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A critical discussion of the use of film  
in participatory research projects with  
homeless young people: an international  
case-case based analysis

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Methods Manchester:  
Methodological innovations  
to meet 21st Century  
societal challenges

Alastair Roy, UCLan, UK [@aliroy01](#)

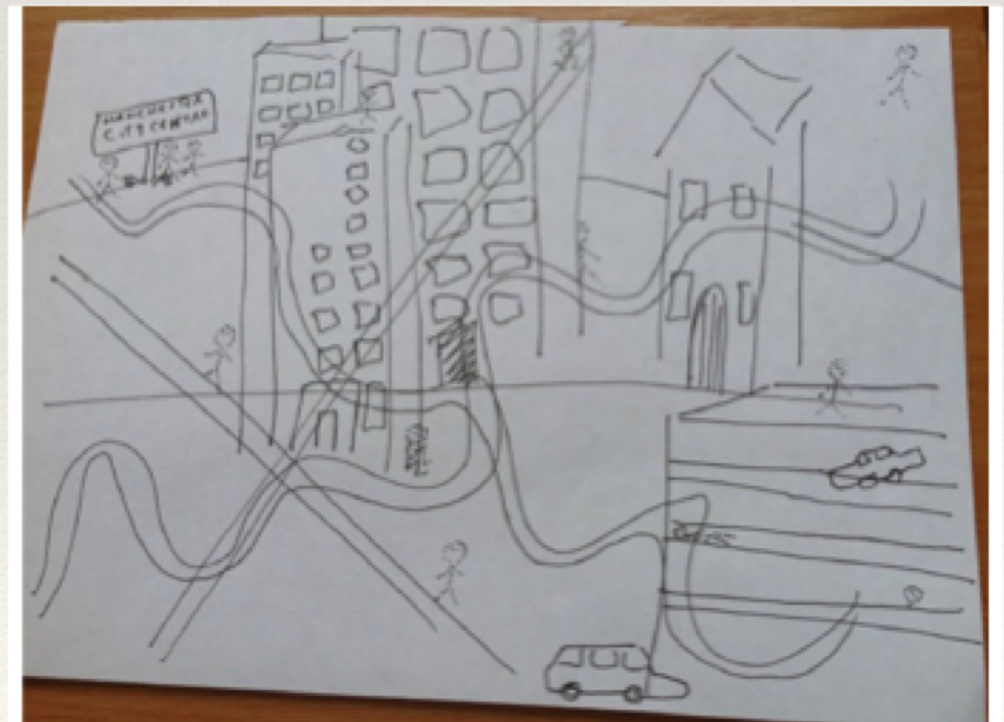
Harriet Rowley, MMU, UK

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# Mapping the terrain

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- ❖ Participatory – Action – Research
- ❖ Film in participatory research
- ❖ Story-narrative tensions
- ❖ Two examples: Ottawa and Manchester
- ❖ Conclusions



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# Aspirations

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- ❖ **involvement** (who should be involved in research activity),
- ❖ **process** (how such activity should be undertaken) and
- ❖ **benefit** (who should experience the positive effects of research)

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# Film in PAR

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The use of film based media help young people:

- to express their lives, views and situations in new ways and
- To make interventions in the public sphere on the basis of these



*Photograph of installation  
from Manchester Project*

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# Anxieties

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How can we not feel anxious about making private worlds public, revealing confidential statements made in the context of ... relationship[s] based on trust? ... [N]o contract carries as many unspoken conditions as one based on trust. In the first place, we ... protect ... people ... by changing the names of places and individuals to protect identification. Above all, we [must] ... protect them from the dangers of misinterpretation (Bourdieu, 1999: 1)

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# Stories and narratives

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*Stories* are “living, local, and specific”

*Narratives* are templates

We learn these narrative templates from our culture

Frank (2010)



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# The Ottawa project – introduction

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*Still shot from the production of films with Ottawa youth. Here, youth are leading the research team and film crew on walking tours of the city.*

Films and resource guide publicly available at:

[www.jacquelinekennelly.ca/encounteringdemocracy](http://www.jacquelinekennelly.ca/encounteringdemocracy)



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# Ottawa – narrative story tensions

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*Still from film production of the Ottawa films. The blurring is intentional to protect confidentiality of the participants.*



# The Manchester project - introduction

## 'PARTISPACE'

- ❖ Case study site - 'The Box'
- ❖ 9 month ethnography/PAR

## Aims

1. Foreground participants' experiences
2. Act as lead creators

## Outcomes

Installations, walking tour, film



# Manchester – screening

- ❖ Split between process and product
- ❖ Screening at celebration event
- ❖ No common agreement on how film would be used
- ❖ Prioritisation of micro-political and ethical commitments over possible productive effects of wider advocacy



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# Manchester – narrative-story tensions

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*Walking tour led by young men*

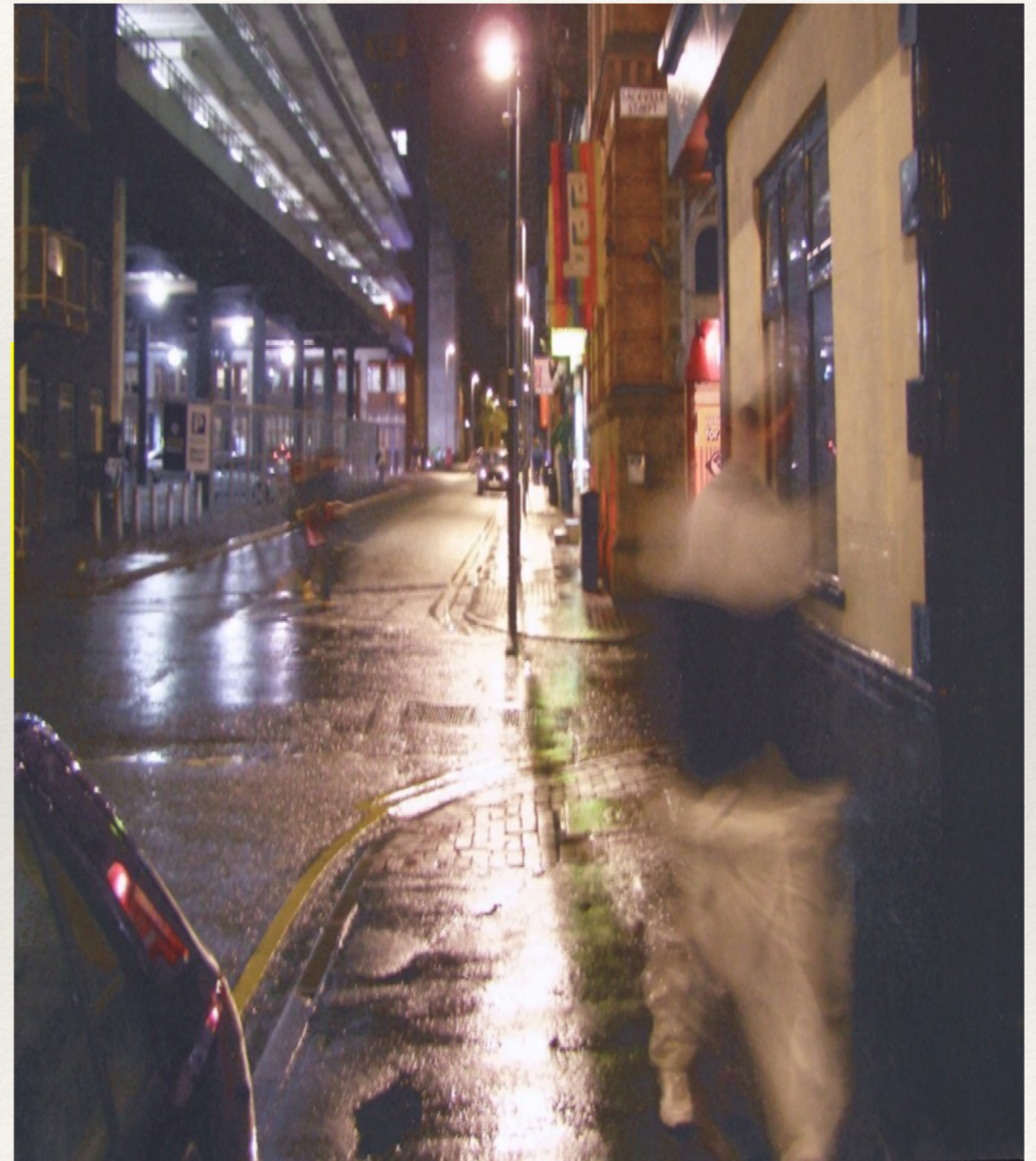
- *living* (he animates the story, bringing it to life),
- *local* (it refers to explicit locations in the city of Manchester, England), and
- *specific* (it tells a story related to his own life).

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# Discussion

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❖ Participation

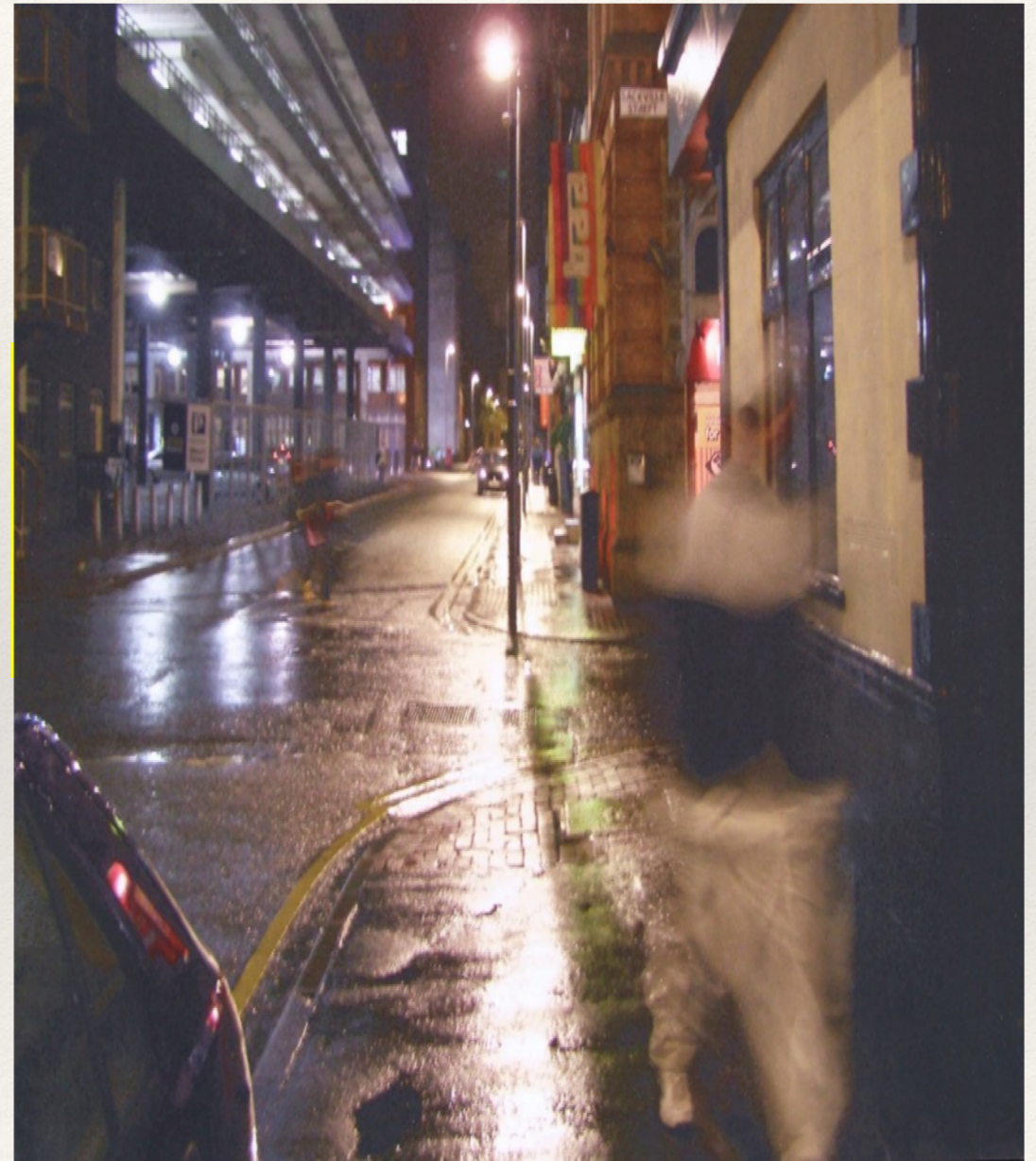


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# Discussion

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❖ Deploying stories

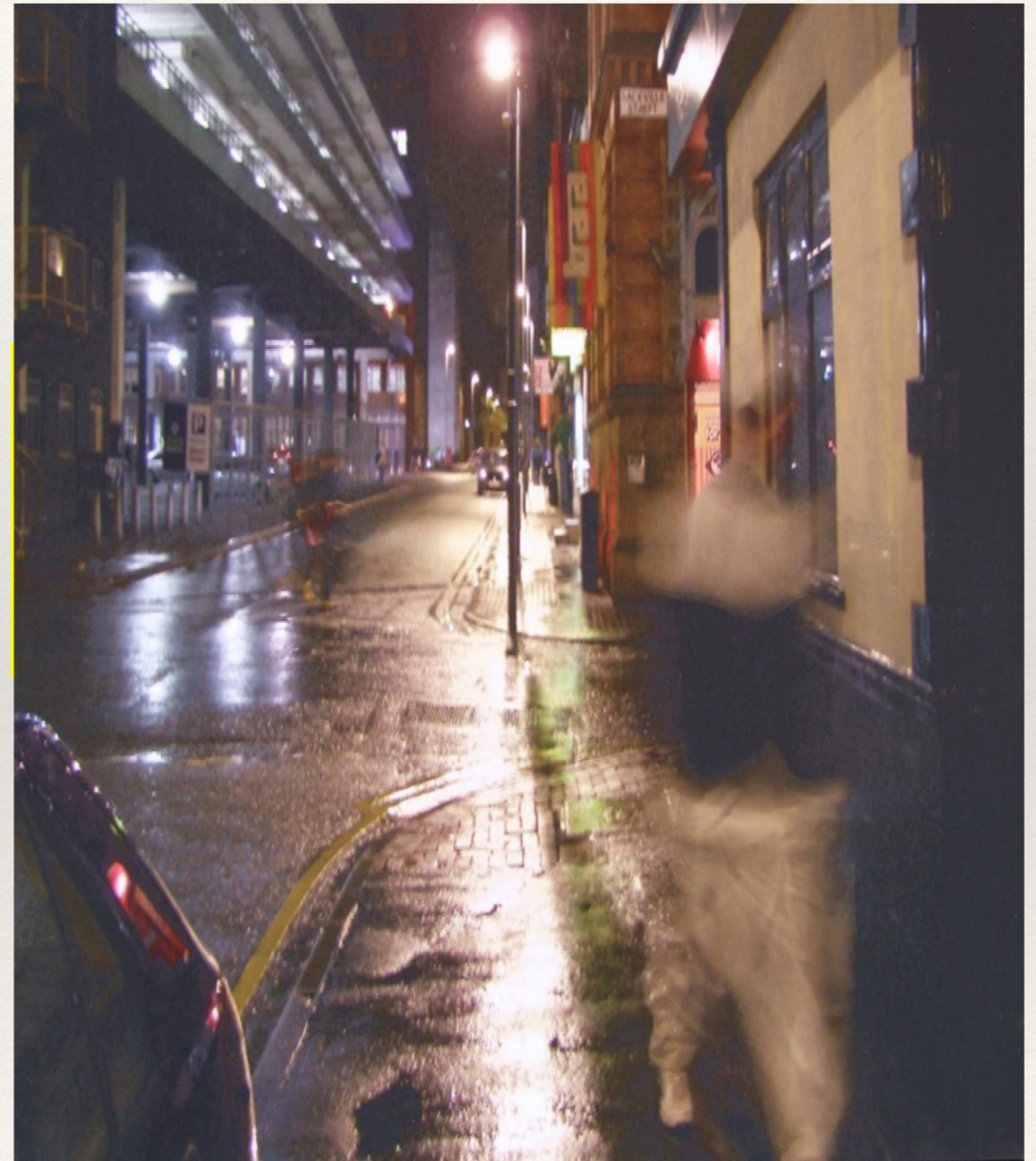


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# Discussion

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- ❖ Narrative-story tensions

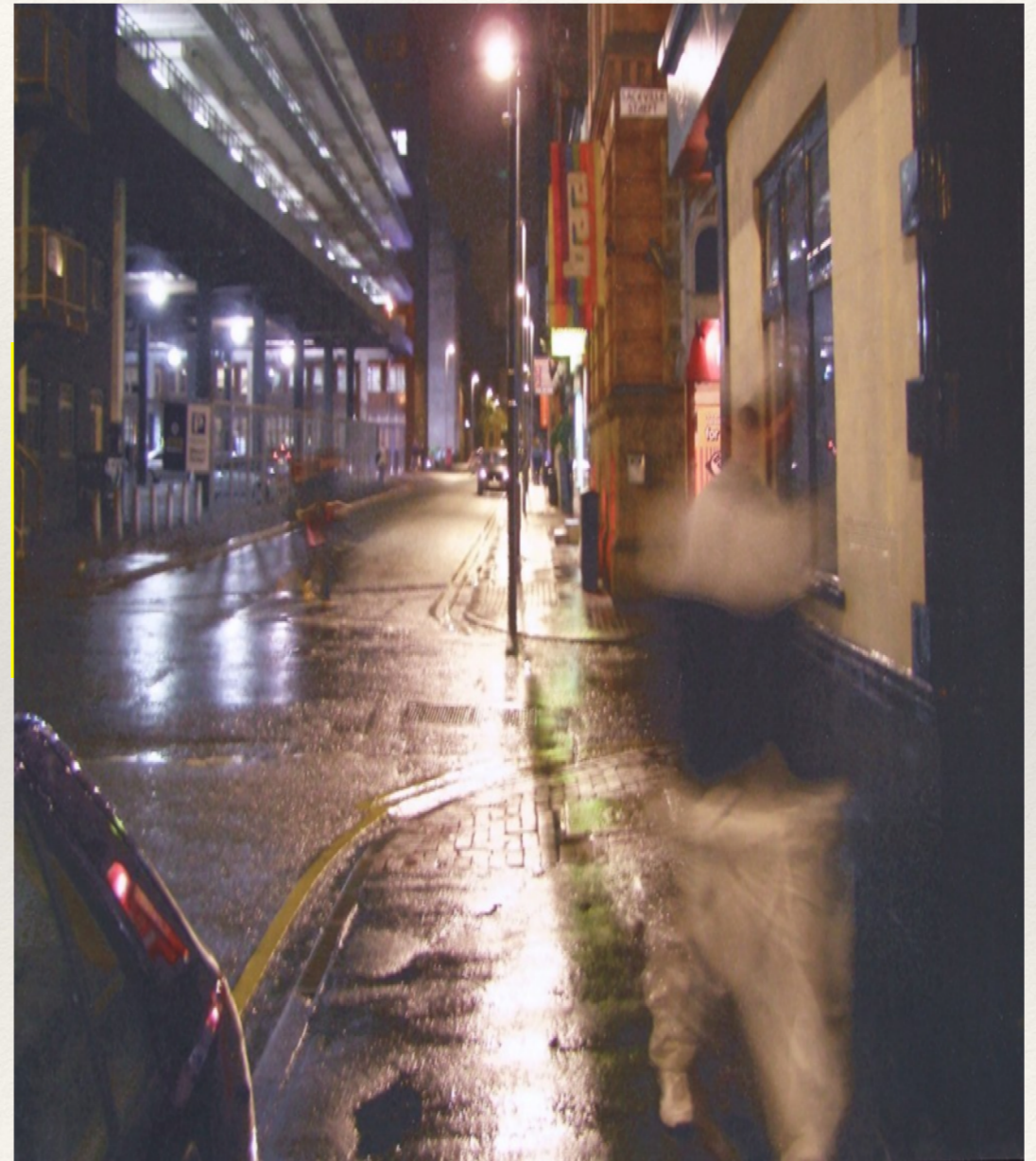


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# Discussion

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- ❖ Going or not going public

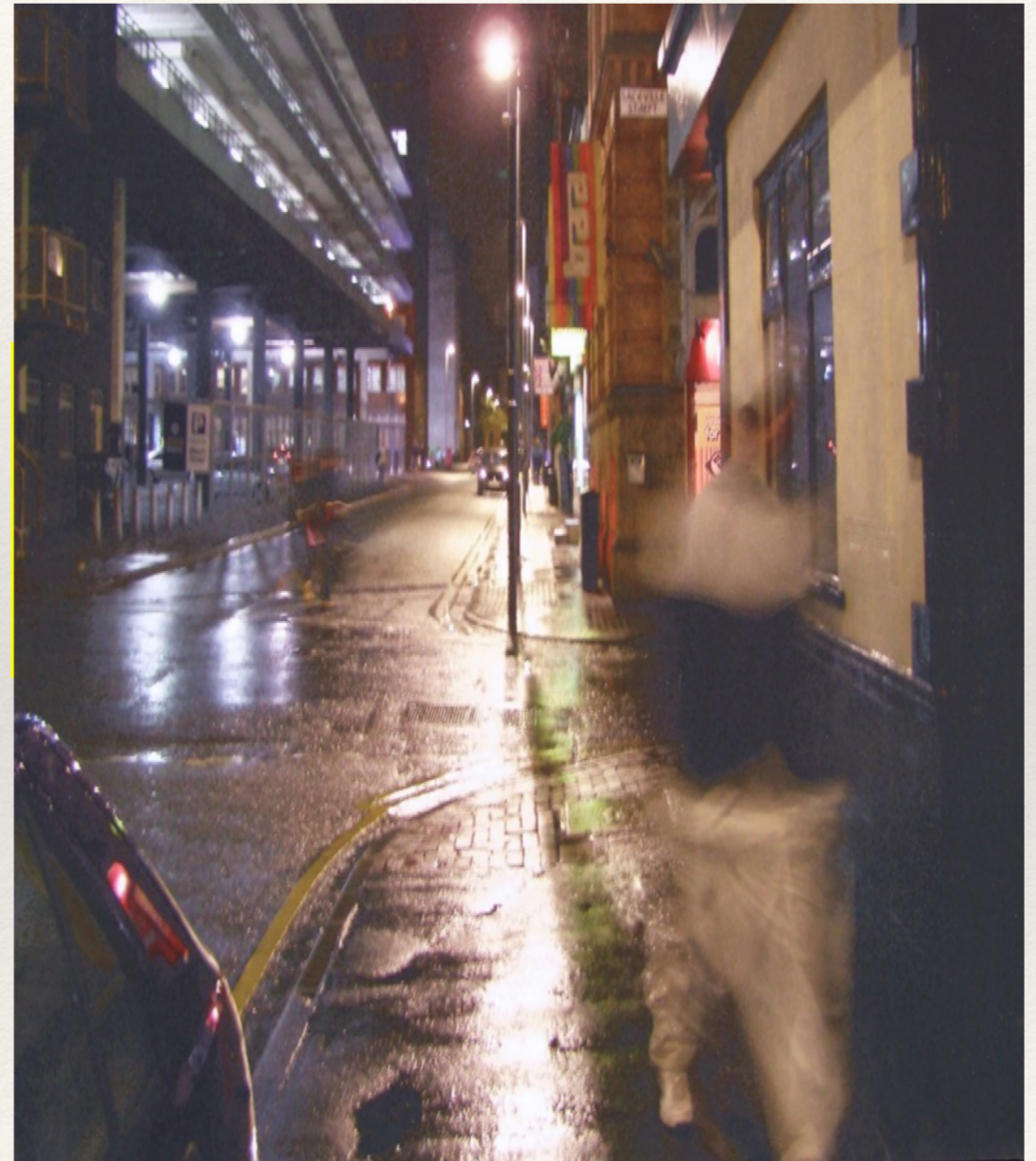


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# Discussion

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❖ **Anxieties**





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# Thanks for listening

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