

Section III

Political Action

8

Creative Destruction and Neoliberal Landscapes

Post-industrial Archaeologies Beyond Ruins

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8.1 INTRODUCTION

‘[T]he problem that is usually being visualized is how capitalism administers existing structures, whereas the relevant problem is how it creates and destroys them’, wrote the Austrian economist, Josef Schumpeter in *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, in 1942 (84). He was describing his discipline’s response to creative destruction; the process of continuous reinvention within capitalist markets.

Like Schumpeter’s visualizing economists, are archaeologists in danger of bolstering a static view? Of pushing a preservation-of-decay agenda, appealing to a mass diagnosis of the rot of modernity? Ruin studies within contemporary and historical archaeology frequently present an overtly anti-capitalist critique, within an aesthetic conception of things and place, sometimes accompanied by an anti-heritage stance (cf. González-Ruibal, Chapter 7). In recent years archaeologists have recognized and at times moved away from, the problem of aestheticization, but continue to parade an underdog status for the stationary object that reverts to an uneasy stasis—an object from the ground—without an acknowledgement of the movement and change that both contemporary and historical archaeology have worked so hard to develop (e.g. Aldred 2014; Beaudry and Parno 2013; Holtorf and Piccini 2009). This can lead to a tendency to critique without fully situating ruin—site, place—in process, despite benchmark studies (e.g. Gosden 2004). Pictures capture a moment. A ruin illustrates an end. Memory mourns the past. What remains, decays.

In this chapter I address some of the landscapes considered epitomic of neoliberalism: the ‘winners’ in the landscape of capitalism, and consider

whether current archaeological approaches to the contemporary have inadvertently, or indeed overtly, disqualified them from analysis. I present case studies that illustrate the ‘creative’ side of ‘creative destruction’—the large-scale landscape transformation of deindustrialized areas. These sites were transformed through governmental interventions in policy—privatization, public–private investment frameworks, changes to the planning system—with the intention of transforming declined industrial areas into economic success stories in line with the push towards a service economy, away from industry.

There is of course another side to this story: as Arthur Marwick observed the reinvigoration of declined industrial areas is often characterized by ‘a growing mismatch between the characteristics of those seeking work and the kind of jobs which [a]re available’ (Marwick 2003: 153). *Creating* the service economy does of course entail selective destruction of the industrial economy and its workers (see McAtackney, Chapter 9, and Ryzewski, Chapter 3, for examples of this ‘selective’ destruction).

It is not my wish to be overly critical—indeed contemporary archaeology is not a large enough field to cover everything—however, without an attempt at balanced consideration of the landscapes that represent both the antithesis of ruin, but also in a sense another kind of ruin, we risk a thoroughly incomplete understanding of the systems we claim to critically dismantle.

8.2 BRITAIN’S DETROIT(S)

On 10 May 2014, *The Guardian* newspaper, a British broadsheet daily considered the newspaper of the liberal left, published an article in its weekend supplement with the headline ‘The north-east of England: Britain’s Detroit?’ (Beckett 2014). The article focused on the decline of industry in the North East of England, comparing its fate to Detroit’s. Over the last two hundred years, the North East has been a heartland of industry, particularly coal mining and shipbuilding, but over the course of the later twentieth century, both have declined to vanishing.

The North East’s decline follows, as does Detroit’s, the changes in the cycles of capital which have led to the end of mining as an ongoing concern across most of Britain, and the various political and global shifts that have more or less ended shipbuilding in the region. We might see some shared issues—an over-reliance on a few core industries and companies and the ancillary works needed to support them; the shifting location of industrial manufacture due to cost; increasing technical innovation abroad; attempts to boost the economy through public–private initiatives and foreign investment—but also considerably different issues. Britain’s industrial decline has been designed by successive

governments. The overt destruction of the mining industry under Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s is well documented, and policy designed at Westminster or in Europe has also dictated the decline of shipbuilding. We can list inordinate interventions in policy and law that accelerated or brought about the failure of these industries.

These included European legislation which disqualified dockyards from involvement in defence *and* commercial manufacture; the short-termism of successive governments in influencing how dockyards worked; the clunky circumstances of nationalization and the asset-stripping of privatization; the desire to get British manufacturing off British books, and the deals done with German, Japanese, American, Indian, and Chinese companies to achieve this. These instances might have equivalents in Detroit—they are part of the same manufacturing universe after all—but all ruins have local context. Beckett's article ran with a photograph of Thatcher's 'walk in the wilderness' across the weed-cracked paving of an old iron works (Figure 8.1). It did not show, although it did mention, the Teesdale Business Park that now stands on the site. It did show Bruce and Freddy Shepherd, the businessmen who have bought up significant swathes of the rundown former docks of Tyneside at knockdown prices. They are part of the reinvention (for profit as well as regeneration) that is as much a part of the shift from the industrial to the post-industrial as ruin.



Figure 8.1. Margaret Thatcher takes A 'walk in the Wilderness' at the former Head Wrightson Works, developed by the Teesside Development Corporation as the Teesdale Business Park. Photo by Ted Ditchburn/North News And Pictures.

8.3 KNOWING CAPITALISM

‘Capitalism, then, is by nature a form or method of economic change and not only never is but never can be stationary’, Schumpeter observed (1947: 82), and neither is it a total system, a unified field. It exists in a maelstrom of competing interests, ‘lines of interference...opacity, division and wildness result’ (Thrift 2005: 2).

Contemporary post-industrial ruins sit within capitalism representing human choice, deliberate process, and within that, *opacity*, *division*, and *wildness*. But they are not still: they are as momentary as the period in which they worked. They represent failure: the end of a path, but not necessarily forever. An end here is not an end everywhere. A technology can reinvent itself (or be reinvented, adapted, developed, transported).

In *Knowing Capitalism*, Nigel Thrift sets out the ‘four methodological rules’ for analysing capitalism. The first of these, the ‘backward gaze’, affords an approach to the present that involves looking back—‘seeing vast numbers of unresolved issues, differences of interpretation, and general confusions, exactly as historians see the past now’. This is an approach similar to that I have described elsewhere as a ‘future perfect’ view; the way we have lived (Penrose 2010). Walter Benjamin’s *Angelus Novus* takes a closer look and sees more than wreckage, travels forward into the past: more simply there is an understanding of the complexities of the present. Thrift argues that this approach will take us away from totalizing claims about ‘modernity’ ‘which are meant to set the seal on history, to wrap everything up’ (Thrift 2005: 2).

The second of Thrift’s rules is the recognition of the accidental—the contingent—the accumulation of events. How instances that might have seemed insignificant play their extraordinary parts in shaping the way we have lived.

The playing of parts, the continuous rolling and shaping, the performativity of capitalism is Thrift’s third rule: capitalism is never still, as Schumpeter observed (1947: 82; see also Ernsten, Chapter 10, for his discussion of capitalist incarnations in Cape Town). As worlds change, as systems change, as regimes and resources, requirements and resiliences change, so must capitalism. Mutations, innovations, brave and cowardly decisions (sometimes the same thing) shape capitalism. There is no plan. This is not entirely true: there are a million plans, but only the mutable survive. Economists put forward a number of narratives to explain for example, financialism, but they do not exclude the constant rolling need to change and innovate.

The fourth of Thrift’s rules is the acknowledgement of the importance of the ‘boring’ and ‘routine’, not just the ‘sexy’. Capitalism relies on the mundane, the daily task, the smooth running of infrastructure, operations, networks, relationships. Like Leder’s ‘absent body’ (1990), capitalism can blend into the background when it is working; it is when it breaks down that we notice. This

is Konvitz's 'myth of terrible vulnerability' referenced by Graham and Thrift (2007: 10). We see the problems, the breakdowns, and their problematic presence makes them unmissable. Meanwhile it is the working system that shapes us, makes us; and that we spend our lives shaping and making. It goes on, invisible, unnoticed, while it works.

In the years that have followed the publication of *Knowing Capitalism* the fundamental shake-up that followed the collapse in 2008 of the American subprime market has brought the broken body of capitalism into view. However, Thrift's maxims still hold, and if we are to avoid those easy damnations of 'modernity', and encourage a more sophisticated exploration of the capitalist world we would do well to, if not follow the rules, at least know they are there.

8.4 NEOLIBERAL LANDSCAPES

The landscape of the recent past might be seen, certainly across much of the UK and the USA to be a landscape of neoliberalism. Initially a term that reflected the 'third way', between the controlled state collectivism of the Soviet states and the classical liberalism of limited government intervention, it was coined in the 1930s, before being resurrected in the 1970s and 1980s with the theories of the Chicago school, especially Milton Friedman, who drew on the work of Friedrich Hayek. Following the relatively prosperous growth years of the post-war period, the 1970s saw a period of stagnation and decline in the liberal 'West' (Britain, the USA, Germany, France, and Italy in particular). Financial liberalization—the loosening of State regulation on the financial sector—influenced by the Chicago school, took hold. Britain became a pioneering driver in that liberalization, and before (but to a much greater degree, after) the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979, financial deregulation put Britain, and in particular, London, in the top three global financial centres. Britain's drive to deregulate and privatize—to limit the size and power of the State against the possibilities of private growth—was unprecedented in speed and scale. Britain led the neoliberal way. Finding its way in the dark, the Thatcher government redefined the boundary between private and public. Issued with a reading list topped by Hayek—'this is what we believe', Thatcher apocryphally said to her cabinet as she slammed down a copy of *The Constitution of Liberty* (Ranelagh 1991)—it disassembled the Keynesian principles of the Welfare State and of nationalized industry. At the time, it purported to withdraw from what it claimed was a heavy-handed unworkable creaking framework that stifled innovation and drove away entrepreneurialism.

With that, and a nod towards Adam Smith's free trade and enterprise, Britain submitted to market rule.

Thatcherism and Reagonomics were informed by the tenets of neoclassical fundamentalism: market regulation in place of state guidance, economic redistribution in favour of capital—supply side economics—moral authoritarianism, international free trade, an intolerance of unionism. And with the aggressive swing to this theoretical baseline, combined with the concurrent release of so much land and so much capital, a significant physical alteration to Britain's industrial landscape was inevitable.

8.5 CREATIVE DESTRUCTION

The shift from a manufacturing to a service economy follows a business cycle much debated by economists. Schumpeter proposed one of the most enduring theories (Schumpeter 1947) based on his proposition that innovation is the basis of dynamic change in an economy. Schumpeter accepted the orthodox economic position that all economies tended to equilibrium—in which all markets clear. However, he argued that while much competition between firms was based on price, the true driving force was the process of innovation, in which a firm or an entrepreneur with the ability to bring an idea to market could undermine the existing status quo. Rival firms would be put out of business, industries would be revolutionized, or the foundations of national and regional economies, or even the global economy, would be shaken. Schumpeter used the term 'Creative Destruction' to refer to this process, capturing both the phenomenon of innovation and the potentially negative impacts on the economy and society (Schumpeter 1947). As firms or even whole industries die, communities that served them decline (see McAtackney, Chapter 9; White and Seidenberg, Chapter 1). There is no guarantee that new firms and new industries will grow in the same places as the old. They may require skills and assets found elsewhere. And in an increasingly networked world, information technology, for example, has allowed many firms to manage production across whole continents or even globally where once the end-to-end process took place within a few square miles.

These changes in business practice have created new landscapes, and in Britain in particular, the release of land and capital from nationalized industry into the private sector has led to the development of previously industrial sites, the reinvention of working landscapes, and the creation of a new era of land as balance-sheet asset.

In essence, what we have come to know as *creative destruction* relies on what Brenner and Theodore have described as:

...two dialectically intertwined but analytically distinct moments: the (partial) destruction of extant institutional arrangements and political compromises through market-oriented reform initiatives; and the (tendential) creation of a new infrastructure for market-oriented economic growth, commodification, and the rule of capital. (2002: 362)

8.6 ARCHAEOLOGIES OF CONTEMPORARY CAPITALISM

Brenner and Theodore made their case for neoliberalism's creative capacities (though not uncritically) against a prevalent view in the humanities that neoliberalism was overwhelmingly destructive (Brenner and Theodore 2002; see also Lerner 2000). Within archaeologies of the recent past, the emphasis has been on those destructive elements. Much contemporary archaeology has taken one of two paths: socially and politically engaged studies that privilege the subaltern, the dispossessed, the abject; and those that privilege matter. The former has been augmented in recent years by the added obligation that these stories must illustrate the failure of modernity or attempt to undermine it (e.g. González-Ruibal 2008; Harrison 2013). While the latter is characterized by, at one end, the acknowledgement of the co-constituting properties of people and things, to, at the other, attempts at non-narrativized understandings of the post-human (cf. Holbraad 2014; Witmore 2012).

Post-industrial ruin is the perfect setting for both kinds of study: desolate, abject, abandoned in both instances—sites that need an alternative (human) story to be told, and sites that have a (post-human) afterlife that is beyond human telling. Returning to Thrift's rules—the focus of this chapter is on capitalist ruins—I find those twin paths of contemporary archaeology break Thrift's rules. Many current archaeological approaches *do* result in totalizing assessments of 'modernity,' (González-Ruibal for example, advocates 'materially exposing the *inherent* destructivity of modernity' [2013: 15, my emphasis]; a statement that makes 'destructivity' an essential characteristic). They do indulge in the 'sexy,' (we might think of Webmoor's (after Woodward 2012: 18) term 'entropic chic' [2014: 470]. Webmoor's argument that ruins are 'counter cultural' effectively owns this understanding of the *sexy*. What could be sexier than entropic chic?). They do overlook the 'boring'. Critically perhaps, their commitment to the exposition of 'trauma', telling the story of the dispossessed terminally neglects the other parts of the framework. Ruin exists because of change and creation, creative destruction. No longer viable places within neoliberal economic frameworks have counterparts—those places where economic activity has shifted: new labour landscapes; new uses for old places; new technologies. This is not a new complaint. Johnson (1998)

set out in his afterword to Leone and Potter's *Historical Archaeology of Capitalism* the tension between telling the 'local' story and analyses of the 'global' framework. As Johnson stated in 1998, '[e]ven as we stress the individual and the local, we can only do so against a backdrop of global structure; even as we look at the small scale and the particular, we fit these into large scale processes' (1998: 220).

But within approaches to the deindustrialized recent past, there has been a tendency to demonize those large-scale processes—a strangely anthropocentric urge, in a field sometimes attempting to move beyond that—that leads to a wholesale abandonment of both baby and bathwater.

8.7 EXPLORING THE BORING

The landscape of neoliberalism is 'polycentric and multi-scalar' (Brenner and Theodore 2002: 351). The landscapes of new commerce have absorbed or incorporated or replaced sites of industrial ruination (see Beisaw, Chapter 6, for discussion of submerged landscapes in the context of New York's water). These kinds of landscapes might have been absorbed, expanded, refurbished, redeveloped, but I argue, have by and large, become unquestioningly part of the worldview of anyone living and working in post-Thatcher's and post-Reagan's—post-industrial?—Britain or the USA. Indeed, they describe any landscape where neoliberalism has become the prevailing economic orthodoxy.

They are inherently speculative. Where the business of the firm once created landscape—whether manufacturing, or financial, or otherwise—these landscapes are increasingly defined by their status as assets. But without the guarantee of viable industry, speculative landscapes—by their essence—require some kind of 'hook', and in some senses, these landscapes are hooked on an idea of ruined industry. The decline of industries associated with a strong sense of national identity—in Britain, car and ship manufacturing, for example—are interlinked with speculation, precisely because it was (and continues to be) the release of previously state-owned land (in this case, state-owned following large-scale nationalization programs in the post-war period) into the private sector that have allowed both the run-down of industrial sites and their development. Here, rather than industrial sites being left to rot, to ruin, the *tendential creation* (Brenner and Theodore 2002: 362) of sites of new commerce overlies old industry. Of course, there remain significant regional and local differences. In the highly developed South East of England, for example, large-scale abandonment is a rarity, while rosebay willowherb strewn former industrial complexes are commonplace in the Midlands, north and west of Britain.

There is a talismanic quality in the use of the past in speculative landscapes. The value of assets depends of course on their worth to investors. The owners place the value, which is determined by their rental prices, which require tenants to pay those prices. To some degree, the base land value is what drives their investment value.

They are landscapes of work—requiring a workforce—just as the industrial sites before them. They are often situated in areas set up for workers to live in. But their success is not guaranteed. How they are built plays a role—both general and specific—in the social reproduction of the working culture (Buchli 2013) and their endurance as sites of work on historic sites of work belies a truth. Elements of what preceded them are incorporated, determinedly to lend legitimacy, a talisman of industrial success, and a posturing: a positioning to show power and success. We might see parallels in the use in industrial architecture of elements of the classical form, as Ballantyne describes:

...the cotton mills around Manchester, which pounded out fine fabrics, were given towers and turrets, and dressed to look superficially like the palaces of a new aristocracy. The thunderous engines that drew into St Pancras Station in London were screened from the city by a cavalcade of pinnacles and pointed arches. (2008: 1–2)

But there is a difference. There is something tentative in the *tendential creation* that accompanied the *partial destruction* that characterized the landscapes of the rise of neoliberalism. Thatcher's government assumed that a solution would arise from the short, sharp shock—the sudden removal of the props that held up industry through privatization—worsened the already existing divide between those formerly industrial areas and those that benefited from the clustering of service industries that Thatcher explicitly supported. The government would not bear the cost and pain of supporting industry, but would receive a return on the economic success of the private sector, and in return, the private sector benefited from deep discount on formerly national assets, principally, it would transpire, land.

8.8 URBAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS

State owned assets that had been allowed to run down, or were considered no longer a priority to be held up, included vast swathes of industrial land. The 1980 Local Government Planning and Land Act enabled the formation of Urban Development Corporations (hereafter 'UDCs')—essentially quasi-autonomous non-governmental organizations (quangos)—equipped with their own statutory powers and annually funded by the British Treasury (Figure 8.2). They were directly responsible to the Secretary of the State for

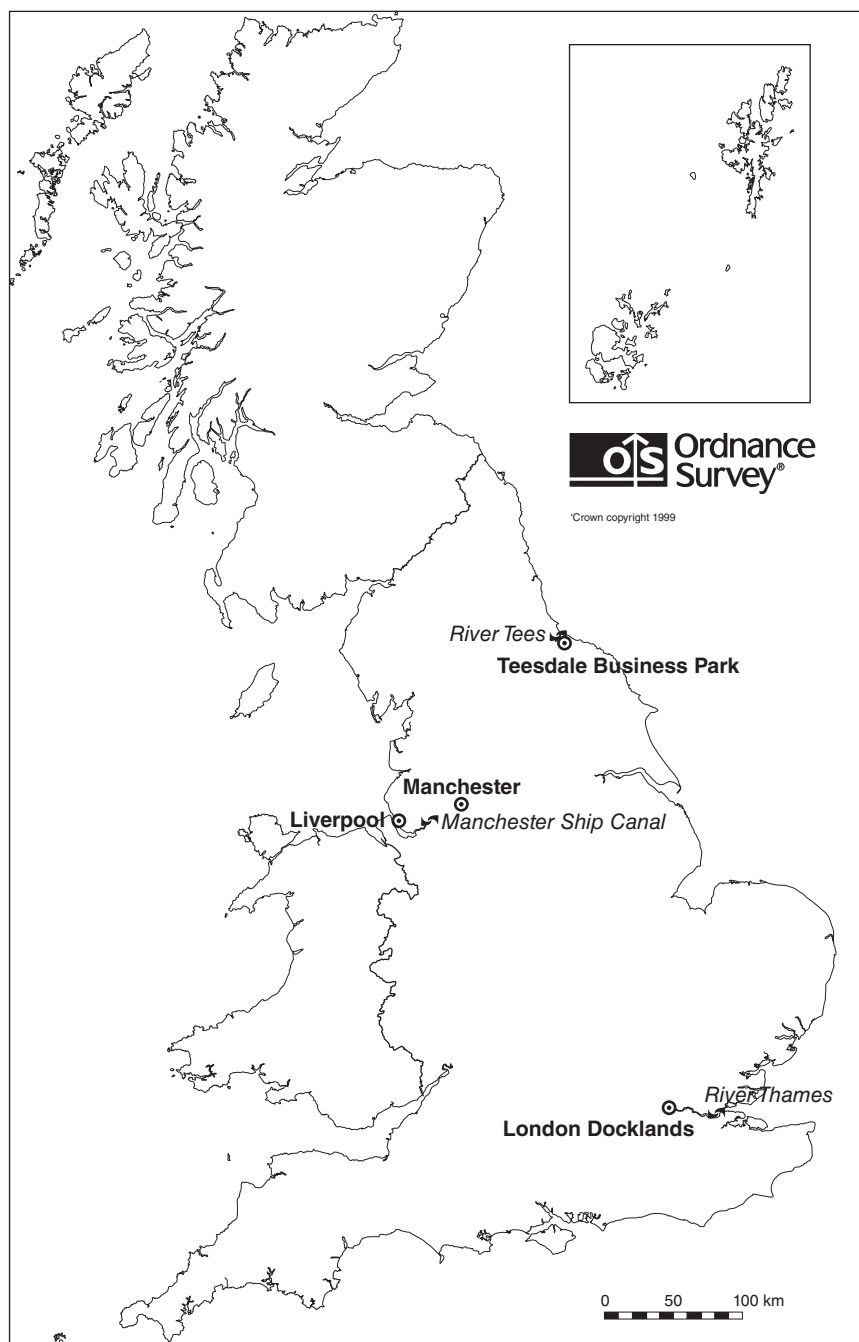


Figure 8.2. Map showing unitary development corporation locations. Reproduced from Ordnance Survey map data by permission of Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright 2013.

the Department of the Environment. However, their boards comprised a majority of private-sector members and their essential remit was to replace local government as the primary promoters of urban regeneration. Aside from reduced bureaucratic constraints, what made the development powers of the UDCs different from those of local authorities, from whom they sequestered those powers, was their undisguised tilt towards private sector capital economics:

[The UDCs] epitomised the subordination of redistributional to economic growth concerns in urban policy; they embodied the preoccupation with responding to ostensible private sector needs, and embracing the outlook of business in public policy; and they exemplified the pursuit of ‘physical’ intervention in local land and property markets at the expense of socially-focused regeneration.

(Deas et al. 2000: 1)

In essence, UDCs existed to transform derelict and problematic areas of state-held land, and in doing so, take the problem away from the state. In 1981 the first two UDCs were formed: the London Docklands Development Corporation (hereafter ‘LDDC’) and the Merseyside Development Corporation (hereafter ‘MDC’). The land belonging to the dock companies was vested under the control of the new corporations.

8.9 LONDON DOCKLANDS

The London Docks had been in steady decline in the postwar period. Successive governments had long considered what might now be seen as ‘master-planning’ strategies. These were conceived to deal with the perceived problem of urban industrial rundown in an area that had been reliant on the docks as a source of employment, concurrent with the steady diminishment of industry as a whole in the area.

The pursuit of different aims of course led to significant strife between stakeholders. The friction between the aims of the LDDC and the needs of local groups was apparent early on, as it became clear that what the Docklands development was offering was a new financial and business centre for London, rather than an employment base that suited its position. But the LDDC persisted in its manufacturing of a new concept for Docklands—‘projecting a confident image of the future’ (Oc and Tiesdell 1991: 311)—as much a core part of the LDDC’s remit as actually facilitating development works. Imaginering became a key concept—and part of it was reimagining and emphasizing exactly how bad it had been before. The LDDC consistently traded on the myth that there had been no investment in the docks, which had effectively been mothballed:

The docklands inherited by the LDDC in 1981 was isolated both physically and emotionally from the rest of London... Docklands was beset by overwhelming problems of social deprivation, poor housing and bleak prospects... in a physical context of dereliction and decay. No one but a few visionary pioneers who, like the LDDC, saw the tremendous potential of docklands and moved here to commence the process of regeneration, saw the area as having any value.

(LDDC 1998: 4)

The facilitation of private sector development therefore included both the downgrading of the recent past and the lionization of a deeper industrial past. Docklands today is a monumental blend of epic architectures. Its backdrop is the relict landscape of the docks themselves. The achievements of structural engineering that the construction of the London docks represents saw England's national heritage agency, English Heritage, play a distinctive part in the creation of the Dockland's aesthetic. In 1983 a number of buildings and structures associated with the old docks were Listed (placed on England's National Inventory of Listed Buildings) or Scheduled (placed on the inventory of Scheduled—at that time—Ancient Monuments), thereby ensuring some element of statutory protection for them. Within the area of the old docks, the monumental aesthetic of the docks provided a fitting backdrop to the monumental aesthetic of some of the office buildings that were being planned. But the offices, warehouses, and workshops of the old docks had already been identified in the determining of the Docklands development.

Arriving at Docklands along Narrow Street, for example, the cobbled street along the River Thames lined with three-, four-, and five-storey converted warehouses, the particularly 1980s aesthetic has become an attractive cityscape style in its own right. Here, old docks are given over to marinas for leisure craft. This waterside living and working was heavily influenced by the work of James Rouse in the US. His waterside developments of Boston and Baltimore are the obvious antecedents—new use of old structures, an eye to tourism, commercialism (Rennie-Short 2013: 69; on repurposing urban architecture in Chicago, see Graff, Chapter 4). It had a successful London precursor in the conversion of the flower market in Covent Garden into a cobbled tourist Victorian culture and shopping experience and the location of the Royal Opera House. The city as a stage. But another influence, successful urban realm over massive hectareage, but not by town planners, was Disneyland, where Main Street, USA was brought to (larger than) life, sanitized, and reinterpreted (Ward 2012: 277). Dockland living was riverside living, but not regenerated, instead, reinvented. The years of decline were bypassed for the evocation of a bustling eighteenth- and nineteenth-century docklands, with all of the mercantilism and derring-do, but none of the squalor.

8.10 CANARY WHARF

Urbanist Peter Hall had proposed in the 1970s that for city areas that had become slums—considered impossible to turn around—the last ditch solution would be to create ‘enterprise zones’ where restrictions were lifted to encourage private innovation and investment without risk (Hall 1982; see Mullins, Chapter 12, for a case study in ‘slum’ clearance in Indianapolis). Michael Heseltine, Thatcher’s Secretary of State for the Department of the Environment (1979–83) took the idea and adapted it. The Isle of Dogs Enterprise Zone was characterized by a lack of planning controls, rates, free business spaces, and the writing off of investments against tax liabilities for any company that chose to locate there. Thatcher personally wooed the few global developers she thought could pull it off. In a coup we could consider one of the biggest physical markers of her regime, she netted Olympia & York, a Canadian company that at the time was the biggest development firm in the world.

The development was regarded as highly controversial: the LDDC had sold the land at below half its market rate, and the local MP noted that it would be harder to get planning permission to open a fish and chip shop in Millwall (the tip of the Isle of Dogs). In the end, there was no doubt that the telling phrase in the LDDC’s planning minutes ‘political considerations favour the scheme’ was the primary driver behind the development (Barnes, Colenutt, and Malone 2013: 18).

Canary Wharf, a business and commercial district of around 1,300,000 square metres, is now considered to be London’s second ‘City’—a financial district that essentially extends the work of the Square Mile into the east (Colour plate 10, top). One Canada Square was completed in 1991, and was at the time London’s tallest building. Olympia & York filed for bankruptcy in 1992 and for some time, Canary Wharf was considered something of a failure—the folly of 1980s trading excesses—but it is hard now to imagine London without it. Even after the latest financial crash, London’s embedding of the consistently repeated message that its success hangs on the financial sector—at home mostly in Canary Wharf—means Docklands thrives.

8.11 MERSEYSIDE TO MANCHESTER

To the River Mersey in the North West of England; the first of those UDCs where special planning measures enabled by Heseltine were instituted.

In many cities, the removal of city council mechanisms that were designed to prevent wholesale decline had left the Conservative government with dead

zones of total shutdown. In 2011 a number of classified documents newly opened following the end of the then thirty-year embargo on their release were published that detailed the Thatcher cabinet's discussions on the fate of Merseyside. During the initial setting-up of the UDC, an area of Liverpool long plagued by disharmony between residents and the authorities, particularly between the black community and the police, experienced serious rioting. Heseltine found himself a lone voice arguing for considerable financial support to regenerate Merseyside: 'Isn't this pumping water uphill? Should we go rather for "managed decline"? This is not a term for use, even privately. It is much too negative, when it must imply a sustained effort to absorb Liverpool manpower elsewhere – for example in nearby towns of which some are developing quite promisingly', wrote Geoffrey Howe in a personal note to Thatcher. Howe was Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time, holding the nation's purse strings (Travis 2011). Heseltine argued that the decline of Merseyside had been worsened by post-war policy: 'a tactical retreat, a combination of economic erosion and encouraged evacuation' (Travis 2011).

Merseyside's state of decline—due in no small part to similar issues afflicting the London Docklands: the reduction in competitiveness in shipbuilding, in suitability of the docks themselves, the growth of containerisation and associated need for larger seaports and better transport infrastructure, problems with local government, and conflicts with central government (sometimes ideological)—was unquestionably part of a broader narrative. Industrial decline preceded the efforts of the Conservative government to crush unionism, although it was certainly not helped by it. The initial regeneration package saw Merseyside woo Arrowcroft, a London-based development group, who saw to the redevelopment of the Albert Dock—a Grade I Listed Victorian dock—as a commercial and leisure area. The first warehouse conversion mezzanine flats were sold in 1986, and the Tate Gallery opened an offshoot of its national collection in a converted warehouse in 1988. But the project also saw land reclamation, environmental clean-up, housing, business park development.

But the extent of the Merseyside dock system meant that, as in London, the process of regeneration would take longer than the initial ten-year lifespan of the UDCs. The decline in industry and the large scale of the land therefore available for potential redevelopment/regeneration meant that the potential to accumulate extensive areas as land assets became a growing possibility. Following the dissolution of the UDCs in 1998, the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, a company with origins and obligations not unlike those of the Port of London Authority, regained control of Merseyside's docks. In 2005 it was acquired by the Peel Group.

The Peel Group is a large (private) property development and investment company still majority-owned by the entrepreneur John Whitaker who

founded the business in 1973. He acquired Peel Mills, a textile mill in Bury, and moved into the acquisition and development of large former industrial sites as business and warehousing sites. The company floated on the London Stock Market in 1981 and grew with the creation of an extensive asset portfolio that included the Manchester Ship Canal and the Port of Liverpool. It reprivatized in 2004, with the help of the Saudi investment conglomerate, Olayan Group, who hold approximately 25 per cent of Peel.

In a controversial development that raised the ire of Manchester City Council, Peel developed the Trafford Centre—one of Britain's first mega-malls—which opened in 1998 on ship canal land. And more recently the Manchester docks—developed by Salford Council as 'Salford Quays'—have been augmented by Peel's investment in MediaCity, and a variety of other schemes that will form part of Ocean Gateway. Private consortia and companies such as Peel carry the investment and development abilities that local authorities no longer do. Ocean Gateway is Peel's 'vision' for the corridor of the Manchester Ship Canal—effectively a massive regeneration of the former industrial powerhouses of the North West, connecting Manchester to Liverpool via Salford, Warrington, Runcorn, and Birkenhead with a tagline of '50 projects, 50 years, 50 billion'. Ocean Gateway will be part of 'Atlantic Gateway', a board-led group of partnerships between local authorities (including Liverpool, Salford, and Manchester) and private business and consortia such as Peel—or rather some of Peel's enterprises/subsidiaries/assets such as MediaCity and Liverpool Airport. It is designed to drive growth and in its effort to do so will transform areas long known for their economic stagnation and industrial ruin. It is *tendential creation* on an epic scale. It is also a post-industrial asset portfolio, snugly entangled in the matted webs of tax accounting that investment groups specialize in.

8.12 CONCLUSION

In Detroit, a Chinese businessman who made his fortune building worker dorms in Shenzhen has acquired a few of the cities more iconic 'abandoned' early twentieth-century buildings—presumably because Detroit has infrastructure and a labour force and China's economy is slowing. It is a risky strategy, but a strong yuan and a weak dollar make risky strategies look reasonable in this mutable world and China is now the second biggest buyer of US real estate (Kaiman 2014). The 'Chinese takeaway' (as the buyout of British automotive firms by China was nicknamed in local pubs and tabloid newspapers) reshapes the mutable ruin. Of course, it does not reach those areas of Detroit where depopulation has become so bad that proposals to consolidate and return those areas to farmland (rather than leave them to

ruin) are tabled. It recalls Cornwall, where the Devon and Cornwall Mining World Heritage Site—a tourist's mecca of picturesque harbour towns and scenic moorland—was once a mess of industry and now homes a population of less than a fifth that it did in its short-lived heyday in the late nineteenth century; a place where industrial talismans are clung to and converted despite the almost total loss of industry.

As part of General Motors' Chapter 11 bankruptcy, the car giant sloughed its unprofitability and debt, like the big British industries, accumulated from years of failures to modernize, bad investment decisions, too big and creaky a reach (as well of course of those well-rehearsed arguments about Japanese innovation and Chinese labour costs), into a new company, Motors Liquidation Company. The primary role of this company was to dispose of GM's dirty washing—from its accumulated debts, to its environmental pollution—taking with it a few old holdings. The terrible vulnerability of the end of American manufacturing—the ruins of Detroit—is not the end of the story, however. There is no end. GM's fortunes have picked up (although the recall of 6 million cars made between 2007 and 2014 has not been fortunate). Its English badge, Vauxhall, on the verge of being packaged off to a consortium in 2009, is thriving. Whereas, the Saab factory abandoned in Trollhättan, outbid by Vauxhall's superior production, finds itself starring in articles under headlines proclaiming 'Sweden's Detroit'. Saab's ruin is literally Vauxhall's increased capacity.

The post-industrial shift has occurred within a globalized network of capital ownership. Thatcher's revolution in government not only entailed the draw-down of industrial manufacturing in Britain that continued under the Conservative and Labour governments that succeeded her. It also actively pursued an agenda of private ownership that encouraged citizens to literally own their own assets.

The sweetheart deals and discount pricing that accompanied the sale of national assets to private companies have sometimes resulted in mega-rich companies that are markets in themselves. Companies are so large that their market share cannot be competed with and they can offer governments and councils opportunities too promising to refuse. We see Thatcher's successors as continuing the legacy of those governments, and we can see initiatives such as Ocean Gateway as successors to UDCs (and UDCs are making a comeback). This ensures the market, is as ever, forgiven with each new cycle of government support (including financial and tax incentives) for private initiatives.

In architecture, those illusory post-modern ruin-influenced forms say 'what came before is ours: we don't need to heed its structures', but they also use fragments of the past as architectural talismans. The Peel Group's timeline on its website begins at 1715 when the Liverpool docks opened, and includes the death of Robert Peel, prime minister and mill owner.

‘Postmodern architecture is about providing the right ambience and affective state’ (Svabo et al. 2013: 313), and indeed its bi-fold ambition in these case studies is to engender a belief in its longevity that will bring investors; and to create an affective state that will encourage productivity from those within it, whether they are buying or selling. It tries to do all this with a nod to a classical past that has been tried and tested in this manner since the eighteenth century, but also with an understanding of its industrial past. By doing so, it reinforces the strange belief that we appear to have in our industrial past; our love for the monumental, no matter how fleeting; our conflicted and often dishonest relationship with ruins; our resistance to change.

Perhaps because the contemporary is so close, and perhaps because seeing the living is so hard, archaeologists of the contemporary past run the risk of being myopic in their exploration of the theoretical embeddedness of economic, social, and natural processes within ruin. While the ‘thingness’ of ruins (Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2014), their inherent value, their own-ness, does indeed provide a fruitful avenue for material observation and the understanding of certain human conceptions and non-human growth cycles, it wilfully sidesteps both broad issues of economic change and detailed understandings of the complexity of place. In some ways this is comparable to the keen focus of industrial archaeology on specific technologies and the privileging of the machine: a neat paring of industrial and post-industrial archaeology in which things and places become isolated from all but the most obvious or immediate networks and systems, and a real critique of capitalism is missed, again. Neoliberalism’s techniques are not limited to the ruin of heavy industry and the human cost that that entails. It is built on speculation and accumulation, the work of which is done from, and exhibited in a new landscape of commerce. If we look carefully, we can see neoliberalism’s own uncertainty in these landscapes. An archaeological eye can track the gambles, pay-offs, big wins, and bigger losses in these forms. The deindustrialized is the post-industrial: the uncertain present grasping at a fleeting past to ensure a fantasy future. Sometimes, ruins can obscure the broader view.

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