

I chose to explore a **site I've been both physically and conceptually close to for the past three years**: the HS2 construction opposite my flat. Two texts formulated the core processes and themes I used for my exploration: *Robinson in Space* by Keiller (1997) and 'The Street' and 'The Neighbourhood' sections from Perec's *Species of Spaces and Other Places* (1974).¹

THE STREET & THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Perec's exercise in seeing the world "more flatly" (1974, p.51) **challenged my perception of an area** I thought I knew well. His directive to "force yourself to write down what is of no interest" (1974, p.50) guided the method of my critical findings: observing the mundane through rigorous documentation and collection through photography.

The exercises in both 'The Street' and 'The Neighbourhood' were poignant. By listing and describing without interpretation, I began to **notice the unnoticed**:

the quiet rhythms of
everyday life.

Using a focused micro lens, I examined stickers, intentional markings of community I'd overlooked for years. Their placement, repetition, and absence formed a dataset that led to open-ended inquiries about the social landscape of North Acton. Through this exercise, I came to understand Perec's notion that

the everyday is what
we fail to notice
precisely because it
is everyday,

and that insight emerges from habit and use rather than formal geography (1974).

My method, though rigorous, was not without **bias**. I separately catalogued ripped political stickers (such as "Just Stop Boats") because I read them as reactionary, though another observer might not.

ROBINSON IN SPACE

In *Robinson in Space*, Keiller investigates England's economic and social systems through detached visual documentation, using the landscape as evidence of invisible structures, in his case exploring capitalism and decline (1997). It reveals how patterns and hidden meanings can be uncovered by observing everyday spaces, evidenced in a quote from the film: "If he looked at the landscape hard enough, it would reveal to him the molecular basis of historical events." (Keiller, 1997). *Robinson in Space* is not about finding answers, but about developing a method of looking; a way to treat the visual world as data for thinking. This was echoed in Campkin's *Remaking London* (2013).

While I initially focused on observing the cranes at the HS2 site and documenting their patterns and colours, **viewing Robinson in Space pivoted my focus to the communities around the area**: the old signs on decommissioned factories, stickers from shuttered businesses, graffiti. I became increasingly interested in the landscape as a text, and what I could learn about

the communities
of North Acton.

I observed stickers placed around the area to understand the communities present. Some were political, often layered on top of each other or ripped, whereas the shutter business stickers were tightly grouped, almost competing for visibility. Had I not observed these, I wouldn't have opened so many new lines of inquiry for myself about the area: **What kind of marks are the community leaving behind, what does this tell us about them, and what will happen to these communities after the drastic change the area will face?**

¹Both process and theme were equally important in my investigative process, hence I have chosen to structure this written response with any visual hierarchies between the two texts due to placement or order removed.

Campkin, B. (2013) *Remaking London: Decline and Regeneration in Urban Culture*. I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.

Perec, G. (1974) 'The Street' and 'The Neighbourhood' in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*. Reprint, Penguin Classics, 2008. pp. 46–59

Robinson in Space (1997) Directed by Patrick Keiller [Film]. BFI Video.