



The contemporary visual analysis of urban space reveals a great deal, specifically when the process is repeated over time. Longitudinal studies carried out in particular sites or with specific communities for example, help to better frame our understanding of an environment. These long-term investments enable researchers to collect data, which might not be immediately noticed. This process allows for connections in spatial, social and cultural practices to be drawn out, becoming visible over weeks, months or years depending on the scale of the project.

Ancoats, Miles Platting and New Islington

The images to the left are 'researcher-produced images' (Pauwels, 2008) that form part of a bigger and more extensive photographic survey (Krase and Shortell, 2014). The photographic images presented represent just one aspect of an informal ethnographic undertaking within the inner city residential areas of Miles Platting and Ancoats. Located on the north-eastern edge of Manchester, in the North West of England. The survey (of which there are more than 600 images to date) presents a visual record of the physical and social streetscapes within a 1.5 mile radius and a maximum 0.8 mile distance from the Manchester city centre boundary.



Since 2012 I have been periodically documenting a cycle of urban regeneration and gentrification in the newly conceived 'New Islington area'. Located just 0.5 miles from the city boundary, the New Islington district, originally part of Ancoats, has recently taken on a separate identity that reflects its changed status. In addition, I have conducted online ethnography, focusing on the way the developing areas of Ancoats and Miles Platting have been imaged and presented online through users of the 'skyscrapercity' forum (www.skyscrapercity.com) seen on the right. Potential residents for new inner city housing schemes use the forum to express their ideas, values and interest in the on-going schemes and in do so, build a virtual and imagined community online before moving into a new housing project or redevelopment. By doing so, the user blogs and visually constructs an exclusive and utopic narrative related to their future home that as of yet, does not exist.



In doing so, many of the images uploaded to the website by future property owners of the on-going development during routine site visits, actively exclude or omit the existing and dilapidated inner city housing stock that surrounds their development. Prioritising the green space that the development is built upon, the web-users reproduce tightly framed shots of their new development, their specific house or street, sterilising the focus of their camera (and future) from the existing neighbourhood where their development is being built.

The images I present from the photography survey, on the left of the page are counter of this self-induced scotoma. By revisiting my photographic survey I offer a selection of images that seek to challenge this conscious act of visual exclusion produced online, bringing into view objects, spaces and building removed by both the developers and the new residents.

Gary Bratchford

