

# QUEEN VICTORIA MARKET: INTANGIBLE VALUES

## Final Report

Prepared for the City of Melbourne and  
the Queen Victoria Market Pty Ltd



Shanti Sumartojo, Joanne Mihelcic,  
Nicholas Walton-Healey, Bianca  
Vallentine, Sarah Pink

September 2017

## INTRODUCTION

In the first half of 2017, researchers from the Digital Ethnography Research Centre at RMIT investigated the 'atmosphere' of the Queen Victoria Market, and how it formed a part of the intangible value of the site. We immersed ourselves in the life of the Market and interviewed and observed vendors, workers, visitors and shoppers and participated in the life of the market ourselves by, shopping, photographing and filming.

We video- and audio-interviewed eighteen people in total: ten workers at the market, including sellers and business owners in the retail, general merchandise, produce and deli hall; seven regular shoppers; and one visiting tourist. These seven men and eleven women were aged from their 30s to their 70s, and although we did not ask people to identify their cultural background, participants were also diverse in this regard. We observed and spoke informally with many others, and also made a series of professional photographs that captured our own auto-ethnographic experience of the site, on various days from very early in the morning to late at night. We observed the rhythms of different areas of the market by entering into them and by making and watching video footage.

These methodologies enabled research participants to show us how they perceive, navigate, make sense of and value the site. By going along with research participants in the Market, as well as experiencing it ourselves, we were able to build up a rich perspective on what comprises and is valued about its unique atmosphere.

We undertook to answer the following **research questions**:

1. What concepts and categories do people use to describe/ perform the ways that they sense, experience or 'feel' the things that they value about the QVM?
2. What are the material *and* immaterial elements of the QVM that make it meaningful?
3. What patterns and themes are there in the ways that people define, experience, demonstrate and value the atmosphere, vibrancy and authenticity of the QVM?
4. How are social interactions a part of the identity of the QVM? What is the range and nature of these interactions and how are they perceived, understood and valued by participants?
5. What anxieties and aspirations do people have for their future experience of the market - and how might this impact on the categories of atmosphere, vibrancy and authenticity?
6. What key recommendations are there regarding how the QVM can retain its valued intangible qualities during and after its renewal?

## BACKGROUND

Ethnographic research seeks to improve understandings of the experiences of others, and draw conclusions about these experiences and the social, environmental and cultural contexts in which these occur. Each person's perspective is treated as unique and valuable, and in this context they are regarded as experts. Research materials that are generated from interviews and observations – video and audio recordings, transcripts and photographs – form a record of the encounter between the researchers, research participants and the research site, in this case the Queen Victoria Market. This material is then compiled and analysed as a whole to reach conceptual understandings that move beyond description. This qualitative methodology favours in-depth engagement with a relatively small number of research participants, which allows themes to be thoroughly explored and findings to emerge as a result of the interaction between the interviewee and the researcher. As such, it offers results that are often unexpected, and which surfaces new forms of information.

The visual materials that accompany this report are best understood as helping to get beneath what people might simply describe about their worlds, instead *showing* a version of the collaborative interaction between the participants and the researchers. Research is conducted *with* participants and in their surroundings, rather than *on* them. This approach almost always raises new questions which are an outcome of the fieldwork, analysis and reporting process.

In this report, we explain the key concepts and categories that participants used to understand the Market. The detailed findings link these directly to participant accounts. The report is also accompanied by photographic material: 32 fully post-produced and professional ethnographic photographs by Nic Walton-Healey.

## KEY INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**KEY INSIGHT 1.** The proposed renewal of the Queen Victoria Market is the subject of intense community interest. This is because it **is bound up in significant relationships and memories within the Market environment but that also stretch far beyond it**. Research participants commonly referred to family and friends in the present or past when describing the Market, and tapped into important emotions associated with these relationships when they explained what they valued about it (see Clip 1).

- Social interaction was one of the most highly valued aspects of the Market experience. The longstanding nature of some of these relationships, and the careful development of these over time, were also part of the perception of quality of Market produce. These relationships were tied closely to physical location and routines of moving through the market, and the choices that were made on well-established routes.
- Memories of previous visits to the Market, or of visits to Markets in other places, also shaped how the site was understood and valued. This was often associated with close family relationships, such as children who had accompanied their parents shopping or working there.
- This sense of value was also closely linked the Market's built environment and research participants' accustomed ways of moving through it and getting 'the best' from it (see Key Insight 2).

**RECOMMENDATION 1.** Research participants identified with the market in highly personal ways - so **changes to it will likely be seen as affecting these relationships and memories**. However, this also offers a way to think about designing the new site:

- For example, one implication could be design outcomes that help people connect to valued traders, products or customers, particularly when stalls have moved.
- Another is ensuring that the rich social interactions at the Market are able to be supported, including the site's valued role in long-standing relationships that stretch beyond the Market.
- A final recommendation is to reflect the entanglement of the Market experience in users' close and important personal relationships.

**KEY INSIGHT 2. People with longstanding experience of the Market regard themselves as experts.** These regular customers, traders and workers have strong views on its material and immaterial qualities that tended to favour retaining them as they are. This is because they have built up skilled knowledge of the site over long periods and have discovered their own ‘best ways’ to do things: how to select the best products; the best spots for selling their goods; the best times of day or week to visit or set up their stalls.

- This valued expertise is bound up in routine ways of moving through the site, the knowledge necessary to improvise successfully within it, and the sensory elements associated with these activities (see Clip 2).
- Whilst there is a variety of views about the Market renewal, there is concern that design decisions have already been made with little chance for influential input – and that by implication does not recognise the expertise of people who work at or visit the Market.

**RECOMMENDATION 2.** The **expertise of regular users should be treated as a resource** and harnessed during the renewal process. Although there is no one agreed position on the Market renewal, the commitment and passionate engagement of workers and regular shoppers and visitors is also part of the site’s atmosphere. Surfacing and honouring the skill and commitment of people who have found ‘the best’ of the Market in their own ways could help to build engagement with the renewal process and whilst also delivering robust design outcomes.

**KEY INSIGHT 3. People are apprehensive about the potential ‘sanitisation’ of the market.** This can be understood in two ways. First, it was linked to both the sensory aspects of the Market - its unique sights, sounds and smells, the feel of produce, the weather or the ground underfoot – and the sense that this was a longstanding or traditional aspect of the site. These qualities were strongly valued and differentiated the Market from other ways of buying or selling, particularly food shopping in comparison with the supermarket. The second was the site’s age and heritage. The ‘heritage feel’ of the site was important, and was connected to other key values of expertise and social interaction, as above. This value was often expressed by way of social relationships (see Key Insight 1), as people explained the Market in terms of connection with the people they enjoyed it with.

- The improvisatory tactics required to get the best from the complexity and diversity of the Market are highly valued. Concerns about change can be understood as reflecting the high value attached to its multiple uses and meanings, the expertise required to navigate and enjoy these (see Key Insight 2), as well as its particular built environment.

**RECOMMENDATION 3.** Design changes should therefore allow for flexibility in the way people use and improvise in the site, allowing users to ‘design’ their own experiences for themselves rather than over-determining how they engage with its spaces, products and routines. Designing the Market to appear more ‘orderly’ or organised would ameliorate the highly valued sense of shared experience, excitement, unpredictability and potential for discovery. However, improvements to toilets, customer parking and other amenities would likely be welcomed.

**KEY INSIGHT 4. The Market never stops moving.** Movement was crucial to how shoppers and visitors perceived the goods, produce, environments and other people at the site, with implications for display and interaction with goods for sale. This was comprised of many different elements: a mix of adults and children of different physical abilities and habits; cars, trucks and forklifts; trolleys, prams and scooters; bins and boxes; and other aspects. Because these elements are so important to how we make sense of the Market, changes to patterns, rhythms or routines of movement are likely to be experienced and expressed as changes to the site’s atmosphere.

**RECOMMENDATION 4.** Design attention should highlight and support the way the Market is used and understood on the move. These might include: wayfinding that is easy to understand whilst moving; circulation spaces that can accommodate trolleys, different speeds of walking and levels of mobility; and places to stop and rest that do not remove people from the flow and excitement of the site.



Image 1: An early morning shopper exits the Market. Photo: Nic Walton-Healey.

## KEY FINDINGS

1. The Market can be understood in a web of **relationships and connections** that reach beyond the site itself to people, places and times beyond (Key Insight 1). In other words, the site itself isn't simply what's sensed there, but extends far beyond the site - and this is a key part of what makes it meaningful to people. This means that change to the site can be understood as affecting these relationships.

- These sentiments were expressed by participants in terms such as shopping being an extension of cooking for and nurturing **friends and family**; the memory of other markets or of the QVM at previous times of their lives; and of the relationships with people with whom these other market experiences took place, most commonly parents, grandparents and children. This included intergenerational trading families.
- **Memory** emerged as a crucial part of how people make sense of, perceived and valued the Market environment and how they understood their activities in it. Memory was associated with particular objects and spatial elements of the Market environment, helping to explain the intensity of feeling about it.
- **Social interaction** was crucial in how the Market was both experienced and understood. Relationships between traders, other traders and shoppers that had developed over time were commonly reported as the heart of the Market, and a reason to choose to shop there rather than at the supermarket. These were entangled with other material and immaterial factors such as the quality and freshness of the products and the location of the stalls or shops.

2. High importance was ascribed to the dedicated **routines** developed over time to move through and engage with the Market environment in ways that suited people - these were highly valued as demonstrating expertise in navigating the site and getting the best from it (Key Insight 2).

- Routines had **material implications** at every scale including: buying things in a particular order and managing purchases to protect them and keep them as fresh as possible; moving along the aisles in a way that accommodates the needs of other to look at and buy things; and setting up and taking down stalls in a particular order.
- However, casual visitors moved more slowly and less purposefully through the Market, bought less fresh produce and lingered in aisles where others might be trying to pass. This points towards **designing for the mix of uses** and several different and distinct ways of moving through the site.

3. While carefully planned, routines were critical for many traders and regular shoppers, the Market was subject to ongoing **change and variety** linked to specific elements such as the availability of seasonal produce, the day of the week or time of year, other events programmed in the site and different people there (Key Insight 4 and Clip 9).

- **Improvisation** was a valued and pleasurable aspects of the market environment. This was evident in some of the details of the site's use (see Clips 2 and 8). In terms of the search for particular products, for example, while routines were important, they were not immutable, and variation from them was a valued part of the Market's sensory experience. This also underpins the key insight that the Market is experienced, understood and valued in terms of motion and movement.
- For some traders, the decision whether to set up their stalls for the day was based on **variable perceptions of trading opportunities**, a changing combination of factors including: weather, time of year, and busyness of the Market more generally.

4. **Sensory configurations** of the site - the smells, sounds, weather, crowds, look of the produce and variety of visitors, the feel of surfaces underfoot or of produce in the hand - were immensely important, and mentioned by virtually all interviewees (Key Insight 3).

- The **weather** was an underlying but important factor that many participants commented on, particularly traders and especially in the Sheds. It was understood as affecting the number of customers, and comfort levels for shoppers - but equally changing conditions of rain, wind, heat or cold were accepted as part of the sensory experience of the Market, despite occasional discomfort or inconvenience.
- Equally, at times the **senses were overwhelmed** and it was difficult to navigate the moving crowds or unpleasant smells or sounds intruded; even so, this was an accepted part of the atmosphere of the Market.
- The project's ethnographic photographs are particularly powerful in describing the **quality of the light** in the Market, at different times of day and night, during special events, and particularly in the general merchandise area. This series demonstrates the importance of light in different areas and powerfully depicts how this shapes how the site 'feels'.

5. For regular shoppers and traders, the **future of the Market** is closely associated with anxieties about something being 'lost' or 'taken away' when the market is redeveloped, particularly around the refurbishment of the sheds' structure and changes to how goods are delivered or displayed. This is often expressed in terms of the Market being 'sanitised' or made to look like a 'food hall' rather than a 'working site' (Key Insights 1 and 3).

- Misgivings about changes to the Market were often expressed in sensory terms, particularly the desire to retain certain elements because they gave an impression of **age** - this was more highly valued in general than the efficiency of services, for example. This included design details such as particular 'heritage colours', the design of the shed frames, and the flooring surface in the deli hall. Even though they may have structural issues, these aspects were not perceived as in need of refurbishment because they did not *appear* to be deteriorating - appearing 'old' was valued.

## KEY FINDINGS - IN DETAIL

### 1. Relationships and connections



Image 2: The Market is associated with strong connections to family and friends.

Photo: Nic Walton-Healey.

The market was commonly expressed in terms of **connections to people and things** encountered both inside and beyond the Market itself. In this sense it extended into other places, times and relationships. This included, for example, the relationships that were formed, reinforced and enacted when shopping, trading or visiting the Market, which were often expressed in intimate or domestic terms about food and nurturing (see Clip 1).

1.1 This extended to meanings that were embedded in the **production and delivery processes** of the produce, showing how the Market is understood as existing in a web of other relationships. Values of 'quality' and 'freshness' were repeatedly mentioned by participants, and this was bound up in these relationships, as demonstrated in this exchange about eggs:

We know exactly where they've come from. And mainly because they get delivered, you know, there's a face, there's a face in front of it which is the main thing. If you go to a supermarket there may be three different options there and you've got no one to talk to you don't know. [So do people come searching for a specific type of egg?]

Absolutely! Absolutely!...We've got Greg's eggs over there which has got 16 hens per hectare. So it's a, It's a moral standpoint...That people really focus on these days. You know? The humane side of things.



Image 3: A sign clearly indicated how many 'birds per hectare' had produced the pasture-fed eggs. Photo: Joanne Mihelcic.

1.2 Beyond the food itself, **memory was accreted in objects** that were directly related to how people moved around or worked in the site. This means that the meaning and importance of the Market is entangled with specific physical aspects and objects:

So this trolley, I don't know, I think we've probably had the trolley for about 25 years. We've had several reincarnations of the bottom basket, cause that wears out. In fact the basket was wearing out the other day and I wasn't able to buy a new one and they offered, selling me a brand new trolley but it's the trolley that Meg [his daughter] rode round in when she was about 3 so I couldn't bring myself to get rid of it.



Image 4: Regular shopper David shows off his old and much-loved shopping trolley. Photos: Joanne Mihelcic.

1.3 These spatially-related meanings were also expressed as **crossing generations**, becoming embedded in family history as people grew up in and with the Market, as this trader explained:

Okay so it's a bit of a personal journey back...My mum was heavily pregnant with me, lining up, actually sleeping in the van on a Saturday night waiting to get a casual spot and waking up at 5:30 AM to get in line and obviously being a heavily pregnant woman get an express line to the front. Pending birth being able to secure a spot in the A shed...and from there we progressed to two stalls, one in A shed and one in B shared for Sunday trade and that evolved into a permanent stall in C shed which my auntie still has a stall there from about '97. So we coming onto about 20 years. Yep quite a long linkage to the Queen Vic.

1.4 Almost all participants emphasised the importance of **social interaction** in what they valued about the market, highlighting the longevity of these relationships, the trust and sense of exchange that they were based on and their integration with the other values of food as nurturing as well as the Market atmosphere. This account from a trader provides and example:

I've got a good relationship with my customers... there's so many. So many. A lot of regulars. I know a lot about them which is interesting. People are like "how do you

know so much about them?" I'm very much a people person so like to know about everything. So yeah it's nice...Oh, we email yes. And we speak. I've got them on Facebook. I get invites to the birthdays. Yep. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. It's a bit crazy I know but were pretty friendly.

Another regular shopper also explained the value of these relationships for him:

It's the personal interaction when here. I guess a sense of community almost that you don't get when you go to the supermarket. You're completely anonymous. Whereas here it's a nice social interaction. So it turns what is essentially a chore into you know an enjoyable experience...I think it's one of the fundamental things about being in Melbourne. It sort of gives you a sense of, like I said a sense of community by being the social interaction and the people here. And it's different, it's obviously different to work. It's you know quite a diverse background. I mean we don't know each other socially or anything like that. It's like being part of a community.



Image 5: Vendors in the Fish Hall. Photo: Nic Walton-Healey.

## 2. Routines of movement



Image 6: Setting up a stall at the beginning of the trading day. Photo: Nic Walton-Healey.

Different routines of moving through the market indicated different ways of using and experiencing it and therefore different meanings ascribed to it. These routines were most obvious for regular users of the site: for regular shoppers, the Market was a site of carefully worked out routines, with favourite traders, times of day and year and even ways of packing shopping trolleys to preserve freshness and protect purchases. For workers, rhythms of cleaning, setting up and packing down, loading and unloading were constant and ongoing.

2.1 **Movement was central** to how the Market atmosphere felt to people. When it is interrupted or impeded, this is particularly obvious, as shown in Clip 3. Feelings of comfort or safety in moving around the Market were variable, however, and one regular shopper explained some of the hazards she faced when moving around the Market, including a stormwater grill that her walking stick could catch in:

Then you get here you don't really know where you are. If you are new to the place is just a rambling mess of roads and bits and pieces. And the problem is there's also cars. So, if it was just pathways it would be okay. But I reckon it could be quite dangerous as well. I also noticed when we were walking up behind someone with some kind of a market trolley, if we hadn't of been looking we could have stepped right in front of that person as well.... Here's this grill that I don't like (see Clip 4).



Image 7: Irene carefully navigates around a stormwater grill that might catch her walking stick. Photo: Joanne Mihelcic.

2.2 A common account was that the ‘best way’ of moving through the Market had emerged over time by way of favoured products and vendors. These paths also connected with how the Market was entered and exited, as one regular shopper explained with her account of incorporating her walk into and through the Market into her shopping decisions (see Clip 2), reinforcing findings about connections into and out of the Market. Another regular shopper told a similar story:

I’m a creature of habit and one of the things that I like about the market, or one of the things that makes it easier to shop at the market is to always got to the same stall, pretty much. Or the same stalls with particular items. So this particular stall I go to to get my mushrooms and another one where I get my fruit and another one where I get carrots...I’ll park in one of the surrounding streets and and then walk down through the fruit and vegetables section, through the meat, through the deli and move back up and leave. [And why do you do that particular route?] Oh, well it sort of fits with the flow from the car. So if I park up on Victoria St then the closest area is the fruit and vegetables and then sort of fill that, the trolley with that. And then walk down into the deli, get meat if we need any meat and then come across into the meat section and then into the deli section. Get the deli and then out.

2.3 For vendors, movement was an ongoing part of their daily routine as they unloaded goods or produce; set up and arranged their areas; and disassembled and cleaned their stalls for each trading day. We observed that this had particular material effects, including:

the variable use of car parks in Queen Street at different times of the day and week; the constant collection of fruit boxes or rubbish; and the movement around the site of small vehicles such as trucks, forklifts or large trolleys. This reinforces Key Insight 4 that constant movement is central to the feel of the site, so changes to it will be interpreted as changes to atmosphere.



Image 8: Some of the vehicles, objects and goods that are constantly moving around the Market site. Photo: Joanne Mihelcic.

2.4 Another significant group of people at the market were **infrequent shoppers or tourists**. These visitors were distinguishable from the routine shoppers by the ways they moved through the various sections of the market, and as researchers, we became able to identify and observe this group because of how they moved through and lingered in particular spots. They meandered along the aisles, wandered and browsed.

- Tourists and visitors were more evident during mid-late morning when they were buying ready-made food to eat. They often wandered in small groups, dispersing intermittently as they noticed different things and then reuniting.
- Unlike regular shoppers, who were generally very well organised with bags/trolleys, and seemed to be targeted in terms of where they were going, visitors' browsing patterns were more distracted. They might have backpacks and were less likely to be

carrying reusable shopping bags. If they were carrying disposable plastic bags these tended to contain smaller quantities of goods.

2.5 The photographs included in and with this report depict a wide array of the various uses of the site at different times of the night and day as people work at different jobs, shop, wander and socialise.



Image 9: The American Donut Van is a central Market landmark. Photo: Nic Walton-Healey.

### 3. Change and improvisation



Image 10: The moving crowd at the busy summer Night Market. Photo: Nic Walton-Healey.

At the same time as routines were commonly described as an important part of a visit to the Market, these were actually experienced as quite fluid and contingent. For example, regular shoppers all explained how their habits and routines in the market changed if they saw something they liked or looked particularly fresh, and that their shopping lists transformed as they moved through the site.

3.1 This entanglement of routine and improvisation was expressed and experienced in terms of the **specific built and sensory environment** of the Market, with people making shopping decisions as they moved through it in a particular order. This was closely linked to ‘freshness’ or ‘quality’ perceived by smell, look or feel; or choosing products that would complement others that they had bought or imagined buying at another stop on their pre-determined route; or browsing in the general merchandise sections.

3.2 Contingency and improvisation were thus also important concepts for making sense of **different ways of moving** in the Market (see Key Insight 4), with common reference to the variable activities in the site. For regular shoppers, this could mean moving through without lingering too long in one place where crowds might gather or they might impede others; for others, lingering over tables of products was an important part of a visit. While some found the crowded Market a challenge, others valued it as an important part of why they liked

shopping there (see Clip 3). This suggested that changes to the site that disrupt the ability to move through it in a variety of ways will be perceived as damaging to its 'atmosphere'.

3.3 This valued variety extended to the **diverse cultural mix** of people who used the site for different purposes and at different times (see Clip 9) – as demonstrated in the ethnographic photographs and interviews with research participants from diverse backgrounds.

3.4 Another crucial but unpredictable aspect that many people mentioned was the **weather**, both in terms of the effect on the traders and workers and on shoppers and visitors (this is also strongly linked to sensory configurations discussed below). The weather was perceived to affect trade and profit, as well as the working conditions of traders:

But then you feel for the traders who are out under the sheds with the sun beating on the sheds and then perhaps even a day like today with that cool breeze, you know you see them all rugged up and they're standing on this cold concrete but that's what they do. That's part of the market...Oh! The wind just whistles through sometimes. And they have problems with their displays. You know because the wind just comes up... Things hanging from the rails up there, you know sometimes it becomes a bit dangerous if the wind is really strong. They have to take them down because they will blow down. They work in all elements.

Another worker at the market explained the effect of the weather on his stall:

I used to have a shoe stall... I used to find on really hot windy days, my stock had gone down 5% cause of the amount of dust... If you're not turning your stock over quickly the environment, all the dust and the pollution that goes through the market does take a bit of shine off your goods. And customer-wise too like we used to, which has changed, in the old days you'd have a lot of people working in the office. So from 11 to 2 you'd have that office rush. And then if it was raining in those hours, people just wouldn't come in. So, weather played a big part of market trade.

3.5 **Changes to the site** with events - such as the Night Markets - were also a valued part of the 'atmosphere', with familiar environments rendered exciting with material changes, different sensory experiences on offer, and a crowd largely there to socialise rather than shop. One regular shopper explained her experience of an evening event:

That was lovely that opera. We went for my birthday. And I think it was here, was gorgeous. And then they had food we could buy for dinner before and it was really nice. Well I noticed the opera was going to be on my actual birthday so we organised to go with my mum and my sister and my brother-in-law. And it was a beautiful humid warm night, in the sheds, it was a gorgeous atmosphere. They had

cleared everything out. There was a stage, seating there were food caravans. Coffee machines. It was just a beautiful atmosphere.

3.6 The transformation of the site for different uses and the different groups of people these events might attract was seen as a positive attribute. However, the movement of particular stalls was a matter of concern for traders who perceived some areas of the Market to be underutilised, as in this account about an area of A Shed:

[Do you know why they shut that side down?] Oh, no. We have no idea. They just did it. Made everybody move and no-one had choice. And that was the end of this aisle and now it's dying... [How is the change going to impact on you?] It's already impacted on us. Immensely. Hugely. People think it's closed. There's not much here. No one comes down here. There's nothing open.

3.7 For some, there was a related perception that the **renewal could damage the variety and improvisation** in the site, and ruin the Market's special value, as this shop worker explained: 'Well I just think, it's a bit like turning things into a nanny state as well. It's that kind of feeling. That's how it feels like to me at times. But I just think it's a bit too much trying to streamline in a way that is not going to feel very natural.'



Image 11: A quiet section of the Sheds. Photo: Joanne Mihelcic.

3.8 These findings suggest that changes to the use of the space are valued in terms of their ability to **create new experiences or to promote trade** - and that visible busyness and activity are crucial to this.

#### 4. Sensory configurations



Image 12: Smoke rises from meat cooking at the summer Night Markets.

Photo: Nic Walton-Healey.

An absolutely central aspect of the Market atmosphere, and one that all participants mentioned, was the set of **unique sensory aspects** that they experienced there. The smell of the fish of dairy hall, gleaming fresh vegetables, the chill outside in the Sheds in the general merchandise area or the changing surfaces underfoot were all specifically identified. The value of these was also apparent in concerns about physical changes to the site that might 'sanitise' the Market in terms of its sensory affordances, as discussed further below.

4.1 In terms of food, **'freshness' was a commonly expressed value**, a descriptor that took in a range of sensory elements, as well as relationships with vendors and ways of moving through and making decisions in the market (Key Insights 1 and 4). These were often expressed in sensory combinations, as two participants explained:

J: Oh the smell. The smell. Particularly celery. There's something about the smell of fresh celery, that I find really, you know when celery's fresh.

B: It's quite distinct isn't it? It's quite distinct, the smell.

J: It is distinct and you know you can see it's crisp and fresh and really nice.

B: I think the colours. The colours walking down the fresh food aisles and all the colour. You know you're surrounded by fresh produce when it's so colourful and vibrant and beautiful. It's just beautiful...It's a market because you still got your Heritage browns and those sorts of colours...for me colour is a huge thing. And I noticed that so the browns with the Heritage feel the but the colours of the fresh produce.

4.2 **Smell was also very important** for how people understood and explained the atmosphere of the Market. For example, Karl explained the sensory appeal of the doughnuts from his van (see Clip 5), whereas Peter explained how important smell was for his deli stall:

One of my great advantages here is that I have, so many of my products are smoked, there's a beautiful fragrance...It's a smell that is been around since small goods were smoked I guess. It's an ancient craft that is used to preserve small goods and give them extra flavour... So many customers, new customers not old ones but new ones comment on how great it smells. How smoky. Sadly I can't smell it. I have to go to Europe for about 10 weeks and come back and then I can smell it for the first day...just because it's a familiarity breeds insensitivity to smells like that...Smoked smallgoods is unique smell that is quite pervasive.

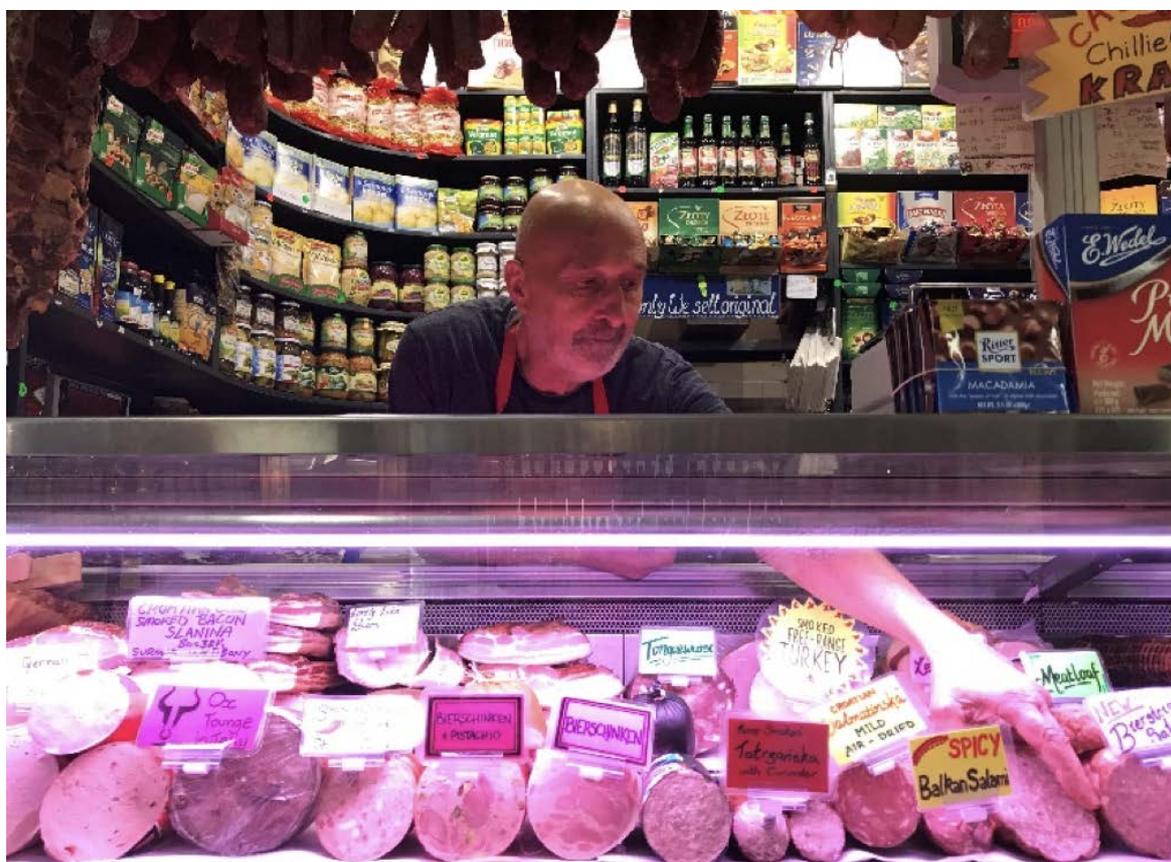


Image 13: Peter arranges his fragrant smallgoods display. Photo: Joanne Mihelcic.

4.3 The possibility that smells might be ‘overwhelming’ was present as well, with the odour of the fishmarket a clear indicator participants were approaching it, or fragrance of cooked meats. This combined with the other senses, as shoppers used the look, weight and feel as a guide to freshness in lieu of olfactory cues (see Clip 6).

4.4 Overall, the Market was commonly understood and valued through sensory experience. Linda explained how she was fascinated by ‘atmospheric’ sensory aspects of the Market such as the ‘vibrant’ colours of the fresh meat, the sound of people hawking their produce and the size of the space itself, which gave a sense of expansive profusion (see Clip 7):

The first building I walked through was the meat market and I’ve never seen anything like it anywhere in the world, and I’ve travelled a bit in my life. So one stall after the next of absolutely beautiful meats, fishes, and then I went into some of the specialty areas, the bakery, the cheese mongers and then out here into the vegetable stalls, which I’ve never seen so much produce in one place.

4.5 Our research revealed that sensory aspects cannot be adequately understood without seeing them as **entangled with the other things that people valued**: relationships and social connectedness; memory; routines of movement and choice; and contingency and improvisation. Accordingly, changes to the ‘look and feel’ of the Market - are likely to be seen to alter other highly valued ways of understanding it atmospherically.



Image 14: A busy access laneway during a trading day. Photo: Nic Walton-Healey.

## 5. The future of the Market

While a few participants expressed excitement for what the Market might become, there was general concern about something vital being lost in the renewal process. Because the market is closely associated with important personal relationships, often intergenerational or stretching into the past, changes to it are felt as affecting those relationships or memories. People identify with the details and sensory affordances of the Market's built environment - these elements are accreted onto social interactions that it encompasses or touches.

5.1 One of the most important aspects of the Market was that **products were perceived as desirable** – depending on the product, this was defined and assessed in terms of 'freshness', 'quality' or 'value for money', ranging across all areas of products, from fruit and vegetables to general merchandise. This core aspect of the Market was underpinned by the major findings discussed so far – in other words, 'value' cannot be understood independent of how the market is designed and experienced, particularly by those workers, traders and shoppers who use it the most.

5.2 Ultimately, this also relates to a feeling of **common purpose** identified as 'community' and related to the Market's built environment, as in Clip 3:

It's actually kind of comforting to know there's so many people in the same area doing the same thing. There's a sense of comfort that I get from coming here and knowing that people are around and buying together. It's a cool feeling. It's nice to know that people are out, that they're looking for fresh good food, and we're all together doing it. It's like a shared experience with people, you're a part of something.

5.3 The **most common anxiety** was around the Market being 'cleaned up' or 'sanitised', and that this would diminish the experience of being there (see Clip 8). At the same time, not everyone was negative about change, as this trader explained:

There's a bit of the same sameness going around and I hope you know we create a very vibrant atmosphere that brings a certain target demographic to the market. I understand the success of the night market and festivals and what have you and obviously we are in prime real estate so we have to make good use of that ... And I think changes - we will see attrition of the old guard-for better or worse. Obviously, you know, parting legacies and a bit of history gone... With that said it's time for new history to be created. And I'm excited to see what unfolds as a second-generation. And who knows I might be part of it as well.