

live the life I have always imagined

In London





pranati satti



for the audio tour:

www.live-the-life-you-have-imagined.webnode.com

Rapid development, due to the rapid influx of capital brings with it rapid marketing. The relation between the three is an endless loop, operating at such a speed, that the content of a marketing campaign bears little relevance to the present.

Live the Life You Have Always Imagined seeks to show the different perceptions and preconceptions developers have of the same area and their varying ideas for shaping it to best suit their desired investors. This interest is addressed through pre-recorded audio tours, the content and language of which, is derived from each developer's marketing materials. The tour can be accessed by

scanning a QR code at every stop on the route of the 196 bus from Wandsworth to Elephant and Castle in South London, and by a car driving on the Outer Ring Road from Nanakramguda to Nekkampur in Hyderabad. The QR code leads to a website, which in addition to the soundtrack has a video for someone who cannot visit the site in person. Since the QR and the website are key to the outreach of the project, a billboard on the Wandsworth road will display both for a duration of two weeks.

At the end of the audio tours, guided-walk books lead the audience through the same sites but in the opposite direction. Unlike the audio tours which discuss the future's perfect visions for the sites, the guided-walk books remain true to their surroundings, aiming to record them at exactly this moment in time.

[To be read after the audio tour]

While we all feel a sense of loss
when a familiar environment is
changing, are we taking the
time to see it, wide-eyed,
gathering all the details the way
it is now? A simple answer may
be taking a photograph – which
may then be handed over
generations, in hope that they
will feel what you felt about this
place.

In my own experience, my
mother's childhood house in

Buchireddypallem, Nellore was
something I had only seen
through a photograph and her
descriptions of it. I visited twice,
but the house being over 90
years then, and with no one to
take care of it, was weather-
beaten, reducing more than half
of it to a pile of stones.

At that time, though the
foundation was designed for a
single or double storied house,
through competition among
neighbours, entire floors were
added to make houses taller
than the rest, symbolizing more
control over the town.

My mother often describes the rooms, the streets, the trees, the animals and the people, and these for me serve as better visuals than the single photograph.

While photographs have a two-dimensional quality, words add a third dimension.

This guide tries to describe the changing environment in between Wandsworth Road and Elephant and Castle in South London, by walking through the sites around or undergoing redevelopment.

[Only the start is geo-located, beyond which the text will be your only guide. A web based mapping service through most of these sites will not function accurately.

The guide is read through three registers of voice, placed at different positions on the page.

This within brackets is the instructive text.]

My personal observations occupy this space.

Personal and sourced reflections are placed here.

time elapsed

The book is situated in the time when I
documented my walk.

(3rd September 2018 to 7th September 2018)

[Start at Gaunt Street]

51.497178, -0.099266

[Where the bus terminates, you will see Two Fifty-One in front of you. Walk towards it and turn left.]



00 hours: 00 minutes: 00 seconds

Two men are replacing the paving outside the Perry Library. They appear to have taken on more work than they can deliver by the end of the day. While they don't have the time to look up, people on the street, who are now being diverted into a single lane, seem unhappy with the obstruction during their already brief lunch break.



00 hours: 00 minutes: 30 seconds

[Once you find your way
through the crowd, keep
walking until you get to a cross
road and turn left.]

People look at me as I pass.
They wonder what is so
important that I need to write
down at this very moment.



00 hours: 01 minute: 10 seconds

Have you ever spotted someone
or someplace that you can relate
to on the many property
billboards that surround us
today? Do you ever wonder if
the place that is being
advertised was ever designed
taking 'you' into consideration?



[As you walk further, you will notice that the cycle superhighway that you're now on, gets interrupted by a main road.]



00 hours: 04 minutes: 10 seconds

[Continue on the superhighway
and to your left you will see the
Perronet House and a flight of
stairs. Walk up these stairs, and
momentarily you will feel like
you have escaped the crowds.]

I like the view of the street from
here.

00 hours: 06 minutes: 20 seconds



Until I look behind and realize that the railing leading up to the main entrance is covered in barbed wire.

Suddenly, there's barbed wire all around, on the walls, along ramps.



[Walk further and a flight of stairs will lead you back to the street. From here, across the road you will see Nandine Coffee and a corner store selling newspapers.]

This seems like a very popular spot for a quick cup of coffee, a cigarette and socializing in the late afternoon.



[Walk into the lane next to Nandine Coffee. On your left, you will see a row of houses in three different types of brick and on your right a concrete structure that the University of Arts London now occupies.]

Unlike on the main road, this side of the campus seems quiet, and looking up at the windows, there are hardly any students. The terraced houses on the left fall silent as I move through the lane.

00 hours: 10 minutes: 30 seconds



[When you reach the end, you will see the back of the Castle Centre, a massive brick structure, clad in wood.]

What looks like a single storied structure, I learn, has an indoor cycling studio, a swimming pool and a gymnasium which are free for the residents in the area on the weekend.

00 hours: 13 minutes: 20 seconds



[Turn right and then left immediately into the narrow lane that seems wide enough for a cycle and runs along the building. At the end of the lane turn right along the fence that has 'Beware of Dog' painted in 3 places.]

On my right, there is now a building clad in aluminum panels. There's an empty park in front of it that runs along the Castle Center and directly faces the Elephant and Castle main road.



[Walk into the lane and
follow the road, as it curves
gently to the left.]

Looking straight into the
Dante road, I see the sky
clear of skyscrapers and
wonder how.



[When you reach DR10 on your left, turn into the lane you see across. You reach a peaceful street with semi-detached brick houses leading up to traces of modern buildings.]

Looking down I realize a distinct change in the road and the paving exactly where the old buildings merge with the new – and suddenly I'm surrounded by them.

00 hours: 16 minutes: 20 seconds



What's unsettling, is that the
utopia we see on billboards
today is being replicated life size
and our cities are being
reconfigured according to one
person's ideal world, directed by
his own needs. Is something as
simple as the paving ending at a
specific spot differentiating
already?



In front there's a sign that says Cinema Museum and on the left, there's a massive brick tower. The brick tower is actually a water tower that in 1867 used to hold 30,000 gallons of water and has now a 5-bedroom house with 4 bathrooms.

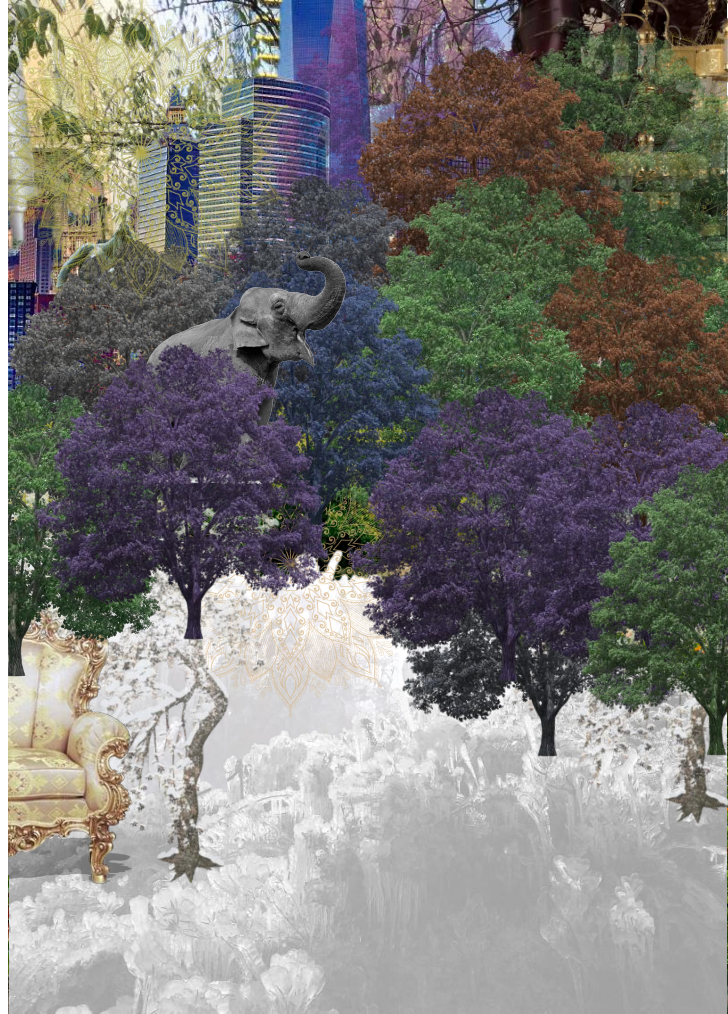
[Turn left and walk up the stairs to your right.]

00 hours: 16 minutes: 50 seconds



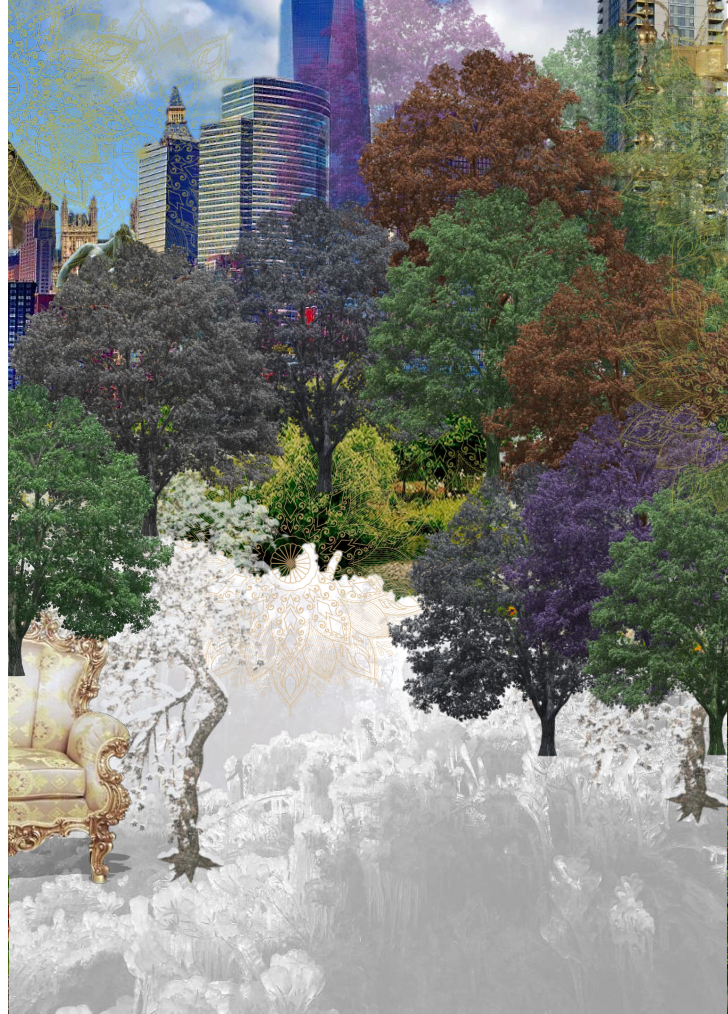
As the path leads through the development, a central space is occupied by four trees that look like their bark is made of plastic. They don't smell like anything.

[In front of you, you will see a gate that says restricted access. Walk through it, towards the street and turn right.]



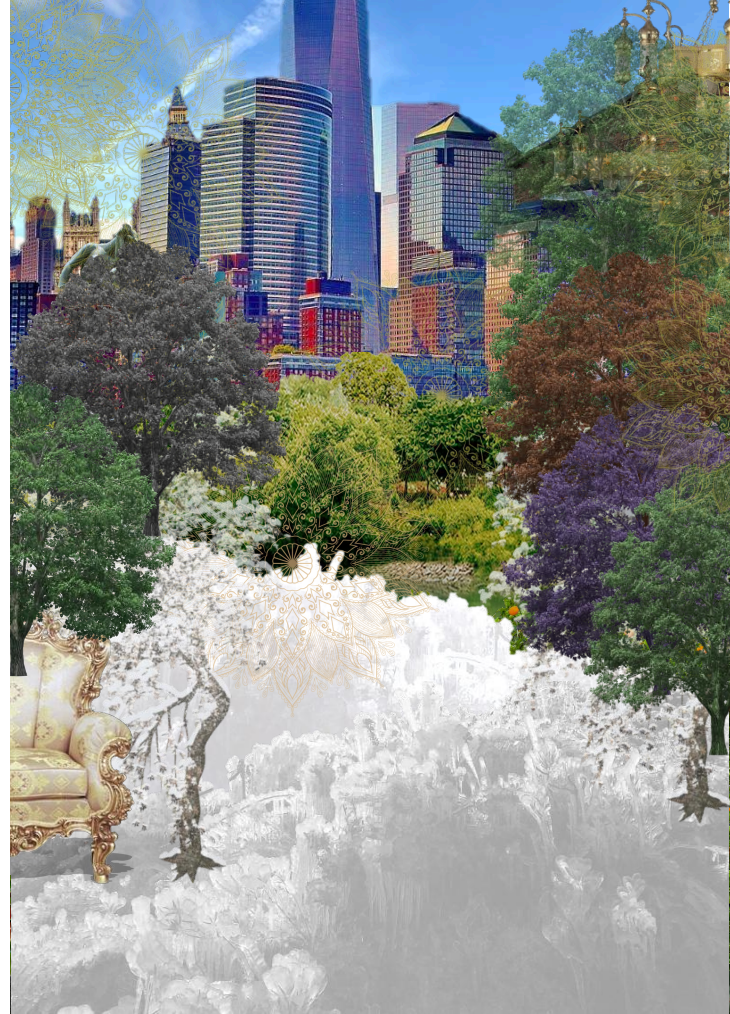
This street is empty and quiet. I
can hear what sounds like
Caribbean music from a house
further ahead on the right.

[After the second red garage
door turn left.]



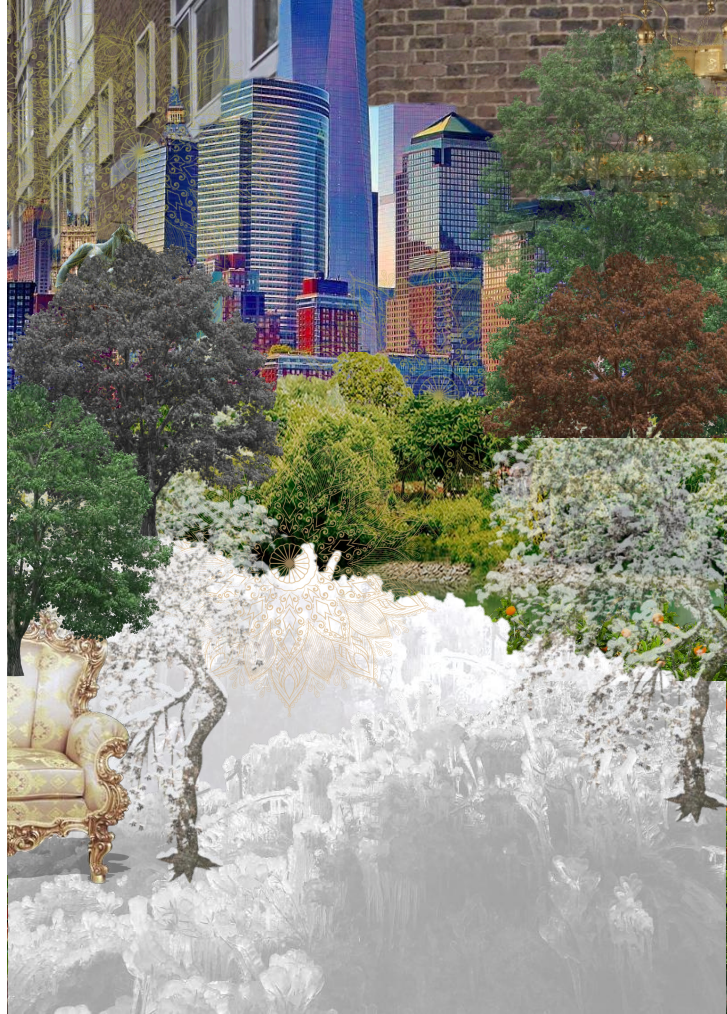
I now see a road that curves to the right, following the curve I see a group of houses with red doors, red railings and red planters. While some people have chosen red flowers for their planters, some have purple and two houses don't have plants at all.

These houses face a large brick wall of a block in Dryden Court. Makes me think that this structure would've been less imposing if it had windows on this side.



[In front of you, you will see two blue gates, take either. As you pass through and continue along the path, you will find a building that cuts off both paths and occupies a central space.]

00 hours: 18 minutes: 30 seconds



This is probably a club house for the people who live within the development. Then again, it has small windows with frilly curtains. I look back and realize this is a house and that I've just passed by a row of semidetached single storied houses, all while looking at the Dryden court.



In London, as Anna Minton mentions, properties are sold off plan to overseas investors before they are marketed to locals. Looking at more recent brochures, post the production of the book, it appears as though it is more out in the open as of 2018 - with developers clearly stating their desired investors – be it high net-worth individuals or investors from Dubai, Australia and New York.

The use of terms such as, when your international friends fly in for a weekend are clear indicators that the problem is not as hidden as it seems.



[As you continue walking, you will see a green box on your right.]

Feeling lost, I decide to check my phone – my map says there is no path where I am standing, but it shows that the Victoria line passes below at this exact point.

Another common pattern is describing London's transport system in great detail - starting from explanations of the underground being called 'the tube'.



[Keep walking]

Six posts mark the end of the park, one of them has been replaced but not very efficiently.

00 hours: 20 minutes: 55 seconds



[Turn right onto Wincott Street.
As you walk down, you will
reach a clear point where the
end of the development is
made clear by a change in the
paving.]



I see a school playground on my left, where a few children are being spoken to for being late. Further down, the road falls silent, but it still feels like I'm in the vicinity of a school.



[At the end of the lane, turn
left.]



[You will see house 181 which
has a mosaic pond that on a
bright day reflects shafts of light.
Cross the road at this point.]



The median is being laid and
the traffic has been restricted to
one lane on either side.



[You will now see a park in front
of you. Walk into it.]



The pigeons seem to have found a comfortable afternoon gathering spot on the left behind the fence. They don't move.



[You will now reach a space
that feels like a stage, where
nothing has been planted and
there are no places to sit.]

[Walk straight ahead towards
the Emmanuel house.]



[Walk past the Emmanuel house, that is now on you right, follow the curve of the road, which has been narrowed down for the construction that's to happen and you will reach a T junction.]



[Turn right here, walk through the parking lot and you will see an L shaped ramp.]

The parking lot is being made smaller, I'm told by one of the three men working on the cordoned off site. I wonder if the paving is being removed.



[Walk towards the Gaysley House and up the ramp.]



The courtyard is empty and quiet. I can hear the wheels of a suitcase on a tiled floor. It so easy to walk into, but feels private, I wonder if I'm trespassing.

[Walk straight through the courtyard and turn left, when you see the Baltimore House in front of you.]

00 hours: 29 minutes: 20 seconds



[Walk down this ramp and you will suddenly find yourself in a new development again.]



[Ahead you will see an arch that says ETHELRED TMO.]

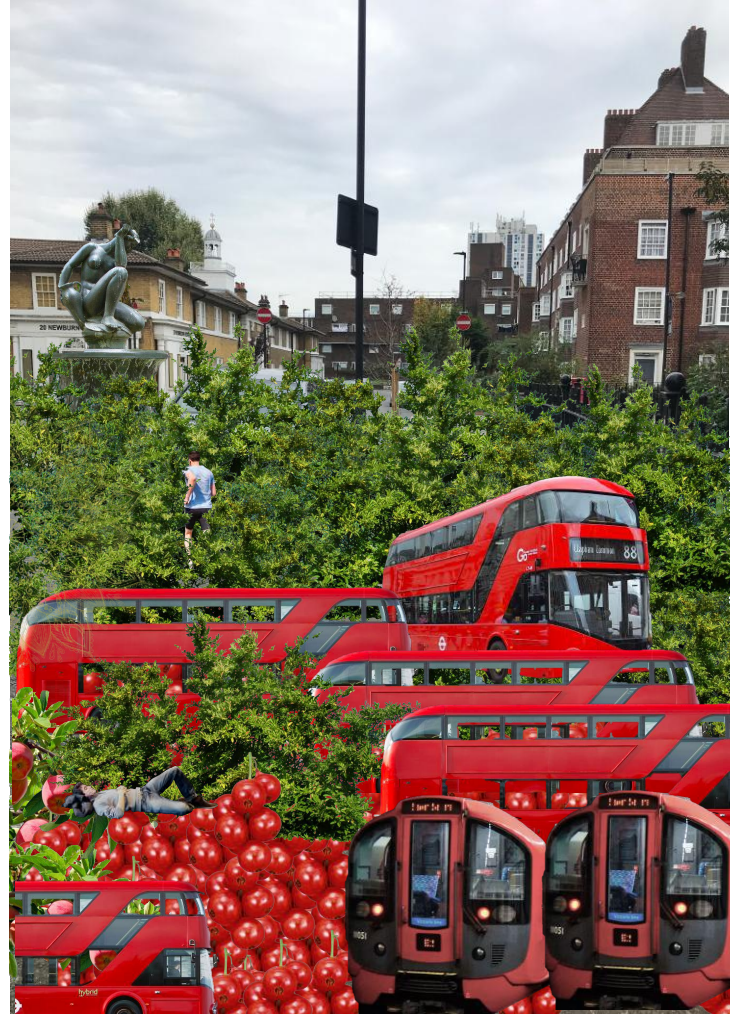
[Walk through it and turn right.]



[Cross the road and take the first left into Newburn Street.]

As I walk along Newburn street,
I see a distinct change in
character of the brick.
I'm also beginning to realize that
most developments are only
main road deep.

A Guardian article published on
the 26th of January 2018, states
that, "the total number of
unsold luxury new-build homes,
which are rarely advertised at



less than £1m, has now hit a record high of 3,000 units, as the rich overseas investors they were built for turn their backs on the UK due to Brexit uncertainty and the hike in stamp duty on second homes.”

[When you reach Wyburn House, which has an old fence and then a new fence over supporting it, turn left.]

00 hours: 35 minutes: 45 seconds



[You will then reach a fork, stick
to your right.]



00 hours: 36 minutes: 50 seconds

As I walk further I see a gas holder in front of me and having been on this road multiple times, it's strange that I see it now for the first time.

[Turn into the lane next to the Dolland House and follow the path as it winds around the estate.]

00 hours: 37 minutes: 20 seconds



The path then ends abruptly,
into a new construction site.

The road that runs parallel to
this path has also been closed.

[Walk past the construction and
turn left.]

[You now see the Kennington
main road.]

00 hours: 38 minutes: 20 seconds



[Cross, turn right, walk until you see a brick wall that's been painted red and turn left.]

[Walk down this road until you see the foundry on your right.]

I am closer to the gas holders now.

00 hours: 41 minutes: 20 seconds



[Follow the road through the houses and the narrow-barricaded entryway, which will lead you to the Oval Cricket Ground.]

It's starting to get dark. I see a few people getting home from work.

00 hours: 43 minutes: 30 seconds



[Turn right, cross the main road
and turn left.]

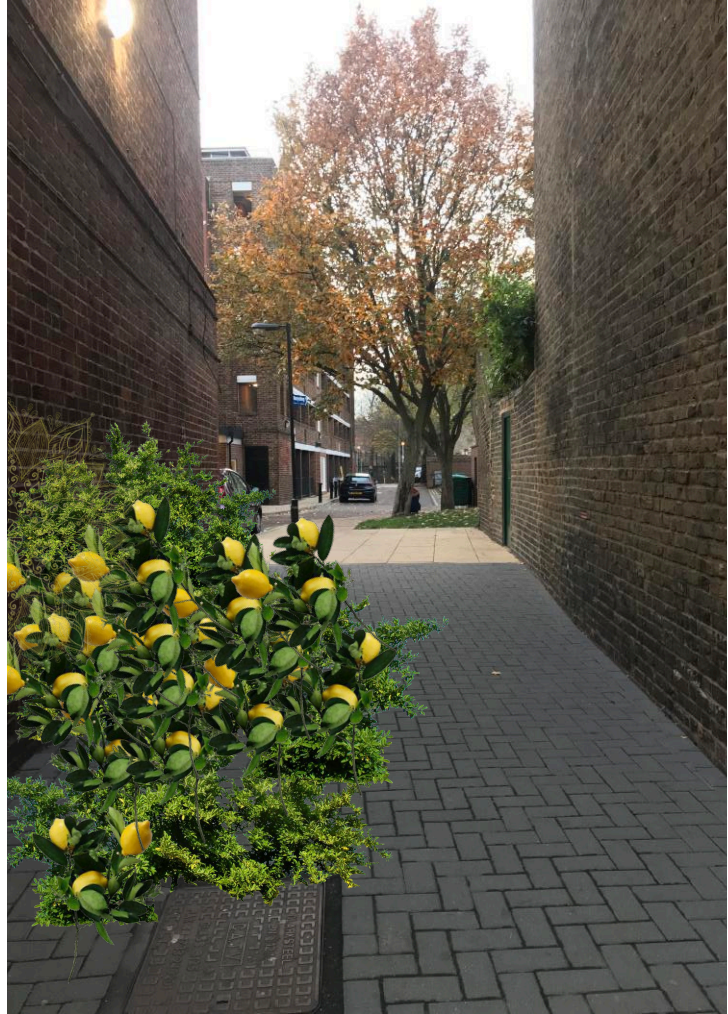


00 hours: 44 minutes: 20 seconds

[When you cross House 6-0 turn
into the gap between it and the
Shrewsbury House.]

The lights turn on just as I walk
in. I am not sure if it is because
of this, or the tree up ahead, but
it suddenly feels warm and
welcoming.

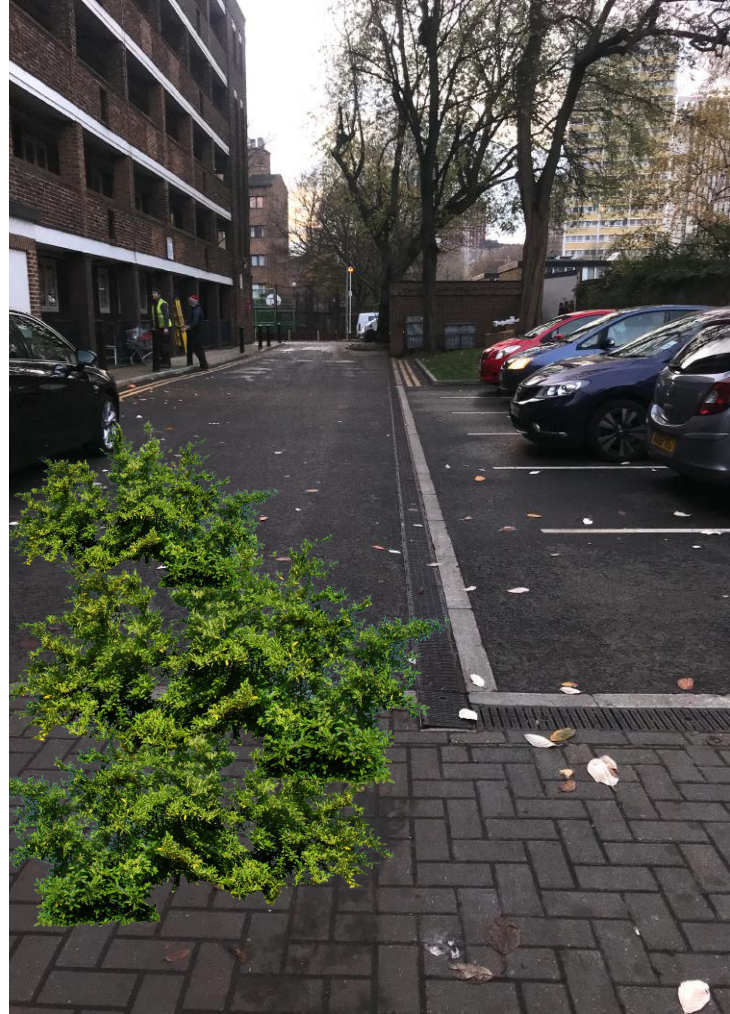
00 hours: 44 minutes: 50 seconds



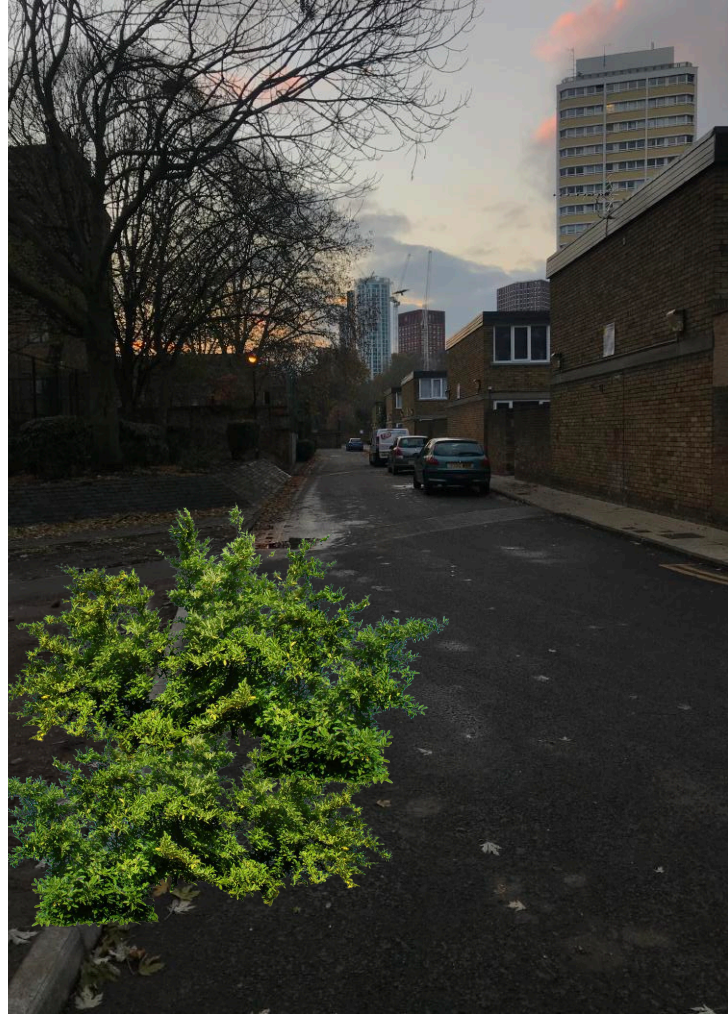
[Walk through the car park, and follow the road.]

This place is so quiet. Two men in PPE are talking on the left and someone is playing music in the car that's parked on the right. I can hear both distinctly, as I walk by.

00 hours: 45 minutes: 30 seconds



[You will see similar looking rows of houses on your left, none of them open onto the street.]

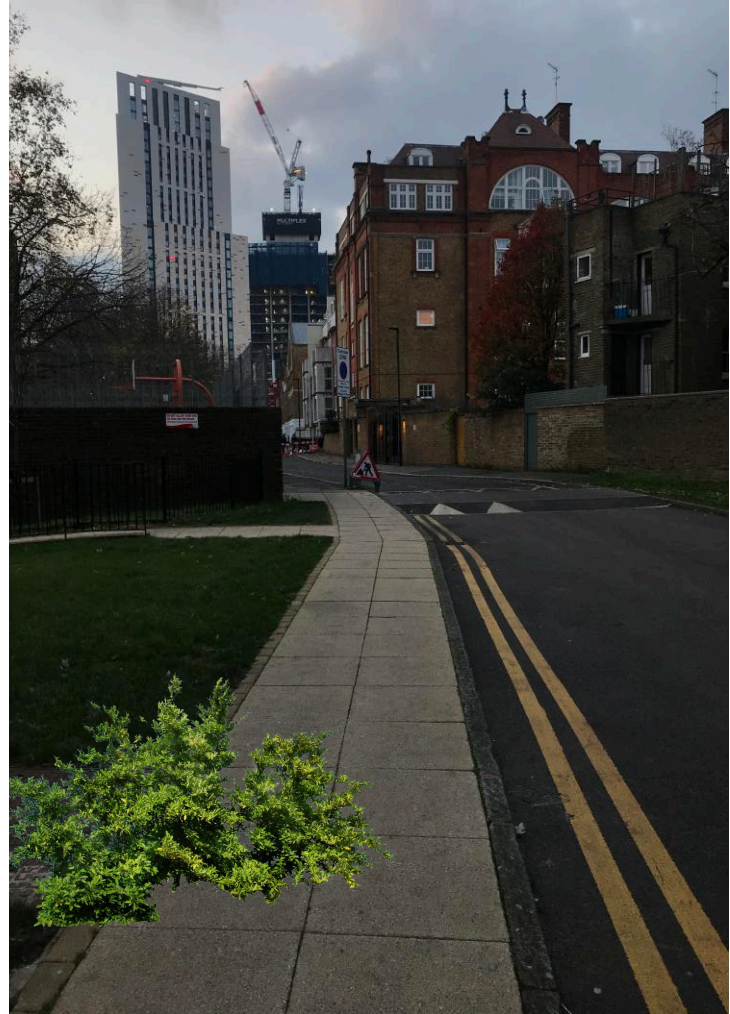


[You will then approach a fork,
turn right.]

[You will now see the Vauxhall
main road in front of you]

As I walk down the road, a few
children walk out of Vauxhall
park. They are probably the last
to leave, because when I look in,
it's all empty.

00 hours: 46 minutes: 20 seconds



[On your right, you will see a building that seems to be a school and an apartment.]

The end of the lane is bright. I first look straight into Atlas gym, then towards the train that's passing by and then at an illuminated billboard endorsing the opening of Vauxhall's Leisure Centre.



The skyline from Fentiman Road towards Wandsworth Road looks dense with towers, cranes and construction. There are however no people on the street.



[Cross the road, turn left and
turn right into the lane adjacent
to St. Anne and All Saints
Church.]



00 hours: 55 minutes: 35 seconds

[As you continue walking, you will realize that the newer developments end once you are off the main road.]

[Pass through the tunnel in front of you.]



[Walk past 'This is Vauxhall'
towards the Wandsworth main
road.]



00 hours: 57 minutes: 28 seconds

[Cross the road and turn
right.]

[You will see a road on your
right – that looks like it runs
along the railway arches.
Walking into this road, you will
first be sent through a fenced in
pedestrian walk.]



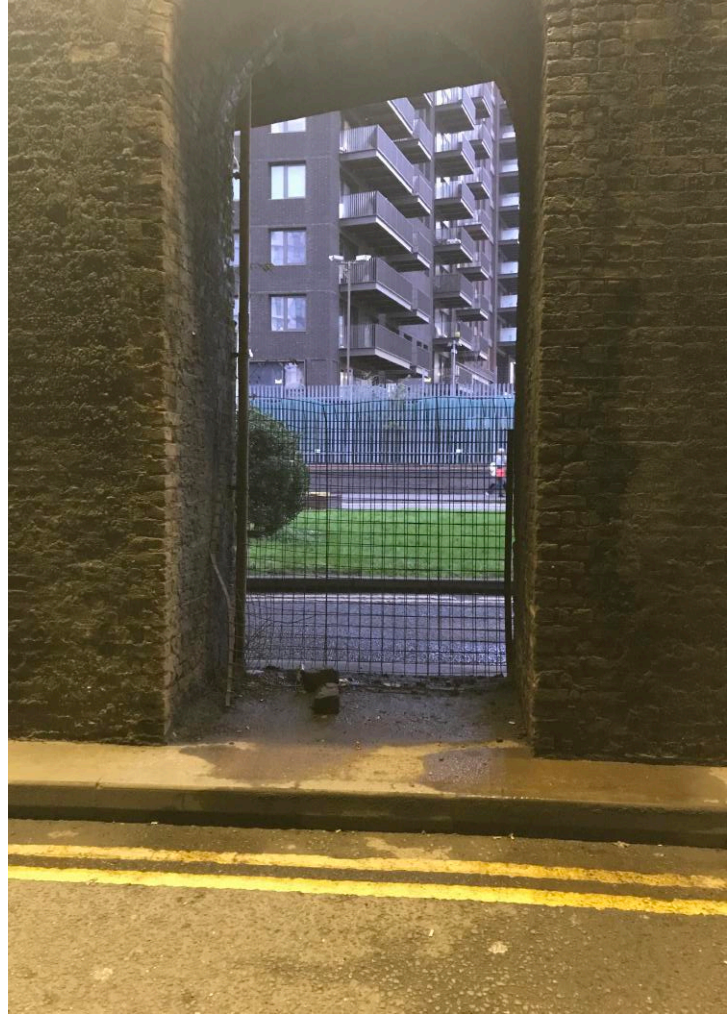
[Where the pedestrian access ends, there is no paving and the ground is slippery.]

[Walk along the narrow tunnel footpath.]



[Halfway into the tunnel, you will notice an archway on your right.]

[At this point, stop, lean against the wall, feel the cold stone and you will almost hear the sound of the trains passing above louder.]



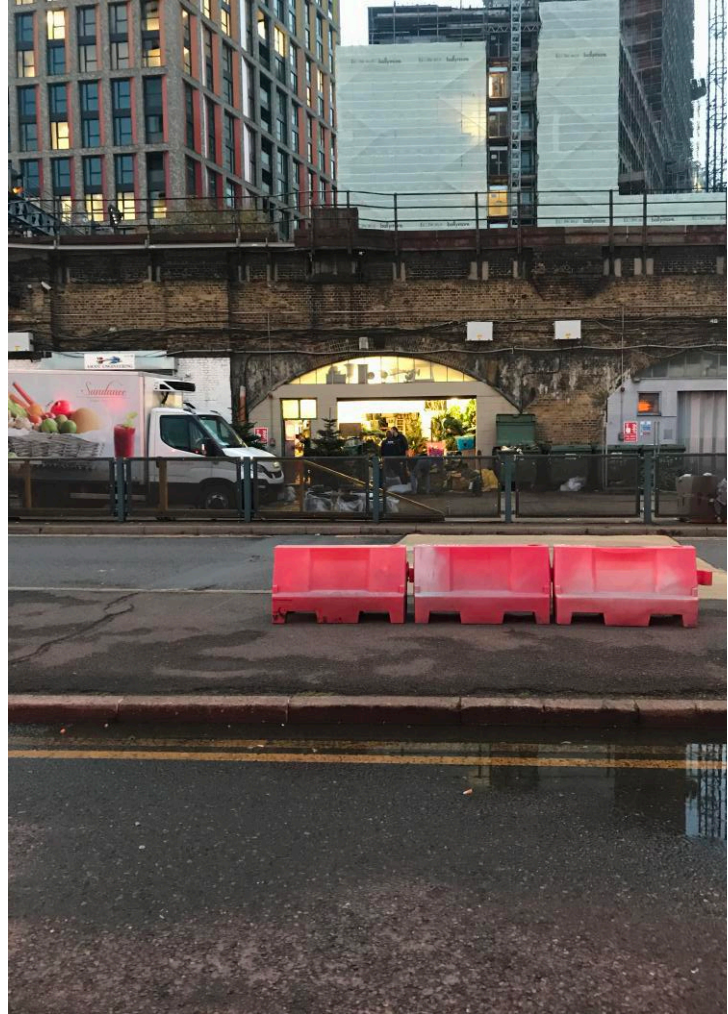
[As you walk out of the tunnel,
you will notice that what was left
of the footpath is now occupied
by signs of the New Covent
Garden Market.]



I see people arranging plants
under one of the railway arches
on the left.

[Beyond the advertising, you
will notice a ramp on your right.
Walk through this, and the path
will take you along the
construction site of the new
Nine Elms tube station.]

01 hour: 09 minutes: 35 seconds



As I pass by the project offices, I notice a cyclist behind me. I suddenly realize that this is the only path connecting Nine Elms to Wandsworth at present.

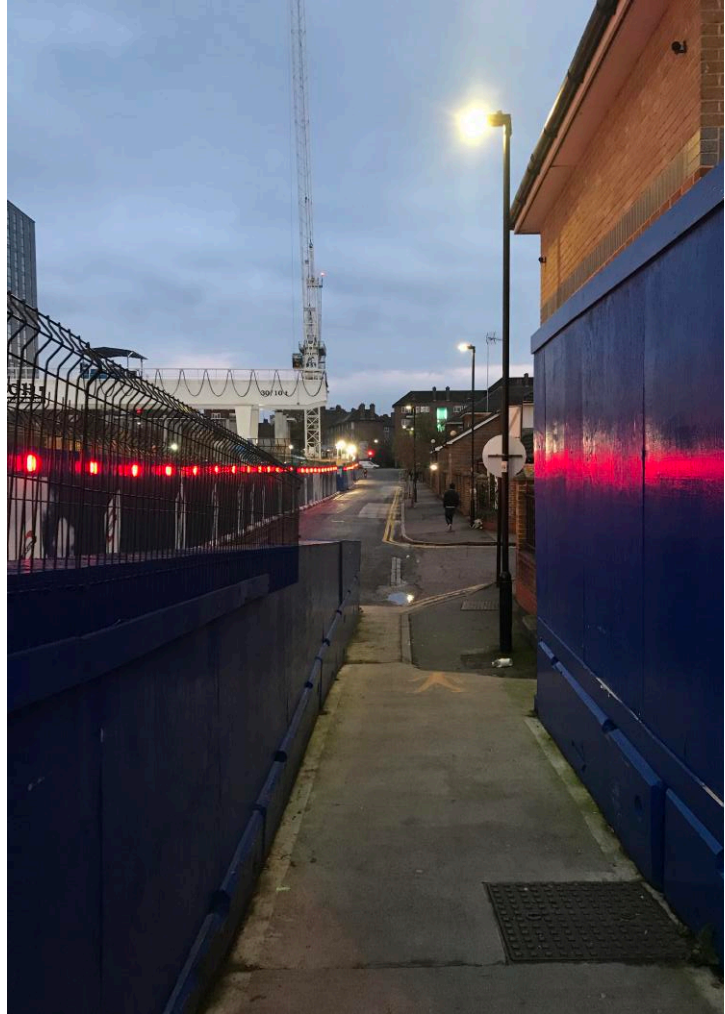
01 hour: 15 minutes: 45 seconds,



01 hour: 18 minutes: 30 seconds,

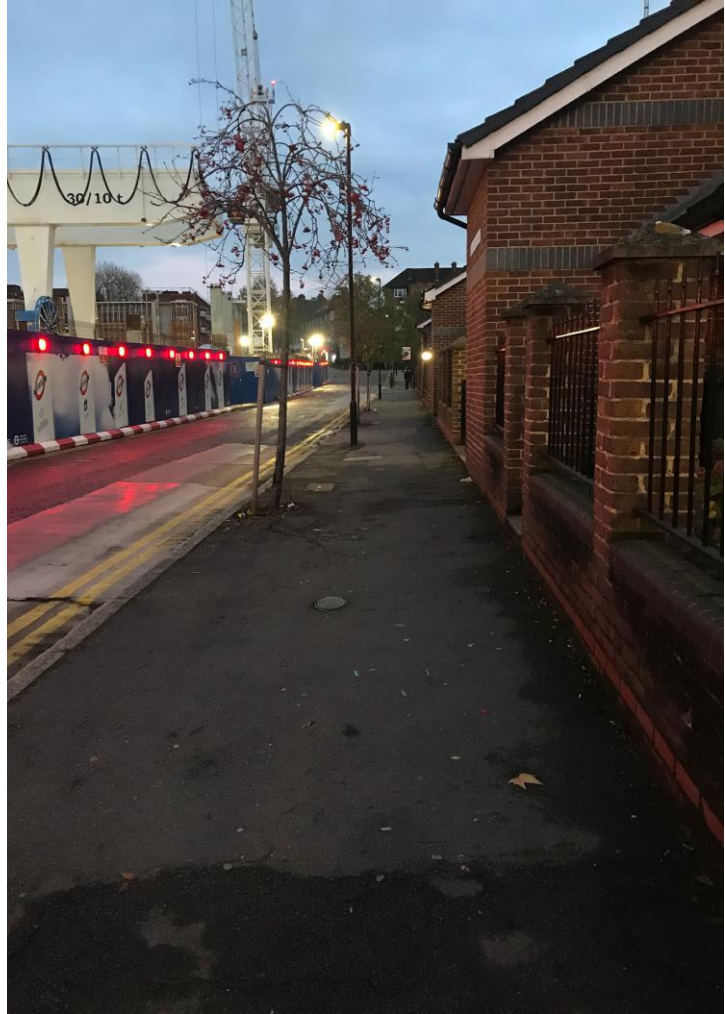


[At the end of the path walk
down the ramp onto Pascal
Street.]



01 hour: 19 minutes: 45 seconds,

01 hour: 22 minutes: 50 seconds,



Walking is seen as transit from one point of call to another. Getting lost, as seen in the case of this book is perceived as a setback and a loss of time in the achievement of a predetermined goal. The time we spend commuting past our environment, seeing it change through our peripheral vision, is time fleeting for our surroundings.

I have lived in London for a thirteen months, and been around the Nine Elms – Elephant & Castle area for ten, out of which five were spent observing and discovering the site, and one week in those five months, doing intentional, contemplative walking.

From then to now, roads have changed, paths have been modified and cranes block what is described as a clear view. The soundscape of Pascal Street changes, whenever the

whenever the crane moves in between the many columns of the new Nine Elms Tube Station. The view of a small piece of the Palace of Westminster from my room on the 6th floor, is now intersected by two cranes and is slowly being lost behind the scaffolding of a newer construction.

The purpose of this book is to capture the present and work in between the past and the future; collapsing all three worlds into one journey. Our attention is guided and modified by what we read and this influences what we expect to see, creating an experience that is both familiar and strange. The book tries to immerse the reader in a world where, when something that has happened, unexpectedly coincides with something that is happening, instilling a sense of lost time being regained.

References:

1. Anna Minton, *'Big Capital: Who is London For?'* (London: Penguin Books, 2017)
2. Rupert Neate, *'Ghost towers: half of new-build luxury London flats fail to sell.'* (London: The Guardian, 26 Jan 2018)
3. Oliver Wainwright, *'Revealed: how developers exploit flawed planning system to minimise affordable housing.'* (London: The Guardian, 25 Jun 2015)
4. Robert Booth, *'Tower for the toffs': UK's tallest skyscraper and playground of the rich.'* (London: The Guardian, 24 May 2016)