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Subtopia: photography, architecture and the new towns programme

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SUBTOPIA

PHOTOGRAPHY,
ARCHITECTURE
AND THE
NEW TOWNS PROGRAMME

PAULO CATRICA

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ABSTRACT

Subtopia aims to build a cognitive map of the contemporary condition of the New Towns in the United Kingdom. The written argument proposes an archaeology of the visual paradigms that inform the photographic representation of landscape and architecture. It investigates and discusses the history and the historiography of those visual paradigms through the scrutiny of content (subject) and form (aesthetics) in order to acknowledge a critical viewpoint to the photographs of *Subtopia*.

Assuming a descriptive mood, the photographs of the visual component endorse landscape as a cultural construction. They look into urbanism and architecture as ideological epitomes, seen through the organization of public spaces. As visual fragments of a non-existent whole, the intent is to create an imaginary *new town* by assembling photographs from five different towns, chosen according to the different historical and political phases of the New Towns programme: Stevenage (1946), Harlow (1947), Cumbernauld (1955) Runcorn (1964) and Milton Keynes (1967).

The thesis contributes to new knowledge in the history and the historiography of the New Towns in Britain. The written theory proposes a critical investigation of historical representations of architecture and the urban space, discussing the cultural environment that informed the photographs. Aiming to go beyond the sheer contextualization of the visual component, the writing examines how photographs engage with the discourses of history, architecture and urbanism. Through a dual subjective mode, as documents and as artistic representations, the photographs of the visual component *Subtopia* look at and trace distinctive elements of the landscape design and architecture, aiming to create an allegory of the New Towns Programme. Ultimately, the thesis proposes a new understanding in the representation of the 'social' landscape and the ideological expectations of the post-war urban planning in Britain.

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PREFACE

Subtopia *n*
Brit suburban development that encroaches on rural areas yet appears to offer the attractions of country life to suburban dwellers
[blend of suburb + Utopia]
subtopian *adj*

Coined by Ian Nairn in 'Outrage', a special issue of the *Architectural Review,* published in 1955, the term *Subtopia* operated as motto for the critical voices towards the achievements of post war 'modern' urban planning in Britain. Nairn's opening words were;

> (…) the doom of an England reduced to universal Subtopia, a mean and middle state, neither town nor country, an even spread of abandoned aerodromes and fake rusticity, wire fences, traffic roundabouts, gratuitous notice-boards, car-parks and Things in Fields (…) Subtopia is the world of universal low-density mess.(…) destroys country without making town.[1]

I borrow the term *Subtopia* due to its semantic play, suburbia was the word used by the detractors of the garden city and the new towns when refusing to acknowledge it as a new urban model. Indeed a certain negativeness always overshadowed the new towns, as they are inexorably tied to the dismissal of the post war techno-utopia promise that collapsed with the early 1970s economic and social crisis. Surely this generalized negative image was instigated by conservative policies throughout the 1970s and the 1980s and their efforts to dismantle of the Welfare State. All these generalizations contributed to portray the New Towns as a project that failed to fulfil its prospects.[2]

Indeed over the forty-year span that the programme lasted it suffered the negative impact of several economic crises and the political unwillingness of different governments. Therefore it can be argued that the higher expectations for new towns as a social and political programme were never accomplished.

This aspect was recognised by an official Expenditure Committee in 1974:

> It will be evident that the new towns were not conceived as, and do not constitute a single programme so much as a series of programmes resulting from decisions taken at a number of points since 1946'.[3]

Following this line of reasoning the sociologist Meryl Aldridge remarks, that the programme 'resulted in a regrettable lack of clarity about what objective or objectives were being pursued, a set of policies with centrifugal tendencies and the dilution of a truly visionary social programme'.[4]

My motivation to investigate the British New Towns was triggered by the perception that the subject lacked a critical assessment within the academic sphere of visual arts. However a number of academic researches were produced within Humanities Studies as well in Architectural History, where the new towns are acknowledged as descendents of the Garden Cities.

The primary aim of this thesis is to challenge the 'lower status' of the new towns as an outmoded subject matter within the study of modern British urbanism and architecture. A sense that echoes the words of the Director of The Twentieth Century Society, Jon Wright:

> Generally in the New Towns there is a lack of understanding about what was trying to be achieved. Until the late 1970s, the buildings, public art and street patterns of the Victorian era were considered poor quality, out of touch with the modern needs and best demolished. Today the same is occurring in the New Towns. Large architectural statements of the era are now listed such as the Byker Wall in Newcastle or Park Hill estate in Sheffield, are widely known, but the New Towns are neglected. They are not places that people other than their residents or people working there ever visit.[5]

1   Ian Nairn, 'Outrage, On the disfigurement of town and countryside', In: Architectural Review. vol. 117. no. 702. (Westminster; 1955).

2   See Colin Ward, *New Town, Home Town : the lessons of experience* (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation; London, 1993), p 11-12.

Ward refers in particular *Paradise Mislaid* an article at The Times, 24 January 1992, to mark the 25th anniversary of Milton Keynes and the demise of its development corporation:

"(…) a memorial to a tradition of social engineering that must be seen as dead and buried. Hardly, however, to be mourned… An eagerness to force large numbers of people out of city centers, shared with authoritarians in less democratic societies, led to the desertion and dereliction of many Britain's inner cities and the spoliation of millions of acres of countryside… residents many moved compulsorily and callously, found themselves in single-class towns with poor services and a lack of communal continuity vital to humane neighborhood.
Milton Keynes was the last desperate throw of a generation of British planners who were distasteful of the traditional British towns and cities and had the political power and public money to fashion the environment to their will…The architect was god and history was the devil(…) from Crawley and Corby to Skelmersdale, Washington and Cumbernauld, new town blues became a widespread syndrome."

3   Quoted in Meryl Aldridge, *The British New Towns: A Programme without a Policy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 185.

4   Aldridge, *The British New Towns: A Programme without a Policy,* p. xiv.

5   Jon Wright, The Twentieth Century Society, Campaign director in Anthony Alexander, *Britain's new towns : garden cities to sustainable communities* (Routledge; London, 2009, p168.

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Rosa and Carlos, my parents; Luisa e Luis, Pedro, João, Assunção, Irene, Eduarda, Pedro, my close family, and to my nephews: João, Pedro, Lourenço, Inês e Camila;

For antagonist reasons two events marked my life since the commencing of this research, the birth of my son António, on the 19th November 2006 at the UCL maternity and the premature lost of my good friend Luisa Costa Dias last June. With her I shared fourteen years of a sincere complicity in looking at and discussing photographs. Thank you very much Luisa.

I dedicate this work to António, Manuel and Matilde, my children, and to Isabel, for their encouragement and love.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I Paulo Catrica, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

INTRODUCTION

"Everything is history, thus History does not exist"
Paul Veyne[1]

In a semantic archaeology of the word History, Jacques Le Goff deemed that the first prob-
lem a Historian might face was to relate voir and savoir – 'seeing and knowing'. According
to him it was the 'conception of vision' that led to the idea 'that istor, the one who sees, is
also the one who knows'. In ancient Greek istorien means, "to seek to know" or "to inform
oneself" and Le Goff acknowledged Istoire is an inquiry, an investigation.[2]

Herodutus avowed that the object of that inquiry were "the acts accomplished by men",
being the objective of that inquiry to acknowledge, "what have men accomplished".[3]
Le Goff's referring to Paul Veyne's words proposes a further meaning for history, as a
narrative, which can be true or false, based on a "historical reality" or on pure imagination,
either a "historical" narrative or a fable.[4] This understanding of history as narrative
entails a process of montage, and Le Goff recognises that historical facts require from the
historian both "technical and theoretical work".[5]
In this process of montage, historiography is a method of research, an operative tool
that sustains the critical investigation of the written and the visual sources. The scaffold
of this method implies the selection of which details to look at closer, and of how to
articulate them into a narrative in order to formulate a viewpoint. Though historiography
refers to the theory as well as to the writing of history. The thesis proposes a 'history of
the history' of the visual paradigms that shape the photographs, in relation to specific
issues of architecture, urbanism and the new towns. Acknowledging that history and
historiography, as well as photographs, are fragmentary and incomplete.

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photographs in relation to specific issues of architecture, urbanism and the new towns.
Acknowledging that history and historiography, as well as photographs, are fragmentary
and incomplete.

The primary intention of the photographs is to construct a new, new town called
Subtopia, a photographic site that operates as an allegory of the New Towns Programme
in Britain. It brings together photographs from five existing new towns, chosen according
to the historical and political phases of the programme: Stevenage (1946), Harlow (1947),

Cumbernauld (1955), Runcorn (1964) and Milton Keynes (1967). As forms of documentation these photographs inform specific issues discussed in the written components of this thesis. For instance, they look with particular attention to the original or emblematic architectural and landscape elements of each of the towns. Emphasizing a descriptive mode, the photographs maintain a formal approach to the subject through all the series, addressing the architectural options and solutions from the diverse stages of the development programme in the selected towns. However, the photographs were not conceived as illustrations of the written component, but are intended to forward the argument of the thesis itself, both as documents and as artistic representations.

Displayed throughout the thesis, the *Subtopia* photographs operate as fragments of the argument, whereas the written theory via the historical informs the critical perspective of the visual work. Avoiding a formal chronological arrangement each written chapter investigates and discusses the visual paradigms of landscape and architectural representation that share ideological interests, aesthetic viewpoints or subject content with my own visual practice. The aim is to locate these visual paradigms in their historical *circumstances* and investigate their ideological viewpoints.

The visual paradigms considered and discussed include the following types of photographs:

- Record surveys and topographical views/photographs as visual documentation;
- Photographs as architecture/ the metaphor of 'modern' space;
- Documentary scrutiny/journalistic truths;
- Post war narratives/Humanistic rhetorics;
- Critical evaluation of the post-industrial landscape/conceptual typologies and *new* topographies.

Departing from the photographs, the investigation is grounded in History and structured in Photography theory, relating the History of Architecture, Theory of History, Sociology, Semiotics, and Cultural Studies, methods that inform the visual work. A cluster of seminal authors tie this inter-disciplinary approach. Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* anchors the Benjaminian stance of the thesis, helping to structure its allegorical condition. Manfredo Tafuri and Anthony Vidler were key references in issues of history and the historiography of 'modern' architecture; Francoise Choay in historicism and urbanism; Raymond Williams strengthened and defined issues of terminology, language and modernism;

Roland Barthes allocates a field of broad interests, from the discussions of the polysemic condition of the photographs to issues of semiotics and urbanism; Le Goff's pivotal references to history, historiography and memory, enable one to dismantle the monolithic structure that usually implicates the making of 'history', unveiling the acts of narrative and montage that history and historiography always involve; Paul Ricoeur assists in issues of historical narrative and time, in particular the notion of the document as a trace. These authors emerge throughout the argument at different times and in relation to distinct issues.

Drawing an outline of the main bibliographic references will present specific issues that inform each section of the argument. The second chapter investigates the inscription of *'Facts'* into photographs, looking at the changes in the visual paradigms of 1920's photography in Germany and in the Soviet Union. It places the scrutiny of aesthetic (form) versus subject (content) within the theoretical debates of the 'historical avant-gardes',[6] discussing the artist's ideological commitment to socio-political aims, questioning photographs that reacted to 'real' events in Germany Weimar's Republic, and photographs that attempted to build new 'realities' in the Soviet Union.

In the first decades of the twenty century, radical breaks and discontinuities in the visual arts triggered a disruption of the *representational paradigms.*[7] The practitioners and scholars studied in this chapter contributed to shift those paradigms and put forward visual and theoretical models, which remain a strong influence within contemporary 'documentary' photography. Understood in its broad and complex sense, the term documentary is employed as a multivalent genre, affirming a critical position within issues of social and cultural significance.[8] In order to validate the term 'documentary', the investigation needs to explore, expose and contextualize the types and genres of photographs that claim a critical stance, which implies a discussion of their ideological commitment.

The argument develops from questions brought up by Walter Benjamin's seminal essay 'The Author as a Producer' (1934), which discusses the author/artist's ideological commitment to socio-political aims. From a materialist perspective the *produce*r essay points out the need for the author to retain autonomy in relation to the production apparatus. This awareness stresses the need to locate the works and the authors within their own historical context, in order to assert onto them an ideological viewpoint. In Benjamin's words:

> What is the position of the work vis-à-vis the social relations of the time? ...is it reactionary or does it aspire to overthrow them?[9]

Taking into account Benjamin's criticism, regarding the ubiquitous facets of *Neue Sachlichkeit* photographs, the chapter begins to examine how the photo-essays *Die Welt ist Schön* (1928) by Albert Renger-Patzsch and *Antlitz der Zeit* (1929) by August Sander reflect or react to the 'real' events of the Weimar Republic in the late 1920s.

Both Renger-Patzsch and Sander believed in photography as a pedagogical tool, a universal language, and advocated the photo-essay narrative as the operative device that could project those expectations. However they diverged ideologically: while Sander professed an ideological commitment with social democracy and expected that his project could perform a political task, Renger-Patzsch dismissed any political expectations regarding his photographs, as his intentions were 'less philosophical' and more pedagogical, attempting to create a visual vocabulary.[10]

A corpus of main bibliographic references supported the research of the *facts* that the photographs depicted or discussed. *Germany, the New Photography, 1927-33: documents and essays*, edited by David Mellor, transcribes original documents from the 1920s along with critical essays written in the late 1970s.[11] An essay by Herbert Molderings, *'Urbanism and Technological Utopianism, Thoughts on the photography of Neue Sachlichkeit and the Bauhaus'* is a key text to discuss the relationship between photography and industrialization. In particular, how the 'new photography' propagandistic mode visualized Weimar's technological 'utopia'.

Benjamin's main critique of Albert Renger-Patzsch's photo essay was to elude Weimar's political situation. A document transcribed in Mellor's book addresses this question, Carl Georg Heise, *'Preface to A.Renger-Patzsch, Die Welt ist Schön'*.[12]

Through this text one can perceive the crucial role that Heise played in the conception of the book, from his decision concerning the title to the sequence of the photographs. He claimed that the book's intention was to create a 'world-view', arguing that Renger-Patzsch's 'absolute realism' had pedagogical expectations, aiming to release photography from aesthetic experimentalism and determining the style of 'new photography'.

A noteworthy study in matters of establishing a close relation between the photographs and their socio-economic environment was Michael Jennings' paper, 'Agriculture, Industry, and the Birth of the Photo-Essay in the Late Weimar Republic'.[13] Acknowledging the photo essay as a 'new aesthetic form' Jennings affirms that it 'arose in a social and political field that shaped it irrevocably'.

He sustains that in particular Sander's project exposes the tension between an agrarian ro-
manticism and a technological utopia by contrasting the portraits of the rural inhabitants
with the urban characters. Jennings singles out one of Sander's portraits of three young
farmers dressed in their Sunday outfits as a visual truism of Weimar's fracture between the
urban/industrial and the rural environment.

An enduring issue of this chapter is the understanding of photographs as a universal
language. In 'The Traffic in Photographs', Alan Sekula criticizes Sander's expectations
regarding the hypothesis of the photographs to 'hurdle the barriers of illiteracy'.
Exploring the contradictions of this 'universalism', Sekula states that Sander stood on
the liberal side of positivism, which he acknowledges as a conservative stance. Therefore
he locates the 'formal representation' of Sander's portraits as mirroring the Weimar
Republic's parliamentary system.[14]

Another crucial source of documentation for the first chapter is discussed is *Photography in
the Modern Era, European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940,* edited by Christopher
Phillips.[15] Organized by country and following a chronological order, the book reproduces
press articles, artist statements and critical texts. In regard to Weimar Republic it contains texts
from Albert Renger-Patzsch and August Sander, as well as other artists that participated in
these debates, such as Willi Baumeister, Erno Kallai, László Moholy-Nagy, and Hugo Sieker.[16]
In the section of Philips' book devoted to the Soviet Union, a series of articles from
Novyi Lef are reproduced, allowing one to follow the sequence and the substance of
this debate. The chapter progresses investigating the avant-garde *Lef Group* debate on
the role of photography in the Soviet revolution. It specifically discussed which point of
views, sequences and modes of display would thrust the 'revolutionary' photographs. It
involved three members of the group, Sergei Tretyakov, Alexander Rodchenko and Boris
Kushner.[17]

The pivotal questions of this debate are addressed in Tretyakov's article, 'From the Editor',
where the purpose of 'functional' photography is explained.[18] Stressing that the 'why' was
more relevant than the 'how' or the 'what', Tretyakov's intention was to fight against mere
aestheticism while reinforcing the 'utilitarian goals' of photography. He points out that the
awareness of this utilitarian condition (the why) would alter the photographer's relation
with the subject matter. Tretyakov reveals a profound recognition of the representational
role that photographs could play within the ideological challenge of addressing
revolutionary tasks.

A notable critical reading of the 'producer' essay is given by Maria Gough in 'Paris, Capital of the Soviet Avant-Garde', framing the *facts* behind Benjamin's interest in Tretyakov.[19] Indeed the motif of the essay was a talk delivered on the 27th of April 1934 at the *Institut pour l'étude du fascisme*, in Paris. Gough deems the fascist riots of February/April that Benjamin observed while living in Paris as a political refugee as having a significant impact on the content of the essay.[20] Acknowledging the fact that Benjamin wrote in a highly sensitive political atmosphere, Gough locates Sergei Tretyakov's proposals at the core of Benjamin's concept of the 'operative' author and acknowledges the producer essay as the moment when Western Europeans became aware of the "(…) Russian and Soviet avant-garde's pioneering attempts to theorize the role and efficacy of the artist and, more broadly, of the intelligentsia, in revolution."[21]

Margarita Tupitsyn's , *The Soviet Photograph 1924-37*, helped to contextualize and discuss the *Novyi Lef* debate.[22] The book is structured chronologically and is subdivided into diverse thematic analyses. It centres on questions involving the experimental use of photography by avant-garde artists in the Soviet Union, particularly during the first Five Year Economic Plan (1928 to 1932). Tupitsyn discloses how Constructivist artists in the early twenties were attracted by the possibilities of photomontage. Its political significance rose after Lenin's death, which brought about the need to bring forward new modes of visual representation that could address mass audiences.

A main contribution of Tupitsyn's study is the evaluation of how aesthetics and subject matter shifted in order to respond to specific needs of the revolution: from abstraction, usually evolving from the traditional art mediums, such as painting or sculpture, towards a more 'realistic' perception. This sudden move impacted mostly upon the avant-garde groups, where artists, critics and theoreticians discussed the limitations of visual mediums. Indeed the 1928 *Lef* group debate on the photographic image was the moment in which all those questions were put forward. Tupitsyn places the contenders of the debate and the photographs in a wider sphere, establishing a close relation to the economic and political situation of the Soviet Union, during the industrialization effort of the first Five Year Economic Plan.

The study of the visual paradigms of the1920s photographs intends to acknowledge how the theoretical discourses of the 'historical avant-garde' perceive the ideological possibilities of photography. Which point of view and mode of approach could thrust ideological tendencies and political beliefs in the photographs? How best to propose a critical understanding of a subject matter, using photographs, as a series in sequence - a photo-essay, or as an archive of pictures, a file-cabinet of the subject?[23]

The third chapter examines and discuss the discursive spaces of nineteenth century architectural and urban photographs, acknowledging how photographs impacted and reshaped the axioms of modern urbanism. It places the early photographs in relation to the previous visual types in the rendering of the architectural. Questioning how photographs conformed or moulded to the visual paradigms, or even altered those paradigms in response to specific historical settings, in relation to the renewal of Paris under Haussmann's plan.

Primarily it investigates how early architectural photographs were read by historiography discourses and how those readings thrust their fictional role and enlivened their polysemic condition. These questions are affiliated with a pivotal issue of the thesis, the tie between photographs and the ideological agenda of urbanism. Moreover I will examine how photographs enhanced the consensus for the needs of the 'modern urban plan', backing the belief that landscape could entail the prospectus of a 'better tomorrow'.

Anthony Vidler in, 'Space, Time and Movement', and Francoise Choay in, *The modern city: planning in the 19th century* provided a historical framework for specific issues of the nineteenth century urbanism and architecture.[24] Both allow for the possibility to allocate specific facets of Haussmann's regularization into the photographs, and thereafter making it possible to trace how the different visual types of pictures operated in the documentation and subsequent promotion of the project.

An essay of Lauren M. O'Connell, 'Afterlives of the Tour Saint-Jacques, Plotting the Perceptual History of an Urban Fragment,' acknowledges how drawings and early photographs helped the iconographic construction of the historic monument.[25] It furnishes a case in point, to look at photographs made during and after the restoration of the gothic tower of Saint-Jacques by three different photographers: Henri Le Secq Édouard Baldus and Gustave Le Gray between 1851 and 1857. These pictures perform as archetypes of the predominant visual types of early architectural photographs, on issues of approach to the subject, perspective and composition.

A constructive contribution to the analysis of the photographs of tower of Saint-Jacques is given by Barry Bergdoll's essay, 'A Matter of Time: Architects and Photographers in Second Empire France', mostly regarding the institutional photography commissioned by The Historic Monuments, from the early 1850s until 1871.[26] Indeed the recognition and use of photography during Haussmann's venture established the institutional practice of commissioning urban and architectural photographs. This modus operandi persisted after the dismissal of the Second Empire in 1871, a fact that is confirmed by the mid to late 1870s assignment of Marville's photographs, or later to Séraphin Médéric (1887-1892). Haussamann's renovation plan kept its pace through the early decades of the

twentieth century, and by then it was common for libraries and archives to acquire urban photographs, as the acquisition by The Historic Monuments of Atget photographs proves.[27]

Shelley Rice in *Parisian Views*[28] provides an accurate reference to discuss how photographs conveyed Haussmannization. She assembled a myriad of different photographic genres and discourses, from the picturesque to the scientific/technical, to discuss the creation of nineteenth century Paris as a *view*, an image that still persists, projecting a photographic perception of Paris as a historic city that is inseparable of Haussmann's idealization.' Rice's critical understanding of the contradictory roles that Marville's photographs perform, then and now, is relevant to acknowledge how photographs perform within a historicist mood. Describing the photographs of the soon to be demolished neighbourhoods as 'still points in a turning world', Rice endows a motto to look at the *Subtopia* photographs. What motives nourish Charles Marville's point of views? What method did he use to approach his subjects?

Undeniably the most noteworthy study that answers these questions is Marie Thézy's, *Marville : Paris*[29]. The book comprises the Parisian photographs of Charles Marville from the early 1850s until his death in the late 1870s. Grouped by motif and subject interest - monuments, parks, urban furniture and streets, old and new - Thézy proposes to read the photographs in a sequence that unveils Marville's operational mode. Thézy displayed Marville's pictures enacting their original archival potential; a map introduces each group of pictures, grouped by neighbourhood, and a red mark signals where the pictures were taken from.
For the thesis, the new boulevards photographs are the most relevant segment of the book; eventually this is the only instance in which these photographs were displayed against each other in sequence. Not even in the library room was such an act of sequential montage allowed, due to the fact that the photographs are dispersed through different libraries, archives and museum collections.

The proposal of an archaeology approach to architectural photographs meant acknowledging how visual types promote urbanism and architecture as instruments of social order. The instrumental uses of photographs under Historicism expected to enhance the authority of urban planning as an autonomous scientific discipline, as a sign of scientific progress and technological utopianism.

This second chapter establishes a close connection between Marville's photographs and Historicist beliefs. I explore how these photographs created a dual historical narrative associated with place, and become themselves an archaeology of an image-city and the creation of a modern urban photographic metaphor.

Commonly the term *architectural photograph* designates expertise, either commercial or industrial, or a specific category or a genre defined by the history of photography. However it is important to distinguish architectural photographs commissioned by institutions and architecture offices from photographs that endeavour a critical stance on matters of landscape and architecture, made according to specific interests of the photographer/ author. A case in point would be the nineteenth century photographers discussed in the second chapter, Baldus, Le Gray, Le Secq and Marville, whose work had a commercial or institutional frame. However these photographs were displayed in the seminal books of the History of Photography along with other master photographers.[30]

Architectural as a photographic artistic genre was shaped from the early 1980s onwards with the publication of Richard Pare's, "*Photography and Architecture: 1839-1939*'" (1982) and Cervin Robinson and Joel Herschman in, *"Architecture transformed: a history of the photography of buildings from 1839 to the present'* (1987).[31] These books asserted the specificity of the photographic medium and were structured upon a *formalistic* grid. Following a chronological sequence they evaluate how technical improvements in cameras, lenses, or printing impacted on the aesthetics of the photographic image and how technology shaped style. Pare's book is a catalogue of one of the largest collections of architectural photographs from the Canadian Centre of Architecture based in Montréal. It is drawn around the technical qualities of the photographs and the skills of the photographers, without establishing a relationship between photographs and historical context. Robison and Hershman's argument is also picture driven, their choices motivated by the significance of the photographer within the canon of master photographers.

These books attempt to recreate a history of architectural photographs, considering either the artistic status of the photographers or the archietctural significance of the buildings or landscape depicted. Including mostly photographers and architects certified by the history of Art and Architecture, they ignore the context of production of those photographs, as aesthetics overshadows the context of production.

More recently *"Building with light: an international history of architectural photography"* by Robert Elwall,[32] extends the category of architectural photographs, creating a close relationship between history, photographers, techniques and architectural subjects and considering how architectural photographs changed in response to different historical settings. History shapes Elwall's choices, thus the photographs attempt to relate to relevant architects, buildings and photographers.

Historiographical readings of architectural photographs establish a category and a genre of art photography, mostly ignoring a critical relation between the visual types of photographs and the ideological environment where they breed. Architectural photographs as considered and discussed by the thesis attempt to acknowledge the context of production and the ideological discourses of these pictures. They are part of a constant flow of influences and changes, between the diverse modes of thinking architecture and their media of circulation.

Following Reyner Banham's perception that the photographs printed in the pages of the specialized media became the sites of *modern* architecture production, the third chapter of the thesis investigates the new towns photographs of the Architectural Press Archive. Banham asserted that photographs made it possible to access the continuous shifts of what was understood and valued as *modern* in architecture. Expanding the notion of the factual, both as a description and a document of the architectural object, the photographs promoted the iconic/symbolic spaces of modern architecture.[33] Beatriz Colomina extended Banham's thoughts, proposing to investigate architecture as *media*. She acknowledges that from 1920 onwards through the engagement with mass culture, the architectural and the urban become indistinguishable from their visual representations as visual media, either photographs or moving images.[34]

Following this understanding of architecture as media, I discuss and trace the new towns photographs of the Architectural Press Group archive, from the pages of the *Architectural Review* and the *Architects' Journal,* between the years 1952 to 1992.

The main intention was to investigate the role of the photographs within the editorial policies of the Architectural Press Group: how photographs were used and displayed in order to convey the critical arguments in favour or against the New Towns. Retrieving the information held at the back of each of the photographs, either stamped or hand written, it was possible to trace when and where it was published in the magazine. Moreover they indicate the photographer and the corporation or architecture office that commissioned the work.

In order to allocate specific issues onto the photographs it was important for the thesis to investigate the historical background that led to the emergence of the New Towns, discerning their Garden Cities affiliation, the aesthetic roots and the ideological influences and discussing urbanism as a political tool in the implementation of the Welfare State.

An historical perspective on British urban planning from inter-war to post-war reconstruction, was built on bibliography references such as Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: an intellectual history of urban planning and design in the twentieth century,*

Lewis Munford's essay 'The Garden City Idea and Modern Planning' and Bullock Nicholas's, *Building the Post-War World, Modern architecture and reconstruction in Britain*.[35] A vital contribution is from David Mattless, *Landscape and Englishness*, which traces the crisis in landscape and politics from the late 1920s to the emergence of an inter-wars planning movement, arousing conflict issues of tradition/preservation versus modernity/progress and pointing out how they became central in the visions of city, suburb and country. Moreover how 'modern' authority assumed a position of political governance over landscape issues after the Second World War, a decisive matter in the implementation of the New Towns Programme.

It is significant to scrutinize the inter-war urban planning debates in order to understand the substance of the critical arguments in some of the Architectural Review articles of the 1950s. In particular, questioning the new towns urban model and its proposal of merging the urban and the rural through the 'naturalism' of their landscape design.

An outline of the different phases of the New Towns Programme distinguishes and validates the options of the thesis to concentrate the investigation on five of the new towns out of the thirty two that the programme built. The discussion of the photographs and the articles published at the Architectural Review and the Architects Journal confined its scope to the New Towns that are part of the visual work: Stevenage, Harlow, Cumbernauld, Runcorn and Milton Keynes. However it must be stressed that the ***Subtopia*** photographs do not intend to re-photograph the sites according to the historical photographs.

The selected articles took into account a plurality of critical voices, in favour and against the New Towns, as well as including each one of the towns mentioned above. Covering a temporal arch of forty years it comprises and reproduces articles written by editors such as J.M. Richards and Gordon Cullen in 1953, or by prominent architects connected to the New Towns, such as Frederick Gibberd.[36]

The chapter closes with an analysis of the visual types of architectural photographs in Britain from the 1950s until the 1970s with the aim to relate the visual types of the photographs with the critical discourses of modern architecture and urban planning, while acknowledging the impact of post war Humanistic rhetoric's narratives in the architectural domain through the photographs of Nigel Henderson and Roger Mayne, John Donat ideas and the *Manplan Series* (1969/70).

The seventh chapter examines and discusses empirical questions raised by the visual component of the thesis, in order to contextualise the *Subtopia* photographs against and within historical and contemporary art practices and focus the analysis on specific aspects of the work, on artists who were influential or are crucial references to my own practice. Firstly it draws attention to contradictory aspects of the *New Topographics* (1975) exhibition. As a seminal reference in contemporary photography practices, the show retrieves the topographic as a genre from a documentary viewpoint. It re-enacts a visual type of depicting landscape grounded on descriptive aesthetics and subject matter. Since then topographic photographs have become a critical idiom of landscape and environment issues. However, despite the acknowledgment by art critics of the show, hardly any critical reflection has been produced on the exhibition over the last two decades. Amongst the exceptions are the essays by Debora Bright, *Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men: An Inquiry into Cultural Meanings of Landscape Photography* (1989), and *The Machine in the Garden Revisited: American Environmentalism and Photographic Aesthetics* (1992). Particularly relevant to the thesis is Bright's critique of how the *new topographers* fail to articulate a clear social critique. Not exclusively focused on the *New Topographics*, in these essays Bright points out the contribution of the show to the ideological/iconographic construction of the American West landscape.

The ideological position of the photographers is again a subject of discussion, revaluating the relationship between aesthetics and content, mainly through the analysis of William Jenkins' text at the catalogue, contesting the perception that the photographs were merely descriptive with no concern for cultural or critical meaning.

Acknowledging the significance of the show, a partnership between the George Eastman House and the Center for Creative Photography (University of Arizona) restaged the *New Topographics* exhibition in 2009. It toured eight different venues, in the United States and in Europe, ending in the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum in January 2012. To go along with the show a high profile book was published by Steidl, edited by Britt Salvesen, with a substantial number of photographs and the reproduction of the 1975 catalogue.[37] Two extensive essays by Britt Salvesen and Alison Nordstrom forward a historiography interpretation on the context and the motivations of the curator William Jenkins and the photographers.

Particularly concerning with the ambiguous facets of photographs as documents and its hidden political significance the chapter proceeds with the examination of certain facets of Eugéne Atget's (1857-1927) work in relation to the photographs of *Subtopia*. Questions to be asked include what enabled the photographs to operate as expertise documents? Which technical signs had to be employed?

Molly Nesbit's study *Atget's Seven Albums* recognizes the ambivalent double function of Atget's photographs as documents and open texts. She states that Atget's photographs

> (…) produced an often-beautiful doubling of the signs and the illusion of an open text. We have not however stumbled through the back door of the archive onto art. The double function did all this while leaving the objectivities intact. The text was not so open as all that. It was still very much a document.[38]

Unveiling the operative mode of Atget's albums, Nesbit's investigation was a pivotal reference for the archival montage of *Subtopia;* as documents, the photographs were sequenced according to specific topics of the subject matter, neither displayed by town, according to their geography boundaries, nor following a visual or a chronological arrangement.

Acting as mnemonic visual fragments the photographs look and trace the distinctive elements of the new towns landscape design: houses, trees, pedestrian roads, parks, institutional buildings, factories. They emerge in different sections, each one combining different categories of the functional plan, as stated in the Athens Charter (1933): living, working, recreation and circulation.

Both the visual and the written components of *Subtopia* propose an understanding of photographs as historiography. The critical examination and the discussion of the historical photographs aimed to inform particular issues of the making of the photographs. How do photographs discuss their subjects? How to inscribe 'facts' in photographs? How did the descriptive genre of the nineteenth century Paris urban photographs nourish *Subtopia* pictures? These facets regard the assessment of the photographs as documents.

The study of the Architectural Press Group photographs operated as a significant primary source for both the written and visual components of the thesis. Concerning the written component, a study and discussion of the types of architectural photographs in relation to the ideological framework of the New Towns programme was enabled. In regard to the visual component, it allowed access, via the photographs, to the original architecture and landscape features, as well making a previous visual *reconnaissance* of the towns to be later photographed. These aspects were crucial tools supporting the practical work, owing to the fact that some of the towns depicted underwent major urban renewal projects recently. Such were the cases of Harlow and Cumbernauld's city centres or Runcorn's residential areas.[39]

All art practices entail a method and a theory. Most of the operative decisions were informed by the preceding investigation of the visual and the written sources. From the archive, the library and the text to the field work and back again – an elliptical method, which had a decisive impact in the creation of a non-linear argument. The historical considered and influence both the writing and the making of the pictures.

This non-linear argument disclaims a chronological reading, which explains why the historical context ended in 1975 with the discussion of the *New Topographics* exhibition. Despite other reasons sustaining this option, this show signals the retrieve of descriptive aesthetics within landscape photography, thrusting the idea of looking at the peripheral, the suburban and the banal – aspects that relate to the visual component of the thesis. Moreover, the overgeneralization of the expression *New Topographics* within contemporary art, projected the notion that a coherent framework gathered all those photographs, in a style or a fashion. This investigation unveiled the ambivalent and even contradictory motifs between the curator and the photographers – all aspects in need of further critical reflection.

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In Europe the impact of the *new topographers* and the recovered interest in the topographic had an enormous stimulus with the *Mission Photographique de la DATAR,* a project commissioned by a French Government Agency, the Délégation à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'action régionale. Intended to look at the 'contemporary condition' of French landscape it lasted four years, from 1984 until 1988, and amongst other photographers included Gabriele Basilico, Dominique Auerbacher, Gilbert Fastenaekens and the *new topographers* Lewis Baltz and John Golhke.[40] It retrieved the operational model of the nineteenth century *survey* photographs of the *Mission Héliographique* of 1851, where each photographer was commissioned to work on a specific geography area or subject. However instead of looking for ancient monuments and architecture heritage as their predecessors a century before did, they concentrated on landscape changes, on picturing the dismantling of the second industrialization cycle –gigantic industrial structures such as mines and sea ports, turned obsolete or dislocated to other parts of the globe.

The impact of *Datar* on a subsequent wave of photographic commission projects on landscape, mostly in Central and Northern Europe since late 1980s, is well acknowledged. In *Suburban Options : photography commissions and the urbanization of the landscape* (Nederlands Foto Instituut; Rotterdam, 1998), some of the European commission projects, collections, and archives on landscape are listed: Fotografien und Gedachtnis Germany (1993-1996) Ekodok-90 Sweden (1990-1994); Cross Channel Photographic Mission / Photoworks U.K. (1987-1996); Mission Photographique Transmanche France (1987-2000); Archivio dello Spazio, Milan, Italy (1987-1997); Linea di confine della

Provincia di Reggio Emilia (from 1989); L' Observatoire photographique du paysage France (1992-(?)); Bureau Audiovisuel, Ministère de l' Agriculture et la Pêche France (from 1988); 04º50º La Mission Photographique à Bruxelles Belgium/Switzerland (1989-1990); Les Quatre Saisons du Territoire France (1987-1991).[41]

Gabriele Basilico perceives this phenomenon as the moment when architects and urban planners became aware of the photograph's potential as a critical tool. Himself trained as an architect, Basilico considered photographs as an oblique tool capable of creating a critical discourse on landscape in close collaboration with disciplines such as architecture, city planning and social anthropology, in his own words:

…photography together with other parallel cultural accomplishments, seems to provide the opportunity to produce a story closer to physical reality, on a level both of places and of people, capable of oblique investigation and if mediated through the experience of art, of re-establishing a more comprehensive scenario.[42]

As instruments of observation and investigation *Subtopia* photographs breed in this 'oblique' understanding devised by Basilico. As sources of documentation and artistic representations they attempt to propel a visual narrative that stimulates a critical reflection on a historical subject the New Towns Programme in Britain.

1   Paul Veyne, *Comment on écrit l'histoire.Essai d' epistémologie*, Paris 1971
     as quoted in Jacques Le Goff, *History and memory* (Columbia University
     Press; New York, 1992) p 103.

2   Jacques Le Goff, *History and memory* (Columbia University Press; New
     York, 1992). p 101-102.

3   Herodutus, as quoted in Le Goff, History and memory, p 102.

4   Paul Veyne as quoted in Le Goff, History and memory, p102.

5   Le Goff, History and memory, p 102.

6   Peter Burger uses the term 'historical avant-gardes' to distinguish the
     period between c.1910 and 1930. See Peter Burger, *Theory of the Avant-
     Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984), pp.47-54.

7   Peter Hamilton applies Thomas S. Kuhn concept of paradigm to the
     visual arts: "...it suggests that photographic approaches - as with 'schools'
     in fields such as painting or philosophy - follow cyclical processes of
     paradigm-shift not dissimilar to those in science...a paradigm-shift in
     photography generally denotes the appearance of a new visual aesthetic,
     so that a novel conception of representation becomes dominant...familiar
     things are seen or re-seen in revolutionary ways...developed a new theory
     about representation...a decision for instance to concentrate on a certain
     type of subject-matter...the novel or revolutionary new image attracts
     the attention from other photographers, it may be associate with new
     forms of publication or display...located within a social group who cluster
     together and derive solidarity from the fact that they are in opposition
     to the status quo." In Peter Hamilton, 'Representing the Social: France
     and Frenchness in Post-War Humanist Photography', in *Representation :
     cultural representations and signifying practices*. Stuart Hall (ed.) (London:
     Sage in association with the Open University, 1997), pp. 75 – 150, p 79.

8   Ian Walker, *City gorged with dreams, Surrealism and documentary photography
     in interwar Paris* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.4.
     Walker gives a particular account of 'documentary' photography as a genre:

     'For many years, the humanist mainstream of documentary was hardly
     subject to questioning. Then, through the late 1970s and early 1980s, it was
     problematised almost to the point of paralysis. In the last fifteen years, how-
     ever, the genre has been reinvigorated by self-reflexivity, a refusal of mastery,
     an acceptance of ambiguity and a critical awareness of its own history.'

9   Walter Benjamin, "The Author as a Producer," in *Thinking Photography*, ed.
    Victor Burgin (London: Macmillan, 1982).
    In 'A Small History in Photography', published in *Die literarishe Welt,* in
    September and October 1931, Benjamin investigates the possible use of
    language to liberate photography from its surface meaninglessness. In
    the 'producer' essay he returns to the subject stating that only the caption
    could add 'revolutionary use value' to the photograph. Later in 'The
    Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936), Benjamin
    persists in the quest of finding the relation between technology, function,
    production and reproduction of the work of art, within the purpose to
    perform a radical political task.

10 Albert Renger-Patzsch, Ann Wilde, Jurgen Wilde and Thomas Weski,
    Albert Renger-Patzsch : photographer of objectivity (Thames & Hudson;
    London, 1997), p 167.

11 David Mellor, *Germany, the New Photography, 1927-33 : Documents and
    Essays* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978).

12 Carl Georg Heise's text, 'Preface to A.Renger-Patzsch, Die Welt is Schön'
    in David Mellor, *Germany, the New Photography, 1927-33 : Documents and
    Essays* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978).

13 Michael Jennings, "Agriculture, Industry, and the Birth of the Photo-Essay
    in the Late Weimar Republic," *October* 93 (2000), pp 23-56.

14 Allan Sekula, 'The Traffic in Photographs', In: *Modernism and modernity:
    Conference: Papers*. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Serge Guilbaut and David
    Solkin (eds.) (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Press of the Nova Scotia College of
    Art and Design, 1983).

15 Christopher Phillips, ed., *Photography in the Modern Era. European
    Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940* (New York: The Metropolitan
    Museum of Art / Aperture, 1989).

16 Phillips, 1989. Concerning the Weimar Republic the thesis discusses the
    following documents:

    - László Moholy-Nagy, 'Production-Reproduction' (1922), pp 79-82.
    - László Moholy-Nagy, 'Unprecedented Photography' (1927), pp 83-85.
    - Albert Renger-Patzsch, 'Aims' (1927), pp 104-105.
    - Erno Kallai and Láslzo Moholy-Nagy with responses from Willi
    Baumeister, 'Painting and Photography; Excerpts', (1927), pp 94-103.

- Hugo Sieker, 'Absolute Realism: On Albert Renger-Patzsch' (1928), pp 110-115.
- Albert Renger-Patzsch, 'Photography and Art' (1929), pp 142-144.

17 Phillips, 1989. In regards to the *Novy Lef* debate the following documents were discussed :

- Rodchenko, Aleksandr,"Against the Synthetic Portrait, for the Snapshot" (1928), pp. 238-242;
- Rodchenko, Aleksandr, "Downright Ignorance or a Mean Trick" (1928), pp. 245-248.
- Kushner, Boris, "Open letter to Rodchenko" (1928), pp 249-251.
- Tretyakov, Sergei, "Photo-Notes" (1928), pp 252-255.
- Rodchenko, Aleksandr, "The paths of Modern Photography" (1928), pp 256-263.
- Rodchenko, Aleksandr, "A Caution" (1928), pp 264-266.
- Kushner, Boris "Fulfilling a Request" (1928), pp 267-269.
- Tretyakov, Sergei "From the Editor" (1928), pp 270-272.

18 Tretyakov, Sergei "From the Editor" *Novyi Lef*, no. II (1928), pp 270-272.

19 Maria Gough, 'Paris, Capital of the Soviet Avant-Garde', *October*, Vol. no 101 no. Summer 2002, 2002, pp 53-83.

20 These events lead to the formation of the *Popular Front*, a crucial episode for the 'leftist' European intellectuals.

21 Gough links the 'operative' concept propose by Benjamin with Brecht's concept of 'Umfunktionerung' – refunctioning.

22 Margarita Tupitsyn, *The Soviet Photograph, 1924-37* (Yale University Press New Haven and London, 1996).

23 Rodchenko proposes to erect a monument to Lenin in the shape of 'a file of snapshots allows no one to idealize or falsify Lenin... no-one would allow artistic nonsense to be taken by the eternal Lenin'. In Aleksandr Rodchenko, 'Against the Synthetic Portrait, for the Snapshot', In: *Photography in the Modern Era. European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940*. Christopher Phillips (ed.) (The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Aperture; New York, 1989), pp 238-42, p 240.

24   Anthony Vidler, 'Space, Time and Movement', *At the end of the century : one hundred years of architecture*. Russell Ferguson (ed.) (Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Los Angeles, 1998), pp 100-26. And Francoise Choay, *The modern city: planning in the 19th century* (London: Studio Vista; 1969).

25   Lauren M. O'Connell, 'Afterlives of the Tour Saint-Jacques, Plotting the Perceptual History of an Urban Fragment', *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 60, no. No. 4, Dec., 2001 2001, 450-73.

26   Barry Bergdoll, 'A Matter of Time: Architects and Photographers in Second Empire France', In: Malcolm R. Daniel, ed, *The Photographs of Édouard Baldus*, New York, 1994, pp 99-119.

27   Molly Nesbit and Eugene Atget, *Atget's Seven Albums* (Yale University Press; New Haven, 1992), p 261.

28   Shelley Rice, *Parisian Views* (MIT Press; Cambridge, Mass. ; London, 1997).

29   Marie Thézy, *Marville : Paris* (Hazan; Paris, 1994).

30   The following authors make reference to these photographers:

     - Helmut Gernsheim, *The Rise of Photography 1850-1880* (Thames and Hudson; London, 1988);
     - Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography from 1839 to the present day* (Museum of Modern Art, New York; New York, 1978);
     - John Szarkowski, *Photography Until Now* (Museum of Modern Art distributed by Bulfinch Press; New York, 1989);
     - Michel Frizot, *A new History of Photography* (Konemann; Koln, 1998).

31   Richard Pare, Photography and Architecture: 1839-1939 (Canadian Centre for Architecture; Montreal, 1982); Cervin Robinson and Joel Herschman, Architecture transformed : a history of the photography of buildings from 1839 to the present (Architectural League of New York ; London : MIT; New York, 1987).

32   Robert Elwall, *Building with light : an international history of architectural photography* (Merrell; London, 2004).

33 As quoted in Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity : Modern architecture as Mass Media* (London: The Mit Press; 1994), p 14.

34 Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity : Modern architecture as Mass Media* (1994).

35 Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: an intellectual history of urban planning and design in the twentieth century.* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2002) p 3; Bullock Nicholas, *Building the Post-War World, Modern architecture and reconstruction in Britain* (London: Routledge, London, 2002); Lewis Munford's introductory essay 'The Garden City Idea and Modern Planning' in Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-morrow* 1965.

36 J.M. Richards, "The failure of the New Towns", *Architectural Review*, July 1953 pp-29-32; Gordon Cullen, "Prairie Planning in the New Towns", *Architectural Review*, July 1953, pp 33-36; Frederick Gibberd ,"The High" *Architectural Review*, pp 381-392.

37 Salvesen, Britt *New Topographics*, (Göttingen: Steidl 2009).

38 Molly Nesbit and Eugene Atget, *Atget's Seven Albums* (Yale University Press; New Haven, 1992).

39 In Harlow the original buiding from the Council and the Water Gardens design by Frederick Gibberd were demolished; in Cumbernauld part of the shopping mall was demolished, and in Runcorn the residential buildings designed by James Stirling were taken down.

40 See Letarjet, Bernard, and Francois Hers (eds.) *Paysages-photographies en France les annees quatre vingts: la mission photographique de la DATAR, 1984-1988* (Paris: DATAR/Credit Foncier/Editions Hazan, 1989).

41 Frits Gierstberg, *Suburban Options : photography commissions and the urbanization of the landscape* (Nederlands Foto Instituut; Rotterdam, 1998).

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NEW TOWNS OF BRITAIN

New Towns ■

Some Important Expanding Towns □

Others ○

Dundee

GLENROTHES ■

CUMBERNAULD ■
Edinburgh ○
LIVINGSTON ■
Glasgow ○ EAST KILBRIDE ■
IRVINE ■

Cramlington □ Killingworth □
Newcastle upon Tyne ○
WASHINGTON ■
Durham ○ PETERLEE ■
AYCLIFFE ■

BALLYMENA ■
ANTRIM ■
CRAIGAVON Belfast ○

Leeds ○
Preston ○

SKELMERSDALE ■ Manchester ○
Liverpool ○ Salford ○
RUNCORN ■ WARRINGTON ■
Winsford □

TELFORD ■
Leicester ○
NEWTOWN ■ Wolverhampton ○ PETERBOROUGH ■
Aberystwyth ○ Birmingham ○ CORBY ■ Thetford □
NORTHAMPTON ■
REDDITCH ■ Daventry □ Haverhill □
MILTON KEYNES ■ STEVENAGE ■ Ipswich ○
WELWYN GARDEN CITY HATFIELD □
Aylesbury □ HARLOW ■
CWMBRAN ■ HEMEL HEMPSTEAD London ○ BASILDON ■
Cardiff ○ Swindon ○ BRACKNELL ■
Bristol ○ Basingstoke □ CRAWLEY ■
Southampton ○ Portsmouth ○

0 25 50 75 100 MILES
0 25 50 75 100 125 150 KILOMETRES

0.1.
Map of the New Towns of Great Britain

1

PAYSAGE & DOCUMENTS: WORK, WELFARE AND LEISURE

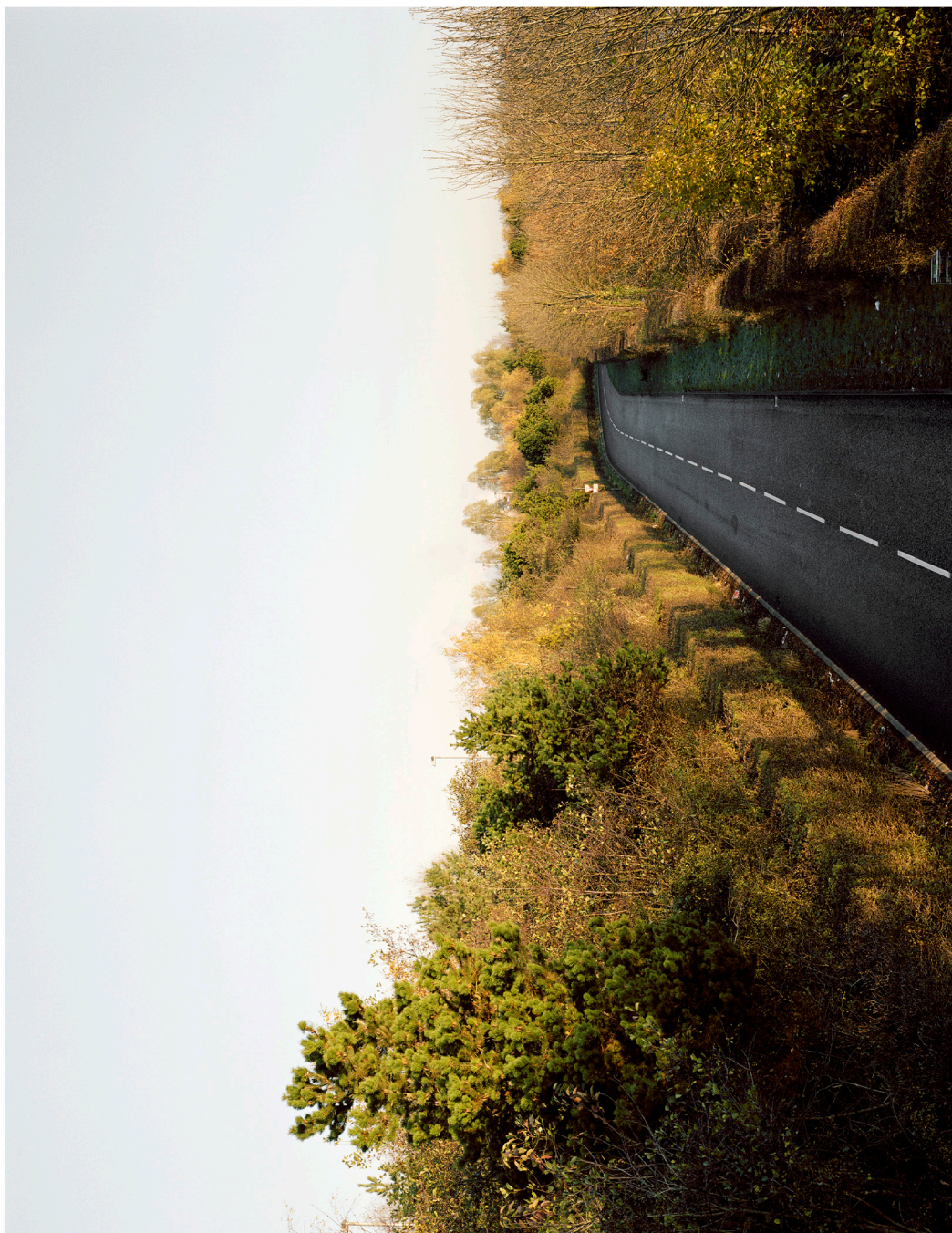LfcS40

Lfc670

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Lfc604

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Lfc821

Lfc697

Lfc698

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2

THE
INSCRIPTION OF '*FACTS*'
IN PHOTOGRAPHS

2.1.
Boris Ignatovitch, New Moscow, from *Soviet Photo*, Moscow 1930.

THE INSCRIPTION OF
'*FACTS*' IN PHOTOGRAPHS

Through the scrutiny of aesthetics (form) versus subject (content), the argument investigates the inscription of ideological 'facts' into photographs. It converges on the work of practitioners that operated in the 1920s in Germany's Weimar Republic and the Soviet Union. By then it was a matter of determining the use and function of photography as a visual medium capable of addressing mass audiences.

If the last decades of the nineteenth century had foreseen the commoditisation of photography resulting in an increase in its applications, it was during the inter-war period from 1918 to 1940 that photography and cinema were established as the chief visual media within mass culture. Technical advancements in photography introduced smaller cameras, lighter lenses and faster films. Above all, improvements to the photomechanical reproduction of photographic images expanded photography's currency and released the medium from its earlier limitations.[1] In a wider context these technical improvements concurred to alter the visual and spatial modes and models. The ultimate result was a crisis of representation, which Henri Lefebvre places around 1910, arguing that a 'certain space' was overwhelmed, in his own words, 'the space of common sense, of knowledge, of social practice, of political power (...) the space, too, of classical perspective and geometry (...) bodied forth in Western art and philosophy, as in the form of the city and town'.[2]

The early decades of the twentieth century were marked by the shattering events of World War I and the triumph of the Bolshevik Soviet revolution, which opened up a social, economic and ideological crisis that shook the foundations of liberal, industrial capitalism. This crisis propelled an urge to establish new modes of collective perception, in order to 'transcend the historical limitations of modernism'.[3] Western avant-gardes foresaw photography and cinema as a system of representation and a social phenomenon, as ideological weapons in contrast with, and in relation to, the former artistic visual mediums of representation, such as painting, drawing or sculpture.

It was under this atmosphere that debates on the tasks and role of the photographic image took place. They concerned the search for visual types of photographs that could thrust and maintain ideological tendencies and political beliefs. The main questions that fed this debate were: what *facts* to include in the photographs? Which point of view could propose a critical understanding of a subject matter? How to display the photographs? What type of captions and subtitles to use? At the epicentre of this debate was the question of the indexical value of the photographic image, its ontological aspect inherently close to the 'real'.

Walter Benjamin's seminal text *The Author as a Producer* (1934) acted as the framework for the investigation, mostly in regard to the ideological constraints of photography as a mass medium and the re-evaluation of the artist/author engagement with collective socio-political aims. Following Benjamin's correlation, this chapter examines the photo-essays, *Die Welt ist Schön* (1928) by Albert Renger-Patzsch and *Antlitz der Zeit* (1929) by August Sander. The intention is to dissect the ideological expectations of these authors regarding their work and relate them with the political context of the Weimar Republic in Germany.

It progresses with a line of reasoning that grows from Benjamin's enthusiasm and belief in the soviet constructivist writer Sergei Tretyakov's 'operativist' methods of using photographs. It converges on the debate within the Lef group, expressed in a series of articles published at *Novy Lef* in 1928. Involved in this quarrel were Sergei Tretyakov, Alexander Rodchenko and Boris Kushner; the discussion concerned the role of the author within the avant-garde photographic practices in the Soviet Union in the mid to late 1920s. The chapter then discusses the role of aesthetics in relation to subject content and the commitment of the artist in the creation/production of photographic work to address revolutionary tasks. It aims to locate the intentions and expectations of practitioners and theorethicians in relation to an ideological commitment, contextualizing their practices within the specificity of their historical *circumstances.*

'Things' and Facts, the ubiquitous facets of Neue Sachlichkeit photographs

It becomes even more *nuancé,* ever more modern, and the result is that it can no longer photograph a tenement block or a refuse heap without transfiguring it. It goes without saying that it is unable to say anything of a power station or a cable factory other than this: what a beautiful world ! *A Beautiful World,* that is the title of the well known picture anthology by Renger-Patzsch, in which we see New-Matter-of-Factness photography at its peak. A flagrant example of what it is to supply a productive apparatus without changing it. It 'turned the struggle against misery into an object of consumption (...) it transforms political struggle so that it ceases to be a compelling motive (...) and becomes an object of comfortable contemplation...it ceases to be a means of production and becomes an article of consumption.[4]

Written in 1934 as a lecture delivered at the Institute for the Study of Fascism in Paris, the essay *'The Author as a Producer'* unveils Walter Benjamin's disenchantment with the attempts of a certain German 'left' intelligentsia to enhance political consciousness and class struggle through the use of artistic mediums and mass media.

From a material criticism stance, Benjamin locates the author and his production within, and in relation to, the social-political context. For him, more important than the individual author's commitment to the 'class struggle', was the need to question the author's autonomy in relation to the means of production. His concern was that the assimilation by the 'bourgeois apparatus of production and publication' of 'astonishing qualities of revolutionary themes, indeed can propagate without calling its own existence'.[5]

Aware of the consequences that an optimistic 'realism' had on the Weimar Republic, Benjamin made a specific reference to the photography of Albert Renger Patzsch. The misleading relations that photographs could bestow seemed to concern Benjamin, in particular the question of 'objectivity'. Indeed the term *Neue Sachlichtkeit* had blurred ideological connotations; Benjamin considered it a counter-revolutionary force. The term *Neue Sachlichtkeit* was employed for the first time by Gustav Friedrich Hartlaub, then director of the Kunsthalle Mannheim, in a 1923 circular letter addressed to other museum directors and art dealers. While searching for artists to participate in an exhibition that he was organising, Hartlaub wrote:

> I wish in the autumn to arrange a medium-sized exhibition of paintings
> and prints, which could be given the designation 'Die Neue Sachlichkeit'.
> I am interested in bringing together representative works of those artists
> who in the last ten years have been neither impressionistically relaxed nor
> expressionistically abstract, who have devoted themselves exclusively neither
> to external sense impressions, nor to pure inner construction. I wish to exhibit
> those artists who have remained unswervingly faithful to positive palpable
> reality, or have become faithful to it once more. (…) Both the 'right wing' (the
> Neo-Classicists, if one cares so to describe them), as exemplified by certain
> things of Picassso, Kay H.Nebel, etc, and the 'veristic' left wing, to which
> Beckmann, Grosz, Dix, Drexel, Scholz, etc., can be assigned, fall within the
> scope of my intentions.[6]

The exhibition took place two years later under the title, *'Deutsche Malerei seit dem Expressionismus'* (German painting since Expressionism) at Mannheim Kunsthalle. The *Neue Sachlichkeit* grew on the belief that an 'objective' approach to subject matter would inscribe ideological meaning into a work of art. It was characterized by the employment of a 'realistic' mode to a diversity of visual artistic media, such as painting, architecture, design, photomontage, photography and film. It brought into discussion the political concerns of the artists/authors and their intention to inscribe *facts* into a work of art, with the aim of attaining a positive clarifying effect on the social sphere. It reaffirmed the 'historical avant-garde' intent to bring art closer to life.[7]

Hartlaub's letter gives an accurate account of this situation when referring to the term *Neue Sachlichkeit* as including the 'right wing' classicists and the 'left wing' Verists. Anticipating the ambiguous ideological usages of the term, Shearer West points to a 'semantic slippage' that characterized the use of the term, allowing an endless discussion on the 'terminology' in relation to the plural art practices in the Weimar Republic.[8] Commonly the *Neue Sachlichkeit* is referred to as the art of Weimar, a 'period style', associated with an objective and analytical frame. The intent of the argument is to discuss the ambiguous, even erratic, socio-political implications of the term, relating the photographs with the *facts (Sache)* of the historical conditions of late 1920s Germany.

The Weimar Republic is commonly characterized by three periods. The first dates from the revolution of November 9 1918 until 1923, which was marked by political instability and social and economic disarray. It was followed by a period of stability, after the introduction of the Dawes Economic Plan (1924) that lasted until 1930, although the last two years were very unsettled in economic terms due to the effects of the 1928 agricultural crisis and the Wall Street crash a year later.[9] Turmoil and political crisis mapped the last years of the Weimar Republic, from 1931 to 1933, with the emergence of the National Socialist Party.

Based on the Weimar Constitution of 1919, which guaranteed unprecedented 'liberal' laws for the time, the Republic introduced universal suffrage, which would lead to the election of a Parliament with a broad political representation. Social policies ensured the protection of workers, covered wage agreements and reinforced the influence of trade unions. Furthermore, the abolition of censorship had an enormous impact on the endeavours of a free and plural press.

These political changes signalled a clear rejection of the Germanic Imperial ambitions that had unified Germany as a country in 1870, after the Franco-Prussian war. The social democratic society that the Weimar Constitution attempted to establish would reveal a country divided by regional ambitions, economic dissimilarity and political polarization. The nationalist 'right'' tussled against the *Kulturbolshevismus,* arguing for the revitalization of traditional German values. The 'left's' radical critique of the Western bourgeoisie tradition targeted in particular the 'taylorization' of the productive economic apparatus.[10] During the period of stabilisation the 'liberal' elements of Weimar politics looked to the United States as a model of a future 'classless society' based on technology and the parliamentary system. Massive industrialization and urbanization characterized the years from 1924 to 1929, accentuating the division between rural and urban. Molderings designated this period as 'urbanism and technological utopianism', expressing a belief that technical achievements would mean social progress as a solution to political and economic problems.[11]

This atmosphere was to have an enormous impact on the political consciousness of the German critics, theoreticians and the photographers discussed here. Their engagement with the socio-political reality echoes the cultural diversity and artistic pluralism of Weimar, mirroring its contradictions as well.

Neue Sachlichkeit, New Photography and New Vision

At the time of passionate debate on the decadence of art and the means of saving it, many felt that photography, itself a child of scientific and technical progress, was the natural medium of expression of the 'industrial world.[12]

Part of a review on the *Film und Foto* (Stuggart, 1929) exhibition, this extract from Karl Sommer synthesises the substance of the debate that considers 'new photography' as the visual expression of Weimar's technological utopianism. This show is commonly recognized as the 'triumph' of modern photography. Photography's potential as a medium of mass circulation exerted a pull on various artists, art critics and intellectual figures in late 1920s Germany. Generic designations of 'new vision' or 'new photography' were used to name the uses and applications of the photographic image and its role in a modern society.[13]

The debate developed from issues such as the specific nature of the photographic image, its realistic and artistic claims in relation to ideological expectations, and its relation to other mediums of artistic expression. It surrounded aspects of form versus subject content. Usually the contenders of this quarrel were split between a conservative realistic tendency and a radical/experimental avant-garde standpoint.

In the essay *Production-Reproduction* (1922) Moholy-Nagy anticipated the key questions at the centre of the debate. He separated the ability of photography in two opposite streams, one being *reproduction* and the other *production*. The first implies a mimetic replication of the external reality, a "reiteration of relationships that already exist", whereas *production* is understood as the intentional creation of new forms of art that could generate new relationships. Furthermore he advocates that with *production* the photographs could extend human cognition by creating new sensory experiences, which hypothetically would have an inherent social value by 'expanding a person's awareness'.[14] Moholy-Nagy understood photography as part of a modern 'visual culture,' along with cinema, design, abstract painting and advertising. Having no 'dependence on traditional forms of representation', photography and cinema were the preferred mediums to provoke a radical rupture with other conventional artistic mediums.

Albert Renger-Patszch, in a text published in the first volume of *Das Deutsche Lichtbild* (1927), argued for the specific nature of the photographic medium based on its 'realism'. In his understanding, photography could bestow 'our impressions of nature, plants, animals, the work of architects and sculptors and the creation of engineers'. This role implied the 'correct rendering of form' in order to do justice to modern technology, to the dynamics of the machine.[15] This view of confining the specific nature of the photographic image to 'realism' separates 'art' from photography. According to Renger-Patzsch, art ought to be left to the artists: 'let us try to use the medium of photography to create photographs that can endure because of their photographic qualities, without borrowing from art'.[16] A year later in another essay he furthers this argument:

> The rigid adherence of 'artistic-photographers' to the model provided by painting has always been damaging to photographic achievement. There is an urgent need to examine old opinions and look at things from a new viewpoint. There must be an increase in the joy one takes in an object, and the photographer should become fully conscious of the splendid fidelity of reproduction made possible by his technique.[17]

Terminology is revealed as imprecise in relation to ideological expectations, i.e. *The New Vision*, was the American-English translation of the title of Moholy-Nagy's 1930 book *Von Material zu Architektur* (1929). Thus, if Moholy-Nagy's early position unveils an avant-garde stance close to Dadaism and to Soviet Constructivism, after his Bauhaus experience and the proximity with Walter Gropius he moved away from the ideological implications of art and became more moderate. Contradicting his previous statements that profess the ideological commitment of the artist, Moholy-Nagy became more interested in defending art's autonomy from politics.[18]

In the late 1920s neither the 'new viewpoints' of Renger-Patzsch nor the 'new vision' of Moholy-Nagy concerned any particular ideological commitment. Moholy-Nagy privileged the effect of the photographic on the human subject, while Renger-Patzsch accentuated the distinctive accuracy of photography to translate the new technologized object. However, 'New Photography', as Michael Jennings points out, seemed to embrace all these representational strategies measured by the standards of the new industrial urban world.[19]

'He who has eyes to see let him see'[20]

Die Welt ist Schön, Renger-Patzsch's book published by Kurt Wolff Verlag in 1928, drew on a common feature employed by the illustrated press at the time, which became widely accepted: less text and more photographs. It reversed the idea of photographs as an illustrating feature, allowing for the possibility of a narrative built merely on the visual and its juxtapositions. It propelled the novel concept of the *photo-essay,* where a sequence of photographs presented an argument.[21]
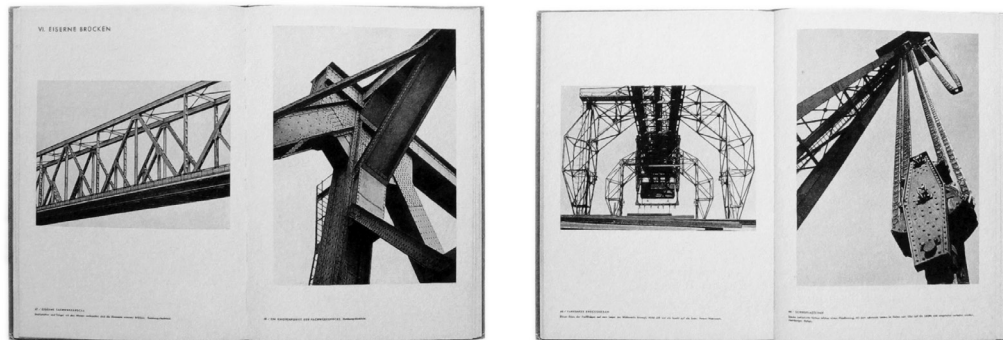

2.2.
Cover of Albert Renger-Patzsch, *Die Welt ist Schön :
einhundert photographische Aufnahmen* (Wolff; Munchen, 1928).

The book turned out to be a manifesto of *Neue Sachlichkeit* photography, although a scrutiny of how the book was conceived by the publisher and the authors reveals a host of contradictory intentions and expectations. The marketing strategy of the publisher was an obvious effort to make the book a commercial success.[22] The media advertising campaign stated:

> The pleasure in looking has reawakened in our impoverished Germany. It is a delight that the poor can take advantage of it to the same extent as the rich (...) is something totally new and is *The Gift Book For Every Body*. Renger's art mirrors our contemporary view of life. It is as if we were learning to see everything anew and more intensely.[23]

Both Heise and Renger-Patzsch understood photographs as a synthesis of art, technology and science and *Die Welt ist Schön* endorsed Weimar's technological utopia. However, the suggestion to perceive the photographs as a 'mirror' of contemporary 'impoverished Germany' seemed to be a total dismissal of reality. The book was launched in December 1928, a month after the beginning of a severe economic and social crisis in Germany.[24] Therefore the matter of determining which 'facts' and which reality are as crucial to contextualize Benjamin's criticism, as the photographs.

The overall ideological concept of the book followed Heise's pedagogical intentions to create a 'world-view'. Under his editorial guidance, narrative and sequence were epitomized by the visual structure that groups the photographs in themes, covering aspects from *nature* to *technology*. It begins with objects found in nature, the section on plants, animals and people, and moves to objects made by man: landscapes, material, architecture, technique (technology). The last sections embrace the more complex categories of the coloured world and the symbol. For Heise the authority of the photographer, isolating the fragment from the 'multiplicity of the whole, expresses in visual form that which the scientist can only describe'. Furthermore he affirms 'the fact that a fragment symbolizes the whole, and that enjoyment and empathy are mutually exalting when the imagination is forced to collaborate in the experience'.[25]

2.3.
Albert Renger-Patzsch *Die Welt ist Schön :*
einhundert photographische Aufnahmen (Kurt Wolff; Munchen, 1928).

One of the pivotal facets of Neue Sachlichkeit photography was the relocation of the positivist structure within the sphere of art by fusing a scientific approach through a certain aesthetics that proposes a 'dead pan' approach or an analytical view. This aesthetic formal device was grounded on sharp focus, detail and the avoidance of severe contrasts of dark and light, guaranteeing a visual constancy that brought the photographs together. Renger-Patzsch describes this objective perspective as a need to do justice to the 'object':

> In photography one should surely proceed from the essence of the object and attempt to represent it with photographic means alone, regardless of whether it is a human being, landscape, architecture or something else; whereas today a violation of the object for the sake of the formal play is often the norm. Because the German word *Sachlichkeit* has taken on practically the opposite meaning today, I have used a foreign word to describe accurately the position of servitude I maintain before the subject: 'objectivity'.[26]

It seems that for Renger-Patzsch, realism and objectivity were both intrinsic characteristics of the photographic image. Therefore he perceives 'objectivity' as an aesthetic device undisclosed from the subject matter, which can be either 'a human being, landscape, architecture or something else'.
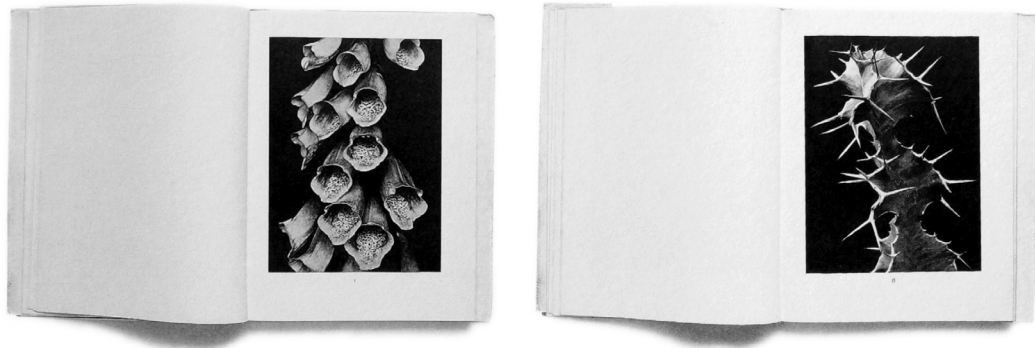
2.4.
Albert Renger-Patzsch *Die Welt ist Schön :*
einhundert photographische Aufnahmen (Kurt Wolff; Munchen, 1928).

Other ambiguous questions surrounded Renger-Patzsch's book upon its publication.
In regard to the title and its proclaimed optimism, Renger-Patzsch's preference was Die
Dinge (The Things), but it was refused by the publisher apparently owing to the lack of
commercial impact. Later, in two different occasions, a letter addressed to Franz Roh and
a written statement in 1937, he attempted to free the book from its connections with a
conservative apologetic view of 'technology':

> I would now like to refer to the remarkable misunderstandings caused by my
> book *Die Welt ist Schön.* I believe that I can quite rightly say that I wanted to
> see this book conceived less in a philosophical sense (as often been falsely
> concluded from the title) than in a didactic sense, like an ABC-book to show
> how one can achieve pictorial solutions in a purely photographic way (…)
> these photographs consciously display the attraction of the surface.[27]

As Ulricht Ruter discusses in the essay *The Reception of Albert Renger-Patzsch's Die Welt
ist Schön,* it is an overly-simplistic attitude to split the critical views on the book between a
negative response from the left and a unanimously positive reception from a conservative
milieu. The book was highly praised by Kurt Tucholsky, a leftist journalist, Erno Kallai,
from Bauhaus, Thomas Mann and Hildebrandt Gurlitt, an art historian. All admire
Renger-Patzsch's photographs for their 'absolute realism', mostly associating them with the
notion of releasing photography from experimental imagery as well as from the traditional
art medium, such as painting. Kurt Tucholsky's words seek to place the book as a high
artistic project:

How strangely polytheist, how godless and how full of God these images are!
… This art is without any dogma and seemingly without any postulations.
Good and Bad are not applicable here, this is how God views the world. And it
is thus beautiful.[28]

From a conservative stance, Thomas Mann located the photographs' ability to engage
art with technology: 'The mechanization of the artistic…sounds like the decay and
downfall of the soul'. His analysis continues by stressing issues of the spiritual and the
mechanic:

But if the spirit yields to technology and, in the process of doing so,
technology is itself spiritualized? It is Albert Renger-Patzsch…a master, a
seeker and finder with a keen eye for visual discovery, who is attracted to
appearances with the same precise love and energetic sensitivity as only the
heart of an artist can be (…). [29]
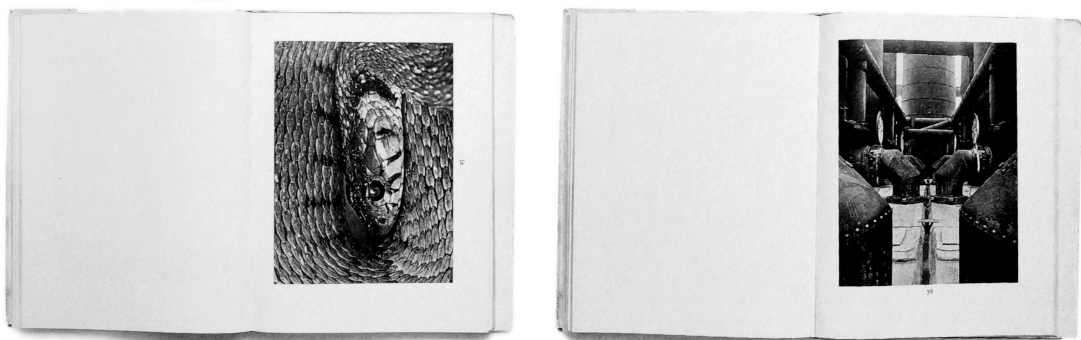
2.5.
Albert Renger-Patzsch *Die Welt ist Schön :
einhundert photographische Aufnahmen* (Kurt Wolff; Munchen, 1928).

Hildebrandt Gurlitt's compares the book to Charlie Chaplin films in their ability to
address the masses:

At long last a work of art that is not addressed to a small group of
connoisseurs, although these will also so enjoy it – but to the entire
population.[30]

These reviews clearly affirm Renger-Patzsch's project as *'art pour l'art'* and art for the masses, Benjamin's concerns from 1934 were that this sort of discourse was made available to the masses. Therefore his criticism of Renger-Patzsch's *'sachlichkeit'* centres its attention in the lack of political commitment of the project. In his view the book proposed an unjustified optimism that eluded the particularly distressed and unsettled political moment. Hence, Benjamin perceived the enterprise of *Die Welt ist Schön* as a manipulation of reality in its denial of social-political content.

Walter Benjamin affirms that this 'objectivity' relied on the surface, on the aesthetic condition, rather than on 'reality' itself. Instead of the objective *fact,* the reality, the weight was on the tangible 'object', the thing. The kind of *montage* revealed by *Die Welt ist Schön,* which seemed to evade Benjamin's dialectical treatment, fails when inserted into the specific 'context of the living social conditions'. To impose an optimistic view in times of economic and social crisis is an attempt to 'rescue humanity' from the vicissitudes of the historical time. Photography here is identified with a conservative aim, proposing to recover certainty and solid ground in a world disturbingly off balance.[31]

A training manual

The refutation of what Benjamin titled 'New-Matter-of -Factness', and his reference to Renger-Patszch's book, do not imply the dismissal of Neue Sachlichkeit's ideological intentions. In a previous essay, *A Small History of Photography* (1931), he recognized the relevance of a realistic/objective approach while commenting on August Sander's work:

> …a very impartial, indeed old sort of observation, but delicate too, very much in the spirit of Goethe's remark, "There is a delicate empiricism which so intimate involves itself with the object that it becomes true theory." (…) Sudden shifts of power such as are now overdue in our society can make the ability to read facial types a matter of vital importance. Whether one is of the left or right, one will have to get used to being looked at in terms of one's provenance. And one will have to look at others the same way. Sander's work is more than a picture book. It is a training manual.[32]

2.6.
Cover from August Sander, Antlitz der Zeit (Kurt Wolff; Munchen, 1929).

2.7.
Bohemians, 1925.

2.8.
High School Student, 1926.

2.9.
Indian Man and German Woman, 1926.

2.10.
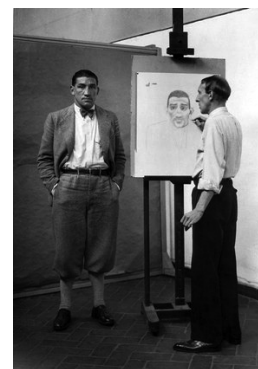Member of Parliament,
Democrat, 1927.

2.11.
Police Officer, 1925.

2.12.
Sisters, 1927.

2.13.
The Painter Heinrich Hörle Draw-
ing the Boxer Hein Domgören,
1927-31.

2.7 to 2.13.
August Sander People of the 20th century : a cultural work of photographs
divided into seven groups.

Benjamin is referring to August Sander's seminal work *Antlitz der Zeit*, an ambitious project consisting of a series of portraits of German people, which the author planned to publish as albums divided in a typological manner.[33] In 1925 he explained to Erich Stenger, a collector and an historian of photography, his expectations and beliefs in 'pure photography' as a mode to picture subjects in time:

> Pure photography allows us to create portraits which render their subjects
> with absolute truth, truth both physical and psychological…if we can create
> portraits of subjects that are true, we thereby in effect create a mirror of the
> times in which those subjects live….By using absolute photography to establish
> a record both of various social classes and of their environments, I hope to give
> a faithful picture of the psychology of our age and of our people.[34]

In his quest for truth, Sander's intentions reverberate nineteenth century Positivism, an understanding that Alan Sekula roots with Physiognomy, 'that predates and partially anticipates positivism'. Later, a number of social disciplines absorbed the physiognomy method as a means of implementing positivist theory.[35]

Although August Sander's beliefs relied on the social not on the racial, therefore dismissing physiognomy as a scientific means to accomplish biological determinism, his anthropological visual typology stresses a 'universalism' that Sekula places as oppositional to the Nazi's 'scientific' legitimated genocide policies.[36] The apparently equal mode that Sander employed in the approach of each class segment seemed to give the project a 'synchronic structure'.[37] It locates Sander's intentions within the grounds of 'social democracy' as the portraits in their 'formal representation' seem to authenticate, or mirror the parliamentary system and its universal representation.[38]

As Michael Jennings emphasizes, 'it is at once a diachronic survey of the becoming of a society and at same time synchronic, a cross section of a society caught at one moment in 1929.' The transition between the modes of production is clearly sensed through Sander's photographs through the conflict between the rural (agriculture) and the urban (industry)[39]. Technological utopia and urban politics prevailed in the Weimar Republic, thus Jennings suggests that Sander's look on rural Germany indirectly discloses some of the reasons for the electoral success of the Nazi party.[40]

2.14.
August Sander, *Young farmers*, 1914.

Both Sander and Renger-Patzsch agreed on the ability of photography as a pedagogical tool, indeed a universal language, aiming to 'hurdle barriers of illiteracy' and knowledge. Nevertheless, Sander maintained that the author had to decide whether to 'serve culture or the market place'.[41] What seems to separate Sander from Renger-Patzsch is their ideological provenance, entrenched in their expectations towards the uses and the ends of the medium. By isolating the object from its context Renger-Patzsch transfigured the photographed object; Benjamin stresses that this strategy for abstraction compromised the subject matter. On the contrary, Sander, by emphasizing an empirical and rational approach on the subject matter, acknowledged the idea that 'political relations could be evident on the surface of things'.[42] In a radio talk entitled 'Photography as a Universal Language' (1931) Sander furthered his argument:

> Today with photography we can communicate our thoughts, conceptions and realities, to all the people on earth; if we add the date of the year we have the power to fix the history of the world.[43]

This observation addresses Benjamin's concern when he demands from the photographer 'the ability' to put the caption beneath the pictures in order to 'rescue it from the ravages of modishness and confer upon it a revolutionary use value'.[44] In his closing paragraph Benjamin reiterates the vicissitudes and the limited political capacities of the 'art' work, affirming that 'the revolutionary struggle is not fought between capitalism and mind. It is fought between capitalism and the proletariat'.[45]

A Radical Mistake

To invent an important theme is novelistic belles-lettres…to discover an important theme is reportage…to contribute constructively to an important theme is operativism.[46]

In the essay *Paris, Capital of the Soviet Avant-Garde,* Maria Gough portrays Benjamin's 1934 essay as the key moment of the acknowledgment in Western European cultural circles of the Soviet avant-garde's attempts to theorize the role and efficacy of the artist in the revolution.[47] Benjamin foresees Sergei Tretyakov's 'operativistic' methods as the possibility for an author to 'intervene actively' instead of 'playing the spectator', maintaining that the mission of the informed author is not to report but to struggle. Tretyakov's proposals had a substantial effect within the avant-garde circle of the Lef group where he was one of the leading figures. It was through the pages of their magazine *Novy Lef* that the theoretical discussion concerning the role of the photographic image in relation to revolutionary tasks had its reverb.

Since its very first moment the Bolshevik Revolution had recognized the relevance of artistic practices in relation to the transmission of political aims. As early as 1920 the Council of People's Commissars declared that the Higher State Artistic and Technical Workshop's main purpose was to 'train artists of high quality for the benefit of national economy'. Supported by the critical writings of Boris Arvatov, Boris Kushner, Tarabukin and Osip Brik, constructivist artists fully engaged with 'productivist' aims. They repudiated the ability of painting to permeate everyday life and to influence the social environment; instead, they proposed a commitment to the idea of art being involved in industry with the production of real objects of everyday use.[48] The productivists undermined the prevalent idea among the avant-garde artists that abstraction was the primary mode of revolutionary creation; instead, they instigated a far more iconographical and stylistically diverse practice. In order to address a mass

audience, productivist artists employed a diversity of techniques and mediums, such as cinema, photography, architecture, design and typography. New techniques of production, distribution and dissemination attempted to redefine the representational models of the new society. As Benjamin Bucholh states, the concern for a self-reflexive pictorial and sculptural production was abandoned after 1920, 'gradually at first, then abruptly, was to be replaced by *factographic* and *productivist* practices that are indicative of a more profound pragmatic change'.[49]

The Novy Lef debates on photography

A theoretical debate on the role of photography was raised within the *Lef* group through the pages of their renewed magazine *Novy Lef*.[50] In 1928 a series of articles anticipated the so-called 'formalist-sociological method' which, along with 'productivist' ideology, provided the theoretical basis for most Soviet avant-garde photography after Lenin's death in 1924 and until the early 1930s. It discussed the 'fixing of facts' through photographs, evolving from issues surrounding the role of formalist aesthetics, the commitment of the artist with subject content and the production of Art in relation to mass culture.

The main questions were anticipated by Osip Brik in the article *'Fixation of Facts'*, Novy Lef nº11/12 (1927), where he distinguishes between past and present ways of making art:

> If before the artwork itself had a prime position and material was used only as a necessary raw product… now material has stepped to the forefront, and artwork is only one of the possible ways to give material concrete form (…) 'real facts'…not simply install a camera on a street and leave…we have to reflect reality at the certain angles.[51]

In response to the introduction of the Five Year Economic Plan in 1928 artists such as Rodchenko, Klutsis, Senkin and Ignatovich committed themselves to work only for mass-media publication. Their primary goal was to achieve a synthesis between socialist content and inventive form. They viewed single-frame still photographs or photomontages not as finished works of art produced to exist by themselves, but as disposable objects composed during the process of making agitational posters or magazines.[52] By 1928 a 'platform of realist genre' became common within different groups of artists, being photography the preferred media. It should be stressed that photo-reportage or photo-journalism were clearly distinguishable from these avant-garde uses of photography.

2.15. to 2.18.
Aleksandr Rodchenko, design and photographs from *Novy Lef* covers, 1928.

A pivotal figure in this debate was Alexander Rodchenko, who argued for an experimental 'new photography' that was expected to create a revolutionary vision. In a series of different articles he maintained that formal innovation in photography would act as a means to alter perception. He wrote that photographs ought to be taken "from all viewpoints except from 'navel photo' (or belly button), until they become acceptable".[53] This statement is rooted in the concept of *ostranenie,* making the strange out of the familiar, developed by Victor Shklovsky in relation to literature.

In his essay *'Art as Technique'* he stated:

> The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and
> not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to
> make forms challenging, to increase difficulty and length of perception because
> the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself one and must be prolonged.[54]

By pointing out the idea of photographing 'the down from above and up from below'
Rodchenko aims to break with the conventional mode of representation linked to painting.
His position implies an ahistorical condition, an aesthetic rupture sustained by formal
aspects of the composition of an image.

Another critic, Boris Kushner, responded to Rodchenko by questioning that it was not
'view point' that assured a subject's revolutionary status:

> (…) the revolution is precisely a revolution of facts not of how we perceive them,
> or how we depict, transmit, render, or pinpoint them. In such a simple affair as a
> revolution, facts play not only a persistent role but also a decisive one (…).
> Why all this pathos about facts if they themselves are devoid of meaning? To
> depict a 150-meter-high radio tower as a wire bread basket is to fail to respect and
> to scoff at the facts. It is more desirable to take the tower 'from the belly button'
> than to turn our finest example of high-rise technology into a kitchen utensil.[55]

Sergei Tretyakov, at the time an editor of *Novy Lef,* reacted to Kushner's and Rodchenko's argu-
ments considering them a 'radical mistake'. He maintained that both disregarded the 'functionalist'
approach to photography, reminding Kushner that photography was not only a mirror but also
projects: 'Photography is not just a stenographer, it also explains...the question cannot be resolved
by cheap recourse to the 'primacy of content', by asserting that 'what' is more important than 'how'.[56]

With a clear intention to challenge aestheticism, Tretyakov maintained that the
'polygraphical' condition of the photographic image had 'utilitarian goals' to fulfil, for
example photo information, photo-illustration, scientific photography, photo-posters etc.
For functionalists, more important than *what* (i.e. the form) and *how* (i.e. its content), is
why. This, according to Tretyakov, is the link that transforms a 'work' from an 'object'
into an instrument of 'expedient effect'. Therefore he argued that its polygraphic condition
required a change in the methods of photography.[57] Proceeding on this 'functional'
approach, Tretyakov mentions that the choice of subject matter (the what) and the choice of
media for the design (the how) should be subordinate to the definitive purpose or function.
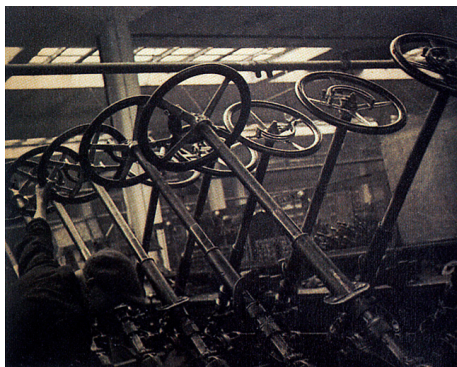
2.20
Aleksandr Rodchenko,
The automobile factory AMO, 1929.

2.21
Aleksandr Rodchenko, cover Dajosh Nr. 14, 1929.
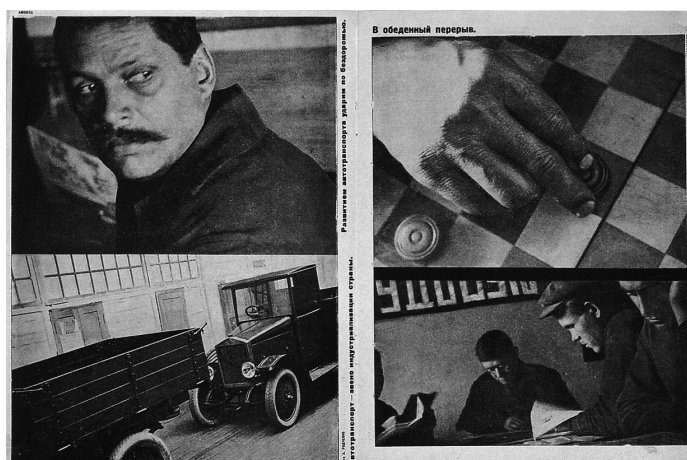
2.22
Aleksandr Rodchenko, spread Dajosh Nr. 14, 1929, The automobile factory AMO.

Following this, Tretyakov reduces Rodchenko's argument of 'seeking a new aesthetics (…) the capacity to see the world in a new way' as restricting the aims of photography to those once belonging to painting. A 'manifestation of emotional attitudes to the object', as Rodchenko argued, 'narrows the scope of the problem and succumbs to stylistic subjectivism'.[58] Whereas, in regard to the experimental claims, Tretyakov argues that 'an experiment divorced from a goal can easily lead to the degeneration of 'art' into an aesthetic element'. The utilitarian goals of photographs implied its 'polygraphical' use which required a 'change in the methods of photography'. Tretyakov was concerned that the 'primacy of the raw, un-worked, unorganized fact' threatened the professional skill of the photographer.[59] Therefore he proposed guidelines on how to photograph a demonstration, considering different approaches in order to stress specific features within the subject matter:

- crowds of people, shoot from above;
- crowds' social composition, select points when a person's clothes indicates his profession;
- demonstration moving forward, feet ;
- demonstration demands, the posters in the large scale as possible;
- human mass crystallizing around a central driving force, a double exposure: to a photo of the demonstration from above you can add a shot of an analogous construction – an anthill, bees in their honeycombs, the growth rings of a tree trunk, metal fillings around a magnet... .

On Tretryakov's 'technique'

The use of architecture, utilitarian product design and photographic 'factography' was an attempt to transcend the historical limitations of modernism related to aesthetics and formalism. These utilitarian usages aimed to challenge the conventions of pictorial representation and find new paths to present new modes of collective reception. In photography, the inclusion of 'facts' and the possibility of constructing a narrative implied a move away from the single-image aesthetic, and a move towards the photographic sequence.

In his argument against the *synthetic* image, Rodchenko denounces painting as lacking the capacity to resemble reality, using the example of Lenin to illustrate:

…a file of snapshots allows no one to idealize or falsify Lenin… no one would allow artistic nonsense to be taken by the eternal Lenin (…) so a series of 'snapshots' would reveal different moments, a whole made by bits… Lenin representation was based on photographs, books and notes… not just one sum total. He is many, and sometimes they are quite opposed.[60]

The single-image versus a series of images is a question addressed by Ossip Brik in an article titled 'The Photo-Still versus the Picture' published in *Sovietskoe foto* (1926). He divides press photography into two categories: *foto-kadry*, snapshots or photo-stills and the *foto-kartiny*, or photo-pictures - which he criticized as 'organic' representations of various everyday scenes.[61]

Sergei Tretyakov returns to this argument of constructing a portrait by 'combining' different snapshots (photo-stills). He foresees that only *serial photography* could give the 'sensation of dramatic progress' and allow *extended photo-observation*.[62]

This theory had its roots in the concept that only long-term observation could achieve "authentic meaning", stressing the iconic capacity of photography while deleting its indexical potential. A construction or 'montage' that would transform a contemplative mode of seeing into a reflexive perception, as Buchloh writes in reference to the 1928 Pressa Pavillion:

…the center piece of the exhibition was a photo fresco that Lessitzky had design with Senkin…in constant alternation of camera angles, close-ups and long shots, depicted the history and importance of the publishing industry in the Soviet Union since the Revolution and its role in the education of the illiterate masses of the new industrialized state - titled officially *The Tasks of the Press Is the Education of the Masses*.[63]

2.19.
El Lissitzky, foldout from the catalogue for the Soviet pavilion at Pressa, Cologne, 1928.

Lissitzky and Senkin used Tretyakov's methods of the 'systematic analytical sequence' on the design of the Soviet Pressa Pavillion for the Cologne 1928 Exhibition. Lissitzky wrote on the function and use of the photomontage:

> As a result of the social needs of our epoch and the fact that artists acquainted themselves with new techniques, photomontage emerged in the years following the Revolution and flourished thereafter. Even though this technique had been used in America much earlier for advertising, and the Dadaists in Europe had used to shake up official bourgeois art, it only served political goals in Germany. But only here, with us, photomontage acquired a clearly socially determined and aesthetic form.[64]

Among the Soviets avant-garde photomontage lost its artistic aura, and Lissitzky furthers his argument on the specific use of photographs within photomontage by asserting that 'photomontage at is present stage of development uses finished, entire photographs as elements from which it constructs a totality'. These innovative modes of representation aimed to produce iconic documentary information, a technique that for Lissitzky was related to the utilitarian goals of the photomontage.

The assignments that Rodchenko and Ignatovitch undertook for the magazine *Daosh* (Let's Give) in 1929 clearly illustrate this so called '*formalist-sociological'* method. Photographs in sequence, i.e. assembled fragments of the whole, allowed viewers to compare and contrast aspects of the same subject 'at different times and in different circumstances'. Margarita Tupsyn, in *The Soviet Photograph,* refers to them using Deleuze's concept of 'deframing'. The compositions create disconnected spaces that are 'beyond all narrative or pragmatic justification'. In Deleuze's words the 'abnormal points of view… in which the image transgresses purely formal aspects… confirm the visual image's legible function beyond its 'visible function'…'the out-of-field' that 'is neither seen nor understood, but nevertheless perfectly present'.[65] These photographs blend realistic representations with experimental objectives; by addressing the process of labour with fragmented images they challenge the viewer's temptation to perceive them as carriers of narrative, instead provoking a kind of shock, a process that Brecht defines as a challenging and disruptive 'riddle' – the *'umfunktionierung'*.

2.23.
Boris Ignatovitch, Export Forest, Let's Give, 1929 nº4.

2.24.
Boris Ignatovitch, Kondostroi, Let's Give, 1929 nº7.

For Benjamin this shock was crucial in order to change the mode or reception of art and to disrupt what he calls the 'catastrophic continuity of everyday life'.[66] In his 'producer' essay Benjamin describes Brecht's concept of *'umfunktionierung'* as 'functional transformation', how a progressive intelligentsia would 'transform forms and instruments of production liberating the means of production' and consequently instigate class struggle – what he considered as a precondition for the revolutionary reorganization of society.[67]

In 1931 the Soviet Union Photo assigned a project to the photographers Shaikhet and Al'pert. Titled *'A Day in the Life of a Moscow Working-Class Family'* it was meant to depict the life of the family of a red proletarian worker. The suggestion was launched by the Austrian *Society of Friends of Soviet Union* and aimed to address a foreign audience. In its edited version, photographs, along with captions and explanatory texts, introduce the viewer to the Fillipov family. The photographic sequence follows each of the family members as they go through their daily routines. Each photograph is a legible and complete 'photo-picture', its meaning reliant on subject content, 'describing an event in the life of this family'. The occasional de-framing shoots that are included operate merely as formal devices.[68] According to Peter Kruger, this linear progression defines an organic condition, where 'individual parts and the whole form a dialectical unit (…) the parts can be understood only through the whole, the whole only through the parts'.[69] In their 'expression of a social whole' they reflect Georg Lukacs's theory of Realism: the fact, the individual case, depicted concretely and individually, 'makes it really come to life'.[70]

On the 27th of April 1934, when Benjamin addressed the audience at the *Institut pour l'étude du fascisme* with the essay 'The Author as a Producer', Tretyakov's operativist aesthetics and all other Soviet organizations that implicated vanguard practices active in the 1920s were liquidated or otherwise rendered obsolete.[71] Two years earlier, in 1932, the party had abolished all individual cultural organizations, and endorsed 'socialist realism' as the official aesthetic policy. In the same year the *Central Committee of Proletarian Cinematographers and Photographers* stated that Filippov's photo essay was a model for the 'proletarianization' of Soviet photography.
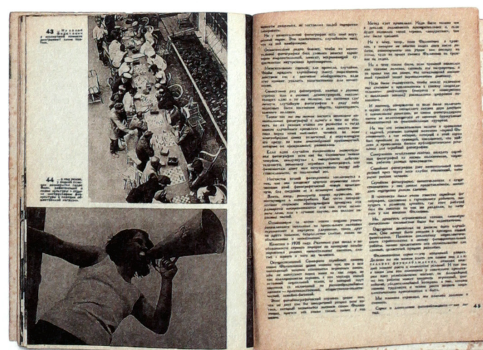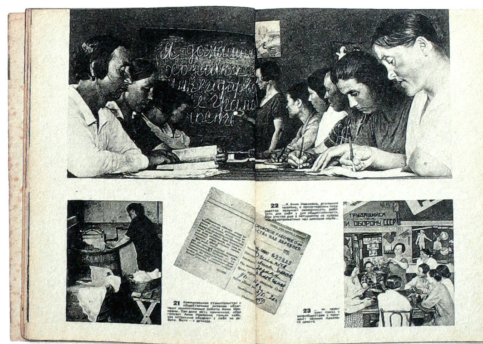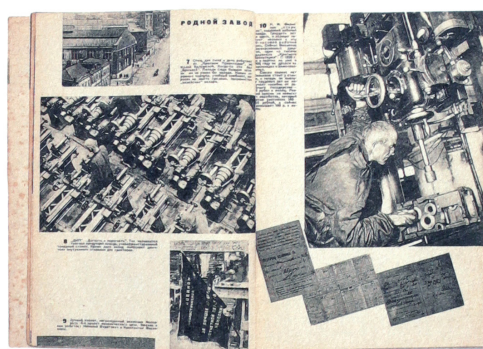
2.26.
Arkadii Shaiket and Max Al'pert 'A day in the Life of a Moscow Working-Class Family', 1931.

1   Rune Hassner, 'Photography and the press' in Jean-Claude Lemagny, and Andre Rouille, eds., *A History of Photography : Social and Cultural Perspectives*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp 76-79.

2   Henri Lefebvre stated that 'Eucledian and perspectivist space did not disappear in a puff of smoke without leaving any trace in our consciousness, knowledge or educational methods'. Quoted in, Victor Burgin, *In Different Spaces, place and memory in visual culture,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p 144.

3   Benjamin H.D Buchloh, 'From Faktura to Factography' in *The Contest of Meaning, Critical Histories of Photography*, R. Bolton (Editor), (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press,1992), pp 49-85, p 51.

4   Walter Benjamin, 'The Author as a Producer', in *Thinking photography*. Victor Burgin (ed.) (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp 15- 31, p 24.

5   Benjamin, 'The Author as a Producer', p 23.

6   Fritz Schmalenbach, 'The Term Neue Sachlichkeit', *The Art Bulletin*, 1940. 22 (n°3), pp 161-165, p 161.

7   On the avant-garde intention to bring art closer to daily life see Gail Day, 'Art, love and social emancipation: on the concept 'avant-garde' and the interwar avant-gardes', in Steve Edwards and Paul Wood (eds.), *Art of the Avant-Gardes* (New Haven, Conn. ; London: Yale University Press in association with the Open University, 2004), pp 308-37.

8   Shearer West, *The visual arts in Germany 1890-1937: Utopia and despair* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p 161.

9   See Michael Jennings, 'Agriculture, Industry, and the Birth of the Photo-Essay in the Late Weimar Republic'. *October*, (Vol. 93: Summer 2000), pp 23-56.

10   See Mattew Simms, 'Just Photography, Albert Renger-Patzsch's Die Welt ist Schön', *History of Photography*, (Vol. 21, no. 3, Autumm 1997), pp 197-204.

11   See Herbert Molderings, "Urbanism and Technological Utopianism, Thoughts on the Photography of Neue Sachlichkeit and the Bauhaus," in *Germany: New Photography*, ed. David Mellor (London: Arts Council of Great Britain,1978), pp 87-94.

12 Molderings, "Urbanism and Technological Utopianism, Thoughts on the Photography of Neue Sachlichkeit and the Bauhaus," p.90. The expression was part of a review that Karl Sommer made on the *Film und Foto* 1929 exhibition. Molderings stressed the significance of the Stuggart show as the 'triumph' of the 'new urban vision', a visual expression of Weimar technological utopianism.

13 See Jennings, 'Agriculture, Industry, and the Birth of the Photo-Essay in the Late Weimar Republic'. *October*, (Vol. 93: Summer 2000), pp 23-56.

14 Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, 'Production-Reproduction', in *Photography in the Modern Era. European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940*, ed. Christopher Phillips (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Aperture, 1989), pp79-82. p 80.

15 Albert Renger-Patzsch, 'Aims', in *Photography in the Modern Era. European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940*, ed. Christopher Phillips (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Aperture, 1989) pp104-105, p 105.

16 Renger-Patzsch, 'Aims', p 105.

17 Albert Renger-Patzsch "Die Freude am Gegenstand" was originaly published at the Berlin Art Journal *Das Kunstblatt* nº1, 1928. It is transcribed as 'Joy Before the Object', In: *Photography in the Modern Era. European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940*. Christopher Phillips (ed.) (The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Aperture; New York, 1989), pp 108-9.

18 Eleanor Hight and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, *Picturing modernism : Moholy-Nagy and photography in Weimar Germany*, (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 1995), p 40.

19 See Jennings, 'Agriculture, Industry, and the Birth of the Photo-Essay in the Late Weimar Republic', p. 38. A query opposed *Die Welt ist Schön* to *Foto Auge*. Renger-Patzsch book was viewed as a conservative approach in contrast to the 'new vision' of Franz Roh catalogue.

20 Carl Georg Heise, 'Preface to A.Renger-Patzsch, Die Welt is Schön' in *Germany, the New Photography, 1927-33 : documents and essays*, ed. David. Mellor (London, Arts Council of Great Britain: London, 1978), pp 9-14.

21 Michael Jennings, 'Agriculture, Industry, and the Birth of the Photo-Essay in the Late Weimar Republic', p 24.

22   See Ulrich Ruter, 'The Reception of Albert Renger-Patzsch's Die Welt ist Schön', *History of Photography*, (Vol. 21, no. 3, Autumm 1997), pp 192-196.

23   This advertisement is reproduced in Carl Georg Heise, 'Preface to A.Renger-Patzsch, Die Welt is Schön', in *Germany, the New Photography, 1927-33 : documents and essays*, ed. David Mellor (London, Arts Council of Great Britain: London, 1978), p 8.

24   Jennings, 'Agriculture, Industry, and the Birth of the Photo-Essay in the Late Weimar Republic', p 25.

25   Heise, 'Preface to A.Renger-Patzsch, Die Welt is Schön', p 10.

26   Albert Renger-Patzsch, Ann Wilde, Jurgen Wilde and Thomas Weski, *Albert Renger-Patzsch : photographer of objectivity* (London: Thames & Hudson 1997), p.168. The book reproduces an article by Renger-Patzsch first published in *Meister der Kamera erzahlen.Wie sie wurden und wie sie arbeiten*, edited by Wilhelm Schoppe, Halle-Saale 1937, pp 44-50.

27   Jennings, 'Agriculture, Industry, and the Birth of the Photo-Essay in the Late Weimar Republic' , p. 50. See also Ulrich Ruter, who transcribed Renger-Patzsch's concerns on the misreading of his book in a letter addressed to Franz Roh in Ruter, 'The Reception of Albert Renger-Patzsch's Die Welt ist Schön', p194.

28   Ruter 'The Reception of Albert Renger-Patzsch's Die Welt ist Schön', p192.

29   Ruter 'The Reception of Albert Renger-Patzsch's Die Welt ist Schön', p 193.

30   Ruter 'The Reception of Albert Renger-Patzsch's Die Welt ist Schön', p 192.

31   Simms, 'Just Photography, Albert Renger-Patzsch's *Die Welt Ist Schön*', p 202.

32   Walter Benjamin, 'A Small History of Photography', in *One-way street, and other writings*. (London: Verso, 1997), pp. 240-257. p 252.

33   Sander began this work in the 1910s, but it was only after the Great War that the project took became consistent.

34   August Sander in a letter to Erich Stenger, 21 July 1925, Fotohistorama Collection Leverkusen, quoted in Ute Eskildsen, 'Germany: the Weimar Republic' in Jean-Claude Lemagny and Andre Rouille (eds.), *A History of photography : social and cultural perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p 142.

35 Allan Sekula, 'The Traffic in Photographs', *Art Journal*, Vol. 41, no. Photography and the Scholar/Critic (Spring, 1981), pp 15-25.

36 Sekula, 'The Traffic in Photographs', p 17. In 1934 the Nazi party confiscated and destroy some of the plates of *Antlitz der Zeit*.

37   Jennings, 'Agriculture, Industry, and the Birth of the Photo-Essay in the Late Weimar Republic', p 33.

38 Sekula,'The Traffic in Photographs', p 20.

39 Jennings, 'Agriculture, Industry, and the Birth of the Photo-Essay in the Late Weimar Republic', p 31.

40 Jennings, 'Agriculture, Industry, and the Birth of the Photo-Essay in the Late Weimar Republic', p 33.

41 August Sander, 'Photography as a Universal Language', trans. Anne Halley, Massachusstes Review, XIX, nº4, 1978, pp. 674-675, quoted in Sekula, 'The Traffic in Photographs', p132.

42 Sekula ,'The Traffic in Photographs', p 130.

43 Sekula ,'The Traffic in Photographs', p 131.

44 Benjamin, 'The author as a Producer', p 24.

45 Benjamin, 'The author as a Producer', p 30.

46   As quoted in Maria Gough, 'Paris, Capital of the Soviet Avant-Garde', *October*, (Vol. 101/Summer 2002), pp 53-83, p 77.

47   Gough, 'Paris, Capital of the Soviet Avant-Garde', p 53.

48   Margarita Tupitsyn, *The Soviet Photograph, 1924-37*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), p 2.

49 Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography " in *The Contest of Meaning, Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. Richard Bolton (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1992), pp 49-85, p 51.
According to Buchloh, *faktura* corresponds to the first period of Russian avant-garde and *factography*, 'the primary method in the second period of Russian avant-garde practice'.A further account is given in the 'Soviet Factography, A Special Issue', ed. Devin Fore, *October* (Vol.118/Fall 2006).

50   These articles, by Alexander Rodchenko, Boris Kushner and Sergei
     Tretyakov, are translated and published in Christopher Phillips, ed.
     Photography in the Modern Era. European Documents and Critical Writings,
     1913-1940 (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Aperture, 1989).

51   Tupsyn, *The Soviet Photograph 1924-37,* p 37.

52   Tupsyn, *The Soviet Photograph 1924-37,* p 63.
     Tupsyn calls into attention that they fulfilled Benjamin's aphorism,
     that 'the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art design for
     reproducibility'

53   Alexander Rodchenko, 'The paths of Modern Photography', in
     Photography in the Modern Era. European Documents and Critical Writings,
     1913-1940, ed. Christopher Phillips (New York: The Metropolitan
     Museum of Art / Aperture, 1989), pp 256-263.

54   Tupsyn, *The Soviet Photograph,* p. 5.

55   Boris Kushner, 'Fulfilling a Request', in *Photography in the Modern Era.*
     European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940, ed. Christopher
     Phillips (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Aperture, 1989),
     pp 267-269.

56   Sergei Tretyakov, 'From the Editor' in *Photography in the Modern Era.*
     European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940, ed. Christopher
     Phillips (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Aperture, 1989),
     pp 264-266, p 265.

57   Burgin uses this exchange between Rodchenko, Kushner and Tretyakov in order
     to discuss a disagreement in 1931, between the October group (linked to *Novy*
     Lef) and the photography section of ROPF - Russian Society of Proletarian
     Photographers. See Victor Burgin, 'Photography, Phantasy and Function', ed.
     Victor Burgin, *Thinking Photography*, (London: Macmillan, 1982).

58   Tretyakov, 'From the Editor', p 271.

59   Tretyakov, 'From the Editor', p 272.

60   Alexander Rodchenko in 'Against the Synthetic Portrait, for the
     Snapshot' in *Photography in the Modern Era. European Documents and*
     Critical Writings, 1913-1940, ed. Christopher Phillips (New York: The
     Metropolitan Museum of Art / Aperture, 1989), pp 238-142.

61   Tupsyn, *The Soviet Photograph 1924-37,* p 69.

62   Buchloh, 'From Faktura to Factography', p 68.
      Sergei Tretyakov develop his argument in, 'From the Photo-Series to
      Extended Photo-Observation', *October,* Vol. 118, no. Fall 2006 2006, pp 71-7.

63   Buchloh, 'From Faktura to Factography', p 65-67.

64   Buchloh, 'From Faktura to Factography', p 63.

65   Tupsyn, *The Soviet Photograph 1924-37,* p 97.

66   Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture,
      PostModernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,1986), quoted in
      Margarita Tupsyn *The Soviet Photograph,* p 97.

67   Benjamin, 'The Author as a Producer', p 23.

68   Benjamin, 'The Author as a Producer' p 89.

69   Peter Burger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of
      Minnesota, 1984), p 70.

70   Burger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde,* p 70.

71   Gough, 'Paris, Capital of the Soviet Avant-Garde', p 83.

3

THE
MAKING OF URBAN &
ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Nineteenth century photographs and the
discourses of architecture and urban planning
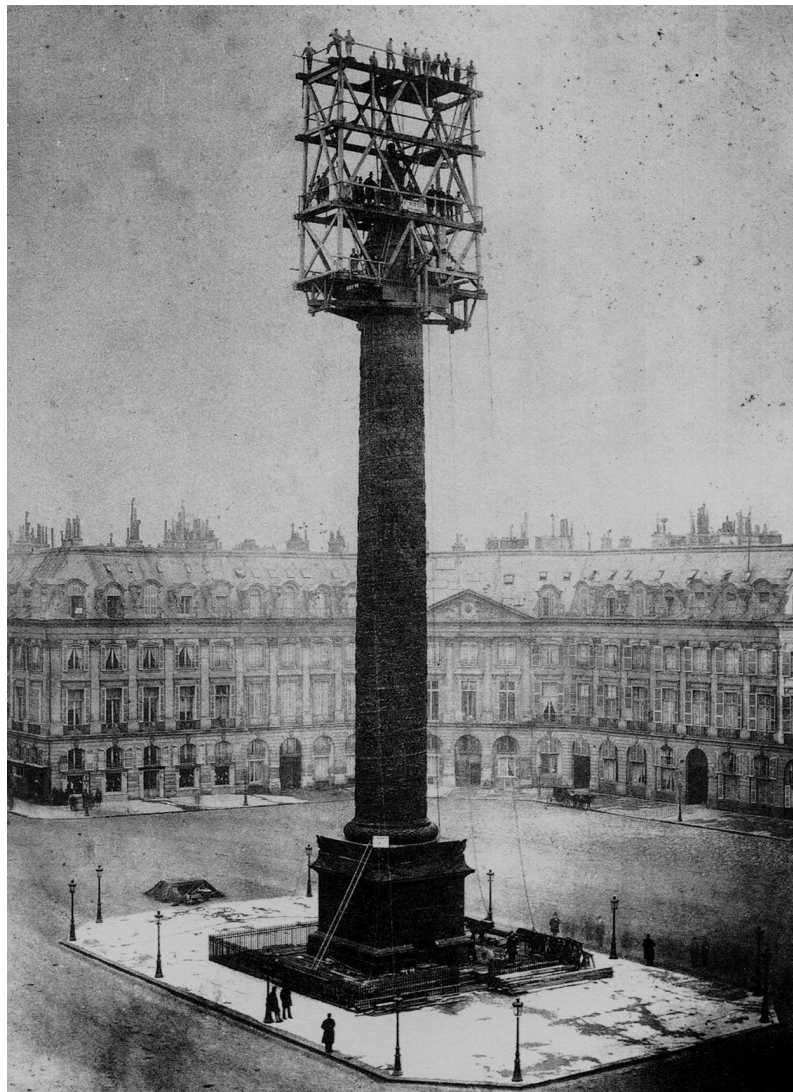
3.1.
Charles Marville, the montage of Napoleon I statue, 27th December 1875.

THE MAKING OF URBAN & ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Nineteenth century photographs and the
discourses of architecture and urban planning

Evolving from the acknowledgment that photographs impacted and reshaped the ideological axioms of modern urbanism, this chapter will examine and discuss the discursive spaces of early architectural and urban photographs. It aims to locate photographs in relation to the previous visual paradigms in the rendering of the architectural by questioning how photographs conformed or moulded to these paradigms, or even altered those paradigms in response to specific historical settings.

It examines how early architectural photographs were read by historiography discourses and how these readings thrust their operative fictional role and enliven its polysemic condition. These questions are affiliated with a pivotal issue of the thesis, the tie between photographs and the ideological agenda of urbanism. Moreover I will explore how photographs enhanced the consensus for the need of the 'urban plan', backing the belief that modernity as a landscape entails the prospect of a 'better tomorrow'. Hence, the historical photographs discussed here ought to be viewed alongside, and with the specific interests to, my own practice, considering that the ***Subtopia*** photographs address a historical subject, the architecture and the landscape of the New Towns Program.

Photographs and the promise of history

'History is like Janus; it has two faces. Whether it looks at the past or at the present, it sees the same thing'. [1]

In the late eighteenth century *time* and *temporality* became an obsession among intellectuals and artists, manifested in a growing awareness of History as a narrative process, a sense of progress as related to development.[2] Raymond Williams points out that with the 'stress on human *self-development,* history in many of its uses lost its exclusive association with the past and became connected not only with the present but also with the future'.[3] This notion was grounded on a Western concept of time as being linear, irreversible and progressive.

This perception draws upon *Historicism* as defined by Hegel, which allocates in the historical phenomena the essence and understanding upon all facets of human society, in reaction against or building upon a past occurrence. In its further complexity the term casts both a negative and a positive impact upon modern critical thought. Its wider use and implications led *Historicism* to be regarded more as a trend or a mood than a specific stream or school of thought.

Historicism in relation to architecture is commonly employed in reference to the introduction of stylistic and decorative elements that 'quote' from the past. By the mid nineteenth century the history and the critical interpretation of architectural design were largely dominated by concepts of *style* and *genre*, similar to those operative in the domain of painting.[4]

Fostered by the new historiography of Augustin Thierry, François Guizot and Jules Michelet, studies of historical periods shifted, from an exclusive focus on the Classical to a broader interest in the Medieval Age and Renaissance. Architecture became valued as 'the only testimony of beliefs, customs and daily life', and therefore a more persuasive testimony of the past than written documents.[5]

Monuments were no longer seen as the mere repository of architecture ideals, rather they were looked at as the embodiment of social and cultural formation. As Alois Riegl pointed out, monuments function as agents of memory:

> A monument in its oldest and most original sense is a human creation, erected for the specific purpose of keeping single human deeds or events. . . alive in the minds of future generations.[6]

Therefore the restoration of a historic monument implied an ethical bias, to recover the moral and cultural values of an era in the present, a truism that only photographs seemed to make feasible; by replicating the exact forms of the past they redeemed a symbolic 'truth', therefore allowing the harmonious reconciliation of the historical object as an image, its *Zeitgeist*.

Hence, *historicism* was also linked with 'objectivity', an impartial gaze to which the photograph and its truth express flawlessly. For a generation of architects, the so-called *romantic school*, a photograph's veracity allowed them to reclaim scientific parameters to architectural restoration studies.

Early applications of photography to architecture/urban landscapes operated within a *historicist* mood. They conveyed the argument that by looking at and fixing the transitional present (that ought to become the past), it would impact and create an image for the future. That is, the very notion of a visual narrative, which would gain its strength with time. On these matters Siegfried Kracauer stated that 'historicism is concerned with the photography of time', reaffirming that both historiography and photography were media of historical investigation. He furthered this theory, claiming that photographic technology belonged to the physiognomy of historical thought, which means that there can be no thinking of history that is not at the same time a thinking of photography.[7]

Paris 1850s

Mid nineteenth century Paris was an overpopulated city, dirty, unhealthy, un-navigable and ungovernable, devastated by the cholera epidemics of 1832, 1849 and 1853, and blasted by the barricades of the 1848 revolution. The election of Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte as president of the Second Republic in December 1848 was understood as an intention to reinstate order and nationalist pride. Under the banner of Bonapartism, supported by a rural electorate and the Parisian upper bourgeois, Louis-Napoleon managed an expressive victory at the 1848 elections. Four years later the restoration of the Empire and his proclamation as emperor Napoleon III apparently had a wide consensus among the French electorate.

The unprecedented enterprise that the mid nineteenth-century urban renewal of Paris involved has to be placed within the social and economic expectations of the Second Empire. As the capital, Paris was designed to be the icon of commodity and capitalism. The intent was to create an urban environment where circulation, communication, hygiene and security could flow. Architecture and urban space operated as role models fostering a new social and economic (re)order.

This renewal preceded the definition of 'urbanism' as a discipline. In its foundation the term *urbanización* was put forward by Ildefonso Cerdá, in *The General Theory of Urbanization* (1867). It described a new way to approach planning, in which the city is regarded as a single organism, a 'unified system' that could be changed and improved through a scientific plan. Françoise Choay mapped the historical evolution of nineteenth-century urban planning, distinguishing three stages of the Industrial Revolution's impact upon spatial organization: *regularization*, pre-urbanism, and later nineteenth century urbanism.[8]

Haussmann's venture is regarded as a blueprint in the schema of *regularization*, its materialization due to the needs of the capitalist-industrialist order. As Choay argued it was known as the 'Haussmann pattern', and was 'grounded on the repetition of principles as put forward by Neoclassicism: uniform frontage lines along broad, straight streets, perspective effects and the location of monuments on a perspective axis'.[9]

Paris is the most relevant example of its application, although it was developed empirically in other major European cities.

As a political tool, the renewal of Paris was totally controlled and supervised by government institutions and financially supported by state corporations operating together with private companies. A few private building corporations chosen by Haussmann himself were given access to credit in order to respond to the scale of the task. All plans were designed and supervised by 'official' architects, and from the mid-1850s until the 1890s a whole generation of French architects worked exclusively in response to public commissions. To open new streets meant taking possession of the land, clearing the medieval city and restoring the historic monuments. The final stage was to build apartment houses and new monumental public buildings. Each and every new structure had to be in accordance with a certain aesthetic historic mood.

According to Louis Bergeron urbanity as forwarded by Haussmann was a further step into the 'democratization of the aristocratic life style', a conquest assured to the upper Parisian bourgeois class by the French Revolution. Haussmann's boulevard apartment houses were modelled on the Chaussé d'Antin urban district buildings erected in the1840s. Urban palaces for the upper classes, these apartments were affiliated with the aristocratic eighteenth-century urban palace.[10] With the boulevard apartment a new urban class emerged, secure in their bourgeois domestic pleasures and simultaneously embracing the privileges of a modern urban life style, living close to theatres, restaurants, cafés and shops.

For Haussmann and Napoleon III 'history' was the leitmotif. The scheme operated through the monumentalizing of all its features, recovering the past both as a vivid place and as an image. Anthony Vidler locates this type of urbanism within the 'nature of the Renaissance ideal city' and refers that it functions through 'cutting out of the fabric of the real city the sequences and places' that could build a memory map. As a consequence the city centre was turned into a 'theater' perpetuating the myth of memory.[11]

An official bureau, the *Service des Travaux Historiques,* was created in 1860 to register and archive every phase of the plan. It aimed to produce, assemble, organize and preserve all the documentation. The first operative role of these materials was to help historians to write the new history of Paris, the *Histoire génerale de Paris.* Its first volume appeared in 1866, and the preface transcribes an exchange of letters between Napoleon III and Hausmann:

> Haussmann: ' Cette persistance d'un souverain à rechercher dans le passé l'explication du présent et la préparation de l'avenir, est la plus haute expression la plus éclatante des tendences modernes'
>
> (…) Napoleon III's response: 'Cette collection de monographies, de plans, et de documents authentiques, destinées à s'accoître sans cesse, permettra de suivre à travers les siécles la transformation de la Ville, qui grace au concours intelligent de son conseil municipal et à votre infatigable activité, est aujourd'hui la plus splendide et la plus salubre des capitales de l'Europe'.[12]

Both interlocutors seemed to reveal a clear understanding of the meaning of 'tendences modernes', an awareness of the present while preparing the future; the future modern city would be a salubrious and splendid space.

Architectural and Industrial photographs

Photographs became a common feature in architect's offices, university classrooms, archives and libraries throughout the 1850s. Due to the daguerreotype non-reproducibility in the early years of the medium, the 1840s were marked by technical fragilities which limited the range of photography applications. This condition changed due to the improvement of Talbot's paper negatives, the Calotypes, which enabled the photographic image to be reproduced in multiples.[13]

At the time, photography was the most advanced technological visual media and its use in Paris established a set of practices, which became seminal in architecture, urbanism and urban improvement schemes since then. As a case study 1850s Paris brings to light the extensive use of architectural and urban photographs within institutional agencies. The practices of commissioning photographs involved a myriad of institutional agencies in diverse government offices, such as architects, urban planners, photographers, archivists and historians.

The photographs discussed and studied here had their origin in different rhetorical intents, either belonging to the institutional or the commercial sphere. Early 1850s photographs of historic monuments belong to the domain of the architectural and the industrial; they assist the argument by questioning how early architectural photographs frame and recreate the ideological discourses of the historicist mood, predominant by then within architecture and urban planning. Whereas Charles Marville's street photographs fit the category of the urban survey, its discussion attempts to unveil the complex role that the photographs performed under the urban 'regularization' of the city carried out by Haussmann.[14] Thus, both the photographs of architectural objects in context and the urban survey fit into the genre of the Topographic.

It is also relevant to study these architectural and urban mid-nineteenth century Parisian photographs to question their role in the creation of the metaphoric image of the modern urban myth, an issue emulated consistently by these photographs. The intention is to examine the ubiquitous relationship between photographs and the historical in the creation of history as a photographic image.

In matters of subject approach and visual structure early *architectural* photographs were rooted in the traditions of architecture rendering common at the time. Drawing on a linear perspective which implied the use of the camera obscura, a canon of visual archetypes characterized the representations of architecture. It usually involved a plan, a section, and an elevation, complemented by several perspective views. Spread through illustrated publications, these images established the conventions of architectural representation that were adopted, no doubt unconsciously, by photographers.

The affiliation of early architectural photographs with previous archetypes of visual representations was much sensed through features such as viewpoints, the choice of the motifs or the details to depict. The most common viewpoints adopted by 1850s photographers were the bird's eye-view, the elevated photograph and the perspective shot.

Although photographs share these formal similarities in their aesthetics, image composition, and motifs with older types of images, this seems unimportant to the ways in which photography was perceived and assimilated. As Jonathan Crary argues, photographs 'reshaped an entire territory' of consumption and circulation of images, which had an effect on the "…new cultural economy of value and exchange not as part of a continuous history of visual representation.[15]

A case in point in early photographic 'architectural studies' was *Le Mission Héliographique*, a project sponsored by the Historic Monuments Commission of France. Initiated in 1851, it involved the photographers Edouard Baldus, Henri Le Secq, Hippolyte Bayard, O. Mestral and Gustave Le Gray. Each one was assigned to a specific region of France, with the aim to photograph previously chosen historical monuments in order to create a visual inventory. The venture was very much an experimental project and its primarily intention was to protect France's historical heritage from decay and the threat of industrialisation. With the creation of a photographic archive the commission intended to lay the foundations for the restoration of the depicted monuments. Under the guidance of the architect Viollet Le Duc, the Historic Monuments Commission proposed the restoration of the monuments into their original 'style'. Seen today the historical interest of these 1851/52 photographs is to assess the monuments before the 'restoration' and acknowledge the impact of the nineteenth century restoration. However, after a few *missions* the project was discontinued for no apparent plausible reason.

The photographs that survived were rooted on a *picturesque* tradition, a trend well established among topographical picture makers.[16] Painting, lithography and illustration were the artistic background of the photographers active in early 1850s Paris. Such was the case of Gustave Le Gray, Charles Négre and Henri Le Secq, who all worked at Paul Delaroche's studio; Edouard Baldus worked as a portraitist and Charles Marville had previously been an illustrator and a painter.

When seen today, the Calotypes salted paper prints from paper negatives resemble drawings more than contemporary photographs. The technical constraints of the photographic materials of the time can be seen in the reproduction of the darkened areas i.e. shadow detail, or in their inability to reproduce the sky's tonality.[17]
Laura Mulvey suggests that analogue photographs appear to us under an uncanny cast, as an encoded emanation of a past reality. Reinforced by the context of digital technology, it is not only the subject depicted that is from the past, the technology itself is the past.[18]

The first mass audience event where photographs were used in large numbers was the Universal Exhibition of Paris in 1855. Commissioned and acquired by government agencies and major industrialists, photographs were shown in the form of prints, albums or reproduced as lithographs.[19] Broadly these images fell into what was classified as the *artistique/industrielle*. It forwarded an interest and a market for a commercial genre of photography that included architectural and engineering works. New technology and new materials were employed, usually in a grand scale, in the restoration of monuments, new buildings, major public infrastructures, urban renewal and transport.

From the late 1850s onwards the establishment of a variety of photographic landscape practices occurred in parallel with a fundamental change in the ontological character of photography: the reinforcement of its mechanical nature. Technical advancements with the introduction of the Wet Collodion Process made the printing of the photographs look like machine-made images, which reinforced their singularity, increased their circulation and created a boom in their commercial potential. Invented in 1851 by Frederick Scott Archer, the Wet Collodion Process supplanted all other existing techniques - daguerreotype, calotypes and albumen.

These improvements added extreme detail to the photographs while improving the reproduction of the half-tones. It was the most sensitive photographic process, eclipsed only by the faster and more easily operated Gelatine Dry Plate in 1880.[20] Joel Snyder argues that from this moment onwards there was the 'evolving belief that photographs were different from other types of pictures'.[21]

Throughout the Second Empire's urban renewal of Paris, photographs played a multiplicity of roles assisting architects, sculptors and builders in regard to architectural ornaments and detail, which was particularly significant as the venture evolved into a historical revivalism.[22] As documents for specialists, photographs operated as cumulative empirical data, securing evidence and scientific value under the demands of the positivist grid; as propaganda tools, they trespassed the field of the expert, forwarding an ideal of urban modernity. In her seminal book *Parisian Views,* Shelley Rice asserts that the transcription of Haussmann's city into a photographic image happened promptly:

> Everything (…) became an open-ended perspective, a point of view that could
> be captured, piecemeal, by a camera; and the sum total of the photographs
> that exist leave us with a broken narrative whose meanings have been built for
> us only in this multiplicity of subjective fragments.[23]

The photographs of Tour Saint- Jacques de Boucherie – a case study

The tower of Saint- Jacques de Boucherie epitomizes mid-nineteenth century practices on matters of urbanism and the historic monument in Paris. Therefore a set of photographs of the tower, made between 1852 and 1858, will operate as a case study to discuss the visual types of early architectural photographs.

Situated along the Avenue Victoria and Rue du Rivoli, closer to the cross with the Boulevard Sébastopol, part of the medieval church of Saint-Jacques de Boucherie, the tower was built in the sixteenth century (1508-1522) attributed to Jehan de Felin. Sold to a private investor in 1797, under the de-sacralisation of the French Revolution, the church was demolished shortly after.

The tower was rescued due to the efforts of government architect Pierre Giraud and listed 'historic' together with other Gothic buildings under the rubric of 'monuments to be conserved for aesthetic reasons'. He argued that the tower had artistic and practical value: a 'pure' Gothic style and its great heights could be used for 'geographic operations'.[24]

When a monument was listed as 'historic' it was avowed with a kind of neutral status, a practice that enabled them to declare the classical and early medieval monuments erected before France was a country as 'national symbols'. Therefore the categorization of architectural styles that correspond to historic periods, together with nationalist romantic ideals, sought to forge a unity between aesthetics, architecture and history. Vidler points out that since then monuments became a kind of 'natural' language expressing the culture of an entire 'people'.[25]

Thus the recovery of Saint-Jacques de Boucherie tower has to be framed within the nationalistic expectations of Napoleon and the need to correct some of the excesses of the revolution that culminated with the demolition of the church. Other aspects also played a significant role. Since the late eighteenth century the tower was extensively represented through diverse visual media. Certainly this vast iconography helped to establish its symbolism as a historic monument. In fact, the first impulse of historical heritage was iconographical representation, as monuments were rescued for posterity in drawings and engravings. These images strengthened the tie between architecture and memory and could be understood against Ruskin words: "We may live without architecture, and worship without her, but we cannot remember without her."[26]

In the case of Tour Saint- Jacques de Boucherie its image surpassed its original religious function as part of a medieval church. The photographs helped to secure the tower a place in Parisians' collective memory as a civic secular historic monument.

This set of photographs from Tour Saint- Jacques de Boucherie, captured between 1853 and 1859, enliven the paradigms of early architectural photographs. They refer to the endurance of *Tour Saint- Jacques de Boucherie*, its rescue from demolition and its reinvention as a 'civic' and historic monument. This process occurred under the impetus of the Universal Exposition of 1855, as part of the Rue du Rivoli extension.
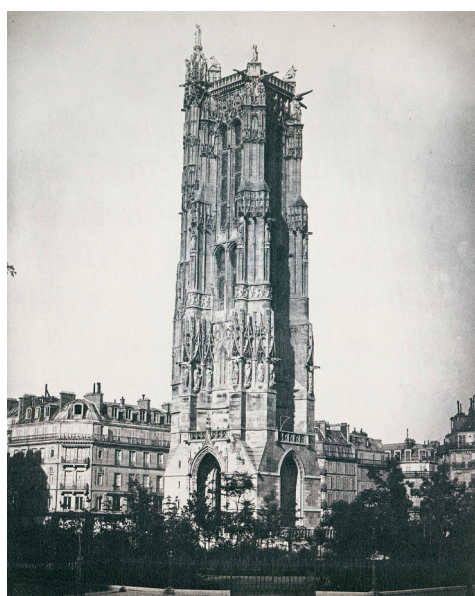
Assembled in a dialectical sense the photographs aim to re-enact a model of display broadly used in architecture, making it possible to trace and compare details between the different images over a time span of seven years.
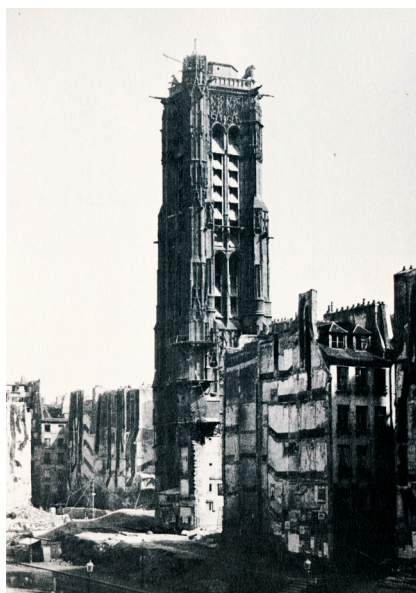
3.2.
Henri Le Secq. Tour Saint-Jacques
(facade facing Rue du Rivoli), Paris, 1853.

3.3.
Edouard Baldus. Tour Saint-Jacques, Paris, 1852/53.

3.4.
Gustave Le Gray .Tour Saint-Jacques, Paris, 1857/9.

3.5.
Edouard Baldus. Tour Saint-Jacques, Paris, ca.1858.

How do these photographs have a rapport to the ideological construction of historicism within architecture and urbanism? Affiliated with conventional visual types of representations of architecture prior to photography, as listed before, all four photographs share a similar formal composition: an architectural object in context, the tower placed at the centre of the frame and the vertical frame emphasising its height. We can trace the occurring events in the surrounding space of the tower, other than the architectural qualities of the object depicted, the photographs relate to a particular time and event.

The photographs differ in the viewpoints adopted. Two of them are elevated shots, the photograph by Henri Le Secq (figure 3.2) and the one by Edouard Baldus (figure 3.5). Whereas the other by Baldus (figure 3.3), and the Gustave Le Gray (figure 3.4) can be described as perspective shots.

As a compositional device the elevated shot operated as a kind of *ideal* viewpoint. Commonly the centre of the frame is adjusted with the mid-point of the building's façade, which facilitates an undistorted perspective in order to create a neutral mood. It ensures an unfamiliar point of view over the subject as well as guaranteeing a formal arrangement of all the elements within the frame.

Perspective shots are usually less formal in their composition. By positioning the camera at the eye level they recreate a pedestrian viewpoint, therefore providing a sense of presence to the viewer. In the case of the photograph produced by Le Gray it places us as pedestrians along Avenue Victoria.

The early 1850s photographs address the clearance of the medieval structures. The Henri Le Secq picture (figure 3.2) was part of *The Album Berger*, a survey of several major demolitions sites made from 1849 until 1853, under the commission of the Prefect of the Seine, Jean-Jacques Berger. As 'an elegy to disappearance' this album foretells the massive task that photography ought to perform under Haussman's plan.[27]

One of the facets of Paris's historical revivalism was the clearance of the surrounding structures of the monuments. Its aim was to create a *view* that allowed the restored buildings to be seen as detached from other non-historic urban fabrics. This effect of *dégagement* intended to enhance the monumental facet of the building through the creation of a scenographic space in its foreground to underscore its historical purity. Among many other monuments liberated from surrounding structures were the Arc de Carrousel, the Panthéon and Notre Dame.

In a photograph a clear and crisp view of a historic building detached from all the surrounding structures and obstacles achieved an iconic status that even reality itself could not fulfil. It redeemed the past as an image, rescuing for the present a vivid impression of history.

Edouard Baldus removed the photograph of the demolition phase (figure 3.3) from his commercial folio. He replaced the image in 1858 with the latest version of the completed tower.[28] We can speculate that this move was motivated by commercial intentions. The elevated shot of the new urban icon was a more desirable image, one that could operate as an aspirational image of the emerging nineteenth century urban modernity. In fact Le Gray and Baldus's late 1850s photographs were produced under their own commercial initiative, whereas the early pictures were institutional commissions. [29] The later images depicted the tower after Théodore Ballu's restoration, attesting its shift in meaning and function and its reinvention as an urban icon, from a church tower into a gothic obelisk.[30]

Among French architects there was a belief that a single view of a monument could summarize a 'phase of history (…) its physiognomy, its meaning, its majesty, and its overwhelming presence'.[31] So photographs with their indexical attributes, and their mass circulation, condensed this effect and made them last for posterity. Photographs projected Paris as a site of modernity, where its past could be seen through its renewed historic monuments. The photographs emphasize the city as a plateau in which the icons of the past, the monuments, come into view as an image of harmony and order. The monuments depicted, either restored or recently built, could be regarded as objects belonging to a non-specific historical time, inscribed with symbolic meaning.

In a semantic reading of the city Barthes refers that the functions of a city centre are constantly revised:

> …not only because of the weight and pressure exerted by history, but because, precisely the signifieds are like mythical beings, of an extreme imprecision (…) at a certain moment they always become the signifiers of something else; the signifieds pass, the signifiers remain.[32]

Therefore these photographs avowed the authority of historicism, forwarding a narrative of continuous progress grounded on positivist science and secular values. In matters of architecture and urbanism they endured the visual archetypes of the topographic and architectural rendering, prior to the appearance of photography. Thus from late 1850s onwards photographs became more persuasive than drawings, blending the impression of truth with the possibility of witnessing time, acting as a 'mirror with a memory'.[33]
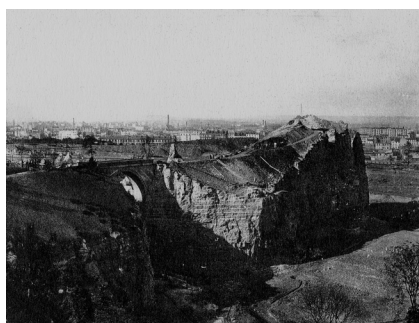
3.6.
Charles Marville, La Trinité Church.

3.7.
Charles Marville, Urinal, Boulevard Saint-Martin.

3.8.
Charles Marville, Boulevard Haussmann,
close to rue Mogador.

3.9.
Charles Marville, Buttes-Chamont Park.
View towards La Villette.

3.10.
Charles Marville, Rue d'Orleans (demolished),
viewed from the rue Babille (demolished)
towards rue Saint Honoré.

3.11.
Charles Marville, demolitions works clearing space for
l'avenue de l'Opera, from rue St. Augustin, aprox. 1877.

3.12.
Charles Marville, Rue des Écoles, viewed from
boulevard Saint-Michel, aprox. 1877.

Charles Marville's street photographs: place, time and historical narrative

In1856 Charles Marville was appointed as a photographer of Paris - *Photographe de la Ville de Paris*. Thereafter and over a period of twenty years he photographed an immense range of urban subjects commissioned by various council departments and in straight collaboration with architects, builders and urban planners. These photographs seemed to cover almost every architectural feature, building or urban object due to be altered, removed or renewed in the city: historic monuments during and after the restoration, new monuments, areas slated for demolition, the demolitions themselves, the new streets, parks, fountains, sculptures and urban furniture such as street lamps, urinals and kiosks.[34]

Today these photographs are dispersed through several archives, libraries and museums.[35] Therefore it has to be taken into consideration that assembling some of these photographs together is always an act of relocation, which carries its own fragilities and contradictions.

Through Marville's photographs, we can address and discuss various facets of the rendering of the urban subjects when we contrast his early pictures of the monuments from the 1850s with the street photographs from the mid to late 1860s. Most of the photographs of monuments fall into the predominant canon of the architectural rendering - as discussed previously in relation to the photographs of Tour Saint-Jacques de Boucherie, elevated views isolate the subject from its context, unveiling a particular care for formal composition. Whereas in the 1860s photographs of the streets, taken before and after the demolitions, he sought and established a new mode of approaching the subjects.

A list of Marville's Parisian photographs can be drawn considering subject approach and image composition:

- objects detached from context – the monuments;
- objects partially in reference to the context – urban furniture, sculptures, fountains, street lamps;
- views – parks and gardens;
- the subject as context – the old streets, vertical shots;
- time events – demolitions, in progress;
- the space as subject – the boulevard, horizontal views.

The list reveals how Marville approaches subject and image composition in order to suit each commission. It results in a catalogue of visual archetypes of the rendering of the landscape, the architectural and the urban; ranging from the classical perspectives of historic monuments which can be seen as picturesque, to the topographical approach of the new gardens, or the typological method to depict urban furniture. Later the seemingly banal ground shots of the old neighbourhood streets and the boulevards were commonly grouped as urban survey.

Ground level shots were Marville's predominant feature, mapping a distinct approach from architecture's pictorial conventions or the topographical views of the time. The former usually implied an unfamiliar points of view, whereas the ground level shots disclosed the common view of the pedestrian, and in aspects of composition and subject approach they were less formal.

Marville's street photographs are the locus of this argument. They result from different commissions by the *Service des Travaux Historiques* , since 1865, which led him to photograph the soon to be demolished or refurbished streets of the old medieval neighbourhoods. Later in other assignments he depicted the demolition sites and the newly completed boulevards.[36]

The photographs of the streets from the old medieval neighbourhoods clearly exceed their inventory role, which other Marville Parisian photographs seemed to inhabit. They shape a paradigm of the urban survey photographic genre, a fact that this thesis will try to demonstrate primarily by tracing how historiography readings mould the way these photographs were perceived, then by examining the photographs themselves and proposing further possibilities for their understanding.

Considering that Marville's photographs of the old streets were made in close collaboration with a myriad of institutional agents, architects, planners, builders, archivists and historians, they are inevitably tied up with Haussmann's ideological milieu. Aimed to be tools for expertise, the photographs were produced as a response to empirical aspects of the urban project, fact gathering or subject driven, though they had further aims to be archived as historical documents that could help the writing of the future history of the city. [37]

Bringing together time and space in a unique manner, Marville's street photographs for the *Service des Travaux Historiques* ascertain a linear sense of history. Creating a unique visual chronicle, the photographs cover the three phases of the renewal, the *a priori* or the 'then was', the demolition sites during the works, and after the conclusion of the new boulevards. As historical documents they are dispersed through diverse institutions and museums, a fact that highlights their fragmentary condition. Subjected to multiple historiography interpretations these photographs operate as sites of allegorical projection.[38]

3.13.
Charles Marville, Rue Childebert, from rue d'Erfurth towards rue Sainte-Marthe.

The vanished streets of medieval Paris are the most recognised and studied area of Marville's work. Widely published and included in major art exhibitions, these photographs are widely praised by the history of art formalism approach and within architecture and urbanism expertise.[39] In the former they appear as master works from the photographer, as art objects, whereas in the latter they are valued as visual emanations of the Haussmann project - 'les images en elle-mêmes de l'oeuvre d'Haussmann'.[40]

Photographs of vanished places usually carry a nostalgic tone; in regards to Marville's images, this aura was apparent through formalist discourses. Beaumont Newhall saw them as 'the melancholy beauty of a vanished past', whereas Herschman praises Marville's sympathetic views of the old neighbourhood, due to his keen interest on the subject.[41] John Szarkowski hails Marville's old Paris photographs for their foresight of a forgotten subject. Misplacing the fact that these were commissioned photographs, he deliberately ignored their original rhetorical task as part of an archive. They were included in the seminal exhibition, *Photography Until Now* that MOMA hosted and organized in1989 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of photography.

In the catalogue's text Szarkowski remarks that these photographs were the result of the personal will of the photographer:

> Charles Marville constructed a vision of nineteenth-century Paris that presents to us a silent epitome of civilized life: a great city, filled with delights, in which we-one by one-are the only inhabitant. He bypasses the great monuments and the famous boulevards, and gives us instead shopping streets and suburban roads, framed with so lively a sense of ingenuous virtue, and recorded in so pure morning light, that his pictures persuade us that these places are our forgotten childhood home.[42]

Praising the aesthetic qualities of the pictures and the historical relevance of the subject, these formalistic readings dismiss the institutional framework that made the making of the photographs possible. They inscribe onto the photographs an aura of virtue, ingenuity and original intent, by relocating them on the aesthetic domain, reinforcing their artistic potential and erasing their archival weight. Those historiographical interpretations opened a wider field for the circulation of these photographs as master works of nineteenth-century photography, the result of an artistic practice though they deliberately ignored and misplaced Marville's other Parisian photographs.

Critical theory claimed the need to relocate the study of photographs according to their historical framework. It states the fact that there is no photography 'as such', that is, absent of cultural and ideological apparatus or removed from an institutional framework. Such a stance made possible a further understanding of the photographs' transversal role by acknowledging their polysemic condition, either within the silence of the archive or the lights of the museum wall.

In the seminal article *Photography Discursive Spaces,* Rosalind Krauss criticizes how art history recreated nineteenth century topography/survey photographs as museum artefacts. Krauss reclaimed that nineteenth-century photographs should be studied in their historical context, the archive, instead of the museum wall. She affirms institutional practices – in specific reference to MOMA - misplaced the original discursive spaces of the photographs.[43]

Hence any investigation into the historical value of nineteenth century topographic/survey urban photographs has to acknowledge the impact of the diverse historiography models and discourses upon the way in which these photographs are perceived today. Therefore the study of Marville's photographs must consider their multiple discursive spaces: their institutional intent, as archival documents; their historical significance, in relation to the subjects depicted; and their dispersed allegorical condition, mostly asserted by narrow formalistic historiography constructions. Its primary historical condition was sustained by the ontological claim that photographs could perform as authentic documents. In their *effet de réel*, they were meant to forward a realistic representation of the subject, which the institutional act of montage within the archive upgrades and perpetuates.

Beyond their status as documents, Marville's photographs operated in several other domains. Throughout their validation as artistic historical objects, as the expression of a specific art medium, the photographs were published in art history books, exhibited in museums and commercially valued as historical prints in antiquarians and auction houses. They were also printed as postcards to be sold as tourist souvenirs and became accessible through a diversity of websites.

Throughout these different media the photographs of the streets play a multiplicity of roles within the collective memory of Paris. Attaining a symbolic meaning that refers to the historical in a broader and abstract sense, they become recognised and praised as historical. Although its wide publication and circulation surely erases their representational status in reference to a specific social and historical context, they become images of vanished places, glimpses of an era, like mythical images from a remote past.

Thus, memory itself is built upon diffuse fragments of time in relation to particular places or events. History and memory complement and contradict themselves, as Pierre Nora states, 'history is perpetually suspicious of memory and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it'.[44] How urban, landscape and architectural photographs contribute to the ambiguities between personal and collective memory and history is a critical question of the thesis, which will be the matter of a further discussion in chapter four.

Les Rues; to be demolished

In 1865, when major demolitions were extended to a large perimeter of the city centre, Marville was commissioned by the *Service des Travaux Historiques* to photograph the places to be demolished. Working in straight collaboration with the council planners, Marville depicted each street to be demolished or renewed.

Within three years he created *L'Album du Vieux Paris*, which included 425 photographs. Under a methodical and systematic approach, he photographed each street or location twice from different angles, predominantly shot from a low viewpoint and vertical perspective.[45]

3.14.
Charles Marville, Rue Mauconseil,
viewed from the rue Montorgeil.

3.15.
Charles Marville, Rue Mauconseil,
viewed from the rue aux Ours.

A permanent feature is the use of the foreground as a compositional device, establishing a kind of a pattern that invites the viewer to enter the space of the photograph. The foreground acts as a stage where the buildings seem to operate as a backdrop scenario allowing a certain perception of scale. The camera is either positioned in the middle of the street or closer to one of its sides; either way it always reveals both sides of the street. A sense of enclosure is commonly given by a building or a wall located in the background blocking the axis of the composition. Therefore the foreground appears as an open ground, which is locked or comprised by the old buildings. Somehow these photographs seem to emphasize the material resistance of the old city to transformation. Focused on surveying the soon to disappear urban structures, the centre of the photograph usually indicates the route of the future street or road, anticipating a non-visible axis.

Deliberately avoiding any signs of human activity, Marville reinforced the urban fabric itself as subject matter with street pavements, buildings and written signs. Grounded in a descriptive mood, in these photographs the subject is the urban space as a whole. There are no predominant elements as each structure or sign seems to fit the composition, without standing out from the others. It was a matter of defining a pattern of approach to the subject, allowing the images to describe the space and scale of the urban fabric, identifying structures and obstacles.

As viewers, we 'enter' the photographs as pedestrians, walking along the streets, detaining ourselves according to our interests within each scenario. Additionally, these motionless images often concealed their scope; at first sight the level of destruction that will take place in each of these spaces is not at all evidenced, provoking questions: is it a partial or a total demolition?; A new street or an enlargement of the existing one? Without the aid of the map and the photographs of the post-demolition sites the photographs of the old streets seem to obscure their intents.

Consequently the meaning of the photographs is gauged from the relation of the parts to the whole. One can speculate that within the archive each individual image could be related to its subsequent one, or to a small group, creating an enclosed sequence. In reference to a specific location, a neighbourhood, the photographs could be seen against maps, drawings, metric plans and topographic surveys.

Each photograph remains a text without a narrative, 'a set of spatial and temporal fragments that function cumulatively, outside language, to convey an aspect of place, unlabelled and unmarked their significance is ambiguous'[46]. Seen together, they unveil a contradiction in terms, creating a historical narrative which associated place and time, yet they also forward and discuss the impossibility of representing a city through photographs. Photographs are as fragmentary and cumulative as the cities themselves, a photographic map seems an incomplete task.

3.16.
Charles Marville, Passage de l'Opera, viewed from the
rue Le Peletier towards rue Drouot.

3.17.
Charles Marville, Passage de l'Opera,
galerie du Baromètre. View towards le boulevard dês Italiens
(Boulevard Haussmann).

If these photographs played their supportive role to planners, architects and builders, it would be their historical condition that asserts their most accomplished performance. They kept alive parts of a city that do not exist anymore, and, in their ambiguity they performed a decisive role in the discussion of the Haussman project.

To carefully preserve what one intends to demolish seems a contradictory state of affairs. This kind of ambivalent reading of the past was central to the operative mode of the *Service du Travaux Historiques* and to all of Haussmann's ventures. Marville's photographs of the Old Parisian streets were meant to be archaeological artefacts, to be preserved as documents. And within the discipline of the archive both subject and image were inscribed with a specific historical meaning.

Thus, what is the prevailing 'historic' trait in Marville's Old Paris photographs? The nostalgic loss of the medieval city or the decadent and unhealthy inner city space? What seems to overcome all the hypothetical readings of these photographs is their allegorical facet. According to Owens, the two fundamental impulses of allegory are the 'conviction of the remoteness of the past, and a desire to redeem it to the present'.[47] While merging the gap between the present and the past these photographs rescue from 'historical oblivion' what in fact disappeared.

It seems that the only truthful way to access these places is through the photographs themselves. In fact the photographs become themselves the place - *Old Paris /Paris Disparu,* a lost place recreated by a sequence of photographs. Onto these narrow and dark streets we can project our nostalgic dreams of a vanished world, or recall the insalubrious and precarious living conditions of these neighbourhoods.

3.18.
Charles Marville, Rue du Four-Saint Germain
(Rue du Four) viewed from the rue Bonaparte towards West.

3.19.
Charles Marville, Rue Bernard-Palissy, from rue l'Égout
(demolished).

Transient events and ephemeral spaces

Marville's photographs of the demolition sites postdate the Second Empire. Thézy dates them around the mid-late1870s, meant to be part of an official album that the council administration showed at the Universal Exhibition of 1878 in Paris.[48]
Addressing an unusual moment the photographs of the demolition sites are staged events. They rehearsed a disparate moment, recreating the chaotic atmosphere of demolitions in an idiosyncratic way. The building sites are at once a landscape view and the backdrop for a collective portrait.

Again the foreground is a pivotal element in the composition of the photographs.
Marville sets up the camera in order to include two topographic references. One refers to the pre-existing landscape, either the cobblestones of the old street pavement or the old buildings as the backdrop. The other denounces the soon to be boulevard, either by positioning the camera in the axis of the new avenue or by including a new building in the background – i.e. as seen on the set of photographs of the demolitions to pierce the Avenue du Opera .[49]

All the figures in these photographs pose for the camera: workers, builders, drivers from the transport carriers, and passers-by, standing where they supposedly were working or just constructing a pose up on a rooftop, on top of a pile of waste bricks, looking up from a massive crater or next to a transport carrier.

3.20.
Charles Marville, demolitions works clearing space for l'avenue de l'Opera, on the right side the buildings of Rue d' Argenteuil, aprox.1877.
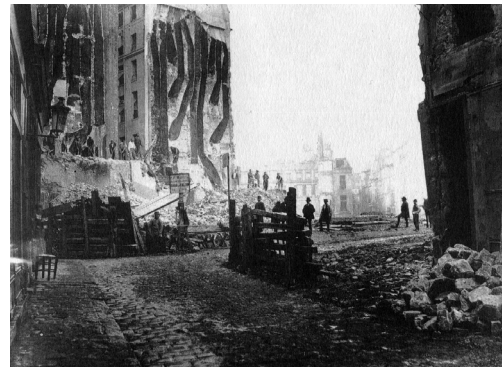
3.21.
Charles Marville, demolitions works clearing space for l'avenue de l'Opera, view from Rue des Orties (demolished), aprox. 1877.

Predominantly these photographs are horizontal views. They expose the building sites as a rehearsed spectacle. A transitional and unique space that only the photographs seemed able to represent accurately, the images are a slice of time between the 'then' of the old and the aftermath of the new boulevard.[50]

These photographs could be more emphatic in their recreation of the grandiose view, for example when compared with other photographs from Baldus. In the latter the demolition sites were depicted from a higher point of view emphasising the scale of the event.[51] In Marville's photographs it is the subject as factual that seems to perform such a task.

In their operative role the demolitions photographs claimed the notion of political wisdom associated with modernity. However, in nineteenth century Paris demolitions were not unanimously perceived as a sign of progress. They were meant to remove and relocate populations, trades, social communities, interrupt and suspend city life, erasing personal and collective memories and public places. In urbanism as theory, modernity implies optimism and the promise of a better future associated through the change of the urban features - architecture and the landscape. These photographs highlight the massive scale of the enterprise and the immensity of resources allocated, acting as propaganda for the present and historical documents for the future.[52]

Vues administratives, par M.Marville[53]

The album *Travaux* gathers the photographs of Marville's last commission, around 1876/77, just before his death which occurs presumably in 1878.[54] It includes photographs of the new boulevards together with others from the city's outskirts referring to places that would be part of the urban renewal.

The new boulevards photographs are the foremost ideologically engaged of Marville's commissioned projects, most likely due to the visual composition adopted, which forms a kind of a pattern that persists in each picture. Together with the absence of the nostalgic aura as featured in the old streets photographs, these pictures of the new boulevards are systematic as if they were *vues administratives*, as Marville's work was commonly described by then.[55]

Instead of the vertical compositions, predominant in the photographs of the old neighbourhoods, in the boulevards Marville opts for horizontal ground level shots and wide views in which the new urban space is eulogized; at times the camera is positioned on the axis of the street, securing a perspective view of the boulevard. In the intersection between boulevards, a carrefour, he opts to depict each one of the intersections, building a kind of a photographic map.

The photographs deliberately avoid any element of daily life, such as pedestrians or traffic. In their motionless and lifeless creations these images replicate the mode and the approach of the photographs from the old neighbourhoods, concentrated upon space and structures.

Working with long exposure times, Marville erased all the moving subjects from his photographs. At times small traces of activity appear, streetcars or even human figures, although always blurred and imperceptible in their full form. He deliberately waited for the moment where nothing or no one could dismantle this emptiness. In their quiet and silent flow these photographs created a non-existent city.

3.22.
Charles Marville, Rue de Lisbonne.
Viewed from the rue de Courcelles, aprox. 1877.

3.23.
Charles Marville, Rue de Rome,
viewed from bouvelard des Batignolles, aprox. 1877.

3.25.
Charles Marville, Boulevard Haussmann.
Viewed from l'avenue de Friedland, aprox. 1877.

3.24.
Charles Marville, Boulevard Haussmann,
towards West, aprox. 1877.

As a set of dissimilar views of the new boulevards, in these photographs the buildings seem to operate as if architectural models, or backdrop elements, cutting the foreground space and asserting scale onto the photographs. Ultimately they conceal parts of the older fabric of the city that remained untouched, propelling an image of uniformity and visual order. They allow the contrast of architectural elements and street space, in each individual photograph, and between them.

In most of the new boulevards photographs the foreground is more emphasized than in the old streets vertical views. Affirming a sense of *'freiflach'* , a void, a notion of open space, which was 'not laid out for visual or ceremonial effect as in the Baroque, but simply for the negative reason that they are not to be filled in'.[56] Francoise Choay argues that Haussmann's urban *regularization* also conveyed the institutional intention that the demolition of the old city would open space for circulation, military troops, commercial goods, tourists and locals. It is the space of the boulevard that is the main subject of the photographs, stressing a wide and infinite perception of an immense and endless city.[57]

A late 1870s anonymous photograph of a boulevard shot from an elevated point propelled a perception of urban modernity more attractive than Marville's idiosyncratic boulevard views. The image conveys movement, the flow of traffic and pedestrians as it seems to attempt to melt the endless perspective of the boulevard with the city's daily life. While this elevated view forwards the perception that all the elements within the photograph have a fixed role, Marville's empty boulevards gave us, as observers, several possibilities to enter the photographs. We can position ourselves as pedestrians accessing a view from a fixed point, look around and compare details in all the surrounding structures, measuring them against each other. Conversely we could step back and perceive the space proposed by the photographs as scenarios to be filled, foreseeing these locations before being inscribed on the city map.

3.26.
Anon. Boulevard Montmartre, in late 1870s.

A photographic place

Throughout their institutional/archival role, these photographs formulated a narrative inseparable from their ideological upbringing, at times becoming the image of history themselves.

In their ubiquitous condition Marville's street photographs feed a plurality of arguments that support dissimilar historiographical perspectives: either they are read as a sign of progress and modernity, or referred to the catastrophic moment that Haussmannization also was. In fact they played an instrumental role to successive council administrations after the dismissal of the Second Empire in 1870, mostly operating as persuasive tools sustaining the argument that evolved the maintenance of the Haussmann plan. Hence, these photographs heighten the separation of memory from fact, exposing the clash between the 'stasis of memory' and the speed of 'historical change'.[58]

Significantly Marville's commissioned works for the *Service des Travaux Historiques* became a blueprint for the use of photographs in urban renewal schemes. The format pioneered the close relationship between urbanism and photography, a series of photographs that documented the transformations of an urban space, linking space and time in reference to specific features of the plan. The format of the series and their archival condition, as visual documents, enhances the paradigm of the urban survey photographs which persisted and adapted to the far more complex exchanges between the photographic image and 'modern' urbanism and architecture.[59]

Further to the symbolic aura asserted by historiography, Marville's Parisian photographs created an allegorical place. Tangible to the real site, this photographic place includes locations that no longer exist and others that never existed as such. The demolitions sites depicted ceased to exist immediately after the shutter release, and the empty boulevards recreated in his photographs excluded the movement of daily life.

Although asserted by institutional settings, with archival and historical intent, Marville's Paris never existed as such. It is a place beyond the mere representational space of the photographs, and the cultural codes that avow meaning onto these photographs are constantly being reviewed and altered. Furthermore, Marville's street photographs are part of a corpus impossible to be read in its totality, since they are spread through several archives and collections.

They emerge from their archival condition in fragments, in different levels according to the specific formulation of each discourse, whether that be art history, critical theory, or within the expert domain of architecture and urbanism. Spread throughout a myriad of visual media these photographic fragments propel an image from a lost place, *Paris Disparu*, in the collective memory of Paris. This acknowledgment, together with their institutional existence, avows an historical status onto Marville's street photographs.

Emphatically the historical always implies the allegorical. Therefore, locating these photographs within the aesthetics of the allegorical means to acknowledge their contradictions; that is, to address them beyond a historicist mood, which sponsored them, inscribing the notion of the historical as both sequence and quotation. Incapable of restoring any untainted meaning into the original subject, Marville's photographs simultaneously conserved and destroyed the city. As allegories every so often, they signify precisely the 'nonbeing of what they present'.[60]

Presumably in 1877, Charles Marville took this photograph of Rue du Rivoli, looking towards the West. On the left side of the street we can catch a glimpse of the scaffoldings erected for the reconstruction of Hotel de Ville, the former location of the *Service des Travaux Historiques* . Its archive was destroyed in the fire that consumed the building in 1871, a consequence of the Commune upheaval a few months after the deposition of Napoleon III and the dismissal of the Second Empire.
A part of Marville's corpus of Paris photographs were lost forever.
In a further distance, as well on the left side of the street, we grasp the silhouette of the Tour Saint-Jacques de Boucherie.

3.27.
Charles Marville, Rue de Rivoli, viewed towards the Hôtel de Ville, 1877.

1   Máxime du Camp as quoted by Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, (Cambridge, Mass.; London, 1999), p 14.

2   Anthony Vidler, 'Space, Time and Movement', In: *At the end of the century : one hundred years of architecture*. Russell Ferguson (ed.) (Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Los Angeles, 1998), pp 100-26, p 102.

3   Raymond Williams, *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society* (London: Fontana Press, 1988), p 147.

4   Anthony Vidler, 'Space, Time and Movement', p 102.

5   Vidler, 'Space, Time and Movement', p 101.

6   As quoted by Anthony Vidler, *Architectural Uncanny : essays in the modern unhomely* (MIT Press; Cambridge, Mass. ; London 1992), p 177.

7   Siegfried Kracauer, 'Photography ', In: Alan Trachtenberg, (ed.), *Classic Essays on Photography*, (Leete's Island Books, New Haven, Conn. , 1980), pp 245-268.

8   Francoise Choay, *The modern city: planning in the 19th century* (London: Studio Vista; 1969), p10.

9   Choay, *The modern city: planning in the 19th century*, p10.

10 Robert Fishman refers to the Palais Royal as the 'archetypal upper class apartment dwelling that the duke of Orléans built as profitable speculation behind his own palace'. Robert Fishman in *Bourgeois Utopias, The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*, (Basic Books, New York, 1987), p 109.

11 Anthony Vidler, *Architectural Uncanny: essays in the modern unhomely* (MIT Press; Cambridge, Mass. ; London, 1992), p 179.

12 In *Historique générale de Paris I* (Paris:Imprimerie Impériale,1866) pp 9-13, as quoted in Maria Morris Hambourg, *Charles Marville, photographs of Paris at the time of the Second Empire on loan from the Musee Carnavalet, Paris* (French Institute/Alliance Francaise; New York, 1981), p 9.

13 In 1841 Fox Talbot introduced a positive/negative photography process. A piece of paper was brushed with weak salt solution, dried, then brushed with a weak silver nitrate solution, dried, making silver chloride in the paper. This made it sensitive to light, and the paper ready for exposure. This might take half an hour, giving a print-out image. It was fixed in strong salt solution - potassium iodide of hypo.

The following year Fox Talbot succeeded in improving the "photogenic drawing" process, renaming it the Calotype. He discovered that if he added gallic acid, the paper became more sensitive to light, and it was no longer necessary to expose it until the image became visible. With further treatment of gallic acid and silver nitrate, the latent image would be developed.To make a print, the negative was placed on top of more photo paper, laid flat in a glass frame, and allowed to develop in sunlight. Compared with the daguerreotype, the Calotypes were less sensitive to light and their image had less detail. The fact that the paper was used as a negative lessened the detail of the pictures. However it had the advantage of making an unlimited number of prints from one negative.
In http://www.rleggat.com/photohistory/history/calotype.htm

14   A clear account of the nineteenth-century urbanism is given by Francoise Choay, in *The modern city: planning in the 19th century,* p 7-15.

15   Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the observer: on vision and modernity in the nineteenth century* (MIT Press; Cambridge, Mass. ; London, 1990), p13.

16   Lithography was by then the main medium to mechanically reproduce topographical views. One of the foremost influential topographical lithography works was Charles Nodier's and Baron Taylor's *Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France*. It was first published in 1820 and ceased in 1878; it aimed to record architectural monuments and significant scenery of France. Commonly the images on these topographical lithographies ignored recent transformations or the impact of the Industrial Revolution upon urban landscape. They concentrated on a range of conventional subjects, exploring the possibility to recreate monuments and views from another historical time. See Eve Blau, 'Patterns of Fact: Photography and the Transformation of the Early Industrial City ', In: *Architecture and its Image*. Eve Blau and Edward Kaufman (eds.) (Canadian Centre for Architecture / The MIT Press; Montreal, 1989), pp 36-57, p 39.

17   In their research upon post-industrial landscapes Bernd and Hilda Becher reproduce some aesthetic facets of early architectural photographs, for example, the elevated shot, the position of the subject in the middle of the frame, and neutral skies that enhance the subject, which given a scenographic effect, the architectural objects become detached from their context. See Bernd Becher, Hilla Becher and Armin Zweite, *Typologies*, (Cambridge, Mass.; London, 2004).

18   Laura Mulvey, 'The Index and the Uncanny' in: *Time and the Image*. Carolyn Bailey Gill (ed.) (The Barber Institute's critical perspectives in art history series, Manchester University Press; Manchester, 2000), p139.

19 Elizabeth Anne McCauley, *Industrial Madness: Commercial Photography in Paris, 1848-1871* (Yale University Press; New Haven ; London, 1994), p197.

20 On the Wet Collodion Process see Helmut Gernsheim, *The Rise of Photography 1850-1880* (Thames and Hudson; London, 1988), p 9.

21 Joel Snyder, 'Territorial Photography', in *Landscape and Power*. W. J. Thomas Mitchell (ed.), (University of Chicago Press; Chicago, Ill.; London, 2002), pp 175-201.

22 See in reference to the tasks performed by Baldus photographs on the reconstruction of the Louvre, Barry Bergdoll, 'A Matter of Time: Architects and Photographers in Second Empire France', In: Malcolm R. Daniel, ed, *The Photographs of Édouard Baldus*, New York, 1994, pp 99-119.

23 Shelley Rice, *Parisian Views* (MIT Press; Cambridge, Mass. ; London, 1997), p18.

24 Lauren M. O'Connell, 'Afterlives of the Tour Saint-Jacques, Plotting the Perceptual History of an Urban Fragment', *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 60, no. No. 4, Dec., 2001 2001, pp 450-73.

25 Vidler, 'Space, Time and Movement', p 102.

26 As quoted by O'Connell, 'Afterlives of the Tour Saint-Jacques, Plotting the Perceptual History of an Urban Fragment', p 453.

27 Shelley Rice, *Parisian Views* (MIT Press; Cambridge, Mass. ; London, 1997), p 12.

28 Bergdoll, 'A Matter of Time: Architects and Photographers in Second Empire France', p 108.

29 Eugenia Parry, *The photography of Gustave Le Gray* (Art Institute of Chicago and University of Chicago Press; Chicago ; London, 1987), p 114.

30 Theodore Ballu is one of the most important architects of Haussmann's enterprise. He completed Gau's Ste-Clotilde (1846–57), the first Gothic revival church in Paris, restored the Tour St-Jacques de la Boucherie (1854–58) and the St-Germain I'Auxerrois, (1858–63), Designed the church of La Trinité, in a Renaissance style (1861–7), and rebuilt the Hôtel de Ville, Paris (1874–82).

31 Bergdoll, 'A Matter of Time: Architects and Photographers in Second Empire France', p107.

32   Roland Barthes, 'Semiology and Urbanism', In *The Semiotic Challenge.* (University of California Press; Berkeley, California, 1994), pp191-201.

33   Heinrich Schwarz's article of 1949 "Art and Photography: Forerunners and Influences", quoted in Peter Galassi, *Before Photography: painting and the invention of photography* (The Museum of Modern Art New York; New York, 1981), p 12.

34   A noteworthy study on Charles Marville is Marie Thézy, *Marville : Paris* (Hazan; Paris, 1994). Thézy proposes to read Marville's photographs in a sequence that re-enacts their archival potential. Unveiling the operational mode of the photographer, the photographs are grouped by motif and subject interest: monuments, parks, urban furniture and streets – old and new.

35   A full list of institutions – archives, libraries and collections, that host Marville works is given in Thézy, *Marville: Paris*, p 723. In Paris the main institutions which hold Marville's pictures are the Bibliothèque Nationale, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, Archives photographiques de la Caisse nationale des Monuments historiques, Musée d' Orsay and Musée Carnavalet.

36   Thézy, *Marville: Paris*, pp 28-38.
      Only a few written documents remain from this collaboration due to the fact that the archives that host Marville's photographs and documents were destroyed in the fire that consumed Hôtel de Ville in 1871. On the aftermath of these events Marville photographed the shattered streets and neighbourhoods, including the Hotêl de Ville itself, which he depicted twice in ruins and later during its reconstruction – see figure 2.26.

37   Choay, *The modern city: planning in the 19th century,* p 18.
      Photographs were a second stage of the intervention following Haussmann's 'initial studies' – the Prefect's own expression. Choay wrote: "…he examined his object of study in relation to two coordinates - time and space - and his first step on entering the Hotel de Ville was to have drawn up a detailed and accurate plan of the whole city, the first of its kind. This year long operation included a plan metric survey by triangulation as well as a topographical survey. When the surveys were completed, he had the plan engraved on large sheets, to the scale of 5/1000. The sheets were mounted on canvas and juxtaposed on a frame on wheels, forming a screen which never left his office."

38   Thézy, *Marville: Paris*, p 723.
     Thézy gives an extended account of the French institutions that hold
     Marville's photographs and the portfolios and subjects.
     The main institutions are, Archives photographiques de la Caisse nationale
     des Monuments historiques; Bibliothèque administrative de la Ville de
     Paris; Bibliothèque Nationale; Musée Carnavelet; Musée d'Orsay.

39   An immense array of books displays Charles Marville photographs:
     Helmut Gernsheim, *The Rise of Photography 1850-1880* (Thames and
     Hudson; London, 1988); Michel Frizot, *A new History of Photography*
     (Konemann; Koln, 1998); Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography
     from 1839 to the present day* (Museum of Modern Art, New York; New
     York, 1978).

40   Thézy, *Marville: Paris*, p 7.

41   Beaumont Newhall as quoted by Maria Morris Hambourg in *Charles Marville,
     photographs of Paris at the time of the Second Empire on loan from the Musee
     Carnavalet, Paris* New York, 1981, 7. Herschmann accounts on Marville in
     Cervin Robinson and Joel Herschman, *Architecture transformed : a history of the
     photography of buildings from 1839 to the present*, New York, 1987, pp 19-24.

42   Two Marville photographs were included in MOMA's, 1989 exhibition
     Photography Until Now curate by John Szarkowski, printed at the
     homonymous catalogue (Museum of Modern Art distributed by Bulfinch
     Press; New York, 1989), p 109.

43   Rosalind Krauss, 'Photography's Discursive Spaces', in Richard Bolton,
     ed, *The Contest of Meaning* (MIT Press, Cambrigde, Massachusetts,1999),
     pp 286-301. In the essay Krauss locates Atget's practice within nineteenth
     century urban survey photographs, as following Charles Marville
     photographs of Paris. She criticizes MOMA policies regarding the
     misplacing of historical photographs, in particular how the museum (re)
     created Atget as the quintessential *modern* photographer. The fourth
     chapter discusses in detail the historiographical readings of Atget's work.

44   Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History', in Jeannene Przyblyski,
     Vanessa Schwartz, eds, *The Nineteenth Century Visual Culture Reader*
     (Routledge, London 2004), pp 235-237, p 236.

45   Thézy, *Marville: Paris*, p 287-783. In the old streets photographs the areas
     depicted are shown in a map, which indicates the position of the camera of
     each one of the photographs.

46 Eve Blau, 'Patterns of Fact: Photography and the Transformation of the Early Industrial City ', In: *Architecture and its Image*. Eve Blau and Edward Kaufman (eds.) (Canadian Centre for Architecture / The MIT Press; Montreal, 1989), pp 36-57, p 42.

47 Blau, 'Patterns of Fact: Photography and the Transformation of the Early Industrial City ', p 53.

48 Thézy, *Marville: Paris*, p 287.

49 Thézy, *Marville: Paris*, p 444-449. It refers specifically to the photographs of the demolitions to clear the space for the Opera Avenue, as reproduced in Thézy's book.

50 See, in particular, *Eugéne Atget: Itenéraires parisiens,* (Editions des Musées de la Ville de Paris; Paris,1999) or in its English version, Eugene Atget and David Harris *Unknown Paris*, (The New Press; New York, 2003). Demolitions continue throughout the late nineteenth century and the twenty-century as Séraphin Médéric or Eugène Atget photographs bear witness. Séraphin Médéric worked for the *Commision des Monuments Historiques* from1875 onwards. Whereas Eugène Atget photographed Paris since 1899 until 1927 covering a substantial number of demolition sites.

51 See the demolition sites photographed by Baldus in Malcolm R. Daniel, *The photographs of Edouard Baldus*, (Metropolitan Museum of Art New York, 1994), p 98.

52 The discussion of the photographs of building sites as a projection will be extensive in the third chapter, in relation to the New Towns photographs of the Architectural Press Review at the RIBA.

53 As quoted by Thézy, *Marville: Paris*, p 35.
The expression 'vues administratives' was used in reference to Marville's photographs of the new boulevards by Alphonse Davanne, in *"Rapport sur la photographie à l'Exposition Universelle de Vienne en 1873"*, transcribed in the Bulletin de la Société française de photographie, 1875, pp 269-270.

54 Thézy, *Marville: Paris*, p 288-291.

55 Thézy, *Marville: Paris*, p 35.

56 Choay, *The modern city: planning in the 19th century*, p 18.

57 Choay, *The modern city: planning in the 19th century*, p 23.

58 Rice, *Parisian Views*, p 16.
Rice tags the photography of Haussmanization as a catastrophe: 'It is, perhaps, this separation of memory from fact, this demolition of the collective personal and public mythologies inherent in city spaces, that is the real tragedy, the "catastrophe" in the photography of Haussmannization. In a work like this one, the stasis of memory comes up against the crushing speed of historical change, and it is inevitably vanquished.'

59 A very good account on the role of the photographs in nineteenth century urban renewal schemes in Europe is given by Eve Blau, 'Patterns of Fact: Photography and the Transformation of the Early Industrial City ', p 36-57. Urban survey photographs played a pivotal role in last quarter of the nineteenth century under the urbanism 'culturalist model'. While campaigning for urban renewal schemes grounded on social aspects, the photographs denounced the negative impact of the industrial revolution upon cities and set the case for a new 'social' landscape. Most often they concentrated on the picturing of the 'then was' and very rarely the photographs cover the 'after was'. It was not a matter of depicting a process of change, where the past was used as a model, as it happened in Paris, it was a question of making visible the errors of the past in order to build a new future.
They diverge according to the specific constraints of each city, institution or entrepreneur that commissioned them. In the United Kingdom the Thomas Annan's album on the Glasgow closes, the pictures of James Burgoyne commissioned by the Council of Birmingham in 1875, and the Leeds Quarry Hill photographs discussed by John Tagg are good examples of urban survey pictures. After accomplishing its primary goal, as part of an argument for an urban improvement scheme, those photographs were indexed as documents in the local archive, read as historical images from the past and later converted in postcards or printed on local history books.

60 Walter Benjamin quoted in Eduardo Cadava, *Words of light : theses on the photography of history* (Princeton University Press; Princeton, N.J. ; Chichester, 1997), p 23.

4

THINGS IN THE FIELDS: HOUSES

Lfc595

Lfc531

Lfc760

Lfc678

Lfc598

Mfc402.10

Lfc586

Lfc679

Lfc547

Lfc539

Lfc590

Lfc735

Mfc224.5

Lfc7S2

Mfc325.10

Mfc325.7

5

THE
NEW TOWNS PROGRAMME IN THE
PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE ARCHITECTURAL PRESS

Visual types of architectural photographs
in Britain (1952-1992)
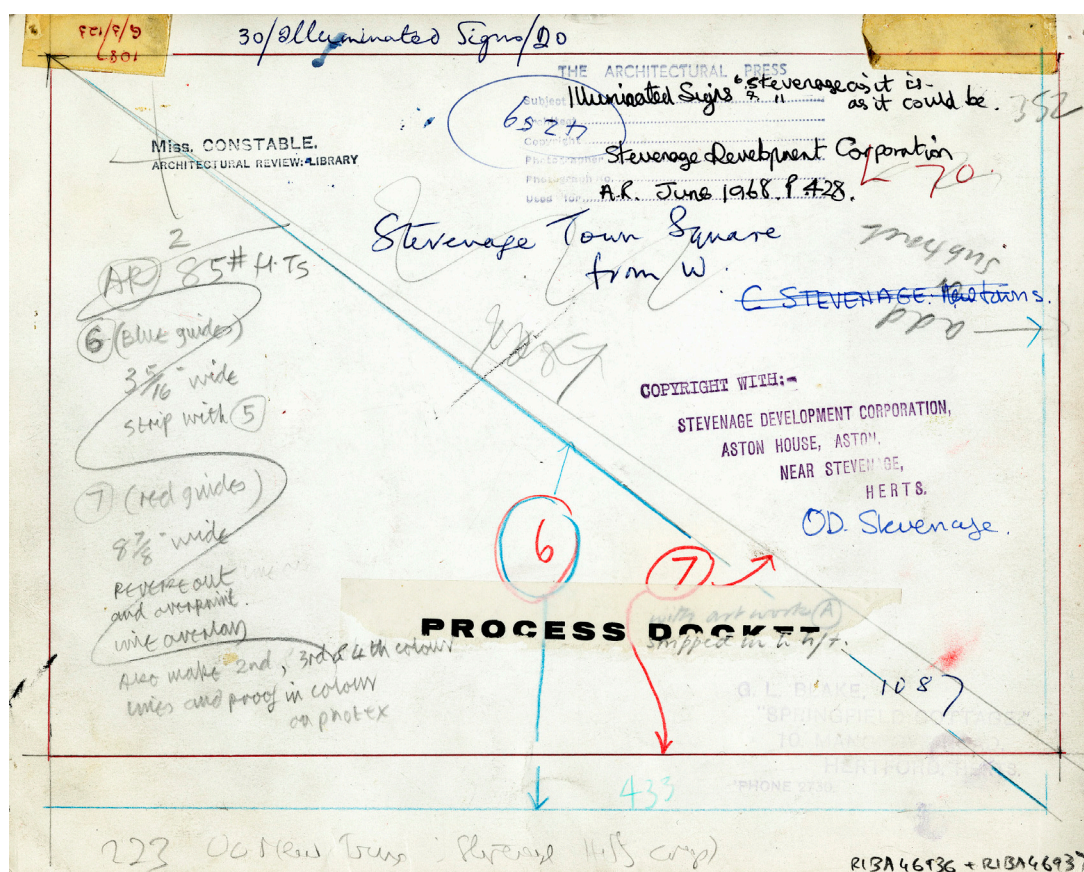
5.1.
Back of a photograph, supplied by the Stevenage Development Corporation, to the Architectural Press Archive,
RIBA Library Photographs Collection.

THE NEW TOWNS PROGRAMME IN THE
PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE ARCHITECTURAL PRESS
Visual types of architectural photographs in Britain (1952-1992)

From the mid to late 1850s onwards, the industrial dissemination of photography impacted significantly on the modes of representation of architecture and urban subjects, expanding their circulation mostly within the domain of the expert eye. However, only when half tone printing technique became available in the late nineteenth century did architectural and urban photographs become truly persuasive and influential.[1]
The printed photograph in the pages of specialised media signals the decisive moment of the dissemination of *modern* architecture; the term *modern* is employed in eclectic sense, taking into account Raymond William's definition, 'an improvement in art tendencies and writing between 1890-1940'.[2] In relation to the history of architecture, *modern* is often synonymous of a movement that had its heights in the inter war years.

Reyner Banham remarks that 'modern architecture' was the first movement in the history of art exclusively based on photographic evidence rather than on personal experience, drawings or conventional books. Since the early twentieth century, the iconic buildings of modern architecture were familiar to architects mostly from photographs printed in specialized journals and magazines. For that reason Banham considered that architectural production was no longer located on the building site but 'rather on immaterial sites of architectural publications, exhibitions, journals'.[3] Moreover, it is significant to place *modern* architectural photographs, as referred by Beatriz Colomina, within 'a series of overlapping systems of representation', where the object and the subject of the photograph, either a building or the urban landscape, begin to be valued as 'mechanisms of representation in their own right'.[4] This change on how photographs were used and perceived impacted significantly on their aesthetics. Incorporating the continuous shifts of what was understood and valued as *modern* in architecture, the photographs expanded the notion of the factual, both as a description and a document of the architectural object. Instead they (re)created modern architecture as an iconic/symbolic space.

From 1920 onwards the architectural and the urban became indistinguishable from their visual representations as printed media, photographs or moving images. In fact, through the engagement with the mass culture architecture became truly 'modern'.

The chapter begins by investigating the historical background that led to the emergence of the New Towns. It proceeds with an overview of the different phases of the program, discerning the options for studying these specific five New Towns. The core of the study traces the New Towns' archive photographs published in the pages of the Architectural Press publications, the *Architectural Review* and the *Architects' Journal* from 1952 until 1982. In order to understand how the New Towns were shown in these publications, a distinction has to be made regarding the editorial policies of the Architectural Press. Both publications started their production in 1896: the *Architectural Review* as a monthly magazine covering a wide range of subjects from British to international architecture, using up to date graphics and more picture orientated; the *Architects' Journal* as a weekly publication centred on more practical issues, such as building design and materials, construction technologies and expertise data. The photographs in the *Journal* were mostly used to supply information, in an illustrative/descriptive mode. Although photographs predominate, they were displayed alongside other visual media, such as drawings, plans and maps. It was the biggest selling architectural journal in Britain, circulating around 22,000 copies a week in the 1960s. The *Review* had editorial priority over the *Journal* and very recently, in 2009, the editorial boards of the two publications were merged.

The chapter closes with an analysis of other photographic architectural representations in Britain within the same time frame. It aims to situate the visual types of the historical photographs of the New Towns in relation to the debates that arose in the architecture domain from the early 1950s onwards. Concerning the *modern plan*, the functional city and the claims of architecture as a social engineering tool, a quarrel began that ultimately lead to the dismissal of the *modern* in architecture.

The aesthetic and the ideological roots of the New Towns

In the seminal manifesto *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, Ebenezer Howard forwards the idea of creating a new society grounded on cooperatives and self-governing commonwealths. Rooted within the later eighteenth-century's socialist-anarchist utopian ideals, he believed that technology and industrial progress could transform urban environments and ultimately create a new social order.

Peter Hall refers the impact of these anarchist roots on the planning movement:

> The vision of these anarchist pioneers was not merely of an alternative built
> form, but of an alternative society, neither capitalistic nor bureaucratic-
> socialistic: a society based on voluntary cooperation among men and women,
> working and living in small self-governing commonwealths. Not merely in
> physical form, but also in spirit (…) When, however, the time at last came
> for their ideals to be turn into bricks and mortar, the irony was that - more
> often than not - this happened through the agency of state bureaucracies,
> which they would have hated came about, how far it was responsible for the
> subsequent disillusion idea of planning (…).[5]

Describing how these anarchist ideals turned into reality, Hall terms it a 'rather
monstrous perversion of history'. In fact, the construction of the first Garden City
(Letchworth, in 1906) was only made possible due to the financial support of major
capitalists and reformist entrepreneurs. In fact, the economic scheme that supported the
first garden city was based on individual ownership through bank loans and mortgages,
a common practice in other suburban developments at the time. Howard accepted
this compromise because he believed that the edification of Letchworth would have
a symbolic outcome and motivate the appearance of other garden cities. However, in
Britain the interest in building other Garden Cities never took form and the second
city, Welwyn, was only begun in the late 1920s.[6] Since the very beginning of their
materialization, Howard's 'social' anarchist ideals were erased or disguised, superseded
by the appealing aesthetic qualities of his proposal.

More than a theory in urban planning the manifesto *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (1899)
is a cluster of utopian social expectations added with a geometric plan. Thus, Howard's
drawings and schemes had no particular architectural feasibility as an urban plan and
therefore were put aside by Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin, the architects/planners of
Letchworth. However, as a prototype Howard's utopian ideals were highly influential for
twentieth century urban planning. They led to the construction of garden cities in several
countries as well as to the creation of the Garden City Association, which had a pivotal role
in matters of town planning in Britain.

Suburbia and the harsh realities that lead to Welfarism

Since the last quarter of the nineteenth century and throughout the early decades of the twentieth century, the expansion of Britain's industrial cities was mostly made through suburban schemes. They were built around or close to transport infrastructures – rail tracks and main roads, and financed by private entrepreneurs according to their own commercial interests. This pattern of development reached its peak during the inter-war years (1918-1940). David Mattless points out that the suburb was 'not an entirely novel settlement form, but one moving down the class structure and growing on an unprecedented scale, built around new domestic technologies'.[7] On the outcome of this state of affairs, two main arguments emerged. The *Town and Country Planning Association* (formerly the *Garden City Association)* foresaw the garden city model of self-contained communities as the ideal settlement, blending the urban and the rural. On the other side was the *Council for the Preservation of Rural England*, which advocated that town and country had to be considered as opposite poles; whilst urbanism should prevail and preponderate in the town, the countryside should remain quintessentially rural.[8]

Although divergent, both parts were committed to the need for a 'National Plan' that could battle the 'inefficient of urban agglomerations' and put an end to the 'anarchy in our present surroundings'.[9] The split issues concerned the typology of the urban environment to be built, either high or low density blocks of flats or houses. These questions fed a permanent debate amongst entrepreneurs, politicians, architects and planners in Britain, throughout the war, the reconstruction at its end, and thereafter in the discussion of the New Towns' programme.

The 1929 economic crisis had a greatly negative impact on industrial production in the United Kingdom, affecting mostly the working class populations of Northern England and Wales, labelled by the government as 'distressed areas'. These circumstances led to the nomination of a Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population (1937), the Barlow Commission.[10] In its conclusion report, it stressed the disadvantages of the swollen cities, criticizing the insufficiency of the 1932 Town and Country Planning Act.[11]

Even before the destructive force of the Blitz, a conference took place at the University of Oxford in March 1941, under the title "Town and Country Planning after the War". Sponsored by the Town and Country Planning Association, it brought together the key figures in urban planning in the UK: pre-war campaigners, associations, architects and politicians.[12]

Frederic Osborn, by then the chairman of TCPA, was at the front line of the event. As an Ebenezer Howard disciple he had campaigned and lobbied for the garden city ideal for over thirty years. Thus, contrary to Howard's expectations on the individual and the cooperative association, Osborn foresaw that only through a state enterprise would it be possible to implement the garden city ideals.[13] Throughout the reconstruction debates his actions were crucial in the adoption of formal aspects of the garden city model by future New Towns. Undeniably he was a key figure in the writing of the New Towns' Act in 1946.

In fact, the war provided the ideal setting to discuss the feasibility of planning as a national enterprise. Due to the level of destruction caused by German bombs on major British cities, it became imperative to discuss post-war reconstruction. The urban planners foresaw in this destruction a possibility of correcting the maladies of the past, raising the idea of building a 'better tomorrow'. This aphorism played a pivotal role within the 'thumbs up' mood of war propaganda. Together with other propagandistic slogans of 'never before' and 'never again', it helped in the emergence of a political and cultural middle ground, bringing together different ideological positions. 'Never before' referred to the opportunity to make a new country, 'never again' to the poverty and chaos of the 1930s. The message was forwarded through an array of different media and events: books, pamphlets, daily newspapers, magazines and architectural journals, as well as conferences, exhibitions and radio programs.

This political 'progressive centre' dominated the initiatives of the war coalition government and parliament. Following the *Barlow Report* (1940) and within the shed of war reconstruction, two other committees were appointed to report on matters of urban planning and the use of the land: *The Scott Committee* into rural land use (1941) and the *Uthwatt Committee* into compensation and betterment (1942). This sudden concern with town and country planning must be placed within the wider political frame that set the ideological foundations of the Welfare State. In 1941, Arthur Greenwood, a Minister without portfolio, appointed a committee to report on Social Insurance and Allied Services. Known as *The Beveridge Report,* it identified five 'giant evils' in Britain's society: squalor, ignorance, want, idleness and disease. It concluded that only through a major reform of social welfare would it be possible to address these problems. The conclusions of this report were crucial to a series of post war legislative Acts that expanded the National Insurance and created the National Health Service. Implemented by the Labour government, elected in July 1945 with a significant majority, the Welfare State avowed the Keynesian doctrine of political control over economy. The intention was to make new social policies effective, guaranteeing the 'never again' aphorism.

New Tows and Garden Cities

The New Towns shared with the Garden Cities the utopian belief that urban planning was an instrument capable of transforming society. Ideologically they differed, according to the specificity of their own historical settings: the Garden City emerged in the late nineteenth century in reaction to the overpopulated industrial cities, whereas the New Towns were part of a governmental national plan to regulate the land use in the United Kingdom. It seems important to trace the roots of the New Towns, stressing a distinction between their ideological framework and their aesthetic influences.

For the most part the affinity between the New Towns and Howard's ideas can be seen through two different aspects, their urban typology and the social expectations of the landscape aesthetics/design. From the Garden City they borrow the functional layout of their plan (promoting the separation between houses, factories and the city centre), the lower density of their residential neighbourhoods and the ideal of merging the country with the city. They share the belief in urbanism as a scientific tool perceiving the modern plan as an antidote capable of healing the maladies of the historic city.[14]

Early New Towns incorporate an element in their plans that was regarded by Lewis Munford as Howard's prime contribution to modern planning: the 'internal green belt'.[15] The different functional areas of the town are separated - or joined - through landscape elements, as Osborn affirmed 'as much a city *in* the garden - that is surrounded by beautiful country – as a city *of* gardens'.[16] This particular attention given to the design of the landscape, transcribed by the architects and planners of the New Towns, also draws from an English picturesque tradition in garden design. This tradition, deriving from eighteenth century landscape design, is here merged with environmental and ecological issues. This aspect was clearly addressed in the overall concern for the existent natural elements of the landscape linked through picturesque recreations with the new urban elements. The green belts are an example of such natural landscape features that divide, protect and fuse the different functional elements of the town. Merging the garden and the rural with the urban, the Garden City and the New Towns aimed to redeem Nature by seeking aesthetic harmony.

However, Garden Cities and New Towns have distinct ideological credos, each reflecting specific questions of their historical settings. The garden city utopia foresaw the ideal of a society of individuals based on cooperative ownership. It had expectations regarding the economical and the social implications of a spatial model.

The new towns' utopian claims grew within the pragmatic atmosphere of post-war reconstruction and the implementation of the Welfare State. To map the distinctions the legislators of the 1946 New Towns' Act made a particular and contradictory reference to the term garden city:

> The intention behind the Act is that the new towns shall be self-supporting, self-contained communities, living a full and independent life in all respects. Hence its worthy of note at the very outset that the Act deliberately eschews the use of such expressions as "satellite town" and "garden city", both of which have been common parlance during the last three decades, but each of which denotes some kind of link or connection which ties the satellite town or garden city to some older town to which it owes certain allegiance and from which it draws many of the essentials of its cultural and economic life. It is intent that the towns which develop as a result of this Act shall be neither satellites, garden cities, dormitory suburbs, nor anything of the kind associated with other and older towns. They are, in fact, to be *towns in themselves* and as they will be new the Act calls them, simply enough, *'new towns'*.[17]

The purpose was to remove any possible misunderstanding that the term garden city could imply. Eventually this political gesture was meant to release the program from the pre-existent models of urbanization and therefore attract sympathetic supporters among architects and planners from both sides of the quarrel on the typologies of urban planning. This episode is itself a contradiction in terms, as the eight towns nominated in the first phase of the New Towns construction recreate the urban density and the aesthetic features of the garden cities. Furthermore they undergo a suburban cast, due to their location in London's periphery, but ironically four of them were closer to Lechtworth, the first garden city. Even Welwyn Garden City, included in the New Towns' programme in 1948 and struggling with economic difficulties that delayed its construction merged with Hatfield.

The New Towns Program

As employed here the term New Town designates the towns that were constructed in England, Scotland and Wales under the government legislative initiative, the New Towns' Acts of 1946, 1959 and 1965. Fourteen towns were designated as a consequence of the 1946 Act, the first wave or stage of the program. In the second stage of the programme, the 1959 Act saw five towns nominated, and the 1965 Act indicated eight towns. Four other new towns were built in Northern Ireland under a specific political and administrative frame.

Undeniably, the New Towns are the archetype of a Welfare State landscape, blending the prospects of full employment and affordable housing with the coherence of the functional *modern* plan within the naturalist picturesque scenery. Thus in the ideological atmosphere of post-war Britain, high expectations and optimism contrasted with a harsh economic reality. Food, fuel and clothing were rationed and building materials – timber, bricks, cement or steel, were only obtained on government licences. Therefore pragmatism moulded the first decade of the New Towns' Program, where the main question to be addressed was the housing shortage of London and other major British cities. This housing shortage resulted from a loss of six years of house building and the devastation of Second World War bombing.

The criteria employed to select the towns to study in this thesis took into account their architectural relevance, geographic location and historical context. These aspects were considered in relation to the three different political and administrative phases stated above. Thus from the towns nominated in the 1940s the choice fell on Stevenage and Harlow, both located in London's 'overspill' area. The towns from this first wave of designations were mainly planned by architects connected with the MARS group - Modern Architectural Research Group (1933-1957), which were strongly committed with the ideals and proposals of the CIAM, Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne.[18] Stevenage was the first new town to be designated in November 1946, planned by Gordon Stephenson and Peter Sheppard and Harlow designated in March 1947 and projected by Frederick Gibberd.

The third town selected for this study is Cumbernauld. It is located in Scotland, twenty-four kilometres east of Glasgow and on the main road to Edinburgh. It was the only town to be nominated in the fifties (in December 1955) and signals a turning point in the program with the attempt to reinforce urban characteristics, which involved eliminating features of the landscape that segregated the diverse neighbourhoods (and between those and the city centre) and strengthening the symbolic meaning of the urban. Cumbernauld's town centre was erected around a New Brutalism mega structure design by Geoffrey Copcutt.

The fourth town to be considered by the study is Runcorn, located in the Northwest of England near Liverpool. It was nominated in July 1964, framed by the 1959 New Towns' Act. The novelty of its plan, designed by Professor Arthur Ling, relies on the fact that the town is structured around a public transport system.

As a consequence of the 1965 Act, Milton Keynes was designated in January 1967. Located between London and Birmingham it is the biggest town in size and was designed by Llewelyn-Davies and Partners. It was the most ambitious town built under the program, mapping a shift in the political direction of the project through the inclusion of private economic interests in its development. Planned as a grid system of roads bordered by tree-walls, the traffic arteries delimit the boundaries of each neighbourhood and a drive-through landscape facilitated and promoted the use of private transport. Despite the planner's intention of multiple uses in each neighbourhood – residential and commercial - what still prevails in the Milton Keynes' plan is the *modern* dogma of the functional cityscape. Its vast scale, together with its ambitious landscape design, inscribed onto the place a hybrid sense, indeed the epitome of the New Towns' Programme.

The New Towns' photographs from the Architectural Press Archive

The New Towns photographs of the Architectural Press Archive are the result of a collaborative work between corporations, planners, architects, journalists, editors and photographers. They are part of an expertise discourse, which maintained a position of knowledge and authority over the subject. These photographs were used to promote and discuss the New Towns on the pages of the Architectural Press publications, the *Architectural Review* and the *Architects' Journal*. Since 2007 the Architectural Press Archive is held at the library of the Royal Institute of British Architects, as part of the Architectural Library Photographs Collection. It comprises c.500,000 prints and negatives, materials either commissioned or used in the Architectural Press publications from 1930 up to the 1990s.[19]

The photographs come from different sources, they were either commissioned directly to the photographers by the editorial board of the Press Group, or supplied by the private offices of architects and planners through the local corporations. Usually architects, urban planners and the editors employed photographers specialised in architecture, whereas it was common for development corporations to hire local commercial-industrial photographers.
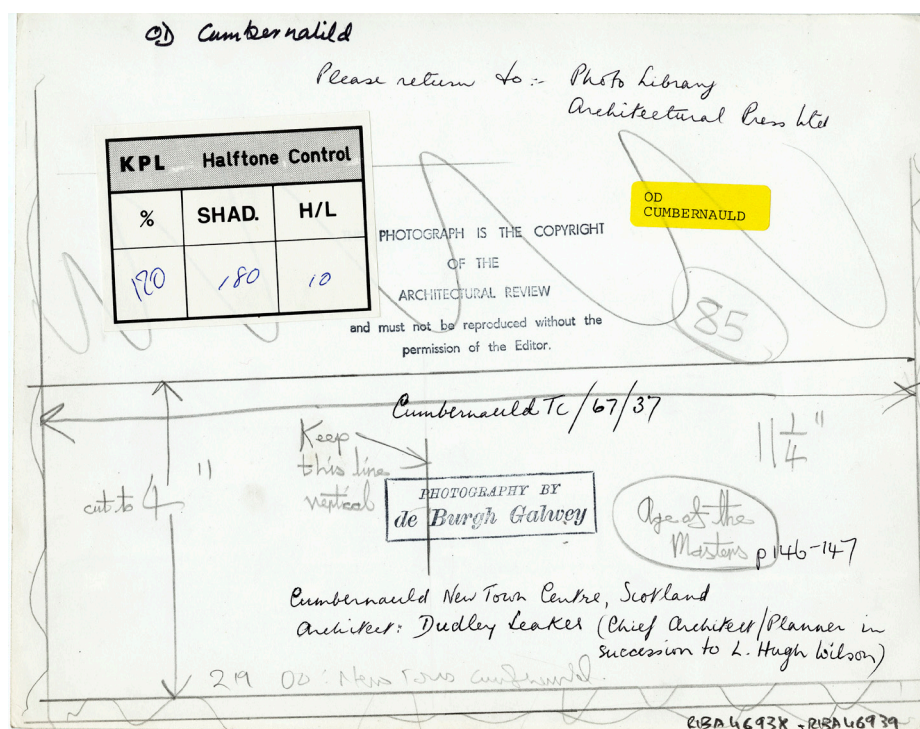
5.2
Back of a photograph from Cumbernauld by Burgh Galwey, Architectural Press Archive,
RIBA Library Photographs Collection.

Within the archive the New Towns photographs are referred to and grouped by location.
Commonly, they depict different phases of the construction and, after their completion,
particular buildings and landscape features. Regarding the subjects pictured the archive
includes photographs of:

- architecture models;
- aerial views of the sites before the towns were built and during different phases of
  the construction;
- landscape views, the pre-existent site in different stages of the construction;
- landscape/architectural: the buildings in context, the predominant type;
- architecture details : the buildings, exteriors and interiors, either during
  construction or after been completed;
- architecture and landscape with people: as if the site was an architectural model,
  with the human figures asserting scale and meaning;
- in public, civic or community buildings, features with social content; where
  architecture is look as a site for human activities.

Concerning the visual types, several categories can be mapped:

- realistic descriptive: pictures of subjects from the point of view of the common observer; neither emphatic nor dramatic, buildings in context, people from a certain distance, asserting scale and meaning, never in the foreground - this is the overall tendency of the New Towns' photographs in the archive;
- realistic illustrative: closer to a specific subject and assuming a viewpoint that reinforces the written argument;
- realistic casual/journalistic: random in their composition, closer to a humanistic trend;
- formal/symbolic: affirmative or dramatic in their recreation of the space, isolates the building from its context; closer to the predominant visual type of architectural photographs since the 1930s.

On the back of each photograph is a set of written or stamped references, usually in an erratic way, detailing the town, the date and the photographer. They also mention their provenance, if supplied by a New Town Development Corporation or commissioned by the Architectural Press. If published, a handwritten note indicates which publication and the date.[20] This written data makes it easy to identify the articles and trace the photographs printed on the page of the magazines. Either as editorial, industrial or commercial assignments, these photographs operated within a constrained institutional framework, acting in response to the demands and requests of urban planners, architects and editors. Therefore authorship is not a relevant issue, instead the discussion of these photographs is focused on institutional and editorial uses, vis-à-vis the visual types of photographs.[21]

These photographs were therefore not perceived as autonomous visual representations, but as part of a multifaceted narrative: the printed page of the magazine. They stand together, against or beside a written text or other visual media - drawings, maps and plans. It was common practice, confirmed by the articles studied, to include and display photographs from distinct sources, with different visual types, in the same article.

Due to the extension of the archive, the articles and the photographs chosen and studied in this chapter refer to the towns depicted in the visual component of the thesis. Furthermore the articles are concerned with the main critical debates that besieged the New Towns' Program. The intention is to discuss and locate the instrumental role of the photographs as well as call into attention specific issues of the townscape debate. Although in a later stage of the program, the main question was how the ideological rarefaction of the Welfare State undermined the New Towns as a subject of interest to the editors of the Architectural Press.

The photographs in the magazine pages

"Housing layout in London's New Towns" (*Architects Journal* 10.4.1952) reports the progress on the construction of the residential areas in six new towns on the vicinity of London: Stevenage, Hemel Hampstead, Crawley, Harlow, Hatfield and Welwyn.[22] The overall atmosphere of the article is summed up in its introductory statement: '… the towns must be efficient as places to live and work in, go to school in, to bring up a family in, and to enjoy the years of old age in.' This over simplistic discourse unfolds the Welfare State's main beliefs: education, employment and security. The article attempts to promote the novelty of the architecture and the functional claims of the landscape design, assembling different types of photographs from aerial views to landscape and architecture photographs of the residential areas.

5.3.
"Housing layout in London's New Towns", *Architects Journal*, 10.4.1952.

The houses/buildings were depicted in context using the pre-existing natural landscape features to structure and organize the composition. It was very common in architectural photographs to include trees and their foliage, either in the foreground, or on the upper margins of the frame, as they punctuated the sky and as vertical counterparts asserting the scale of the buildings. Furthering a positive view on the subject, these photographs operated in a semi 'realistic' mood as unbiased depictions, in residential areas recently or even partially built, unoccupied by their residents. They intentionally proposed a spacious, disciplined and functional environment.
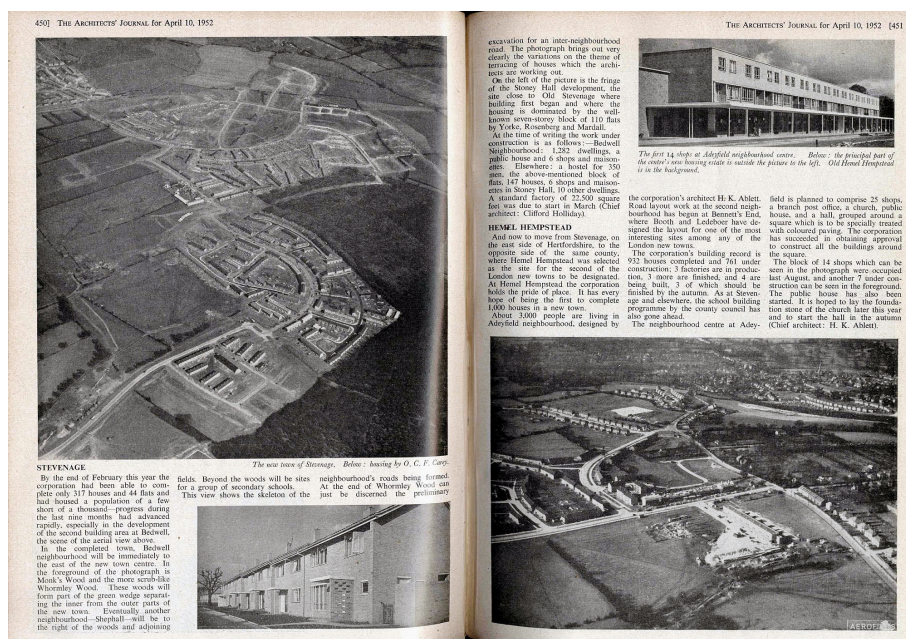
5.4.
"Housing lay out in London's New Towns", *Architects Journal* ,10.4.1952.

Two aerial photographs of Stevenage and Hemel Hampstead, made 'in the past three weeks' as stated by the text, confirm and legitimate the progress of the works. Aerial photographs became available in town planning after the First World War.[23] Employed as expertise documents they entail a technological discourse of authority and control over a territory. Indeed, they combine the architectural plan and cartographic representation. Aerial photographs are a constant feature in the New Towns progress reports of the *Architects Journal's*. Making use of their indexical ability as an accurate way to access the progress of the works, they allow a comparison of the scale of the new constructions with pre-existing natural features, or even to compare the size between the different towns.

Along with these aerial views, two perspective shots from new buildings reinforce the novelty of the architecture. In this phase of the program in the early 1950s, six years after the designation of the first new towns, the majority of the photographs published at the Architectural Press Group magazines still endeavour the achievements of the programme.

The optimism of post-war Welfarism had already started to fade into an atmosphere of re-appraisal and doubt. The first major dissonant tone towards the New Towns on the pages of the *Architectural Review* appeared in July 1953, in the articles *"The failure of the New Towns"* by J.M. Richards and *"Prairie Planning in the New Towns"* by Gordon Cullen.[24] Richards was one of the editors of the magazine (1937 to 1971), and Cullen its art director.

These two articles anticipated and summed up a critical stance that took form among British architects in the early 1950s, regarding the politics of reconstruction and their social expectations, in particular towards the New Towns Program. In 1953 the first wave of new towns, the ones designated in the late 1940s, were far from completion. Therefore the articles point mainly to negative aspects, the lack of government investment, the architectural qualities, and in particular to the urban model adopted and the type of environment produced.

Richards' article opens with a collage by Cullen, combining a drawing and a photograph. In a new town, an old man makes a sketch with chalk on the pavement. Irony plays a central role in this image, with the landscape design of the new towns, portrayed as a desolate place in which the old man, acting like a child, draws a plan of a town centre. In his picture he included houses, shops, a pub and all the community buildings. Addressing the lack of urban infrastructures in the new towns, Cullen caricatures the lack of vision of politicians and planners regarding the expectations of the common man.
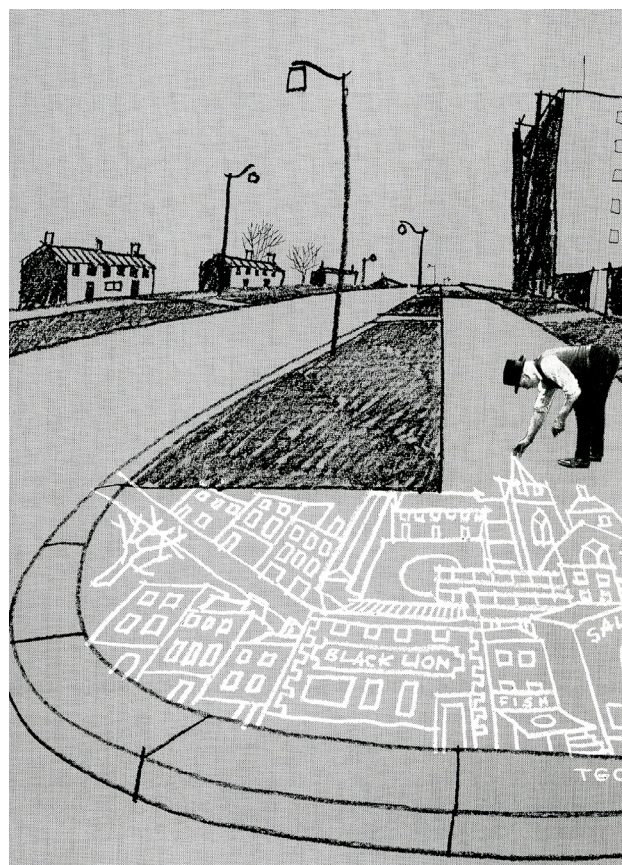
5.5.
Collage by Gordon Cullen, the opening of J.M. Richards,
"The failure of the New Towns", *Architectural Review*, July 1953.

Richards' argument is focused on the lack of progress in the construction of the towns and how this aspect led to the dismissal of the social and economic expectations of the program. He synthesizes the main fragilities of the New Towns in three levels: the social, the economic and the architectural.

Richards stresses that the lack of government effort to control the programme led to a discrepancy between the scale of the organisation and their achievements. From 1946 until 1953, the main efforts of the New Towns' Corporation was directed to the construction of residential areas, discarding other types of infrastructure such as community buildings, commercial or industrial facilities. Richards states that the economic restrictions and the instrumental use of the programme by the different Governments seeking to earn credit with the electorate were the main reasons that led to those circumstances. The imbalance between the construction of residential areas and the building of community, commercial and industrial facilities had a severe impact on the living conditions of the first inhabitants of these New Towns. In 1953 these delays in the construction of industrial infrastructures, which ought to provide employment, resulted in an awkward situation. Without industrial, commercial and public buildings the new towns were in danger of becoming suburb dormitories.

Extending his critique to the landscape design, he called attention to the 1920s:

> Those were the days when it was justly said that the Englishman had forgotten how to build towns he built garden suburbs instead. Today he goes on building suburbs which he dignified by the name of towns.(…)
> Their inhabitants instead of feeling themselves secure within an environment devoted to their convenience and pleasure, find themselves marooned in a desert of grass verges and concrete roadways.[25]

The argument ends by questioning the ideological expectations of the New Towns' Programme, which he refers to as the failure of modern architecture itself, "a failure the more disastrous for having occurred on the occasion when architecture faced the challenge of fulfilling a vital social need. It will be a long time before such an opportunity comes in architecture's way again".

In *Prairie Planning in the New Towns* Gordon Cullen persists in the same critical tone, but he employed a visual rhetoric, using photographs and drawings. Produced by Cullen himself, the photographs depicted North London's orbital new towns of Hemel Hempstead, Harlow and Stevenage. Mostly the pictures converge on the relationship

between buildings and the surrounding space, what the author terms as 'townscape'. They juxtapose landscape views with architectural features, either depicting the pre-existent natural environment with houses on the background or the new streets in residential neighbourhoods.
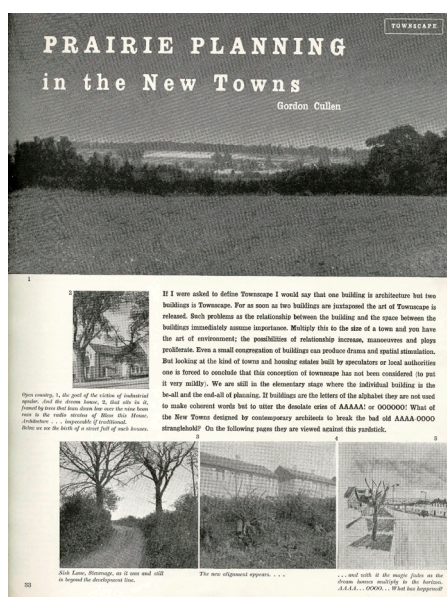
5.6.
Gordon Cullen, "Prairie Planning in the New Towns", *Architectural Review*, July 1953.

The photographs approached the subject in an apparently detached manner, as if their only intention was to make the subjects visible, confirming and informing the viewer about the condition of the sites. The street pictures are almost absent of vertical elements and the foreground occupies half or at least two thirds of the picture, depicting an open ground - asphalt, concrete, grass or land. Certain rules had to be employed to set the general mood on emptiness. Cullen used extreme wide-angle lenses and positioned the camera at a low level, close to the ground, reinforcing the foreground as the primary element of the composition. The intention was to relate the landscape of the new towns to a Canadian prairie.

Therefore Cullen emphasizes to the physical isolation of the new towns, and the absence of a relation with the surrounding environment, either the pre-existent natural environment or the one built by the new urban design. He argues for a return to an English tradition in town planning, considering that the New Towns misled and ignored a tradition in townscape. The visual counterparts of his new towns photographs were drawings from Blanchland, York-shire (in the North Penines), a historic market town comparable in size to the new towns.

In a simplistic dialectic manner, the drawings stand for the positive while the photographs refer to the negative – reality. In Cullen's narrative the images play a twofold role, either leading the argument, advancing the issues to be discussed, or retreating back as mere illustrations, as if their only role was to make visible the arguments of the text. Although the layout is clearly dominated by the images, the substance and the structure of the argument is unfolded by the text.
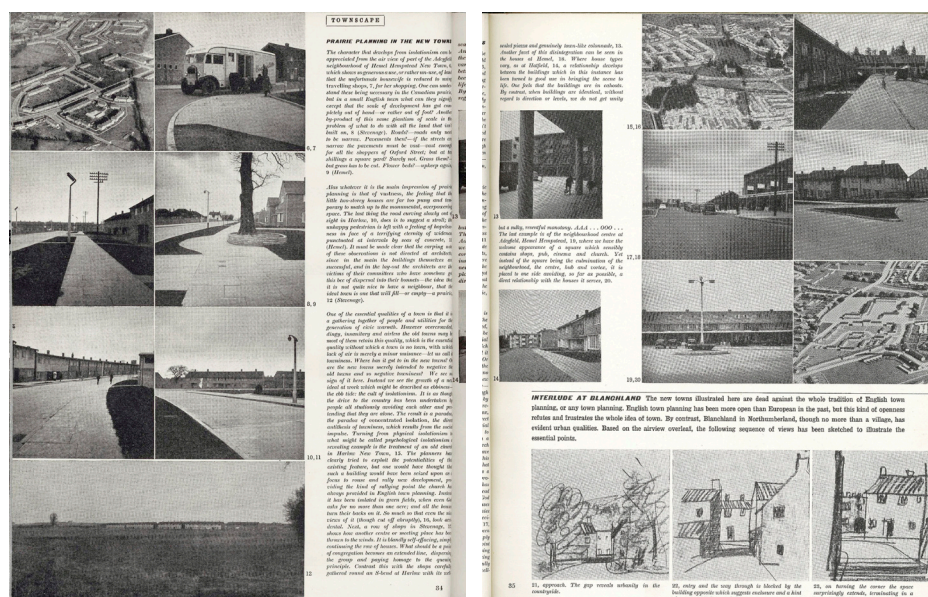
5.7.
Gordon Cullen, "Prairie Planning in the New Towns", Architectural Review, July 1953.

Sustained by the exaggerated visual compositions of the photographs, Cullen's criticism of landscape design seems to be misplaced in time, using and referring to towns that were far from their completion. Thus, by placing the photographs in contrast with Blanchland drawings, he drew attention to a question that splitted positions in post-war debates on modern architecture and urban planning. How to deal with the burden of the past? Use the past as a reference or break with the past and forward new radical solutions?

Pursuing a British tradition in *townscape,* Blanchland's vernacular style and picturesque atmosphere is referred by Cullen as an example. This nostalgic impulse of seeing the historic market town as the archetype of town design is grounded on the need to reassure a harmonious and secure environment and follow a national tradition. Conversely, the architectural qualities of the New Towns were in Cullen's words 'as anodyne as the very same suburban developments that had been attacked so roundly by the leading campaigners of the New Towns movements before the war'.[26]

Cullen's visual strategies acknowledge the photograph's ability to strengthen the expertise claims of his critique. Displayed along with abstract projections - drawings and plans - the photographs build up the locus of the argument, which relied on the indexical characteristics of the photographs in the recreation of an imperfective present, the harsh reality of the New Towns.[27]

The urban model of the New Towns returns to the pages of the *Architectural Review* with the June 1958 portfolio on Harlow. In its essence this piece responds to the major criticism that the program faced since the early 1950s, of making no effort to build civic centres. Written by Frederick Gibberd, architect-planner of Harlow, it addresses some of the questions that Richards and Cullen's critique addressed five years earlier. It aims to present Harlow as a complete town, in accomplishment of the expectations of the New Towns' Act to build towns instead of suburban schemes. Gibberd set the tone in the opening of the article:

> Harlow is not a suburb but a complete Town, and it must provide all cultural, administrative and commercial services short of those proper to a metropolis.[28]

5.8.
"The High" Harlow, *Architectural Review*, June 1958

Converging on the architecture and design of the civic centre this eleven pages article is predominantly visual, employing drawings, maps and photographs. Named after a location in Harlow's city centre, *The High,* it opens with a drawing of the city centre's skyline and a map of the town centre with a highlighted section. In the following page, the highlighted section of the map is enlarged and dashed orange lines mark five different routes alphabetically identified. To each one of those routes corresponds a set of photographs, and in a blow up section of the map, arrows and numbers signal each photograph's point of view. All the itineraries lead us through different courses to the market square.

5.9.
"The High" Harlow, *Architectural Review,* June 1958

The camera took the position of a pedestrian walking through the streets of Harlow centre, detaining itself in strategic viewpoints. For each route an enlarged section of the map displays the location of each photograph, propelling a notion of movement, whereas extended captions highlight particular features of the architecture and urban design.

Three photographers were engaged in this commission: Wainwright, John McCann and Burgh Galwey. The first two were commissioned by Frederick Gibberd's office, and Galwey was working under an assignment of the Architectural Press. Wainwright and Galwey depicted the pedestrian itineraries; the former focused on the buildings, the latter on the streets, whereas McCann's photographs converge on the market square.

5.10.
"The High" Harlow, *Architectural Review*, June 1958. pp 381 to 392;

They diverge on their approach to the subject. Wainwright's photographs are carefully composed, they make use of arcade columns or stairways to frame the foreground and geometric shadow projections, people and cars to ensure a sense of scale. People never appear in the foreground, they are always part of a wider picture, framed by the architectural space.[29] While Galwey's photographs are more casual, as if snapshots of a passer-by, they often include people in the foreground. The 'street' as architecture is the pivotal element of these pictures; the inclusion of people bestows a realistic/casual aspect onto the photographs.
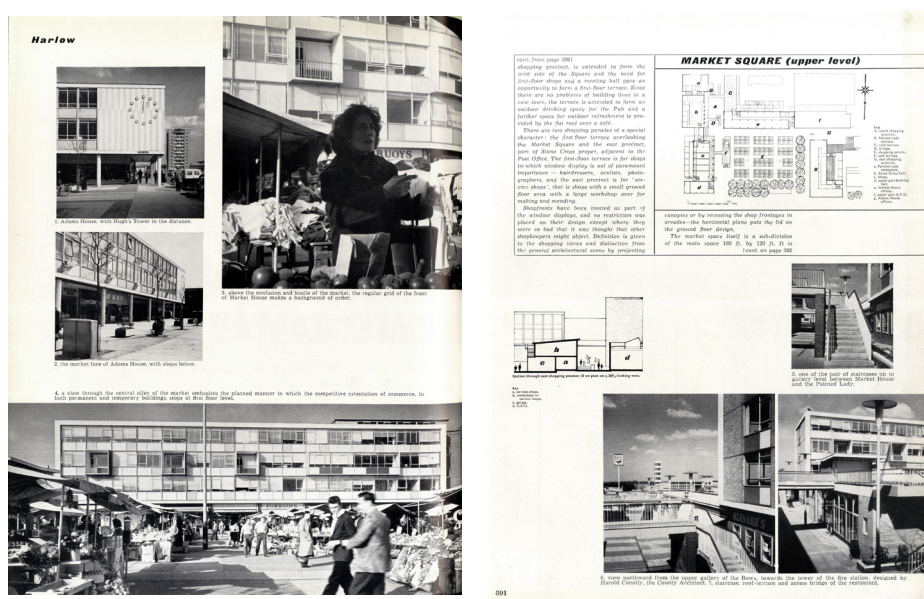
5.11.
"The High" Harlow, *Architectural Review*, June 1958

Shot on a market day, John McCann's photographs of Harlow square emphasize the place as a vivid space. Commissioned by Gibberd's office, the motif is confirmed by the captions on the back of the photographs, examined at the archive: *Architecture as a background to the market scene.* Undoubtedly the market operates as a symbolic space, the ideal metaphor to forward an urban sense to the new towns. On the foreground Harlow's inhabitants perform casual routines, passing by, looking at the stalls, buying goods, they emphasize the realistic tone of these photographs as if the camera was an invisible tool. In bringing the human figure to the foreground, some of the photographs of Harlow partially disclose a new visual approach to the architectural, reflecting the impact of humanistic post-war visual rhetoric and the need to extend the limits of representation beyond the building/architecture as an artistic object. Strengthening the notions of

everyday life and the routine uses of architecture in architectural representations, these humanistic/casual photographs acknowledged the implications of the social, proposing an understanding of architecture as vivid and functional sites. Assembled with text, maps and captions, these photographs attempted to propagate Harlow as a *complete town*, anticipating the completion of the town centre, which in fact only occurred in 1964.[30] They result from the collaboration between Frederick Gibberd, the chief architect/planner of Harlow, and the *Architectural Review* editors. It must be said that Gibberd shared an unusual complicity with the editors of the *Review*. As a leading figure in the British post-war architecture scene he wrote, on more than one occasion, apologetic articles to the New Towns' Program at the *Review*.[31] Therefore it looks as if the script followed by Wainwright and McCann, working for Gibberd's office, was later concluded by Burgh Galwey, on a commission from the magazine editors.

The relevancy of this article relies on the fact that it exposes a mode of use and display of photographs, that prevailed in the publications of the Architectural Press in the 1950s and persisted throughout the 1960s, especially in the *Architects Journal*. It is grounded on the principle that both written text and visual media are part of the same comprehensive mean of displaying information. The photographs fit a realistic mood, discarding any radical visuals or iconic gist. Shot mostly from eye level, subject matters guide their interests, as segments of the narrative or windows onto specific issues that the text discusses and which the captions highlight. Therefore the photographs bear no autonomous status.[32]

The photographs of the late New Towns

The analysis now converges on the photographs of Cumbernauld, Runcorn and Milton Keynes, towns that were designated in the second and third phase of the New Towns program from the mid 1950s to the late 1960s, and that are part of the visual component of this thesis.

Cumbernauld is an interesting case as it was the only new town designated in the 1950s in which an effort was made to reinforce the urban character of the city centre. This involved the suppression of the green belts between the city centre and the surrounding residential areas and the adoption of more radical and affirmative ideas in the design of the buildings of the civic centre. These alterations appear to respond to the main criticism that early new towns faced of lacking urbanity.

In *Town Centre phase I* (*Architects' Journal*, January1968), plans, drawings and photographs introduce Cumbernauld's city centre, designed by Geoffrey Copcutt,[33] an iconic mega structure that concentrated all the major social, commercial and shopping functions of the town centre. One of the most radical buildings of the new towns, its design is undoubtedly associated with New Brutalism.

Shot in winter light, the Cumbernauld *phase I* photographs bear a certain mist. The photographs were taken from a distance showing the building and the surrounding landscape punctuated by the dark silhouettes of people walking by. It bears the same visual strategies previously discussed of depicting the buildings partially in context with human figures, introducing the casual while asserting scale. They seem to recreate the city centre as an architecture model. This is particularly sensed on the exterior shots made from the building towards a semi desert landscape, i.e. in the opening photograph where people walk towards a fading and distant landscape.

5.12.
"Town Centre, phase I", *Architect's Journal*, 31.1.1968.
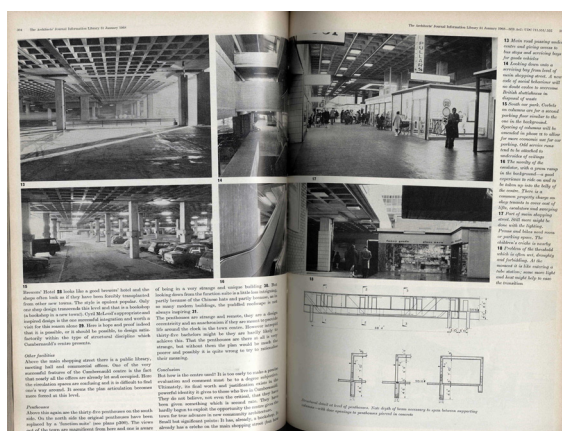
Overall the display of the photographs and the plans follows the same editorial guidelines of the previously discussed Harlow article. The photographer assumed the position of a common viewer and the photographs guide and show us around and inside the buildings. This model fitted an editorial policy of supplying technical information and data on buildings. Photographs, drawings and plans were understood as visual illustrations of a given subject, parts of a narrative that denied any radical or affirmative aesthetics. The photographs attempt to look at things as they are in 'reality', whereas the plan section projects the final image of the structure. This 'neutral' mood is confirmed by an absence of critical viewpoints in the text and the captions. By the late sixties this model began to fade, as Colin Boye, one of the editors from the *Architects' Journal*, stated:

> The intention was to be comprehensive (. . .) to provide balanced coverage. So composition, context, circulation, detail, services, were all meant to be covered. We decided to show buildings as a visitor would see them photographed at eye level, from around view points, i.e. at the front gate. This annoyed everyone: architects wanted viewpoints from where the buildings looked best - shrubs and trees in the foreground and so on. Photographers complained because their photos had lost glamour. Readers complained that we should publicise better buildings. So we went back to worms'-eye views, painting out wire-scrapes and so on, i.e. faking it a bit.[34]

Boye summarizes the two antagonist ways of capturing architecture pictures, being 'comprehensive' or 'looking at the best side'. In the photographs of Runcorn published in the *Journal*, in two different moments in 1972, some changes are visible. Although not exactly a return to the 'eye's-worm views' or 'faking it a bit', as Boye mentioned, there was an effort to incorporate other visual types, more affirmative in their aesthetics.

'Building study: Community buildings' (*Architects' Journal*, January 1972), centres its attention in the neighbourhood of Castlefields, reporting the first community building to open in Runcorn, which included housing, shopping area, a bus station, a sports area and a health centre.[35]

5.13.
"Building study: Community buildings by Runcorn Development Corporation" *Architect's Journal*, 5.1.1972.

On the whole the layout of the photographs follows the prevailing model of the common viewer, a visitor, and the photographs guide us, the other viewers, throughout the building. A map and a plan locate the site and the building. The visual types of these photographs differ from those of Harlow and Cumbernauld: they are less formal in their compositions, assuming an informal grasp at times almost resembling snapshots. Under strong sunlight and dense geometric shadows, some exterior shots seem to contradict that casual mood, which is due to the careful arrangement of the subjects within the frame. However, the remaining sequences persist on a casual effect, which was reinforced by the use of a hand held camera with wide lenses. This mood can be sensed in the photographs of the architectural details in the interior of the building where the composition avoids a conventional or straight arrangement of the elements.

5.14. & 5.15
"Building study: Community buildings by Runcorn Development Corporation" *Architect's Journal*, 5.1.1972.

Most of the photographs include people passing by, which again emphasizes the daily routines and adds an element of banality, also intending to show the building as a living space. This snapshot strategy achieves its climax in the photographs of the interior of the health centre, where the reception and the waiting room look as if they were shot with a hidden camera. Set to look informal, these two photographs depict people in place. In both of them children seem to take over the frame, looking straight to the camera. This casual moment is deliberately left to the attention of the viewer.

5.16
"Building study: Community buildings by Runcorn Development Corporation" *Architect's Journal*, 5.1.1972.

To make evident the shifts in the visual styles of the New Towns' photographs in the early seventies, it is significant to compare the Castlefields photographs with others published at the *Architects Journal* later on the same year on the 21 June 1972. The subject matter was Halton Lea Shopping Centre, the main building of Runcorn town centre.

5.17.
"Building illustrated: Shopping Centre, Runcorn Development Corporation", *Architect's Journal*, 21.6.1972.

The visual tone is set by the frontispiece picture, a vertical shot emphasizing the geometric lines of the building against an expressive sky. The introductory text unveils an unusual enthusiasm:

> 'Shopping City' is the impressive centrepiece of Runcorn New Town. It is probably unique among new towns centres in combining the concept of a mega structure with commercial viability. But to what extent has the traditional ideal of a central place been scarified in the process?[36]

Isolating the building from its surroundings, this photograph turns the façade into a scenario. It introduces a new approach that regards both the visual style of the photograph and the design. Although less radical than the cover picture, the remaining photographs persisted in the same mood. Along four pages, the building is seen as emerging from the natural landscape, where the future new town is due to be built. The building is either depicted under a strong sunlight with deep shadows or at night under artificial light.

The locus of this visual argument is epitomized in a photograph of the central bus station at night. Under artificial light the interior of the building is seen through a window, revealing two floors of the internal structure and the staircase. It depicts the building as seen from the bus way – the 'express bus way' is an experimental transport system introduced in Runcorn that connects the residential neighbourhoods with the town centre, where only low deck buses are allowed to circulate.[37]
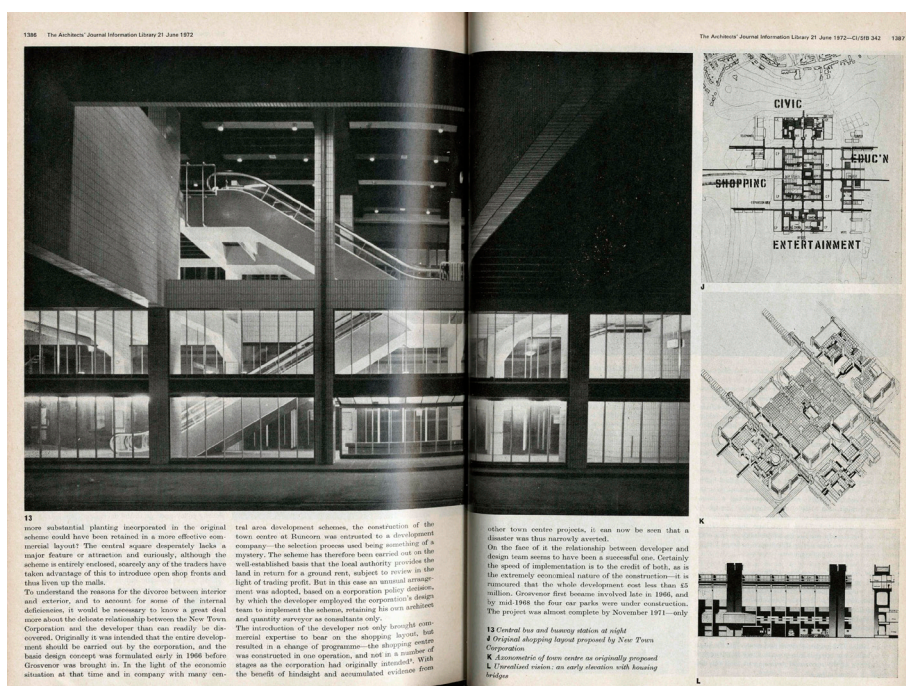
5.18.
"Building illustrated: Shopping Centre,
Runcorn Development Corporation", *Architect's Journal*, 21.6.1972.

Spread along a page and a half this photograph attains an autonomous status although restrained by the side display of two plans and a drawing from the building. Its content is turned into the symbolic, more focused on the image than the subject. Illuminated from the interior and shot from the exterior, this photograph calls into attention a recurrent theme in architectural representations: transparency. Unequivocally *modern*, the term transparency was introduced in the architecture domain in the twentieth century. Adrian Forty accounts that the term has several implications. In a literal sense it could mean that the glass wall reveals the interior structure of the building, making it available to everyone. Whereas a *transparency of meaning* refers to the term's diffused connotations within modernist aesthetics, as in making no distinction between form and content, object and meaning.[38]

In fact both the informal-casual photographs of the Castlefields's community buildings and the formal-symbolic pictures of Halton Lea Shopping strengthen the previous realistic informative visual strategies. However, those strategies of the casual, which can be linked to a journalistic style, were very resilient within the New Towns' photographs of the 1970s and the 1980s. Therefore the episodic return to symbolism of the architectural object that marks the Halton Lea photographs is scarcely seen in other photographs of the New Towns that are part of the Architectural Press Archive.

Twenty years later, to mark the twenty fifth anniversary of Milton Keynes, the *Architects' Journal* published an extensive critical assessment on the biggest and latest new town built.[39] At the time the critical atmosphere towards the programme had shifted significantly, following the closure of the New Towns Corporation by the Conservative government under the policies of dismantling the Welfare State. In fact this article was published on the 15th of April 1992 and the Milton Keynes Development Corporation closed its doors two weeks earlier on March 31st 1992.[40] The Milton Keynes' piece includes five articles, each by a different author, reviewing specific questions such as the urban pattern, experimental architecture schemes, recent housing developments and the novelty of the landscape design.[41]

5.19.
"Little Los Angeles in the Bucks", *Architects' Journal*, 15.4.1992.

The articles use of a plethora of visual media, mostly photographs together with drawings, plans, maps and computer generated graphics. The photographs were supplied by the Milton Keynes Corporation and commissioned by the Architectural Press Group. They diverge in their visual types, aesthetics and subject approach, between the different articles and even within the same article.

Overall the mood of the photographs persists on the casual, journalistic/reportage style; although subject driven they look more illustrative than descriptive. What can be seen in the picture of a façade of a commercial building, a distorted sign (picture 3.19) or the silhouette of man looking through the window (picture 3.20). Their aim seemed to be to convey and confirm the written arguments, although they appear hybrid, vague and random, as if there was no link between image and text.

The opening piece *Little Los Angeles in the Bucks*, encapsulates this erratic use of the visual media. It assembles different types of photographs with drawings and plans. The images at times contradict and disperse the questions raised by the written argument. The article discusses the options of the architects and planners regarding the urban model, how the landscape was appropriated and lived by its inhabitants and the struggle of Milton Keynes to be recognized as a city. Overall it presents a positive view of Milton Keynes, although it acknowledges some contradictions concerning the garden city outline.

Regarding the pictures, it opens with a quintessentially urban and iconic photograph of a mirror building façade displayed along two thirds of a double page - paired with a small aerial photograph and a drawing with a bird eye view of town centre. Somehow the title and the scale of the open photograph raise expectations concerning the visual potential of the subject, which are not confirmed in the subsequent pages. The remaining photographs and drawings seem to merely pinpoint issues raised by the text in a loose and random way. The layout seems to follow this haphazard path, which is sensed in the sequence and on the visual types of the photographs: a picture of Venice, a map, a contemporary photograph of a crowded bus stop, a wide angle shot with a letter sign on the foreground and a view from a boulevard in central Milton Keynes. Most of these pictures resulted from the collaborative work between the author of the text, Tim Mars, and the photographer Philip Wolmuth, while the other visual media, drawings and historic photographs came from archival sources.
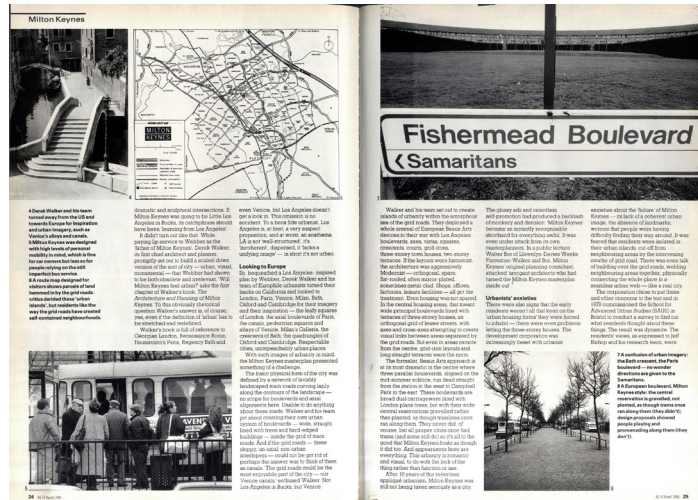
5.20.
"Little Los Angeles in the Bucks", *Architects' Journal* 15.4.1992.

What seems to come across the Milton Keynes portfolio in the *Architects' Journal* is an inability to build a coherent visual narrative with the photographs and the text. As an example, Wolmuth's photographs shift from the casual irony wide-angled picture of a sign, where the sign takes over two thirds of the landscape, to a snapshot of a bus stop, to the abstraction of the mirror façade building, or the symbolic play of the man looking through a window.

5.21.
"Little Los Angeles in the Bucks", *Architects' Journal* 15.4.1992.

This lack of concern regarding approach and subject content of the photographs is extended to the graphic lay out, certainly due to the less iconic status of the New Towns as a subject in 1992. Indeed by then the *Architects' Journal* already printed colour photographs and the main articles were totally picture driven with the photographs spread along double pages. Therefore the layout and the visual media displayed in the Milton Keynes portfolio seemed out of date and style, a conclusion that is sustained by the comparison of the Milton Keynes articles with the others published in the same issue. In fact, Architectural Press Archive photographs from Milton Keynes are much more dispersed and fragmented than others from the 'older' new towns. They mostly addressed the town in an early stage of its construction, and include a large number of pictures of architecture models dating from the late seventies and early eighties. Apart from the samples published in 1992 it seems that Milton Keynes' iconic architecture is rare or at least unworth for the editors of the Press Group during the 1980s.

Photographs at the core of the modern architecture paradigms

Preceding the closing of this chapter it seems important to draw attention to other types of architectural photographs operative in Britain, during the same period of the New Towns photographs in the Architectural Press. The intent is to examine how the post-war Welfare State ideological atmosphere favoured the emergence of certain visual types of photographs, and explore the critical role that they played in the questioning of the *modern* as the prevailing architectural discourse. In addition, it aims to discuss how those photographs moulded and influenced the architectural debates themselves. Ultimately the intention is to understand their effect on the New Towns' photographs previously examined, contextualizing them in a wider cultural frame.

The archetype of the 1930s architectural photographs, as seen through the pages of *Architectural Review,* was grounded on the recreation of architectural space into a metaphoric image. The pictures assumed a plurality of visual styles and aesthetic trends, and their roots have no definitive boundaries; broadly they can be affiliated to the 1920s New Vision or New Photography. These apparently distinct visual styles had a considerable impact on commercial and industrial applications of photography. Their symbolic narratives undoubtedly propelled architecture as the core of technological progress and design novelty.

The harsh realities of the war reversed this atmosphere and the post-war new social order propelled another cultural environment. The needs of the Welfare State to expand the access to education and health, together with the reconstruction effort, brought pragmatism and utilitarian concepts to architecture and design. Public commissions by the government or by local authorities, became the unique source of work for architects and urban planners. Schools, hospitals, housing schemes, public buildings and the reconstruction of vast bombed areas were the main types of architectural structures to be built immediately after the war.[42]

In the post-war climate the high sophisticated scenarios rehearsed by the 1930s architectural photographs became associated with the pre-war modernist elite and its formal/functional aesthetics. They were ineffective to represent and promote a new ideological atmosphere. Reflecting this environment, architectural photographs withdrew from the symbolic abstractions surrounding the form and the design of the architecture object. A realistic approach favoured context instead. Echoing a growing interest in townscape, buildings began to be depicted within their surroundings. In the devastation of post-war Britain, landscape design became a predominant subject of interest for architectural photographs, understanding architecture as the total environment made visible.

A group of young architects and planners who began their practice working in public commissions, immediately after the war, foresaw the need to extend and relocate the ideological role of architecture. Their aim was to bring architecture closer to the 'individual body, to become more localized and flexible… to make it less visible and coercive, and more pleasurable and adapted to local differences'.[43] The main divisive issue between the younger and the older generation - associated with the MARS group and New Empiricism - was the functionalist's perception of modern architecture and urbanism as stated by the CIAM's Athens Charter (1933).[44] Their critical voice began to be heard at the congress of CIAM 9 (Aix-en-Provence,1953) in a presentation given by Peter and Alison Smithson.[45] Displayed in the format of a grille, according to CIAM's rules, it combined a series of photographs of children playing in the streets on the left side, with a composition of images and drawings presenting architectural/urban conceptions on the right side. It advanced Smithson's theory of 'urban re-identification', developing the concepts of 'association' and 'identity' in alternative to the functional CIAM discourses.

This presentation became a seminal statement of the counter critique discourses and would later lead to the formation of Team X. Their critical stance argued against the understanding of urbanism as a quantifiable social science, in Allison Smithson's words, because 'cities patterns spring from man's aspirations rather from his necessities'.[46] Smithson's grid used Nigel Henderson's Bethnal Green photographs of children playing in the streets - shot from a close range together with a view from a street decorated with flags. The photographs' intent to foster a notion of the 'identity' of Bethnal Green was grounded in its strong 'community' ties.

5.22.
Nigel Henderson, Bethnal Green, 1950s.

Humanistic rhetoric and documentary aesthetics were previously used as critical weapons to denounce the appalling situation of the working class neighbourhood areas. They were recurrently employed within the 'thumbs up' war official propaganda and the debates of the reconstruction.[47] Within CIAM, photographs of children playing were used by Sert in 1942 to denounce the lack of conditions of the old cities and promote the advantages of the functional urban plan.[48] In the aftermath of the war these aesthetics and the humanistic paradigm overran photographic discourses fuelled by notions of getting closer to the subject, unveiling an experience and revealing a moment of truth. Within the architectural these rhetorics brought into play semi-scientific claims, regarding the hypothesis of a sociological/anthropological approach.
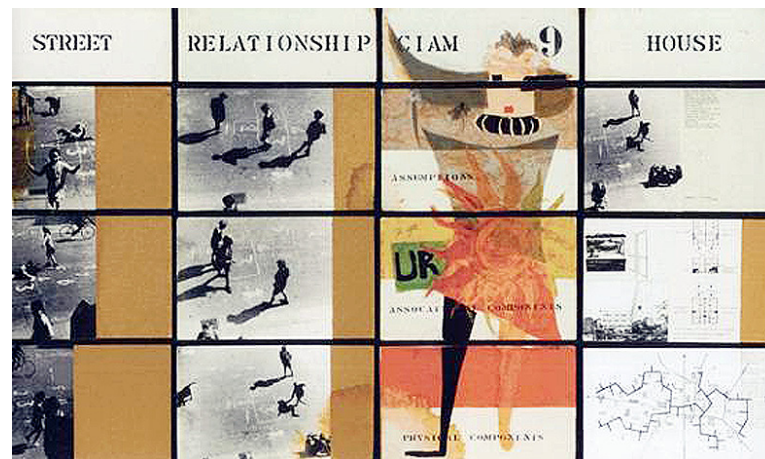
5.23.
Team X grid presented at CIAM IX, June 1953. Alison and Peter Smithson,
with Bethnal Green Nigel Henderson photographs.

While seeing the city through children eyes and their performances, Henderson's photographs
are inscribed within a recurrent metaphor of the post-war visual representations of urban space.
Children playing in the streets are among the most recurrent subject of French humanistic
photography from the fifties, i.e. Robert Doisneau, Willy Ronis or Henri Cartier-Bresson.[49]

Children's eyes also lead the viewers through the city in post-war Italian Neo Realism
films, such as Roberto Rossellini's *Roma, città aperta (1946)* or Vittorio De Sica, *Ladri di
biciclette* (1948). Post-war (neo) realism reinvented documentary discourses, perceiving
human subjects through an anthropological stance. They proposed a positive and
sympathetic position regarding community life and neighbourhood under extremely
difficult living conditions, making use of the shattered urban spaces of European cities as a
plateau for realistic poetic chronicles.

Although undoubtedly affiliated in these humanistic trends, Nigel Henderson's photographs
avow avant-garde roots, blending surrealism, documentary interests and English
Neo-Romanticism.[50] They bear the influence of Bill Brandt's 1930s photographs and
Humphrey Jennings documentary films. The photographs captured by Henderson at
Bethnal Green (1949 to 1953), as well as Roger Mayne's North Kensington work (1956),
are commonly acknowledged by architecture historians as seminal visual pieces in the
rediscovery of the core of the industrial cities as living communities. They brought notions of
urban space and social cohesion at a time when Bethnal Green was overpopulated, extremely
poor and bomb damaged and North Kensington on a waiting list to be demolished. However,
both Henderson's and Mayne's pictures were peripheral in relation to the prevailing visual
types of architectural photographs in Britain and their influence took some time to be felt.

Inside the expertise domain of architecture, in a lecture delivered at Royal Institute of British Architects in 1968, entitled *The camera always lies,* John Donat argued for the need of a less formal and more realistic tendency of architectural photographs. Himself a photographer, Donat was a regular collaborator of the *Architectural Press*, from the 1960s until the 1990s, and made several assignments on Milton Keynes.[51] He expressed his doubts about the photographs of architecture that were devised on perspective and abstract views of the buildings, which he deemed as artistic. He questioned the architects'/ editors' obsession with taking photographs of buildings immediately after the conclusion of the construction works and before their inhabitants' and users' arrival. He proposed that architecture photographs should account for a vivid experience of a building or a place, emphasizing the architectural space as perceived by its users, rather than the abstract forms of the building depicted by a photographer. As an example he mentioned Roger Mayne's photographs of Park Hill, Sheffield published at the *Architectural Design* in 1961.[52]

His proposal implied the use of small hand held cameras and the adoption by the photographer of a reportage or journalistic approach, in order to develop an understanding of the architecture as a vivid stage. The photographer had to be an observer of daily life, depicting the scene in a casual manner, to use his own words, showing 'a slice of time in the life of a building'.
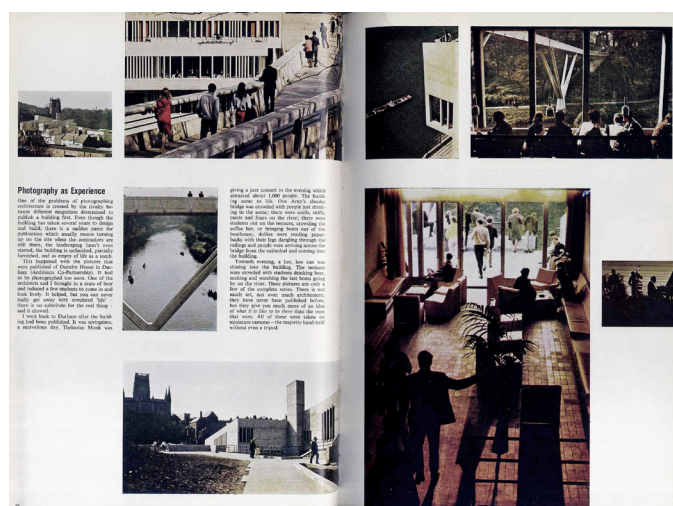
5.24.
John Donat RIBA journal vol.75, February 1968.

Donat's argument was a late call for realistic aesthetics and a humanistic experience of a site, claiming notions of objectivity and veracity. He stated in his conclusion that photographs ought to:

> "(…) reveal the environment, suppress subjective abstractions. Allow people to inhabit pictures(…)If someone sees the photographs and then visits the building – he should feel he has been there already."[53]

The height of this debate surrounding matters of authenticity, subject and representation in architectural photographs came about when the editors of the Architectural Press decided to reassess post-war Britain. Instead of discussing the customary issues focused on buildings and town planning, they proposed to address issues such as Health, Welfare, Education, Housing, Communications, Industry and Religion. They propped their critique with a visual narrative grounded on radical graphics and photographs with a documentary/journalistic approach.

Named *Man Plan,* this series of thematic portfolios were published between September 1969 and September 1970. Instead of employing photographers that regularly collaborated with the *Review,* the editors decided to commission photojournalists and documentary photographers. The group included Ian Berry, David Hurn, Peter Baistow, Tim Street-Porter and Patrick Ward, photographers frequently published in Sunday papers' colour supplements. Paradoxically, it also integrated Tony Ray-Jones, who usually refused to work for the media idustry.[54]'

This series of portfolios proposed to revaluate and discuss the achievements of the British post-war Welfare State, exploring public spaces and everyday life, instead of looking at architecturally conventional subjects, such as building design or town planning. The photographs allude to, and quote, the visual types of the documentary/humanistic rhetoric. Radical graphics layout spread the pictures along a full page or double pages, with captions or text over the images. It aimed to emphasize the visual autonomy of each photograph within the theme, as well as strengthen its relations to the whole argument. The political engagement of this critique is obvious; the photographs operate as fragments of British society in the late sixties, and their intention is to denounce the harsh reality and provoke an immediate emotional response in the viewer.

5.25.
ManPlan Series, *Architectural Review*: ManPlan 1, September 1969 and ManPlan 3, November 1969.

By the late sixties the utopian claims regarding the social implications of architecture were set aside. Ultimately what came out of the *Man Plan's* visual essay is an anticipation of the bitterness and disillusionment that characterized Britain in the 1970s. In its critical stance the *Man Plan* suggests a crisis of architectural representations and the radicalism of their visuals was not unanimous among the editors and readers, which led to the decision of interrupting the publication of the folios in September 1970.

5.26.
"Looking back in London" *Architects' Journal* 15.4.1992.

3.27.
"Looking back in London" *Architects' Journal* 15.4.1992.

**To conclude the study of the Architectural Press
archive new towns photographs**

The New Towns photographs of the Architectural Press Group Archive discussed in the thesis spread over four decades, from the early 1950s to the 1990s. Perceived as inside views and expertise forms of representation, this study acknowledged the prevailing visual types of the photographs, regarding aesthetics, approach to the subject, specific interests and operative role.

Tracing their trajectory from the archive file to the pages of the magazines, we can observe the shifts in the architectural discourses that promoted the New Towns Program. For instance the bulk of the 1950s New Towns' photographs expressed a particular concern for subject matter, favouring the depiction of landscape design and buildings in context. Overall the prevailing mood of the new towns photographs of the Architectural Press was grounded on mild realistic aesthetics, avoiding iconic, abstract or symbolic images. They seemed to foster orderly, passive, descriptions of their subject, as if just proclaiming that what was seen in the pictures was what was there, the real thing. I believe the motto that drove this Welfare State realism was making the construction of this new world visible. *Landscape design and architecture were operative subjects of a wider programme where education, health and employment for all were the main issues.*

This ideological 'realism' thrived in the visual narratives of post-war society, where a search for the unveiling truth mapped the Humanistic trends in photography and cinema. However, architectural photography in Britain remained attached to a certain level of 'truism', which explains why in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s the photographs of the new towns persisted in a realistic script, showing their subjects at eye level and recreating the point of view of a common observer. Occasionally they employed a much more affirmative visual style, either as semi-casual snapshots or even rehearsal, a return to the architectural object and the ruses of the symbolic. These moments however were not indicative of any enduring change.

A reason that surely contributed to the persistence on this realistic style was the low profile of the New Towns as a subject matter. This fact seems to justify their diminutive presence as an editorial subject in the pages of the *Architectural Review* since the late 1950s. This fact is clear when comparing the number of photographs from the early towns in the late 1940s to the early 1960s, with the number of photographs from the late towns, from mid to late 1960s onwards. Richard Williams states that all Welfare State architecture had an inconsequential treatment in the pages of the *Review*, and that

Architectural Press editorial policies relegated them to the *Architects' Journal*.[55] Indeed, the new towns photographs in the *Journal* were primarily thought and understood to illustrate the progress reports, to follow the stages of their construction. And as forms of documentation the photographs were mostly illustrative or descriptive, made comprehensive through extended captions or text and displayed alongside maps, plans, drawings and other technical data – budgets, costs, materials, measurements, dates.[56] The option for mild realistic aesthetics primarily addressed the need of supplying information to document the sites and the buildings.

Even when the *Architects' Journal* began to include critical articles, in the 1970s, the use of photographs as information prevailed. The resilience of these realistic strategies was undoubtedly tied with the lower editorial status of the New Towns as a subject. Meanwhile the visual narratives forwarded by the photographs became less affirmative and coherent, a facet clearly seen in the Milton Keynes 1992 portfolio, in which photographs look like fragments of a random collage, resembling the New Towns program itself.

1   Robert Elwall, *Building with light : an international history of architectural photography* (Merrell; London, 2004), p 98.

2   It refers to the definition of the term by Raymond Williams: *modern* is 'an improvement in art tendencies and writing between 1890-1940'. In Raymond Williams, *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society* (London: Fontana Press, 1988), p 208.

3   Reyner Banham, *A Concrete Atlantis: U.S. Industrial Building and European Modern Architecture*, (Cambridge and London: The Mit Press,1986), p 18. As quoted by Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern architecture as Mass Media* (London: The Mit Press, 1994), p 14.

4   Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern architecture as Mass Media,* p 13.

5   Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: an intellectual history of urban planning and design in the twentieth century.* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2002), p 3.

6   On a first moment it was Howard's personal investment that made possible the acquisition of the land for the construction of Welwyn Garden City. In 1948 the city was integrated in the New Towns program merged with Hatfield.

7   David Mattless in *Landscape and Englishness* (Reaktion Books; London1998), gave an account of the expansion of suburbia in the inter-war years: "Over four million houses were built in Britain between the wars, over one third of the total stock of private building in 1934-5 when 293,000 units were built. Between 1927-8 and 1933-4 an average 38,000 acres of land were developed each year for housing, rising to 50,000 between1934-5 and 1938-The key side of growth was the suburb (…)", p 34.

8   As quoted by Mattless, *Landscape and Englishness*: "The essence of the aesthetic of Town and Country Planning consists in the frank recognition of these two opposites. . . Let Urbanism prevail and preponderate in the Town and let the Country remain rural. Keep the distinction clear." in Patrick Abercrombie *'The English Countryside'* (1929), p 32.
Patrick Abercrombie was one of the founders of The Council for the Preservation of Rural England in 1926. Apparently more conservative, the Preservationists stance reflected the concerns with the destruction of the 'unspoiled' rural by holiday cottages and urban tourists a facet that had an unparalleled growth during the 1920s.

9   Mattless, *Landscape and Englishness,* p 190.

10   Mattless, , *Landscape and Englishness,* p 202.

11   In 1932 the Government Town and Country Planning Act signalled a
small step forward, by enabling local authorities to prepare planning
schemes and assured them with a few effective powers in the control of the
construction of new buildings.

12   The TCPA March 1941 conference at Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford,
was attended by 181 delegates; among them all the major British urban
planners, architects, and politicians that would have a predominant role
after the war, such as Abercrombie, Barlow, Dower, Eden, Fitter, Holford,
Jellicoe, McAllister, Mauger, Morris, Osborn, Pepler, Scott, Silkin, Stamp,
Stapledon, Taylor (…).
Other major initiatives of preparing the post-war reconstruction included
the *Architects' Journal's* series on Physical Planning Architects, gathering
together sociologists and geographers to map out the future; the RIBA
Reconstruction Committee projected a planned country in its *Rebuilding
Britain* exhibition, opened by William Belveridge at the National Gallery
in February 1943 under the motto 'Now is the opportunity for making the
New Britain that we all desire.' See Bullock Nicholas, *Building the Post-
War World, Modern architecture and reconstruction in Britain* (London:
Routledge, London, 2002) and Cullingworth J.B. and Nadin, Vicent, *Town
and country planning in the UK* (London: Routledge, 2006).

13   Fredric Osborn was born in 1885 in London. A member of the Fabian
Society along with Ebenezer Howard; in 1912 he took the job of secretary-
manager of the Howard Cottage Society in Letchworth Garden City. Later
he assumed a predominant role in the construction of Welwyn Garden
City as Howard secretary. On the outcome of the Oxford conference he
edited a collection of small books for *Rebuilding Britain Series* (Faber &
Faber: London,1942) and in 1942 published a book entitled *New Towns
after the War* (J.M.Dent: London, 1942).

14   A common feature in other spatial utopian models such as Tony Garnier
Industrial City, Frank Lloyd Wright, *Broadacre City,* and the pivotal
argument of the *Athens Charter* the outcome of the 1933 CIAM Congress.

15   Lewis Munford introductory essay 'The Garden City Idea and Modern
Planning' in Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-morrow* 1965, p 32.

16   Frederick Osborn in the preface of Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-
morrow,* written for the 1945 edition. p 26.

17   Desmond Heap, *The New Towns Act, 1946* (Sweet & Maxwell: London; 1947), p 4.

18   On CIAM - Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne, see Mumford, Eric, *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928-1960* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Mit Press, 2002).

19   Among the highlights of the archive are c 2,000 glass plate negatives taken by Dell and Wainwright, official photographers to the Architectural Review from 1930-1946 whose images did so much to promote the Modern Movement in Britain; the more informal photographs of journalists such as Ian Nairn which provided visual reinforcement to campaigns for a better environment; and the photographs commissioned for the Architectural Review's *Manplan* series (1969-1970).

20   The front cover of the chapter, illustration 3.1 and the illustration 3.2 reproduce the back of two photographs from the Architectural Press Archive.

21   Only in the late 1950s did the authorship of the photographs begin to be credited in the pages of the magazines.

22   D. Rigby Childs, "Housing lay out in London's New Towns", *Architects Journal* 10.4.1952 pp 449-455.

23   The source of these two images was the specialist firm British Aerofilms Ltd (1919), which was the first commercial aerial photographic company in the world.
     Le Corbusier devoted a book to the subject in 1935 *Aircraft* - part of the *Studio's New Vision* series, London, p11 in which he claimed: "...by means of the airoplane, we now have proof, recorded on the photographic plate, of the rightness of our desire to alter methods of architecture and town planning". Quoted in Robert Elwall, *Building with light: an international history of architectural photography* (London: Merrell, 2004) pp 240; p 122.

24   J.M. Richards, "The failure of the New Towns", *Architectural Review*, July 1953 pp-29-32 and Gordon Cullen, "Prairie Planning in the New Towns", *Architectural Review*, July 1953, pp 33-36.

25   Richards, "The failure of the New Towns", p 32.

26   Cullen, "Prairie Planning in the New Towns", p 34.

27   See Ian Nairn, 'Outrage, On the disfigurement of town and countryside',
     Architectural Review. vol. 117. no. 702. (Westminster; 1955) and Ian Nairn,
     'Counter Attack; On modern life and the landscape', *Architectural Review*.
     (Westminster; 1956).

28   Frederick Gibberd, "The High" *Architectural Review*, pp 381-392;
     Gibberd was actively engaged within the MARS group, and become a
     prominent figure in the post-war architecture scene. Appointed architect
     planner of the Harlow New Town, he designed and coordinated the Poplar
     Estate, erected on purpose as part of the East London section of the
     Festival of Britain in 1951.

29   As a regular collaborator in the *Architectural Review,* Wainwright had
     a partnership with Dell. They were the most high profile architectural
     photographers of *modern* architecture in Britain during the 1930s. Their
     photographs recreated the buildings into sophisticated spaces, using
     unusual viewpoints and dramatic lighting effects. Robert Elwall affirms
     that 'style developed by Dell and Wainwright become the norm for
     architectural photography in post war England' at least until the early
     sixties. Robert Elwall *Photography takes command: the camera and British
     architecture 1890-1939* (London, RIBA1994) p 97.

30   The completion of Harlow in 1964 was the object of the article by Nicholas
     Taylor, Architectural Review, September 1964 p.220.

31   In the first major article on New Towns at the *Review*, Gibberd argues that
     the New Towns follow a tradition of British landscape design, Frederic
     Gibberd, "Landscaping the New Town", *Architectural Review*, March 1948
     pp.85/90.

32   Richard Williams, 'Representing Architecture: The British Architectural
     Press in the 1960s', *Journal of Design History,* Vol. 9/No. 41996), pp. 285-96.
     Further on this chapter this question of photographs as information
     is discussed in relation to the late 1960s and early 1970s new towns
     photographs of Cumbernauld and Runcorn.

33   "Town Centre phase I" *Architects Journal*, 31.1.1968 p.304.

34   As quoted by Richard Williams, "Representing Architecture: The British
     Architectural Press in the 1960s", p 289.

35 "Building study: Community buildings by Runcorn Development Corporation" *Architect's Journal* , 5.1.1972, p 21.

36 "Building illustrated: Shopping Centre, Runcorn Development Corporation" *Architect's Journal,* 21.6.1972, p 1377.

37 See *Subtopia* photographs from Runcorn Bus Express Way: Mfc291/12 Busway, Halton Lea, Runcorn 22.11.2007 11:35 hrs and Lfc 665 Busway near Halton Lea Shopping Center, Runcorn, 20.11.2007, 15:20 hrs.

38 In Forty, Adrian A. *Words and Buildings, A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (London, Thames & Hudson, 2000) p 286. Forty distinguishes three senses in 'which the word exists in architecture': literal, phenomenal and 'transparency of meaning'. The first two senses are more explicit, while the third is more difused and 'has never been codified so precisely'.

39 "Milton Keynes", *Architects' Journal,* 15.4.1992, pp 22–48.

40 Colin Ward, *New Town, Home Town : the lessons of experience* (London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1993).

41 The titles and the contents of Milton Keynes articles at the *Architects' Journal* 15.4.1992 are quite suggestive:

  - "Little Los Angeles in the Bucks", on the urban model;
  - "The Great Experiment", discuss the experimental architecture of the first housing schemes;
  - "Selling the Dream", is focus at recent housing developments:
  - "How the Land Lies", the landscape design;
  - "Look back to London", compares the urban models of Milton Keynes and London.

42   Within the politics of reconstruction New Empiricism emerged as the dominant architecture style/trend. The term was coined by J.M. Richards, editor of the *Architectural Review* in 1947, referred to Swedish modernism as the 'humanized' aesthetics of functionalism, as an attempt to 'bring back another science, that of psychology, into the picture'. New Empiricism tempered radical functional architecture favouring the employment of indigenous materials and including traditional forms
In J.M.Richards "The New Empiricism: Sweden's Latest Style", *Architectural Review* 101, June 1947, pages 199-204. Quoted in Mumford, Eric, *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928-1960* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Mit Press, 2002) pp 167-168.

43 Roy Kozlovsky 'The Child Grilled at CIAM : Children as Reprsentation and as subjects in postwar architectural discourse.' *IN SI(S)TU*, number 7, (2004), pp 88-105.

44 The Athens Charter (1933) classified and organized urban space according to categories and functions: work, house, transport and leisure. This functional grid generated a set of guidelines aimed to help to legislate, regulate and standardize matters such as hygiene, health and education. Broadly it acknowledged architecture and urban planning as a practical tool for social engineering, therefore it match the agenda of post-war reconstruction. It had an international programme sustaining that these functional concepts ought to be applied everywhere.

45 Peter and Allison Smithson organized together with Eduardo Paolozzi, Nigel Henderson, and Ronald Jenkins the exhibition '*Parallel of Life and Art*', held at the ICA in 1953. It stated the old avant-garde ambition to bring closer together life and art. The exhibition consisted of a hundred photographs of all kinds deriving from a vast array of sources, ranging from X-rays and microphotographs to landscapes, aerial photographs or photographs from art works. All the images in the exhibition were presented as photographs printed on a 'coarse, grainy paper and mounted on cardboard'. The intention was to challenge the viewer's perception of what a 'good' image is (was) and what should or shouldn't be shown in an art gallery. Although the impact of the show at the time could be considered insignificant, given the fact that the exhibition only had 443 visitors, it propelled the motif for Reyner Banham's formulation of New Brutalism, in an article published by the *Architectural Review* in December 1955. On 'Pararell' Banham stated:

'(…) it dealt almost exclusively in images drawn from anthropology and technology and, as objects to be exhibited in an art gallery…they were a deliberate flouting, not only of conventional ideas of 'beauty' but also of the common concept of a 'good' photograph.
The banality and rawness of the 'Pararell' photographs raised questions surrounding aesthetics, scientific and technological uses. Misplacing the images outside their conventional uses they become absent of their given meaning, unveiling the limitations of the photographs to represent a given subject and stressing their full potentialities as images.

46 In *The Emergence of Team Ten out of CIAM* by Alison Smithson (London: A.A., 1982) p 61.

47 A good account of 'thumbs up' photographs is given at the by John Taylor in *A dream of England : landscape, photography, and the tourist's imagination* (Manchester Manchester University Press, 1994).

48   Kozlovsky, 'The Child Grilled at CIAM : Children as Reprsentation and as subjects in postwar architectural discourse', p 92.

49   Peter Hamilton, "Representing the Social: France and Frenchness in Post-War Humanist Photography" in *Representation: cultural representations and signifying practices*, Hall, Stuart, (London, Sage in association with the Open University) pp 75 – 150. *La rue* – the street and children and play are among Hamilton's list of themes and subject matters of humanistic reportage, p 102.

50   See Victoria Walsh, *Nigel Henderson : parallel of life and art* (Thames & Hudson; London, 2001) and Claude Lichtenstein and Thomas Schregenberger (ed.) *As Found: The Discovery of the Ordinary British Architecture and Art of the 1950s: Independent Group and New Brutalism* (Lars Muller Publishers; Baden, 2001).

51   John Donat lecture 'The camera always lies' was later published at the *RIBA journal* vol.75, February 1968, pp 62-71.

52   Roger Mayne photographs on Park Hill, Sheffield, were published in *Architectural Design*, September 1961. They emphasise the benefits of a carefully planned development seen from its inhabitants' point of view.

53   Donat, 'The camera always lies', p 71.

54   Martin Harrison, *Young meteors : British photojournalism: 1957-1965* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1998). Harrison's book is a good visual source for British photojournalism, reproducing journal and magazine spreads and mentioning lesser known photographers, although it has no bibliography notes and the information becomes impossible to trace.

55   Williams, 'Representing Architecture: The British Architectural Press in the 1960s', p 291.
He argues that the *Architects' Journal* was the main source of information on Welfare State architecture.

56   Williams, 'Representing Architecture: The British Architectural Press in the 1960s', p 289.
Richard Williams gives a clear description of the *Journal* contents in the late sixties: 'The core of the journal was the 'Information Library', which would typically occupy half the available editorial space. Normally comprising an extended account of a newly constructed building, it would provide extensive photography, plans, a text subdivided into a multi-part description and a separate appraisal, an account of construction techniques, and, finally, a costing. At the time, the 'Information Library' was the only part of the journal where photography was used extensively.

6

DOCUMENTS: URBAN

Lfc761

Lfc529

Lfc594

Mfc319.6

Mfc218.1

Lfc904

Lfc905

Lfc817

Lfc740

7

TOPOGRAPHY AND MEMORY

Mfc218.14

TOPOGRAPHY AND MEMORY

Topography is commonly understood as the arrangement of the natural and artificial physical features of an area, represented either as an image or a map. It derives from late Middle English, via the Latin, although its origin is Greek; *topographia - topos* (place), *graphia*, (writing). Its Greek roots also refer to a further meaning, *topothesia*, which means a description or a representation of a place, as well as its imaginary geography.[1]

This chapter examines and discusses the empirical questions raised by the visual component of the thesis. First it contextualises the *Subtopia* photographs against and within historical and contemporary art practices. Then the analysis converges on artists who have been influential or are crucial references to my own practice, acknowledging the specific aspects of their works which thrust the visual argument of this thesis into visual types of photographs, their aesthetics and their 'documentary' expectations.

The Topographic as a photographic genre

In Western cultural history, the landscape as an image and as a visual subject matter is intrinsically tied up with its content, it signals the transition from the feudal use values in land ownership to the capitalist system of production. Landscape in paintings and drawings came into view in the seventeenth-century in Italy and Holland, associated with the acquisition of land by the urban bourgeoisie merchant class.[2] As a genre, those landscape views were apparently indistinct of the geography of the place/landscape they portrayed. They were quintessentially topographic, descriptive and representational.

W.J.T. Mitchell proposes a definition of landscape that diffuses implications between landscape views and topography:

> …as natural scene mediated by culture, both a represented and presented space, both a signifier and signified, both a frame and what a frame contains, both a real place and its simulacrum, both a package and the commodity inside the package.[3]

What then distinguishes the topographic as a specific visual representation? Indeed landscape can be both a site - a 'place', and a sight - a 'view'.

Undeniably the boundaries between landscape and the topographic are ambiguous and inaccurate. Thus a topographical image is always tied up with the descriptive, conveying the notion of being representative of the subject and forwarding the hypothesis of analysis and comparison of its specific features. This could either be the detail/scale references in a map or a particular type of image composition that favours interpretation.

Photographs seemed the ideal visual medium to render the topographic. Their verisimilitude extended the limits of topographic narrative, inscribing empirical and scientific meanings on images. Therefore, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the topographic became one of the most prolific genres of photography. As an expertise form of visual knowledge under the Positivist quest, it thrived on visual facts and political neutrality, depicting historic monuments, archaeology sites, surveying geography expeditions – the colonisation and conquest of unknown territories – illustrating and propagating major technological improvements in the urban and industrial. In their commercial applications, topographic photographs as individual prints, albums and postcards propelled the notion of photography as a window to the world. Disseminating the impression of knowledge and control over the landscape, the topographic photographs were simultaneously documents, commodity objects and propaganda tools. [4]

The distinctiveness of the photographic vision in relation to painting or drawing, enabled the topographic photographs to disguise (or undermine) certain picturesque effects. Indeed, viewing the land as topography was asserted as a specific photographic discourse, which implied notions of accuracy, information and detail. Earlier topographic photographs were commonly shot with large format view cameras, 10x8 inches or even larger; as a consequence the pictures had very sharp focus and rich tonal range. As David Bate states, they 'introduced a new pleasure into the genre of landscape: *detail* as a pleasure of information.'[5]

Thrusting the notion of the image of a place in a specific time, topographical photographs became associated with the historical, establishing a close relation between places and particular events, projecting an image that became dissociated with the place depicted, for example as the Parisian photographs of Charles Marville discussed in chapter two.

Descriptive aesthetics and the commonplace: the new topographers

These considerations surrounding the topographic as a photographic visual style aim to contextualize the retrieve of the genre in the late 1960s. Its resurgence is undoubtedly associated with the exhibition *New Topographics, Photographs of a Man-altered Landscape*, which took place at the George Eastman House in Rochester (1975). It included works by Robert

Adams, Lewis Baltz, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Joe Deal, Frank Gohlke, Nicholas Nixon, John Schott, Stephen Shore and Henry Wessel, Jr., under the curatorial devise of William Jenkins. To discuss the impact of this exhibition on contemporary photography it is essential to unpeel some paradoxes that the overgeneralization of the term *New Topographics* implicates. How and why did this term become a seminal reference for contemporary photography practices within art documentary stance? What does it exactly refer to? Which aspects of the *New Topographics* are worth considering in relation to the visual component of the thesis?

Ironically the exhibition had an insignificant number of visitors and its impact was inconsequential at the time. However, due to the succeeding trajectory of some of the participating photographers, in the art market sphere or through their influential role in academic institutions, the term *New Topographics* grew to be inseparable from a certain way of making landscape photographs. In the past two decades the leading figures of the *new topographers* - Robert Adams, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Lewis Baltz and Stephen Shore, have exhibited regularly at major art venues, published their pictures in catalogues and books, and had reviews in main contemporary art magazines. Their inclusion in the pantheon of the 'master photographers' was crucial for the rehabilitation of the 1975 exhibition and the trend of the *New Topographics* as a label.

The revival of the topographic as a genre implied the relocation of interests and subjects, shifting the perception of landscape photographs as forms of documentation to the realm of the artistic. The 1975 George Eastman House's show signals the institutional moment where the deadpan, neutral mode of depicting landscape entered the category of documentary 'art' photography.

7.2.
Robert Adams, *Tract house, Westminster, Colorado,* 1974.

Style matters: non-aesthetics or 'without a style' aesthetics

In the exhibition's catalogue essay, William Jenkins validates the curatorial concept of the show on aesthetic matters: 'the stylistic context within which of all the work in the exhibition has been made is so coherent and so apparent that it appears to be the most significant aspect of the photographs'.[6] Although he acknowledged that the photographs were 'far richer in meaning and scope than the simple making of an esthetical point', by placing style at the core of the argument, Jenkins eluded the historical context and cultural meaning of the photographs. In doing so he erased the dissimilarities between artists' practices and ideological viewpoints, asserting that 'as individuals, the photographers took great pains to prevent the slightest trace of judgment or opinion entering their work'.[7]

7.3.
Bernd and Hilla Becher, *Loomis Coal Breaker, Pennsylvania, USA* , 1974.

Jenkins affiliated these *without a style* photographs to the lineage of Szarkowski's understanding of the nineteenth-century's expeditionary photographs, of working without precedent and producing photographs that 'describe everything but explain nothing'.[8] Paradoxically, he finalizes the argument by sustaining that the *New Topographics'* 'central purpose is, at least for the time being, simply to postulate what it means to make a documentary photograph'.[9]

7.4.
Stephen Shore,*Church Street and 2nd Street, Easton, Pennsylvania, June 20, 1974.*

There seems to be a paradox involving the binding of these works through their 'aesthetics of without a style aesthetics', which collides with the individual expectations of the photographers. In order to tear away any possible doubts that his argument could build up, Jenkins asked the photographers to submit statements regarding their own work, which he then quoted throughout the introductory essay. These testimonies unveil the different perspectives of the artists regarding the apolitical or neutral claims of descriptive aesthetics, unveiling a plural understanding of their 'documentary' expectations.[10] Questioning Jenkins's opinions, Debora Bright argued that all the artistic formal and personal choices reflect 'collective interests and influences, whether philosophical, political, economic or otherwise'.[11]

Jenkins located the *New Topographics'* non-aesthetics and their interest in 'picture-making' alongside Ed Ruscha's early 1960s works. In his description of Ruscha's work, Jenkins states that:

> …the pictures were stripped of any artistic frills and reduced to an essentially topographic state, conveying substantial amounts of visual information but eschewing entirely the aspects of beauty, emotion, and opinion.[12]

To frame his line of reasoning Jenkins quoted John Schott's distinction 'what a picture is of and what it is about', while comparing Ruscha's photographs with his Route 66 Motels: "… they [Ruscha's pictures] are not statements about the world through art, they are statements about art through the world"[13]. With Schott's statement, Jenkins maps the difference between 'physical subject matter and conceptual or referential subject matter' acknowledging that they coincide in making a photograph '*about* that which is in front of the lens', therefore both made documents.

7.5.
Lewis Baltz, *Alton Road at Murphy Road, looking toward Newport Centre*, 1974.

7.6.
Nicholas Nixon, *View of Storrow Drive, the River Street Bridge, and Massachusetts Turnpike, Boston*, 1974.

Yet, for Lewis Baltz and Nicholas Nixon, the use of descriptive aesthetics and the dismissal of the author in favour of the subject foresaw the rebirth of a photographic documentary tradition, grounded on notions of transparency, neutrality and truth. This attitude in perceiving the photographs as objective views on their subjects is surely linked to the need of mapping a distinctive position from Romantic and Symbolist styles, which prevailed in American landscape photography since the 1920s and can be seen in the work of Ansel Adams, Edward Weston or Minor White, understood to be artistic, sublime, emotional and subjective.[14]

Left to the interpretation of the viewer as neutral documents, the *New Topographics'* photographs also brought into play an ambiguity. Photographs could be understood as the endeavour of a conservative/romantic perception of the Natural, attesting the damage of the human effect upon 'nature' as a critique in an attempt to recreate the myth of unspoilt 'nature', an aspect mostly sensed in the photographs of Robert Adams, Joe Deal and Frank Golke.

7.7.
Frank Gohlke, *Landscape, Los Angeles*, 1974.
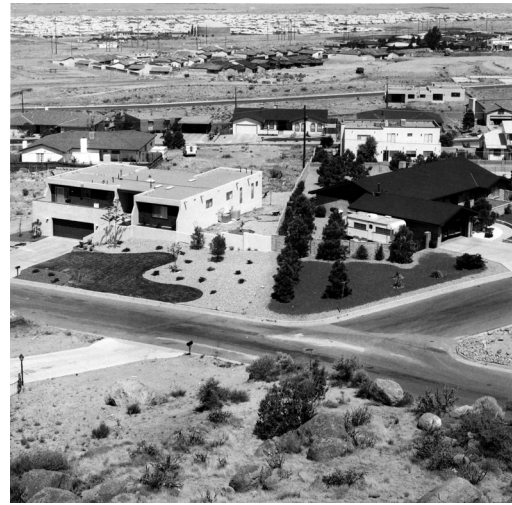
7.8.
Joe Deal, *Untitled View (Albuquerque)*, 1974.

In a recent interview Jenkins acknowledged the fragility of his argument, stating that 'people come to me and think that I understand this because I invented it, and I didn't really understand it very well then. I think my essay reveals that'.[15] Thus what exactly did Jenkins 'invent' with the term New Topographics?

Approach to the subject: visual strategies and composition

Taking apart the aesthetics' motivations and claims, in viewing the photographs as documents or within a documentary stance, the overall sense that emerges is that all artists were working under the same framework: using descriptive aesthetics, sharing subject interests and displaying their work in series. Hence some distinctions have to be made concerning the visual strategies employed by each one of the artists in the making of the photographs vis-à-vis the subject interests, manner of sequence and display of the work, their different engagement of landscape, and the topographic as an enduring subject matter. The works had different provenance, the photographs of Baltz, Deal, Nixon and Schott were selected from finite projects. The ones by Adams, Gohlke, Shore and Wessel from works in progress, and the Bechers were selected from their North American pictures, part of their ongoing typological series.

7.9.
Bernd and Hilla Becher, *Pit Head,
Bear Valley, Pennsylvania, USA*, 1974.

7.10.
Stephen Shore, *2nd Street East and South
Main Street, Kalispell, Montana, August 22, 1974.*

7.11.
Lewis Baltz, *East Wall, Western Carpet Mills,
1231 Warner, Tustin,* 1974.

7.12.
Joe Deal, *Untitled View
(Albuquerque)*, 1974.

7.13.
Frank Gohlke, *Landscape,
Los Angeles,* 1974.

7.14.
Nicholas Nixon, *View of Copley Square,
Boston,* 1974.

7.15.
John Schott, from the series
Route 66 Motels, 1973.

7.16.
Robert Adams, *Subdivision Street,
Longmont, Colorado,* 1974.
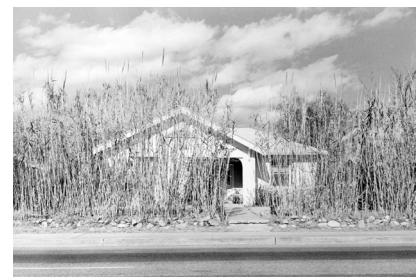
7.17.
Henry Wessel, Jr., *Tucson,* 1974.

Indeed, the Bechers photographs map a unique territory concerning the visual approach and the specificity of the subjects depicted. The selection of the works included different sets of photographs showing the same building or structure from different points of view. They portrayed mining industrial structures in Pennsylvania and Canada and a house in Pennsylvania. Rather typological/architectural than topographic, this set of pictures locate buildings and structures in partial context, unveiling their surroundings.

For Bechers's visual narrative, the specific location of their subjects was not the locus of the argument. As a form of documentation, these photographs belong to another sphere of interest other than the documentary. Addressing subjects on the verge of disappearance, these photographs could be understood as testimonies of an industrial era, somehow contradicting the general tone of the exhibition, mostly interested in the contemporary facets of the landscape.

In their aesthetics Becher's photographs emulate the early nineteenth-century's visual type of architectural rendering. Responding to precise composition rules, the main subject is always placed in the centre, depicted from an elevated point and viewed in different perspectives. Shot with neutral light, the buildings and industrial structures contrast against uniform white skies, which emphasizes their resemblance with the nineteenth century's albumen prints.

Apart from the Bechers, all other artists from the *New Topographics* had documentary intentions. Their photographs engaged with the notion of conveying a realistic account of their subjects. Baltz, Schoot, Nixon and Deal presented series of photographs in which the subject is confined to a specific geography. Whilst the photographs of Adams, Gohlke and Wessel address the suburbanization of the American West, Shore, the only photographer working in colour, used a more symbolic vocabulary. He was less precise in relation to location or in establishing a specific interest within the subject, and his photographs range from vernacular architecture to inner city streets, urban/terrain vague, or small towns' main streets.

Concerning visual strategies, structure and composition, the photographs of Adams, Gohlke, Shore, Schott and Wessel are more random, less definable by a single visual concept, pattern or type. They can be affiliated with the *documentary style* of Walker Evans' Farm Security Administration landscape photographs produced in the 1930s, whose legacy was well acknowledged by these photographers.[16] Evans' photographs seem to convey to the notion of looking straight to the subject as a way of defining an ethical stance.

In fact, these visual strategies appear as if the subject played the main role in the arrangement of the different elements within the pictures. Even though they employed a plethora of viewpoints, sensed in the scale, range and optics, their distance in relation to the subjects was grounded on a photographic mode. For instance, in Shore's photographs of small towns' main streets he positioned the camera at eye level, pointing towards the axis of the road or the intersections of two roads, recreating the perception of space from a pedestrian's point of view (a visual strategy that recalls that of Marville's pictures of Paris discussed in the second chapter).

In the cases of Deal, Baltz and Nixon, the viewpoints adopted seem to distinguish an operative mode to compose and arrange their subjects within the frame. In the *Albuquerque Series*, Deal maintains a similar approach in all the photographs, using a square format and deliberately eliminating the horizon line: none of the pictures feature sky. The photographs were shot with a long distance focal lense, from elevated points, isolating sections of a partially built landscape. Resembling fragments of a map, they bear a certain abstract gist, showing recently built villas, tract houses, caravans and cars merging (or emerging) with (or from) the natural desert landscape.

Looking at the city of Boston, Nixon's bird eye views descended from a tradition in the visual representation of the urban space, which is prior to the existence of photography. Viewing the city from elevated points located in its centre, the photographs seem to look towards each one of the cardinal points. High viewpoints rehearse control over the space depicted, as if God is looking down on us; they became common in the representation of urban space from the Renascence onwards.[17]

The industrial parks photographs of Lewis Baltz disclose two broad visual types: landscape views and architecture details. In the former, the horizon line divides the frame in equal parts, organizing the composition: whenever buildings are shown, they are positioned at the centre of the frame. At times the horizon line is interrupted by parts of buildings. The pictures of the architecture details portrayed the buildings frontally or in perspective, exploring their surface materials and the reflections or artificial light in contrast with the natural elements of the landscape.

The American West as a commonplace

The American West is the locus of the *New Topographics* photographs. Apart from Nixon and the Bechers, all other artists depicted the West either as their main subject or by including single pictures in their series. The majority of these photographs concentrate on the contemporary condition of the landscape, the sprawl of suburbia depicting new and

recent settlements. This interest in everyday Western landscapes as cultural sites could be understood by considering Peirce F. Lewis' notion of the commonplace:

> The basic principle is this: that *all human landscape has cultural meaning* no matter how ordinary that landscape may be... Our human landscape is our unwitting autobiography, reflecting our tastes, our values, our aspirations, and even our fears, in tangible visible form.[18]

However, this attention to the cultural expression of the commonplace has to be placed in a wider historical and cultural context. This would be the awareness for the ordinary and the ugly, which attracted widespread academic research and artistic practices from the early 1960s onwards.

7.18.
Stephen Shore, *Proton Avenue, Gull Lake, Saskatchewan, August 18, 1974.*

The ordinary, the ugly and the banal gained particular attention in the works of conceptual artists, such as Ed Ruscha in *Twenty Six Gasoline Stations* (1963) Dan Graham in *Homes for America* (1966) or Robert Smithson's *The monuments of Passaic* (1967), as well in the seminal books of Kevin Lynch, *The image of the city* (1961), Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (1968). In the latter the authors propose a theory of the ugly and the ordinary as symbol and style, in order to discuss the use of conventional elements in ordinary architecture. They are concerned with a particular historical stage and the impact of liberal economics in the American urban landscape. What these artists had in common was the use of photographs, either as forms of documentation or as conceptual statements, at times displayed alongside other visual media and written information.

7.19.
John Schott, from the series *Route 66 Motels*, 1973.

Revisiting the West as a symbolic territory, the '*man altered*' landscapes of the *New Topographics* can be understood as a late contribution to that debate. Indeed, from the mid nineteenth century onwards the American West was a territory colonized by photography, inscribed with a plurality of mythical references and historical significances. Its photographic exploitation started with the scientific expeditions, and the mapping of its geographical and geological features (i.e. as seen in the photographs of Timothy O'Sullivan or William Bell) and progressed with the visual survey of its exploration and domestication through the building of new railroads, bridges, mining, villages, cities (i.e. the pictures of Carleton Watkins and Eadweard Muybridge). The recreation of the American West as the quintessential *sublime* natural place was made through the photographs of Ansel Adams, Edward Weston and Minor White. Foremost in the United States of America's collective memory, the symbolic status of the West is undoubtedly associated with its representation as a photographic site.[19]

7.20.
Henry Wessel, Jr., *Hollywood,* 1972.

One must consider how the photographs of the *New Topographics* challenge that perception. Addressing landscape as a cultural construction, the photographs look upon a pattern of social and economic development, exposing its impact upon natural resources. By doing this, these photographs formulate an ideological claim. In fact, location being an intrinsic factor, and considering the symbolic myth of the West as the land of opportunity, the photographs can be perceived as a persuasive critical narrative on the dismantling of the American Dream.

Robert Adams was the artist most concerned with environmental issues, although his critique is not always explicit. His *New Topographics* pictures were selected from a previous project published many years later, under the title *What we Bought: The New World – Scenes from Denver Metropolitan Area, 1970-1974* (1995).[20] Examining the book, we noticed that certain subjects and types of pictures were excluded from the 1975 selection for the exhibition. Such was the case of photographs of the main commercial streets, viaducts and industrial structures or the interior shots of domestic households, shopping areas, industrial facilities and offices. In the book, people appear performing daily activities on a substantial number of photographs.

7.21.
Robert Adams, *Mobile homes, Jefferson County, Colorado*, 1973.

In the *new topographics* selection, Adams' photographs seem to respond to particular aesthetic codes under a poetic mood. They put forward notions of formal coherence avowing the idea of a series of photographs looking on the residential suburban areas of Denver.

In fact, the arrangement of Adams' photographs as a series, as well as the remaining *new topographers,* favoured their topographic potential while strengthening its documentary stance. In a sequence and part of a series, the individual photographs lose their autonomous condition. Each photograph operates as a fragment and the content relies on the sum of the individual parts. It allows comparing information and detail between the pictures, extending the notion of research and analysis on a given subject, to either a geographical area or a theme.

Serialization strategies were adopted by documentary rhetorics as a possibility to formulate complex narratives on apparently common (banal) subjects. Tracing a scientific positivist resonance, a series of photographs on a specific subject builds up formal coherence. Titles and captions are pivotal elements in serialization, emphasizing a *realistic* bond between image and subject content, being more or less descriptive or detailed.[21] At the *New Topographics,* the format of the series, either on a specific subject or constrained within a geographic boundary, is only partly contradicted by Shore's pictures, which are less restricted to subject interests or visual types. The titles and the captions were positioned close to the images, on the page of the catalogue or on the gallery wall, which tied the different works together and secured their realistic perception. However, captions were not standardized; Shore used very precise captions, indicating the name of the street, the place and the date, while the Bechers, Baltz, Nixon, Golhke and Wessel, used place/location and date. Robert Adams goes further and uses captions that mention subject, place/location and date.[22] John Deal referred to all his pictures by Untitled Views (Albuquerque,1974) and Schott by Untitled (1973).

7.22.
Joe Deal, *Untitled View (Albuquerque)*, 1974.
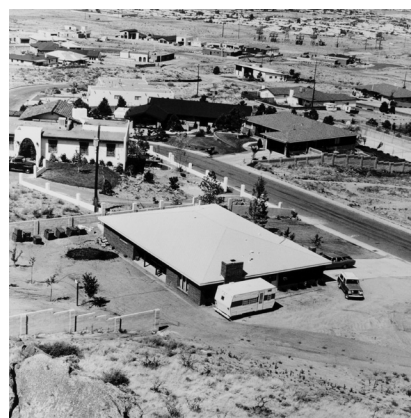
7.23.
Joe Deal, *Untitled View (Albuquerque)*, 1974.

Creating the seeming impression that the photographs depicted what was in front of the lens with minimal intervention from the photographers relied on a crucial aspect in the recovery of a certain realistic tone. This illusion of objectivity indeed challenges the perception of how subjects are represented through photographs whilst questioning the ability of photography itself to build a subject driven narrative.

These realistic aesthetics are grounded on certain technical features and composition rules and usually implicate the use of view cameras. By then view cameras were predominantly employed by commercial photographers, within the architectural, industrial or the advertisement domains, mostly due to their ability to blow up images rich in detail from large format sheet analogue film. Furthermore, this type of camera allows for the possibility of shift and tilt in the front and rear standards of the camera, altering perspective or repositioning the horizon line within the frame. These aspects of controlling the perspective are crucial to reinforce a *realistic* perception of space.

In order to produce images rich in detail, the Bechers, Nixon, Shott and Shore worked with view cameras using large format sheet film, 10x8 inch. Others used medium format roll film cameras, Adams 6x7centimetres film, Deal and Golhke employed 2 1/4 inch film. The only exceptions were Baltz and Wessel Jr. who operate 35mm cameras with very low ASA film.

Exhibiting their photographs in considerably small formats, the *new topographers* proposed to recover the pleasure of images with great detail: the Bechers, 30x40cms and 23x29cms aprox., with the pictures grouped in panels; Adams, 15x19cms aprox.; Baltz, 15x22cms aprox. ; Deal, 32 x 32cms aprox. ; Gohlke, 24x24cms aprox., and Shore, Nixon and Schott exhibiting contact prints from their 10x8 inches negatives with 19.5x24.5cms.

This option regarding the size of the prints reinforces a formal coherence between the works while suggesting a double revivalism. It emphasized the craftsmanship qualities of the photographic print as fine art, closer to the nineteenth-century's *topography,* when photographs were only reproduced by contact and prints had the same size of the negative. It also asserted a positivist mood upon the exhibition, forwarding the perception of the photographs as *documents.*[23]

In their aesthetics venture, the *new topographers* transformed a seemingly objective perception of contemporary landscape into a subjective narrative. However, inherent in landscape photographs is an oblique condition that emphasizes their ability to operate as 'documents'. In Debora Bright's words:

Thus, whatever its aesthetic merits, every representation of landscape is also a record of human values and actions imposed on the land over time.
What stake do landscape photographers have in constructing such representations? A large one, I believe. Whatever the photographer's claims, landscapes as subject matter in photography can be analyzed as documents extending beyond the formally aesthetic or personally expressive.
Even formal and personal choices do not emerge *sui generis*, but instead reflect collective interests and influences, whether philosophical, political, economic or otherwise.[24]

The weight of the *New Topographics* as a seminal reference for contemporary photography seems to rely in the merging of fine art photography, documentary expectations and post-conceptual contemporary art practices. Its format derives from Szarkowski's understanding of photography as fine art, sustained in its ability to renew and reinvent the medium's capabilities and traditions. Both the topographic as a genre and the documentary stance asserted this formalistic lineage. Britt Salvesen perceived the exhibition 'simultaneously asserted and deconstructed the medium modernist specificity, authority and autonomy'.[25]

In fact, the *new topographers* reinvented and shifted the conventional motifs of landscape photography as a genre, from the scientific, historical and monumental towards the vernacular, the banal and the commonplace. Their main ideological standpoint relates to the treatment of a new vocabulary of subject matters (landscape) to the documentary field, at the time still filled with humanistic pictures. Therefore in bringing together these works, William Jenkins built a 'catalogue' of visual topographic types. Ranging from the typological approach of the Bechers, Nixon's birds eye views, or the architectural subjects in context, the photographers broadened the documentary expectations of landscape photographs. The *New Topographics* fostered a model and a mood that became a paradigm and a trend within contemporary art practices, retrieving descriptive aesthetics, addressing the commonplace and the vernacular as the main subject, and asserting serialization as a format.

Atget: photographic documents and the illusion of an open text

Within the intention to expand the critical and historical framework of the *Subtopia* photographs, the argument converges into a specific facet of the work of Eugéne Atget (1857 - 1927), which is broadly identifiable as the hidden political significance of photographs as documents. Over the course of thirty years Atget photographed Paris, amassing an immense archive of 8,500 prints. Through a particular and complex operative method he listed subjects of interest through the libraries' indexes or by toning the categories of the topographic collections. Therefore his archival categories expose a particular attention to survey, documenting what was by then considered as *historically* relevant.

7.24.
Eugène Atget, Pl.62. *Rue Pigalle,¸ à 6h. du matin em avril 1925*

On different occasions Atget declared that his photographs were 'simple documents', a statement that became an aphorism adding controversy and mystery to the work. During his lifetime he only briefly caught the attention of the art scene when, following an invitation from Man Ray, a few photographs were published in *La Revolution Surrealiste*.[26]

Soon after his death in 1927, numerous mediators attempted to make his work comprehensible and coherent as an artistic oeuvre, establishing Atget as a quintessentially modern photographer. Formalistic art history allocated a poetic aura to the photographs and perceived him as a virtuoso artist. The forerunners of this thesis were Marc Orlan, Berenice Abbot and Julien Levy, with Abbot and Levy acquiring a substantial part of his archive and selling it to the MOMA in the late sixties. This notion contradicts the surrealist fascination with Atget's naiveté or primitiveness.

It was through the publication of *Atget photographe de Paris,* in 1930, that his work was introduced to a wider audience. The book had French, English and German editions and in the introductory text Orlan described Atget as a lyrical craftsman, an 'artisan poet of the crossroads of Paris'.[27]

Pursuing Abbot's efforts, the edifice of Atget as a quintessential 'master' photographer benefited from Beaumont Newhall, John Szarkowski and Maria Morris Hambourg's writings and curatorial options. This historiography process culminated with a major exhibition at MOMA and the edition of four catalogues with his oeuvre.[28] This construction of Atget as a modern photographer is sustained by the perception of his work as 'a bridge between nineteenth-century topographical photography and twentieth-century modernism'. This reversed the perception of his photographs as documents, and located his oeuvre within the documentary artistic sphere.[29]

7.25.
Eugène Atget, Pl.52. *Porte d' Asnières,
Cité Trébert. (1913)*

7.26.
Eugène Atget, Pl.55. *Porte d' Ivry,
villa des chiffonniers. (1910)*

Reacting to the (re) montage of nineteenth-century topographic photographs in the museum walls, Rosalind Krauss's seminal article *Photography's Discursive Spaces* critiques the formalist appropriation of Atget, discarding his merit as an artist. She affiliates Atget's photographs in the lineage of Marville's 'taken a half century earlier' both as functions of the 'same documentary master plan'.[30] Krauss perceives Atget's operative mode as drawing from the established categories of 'libraries and topographic collections', dictating and imposing an order upon his subject choices, thus taking a standardized approach, proper of the nineteenth-century photographic surveys with historical documentation intentions. Using Atget and Timothy O'Sullivan as cases in point, the core of Krauss' argument concerned the formalistic misreading of their work and the misplacing of their historical archive photographs:

> Everywhere at present there is an attempt to dismantle the photographic archive - the set of practices, institutions, and relationships to which nineteenth-century photography originally belonged-and to reassemble it within the categories previously constituted by art and its history. It is not hard to conceive of what the inducements for doing so are, but it is more difficult to understand the tolerance for the kind of incoherence it produces.[31]

Rather than merely discussing the artistic merits and intentions behind Atget's pictures, it is significant to consider why and how those photographs attract such contradictory perceptions, critical views and acts of re-montage. However, both these critical perceptions seem to have a narrow understanding of Atget, dismissing the ability of his photographs to play multiple roles. The formalistic art history perspective secluded the photographs in its artistic poetic aura, whilst Krauss restrained them to an original intent, its historical documentation role.

Commodity Documents and Archival Modes

A further reading emerged from Molly Nesbit's study, *Atget's Seven Albuns*, extending the awareness of his role as an author, not exactly as an artist. Proposing a new understanding of Atget's operative model, Nesbit framed the discussion upon the photographs' functional role as commodities in response to the needs of their own time. However, she acknowledges their ability to initiate a complex discourse other than those poetic aesthetics or historical documentation.

Intending to feed a vast clientele, Atget's photographs had a utilitarian and commercial role as raw documentation materials. Therefore subject matter choices had to anticipate their use and function as documents, later due to be sold as prints to artists, antiquarians, craftsmen and architects. Sometimes organized in series displayed in albums, they were sold to personal collections, archives and libraries. Their applications relied on their ambiguous status, which enabled them to perform various functions. As Molly Nesbit points out:

> 'commerce' for Atget 'provided a base of operations and an authorial position (…) he was trying to push the picture into a new historical role and develop a new role for himself as a producer of culture'. [32]

Atget's trade functioned outside of prevailing commercial photographers from that time, developing a peculiar niche of costumers and subject interests as 'documents for artists'. To enable the photographs to operate as expert documents, certain technical signs had to be employed, as the needs of the architect were not the same as the interests of the decorator. Therefore the photographs needed to remain fairly open in order to convey multiple uses and applications to its commodity value.

Nesbit points out that, for Atget, the use value of the pictures was associated with their ability to hold more than one technical sign:

> This double function and its surroundings excess were generating principles of most Atget's photographs. They produced an often-beautiful doubling of the signs and the illusion of an open text. We have not however stumbled through the back door of the archive onto art. The double function did all this while leaving the objectivities intact. The text was not so open as all that. It was still very much a document.[33]

This 'openness' was intrinsically related to the interpretative potential of the photographs and their ability to perform different demands. Therefore certain modes of picturing the subjects ought to be employed in order to convey this impression onto the photographs. Being documents they had to be factual, place subject in context, convey a realistic and descriptive perception, and bear an impression of neutrality.

7.27.
Eugène Atget, *Cour 41,rue Broca* (1912)

Looking at most of Atget's photographs there is the impression that content surpasses form, that subject matter erases composition, and that the light and composition attempt to refrain from imposing an imprint onto the subject. Most of the times the subject is the scene, the street, the interior or the landscape, which means that all the elements within the picture seem equally relevant; in his street photographs, the foreground is a structural element of the composition, not merely providing a contextual reference, but bearing the same weight as the other elements of the picture, which reinforces a realistic perception of space.

7.28.
Eugène Atget, Pl.86. *Saint-Cloud.*
Le soir, 7h.(1921)

7.29.
Eugène Atget, Pl.87. *Saint-Cloud.*
Le soir, 7h.(1921)

7.30.
Eugène Atget, Pl.89. *Saint-Cloud.*
Juin (1926)

To cast this realistic sense on the photographs, one of Atget's recurrent facets was to place some elements slightly off the correct perspective, at times eluding what seemed to be an obvious point of view. This aspect is particularly sensed in the Versailles pictures and in other eighteenth-century Parisian gardens, where he deliberately avoided composing perspective views using the axial elements of the landscape's design. These photographs contradict the discipline and the authority of the landscape design, reassuring a human scale and creating in the viewer a sense of being there. Atget's askew compositions, slightly off the correct perspective and oblique vistas, counteract certain norms of topographic and architectural views. They further an impression that the subject determines what was included or excluded from the pictures, forging the notion that matter rules over form.

All these mannerisms were certainly significant for his clientele at the time, as the photographs were sold as raw materials. They operated as disguise mechanisms, disregarding some of the conventions of the picturesque and rendering of the landscape and the urban, thus extending the photographic narrative that Charles Marville and other nineteenth century photographers had previously devised looking upon the very same territory.

Other aspects seem to come into conflict with the commercial intents of the photographs. For instance, Atget employed a bulky and awkward nineteenth century view camera, made his own glass negatives and printed them by contact producing albumen prints. Also, the finishing of the prints was careless; chemical stains, dark corners or biased black borders on the margins of the print were common. Ironically, all these anachronisms imprint a 'mood' onto the photographs which seems to validate the iconic aura that the art history readings cast upon his work as being intrinsically photographic. Moreover the use of these outmoded techniques and the apparent careless finishing of the prints spur the surrealistic interest on Atget's photographs as 'primitive' raw materials.

Before the photographs reached their final destination, the clients, they were filed in Atget's archive. They were organized into five main categories: *Vieux Paris* (parts of it came to be called *L'Art dans le Vieux Paris*), *Environs de Paris, Topographie du Vieux Paris, Paris Pittoresque* and *Paysages-documents divers*.[34] These categories or series were defined by their own broad subjects; Atget used them to structure his extensive archive of thousands of photographs which he used over the course of three decades. Though they were not exclusive or sufficient to map all his subjects, a few smaller series, on very specific subjects, came out of this mass of pictures, usually for the purpose of presenting his works to prospective clients.

Atget shifted the position of the photographs within the archive in order to convey a new role within another subject category. Inherent in this possibility of the photographs to shift categories is their resilient aesthetical realistic mood, which brings photographs taken on different dates and locations into the present. Therefore not only did the photographs need to remain 'open' as documents, their arrangement within the index could also be subject to more than one category, making it possible to establish particular associations and new functions for each photograph. Atget's archive was an on-going labour, so the new photographs augmented the categories of index along the thirty-year period of his photographic activity.

Empty streets and the politics of document

Due to their influence on the *Subtopia* photographs, Atget's empty streets now deserve particular attention. Belonging to the category of *Topographie du Vieux Paris*, which begun in 1906, it includes the old streets of Paris, the disruptions of the urban fabric and the demolitions. They pursue the line of work that Marville (1850's until 1871) and Séraphin Médéric (1875 until 1890s) made under the assignment of the *Commission des Monuments Historiques*.[35] They clearly indicate that there was still an institutional market for this kind of pictures within the main public libraries and the topographic collections.
These photographs of the streets very rarely included people or any apparent relevant action to follow. As viewers looking at these pictures we are left with an overall sense of the uncanny and emptiness given by these still life urban scenes. Walter Benjamin wrote on Atget's street photographs:

> They are not lonely but voiceless; the city in these pictures is swept clean like a house which has not yet found its new tenant. These are the sort of effects with which Surrealist photography established a healthy alienation between environment and man, opening the field for politically educated sight, in the face of which all intimacies fall in favour of the illumination of details.[36]

Significantly, Benjamin's statement links the photographs to a surrealistic milieu and emphasises their *openness* as a political question. The surrealists foresaw Atget as a producer of documents. 'But what documents', expressed the poet Robert Desnos, these photographs 'fix life itself… without ever sacrificing to the picturesque or to the merely anecdotal'.[37]
Later in the seminal essay *The work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Benjamin extended this line of reasoning, sustaining that Atget's streets invited interpretation and analysis rather than aesthetic contemplation. It brings back the questions discussed in

the first chapter of this thesis regarding the ideological position of the photographs and their ability to avow a political viewpoint. He proposed an understanding of Atget's street photographs as 'scenes of a crime' referring their 'hidden political significance', as an intention to establish evidence for 'historical occurrences'.[38] Stripping the photographs of an artistic aura, he allocates them onto a social sphere as historical and ideological documents.

This calls into attention a dialectic analysis that Benjamin made in 1928 while listing the conflicting intentions between the artwork and the document:

I

The artist makes a work. – The primitive expresses himself in documents.

II

The artwork is only a document. – No document is such a work of art.

III

The artwork is a masterpiece. – The document serves to instruct.

IV

On artworks artists learn their craft. – Before documents, a public is educated.

V

Artworks are remote from each other in their perfection. – All documents communicate through their subject matter.

VI

In the art work content and form are one: meaning. – In documents the subject matter is dominant.

VII

Meaning is the outcome of experience. – Subject matter is the outcome of dreams.

VIII

In the art-work subject matter is a ballast jettisoned during contemplation – The more one loses oneself in a document, the denser the subject matter grows.

IX

In the art work the formal law is central. – Forms are merely dispersed in documents.

X

The artwork is synthetic: an energy centre. – The fertility of the document demands analysis.

XI

The impact of an artwork increases with viewing. – A document overpowers only through surprise.

XII

The virility of works lies in the assault. – The document's innocence gives it cover.

XIII

The artist sets out to conquer meanings. – The primitive man barricades himself behind subject matter.[39]

By then, he considered the document a fertile ground, demanding analysis under the political educated eye: 'the more one loses oneself in a document, the denser the subject matter grows'. Contrasting with the art-work, where 'subject matter is a ballast jettisoned during contemplation', he remarked.[40]

Benjamin's list is surely flawed, a set of speculative clues and Atget's oeuvre seems to be an inspiring model for an artistic critical reflection in the realm of the *document*.

Subtopia: Landscape as a Cultural Construction

The photographs of *Subtopia* propose to build a cognitive map on the contemporary condition of the New Towns in Britain. They endorse landscape as a cultural construction, perceiving urbanism and architecture as ideological epitomes seen through the organisation of public spaces. They claim that cultural, social and political issues are inscribed into the landscape and ought to become visible in the pictures.

Operating as visual fragments of a non-existent whole, these photographs intend to create an imaginary new town called *Subtopia*, a photographic site as an allegory of the New Towns program in Britain. They bear an *archaeological* interest for the subject: the criteria to select the towns to photograph took into consideration their relevance according to the diverse stages of the programme. There were three different phases, each

one corresponding to a legislative cycle. In the first stage, following the New Towns Act of 1946, which lasted until early 1950s, the towns planned were strongly influenced by the Garden City philosophy. From this stage, the towns chosen to include in the study are Stevenage (1946) and Harlow (1947).

The second phase, from the mid-1950s to early 1960s, corresponded to the need of the programme to foster 'urbanity', promoting higher urban densities and emphasizing the symbolic aspects of the town centre – the towns selected to photograph were Cumbernauld (1955), Runcorn (1964). Lastly the third phase, which took place from the late 1960s, initiated significant changes to the design of the landscape, planned as a grid road system reflecting the need to optimize the use of the private car – the chosen town was Milton Keynes (1967).

The categories of the sequence

This (re)invented new town enables one to compare and juxtapose photographs of the five different towns, each one corresponding to a particular historical time frame, and question how the different historical settings impacted on the landscape design and their architectural features. As a historical residue, these photographs propose to create an abstract outline of forty years of urban planning of the New Towns in Britain.

In the endorsement of *Subtopia* as an imaginary new town, the sequence of photographs is particularly relevant for the creation of a narrative that refers to specific aspects of the subject. As an operative model the sequence of photographs ensues from the categories of the functional city, as stated in the Athens Charter (1933), in which urban space is organized according to four main functions: work, house, transport and leisure. These categories generated a set of guidelines aimed to assist, legislate, regulate and standardize matters of urban planning. Broadly, they acknowledged the understanding of architecture and urbanism as a practical tool for social engineering, which matched the welfare state agenda of post-war reconstruction in Britain.

However, this arrangement of the photographs does not isolate the different categories of the urban plan; some categories such as housing or transport appear more than once throughout the sequence. The intention is to replicate an existing new town and its functional design, with several neighbourhoods, a city centre, parks and public amenities, an industrial area and a grid of ring roads.

The photographs call to attention two different visual types: the topographic and the architectural, each disclosing a different scale and mode of approaching the subjects. The topographic commonly locates (integrates) the subject in context, whilst the architectural is centred on the object, usually shot from a closer range, isolating the subject from its context.

Most of the topographic views call into attention a distinguishable aspect of the British New Towns landscape design, the effort to blend the pre-existent natural elements of the landscape with the new design and additional features. Some of these topographic views bring together more than one category of the functional, i.e. housing in landscape versus transport, or a view from a higher point where landscape is the 'full picture', its subject. Hence on some photographs the functional categories become seemingly indistinctive, and the dissimilarities between topography and architecture are not always obvious.

In specific subject categories, such as housing or the city centre, the typological elements play a crucial role in the narrative when displayed alongside the photographs of similar subjects, such as houses or factories depicted in towns erected in different historical settings. This encourages the recreation of a historicist mood. Avoiding displaying photographs by town or chronological order, the sequence presented them as fragments of a wider narrative. The aim is to create new relations and contingencies, extending the hypothesis for further interpretation and speculation.

A card file index

In the most common structure of documentary serialization there is a sequence of photographs where titles and captions play a pivotal element of the narrative. Captions allocate descriptive aspects to the photographs and relate them to events, places and a specific time. The outline of *Subtopia* partially contradicts these aspects, as the captions are not displayed close to the photographs, nor is the sequence organized by location or chronological reference. Taking apart the captions from the images is crucial to strengthen their allegorical meaning as epitomes of the New Towns Programme. Thus, place and time were key references to recount the operative role of the photographs as documents on a historical subject. In the outcome of these questions the construction of an index card file appears as the most feasible hypothesis.

Each photograph is referred by a combination of letters and a number, displayed closer to the image, i.e. Lfc 600 or Mfc290/1. The letters indicate the format of the analogue film: Lfc stands for Large Format Colour 5x4 inches sheets, whereas Mfc refers to Medium Format Colour, 6x7 centimetres film. The numbers correspond to the position of the photographs on my personal archive, which comprises twelve years of work - *Subtopia* comprises photographs taken from 2006 until 2010.

Each of the photographs has an entrance in the index card file, corresponding to the alphabetic/numeric reference to a title/caption. It mentions the exact location where the picture was taken, the place, street, town, the date and the hour, as well as technical data, such as film, shutter speed and f-stop. In the index card file the entries follow the alphabetic order, i.e. Lfc or Mfc, whereas the numeric corresponds to a chronological sequence, following the progression on the making of the photographs over a course of four years.

Hint at the indexical referent of the photographs the captions tie them to an existing place and a given time. However, the archive will have more entries than the subtitles of the pictures, so it lists the photographs by the categories of the functional city, by visual types – houses, topographic views, industrial and by the town or location. Each of those entries also contemplates relevant factual raw data on the towns and quotations from key bibliography references of the thesis.

All the entries of the archive follow the alphabetic and numeric references of the photographs. Retrieving specific issues of the thesis, the archive extends the hypothetical juxtapositions and comparative aspects between the images and other aspects of the research that are not obvious. This proposed elliptical model departs from the photographs, and streams through the entries and sub-categories of the index understanding the photographs as 'documents'. The indexical of the photographs and the list categories of the archive operate as a parable of the thesis, bringing together the visual and the written components of the research.

The intention is to explore the contradictions of the archival mode. Archives commonly control information and knowledge and exercise discipline upon their subjects. This understanding acknowledges the redefinition of the nineteenth-century archive by the 1920s avant-garde, where archive became a laboratory for experimental inquiries into the positivist underside.[41] The archive as a critical stance is amplified throughout the 1960s and 1970s by the postwar artists' concept of the archive (and the archival mode) as a set of 'rules and protocols that are basic to art's production'.

Sven Spieker suggests to read this impulse within the 'vein of Michel Focault's historical a priori':

> (....) neither a grammar of abstract rules and paradigms nor an inventory of actual records; it is an archive whose rules constitute themselves together with (at the same time as) that which they help formulate.[42]

As an 'archive at play' the card file index of *Subtopia* uses the rational foundations of the modern archive in order to expand the reading of the photographs as 'open texts', leaving their interpretation to the specific interests of the viewer. In regard to its active perception, an analogy can be drawn from Roland Barthes' insight of the 'reader' in the essay *The Death of the Author*:

> (…) a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination.[43]

To conclude: landscape allegories, historicism, historiography and collective memory

Borrowing a metaphor from urban history, Rome as a palimpsest city, Sigmund Freud in *Civilization and Its Discontents* invites his 'reader' to speculate what a visitor 'versed in both history and topography' could find and perceive of the early history of the city by walking through its ruins.

> Except for a few gaps, he will see the wall of Aurelian almost unchanged. In some places he will be able to find sections of the Servian wall where they have been excavated and brought to light. If he knows enough - more than the present day archaeology does - he may perhaps be able to trace out in the plan of the city the whole course of that wall and the outline of *Roma Quadrata*. Of the buildings which once occupied this ancient area he will find nothing, or only scanty remains, for they exist no longer.(…) There is certainly not a little that is ancient still buried in the soil of the city or beneath its modern buildings. This is the manner in which the past is preserved in historical sites like Rome.[44]

Freud uses this metaphor of the historical city to discuss the preservation of memory, deeming the destruction of the urban space as an analogy to the human trauma. In fact, building demolitions and urban renewal schemes are customary events in historic cities, therefore the state of partial or imperfect preservation is the norm. While in mental life, Freud affirms that 'nothing which has once been formed can perish - everything is somehow preserved and that, in suitable circumstances (when, for instance, regression goes back far enough), it can once be brought to light'.[45]

Looking beyond the physical destruction of buildings and structures, other aspects can be of help in tracing, or evoking, the past of a place, either its toponymy or its visual and written representation.[46] Following this line of reasoning Sebastien Marot suggests, "…why not imagine that, as psychoanalysis, there could be ways of managing and reconstructing urban space that would allow us, if not to preserve its past as such, at least live in understanding with it?"

Contrasted with the physical layers of the 'historic' cities, the landscape of the New Towns is less expressive. The original architecture and landscape design are best perceived through their contemporary structures: parks, buildings, houses, roads, signs, most of them still standing. Therefore Freud's metaphor could be interpreted not only as a formal analogy, but almost as a form of consubstantiality; we can map the past as all the historic layers seem to be visible.

Following Marot's perception, the purpose here is not to reinvent the past. These photographs are intended to act as archaeological residue, *partially* reconstructing the New Towns urban model as a mnemonic place, calling particular attention to the connections between urbanism and collective memory. Urbanism in fact arose from concepts of order and orientation, which ultimately present the design of the urban space as a mnemonic system. Structured around the guidelines of the functional plan, the New Towns Programme propounded a new set of relationships between landscape and collective memory, affirming the relevance of 'natural' landscape and architecture as a social achievement.

Within the political framework of the Welfare State, the New Towns transformed an untouched territory into an ideological environment. Built without spatial constraints on designated sites, places with no particular or relevant previous human occupation, the New Towns are a-historic urban models, in that they do not relate to any previous form of traditional English urban settlements. By assembling photographs from five different towns built over a period of forty years, *Subtopia* proposes an allegory of the New Towns Programme. Reflecting a historicist mood, the photographs show that it is possible to trace the historical relevance of the New Towns Programme as a prototype of modern planning and social architecture.

The above attributes of the photographs in relation to the subject could be incorporated into Maurice Halbwachs understanding of how collective memory finds its support basis in spatial images, where space operates 'like an immobile image time':

> Thus, there is no collective memory that does not unfold in a spatial framework. Now space is an enduring reality: each of our impressions banishes the one that comes before, nothing remains in our mind, and there would be no way of understanding the fact that we can retain the past, if it did not in effect preserve itself in material surroundings. It is to space, to our space, that we must turn our attention: the space we occupy, which we frequently cross, to which we have always have access, and which in any case our imagination and our thought is able to reconstruct at every moment. It is there that our thought must fix itself, in order for any given categories of memories to reappear.[47]

Following a historicist path, this thesis proposes a history of the New Towns structured upon spatial images. The specific written or visual sources' stated aim is to anchor the historical narrative to the question of how space is represented through photographs. Thus it is important to redefine certain terms used in the argument, particularly the distinction between historicism and historiography.

According to Raymond Williams the term historicism is ambivalent and its twentieth century uses distinguishes three senses:

> …(i)a relatively neutral definition of a method of study which relies on the facts of the past and traces precedents of current events; (ii) a deliberate emphasis on variable historical conditions and contexts, through which all specific events must be interpreted; (iii) a hostile sense, to attack all forms of interpretation or predictior by 'historical necessity' or the discovery of general 'laws of historical development' (cf.Popper).[48]

This later negative perception of historicism understands the 'lessons of history' as an argument against hope in the future. As acknowledged in this thesis, historicism traces and questions the 'historical conditions and contexts' arising from the photographs, the written sources and their subjects. However, it does not suggest laying out the argument in a chronological linear progression of events and facts. Instead, it proposes a critical evaluation of the notion of the historical. The written component begins with a discussion of how to include *facts* in photographs, in Germany's Weimar Republic and in the Soviet Union in the 1920s; it progresses to the study of the early Parisian architectural photographs of the nineteenth century; it then deals with the New Towns photographs of the Architectural Press Group, and closes with the study of the New Topographics. In this understanding and use of historicism there is no room for a linear conception of history, justifying the argument that the study of the visual paradigms terminated in 1975 with the discussions of the *new topographers*. In their retrieval of landscape as a photographic genre, those photographers opened up pivotal questions regarding the role of descriptive aesthetics in the representation of landscape through photographs. Discussing their strategies of approach, and their different motivations and motifs, it was necessary to connect the visual component of the thesis to this historicist mood. Avoiding the chronological edifice, the methodology of investigation proposes an elliptical reading, which makes use of historicism to gather together both written and visual components.

Siegfried Kracauer stated that "historicism is concerned with the photography of time", and proposed recognising historiography and photography as tools of historical investigation.[49] According to this view, the thesis assigns to historiography an operative role, as both the photographs and the writing invites a critical investigation of the sources. The historical debates of the written component stem from questions raised by the visual component, either specific issues of subject content – urbanism, architecture and the New Towns - or those concerned with documental descriptive aesthetics. In this process of writing as historiography, the term implies the dismantling of the ideological stance of the visual paradigms investigated, in order to locate the contexts that inform and influence the photographs.

Thereafter, it is important to distinguish beteen the various meanings of the term 'descriptive'. Certain techniques involved in the making of the photographs tended to reinforce their descriptive abilities. The use of a plate camera made it possible to control some optical setbacks, whilst shooting with large format analogue film and exploring depth of field ensured the sharpest possible detail to the photographs. This descriptive mode contains quotes from the photographers investigated and is discussed in the written component of the thesis: Charles Marville, Eugène Atget or the *New Topographics*. However, the meaning of the word *descriptive* suggests looking without judging, i.e. appearing to be impartial, yet the *Subtopia* photographs negate the claim of their being a neutral voice on the subject. Thus descriptive aesthetics also show how subjectivity is reaffirmed, firstly by questioning this model of representation, since in the archival *montage* there is a refusal to establish an immediate relationship with a documentary stance.   For example, the captions are not displayed close to the photographs, the sequence does not follow chronology, or geographical location, and we do not even know at first glance where the photographs were taken. Once more, this denial of a linear narrative leads us to a paradox: while the photographs emphasise their documentary content, the sequence and the montage serve to highlight their allegorical capabilities.

As a subject of interest the New Towns bear an outmoded burden. In a professed interest in exploring a suburban peripheral territory, the photographs of *Subtopia* allude to the commonness of these places. Allegorically, this desire for the banal and the ephemeral could 'become the subject of the image' as Craig Owens states.[50] Attempting to rescue their subject matter from oblivion, these photographs reclaim an allegorical condition, as palimpsests, tracing other layers beneath the surface. Craig Owens remarks that in the allegorical structure 'one text is read through another', though their relation could be discontinuous. [51]

Acting as fragments affirming their own arbitrariness and contingency, the photographs do not attempt to restore any sense of formal unity or coherence upon the subject. Instead, in their subjective task, they further an understanding of the New Towns Program as an unfinished ideological model, as the impossible materialization of utopia. In their ultimate intention the photographs question the significance of the post-war social suburban landscape within British culture and 'collective memory'.

The epistemological purpose of this investigation is to try to examine an alternative proposal. Its main contribution is to the history and historiography of the New Towns Programme in Britain, proposing a new method for the visual representation of its landscape and architecture. Furthermore, it seeks to contribute to the History of Architecture, permitting an awareness of the various ideas introduced, and the progress made by the New Towns Programme during the four decades that the project lasted, an epoch when major shifts in the critical understanding of modern architecture took place. Through the photographs, it is possible to discern how the garden city roots of the New Towns were retained throughout all phases of the programme, whilst architectural design changed profoundly. In fact, the photographs show towns that were built under the influence of new ideas that inevitably shaped the critical debates within post-war modern British architecture, from Empiricism (late1940s to mid 1950s, the towns of Stevenage and Harlow) to Brutalism (Cumbernauld and Runcorn, the late 1950s to mid 1960s), or the quintessential post-modern designs of Milton Keynes (mid to late 1970s onwards).

I firmly believe the thesis has made a weighty contribution to the analysis of the New Towns photographs of the Architectural Press Group, pioneering the study of this archive. I was able to examine these photographs, in November 2005, soon after they were deposited with the RIBA Library Collections, even before all the material was subjected to a new archival classification. The critical analysis contained in the thesis will awaken further interest and introduce other points of view to the continuing study of the New Towns photographs.

The study of Charles Maryville's Parisian photographs, by unpeeling their visual structure and framing their historical background, has a twofold role. To question how photographs represent a historical viewpoint of architecture and urbanism, building on the notion of encapsulating space and time. The other deals with the specific case study of Haussmann's Paris, showing how those pictures were understood and used by the different historiographical readings.

Mainly by analysing the visual paradigms that influenced the German and Soviet photographs in the 1920s, the thesis aims to contribute to the history and theory of photography. It proposes a new relationship between the different sources that nourished the investigation, by studying aesthetics in relation to the ideological and historical context, and by taking a closer look at the photographers' expectations with regard to their pictures. I have no doubt that this analysis contributes to the study of how these visual paradigms still impact contemporary practices in documentary photography.

Questioning the historical perception of the New Towns of Britain, whilst raising further consciousness and knowledge, these photographs perform a subjective task, as documents as well as artistic representations on the subject. They call into attention Peter Wollen's words:

> Photography within art, can, however, re-open the closed questions of ideological reading and understanding, the symbiosis of the information with blocked knowledge and balked desire. In this sense, it opens up paths which make the production of new knowledge elsewhere more possible.[52]

1   On imaginary topography see Ann Jensen Adams, 'Competing Communities in the "Great Bog of Europe": Identity and Seventeenth-Century Dutch Landscape Painting ', In: *Landscape and Power.* W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.) (University of Chicago Press; Chicago, Ill. ; London, 2002), pp 35-76.

2   W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Imperial Landscape ', In: *Landscape and Power.* W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.) (University of Chicago Press; Chicago, Ill. ; London, 2002), pp 5-35, p 5-7.

3   Mitchell, 'Imperial Landscape ', p 5.

4   Two seminal texts on photography theory discuss the questions of representation in relation to nineteenth century photographs: John Tagg, *The burden of representation: essays on photographies and histories* (Macmillan Education; Basingstoke, 1988) and Allan Sekula, 'The Body and the Archive', In: *The Contest of Meaning, Critical Histories of Photography.* Richard Bolton (ed.) (The MIT Press; Cambridge MA and London, 1989), pp 343-89.

5   David Bate, *Photography, The Key Concepts* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2009), p 99.
    The author links pleasure from this type of landscape photographs to what Walter Benjamin calls the 'optical unconscious ' of photography: 'The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses' in "The work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations* (London; Fontana 1979), p 239.

6   William Jenkins, *New Topographics Photographs of a Man-altered Landscape* (Rochester: International Museum of Photography, George Eastman House, 1975), p 5.

7   Jenkins, *New Topographics Photographs of a Man-altered Landscape,* p 7.

8   Szarkowski as quoted in Debora Bright, , 'Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men: An Inquiry into Cultural Meanings of Landscape Photography', in Richard Bolton (ed.), *The Contest of Meaning : Critical Histories of Photography* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT Press, 1989), pp 125-144.

9   Jenkins, *New Topographics Photographs of a Man-altered Landscape,* p 7.
    The artists are sequenced by alphabetic order in the catalogue. Each one has a biographical note and three pages with photographs, commonly a photograph per page. The author of this layout was the participating artist Joe Deal, at the time the exhibitions manager at Rochester.

10   Jenkins, *New Topographics Photographs of a Man-altered Landscape,* p 7. The author gives an account of his intentions regarding the artists' statements in a footnote.

11   Bright, 'Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men: An Inquiry into Cultural Meanings of Landscape Photography', p 126.

12   Jenkins, *New Topographics Photographs of a Man-altered Landscape,* p 6 The author made this reference in relation to Ed Ruscha's *Twenty six Gasoline Stations* (1963) and *Some Los Angeles Apartments* (1965).

13   Jenkins, *New Topographics Photographs of a Man-altered Landscape,* p 5

14   Deborah Bright, "The Machine in the Garden Revisited: American Environmentalism and Photographic Aesthetics" in *Art Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 2, Art and Ecology. (Summer, 1992), pp 60-71.

15   William Jenkins in conversation with Britt Salvensen (2006), in *New Topographics*, (Göttingen: Steidl 2009). p 49.

16   Salvensen, *New Topographics,* p 14 -16.

17   W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Imperial Landscape ', In: *Landscape and Power.* W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.) (University of Chicago Press; Chicago, Ill. ; London, 2002), pp 5-35

18   As quoted in Salvensen *New Topographics* , p 21, Peirce F. Lewis "Axioms for Reading the Landscape: Some guides to the American Scene" in D.W. Meinig (ed.) *The interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) p 12.

19   Salvesen, *New Topographics,* p 37.
     Beaumont Newhall at the centenary exhibition *History of Photography* established Western survey photography as an origin point for the 'straight' aesthetic both he and Adams (Ansel) considered to be quintessentially modern, photographic, and American.

20   Robert Adams, *What we bought: the new world: scenes from the Denver Metropolitan Area 1970-1974* (Stiftung Niedersachsen ; New York 1995).

21   A good definition of serialization is given by Thomas Weski in 'The sign language of the Documentary ', In: *Landschaft.* Heinz Lisbrock and Thomas Weski (ed.) (Steidl; Gottingen, 2002), p 13.

"It serves primarily as a means of formulating a complex statement on a particular aspect of the world. Unlike photo reportage. Which provide us with one visual superlative after another, the serialization technique is based on a dramaturgy of the commonplace, which allows of, and concedes meaning to, the seemingly unimportant and irrelevant. The results of this artistic construct continue to fascinate us because they neither furnish our imagination with pictures nor over visualize visible phenomena."

22 Ironically, in *What we Bought: The New World – Scenes from Denver Metropolitan Area, 1970-1974,* Robert Adams dismisses the use of captions. Apart from the title of the book, the photographs have no reference to location or date,

23 A question that will be discussed in regards to Atget photographs.

24 Bright, Debora, 'Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men: An Inquiry into Cultural Meanings of Landscape Photography', in Richard Bolton (ed.), *The Contest of Meaning : Critical Histories of Photography* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT Press, 1989), pp 125-144, p 126.

25 Salvesen, *New Topographics*, p 12.

26 Ian Walker, *City gorged with dreams, Surrealism and documentary photography in interwar Paris,* (Manchester University Press; Manchester, 2002). Walker devotes an entire chapter to Atget, *A Surrealist Atget,* p 88.

27   Henri Jonquières, *Atget Photographe de Paris* (Henri Jonquières; Paris, 1930).

28 This book had also an American edition by E. Weyhe; New York 1930, and a German edition *Atget Lichtbilder* (Henri Jonquières; Leipzig, 1930). In 2008 Errata Editions launch a fac simile publication in the series Books on Books : *Eugène Atget, Photographe de Paris* (Errata Ed.; New York, 2008). In 1984, MoMA completed the publication of a four-volume series of books on Atget. The books were based on four successive exhibitions that the Museum held from 1981 onwards, under John Szarkowski's direction: Eugène Atget, John Szarkowski and Maria Morris Hambourg, *The Work of Atget: The Old France, Volume I* (MOMA; New York, 1981); *The Work of Atget: The Art of Old Paris, Volume II* (MOMA; New York, 1982); *The Work of Atget: The Ancien Régime, Volume III* (MOMA; New York, 1984); *The Work of Atget: Modern Times, Volume IV* (MOMA; New York, 1985).

29   Walker, *City gorged with dreams, Surrealism and documentary photography in interwar Paris,* p 88.

30   Rosalind Krauss, 'Photography's Discursive Spaces', In: *The Contest of Meaning* Richard Bolton (ed.) (The MIT Press; Cambrigde, Massachusetts, 1999), pp 286-301, p 297.

31   Krauss, 'Photography's Discursive Spaces', p 298.

32   Molly Nesbit, 'The Use of History', *Art in America*, February 1986.

33   Nesbit, Molly *Atget's Seven Albums* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p 84.

34   Nesbit, *Atget's Seven Albums,* p 82.
     Nesbit gives a clear account of the organization of Atget archival categories: *Vieux Paris* begun in 1897, and the architectural photographs were grouped under *L'Art dans le Vieux Paris*. The sister series of the former *Environs de Paris* deal with the historic monuments; *Topographie du Vieux Paris*, begun in 1906, includes the old streets, the disruptions of the urban fabric, the demolitions; *Paris pittoresque*, begun in 1897 '(…) with the collection of *petit métiers* and scenes of the crowded streets; it lay dormant after 1900 until 1910, when it became the location for Atget's meditation on modern life in Paris.' *Paysages-documents divers*, probably begun in 1892 and ended in 1919.

35   Ute Eskildsen, *Wenn Berlin Biarritz Wäre* (Gottigen: Steidl 2001) p38/39.
     Séraphin Médéric worked under assignment for the *Commission des Monuments Historiques* since 1875 until the 1890s.

36   Walter Benjamin, 'A Small History of Photography', in *One-way street, and other writings*. (Verso; London, 1997), p 242.

37   Robert Desnos, 'Spectacles of the Street- Eugène Atget', in *Photography in the Modern Era. European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940*. Christopher Phillips (ed.) (The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Aperture; New York, 1989), pp 16-17.

38   Walter Benjamin, 'The work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction ', in: *Selected writings, 1935-1938*. Michael William Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith (eds.) (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), pp 101-133, p.108.

See also Peter Wollen, 'Vectors of Melancholy', in Ralph Rugoff (ed.), *Scene of a Crime*, (Cambridge, Massachussets; London, England: UCLA at the Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, published in association with The Mit Press, 1997), p 28.

39   Walter Benjamin, 'One-way street', in *One-way street, and other writings.* (Verso; London, 1997), pp 45-107, p 66.

40   Benjamin, 'One-way street', p 66.

41   Sven Spieker, *The Big Archive : art from bureaucracy* (MIT; Cambridge, Mass. ; London, 2008), p 6. In the introduction Spieker address the early century avant-gardes critique of the archive:
"Rather than endorsing the nineteenth century's confidence in the registration of time, members of the twentieth-century avant-gardes critiqued and ultimately dismantled that confidence first, by pointing out that contingency and chance may affect the archive's operations literally at every level (Duchamp) ; second, by compiling collections of moments of rupture that elude the archive (early Surrealism); and third, by challenging the Newtonian underpinnings of the archive's topography and its optical correlatives by way of film (Lissitzky, Eisenstein)."

42   Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language* (Pantheon Books; New York, 1972) p 130.

43   Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, music, text.* (Fontana; London, 1977), p 148.

44   As quoted in Sébastien Marot, *Sub-Urbanism and the Art of Memory* (Architectural Association; London, 2003), p 24.

45   As quoted in Marot, *Sub-Urbanism and the Art of Memory,* p 25.

46   Marot, *Sub-Urbanism and the Art of Memory,* p 28.

47   As quoted in Marot, *Sub-Urbanism and the Art of Memory,* p 30.

48   Raymond Williams, *Keywords : a vocabulary of culture and society* (Fontana Press; London, 1988), p 147.

49   Siegfried Kracauer, 'Photography ', In: Alan Trachtenberg, (ed.), *Classic Essays on Photography*, (Leete's Island Books, New Haven, Conn. , 1980), pp 245-268.

This quote is also used in the second chapter in the discussion of the *historicist* mood of nineteenth century photographs of Paris.

50   Craig Owens, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism' in *Art after Modernism : Rethinking Representation*, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art ; Boston : D.R. Godine, 1984), pp 203-235. p 205 and p 207.

51   Owens, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism', p 207.

52   Peter Wollen, 'Photography and Aesthetics', *Screen*, Winter 1978-9 (vol.19, nº4) p 28.

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