spaces that are imbued with particular meanings, attachment and belonging that shapes individuals life

experience. Further, this thesis acknowledges the overlap between space and place within consumption, which has often been neglected within consumer research literature (exceptions include Visconti et al., 2010). Extending beyond spatialities, the following section examines the temporalities of space and place.

2.2.3 Temporality of Space and Place

Conceptualisations of space and place have become indivisibly linked to notions of time (Agnew, 2005). Space and place can be distinguished by their distinct temporalities. Agnew (2005) suggests space is associated with the present and future progression, whereas place is associated with the past, nostalgia and regression. Similarly, Tuan (1974) suggests space is characterised by action and movement, whereas place is about stopping, resting and pausing. Whilst temporality can be used to differentiate between characteristics of space and place, time remains a distinct notion in its own right. Crang (2005) argues time is understood as an unfolding process and creative movement of becoming, whereas space is an enduring entity, dimension and essence associated with being. Space preserves, whereas time devours as it always moves forward consuming the future (Crang, 2005). Time is understood as a movement that has the capacity of perdurance and decay (Malpas, 2012).

Moving thought beyond conceptual distinctions, relational approaches highlight the convergences between space, place and time. The geographical work of Allan Pred,

Doreen Massey and Edward Casey have shaped relational understandings of space and place in their own distinct ways. Time-geography, developed by Hägerstrand and later advanced by Pred and Thrift, conceives that space and time are co-produced in ongoing flows and forms of practices, performances and interactions between people, places and objects (Gregory et al., 2009). Space is understood as an active and moving dynamic, rather than a pre-existent void. Shifting focus from space to place, Pred (1984) conceptualises place as a process of ongoing interactions among different entities and a constantly becoming human product that “takes place ceaselessly” in the everyday (p.79). For Pred (1984), place is a process whereby the reproduction of biographies, socio-cultural forms, and the transformation of nature become intertwined and become one another. From this perspective, place becomes an open-ended process (Kalandides, 2011) where “[p]laces are constructed by people doing things, and in this sense are never ‘finished’ but are constantly being performed” (Cresswell, 2004: p.37). Similarly, Warnaby and Medway (2013) relate this to narratives and suggest places are texts that are constantly rewritten by human actions. In this sense, places are processual.

Doreen Massey’s work advances theorisations of the temporality of space and place. For Massey (2000), space is alive, relational and intimately connected to time. Rather than offering a strict definition of space, Massey (2000) highlights the social and political consequences of how we understand spatial rhetoric (Malpas, 2012). Massey (1994) uses this relational approach to challenge the conceptualisation of places as boundary defined, static and complete things. In her seminal essay ‘A global sense of place’ Massey (1994) advocates a progressive understanding of place

that argues places are not defined by boundaries as they do not have clear divisions between them, rather places are processes and flows of social interactions that have multiple and conflicting identities, instead of singular or unique meanings. However, this processual view of place does not undermine the importance of 'unique' place, rather Massey (1994) suggests places become unique because they are continually reproduced. As such, places are deeply relational and temporal as "moments in networks of social relations and understandings" (Massey, 1994: p.154). Inspired by Massey, Malpas (2012) suggests "[p]lace is always bounded, yet it is also always open and dynamic" (p.236) that acknowledges the particularity of place as an entity in its own right that is equally open and changeable. Massey's work collapses distinctions between space and place (Malpas, 2012) where both concepts are treated as relational and processual forms.

Finally, Casey's phenomenological perspective highlights the temporality of place. Casey (1996) argues that 'places gather' as they are composed of a multiplicity of experiences, histories, animate beings and inanimate things. For Casey (1996), places are eventmental as they have a capacity to co-locate space and time. In other words, space and time are dimensions of place as they are experienced and expressed "in place and by the event of place" (Casey, 1996: p.38). This reveals the temporality of place. Unlike Massey who collapses the conceptual boundaries between space and place, Casey (1996) argues space is empty and place is full and, similarly, Ingold (2011) claims space is "a vacuum to the plenum of culture" (p.54). Ingold (2013a) argues against the notion of space and insists lived experience is

inhabited in place, and therefore cannot be understood as an abstract emptiness that characterises space.

Like Casey, Ingold (2011) argues places are events, experiences or encounters, rather than defined by locations. “[P]laces do not have locations but histories. Bound together by the itineraries of their inhabitants, places exist not in space but as nodes in a matrix of movement” (Ingold, 2011: p.219). Drawing upon Deleuze and Guattari’s (2004) notion of the rhizome, where the world is considered to be in constant flux and movement, continually enfolding in its growth and relations with all other things, Ingold (2011) emphasises the temporality and movement of place, suggesting that places are found in the “narratives of past movement” (p.237) that unfold in the passage of time. “Endlessly generated through the coming and going of their inhabitants, they figure not as location in space but as specific vortices in a current of movement, of innumerable journeys actually made” (Ingold, 2011: p.238). In this sense, places are events of generation and movement.

The temporality of place is further evident in Bradford and Sherry’s (2015) conception of place as an event where “practices are infused with the spirit of the place, which binds them in turn to locales” (p.146). This enriches our understanding of place as an event of convergence rather than a static meaningful location. The temporality of places and spaces resonates with the tripartite perspective that guides this thesis. Within this thesis, places are considered as events that ‘relationally gather’ together multiple meanings, experiences, animate and inanimate things. Whilst this thesis draws upon Ingold’s work, it departs from Ingold’s (2013a) denial

of space. This thesis considers space as equally temporal and dynamic zones of social practices that produce and reproduce power relations. Spaces and places have diverse materiality as they can exist in physical form or be imagined and symbolic of representational structures. Crucially, spaces and places occur simultaneously within consumption and are inherently shaped by temporality.

2.3 Consuming Space and Place

Consumer research has examined place meanings, spatial practices and experiential encounters within a range of commercial environments, tourist sites, the great outdoors, the home and virtual places as sites of consumption. Less research has focused upon public place and urban environments (see exceptions Chatzidakis, Maclaren and Bradshaw, 2012; McEachern, Warnaby and Cheetham, 2012; Visconti et al., 2010). These environments are often over-looked as the background to other consumption activities, despite their importance and ubiquity in consumers' daily lives. The following sections examine consumer research studies that contribute to understandings of space and place. This discussion is categorised by the dominant theoretical framework used within the studies, but other groupings are equally valid.

2.3.1 Spaces and Places of Exchange and Sociality

Consumer research documents a wealth of consumption environments as sites of economic and social exchange including traditional marketplaces (Belk, Sherry and Wallendorf, 1988), farmers markets (McEachern et al., 2010), craft markets (Fillis, 2014), shopping malls (Maclaran and Brown, 2005) and art festivals (Kozinets, 2002a). These environments are often referred to as servicescapes that are man-made environments created for commercial exchanges (Bitner, 1991). Arnould, Price and Tierney (1998) define servicescapes as consciously designed sites for commercial exchanges that create meanings and values for consumers, and have specific social rules, conventions and expectations that determine consumer experiences and interactions. Indeed, Belk, Sherry and Wallendorf (1988) highlight issues of social rules, boundary-crossing behaviours, competition, and desacralisation that shape the commercial exchange as a space of social practice.

Marketplaces can have multiple meanings. Sherry (1990) suggests flea markets are polylogues with multiple meanings and voices that are characterised by atmospheres of liminality, ambivalence and opportunity, where consumers partake in searching, dickering and socialising behaviours that foster playfulness, consumer competence and mastery. Sherry (1990) suggests consumers experience 'being-in-market' as a liberating and engaging force that is perceived as exciting, dangerous and potentially threatening. In this sense, the market emerges as a space of liminality where disorder and anti-structure (Turner, 1974) liberates consumers from normative constraints of the traditional marketplace.

Retailers often try to emulate traditional marketplace atmospheres by creating designed experiences (McGrath, Sherry and Heisley, 1993). Drawing upon Relph's (1976) notion of placelessness whereby places are homogenous, devoid of sociality, meanings and emotional attachment, Holloway and Kneafsey (2000) argue these designed places contribute to the placelessness of the contemporary marketplace. This dominant perspective suggests contemporary commercial environments are too large, homogenous and impersonal to create social interaction (Sherry, 1998) and represent desolate nonplaces where people do not interact and are invisible to each other (Aubert-Gamet and Cova, 1999). However, consumer research demonstrates that commercial environments can foster social connection and belonging (Shield, 1992). These environments emerge as new community spaces for non-commercial relationships (Johnstone, 2012) that enable ephemeral and interactive sociality between consumers (Jafari, Taheri and vom Lehn, 2013). Consumers can also foster emotional attachments to servicescapes that transforms space into place when social constraints are suspended that allow consumers to 'go behind the scenes' and interact with the functionality of the service setting (Debenedetti, Oppewal and Arsel, 2014). Whilst not all servicescapes transition from space to place, the social space of commercial environments acts as a linking value (Cova, 1997) that is often more important than the products, services or store aesthetics.

Consumer research also demonstrates that commercial environments can be sites of authenticity. Kozinets (2002a) argues the space and temporality of the Burning Man art festival market creates distance from commercial forces and allows consumers to

encounter a more authentic exchange experience. In farmers markets McEachern et al. (2010) identify the 'conscious consumer' who integrates ethical values into their buying behaviour, and argue the space offers consumers a more authentic shopping experience that highlights the tangible link between consumption, production and their local community. In both cases, consumers seek a more authentic, simplistic and community driven market exchange. In short, servicescapes emerge as spaces characterised by social practices, exchange and social connection that have the potential to transform into places of emotional attachment and authenticity.

2.3.2 Spaces and Places of Spectacle and Play

A wealth of consumer research has focused upon spectacular commercial environments, such as theme parks (Firat and Ulusoy, 2011; Houston and Meamber, 2011) and brand stores (Diamond et al. 2009, Kozinets et al. 2004, Kozinets et al., 2002; Peñaloza, 1998; Sherry, 1998). Brandscapes are a particular form of servicescape that experientialise the brand (Moor, 2003) and physically communicates its values in geographical space (Sherry, 1998). Environmental symbolism and aesthetics are important to creating and communicating experience. In conceptualising a typology of servicescapes Sherry (1998) argues consumers read themed environments for associations and meanings. In extension to Sherry (1998), Kozinets et al. (2002) argue brandscapes communicate overlapping narratives and conceptualise a pyramid of three dimensions; retail orientation focusing on short-term sales over brand-building, cultural orientation focusing on the level of

spectacle, and brand orientation that communicates the multidimensionality of brand personality and imagery within the environment. Similarly, Joy and Sherry (2003) suggest the museum space is read through metaphor and metonymy of exhibits that permits consumers to imaginatively travel to another time and space. For Joy and Sherry (2003) experiential consumption is encountered through embodied experience where cognition and the senses operate together to inform encounters. They theorise embodied experience as occurring at two levels: the phenomenological level where consumers are conscious of their emotions and actions, and at the cognitive unconscious level where consumers experience through unconscious mechanisms that inform abstract cognition and reasoning. This reflects a phenomenological understanding of emplacement where place is known through the body (Casey, 1996), yet Joy and Sherry (2003) fail to elaborate on a spatial dimension of embodied experience. This theoretical gap resonates with experiences of urban exploration that physically challenge the mind and body to navigate the dangerous environments of abandoned buildings. In relation to research question one, this thesis seeks to explore how consumers engage with the spatiality of obsolescent consumptionscapes.

For consumers to read a commercial environment it must be coherently staged. Arnould, Price and Tierney (1998) conceptualise the notions of substantive staging where service providers display meanings through physical environments, and communicative staging where service providers and customers assume roles in creating narrative framing of the service encounter. In an analysis of luxury brand stores, Van Marrewijk and Broos (2012) highlight the importance of substantive and

communicative staging where the retail space, objects and store aesthetics “become the stage on which shop attendants perform” (p.374). This evokes Deighton’s (1992) notion of show performance, where the performance of services becomes inextricably linked to important cultural narrative themes and scripts. In this sense, service providers and consumers engage in performativity (Butler, 1990) through speech acts, body language and gestures that socially construct the reality of the servicescape.

In separate ethnographies of Nike Town Chicago Peñaloza (1998) and Sherry (1998) suggest consumers interact with spectacular environments in a co-creation of performances. According to Peñaloza (1998) spectacles are constructed as performances with tensions between normality and abnormality that creates a buying/not buying dyad, which enhances the spectacle. Further, Peñaloza (1998) suggests consumers’ interactions and movements within the spectacular space create cultural meanings through two processes: participative interspatialities whereby consumers’ movement and sensory responses to the spatial environment creates meanings, and communicative intertextualities where displays of images, celebrity memorabilia and products create meaning. Here, Nike Town is simultaneously a place filled with brand meanings and a space for sensory and communicative engagement. Extending the understanding of consumer performances, Peñaloza (2000) introduces the notion of joint cultural production whereby consumers actively engage, manipulate and become agents of (re)invention within consumption experiences.

Spectacular environments are also sites of consumer play. Kozinets et al. (2004) argue the spectacular environment of Chicago's ESPN Zone is a site of ludic play where consumers can actively engage, perform and become liberated as they "use their freedom to work within the rules of play, to break other rules, and to create new rules as they become, in effect, props for other consumers engaged in their own construction projects" (p.668). Advancing Holt's (1995) notion of consuming as play as a type of autotelic inter-consumer interaction, Kozinets et al. (2004) suggest consumers enjoy spectating and becoming a spectacle for other consumers to watch, creating a form of screen-play where consumers occupy a mediated position between interacting and performing. Kozinets et al. (2004) term this position interagency whereby the consumer negotiates between being powerful and manipulated, passive and active, subject and object. This position creates liminoid real estate, where daily life can be escaped through the liminal retail space, and an obverse panopticon, where consumers want to observe and be socially visible as a libidinous form of surveillance that enables participation in the spectacle (Kozinets et al., 2004). Visibility is desired in the obverse panopticon (Kozinets et al., 2004). In contrast, urban exploration thrives on invisibility that enables explorers to successfully avoid capture by surveillance services. As such, in urban exploration surveillance constrains the consumption of space.

Through the context of tailgating, Bradford and Sherry (2015) conceptualise 'vestaval' as a secular ritual and sanctuary that stimulates social and civic engagement. Using a semiotic square, Bradford and Sherry (2015) distinguish vestaval from three other forms of celebratory events examined within consumer

research. First, spectacles are characterised by rituals of subversion where consumers are passive participants and spectators shaped by dominant totalising powers. Second, festivals are rituals of obversion that enable escape from mundane life through participatory ludic play and communal celebration. Third, carnivals are a ritual of inversion where the status quo and social conventions are disrupted. This occurs within larger institutional frameworks and act to threaten dominant powers through encouraging alternative ways of being, doing and critical reflection (Bradford and Sherry, 2015). Finally, Bradford and Sherry (2015) introduce the concept of vestaval as a ritual act of eversion that domesticates public space and publicises private personal place, which enables the temporary suspension and remaking of market and community organisation.

Vestavals are created by journeying to the site and setting up encampments, which alters the physical space and imbues it with domestic meanings, that transforms space into place. Bradford and Sherry (2015) conclude that vestavals are alternative ways of being-in-public that draw upon communal values of *communitas* and kinship that shapes consumership and citizenship. Vestavals are not permanent places as tailgate encampments are temporary events. Bradford and Sherry (2015) fail to address this temporal quality within their conceptualisation of vestavals. In light of the research questions, it is important to develop a more nuanced understanding of how temporalities and spatialities intersect within consumption. This theoretical gap affirms the tripartite perspective used within this thesis.

2.3.3 Spaces and Places of Nostalgia and Imagination

In an extension to servicescapes, Brown and Sherry (2003) introduce the concept of retroscapes to describe commercial environments that evoke a different time, space and nostalgia, such as heritage retail parks (O'Guinn and Belk, 1989), theme parks (Firat and Ulusoy, 2011; Houston and Meamber, 2011), themed pubs (Brown and Patterson, 2000) and tourist sites (Chronis, Arnould and Hampton, 2012).

Nostalgia, as a longing for the past, is understood as a broader sociological phenomenon rather than a psychological characteristic or disorder (Davis, 1979), as previously thought. Belk (1990) suggests nostalgia is an emotional memory process and a bittersweet reflection of the past that sacralises past times and acts as an authentic and/or imaginary regression into the past. Consumer research suggests nostalgia guides consumption preferences, is an important experiential factor in consuming history (Goulding, 2001) that does not rely on lived experience but is evoked through popular culture (Holbrook, 1993). Through an experiential examination of living museums, Goulding (2001) conceptualises nostalgia as a complex emotion and coping mechanism that allows for societal escape but also causes feelings of alienation and frustration. Goulding (2001) identifies two consumer groups that visit heritage museums: existential consumers and aesthetic consumers. Firstly, existential consumers experience first-order nostalgia (Davis, 1979) where they accept the past was better than the present day. This is driven by alienation from the present, search for meaning, escapism and authenticity, whereby visiting these sites gives them temporary control by retreating to the past. Secondly,

aesthetic consumers are nostalgic for a time beyond their lived experience, find cultural value in history, architecture and art, and experience imaginative nostalgic escapism where they fantasise about an idealised and romanticised past. These consumers experience vicarious nostalgia where they experience feelings of emotional loss and contemporary emptiness caused by the loss of aesthetics, artists and craftsmanship within contemporary society. Goulding (2001) argues contemporary society endures a nostalgia epidemic that is fostered by sentimentalism and romanticism of the past within popular media, which enables consumers to temporarily replenish their sense of self, empowerment and belonging. This has particular resonance to understanding obsolescent consumptionscapes that may represent a recent or more distant past. Goulding (2001) does not examine the spatial qualities of the museum space, focusing rather on its constructions of history. In relation to research question two, it is important to examine the meanings consumers ascribe to abandoned buildings as places of the past and to understand how these meanings differ in places that are not constructed by the marketplace.

In contrast to museum visitors' dislike for contrived environments (Goulding, 2001), Firat and Ulusoy (2011) find consumers do not distinguish between reality and thematization, but rather consider themed environments as sites of authenticity and preferential to the real world. Similarly, in a study of EPCOT, Houston and Meamber (2011) claim visitors believed the sanitised version to be an adequate cultural proxy or real representation of historic life. Houston and Meamber (2011) consider this preference for the imitational and idealised as a form of postmodern authenticity where the Disneyfication of society has resulted in the disappearance of

a truly authentic past. These retrosapes enable consumer imagination as they transport consumers to another space and time through environmental staging. Firat and Ulusoy (2009) define thematicization as “the patterning of space, activity, or event to symbolize experiences and/or sense from a special or a specific past, present or future place, activity or event as currently imagined” (p. 195). This highlights the intersection of space and time within commercial consumptionscapes.

Advancing Arnould, Price and Tierney’s (1998) notions of staging, Chronis, Arnould and Hampton (2012) introduce the concept of narrative staging as the doing of stories, and the textual reconstruction and commercial presentation of a story. This enables consumers to experience a different time and space as they place themselves within the storyscapes, as consumption spaces where narratives are the primary consumption focus. Narrative staging can be present in both substantive and communicative terms where the environment and organisational actors are imbued with narrative meanings. Chronis, Arnould and Hampton (2012) suggest storyscapes can change through refiguration where shared narratives shift and circulate because of multiple authorship, which can occur in communal consumption. Firstly, imagination is mediated and constructed intertextually as consumers bring prior knowledge to the experience. Secondly, consumer understandings are grounded in their everyday life experience where they recontextualise the past in terms of their understanding of the present. Thirdly, this results in reverse valuation where the majority of meanings are rooted in terms of present events. In the case of Gettysburg, narrative staging allows consumers to experience and imagine a collective past. These processes illustrate how consumers engage with a past

through their imagination and emplacement in the environment that is guided by the narrative staging of service encounters. However, literature fails to examine how consumers engage with the past that is devoid of staging and is not constructed by service providers. This is addressed within this thesis by considering how consumers engage with obsolescent consumptionscapes that exist out of marketplace circulation.

Imagination is often understood as a cognitive phenomena using psychological theory (Childers and Houston, 1983) and is viewed as the capacity to visualise (Sarbin, 1998) or to see in the mind's eye (Brann, 1991). To Sherry (1990) imagination is an essential part of consumption activity. This is further evidenced in retail environments where consumers use their imaginations to create meanings whilst engaging within fantasy environments (Kozinets et al., 2004; Peñaloza, 2000). Kozinets et al. (2002) draw attention to the ludic gaze in which consumers become “entranced zombies” (p.35) “experiencing a rich inner world” (p.31) as they focus their attention to visual images within the retail environment.

Enacting the imaginary requires an intentional act of consciousness (Iser, 1993) and a shift in attentional focus (Thomas, 1999). Using the context of trading card games, Martin (2004) argues that consumers' ability to evoke the imaginary is reliant on their predisposition to actively participate in imaginative play and have an orientation towards fantasy beliefs. Further, Martin (2004) finds consumers focus upon the visual elements in the real world that would stimulate their fantasy imaginary. This supports Iser's (1993) assertion that during the imaginary an individual holds the real and unreal together that negates the real, rather than its

complete cancellation. Martin (2004) considers this as a boundary crossing (Belk, 1997) whereby individuals visualise the unreal and step beyond reality.

Martin (2004) conceptualises the various thematising strategies that consumers use to evoke the fantastic imaginary. Firstly, consumers use a technique of literal embodiment where the imaginary is given form in the imagination. Secondly, consumers use embellishing strategies, including; extrapolation where incomplete aspects are filled in by “extending the visual depiction” (p.144), ornamentation where the imaginary is adorned with minor details, historicisation where the imaginary is given a historical context or background, and character interaction where consumers visualise the interactions of the imaginary characters. Thirdly, consumers use expansion strategies to counter perceived limitations of the visual stimulus. Finally, consumers use a replacement strategy to counter unfavourable situations by visualising an alternative scenario. This advances understandings of the different types of consumer imagination that is enabled by consumption, and opens avenues to extend this work into the spatial domain to consider how consumers use space and place to imagine the past. In contrast to servicescapes that foster social connections and brandscapes that enable consumer meaning-making, retroscapes enable consumers to experience and imagine different spaces and times through thematicization and narrative staging.

2.3.4 Spaces and Places of Sacredness and Liminality

Consumption studies often draw comparisons between the sacred and the secular (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989) and take inspiration from anthropological work on *communitas*, pilgrimage and liminality (van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1969). In their seminal work Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry (1989) examine the sacralisation of the secular domain and the secularisation of the sacred domain, and argue that in contemporary society consumption can enable sacred experiences to occur. They identify six domains of the sacred, including; places, times, tangible things, intangible things, persons and beings, and experiences. Please refer to Chapter Three (section 3.2.1) for an in-depth discussion of the conceptualisation of the sacred developed by Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry (1989). Within consumer research the environment is an important element in the creation of sacred experiences where qualities of sacredness are present within nature (Canniford and Shanker, 2013; Belk and Costa, 1998; Arnould and Price, 1993), retail spaces (Kozinets et al., 2004; O'Guinn and Belk, 1989), nightclubs (Goulding et al., 2009) and the home (Hirschman, Ruvio and Belk, 2012).

Van Gennep (1960) conceives liminality as a process where an individual or group separates from their current role or status, moves through an in-between, transitional or liminal phase, and then integrates into an alternative role or status. In extension to this, Turner (1969) claims that during the liminal phase individuals experience anti-structure whereby normality is disrupted and *communitas*, anonymity and equality may form. Turner (1969) conceptualises a dichotomy between structure, as the

organisation of society, social order, roles and statuses, and anti-structure, as non-mundane life characterised by liminality, sacredness and *communitas*. Turner (1969) defines liminals as “entities that are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arranged by law, customs, convention, and ceremonial” (p.95). For Turner (1969), liminals challenge societal structures and allow individuals to transcend conventions through *communitas* as an experience where normal roles are shed and new communal roles are acquired. This understanding of liminality has been applied to derelict places (Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2014) and ruins (Fraser, 2012) that are considered to exist in a limbo state of disposal (Edensor, 2005b). Whilst literature explores the liminality of the building itself, the consumer perspective has not been considered. This thesis addresses this theoretical gap by examining consumers’ encounters with abandoned buildings as obsolescent consumptionscapes.

Existent consumer research focuses upon how liminality is created by the marketplace. In an examination of the simultaneous secularisation of religion and sacralisation of the secular in a heritage shopping mall, O’Guinn and Belk (1989) conceive the consumer shopping experience as a pilgrimage that is marked by pre-liminal journeys to the mall, liminal rites of transition as they cross the threshold of its entrance, and post-liminal rites where they purchase items. By demonstrating the sacralisation of the secular, O’Guinn and Belk (1989) highlight the spatial and temporal qualities of sacredness by suggesting sacred places are territorialised with boundary markers in retail space, and sacred times can be evoked within retail environments through aesthetics.

Consumer research also draws links between nature environments and the sacred. Canniford and Shankar (2013) argue nature has become associated with an overarching romanticised ideology comprised of three discourses: primitivism that reunites people with nature that frees them from social constraints and environmental degradation of modern living; the sublime as an uncontrollable and immense power that is simultaneously revered and desired; and sacredness whereby wilderness is understood as a divine entity (Arnould and Price, 1993) or quasi-religious that prompts nature worship (Belk and Costa, 1998). Canniford and Shankar (2013) relate this to consumption magic where consumers feel ‘at one’ with their environment occurring when the barriers between mind, body and environment collapse. This relates to experiences of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), embodied experience (Joy and Sherry, 2003) or the emplacement of human experience (Casey, 1996).

Arnould and Price (1993) conceive commercial river rafting trips as sacred, magical and extraordinary experiences that lead consumers to experience personal growth and self re-newel, *communitas*, harmony and connections with nature. Arnould and Price (1993) identify extraordinary experiences as encounters that offer a new sense of perception which are triggered by unusual events, high levels of emotional intensity and spontaneity. In the case of river rafting, consumer *communitas* is created through the dynamics of consumers, nature, and service providers where *communitas* emerges from an overarching feeling of linkage, belonging and devotion to a transcendent goal and fear of the river that creates a temporary sense of closeness (Arnould and Price, 1993). The role of the service provider is a boundary

opening experience which is more than a mere transaction as river guides are central in creating these culturally embedded rituals and fostering bonds with and between consumers.

In their examination of the mountain myth men rendezvous, Belk and Costa (1998) conceive the wilderness of the Rocky Mountains as a fantasy environment that encourages play, relaxation and an escape to a mythic past. This alternative reality or subworld is cultivated from the place, authentic objects, historical accounts, folklore stories, mass mediated representations of the mountain men, and ritual practices performed by consumers. This creates a semi-mythical past that allows carnivalesque play, transformation and rites of intensification to take place. Drawing upon Turner (1969), Belk and Costa (1998) theorise the rendezvous as a liminoid experience that is spatially and temporally separate from ordinary life where the rules and technologies of contemporary life are avoided, allowing a mythical experience or fantasy enclave to emerge as a time-out-of-time that counters cultural disillusionment. Myth acts as a cultural resource in the creation of a liminal experience and a “collective unreality” (Belk and Costa, 1998: p.233). Despite this escape, consumers cannot fully depart from the consumption ideology as they rely upon market and commercial entities to deliver romantic and sacred experiences of nature, such as providing clothing and equipment (Belk and Costa, 1998) and facilitating the service experience (Arnould and Price, 1993). The reliance on the market is most pronounced in Tumbat and Belk’s (2011) investigation of Mount Everest climbers where consumers use the market to fulfil personal competitive goals and gain symbolic capital. In critique of the overtly romanticised and

communal treatment of Turner's (1967) notion of anti-structure, Tumbat and Belk (2011) argue that extraordinary experiences within the marketplace have the potential to be highly individualistic, competitive, conflicting and driven by positional struggles of hierarchy. Through the context of Everest climbers, Tumbat and Belk (2011) demonstrate that the ideology of performance creates numerous tensions that inverts the structure/anti-structure dichotomy where consumers limit social interactions, create boundaries, develop individual goals that fosters competition and valorise individual responsibility. Tumbat and Belk (2011) conclude that liminality within the marketplace emerges as a contested site for identity competition. In this sense, liminality is a spatial practice of competition, rather than a quality or feature of the environment. Drawing attention to the active role of the consumer in the co-construction of a marketplace experience, Tumbat and Belk (2013) introduce the concept of performancescapes where consumers are equal agents to service-providers in the co-construction of experiences. Further, they suggest performances inherently involve elements of risk, success and failure and demonstrate the importance of consumer competence in delivering successful experiences.

The interdependent relationship between nature and culture is further demonstrated in Canniford and Shankar's (2013) ethnography of surfing culture where they conceptualise consumers' experiences of nature as hybrid consumption assemblages comprised of cultural scripts, material geographies and technological resources. Canniford and Shankar (2013) draw attention to the materiality of nature as a powerful, unpredictable, temporal yet fragile force that requires consumers to create

a working consumption assemblage and use varying skills, expertise and a stronger connection to nature. Canniford and Shankar's (2013) approach supports the tripartite perspective adopted within this thesis. Whilst they recognise the importance of geographical space, temporality and materiality as features of the surfing context, they fail to conceptualise how temporality shapes the consumption experience. Canniford and Shankar (2013) argue that counterassemblages form when conflicts arise between nature and culture within the assemblage. These counterassemblages require consumers to develop purifying practices to mask, purge and redress contradictions and sustain boundaries between nature and culture that keeps nature as a pure zone.

In contrast to Canniford and Shankar's (2013) purifying practices, St. James, Handelman and Taylor (2011) introduce the notion of magical thinking as a cultural practice of meaning negotiation that allows consumers to invoke extraordinary connections to mystical forces of nature (such as karma) to understand, predict and influence negative circumstances and to create a space of uncertainty and ambiguity that transforms impossibilities into possibilities that restores hope. This allows consumers to enact chimerical agency whereby they creatively blur fantasy and reality to cope with cultural expectations of control, and in turn allows them greater control by constructing a realm of possibility. Both accounts highlight the interactions of nature and culture and demonstrate how the market is instrumental in the delivering of sacred experiences to consumers.

In addition to experiences of liminality, places can become liminal zones. In particular, the home emerges as a site of liminality. McCracken (1986) argues the attic can desacralise personal possessions in preparation for disposal as the space is perceived as a distant, less internal and less personal area of the home that allows the transformation from possession to discarded object to occur. In their ethnography of the garage, Hirschman, Ruvio and Belk (2012) identify four outcomes of liminality in the garage. Firstly, the garage acts as a holding area for mixed state objects that are in limbo between use and disuse, neither dead nor alive, which renders the garage space as equally liminal. Secondly, the liminal space enables future hope where consumers hope that future generations will make use of sentimental family objects in the creation of an intergenerational legacy and transfer for symbolic meanings. Thirdly, the garage maintains tangibility of past selves where it acts as a shrine or place makers that preserves past selves and enables consumers to revisit their personal history. Finally, liminal spaces hedge against the future where the garage acts as a waiting room of potentiality where objects remain for reuse or transference from limbo into use. This illuminates the overlap between space and place, where the garage is a place within the home, and a space of liminality that enables separations of meanings to occur.

For Hirschman, Ruvio and Belk (2012) the garage also acts as a hospice for items that have to be disposed, as the item moves from being a living possession to a dead object. This relates to McCracken's (1988) cooling off phase as a necessary stage before the emotional attachment to the belonging fades. These limbo spaces act as spatial artefacts or time capsules of past events, memories, past meanings, former life

roles and ghosts of the past, such as deceased relatives and empty nest families (Hirschman, Ruvio and Belk, 2012). They also signify loss and preservation where people hold onto the memory and tangibility of loved ones and historical selves. This adds to understandings of the home as a multi-dimensional phenomenon (Mallett, 2004) where the home relates to different times, past selves and absent people. Similarly, Gregson and Crewe (2003) argue the storage process is part of imagined history making where items become imbued with family history and nostalgia. Further, Miller (2008) suggests home-making is a process that uses multiple practices to produce and (re)produce a homely space which draw upon the past events, present essentials and future ideals. Interestingly, Hirschman, Ruvio and Belk (2012) note that in extreme cases the garage can lose its liminal status if it becomes too dirty, chaotic where it takes on a state of wilderness and a space of deviant disorder. Here place is transformed into space. In order for the garage to return to its liminal status, it must be re-ordered, de-cluttered and cleaned. This has particular relevance for understanding the derelict, disorderly and desolate qualities of abandoned buildings and raises the question if obsolescent consumptionscapes are capable of losing their place status as they move towards spatial disorder and deviance.

2.3.5 Spaces and Places of Resistance

A growing stream of consumer research examines how spaces and places enable consumers to resist the dominance of market ideology (Kozinets, 2002a), brands

(Thompson and Arsel, 2004), homogenising retail design (Maclaran and Brown, 2005), public place privatisation (Visconti et al., 2010), and to foster ethical consumerism (Chatzidakis, Maclaran and Bradshaw, 2012).

Through an ethnography of the Burning Man festival Kozinets (2002a) examines consumers' ability to escape the traditional commercial marketplace by engaging in an alternative temporary art market. Kozinets (2002a) suggests the remote location of the festival provides a temporary and emancipatory space where consumers can be creative, develop a sovereign identity and experience a sense of authenticity. Further, consumers express anti-market discourses through market-distancing practices, including using alternative forms of exchange and voicing subversive discourses that criticise traditional marketplace dynamics. These practices position consumption as a form of artistic expression, encouraging communality and alternative forms of exchange that allow consumers to feel distanced from logics of commercial exchange. Despite this, Kozinets (2002a) concludes that it is impossible to completely escape the market as individuals use market sign systems to differentiate themselves from others.

Extending this work on consumer resistance to brandscapes, Thompson and Arsel (2004) examine the influence global brands have on expressions of heterogeneity and glocalisation. They introduce the notion of a hegemonic brandscape as "a cultural system of servicescapes that are linked together and structured by discursive, symbolic, and competitive relationships to a dominant experiential brand" (p.632). Thompson and Arsel (2004) suggest that the dominance of Starbucks stimulates

marketplace demand for coffee shops and structures the coffee shop experience, whilst simultaneously stimulating consumer dislike for financial gain and servicescape standardisation, creating an anti-Starbucks discourse. They identify two consumer types: café flâneurs who seek authentic experiences from local coffee shops for identity expression and public participation, and oppositional localists who seek alternative community spaces and exchange systems in local coffee shops that challenge profit-driven corporate brands and engage in political movements.

Building upon this commercial resistance, Maclaran and Brown (2005) examine the conflicting meanings consumers create and experience in commercially constructed utopian settings of a festival shopping mall. They identify three meanings of the utopian marketplace; sensing displace refers to the discovery of utopia that involves feelings of dislocation, removal and elsewhere, creating playscape where the utopian environment embraces contradictions and paradoxes resulting in ludic play between places and time periods, where uniformity is undesired, and performing artscape which casts the consumer as an artist of the imagination and a co-creator of meanings, that are acted out in the theatre of the shopping environment. Maclaran and Brown (2005) conceptualise utopia as a process where meanings are emplaced and emergent that create a fantasy space in consumers' minds. Utopia was disrupted when Powerscourt was refurbished creating a sense of being anywhere, buying uniformity and betraying culture. Redesigning the place stimulates consumer resistance, whereby consumers actively nostalgise and romanticise the past as a device against the future (Maclaran and Brown, 2005). Like the garage, alterations within the environment transform meaningful place into homogenised space. This

highlights the importance of alternative values in creating a sense of place that deviate from mainstream market aesthetics and raises the question of how alternative values create a sense of place in obsolescent consumptionscapes.

Through the context of club culture, Goulding et al. (2009) examine consumer resistance as a form of illicit pleasure. Goulding et al. (2009) conceptualise pleasure as a complex biosocial phenomenon that stems from physiological/biological reactions within the body, sociality with others, and is shaped by socio-cultural rules and regulations. This experience is captured by the experience of ‘losing it’ where the mind disengages allowing individuals to return to emotionally childlike states (Greenfield, 2000). Goulding et al. (2009) suggest losing it enables consumers to “rediscover empathetic community through shared illicit risk taking, sensory stimulation, and ritualised, highly energetic play” (p.767). This is facilitated by the club environment as a social space of contained illegality where the ungoverned and illegal practices of rave culture are transformed into safer and sanitised zones of club culture that is facilitated by service-providers. The clubbing experience is co-created from ecstasy consumption, club atmosphere, clubbers and service providers, and emerges as a fundamentally shared communal experience based on sensual communication, gaze and touch of others. Goulding et al. (2009) frame consumers as benevolent clubbers who use drugs for escapism and restorative effects. In tracing the sociohistorical roots of the regulation of pleasure in drug taking, Goulding et al. (2009) note the shift from rave culture as a resistance to wider sociocultural issues, ranging from political protest against right-wing regulation, reclaiming public place, to fighting for social justice, towards contemporary ecstasy consumption for hedonic

experiences that enable a separation and calculated suspension of rules and norms of everyday life. The illegal aspect of illicit pleasure (Goulding et al., 2009) has particular resonance to the context of this thesis as urban exploration typically involves trespass. Goulding et al. (2009) highlight the importance of sociality to creating illicit pleasure. However, gaps in our understanding remain over what role sociality plays in illegal consumption and crucially if illicit pleasure emerges in spaces devoid of sociality.

Extending this work on illegality, Visconti et al. (2010) explore how consumers resist homogenous streetscapes through graffiti street art. They conceptualise public place as a form of public good that is characterised by shared ownership by a collective of citizens that transforms desolate urban voids into meaningful places. This shared ownership of space causes the uses, appropriation and meanings of public space to be continuously negotiated and contested amongst different stakeholders who have diverse motives; including private appropriation of public space, resistance to the alienation of public space, street democracy against the commercialisation of streets, and striving for common place to re-create connection, belonging and community. From the artists' perspective, street art is gifted to the public as a way of re-enchanting and reclaiming urban spaces by transforming them into meaningful places. Similarly, McEachern, Warnaby and Cheetham (2012) argue public park users experience tensions towards others' misuse of public space. Drawing upon Lefebvre's (2004) account of rhythm analysis, McEachern, Warnaby and Cheetham (2012) argue shared social spaces are polyrhythmic, consisting of multiple rhythms between space, time and practice. During conflict, spaces can

experience arrhythmias where irregularities in rhythm cause disorder and unrest (Lefebvre, 2004). In the case of the public park, McEachern, Warnaby and Cheetham (2012) found these arrhythmias occurred between park users who disagreed over the use of the space. Both Visconti et al. (2010) and McEachern, Warnaby and Cheetham (2012) highlight the continual conflict and negotiation that occurs regarding use and ownership of public shared space. Public spaces emerge as particularly precarious sites of shared consumption where the boundaries of ownership and consumer agency are often ambiguous and indeterminable. This helps illuminate the conflicting issues of ownership and access of spaces which is relevant to examining abandoned buildings as obsolescent consumptionscapes as often the legality of use, access and ownership to these sites is unclear. Whilst these studies examine shared ownership of public space as a shared good, there remains limited understanding of how a lack of ownership enables and constrains consumption of space.

Advancing understandings of urban resistance, Chatzidakis, Maclaran and Bradshaw (2012) highlight the significance of spatial and political considerations to understand the drivers of ethical and green consumerism that extends beyond identity projects. Chatzidakis, Maclaran and Bradshaw (2012) argue heterotopian space enables consumer social critique and experimentation as a form of utopian praxis and demonstrate how a space cultivates anti-consumerist and anti-capitalist discourses. Building on Hetherington's (1997) three categories of difference that characterise heterotopias, Chatzidakis, Maclaran and Bradshaw (2012) identify three qualities that foster green and ethical behaviours. First, the built environment and material

features mark boundaries of the neighbourhood and separate it from the outside, such as signs, graffiti and shrines. Second, social practices of inclusivity and exclusivity that is tolerant of anti-establishment ethos, solidarity with other radical movements, and community gifting, sharing and co-producing goods for the benefit of the community. Third, events allow the community to experiment with space and transform desolate spaces into places through cultural interventions. Chatzidakis, Maclaran and Bradshaw (2012) suggest that heterotopias of resistance (Kohn, 2003) act as an agent of urban and social transformation that enables consumer resistance to flourish within the marketplace as consumers react against and co-opt meanings for their own purposes.

The use of heterotopias in consumption (Chatzidakis, Maclaran and Bradshaw, 2012) has relevance to this study as ruins and derelict buildings have been conceived as heterotopias (Churchill and Smith, 2016; Foucault, 1986) that lie somewhere between utopia and dystopia. Drawing upon Foucault's (1986) conceptualisation of heterotopias, abandoned buildings have lost their original function they are not easily or legally accessible to the public and they represent a clear break in time, as they remain relatively frozen in appearance. Whilst heterotopia is useful in understanding the 'otherness' of derelict buildings, Saldanha (2008) critiques heterotopia for treating society as a totality by juxtaposing 'difference' against an apparent 'whole'. From Said (1985), 'othering' accounts for when an individual or group is considered to be foreign, or alien from the dominant group. Similarly, Foucauldian accounts of 'othering' suggest certain individuals can become excluded, disadvantaged or oppressed by particular discourses (Wearing and Darcy, 2011). Further, Bhabha

(1983) and Aitchison (1999) draw attention to the power dynamics in ‘othering’ where the ‘other’ is constructed as inferior to the dominant group or discourse by imposing stereotypes and misrepresentative cultural meanings. Within consumption contexts, research has explored othering in tourism (Urry, 1990), affective potentialities of objects (Kuruoğlu and Ger, 2015) and otherness crafted in theme parks (Bettany and Belk, 2011). Heterotopias bring spatiality to conceptualisations of ‘othering’ by juxtaposing difference with normalcy. Within consumer research there remains limited understanding of how consumers use heterotopias to foster meanings and practices beyond resistant behaviours. In relation to the research questions it is valuable to explore the various meanings and practices that emerge from obsolescent consumptionscapes that have heterotopic qualities.

2.3.6 Spaces and Places of Identity and Gender

Places shape and are shaped by consumer identity projects. A wealth of marketing research debates whether place identity is socially constructed (Lalli, 1992), a perception based on objective characteristics (Barke and Harrop, 1994), a representation of a place (Skinner, 2008), or is part of personal identity where the environment defines the self-concept (Johnstone, 2012).

Places are can be sites of consumer identity. In particular, the home is an important site of authenticity that reflects inhabitants’ selves (Marcus, 2006) and is a channel for identity expression through possessions (Moisio and Beruchashvili, 2014; Miller,

2010; Belk, Seo and Li, 2007; Belk, 1988;) and practices of décor (Arsel and Bean, 2013). McCracken (1989) argues people create a sense of homeyness by collecting objects that are dense with symbolism that are relevant to family members. Homeyness allows consumers to create a self-identity by emplacing oneself in the world. In an extension to this, Money (2007) suggests displayed objects act as markers of memory and commemoration that are displayed because of family obligation. The home can also relate to past selves and previous life roles (Bachelard, 1969). Indeed the home is a place of ultimate shelter, safe haven (Tuan, 1977) and security (Scannell and Gifford, 2010) that is central to peoples' lives as the place of most significance (Proshansky, Fabian and Kaminoff, 1983). The importance of the home to personal identity is especially visible in cases of home loss and homelessness where individuals can experience a loss of part of their identity (Gross, 2008). In an ethnography of a women's homeless shelter, Hill (1991) finds thoughts of home allowed homeless individuals to escape their current circumstances through revisiting their past lives and dreaming of their future ideal home as an escape. This illuminates the imagined space (Cresswell, 2004) of home.

Frawley (1990) considers the home as a possession that enables consumers to spatially and socially differentiate themselves from others. Saatcioglu and Ozanne's (2013) ethnography of trailer park communities examines how individuals use moral habitus to differentiate themselves from their neighbours through field specific cultural capital. Their account highlights how the trailer park is a temporary home space for some consumers and a permanent place of home for others. Like Hill (1991), Saatcioglu and Ozanne (2013) find some consumers fantasise about home to

escape their current circumstances. From both cases, the home acts as a place or imagined space of refuge. The home becomes imbued with meanings of social identity, ownership, attachment, memories and aspirations, and emerges as a consumption-centred zone that enables individuals to collect possessions, symbolic meanings and display status. There remains limited understanding of what happens to the home as a meaningful place once it has been abandoned. This thesis addresses this gap by exploring consumers' meaning-making activities in relation to obsolescent consumptionscapes.

The home is also an arrangement of gendered spaces (Spain, 1992) where both male and female roles are defined (Blair and Hyatt, 1997). Historically, the home has been culturally categorised as a feminised domain with the workplace categorised as a masculine space (Coskuner-Balli and Thompson, 2013). Indeed Cappellini, Marilli and Parsons (2014) demonstrate that financial stress and austerity reinforces gender stereotypes in households. Consumers use the home to legitimise their gendered identities (Coskuner-Balli and Thompson, 2013; Moisio, Arnould and Gentry, 2013). Moisio and Beruchashvili (2014) find men use masculine spaces as therapeutic venues to relieve identity pressures associated with work and home life. Focusing on the 'mancave' they find these highly masculinised home spaces revitalise men's domestic masculinity and can help foster paternal and fraternal bonds. As such, the home is a highly gendered space that dually constricts and facilitates consumers' gender roles.

Virtual places are also sites of consumer identity. Consumer research demonstrates that virtual places are sites of community (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001), liquid consumption (Eckhardt and Bardhi, 2015; Bardhi, Eckhardt and Arnould, 2012), consumer taste (Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013; Arsel and Bean, 2012), and zones of identity construction (Belk, 2013; Schau and Gilly, 2003). Thomas, Price and Schau (2013) find virtual communities provide personal fulfilment through identity distinction, a sense of continuity through everyday interactions, and a structure by providing a set of norms and symbolic associations. Belk (2013) suggests consumers co-construct their sense of self with others online through affirmation seeking and reciprocal smiling where the exchange of online materials creates bonds between consumers. This runs counter to interdisciplinary literature that suggests virtual places are sites of perpetual placelessness (Soukup, 2012), multiple “no-where places” and “no-where times” are experienced simultaneously (Caron and Caronia, 2007: p.98). Instead, consumer research demonstrates the wealth of meaning-making and identity construction that virtual environments enable.

2.4 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter examines the wealth of consumer research literature that contributes to understandings of space and place. This thesis follows a relational understanding of place and space. Places are understood as events of lived or consumed space that emerge as convergences of imbued meanings and emotional attachment that grounds

our emplaced experience of the world. Spaces are understood as dynamic zones that enable social practice, activity and can signify larger social structures that shape social life. This chapter has demonstrates the overlap between space and place within consumptionscapes and raises a number of theoretical gaps within existent literature.

First, some studies consider the temporal and material aspects of consumptionscapes (e.g. Canniford and Shanker, 2013; Belk and Costa, 1998), but do not explore how time and material contribute to understandings of space and place. The tripartite perspective used within this study seeks to bridge this theoretical gap by highlighting the intersection of spatialities, temporalities and materialities within consumption.

Second, various studies examine how space is transformed into place (e.g. Chatzidakis, Maclaren and Bradshaw, 2012; Visconti et al., 2010), but fails to examine how meaningful place can transform into space. This is particularly resonant to this study that seeks to explore consumers' engagement with obsolescence and disuse. Urban exploration emerges as a useful context to explore the slip-slide between space and place as consumptionscapes become abandoned and fall out of marketplace circulation.

Finally, existent research explores the ways in which consumptionscapes can foster alternative values that are used to resist the mainstream marketplace (e.g. Chatzidakis, Maclaren and Bradshaw, 2012; Visconti et al., 2010; Maclaran and Brown, 2005; Arsel and Thompson, 2004; Kozinets, 2002a). Challenging the focus

on resistance, it is valuable to question what other drivers lead consumers to engage with alternative values of consumption. This thesis aims to explore consumers' engagement with obsolescence as an alternative form of consumption in contemporary culture.

The next chapter shifts focus from abandoned buildings as obsolescent consumptionscapes and considers how abandoned buildings are equally understood as obsolescent objects.

Chapter Three: Consuming Material Culture

3.1 Introduction

Consumer research has amassed a body of research examining the ways in which consumers acquire, consume and dispose of objects. This chapter explores consumer research literature on consuming material culture. It begins with discussions of possession, sharing and practices of disposition. This is followed by with a theoretical examination of the value of waste and an interdisciplinary account of waste as an artefact that signifies traces of life, history and memory. This chapter goes on to explore object agency within the consumer culture domain through the emerging debates of vital materialism and relational thinking. With specific focus to conceptualisations of ruins, the discussion considers the materiality and mortality of buildings. Finally, the chapter closes with concluding remarks that link both literature review chapters together.

3.2 For the Love of Things: Possessing, Sharing, Gifting, Disposing

This section begins by exploring consumers' ownership and possession of objects and the various ways objects become meaningful to consumers. This is followed by

a discussion of consumer sharing, gift giving and the inheritance of possessions. This section closes with a discussion of disposal and practices of disposition. These discussions introduce some theoretical concepts and ideas that may be useful in exploring consumers' interest in abandoned buildings.

3.2.1 Ownership and Possessions

Consumer research understands material culture through two streams of research: expressions of consumerism and modes of identity construction (Cherrier, 2010). First, material possessions are emblematic of consumerism that signifies “new, modish, faddish or fashionable, always improved and improving” products (Slater, 1997: p.10). Cherrier (2010) argues this increases the transience and disposability of the marketplace where past, old and used objects are disregarded. Second, consumers use the ownership of possessions to express identity (Miller, 1995), as objects become part of the extended-self (Belk, 1988). Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry (1989) suggest the deep meanings of possessions can be understood through four notions: extended self (Belk, 1988), sacred-profane continuum (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989), fetishism (Fernandez and Lastovicka, 2011; Wallendorf and Belk, 1987), and anthropomorphism (Aggarwal and McGill, 2007). Recent consumer research also highlights the emotional economy (Kuruoğlu and Ger, 2015) in understanding the complexity of meanings mundane objects carry.

Extended Self

Belk (1988) conceptualises the extended self as consumers' ability to transcend the confines of the body by incorporating objects into their identity. This occurs through four processes of controlling, creating, knowing intimately and contaminating (Belk, 1988), and allows the self to become temporarily enlarged by linking present self to past and future time periods (Belk, 1990). Lastovicka and Fernandez (2005) define a meaningful possession as a vessel that carries public and private meanings and Price, Arnould and Curasi (2000) suggest consumers use these objects for narrative scaffolding to create a personal and durable sense of identity. From this perspective objects carry meanings that can symbolise and represent values, mythologies, relationships and identities (Kuruoğlu and Ger, 2015; Borgerson, 2005) as consumers imbue objects with meaning.

Collections of objects also act as expressions of identity (Miller, 2009) and emerge as a "process of actively, selectively, and passionately acquiring and possessing, things removed from ordinary use" (Belk, 1995: p.67). Collecting enables consumers to increase the value of possessions by becoming curators and creating collections. McCracken (1988) identifies the curatorial consumer as an individual who attributes mnemonic value to their possessions and feels a sense of responsibility to conserve, display and safely transmit objects to future generations. Belk (2010) distinguishes between responsibility to care for a thing for the benefit of group use, and sole ownership where there is greater freedom over an objects' use. As such, possession can become distinct from ownership as it can represent larger

networks of meanings and obligations. This has particular relevance to the context of urban exploration where explorers do not own abandoned buildings but merely access these locations and are bound by the ethos of 'leave nothing but footprints'. This raises an interesting relationship between this protective ethos and non-ownership.

The emerging theoretical perspective of liquid consumption (Eckhardt and Bardhi, 2015) suggests consumption has become dematerialised where consumers seek value in the lightness of immaterial goods and they no longer singularise objects nor wish to extend the self through objects, but rather seek situational value and flexible consumption relationships and find significance in use value, as opposed to identity or linking values. Liquid consumption challenges the assumed fixity and endurance of consumers' relationships with possessions. Using the context of global nomads, Bardhi, Eckhardt and Arnould (2012) introduce the notion of liquid possessions and suggest the frequency of nomadic consumers' global travel decreases their attachment to possessions in favour of mobility that creates a porous sense of self that adapts to changing locations. Objects emerge as important vessels of meaning that enable consumers to create, construct and express identities that vary in their fixity and endurance. Liquid consumption highlights the importance of immateriality in shaping consumption habits, but the particularity of global nomads does not capture the equally material and immaterial qualities of consumption. This study seeks to illuminate a more complete understanding of materiality in consumption by considering its temporal and spatial dimensions.

Sacred

In their seminal paper ‘Theodicy on the Odyssey’ Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry (1989) conceptualise the properties, manifestations and processes of sacralisation in consumption and argue that consumption has become a vehicle for sacred and transcendent experiences in contemporary society. Table 3.1 summarises the key contributions from Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry (1989).

Table 3.1: Summary of conceptualising sacred consumption, adapted from Belk, Wallendorf and Shery (1989)

Conceptualisation	Concept	Definition
Properties of Sacredness	Hierophany	The sense that sacredness is not created but rather emerges from something
	Kratophany	A quality that engenders power that is equally alluring and repelling
	Opposition to profane	Distinguishes sacredness from the ordinary
	Contamination	A power to positively contaminate or taint that spreads sacredness through association
	Sacrifice	An act of submission that enables individuals to connect with the sacred
	Commitment	A deep emotional attachment to the sacred
	Objectification	The sacred becomes concretised through its representation as an object
	Ritual	Prepares individuals for sacred encounters and protects the sacred from the profane
	Myth	Socialises individuals in meanings and stories of the sacred
	Mystery	Allows the sacred to transcend rational thought
	Communitas	A social anti-structure that enables individuals to transcend normal roles and engage with shared ritual experience
	Ecstasy and flow	Encountering the sacred can induce an ecstatic or transcendent experience
	Places	Locations of sacred events, buildings, temples or

Sacred Domains		sites of sacred worship and pilgrimage
	Times	Annual festivals, or eras associated with sacred events
	Tangible things	Objects that are symbolically linked to the sacred, such as icons and artefacts
	Intangible things	Practices or symbols that exhibit kratophany
	Persons and other beings	Gods, saints and prophets that are set apart from the masses for their sacred acts or divinity
	Experiences	Individuals engage with sacred encounters such as pilgrimages and rituals
Processes of sacralisation	Ritual	Symbolically transforms the object
	Secular pilgrimage	Consumers journey to consumption sites or experiences, quintessence of sacredness or authenticity
	Gift giving	Reinforces relationships and connects with the sacred in the form of offerings
	Collecting	The whole collection gains sacred status for its uniqueness as a whole and can express self
	Inheritance	Sacralises objects through contamination of meanings that connects the object to the previous owner
	External sanction	An external organisation sacralises an object using its authority

Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry (1989) argue secular possessions become sacralised through rituals, secular pilgrimage, gift giving, collecting, inheritance and external sanction, and desacralised where sacredness is lost through habituation, forgetting and the encroachment of the profane. To counter desacralisation, Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry (1989) suggest sacredness can be perpetuated through four practices. First, separating the sacred from the profane, to reinforce its non-utilitarian status and prevent it from entering the profane realm. Examples of separation include; museums, collections, special conditions of sale, and displaying shrines. Second, performing sustaining rituals preserves and revivifies the sacred status of objects, to counter habituation and rationalisation that threaten the sacred. Third, inheritance

bequests ensure objects are treated as sacred heirlooms as they are passed down generational lines. Fourthly, tangibilizing contamination by preserving the transient experience or encounter in souvenirs and photographs that acts as logical or symbolic reminders of the sacred. Sacred qualities increase the power and desirability of possessions and can imbue mundane objects with extraordinary meanings. Abandoned buildings are often the epitome of mundanity, yet consumers continue to engage with them through urban exploration. In light of research question two, it is valuable to explore what meanings ascribe to these obsolescent buildings to reveal potential sources of consumer fascination within this mundane context.

Fetish

Drawing closer attention to the object itself, Belk (2001; 1996a; 1991a) suggests some objects have the capacity to become fetishes. Fernandez and Lastovicka (2011) define a fetish as “a magical object of extraordinary empowerment and influence” (p.278) and Belk (1991a) argues fetishes contain transformative powers and emerge from contamination with a sacred person, object or event.

Through the context of musical instruments, Fernandez and Lastovicka (2011) examine how consumers transform mass-produced objects into relics and replicas and argue consumers use magical thinking where consumers create connections with actions, events and objects to imbue objects with power that transforms them into fetishes. Objects can be iconic where the icon shares a physical resemblance,

similarities or associations to other objects or people. Objects can also be indexical where the vessel holds a direct or first-hand link to the people or the past (Epp and Price, 2010; Lastovicka and Fernandez, 2005). Fernandez and Lastovicka (2011) suggest fetishisation is fluid and cyclical where the power from fetishised objects can flow from one entity to another through magical thinking. Drawing on Fraser's (1959) laws of magical thinking, Fernandez and Lastovicka (2011) conceive consumers' magical thinking is comprised of imitative magic where replicas become iconic of original objects through their shared resemblance to the original, and contagious magic where objects that come in contact with originals become contaminated through a transfer of properties. This process incrementally adds aura and power to the replica that transforms it into a fetish object.

For Fernandez and Lastovicka (2011) aura has transformative agency that is not contained in either the individual or the object but emerges from the storied relationship consumers have with their possessions as a relationship between the consumer and object. Fetishisation has relevance to the context of this study that considers consumers' cultural fascination and engagement with abandoned buildings. Previous accounts of fetishisation prioritise the object and fail to account for the broader sociohistorical forces that have shaped fetishisation. This thesis aims to reveal consumers' fascination with abandoned buildings and develop a richer understanding of obsolescence by considering the socio-historic roots of ruination more broadly.

Anthropomorphism

Consumers can develop deep emotional attachments to objects and create relationships with their possessions. With a particular focus on brands, Fournier (1998) introduces a typology of consumer-brand relationships where consumers develop deep and meaningful human-like relationships with brands. Aggarwal and McGill (2007) suggest anthropomorphisation shapes consumers' evaluation of products. Indeed, brands often use anthropomorphised mascots to engender their brands with positive characteristics (Hosany et al., 2013; Patterson, Khogeer, and Hodgson, 2013). Shifting attention towards possessions, Lastovicka and Sirianni (2011) argue consumers develop relationships and emotional attachments to possessions that can result in 'material possession love' that manifests in four forms: romantic love, enduring romantic love, fatuous love, and companionate love. Lastovicka and Sirianni (2011) highlight consumer nurturing as a central characteristic of material possession love, where consumers give time, energy and financial resources to foster relationships with their beloved possessions. In this sense, relationships with possessions become as significant to human relationships. Indeed, through an analysis of the Toy Story film franchise, Lanier, Radar and Fowler (2013) suggest the anthropomorphisation of characters with human characteristics increases their worth that transcends market value. As such, objects become cherished possessions when imbued with human or animal characteristics allowing consumers to develop deeper emotional attachments to their inanimate forms. These studies highlight the various ways consumers derive meaning from

objects that provides some theoretical tools that may help to examine how consumers may ascribe meanings to abandoned buildings.

Emotional Economy

Whilst much consumer research has focused on how consumers imbue objects with meaning, notions of object agency draw attention to the power objects have to affect consumers. Indeed Harris and Sørensen (2010) suggest objects create affective fields as webs of emotionally thick relationships between objects, things and places. Moving beyond the object, Russell and Schau (2014) demonstrate how consumers form meaningful relationships with narrative brands and grieve the loss of these relationships when these brands are discontinued. In addition to losing the narrative brand, consumers experience subsequent losses of cultural identity and sociality surrounding the narrative brand (Russell and Schau, 2014). Russell and Schau (2014) identify three ways consumers may cope with these losses: complete decathexis where consumers detach from the brand, continuing brand bonds where consumers create an altered relationship with the brand, and maladaptation where consumers deny the discontinuation of the brand. As such, Russell and Schau (2014) highlight the deeply emotional relationships consumers develop with brands that extends towards grief.

Refocusing attention towards objects of consumption, Anderson, Tonner and Hamilton (forthcoming) demonstrate the grief consumers experience in the loss of

buildings that illuminates the emotional attachments consumers develop for objects beyond personal ownership. Anderson, Tonner and Hamilton (forthcoming) suggest consumers use the language and emotionality of grief to reflect upon their own mortality and wider sociocultural losses. Similarly, Kuruoğlu and Ger (2015) reveal the affective potentialities of objects and demonstrate how consumers use the circulation of music cassettes as a resistant practice against political controls of Kurdish culture in Turkey. Drawing on Ahmed's (2004) premise that objects are sticky, Kuruoğlu and Ger (2015) argue objects become sticky with intense emotional feeling and introduce the notion of the 'emotional economy' of the mundane object whereby the circulation of objects saturates them with emotions, creates shared emotional repertoires between consumers, and fosters individual and collective emotional dispositions. Kuruoğlu and Ger (2015) identify four circulation practices (recording, hiding, playing and exchanging) that demonstrate the entwinement of emotions and materiality, and argue these practices creates an emotional habitus that shapes ways of being, acting and feeling. This fosters a sense of 'us' and 'them' as other that emerges as tactical resistance and creates an imagining of community. This highlights how the circulation of objects releases their affective potentialities. There remains less understanding of the affective potentialities of objects that stay out of circulation. Bridging this theoretical gap, this thesis examines the various meanings that are ascribed to obsolescent objects that remain out of marketplace circulation.

3.2.2 Sharing, Gifting and Commodity Exchange

Consumer giving is foundational to consumer culture studies (Arnould, 2007; Otnes and Beltramini, 1996; Sherry, 1983). Consumer research has explored self gifts (Mick and De Moss, 1990), gifts of agapic love (Belk and Coon, 1993), dark side of gifts (Sherry, McGrath and Levy, 1993), gifts to reinforce social ties (Joy, 2001), gifts for the dead (Bonsu and Belk, 2003), gift systems in cyberspace (Geisler, 2006), sharing (Belk, 2010; Belk, 2007), the sharing economy (Belk, 2014), escaping gift economy (Marcoux, 2009), and mutuality (Arnould and Rose, 2016). Despite this rich body of work theoretical distinctions between commodity exchange, gift giving, and sharing are blurry (Belk, 2010) and have become increasingly contested (e.g. Arnould and Rose, 2016; Belk, 2016).

Conceptualisations of gift giving are often informed by Mauss (1925) who argues gift giving is a tripartite relationship between giver, receiver and an obligation to return a reciprocal gift. Based on the Maori tradition of the hau or ‘spirit of the gift’ as a force that binds the giver and receiver in an obligation to return, Mauss (1925) suggests gifts appear to be spontaneous, voluntary and devoid of self-interest, but are in fact motivated by self-interest and obligation created to forge alliances and prevent war. As such, gift giving is a form of exchange driven by a continual system of mutual obligations. This informs Ingold’s (2015; 2013b) notion of correspondence where the gift is understood as two hands clasping in constant movement of sociality. The hands carry on together by wrapping around one another like strands of a rope

that is never finished. For a deeper discussion of correspondence please refer to Chapter Four (section 4.2.2).

Existent literature distinguishes between gift giving and commodity exchange based on a variety of conditions; interpersonal dependence and object alienability (Gregory, 1982), the social context of exchange (Gell, 1992) and the delay between giving and returning (Bourdieu, 1984). As such, it is the occasion through which the gift or commodity is received that determines its status. The pure or perfect gift is immaterial (the material manifestation is secondary to the thought), priceless (removed from commodity exchange valuations) and lacks reciprocal obligations (Belk, 2010). Whilst Derrida (1992) argues that the perfect gift is an impossibility, Belk (1996b) suggests perfect gifts are characterised by extraordinary sacrifice, driven by happiness of the receiver where the gift is a luxury, uniquely appropriate to the recipient, surprises the recipient and is appreciated by the receiver.

Directing attention to sharing, Sahlins (1972) introduces the concept of generalised reciprocity, or giving without keeping track, that occurs between close kin and family that has vague expectations for reciprocity. Ingold (1986) distinguishes between 'sharing in' as an act of unbounded inclusion and reciprocity, and 'sharing out' as an act of distribution outwith the close family. Belk (2010) argues sharing is nonreciprocal, fosters solidarity, bonding and social reproduction that includes shared ownership of inalienable possessions where money is irrelevant. Distinguishing between sharing, gift giving and commodity exchange, Belk (2010) argues gift giving is reciprocal and obligatory in practice, involving a transfer of

ownership, sacrifice and inalienability that creates a lingering imbalance of debt between people. Sherry, McGrath and Levy (1993) consider this indebtedness as the dark side of the gift and Belk and Coon (1993) highlight the obligations attached to gifts as they become extensions of the giver. In contrast to gift giving, Belk (2010) conceives commodity exchange as a reciprocal and balanced exchange that incurs no lingering obligations, and involves the transfer of ownership of alienable commodities for money. In a critique of Belk's (2010) conceptualisations of consumer sharing, Arnould and Rose (2016) introduce the notion of mutuality as a form of generalised exchange that focuses on inclusion in interaction. In rebuttal to Arnould and Rose (2016), Belk (2016) draws attention to feminist critiques of exchange and poses that sharing is a conversation, a "mutually shared possession that we jointly construct" (p.148). Such acts of sharing and gift giving have temporal dimensions. Drawing upon Bird-David's (1992) cosmic economy of sharing, Belk (2010) highlights the importance of pass-along sharing where the wealth is shared forward to others. Similarly, inherited gifts can have multiple temporalities (Türe and Ger, 2016) as they are passed along generational lines.

3.2.3 Inheritance of Things

Consumer research examines inheritance as a special form of gift disposition that creates meaningful legacies and transfers the inalienability of possessions to future generations that choose to either sustain or transform heirlooms.

Legacy

In defining legacy Plager (1999) suggests it is “a living tradition” (p.52) of family life that is reshaped by family, culture and society over time, whereas Hunter and Rowles (2005) argue legacy is a life narrative that allows consumers to create and transmit material and non-material markers that allow individuals to be remembered. Hunter and Rowles (2005) identify three types of legacy; material legacy where family heirlooms, possessions and symbols are passed on as societal markers, biological legacy that involves the transmission of genes, health conditions and organs, and legacy of values where personal beliefs can be passed onto future generations. Epp and Arnould (2006) conceptualise family legacies as ‘lasting themes’ and the embodiment of family identity that shapes behaviour and consumption practices through rituals, kin-keeping practices, narratives, intergenerational transfers and activities.

Inherited possessions and heirlooms draw their rich meanings from their connection to the past (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989; McCracken, 1988) that creates a sense of continuity and stability for consumers (Epp and Price, 2010; Curasi, Arnould and Price, 2004) and sustains relationships between the living and the dead (Belk, 1990). As gifts, inherited possessions establish ties of reciprocity and interdependence between people, as there remains an obligation to return. Price, Arnould and Curasi (2000) highlight that inherited possessions have mnemonic and narrative qualities that act as a metaphorical extension of self, sense of collective self that brings a durability to life narratives (Belk, 1991a), and symbolic immortality by

invoking the spirits of the ancestors (Belk, 1991b; McCracken, 1988). Similarly, Curasi, Price and Arnould (2004) argue inalienable heirlooms are symbolic vehicles that allow consumers to imaginatively extend into the future. In this sense inheritance creates symbolic immortality. These studies acknowledge the importance of temporality in inherited possessions, but stop short of conceptualising how temporality intersects with materiality in inheritance consumption.

Shifting focus from temporality to the materiality of the object, Lim and Fitchett (2011) draw attention to the agency of objects and conceptualise 'death objects' as the possessions left behind or orphaned by the deceased that retain an agentic permanence and presence beyond the mortality of their owners. Arnould and Epp (2006) suggest family legacies can fail when objects, or alienable assets are destroyed. Indeed, Epp and Price (2010) demonstrate that even irreplaceable indexical objects can become displaced when threatened by shifting family roles, uses and meanings attributed to objects. Epp and Price (2010) argue that singularised objects can move in and out of networks of practices, objects and spaces, and distinguish between 'active objects' as those caught up in networks of existing spaces, objects and identity projects, and 'inactive objects' as those not enlisted within a network. This extends Kopytoff's (1986) theory of singularisation where an object becomes singularised when it enters the home, becomes imbued with personal meanings and commoditised by rituals, and then becomes recommodified when it exits the home space.

Epp and Price (2010) highlight the biography of the object, conflicting identity projects, changes in life circumstances and other competing objects as forces that can empower or constrain an object's use within the home. These forces create network transformations that determine whether an object is retained, through reincorporation and reengagement within the family network, or returned to the marketplace based on its agency within a network (Epp and Price, 2010). This network understanding, where objects can move in and out of use, has particular resonance to the aim of this study to examine obsolescence as a state of disuse where objects remain out of marketplace circulation. This thesis moves beyond the context of the family to examine how consumers engage with obsolescence at a societal level. Existent research prioritises familial inheritance and neglects the notion of societal inheritance. Buildings, as inherited objects, have a greater societal impact than possessions as they shape communities, housing, and economic development. As such, the context of this study highlights societal inheritance and legacy as important considerations to consumer culture.

Inalienability

Curasi, Price and Arnould (2004) distinguish between individuals' cherished possessions as objects with personal meanings that are independent of exchange value, and possessions of inalienable wealth that are irreplaceable, sacred and have an imaginary power that prevents these objects from being exchanged within the market. Weiner (1992) conceptualises the inalienability of objects as its ability to

embody an individuals' lineage whilst moving through time that illuminates the temporality of inalienable objects.

Curasi, Price and Arnould (2004) identify six qualities of inalienable wealth, including; hierophancy, kratophany, mystery, group identity distinction, affirms certain social order, and lack of ownership as individuals may possess objects of inalienable wealth, but they do not have right to give or sell the object. Many of these qualities are reminiscent of sacredness (Belk, Walendorf and Sherry, 1989). Whilst desacralisation threatens sacredness, inalienable wealth is threatened by object theft, damage and market alienation (Curasi, Price and Arnould, 2004). Consumers act as caretakers or “[c]ustodians of inalienable wealth [that] preserve and share the objects and the knowledge that goes with them” (Curasi, Price and Arnould, 2004: p.611) to protect the inalienability of objects.

Bradford (2009) further highlights the fragility of inalienable wealth and demonstrates how intergenerationally gifted assets (e.g. monetary goods, property or businesses) flow between states of alienability and inalienability. In contrast to heirlooms where inalienability is tied to the object, Bradford (2009) argues gifted assets are indexes that can be transformed into different forms of inalienable wealth that passes forward the legacy of a family. Consumers categorise gifted assets by indexical (symbolic meaning) and prosaic (functional use) that enables consumers to sustain symbolic inalienability, whilst exploiting alienability for prosaic uses (Bradford, 2009). For example, inherited wealth may be used to purchase a home that becomes symbolic of the family legacy of wealth. In this sense, gifted assets

can have exchange value and symbolic value, where the latter is retained and enhanced by the exchange value within the market.

Sustaining Inalienability

Consumer research suggests that consumers use three modes of sustaining inalienability; storytelling where meanings are transferred (Cursai, 2006), rituals where sacred status and social orders are affirmed (Curasi, Price and Arnould, 2004) and custodian practices where consumers preserve inalienability for future generations (Curasi, Price and Arnould, 2004). These practices prevent alienation and fossilisation of meaning that renders objects invisible, forgotten or inactive (Türe and Ger, 2016). In particular, custodian practices can be understood as a form of curatorship (McCracken, 1988) or guardianship (Bradford, 2009) where “guardians follow in their ancestors’ footsteps in caring for heirlooms” (Türe and Ger, 2016: p.10).

Outside of the context of inheritance, Cherrier (2010) argues custodian behaviour can be a form of reflexive anti-consumerism that is motivated against wasteful consumer culture. Cherrier (2010) defines custodian behaviour as “an everyday practice that certain consumers consciously perform in order to rescue and safeguard material objects from being thrown away or wasted” (p.259) and identifies three unconventional aspects of custodian anti-consumerism. Firstly, consumers act as custodians of material objects by rescuing forgotten or unwanted objects from being

wasted and envisaging the potential future use of objects. Second, consumers' custodianship blurs the divisions between the material and the social as "the material is loaded with membership significance to a time, a person or a place, it acts as a stabilising force against change and rupture" (Cherrier, 2010: p.266). Third, consumers demarcate between past objects that are charged with a sense of history, tradition, value and authenticity, and modern objects as throwaway that signifies a destruction of the past. According to Cherrier (2010) custodian behaviour gives consumers a sense of security and permanence in contemporary life that is characterised by flux and instability. Cherrier's (2010) account helps explore the overlapping dimensions of space, time and material as consumers engage with objects, but fails to theorise how these conditions intersect within consumption.

Türe and Ger (2016) highlight the importance of materiality, multi-temporality and craftwork in heirloom consumption, and argue inalienability can be sustained in heirloom transformation by preserving the 'heirloom essence'. Türe and Ger (2016) identify three processes of rejuvenation that renew and re-integrate objects into new owner's life trajectory. First uncovering where through 'hunting' the consumer critically gazes at the object to identify its potential life and through 'leavening' the object is linked to specific spaces and materials to strengthen and legitimise its new life. Secondly, refreshing involves updating an object to present needs, or re-authenticating an object with the imaginaries of the past. Thirdly, reconciling can involve de-fossilising or reviving heirlooms that have lost their meanings, and hibernation where negative associations are weakened to reveal their potential life. Chevalier (1999) uses the term fossilised for objects that have not been used or gazed

upon in a way that preserves meanings. For Türe and Ger (2016), fossilisation occurs when an object has been temporally and spatially distanced from the family. Whilst Türe and Ger (2016) acknowledge the presence of spatiality, they fail to consider space as important dimension to heirloom consumption. In contrast, this thesis seeks to elevate theorisations of space within understanding objects of the past.

Türe and Ger (2016) suggest consumers use craftwork to transform heirlooms and identify two forms of transformation: material transformation, where transformation changes the material form to enrich and renew functions and aesthetic appeal of objects, and compositional transformation, where heirlooms are repurposed by integrating the object into spatial and aesthetic assemblages without changing its material form. These transformations sustain inalienability as the heirlooms essence is preserved. These processes illuminate how consumers creatively engage with inherited objects and change their uses, aesthetics and material form whilst maintaining inalienability. This has particular resonance with research question three that seeks to explore how consumers produce value from obsolescence. Rather than sustaining inalienability, consumers' engagements with obsolescence have the potential to create new values and sense of worth.

3.2.4 Disposal of Things

Consumer research has often prioritised consumers' acquisition and purchase of products and has subsequently under-theorised the disposition stage of consumption

(Parsons and Maclaran, 2009). Despite this, a growing body of consumer research has examined a range of disposition practices as reverse channels of distribution (Benton, 2014). This section examines the meanings associated with disposal, the modes of disposition and the circular movement of disposal.

Emblem of Consumerism and Loss

Disposal is often regarded as a negative outcome of consumerism and emblematic of over-consumption and poor waste management. In particular, Hawkins (2001) argues disposal is inextricably linked to the logic of mass consumption where the dominant axiom of exchangeability has created the continual production and replacement of things. In extreme cases, Hawkins (2001) points to the unavoidable presence of waste, where its visibility has become “a landscape in its own right” (p.10). Post-disposition practices, such as second-hand exchanges, recycling and upcycling, are hailed as a solution to the throwaway society. For Lucas (2002) recycling provides a reconciling role in the dilemma of disposability, yet Hawkins (2001) critiques this assumption and argues the ethos of disposability codes disposal with moral and ethical connotations of renewal, restoration and purification. This results in “virtue-added disposal” where “the self is morally purified, disposal as an act of redemption” (Hawkins, 2001: p.12). Once imbued with moral associations, reuse becomes a voluntary and coercive action, as individuals feel morally indebted to recycle. Rather than reusing, Humes (2012) argues the only solution is refusing and reducing consumption.

Consumer research has examined practices of reducing consumption from voluntary downshiffters (McGouran and Prothero, 2016; McDonagh, Dobscha and Prothero, 2012), slower consumption where durability slows the rate of consumption (Cooper, 2005), and anti-consumption driven by environmental motives (Chatzidakis and Lee, 2012). Shifting focus towards spaces of disposal, Brace-Govan and Binay (2010) highlight the importance of the nexus of objects, practices and immersive spaces in successfully re-commodifying disposed objects that enables consumers to express individualised moral identity projects. These studies highlight the range of consumer disposition practices and the variety of ways waste is linked to consumerism. In relation to the research questions, this helps explore the various meanings associated with abandoned buildings as outcomes of consumption that have fallen out of marketplace circulation, but have not reached the stage of disposition as they remain in a state of dormancy and disuse.

Within consumer research, disposal is also considered as an expression of loss. Young and Wallendorf (1989) claim disposition is the process of detachment from self and is a painful experience that signifies a death of past stages of life. This occurs through two processes: emotional detachment and physical detachment. The process of dispossession can also shape identity, where disposal signifies altruistic values or can occur when an object no longer fits with the self-concept. (Albinsson and Perera, 2009), and can shape social relationships where objects of disposal are gifted (Cappellini, 2009) and can foster community building (Albinsson and Perera, 2009). Further, disposal of cherished objects can cause loss of self-identity, erasure

of family traditions, loss of object meanings and de-valuation of objects (Price, Arnould and Curasi, 2000). Indeed Trotter (2009) suggests the meanings of objects do not necessarily endure beyond waste. For Trotter (2009), clearing possessions causes a 'double reduction' where the object first loses its past and becomes stripped of memory traces, meanings and cultural value as it shifts from possession to commodity, and second the object is deprived of a future as it shifts from commodity to waste matter. This deepens our understanding of disposition beyond materiality towards the symbolic as disposal can cause a loss of identity, social relationships and memories. This theme is further explored in section 3.3.4 below.

Circularity of Disposal

Rather than "the last act" of consumption, Hetherington (2004: p.159) argues disposal is a recursive process that is never complete as objects are never entirely disposed but rather fluctuate between states of absence and presence with the capacity to reappear. Importantly, this highlights the spatial dimension to disposal where objects are always placed, rather than discarded. For Hetherington (2004) disposal is a double take or secondhandedness that works in two stages: in 'first disposal' objects become representationally distant yet remain physically close, and in 'second disposal' objects become representationally close but physically distant. This enriches our understanding of the representational and non-representational qualities of disposal where objects can have material presence that shapes social order and figural absence that creates 'absent presence' where things have the ability

to remain after disposal (e.g. lingering smells). For Hetherington (2004), second disposal is more final yet is never complete as objects always have the potential to return through haunting. Munro (1998) introduces this notion and terms it the “haunting presence of exclusion” (p.148) where gaps continually appear in our representation of disposal. This sensitises our understanding of how abandoned buildings can remain after disposal that has particular relevance to studying urban exploration and its associated photography of abandoned buildings.

Building upon the circularity of disposal, Gregson, Metcalfe and Crewe (2007) conceptualise disposition as a process of moving things along that involves multiple conduits of moving and rediscovery. Through an examination of household divestment practices, Gregson, Metcalfe and Crewe (2007) argue divestment is characterised by movement that shapes social orders and narratives. Similarly, Gille (2010) argues waste regimes should acknowledge the production, circulation and transformation that waste undergoes as a set of physical materials.

Much consumer research literature supports this perspective of disposition as a movement of things. Parsons and Maclaran (2009) challenge the assumption that production and consumption are linear processes and suggests disposal can stimulate re-birth and re-evaluation of goods through gifting, secondary markets (e.g. auctions), re-use, and hoarding where disposal is a transition between commodity statuses. Parsons and Maclaran (2009) also highlight the importance of space within the process of commoditisation and argue that within the ambiguous settings of auctions (Cheetham, 2009) and online marketplaces of Ebay (Denegri-Knott and

Molesworth, 2009) the status of objects exists in spaces between commodity and possession, where object meanings are out-of-control.

This spatiality is best reflected within Lastovicka and Fernandez (2005) where consumers use physical and psychological distancing to prepare meaningful objects for disposition to strangers. Their account highlights the centrality of identity to disposition where various aspects of the self are separated from the object before transferring to new owners who share a common identity or shared self (Lastovicka and Fernandez, 2005). Transition is eased by four divestment rituals, including; iconic transfer that reduces emotional disturbance by creating a representation of the object, transition-places to erode private meanings and aid detachment, ritual cleansing to remove contaminated meanings and add marketplace meanings, and sharing private meanings with new owners as catharsis or legacy creation. This account illustrates the tangible and intangible spatiality in disposition where consumers use physical spaces and imagined distancing to separate and transfer objects.

Advancing this comprehension beyond emotional attachment, consumer research illustrates how disposition can illuminate value in disposition. Parasuraman and Grewal (2000) identify redemption value as the residual benefit at the end of an object's life. Through the context of food leftovers, Cappellini (2009) demonstrates how this redemption value produces excess value, where practices of thrift adds value to leftovers that reinforces familial bonds through the notion of sacrifice. Advancing this further, Cappellini and Parsons (2013) suggest thrift can be a form of

moral disposition that reflects shifts towards sustainable consumption habits and economic hardship. As such, disposition emerges is a circular movement, rather than final point in linear consumption, (Cappellini, 2009; Gregson, Metcalfe and Crewe, 2007; Hetherington, 2004). Similarly, Türe (2014) argues an object's life can be prolonged through disposition conduits that reevaluate and (re)associate the object with new regimes through transformation, reuse and recycling. Türe (2014) suggests consumers use three strategies of value enhancement; esthetic manipulation that reconnects objects to new realms of production and consumption, brutal use that increases the use value of the object by using it until depletion, and gradual garbaging where objects are optimally used across consumption contexts. Türe (2014) argues that disposal can trigger deeper attachment to objects that may prompt consumers to use a protection strategy that safeguards the perceived value of objects that may be ambiguous or at odds with broader value regimes. As such, whilst disposal can be considered as a negative consequence to consumerism or a painful experience of loss, it also has the ability to transform waste into valuable offerings that demonstrate the eternal circularity of consumption and disposal. This illuminates how consumers produce surplus value from disposition, but fails to address obsolescent objects that have not reached disposition nevertheless remain in a state of dormancy and disuse. This thesis redresses this gap by exploring the various ways consumers produce value from their engagement with obsolescence.

3.3 Waste and Obsolescence

This section explores the movement from use to disuse of consumption objects. It begins with reviewing theorisations of value within consumer research. This section continues with a brief outline of how obsolescence has been conceptualised and goes on to examine the value of waste from various disciplines. Finally, this section explores literature on consumer memory and how consumers use objects as conduits of remembering.

3.3.1 Theories of Value

Theorisations of value are often complex and contradictory as they stem from various conflicting disciplines, including; philosophy as a form of ethics, sociology as beliefs held by a group, and economics as a marketplace evaluation or worth. From a Marxian perspective value is determined by the amount of labour required to produce it, where use value has general utility for meeting human needs and exchange value is determined by quantity as it enters an exchange relationship. Further, Baudrillard and Levin (1981) distinguish between exchange value as a mutually agreed quantitative value that enables trade of commodities, and symbolic value as any association between an object and a subject, object, relationship or abstract notion.

Value has been conceptualised within consumer research as the interactive, experiential and subjective relation with products (Holbrook, 1999) or consumers' symbolic meaning-making (Shankar, Elliot and Fitchett 2009; Ventakesh and Meamber, 2006). Holbrook (1999) identifies three types of value including; aesthetic value as an experience of beauty or pleasure through form, moral value as a positive act to enhance welfare of others, and spiritual value where consumers encounter transcendental experiences. Further, semiotic value (Levy, 1959) emerges as an exchange of signs between marketers and consumers, and linking-value refers to the shared interests or activities that connect people, groups and communities (Cova, 1997). This body of consumer research locates consumers' value attainment in either value-in-exchange or value-in-use (Türe, 2014).

Supporting Appadurai's (1986) suggestion that exchange is the primary source of value, consumer research broadly positions value as an emergent property that develops from consumers' activities and interactions with objects, rather than a quality of the object itself. Value emerges as consumers "absorb objects into their lives" where value is not intrinsic to objects, but rather is shaped through use and perception (Parsons, 2008: p.393). As such, consumer practices are carriers of value (Schau, Muñiz and Arnould, 2009) where the performance of practices creates value for consumers (Duffy, 2014). Consumers are viewed as co-creators or prosumers of value who participate or resist in the marketplace meanings (Cova and Dalli, 2009; Kozinets and Handelman, 2004). Value is contextually determined (Holbrook, 2006). In this vein, Türe (2014) conceptualises a value regime as "socially and historically defined contexts of valuation" that "allow objects to move across cultural

boundaries, among parties with nonsimilar interests or standards of valuation” (p.55). This highlights the fluidity of value in exchange as it can move between “different regimes of value in space and time” (Appadurai, 1986: p.4). This is further explored in section 3.3.2.

Lanier, Radar and Fowler (2013) distinguish between ‘value’ that is determined by sociocultural market logics that recognise exchange, use and symbolic value, and ‘worth’ that operates within a different logic which transcends market valuations. Worth is an appreciation or depreciation of the significance of something for its own sake that does not necessarily have subjective utility, and is characterised as highly transitory, idiosyncratic, and discrete (Lanier, Radar and Fowler, 2013). This enriches our understanding of the alternative ways consumers appreciate objects. Understandings of worth (Lanier, Radar and Fowler, 2013) resonate with the study that seeks to illuminate the ways consumers find value in obsolescence.

3.3.2 Value of Waste and Obsolescence

Obsolescence is generally understood as an inactive state where functionality has become outmoded or undesirable (Packard, 1963) and is associated with death, loss or contraction (Dorian, 1992), failure (Heiskanen, 1996), depreciation (Cooper, 2004), replacement (Van Nes and Cramer, 2006) and reduction in product longevity and life-cycle (Cooper, 2016). In this sense, obsolescence is a deeply temporal condition that dictates longevity and permanence. Following Cooper (2016), this

thesis defines obsolescence as a state of inactivity or disuse where an object or mode of being is no longer functional or desirable. Existent research on obsolescence originates from disciplines of product design, economic theory and business management, and identifies various forms of obsolescence, including; planned obsolescence (Guiltinan, 2009; Iizuka, 2007; Cooper, 2004), technical, stylistic and programmed obsolescence (Maycroft, 2009) and the obsolescence of peripheral technology (Maycroft, 2015). Obsolescence has wide-reaching implications for the economy, environment and social habits. Whilst consumer research has explored contexts of obsolescence in abandoned brands (Muñiz and Schau, 2005), termination of narrative brands (Russell and Schau, 2014), and circulation of disused objects (Epp and Price, 2010), it has not theoretically engaged with obsolescence as a consumption domain.

Maycroft (2015) suggests obsolescence is a material outcome of capitalism and Cooper (2005) suggests it is a product of a throwaway society. In this vein, Fitzpatrick (2011) draws attention to the political aspect of obsolescence and argues that rather than a material state, obsolescence is a political project that shapes public life. Understood in this way, obsolescence emerges as a power-laden status that shapes consumption. This issue is most pertinent in planned obsolescence where the life-span of a product is predetermined (Cooper, 2016) and manufacturers, suppliers and marketers 'kill-off' products (Iizuka, 2007). As such, obsolescence is one potential outcome before an object is classified as waste.

Waste is often considered as the end of life for products and “an inevitable consequence of consumption” (De Coverly et al., 2008: p.295). Existent literature typically follows an economic perspective where waste has a fixed zero value as the opposite of value or the excess to value systems (Frow, 2003), or a sociocultural perspective where waste is dangerous (Douglas, 1966) and has transformative potential (Gregson, Metcalfe and Crewe, 2007).

This waste status is socially and culturally determined and reinforced by negative associations to disorder, uncleanliness and danger (Douglas, 1966). In her seminal work ‘Purity and Danger’ Douglas (1966) argues that as a concept ‘dirt’ has become socially and culturally classified as a matter out of place in society. Douglas (1966) argues waste is a by-product of the creation of order and is threatening and dangerous to social life. This demonstrates how polluting objects are power-laden as they have the ability to repulse (Reno, 2014). Indeed the treatment of waste affirms this view where there is a systematic avoidance of waste where smoothing mechanisms (De Coverly et al., 2008) and silencing processes (O’Brien, 1999) of refuse collection physically and socially remove waste from our lives. Indeed Tadajewski and Hamilton (2014) argue that this distances consumers from the impact of their consumption.

The value of products is linked to its perceived disposability (Peñaloza and Mish, 2011), transient and finite value (Hawkins, 2001). Challenging the dominant view of waste as dysfunctional, Baudrillard (1970) suggests that wasteful consumption allows consumers to feel alive. These accounts highlight that notions of waste are

entirely socially constructed. Growing research draws attention to the transformative potentialities of waste. Indeed second-hand consumption gives objects a second chance in the consumption cycle (Soderman and Carter, 2008) and waste can be transformed into fashion items (Emgin, 2012) and art (Crang, 2012). This movement from disuse to use has implications for how waste is valued.

Fluctuating Value of Waste

Much research acknowledges the fluctuating value of objects. Indeed Lucas (2002) argues objects have unfixed and negotiable value and Frow (2003) argues value is a process, movement or cycle that is continually defined contested and redefined. In particular, Thompson's (1979) 'Rubbish Theory' highlights the fluctuating status of rubbish as an object category that exists in a region of flexibility where it can "exist in a timeless and valueless limbo" and has the capacity to be re-discovered (p.8-9). In contrast to the fluctuating value of rubbish, durable objects and transient objects have relatively fixed values that shape social order. Similarly, Hetherington (2004) theorises value as a region of flexibility or as a 'door' where conduits of disposal allow objects to transfer between regimes of value of de-commoditisation, where valorisation creates high value (e.g. collections) and re-commoditisation that has less value (e.g. trashion (Emgin, 2012)). Hetherington's (2004) account only considers how disposal enables objects to move between categories of value. In contrast, De Coverly et al. (2008) argue value is eternally in flux as it is socially and culturally determined. From this perspective, waste has the capacity to return under a new

regime of socially determined value. More recently, studies introduce the notion of the ‘fluidity of value’ in arts marketing (Preece, 2013) and vintage consumption (Duffy, 2014) contexts. In particular, Duffy’s (2014) notion of value fluidity conceives value is an enactment of relations, practices and socialites that emerges in liminal moments that are spatially and temporally bound. This highlights the importance of space and time in shaping value.

Consumer research studies highlight various practices that transform the value of waste. Parsons (2008) identifies three consumer practices that enable movement from rubbish object to durable object: finding objects as a practice of discovery and “triumph against the system” (p.392) where objects have been physically hidden or socially over-looked, displaying objects where the placing of objects can signify their significance, and transforming or re-using objects by creating alternative uses, modifying or updating objects for contemporary life. Further, Türe (2014) examines value-in-disposition where consumers use disposition to enhance the value of their possessions. Türe’s (2014) account highlights the transferability of value in consumer practices of gifting, sacrificing or re-commoditising that creates value by fostering new relations, strengthening social connections and alleviates social positions. This reveals the dark side of disposition where disposal can reproduce social orders and exploit power imbalances (Türe, 2014). This moves Douglas’ (1966) conceptualisation of waste as a dangerous material, towards revealing the socially threatening aspects of disposed possessions.

This growing body of consumer research studies demonstrates the fluctuating and fluidity of value where objects associated meanings continuously shift in and out of value regimes, that are often socially constructed, sign dependent and spatially and temporally bound. This has particular relevance to this thesis as it raises questions as to how consumer evaluations of obsolescence fluctuate and what practices enable objects to move out of a state of obsolescence.

3.3.3 Waste as Trace Artefacts

Whilst obsolescent objects are associated with waste and finitude (Gregson et al., 2010), from a social archaeological and cultural anthropological perspective spent objects are artefacts (Buchli and Lucas, 2001). Bailey (2007) suggests an artefact is a palimpsest where history is held within an accumulation of traces that remain even after life has departed. As such, an object can hold traces of present and past life.

Obsolescent and waste artefacts can act as traces of present life and action. For the Dogon people of Mali the presence of domestic dirt (*neme*) has positive connotations as it indicates activity, work and vitality in the home (Douny, 2007). Here waste matter becomes a sign of life and progress. Reno (2014) draws our attention to the non-human life that is communicated through animal waste and decay where “[t]he transience of decomposing and deteriorating matter can be seen as loss, but also as the perpetuation of life” (p.7). For example, the *malanggan* death rituals in Papua New Guinea involve constructing a *malanggan* monument to the dead that slowly

decays and is left to rot as a symbol of the cyclical process of life returning to the ground through death (Küchler, 1999). Decay and final death in this respect is understood as a 'process of eternal return' (Küchler, 1999: p.57) where these rituals encourage cultural remembering that is not fixed in the past, but pulls forward through the slow degradation of material, "awakening the past in the present" (p. 63).

Consumer research suggests photographs, souvenirs and everyday objects act as tangible markers, repositories for memories and containers of meanings that prompt retrospective reflection (Belk, 1990). Waste artefacts also act as residue of the past (Parsons, 2008) that provide traces of culture. Objects maintain aspects of prior ownership as they are "encoded with our general habits and relationships" (Reno, 2014: p.6). Douglas (1966) argues that whilst waste has been rejected, it maintains an identity of its past use. For DeSilvey (2006) this half-identity clings to objects before they dissolve through decay. This is particularly useful for understanding obsolescent objects and consumptionscapes that have fallen into disuse. In relation to the guiding perspectives of this thesis, materiality surfaces as an important dimension that reflects social life and provides a tangible record of consumption. The material persistence of waste highlights society's achievements and failures (Bennett, 2004), ecological misdemeanours (Parsons, 2008) and downfalls of capitalism and globalised production (Crang, 2010). Material culture acts as memory markers of the past. Possessions can store corporal traces of past owners (Crewe, 2011), stimulate memories (DeSilvey, 2006) and record daily routines (Moran, 2004) that act as material maps (Crang, 2012) or terrains of autotopography (González, 1995) that preserve traces of life.

The materiality of space and place preserves the past. Ingold (2011) argues the landscape is made by inscriptions of daily practices, routines and dwellings of ancestors. Based on his work with the Walbiri people of Australia, Wagner (1986) considers “the life of a person is the sum of his tracks, the total inscription of his movements, something that can be traced out along the ground” (p.21). Similarly, Nelson (1983) suggests the landscape stands in memory of people and their activities. In this way, the traces of past life extend beyond living through its trace inscriptions. Bergson (1911) suggests “wherever anything lives, there is, open somewhere, a register in which time is being inscribed” (p.17). This highlights the intersections temporality and materiality in understandings of life. Western thought often considers the living as present and the dead as absent, where “[t]he confinement of life to the present leaves the past lifeless or extinct” (Ingold, 2011: p.136). This dichotomy is evident in Crang’s (2005) account of time devouring the present and Descola’s (1996) suggestion that “the present exists for us only thanks to the inexorable abolition of the past from which it proceeds” (p.226). As such, the past is equated with non-existence. Ingold (2011) challenges this view and argues “[d]eath punctuates, but does not terminate life” (p.143). In other words, whilst the past appears to be absent from the present it does not cease to exist or become extinguished by present time, as evident in the traces that living things leave behind. This social anthropological work enriches understandings of how spatialities, temporalities and materialities intersect as activities are inscribed in material culture and the spatial landscape that provides traces of the temporal past.

3.3.4 Memory, Remembering and Forgetting

Consumer research studies of memory often focus upon experiences of nostalgia (Routledge et al., 2012; Kessous and Roux, 2008; Baker, Karrer and Veeck, 2005; Holbrook, 1993; Belk, 1990) and collective memory of tragedy (Godfrey and Lilley, 2009; Kaplan, 2008; Nguyen and Belk, 2007). This work highlights the shifting boundaries of memories, how memories are mediated by material culture and political regimes of memories, and how memory work can create mnemonic communities.

For Halbwachs (1992) memory is a fundamentally social process where individual memory is constructed by social structures and institutions, and collective memory is determined by the power of a group. Distinguishing between social and personal memories is difficult (Nguyen and Belk, 2007) as social memories can become appropriated (Wertsch, 1998) as individuals attach personal feelings and emotions to the cultural tools used to remember. According to Belk (1991b) our memories are part of who we are. Memories are not static but rather have shifting boundaries that change depending on current circumstances. Indeed Halbwachs (1992) highlights remembrance is an active process of (re)construction and (re)presentation that is shaped by time, self and social affiliation, as our memories shift and change from the actual event. Eber and Neal (2001) suggest this issue of representation allows individuals to (re)construct memories to create personal and collective identities.

Memory work can foster communal links between consumers. Through their visual analysis of web postings of the Vietnam war, Nguyen and Belk (2007) argue that individual remembering is nested within collective remembering and that individuals (re)construct representations of their past to create identity and social connections with others. Zerubavel (1996) refers to this as a mnemonic community where individuals share the past to groups or communities even though they did not experience that past. Individuals create a memory space that they share with others where remembering becomes a process of identity construction and community belonging (Nguyen and Belk, 2007). As explained in Chapter One, the urban exploration community can be understood as a mnemonic community that share images and stories of the past that they have no personal connection to or have experienced themselves.

Memory is mediated by material culture, memorials, texts and storytelling (Podoshen and Hunt, 2009). Indeed Wertsch (2002) argues that the act of remembering is a form of mediated action where active agents use cultural tools to construct a 'useable past' for identity building. Nora (1989) argues modern memory relies upon "the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image" (p.13). Photographs, films, monuments and artefacts extend memory beyond the confinements of the individual mind (Nguyen and Belk, 2007) and develop material form in "mnemonic artefacts" (Storey, 2003: p.104) that (re)present them. Godfrey and Lilley (2009) examine ways of remembering in the media and argue representations of the past can create regimes of memory as a discursive act of remembrance that reaffirms identity, re-writes history and distorts particular versions

of historical events. Foucault (1980) introduces notions of dominant and resistant memory, where counter-memories of the marginalised, repressed and unheard, resist the dominant representations of the past. Drawing on this work, Godfrey and Lilley (2009) suggest regimes of memory are discursively produced by power, knowledge and media simulation that “obscure, marginalise and produce new truths, truths that not only structure a particular conception of history, but may also diminish the achievements of the past” (p.296). Indeed Belk (1990) states that history is marked and commemorated to counter amnesia and Nora (1989) argues collective memory is a tool of power that can commemorate or erase events, people or places from the past through collective amnesia.

This results in a collective forgetting or social amnesia where unregistered, unchronicled and uncommemorated events become socially forgotten or unknown to the individual (Schwartz, 2009). Further, Baudrillard (1994) suggests commemoration and remembrance manipulates the past that results in “the obliteration of all “negative” events from our memory” (p.12). This resonates with the context of this thesis where abandoned buildings become erased from social memory through eventual demolition or redevelopment. According to Griffin (2004) it is a false perception that the past remains in the realm of the past, but rather we are passively tethered to our past (Hill and Cromatie, 2004). Memories are materialised and (re)presented in objects, media, texts and storytelling. The following section engages in a deeper discussion of the materiality of objects and relates this to abandoned buildings as objects and consumptionscapes of obsolescence.

3.4 Things as Material

This section examines object agency within consumer research through emerging debates of vital materialism and relational thinking. It begins by exploring the vitality of things, followed by a discussion of the fatality of things from a materialist perspective. This section closes with an interdisciplinary discussion of ruins and growing cultural fascination with ruinophilia.

3.4.1 Vitality of Things

Whilst increasing research has acknowledged the fluctuating and fluid value of waste, the emerging debate of vital materialism has drawn attention to the vitality of objects as flows of materiality and the agentic powers of human and non-human things (Bennett, 2004). This has shifted the perception of waste as finitude (Gregson, Watkins and Calestani, 2010) and death (Trotter, 2009; Scanlan, 2005), towards an appreciation of the agency and material persistence of matter. Appaduari (1986) argues objects have social lives as they move through biographies and have a restless character as they experience changes in their commodity status. Additionally, Kopytoff's (1986) cultural biography of things suggests objects, as non-human active social entities, accumulate histories and traces from social, market and non-market interactions. Kopytoff (1986) argues that objects can shift between commodity and non-commodity status, where commoditisation is "a process of

becoming rather than an all-or-nothing state of being” (p.73). This reaffirms the fluctuations of value discussed in section 3.3.2.

Consumer research also examines the agency of objects in material semiotics (Bettany, 2015; 2007), materiality in consumption (Borgerson, 2014; 2005), the storied life of family possessions (Epp and Price, 2010), death objects (Lim and Fitchett, 2011), and object-subject hybrids in alcohol consumption (Cocker, Bannister and Piacentini, 2012). These studies often draw upon various material-centric approaches, including actor-network theory (Martin and Schouten, 2014; Thomas, Price and Schau, 2013; Giesler, 2012; Bettany and Kerrane, 2011), assemblage theories (Canniford and Shanker, 2013; Hui, 2012) and non-representational theories (Hill, Canniford and Mol, 2014), that operate on varying degrees of flat ontologies. Emerging debates on vital materialism (Bennett, 2010; 2004) and relational thinking (Ingold, 2015; 2013b) illuminate the animate qualities of objects that are gaining ground in geographical, ecological, material culture, and anthropological disciplines, but have yet to be utilised within consumer research.

Despite idiosyncratic ontological foundations, these approaches broadly conceive things as flows of materiality, rather than solid forms, and emphasise the thoroughly agentic, resistant and transformative power of things. Material culture studies often follow assumptions of hylomorphism where materiality equates to solidity (Anderson and Wylie, 2009). Drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari, Ingold (2013b) offers a relational-processual perspective of materiality and argues that materials are substances-in-becoming. According to Ingold (2013b) materials can

carry on or perdure, as they are currently cast as objects but are always on their ways to becoming something else. Materials in this sense have “already an ongoing historicity” (Barad, 2003: p.821). Akin to Appadurai’s (1986) social life of the object, Hägerstrand (1976) argues organisms and objects have trajectories that weave into a ‘big tapestry’ throughout their lifespan. Ingold (2013b) draws attention to this temporal trajectory, through the notion of perdurance, as the ‘carry on’ of materials and the life expectancy of a thing. Relating this to consumption, Türe and Ger (2016) demonstrate how material transformation of heirlooms extends their object life. Whilst Türe and Ger (2016) draw attention to object materiality they fail to explore the materiality of matter. Such an approach shifts its focus from the object towards the materials that comprise the object that could reveal a more nuanced understanding of materiality.

Gregson, Watkins and Calestani (2010) argue materials are performative and animate as they continually transform, morph and mutate into other states and materials. Even during destruction, things experience dissolution of form and become ‘unmade’ and as the form of an object is transformed, yet the materials are reanimated into another form (Gregson, Watkins and Calestani, 2010). Zumthor (2006) suggests the material is endless because we can engage with it in so many ways. Similarly, Hawkins’s (2009; 2001) work on recycling draws attention to the enchanting transformation of waste into other objects. These studies demonstrate the unfixed and transformative quality of materials where consumer practices of reuse are acts of salvage that extends the life of material to avoid material loss (Soderman and Carter, 2008).

Bennett's (2004) seminal work 'Matter and Materiality' introduces the perspective of thing-power materialism that suggests things have the power or actancy to animate humans. This approach decentres the human subject by considering the transformative power of things, where non-human entities are conceived as vital actants and humans as "particularly rich and complex collection of materiality" (p.359) that have the potential to be objectified and commodified. For Bennett (2004) materials are disobedient towards culture as they fail to conform to the cultural categories imposed upon it, which she terms material recalcitrance. In particular Bennett (2004) highlights the thing-power of trash whereby through a process of anti-materiality things become devaluated objects as they lose thing-power due to excess. Things gain thing-power when they are considered individually as the inanimate object moves to animate thing status (Bennett, 2004). For Bennett (2010) this transformative potential of materials expresses their enchanting qualities.

Despite shared tenants, vital materialism (Bennett, 2010; 2004) and relational thinking (Ingold, 2015; 2013b) depart on ontological foundations. Vital materialism adopts naïve realism and focuses on the agency of things, whereas Ingold's relational thinking thoroughly adheres to relational accounts of agency, where object vitality is established in the incomplete and always ongoing movement that keeps the object animate. Drawing on Whitehead's (1938) assertion that all living beings are forever immersed in action, Ingold (2013b) argues relationally things are not entities, rather they are in the making, "they do not exist so much as carry on" (p.94), and the body

is a thing, an organism-person as personhood overlaps with thinghood. Bennett (2010) also acknowledges this overlap as “the extent to which the us and the it slip-slide into each other” (p.4). Pollard (2004) considers people as processes that are brought into being in production, ongoing social projects and attentive engagement. Drawing on Barad’s (2003) claim that agency is “an enactment, not something that someone or something has” (p.826-7), Ingold (2013b) argues that rather than possessing agency, beings are possessed by action. This way of thinking allows material, matter and objects the same affordance as human beings as “active participant[s] of the world’s becoming” (Barad, 2003: p.805). Reflecting Gibson’s (1979) notion of affordance, the object ‘allows’ and carries’ (Ingold, 2013b). For example, the pencil allows the writer’s gestures to be carried over onto the inscription of lead into paper. These emerging debates provide nuanced understandings of materiality and contribute to the growing understanding of life within matter.

Within this thesis the term materiality is used to delineate a material dimension and thingness that is both physical (tangible) and imagined or symbolic (intangible). Drawing upon the work of Bennett and Ingold, materials are understood as the stuff that comprises objects (e.g. glass and fibre) and therefore materials are contained within objects. Matter can be understood as the thingness that gives materials and objects presence that can be highly ambiguous and can transcend physicality (e.g. dark matter). This understanding creates a more nuanced understanding of materiality and illuminates alternative ways of conceptualising obsolescent objects that are often plagued with material deterioration.

3.4.2 Fatality of Things

Whilst consumer research has embraced the social life of things (Appadurai, 1986), there remains limited research on the finitude of things and objects. On the issue of finality consumer research has explored the death market (Dobscha, 2016), issues of bereavement (Turley and O'Donohoe, 2015), possession disposition (Turley and O'Donohoe, 2012), death objects (Lim and Fitchett, 2011), death rituals (Hackley and Hackley, 2016; Bonsu and Belk, 2003) and death of brands (Russell and Schau, 2014; Muñiz and Schau, 2005). In the sociology and psychology of death we understand dying to entail loss, sadness and grief (Neimeyer, Franz and Krieger, 1983). These feelings of loss can occur in a variety of situations beyond human death, such as loss of identity (Gabel, 2016), death of a pet (Mansfield, 2016) and loss of community in instances such as natural disasters (Baker, 2009).

In humans, the moment of death is considered as a biological phenomenon, the irreversible cessation of the functioning of the person as a whole (Truog and Miller, 2010). Death can be sudden or expected, just or unjust, in-time or off-time (Carr 2012), yet advances in intensive care and organ transplantation blur this moment of finality as life becomes unnaturally preserved. In an interdisciplinary analysis of mortality, Connolly (2011) considers the ruin as a representation of dying in material culture: “free from the interference of life-sustaining measures, the dying patient slowing takes leave from life and becomes a *ruin*” (p.215 emphasis in original). However, understanding the moment of death in material culture remains a complex and under-researched area. In an attempt to bridge this theoretical gap, Anderson,

Tonner and Hamilton (forthcoming) examine the death of a building and introduce two concepts: 'physical death' where once physical integrity of the building rots, the cost to save it outstrips its apparent value and its condition is deemed terminal in that there is no realistic chance of saviour, and 'cultural death' where cultural value is diminished and vanishes from living memory. Anderson, Tonner and Hamilton (forthcoming) suggest cultural death manifests in three forms; *cultural obsolescence*, where the movement from use to disuse is caused by social and cultural progression; *loss of cultural places*, where important sites of cultural heritage and social memory are lost from collective memory; and *loss of cultural skill* where technical crafts and skills are no longer practised due to social changes and the traces of these skills are cleansed from the landscape. These concepts move our understanding of death into the material culture domain and reveal consumer grief can be driven by broader sociocultural issues that extend beyond personal connections.

From vital materialism and relational materialism, we understand things as materials in constant flow (Ingold, 2013b) even during the processes of decay and decomposition. Tim Edensor (2005b) draws attention to the agentic power of human and non-humans in the process of decay that "transform the familiar material world, changing the form and texture of objects, eroding their assigned functions and meanings, and blurring the boundaries between things" (p.318). This reflects Bennett's (2004) account of the slip-slide that occurs between objects. The process of decay is fickle as different rates of decomposition completely erase materials whilst others remain (Edensor, 2005c), creating a temporal collage (Lynch, 1972). Through decay all materials succumb to the processes of dissolving, rotting and

pulverising, rendering them unrecognisable (Douglas, 1966). This is reflected in Taussig's (2003) account of decay in bogs and swamps where life and death are suspended "between a miraculous preservation and an always there of immanent decay" (p.15-16). As such, decay disrupts the linearity of memory as it causes temporalities and materials to intersect, collide and merge through decomposition.

For Crang (2012) decay involves a degree of unravelling and unbecoming, where "unravelling the materiality becomes more evident as the form is lost" and "unbecoming as material process with its adjectival sense as being disreputable" (p.766). Here, we note the loss of memory and meaning that were once attached to the object. Similarly, drawing upon Deleuze's notion of time-image, Crang (2010) argues that organic decay follows chronological time, shifting the material through death to rebirth, whereas disposition practices follows time-image where time is distorted by artificial movements of demolition. This further illuminates the temporality of materiality evident in understandings of object disposal and decomposition.

In direct contrast to Crang's (2010) account of decay as loss, DeSilvey (2006) argues decay is an animating process that can recover memory and generate new stories through new uses that have been created by ecological processes and non-human agents. This reveals the procreative power of decay (Bataille, 1993) where materials have a double-life as they evolve into new forms of being (DeSilvey, 2006). Viewed in this way, objects are not stable entities with fixed identities but rather things in process. This understanding of objects as processual things is particularly important

to understanding obsolescent objects. DeSilvey (2006) calls for research on decay and suggests researchers practise liberating negativism (Sloterdijk, 1987) whereby we confront unpleasant material, pushing past discomfort, aversion and nausea to reach the threshold of other ways of knowing. This helps confront the matter of materiality and is reflected in the methodology of this thesis (see Chapter Four, section 4.3.3).

Not all objects decay and cease, but instead persist and endure. Ingold (2013b) argues that things exist and persist because they leak, as an interchange of materials between things. This is exemplified by Gregson, Watkins and Calestani (2010) account of the persistence of asbestos as a performative material that transforms, morphs and mutates into other states to prolong its material life. For Ingold (2013b), the landscape is a 'mound' that continually grows over itself through the processes of metabolism and decomposition that fuel further growth. In contrast, objects, and buildings as an extension of this, are 'monuments' that are stuck in time until an archaeologist rediscovers them. "Like beached whales, they seem to have been left stranded on the shores of history, while time moves on. As it does so, the gap between a lost past and the vivid present grows ever wider" (Ingold, 2013b: p.79). Heidegger (1960) distinguishes between the object and the thing where the prior is complete in itself and we cannot join with it (over-againstness) but we can observe it, and the latter is a coming together or gathering of materials in movement (Ingold, 2013b). As such, a thing becomes a monument when it is stopped in its path and becomes an object. These diverse views on the fatality of things reveals decay as a procreative and degenerative process that animates materials and transforms objects

into matter. However, decay follows diverse temporalities that perish some materials whilst others persist as objects. This raises important questions as to how to conceptualise the materiality of a decaying building that is at once place, object and material. This thesis seeks to bridge this conceptual gap by drawing upon Ingold's relational thinking and using the tripartite perspective of spatialities, temporalities and materialities. The following section explores existent literature on ruins to understand the abandoned building as an object, artefact and material in process towards demise.

3.4.3 Ruins as Object, Artefact and Thing in Process

Since the rise to popularity in the 18th century ruins have historically been admired for their sublime grandeur and wild desolation (Shanks, 2014). Throughout history ruins have been understood as signifying displacements of time, space and being. Indeed Simmel (1959) considers the ruin as a remnant of past life and a signifier of death in describing it as “the site of life from which life has departed...the present form of past life” (p.265). In 1767 Denis Diderot described his experience of walking amongst ruins as being “between two eternities” (1995: p.196). Similarly, Cairns and Jacobs (2014) suggest these obsolete buildings become “in place but out of time” (p.103) and Augé (2003) highlights the ruin's capacity to disturb linear notions of time. Benjamin (1999) furthers this notion of disjuncture by suggesting that ruins have the potential to exist as a dialectical image that haunts the present with an abandoned future. This relates to Derrida's (1994) notion of hauntology as

an alternative ontology that displaces the importance of being and presence by drawing attention to the 'specter', that is neither present, absent, dead or alive (Laclau, 1995). Derrida (1994) considers the endurance of certain historical events and notions as examples of hauntology, whereby revenants from the past are stuck in a continuous limbo of being and non-being, never fully coming into fruition in the present day. Indeed Sleight-Johnson (2015) conceptualises the ruin as an amorphous object "a space between being and non-being, at the border – a blinding immediacy, a fragment that inheres in dust, in a series of events" (p.173). Relating this to understandings of consumption, Edensor (2005c) posits that ruins exist in a state of indeterminacy, jointly absent and present in a state of unfinished disposal (Degen and Hetherington, 2001), in limbo between rejection and obliteration.

This liminal existence of being and non-being is exemplified by St Peter's Seminary. Built in 1966 and abandoned in 1980, the ruin of St Peter's has existed for longer than the building in use. Once derelict, the concrete structure slowly began to unravel due to both vandalism and water ingress, transforming the modernist icon into a perilous ruin (Archibald and Roger 2015; Lorimer and Murray 2015). Buildings may exhibit biographies as they evolve over time, for example, Maclaran and Brown (2005) illustrate how refurbishment changed the meanings associated with a festival shopping mall. The vocabulary of architecture also brings life to buildings through bodily (e.g. building structures described as bones) and spiritual (e.g. the building's soul) metaphors (Cairns and Jacobs, 2014). Referring to the post-industrial city, Miles (2010) suggests that "architecture is actively mobilised in order to reproduce a myth of urban vitality" (p.77). This sense of urban vitality is

supported by retailers and urban planners whose efforts concentrate on “animating the urban experience” and offering experiential spaces for consumption (Warnaby 2013: p.29). However, less attention is given to what happens when buildings no longer fulfil this function. Notably, Cairns and Jacobs’s (2014) ‘Buildings Must Die’ draws attention to the death, destruction and deterioration of buildings as often overlooked alternatives to permanence and endurance. They argue that under capitalism the fate of buildings is determined by the market and draw on David Harvey’s (1975: p.124) description of “perpetual perishing” to highlight how architecture is linked to destruction whereby buildings can only be saved if aesthetic or historical value is strong enough to prevail over market value.

Contemporary understandings of ruins are ambiguous and contested (Pétursdóttir and Olsen, 2014). This has been furthered by the variety of ruin terminology; authentic ruin (Huysen, 2010), romantic ruin (Ashurst, 2007), heritage ruin (Pétursdóttir, 2012), industrial ruin (Edensor, 2005a), and modern ruin (Pétursdóttir and Olsen, 2014). Modern ruins are generally considered to be buildings constructed in the recent past dating from the 19th century. Modern ruins of the recent past are rarely granted the same fascination, admiration or protection by heritage agencies because of their historical immaturity and rotting state they are “caught up somewhere between disposal and history” (Pétursdóttir, 2012: p.33). Like cherished family objects (Epp and Price, 2010), even the most important buildings are not guaranteed to be saved from ruination. Crawford (2015) suggests “survival alone does not equate with significance. Indeed sometimes it is a site’s very obscurity that explains its preservation” (p.388).

For Apel (2015) the appeal of historical ruins is rooted in Romanticism whereas the contemporary fascination with modern ruins is driven by anxiety of capitalism. Following the product life cycle, once buildings have lost their functional use, they subsequently lose value and become considered as waste (Edensor, 2005c). In contrast, the heritage ruin is a disciplined, sanitised and purified space that is devoid of natural and modern intrusions (Edensor, 2005a). Ruins are generally viewed as outcomes of destruction (Stoler 2008), societal or architectural failure (Crawford 2015), costs of consumerism (Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2014) and the consequences of capitalism (Edensor 2005a) where capital is constantly moved to the most productive places, leaving in its wake dereliction and urban decay.

The magnitude of deindustrialisation is most evident in North American cities where economic instability, deindustrialisation, the collapse of Fordism and rise of neoliberalism (Apel, 2015) has created “a ruin landscape” (Pétursdóttir and Olsen, 2014: p.4983) that is littered with empty factories, derelict shopping malls, and redundant mining towns. The rise of ruin porn and ruinophilia, as artistic genres driven by fascination with ruins, has rekindled the 18th century cultural fascination with desolation and ruination. These genres celebrate the aesthetic of decay associated with ruination and deindustrialisation. Apel (2015) and Leary (2011) critique ruinophilia for romanticising serious social problems and economic failure that demoralises residents and sensationalises austerity and poverty. Detroit has become the focus of this social critique and Leary (2011) argues the cultural

fascination with Detroit's ruins is a lament for 20th century history and culture, and a social anxiety about the future.

Urban studies highlight the creative destruction of cityscapes as an inevitable outcome of capitalism, such as Manhattan slum clearances (Page, 2001), Les Halles' marketplace destruction (Wakeman, 2007) and Singapore's waterfront regeneration (Chang and Huang, 2005), which represent intentional reconstructions of social history, collective memory and a silencing of local memory. This helps contextualise the cultural fascination with ruination and urban exploration imagery within a sociohistorical frame that will guide understandings of consumer practices, meaning-making and value production within this thesis.

Abandoned buildings shape whole communities. Once thriving communities of industry and activity become desolate zones of inertia: "Movement is stilled, and where people had once laboured with tools and materials, there now stands a structure – a building – that shows every sign of permanence and solidity" (Ingold, 2013b: p.47). Despite the concerted efforts by humans to cast materials in fixed and final forms, Ingold (2013b) reminds us that buildings continue to undergo processes of movement, decay and regeneration. This highlights how buildings can be simultaneously spaces of activity, places of meaning, objects of design, and comprised of materials. As ruins, abandoned buildings exist between spatial, temporal and material categories as it continuously morphs in a process of becoming *something* else. Based on the context of urban exploration, this thesis frames abandoned buildings as equally obsolescent objects and obsolescent

consumptionscapes that have fallen out of marketplace circulation and seeks to understand how consumers engage with this obsolescence. Throughout this thesis abandoned buildings are often referred to as *things* to be inclusive and capture this indeterminate position between consumptionscape and object.

3.5 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter reviews consumer research literature on consuming objects and explores constructs of possessions, gifting, disposal and values of waste. Drawing upon interdisciplinary discussions from material culture, social archaeology and cultural anthropology, this chapter also explores distinct understandings of waste as an artefact that signifies traces of life, history and memory. Further, the chapter examines emerging debates of vital materialism and relational thinking, and reviews understandings of objects as processual becomings. This raises a number of theoretical gaps within existent literature.

First, a growing stream of consumer research has examined waste (Tadajewski and Hamilton, 2014; Bradshaw and Canniford, 2010; Parsons, 2008; De Coverly et al., 2008), conduits of disposal (Fernandez, Brittain and Bennett, 2011; Cappellini, 2009; Parsons and Maclaran, 2009) and circulations of inactive objects (Kuruoğlu and Ger, 2015; Epp and Price, 2010). There remains limited research on obsolescent objects that remain in a state of disuse and out of circulation and how obsolescence is

consumed. Bridging this theoretical gap, this thesis seeks to develop a rich understanding of how consumers engage with obsolescence through the context of urban exploration. Further, existent literature prioritises object transmission at the family (Curasi, Price and Arnould, 2004; Price, Arnould and Curasi, 2000) or person-to-person level (Lastovicka and Fernandez 2005). Buildings become inherited by societies as they outlive their creators and owners to be sold within the marketplace. As such, this thesis aims to move beyond the context of the family to examine how consumers engage with obsolescence at a societal level and seeks to highlight societal inheritance and legacy as important considerations to consumer culture.

Second, various studies acknowledge the materiality of consumption (Türe and Ger, 2016; Borgerson, 2005), yet fail to engage with the thingness or matter of materiality. This thesis seeks to address this theoretical gap by drawing upon the work of Ingold (2013b; 2007a) and vital materialism (Bennett, 2004). The methodological implications of these approaches are further outlined within section 4.2.2 within Chapter Four. The decay of abandoned buildings emerges as a useful context to explore the nuanced distinctions between materiality, materials and matter within the consumption domain.

Third, existent consumer research distinguishes between objects and spaces and/or places. This is reflected within this thesis by means of two separate literature review chapters. However, the context of urban exploration illuminates the complexity of conceptualising buildings as simply objects or spaces and/or places. The discussions

within these two literature chapters highlights how buildings can be simultaneously objects, spaces and places. As such, this thesis frames abandoned buildings as equally obsolescent objects and obsolescent consumptionscapes that have fallen out of marketplace circulation and seeks to understand how consumers engage with this obsolescence by using a tripartite perspective of spatialities, temporalities and materialities. The next chapter details the methodology that guides this thesis.

Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology guiding this thesis. The chapter commences by detailing the research aim and research questions of this research and continues by detailing how the methodology is informed by interpretivist philosophy, material semiotic approaches within Consumer Culture Theory and Tim Ingold's relational thinking. The chapter continues by outlining the ethnographic methodology and data collection methods, including; netnography, ethnographic fieldwork, interviewing and researcher diary. The ethical considerations undertaken within this study are then outlined, followed by a discussion of analysis and interpretation focusing on issues of validity, reliability and reflexivity. Methodological limitations are outlined, before this chapter closes with concluding comments.

Research Aim and Questions

This thesis aims to develop a rich understanding of how consumers engage with obsolescence through the context of urban exploration. This aim is addressed through three research questions:

4. How do consumers engage with the spatialities, temporalities and materialities of obsolescent objects and consumptionscapes?
5. What meanings do consumers ascribe to obsolescent objects and consumptionscapes?
6. How do consumers produce value from their encounters with obsolescent objects and consumptionscapes?

4.2 Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

This section outlines the interpretivist philosophical approach used within this thesis. The section continues by detailing Ingold's relational thinking as a useful approach for examining spaces of obsolescent consumption. This discussion positions relational thinking alongside other material semiotic approaches used within Consumer Culture Theory and teases out the various epistemological and methodological implications of this approach.

4.2.1 Interpretivist Philosophy and Consumer Research

Social science has often divided research approaches into two camps: objectivist or subjectivist, with the subsequent paradigms of positivism and interpretivism being

associated respectively. For example: Morgan and Smircich (1980) introduce the objective-subjective continuum and Burrell and Morgan (1979) suggest ontology questions whether reality is either external to an individual (objective) or is derived from an individual's consciousness (subjective). A summary of the key differences between positivism and interpretivism is provided in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Summary of research approach, adapted from Hudson and Ozanne (1988)

Philosophical Assumptions	Positivism	Interpretivism
Ontology	Reality is objective, singular and external	Reality is socially constructed, multiple and context dependent
Epistemology	Nomothetic, context independent	Idiographic, context dependent
Axiology	Developing Erklären or an explanation of social facts	Developing Verstehen or an understanding of social phenomena

At the most basic level, ontology questions the nature of reality and existence (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). Positivism generally follows a realist ontology that claims reality is 'real' and graspable through scientific methods, and reality is objective where social life is external and outside our influence (Bryman, 2012; Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). In contrast, interpretivism often follows a relativist ontology that suggests there are multiple constructed realities (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003) and considers reality as a social construction that is subjectively experienced (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Epistemology refers to the relationship between the knower and what can be known (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Positivism suggests knowledge is verifiable through scientific experimentation, whereas interpretivism

suggests all knowledge is partial and socially constructed (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). This dichotomous approach has limited applicability to actual research practice and fails to capture the plethora of alternative philosophical perspectives and the often-overlapping nature of research approaches. For example, Hirschman and Holbrook (1986) draw upon realist ontology by suggesting reality is 'out there', but the experience of this reality is fundamentally subjective (Szmigin and Foxall, 2000). Using gloss terms, such as qualitative or interpretivist research, can reproduce misconceptions and misleading connotations that undermine institutional legitimacy (Thompson, Arnould and Giesler, 2013). As such, interpretivism should be thought of as an umbrella term that encompasses a range of philosophical approaches, such as subjectivism, phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics (Ozanne and Hudson, 1989). The development of Interpretative Consumer Research emphasises that consumer behaviour is more complex than positivist grand narratives can represent (Simonson et al., 2001) and embraces increasingly pluralistic and diverse methods where no one accepted method dominates (Shankar and Goulding, 2001). In particular, the more recent development of Consumer Culture Theory legitimises ontological pluralism, embraces the complexity of individuals' multiple realities (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995), and rejects generalised or nomothetic views of culture that are associated with positivism (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988).

Consumer Culture Theory has received a number of critiques. First, the branding of Consumer Culture Theory is critiqued for the inadvertent creation of a hegemonic unified theory with implicit norms, ideals and practices that are not conducive to the apparent embrace of alternative methods and approaches (Peñaloza and Valtonen,

2009). This study exploits the diversity of methodological approaches within Consumer Culture Theory by drawing upon relational thinking (Ingold, 2015; 2013b) and vital materialism (Bennett, 2010; 2004) (see section 4.2.2). Second, Consumer Culture Theory is critiqued for over-emphasising the importance of the individual as an appropriate unit of analysis for conducting cultural research. Moisander, Valtonen and Hirsto (2009) suggest this stems from the over-use of phenomenological interviews that fail to engage with the critical elements of consumers' lived experience. Advancing this critique Askegaard and Linnet (2011) argue future studies should focus on the 'context of the context' that connect the sociohistorical context and macro-social frameworks within the micro-social phenomenological lived experience. In other words, interpretivist consumer research should explore consumers' lifeworlds whilst acknowledging the cultural, historical and societal conditions that illuminate the meaning and legitimacy of marketplace practices, interactions and identities. This study explores the context of context in obsolescent consumption by focusing on consumers' experiential engagement whilst also attending to the macro-social conditions that have popularised urban exploration practise and photography. Thompson, Arnould and Giesler (2013) suggest that the field can be further enriched and diversified by blending historical, material, critical and experiential perspectives. Following this premise, this study draws upon Tim Ingold's relational thinking and uses a tripartite perspective of spatialities, temporalities and materialities to examine the multi-dimensionality of obsolescent consumption.

4.2.2 Relational Thinking

This research uses Ingold's (2015; 2013b) 'relational thinking' to develop a rich understanding of how consumers engage with obsolescence through the context of urban exploration. As a social anthropologist Tim Ingold's work is unusually philosophical. His work seeks to collapse the nature/culture binary and moves towards a more comprehensive understanding of human life as inherently connected to the environment. Ingold's early anthropological work draws on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body and Gibson's (1979) ecological perspective, where the person is understood as an organism that develops through growth and maturation within the environment and fields of social relationships. Whilst Gibson (1979) conceives the individual as confronting the world 'out there', Ingold (2011) conceives the individual as an organism-in-its-environment where practices are equally biological and cultural as they are creatively grown within the human being and developed within the environment through training and expertise. Such an approach is realist yet deeply interpretivist that treats nature and culture as equal forces shaping life. Ingold's later work draws upon Deleuze and Guattari's relational ontologies and is largely regarded as non-representational, yet he refrains from using this label. As a result Ingold's work emphasises relationality and the epistemological importance of viewing objects as constant flows of matter in movement.

Ingold's (2011) 'relational thinking' draws upon the notion of the rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004) where the world is considered to be in constant movement, continually enfolding in its growth and relations with all other things. Ingold (2011)

argues life is a “progeneration, a continually ravelling and unravelling relational manifold” (p.140) and can be understood as a rhizome that connects beings through ongoing movement and activity “where the life-lines of different beings cross, interpenetrate, appear or disappear (only, perhaps, to reappear at some other moment)” (p.142). This relational ontology is a process of ‘coming and going’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: p.25) rather than starting and finishing (Ingold, 2011). In other words, reality is formed through relations between objects, subjects and is not determined through physical material.

Following Ingold (2015; 2013b), this research is guided by a relational ontology in which there are multiple realities that are formed by relations between all matter, things, people and places, rather than substance (Schaab, 2013). In contrast to object-orientated ontologies that are characterised by flat ontology, Ingold’s work follows an ecological approach that breathes life into objects, matter and being. This relational thinking shares ground with material semiotic approaches that prioritise relationships rather than static entities.

A growing stream of consumer research has drawn upon object-orientated ontologies (Schouten, Martin and DuFault, 2015), such as actor-network theory (Bettany, 2015; Martin and Schouten, 2014; Thomas, Price and Schau, 2013; Giesler, 2012; Bettany and Kerrane, 2011), heterogeneous network relations (Bajde, 2013), practice theory (Magaudda, 2011; Schau, Muñiz and Arnould, 2009), assemblage theories (Canniford and Badje, 2015; Canniford and Shankar, 2013; Hui, 2012) and non-representational theories (Hill, 2015; Hill, Canniford and Mol, 2014). This

expanding body of work pays greater attention to the importance of objects in consumption and positions the relations between objects and subjects at the forefront of analysis.

Despite this common focus on relationality, these approaches have various deficiencies that limit their use within this research. For example, actor-network theory focuses upon action and heterogeneous networks of people and things (Bajde, 2013) that could be useful for examining how obsolescent objects relate to active objects within the marketplace. However, actor-network theory is culturally flat, privileges things over people (Newton, 2007) and fails to consider the social, cultural and historical conditions, which within this study are important considerations that shape the modern cultural fascination with ruination and abandonment.

Assemblage theory draws attention to the webs of relations (Law, 2009) between meanings, uses and encounters in networks of consumption resources (Canniford and Shankar, 2013). This approach could be used to demonstrate the webs of relations between the spatial, temporal and material conditions of obsolescent consumption. However, whilst assemblage theory demonstrates how webs of relations exist together, it fails to explain how these diverse things connect with each other (Ingold, 2013b). Further, this focus on assembling is too restrictive for examining emergent domains of consumption where consumers' practices, meanings and values are unknown. Rather than following a specific theory that imposes assumptions, this thesis draws inspiration from Ingold's thinking to illuminate the particularities of obsolescent consumption.

Practice theory draws attention to relations between people, objects, and competences (Shove and Pantzar, 2005) where practices emerge as a nexus of procedures, engagements and understandings (Warde, 2005) and can be used to tease out the relationships between structure and agency. As such, practice theory could act as a lens to explain how various practices of urban exploration intersect and relate to issues of consumer agency and societal structure. However, practice theory fails to capture the vitality of non-human life and has been critiqued for its restricted focus on analysing micro social phenomena (Brand, 2010). This research pays attention to the vitality of decay as an animate process through its sensory ethnographic approach (see section 4.3.3) that is fitting with Ingold's phenomenological and materialist considerations.

Non-representational theories move beyond issues of representation and re-focus attention to performativity and bodily practices (Patchett, 2010). This approach would prioritise experiential encounters and the 'unrepresentable' (Dewsbury, 2003) facets of obsolescent consumption such as precognition, affect and atmosphere. Previous research on urban exploration by Garrett (2012) offers an account of such embodied experience. This study also attends to the embodied experience of the researcher through the sensory ethnography (see section 4.3.3). In addressing calls for experiential research to consider the context of context (Askegaard and Linnett, 2011), this thesis uses an ethnographic approach, netnography and in-depth interviewing to refocus attention to how these experiences connect with broader sociocultural movements.

Hill, Canniford and Mol (2014) regard the above theories (with practice theory as the exception) as relational ontologies, which they define as a “set of approaches that understand ‘things in the world’ as taking on form and meaning through their relations with other things, rather than possessing any essential substance” (p.1). Rather than following a strict theory, this research draws upon Ingold’s (2015; 2013b) relational thinking that encompasses many facets of material semiotic approaches without being restricted by their theoretical boundaries. In particular, Ingold’s work enables the tripartite perspective of spatialities, temporalities and materialities to work together in developing a rich understanding of how consumers engage with obsolescence. The following sections examine Ingold’s thoughts on four key notions (enskilment, making, meshwork and correspondence) and explore the epistemological and methodological implications for this study.

Enskilment and Making

For Ingold (2011), the human is a sentient practitioner who gains knowledge through *enskilment* where skill and capabilities are developed from being immersed within the environment. In contrast to enculturation as a type of social learning that uses pre-existing internal psychological mechanisms, *enskilment* is a practical ability that develops through action and movement within the environment. Turnbull (1991) suggests knowledge is generated within a field of practices where “all knowing is like travelling” (p.35). Ingold (2011) deems this as knowing from the inside,

whereby “we *know as we go*, from place to place” (p.229 emphasis in original). Knowing arises as an active process of movement where the sentient practitioner engages with the environment to develop knowledge. This is reflected within the ethnographic approach of this research and in particular the use of sensory ethnography (see section 4.3.3) where the researcher becomes a sentient practitioner in gathering field data.

Ingold’s (2013b) relational approach to understanding objects has particular resonance to understanding how objects are unmade through ruination. Ingold (2013b) argues that material culture studies prioritise finished objects and their interactions with people, and neglect the creative productive processes that bring objects into being. To counter this, Ingold (2013b) draws attention to the process of *making* as an intertwining between the sensory awareness of the practitioner and the generative becoming of materials. This approach emphasises the flow patterns of materials that become encased in objects, and the traces of movement in practice (e.g. manual, bodily gestures). This has epistemological implications for understanding the materiality of objects, and at a methodological level it offers a new ways of understanding how the researcher engages with objects whilst gathering data. Viewed in this way, ethnographic fieldwork emerges as a process of *making* from the spatiality, temporality and materiality of the environment, and interviewing is collaboratively *made* by researcher and participants.

Meshwork and Correspondence

Actor-network theory conceives that humans and non-human actors are connected in a network of social relations. Similarly, assemblage theory demonstrates how things, relations and people become intertwined in assemblage formations. In critique, Ingold (2015; 2013b) argues these approaches simply show how things exist together, but fail to demonstrate how things attach or cling to one another. In other words, actor-network and assemblage theories fail to explain the connections that hold things together in these apparent arrangements. Rather than network, Ingold (2007b) introduces the notion of *meshworks* as bundles of lines that are open-ended, intertwined and tangled. This intertwining binds them in a tension that holds things together (Ingold, 2007b). Rather than a network or assemblage of heterogeneous interconnected points or entities, Ingold (2008) conceives the world as a meshwork of interwoven lines, threads and pathways where agency emerges from the interaction between lines within the meshwork.

More recently, Ingold (2015) argues life is constructed by lines that are “laid down by animate beings as they thread their ways through the world, rather as plants lay down their roots in the soil” (p.82), which mark traces of their existence. In developing the conceptualisation of the meshwork, Ingold (2015) suggests these lines create knots as they intermingle and generate new forms. These knots fasten lines together within the meshwork through a process of *correspondence* where lines wrap around one another and carry forth in movement. For Ingold (2015), correspondence appears in all forms of life, including social relationships, gifting and

making. Ingold (2015) reimagines the binding obligation or 'hau' of the gift (Mauss, 1925) as two hands clasping in a movement of correspondence where hands 'carry on' together by wrapping around one another like strands of a rope that is never finished and always weaving in process. For Ingold (2015), correspondence is the essence of sociality that allows us to cling or hold onto one another, and uses the example of kinship as a correspondence of anthropogenesis that carries on through generations.

At an epistemological level Ingold's notions of meshwork and correspondence offer new ways of understanding how various resources intersect within consumption. At a methodological level it illuminates the importance of collecting diverse data sets that will enable the researcher to understand research phenomenon. For example, during ethnographic fieldwork a range of sensory material can be collected, such as visual images, soundscape recordings, materials, and verbal audio recordings to capture descriptions of texture and taste. In contrast to the deadening characteristics of flat ontologies, Ingold's relational approach breathes life into material perspectives and adds depth of understanding to how animate and inanimate life connect within their being in the world.

4.3 Ethnographic Methodology

This section outlines the ethnographic approach used within this thesis. It begins by detailing the changes within ethnography and goes on to examine applications of ethnography within consumer research. Finally, this section draws on Pink's (2015) sensory ethnography and details how it offers a useful methodology for researching obsolescence in the context of urban exploration.

4.3.1 Understanding Ethnography

Ethnography originates from early 20th century studies of British social anthropology and the Chicago School of sociological fieldwork (Brewer, 2000) that emphasised the importance of understanding cultures through empirical fieldwork. Brewer (2000) broadly defines ethnography as a “style of research” (p.11) that studies people within their natural settings and seeks to capture “social meanings and ordinary activities” (p.6) where the researcher actively participates without influencing the research field or setting. Since its conception, ethnography has developed against critiques that challenge the reliability and validity of the approach. Notably, the ‘double crisis’ of ethnography (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998) emphasises two critiques: the *crisis of representation* questions the ability of ethnography to provide truth claims to reality through ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973), and the *crisis of legitimatisation* challenges the ability for ethnography to validate claims made, as any account will always be partial, not neutral and shaped by the ethnographer

(Brewer, 2000). In relation to these critiques, Atkinson, Delamont and Housley (2007) observe a shift from traditional ethnographic methods of observation to post-modern approaches that utilise fragmented methods and privilege experience and engagement. Delamont (2007) argues traditional approaches that use participant observation are 'proper ethnography', whereas Pink (2013) argues purely observational approaches restricts what ethnographers can do, and presumes that knowledge of a culture can be extracted by a simple process of observation, collection and interpretation. In line with Pink (2013), O'Reilly (2005) offers a broader, more flexible definition of ethnography as an iterative-inductive process that uses a variety of methods and involves "direct and sustained contact with human agents, within the context of their daily lives" to produce "a richly written account that respects the irreducibility of human experience, that acknowledges the role of theory as well as the researcher's own role and that view humans as part object/part subject" (p.3). Following this broader understanding of ethnography, this thesis uses a variety of methods (including sensory fieldwork, netnography and in-depth ethnographic interviews) in an effort to create a richly written account whilst acknowledging that attempts to capture the complexity of human experience are always partial.

4.3.2 Ethnography in Consumer Research

Since the 'interpretivist turn' (Sherry, 1991) many consumer culture studies draw upon the ethnographic tradition, including; the odyssey (Belk, Wallendorf and

Sherry, 1989), retail environments (Diamond et al., 2009; Kozinets et al., 2004; Kozinets et al., 2002; Peñaloza, 1998; Sherry 1998) subcultures (Goulding et al., 2009; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995) and family (Coskuner-Balli and Thompson, 2013; Epp and Price, 2010; Heisley and Levy, 1991). In particular, ethnographic methods have been used in experiential consumption studies, including river rafting (Arnould and Price, 1993), mountain men re-enactments (Belk and Costa, 1998), Burning Man desert festivals (Kozinets, 2002a), mountain climbers (Tumbat and Belk, 2011), public place street artists (Visconti et al., 2010), sacred places (Higgins and Hamilton, 2012), surfers (Canniford and Shankar, 2013), lifestyle sports (Woermann and Rokka, 2015) and tailgating events (Bradford and Sherry, 2015).

Ethnography is particularly well suited to studying urban exploration because of the centrality of experiential consumption to consumers' engagement with the environment. In particular, this research draws upon the ethnographies of public street art from Visconti et al. (2010), for its resonance with the urban environment and illegal practices, and surfing culture from Canniford and Shankar (2013) for its attention to geographic materialities and consumption resources in consumers' creation of meaningful and valuable experiences. Building upon this tradition, this study aims to stretch existing ethnographic approaches towards performative potentialities by using sensory ethnography (Pink, 2015) and ethnographic walking (Ingold and Vergunst, 2008) that attend to the performative and emplaced engagement consumers experience whilst exploring abandoned buildings.

4.3.3 Sensory Ethnography and Urban Walking

This research draws upon Pink's (2015) sensory ethnography and Ingold's account of urban walking (Ingold and Vergunst, 2008; Lee and Ingold, 2006) as a means to grasp at the unfamiliar landscape and cultural practices of urban exploration. Pink (2015) argues sensory ethnography offers a way to depart from purely observational techniques and attend to the reflexive and experiential process of ethnography. For Pink (2015) sensory ethnography as a re-thinking of ethnographic methods that draws attention to the centrality of experience, perception, knowing, memory and imagination. In particular, sensory ethnography considers embodiment is central to conducting fieldwork (Pink, 2015; Coffey, 1999) where the body understood is a core site of knowing (Csordas, 1990). Further, sensory ethnography acknowledges the emplacement of the body within the environment that considers ethnographer as situated within social, material, and political power relations that are integral to the ethnographic process (Pink, 2015). Furthermore, sensory ethnography considers memory as an individual and collective sensory practice where memories can be sedimented in the body and other material practices (Sutton, 2001). Pink (2015) argues knowing emerges from embodiment and emplacement as ethnographers learn through the body and the environment. This aligns with Ingold's (2011) account of the sentient practitioner who develops ways of knowing through the environment.

This approach is particularly useful to understanding how consumers encounter and experience obsolescence and has particular resonance to the highly tactile and

sensory environment of abandoned buildings, as previous accounts document (DeSilvery, 2006; Edensor, 2005a). Emphasising the importance kinetic movement to urban exploration, this thesis draws upon Ingold's account of urban walking. Ingold (2004) argues urban walking is a way of understanding the multisensory 'being there' of experience through the tactile grounded nature of walking. It focuses on movement of the body, perception of the environment, development of skill and knowledge, and relations between human and non-human entities that can enrich understandings of how individuals develop routes through the landscape and reflect upon these practices (Ingold and Vergunst, 2008). This has particular relevance to studying urban exploration as a physically demanding activity where individuals explore the landscape on foot for abandoned buildings and use their bodies to navigate through derelict and dilapidated buildings. Together, urban walking and sensory ethnography offers a means to understand how consumers encounter, engage and experience obsolescence that attends to the spatiality, temporality and materiality of obsolescent objects and consumptionscapes.

Pink (2015) moves sensory ethnography away from the often over-individualising tendencies of phenomenological accounts by insisting upon collective memories and imaginations. Indeed Valtonen, Markuksela and Moisander (2010) recommend a greater focus upon the cultural aspects of the senses and propose a 'practice-based culturalist approach' to sensory ethnography that focuses upon senses in action in consumer practice, by directing "episteme attention to the ways in which the senses play a part in the performance and coordination of practices and in the subsequent interaction with the social and material world" (p.377). In particular, Valtonen,

Markuksela and Moisander (2010) propose the use of multi-sensory observation that re-focuses the researcher to observe typically unnoticeable odours, temperatures, textures that are experienced through the body. This study utilises walking as a sensory and cultural practice that is deeply performative and places the researcher in relation to the environment. Following Dewsbury's (2010) account of performative methodologies, this study takes the body seriously as an embodied, emplaced, reflective researcher tool that co-fabricates (Cadman, 2009) the research in collaboration with participants and the social phenomena. The senses are regarded as inter-relational (Ingold, 2011) where vision becomes intrinsically linked to other senses, transforming 'detached observation' into 'skilled visions' of multisensory practice, where "look is coordinated with skilled movement, with rapidly changing points of view, or with other senses such as touch" (Grasseni, 2007: p.4). Further, in appealing to calls for greater attention of cultural within sensory accounts (Valtonen, Markuksela and Moisander, 2010) this study forges stronger links with socio-cultural, historical and political forces that shape the context of context (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011). As such, this study stretches the potentialities of ethnography towards sensory, performative and relational sensitivities. The following section will provide an overview of this approach in practice by detailing the main methods of data collection.

4.4 Data Collection

This section details the various collection methods used within this thesis. It begins with an overview of the data collection and issues accessing the field. This section continues with a detailed discussion of each data collection method and explains the relevance of each method to this research. Issues of sampling and recruitment are discussed within each relevant section.

4.4.1 Ethnographic Fieldwork: Accessing the Field

Following the multi-method ethnographies of Canniford and Shankar (2013) and Visconti et al. (2010), this study uses a range of collection methods, including; netnography, ethnographic fieldwork, fieldnotes, photographs and ethnographic interviews. Table 4.2 details an overview of data collection methods and materials collected. This range of techniques generates a holistic, if always partial, understanding of the practices and experience of urban exploration.

Table 4.2: Data collection methods and materials

Method	Explanation	Data Collected
Netnography	<p>Two urban exploration forums:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - '28dayslater.co.uk' - 'Oblivion State' <p>Three urban exploration Facebook groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Abandoned Uncovered', - '28daylater.co.uk Official Facebook Group' - 'Urban Exploring and Infiltration' <p>Thirty urban explorers' personal websites</p>	<p>230 pages of screen shot data of threads, posts, discussions and photographs</p> <p>98 pages of netnography fieldnotes</p>
Ethnography	Sensory fieldwork was conducted at twenty-seven urban exploration locations	<p>27 locations</p> <p>54 pages of ethnographic fieldnotes</p> <p>1179 photographs collected at locations</p> <p>13 audio recordings on location (126 minutes total)</p>
Interviews	Ethnographic interviews with twenty-eight urban explorers	<p>28 interviews</p> <p>630 pages of transcript data</p> <p>62 pages of interview fieldnotes</p>
Researcher Diary	Reflective research diary written during the data collection period	89 pages of diary notes
Other Materials	A range of secondary data was collected to gain an understanding of the urban exploration community and ruinophilia genre	<p>Over 250 artefacts on urban exploration, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - online newspaper articles - online urban exploration magazines and zines - urban exploration visual artefacts - urban exploration books - art exhibitions - videos and film shorts

Data collection occurred over one year. Due to the importance of online postings to urban exploration, data collection began with netnographic observations of urban exploration forums, Facebook groups and personal websites for three months to gain an initial understanding of the research context. This was followed by physical fieldwork and interviewing urban explorers for the remaining nine-months. Throughout the data collection I participated in urban exploration practices by exploring abandoned buildings, researching and photographing abandoned buildings and participating within online forums and social media. This ethnographic approach allowed me to become immersed within the context of study and develop an understanding of the cultural context from the inside.

The unfamiliarity of the context proved to be particularly problematic for accessing the field. Like other subcultures (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995), urban exploration is relatively subcultural evidenced in countercultural community ethos of resisting societal rules, forming strict community norms, and excluding outsiders. The community is particularly resistant to journalists and media outlets due to the increasing media coverage that has exposed the underground movement and misrepresented the practice as socially deviant. The forum 28dayslater.co.uk specifically states in its FAQs that all posts will be vetted before posting to the main page, and journalists and university researchers are not welcome. Community members who speak to the media are disliked and tainted as 'sell-outs' as they have exposed the practice outside of the group. Being an insider is highly beneficial in terms of developing trust within the community. Throughout this research I sought to achieve a novice status through participation in online communities, conducting

urban exploration trips and sustaining relationships with participants where I was continuously open and up front about my status as a researcher. This process began with familiarising myself within urban exploration online communities.

4.4.2 Netnography

Netnography is an online form of ethnography that allows the researcher to study online cultures and communities by becoming immersed within the virtual context of study (Kozinets, 2002b). Garrett (2011) foregrounds the importance of online storytelling to urban exploration as the community primarily meets and communicates within online realms. Netnography was predominantly used to build an understanding of the community and recruit interview participants, with netnography material and fieldnotes being used as supplementary data. Similarly, urban exploration media accessible online (including zines, explorer publications, news articles, exhibitions and exploration videos) were collected to understand the marketplace culture that has developed around urban exploration.

Following Canniford and Shankar (2013), a combination of personal and public web spaces (including forums and social media) were collected. In terms of sampling, two forums (28dayslater.co.uk and Oblivion State), three Facebook groups (Abandoned Uncovered, 28dayslater.co.uk Official Facebook Group, Urban Exploring and Infiltration), and thirty explorers' personal websites were selected. Public forums and social media groups were selected based on high membership and

level of activity. For example, 28dayslater is very active with over 25,780 members (28dayslater.co.uk, 2015) and exploration reports being uploaded daily. Discussion threads on the forum range from “Asylums and Hospitals”, “Industrial Sites” to “Draining” and “Rooftopping” with each thread having between 1,500 and 5,000 linked-threads, with 3,500 accompanying posts and 10,500 views. Oblivion State is a smaller forum that is active on an hourly basis, but does not share information about member numbers or aggregate posts. To extend the context outside of the UK, global urban exploration Facebook groups were selected that were inclusive to all nationalities. These groups were all extremely active with new posts being uploaded on average every hour. In comparison to the experienced urban explorers that dominate the forums, the Facebook groups had a variety of experienced and novice explorers, as well as spectator members. Thirty personal websites and social media accounts were selected by following hyperlinks from the forums and Facebook groups and were selected on content and activity levels. These pages often detailed a greater depth of personal reflection about their personal background and urban pursuits.

The netnography ran for 12 months with weekly observations, screen shots and fieldnotes for each site to allow the researcher to become immersed and extend the field to its online context (Kozinets, 2002b). Throughout this process the research was overt and my position as a researcher was communicated through my own social media information and any interactions with individuals. Despite my efforts to perform and experience the online urban exploration scene, my overt position reduced my integration and interaction within the community. Specifically, data was

collected regarding exploration reports, reply comments, photographs, and individuals' reflections of their experiences. This generated over 230 pages of screenshot data from forums, websites and researcher reflective fieldnotes, used to aid contextualisation (Kozinets, 2002b) and build knowledge of the community prior and throughout fieldwork.

4.4.3 Ethnographic Fieldwork: Sensing Abandoned Buildings

A multisite ethnography (Visconti et al., 2010; Canniford and Shankar, 2013) was undertaken as urban exploration takes place in a number of locations. Overall 27 field-sites were explored during the nine-month fieldwork period. Details on each site are provided within Table 4.3 below. Following the aim of this study, sites were selected based on their obsolescent status, abandonment and degrees of dilapidation. Despite its namesake, urban exploration often takes place in rural locations. As such, locations included both urban and rural locations and did not discriminate against the age of the buildings.

Table 4.3: Sensory ethnography field work locations

Field Site	Function	Built- Abandoned
Bangour Village Hospital, West Lothian	Psychiatric Asylum	1906-2004
University of Strathclyde Jordanhill Campus, Glasgow	University Campus	1922-2012 to be sold
Acre House, Glasgow	University Housing	c.1880-2004
Seafield School, Ayrshire	Children's Residential House (Quarries)	1820-2013
Witches Linn House, Ayrshire	Private House	c.1930-1990s
St. Peters Seminary, Cardross	Roman Catholic Seminary	1961-1995
Overnewton School, Glasgow	Private School	1876-2014
Scotway House, Glasgow	Office of Meadowside Shipyard	1885-2000s
Govan Graving Docks, Glasgow	Canal Docks	1875-1987
Our Lady and St Margret's School, Glasgow	Private School	1910-1997
Gray Dunn & Co Biscuit Factory, Glasgow	Factory	1862-2001
Botanics Underground Station, Glasgow	Railway Station	1896-1964
St Andrews Printing Works, Glasgow	Printing Factory	1899-2000s
Former Strathclyde Police Branch, Glasgow	Police Training Station	1933-2012
Clydesdale Paint Colour and Oil Works, Glasgow	Chemical Works	1876-2002
Inverkip Pier, Inverclyde	Mooring Dock	1970-2014
Inverkip Power Station, Inverclyde	Nuclear Power Station	1970-2014
Ardeer ICI factories, Ayrshire	Chemical Factory	1833-ongoing
Belleisle Estate, Ayrshire	Stately Home	1787-2000s
Seafield Hospital, Ayrshire	Hospital	1888-1991
Cambusnethan Priory, Glasgow	Gothic Revival House	1820-1984
Gartloch Village Hospital, Glasgow	Asylum	1896-1996
Gartloch Village Morgue, Glasgow	Asylum Morgue	1986-1996
Broompark Day Nursery, Glasgow	Nursery	1867-2000s
Golfhill Public School, Glasgow	Public School	1903-2000s
Craigilea Nursery, Glasgow	Nursery	19thC-2000s
Ellis Island Hospital, New York City	Immigrant Public Health Hospital	1902-1930

Although not positioned as an auto-ethnography, fieldwork has similarities to this approach. Observation of urban exploration in action was not possible due to Ethics restrictions to not commit trespass (see section 4.4.6). Further abandoned buildings are desolate places devoid of human activity that restricts the type of observation undertaken. Following Pink (2015) sensory ethnography, the fieldwork is highly participative rather than voyeuristic, that involved the researcher exploring sites of urban exploration. This deepened my understanding of the urban exploration community and practice and allowed me to become embedded within the context.

Existing methodological labels do not fully account for ethnographic fieldwork that is devoid of social action. Previous research by Garrett (2012), DeSilvery (2006) and Edensor (2005a) uses auto-ethnography to create narratives of their experiences with derelict locations and reflexively understand their position as a researcher. In support of auto-ethnography, Denzin (2013; 2003) draws attention to the performative aspects of the research process and calls for methodologies to embrace the performative turn. However, auto-ethnography has been critiqued for limited analytical rigour and an over-emphasis on experiential accounts (Delamont, 2007). Whilst this thesis attends to the experiential aspects of urban exploration, it supports this account with netnography and interviewing that seeks to reveal the socio-cultural, historical and political aspects of urban exploration that explores the context of context (Askegaard and Linnett, 2011), rather than prioritising the researcher's own experience or introspective accounts. Following Pink (2015) and Ingold (2011) this research draws upon elements of performance and views the researcher as sentient practitioner who develops knowledge from being emplaced and immersed

within the environment. This approach draws links between performance as kinesis (Denzin, 2003) with sensory and perceptive sensitivities. Further, reflecting a form of mimesis (Denzin, 2003), efforts were made to re-enact urban exploration practice to enable familiarisation with the research context.

The overall approach to fieldwork followed the same urban exploration practices described within Chapter One; researching the history of each site, visiting and exploring the locations, photographically recording the sites and creating written accounts of the experience. Prior to each site trip desk research was undertaken on the location, history and accessibility of each location. The night before each exploration all electrical equipment was charged to ensure their full use the next day and maps checked for the planned route, and printed if necessary. On the morning of the exploration a small black exploration backpack was packed containing the following items: Sony ∞5500 Compact System Camera, audio-recorder, GoPro HERO3+ Black Edition, Chesty GoPro body-mount, Lenser P7 head torch, protective gloves, two mobile phones, participant information forms, University ID, pens, paper, money, plasters, spare socks, water and biscuits. Due to the physicality of exploration particular clothing was adorned including; heavy boots or lightweight trainers (site dependant), thick socks, skin-tight dark jeans, two layers of t-shirts and a dark hooded jumper. Dark clothing was opted against brighter colours for two reasons: cleaning purposes, as exploring is an unclean and dirty activity, and camouflage to reduce visibility to onlookers.

A car was used to travel to destinations located in green-belt or rural areas. For safety reasons I was always accompanied by another person – my partner David who is an experienced climber. Forums often advise against exploring alone for safety reasons. Whilst the presence of this person was initially required for safety reasons, throughout the process of fieldwork it became apparent the importance of exploring *with* another person. In particular, the physical exploration of sites demands two bodies to climb over, clamber up, squeeze through and navigate the obstacles of the ruin environment. Further, the presence of another person adds to the playful experience of exploring where route and access decisions are made together and observations are shared and discussed, rather than purely recording fieldwork. This brought the experience of exploring closer to the social phenomenon of urban exploration. This aligns well with Lee and Ingold (2006) who argue that understanding of a place can be developed through the sociability of urban walking, whereby walking with another can foster greater reflection upon practices and ways-of-being.

Fieldnotes, Soundscapes and Visual Materials

Fieldnotes are a central part of ethnographic fieldwork (Brewer, 2000) as they record the actions, movements and practices in the context of study and act as an aide-mémoire (Peñaloza and Cayla, 2006) that reconstructs the field experience for the ethnographer and enables greater transparency in researcher thinking. During the ethnographic fieldwork 54 pages of fieldnotes were generated. Initially audio

fieldnotes were recorded on site using an audio-recorder due to the physicality of exploring. Particular attention was paid immediate feelings, the spatiality of the environment, sensory elements, movement of the body and physical contact with materiality of the site through multi-sensory observation (Valtonen, Markuksela and Moisander, 2010). These thin descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of immediate experience were then transcribed next to reflective fieldnotes that were written after each field trip focusing on 'sensorial cues' (Valtonen, Markuksela and Moisander, 2010) of the spatial environment, temporality of the ruin, materiality of the site, objects and environment, bodily movement, more-than-human life and previous human presence.

Following Valtonen, Markuksela and Moisander (2010) fieldnotes were re-read to reflexively identify perceptual gazes and reveal the selectivity of what was included and omitted from fieldnotes. Gobo (2008) recommends different types of fieldnotes (observational, theoretical, methodological and emotional) should be kept in separate files whereas Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2011) argue for the inseparability of fieldnotes and suggest such separation fails to acknowledge the emplacement of the researcher and wrongly treats reflections as contamination. Fieldnote slippage was common and unavoidable in practising sensory ethnography where observation and reflection occur simultaneously. Following Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2011) reflections were actively included within fieldnotes, whilst a separate reflective diary was kept for deeper reflexive writing (see section 4.4.5).

Attending to the sensory ethnographic approach (Pink, 2015), audio recordings were also taken of the sounds that inhabit abandoned buildings. These usually ranged

from flapping wings of birds, dripping water, snapping wood, and road traffic, as well as the researcher's own footsteps. These audio recordings were re-played after each exploration and the sounds transcribed into the fieldnotes. Visual materials were also recorded fitting the multi-sensorial approach and due to the centrality of photography in urban exploration practice. Photographs were taken at each site, visually recording inside legally assessable sites, and around the exterior of restricted access sites. Particular attention was paid to capturing the space and typology of the environment, material objects, textures of the building structures and the natural environment, plant and animal life, and symbolic imagery such as graffiti and signage.

Sontag (1977) argues that although photographs fail to capture veracity as they communicate on a visual code, they indicate that "what is worth looking at and what we have a right to observe" (p.3). This judgement of what is valuable to photograph formed a theme within the interviewing in order to develop an understanding of the values and meanings consumers find in obsolescence. The use of visual materials is used as a record of social phenomenon – the doing of photography – and as a mode of social representation where visual material aids the dynamic research process in which the records are used (Peñaloza and Cayla, 2006). Importantly, visual materials are not representative of any reality or experience of social life, but are instead used as tools to understand the research process.

4.4.4 Ethnographic Interviews

Ethnographic interviewing was used to collect verbal data. Interview participants were recruited over social media as the forum 28dayslater.co.uk was already ‘tapped out’ (Kozinets, 2010) by Garrett (2012). Initially relationships were built by participating within online groups, posting personal urbex photography and responding to others’ posts. Potential participants were sent Participant Information Forms and Consent Forms. Following Schouten and McAlexander’s (1995) study of the Harley Davidson subcultural community, interview participants were identified through purposeful sampling (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), coupled with snowball sampling (Morgan, 2008). Participants were selected based on their experience of urban exploration and their knowledge of the community movement. Overall 28 participants were interviewed (see Table 4.4 below). Participants were all white and aged between 21-53 years old, with two thirds were male and the remaining third were female. Efforts were made to be inclusive of a range of ages, ethnicities and genders, however, this sample represents the limited demographic of the community, which is not ethnically diverse and is dominated by males (Garrett, 2012).

Table 4.4: Interview participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Country	Occupation
Josh	38	Male	UK	Artisan bike designer
Abby	23	Female	Germany	Postgraduate student
Matt	25	Male	UK	Postgraduate student
Lexi	32	Female	Germany	Professional photographer
Sam	27	Female	UK	Travel writer
Pete	30s	Male	UK	Government worker
Aaron	36	Male	Canada	Sales executive
Andy	21	Male	UK	Sportsperson
Connor	25	Male	UK	Computer technician
Mila	30s	Female	Germany	Freelance writer
Rory	30s	Male	UK	Professional photographer
Simon	30s	Male	UK	Mental health practitioner
Hanna	22	Female	Germany	Undergraduate student
William	53	Male	UK	Disability support worker
Euan	40	Male	UK	Freelance building surveyor
Liam	38	Male	UK	Manufacturing technician
Seb	26	Male	Italy	Professional photographer
Nick	33	Male	UK	Events manager
Lydia	50	Female	UK	Magistrate
Tom	40	Male	Canada	Advertising executive
Ariel	29	Female	UK	Historian writer
Paul	40	Male	UK	Professional photographer
Luke	32	Male	UK	Mechanical engineer
Nate	26	Male	United States	Advertising producer
Ross	38	Male	UK	IT technician
Rob	40s	Male	UK	Business executive
Max	40	Male	Netherlands	Sales manager
Jack	35	Male	UK	Self-employed contract cleaner

Ethnographic interviewing seeks to gain richer understanding of consumers' experiences by locating the interview process within the consumption context (Heyl, 2008; Holt, 1997) by means of a friendly conversation (Spradley, 1979). Ethnographic interviewing can be distinguished from other interview techniques for its focus on developing a respectful and on-going relationship with the informant to create genuine and open exchanges of experiences and views (Heyl, 2008). This on-going relationship includes emails about urban exploration sites and experiences and interactions in urbex forums. Where possible ethnographic interviews were taken at site locations. If not possible, interviews were conducted in public places or over video-calling. This face-to-face visualisation was important to build rapport, but also to allow the use of auto-driven photo elicitation (Heisley and Levy, 1991), where the participants displayed and discussed their own exploration photographs during the interview. The interviews ranged from one hour to three hours. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed in full, resulting in over 630 pages of transcript data.

The interviews followed a semi-structured approach using a basic interview guide containing broad topic areas to allow multiple topics to surface (Holt, 1997) and maintain a natural flow of conversation between researcher and informant (Spradley, 1979). A sample interview guide is provided in Appendix A. Initially participants were asked to describe their first encounter with urban exploration as this offered an easy starting point for participants to recall and discuss. Informants were encouraged to use rich descriptions in explaining their practices, share stories about exploration trips and describing their perception of the places. They were also encouraged to reflect upon their experiences of urban exploration and the wider societal forces that

enable and constrict their exploration habits, such as legal constraints and law enforcement officers. As advocated by Holt (1997), emic terms created by the informant were probed to elicit deeper understanding of the grounded meaning of the terms. Fieldnotes were written immediately after the interviews and focused upon various issues including; interview environment, interaction between researcher and participant, flow of the interview, reflection upon the interview process, and the main topics or stories discussed by the participant. Following this initial reflective account of the interview, the researcher listened to the audio recording of the interview and added in reflections upon important moments in the interview focusing upon the participant's verbal account (substantive content) and the textual cues (e.g. laughing or hesitation) as these can indicate meaning and aids interpretation. In total 62 pages of interview fieldnotes were generated. These were used during the analysis and interpretation stages.

4.4.5 Researcher Reflective Diary

A reflective research diary was kept throughout the 12 months of data collection and was used to record and reflect upon the evolving thoughts, feelings and impressions gathered from the research process. The diary was used alongside fieldnotes as a way to explore personal reflections and the construction of the researcher self (Elliot and Jankel-Elliot, 2003) during fieldwork. It explored issues regarding my experience as a researcher entering into an antagonistic community, difficulties with

gaining access and reflecting upon the movement from ‘outsider’, through ‘tourist’ to ‘novice insider’ (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995) position within the community.

The research diary became a space that allowed for critical reflection into my role as a researcher and allowed issues of researcher vulnerability (Jafari et al., 2013; Downey et al., 2007) to surface. The illegality of the research context was problematic as it challenged my belief systems and led to moral and ethical reflections upon my role as researcher against my need to immerse myself within urban exploration practices. This issue also leaked into my personal life as my family raised concerns over my personal safety whilst exploring these potentially hazardous places and meeting strangers who partook in trespass. Whilst I fully adhered to the ethical constraints imposed by the University Ethics Committee (see section 4.4.6) there always remains a risk when conducting research. My position as a researcher that was bounded by strict ethical constraints created a barrier between myself and acceptance from the group.

At times, being a female researcher within a predominantly male research context was problematic as on several occasions my personal appearance was discussed by some participants. Whilst I found this particularly troubling, it raised interesting inversion of the researcher-subject power dynamic where the gaze of the participant leads the researcher to feel vulnerable and gazed-upon. Related to issues of safety, conducting interviews over video-calls allowed for a two-way gaze between researcher and participant that also acted a safety barrier for both parties. Despite this barrier, conducting a netnography of Facebook groups meant I had to use my

own personal account to interact with these groups due to Facebook rules on false or anonymous accounts. This meant the social phenomenon began to enter personal life through social media interactions. This led to reflections about the seepage between researcher and personal life and how to best to immerse myself within the community, build relationships and protect my own personal life from my research.

The diary acted as a space to challenge and tease-out tensions that are experienced within the research process. Entries were written down on a weekly basis or opportunistically when a situation prompted reflection such as post-fieldwork, post-interviews or after presentations. Over the data collection period 89 pages of reflective notes were compiled. This aided the analysis and interpretation of data as it displayed the evolution of thoughts, ideas and feelings and allowed for a critical reflection of the interpretation of data.

4.4.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was granted for the ethnography, netnography, and interviews with certain boundaries imposed by the University Ethics Committee concerning personal safety and legal access to the sites, and participant anonymity. Guidelines offered by the Committee were followed fully. Firstly, to mediate legal and safety risks, adequate research was undertaken regarding the legal access of each site, and sites were pre-selected that were considered to be safe to enter. For example, no buildings were entered that displayed hazard-warning signs, or were made from wood that may

be unstable to walk upon. The researcher also wore appropriate safety clothing in order to reduce any risk of personal injury, including protective gloves, as discussed in the fieldwork section 4.4.3. Secondly, particular ethical issues were considered whilst collecting netnographic data by following recent guidelines from Kozinets (2015). The netnography was observational and collected only archive data on publicly accessible websites. Data was fully anonymised, as some explorers remain anonymous on forums and websites by creating nicknames, and pseudo-anonymised for individuals who used their real names. To protect the identity of participants all data was pseudo-anonymised by changing names and generalising information such as occupation and location. Some participants who provided photographic images for the findings chapters wished their real names to be included within the thesis. For consistency all participants were pseudo-anonymised. A list of accreditations for images are listed in Appendix B and appear in accordance with each participant's wishes. In terms of the interviews, all participants gave informed consent prior to each interview and all visual material is reproduced with permission and accredited to image owners.

4.5 Analysis and Interpretation

Whilst the variety of methods used within this study adds value to the research process, managing the wealth of collected data materials can be challenging. This

study draws upon Spiggle (1994) within the broader discussion of data analysis and interpretation. This section goes on to discuss validity, reliability and reflexivity.

4.5.1 Analysis and Interpretation

Spiggle (1994) distinguishes between analysis as the process of breaking complex wholes into constituent parts where the researcher manipulates data to comprehend complex phenomena, and interpretation the process of making-sense and assessing intentions and inferences of social phenomena. For Spiggle (1994) these are distinct activities that, are not always sequentially undertaken in research practise, but rather occur in tandem throughout the research process. This iterative approach allowed the research design and data collection to be refined throughout the fieldwork period. For example, comparisons between netnography observations and ethnographic fieldnotes lead to questions about waste being added to interview questions.

The process of data analysis commenced by converting digital netnography screenshots, ethnographic fieldnotes, interview transcripts and fieldnotes, researcher diaries and media articles into physical paper format. These data sets were initially read and re-read and using the technique of categorisation (Spiggle, 1994) units of data that shared similarities were classified and labelled into themes, concepts and ideas. This was conducted inductively where emergent categories were identified from the data, and occurred iteratively by continually returned to different stages of understanding to critically reflected upon the basis for developing understanding.

The full data set was organised under these labels electronically using tables, re-read and then re-organised. This process continued until each unit of data was appropriately categorised. Using abstraction (Spiggle, 1994), similar themes were grouped under more general conceptual categories and higher-order constructs that come from existent theorisations or emerging from the analysis (Spiggle, 1994).

This was followed by a process of comparison (Spiggle, 1994), whereby similarities and differences across the data set are contrasted in-line with Glaser's (1965) constant-comparative method to compare differences within categories. In particular a process of intertextual (Thompson, 1997) analysis was used where intertextual iterations were made between texts, fieldnotes, and visual materials through a process of tacking between individual units and the complete data set (de Valck, 2007). This allowed for greater sensitisation to themes emerging from the field, rather than projecting predetermined meanings onto emic data (Thompson, 1997).

The interpretation was equally iterative and was achieved by tacking between fieldnotes and extant theory to learn from the social world during analysis (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011). It also sought to recognise resemblances in meaning or emic redundancies (Wallendorf and Brucks, 1993) across a range of contexts, situations and individuals (Spiggle, 1994). A separate table was created with analysed data and interpretative notes were added in a separate column. This table was initially used to write up the findings chapters, before the data sets were re-read and a final interpretation finalised. Spiggle (1994) acknowledges the difficulty in conducting interpretation in a linear manner due to its intuitive, subjective and particularistic

nature. This is reflected in the iterative and constant re-reading of analysis and interpretation throughout the research process.

4.5.2 Validity, Reliability and Reflexivity

Following an interpretivist orientation this research is particularistic (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988) by focusing on the context of urban exploration that is context-bound to Western urban exploration subcultures and does therefore not aim to generalise findings to other contexts. Through the use of ethnography this research aimed to develop thick description (Geertz, 1973) of the urban exploration experience and subculture, which is difficult to generate generalisable knowledge claims (Berger, Zelditch and Anderson, 1982). Data collection took place over 12 months, with the overall research occurring over a three-year period. This prolonged engagement in the context (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989) allowed the researcher to develop an adequate understanding of the social phenomenon. In particular, the researcher became immersed within the context of study by engaging in urban exploration most weekends, being exposed to urban exploration social media on a daily basis and making friendly acquaintances in the field. This said, it is important to note that the researcher did not 'go native' as despite the prolonged and immersed position the researcher maintained a degree of distance from the context due to the antagonism towards researchers within the urban exploration community.

The variety of methods adopted adds credibility to this study as it allows for a broader, more holistic understanding of urban exploration as experienced by explorers themselves, as well as the marketplace culture that has been stimulated by this subcultural movement. The use of netnography, sensory ethnographic fieldwork, ethnographic interviewing and a reflective diary enables a more comprehensive appreciation of the context to develop and adds rich texture to grow within the interpretation.

This credibility of the interpretation has been furthered by the use of reflexivity that allowed a critical reflection of the researcher's own situated position within circuits of cultural production, including researcher background and academic discourse (Peñaloza and Cayla, 2006). Reflexivity is used within ethnography as a corrective technique to acknowledge the presence of the researcher and limit the authoritative voice of the researcher who can impose meanings upon the social phenomenon (Joy et al., 2006). Following Joy et al. (2006) this research uses reflexivity as a critical reflection upon researcher position, biases, theoretical predispositions and preferences potentially imposed upon the research.

In particular, I acknowledged my role as a researcher within the research process and considered how this shaped the social phenomenon. The researcher diary enabled a space to critically question my active role in collecting data. The physical demands of ethnographic fieldwork highlighted it as an embodied activity where researchers use their bodies to record the environment and social phenomena (Madden, 2010). In this sense, the researcher is an active agent within the research process (Murray

and Ozanne, 1991; Wallendorf and Brucks, 1993) as the primary data collector and analyser (Peñaloza, 2000). However, the researcher is more than just a tool for data collection, but is positioned within circuits of cultural production (Peñaloza and Cayla, 2006). Critically reflecting upon the theoretical predispositions and my use of language aided my analysis and interpretation of the movement between emic terms and etic discourse. This level of critical reflection was further by de-briefings from peers (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989) through continuous supervisory meetings, departmental presentations, and discussions at ICR and ACR conferences and workshops. These interactions shed a critical light upon the research process, approach and interpretations that enabled for stronger theorisations to be built.

Further, my role as an outsider to the context of study was considered. My initial unfamiliarity with the context allowed for three main benefits. Firstly, it allowed greater reflection upon urban exploration practices and the wider societal implications that insiders are often biased against, such as legal consequences. Secondly, the illegal nature of trespass challenged my personal beliefs that allowed for a critical reflection upon the social construction of belief systems, my positioning as a researcher and how this impacts the study. Finally, my initial unfamiliarity allowed me to relate to the vantage point of the neophyte (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995) explorer who enters the community as a novice. This position enabled greater sensitisation to emic meanings and prevented any reliance upon pre-existing meanings. As such, the research emerges as a co-fabrication between the researcher and researched (Cadman, 2009) that creates something new, rather than merely observing a phenomenon.

4.5.3 Limitations

Whilst this study aimed to minimise the methodological limitations, practical issues of recruiting participants is a limitation to this research. As explained, urban explorers are often suspicious of researchers and often refuse to speak with them, or remove them from forums. This issue was a central concern within this research, and was mediated by developing tentative relationships with explorers on social media over a six-month period, and seeking explorers who promoted their pages for others to visit. Particular efforts were made to interview explorers with a range of experience and social positioning within the subculture hierarchy. Further, urban exploration is a global subculture with particular popularity in Europe and North America. The participants within this study were mainly from the UK, yet many had experience of foreign explorations. Given that this study does not aim to generalise results, this limitation does not reduce the value of the study. Future research could use a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995) approach across countries and states to examine the specific differences and similarities in urban exploration practice and aesthetic preferences across cultures.

A further limitation stems from the ethical constraints imposed upon this research regarding safe and legal access. Whilst these constraints provided the researcher with legal security and physical safety, it also prevented the researcher from gaining the full urban exploration experience that involves risk taking. For example, no infiltration of live sites was undertaken that are still in use for obvious issues of trespass. That said, not all explorers will use infiltration or enter highly dangerous

locations. As such, the immersion within the context of study allowed the researcher to face the same ethical dilemmas that explorers come across regarding legal access and personal safety.

4.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the philosophical, methodological and specific collection methods adopted within this study. This discussion situates the study within a broadly interpretivist tradition that aligns with the development of Interpretivist Consumer Research and Consumer Culture Theory research. This study draws upon the relational work of Ingold that guides the ethnographic approach. A gamut of collection methods are used that enable a rich landscape of understanding of urban exploration to emerge. Through a careful analysis and interpretation, outlined within this chapter, this research offers an understanding of the complexity and unexpected significance of urban exploration practice for contemporary society.

Findings Introduction

The findings chapters draw together diverse data sources to develop a holistic understanding of consumers' engagement with obsolescence through the context of urban exploration. Consumers' verbal accounts are given primacy to allow emic terms to surface more readily within the interpretation. The netnographic data is used throughout the analysis to develop an understanding of the urban exploration community and is presented here alongside photographs and ethnographic fieldnotes to support participants' verbal accounts.

There are two findings chapters. Chapter Five examines the allure of abandoned buildings and the experiential aspects of urban exploration through unpacking the notions of discovery, place-making and imagination. Chapter Six examines the materiality of abandoned buildings as vulnerable objects, explores how consumers act as guardians of the past through protective practices and gift giving, and examines how consumer photography reintegrates obsolescent objects into marketplace circulation.

Chapter Five: Experiencing Obsolescence

We came across a metal gate with a token padlock. Casting a quick glance over my shoulder I ducked through a small hole in the ivy-grown hedge that bordered the fence. We took this well-trodden route and kept walking along the path until we reached another set of fences. Stooping below the wire border fence, my hood suddenly became caught on the wires. Three sharp tugs and I was free. The frayed rip in my hood remains as my souvenir of the day. ... We reached large industrial steel gates that were heavily graffitied with spray paint in almost every colour. Peering through, I could see the imposing concrete Seminary. It is such a strange place. Skeletal in appearance, its cavernous concrete brutalism is punctured by missing walls and windows. Stripped of valuable items and ravaged by the elements, all that remains of St Peters are its concrete bones. Not wanting to climb the fence, we decided to find an easier entry point. Looking around, and checking to see if we were being watched, we spotted some footprints in mud and decided to follow them through the wooded areas surrounding the Seminary. Following in the footsteps of others, we re-traced their trespass to find the gap in the fence.

(Ethnography fieldnotes, St Peters Seminary, 24/05/15)

5.1 Introduction

Urban exploration has rekindled the cultural fascination with ruination. New genres of ruinophilia and ruin porn reveal that the attraction has shifted from a purely aesthetic contemplation to a social and cultural critique of capitalism, social structures and market logics. This chapter opens with an ethnographic excerpt from the fieldwork and goes on to examine the various meanings consumers ascribe to abandoned buildings. The chapter continues by unpacking the notion of consumer discovery and examines consumers' place-making practices. Finally, the chapter explores consumer imagination that is triggered by abandoned possessions and conceptualises the processes through which consumers correspond with the absent 'other'. The chapter closes with concluding comments that links together each section.

5.2 Allure of Obsolescence

Derelict buildings are generally viewed as outcomes of destruction (Stoler, 2008), societal or architectural failure (Crawford, 2015), costs of consumerism (Pétursdóttir and Olsen, 2014) and the consequences of capitalism (Edensor, 2005a) where capital is constantly moved to the most productive places leaving in its wake dereliction and urban decay. In contrast to dominant market logics that privilege innovation and progress, urban explorers find value in obsolescent buildings on various registers.

This section examines the allure of abandoned buildings that have fallen into an obsolescent state and explores the various values that consumers ascribe to these previously devalued objects.

5.2.1 Liminal Places

Interdisciplinary literature conceptualises ruins as liminal places that disorder space (DeSilvery and Edensor, 2013), disturb linear notions of time (Augé, 2003), and exist in material indeterminacy (Edensor 2005b). Abandoned buildings are often labelled ‘modern ruins’ within contemporary literature (Hell and Schönle, 2010) and have been conceived as heterotopias (Churchill and Smith, 2016; Foucault, 1986) that lie somewhere between utopia and dystopia. Abandoned by owners or ownerless through death, these buildings remain in limbo and are excluded from circulations of capital and marketplace resources. Participants often suggest ruins are frozen in time or symbolise a different era, as Simon, a 40-year-old psychiatric practitioner, highlights:

You walk into a frozen snapshot of a previous time. That is very appealing because everything around you is as it is now. This is the one time that you actually step into the past as it was when it was left. Especially if it a house or something that no one else has been in and it is exactly the way it was when the last person shut the door. So you are stepping back into time because it freezes in time. It doesn't change. Apart from the decay that sets in, the natural decay. (Simon)

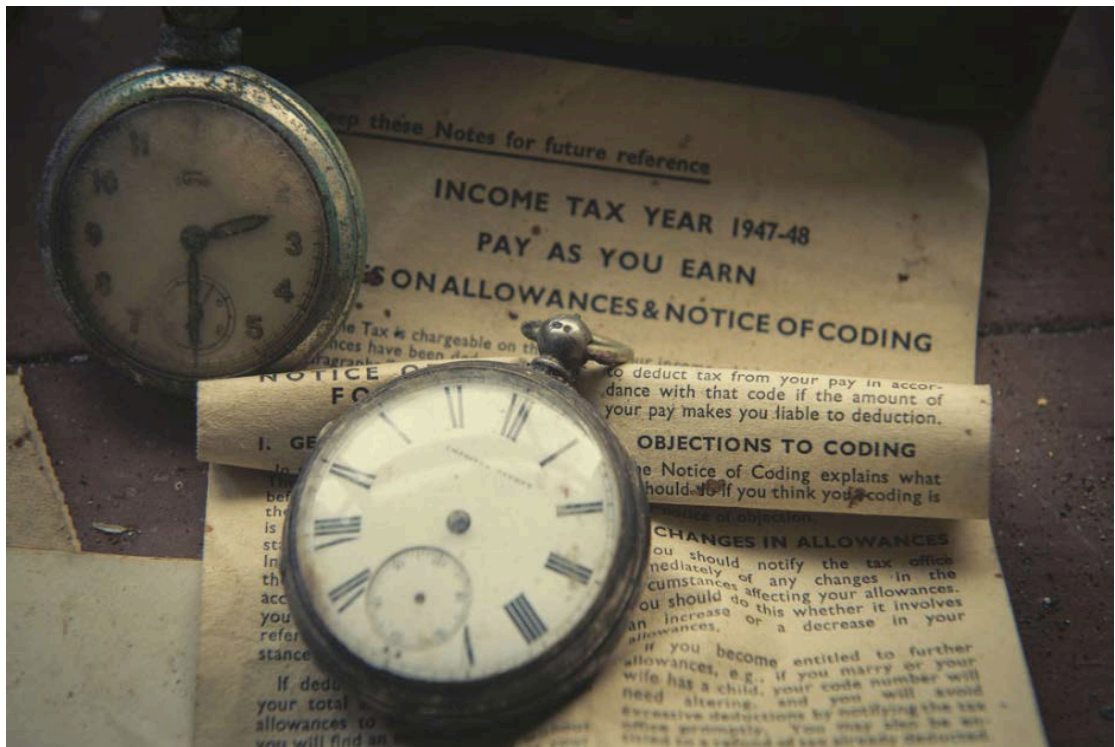


Figure 5.1: 'No time for objections', courtesy of Mark Williams

Simon illustrates how places, as with objects, can become trapped or frozen in a single moment of time. In this sense, abandoned buildings are characterised by temporal liminality. This is beautifully captured by urban explorer Mark William's photograph above, taken within an abandoned house where time has stopped at twenty-five past two at some point in 1947 as captured by the pocket watches and tax leaflet. These relics offer a snapshot of time in a house that has been abandoned for over seventy years. Like the garage (Hirschman, Ruvio and Belk, 2012), abandoned buildings are also characterised by spatial liminality and act as museums for mixed state objects that exist in limbo between preservation and the imminent threat of organic decay. These objects offer a tangible reminder of the material culture of the past but fail to convey personal meanings that have been lost through time. McCracken (1988) suggests storing objects away erases meanings. Lying empty for

decades, some of these places are sparsely filled with meaning, as there are no guardians to pass meanings to future generations.

The physical decay of abandoned buildings adds to the material liminality that characterises these places, as they begin to tangibly degrade and become mixed state objects where their material properties intermingle and merge (Edensor, 2005b). William, a 53-year-old carer, illustrates this material indeterminacy in his comments about a burnt-out castle:

It had been burnt before. I found it fascinating because the summer light came in and it lit everything up and there were all these beautiful purples and stuff. [...] So you are using your imagination of what it used to look like and what it beginning to look like, so it is taking another life of itself on. [...] I remember quoting Leonardo Da Vinci who said that to one of his pupils, and I get the urbex thing, because he said “If you had seen the castle as it was there would be no room for your imagination to work”. I got it immediately. That is why the urbex stuff works so well because you can’t determine what it was or what it is going to be. [...] But for the imagination it lends more scope. (William)

The degradation of the environment reveals the potentialities of the materials (Ingold, 2013b) that have been released from their object containers through fire. For William, the poor condition of these buildings adds to their material liminality and makes it difficult to determine past material from present decay and future degeneration. This apparent multi-temporality builds upon Edensor’s (2005b) suggestion that decay creates a temporal collage (Lynch, 1972) where materials meld in an interminable mix of states. William’s suggestion that “*you can’t determine*

what it was or what it is going to be” illustrates this displacement of time where it becomes difficult to distinguish materials and events. Unlike the notion of heterotopia (Foucault, 1986) that juxtaposes utopia/dystopia and normalcy/othering, the notion of liminality captures the material indeterminacy of dereliction. Decay entangles materialities and temporalities and cultivates imaginative potentialities or affordances (Gibson, 1979) that allow William to creatively envisage the possible future state of the place. Within consumer research liminality has been conceptualised as a communal experience between consumers (Tumbat and Belk, 2013) and a spatial characteristic (Hirschman, Ruvio and Belk, 2012). Building upon these conceptualisations, findings reveal three forms of liminality (spatial, temporal and material) that offer a more nuanced understanding of liminality as a multi-faceted concept that can apply to material culture.

5.2.2 Mundane Spectacles

The liminality of these places gives the appearance of a distant time that enables participants to imaginatively time-travel into the past. Abby, a 23-year-old German student, experiences a different feeling of distance when recalling her exploration of disused Soviet buildings in Berlin:

I like anything that is really quite odd, like sticking out from what you would see in the daily life of someone else. [...] Stuff you are familiar with, you can't get excited because you acknowledge that it is normal in a way. Whereas when you think of like Soviet or World War II buildings they are just like spookier,

just the thought of the Cold War and all these things that you are not exposed to now. We are quite sheltered now. (Abby)

Abby's comparison between "normal", "familiar" and "odd, like sticking out" illustrates the perceived distance of these abandoned buildings from her daily life experience. For Abby, these places are removed and become 'other' to her space of lived experience as they offer a view into a different world that appears foreign and unfamiliar from contemporary life. Ingold (2011) argues the past is perceived as occupying an absent existence, where the deceased "have departed from the living, along a path that takes them to what is often conceived as another land" (p.143). Participants reflect upon the distance between the past and their "normal" (Josh) daily experience. This distancing can be understood as a form of 'othering' (Urry, 1990). Abandoned buildings and their absent occupants can be understood as 'other' on two registers: *temporally* as they appear to be trapped in a different time, and *spatially* as they appear to be distant from the space of lived experience.

Drawing upon Freud's notion of the uncanny as a return of the familiar in an unfamiliar form, McQuire (2008) suggests the known and the familiar can be made strange. Sam offers similar reflections on the industrial demise of her hometown of Oldham where deindustrialisation has caused local heritage to be "*put in the background and forgotten*". Sam suggests these abandoned industrial ruins "*have gone from being our everyday, to our escape from the everyday*". On the issue of deindustrialisation MacCannell (1999) suggests it has created a loss of identity and community as individuals become detached from their industrial occupations, yet increasingly search for authenticity in the lives of others. This exemplifies Sam's

observations of Oldham where the old mills that were once the epitome of mundanity, have become uncanny or foreign through their modern obscurity. For Atkinson (2008) this shift in gaze from grand historiographies towards mundane spaces of heritage and regional histories, represents democratisation of memory. Shifting focus from experience towards values of otherness, findings reveal that abandoned buildings can be understood as *mundane spectacles*, whereby mundanity is inverted into spectacle through the perception of distance from lived experience that increases otherness and adds to the allure of unfamiliarity.

Through urban exploration, places that were once devalued for their mundanity have become worthwhile to consumers through their perceived distance from contemporary consumer sensibilities and space of lived experience. This notion highlights a peculiar tension between mundane and spectacular, whereby the perceived distance from the past skews consumer appreciation, and the mundane becomes spectacular through its modern obscurity. This is evident in much urban exploration photography that focuses upon areas of severe deindustrialisation, economic inequality and economic disaster, such as Detroit, US. Lanier, Radar and Fowler (2013) suggest that rather than the sacred meanings we impart to objects, it is the ordinary and profane qualities of objects that are attractive and endearing, and Campbell (1988) suggests that the imperfections of characters adds to their attraction. Whilst urban explorers quasi-sacralise these places through pilgrimage (see section 5.3.1), these places retain their ordinariness, and it is this mundanity that adds to their allure and perceived worth. The following sections unpack the notion of the mundane spectacle by teasing out its various associated values.

Forsaken Value

Unlike living museums that display the past in relatively sanitised conditions (Goulding, 2001), urban explorers find value in obsolescent objects and consumptionscapes that have been discarded by the market as waste. Findings reveal that consumers ascribe obsolescent things with *forsaken value* where previously rejected, disowned and abandoned objects and consumptionscapes are deemed deserving of recognition and appreciation. This admiration is captured in the following excerpt from my researcher diary:

There is something very dysfunctional about these places. They have no real purpose anymore. It is quite nice to appreciate something that has no real purpose anymore. I suppose it is like art. Art doesn't have any purpose other than an end in itself. You appreciate it for what it is. With abandoned buildings, you value their derelict and discarded qualities. Seeing value in something that society has rejected. (Researcher diary, 15/06/15)

Abandonment is an uncertain quality that can equally signify decay and destruction, as well as pristine preservation. Participants marvel at the untouched appearance of modern ruins that have been protected from human intrusion. The temporal quality of forsaken value is revealed through Hanna's comments and displayed in Figure 5.2 of an abandoned villa in Italy:



Figure 5.2: 'Grandeur', courtesy of James Kerwin Photographic

There are also buildings that are still in good condition and I think if you find a place like that then you are thrown back into another century. Sometimes if you have a castle which was built in the 18th century or so, it just feels like you are actually in this time. (Hanna)

For Hanna, a 22-year-old student from Berlin, abandoned places that are relatively pristine allow her to experience a different time period. Similarly, Sam talks of “stepping back in time” in her experiences of exploring abandoned buildings. This disjuncture of times is further appreciated by William who revels in the “luxury of finding places almost intact....as if someone has walked away from a room and never came back”. Nguyen and Belk (2007) suggest “the lack of human beings or even a trace of human presence sharpens the beauty of nature” (p.275). In the case of

abandoned buildings, the lack of human presence sharpens the beauty of forsaken material culture.

Findings reveal that consumers find forsaken value in obsolescent objects and consumptionscapes that have been discarded by society purely based on their neglected quality. In addition to deserving attention and appreciation, forsaken value has an aesthetic quality that enables consumers to authentically experience another time period through the untouched appearance of objects and place. Türe and Ger (2016) introduce the notions of zeitgeist value that is time appropriate value, and lineage value that comes from ancestors. The concept of forsaken value advances this discussion by demonstrating that consumers find worth in the abandoned quality of neglected objects. Based on Thompson (1979: p.8-9), abandoned buildings can be understood as waste that “continues to exist in a timeless and valueless limbo” with the capacity to be re-discovered in the future. Through the practices of photography, obsolescent things move through the door (Hetherington, 2004) between categories of waste and value. Building on Lanier, Radar and Fowler’s (2013) notion of worth, these places have forsaken value that transcends market economic evaluations, and yet retain the potential capacity to be re-discovered which increases their perceived value.

Terminal Value

These places offer individuals a unique experience that allows an exclusive gaze into hidden or forgotten places in society. This is captured by participants' comments on the importance of "[b]eing somewhere that nobody else knows what it is like inside" (Paul), and being able to "go off the beaten-path of society and go to something that only a few hundred people have experienced before" (Nate). Equally, being the last explorer to see a place is valued due to the decaying and vulnerable condition of these sites, as Nick, a 33-year-old British urban explorer suggests:

[S]ome of the places I have been I don't think that many people are going to see them. I have seen some places in the UK that I don't think people will be able to see again because some of them are decaying and some are gone.
(Nick)

Nick highlights the finite character of these fragile buildings that will inevitably cease to exist in the near future. For Rob, exploring is a battle against time where he must be quick to explore a location before it is too late: "[T]hese places get boarded up and shut down. You miss your opportunity. You only have a small opportunity, a small window to get through and that's it." Reflections within my researcher diary capture the finite qualities of these places:

One of my biggest regrets is not going to Kayaköy in Turkey when we visited last year. The place lingers in my mind. I would love to go back just to see this place as a site of historical importance and tragic ethnic cleansing. Vacated by the Anatolian Greeks in 1922 after the Greco-Turkish War, the village exists in ruins, slowly decaying away. There are plans

to develop the site and build hotels. The prospect to explore Kayaköy in its ruined state feels like a missed opportunity. I have a lingering feeling of guilt that I didn't photograph the place, as I'm sure that I won't be returning to Turkey anytime soon and its redevelopment is on the horizon. (Researcher diary, 15/06/2015)

Reflecting upon my own missed opportunities highlights the uncertain future that characterises these places. In this sense, these places have *terminal value*, whereby their immanent and inevitable demise increases their exclusivity and allure. Nate, a 26-year-old media producer from New York, elaborates on this terminal value in his explanation of the fascination with decay:

Decay reminds us of an ultimate fate that nothing lasts in this world. I think that consciously or subconsciously resonates with us. We all realise, the same way that we realise in a tragedy that it is doomed, these buildings are doomed, we are all doomed to an eventual fate in here. There is a lot involved in why we perceive that decay to be beautiful. (Nate)

The terminal value of these places deepens their allure as participants anticipate their demise. Indeed, Türe (2014) demonstrates that disposition encourages attachment to objects that have ambiguous value. The immanent disposal of abandoned buildings places them at risk which increases their perceived value. Like limited edition products, urban exploration is a form of restricted consumption where scarcity increases value. The allure of abandoned places emerges as the search for finite experiences that are inaccessible and potentially unknown to the wider public.

Outré Aesthetic Value

In contrast to the social systematic avoidance of waste (De Coverly et al., 2008), explorers find *outré aesthetic value* in these obsolete and derelict buildings. This is often referred to as the ‘beauty in decay’, which has become the title of many urban exploration books and exhibitions. This aesthetic appreciation is evident in participants’ descriptions of decaying buildings as “*beautiful*” (Tom), “*stunning*” (Lydia) and “*photogenic*” (Seb). Participants find the ruin aesthetic more appealing than pristine aesthetics in everyday life. This is evident in Ariel’s comments on Baron Hill, a Welsh 18th century mansion: “*It is very, very picturesque now. It looks better as a ruin*”. Similarly, for Paul “*there is something about a derelict building or a derelict room it just...there is something really poetic about it*”. The ruin acquires a fetish quality where its derelict aesthetic exudes an alternative form of beauty, which Paul deems to be poetic. This poetic aesthetic is captured in Nate’s talk on the goals of Project Senium, a video documentary on Kings Park Hospital, New York (see Appendix C):

We obviously didn’t do a straightforward documentary on the place. We didn’t do the interviews with the people who were there because that is not the only value that this place has. It is not historical, but it is aesthetically when we think a gorgeous occurrence, a chaotic occurrence that wasn’t necessarily planned this way that has innately brought on a beauty by itself. We thought that alone was worth documenting and sharing. (Nate)

Nate’s discussion illustrates the variety of values these places have: historical, local storytelling and aesthetic beauty. For Nate, the chaotic and tragic circumstances of

Kings Park Hospital as an infamous site of disturbing psychiatric treatments have created its own beauty through its physical demise.

For Lydia, these places exude a clandestine aesthetic value that is often overlooked by society. This is evident in her discussion of an abandoned cemetery:

I started to notice that a lot of the cemeteries were quite derelict and overgrown. I really liked the image that you got from that. I thought they were absolutely beautiful. A lot of people would see decay as a negative thing. For me I actually thought it was quite beautiful. [...] When I say beautiful, I mean beauty is in the eye of the beholder. It is a beauty in decay that I see. (Lydia)

In contrast to the generally accepted view of decay as out-of-place (Douglas, 1966), Lydia visualises the outré aesthetic value of decay as a positive outcome that creates beauty. This was reflected across participants, and is illustrated in Lexi's statement that "[t]he more decay and grime the more interesting a place is for me". Liam dislikes "the pristine", believing that photographs of modern buildings make "your pictures look like an estate agents' pictures". Patina and signs of aging authenticate lineage and legitimise the value of objects (Curasi, Price and Arnould, 2004) and create an aesthetic value of non-commercial authenticity.

Explorers' appreciation of decay is deeply phenomenological and sensory. Participants describe the dense smell of these places as "musky" (Simon), full of "dampness and mould" (Jack), "damp and mossy" (Hanna) and "musty, mouldy or like dead animals" (Tom). They also give sensory accounts of the light, colours and materiality present within derelict building: "I love the morbid colours of decay and

the special light” (Lexi), “*light spilling out everywhere*” (Rory), the “*muted dullness*” (William), and “*peeling paint will always reveal many different colours, and crumbling walls and ceilings reveal the bones of a building*” (Tom), where “*the peeling paint, the crying walls they tend to give you that real sense of dereliction and run-downness over the period of time*” (Rob). This sensory experience was reflected within my own fieldnotes:

I focused the lens on the colourful graffiti and objects that were littered around the Seminary. Its cavernous space was both vacant of activity, yet occupied by nature that has inhabited its remaining walls. Nature had clearly begun to take over, melding its way into and through the building where plant and concrete become one entity in a mix of green and grey matter. I was aware of a feeling of dampness, which draped the place in velvety moisture. Concrete absorbs water. The walls felt damp, cold and moist to the touch. The tap, tap sound of water dripping from the roof stays in my memory, like a clock ticking, counting down the Seminary’s existence. (Ethnographic fieldnotes, St Peter’s Seminary 24/05/2015)

Similarly, the following Facebook post (Figure 5.3) demonstrates the thickly sensory descriptions of decay used within the online communities:



2 hrs · 🌐

Hidden by trees this quaint little cottage is trapped, vintage radios reside in most rooms along with the personal effects of the former occupier, damp strips walls of paper, moss filled windows cast green dancing lights against the walls the air is thick with foul smells of decay, nature ever so slowly creeping, engulfing a once happy vibrant home.

Figure 5.3: Facebook post describing decay

These accounts highlight the material thingness (Bennett, 2010) of decay, moving it from merely the visual to the material aesthetic. This movement is best captured in Jack's comments on colour and paint: "*The colours of rusting metals are fascinating. There are always walls with peeling paint, which feels great to run your fingers*

along”. Jack’s haptic engagement with the decaying environment demonstrates the intensely embodied and emplaced experience of exploration where the body entangles with the materiality of the environment.

The intrusion of nature adds to the complexity of these environments where materials mix and meld together and creates an outré aesthetic value. Explorers revel in the dichotomies that nature produces within buildings where “*natural beauty blending in with man-made decay*” (Ross) creates beautiful imagery. Often explorers’ post before-and-after pictures of the places they have explored to highlight the impact of decay, as evident in the images below from Facebook (Figure 5.4):

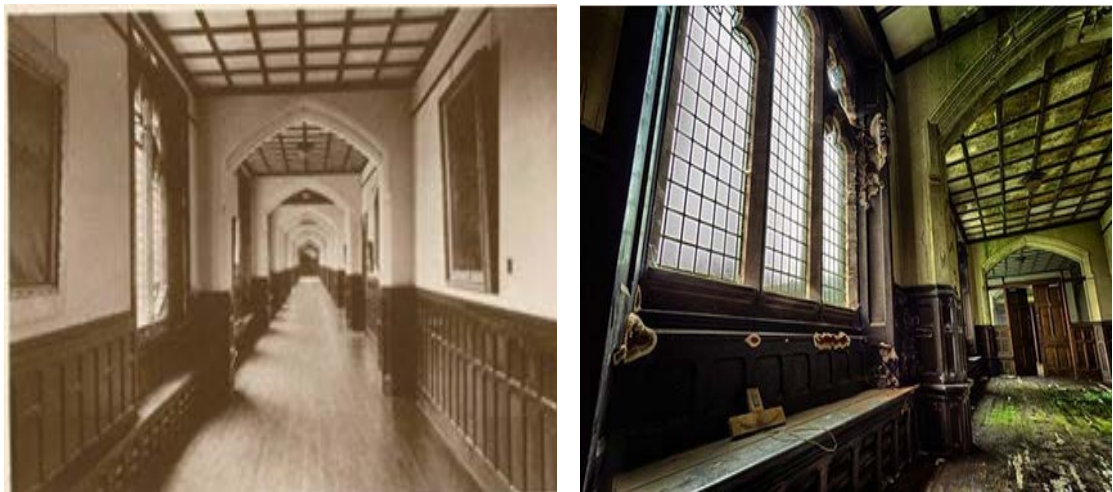


Figure 5.4: Facebook posts of St Joseph’s Seminary in 1960s and present day

Nature and culture are often treated as binaries within literature (Clope and Johnstone, 2005). Simon elaborates on this contrast between nature and culture in his descriptions:

I term that as nature's interior design, and they will go in and give their own natural design on a place. There is nothing better than going into a house that is still in good condition but nature has taken over. So you may have beautiful like dressing table with all old vintage things on it, but behind the dressing table the wall is all crumbling and the wallpaper is peeling down. Maybe there is some ivy coming down as well. If you can photograph these two things together then this is perfect for me because you have two elements. You have progression of nature that doesn't stop it continues going, and then you have the frozen static part which is the dressing table and all of the items on it. So they are frozen in time against progression going on around it. (Simon)

For Simon, the indiscriminate mixture of man-made items with natural decay illuminates the juxtaposition of time where cultural items remain trapped in time, whilst nature carries on reclaiming the things for her own. This creates an *outré* aesthetic value that highlights the potential virtuous demise of objects. Building upon Cherrier's (2010) suggestion that consumers use material as a form of protest against the dominant aesthetic, findings demonstrate consumers find alternative value in the materiality of decay. Taking 'aesthetic' back to its original meaning as a way to perceive through the senses, these places are valued for their densely sensory appeal. In this way, *outré* aesthetic value offers more than a flat image, but an appreciation of the material thingness of nature, decay and material culture as they intermingle.

Findings illuminate the allure of obsolescent objects as vessels of liminality, otherness and mundanity, and introduce the notion of the mundane spectacle,

whereby mundanity is inverted into spectacle through the perception of distance from lived experience that increases otherness and adds to the allure of unfamiliarity. Objects can become fossilised (Shove and Pantzar, 2005) once they become temporally and spatially distanced from the family (Türe and Ger, 2016). Advancing fossilisation (Shove and Pantzar, 2005) beyond the object, findings reveal the layers of meanings consumers ascribe to abandoned buildings extend beyond the close kin of the family and account for societal failures, deprivation and cultural loss. This occurs at the macro-societal level where abandoned buildings, as entanglements of objects, places and peoples, become metonyms of the past. Consumers ascribe a range of alternative values to abandoned buildings that counter the dominant axioms of consumption, including forsaken value, terminal value and outré aesthetic value. The obsolescent status of these buildings enables consumers to visualise alternative meanings, uses and potential for disposed objects. Within a culture that typically privileges the 'new', obsolescent objects and consumptionscapes act as vessels to appreciate the used, neglected and discarded.

5.3 A Pursuit of Curiosity and Discovery

Whilst previous accounts (Garrett, 2012; Bennett, 2011) have focused on urban exploration as a deviant activity, this section draws attention to consumers' core fascination with discovery as an equally important driver of urban exploration.

5.3.1 Exploration: A Journey of Discovery

Unlike overt brand communities that publicise community gatherings (Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001), the urban exploration community remains an underground movement that does not encourage public awareness, as explained in Chapter One. The journey into the community is often one of fate, chance or curiosity. Many participants suggest their entrance into the urban exploration scene was “*purely by chance. [...] purely by fate*” (William). First experiences are often opportunistic and occur without any knowledge of the wider community until individuals share their photographs on social media: “*I stumbled across it really*” (Nick). Other participants suggest their urban exploration activities are driven by curiosity. Participants describe themselves as “*quite intrigued*” (Rob), a “*curious person*” (Euan), or “*a curious child*” (Aaron). It is this curious mind that drives consumers into these unusual places and distinguishes them from others who disregard derelict buildings as stains on the landscape.

Existent literature on urban exploration prioritises the importance of deviance and thrill seeking that Garrett (2014) conceptualises as a form of recreational trespass, which is directed against societal control. Like clubbing (Goulding et al., 2009), the urban exploration subculture has shifted from a reactionary and resistant counterculture of the 1990s scene to include more benevolent motivations to uncover the hidden places of the built environment. Urban exploration is fundamentally an act of discovery. For Simon, it is the excitement of discovery that “*pulls you to explore*”. Mila has always had a fascination with abandoned buildings having

grown up in her homeland of Ukraine. Now in her mid 30s she works as a creative writer in Berlin. Mila describes the essence of exploring as a “*process of discovery*”:

It is about being out there and discovering something new. [...] Some of them you need to walk two hours through the forest and you don't know which direction. It is just like it could be there: it could be here. It is just the way you go, it is just the process of discovery, you don't know what to expect. This feeling is just so beautiful. Sometimes you discover ruins which are ugly, but the way was so exciting. Some places they are just old, and they are next door but we are never going there because there is no magic, there is no fairy-tale somehow, just too easy to find them. (Mila)

For Mila, the most important part of urban exploration is the journey of discovery, rather than the destination. As in pilgrimage tourism, the emotional, educational and physical journey becomes a fluid space that eclipses the experience of the destination (Cutler, Carmichael and Doherty, 2014). Mila relates the journey of discovering as a magical experience that is shrouded in fairy-tale adventure and uncertainty.

For many participants, the ultimate fairy-tale is to discover undocumented places.

This is a very rewarding experience, as Rory explains:

You kind of get a wee buzz. I enjoyed the Oaklands because to me it was like a find. [...] I remember jumping the fence and thinking this is fucking amazing this: how could I have missed it and why has nobody documented it? [...] there is that excitement of capturing something, maybe not what other people have captured but I knew that I would get the story. (Rory)

For Rory, the excitement of discovery peaks when he stumbles upon an abandoned high-rise estate that no one else has documented within the community. Despite the differences in landscape between Mila's Germanic woodland and Rory's inner-city high-rise, both experience a sense of excitement or "buzz" (Rory) of discovering something unique that lies dormant and hidden from the ordinary gaze (Urry and Larsen, 2011). Rory's notion of the "find" is reminiscent of consumers' treasure hunting practices in second-hand markets where consumers wonder through experiential environments (Guiot and Roux, 2010; Belk, Sherry and Wallendorf, 1988).

Rob, a business director in his 40s, believes being first to find a new place is the "ultimate" goal for him as an explorer:

I think the ultimate one would be to find a place that no one has been to before and find your own, become Lara Croft over night, and find your own adventure and something that is unique. It does happen: people are finding them. (Rob)

For Rob, finding an undiscovered place allows him to transcend from urban explorer, who explores the known urban landscape, to explorer proper, who finds completely undiscovered places or artefacts unknown to living memory. This is captured with his comparison to becoming Lara Croft, a fictional archaeologist-explorer who scours the landscape in search of hidden relics. Paul makes similar comparisons in his discussion of St. Josephs Seminary:

It is like being a treasure hunter. Yeah it is finding something different. Especially with a building like that...as grand as it is. Because it was a religious building there is rumours of tunnels underground and nobody has

ever found them. So when you do find a little secret door you get excited, wondering where it is going to lead. Personally I am always looking for that trap door. It is that air of mystery, finding that hidden tunnel or secret room or something like that. I probably will never find one but it is nice to think that you might do one day. (Paul)

For Paul, the mystery and secrets these buildings hold allow him to transcend his normal role as father, husband and fashion photographer to become a “*treasure hunter*” that continuously searches and hunts for hidden rooms, secret tunnels and trap doors. Coupled with Mila’s account of magic and fairy-tale, and Rob’s comparison of fictional explorer Lara Croft, Paul’s account enriches the notion of discovery as a playful and almost childlike pursuit where new roles can be adopted. This theme is further developed in section 5.4.2.

The rumoured underground tunnels that snake underneath St. Josephs have become an urban myth. Unlike commercial mythmaking (Crockett and Davis, 2016), urban explorers create their own myths that are unregulated by the marketplace. One such mysterious and mythical place is an abandoned house that contains a Rolls Royce hidden in its garage. Its location remains a closely guarded secret within the urban exploration community. In a very tentative discussion about this place, William explains he loves finding the “*gems that folk had missed*” as this is more rewarding than exploring well-known locations.

I heard stories about it before but I couldn’t believe we got in. So we went in and for me the sun, the light was coming in but it was boarded up but it gave this cracking gold. It lit up all of the rooms gold which was dead nice cause

they were really rich and the wallpaper was this thick gold wallpaper so it was like walking into a tomb. (William)

William's vivid description of the golden interior as a grand tomb is reminiscent of Howard Carter's discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922. Some participants admit visiting these places countless times. Consumers sacralise (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989) abandoned buildings as sites worthy of pilgrimage, where these obsolescent consumptionscapes become shrines to the past and are elevated from the profane towards the sacred. Like traditional ruins that are considered as sacred places (Colwell, Chanthaphonh and Ferguson, 2006), abandoned buildings have various sacred properties (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989), such as; hierophancy as they exist outside normal order, provoke fascination and repulsion through kratophany, are contaminated by previous owners, amass mystery, and have mythical stories that add to their hierophantic allure. This is evident in William's account where he compares the wealth of the owners to the gold wallpaper. Whilst urban exploration practices sacralise these buildings through pilgrimages of discovery and protection rituals (see section 6.1), these buildings equally epitomise the profane as they are sites of everyday life, such as factories and houses. As such, abandoned buildings emerge as marginal pseudo-sacred places whose significance as mundane spectacles is apparent only to the urban exploration community.

Reminiscent of archaeologists, some explorers search for specific objects. Simon shares the rewarding experience of finding something after four years of searching (illustrated in Figure 5.5):

I actually got my dream at the weekend! It was a Victorian pram. I have been searching for them. [...] I walked into the upstairs bedroom and there was this wooden television from about 1940, some children's toys on the windowsill, and next to it this old pram, the really old ones that the Victorians used to push around. Oh God I nearly had a heart attack! I went and touched it and smelt it and everything. I was so happy to see that, it was like I had won the pools or the lottery or something. (Simon)



Figure 5.5 'The House of the Morbid Pram', courtesy of A World in Ruins

Simon's emotive description of finding the pram captures the excitement and pleasure that comes with discovering treasure. Simon corporally revels in the objects' sensory qualities by sensually engaging with the odour and tactility of the

pram. Like Paul and Rob, Simon was driven by hope to find the pram. In a Facebook post Lydia, a 50-year-old magistrate, explains “*that's the joy about exploring. It's a lucky dip. Sometimes there's nothing there to blow your skirt up, other times you get inside and its full of treasures*”. Simon’s sensory experience of discovery is further reflected in Sam’s account:

You get a smell from it. [...] it will kind of take you back to exploring. I guess it is foosty. It is like thing rotting away but it is quite distinctive, once you smell it, it becomes a familiar not comforting but you get used to it. Aw I am here again, I am in explorer mode. (Sam)

Sam, a 27-year-old blogger, relies on her senses to discover abandoned buildings and recalls the distinctive “*foosty*” and “*rotting*” quality of decay. Like Simon, Sam enjoys the outré aesthetic value of decay and recognises it as a familiar and comforting experience that transcends her into explorer mode.

Parsons (2008) suggests finding objects is a practice of discovery where the potential qualities of an object have been socially-overlooked or hidden. Findings advance understandings of consumer discovery (Guiot and Roux, 2010; Gregson and Crewe, 2003) beyond the commercial domain, and demonstrate that it is an ongoing process that is driven by curiosity and hope to find something unique, undiscovered or lost to living memory. Building upon Gabriel and Lang’s (1995) ‘consumer as explorer’ identity, urban exploration allows consumers to transcend their normal roles and enact semi-fictional fantasy roles to become archaeologist-explorers by hunting and uncovering the secrets, places and objects of the past.

5.3.2 Practices of Discovery

Despite the opportunistic nature of exploration, participants stress the importance and complexity of effective planning that is required to find new sites. Findings introduce four consumer practices of discovery; detection, endurance, emplaced observation and re-tracing.

Firstly, *detection* refers to the various research skills and detective work necessary to pinpoint new locations. For Seb, an Italian explorer from Milan, this stage involves a degree of “*investigating*” and gathering information from various sources, such as online search engines, online maps, and urban exploration forums. Aaron, a Canadian explorer from Ontario, suggests “*Google is an explorer’s best friend*”. Participants describe using combination of Google Maps and Bing Maps to get a birds-eye view of buildings, buildings’ floor plans, and other explorers’ photographs that offer clues to locations. Simon explains how he detects new locations:

[W]hen someone does post a new house, the first thing you do is look at their photos and I have a magnifying glass which you can really zoom in on the photos, so I look for clues of course. Of course everyone does that. (Simon)

Simon uses other explorers’ finds to his advantage and scrutinises the online images for potential clues to a building’s location, such as addresses on letters and place names on medicine bottles. Consumers deploy practices of detection to skilfully locate places to explore.

Secondly, consumers practice *endurance* during searches to ensure the success of a trip. Whilst detection is useful for finding hidden locations, finding entirely unknown locations is more complex and relies upon consumers' determination and perseverance. As Simon explains, the best method for finding undocumented places involves physically searching the landscape for physical clues.

You will never have a new location without getting in your car and driving down tiny country lanes, going off road, ignoring the SatNav, just going wherever you want to go, over hills and you will find them. They are there. But it requires a bit of patience, a bit of stamina you know. If you have been driving for two or three hours and you haven't found anything, you think God I want to go home. Then you turn a corner, bang there is a house. Oh it is marvellous! It is absolutely delicious. [...] So that is the best way to find a new house and it is really the only way. (Simon)

As Simon describes, the explorer exerts physical effort, “*patience*” and “*stamina*” to find these places by going off the beaten path, getting lost and following their instincts. Practices of endurance also emerge during exploration as often the physical elements wreak havoc on the body. This is evident in the following fieldnotes where enduring the sting of nettles was the trade-off for capturing good photographs:

We trampled over and under trees saplings, taking care not to get hit in the face by a stray branch. Simon's words rang in my head “In summer I always take gardening gloves”. The amount of nettles made it difficult to take photographs without exposing your hands to the stingy raspy leaves. My hands itchy, lumpy and red were a source of annoyance. It was a reminder of

good work, and a scar of the experience. (Ethnography fieldnotes, Cambusnethan Priory, 24/08/15)

As such, endurance is simultaneously about tolerance and sacrifice where the mental and bodily faculties are tested for their staying power. The practice of endurance is an important sacrifice during discovery to ensure a successful trip.

Thirdly, *emplaced observation* enables consumers to hunt out abandoned buildings. Often explorers will visit the site numerous times to conduct “*reconnaissance*” (Josh), a “*recce mission*” (Paul) or “*scout*” (Aaron) the place. Observation emerges as a core practice that enables explorers to find their way into buildings, as Aaron explains:

Once I have my sights set on a location the next step would be to get out and scout the location. Watch to see if there is on-site security, what sort of surveillance equipment is on site, if and when they make their rounds. Getting out of the car and walking around the building can let you know quickly if there is someone watching the place. (Aaron)

Aaron gives primacy to practices of observation evident in his various synonyms of seeing (“*sights*”, “*watching*” and “*surveillance*”). This is further reflected in Lydia’s idiom of the eye that reveals the chance nature and spontaneity of discovery: “*out of the corner of your eye, sometimes you see somewhere that you didn’t actually know about*”. Tuan (1977) suggests we know through place by using our capacity to experience and perceive. Like a hunter-gatherer (Ingold, 2011), the consumer develops tacit knowledge of the landscape through *emplaced observation* by reading the environment for traces and clues.

Fourthly, consumers *re-trace* the steps of others as a practice of discovery. Re-tracing is a linked-practice of emplaced observation that enables consumers to follow the paths of others through detailed observation. This is reflected in Max's account:

When there is a fence, you look for spots where the fence is damaged or you look at paths in the grass, often made by explorers who were there before you.

(Max)

Max, a Dutch explorer, follows the tracks made by previous explorers. In this sense, Max deploys emplaced observation to find the traces of others and follow their lines through the environment. This was a practice used within the ethnography as the fieldnotes that open this chapter from St. Peters Seminary illustrate:

Not wanting to climb the fence, we decided to find an easier entry point. Looking around, and checking to see if we were being watched, we spotted some footprints in mud and decided to follow them through the wooded areas surrounding the Seminary. Following in the footsteps of others, we re-traced their trespass to find the gap in the fence. (Ethnography fieldnotes, St Peters Seminary, 24/05/15)

These accounts reveal re-tracing as an important path-finding practice of discovery that involves a combination of observation and instinct to track the route of others. This is akin to Ingold's (2011) notion of wayfinding whereby people move between places by perceiving the environment along paths of observation where "we *know as we go*, from place to place" (p.229) as one learns by discovery whilst following in the path of an ancestor. Similarly, Bradford and Sherry (2015) suggest consumers use wayfinding in tailgating vestavals as a strategic practice of travel that involves

“steering by a predetermined set of waymarks” (p.140). Extending Bradford and Sherry (2015), re-tracing emerges as a form of wayfinding where footprints act as transient waymarks that enable consumers to re-trace the lived experience of those who have gone before them by being watchful, patient and constantly assessing the environment.

Findings reveal that consumers undergo a journey of discovery to uncover these hidden or forgotten building artefacts, and introduce four practices of discovery: detection, endurance, emplaced observation and re-tracing. This builds upon understandings of consumer discovery (Guiot and Roux, 2010; Gregson and Crewe, 2003) and demonstrates the various processes involved in locating artefacts. These practices are fundamentally investigative and involve a level of detective work where consumers observe, read and decode the clues within the environment, and follow the pathways hidden within the landscape.

5.4 Temporary Place-making

This section follows the urban explorer into the ruin environment and examines how urban exploration emerges as a place-making practice that gives abandoned buildings temporary purpose. Consumer practices of urban exploration fill these empty shells with momentary meaning and ephemeral human activity that temporarily awakens

consumptionscapes from the coma of abandonment. Findings reveal place-making manifests in three forms; re-appropriating, re-enchanting, and retreating.

5.4.1 Re-appropriating Place

Derelict places often lie in a grey area of ownership having been abandoned by owners or ownerless due to death. Ownership is often unclear to explorers, as Simon explains “*[t]hey generally do belong to someone. It is very rare that you find somewhere like a house and it is completely abandoned. 100% abandoned doesn't really exist*”. Most participants have knowledge of national trespass law and amend their behaviour to prevent arrest. Issues of trespass were particularly relevant to my fieldwork as the University Ethics committee imposed strict rules against conducting any form of trespass. At the beginning of my fieldwork I struggled to understand why people would commit trespass, but these tensions eased near the end of the fieldwork, as evident in the following researcher diary excerpts:

The whole trespass issue continues to bother me. I ask myself the same question that I ask my participants: How do you interpret ‘no entry’ signs? For me, there are reasons why you are not allowed inside certain places because you potentially will hurt yourself. Signs are there to protect people, but they do take away a lot of your freedoms. I also recognise that signs are used for litigious reasons to prevent organisations being sued for personal injury claims. From that perspective, signs and fences are social constructs

that shape and control our ways of moving in the environment. (Researcher Diary, 21/01/15)

I finally understand the draw of sneaking through the hole in the fence: sovereignty over your body, actions and desires. Once you have pushed passed the legal constraints of a fence, you see it more as an object to physically overcome, rather than symbol of the law. (Researcher Diary, 25/08/15)

Urban exploration has been conceptualised as recreational trespass (Garrett, 2014) whereby exploring is driven by amusement rather than criminality and individuals act against constraining rules of society. For many participants, trespassing is a playful and exciting activity, as evident in Simon's suggestion that "*You are being naughty in a way because you are trespassing*". Similarly, Andy compares exploring to "*being young again and you were in someone's garden getting your ball. That kind of feeling. You aren't supposed to be there but that is what it feels like*". Additionally, trespass is a means of place appropriation where explorers use these places for their own means. Ross offers his views on the meanings of warning signs that prohibit his spatial intrusion:

I would interpret them as lies and rules. [...] I see CCTV signs now and I just see them as a lie because most of these buildings that we go in that have got these signs and they won't have CCTV. [...] The danger signs are a warning. I see them as a rule that somebody says I should live by. But why? 'Oh because

we say so.’ But it is a building that is empty. It is falling down, nobody is looking after it, why can’t I go in? (Ross)

Ross challenges the rules that prohibit him from exploring and rationalises his right to explore based on the building’s neglected, decaying and ownerless state. Explorers re-appropriate the empty spaces of obsolescent consumptionscapes and transform them into places through trespass. Deepening this notion of re-appropriation, Hanna believes these ungoverned locations allow a degree of legal deviance:

I feel a little bit of freedom because I know it isn’t always legal to go to the places. But when I go to the places that I go alone, you are free to do anything, to go anywhere, to do anything you want, to leave when you want. To me it is just like a little bit of freedom. (Hanna)

For Hanna, these places allow her the freedom to do whatever she likes as there is no one else watching or controlling her behaviour. It is the liminal space of ruins suspended in an ownerless state that enables her feelings of freedom.

For Garrett (2012) urban exploration is a form of ‘place hacking’ where explorers “access closed places. Whether public or private, and reappropriate them for whatever temporary use is desired” (p.15). Anderson, Hamilton and Tonner (2015) suggest urban exploration is a transient appropriation characterised by short-lived duration and impermanence. First, trips are often very transient, lasting only hours or minutes as trips can be cut short if security guards, police or members of the public interrupt explorers. This is captured in participants’ comments: “*We had to be quick before anyone catches us*” (Abby) and “*my photos at the beginning tend to be*

very rushed snap-shots that I take very quickly in case I get kicked out within five minutes” (Ariel). Second, explorers leave little trace of their re-appropriation by following the community ethos ‘take only photographs, leave only footprints’. This contrasts the semi-permanence of street-art as a place-marking practice that appropriates shared public space as a statement of ownership (Visconti et al., 2010) and the misappropriation of third place by non-regulars that physically invade the shared place, transforming harmony into conflict (Goode and Anderson, 2015).

Findings reveal consumers re-appropriate obsolescent consumptionscapes to satisfy their need to discover, deviate from rules and express individual freedoms. Shifting focus from hacking access (Garrett, 2012) towards appropriation, exploring is a place-making practice that transforms desolate spaces into places of liberty, emancipation and autonomy. Goulding et al. (2009) suggests the club is an unregulated space of illicit pleasure that enables consumers to cross social and legal boundaries. Building upon Goulding et al. (2009), abandoned buildings become unregulated places of deviant pleasure where consumers practice place-making to fill desolate zones with meanings of deviance and liberation.

5.4.2 Re-enchanting Place

Consumers re-enchant obsolescent consumptionscapes by awakening the place from its slumber of abandonment. Re-enchantment occurs through three forms of playful practice; chimerical fantasies, masquerade, and corporeal games.

Chimerical Fantasies

First, consumers engage in *chimerical fantasies* to imbue a place with meaning. During her interview Lydia displayed the photographs of her favourite locations, describing the place below as an “*enchanted*” and a “*fairy-tale*” place.



Figure 5.6: ‘The Enchanted Door’, courtesy of Lydia

Simon regards the whole experience of exploring to be magical: “*it is magical when you step through the door and you are confronted with the room, like wow! It is magical*”. Often participants draw upon popular and folk culture to explain the magic within these locations. Hanna considers these places as a source of magical imagination:

To me it is just the thought that the past has happened there. I think magic doesn't always have to be supernatural because if you just are walking around in an old ball house, you can imagine the glamour and the parties and stuff. I think this is something that is also magical. So it is like these decayed Disney moments. (Hanna)

Hanna relates her imaginative projections to “*decayed Disney moments*” as a way to capture the faded grandeur and fairy-tale quality of her imagined vision of the past. This is further captured by responses to Liam’s Facebook post below (Figure 5.7) on Chateau Miranda:

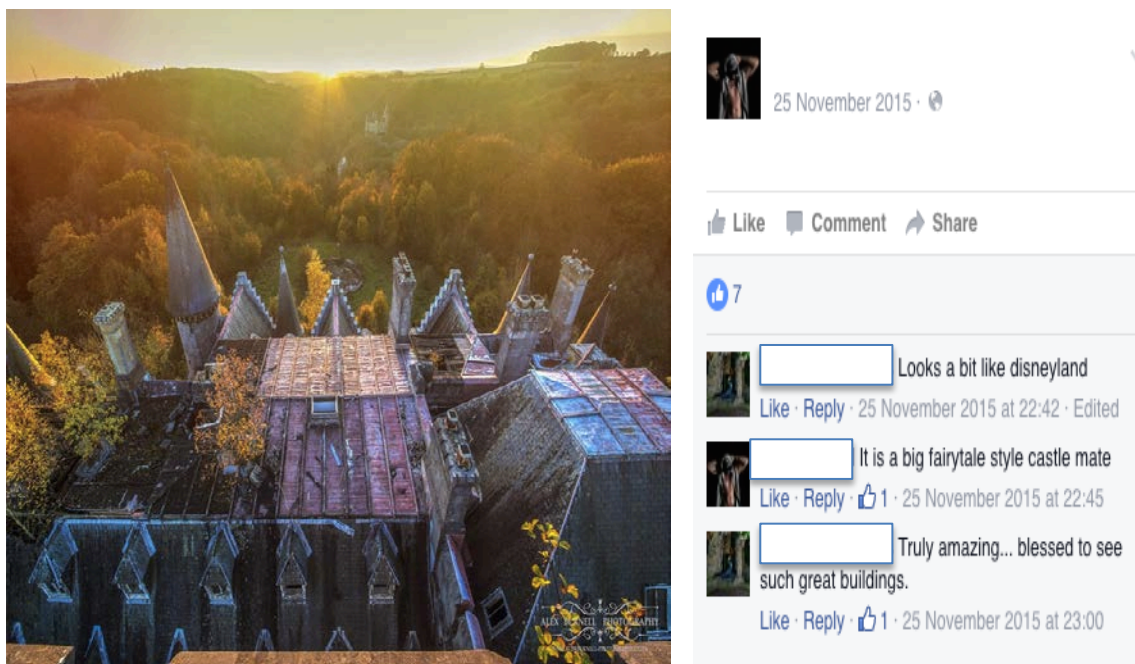


Figure 5.7: Liam’s Facebook post of Chateau Miranda

Hanna’s comment of “*decayed Disney moments*” is reflected in the Facebook comments of “*disneyland*” and “*fairytale style castle*”. According to Glücklich

(1997) magic is a fundamental part of culture and the human condition and Ritzer (1999) suggests hyper-real consumption environments can offer contemporary enchantment and magic. Participants use *chimerical fantasies* of magic as a cultural vehicle to imbue a space with place meanings and draw links to popular culture as a means to understand the obscurity of these places.

Mila's description of the magic of Beelitz-heilstätten hospital in Berlin (Figure 5.8) unpacks the elusiveness of magic:

It is hidden in the woods and it is all, it is like a fairy-tale you know. You go there and you are part of this fairy-tale. You are alone and sometimes you see the foxes strolling around, there are a lot of birds and just being with nature. [...] You know it is about a hidden beauty. Some places there is a kind of magic, I cannot describe it. Places that are beautiful, but some places they are just rotten and ugly and just like not inviting at all so it is not just about being in abandoned places, it is about discovering the beauty, seeing the past and the history, and how the life was before people left. (Mila)



Figure 5.8: ‘Beelitz Hospital’, Berlin courtesy of ScrappyNW

For Mila, the magic of these places resides in the qualities of beauty, abandonment and catching a glimpse of past life. Mila’s fantasising is particularly immersive as she becomes physically embedded within a fairy-tale imaginary: “*You go there and you are part of this fairy-tale*”. Glücklich (1997) considers magical thinking as an experiential force, in which awareness between the perceiver and the world creates a unified system or mental ecology. These magical fantasies are a form of place-making that arise as an embodied interaction between place and person which fills a place with temporary meanings before the urban explorer departs.

Consumers also engage with fantastical imagination where they allow their minds to explore irrational thoughts and ponderings. These thoughts often include

experiences of paranormal activity, such as feeling watched, hearing voices and seeing unexplainable presences. Despite his scepticism William admits experiencing the unexplained: “*I could hear something. Normally you can hear something but this time it was like a voice. It was really like a voice at my head at the side*”. Similarly, Ariel describes paranormal activity in Cloud House:

I did feel like I was being watched in there, that there was something in there that was other-worldly. I felt like there was something behind me watching me taking my photos. (Ariel)

Like William, Ariel relies on her senses to feel the lingering gaze of the absent ‘other’. Nate compares these fantasies to horror fiction and suggests exploring is “*more immersive to be in a place and let your mind go crazy*”. The majority of participants firmly do not believe in ghosts or spirits, yet they allow their minds to explore unbounded possibilities (Martin, 2004) of paranormal presences and strange situations. For example, the following Facebook post (Figure 5.9) illustrates how these places enable individuals to engage in imaginative wonderings:

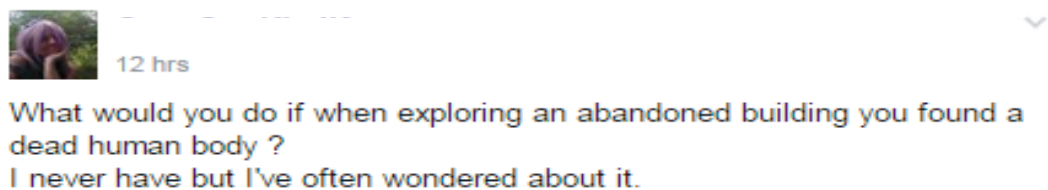


Figure 5.9 Abandoned Uncovered Facebook post

These chimerical fantasies awaken the place through imaginatively placing life back into the building, even in the form of an imaginary corpse, as suggested above.

Maclaran and Brown (2005) introduce the notion of ‘performing artscape’ where the consumer is an artist of the imagination and co-creator of meanings in the marketplace, whereas Chronis, Arnould and Hampton (2012) suggest consumers’ physical engagement with the site, artefacts and materiality allows greater (re)imaginings of the past to occur. Findings demonstrate consumers’ create magical and ethereal chimerical fantasies as a way to create a sense of place from ruins that are devoid of personal meanings. Rather than an artist (Maclaran and Brown, 2005), in the context of urban exploration consumers are the sole creators of meanings, as they become magicians conjuring fantastical visions that re-enchant and fill the desolate spaces of ruins with illusory life.

Masquerade

Second, consumers engage in *masquerade* by performatively playing with their identities. Urban explorers often relate their activities to professional or fictional explorers of popular culture, as discussed in section 5.3.1. This extends beyond mere discussion as they often adorn masks and stage surrealist photography. Participants cite two main motivations to wear masks: entertainment and anonymity. For many participants, wearing masks is about having fun and performing, as Paul explains:

I take a mask, and that is really it. I am not really bothered about being caught on camera or anything like that. It is just really for fun. [...] You know people wear masks. I don't think it is to be anonymous as such. It is just a bit of a theatrical selfie. (Paul)

Paul highlights the playful side of wearing masks where individuals can perform dramaturgical roles for the camera. This is best illustrated by Martin Beaumont's photographs of urban explorers in masks (Figure 5.10 and 5.11):



Figure 5.10 Monkey mask, courtesy of Martin Beaumont Photography



Figure: 5.11 Masked explorers, courtesy of Martin Beaumont Photography

Masks also enable consumers to disguise their identities and disassociate themselves from committing trespass. Ross explains the requisite for anonymity: “*People are so scared to have their real name attached to anything that they do around this hobby. At the end of the day that is what it is, it is a hobby. So they will use false names and wear masks. [...] ...they don’t want to get themselves in trouble*”. For Ross, creating “*false names*” and wearing masks allows individuals to anonymise their activity and separate their private hobby from their public life. Similarly, clubbers adopt new roles as a means of separating normal life from the contained illegality of the club space (Goulding et al., 2009).

Liam explains all explorers would adopt “*an explore name*” that is shared with the community: “*everyone online knew me as Venustas they didn’t know what my face was like because I always had a mask on*”. Liam dropped his explore name after Facebook changed its privacy rules that prevented people from adopting fake names. Liam is now known within the community as ‘The Man in Black’ – a name given to him by the online community for his knowledge of St. Josephs Seminary. Liam performs this identity within his Facebook post (Figure 5.12) below:



13 June 2015 · 🌐

Forever walking the path of decay the man in black will walk these halls

Figure 5.12: Liam's Facebook post from St. Josephs Seminary

Whilst creating new identities provides anonymity, Liam's performance as the Man in Black highlights the importance of dramaturgy and performativity. Belk, Ger and Askegarrd (2003) suggests the process of becoming someone else is a desire for otherness. In this sense, masquerade enables consumers to adopt new names, disguise their identity and perform new identities that match their explorer role.

Through masquerade the empty shell of the ruin becomes-a-place where explorers perform their masked identities and photograph their stage performances.

Corporeal Games

Third, consumers engage in *corporeal games* that transform the empty ruin that is devoid of human presence into a place animated with movement as explorers corporally engage with the assault-course environment. Unoccupied by service providers or owners, abandoned buildings offer consumers spaces of physical freedom, as Nate explains: “*Being in these spaces, having your adventure, being able to scale the tops of these buildings. There is nothing like that*”. Echoing Nate’s sentiments, Ross explains that the physical freedom afforded in abandoned buildings gives him a release from his daily routine:

When you get out your car and you are on the grounds and you are climbing up a drainpipe to get through a window. Crawling through a board that is loose. As soon as you start doing that the excitement just starts and you just get lost, everything else disappears. All the crap that comes from the daily routine that you have just lived for the past five days just gone. So I get the excitement, the nerves and then the freedom really from everything else outside. It is just fun. It is brilliant. (Ross)

Ross highlights the corporality of his movement as he climbs and crawls over urban obstacles that give him a sense of “*freedom*” that would not be permitted in his daily life. I experienced this corporal freedom during the fieldwork:

Climbing up the embankment and through the overgrowth was more difficult than my usual walking pursuits. I became aware of the use of my body as a means to traverse the challenging terrain. Ducking and negotiating the thick undergrowth required my body to loop and stretch in-between small spaces and gaps between the trees. Clinging to the hanging branches and gripping my toes into my shoes allowed me to tactfully amble up the side of the steep embankment that hugged the boundary fence. Reflecting back, this mode of movement is far more animalistic than my upright human bipedalism.
(Ethnographic fieldnotes, St Peters Seminary, 24/05/15)

In many ways, abandoned buildings become a playscape that enables ludic play (Maclaran and Brown, 2005) and serious play (Abrahams, 1982) to surface as explorers engage with extreme experiences. For participants, these abandoned environments are the only socially acceptable places that permit physical play as they are placed somewhat outside of public order. Play was a consistent theme throughout fieldwork and my own experiences of ruins:

One warehouse housed a mass of decaying polystyrene padding. My immediate impression was excitement. It was like bubble-wrap. As soon as you see it you have the urge to play with it. I immediately wanted to jump on top of the piles of white mass and climb up to the top of the pile to claim my territory. However, this feeling was tempered by the fact the mass was disgustingly dirty, unclean, unsafe, unstable and potentially toxic.
(Ethnography fieldnotes, Ardeer Chemical Munitions Works, 24/06/15)

Exploring requires a playful engagement with the built environment where the body is used in unconventional ways. For many participants exploring is a “game” (Rob) that is played within the environment and against security services. Nate, compares entering Kings Park Hospital as a puzzle: “*we play that Rubik’s Cube and find our way in.*”

Nowadays the way the asylum is...gaining entrance is always a question mark because they are constantly boarding up the old exits and then other people are creating new ones. [...] So it is kind of like a puzzle, like a Rubik’s Cube. You always get to find the new entrance, like a game playing with the people who keep up the place. It is also avoiding detection. You are sneaking around. It is a much more elaborate game of hide and seek, so to speak. [...] You have the opportunity to scale some really tall buildings and see some pretty wild things. (Nate)

Nate uses multiple analogies of play in his description of exploring the ruin, such as “puzzle”, “Rubik’s Cube”, “game playing”, and “hide and seek”. His description of avoiding detection highlights the cat-and-mouse game that explorers play with security services as the access routes continually change and get boarded up. Both participants’ accounts and ethnographic fieldnotes highlight the importance of the body and corporeal games to ensuring safe passage. Corporeal games awaken the obsolescent environment as exploring fills the empty voids with human presence and bodily movement.

In addition to awakening the place, corporeal games awaken a past sense of self. Many participants relate their urban exploration exploits to experiences in their

childhood. Aaron, Tom and Rob shared childhood stories of exploring in their local towns with their friends. In Rob's case he explored an abandoned POW hospital with his father when he was twelve years old. He explains that this experience "*lays there in your subconscious over the years*", leading to his current fascination with abandoned buildings. Similarly, Seb regards the ruin environment as a "*playground*" and William feels exploring allows him to go "*back to the time of your youth*". Simon believes exploring is a regression into childhood:

A lot of this is like the psychology of regression into childhood. [...] [W]hen I was a young boy we would go and discover and climb up trees and climb on stuff. [...] but then when you are a teenager or an adult you don't do it anymore. You are not supposed to do it anymore because you are an adult. So what we are doing, we are regressing back to childhood and doing what adults aren't supposed to do. So there is that element of playful feeling in a place as well. You have got into a building, you are regressing back to childhood in a way. (Simon)

For Simon, these places have a "*playful feeling*" that allows him to regress into childhood play and deviance. Simon believes the progression into adulthood means we lose this sense of play. The liminality of obsolescent consumptionscapes rekindles feelings of childhood and re-enchants a sense of past self lost to adulthood. In this sense, corporeal games enliven the place through activity, movement and play. Simultaneously, exploring awakens a sense of past self that allows consumers to regress into childhood experiences of play and wonder.

5.4.3 Retreating to Place

Abandoned buildings become sanctuaries and shelters for quiet solitude and contemplation through consumer place-making. In contrast to Ratner and Hamilton's (2015) suggestion that consumers avoid solitary hedonic activities, the solitary experience is an attraction of urban exploration. For Mila, solitude is the essence of exploring: "*It is just about being there and being alone*". Similarly, Lydia states "*I personally like to explore on my own. I don't particularly want to be with other people*". Tumbat and Belk (2011) suggest climbers use self-enforced isolation to keep focus and deep concentration. Whilst some participants warn against exploring alone for safety reasons, moments of solitude from other people allows explorers to depart from the drudgery of daily life, as Ross explains:

It is just a way of escaping the rat race to be honest. I like to go to somewhere where it is quiet and peaceful. [...] you have your daily routine and you are stuck in that and just to get out of the way where nobody else is, it is a fantastic feeling. [...] It is just escapism. [...] if you are younger you will go to your room, switch the telly on and read a book. As a parent you don't really get a chance to do that, so we get up at half three in the morning, travel stupid amounts of time in the car and find somewhere where we can do that I suppose. (Ross)

Ross compares the ruin to the childhood sanctuary of a bedroom that allows him to escape the "*rat race*" and adult responsibilities that he endures on a daily basis. Whilst utopian marketplaces offer a sense of displace or feeling of elsewhere (Maclaran and Brown, 2005), participants seek moments of quiet solitude and

removal in the desolate environment of the derelict building. This reflects the physical and temporal distancing that female consumers create in the creation of 'me-time' as a break or interlude from family life (Stevens, Maclaran and Catterall, 2007). Through the context of urban exploration, 'me-time' enables both genders to escape from family duties and adult responsibilities.

Many participants use abandoned buildings for quiet contemplation. Like the mountain rendezvous (Belk and Costa, 1988), exploring provides escape and renewal. For William, abandoned buildings offer him a therapeutic experience: "*I find it quite therapeutic and I feel quite relaxed after I'm in a place, everything melts away*". For Hanna, these locations enable her to be free to be "*really alone with yourself*" and "*really think about life*". Similarly, Liam describes these environments as a peaceful sanctuary from daily life:

A lot of the time I find that that is my escape. Once I get into that place I am in that zone, walking around and I am feeling the passion of that place in my pictures. Obviously when you come out you are back in the real world. I find it peaceful in these places. [...] It is nice just to get lost in that building. You take it all in. It is a special feeling. [...] it is nice to come out of your everyday life and get that before you return back to your everyday life. (Liam)

For Liam, these places provide a retreat or "zone" for peace and quiet that is distanced from daily life. This distance is spatiality captured by Liam's comments "*back in the real world*" and "*before you return back to your everyday life*". Similarly, Nick revels in the quiet desolation of abandoned buildings: "*I love the emptiness. [...] There is no noise, no people, no shops, no commuting, no driving or*

talking it is all peaceful". For Nick, the emptiness, silence and stillness adds to the allure of abandoned buildings as peaceful retreats from the hustle-and-bustle of daily life. Similarly, Seb explains "*Silence is about the place. [...] That is the best thing about urbexing is about the silence, the noises of the place. Every place has got those noises, something that is coming from the place*". For Seb, the essence of the place is felt through its silence.

The particular sounds of abandoned buildings were captured in the ethnographic audio recordings and transcribed in the fieldnotes:

Researcher: What can you hear?

David: Silence. Wait...maybe a river, water dripping, pigeons...

Researcher: The wind, leaves in the wind. It is so quiet here. Before I could hear our footsteps and branches cracking under our feet, metal clanging on the rails of the fence. And then weirdly I heard a bell. Did you hear it? (Ethnographic fieldnotes, St Peters Seminary, 24/05/15)

These sounds reinforce the heterotopic qualities (Chatzidakis, Maclaran and Bradshaw, 2012; Foucault, 1986) of abandoned buildings as alternative consumptionscapes that are out-of-place and separated from normal life and daily soundscapes.

Stevens, Maclaran and Catterall (2007) suggest consumers use magazines to create imaginary and material spaces of relaxation in the home, and Goulding et al. (2009) suggest chilling out is a ritualised practice of clubbing that prolongs feelings of pleasure and empathy. In the context of urban exploration, individuals use the

empty shells of abandoned buildings as a retreat to withdraw from everyday life. Abandoned buildings become a hiding place or sanctuary filled with meanings of solitude, recuperation and contemplation.

Previous research has suggested places are constructed through place-marking (Visconti et al., 2010) and placeway rituals (Bradford and Sherry, 2015) where the physical environment is altered to create meaningful place. Advancing this work, findings reveal place-making is not confined to physical alterations of the place environment, but can include transitory place-making practices. Urban exploration emerges as a transient place appropriation characterised by ephemeral occupation that leaves little trace of presence (Anderson, Hamilton and Tonner, 2015). Extending Anderson, Hamilton and Tonner (2015), findings demonstrate temporary place-making has three forms; re-appropriating, re-enchanting, and retreating. First, consumers re-appropriate unoccupied ruins through trespass for their own means. Second, consumers re-enchant these empty buildings with chimerical fantasies, masquerade performances and corporal games that fill these places with temporary meanings and human activity. Finally, through retreating to the ruin consumers transform these desolate spaces into meaningful sanctuaries for contemplation and recuperation.

Previous accounts of place appropriation have emphasised issues of access (Garrett, 2012) or ownership driven by resistance (Visconti et al., 2010). Through the context of urban exploration, place re-appropriation is a place-making practice that fills the empty void with temporary purpose and meanings of liberation. Bradford and

Sherry (2015) identify various forms of placeway rituals that create new places through spectacles, festivals, carnivals and vestavals. Rather than creating new places, findings demonstrate that place-making practices awaken and enliven obsolescent consumptionscapes, whilst simultaneously reawakening a sense of past self in consumers as they revisit feelings and freedoms of youth. As such, place-making emerges as a temporary practice that transforms space into place by giving it a transient purpose where the movement of human activity temporarily awakens the place from its ruin slumber.

5.5 Imagining the Unfinished Stories of the Absent ‘Other’

This section examines consumer imagination within abandoned buildings. It begins by examining how consumers imagine the past lives of these buildings and their absent occupants. The section continues by examining the various ways consumers move beyond imagination to connect with the absent ‘other’.

5.5.1 Imaginative Patching of the Past

Like places of dark tourism, most abandoned buildings can be understood as storyscapes (Chronis, Arnould and Hampton, 2012) where narratives of the past are communicated to consumers through local knowledge, historical documents and

heritage agencies. The imagined presence of the dead is materialised in the monuments and memorials and are summoned to life through stories and narrative staging (Chronis, Arnould and Hampton, 2012). However, abandoned buildings are often shrouded in mystery as their mundanity negates the need for any documentation. Like heirlooms, these modern ruins have “lost their specific stories of origin but embody vague connections to ancestors” (Türe and Ger, 2016: p.33). Participants share the difficulty in locating the history for some neglected buildings, as Luke found when researching an abandoned orphanage in Preston: *“some of the buildings haven’t been documented very well over the years. Like the orphanage has hardly got any pictures about it around anymore. Back in the day there is only a few. The history is scarce as that”*. Unlike public buildings, private residential buildings have little or no recorded history. This is often frustrating to explorers who wish to piece the missing sections of the puzzle together and gain a better understanding of the place.

Whilst this mystery adds to the allure of exploring, consumers are left questioning what events led to final abandonment of these places. This is illustrated in Seb’s assertion: *“many times I wonder why these places are left abandoned”*. Similarly, Max found himself asking the same questions each time he visits a place: *“What happened there and who was involved? How many people worked there? When did it open? When did it close and why?”* Explorers’ minds are left to deliberate the darker events that led to the abandonment of these places. This is evident in the comments on Aaron’s Facebook post (Figure 5.13) about an abandoned home:

Kitchen in an abandoned house in rural Ontario. The house, full of belongings is slowly decaying from the upper floor down to the main floor as water works it's way in.

If you enjoy my work & want to continue seeing it please be sure to hit like & share it! 😊!



Like Comment Share

122 people like this.

Top Comments



I can imagine the scenario as it happened. Rural Ontario family, lived in house for 60 or 70 years. The matriarch gets very old and feeble, depends on her bachelor son to take care of her. He does, until she dies. He lives on in the house alone, in squalor, no money to repair the roof. Does not maintain the house, chops wood for the fireplace, the furnace no longer works, electricity turned off, God knows what he eats. He shuffles around the house, not wanting to accept the reality of what is happening to the house, and powerless to do anything anyway! He too dies and old man, no survivors can be found. The house sits and rots away, remembering better days.

Like · Reply · 5 · 17 July at 20:14



Pretty much what happened. The woman passed away and was eventually found.

Like · 2 · 18 July at 16:26

Figure 5.13: Aaron's Facebook post on an abandoned house in Ontario

Aaron's photograph stimulates other people's imaginings of what happened to the absent residents. The commenter develops a fictional story as a means to understand

how this once private home that was full of life and personal possessions became a vacant museum that stores artefacts and gathers dust.

Chronis, Arnould and Hampton (2012) argue that empathic connection to a place allows consumers to fill out the narrative (Braid, 1996) by adding emotional depth. In these anonymous ruins explorers are often left baffled. Lexi conveys this sentiment in her comments on abandoned houses: *“I can't understand how someone could leave all the private stuff and then there is nobody else who cares”*. In an effort to understand the missing stories of a ruin's history explorers use imagination as a mechanism that allows them to mentally visualise the past. Familiar objects stimulate nostalgic reactions for existential consumers (Goulding, 2001). In contrast, consumers' encounters with unfamiliar found-objects (see Appendix D) trigger the imagination, offering clues of past use, people and activities. Through a process of patching consumers create a patchwork of visualisations, voices and feelings that mend the gaps of a ruin's biography. Rather than filling in (Martin, 2004), consumer imagination can be understood as a patchwork of fragments that can be pieced together to form a more collegiate whole. Ingold's (2013b) notion of correspondence is particularly useful for understanding how consumers connect fragments during imagination. Ingold (2013b) conceptualises correspondence as a movement of sociality that allows us to cling or hold onto one another and can occur between animate beings (e.g. social relationships) and between animate and inanimate objects (e.g. processes of making). Participants patch together fragments in an effort to connect or correspond (Ingold, 2013b) with the absent 'other'.

This patching is evident in Andy's discussion of machinery as he pulls together the real and imagined in an effort to understand the scene before him:

Yeah when I went up the crane, I managed to get into the cockpit of where they would drive the crane, and I was trying to imagine how ever many years ago someone working in the cockpit. [...] I like seeing the big machinery that used to be there and like those are the ones that attract me the most. I just like the feel of the place. To try and imagine what happened there in the past. (Andy)

For Andy, the physical material of machinery allows him to visualise people working in the disused crane. This is akin to Martin's (2004) literal embodiment technique where the imaginary is given form.

In addition to found-objects, the place itself would prompt explorers to imagine the past. This is captured by Lydia's comments:

I think just standing in some of these buildings...I was at an RAF air force base at the weekend, just standing there and it was completely ruined but I could almost close my eyes and imagine all of the pilots wondering through with their uniforms on. It was quite special and quite amazing. (Lydia)

Whilst the RAF airbase was completely ruined, its remains allow Lydia to visualise the clothing of the absent pilots. In many ways this reflects an imaginative nostalgic escapism where consumers day-dream about a romanticised past (Goulding, 2001). Here, ornamentation is used as an embellishing technique (Martin, 2004) that generates thick imaginary from very little stimulus.

Along with artefacts and buildings, Simon suggests that the atmosphere of a place can help the explorer to be imaginatively transported to a previous time when the buildings were in use:

You take in the atmosphere and the feeling of a place, and try to visualise what it was when it was full of people in whatever period it was. And then you start taking the photos. You try to capture the atmosphere. (Simon)

For Simon, the place has an atmosphere that impresses upon him to imagine past times. Martin (2004) suggests that consumers immersed in game play can experience “temporal freedom to evoke the imaginary” (p.141). Rather than game play, urban explorers use the imaginary to access the past as a real event. Hanna describes this way of imagining as an “*inner cinema*”:

I think abandoned buildings always have this little charm. You also have this inner cinema when you go. [...] If you go into some kind of building that you don't really know what actually happened there. Do you know Beelitz here? Like a hospital for tuberculosis. You can imagine what happened there, but you don't know how many patients they had, if they had visitors, what did they talk about? And you just get kind of thinking about what happened there. I think it is more about the conversations that took place in these kinds of buildings, than more like who built it actually or when it closed. It is more like what happened to the people staying in those buildings. (Hanna)

Reminiscent of Kozinets et al.'s (2002) “rich inner world” (p.31), Hanna's “*inner cinema*” allows her to visualise the past, imagine the conversations that people had between each other and patch together the missing information that remains in empty, neglected and often anonymous buildings.

Martin (2004) regards consumers' ability to fill in the gaps as an embellishing strategy of extrapolation where incomplete information is filled in by "extending the visual depiction" (p.144). However, Martin (2004) fails to explain how the process of filling works in practise. Findings demonstrate that consumers piece together material objects, place features and atmospherics to create a patchwork of visualisations, voices and feelings in an attempt to mend the unfinished stories of ruins and allow for a building's biography to be replenished. This patchwork can be understood as a correspondence (Ingold, 2013b) with the absent 'other' as consumers attempt to connect with the past. Imaginative patchworks are fabricated into an understanding of the absent 'other' through three stages of sensing, knowing, and learning.

5.5.2 Sensing the 'Other'

Whilst some buildings can remain anonymous and offer no stories to their ultimate abandon, other buildings subtly offer clues to past uses, occupants and activities that took place within the walls. Indeed Ingold (2011) reminds us that "[j]ourneying forward along a path or trail, one is also taken back to places imbued with the presence of ancestors" (p.148). Chronis, Arnould and Hampton (2012) suggest this embodied presence within the physical space of a storyscape allows cultural imaginaries to form. The previous section demonstrates that consumers use imaginative patching to replenish missing information and create imaginaries.

Findings demonstrate consumers' correspondence (Ingold, 2013b) with the past extends beyond the imaginary towards gaining an overall sense of the absent 'other'. At times this is achieved through physically seeing the 'other' in photographs from the past. Lydia tells the story of her trip to Scotland where she came across a wonderful abandoned Edwardian house (Figures 5.14 and 5.15):

I found most amazing building which I took some pictures of but then I did my research, as I obviously do, and I found would you believe a photograph of the family that lived in the house. They were actually sitting on the steps that I had photographed. Do you know what? It was so moving to see them and to see the people who were actually there. It was really quite a powerful thing. It was very special to see that. (Lydia)



Figure 5.14: The Edwardian house, courtesy of Lydia



Figure 5.15: The Edwardian house circa 1800s, courtesy of Lydia

For Lydia, it is emotionally moving to see the family who lived in the house and sat upon the same steps that she photographed. The anonymity of these buildings and their previous occupants creates mystery that intrigues viewers. Often urban exploration photography evokes the foreign through the outré aesthetic value in images of destruction, decay and abandonment. This is evident in Lydia's own photograph of the dilapidated doorway that is overgrown with plants. Ruinophilia is often compared to visions of trauma, war and apocalypse. Whilst in post-war photography "the human presence is a mere trace, creating a feeling of isolation" that leaves local "people unnamed and the country faceless" (Nguyen and Belk, 2007: p.276), Lydia's photographs side-by-side offers a face to the abandoned house.

Seeing the ‘other’ gives her a greater sense of the people who lived in the now uninhabited ruin.

As objects can offer traces of past life (Parsons, 2008), they can also tell stories about the past (DeSilvey, 2006). Similarly, Rob speaks of finding words drawn into the walls in St Josephs Seminary:

[I]f you go up into the clock tower there is writing dating back to when I was born, forty years ago. You know that the people who have written it were children at the time. They are quite humorous, jokey things, as well as some deep and in-depth ones as well which you can understand that they had some deep and darkened thoughts that has caused them to write these things. (Rob)

Rob’s encounter with the words of the ‘other’ offers him sense of what these children were feeling during their time in the Seminary. In the previous section, Hanna imagined the conversations of the TB patients. Found-objects allows consumers to move beyond imagination towards sensing the ‘other’ by reading their written words. Ingold (2013b) regards this insight as listening to the past, where “[t]o visit a monument is to eavesdrop on past conversations that we can no longer fully understand, or that are compensable only to specialist antiquarians. They were then, we are now” (p.79). In this case the ‘other’ speaks, offering an insight into their personal emotions and experiences. The voice of the ‘other’ is captured in Simon’s photograph (Figure 5.16) of personal letters from 1919:

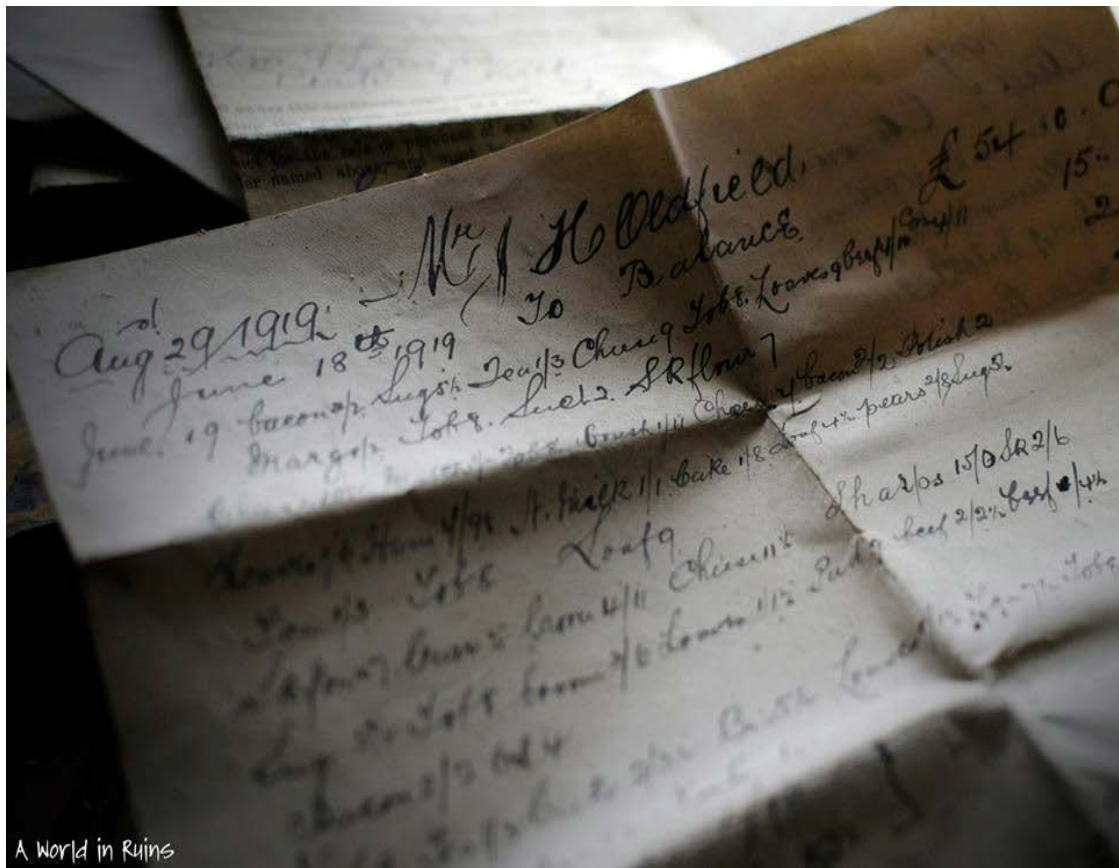


Figure 5.16 ‘Stargazer Manor’, courtesy of A World in Ruins

Not all absent ‘others’ of the past can leave a written imprint on the world, and instead leave a bodily trace of their existence as Ross encounters:

[H]ouses are not my thing. They creep me out. Yeah cause I am too close to somebody’s personal space. One house and that was in Luxemburg. It freaks me out. Really did, really did. Seeing a hairbrush with her hair still in it, the clips, her picture of Mary, her beads next to it. No, no I enjoyed it but it freaked me out. A little bit too personal. (Ross)



Figure 5.17: 'The Lord is my Shepherd', courtesy of A World in Ruins

Encountering the bodily material of the absent resident disturbs Ross as he feels he has gotten too close to sensing the other. Here the absent 'other' leaves a corporal trace (Crewe, 2011) that contaminates (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989; Douglas, 1966) the now abandoned objects. In a more philosophical tone William tries to capture the sense of the 'other' by placing himself in the same places they would have done during their life.

It is always the windows. I'm trying to capture this as if someone else must have looked out of that window. That is the view that they see. But not the exact same view but the presence of them. I think that is what you are trying to capture. [...] [A] lot of folk must have spent their life looking out that

window. What did they see and things like that. [...] It is like capturing the time, the perspective and the presence of the person and I am hoping that it is being sort of respectful as well. (William)

William's carefully considered emplacement allows him to almost see the world (out of the window) through the eyes of the 'other'. Gaining the same "*perspective*" as the previous occupants allows William to create a greater sense of the 'other' that is respectful to their being. Despite the absence of the 'other', explorers can feel their presence through sensing the traces left behind in pictures, writing, bodily material and inhabited environment. Chronis Arnould and Hampton (2012) highlight the materiality of the place and its objects are important in informing consumers' cultural imaginaries, where the past is grasped directly through multi-sensory experiences. Indeed the "direct experience of touching" (Chronis Arnould and Hampton, 2012: p.279) enables a haptic engagement with the past. In contrast to imaginaries, explorers move beyond imaginary through a process of *gathering* traces and material inscriptions of the other. This movement beyond imaginary visualisation is further developed in the process of knowing the other, discussed in the following section.

5.5.3 Knowing the 'Other'

Along with sensing the 'other', explorers try to build up an understanding of the absent people through a process of contemplation and interpretation that leads an understanding or *knowing* of the 'other'. This often leads explorers to search for the

absent 'other', as evident in this Facebook post (Figure 5.18) on the handwritten notebooks of Pine End factory:



Figure 5.18: Facebook post on Pine End

The explorer clearly relished the find of these notebooks for their historical importance, but goes further by trying to locate the factory director himself: *“As the book was so personal I did a bit of digging to see if he was still around, unfortunately it seems he passed away in 2005”*. Sometimes the only way to gain any information about a place is to physically search the property for clues, as Luke suggests: *“The only way you will*

find out whose house it was would be through letters that have been left and addressed to someone”.

Specifically discussing the exploration of private residences Ross regards this as a process of building interpretation:

There are other people who want to go there to graft these pieces of history. [...] You have the little relics of that person’s life and it is those type of things that people take pictures of. There is one lad who just loves houses and houses alone. All he does is photograph houses. He doesn’t want to just document a building; he wants to document somebody’s life that is possibly no longer here. So they collect what type of things they did, they read so they can try to build your own interpretation of the person who lived there. You know, whether they collected lighters or snuffboxes or Life magazine as some people did. You can build up your own interpretation. (Ross)

As Ross describes, explorers build an interpretation of the absent ‘other’ through collecting fragments of the absent occupants life and pulling these scraps together to create a thicker thread of understanding. Explorers act as archaeologists of the recent past by using “*mixtures* of reading and seeing” (Elkins, 1999: p.84 emphasis in original) to understand these artefacts and their previous owners. Simon regards found-objects as the key to creating knowledge of the absent ‘other’ as evident in his comments and Facebook post (Figure 5.19) on Mrs. Brown’s House:

I think the objects are the heart of the house. The objects are what they have gone out and bought, or the receipts, the work they have done and the receipt for their profession, whether they are a farmer. That is the heart of their

existence, making hay or wool or producing milk or whatever, there is a receipt. That is them within the receipt. I can't take a photo of that person but the receipt or a diary or something is very personally to them. Really tied into their day-to-day living. I think to really build up a picture of a person or how their life was day-to-day you really need the personal things. [...] In these houses you are finding letters and diaries, perfumes bottles. These are intrinsically linked to the person who lived there. So I think really adds substance to a place. I am obsessed with them. I love them. I will read letters for hours and diaries. I love it! I could spend ten hours in a house quite easily. Yeah I can be in there all day. (Simon)

One of my favourite houses of 2015. Hidden by trees and down a long path away from the main road, Mrs Brown's house lies derelict and decaying in its pastoral setting yet still retaining much inside to have an idea of the people who once lived there.

A rather unspectacular dwelling with a corrugated iron roof, none the less, inside was full of rooms etched in the past containing snapshots of Mr & Mrs brown's lives along with nature's own design ideas.

Not much could be gleaned from what artefacts were left regarding Mrs Brown, however Mr Brown, it appears was in the Royal Air Force for a short period of time being discharged in 1960 according to documents still in one of the bedrooms.

Figure 5.19: Facebook post on Mrs Brown's House

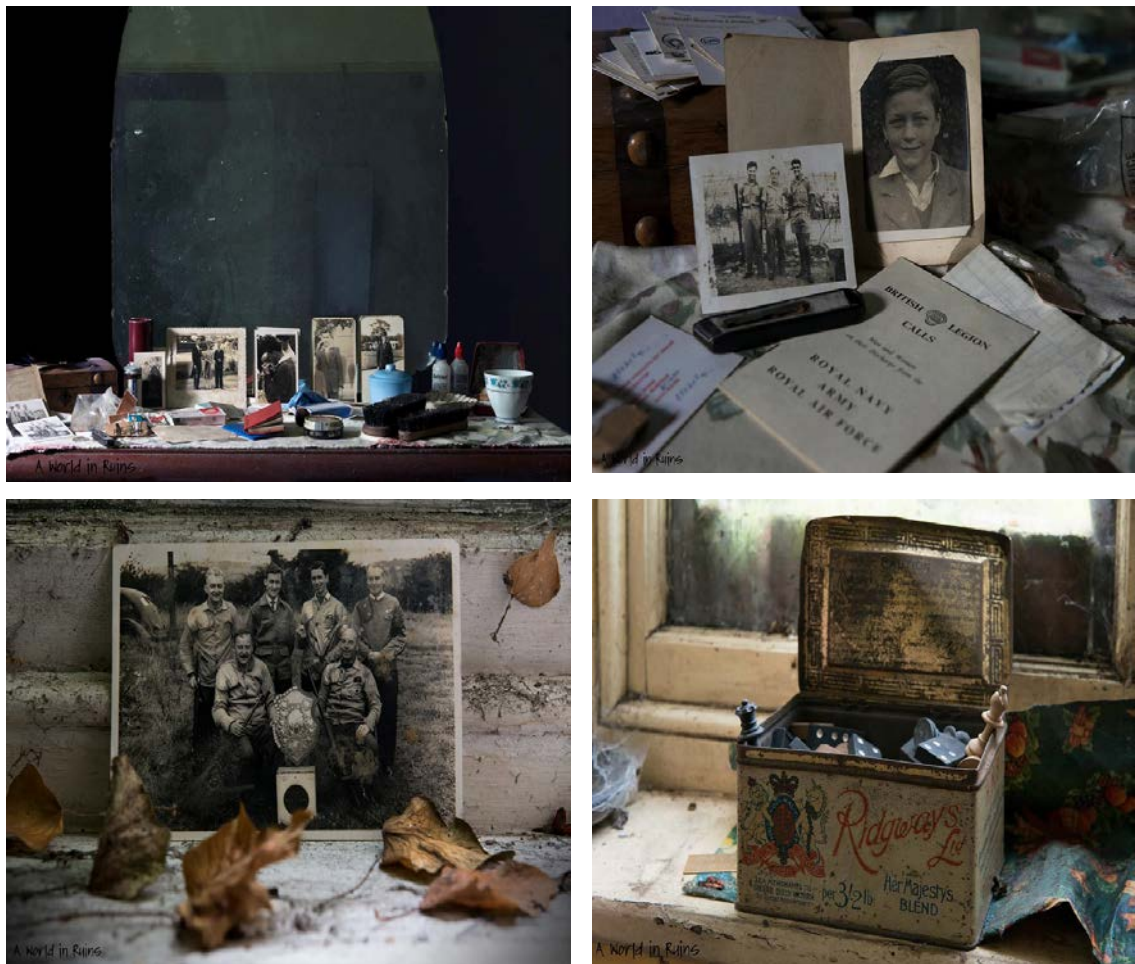


Figure 5.20: ‘Mrs. Brown’s House’, courtesy of A World in Ruins

For Simon, the absent ‘other’ is known through personal possessions as those objects are “*intrinsically linked*” and are “*the heart of their existence*”, which allows him to build up an interpretation of the person. Simon tries to ‘*glean*’ some information about Mr and Mrs Brown from their possessions to build an interpretation of their life. Simon’s admission that he is “*obsessed*” and in “*love*” with these possessions is reminiscent of Lastovicka and Sirianni’s (2011) material possession love where Simon expresses passion and intimacy with these objects. Interestingly, Simon does not own these objects. Rather than animating the object (Lastovicka and Sirianni, 2011) Simon forms a close intimacy with them to animate the absent ‘other’ into being. Whilst

personal affects offer a snapshot into a person's extended self (Belk, 1988), they fail to capture the entirety of the person, leaving the explorer with the fragments of a life. Here, building an interpretation is both literal and metaphorical: documenting, collecting and making photographs of objects, the place and traces of the person, and then weaving these diverse threads together to create knowledge about the person.

Evidence of this weaving process is evident in William's comments about an affluent man's house that became abandoned when he moved into a care home:

The last shot of the day was of his coat. It was like a Delboy coat. There was a lot of dementia books. I work with a lot of people with dementia that was the thing that got me. So I put his jacket and the dementia books were there so I just sort of laid them on the bed, and there was a wee clock. I thought that was quite symbolic, so I'll put that there too. If this millionaire couldn't get his life in order then you know. So I put stuff like that together. (William)

William's placement of the man's possessions on the bed pulls together, connects and weaves the threads to make a picture that William regards to be symbolic of the man's life. This presentation is sewn from William's subjective interpretation of objects, environment and absent 'other'. Through the process of knowing consumers build a holistic understanding of the person from the diverse and remnant threads of their life and pull together materials, stories and imaginaries to weave a (re)presentation of the absent 'other' that develops a connection of familiarly akin to knowing a person. This can be understood as a type of meshwork as entangled and interwoven lines of life, growth and movement (Ingold, 2015). This is followed by learning from the 'other', explored within the following section.

5.5.4 Learning from the ‘Other’

Along with developing a sense and knowledge of the absent ‘other’, explorers also learn from past ways of life through these sites. Rob describes an abandoned house owned by a military man:

In a lot of these places it is as if they just walked out one day, turned the key and never gone back. I went to one sometime last year. It was actually owned by a military chap, and from what we can see and what we can understand that is what he did. One day he just left probably around the mid to late 70s, just locked the door and never came back. But what was eerie about it was you went into the pantry and there was pickles there that had got the dates on from 1971. People have actually spent the time to preserve and grow their pickles. Same again there was old sewing machines in there, there were TVs, in there, pictures, paintings, ornaments, clothing, the beds were still made. It was quite eerie and you acquired a sense of how people have and used to live. (Rob)



Figure 5.21: ‘Pickle House’, courtesy of ScrappyNW

Rob's encounter with the jar of pickles (Figure 5.21) taught him of the once common practice of pickling and preserves in households and led him to reflect upon past ways of life. Similarly Aaron describes his reflections on the objects he has come across:

I feel that we can easily forget how life used to be for our ancestors. Whether it be manufacturing or as simple as washing our clothes we tend to forget how things were done in the past. Photographing old production lines and often filthy and treacherous conditions workers were subjected to show that through time quality of life within the workplace has improved. Wringer washing machines remind us that not everything was done at the press of a button. In fact the water used in those was pumped from a well! (Aaron)

Aaron reflects on the harsh conditions and hard work that our “ancestors” endured prior to automation. For Aaron, photographing the objects act as reminders of how people lived and worked in the past and counters the collective forgetting that current society suffers. Curasi (2006) argues consumers are socialised in family values through storytelling rituals that are transferred with possessions. Findings reveal that abandoned possessions that are devoid of family stories or values continue to communicate values that aids consumer learning.

Participants' comparison with contemporary life reflects reverse valuation where the past is (re)imagined through the present as consumers narrative references move back and forth between past and present (Chronis, Arnould and Hampton, 2012). Simon comments demonstrate this reverse valuation as he reflects on past ways of living:

You are stepping back in time in that respect and it is fascinating to see how people used to live. Especially in Welsh farm houses, you see things that you

have never seen before. Like Singer sewing machines, the old perfume bottles. You actually are getting an understanding of what life used to be like twenty, thirty, forty years ago. Their customs and the different ways of life, and the way that people used to treasure possessions and hold on to them. Whereas now as consumers we take things, we buy things and we throw them away very quickly. You know in the past people treasured them a lot more and kept them, and repaired them. So you are discovering items, past times, and day-to-day life that you weren't aware of, so there is a historical learning going on. (Simon)

For Simon, abandoned houses are a slice of past life where the movement of time stands still that preserve the “*customs and the different ways of life*” and allows him to increase his awareness of past ways of life through “*historical learning*”. The found-objects prompt Simon to critically reflect on the modern day consumer society where objects are throwaway and not ‘treasured’ as they were in the past. Moving beyond consumers’ recontextualisation of the past with present narratives (Chronis, Arnould and Hampton, 2012), Simon learns from the past through a process of knotting where he critically reflects upon present life by contemplating different temporal narratives.

Abby shares similar sentiments and comments: “*The exciting bit about going to abandoned building is you can like step into history in a sense. It is like a live history class in a way*”. For Abby, exploring allows her to physically experience another time period that she considers to be comparable to a live history lesson. These sentiments were present in other participants’ accounts such as Jack who described exploration as “*educating*” and stressed that “[l]ocal communities should really understand the

importance of the history surrounding them, especially industrial heritage”. Simon furthers this notion of learning in his Facebook post (Figure 5.22) and by calling these places “abandoned museums”:

They are kind of abandoned museums in a way. Not a lot of younger people will have seen a big television with big dials on it, like two or three dials saying BBC1 BBC2 and that is it, and no remote control. [...] They are in a way little museums but they are abandoned. They are the most natural museum because they are not very contrived and put together by some curator to look at. They are as they were in use. They are the perfect kind of museum because you are seeing them in their proper situation, in their proper context. The radio will be in the kitchen. (Simon)

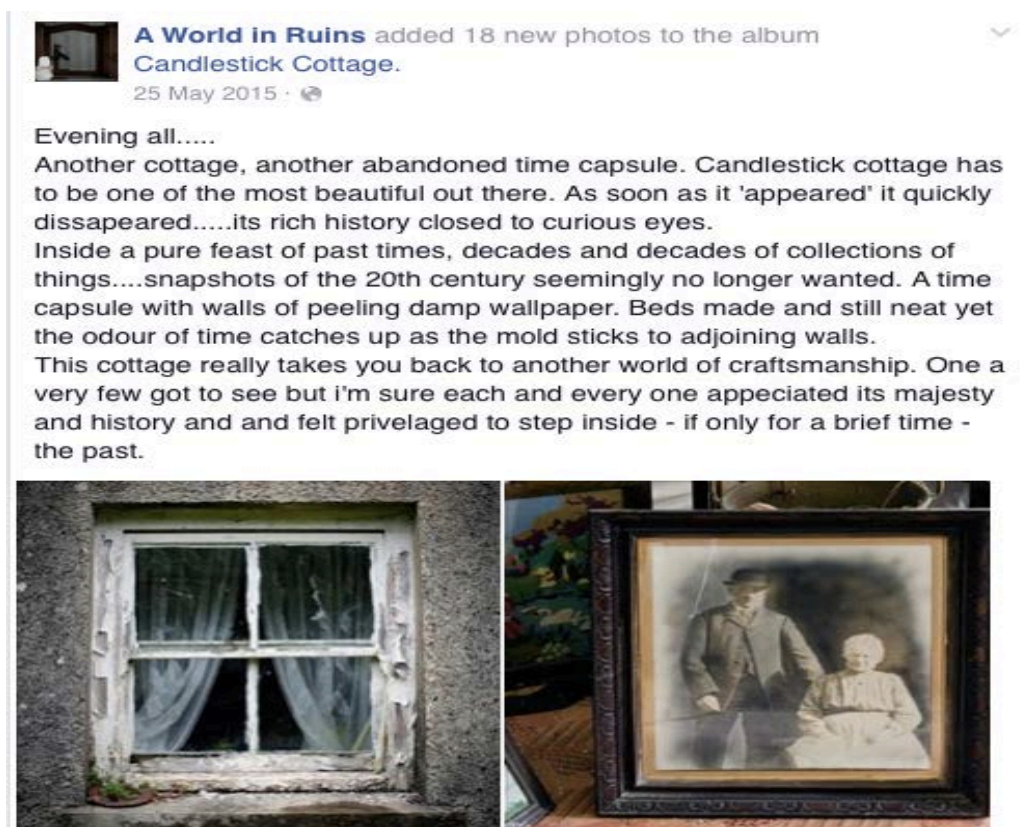


Figure 5.22: Simon’s Facebook post on Candlestick Cottage

Simon describes Candlestick Cottage as a “*time capsule*” full of “*rich history*” and “*another world of craftsmanship*” that has been “*frozen in another time*” and “*seemingly no longer wanted*”. For Simon, abandoned buildings are spaces for learning where past life can be captured as time is abated through abandonment. In many ways this reflects practices of storage where items become imbued with family history and nostalgia creating an imagined history (Gregson and Crewe, 2003). Further, abandoned buildings are reminiscent of the spatial liminality in the home where the garage acts as a spatial artifact or time capsule to past events, memories, meanings, former life roles and ghosts of the past, such as deceased relatives and empty nest families (Hirschman, Ruvio and Belk, 2012). In contrast to the familial liminality that garages afford, abandoned buildings contain the traces of the absent ‘other’ as a macro-ancestor.

For Simon, these abandoned buildings offer a more authentic and contextually genuine (re)presentation of life in its “*proper situation*” and “*proper context*”. Simon regards the museum as a “*contrived*” space that is compiled in the confines of curatorship. Indeed, museums offer staged authenticity (MacCannell, 1976) where even the living museum is a site of cleansed history (Goulding, 2001) that decontextualises sacred objects by removing them from their authentic context (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989). Abby discusses issues of authenticity and highlights the bias present within representations of history in books:

I mean you can read up about the history and stuff but it kind of depends on the witnesses of the time or when building was last accessed, but it kind of depends on the subjective memory of people. (Abby)

For Abby, written historical accounts are inherently biased and subjective, whereas walking amongst the ruins herself she is able to gather her own interpretation. In this way consumers learn from experience rather than merely written accounts.

Advancing Chronis, Arnould and Hampton's (2012) account of consumer imagination, findings reveal that consumers seek to develop an understanding of the absent 'other' beyond their imaginative visualisations. Belk (1990) suggests antique collectors move beyond displaced meanings (McCracken, 1988) of objects by conjuring the past (Hillier, 1981) in an attempt to draw closer connections between the object and its past. Findings extend Belk (1990) by demonstrating how consumers do this in practice and conceptualise this as an act of correspondence. Drawing upon Ingold's (2015; 2013b) notion of correspondence, findings demonstrate that consumers correspond with the absent 'other' through four processes. Firstly, consumers imagine the 'other' through a process of *patching* together fragments from the unfinished stories of these buildings. Secondly, sensing the 'other' occurs through a process of *gathering* visual, inscribed, corporal and atmospheric traces of these absent beings. Thirdly, knowing the 'other' is achieved through a process of *weaving* where individuals pull together materials, stories and imaginaries to weave together the remnant threads to fabricate an interpretation of their life. Fourthly, learning from the 'other' is achieved through a process of *knitting* together diverse threads and critically reflecting upon present life by contemplating different temporal narratives. This is distinct from Chronis, Arnould and Hampton (2012) account of reverse valuation where consumers recontextualise the past with present narratives. Instead, through learning explorers critically reflect upon

present ways of life by engaging with an authentic, untouched and contaminated vessel of the past.

Whilst original meanings of objects can be lost with their absent owners, consumers restore inalienability through the processes of patching, gathering, weaving and knotting. Through urban exploration, consumers become guardians that “follow in their ancestors’ footsteps in caring for heirlooms” (Türe and Ger, 2016: p.10), as well as “[c]ustodians of inalienable wealth [that] preserve and share the objects and the knowledge that goes with them” (Curasi, Price and Arnould, 2004: p.611). Kuruoğlu and Ger (2015) suggest the circulation of emotionally sticky mundane objects can “thicken the threads that weave together a collectivity: solidifying the sense of “us,” while concomitantly rigidifying the boundaries against the “other”” (p.215). Extending Kuruoğlu and Ger (2015), findings demonstrate that abandoned objects that are out-of-circulation can be emotionally sticky and continue to offer a view of the ‘other’. Findings reveal the stickiness of possessions belonging to the absent ‘other’ allows consumers to relate to the ‘other’ through imagination, sensing, knowing and learning.

5.6 Chapter Conclusion

This first findings chapter examines consumers' experiential encounters with abandoned buildings. The chapter commences with an examination of the allure of obsolescence and the various meanings consumers ascribe to abandoned buildings. The chapter considers urban exploration as consumer discovery and introduces various ways consumers practice discovery within obsolescent consumptionscapes. The chapter goes on to examine consumers' spatial engagement with abandoned buildings as a form of place-making practise. Finally, the chapter explores consumer imagination as a form of correspondence with the absent 'other'. As a whole, this chapter reveals urban exploration as a deeply experiential and physically immersive activity where consumers engage with the spatialities, temporalities and materialities of obsolescence.

Chapter Six: Guardians of Obsolescence

6.1 Introduction

Ruins are typically protected by heritage agencies for their historical and cultural value, whereas abandoned buildings receive little protection because of their mundanity. This chapter explores the vulnerability of abandoned buildings as unprotected and neglected artefacts of material culture, and examines the various ways consumers protect the meanings, memories and material of these obsolescent buildings. This chapter begins by examining the consequences of abandonment and how consumers respond to a building's vulnerability through practices of protection. This is followed by a discussion of the death of an object and the associated processes of fatality that occur as the building moves from its object status towards a material existence. The chapter then turns to consumers' photographic documentation of abandoned buildings as a form of societal gift giving that prolongs the living memory of these buildings. Finally, the chapter closes with an examination of photographic documentation as a means of reintegrating obsolescent objects and consumptionscapes into marketplace circulation.

6.2 The Vulnerability of Things

Many ruins have stood the test of time, such as the Athenian Acropolis. However, modern ruins are often neglected and fail to receive funding or protection from heritage agencies due to their historical immaturity (Pétursdóttir, 2012). This section examines the consequences of abandonment and how consumers respond through practices of protection.

6.2.1 Societal Neglect and Consumer Respect

Societal Neglect

Abandoned buildings often act as metonyms for the failures of capitalism and wider socio-economic issues (Leary, 2011). Participants recognise societal neglect is a direct consequence of abandonment when a building becomes abandoned by owners or is trapped in an ownerless state where legal ownership remains unclear. Participants understand that lack of ownership increases the vulnerability of the building, as Simon explains:

They are very vulnerable as well, especially the houses that don't have security. I mean the factories and the asylums they all have security so they are kind of protected. You have still gone in them, you have still found a way, but they are kind of protected to a degree. [...] But houses to me really do

need protecting because they are really vulnerable. Everything is left and there is no security on them. (Simon)

For Simon, residential properties are particularly “*vulnerable*” and “*need protecting*” because they lack sufficient security to safeguard their valuable contents. Participants identify numerous parties that put buildings at risk including “*vandals*” (Lydia), “*squatters*” (Abby), “*drug addicts*” (Rob), “*ghost hunters*” (William), and “*owners*” (Ariel) who allow damage to take place. An abandoned property becomes separated from flows of capital (Edensor, 2005a) within the marketplace leaving the building vulnerable to these groups. Following Epp and Price (2010), abandoned buildings can be understood as inactive objects that are not enlisted within a network, whereas active objects are caught up in networks of existing spaces, objects and identity projects.

Abandoned buildings act as a metonym for social depravation, spatial inequality (Apel, 2015) and social stigmatisation, where demolition is the common method of eradicating social blemishes from the landscape. Indeed, Bradford (2009) suggests a dilapidated family home is a “painful reminder of the consequences of neglect” (p.104). Consumers often use disposal as a means to shed the tainted remnants of personal lives (Lastovicka and Fernandez, 2005). Nate talks about the “*stigma*” attached to Kings Park Hospital due to its notorious ill treatment of patients:

I think they would like to see some condominiums come in to boost the economy one part of it. It is also a stigma. People are like “you live where that old asylum is”. People can see it from their houses or whatever, and it is a constant reminder too. It definitely does not have a great association. Some

people were genuinely helped at this facility but that is not really what is remembered of that place. It is kind of looked on as a dark mark in that place's history and I think they would rather forget it. (Nate)

From Nate's comments Kings Park emerges as a symbol of economic and social neglect where out-dated practices of lobotomies still haunt people's memories. Indeed the building acts as a "*constant reminder*" that residents would rather "*forget*". The biography of a space can be a constricting force that shapes meanings and uses of that area (Epp and Price, 2010). Unfortunately, the biographic stigma of Kings Park has contaminated the surrounding area causing a vicious circle that discourages economic development. Similarly, Rory asserts that derelict buildings are a "*symbol of the neglect of the full area*". As such, these places are a material reminder (McGuire and Stevens, 2015) of social and economic failure that is imbued with social stigma and shame. According to Bradford (2009) consumers purge assets with negative associations by stripping them of indexical value and reallocating them prosaic value. Residents reallocate the asylum economic prosaic value in an effort to purge the building from its negative indexical associations of the past.

Respecting a Building

Participants often speak of having respect for these places to counter the societal neglect that abandoned buildings suffer. Many participants express their feelings of social injustice dealt to these buildings. This is evident in Ariel's account:

For me it is about respect for the buildings. You are bringing attention to something that nobody really cares about. As someone with a mental health condition I know what it feels like to be abandoned. I can relate to these places. These places have a soul that is slowly falling apart because no one cares anymore. (Ariel)

Ariel anthropomorphises these buildings by suggesting they have a “*soul that is slowly falling apart*” due to neglect, and suggests this societal disregard deserves respect and attention. Fernandez and Lastovicka (2011) regard this as collective anthropomorphisation where a material object is animated or given human physiological characteristics by a collective or group. Moreover, Ariel empathises with the plight of these buildings that have been neglected, marginalised and ignored by society. She relates this to her own experience of abandonment within her personal life where she became homeless for a period of time.

Respect emerges as a protective practice that safeguards buildings from consequences of abandonment. Participants associate having respect as part of the urban exploration mantra ‘take only photographs, leave only footprints’ which was recited by almost all participants. For example, William explains that “[*t*]he golden rule is that we never touch anything. Take only photographs, leave only footprints”. This runs in contrast to Simon’s account of touching the pram (section 5.2.1) to sensuously engage with its material presence. Unlike Simon, many explorers operate a no-touch policy. Seb elaborates on this premise of maintaining an untouched appearance:

The best thing about it is exploring these places without touching anything because they are beautiful just the way that they are. So if you see it, you leave it like that so that maybe someone else could see the same. That is the philosophy. (Seb)

From a sensory perspective (Pink, 2015), Seb highlights the importance to look but not touch so that future generations of explorers will be able to see the exactly same vision of untouched abandonment. Like hoarders who protect their possessions from unauthorised touching (Cherrier, 2010), urban explorers pay careful attention to preserve the untouched appearance of abandonment through the community ethos of respect.

Participants separate themselves from other individuals who frequent these buildings by highlighting the differences in their motivations. Simon explains the requisite for respect whilst exploring:

You just have to respect these places and understand that they are not ours and they do belong to someone. [...] These houses are very personal. So you are really trampling on people's history. So you have got to be very respectful of them. [...] As long as you know that you are respecting it and you are not there for any nefarious reasons: stealing everything and graffiting everything. (Simon)



Figure 6.1 'Stargazor Manor', courtesy of A World in Ruins

Simon acknowledges the intrusive nature of exploring where he is entering someone else's private space and "*trampling on people's history*". The highly personal nature of these places is illustrated in Figure 6.1 of Stargazor Manor where the possessions of the absent occupant remain untouched since their abandonment. Simon minimises the damage of trespassing by being respectful to these places.

In contrast to the "*nefarious reasons*" (Simon) that thieves and vandals are driven by, explorers believe they have "*respect and integrity*" (Paul) for the buildings. William explains his understanding of respect:

Researcher: You mention that a lot about being respectful. What is being respectful to a place?

William: Well not damaging things, not abusing it in any way and hopefully cause they are giving you something, although you are bringing something, they are giving you something as well. [...] It is not just about visiting the place it is about trying to respect it and take something from it as well. [...] Not to exploit it if you know what I mean, but to try and have some artistic integrity. I am hoping that it is being sort of respectful as well.

William equates respect with an exchange where these places “are giving you something” that requires giving something back to the place by not exploiting its vulnerable state. This respectful exchange is akin to Ingold’s (2011) cosmic economy of sharing where people, animals and landscape are equal partners. In urban exploration respecting a place means entering the building with good intentions and photographing these fragile subjects with artistic integrity. In contrast to other parties who damage these buildings, urban explorers place their own intentions as secondary to the needs of the building. They do this by respecting the building through treading carefully so as not to cause damage, and not exploiting the place by changing its appearance beyond its current state.

6.2.2 Abuse and Safekeeping

Abuse

Along with neglect, participants identify abuse to be another outcome of abandonment. Participants attribute the most damage to metal thieves, who were often referred to as “*scrap thieves*” (Liam), “*copper thieves*” (Nate) or “*metal fairies*” (Rob). Simon describes the various practices of abuse that abandoned buildings endure: “*they would be moving stuff around everywhere and trashing the place and taking stuff, and hiding stuff*”. Simon’s account highlights a core feature of neglect where a lack of active ownership means a place or object is at risk of abuse. In addition to “*damaging and abusing*” the building and “*stealing everything*” (William) of value, metal thieves mutilate the buildings beyond repair. Nate’s description of the vandalism of Kings Park highlights this brutality:

They have pretty much picked over this place almost. [...] [I]n some places they have literally just bashed open the walls, and literally ripped it right out of the walls. It is really a problem that had serious affected the place. (Nate)

Nate’s comments viscerally illustrate the physical damage that metal thieves and other people commit, which sadly affirms Simon’s earlier concerns of the vulnerability of derelict buildings. In contrast to consumers’ brutal use of objects driven by thrift (Türe, 2014), these parties abuse abandoned buildings as an act of despoliation.

Participants' accounts highlight the cyclical nature of abuse where one incident stimulates recurring instances of abuse, as Josh explains:

[Y]ou can see the building decaying. Eventually the windows get broken and the windows get smashed. Most owners don't bother with on-site security so the place was getting trashed really quickly. Then the local kids start setting fire to things and it goes down hill very quickly. (Josh)

To Josh, the appearance of the building highlights its vulnerable state to various abusers. Similarly, Jack suggests that: “[a] derelict site can quickly change into a very unstable place after the effects of metal theft, fire and vandalism”. Jack highlights the material instability as a consequence of abuse. This is visually evident in Figure 6.2 of Acre House where after years of vandalism and fire damage the building has almost been reduced to rubble.



Figure 6.2: ‘Acre House’, Author’s own photograph

In contrast to vandals and metal thieves, some explorers exploit the vulnerability of abandonment by removing items or forcing access to properties. Whilst most explorers adhere to the ethos of accessing building through existing gaps in a building's security, Seb explains that this ethical way of access is not always possible.

So if you are travelling and you are driving two three thousand kilometres, the way you knew about the place is inaccessible you have to create your own way, maybe you have to break some windows. That is not good. That is not the thing to do but the people are just so crazy about photography. There are people that break doors and glass and everything just to get in. (Seb)

The desperation to photograph a place leads some explorers to force entries. Paul elaborates on the motivation for explorers' breaking entries: *"Everybody wants bragging rights for certain buildings. People are kicking doors in and smashing windows in just to get bragging rights or just to get into a building"*. According to Paul some explorers disregard the community ethos in order to attain community status. Despite explorers' disdain for vandals, their own practices of misuse are an equal form of abuse.

Explorers' misuse of these buildings can also extend to theft. Participants perceive stealing as a deeply unethical and destructive act against the reputation of explorers.

Ross shares his feeling on stealing:

Hate it. What right have they got to take it? It is not theirs. It is stealing. That is the two things that get urban explorers a bad name; breaking in and stealing. [...] I have seen people do it. [...] I saw one of them pulling

off...you know an organ you have got those knobs that you can pull and push...pulling one of them off to take with him. A memory. But your pictures are a memory obviously. (Ross)

For Ross, stealing objects not only mars the collective reputation of urban explorers, but also diminishes place memory. Unlike tourist souvenirs that remind consumers of their experiences, taking objects from abandoned places detracts from the memory of the place. Ross highlights the subtle contradictions within community practices where explorers condone trespass on private property, but condemn stealing items. Trespass is viewed as a transient appropriation (Anderson, Hamilton and Tonner, 2015), whereas stealing is a permanent appropriation that cannot be undone.

Most participants shared this contempt for explorers who take objects from buildings as illustrated in the Facebook post below (Figure 6.3):





8 hrs

So thought id share a few shots on my recent trip with [A World in Ruins](#) sadly all the photographic material I captured from here last year had been stolen, this left me feeling rather pissed but hey ho I have a tonne of this place from last year...

Figure: 6.3: Explorer's Facebook post

Sharing similar feelings to the explorer in the Facebook post, Rob states "*I am relatively disgusted with it really. I think everyone feels quite strongly about it because you are not capturing what is there if somebody goes in and takes it*". Rob's disgust centres around the premise that one explorer spoils the exploration experience for all future explorers. Lydia elaborates upon this position:

[I]t is a very selfish attitude. I mean I don't know what they take or what they do with the things that they take. They are spoiling it for the next generation, the next group who want to go there. I mean these places will be stripped bare eventually. (Lydia)

Lydia observes that over time objects will eventually disappear from the property leaving it "*stripped bare*" and empty. These practices of abuse, that include moving, hiding, stealing and damaging objects, diminishes the value of the modern ruin as an untouched and authentic place. Whilst consumer place-marking can create a sense of place (Visconti et al., 2010) and contribute to place-making (Bradford and Sherry, 2015), in the context of ruins such place-marking permanently damages the building and destroys the sense of place. Unlike the transient signs and banners of tailgating (Bradford and Sherry, 2015), abuse has a more permanent existence. Whilst the

vandal mutilates the property and the metal thief steals its valuable materials, the dubious explorer destroys the untouched appearance and forsaken value of abandonment.

Safekeeping Things

A few participants use official means to safeguard places from the consequences of abandonment. Ariel is a director of a local “*heritage campaign group*” in Belgium that is trying to save Chateau Miranda from being demolished. By creating an official group Ariel has greater power to save the 150-year-old building from harm: “*Anyone who hurts Chateau Miranda is going to face Hell from me*”. Other participants deploy unofficial means to protect buildings from harm. Ross recalls instances where other explorers use padlocks:

I have even known people to put on fresh padlocks after they have seen places.

You know if they found a place stuffed with items, they will photograph a place and then put on their own padlocks to keep others out. (Ross)

Like caretakers that “encase objects in protected environments” (Curasi, Price and Arnould, 2004: p.618), participants use padlocks to secure the building from nefarious parties. This type of safeguarding territorialises sites of urban exploration and is widely regarded as bad practise within the community as it prevents other explorers from accessing these places. Tumbat and Belk (2011) suggest consumers mark their territories from others at Everest basecamp through banners and roped-off areas to protect privacy and prevent trespassing and contamination. Further,

Bradford and Sherry (2015) identify ‘staking’ as a practice of marking a territory for inhabitation in tailgating camping. In the context of urban exploration, padlocks secure territory of un-inhabitation.

Other protective practices include explorers removing objects from properties in an effort to save objects from damage and disposal. Openly discussing these practices is often met with disdain from the community. In one online discussion an explorer highlights the ironic paradox of “*highly moral trespassers*” who follow some rules and break others. This explorer was blocked from the Abandoned Uncovered online community for his overt approval of taking objects. In the following social media post (Figure 6.4) another explorer suggests he “*saved*” a set of building plans after witnessing other explorers trampling all over them.





Can't remember if there where anybody else interested, but here as promised ; Hi Res Photo's of the plans saved the other day. As said in the previous I only consider myself a sort guardian of these plans rather than an owner, so if anyone would like to use this pics in a report, for research etc, request more or even view them in person, just drop me a message. Also feel free to down load from here, or email me if you're not satisfied with the quality.

Figure 6.4: Facebook post on guardianship

In the post he refers to himself as “a sort [of] guardian of these plans rather than an owner” and welcomes others to use and share in these items. Unlike shared access consumption where consumers may damage shared property (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012), individuals who follow the urban exploration ethos adopt guardianship roles and use protective practices to guard these shared places and objects. Faced with this choice participants often highlight the ethical dilemma they experience, as Luke, a 32-year-old British explorer, explains:

There were one time in Sheffield there was an old sign makers and I climbed up into the attic and I found an absolutely massive book, an old ledger, all handwritten from like 1920 to 1942 where they had put orders and the signs that they had made, and pictures of the signs that they had made. I thought that is part of history that. I am like what do you I? If I took it out off the site that is theft because that is taking it outside. [...] It broke my heart to actually leave it there. [...] You can't go taking stuff. Although it should be in a museum or it should be looked after in an archive it is up to them, you have got to leave it. (Luke)

Faced with the ethical dilemma to steal and save, or leave the ledger to an unknown fate, Luke followed the code. Luke informed the local council of the ledger and its historical importance, but does not know if they saved the ledger. This uncertainty continues to trouble Luke. Simon faced a similar dilemma when he found items that were to be burnt on a bonfire by the owner of a cottage.

I really hate the thought of someone coming along and buying the property and just taking everything in the house and piling it on giant bonfire and burning it all. So there is always that ethical dilemma: do you take it? We all have that. [...] You could see the bonfire in front of the cottage. [...] There was beautiful antique binoculars, World War II first aid kits, really amazing stuff that should be in a museum. So I took the binoculars. I thought you are not burning them, no way. They are not worth anything; they are a bit damaged. So I thought I am rescuing them. (Simon)



Figure 6.5: 'Binoculars', courtesy of A World In Ruins

For Simon, it was important to remove the binoculars from the bonfire to save them from being destroyed. Simon's dilemma becomes an easier choice as he believes he is "rescuing them" from a worse fate. Simon rationalises that the binoculars movement from the private sphere of the home to the public sphere of the bonfire justifies his procurement as a form of safekeeping. Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry (1989) suggest collectors' sacralise objects by rescuing them from others who disregard them as valueless or worthless and Cherrier (2010) suggests consumers' homes can become orphanages for abandoned objects that have been rescued from the streets. In this sense, Simon's home becomes an orphanage for the doomed and damaged binoculars. Like Luke, Simon is troubled by the injustice of abandonment where objects that should belong in a museum due to their historical worth are disregarded due to their limited economic value. Lanier, Radar and Fowler (2013) demonstrate how consumer evaluations of an object's worth can transcend market value. Building upon Lanier, Radar and Fowler (2013), findings demonstrate the historical and cultural significance that individuals find to be worth protecting, which extends beyond market valuations. Further, findings reveal that placing an object at risk can highlight its significance and worth beyond economic value.

Developing the understanding of consumers' moral dilemmas within restricted consumption, Paul explains his shifting views on taking things as stealing or saving:

I was right against it in the beginning but I have had a little bit of a change of heart. Some people do actually take things to preserve it. They might have a bedroom full of bottles, or metal signs or things that you wouldn't generally find these days and that would probably end up in a skip or would just rot

away with the building. I don't do that but I don't judge them that do anymore. Not those who take things just to sell them on or they take them cause they just like stealing, then no I don't like that. But if they are taking to preserve it then that is up to them. (Paul)

For Paul, the motivation behind taking objects can be distinguished at the moral level. Paul draws a distinction between taking objects for personal benefit as stealing, and taking objects for social and historical benefit as an act of preservation.

Jack provides more clarity on this distinction by explaining his judgement on bending the rules on taking objects: *“The only time I would take something would be if it had some sort of value to a local community or historical group, i.e. photos or slides, which should be saved and documented before perishing”*. For Jack, taking an object is morally passible if it has inalienable value (Weiner, 1985) that benefits the wider community and protects the item from perishing. This runs in contrast to stealing objects for personal gain: *“some people say that they are saving stuff, some people will then sell on for personal gain. I don't agree with that”* (Jack). The majority of participants view taking objects as an “act of despoliation” (Ingold, 2013b: p.83), even if that means items may be lost or stolen by others. Participants share their regret for objects they have saved, as Max explains:

One time I took something, and still regret that I did. It was nothing worth any money but I found it very interesting. I visited an old castle where noble people had lived for centuries. [...] In a messy room I found a book, written with ink pencil, dated from I believe somewhere in the 1700s. It was a notebook, so not worth anything. It is now in my attic and never did anything

with it. I still feel sorry for doing that. [...] If all explorers take one thing the places would be empty within weeks. (Max)

Max regrets taking the notebook for two reasons. Firstly, taking items is against the community ethos and spoils the experience for future explorers, and second he “*never did anything with it*”. If Max had passed over the item to be archived or housed in a museum then he would have been saving the object for the community benefit, but as the notebook resides in his attic he feels that stole it for personal gain. These dilemmas highlight how protective practices can fail, leaving the object unprotected to the cyclical consequences of abandonment.

6.2.3 Exposing and Concealing

Exposing

Abandoned buildings also become vulnerable through the practices of online sharing and media exposure. Speaking of the increasing popularity of exploring Hanna highlights the negative consequence of increased exploration trips: “*The decay will get worse if the people go to the places and everyone is like trampling in, and you can’t help but to destroy the building when you walk into it. [...] The decay is faster if a lot of people know about places*”. Whilst Hanna wants to explore she acknowledges the inevitable damage that increased knowledge of locations causes to buildings. Like many urban explorers who visit their local haunts multiple times,

Nate has witnessed a decline in the found-objects left behind in Kings Park hospital over the years. Nate attributes this decline to sharing photographs through social media:

We also show some of the stuff that is left. That stuff is the stuff that we have seen deteriorate over the past three years. We have noticed a significant shift. I am sure that has to do with social media. The pictures of this place kind of alerts more people to its presence. So there are cool things to be found, patient records, ward reports. All of that is super fascinating to us. There used to be a lot more left quite honestly. (Nate)

For Nate, the increased online visibility of these places highlights their presence to the general public, which subsequently increases instances of theft. Similarly, Luke wonders if his social media sharing has attracted attention to St Joseph's Orphanage (Figure 6.6):

[I]t is probably going to be demolished and I am absolutely mortified to tell you the truth that that is going to be the case. You can always think back over the years the amount of times that I have been in there and pictures that I have posted up. Yeah I have let people see it but have I drawn too much attention to it? It is something that I have then made more popular this place in Preston that kids are seeing it online and stuff and they are going or it could be like we make the demise of the buildings ourselves. (Luke)



Figure 6.6: 'St Joseph's Orphanage', courtesy of ScrappyNW

Sadly, Luke believes that his online sharing has resulted in the damage and potential demise for one of his favourite buildings. These concerns often prevent Liam from sharing his photography online: *“you are worried about putting them online because you know people will want to pinch them and some places over time bits will start going missing”*. Other participants worry that sharing can *“jeopardise a location”* (Tom) making them more vulnerable as a *“target for looters”* (Nick).

Along with social media exposure, obsolescent buildings are made vulnerable through media coverage. Sometimes explorers will sell their photography or stories to the media. Within the community this is known as 'selling out' and is generally regarded as bad practice. Aaron explains the variety of ways that explorers sell out:

Now with the enormous reach of social media I find that more times than not stories are being altered into “click bait” to get the likes, click throughs etc. I’ve personally witnessed stories altered, images not from the same location added to make a story seem more interesting. In fact I’ve witnessed explorers create stories just to get further exposure. (Aaron)

For Aaron, the increased media exposure has encouraged some explorers to sell out in order to gain more notoriety within the community and the wider public. Ariel’s comments illustrate her strength of feeling towards selling out:

I have made the solemn promise on Our Mortal Remains that I will never sell to a newspaper. I will make a book but I wont sell to a media outlet to the Daily Mail or anything like that because that is really bad practice in the urbex community. People who do that are called sell outs. If you want to be ex-communicated from the urbex community then that is the way to do it. (Ariel)

For Ariel, selling out is a serious community offence that can result in being “ex-communicated” by members. Interestingly, Ariel condones publishing a book, yet condemns selling to a media outlet. This paradox is enforced by the community where individuals who sell photographs, locations and stories to the press have been banned from community forums and groups.

One particular individual has become the target for online trolling and hate messages due to his reputation as a sell out. A post from the 28dayslater.co.uk Facebook illustrates the contempt for this individual: “*self promoting himself by whoring his shit around in the papers and bringing even more attention of the wrong kind to an activity dozens of people do without making a fuss*”. The following forum posts on

Oblivion State (Figure 6.7) demonstrate how selling a story to the Daily Mail results in the location being published on an auctioneer site.



Figure: 6.7: Forum post from Oblivion State on selling out

For the community, selling out directly increases the vulnerability of places from being exploited. This account is further supported by Nick who recalls an incident of selling out: *“three weeks after it featured within the Daily Mail two vans loads rocked up to the place and cleared it out”*. Nick’s comments highlight the cardinal sin of selling out is not about protecting the community, but is about exposing the locations and contents of buildings which makes them vulnerable to theft and damage. As such, exposing through selling out is an act against the building, and not

the community. Saatcioglu and Corus (2016) highlight digital and physical surveillance as a contributory factor of consumers' spatial vulnerability, as a state of powerlessness that arises from ideological tension within the social space. Extending Saatcioglu and Corus (2016) beyond the consumer, digital surveillance is a contributory factor in the vulnerability of things. Media exposure draws attention to unprotected and defenceless abandoned buildings and increases the risk of abuse.

Concealing

Previously, consumer research has demonstrated that consumers use the marketplace to protect, enhance and transfer inalienable wealth (Bradford, 2009). In contrast, findings demonstrate that some individuals actively disengage with the mainstream marketplace to protect these buildings and try to keep the circulation of images within the realms of the community. In an effort to reduce the consequences of media exposure, consumers conceal the locations of buildings through secret keeping and codenaming as practices of protection. Firstly, secret keeping is an important practice or an "*unwritten law*" (William) within the community. Harboring the knowledge of locations requires explorers to "*keep it low profile*" (Max) and "*say nothing, tell nothing, be very secretive*" (Lydia). Seb explains why it is important to keep places secret:

They want to keep it secret because they are scared about people who will vandalise and destroy it. That is true, that is true because I met many people inside these places that were just smashing everything you know. It is really

common. I mean here in Italy it happens everywhere. So if you want to keep a place as you saw it then you don't give it away so that is the deal. (Seb)

For Seb, keeping locations secret is paramount to keep a place in untouched condition and protected from vandals. Paul elaborates upon this premise by suggesting explorers feel an obligation to maintain the intact appearance of modern ruins: “*We try to keep locations as secret as possible. [...] A lot of people do feel sort of responsible for keeping it in the state that they found it*”. This centres on preventing future damage from “*undesirables*” (Jack) who damage and abuse these neglected relics. Like the hierarchical orders of mountain climbing (Belk and Tumbat, 2011), secret keeping emerges as a form of boundary creation that prevents certain individuals exploring locations. Secret keeping is also driven by community motivations, as Sam explains:

Part of it is to protect the places and I get that. [...] I don't know who is the authority on it but I know that if I just told people then I would just ruin it for other people. I don't want to be responsible for other people, like if other people found out and they were getting in then places do get sealed, and sometimes that is just a natural thing that happens. But certain places like that you can avoid that happening by not telling people. (Sam)

Sam is concerned about drawing unwanted attention to places. Keeping secrets allows her to protect the places and also protecting the community's interests. Similarly, Aaron suggests that “*an explorer that keeps their cards close will help preserve it for future visits for both themselves and other like-minded people. To me it's not about keeping secrets, but preserving a place before its looted, locked or set*

ablaze". Aaron is driven to protect the place and the community experience of exploring for future generations.

Although secret keeping is an important practice of protection, sharing information amongst trusted community members is widely practised. To reduce the risks of online exposure sharing information is based on a number of conditions; making contacts, developing community trust and building up a reputation. Paul explains how this works: "*Within the community you have to build up trust and you have to build up contacts and that is how you get to find out about certain buildings by getting well known and posting pictures up*". Building trust is usually achieved by showcasing a repertoire of exploration reports, skilled photography or by gaining recommendations from contacts. Once you have gained connections and trust, information will only be shared through a "*quiet understanding*" (Liam), "*exchange*" (Seb), "*trades*" (Laim), "*tip-offs*" (Simon) and "*swaps*" (Nick). Rob elaborates on this process:

That is why you tend to go on forums and get trust and slowly build up relationships. What we tend to do is we tend to have a meet up and meet the people, get to see who they are face-to-face and from there you can make your own judgement. [...] It is all generally founded around going on an explore somewhere, so you spend a few hours with them. Then you just start sharing information with them. [...] With some of them it is surprisingly how long it takes to get that respect. (Rob)

Rob highlights the complexity of exchanging locations, which requires trust, status, relationships, judgement, a face-to-face meeting, and community respect before any

information is handed over. Once trust has been forged secret locations are traded for one another where it is commonplace that on receipt of a new location to “*pay them back with someplace*” (Seb). Unlike street artists who appropriate public space to create a ‘common place’ (Visconti et al 2010), urban explorers have conflicting views over place appropriation and strive for exclusive access. In heirloom consumption future caretakers are selected based on willingness and ability to assume care-taking responsibilities (Curasi, Price and Arnould, 2004). In mountain climbing, climbers must demonstrate deservingness to succeed (Tumbat and Belk, 2011). In the context of urban exploration, individuals must earn the right to explore from the community by being willing and able to accept the community ethos, and deserving of coveted information that protects these places.

Secondly, codenaming is an equally important protective practice that conceals locations from media exposure. Urban exploration forums are by in large publicly accessible online. To counter this public visibility some forums codename locations to disguise their identity and geographical location, for example Stargazer Manor, Cloud House and Prison H15. As Liam explains, codenaming locations prevents damage and theft:

Things get codenamed to stop people from ripping them apart, vandalising them and getting them sealed up. It is to protect the building really. That’s why we only give names out to the trusted community and trusted people. (Liam)

For Liam, codenaming is a protective practice that counters the vulnerability of neglect that these places endure. Similarly, Rob believes that codenaming places protects the places from spatial vulnerability caused by online exposure: “*Well the*

reasons for creating codenames is simple...you really can't trust the World Wide Web to not to go in there and take valuable items".

Some forums insist that all exploration reports name locations or use agreed codenames, such as 28dayslater.co.uk. Along with protecting places, Ross believes that revealing location names ruins the discovery process: *"It takes away part of the fun. Part of the fun is finding the places"*. In the spirit of fun some explorers would create red herrings and false clues in order to trick others. Simon describes how he edits his photographs, displayed in Figure 6.8:

I am very good on Photoshop, so I will always put a clue in the photos to a location 400 miles away, on purpose. So they will look at the clue and go "wow I know where that is", and they will go and drive there and there will be nothing there because it is a false clue. [...] You can easily miss a tiny word on a note or something, or like a medicine bottle that has the address on it, and then you have got clues. [...] But I scrutinize mine so obsessively before I upload them so there is no clue, only false ones. It is devious! (Simon)



Figure 6.8: ‘Vanity House’, courtesy of A World in Ruins

Simon creates false clues in order to protect locations from being found by other explorers and the wider public. This practice is partly driven by place protection, and also part game-playing between explorers. Similarly, Ariel admits being “cryptic” with the “*hints and little tips*” she places on her website. In contrast to Simon, Ariel offers up small clues and hints through her reports and photographs. It is important to Ariel that these are subtle enough that only experienced explorers will be able to decode these clues. As such, codenames and clues act as a hidden language between explorers as they read and decode its veiled messages.

Urban explorers often publicly share their photography on websites, open forums and Facebook groups. This runs counter to attempts to conceal locations from media exposure and highlights conflicting tensions within the community. Bradford (2009)

suggests a tension exists between the desire to protect, preserve and grow both symbolic and exchange value of inalienable wealth. Findings enrich this notion by demonstrating competing tensions between consumers' desire to attain cultural and economic exchange value for exposing locations, and retaining symbolic inalienability of buildings through concealing their location.

Whilst participants do not own these objects, they recognise the inalienability of their social, cultural and historical value in the level of hierophancy. Findings demonstrate that the worth of abandoned buildings increases as they become threatened by abuse and exposure. In line with Belk's (1990) suggestion that consumers become connected to the past when their present circumstance is threatened, these objects signify a claim to an ancestral past (Curasi, Price and Arnould, 2004) and a tangible connection to the absent 'other'. Cherrier (2010) argues consumers develop custodian behaviour through rescuing abandoned or unwanted objects. Indeed, threatened by the consequences of abuse, consumers devise protection practices in an attempt to protect these fragile places from destruction.

At a discourse level, Canniford and Shankar (2013) suggest consumers develop purifying practices to protect romantic ideals and discourses of nature from negative discourses that occur in counterassemblages. At the value level, Türe (2014) suggests consumers deploy a protection strategy by keeping objects back from disposal to protect their perceived value that is deemed ambiguous or at odds with broader value regimes. Findings identify three protective practices (respecting,

safeguarding and concealing) that consumers enact to protect vulnerable objects from material damage, societal neglect, abuse and online exposure. Extending beyond discourse and value, these practices illuminate the importance of material protection.

Findings demonstrate that despite consumers' efforts, protection practices can fail. Epp and Anould (2005) suggest family legacies can fail when objects, or alienable assets are destroyed. In the context of urban exploration, consumers lack ownership of buildings and thus have limited agency over physically protecting these consumptionscapes from being destroyed. As such, the material legacy of buildings can fail when consumers lack agency to protect them resulting in the cyclical failure of threat, protection and failure that continues to place the building at risk.

6.3 Death of an Object

The previous section examined consumers' guardianship role and the various protection practices used to safeguard buildings and their contents from the consequences of abandonment. This section examines what happens to buildings once these protection practices have failed and identifies various manifestations of fatality that buildings undergo before they move into a material state.

6.3.1 Cultural Death: Erasing, Replacing and Forgetting the Past

This section examines how practices of transformation and redevelopment can endanger buildings and result in a cultural death through processes of termination. The demise of a building can signal the symbolic loss of activities, places, artefacts and skills that Anderson, Tonner and Hamilton (forthcoming) consider as the cultural death where cultural value is diminished and vanishes from living memory.

In line with consumption literature (Türe and Ger, 2016; Cappellini, 2009; Hawkins, 2009), many participants recognise the benefits of transforming obsolescent things into new uses. Participants cite the economic and social benefits that building redevelopment projects create that can “*benefit the community*” (Abby), such as creating “*affordable housing or community spaces*” (Matt) and “*youth clubs*” (Ross). Hanna explains how redeveloping abandoned buildings can benefit the local economy and community:

I think it is always a good thing if they are restored because then you can build something new from something which has already a past. I think it is a good thing if they are restored because a good side effect of restoring a building is that you are providing new jobs and sometimes new living spaces. (Hanna)

Despite her love of abandoned buildings Hanna recognises their potential to generate economic prosperity if they are transformed and redeveloped.

This view is not shared amongst participants who in general regard redevelopment projects as a sign of a buildings’ demise. Throughout the ethnography I confronted

conflicting feelings towards the redevelopment of buildings as captured by my reflections upon the redevelopment of Gartloch Hospital (Figure 6.9) into private housing.

After one hundred years as a psychiatric facility Gartloch Hospital closed its doors in 1996. Whilst its redevelopment will undoubtedly save the building from ruination, I can't help but feel sad that it will be totally transformed into apartments with traces of its past life compromised for conveniences of modern living. Is transformation a worse fate than death? In either scenario the life of the hospital has been terminated.



Figure 6.9: 'Gartloch Hospital', Author's own photograph

Findings reveal three processes of termination that lead to cultural death of a building; erasing, replacing, and forgetting.

Erasing

Most participants are deeply sceptical of the motivations that drive redevelopment projects and cite land value as the main driver of these transformation developments. Participants believe that development results in demolition for historically and culturally important buildings and locate blame on the landowners for this trend. For example, Paul suggests that the “*people that own them just leave them to crumble so they can just sell the land off for development*” and Ross claims “*they want them to crumble, they want to knock them down because they want to use the land to build houses*”. In line with Lanier, Radar and Fowler (2013) these accounts highlight that an object’s worth is cast aside for economic value. Simon elaborates upon this premise within his discussion of St Edmunds School for Boys:

[L]ast year they demolished it which was very sad because you know now what will be built on it... Wimpy homes and Barrett homes. It is easier for them to just knock it down because the land is usually more valuable than the property.

(Simon)

Simon identifies the competing values at play where economic value is given primacy over its historical and cultural value. This often results in a cultural erasure where it is easier to remove rather than restore objects of the past. This is aptly captured in Liam’s comments on failed restoration projects that become modern housing developments:

Some places that I have been do get renovated while others they have run out of money and it has been left and they can’t sell them. So some of them just do

slowly rot away. [...] I personally would like to see them renovated back to their original state but it is a society where it is all about money, it is not about people. (Liam)

Like Simon, Liam recognises that economic value that generates wealth conflicts with socio-cultural values that benefit people. In addition to demolition, buildings become erased when transformation fails and they are left to “*slowly rot away*”.

William highlights the cultural impact that this process of erasure has on society:

Another thing is the brutality of just dismissing them and getting rid of them for land is culturally quite bad for me now. [...] There are other times that they deliberately get stuff set on fire. I find that dreadful because it is a cultural thing for me. They are burning my history. [...] The cultural aspect, to me the place has just been culturally raped. That is the way that it is. I have never known so many buildings getting pulled down and suspicious buildings going on fire. (William)

For William, arson is a cultural abuse akin to the violence and inhumanity of rape. His assertions viscerally illustrate the violent pillage of history and heritage in cultural death. Young and Wallendorf (1989) suggest disposition is a painful experience that signifies a death of past stages of life. Despite their lack of personal attachment, participants are unable to emotionally detach from these buildings, as the disposal is not voluntary. William’s assertion that “*they are burning my history*” highlights this pain and the erasure that takes place in cultural death and emphasises his feelings of loss that is akin to Kaplan’s (2008) notion of witnessing, whereby an

individual is transformed by an image of trauma or catastrophe. Once a building has been erased it is replaced by modern structures.

Replacing

All participants share a common dislike for new or modern housing that is captured by Simon's earlier comment on Wimpy and Barrett homes. These houses are associated with being "homogenous" (Sam) and "plain and uninteresting" (Matt), but also a sign of a larger cultural trend of disposability, a "throwaway society" (Paul) and a "wasteful race" (Ross). Participants are troubled by the social disregard for traditional architectural designs and materials:

I think we live in a throwaway society nowadays. Buildings they are not like the grand architecture like it was back in the day. There is no woodwork and fancy architecture. It is just like all MDF and bricks. It is not what we used to have in the past. That is why I love it. I love seeing that before it is gone. Once it is gone, it is gone. (Liam)

Liam recognises the cultural shift in building practices where traditional materials and methods of construction have been replaced. For Liam, it is important to see these expressions of material culture before they are lost. Similarly, Paul is upset that traditional designs have been consigned to the past: "they are so ornate and they just don't make them like that anymore. I just think that we are losing that too quickly. We are losing it and nobody is trying to replicate it". Paul laments that the replacement of these architectural practices that signifies a larger loss to the future of

building. This is reflected in the case of Cambusnethan Priory where the ornate colonnade and gothic revival spires have become stylistically obsolete (Figure 6.10)



Figure 6.10: ‘Cambusnethan Priory’, Author’s own photograph

Craftsmanship is a symbol of premodern era (Campbell, 2005). Participants evaluations of old buildings reflect ‘against the modern’ ideals of architectural progress, where old buildings signify solidarity against societal forces of destruction, continuity between generations, authority of craft traditions worth preservation (Urry and Larson, 2011). Ross is thoroughly against the modern and distinguishes between old and new buildings:

*We would rather knock down good sturdy stuff and build cheap wobbly crap.
[...] You get these new houses and they are just built so shoddy. They have no feeling to them. In these old buildings they have got so much character,*

history, not just to the local towns but to the architecture, to the styles that were used to make them. (Ross)

For Ross, old buildings are defined by their structural integrity, character and cultural history. In contrast, the new styles that are replacing old buildings are devoid of any character, associated with poor construction and low quality materials.

Even if buildings are saved from demolition significant cultural artefacts and features can be replaced during the restoration process. William expresses his disdain at modern redevelopment projects:

I think these places could be saved. I think they could be kept in a way that we respect what they used to be, whereas they just keep the facings of them. That is taking the heart. That is nothing. To me that is just...you would be as well as just pulling it down. I've not got any time for that at all. (William)

For William, maintaining the façade of a building and replacing its interior is equally destructive as demolition. Reflecting participants' earlier attempts to anthropomorphise buildings, William considers buildings to have a "heart" in their original use and material integrity. This life and feeling is destroyed once traditional features have been replaced. Similarly, Ross highlights conditions of sympathetic redevelopment:

I would rather they were used for absolutely anything to be honest, as long as they don't tear the heart out of the place by taking out all of the décor. Most of them unfortunately get changed into flats. [...] All the stained glass would be covered up and it just lost the heart and soul of the building. (Ross)

For Ross, the redevelopment of a building can involve cultural loss if important architectural features are removed, covered up and replaced from the building's fabric. Like William, Ross imbues human qualities onto the building and regards the decorative materials as its "*heart and soul*". Additionally, Mila highlights how renovation can destroy the feeling of the place: "*I wish that it wasn't renovated that nicely because all the magic is gone. Now it is just a building and it is old, nothing special anymore*". Whilst Mila admits that the renovation is pleasing, she feels it is no longer "*magic*" and "*special*" as the modernisation has replaced the magical charm that once existed within its walls.

Forgetting

Erasing or replacing buildings with modern alternatives also represents a cultural death that can cause a loss of local memory. This is evident in Sam's comments on loss of local factories and mills in Oldham.

There is a mill in Oldham and it is a listed building. It is going to eventually get demolished. It is a shame because all that will end up happening is eventually it will get knocked down and they will build a set of homogenous flats there or just new build houses and people will just forget that there was this big important building there. [...] that is the history of the city, of the town.

(Sam)

Sam is saddened by the loss of these industrial buildings that are culturally important to local history and is troubled by the collective forgetting that occurs once these

places of work and community have been replaced by housing. Sharing similar views, Luke recalls a local derelict outdoor swimming pool that to him represents a loss of “so many memories of what it once was”. Luke elaborates on this premise within his discussion of factories:

Things like old factories, they have still got memories for people even if they are not the prettiest. I think it is too easily forgotten about nowadays. Knock it down and built something made of glass. [...] I don't get it, how it can be forgotten about and left. (Luke)

For Luke, the swimming pool and the factory hold memories of local people that are too readily forgotten once the building has been transformed. In contrast to the sanitised spaces of museums that preserve cultural memories, the mundanity of these sites means everyday cultural memories are lost.

Reflections within my researcher diary captured the fatal consequences of cultural death:

The more I peruse the Buildings At Risk register, the more I am confronted with my historical ignorance as I know little or nothing about what these buildings were used for, who worked there or why they closed. I am confronted with a sadder fact: what about the buildings that are already lost? Once they are gone and there are no people to remember them and no records to document their existence, then what is left? Gone, forgotten, vanished. (Researcher diary, 03/07/15)

This results in collective forgetting where unregistered, unchronicled and uncommemorated events that have been socially forgotten or unknown to the

individual (Schwartz, 2009). Advancing this notion to the consumption domain, findings reveal that collective forgetting is a process of termination where the neglect and disregard of significant artefacts, knowledge or skills by a collective group results in the eventual loss of these things and activities from living memory. Consumers experience collective forgetting that signifies a cultural loss is embedded in the collective memory of the regions' past and historical events.

Despite the lack of personal connection to these places, participants experience a broader sense of loss to cultural heritage. Indeed Podoshen and Hunt (2009) demonstrate that consumers can be affected by events that precede their lifetime due to cultural and ethnic ties through collective memory. In this sense, individuals are passively tethered to the past (Hill and Cromatie, 2004). Cultural death enables individuals to critically examine the multiple forces and contested discourses that shape the cultural landscape. Cultural death can be understood as a cultural loss where cultural value is diminished and vanishes from living memory (Anderson, Tonner and Hamilton, forthcoming). Findings demonstrate that cultural death occurs through three processes of termination. Firstly, *erasing*, whereby significant facets of material culture are removed and destroyed. Secondly, *replacing*, whereby traditional expressions of material culture are substituted for modern alternatives. Thirdly, *forgetting*, whereby neglected yet significant buildings are forgotten due to their mundanity and overlooked sociocultural worth. Following Epp and Price (2010), findings demonstrate that even irreplaceable and significant buildings can be displaced due to changes in contemporary sensibilities and the building's problematic biography. Consumer research suggests that the value of cherished

possessions is in communion by linking self and cultural values (Price, Arnould and Curasi, 2000). Abandoned buildings emerge as cherished dispossessions that allow explorers to relate, in communion, with wider cultural values that they deem to be at risk from the consequences of abandonment. As such, it is the threat from the processes of termination that brings objects cultural worth to the fore.

6.3.2 Physical Death: Fragility, Reclamation and Metamorphosis

Participants draw upon analogies of death and dying in their discussions of ruins. Aware of the material vulnerability of ruins, participants regard the intrusion of nature as a bittersweet destruction that creates beauty, but also destroys the integrity of the building, causing its physical death. Lorimer and Murray (2015, p.60) deem this as the ruin paradox where there are conflicting desires for the ruin to remain but also to be left to “Rot in Peace”. This ruin paradox is captured in Mila’s comments:

Yeah somehow you are sad about it but somehow you are happy that they have gotten in that state. It is a kind of contradiction so...yeah it is difficult. Somehow you are happy about these places, and you want them to stay there like that but they cannot stay in the same state because they will get more rotten and they will just fall apart one day, which is also sad, but that is life, the circle of life. (Mila)

For Mila the death of a building lies in its physical decomposition when they “*get more rotten*” and “*fall apart*”. Crawford (2015) similarly acknowledges that the intrusion of nature can be so extensive that determining the presence or existence of

the building becomes difficult. Reflecting Gregson, Metcalfe and Calestani (2010), Mila’s discussion highlights the process of dying as a continuous change in material states that will result in the building physically disintegrating as they “*crumble into nothing*” (Sam). At this point the building as an object becomes materially vulnerable. Whilst the material of the building will live on in other states, the physical death is a corporal ending in the building’s biography as an object.

Many participants associate this decaying process with dying where at one point the building will be physically gone. This is evident in Lydia’s Facebook post below (Figure 6.11) where she claims “*[a]nother magnificent London hospital about to have its life support machine switched off*”. Lydia further elaborates this within her interview comments below:





Another magnificent London hospital about to have its life support machine switched off.

This derelict beauty opened on 6 October 1873 by initiative of the National Temperance League. It was managed by a board of teetotallers who encouraged abstinence, thinking alcohol responsible for many of society's ills.

The hospital was closed in 1990 and is likely to be demolished to make room for the HS2 rail link.

Figure 6.11: Lydia's Facebook comment

I think that moment in time when it is sort of decaying and beautiful is great but nothing lasts forever and there is always going to be that moment when we just have to let go of them. Sad though it is. But that is when you want people like me taking photos that we can look back on and just remind ourselves of just how stunning they were in their hey-day, or not even in hey-day, at that point when they were starting to fade away. (Lydia)

Lydia readily accepts the impermanence of existence and inevitability of death as innately part of living and extends this philosophy to buildings. This acceptance of death is reflected by all participants, and is captured by Seb's comments: *"It is sad but to be honest it is part of the process. All of the urbex locations have an end. [...] Nothing is forever, especially these places. They are not going to stay there for the ages"*. Despite their sense of loss and sadness, these accounts highlight the transience of material things as *"nothing lasts forever"* and all things have an *"end"* or *"fade away"* and illustrates consumers' acceptance of the finality of things as a fundamental process of life.

In human mortality, the moment of death is a complex and contested definition (Miller and Truog, 2010). Extending death beyond the human domain, Josh's comments offer an insight into the point of a building's terminal demise:

In some ways it is a pity because....you have to be pragmatic. These buildings, once they get to a certain stage, especially once the water starts getting into them, then saving them becomes incredibly expensive. Nobody in their right mind is really going to throw millions and millions of pounds in saving a really old building, when they could just demolish it. (Josh)

According to Josh there is “*a certain stage*” where considerable structural damage means the cost to save a building vastly exceeds the cost to demolish it. As such, a building becomes terminal once the material vulnerability becomes too expensive to restore. Josh's evaluation of the building demonstrates the movement from indexical to prosaic evaluation (Bradford, 2009), and represents the building's transformation from inalienable to alienable status. This moment of demise is captured by Rob's comment of “*gone beyond repair*” and Rory's discussions of 1960s high-rise flats where he claims: “*It is too late for a lot of them, it is too late and it is too far gone*”. This was further highlighted in a forum discussion (Figure 6.12) about a building set to be demolished:

Once something has got beyond a certain stage, regardless of it's status on any register, the local council have to demolish it. That's why there is a [buildings at risk register](#), because owners know this and try to let the buildings slide so they can get rid of them. Councils don't have the budget to chase up every owner to upkeep their properties, some owners are purposefully lost in a paper trail that is expensive to track down.[3 hrs](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#)

Figure 6.12 Facebook post from Abandoned Uncovered

This post highlights the political forces at work with these places in terms of ownership, government involvement, legal rights and health and safety laws. Until they reach this terminal stage some ruins remain between life and death, like people who are “in a permanent vegetative state are irreversibly unconscious, yet they are not considered dead” (Truog and Miller, 2014: p.886). These buildings retain a physical status that falls short of an ultimate death.

Whilst Price, Arnould and Curasi (2000) highlight an awareness of finitude in possession disposition, there remains little understanding on the finality of objects. Hirschman, Ruvio and Belk (2012) argue the garage acts as a hospice for items that have to be disposed and Garcia-Bardidia et al. (2015) suggest an item moves from being a living possession to a dead object as it is no-longer in circulation. Building upon the understanding of the dead object, findings suggest that the physical death of a building, as an object, occurs once the physical integrity of the structure rots, the cost to save it outstrips its prosaic value and its condition is terminal in that there is no realistic chance of saviour. Whilst Trigg (2006) asserts that despite having “outlived its functional existence, the ruin’s persistence in time disproves its outright extinction” (p.131), even a ruin is extinguished once it has physically eroded to the ground and is no longer physically present. At this stage the materials move on, transform and morph into another being, leaving the ruin living only in memory. This movement occurs through three processes of material vulnerability; fragility, reclamation and metamorphosis.

Fragility

Once damaged by human action, nature is allowed to attack the weakened structural integrity of these buildings. For participants this fragility is sometimes visually evident in the “*rotten wood*” (Josh), “*dry rot*” (Ariel). In particular Simon’s description of a farmhouse highlights how frail these structures can be: “*The window frames were so old that they were crumbling. Some of the windows were taped up and had newspapers stuck to them*”. This fragility is further evident in Rob’s account:

Certainly the vines growing internally, and it doesn’t take long, it doesn’t take much. Unfortunately when nature does get into the buildings it doesn’t take long for it to take over as well as destroy the building at the same time. So you feel a nervousness when you start seeing – depends on the level of nature in there - how long the place has got left. So you have only got that small opportunity and that small window before nature takes over. (Rob)

For Rob, the natural life growing inside the building signifies its material destruction. Rob’s account of the “*small opportunity*” to visit these places before nature ravages its structure demonstrates how quickly a building can be destroyed once the structural integrity of the building has been compromised by nature. This material fragility makes Rob nervous as he anticipates the building’s demise. Their uncertain existence is determined by their material fragility adding to their terminal value (section 5.1.2). The short phase of fragility is the first process of material vulnerability that leads to its physical death.

Reclamation

Participants demarcate nature and culture as two distinct opposing forces within their discussions of abandoned buildings. Surfers draw similar distinctions between nature and culture and devise assemblages to reduce the unpredictable effects of nature (Canniford and Shankar, 2013). In contrast, urban explorers often enjoy the negative consequences of nature's immense force. This is evident within Nate's comments:

The duality of nature reclaiming something I think we are really interested in those concepts, especially in a modernised world where we are constantly used to civilisation prevailing over nature in a way. I think it is starting to come around that we like to see nature win one or something.

Nate's comments reflect the genre of ruin porn where there is an aesthetic enjoyment in the ruination of man-made structures. Tapping into the historical divisions between nature and culture, Nate enjoys when tables turn and nature triumphs over culture through processes of reclamation.

Participants were often surprised at the sheer power that nature has over material culture. This is evident in Jack's comments: "*It never ceases to amaze me the power of nature. It really can grow anywhere and take over. It just shows how temporary man-made objects can be when not maintained*". Like Jack, Tom marvelled at the tenacity of nature to grow in hostile environments and reclaim these constructed monuments: "*One of my favourite things to see is how nature reclaims a building, over time all it takes is a strong gust of wind or strong enough vines to take over a*

building and pull it to the ground". These participants attribute greater agency to nature than culture which is deemed as "temporary" and requires "maintenance" (Jack). In contrast, nature is a powerful force that cannot be tamed or controlled. This is reflected in Aaron's comments and illustrated in Figure 6.13 below:

I am truly amazed at how quickly nature wants to reclaim places. After only a short time I have seen places ravaged by the elements. It makes me feel that nature is truly a force that we cannot control, only keep at bay with regular maintenance. It's interesting to revisit locations and see what has happened over time. A severe storm can completely transform a location. (Aaron)



Figure 6.13: 'Ellis Island Immigrant Hospital', Author's own photograph

This transformation is evident in the above image where the thick undergrowth has begun to infiltrate the Ellis Island Immigrant Hospital in New York after 80 years of

dereliction. Aaron attributes further agency to nature by suggesting it “*wants to reclaim places*” and therefore believes nature has the ability to desire. Despite their admiration for nature, participants recognise that its presence reclaims the building that ultimately results in its physical demise.

Metamorphosis

Once a building has been reclaimed by nature it begins to unravel through the process of metamorphosis. Participants often cite decay as the main culprit in a building’s physical mortality. Max describes the fetidness of decay by listing the materials he vividly remembers: “*paint peeling off the walls and thick green mould on the wall. [...] Time stood still but nature, nature's process continued*”. This is visually captured in Figure 6.14.



Figure 6.14: ‘Peeling paint’, Author’s own photograph

Max's account highlights the vitality (Bennett, 2010) and movement of materials (Ingold, 2013b) where the virescent mould grows on the walls causing the paint to become unstuck from its vertical surface, slowly peeling away and becoming a suspended structure in its own right, before flaking off and falling to merge with the ground matter. Indeed Ingold (2013b) reminds us that "[l]eft to themselves, materials can run riot" (p.94). Abandoned buildings left by themselves materially unravel through the processes of metamorphosis, as the building moves from its object form to its material origin as materials uncouple and disperse. Ingold (2013b) argues that an object is a monument that encases materials in its object-form and the landscape is a mound continually growing through layers of becoming. Decaying buildings transform from once solid objects into material mounds where layers of organic growth continuously become in a process of ravelling and unravelling in metamorphosis. The object experiences a physical death, loses its object status and is released into a material existence.

When protection practices fail the consequences of abandonment (neglect, abuse and exposure) make these places vulnerable to the destructive power of nature. Epp and Price (2010) argue displaced objects move through a network of transformation. Advancing Epp and Price (2010), findings reveal that abandoned buildings move through a network of material transformation, garnering new meanings, uses and appropriations by various human and non-human entities. Findings demonstrate that nature causes material vulnerability, whereby through the processes of *fragility*, *reclamation* and *metamorphosis* unchecked materials are set loose and run free, mixing and morphing into different states. Firstly, the structural fragility of the

building increases its risk of physical failure. Secondly, through reclamation nature salvages space from the occupancy of the building and materials from its structure. Thirdly, through the process of metamorphosis the building is released from its object encasement and moves towards a material existence. Through these processes of material vulnerability the object moves from vulnerability towards fatality, resulting in physical death.

6.4 Gift Giving: Documenting Ruins

Participants accept that they cannot always physically protect ruins despite their efforts to keep locations secret within the community. Faced with the inevitable demise that befalls all abandoned buildings either through ruination, unrecognisable redevelopment or physical death, participants seek to extend the life of buildings through their photography and storytelling. This section examines consumers' practices of documentation and reveals consumers enact two forms of documentation practices; *trace-making* where traces are created through written, verbal and photographic accounts that stalls the progress of time, and *trace-giving* where traces are shared between people and communities that temporally connects places, things and people across time.

6.4.1 Trace-making Practices

Many exploration practices are linked to documentation, such as exploration reports, photographic collections and video compilations. Many participants believe urban exploration is an important activity that is driven by “*documenting and capturing the history*” (Rob) of these once functional places. Ross explains why it is important to document these places:

To me, personally it is important. I want to see these places in the flesh rather than just in a picture so I will happily go and do it. It is important for history. [...] You have got to remember everything because somebody is going to want to know how something looked that is no longer there. So it is important for that reason. (Ross)

For Ross, it is important to see these places “*in the flesh*” before they disappear, and to have visual records of how these places once looked within the landscape for those who cannot explore. The visual material of photographs acts as a cultural tool that aids remembering (Nguyen and Belk, 2007). Nate explains his efforts to document Kings Park Hospital:

But as we returned years later, we noticed that the state of the place was just getting worse. We were hoping that there was just something we could do to just preserve the place. I mean we do videos so hey let's do a video, a little documentary thing to try and capture the place for what it is right now. (Nate)

In light of its declining state, Nate and Project Senium tried to “*capture*” the remains of Kings Park and “*preserve*” the place in its current state through a video documentary. According to Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry (1989) photographs

preserve sacred experience in object form through a process of tangibilised contamination. In this sense photographing and videoing allow individuals to latch and hold on to these places through their material and visual (re)presentation.

Simon's comments on photographic documentation highlight the impetus to capture these places and things: *"You are just documenting the past and if people don't do it then it just disappears. Like the pram, if I didn't take a photograph of it and next year it is gone"*. Simon recognises the terminal value of the pram and realises the mortal consequence if it is not documented. Indeed Sontag (1977) suggests all photographs are memento mori, an anticipation of loss. Lamenting on the plight of these places Euan expresses his sadness that photographs are the last material remnant of these places: *"It is sad that the only documentation of these buildings is a bunch of pixels"*. In this sense, photographs create a material trace of the past that is a temporal hallucination (Barthes, 1993 [1981]) where the subject moves within a dichotomy between materiality and immateriality. Seb elaborates upon this premise:

That is how the philosophy of urbex photography works. It is the power of photography, like saving the time for forever. Something is going to be captured and you need to because it is not possible to save it. It is not like the new buildings in the city, if you want a picture then you can drop by maybe one month later two months later, ten years later and the building is still there. Urbex photography is something about being quick and trying to get the shot as soon as possible because you don't know what is going to happen. (Seb)

Seb's comments reinforce the importance of time in urban exploration on two registers. Firstly, in an anticipation of physical death explorers must quickly capture

these places before they decay beyond revival. Secondly, photography stalls time and materially captures one moment, in Seb's words "*saving the time for forever*".

Belk (1990) suggests photographs mark the passage of time and act as reminders of temporal displacement. Indeed Berger and Mohr (1995) suggest photographs allow for a shock of discontinuity where "[a] photograph arrests the flow of time in which the event photographed once existed. All photographs are the past, yet in them an instant of the past is arrested so that, unlike a lived past, it can never lead to the present" (p.86). Photographs, as material traces of time, allow explorers to extend the life of places through their visual (re)presentations. Ross believes he can immortalise his photography further:

Cause I post on my website, I post on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, all the social platforms, they are stored somewhere else. So if I was to no longer be here everything is lost. My wife doesn't know what to do with the stuff. It is lost. If it is already on the Internet it is going to be picked up through time. It is securing it basically. It is securing it through the Internet. [...] Get them out there and get them away from your machine basically. So then they are not lost. [...] I don't want all of my images to be left on a hard drive. What is the point in taking them if nobody is going to see them? (Ross)

Ross highlights a more nuanced understanding of immateriality where he fears the immateriality of digital photographs, but finds security in the digital plane of the Internet that immortalises his photographs. This highlights a contradiction between the risk that online exposure creates for buildings, and the safety that digital storages creates for consumer photography. Whilst the materialisation of memory has been

decentralised and democratised (Nguyen and Belk, 2007) through photography, the digitisation of memory has been furthered by digital consumption.

Along with creating a trace of these places, explorers inscribe their own traces through their photography and online documentation. Through his photography Ross can leave his own trace upon the world that will exist beyond his lifetime. In this way photographs, videos, website and exploration reports create a legacy of the individual.

Well there is only one thing that is inevitable and that is death unfortunately. You know I am not an educated lad so if I can leave my mark in one-way then that works for me. [...] I want my pictures to be getting looked at when I am no longer around. That is my goal to document as much as possible of buildings that aren't going to be around for too much longer. People can look at them, as I do now, pictures from a hundred years ago of my hometown; those buildings are no longer there. Maybe people can see mine from stuff around the UK in a hundred years time. That's the appeal to me. (Ross)

While Ross feels limited by his educational background, he inscribes his own “mark” upon the world through his photography. His photographic legacy gives Ross symbolic immortality (Price, Arnould and Curasi, 2000). An example of this legacy is displayed in Figure 6.15 below.



Figure 6.15: 'Maison Kirsch', Luxembourg, courtesy of Ross

Other explorers shared similar concerns over their own mortality and the fate of their photographic legacy. Max shares his concern: *“The one thing that worries me a little bit is what will happen to my work when I am gone”*. William in particular drew comparisons with abandoned buildings and his own mortality: *“[W]ith the abandoned stuff, there is a wee bit of a link there with the disappearing world type of thing. I suppose that is me running out of time as well. Well I am getting old”*. For William, ageing is a visceral reminder of the movement of time that he finds in the *“disappearing world”* of the ruins he photographs. In the same way that disposition of possessions can comfort terminally ill consumers (Kates, 2001), objects of terminal value help consumers accept and comprehend their own mortality.

Sontag (1977) reminds us that “[t]o 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” (p.15). Relating this back to the earlier arguments of a building’s vulnerability and mortality, the photograph records and artificially preserves the image from material movement. The photograph anchors these places into existence through practices of trace-making where a record of a place is captured as a moment in time, preserved through its (re)presentation in an image, and archived through materialisation or digitisation. Trace-making immortalises the presence and lived existence of a place for future prosperity.

Trace-making also inscribes the presence of the individual that is drawn into the image through their photographic signature. Like a fingerprint, no two urban exploration photographs are the same as individuals spend hours editing their images to their own artistic style. As such, trace-making can be understood as a form of poetic involvement (Ingold, 2011) with the environment. Nguyen and Belk (2007) suggest we remember through photographs and argue “we record as much as we can of what may be lost in our memory” (p.254). Extending this beyond individual memory, photographs inscribe an individual’s trace, and creates a legacy that carries on beyond individual mortality. In this way, we record as much as we can of what may be lost in our *memorial*. As such, recording these places is as much about remembering and remembrance and allows consumers to materialise their existence as a trace that extends beyond mortality. This is further explored within the next section.

6.4.2 Trace-giving: Gifts through Time

In previous sections participants discussed their respect, appreciation and protective practices deployed to save these buildings from cultural and physical death. For many consumers these urban relics are to be treasured. William suggests that these places give something to urban explorers: *“they are giving you something, although you are bringing something, they are giving you something as well”*. Similarly, speaking about St. Joseph’s Seminary, Paul suggests that places are capable of giving: *“It is massive, it just keeps giving up little rooms. You might find a trap door, you might find a corridor that you have not seen before. It just never stops giving”*. For William and Paul, these places give themselves up to explorers to photograph and offer endless photographic opportunities. Adding another layer of understanding, Ariel suggests these places are gifts from the past:

I get really sad when people can’t be bothered to do that little bit of extra hard work to save something that the past has given us as a gift and instead they knock it down, or they leave it empty, or they put up something that has got no character about it and it will be pulled down again in another fifteen, twenty, thirty years’ time anyway because its purpose has run out. (Ariel)

For Ariel, buildings are gifts from the past that are imbued with meaning and should be cherished as valuable offerings. Ariel’s sadness is directed toward society’s failure to meet their obligation to maintain these buildings. Türe (2014) suggests salvaged gifts that are driven by altruistic intentions can “heal society” (p.60). These photographs act as iconic gifts of moral value (Holbrook, 1999) and linking value (Cova, 1997) that enhance the welfare of others by healing collective forgetting.

Participants understand these buildings as gifts from the past for their inalienable value that cannot be replicated within modern buildings.

Contributing to this notion of abandoned buildings as gifts from the past, participants speak of their duty or obligation to document these buildings for the sake of history.

Rory explains this obligation:

The other reason is when you are in these buildings and when you are in these empty places, you kind of have a duty, sounds bit wankish, but you have a responsibility. You have got, it is not a responsibility, bringing up your kids is a responsibility but you have an opportunity to actually do and record something special. (Rory)

Rory's discussion of "duty" and "responsibility" captures this feeling or force that compels him to "do and record something" which he considers to be inalienable to social memory. It is this action of recording that returns something back to the past. This reflects Mauss' (1925) tripartite relationship of obligations to give, to receive and to return a reciprocal gift. In heirloom consumption, heirs have an obligation to preserve the objects for future prosperity by acting as curators of a family archive (McCracken, 1988) and a responsibility to act as guardians to keep objects within the family (Curasi, Price and Arnould, 2004). Sherry et al. (1993) regards this indebtedness as the dark side of the gift. However, in the case of urban exploration, individuals' indebtedness to the past compels them to protect these buildings as they self-appoint responsibility (Cherrier, 2010) to ensure their future preservation.

In contrast to heirs that have a familial obligation to guard possessions, these consumers feel a societal obligation to record these buildings. As they do not own these buildings they are limited to capturing their image. William furthers this notion of obligation to the past:

You feel a wee bit of an obligation. You feel a bit of an obligation, maybe it is because I am getting older and my time is disappearing. I say that to my son. No but even looking outside of my window, the view from my window has just gone. It is not the same view anymore. So there is a historical type of thing where you are trying to hold onto the past because the future is moving too fast for you. You can't keep up. (William)

William equates time with movement and loss: “*my time is disappearing*”. William feels obligated to document of these buildings in an effort “*to hold onto the past*”. According to Goulding (2001) contemporary life leads consumers to feel a loss of control and alienation, where the past offers a sense of continuity. Whilst venturing into the past may comfort individuals, they feel a sense of duty or obligation from the past to remember, respect and document these places as a symbolic act of return to the absent ‘other’.

Ingold (2015) envisages Mauss’ notion of hau, binding contract of obligation, as two hands clasping or corresponding in movement. These hands are *carrying on* wrapping around one another as strands of a rope, always weaving in a process that never finishes (Ingold, 2015). In this sense, documentation is a correspondence with the past that allows consumers to hold onto and secure themselves into existence against the movement of time. In Chapter Five, participants’ imaginings were

conceived as a form of correspondence with the absent 'other'. Documentation brings tangibility to participants' efforts of correspondence with the past.

Whilst consumer research has examined inherited possessions as inter-generational gifts (Bradford, 2009; Curasi, Price and Arnould, 2004), limited research considers how consumers gift beyond the family domain at a macro-social level. Advancing gift giving theory, consumers documentation can be understood as a trace-giving practice that gives form to materially dissolving buildings, which transcends the relentless movement of time. Trace-giving counters collective forgetting and creates an aggregate sense of past (Belk, 1990) that adds to collective memory of social life of the past. Findings demonstrate that consumer trace-giving practices act as gifts through time through three processes of past remembrance, present memories, and legacy creation for future generations.

Gifts to the Past: Remembrance

Many participants consider their documentation of the places as an act of remembrance. For example, when asked why she documents places Ariel explains "*It is about the decay and remembrance*". Simon considers urban explorer documentation as a fitting tribute to the absent 'other' of the past:

Imagine that your house becomes abandoned but then in a hundred years time and then someone goes in and photographs it as it is and makes a nice book. It would be quite fitting isn't it? That is what you are doing because I appreciate

everything in the house. So every tiny thing from a receipt to a book, to diary, to a letter, to a jacket. I appreciate every single thing in there. All the tiny elements that make up someone's life. [...] It is kind of a nice thing in a way, rather than someone just going in and smashing everything up and graffiting all over the walls, and nicking everything and flogging it. To create some nice photographs, it is a nice thing that. I am quite comfortable doing it. (Simon)

In photographing these places Simon offers over his time, empathy and appreciation to these relics. This is reminiscent of consumer nurturing (Lastovicka and Sirianni, 2011) where consumer gives time, energy and money to create relationships with objects. For Simon, the creation of photographs and books is “*a nice thing*” to do for the absent ‘other’ that rescues the place from collective forgetting. Similarly, Lydia discusses her tributes to the absent ‘other’ through her photography and recalls to one particular photograph (Figure 6.16).



Figure: 6.16: 'Alfred's Grave', courtesy of Lydia

Even in graveyards when you think they have just been left to rot and there isn't somebody there to care for them anymore. It is sad really. But again I like to think that by keeping that photo I am celebrating it in a way. [...] This is a grave that this tree has grown around the grave, and it looks like it is actually hugging the grave itself. Alfred was his name. Isn't that beautiful? So, so pretty, beautiful place. Yeah there are some beautiful places. We are very lucky. (Lydia)

Lydia regards her photographs as a celebration of the memory of the past. Her fond words of Alfred's grave are particularly touching as she did not know him personally, but has paid tribute to his existence through visually documenting his resting place. Bradford and Sherry (2015) note that consumers remember the deceased by displaying temporary signs during tailgating and suggest this form of memorialising reflects a desire for continuity and to transform a space into a place. Conversely, photography of these terminal places maintains a sense of place through the iconic (re)presentation of the image. Within the context of brand narratives Russell and Schau (2014) consider remembering through representation as a continuation of brand bonds. Creating iconic (re)presentations allows consumers to cling onto the memory of vulnerable objects for posterity.

Remembering the neglected 'other' was important to many participants. Ariel explains why she feels it is important to document these places:

To do what I do it brings attention to the place, even if it is just for half an hour and then there is something that I produce from the buildings that is going to be there for prosperity. I can write about them, I can take photos of them, I can paint them and they will be remembered. [...] It is like putting a message on someone's gravestone. Otherwise it is just going to be forgotten and it is like it never existed. (Ariel)

For Ariel documenting buildings is about acknowledgment and attention that she feels they deserve. Along with her own sensitivity that she gives to the buildings, the materials she produces draws attention to their existence. In many ways her sentiment of "putting a message on someone's gravestone" is the essence of trace-

giving and enables her to correspond with the past and pull them from the oblivion of *oublié* and into existence. In particular, Josh feels strongly about the neglected history of the working classes:

I think any history matters because you need to remember where you are. [...] I think it is partly also because I feel it has been neglected. We don't pay attention to that kind of history as opposed to other history. [...] In Scotland people obsess about the castles of Scotland. [...] Some of them are in ruins but they are well looked after ruins. They have lots of people to look after them. They have visitor centres and cafes. You see lots of these equally historically important buildings...things like The Finnieston crane, which is iconic in Glasgow. Ok, it is looked after a little bit but it is not very well maintained or looked after for a historic monument. [...] It is part of our history to keep track of these things. They are just snippets of history that I think it is important to remember and save. (Josh)

Josh's comments on the neglect of industrial history reflect the heritage prejudice that befalls many modern ruins (Pétursdóttir, 2012). For Josh, it is important to "keep track", "remember and save" these remnants of history as a way to understand our emplacement within the world. Offering similar sentiments William explains his personal reasons for documenting neglected culture:

There is a big thing in the community where they want the big chateau, grand things. I am sort of like, not against it...but I like the forgotten man. I suppose that is maybe you bringing your own personality to it cause I know that I am probably in a place in my life that I probably shouldn't have been. I have got like two degrees but I am wiping folks backsides for a living. You know I

mean? I'm nearly retired and all of the things I could have done. [...] Like I am nobody but I'm going to try and record nobody as well. (William)

Reflecting upon regrets within his own life, William finds an affinity with documenting the “*the forgotten man*” who often fails to leave a mark upon the earth after death. In a sense William pays homage to the unremarkable lives that most people leave behind and brings them into the light by giving them a lasting trace. In the same way that transferring cherished possessions is a gift that comes with the obligation to remember the giver (Price, Arnould and Curasi, 2000), participants believe these places demand remembrance. The sadness of William’s “*forgotten man*” is reflected in Aaron’s comments: “*The saddest finds are family photos. They are a family’s history and now it can all be forgotten and as if they never existed*”. Participants’ sentiments highlight the sad consequence of neglect and abandonment where collective forgetting results in the complete erasure of a life.

Godfrey and Lilley (2009) suggest commemoration is equally about remembering the past as it is about reflecting on the present and argue that representations of history do not depict the truth but rather rewrite it. In this sense, urban explorer photography *redraws* the image of the building as a tribute to the memory of the absent ‘other’. These photographs are conduits of remembrance that have the potential to create a new regime of memory for these anonymous buildings by drawing attention to the forgotten and marginalised parts of the cultural past. As such, consumers documentation is a correspondence with the past, but also a gift of trace-existence for the absent ‘other’ whose existence can be remembered and re-lived through the materials of documentation.

Reinforcing this notion of consumer documentation as a gift, some participants are motivated by sharing their experiences with others. For Liam, exploring is about sharing these places with other people: *“I like to appreciate a building and the history. I like to get my photos to let people see it and enjoy what we have seen. I try to bring the building alive”*. Liam’s photographs are a gift to present people who have not been able to physically see it. Similarly, Ross explains that he is motivated by *“sharing and creating memories for myself and for others who look at my stuff, read my website”*. According to Ingold (2011) “[m]emories are generated along paths of movement that each person lays down in the course of this or her life” (p.148). Through his urban explorations Ross generates his own memories but also his documentation acts as a gift to people in present time whose memories are stimulated by his photographs and stories. Luke explains that his photographs often trigger memories in other people who visit his website:

One of my favourite places to go are cinemas. I absolutely love cinemas and theatres. Now and again people will message me about old cinemas that they used to go to back in the eighties and telling me old stories about the things they used to do [...] it makes it all very...I don't know it makes it worthwhile really. You are bringing people's memories back and remembering the good times and then they feel like they can share it with you. It is all very good.

(Luke)

Luke’s photographs allow people to remember and reminisce in the memory of their local haunts. Luke finds it very fulfilling to share in people’s memories and give

people the opportunity to revisit their past. Ariel believes that explorer photography involves “*making history more personal to people*” as they can visually relate to these places. Indeed these photographs often open up a wealth of memories as Liam found when he shared his photographs of St Josephs Seminary online (Figure 6.17). Liam describes the memories that a man shared with him about his attendance at the school:

When I put my pictures up he was commenting on them telling me what each room was called and everything else. Then I was putting up rooms that were out of bounds to him as a kid that he had never seen. So it is like history but it is his childhood, his memories. He has loved it. He has told me little things about the place and I have gone back and I have found them little places. There is one that he told me about. There is a big arch room and there is a ladder going up to the loft. It is a clock tower. He said that some kids would try to get into there when they were little in the dormitory. So I went up there on the walls it has got all of the kids have got their names signed on it. It was like 1931 and it has got their names next to it, for who have died it has got rest in peace next to it. I took a picture of that and sent it to him and he was like “wow” because he was seeing names that he knew. It is memories for some people. I love sharing that with people. (Liam)

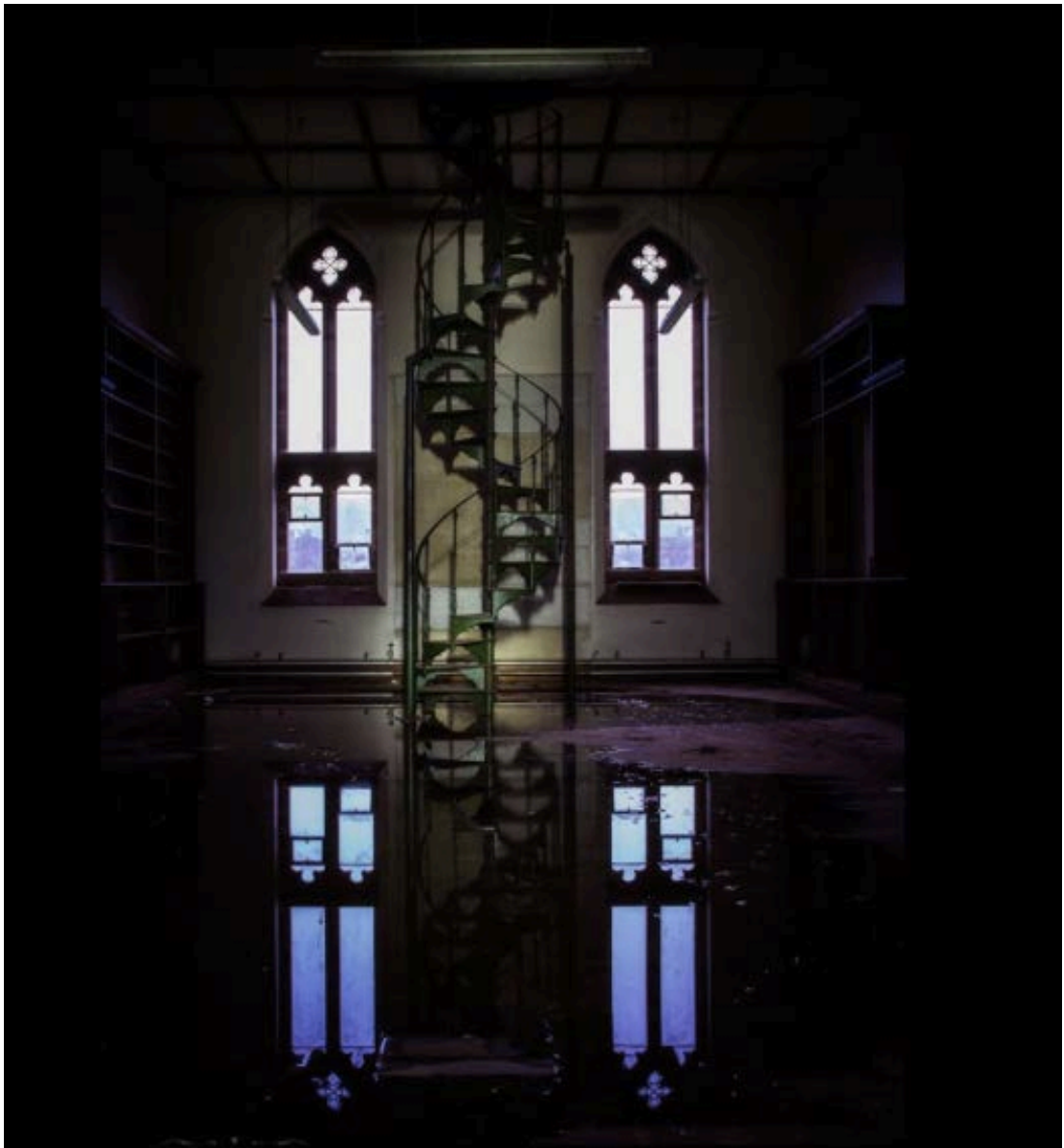


Figure 6.17: 'Past Reflections', courtesy of Liam

Liam's documentation of St Josephs is a gift of memory to this man, allowing him to regress into his childhood memories. Kuruoğlu and Ger (2015) suggest the affective field connected to the object is not necessarily diminished when the object is destroyed. In the context of urban exploration, the affective field of the building remains in individuals' memories and stories, despite their physical demise. Ingold (2013b: p.110) reminds us that to tell a story is "to trace a path that others can

follow” where the storyteller gives a “guided rediscovery” for the novice to follow (Ingold, 2011: p.162). Liam follows the path set out by the man’s memories and treads the same steps to the clock tower. For Liam, it is important to share these places with the people who experienced them during their use as it brings life back into the building that for years has lain uninhabited.

Consumer research has suggested that objects are loaded with social memberships and personal ties to the past (Cherrier (2010) and that even mundane objects are sticky with emotion (Kuruoğlu and Ger, 2015). Some participants recall the emotional responses that their photographs stir with other people:

There are lots of people who remember this stuff. There was a man [...] he saw that machine and he was almost in tears because he used to work in a mill up near the Kelvin and they had closed in the 70s and he used to work there. He turned up one day and the gates were closed. That was it basically so he doesn’t have....there are no photographs of it, it is just gone completely. Yeah saw this stuff and could remember all of these things. It is like a personal history project that records personal history of people. (Josh)

The printing machine that Josh has saved from an abandoned paper mill brought back memories of the man’s livelihood that ended after the closure of the mill. Josh’s account highlights the sense of personal loss is attached to these places. Similarly, Luke recalls the emotional response that his photographs of Whittingham Asylum has stirred in a man who used to work there:

When he saw my pictures he said he almost cried at the state the building had got into and his memories of what it was like, and then what has gone and

happened to it. I never expected that emotion to be brought over but it is the way that it is when somebody has worked there for so long and then to see it as it was and now it has been demolished making way for houses. (Luke)

These emotional responses bring humanity back into these empty ruins. Nguyen and Belk (2007) refer to this as a crisis point whereby individuals are confronted with the change between then and now of their memories as an interaction between past and the present. These emotional reactions also affirm consumer documentation as a gift to people in present time allowing them to re-live their memories, rekindle and remember these places.

In a more concrete way Ross uses his photographs to give-back to the community:

I am currently doing a project for Fleetwood churches. I am trying to document all of the churches now because obviously as I am sure you are aware of now, the church congregations are shrinking, faith is getting less and less so it wont be too long before the churches of different faiths disappear in some towns. I document them now, get the local community talking about them and possibly raise some money through it because I am giving them all the pictures to do with them so they can do whatever they want with them. (Ross)

As with the gift of memory, Ross literally gifts his photographs to local community projects in an effort to raise awareness to these often neglected places. Nora (1989) argues that modern memory relies on “the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image” (p.13). In contrast, Ingold (2013b) argues that places allow memories to be carried on through memory-work of doing (Carruthers, 1998), “to tell stories that flow as seamlessly from past to present”

(p.79). Findings demonstrate that consumer documentation emerges as a form of memory-work and trace-giving practice that allows for stories in living memory to ebb and flow between past and present. Rejuvenated heirlooms can be materially re-inscribed with reanimated stories of the past and new stories of the present (Türe and Ger, 2016). Consumer photographs are re-inscribed by time, weathering, abuse and also the consumers' artistic (re)presentation of the place, that triggers nostalgic and emotional reflections upon old memories as well as new stories created by the consumers explorations. Trace-giving also emerges as a gift to the future.

Gifts to the Future: Materialising Time and Legacy

In addition to participants' accounts of preserving places for future generations to experience, explorers create photographs and stories of places as gifts to the future. Indeed one explorer's personal website, called 'A World in Ruins', uses the tagline "*documenting the past for the future*" which reveals a level of citizenship that drives explorers to document these places. Speaking very much in the future tense Luke wonders the future be like: "*What will we look back at? Everything is just getting knocked down. [...] People are not going to have anything to look back at. [...] I think it is too easily forgotten about nowadays*". Reflecting these concerns, Tom considers the usefulness of explorers' records in the future.

In regards to abandoned places, it is absolutely about preservation and storytelling. Most of these places will eventually be gone and long forgotten about but there may be a day in the future when someone is looking back for

information on their childhood home or someplace that meant a lot to them growing up. In Ontario, farmland is being bought up and developed at an alarming rate and they are demolishing all of the old homes that were left behind. It will be a good project in the future to revisit what a city or a neighbourhood looked like before it was transformed. [...] I hope that one day a few of my shots might mean something to someone. (Tom)

Thinking of how Ontario may transform in years to come Tom envisages the value in his photographs for people living in the future. Returning to the earlier discussion on photographs as stills of time (Sontag, 1977), Tom values his photography as a still record that freezes the rampant transformation of Ontario where development projects are changing the farming landscape through processes of erasure and replacement (see section 6.2). Countering this loss, Tom hopes his photographic record will capture and maintain the meanings these places once held for people.

To prevent this collective forgetting that leads to complete erasure, Lydia believes creating a “national record” of these places is very important to future generations:

I think the other thing as well is what we are doing is photographing and preserving these places for future prosperity. Even in the short span of time you hear people saying “oh that is not there any longer and I see that roof has come down”. So by taking photos it is a national record for the future of these places as they deteriorate and they will. Particularly with the churches there is very little or no funding that is actually going to keep them safe and in good condition so it is a sad state of affairs but in fact they will likely end up just gone for good. So it is nice in a way to be able to say that we have done

something to try to keep the place looking relatively in tact. At least when people will look back on it in the future they can see how it was in one point of time. (Lydia)

For Lydia, despite the loss of physical building the place becomes re-materialised through photographs “*to keep the place looking relatively in tact*”. In her own words Lydia regards this as preservation for “*future prosperity*”. This act of trace-giving creates a material legacy (Hunter and Rowles, 2005) that will endure long after the building’s physical death. As gifting cherished possessions to future generations is a metaphorical extension of self in time (Price, Arnould and Curasi, 2000), the re-materialisation of these places in consumers’ documentation metaphorically extends their presence, but also materialises time through photography. Edwards (2009) illuminates the materiality of photographs: “Photographs are handled, caressed, stroked, kissed, torn, wept over, lamented over, talked to, talked about and sung to in ways that blur the distinction between person, index and things” (p.33). As such, Lydia carries forth the gift to the future through the materialisation of time in photography that will benefit future generations.

This research attends to calls from Bradford (2009) to extend inquiry into the various conditions that foster different types of exchanges between individuals. Findings introduce the notions of trace-making and trace-giving as consumer practices that create trace-inscriptions through photography and storytelling for various buildings, historical events and people. Consumer research has suggested inheritance objects can link the living and the dead (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989) and gifted mundane objects can connect individuals at an imaginary level across time periods

(Kuruoğlu and Ger, 2015). Understandings of these object legacies have focused upon meso-level theorising of family consumption (Epp and Arnould, 2005). Advancing understandings of consumer gift giving (Belk, 2010), findings demonstrate that consumers develop gifts at the macro level of remembrance, memory and legacies that are directed towards cultural remembering and counter collective forgetting. Building upon Kuruoğlu and Ger's (2015) account of cassette circulation, the notion of trace-giving creates inscriptions for marginalised voices and absent ancestors that unites audiences in common appreciation of the past.

Trace-giving emerges as a transformational practice of correspondence that passes on inalienable value to future generations. Ingold (2013b) considers transformational actions as “incumbent on us to give to the future as we have received from the past” (p.13). Consumer research has suggested that inalienable wealth is eternal as it links individuals across time and space through a complex bundling of past and future (Curasi, Price and Arnould, 2004; Price, Arnould and Curasi, 2000). Further, Türe and Ger (2016) demonstrate that heirloom transformation connects and negotiates the past(s) and the future(s) that are embodied in objects and argue that rejuvenated heirlooms are “inscribed by stories of change, move across multiple temporalities iteratively” (p.26). Consumer practices of trace-making where life is inscribed into written, verbal and photographic accounts, and trace-giving, where these traces are shared amongst other individuals and communities, transcend across temporalities and demonstrate that reciprocity is not temporally bound. This develops Türe and Ger's (2016) multi-temporal approach of heirloom consumption. Türe and Ger (2016) demonstrate the iterative interplay between past, present and future. Through

the context of urban exploration, consumers correspond with the past as a transformational gift that transcends the family unit and offers inalienable value to the wider sociocultural levels.

6.5 Reintegration into Marketplace Circulation

This section considers how obsolescent objects become reintegrated into marketplace circulation through consumer photography. It begins by exploring how consumers add value to obsolescent objects and continues by examining the processes consumers use to legitimise and reintegrate previously devalued objects into marketplace circulation.

6.5.1 Photography: Adding Value to Obsolescence

Along with visualising the existing values of obsolescence, consumers generate supplementary value through the creation of photographic artwork. Whilst not all urban explorers photograph their trips, all participants within this study took photographs as part of their experience. Urban exploration photography generally falls into two categories: pure documentation (non-edited) and aesthetic artwork (edited). Findings reveal that consumers add artistic value and narrative value to abandoned buildings through their photography.

Artistic Value

Urban exploration photography requires an investment of dedication and effort. Participants describe going abroad to find new locations and spending many hours within each building to get good photographs. This dedication is often endemic of the exploring world, as Luke observes “*some people will go and they might go to a site for 6 or 7 hours and come away with two pictures*”. Participants find the ruin environment to be a “*huge source of inspiration*” and a muse for creative production. Mila explains how the aesthetic allure of derelict places inspires her to create: “*It is just so inspiring, so I feel like now I have to write a story about it, now I have to go do something to publish my pictures because I cant even hide it inside, I just have to do something!*”. Mila’s interaction with these strange places animates her into action as she is moved to produce something from her experience. Similarly, Nate questions how these places inspire:

It is one of the great philosophical questions: do you create from within or do you try to create the world outside? [...] we definitely try to recreate these places and the effect that they have on us, create that effect at least. (Nate)

Both Nate and Mila’s comments highlight the object-agency that abandoned buildings have which moves individuals to create. Lanier, Rader and Fowler (2013) suggest that objects are powerful agents that act upon consumer imagination and cultural creations. Participants were animated into action by their interactions with abandoned buildings that inspired them to create something valuable from their experience with obsolescence.

Whilst ruins stir creativity, many participants believe the artistic ability lies within the creator. Lydia describes this creative ability whilst discussing her photograph below (Figure 6.18):

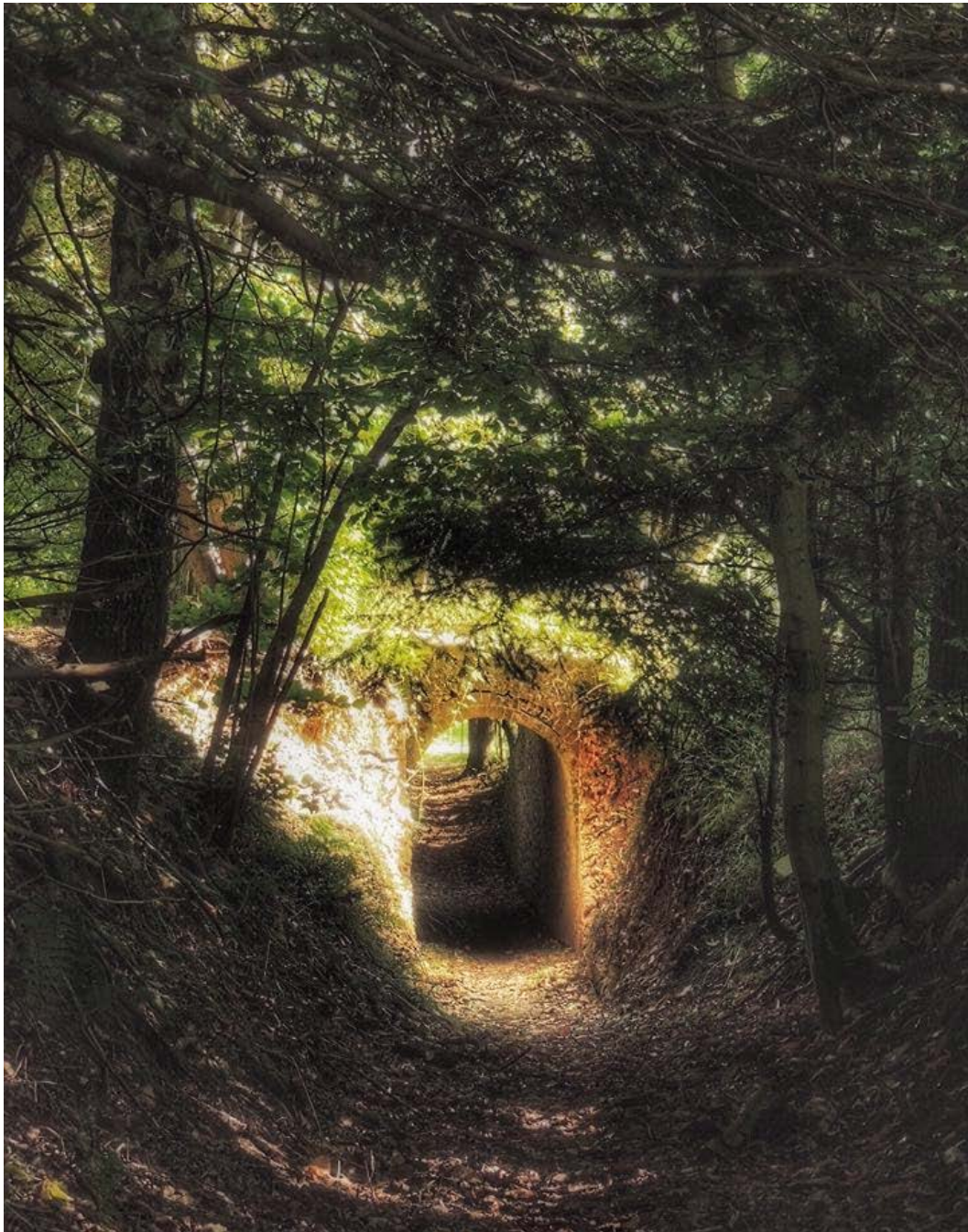


Figure 6.18: 'Abandoned Lovelace Tunnels', courtesy of Lydia

Some people have got a creative eye and an ability to see what they can do with an image and a particular structure to make it look really beautiful, whilst others look at it and go “yeah I don’t see anything exciting about that at all.” I like to think that I am able to make something beautiful out of boring things.

(Lydia)

For Lydia, the “*creative eye*” is an ability to visualise the potential beauty in objects and to create beauty from mundane objects that typically are deemed ugly or uninteresting. This reflects the critical gaze as a competence that consumers use to assess and reconfigure heirlooms (Türe and Ger, 2016). Unlike heirlooms, explorers have no sentimental attachment or family connection to the found-objects or derelict buildings they explore. Explorers require a deeper creative ability to pull meaning from obsolescent objects and consumptionscapes that are devoid of generational stories and personal connections.

Participants often attribute this creative ability to creating atmosphere within their photographs. Rory was determined to capture the atmosphere of a derelict high-rise building that was doomed for demolition: “*I had been waiting for that fog for a long time. I had been waiting to capture them in a different way*”. Simon explains how this creative ability works in practice to capture an atmosphere in a photograph:

You take in the atmosphere and the feeling of a place, and try to visualise what it was when it was full of people in whatever period it was and then you start taking the photos. You try to capture the atmosphere. The easiest thing in the world is to capture an object with a camera. [...] But to capture the

atmosphere of the place, that is the real sort of art behind this. It is not easy to do. You have got to understand the atmosphere and then absorb it. (Simon)

For Simon, the creative ability to capture the atmosphere of a place is an “art”, a talent or aptitude that is difficult to develop and enact in practise. In contrast, photographing an object is an unskilled action that anyone can do. Simon elevates the value of photographs that capture the immaterial quality of atmosphere. This ability adds *artistic value* to photographs whereby consumers imbue an image with creative ability and artistic talent in the creation of art or art-like outcomes. Other participants talk about trying to create “*something unusual*” (Lydia) or “*a surrealist hint*” (William) in their photographs.

This search for something different is reflected amongst many participants interested in photography. This allows Ariel to express an artistic identity:

When you are an artist you want something that represents your take on creativity. You don't want to be copying everybody else. [...] Before I started exploring I was drawing derelict places and painting derelict places and because I want to show something that is unique to me, my style of photography is going to be different to somebody else's. I didn't want it to end up being the same old thing as everyone else was producing. (Ariel)



Figure 6.19: 'St. Cecile's Ballroom', courtesy of Their Mortal Remains

For Ariel, it is important that her creative output is unique to what she regards as her own artistic style, displayed within Figure 6.19. Like Simon's comparison with "art", Ariel considers her creative skill to be thoroughly artistic and unique to her own style of creativity.

Participants stress that developing a creative style relies on technical skill. The dark environments of abandoned buildings make it incredibly difficult to take detailed images. Participants describe working in complete darkness and using long exposures to capture the full range of light in the room. This technique requires incredible patience, as Seb explains: *"If you want to get a perfect shot it is going to take you hours because you need to wait for the right light. [...] You just need to*

wait there, and put your tripod there and just wait... sitting not breathing in a dark room". Along with patience, consumers use various skilful tricks to capture these dark subjects, as Liam explains:

If I know something is too dark and I know my camera is not going to pick it up then you will light paint with your torch. So you will do a 30 second exposure on a tripod and you will literally paint everything in with your torch. Once the 30seconds are gone you will look at your picture and it will look like it was taken in daylight. It is a little camera trick. (Liam)

Liam's "camera trick" allows him to compensate for the dark conditions and create a transformed image. These techniques completely change the (re)presentation of the place as Ross explains: "*quite a lot of our stuff doesn't actually look like it does when you actually see it*". For Nick, urban exploration photography is about an "*incredible control of light*" that completely transforms the (re)presentation of a place into something artistic. Images are further transformed through photo-editing software that participants believe can improve the quality and visual effect of images, such as Photomatics (William), PhotoX (Ariel) and Lightroom (Tom). To "*capture the depth*" (William) of vision that the human eye sees, explorers layer and blend a number of images into one complete image as this improves the level of light and detail visible. As William's interview took place in his home he was able to demonstrate how he processes his photography. Displaying a number of images, William literally redraws the images by moving the cursor back and forth across the screen. Paul explains that he will "*pour over*" and "*scrutinise each photograph*" during his processing. Some participants would spend between thirty minutes to four hours processing each complete photograph depending on their desired outcome.

Photography is considered as a mundane technology (Michael, 2001) that mediates the material and symbolic relations between bodies and natural environments (Shove and Panzar, 2005). Ingold (2013b) argues that a hand-drawn line is a trace of a gesture and the camera has “torn drawing from the ductus of the hand” (p.132). However, Liam’s account of light painting and William’s demonstration of editing images highlights the integral presence of the hand and dextral skill within this process. Processing involves gestures of the hand, moving back and forth with the cursor over sections of the image, literally drawing, colouring and shading the image. Understood as a form of inscription, consumers edited and transformed photographs become traces of bodily gesture that become inscribed in (im)material images.

Türe and Ger (2016) suggest that consumers’ transform heirlooms with their own personal stamp that protects its authenticity and decreases perceived marketisation. Building upon Türe and Ger (2016), findings demonstrate that consumers transform their photographs by adding artistic value that is unique to their creative ability and technical skill. Beyond a personal stamp, consumers imbue photographs with artistic value and inscriptions of the hand that are completely unique and particular to the creator. Artistic value refers to the creation of art or art-like outcomes from consumers’ creative abilities and technical skill. It can be understood as a form of craft consumption (Campbell, 2005) where consumers deploy skill, knowledge and passion to create crafts products for self-expression. Meamber (2000) suggests consumers as artists use the creation and inscription of art to ascribe meaning to their

lives. Through the context of urban exploration, consumers add artistic value to their own lives and also the (re)presentation of obsolescence as beautiful images of art.

Narrative Value

In addition to artistic value, consumers add *narrative value* to photographs whereby a story is created about places, people or objects through symbolic staging. William explains how he imbues his photographs with meaning:

I also like just trying to bring something bizarre to the whole thing. I remember there was an old children's hospital but there was nothing in it. You wouldn't even know it was a children's hospital. And then I found a bag of old kids shoes. To me I had to take photographs of the shoes to bring the relevance of the place back. [...] I'm just trying to create a visual image that people will maybe find memorable. You know like filmmakers, like the Shinning and all of these things. You possibly don't even remember the film but you can remember some of the stills from it. (William)

William stages the children's shoes to signify the lives lived out within the hospital and to bring human life back into the desolate ruin environment. William uses "bizarre" photographic staging to create memorable photographs equivalent to iconic imagery of film fiction. This can be understood as a form of subversive customisation where dominant norms are subverted to counter the alienating and homogenising outcomes of mass consumption (Campbell, 2005). Further, William tries to create a more complete narrative about the place by using the shoes as an

allegory of the children's lives. This adds narrative value by creating a visual narrative that an audience can read for plot lines and characters. The Facebook post below (Figure 6.20) highlights the common practice of staging:

On a wing and a prayer...



33 people like this.



did you find these together (bible page, butterfly, dead bird remains) or arrange and compose them?

4 hrs · Like · 1



Found like that I presume someone had previously composed them

4 hrs · Like · 1



unless chance (or maybe more?) did it.

4 hrs · Like

Figure 6.20: Abandoned Uncovered Facebook post

This use of symbolism allows the viewer to read the image for a story. As craft consumers recontextualise and transform objects by drawing upon an ensemble of skills, objects, styles, and materials from the market (Türe and Ger, 2016; Campbell,

2005), consumer photography enables consumers to inscribe images with new stories and build narratives around desolate places. Simon explains how he communicates the story of these places through his photographs, as displayed in Figure 6.21:

I tend to segment a room up into sections. [...] You don't have to take everything, you can have hints of things. A lot of, I think, the core of this photography is not what you are photographing but what you are not photographing. So when you have a photo you want whoever is looking at the photo to add whatever they want to add. Who was sitting in that chair? Who was living in that room? They will complete the picture. So I can take a photo of a wall and get only half the chair in, you don't need to get the whole chair in because you are suggesting it. [...] Then people will make up their mind about who bought the picture, who was lying in the bed, whose chair it was. You try and capture a room how you want to capture it but you leave elements out. There are a lot of missing elements anyway by their nature. And you will let the viewer fill in their missing pieces. (Simon)



Figure 6.21: ‘Crib Cottage’, courtesy of A World in Ruins

For Simon, it is the missing objects that tell the story of the place and its previous occupants. Simon develops narrative value through synecdoche whereby “*hints*”, “*missing pieces*” and “*missing elements*” signify a larger narrative about the place. This is evident in his photograph of “*half*” of the chair that suggests the “*whole*” object and broader narrative of the occupant. In contrast to storyscapes that are constructed by service-providers (Chronis, Arnould and Hampton, 2012), consumers add narrative value through synecdoche that allows the reader to build their own interpretation of the image. These images act as incomplete allegories that suggest and imply storylines whilst also excluding the end of the story to keep the audience wondering.

Türe (2014) suggests consumers use esthetic manipulation and creative recontextualisation (Appadurai, 1986) as value enhancement strategies that move objects into new realms of production and consumption. Extending Türe (2014) by focusing on production, findings reveal consumers add artistic and narrative values to their photographs through image editing and staging. These practices contribute to the ruin porn genre, which consequently increases the appreciation and worth of the abandoned building as a site of cultural fascination. Epp and Price (2010) suggest consumers reincorporate threatened objects to rescue them from displacement. Whilst urban explorers fail to rescue abandoned buildings, their photographic documentation can be understood as a reincorporation attempt that reintroduces the building into public view and cultural appreciation. This understanding extends reincorporation (Epp and Price, 2010) beyond the object itself and demonstrates the potential values of iconic reincorporation through photographic (re)presentations.

6.5.2 Legitimising Value

In addition to adding value to these places through photography, consumers legitimise newly ascribed values through three processes; community sharing, restricting consumption and publishing within authoritative arenas.

Community Sharing

Firstly, consumers legitimise their photography by sharing it within online interest groups, such as Abandoned Uncovered Facebook group, Oblivion State forum, and 28dayslater.co.uk forum. Lydia explains the positive experience of sharing her photographs within these communities:

[F]or me the joy is putting them up on Facebook and seeing the response you get and the reaction if you have found somewhere completely unique. Being able to enjoy them. It is almost like you are enjoying the place all over again when people are liking them and commenting on them and giving you a critique on them as well. That is a great feeling. It is a community thing, you are sharing your work with people. They are giving you a bit of feedback on it.

(Lydia)

Lydia revels in the reciprocity (likes and comments) she receives when she shares her photographs online. Sharing allows Lydia to relive her exploration experiences and enjoy receiving the attention and interaction over her photographs.

The reciprocity Lydia receives legitimises her photography as a valuable output that is appreciated by others. Receiving “*critique*” and “*feedback*” from the community further legitimises the value of photographs as the community defines was it acceptable and appreciated within the group. Importantly, the community values “*somewhere completely unique*” that others may not have seen or photographed in a particular style. This is reinforced by Paul’s comments:

For some people it is a trophy. If they find a building that nobody else has found, they don't want anyone else to know because it is their own little trophy – “I have been in here, you haven't been in here”. [...] Facebook is to blame for a lot of it. Everybody wants bragging rights for certain buildings. (Paul)

As Paul suggests the community legitimises “*trophy*” photographs by offering “*bragging rights*” to successful explorers. Tumbat and Belk (2011) report similar competitive scoring between Everest climbers who experience positional struggles over climbing achievements and engage in individualising attempts where they aim to build the best story or narrative about the experience. Much like climbers (Tumbat and Belk, 2011), urban explorers gather together online to compete in displays of their photographs where community sharing reinforces and validates consumers' work by offering social capital (Bourdieu, 1984) and community affirmation (Belk, 2013).

Restricting Consumption

Secondly, consumers legitimise the value of their photography by restricting and limiting the availability of published images in order to increase their value. Many participants believed that sharing on social media devalues photographs, as Rory explains:

Nowadays images are throwaway. There is no value attached to them. That is why I delved in with Instagram and then it really annoys me now and I rarely use it. Cause it is just this idea of just giving it away, giving it away, giving it away. (Rory)

For Rory, sharing or “*giving away*” images online decreases their value as they become simultaneously plentiful and disposable. As such, restricting the availability of images by not sharing them with the wider public increases their value as Seb explains:

The photographers are really patient so they are like taking pictures but they have to wait years before uploading pictures. [...] You will be waiting because the picture gains value once it is not possible to take anymore. So if the place gets closed indefinitely or if the place is renovated or if it is demolished, well then that is the shot that people cannot take anymore. (Seb)

Seb’s account highlights the importance of delaying publication or sharing of images as this restricts consumption and circulation of images. Explorers understand this necessity and “*selectively*” and “*delay*” (Nick) releasing photographs at times that will not depreciate their value. In particular, Seb exploits the terminal value of these places by waiting until the place no longer exists before he publishes his photographs of it. This adheres to the market logic of supply and demand where scarcity increases value. Indeed, Liam has a collection of photographs of St Josephs Seminary that he plans to “*save*” for an exhibition. Restricting consumption legitimises the value of photography through limiting the circulation of images. Findings reveal a tension between the legitimising processes of community sharing and restricting consumption. Whilst both processes legitimise and increase the value of the photographs, consumers must find a balance between sharing and over-sharing.

Publishing

Thirdly, consumers further legitimise their photography through publishing transformed photographs into art-objects. Once imbued with artistic value the photograph is transformed into an art-object by publishing the image in authoritative arenas, such as books, photography articles, and exhibitions. Participants shared their plans to publish photographic books (Simon, Nick), a fiction novel (Ariel), and have exhibitions in the future (Seb, William and Liam). The Facebook post below (Figure 6.22) illustrates how explorers' validate their photography through publications:

Hope no one minds me posting this but it might be of interest to some. Second article I've done for Advanced Photographer Magazine. It's really a "hands on" gear review (of a Canon 5Dmk3 and the new Canon 11-24 f4 lens) but I based the article around an Urbex trip - with Julie Ferry. Latest issue just come out in the UK (issue 59), pages 76 and 77.



Figure 6.22: Abandoned Uncovered Facebook post

Consumers legitimise and validate their productive output through a three-part process of *distancing* their work from devalued social media imagery, *coupling* with fine artwork, artist or genre, and *capitalising* on the economic potential of images.

Participants use *distancing* to physically separate their work from less valued imagery by displaying them within authoritative spaces. Ross's recalls why he created his website to showcase his photography:

I wanted my space, I wanted my own area. [...] [Y]ou dream about having a gallery somewhere, your own space on a wall. That is my wall. My website is my wall. That is why I created it. I didn't want it mixed in with everybody else's. I wanted my own little private space where it is only my stuff to be looked at. (Ross)

For Ross, the website is a visual gallery space that channels the audiences' gaze towards his photographic art. By creating this website Ross has a space for personal expression (Schau and Gilly, 2003) that is distanced from others' photographs.

Unlike Ross, William dreams of having a physical gallery exhibition:

Ideally I would love a show, a good show. [...] I don't want my own website page or anything cause there is too many of them. Everybody is a photographer, anybody who has got a phone is a photographer. But one thing they haven't got is the vision and the presentation of what it could look like. [...] I would love for the people to get off their arse off their Facebook page and go into a space. A space they can walk round and see all of these things on a big scale. I reckon they would love it cause folk find it fascinating. (William)

William distances his work further from other consumers' work by physically excluding his photographs from the online world and print media that includes publishing his photographs within this thesis. In William's words this enables him to have greater "*control*" (William) of his work. This resonates with Belk, Sherry and Wallendorf (1988) who suggest consumers separate art from craft as an attempt to sacralise artwork.

Along with distancing, participants associate their work with celebrated art through a process of *coupling*. William views his urban exploration photography to be an authentic artistic outlet:

They want to explore a place, go in take a few photographs and then post it on Facebook and go "oh yeah look at me". Whereas I am going in there and going look at the textures, look at the detail. [...] To me it is like a legitimate artistic expression now. You know it is as valid now to me as any of the Rembrandt things. [...] It is like a craft, it is like art.

William distinguishes between his artistic intensions from others who mainly want to explore places and share photographs online as evidence of their experience. By *coupling* his photography with fine art and celebrated artists William elevates and legitimises his photography as an art-object.

Some participants have successfully sold their photographs by *capitalising* upon their exchange value. However, many participants stress it is not about making money, as Simon explains: "*You don't make money from a book though. It is like a CV in a shop. It is a kudos thing when you have a book out, and people like it. [...] I am not*

doing it to make money. I am just doing it to make the book". For Simon, publishing a book establishes credibility and legitimises the value of his photography for its own sake rather than purely its exchange value. Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry (1989) suggest there are special conditions for selling artistic work. For Simon, these include building his reputation as a serious explorer and gaining affirmation for his work as a legitimised pursuit. William shares similar views:

[I]f there was any money to be made, it is not about money for me. It is about artistic integrity. That is my bad thing. No, no cause I could have made a lot of money but I turned my back on it. Now I think I have got something to show that I am quite happy with showing.

For William, economic value is secondary to his "*artistic integrity*". Like Simon, William's account highlights a tension between commercially driven work and artistically driven work (Fillis, 2006), where the latter legitimises the artistic value of the photographs. It also highlights the romantic and commercial intentions that exist uncomfortably within the community where selling work can threaten the safety of locations (section 6.1.3), whilst legitimising urban explorers' activities as more than recreational criminality.

In contrast to many participants Nick admits selecting locations for their commercial return: "*I like to be different. I am always choosing places like that greenhouse, it is a one shot place really. [...] I went there with the sole purpose that I knew I could sell some work from it*". Nick's comments highlight the commercial intentions that some explorers have for their photographs, where artistic value is converted into

economic exchange value. This is evident in Simon recollection of a magazine that wanted to purchase his images:

I said to them “do you realise the effort that goes into these?”. This isn’t going to the Welsh countryside standing on a hill and taking a nice photo. This is hours of research, a lot of injuries, a lot of travelling. There are hours and hours that goes into it. [...] So there is a lot at stake when you go into these places, and then when you finally get an image, the people have to understand what goes into creating it at the time. And it is not because I think my images are so remarkable that people should pay hundreds for, but you have to consider the time and effort that goes into it. Think about what the price would be if you were selling it. Some people I know sell them for thousands. [...] you are entitled to sell it like any kind of art. You will try to make a living from it if you can. (Simon)

Simon places an economic value upon his effort, rather than the quality of the images. Similarly, deservingness or worth is measured by effort and sacrifice (Tumbat and Belk, 2011). Simon considers the exchange value for selling his images and deems them more valuable than the £270 for a series of images offered by the magazine. This highlights the transition from artistic value into economic exchange value. Selling prints legitimises the value of consumers work through *capitalising* on their exchange value.

Publishing in these arenas legitimises the added value that consumers adhere to these places. Building upon Parsons (2008), Türe and Ger (2016) suggest that consumers become playful excavators in heirloom consumption through the practice of

uncovering, that involves a two-stage process of hunting where consumers critically gaze at the object to identify potential life, and leavening where the object is linked to specific spaces and materials to strengthen and legitimise its new life. Extending this further, findings reveal that consumers transform previously mundane images into art-objects through publishing within authenticated and institutionally validated spaces. This involves three processes of distancing from throwaway images, coupling with authenticated arenas, and capitalising on the exchange value of images. In contrast to heirloom transformation (Türe and Ger, 2016), adding artistic and narrative value increases the exchange value of the object as a sellable asset. This advances Türe and Ger's (2016) notion of leavening, by demonstrating objects become legitimised beyond the family environment and become art-like by re-entering the marketplace.

Photographing abandoned buildings acknowledges their forsaken value and quasi-sacralises abandoned buildings as objects and consumptionscapes worthy of reproduction. Findings highlight this reproduction can be understood as *iconic reintegration* where inactive objects are reintroduced into marketplace circulation through their iconic (re)presentation. By creating icons consumers add value to the original object by highlighting its worth and ulterior qualities that society has overlooked. Belk, Sherry and Wallendorf (1988) suggest sacred objects slide towards profanity once sold. As such, the legitimised icon is desacralised through its sale and capitalisation. Whilst some explorers sell their photographs, many do not capitalise upon their economic exchange value, but rather trade in the social capital from sharing their images. Findings demonstrate community sharing, restricting

consumption and publishing are all forms of iconic reintegration that reintroduces obsolescent objects and consumptionscapes into marketplace circulation, yet maintain the obsolescent status of the original building that remains out-of-circulation.

6.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter examines consumers' material engagement with the obsolescence of abandoned buildings. This chapter explores how consumers act as guardians in protecting these fragile places and highlights how these attempts can fail. This is followed by a conceptualisation of the death of a building that introduces the various processes of fatality as the building moves from its object status towards a material existence. The chapter continues with an examination of consumers' documentation practices as a form of societal gift giving that prolongs the living memory of these buildings. Finally, this chapter examines how consumers reintegrate obsolescent objects into marketplace circulation through photography that adds and legitimises value to previously devalued objects. As a whole, this chapter reveals the significance of obsolescence in consumer culture where latent meanings and values of alterity challenge the dominant market logic.

Chapter Seven: Contributions and Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

The overall aim of this thesis is to develop a rich understanding of how consumers engage with obsolescence through the context of urban exploration. This final chapter details the core theoretical contributions to consumer research and Consumer Culture Theory. Contributions each relate to the guiding perspectives of spatialities, temporalities and materialities, and together address the three research questions of this thesis.

Research Questions

1. How do consumers engage with the spatialities, temporalities and materialities of obsolescent objects and consumptionscapes?
2. What meanings do consumers ascribe to obsolescent objects and consumptionscapes?
3. How do consumers produce value from their encounters with obsolescent objects and consumptionscapes?

This chapter goes on to address directions for future research and closes with a summary of the chapter and the researcher's reflections on the research journey.

7.2 Contributions: Tripartite Perspective in Understanding Consumption

The following discussion details the core contributions of the thesis to consumer research and specifically Consumer Culture Theory. This thesis contributes a novel understanding of how consumers engage with obsolescence by using a tripartite approach of spatialities, temporalities and materialities. Previous research has focused upon spatial qualities (Bradford and Sherry, 2015; Chatzidakis, Maclaran and Bradshaw, 2012; Visconti et al., 2010), or temporality and materiality (Türe and Ger, 2016) in understanding consumption, but fails to consider how spatial, temporal and material dimensions intersect and shape consumption. This thesis bridges this theoretical gap by using a tripartite perspective that prioritises the entanglement of space, time and material that is evident in obsolescent consumption.

Findings demonstrate that obsolescent things (objects and consumptionscapes) are important artefacts of material culture that signify a material heritage, and have varying degrees of materiality depending on their object-status. Obsolescent things are equally artefacts of different temporal periods and emerge as palimpsests of consumer culture that allow consumers to imaginatively venture into the past. Obsolescent things are also spatially categorised as 'out-of-place' as they have fallen

out of marketplace circulation and maintain a dormant space within the marketplace waiting for disposal or reintegration. Drawing upon the work of Tim Ingold, this thesis argues that space, time and material become entangled within consumption as consumers interact with the materiality of objects that are spatially emplaced within social categories and have temporal histories. This tripartite approach illuminates a more nuanced understanding of consumption as a meshwork of overlapping threads, layers and webs that weave together during consumer practices, interactions and meaning-making.

Furthermore, this thesis contributes to the multi-layered heteroglossia of Consumer Culture Theory by introducing Ingold's relational thinking to the consumption domain. This thesis uses Ingold's relational approach to illuminate the spatial, temporal and material qualities of obsolescence and conceptualise the material thinghood of obsolescent objects and consumptionscapes. In particular, it uses Ingold's concepts of 'meshwork' (Ingold, 2008) to understand the complexity of consumption and 'correspondence' (Ingold, 2013b) to deconstruct how consumers use obsolescence to connect with the past and reflect upon contemporary life. Further, the sensory ethnography used within this thesis draws attention to the methodological implications of Ingold's relational thinking. In doing so, this thesis pushes the boundaries of neo-materialism within Consumer Culture Theory and bridges the gaps between subject and object, whilst not fully conceding to object dominance.

Consumers and objects can be understood as entities enmeshed within a marketplace of meanings, practices and interactions. In the marketplace, consumers and objects are distinguished by their animate and inanimate qualities. Consumers have the ability to live, think and feel, whereas objects have comparably limited agency that impresses upon humans where their vitality lies in a capacity to metamorphose into other material states. This thesis argues consumers and objects share a dense materiality that leaves traces of their existence as they connect and reconnect through meshworks of meanings, memories and matter. Understood as a meshwork, obsolescent consumption emerges as a re-engagement with material culture of the recent or more distant past that revives, awakens and reintegrates inactive objects into marketplace circulation. Drawing together spatial, temporal and material considerations has allowed for the following contributions; illuminating obsolescent consumption as a significant domain in consumer culture, introducing the notion of temporary place-making, conceptualising the death of an object, and theorising the iconic reintegration of obsolescent things into marketplace circulation.

7.2.1 Obsolescent Consumption and the Mundane Spectacle

This thesis introduces a new theoretical perspective of ‘obsolescent consumption’ where consumers find value in inactive objects that have fallen out of marketplace circulation, engage with obsolescence for its own sake and attempt to keep objects in their obsolescent state, rather than altering or modernising objects. Previous research focuses on the practices of disposal (Parsons and Maclaran, 2009; Cappellini, 2009;

Lastovicka and Fernandez, 2005), value in disposition (Türe, 2014; De Coverly et al., 2008; Parsons, 2008) and practices of waste transformation (Crang, 2012; Emgin, 2012; Hawkins, 2009; Lucas, 2002). Less research has considered consumers' engagement with obsolescence as a consumption activity in its own right. This thesis bridges this theoretical gap by introducing obsolescent consumption as an important consumption domain in contemporary consumer culture that privileges qualities of neglect, termination and alterity. Obsolescent consumption emerges as a celebration of the past and a cultural fascination with economic failure, societal neglect and cultural loss.

This thesis also introduces the concept of the 'mundane spectacle' whereby previously devalued objects become worthwhile through their modern obscurity and unfamiliarity to contemporary culture. Building upon Atkinson's (2008) notion of mundane spaces of regional heritage, this thesis conceptualises the mundane spectacle as the perceived distance from consumers' lived experience that transforms the mundane into a spectacle through its modern opacity. Lanier, Radar and Fowler (2013) argue consumer assessments of an object's worth "gives life meaning" that can transcend market value (p.37). Mundane spectacles transcend economic valuations and their worth is located in their qualities of alterity that moves them from waste status to spectacle status. Debord (1967) argues modern society is overflowing with diffuse spectacles where conflicting commodities compete for dominance within the marketplace and gives the example of progression conflicting with city heritage that can lead to the "destruction of old urban districts" (p.65). In this sense, the mundane spectacle is an example of diffuse spectacle (Debord, 1967)

as its qualities of alterity conflict with mainstream marketplace offerings, as it raises the ordinary and mundane to the level of the spectacular.

Holttinen (2014) suggests mundane consumption is characterised by situations that are “neither extraordinary nor dramatic and which are often characterised by routine” (p.3). Extending work on mundane consumption beyond consumer routines and everyday consumption, the notion of mundane spectacle demonstrates how mundane material culture can be experienced as a spectacle where forsaken, terminal and outré aesthetic values dominate. Advancing current understandings of consumer value (Türe, 2014; Duffy, 2014; Holbrook, 1999; Cova, 1997), these alternative values deepen our understanding of obsolescence as a source of discarded, finite and visual significance.

7.2.2 Temporary Place-making

Space and place have become increasingly important theoretical considerations within Consumer Culture Theory with special issues (Chatzidakis, McEachern and Warnaby, 2014) and conference roundtables (Lucarelli et al., 2015; Chatzidakis and McEachern, 2013) dedicated to these theoretical areas. This thesis advances works on place consumption (Bradford and Sherry, 2015; Visconti et al., 2010) by introducing the notion of ‘temporary place-making’, whereby an obsolescent space is given transient purpose through the movement of human activity that temporarily awakens the consumptionscape from its coma of disuse.

Previous research suggests places are constructed through place-marking (Visconti et al., 2010) and placeway rituals (Bradford and Sherry, 2015) where the environment is physically altered to create meaningful place. Advancing this work, findings argue place-making is not confined to physical alterations of the environment, but can include temporary place-making practices that are deeply transient and impermanent, which leave little physical trace of activity. Obsolescence and abandonment transform meaningful places into desolate spaces, and place-making practices reverse this transformation where space becomes place. The transient quality of temporary place-making illuminates the slip-and-slide between space and place, where consumers briefly engage with obsolescent consumptionscapes for a matter of minutes or hours, before they are return to their dormancy of disuse. Further, this highlights the eventmental character of place that ‘relationally gathers’ together multiple meanings, experiences, animate and inanimate things, which adds depth to current treatments of place within Consumer Culture Theory.

The tripartite perspective illuminates how temporary place-making is linked to practices of consumer discovery and consumer imagination. This thesis contributes to a broader understanding of consumer discovery (Guiot and Roux, 2010; Gregson and Crewe, 2003) beyond the commercial domain, and introduces four practices of discovery; detection, endurance, emplaced observation, and re-tracing. Bradford and Sherry (2015) call for future research to explore extraordinary or mundane placeway rituals, and postulate that consumers may create placeways by going over, through, around or under places to reveal the sacred dimensions of space. Rather than one form of placeway movement, consumers’ practices of discovery and temporary

place-making illuminate the variety of ways consumers physically engage with places in mundane obsolescent consumption. Further, building upon Gabriel and Lang's (1995) 'consumer as explorer' identity, consumers use practices of discovery and temporary place-making to transcend their normal roles and perform semi-fictional fantasy roles to become archaeologist-explorers for transient moments. This reawakens a sense of past self where consumers temporarily revisit feelings and freedoms of youth as they transiently adopt new identities, play corporal games and create chimerical fantasies. As such, the tripartite perspective illuminates how consumers engage with the spatiality of consumptionscapes in consumer discovery and how the temporality of temporary place-making shapes identity performance. Visconti et al. (2010) fail to address the temporal and ephemeral quality of place-marking in street art and Bradford and Sherry (2015) fail to tackle the implications of material alterations to space that occur in placeway rituals. Using the tripartite perspective allows this thesis to address these theoretical gaps and provide a more nuanced understanding of place consumption by highlighting the transience of consumers' place-making practices that fill desolate spaces with momentary meaning and ephemeral human activity that temporarily awakens a place.

Further, the tripartite perspective illuminates the significance of temporality and materiality to consumer imagination as a core activity within obsolescent consumption. This thesis argues that in obsolescent consumption consumer imagination emerges as a correspondence with the absent 'other', and demonstrates how consumers extend their imaginaries to develop an understanding of real events, places, people and things. This contributes to a broader understanding of consumer

imagination (Chronis, Arnould and Hampton, 2012; Martin, 2004) that extends beyond fantasy and towards grasping at a past reality.

Previous research conceives imagination as a process of filling in missing information (Chronis, Arnould and Hampton, 2012; Martin, 2004). Rather than filling, this thesis conceptualises imagination as a process of correspondence (Ingold, 2013b) where fragments of stories, visuals and materials are collected and connected together to form a tapestry of impressions. Ingold (2013b) conceives correspondence as a movement of sociality that allows animate beings and inanimate objects to cling or hold onto each other as wrapping strands of a continuous rope. In obsolescent consumption, consumers correspond with the absent 'other' through various stages of imagining, sensing, knowing and learning from obsolescent things through processes of patching, gathering, weaving and knotting, respectively. Each stage deepens consumers' understanding as the fragments of things, places, events, or people, creates a tapestry of impressions, that move consumers beyond the figment of imagination and towards an understanding of real life. This offers a richer understanding of the ways in which consumers construct meanings of the past from their imagination as a deeply temporal and material process.

Previous accounts of consumer imagination focus upon commercial products (Martin, 2004) and consumptionscapes (Chronis, Arnould and Hampton, 2012). Obsolescent consumption occurs outside of marketplace circulation where inactive objects remain dormant. Findings extend understandings of consumer imagination beyond the commercial domain, and demonstrate that consumers can successfully

build thick interpretations in the absence of commercial staging and manipulation. Kuruoğlu and Ger (2015) suggest the circulation of emotionally sticky mundane objects can “thicken the threads that weave together a collectivity: solidifying the sense of “us,” while concomitantly rigidifying the boundaries against the “other”” (p.215). Extending Kuruoğlu and Ger (2015), findings demonstrate that obsolescent objects that are out-of-circulation can be emotionally sticky and continue to offer a view of the ‘other’. Through the tripartite perspective, findings reveal the stickiness of possessions allows consumers to correspond with the absent ‘other’ who is temporarily distance, yet appears spatially and materially close through their abandoned possessions. This reaffirms Hetherington’s (2004) ‘secondhandedness’ where the absent ‘other’ is representationally close, yet physically distant. Consumers generate thick interpretations of the absent ‘other’ from the traces they have left behind.

7.2.3 Death of an Object

This thesis contributes to a material understanding of objects by theorising the death of an object. Previous consumer research focuses on the loss of perceived value in object disposition (Türe, 2014) and loss of inalienable wealth when objects are destroyed (Epp and Anould, 2006). In contrast, this thesis highlights the material presence of objects can be at risk from various destructive forces. This moves our understanding beyond intangible value and towards material jeopardy.

This study identifies three protective practices (respecting, safeguarding and concealing) that consumers enact to protect vulnerable objects from material damage, societal neglect, abuse and online exposure. This material focus advances previous work that focuses upon discourse protection (Canniford and Shankar, 2013) and value protection (Türe, 2014), by illuminating the importance of material protection. Findings also demonstrate that despite consumers' efforts, protection practices can fail due to lack of ownership and agency over physically protecting objects from being destroyed, leading to the death of objects.

Consumer research surrounding death often prioritises human death and focuses on issues such as bereavement (Turley and O'Donohoe, 2015), death rituals (Hackley and Hackley, 2016), death planning (Levy, 2015), and the inalienability of bodily remains (Baker, Baker and Gentry, 2016). Studies also focus upon the disposition of objects after human death, in possessions orphaned by the deceased (Lim and Fitchett, 2011), inheritance of family heirlooms (Curasi, Price and Arnould, 2004; Price, Arnould and Curasi, 2000), and possession disposition through gifting (Turley and O'Donohoe, 2013). Limited research has focused upon the death of the object itself. This thesis broadens consumer research on death beyond the human or living being by considering the death of an object.

Appadurai (1986) contends that objects have social lives as they move through biographies and experience changes in their commodity status. Building upon this material perspective, Anderson, Tonner and Hamilton (forthcoming) suggest the inverse is also true, as objects experience various manifestations of death. They

introduce the concepts of ‘cultural death’, where cultural value is diminished and vanishes from living memory, and ‘physical death’ whereby the physical integrity of the structure rots, diminishing its value and potential success of redevelopment. This thesis deepens Anderson, Hamilton and Tonner’s (forthcoming) conceptualisation of cultural death and physical death, by demonstrating that both forms of fatality can result in the death of an object where it ceases to exist in its object-form. Cultural death occurs through processes of termination where important expressions of material culture may be erased, replaced or forgotten from collective memory. Physical death occurs through processes of material vulnerability where the object experiences structural fragility, reclamation and metamorphosis where the object is released from its object encasement and moves towards a material existence. In doing so, this thesis broadens Appadurai’s (1986) perspective of social lives for objects by demonstrating objects experience deaths as they move through biographies and experience changes in their object status.

The death of an object contributes to growing materialist discussions within Consumer Culture Theory by drawing attention to the material thingness of objects. Whilst growing research has focused upon the agency of objects (Türe and Ger, 2014; Lim and Fitchett, 2011; Epp and Price, 2010), less research has focused upon the matter of materiality. Drawing upon Ingold’s (2013b) relational thinking where objects are considered as temporary containers of material, findings offer a processual understanding of objects as material things that have the potential to die and move on to a material existence.

7.2.4 Iconic Reintegration

This thesis advances understandings of how inactive objects return to marketplace circulation. Previous research examines how disused objects circulate in emotional economies (Kuruoğlu and Ger, 2015) and networks (Epp and Price, 2010). Moving beyond the physical object, this thesis introduces the notion of ‘iconic reintegration’ where obsolescent objects are reintroduced into marketplace circulation through their iconic (re)presentation in photographs. In contrast to reincorporation and reengagement that move objects from inactivity to activity by returning them into networks of use (Epp and Price, 2010), iconic reintegration creates an icon of the original and reintegrates this icon into marketplace circulation.

Findings demonstrate this occurs through three activities; icon creation, legitimisation attempts, and societal gift giving. First, consumers create icons of obsolescent objects through ‘trace-making’ where photographs produced and imbued with artistic value and narrative value that appeals to a market audience. Second, consumers develop legitimisation attempts to reintroduce obsolescent things into the marketplace through sharing, restricting and publishing photographs within authenticated marketplace arenas. Third, consumers practise trace-giving where icons of obsolescent things are given back to individuals and communities as a form of societal gift giving that is driven remembrance, rekindling memory and legacy creation.

Consumers use the market to reintegrate icons of obsolescent things into circulation, yet maintain the obsolescent status of the original that remains out-of-circulation. By creating icons consumers add value to the original by highlighting its worth and ulterior qualities that society has overlooked. Advancing Türe and Ger (2016), findings demonstrate that consumers do not have to alter the object to add value to it, but instead can alter its representation through photography. As a form of iconic transfer (Lastovicka and Fernandez, 2005), photography emerges as a transformative practice that enables consumers to inscribe images with new values with the audience in mind to reintegrate obsolescent objects into the marketplace. Extending Epp and Price (2010), this thesis moves understandings of object circulation beyond the physical object and towards a representation of the object and reveals how inactive objects are reintegrated into the marketplace through their image. The tripartite perspective illuminates the importance of spatiality and materiality in iconic transfer, where the shifting material status from original to icon allows obsolescent things to be reintroduced into the space of marketplace circulation.

Liquid consumption (Eckhardt and Bardhi, 2015) suggests consumption has become characterized by: a lack of identification with objects as consumers do not wish to extend the self; fluid or situational relationships and practices; a dominance of use values; and dematerialisation of possessions. Whilst liquid consumption offers a new theoretical perspective to understand changing consumption habits, it fails to offer a nuanced understanding of a range of simultaneously liquid and non-liquid qualities that occur in consumption activities. This thesis introduces the notion of ‘trace-making’ where consumers create icons of obsolescent things to extend the life

of neglected yet culturally significant objects, and to counter their own mortality through photography and storytelling. Practices of trace-making are simultaneously liquid and solid, and cannot be confined by either perspective. Consumers seek to identify with objects of the past and singularise obsolescent objects by imbuing them with new values and icon forms. Through trace-making consumers create enduring relationships with these objects that they have immortalised in image form. Rather than seeking use value, consumers develop exchange value from circulating images and stories of obsolescent objects. Finally, trace-making dematerialises the object by transforming and (re)presenting it in iconic form, yet the materiality of the object is immensely important to obsolescent consumption, as evident in consumers' protection practices that seek to save the object from physical death. As such, the dematerialisation of trace-making should not be confused with a lack of fixity or detachment from the material world. In the context of obsolescent consumption, consumers use immateriality of digital photographs and online written accounts to fix materially vulnerable objects into existence. As such, this thesis demonstrates the varying liquidity of consumption where consumers exploit liquid dematerialisation in the marketplace to save the material object from the oblivion of collective forgetting.

Further, this thesis contributes to a broader understanding of consumer gift giving beyond the family domain and demonstrates that consumers create gifts at the societal level. Existent consumer research examines inherited possessions that act as intergenerational gifts within the familial domain (Türe and Ger, 2016; Bradford, 2009; Curasi, Price and Arnould, 2004). Less consumer research examines inheritance at the societal level where artefacts of material culture are inherited by

communities and nations. Addressing calls from Türe and Ger (2016) for research to explore multi-temporal forces that extend beyond family history in broader sociohistorical contexts, this thesis introduces the notion of ‘trace-giving’ where iconic traces act as multi-temporal gifts that anchors remembrance of the past, stimulates memories in the present and materialises legacies for the future. This advances understandings of consumer gift giving (Belk, 2010) by demonstrating the multi-temporal pathways gifts can travel that are directed towards cultural remembering and counter collective forgetting at the societal level. As such, consumers’ engagement with obsolescence creates traces to counter the eternal melt of time, degradation of places and movement of material. Through iconic reintegration, consumers retain qualities of obsolescence, alterity and terminality, whilst preserving traces for posterity.

7.3 Future Research

This section outlines potential areas for future research based on the contributions and limitations of this thesis. It highlights five key areas for future research, including; developing the tripartite approach, advancing understandings of obsolescent consumption, building theorisations of place consumption, developing iconic reintegration, and enriching understandings of the homogeneity of consumption communities.

This thesis uses a tripartite perspective of spatialities, temporalities and materialities to explore consumption. Future research could examine how spatial, temporal and material dimensions intersect within diverse consumption contexts. This thesis introduces obsolescent consumption as significant and distinct consumption domain. Future research could explore other contexts to shed new theoretical light upon obsolescent consumption. For example, the home could be a valuable context to explore obsolescent consumption in private spaces where consumers have increased agency to engage with obsolescent objects. Through the context of urban exploration, considerations of temporality within this thesis were directed towards the past. Future research could explore how future temporalities shape obsolescent consumption. For example, technological consumption could offer a useful context to examine how consumers assess terminal and forsaken values of technological obsolescence. Further, future research could use other theoretical perspectives to examine the circulation of obsolescent objects at a macro level where objects move in and out of global networks of use and disuse.

The notion of temporary place-making highlights new avenues for future research. Firstly, temporary place-making could be examined within commercial contexts. Increasing interest in abandoned industrial heritage has prompted tourist service providers to offer tours of disused industrial sites. For example 'Hidden Heritage Tours' offer walking and cycle tours of Glasgow's disused industrial heritage. Future research could explore how temporary place-making is constrained or fostered within commercial contexts. Secondly, temporary place-making may extend beyond the domain of obsolescent consumption. Future research could

examine other consumption contexts where consumers engage in temporary place-making, such as wilderness trails, that may shed new theoretical light on place consumption.

The notion of iconic reintegration offers fruitful theoretical scope to examine the circulation of visual reproduction in an age of proliferate digital photography. Other contexts may offer new theoretical advancements in understanding iconic reproduction. In particular, the notion of trace-making could be used to shed new theoretical light on ‘selfie’ cultures. Within the context of this thesis the vulnerability of obsolescent things revealed their alternative values to consumers. Future research could explore to what degree an object must be at risk to capture cultural fascination and iconic trace-making. This highlights the importance of understanding the terminality and death of an object and raises the questions: What role does mortality play in assessing the value of objects? How do aesthetic, forsaken and terminal values inspire cultural fascination? What role does restriction play in creating cultural allure? This thesis treats trespass as a place-making practice, whereas other accounts examine trespass as a form of resistance (Garrett, 2011). Future research could explore how restriction inspires consumer fascination and iconic reproduction, and question: How do consumers use the illegal consumption of places to resist the dominant axiology of consumption?

The urban exploration community is largely a Western phenomenon that is dominated by white males. Despite recruitment efforts to be inclusive of a broad range of ethnicities and genders, the limited demographic of the community is

represented within this study with all participants being white and one third being female. Garrett (2012) acknowledges the prejudices within the urban exploration community as predominantly white, male and heterosexual but fails to explore the roots of these discriminations and divisions. Issues of gender and sexuality were not the central focus of this research. Future research could examine how consumption communities foster gender divisions. How are gender divisions created and fostered within consumption communities? What community practices sustain these divisions?

7.4 Chapter Conclusion

This thesis explores how consumers engage with obsolescence through the context of urban exploration. It is theoretically underpinned by Consumer Culture Theory traditions, draws upon the work of Tim Ingold, and uses three guiding perspectives of spatialities, temporalities and materialities. In doing so, it addresses three research questions that relate to consumer practices, meaning ascription, and value production from their encounters with obsolescence.

Through a tripartite perspective of spatialities, temporalities and materialities this thesis contributes to a richer understanding of obsolescence and bridges the theoretical gap in existing research by prioritising the entanglement of space, time and material evident in obsolescent consumption. In doing so, this thesis makes four

novel contributions to consumer research. First, this thesis introduces a new theoretical perspective of ‘obsolescent consumption’ as an important consumption domain in contemporary consumer culture that privileges qualities of neglect, termination and alterity. It also introduces the notion of ‘mundane spectacle’ as a significant feature of obsolescent consumption that enriches understandings of consumer value. Second, it advances work on place consumption by introducing the notion of ‘temporary place-making’ that highlights the importance of temporality in place consumption and contributes to broader understandings of consumer discovery and consumer imagination. Third, it contributes to a material understanding of objects by theorising the ‘death of an object’ that advances our understanding beyond intangible value, and offers a processual understanding of objects as material things that have the potential to die and move on to a material existence. Fourth, this thesis introduces the notion of ‘iconic reintegration’ that advances understandings of how inactive objects return to marketplace circulation and moves understandings beyond the physical object towards iconic circulations of images. It also introduces the notions of ‘trace-making’ and ‘trace-giving’ that highlight the dually material and immaterial qualities of contemporary consumption as consumers exploit dematerialisation to preserve the material thing.

It is hoped that this thesis provides a deeper understanding of urban exploration from a consumption perspective and further opens-up dialogue surrounding the domain of obsolescent consumption. The researcher’s initial interest with urban exploration was stemmed by struggling to understand the allure of derelict buildings, which shaped the guiding question of the thesis to understand how consumers engage with

obsolescence and the meanings individuals attach to these strange places. On the conclusion of this thesis, it becomes apparent that obsolescence is not necessarily the end stage of consumption, but rather can be the beginning of consumer fascination. Obsolescent things have the potential to become mundane spectacles that are characterised by values of alterity. Through urban exploration, consumers breathe life into previously dead spaces through practices of place-making, imagination and documentation. Engaging with obsolescence allows consumers to venture into the past and rediscover the value and worth of things that society has neglected. As such, obsolescent consumption becomes a journey of footsteps into the forgotten.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Sample Interview Guide

The following general questions were used as a guide. Prior to each interview, knowledge was gained on each participant based on their online presence. Interviews were tailored to each participants' experience within the community, practices of photography and online interactions. Photo-elicitation was carried out over video-calling and face-to-face interviews where participants would display and discuss their own photography.

About you:

Can you tell me a little bit about you? (occupation, background, any interests)

How long have you been exploring for?

How did you get into urban exploration?

I was wondering if you could describe a typical exploration trip for me....

Preparing:

Could you tell me how you usually plan an exploration?

What equipment and clothing do you take with you?

Researching:

What kind of research on these places do you do before you go?

What kind of resources do you use to find out about these places?

Entering and exploring:

Can you describe what happens when you arrive at an exploration site?

How do you feel when you are walking around?

What kind of emotions do you experience?

How long do you typically stay in a location?

What does exploration mean to you? What does it give you in your life?

Danger

How do you feel about the physical danger associated with these explorations?

Have you ever had any near misses where you have been injured?

Are you ever worried about being arrested or confronted by police/security?

How does your family feel about you exploring?

How do you feel about the fact urban exploration involves trespass?

Derelict Places and Ruins:

Could you describe what these places look like, smell like, feel like etc?

Sometimes these places are dirty, does that ever bother you?

Can you tell me what the aesthetic of decay means to you?

Why do people find decay aesthetically pleasing?

What do these places mean to you?

How do you feel about these objects and why they have become disused?

From your experience, can you explain to me why these places become abandoned?

What types of places are your favourite to explore?

History

Is the history of these places important to you?

What motivates you to document these places photographically?

Do you like heritage sites? Do you visit historical places of interest?

To you, what is the difference between heritage sites and abandoned buildings?

How do you feel about the process of 'listing' buildings?

Do other people you know share your views?

Transformation and Nature:

What do you think should happen to these places?

How do you feel about renovation and redevelopment projects that transform these places?

How do you feel when nature begins to 'take over' a place and makes it wild again?

Objects:

What kinds of things did you find in these places?

How do you feel about these objects and why they have become disused?

How do you feel about people taking objects/things from these places?

Have you ever taken things? Why did you take them, and what did you do with them?

Photography:

How would you describe your photography style?

What kind of camera do you have?

Can you show me some of your photography?

There seems to be a lot of work that goes into the post-processing side of urban exploration photography, how many hours do you spend processing your photographs?

What is it about these places that attract you to capture them photographically?

Urbex Community:

Are you a member of any of the forums?

Do you think there is an urban exploration “community”?

What does community mean to you?

Some media articles suggest it is a subculture. Would you agree with that?

Why are explorers very protective of locations? Why is it important to keep these places secret?

Do you share locations with other explorers?

Is there a lot of rivalry between explorers over locations and photographs?

How do you feel about the increased media exposure of urban exploration?

How do you feel about journalists?

End:

Would you call yourself an urban explorer?

What does it mean to you to be an “urban explorer”?

Do you think you will always explore these kinds of places?

Appendix B: Image Accreditations

Image	Accreditation
Figure 5.1 ‘No time for objections’	Mark Williams [https://flic.kr/ps/2nZTr5]
Figure 5.2: ‘Grandeur’	James Kerwin Photographic [http://www.jameskerwin.uk]
Figure 5.5 ‘The House of the Morbid Pram’	A World in Ruins [http://www.aworldinruins.co.uk]
Figure 5.6: ‘The Enchanted Door’	Margaret Flo McEwan
Figure 5.8: ‘Beelitz Hospital’	ScrappyNW
Figure 5.10 Monkey mask	Martin Beaumont Photography
Figure: 5.11 Masked urban explorers	Martin Beaumont Photography
Figure 5.14: The Edwardian house	Margaret Flo McEwan
Figure 5.15: The Edwardian house circa 1800s	Margaret Flo McEwan
Figure 5.16 ‘Stargazer Manor’	A World in Ruins [http://www.aworldinruins.co.uk]
Figure 5.17: ‘The Lord is my Shepherd’	A World in Ruins
Figure 5.20: ‘Mrs. Brown’s House’	A World in Ruins [http://www.aworldinruins.co.uk]
Figure 5.21: ‘Pickle House’	ScrappyNW
Figure 6.1 ‘Stargazor Manor’	A World in Ruins [http://www.aworldinruins.co.uk]
Figure 6.5: ‘Binoculars’,	A World In Ruins [http://www.aworldinruins.co.uk]
Figure 6.6: ‘St Joseph’s Orphanage’	ScrappyNW
Figure 6.8: ‘Vanity House’	A World in Ruins [http://www.aworldinruins.co.uk]
Figure 6.15: ‘Maison Kirsch’	Alan Duggan [http://www.alanduggan-photography.co.uk]
Figure: 6.16: ‘Alfred’s Grave’	Margaret Flo McEwan
Figure 6.17: ‘Past Reflections’	Alex Burnell
Figure 6.18: ‘Abandoned Lovelace Tunnels’	Margaret Flo McEwan
Figure 6.19: ‘St. Cecile’s Ballroom’	Their Mortal Remains
Figure 6.21: ‘Crib Cottage’	A World in Ruins [http://www.aworldinruins.co.uk]

Appendix C: Project Senium

The short film 'Project Senium' can be viewed by accessing this link: <https://vimeo.com/127178908>

A selection of stills from Project Senium are provided below:

“Project Senium is an effort by [Selladore Films](#) to preserve the experience of one of the most beautifully disturbing places in the world in a cinematic short film. By bringing tools and experience from the realm of filmmaking, we show the decaying walls of abandoned mental hospitals, expose their dark history, and forever preserve the beauty that few get to witness. Join Project Senium and for an unprecedented cinematic view into these forgotten places before they disappear forever.

In the form of a six-to-nine minute short film we try to cover the importance of remembering the history of this location, speak briefly to the now popular activity of urban exploration, and capture the quickly deteriorating buildings in a way that has never been seen before.” (Excerpt from <http://www.projectsenum.com>)







PROJECT SENIUM

Appendix D: Table of Found-Objects

Object	Place	Explorer
Russian stamps	House	William
Velvet coat	House	William
Dementia books	House	William
Rolls Royce	House	William
Clock	House	William
“The Sexual Side of Marriage” book	House	William
Portrait of friend	House	William
Doll	House	William
Share certificates	House	William
Needles	Morgue	Liam
Woodwork	Seminary	Liam
Bricks	Seminary	Liam
Ladder	Seminary	Liam
Table	Courthouse	Liam
1940s gas masks		
Board games with wooden counters	House	Simon
Singer sewing machines	House	Simon
TV 1950s	House	Simon
Wireless radio	House	Simon
Letters	House	Simon
Diaries	House	Simon
Receipts	House	Simon
Perfume bottles	House	Simon
Victorian perambulator	House	Simon
Pocket watch	House	Luke
Binoculars	House	Luke
Ledger	Print works	Luke
Toys and games	House	Rob
Jar of pickles 1971	House	Rob
Sewing machines	House	Rob
TVs	House	Rob
Pictures and paintings	House	Rob
Ornaments	House	Rob
Clothing	House	Rob
Beds (still made)	House	Rob
Equipment	House	Rob
Marvel comics	Villa	Max
Crystal chandeliers	Villa	Max
Hand-written book 1700s	Castle	Max
Rocking horse 1900s	Villa	Max
Coats	House	Max

Tables	House	Max
Cutlery	House	Max
Plates	House	Max
Patient files and x-rays	Hospital	Max
Picture frames	House	Nick
Bottles	House	Nick
Snuff boxes	House	Ross
Lighters	House	Ross
Life magazine	House	Ross
Hair brush	House	Ross
Hair clips	House	Ross
Portrait of Mary	House	Ross
Rosary beads	House	Ross
Teddy bear and dolls	TB Hospital	Hanna
Shoe	TB Hospital	Hanna
Furniture	House	Tom
Family photographs	House	Tom
Typewriters	House	Tom
Money	House	Tom
Milling machine	Paper mill	Josh
Application forms	High-rise flats	Rory
School books and folders	High-rise flats	Rory
Clothes	High-rise flats	Rory
Baby clothes	High-rise flats	Rory
Records (LPs)	High-rise flats	Rory
Empty Vodka bottles	High-rise flats	Rory
Movie posters	High-rise flats	Rory
George Michael record	High-rise flats	Rory
CD cases	High-rise flats	Rory
Family photographs	High-rise flats	Rory