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Pilot Zones: The New Urban Environment of Twentieth Century Britain

By

Sam Potter Wetherell

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
Requirements for the degree of
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in
History
in the
Graduate Division
of the
University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor James Vernon, Chair
Professor Thomas Laqueur
Professor Robin Einhorn
Professor Theresa Caldeira

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Pilot Zones: The New Urban Environment of Twentieth Century Britain

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by Sam Wetherell
Abstract

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In the last third of the twentieth century, Britain underwent an urban transformation that was faster and more profound than any since the industrial revolution. Modernist housing schemes became gated communities. State managed shopping precincts became private out-of-town shopping malls. Derelict docklands became “enterprise zones” for fostering the financial service industry. A material world built from concrete began to give way to a world made of steel and glass. Using material from archives across Britain this dissertation discusses the role played by cities in producing, reflecting, and normalizing Britain’s post-social democratic settlement. The phrase “pilot zones” refers to the five spaces that act as case studies for this dissertation. The first of these two were policies. Enterprise zones, created by the Conservative government in 1981, were miniature tax havens in inner city areas, while National Garden Festivals were ambitious, state-directed garden shows in derelict urban areas that aimed to attract capital for urban redevelopment. The remaining three case studies — housing estates, shopping malls, and business parks — are built forms with histories that spanned much of the twentieth century. This dissertation looks at how they were privatized and re-imagined. Pilot zones created an environment that made particular political outcomes possible – and shut others down. The dissertation shows that the material basis for the privatized and securitized landscape of British cities at the millennium was assembled much earlier in the century for reasons that cannot be reduced to either structural economic change or the machinations of high politics. The built environment offers a new way of thinking about the sources of the culture and politics of the postwar period, one that not only avoids a dependence on the overly narrow and parochial term “Thatcherism”, but also is more tangible and accessible than the increasingly theistic term “neoliberalism.” Although Britain is the primary focus of my research, the dissertation uncovers many instances of transnational exchange or cooperation, either in ideas, policies, or techniques, particularly with the US and Hong Kong.
For my parents:
Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter
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What drives someone to leave his job in London and travel to a distant city, on an unfamiliar ocean, to spend five years writing about British history? I may not have the answer to that question, but the reason I finished and the reason why these were among the best years of my life have everything to do with the following list of colleagues, friends and loved ones.

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Berkeley, May 2016.
Introduction

In 1968 the first twelve thousand residents of Thamesmead in South East London moved into their new homes. Thamesmead was a labyrinth of concrete walkways, totemic mega-structures, and square artificial lakes — a state housing project announced as a triumph of both architectural and social engineering. Initially it was hoped that the project would extend to cover a vast area of the city, housing up to one hundred thousand of London’s poorest citizens. In 1970 the Greater London Council, the owners and builders of the estate, commissioned a documentary about the lives of these new working-class residents.1 At one point the film shows a small group of young children gathered in the classroom of a brand new school hastily erected on the estate by the local council. Milling around a graying cube of papier mâché about two feet high, the children were being encouraged to design their own housing project similar to Thamesmead, using basic blueprints. To Britons alive today, this image of a group of children, happily ensconced within a newly minted utopia and encouraged by a beaming teacher to play modernist planner for the afternoon, seems to belong as much to an ancien régime as a Napoleonic battlefield or a Chartist rally.

If you were to walk today the twelve miles from what remains of the Thamesmead estate to Trafalgar Square in the middle of London, depending on your route, you would encounter many of the structures and policies that form the basis of this dissertation. Walking northeast you would likely find the Westfield Shopping Mall on the site of the 2012 Olympic village. The mall is a glowing, angular cube, peppered with shards of decorative glass. It encompasses more than three hundred stores, facing off along miles of brightly lit concourses. Walk a mile or two further East from Stratford and you might encounter the twelve-foot high iron gates of the Bow Quarter. The Bow Quarter is a colossal gated housing development, retrofitted into the grounds of a former match factory. The factory was once the stage for the famous 1888 Matchgirls’ Strike, a canonical event in the annals of British labor history. Behind its high walls the development boasts a swimming pool, a gym, and a restaurant catering solely to the residents of its 714 apartment buildings. During the 2012 Olympics the Bow Quarter became central to the counter-terrorism operation that accompanied the games, after it was decided that an anti-aircraft missile battery would be fitted to the development’s roof.2 To take a different route, and to walk directly East of Thamesmead, would take you across the border into what was, until recently, an entirely different legal regime. The Isle of Dogs, a neighborhood nestled in a bend in the river Thames, was designated an “enterprise zone” in 1982. Covering a few hundred acres of former dockland, businesses in the zone could expect lighter taxes and fewer planning regulations than those elsewhere for a ten-year period. The result is a warren of banks and business parks, of chrome orbs and wine bars. At the heart of the former enterprise zone sits Canary Wharf, an immense forest of skyscrapers and often deserted plazas, one of the centers of Britain’s financial services-driven economy.

In the last third of the twentieth century, Britain underwent an urban transformation that was arguably faster and more profound than any since the industrial revolution. Modernist housing schemes became gated communities. State managed shopping precincts became private out-of-town shopping malls. Abandoned industrial quarters became enterprise zones for fostering a new services-led economy. New forms of sovereignty and enclosure, from private housing associations to quasi-autonomous development corporations, proliferated, fragmenting and re-ordering towns and cities. A material world built from concrete began to give way to one made of steel and glass. This new built environment normalized the changing politics of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s in Britain for the residents, shoppers, business owners, and pedestrians who inhabited it. As large swaths of British cities were privatized and enclosed, whole neighborhoods were created to showcase the revitalizing effects of free markets and light touch regulation to the rest of the nation and the world. At the same time the shopping malls, gated communities, land reclamation festivals, and business parks that together constituted this new built environment each came with their own separate histories and their own autonomous logics, which far exceeded the fantasies of contemporary conservative legislators.

Even in 2015 this privatized and heavily fortified urban landscape is far from everywhere. It is most visible in what was once the industrial heartlands of Britain, as
former Manchester textile mills, Gateshead Flour Mills, and East London cake factories become shopping malls, art galleries, and securitized housing developments. It is a landscape that hugs the coast, as the once vast and thriving docklands of Liverpool, East London, and Portsmouth have been transformed into sites of fun and financial services trading. The center of Britain’s coastal leisure economy has shifted. Where once the seaside resorts of Skegness, Blackpool and Scarborough were the playground of mid-century British families, tourists now flock to the museums and wine bars which have sprouted among the warehouses of the Albert Dock in Liverpool, Canary Wharf in London and Gunwharf Quays in Portsmouth.

Rather than focusing on planners or policies, this dissertation proceeds through a series of case studies, an approach that allows us to see how this new built environment was assembled piece-by-piece, even as its constitutive parts are beginning to blur together. These case studies make up the tangible, medium-term interventions, which one can point at from the window of a departmental office, or from a jumbo jet coming in to land. First, I will look at the history of enterprise zones, an initially radical and utopian right wing urban planning idea that reached fruition in the 1980s and called for small deregulated and tax-exempt neighborhoods in inner city areas. Second, I will look at national garden festivals. These were five enormous, theme park-like events hosted by the government in the 1980s on derelict industrial sites to prepare the land for the property market. These two case studies are linked in that together they prepped the ground and set the parameters for the new urban environment of the 1980s and 1990s. Third, I will look at the long history of the postwar housing estate, from its social democratic inception to its rearticulation in the 1980s in the form of gated, luxury housing. Fourth I look at the history of shopping malls in Britain, from their origins as a means of enclosing and rationalizing town centers in the immediate postwar era to their recent guise as private, self-regulating automatons existing on the outskirts of towns and cities. Finally, I will look at the history of suburban business parks and show how new forms of post-Fordist employment were planned for and regulated.

The phrase “pilot zones” is taken from a speech by Conservative Chancellor Geoffrey Howe delivered in 1988 among the skyscrapers that had sprouted in the London Docklands Enterprise Zone. Howe said:

More quickly perhaps than we expected [the Thatcher government] succeeded in getting rid of many of the restrictions that blighted entrepreneurship. Even so, that took time, and the case for concentrated pilot zones of freedom still stood. So as Chancellor I set up a series of those “test market” areas or laboratories in which to see how capitalism in undiluted form could revive our derelict industrial landscape.3

The phrase captures both the experimental and the demonstrative purpose of enterprise zones, but can also apply to national garden festivals, set piece shopping mall developments, business parks, and gated residential communities. It speaks to the unevenness of the development of the new, late twentieth century built environment.

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While all of these case studies have their own distinct history, a history that in all five cases can be traced back to the middle of the twentieth century (and in some cases before), they have three important things in common. Firstly, these developments were mechanisms that allowed once public space to come under private ownership. Secondly, and relatedly, they enclosed buildings, spaces, and neighborhoods, subjecting them to new legal regimes and intensive forms of policing and security. Finally, they each contributed to the production of a deregulated, post-Fordist economy in Britain, one that operated primarily through the selling of services rather than industrial production. While each case study has its own logic and trajectory, together they tell the story of the privatization and enclosure of the British city, as well as the role it had to play producing the political economy of our urban environment. In this sense, each case study can be seen as a train journey, taking different routes, some longer and more rambling than others, but each eventually arriving at the same station.

A New Urban Policy

Twentieth century urban history as a field in Britain has remained underdeveloped, particularly when compared to many of the grand synthetic works that have emerged on North American cities in recent years. This is even more striking during a time of burgeoning interest in the contemporary British city with a spate of recent books, exhibitions, and BBC documentaries about contemporary British urban life. This deficit is beginning to be rectified, as recent works by Guy Ortolano, Frank Mort, Judith Walkowitz, and other historians have started to take the twentieth century city seriously as a distinct unit of analysis. However, most histories of the twentieth century (and particularly the late twentieth century) British city have tended to treat the built environment merely as a source for understanding high political change, rather than as an agent in that change. Pieced together not only from scattered histories and biographies, but also from contemporary works of political science, what follows is a

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rehearsal of the currently accepted narrative of late twentieth century British urban history.\textsuperscript{7}

The history of the postwar British built environment is most often seen through the lens of deindustrialization. Between 1870 and 1970 the percentage of Britons employed in manufacturing had remained relatively stable at 40 percent.\textsuperscript{8} After 1970 the containerization of shipping procedures, technological changes in production methods, and the offshoring of jobs dramatically reduced Britain’s industrial workforce. Between 1950 and 1970 Britain’s global share of world trade in manufacture declined from 25 percent to 10 percent.\textsuperscript{9} The number of workers employed in manufacturing sectors shrank from its peak of 8.4 million in 1966 to 5.5 million in 1983.\textsuperscript{10} As the wave of industrial capitalism retreated, it left exposed a redundant infrastructure of docks, factories, and warehouses, many of which had been owned by the state following a wave of nationalizations after the Second World War. This infrastructure was particularly visible in key neighborhoods in cities such as Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Glasgow, and the East End of London. Flying in a small plane over the East End, the Conservative Party Environment Minister described what he saw out of the window:

\begin{quote}
My indignation at what was happening on the South Bank was as nothing compared to my reaction to the immense tracts of dereliction I now observed. The rotted docks – long since abandoned for the deep-water harbours able to take modern container ships downstream – the crumbling infrastructure that had once supported their thriving industry and vast expanses of polluted land left behind by modern technology and enhanced environmentalism.\textsuperscript{11}
\end{quote}

Amidst the increasingly conspicuous ruins of this now defunct political economy were urban communities of individuals, once manual workers, who were now unemployed. In the fifteen years from 1970 to 1985 the percentage of the labor force that was unemployed rose from 4 percent to 12 percent. From the late 1960s to the late 1970s, with a brief Tory intermission, successive Labour governments attempted to deal with the growing urban crisis through rafts of targeted local stimulus packages such as Education Priority Areas (1967), the Urban Program (1968), Community Development Projects (1969), Housing Action Areas (1974) and the Inner Urban Areas Act (1978). These packages were essentially demand-side solutions, whereby specific areas were targeted for greater public investment in various forms.

By the late 1970s there was a sense these policies were failing and that British cities were in crisis. Between the 1930s and 1980s the population of London fell from a peak of 8.5 million to just seven million. According to one report, by the late 1970s the 7 percent of the population that lived in inner city areas accounted for 14 percent of the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{7} Versions of this story can be found in Nicholas Deakin and John Edwards, \textit{Enterprise Culture and the Inner City} (London: Routledge, 1993); Peter Hall, \textit{Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century} (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014).
\textsuperscript{8} Figure cited in Michael Dintenfass, \textit{The Decline of Industrial Britain: 1870 – 1980} (London: Routledge, 2002), 5-6.
\textsuperscript{9} Figure cited in David Rose et al., “Economic Restructuring: The British Experience,” \textit{Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science}, vol. 475 (1984), 140.
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 144.
\end{flushleft}
unskilled workers, 20 percent of the households deemed to be in “housing stress,” 33 percent of commonwealth immigrants, twice the national rate of unemployment, and up to ten times the amount of people living on or below the poverty line. Suburbanization, postwar reconstruction, and the growth of new towns meant that Britain’s cities had been hemorrhaging jobs and capital for more than a generation. Meanwhile, increased commonwealth immigration into key neighborhoods of London, Birmingham, and Liverpool led to pitched battles with organized fascist groups. High rates of unemployment and police harassment prompted a summer of riots by the black communities of Brixton and Liverpool in 1981. During the 1970s and 1980s the city became a site of generalized moral panic for many in Britain. Writing on urban crime in 1973, the cultural theorist Stuart Hall described “a society which is slipping into a certain kind of crisis…” resulting in “the construction of an authoritarian consensus, a conservative backlash.” As a result, British culture in the 1970s became steeped in references to a greying and increasingly militarized built environment. Stanley Kubrick’s _A Clockwork Orange_, filmed, not coincidentally, on the grounds of Thamesmead in 1972, portrayed a world governed by nihilism and extreme violence. The novelist JG Ballard, meanwhile, imagined a West London tower block descending into cannibalism and sectarian warfare. It is difficult, of course, to disentangle this crisis from the authoritarian and sometimes racist discourses that enabled it.

In the wake of these concerns, the philosophies that had underpinned more than a generation of British urban policy began to give way, as targeted state aid began to fall out of fashion with legislators. Beginning in the late 1970s there emerged a new sense that inner cities were facing a collapse of their economic infrastructure, a collapse that would supersede and outlast any short-term ameliorative attempts to improve the material conditions of their residents. These problems were the headline of a 1977 white paper on inner cities, which, despite being initiated by a Labour government, formed the intellectual basis for a radical supply-side transformation of British urban policy under Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. In short, the problem of jobs was to be solved by encouraging capital to move back to the inner city. It was hoped that a combination of deregulation and state-directed regeneration would bring jobs back to the deindustrialized areas of London, Liverpool, Manchester, and Glasgow. Urban Development Grants (1982) provided small amounts of capital expenditure to local authorities only on the condition that it was spent on specific projects completed in partnership with the private sector. National Garden Festivals (1984) and Derelict Land Grants (1983) would use small amounts of public money to clear away decaying industrial ruins and prepare land for private development. Meanwhile, the Enterprise Zone (1981) would suspend the apparatus of state regulation to incentivize market-based regeneration. All of these would be managed and implemented by Urban Development Corporations (1981) that would overrule democratically elected local authorities. Finally, the Housing Act (1980) allowed

13 Stuart Hall et al., _Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order_ (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1.
residents of public housing to purchase their own home at heavily subsidized rates. By the mid-1980s a complete transformation of the nature and purpose of British urban policy had been effected. David Harvey would characterize this change as the shift from “managerialism” to “entrepreneurialism.” Where once the goal of urban policy had to been to provide and maintain services, cities were now forced to compete against one another for capital in increasingly dynamic ways.16

This political transformation is the canvass on which this dissertation unfolds, but it is far from the full story. Many of these policies were prescriptive rather than substantive. The state created the conditions for a new kind of private sector urbanism, but what did the private sector build when it arrived? There is much written by political scientists and geographers on the policy developments of the early 1980s, but little on the shopping malls, business parks, and private residential developments that rushed to fill the inner city areas prepped for their arrival. Histories of the high politics of Thatcherism, for example, cannot account for muzak, for electronic entryphones, and for giant Coke cans transformed into children’s play areas in garden festivals. Many of the policies themselves also had their own independent histories, histories that are often repressed in accounts that focus solely on Thatcherite high political change. Enterprise zones, often listed as just one of many different urban policy initiatives of the early 1980s, were more than a decade in the making by the time they became law. The creation of the first enterprise zone, as the first chapter of this dissertation shows, marked the end of a historical arc which passed through 1960s urban sociology, pop-art, and postmodern architecture movements, and even the history and governance of imperial Hong Kong. Many of the policies generated during this new era of urban governance and many of the new physical structures and institutions they fostered on the ground had trajectories which stretched back long before the election of Margaret Thatcher.

**Neoliberalism and Thatcherism**

It has increasingly become necessary to group together various changes that took place across Britain and the world in the last third of the twentieth century under the descriptive term “neoliberalism.” The catalogue of maladies has been well-rehearsed in recent years. It includes the emergence of monetarist and supply-side macroeconomics as the normative framework for state policy, the privatization of once publicly-owned and managed assets and the displacement of union-backed full employment with flexible service jobs and structural unemployment.17 Lately the definition of neoliberalism has been extended to include new understandings of the self as an enterprising subject and the extension of economic metaphors and market-based practices to every domain of human existence.18 Recently it has been the case that both Marxist scholars interested in

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revealing the simultaneous global emergence of new forms of accumulation as well as theorists influenced by Foucault’s 1979 lectures on neoliberalism are speaking in almost theistic terms, describing neoliberalism as a totalizing and inescapable presence. Sitting in a half empty library and reading recent works that claimed that “neo-liberalism is nothing more, nor less, than the form of our existence - the way in which we are led… to relate to others and to ourselves,” it is hard to imagine that something like neoliberalism could possibly exist at all.

The big transitions that form the basis of this dissertation, the privatization of once publicly owned space, and the creation of a deregulated and post-industrial political economy are indeed changes that are associated with the term neoliberalism. However, I want to maintain in this history some of the precision and clarity that an overdependence on term “neoliberalism” tends to obscure. “Neoliberalism” is increasingly being used to refer to something like an epoch, like the Triassic period or the late Middle Ages, rather than a gathering of linked processes. It is important to note that not one of the countless voices that make up this dissertation, the conservative planners and legislators, the radical geographers, and anti-gentrification activists, uses the term. Despite its weaknesses, however, “neoliberalism” remains a useful category of analysis for historians attempting to describe a set of linked global processes. It is a term that captures both the privatization of once public space, an essential feature of pilot zones, as well as the new kinds of economic practices and macroeconomic agendas that spaces like enterprise zones and national garden festivals sought to showcase. What these two processes have in common is that they both signify, albeit in quite different ways, the extension of the market into areas where it was once constrained, or entirely banished by more than a generation of social democratic policy. In what follows I have made a conscious attempt to use the term “neoliberalism” sparingly—after all, the purpose of history is to show as well as to explain. But when I do use the term I am referring to nothing more than the extension of the market into hitherto protected realms.

While I will be making limited use of the term “neoliberalism,” I will be avoiding the term “Thatcherism” entirely. In Britain, Thatcherism has largely been explained as a set of policies and ideas endogenous to the British right, a historical problem whose solution lies in the study of political biographies and electoral campaigns. This explanation is an overly parochial explanation of changes that, by and large, were occurring all over the world in the late twentieth century. Political histories of Thatcherism have tended to have the opposite problem to scholarship that has used “neoliberalism” as an explanatory force. They tend to describe a series of political adjustments that are so small as to be almost imperceptible. Adjustments that by implication can be swiftly reversed by a new government, in a new election cycle.

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20 Dardot and Laval, New Way of the World, 4.
21 Stedman Jones, Masters of the Universe; Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders eds., Making Thatcher’s Britain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Andrew Gamble, The Free Economy and the
While the themes which link my case studies together, namely privatization, enclosure, and deregulation, are all changes associated with Margaret Thatcher, the global proliferation of many of the practices described here, and their *longue durée* resilience suggests that they cannot be reduced simply to being effects of her premiership.

The history of the built environment is a way of connecting the literature on neoliberalism, as a global, joined-up philosophy, with histories of Thatcherism, as a menu of policies introduced in the British 1980s. At stake is a reassembling of the history of the late twentieth century. A way of showing how many of the changes we associate with neoliberalism were materialized and made possible, and how they intruded into the quotidian world of millions in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. One of the biggest claims of this dissertation is that Britain’s changing towns and cities were productive of as well as merely reflective of new forms of politics in the late twentieth century. The shopping mall, the private housing estate, and even the enterprise zone cannot be reduced to either structural economic change or the contingency of high politics. They are each fragile, hybrid forms, whose gestation period began long before the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979, and whose developmental trajectories were often beyond the control of any individual planner or politician. Each pilot zone has its own historical logic, one that sometimes enabled, sometimes radicalized, and sometimes even limited the implementation of this top-down restructuring of British urban life. Its worth spending a moment dwelling on the two different means by which the built environment can wield something like agency or autonomy, each of which is applicable more or less to all five of my case studies. The first is the problem of scale, or *durée*, which the built environment, by definition, forces upon those trying to change it. The second is the capacity of certain spaces to demonstrate new and precocious forms of economic and social life.

**The autonomy of the built environment: An issue of scale**

To the extent that buildings and cities are capable of reflecting political norms, they also freeze them in time. Just as John Maynard Keynes claimed that we are all slaves to some defunct economist, our daily lives unfold in cities and among buildings that were designed and built during times that are radically different to our own. The houses we live in, the routes we take to work, the buildings in which we buy our coffee and our shoes, were often built by planners and architects whose political assumptions and anthropological claims have long since been deemed to be defunct. This problem, a problem of scale, is the first means by which the built environment can have an autonomy independent from the machinations of politics or the necessities of capital accumulation.

In a study of medium-sized Russian cities in the period before and immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union the political theorist Stephen Collier has drawn attention to the difficulty of privatizing built environments that had been planned holistically by socialist governments.\(^{22}\) In many Russian cities heat was directly piped to every household from a giant centralized boiler that was often heated using by-products from the local factory, the biggest source of employment for most of the town’s residents.

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Collier argued that in the 1990s, as the Russian economy was being restructured under the auspices of the Washington Consensus, the embeddedness of this infrastructural arrangement limited the possibilities of those hoping to privatize Russian urban economies. Taking into account the scale and the conspicuousness of the architectural and infrastructural forms that socialist or social democratic governments produced during their global, mid-century, heyday, it should not be a surprise to discover the extent to which these forms limited or reconfigured the privatization and deregulation of various national economies and infrastructure networks across the world. While many environmental historians have drawn attention to the different ways in which human agency is circumscribed by the natural world, few historians have paid the same attention to the various strictures prescribed by previous iterations of the built environment. Those attempting to negotiate the privatization of holistically planned Russian cities in the 1990s could have learned something from the initial failed attempts to privatize modernist housing developments in Britain in the 1980s or lock the doors of state built shopping precincts in town centers across the country.

One of the aims of this dissertation, then, is to show the challenges and negotiations that arose as a mid-century social democratic infrastructure came to be privatized or demolished. The thousands of high density housing estates built in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, most of which still survive, proved particularly difficult spaces to privatize, as collective forms of heating and provision led to sometimes insolvable disputes between residents who had bought their own flat and those still renting from the council. Meanwhile, modernist 1950s and 1960s shopping precincts had their doors locked in the 1980s, as private security guards were employed to patrol their newly purchased concrete concourses. Legal battles over whether or not those who pass through these once public spaces have the same legal rights to protest and assembly as they would beyond their gates continue to rage. Rather than being an invisible yet totalizing monolith, an all encompassing “new way of the world,” the changes we have come to associate with neoliberalism were retrofitted into an increasingly shabby social democratic infrastructure. In Britain the politics of the 1960s seem to be separated from that of the 1990s by an abyss that appears almost cosmic in scale. It is indeed the case that many of the most fundamental and commonsensical ideas about the nature of politics, the economy, and the individual were profoundly altered during this period. However, the formal continuities and long term processes that such an attention to scale uncovers, allows us to forge points of connection on either side of this historical chasm, and to build a shaky and treacherous rope bridge from one historical epoch to another.

While attempts to privatize and securitize a built environment developed by social democratic planners and architects sometimes resulted in strange hybrids, or in outright failure, there were moments when more extreme forms of erasure became necessary. Garden festivals, in capturing the language of environmentalism and claims to the “organic,” resulted in nothing less than a state-enforced amnesia about the industrial infrastructure which they displaced. In many ways the garden festival project was made necessary by the sheer extent of the stubborn and toxic remains of Britain’s industrial past. In some cases it seemed like the only viable means of preparing such land for the urban property market. Elsewhere the failure of maintaining hybrid forms of public and private housing, and of policing high-density modernist housing estates forced the construction of entirely new gated developments where experiments which had been
attempted and failed in the public sector could be perfected. The stubbornness of the prior built environment, then, sometimes limited the possibilities of political action, and sometimes forced a more extreme solution. For this reason the built environment cannot be seen as an ideal reflection of political norms that are generated elsewhere.

The various elements that make up Britain’s present built environment will also long outlast the contingent political formations that fostered and produced them. The problem of scale is something that can be projected forwards as well as backwards in time and offers a new means of thinking about politics in the medium term. Theorists have long been aware that what is commonsense in politics at any given time is in fact the outcome of prior political struggles or contingent changes in calculation. What Antonio Gramsci’s theory of hegemony and Michel Foucault’s theory of governmentality have in common is that they each show how the limits of political action, and the things deemed appropriate subjects for the political are shaped by ideas and power relations that are not immediately obvious. One of the challenges facing the political left in recent decades has been the problem of how to construct a politics that is pragmatic and constructive in the face of the invisible and insufferably heavy forces seen to be shaping the political middle ground. How do those sitting in a circle of chairs in a function room, drawing up an agenda begin to figure out how to change a governmentality?

Many of those attempting to effect political change are therefore caught between two different scales and registers. In the short term, those on the left are encouraged to throw their lot into the doomed process of electoral politics on a nation-by-nation basis. In the long term they are challenged with the Herculean task of altering an infinite charge sheet of calculations and assumptions that are deemed by most to be pre-political. Taking the built environment as a starting point for an analysis of historical change, and understanding that it is one of the primary means by which politics is stabilized and reproduced, allows us to forge an oppositional politics between these two scales and registers, and hopefully one that connects them. The built environment is of course not the only source for creating a meaningful medium term politics. Recent business histories such as Bethany Morton’s work on Wal-Mart or histories of commodities such as Timothy Mitchell’s history of oil show how the world has been materially assembled in a way that makes particular political outcomes possible, and shuts down others. 23

Demonstrating a new kind of politics

In Britain in the 1980s different political economies lived side-by-side, streets apart. Operating as a network of legal exceptions, enterprise zones were designed to showcase a newly deregulated political economy, and have it lead by example, while it awkwardly coexisted with the social democratic regulatory state beyond its borders. At the same time, in modernist housing estates in London, tenants who had bought their own flats under the terms of the 1980 Housing Act lived literally next door to those who still rented from the state. Although the concourses of shopping malls resembled and often connected with the city streets outside, they were owned and managed by private authorities, and patrolled by private security guards rather than police. Each of the five

case studies that form the basis of this dissertation operated as precocious and exceptional spaces, arriving with new forms of sovereignty and enclosure that ruptured the urban fabric of social democracy. While there is no doubt that Thatcher’s government implemented a top-down reconfiguration of Britain’s national political economy, it is important to note that her politics cohered and congealed in some spaces more than others. The second means by which the built environment came to have a productive autonomy of its own, then, is through the demonstrative and exemplary nature of the new elements of the late twentieth century British urban landscape.

All five of the interventions that make up this dissertation were accompanied by the emergence of new forms of sovereignty. Behind the high gates and air conditioned lobbies of luxury housing developments, private residents associations exercised an almost draconian form of control over the day-to-day management of common space. Shopping malls, meanwhile, were almost Hobbesian creatures, with individual businesses collectively submitting to regulations over opening hours, storefront design, and tenancy agreements for their common benefit. Both enterprise zones and garden festivals were managed as spaces apart from the crumbling industrial cities that encircled them. It is difficult to understand the changing built environment in Britain without studying the management of these new institutions, and my source material includes the minutes of private residents’ associations, shopping mall owners, and newsletters circulated among the tenants of business parks. As well as drawing attention to the uneven spread of new forms of political and economic life, which have been deemed by many to be omnipresent, this dissertation will also address the fracturing of British local governance, as elected councils ceded control of more and more of their territory to brightly lit concourses and exceptional globalized zones.

In many ways enterprise zones, garden festivals, shopping malls, gated communities, and business parks created laboratories where new kinds of economic behavior and forms of private ownership could be showcased, and spread by example. Likewise garden festivals were exceptional and demonstrative spaces, where a prosperous, homogeneously white and relentlessly private vision of the social emerged in stark opposition to the derelict, impoverished, and increasingly multi-racial inner city landscapes which lay beyond their ticket barriers. This approach is much indebted to the anthropologist, Aihwa Ong, who has argued that the spread of globalized and deregulated markets was facilitated by the emergence of localized and exceptional forms of sovereignty. Ong cited the emergence of Chinese Special Economic Zones in the 1980s, as vast macroeconomic exceptions, which allow Chinese factories and banks to be exposed to the global market without having to jettison a national commitment to protectionist state planning.24

The capacity of the built environment to demonstrate new kinds of relationships between the individual, the state, and the market, as well as the built environment’s tendency to freeze politics in space, giving it a coherence that often outlasts the cohorts of politicians and planners who formed it, are the two reasons why housing developments, shopping malls, business parks, garden festivals, and enterprise zones must be fully historicized, rather than being seen as merely an effect of high political change. It is hoped that other historians, not just those working on Britain or the twentieth century,

24 Ong, Neoliberalism as Exception.
might find these two approaches useful when trying to chart the relationship between politics and the built environment.

Beyond Britain

While the primary focus of this dissertation is on the history of Britain, all five of my case studies spent some time germinating beyond Britain’s shores. Throughout the entire postwar period, delegations appointed by both the private and the public sector left Britain to examine shopping malls, housing estates, and cultural festivals in mainland Europe, North America, and parts of Asia. In the case of garden festivals the idea was imported (although heavily modified) from Germany, and the first garden festival in Liverpool was subject to regulation by an international organization headquartered in Paris. The late twentieth century urban environment in Britain did not develop in isolation as planners, policy makers, business owners and developers were caught in international networks of expertise. The US was a common resource. British shopping mall looked to their American counterparts for inspiration, while high-rise apartments built in London in the 1980s were raised using construction techniques developed across the Atlantic. The enterprise zone, meanwhile, was formed among a cohort of anti-planning activists in the late 1960s who looked to the American West and to Las Vegas in particular as inspiration for their decentralized planning fantasies.

Britain was not merely a receptacle for innovations that were developed and honed elsewhere, it also exported ideas and practices to the world during this period. The enterprise zone in particular was arguably the biggest single policy export from Britain during the 1980s, and was quickly introduced by various other nations. By 2008 there were two thousand state enterprise zones in America, as well as zones in France and Italy. South Africa, Australia, and Sweden, meanwhile, are currently contemplating introducing their own enterprise zone programs. Initial attempts by British planners to use shopping malls to recentralize British cities around ideas of public space and association, meanwhile, disrupt what is becoming a fairly advanced, Whiggish story about the development of North American retail space.25 The repressed early history of shopping malls point to alternative trajectories and roads not taken, which complicate well-developed narratives on both sides of the Atlantic.

More so than abstract ideas about the management of political economies, practices relating to the built environment are especially prone to move between national borders. Often this was literally the case. The monorail which connected the car park of the Merry Hill Shopping Mall in the West Midlands of England to the mall itself was decommissioned in 1992, and shipped to a similar shopping mall in Queensland, Australia where it is currently still in operation. Many of the exhibits at the Liverpool Garden Festival were grown or constructed by the more than thirty overseas delegations that leased space at the event. The modular history of the built environment goes some way towards accounting for the relative standardization of cities across the world during the late twentieth century. While the neoliberal spaces of Manchester, San Francisco,

25 Versions of story can be found in: Lizabeth Cohen, “From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America,” American Historical Review, vol. 101 No 4 (1996); Cohen, A Consumers’ Republic; Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier.
Hong Kong and Sao Paulo did not set out from the same *ancien régime*, they all now, superficially at least, resemble one another.

This dissertation is based on research in more than thirty different archives in the UK, as well as archives in the US and Hong Kong. As the spaces I write about were privatized, so too were many of their archives. While the housing developments and shopping precincts planned and built by activist local authorities in the middle of the century resulted in volumes of archival print material in the form of council minutes, official plans, and publicity material, their private counterparts came and sometimes went without leaving a trace. The biggest archival challenge facing historians of the post 1970s built environment is the retreat of the state from the business of urban planning. I have been dependent on business archives, fistfuls of publicity material squirreled away by anti-gentrification activists, and, in one instance, the records of a private residents’ association, kindly shown to me by a local resident. Most of all I have used the holdings of large numbers of local authority archives whose workers, sometimes volunteers, have diligently squirreled away reports and planning documents. It is worth noting that these workers are increasingly under threat from government cuts and some archives are faced with privatization in the near future. Many of my archives are themselves becoming pilot zones, retrofitted into former warehouses and, in one instance, into the former headquarters of a now outsourced sewing machine manufacturing company.

The five vital, constitutive elements of the late twentieth century British city that constitute this dissertation are analyzed in isolation, yet they tend to cluster in key, usually former industrial neighborhoods. The two largest shopping malls in Britain, the Gateshead Metrocentre and the Merry Hill shopping mall, which is on the outskirts of Birmingham, are both located entirely within enterprise zones. Although much of the land once used for garden festivals now stands derelict and empty, garden festivals once advertised private housing developments in model villages on their grounds. There are parts of the former docklands in East London, Salford, which is on the outskirts of Manchester and the Liverpool Docks where shopping malls, private housing developments, and business parks blur together, all under the jurisdiction of an enterprise zone. In parts of Britain this new urban landscape has been with us for more than forty years. It is time to write its history.
Chapter 1: 
The Enterprise Zone: Laboratories for a New Political Economy

In June 1978 Geoffrey Howe, the Conservative Party spokesman for the Treasury and Economic Affairs, summoned the members of a right wing think tank to the Waterman’s Arms, a pub in the abandoned ruins of the former London Docks. His speech that evening was titled “Liberating Free Enterprise: A New Experiment.” Caged in the language of what was becoming a well-rehearsed attack on state planning the speech presented a stark vision of British inner city decline:

The urban wilderness, which does so little credit to the effectiveness of well-intended political initiatives, has spread further. The London dockland is far from being the only example of this... Anything that can be seen beside the Thames can be matched by examples of dereliction on almost as large a scale beside the Mersey and the Clyde. Manchester, Leeds, the West Midlands – in almost every city of the same size one can see similar devastation.

Howe then outlined the details of a solution, something he called the “enterprise zone.” Reversing more than a decade of state-led strategic investment in Britain’s declining inner city areas, Howe called for small, discrete urban areas blighted by high rates of poverty and unemployment to be freed from almost all planning regulation, made exempt from the Development Land Tax, and legally protected from future nationalization initiatives. According to this idea, the new businesses that such a policy would attract into the neighborhood would then spark the process of regeneration. Three years later the enterprise zone would become government policy, and the Isle of Dogs would become just one of eleven such zones implemented across the country. Although these zones were a scaled down version of Howe’s radical vision, their popularity in the short term resulted in another fifteen zones being implemented in Britain in 1983. At the same time the idea was picked up on in the US by advisors to Ronald Reagan. By the end 1991 there were more than two thousand enterprise zones in the US, and in the last twenty years France and Italy have introduced similar programs. There have been plans to implement enterprise zones in Australia and Sweden. While enterprise zones bear an important resemblance to the free ports, free trade zones, and special economic zones that have been used as developmental tools by nations such as China, the Ukraine, and Ireland, there is a crucial difference. While the latter policies were engineered to stimulate transnational trade and investment with macroeconomic ends in sight, enterprise zones are microeconomic tools that prioritize failing neighborhood economies

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2 Ibid.,13-14.
4 In Australia a working group was set up by the government of New South Wales in 2001 to examine the feasibility of enterprise zones. In 2010 the Swedish government considered implementing an urban enterprise zone similar in form and scope to those in the UK.
above the national economic interest, and are designed to stimulate local rather than national growth.\(^5\)

The enterprise zone concept did not, however, spring fully formed, like Athena, from the head of Geoffrey Howe that summer evening. It had a history that by 1978 was already ten years old. It can be traced back to a group of countercultural urban planners, architects, and journalists who orbited around the magazine *New Society* and popularized a short-lived urban planning movement that they called “Non-Plan.”\(^6\) The Non-Plan movement, a self-described “experiment in freedom,” called for large, county-sized regions of the UK to be freed from all planning restrictions. Taking its cues from Californian urbanism and postwar sociology, the non-planners claimed that in Britain the natural desires and spontaneous whims of the population were being repressed by state planning. Some of the core ideas of non-planning were retained and developed by Peter Hall, one of the original authors of the Non-Plan manifesto, throughout the 1970s. As Hall visited both Hong Kong, and Singapore and watched the crises of the 1970s develop in Britain from his post at the school of City and Regional Planning at Berkeley, his critique of state regulation deepened. In 1977 Hall declared that small inner city areas should be made exempt from planning as a possible solution to inner city unemployment and depopulation. Chiming perfectly with the supply-side sentiments of Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative Party, it was an idea that was quickly appropriated by her supporters and transformed into the enterprise zone.

By the end of the 1980s the idea that non-planning, rather than planning, was a prescriptive norm that could be experimentally applied to small sectors of land to solve some of the biggest economic and social problems of the postwar period was a common feature of British and American urban policy. This negative, utopian vision emerged in the 1960s and spread throughout networks of right wing think tanks, catching the imagination of increasingly powerful politicians on each side of the Atlantic. As it radiated outwards as policy, latching onto depressed industrial quarters, it disrupted the consistency and totality of national economies, allowing multiple political economies to exist streets apart. It was in enterprise zones that the garden festivals, shopping malls, private housing developments, and business parks that populate the rest of this dissertation were most likely to assemble.

The first half of this chapter is primarily concerned with charting the emergence of the enterprise zone idea. Tracing the history of the enterprise zone concept, from its anarchic 1960s prototype to its implementation in many former industrial regions of Britain, reveals the centrality of the British built environment for generating new ideas about the relationship between the economy and the state. More so than any other chapter in this dissertation, this is the history of a political idea, one that explicitly concerns the ideological lenses through which politicians and planners saw the various problems affecting the late twentieth century built environment. Enterprise zones were at the vanguard of attempts to tie free market deregulation to urban policy in the late twentieth century. However, with their repressed counter-cultural pre-history in the form of the Non-Plan movement, enterprise zones were also an intricate intellectual and political

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5 Distinction made clear in Akinci et al., “Special Economic Zones: Performance, Lessons Learned and Implications for Zone Development” (World Bank Group, 2008), 3.

hybrid, a wedding of Thatcherite macroeconomics with pop-cultural criticism, 1960s New Left thought, and the urbanism of the American West. The history of the enterprise zone and the Non-Plan area are further examples of the fine line that exists between 1960s and 1970s anarcho-libertarian thought, and the pro-market evangelism of late twentieth century neoliberals. Indeed, later in his life, one of the non-planners reflected on the transition from Non-Plan to enterprise zone as an instance where “right and left met around the back of the stage.” For this reason the long history of the enterprise zone allows us to rethink the history of what has become known as ‘Thatcherism’ in Britain. Recent histories of the emergence of Thatcherism have looked almost exclusively at either academic economists or the machinations of high politics, and recent scholarship as beaten a well-trodden pathway from Friedrich Hayek to the Chicago School, to the Centre for Policy Studies to Thatcher. This chapter shows the payoff of looking beyond the traditionally defined political right to chart the emergence of the ideological climate of 1980s Britain.

The second half of this chapter looks at the implementation of the enterprise zone policy in the 1980s in both Britain and the US. Enterprise zones inaugurated an exemplary and utopian relationship between politics and space. For senior Thatcherite insiders such as Keith Joseph and Geoffrey Howe as well as their American counterparts enterprise zones were designed to act as beachheads for a more thorough supply-side revolution. As well as short-term mechanisms for the rehabilitation of deprived neighborhoods, enterprise zones were also intended to demonstrate and perfect a new kind of economy, one that was flexible, globalized, and resolutely post-industrial. The success of enterprise zones would, it was argued by some policy-makers, encourage the spread of this new economic model, allowing the implementation of a national or even a planetary enterprise zone. Indeed, many of the architects of the enterprise zone policy cited the British colony of Hong Kong as a source of inspiration for their ideas. In Hong Kong they saw a dynamic, free market entrepôt, an exceptional economic laboratory that showcased free market economic practices to Mainland China and the world. While there is no doubt that Thatcher’s government implemented a top-down reconfiguration of Britain’s national political economy, it is also the case that enterprise zones, acting as local, legal exceptions to an otherwise social democratic norm, allowed free market ideas to take root at a local level and then proceed at a nationally uneven rate. While many of the zones introduced in Britain sank without a trace, absorbed into a complex web of other regeneration programs, others contributed to the transformation of the built environment within their perimeter. The Docklands Enterprise Zone in East London, where Howe first announced the policy, is now a dense thicket of skyscrapers, a key hub for Britain’s burgeoning financial services sector. Salford, on the outskirts of Manchester, has likewise been transformed by enterprise zone-led regeneration. What, previously, was a shattered cluster of once-thriving docks is now known for its waterside luxury hotels.

7 Another example of this porous boundary can be found among the pioneers of tech culture in Silicon Valley. See Fred Turner, From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, The Whole Earth Network and the Rise of Digital Utopianism (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2008).
8 Quoted in Anna Minton, Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-First Century City (London: Penguin, 2012), 188.
This chapter will look at the enterprise zone in Clydebank, a former industrial community to the west of Glasgow, as a case study. The Clydebank enterprise zone fostered the development of a large business park, a shopping center, and even a private, non-NHS hospital funded by a US healthcare trust. In many ways, as we will see, Clydebank became something like a museum, exhibiting many of the urban planning techniques which make up this dissertation.

An Experiment in Freedom

On the March 20 1969 New Society devoted the first eight pages of the magazine’s edition to a series of articles under the headline “Non-Plan: An Experiment in Freedom.” Dotted with grainy black and white photos of launderettes, Coca-Cola billboards, and neon advertisements for “3-decker sandwiches,” this curious edition opened with a problem:

Town and country planning has today become an unquestioned shibboleth. Yet few of its procedures or value judgments have any sound basis, except delay. Why not have the courage, where practical, to let people shape their own environment?¹⁰

The articles were written by the urban planner Peter Hall, the journalist and then editor of New Society Paul Barker, the cultural critic Reyner Banham, and the architect Cedric Price. In a jointly written opening editorial the four men railed against what they saw as the highly restrictive urban and regional planning apparatus of 1960s Britain:

Somehow everything must be watched; nothing can be allowed simply to “happen.” No house can be allowed to be commonplace the way things just are commonplace: each project must be weighed, and planned, and approved, and only then built, and only after that discovered to be commonplace after all.¹¹

This led them to pose the question: “what would happen if there were no plan?”¹² To answer this question the authors took three regions of Britain — the East Midlands, the Essex-Hertfordshire border, and the Isle of Wight, including the Solent coast — and imagined the development of these regions with no state planning restrictions. The results were fantastical and at times eerily prescient. The Solent region, for example, would become a “play and live area”:

Mobile homes might dot the New Forest and the Isle of Wight. Caravans to begin with. Later more elaborate, or at any rate more efficient, constructions. There would be high level tree-top chair rides through the Forest and convoys of computer-programmed holiday houseboats (both public and private) on the Solent. Fawley refinery would have a son et lumière. Floating grandstands, with public address systems and information displays, would involve visitors in the speed and performance trials of new water gear (hovercraft speedboats, waterskis, life-saving). Large retractable marinas would have sail-in movies and row-in bars. Beach buggies would drive through the heathland. Particular villages,

¹¹ Ibid., 435.
¹² Ibid., 436.
especially on the Isle of Wight, would be got up as showpieces. Britain’s first giant dome would rise off the Isle of Wight coast: the first all-weather, all-public Ile du Levant nudist scene in the country – thermostatically controlled and ten-bob a head.\textsuperscript{13}

While in the Essex-Hertfordshire border where London’s third airport had been proposed:

The motels, restaurants and so on for [the airport] might well string out eastwards… along the A120, in a similar manner to the development of the “little Las Vegas” strip along Mannheim Road to serve Chicago O’Hare airport… Equally well they might not. We don’t know because we have not seen the area around an airport develop naturally in England since Croydon in the 20s.\textsuperscript{14}

The authors’ plans for the three regions anticipated an aspirant, flexi-time future. This was a world of “auto-nomads,” of “pot shops instead of all of those declining tobacconists,” where mobility and personal freedom were the order of the day.\textsuperscript{15} The vision required a new decentralization of power that allowed local authorities to raise money in ways that they saw fit, “a sales tax, a sail tax, a poll tax, a pony tax.”\textsuperscript{16} This world, according to the authors, was impossible to conjure into existence during the 1960s, in an era where top-down state planning carried the day:

The notion that the planner has the right to say what is “right” is really an extraordinary hangover from the days of collectivism in left-wing thought... We seem so afraid of freedom. But Britain shouldn’t be a Peter Pan Edwardian nursery. Let it at least move into the play school era; why should only the under sevens be allowed their bright materials, their gay constructions, their wind up dump-trucks… let’s Non-Plan at least some of the problems of planning into oblivion.\textsuperscript{17}

The article prompted a minor sensation in Britain’s architectural and planning community and a few months later it was revived in the trade magazine \textit{Architectural Design}.	extsuperscript{18} \textit{New Society} was inundated with letters criticizing the article. These letters continued to be published weeks later. One made the point that, “In a society without curbs the strongest and richest always get what they want, especially where money-making is involved. They will of course plan in minute detail!”\textsuperscript{19} The idea was lauded, however, by the anarchist Colin Ward and the sociologist Michael Young.\textsuperscript{20} Another key

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 441.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 440.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 440.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 441.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 443.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Cedric Price, “Non-Plan,” \textit{Architectural Design}, May 1969, 269-273.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Jennifer Girst, Letter, \textit{New Society}, March 27, 1969, 499.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Colin Ward’s support was pledged in person to Paul Barker, as mentioned in Paul Barker, “Thinking the Unthinkable” in \textit{Non-Plan: Essays on Freedom, Participation and Change in Modern Architecture and Urbanism}, Jonathan Hughes and Simon Sadler eds. (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2000), 5; Michael Young’s support came from his writings in Open Group, \textit{Social Reform in the Centrifugal Society} (London: New Society, 1969).
\end{itemize}
endorsement came from the right wing journalist Alfred Sherman. Sherman was a
passionate and early critic of the welfare state and, along with Keith Joseph and Margaret
Thatcher, he would go on to found the Centre for Policy Studies, an influential right wing
think tank, in 1974. Sherman wrote to New Society to praise the Non-Plan manifesto,
celebrating it as an attack on “what claims to be town planning but is in fact the attempt
to impose socialistic values on a society which rejects them.”

Despite Sherman’s praise, these authors were far from proto-Thatcherite right-
wingers. While he would eventually champion the enterprise zone from within Thatcher’s
administration, Peter Hall strongly identified with the left for much of the 1970s. During
this time he served as an adviser to Labour MP William Rodgers who chaired the South
East Regional Economic Planning Committee between 1965 and 1979. Formed by
Harold Wilson, the committee researched the feasibility of holistic infrastructure
proposals for London and the South-East, and Hall was involved in the development of
proposals for a new London airport and for an orbital motorway around the capital.
Although Hall was frustrated by the glacial pace at which these projects moved and what
he saw as an increasingly ossified state-planning, he remained a member of the Labour
Party until its split in the early 1980s. He even served as national chair of the Fabian
Society in 1972. The cultural critic Reyner Banham approached Non-Plan as a champion
of aesthetic and personal freedom and would later become an early proponent of
postmodern architecture and pop art. Relatively insulated from political life, Banham
frequently wrote the “Arts in Society” column for New Society, where he considered
subjects as diverse as the design of the Mini Cooper, the aesthetic of The Monkees and
the relative merits of different styles of sunglasses. Cedric Price, meanwhile, was a
disgruntled and radical “socialist architect.” His biggest achievement of the 1960s had
been his iconic redesign of the aviary at London Zoo. Interested in prioritizing function
over design, Price often straddled the line between artist and architect, and his sketches
and designs were often exhibited and rarely implemented. Paul Barker was a writer and at
the time the chief editor of New Society, having devoted much of the ten years of his life
prior to the Non-Plan manifesto to the magazine. Describing himself as “resolutely non-
party” he would edit New Society for another two decades.

Together, these four writers were unlikely candidates to be launching a revolt
against some of the most basic assumptions of the postwar welfare state. In Paul Barker’s
words they were “a quartet of mavericks. Paid up members of the awkward squad.” At
times playful, at times fiercely angry, the Non-Plan articles do not quite amount to an
ideology, but they do amount to a sentiment, a primordial political soup from which a
new ideology would soon evolve.

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Association, 1984), 7.
24 Barker in Hughes et al., Non-Plan, 2.
25 Ibid., 4.
Non-Plan in Context

The four authors of the Non-Plan movement arrived at a stern critique of state planning more than a decade before such critiques would become common. To arrive at these ideas, they wove together various strands of 1960s intellectual and cultural life. The Non-Plan movement was inspired by a curious blend of contemporary sociology, the urbanism of the American West, and New Left politics. This alignment was possible during a time in which ideological critiques of state planning were yet to be monopolized by the traditionally defined right. What resulted was an unstable ideological coalition, one that feels deeply unfamiliar from our present vantage point. In many ways the non-planners resembled both Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs, simultaneously calling for uninhibited freeway building in the name of fostering genuine communal bonds, and invoking a postmodern critique of architecture in the name of authenticity.

All four writers were contributors or editors of *New Society* and became acquainted with each other during their work for the magazine. *New Society*, founded in 1962, was a popular magazine for sociology in the vein of *New Scientist*. It appeared during an effloresce of popular and academic sociology in the early 1960s and according to Mike Savage, “set out its stall with an almost missionary zeal for the role of the social sciences in contributing to national prosperity and social advance.” In its first edition in 1962 an editorial made the case that, “We simply do not know about other people, or even about ourselves… the great need is to bring as many good minds as possible to the study of society.” The Non-Plan movement can, therefore, be placed within the resurgence of sociology as a discipline in 1960s Britain. Indeed, Non-Plan was presented as a tool to find out what people really thought:

Proclaiming a Non-Plan zone… would reveal what pressures are currently being held in check (but only just) by present planning routines. Even more than that, taking the planning lid off would produce a situation traumatic enough among the amenity lobbies to make their real motivations visible.

The writers went on to argue that in implementing the experiment, “at the very least one would find out what people want; at the most one might discover the hidden style of mid twentieth century Britain.” The following year, when Michael Young picked up the Non-Plan manifesto, he seized on its sociological potential:

The justification is that the planner is representing the interests of the “community.” But of course no one really knows what the interests and desires of the community really are; no one on these questions, has seriously asked the community, or knows effectively how to ask it. In fact, it could be argued that in some important areas of policy, the effect has not been to further the interests of community but to thwart them.

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29 Ibid., 436.
30 Michael Young et al., *Centrifugal Reform*, 15.
While this coming of age of sociology set the intellectual stage on which the Non-Plan ideas were to be formulated, it was to a specific American sociologist called Herbert Gans that the non-planners looked for inspiration. In 1967 Gans published The Levittowners, the result of a year spent living in a suburban workers’ housing complex built by the company Levitt and Sons in New Jersey. His stated aim was to challenge the “hair raising stories about the homogeneity of people and conformity of life” in such communities. Gans wanted to show that such suburbs had a rich associational life, and that contrary to the derisive claims of certain urban planners suburban sprawl was popular, and to an extent liberating, for those who lived there. The Levittowners was lavished with praise in Peter Hall’s review for New Society and in the year of its publication New Society devoted almost ten pages to an extract from the book. Indeed, in Paul Barker’s own history of the Non-Plan moment he claims that the Non-Plan idea arose during a conversation about Gans between Peter Hall and himself.

For Gans, sociology was a value-free bottom-up method of social enquiry. Gans claimed:

> The essence of sociology is that it observes what people really do and say. It looks at the world from their perspective, unlike much literary writing, which often boils down to cataloguing their shortcomings from the author’s perspective. Sociology is a democratic method of inquiry; it assumes that people have some right to be who they are.

Instead of a deductive structuralist sociology that first analyzed participants’ occupation, gender, or location, then drew conclusions about their needs or desires, Gans argued that the whims by which people assigned value to their own environment should be collated and taken seriously. The non-planners admired this inductive approach to urban sociology, an approach that, taken to its logical conclusion, indicted state planners of the built environment for what was perceived as a failure to account for the complex, changing needs of their subjects. The Non-Plan policy, therefore, was a sociological tool as much as it was an urban planning instrument. When seen in this context the Non-Plan “experiment in freedom” conforms to both definitions of the word “experiment.” The Non-Plan zones would be areas where the desirability of living without any state intervention could be tested, as well as laboratories where the true inner desires of residents (as opposed to the desires of planners) could be ascertained and studied.

All four authors, but particularly Cedric Price and Reyner Banham, also brought to the Non-Plan manifesto their passion for the urban planning of the American West. The articles are littered with references to the West, to the architect Frank Lloyd Wright’s championing of the gas station as “the agent of decentralization,” and to Tom Wolfe’s essay on Las Vegas, in particular. They are illustrated by a sketch of an iconic-looking American freeway passing by a curious medley of signs advertising British high street

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33 Hughes et al., Non-Plan, 4.
34 Gans, The Levittowners, vi.
brands and motels. It could be a rendering of the kind of British Freemont Street that the authors wanted to recreate outside Stanstead Airport. Indeed, Reyner Banham would go on to write *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*, a book that would praise Los Angeles urbanism and was dedicated to his fellow non-planner Cedric Price. Like Hall, Banham would spend a considerable part of his working life in California. The speculative Non-Plan areas drew heavily from aesthetic and regulatory planning ideals such as decentralization, low density, and automobile navigation that governed Californian sprawl. In their plan for the East Midlands, for example, vast freeways connecting Nottingham, Derby, and Leicester would let people “live where they like… [with] scattered often small-scale growth in hundreds of villages and small towns.”

While Reyner Banham nurtured his passion for Southern Californian urbanism, Cedric Price, throughout the 1960s, was developing an architectural vernacular that was decentralized, disposable and prioritized roads and signs over permanent structures. His sketches during this period, for example, include plans for a “pop-up House of Commons” in the middle of an expanded Parliament Square as well a proposal to replace Oxford Street with a freeway leading to a large out-of-town shopping mall. These shared ideas came together in the Non-Plan manifesto where the authors claimed that the removal of state regulation would allow for the more anarchic, car-centered, and decorative built environment that they believed they had found in the American West. There is an extent to which the architectural politics of Non-Plan anticipated by two years Robert Venturi, Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour’s *Learning from Las Vegas*, widely seen as the manifesto of the postmodern architectural movement. Like the non-planners, Venturi, Brown, and Izenour called for the development of vernacular architectural styles that had been held in check by modernist uniformity.

Finally, the Non-Plan authors also engaged with some of the more populist expressions of the New Left in the 1960s. Hall himself had witnessed the Berkeley Free Speech Movement during two trips to California in 1965 and 1966. Banham, meanwhile, referred to himself as “part of the protest culture” while working at the Bartlett Architecture School in London in the 1960s. For these writers there is a sense that the newly felt personal, aesthetic, and sexual freedoms that characterized this period for certain groups of Britons and North Americans were at odds with the ethos of top-down state planning, and it is possible to discern the influence of these both elite and populist New Left movements in the Non-Plan idea. The late 1960s also saw a spell of high-profile failures when it came to state regulation of the built environment in Britain. The metaphorical collapse of Labour’s national and regional plans in 1967, which Peter Hall, as a member of William Rodgers’ planning committee, was highly attuned to, and the literal collapse of the Ronan Point modernist state-built tower block in East London in 1968, were two such failures that immediately precipitated the writing of the Non-Plan manifesto.

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37 Ibid., 438.
The Non-Plan moment has now passed away, borne along, as it was, by intellectual and political currents and coalitions that have long since expired in Britain. Unlike the enterprise zone that championed freedom within the market place, the Non-Plan movement sanctioned the unimpeded development of communities and individuals, and these three themes cohere to the extent that Non-Plan was invested in pitting the local against the national, the freedom of the individual against the control of the state and vernacular expression against what were increasingly seen to be the uniform orthodoxies of postwar urban planning in Britain.

The British ‘Urban Crisis’

In 1977, ten years after Peter Hall and Paul Barker sat down in the Yorkshire Grey pub to piece together the Non-Plan manifesto, Hall delivered the keynote address at the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)’s annual conference in Chester. As with the Non-Plan manifesto, his speech opened by posing a problem:

Urban Britain is following the path of urban America. The biggest urban areas have seen their growth slow down, stop and then reverse. They are losing people and jobs. And the loss is not confined to the inner cities – though it is most intense there. Now, there are vacant factories and the population in the outer parts of our great conurbation is declining too.\(^{41}\)

In the late 1970s there was a growing consensus that Britain’s cities were in crisis. According to a report issued by a working party of academics chaired by Hall between 1977 and 1980, British cities were facing simultaneous economic and demographic collapses.\(^{42}\) Cities such as Sheffield, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, and London were being ravaged by the deindustrialization of key neighborhoods. Meanwhile, postwar reconstruction, suburbanization, and the construction of New Towns saw the moving of jobs and capital out of cities. Hall was particularly alarmed by what he saw as the depopulation of inner city London, noting that London’s population had fallen from 8.5 million in 1939 to just 7 million by the end of the 1970s.\(^{43}\)

In his speech to the RTPI Hall exhumed an old idea. In what he described as “essentially an essay in non-plan,” he proposed that selected inner city areas should be freed from all state regulation, taxation and customs.\(^{44}\) Such a policy would stimulate the local economy of some neighborhoods by enticing ambitious start-up capital into the area. Hall was clear, however, that this was an idea from the radical fringe, a policy suggestion so anathema to Britain’s social democratic settlement that even he was not sure if it was a good idea:


\(^{43}\) Ibid., 1.

\(^{44}\) Hall, “Greenfields and Grey Areas.”
Such a solution would not conform at all to modern British notions of the welfare state. But it could be economically vigorous on the Hong Kong model. Since it would represent an extremely drastic last-ditch solution to urban problems, it could be tried only on a very small scale. It is most appropriate to those inner city areas which are largely abandoned and denuded of people… I do not expect the British government to act on this suggestion immediately and I want to emphasize that I am not recommending it as a solution for our urban ills. I am saying that it is a model, and an extreme one, of a possible solution.\textsuperscript{45}

These regions would be governed as Crown Colonies or Protectorates, with open borders and no customs barriers. The areas would be outside British exchange controls and secede from the European Common Market.\textsuperscript{46} Within five years, eleven zones heavily influenced by this once drastic-sounding solution would be operating in Britain. While the first iteration of non-planning was designed purely to facilitate the social and cultural liberation of individuals, Hall’s 1977 proposal was a micro-economic solution to the specific problem of the deindustrialized inner city. Both the Non-Plan articles and the fledgling enterprise zone policy described by Hall posited that the removal of all state regulation would benefit specific regions of the country. While the former claimed state planning was preventing the social body from developing naturally and restricting personal and architectural freedom, the latter implicitly made the case that intrusive regulation of the economy was stifling businesses.

We will never know for certain whether enterprise zones would have existed without the inspiration of the Non-Plan movement or Peter Hall’s input. We do know, however, that a link between enterprise zones and Hall’s anti-planning ideas was made repeatedly and explicitly by Geoffrey Howe, who acknowledged Hall’s idea both in his 1978 Isle of Dogs speech, and in Parliament when introducing enterprise zone legislation for the first time.\textsuperscript{47} Peter Hall passionately defended the policy throughout the 1980s in the pages of an international planning journal, and, later, from his post as Special Advisor to Conservative Environment Minister Michael Hesaltine.\textsuperscript{48} As late as 1991 Hall claimed sole credit for the idea, and argued that that enterprise zones were a logical extension of the Non-Plan manifesto.\textsuperscript{49} Paul Barker also praised the policy as recently as 2009, writing that enterprise zones were “small Non-Plan zones” and that, “Without enterprise zones, we would have no MetroCentre Gateshead and no Canary Wharf. These are design icons, accurately symbolic of social change.”\textsuperscript{50} Writing for different audiences at different political moments and responding to different problems, Hall was involved in designing two superficially similar anti-regulatory and localized urban planning instruments. The crucial difference was that while the Non-Plan zone was tailored to optimize individual and personal freedom of expression, the enterprise zone was designed to encourage

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid.
\item Peter Hall, “British Enterprise Zones,” in Green ed., \textit{Enterprise Zones}.
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freedom and growth of the market. Having documented the migration of the enterprise zone from the counterculture to Margaret Thatcher’s in-tray, I will now examine how the policy was crafted and reworked by senior right wing politicians and intellectuals.

**Becoming Policy**

The implementation of enterprise zones was formally announced in the 1980 Budget, two years after Geoffrey Howe first proposed the policy to the Bow Group in 1978 in his Isle of Dogs speech. The first wave of enterprise zones in Britain were each a few hundred acres in size, and were created in the London Docklands, Glasgow, Clydebank, Belfast, Newcastle, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Liverpool, Salford, Trafford, Wakefield, Swansea, Corby, and Dudley in 1981 and 1982. While the zones were more modest than those proposed by the non-planners in 1969, by Hall in 1977, or by Howe in 1978, businesses in these areas could expect 100 percent capital allowances for industrial or commercial buildings, exemption from the Development Land Tax, a streamlining of the planning process, exemption from industrial training boards, and minimal requests from the government for statistical information for a ten-year period. The removal of all fire and building regulations, bus and taxi licensing, and even suspension of laws forbidding “sex and racial discrimination” were discussed but never implemented.

The enterprise zone marked a fundamental breach with previous attempts to ameliorate urban poverty in Britain. The guiding principle of the policies that came out of Harold Wilson’s first government in the 1960s was that inner city poverty could be reduced by increased government spending on education and welfare in specific neighborhoods. The Home Office’s 1968 Urban Program, for example, provided aid for targeted local authorities to set up programs they otherwise could not afford. Under this program for every pound the local authority would spend on such programs, the government would match it with three further pounds. The urban policies of Labour’s 1974-9 government were still essentially what Peter Hall deemed “area-based positive discrimination measures with a primarily social services orientation,” yet unlike those of the 1960s these measures attempted a holistic solution to the urban problem that would find new places for declining inner cities within the macro-economy of the nation as a whole.

Policies such as the 1978 Inner Urban Areas Act, for example, gave depressed inner city areas priority in the granting of Industrial Development Certificates, a macroeconomic approach to inner city decline that was especially irksome to the massing ranks of anti-planning ideologues. Unlike these ameliorative urban planning policies, enterprise zones projected their losses forwards. In other words, they were paid for by future losses in tax revenue (estimated in one report to be about ten million pounds per year spread across the eleven zones) rather than large government investments.

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53 Hall, *The Inner City in Context*, 95.
54 In this sense enterprise zones can be seen as part of a broader rise in “tax expenditures” as forms of welfare provision. In the US Earned Income Tax Credits and mortgage deductions have been referred to as
success and failure of each designated neighborhood was left entirely to the whims of (albeit somewhat incentivized) market forces. Unlike the targeted areas of previous Labour governments, enterprise zones were created to showcase a qualitatively different political economy, an exception to the regulatory state that continued to exist beyond their borders.

Geoffrey Howe and Peter Hall each looked to Hong Kong as inspiration for the nascent enterprise zone policy. During his 1978 Bow Group speech introducing the enterprise zone idea, Howe suggested that the Isle of Dogs be run as a “Crown Colony” (this being the official name of Hong Kong’s former designation within the British Empire). In the speech Howe praised Hong Kong’s flexible monetary policy, its light taxation and customs regime and lack of industrial regulation. Indeed, he imagined that the relationship between the future Docklands and the rest of the UK would resemble that between Hong Kong and Mainland China. Hall, as we have seen, also used the term “Crown Colony” in his RTPI speech, and noted that such an area would be subject to passport and customs controls, and would even be ineligible for membership within the European Common Market. According to one report, while the idea was being passed around conservative circles in the late 1970s, Keith Joseph, architect of the Conservative’s 1979 manifesto, said that “the Queen’s writ shall not run” in the zones.

There is no doubt that Hong Kong, an aggressively free market entrepôt nominally under the flag of the British Empire, was something of an urban fantasy for those on the new right during this period. Hong Kong’s colonial leaders oversaw a program of minimal state regulation of the economy and consciously harked back to a lost golden age of laissez-faire liberalism. Milton Friedman, in his 1980 television documentary Free To Choose, visited the colony and described it as a “laboratory experiment to find out what happens when government is limited to its proper function and leaves people free to pursue their own objectives. If you want to see how the free market really works this is the place to come.” In 1976 the neoliberal economist Alvin Rabushka delivered a speech to the right wing Mount Pelerin Society in which he described Hong Kong as “the industrial world’s most robust example of a truly competitive marketplace... [a] fascinating Gladstonian dream world [that] stands in sharp contrast with today’s increasingly interventionist, regulated and heavily taxed world.” Margaret Thatcher’s ministers were similarly intrigued by Hong Kong’s economic model. During a state visit to the colony in 1980 Thatcher’s Trade Secretary Cecil Parkinson could not resist including in his speech the words, “Here in tiny Hong Kong you set all nations an example. I do not claim that we in Britain today will match your economic success. But the new Conservative government shares your profound belief in

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56 Ibid., 12.
57 Hall, “Greenfields and Grey Areas.”
59 The distinctiveness of Hong Kong’s liberal economy was frequently touted by Philip Haddon-Cave, Financial Secretary between 1971-1981.
60 Free to Choose, Dir. Milton Friedman, PBS, 1980.
61 Alvin Rabushka, Hong Kong: A Study in Economic Freedom (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979), 1.
free enterprise and we shall strive to come as close to your achievements as we can.”

While the non-planners drew their inspiration from the dizzy hedonism of Las Vegas and the American West, those in charge of crafting enterprise zone legislation looked to Hong Kong to justify the necessity of creating conspicuous free market enclaves.

**The politics of implementation**

When writing about enterprise zones, many scholars and journalists have made the point that creating a geographically uneven market is merely a redistributive rather than a classically neoliberal intervention. After all, were enterprise zones not just a cheaper form of regionally specific aid? To answer this question we must look at the way in which senior Conservative Party insiders in Britain discussed the policy. The month after Geoffrey Howe’s Isle of Dogs speech, in a private memo submitted to Margaret Thatcher from Keith Joseph, Joseph elaborated on a point to which Howe had only alluded to. The enterprise zones, according to Joseph, would be “demonstration areas… where conditions more encouraging to enterprise might be established – to show what would then result.” The idea would be “to move administratively more quickly than we could legislate and to pave the way for legislative change later.” The memo claimed that the need for such “demonstration areas” came out of discussions earlier that year between Geoffrey Howe, MP and senior adviser to Thatcher, Nicholas Ridley, MP. Over the coming months Howe would send a series of memos to Thatcher begging her to include the enterprise zone policy in the 1979 Conservative manifesto. His selling point was that the policy was “gathering the support of people who would not otherwise have inclined in our direction.” It was, he claimed, popular among new American right wing think tanks, such as the Heritage Foundation. Thatcher eventually refused to include the policy in that year’s manifesto, claiming it had not been fully worked through.

Clearly for the inner circles of the Conservative Party during this period, enterprise zones were more than short-term policy tools to achieve urban regeneration. Instead they were intended to become laboratories for incubating a new kind of economics, an economics whose popularity would be spread by the success of the zones. A desire that the zones should perform such a role occurs over and over again in governmental exchanges in the buildup to the implementation of the policy. It occurs in the Ministerial Committee on Economic Strategy’s initial report on the subject in 1979 and in the policy briefing drawn up for Thatcher later that year, in which Thatcher herself appears to have underlined the words, “Enterprise zones will be seen as a test bed of...”

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62 Transcript of Speech by Cecil Parkinson to the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, January 28, 1980, TNA:PRO, FCO 40/1157.
65 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
Conservative philosophy. If they go ahead, it will be very important that some should succeed.” When the policy was created and managed by the Treasury rather than the Department of the Environment (which was in charge of urban policy), suggests its broader significance for British economic policy as a whole. The zones, which would be introduced as bipartisan attempts to solve the growing urban crisis and garner the support of Labour local councils, were intended to be perforations in the fabric of the welfare state, ruptures through which a national and even global new style of economics would leak. Howe retroactively alluded to this vision of enterprise zones as stages for the success of free market economics when he returned to the Isle of Dogs on the ten-year anniversary of his 1978 speech:

More quickly perhaps than we expected we succeeded in getting rid of many of the restrictions that blighted entrepreneurship [in the UK]. Even so, that took time, and the case for concentrated pilot zones of freedom still stood. So as Chancellor I set up a series of those “test market” areas or laboratories in which to see how capitalism in undiluted form could revive our derelict industrial landscape.  

He went on to note that his government’s policies had “turned the country into one big enterprise zone.”

The zones were awarded to local authorities based on a lengthy application process. Perhaps surprisingly, the government was inundated with requests from predominantly Labour councils. Due to the sheer number of applications received, the government was forced to increase the number of zones from seven to eleven during the planning stage. This popularity can, in part, be seen as a symptom of desperation, as many of these Labour councils were facing unprecedented levels of unemployment and industrial decline. Its clear that many councils hoped the zones would attract industrial jobs that would be suited to their unemployed workforces. Tower Hamlets council, for example, produced a pamphlet for residents explaining that “the existence of a large work-force and a long tradition of industrial work… [means that there is] considerable scope for increased activity on the Isle of Dogs which would be boosted by an Enterprise Zone.” That same year, however, the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC), a quasi-governmental organization created to manage what would become the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone, circulated a glossy pamphlet with the title *The Isle of Dogs Enterprise Zone: The Place To Be*. Aimed at businesses considering relocating to the zone, this pamphlet presented a very different future for the neighborhood, encouraging businesses to imagine a depopulated blank slate, a place for the development of a high-tech post-Fordist economy:

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For this is one part of London where there really is room – room for firms to manufacture modern products in the new technology, or anything else. Room for offices. Room for film or television studios. Room for crafts. Room for the services a capital city always needs. Room for markets, whether outdoors on the waterfront or indoors, tailored to meet the needs of one particular trade. Room for sports, in doors or on the water.\textsuperscript{73}

A similar story can be told about the enterprise zone in Dudley, on the outskirts of Birmingham. The zone was supported by Labour councilors expecting a revival of the area’s depressed steel industry. To their dismay, the zone enabled the construction of an enormous shopping mall, Merry Hill, which was built on the site of a former steel foundry. As a response to Merry Hill, Labour councilors in Dudley tried to ban the tax exemptions enjoyed by retail outlets in the zone.\textsuperscript{74} There was arguably a Janus-faced quality to enterprise zones in the early 1980s, a discrepancy between how the zones were sold to Labour councilors and residents, and how the zones were marketed to businesses, or talked about by conservative insiders.

Many left wing thinkers and activists in the 1980s were quick to condemn enterprise zones, recognizing that they would act as Trojan horses for free market deregulation. Addressing Peter Hall directly, the geographer Doreen Massey called the policy “yet another addition to that collection of spatially discriminatory policies which, especially in times of overall recession, play one area, one group of workers, off another.”\textsuperscript{75} After President Reagan announced his support for an enterprise zone policy in the US the American urban planner William W. Goldsmith argued that, “This is how non-planning can be expected to work – prepare the way for cities of third world people, with second class citizenship, so as to make first world countries competitive again.”\textsuperscript{76} By the early 1980s, then, there was a growing sense that enterprise zones were, as the British geographer James Anderson deemed them, “geography as ideology.”\textsuperscript{77} The enterprise zone policy was formally denounced by the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party in 1980 and it was claimed by many that support for the zones among inner city Labour-controlled councils was a product of their desperation and the lack of any alternative proposals for inner city renewal.\textsuperscript{78}

Opposition also came from organized groups of residents, many of whom saw enterprise zones as stalking horses for gentrification and displacement. This was particularly the case in the Isle of Dogs, where the zone initiated a generation of upheaval and gentrification. Various residents’ associations in the area opposed the enterprise zone.

\textsuperscript{73}“Isle of Dogs Enterprise Zone: The Place To Be,” LDDC Publication, MLDA, Docklands Forum, Tranche 3, Box 12, 6-7.
\textsuperscript{74}“Metropolitan Borough of Dudley Minutes: June – December, 1986,” Dudley Archives and Local History Centre, 70.
on the grounds that it incentivized high-skilled service sector jobs, jobs that the unemployed former dockworkers in the neighborhood would be unable to do. A 1984 report by a local residents’ group noted, “Given that the manufacturing industry already receives tax benefits, service industries, office and commercial development stand to benefit the most from the enterprise zone subsidies.”79 Another residents’ group noted:

[The government believes] Britain’s economic future lies with services rather than manufacturing, with what has been called the “ice-cream economy” The marketing strategy it follows is based on duplicating the sun-rise belt of the M4 in Docklands – a suburban office park with wind-surfing at lunchtime. Hi-tech offices and services are the image. Industry is not encouraged and often displaced.80

The same year a coalition of activists launched a “people’s armada,” a parade of ships which sailed back and forth along the Thames protesting enterprise zone driven regeneration in the borough. In the 1970s and 1980s the lines between the left and the right were being redrawn as the role of the state became highly politicized. No longer was it possible for cultural critics to casually rail in left-leaning papers against ossified state bureaucracy. The political battles surrounding the implementation of the enterprise zone not only marked the coming of age of the Non-Plan manifesto, but also its erasure from the history of the development of neoliberal urban policy.

Figure 2: “Give Us Back Our Land” — The ‘People’s Armada’ in 1984 (Photograph: Mike Seaborne — Creative Commons)

80 Undated policy position printed by Docklands Forum, MLDA, Docklands Forum, Tranche 3, Box 5.
The Clydebank Enterprise Zone: A Case Study

The Clydebank enterprise zone opened amidst a climate of economic emergency in the small Scottish town. Seven miles to the west of Glasgow, Clydebank had been a center of Scotland’s lucrative shipbuilding economy since its rapid industrial development in the 1870s. From the 1880s the town had also housed a Singer sewing machine factory that at its peak in 1913 employed fourteen thousand workers. The shipbuilding industry began to decline from the 1950s onwards, and between 1960 and 1976 the town lost thirteen thousand jobs. In 1980 the Singer factory closed its doors plunging the already struggling town into a deep crisis, one that, according to one observer, was “almost unparalleled in the UK.” At its peak the following year, unemployment reached 18.2 percent in the town. Opening in 1981 and covering a 568-acre area, which included the former Singer works and most of the town center, the Clydebank enterprise zone participated, in the words of one leaflet, in “the building of a new economy” in the town. The zone enabled a diversity of new economic practices to take root on its small patch of land, and oversaw a rapid switch from industrial to service sector jobs for the town’s residents.

Clydebank Business Park was arguably the enterprise zone’s crown jewel. Housed within the crumbling grounds of the former Singer factory site, the eighty-six acre park advertised its enterprise zone status to a variety of businesses, more than two hundred of which moved into the site by 1988. One report described the park as resembling a row of “low-rise high-tech tin boxes.” Although some of the older Singer buildings were owned and let by the Scottish Development Agency, a quasi-governmental authority, many of the newer office buildings were built by private developers, such as the £1.3 million Phoenix House, built by Bombard Developments, described as providing a “high tech” and “flexible” office environment. The business park saw a scattering of small, high-tech manufacturing plants, such as the UK subsidy of Terasaki, a Japanese electronics company, and Dean Blinds, a workshop employing twenty highly skilled workers who manufactured storefront advertising canopies. Many of the new jobs attracted into the business park were in the service sector rather than in manufacturing. Radio Clyde, a large Glasgow-based independent radio station moved their headquarters into the park in 1983 and shortly after, Clydesdale Bank set up a computer services office in the park. The park also hosted an Information Technology Centre, designed to train school leavers to use computers and small electronics. The enterprise zone in Clydebank, then, resulted in a new geography of work, as the large
scale industrial employers of the last one hundred years gave way to a multitude of small workshops and office jobs, many of which were housed literally within the restored remains of the old Singer site.

The business park sits immediately upriver of the Clyde Shopping Centre. The shopping center was heavily expanded in 1982 after the creation of the enterprise zone and then again in 1988, more than doubling in size and briefly becoming, according to one estimate, the biggest shopping center in Scotland.  

By the end of the decade the center’s one hundred stores and ten screen AMC cinema employed more than two thousand people, making it one of the largest employers in the enterprise zone. The center was a joint development between the Co-operative Insurance Society, Neale House Group, and the local council. As well as a provider of employment and commerce, the shopping center was marketed as a place for leisure and public association, something akin to a privately owned indoor town center, “The center has been attractively landscaped with a bridge over the canal, a lovely place to sit or stroll on a sunny day. If you have time to spare, this is the place to be.” Large shopping malls were a common feature of the first round of British enterprise zones, as such developments were especially likely to be incentivized by deductions on the development land tax. The Gateshead MetroCentre and the Merry Hill Shopping Mall in Dudley, at one point the two largest shopping malls in the UK, were each built entirely within first-generation enterprise zones.

Perhaps the most controversial development in the Clydebank enterprise zone was a large private hospital built on the western edge of the zone, owned by the US consortium Health Care International. The hospital was created to serve wealthy patients from overseas who were suffering from conditions that their home countries did not have the resources to treat, and acted as a competitor to Britain’s nationalized public health service. A large hotel, designed to house visiting relatives, accompanied its construction. First floated in 1987, plans for the hospital were greeted with a storm of protest, and were opposed by the Labour Party, Scottish trade unions, the Greater Glasgow Health Board, and even the World Health Organization. Although the development promised to bring one thousand eight hundred jobs to Clydebank, opponents claimed that the hospital would redistribute vital supplies of trained nurses and even blood, from elsewhere in Scotland. Despite these objections, plans for the hospital went ahead, although it took until 1994 for the building to finally open. Although Heath Care International had been initially tempted by the enterprise zone to move into Clydebank, its delayed construction meant that it opened several years after the zone’s ten-year lifespan had ended. After it opened the hospital failed dismally to attract patients, and in 2002 both the hospital and the hotel were nationalized and bought under the control of the National Health Service.

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91 “The Changing Face of Clydebank.”
92 “Advertisement Feature: The Glasgow Herald.”
93 “The Changing Face of Clydebank.”
While Clydebank’s built environment was transformed by the enterprise zone, so too was its employment base. During the zone’s ten-year existence the number of firms located in the zone increased from 205 to 337, and the number of jobs increased from 2825 to 6609, comparing favorably with a 4 percent decline in employment in the broader Strathclyde region during the same period.\(^97\) While on the surface this seems impressive, a large number of firms in 1990 reported difficulty in finding suitably skilled workers, suggesting, according to one report, that “a large portion of skilled employment may have been filled from outside Clydebank.”\(^98\) Across the town as a whole, the percentage of the workforce employed in manufacturing fell from 32.5 percent to just 10.2 percent during the 1980s, with a rise in service sector and construction jobs taking their place.\(^99\) While Clydebank had once been dominated by two large, industrial employers, its workforce was now scattered among hundreds of small manufacturing firms, offices, and chain stores. It was these businesses that benefited most from the tax deductions offered in the zone, and that were the target of leaflets with headlines like “Develop in Scotland’s Enterprise Zone” and “Clydebank Enterprise Zone… entering a new era of business prosperity.”\(^100\) In other words, while the enterprise zone could not reverse the global demand for personal Singer sewing machines or the containerization of long distance shipping, it could encourage AMC to develop a ten screen cinema in Clydebank’s shopping center.

The Clydebank enterprise zone in practice marked a further departure from the purity of the original non-planning ideal. The enterprise zone was the most successful and high profile of a range of different regeneration strategies that were targeted at the town in the 1980s. While businesses were tempted to rent space in the Clydebank Business Park by the low tax and light regulation regime, they were moving into an infrastructure that had been prepped and cleaned by the Scottish Development Agency (SDA). The SDA was a quasi state-owned body, funded partly by the government and by the money it was able to generate through property development in places such as Clydebank. The SDA had a permanent office in the Clyde Shopping Centre for much of this period, where property deals with businesses wanting to rent land from the agency were cut. The SDA also owned and prepared the site that would eventually become Health Care International’s private hospital, clearing away vast amounts of asbestos and even an unexploded World War II bomb from the site.\(^101\) The enterprise zone’s supply-side planning regime was not enough by itself to incentivize the initial clearance of the rubble of more than a hundred years of intensive industry. For this the public sector had to do the work.

Despite this the Clydebank enterprise zone created a space where time seemed to move more quickly. The high-tech business parks, sprawling private shopping mall, and international hospital together produced a sheen of post-Fordist futuricity in Clydebank. The zone even led to an increase in property prices and a boom in council house sales, in

\(^{97}\) Martin Wallace, “An Investigation into the Long Term Impact of the Clydebank Enterprise Zone,” 49.
\(^{98}\) Ibid., 49.
\(^{99}\) Ibid., 48.
\(^{100}\) “Develop in Scotland’s Enterprise Zone,” advertising pamphlet, CHC, 330.941632; Clydebank District Council, “Clydebank Enterprise Zone,” advertising pamphlet, CHC, 330.941632.
a town whose housing stock had once been more than 80 percent owned by the state. In a ten-year period in Clydebank the various precocious elements of the new British built environment accrued together. During this time a world of factories and shipyards gave way to one of low-rise office buildings and large department stores. The latter still dominates the landscape of Clydebank today. The Singer headquarters, with its iconic clock tower, has fittingly become the town’s archive. The enterprise zone has long since expired, reaching the end of its statutory ten-year life span in 1991. In 2014, it was reported that the two council wards with which it once overlapped now have the highest rate of child poverty in West Dunbartonshire. The post-industrial world inaugurated by the zone perhaps finally came of age in May 2015 when, for the first time since 1936, the town failed to return a Labour MP.

Figure 3: Industrial Clydebank: A sketch of the Singer factory, once the town’s largest employer (www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk).

102 “Advertisement Feature: Glasgow Herald.”
103 “One In Four West Dunbartonshire Children Living In Poverty,” Clydebank Post, October 22, 2014.
The enterprise zone crosses the Atlantic

As enterprise zones were going live in eleven towns and cities across the UK, the idea was spreading to the US. In 1977 a right wing American economist named Stuart Butler attended a debate in London chaired by the Adam Smith Institute, in which he heard Keith Joseph speak admirably of Peter Hall’s recent speech at the Royal Town Planning Institute, where Hall had first called for something like an enterprise zone policy. Butler, like senior British Conservatives, was excited about the exemplary possibility of enterprise zones, writing that they would create cities in which “planning and non-planning would meet each other in combat like medieval champions at the joust.” Following a paper published in support of the policy by Butler in 1979, the idea was picked up by a number of American think tanks including the Cato Institute and the Heritage Foundation, the latter for which Butler ended up working for. As a modular policy that could be adapted into almost any urban or regional environment, the enterprise zone concept fit perfectly into the policy slipstream created by think tanks on either side of the Atlantic during this period. For the staff of such institutions the political

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implications of enterprise zones were very clear. Writing in the Cato Institute’s Journal in 1982, the libertarian lawyer Peter Ferrara noted:

Other important advantages of the program relate to political… factors. The creation of islands of economic freedom in America’s major central cities will hopefully serve as useful demonstrations of the success of free markets. This should lead to pressures for further economic liberalization nationwide.\footnote{106}{Peter J. Ferrara, “The Rationale of Enterprise Zones,” \textit{Cato Journal}, vol. 2, no. 2 (1982), 8.}

Just as the UK’s enterprise zone program began in the Docklands, the US program began in the Bronx. The idea was picked up and championed by Robert Garcia, a Democratic Congressman from the South Bronx, as well as by the Republican Congressman Jack Kemp. Things moved quickly. Ronald Reagan, receiving advice from Kemp, mentioned enterprise zones several times during his 1980 election campaign, once while campaigning in the Bronx, and referred to the policy in his second State of the Union in 1982.\footnote{107}{Ronald Reagan, “State of the Union Message: Message from the President of the United States Transmitting a Report on the State of the Union” (Washington DC: U.S. G.P.O, 1982).} Later that year an enterprise zone bill was put to Congress with the support of Kemp and Garcia. In the US, as in Britain, the enterprise zone overturned more than a generation of economic policies based around the shibboleth of increased government investment in areas of urban poverty. In a statement to Congress, Reagan said that the policy would be an inverse of Lyndon Johnson’s Model Cities program introduced in 1966, which had channeled federal aid into inner city areas:

Enterprise Zones are based on an entirely fresh approach for promoting economic growth in the inner cities. The old approach relied on heavy government subsidies and central planning. A prime example was the Model Cities Program of the 1960’s, which concentrated government programs, subsidies and regulations in specific, depressed urban areas. The Enterprise Zone approach would remove government barriers freeing individuals to create, produce and earn their own wages and profits. In its basic thrust, Enterprise Zones are the direct opposite of the Model Cities Program of the 1960’s.\footnote{108}{Ronald Reagan, “Message to the Congress Transmitting Proposed Enterprise Zone Legislation,” March 23, 1982. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project, Last modified April 5, 2016, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42307>.}

The zones split the opinion of American progressives, winning the support of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Congressional Black Caucus, but garnering opposition from the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) and other trade unions.\footnote{109}{Karen Mossberger, \textit{The Politics of Ideas and the Spread of Enterprise Zones} (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2000), 57.} The proposal also divided residents of the Bronx, hundreds of whom picketed a meeting between Garcia, Kemp and a handful of business executives with signs saying “Kemp-Garcia means welfare for the wealthy.”\footnote{110}{Robert W. Benjamin, “The Kemp-Garcia Enterprise Zone Bill: A New, Less Costly Approach to Urban Development,” \textit{Fordham Urban Law Journal}, vol. 9 (1980), issue 3, 663.} The US bill offered businesses exemption from capital gains tax and substantial tax credits on large capital expenditures. Unlike in Britain the zones proposed were substantially larger, and promised relief from tariff and
import duties. In this sense, the proposed US zones were arguably closer than those in the UK were to Peter Hall’s 1977 proposals.

The Kemp-Garcia bill was eventually defeated in Congress. However, while an attempt to create federal enterprise zones floundered, the policy garnered enough publicity to encourage state governments across the country to introduce their own versions. By 1991 there were more than 2,000 enterprise zones created by the governments of more thirty-eight states. During these ten years the enterprise zone concept went feral, with countless iterations taking root in a variety of urban and rural locations across the US. Ohio’s state enterprise zone project heavily resembled zones in the UK, for example, with small urban zones (the median size was five square miles) offering 100% property tax rebates for businesses. Other states, however, used zones to conserve a pre-existing urban economy. Illinois, for example, created a tiny enterprise zone in a wealthy suburb of Chicago to persuade Sears to stay in state once the company began hinting it would leave the city. State enterprise zones also varied wildly in size. Chicago’s microscopic enterprise zone can be compared to the Clark County Enterprise Community in Nevada, which covers more than eight thousand square miles and boasts a population of 2 million, covering the entire city of Las Vegas. Most of the US zones were ghostly creations, only ever existing on paper. Of the two thousand zones created by 1991, it was estimated that only four to five hundred were “active, recognized and have local commitment.” While enterprise zones peppered the American landscape, by the early 1990s they were strange, mutated creatures, bearing little resemblance to their ancestors. Although the effect was less dramatic US enterprise zones, as in the UK, created fragmenting and competing political economies, and put “non-planning” at the heart of urban and regional policy. In the 1960s the authors of the Non-Plan manifesto had been heavily inspired by their fantasies of a flexible and decentralized American urban dream. Perhaps the growth of American enterprise zones in the 1980s could be seen as a kind of homecoming.

Conclusion

Historians and theorists have dated the emergence of “the economy,” a single consistent entity bounded by a fixed geographic space, to different moments in time. In 1944 the economic sociologist Karl Polanyi argued that the industrial revolution knitted together what had once been a handful of isolated, local economies, embedded in social networks, into a coherent entity. More recently, Timothy Mitchell has argued that it was only in the 1930s that a set of new statistical and governmental technologies combined with the shrinking of imperial political systems to form “the economy” as a

distinct object. By the middle of the twentieth century few would have denied that a single national economy, one that was governed and calculated by political elites, and that stretched taut over territories like a fitted sheet, was one of the defining characteristics of modern nation states. In the late twentieth century both the consistency and the totality of national economies have come under challenge. Enterprise zones pierced holes in Britain’s national economic fabric, briefly allowing aggressive free market capitalism and a regulatory social democratic economy to live literally streets apart. The fragmenting of national economies into competing exceptional zones has been a global story. Latin America, Eastern Europe, and perhaps most famously China have seen the proliferation of free trade zones, export processing zones, and special economic zones in the 1980s and 1990s where exceptional anti-regulatory measures have allowed the development of international trade networks and facilitated the settlement of migrant workforces. A 2008 World Bank report noted that there were more than 2,000 such zones scattered across the world. The result has been something like political economy à la carte.

While enterprise zones, as micro rather than macroeconomic exceptions, are quite different from national free trade zones, their effect on the global fragmentation of economic sovereignty has been similar. Enterprise zones suited perfectly a new global geography of capitalism, one where nomadic banks, property developers, and even private healthcare trusts prowled across the globe seeking the lowest taxes and the lightest regulation. Using the example of Chinese special economic zones, Aihwa Ong argued that the exceptional nature of these spaces has produced deep contradictions within the political economies of states, writing that “the logic of the exception… was to meet the crisis of centralized socialist production and to launch market reforms that produced spaces and conditions radically at odds with those in the rest of the country.”

Enterprise zones are just one instance of the emergence of a new relationship between politics and space. In the last third of the twentieth century, elements of the left in Britain were also involved in developing a politics that was highly local, exemplary, and dependent on exceptional forms of sovereignty. In 1980 for example, Manchester City Council voted for Manchester to become a Nuclear Free Zone, an idea that has spread with a similar infectious pace across Britain and the world. Some nuclear free zones are as large as Australia, others are as small as Berkeley, California. Meanwhile, grass roots political activism in the West has increasingly operated through the reification of community and locality. Indeed, with community arts, community centers, and community organizing, the “community” has become one of the dominant political heuristics in the last third of the twentieth century. With the exceptional zone increasingly becoming the global rule, it is important for historians to understand the new forms of politics that emerge as national economies begin to disassemble into neighborhood-sized zones and supra-national trading blocks.

This chapter has also unearthed the surprising and complex intellectual genealogy of late twentieth century right wing urban policy, a genealogy that should be seen as

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119 Akinci et al., “Special Economic Zones,” 2.
extending far beyond the usual channels of high politics and conservative thought. First conceived over lunch in a London pub, the idea of making small patches of land exempt from state planning spread to the heart of the Conservative Party, and went on to transform lives in depressed Scottish towns and distant American deserts. The enterprise zone was an idea assembled out of a host of different elements, elements that far exceed national boundaries or the current ideological markers that we use to categorize political ideas. The zones were assembled out of New Left sociological ideas as well as New Right economic practices, with trans-Atlantic and even imperial roots in California and Hong Kong. During the 1970s the opposition between state planning and personal autonomy, as articulated by the non-planners, was re-codified as an opposition between the free market and the social democratic consensus. The weed-peddling tobacconists or the twenty-four hour pubs which the non-planners insisted would grace their newly liberated regions, were not, it is needless to say, permitted within the boundaries of enterprise zone.
Chapter 2:
The National Garden Festival: Sowing the Seeds for the New British City

On the night of the July 3, 1981 a resident of Lodge Lane in the Toxteth neighborhood of Liverpool described what he saw outside his home:

Outside, the entire skyline is an angry crimson. Dense banks of black smoke hang threateningly above the rooftops. The silhouette of Tiber Street School, five hundred yards away, is framed by huge tongues of green and lilac flame, licking skyward. Over by the Anglican Cathedral is a colossal blaze, the like of which we have never seen in our lives. By its position we guess it must be the Rialto Building going up. Almost as huge is the conflagration over in Parliament Street where there is a tyre factory and a couple of petrol stations… mass looting is taking place. Figures can be seen silhouetted against blazing shops… the view is a Hieronymus Bosch painting of hell.¹

The Toxteth riots began after the heavy-handed arrest of a young black man by the Merseyside Police. Harassment of Toxteth’s black community by a police force that had just four black officers (out of a total of five thousand) was all too common.² Controversial “sus” laws allowed police officers to stop and search anyone they suspected of being criminals, resulting in racial profiling and mutual resentment. For most of July the impoverished neighborhood fought pitched battles against the police, effectively seceding from the rest of the city. On July 6 the police, becoming increasingly desperate, fired thirty CS gas grenades, the first and only time that CS gas had been used in Britain (outside of Northern Ireland). Sporadic outbursts of unrest continued until July twenty eight, by which time hundreds of police officers had been injured, hundreds of residents arrested, and more than seventy buildings had been burned down. The same explosive cocktail of poverty, unemployment, and racist police tactics resulted in similar scenes in English cities elsewhere that summer, in the Handsworth neighborhood of Birmingham, the Chapeltown neighborhood of Leeds, and, perhaps most famously, in Brixton in South London. All of these neighborhoods had high rates of unemployment and isolated communities of commonwealth migrants. On television the riots played out amidst a landscape of empty factories and mills, an industrial landscape that was increasingly becoming obsolete. Perhaps nowhere in Britain was as desperate as Liverpool in the early 1980s. The collapse of the city’s port economy in the 1970s, coupled with the recession of 1980-1 resulted in unemployment rates of 40 percent in places such as Toxteth.³ Shortly after the riots, Geoffrey Howe, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, wrote a confidential note to Thatcher suggesting that Liverpool should enter a period of “managed decline… a sustained effort to absorb some of Liverpool manpower

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elsewhere – for example in nearby towns.” The city was effectively deemed to be a lost cause.

Three years after the riots, a few miles south of Toxteth, the Liverpool International Garden Festival opened its gates to visitors. The festival was held over a period of 165 days on a vast stretch of once-derelict dockland. It accommodated more than a hundred themed gardens designed by delegates from multiple nations, connected by a model railway. The gardens orbited a shopping bazaar and an enormous “festival hall” reminiscent of the Crystal Palace built for the 1851 Great Exhibition in London. The festival was a strange hybrid between a theme park and a horticultural exhibition, a place where visitors could drift between comedy shows, souvenir stands, and ornate gardens. It was arguably one of the strangest and most audacious urban regeneration projects of the postwar era, an attempt to reclaim a vast stretch of rotting dockland and seal the fissures of poverty and racial strife that the riots had torn open. Like the 1981 riots, garden festivals were not confined to the city of Liverpool. The success of the Liverpool Garden Festival resulted in another four garden festivals being hosted by former industrial cities and towns in the following decade, in Stoke-on-Trent in 1986, in Glasgow in 1988, in Gateshead in 1990, and in Ebbw Vale in 1992. As well as garden shows, the festivals included fairground rides, mock villages and towns, model railways, and live performances. The festivals were sanctioned and in some cases funded by the national government, as a means of reclaiming derelict land and eventually preparing it for the property market. Over eight years the festivals attracted more than ten million visitors, suggesting that something approaching one in six Britons attended.

This chapter asks how a summer of tear gas and fires terminated in flowers and fairgrounds. Why did the government, local authorities, and urban development corporations decide that gardening festivals would solve the dual social and economic crises facing British cities in the 1980s? While all five garden festivals will be discussed, this chapter will focus on the festivals in Liverpool, Glasgow, and Ebbw Vale. The Glasgow festival, held in 1988, was the largest of the three, attracting 4.3 million visitors to a complex of roller coasters, historical reenactments and mock Victorian streets, which was once a stretch of dockland by the River Clyde. The Ebbw Vale festival was hosted in a former coal mining district in South Wales, and presented a surreal jumble of attractions, including a synthetic waterfall, robotic animals, and a replica seaside pier (despite being twenty five miles inland). All three festivals were facilitated by urban and regional development corporations, bodies whose boards were appointed by the government and who were given special powers to purchase land for regeneration. The festivals assembled various elements that together would form a new kind of city in Britain. As with enterprise zones the festivals were discrete areas, enclosed and marked apart, which were designed to revitalize depressed urban economies. Also like enterprise zones...

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5 The figure of one in every ten is a rough estimate. While there were close to fifteen million total visits to the five events (Liverpool 3.4 million, Stoke 2.2 million, Glasgow 4.3 million, Gateshead 3 million, Ebbw Vale 2 million). These figures include repeat visits. The sale of season tickets at many events, and a handful of news stories of visitors claiming to have attended every day the festival was open in Glasgow and in Ebbw Vale suggests that repeated visits were not insignificant, but probably did not amount to more than a third of all visits. With the population of Britain between 1981 and 1991 being between fifty-six and fifty-eight million people, the figure of one in ten is a likely, if not even conservative one.
zones, the festivals acted as showcases for a new kind of city, one in which infrastructure was privately contracted, and the attraction of capital became more important than the provision of services. This chapter traces the various stages in the life cycle of garden festivals. It will begin by looking at the origins of the festival project, as a strange amalgam of industrial trade exhibitions, central European garden shows, and Thatcherite urban policy. It will then look at how the festivals prepared and cleaned their industrial sites, creating an entirely new urban landscape. Finally, it will look at the transformation effected by the festivals on their host cities, showing how the festivals established a new relationship between infrastructure, urban government, and the market. While cities had once existed to provide welfare, develop territory, and solve collective infrastructure problems, this chapter will show garden festivals helped usher in a new paradigm, one where cities competed globally for capital and tourists (rather than nationally for funding and expertise) and used the distinctiveness of place and locality to gain an edge in this market.

**Origins**

Shortly after the fires in Toxteth were extinguished, the Conservative Party leadership descended on Liverpool. First came Margaret Thatcher herself, who met briefly with the police and community leaders. Next came Michael Heseltine, the Secretary of State for the Environment, who spent two weeks in Liverpool subjecting himself to a breathless schedule of public meetings. The outcome of Heseltine’s visit was an internal report called *It Took A Riot*, in which the minister acknowledged the social problems caused by high rates of unemployment in the city. Heseltine’s solution was to attract capital back into Liverpool:

> A feature of my visit was the tour of some 30 representatives of Financial Institutions... They have agreed – partly as the result of the shock of all they saw – to join the Government in a comprehensive examination of the role of the private sector in financing urban development and in the revival of the older urban areas... I have made the point that we are not seeking loss-making investments but rather the development of methods that will enhance the flow of private capital into urban opportunities.6

Some of this work was already underway by the outbreak of the riot. Liverpool had been approved as a site for an enterprise zone earlier that year. Meanwhile, the Merseyside Development Corporation had been formed in March 1981, a few months before the riots, as a quasi-autonomous body tasked with buying up land for redevelopment. Three years later the Merseyside Development Corporation would become the organizers of the Liverpool Garden Festival. The primary response to the Toxteth riots, therefore, was to intensify attempts to attract the private sector into the city to bring jobs and infrastructure. How then did a large horticultural show come to be seen as one of the most effective ways of achieving this?

As with other pilot zones, national garden festivals have a long and tangled pre-history, one that stretches back to Britain’s industrial past. The festivals were inspired by

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the various industrial expositions and worlds fairs in both Britain and overseas that punctuated nineteenth and twentieth century life, drawing millions of visitors, and often remaking the urban fabric of industrial cities. The history of these events can be traced back to a series of industrial exhibitions in post-revolutionary France, an idea, which then spread to other European countries in the 1840s and 1850s.\(^7\) These early events were designed to showcase the industrial wares of a given nation. In an era of increasing free trade and imperial competition, they allowed citizens to marvel at cutting edge technological advances in manufacturing. The nineteenth century industrial exhibition complex found its most dramatic and precocious form in the Great Exhibition, held in London’s Hyde Park in 1851.\(^8\) The event attracted more than six million people, a sixth of the entire population, and displayed various new tools and products from Britain’s emerging manufacturing economy. The exhibits arrayed under Jacob Paxton’s Crystal Palace, an unparalleled feat of architectural engineering in its time. For Jeffrey Auerbach, the Exhibition’s relationship to this emerging industrial world was primarily pedagogical:

> The Great Exhibition occurred at a time when there was a resurgence of interest in technical education as an element of national industrial performance, and it cannot be understood outside the context of industrial education and production in Britain… In an economic system based on cottage industries and craft apprenticeships there had been little need for formal teaching. But the Industrial Revolution and the attendant growth of the factory system… called for a new educational process that increasingly emphasized science and technology.\(^9\)

By the end of the nineteenth century these events had crystallized into a recognizable set of tropes: usually a handful of architectural and artistic set pieces coupled with dramatic displays of new technological advances and exotic artifacts from around the world. The 1892 Chicago World’s Fair saw the construction of an entirely new neoclassical city. Celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of the landing of Columbus it featured forty-six different international exhibits, including mock Samoan villages. The event was credited with inaugurating the City Beautiful movement in American urban planning and exhibiting for the many millions of visitors the possibilities of electrical lighting.\(^10\) The 1938 Glasgow Empire Exhibition was a similar event, attracting twelve million visitors and showcasing products from around the British Empire. The Glasgow Garden Festival was held on the fiftieth anniversary of this event, and its publicity material drew obvious parallels between them.\(^11\)

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\(^9\) Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition*, 10


\(^11\) “Glasgow Garden Festival 88,” Leaflet, National Library of Scotland Printed and Other Collections (henceforward NLS), HP1.87.2805.
By the 1920s the unregulated global proliferation of worlds fairs and exhibitions was becoming a problem for international governance. In 1923 a new international body, the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), was formed in Paris with the intention of restricting the number of events and providing international standards for hosts. The organization acted as a clearinghouse for bids from different national governments to host officially recognized national expositions. By the 1980s the BIE still existed and the Liverpool International Garden Festival was officially approved by the body as an “A1” event. A1 events in any given country were only allowed to occur once in every ten years, and only one A1 event was permitted by the BIE in any given year across the world. For this reason, while Liverpool’s International Garden Festival would be awarded recognition by the BIE, the remaining four garden festivals had to opt for “national” rather than “international” status, choosing not to bid for BIE recognition.

While garden festivals had their roots in the long history of both domestic and international expositions, the specific form of a “garden festival” had its origins in postwar West Germany. Bundesgartenschau, or “federal garden shows” had been held every other year in different German cities from 1951 on, and were initially on areas of land that had been damaged by wartime bombing. In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s the idea spread to Switzerland, Austria, and the Netherlands. These shows were organized by local government bodies with the oversight of a national horticultural association, which was responsible for accepting applications from different cities and awarding contracts. The central European shows, like British garden festivals, usually lasted six to eight months and acted as prolonged national advertising campaigns for their chosen city. There were, however, important differences between British garden festivals and German gartenschau. While the former were focused primarily on producing new parkland that would be managed by local state bodies, the latter intended to prepare its chosen land for the property market, with any new parkland described by one commentator as “only an adjunct to the primary purpose of making land marketable.”

Members of the Joint Council for Landscape Industries, a British trade body representing the horticulture industry, had long campaigned for British garden festivals along the same lines as those in Germany. In 1979 representatives of this group met with the newly elected Conservative Environment Minister Lord Bellwin to make the case for British festivals. In 1980, as a result of this meeting, the Department of the Environment conducted an in-house study of German bundesgartenschau. It was, however, unlikely that the festivals would have occurred, had the idea not chimed perfectly with the pro-market urban policies of the Thatcher government in the early 1980s. The real impetus came from Michael Heseltine, who saw in the festivals the potential for attracting private sector capital for urban regeneration. According to one account, the Department of the Environment’s in-house study was read by Heseltine in early August 1981, two weeks

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after the Toxteth riots. On the September 5 Heseltine announced that Liverpool would host the first national garden festival. The minister hoped that the festivals would prepare land for the urban property market that otherwise would be left empty. For this reason, instead of being studied in their own right, garden festivals are often listed alongside projects such as enterprise zones, derelict land grants, local enterprise agencies, and urban development grants. Before being granted permission for a garden festival, Stoke-on-Trent had previously applied for and been denied both an enterprise zone and designation as an Assisted Area, suggesting, in at least one case, a garden festival was seen as a last ditch alternative after other attempts at regeneration had been stymied. Speaking on television during the Liverpool festival, Michael Heseltine is reported to have said, “the object of this Festival is not gardens.”

The creation of urban development corporations and regional development agencies were crucial for the birth of garden festivals. These incorporated bodies had initially been used to plan new towns such as Stevenage and Milton Keynes in the immediate postwar period. In the 1980s, following the direction of Heseltine, a number of new development corporations were created to override local authorities that were unwilling to support private-sector-led regeneration. The urbanist Michael Parkinson has described such bodies as an example of “the centralisation and privatisation of power” under the Thatcher government. While urban and regional development corporations had a hand in planning three of five garden festivals, this was particularly the case in Liverpool, where Militant Tendency, the Trotskyist wing of the Labour Party, controlled the city Council after 1983. Liverpool Council repeatedly and conspicuously opposed the Conservative government in the 1980s and refused to set a budget in 1985 as a protest against government spending cuts. The Merseyside Development Corporation was a means for the government to overrule Liverpool’s elected local government during this period, and the garden festival went ahead in spite of protestations from the local authority. The Council, which was originally tasked with part-management of the festival site, pulled out of the project, objecting to the cost of the event. One Liverpool councilor complained that it was “the most expensive job creation project since the space race.” In Liverpool the festival was a beachhead of central government control, an exclusion zone in which the elected local council had no authority.

Like other pilot zones, national garden festivals were assembled out of a diverse array of constituent elements, many of which belonged to different political epochs and were perfected beyond the shores of Britain itself. In essence they were central European gardening competitions reconstituted as technologies for preparing derelict land for the market. They were theatrically planned expositions stripped bare of the high modernism and teleological wonder that characterized similar events in the past. Indeed, there is an irony that one of the most precocious techniques used to erase the material fabric of two

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17 Ibid., 13.
18 For example, in Nicholas Deakin, The Enterprise Culture and the Inner City (London: Routledge, 1993).
19 Theokas, Grounds for Review, 158.
centuries of industrial growth in Britain can trace its origins back to the great industrial trade exhibitions of the mid-nineteenth century. This tension between the planned and the organic, as we will see, could be found at the heart of the garden festival movement. Having unraveled the complex genealogy of these peculiar events, this chapter will now examine some of the cultural and political work in which this project was engaged.

Preparing the Ground

The historian Eric Hobsbawm once claimed that “the industrial revolution created the ugliest world in which man has ever lived.” With the industrial revolution in retreat, ugliness was compounded by dereliction. Garden festivals were primarily intended to be environmental interventions, means of clearing away scarred and rotting former industrial land. The festivals functioned a form of state-sponsored amnesia, a means of repressing the memory of an industrial economy that had thrived within many Britons’ recent memories. By 1980 British inner cities were littered with vast, obsolete buildings and infrastructure networks that belonged to an earlier time. In Liverpool and Glasgow these took the form of miles of coastal warehouses and jetties that 1970s technological change had rendered redundant. Ebbw Vale, meanwhile, was peppered with empty coalmines and silent steel mills. A memo written on the Liverpool festival from within the Department of Environment lists the desired outcomes of garden festivals as follows: 1) “to provide a catalyst for the reclamation of a large area of derelict land” and 2) “to gain a higher quality of landscape on the reclaimed site than would normally be the case.”

Michael Heseltine was clear about the purpose of the project: “The concept was simple. Use public money to eliminate dereliction, and green the area to produce a high quality environment.” Throughout the staging of the festivals, aesthetic improvement became subject to strange forms of quantification. In 1990, when left to evaluate the success of the garden festival project, the Department of Environment was forced into the difficult position of drawing up a precise set of calculations to make subjective value judgments about the appearance of the transformed sites. To do so, a series of professional landscape architects were asked to score the sites numerically in order to quantify their “improvement.” Afterwards, “to estimate total visual impacts,” the assessors combined these findings “with survey findings from residents, businesses and users for the frequency of their exposure to the views.” The Liverpool site, for example, had a relatively low initial score for visual improvement (due to the abandonment of the site after the festival), but one that was improved by the fact that a higher percentage of the city’s population drove along Riverside Park, a major through road with views of the site.

The Liverpool International Garden Festival took place on a patch of decaying former-industrial land in the south east of the city. Most of the site had once been

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27 Ibid, 25.
occupied by the Herculaneum Dock, which opened in 1886 and closed in 1972 after larger container ships found it increasingly difficult to dock in the relatively narrow and fast-flowing Mersey estuary. The festival area also included thirty-five acres of waste tipping land, owned by the city council since 1950. The site was prepared at a stakhanovite pace by the Merseyside Development Corporation. While German bundesgartenschau were usually awarded eight years in advance of the actual festival, preparations for the Liverpool Garden Festival were forced to take place in just nineteenth months. The reclamation of the land became a kind of performance, part of the self-made mythology of the festival. Some of the original material of the derelict site was recycled for use in the event. The wooden jetties that once formed the dockland site were turned into benches for the festival, while it was hoped that the methane drained from the toxic landfill would heat the festival hall for several years.28 Visitors were rarely allowed to forget what the area had once looked like. One festival brochure distributed during the event suggested that “visitors may find it difficult to believe that this same area was once a derelict wasteland.”29

The Glasgow Garden Festival was run by the Scottish Development Agency, a regional body founded in 1975 with a similar mandate to the urban development corporations created in the early 1980s. The process of reclamation was no less impressive than in Liverpool. In order to create the festival site, a new landscape had to be sculpted, with fifty thousand truckloads of topsoil brought in from elsewhere, and three hundred thousand tons of silt dredged from the Clyde being re-used to create the festival’s foundations.30 As with Liverpool, the land reclamation in Glasgow was both necessity and performance. For more than two years before the event Glasgow residents were kept up to date on the process of reclamation and planning for the festival, while schoolchildren in the Strathclyde area were taught lessons about how the festival was planned and conceived.31 Visitors to the festival were encouraged by the on-site material to “Recall for a moment that the entire Festival site was once a huge dockland complex,” while others spoke of breathlessly of an awe-inspiring and almost magical transformation: “Almost incredibly, a wasteland of 120 acres on the south bank of the River Clyde has been turned into a Disney-like paradise.”32

28 Ibid, 7
Figure 5: Liverpool’s Herculaneum Dock in the Middle of the 20th Century. (Photograph: Christopher Coulter, Flickr, Creative Commons).

Figure 6: The Liverpool International Garden Festival (Photograph: John Firth, Wikimedia, Creative Commons).

The organic, redemptive power of the flowers and trees that grew in place of the slag heaps and abandoned industrial buildings was a theme to which organizers and promoters of garden festivals frequently referred. The Queen, speaking during a visit to the Liverpool festival, was forceful in this message:

Some people have probably wondered about the relevance of organizing a garden festival in a derelict area of Liverpool. I think it is most appropriate. The
wonderful feature of nature is its powers of renewal. Plants wither and die but with the coming of Spring growth begins again. And garden exhibitions blooming on this site are symbolic of what we all wish for Liverpool.33

Garden festivals served as a verdant and living critique of the toxic ugliness and economic stagnation of Britain’s recent industrial past. Prince Charles, who visited many of the festivals, emphasized this theme. His speech in Ebbw Vale was typical:

Wales and its environment have suffered greatly from rapid industrialization in the past. It is encouraging to know, therefore, that thousands of acres of scarred industrial land are being reclaimed in the Principality and made available for cleaner industries, for housing and shops, for schools, for country parks and other leisure facilities. It is clearly vital that the festival is a success and leaves behind a positive message of environmental improvement.34

The repressed industrial pre-history of the garden festivals occasionally returned, at times as nostalgia, at times as parody, during the course of the events. When the Ebbw Vale garden festival opened in the former coal mining region of South Wales, school children lined the entrance to the site dressed as miners with hardhats and soot covered faces.35 It was also proposed that the festival have a “mine-based” amusement ride.36 Meanwhile, all five of the festivals boasted some form of kitsch nineteenth or early twentieth century form of transportation. The Liverpool festival featured a steam-powered miniature railway that took visitors to the various sections of the site. The railway had a full signaling system, bridges, level crossings, and even a tunnel. The description of the train in the event’s souvenir brochure is shot through with nostalgia:

[This is] one public transport system with no problem of declining numbers of passengers... the steam era has an enduring fascination and the 15” gauge railway with its quarter size engines soon proved an attraction in own right, as well as a practical means of getting around the three-quarter mile long site... The whistle of an approaching train and puffs of smoke as it bustles past have become an integral feature of the Festival scene and will linger as an evocative memory long after the event is over.37

The Glasgow site was serviced by a series of restored, early twentieth century tramcars, relics from the city’s comprehensive tram system that closed in 1962.38 According to one brochure, the trams evoked “memories of yesteryear, when travel was somehow more of an adventure.”39 At Stoke-On-Trent it was initially planned that festival visitors would participate in mock industrial workshops including pottery-

33 Jones, “50,000 Bluebells,” 94.
37 “Royal Souvenir Brochure,” LRO, 712.50942753 LIV.
39 Ibid.
making. Garden festivals erased the industrial legacy of many parts of Britain, only to selectively revive it in highly aestheticized and theatrical forms.

The environmental critique extended by garden festivals, a critique that pitted the organic against the artificial, belied the micro-managed artificiality of the actual environments. In both Liverpool and Glasgow most of the plants were grown off site and only transferred to the festivals shortly before they were due to open. One official guide in Liverpool spoke of the problem of “creating an apparently mature garden in what seemed an impossibly short space of time.” The Merseyside Development Corporation paid nurseries around the country to grow many of the festival plants in “large ten or twelve litre containers.” Meanwhile, although many of the two hundred and fifty thousand trees and shrubs were grown in Liverpool:

The planting season had to be considerably extended. This was contrived by using the facilities of a cold store on the Liverpool docks, adjusting the climate in the store to high humidity and low temperature and so deceiving the plants into thinking it was winter right through to the end of May, when the last one went in.

One newspaper editorial in Glasgow, where a similar process occurred, slyly noted, “This might seem to go against nature and the natural idea of a garden as an organic, gradually growing entity.” In Liverpool, faced with the sometimes gale-force winds sweeping in from the Mersey, the organizers were forced to create an entirely new physical environment. A series of hills and slopes built out of the rubble and refuse from the reclaimed site were constructed along the riverbanks to shelter the site from the wind. Scale models of this environment were tested before construction in a wind tunnel offsite.

The festivals were sculptured and perfectly rendered artificial realities. The Liverpool site boasted “a level of cleanliness achieved by the site operations team without precedent in any public external space under such intensive use.” It was in the Ebbw Vale festival, that the tensions between the organic, the artificial were most extreme. Ebbw Vale, a former coal mining community in the Welsh valleys, saw the only festival held in somewhere approaching a rural setting. In spite of its setting, however, the festival fabricated a theme-park-like exhibition to advertise the surrounding natural beauty. The exhibition boasted a giant replica camera at its entrance as well as:

A host of moving animals, birds and robots – including a life-size David Bellamy [a Welsh environmental campaigner] - set in delightful landscapes that include a beach, a colourful seaside pier, forests and waterfall… Not only will visitors see

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41 Jones, “50,000 Bluebells,” 16.
42 Ibid. 16.
43 Ibid. 16.
45 Liverpool International Garden Festival: Press Release, June 22, 1982, LRO HQ 635 INT.
the beauties of rural Wales they will also be able to smell them with a special “smellorama” to add to the reality of a visit to the pavilion.47

When a focus group of potential visitors to the Ebbw Vale festival were assembled by the Welsh Development Agency (the Welsh equivalent to the Scottish Development Agency that ran the Glasgow festival) a few years prior to its opening, they were shown television adverts for Thorpe Park and Alton Towers (two of Britain’s largest theme parks) alongside an advert for the festival.48 When asked to comment on plans for the festival, one of the focus group participants said, “we all know what Ebbw Vale looks like – and it doesn’t look like that.”49 The festivals offered their visitors a cartoonish hyper-reality. A simulacrum of the natural and the organic, built to smother the unsightly polluted relics of Britain’s industrial past, and mobilized as a critique of more than two centuries of industrial urbanization.

While the festivals sought to hide the material effects of industrialization, they were also grimly silent when it came to incorporating the non-white residents of Britain’s inner cities. This omission was particularly noticable in Liverpool. While the Liverpool International Garden Festival was marketed as a direct response to the 1981 Toxteth riots, it remained a resolutely white affair. There is no data on the racial backgrounds of festival visitors. A survey of visitors commissioned by the Department of the Environment to find out the “demographic profile” of attendees stratified respondents by class, gender, region and age, but neglected to record their race or ethnicity.50 Non-white faces were absent from the festival’s promotional material or among the sculptures of Liverpudlians that dotted the riverside walk.51 According to the Department of the Environment Survey, visitors to the park tended to be wealthier, with young children and middle-age couples more likely to visit than teenagers or people in their twenties.52 This was not, therefore, an event that catered to the unemployed young men of Toxteth. Rather than being cosmopolitan, attractions were either parochial (such as the Britannia Pub or the Beatles Maze) or international (such as the Japanese Kimono Shows or the mock battles between American “frontiersman and Indians”). Many of the overseas delegates were patronized in the print material produced by the festival and treated as strange curiosities. The Chinese presence at the festival, for example, became an object of derision in a children’s book used to market the festival (narrated by two cartoon birds): “[The Chinese workers] even bought their own cook with them, but they didn’t leave

48 “Garden Festival Wales: Consumer Response to the Launch Commercial,” Gwent Archives (henceforward GLA) 3481 M1, location 52/62/57, 2.
49 Ibid, 7.
50 “Survey of Visitors to the Liverpool Garden Festival: Final Report,” LRO HQ 712.5 NOP.
52 “Survey of Visitors to the Liverpool Garden Festival: Final Report;” The survey recorded that 54 percent of adult visitors were from ABC1 (white collar) households compared with 39 percent across the country as a whole, and that only 9 percent of visitors were aged between 15-24, with 16 percent across the country as a whole.
much for us did they? To be honest, my friend, I can’t say I’m sorry; I don’t fancy the idea of eating bird’s nest soup!”

The festivals also shut down any form of political debate or dissent on their grounds. A controversy that briefly ignited over the Liverpool Quiz Garden shows how organizers sought to avoid all forms of potential conflict. The garden was initially intended to be “a political statement about the state of the city at the time.” The design was commissioned to a radical landscaping group called The Diggers, whose name derived from the proto-communist, seventeenth century sect. The group, which was created to teach gardening skills to unemployed people, originally intended to build a fibreglass pond from which a hand would emerge holding a UB40 Form (a form which all of those claiming unemployment benefits had to complete). It was a protest against the high levels of unemployment in Liverpool in the early 1980s – an implicit critique of Margaret Thatcher’s government. The theme was to be The Beatles’ song “Help!” This design was, however, vetoed by the festivals’ organizers. Instead the Diggers were forced to produce the interactive Liverpool Quiz Garden, which was deemed to be a safer and less confrontational option. Held in the kinds of inner city areas, which throughout the 1980s experienced turbulent political unrest and industrial action, the festivals were oceans of forced, tight-lipped consensus.

To walk through the turnstile gates of a garden festival was to leave reality behind. Garden festivals were a local anesthetic rather than a permanent cure for the ailing cities that surrounded them. While many pilot zones were pitched as fixes for a stubborn and increasingly dilapidated industrial and social democratic built environment, garden festivals were the most radical. While many factories or large housing estates were turned into offices or art galleries, garden festivals opted for a more extreme form of erasure. Although they claimed to be organic and spontaneous, they were vast, artificial infrastructure projects no less labor-or-capital-intensive than the docks, warehouses and steel mills they replaced. While they claimed to be pre-political, they were affluent and homogenously white zones amidst cities wracked by unemployment and racism. If the first job of garden festivals was to erase what came before, what did they build to replace it?

Beyond the Turnstiles: Outsourcing Content

Nineteenth and twentieth century industrial exhibitions and worlds fairs were often didactic events, heavy-handed and drenched in teleological significance. Nowhere was this more the case than during the 1951 Festival of Britain. Occupying a central stretch of the South Bank of the Thames and visited by more than twelve million people, the festival marked a moment of celebratory self-reflection at a crucial moment in the forging of a new social democratic political economy. Becky Conekin has written:

The Festival of Britain set broad parameters of a social democratic agenda for a new and modern Britain. The expertise of architects, industrial designers,

53 Peter Wynn Jones, Oliver and Simon at the International Garden Festival: Liverpool ’84 (Liverpool: P. Wynn Jones, 1984).
55 Ibid.
scientists and town planners was enlisted in this government project to construct representations of the nation’s past and future… These projections stressed progress and modernity with science and planning evoked as the answers to the questions of how to build a better Britain… the Festival can be read simultaneously as a public celebration and a government-sponsored educational event.56

The Festival of Britain was seen as a reference point for National Garden Festivals and it was hoped the events would augur a similar sense of occasion. The Liverpool festival was described on the first page of the event’s souvenir guide as “the biggest event in the United Kingdom since the Festival of Britain,” while a memo circulated within the Department of Environment described the events as “smaller scale festivals of Britain.”57 Despite these comparisons, National Garden Festivals had no such master narrative.

Like enterprise zones, garden festivals were minimalist grids intended to attract content and substance from elsewhere. The large number of separate gardens that formed most of the exhibition space were not planned by the festival organizers. Instead they were designed by various public and private bodies including, banks, local councils, and overseas national delegations. Organizers of the festivals made few substantial claims over what the end project would look like, providing only a master plan and basic facilities. As an officially recognized International Exhibition, the Liverpool Garden Festival was particularly suited for this kind of outsourcing. The multiple nations participating in the Liverpool festival were given their own garden, with plots designed by delegations from countries such as Australia, India, and even communist China (whose participation was billed as “a major diplomatic breakthrough”).58 Each participating country was also encouraged to provide activities to fill the hundreds of hours of scheduled events that took place on the festival site. The festival boasted, “American pop, Chinese lion-dancing, Canadian Mastersingers and totem-pole carvers and a Japanese kimono-laser spectacular.”59 The Liverpool festival was a collage of different national projects, a radical departure from either the Great Exhibition, which touted British imperial domination, and the 1951 Festival of Britain, which was resolutely introspective, with few international or even imperial references.

Moreover, many of the Liverpool festival elements were decided on by competitions featuring members of the public. Both within and between the various exhibited gardens, amateurs were encouraged by the organizers to grow their own gardens and the results judged by both international and national juries with two hundred thousand pounds of prize money made available.60 A garden was ceded to the children’s television program, Blue Peter, which held a competition among its young viewers to design the site entered by almost twenty thousand.61 Meanwhile, the branding and design

58 “Worldwide Lure Of The Greenest Show On Earth,” Liverpool Echo (Festival Supplement), September 21, 1983.
59 “Festival Guide,” guidebook, LRO 712.50942753 INT, 188.
60 Ibid, 35.
61 Ibid, 49.
of some of the most iconic elements of the festival’s marketing was also opened to competition. A competition was held among schoolchildren to name the festival’s centerpiece pub, “The Britannia,” while a local fabric company won a contract to manufacture “Oliver,” the soft toy representation of the festival’s official logo that was sold throughout the festival.62 One of the promotional brochures for the Liverpool festival noted:

There was always an element of healthy competition about Liverpool’s Garden Festival, from the highest level, where some of the largest firms in the country submitted tenders to carry out the work, or to supply specific services or commodities… to the BBC’s children’s competition won by 14-year-old Theodore Gayer-Anderson who designed the Blue Peter fantasy garden with its centerpiece of a gigantic red and gold dragon.63

At almost every possible opportunity, then, the organizers of the Liverpool festival chose to open its gardens, stores, and icons to outside competition, rather than produce their own content. While the Glasgow Garden Festival, not being officially recognized by the Bureau of International Expositions, had fewer opportunities for internationally designed exhibitions, the event betrayed a similar minimalism with regard to content. Many garden plots were ceded to both public and private bodies, with, for example, each new town in Scotland given their own garden.64 The master plan for the Glasgow site, produced by the architecture firm Building Design Partnership, was a masterpiece of minimalist planning. While the festival was divided into six broadly defined “themes,” these were dispersed around a central core, so that no area of the festival could be given preference over any other.65 The plan was engineered “to locate the merchandising areas adjacent to the entrance to maximise commercial opportunity from visitors entering and leaving the Festival without creating unnecessarily contrived visitor handling.”66

It was for this reason that garden festivals, unlike their high modern forebears, ultimately had little to say. While garden festivals offered a handful of narratives of progress or improvement — Liverpool festival’s “Land Treatment Maze” which was built to showcase the environmental policies of the local council, or the “Silicon Glen” technology exhibition on the Glasgow site, for example — such vivid illustrations of progress were relatively rare. While the 1951 Festival of Britain was described by Conekin as “an isolated storybook encapsulating tales of British strengths and imagination, arranged as ‘the autobiography of a nation’, with chapters to be experienced in a specified order,” the five garden festivals could not have been more different.67 Instead, they presented a handful of narrative strands, largely outsourced to other bodies, amounting to little in the way of coherence. This incoherence also applied to the festivals’ relationship with history. In the form of the steam trains, trams, tall galleon

63 Ibid, 86.
ships, pottery museums, and Beatles memorabilia, the past was represented at the festivals as an excuse for color and excitement rather than as a state of affairs altered by collective historical achievement — as chaotic pastiche rather than as an ancien régime. The intellectual historian Daniel T. Rogers has argued that the late twentieth century saw the emergence of a new language for understanding and experiencing the past: “the boundary between past and present literally dissolved. History’s massive social processes disappeared. One travelled between past, present, and future in the momentary blink of the imagination, through a wrinkle in time.”68 That the festivals were designed to physically erase the recent industrial past of the inner city, only to themselves be erased by property development after their closure, served to deepen this feeling of transience.

The festivals also outsourced advertising space, events, and even some of their physical infrastructure to numerous corporate sponsors. During the Festival of Britain, all corporate sponsorship was banned from the festival’s primary site on the south bank of the Thames.69 One of the organizers of the festival noted, “There was to be no space to let. No one would be able to have his goods on exhibit by paying to do so; they would get there by merit or not at all.”70 In contrast, each of the five national garden festivals was a dizzying riot of corporate sponsorship. The different bodies charged with running garden festivals (such as the Merseyside Development Corporation and the Scottish Development Agency) were effectively clearing houses for various private sector contracts. Ahead of the Liverpool festival, an information package distributed to different corporations promised “125 acres of sponsorship opportunities.”71 The Liverpool festival’s steam train was sponsored by Natwest Bank, an ominous portent of the privatization of Britain’s railway system, still eight years in the future. The site also featured a photographic trail, sponsored by Kodak and a as a large playground slide in the shape of a Pepsi can.72 The Ebbw Vale festival, meanwhile, featured a children’s play area entirely sponsored by Cadbury’s, with a Cream Egg Switchback and a Flake Bar Tire Climber, as well as an environmental pavilion sponsored by the domestic appliance company Hoover. The exhibit took “a lighthearted but educational look at the way in which Hoover domestic appliances not only tackle household cleaning, but are designed with environmental concerns in mind.”73 The educational packs produced by the Ebbw Vale festival for school trips, meanwhile, were sponsored by McDonald’s and there were negotiations for the “fitness week” held at the festival, to be sponsored by the private healthcare company (and rival to the National Health Service) BUPA.74 Of all the festivals, however, it was perhaps Glasgow that had the largest corporate presence. The festival witnessed more than 1,250 individual instances of corporate sponsorship, ranging from the Bell’s Whiskey Footbridge, the Coca-Cola Roller Coaster and the 240 foot

70 Ibid. 204-5.
71 “Over 125 Acres of Sponsorship Opportunities,” Promotional pamphlet, LRO HQ 635.0942753 MER.
72 For Natwest’s sponsorship see, Jones, “50.000 Bluebells,” 53; For Kodak’s sponsorship see “Festival Guide,” LRO 712.50942753 INT, 33; For the Pepsi slide see, “Its Magic for The Children in a Garden That’s Made For Giants,” The Liverpool Echo (Festival Supplement), May 21, 1984.
Clydesdale Bank Anniversary Tower. An advert for the festival distributed among interested corporations noted, “we invite commercial involvement on an extraordinarily wide and flexible scale… every element of the Festival is sponsorable.”

Private, outsourced, and ultimately ambiguous in their cultural or pedagogical importance, garden festivals were seen by one observer as a reflection of broader changes in British society:

In common with the prevailing social and political ethos of the ‘80s, individualism has reigned supreme at the Garden Festivals: commercial imperatives have frequently overwhelmed any ‘master plan’, resulting in extreme diversity of styles and intensions, both commercial and aesthetic, a fact which could be said accurately to mirror British society as a whole.

The language and practices of the private sector seeped into the organization of the festivals. Throughout the planning of the Ebbw Vale festival visitors were referred to as “consumers” and the event itself was deemed to be a “product.” The festival organizers hired a professional marketing firm, Golly Slater, to organize corporate sponsorship and advertise the event. The firm held focus groups in years preceding the event to determine the public’s reaction to, among other things, the official mascot of the event, a cartoon animation named Gryff. The firm created an employee incentive scheme for “Welsh based manufacturing companies who do not get involved in traditional sponsorship” but wanted to contribute financially, which included free admission, a free tee shirt, and other benefits. The firm even courted sponsors as far away as Japan, with eight Japanese companies being shown presentations about the festival and one such company, Star Micronics, agreeing to sponsor the Stairway to the Stars exhibit.

Perhaps the most significant instance of the privatization on display at garden festivals were the many exhibitions hosted by private house-building companies. It is worth dwelling on these exhibits in detail, as they more than anything else, contributed towards the banal normalization of a privatized and decentralized urban environment — a projection of a highly contingent and still much contested political moment into the distant future. The festivals coincided with one of the biggest changes in the nature and provision of Britain’s housing stock that has ever occurred. The 1970s had seen the effective end of a state-led public housing project that began in the late nineteenth century and had picked up pace after the Second World War. The passage of the 1980 Housing Act by Margaret Thatcher’s new Conservative government financially incentivized residents to purchase their own homes and led to a sudden and rapid privatization of this housing stock. In the six years after the 1980 act was passed, more

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75 This figure was ascertained by counting the list of sponsors published in the index of the “Glasgow Garden Festival Souvenir Brochure and Official Guide,” GCA GL f6073441443; It is worth emphasizing that these are the total number of instances of sponsorship rather than number of individual sponsors.


79 Ibid.


than eight hundred thousand council houses were purchased by their previous occupants.\textsuperscript{82} At the same time, as a later chapter of this dissertation shows, high density housing stock was denigrated and demolished in cities across the UK.

Given this context it is significant that the model housing exhibitions in the five garden festivals featured homes that were private, suburban and detached. Liverpool festival’s Home and Garden Feature was a “mini village complex” of six detached suburban homes built by private developers such as Wimpey, Barratt, and The Abbey National.\textsuperscript{83} Descriptions of the houses were aspirational in tone: “Barratt has built two homes, the first is a luxury four-bedroom house with two balconies and a sauna. The second is a large three-bed-roomed bungalow designed around an enclosed garden.”\textsuperscript{84} After the festival came to an end these six houses were sold to members of the public and formed the basis of a suburb of more than one thousand homes, following the sale of part of the festival land to a private developer. Wimpey Homes were allowed to construct a similar model village in the Glasgow festival site. One of the more up-market homes, named ‘Lancefield Manor’, was presented as belonging to a fictional aspirational family called (in one of the many small ironies of history) “the Blairs”:

Mr. Blair, a book publisher, has a passion for Scottish limited edition prints. Notice the print at the head of the stairs specially commissioned by Wimpey to commemorate this Festival! Mrs. Blair teaches the piano and her 14 year old daughter is learning the cello as can be seen her in her room… The design features throughout the house incorporate the latest fashion colours and fabrics put together by Wimpey professional designers… Upstairs, are five glorious bedrooms with the guest room doubling as a gym, while the master bedroom is complete with a spa bath. Back downstairs the dining room is truly traditional, almost medieval with hand stenciled wall paneling and a handsome dining suite, with a table fully laid for dinner using some of Scotland’s most beautiful china and Edinburgh crystal.\textsuperscript{85}

In Ebbw Vale, as in Liverpool, a collection of private, detached show homes deemed the “town of the future,” was turned into a large suburban community after the closure of the site, complete with a shopping mall and business park.\textsuperscript{86} These model villages, created to showcase cutting edge changes in home-building technologies, resemble the Lansbury Estate, a housing complex built in East London and opened to visitors during the Festival of Britain. Named after the Labour Party leader George Lansbury, the Lansbury estate was a world unto itself, with thousands of residents living in high and low-rise flats, connected by squares and footbridges, punctuated by stores, pubs, and community centers, all owned by and let by the state. As with the model homes on display at the garden festivals, visitors to the Festival of Britain were encouraged to tour the estate, both inside and out, and to view it as a precocious example of future housing conditions, which would soon be universal. While the


\textsuperscript{83} “Home is Where the Park Is,” \textit{The Liverpool Echo} (International Garden Festival Pre-Opening Supplement), April 25, 1984.

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{85} “Wimpey Homes Invites You to Lancefield Manor,” NLS GSR 2/3.

Landsbury exhibition showcased a future that was state-built, collective, high-density, and resolutely urban, the model homes that were presented to garden festival visitors were private, suburban, and isolated. They were examples of the kinds of private, low-rise home-ownership being popularized and enabled by the new Conservative government. That these developments were bestowed with the same sheen of optimistic modernity that surrounded the Landsbury Estate was significant. Less than four years after the passage of the 1980 Housing Act, this form of home-ownership was being normalized for visitors, at the same time that alternatives were being closed down.

Beyond The Turnstiles: A New Kind of City

In the early 1980s the Conservative government had created various mechanisms for attracting capital into inner cities, with policies such as enterprise zones, urban development corporations, and Urban Development Groups, which, as we have seen, encouraged speculators to buy up land and improve it for resale. These policies were in contrast to a mid-century urban policy aimed at investing state money in infrastructure and state-owned or subsidized industries (such as Liverpool’s docks or Ebbw Vale’s coal mines). By outsourcing almost all of their content, garden festivals marched in step with the new beat of 1980s urban policy, demonstrating their potential to millions of visitors. While the primary aim of urban governance had once been the direct provision of services, by the 1980s cities had become, first and foremost, experts in their own self-promotion, competing far and wide for their share of a global pool of tourists, jobs, and capital. In this new climate the festivals acted as giant promotional venues for their host cities, marketing them to millions in the hope of attracting residents, tourists, and businesses.

An early memo outlining the feasibility of garden festivals produced within the Department of the Environment noted:

> In addition [to land reclamation], an important subsidiary effect is that such a festival concentrates public attention on a locality for a period of time during which hopefully outside interest will be generated in it with consequential beneficial effects.\(^{87}\)

> In different ways the five festivals sought to market the auratic uniqueness of their given location. The Liverpool festival featured a Beatles Maze (with the inevitable giant Yellow Submarine) and an outdoor, interactive Liverpool quiz, which attempted to “reproduce Liverpool in its fullest sense.”\(^{88}\) One figure involved in the promotion of the Liverpool festival argued that Liverpool could learn from the rebranding of New York, through the city’s “I Love New York” marketing campaign.\(^{89}\) Prior to the festivals, delegations from the Council and the Merseyside Development Corporation contacted and, in some cases, even visited various international cities to drum support for the festival, including Cologne and Odessa, as well as Liverpool, New York; Liverpool Nova

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\(^{87}\)”National Garden Festivals,” Memo: A D Landsdown to Mr. F G Watson et al., TNA:PRO BD 40/296.

\(^{88}\)”Festival Guide,” LRO 712.50942753 INT, 51.

\(^{89}\)”Festival’s End Is Just The Beginning,” Liverpool Echo (Festival Supplement), November 23, 1983, 23.
Scotia; and Liverpool, Australia.\textsuperscript{90} The centerpiece of the Glasgow festival, meanwhile, was a representation of the city’s Victorian high street, interspersed with life-sized sculptures of local residents. It was initially intended for more than one fifth of the entire festival to be taken up with a complex of exhibits called The Heritage of Glasgow.\textsuperscript{91} An economist at the University of Strathclyde linked the festival’s project of place-making with the broader economic regeneration of Glasgow: “The hosting of such a well-known event is guaranteed to generate interest about the host city. Such interest can be used to advantage by the city to improve its image and morale, and to encourage a general environmental improvement.”\textsuperscript{92}

All five of the festivals sought to ignite a local tourism economy that was often framed as an alternative to the diminishing number of industrial jobs in the festivals’ respective regions. In an interview with a local newspaper, the promotions manager of the Liverpool festival, Paul Billinge, expressed this hope:

Regeneration cannot begin and end with a single event… It must go hand in hand with an acknowledgement of tourism as a permanent money-spinner. The secret, he says, is to use a major show as a catalyst to draw people from Britain and overseas into an unfamiliar area, impress them with the whole area and thus encourage them to return as well as to tell their friends.\textsuperscript{93}

The festival orientated itself to both domestic and international tourists, running competitions to win a flight to Liverpool from anywhere in the world, and initiating the redevelopment of parts of Liverpool Airport.\textsuperscript{94} Meanwhile, five thousand visitors from the south of England paid for a luxury train journey to the festival aboard a replica of the Oriental Express.\textsuperscript{95} It was estimated that the festival created two hundred and thirty five thousand additional “tourist bed-nights.”\textsuperscript{96} The other four festivals were equally orientated towards tourism. The organizer of the Glasgow festival described the event as “the single biggest tourist attraction staged in Scotland for half a century.”\textsuperscript{97} In Ebbw Vale, meanwhile, a tourism industry had to be assembled out of almost nothing in the year preceding the event. The Wales Tourism Board was forced to launch a training program for prospective Bed and Breakfast proprietors living within a twenty-mile radius of the festival site. The training included “essential food hygiene, as well as guidance in food and refreshment service, accommodation planning and making a business programme.”\textsuperscript{98} All 1,900 workers at the festival were forced to complete a special hospitality course designed by the Welsh Tourism Board before the festival opened.\textsuperscript{99}

\textsuperscript{92} Pam Castledean, “Glasgow Garden Festival: A Wider Perspective,” GCA GL 6073441443 CAS.
\textsuperscript{93} “Happy Lands in Liverpool,” \textit{Liverpool Echo} (Festival Supplement), November 23, 1983.
\textsuperscript{94} “All Set For Take-Off,” \textit{Liverpool Echo} (Festival Supplement), November 23, 1983.
\textsuperscript{95} “On Right Lines For Trip Of A Lifetime,” \textit{Liverpool Echo} (Festival Supplement), November 23, 1983.
\textsuperscript{96} “Survey of Visitors to the Liverpool Garden Festival 1984: Final Report,” LRO HQ 712.5 NOP, 8.
\textsuperscript{97} “Glasgow’s Glory,” April 1988, GCA f607 344 1443.
Lacking either the ideological or financial resources to redistribute wealth through the guise of infrastructure and services, British cities, from the 1980s onwards were increasingly forced to compete in a global market for private sector investment in the form of business, or for tourists. By stimulating, and in some cases even initiating a local tourism industry, and by acting as enormous national and international marketing campaigns for their host cities, garden festivals were early examples of this new urban logic. In this sense, then, garden festivals can be viewed alongside such other international urban marketing ploys as the European Capital of Culture movement (founded in 1985) and major high profile international sporting events. Indeed, a direct line can be traced from the 1984 Liverpool Garden Festival to the 2012 London Olympic games. Unlike the previous national exhibitions, which long preceded these events, the Liverpool Garden Festival and the 2012 games were in the business of promoting local attractions, rather than the fruits of industry, and attracting global capital and tourists rather than national pedagogical mythmaking.

**Legacy**

When garden festivals were initially proposed in the early 1980s, it was intended that a festival would be held in a different city every other year, indefinitely. The initial 1980 document produced by the Department of the Environment to float the idea asked, for example, “If people flock annually to the Ideal Home Exhibition, why not a garden exhibition?”100 By 1990 support for garden festivals among the government, the public, and the landscape industry (many of whose members were becoming increasingly interested in restoring existing urban parks, rather than lobbying for further festivals) was waning. Meanwhile, as early as 1986 planners and geographers were beginning to question the success of the festivals as cost-effective ways of regenerating land, with one report claiming that “most of the benefits attributed to the Garden Festival Initiative could be achieved in a more cost effective way by existing central and local government initiatives.”101 In 1990 the Department of Environment launched the biggest report yet on the economic and environmental impacts of the garden festivals. The report was ultimately lukewarm, noting the complexities of quantifying any urban improvements led by the festivals, and recognizing that while a festival may have had some success alongside other regeneration initiatives, it “may not in isolation be a powerful instrument.”102 Another report published in the same year criticized the environmental effects of the festivals, arguing that the environmental logic behind the events would have been better served had much of their land not immediately been sold, and if each had instead been retained as a “publically accessible park, thus providing a long term environmental benefit.”103 In the wake of draining enthusiasm, the Department of the Environment chose, effectively, to discontinue the program, and the 1992 Ebbw Vale festival was the last of its kind in Britain.

100 Department of the Environment, “Garden Exhibitions and the UK,” TNA:PRO AT 42/75.
101 Balsille, “Garden Festivals: Propagation or Propaganda?” xi.
103 Mo O’Toole et al., “Garden Festivals and Urban Regeneration” (April 1990), British Library Document Supply q94/17078, ii.
In many ways garden festivals were a failed intervention. Not only was the program axed after little more than a decade, but also many of the festivals failed to achieve their ultimate goal of returning the festival site to the urban property market. Nowhere was this failure more striking than in Liverpool. While after the festival closed, part of the festival land was turned into a suburban housing complex, the rest of the site was left largely abandoned. In the mid 1990s the site was occupied by an amusement park named Pleasure Island, before its owner went bust after just four years. In 1997 the site was leased to a property development company with plans to build a housing complex. Before the plans could go ahead, however, the company also went under. In 2004, on the twentieth anniversary of the festival, a journalist visited the site and described seeing, “a solitary yellow flower standing proud amid rubble and waste… the only reminder of the blooming splendor Britain’s first international garden festival.” A year previously the festival had faced the prospect of being voted “Britain’s most wasted space” by a national poll. By the early twenty-first century, then, the site was left empty, an overgrown and desolate landscape punctuated only by the ruins of a former theme park. Following the failures of the private sector to develop the site, the area was transferred to a non-profit organization named The Land Trust, a charity that looks after open spaces. Since 2012 the Trust has run the site as a nature park named Liverpool Festival Gardens. In a phrase redolent of the rhetoric that surrounded the initial festival in 1984, the opening of Liverpool Festival Gardens was hailed as a “symbol of the city’s rebirth.”

In Glasgow the story of the after-use of the festival was also an unhappy one. As with the Liverpool festival, the site was ultimately unpalatable to private investment. The various set piece infrastructural components of the site were sold off and shipped elsewhere, including the 280-foot tower, which was sold to the Welsh Seaside resort of Rhyl for eight hundred and twenty five thousand pounds. Although the area was immediately sold to Laing Homes, a local property developer, the company was unable to summon enough capital to build any homes, set back by the economic downturn of the late 1980s and early 1990s. As in Liverpool the site was purchased by a non-profit organization (in this case a group called Scottish Enterprise, a rebranding of the Scottish Development Agency who had organized the festival). Since 2001 the site has become a complex of museums and cultural attractions, and hosts the headquarters of BBC Scotland. The smaller festivals of Stoke-on-Trent, Gateshead, and Ebbw Vale were only marginally more successful than Liverpool and Glasgow in developing their respective festival sites, with similar stories of delay and abandonment.

Garden festivals were designed to act as clearing houses for turning derelict, nationalized land into areas of private development. While in the short term, the festivals were intended to smother the urban industrial ruins that had sprung up in British cities in

the wake of de-industrialization, the eventual intention was for large areas of unused urban land to be opened up to speculators and seamlessly assimilated into the urban property market. In many ways the failure of garden festivals to achieve this aim was a result of the failure to resolve the contradiction between the planned and the organic, between state intervention and the free play of market forces, a contradiction that the festivals were caught in from the outset. All of the festivals, in different ways, saw their after-use affected by the recession of the late 1980s and early 1990s, which saw six successive quarters of negative growth. While state-appointed urban and regional development corporations could clear and trim the land, invite tourists to visit it and market it across the world, there was still no guarantee that the land would thrive on the market. While the soil on which future private capital would develop was planted and fertilized the eventual growth of future investment was stunted by the economic winter of the early 1990s.

Conclusion

Walking through the maze of internationally themed gardens, outsourced catering facilities, and play areas branded by corporate sponsors, visitors to the Liverpool garden festival may have noticed a small parcel of land stricken with industrial ruins and household trash. A small patch of the unused industrial land that had once occupied the festival’s grounds had been left in place show “just how depressingly derelict land can be, and what can be done with it.”110 This exhibit was perhaps the garden festival project at its most performative, dazzled by its own myth of the possibility of perpetual improvement. The exhibit was a memorial for a former world, a world that must have felt impossibly distant.

While the ideas, calculations and practices, of government are prone to rapid and often devastating upheavals, the buildings and plans, factories, and infrastructural networks left behind by previous political moments stubbornly remain. The built environment can be seen as a giant museum, exhibiting the decrepit and shabby remains of prior means of capital accumulation and defunct visions of the social body. While, in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, many of these remains were retrofitted into the shopping malls, business parks, and private housing developments that characterized the new British city, many of the factories, docks, and warehouses of Britain’s industrial past simply had to go. By hastening this demolition, and by acting as lurid caricatures of the flexible, minimalist, and resolutely private future of British urbanism, garden festivals did some of this work of realignment.

As well as hiding the ruins of a former regime, garden festivals contributed to and normalized, for millions of visitors, one of the biggest shifts in how cities were understood and governed that has ever taken place in Britain. For more than a century prior to the opening of the first garden festival, British cities had been managed as infrastructural agglomerations, as instruments for the production and delivery of services within a defined territorial space. This vision of urban life accommodated and made possible both late nineteenth century liberal public health reform, and postwar social democratic modernism. This was a logic that applied as equally to Joseph Chamberlain’s

Birmingham in the 1880s as it did to David Blunkett’s Sheffield in the 1980s. From the 1980s, however, a new understanding emerged of what cities were and what they were for. In tune with the opening up various new domains of life to market forces across the world, this new vision rearticulated the relationship between the city and the state. The task of urban governance became not the provision of services, but the aggressive marketization of place, in the hope of attracting capital from elsewhere. This was an abstract, conceptual shift in understanding, but one that came with a host of infrastructural and legislative baggage. From the 1980s the work of urban improvement was to be conducted by the market rather than the state, a market that could be orchestrated and conducted by institutions such as development corporations, and policies such as enterprise zones, with varying degrees of success. In preparing thousands of acres of inner city land for the property market, and outsourcing much of its elements to the private sector, garden festivals were causal agents in this new kind of city. As with other pilot zones, then, national garden festivals were both symbolic and literal. They were a fantastical and otherworldly projection of Britain’s urban future, but they were also agents in producing the world they signified.

While garden festivals borrowed many of the practices of previous national expositions, not in the least events such as the 1951 Festival of Britain, and German bundesgartenschau, the content they presented marked a radical breach with earlier, similar events. While the Great Exhibition and the Festival of Britain were canvasses on which a grand and coherent national vision could be painted, garden festivals were a bricolage of different stories and ideas, contracted out to public and private bodies. This does not mean, however, that the festivals were lacking in political meaning. While festival visitors were invited to tour the show homes of Wimpey and Barratt, they did so not to witness the next step in the inexorable march toward modernity, but instead as if such lifestyles had always been the case and the suburban private homes, prepped and ready for sale, were as natural, timeless, and free of context as the trees and flowers that were growing in the nearby gardens.

While private sector-led redevelopment and the tying of regeneration strategies to large, set-piece cultural events have had a long and global history over the last thirty years, these particular festivals were, in many ways, failures. While they succeeded in tidying and de-toxifying huge tracts of inner city land, it was land that, for the most part, remained unpalatable to private developers. Indeed, twenty years after the event, the Liverpool site remained overgrown and underdeveloped. It was around this time that the local press began, once again, to refer to the area as “derelict.”111 The ruins of pilot zones will one day be awaiting their own reclamation.

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Chapter 3:  
The Housing Estate: Privatization Begins At Home

In 1988 an exclusive housing development in East London opened its gates to welcome its first residents. Called the Bow Quarter, the development occupied the grounds of a former match factory and offered its newcomers a comprehensive package of amenities:

Designed for a modern lifestyle, the apartments provide high quality living space within a total self-contained environment. Life with style, comfort and ease. Spacious and fully equipped… everything at Bow Quarter is designed to make your life easier. If you need some supplies or run out of coffee you’ll find the local store for everyday groceries. There’s also a video shop and a dry cleaning service.1

Residents were also promised a heated swimming pool, a “state of the art gymnasium,” and even a dance studio.2 To enter the development a visitor had to pass through a squat, pillbox-like gatehouse, manned twenty-four seven by a private security team. The Bow Quarter was a short bus journey from another development, Balfron Tower. Completed in 1967, and designed by the Hungarian modernist Ernő Goldfinger, Balfron Tower was built by Tower Hamlets Borough Council to house some of the poorest residents in London. With twenty-seven floors and offering 146 homes, the tower was one of the tallest buildings in London when it opened. In many ways the Bow Quarter bears a formal resemblance to Balfron Tower. Both were holistically planned residential environments, set apart from the street. Both were comparatively tall, high-density units offering residents flats instead of traditional low-rise homes. However, these two structures were the outcomes of two fundamentally different ideological epochs. Although separated by a gulf of less than twenty years, in many ways Balfron Tower would have seemed, to the new residents of the Bow Quarter, an alien and mysterious place, the outcome of ancient and defunct ideas about space, ownership, and urban planning. This chapter is about the history of “the housing estate” in both its public and private guise in the last third of the twentieth century. It tells the story of how the communal walkways, stairwells and heating systems of Balfron Tower terminated in the electric security gates of the Bow Quarter. As we will see, the history of housing estates is one of the best resources we have for understanding how Britons in the late twentieth century theorized, calculated upon and parcelled out space itself.

The years between 1945 and 1969 saw the construction of four million state-owned dwellings in Britain, almost 40 percent of which were apartment blocks of three stories or more.3 Most of these were built as part of comprehensively planned housing estates. These inward-looking and labyrinthine developments usually consisted of both high and low rise buildings that were connected by walkways and courtyards. Residents paid subsidized rents and service charges to local municipal authorities who also acted as

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2 Ibid.
their landlords, changing lightbulbs, fixing elevators, and cleaning windows. Praised nationally and internationally by architects, planners and many (though not all) residents, these developments were one of the most conspicuous material manifestations of British social democracy. In the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s large public housing projects were a global phenomenon. The khrushchevky of Moscow, the superquadras of Brasilia, the Unités d’Habitation in Marseille, the projects of Chicago, among countless others, were constructed during these decades as solutions to demographic problems created by rapid urbanization and strategies for state-directed modernization. The bigger and denser the housing estate, the greater the dependence on communal systems of heating, refuse disposal, and pedestrian circulation. This chapter is about the end of this generations-long project in Britain, and what became of the buildings and ideas that it left behind.

Figure 7: The Bow Quarter, East London (Photograph: Andrew Smith, Flickr, used with permission).

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The privatization of housing estates occurred in three stages. First, the 1980 Housing Act, passed by Margaret Thatcher’s newly elected Conservative government, permitted residents to purchase their own council houses or flats at heavily subsidized rates. In 1988 the concept of “right to buy” was extended, permitting councils to sell off entire estates in one go, either to housing associations (charitable bodies who had powers to raise money through loans) or to private bodies. Second, as housing estates were being privatized, either home-by-home or en masse, their internal environments were being restructured with a new emphasis on security and creating “defensible” space. Finally, as council estates were being sold, a new generation of private, residential developments such as the Bow Quarter blossomed. These new developments are Britain’s residential pilot zones. This chapter moves through these three stages sequentially, telling the story of the rise of private housing developments in Britain and the subsequent fall from grace of their public counterparts. Most importantly it shows how a set of architectural practices and ideas about collective ownership and management emerged in the 1970s and 1980s to enable the restructuring of both public and private housing estates.

Writing the history of British housing through the form of the housing estate captures something lost in histories of policies and government directives. It shows how government policy was itself shaped by the difficulty of privatizing and securitizing the first generation of public housing projects, which were built with the intention of fostering shared ownership and public space. As the partial privatization of estates resulted in council tenants living next door to those who owned their own flats, and sharing the same courtyards, corridors and heating systems, it created disputes over space that were sometimes insoluble. Meanwhile, a new school of criminology emerged that
blamed the architecture of modernist housing projects for high rates of crime, arguing that residents felt an insufficient sense of control over the public spaces that surrounded their homes. Early attempts to privatize and securitize estates were awkward and, for the most part, unsuccessful retrofits. Some of the most radical interventions of Thatcher’s government were limited by a social democratic urban environment that stubbornly refused to be privatized or securitized. The result was the denigration and demolition of housing estates, and the building of private residential developments in their stead.

Studying “the estate” as a formal category which includes both Balfron Tower and the Bow Quarter, also allows us to rethink the history of privatization itself. Privatization is commonly seen in Britain as a series of zero sum policies and tenders, a step-by-step withdrawal of the state from a discrete handful of industries and institutions. This chapter shows that privatization can also be a set of practices, deployed by planners and residents alike, in both public apartment buildings and in private gated developments. These practices include the contesting and auditing of collective forms of provision as well as architectural interventions to break up and surveil public space in its various guises. These strategies were as much the result of a new set of calculations deemed to be outside of politics than they were of government policies. In this context, then, privatization can be seen as a new rationality, something perhaps more partial and incomplete than a mere transition in ownership, but also something harder to displace by formal political channels.

Origins

The housing estate has a brief but important pre-war history. Prior to 1945 there existed a small number of municipally owned high-density housing projects in Britain. An early example is the Boundary Estate, built by the London County Council in 1890, and comprised of a cluster of five-story buildings, each radiating outwards from a central bandstand. With a few exceptions, the first sustained wave of council housing built under the 1919 Housing Act remained low rise. Before the widespread urban redevelopment projects of the postwar period, high-rise developments were often contested and seen as unwanted imports from mainland Europe. For much of this period they were opposed by the Labour Party. This policy was reversed when the party came into power in 1945 and initiated an enormous and diverse postwar house-building campaign. For both Labour and Conservative governments immediately after the Second World War, the provision of housing was an important means of achieving electoral success. The need for housing was made all the more urgent by the wartime destruction of much of the housing stock of cities such as London, Portsmouth, and Coventry. As Minister of Housing between 1951 and 1954 Harold MacMillan described his mission to construct hundreds of thousands of new homes each year “like cricket, you could see the runs stacking up on the chalkboard.” The Housing Subsidy Act, passed in 1956, tied the provision of government subsidies to local authorities to height—the higher the tower block, the greater the subsidy. Planned estates became larger, higher, and denser during this period. In all, four hundred and forty thousand flats, housing more than a million people were

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built during this mid-century boom. By 1992 there were 5,030 tower blocks in the UK (not including Northern Ireland). Rents, meanwhile, were kept artificially low and in 1955 were a little over 6 percent of the salary of an average manual worker.

By the mid-1960s housing estates were vast and complex automatons, engaged in the collective provision of an array of services to residents. Designed by the same architect and governed collectively, such estates were usually isolated from roads and formed the basis for distinct sociological units. Architects and planners of the 1950s and 60s believed that the density and relative isolation of these developments would foster a sense of community among their residents. For this reason the material environment that surrounded each home on an estate took on an importance that was more than merely functional or decorative: “The moment a man or child steps outside his dwelling,” declared one modernist architect during this period, “our work begins.” According to architectural historians Miles Glendinning and Robert Muthesius, “There is overwhelming evidence that architects of the forties and fifties saw themselves as social reformers, just as much as did the town planners and some of the older generations of sociologists.” Architects saw themselves as being engaged in the (literal) construction of the material basis for a future communal life. In this sense, high-density estates were sociological as well as material artifacts. They were instruments for shattering and reconstituting the residential space of British cities, and creating new communities of working class solidarity, rigidly codified by estate boundaries. This legacy goes some way towards accounting for the distinctiveness of council estates. As Alison Ravetz noted, “There can be few British people unable to recognize what is nor what is not a council estate.”

By 1970 the housing estate had come to be assembled out of a recognized number of architectural and social elements. To understand these different elements and how they were seen to cohere, this chapter will briefly look to Park Hill and Hyde Park, two adjacent, very high-density housing estates built in Sheffield between 1957 and 1966. These two projects were built to replace an old nineteenth century slum on the outskirts of the city center. From the outset, J. L. Womersley, Sheffield’s didactic city architect, argued to the Council’s housing committee that high-density housing should replace the slums regardless of cost:

The mere comparison of the cost of a 2-storey house with the cost of a flat or maisonette in a multi-storey building is not in itself an adequate criterion on which to base a decision on the form of redevelopment for the central residential areas of the city… the real criterion being whether or not the redevelopment of such areas by high-density multi-storey dwellings is to the social and economic advantage of the inhabitants of the city as a whole.

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8 This figure is from a private consulting company. It is cited in Alan Scott, “High Rise Housing,” *National Housing and Town Planning Review*, special edition, 1992, 12.
10 Glendinning and Muthesius, *Tower Block*, 121.
11 Ibid., 110.
12 Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture*, 177.
13 Note by J.L Womersley, “To the Chairman and Members of the City of Sheffield Housing Committee,” 1955, Sheffield Archives (henceforward SHA), CA 655 (15).
In 1954 the Council appointed a committee of five officials under the leadership of Womersley to visit various multi-story housing developments in Copenhagen, Hamburg, Antwerp, Paris, Strasbourg, and Zurich. The Building Research Station at the government’s Department of Scientific and Industrial Research designed much of the itinerary. During their tour the committee visited housing units designed by the modernist architect Le Corbusier. According to their report they were impressed by the totalizing nature of the schemes they visited, and specifically, by their tendency to concentrate various kinds of provision within a single structure or group of structures:

Well-designed multi-storey flats can provide living standards which are in every way adequate as an alternative to 2-storey housing. For families who do not desire life in a suburban house with a garden, the multi-storey flat can give exceptional amenities in the form of open space, community buildings, services and equipment… multi-storey housing schemes, which are essentially of a communal nature and of modern construction, should exploit these two inherent features to the full if they are to be completely successful.

The housing committee decided to replicate the scale and complexity of the projects they saw, with the goal of creating “a city within a city.” The first phase of the development, Park Hill, was opened in 1961 and comprised of 992 dwellings spread among multiple four to thirteen story structures. The buildings were connected by three-meter wide decks, big enough for a milk delivery float to drive along. The architects imagined that the access decks would serve as “streets in the sky,” recreating the vibrant and communal street life of the slums that the estate had replaced: “Being free from the weather and free from normal vehicular access traffic they form ideal places for daily social intercourse – for the conversation of adults and for small children’s play.” Hyde Park, meanwhile, completed in 1966 on a plot of land adjacent to Park Hill, comprised of small maisonettes and large tower blocks, the largest of which was more than nineteen stories. As with Park Hill these structures were connected by sheltered walkways. Located on a hill and isolated from the major roads that passed through the city they were disconnected from their surroundings and shared the sociological isolation of many estates built during this period. It is telling that the first resident of Park Hill was said to be a sociologist, Mrs. J. F Demers, employed by the Council to monitor the progress of the new community as it formed.

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15 Ibid., 36.
16 Collection of miscellaneous papers relating to Hyde Park estate, SLS MP 4048 M.
18 City of Sheffield Housing Committee “Park Hill Redevelopment,” February 1961, SLS 331-833 SF.
Park Hill and Hyde Park provided comprehensive and collectively managed services to their residents. One of these was heating. Park Hill boasted a single central boiler at the lower end of the development that provided both central heating and hot water to everyone on site – the cost was included in the residents’ rent. Central heating was a radical departure. In 1956, the year before construction began on Park Hill, 96 percent of households in Britain with incomes below twenty pounds still used an open fireplace. Members of the council’s Housing Committee noted that such a modern and comprehensive heat provision was something that only a large development could make possible, writing that “Individual coal fires… are an anachronism in high-density flats which are ideally suited to provide heat and hot water from a central boiler house, a method which at once conserves the nation’s fuel and reduces emission of smoke.”

Park Hill and Hyde Park also found a collective solution to the problem of waste disposal. Both estates shared a waterborne refuse system called the ‘Garchay’ system, in which refuse was placed into a chute fitted into the kitchen sink. The waste would then flow out to a centrally located incinerator where it was burnt and removed in ash form. The development also included a handful of shops, four pubs, and a public health clinic for expecting mothers. Hyde Park, when it was opened in 1966, also featured a clothing factory, rehoused by the Council, which provided work for two hundred female staff.

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20 “Section A – City Architect’s Report,” SA CA 655 (15), 8.
21 Glendinning and Muthesius, Tower Block, 19.
22 “Multi-Storey Housing in Some European Countries,” 36.
24 Collection of miscellaneous papers related to Hyde Park estate, SLS MP 4048 M, 6.
The architects proudly claimed that the estate would provide “for almost every human need.” The common spaces – stairwells, courtyards, walkways and elevators – were to be cleaned and maintained by a team of staff employed by the council. Social activities among residents were run by an informal tenant’s association.

Park Hill and Hyde Park were early and somewhat exceptional examples of high-density estates. Their novelty spawned ministerial and royal visits, as well as articles in newspapers and trade magazines. Harold MacMillain said that the flats would “draw the attention of the world.”

Sociologically and architecturally discrete, serially produced, centralizing systems of heat provision and waste removal, and comprising of a labyrinth-like network of both public and private space, these two complexes were arguably the apotheosis of the British housing estate. By the 1970s architects had perfected a complex, integrated, and, to an extent, self-regulating residential form. The remainder of this chapter will show the means by which this form would be privatized in the later twentieth century.

Privatizing the Estate

By the 1970s the boom in high-density housing provision was coming to an end. In the wake of widespread structural problems with many of the large estates built during the previous thirty years, construction of flatted homes was beginning to slow, tailing off in London after 1975 and in the rest of the UK from the late 1960s onward. A new wave of subsidized, cheap, and industrially produced units was plagued with weather damage, heating failures, and blocked toilets. In 1968 a gas explosion in the early hours of the morning at Ronan Point, a prefabricated twenty-two-story tower block in London, killed four residents and led to a government enquiry about the safety of tower block construction methods.

As the material world of housing estates crumbled in the late 1970s a new Conservative government came to power with the intention of ending the role of the central government in the provision of housing. While the tenants of state housing had been able to purchase their homes from the state before the 1980s, doing so was a lengthy and expensive process. In 1980 the newly elected Thatcher government introduced legislation that simplified the ability of tenants to buy their home from local councils and financially incentivized those who chose to do so. The 1980 Housing Act effectively ended a public housing program that had lasted more than sixty years. In the six years after the 1980 act was passed, close to eight hundred thousand council houses were purchased by their previous occupants. In 1982 alone, upwards of two hundred thousand were purchased, more than all of the purchases of council houses between 1960 and 1977 put together. This process was driven by a calculation that a one-time transfer

26 “Park-Hill Sheffield,” SLS, MP1738 S.
27 Ibid.
29 Glendinning and Muthesius, Tower Block, 313; Figures about the decline of construction relate specifically to high tower blocks.
31 Ibid., 110.
of state assets to individuals and families would be immensely popular among its beneficiaries, whose new status as mortgaged homeowners would tie them to the low tax and small state policies of the party. This strategy was part of a broader project to reduce the scale of state ownership of infrastructure in Britain. In the years that followed the state-run electricity industry, the gas industry and the telecommunications network would be sold off, and replaced by mass share ownership and competing forms of private provision.

While a new culture of mass homeownership emerged, the thousands of estates built during the previous decades stubbornly persisted. The 1980 legislation also gave the “right to buy” to those living in flats in tower blocks, a point that Thatcher herself would emphasize in the House of Commons in 1979. While many tenants took advantage of this right, and many more bought flats from councils on the open market, this was a messy, and partial affair. The stubborn, skeletal remains of social democratic infrastructure frustrated and limited attempts to sell individual council flats on the open market. The difficulties faced by politicians and residents who attempted to deal with these remains shows that there was a protean and hybrid nature to a transition that is often seen as total, and governed by the magic wand of political whim. Attempts to part-privatize mass housing estates were arguably unsuccessful, and the collective spaces and forms of provision that defined mid-century estates became increasingly untenable.

One of the first problems facing partially privatized tower blocks in the 1980s had to do with heating. As we have seen, central heating was a particular novelty for many of the first residents of 1950s and 1960s blocks. A variety of different heating methods were used in large estates, the main divide being between hot-water-based central heating and electrical heating systems. The former usually involved the construction of one or two large boilers that distributed hot water to the entire tower block or estate. When it covered a wide area this technique was known as “district heating.” In some parts of the world, district heating, in the middle of the twentieth century, enabled a distinctive form of holistic municipal planning. In the Soviet Union many of the new industrial cities built after the revolution were serviced by a single central boiler that was heated, in many instances, by the byproduct of local industry. In such cities residential heat became dependent on the success of the local industrial economy and the functioning of an enormous municipal network of outdoor pipes. In Britain the spread of district heating was more localized, although in 1965 Birmingham City Council floated the idea of using the method to heat all of the structures in the city’s center. In housing estates hundreds of residences, sometimes in different buildings, were heated by the same boiler that was tended by the local council and paid for by a monthly service charge from residents. One report estimated that in the early 1980s close to two hundred thousand local authority

32 For differing versions of this argument see Hanley, Estates, 134-5; Rowan Moore, “Margaret Thatcher Began Britain’s Obsession With Property: Its Time To End It,” The Observer, April 5, 2014.
33 Hansard Parliamentary Debates, Commons, Deb., May 24, 1979, Series 5, Vol. 967, c1223.
34 For an overview of debates over different heating methods see Glendinning and Muthesius, Tower Block, 19.
homes were served by district heating methods. While many tenants in estates with
district heating had their flats fitted with individual thermostats allowing them control
over the provision of heat, others had no control over the supply. For the most part this
was paid for by a service charge to the local authority that built and maintained the
systems.

Many of the purchasers of local authority flats in the 1980s were buying homes
that were integrated into district heating networks, networks that mostly served council
tenants. The question of whether or not these new owners were allowed to disconnect
from such systems was solved in different ways by different local authorities, as
evidenced by a Department of the Environment survey. The London boroughs of
Hounslow and Islington, for example, favored allowing new homeowners to disconnect
from collective heating systems and install their own. Hounslow even offered to remove
council-owned heating equipment free of charge. Not all council tenants were
permitted to make this change. In housing developments managed by the Borough of
Greenwich or by the Greater London Council, for example, right-to-buy residents were
forbidden from disconnecting from communal systems and were forced to continue
pay service charges to the council (and in many instances were unable to control the flow
of heat to their homes). In both Hackney and Barking-Dagenham, meanwhile, the
council granted permission on a case-by-case basis after a lengthy process.

Debates about heating and other services, however, are perhaps most clearly seen
in the Borough of Wandsworth in South West London. Wandsworth was among the most
precocious in encouraging tower block residents to buy their flats from the state.
Governed, from 1978, by a right wing Conservative leadership, Wandsworth Council
oversaw the biggest sale of council flats anywhere in Britain. In 1980 75 percent of the
27,500 homes owned by the borough were flats. By 1988 Paul Beresford, the
Conservative leader of the Council, announced, in a special report published by the Adam
Smith Institute, that his borough had sold over ten thousand of these dwellings, 60
percent of them in high rise flats. Commitment to the privatization of housing was a
conspicuous part of the Council’s political mission, a means of raising money, lowering
taxes and reducing the role of local government in the day-to-day lives of Wandsworth’s
residents. In 1984 the five thousandth sale of a Wandsworth council home was marked by
a highly publicized event, attended by a minister from the Department of the
Environment. The Council used various methods to facilitate the sale of flats, including
sending targeted letters to individuals or families on estates earmarked for sale. One
element read:

37 Department of the Environment, internal memo, “Right to Buy: District Heating,” TNA:PRO AT 88/165.
38 Department of the Environment. internal memo, “Right To Buy: District Heating: Favourable to
Disconnection,” TNA:PRO AT 88/165.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 London Borough of Wandsworth Housing Committee Minutes, November 16, 1978, Wandsworth
Archives (henceforward WLA), 1.
43 Miss J. Crowley to Wandsworth House Sales Coordinator, Re: 5000th Sale in Wandsworth, Memo, May
4, 1984, TNA:PRO AT 88/184.
Like a lot of Wandsworth tenants you’ve probably always wanted to own your own home… Just take a look around you – already 21% of tenants on the Chatham Estate have taken up our offer and bought their own homes… You will be joining the happy band of owner occupiers on the Chatham Estate, each secure in the knowledge that their growing numbers are raising the standard of the area – and the value of their investment.44

The Council also set up a Home Ownership Unit with a mobile Sales Coordinator who made residential calls on various large estates.45 Meanwhile, certain estates, such as the Ethalburga Estate, a cluster of tower blocks and medium-rise structures built in 1966, were designated “priority sales” areas, meaning that vacant premises were advertised on the open market for sale.46 By the late 1980s as a result of these initiatives, many of the high-density estates in Wandsworth had become split between private residents and council tenants. These estates marked the frontier of the new culture of home-ownership that Thatcher’s government was attempting to inculcate. Council tenants and private residents were now sharing corridors, heating pipes, and stairwells.

While almost all of the large estates in Wandsworth were organized by some form of tenants association, the needs of these new private residents were often at odds with their neighbors. Some formed their own “leaseholders’” association to work independently of such bodies, representing only the interests of private homeowners on the estate.47 Faced with such high numbers of flat sales, Wandsworth was forced to ban most private tenants from disconnecting collective heating systems because it was “impractical and uneconomic to have large boilers running a decreasing number of units.”48 Indeed, such was the anxiety about maintaining heating systems, that in the contracts drawn up between the Council and purchasers of flats, the residents (referred to as “consumers”) were forced to agree “to ensure that there is no waste of heat and hot water whether due to the act of neglect or default of the Consumer.”49 There were fears that allowing private owners to disconnect from communal heating systems en masse was dangerous. A 1982 Department of the Environment report noted that introducing the added pipes required for disconnection may cause structural problems in large buildings. At the same time half-operating boiler systems had the tendency to create “heat load problems,” whereby it became difficult to circulate an even amount of hot water around the building.50 Despite Wandsworth’s zealous commitment to private ownership in the 1980s the Council still found itself taking on managerial roles for heat provision and other aspects of maintenance and repairs on estates in which home-owning residents were becoming the majority.

Although sales of flats proceeded at a slower rate elsewhere in the country, similar problems caused by the fracturing of ownership patterns emerged again and again. While most council residents in mass housing estates would have paid a fixed

44 Councilor P. Bingle to Mr. W. Spendlove, Memo, November 25, 1983, TNA:PRO HLG 118/4253.
45 Ibid.
47 Paul Beresford writing in Adam Smith Institute, Altered Estates, 26.
48 “Right To Buy: District Heating: Not Favourable [to disconnection],” Department of Environment internal memo, TNA:PRO AT 88/165.
49 “Agreement made between London Borough of Wandsworth and the Consumer,” Sample lease agreement, TNA:PRO AT 88/165.
service charge, which would have included the heat, maintenance and cleaning (among other services) provided across the estate, the sale of individual flats on each estate disrupted the collective logic that made these charges possible. Speaking to an audience of council officials soon after the passage of the 1980 Act, a Department of the Environment official declared “a new problem to all Local Authorities” and noted that they would be treading “to a large extent in unmuddied waters.” Would a theoretical private tenant have to pay for maintaining the elevator services in adjacent tower blocks, for example? This question was analyzed at length by a legal team commissioned by the London Borough of Southwark, which concluded that service charges had to be adjusted for each circumstance. In other words, local councils would have to reassess the cost of heat and maintenance on a block-by-block, floor-by-floor basis. This legal intervention was read and sanctioned by the Department of the Environment. While the provisions of the 1980 Housing Act continued to be interpreted differently by local authorities, the unbundling of once collective systems of provision, and their distribution to different residents at different rates was, it seems, a result of the part-privatization of mass public housing developments, almost everywhere. In Leicester, for example, the Council faced an intractable problem, when the private residents of a high-density estate, with a district heating system, which also served a nearby, almost entirely still council-owned estate, began to agitate for the right to disconnect. The City Attorney wrote an exasperated note to the government, stating: “These houses were not built for sale and the purchasers are buying the dwelling as it stands with all its benefits and burdens.”

Another important difference between private and council tenants on large estates was the right to audit service charges. Under the 1980 Housing Act tenants in the private rental sector were given the right to audit any service charges they were subject to, and mount a legal challenge if what they saw was unsatisfactory. Labour MP George Cunningham complained that this right was also enjoyed by private tenants who bought the leasehold of a flat in a communal housing estate. In Parliament Cunningham pointed out:

'It is worth pointing out that any council tenant who buys the leasehold of his flat under the right to buy legislation and who has a communal heating system will have the rights of a private tenant with regard to a heating charge. He will have the rights, but the person next door who continues to be a weekly tenant will not have the same rights.'

Cunningham’s solution was that council tenants be given the same rights as their homeowner neighbors to audit the service charges they were paying to local authorities, including the ability to see “a summary of the costs giving rise to a service charge” as well as “the accounts and receipts on which the charge is based.” It is likely that Cunningham’s objections were intended to defend the interests of an increasingly

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55 Ibid.
subordinate class of council tenants. However, the demand for the right of tenants to audit and contest each item on their service charge fit perfectly with the unbundling and segmentation of once collective services on British high-density estates during this period.

There are, then, two key points to be made about the sale of small, yet consequential numbers of council flats to owner-occupiers during this period. First, as we have seen, debates over the application of service charges in buildings with two distinct classes of ownership led to an unbundling of collectively provided services for the residents of many British high-density estates. As service charges began to differentiate between the residents of different buildings, or the beneficiaries of different types of repairs, residents began to conceive of these services in terms of how the services related to them specifically, rather than the residents of an estate as a whole. Here, privatization entailed a set of practices that went beyond the binary of state or non-state ownership.\(^\text{56}\) The second point, however, is about the failure of traditional forms of privatization. Due to the stubborn remnants of communal systems for the provision of heat, and the presence of large areas of common space that needed cleaning, fixing, and gardening, the sale of flats in tower blocks could only proceed so far. It turned out that the privatization of environments conceived of as totalities by mid century socialist architects was not an easy task. This goes some towards explaining why, while high-rise flats made up 30 percent of the total council stock in the early 1980s, they formed only 5 percent of sales between 1981 and 1985.\(^\text{57}\) Indeed, Wandsworth alone accounted for approximately one-sixth of the entire national sale of flats up 1988.\(^\text{58}\) In 1986 the government introduced new laws giving councils the power to rehouse the residents of council estates elsewhere in order to transfer ownership of the whole estate, either to a private developer or, more often, to a charitable housing association. While transfers were a potential solution for councils dealing with the problems of part-privatization, much of the growth of Britain’s private rental sector since the 1980s has occurred in newly built complexes rather than in housing estates.\(^\text{59}\) The material world created under social democracy would not pass away overnight, and attempts to retrofit large estates to meet the demands of private homeowners proved extremely challenging.

**Fortifying the Housing Estate**

There was no shortage of critics of high density housing in the 1960s and 1970s. There were many who accused particular estates of being shabby or ugly or argued that they were isolating their residents in urban peripheries.\(^\text{60}\) Until the 1980s, however, most

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\(^{56}\) In many ways this new awareness of services intersects with recent research by Peter Shapely about the rise of an increasingly discerning, “consumerist” tenant. See Peter Shapely, “Tenants Arise! Consumerism, Tenants and the Challenge to Council Authority in Manchester, 1968-92,” *Social History*, vol. 31, issue 1 (2006).

\(^{57}\) Forrest and Murie, *Selling the Welfare State*, 121.

\(^{58}\) Paul Beresford writing in Adam Smith Institute, *Altered Estates*, 26.


\(^{60}\) For these kinds of critiques see Dunleavy, *The Politics of Mass Housing*. 
of these critiques remained specific and partial. While many recognized particular problems of provision, upkeep and safety, few were arguing that high-density social housing *per se* was to blame. Indeed, many early surveys of residents were overwhelmingly positive. 61 When planners and early residents expressed doubts about the suitability of tower blocks, these doubts tended to apply only to specific groups, such as families with young children. 62 In the 1970s and 1980s a new avenue of critique emerged which served to denigrate all forms of mass public housing, and to further enable privatization. This critique was initiated by a new generation of criminologists and psychologists whose attacks on housing estates were not grounded in politics, but in biological determinism or rational actor theories of human behavior.

The intellectual origins of this critique lay with a New York-based urban planner named Oscar Newman. In 1972 Newman began research into the living conditions of the tenants of the New York Public Housing Authority. Framed within the context of a perceived trans-Atlantic crime wave, Newman argued that the high levels of crime recorded in American cities was a result of the uprooting of neighborly communities and their placement in hostile and artificial urban environments:

> The crime problems facing urban America will not be answered through increased police force or firepower. We are witnessing a breakdown of social mechanisms that once kept crime in check and gave direction and support to police activity. The small-town environments, rural or urban, which once framed and enforced their own moral codes, have virtually disappeared... In our society there are few instances of shared beliefs or values among physical neighbors. Although this heterogeneity may be intellectually desirable, it has crippled our ability to agree on the action required to maintain the social framework necessary to our continual survival. 63

What was lost as a result of this uprooting, according to Newman, was a sense of individual ownership over space. Without this feeling the collectively managed stairwells, corridors, and courtyards of high-density housing projects were concrete incubators of crime, alienation, and mutual suspicion. For Newman, the very collectivity of common spaces in large projects was a problem:

> Design can make it possible for both inhabitant and stranger to perceive that an area is under the undisputed influence of a particular group, that they dictate the activity taking place within it, and who its users are to be. This can be made so clearly evident that residents will not only feel confident, but that it is incumbent upon them to question the comings and goings of people to ensure the continued safety of the defined areas. Any intruder will be made to anticipate that his presence will be under question and open to challenge; so much that a criminal

61 At Park Hill, for example, only 7 percent of those asked were critical of the appearance of the estate. A survey of families in a 1955 London tower block 90 percent of people living above the fifth floor liked living there and did not wish to go lower. Sheffield Housing Department, “Park Hill Survey,” 1962, SLS 331.833 SQ, 8; Margaret Willis, *Living in High Flats: An Investigation* (London: London County Council Architecture Department, 1955), 2.

62 A later survey of Park Hill found that 39 percent of housewives with children under the age of five were dissatisfied with living off the ground. See Great Britain Department of the Environment, *The Estate Outside the Dwelling: Reactions of Residents to Aspects of Housing Layout* (London: HMSO, 1972).

can be deterred from even contemplating entry. Defensible space is a model for residential environments which inhibits crime by creating the physical expression of a social fabric which defends itself.\textsuperscript{64}

These problems could be ameliorated by a variety of architectural interventions, from decreasing the number of entrances shared by large developments to subdividing communal walkways and placing them under the ownership of a small number of apartments. To fully solve the problem, however, the entire concept of high-density living would have to be jettisoned. Citing examples from Ancient Rome and Sub-Saharan African communities Newman argued that “defensible space” was not unique to the urban environment of 1970s New York, but was rather something ingrained in the human condition itself:

Historically the intactness of the family living unit and the territorial zone of the cluster of family units has always been given architectural expression. The single-family house set on its own piece of land, isolated from its neighbor by as little as six feet, has been the traditional expression of arrival in most every Western culture.\textsuperscript{65}

This critique was qualitatively different from those directed at high-density housing emerging in Britain during the same time period. Problems in large estates, according to Newman, were not due to the shabbiness of construction techniques. Nor were estates only unsuitable for families with children (as 1960s and 1970s researchers feared). Rather, such projects were fundamentally unnatural. Britain was first exposed to Newman’s ideas through a 1974 BBC documentary, \textit{The Writing on the Wall}, in which Newman visited the Aylesbury Estate, still under construction in South London, and predicted that “in a short period of a few years” the project would suffer such high crime rates that “we would have to close it down, and possibly even tear it down.”\textsuperscript{66}

Oscar Newman’s concept of “defensible space” was the architectural expression of a new form of criminology that emerged in the 1970s and become known as “situational-crime prevention.” Situation-based criminologists argued that crime was about opportunity.\textsuperscript{67} It was an approach that focused less on measures that would ameliorate poverty or treat mental illness and more on unlocked doors and poorly overlooked streets. Rather than making the kinds of anthropological claims associated with earlier generations of criminologists, academics such as C. Ray Jeffrey in the US and Ron Clarke in the UK argued that criminals were merely maximizing the opportunities afforded to them. While the former spent his career seeking a neuroscientific basis for the link between high rates of crime and certain kinds of environments, Ron Clarke became interested in “rational actor” behavioral models, in which crime could be controlled by carefully calibrated incentives.\textsuperscript{68} Before going into

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 2-3.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{66} \textit{The Writing on the Wall}, directed by Patrick Smith (1996; UK; BBC), Youtube Video, Last modified April 2, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9OMH7N_6nCE>.
academia, Clarke had been the director of the Home Office Research and Planning Unit, where he pioneered situation-based crime prevention techniques.

In the wake of Jeffrey’s and Clarke’s work and as situational theories of criminology began to take root on both sides of the Atlantic during the 1970s and 1980s, responsibility for crime reduction fell increasingly onto the built environment. Oscar Newman was the first among a generation of planners and architects who argued that minor environmental interventions would dramatically reduce urban crime rates. It is no coincidence that Alice Coleman, one of the biggest supporters and practitioners of Oscar Newman’s ideas in the UK, was arguably the biggest single agitator against high-density housing in postwar Britain. Coleman was a geography professor at King’s College London who, towards the end of her career, led an in-depth investigation into the conditions of life on various high-density estates in Britain. The resulting book, *Utopia on Trial*, was published in 1985 and featured a vitriolic attack on almost every aspect of high-density housing. Declaring postwar estates to be “human disasters that smear many lives with traumatic experiences,” Coleman argued for the superiority of the unplanned ribbon developments of the pre-war era:

> The twentieth century has been split in two by a great revolution in housing. The first half of the century was dominated by the age-old system of natural selection, which left people free to secure the best accommodation they could. The second half has embraced the Utopian ideal of housing planned by a paternalistic authority, which offered hopes of improved standards but also ran the risk of trapping people in dwellings not of their choosing… many of whom have been ruthless evicted from their little terrace houses, and sometimes mentally scarred by this process as severely as by the loss of a spouse or the loss of a limb.\(^69\)

Coleman deployed a disparate array of psychological evidence to claim that such housing units were opposed to what she deemed to be unalterable aspects of nature:

> A limpet manufactures a protective shell. A snail creates a mobile home. A shrimp burrows into the sea-floor… Throughout most of human history our inbuilt guidance system has led us to produce a shelter with an adjoining piece of territory, and to impress it with distinctive marks of identity. The decoration, the garden layout, the boundary fence, the name plate or other signals proclaim the residence of a unique family rather than a faceless unit among the masses… Designs that incorporated defensible territory and scope for the occupants to make their mark proved popular and were repeated, while those that denied these needs proved hard to sell and were discontinued. Natural selection was still in command.\(^70\)

Coleman claimed to have discovered an eternal, unchanging fact about the relationship between living beings and space — one that transcended time, place and even species — writing, “evidence from five continents suggests that the effect of the indicated designs

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70 Ibid., 17-18.
are a world-wide phenomenon, which must reflect something basic in human nature.”  
Elsewhere she cited research supposedly showing that when a rat colony becomes too large, normal behavior among its residents gave way to “aggressiveness, homosexuality and other deviations.”  
Like Oscar Newman (whom she cited throughout her book), Coleman believed that while detached suburban homes were the long-term ideal, a set of ameliorative environmental interventions could be made to improve many high-density estates.

After the publication of *Utopia on Trial*, Coleman visited estates in Toronto, Amsterdam and across Australia and was given an audience with Prince Charles. Her book was a publishing success and received a second edition in 1990. Most importantly, however, *Utopia on Trial* was read and admired by Margaret Thatcher. Coleman’s arguments resonated with neoliberal critiques of state planning that were gaining currency in the 1980s. While government policy was attempting to turn communities of tenants into private homeowners, here was evidence that privately owned and defensible space was something deeply ingrained in the human condition. Not only did Coleman appear to provide evidence linking a key element of the British welfare state with high rates of crime and delinquency, but also she did so within an analysis of the social body that saw crime as the result of opportunities and choices rather than poverty or unemployment. Indeed, Coleman even hinted that unemployment itself was the *outcome* of the undesirable architecture of British council estates:

> Is joblessness not another form of social malaise that follows from the existence of misconceived design? In broad terms the answer is no... but if we look at the more detailed distribution of unemployment we find high concentrations in inner cities with postwar housing estates, and we have to ask, ‘Why there?’"  

Furthermore she emphasized that her interventions would have a broad, ameliorative affect on various social problems at a very low cost. Small sums of money spent on redesigning estates would have “financial gains outside the housing unit,” as social services and the police would be allowed to play a diminished role.  
Here, then, was a vision of society that suited perfectly a government hell-bent on fiscal retrenchment, and the phasing out of wealth redistribution as a means of poverty reduction.

In 1988 Coleman was invited to 10 Downing Street to meet personally with the Margaret Thatcher. Following this meeting, she was awarded more than forty million pounds from the Department of the Environment to implement a series of reforms to British housing estates. The Department also promised a 100 percent subsidy for cooperative local authorities that were willing to implement her proposals. Colman undertook this project as head of the Design Improvement Controlled Experiment (DICE), a group headquartered at King’s College London. The DICE project was notable for its rigorous and calculative methodology. When working on the Ledbury Estate in South East London in 1989, the team drew up a list of sixteen factors it believed to be

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73 Coleman, *Utopia On Trial*, 86.
74 Ibid., 168-169.
harmful. Some of these, such as the number of stories and dwellings per unit, related to size and density, while others, such as the number and type of entrances, and the presence of overhead walkways, related to specific design features. Depending on the prevalence of these faults the estate was assigned an overall “disadvantagement score,” calculated by averaging the number of design infringements recorded on each block. The twenty tower blocks and low-rise structures that made up the Ledbury Estate, for example, received an overall disadvantagement score of 10.7, seen by DICE as dangerously high.

Once the problems of a given estate had been identified and their relative severity calculated, DICE employed Department of the Environment funding to solve the problem as best they could. At the Ledbury Estate various changes were made to increase the amounts of private, defensible territory. The ground floor units of many of the blocks were converted into a “house,” “with its own walled and gated front garden facing the road, and its own back garden without an exit.” The provision of walled gardens was a particularly important point for Coleman, who, writing about another estate, described how “the provision of gardens for 35 maisonette blocks transformed the children [who lived on the estate] from anonymous menacing gangs to polite individuals.” Meanwhile, a sense of demarcated private ownership over common space was to be induced on the Ledbury Estate by reducing the number of entrances and turning communal walkways into “a landing within the entrance” and in the case of some of the blocks removing them entirely. The medium-sized blocks would be ringed with fences to create “semi public areas… with a single access gate.”

The changes introduced at the Ledbury Estate were typical of the kinds of interventions made by Coleman to housing estates across the country. Across London and in Nottingham, Preston and Manchester ground floor apartments were given fenced gardens, collective walkways were demolished or bricked up, and tower blocks were segmented into different access zones. Almost every intervention undertaken by the DICE team was designed to increase the amount of private or semi-private space at the expense of accessible common areas, while developing mechanisms for the increased surveillance of the common areas that remained. Writing about Coleman’s interventions on the Mozart Estate in North West London (figures 4 and 5) one architecture critic described the way the new design of the estate allowed for enhanced surveillance of the street outside:

The architecture of the new dwellings follows a defensible space strategy of design, to minimise shared space and maximise surveillance. Low fences

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75 “Ledbury Estate: Design Disadvantagement Report,” King’s College Design Improvement Team, 1989 (As seen with the permission of Alice Coleman, October, 2014), 2-4.
76 Ibid., 7.
77 Ibid., 11.
78 Alice Coleman in Adam Smith Institute, Altered Estates, 1.
80 Ibid., 17.
81 Summary of the projects undertaken by DICE can be found in Great Britain Department of the Environment, The Design Improvement Controlled Experiment (DICE): An Evaluation of the Impact, Costs and Benefits of Estate Re-Modeling (London: Department of the Environment, 1997).
proliferate. They demarcate where the public streets end and where the private gardens begin, while eyes inside the houses can still watch the street.²²

These subtle means of privatizing or fortifying space changed the outward appearance of many estates in Britain. The communal fantasies of many modernist architects were being destroyed by DICE, in pursuit of “defensible space.” Indeed, in the early 1990s, the Hyde Park estate in Sheffield was remodeled using many of the techniques pioneered by DICE after a Council report deemed elements of the building to be “unattractive and hostile.”³³ The estate was entirely demolished and rebuilt, lacking almost all of the communal features (such as the walkway and courtyards) of the previous development, instead rebranded as a low-rise “village” complete with a village green.⁴⁴ Although DICE had no official role to play in the redevelopment of Hyde Park the influence of Alice Coleman was recognized by the disgruntled modernist architect Cedric Price, who referred to the development as a “pathetic Colemanville.”⁵⁵

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**Figures 10 and 11:** The Mozart Estate in 2015: Ground floor units have fenced gardens and corridors. Landings of upper floors are fenced off from those who don’t live there. Once fully open these buildings have been segmented into different zones of access, and, as with the above, fitted with walled perimeters to create “semi private” space. (Photograph: Sam Wetherell).

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⁴⁴ “Hyde Park: 1991 Student Games Village and Future Housing Scheme.” SLA ACC 2010/36, Box 1.
While its methods were doubtless influential DICE was only able to restructure a handful of British estates. In 1990 a change in government led to the end of the program, and in 1997 an independent audit of the program concluded that its effects had been limited, noting that “none of the DICE schemes can be judged to have been effective in meeting the (admittedly ambitious) objectives set for it by Professor Coleman.” For the most part Coleman’s interventions had little effect on crime rates and poverty on the estates with which she worked. The warren of waist-high fences, absence of overhead walkways, and segmentation of access remain on the Mozart Estate in 2015, twenty-five years after Coleman first arrived there. Despite her alterations, however, the estate has witnessed a number of high profile instances of gang violence, including kidnappings and drive-by shootings.

Telling the story of the denigration of high-density public housing in Britain through the lens of architectural criminology allows us to make two important insights. First, the denigration of collective mass housing projects and the valuation of private space and low-rise homeownership in its stead was initiated by a calculative change as much as by a political critique. For planners like Alice Coleman and Oscar Newman, it was a scientific fact that this kind of housing was doomed to end in marginalization and misery for its residents, one that rested on essential truths about the human condition. This discovery had an inevitable logic and was used to undermine the collective nature of earlier developments, replacing the walkways and courtyards which were once seen as the necessary material bedrock of future social cohesion with fortified entrances, defensible spaces, and clearly demarcated private gardens. The privatization of housing estates marched in step with a new set of ideas about the relationship between individuals and space, ideas that emerged in the 1970s and would come to feel commonsensical by the 1990s, to the point where such estates feel like strange and unfamiliar places to many Britons today. Second, the architectural practices that resulted from these new theories saw the development of subtle and partial forms of privatization that have thus far been overlooked. At the same time that estates were being formally privatized, first on a flat-by-flat basis and later en masse, residents were being encouraged to treat public and unsurveilled spaces as suspicious. These changes suited a new environment where communities of council tenants on large estates were increasingly becoming homeowners and private renters. However, the various nudges and fences that create defensible spaces, when tacked onto modernist council estates, were only ever an awkward retrofit. As with attempts to sell individual flats within estates, attempts at privatization were stymied by the tricky persistence of the open plan courtyards and walkways built by a previous generation of architects. As the remainder of this chapter will show, the solution was to rethink the high-density estate, beginning from an entirely blank slate.

Rearticulation

In 1986 George Young, a junior Conservative minister in the Department of the Environment, ceremonially opened a twenty-two-story tower block in East London. Unlike Balfron Tower or the towers of Park Hill, The Cascades was an entirely private

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86 Department of the Environment, *The Design Improvement Controlled Experiment*, 2
development, purpose-built for the elite employees of the new businesses that were moving into the London Docklands enterprise zone. While the planners and architects of mid-century modernist estates had looked east to France, Central Europe and Scandinavia, The Cascades was a resolutely American affair, whose developers had toured the US gathering information about luxury high-rise developments. An article in the property supplement of the *Sunday Times* highlighted the building’s novelty: “If you thought that tower blocks had been permanently discredited as civilized places to live – think again… today’s yuppie buyer will be enchanted by the style of luxury high-rise life.”

In the 1980s and 1990s a new breed of high-density tower blocks emerged, constructed by private property developers. While these buildings were once limited to parts of London, particularly the East End, by the early 2000s they had become a common feature of most British cities. The emergence of such developments must be seen within the context of a renewed political focus on the private rental sector. Private landlords had been scarce in the middle of the twentieth century, a time when most people either rented from the council or owned their own home. In the 1940s a Labour government had even considered nationalizing Britain’s entire stock of private rental housing. The Conservative government of the 1980s, however, was determined to revive this sector. The 1979 Conservative manifesto talked about “reviving the rental sector” and the urban boom in private rented housing in the late 1980s and 1990s was in many ways enabled by the 1988 Housing Act, which introduced more flexible systems of short and long term rental contracts. This chapter will conclude by looking at the housing estate in its private, *fin-de-siècle* form. After the difficulties faced by councils attempting to part-privatize their stock of high-density estates, these new structures granted free rein to the auditing and segmentation of services and intense forms of security and surveillance.

Sometimes called “gated communities” private, fortified, estates were a common feature of late twentieth century cities across the world. In the US, Brazil, and South Africa such developments tended to follow in the wake of national moments of democratization or civil rights victories, in which the task of segregation, now *de facto* rather than *de jure*, fell increasingly onto the private residential sector. The rise of “gated communities” in Britain, although significant after the 1980s, had been slower. When Margaret Thatcher bought a home in Hambledon Place, a gated community in Dulwich in South London, such developments earned a brief flurry of press interest. A local history website for residents of this part of Dulwich noted that, due to its gates, “a Heritage Blue Plaque on the wall of her former house would not be seen by the general public.” By 2003 it was estimated that there were more than a thousand “gated

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However, this figure overlooks the substantial number of private apartment buildings, many of which were subject to the same mechanisms of collective provision mixed with securitization.

The publicity material for hundreds of developments in the London Docklands and the South London borough of Southwark, built during the 1980s and early 1990s, show a striking set of similarities between structures built by a wide variety of private developers. In their density, the serial nature of their production, their relative isolation from pre-existing urban networks, and their provision of various services for residents, these structures resembled council estates. Many of the new developments that emerged in East London, for example, were complex high-density developments, comprised of multiple structures, linked together by courtyards and sculpted common spaces. A low-rise development of forty seven private flats built by Bennett Homes in East London in 1988 offered residents a total planned environment:

Architects were commissioned to create a design that gave the atmosphere of the warehouses and merchant homes of Docklands past. On walking between the two imposing gatehouses at the entrance of St. George’s Square into the cobbled quadrangle, it can be seen that with the blend of mellow redbricks… the vaulted windows and the copper dormers, tranquil surroundings have been created.\(^{95}\)

Another development in the Isle of Dogs was described by developers as a “total concept.”\(^{96}\) Meanwhile, Heron Homes marketed a new development near St. Katherine’s Wharf offering “total communities” for their residents that would “recreate the village atmosphere and friendly community of yesteryear.”\(^{97}\) The similarity between these large, comprehensive, developments and their mid-century modernist equivalents did not go unnoticed by contemporary architects and journalists. *The Sunday Times* property section wrote of developers dissuading “the public from associating tower blocks with the monstrosities of the 1960s,” while *Architects Journal* wrote that “the visions of Le Corbusier… had finally been realised.”\(^{98}\) As with the shops, launderettes, and workplaces that were included at Park Hill and Hyde Park, many of these developments offered a diverse and sometimes obscure range of services beyond their lobbies. A late 1980s development built by Fairclough Homes in the Isle of Dogs, for example, promised “shops, a health club with swimming pool, solarium, sauna and gym.”\(^{99}\) As we have seen, perhaps the most comprehensive range of services was offered to the residents of the Bow Quarter. That the Bow Quarter was described as “more than just a place to live” is telling.\(^{100}\) To buy or rent a house in many of these complexes was to sign up for a holistic


\(^{96}\) “A Total Concept,” advertising brochure, THA 331.1. LC 7838. Box 2.


\(^{100}\) “Bow Quarter: A New Landmark for London Living.”
experience of consumption, fashioned out of the ancillary services provided by property
developers.

As we have seen, heating methods often provide valuable insights into the extent
to which forms of provision were provided on a collective or individual basis. While a
range of different heating methods were provided for the residents of such developments
their publicity material was often keen to emphasize that tenants retained total control of
their heat provision. Heating was referred to at different times as “independent,” “fully
programmable,” and equipped with “sophisticated controls.” While many residents
would likely have paid metered bills directly to gas or electricity companies, those who
paid service charges would have had the right, under the 1980 Housing Act, to audit each
line of their account. In these developments we see something like an autonomous and
individuated rearticulation of the district or collective heating systems found in the first
generation of tower blocks.

Such developments were also able to distil and perfect many of the architectural
practices developed by environmental criminologists in the 1980s. While planners such
as Alice Coleman had to retrofit these techniques into pre-existing buildings, many of the
new private developments of this period were “secured by design” from the outset. In the
publicity material for these developments, descriptions of their sophisticated security
arrangements take center stage. An advert for Free Trade Wharf, a very large riverside
development, noted:

Security has been recognised as of prime importance to residents. The main
entrance is surveyed 24 hours a day by video cameras as are all external
parking areas. Residents are provided with electronic passes which they can
gain entry. The video and audio entry systems installed in each apartment allow
the residents to view visitors at the security desk and to communicate with the
porter... Entry via the car park can only be gained with a special transmitter
which automatically opens the gates.102

Another large Docklands development consisting of sixty eight apartment
buildings spread among four “wings” boasted:

A comprehensive security system... all entrances are under surveillance by the
Porter. In addition each apartment has its own entry telephone system with
video monitor. Apartments are also linked to the Porter’s lodge by telephone.
Each apartment has a security alarm system which is linked to the Porter’s
lodge.103

This emphasis on security is almost ubiquitous in such adverts. While private
developers boasted many innovate security technologies, the most common were video
entry phone systems and CCTV cameras. Many of these systems mirrored developments
taking place in high-density, council-owned blocks. Although intercom systems had been
in use since the 1950s in housing estates, they became increasingly prevalent from the

101 In order of appearance: “St Hilda’s Wharf,” advertising brochure, THA 331.4 LP. 7819; “Eaton
Terrace,” advertising brochure, THA 331.9 Folder 9; “Gun Wharf,” advertising brochure, THA 331.1
Folder 9.
102 Free Trade Wharf,” advertising brochure, THA 331.1 LP 8619.
103 Prospect Wharf,” advertising brochure, MLDA, Docklands Forum, Set 2, Box 5.
1970s and 1980s, being installed as part of upgrading and modernization programs. In Wandsworth, for example, entryphones were introduced on estates in 1981 as part of “a major measure to combat vandalism in flatted blocks.” Indeed, planners in the borough even discussed “extending their use to protect individual corridor entrances inside blocks.” On the Wenlock Estate in Hackney, meanwhile, entryphones were introduced as part of a tenant initiative in 1978. In 1989 proposals for the redevelopment of the Hyde Park estate in Sheffield were similar in their complexity to those in private sector developments:

In addition to enclosure… access decks will be protected by a security system to prevent unauthorised access by members of the public. This will be a two stage system. The first stage consists of enclosing all the stair and lift areas via a staffed reception desk. This desk would have video surveillance of all other entrances (only accessible to residents) and of the deck areas. The second stage would be individual decks, and visitors would only be able to gain access to these areas after calling up the residents via a door entry system.

CCTV cameras became routine in tower blocks from the 1980s onward. For example, as part of a two million pound redevelopment project led by the Estates Action Group, Rundell Tower in Lambeth was provided with a comprehensive CCTV network in 1990. At Wenlock, Hyde Park, and Rundell Tower, however, the introduction of such measures were post-hoc retrofits. In the new, private, mass housing developments, these measures were in place from the outset.

As well as including gates, cameras, and security guards, private housing developers also introduced many of the more subtle aspects of defensible space. It was common practice for ground floor apartments, for example, to be provided with fenced gardens, a familiar device of Alice Coleman’s DICE project. One private Docklands development, championed as a model of “community architecture,” cited Oscar Newman’s work, offering residents “defensible space through front and rear gardens.” The ground floor flats of Horseshoe Court and Russia Court, two luxury apartment units built by different developers, were separated by high walls and fences from both the common areas of the development as well as the public riverside walkways that passed by outside. Meanwhile, the large walkways connecting separate blocks so despised by Coleman and Newman, were largely absent in such private developments, which for the most part advertised separate entrances for each major structure. Each “wing” of Prospect Wharf, for example, had its own staircase, foyer, and elevator. In many ways such developments were perfections of the decades-long co-evolution of criminological and architectural practices. While Oscar Newman claimed to have demonstrated a positive correlation between the height of a residential building and the number of crimes it witnessed, he also argued that such a correlation would not apply to securitized high-density private developments:

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105 Ibid., 6.
109 Advertising brochure, Horseshoe Court and Russia Court, MLDA, Docklands Forum, Set 2, Box 5.
110 Advertising brochure, “Prospect Wharf,” MLDA, Docklands Forum, Set 2, Box 5.
The only difference between a low-income and a high-income development is the presence of fences and guards in the upper-income project, or a doorman provided for each of its buildings. These... are what make the one a workable habitat and the other not.\textsuperscript{111}

These luxury units were the logical outcome of an increasingly institutionalized theory about the relationship between architecture and crime. Set apart from the street by high walls and fences, monitored by CCTV cameras, and secured by video entry phones, these new developments offered residents a radical sense of enclosure.

While tenants’ associations on council estates had existed since the dawn of British public housing, before the 1970s they had largely been either organizational (for example, managing the use of the community center at Park Hill) or political (for example organizing city-wide as a pressure group to resist rent increases).\textsuperscript{112} For the most part, the day-to-day management of council estates depended on an increasingly bureaucratic system of local authority control, with most local councils creating discrete housing departments during the mid-century boom in construction. In the 1970s, however, management was progressively devolved, with tenants themselves becoming responsible for the cleaning, repairing, and even the policing of their estates. The day-to-day tasks of mediating disputes, making decisions over common spaces, and collectively bargaining with management in private high-density units was largely undertaken by private residents’ associations. Although these organizations were, by definition, collective endeavors, they were often seen as necessary instances of cooperation in order to preserve a common investment. Indeed, there is something almost Hobbesian about the advice given to residents considering forming such an association:

Flat owners are a diverse group of people whose one common feature is that they share a building which is separated into individually owned and occupied units. Each unit relies on all the others for support and protection. They are interdependent, and without being enveloped in an integrated structure each unit would soon become impossible to manage and possibly unsaleable. Each flat-owner will want to ensure that a proper structure is in place which provides rules for enforcing obligations between flat-owners and for how the building as a whole is maintained and how it insured.\textsuperscript{113}

Residents’ associations usually had their own constitutions, specifying a quorum for decision-making and meeting frequency.\textsuperscript{114} Often legal advice and draft constitutions were dispensed by the Federation of Private Residents’ Associations (FPRA), an organization founded in 1971 to advance the interest of private tenants in the rental sector. Thanks in part to lobbying by FPRA, private residents associations were deemed

\textsuperscript{111} Newman, \textit{Defensible Space}, 23.


\textsuperscript{113} Nigel Cox, \textit{Running a Flat Management Company} (Bristol: Jordans, 1993), 1.

\textsuperscript{114} A specimen constitution designed for residents can be seen in Federation of Private Residents’ Associations, “The Federation of Private Residents’ Associations Information Pack,” (London: Federation of Private Residents Associations LTD, 1993).
by the 1980 Housing Act to be the legal official representatives of individual housing units.\textsuperscript{115}

Much of the FPRA’s energies were spent mediating legal battles over the maintenance of common spaces in private housing developments. Legally, landlords were allowed to charge residents for maintenance and repairs but not for “improvements” that resulted in long-term substantive changes to the building. Many of the legal challenges that FPRA was involved in were disputes over the financial responsibility of various alterations. The large number of such disputes is testament to the complete unbundling of forms of provision in private housing units. In 1990, for example, a legal challenge following the sale of a previously communal roof terrace to a third party resulted in a reduction of rents and service charges for the residents.\textsuperscript{116} In South London in 1986, a judge ruled that a landlord was allowed to charge residents for painting the exterior wooden frames of windows, but not their replacement with double-glazing.\textsuperscript{117} In 1993, elsewhere in London, a tenant successfully claimed that the disrepair of common spaces breached a covenant he had signed guaranteeing “quiet enjoyment” of the premises.\textsuperscript{118} These mundane examples of legal challenges show that private tenants were highly organized, both on a building-by-building basis, but also as part of a nationwide structure of support when it came to consuming and contesting the services provided in private housing developments.

The role of these organizations in contesting services, managing common spaces, and taking an active interest in the security of their buildings can be seen in the material produced by a small residents’ association in a large market town in Berkshire.\textsuperscript{119} The residents’ association was created to organize the tenants of Parker Grange, a private housing development comprising of twenty-one flats spread between two multi-story buildings, built in 1982. The association was organized as a limited company, with each tenant receiving a single share. With a quorum of just three residents, the members of the association would meet annually to discuss various issues relating to the management of the common resources they shared. Such issues ranged from the installation of lights in the development’s car park to discussion of sending a delegation to the local vicar to complain about the loudness of the nearby church bells.\textsuperscript{120}

The various services provided at Parker Grange were heavily audited by residents. When a minority of residents complained about poor television reception in 1983, for example, it was decided that repairing the television aerials of each building would be too expensive, and “those experiencing poor reception would have to make their own arrangements.”\textsuperscript{121} In 1987, meanwhile, the residents decided against the creation of a collective “sinking fund” for repairs, arguing instead that “such expenditure should continue to be met as it arises by extra individual contribution at time of need.”\textsuperscript{122}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{116} Ibid., Spring 1991.
\bibitem{117} Ibid., Summer 1987.
\bibitem{118} Ibid., Autumn 1993.
\bibitem{119} For reasons of anonymity, the name of the housing complex has been changed, as have any individuals referred to in the printed material. The material was viewed with the permission of the association’s chairman in October, 2014.
\bibitem{120} Parker Grange Residents’ Association, “Minutes,” February 12, 1985.
\bibitem{121} Parker Grange Residents’ Association, “Minutes,” December 9, 1983.
\end{thebibliography}
the bitterest debate over provision emerged in 1984 when a resident, Mr. Fairclough, sent a series of detailed requests to the management requesting more information about the service charge. The resident claimed that charging each household the same amount for different services was unreasonable. He claimed that the security system, as well as the floor and window cleaning costs, should be differentially charged, as “it would reasonably be expected that wear and tear would be higher in the downstairs block.” Indeed, he was particularly concerned about the distribution of costs between residents of the two buildings, demanding to see maintenance costs for each. Fairclough even challenged the costs of the lighting of common areas after conducting his own test of the electricity supply. The denial of his requests to further segment the service charges paid by residents to the management sent Fairclough into a rage. One letter to management, following a meeting about the issue, revealed the bitterness that these debates could engender:

You deliberately and with some malice prevented me from stating my case. In fact you prostituted your office to argue against me… You openly encouraged a hostile re-action from the meeting, and, did nothing to restrain the unseemly verbal abuse of Mr. Childs and myself… All in all I regret to say your competency in chairmanship is abysmal.

At almost every opportunity, some or all of the residents of Parker Grange opposed collective forms of provision. Service charges were closely audited, frequently contested, and, if possible, charged on a household-by-household basis.

More than anything else, however, the residents of Parker Grange, discussed security. The fortification of their homes recurred with an obsessive frequency at the Annual General Meetings (AGMs) of the residents’ association. Many early discussions about safety betrayed a paternalistic conservatism. The minutes for the 1985 AGM noted:

In view of the many ladies residing in the blocks, Messers Smith and Stevens suggested that there should be permanent internal safety lights illuminated on the same basis as the outside lighting. It was pointed out that the majority of flats had spyholes and door telephones. Leaseholders were advised to use the safety chains provided.

Meanwhile, the positioning of a plaque detailing the industrial history of the site on one of the inward facing walls came under fire during the same AGM out of concern that it might attract “trespasses.” At the 1987 meeting the storage of fire extinguishers in the landings and corridors of the buildings came under scrutiny as the equipment was “too easily stolen.”

The residents, at different times, railed against, “trespassers apparently under the influence of drink,” the noise from the local youth club, and even

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123 Parker Grange Resident’s Association, “Memorandum: Maintenance Charges 1984.”
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
126 Mr. Fairclough to Mr. Jones, Parker Grange Residents’ Association file of correspondence, January 14, 1985.
128 Ibid.
roosting pigeons, responsible for “droppings cascading out of the West door.”

Anything that intruded onto the heavily fortified and sanitized environment of Parker Grange was cause for concern. In 1991 a reminder to residents to double lock their doors was marked with the heading: “URGENT!!! SECURITY WARNING!!!”

It is clear from the records of Parker Grange that any form of common space or any collectively managed service was a source of tremendous anxiety for its residents. Corridors, car parks, and landings were imagined to be sites of criminal and sometimes even sexual danger. The spending of funds on a collective rather than an individuated basis, meanwhile, was fraught with concerns about value for money, and led to tempestuous arguments between residents. Despite the ostensibly massified and communal nature of the built environment the residents inhabited and the stairwells, corridors, gardens, and courtyards that they had common rights to, Parker Grange was a site for fiscal and spatial retrenchment.

Conclusion

How we understand the history of “privatization,” in the late twentieth century depends on our point of departure. The usual tendency to dwell on the fates of British Rail, British Steel, and British Telecom has produced a familiar account of privatization as being a state driven, zero-sum game, heralded in manifestos and announced by the Queen in Parliament. From a focus on housing, particularly high-density housing, a very different picture emerges, one that allows us to see privatization as a set of practices and calculations that transcend the binary between state and non-state ownership. As with other aspects of what has come to be called “neoliberalism” in late twentieth century Britain, a close attention to the history of high-density housing shows how a new political rationality was assembled out of various historically contingent practices that cohered together in the crucial decade of the 1980s. It was during this time that mid-century planning methods, new and essentialist calculations about the relationships between people and space and new assumptions about the provision of services to the residents of collectively planned environments came together to produce an approach to housing that feels commonsensical to those of us in the early twenty-first century.

Looking at the changing skylines of almost every major British city in the second decade of the twenty-first century, it is possible to imagine that private apartment buildings will soon become as numerous and widespread as the council-owned tower blocks which continue to ring the outskirts of city centers. Their popularity as homes for residents and as financial instruments for property speculators continues to grow. This chapter has attempted to show that each of these new buildings was the outcome of set of new ideas about space that crystallized during the 1980s. The collective features of high-density housing, features that once appealed to social democratic modernists interested in creating new egalitarian communities and were distributed equally among residents, became unbundled from one another, resulting in the individuation and stratification of contributions to upkeep and services. While these changes took place, a new set of

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calculations about the relationship between crime, opportunity and architectural design emerged to denigrate collectively managed common space and encourage its fortification. These new and increasingly commonsensical ideas about segmentation and security were found to be incompatible with the dense, modernist worlds conceived of by mid-century planners. It was in the new private developments that these ideas found their purest expression in the final decades of the twentieth century.

The purpose of this chapter is not to argue that Margaret Thatcher’s government or the various housing acts of the 1980s played an insignificant role in the end of Britain’s sixty-year public housing program. Nor is it to downplay the very serious environmental problems that faced the residents of cheaply constructed tower blocks by the 1980s (although access to private home-ownership has neither improved the living conditions of Britain’s poor, nor ended their cultural and spatial marginalization). Instead the chapter shows that people’s relationship with their immediate spatial environment is produced by a set of imperatives and assumptions subject to change without notice. These imperatives in the mid-twentieth century valorized public ownership, collective and equal forms of provision, and large areas of open, communal space. In the late twentieth century a new set of imperatives valorized defensible space, and individually allocated forms of provision. The latter values became increasingly difficult to retrofit into an environment built for the former. As we have seen with garden festivals, the increasingly ruinous remains of social democracy had to be negotiated one way or another. This chapter began by describing Balfron Tower and the Bow Quarter, two irreconcilably different developments that were outcomes of two very different political moments. In the thirty years since the opening of the Bow Quarter, the further intensification of the processes described in this chapter — the privatization, securitization and rearticulation of high-density housing — has begun to render the distinction between these two structures meaningless. Recently it has been the case that the developers of luxury housing estates are legally required to provide a small number of low-income homes for poorer residents. In 2015 it was reported that low-income tenants in a new luxury estate in London called One Tower Bridge would not be allowed access to the development’s communal gardens.132 Meanwhile, in 2008, the private property company Urban Splash purchased the entirety of the Park Hill estate in Sheffield. Clad with sheets of red, orange, and yellow aluminum, the newly restored Park Hill offers “streets in the sky” for wealthy young professionals.133 In the first instance, low-income housing is provided as an appendage to a luxury gated estate, excluded from the forms of provision on offer to its wealthier residents. In the second, the mid-century modernist complex has become the luxury apartment building. Due to the processes described in this chapter, then, we are living in a world in which the distinction between collective and private forms of housing is beginning to blur into irrelevance.

Chapter 4: The Shopping Mall: The View From the Mezzanine

In the spring of 1990 a team of expert seismologists from California flew halfway around the world to advise on the construction of what was to be the world’s tallest building.\(^1\) Their destination was not Dubai, Tokyo, or London, but rather an enormous shopping mall on the outskirts of Birmingham named Merry Hill. Even without the proposed two thousand foot tower Merry Hill was a vast automaton. Ringed by ten thousand parking spaces and a waterside business park, Merry Hill would boast 2.5 miles of enclosed pedestrianized shopping with more than two hundred and fifty shops spread among five discrete and carefully planned zones. Inside the mall was a ten screen cinema, a Jules Verne style international food court with a giant sculpted balloon at its center, a “finance court” with live financial news broadcast on a series of TV screens, and a full amphitheater that hosted fashion shows, carnivals, home exhibitions, live music events and, even a Miss Merry Hill pageant.\(^2\) The mall had its own quarterly magazine, its own fleet of more than forty minibuses, and, perhaps most impressively a state-of-the-art monorail system linking the car park, the shopping mall, and a next-door business park. One hundred and fifty closed circuit television cameras watched over the mall’s twenty three million annual visitors monitored by a central control room.\(^3\) On top of the fifty private security officers working in the mall were seven permanently stationed members of the West Midlands Police. To cap it all the Merry Hill Tower, whose construction was eventually shelved, was set to be more than twice the height of the Eiffel Tower.

Conceived of by two local entrepreneurs, bought out by American property developers, inspired by the West Edmonton Mall in Alberta, Canada, and furnished by a Swiss-built monorail and French-built color-coded neoclassical gables Merry Hill was a transnational enterprise. As if to illustrate the modularity of the project, its carriages and tracks, when closed in 1996 for safety reasons, were shipped to an almost identical mall in Queensland, Australia.\(^4\)

The worldwide proliferation of enclosed shopping centers such as Merry Hill is responsible for one of the greatest global standardizations of space that has ever occurred.\(^5\) Great swathes of the world are now lit at 350 lux and heated to precisely seventy-two degrees Fahrenheit. In many ways the shopping mall is as familiar to urban residents the world over, as freeways, sewerage systems, and municipal parks. Today, the

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2 Merry Hill Express, promotional newspaper, “Romantic Paris Weekend Awaits Miss Merry Hill,” April 1987, in Dudley Archives and Local History Centre (henceforward DLA) R83580.
5 Precise definitions of “shopping malls” and “shopping centers” vary. For the purposes of this chapter a mall is defined by its enclosure and management by a central authority. Shopping centers refer merely to a concentrated area of stores. In other words, all shopping malls are shopping centers, but not visa versa. For further discussion on methods of classifying retail environments see Clifford Guy, “Classifications of Retail Stores and Shopping Centres: Some Methodological Issues,” GeoJournal, vol. 45, no. 4 (1998).
British Council of Shopping Centers lists 749 enclosed shopping centers in the UK.\(^6\) This chapter is about the curious postwar history of the shopping mall in Britain, and the peculiar evolution of these 749 buildings.

While enterprise zones and garden festivals were policies state policies, enacted by a Conservative government with a specific political objective, shopping malls have a longer history, and one that stands apart from high politics. Most importantly, shopping malls emerged, as this chapter will show, from a social democratic chrysalis. The first wave of enclosed shopping complexes in Britain was built by mid-twentieth century modernist planners, employed by the state, and dedicated to the re-centering of British towns and cities around pedestrianized, public space. Constructed in newly built towns and war damaged cities, early shopping centers emerged in tandem with slum clearance projects, new town planning, and architectural modernism in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. This chapter is about how these curious state institutions evolved into the private, suburban, and internationally standardized modern shopping mall. It also addresses the privatization of what remained of Britain’s publically owned retail infrastructure in the 1980s and 1990s, as the precincts and shopping centers built by state planning departments and development corporations were sold off, and in many cases fitted with locking doors for the first time. As part of this process many of the techniques that were standardized and perfected in isolated private developments came to be retrofitted, at times awkwardly, into British town centers. This privatization of retail space was arguably as audacious, visible and politically significant as any of the other major state selloffs of the 1980s and 1990s.

Shopping malls are the outcome of three historical processes and for that reason this chapter is split into three parts. First, multiple retail sites were aggregated into an organic whole, enclosed under one roof and managed by a single actor. Second, various aspects of malls were standardized, from architectural practices to tenancy agreements to security strategies. Finally, shopping itself was purified, re-imagined as a discrete, pleasurable, and site-specific activity. This chapter will move sequentially through these three stages: enclosure, standardization, and purification. Each of these three moments will be illustrated by using a different British shopping mall as a case study. Meanwhile, records from businesses such as the supermarket Sainsbury’s and the pharmacy chain Boots will be used throughout this chapter to illustrate the governance of malls from the store-owners’ perspective. Beginning with the Coventry Shopping Precinct, the chapter will show how the enclosure of shopping spaces in Britain was instigated by forward-looking technocratic planners employed by the state. Second it will use the construction and ultimate failure of the Elephant and Castle shopping mall in south London to show the standardization of a set of practices governing the management of shopping centers. Elephant and Castle represented a radical shift in control from shop-owners to mall-managers in areas such as music, shop frontage design, lighting and heating. Next, we will look at the construction of the Brent Cross regional shopping center in North London to illustrate the “purification” of shopping. Isolated for the first time from the rest of the city and marketed as a leisure destination in its own right, Brent Cross represented a new

\(^6\) Figure obtained by tallying the total number of developments registered with the British Council of Shopping Centers as of March 2015. Regionally they break down as follows: Scotland, 74; North, 179; Midlands, 125; Eastern Region, 28; London and South East, 219; South and West Region, 85; Northern Ireland, 39; Last modified March 1, 2015 <https://www.bcsc.org.uk/about_bcsc/centre_listing>.
style of suburban shopping in Britain. Meanwhile, as shopping malls were being perfected by private developers, built from scratch in ever-more isolated and suburban locations, the remaining state-owned shopping centers in the old centers of many towns and cities were sold to private development companies and fitted with security devices. We will return to these spaces to look at some of the material and legal problems faced by citizens and by planners as this history unfolded. This chapter will end in Merry Hill as the apotheosis of the enclosure, standardization, and purification of shopping. It will show how ownership of Merry Hill was passed between various local and international property developers, and how the mall came to be used to manage the problems created by the closure of an industrial steel works whose former site the mall now occupied.

By beating a historical path to Merry Hill, one that passes through its many scattered and half-formed ancestors, we can unearth four conclusions about postwar British history. First, we can see the increasing role of private interests, both developers, and businesses, in making rudimentary urban planning decisions. By the 1970s decisions about the interior functioning and policing of shopping malls, their siting, and even their initial planning permission came increasingly to be made by private businesses and developers rather than the state. Second, we can see the standardization of British urban space, as international experts and developers shaped shopping malls into a recognizable and instantly familiar typology, a process that enabled shopping malls to be owned and commissioned by ever more distant authorities. Third, this is a story of the emergence of new forms of sovereignty, as both shopping mall customers and business found themselves subject to varieties of legal and managerial regimes that did not apply beyond their walls. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it allows us to build a bridge between the built environment of the immediate postwar period and that of the later twentieth century. The private retail environment of the 1980s and 1990s, the vast glittering shopping malls such as Merry Hill that emerged during this period, had both their form and, in many cases, their material structures bequeathed to them by an earlier generation of modernist planners and social democrats.

I also hope to intervene in the (surprisingly well developed) prior literature on shopping malls, a literature that can be divided into two camps. First, for a generation of geographers and critical theorists such as Margaret Crawford, Michael Sorkin and John Goss the shopping mall (along with the theme park) represents the pinnacle of postmodern irreality. They have argued that large shopping malls have become storehouses for a series of artificially produced and spatially disembedded images and illusions (the West Edmonton Mall in Alberta, Canada, has a Chinatown and a Bourbon Street while the New South China Mall in Dongguan has a network of Venetian Canals complete with gondolas). Margaret Crawford described the mall as having “an intense spectacle of accumulated images [that] owe much to Disneyland and television,” while the theorist Zygmunt Bauman has described the very condition of postmodernity as being

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“like a life long confinement to a shopping mall.” By showing that these spaces are not already fully formed, but rather fragile and historically contingent, this chapter shows how we can move beyond the teleological awe that pervades much of this scholarship. Second, shopping malls have become a key prop for a new generation of urban historians of the US who are turning to the built environment to chart the contradictions of New Deal liberalism and its eventual collapse. Lizabeth Cohen and Kenneth Jackson have argued that the proliferation of malls has allowed for the decline of downtowns and the ghettoization and retrenchment of American cities, along with the increasing stratification of retail space along class lines. These historians have made few attempts to verify their claims by looking beyond the US. Some have even argued that the growth of American shopping malls has been fostered by contingent peculiarities within America’s political economy. Thomas Hanchett argued that adjustments to the US tax code in 1954 turned shopping malls into vast tax havens for surplus capital and Caley Horan claimed that their emergence coincided with the proliferation of US insurance practices. In looking beyond the US, and by showing that the massification and privatization of retail environments occurred at different historical moments, it is hoped, that this chapter will go someway towards rethinking the existing historiography on shopping malls. The British story, as we will see, shows that shopping malls did not rise like the sun at the appointed hour, rather they were assembled out of a series of contradictory and contingent processes.

The Coventry Shopping Precinct and the Enclosure of Shopping

In setting out his vision for a rationally planned garden city on the outskirts of London in 1898, Ebenezer Howard described the following:

Running all round the Central Park (except where it is intersected by the boulevards) is a wide glass arcade called the ‘Crystal Palace’, opening on to the park. This building is in wet weather one of the favourite resorts of the people, whilst the knowledge that its bright shelter is ever close at hand tempts people into Central Park, even in the most doubtful of weathers. Here manufactured goods are exposed for sale, and here most of that class of shopping which requires the joy of deliberation and selection is done. The space enclosed by the Crystal Palace is, however, a good deal larger than is required for these purposes, and a considerable part of it is used as a Winter Garden – the whole forming a permanent exhibition of a most attractive character, whilst its circular form brings it near to every dweller in the town – the furthest removed inhabitant being within 600 yards.11

In Howard’s vision the trader in the Crystal Palace would “depend upon the goodwill of his customers.”\textsuperscript{12} If the trader fails in this duty, the residents of the town can vote to elect a competitor to discipline or replace the lapsed trader. Centrally managed, blending both recreation and shopping and enclosed under a single roof, this blueprint appears to be a gesture towards the world’s first shopping mall (were it not for its public ownership and democratic management).\textsuperscript{13} Rather than a tool for the privatization of space and the elevation of consumption to an almost spiritual level, however, Howard’s Crystal Palace was pitched as a radical solution to the unplanned economic chaos of Britain’s crowded industrial cities.

The massification and enclosure of shopping spaces in Britain, while it would take another four decades to be realized, originated out of the drive of those such as Howard to rationalize and plan British towns and cities in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A series of public health and town planning acts during this period introduced national standards for sanitation, public housing, and infrastructure. Crowded, dirty and confusing urban environments were to be scrubbed clean by sanitation networks and made legible by comprehensive traffic plans.\textsuperscript{14} In housing, new standards of lighting, distribution, and cleanliness were introduced in the private sector by Housing Acts in 1909, 1919 and 1949 with the growth of council housing, particularly after 1919, local authorities became increasingly involved in the day to day practice of designing, planning and building parts of British cities.\textsuperscript{15} Meanwhile, newly empowered municipal bodies in the late nineteenth century set about elaborate infrastructure projects in Britain’s cities, be it the management of a network of municipally-owned street cars in Glasgow, the construction of a vast series of dams in the Welsh Elan Valley to ensure Birmingham’s water supply, or the construction of London’s ornate sewerage system.\textsuperscript{16} The planning offices of local authorities became sites for various kinds of experimental innovations, from the construction of entirely new towns to the comprehensive redevelopment of British cities.

The ordering and management of retail space was part of this process, albeit one that has been overlooked by many of its historians. Ebenezer Howard’s Garden City movement provided the intellectual fuel for the increasingly ambitious modernism found in turn-of-the-century town planning in Britain. Although Howard’s proto shopping mall was never built in the early twenty century garden cities of Letchworth and Welwyn, the increased municipal supervision of British marketplaces has a history that goes back to the late nineteenth century when many of Britain’s wholesale markets were transformed from anarchic and often blood-soaked spaces into regulated, enclosed, sanitized, and licensed institutions. Smithfield Market in London, for example, in the 1860s and 1870s was gradually enclosed by giant neoclassical arcades, while its owners were subjected to

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 101.
\textsuperscript{13} Peter Hall and Colin Ward, Sociable Cities: The Legacy of Ebenezer Howard (Chichester: Wiley, 1998), 21.
\textsuperscript{16} Rodgers, Atlantic Crossings, 16.
detailed regulations over opening hours, licensing, waste disposal, and stall size.\textsuperscript{17} Such regulation was confined at first to urban wholesale markets. By the early twentieth century these markets were increasingly the exception, with most Britons shopping in individual stores that clustered along unplanned arterial roads and scattered town centers.

By the 1930s technocrats were beginning to see these unplanned shopping streets as a problem, linked to broader national concerns about the growth of unplanned “ribbon development,” the monotonous, octopus-like growth of prewar cities along major road routes, seen by many to be unsightly and irrational.\textsuperscript{18} Wilfred Burns, one of the developers of Coventry’s shopping center described the growth of shops along such roads as disorderly and dangerous:

\begin{quote}
From the point of view of the shopkeepers, the centre was increasing in attraction, and consequently in the days before planning control, we saw these centres stretching out their tentacles farther and farther along the main roads until the phenomenon of a shopping centre stretching almost continuously for miles on either side of a dangerous road resulted. These extreme conditions can be seen almost everywhere today and they pose enormous problems for many of our large cities.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

The movement to pedestrianize and enclose British shopping centers, as the example of the Coventry Shopping Prescient will show, was part of this mid twentieth century moment of ambitious urban planning.

In 1938 Coventry City Council created the new full-time position of City Architect and Planning Officer, and gave it to a man named Donald Gibson, just twenty-nine at the time of his appointment. Gibson was a ruthless and ambitious modernizer. In a typical statement, Gibson derided the Victorian clock tower in the center of Coventry as “a very ugly piece of Late Victoriana,” noting that “it stood in the way of the redevelopment which I envisaged.”\textsuperscript{20} Gibson railed against previous generations of British retail architecture and promised to begin anew: “Commercial buildings, even when well designed, can still be as “dull as ditchwater” (sic), and produce a negative backdrop to the daily city life. Thus I fought for something different, something better.”\textsuperscript{21} Earlier in his life Gibson had worked in a department store and had been impressed by its size and efficiency. He had strong ideas about shopping being a pleasure and not a drudge, stating that “The big store did enable people to buy in comfort and safety, leave a child with an attendant, have a cup of tea or a meal, and in fact get all they wanted under one roof…”\textsuperscript{22}

In the summer of 1940 Gibson organized a public exhibition called the Coventry of Tomorrow. Taking cues from the modernist plans of Le Corbusier and the Architectural Association, the plan included a small, enclosed forty-acre shopping

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\textsuperscript{17} Joyce, \textit{The Rule of Freedom}, 78-85.
\textsuperscript{20} Handwritten reflections by Donald Gibson, Letter 1, Coventry Record Office (henceforward CRO) PA623.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., Letter 1.
\end{flushright}
precinct, planned and designed by Gibson himself in his official capacity. In the pamphlet produced to advertise the exhibition, the problem of shopping is signaled in the first few sentences:

Something is wrong with our city. This is as plain as a pike staff… We resent the nightmare of shopping during the week-ends; the crowded pavements; the impossibility of being served quickly in our shops; the irritation of being elbowed and jostled by each other. Why is this so? And then the thought forms itself that these things are symptoms of an illness – our City is ill and not functioning correctly. Yes, let us say it – it is badly planned and ill-made [with an] irrational mixture of shopping, industrial and residential areas."

On the evening of November 14, 1940, more than two-thirds of Coventry’s entire building stock was either damaged or destroyed by an enormous German bombing campaign, which left more than five hundred dead. Gibson saw the rebuilding of the city as an opportunity to implement some of these ideas, writing that “like a forest fire the present evil might bring forth greater riches and beauty.”

Like any infrastructural project, the construction of an enclosed shopping center requires large amounts of both land and capital. Gibson’s first problem was ensuring that he had total planning control over his chosen area of redevelopment. Within months of the bombing the city hastily assembled a committee for redevelopment. The committee met with Lord Reith, the Minister of Town and Country Planning in Westminster, who said that “without question” Coventry should “disregard the ancient plan and to aim at a comprehensive redevelopment on modern lines.” Going ahead with the plan, however, required an extraordinary transfer of power and ownership. In an interview conducted before the bombing, Gibson had made the case that the rationalization and modernization of Britain’s cities could only be achieved after “some form of nationalisation of all land.” He went on to advocate for the conversion of “all freehold property into leasehold to the state, with a ninety-nine year old lease.” In essence, these were the means by which Gibson was eventually able to build his shopping center. In 1946 under new postwar town planning legislation, Coventry Council successfully received permission for a Declaratory Order from the government, allowing the compulsory purchase of 452 acres of the center of the city.

The enclosed shopping precinct formed the heart of this comprehensive redevelopment program and an outlet for Gibson’s modernist zeal. In 1946 he persuaded the City Council to celebrate the first anniversary of the declaration of peace with Germany with the unveiling of a ceremonial foundation stone “marking the line of the proposed pedestrian precinct” (in lieu of a firework display which had been previously suggested). This event was an extremely effective touch of political theatre. Gibson

24 Booklet, “Coventry of Tomorrow: Towards a Beautiful City,” booklet, CRO JN 711, 1.
28 Handwritten reflections by Donald Gibson, Letter 2.
noted, “Before, the big stores like Woolworths had bitterly opposed the Precinct idea. After this day, they began to come and talk terms for a new building site in the Precinct with the estates surveyor.”

In a series of handwritten reflections composed towards the end of his life Gibson describes setting out in the middle of a freezing cold night for a quarry in Cumbria with a university friend to find the perfect stone. Carrying whiskey and blankets the two men stopped by the side of the road at daybreak and fried eggs over a makeshift fire. If ever this history needed a poetic mythology, the image of these two men, cooking breakfast at the dawn of the shopping mall, would suit better than any.

The precinct was built in stages from 1946 to 1955, a process slowed down by severe labor shortages (in 1947 the idea of using forced prisoner-of-war labor to construct the precinct was floated but never acted upon). The finished precinct consisted of multi-story enclosed arcades connected by internal steps, and contained a mixture of small shops, larger department stores and a large market with more than two hundred stalls. As well as increasing the amount of lettable space, the high density precinct allowed for a mix of high and low-end stores, “Two-story shops were proposed to get more shops in a small walking distance and to give a choice between the higher rents on the ground floor and the lower rents upstairs so that, for instance, the optician and the dry cleaners could find a place in the centre instead of being a long walk away.” The public spaces of the center, the arcades, the steps, and the car park were owned and managed by the council, acting as landlord for the shops and market traders using the space. Much energy was spent trying to produce a unified aesthetic order: “Care too must be taken to control advertisements and lettering and neon signs so that good buildings do not become spoilt. Even such details as street lamp fittings, seats and bus shelters and litter baskets should be well designed and conveniently and tidily arranged.” Shop tenants, meanwhile, were expected to provide their own lighting, heating, and ambient music.

While shopping centers in the coming decades, would come to be seen as the epitome of suburban, automobile-centered anomie, the Coventry’s shopping precinct was founded in order to re-center the city, and to diminish the danger and pollution caused by increased car ownership. Journalists and visitors marveled at what they saw as an avant garde and thoroughly metropolitan institution. Both Architectural Design and the Architects Journal devoted special editions to Coventry, with the latter praising the shopping center’s “warm, human qualities.”

The pedestrianization of the precinct was championed by the local newspaper as a “triumph for man over the motor car,” and other reports stressed the novelty of “dry shopping,” though noted that for many older residents

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29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Kenneth Richardson and Elizabeth Harris, Twentieth Century Coventry (London: Macmillan, 1972), 294.
34 Coventry Cash Stores, a store that let space in the precinct, advertised their own “infra-red heating”: “Precinct Store Has Been Transformed,” Coventry Evening Telegraph, February 18, 1960; When Marks and Spenser moved into the precinct they advertised their own air conditioning system: “New Store for Coventry,” Coventry Evening Telegraph, December 11, 1953.
the center was “unfamiliar and strange.”36 One report described the precinct as heralding a new age of bustling urban sociability:

A well-planned bar, a coffee house, a popular terrace restaurant, and Coventry citizens will begin to imitate the more sociable city of habits of the Continent. I hope the developers will observe this promenading tendency closely.37

It was even reported that when King George VI visited the wreckage of Coventry in 1942, he told reporters he was “particularly satisfied” about future plans for an indoor shopping precinct.38

Figure 12: Impressions of the Coventry of the Future: A Christmas Card sent to residents by Coventry Council in 1946 (Coventry Record Office JN 711. Reproduced courtesy of Coventry History Center).

The rationalization of unplanned shopping spaces through local authority driven enclosure was a process that had its roots in Coventry, but spread across the UK in the immediate postwar period to become a common feature of British mid-twentieth century urban planning. Holistically planned shopping centers similar to the precinct in Coventry were built in Sheffield, Southampton, Plymouth, and Oxford and in new towns such as Stevenage, Washington, Runcorn, and Milton Keynes (with the latter built as late as 1979). These shopping centers were generally small, centrally located, modernist in design and, most importantly, planned and built by local authorities or state development corporations using postwar town planning legislation. The first movement towards the

36 “Unique Example of Dry Shopping,” Coventry Evening Telegraph, April 30, 1953.
enclosure of British shopping spaces came, therefore, from a mid-twentieth century moment of modernist, state-driven town planning. Like slum clearance programs, traffic management systems and municipal infrastructure programs the story of early shopping centers in Britain belongs to the teleology of social history rather than story of neoliberal privatization. While these structures resemble in form later shopping malls such as Merry Hill they emerged at the terminus of a mid-century ideological moment that has long since passed away and are the children of Ebenezer Howard and Patrick Abercrombie rather than Margaret Thatcher. The modernist, social democratic pre-history of British shopping centers allows us, then, to disrupt some of the most basic dichotomies of modern politics. In an age when political battle lines are drawn between the organic deli and the chain supermarket, the Coventry Shopping Precinct was neither and both.

**Elephant and Castle and the Standardization of Retail Space**

In order for shopping centers to be modular over space and for malls in Los Angeles, Tokyo, and Birmingham to bear a formal resemblance to one another, a common set of technologies and practices had to be standardized by shopping mall developers. While individual shopping malls may claim to have a unique set of attributes, be it certain themes or attractions such as a Chinatown in the West Edmonton Mall, or a luxury ‘Platinum’ wing in the case of Gateshead’s Metrocentre, these ostensibly unique attributes belie an architectural and environmental homogeneity that is global in scope. Shopping malls are a cellular, minimalist and infinitely repeatable spatial type, the global retail equivalent of the Jeffersonian national grid, reducing space to a set of predictable, measurable qualities.39

The wave of state-built shopping precincts in new towns and redeveloped city centers in the 1940s and 1950s was swiftly followed by a handful of small, privately built shopping centers in northern towns such as Jarrow and Bradford. These centers were accompanied by a handful of larger malls such as Elephant and Castle in London and the Bullring Centre in Birmingham. The rise of privately built shopping centers during this period was partly driven by chain stores, which saw shopping malls as the key to their future success. An internal report created by the chain chemist Boots in 1970, for example, lists the reasons why stores in out-of-town shopping centers are preferable to town center locations, citing lower rents, greater availability of locations, and the fact that “crowding of pedestrians and traffic has created problems in central locations.”40 Anticipating the future of shopping in 1968 Boots officials imagined that shopping centers would provide “on one site a comprehensive mix of all trades and services… offering a pleasant and safe environment for the shopper.”41 From the 1970s onward, meanwhile, the British supermarket chain, Sainsbury’s, began constructing their own suburban shopping precincts, usually comprising a cluster of small stores orbiting one of their larger branches. While large department stores had been wary of moving into

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41 Position statement, “Retailing in the 70s,” BCA 49/8, 3.
Gibson’s shopping precinct in Coventry, by the end of the 1960s shop owners were enthusiastically jostling for space in shopping centers, seeking to take advantage of cheap rent, and a ready-made infrastructure for parking, circulating pedestrians, and efficiently managing the arrival of stock.

The new breed of private shopping centers marked a fundamental change in the relationship between tenants and shopping center owners. In the Coventry Shopping Precinct each store was responsible for its own heating, lighting, and music, with the concourses outside subject to the same standards of cleaning, policing, and planning controls as other city streets. In later malls such as Elephant and Castle, as we will see, these powers were transferred to management. The pioneer architect Victor Gruen’s description of these new malls in 1960 is almost Hobbesian: “The shopping center is one the few new building types created in our time. It also represents one of the rare instances in which a number of individual business enterprises, in banding together, are ready to submit to certain overall rules in order to further their common welfare.” In this sense, shopping mall tenants faced many of the same problems regarding reluctant collective responsibility as those living in gated housing developments.

As the architectural, environmental, and spatial practices of shopping became increasingly centralized in shopping malls, a set of management techniques could be abstracted and standardized between different sites. In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s a number of agreed upon practices about lighting, heating, music and policing emerged among shopping mall developers seeking to maximize the utility of their space. These solutions were made mobile by international property developers, touring experts, and bureaucrats (it was common practice, as we will see, for local Council officials to visit malls in North America before committing to new developments), as well as a proliferation of books and manuals targeted at shopping mall builders on either side of the Atlantic. The advice given by these manuals was often surprisingly exact. An American manual from 1973 suggested, for example:

The illumination level for mall areas should be subdued and yet adequate to stimulate people and to create a restful and inviting atmosphere. In addition, the lighting source can be placed to create interesting ceiling patterns… Most shopping centers employ a central environmental monitoring system. This system indicates the illumination level at one or more critical locations and it is connected to the central console which is generally located in the building engineer’s office or the security office.

A British manual meanwhile notes that shopping malls should be consistently lit at between 300 and 350 lux. Elsewhere it is recommended that malls be heated at seventy five degrees Fahrenheit with 50 percent relative humidity in summer and seventy degrees in winter. A British manual published in 1982 calculated the exact width of pedestrianized walkways to maximize profits, “People flow like liquid, tending to follow

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the line of least resistance. They can be deliberately ‘funneled’… and this is a trading
axiom.”

Along with light and heat, sound was also regulated and standardized through the
presence of soft background music. Although the history music in shops goes back to the
early twentieth century, when live bands would play in large, urban department stores,
the development of ambient, almost inaudible music was a technology honed by
shopping mall developers.45 One American manual describes the various means of
distributing music throughout the mall:

[Music] must be integrated with the lighting layout and with the architectural
and acoustic design. The systems can be designed to distribute sound to all
stores or only to the common areas. The music source is usually leased by the
shopping center owner and may be a tape machine, record player, tuner, special
radio station source, or special wired circuit via telephone or private
underground distribution system.46

The integration of music with systems of lighting, heating and electricity usually under
the oversight of a single “facilities manager” allows the music to become part of the
architecture of the mall — a technology for creating consistency within its space. This is
a point that has been made by the musicologist Jonathan Sterne in a 1997 study of the
background music played in the Mall of America in Minnesota.47 Sterne notes how muzak
generally consists of orchestral arrangements of well-known songs with little voice or
percussion (an example cited by Sterne is “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds,” played by
the Czechoslovakian String Orchestra).

The Elephant and Castle shopping center in South London was one of the first
British developments to use these various technologies for regulating internal space.
Elephant and Castle opened in South London in 1965 and marked a new phase in the
development of British shopping centers. Larger than both the state-built shopping
precincts of the 1940s and 1950s, and the small number of privately built shopping
centers built in the early 1960s in northern towns and cities Elephant and Castle promised
to revolutionize shopping in London. The London County Council (LCC) conceived the
building in the late 1950s as a means of rejuvenating a busy intersection in Southwark.
Unlike in Coventry, however, the LCC was determined that the center be built and
developed by a private property firm, and were largely uninterested in the final product.
A statement produced by the LCC noted, “while we had approved a provisional layout
for the area, we were anxious that developers and their architects should have freedom to
develop their own ideas and that any lay-out which complied with the necessary
conditions… would be considered.”48 As with Coventry the problem of amassing enough
land was solved by the creation of a “comprehensive redevelopment area,” an instrument
that allowed the LCC to seize control of the necessary land. The property developers
William Willett LTD won the contract to create the center, and by 1965, Britain’s biggest

46 Redstone, *New Dimensions in Shopping Centers*, 73.
47 Jonathan Sterne, “Sounds Like the Mall of America: Programmed Music and the Architectonics of
48 “Minutes of the London County Council,” 1960, Southwark Local History Library and Archives
(henceforward SLH), 528.
and most sophisticated private indoor shopping center had been built. Spanning three floors and offering space for more than one hundred shops along a series of 450-foot pedestrian concourses, Elephant and Castle was unlike anything that had been seen before in London. There were even plans for a partly retractable roof over the main concourse of the center, which would be opened on warm weather days. Sitting beneath a multi-story office block – built by the developers to offset any losses that the shopping mall might incur – and with entrances opening directly onto the London Underground, the mall was embedded in the infrastructure of the neighborhood.

The stores that bought space in Elephant and Castle made a Faustian pact, one that many would end up regretting. Tenants leasing space in the mall were given a document that explained in detail the management responsibilities of the tenant and the development company. First to be emphasized was the total control of the company over all of the common spaces, “these consist of the trucking tunnel with road leading thereto, loading platforms… male and female staff toilets, lower ground floor concourse, upper ground floor concourse, staircases, ramps, fire corridors, escalators, forecourts.” Tenants paid a service charge “to cover the costs of management, maintenance and operation.” The strictest regulations concerned the aesthetic presentation of the interior stores:

While it is the desire of the Developing Company to give as much freedom as possible to tenants in the design, colour and construction of the shop fronts, it is necessary for certain rules to be made so that there is harmony of colours and materials both between individual shop fronts and between shop fronts and the Centre itself… As the Centre will be the focal point for shopping in South London a good standard of both window dressing and display illumination will be desirable.

Strict guidelines about the exact size and height of fascia design, lettering, sign illumination, pilasters, and ventilation were set out for tenants. While all final decisions were the reserve of the development company, stores in Elephant and Castle were allowed to form a representative committee of tenants for purely advisory purposes. These committees were common features of early British shopping centers. In the centers built and managed by Sainsbury’s tenants’ committees would meet regularly to discuss tenancy and rent issues, as well as the management of common space. A typical meeting of the tenants of Lord’s Hill shopping center in Southampton in 1979, for example, saw tenants discussing the maintenance of public toilets and lighting facilities, and offering to collectively put forward extra money to provide a shelter for private security officials.

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53 Ibid., 14.
54 Ibid., 15.
55 Ibid., 14.
56 “Minutes of the Meeting of Lord’s Hill District Centre Tenants Association,” October 9, 1979, The Sainsbury’s Archive (henceforward SA) BRA/2/2/30.
By aggregating a set of architectural and environmental practices that were traditionally the reserve of individual storeowners, the developers of Elephant and Castle were able to create a perfectly regulated space. The main concourses of the shopping center were heated to sixty degrees Fahrenheit, while the temperature in each individual store was to be kept above fifty degrees.\textsuperscript{57} A series of extractor fans allowed for three complete air changes per hour.\textsuperscript{58} Meanwhile, an exact consistency of light was achieved by balancing the natural light streaming through the translucent concourse roof, the artificial lights installed by the developing company, and the lighted signs of individual stores, which the developing company stated were to be lit continuously between 8:00AM and 10:00PM.\textsuperscript{59} The public spaces were populated by fountains, prosthetic plants and benches while light music played in the background.

The social contract between the stores and the developing company, however, quickly fell apart at Elephant and Castle, and it was not long before the center was deemed to have been a disaster. When the center opened in 1965, just 29 of a possible 120 stores were trading and less than a year later one desperate tenant offered to sell his lease for 400 pounds.\textsuperscript{60} Throughout Elephant and Castle’s history much of the space on the upper floors remained entirely empty, with a handful of isolated shops trading far out of sight. It was said that mothers with prams were reluctant to tackle the stairs and escalators or make a long detour to an external ramp outside the building.\textsuperscript{61} In a survey conducted a few years after the build opened, most shoppers “expressed surprise that there were any upper floors at all.”\textsuperscript{62} The final indignity came in 1991, when, after a fourfold increase in service charges, thirty-four stores went on rent strike, requiring the intervention of the local Member of Parliament.\textsuperscript{63}

Although Elephant and Castle was a failure, its methods of managing and regulating space would live on in hundreds of new developments over the coming decades. Shopping centers used these methods to create a consistent and standardized environment, one that was radically dissociated from the specificities of time and place. The minutely controlled artifice of shopping malls has fascinated some theorists who have taken malls to be the ur-structures of postmodern dislocation, spaces where, “confusion proliferates at every level; past and future collapse meaninglessly into the present; barriers between real and fake, near and far, dissolve as history, nature, technology are indifferently processed.”\textsuperscript{64} This standardization had another effect. As techniques were shared between nations through design guides and, later, through touring delegations, shopping malls came to resemble each other the world over. For this reason it became possible, as we will see, for international property speculators to buy and sell British shopping malls without ever having stepping inside them. More than anything

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{61} Marriot, The Property Boom, 221.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 220-2.
\textsuperscript{64} Crawford, “The World in A Shopping Mall,” 4.
else these practices of standardization allowed shopping malls to become a particular and predictable type of space. Heated to 70 degrees Fahrenheit, lit at 350 lux, dotted with hidden speakers looping the same vast banks of pre-recorded music, connected by concourses no narrower than twenty feet, and offering twenty-one-year letting contracts, by no later than 1975, the modern shopping mall was born.

**Brent Cross and the Purification of Shopping**

By the 1970s public and private shopping centers had been granted their privatization, enclosure and relative standardization. While these spaces were becoming increasingly distinctive, our two case studies thus far were hybrid elements in often bigger, comprehensively planned schemes. While the Coventry Shopping Precinct was arguably Donald Gibson’s biggest achievement and a synecdoche for the redevelopment of Coventry as a whole, it remained one element in a holistic central redevelopment plan that included offices, municipal buildings, and even a new Cathedral. Likewise the LCC saw the Elephant and Castle shopping center as one element in the regeneration of the entire neighborhood, and hoped the accompanying road network, housing and office development would turn the area into a Piccadilly Circus for South London. Indeed, as we have seen, Elephant and Castle, when it was completed, was woven into South London’s infrastructural fabric. Its concourses opened directly onto the Northern Line branch of the London Underground and it sat almost unnoticeably beneath a 290,000 square foot office block called Hannibal House — owned by the same developing company.

The final element in the fabrication of the modern shopping mall, then, was the isolation of retail from all other forms of economic activity and its granting of spatial and conceptual autonomy. This involved two separate, yet related processes. The first was the increasing tendency for shopping malls to be built on the urban periphery, at a driving distance from high streets or shopping centers. Generally, as we will see with the example of Brent Cross, which forms the next case study, these new malls contained no room for office space, housing, or municipal functions, and remained largely distinct from pre-existing road or public transport networks. Second was the tendency for the new breed of large shopping malls to market themselves as sites of leisure, destinations in themselves, rather than as places enabling the mundane routines of household reproduction. These processes came together during the wave of large, private and, crucially, suburban shopping malls that were built in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s.

The purification of shopping was intimately related to two wider changes that were transforming the postwar British social fabric. First the 1960s saw the rise of mass car ownership in Britain. Between 1939 and 1960 the number of the licensed motor vehicles in the UK increased from three million to nine million, with the proportion of British households with access to a car doubling between 1955 and 1965 alone. Britain’s national infrastructure was remade during this period to suit the massing ranks of drivers, with the years between 1962 and 1972 effectively seeing the construction of

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Britain’s modern motorway network. With their vast car parks, peripheral locations, and relative isolation from pre-existing public transport routes, the autonomy of 1970s and 1980s suburban shopping malls such as Brent Cross, the Pentagon Centre in Kent, and the MetroCentre in Gateshead was made possible by this development. Indeed, a questionnaire taken at Brent Cross in 1977 found that 72 percent of shoppers had arrived by car (with only 16 percent having arrived by bus). Secondly, the shift in purpose of British shopping environments from functional and feminized sites of daily routine to sites of family leisure and recreation was in part the outcome of the growing affluence and falling working hours of 1960s Britain. With the addition of cinemas, restaurants and even rollercoasters British shopping malls from the 1970s became fantastical and otherworldly destinations, important, yet underappreciated elements in the new infrastructure of family leisure time. Indeed, Guy Ortolano noted that 1960s urban planners saw the pleasurable aspects of consumption as being an antidote to suburban anomie, writing that “More than theatres, libraries, or concert halls, it was the shopping centre that promised to function as the key social institution in the coming age of leisure.”

The new wave of 1970s and 1980s suburban shopping malls saw a further recalibration in the relationship between the state and the private developer. While the Coventry Shopping Precinct had been entirely developed and managed by the City Council and London County Council carved out space for Elephant and Castle and commissioned a private developer to build it, many of the shopping malls of the 1970s and 1980s were private initiatives to begin with. This was the case for many of the small shopping centers built by Sainsbury’s in the 1970s and 1980s. In the briefs drawn up by the company to convince local authorities of the necessity of a shopping center development, for example, the company appeared to take on the role of urban planner, performing many of the functions of council planning departments in the immediate postwar period. A report drawn up by the company suggesting plans for a shopping center in Amblecote, in the West Midlands, for example, reads like an internal memo circulated by a local planning department in the 1950s: “An area of land has been designated for community facilities together with car parking and will have a direct pedestrian link to the shop. The site for a public house adjacent to the community buildings completes the Local Centre.”

Nowhere was this more the case than in the construction of Brent Cross. Brent Cross was a long time coming. Its opening in 1976 was the culmination of a planning process already twenty years old. The Hammerson Company, the owners and builders of Brent Cross, began negotiations with Hendon Council as early as 1957, and in 1965 had their planning permission revoked by the Ministry of Transport, which expressed concerns about the effect of the proposed center on traffic routes in North London. It took a working group comprising of the Ministry of

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70 Ortolano, “Planning the Urban Future,” 497.
Transport, the Greater London Council, the London Borough of Barnet and a consortium of private traffic consultants to approve the plan. While Donald Gibson wrote of the “bitter opposition” of department store owners to his center in Coventry, and the LCC commissioned and oversaw the creation of Elephant and Castle, Brent Cross marked an altered dynamic between developers and the state. Here the developers took the lead, fighting an uphill battle to realize their vision.

Occupying more than fifty-one acres, and with 3,500 parking spaces circling the mall like a moat, Brent Cross was the largest of its type built in Britain.72 A report on Brent Cross drawn up by the Greater London Council emphasized the physical isolation of the mall and the purification of its function:

Brent Cross differs from other shopping places in London in a number of respects. It is physically separated from the residential streets which surround it by extensive car parks, new access roads, on one side, by an industrial estate. It contains no public offices, no places of recreation and very few of the non-retail establishments which comprise such a large part of ‘town centres’ possessing comparable areas of floorspace. The centre consists of one massive, free-standing, air-conditioned building… all the shops are connected by fully enclosed internal malls and with ‘open air’ restaurants and a large central fountain… Retailers at Brent Cross are occupying shops designed specifically for the purpose – not converted, as are many in traditional shopping centres, from residential use.73

Each shop was given access to its own entirely external service bay, “designed in such a way as to isolate the shopper from the servicing arrangements.”74 In its temperature control, consistency of lighting and background music Brent Cross was a perfection of the techniques developed at Elephant and Castle.75 Unlike Elephant and Castle, however, Brent Cross did not fall prey to the same problems of vacancy and under-use. This success was party the result of a key characteristic of the mall’s design. The mall was built according to the “dumbbell” model, a popular American design in which two large department stores (in this case John Lewis and Fenwick’s) act as anchors for pedestrians at either side of the mall, while the remaining stores attracted the foot traffic flowing through the mall from one department store to the next.76

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72 Ibid.
75 For descriptions of the interior of Brent Cross see Michael Freedland, “Shades of Disneyland,” The Evening Standard, October 9, 1976.
Brent Cross was seen as an exciting destination in itself, removed from the humdrum of daily life. This is in contrast to Elephant and Castle, which marketed itself as a place where housewives can perform the mundane trivialities of the weekly shop in greater comfort. A 1967 advert for Elephant and Castle, for example, noted, “No rushing to and fro to try and get everything you need for the weekly shopping – just make up one shopping list and you’re finished (We are opening a brand new launderette soon, to help you still further. Cut out washday blues and come to the Centre for your whites.)” Brent Cross, meanwhile, sold itself on pleasure over function. Developers made a conscious decision to limit the amount of food shops that were allowed to lease space in the mall. William Tindale, the head of the developing company, noted in an interview that his firm had turned away several applications from butchers because “that wasn’t the business we were trying to attract.” Several commentators, meanwhile, expressed the almost thrilling, other-worldliness of the design with an Evening Standard reporter writing, “The building rising up at the moment from a flat, plain of empty car parks... looks very long and large – like a massive Odeon cinema tacked on to an ocean liner.” Writing in 2006 a Times journalist remembered his first visit stating, “It was as if Kubla Khan himself had descended upon Hendon. The fountain! The dome! The escalators! The air conditioning! The space! Open till 8pm – all week, too!” Another commentator wrote that the mall

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77 Elephant and Castle Second Anniversary Pamphlet, SLH PAM658.87 ELE.
78 Michael Freedland, “Shades of Disneyland.”
“draws the inevitable comparison with religious architecture” and yet another noted that it resembled Disneyland. It is worth noting that this spatial purification of shopping malls remained partial in much of continental Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. With the exception of France, European shopping malls tended to remain embedded in local infrastructure networks, and planned at the center of cities, with planners often expressing anxiety or hostility towards North American mall developments. In Stockholm, for example, small, decentralized shopping centers were planned along major public transport routes, while Dusseldorf rebuilt its bombed center as a shopping mall.

As shopping malls moved to the outskirts of towns and cities, away from public transportation routes, their structures becoming increasing isolated from other forms of residential or commercial development, shopping became a distinct experience, one deemed to be pleasurable in itself. This, then, was the final step in the creation of the modern shopping mall. Historians such as Frank Trentmann and Matthew Hilton have, to an extent, shown the emergence of shopping as a distinct sphere of human activity, writing about the rise of consumer politics and activism in the twentieth century. This chapter has shown that rise of consumer culture also came with its own ready-made spatial logic. “Consumerism” in the abstract depended on a physical infrastructure of consumption, one whose contours became well-defined in the last third of the twentieth century.

The Oxford Westgate Centre, The Washington Galleries, and the Privatization of Shopping Precincts

It’s worth returning to dwell on the fate of the numerous shopping precincts, built and owned by the state, that had come to dominate the urban fabric of cities such as Coventry by the 1970s. In many British new towns, places such as Milton Keynes, Runcorn and Washington, planned shopping centers served as de facto town centers: sites for public assembly and municipal pageantry as well as shopping and parking. While large developments such as Elephant and Castle, Brent Cross, and Merry Hill were privately owned from the outset, these once state-owned shopping precincts, built in the immediate postwar period, were gradually refurbished, fortified, and sold off to private property developers in the 1980s and 1990s. As with the privatization of council estates, this process was fraught with logistical and legal problems. The refurbishing and subsequent sale of the Westgate Shopping Centre in Oxford, a multi-story precinct built by the city council in 1972, was typical of the problems entailed by the privatization of these spaces. Westgate connected seamlessly with Oxford’s High Street, with the shopping center’s concourses acting as throughways to another neighborhood. The sale of the center to a private consortium in 1986 required that the

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81 “The Brent Cross Regional Shopping Centre – Characteristics and Early Effects,” 11; Michael Freedland “Shades of Disneyland.”
municipal functions of the building — its public toilets, its external staircases, and its car parks — be uncoupled from its commercial core. While these things continue to be owned by the Council, the private consortium would acquire the internal concourses of the center and leasing rights of the stores.\footnote{The Estates Gazette “Council Wants Partner for Oxford Centre,” October 27, 1984, SA BRA2/2/2.} Immediately prior to the sale Oxford City Council initiated a comprehensive upgrade of the mall’s security, which effectively enclosed the mall from the rest of the city, and would make possible its subsequent privatization. While previously the structure had lacked doors on its entrances and was open at all hours, it was now to be closed off at certain times:

It is envisaged that doors would be fitted to all the entrances which do not have them at present. These would be stainless steel, fully glazed doors, arranged to swing in pairs with the usual self-closing springs… Fitted doors… will [mean] the main entrance will become less obvious and less welcoming visually.\footnote{“Westgate Shopping Centre: Closure of Malls, Security and Other Improvements,” Report to the Oxford Estates Committee, November 15, 1983, SA BRA 2/2/2, 7.}

These changes appear to have been proposed by businesses renting from the Council, following a meeting held with Council representatives. Indeed, a number of businesses letting space from the Council in the center even offered to help finance the new security arrangements on the condition that the measures “proved acceptable to them.”\footnote{Ibid., 1.} This was another instance in which private companies rather than town planning departments were taking the initiative. Westgate also introduced security guards “doubling as information guides” during the same time period in the hope that their very presence would exert a “controlling influence.”\footnote{Ibid., 4.} Enclosing the structure in such a way required a change in the legal designation of the building’s concourses. While previously the concourses had been designated as “highways,” subject to the same laws as any other city street, the installing of doors and introduction of closing hours required the concourses to be legally redefined as “walkways.” Set out by the 1980 Highways Act, walkways referred to:

A species of highway comprising a way over, through or under buildings and structures. Walk-ways have many of the characteristics of highways but can be regulated by by-laws… By-laws can be used to regulate the conduct of persons using walk-ways, [and] the times when walk-ways are open to the public.\footnote{Report to the Estates Committee, “Possible Night-time Closure of Westgate Centre, Oxford,” March 17, 1983, SA BRA 2/2/2, 3.}

This designation also meant that while closed, the walkways would not be subject to regular police patrols like the city streets outside. Indeed, it was made clear that under these proposals the city police would not have keys to the building.\footnote{Ibid., 4.} These new arrangements, then, created a new, albeit small, legal regime within the city of Oxford, where authority was split between the police and private security staff.

The privatization of retail space in the 1980s posed further legal problems in new towns built after war, where enclosed shopping centers often performed many of the roles
played by traditional town centers. In the new town of Milton Keynes, those designing the shopping center deliberately alluded to this function, with the shopping center boasting a mock town square (host to Christmas pageants and ideal home exhibitions), a clock tower, and a civic fountain encircled by sculptures. The miles of long, parallel, single-story concourses comprised almost the entirety of the non-residential city center. When the Milton Keynes shopping mall opened in 1979 it was still owned by the state-run development corporation that built it, and its concourses were open twenty-four hours a day. In the mid 1980s its concourses began to be locked after closing time, and shortly afterwards the mall was sold off to a private development company. A similar story can be told about the holistically planned shopping centers of new towns such as Cumbernauld (purchased by a property developer in 1996), Telford (purchased by a pension company 1990), and Washington (purchased in 1987). In most of these instances the shopping centers were planned and managed by state development corporations and were sold upon completion of the town when the corporations’ remit expired.

In the final decades of the twentieth century, then, the privatization of retail space did not just occur in set piece developments on the outskirts of towns and cities in Britain, but also encroached on many town centers as Britain’s retail infrastructure was sold off and retrofitted with security devices. As shopping malls on both sides of the Atlantic increasingly came to be the only sites of publicity and free association for many urban residents, a set of legal problems emerged concerning the rights of visitors to assemble and protest in such places. In the US, from the late 1960s onwards, legal battles over the right to exercise the First Amendment right to free speech in shopping malls were common. In 1968, following the expulsion of union workers picketing in a private retail plaza in Pennsylvania, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the union, arguing that the plaza was the “functional equivalent” of a sidewalk. This ruling did not last long, however, and, following the expulsion of a group of high school students who were attempting to gather signatures for a petition at the Pruneyard Shopping Center in San Jose, California, the Supreme Court ruled that rights to free speech and assembly did not automatically apply to shopping malls. It was left up to individual states to decide whether the owners of shopping malls would have the final say in the arbitrary expulsion of individuals. As of 2003 only six states, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon, and Washington specify the rights of citizens to protest and assemble in shopping malls.

It seemed inevitable that, when an equivalent court case would emerge in Britain, it would concern a once-municipally-owned shopping center in a new town. In 1998 a group of protesters set up two stands at the entrance of the Galleries shopping mall in the new town of Washington, on the outskirts of Sunderland, to protest the redevelopment of a nearby playing field. Shortly afterwards they were asked to leave by private security guards. A few months later the same group of protestors wrote to the manager of the Galleries asking for permission to return and were denied, with the manager writing: “The owner’s stance on all political and religious issues, is one of strict neutrality and I am charged with applying this philosophy.” When Washington was planned and built in the mid 1960s the central shopping center was owned and managed by the Washington

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90 The quote and details of the case come from Cohen, A Consumers’ Republic, 275.
91 Ibid., 275.
92 Appleby and Others v. the United Kingdom, 44306/98, European Court of Human Rights, 2003, VI.
Development Corporation — a state-run body. In 1987 the center was sold off to a private property developer called Postel Properties, LTD. Like many new towns the shopping center was also the focal point, even marked on maps as the “town centre,” and housed many social services including a public housing office, careers office, library, police station, and health center. The protestors took their complaints to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, claiming that articles ten and eleven of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, which guarantee rights to free speech and free assembly, were violated. In 2003 the court ruled against the protestors. The ruling stated:

> While it is true that demographic, social, economic and technological developments are changing the ways in which people move around and come into contact with each other, the Court is not persuaded that this requires the automatic creation of rights of entry to private property.\(^{93}\)

As a result of this ruling the effective town centers of many British new towns, or towns that were heavily re-planned after the war, are now subject to the same legal regimes as out of town shopping malls such as Brent Cross or Merry Hill. It is for this reason, above all others, that the public nature of mid-twentieth century retail environments was so distinctive, and the sale of these places to private developers marks such a significant historical rupture. The autonomous and self-contained nature of early shopping centers and their relative isolation from city streets, meant that they could be easily sold off as discrete units by cash-strapped Councils in the 1980s and 1990s. Unbeknownst to them at the time, the Council planners and architects who designed shopping precincts across Britain in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s created an environment that was extremely easy to privatize.

**Arriving at Merry Hill**

With the construction of Merry Hill, in phases from 1985 to 1990, came the apotheosis of British shopping mall building. Merry Hill, known locally as “Merry Hell,” was built in a distant suburb of Birmingham called Brierley Hill. The mall combined the techniques of enclosure, standardization, and purification perfected elsewhere at different moments in different places. First, Merry Hill’s 250 shops and 2.5 miles of mall space were entirely enclosed and managed by a single authority. Its public spaces were heated, lit and secured according to international standards.\(^{94}\) Merry Hill became a space that could be experienced — in almost identical form — in increasingly diverse parts of the world. As we have seen, several of the mall’s moveable parts were designed and built by foreign companies (the Swiss monorail, the French-built neoclassical gables) and could be shipped elsewhere once depleted (with the Monorail being transferred to an Australian mall). Second, Merry Hill stood in relative isolation from its surrounding urban fabric. As at Brent Cross, there were no offices or housing on Merry Hill’s main shopping site and the mall was built on the outer fringes of the greater Birmingham metropolitan area —

\(^{93}\) Ibid.

\(^{94}\) For a detailed description of the facilities at Merry Hill, see “Shopping City Takes You Into The 1990s!” *Dudley Express and Star*, November 15, 1988, DLA 85287.
relatively isolated from pre-existing roads and public transportation routes. Also, as with Brent Cross, Merry Hill was advertised as a pleasurable shopping destination rather than a functional prop for daily or weekly reproduction. One advert for the center urged, “Don’t forget your camera when you visit Merry Hill with the children. The centre offers some great opportunities to take happy family snaps. Just watch the youngsters enjoying themselves specially designed children area outside Pizza Hut.”

Merry Hill, then, was a massified, standardized, and purified shopping space. By 1985 the British shopping mall had found its ideal expression.

![Figure 14: The Monorail arrives at Merry Hill](Photograph: Lewis Bevan, Flickr, used with permission).

Merry Hill is as an ideal case study for seeing how late twentieth century shopping centers were financed. In 1990 Merry Hill was purchased from the Richardson Brothers by a property company named Montleigh, a former British company that had been purchased by two American investors “as a vehicle for a huge raid on the European property market.” Montleigh’s new American owners, Nelson Petlz and Peter May, were rumored by a report from the local press to be close to Michael Milken, a notorious Wall Street junk bond trader who was jailed for two years for gross violations of US securities laws. Montleigh soon racked up debts more of than 500 million pounds as the early 1990s property crash set in and a deal with O’Conner, another large American property development company, fell through in 1992 due to environmental concerns about the site. In 2010 Merry Hill was purchased by the Australian shopping mall

95 “Memories Are Made of This,” Dudley News, August 26, 1988, DLA NPC/220.
97 Ibid.
building company Westfield, and joins more than one hundred of their sites around the world. Merry Hill, unlike the shopping precincts of the immediate postwar period, was able to have a double function. Merry Hill was a shopping center but it was also a kind of financial instrument, traded between international speculators. Since the 1970s, as shopping malls became increasingly recognized as lucrative real estate investments, they began to attract money from those with surplus capital. While Merry Hill saw American investors pouring money into suburban Birmingham, there are many instances of money flowing in the other direction. The Pompano Fashion Square shopping mall in southern Florida, for example, was purchased for seventeen million pounds by the National Union of Mineworkers. Pension funds and life insurance companies looking for stable returns on long-term investments were particularly likely to invest in shopping malls on both sides of the Atlantic. Indeed, one of the earliest UK malls, the Grosvenor-Laing Centre in Chester which opened in 1965, the same year as Elephant and Castle, was heavily funded by the Canadian life insurance company Sun Life Assurance. Although primarily planned and initially owned by a state development corporation, the shopping mall in the center of the new town of Milton Keynes was partly financed by the Post Office Superannuation Fund. Like the railroads of the early nineteenth century, then, shopping malls increasingly served as stable outlets for investing surplus capital, a process that was only possible after the standardization and purification of shopping had rendered shopping malls a familiar global type. While many overseas investors, not in the least the American owners of Merry Hill, would likely have never stepped foot inside their properties, they would almost certainly have stepped foot in a similar mall, somewhere in the world. This sale would have most likely been impossible had the enclosure, and the global standardization of shopping mall space not occurred between 1950 and 1970.

The complexities surrounding Merry Hill’s ownership showed how far the shopping mall had departed from its inception as an instrument of social policy. The giant suburban shopping malls built in Britain in the 1980s also had a radically altered relationship with the state’s planning apparatus. Merry Hill was built entirely within the boundaries of the Dudley Enterprise Zone, one of the first eleven state enterprise zones created in 1982. While both were similar in size and arguably essential for incentivizing the construction of shopping centers, the contrast between the enterprise zone and the Declaratory Order in Coventry could not have been more stark. While one instrument centralized control in the hands of the state, the other was the exact inverse, erecting a libertarian power vacuum for the unimpeded play of free market forces. The zone’s offer of exception from most local taxes and minimal planning interference from the state, made a shopping mall on the scale of Merry Hill possible. Indeed, while all malls need substantial upfront investment, this was especially the case for Merry Hill, as tens of millions of pounds were spent removing the massive concrete foundations of the steel works that had previously existed on the land. In lieu of an enterprise zone it is very likely the mall would never have been built. It is no coincidence that Merry Hill’s only

98 Beddington, Design for Shopping Centers, v. Note that this source incorrectly states that Pompano Fashion Square Mall is in California.
100 Ibid., 309.
101 “Shopping City Takes You Into The 1990s!”
British rival in the mid-1980s for size and ambition was the Gateshead MetroCentre, which was also entirely built within the borders of one of the first eleven enterprise zones in Britain.

Built on land that, until 1982, had housed the Round Oak Steel Plant, Merry Hill also advertised itself as a partial solution to the job losses caused by the steel plant’s closure. Nationalized in 1967, the Round Oak plant had been in operation since the mid-nineteenth century, and had been the major source of employment for the surrounding area. Merry Hill, however, initiated a total erasure of the site’s recent industrial past. The mall’s main cultural signifiers, from the monorail to the Jules Verne food court, were global rather than local in scope, with the large numbers of indoor fountains and pools a weak and token reference to the canals of the black country (an allusion described by one magazine as “distant and doubtless lost on visitors – no industrial canal was ever so blue or clean”).  

Merry Hill’s repressed industrial past came back to haunt the mall when fears that toxic residue may have left the mall in danger of being shut down by the government scuppered an attempt by a property developer to sell the site in 1992. The Dudley enterprise zone, as with enterprise zones in East London and in Clydebank, was initially intended to bring manufacturing jobs back to the region. In 1986 Labour councilors in Dudley, dismayed by the new, service-based economy emerging before their eyes, persuaded the Secretary of State to reintroduce local taxes for retail developments within the zone. By then, however, it was too late and this intervention was not enough to stop Merry Hill’s expansion in the following four years.

Opposed by Labour councilors, built in a supply-side tax haven, passed around between international property speculators, and proposed as a band-aid to heal the problems caused by the deindustrialization of the greater Birmingham area, Merry Hill appears in many ways to have an immediate association with the politics of the 1980s Conservative government. However, Merry Hill was made possible by a set of processes that were put into motion decades before the election of Margaret Thatcher. This chapter has shown that the shopping mall was not a ready-made solution to a new political moment. It was neither conjured fully formed from the minds of policy makers, nor was it fully determined by the reorganization of the global economy in the 1970s and 1980s. While the shift from manufacturing to services and rise of a new political class invested in the denigration of public infrastructure in Britain created a perfect environment for the proliferation of shopping malls, the form itself was an older and more contingent combination of elements.

Conclusion

The feeling of stepping from a windy sidewalk or exposed car park through the double doors of a shopping mall into a dimly lit cocoon of soft music and boxed storefronts is a familiar and constitutive part of both urban and suburban life for most. Where once city-dwellers went to British high streets or American downtowns to buy clothes, take their children to see Santa, or for aimless meetings or dates, by the 1990s these activities were increasingly confined to shopping malls. More so, perhaps, the other case studies that make up this dissertation, the emergence of shopping malls has been a

103 “For Sale: But Its Business As Usual For Shoppers.”
global phenomenon. There are approximately 1,100 shopping malls in the US alone, a figure that increases exponentially if strip malls and urban gallerias are included.\textsuperscript{104} Although a recent decline in shopping mall building in the US has been widely reported, this has not been the case elsewhere, particularly in parts of the developing world, where shopping malls continue to be used as methods for urban expansion and development.\textsuperscript{105} There are 430 shopping malls in Brazil, 570 in India and 155 in South Africa.\textsuperscript{106} Perhaps the biggest global growth in recent decades has been in China, where the number of malls is set to surpass four thousand.\textsuperscript{107}

Like other pilot zones, shopping malls acted as instruments for privatizing and fortifying urban space. Like others, their emergence cannot be reduced to a set of high political initiatives or the reconfiguring of the global economy in the 1970s and 1980s. The road from the Coventry Shopping Precinct to the Merry Hill Shopping Mall saw the enclosure, standardization, and purification of shopping centers, each occurring at different historical and political moments, yet each becoming essential for the modern shopping mall to exist in global networks of capital, expertise, and artifice. As with enterprise zones each new shopping mall in Britain also marked a puncture in the sovereignty and legal consistency of Britain’s urban space. Shopping malls led to a delegation of power in British towns and cities, to private security guards, to draconian facilities managers, and large private developers, who became increasingly involved in urban planning decisions. Businesses letting space in shopping malls tied themselves to the mast of the meticulous governance enacted by management companies in the hope that they might benefit from cheaper ground rents, tighter security, and more efficient means of channeling stock and customers. Meanwhile, their customers were subject to different legal codes than they were on the streets outside. Shopping malls emerged as distinct legal and political regimes, and by the 1980s, in places such as Merry Hill, they were being marketed specifically as a departure from the drab industrial built environment of the mid-twentieth century.

This was not always the case. The initial enclosure of British retail space was undertaken by state actors in order to recentralize British cities, to rationalize and order town centers and rein in automobile use. Unbeknownst to the modernist planners who first conceived these shopping centers, men such as Donald Gibson, the aggregation of various stores into discrete centers, set apart from the street with multiple stores and ancillary services, meant that they were eligible for privatization in the 1980s and 1990s, in ways that older high streets were not. Before doing so, however, these structures, had to be retrofitted with material and legal alterations, fitted with locking doors and staffed by private security guards. The techniques that had been developed and honed in private shopping centers on the outskirts of cities were, by the end of the century, coming home

\textsuperscript{104} Figure cited in David Segal, “Our Love Affair With the Mall is on the Rocks,” \textit{The New York Times}, January 31, 2009.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{106} For figures on Brazil see “Brazilian Shopping Mall Market,” Alianse Shopping Centers, Last modified April 2, 2016, <http://ir Alianse.com.br/enu/brazilian-shopping-mall-market>; For India see Samidha Sharma, “Malls More than Double in Five Years,” \textit{The Times of India}, August 8, 2013; For South Africa see Joan Muller, “Number of Large Malls In South Africa Expected to Grow to 180 by 2016,” \textit{Business Day Live}, November 28, 2013.

to reshape the social democratic retail infrastructure of the mid-twentieth century (needless to say Donald Gibson’s shopping precinct in Coventry now belongs to a holding company called Mall Solutions Europe). Splitting the atom of the shopping mall reveals modernist technocrats, heating and lighting systems, instruments for regulating and de-regulating land use, and flat pack monorails that can be shared between property developers in different hemispheres. Most importantly, perhaps, it uncovers a repressed social democratic pre-history, a sign that massification and enclosure of retail without the privatization of land was once, and still could be, possible.
Chapter 5:  
The Business Park: A New Working Landscape

On January 14, 1982 the staff of LKB Biochrom arrived at work to find a memo from their new next-door neighbors. Addressed only to the company’s male employees, it read:

A new company on the Science Park, Cambridge Life Sciences, use HUMAN URINE as the raw material for one of their products. Due to the current adverse weather conditions, their normal supplies of this unusual starting material have failed. We have been asked if employees of LKB Biochrom would donate their urine for experimental purposes.

A plastic container was left in the company’s male restrooms, and after enough urine had been gathered the company was provided with “a barrel of beer as compensation.” This exchange took place on the leafy grounds of Cambridge Science Park, a mute scattering of low-rise offices and laboratories planned by Trinity College, Cambridge in 1970. Designed to foster links between Trinity and the private sector, the park was a quiet and cordial expression of avant-garde techno-futurism nestled in the Cambridge Fens, the first of its kind in Britain. Although bizarre, this exchange was not untypical in an environment designed to foster professional and social collaboration between different enterprises. Designed to be more than the sum of its parts, the businesses that leased this shiny complex of huts shared resources and ideas with their neighbors and with Cambridge scientists and students. Their employees ate, drank, and even exercised with one another. The final chapter in this dissertation is about low-rise, post-industrial, and holistically planned developments such as Cambridge Science Park. Beginning in the 1970s science parks and business parks sprouted in suburban locations where land was cheap. These developments were planned and managed by a single authority, usually in the private sector, and hosted a mixture of offices, light industry and private research centers. By the end of the 1980s there were more than 450 such developments in Britain as cities such as London, Manchester, Birmingham, and Glasgow became ringed by necklaces of squat, white buildings, silent car parks, and glistening lawns. These developments have been mythologized as the purest spatial expression of Britain’s increasingly high-tech, suburban, and post-Fordist economy, places where laser technicians and university scientists go for drinks after work or where the CEOs of rival companies discuss share prices over golf. They were developed in relative isolation from the urban fabric that surrounds them, providing their own roads, landscaping and security. Business parks were to corporate offices and small factories what shopping malls were to high street stores.

Like the other pilot zones in this dissertation, business parks did not emerge fully-formed in the late twentieth century. Holistically planned urban developments leased to multiple employers date back to “industrial estates,” the first of which, Trafford Park,  

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2 Ibid.
was founded in 1896. In the first half of the twentieth century, estates such as these were large industrial conglomerates, where barracks of warehouses were connected to vast factories and shipping ports. These developments saw some of the first industries to harness electricity for mass production, and housed some of the earliest experiments in Fordist labor practices in Britain (not least Trafford Park, where Henry Ford himself opened a factory in 1911). Industrial estates plugged their tenants into a comprehensive infrastructure network consisting of railroads, gas mains, water pipes, electric cables and shipping canals. Trafford Park provided housing on site for hundreds of workers and organized publicity campaigns across the globe. While Trafford Park’s infrastructure was gradually brought under public control, first by the local municipal corporation, and later by the government, the government began to create its own industrial estates in depressed areas of the country in the 1930s. As industrial estates brought together different forms of provision that had once been the preserve of individual enterprises they enabled what I call a “Fordist complex” to take root. In using the phrase “Fordist complex” I refer to a state of affairs in which infrastructure (electricity, oil, transportation networks), production and welfare (including housing) were conceived of as a totality, usually under the direction of a single authority. In the early twentieth century, the Fordist complexes forged at places like Trafford Park were amenable to various forms of state control, if not outright nationalization.

As the roar of assembly lines and the stench of chemicals gave way to the quiet hum of fluorescent lighting and curvilinear garden paths in the later twentieth century, a new kind of workplace was born. The transition from industrial estates to business parks was enabled by a now-familiar combination of global economic ruptures and parochial political decisions. They were the outcome of postwar suburbanization and deindustrialization, as well an attempt to foster scientific and cultural research by the late 1960s Labour Party. The transition was hastened by a change in planning legislation enacted by Margaret Thatcher’s government in 1987. Yet, as with other pilot zones, these spaces had their own autonomous spatial logic, one that throbbled beneath the visible surface of legislation, and one that cannot be accounted for by either economic change or high politics. To tell the history of the modern business park is also to tell the story of the disaggregation of the industrial estate’s various elements. The Fordist compact between production, infrastructure, and housing, established in places like Trafford Park, split into its separate elements. First, conspicuous industrial and infrastructural processes were made to disappear, as pipes and ducts were buried underground, and sound and smoke were banished. Second, a new infrastructure of well-being supplanted one of welfare, as unionized jobs were replaced with charity fun runs, while public art, nature, and exercise were deemed essential for workplace satisfaction. Third, the new parks had no provision for housing, as the Fordist compact that linked employment with housing gave way to the workplace and to the community as two autonomous urban units. Fourth, the cleaners, gardeners, and construction workers who serviced business parks were rendered invisible, ineligible, for the most part, to participate in the amenities created for the well-being of skilled technicians and businessmen and women. Finally, the evolution from industrial estates, to science parks to business parks saw a gradual withdrawal of the state from such developments as infrastructure was privatized and planning regulations were

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loosened. The collapse of traditional industries, the suburbanization of work and the erosion of rights and welfare for workers were not confined, of course, to business parks in postwar Britain. But it was here that these developments were arguably most conspicuous, where the new features of technical, middle-class working life were assembled.

This chapter will begin with Trafford Park, looking at how the various elements of the Fordist complex congealed together on this immense industrial estate. It will show how the estate was gradually and subtly nationalized by the middle of the twentieth century — at the same time as industrial estates funded by the government were built across the country. The chapter will then look at science parks as the concept emerged in California in the 1950s and spread to Cambridge in the 1970s. Perhaps more so than any other pilot zone, science parks were a direct import from the US, and from northern California in particular. Next, the chapter will look at the development of Stockley Park, a vast, cavernous business park built in northwest London in the mid-1980s. With its immense, bucolic grounds and its extensive list of therapeutic amenities for high-skilled workers, Stockley Park was the apotheosis of a planned business park — an ideal case study for the new spaces under examination in this chapter. Finally, the chapter will return to Trafford Park in the early 1980s, to find it beleaguered, desolate, and hemorrhaging jobs. In the 1980s and 1990s, to ensure its survival, the park was transformed into a business park like any other, as many of the post-Fordist planning techniques that were honed in Stockley and Cambridge were retrofitted into its grounds.

The Industrial Estate

By the late nineteenth century the de Trafford family could see the city of Manchester coming over the horizon to meet them. Their ancestral home, a large manor house surrounded by hundreds of acres of parks and gardens, found itself encircled by the enormous, soot-drenched city that was creeping closer with every year that passed. In 1888 construction began on the Manchester Ship Canal, a deep-water channel that would allow large ships to dock in the city. When it was clear that the canal would pass immediately to the north of the de Trafford estate, the family knew that the game was up. In 1896 they cut their losses, selling the estate to a self-made speculator named Ernest Hooley, who had made a fortune buying patents from small companies. Hooley used his charm to promote the company and then sold the patents for larger sums of money. Trafford Park would be Hooley’s biggest speculative venture. After founding Trafford Park Estates LTD as a joint stock company, he set out to become one of the biggest and most unusual landlords in Britain.5

Occupying what was effectively an island, bounded on all sides by canals and perched on the edge of Manchester, Trafford Park was an ideal site for industrial development. Hooley’s Estates Company provided gas and water to tenants, as well as access to both the ship canal and local and national rail networks. Electricity, provided by a small on-site power station, was a rarity at that time.6 One of the first tenants on the estate was George Westinghouse, the American electrical supplies magnate who had played a key role in developing commercially available electricity in the US. Another early arrival was

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the British car manufacturer Rolls Royce, which set up a crane factory in 1902. Henry Ford, meanwhile, built a car plant on the estate — his first in the UK — in 1911. Hooley’s company created a light rail network that linked different parts of the estate and connected businesses to the ship canal. The Estates Company tried to impose some logic to the rapid development of the estate in its first few decades. Large businesses, trading mostly in raw materials (such as Anglo-American Oil and Grain Elevator Estate LTD), were given land on the outer perimeter of the estate, close to shipping networks, while smaller, more specialized businesses were dependent on the estate’s road and rail network. Within this framework, interested companies would purchase a plot of land from the estate, after which they would pay for access to the railroad, gas, electricity and water. Aside from a handful of speculatively built warehouse developments, which the company named “hives,” tenants were expected to plan and build their own factories. The estate marketed itself as being at the vanguard of twentieth century industrial modernity. In 1905 a giant banner was hung over the estate’s main entrance reading, “Wake Up England – Trafford Park is Awake!”

At its mid-century apotheosis Trafford Park was one of the largest industrial complexes in Britain. Before the Depression it was estimated that Hooley’s company was receiving a rate of return on capital approaching 9 percent. By the end of the 1930s the estate employed more than 40,000 people in 150 factories. By this time almost all of the estate’s two thousand acres had been converted into a dense industrial landscape. Contemporaries marveled at the scale and intensity of the estate. One journalist commented:

As they gaze across the maze of dull workshops and warehouses the romantics may sigh and think of the past glories of the de Trafford home. But is there not a romance of a different kind in the steel rails, the steamer tunnels, the rumbling motor lorries and the skill of the hands that produce the park’s dynamic effort?

The complete erasure of the area’s recent rural past was also celebrated in publicity material for the estate, which was circulated widely by Hooley’s company: “The woods have gone, the deer pheasants and rabbits are a memory. The verdant, velvet-like turf has given way to concrete floors for big factories and warehouses.”

Although many of the factories on the site made use of imported and exotic raw materials, and catered to distant markets across the globe, Trafford Park’s spatial horizons were remarkably narrow. An on-site company provided gas and the estate drew large quantities of water from the nearby Lake District (with help from the local municipality). An oil company established depots that other factories could use. Coal

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7 John O’Malley, “The Industrial Development of Trafford Park 1919-1939,” Trafford Local Studies Centre (henceforward TLS) 338.09 OMA, 12.
8 Ibid., 13.
9 Nicholls, Trafford Park, 56.
10 O’Malley, Industrial Development of Trafford Park, 13.
11 Cliff and Southern, Trafford Park, 77.
12 Daily Dispatch, “Dream Became Symbol of Wealth,” TLS 339.09 DAI.
14 Cliff and Southern, Trafford Park, 77.
was provided from mines in nearby Lancashire.\textsuperscript{15} As we have seen, the estate had its own small power plant and network of roads and railroads. The estate even boasted its own banks.\textsuperscript{16} In some instances companies were able to centralize entire branches of production on the site, with the Ford factory using rubber purchased from its neighbor, the Vulcanite Felt Company. The Hovis breadmaking company, meanwhile, built an underground conveyer belt from the grain elevator by the wharf to its factory.\textsuperscript{17} Factories in the estate, therefore, were uniquely dependent on a complex infrastructure network overseen and, in some cases, operated by the Estates Company. The estate advertised itself to footloose factory owners looking to capitalize on established infrastructure networks. One pamphlet aimed at such businessmen was titled, “Where Should My Factory Be?”\textsuperscript{18}

In 1899 British Westinghouse commissioned the construction of seven hundred homes on the site to house its workforce. In order to add an American imprint to Westinghouse’s first British venture, the streets were laid out in a grid pattern and divided into numbered streets and avenues. Isolated from other residential areas and surrounded on all sides by towering industrial complexes, the development became known, somewhat ironically, as “the village.” The houses were tightly packed terraces clustered around narrow streets, with a modest school described as little more than a “tin shed.”\textsuperscript{19} Eventually a small Methodist church and a swimming baths were added to the development.\textsuperscript{20} The village was clearly too small to house all of the workers of the various factories in Trafford Park. As the estate grew, a network of electric trams was built to carry workers to and from the estate and nearby Manchester.\textsuperscript{21} Like the gas, electricity and water which were funneled into the estate, the estate’s owners and tenants realized the importance of maintaining a stable supply of labor, and intervened as much as was necessary to bring in workers. In 1916 the Estates Company purchased a nearby farm with the intention of developing a complex of houses for workers, a plan that never materialized.\textsuperscript{22} Meanwhile, many businesses took extra steps to ensure the quality of their workforce. In the 1920s Metropolitan-Vickers electrical company paid for its apprentices to spend one day a week training at Manchester College of Technology, and twenty scholarships covering fees, books, and wages were given out each year for further technical study.\textsuperscript{23} While the kinds of work that took place on the estate varied widely, employees across the 150 factories had, for the most part, two things in common: they were male and working-class. In the 1930s the government estimated that just 10 percent of the estate’s workforce were female and that these workers were concentrated in electrical

\textsuperscript{15} Talbot, Trafford Park, 14-15.  
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 14-15.  
\textsuperscript{17} “The Development of Trafford Park,” TLS 338.09 TRA, 7.  
\textsuperscript{19} Nicholls, Trafford Park, 78.  
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 78.  
\textsuperscript{21} Cliff and Southern, Trafford Park, 77-78.  
\textsuperscript{22} “The Development of Trafford Park,” 8.  
\textsuperscript{23} Metrovicks AEI, “The Trafford Park Works of Metropolitan Vickers Electrical Company Ltd.,” 1929, TLS GB 7A2. TBC 231, 137.
engineering, food, and textile plants. When in 1946 the government considered a proposal to extend the estate, an official report noted:

We should oppose the recommendation that proposals for extensions employing women should receive some favourable consideration. Women workers generally have many extra industrial ties and employment for them should be found near their homes. Peripatetic females should be discouraged.

The same 1946 government report attempted to calculate the number of insured workers on the estate using data from the Ministry of Labour, and estimated that forty three thousand out of fifty thousand workers had some form of insurance against unemployment. Although there are no statistics on rates of trade union membership on the estate, it is likely that many if not most of the workers were members of unions. The militant union activist Hugh Scanlon, leader of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering, began his career as a union steward at Metropolitan Vickers in Trafford Park in the 1920s. During this time the Vickers plant’s workers were organized into twenty-four separate trade unions, each with regularly elected shop stewards. Working spaces on the estate were often dense and crowded, with an average of more than 266 workers per firm and a density of 57 workers per acre across the developed parts of the site. At Metropolitan Vickers these workers were organized into a complex hierarchy of skill:

The engineering organization consists of the departmental chief engineers with their assistant engineers, draughtsman, and clerical staffs who are responsible to a chief electrical engineer and a chief mechanical engineer... The works organisation is under the control of a general manager of works, to whom the departmental superintendents, together with the foremen and employees under their charge are responsible.

A photograph of the assembly room for electro-magnetic coils in the Metropolitan Vickers plant shows parallel lines of workers seated around tables in a vast brick atrium, with one supervisor per table.

By the 1930s the different firms on Trafford Park were dependent on each other and on vast and conspicuous infrastructure networks that housed, educated, and transported workers while distributing raw materials. As the century wore on, parts of the estate were brought under control of the state. The estate’s power plant was taken over by Stretford Urban District Council in 1920. The plant was moved in 1935 when it was incorporated into the national electricity grid, which was later entirely nationalized in

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24 Board of Trade Regional Office Note on Trafford Park, 1946, The National Archives (henceforward TNA:PRO) HLG 79/428, 2; It is worth noting that this figure of 10 percent expanded considerably after the outbreak of the Second World War.
26 Board of Trade Research Sub Committee Report: “Trafford Park Industrial Estate,” TNA:PRO HLG 79/428, 2.
28 Figure for workers per firm obtained by dividing 40,000 workers by 150 firms (Cliff and Southern, Trafford Park, 77). Figure for density obtained by dividing 40,000 workers by 700 acres.
29 Ibid., 131.
30 Ibid., 65.
31 “The Development of Trafford Park,” 5.
1947. The trams that connected the estate to Manchester were, meanwhile, incorporated into the city’s municipal tram network in 1934.32 Between 1946 and 1949 the postwar Labour government nationalized coal, gas, and railroads, meaning that by 1950 a significant part of the estate’s energy and transportation networks were owned by the government. During the First and Second World War the state deepened its involvement in Trafford Park. Throughout World War I, the Estates Company housed a number of large warehouses that were hastily built to aid the war effort, including a vast storage depot designed to store war munitions intended for use by the Russian army that became known as Petrograd.33 At the same time the old de Trafford estate house, still intact, was requisitioned for use as a military hospital.34 In 1917 the Ministry of Food commandeered land on the site for a cold storage warehouse to store frozen food.35 During World War II, meanwhile, the estate became a giant arsenal, as many of the factories were put to work manufacturing munitions. Perhaps the most impressive of these operations was an aircraft production facility created by Ford’s Motor Company in 1939 under the oversight of the Ministry of Aircraft. The factory employed seventeen thousand and constructed thirty-four thousand planes during the war.36

![Figure 15: Workers leaving the Metropolitan-Vickers plant on Trafford Park (date and author unknown).](image)

32 Ibid., 5.
33 Ibid., 8.
34 Nicholls, *Trafford Park*, 78.
36 Ibid., 13.
The centralization of housing, labor control, transportation, and raw materials under a single guiding authority made industrial estates ideal tools for state-led industrial development. In 1934, facing high rates of regionally concentrated unemployment as a result of the Depression, the government created a handful of “Special Areas,” regions that would receive injections of state funds. The commissioners hired to oversee these areas recommended that the government construct and manage trading estates that would follow the example of Trafford Park and Slough (a rival enterprise that opened in 1920).\textsuperscript{37} The estates would provide an attractive, subsidized environment for industries in areas of high unemployment. The first of these developments was Team Valley in Gateshead, whose construction began 1935. Team Valley was built by a limited liability company, funded by the government and reported to the commissioner for Special Areas who had the final say on all developments.\textsuperscript{38} The estate was split into neat quadrants of identical cement factories separated by wide roads and provided with access to railways and electricity by the estates company. A central canteen servicing every worker on the site was also built.\textsuperscript{39} Similar estates were created in Treforest in South Wales, in Solway, in West Cumberland, and in Hillington, on the outskirts of Glasgow, in the late 1930s.\textsuperscript{40} Many more industrial estates were built to sustain the economy of postwar new towns such as Basildon and Harlow. By 1958 there were eighty-one industrial estates in the UK.

\textsuperscript{38} Kenelm, “Government Sponsored Trading Estates,” 849.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid 855.
\textsuperscript{40} William Bredo, \textit{Industrial Estates: Tool For Industrialization} (Glencoe: Free Press, 1960), 18.
many of which were owned or commissioned by the government.⁴¹ Through its creation of a discrete industrial complex, Trafford Park allowed government planners to conceive of industry and jobs as portable units that could be cut and pasted into different parts of the country. Although he did not know it at the time, Ernest Hooley created a model that was eminently portable, and ripe for nationalization.

Places like Trafford Park spatially anticipated the twentieth century shift towards national planning and the nationalization of industry and infrastructure. Wolfgang Schivelbusch argued that the increasing dependence of enterprises on external infrastructure, particularly electricity, at the turn of the twentieth century, prefigured and made possible a new kind of political economy:

> The period of electrification… witnessed changes in the economic structure of capitalism. The transformation of free competition into corporate monopoly capitalism confirmed in economic terms what electrification had anticipated technically: the end of individual enterprise and an autonomous energy supply… to cling to entrepreneurial autonomy and energy independence in the new world of the second Industrial Revolution would have been a quixotic act.⁴²

Industrial estates were at the vanguard of this transition. As we will see, the history of the business park in the later twentieth century is also the history of the reversal of this process.

**The Science Park**

In 1960 a senior administrator at Stanford University addressed an audience of wealthy benefactors in Palo Alto, California. The speech concerned the creation of an industrial estate on a small patch of the university’s 8,800-acre land grant on the San Francisco peninsula. The administrator sought to reassure the trustees that this was unlike anything they had ever seen before:

> Before taking a position on the question of industry in the hills, we must first ask ourselves, “What is industry?” Many of you have probably come from the east or midwest, like myself, and industry means smoke stacks, heavy thumpings, coal cars, soot and many other things not associated with pleasant living. Industry, as we know it in the peninsula area, is something entirely different. It can mean broad lawns, employee patios, tree planting, walls of glass, recreation clubs, research and development, and a place for creative people to work. The buildings often resemble schools and colleges more than industrial plants.⁴³

The Stanford Industrial Park was the first university-developed “science park” in the world. The university acted as a landlord for businesses that moved onto the site, and facilitated the transfer of ideas and resources between tenants and Stanford academics. By the time the speech was delivered the park had already been open for seven years.

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⁴¹ Ibíd., 7.
⁴³ Speech to donors by unnamed administrator, Stanford University Archive (henceforward SUA), Public Affairs Office Records 1960-1980, SC0105, Box 1, Folder 7.
While Trafford Park was a triumph of artifice, a singed labyrinth of brick and steel, the Stanford Industrial Park was verdant and inconspicuous, almost invisible from the adjacent road.

As Louise Mozingo has noted, mid-century American capitalism was becoming increasingly pastoral. As improving communications meant that managers and backroom offices could be located away from industrial centers of production, American businesses in the immediate postwar era escaped high land values to set up headquarters in leafy suburban settings. The Stanford Industrial Park was the apotheosis of this new kind of suburban capitalism. In the early twentieth century, at the same time as Trafford Park was under development, a handful of industrial estates were built in the US, most under the ownership and management of large railroad companies. After Stanford these spaces all went green, as freeways rather than railroads determined the location of new industrial developments, and light-manufacturing companies began to campaign to local governments for the right to develop in suburban locations. These new developments eschewed the term “industrial estate,” calling themselves “industrial parks” (or “science parks” in the case of high tech research establishments such as Stanford). The Industrial Parks USA exhibit at the 1958 Brussels World’s Fair popularized the term, drawing international attention to these new developments.

In order to justify its picturesque, suburban setting, the Stanford Industrial Park did as much as it could to distance itself from heavy industry. Businesses renting space on the site were legally prohibited from the “giving off of offensive gas, smoke fumes, dust, odors, waste products, noise or vibrations.” As had been the case in Trafford Park, tenants were encouraged to design and build their own buildings. In this case, however, Stanford was allowed to veto any building deemed ugly or inappropriate. All development plans by prospective tenants were submitted to a committee of Stanford faculty, chaired by the head of the Department of Art and Architecture, for aesthetic review. Much of the site was intended to have only 20 percent building coverage, with a third of the site left as an “open green area.” Stanford Industrial Park set a precedent for other universities with large, vacant land grants looking to become property developers and share resources with the private sector. According to one estimate, there were eighty-two developments calling themselves “science parks” across the US by 1971, most of which were connected with universities.

It was not until the 1970s, a generation after the opening of the Stanford Industrial Park, that the first science park was built in Britain. British capitalism was becoming suburban, as the geography of work was transformed between 1960 and 1980. Cities such as London and Manchester warped and deflated like day-old party balloons, as jobs and capital migrated to suburbs and small towns. During this period London lost seven

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46 Ibid., 120.
48 “Ampex Corporation Lease,” SUA SC677 Box 2.
49 Speech to donors by unnamed administrator, SUA SC0105, Box 1, Folder 7.
50 Ibid.
51 “A university promotes commercial enterprise,” TNA: PRO BT 177/2765.
hundred thousand manufacturing jobs, more than half its 1960 total. At the same time the number of manufacturing jobs in rural areas across the country increased by one hundred thousand, despite a large contraction in manufacturing during this period in general. Cities also shrunk. From 1930 to 1980 London’s population steadily declined, decreasing from 8 million to 6.5 million. During the same sixty-year period the population of Liverpool fell from 800,000 to 500,000 and Glasgow shrank from 1.1 million to 700,000. While the location of jobs changed, so too did the jobs themselves. Between 1961 and 1991 the number of manufacturing jobs in Britain almost halved, while the number of service jobs almost doubled. As precursors to the business parks and office complexes that sprouted in suburbs in the 1980s, science parks were at the vanguard of this economic and demographic upheaval.

Science parks came in the wake of a decade in which science and technology had been at the forefront of British political debate. Shortly before becoming Prime Minister in 1964, the Labour Party leader Harold Wilson declared that a new nation would be forged in the “white heat” of technological progress and called for the country to:

…mobilise the talents of our scientists and technicians, redeployed from missile and warheads, on research and development contracts, civil research and development to produce the new instruments and tools of economic advance both for Britain and for the war on poverty in under-developed areas of the Commonwealth and elsewhere.

The number of scientists in laboratories and campuses in Britain had been expanding as a result of military research during the Second World War, almost doubling between 1921 and 1951. During his 1964 to 1970 government, Wilson created the short-lived Ministry of Technology (often cutely shorted to Minitech), and, more importantly, oversaw a vast expansion of scientific and technical departments on British colleges and universities. In 1966, following a visit to the US, Wilson wrote an open letter to British universities encouraging them to set up science parks following the American model. Cambridge University, which, during the 1960s, hosted famous and fractious debates

53 Ibid., 5.
58 Ibid., 191.
between the scientist C.P. Snow and literary critic F.R. Leavis over the role of science in society, was particularly affected by the growth of scientific education during this period. In 1967 the university convened a subcommittee under the guidance of Nobel Prize winning physicist Neville Mott to look at strengthening “the interaction between teaching and scientific research… and its application in industry, medicine, and agriculture.”

When Trinity College, Cambridge began to consider building a science park on the outskirts of the small market town in the late 1960s, it looked to the US as a precedent. Like many Oxford and Cambridge colleges, Trinity owned vast tracts of land up and down the country. In the early 1970s, Trinity’s tenants included an agricultural estate in a small village in Bedfordshire, a boat hire depot on the Grand Union canal, a few scattered houses across a large tract of the Romney Marshes in Kent, and even a car tire store in East London. Its status as a registered charity meant that the college benefited from reduced property tax rates. By the time that Trinity first started planning the Cambridge Science Park in 1970, the college was an experienced landlord and its finances heavily supplemented by rental income. The college’s senior bursar, Dr. John Bradfield, oversaw this diverse portfolio of land holdings, collecting rent and approving planning proposals. The site chosen for the park was a flat and featureless patch of ground on the outskirts of town. Owned by the college since 1443, the site had been a parking spot for US tanks during the Second World War, and since then had become a “disused gravel pit.”

With the help of Bidwells, a private property developer, Trinity set about sowing the ground with grass and plants, laying down roads, and turning the gravel pit at the center of the site into an artificial lake. As in Stanford, the college set out to create a “park” environment of mainly trees and substantial areas of grass. Whimsy was prioritized over function, as the college demolished the original military road on the site, deeming it “too dull and straight.” Electricity lines, meanwhile, were torn down and hidden underground. A groundsman who formerly worked for the new town of Runcorn moved to live full-time in the park with his family. The park was an enclosed, village-like environment, its public spaces tended, managed and policed by Bidwells, under the watchful eye of Trinity. Trinity retained “aesthetic control” over any proposed developments, and restrictive covenants ensured that only clean, low-rise industries were...
Initially the college sought to restrict the number of tenants to 16, with a ratio of approximately 1 square foot of building for every 4.5 square feet of site. Tenants were to have “a high standard of external appearance… and a high level of landscaping.” The first two tenants were LKB Biochrom, a Swedish biotech company, which built a two-story office block and small on-site laboratory, and Laser Scan, which manufactured computer-controlled lasers. Although initial uptake was slow, by 1989 the park had extended considerably beyond its initial, modest, thirteen-acre site, to house sixty-nine different firms. As the park developed throughout the 1970s and 1980s it marketed itself as an exciting curiosity, a crystal ball in which the future of British work could be seen. Its success in doing so led Margaret Thatcher and the Duke of Edinburgh to visit the park at different times during the 1980s.

While the owners of Trafford Park allowed tenants to construct permanent, monumental structures, Cambridge Science Park opted for flexibility and impermanence. Tenants rented rather than purchased their plot of land, with a twenty-five year lease that was reviewed every five years. While some companies designed and constructed their own buildings, others were built by the Park management and leased on a short-term basis. These buildings were designed with malleable internal spaces, which could be re-ordered to suit the needs of specific tenants, “without uprooting expensive apparatus.” Continuous fenestration around the building meant that internal floor space could be subdivided without closing off any exits. Unlike the capital-intensive factories in Trafford Park, the scientific firms at Cambridge were frequently called upon to re-order their internal workspaces. Many of the tenants housed laboratories, offices, and small assembly plants, spaces that had to be reconfigured as contracts changed and new technologies emerged. One of the challenges faced by business park developers was taking “a long view whilst accommodating firms whose time scales are short.” Laser Scan’s headquarters, for example, was described as “aluminum cladding on steel frame, with completely clear space inside… to permit maximum flexibility of use.” As factories and offices shrank, then, so too did their time horizons. The Cambridge Science Park was planned as an empty grid, where industries could be broken down and reconstituted at a moment’s notice. While Trafford Park was like a classical sculpture, a fixed testament to industrial high-modernism that was intended to remain in place for centuries, Cambridge Science Park was like a sketch pad, a blank slate to be filled with whatever was deemed avant garde or productive at any given moment.

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70 “A Cambridge Science Park: A Proposal By Trinity College For The Early Provision Of Suitable Accommodation For Science Based Industry In Cambridge.”
71 Ibid.
75 “Cambridge Science Park: A Trinity College Scheme,” TNA: PRO BT 177/2765.
78 Ibid., 39.
Figure 17: Horses graze on land in the Stanford Industrial Park (Photograph: Stanford Archives, Flickr, Creative Commons).

Figure 18: The lake at the center of the Cambridge Science Park (Photograph: Howard Chalkley, Flickr, Creative Commons).
The employees of Cambridge Science Park also shared starkly different working lives as compared to the working-class laborers who commuted to Trafford Park each morning. In 1990 two Open University academics, Doreen Massey and David Wield, collected data from the managers of eighty-eight businesses located on science parks (the Cambridge Park provided by far the largest number of responders). Unsurprisingly Massey and Wield found that “in the imagery of new work, trade unions have no place,” with 90 percent of firms reporting that they had no unionized members at all.80 Their data suggests that, with regard to unions, science parks were several steps ahead of the national trend, with trade union density in the UK at 39.9 percent in 1989 (having fallen from 49.9 percent in 1981).81 Also unsurprisingly there were more women working on science parks than in early twentieth century industrial estates, although women’s labor tended to be concentrated in lower-status positions, such as part-time secretarial or administrative jobs. Women comprised only 26 percent of full-time employees but 52 percent of those working part-time.82 The park’s bi-annual newsletter, produced by Bidwells to forge connections between businesses, betrays the almost total invisibility of women on-site. In the first eighteen editions of the newsletter, which cover the entire 1980s, just 8.5 percent of all of the figures depicted in photographs, cartoons, and sketches are women.83 Between 1980 and 1995 the newsletter published “profiles” of prominent members of the science park community. Among the 22 of these that appeared during this period, not a single woman was profiled.84 Workplaces were also smaller. Gone were the giant shop floors and assembly lines of Trafford Park, with an early development clause limiting the number of employees per establishment at Cambridge. Rather than working in a fixed, Fordist hierarchy, with clearly assigned tasks, hours and expectations, most science park workers were expected to be in charge of their own hours and to be motivated solely by their enthusiasm for the work. Of the managers questioned in Massey and Wield’s survey, 67 percent said that their employees were expected to record their own time on projects, and 59 percent said that their staff worked flexible hours.85 Of these 59 percent, 91 percent said that they had no formal system of timekeeping, and that timekeeping was based on “trust” and “high morale” alone.86 The same survey found that only 25 percent of science park establishments paid overtime to their workers (compared with 56 percent of non-park establishments).87

Cambridge Science Park, therefore, was a place where morale and satisfaction were more important than job security and welfare. Indeed, when asked by the Massey and Wield survey about low rates of on-site unionization, one manager said that unions were unnecessary as workers felt that they were “well treated” and in a “good environment.”88 The park was spatially ordered to maximize these qualities, not only

82 Massey and Wield, *High-Tech Fantasies*, 112.
84 Ibid.
86 Ibid., 93.
87 Ibid., 102.
88 Ibid., 104.
through its bucolic, manicured setting, but also its attempts to inculcate a sense of collegiate sociability between different employees. Trinity intended for the park to be more than merely an atomized scattering of businesses. The park’s newsletter advertised a number of events available to any worker on site, including games of squash, an annual charity fun run (where businesses competed against one another), a Christian fellowship that met weekly and even a weight management course led by a nutrition scientist who worked at the park.  

In 1983 Trinity opened a social center on the park, which housed a bar furnished by a twenty-five thousand pound grant from Barclays Bank. The hope was to establish a culture in which businesses would share ideas and resources, as well as to provide incentives for flexible workers, workers who would begin to see their place of employment as a site for leisure and sociability. When opening the social center, the Master of Trinity fantasized that the bar would become a “a miniature hybrid between Kubla Khan’s ‘stately pleasure dome’ and George IV’s Pavilion in Brighton!” The success of this policy is perhaps best seen in the pages of a spy thriller novel called The Cambridge Connection written in 2001 by an ex-physicist who used to work in the park. The novel depicts a confident and chummy workforce, basking in what the author called “the continued growth of high-tech sunrise industries.” The staff live lives clouded by inter-business social and sexual intrigue, with the protagonist, Harry Bridge, meeting the story’s love interest in the social center bar after work.

Daniel Ussishkin has shown how techniques of morale management appeared during the Second World War in the form of joint production committees between workers and managers, and attempts to foster cohesive workplace cultures. He argued that this cohesiveness was essential to managing the social democratic consensus that emerged after the war. The institutions that appeared during this period sought to inculcate forms of community and solidarity between workers. T. T. Parsons, a sociologist given state funding to investigate problems of morale among coal mining communities in the 1940s, suggested that the solution to poor workplace morale was to encourage an “intensification of normative behavior,” and suggested choosing a single color scheme for beams and equipment in a particular colliery. As the landscape of employment changed in the later twentieth century, this kind of workplace cohesion was less and less necessary or possible. As a result, the purpose of “morale” and the means by which it could be achieved shifted subtly. In the Cambridge Science Park, morale became an individuated affair, something that workers achieved through self-management and collegiate friendships rather than joint production committees or exercises in collective identification. Clean, tipsy, and picturesque, with an elite, largely male crowd of skilled and self-disciplined workers, the Cambridge Science Park was a space where wellbeing, rather than welfare, was the organizing principle.

As we have seen, the middle of the twentieth century saw the gradual nationalization of industrial estates, and their strategic dispersal by states seeking a quick

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91 Ibid., “Pastime And Good Company At The Trinity Centre,” Autumn 1984.
94 Ibid., 738.
fix for industrial development. While the Cambridge Science Park, to some degree, marked a retreat of the state from the business of planning working environments, it was far from fully denationalized. Trinity College’s initial application to the government for planning permission was turned down, with one official noting that they were impractical, and a poor macroeconomic strategy for a declining industrial nation:

They [are] a slavish and half-baked attempt to follow American fashion, having misunderstood that fashion in the first place... since the Germans and Japanese have swept us out of world markets for the general run of production industry Cambridge (and perhaps Oxford?) University are all we have left that we can put in to bat against foreign competition. One has heard contrary opinions on this... it was precisely because we were so good at pure science and put so much more prestige on Fellows of Trinity winning Nobel Prizes, that our production industries went down the drain. 95

Cambridge was rural, affluent, and boasted high levels of employment. To support industry in the town was to go against the grain of Britain’s post-1930s regional industrial policy, which had channeled new developments into areas of unemployment. Since the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, any factory or factory extension could be built only after being granted an Industrial Development Certificate (IDC) by the Board of Trade. From 1958 the Board began to turn down increasing numbers of IDC applications, tending only to approve applications for factories in targeted development areas. 96 Early boosters of the Cambridge Science Park faced further problems. In 1950, with support from the government, Cambridge Country Council set out to restrict the growth of the town, calling for any large-scale industrial developments in and around the town to be limited. 97

The Cambridge Science Park, therefore, faced objections and restrictions from every level of government. Having been turned down for a site-wide Industrial Development Certificate, the bursar was forced to make every new tenant on the site apply for their own separate IDC, a process he likened to collecting stamps. 98 Meanwhile tight restrictions on the use of the site were imposed by the Council, which demanded that research and development should be prioritized over production (“one does not like to limit the use of land if avoidable” noted the bursar, “but such is the essence of the scheme [that] I do not think the limitation matters greatly in this case”). 99 Alongside these restrictions there was also something cordial, collegiate, and almost ancien régime about Trinity College’s involvement in the development. Businesses were invited to regular sherry parties on the college’s medieval grounds. 100 The social club on site was named Henry’s, after Henry the VI and VIII, who were both alumni of the college (and whose portraits adorned the pub’s interior). One local magazine expressed surprise and amusement about this notoriously backward-looking institution’s new high-tech toy:

95 Memo, “Science Parks: Regional Implications,” TNA: PRO BT 177/2765.
97 For where these proposals were set out, see William Holford and Henry Myles Wright, A Report to the Town and Country Planning Committee of the Cambridgeshire County Council (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950).
100 Ibid., October 15, 1971.
“Industry’ used to be a dirty word in the hallowed cloisters of learning… [now] I am told, even College masters follow the progress of Acorn shares.”¹⁰¹ Unlike Team Valley or even the later years of Trafford Park, the science park at Cambridge was not a national, state-directed project. But it was hardly a libertarian start-up either. As the park was scrutinized and restricted by the government and owned by an ancient, public institution, the state was still a vital presence among its humming, low-rise sheds.

In the wake of Cambridge, science parks spread quickly through the UK. In 1984 the first five science parks in Britain created a trade group, the UK Science Parks Association, to share expertise and lobby the government for favorable planning legislation. By 2003 there were fifty-five science parks in the UK, usually owned by or built nearby major universities.¹⁰² While science parks were holistically planned environments for work and production, they presented an immediate and visceral departure from their high industrial forebears. Despite its medieval landlords, the Cambridge Science Park showcased a new kind of workplace, one that would become increasingly familiar as the decades passed. With its malleable architecture, whimsical aesthetic and its efforts to create a social community of tenants, the Cambridge park was a spatial arrangement suited for transient, flexible workers and a post-Fordist knowledge and research-based economy. As the first such enterprise in the UK, it provided a model for subsequent science parks built up and down the country. Although the park was heavily restricted by the state, it marked a departure from the Fordist complex of infrastructure, housing, welfare and work that was perfected on mid-century industrial estates. It would take the emergence of business parks in the 1980s for this complex to fully unravel.

The Business Park

In September 1985 the residents of Dawley Road, a suburban back street on the distant, western fringes of London, were treated to a sickly fragrance – a mixture of pine, vanilla, and decades old trash. Dawley Road sat on the edge of an immense new development, an enormous undulating business park called Stockley Park. Building the park required excavating more than 3.5 million cubic meters of industrial and domestic waste, which had been deposited for more than 70 years.¹⁰³ To mitigate the dizzying stench unleashed by this process, the developers undertook one of the most sophisticated counter-smell operations that had ever been attempted. Developers built what they claimed (perhaps with some exaggeration) to be the world’s largest air freshener: a mobile machine that set about “treating local noses to alternative bursts of pine and vanilla fragrance.”¹⁰⁴ One resident complained after being drenched by concentrated pine-smelling chemicals while riding her bike, and the company admitted, “reactions have been mixed.”¹⁰⁵ The transformation of Stockley Park from a fetid wasteland into a giant, maze-like business park, a city within a city, took five years to complete, and was a

¹⁰³ Stockley Park newsletter, Summer 1989, Hillingdon Archives (henceforward HLA) ADB 15/15 Box 1.
¹⁰⁴ Ibid., September, 1985.
¹⁰⁵ Ibid., September, 1985.
Herculean feat of engineering. It was an undertaking that was perhaps comparable in difficulty to the development company’s previous project, a 650-kilometer freeway built in the middle of the Saudi Arabian desert.\textsuperscript{106}

For the most part business parks were similar to science parks in aesthetic and function, although the former tended to be larger, less specialist, and subject to fewer planning restrictions. Arriving on the heels of the first science parks, business parks oversaw an intensification the forms of management, landscaping, and labor control that were first tested in places like the Cambridge Science Park and the Stanford Industrial Park. While science parks were the insurgent brainchild of university administrators, however, business parks were a creation of the 1980s conservative government. Before the late 1980s prospective business park builders had faced many of the same planning problems as Trinity College in the early 1970s. British zoning law did not distinguish between high-tech industry and traditional manufacturing plants, meaning that the owners of a small shed used to manufacture scientific instruments were subject to the same zoning code (or “use class”) as a vast, industrial chemical plant.\textsuperscript{107} In 1985 Margaret Thatcher’s government released a white paper called “Lifting the Burden,” which called for wholesale deregulation in a variety of different economic spheres, including environmental, fishing, and food regulations as well as data protection and tax rates. The paper also called for a reform of the planning law’s use class system, to take into account:

\begin{quote}
…the requirements of the typical “high-tech” firm where manufacturing, offices, research and development, warehousing and other activities may be carried on in a single building and where the mix of uses and space utilisation may need to be constantly changed and adapted to the needs of the business.\textsuperscript{108}
\end{quote}

The new B1 use class, approved in 1987, applied equally to offices, research and development centers, and light manufacturing, provided they were free of “noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.”\textsuperscript{109} Unlike many other use classes, B1 permitted developers a high degree of flexibility, allowing them to “choose the proportions of space for a particular use and to change this over time.”\textsuperscript{110} Until this change business parks and science parks were precocious, marginal curiosities. By the end of the 1980s they were a common feature of the British landscape. In 1985 there were 890,000 square feet of business parks in Britain. By the end of 1988 that figure had risen to five million.\textsuperscript{111}

The modern British business workplace reached its apotheosis in Stockley Park. The park was twenty-five times larger than the Cambridge Science Park when it opened, and was designed to be “analogous to the structure of a town.”\textsuperscript{112} As well as a large golf course and a nature reserve, the site boasted “a river system in microcosm,” navigable by boat from the Grand Union Canal and culminating in “a chain of ponds and rapids,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[106] Ibid September, 1985.
\item[108] \textit{Lifting the Burden: Presented to the Minister Without Portfolio} (London: HMSO, 1985), 11.
\item[111] Ibid., 10.
\item[112] “Stockley Park: A Development Proposal,” May 1983, HLA ADB 15/15 Box 2, 14.
\end{footnotes}
among rocks, leading to a still pool above the weir.”

By 1989 the Park created a total of one million square feet of constructed space, most of which was found in buildings designed by the park’s developer. While Stockley Park had enthusiastic support from the London Borough of Hillingdon, the development was entirely financed by private funds. The project was a joint venture between a newly formed public limited company (Stockley PLC) and the University Superannuation Schemes (USS), a pension fund for university workers. Indeed, as owners of vast reserves of capital, it was not unusual for pension funds and life insurance companies to invest in large property developments such as business parks (and shopping malls).

Stockley PLC and USS hired a property developer, Arup Associates, which was given total control over the land. As well as cleaning and fumigating the land, Arup designed and named their own roads and paths, laid pipes and cables underground, and planted hundreds of thousands of trees. The site was overseen by a park manager (who had spent the past thirty years working in the military) and patrolled by fourteen full-time private security guards in yellow jackets, most of whom were also former military personnel from the local area. Before breaking ground, Arup sent an exploratory team to Stanford Industrial Park, as well as to business parks in Denver, Atlanta, and Princeton to gather ideas for the site.

Stockley Park was a conscious and total negation of the industrial landscape found at Trafford Park. The master plan for the site promised to induce “levels of human activity, interaction and visual perception not normally associated with industrial developments.” The park traded in atmosphere over function. As in Cambridge the park’s infrastructure was carefully hidden away, with attractiveness given priority over utility. The park’s roads were planned to be curved rather than straight in order to bestow a “more relaxed and more “rural feeling,”” while buildings were to have no exposed pipes, mechanical plant, or air conditioning units.

Although Stockley Park was marketed as an organic and unspoiled wilderness, it was an entirely prosthetic environment. Immense quantities of soil were imported onto the site and oxygenated to support plant life, a process set back by methane leaks and a series of underground fires that had devastated the area in the 1970s. The Park advertised its resolutely post-industrial environment as being the future of modern British capitalism:

Stockley Park was conceived for the kind of business that is at the forefront of modern industry, using the latest technology and demanding quality buildings capable of providing sophisticated services. Its staff both need and expect such an internal environment.

113 Ibid., 14.
114 Stockley Park newsletter, Summer 1989.
115 Standard Life Assurance Company, for example, had built three business parks by the end of the 1980s; King, UK 2000, 8.
118 “Stockley Park: A Development Proposal.”
120 Stockley Park newsletter, October, 1985.
121 Ibid., June 1988.
In doing so the park looked proudly outwards, hosting delegations of planners and students from other cities, as well as members of the Royal family and government ministers.\footnote{Ibid., May 1986.}

As with Cambridge, Stockley Park hosted businesses whose operations were ephemeral and fleeting.\footnote{Ibid., September, 1986 and 1987.} Because the park housed a diversity of work, ranging from customer service, to light manufacturing to scientific research, it was difficult to engineer buildings in advance for tenants. To solve this problem, buildings were designed to accommodate transient workforces and businesses with brief and ever-changing contracts. Using an architectural method called “shell and core,” businesses were provided with the barest minimum of constructed space — usually a roofed and clad steel frame — with stairs, lifts, and plumbed lavatories inside. Afterwards:

The occupier can then alter the developer’s standard fitting out specification for ceilings, floors, finishes, secondary air condition and so on, to suit his needs without costly alterations and abortive work. It results in savings on capital, time and provides a customised product…\footnote{“United Kingdom Business Parks Conference: Presentations and Programme,” 1989 (n.p), Presentation by Michael Lowe, director of Arup Estates LTD, Retrieved from British Library Document Supply, location q89/21008.}

The building could then be broken down and reconstituted when subsequent tenants took over the lease. Flexible buildings housed flexible workforces. Workers on the site were, for the most part, adaptable and self-disciplined, organized horizontally by task rather than in a vertical hierarchy:

The new technology firms are expanding, confident and informed, with no status barriers between grades of staff. The project team work and the short production runs results in a flexible style of working allowing for rapid career development and for people to match their individual skills to the jobs.\footnote{Stockley Park newsletter, February 1986.}

Among the more permanent tenants were the regional offices of high-technology companies that were headquartered overseas. Apple, the Japanese communications company Fujitsu, and the Taiwanese computer company Acer, all had large offices on site, split between management, production, and customer service facilities. These integrated centers were some of the biggest employers on the site, with Fujitsu employing 160 people (out of a global workforce of 80,000) and Marks and Spencer, which moved its IT department to the park in 1987, employing 350.\footnote{Ibid., September, 1986 and 1987.} Such large, globally connected organizations were mostly absent in science parks such as Cambridge, who courted smaller start-ups more interested in proximity to scientific equipment than access to Heathrow and London. As late as 1999, 80 percent of firms on science parks in the UK still had less than fifteen employees.\footnote{United Kingdom Science Park Association, UKSPA 96: The United Kingdom Science Park Association Annual Report 1996 (Cambridge: The United Kingdom Science Park Association, 1996).} Elite science parks also hosted a more skilled and affluent workforce. As business parks proliferated in the 1980s and 1990s they began to host strictly disciplined and poorly remunerated service jobs (whose workers were
unlikely to be the target users of the golf courses and plush wine bars that accompanied places like Stockley Park). Call centers, in particular, populated business parks at the turn of the millennium. Stockley Park, therefore, saw the kinds of globalized and massified workplaces that were the hallmarks of Trafford Park. While images of the workspaces in Trafford Park show vast halls of tightly packed and closely monitored workers, however, photographs taken inside Stockley Park businesses show fractured and empty spaces, totally devoid of workers. The lobby of Tandem Computers is deserted apart from a single receptionist, partly obscured by a giant indoor tree. The trading company PST’s internal space resembles a dimly lit living room, with empty couches, venetian blinds, and a glass coffee table.

Like the Cambridge Science Park, Stockley prioritized wellbeing over welfare. While Cambridge organized a handful of social events and built a single, central pub, Stockley offered its tenants a veritable onslaught of recreational and therapeutic activities. Exercise was central to Stockley Park’s development plan. The park orbited around the two-story, cylindrical “Arena,” which housed a gym, squash courts, swimming pool, health club, and wine bar. The gym and health club were elite and sensuous environments, adorned with “rich maroon leather” and “sophisticated black marble.” Art was also an essential component of the manicured landscape. Arup Associates worked with the Public Art Development Trust to instill what they referred to as a “sensitive concern for the visual and functional world” of the park. Twenty young artists were recruited at an early stage to work for the development. Perhaps the strangest and most conspicuous of their projects were eight bronze legs that jutted vertically out of the lake near the Arena — installed to show the “links between architecture and synchronized swimming.” There was a mystical and almost therapeutic quality to the park’s shared amenities. It was described as “a place to work and think in a relaxed and natural environment.”

For its affluent, flexible, and self-motivated workers, the space and feel of the park were arguably its biggest perk and source of morale.

Stockley Park saw the final unraveling of the Fordist compact between labor, housing and infrastructure, which had been established on early twentieth century industrial estates. While Trafford Park built houses, schools, churches and trams for its workers, Stockley Park had no such relationship with its surroundings. This was despite the fact that almost a third of the first wave of workers lived within five miles of the site. The park’s primary engagement with its community of employees was through charity work, with the Hillingdon Partnership Trust formed to encourage businesses to donate their time and money to local social service. Perhaps the most prominent instances of community engagement, however, were Neighbourhood Watch meetings.

130 Ibid., October, 1988.
131 Ibid., October, 1987.
133 Ibid., Summer 1989.
135 Ibid., Summer 1989.
attended by more than 300 residents and hosted in the Arena’s sports hall.\textsuperscript{136} For the most part employees were encouraged to engage in more distant forms of solidarity, with the management hosting blood donations and a sponsored bike ride for a nation wide disability charity.\textsuperscript{137} With its dispersed and hidden infrastructure networks, close attention to ambience over welfare, and ambivalence towards the nearby community, Stockley Park assembled various elements that would come to be seen as hallmarks of post-Fordist working life. It was a model that would be picked up on, once again, by the state.

The New Trafford Park

By the early 1980s Trafford Park was a failed state. Until 1965 the number of people employed on the site had remained steady at 52,000.\textsuperscript{138} After that it dropped precipitously, reaching 24,500 by 1985.\textsuperscript{139} Between 1940 and 1971 the amount of material transported by the Estates Railway system declined by 90 percent.\textsuperscript{140} While the estate suffered from the same problems of offshoring and technological change that eroded Britain’s urban industrial base in the later postwar period, these were compounded by its awkward location. The estate had been well-suited for rail and canal access, but was relatively isolated from mid-century road networks.\textsuperscript{141} Trafford Park felt derelict and eerily deserted by the end of the 1970s. In 1978 a resident of the Village lamented, “…there is no sign of people walking around the industrial park at weekends, you could be forgiven for wondering if an Atomic Cloud had passed.”\textsuperscript{142} Eighty years after it opened, one commentator described the estate as looking like someone had “had a big party and forgotten to clear up.”\textsuperscript{143}

Concerned about the ruinous image of the estate and high levels of unemployment in its surrounding neighborhoods, Trafford Park bore the brunt of twenty years of failed attempts at regeneration, beginning in the 1970s. Following unsuccessful efforts by the Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council to improve the estate’s physical environment, the site was made into an enterprise zone in 1981. Six years later, and with little sign of any improvement, the government created the Trafford Park Urban Development Corporation (TPUDC) to regenerate the area. Like other Urban Development Corporations, TPUDC was a quasi-independent body tasked by the government to buy up areas of derelict land, which it would then tidy up and sell to private property developers. Its board was appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment and “dominated by business and the private sector.”\textsuperscript{144} During the eleven years of its existence, the TPUDC transformed the estate into something resembling a giant, inner city business park. TPUDC was not the only state development corporation to use business parks as a tool for urban

\begin{thebibliography}{100}
\bibitem{136} Ibid., November, 1988.
\bibitem{137} Ibid., March, 1991.
\bibitem{138} Nicholls, \textit{Trafford Park}, 117.
\bibitem{139} Ibid., 128.
\bibitem{140} Ibid., 127.
\bibitem{141} Board of Trade Research Sub Committee report, “Trafford Park Industrial Estate, TNA:PRO HLG 79/428, 6.
\bibitem{143} Trafford Park Development Corporation, “Regeneration Statement,” TRA 1706 2/2, 12.
\bibitem{144} Ibid., 6.
\end{thebibliography}
regeneration. As we have seen in the first chapter of this dissertation, the Scottish Development Agency created a business park in Clydebank, while Crewe Business Park was built by the local Council as an economic development strategy.\textsuperscript{145} By the late 1980s the business park, rather than the industrial estate, had become the state-sanctioned, go-to for economic development and urban regeneration.

As in other business parks, improving the visual appearance of Trafford Park was paramount. The sheer ugliness of the estate was deemed to be a problem as great, if not greater, than the economic issues it faced. One report claimed, “few would contest that Trafford Park is one of the ugliest working/business environments in the UK and possibly Europe.”\textsuperscript{146} Another observer noted, “the air is now filled with hundreds of different odors, few pleasant.”\textsuperscript{147} During a period when workplaces were scrubbed clean and silent, Trafford Park stood out. All of the many attempts to regenerate the estate began with a declaration of war on “eyesores.” In the mid-1970s a number of businesses on the site banded together to launch “Operation Eyesore” – an attempt to improve the estate’s outward appearance. Approving the appearance the park became an official part of the TPUDC’s mission, with the body accepting that, “no matter how many environmental improvements are carried out, prominent eyesores will continue to diminish their effect.”\textsuperscript{148} The corporation put pressure on targeted individual businesses to improve their outward image. Although the large green areas that characterized other business and science parks were impractical in such a dense, inner city area, the corporation still boasted of planting more than eight hundred thousand trees and shrubs.\textsuperscript{149} Trafford Wharf Road, running parallel to the Manchester Ship Canal, was turned into “a continuous strip of trees, shrubs and grass.”\textsuperscript{150} As with other business parks, public art was a central part of the corporation’s strategy. The most conspicuous project was the large “skyhook” sculpture that fronted the canal — a representation of a steel anchor connected to a chain vanishing in mid-air, an eerie reminder of the Ship Canal’s past life.\textsuperscript{151}

A key first step in the regeneration process was the demolition of The Village and eviction of its residents. By the late 1970s the Village was a tightly packed and remarkably well-organized community. For three years the residents frantically fought against their eviction. A residents’ group published a dense and decorous weekly newsletter, which kept residents informed about the legal and political process of eviction, and also published poems from residents that commemorated the village’s recent industrial past:

Surrounded by great Industry, and all it’s many works, (sic)
Peace at Sunday shut-down, the only workers’ perks?
But people from ‘Park Village’ were happy hard-work folk,
And environmental pillage was not a heavy yolk.

\textsuperscript{146} Trafford Park Development Corporation, “Trafford Park: A Dynamic Future Built On A Proud Past.” TRA 1706 1/2.
\textsuperscript{149} Trafford Park Development Corporation, “Regeneration Statement,” TRA 1706 2/2, 18.
\textsuperscript{150} Trafford Park Development Corporation, “1996 Annual Report,” TRA 1706 1/2.
\textsuperscript{151} “Regeneration Statement,” (photographic insert after page 61).
In spite of smoke and chemicals, rubber smells and dust,
Home were happy living cells, - the doctor was no must,
Health was quite amazing, School health-men judged it good,
And healthy happy children, played ball on croft-site mud.152

Despite their efforts, the village was acquired by the Trafford Council following a 1979 compulsory purchase order, after which it was mostly demolished in 1981, and sold to the Urban Development Corporation in 1987. The development corporation’s chairman stated at the outset, “housing is not a priority for Trafford Park.”153 Instead, the land was turned into an amenities hub for the rest of the estate, similar to Stockley Park’s Arena or Cambridge Science Park’s social center. One hundred thousand square feet of space was built for small businesses such as shops, restaurants, and hotels that would cater for nearby employees.154 The trendy property developer, Urban Splash, made famous for their conversion of the Park Hill housing estate in Sheffield into luxury flats, transformed the former Village school into a handful of artistic studios and workshops.155

In the 1980s the spatial pact that linked work, welfare, and housing was literally demolished, replaced instead with what was effectively a mini-shopping center for nearby employees.

As the landscape of the estate was transformed in the 1980s, so too were the types of work available on the estate. In 1945 92 percent of the estates’ employees worked in manufacturing, with the remaining 8 percent employed in “trades and services.”156 By 1993 the number of manufacturing jobs had fallen to just 42 percent of the total, with the remainder of jobs split evenly between “Real Estate and Business Activities,” “Transport Storage and Communication,” and “Wholesale and Retail Trade.”157 While the new Trafford Park was a less hostile working environment for women, they were still concentrated in part time jobs, making up 67 percent of part time staff.158 Meanwhile, the cavernous, teeming factories of the mid-century era splintered into smaller factories and workshops. While 150 firms on the estate had once employed more than 50,000 workers, by 1993 33,000 workers were split between more then 1,200 companies.159

By the millennium, Trafford Park had been well-colonized by landscaping practices that had once been consigned to the suburban periphery. Although more urban, more industrial, and considerably less green than most suburban business parks, the new Trafford Park had more in common with these spaces than it did with its own recent industrial past. The giant Fordist engine had sputtered and died, leaving its parts to be picked over, scrubbed clean, and rearranged. Casting a weary eye over one of the earliest attempts to rehabilitate the estate, one observer imagined that the land might return to its wooded, pre-industrial state: “Trees and shrubs have been planted along the new roadways which have been constructed… it may soon become green and pleasant as it

153 “Trafford Park: Manchester UDC – In Profile, interview with TPUDC Chairman Peter Hadfield, TRA 942.731.
154 Nicholls, Trafford Park, 151.
156 Board of Trade Regional Office, “Note on Trafford Park,” 1946, TNA:PRO HLG 79/428.
157 Trafford Park Development Corporation, “Trafford Park Company Census.” TRA 1706 1/. It is worth noting that this was still above the natural average for manufacturing employment.
158 Ibid.
was over 80 years ago.” In the first decades of the twentieth century, the contrast between the ancient de Trafford estate and the industrial complex that replaced it was striking and self-evident. By the 1990s the difference in appearance between these old patrician landscapes and many modern, high-tech workplaces was harder to identify.

Conclusion

In 1835 the Scottish polymath Andrew Ure described the workings of an industrial factory — at that point a relatively new institution:

[A factory] involves the idea of a vast automaton, composed of various mechanical and intellectual organs, acting in uninterrupted concert for the production of a common object, all of them being subordinated to a self-regulated moving force.

At the time these various mechanical and intellectual organs would have included the energy that went into the productive process, the infrastructure for distributing products and raw materials outside of the factory gates, as well as the construction and design of the physical factory itself. With the emergence, first, of industrial estates, and later, of business parks, at the turn of the twentieth century, property developers took on many of the architectural, infrastructural, and logistical challenges that faced individual enterprises. As with shopping malls and gated housing units, these developments were set apart from city streets and embodied a corporate logic by which individuals or enterprises came together for mutual benefit. As with shopping malls and private housing developments, they represented a new kind of sovereignty.

Once established, planned environments for productive work mutated, like cells replicating on exposure to radiation. Wires and cables were buried underground as buildings shrank and grew apart, straight roads went slack, and sheets of gravel and dirt were planted over with grass and flowers. The mechanical time clocks used for employers to track their workers’ hours disappeared as working lives become more flexible, hierarchies disintegrated, and trade union memberships were replaced with gym memberships. The role of the state faded away. The 1970s and 1980s science and business parks were trailblazers for the decline of manufacturing jobs, erosion of organized labor, and suburbanization of work. It was in such places that these three massive structural forces were rendered in space. As with other pilot zones, business parks created a feedback loop, intensifying these forces. As the cocktail of time discipline and job security that once incentivized high industrial work gave way, business parks found that new, more ambient and therapeutic incentives had to be provided for highly skilled workers who managed their own time. In doing so they became large, leafy exhibitions, places where new types of work were demonstrated and celebrated.

Moreover, the infrastructural, architectural, and governmental strategies that were tried and tested on business parks crept back into the inner cities, taking root in derelict industrial conglomerations and town centers. In the 1980s the government, with the help

of local authorities and development corporations, set about creating post-Fordist working environments in Britain’s declining cities. The only way the government knew what a post-Fordist working environment was or what it looked like, however, was because places like Stanford, Cambridge, and Stockley had led the way. In 2015, Tom Bridges, Leeds City Council’s chief officer for the economy and urban regeneration, announced the death of the business park. Addressing a gathering of local businessmen and women, Bridges said:

Before, people who invented things would drive to their workplace in out-of-town business parks and generate ideas that they would keep secret within their buildings. But now they’re coming into the city centres… and I think that has real implications for how we treat city centres in terms of public policy.\(^{162}\)

Bridges’ pronouncement is only half correct. If the business park is dead, then its ghost still haunts places like Trafford Park, like the Olympic Village in East London, and like Leeds city center.

Conclusion:
Milton Keynes, From Enterprise Lane to “thecentre:mk”

I was born in Britain in 1986, and I came of age amidst the ideas and buildings described in this dissertation. My hometown of Milton Keynes is a quiet and corporate enclave seventy miles north of London — a pointillist scattering of business parks, supermarkets, and low-rise homes. It was not meant to be this way. Milton Keynes was a new town commissioned in 1964 by a Labour government. The town was originally intended to be a modernist spectacle, a British version of Brasilia. The initial plan called for fifty townships of five thousand people threaded together by an elevated monorail, taxpayer funded and free of charge. No resident would live more than a five-minute walk from a monorail stop, and no commute was to take more than fifteen minutes. Like many other postwar new towns, housing was to be high in density and for the most part, owned by the state. Meanwhile, a vast underground heating grid would heat the whole city.1 As the 1960s progressed, this plan was watered down, reconstituted, and eventually shelved completely. During this time, the staff working at the Milton Keynes Development Corporation became fascinated by Los Angeles. Derek Walker, the city’s chief architect, visited Los Angeles in the 1960s and like the non-planners, was inspired by what he found. Speaking to the journalist Andy Beckett a few years before Walker’s death in 2015, he said:

I saw the sixties as a time of aspiration, dissolving class structures. People were getting wealthier. They’d started seeing American kitchens. The whole system of consumerism was being born big time… In Milton Keynes, we did a continuous household survey, asking people what they wanted, and their horizons were rising, rising, rising.2

The town was caught between two different visions of the future. One was conspicuously modernist, looking east to Berlin, Le Corbusier, and science fiction. The other was flexible and suburban, looking west to Los Angeles, Frank Lloyd Wright and David Lynch. While the latter vision eventually won out, it did so under the cloud of a vague egalitarian promise. When it was finally built in the 1970s, the town was divided by a grid of major horizontal and vertical roads (indexed as H1, V1 etc.), enclosing more than thirty discrete, low-rise residential areas, or “estates,” which were intended to mix high and low income housing. The shopping center, when it was built, was owned and managed by the development corporation, with its doors permanently unlocked.

By the time we moved to Milton Keynes in 2000 the town had come a long way from both its initial high-modern vision and its consumerist, social democratic realization. The shopping center had been expanded and privatized, rebranded as “thecentre:mk” — with a nearby theatre and restaurant district called ‘thehub:mk’ attached. Even on the ordinance survey map, these places are marked in all lower case, all one word. Meanwhile, the discrete neighborhoods, once mixed, have polarized into ghettos and wealthy enclaves. In 2001 the children’s writer Malcolm Rose wrote a briefly

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popular novel about an outbreak of an Ebola-like virus in Tinker’s Bridge and Passmore, two residential “estates” in Milton Keynes separated by a canal.\(^3\) These two estates, one rich and one poor, were quarantined, forcing them to resolve their deep class differences in order to survive. By the 2000s the supposedly egalitarian landscape of Milton Keynes was scarred by deep and deepening economic inequality.

My life in Milton Keynes was divided between two pilot zones about half a mile apart. I lived in Campbell Park, a private, high-density housing complex built in 2001 and organized around three courtyards. Our courtyard and my home address for more than five years was Enterprise Lane. As a teenager I went to the meetings of the development’s private residents’ association and earned pocket money helping organize the association’s website. The website featured a forum in which residents discussed the management of the courtyards and car parks, and shared tips about security and the threat of vandalism. The proximity of the development to the city center and to nearby “sink estates” such as Fishermead and Springfield meant that intruders were a constant source of anxiety. Since we moved in 2006 these fears have clearly reached something like a crisis point for the residents of Enterprise Lane. I went back to the development in 2013 to find that an extra perimeter fence had been built to semi-enclose the approach to the street, undoubtedly intended to instill a greater feeling of defensible space.

\[\text{Figure 19: Enterprise Lane, Milton Keynes (Google Street View).}\]

Although the shopping center was only a twenty-minute walk from Enterprise Lane, most people would drive to get there. As a teenager I was an exception. I walked to the shopping center most days to take the city bus to school (had I known about the monorail during those years I would have cursed its absence), tacking along a grass verge next to a thundering trunk road. The shopping center was the focus of my adolescence, where I bought milk, posted letters, met with friends, and went on dates. In my later teenage years I went there to go to bars and political protests. The center consists of two long parallel atria, lit with neon and dotted with artificial plants complete with digital birdsong. There is a clock tower and a mock, indoor “town square” that was used for Christmas pageants, comic book conventions and ideal home exhibitions. The restaurants and cafes have “outdoor” seating along the streets of the mall, which are still enclosed by its roof. Its attractions range from the spectacular to mundane, with an indoor ski slope and a climbing wall, as well as a police station, a civic library, and the local unemployment office.

When I first moved to Milton Keynes the shopping center was separated from the train station by two miles of empty scrubland. On visiting Milton Keynes, the journalist Owen Hatherley wrote:

> The first thing we (adoptive) Londoners noticed in Milton Keynes was space. . . Sheer, vast, windswept open space, which one could call desolate if that desolation wasn’t so popular with its users.⁴

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Over the last fifteen years a chain of offices and business parks has filled this space. These quiet, pastel-colored buildings are interspersed with ambiguous sculptures and half-empty gastro pubs. It is now possible to walk the three or so miles from Enterprise Lane to the train station without ever leaving the pilot zones whose history this dissertation describes. In some ways an epilogue to this dissertation is unnecessary. Shopping malls, business parks, and private housing complexes remain the dominant features of British cities and continue to multiply. Enterprise zones and set-piece cultural events continue to be the go-to policies for revitalizing de-industrialized neighborhoods.\footnote{In March 2011 David Cameron announced the creation of ten new enterprise zones in Britain.}

In the last twenty years these spaces have blurred together, becoming increasingly entangled and indistinguishable. The phrase “pilot zones” is perhaps now obsolete, if only because these spaces are no longer experimental or exceptional. The techniques of management, architecture, and security perfected in places like Merry Hill, Stockley Park, and the Bow Quarter have crept back into high streets and city centers. In Nottingham, as part of efforts to revitalize the city center, a tiny shopping mall was built in 1989 to connect two major shopping streets. While tech companies would once have moved to Stockley Park their twenty-first century counterparts are more likely to rent flexible office space near the Silicon Roundabout — in East London — an area that David Cameron attempted to brand as “East London Tech City” in 2010. As business parks, shopping malls and private housing developments have increased in number they become harder and harder to see, fusing seamlessly into high streets, train stations, football stadiums, and universities.

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The hundred-year stretch between the municipalization of Birmingham’s gas works in 1875 and the first enterprise zone in 1981 can be read as a discrete epoch in British urban history. This period saw the building of vast municipal infrastructure projects such as the Elan Dam in mid-Wales, Manchester’s electric tram network and the Boundary Estate in East London. It saw the building of Coventry’s shopping precinct and the Team Valley trading estate in Gateshead as well as garden cities such as Letchworth and new towns such as Stevenage and Cumbernauld. The 1947 Town and Country Planning Act extended the state’s control over the built environment while the 1968 Urban Programme channeled state money into deprived inner urban neighborhoods. This period saw the urban planner Patrick Geddes coin the term “conurbation” to describe towns and cities — a term that referred to units of infrastructure rather than population or politics.\footnote{Patrick Geddes, \textit{Cities In Evolution: An Introduction to the Town Planning Movement} (London: Williams and Norgate, 1915), 25.}

While urban projects and policies during this long period varied wildly in scale and scope, and served a variety of political ends, ranging from liberal regulation to outright socialism, they had three important things in common. First, there was an assumption that national and city governments would take a lead role in funding, constructing, owning, and managing extensive tracts of the British built environment. Second, while cities during this period were competing for capital and prestige, it was assumed that the primary purpose of cities and city government was to provide and
maintain services for residents living in a fixed territorial space. Finally, the major developments built in cities during this period, the shopping centers, mass housing developments, and trading estates — were characterized by their shared public space, collective systems of management, and centralized provision of infrastructure.

More than anything else this dissertation is about the end of this long epoch. The spaces it describes must be seen within the scope of centuries rather than decades or premierships. British cities are now characterized by the private ownership of space and infrastructure as well its relentless securitization. In homes and workspaces the provision of services has been segmented and individuated. Cities compete globally for tourists, prestige, and capital using garden festivals and sporting events to market their brands. The new built environment appears in negotiation with the old. While the privatization of public housing and council-owned shopping centers was fraught with complications, new out-of-town shopping malls and business parks honed many of the practices developed by their social democratic forebears. Enterprise zones, meanwhile, were the prodigal children of counter-cultural Fabians, and national garden festivals were inspired by high-modern industrial trade fairs. While our present built environment marks a profound departure from the hundred-year reign of urban social politics that preceded it, its glass lobbies and tended gardens are still haunted by the ghosts of former ideas and policies.

I hope that an attention to this urban story goes some way towards complicating a familiar periodization of British twentieth century history. There is a popular story about twentieth century politics, one that has been reinforced by all-too many monographs. It tells us that social politics arrived fully formed in the hands of the 1945-1951 Labour government. With a handful of top-down socialist policies, this government transformed Britain forever, reshaping its political landscape. The story then skips to the Conservative government of 1979-1997, which undid Labour’s postwar achievements with a brief burst of policies in the 1980s. Versions of this story are everywhere. It can be found in Ken Loach’s film The Spirit of ’45, in Andrew Marr’s popular history documentaries, and in the speeches of politicians such as Maurice Glasman. It is an endogenous, even parochial, story of top-down political change, in which the main actors are elected politicians and plot points revolve around changes in government. There is, of course, much truth to this story. But what I hoped to have shown in my dissertation is that both postwar Labour and 1980s Conservative policies were prefigured and enabled by urban and infrastructural changes that occurred in relative isolation from the machinations of high politics. Pilot zones anchored these political moments in space and without them the social democratic moment of 1945 and the neoliberal turn of 1979 would have been partial affairs. Moreover, these developments were spatially uneven by design. Individual neighborhoods, streets, and even buildings were transformed while others were left behind. In the 1980s these invisible political borders even ran through buildings and along hallways. As the twentieth century came to an end, pilot zones flashed into existence one by one across Britain, like lights on a distant hill as the sun sets.
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