Making the Invisible Visible

Project 2

Observation

The project began with observing everyday signage in urban space. These signs appear repeatedly in streets, car parks, and building entrances, yet are rarely consciously noticed. I started to recognise that although they are quiet, they continuously influence how people behave in the city

Invisible Rules

Image Collection

Photographs were taken directly from the urban environment, focusing on signs that regulate behaviour subtly rather than dramatically:
maximum height, no parking, pay and display, one way, refuge point, no unauthorised access.
The images were intentionally captured without people, reinforcing the absence of visible authority and highlighting how control operates even when no enforcer is present.



Analyze

After collecting the images, I organised them according to their function rather than their visual appearance, such as warning, restriction, direction, measurement, and conditional access. This process revealed that signage forms a system of invisible rules governing everyday behaviour

Invisible Rules

Technical & Infrastructure Signs
ELECTRICAL / PLANT ROOM / NO UNAUTHORISED ACCESS
These signs reveal the presence of systems while denying public understanding or participation.

Safety & Emergency Signs
REFUGE POINT / SAFETY NOTICE
Safety is reduced to a symbol, masking the possibility of systemic failure.

Payment & Conditional Access Signs
PAY & DISPLAY
When access must be paid for, public space becomes conditional rather than collective.

Prohibitive Signs
NO PARKING / NO LOADING / PRIVATE
Prohibitive signs normalise control by presenting authority as neutral instruc-tion

Restriction & Measurement Signs
MAXIMUM HEIGHT / CLEARANCE
Measured limits exclude bodies and vehicles before entry, rendering exclusion invisible and unquestioned.

Warning Signs
CAUTION / WARNING / HAZARD
Warning signs do not remove danger; they transfer responsibility from the system to the individual.

Directional Signs
ONE WAY / DIRECTION
By prescribing movement, directional signs quietly eliminate alternative ways of being in the city.

Process

I want to make a photography zine.All images were processed into high-contrast black and white to reduce environmental distraction. Orange was selectively applied only to the signage itself, highlighting authority and making the rules visually visible again.

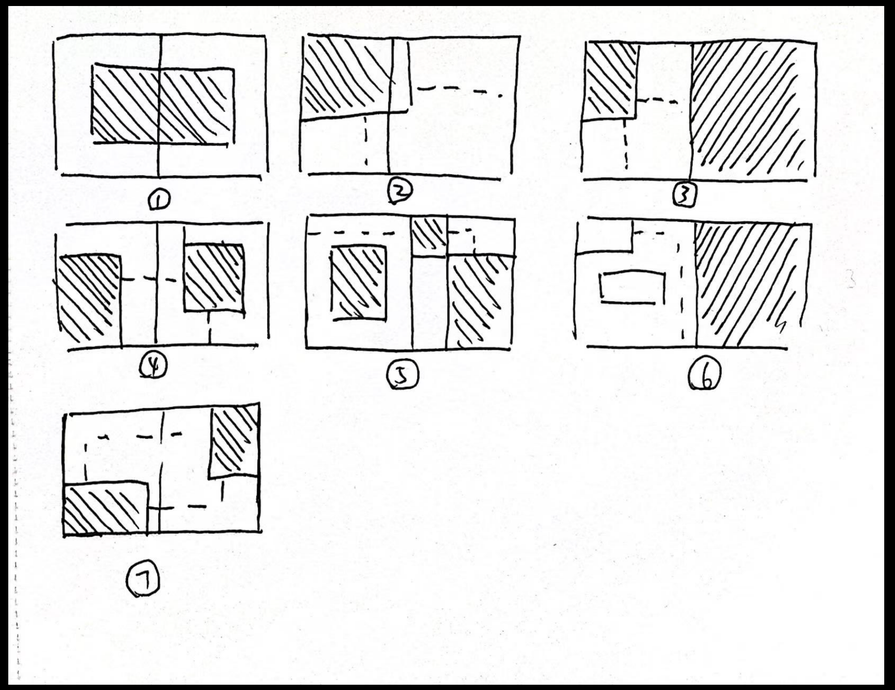


Process



I chose the map as the background of the zine because maps, like urban signage, are often perceived as neutral tools of orientation, while in reality they function as systems of control. A map does not simply describe space; it selects, prioritises, and organises it, determining what is visible, accessible, or omitted.
By placing the signs onto a map, the project reveals how rules, restrictions, and permissions are spatially embedded within the city. The map becomes a silent authority, normalising movement, access, and exclusion in the same way signage does. This pairing exposes how urban space is not freely navigated but continuously governed through invisible frameworks that guide behaviour while appearing objective and informationa

Critical texts were grouped into selected pages
rather than attached to individual images, allowing the project to address underlying mechanisms
of control and exclusion without directly explaining each sign



Outcome





Outcome


ALCOHOL CONTROL ZONE
It is an offence to drink alcohol in public in this area when asked not to do so by a police officer.
MAXIMUM FINE OF £500
ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR CRIME AND POLICING ACT 2014
P
Pay & Display
Colebrook Street
• Solo motorcycles may park free in the motorcycle bay only
• Blue Badge display can park free in any bay
Winchester


T1037 Electrical Intake
SAFETY NOTICE
Caution
Wet floor / Trip hazard

Outcome


Unsuitable for HGVs
One way
No stopping except buses
Southampton (M3)
Romsey (A3090)
Station
University
All other routes
St Peter's RC Church
Theatre Royal
Holy Trinity Church
St. Peter's RC Church
Miner Hall
NORTH WALLS
Great Hall


Assistance Available
Refuge point
Private driveway
No parking
or turning
The Brooks Shopping Centre
FRIARSGATE

Outcome



Restriction & Measurement Signs

MAXIMUM HEIGHT / CLEARANCE

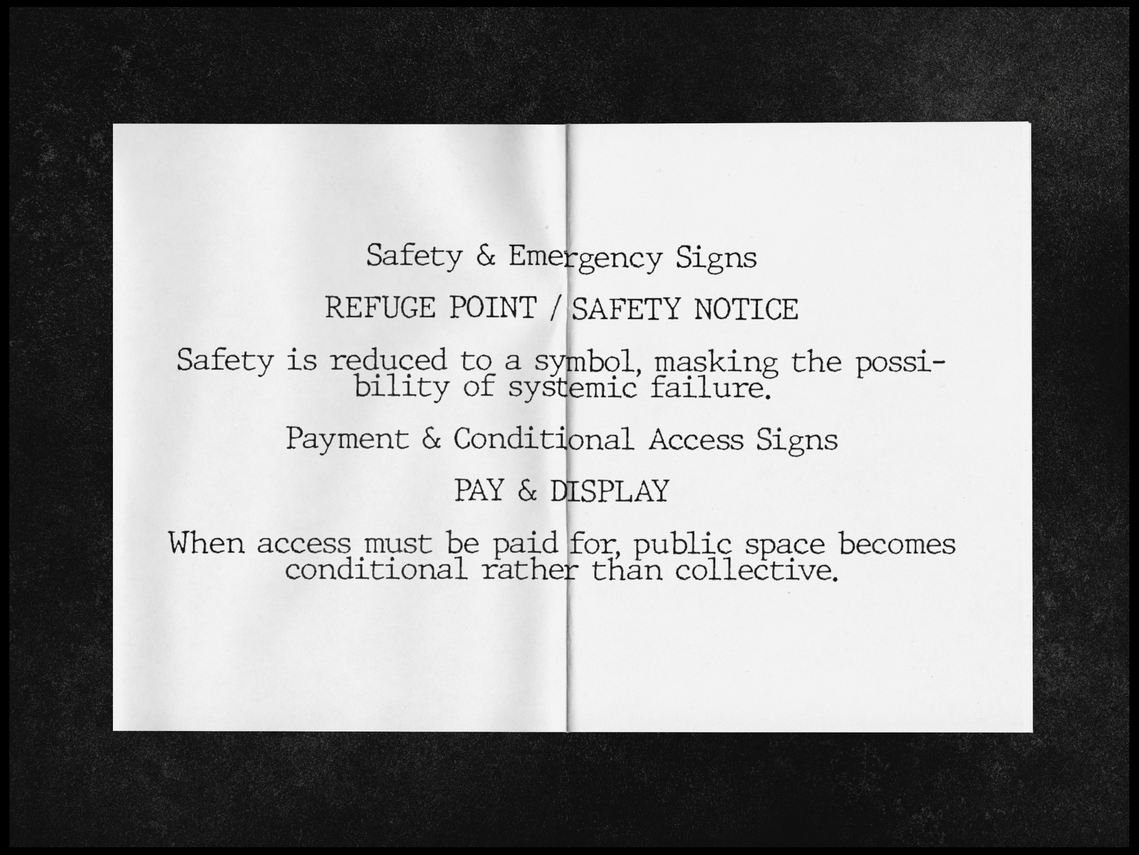
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Outcome



Safety & Emergency Signs

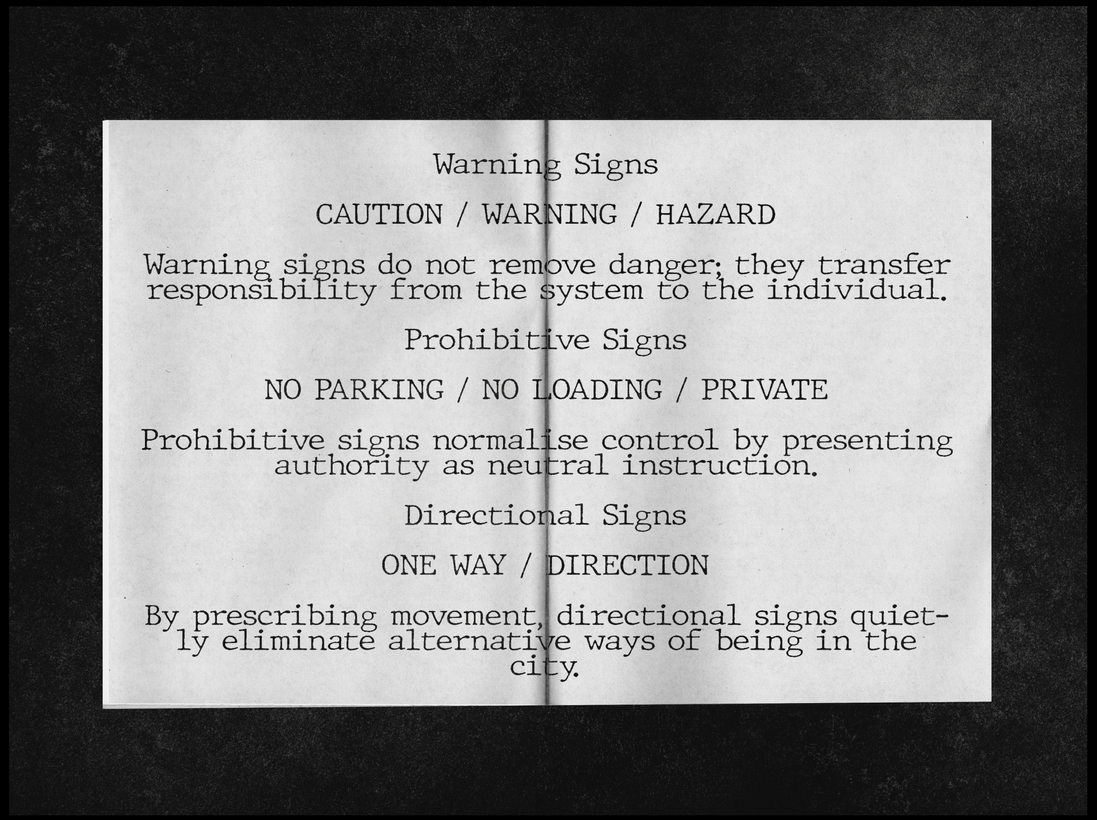
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Reflection

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