Housing, Memory and the Post-War State: Resident Experiences, Regeneration and the Council Estate in Manchester, 1945-2010

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

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<td>CHAC</td>
<td>Central Housing Advisory Committee</td>
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<td>CPA</td>
<td>Conservative Party Archive</td>
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<tr>
<td>DETR</td>
<td>Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoE</td>
<td>Department of the Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>DTLR</td>
<td>Department of Local Government and the Regions</td>
</tr>
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<td>GMCRO</td>
<td>Greater Manchester County Record Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>HLG</td>
<td>Ministry of Housing and Local Government. TNA reference</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIC</td>
<td>Local Image Collection (GMCRO)</td>
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<td>MCC</td>
<td>Manchester City Council</td>
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| MHLG         | Ministry of Housing and Local Government (non-
               TNA reference) |
| MoH          | Ministry of Health |
| MoT&CP       | Ministry of Town and Country Planning |
| NWFA         | North West Film Archive |
| NWSA         | North West Sound Archive |
| PFI          | Private Finance Initiative |
| PHM          | People's History Museum Archive |
| TNA          | The National Archives, Kew |
Abstract

Council housing was a key component of state activity in the lives of citizens after 1945. Scholarly and popular narratives of council housing have focused on the progression of policy across the twentieth century, emphasising failures. Not only does this lead to a narrative centred on what went wrong, it also ignores the very people who have direct experience of living on the estates. This thesis challenges the ‘official’ perspectives of council housing, by using oral history interviews conducted with residents from three council estates in Manchester to ask how they have experienced urban change over the past sixty years. These estates were chosen because they have seen repeated state-led interventions into their physical fabric since the end of the Second World War.

Using personal testimonies, this thesis contributes to the scholarship on council housing in three key ways. Firstly, it demonstrates how residents view history as a cyclical process of change and continuity, rather than a linear process of policy development and implementation. Residents recognise the similarities between slum clearance, estate construction and regeneration practices, in a way that local authorities, national governments, planners, and the scholarly discourse do not at present. Secondly, the thesis develops historical uses of key terms such as ‘community’ and ‘neoliberalism’. These two concepts are integral to scholarly and practice-based debates about urban change. ‘Community’ in particular has a range of uses, from state-led appeals for a ‘Big Society’ to mitigate a shrinking of the welfare state, to resident-claimed memories of social networks and working-class spaces that no longer exist. This thesis concentrates on the latter, arguing that for the interviewees, feelings of community were organised around proximity and shared positions in the life cycle. In terms of neoliberalism, the thesis enters a debate that presently takes place outside of the confines of history. It argues that the current view of neoliberalism as a ‘turn’ in the economic and political relationship between state and citizens neglects continuities in the practice of urban interventions that interviewees recognised so clearly. Finally, the thesis demonstrates a methodology for challenging the stereotypical narrative of social housing as a ‘failure’. It demonstrates how the use of a broader range of source materials, such as personal testimonies collected from residents, offers alternative assessments of the value and function of social housing in twentieth-century Britain.

This thesis presents an account of council housing able to recognise successes as much as failures. Positioning housing within the broader contexts of personal histories offers a rich source of memory and experience lacking from much of the existing scholarship and popular discourses. These memories challenge some key assumptions about the function of housing in postwar Britain, including claims for novelty for each subsequent policy or practice. Policy makers and local authorities could also employ memory-work as they develop new urban interventions, to ensure that the experiences of working class city residents are recognised, and most importantly, valued.
Declaration

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**Introduction - Housing, Memory and the Post-War State**

The council estate is one of the most visible markers of state activity in post-war Britain. Thousands of estates, housing millions of people, were built by the public sector after 1945, representing a huge financial investment in the spaces where people live out most of their lives. In 1975, just short of a third of the national housing stock was provided through council housing. This level of construction transformed the urban landscape of Britain, introducing new built forms and layout models to the environment of our towns and cities, and into the domestic lives of ordinary citizens. This is not a process that has ended, rather its scope and scale has changed over the past seventy years. Indeed, the state continues to intervene in the housing market, through construction and demolition, economic incentives and sanctions, and legal or regulatory requirements. These continuing interventions into residential spaces are important not just because of their scale, but because they form a crucial part of a wider post-war process of increased state involvement in the private lives of citizens.

The visibility and cost of estate construction has led to close scrutiny of their successes and failures. The attentions of popular media and academic scholarship often take the form of a failure narrative. For example, a recent *Observer* article opens with the following oft-repeated synopsis of British post-war council housing:

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Once upon a time new housing in Britain was terrible. Engendered by the fearful coupling of utopian architectural fanatics and of bureaucratic automata in local authorities, it was soulless, alienating, malfunctioning and often damp.²

In one sentence, we move from utopia to malfunction. This type of representation damages the state’s reputation for managing the complexities of the housing market. More importantly, however, the failure narrative also passes judgement on the lives of the council tenant as they find themselves ‘left behind’ in unpopular estates characterised by their residual tenure.³

The failure narrative described above is rooted in analysis of social housing from the perspective of its producer, the state. New estates were built in new ways because housing producers and planners believed in the power of the environment to affect the social, moral and cultural lives of prospective residents.⁴ Despite their centrality to the programme of reconstruction and social housing construction, the story of council housing in post-war Britain consistently marginalises the voices of citizens, as residents, leaving little space for their memories of their private lives during and after state intervention. Resident experiences of the dramatic changes that took place in neighbourhoods across the country matter, because it was the resident, and their domestic life, that was the object of state intervention.

The ‘Problem’ Estate

The neglect of a whole swathe of source material, in the guise of resident testimonies, has exacerbated a number of problems in our understanding of post-war housing. Firstly, post-war housing is often understood as a linear series of events and interventions, enacted by the state, evidenced through government publications and town plans. In the narrative built from these sources, we see housing through a series of national and local policies and Acts, driven by changing ideas in planning and architecture, or as responses to exceptional events. This is problematic, because it allows little attention for the everyday use of housing, and privileges the exceptional, such as the collapse of Ronan Point in London, one event amongst many that has achieved mythical status. It also feeds into the narrative of failure attached to council housing, where utopian dreams failed to provide even adequate shelter.

This thesis examines post-war planning and housing because the period 1945-2010 saw three major phases of state-driven intervention into the urban fabric of the working class in towns and cities across Britain. These phases are currently understood in a linear framework within the historiography of

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5 Ronan Point was a point block in Newham, London, which collapsed in 1968 following a gas explosion. Four people died and seventeen were injured. The collapse became the subject of a public enquiry resulting in the publication: Hugh Griffiths, QC, Sir Alfred Pugsley and Sir Owen Saunders, Report of the Inquiry into the Collapse of Flats at Ronan Point, Canning Town, (1968). Ronan Point has received considerable attention from historians, particularly as a turning point in the use of high-rise as a form for post-war social housing. This often ignores the reality that subsidies for high-rise were removed in 1967. See, for example: Anne Power, Hovels to High Rise: State Housing in Europe Since 1850, (London, 1993), p. 196; Peter Hall notes that subsidies were removed a year before Ronan Point collapsed, noting instead the disasters’ impact on public opinion, rather than government policy: Peter Hall, Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and design in the Twentieth Century, (Oxford, 1988), p. 226. Alison Ravetz also emphasises Ronan Point as a symbolic end for high rise: Ravetz, Council Housing and Culture, p. 104.
planning, housing and post-war Britain. The basic narrative follows like this: After the Second World War, a new settlement was required to provide the socially democratic nation that war-weary citizens deserved. This ethos led to a number of urban interventions. Firstly, the 1950s saw slum clearance resume on a massive scale, transforming inner cities forever. Clearance was a response to poor housing standards in the largely working-class neighbourhoods that made up the inner areas of many towns and cities. Once the slums were cleared, new state housing was built, embracing developments in sociology, planning and architecture to recreate the inner cities and give some tenants access to the suburbs in peripheral estates. Council housing built in this period was experimental, pushing boundaries in its layout, construction method and use of materials. This approach reflected a new-found ‘confidence in the capacity to build a better future without the need to rely on the past.’

Over the next twenty years, a growing realisation emerged amongst politicians and planners that the experiment had failed; the new housing was unpopular and expensive. In response to this, new approaches to problem neighbourhoods were formed, under the umbrella of ‘regeneration’, which promised to deal with the social, economic and physical problems of the council estate.

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This linear history of urban change cannot account for resident testimonies, which employ a circular narrative to explain the histories of individual lives and neighbourhoods. What the three phases of intervention described in the historiography meant for residents was the compulsory purchase of their home, forcing them to start their lives again, whether in a new neighbourhood or in replacement estates sometimes only metres from their former homes. For those in the latter example, it also meant witnessing the demolition of their former homes all around them. This was not an act of violence done once, for many estate residents recent regeneration has meant a repeat of the process. This personal view of ‘history repeating itself’ is not reflected in the housing policy literature. Having to move, sometimes gratefully, other times under duress, is a major part of council tenants’ lives, punctuating their testimonies and shaping their experiences. Ultimately, urban interventions remind them that outsiders control their housing choices. Like Benjamin’s Angel of History, residents are therefore in a special position to offer assessments of post-war housing, to identify urban interventions, as patterns of destruction and creation.11 Not only are they the object of urban interventions, they also live out their private lives in the environments created.

History cannot aid urban policy-makers or tenants if it does not speak their language. A further problem in the historiography is a vein of intellectual isolationism, which prevents effective communication between historically grounded research, other academic disciplines and urban practice. For example, the historical use of key terms such as ‘community’ and ‘neoliberal’

has not yet reflected changes in their usage in planning discourse, studies of social policy or in human geography. ‘Community’, so often associated with working-class places and practices, is incorporated into a historical discourse of decline in the post-war years, as reciprocity and shared values are replaced by home-centred anomie. Yet regeneration programmes require participation by resident communities in the process of urban change, and tenants talk about their public lives in terms of community. Confusion over the meaning of community in academic writing, in part because of a breakdown in interdisciplinary conversations, in part because of a neglect of the way residents use the term, adds nothing to discussions of ‘community’ in the real world of policy decisions and residents’ lives.

Similar problems surround the use of ‘neoliberal’ to explain political and social changes since 1979. The incorporation of the term is in its infancy in history, particularly as the historiography of the past thirty years is small, but growing. However, a chasm between the post-war settlement exemplified by the welfare state, and Margaret Thatcher’s premiership is emerging, with Thatcherism characterised as neo-liberalism. Key texts in the historiography treat ‘Thatcherism’ as a wholly exceptional shift to a new national order, based

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13 A classic definition of ‘neoliberalism’ is offered by David Harvey: ‘Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices.’ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, (Oxford, 2005), p. 2.
not on shared acceptance of welfare, but on individualism and the market.\textsuperscript{14} Neoliberalism emerges victorious, as the basis for our national identity, political relationships and social activity. \textsuperscript{15} The neoliberal paradigm, dominating our understanding of urban space in the past thirty years, must receive attention from historians, to work through questions of novelty, and to ask whether these recent processes continue the circular history of urban intervention.

**Persistent Narratives of British Council Housing**

A linear historiography focussed on the perspective of experts has led to a situation where we know much of British urban planning from the perspective of the planner, architect and politician, but less from that of the planned-for.\textsuperscript{16} There is a considerable literature charting the history of planning and architectural theory, practice and policy in Britain.\textsuperscript{17} For example, scholars such

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\textsuperscript{15} Though Simon Springer has recently noted that political developments, such as the Occupy movement, have been interpreted by online commentators as the birth of ‘postneoliberalism’, though he also argues that ‘there is an undeniable continuity to neoliberalism’ in the present. See: Simon Springer, ‘Postneoliberalism?’, *Review of Radical Political Economics* 47:1, (2015), pp. 5-17, (p. 5).


as John Gold have foregrounded the influence of architectural theories, such as Modernism, in shaping the state’s response to housing shortages. Whilst important in setting out the parameters for state intervention, and exploring the debates conducted amongst urban experts, this tradition of literature cannot reflect the narratives that estate tenants have to tell, because it is constrained by its archival source material and emphasis on urban authorities and experts. This literature relies on interpreting governmental archives, plans, local authority committee minutes and personal archives of prominent architects and planners, which I will term ‘official’ sources. These sources, useful for explaining change at the national level, and to look at relationships between different tiers of government at the local/national level, have little to say about the everyday experiences of citizens. Despite this drawback, the policy literature remains dominant, as illustrated by Alison Ravetz, who argues that the ‘academic study of council housing has been presented as the history of housing policy’. We are left, in urban history, with half a conversation.

The housing policy literature also works within a framework of broader studies in post-war politics. Although the provision of social housing dates back to the very end of the nineteenth century, it is more readily associated with the transformation of the British state in the twentieth century, and with post-war reconstruction in particular. The history of council housing after the Second

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19 Ravetz, Council Housing and Culture, p. 3.
20 Clara Greed, Planning in the UK: An Introduction, (Basingstoke, 2014), p. 101. Greed notes that the first municipal housing was provided by the Boundary Street Estate in London, built between 1893 and 1900.
World War is characterised by its contentious relationship to the ‘post-war consensus’. For example, Peter Malpass has described post-war housing provision as a ‘wobbly pillar’ of the welfare state, never quite a universal service, and never likely to be. Without the status of ‘cornerstone’ in the welfare state, social housing is residualised, a last resort for those unable to participate in the private market. At the same time, however, some historians view the period of reconstruction following the end of the War as a crucial part of the welfare state, particularly in terms of housing activity. Anne Power, for example, argues that:

Universal health and education were not enough as long as Victorian housing conditions persisted. The very success of the Welfare State in reducing crude poverty generated demand across the society as a whole for the elimination of out-dated housing conditions.

Moving away from the debates surrounding the post-war consensus, political explorations of council housing have also concentrated on the politician as creator. Patrick Dunleavy, for example, whilst noting that central government control over housing was ‘weak’, highlights the notable influence that individual politicians had on the form of council housing in the thirty years after the end of the War.

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24 Power, Hovels to High Rise, p. 189.

The strong link between housing and social policy is maintained in broader accounts of the post-war period. For example, historian Paul Addison supports his argument that successive governments were expected to provide adequate housing in the post-war period by emphasising the influence of the post-war squatters’ movement, particularly in the period 1945-55. Though initially highlighting citizens’ collective action through squatting, Addison’s attention immediately turns to governmental responsibility. He sets out five aims of housing policy: to complete the slum clearance began in the 1930s; to rebuild blitzed areas; the renovation or conversion of old housing stock and a separate home for every family. Prospective council tenants appear, then immediately disappear again. Similarly, Arthur Marwick, in his influential work on post-war society, uses housing conditions in the period 1945-1957 to support his broader argument that the welfare state was a response to public opinion:

...housing was the issue on which people felt most strongly in 1945. People had endured crowded, low-standard housing in the 1930s; during the war they had been bombed out, shunted around, doubled up: now, couples looked forward most of all to a home of their own.

However, once again, the prospective resident, the object of policy, slips from view, as Marwick goes on to note the importance of the Housing Act of 1949 for

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27 Addison, *Now the War Is Over*, p. 56.

28 Addison, *Now the War Is Over*, p. 57. Addison does go on to quote one of the first residents of the Lansbury estate in London at length in his discussion of high-rise.

party politics and the state. This is not to argue that post-war histories are at fault for considering housing policy without housing memory or housing experience. Indeed, in broad histories of several decades, it would prove impossible to do, but their source material and focus are indicative of broader problems in the ways historians have approached housing interventions as linear processes.

The separation of housing policy from tenant perspectives, as exemplified in the scholarship of the post-war period has tangible effects. It has added to overriding narratives of failure attached to state-led housing provision in a range of popular discourses and academic disciplines. Historians Ian Cole and Robert Furbey describe this as ‘the eclipse of council housing’. Concentrating on housing policy, to the exclusion of the lived experience of council estates, leads to an overemphasis on what went wrong. In the failure narrative, politicians bicker about output volumes, environmental disintegration and failed allocation policies, whilst local authorities struggle to deal with the day-to-day realities of construction and management. Planners are castigated for their ‘experiments’. Chronological lists of housing policies, with each subsequent policy characterised as a remedy for the last, create a

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30 Marwick, *British Society Since 1945*, p. 59. The Housing Act 1949 granted powers to local authorities to purchase dwellings for improvements, and most importantly, removed the ‘working class’ restriction for social housing provision.
31 Cole and Furbey, *The Eclipse of Council Housing*.
myth of failure spanning the second half of the twentieth century. The spectre of ‘failure’ is rarely absent from this historiography or its archive.

It is perhaps because this narrative is so pervasive that the history of council housing, as a relationship between the state, planning, and people, has received less attention in recent scholarship. For example, Mark Clapson opens his 2012 book *Working-Class Suburb* by simply asking the question: ‘Whither the social history of council estates in England?’ inviting scholars to invest more thought into the approaches we take towards the study of social housing. Clapson’s point is important for post-war housing history. If we focus on housing policy as a chain of linear political reactions, to crisis, shortages and mistakes, then we risk ignoring the benefits that social housing has provided to the private lives of millions of citizens over the past sixty years.

There are examples of historians who have broadened the archive of post-war housing, or reinterpreted ‘official’ accounts to challenge the failure narrative, including Clapson himself, who notes that ‘problematic’ estates, such as his case study in Reading ‘continue[d] to manifest many ordinary qualities’, despite their poor reputations. Similarly, Peter Shapely’s work on Manchester incorporates theories of ‘consumerism’ on the part of residents to include them in the discourse, though his research remains largely based on ‘official’ records. The case-study approach taken by Clapson and Shapely

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allows the historiography to move away from policy formation at a national level, to focus on implementation and effects at a local level. This local approach opens the way for integrating resident accounts into the archive, and the scholarship.

Other studies have taken resident integration one step further, using personal testimonies, archived or collected for purpose, to explore public and private lives in modern Britain. Whilst not necessarily focused on the study of post-war council estates, this scholarship offers a framework for integrating resident accounts into the history of housing. For example, Jerry White demonstrates how rich personal testimonies can narrate much broader histories of urban spaces such as slum streets, tenements and prisons. He uses a case study of Campbell Bunk in London to illustrate the impact that ideas about class and neighbourhood reputation had on individual private lives. Class is an important lens for exploring council housing, and council tenants in particular. Historian Selina Todd has demonstrated the importance of class identities in post-war Britain, arguing that class provides a ‘conceptual framework for understanding twentieth-century Britain’. Todd bases much of her work on sociological studies conducted in the 1950s and 1960s, which

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provide a promising archive for exploring residents’ experiences and outsider views of council tenants more broadly.40 Similarly, Elizabeth Roberts has used oral history to explore the lives of women and families in post-war Britain, also emphasising the importance of neighbourhood and class in structuring their experiences.41 The work of Todd and Roberts hints at the possibilities for rescuing housing history through the integration of personal testimony, to allow for a broader appreciation of the importance of experiences of class and neighbourhood, along with housing.

Despite these uses of personal testimony, resident perspectives of the post-war period remain largely separate from the history of housing policy, instead located within the literatures of anthropology, sociology and human geography.42 Anthropologists bring methodologies of participant observation


into the arena of domestic environments, making the resident the object of study, rather than the silent partner in urban space. For example, the anthropologist Daniel Miller uses participant observation and interviews with council residents to explore consumption and material culture through the prism of the council flat, opening new methodologies and possibilities for the study of council housing.  

Ultimately, he finds that although residents use the consumption of material culture in ‘attempt[s] to transform alienable goods into inalienable culture’, they are ‘often unable to accomplish this goal.’ His approach brings insight into the practice of domesticity, and could prove extremely relevant to discussions of the meanings of tenure and their effects on domestic space over time.

Anthropologists have also used their methodologies to address broader issues in urban space. For example, Jacqui Karn, in her study of a council estate in Manchester, used her relationships with residents to inform her discussion of crime and regeneration. She is able to make claims about policy approaches to regeneration, particularly an overreliance on the concept of community, because of her time spent with estate residents. Also straddling the boundaries between anthropological methodologies of participant observation, and sociological theories of class, culture and society, Lisa McKenzie uses her


Karn, *Narratives of Neglect*, p. 32.
own experiences of living in St Ann’s, Nottingham to draw attention to the position of the council tenant in modern Britain. She uses her unique position as an academic ‘insider’ on the estate to move past ‘official’ accounts and bring residents to the centre stage.

Sociologists offer a theoretical framework for integrating studies of people and their environments, particularly in terms of class. Ben Rogaly and Becky Taylor have explored concepts of class and community through interviews with residents of estates in Norwich. With the starting point of failure narratives, particularly those attached to residents in social housing, they argue that individual lives ‘are closely entwined with changes at the local, national and international scales’, supporting this through case study approaches. They demonstrate how small-scale case studies offer an alternative approach to exploring national change, including policy development and implementation, and wider social or cultural changes. This approach can also contribute to discussions of social and economic inequality, which, as Rogaly and Taylor state, remain dominated by ‘universalizing stereotypes that link style of dress and speech with educational aspirations, involvement with welfare and social control agencies and patterns of family...

47 Lisa McKenzie, Getting By: Estates, Class and Culture in Austerity Britain, (Bristol, 2015). Another example of this approach is found in Lynsey Hanley, Estates: An Intimate History, though this draws more on direct experience with less recourse to theory.
50 Rogaly and Taylor, Moving Histories of Class and Community, p. 3.
behaviour.' We are back to Clapson’s point about stigmatising discourse. For historians, the opportunities from this type of approach (and those of anthropologists) are multiple. Not only can historians learn about changing experiences of estates over time, from long-standing residents, they can also provide historical context to otherwise contemporaneous research in the social sciences. Continuing to improve the dialogue between history and the social sciences will benefit each discipline in this way, and challenge lazy stereotypes.

Studies of contemporary urban space also present important contributions to our understanding of residents’ experiences. Geographers, such as Jane M. Jacobs, offer new approaches for exploring the spaces of social housing, such as tower blocks. In her work on the Red Road estate in Glasgow, Jacobs, along with Stephen Cairns and Ignaz Strebel, makes the case for understanding tower blocks as pieces of technology, employed by residents in their everyday lives. In doing this, Jacobs et al call for the modest enlargement of ‘the cast of actors (both human and non-human) that have come together to form the Red Road “public housing apparatus”. We can fruitfully link the spatial and social aspects of residents’ experience through such an approach.

Similarly, James C. Scott, from a political science perspective, notes the contrast between abstract academic assessments of Le Corbusier’s vision for the city of Brasilia, and the lived experience of the urban spaces created in his image:

51 Rogaly and Taylor, Moving Histories of Class and Community, p. 3.
For them [residents of Brasilia] it is almost as if the founders of Brasilia, rather than having planned a city, have actually planned to prevent a city. The most common way they put it is to say that Brasilia “lacks street corners”, by which they mean that it lacks the complex intersections of dense neighbourhoods comprising residences and public cafes and restaurants with places for leisure, work and shopping.55

The benefits of this approach are clear if the intention of research is to learn about everyday experiences in urban spaces such as council estates. History needs to move towards this type of research question, and the theoretical grounding that science and technology studies offers can bridge between the everyday and the spatial, though it will require further historical methodologies too.

Historians, such as Jerry White, Selina Todd and Ben Jones have already taken steps towards broadening the archive for housing history, but there are also numerous exciting and innovative methodologies, using otherwise neglected source material, in fellow humanities disciplines. We must stretch the boundaries of our methods and sources if we are to include residents in our histories. Existing scholarship in housing policy, social change in the post-war period, and studies of class are useful foundations on which to stake a claim for understanding resident experiences in their wider contexts, but at present they largely ignore these issues. It is only with improved interdisciplinary dialogue, and with willingness to make use of the vast source material made available through talking to living residents, that history can tackle the interrelated problems of tenant misrepresentation, an over-reliance on ‘official’ sources, and misunderstanding the relationships between citizen and state in the post-

war period. This thesis tackles these issues directly, not just by foregrounding resident experience, but also by keeping it in tension with more traditional historical discourses of ‘official’ perspectives.

Testimonies of Experience

To challenge prevailing ideas about the nature of spatial change in post-war Britain, this thesis examines the voices of residents, reintegrating their experiences into the broader history of council housing. It uses personal testimonies collected from present and former residents of three neighbourhoods in Manchester to demonstrate the benefits of a historical approach that places the memories and experience of local people encountering urban change at the heart of analysis. Without a full integration of their complex, contradictory and fragmentary experiences, it is all too easy to neglect, misrepresent or misinterpret residents’ contributions to and perspectives of urban change since the Second World War, and overemphasise the power of authorities to control and manage the city. It is also easy to misrepresent the complex urban histories of neighbourhoods such as Ardwick, Longsight and West Gorton, which together form the case study for this thesis.

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56 Residents interviewed for this project had lived, or continue to live, in Ardwick, Longsight, or West Gorton. Where interviewees brought memories of living in other places before arriving in the study areas, these too will be discussed, as in the case of Hulme. The study neighbourhoods are defined as part of ‘central Manchester’ by the local authority. They are to the south of the city centre, and share an industrial past, centred on manufacturing, heavy industry and chemical works. All have seen multiple urban interventions since 1945. All names in this thesis are pseudonyms.
Over the past fifty years, a sophisticated structure for collecting and analysing personal testimonies has developed. Despite early critiques, the use of oral histories as a form of personal testimony is now accepted as a valid means of researching the past. Developments in oral theory have settled early criticisms of personal testimony as particularly subject to the vagaries of memory, or at risk of falsification, as oral historians have argued that all archival sources, whether oral, visual or written, suffer similar ‘problems’; that is, they are subjective. Forgetting, misremembering, or even falsification in oral interviews are points of interest in their own right, not reasons to recoil from memory. Indeed, to counter concerns about the use of memory, oral history theory has now moved to a reflexive approach, with the recognition that ‘the historian plays an active role in the (re)constitution of the past, narrating histories and (as with ethnography) literally “writing culture”.’ Recognising that in oral history, researcher and interviewee collaboratively produce source material, forces the oral historian to consider broad questions about how they craft their sources into narratives and arguments.

Oral historians have also dealt with issues of validity and reliability through a form of triangulation, where a broad range of cultural and social

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archives are consulted in conjunction with personal testimonies. Following from the triangulation approach, we can also examine how memory and popular culture interact. This thesis follows scholars such as Penny Summerfield and Alistair Thomson in viewing oral histories as a culturally shaped source, so uses a range of archival sources, including popular media. Summerfield explains this in the following terms:

...cultural constructions form the discursive context not only within which people express and understand what happens to them, but also within which they actually have those experiences.

Such an approach is particularly useful for this thesis, as it opens a dialogue between the historical sources produced through oral history, and the wider cultural milieu that residents experience throughout their lives, which in turn influences their memories.

The concept of nostalgia fits within this ‘culturally informed memory’ methodology, allowing the thesis to interrogate nostalgic memories within a wider framework of social and class memory. The idea of nostalgia is sometimes viewed as a dangerous problem for the historian to negotiate, capable of sanitising the less savoury aspects of the past, and a particularly pertinent issue for oral historians. It is also associated with critiques of early

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61 In particular, oral historians such as Alessandro Portelli and Luisa Passerini have incorporated broader archives in their studies of working-class people in Italy. See, for example, Alessandro Portelli, The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History, (New York, 1991); Luisa Passerini, Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class, (Cambridge, 1987).


64 On historians’ treatment of nostalgia, see, for example: Svetlana Boyn, ‘Nostalgia and its Discontents’, The Hedgehog Review, (2007), pp. 7-18, (p. 9). For the sanitising possibilities of nostalgia see: Joanna Bourke, Working Class Cultures in Britain 1890-
oral history research, perceived as attempts satisfied with 'merely “collecting people’s lives”.'However, the concept should not be dismissed entirely, as it provides a common language between historians and oral history interviewees. In particular, nostalgia bridges gaps between the academy and otherwise marginalised voices, such as those of urban working-class men, who are as poorly represented in the scholarship of oral history as in housing history. In this thesis, nostalgia is brought to the foreground, not to be overcome, but to show how residents reconcile large-scale urban change with their memories.

Accessing the memories and experiences of residents proved a difficult task, as noted in other projects attempting to do the same. I was not resident in the study area, so could not rely on existing networks to gain trust. Instead, I posted leaflets across the estates, and placed posters in key public spaces, such as doctor’s surgeries, libraries, sports facilities and churches. I set up a social

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66 I make this point in comparison with the extensive literature produced in women’s history, which uses oral sources. Lisa McKenzie also notes how men are invisible in council estates, see: McKenzie, Getting By, p. 90. Where men are included in oral history projects, it is often their status as veterans or industrial workers that is the object of study. See, for example: Thomson, Anzac Memories; Michael Roper, Masculinity and the British Organization Man Since 1945, (Oxford, 1994). Hilary Young also notes an emphasis on sexual politics in oral histories of masculinity, see: Hilary Young, 'Hard Man/New Man: Re/composing Masculinities in Glasgow, c. 1950-2000', Oral History 35:1, (2007), pp. 71-81, (p. 72). In housing history, the participation of women in community activity is emphasised, with men silenced. See, for example: Marianne Hood and Roberta Woods, ‘Women and Participation’ in Rose Gilroy and Roberta Woods (Eds.), Housing Women, (London, 1994), pp. 58-74.

67 In particular, Jacqui Karn notes the difficulties in gaining trust amongst council tenants. See: Karn, Narratives of Neglect, pp. 10-12.

68 Leaflets and posters went through various versions before I felt they were successful in communicating the project effectively. The final version is included in Appendix 1.
media account, created a website for the project and appeared on the local community radio station to promote the study.\(^6^9\) I also made direct contact with community groups using social media, and telephoned key community activists. I accessed three of my interviewees through their employer, and interviewed a close friend who lives in the study area. In total, I conducted fifteen interviews. The most successful recruitment method in terms of numbers was direct contact, either with individuals or community groups, which granted access to a number of interviewees who had experience of working in partnership with regeneration programmes.

As a stranger working in a tight geographical area, I was careful to position my project as an informal conversation, rather than a University-led study. Ultimately, many of the residents who put themselves forward for the project did so because they had a deep interest in history and local history in particular. Many interviews involved the interviewee sharing local history books and other resources such as films and photographs.\(^7^0\) One group of interviewees described themselves as ‘history geeks’.\(^7^1\) The shared passion for the past certainly helped me to avoid the role of academic outsider.\(^7^2\) It also emphasises how history and memory are alive in the everyday lives of ordinary people. Change in post-war Britain for the interviewees was not a static

\(^6^9\) My thanks to ALLFM for offering this opportunity.
\(^7^0\) These include various publications about Longsight and West Gorton, including Jill Cronin and Frank Rhodes, *Longsight*, (Stroud, 2010) and Jill Cronin and Frank Rhodes, *Gorton*, (Stroud, 1998). Both of these books are compilations of archive photographs. I was also given a short film about the Belle Vue Zoological Gardens.
\(^7^1\) Interview with Angela, Betty and Sue, 22 July 2013, ref. VN850016.
\(^7^2\) Lisa McKenzie notes that working-class interviewees ‘know what to say when they are asked about their lives from middle-class researchers, journalists and professionals coming into the area. They know they must be the ‘deserving poor’.’ McKenzie, *Getting By*, p. 171.
background in which they lived their lives; it was an active part of their present and futures. They recognised the enormity of the changes they had witnessed in their neighbourhoods, and cared deeply about them.

Aside from shared interests in history, a shared working-class background between interviewer and interviewee was also helpful in the interviews. All of the interviewees for this project come from what can be considered working-class backgrounds, though not all would be considered working class at the time of the interview. Throughout the interviews, it was clear that residents on the estates experienced society in classed terms, particularly when they talked about the influence of their up-bringing on their later lives. Through my accent, interviewees recognised that I was northern and likely working class. I ensured that interviewees knew from early in the interview that I was from Blackburn (41 miles north of Manchester) and understood on a personal level many of the references they made to working-class life and culture. This helped to build rapport through the interview process. Donald A. Ritchie, in his guide to ‘doing’ oral history, notes the importance of shared characteristics to create rapport:

Just as the race and gender of the interviewer and interviewee may affect the interview, whether the interviewer comes from the subject’s community will influence what is said. …with thorough research, persistent effort and the right personality, interviewers from outside a community can also build the kind of rapport that facilitates interviewing.74

73 I make this claim based on the occupations of interviewees’ parents, their own current and former occupations, their tenure history, and the cultural references they made.

Rapport, and the interviewer/interviewee relationship during interviews, is an area that has received considerable debate from historians. Valerie Yow, for example, asks whether it is possible to ‘like them [interviewees] too much?’ She argues for a reflexive interviewer to consider their part in the co-production of oral history knowledge. I have attempted to ask these questions of myself when working with the oral sources I have collected, recognising that my affinity with the interviewees had a considerable impact on the interview itself, and my subsequent analysis of the oral source material.

Interviewees for this project were self-selecting. I was unable to conduct any interviews with residents from some of the estates in the neighbourhoods, despite leafleting and poster campaigns in the local area. This is one major weakness with the oral history methodology, as it relies on individuals putting themselves forward for interview. It is easy to speculate that residents who declined the invitation to take part lack confidence, or feel that their stories and memories were not what I was looking for, but in reality, it is difficult to know that this was the case. There are an unlimited number of reasons why people would not wish to be interviewed, from suspicion to lack of interest. Self-selection, particularly following direct contact from a researcher (as was the case for five of the fifteen interviewees) also means that interviewees are more likely reflective of the most confident groups in social housing, such as those with previous experience of academic research, or neighbourhood activism. These methodological issues need to be considered at all points in the research.

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76 One interviewee mentioned that a researcher has interviewed them on a previous occasion.
process, and feature in the analysis of the personal testimonies collected. The small sample size for this thesis is reflective of the type of project that could be implemented into future urban practice, and problems with self-selection can be mitigated if they are discussed openly.

Collecting the personal testimonies for this project has opened up the possibility of a new perspective on post-war housing and planning. The political scientist Richard Fenno has argued that collecting personal testimonies ‘...has benefits. It brings you extremely close to your data.’\(^77\) I would agree with this, as I was often invited into interviewees’ homes to conduct my research. Studying post-war housing from the perspective of the resident, without spending time in their homes, makes little sense for the social historian. The invitation into the private spaces of my interviewees allowed me to place them, and their memories, into their own context, to see the dimensions of their rooms and the different uses they were put to. It also aided in making the research process feel less abstract or formal for myself, and I suspect, for the interviewees.

This thesis uses three neighbourhoods in Manchester as case studies for broader urban changes in post-war Britain. The study areas were chosen for a variety of reasons. The study areas have all been described as deprived at different points in their histories, by different commentators.\(^78\) The original study area was limited to Ardwick and Longsight, because those


neighbourhoods have seen multiple state-led interventions into their urban fabric through the post-war period. This ranges from large-scale slum clearance in the 1950s and 1960s, construction of mass housing estates in the 1960s and 1970s, and major regeneration projects from the 1980s to the present day, including the first private finance initiative (PFI) regeneration project to come to contractual conclusion, at Grove Village (Figure 1.1).79 West Gorton was later included because the process of regeneration, including the demolition of two tower blocks and construction of new housing, was on going at the time of researching this thesis. It therefore offered an opportunity to interview residents who are experiencing urban change on a daily basis.

In addition to oral history sources, the thesis uses 'official' archival material. Governmental sources, including records of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHLG) and parliamentary debates are consulted, to provide a policy framework for the research. In addressing the current gulf between housing policy research and lived experience, it is crucial to examine material from both sides of the divide. Local authority archives, relevant to the study areas, are also important in determining the context of urban change in Manchester. Accordingly, local authority records, such as housing committee minutes and press reports are also consulted.

79Private finance initiatives 'extend the role of the private sector in the provision of what are generally considered to be public services (such as health, education, transport infrastructure, prisons and the administration of the functions of the state) by signing contracts with private sector partners to design, finance, build and manage assets and to deliver associated services.' See: Julie Froud, 'The Private Finance Initiative: Risk, Uncertainty and the State', Accounting, Organizations and Society 28, (2003), pp. 567-589, (p. 567). On Grove Village as a PFI project, see, for example: http://www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk/your-community/greater-manchester/grove-village/ accessed 12 March 2014.
Figure 1.1 Ardwick Grove Village 1200m. Source: Manchestermove.co.uk.

The three study areas are used as a prism for studying a range of urban interventions in the post-war period. They are all classed as inner-city residential neighbourhoods, with industrial heritages and some continuing industrial activity. All have been, or are considered deprived by the local and national state. They are at once both remarkable and unremarkable. Long-standing residents have seen multiple urban interventions into their neighbourhoods; some have lived in notorious blocks such as ‘Fort Ardwick’ and the Hulme Crescents. Yet throughout the interviews it was clear that these places are not urban laboratories for planning experiments or the production of abstract social theory by researchers, they are spaces of the quotidian, lived in and loved by their residents, warts and all. Studying a small geographical area in one city allows this project to explore at length, and in context, the memories of interviewees.

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The demolition and reconstruction of people’s homes, the experience of migration and destruction, runs like a thread through the life narratives of tenants. They tell powerful and moving stories of moving under such circumstances, but their accounts offer more than this, because at the same time they also make thoughtful reflexive comments about the nature of urban change in the post-war city. As historians, we could use resident accounts to better understand not just the story of post-war housing, but also the nature of change in post-war Britain. Furthermore, we can contribute to planning practice and social policy, which continue to grapple with problems in urban space, such as the halting of urban renewal, how to make desirable places and how best to deal with continuing pockets of deprivation and poverty. Urban renewal, for example, has slowed since the financial crisis in 2007, leaving some neighbourhoods without much needed investment.  

In terms of continuing poverty and deprivation, whilst the Department for Communities and Local Government currently uses the Economic Deprivation Index to track income deprivation, and highlight specific geographies of poverty over time, their reports cannot account for the impact of deprivation on individual lives. Using resident memories of space and change, we can offer a long-view of these processes within their social and cultural contexts, which recognise their

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cyclical nature. Opening an interdisciplinary dialogue between history, geography, planning and sociology not only offers a stronger understanding of housing in the past, it can also help historicise practice-based disciplines. Again, a shift to new methodological approaches, which incorporate resident testimonies can bridge gaps between disciplines focused on the present and future, and history, which whilst centred on the past, can give warning for the future and explain the present.

The Structure of the Thesis

Chapter One acts as a thematic umbrella for the chronologically structured chapters that follow. Using the concept of ‘home’ as a lens, it engages with the problem of estate [mis]representation in the ways that citizen-tenant relationships are characterised. It demonstrates a considerably more nuanced and complex relationship between estate ‘insiders’, the residents, and ‘outsiders’, such as planners, local authority officials and politicians than is presently acknowledged in the scholarship. For example, literature on council tenants has tended to present housing as either a source of deep conflict as prospective tenants fight over scarce resources, or as a mechanism of paternalistic control by the state over passive tenants. Historian Peter Shapely, who has worked extensively on social housing in Manchester, has challenged this narrative, arguing that tenants have taken on a consumer

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identity over the past forty years, leading to increasing conflict and agitation with the local state. However, across the interviews for this project, it became clear that residents had different relationships with the local authority, and central government, at different times in their lives, depending on their housing circumstances.

Using oral history accounts in conjunction with ‘official’ discourses of ‘house’ and ‘home’, this opening chapter demonstrates how large-scale state-led interventions into the urban fabric, such as slum clearance or regeneration, along with personal meanings imbued by residents are based on shared ideas of what home is and does. From the state’s perspective, ‘house’ and ‘home’ are instruments of social policy, intended to facilitate the private lives of working-class tenants with dignity. For residents, home is an emotional practice, not necessarily limited to the physical structure of the dwelling. The way residents conceive of their home is vulnerable, however, to physical interventions such as regeneration initiatives, and to national policy changes such as the introduction of the ‘bedroom tax’. Unlike housing producers, residents understand the history of their home in relation to the state as cyclical, as mistakes are repeated. This chapter demonstrates the importance of broadening our source material, as resident accounts can change our assessment of housing policy.

Chapter Two focuses on the immediate post-war period, up to the end of the 1950s. Using the process of slum clearance in Manchester’s inner city residential belt, it addresses the problem of tenant marginalisation by making

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resident memories the central focus of the history. This chapter demonstrates
the need to move beyond traditional ‘expert’ discourses of the ‘slum’. It argues
that although the idea of the slum, constructed by ‘outsiders’, legitimated the
process of clearance at the time, it does not reflect the range of views offered in
oral history interviews, as former residents looked back on their lives. Rather,
the slums remembered in resident interviews were complex spaces of
childhood opportunity, within the context of ‘hard’ times. The oral history
interview also allows analysis of urban change situated within the broader
trajectories of interviewees’ lives. Rather than a snapshot of attitudes at a
specific moment, such as those collected in formal or restricted surveys, the life
history interview meanders through the personal histories of the interviewee,
drawing links between different aspects of their lives, shedding new light on
their personal experiences of broad social changes in the process. It thus
forces historians to recognise the cyclical nature of resident accounts of change.

In addition, this chapter tackles latent suspicions of the remembered
slum as particularly susceptible to nostalgic overtones. It rescues nostalgia
from the suspicion that it is inherently non-academic, by employing it as an
analytical tool that can critically introduce personal testimonies into the
archive. The idea of the ‘nostalgic slum’ is largely based on a strong association
between working-class neighbourhoods and ‘community’, with Joanna Bourke,
for example, arguing that working-class reminiscences display ‘nostalgia for a
past “community”.’ The chapter demonstrates that the historical study of

87 Interview with Gary, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850030.
88 Ardra L. Cole and Gary J. Knowles, Lives in Context: The Art of Life History Research,
89 Bourke, Working Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960, p. 163.
condemned housing needs to take a step back from the framework of 'community', to enable a more nuanced exploration of not only how residents felt about the state-led demolition of their homes, but also their assessments of community and neighbourhood in urban space.

Chapter Three focuses on the replacement estates built over the foundations of the 'slums'. It looks to the importance of narrative in the history of the post-war estate, arguing that the resident is frequently missing, or misrepresented, in many popular narratives. The sociologist Lisa McKenzie has forcefully argued this point, stating in relation to her interviewees in the St Ann’s estate, Nottingham:

They know that they are looked down on, that they are represented as not good enough, and that their tastes are often rubbished or ridiculed. This is harmful but also has a negative effect on your life chances, your opportunities. You become stigmatised.90

Here, stigmatisation and misrepresentation are at the intersection between place and class, and have tangible effects on residents’ lives. In a similar vein, the housing worker and activist Glyn Robbins notes that council tenants are sometimes considered part of a ‘mythologised underclass’.91 Narratives of failure are particularly pervasive, and have real spatial and social consequences. The chapter separates narratives of post-war council housing into those produced by ‘insiders’, and those by ‘outsiders’, borrowing a framework from McKenzie.92 It argues that a failure narrative, supported by assessments of expert discourses which highlight the utopian aims of post-war

90 Lisa McKenzie, Getting By, p. 7.
92 McKenzie, Getting By.
reconstruction, fails to account for the complex, contradictory accounts of residents who experienced these spaces.

Chapter Four turns to the latest range of urban interventions to affect the study areas. Termed ‘regeneration’, these interventions, covering the period 1980-2010, are not yet historicised fully. This chapter argues that although regeneration is often characterised as a novel form of intervention, based on perceived links with a neoliberal turn, residents have already experienced many of the practices included in such projects before.93 In their life histories, urban change is cyclical. In particular, physical interventions, such as demolition and aesthetic improvements to dwellings, are continuations of expert beliefs in the power of the environment to affect social life and action. However, the chapter does not simply suggest that regeneration is nothing more than a new language for existing practice. Using two case studies of regeneration projects in Manchester, it also demonstrates the influence of new techniques to market and brand defined neighbourhoods.

Chapter Four draws on interviews with residents, some of whom have experienced all three major urban interventions into their domestic lives, from slum clearance, post-war estate building, to regeneration. Voices within critical regeneration studies have started to call for long-term evaluations of the results of regeneration projects, and this chapter answers their calls by analysing resident accounts of the changes they have witnessed.94 This analysis,

93 The ‘neoliberal turn’ refers to scholarship which claims a drastic political shift from a Keynesian welfare state to a market-orientated structure. See pp. 215-220.
and the thesis as a whole, extends the parameters of evaluation from the lifespan of the regeneration project, to the whole post-war period. This thesis demonstrates how approaching histories of council estate through oral history methodologies can solve the interrelated problems of limited source material, linear history and disciplinary isolation. By shifting our attention to research questions centred on experience and memory, we can breathe new life into the historiography of post-war housing, open up dialogue with people who have direct experience of changes and continuities, and see ‘official’ accounts of urban change from new perspectives.

Chapter One - House and Home in Post-War Britain

Between 1945 and 2010, in various guises, the British state planned, constructed, managed and demolished thousands of peoples’ homes.¹ Through these actions, the state became a major player in the housing market, ring-fencing housing as a collective social good necessary for the welfare of British citizens. The shifting meanings of ‘house’ and ‘home’ for the different groups involved in such large-scale environmental interventions are a significant aspect of the academic and popular debates that have followed. For example, the historian Claire Langhamer argues that focussing on concepts of home ‘allows us to explore the tension between past, present and future within postwar Britain.’² For Langhamer, ‘home’ offers a lens for understanding continuity and change in the twentieth century, for elites and authorities as much as for ordinary residents. It is a shared language between past and present, state and citizen.

Despite academic interest in the concepts of ‘home’, the group most affected by the process of house building, the residents and tenants, are at present poorly served by the bulk of the scholarship. This poor representation in scholarship takes multiple forms, and each of these has links to broader social and cultural stereotypes, which in turn have real-world consequences. For example, tenants are sometimes portrayed as passive recipients of social housing, where state planning ‘stands for the infantilization of the citizen in the

¹ Ravetz, Council Housing and Culture, p. 2; Clapson, Working Class Suburb, pp. 2-3.
liberal democracy’.3 Alison Ravetz describes this as a situation whereby social housing provision reinforced the ‘habitually passive status of council tenants by preventing them having direct influence or control over their housing.’4 Linked to this, council tenants are frequently portrayed as victims of poor planning theory and estate residualisation, where their already weak position in society is compounded by a lack of collective power over their home and environment.5 In addition, there also exists a stereotype of the council tenant as a problematic subject unable to participate in the wider housing market for reasons of poverty or other ‘problems’.6 Scholarship, centred on policy and planners forces the tenant into a subservient position, echoed in cultural voices such as the media.

The homogenised view of council tenants as passive is damaging and is yet to be effectively challenged by historians. Challenges to date tend to focus on the tenant as activist. For example, historians such as Peter Shapely and Quintin Bradley have emphasised tenants engaged in a ‘struggle’ with authorities over housing policy.7 In this light, the tenant is engaged, considerably more powerful and able to influence their environment. Whilst these histories offer excellent rebuttals to the broader portrayal of tenants as weak or apathetic, they cannot account for the majority of residents who are not part of a ‘struggle’ for rights.

3 Jerram, Streetlife, p. 318.
4 Ravetz, Council Housing and Culture, p. 5.
5 Wilmott and Murie, Polarisation and Social Housing, p. 50.
and participation. Quite simply, the majority of tenants were not involved in collective action, but this does not mean they do not have opinions about where they live, or what they would like changed or protected. We are left with an alternative discourse of housing that emphasises opposition, conflict over consensus and unequal power relationships between producers and users. In effect, the resident is de-politicised outside of the narrow confines of opposition to the local and national state.

'Home' as an idea has received considerable attention from a range of scholars interested in its varying social, cultural, economic, physical and psychological meanings for residents. In a review of literature on 'home', sociologist Shelley Mallett described it as 'place, but it is also a space inhabited by family, people, things and belongings – a familiar, if not comfortable space where particular activities and relationships are lived.' 'Home' is therefore considered a personal place where social actors can shelter from the public sphere, or a psychological anchor rooting the individual or the nation in place and static over time. Whilst a useful foundation, this type of account does not
offer the opportunity to re-evaluate how ‘home’ works at different times to facilitate or stifle social relationships beyond the immediate family unit, such as between citizen and state. This type of account also struggles to reflect the contradictions about the nature of home found in resident testimonies, particularly where residents suggest that ‘home’ as a physical entity might not be that important in their lives.

Although commonly understood as a potentially political signifier of nationhood and nationality, ‘home’ is rarely understood as a political concept within the nation-state, outside of the confines of tenure, party politics and finance. For example, Peter Saunders argues that ‘owner occupation’ as a tenure category was deeply political and used by political authorities to prioritise the voices worth listening to. In contrast, this chapter argues that in post-war Britain, ideas about house and home became politicised in a personal way, as the state and its citizens negotiated interpretations of housing and neighbourhood again and again in the different political, social and economic contexts of the post-war years.

In contrast to the bulk of literature on the meaning of home, which, as noted above, is largely generalised, this chapter turns to the importance of ‘home’ on a personal level, but keeps it in tension with broader social relationships such as that between tenant and state. To demonstrate the nature

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of the tenant-state relationship, as organised around concepts of ‘home’, it is crucial to consider each group’s perspective in relation to the other. The state and its citizens are in continuous dialogue about the meanings of house and home. At present, this dialogue is presented as a one-sided affair, in part because the concept of ‘home’ is interpreted as deeply personal, whilst the state is imbued with ownership of the more neutral ‘house’. To explore the continuing relationship between these two discourses, residents were interviewed using oral history methodology. The state’s usage of different terms relating to housing is interpreted within a wider framework of social, cultural and ideological changes. For example, usage of the term ‘houses’ is most common when a large volume of building is required, as in the period of reconstruction following the end of the War in 1945. In Manchester, the term ‘house’ was frequently used in reports about targets and volume.\(^{13}\) Resident testimonies collected for the oral history project are analysed in terms of the broader narratives that are attached to the terms ‘house’ and ‘home’. Wider contexts, such as ideological political shifts, or even specific changes in policy are shown as crucial to the balance of the state-tenant relationship.

The first section concentrates on state discourses and the different ways that the idea of home is incorporated and used within them. It argues that the term ‘house’ is used to organise plans for immediate post-war reconstruction, where volume was a key output measure of success. In contrast, ‘home’ is used by the state to directly communicate with citizens, appealing to domestic desires for family and privacy. ‘Home’ becomes more common in the later part

\(^{13}\text{The housing department conducted monthly reports on starts and completions of housing throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In contrast, their planning documents were largely factual and rarely stated social or cultural aims.}\)
of the twentieth century, as relationships between the state and citizens changed. The second section concentrates on the different ways that residents interviewed for this project conceived of their homes throughout their lives. It argues that although resident memories of ‘home’ are sometimes contradictory, they need to be understood as a whole for urban practitioners such as local authorities, planners and architects. Taking this further, the chapter demonstrates that the post-war period has seen some level of convergence in the meaning of home for housing providers and consumers, as concerns with the volume of house-building gave way to a focus on the material and cultural nature of the individual home as a functioning space. The chapter speculates on the potential uses of this convergence for both groups, residents and experts. Finally, the chapter looks to ‘home’ as an intersection between social policy and individual resident memories. National politics, which over the past fifteen years has ‘rediscovered’ a housing crisis, has led to changes in housing policy which cast a long shadow for council tenants. For residents who have experienced regeneration in the past fifteen years, there are obvious physical effects. However, this chapter demonstrates that even residents who have seen no physical intervention into their home or neighbourhood through regeneration are affected by social policy in the present, which affects their

14 Changes include the impact of participation agendas, and shifts in paternalist approaches by the state towards its tenants. See, for example: Alan Murie, ‘Housing in the Welfare State: Partitioning Places and People’, Local Economy 27:5-6, (2012), pp. 480-485, (p. 481).
15 In a further example of the cyclical nature of housing discourse in Britain, attention has again shifted to concerns about the crude number of houses available for ‘affordable’ rent or purchase, with regular calls from politicians to restart a large-scale social housing programme, based on assessments of a ‘housing crisis’ or ‘shortage’. See, for example: Shelter, ‘The Human Cost: How the Lack of Affordable Housing Impacts on All Aspects of Life’, (2010), Shelter, ‘What is the Housing Crisis?’ http://england.shelter.org.uk/campaigns/why_we_campaign/the_housing_crisis/what_is_the_housing_crisis, accessed 5 March 2015.
feelings about their home. ‘Home’, then, is more than bricks and mortar. This section argues that a broader understanding of how social policies and ‘home’ overlap can inform future practice for the benefit of producers and residents.

### Home as Social Policy

The way that the state defines and understands what constitutes a dwelling directly impacts the way they are planned and produced, because it determines what is possible, viable and to an extent, popular. Claire Langhamer suggests that in the 1950s, the houses planned as part of the reconstruction effort are examples of the mediation between past and present, state and resident.\(^{16}\) Following Langhamer, ‘house’ and ‘home’ become sites for imagining and realising the state’s ideas about the past, present and future of post-war Britain. However, ‘house’ and ‘home’ are more than ideas for the state. They are also key tools for enacting social policy. As Leif Jerram argues in relation to planning:

> Planning embodies the recognition by the state and its angry citizens that “something must be done” about disease, incest, cold, damp, alienation, loneliness, overcrowding, pollution, coal dust, noise and exploitative landlords.\(^ {17}\)

Dealing with the conditions that Jerram lists is more than about creating ideas; it is about acting on problems through social policy. The oppositions between ‘house’ and ‘home’ are important facets to post-war social policy, and their usage changed over the second half of the twentieth century, reflecting changes in the relationship between state and citizen.

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\(^{17}\) Jerram, *Streetlife*, p. 318.
The narrative of housing as an instrument for social policy is well established.\textsuperscript{18} As noted in the introduction to this thesis, the literature tends to present housing policy as a linear series of interventions made in reaction to external factors. To avoid repeating this linear history, this chapter moves the discussion of housing as social policy into a consideration of the language of reconstruction. In particular, it looks to the ways that state authorities, locally and nationally, use ‘house’ and ‘home’ to further social policy aims. The term ‘home’, in particular, is analysed as a means of the state to communicate directly with citizens, in a less abstract manner than merely stating targets for reconstruction. This engagement through the concept of ‘home’ brings social policy discourse into everyday use, giving it a special resonance in the private lives of potential tenants. In addition to framing discourses of new building, the language of reconstruction also structures discussion of the existing built environment, affecting plans for its replacement or rehabilitation. State reactions to the realities of the 1950s and 1960s were based upon ideals and ideas about ‘house’ and ‘home’, which demonstrates their impact upon the built reality of Britain, particularly as responses to these ideas and ideals often included demolition and rebuilding.

In the period following the Second World War, the national state regularly referred to the rebuilding effort in terms of achieving a set volume of houses. This is the case in government publications, internal Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHLG) documents and party political

\textsuperscript{18} As noted in the introduction to the thesis. See, for example: Ravetz, \textit{Council Housing and Culture}; Power, \textit{Hovels to High Rise}; Paul Balchin and Maureen Rhoden, \textit{Housing Policy: An Introduction}, (4\textsuperscript{th} Ed, London, 2002).
statements.\textsuperscript{19} For example, in a state document entitled ‘Housing Programme’, part of the ‘Housing Instructions’ series authored by civil servants in the MHLG, S. F. Wilkinson explains to regional officers that:

> Just as we now have national and regional targets of completions in 1953 and 1954, so should each local authority have similar targets… This target should now be given to the local authority as the minimum number of houses they are expected to get completed in their area in 1953; and they should be told that their corresponding target of completions in 1954 is likely to be about 15% higher.\textsuperscript{20}

‘House’ in this usage refers to a measure of volume against a defined target. Volume, as Harriet Jones has argued in relation to Conservative election campaigns between 1945 and 1955, was crucial for politicians and civil servants to come to terms with the reconstruction effort.\textsuperscript{21} The need for reconstruction was partly a reaction to war damage, but also supported through interpretations of the existing housing stock as inadequate. Closely linked with party political campaigns, in the 1950s and 1960s, volume was the most common meaning attached to housing by the state, as it offered a means of control over the task of reconstruction for those completing it, and those watching on. Setting a target allowed for accurate measurement of its achievement or not. Indeed, S. F. Wilkinson later goes on to note that ‘the aggregate of the latest P.R.O’s [Principal Regional Officer’s] estimates of completions in 1952 falls nearly 6000 houses short of the national target...


\textsuperscript{20} Wilkinson, ‘Housing Programme’, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{21} Harriet Jones, ‘“This is Magnificent!”: 300,000 Houses and the Tory Revival After 1945’, \textit{Contemporary British History} 14:1, (2000), pp. 99-121.
Every effort should be made to close this gap of 6000 houses.\textsuperscript{22} This type of bureaucratic language also allows the state to restrict discussion of reconstruction to an abstract series of tasks to complete, without recourse to the afterlife of such tasks, when citizens move into the dwellings.

The currency attached to the term ‘house’ is also evident in intra-state discussions about the volume of rebuilding, living conditions, funding for interventions and modernising the city. In the 1950s and 1960s, Manchester’s local authorities were in regular contact with the Housing Ministry regarding the possibility of building overspill estates in a range of locations outside the city borders.\textsuperscript{23} These pleas were particularly important for the City Council given the city’s acute shortages of housing at the time, which Peter Shapely attributes to ‘bomb damage, the rising number of private families and the suspension of building [during the War]’.\textsuperscript{24} These discussions use the term ‘house’, with its connotations of ‘volume’, to make a case for approving the city’s requests to expand outside of its borders. For example in 1958, the City Council wrote to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government in protest against the Minister’s decision to block attempts to build overspill estates at Lymm in Cheshire, mooted since the early 1950s.\textsuperscript{25} The letter makes repeated points about the volume of clearance and rebuilding necessary in Manchester: ‘...having regard to the extent and urgency of the City’s needs, the Council regard their programme of 40,000 houses for the period 1958-71 as a

\textsuperscript{22} Wilkinson, ‘Housing Programme’, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{23} For a wider discussion of this process see Shapely, \textit{The Politics of Housing}, pp. 132-154.
\textsuperscript{25} Philip Dingle, ‘Proposed Development of Land at Lymm for Manchester Overspill’, 12 September 1958, TNA, HLG 79/380: Manchester CB.
minimum.\textsuperscript{26} In this case, reference to ‘houses’ suggests the possibility of building a large volume of accommodation that would solve the housing shortage in the city in one fell swoop. Aside from a call for improved links with industry, there are no mentions of design, size, or community provisions required for such a large volume of building:

> The success of all these projects is conditional on the attraction of new industry and unless and until the Board of Trade decide to adopt the policy of endeavouring to persuade industrialists to establish new industries in these localities the projects are not likely to be successful.\textsuperscript{27}

‘House’, with its connotations of volume and measurability, is used in this local-national state communication to highlight the individual needs of Manchester to improve its residential stock. In the context of a reconstruction effort at its peak, Manchester’s calls for assistance in increasing its volume of housing production is intended to sway the Ministry to accepting the city’s request for overspill land, despite opposition from neighbouring boroughs.

Such references to ‘houses’ as an indication of volume are echoed in further correspondence between the local authorities in Manchester and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. In 1961, for example, the Town Clerk at Manchester City Council stated:

> ... although there will be sufficient land available to enable the City Council to achieve a programme of 4,000 houses in each of the years 1963, 1964 and 1965, the programme will commence to run down in 1966 and subsequent years because of the shortage of land... In the circumstances the City Council have asked me to inform you that they cannot escape the conclusion – a conclusion which they have reached on previous occasions and expressed to previous Ministers – that having regard to the scale and magnitude of the City's housing needs it is essential, if the City's housing needs are to be met within a

\textsuperscript{26} Dingle, ‘Proposed Development of Land at Lymm’.

\textsuperscript{27} Dingle, ‘Proposed Development of Land at Lymm’.
reasonable time, that the Ministry should take steps to establish a New Town...\textsuperscript{28}

This is an example of the local state’s understanding of the term ‘houses’ again used to make a political point to the Ministry about Manchester’s problems with land shortage. On the one hand, the positive declaration that 4000 houses could be completed each year is noted, but on the other, the potential for failure if the Ministry refuses to back the city’s overspill plans is threatened. Noting previous attempts at sharing their logic with the Ministry, the local authorities use the term ‘house’ as a bargaining tool to argue for a positive assessment of their overspill plans. The link between ‘house’ and volume strengthens the local authority’s case, by removing the messy reality of creating a Manchester New Town, streamlining it into a simple case of numbers.

However, in contrast to the usage of ‘house’, ‘home’ also appears in other state publications from the same period. It too is used to organise the way the state disseminated messages about the reconstruction project, and to make sense of the task of rebuilding for itself, but in a less abstract way than ‘houses’. It shifts attention to the user of the dwelling, rather than the dwelling itself. For example, in the \textit{Housing Manual 1949}, the Ministry of Health notes: ‘...in the period immediately after the war the most urgent task would be to provide homes for the younger families, who, by reason of war conditions, had been unable to obtain a separate home of their own.’\textsuperscript{29} Here, ‘home’ is linked to the domesticity and privacy of ‘young families’, who deserve a separate home of their own to live in, after the privations of war. Whilst volume and construction

\textsuperscript{28} Philip Dingle, ‘The City Council’s House-Building Programme’, 18 December 1961, TNA, HLG 79/380: Manchester CB.

\textsuperscript{29} MoH, \textit{Housing Manual}, p. 11.
targets are dealt with using the term ‘houses’, ‘home’ allows the discourse to move into the realm of the completed dwelling, where citizens will live out their domestic lives.

The currency of the term ‘home’ continued later into the reconstruction period, as dwellings were completed in increasing numbers. Rather than indicating volume, or the necessity for producing mass-housing solutions, ‘home’ in this later period is increasingly used to refer to the individual family or resident in-situ, enjoying a range of emotional and social functions intrinsic to the dwelling. For example, in the 1961 Parker Morris Report, *Homes for Today and Tomorrow*, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government switched between referring to individual families, moving into ‘homes’ and the more common reference to ‘house’ as a marker of volume:

A thousand families every working day move into a newly finished home. With the continuing increase in the number of households, with the demand – because people are living longer – for more attention to the special needs of old people, and with the calls of slum clearance, overspill and urban renewal, not to mention the higher standard of living, the indications are that a high rate of house building is likely to continue for many years to come.30

Here, ‘house’ is reserved for discussion of volume, and ‘home’ is used to indicate the state’s plans for life in the completed dwellings, particularly the ‘increase in the number of households’.

As noted, the term ‘home’ is not as common as ‘house’ in state discourse, particularly between 1950 and 1970. It is perhaps for this reason that the existing literature on post-war housing has tended to suggest that state interest in the social aspects of dwellings was limited to the creation of communities and

neighbourhoods based on proximity and the amenities available outside of the front door.\textsuperscript{31} However, ‘home’ was an important idea during this time for other key discourses, some of which influenced state thinking.\textsuperscript{32} For example, contemporary sociological studies influenced the way the state understood ‘home’. In Peter Willmott and Michael Young’s landmark \textit{Family and Kinship in East London}, published in 1957, despite the book being largely a polemic against the post-war estate in Essex, the newly built dwellings of ‘Greenleigh’ remained an important site for kinship activities, such as visits from relatives.\textsuperscript{33} Similarly, in John Goldthorpe and David Lockwood’s \textit{Affluent Worker}, the ‘home’ was the place where newly affluent workers enjoyed their family and leisure time.\textsuperscript{34}

Meanings usually attached to the term ‘home’ can be read into the occasional state usage of ‘house’. For example, the ‘People’s House’, announced by Harold Macmillan in 1951, is a curious example of the language of reconstruction, particularly given the context of a government that wished to increase the proportion of private building over public.\textsuperscript{35} Despite the reference to ‘house’, it evoked meanings of family, community and social harmony that are

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\textsuperscript{31} Ravetz, \textit{Council Housing and Culture}, p. 138.
\textsuperscript{34} John Goldthorpe and David Lockwood, \textit{The Affluent Worker: Political Attitudes and Behaviour}, (Cambridge, 1963).
not usually associated with the word. The ‘People’s House’ conflated positive aspects of the communal war effort with notions of belonging: ‘People’s’; and the positive aspects of creating volume: ‘House’. Home used here would suggest a singular or limited solution, or could be confused for referring to the nation as a whole. The term also has a specific meaning for Macmillan and the Conservative Party project of that time; the People’s House was applicable for all who needed it, including the respectable working classes, the bombed out, and the slum tenant. This allowed a severely scaled-down solution to the housing problem to retain positive associations with the previous Labour Party project of 1945-51, and by extension, the war effort. Use of the term hints at the fluidity of meanings attached to ‘house’ and ‘home’, even in this early period of social housing provision.

Aside from the occasional pragmatic switch to using ‘house’ for such purposes, ‘home’ was also used by the state to evoke an understanding of social values. In 1965, for example, the Conservative Party published a policy discussion document that highlighted the importance of the home in maintaining highly prized family values:

By no means every social misfit comes from a broken home. And by no means every broken home is caused by bad housing – whether it be desperate overcrowding or appalling slum conditions. But a good many of them are. Those from comfortable homes who are only too ready to criticise delinquents’ behaviour should pause to consider what they would have been like if they had had to be brought up

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37 Jones, ‘This is Magnificent!’, p. 111.
sleeping in a room with three brothers and sisters and their parents; or in a living room that was never free from damp walls...\textsuperscript{38}

It is therefore a mistake to assume that the state had no interest in creating homes. The home is considered as the community in microcosm, the place where successful and desirable family orders can be replicated. Bad housing is one cause of broken homes. Following elements of ‘environmental determinism’, this policy document emphasises the reciprocal relationship between physical conditions and social-familial outcomes.

The state also used the term ‘home’ to indicate a direct communication with the resident citizen. Rather than homogenising residents, the term ‘home’ indicates a conscious effort to appeal to the aspirations of the individual, however disparate these aspirations may be. In *Homes for Today and Tomorrow*, for example, the Ministry attempts to account for a range of activities that individual families could wish to perform within their dwellings. It is worth quoting at length because of the rich array of domestic activities it suggests the state should be aware of:

All these changes are beginning to mean an easier, more varied and more enjoyable home life. Housewives now increasingly look to machinery to lighten their household tasks; and the family, and husbands in particular, now expect to help with much of that work that previously the housewife was left to do, so that she has more free time to live a life of her own. This desire to live their own lives for an increasing part of the time they spend at home is spreading through the family as a whole. Teenagers wanting to listen to records; someone else wanting to watch the television; someone going in for doing-it-yourself; all these and homework too mean that the individual members of the family are more and more wanting to be free to move away from the fireside to somewhere else in the home – if only (in winter at any rate) they can keep warm. These changes in the way in which people want to live, the things which they own and

use, and in their general level of prosperity, and perhaps also the
greater informality of home life, make it timely to re-examine the
kinds of homes that we ought to be building, to ensure that they will
be adequate to meet the newly emerging needs of the future, as well as
the basic human needs which always stay the same.39

This version of 'home' is far removed from the discourse of volume attached to
the word 'houses'. *Homes for Today and Tomorrow* makes a number of
assertions about the nature of domestic life in the past, present and what is
envisaged for the future. In reference to the past, home life is now 'easier' to
manage, through technological progress and because of a more enlightened
family willing to assist in chores. There is a strong link here with slum discourse,
which commonly evokes the futile housewife attempting to keep her 'hovel'
clean in the face of damp, infestations and absent amenities such as baths and
ventilation.40 Similarly, reference to 'the desire to live one's own life' contrasts
sharply with the overcrowded slum house, where families often lacked privacy
from their neighbours, let alone privacy from each other. In reference to the
present and future, *Homes for Today and Tomorrow* notes the importance of
domestic layout in enabling homes to 'meet the newly emerging needs of the
future'. It illustrates the Ministry's willingness to consider domestic life beyond
the fulfilment of basic shelter. Its publication in 1961 hints at a Ministry no
longer answering solely to considerations of volume, but also able to consider
what was built and provide guidance for local authorities on what citizens
wanted, rather than needed.

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40 See, for example: Judy Giles, 'A Home of One's Own: Women and Domesticity in
(p.249).
Continuing the theme of communication, and moving away from government publications, election materials are perhaps the most direct form of political interaction with the individual citizen. It is not surprising, then, that the idea of ‘home’ is commonly referred to in election posters throughout the post-war period. For example, in the 1950 election campaign, the Conservative Party, in opposition at the time, produced the poster below [Figure 2.1] This poster drew together the domestic connotations of the idea of ‘home’, as evoked in the Housing Manual published just a year earlier. The image presented the nuclear family; parents, two children and a dog, happy because they have their own home. They are well dressed and appear healthy, with broad smiles. They embody the ideal of the family, in conjunction with the ideal of the ‘home’ for each family. This poster also hints at the political acceptance of a social remit in relation to its housing programme, emphasising ‘family’ and ‘happiness’ in return for votes.
Similarly, Figure 2.2 below, a poster from the 1945 Labour election campaign, draws on the figure of the housewife to appeal for votes. The text reads ‘She can’t make a home until she gets one’, again pointing to domestic action as a key part of the reconstruction effort. It also draws on the idea of ‘national effort’, a term heavy with significance in the aftermath of the Second World War.
The trend to evoke ideas of ‘home’ to gain votes continued through the 1960s into the 1980s, as illustrated by Figures 2.3 and 2.4 – both part of Conservative election campaigns. Figure 2.3 highlights the Conservative government’s housing record, covering the period 1951 to 1961. It emphasises the ‘responsible’ Conservative governments who presided in a ‘21 per cent increase’ in the number of ‘homes’, in a period which also saw a ‘12 per cent increase’ in the number of families. Demographic change is managed through the production of homes, particularly important when demographic change is signified by an increase in families, not individuals.
Taking a different approach, Figure 2.4, a poster taken from the 1987 election campaign supporting the incumbent Margaret Thatcher, draws on a link between the idea of ‘home’ and ownership. It suggests that one million tenants have made a ‘home’ because they own it, which in turn is part of making Britain ‘great again’. Home ownership here signifies a deeper relationship with the dwelling, with the associated responsibilities of maintenance, upkeep and investment. Home ownership also results in greater control over ‘home’, something social renters could never achieve. The poster plays on a fear of losing the opportunity to participate in the housing market and share the personal and financial benefits that ownership can bring.
Figure 2.4 ‘1 Million Council Homes Have Been Sold to Their Tenants’ (1987). Source: Conservative Party Archive.

Shifting attention to the local, ‘home’ was also used by councils as an aid to making political points, often to critique government policy, past and present. For example, MCC gave the term ‘home’ a political edge in its 1985 publication *Housing Defects in Manchester*. The pamphlet, intended for public consumption, strongly argued that the local authority was put into an impossible position by the national state and incompetent building industry, resulting in a huge bill for repairs to the city’s housing stock:

> More resources are needed – not less. It makes sense to invest in housing. It makes sense to put the construction industry back to work. It makes sense to give people back one of their most basic human rights – a home fit to live in.\(^{41}\)

Consistent with earlier analysis, here home signifies the individual affected by the need for repairs and investment. ‘Home’ is only possible if the dwelling is ‘fit

\(^{41}\) Manchester City Council, 'Housing Defects in Manchester', (Manchester, 1985), p. 1.
to live in.’ The pamphlet goes further, however, by suggesting not only that a ‘home’, rather than just a ‘house’, is a basic human right, but that the actions of the national state are jeopardising it. In one short sentence, the local authority has brought tenants into the discussion, albeit narrated by the Council and unable to speak for themselves. The local authority is depicted as the provider of ‘homes’ and, based on an interpretation of the past, the national government is blamed for the inadequacies of the present.

‘House’ and ‘home’ are consistently employed by the national and local state in the post-war period to refer to the new dwellings built as part of the reconstruction drive. However, ideas about ‘house’ and ‘home’ are also used in the discourse on existing built environment of old dwellings and neighbourhoods. Work on post-war slums is in its infancy at present, with the bulk of the historiography currently focusing on inter- and pre-war interventions.42 Yet, the importance of language is noted in both literatures.43 The refusal to attach the term ‘home’ to what were considered slums in the 1940s, ‘50s and ‘60s was a key part of organising both state and public attitudes towards different types of older dwellings and the wider neighbourhoods they were sited in. In a recent edited volume, urban historian Filippo De Pieri has argued that the treatment of the existing landscape by town planners reveals


much about their ideas and ideals for the future.\textsuperscript{44} Similarly, Alison Ravetz notes how ‘dispensable’ older urban neighbourhoods were seen to be by the planning profession.\textsuperscript{45} Planning history cannot therefore narrow itself to focussing merely on plans, realised or otherwise. Rather, the historian who wishes to explain the post-war built environment needs to consider the treatment of landscapes as they were, as much as how they could have been.

Use of the term ‘house’ is particularly significant in this period, because it denies the possibility for individual responses to dwellings, which the term ‘homes’ may allow or indeed, require. Alison Ravetz has pointed to examples of slum residents who worked together to fight clearance orders and save their homes from the bulldozer, such as residents in interwar Hulme, Manchester, who fought off redevelopment.\textsuperscript{46} In 1958 on Hyde Road in Longsight, the graffiti shown below protested against slum clearance, arguing that the new flatted estates proposed were inadequate and unwanted (Figure 2.5).\textsuperscript{47} It is interesting that the graffiti reads ‘No flats [illegible] refrain. Arrest town council for condemning houses’. This, in the contexts of the contradiction between house/home is problematic, as it shows ordinary citizens claiming the term ‘houses’, but could be interpreted as a reference to the volume of dwellings proposed for demolition, or the language used by city authorities.


\textsuperscript{45} Ravetz, \textit{Council Housing and Culture}, p. 102.

\textsuperscript{46} Ravetz, \textit{Council Housing and Culture}, p. 229

\textsuperscript{47} Shapely, \textit{The Politics of Housing}, p. 123.
The focus on the physicality of the slums present in the state’s discourse is also important, as the government effectively limited their interventions to the realm of the built environment, rather than the wider range of social and cultural concerns that were so frequently included in popular representations of the slum. 48 Social investigators have since noted the potential pitfalls of such a limited frame of reference for understanding slums and their problems. 49 Indeed, the focus on the purely physical is held at least partly responsible for the failure of the state to comprehend or provide for the social needs of ex-slum-dwellers once moved into new estates and neighbourhoods. 50

50 Such an argument has long been made in criticising the slum clearance programme. For example, contemporaries raised concerns about housing conditions; George

Figure 2.5 H. Milligan, ‘Housing Hyde Road Slum Clearance Protest’ (1958). Source: GMCRO LIC, ref. m08449.
However, it was not the case that the local or national state were blind to the social needs of ex-slum dwellers. In the 1959 publication, *Councils and Their Houses: Management of Estates*, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government noted the importance of providing social amenities:

Tenants in new and possibly strange surroundings need a place where they can meet each other, discuss common interests and organise their social activities. The need is apparent very early in the life of an estate, and it is important that it should be met immediately.51

This call for amenities to create communities on new estates was an echo of earlier statements of intent from the Ministry.52 Making homes to replace the slums was considered in a holistic manner by local authorities, who recognised the importance of facilitating engagement and investment in the new estates and the new dwellings.53

This section has emphasised the importance of language for understanding ‘official’ ideas and intentions for creating post-war ‘homes’. In particular, it has deconstructed the different usages of ‘house’ and ‘home’ as they organise the state’s responses to problems in the existing built environment, such as slum conditions, and frame the possibilities for rebuilding. This approach challenges the history of housing policy presented by

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scholars such as Anne Power, because it better incorporates the state-resident relationship as mediated through language. However, this chapter began by identifying two problems in the historiographical exploration of ‘home’. Firstly, the tenant-landlord/state relationship is often characterised as either passive or antagonistic, with nothing between. Secondly, the bricks and mortar of a dwelling are assumed to take on a wide range of emotional practices. Accordingly, the chapter now turns attention towards residents’ views of ‘home’.

Home as Emotional Practice

Because of the significance of state housing, the way residents consider their dwelling as a house or a home is part of their experience of the wider state. At present, residents’ relationships with the state-as-landlord are often characterised as either antagonistic or passive in the literature. Such accounts offer little towards understanding residents who were neither antagonistic nor passive, and do not include the importance of the personal past in shaping attitudes towards homes. These are important issues for housing and planning practitioners to understand, particularly as part of the process of intervening into the fabric of individual homes and neighbourhoods. This thesis is based on interviews with residents who do not fit easily into either the ‘passive’ or ‘antagonistic’ category. Rather, their attitudes towards the state, and their homes, changed over time and according to circumstance.

54 Power, Hovels to High Rise.
55 See introduction to Chapter One for further discussion of this.
Literature on residents’ experience of house and home is vast, if rather limited in its scope. Without exception, it assumes that ‘home’ is significant in the everyday lives of ordinary people. For example, sociologists Graham Allan and Graham Crow open their book *Home and Family* by stating: ‘As the setting in which personal life is located, the home makes a strong claim on people’s time, resources and emotions.’ Echoing Allan and Crow’s inclusion of ‘resources’ in their discussion, much of the existing material in sociology and anthropology concerns itself with the processes of consumption, material culture and appropriation at work when an individual or family live in a dwelling. Some of this engages with the tenant-landlord relationship and the broader position of the social renter in society. For example, Daniel Miller’s article about interior appropriation of council flats in London argues that because of the impracticability of self-build housing, the ‘theory of housing ... has to be largely a theory of consumption.’ Tenants (and owner-occupiers) as customers in the housing market are ‘likely to receive their built environment as the product of a system which would not be regarded as an investment in their social being’, hence the need for appropriation through consumption. However, Miller cannot account for the importance of the personal past in shaping his interviewees’ emotional

56 This significance is not necessarily manifested as a positive relationship with home. See, for example: Tony Chapman, ‘Spoiled Home Identities: The Experience of Burglary’, in Chapman and Hockey (Eds.), *Ideal Homes?*, pp. 133-146.
60 Miller, ‘Appropriating the State’, p. 354.
relationships with their homes. This section redresses this problem by focusing on residents’ understandings of their homes in relation to their memories and experiences. It therefore avoids the assumption that the physical dwelling is of particular significance in the making of ‘home’.

For the council tenants interviewed in this project, the past was integral not just to their memories of ‘home’ but also their feelings about it in the present. A number of residents talked about how they felt at home, or not, in particular houses that they had lived in at different points through their lives. Analysing such accounts could make it possible to link the individual’s position in the life cycle to their feelings of home, or lack of. Such analysis is certain to enhance not only the historical but also the practice-based study of planning, as it fosters a link between the individual’s past and their subsequent ‘housing career’.61 The following analysis of resident testimonies demonstrates how crucial historical context can be when working with individual’s memories. This section is divided into two themes. The first section looks at how residents talk about house and home at different points in their lives and in accordance to particular circumstances. It then moves to explore how residents understand their home within wider contexts of community and neighbourhood, rather than as fixed dwellings comprised of bricks and mortar.

Cath, now an owner-occupier of a new-build house in Ardwick, spent her childhood up to age eleven in a duplex flat in the Hulme Crescents in Manchester, until her family were rehoused in 1983. Cath’s remembered experiences as a child in the area do not follow the popular narrative that the

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Crescents were a social and physical disaster. Rather, she offered an alternative assessment, based on the positive memories she had as a young child:

[Interviewer] What were they [the Hulme Crescents] like?

[Cath] They were good, there were four floors, shape of a crescent and there were like... ours had four bedrooms, but they had different numbers of bedrooms. They weren’t just like one bedroom flats. It wasn't like a tower block. I just remember running around the landings on the crescents. We had lots of friends there. It was quite sociable.

[Interviewer] Yeah, so you go to know lots of people?

[Cath] Yeah and I am still in touch with now [sic]

[Interviewer] So they were a really important part of who you are now then?

[Cath] Yeah, they were good days, I enjoyed those days.

Cath, when asked about her experience of living in the Hulme Crescents placed her memories within a wider context of childhood sociability. In her memories, it is impossible to separate out her happy childhood from its spatial location in her home and neighbourhood. When asked about why she thought the Crescents were demolished she refers to some of the social problems that were associated with the area at the time, such as gang culture, the 1981 riots in nearby Moss Side, and the transient nature of some parts of the development:

[Interviewer] Do you remember moving out?

[Cath] Yes.

[Interviewer] What was that like?

[Cath] I didn’t want to move, but I think it got to the stage where they [the local authority] wanted to knock the flats down cause I think it did come a bit... I don’t know... there were the riots [in Moss Side, 1981] and there were different other things that

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63 Interview with Cath, 17 May 2014, ref. VN850024.
went on. And I think a lot of people were moving out, they started to move out and I remember in my last year of primary school, there wasn’t many of the families that I had grown up with. They had moved on.

[Interviewer] So it had gone quieter?

[Cath] Yeah it had gone quieter and a lot of families were moving out. And I think it was because they were planning on knocking them down. I didn’t know at that age, cause I didn’t know at that age.

[Interviewer] But you felt it, even at that age, that something was changing?

[Cath] Yes

[Interviewer] So why do you think now that they pulled it down – you mentioned the riots, do you think that was just a reaction to [them]?

[Cath] I think, there was a lot of things going on that I didn't see, I didn't know about, cos I was young. I don't know if there was trouble or fights or gangs. I am not sure how that all came about, but I just think that maybe it had something to do with that.

[Interviewer] So you don’t remember seeing anything?

[Cath] No not really no, I just remember playing. And it was always sunny [laughs]. Not like now.64

Despite her allusion to the popular narrative of failure attached to the Hulme Crescents, Cath highlights her position as a child experiencing major change, saying, ‘there was a lot of things going on that I didn't see’. This demonstrates a link between her position in the life cycle and her experiences and memories. Cath’s view as a child meant she didn't have to deal with the local authorities in the process of moving out of the Crescents, particularly as she is unsure now why she had to move then. Her nostalgia for her childhood home is noted in the comment ‘And it was always sunny’, a common trope when discussing

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64 Interview with Cath, May 2014, ref. VN850024.
childhood, though under-researched by historians and social scientists.\textsuperscript{65} The significance of this final comment hinges on its juxtaposition of then and now, sunny (i.e. desirable, good weather, happy times) and not (e.g. stormy, bad weather, difficult times).

Cath’s status as a child also affected her assessment of the new house she moved in to with her mum in Moss Side:

[Interviewer] Where in Moss Side did you move to?

[Cath] Not far from Alexandra Park, it was called Gosling Close, it’s not there any more. Its been knocked down.

[Interviewer] So, was that a house?

[Cath] It was a house, and it was in a cul-de-sac. And again, there were families there. But I didn’t know anybody, so I felt a bit isolated, cause I didn’t really know anybody and I found it hard then to make friends cause I grew up with the friends that I knew. It took a while to make friends. But then I made friends at a secondary school and a lot of the secondary school kids lived in Moss Side. Not particularly on the street that I lived on, but round and about. So then, yeah, I made new friends.\textsuperscript{66}

Later in the interview Cath did talk about the physicality of the Moss Side house she had lived in as a teenager, but this was only with prompting. Her initial reaction to the question ‘So, was that a house?’ opened a dialogue about sociability and locality that was not anticipated by the interviewer. ‘Home’, for Cath, is an integral part of her personal past, shaping her knowledge of 1980s Manchester and her social opportunities. This illustrates the need to understand home as an emotional practice, coloured by wider feelings of social isolation or inclusion.

\textsuperscript{65} Research in literary studies has pointed to the importance of the sunny idyll in fictional narratives about war and conflict: see, for example; Randall Stevenson, ‘Remembering the Pleasant Bits: Nostalgia and the Legacies of Modernism’, Novel 43, (2010), pp. 132-139.

\textsuperscript{66} Interview with Cath, May 2014, ref. VN850024.
In contrast to the way Cath talked about her childhood home, Jackie, born in 1944, who now lives in one of the newly built houses on the recently regenerated West Gorton estate, described her acute awareness as a teenager in the late 1950s that different types of houses and streets had different statuses:

[Interviewer] What’s your first memory of your first house, your childhood home? What sticks in your mind when you think about it?

[Jackie] [Pause] I don’t know. [Pause] Well, when you’re brought up somewhere you don’t really notice what it is do yer? I know there was dirty houses and scruffy houses and all the rest of it, I mean we weren’t, me Gran wasn’t. [Pause] Erm, but even so, I mean I’m saying that West Gorton was mean and poor, but I’m talking about when I was a teenager … late fifties erm, when it was, when I was coming down this end. And I say, I noticed the difference between us, and er, you know, it. It was just so, what you call ‘mean streets’ really. Like the ‘mean streets of Salford’. You know you’ve seen, you’ve seen pictures over the years. But ours, ours was pretty good.67

Jackie also uses the representation of other streets and areas that she visited to respond to a question about her own childhood home. This is particularly significant as she starts by saying that she does not have any striking memories of that dwelling. In doing this, Jackie touches on an important aspect of home as an emotional practice, in its role as an identity signifier. After noting her awareness of ‘dirty houses and scruffy houses’, she is quick to note that such characterisations did not represent her or her family, despite not saying what would describe her childhood home. She also points to influence of cultural imagery, in her reference to the ‘mean streets of Salford’ and seeing pictures over the years of similar working class streets. Her account therefore includes elements of a cultural circuit related to slum imagery, which she is able to reject in relation to her own neighbourhood, and apply to others.

A further aspect to home as an ‘emotional practice’ is the comparison of different dwellings at different times. Betty has lived in her two-storey house, which backs on to a Radburn-style square in Longsight, since being rehoused in 1974.\textsuperscript{68} She offered a positive view of her previous house, which was condemned as part of the slum clearance programme in the 1960s. This was contrasted with her experience of her present home:

We got moved from there, lovely old houses. I loved; I’d go back there if it was standing there today. This house is alright but it’s got no memories whatsoever. And I’ve been in here more than thirty years but it’s got no memories whatsoever.\textsuperscript{69}

Betty’s position at first appears surprising. She is adamant that despite the longevity of her residence, covering forty years of her life, no memories are attached to her present home. However, it is important to note that Betty was a young mother bringing her family up in her previous home. Her forced relocation acts as a cleavage in her memories, even though she continued her role as a mum. Betty therefore draws a strong link between the idea of home and the reality of raising a family, echoing the links emphasised in the Conservative election posters and ‘official’ publications discussed in the first section of this chapter.\textsuperscript{70} Her old house was the location for raising her children, not the house she was moved to. In a similar way to how Cath describes childhood, Betty remembers her old home in conjunction with an array of positive memories.

\textsuperscript{68} ‘Radburn’ refers to a specific layout model used frequently in post-war low rise council estates. It proposed to separate pedestrians from traffic, by granting access to individual houses via pedestrian paths. The result was that many houses appeared to be facing the wrong way, with their vehicular access at the back. The removal of through roads in estates meant that some areas were difficult to access or leave. The positioning of houses to look out over the path system meant that roads and streets were left without surveillance. This has been linked to a rise in crime in Radburn estates. For more detail see, Ravetz, \textit{Council Housing and Culture}, p. 103.

\textsuperscript{69} Interview with Betty, 22 July 2013, ref. VN850016.

\textsuperscript{70} See Figure 2.1, p. 65
about becoming a mother and taking care of her family. These memories are truncated at the point of rehousing. Betty’s conclusion that she has no memory of her present home is not to be taken literally. She uses it as a rhetorical device to transmit her personal feelings about the nature of a home, which in her eyes is linked with the ability to form memories or attachments, and the raising of a family.

These memories, and the denial of positive attachment to her present house, are also linked to Betty’s reluctance to leave her condemned house at the time:

It was like as if you were bullied into it, you’ve got no more choices, you didn’t know which way to turn. You’ve been turned on your head. One minute, six, twelve months before you were fine, nothing was happening ... then we did hear that it was the wrong street that they were pulling down anyway.71

Unlike Cath, Betty does remember her dealings with the local authority at the time of rehousing:

You could see all these people coming round, clipboards, this an’ that an’ the other, an’ chatting to you... And they kind of come round and it was to do with redevelopment, and erm, the condition of your house you got a certain amount of money. Paid you for the disturbance. They were uprooting you and sending you off to wherever... but as I say you got this and then you got the offer. And I think you had a choice, you had three choices, and erm, but before this happened, as they’re coming along and they’re pulling property, pulling the guts out the houses, they did next door, my kids, I’ll never forget, we just heard this kind of a roaring noise, and the ceiling [laughs] the ceiling in the front bedroom had just fell in! ... Anyway got them out and it was an emergency, you know, housing, well they sent me up ... near Wythenshawe Park. You should have seen what I was, ‘cept for me ceiling falling in, you know what I mean, that [condemned house] was better than what they were offering me.72

71 Interview with Betty, 22 July 2013, ref. VN850016.
72 Interview with Betty, 22 July 2013, ref. VN850016.
The process of ‘redevelopment’ had a direct impact on Betty’s family life. Her children were endangered by the collapse of the ceiling in her old home, which she links directly to the building works next door. Her experiences of moving have had a direct impact on feelings towards her current house, which she appears to have struggled in accepting. However, it is the point in the life cycle that appears to have most strongly affected Betty’s attitudes towards her experiences. Her memories from this period are coloured by the negative effects that rehousing had on her family, and her position as a mother compounded this. Rehousing affected the stability of her family, and the desire to secure a home for them forced Betty into accepting what is her current house.

Betty’s emotional practice of home contains a number of lessons for planners and housing authorities. Her experience of moving, understood in conjunction with her position in the life cycle demonstrates the importance of challenging experts’ assumptions about the meaning of home, particularly at the point of intervention. For Betty, it was not just the bricks and mortar of a dwelling that imbued significance (though the form of the house was important in guiding her choice of replacement dwelling) but the personal freedom to exercise control over when and where to move her family to a new home. As a mother, tasked with the welfare and upbringing of her children, Betty felt unable to make her own decisions about what was best for her family throughout the process of clearance. Therefore, interventions into the physical fabric of home and neighbourhood affect more than the built environment.

By looking at the memory of house and home within the life history of interviewees, it becomes clear that these residents do not base their attitudes
towards housing purely on the physicality of the dwelling. As an interviewer, it was surprising that questions intended to focus solely on the physicality of past homes (for example, ‘What did it feel like to see your new home?’) soon moved into the realm of social and emotional memories, or did not touch on the physical or visual aspects of the dwelling at all. We, as scholars or practitioners, should be wary of limiting analyses to the visual or physical, as it is not necessarily the framework that residents use to remember their homes. In the cases of Cath and Betty their position in the life cycle appears to exert a considerable influence on their memories. Positive periods in their lives coincided with particular dwellings, and have shaped their attitudes since. This demonstrates the importance of the past in shaping reactions to the present, offering a wider scope for the historiography and a new avenue for avoiding ahistorical or static understandings of the meaning of home.

A number of the residents interviewed talked about their sense of home in a wider context than the parameters of their walls or garden fences. They associated a wider pattern of streets with the word ‘home’. Again, consideration of these attachments and associations can assist with better understanding of the reactions to new environments, and comprehension of the needs of tenants undergoing rehousing. For example, Betty made a link between her positive memories as a mother in her old home and the wider community and neighbourhood:

The streets were busy with the parents, because I mean, you didn’t work, you know, that’s gone, the community, the feel and everything’s gone, you know. [laughs] Your ball of wool under your arm, with your knitting needles, you know, stood at the back gate watching your
youngest children playing, other neighbours might have been doing the same thing, you know.\textsuperscript{73}

Betty’s narrative is one of inclusion. Other parents surrounded her that shared her routine. She links domestic signifiers, such as knitting needles, with sociability and a ‘feel’ of community. Yet, she is also making a strong point about what she understands to be the difference between the past and the present. Though easily dismissed as nostalgia for the past, it is important to consider why Betty remembers her old neighbourhood so differently from her current one.

Michael, who grew up in Gorton, also made a strong association between his family routine as a child and the local landscape he considered ‘home’:

Oh yes, when I was a kid then. I have 2 daughters now and I can’t let them do it – it’s a different world. I remember as soon as I came home from school – Out. Back at 6 o’clock for tea and then out again. We used to have [inaudible] playing fields just across the road. And it used to have bits of buildings there. So we used to climb and play, but you can’t do it now.\textsuperscript{74}

In this narrative, Michael compares the past and the present within his association of home and the wider neighbourhood. This is significant, because it allows an interpretation of his individual memories within the wider context of his life history. When asked about his present feelings towards Gorton, Michael again linked the wider neighbourhood to positive associations with home and family:

We are very family-orientated me and my wife, so we would never move too far away. Her parents are still here and I am still quite close to my family, so we wouldn’t move too far away. I would probably move to Denton – it’s a very nice area. So if I was going to go anywhere, I mean I am quite happy where I am at the moment, but if I

\textsuperscript{73} Interview with Betty, 22 July 2013, ref. VN850017.
\textsuperscript{74} Interview with Michael, 31 July 2013, ref. VN850019.
was to go anywhere it would probably be Denton, which is the other side of Debdale Park from where we are now.\textsuperscript{75}

Michael's insistence that he would not move geographically away from Gorton or its surrounding areas is linked with his strong family orientation. Taken in conjunction with his earlier comparison between past and present, it is his rootedness in the neighbourhood, stemming from his positive memories as a child, that is a stronger pull into staying than any push factors, such as the area being 'a different world' now.

Michael was not alone in his reading of 'home' within wider contexts of neighbourhood. For example, Joe, an interviewee born in 1959, who grew up just off Stockport Road in Longsight, but moved away to Levenshulme at the age of seven, also remembered his childhood home in terms of the wider neighbourhood, within the context of 'playing out'. He explains how the practice of 'playing out' was governed by fixed boundaries of what constituted the neighbourhood:

[Interviewer] So did you play out a lot?

[Joe] Yeah. I mean every, every night when I came home. In fact I was only thinking the other day actually that there was a sort of self-defined area that when you went out you wouldn't go beyond... I used to travel as far down as Stanley Grove school, and I can remember them building, for me anyway, the first supermarket I'd ever seen on Stockport Road, which later became a Tesco's, and I can remember there was a brook that went under the building near Stanley Grove school... so I guess that was the furthest I'd ever go, north. Erm, westwards, I would probably only go as far as Stockport Road, with it being quite a busy road.\textsuperscript{76}

When asked whether he goes back to visit either Longsight or Levenshulme to see where he used to live, Joe replied: 'I have no real need to go there, and

\textsuperscript{75} Interview with Michael, 31 July 2013, ref. VN850019.
\textsuperscript{76} Interview with Joe, 30 July 2013, ref. VN850018.
probably no desire either as there’s nobody really now, when my friend moved away... there’s no real reason for me to go there now. Joe responds to a question about whether he returns to visit his childhood homes by explaining that because he no longer knows anyone in the neighbourhood there is no need for him to do so, again emphasising that for him, home was as much about sociability as bricks and mortar.

The sense of ‘home’ as a wider concept than the bricks and mortar of a dwelling is given another dimension when interviewees note the importance of place-names and identity. For example, Gary noted the importance of the ‘Old Gortonian’ identity in shaping his adult life:

[Interviewer] Do you think that’s impacted on ... you say you are community-minded now. Has it come from that do you think?

[Gary] Oh yeah, I really really do, because I come from an area that was very community-minded and it really was. It influenced me for the rest of my life. So I now reciprocate what I got then. Unfortunately, communities are now breaking down. It’s hard to get communities together. It’s still there, it still exists but it did influence me and my life. My community where I came from, and it always will. So, that was Gorton for you.

Gary later goes on to explain the significance of place-name to his identity:

So people from Ardwick, I don’t like the word Ardwick by the way. Ardwick encapsulates Gorton and West Gorton. If you get anyone from Gorton, they are Gortonians. If you get anyone from West Gorton, they are West Gorton’s and Ardwick are ardeonans [sic], whatd’ya call em. So yes, it was a good place, but it was hard.

Gary’s narrative is not isolated; the importance of place-identity was a recurring theme in the majority of the interviews conducted for this study. For example,

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77 Interview with Joe, 30 July 2013, ref. VN850018.
78 Interview with Gary, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850030.
79 Interview with Gary, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850030.
John, an interviewee who grew up in Longsight but moved away as an adult explained that although his feelings are vulnerable to the passage of time he does still feel rooted to his childhood neighbourhood:

[Interviewer] Do you still feel rooted in the area?

[John] Strange really, because ... yes I do. You think, you think you're a bit streetwise as well, and I, I'm going back a few years now... but I went past once and I thought “I'll just nip to Longsight market”, and I parked up on Honour Street, and I thought “it's mine, these are my streets these.” And I got out, and I think I got as far as halfway down Dickenson Road, and I thought “I'm going back, I don't like this”, so yeah, so though I did feel quite comfortable, when I actually went back, it was quite, quite daunting.

For John, his identity is in part rooted in Longsight, evident in his thought ‘these are my streets these’. Though he does not explicitly say so, it is reasonable to assume that it was the level of change in the environment and people of Longsight that caused his unease during the recent visit. What is significant in Gary and John’s accounts is the way that the wider neighbourhood, which may mean a few streets or a large geographical area, is blended with the feelings and emotions more usually attached to the dwelling. Interventions into that neighbourhood can affect the resident in similar ways to those directly impacting on the home.

Home, then, for residents, is more than the bricks and mortar of a dwelling-structure. In their accounts, it encompasses neighbourhood identities, changing social positions, age and position in the life cycle, along with memories of physical structures. One additional aspect of home, only touched upon in this section, that residents discussed at length, is the mediating role between state and citizen played by their homes. This relationship, in conjunction with the

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80 Interview with John, 1 August 2013, ref. VN850020.
many others discussed in this section, serves to mark ‘home’ as an emotional practice, made up of broad social relationships rather than just bricks and mortar, or the ‘stuff’ kept within it, or even the familial relationships nurtured inside.

**Narrating the State on the Council Estate**

Two processes in the recent past have returned council tenants to similar positions that they encountered in their relationship with the state during the process of slum clearance fifty years ago. The first process involves what I term a ‘rediscovery of a housing crisis’ over the past ten years, whereby crude shortages in the number of houses available to rent, privately and from social landlords is linked to the (un)affordability of property to buy.  

This rediscovery of a housing shortage caused changes to national housing policy, such as the removal of the ‘spare room subsidy’ known as the ‘bedroom tax’, which aims to free up capacity in the social housing market by relocating residents to ‘appropriately’ sized properties. Secondly, the process of regeneration has again meant the forced rehousing of a number of council tenants. This final section argues that these two processes affect residents’ feelings of ‘home’, as an intersection between memory and social policy.

This section looks first to narratives of physical change. It focuses on the process of regeneration, which aims to modernise and revitalise targeted areas through demolition and reconstruction. How residents experienced these changes over time is crucial to understanding the power of the built

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environment in everyday life. It then turns to the influence of wider policy changes, enacted by the national state, on resident experiences of ‘home’. In particular, resident experiences of the ‘bedroom tax’ demonstrate that change does not have to be physical in nature for it to have a profound effect on the everyday life of the council tenant.

Planning literature rarely includes testimonies of experience from residents, with long-term resident perspectives entirely neglected. This section demonstrates the importance of using such a rich source to better understand the experience and use of planned environments. Through a better understanding of the vocabulary and meaning that residents apply to their local environment, improved communication between agents and objects of change is possible. The local council is the main agent of the state in residents’ everyday experience. Academic narratives characterise the tenant/state relationship as unequal and paternalist in nature. Tenants are identified as passive, or as protestors. But analysis of resident testimonies points to a more complicated relationship and tenant position that changes over time. Rather than focusing on a historical analysis of distinct moments of protest or disquiet, it is important to consider longer-term experiences as discussed by residents.

In critical planning discourse, regeneration is viewed as a disruptive process echoing the problems encountered in the reconstruction period. For

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example, Phil Jones notes the similarities between the clearance and regeneration of one neighbourhood in Birmingham, arguing: ‘…in spite of the very different governance arrangements which apply to regeneration today … the appeal of comprehensive redevelopment is still very powerful.’ Of course, ‘comprehensive redevelopment’ means the compulsory purchase of privately owned buildings, and the forced rehousing of council tenants, before demolition and rebuilding. Residents interviewed note the immediate impacts of regeneration on their everyday experiences and how their conceptions of home are challenged in that moment. For example, Tony explained that the rehousing he has experienced because of regeneration has challenged his understanding of ‘home’:

…we had some good neighbours... We didn’t want to go. From moving from the flats to those houses, they were only 43 years old and you ask anyone round here who has moved house, I’d say 90% would go back tomorrow, nobody wanted to move. Nice estate, the houses were alright. Then they asked us to come down here, which - I didn’t want to come this far down because I grew up there.

For Tony, the policy of regeneration is far removed from his memories and experiences of ‘home’. From his perspective, the process took no consideration of the effects that rehousing to a different part of the neighbourhood might have on his personal life. In the context of arguments made in the second section of this chapter, it is important to note that Tony shifts his meaning of home several times in his account; from ‘home’ as community (‘we had some good neighbours’); to ‘home’ as the physical dwelling (‘it was only 43 years old’); to

85 Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022. Tony placed emphasis on his final word ‘there’, hence the emphasis in the transcript quote.
‘home’ as a personal anchoring place (‘I grew up there’). Here, his relationship with the state is mediated through his home, but also through his social relationships, his assessment of the physicality of the structure, and his own personal history. Tony mentioned a number of times that he was unhappy to have moved, but he was not part of official protests against the state/regeneration agency’s policies. Despite his anger, he continued to live his life in his new home.

A local councillor noted in his interview that many residents were angry about the process of regeneration they were experiencing. From the local state’s perspective, resident attitudes towards regeneration in some cases have shifted from hostility and mistrust to acceptance and even involvement. For example, Councillor Priest noted a change in reaction to the proposals for regeneration in Plymouth Grove. It is worth quoting at length because it narrates the process of regeneration from beginning to conclusion:

What they say about the place they live is often quite negative at first. But if you actually pin them down, which we have to do with all of these regeneration projects, people are asked “do you want to stay here? If your house is going to be demolished, do you want to stay here?” In which case we will give them a guarantee they can, “or do you want to move away?”

When we first did that in Grove Village, an enormous proportion of people said they wanted to move away. As the date got nearer, they changed their mind and in actual fact it was only ten to fifteen per cent did actually stick with that. In Brunswick where we are about to start the same process, hardly anyone wants to move away. So what we can I think be grateful for is that people are actually.... “The street I live on is great, it’s a bit rough over there, but where I live is great” and there is a great deal of growing realisation that actually the other streets are much the same. So I think people are starting to say that there are some things about it which aren’t right, but I will stick with it, because it is getting better. I think that without almost any exception, I think that people think it is getting better. They certainly say that in all the surveys we do, and all the indicators as I say, if you give people the
option to stay or move out, and if you say to them if you want to move out you’ll get priority for social housing elsewhere in the city, you’d think that anyone who wanted to move out would jump at that. – Not many, not many.

So I think there is a growing feeling that actually it is a good place to be and as the number of people who are employed locally goes up, I think that is strengthening.86

Again, Councillor Priest notes the positive impact that initial reactions to the proposed regeneration schemes can have in the longer term. He links the process with the ability to consciously evaluate the positives and negatives of living in a particular area or estate, which may not have taken place without the interventions.

We had some fantastically tortuous and aggressive meetings in Grove Village when we first started the regeneration there. People extremely angry, you are never really sure why – “why are you angry that we are going to spend millions on your estate? We are going to spend £45k on your house, why are you angry?” “Well, why didn’t you do it twenty years ago?” “I have no idea why we didn’t do it twenty years ago.” “Why is that some of the houses have to be knocked down?” “Well because they are past their sell by date and you are going to get a brand new house in its place and YOU are going to get a brand new house, not that there will be one and someone else will be living in it, but you’ll be living in it.” “Why are you selling some houses?” “Well because that’s where we are getting the money from to do the rest.” “Yes but they’re better people than us, that’s what you are saying?” “No, they’re the daft buggers that are going to pay to live here, you are getting it for nowt.” And as soon as you get that, you know you are going to be alright. It is a bit of rollercoaster ride, but you know that people have started to say “I’ve got an opinion and you’re going to listen to me” and that is all I ask. Once people have made that transition, they are going to be able to argue with you, they still need to be nurtured and they still need to be supported. And a councillor still needs to be angry with them, not angry with them, but if they say they are angry, I have to be angry. If they say they want something, it’s my job to want it too. You can have some fun, people come along and they say “we are really angry” and they want you to be defensive so they can have an argument with you. And when you say, “well what are we going to do about it?” it takes them back a little bit, but then you have to... And it’s building that sense of ownership of their own communities and futures that is going to really challenge deprivation.

86 Interview with Councillor Priest, 22 April 2013, ref. VN850014.
You can’t beat deprivation by spending money, but spending money gives you a tool to engage with people. That had not been there for twenty years prior to ‘97, there had been next to nothing spent on those estates and people had sunk into a morass, that some of them won’t get out of.\(^\text{87}\)

The transition from anger and hostility to understanding and involvement was quick in both of Councillor Priest’s examples. It demonstrates the importance of the resident to the process of modifying the environment, at least in the more recent past. It also challenges the assumption that the resident is a powerless or passive agent in relation to the local authority.

The view that residents are powerless and acted upon rather than with is evident in some of the narratives offered by interviewees, but this is only with a superficial analysis. For example, Gary drew parallels between his experiences of reconstruction in the 1960s and regeneration in the 2000s:

You know when things mirror each other? Well we’ve got that now with regeneration. They’re doing exactly the same thing as they were forty years ago. They’re destroying the community. They don’t see it, or they won’t see it. So consequently what they do, they’re upping the people, making them move out the area... people have been took out the area. They did the same in Gorton. They called it slum clearance then, its redevelopment now, or re-, re-thingy now, they did exactly the same. So, forty years ago, to now, they’ve mirrored it.\(^\text{88}\)

Taken out of context, Gary’s argument could support a negative interpretation of the processes of reconstruction and regeneration. He does say that the authorities are repeating mistakes of the past. However, his narrative relating to regeneration rests in part on an assessment of the success of the post-war estate he was moved to following the demolition of his old slum house. As a whole, Gary’s narrative cannot be positioned within existing frameworks for understanding resident experiences. He was not angry with the local state for

\(^{87}\) Interview with Councillor Priest, 22 April 2013, ref. VN850014.

\(^{88}\) Interview with Gary, November 2014, ref. VN850030.
the entirety of the past fifty years, nor was he powerless in the face of a monolithic state. Rather, his living room was decorated with several certificates and awards for his active participation in the local community in West Gorton. Despite his assertion that the regeneration of West Gorton was a mistake, he remained engaged in the process as chair of the local residents’ association.

Tenants can experience a negative relationship with the wider state without resorting to protest. None of the residents interviewed talked about any form of protest, such as rent strikes, but this does not automatically mean there is an absence of conflict or disagreement. One recurring theme in the tenants’ experience of council housing was the uncertainty that national housing policy could cause in their everyday lives. The most recent of these experiences is the implementation of the extra room subsidy, popularised as the ‘bedroom tax’ in political and media discourse. The change in terminology employed by the political opposition and popular media has bled into the everyday vernacular, residents who mentioned it exclusively used the term ‘bedroom tax’. This is a further example of the important gap between official discourses and the language of the ordinary citizen or resident. The technical terms applied to the new rules, such as ‘spare room subsidy’, ‘under-occupancy penalty’, ‘under-occupancy charge’ and ‘social sector size criteria’ attempt to

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neutralise what became a highly controversial policy. Changing these technical words to ‘bedroom tax’ humanises the potential effects of the policy, repositioning it within the bounds of the dwelling and everyday life. Much like the terminology applied to slum housing by the national state in the immediate post-war period, use of the technical terms denies the individual.

A number of tenants commented on the unfairness of the removal of housing benefit according to a measure of spare bedroom capacity in each property. Gary linked his experience of the bedroom tax to the wider regeneration process, and to his relatively powerless position in choosing a new property to live in following the demolition of his previous home:

[Gary] Like for like was the thing that they did. Like for like. If you’ve got a two-bedroomed house and you go out the area, when you come back in you get a two-bedroomed house. But if they haven’t built enough two-bedroomed houses you can’t have it... Its like with us, I’ve got a two bedroomed apartment, but I had a one bedroomed apartment, down there, so now I’ve got to pay, the, er, room tax, which is expensive. I never asked for that...

[Interviewer] Do you think they [the local authority] were taken a bit by surprise by the bedroom tax?

[Gary] Yeah I do, I mean they didn’t know about that.91

Gary was angry that he had been forced into a two-bedroom property, despite his old home being a one-bed. The regeneration scheme did not make any provision for one-bedroomed properties, so Gary had no choice but to move into his two-bedroomed apartment. He therefore feels he is financially penalised for possessing an extra bedroom that he did not want or need, because of the limitations put in place through the remodelling of the estate.

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91 Interview with Gary, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850030.
Aside from the unfairness that Gary identified in his situation, the narrative he told was based on his wider assessment of the state's intentions. Yet he conceded that the local authority were not the initiators of the policy: the loss of income based on the number of bedrooms is a form of intrusion by the national state into his home, and an unwelcome judgement on his lifestyle and potentially on housing choices, which he could not himself have influenced.

An extreme example of the potential results of such a policy is found in Angela's narrative. She talked with great emotion about how much she loved her home and the wider neighbourhood of Longsight, but in the past tense. When asked about her present feelings about her home she immediately reframed it in terms of 'house', arguing that the bedroom tax had completely transformed her feelings towards her dwelling, and even put her rootedness in the area at risk:

I was living in a one bed flat on Coverdale, and I had a son, I was really depressed, living on whatever floor I was, and they give me this and I was buzzing. Garden, three bedrooms, and now they want me out. Bedroom tax ... I've brought up two kids here. Community as well, I mean, we're all neighbours. Splitting the community up ... Yeah I loved it, loved it, loved it me house.92

Public protests in the form of rent strikes, media campaigns or street demonstrations do not necessarily represent or indicate residents’ experiences of housing policy. None of the residents interviewed have used public protest to communicate their dissatisfaction, but this cannot automatically be interpreted as passivity on their part. For example, Angela was in correspondence with the local authority to try to challenge her inclusion in the 'Bedroom Tax'. Again, the local authority is absolved of blame for the policy, and seen as a supportive

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92 Interview with Angela, 22 July 2013, ref. VN850016.
body that could positively affect Angela’s experience of a national policy. Similarly, Gary, although aggrieved by the situation he found himself in, was not deterred from playing an active role in the regeneration of his estate.

For policy-makers and urban practitioners, it is clear that feelings of ‘home’ are vulnerable to both physical and regulatory interventions. The effects of demolishing a well-loved home are obvious, but those of national policies such as the ‘bedroom tax’ are less so. A deeper understanding of these effects can only aid the implementation of future changes. What is striking about the personal testimonies offered by the interviewees is their perspective of change in the twentieth century as cyclical. Residents recognise that they exert little control over where they live or how much it costs to live there; this is continuous throughout the period. But they also recognise the repetitive nature of ‘official’ responses to external problems, such as crude housing shortages.

Conclusion

Post-war housing is often presented as a battleground for a wide range of different actors, ideas and practices. However, through analysing official discourses in conjunction with resident testimonies, this chapter has demonstrated a level of consensus not currently reflected in the literature. The concepts of ‘house’ and ‘home’ are important in shaping the bureaucratic and tenant discourses about council housing in the second half of the twentieth century. Looking at each discourse in turn suggests a strong inter-dependence between the two. The state discourse in the period of reconstruction was largely concerned with volume, and consequently the term ‘houses’ was most
commonly used. However, into the 1960s and 1970s, usage of ‘home’ increased, a shift that this chapter has argued results from a need for the state to communicate more effectively with individual citizens and families. As crude shortages decreased following the reconstruction programme, the focus of housing policy widened to include emotional and social aspects of everyday domesticity.

This chapter began by identifying silences in much housing discourse about how council tenants create, maintain and experience ‘home’. Whilst social scientists have explored the meanings of home as a special domestic place, they rarely go beyond highlighting the importance of this, and are even less likely to question it. In contrast, this chapter, and the thesis as a whole, makes a claim for contextualising the meaning of ‘home’ within broader historical change. Resident memories of individual housing histories are, as to be expected, largely based on ideas about ‘home’. For individual residents or families, the volume of construction is more of a concern when there is a housing shortage to which they fall victim. Once housed, memories are made within the context of ‘home’, so personal testimonies are imbued with a deep awareness of ‘feeling at home’, or not. However, for the interviewees ‘home’ was rarely confined to the bricks and mortar of the dwelling. Their memories were deeply intertwined with wider experiences of neighbourhood spaces and relationships. These meanings of home, as domestic practice and neighbourhood experience, are indicators of personal experiences of much broader historical change. For example, interviewees talk about changes in their attitudes towards their home as a direct result of national policy decisions, such as slum clearance drives.
Finally, the chapter has also demonstrated how residents’ feelings about their home are influenced by what they perceive as the cyclical history of housing and housing policy. Conflict and disillusionment with tenure, similar in nature to that experienced at the moment of slum clearance, continue to emerge when the individual importance of the home is challenged, as in the case of large-scale demolition projects undertaken as part of regeneration activity. Here residents feel relatively powerless to impact decisions about their homes and neighbourhoods, and the public nature of their homes is foregrounded. Similarly, non-physical interventions, such as the implementation of the ‘bedroom tax’ in 2013 also influence the way tenants feel about their homes and their circumstances.

This chapter has suggested that ‘home’ works as a series of contradictions, for state and resident alike. For the state, ‘home’ is contrasted with ‘house’, with the former signifying domestic, familial, private lives, and the latter signifying targets and the need for volume. For residents, too, home is a contradiction between emotional practices, and their dealings with the state. Nowhere is there a better example of these contradictions at work than in the process of slum clearance that took place between the 1950s and 1970s. The thesis now moves on to look at slum clearance as a source of memory.
Chapter Two - The Remembered Slum

Housing reform was one part of a much broader attempt by the state to transform the social and political nature of post-war Britain. Driven by successive governments, enacted through local government, slum clearance, in turn, was a major part of post-war housing reform. Without the removal of the old, there could be no ‘New Jerusalem’.\(^1\) Despite the wide-ranging effects on post-war urban space, and the massive upheavals that clearance required of urban residents, there is surprisingly little literature that deals with post-war slum clearance. Ben Jones, for example, observes that ‘[Jim] Yelling [has] singlehandedly narrated the story of slum clearance from the 1930s to the 1980s’, though he does also note that the local studies of Manchester by Peter Shapely and Norwich by Ben Rogaly and Becky Taylor have started to redress the balance.\(^2\) Whilst Jones himself has furthered academic discourse with his own work, the reality remains that most references to post-war slum clearance portray it as one step in the linear history of housing policy heading inevitably towards new construction.\(^3\)

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However, the concept of ‘the slum’ is frequently employed in scholarship on working-class community, particularly where sociological studies conducted in the 1950s and 1960s are used as source material.4 In its use of ‘community studies’ as source material, we are left with a historical discourse on older housing that discusses ‘community’ at length, limiting the role of the ‘slum’ dweller to a collective presence, with little space for alternative perspectives of sociability or everyday life in places defined as slums.5 Broadly, the ‘community studies’ emphasised strong spatial links between the working class, a specific form of culture based on a reciprocal community, and poor quality housing. Joe Moran describes this in the following terms:

As families were being moved out of the slums into new housing estate, sociologists were beginning to map this dying world of the ‘slum’ terrace and belatedly to notice the working-class street as not merely a dwelling place but a “place of diversion, and also the playground of the poor.”6

The focus on the social aspects of the slum in the arguments of sociologists such as Mogey, and Willmott and Young, continue to influence recent scholarship,

with a number of ‘community re-studies’ emerging that are based on their work and that of their contemporaries in the 1950s and 1960s.\(^7\)

The influence of the ‘community studies’ is also clear in the renowned work of Ken Coates and Richard Silburn, who surveyed the literature in 1980 and observed:

Much literature has highlighted the permanently destructive effects housing and redevelopment schemes can have upon those communities affected by them. Long-established patterns of friendship and familiarity between neighbours are upset, ties of family and kinship (which, for many still play an important part in solving the problems of daily life) are broken; sentiments of attachment and loyalty, parish patriotism based upon family histories and personal experiences over a long period, and a capacity to identify closely with both a neighbourhood and its people are shattered and are not easily, if at all, recreated.\(^8\)

This quote signifies the major problem with the historical treatment of slums. On the one hand, the collective (or ‘community’) is endangered by the physical intervention of clearance. On the other, the individual is personally damaged, losing the ability to identify with their neighbourhood or neighbours. The final point that Coates and Silburn raise is crucial for the remainder of this chapter. Their emphasis on the importance of ‘family histories and personal experiences over a long period’ is key to avoiding the homogenisation of ‘slum’ dwellers into a collective working-class community.

The use of personal testimonies of the remembered slum is controversial.\(^9\) It has proved relatively easy for historians to dismiss reminiscences of working class life in the older housing neighbourhoods of the

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9 For a wider discussion of the controversies of personal testimony see the discussion in the introduction, pp. 32-35.
1950s and 1960s as a collective ‘nostalgia for a past “community”’.\textsuperscript{10} However, whilst ‘community’ is an important organising framework used by the individuals and groups who have experienced everyday life within environments that no longer exist, it is not always used by them as a nostalgic yearning to return to the past, and it deserves analysis outside of a collective memory paradigm. As the social historians Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw have argued, practicing nostalgia requires ‘some sense that the present is deficient’.\textsuperscript{11} ‘Community’ in personal testimony accounts is therefore a complex device for comparing past and present, which needs historicising.

‘Community’ is not simply a term employed by interviewees in personal testimonies. Historians, planners, politicians and social scientists frequently use the concept to describe and analyse a range of social phenomena, from reciprocity to shared religion, income or geography.\textsuperscript{12} These are a markedly different use from that of the ‘experience’ perspective offered by residents, who focus on their personal relationships with friends and family. Rather, historians, along with social scientists, have debated the merits of urban locations such as ‘slums’ within frameworks of ‘community’, ‘poverty’ and ‘culture’, using these formalised categories to simultaneously homogenise residents and castigate planners.\textsuperscript{13} For example, Peter Shapely, in his work on

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\item \textsuperscript{10} Bourke, Working Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960, p. 136.
\item \textsuperscript{11} Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw, ‘The Dimensions of Nostalgia’ in Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase (Eds.), The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia, (Manchester, 1989), pp. 1-17 (p. 3).
\item \textsuperscript{13} For example, Peter Roberts describes slum clearance rehousing as ‘decanting’ the population, suggesting little thought was given to the process: ‘Peter Roberts, "The
\end{itemize}
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housing in twentieth-century Manchester, has argued that ‘slum clearance programmes led to the break-up of communities; many of the new inner city developments proved to be disastrous.’ It is a short step between loss of the formal community and disaster. Evaluating ‘slums’ through the lens of ‘community’ has led scholars to focus on what might have been lost, rather than happily given up by aspirational tenants wanting away from the claustrophobia of the ‘close-knit’ community, never mind what might have been gained, or indeed maintained, by residents in the new estates.

Over the past fifteen years, debates in regeneration and urban studies have begun to challenge ‘a simplistic construction of community’. For example, the arguments of Katherine Duffy and Jo Hutchinson debunk the idea of a homogenous ‘community’ on post-war housing estates, noting ‘the possibility of several communities of interest’ present in urban areas, rather than a single geographically based ‘community’. Whilst these arguments are made about the present, and the estates that often replaced ‘slums’, they offer a means of reassessing historical moments and places of ‘community’, such as the post-war ‘slum’, because they recognise individual reactions to urban change. Despite publishing in 1997, Duffy and Hutchinson’s nuanced concept of community has not yet figured in historical scholarship.

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14 Peter Shapely, ‘Tenants Arise!’, pp. 60-78.


16 The term ‘communities of interest’ refers to shared social characteristics and shared goals, not necessarily bounded by geography; for example religion or income. See Katherine Duffy and Jo Hutchinson, ‘Urban Policy and the Turn to Community’, The Town Planning Review 68:3, (1997), pp. 347-362, (p. 356).
To challenge the prevailing concept of ‘community’ attached to ‘slum’ housing, the chapter analyses personal testimonies of growing up and raising a family in areas of housing designated as slums in Manchester. The interviewees talk about their memories of living in Gorton, Ardwick and Longsight through the 1950s and 1960s. Many of these interviewees continue to live in these areas to the present day, so they make regular comparisons between past and present, which could be considered ‘nostalgic’. However, in this chapter, these memories are understood and analysed on their own terms, as complex narratives of individual life histories, personal and emotional experiences of loss and hardship, and a reference point for evaluating the present and future.\(^{17}\) They indicate not just a multitude of ‘communities’ in the past, but also a multitude of ways of remembering them. This is in contrast to the formalised models of community offered at present.

In the discussion above, the ‘slum’ is understood as a social space experienced by either the collective or the individual. However, the nature of working-class neighbourhoods was also considered and to some extent determined by the local authorities. Their perspective of what constituted a slum was integral to the future development of any residential area. In Manchester, as in other towns and cities, concerns centred on the damaging effects of poor quality housing on the lives of their residents. MCC knew that there were problems with overcrowding, crime, poverty and public health in many of the city's working-class districts, including Ardwick, Longsight and Gorton. Their definitions and discourse legitimated their decision to intervene

\(^{17}\) Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory.*
in the built environment, and are therefore important counter-points to the way that individuals remember the slum.

The chapter centres on three interrelated aspects of ‘the slum’. Firstly, it looks to the different ways that the idea of the ‘slum’ was used by local government to legitimate violent interventions into the urban fabric of the working class, in the form of forced rehousing and demolition. These interventions were based on a firm belief in ‘environmental determinism’, in relation to the potential harm caused by slum conditions, and the power of re-made environments in new estates to change lives. Secondly, the chapter turns to the different ways that residents remember their old houses. Some interviewees constructed a framework of ‘the slum’ to position their memories of ‘hard times’, whilst others actively avoided the term and placed their memories within broader tensions between ‘what was’, and ‘what ought to be’. These conflicting interpretations are possible because interviewees rarely formalised their understanding of community. Finally, the chapter turns to the concept of ‘community’, as an idea that has simultaneously framed academic and popular imaginings and remembrance of the ‘slum’. It argues that the ‘slum’ and ‘community’ are frequently collapsed into each other, by academics and in the memories of some residents, but that this need not be the case. Rather, memories of the slum demand that the heterogeneity of the resident is recognised, as individuals experienced their own lives, on their own terms, in their own neighbourhoods. This final section offers an alternative theory of community rooted in the personal experiences of individual interviewees.

The Legitimating ‘Slum’

In post-war Manchester, as in many other urban centres, the local state adopted a clearance approach to many thousands of terraced houses within the city, which were declared as slums.\(^{19}\) Many of these were located in areas recognised as working-class, including Ardwick, Longsight and West Gorton. In the 1945 *Manchester Plan*, the City Council set out its intentions to ‘provide anew for the tens of thousands of our citizens who are living and working in unsafe, unhealthy, outworn and overcrowded buildings.’\(^{20}\) In practice, this meant violent interventions into the urban fabric, as whole neighbourhoods were demolished through the late 1950s to the end of the 1960s. What is significant about these interventions is their basis in a strong belief in the environment as a determining factor in the lives of Manchester’s population. This first section looks to tease out tendencies of environmental determinism in the City Council’s discourse, demonstrating the influence that the term ‘slum’ had on approaches to urban management.

Slum clearance in Manchester was not just a post-war activity. The clearance of ‘unfit’, or ‘unhealthy’ housing by the city council started in the interwar period, with parts of Ardwick placed under compulsory purchase and clearance orders between 1934 and 1938.\(^{21}\) Other working-class areas, such as

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\(^{19}\) Power, *Hovels to High Rise*, p. 188.

\(^{20}\) Nicholas, *City of Manchester Plan*, p. 1.

\(^{21}\) Ardwick Compulsory Purchase Order, (1934), TNA, HLG 23/3737; Ardwick No. 1 Housing Confirmation Order; Ardwick No. 2 Housing Confirmation Order; Ardwick No.
Hulme, also received local authority attention in the form of clearance plans before the Second World War.\textsuperscript{22} Early decisions about housing fitness were based on the judgements of the Medical Officer of Health. Referring to West Gorton in 1920, for example, the then Medical Officer of Health, James Niven, described the area in the following terms:

\begin{quote}
...the bad condition of the houses within such area is dangerous to the health of the inhabitants of the buildings in the said area, and that the most satisfactory method of dealing with the evils connected with such houses is an improvement scheme for the rearrangement and reconstruction of the streets and houses within such area.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

The health impacts of ‘bad’ conditions were highlighted, along with other, unspecified, ‘evils’. These early categorisations are significant, because they established the terms through which the local authority could manage urban working-class spaces following the resumption of activity after the War. The layout of the streets, and the built fabric of the houses, was held responsible for bad health, and ‘rearrangement’ and ‘reconstruction’ are offered as the methods for dealing with these problems. It is important to note that the remedy for these ‘evils’ was explained in terms of ‘creation’; an improvement scheme, reconstructing streets and houses, was prescribed. Destruction was only one side of the slum clearance coin.

The local authority intervention into areas such as Ardwick, Hulme and West Gorton from the 1920s onwards is also significant because it demonstrates a growing willingness by Manchester City Council to take

\begin{quote}
3 Housing Confirmation Order; Ardwick No. 4 Housing Confirmation Order, Sealed Plans of the Manchester Corporation Borough, (1938), TNA, HLG 23/16050-4.
\textsuperscript{22} Shapely, \textit{The Politics of Housing}, pp. 121-128.
\textsuperscript{23} James Niven, The West Gorton Area, Unhealthy Areas, 14 June 1920, City Engineers and City Surveyor Files 2866, GMCRO, GB127.M723/11, pp. 3-4.
\end{quote}
responsibility for housing conditions in the city.\textsuperscript{24} In 1919, the Public Health Committee worked to compel individual property owners to improve conditions:

Resolved: That the Corporation, acting as the Local Authority for the City under the Housing Acts 1890 to 1919 serve notices under Section 28 of the Housing, Town Planning co Act 1919 on the owners of the undermentioned houses [4/14 George Street, West Gorton, 3/17 Legh Place, Ardwick] suitable for occupation by persons of the working classes requiring them within twenty one days to execute such works as may be necessary to make the houses in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation.\textsuperscript{25}

Yet by 1920, the same Medical Officer of Health was calling for neighbourhood-level reconstruction in West Gorton, taking responsibility away from individual owners and placing it on the local authority. This shift in responsibility is significant because it was an important forerunner for the later emphases on the public sector created through the post-war welfare state.

The definitions of ‘slum’ or unfit housing in the interwar period continued to influence post-war local authority activity. For example, the \textit{City of Manchester Plan} noted the risks to physical and mental health posed by slum conditions in 1945:

Figures can show the correlation between overcrowding and lack of open space on the one hand and high mortality rates on the other, but they cannot measure the effect on the human spirit of a degrading environment and constant association with ugliness.\textsuperscript{26}

Similarly, in 1960, a report authored by Manchester’s Town Clerk, City Treasurer, Medical Officer of Health, City Surveyor and Director of Housing

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\textsuperscript{24} A similar growth in willingness to intervene in urban spaces is noted with reference to nineteenth-century Manchester. See, Harold L. Platt, \textit{Shock Cities: The Environmental Transformation and Reform of Manchester and Chicago}, (London, 2005).
\textsuperscript{26} Nicholas, \textit{City of Manchester Plan}, p. 157.
\end{flushright}
argued that the city needed considerably more resources if it was to accelerate the slum clearance and rehousing programme to combat ‘the ever-increasing troubles deriving from bad housing and a considerable saving in health and happiness.’

Health, and the related concept of ‘human need’ remained important considerations in defining housing fitness throughout the post-war clearance period. In relation to clashes about attempts to move slum residents to a proposed overspill estate in Whitefield, a part of Bury six miles north of Manchester, in 1957, MCC’s Deputy Town Clerk remarked:

…the only thing … important was “human need. That comes long before any hypothetical, high-fallutin' poppycock about the balance between this type of house and that type of house.” Judged on the test of “human need”, there was no question where the balance lay: it was in favour of Manchester.

The local authority carefully constructed a discourse, through their press statements and official publications, where the care of residents was clearly positioned as the city council’s main priority.

The age of dwellings also remained a continuing measure of housing fitness between the interwar and post-war periods. The City Council created maps of Manchester which organised the city according to the age of buildings (Figures 3.1 and 3.2). The oldest properties, unless of specific cultural interest,

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were included in the clearance programmes, because they often lacked amenities such as bathrooms and toilets. This crucial standard determined whether properties could be considered fit or unfit for human habitation. Determining the age of dwellings into broad categories such as ‘erected before 1870’, or ‘erected between 1870 and 1920’ not only allowed the local authority to filter residential areas and identify neighbourhoods requiring further inspection, it also provided a standard operating procedure for determining a slum.

Figure 3.1 County Borough of Manchester Age of Buildings [1(2)]. Source: GMCRO, M507/5661/4/2.
The local authority was aware of the power of term ‘slum’. In the 1945 *Manchester Plan*, the City Surveyor highlighted the dangers of over-emphasising the worst slums, to the detriment of the ‘multitude of worn-out houses whose occupants must struggle to maintain the decencies of life in conditions of extreme discomfort’.\(^{30}\) This theme continues in the *Plan*, as the local authority were keen to clarify that use of the term ‘slum’ was not a judgement on occupiers’ levels of cleanliness:

> It must be clearly understood that no reproach to the occupier is implied by the word “slum”. Many dwellings that are kept in a most creditable state of cleanliness must nevertheless be condemned because they are structurally unsound, deficient in living space and sanitation, and overcrowded.\(^{31}\)

\(^{30}\) Nicholas, *City of Manchester Plan*, p. 157.

\(^{31}\) Nicholas, *City of Manchester Plan*, p. 157.
This is an intriguing statement by the local authority, as they claim to pass no judgement on residents in slum areas. On the very same page of the Plan, however, the discourse shifts to include judgements on the behaviour of slum dwellers, as a reference is made to ‘sordid public houses’ that are present in slum neighbourhoods. A seepage of moral and social judgement, based on belief that the environment could affect behaviour, remained in the background of post-war clearance discourse.

In all this definitional discourse, the impact of the environment on local residents is a key theme, despite attempts to deny judgements of behaviour noted above. There is a long history of attempting moral reform of behaviours perceived as undesirable, spatially located in ‘slums’ and dealt with through physical interventions, such as demolition. Referring to Victorian urban reformers in London, Anthony Wohl describes a desire to tackle the ‘subject of character reformation of the urban masses’, through the provision of better housing. This belief in the power of the environment to affect behaviour continued up to the interwar period, as argued by Jim Yelling. There is also a case for its continuance into the post-war slum clearances, which is yet to receive full historical attention.

‘Environmental determinism’ refers to the potential effects that architecture, layout and urban space can have on behaviour, either by design or

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32 Nicholas, City of Manchester Plan, p. 157.
34 Yelling, Slums and Redevelopment.
unintentionally.\textsuperscript{36} Alison Ravetz has noted the long history of attempting ‘social improvement through planned land use, not, in itself, an outrageous idea, for down the centuries those who owned land also shaped society to their own ends.’\textsuperscript{37} In post-war Britain, the local state compulsorily purchased land with the explicit aim of shaping it to their own, and ultimately what they considered their citizens’, ends. In Manchester, as across the country, a belief in the power of the rational environment to influence behaviour and produce the modern citizen drove clearance developments and the planning of replacement working-class housing.\textsuperscript{38}

The theory and application of ‘environmental determinism’ principles has received criticism from planning historians. Much of this is based on the hindsight that the replacement post-war estates offer, rather than consideration of the idea’s influence on slum clearance. For example, planning historian Michael Hebbert has argued:

Too much rested upon persuasive varieties of environmental determinism – on the notion that a wide range of social issues were in some sense caused by the physical attributes of urbanisation, with its corollary that territorial and architectural arrangement could provide a key medium for positive social intervention. With the benefit of hindsight we may feel that there was a somewhat unholy alliance

\textsuperscript{36} On unintended architectural effects, such as increased crime levels linked to urban layout, see; Newman, \textit{Defensible Space}; Richard Harold Schneider and Ted Kitchen, \textit{Crime Prevention and the Built Environment}, (London, 2007).


between scientists enthusiastic for social engineering, and designers enthusiastic for the legitimation which science could bestow.\textsuperscript{39}

Hebbert here draws on moral distaste for social engineering, bringing to mind eugenicist arguments in particular. His analysis rejects the possibility that social housing was successful, along with alternative environmental and political explanations for any failures in post-war planning, such as poor-quality materials and construction, changes in housing policy such as allocations or funding cuts for maintenance, or broader national circumstances such as mass unemployment. He also denies the reality that MCC, along with other authorities, recognised, that poor quality housing did cause health problems, shorten lives and cause abject misery for many residents.\textsuperscript{40}

Concerns about social issues were certainly present in Manchester’s clearance discourse. For example, in \textit{The Manchester Plan}, the city surveyor, Roland Nicholas, refers to the importance of ‘traditions’ built since the industrial revolution, ‘some, indeed, are wholly bad, and these must be ruthlessly eradicated; but the best of them should be allowed to play their part in shaping the city of to-morrow [sic].’\textsuperscript{41} Nicholas notes the presence of markets and workshops as part of the ‘best’ traditions, but is silent on what constitutes those that are ‘wholly bad’. Readers are left to draw their own conclusions about what these behaviours, linked to the industrial revolution, might be. It is certainly not unreasonable to infer that Nicholas is referring to social


\textsuperscript{40} Manchester City Council, \textit{A City Speaks}, NWFA (Film No. 19); See also: Jerram, \textit{Streetlife}, pp. 318, 352, 374.

\textsuperscript{41} Nicholas, \textit{City of Manchester Plan}, p. 7.
behaviours perceived as particularly problematic in the ‘slums’, which are also due to be ‘ruthlessly eradicated.’

Manchester was well placed to adopt the theories of urban space that drew a link between urbanisation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and housing, transport and overcrowding problems in the twentieth century. As the original ‘shock city’ of the industrial revolution, a large proportion of working-class housing was built around and within industrial areas, in places such as Ardwick and Gorton. Planning theory, from the interwar period up to the 1960s, offered ‘zoning’ as a solution to such urban problems, along with continuing interwar concerns with ‘urban sprawl’. It formed a key foundation for the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, cementing the idea of formal urban planning into legislation. This was intended to rationalise the cityscape, providing a ‘strategy of social management’ by ensuring cleaner air and healthier citizens. Through zoning, Manchester City Council planned to separate living from working for all, a change in lifestyle and routine for many thousands. For example, Peter Shapely notes the importance of close proximity to work, kin and other amenities for slum-dwellers:

While everyone desired better houses, many wanted to stay living in areas close to friends, relatives and familiar facilities... People worked

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42 Jerram suggests that ‘alcoholism or socialism’ were particularly important examples of problem behaviours located in the slum, see Jerram, Streetlife, p. 356.
close to home and this allowed them to “pop home and see to the
children’s dinner and the shopping.”

In clearing the ‘slums’, MCC understood that half of the population of the inner
city ring of residential districts would have to move to other parts of the city, or
to overspill estates outside of the city boundary, meaning higher rents and
transport costs, along with longer commutes.

Clearance was about more than demolishing substandard housing; it
also offered the opportunity to re-model the wider urban environment. In a City
Council authored retrospective report entitled *Manchester: 50 Years of Change*,
published in 1995, the local authority reflected on the past process of clearance,
stating:

He [Lord Mayor Leonard B. Cohen] believed that post-war
reconstruction should seek to rectify the errors of the past and help to
solve the City’s housing crisis. He announced plans for the complete
elimination of slum dwellings, replacing them with comfortable and
well-planned homes. He also recognised that the reconstruction of
war-damaged areas presented an opportunity. Parts of the City could
be replanned to create new open spaces incorporating wider streets,
dignified buildings and ample squares, green spaces and tree-
bordered avenues.

Here, the local authority, reflecting on the twentieth century as a whole, argues
that interventions after the War were justified by the urban problems
encountered at that time, including the ‘housing crisis’ and past mistakes. It also
notes that the post-war local authority understood reconstruction as an
opportunity to affect public space, transforming it from the ‘drab streets’ of the

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46 Shapely, *The Politics of Housing*, pp. 120-121, quoting Manchester University
(Manchester, 1945).
162.
slums, to ‘green spaces and tree-bordered avenues.’\textsuperscript{49} This is essentially an attempt to bring elements of the classic middle-class suburb into the inner city.\textsuperscript{50}

In addition to providing higher quality public space for the betterment of Manchester’s citizens, the \textit{Manchester Plan} also discussed the impact of the urban form on cultural and social life in the city. Nicholas explains:

\begin{quote}
The question is now being asked whether peace will bring a reversion to the old order: whether comradeship and sociability will give place to selfishness and apathy, or whether the heightened interest in cultural pursuits and in local and national affairs will be maintained. The answer depends to a great extent on whether the structure of our cities is designed to foster or frustrate, to stimulate or stifle, our wartime consciousness of membership in a living social organism.\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

This raises a number of important points about the local authority’s attitude towards the urban environment and its abilities to impact Manchester’s residents. Firstly, Nicholas draws on populist representations of wartime practice, in his reference to ‘comradeship’, arguing that the form of the city can aid its continuance into peacetime. He then credits what he sees as the improved cultural activities of the city’s residents on the experience of war. Nicholas then suggests that the best way of maintaining this culturally engaged population in peacetime is through the urban environment. His rationale for the link between cultural improvements and urban form is that the city is a link between the ‘living social organism’ of the city and the nation, and the individual, which has a hint of the communist about it. By reconstructing the

\textsuperscript{49} Nicholas, \textit{City of Manchester Plan}, p. 157.
\textsuperscript{51} Nicholas, \textit{City of Manchester Plan}, p. 133.
city, in accordance with his *Plan*, a culturally engaged citizen can emerge, ready to invest in their neighbourhood, city and nation.

The local authority was not limited to interest in maintaining the social and cultural habits of existing city-dwellers. Nicholas goes on to chart the ideal socialisation of a child in the reconstructed city, through the prism of the home, school and neighbourhood:

Home life, at its best, is an unfailing source of the sympathy and cooperation which are the essence of neighbourliness. Here the child, secure in the care and affection of his parents, develops his first loyalties and comes to realise that there are other people in the world besides himself. The planning of homes that will make for healthy and happy families is therefore the starting-point of our design for living...

As the next stage in this evolutionary process the young citizen should be encouraged to participate in the affairs of his immediate neighbourhood. Thus the neighbourhood unit is conceived as an extension of the civic pattern based on the home and the school. It should include all types of dwellings and incorporate an average cross-section of the population.52

Each of these spaces of socialisation for the child were reconstructed in the post-war period. These were different from the provisions available in ‘slum’ districts, where housing was unfit, schools were ‘dingy’, and the neighbourhood was spatially segregated according to class.53 A loose set of ideas concerned with the creation of neighbourhoods in urban life were drawn together and precisely defined as the ‘neighbourhood unit’ by Clarence Perry in 1939.54 The ‘neighbourhood unit’ referred to in the above quote promised a framework for rationally organising cities that was based on small-scale ‘village’ style

52 Nicholas, *City of Manchester Plan*, pp. 133-134.
54 Banerjee and Baer, *Beyond the Neighbourhood Unit*, p. 19.
residential neighbourhoods. These units were overwhelmingly suburban in intention if not in reality. The neighbourhood unit enabled planners to create defined spaces, where all amenities were in close proximity to residential zones, and where sustainable and self-maintaining communities could develop, building on pervasive interpretations amongst planners of the Blitz-affected British public as inherently community-minded. It was not universally popular, by 1954, for example, the sociologist Peter Collison described the ‘neighbourhood unit’ theory as ‘a matter of ex post facto theorising.’ However, it was a useful concept for Manchester’s planners, simultaneously justifying their interventions into the city and appealing to public sentiments about the desirability of socially cohesive ‘neighbourhoods’ formed as an extension of ‘home’. The language of ‘home’ employed by the City harks back to the arguments in Chapter One, particularly the Conservative Party election posters. In particular, Nicholas draws on the idea of ‘home’ as an emotional practice, a space for ‘sympathy’, and ‘healthy and happy families’.

The decision to clear Manchester’s 60,000 unfit houses was not made by the city council alone. Manchester’s slum clearance discourse was heavily influenced by the rhetoric of central government, who regularly corresponded

58 Housing in Manchester and Points Arising, TNA, HLG 79/380.
with the local authority on the topic.⑤⁹ Decisions made at a national level
directly impacted on urban change in Manchester. Both local and national
housing policy in the 1950s and 1960s was dominated by a drive to clear
obsolete housing in the guise of the slum.⑥⁰ These policies act as a form of path
dependency over areas declared as slums by the local authority.⑥¹ Once
identified as ‘slums’, neighbourhoods were destined for a violent intervention
into their urban fabric, in the form of clearance. Figures 3.3 to 3.5 illustrate the
nature of demolition in mid-twentieth-century Ardwick. They hint at the scale
of demolition involved in the process of clearance, what Jerram has described
as ‘the obsession of British planners with destruction.’⑥² They also suggest the
length of time that the process took, particularly Figure 3.4, which shows the
piecemeal demolition of Shakespeare Street in Ardwick. What they cannot
depict is the noise and dirt that this level of intervention must have wrought on
residents who remained.

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⑤⁹ Numerous communications are held at TNA, for example, in HLG 79/380; HLG
71/2299; and HLG 118/225.
⑥¹ Path dependency, a theory borrowed from economics, essentially means ‘history
matters’, in that decisions made in the past determine all future options. See Douglas
Robertson, Ian McIntosh and James Smyth, ‘Neighbourhood Identity: The Path
⑥² Jerram, Streetlife, p. 375.
Figure 3.3 W. Kay Ardwick Looking Across Waste Ground to Stockport Road (1958). Source: GMCRO LIC, ref. m39537.

Figure 3.4 W. Kay ‘Ardwick, Shakespeare Street Demolition in Progress Off Stockport Road’ (1969). Source: GMCRO LIC, ref. m12040.
Whilst the local state was busy constructing a discourse linking environmental determinism and the slum, which was used to legitimate a process of clearance and demolition, local residents in neighbourhoods earmarked for demolition were entering a phase of uncertainty. The individual experience of clearance is not routinely included in analysis of ‘slums’, or working-class culture. It is, however, an important aspect of both of these topics, as Alison Ravetz has forcefully argued: ‘The rehousing of working-class people, represented, potentially, a massive cultural dislocation from the traditional
neighbourhood...’ To refocus attention on the meaning of this ‘cultural dislocation’, this section shifts emphasis to the memories of residents interviewed for this project. It centres on the uses of a nostalgic framework, employed by the interviewees, to reflect on and filter through their memories.

Resident memories of life in houses eventually condemned as slums and demolished are more than mere nostalgic ‘yearnings for yesterday’. Ben Jones has demonstrated that nostalgia in working-class autobiography relating to slums ‘needs to be understood as a critique of dominant stigmatizing representations of these neighbourhoods and their inhabitants.’ The use of oral histories to examine experience of slum clearance also needs a similar reassessment. To demonstrate the complexity of accounts collected for this project, this section develops a framework based on two interrelated ideas: ‘what was’, and ‘what ought to be’. ‘What was’ refers to memories that describe aspects of the past as they are recalled in the process of the interview, without making secondary points about the significance or nature of those memories. ‘What ought to be’ refers to an active process of comparison between the past and present, where interviewees share their opinions about the changes they have experienced in their lives. This section uses these two ideas to demonstrate the strengths of using resident nostalgia as a means to interrogate memories of past environments.

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63 Ravetz, Council Housing and Culture, p. 171.
64 Taken from Fred Davis, A Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia, (London, 1979).
66 The original inspiration for these concepts comes from the sociologist Bev Skeggs’ theory of ‘is or ought’, which refers to the importance of personal social ‘values’ in shaping interactions and selfhood in the present. See Skeggs, Class, Self, Culture, p. 14.
In a group interview, three neighbours, Betty, Angela and Sue spoke about the material fabric of their old homes in post-war Manchester. Betty was born in 1937, and talked about her childhood home in Moss Side. Angela was born in 1963, and talks about her childhood home in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Their interviews took the form of a group chat:

[Interviewer] What is your first memory when I say what your childhood house was, what pops into your head?

[Angela] Dark and dismal, mine.

[Sue] Victorian.

[Angela] Yeah toilet outside. Newspaper, no toilet roll [inaudible].

[Sue] Cellar.

[Betty] Yeah. They were different weren't they, coal went down the hole.

[Angela] Yeah.

[Sue] That's right, yeah. Massive long garden...

[Betty] ...Mine was just a yard.

[Sue] ...just a Victorian old house.

[Angela] But dark.

[Sue] Yeah very dark, everything was dark, you know like, you've got all these pastel shades now, it was nothing like – they'll - browns and dark greens.

[Betty] Those were also the things that followed the war because you couldn't get wallpaper...

[Sue] Yeah.

[Betty] ...And they used to make their own stamper, you know you'd get the basics, but I mean, [inaudible] you'd use, God I'm going back now, a potato to do a pattern, 'cos you couldn't buy wallpaper, you couldn't buy anything, you know. And that, you'd just basically ... do it yourself jobs. Or it was left, or some colour that you didn't have to, keep decorating, so that's why
these, a lot of these colours stayed, dark greens, dark browns, maybe cream and brown or cream and green.\textsuperscript{67}

The memories of this group of neighbours, who are referring to different parts of Britain, begin with a consensus of ‘what was’. The ladies remember colours, and spaces that they no longer have in their modern homes, such as cellars, or long gardens, despite the different geographical location of their memories. Sue highlights the darkness of the older houses, contrasting the austere browns and dark greens with the lighter, brighter interior design options available today. The account shifts to an assessment of ‘what ought to be’, when Betty speaks about the resourcefulness of ‘do-it-yourself’ forays into wall decoration, using homemade stamps. She implicitly compares these activities with the ease of decorating today, by noting the lengths that people went to in decorating their homes in the past.

Betty went on to talk about her experience of community whilst living in her marital home near Kirkmanshulme Lane, Ardwick between 1958 and 1974, as a narrative of both ‘what was’ and ‘what ought to be’:

The streets were busy with the parents, because I mean, you didn’t work, you know, that’s gone, the community, the feel and everything’s gone, you know. [laughs] Your ball of wool under your arm, with your knitting needles, you know, stood at the back gate watching your youngest children playing, other neighbours might have been doing the same thing, you know.\textsuperscript{68}

The narrative of loss attached to community is an important part of Betty’s reflection. She was keen to highlight that it was normal for mothers to stay at home in the 1960s, looking after their children and partaking in crafting activities such as knitting. This may be because she saw this as an important

\textsuperscript{67} Interview with Betty, 22 July 2013, ref. VN850016; Interview with Angela, 22 July 2013, ref. VN850016; Interview with Sue, 22 July 2013, ref. VN850016.

\textsuperscript{68} Interview with Betty, 22 July 2013, ref. VN850016.
point to make during an interview with a young female researcher, who is unlikely to experience such widespread, collective housewifery in her own life. Betty’s memories are framed by her assessment of what ought to be, as she compares past everyday activities of community with the present, particularly as she notes ‘what was’ has gone.

Gary discussed his childhood in an old terraced house in 1950s Gorton at length in his interview. His narrative of what was, and what ought to be, was shared between material deprivations and social attachments. Describing his childhood home, he explained:

[Interviewer] So was that rented from a landlord?
[Gary] It was Manchester City Council, a council property?
[Interviewer] So was it an old house?
[Gary] A very old house because it used to have no central heating. We did have running water and electricity! Bathroom was shorter, we had a tin bath, it’s absolutely true. And with a family of nine it was hard.

[Interviewer] So it was two bedrooms and two [rooms] downstairs?
[Gary] It was three bedrooms because it had an attic as well. They were big terraced houses, Victorian houses, very big.69

Gary’s narrative of what was highlights the materiality of his childhood home. He jests that although there was not central heating in the house, they ‘did have running water and electricity’, implicitly pointing to a perspective of older housing as lacking in all basic necessities of life, and making it clear that this was not the case. The bathroom, smaller than the other rooms, was furnished with a tin bath. The size of his family meant that the lack of amenities was ‘hard’, a point he links with the tin bath. The lack of a plumbed bath is contrasted with

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69 Interview with Gary, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850030.
the size of the house, which Gary later compares with the smaller dimensions of replacement post-war housing, and finds preferable.\textsuperscript{70}

Along with his description of the physical house he grew up in, Gary also talked about the combined effects of poverty and housing conditions on his family and the wider neighbourhood residents:

[Interviewer] What do you mean by “you had to be hard”?

[Gary] You had to be hard in things that... my mother never let us go hungry. She always put food on the table. My dad was a grafter, but we only had basic things. We didn't have any special things. We were washed and fed and watered and things like that. We didn't have many holidays away, we didn't have many treats but what we did have, we appreciated. What I mean by hard is that my family came from an extremely poor area and extremely... without people knowing it they were hard people. By hard people, I don't mean good, hearty, but I mean hard people – they survive times, which I probably couldn't survive today. There were things that we did. We made do with very little and that's what I mean hard. My family were brought up that way, so we are hard people.\textsuperscript{71}

Again, Gary talks about these effects in terms of ‘what was’. He portrays this aspect of his memory as a hard reality, quite literally with his use of the term ‘hard’. However, his memories of ‘what was’ in terms of the people he knew and lived with in his old neighbourhood are in tension with his reflexive feelings about ‘what ought to be’ in the present. Gary is applying value to the concept of hardness, as it enabled his family and neighbours to ‘survive’, an achievement he does not believe he could manage in the present. His account implicitly celebrates the resourcefulness of his mother: ‘She always put food on the table’,

\textsuperscript{70} Interview with Gary, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850030.

\textsuperscript{71} Interview with Gary, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850030.
and his father: ‘My dad was a grafter’, but he emphasises that it was the conditions of living in a poor area that allowed these attributes to manifest.

Gary goes further in his reflexive assessment of ‘what ought to be’, particularly when discussing community in the older housing district:

[Interviewer] Do you think that’s impacted on... you say you are community minded now. Has it come from that [Growing up in Gorton] do you think?

[Gary] Oh yeah, I really really do, because I come from an area that was very community minded and it really was. It influenced me for the rest of my life. So I now reciprocate what I got then. Unfortunately, communities are now breaking down. It’s hard to get communities together. Its still there, it still exists but it did influence me and my life - my community, where I came from, and it always will. So that was Gorton for you.72

A superficial analysis of Gary’s memories of community in the old neighbourhood of Gorton would highlight nostalgia for the past, particularly in his comparison of community then and now. However, using the framework of ‘what ought to be’, we can delve deeper into the tensions of Gary’s account. Whilst Gary does feel that ‘community’ has declined in recent years, he also draws links between what he learnt as a child in the ‘slums’, and his actions today. He agreed that what he learnt then guides his social behaviour now, allowing him to ‘reciprocate’ and benefit the neighbourhood he lives in now [West Gorton]. This is borne out through his activity in the local resident’s association.73 His memory of his childhood is far more than nostalgia for a lost time, it is part of his social value system to the present day. He recognises that

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72 Interview with Gary, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850030.
73 A Resident’s Association meeting started two thirds of the way through our interview, with members joining in with the project and reminiscing as a group.
his personal past, which is likely to be different from that of others in the present, has made him the person he is now.

Betty and Gary’s accounts of experiencing everyday life in the ‘slums’ of Longsight and West Gorton demonstrate how nostalgic memories are more than a mere longing for a return to the past. Nostalgia does not necessarily mean that the past is idealised and romanticised, with Gary, for example, making it clear that he would struggle to cope in 1950s Gorton if he could return. Rather, interviewees use their own assessments of the past to make claims about the present and future, sometimes focussing on desirable aspects they would like to see return, other times grateful that things have changed. The violent urban interventions into ‘slums’ are rarely approached from the perspectives of everyday experience or memory, perhaps because a suspicion of nostalgia. Notable exceptions include Selina Todd’s, *The People*, which uses personal testimony to paint a broad picture of working-class life in the twentieth century, including experience of housing; and Ben Jones’, *The Working Class in Mid-Twentieth-Century England*, which makes use of a case study of Brighton to explore experiences of urban change. However, given that an uneven experience of reconstruction and planning is now accepted across different local authorities, the same level of attention is required for slum clearance. The wide-ranging social and personal effects of fundamental urban interventions such as slum clearance are clearly stated by interviewees in this project. This points to a considerable need for further use of personal testimonies in all disciplines which touch on the urban past, including

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74 On the problems of romanticizing the past, and the working-class past in particular, see: Jerram, *Streetlife*, p. 375.
sociology, geography, and most importantly, planning. In particular, a reassessment of the meanings and uses of nostalgia in personal testimony challenge dismissals of accounts as ‘rose-tinted’.76

Separating ‘Slum’ and Community

Interviewees’ memories of living in neighbourhoods condemned as slums were based in a rich tapestry of nostalgia, for childhood and happy family times, and for some form of different ‘community’, but always in tension with the difficulties that environmental privations brought. The idea of a formalised working-class community has a strong association with ‘the slum’, based in sociological studies in the 1950s and 1960s, so the links made by interviewees are expected.77 However, the academic link between slum and community does not reflect what interviewees remember about their own experiences, particularly in terms of what constituted a ‘community’ and how formalised it was. Nor does it account for the ways that residents use their memories and experiences of community in the past to shape their presents and futures, through devices such as nostalgia, or ‘what ought to be’. The formal models of community, shared across sociology, planning and history, talk past residents’ experiences, unable to account for their sporadic, shifting nature.

Intellectual debates about community over the past sixty years have emphasised a broad range of attributes attached to 'community', including shared values, geographies, interests, class, employment, religion, position in the life cycle and gender.\(^78\) As early as 1955, the sociologist George Hillery noted 94 definitions of 'community.'\(^79\) In contrast, interviewees centred on proximity and position in the life cycle as key determinants of their working-class communities. This distinction has profound implications for the types of community discussed in relation to the past, and necessary for the functioning of regeneration projects in the present and future. The formalised, mid-twentieth-century, working-class 'slum community' recognised in academic texts centres on shared values (such as ideas of respectability), shared goals, (such as demanding improved conditions, or fighting against slum clearance) and shared circumstances, such as practices of reciprocity.

Re-assessments of the concept of community have largely taken place in other humanities disciplines, such as sociology and regeneration studies.\(^80\) For example, though noting that intellectual fashions shifted away from the study of 'community' during the 1970s and early 1980s, sociologist Paul Hoggett points

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to a shift back in recent years: ‘A new generation of researchers appear to have registered the fact that outside the seminar room the idea of community appears to remain alive and well’.\textsuperscript{81} This new generation of sociologists and geographers have drawn attention to the uses of community in politics, including housing policy, and the personal nature of community as an aspect of identity. For example, the anthropologist Anthony Cohen argued in 1985 that community is best understood ‘as less a social practice than a symbolic structure. Community is ultimately what people think it is.’\textsuperscript{82}

In terms of politics, scholars such as sociologist Ruth Levitas have argued that community is a tool for creating and maintaining a political identity: ‘It [community] is discursively central to the New Labour project, because it distinguishes it from both New Right and Old Labour ideas.’\textsuperscript{83} The urban sociologist Andrew Wallace argues that this political usefulness attached to the concept of community has bled into housing policy rhetoric, where the New Labour model of community becomes a ‘normative rationale for regeneration.’\textsuperscript{84} Whilst these more recent debates are an important step in questioning the ubiquitous usage of ‘community’ in contemporary party political language, they also offer a means to challenge the reliance on tropes of ‘community’ for understanding mid-twentieth-century urban space. This final section first looks to existing links between ‘slum’ and community, presenting

\textsuperscript{81} Paul Hoggett, ‘Contested Communities’, in Hoggett (Ed.), Contested Communities, pp. 3-16, (pp. 6-7)


\textsuperscript{83} Levitas, ‘Community, Utopia and New Labour’, p. 188.

the formalised theories of community that have dominated postwar clearance discourse. It then turns to alternative perspectives of community in ‘slum’ areas, offered in the memories of interviewees. It uses these to propose alternative theories of postwar working-class community.

Planners, local authorities and sociologists viewed ‘community’ in working class neighbourhoods designated as slums as a consequence of shared experiences and values based in a common locality. For example, sociologists such as Peter Willmott and Michael Young emphasised the cohesiveness of the working-class neighbourhoods they studied in 1950s London. Similarly, Robert MacIver and Charles Page argued in 1961 that community is ‘an area of social living marked by some degree of social coherence. The bases of community are locality and community sentiment.’ Attributes such as cohesiveness and shared values such as ‘community sentiment’ were considered so desirable that new estates were planned and organised around public and social spaces thought to engender such circumstances. The use of such visions of working-class community in postwar planning has received considerable attention from planners and historians looking back at the period. For example, Jerram argues that postwar planning was driven by ideas:

...that the working class generally constituted a tightly knit, sociable corps of salt-of-the-earth types, and that their intense sociability should be replicated as far as possible in new housing. At the heart of most

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85 Willmott and Young, *Family and Kinship in East London.*
87 For example, the Smithsons planned the layout of Robin Hood Gardens in Tower Hamlets based on the facilitation of social activities on the ‘street’ decks, see: Alison Smithson and Peter Smithson, *Ordinariness and Light: Urban Theories 1952-1960 and their Application in a Building Project 1963-1970,* (London, 1970), discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis. See also; Ravetz, pp. 4-5
such estates were institutions like community centres and libraries, which were supposed to provide the spatial facilitation of ‘community’ that courtyards, back alleys, shared toilets, pubs, bookmakers and factory canteens had done, but without the negative effects (like alcoholism or socialism).\textsuperscript{88}

Jerram’s main point here is that planners misinterpreted the nature of working-class community, and made flawed decisions about requirements in the built environment based on this.

Historians have begun to challenge the simple depiction of slum life as community in the post-war sociological literature, yet the idea retains currency. In 1999 for example, Mark Clapson noted the historiographical tendency to highlight the negative aspects of moving from older housing to the new suburban estates, such as social isolation for housewives. Clapson’s argument rests on the resulting break between the old, ‘sociable’ slum neighbourhoods, and the new, suburban, ‘anti-social’ estates built since 1919.\textsuperscript{89} Whilst this thesis is not concerned with the experience of moving to suburban overspill estates, Clapson’s point is important for understanding the narratives offered by former slum dwellers, and their subsequent treatment in the academic literature. Their memories and experiences of the ‘slum’ do not fit neatly into categories such as ‘sociability’ or ‘community’. Rather, they use these terms to indicate shifting ideas about what constituted their social lives, in conjunction with wider feelings of ‘what was’ and ‘what ought to be’.

The strong link between ‘slum’ and community is used as part of broader arguments about increasing privatisation of family life and consumer

\textsuperscript{88} Jerram, Streetlife, p. 356.
behaviours across the classes in post-war Britain. Clare Langhamer, for example, notes the work of sociologists such as Mark Abrams, in identifying changes in working-class culture due to the increasing comforts and draw of ‘home’:

...for the first time in modern British history the working-class home, as well as the middle-class home, has become a place that is warm, comfortable, and able to provide its own fireside entertainment – in fact, pleasant to live in. The outcome is a working-class way of life which is decreasingly concerned with activities outside the house or with values wider than those of the family.90

This new working-class home drew people away from public life through its offer of comfort and entertainment. Away from the privations of the slum, where reciprocity was a necessary coping mechanism, the working-class were now able to enjoy their lives within their homes, in privacy. This assessment only works if life in the slums before the change to the ‘warm, comfortable’ non-slum home is characterised as largely public, that is, community-orientated. The change to comfort, of course, is wrapped up within processes of slum clearance and rehousing for many of the working class.

The conflation of slum with community caused concerns for some sociologists working in the later 1960s. In 1966, for example, the sociologist Hannah Gavron, inspired by the work of Willmott and Young, found in her survey of younger mothers living in Poplar that:

Without a doubt neighbours played a relatively unimportant part in the lives of these couples [the working class respondents]. Only 29% of the wives said they had any contact with their neighbours at all...

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‘They are all old people,’ said a printer’s wife, and the wife of a labourer also complained ‘there are no young people around.’ Based on Gavron’s analysis, it would appear that age and position in the life cycle is an important factor in the feeling and experience of community, even in a ‘traditional’ working-class area of older housing. This is a significant point that opens the possibility for a more nuanced evaluation of personal testimonies relating to growing up and living in clearance areas.

Memories relating to everyday life in clearance areas such as Gorton, Ardwick and Longsight do point to the significance of a sense of ‘community’ amongst residents, but, like the areas highlighted in Gavron’s study, they also demonstrate the significance of age and life cycle in facilitating this. Michael, an interviewee who lived in Gorton between the ages of four and nineteen, responded to questions about community:

[Interviewer]: So, do you remember any of the local people who lived around that area [Gorton]?

[Michael]: Yes I remember, we had core friends. My best friend who I used to go to school with called Paul, he was one of the core friends. We had a group of girls across the road called the […], who I went out with in turn as I was growing up. There was three of them. And yes – kids then just mixed with everybody didn’t they? I can name most of the neighbours. The […], the […] a big Irish family, the […] – another big Irish family. So it was a little avenue that I used to live in, just off Mount Road.

[Interviewer]: So you knew everyone who lived there?

[Michael]: Oh yes.

[Interviewer]: Were your parents friendly with them?

[Michael]: Yes, My dad went to a local pub, which was the Gorton Mount. So you get to know quite a lot of people through that. We were heavily involved in football there, amateur football you know.

[Interviewer]: Brilliant. So would you describe it as a community?

[Michael]: Yes, very close community yes. It was really good at that time. Totally different these days.  

A superficial reading of the above transcript would suggest that it fits within an overwhelmingly positive reminiscence of a working class community lost in time, particularly given his final statement. Such a reading fits neatly with the framework of nostalgia and romance so mistrusted by historians such as Bourke. Yet, in this transcript there is much more than a mere longing for a return to neighbourhoods in the past. The way Michael remembers his time in older housing is not limited to the spatial borders of the street or activities within it. He points to the importance of ‘core’ friends, suggesting that there were individuals in the locality that he either did not know or did not associate with regularly. He notes the nationality of some local families, giving that information because he recognises that the locality was more than simply white, or working-class, but was made up of different groups or families of people. Michael highlights his age at the time, through the association of his friends with ‘going to school’. Michael’s position in his life cycle, as a schoolboy, has shaped his memories, and his opportunity to feel part of a social group at that time: ‘kids then just mixed with everybody’. He also draws on romantic opportunities within the neighbourhood, available because of his age and his long-standing relationships within the locality. When asked whether his parents were friendly with the neighbours Michael agreed, but in agreeing he shifted the spatial location from the neighbours in the street to the local pub, where associations were based on amateur football.

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92 Interview with Michael, 31 July 2013, ref. VN850019.
The informal influence of community in older working class housing manifested itself in multiple quotidian ways. For example, Jackie talked about the importance of front doors in her memories of growing up in Gorton, which formed an important part of her comparison of the neighbourhood with other parts of Manchester as noted in Chapter One:

I don’t know, they seemed to start when I was er, er, an early teenager, like about thirteen, people started erm, panelling their front doors, with er, ‘ardboard, and then it was, a thing ‘round it, erm, painting their steps. I mean, me mam had, we had our wall painted at the front, and the things over the window and over the door and the window-ledge. Erm, she didn’t buy, she didn’t have that done to our door. She bought a new one from a second-hand place, and it had lovely glass at the front of it. You know, what’sit glass, coloured glass. Yeah, that was lovely that, that door. Why she did it I don’t know, just, I say, everybody were changing their doors. But it made everybody paint their doors and you know, once one started painting their walls another one would. The old lady next to us didn’t, but she didn’t even clean her step! [laughs] But erm, most of ’em. We ‘ad all painted doors if you know what I mean? There was nothing scruffy about them all.93

Jackie’s emphasis here is on the ways that the community of the street determined the activity of decorating the outside of the houses. In Jackie’s memories these activities were never explicitly discussed, rather she highlights the informal nature of collective investment in the street.

Gary also grew up in the Gorton area and talked about his childhood memories and their relation to community. When asked about whether his childhood home had high ceilings he responded:

[Interviewer]: High ceilings?

[Gary]: Yes, high ceilings, wooden stairs, cold in winter, colder in summer. But Christ, our community even then when I was kid. Our community, I know people say this, but this is true we left our doors open. I had Aunts on the street, I had relatives on the street. I used to go in to any door I wanted to, see if they wanted anything, any errands running. Or I went for summats to

93 Interview with Jackie, 21 August 2014, ref. VN850028.
eat. It was all doors open, never shut. I ... we didn’t have no-one to suspect. We didn’t have muggings or anything like that. It was a good, good community.

Camber Lane was one of the main thoroughfares in Gorton. Everyone who lives in Gorton or in the surrounding area knows Camber Lane. It used to run right up to St James’ church. Which was St Thomas if you called St James [sic]. That was my local church. Mine was Catholic, my dad never found out. I chose the C. of E. I was involved when I was very young in the church as well. That doesn’t make me a shining example, because I wasn’t. I was a bit of a hard nut – I come from a hard family. We had to make best we could.94

Gary describes the cultural trope of doors left open, which Joanna Bourke has included in her critique of community memory as being part of a ‘golden haze’ of recall.95 Yet for Gary, it is a symbol of his familial experience. As a child, he would have privileged access to enter different houses that may not be afforded to other local adults or neighbours. His narrative does not necessarily conflict with the more critical discourse that suggests elements of ‘standoffishness’ between neighbours.96

Gary’s account of the influence of his time in the ‘slum’ is also significant in the light of debates emerging in regeneration studies about the nature of community. As Katherine Duffy and Jo Hutchinson have argued, ‘community’ is ambiguous and rarely exists in geographically demarcated areas. One individual cannot represent the whole geographic area.97 Gary implicitly points to this in his account, particularly where he compares his own community-mindedness with the breakdown of communities in the present. He suggests that the ability to foster community on a purely geographic basis was lost to a

94 Interview with Jim, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850030.
95 Bourke, Working Class Cultures in Britain, 1890-1960, p. 137.
97 Duffy and Hutchinson, ‘Urban Policy and the Turn to Community’, p. 356.
‘community of interest’. An example of this is found in the resident’s association of which he is a part, which covers two blocks of housing on one side of the West Gorton estate, following regeneration. It is not a broad collection of community-minded residents from across the West Gorton estate.

The memories and definitions of ‘community’ offered by Michael, Gary and Jackie do not fit in existing theories of community. Their communities were rarely formalised, in the past or the present. Instead, they were centred either on age and/or geographic proximity. This made working-class community in the past fluid, as it was dependent upon groups of a similar age remaining in the same geographical area. A similar situation exists today, as ‘community’ experienced in the new estates that replaced the working-class terraces remains vulnerable to changing geographies and demographics. All three accounts of community cited in this section are also slightly different, albeit with shared characteristics. This emphasises the personal construction of community, an aspect of experience not recognised in the formal sociological or historical theories referenced in the first half of the section.

Conclusion

The ‘slum’ is a crucial part of British postwar history. Vast areas of inner-city residential neighbourhoods were surveyed, classified, compulsorily purchased and demolished in the space of two decades, based on their assessment as slums. In Manchester, the local authority used the concept of the ‘slum’ to legitimate its resumption of clearance programmes started in the interwar

98 This echoes the points raised by Tony in Chapter One, about the effects of rehousing as part of the regeneration of West Gorton, see, pp. 86-87.
period. The idea of the ‘slum’ was linked to expert beliefs in the power of the environment to affect the everyday lives and behaviours of the city’s residents. A powerful discourse, marrying the horrors of physical slum conditions with the promise of environmentally engendered social and moral improvement grew. Environmental determinism was used to explain social behaviour in the slums, and to legitimate the proposed replacement estates for the same neighbourhoods. However, to fully demonstrate the significance of slum clearance in post-war Britain, and its effects on social and class relationships in the city, historians must engage with the memories and experiences of ex-slum dwellers.

The way ‘slums’ are remembered by residents is part of a sophisticated framework for comprehending drastic social changes and incorporating these into individual life histories. Whilst memories of everyday life, and periods of violent intervention, in slum neighbourhoods are often characterised as nostalgic in academic studies, they offer a rich source for understanding not just the nature of poverty in mid-twentieth-century Britain, but also examples of deep reflexive considerations of urban change in interviewees’ life histories. In this chapter, interviewee responses were analysed in terms of ‘what was’, and ‘what ought to be’. These two tools allow analysis to move away from concerns about nostalgic reminiscences, to critically assess what might otherwise be dismissed as ‘rose-tinted’. In particular, ‘what ought to be’ allowed the thesis to propose a new theory of community, one based on comparisons and judgements about the nature of sociability in the past and present.
The concept of the slum is commonly linked to ideas about community in contemporary and secondary accounts, obscuring the link between the physical and social experiences that are part of ex-slum dweller’s accounts. Again, use of the ‘what was/what ought to be’ framework allowed this chapter to reassess the practice of community as interviewees understood it at the time, and as they have reflexively reconsidered it over the years. Community is a tricky, ambiguous concept with powerful uses in contemporary political rhetoric. What residents remember, and reflect on, is a different form of ‘community’, based on geographical proximity rather than collective interests. Their personal comparisons of past and present must be placed within this broader context and valued for what they offer the historian of twentieth-century Britain, a new way of conceiving of community.
Chapter Three - Dreaming of the New World, Living in the New World

Goodbye and good riddance to the past.

CHEERS echoed around a housing estate as its last tower block was blown off the map.

Elgol Court, relic of the 1960s, was reduced to a 6,000 tonne heap of rubble in seconds when the plunger was pressed by an 80-year-old former tenant, a primary schoolgirl and a TV star.¹

Two narratives stake a claim for the history of postwar social housing; the well-known stories told by policymakers and other estate ‘outsiders’ such as the media, and the largely unknown stories of the people who live on council estates. This chapter shows how a narrative of failure, based on ‘official’ and ‘outsider’ accounts, has consistently devalued the council estate in British postwar society, simultaneously excluding council tenants from the public discourse.² British postwar estates are broadly described in academic and popular literature as failures, as ‘concrete nightmares’, with demolition the obvious solution.³ For example, the opening quote to this chapter tells a familiar tale of the tower block (in this case Elgol Court in Heywood, Rochdale) deemed a ‘relic’ before its time, blown up in a moment of celebration. This oft-repeated narrative becomes a framework for evaluating the built heritage of

¹ Ray King, ‘Cheers But No Tears as Estate’s Last Tower Block Bites the Dust’, Manchester Evening News (MEN), 13 March 2000.
² Official discourses in this thesis include the publications of local and national government, trade and practice journals in architecture and town planning, and statements made by politicians. ‘Outsider’ narratives include all other public discourse that does not come from within the estate itself. See also, Coleman, Utopia on Trial; Newman, Defensible Space; Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities.
post-war Britain. Council estates are hemmed-in by their built form. The result is that post-war social housing suffers from a poor reputation, further compounded by state decisions to demolish stock, particularly if high-rise or system-built. The failure narrative leaves little opportunity for dissenting voices, for accounts that highlight the importance of social housing, and the places it has created, in the everyday lives of local residents.

In 2001, Alison Ravetz argued that the academic study of council housing has been presented as the history of housing policy, and pointed to the resulting characterisation of post-war housing provision in Britain as a failed social experiment. The focus on housing policy as the historical methodology for comprehending the post-war built environment feeds in to the broad failure narrative found in much of the history of post-war British housing. For example, scholars such as Alan Murie, Ian Cole and Robert Furbey note repeated policy interventions into the urban environment throughout the post-war period as responses to the repetitive emergence of social, economic and physical problems, such as high crime rates, poor educational and employment opportunities, poor health outcomes, physical defects in the built environment and persistent poverty. Analysis in this vein serves to emphasise the exceptional and the problematic to the detriment of discussing successes.

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6 Alison Ravetz, Council Housing and Culture, p. 3.
The focus on housing and planning policy is widespread, and not confined to planning scholarship. A considerable body of work in history, along with multi-disciplinary literature in housing and urban studies follows the emphasis on high politics and policy-making, even where discussing tenant experiences. However, a number of scholars have looked to tenant experience as a source. This work tends to focus on a perceived schism between agents of the state and residents. For example, Lynsey Hanley refers to tenants involved in a regeneration steering group in London who felt that ‘the council has never listened to us’, whilst Peter Shapely notes a growing consumer-discourse amongst tenants in post-war Manchester. Whilst these perspectives are important, and sometimes borne out in the personal testimonies collected for this project, they do not represent the complex and contradictory views offered by my interviewees.

This chapter argues that an overemphasis on historical sources such as policy documents feeds into failure narratives. It demonstrates that existing academic interpretations of council housing assume high expectations for post-war housing, in order to dash them. This forms the foundation of the failure narrative. The result of this failure narrative and a lack of resident voices in academic and popular literature is a one-sided account of the post-war housing

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estate, which overemphasises problems, neglects successes and takes away agency from residents. To contest the failure narrative, this chapter will build on innovative uses of personal testimony in recent sociological work on social class and experience. For example, recent work by Ben Rogaly and Becky Taylor on estate-life in Norwich, Jacqui Karn on the importance of narrative to estate residents, and Lisa McKenzie on how residents of the St Ann’s estate in Nottingham ‘get by’ act as powerful calls for better engagement with the groups academics purport to represent:

It is often assumed that working-class life is one-dimensional and easily comprehended. Working-class people’s practices... are consequently misinterpreted and misunderstood by those who are trying to understand something they know little about.\(^{11}\)

Through ethnography and interviews, McKenzie offers a ‘story from the inside’ that challenges many of these misunderstandings.\(^{12}\) Her work goes beyond merely giving voice to residents that are frequently excluded from the discourse, with the use of sociological theory to explain their experiences and perspectives. In a similar vein, this chapter uses resident testimonies to challenge the failure narrative so often identified in popular and academic discourses of the past, reappraising the position of social housing in British society in the process.

To reconcile official discourses with those of residents it is important to consider what each group has said about post-war housing. By looking at both discourses, we can point to continuities in attitudes and representations, over

\(^{11}\) Quote from McKenzie, *Getting By*, p. 3; See also; Rogaly and Taylor, *Moving Histories of Class and Community*; Karn, *Narratives of Neglect*; McKenzie, ‘Narratives from a Nottingham Council Estate’; McKenzie, ‘A Narrative from the Inside’.

\(^{12}\) McKenzie, *Getting By*, p. 4.
time and between groups. We can also look to periods of change, and the wider contexts that have driven them. The first section of this chapter centres on what is termed the ‘expert’ discourse. This includes planning literature and local and national state discourse. High expectations for post-war estates are emphasised in existing literature, with some going as far as to characterise them through the term ‘utopian’, and others, such as Alice Coleman, using that term to attack the post-war housing drive.\(^{13}\) The definition of utopia is a key battleground for such arguments, as it shifts between specific examples of estate building, particular estate forms, such as the Radburn low rise model, high-rise or deck-access, or at the very act of state intervention into the housing market. Coleman, for example, directly links poor planning theory with social decline on estates, suggesting that any form of state planning in housing is an act of utopianism.\(^{14}\) This analysis is disputed, and in the context of this chapter, is too broad a definition.\(^{15}\) A more useful definition would allow more room for manoeuvre. Ruth Levitas defines utopia as:

> About how we would live and what kind of a world we would live in if we could do just that... Sometimes utopia embodies more than an image of what the good life would be and becomes a claim about what it could and should be: the wish that things might be otherwise becomes a conviction that it does not have to be like this. Utopia is then not just a dream to be enjoyed, but a vision to be pursued.\(^{16}\)


\(^{14}\) Coleman, _Utopia on Trial_, p. 11.


This is a particularly useful definition of utopia, as it incorporates not just the act of dreaming about a better world, but the claims and convictions that can follow. Accordingly, this chapter will understand utopianism as a vision for a perfect future, where urban problems and their social and economic consequences are managed and dealt with through the direct actions of the planner. This first section challenges the assumption that the local authority in Manchester expected its interventions into social housing to create utopian communities, undermining one of the major arguments used to attack the results of the post-war housing drive.

The second section moves to consider ‘outsider’ narratives of social housing in post-war Britain, which act as representative discourses in the public domain. It argues that a broad failure narrative is a crucial component in the representation of council housing in newspapers, television and film. These public discourses rarely include the experience or perspectives of estate residents, particularly where these views may contradict the broader failure narrative. The interviewees for this project were acutely aware of the way that outsiders view them, and talked at length about the ways public discourse affects their lives. The third section focuses on the complex and sometimes contradictory ways that residents interviewed for this project talked about their own experiences of council housing after 1945. Their ‘narrative from the inside’ contrasts strongly with the failure narrative espoused in public and outsider discourses. A number of interviewees talked fondly about housing estates that are commonly considered failures, such as ‘Fort Ardwick’ and the
Hulme Crescents. Their experiences and the ways they evaluate life on council estates offer an alternative interpretation of the post-war housing drive.

Finally, the chapter looks to the effects of failure narratives, and resident’s counter-narratives, on the process of regeneration in the 1980s. It argues that whilst attention shifted towards social breakdown on council estates after 1979, in Manchester the local authority based its interpretation of council estate failure firmly on structural and environmental defects, using this interpretation to justify further spatial interventions into the built fabric of Ardwick and Longsight. Taken together, these sections make a case for using broader source material in the historical assessment of social housing and its popular narratives.

**The State’s Narratives**

There are three main problems with the assessment of social housing as a failure in Britain. Firstly, it is important to consider who is making claims about social housing. The attitudes of national governments, for example, changed considerably in the period 1945 to 1975, from supporting social housing as a social good for the general population, to limiting it as a residual tenure reserved for the most needy.\(^1^7\) Local authorities, in their publications and committee meetings, were always responding to external factors, such as budget changes or the pressures of constituents. Newspapers want to inform,

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but also sell copies, so tend towards the dramatic and the shocking. Secondly, there is an issue of genre. Source material about housing, whether published or restricted access, is influenced by considerations of audience and function. Genre, and in particular its power to shape narrative, has not yet been considered in the literature on social housing. Yet it shapes the way different interpretations are presented and is therefore an important aspect to analysing ‘official’ discourses, just as it is key to understanding resident testimonies in the context of the oral history interview.

Finally, there is the issue of change over time. Utopianism is most often attributed to the immediate post-war period, between 1945 and 1955. It is in this period that planners and politicians made strong claims about the power of the built environment to shape social, economic, and cultural life, particularly in the case of the ‘neighbourhood unit’. But the failure narrative, dependent upon high profile, high-rise disasters, is largely located in the period 1955-1975. As supporters of the failure narrative use the charge of utopianism even on these later examples, it is important to consider what had changed, or remained the same, in the intentions of planners, politicians and local authorities between 1945 and 1975.

To work through these issues, this opening section uses a case study, centred on the planning, construction and afterlife of the Gibson Street estate in Ardwick, Manchester, later monikered ‘Fort Ardwick’. This estate, planned in

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18 CHAC, Design of Dwellings. See Chapter Two p. 118 for further details on the ‘neighbourhood unit’.
19 Mr. Gerald Kaufman, ‘Housing (Multi-Storey Developments)’, Hansard Debates, 14 November 1974, Vol. 881, Col. 746. The Gibson Street estate was also known as
the mid-1960s and completed in 1969, comprised of a low rise Radburn modelled estate set behind 590 dwellings provided in a deck-access ‘barrier’ building intended to shield residents from the traffic noise of Hyde Road, a major route into the city that ran adjacent to the site. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 show the estate, firstly in the process of construction, then once completed. Figure 4.1 demonstrates the contrast in architectural style between the new block and the older pub to the left of the image. This highlights the drastic changes seen in the built environment of Ardwick in just the second half of the 1960s. Figure 4.2 suggests the scale of the block once completed, as it ran a considerable length along Hyde Road. Deck-access blocks have a particularly strong failure narrative attached to them, rooted in their celebration by high-profile architects such as the Smithsons. The Smithsons, who designed Robin Hood Gardens in Tower Hamlets, asked:

Why should we climb up into the towers when it should be possible to go round the corner for odds and ends, paper and phone calls and the post-box? Why forever going up and down and along and up again when we all could live on a quiet street-deck for pedestrians, young children, milkmen’s trolleys, prams.

These aims are built upon a strong belief in working class culture’s desirability and its roots in the built environment of the terraced street. Such ideas are close to the definition of ‘utopian’ offered by Ruth Levitas, particularly in their

Coverdale Crescent, the name of a new road created alongside the deck access block, separated from Hyde Road by a grassed area.

reference to ‘milkmen’s trolleys’ and ‘prams’. However, the ideals proposed by designers such as the Smithsons were never realised.23

Figure 4.1 W. Kay, Ardwick, Stockport Road, New Flats Under Construction in Ardwick, off Stockport Road, North East Side (1969). Source: GMCRO LIC, ref. m40021.


In terms of who made claims about the Gibson Street estate, three interconnected groups emerge as dominant; the city council, planning practice journals and the print media, notably The Guardian. A key component of the discourse on Gibson Street was the sharing of ideas and information between the local authorities responsible for the design and construction of the block, and the planning practice journals and print media. In 1967, for example, The

*Town Planning Review* published an article on ‘the theory of redevelopment’ that explained the proposals for the Ardwick and Longsight areas of Manchester.\(^{24}\) Authored by Robert C. Stones from the Manchester Housing Department, the article drew together planning theory with the process of replanning Longsight. It describes a planning process that is sensitive to the existing landscape of Longsight, and to the desires of ‘human groupings’ to live in urban areas: ‘The starting point here is that many people desire to live in the city for reasons which are no doubt involved with many different considerations, economic, social or psychological.’\(^{25}\) This planning framework is introduced as ‘grain’ theory, which promises to account for organic city patterns of movement and activity in redevelopment areas.\(^{26}\)

If we look to consider its genre, the article is particularly focused on selling the Manchester ‘grain’ planning framework as a means to build on pre-used or difficult sites. Manchester could not expand around its own borders, so new building was concentrated on overspill sites many miles away from the city, or on the inner city itself.\(^{27}\) Other conurbations had similar problems with land availability, so the article in the planning journal is an example of trying to establish some form of best practice for such a situation, not catered for by existing theory:

> Where a theoretical approach has been used for urban growth, it has been mainly applied simply to residential planning in isolation and on sites not previously built on, but in the present day context urban


\(^{25}\) Stones, ‘Housing and Redevelopment’, p. 238.

\(^{26}\) GRAIN was chosen as ‘an analogy with the grain of timber, implying a directional pattern of an organic form’, Stones, ‘Housing and Redevelopment’, p. 243.

theory cannot isolate residential content, nor can it assume, for the
moment at least, unused sites.28

Far from being utopian, Stones’ approach is rooted in pragmatism, but it is also
interspersed with positive assertions and assessments:

In redevelopment, the grain [natural flows of activity] is being
destroyed due to the increasingly large areas being renewed... The
problem is to find a system capable of maintaining the function
fulfilled by the existing grain. In the examples shown [Longsight,
Beswick and Harpurhey] the resultant so far achieved is a clear
definition of the mosaic of grains in an area. By this method the edges
are always handled in a positive way ... and also it is ensured that
adjacent areas are complementary to each other in the manner in
which they are ordered, It has also been found that the edge of two
adjoining grids produces a feather, or open edge in the interior of the
site, which is the obvious place for a pedestrian entrant. The
pedestrian route can thus contain great variety in shape.29

According to Stones’ argument, grain theory promises to preserve successful
aspects of the pre-redevelopment landscape, such as pedestrian routes, and
maintain the flow and coherence of the wider city.

This article was authored before the Gibson Street scheme was realised.
There are indications in the article that Manchester City Council had high hopes
for its new estate in Longsight. For example, the article refers to the ‘ideal city’,
and compares the old housing districts with new estates, suggesting that their
new development at Longsight will learn from past mistakes:

Even the slum street has in this respect many advantages which have
been lost in the replacement council estates... the slum streets are
human in scale; they often have character and liveliness – the
convenience and colour of the corner shop and corner pub, the
occasional mixture of uses – the small industrial yard giving interest
and variety to the street scene.30

30 Stones, ‘Housing and Redevelopment’, pp. 238-239.
These desirable aspects of the pre-redevelopment city are to be maintained in Manchester’s redevelopment areas through application of ‘grain’ theory, where functional grids ‘unify, identify and make comprehensible the parts of a city’.  

This is urban planning replicating organic city forms that are human in scale and fit with the everyday movement of residents. High-rise blocks are an accepted component in Manchester’s plans for Longsight, but are mediated through their ‘human scale’. Figures 4.3 and 4.4 illustrate the plans for Longsight. The first point to note is the sheer size of the redevelopment area, but also how hemmed-in it is, by a railway depot to the east [right side of Figure 4.3] and major road routes to the north and west. The ‘barrier’ of the Gibson Street flats seen from above evokes medieval city walls, preventing noise from the roads entering the open spaces behind, but also, with hindsight, hindering access to and from the spaces behind the blocks. Figure 4.4 illustrates the plans in relief, hinting at the shadows the planned blocks would cast, and the contrasting heights of construction behind this barrier.

Figure 4.3 ‘Town and Country Planning, Longsight, Manchester’ (1972). Source: GMCRO LIC, ref. m58780.

Figure 4.4 ‘Gibson Street’. Source: Stones, ‘Housing and Redevelopment’.
The Town Planning Review published a follow up article in 1970 that charted the redevelopment of Longsight. This article again highlighted the way that planning theories guided the design and construction of the estate:

The form of the building has been determined also by the function it performs in the total environment. This is a directional building giving higher level movement and is aligned with pedestrian traffic flow towards the neighbourhood shopping centre.32

Here, a direct link is made between the abstract theory of ‘directional’ buildings predicting ‘pedestrian traffic flow’, and everyday resident activities which are more sociable, such as shopping. The article concludes: ‘it can be said that the Gibson Street scheme successfully realizes the theory of urban renewal advanced by the Manchester Housing Development Group and illustrates its validity in practical terms.’33 In Longsight, the local authority felt it had achieved a successful scheme without compromise.

Although these articles place considerable faith in planning theory to redevelop and improve the area of Longsight, they are hardly examples of utopianism in any definition outside of Alice Coleman’s.34 What they are is a promotional appraisal of planning theory in practice, which served to inform and to celebrate Manchester’s contribution to post-war planning.35 The local authority, as represented by the author Robert C. Stones, appear aware of resident reactions to their creations, rather than being blinkered by blind

34 Coleman, Utopia on Trial, p. 3.
utopianism. In the 1970 article, for example, Stones refers to the colloquial re-naming of Gibson Street as 'Fort Ardwick':

It is interesting to note that the scheme is known locally as ‘Fort Ardwick’, and although this may seem unflattering, it does at least show that some individual quality has been found here, and the nickname has an affectionate ring.\textsuperscript{36}

Putting a positive spin on the local re-naming of the estate just three years after completion is to be expected in an article evaluating the redevelopment of Longsight from the local authority’s perspective. Indeed the interpretation made suggests that the bespoke nature of Manchester’s response to urban problems was the overriding concern and source of pride for the local authorities. In addition, the proposal for Longsight was based on ‘grain’ theory precisely to avoid what was understood as ‘lost’ in new estates built with unfettered planning ideals.

At the same time as the practice journal publications on Gibson Street, the print media reported on the planning and completion of the Longsight redevelopment. There is a direct relationship between the practice journal publication and the print media, as \textit{The Guardian} published a summary article of the grain principles outlined in Stones’ ‘Housing and Redevelopment’.\textsuperscript{37} In the \textit{Guardian} article, the ‘ideals’ for city living are described as ‘private open space’, and an ‘architecture of dwellings [that] allow[es] individual expression.’\textsuperscript{38} Whilst the newspaper reportage does characterise Manchester’s grain theory as an ‘ideal’, the detail given suggests that the intended outcomes are strongly linked to existing domestic practices such as travelling to the shopping area.

\textsuperscript{36} Stones, ‘Grain Theory in Practice’, p. 355.
Newspaper coverage was not limited to summarising planning theory for consumption by the layperson. Indeed, the newspaper presented a mixed account of the Gibson Street estate from planning to completion. For example, The Guardian reported on a row within the city council in 1970, centred on the aesthetics and design of the main block of flats.\(^39\) Also noting the renaming of the main block of flats as ‘Fort Ardwick’ and terming this ‘unflattering’, the 1970 article goes on to quote the chairman of Manchester’s Housing Committee, Sir Richard Harper:

...those who had abused the design because it was “a little bit way out” would soon be needing to retract. What the corporation had done was to break the building line, instead of arranging it in straightforward cubes, and the interiors were first class.\(^40\)

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\(^40\) “Way Out’ Building Design Defended’, p. 18.
This form of reportage does not fit with narratives of utopianism or the argument that planners and local authorities were not utopian at all. What it does is similar to the journal articles published in *The Town Planning Review,* it draws links between design and theory and the everyday lives of residents, who will enjoy ‘first class’ interiors. Rather than making grand claims about the potential of the building to change the whole society that residents lived in, it centred on the individual experience of interiors. It also highlights the process of negotiation and conflict that characterised the planning, design and construction of the Gibson Street estate.

Aside from the example of the Gibson Street estate, the Manchester housing department records consistently suggest a pragmatic city council concerned with meeting demand through building in high volume, rather than creating a utopian city. As late as 1979, the Greater Manchester Council promised that it would ‘continue to build as long as there is a perceived need for local authority accommodation in the area, and until everybody in the city is adequately housed.’

Manchester City Council also felt pressure from its long waiting lists in the 1960s:

> The more rapidly we complete houses, the more urgent becomes the need to re-house families from clearance areas, otherwise, to prevent properties standing empty, with the consequent risk of vandalism and loss of rent, we shall be compelled to let them to families on the waiting list.


42 Untitled Report, Housing Committee Minutes, Volume 51, 12 November 1962, p. 491, Greater Manchester County Record Office (GMCRO), ref. GB127.Council Minutes/Housing Committee/51.
The risk for the local authorities was that the demand for new properties caused by clearance projects could outstrip the supply. It was a matter of volume, rather than housing form or design.

Where social concerns, perhaps the most likely to slip into utopianism, are noted, they are presented in a direct and functional manner by the housing department in their minutes. In the example of the redevelopment of Longsight in the 1960s, social concerns were rooted in everyday rhythms of shopping and unspecified ‘community facilities’:

The shopping requirements of the area [Dillon Street, Longsight] will be met for the most part in the Neighbourhood Centre outside the boundary of this Compulsory Purchase Order and to be located in the adjoining Everton Road Redevelopment area. The Centre will comprise about 20 shops and other community facilities. One or two ‘corner’ type shops may be required to serve the housing within the Dillon Street area, particularly those parts furthest away from the Neighbourhood Centre.43

Concerns about Dillon Street’s social functioning are framed in spatial terms here. Distance from the neighbourhood centre, which is envisioned as the central social point of every residential area, is of particular interest, as it is not provided within the redevelopment area itself, but in an adjoining neighbourhood. These are practical considerations of the way the estate could be used following completion. This is not an isolated example in its tone or approach to social provisions. Throughout the 1960s the local authority set out its plans for redevelopment areas across the city. A functional approach was

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taken, with the Gibson Street plans noting the importance of building form in making the area acceptable for residents and pedestrians:

Considerable variety is intended in the treatment of the maisonette blocks by introduction of set-backs, variations in storey height and use of balconies. The two-storey elements are grouped all together in the centre of the scheme with pedestrian routes to shops, schools, play areas and parks.\footnote{44}{J. Austen Bent, ‘Longsight Comprehensive Re-Development Area Stage 1: Gibson Street Clearance Area’, Housing Committee Minutes Vol. 57, 13 April 1966, pp. 179-180 (p. 179) GMCRO, ref. GB127.Council Minutes/Housing Committee/57.}

In Alice Coleman’s use of the term, all of Manchester City Council’s redevelopment activity following the end of the War would be considered utopian, simply because it was driven by state intervention. However, looking at the discourse the local authority created, a considerably more complex situation arises. A failure narrative based upon a significant overemphasis of utopianism in the 1950s and 1960s has affected the way council estates are imagined and managed. The consistent return to isolated statements of utopianism attached to post-war social housing sets them up for failure. In Manchester, despite its characterisation as a local authority driven by ideas of civic pride, the housing department and planners consistently focused on the volume of dwellings they were able to provide, rather than partaking in abstract utopian dreaming.\footnote{45}{On civic pride in Manchester, see Peter Shapely, Duncan Tanner and Andrew Walling, ‘Civic Culture and Housing Policy in Manchester in Manchester, 1945-1979’, \textit{Twentieth Century British History} 15:4, (2004), pp. 410-424.}

‘Outsider’ Narratives

Council estates are represented in academic and popular discourses in a markedly different way than they are by the local residents interviewed from
the study estates. Lisa McKenzie has explained this process in terms of ‘outsider’ narratives and ‘insider’ narratives:

Academic researchers have often been accused of being distant, or only speaking to each other. This book [Getting By] is none of those things. It is a story from the inside, but also one that aims to challenge the simplistic and uncomplicated way that council estate life is often represented.46

This is a useful way of looking at the tension between different perspectives, experiences and means of producing knowledge, because it simultaneously gives agency to those with experience, ‘insiders’, and challenges the ‘simplistic’ views of outsiders. McKenzie’s personal position as an academic ‘insider’ in her study estate of St Ann’s in Nottingham is a persuasive argument for such an approach. This section will look at the construction of ‘outsider’ or public narratives, and the different ways they are dealt with by residents interviewed from Manchester. It argues that ‘outsider’ voices are characterised by a failure narrative, and demonstrates how local residents are aware of, interpret and manage such representations of their homes and lifestyles.

Public narratives centred on failure have consistently appeared in the local and national press, in the political arena, and films and television documentaries throughout the post-war period. As examples of state failure, dangerous inner-city neighbourhoods, or the conspiracy of big business to profit from poverty, failed council estates are a powerful visual and imaginary space for public discourse.47 As the Daily Express reported in 1978, ‘After 33 years of post-war development, housing is still the great British disaster

46 McKenzie, Getting By, p. 4.
47 Dunleavy, The Politics of Mass Housing in Britain.
story’. The residents interviewed for this thesis did not position their narratives in accordance with this failure discourse, however, which leads to a problem in reconciling the representation of estate by ‘outsiders’, such as the media or academics, and the lived experience as retold by ‘insiders’, or residents themselves.

Poor reputation goes beyond affecting the life of the individual estate resident, however, as it forms a kind of ‘feedback loop’ with national housing policy and local initiatives. The use of ‘feedback loop’ is particularly apt here, as a term borrowed from oral history theory to indicate a relationship between public or cultural ideas, and memories, or the ‘cultural circuit’. In this case, the feedback loop is formed when national housing policy responds to perceived social, cultural and economic failings spatially located in post-war housing estates. Repeated policy changes suggest failings with previous interventions, and create a narrative of failure which residents must position their memories and experiences within, whether they support the dominant narrative or not. This works in a similar way to Penny Summerfield’s finding that some women struggled to achieve ‘composure’ when discussing memories of their activity in the Second World War which didn’t fit with dominant cultural perspectives of ‘women’s war work’. Because of the far-reaching economic, social and personal effects that this feedback loop results in for housing policy, from changes to welfare to physical interventions through regeneration, it is an important area of study for scholars interested in council housing.

49 Thomson, Anzac Memories; See also Dawson, Soldier Heroes; Summerfield, Reconstructing Women’s Wartime Lives, pp. 16-18.
One example of a feedback loop in action is the process of demolition, where 'outsider' narratives position the spectacle of destruction as the result of inherent failures in the provision of social housing. Images of demolition confirm the failure of previous housing policy. The failure narrative of social housing came to dominate public discourse in the 1970s and 1980s. In the early 1980s, for example, a number of television documentaries highlighted the physical and social problems associated with high-rise housing provision in Britain. They were not based on the experience of residents, but took an 'outsider' view, traveling to and filming estates such as Hulme in Manchester, an approach evocative of the sociological forays into working-class districts made by George Orwell in the 1930s.\footnote{George Orwell, The Road to Wigan Pier, (London, 2001 [1937]).} The failure narrative in these programmes manifested itself through images of demolition.\footnote{For example, between 1978 and 1983, World in Action, the ITV topical documentary series, produced two programmes about industrialised building techniques and high rise housing failures; 'There’s No Place Like Hulme', World in Action, 10 April 1978, ITV; 'The System Builder', World in Action, 20 June 1983, ITV. See also Adam Curtis, Inquiry: The Great British Housing Disaster, (1984), which broadcast on BBC two at 8.10pm.} For example, in Inquiry: The Great British Housing Disaster, made in 1984 by the documentary filmmaker Adam Curtis, the opening sequences depict wrecking balls and the demolition of multi-storey dwellings.\footnote{Curtis describes himself as a 'libertarian' and works largely on themes of power in the twentieth century. See Chris Drake, ‘Adam Curtis’, Film Comment (July/August 2012).} In Figure 4.6, a still taken from the film, we see a wrecking ball in action, demolishing an unidentified slab block, the fruits of its previous labour foregrounded. What Curtis suggests here is that the result of failure is demolition.
The link between high-rise or system-built housing provision and demolition is a common and continuing theme in public discourse, with local and national newspapers reporting the demolition of tower blocks as public spectacles.\textsuperscript{54} Such reportage continued through the 1990s and 2000s. In 1997, for example, the \textit{Daily Express} published an article by Lord Palumbo, the life peer and property developer, which asked readers ‘Why don’t we pull down a building for the Millennium?’ noting that ‘some of those [buildings] thrown up during the last 50 years are positively grotesque’.\textsuperscript{55} The link with time is crucial here; as the demolition of ‘grotesque’ post-war buildings becomes part of the

\textsuperscript{54} An exception to this is the recent listing of a small number of 1960s buildings, including Park Hill in Sheffield. However, the listing of Brutalist buildings in particular is controversial. See, for example: Aidan While, ‘The State and the Controversial Demands of Cultural Built Heritage: Modernism, Dirty Concrete and Postwar Listing in England’, \textit{Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design} 34, (2007), pp. 645-663.

celebration of a new millennium, whilst also acting as a symbolic end to the twentieth century. Recent proposals to demolish blocks in the Red Road estate in Glasgow as part of the opening ceremony for the 2014 Commonwealth Games, hosted in the city, were only shelved following an online petition. Opponents to the plan ‘questioned the message the demolition would send, and described the plans as insensitive to former residents as well as asylum seekers currently living in the sixth block’.56 Perhaps this signals a change in attitude towards tower blocks, at least in terms of recognising their position as former homes.

The demolition of high-rise blocks is used as an end-point for a narrative of failure in the ‘outsider’ perspective. The utopian charge noted in the first section is frequently included in public failure narratives. In 1977, for example, the Daily Mirror reported: ‘Tower blocks were once thought to be a symbol of a bright new Britain. For many people they have proved to be a curse.’57 Similarly, the Daily Express titled one of their articles on housing ‘A Towering Dream that was Doomed to Topple’, which argued that ‘the planners, architects, councillors and sociologists who gave us their vision of a “promised land” to replace Britain’s pre-war slums – had booed on a grand scale.’58 National newspapers also claim legitimacy in their narrative through quoting high profile politicians. The language available to these politicians was equally constrained by the power of the failure narrative. In 2000, for example, the

*Daily Express* quoted William Hague MP: ‘The worst of these tower block estates stand as a monument to the monstrous insensitivity of urban planners who dreamed of creating an urban utopia but instead created rabbit warrens of crime.’\(^{59}\) Here, utopia-turned-sour is held responsible for criminal activity in a powerful recourse to environmental determinism. No alternative future is offered as a possibility for such ‘tower block estates’, which become an unidentified mass subject only to degrees of ‘worst’-ness. The planner is cast in the role of the ‘insensitive’, and, to an extent, single-minded expert desperate to remake the world, and the resident is cast as criminal or victim.

Negative representations of council estates, such as those included above, abound in popular and media discourses.\(^{60}\) In Manchester, the study estates have received negative press attention throughout their existence. For example, ‘Fort Ardwick’ in Manchester was described as looking like ‘a concentration camp’ in a 1973 article published by *The Guardian* on system-built flats.\(^{61}\) However, residents’ narratives do not necessarily fit neatly with such characterisations, as demonstrated in this chapter. This is an important issue, as interviewees talked about their awareness of negative attitudes towards the places they live, and how they understood this as a judgement on their lives and values.

The emphasis on dramatic demolitions of failed estates in ‘outsider’ discourse since the 1980s is not representative of the experience of tenants interviewed for this project. Though many of the residents had recently lived

\(^{60}\) Clapson, *Working Class Suburb*, p. 1; McKenzie, *Getting By*.  
through a process of regeneration which necessitated at least partial demolition of their estates, the process was piecemeal and slow in comparison with the dramatic film Adam Curtis made in the 1980s. Figure 4.7 shows the Wenlock Way flats following completion in 1972. Figures 4.8 and 4.9 show the gradual demolition of the Wenlock Way tower blocks in the West Gorton estate that took place throughout 2013 and 2014.62

![Figure 4.7 B. Garth, Gorton (West) Wenlock Way Flats, Taken from Bennett Street, Ardwick (1972). Source: GMCRO LIC, ref. m24434](image)

Although the outcome for these tower blocks is ultimately the same as for those depicted in Adam Curtis’ film, the process of demolition in West Gorton is entirely different. The blocks were peeled back, layer by layer, over a number of months, revealing the internal decoration of each individual flat. Residents did not experience any single demolition event or spectacle, and when asked about the process, appeared to have become used to seeing the

62 The dark brown building in the background of Figures 4.8 and 4.9 is the Fujitsu Tower, now a City Council office and location of the West Gorton community centre.
skeletal form of the blocks disappear gradually from their landscape. For example, Tony talked about the demolition of the estate as a dynamic process:

[Interviewer] So what’s it like having the building site, a bit further away now [when Tony moved their immediate road was not tarmacked and houses were still being built across the road], what do you think when you look out of the window?

[Tony] Its sad when you walk past, you can see all the estate down, erm...

[Interviewer] Is it a bit weird seeing those flats coming down?

[Tony] Yeah. Its weird, its totally different now, the estate.63

The gradual removal of the flats, for Tony, meant that the estate was changing regularly, as each building, or part of the tower blocks, was removed.

Figure 4.8 Wenlock Way, West Gorton. Source: author’s own, February 2014.

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63 Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022
The ‘insider’ narrative of the demolition of these blocks is different from the feedback loop demonstrated in public discourse. Rather than centring on spectacular failures culminating in the spectacle of demolition, the Wenlock Way towers were understood as out-dated and in need of modernisation, for example Gary noted that the post-war estates were ‘not built to last’. 64 Residents who moved from these flats did not see them as a failure, with some residents reluctant to move from them. For example, Walter noted that he was happier in the old flats than the new (regenerated) flats because they suited his daily routine:

[Walter] They’re nice flats [the regenerated flats] don’t get me wrong, but the only thing I don’t like is the open plan living. Whatever anybody says, that, that detracts from the er, from the flats themselves. 65

[Interviewer] So your previous flat wasn’t open plan at all?

[Walter] No, everything was separate.

[Interviewer] What is it about the open plan that bothers you?

[Walter] Well, its on view all the time. If you cook, the smell is actually in the room, and er, there are no doors to shut. If you don’t feel like cleaning up, but you’ve got to. I mean, you don’t always feel like you should do, and you can shut the door and leave it ‘till later on you know, or even the following morning if you’re that idle. But, er, under these circumstances you can’t. 66

Importantly, whether they wanted to move from those particular blocks or not, the residents affected were happy that their move was to another high rise flat in another part of the regenerated estate. Figure 4.9 demonstrates the close proximity of the demolition to some of the newly built homes in West Gorton.

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64 Interview with Gary, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850030.
65 Interview with Walter, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850033.
66 Interview with Walter, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850033.
These images, and the way that residents talked about the process of demolition demonstrate the differences between ‘outsider’ and ‘insider’ discourses on social housing. Whilst ‘outsider’ discourse centres on the dramatic culmination of failure, residents in West Gorton offered an ‘insider’ narrative which centred on individual memories of the blocks, and their gradual removal from the landscape, almost unnoticed but not unmarked.

Beyond the representation of the built environment, the failure narrative of social housing also draws strength from a range of resident stereotypes. These are often muddied with the built form. For example, the figure of the ‘slum type’ populated unflattering reports of tenants between 1950 and 1965, linking the older housing that had been cleared with its replacement, before the new estates were coined as the new ‘slums in the
For example, in 1950s Salford, the local newspaper, *The Salford City Reporter*, described some ex-slum dwellers as:

The sort of people who burn bannisters when they are short of firewood, never repair a broken window, sleep as often as not on the floor and have almost no cooking utensils or furniture. They live on fish and chips and eat standing up… A Blackpool delegate told of one such family which had reduced a new Corporation house to a pig-sty in six months.

Though powerful, and rich in imagery, the ‘ex-slum dweller’ characterisation did not dominate representations of council tenants between 1950 and the late 1960s. Rather, reportage was frequently sensitive to the social and economic problems that council tenants faced. In 1957, for example, *The Manchester Guardian* published an article entitled: ‘When Families Retreat Before the Slum Destroyers: Can They Afford the New Environment?’ which focused on the economic pressure displaced tenants faced to pay the increased rents that new council housing demanded. It was not until the 1970s that the depiction of the council tenant as a failure became an established narrative.

The failure narrative of social housing tenants is strongly linked to concerns about criminal behaviour located in council estates. In academic literature, the work of Oscar Newman and Alice Coleman has drawn links between the built environment of social housing in the US and Britain, and high crime rates. The search for a solution to this problem has spawned an entire

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68 ‘Salford’s “Problem Families” Film Strip: At Meeting of Health Workers’, *Salford City Reporter*, 28 April 1950, p. 6, Col. 3.
69 ‘When Families Retreat Before the Slum Destroyers: Can They Afford the New Environment?’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 6 July 1957, p. 3.
industry in domestic security aimed at public housing, exemplified by the police-led ‘secured by design’ initiative, which aims to design crime out of residential layouts.\textsuperscript{71} In popular representations, the link between the council tenant and the criminal is also present. For example, the fictional Gallagher family in Channel Four’s \textit{Shameless} drama live in a world of petty-crime, gang activity, and anti-social behaviour.\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Shameless} is a particularly potent example of the ‘outsider’ narrative of social housing for this project, as the first four series were filmed on location in the West Gorton estate. Residents interviewed from this estate therefore had direct experience of the interplay between ‘outsider’ narratives, their reception and legacy.

Resident testimonies showed acute awareness of the failure narrative popularly attached to social housing, and its transference to social housing residents. The interviewees did not merely accept or reject such narratives, but evaluated them in terms of their own experience of their home, neighbourhood and local authority. The sociologist Jeffrey C. Bridger noted in 1996 that ‘communities are defined, in large part, by the stories people tell about them.’\textsuperscript{73} Such stories could include the characterisations of ‘outsiders’ as much as ‘insiders’. Many of the concerns raised by residents about living in social housing were related to the perceptions of outsiders, and their experience of

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\item Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), \textit{Secured by Design Principles}, (Version 1, 2004).
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the broader failure narrative from outside the estates. Indeed, residents interviewed for this project appear to be aware of the wider negative discourse surrounding their tenancies and the neighbourhoods they live in. The interplay between resident perspectives and a broader narrative of failure is important, because it demonstrates what Lisa McKenzie has termed ‘violence’ inflicted on individual and collective lives through its repetition.74

One aspect of the feedback loop is the way that residents evaluate and respond to external characterisations of their homes. In addition to challenging simplistic representations of council estates by outsiders, residents frequently feel misrepresented, or not represented at all in popular and academic discourse. One key example of the popular discourse on council estates is the Channel Four drama Shameless. In interviews with residents from the West Gorton estate, it was a key concern:

[Walter]: Look at the original benefits soap Shameless.

[Gary]: That was, I mean, did you take any of that as serious?

[Walter]: No! I didn’t know anybody who did, I thought it was funny. It was good television, I mean, the antics they got up to! You know they were more outrageous, the more you got into the programme the more outrageous that they, you know, what was going on. And erm, it just beggared belief, what they were showing. Er, but some people did take umbrage over it.

[Gary]: Well, they made a lot of money out of it din’t they? It was just a programme want it? It was just a programme. But people, … thought that West Gorton was like that. You get people coming round taking pictures of the houses over there where the Gallagher’s used to live.

74 McKenzie, Getting By, p. 8.
[Anna]: And the number of times we’ve been stopped in the street and been asked where’s the [inaudible] pub, you know?75

The residents are very clear in their belief that *Shameless* was an extreme form of council estate life portrayed in a way to make people laugh, and was not to be taken seriously. However, they also point to outsiders who might not get the joke, and who continue to transform their estate, their neighbourhood, in to a film set even after filming was complete.

Tony, who also lived in the West Gorton estate, brought the topic of *Shameless* up in a discussion about the reputation of the area:

[Interviewer] So do you think this area has a reputation, I mean I might be wrong?

[Tony] Well a lot people call West Gorton, the people who call it don’t live in West Gorton. I think we got a bit of a reputation, when we started filming *Shameless*. ‘Cause we did have a face in *Shameless*; the pub. And people used to say, well often off that programme thinking this is what it was like and it did give us a bad reputation, the programme of *Shameless*.

[Interviewer] So did you watch *Shameless*?

[Tony] Well it was filmed outside our house

[Interviewer] Did you watch it when it was on telly?

[Tony] No I didn’t. You watched it didn’t you [points to wife, who was intermittently present but did not take part in the interview]– once or twice.

[Interviewer] Was it not a fair assessment?

[Tony] No. one day we couldn’t get in the house, ‘cause they was filming outside the front door. They had taped it off and we couldn’t get in the house.76

75 Interview with Gary, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850033; Interview with Anna, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850033; Interview with Walter, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850033.; and Interview with Paul, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850033.
76 Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022.
Unlike the discussion with Gary, Anna, Walter and Paul, Tony felt that the filming of *Shameless* on his estate had a direct effect on the way West Gorton was perceived by outsiders. He notes that it is people who don’t live in the area that might have their opinion swayed by representations such as *Shameless*. In contrast, his ‘insider’ view is based on everyday experience, not only of the estate, but also the process of filming the drama on set.

Beyond the directly relevant example of *Shameless*, the residents interviewed from West Gorton also highlighted their feelings that council estates and their residents were stigmatised, linking this to television programmes:

[Walter]: And, erm, yes. Some people do tend to look down their noses

[Paul]: Bit of a stigma involved with council households at the minute, that *Benefits Street* [Channel Four documentary following the lives of benefit claimants in Birmingham], programmes like that don’t do...

[Walter]: Well they don’t do, they don’t do us any good do they?

[Anna]: No they don’t, you know. ‘Cause, you know, there are workers out of us, you know...

[Gary]: I think, what you’ve said is true, but they try and show these, like *Benefits Street*, because it sells on the television. If they went into a real community, and see the mundane things that we do, which we do, erm, it wouldn’t get on the television because it wouldn’t be good airtime. But this is what a real community’s made of, its made of people who are willing to spare their time, do things, not people who are ‘where do I get my cigarettes from?’, that’s just for television... A real community works from the bottom and does the mundane things.77

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77 Interview with Gary, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850033; Interview with Anna, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850033; Interview with Walter, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850033; and Interview with Paul, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850033.
Here, the residents highlight the need to consider the everyday, the ‘mundane’ in the council estate discourse. They felt it unfair that exceptional behaviour, of non-working benefits claimants, was used to represent all estate residents. They also felt that this discourse dominated so much that their experiences, as working tenants paying their own way, had little influence in the broader representation of their housing tenure. Yet they also felt able to challenge this representation, with Gary in particular emphasising the inauthentic nature of documentary programmes, as they are made to ‘sell’.

If we look at ‘outsider’ discourses, we see how a social housing failure narrative is maintained throughout the post-war period. This narrative rests on aesthetic, social and moral judgements of both the built environment and residents’ lifestyles. Residents were keen to talk about their experience of ‘outsider’ discourses, in relation to the media and conversations with non-estate residents. They talked about these experiences in relation to their own knowledge, evaluating the representations of council housing and challenging them. Residents felt that they were misrepresented, or not represented at all in the public discourse about social housing. This situation will only change if resident’s wide range of views and experiences are valued.

‘Insider’ Narratives

Council estates are represented in academic and popular discourses in a markedly different way than they are by the local residents interviewed from the study estates. Perspectives offered by the residents interviewed broadly challenged the metanarrative of failure. They acknowledge social and economic
issues encountered through living in specific forms of housing in certain areas, but they also found and talked about considerable positives in their lives and neighbourhoods. However, their ‘insider’ narrative is excluded from the public discourse, leaving the failure narrative unchecked.

Residents’ voices are not currently equal contributors to the post-war narrative of social housing. The fragmented, contradictory and complex nature of their memories and feelings about the places they have lived is perhaps part of this, as their narratives rarely fit within the neat, well-defined representations favoured in public discourse. Lisa McKenzie attributes this to the assumption that working-class identity is considered ‘one-dimensional’.78 However, historical research has also argued that residents are not merely ignored, but excluded from public discussions about council housing. For example, Peter Shapely, in research centred on public participation in planning in the late 1960s and early 1970s, argued that ‘tenants have been absent from the ‘history’ because they were absent from the process’.79 Following Shapely, it is the contention of this thesis that exclusion from the initial planning process is not a valid reason for exclusion from all further debates and discourse.

Because of tenants’ exclusion, there is a considerable gap in the literature on housing in post-war Britain. A new methodology, which integrates the sometimes jarring and difficult perspectives of residents, offers a solution not only to this gap in understanding, but also a means to better integrate the experience of residents into the future directions of housing policy. This final

78 McKenzie, Getting By, p. 3.
section turns to analysis of personal testimonies collected from estate residents in Manchester, to challenge the negative consensus, and provide a more nuanced account of what are considered successes and failures by the residents themselves. If policy-makers can fully integrate the hopes, desires, wishes and preferred solutions of residents in to their interventions, it is entirely possible to challenge the negative stereotype currently attached to estates.

Many of the residents interviewed offered a counter-narrative to the utopia-turned-sour or failure narratives prevalent in ‘outsider’ discourse. Some residents questioned the need for recent regeneration interventions in the West Gorton area, suggesting they were content within their pre-regeneration estate. For example, Tony, who lived on the Wenlock Way estate in West Gorton until it was regenerated three years ago explained:

[Interviewer] So what did you think of the new street?

[Tony] Oh it was good, we had some good neighbours. Up to 2 years ago it was good. We didn’t want to go.\textsuperscript{80}

This echoes the findings of Lisa McKenzie in her sociological study of the St Ann’s estate in Nottingham, where local residents felt that although they faced numerous social and economic problems, within their estate itself they sourced considerable value and success.\textsuperscript{81} Tony was happy with his council home, and did not see the rationale behind regeneration.

Other residents counter-act the failure narrative of specific estates. Cath was interviewed in her home in Ardwick. She bought the property in 1993, but grew up in the now infamous Hulme Crescents in the 1970s (Figure 4.10 and

\textsuperscript{80} Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022.
\textsuperscript{81} McKenzie, \textit{Getting By}.
4.11). Hulme V, better known as the Hulme Crescents, became a potent symbol of utopia-turned-sour. It was described in a *Times* article in 1993 as:

...dominated by gang warfare, drugs, decay, depression and unemployment. High-rise blocks, unlit alleyways, crime and intimidation have helped to create a fertile breeding ground for teenage drug-dealing and addiction.82

The planning of Hulme V is usually framed in utopian terms, with Alison Ravetz highlighting the utopian intents proclaimed by Manchester's city planning department at the time:

The rebuilding of Hulme was said to be on a scale surpassed only in Rotterdam, Warsaw or Hiroshima, and the city's planning department boasted that it was “the first major comprehensive project to be conceived within the framework of an overall town design” and “deliberately planned to allow ... as many people as possible to live near and have direct access to the Centres of community life, the shops, clubs, libraries, public houses etc.”, so as to “encourage social contact and contribute to a sense of community.”83

Figure 4.10, below, shows the planning model for Hulme V, with the four crescents clearly visible. It illustrates how planners imagined the new estate to look. Its model form highlights the clean lines and bold architectural designs employed in the project.

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Figure 4.10 ‘Town and Country Planning, Hulme, Manchester’ (1972). Source: GMCRO LIC, ref. m58778.

Cath’s memories of life in the Crescents not only challenge the broad failure narrative attached to council housing, but also the specific problems identified with mass, system-built high rise slab blocks, and with the Hulme V estate in particular.\footnote{Shapely, ‘The Press and the System Built Developments of Inner City Manchester’; Glendinning and Muthesius, \textit{Tower Block}.} When asked what the Crescents were like, Cath answered:

[Cath] They were good, there were four floors, shape of a crescent and there were like… ours had four bedrooms, but they had different numbers of bedrooms. They weren’t just like one bedroom flats. It wasn’t like a tower block. I just remember running around the landings on the crescents. We had lots of friends there. It was quite sociable.\footnote{Interview with Cath, May 2014, ref. VN850022. This quote was also used in Chapter One 'Home as Emotional Practice', p. 75. It is quoted here again because of its usage by Cath as an alternative narrative to the dominant image of Hulme as a social failure.}
The ‘sociable’ aspect of the Hulme Crescents is usually referred to within the context of a counterculture element of young residents emerging in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{86} The sociability of Hulme is not usually associated with families, or with the period Cath talks about, the mid- to late-1970s.

Figure 4.11, below, is a photograph taken by the music and rock band photographer, Kevin Cummins. It was included in his exhibition at the Richard Goodall gallery in the city centre, which focused on the musical heritage of the city. Cummins explained its inclusion in his work:

Hulme Crescents were, rather grandly, based on the crescents of Bath. They were built to rehouse people after all the urban clearances that got rid of Hulme’s terraced streets. The plan didn’t work. Families quickly moved out; everybody wanted a garden and a fence. The council was going to pull it down but they decided to use it as student overspill. Suddenly the crescents were being populated by students, musicians and left-field types who didn’t want to pay big rents. Some of the flats were knocked through, illegally obviously, and turned into clubs, photography and recording studios, all sorts of stuff. It became a really creative area and the Factory club was right on the edge of it.\textsuperscript{87}

Figure 4.11, in contrast to 4.10, hints at the desolate environment created within one of the crescents, emphasised by the two small trees in the centre. It is a stark space, and from the photograph, it is easy to imagine it as windswept and isolating.

\textsuperscript{86} Ravetz, \textit{Council Housing and Culture}, p. 230.
\textsuperscript{87} Kevin Cummins, ‘Kevin Cummins on Manchester Music’, \textit{The Observer}, 20 September 2009.
Cath’s memories of her childhood were firmly situated within the built context of the Crescents:

[Cath] And there was a little park. If you went downstairs across the grass there was a park in the middle of the crescent. So everyone congregated in the park as well.

[Interviewer] So what types of games did you play? What did you get up to?

[Cath] We used to play knock a door run. Knock the doors and ran round the Crescent. And we used to play tig and stuff like that and we used to play in the park. There was a slide and swings, a roundabout, climbing frames. It was great. There was lots for the kids to do then. Not like now, there is not as much for the kids to do is there?88

Cath makes a number of important points here. She remembers the grass and parkland, and amenities for children such as climbing frames and swings. These small, everyday aspects of the Hulme Crescents are frequently lost in the narrative that charts the estate’s demise, which tend to focus on grand social

88 Interview with Cath, May 2014, ref. VN850022.
and physical disintegration. Cath also highlights the sociability of living on the estate, again, an experience neglected in the failure narrative of estates and the Crescents themselves. Cath engages in what could be termed nostalgia in her final statement, where she compares her childhood with that experienced by children in the present. This is an interesting comment in that post-war council estates are rarely associated with the practice of nostalgia, that is, comparing past with present and finding in 'some sense that the present is deficient.'

Critiques of the Hulme Crescents are often based on the physical disintegration of the built structures of the blocks. Cath is clear that she does not remember any signs of physical deterioration, but emphasised the social loss as families gradually moved away:

[Cath] I didn’t want to move, but I think it got to the stage where they wanted to knock the flats down cause I think it did come a bit... I don’t know... there were the riots and there were different other things that went on. And I think a lot of people were moving out, they started to move out and I remember in my last year of primary school, there wasn’t many of the families that I had grown up with. They had moved on.

[Interviewer] So it had gone quieter?

[Cath] Yeah it had gone quieter and a lot of families were moving out. And I think it was because they were planning on knocking them down. I didn’t know at that age, cause I didn’t know at that age.

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89 For example, in Ravetz, Council Housing and Culture, pp. 228-237.
90 Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw, ‘The Dimensions of Nostalgia’ in Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase (Eds.), The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia, (Manchester, 1989), pp. 1-17 (p. 3).
92 Interview with Cath. May 2014, ref. VN850024.
In the same way as interviewees talked about community in terms of position in the life cycle in Chapter Two, here Cath frames her memories of the Crescents within the context of childhood. She explains that there were occurrences she was unaware of because of her age. This is an important point in relation to personal testimony. Cath’s narrative is primarily one of growing up, she had access to some spaces on the estate that adults would not share in the same way, and conversely she explains her lack of knowledge about some social aspects of the adult world, particularly concerns about crime. As oral historians, we must be sensitive to the different experiences that age brings.

Cath was not alone in her broadly positive memories of living in non-traditional or high-rise housing as a child. Tony, who grew up in the Brook House flats in Gorton in the 1960s (Figure 4.12), remembered them fondly:

[Interviewer] What did it feel like seeing that [the Brook House flats] being knocked down?

[Tony] It was a shame really cos we had some lovely days in the flats.

[Interviewer] So did it make you think about all those times?

[Tony] Yes all the old times we had.

[Interviewer] I know my childhood home was knocked down and I felt the same.

[Tony] We were all born in the flats, and to see it knocked down it was sad yeah, it was sad. Good memories of those flats.

Tony’s experience of demolition inspired him to remember his childhood in the flats and recall positive memories. Photographed in 1964, Figure 4.12 shows the Brook House flats as a location of social activity, with shops integrated within the blocks of flats.

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93 See Chapter Two, pp. 126-136.
94 Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022.
The residents interviewed were critical about some of their experiences in post-war estates. Even when broadly positive, their accounts were evaluative and reflected what they felt was good about their estate, in conjunction and conversation with what they felt was less successful. For example, Betty’s memories of the process of moving from her slum-condemned home to her current post-war home, quoted and discussed at length in Chapter One, emphasised what she saw as a cleavage in her memories which started at the moment of rehousing, denying any kind of relationship with the new house.\textsuperscript{95} Betty also discussed her experience of crime on the post-war estate she lived in:

\begin{quote}
It [crime] goes on, it goes on. I mean, there’s been shootings on this road. I’ve seen it, yeah... ‘Cause, when they taped all the road off to do with the shooting at the pub, the shooting that was in that street, that woman that got hurt. Digging the bullets out of the side of the police station [laughs].\textsuperscript{96}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{95} Interview with Betty, 22 July 2013, ref. VN850016 See Chapter One ‘Home as Emotional Practice’ p. 78.
\textsuperscript{96} Interview with Betty, 22 July 2013, ref. VN850016.
These types of memories contradict the otherwise positive assessment of the estates that Betty and Angela offered. However, Betty, along with Angela and Sue (who were all interviewed together), emphasised that they do not fear crime in their everyday lives. When asked whether they feel safe in the neighbourhood all three immediately answered ‘yes’.\(^97\) This demonstrates the nuanced relationship that residents share with their homes and their environment even as distressing events unfold.

The way that residents interviewed for this project talk about their homes and neighbourhoods is not currently represented in the failure narrative that dominates social housing. In part, this is explained through problems of methodology. In academia, the challenges that speaking to residents in large numbers can present results in a narrative centred on official perspectives. In popular discourse, the failure narrative is a strong framework for reporting on the lives of the disadvantaged. It offers the opportunity to criticise both the national state and the individual. For residents, popular narratives are keenly felt in everyday life, and academia is not yet able to challenge damaging stereotypes.

**A Return to Clearance: On-going Beliefs in the Power of the Environment**

One major effect of the council-estate-as-failure narrative's proliferation over the post-war period is a lack of confidence in the built environments provided.

\(^{97}\) Interview with Betty, 22 July 2013, ref. VN850016; Interview with Angela, 22 July 2013, ref. VN850016; Interview with Sue, 22 July 2013, ref. Vn850016.
Unlike the nuanced memories offered by Betty and Angela in the previous section, the failure narrative is simplistic and glosses over the successes that residents might read into the very same environment that is causing them some form of distress. Over the past thirty years, a third wave of urban interventions has seen the clearance and reconstruction of a large number of council estates (and commercial/industrial areas) across the country, and in places such as Ardwick, Longsight and West Gorton in Manchester. Since the 1980s, interventions into working-class residential urban areas are largely understood within a framework of ‘regeneration’. The term serves as a catch-all for a wide range of projects and activities aimed at deprived or declining residential areas, including remedial structural work, tenant participation, layout remodelling, aesthetic improvements and increasing the sustainability of neighbourhoods, along with the reuse of former industrial and commercial land and a wider range of social and cultural interventions. However, it is not necessarily clear what is different about these residential regeneration practices from earlier interventions, particularly as these projects continue to rely on a belief in the power of the environment to change lives, just as was the case in the slum clearances of the post-war years.

This final section looks at how Manchester City Council discovered and reacted to a range of physical defects in its housing stock, which emerged through the 1980s. Located across many of the council estates planned and

99 Ash Amin, Doreen Massey and Nigel Thrift, Cities for the Many Not for the Few, (Bristol, 2000).
built between the 1960s and 1970s, problems included deteriorating structural integrity of multi-storey blocks, high rates of empty properties, and problems associated with public disorder and social breakdown. In addition, the city was shedding citizens at an alarming rate: ‘Between 1951 and 1981 Manchester’s population declined by one third from 703,000 to 462,700.’ These problems emerged at the same time as central government policy shifted to a market-led approach towards the urban environment, where the state was no longer the automatic custodian of urban affairs. Characterised as ‘neoliberal’ by geographers and urban theorists, these post-1980 interventions are framed in the language of regeneration. Literature on Manchester’s experience of regeneration has emphasised a shift in attitudes by the local authority, from a dogged loyalty to ‘municipal socialism’ at the beginning of the 1980s, to a wholesale embrace of neoliberal regeneration by the end of the decade.

Whatever the political background to 1980s regeneration, this chapter demonstrates the continuities of environmental determinism and local authority concern with providing adequate housing for its citizens, regardless of the funding structure or policy framework.

The spark for intervention into the physical fabric of a number of Manchester’s housing estates was the emergence of a range of physical defects, highlighted in local authority reports since the early 1980s. The Housing Committee and city architect responded to each report with calls for further research before the city could plan a response, suggesting the authorities were

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unsure of the scale of the problem. The first major physical issues were identified in the Wellington Street deck-access flats in Beswick, built to similar designs as the Coverdale Crescent flats in Ardwick (the Wellington Street block is shown in Figure 4.13 and Figure 4.14). These estates were known locally as ‘Fort Beswick’ and ‘Fort Ardwick’ respectively, and along with physical concerns, suffered from a poor reputation. The report announcing physical failings in the Beswick estate came a full ten years after Gerald Kaufman had lambasted the social conditions in Beswick and Ardwick in parliament:

There is the noise from neighbours on the deck above and the deck below. The wind-swept balconies along which tenants have to walk are not as cozy as the streets from which they have come. Those welcoming corner shops, with their bright lights on winter evenings, have gone, and sometimes a new development has no new shops for too long a period. Even when they come, there are not enough of them. The scale of the buildings is often daunting. I have in mind Fort Beswick and Fort Ardwick in my own constituency. The design is frequently all too forbidding. That is why the two estates are called "Forts". "I am on the Fort", constituents tell me.

Such developments are often unsightly. The approaches are not attractively landscaped and are often strewn with litter and debris. Refuse disposal is too often haphazard and infrequent, and this can lead to the proliferation of insects and vermin which are already fostered by design defects.

Kaufman’s description of ‘the Forts’ fits within the tradition of failure narratives discussed throughout this chapter, and also draws on a nostalgia for the cleared

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102 For example, E. Clark, R. G. Goodhead, R. L. Munday and P. Short, ‘The Condition and Future of the Hulme III Deck Access Housing Estate’, Housing Committee Minutes Vol. 103, 13 February 1984, p. 607, suggested that further research was necessary in order for the City Council to make a decision on whether to demolish or repair the deck access blocks.


104 As discussed in Chapter Three, pp. 147-156. The estates have an online legacy in forums and memory websites, particularly those concerned with the built environment. Described as ‘truly dreadful’, and ‘it WAS grim’ on one site. See, for example: www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=363830 or www.manchesterhistory.net/manchester/gone/Fortardwick.

105 Kaufman, ‘Housing (Multi-Storey Developments)’, Col. 746.
working class streets as discussed in Chapter Two. The flats were eventually demolished ‘due to problems of water penetration and structural failure despite expenditure of £0.7M in an attempt to arrest decline.’

Following a large-scale study by structural engineers it became clear that there were serious physical defects emerging across the local authority housing stock, particularly concentrated in dwellings built using industrialised methods, such as the aforementioned deck-access blocks in Beswick and Ardwick, along with those at Hulme, Langley and Wythenshawe. Physical defects jeopardised the primary function of housing, that of security and shelter.

![Image: Ashton Old Road, Flats Under Construction on Un-Named Road (1971). Source: GMCRO LIC, ref. m12528.]

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106 Manchester City Council, 'Housing Defects in Manchester', p. 3.
The discovery of structural defects in Ardwick and Longsight led MCC to a largely physical and spatial response. Manchester's physical problems were analogous to those found in many other British cities, which Peter Shapely has termed a realisation of the 'horror' of the post-war project.\textsuperscript{107} As Shapely's terminology suggests, this was an emotionally charged subject. High-rise blocks, deck access flats, maisonettes and all other non-traditionally constructed dwellings were of concern, both nationally and within Manchester. ‘Non-traditional’ dwellings covers a range of medium and low rise housing forms, including those built using system-methods, prefabs, family homes built with non-traditional materials, and estates laid out according to planning models such as ‘Radburn’. Throughout the 1980’s the city's Housing Committee minutes read as a perpetual battle against a rising tide of structural and social problems. In Ardwick, for example, the early years of the 1980s saw a concentration on structural defects found in maisonettes at Geranium Walk

Problems at Coverdale Crescent [Gibson Street/’Fort Ardwick’] were revealed following the reports of a structural engineer in 1982. Defects at Fort Ardwick included water penetration, damp, structural weakness and deterioration in the integrity of the concrete panels due to incorrect assembly.

Figure 4.15 L. H. Price, Ardwick, Geranium Walk (1969). Source: GMCRO LIC, ref. m11562

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Awareness of physical problems and the visual cues of the difficult-to-let estate were not restricted to politicians and authorities. Outsider narratives soon dominated the interpretation of state and resident discourses. Press reportage at local and national levels highlighted some of the environmental defects associated with industrialised building methods. For example, before they were even completed, the estates at Coverdale Crescent and Wellington Street were appearing in the national press, due to their ‘Way Out’ design: ‘...given the unflattering local nickname of “Fort Ardwick” ... the development has been criticised in the city council chamber for “looking like Lego sets”’. Though the article goes on to make a number of positive remarks about the interior of the flats, describing them as ‘first class’, it ends with a pertinent remark:

However, Councillor Joseph Dean claimed that people who praised the style of the flats were not those who were going to live in them. He said some people on the corporation housing list would rather wait in shocking conditions for a traditional style house than move into “Fort Beswick” an even large development containing 1,080 dwellings. They had told him so.

Here, not only are links made between different estates some distance apart, but both are seen as failing to fulfil the aesthetic requirements of a ‘traditional’ house. Though elements within the local authority appear keen to advance the positive attributes which the interior of the dwellings possess, local residents in this article appear unwilling to compromise on the form of dwelling itself.

Later reports in the press were bolder in their demands for change. For example, The Guardian in the 1980s ran a series of reports calling for the

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demolition of the ‘disgraceful’ estates at Hulme, Fort Beswick and Fort Ardwick.\textsuperscript{113} Reports in the press not only conflated physical problems with social and moral obligations; they also collapsed numerous estates in the city into one failing mass. Press reportage is important when considering the responses made to both physical and social problems. Negative reportage in the local and national press affected the reputation of individual neighbourhoods, cities and regions, a point echoed in the resident interviews conducted for this project.\textsuperscript{114} Indeed, as discussed in Chapter Four, one major intention behind regeneration projects is to manage and improve any poor reputations attached to a neighbourhood.

Press reportage also pointed to the failure of the post-war estates to function as homes, particularly after the local authority had condemned them. In an article about Fort Beswick, Michele Hanson writing in \textit{The Guardian}, describes how the process of demolition made residents’ lives considerably harder:

Lifts, lighting, heating and plumbing were neglected and the few repairs which were done were done shoddily after months of nagging, and then soon needed doing again. Unofficial property strippers moved in, ripping out pipes, tanks, fittings.\textsuperscript{115}

It is important to note that this was not the experience of residents interviewed for this project, with Tony and Angela both stating that their experience of repairs over the years were extensive:


\textsuperscript{114} See for example; Jo Dean and Annette Hastings, \textit{Challenging Images: Housing Estates, Stigma and Regeneration}, (Bristol, 2000).

\textsuperscript{115} Hanson, ‘Betrayal of Fort Beswick’, p. 10.
Over the years, they did a re-wiring, re-plastering, all new window frames cos [sic] to compare with the British standard – health and safety. We got our repairs done, and then got the change of wiring and window frames, we got all that. New bath, new sinks. Our estate got revamped.\textsuperscript{116}

However, the problems described in the newspaper article above struck at the very functioning of a home. Without light, heat or running water the flats at Fort Beswick could no longer be considered habitable. A second report on Beswick simply states: ‘The estate was intended to provide better homes for the community. It has failed to do that.’\textsuperscript{117} The estate at Beswick was not alone. Hulme, too, was described in the national press in similar terms to the slums it replaced:

In Hulme, children still play among the overflowing rubbish bins. Metal coverings are bolted to the doors and windows of empty flats, yet vandals still force their way in.\textsuperscript{118}

Again, few could argue that the estate described here was fulfilling its function as a home for families. That the local authorities responded with physical interventions into the failing environments of Beswick, Ardwick and Hulme is not surprising, given that it was deficiencies of design and construction held responsible for many of their problems. However, the physical response to these issues is recast when considered in conjunction with social problems emerging at the same time.

\textsuperscript{116} Quote taken from Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022. Angela also agreed that requests for repairs were quickly responded to by the local authority, though she also noted that it took considerable effort to have double glazing put in to her house (an important point for her quality of life as she lives directly on the A6). Interview with Angela, 22 July 2013, ref. VN850016.

\textsuperscript{117} Mackie, ‘Marooned’, p. 9.

\textsuperscript{118} Catherine Pepinster, ‘High Hopes” Can Determined Tenant Action Beat the Horrors of Hulme and Hyde Park?’, The Guardian, 13 September 1989, p. 27.
Problems associated with mass-scale social housing were not restricted to physical deterioration; local and national governments also encountered a number of social problems on post-war estates. Concerns centred on the failure of post-war homes to function in an expected fashion. The 1980s are characterised by some academics as a decade where economic priorities out-trumped social concerns, with Steven Tiesdell and Philip Allmendinger arguing that urban policy in the 1980s ‘seemed to be about land and property rather than people and communities.’ However, from local authority evidence and press reports in Manchester, it appears that social concerns were highly prioritised in the city. In Moss Side, for example, the political agent for George Morton (MP for Moss Side) held planners responsible for the 1981 riots:

Planners responsible for widespread re-development in the Moss Side area of Manchester were blamed yesterday as one cause of July’s riots. Mr James Parrish, political agent for Mr George Morton, Moss Side’s Labour MP, told the resumed public inquiry into the disturbances that the planners had “crucified” rather than created a community. They had physically divided the community into sections, and had created social problems.

The discourse of the local state blamed planners rather than rioters. MCC also shifted blame from local residents by holding central government to account, as in its publication *Housing Defects*, where central government was blamed for forcing Manchester to build post-war housing using untested and inferior materials in non-traditional forms.

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121 MCC, ‘Housing Defects in Manchester’, p. 2
The neoliberal interpretation of interventions into the social aspects of council housing is built upon a shift in understandings of the causes of poverty. In line with this argument the 1980s are characterised as a period where political attitudes towards poverty shifted from structural explanations encompassing a wide range of actors, to individual blame, which refocused attention on the poor themselves and pointed to the changes they needed to make in order to be successful citizens. For example, Sir Keith Joseph stated in 1979 that:

> By any absolute standard there is very little poverty in Britain today. There are those who, like the old, the disabled, widows and some one-parent families, have special needs. There are other cases of poverty of a kind which no society can entirely eliminate because they result from, say, gross mismanagement, alcoholism or some unforeseen disaster.\(^{122}\)

Statements such as Sir Keith's led the historian Andy Thornley to conclude that according to the New Right doctrine, 'poverty stems from special needs or personal inadequacy.'\(^{123}\) There is little mention of the impact of the built environment on life chances or poverty in this explanation, a key difference from local authority discourses.

In Manchester, there has been no such shift to individual blame since the 1980s. Rather, the new wave of social problems (including vandalism and petty crime) re-discovered in the 1980s were associated with transient populations and large numbers of empty properties on estates such as those identified in Longsight, Ardwick and other parts of east Manchester.\(^{124}\) Unsurprisingly, the


\(^{124}\) MCC, 'Housing Defects', pp. 32-33.
erratic population figures on some estates were indicative of a wider haemorrhaging of population from the city region, with a loss of approximately 30 per cent between 1960 and 1980.\textsuperscript{125} There is some slippage between the perception of under-occupation on estates, de-population more generally and the way social problems were understood by the City Council. For example, in describing Coverdale Crescent in the mid-1980s, Manchester City Council explained: ‘The level of vandalism on the estate is high and rising. Currently the void level is 11\% and this reflects the unpopularity of these dwellings.’\textsuperscript{126} Both of these problems were considered solvable through physical interventions into housing conditions. Regular reports were submitted to keep track of void properties, and calls were made to speed up the lead-time for turning properties around from tenant to tenant.\textsuperscript{127} The local authorities viewed social problems as a symptom of under-occupation, rather than a reason or explanation for it.

In ‘outsider’ discourses based on press reportage, failure narratives were attached to social behaviours linked to the built environment of the council estate. New social concerns in the 1990s include a growth in the illegal drugs market, and the influence of gang culture in inner city areas such as Longsight, Moss Side and Cheetham Hill.\textsuperscript{128} The local and national press

\textsuperscript{126} MCC, \textit{Housing Defects}, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{127} For example, see: ‘Number and Type of Empty Properties Week Ending 19 Jan 1982’, Housing Committee Minutes Vol. 94, 8 February 1982, p. 200; ‘Void Monitoring Up to Week 31’, Housing Committee Minutes Vol. 103, 12 December 1983, p. 164.
sensationalised and repeatedly reported on the gang- and drug-related issues found in Manchester throughout the 1990s and 2000s, locating these problems firmly within the city’s council estates. For example, Manchester was given the moniker ‘Gunchester’ in the national press, and consistently referred to as such up until the mid-2000s. 129 This narrative was so pervasive that one interviewee, Angela, when asked about the reputation of her estate, immediately replied, ‘what, you mean Gunchester?’ 130 The press reports, in addition to unhelpful comparisons to the version of Baltimore depicted in the drama series The Wire, draw continuities between elements of Manchester’s past and its present, which serve to emphasise negative reputations and locate them within social housing. 131

A considerable amount of the literature on regeneration highlights the importance of a neoliberal ideology in guiding practice, particularly texts written during or just after the Thatcher years. This literature focuses on economic regeneration, as enacted by Urban Development Corporations and Enterprise Zones, and on property-led regeneration, both of which relegate social interventions to a poor second. 132 A growing number of scholars have


130 Interview with Angela, 22 July 2013, ref. VN850016.


challenged the dominance of national policy debates in discourses on housing in Britain over the past twenty years, but the argument against the supremacy of neoliberal thinking or the view that it constitutes a drastic change in the state-citizen relationship has not been the central aim of their work.\textsuperscript{133} For example, in relation to Manchester scholars such as Kevin Ward and Stephen Quilley have focused on local politics, narrating the shift from ‘municipal socialism’ to the ‘entrepreneurial city’.\textsuperscript{134} Other scholars have noted the subjective nature of interpreting central government policy, and the often-contradictory nature of different policies.\textsuperscript{135} Yet neither interpretation allows for the experience of tenants, or for explaining continuities throughout the period.

At the local level, Manchester’s various responses to the physical faults found across numerous estates were not simply based in neoliberal principles, but on pre-existing beliefs in the need to improve the environment to elicit stable behaviours. Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that it was the local authority driving the response to structural failings in the early to mid 1980s,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{133} This is an argument made in Chapter Four of this thesis. See, pp. 215-235.
\end{itemize}
rather than public/private partnerships. The City Council commissioned reports, controlled the available solutions and implemented policy, albeit with carefully positioned nods to localised resident consultation.\textsuperscript{136} Neoliberal rhetoric does not appear to have affected this process. Secondly, individual dwelling blocks were understood within a hierarchy of need, and were dealt with according to their ranking, as determined by the local authority Housing Committee and Direct Works Department.\textsuperscript{137} Competitive funding applications were simply not appropriate for intervention into estates requiring immediate structural attention. Finally, at a local level there was no element of blame placed on residents, either for their housing position or their social problems. Unlike the national neoliberal political and press rhetoric, which shifted causality to individuals and estate communities, in Manchester the focus was firmly on the poor quality environment. An integral part of this approach maintained that social needs remained high on the priority list, as exemplified in the proliferation of neighbourhood schemes, decentralisation and local-level community funding schemes in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{138}

Manchester City Council firmly placed responsibility for physical faults with the various building firms that had been involved with the delivery and construction of the industrialised blocks. Indeed, in 1984 the city council took the construction firm, Bison Concrete (Northern) Ltd, who had built Coverdale

\textsuperscript{137} ‘Housing Department Priorities’, Housing Committee Minutes Vol. 103, 12 December 1983, pp. 142-145.
Crescent to court for negligence and compensation.\textsuperscript{139} Past governments and their policies were also held responsible for the position the local authority found itself in:

Many of the worst problems, of course, are in experimental forms of construction that authorities were advised by Central Government to adopt back in the 1960s and which were favoured by the Subsidy system then operating. They should acknowledge their responsibility for the mistakes of the past and provide \textbf{extra} grant-aided resources for local authorities now faced with putting things right. (emphasis in original)\textsuperscript{140}

Not only did this serve to absolve Manchester council of any blame for the physical problems, it also absolved residents of responsibility for any social problems, and allowed the local authority considerable moral high ground when it came to resolving those problems, and more importantly, in paying for them. This statement is part of a remarkable document entitled, \textit{Housing Defects in Manchester}, produced by the city council. From its style and substance it is clear that this document was meant for public and layperson consumption, taking advantage of proximity to ensure local residents understood the problems faced by the city council. The report documents failings in estates and characterises them as problems with functionality.

MCC were able to fund the repair of water-damaged flats and houses in Hulme with Housing Investment Programme funding as late as 1982, but opportunities for moving funding around were dwindling as every additional penny of revenue had to be won competitively for specific purposes. In 1985, for example, the Housing Investment Programme funding was cut in real terms

\textsuperscript{139} 'Wellington Street Estate, Beswick – Appointment of Consultant Engineer’, Housing Committee Minutes 103, 12 December 1983, p. 20; MCC, \textit{Housing Defects}, p. 13.

\textsuperscript{140} MCC, \textit{Housing Defects}, p. 2.
for the city.\textsuperscript{141} Relations between central and local government became ever more strained, particularly within the context of sweeping changes to the urban programme and what was perceived as an ‘erosion of local autonomy and discretion over the use of income from the sale of local authority assets.’\textsuperscript{142} The general election in 1987, and its catastrophic effect on the Left at a national level has been seen as a point of departure in the attitude of Manchester City Council.\textsuperscript{143} In particular, the strong local character and leader of the Council, Graham Stringer, has been credited with the transformation from municipal socialism and its associated resistance to central government, and the entrepreneurial city which Manchester was to become.\textsuperscript{144}

Beyond the structural problems encountered on various local authority estates, social problems were also ‘discovered’ by the local authority, the press, and central government. Responses differed amongst these institutions. At a local authority level, residents were rarely if ever blamed for social unrest or social problems. The City Council argued that the poor environment caused social unrest, and discussed such behaviour as if it was understandable.\textsuperscript{145} Social concerns required more holistic interventions, which not only needed to alleviate physical problems, such as the rabbit-warren nature of Radburn estates and their association with criminality, but also interventions into

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{143} Kidd, \textit{Manchester}, p. 235.
\bibitem{144} Quilley, ‘Manchester First’, p. 601.
\bibitem{145} MCC, \textit{Housing Defects}.
\end{thebibliography}
education, employment, policing and community empowerment. In this sense, Manchester's response to the issues found on some social housing estates fell short, because interventions into the wider structural defects were almost impossible to enact under the funding regime of the 1980s.

Central government became acutely aware of social problems on estates following the riots of 1981. Issues of race and racism, concentrated in highly specific localities, rather than the broader urban fabric, framed responses to social problems. Indeed, as Rob Atkinson has highlighted, urban policy became, to an extent, racial policy. Some of the problems which physical, economic and to a lesser extent social interventions were intended to solve were specific to the 1980s and 1990s. However, this does not necessarily lead to a wholly new approach, and the resulting regeneration process was made up of a range of measures, some novel and some overlapping with existing and former policy.

As a final section for exploring expert and policy-driven attitudes towards regeneration it is therefore important to consider what was felt to be new about the process.

In Ardwick, the Coverdale Crescent flats were demolished in the early 1990s as a response to their poor physical state. The non-traditional, deck access flats were replaced with a traditional street layout, containing a number

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147 'Secretary of State Initiative on Merseyside’, AT 81/241, 1981, TNA.

of brick-built family homes with gardens and drives. A number of the new homes were offered for owner-occupation.\textsuperscript{149} The Plymouth Grove estate has, since the early 2000s, undergone regeneration through the country’s first Private Finance Initiative to reach contractual close.\textsuperscript{150} A detailed case study of the marketing aspects of the newly created ‘Grove Village’ follows in Chapter Four. Beyond Ardwick, interventions into the physical fabric of other inner-city estates continue, with the Brunswick estate currently undergoing de-Radburnisation through a PFI scheme (Figure 4.16).\textsuperscript{151}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Brunswick_Masterplan.png}
\caption{Figure 4.16 S4B Site Masterplan Brunswick. Source: http://s4bmanchester.co.uk ref. m4976 LP 000 Rev A.}
\end{figure}

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the historical study of post-war housing estates requires new methodologies. It has demonstrated the usefulness of conducting and analysing oral history testimonies with residents who experienced

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{149} One interviewee, Cath, bought one of these new properties.
\item \textsuperscript{150} http://www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk/your-community/greater-manchester/grove-village/ accessed 12 March 2014
\item \textsuperscript{151} Interview with Cllr Priest, 22 April 2013, ref. VN850014. ‘De-Radburnisation’ involves the houses (which faced away from traffic-carrying roads) effectively being ‘turned around’ to face the road, thus following a traditional street pattern.
\end{itemize}
everyday life in the council estates built to replace older housing condemned as slums. Their narratives, complex, sometimes self-contradicting, are a rich source with which we can move away from the narrative of failure currently attached to social housing. This chapter also looked to the physical and social challenges that social housing providers faced by the early 1980s. These defects, including deterioration in the physical fabric of some of Manchester’s post-war housing stock, are one major reason for the stubborn persistence of failure narratives attached to council estates.

One important aspect of the failure narrative attached to social housing is the over-reliance on ‘expert’ discourses in historical scholarship. The first section of the chapter challenged the concept of utopia that frequently frames such literature. In Manchester, the local authorities were concerned with achieving a high volume of dwelling completions to manage their long waiting lists. Their reports and statements in the 1960s and 1970s barely mention the social visions and dreams that could be characterised as utopian. Looking in-depth at the example of the planning and construction of the Gibson Street estate in Longsight, we see the process of planning and designing from the perspective of the local authority, and the press. Neither of these groups positioned the Gibson Street estate in explicitly utopian terms.

The utopia-turned-sour narrative, one of the major tenets of the failure narrative attached to social housing since 1945 is demonstrated in analysis of ‘outsider’ discourses. In film, television documentaries, the print media and fictionalised dramas, the council estate, and its tenants, are routinely represented as failures. Residents were acutely aware of what outsiders think
of them, as demonstrated in the case study of the West Gorton estate, which was used as a shooting location for the Channel Four drama, *Shameless*. The residents on this estate rejected the image that *Shameless* projected about council tenants and their estates.

Turning to resident discourse, it is clear that the interviewees for this project evaluated and rejected the bulk of the failure narrative attached to their homes, tenure and neighbourhood. The interviewees’ evaluation and rejection of the failure narrative is not represented in the current historical literature, although sociologists such as Lisa McKenzie have begun to highlight the importance of discourse in the everyday life of estate residents. A new methodology for historical housing studies, which fully incorporates and analyses the different ways residents talk about and think about their estates will allow historians to build on the work in other disciplines.
Chapter Four - Regeneration: Continuities in the Inner City

After 1980, interventions into urban residential spaces took the form of 'regeneration'. This new concept not only sought to break associations with earlier state-led activities such as 'reconstruction' or 'clearance' by creating a new language of urban practice, it also promised to transform the way urban spaces were managed and changed, particularly as it heralded the explicit involvement of the private sector and the market in the provision of social housing.¹ Regeneration approaches to urban policy, given their overt aim to include the private sector in previously social markets, and given their timing, during the governments of Margaret Thatcher, John Major and Tony Blair, are frequently viewed by scholars as constituting part of a broader neoliberal project.² This neoliberal project sought to transform the role of the state, from welfare provider to market enabler.³ Tore Sager, for example, argues that:

A neo-liberal policy is one that is promoted by neo-liberal regimes and implies a shift from government to (partly) private strategies, or a

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³ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, p. 2; further definitions of 'neoliberal' broaden the concept to include ideas such as the abolition of government entirely. See Dag Einar Thorsen, 'The Neoliberal Challenge: What is Neoliberalism?', *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice* 2:2, (2010), pp. 188-214.
conversion from publicly planned solutions to competitive and market-oriented ones...4

The characteristics of neoliberalism that Sager identifies are recognised in regeneration studies as part of urban interventions after 1980. In particular, the 'shift from government to (partly) private strategies' is perceived as a hallmark of regeneration activities such as public/private partnerships.5 A raft of other features of regeneration, such as the requirement that local residents participate to some extent in processes of change, the aim of achieving socially mixed neighbourhoods, or the competitive funding structure that sees regeneration projects bid against each other, also fit neatly within the neoliberal beliefs in individualism and the supremacy of the market structure.6

Much of the scholarship on regeneration, even if it does not state so, is based in a neoliberal interpretation of British society following the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979, where a rolling back of the state opened up the inner city to new forms of partnership and governance, enacted through regeneration.7 The shift from centralised, public sector led interventions before 1980; to the present patchwork approach is explained in terms of national

political, social, and economic shifts towards a neoliberal paradigm. Viewing regeneration as a neoliberal activity has a number of effects in the literature. For example, in this approach, political ideology has a direct effect on the nature of the built environment. Specifically, changes in the dominant political ideology, from one generally based on Keynesian economics and the welfare state, to one centred on competitive markets and individualism, changed the urban environment. However, the links between regeneration and neoliberal ideologies sometimes remain unspoken and regeneration simply takes place within a neoliberal context.

The perceived link between neoliberal thinking and regeneration is problematic for three reasons, all of which feed into a narrative of change over continuity. Firstly, the concept of ‘neoliberalism’ is itself slippery, open to a range of interpretations and imprecise in application. The scholarly debates resulting from such definitional difficulties focus on different aspects of neoliberalism, but do not challenge assumptions that it was new. The second problem emerges from the first. The historiography of the Thatcher years and

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10 Many key texts on regeneration do not refer to neoliberalism as a political ideology; rather they focus on individual policy directions, such as community development or tenant participation. See, for example: Kathy Artherton, ‘Neighbourhood Regeneration: Facilitating Community Involvement’, Urban Policy and Research 21:4, (2003), pp. 357-371; Teresa M. Cairns, ‘Citizenship and Regeneration: Participation or Incorporation?’, in Pam Coare and Rennie Johnson, Adult Learning, Citizenship and Community Voices: Exploring Community Based Practice, (Leicester, 2003), pp.

beyond remains sparse; ensuring assumptions about the significance of these years continue unchecked. Thatcher, along with her neoliberal project, is viewed as a cleavage in British history, a turning point away from the post-war consensus and into the new globalised society based on market economics and shrinking states. For urban policy, this means that the impact of national political changes is overemphasised, to the detriment of recognising continuities. The third problem with the regeneration-neoliberal connection lies in the assumption that both projects were novel. For John Lovering, ‘talk of “urban regeneration” is intended to convey an impression that something new is happening, which is yet at the same time a return to something old and valuable.’

The emphasis on change in the neoliberal project and regeneration practice influences scholarly discourses. The academic study of regeneration incorporates reports on contemporary practice, and critical evaluations of the different aspects that have constituted urban interventions over the past thirty-five years. Literature that focuses on practice tends to take a case study approach of particular geographies or individual policies. The case study approach fragments the scholarship, denying the opportunity to take a holistic

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view. For example, work on regeneration in Manchester highlights the city’s positive experience:

Manchester may well be regarded as being on an inevitable upward trajectory; the city has come to be seen as a shining example of successful regeneration... With East Manchester now the focus of regeneration in the city, there appears to be every possibility that this success will continue.¹⁵

Such statements emphasise what has changed in Manchester because of regeneration. Not all of the practice literature is so positive however, with critical analyses of specific policies a common theme. For example, John Houghton, who has formerly worked on the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, and Toby Blume, chief executive of the recently defunct Urban Forum, in their evaluation of the Community Empowerment Programme, argue that the policy struggled against central government approaches which ultimately ‘undermined’ its attempts to make local communities equal partners in the task of regeneration.¹⁶ Again, the case study approach denies the opportunity to consider the continuities in problems such as community engagement.


¹⁶ Urban Forum is described as ‘a membership organisation supporting communities across England to have a greater say over decisions that affect them’, it restructured in 2013 and no longer has a website. See John P. Houghton and Toby Blume, ‘Poverty, Power and Policy Dilemmas: Lessons from the Community Empowerment Programme in England’, Journal of Urban Regeneration and Renewal 4:3, (2011), pp. 207-217, (p. 207). The Community Empowerment Programme sought to strengthen the position of tenants as part of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. Money was channeled directly to local community groups to aid the building of Community Empowerment Networks.
Calls to consider a longer-term view are increasingly present in regeneration literature. In the past fifteen years, a growing number of scholars and practitioners have called for improved longitudinal reflections on individual projects. In Greater Manchester, for example, Anne Lythgoe, who worked as evaluation manager for the Charlestown and Lower Kersal New Deal for Communities project, emphasises the need to ask the right questions when evaluating regeneration, in order to improve outcomes across the sector. The question she argues should be asked is:

Did this project really make a difference, if so how, and what can we learn from it to make more of a difference and share information with others in order to ensure that the benefits are sustained for the future?

Whilst taking a long-term view of the effects of any large-scale urban intervention is sensible, it does nothing to contextualise change into the longer histories of cities or neighbourhoods. Residents, for example, do not neatly separate their experience of regeneration from their other experiences of the past outside of the narrow surveys conducted as part of evaluation exercises. Rather, as this thesis has already demonstrated in terms of clearance practices

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18 The ‘New Deal for Communities’ was an attempt to showcase community-based regeneration. Launched in 1998 as a cornerstone of New Labour’s urban policy, it sought to fund geographically specific initiatives to improve employment, reduce low-level crime and focus on the built environment. In Charleston and Lower Kersal this included an ‘alley gating’ project to reduce low-level crime, and other improvements in the built environment. For a deeper exploration of the NDC, see: Lorna Dargan, ‘Participation and Local Urban Regeneration: The Case of the New Deal for Communities (NDC) in the UK’, *Regional Studies* 43:2, (2009), pp. 305-317, (p. 310).

or the meanings attached to home, residents in personal testimony accounts draw links between their personal pasts and the activities of the state, that highlight continuity as much as change in their neighbourhoods.

Commentators have begun to explore the problems that an ahistorical approach to regeneration practice can bring. For example, Rebecca Fearnley, who now works at the consumer rights organisation 'Which?' argues that lessons from the City Challenge programme were not incorporated into later initiatives such as the Single Regeneration Budget or the New Deal. The ahistorical nature of regeneration studies also leaves the process open for claims of novelty that may not be justified. Again, however, these problems relate solely to the execution of regeneration projects, rather than viewing them as holistic interventions into the individual life histories of residents.

To challenge the emphasis of change over continuity, this chapter looks to two inner city residential neighbourhoods in Manchester, to assess the process of regeneration. It avoids the problems with case study approaches noted above by considering continuity and change in tandem, in both policy and resident experience. Both Ardwick and West Gorton have seen large-scale physical, social and economic interventions into their spatial fabric over the past fifteen years (Figure 5.1). Ardwick, as part of the 'A6 Corridor' was included in a Single Regeneration Budget scheme allocated £9,000,000 between

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20 City Challenge was introduced by Michael Heseltine, and involved a competitive bidding process for local authorities seeking to transform a defined inner city area. See: Lucy De Groot, ‘City Challenge: Competing in the Urban Regeneration Game’, *Local Economy* 7:3, (1992), pp. 196-209. Fearnley, 'Regenerating the Inner City', p. 567.
1997 and 2004. West Gorton is part of the New East Manchester Ltd regeneration scheme, and home to the project’s central office. There were also earlier interventions into the re-made estates, from the early 1980s, as discussed in the final part of Chapter Three. These two areas experienced a decline in manufacturing and heavy industry after the Second World War, resulting in a legacy of unemployment and environmental blight, and were also home to some large-scale non-traditional residential blocks. Interviews with residents from both estates allow the argument to include elements of personal testimony that are largely missing from the existing academic and practice discourses on regeneration, and on East Manchester itself. The interviewees’ experiences of regeneration and rehousing are contextualised into the broader life trajectory of each individual, an important point given that many of these residents have experienced such urban interventions more than once.

21 Ms. Armstrong, ‘Departmental Policies (Gorton)’, Written Answers (Commons), HC Deb 17 November 2000, Vol. 356, Col. 820W.
23 For example, structural work on the Gibson Street [Fort Ardwick] block.
To contribute to the emerging debates on resident experience, the process of regeneration and the importance of the neoliberal turn in national politics, this chapter is split into three sections. The first is a broad theoretical assessment of the different uses of 'neoliberal' to describe social, economic and cultural change since 1980. Given the concerns about the ambiguity of 'neoliberalism' raised in the opening part of this introduction, such a discussion is necessary to frame the rest of the chapter.

Figure 5.1 Urban Regeneration Initiatives in Manchester. Source: Gwyndaf Williams, 'City Profile: Manchester', Cities 13:3 (1996), pp. 203-212, (p. 209)

This section recognises the problems identified in present literature, and posits a number of further issues emerging from the association between neoliberal theory and regeneration practice. Specifically, it argues that current uses of neoliberal theory in regeneration studies privilege change in urban policy, neglecting a number of continuities in approach and practice.
The second section develops the arguments of the first by looking at the range of continuities in urban practice sustained well into the supposed neoliberal 1980s and 1990s. It builds on the argument in Chapter Three that challenged the idea that the state retreated from urban policy in this period, by listening to the ways that residents view regeneration as a continuation of past interventions. Finally, the chapter focuses on regeneration practice in two estates in Manchester. It identifies innovation in this period, such as a new professionalization in place marketing, but also emphasises the continuing importance of environmental determinism and utopian imagery in regeneration projects. Residents, some of whom are experiencing large-scale interventions into their environment for the third time, talk about regeneration as a reflection of the clearance and reconstruction they witnessed thirty years previously. Their involvement through participation is one of the key claims regeneration makes for novelty, though residents interviewed offered perspectives of this involvement within the contexts of circular history and continuity rather than in terms of change and progress.

The Uses of Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism, if not in name but in substance, appears in almost every attempt to understand the social, economic and political nature of urban space over the past thirty years. Often, neoliberalism is viewed as a definite break with the past, remaking the state’s relationship with its citizens and the market’s

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influence in the social sphere. Rarely celebrated, but often accepted as an organising force in British society, neoliberalism shapes the way the future, present and recent past is understood. As a key concept in geography, planning and regeneration studies, it also shapes the way those disciplines approach urban space and change within it. This first section looks to the different uses of neoliberalism in a range of disciplines, identifying the issues with the concept highlighted in these discourses. It then posits a number of additional problems that challenge the assumption that neoliberalism constitutes a seismic shift in the nature of British society.

This chapter argues that neoliberal theory, in partnership with regeneration studies, privileges a narrative of change over one of continuity. With regard to neoliberalism, its introduction since the 1980s is interpreted by sociologists such as Monica Prasad as a redefining moment, ushering in a new form of political settlement and new state/citizen relationships. She describes the similarities between Ronald Reagan and Thatcher, stating:

They both attempted to “roll back the state” and were successful to such a degree that both the Democrats and Labour have more or less renounced economic redistribution.

Similarly, Peter Roberts argues that regeneration developed through novel approaches led by new technologies, economic opportunities and attitudes towards social justice.

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Neoliberalism acts as an organising force for urban space amongst geographers and social policy scholars, though they are often critical of its effects. For example, in 1988, Peter Townsend, in his report on inner city deprivation in Greater Manchester, noted:

“Above all, the economy is being restructured by powerful multi-national companies which are less accountable to international agencies and the international community than were family firms and national companies to the nation-state in the early decades after the war. These are among the reasons for the relative impoverishment of inner city areas discussed in the report.”

For Townsend, neoliberal economic changes had specific effects on particular areas, namely the decline of local economies of commerce, which resulted in the ‘impoverishment’ of the inner cities. Similarly, planning theorist Rachel Weber argues that the neoliberal project relied heavily on environmental determinism: ‘Spatial policies, such as urban renewal funding for slum clearance or contemporary financial incentives, depend on discursive practices that stigmatise properties targeted for demolition and redevelopment.’

Moving away from the spatial uses of neoliberalism, the concept is also integral to political explanations of post-1980 Britain. For example, Peter Gibbon and Lasse Folke Henriksen argue that neoliberalism is a political project aiming to remove the state from many aspects of life, where ‘governing at a distance’ is preferred. Others, such as Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell have

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31 Townsend, Inner City Deprivation, p. 3.
argued that neoliberalism is more a marriage between economic and political ideologies:

The new religion of neoliberalism combines a commitment to the extension of markets and logics of competitiveness with a profound antipathy to all kinds of Keynesian and/or collectivist strategies.34

As geographers such as Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore have argued however, nowhere does the pure form of neoliberalism exist.35 Rather, ‘actually existing neoliberalism’ is an imperfect interpretation and implementation of the theory.36 A proliferation of interpretations in practice only adds to confusion about the theory itself. Because of these ambiguities, it is never clear whether scholars in different disciplines are discussing the same causes and effects in relation to neoliberalism.

The political usage of neoliberalism supports an interpretation of drastic change after 1979. For example, Louisa Hadley and Elizabeth Ho, in their introduction to a volume centred on Thatcher's legacy, argue that ‘Thatcher and the phenomenon of Thatcherism … function as a symbolic “wound” in the contemporary imagination, a palpable point where things can be said to have irrecoverably changed.’37 With a historical approach, we can avoid such assumptions and better understand continuities in British history, as much as recognising change. However, historians, in their brief forays into the very...

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36 Brenner and Theodore, 'Cities and the Geographies of “Actually Existing Neoliberalism”'.
37 Louisa Hadley and Elizabeth Ho, 'Introduction: “The Lady's Not For Turning”: New Cultural Perspectives on Thatcher and Thatcherism', in Louisa Hadley and Elizabeth Ho (Eds.), Thatcher and After: Margaret Thatcher and Her Afterlife in Contemporary Culture, (Basingstoke, 2010), pp. 1-28, (p. 2).
recent past of the 1980s, are yet to offer a full assessment of the impacts of neoliberalism on British society. Much of the literature in this area remains in the relatively ahistorical disciplines of planning practice, geography and sociology.

In addition to the concerns already raised by geographers, planners and regeneration practitioners, there are a number of other issues with our present understanding of neoliberalism, which in turn affect the academic treatment of regeneration. Firstly, within the confines of neoliberal discourse, urban interventions such as regeneration appear novel. This approach neglects any element of continuity that informs practice, denying the importance of the past in shaping interventions. The final section of this chapter explores this issue thoroughly. Secondly, the present uses of ‘neoliberalism’ fit within the linear narrative of history that this whole thesis has challenged. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, neoliberalism, as part of the Thatcherite era, is viewed as a seismic shift in the relationship between different parts of the state, and between state and its citizens. With Thatcherism, comes the neoliberal project. For example, in his biography of Margaret Thatcher, Hugo Young argues that local authorities saw drastic changes in their relationship with the national state: ‘Along with money, local government also lost powers. Education and housing, its core activities, were both reorganised in ways calculated to reduce or even exclude the concept of local democracy.’

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39 Hugo Young, *One of Us*, p. 538
similar vein, historian Kenneth O. Morgan has described the election of Thatcher in the following terms:

More than any change of government since 1945, Margaret Thatcher’s election victory was taken as marking a decisive shift in the national mood, politically, intellectually, and culturally... To enthusiasts, it meant the passing of “the dependency culture” in favour of a new wave of enterprise and individualism.  

Morgan later goes on to note that Thatcher herself stated, ‘I have changed everything.’ This type of narrative feeds into the linear accounts of housing history discussed in the introduction to the thesis. It does this because it points to an endpoint: Thatcherism, as a direct response to stimuli, in this case, the postwar consensus and welfare state.

Finally, the two problems noted above entirely ignore the views of residents experiencing regeneration. Residents point to the circular nature of history in their experiences. They are positioned to recognise the similarities in urban practice across the twentieth century. Their perspectives of regeneration, and its promise to offer participation to every individual affected by urban policy, demonstrate an ambiguous attitude towards urban policies and the state. These issues are explored in-depth in the following section.

**Continuities in British Regeneration Practice**

Viewing regeneration as part of the neoliberalisation of the housing sector means that continuities in approach and practice are neglected. This second section develops the problems already noted with neoliberal theory and its use

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in humanities research, by working through a number of continuities shared between regeneration projects and urban interventions into the built environment between 1945 and 1980. Looking at the continuities between urban practices before 1980 and after allows historians to challenge the assumption that Thatcher did indeed ‘change everything’. It also allows explorations of urban policy to intersect more smoothly with residents’ experience of continuity in their lives, neighbourhoods and dealings with authorities. In particular, it opens the possibility to recognise what residents view as a cyclical process of change, where policies change but their results, effects, and experiences of these changes are repetitive in the lives of social tenants.

Despite obvious ideological differences between neoliberal regeneration and the reconstruction of towns and cities following the end of the War, particularly in attitudes towards the public and private sectors, the two forms of urban intervention share much. Firstly, a belief in the power of the environment to engender particular behaviours continues to direct policy. Keith Shaw and Fred Robinson, for example, warn of a reliance on physical regeneration in their review of urban policy following the 1977 _Urban White Paper_. They argue:

Since 1979, the main thrust of urban policy has been about the state subsidising extensive property development schemes... UK cities now look different compared with even 10 years ago. But the emphasis placed on the “breathtaking” physical transformations that have produced Canary Wharf in Docklands, The Albert Dock in Liverpool, The Metro Centre on Tyneside and the International Convention Centre in Birmingham, has reinforced the “physical determinism” that has long characterised urban policy and planning in the UK. This simplistic approach has tended to eschew a more complex economic
and social analysis of urban problems in favour of a narrow range of physical explanations and solutions.\textsuperscript{42}

The examples Shaw and Robinson note are all flagship economically driven regeneration schemes associated with the 1980s, rather than residential estate projects. The relationship between residential regeneration and continuing beliefs in environmental determinism is underexplored. However, as noted in the final section of Chapter Three, in Manchester, the city council started to intervene in its estates because of physical defects, and with a powerful conviction that the environment was the main source of the city’s problems.

As already noted, neoliberalism is often understood by academics as a drastic change in political doctrine, diametrically opposed to the Keynesian postwar consensus that preceded it.\textsuperscript{43} This ignores the changes that the Conservative government had brought in to the provision of housing as early as the 1950s. In particular, successive Conservative governments pursued policies that promoted private sector construction and the ‘property owning democracy’.\textsuperscript{44} Whilst not neoliberal in any political sense, these policies did usher the private sector back into housing provision only a few years after the end of the War.

Allocation practices in pre- and post-1980 social housing markets also demonstrate aspects of continuity over the second half of the twentieth-century. Whilst considerable literature notes the importance of allocation practices, and particularly the position of the local authority as ‘gatekeeper’ controlling access


\textsuperscript{43} Palley, ‘From Keynesianism to Neoliberalism’, pp. 20-29.

to housing resources, in estates built between 1950 and 1979, less attention is paid to this aspect of post-1980s social housing.\textsuperscript{45} However, when one of the interviewees who lived in a housing association flat in Longsight talked through the process of applying for and then accepting her current property, similarities appear. Angharad, a married lady in her early forties, who moved from Huddersfield to Manchester in the 1980s, explained that she and her husband are signed up to a specific scheme with her housing association:

The scheme that this [her flat] is in, its for people that work... Obviously they do social housing for people as well, but this particular scheme that we’re on was like, I think you’ve got to be ‘economically active’ is how they describe it... In other words you must be working.\textsuperscript{46}

This echoes the representation of local authority allocation policies in the immediate postwar period, which depended on a range of criteria being met to ensure fairness:

For would-be tenants, the hurdles were, firstly, admission to the waiting list, and then the award of some measure of priority, which might or might now be followed by an offer of tenancy... People were normally precluded from applying to a waiting list if they did not live or work in a district, or had not done so for a specified length of time.\textsuperscript{47}

Prospective council tenants in the postwar period had to prove not only employment, but also local employment to gain access to a new council house. Though focused on the ability to pay rent as measured through employment, the housing association scheme Angharad is on is not particularly different in tone.


\textsuperscript{46} Interview with Angharad, 25 November 2012, ref. VN850012.

\textsuperscript{47} Ravetz, Council Housing and Culture, p. 130.
The pursuit of pure neoliberalism also contains utopian dreams at its centre, an aspect shared with narratives of reconstruction discussed in Chapter Three. Geographer Japhy Wilson suggests that neoliberalism is a ‘social fantasy which structures reality itself against the traumatic Real of Capital’, whilst, taking a different view, Pierre Bourdieu described neoliberalism as a ‘utopia of unlimited exploitation’. Neoliberalism fits within the definition of ‘utopia’ identified by Levitas, quoted in Chapter Three. It is a vision for a different future, organised around a supposedly superior relationship between that state and citizen, and the state and market. Unlike other forms of urban utopia, such as the post-war council estate, or the commune, neoliberalism has adjusted its aims in response to its failures to deliver its vision.

In the first years of the Coalition Government, David Cameron sought to create the ‘Big Society’, where self-help and empowerment were intended to replace state institutions in the smooth functioning of society. Peter North has characterised this policy as ‘utopian’. Cameron introduced the ‘Big Society’ in the following terms:

You can call it empowerment. You can call it freedom. You can call it responsibility. I call it the Big Society. The Big Society is about a huge culture change – where people … don’t always turn to officials, local authorities or central government for the answers to the problems they face but instead feel both free and powerful enough to help themselves and their own communities.

51 David Cameron, 19 July 2010, quoted in North, ‘Geographies and Utopias of Cameron’s Big Society’, p. 817.
The society that Cameron describes is an updated form of the neoliberal state, maintaining the ideal of the small state, but also turning away from Thatcher’s assertion that ‘there is no such thing as society’. Instead, this latest version of the neoliberal state offers individual freedom and opportunity within the context of the local ‘community’.

This chapter has challenged the view that regeneration, within a neoliberal paradigm, is responsible for drastic changes in approach to urban problems. To further this argument, it now turns to consider experiences of regeneration as local residents. The move to regenerate inner city areas is linked to a drive for tenant participation in the process of environmental change. Participation is claimed as an innovation in urban governance, which ensures accountability, engagement and sustainability. In marketing literature produced by regeneration partners, for example, resident involvement is foregrounded. To earn any funding in the 1990s and 2000s, proposed regeneration schemes had to demonstrate that local residents were involved in the process, and that there was local support for interventions. Literature on partnerships, and on resident’s participation within them, is growing and provides some excellent insights into the everyday processes of regeneration ‘on the ground’, and a critical eye on the assumptions behind

52 Margaret Thatcher, quoted in Women’s Own, 3 October 1987.
53 For example, The Active Citizenship Centre has published a review of participation, commissioned by the Civil Renewal Unit: Ben Rogers and Emily Robinson, The Benefits of Community Engagement: A Review of the Evidence, (London, 2004).
participation. This is often based on surveys or targeted interviews conducted either during or shortly after the regeneration project. Whilst useful, these sources are limited in scope. An exception is the work of Georgina Blakeley and Brendan Evans, who worked on an ethnography of tenant participation in the wider East Manchester area. Their project focused on the motive for involvement amongst the ‘minority’ of tenants who participated in urban regeneration. This chapter uses a similar approach, where ‘each respondent was able to place their narrative in their own social setting’, enabling an assessment of the role of regeneration in the personal histories of interviewees, whether they were active participants or not.

In West Gorton, two of the interviewees for the project were heavily involved in formal participation in the regeneration process. Jackie, for example, took an active role through her involvement in formal committees and

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position as a particularly well-informed member of the community.\textsuperscript{61} She was involved in the early discussions with local authority planners concerning the layout and aesthetics of the new buildings. She was also a key actor in disseminating information across the neighbourhood, through regular meetings and distributing leaflets: ‘I couldn’t tell you how many leaflets I’ve pushed through letterboxes!’\textsuperscript{62} She fits the classic ‘female tenant participant’ as described by Marianne Hood and Roberta Woods, in her willingness to volunteer her time and effort to benefit her neighbourhood.\textsuperscript{63} Jackie became disillusioned with the process of regeneration following disagreements with a fellow active tenant participant, and no longer takes part in formal participation networks.

In West Gorton, Gary was active in various participation activities, including bidding for funding for community projects. Gary was also active in one of the tenant associations on the estate. He explained his interest in participating in the regeneration projects in the following terms:

I’m an environmentalist; I’m also a community minded person. I am chair of the [inaudible] partnership which is down at the community centre or I was. I am chair of the tenants association which is up here and we see over all the area. So I am community minded. That’s what I do.\textsuperscript{64}

And later in the interview:

Oh yeah, I really really do, because I come from an area that was very community minded and it really was. It influenced me for the rest of my life. So I now reciprocate what I got then. Unfortunately communities are now breaking down. It’s hard to get communities together. It’s still there, it still exists but it did influence me and my

\textsuperscript{61} Interview with Jackie, 21 August 2014, ref. VN850028.
\textsuperscript{62} Interview with Jackie, 21 August 2014, ref. VN850028.
\textsuperscript{64} Interview with Gary, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850030.
life. My community where I came from, and it always will. So that was Gorton for you.\textsuperscript{65}

Gary was given numerous awards and certificates for his active participation in the West Gorton neighbourhood. In his living room, one wall is covered with these awards, framed and proudly displayed. He has met the Queen (‘I was very proud of it’), and taken various other opportunities to gain qualifications and training through involvement in community projects and regeneration, including diplomas and NVQs.\textsuperscript{66} Despite this pride in his achievements, Gary’s feelings about regeneration did not necessarily fit with his active participation.

You know you get a parody, where things are actually mirroring things. It’s happening round here, exactly the same thing, we’ve got now regeneration. They’ve done exactly the same things as they did forty years ago. They’re destroying the community. They don’t see it or they won’t see it, so consequently what they doing, they are upheaving people, making them move out of the area. You look around here now you see all the grants to build new houses. Well people they took out of the area. They did the same in Gorton, they called it slum clearance then, but they call it redevelopment now or re- now. It’s exactly the same. So forty years ago to now, they’ve mirrored it, so they are destroying the community. And again it will take probably another forty years again to build up the same kind of or some kind of remnants of a community spirit.\textsuperscript{67}

Active participation in the processes of regeneration, which in Gary’s case included developing grant applications and working with various regeneration partners, does not necessarily equate to confidence in the process.

One other resident interviewed from the West Gorton estate was not formally involved in the process of regeneration in his neighbourhood. Tony has lived all his life in the West Gorton area of south-east Manchester. He spent his childhood in the Brookhouse flats in West Gorton, which were demolished

\textsuperscript{65} Interview with Gary, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850030.
\textsuperscript{66} Interview with Gary, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850030.
\textsuperscript{67} Interview with Gary, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850030.
in the early 1970s. As part of this ‘modernisation’ exercise, Tony moved with his family to the Wenlock Way Radburn-modelled estate in West Gorton. He worked for the Housing department at Manchester City Council for many years, assisting those who needed rehousing and moving from various social housing estates. Tony was attached to his street on the Radburn estate, and was upset when he heard it was to be demolished and replaced. He rationalised the decision, however, as he understood that the environmental layout concerned the local authorities because of its association with crime. He did note, however, that he himself had never witnessed any criminal behaviour: ‘I’ve heard about local muggings or crime, burglaries. That’s everywhere isn’t it? ...But nowt’s happened in my time, or my house, burgled, scene of the crime, no.’

Tony’s experience of regeneration was informed by his dual-actor status. As a resident he was upset at the demolition of his home, but as a manager in the Housing Department at Manchester City Council, he understood the need to modernise and recreate older housing stock. However, Tony’s overwhelming experience of regeneration was one of betrayal, in two separate ways. Firstly, Tony felt that allocation practices had split himself and his wife away from their longstanding friends in the old estate. He resented moving to the ‘quiet’ side of the new estate. Secondly, Tony felt he had been deceived regarding the ownership of the new property, and was upset that his landlord was no longer the city authorities, but a housing association that had put up the rents:

68 Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022.
69 Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022.
They told us a lie, because they said there’d be no rent increases, nobody picked on this, they said there’d be no rent increases, erm, no changes in your, in your agreements. So then we got an increase of £22 a week! Soon as we moved here the rent went up by £22 a week. So I went to Northern Counties and said, “you promised us that the rent wouldn’t go up! I’ve got it all in black and white.” He said “Have you read this? That’s Manchester City Council’s ruling. We’re Northern Counties” He was right, it was Northern Counties, not Manchester City Council. The Council had told us all what’s going to happen, when we’re going to move. And as soon as I signed for it, got the keys for it, they said “Right, you’re not a council resident now, you are Northern Counties’, you come under our terms now.”

Negative experiences of regeneration amongst the participants for this study were strongly related to their understandings of community in the local area. The residents who felt the strongest attachment to the pre-regeneration neighbourhood appear to make judgements of the new landscape based on relatively fixed ideas of what a community could and should be. For example, in describing the Wenlock Way estate that he had moved to in 1972, Tony explained:

Oh it was good, we had some good neighbours. Up to 2 years ago it was good. We didn’t want to go. From moving from the flats to those houses, they were only 43 years old and you ask anyone round here who has moved house, I’d say 90% would go back tomorrow, nobody wanted to move. Nice estate, the houses were alright. Then they asked us to come down here, which- I didn't want to come this far down because I grew up there.

Tony's view of community appears to be based on spatial proximity, and therefore vulnerable to physical interventions. Imbued with the attributes of 'good neighbours', his feelings of community bonds are heavily based around one small area surrounding his former street. Tony's feelings about his old area strongly relate to his experience of the regenerated estate:

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70 Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022.
71 Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022.
Well here, it’s totally different. It’s very quiet here. They put us down this side, cos there were no houses left on that side. I wanted to be on that side you see. They put us here, we found when we come here that there were a lot of old people round here, which is quiet and nice. We were used to, not a noisy neighbourhood, but we used to party and you knew everybody. Whereas here, they don’t want to integrate, they just keep to themselves here. It’s totally quiet here.72

Though his experience of some aspects of the process was positive, ‘they [the new houses] are nice’, Tony’s narrative is one of betrayal by the local authorities.73

Tony’s reading of his situation and his experience of being rehoused is strongly influenced by his conceptions of community, which in turn are drawn from the wider identity-making and socialisation attached to the wider area of East Manchester. Research looking at environmental transformations in other parts of East Manchester has highlighted the importance of the area’s long association with manufacturing and working class employment.74 East Manchester, though far from analogous, is largely associated with working-class communities. West Gorton, where Tony had lived all his life, is therefore permeated with a strong working-class identity.

One trope of the working-class lifestyle is its association with strong community links.75 Tony certainly felt that this was an important aspect not only of his life but also of the identity of the wider area.76 His reading of the regeneration process was based on expectations that his personal idea of community would be protected and maintained. On finding that he was split

72 Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022.
73 Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022.
74 Lewis, ‘Urban Regeneration in East Manchester’.
75 See, for example: Jones, The Working Class in Mid Twentieth-Century England; Todd, The People; Karn, Narratives of Neglect.
76 Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022.
from the rest of his friends on the old estate, Tony was left feeling ‘very bitter, actually’. The impact of rehousing had very real effects on Tony’s social life, his attachment to the regenerated area, and his feelings about the process in general. It is therefore imperative that more than a token appreciation of the need to hold these types of proximity networks together as part of the regeneration process is made. Simply asking individual households who they would like to remain in walking distance from would give them the sense of ownership and control over their new living arrangements. Although it is not practical to replicate the pre-regenerated streets exactly in the new estate, greater sensitivity would probably have gone a long way in Tony’s case.

However, it is important to consider Tony’s response to rehousing within its wider context. Tony was upset with himself for not exercising his Right to Buy before the regeneration process began, he knew people who had that had made considerable sums of money and released large amounts of capital through the process: ‘I don’t know why I didn’t do it’. Tony did not feel he had gained financially from the move. Secondly, Tony was not moved far from his old neighbours and friends. The proximity was not the same as in the old estate, and this was enough of a hurdle to prevent continuing close relationships. Planners and regeneration experts could hardly be expected to predict at which distance friendships would begin to strain and struggle. Finally, Tony’s conception of community is an idealised form. His worldview does not include those who did not participate in the activities of the old community, who may feel they have benefitted from the rehousing process.

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77 Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022.
78 Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022.
Tony is not alone in his emphasis on the importance of community. National and local government have invested considerable meaning and importance on the term, despite its slippery nature and contested meanings.79 A considerable literature has emerged on the topic of community and regeneration. These works tend to focus on the New Labour period post-1997, and often cite the importance of the Social Exclusion Unit and the Urban Task Force in reintroducing community concerns to the urban policy debate.80 However, the issue of community is important to the process of regeneration as encountered before New Labour. After 1979, the local authorities in Manchester became increasingly involved in the co-ordination and direction of community projects, particularly in areas such as Ardwick, Longsight, Gorton, Hulme and Moss Side, amongst others.81

Interest in facilitating community activity follows a pattern of decentralisation, evident in Manchester's city council as a whole, but also found across local government. In Manchester, neighbourhood committees were set up in the early period of the 1980s, and these worked towards the creation of a network of area offices across the city. These offices were to provide a bridge between local communities and the Town Hall, offering services such as rent payment, repairs notifications, advice on housing matters and the opportunity

81 For example, the 'Community Initiatives Panel' ran a series of competitive community funding streams with the intention to improve individual buildings, public spaces and streetscapes.
to be more involved in decision-making. Decentralisation of local authority functions has been characterised as a tool of neoliberalism and as a means for central government to roll back the state and cut local authority funding. In Manchester, however, evidence suggests that the local authority were open to the potential benefits of spreading the influence of the city council into considerably smaller community spaces. City Council initiatives for building community were extremely popular with local residents, as were opportunities for funding improvement programmes.

Community, therefore, can be considered an important aspect to personal accounts of regeneration, but also an important aspect of the process itself. Closely linked to understandings of community are perceptions of the pre-regeneration neighbourhood. If residents do not feel that the existing area is in need of any more than concentrated maintenance and modernisation, it is difficult for them to support and believe in dramatic interventions into the environment. Tony’s narrative of the former Wenlock Way estate is conflicted between his personal experience of security and contentedness, and his professional knowledge about the impact of planning models on crime and safety. For example, his former employment in MCC’s Housing Department, assisting the relocation of families in council stock, meant he understood the rationale of local authority interventions into estates. When the process happened to him personally, however, he found it a distressing period and did

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84 ‘Development of Neighbourhood Service’, p. 146
85 Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022.
not agree with the assessment of the authorities about the needs of his neighbourhood.

One final aspect of resident experience pertinent to understanding regeneration is that of the effect of multiple moves over the lifetime. Tony had moved twice as part of council-led rehousing programmes. The first time he moved as a child, describing the process as ‘all about modernisation.’ His first experience was largely positive, as he felt that ‘everybody had moved together.’ The aspects of the more recent move he had experienced which he found troubling were not associated with his first move. There is a strong argument that Tony’s experiences are strongly influenced by the passage of time and the time of life that they occurred. Tony’s first move was not unlike any other childhood move. There was nothing he could do about it as a child, just as would be the case if the move had been prompted by his parents rather than the local authority:

...so the community did split up we all went to different areas, but we all thought the same area, which was only over the road. It was only like a bus stop, we didn't move too far, which was handy for us, because we didn't have to change our schools. I had left school at the time, but my younger brother and sister, it was alright for them, it was only just down't road, so they didn't have to change their schools. Our jobs were all in the area, so it was ok; there wasn't a big change for us.86

The more recent move came at a time of uncertainty in Tony's life. He had recently changed jobs within the local authority, and felt he wanted to settle down and feel secure in his home.87 The decision to move was not his own, leaving him feeling unable to affect his own circumstance, or take ownership

86 Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022.
87 Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022.
for the changes. His attitude to his home was a positive, however, meaning there is hope for achieving his aspirations.

For Gary and Jackie, the move to a regenerated property was less of a shock, which is potentially linked to their active participation in the wider regeneration process. Jackie, in particular, was proud of her involvement in the regeneration process and was content in her new home. Gary’s feelings about his new flat were more nuanced. Despite his involvement in numerous community projects, and his ‘insider’ view of the regeneration process, he felt deceived by the ‘like-for-like’ promise made to him, as his new property had an extra bedroom which resulted in additional rent charges. Gary also felt that the process of demolition and rehousing risked repeating what he saw as past mistakes. His active community-based role in the neighbourhood can explain this attitude, as he felt that a lot of hard work on community-building was threatened by the rehousing and allocation policies enacted through regeneration. At times he appeared dejected by the changes in community he has experienced in West Gorton, stating that although life in the older [i.e. demolished through slum clearance] houses, was hard, ‘I would rather go back there, than live in the community we live now.’ 88 At other points in the interview, Gary noted ‘…we’ve got some good people ‘round here. Consequently we’ve got a good community ‘round here.’ 89 His contradictory assessment of the present is perhaps explained by his involvement in participation projects, as he met other like-minded individuals, but simultaneously became more aware of non-participators, or those lacking his view of community.

88 Interview with Gary, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850030.
89 Interview with Gary, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850030.
The experience of regeneration for residents interviewed in this project was different in each case. Looking at the individual histories of each interviewee allows a historically-specific analysis of regeneration projects from the resident's perspective. Whilst this methodology takes longer to collect and analyse data than satisfaction surveys, it does offer a richer evidence base for explaining different meanings of participation, or non-participation. Using these accounts of memory and experience prevents ahistorical assessments of the regeneration process, allowing scholars to consider continuities and innovation in urban practice since the 1980s.

Is Regeneration Novel? Case Studies of Grove Village and West Gorton

As demonstrated in Chapter Three and noted earlier in this chapter, regeneration policies pursued since the 1980s by MCC, along with many other urban centres in the UK, were based on beliefs about the power of the environment to influence collective and individual behaviours. Attempting to tackle a range of social and economic problems through interventions into the built environment is not a new idea; indeed it mirrors the clearance and reconstruction efforts of the post-war period. This final section looks in detail at the ideas, and practice, of regeneration in Manchester after 1990. This later period is characterised in the scholarship as a break with purely property-led regeneration associated with the 1980s.\(^\text{90}\) This section argues that the later

period saw an increase in novel regeneration activities such as place marketing, and more sophisticated attempts at involving local people in decision making. To do this, it examines two aspects of regeneration; its use of marketing, and the influence of neoliberal ideas on the form that interventions took.

Regeneration activity is part of a wider process of private and not-for-profit sector interventions into housing, which have taken root since the 1950s. Since the 1990s large numbers of residents are no longer tenants of the local authority, but are distributed across a range of housing providers and housing associations. The change in landlord is often explained as one small part of a wider neoliberal turn in politics and policy, but this final section will argue that such a characterisation is too simplistic to explain the process of regeneration. Along with changes in tenure, what I will term later-stage regeneration is also associated with physical remodelling, modernisation, ‘de-estating’ the housing, re-marketing areas, providing the framework for community participation and ownership, and creating and maintaining partnerships between different groups of actors. Each of these activities can be understood outside of the neoliberal paradigm. By looking at the policy drives across the later period it is clear that there is no dramatic ‘turn’ towards neoliberal housing and planning policies, but rather an incremental, uneven and patchy drift towards what may now be considered a ‘third way’ paradigm, or ‘a version of Thatcherism with an even more human face’. The final section of this chapter uses resident,

92 See, for example: Tallon, Urban Regeneration in the UK; Jones and Evans, Urban Regeneration in the UK.
academic and practice-based accounts of regeneration to challenge the assumption that regeneration is a novel form of urban intervention.

In Ardwick, the Grove Village urban regeneration project has seen the 'de-Radburnisation' of the estate. Figure 5.2 illustrates the remodelling of the estate to include more link-roads, removing the separation of pedestrians and traffic espoused by Radburn principles. These interventions serve to remake the built landscape into a more traditional layout, with improved access into and out of the estate.

Figure 5.2 Manchester, Plymouth Grove housing: (A) as built in the 1970s by the council housing department and (B) revamped in 2006–2009 and rebranded as Grove Village by M. J. Gleeson, Harvest Housing Group and Nationwide Building Society under the Ardwick Private Finance Initiative. Source: Michael Hebbert, 'Manchester: Making it Happen', p. 64.
As previously noted, certain aspects of regeneration, such as place marketing, can be considered novel in the bundle of activities associated with change in the urban fabric after 1980. Whether novelty is enough to argue that these facets of regeneration are part of a wider turn towards the neoliberal is unclear, and requires further research. However, tentative claims can be made to counter-act such an assertion. Marketing activity may be the most natural indication of a move towards a neoliberal paradigm, through its strong association with the growth of private sector service industry, and because of timing: marketing as an industry grew at precisely the same time as ‘regeneration’ became an urban buzzword. However, as Kieron Walsh has argued, the public sector has itself become increasingly involved in marketing activities. In the mid-1980s the Greater Manchester Council was aware of a need to market itself, and the geographical area it represented. MCC too worked on marketing itself and the city in the later 1980s, through a series of ventures culminating in the creation of the ‘Marketing Manchester’ agency.

In Manchester, then, regeneration activity is one part of a wider shift to a more globalised, competitive, service-based and entrepreneurial model than that which typified the early 1980s. To describe the changes in this period as a ‘turn’ towards the neoliberal somewhat simplifies what was a largely pragmatic and piecemeal change. Interventions into the physical fabric of the urban environment that took place throughout the 1980s and 1990s, took

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96 See Ward ‘Front Rentiers to Rantiers’, p. 1100.
97 Quilley, ‘Manchester First’; Ward, ‘Front Rentiers to Rantiers’. 
similar forms to the interventions undertaken in the 1950s and 1960s, at least in terms of process and involvement from the private sector. What is new about regeneration is the act of place marketing and image realignment, which continues to be a major facet of contemporary ‘renaissance’ activity. One aspect of this process that remains largely neglected is the way that residents incorporate, or do not incorporate, the new images for their neighbourhoods into their memories and experiences.

Residents interviewed for this project revealed mixed reactions to the regeneration activity they had experienced, without reference to attempts at rebranding or marketing their estates and neighbourhoods. Their impressions of the area were very much based on personal experience, of safety in the case of Tony, and crime in the case of Cath. However, whether their personal experiences were positive, neutral or negative, all of their accounts were framed within local discourses of community, ‘the estate’, and the wider city of Manchester. None of the residents interviewed for this project referred to wider political or economic shifts, and their impact upon the urban policies that they had experienced.

In Cath’s case, regeneration was a process from which she benefitted as an adult owner-occupier. Her home would not have existed without the demolition and rebuilding of the former Coverdale Crescent estate in Ardwick. However, her narrative is very much framed by on the one hand the importance of family networks, and on the other what she perceived of benefits of living in

\[98\] Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022; Interview with Cath, May 2014, ref. VN850024.
Ardwick, such as ease of movement, good quality amenities and affordability.\textsuperscript{99} When talking about regeneration she saw drawbacks, as ‘the people wouldn’t change’, and when asked whether she thought her local area would be different in five years time she didn’t think so.\textsuperscript{100}

Tony’s frames of reference for his experience of regeneration were based on a narrative of local politics, betrayal, and mistrust in the local authorities to provide what he aspired to. His account imbues the local authority with considerable power over the initial demolition of the old West Gorton estate, the creation of the new West Gorton estate, the decision around who would be landlord, and rehousing practice. For example, he described the rehousing process as ‘like bully tactics, if we didn’t sign, we didn’t get an house’\textsuperscript{101} From his perspective, local government was responsible for the negative experiences he had relating to regeneration. Despite the considerable neoliberal academic and political rhetoric to the contrary, Tony felt betrayed by the City Council. This is an important point, as it highlights how much the resident and academic discourses miscommunicate. It also points to the bind that local authorities find themselves in, with little actual power over decisions and processes, but considerable responsibility for any failings.

As noted earlier, the remedies for structural and social issues did not need to be packaged up as ‘regeneration’. However, the currency of the term during the 1980s, and particularly through the 1990s made it a useful addition to funding applications allocated on a competitive basis. Regeneration as a term

\textsuperscript{99} Interview with Cath, May 2014, ref. VN850024.
\textsuperscript{100} Interview with Cath, May 2014, ref. VN850024.
\textsuperscript{101} Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022.
brings with it a range of positive meanings; for example, a tone of religious hope for ‘rebirth’ or ‘new life’.\textsuperscript{102} It blends solutions to both physical and social problems, both of which were major sources of concern for local and national government throughout the 1980s and 1990s.\textsuperscript{103} It is pertinent to note that recent commentators have pointed to a ‘dramatic change’ in the discourse surrounding neighbourhood regeneration since the 2010 election, whereby the term ‘regeneration’ appears to have lost its currency and side-lined from use in policy documentation at least.\textsuperscript{104} The shift away from ‘regeneration’ may be a result of broader changes in political discourses, towards ‘austerity’.

Between 1980 and 1998, regeneration was seen as a tool to solve a raft of social, physical and economic problems. In a similar vein to purely private sector-led ‘development’, regeneration would ‘return derelict and vacant land and buildings to beneficial use, create new forms of employment where jobs have been lost, improve the urban environment and tackle an array of urban social problems.’\textsuperscript{105} Use of the term ‘regeneration’ serves not only to emphasise the severe need for change, but also the sustainable nature of those changes as a solution. Manchester struggled with the restructuring of the economy through the 1970s to the 2000s, suffering from a loss of manufacturing jobs and de-

\textsuperscript{105} Chris Couch, Charles Fraser and Susan Percy (Eds.), \textit{Urban Regeneration in Europe}, (Oxford, 2003), p. xv.
industrialisation more generally.\textsuperscript{106} Drastic interventions were felt necessary which could solve the structural, social and economic problems the city faced.

Use of the term ‘regeneration’ could also serve to break with the past. Rather than echoing the mistakes of post-war ‘reconstruction’, regeneration could offer an alternative, and a new history for the neighbourhood. As the historian Ian Cole argues:

Neighbourhood policy tends to focus on recent events and tend to rely on relatively ahistorical accounts of the process of neighbourhood change. This matters, because it can miss how far these longer-term changes have helped to shape the outlooks and actions of residents who are intended to be the focus of such programmes.\textsuperscript{107}

In Manchester's inner city estates, a blend of heritage and a re-making of the recent past form the basis of a rebranding exercise.

Regeneration as an activity is comprised of more than physical interventions into small areas. The process shares much with the reconstruction period after the Second World War, particularly in terms of the drive to demolish what was considered sub-standard housing. However, it also entails an effort to create sustainable, desirable residential neighbourhoods for a range of tenures, by marketing areas as desirable places to invest your capital or your life in.\textsuperscript{108} Regeneration is about more than redefining and reframing urban interventions; it also signifies the manufacture of a new image for an area. As Ronan Paddison has argued, former industrial cities linked with economic inactivity and failure are most likely to engage with place marketing

\textsuperscript{106} Kidd, \textit{Manchester}, pp. 187-214


\textsuperscript{108} See Chapter Two, pp. 103-118.
activity in order to rebuild and redetermine their reputation, internally and externally, in the belief that an improved reputation will result in increased external investment and internal economic confidence.\textsuperscript{109}

In Ardwick and Longsight, regeneration activity has brought with it a sustained attempt to re-market the Plymouth Grove estate. Since 2003, efforts have been made to re-conceptualise the estate as an urban village, drawing on positive associations with rural idealism, and suggesting an element of self-containment to make the neighbourhood attractive to a wider range of residents.\textsuperscript{110} Such a process has involved a concerted effort to brand the estate, through signage and logos (Figure 5.3), the creation of ‘Grove Village Publications’, the renaming of the area as ‘Grove Village’, and the positioning of amenities within a strongly branded central zone.\textsuperscript{111} Each of these tactics realigns the area with positive aspects of the meaning of home, such as security, space and privacy. A website has been set up by the local housing association which praises the changes that regeneration has brought, noting:

The project was the first Government-backed PFI scheme for social housing to reach contractual close. Since then, local residents, elected members have celebrated the projects impact on the community, which has also gained the respect from within the Housing Regeneration Sector. In recognition of outstanding performance and


the passion shown by the Grove Village Tenant’s & Resident’s Association, Grove Village has received various awards, these include. “Best Communities Initiative” – Northern Housing awards and “PFI/PPP Project of the year” - Building Magazine awards.¹¹²

Not only does the website recognize the importance of the local community, it also draws legitimacy from inclusion of ‘the Government’, the ‘Housing Regeneration Sector’ and ‘elected members.’ These are all important actors in the remodeling of the area from a ‘run down, inner-city housing estate’ into an urban village.¹¹³ The spatial sleight-of-hand here is crucial, as the estate is removed from the ‘inner city’, and remade into a ‘village’.

![Grove Village Logo](http://www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk)

Figure 5.3 The ‘Grove Village’ logo. Source: [http://www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk](http://www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk).

The re-branding exercise of the ‘urban village’ contains continuities with elements of past policies and interventions in the area, particularly in terms of the positioning of amenities, which is reminiscent of the original neighbourhood unit model on which the Plymouth Grove estate was first built.¹¹⁴ However, the sustained and consistent marketing of the area through branding is new.

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¹¹³ Lovell Ltd, ‘Lovell Case Study: Grove Village Limited’, p. 1

West Gorton, too, has found itself the topic of marketing material published by regeneration partners:

In 2012, the first new council homes to be built in Manchester for over 20 years were completed... Keepmoat delivered this groundbreaking [sic] project in collaboration with GB Building Solutions, working with a wide range of stakeholders. The project was a golden opportunity to create modern homes with high levels of energy efficiency, and in the process, to generate a range of local employment and training opportunities in an area with a history of social and economic deprivation.115

Keepmoat Ltd, in partnership with fellow construction company GB Building, built the new West Gorton estate. Their case study, quoted above, emphasises novel aspects of the project, particularly its return to building council houses. It also points to the ability of this particular regeneration project to finally turn around the fortunes of an area with ‘a history of social and economic deprivation’, silencing or airbrushing achievements of the past.116

Marketing materials relating to West Gorton also contain a neighbourhood logo (Figure 5.4). Neighbourhood branding is ‘becoming a popular instrument in urban regeneration’, which is yet to receive full academic attention.117 The neighbourhood logo serves to differentiate between different residential areas, and different regeneration projects.118 There are echoes of the Grove Village logo, however, particularly in the use of an abstract flower design, complementing the green leaves of Grove Village. The rebranding of West Gorton highlights a break with identities of the past and a celebration of

116 Keepmoat, ‘West Gorton’.
diversity, through its colourful and outward-looking motif, evocative of the Pride rainbow. It also signifies the professional approach of regeneration bodies.

Scholars have highlighted problems with the place marketing and promotion tactics engaged by regeneration agencies. In particular, place promotion activity by necessity accentuates positive attributes and overlooks the negative.\textsuperscript{119} For example, Cath, an owner-occupier who has moved to Ardwick in the past 15 years emphasised her fear of crime, and her uneasiness with particular areas in the vicinity of her home, but her experience is not included in the glossy marketing materials quoted above.\textsuperscript{120}

Part of the regeneration of Gorton has included reference to the area’s history as a site of manufacturing and heavy industry. For example, Gary mentioned the display of machinery parts in prominent public locations, such

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{119} Paddison, ‘City Marketing’, p. 343.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{120} Interview with Cath, May 2014, ref. VN850024.}
as outside the library and in the corner of Debdale Park visible from Hyde Road:

If you go to Gorton library and look at the very front of it, they have an axle tipped on it’s side as a sculpture. Why they painted it silver I don’t know, because the colour of steam engine is steel. But they painted that. So they have one in Gorton library and they have one in Debdale Park and they are representing the old Gorton works. And that was old part of Gorton. It’s good to see that. As a kid, I remember seeing that.121

A cynical view of this type of heritage marketing might highlight the tokenism of celebrating Gorton’s industrial past through sculpture, particularly when the legacies of de-industrialisation continue to impact the lives of local residents.122

However, as Gary powerfully suggests, the sculptures are an important bridge to his past, acting as an [albeit corrupted] anchor amongst the considerable physical changes he has experienced in the wider built environment. The sculptures are exactly where Gary said, but the one in Debdale Park is actually of a much more recent ‘Pendolino’ train, though this is not obvious for anyone simply walking or driving past the installation, as the plaque is relatively small and inaccessible (Figures 5.5-5.8).

The introduction of public art, which celebrates the industrial pasts of Gorton and West Gorton, is an interesting point to conclude this chapter on. Direct references to the past, explicitly included in the process of regeneration allow not just residents, but visitors and officials, recognise the importance of the area’s history in shaping the present built environment of the

121 Interview with Gary, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850030. Debdale Park is a large park bordering the A57 (Hyde Road) in Gorton.
neighbourhood. However, they also emphasise the drastic changes that the
neighbourhoods have experienced in a relatively short space of time,
particularly as they are, as Gary notes, a corrupted vision of the past, spray-
painted silver rather than reflective of the ‘dirt and hard work’ that
characterised industrial Gorton and West Gorton just fifty years earlier.

Figure 5.5 Accompanying Plaque for Wheelset Sculpture, Gorton Library. Source: Authors Own. The plaque states: ‘This Wheelset represents a history of train building that Gorton was famous for around the world. Unveiled by the Lord Mayor of Manchester, local Councillors and the Gorton community, 29th October 2013’.
Figure 5.6 Wheelset Sculpture, Gorton Library. Source: Author’s Own

Figure 5.7 Accompanying Plaque for Wheelset Sculpture, Debdale Park, Gorton. Source: Author’s Own
Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has looked to the regeneration of a number of estates in Manchester, and in combining the accounts of local and national authorities with those of academics, and, most importantly, residents, it has argued that regeneration as a process and activity was not markedly different from previous interventions into the urban fabric associated with post-war reconstruction. However, residents remain affected by personal circumstances and the built environment, in unexpected ways. Aesthetic value judgements and the provision of amenities are important improvements for regeneration areas from the perspective of residents. The resulting gaps between resident and professional discourse are crucial in understanding responses to regeneration.
Residents interviewed were keen to highlight their attachment to neighbourhoods in Manchester, and their upset at being moved away from them with what they saw as little consideration for their feelings, despite attempts at encouraging tenant and community participation.123

This final chapter echoes the findings of the previous three, particularly in terms of viewing history as a cyclical process. Looking at the academic treatment that regeneration activities have received it is clear that the context within which novelty is considered is crucial. Vast swathes of regeneration literature assume not only novelty, but also a strong and direct relationship with ideological and political shifts towards neoliberalism under Thatcher. However, on looking at local responses in Manchester, it is clear that not only do residents frame their experiences in personal rather than political, local rather than national terms of reference, but the local authority was engaged in a process of resistance throughout the 1980s. Neoliberalism did not affect the process of regeneration to the extent that the phrase ‘turn’ would suggest. Urban policy remained a patchwork of interpretation, resistance and personal experience, despite ideological changes at the top.

123 Interview with Tony, 22 February 2014, ref. VN850022; Interview with Gary, 27 November 2014, ref. VN850030.
**Conclusion**

This thesis began by identifying three major problems in the historiography of post-war housing. Firstly, the use of limited source material, largely based on the records of government, planners and architects has led not just to an overemphasis on ‘official’ accounts of post-war housing, but to the marginalisation of tenant voices. This reflects research questions centred on the processes and practices of post-war planning. In effect, the focus on ‘official’ accounts mirrors tenant marginalisation in the very processes of urban change, particularly in the pre-regeneration period.\(^1\) It does not mean that tenants have nothing to say. Secondly, where tenant voices, or assessments of experience are sought, they are kept largely separate from the fields of housing policy or history. Whilst the claim that council housing is presented through the history of housing policy is no longer reflective of the whole field, a gulf between ‘official’ and ‘experiential’ accounts remains.\(^2\) In this thesis, the gulf is presented as a schism between ‘official’ linear accounts of urban change, and ‘experiential’ cyclical experiences of urban ‘change’ that emphasise continuity. Finally, there are elements of disciplinary isolation in the field of housing history. Key terms, such as ‘community’ or ‘neoliberal’ are constantly reworked and reimagined in other disciplines interested in housing, but this is yet to filter into housing history itself. Taken together, these problems serve to marginalise the tenant voice, impoverishing our understanding of how council estates have functioned in the past, how citizens experience and manage multiple urban changes and continuities, and how memories of place can inform future urban interventions.

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\(^1\) Shapely, ‘Planning, Housing and Participation in Britain’, p. 75.

\(^2\) Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture*, p. 4.
This thesis has demonstrated how approaching histories of council estate through oral history methodology can solve the interrelated problems of limited source material, linear history and disciplinary isolation. By shifting our attention to research questions centred on experience and memory, we breathe new life into the historiography of post-war housing, open up dialogue with people who have direct experience of changes and continuities, and see 'official' accounts of urban change from new perspectives. This is important, because council estate history involves far more than policy formation and implementation, funding structures and architectural or planning theory. It needs to understand personal memories, experiences of homes and urban change, accounts of estate networks and sociability, and experiences of external narratives.

The effects of problems in the historical treatment of post-war housing are wide-ranging within academic discourse. Narratives of failure, centred on the state, the citizen, or a combination of both, remain a common trope. Due in part to this, the stigma, stereotypes and otherwise negative assessments of British council housing found in popular discourse are difficult to challenge. We need to recognise what council housing has achieved over the past sixty years, as much as what it has failed to achieve. Few sources from the perspective of the resident exist. Social surveys, particularly those conducted during periods of urban change such as slum clearance do exist, and have received attention.\(^3\) However, these sources are somewhat limited in their scope, given their specific interest in attitudes towards moving at the time. To make any claims to understanding continuities and change over time, we must turn to the

\(^3\) Todd, 'Affluence, Class and Crown Street'.

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memories and experiences of living residents. In life history interviews, we see how residents reassess their feelings about urban change and continuities within the context of their own life narratives.

In the first chapter, the meanings of ‘house’ and ‘home’ were used to challenge a narrative of antagonism between tenants and the local state, which although intended to contest the homogenisation of council tenants actually limits their political identities to a binary of either conflict with the state, or passivity. Scholars such as Peter Shapely have argued that through the post-war years, tenants in Manchester took on a consumer identity in their dealings with the local state. He evidences this through the bitter opposition towards planning decisions throughout the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in Hulme, but also in reactions to the post-war estates in the neighbourhoods of Ardwick and Bradford. However, none of the interviewees consulted for this thesis spoke about any organised opposition to the state. For scholars focusing on antagonism, these interviewees and their experiences would be silenced.

Instead of ignoring residents who were not part of organised protests or conflicts with the state, the first chapter focused on the different meanings of house and home used by the state and residents across the post-war period. It found a change in the way the state spoke about dwellings in the late-1960s, a shift from discussions of ‘house’ dominated by concerns with volume, to usage of ‘home’, which acts as a direct communication with citizens’ concerns about domestic and familial opportunities. This shift was borne out by the personal testimonies of residents, who framed their memories of home in terms of

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emotional practices of familial life. However, ‘home’ was much more than just the bricks and mortar of a dwelling for interviewees; it incorporated a range of social or public spaces and was vulnerable to non-physical policy interventions.

Concerns relating to the treatment of working-class memory were addressed in the second chapter. Focusing on the process of slum clearance in Manchester from the late 1950s, this chapter argued that memories of working-class neighbourhoods were characterised as a complex mix of nostalgia for childhood, community and the houses themselves, and reflexive explorations of the privations and difficulties of living in the old houses and neighbourhoods. These memories contrast with the different ways historians have approached the idea of the ‘slum’. In particular, they challenge the representation of working-class community in the middle years of the twentieth century as homogenous, based on geographical proximity and cohesive. Rather, interviewees talked about the importance of proximity at length, but had less to say about deeply ingrained social practices such as neighbours visiting each others’ homes, or gossip and favours.

The third chapter centred on the different ways that council estates are talked about and represented by different groups. It argued that the dominant narrative attached to social housing is one of ‘failure’, where utopian hopes for a fairer future based on improved housing standards and the facilitation of community within neighbourhoods were dashed either through poor planning decisions, inferior construction methods or materials, or through problematic social behaviours amongst some council tenants. This chapter demonstrated
how the failure narrative can only be challenged if resident memories and experiences are valued.

Finally, the thesis turned to regeneration initiatives that have transformed whole neighbourhoods of council housing in the past thirty years. It argued that historians have only dealt lightly with the past thirty-five years, and that the lack of historiography means that debates about the impact of ‘Thatcherism’ or neoliberal political paradigms are in their infancy. Rather than following the assumption that a neoliberal attempt to ‘roll back the state’ has resulted in a ‘turn’ in housing policy, the chapter on regeneration focused on the perceived novelty of post-1979 urban interventions. It argued that aside from increased awareness of marketing and re-branding council estates as desirable locations for living and working in the city, regeneration relies on the same tools of intervention that post-war slum clearance and reconstruction used; namely demolition and construction. This is significant, because it allows for stronger comparisons between pre- and post-1979 urban interventions. Resident testimonies of their housing histories do not make distinctions between welfare consensus before 1979 and neoliberalism after 1979, so there is no reason why this thesis should do so.

In addition to these contributions, the thesis has constructed a number of broader arguments about the perception and representation of council estates, and their residents, in popular and academic discourses. A number of narratives of council housing have been identified and assessed within the context of resident memories and experiences. In particular, narratives of failure, rooted in the assumption that post-war planning was based on utopian
visions of British cities in the future, have real-life consequences for council tenants. In a return to the roots of oral history methodology, giving voice to the otherwise silenced or undervalued resident grants them the space to challenge simplistic narratives of failure and stereotype. A second narrative of social housing rests on linear interpretations of progress, supporting the idea that each new policy direction offers a novel solution to problems that have existed for decades. For example, resident testimonies challenge the assumptions problematized in Chapter Four, that regeneration saw drastic changes in approaches to urban space. Rather, tenants emphasised the continuities and similarities between past interventions, such as clearance, and regeneration.

This thesis has demonstrated the contribution that council tenants can make to post-war British history. A new methodology is needed to challenge overarching narratives of failure attached to post war British social housing, and oral history interviews with tenants can aid historians, geographers and planners in contributing not just to our understanding of past built environments, but also those we want for the future. Social housing tenants care deeply about their homes and neighbourhoods, and offer sophisticated reflections on both the past and the future for these places. Academic history is increasingly seeking better relations with the wider public, through strategies of engagement and widening participation in research. For historians of post-war Britain, these developments are a golden opportunity to work with living people, to understand their experiences and to further our understanding of social, political, cultural and economic change. People are interested in history,
particularly if it relates to their lives. There is no better way to engage with the public than by exploring their own domestic spaces, from their perspective.
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Appendix I

Example Recruitment Flyer (West Gorton)

Would you like to help make history?

My name is Paula, and as part of a history project I’m interested in the stories you have about living in West Gorton. Whether you’ve lived in the area all your life, or just moved recently, I’d love to talk to you!

Do you, your mum, dad, nana or granddad remember the old houses, the flats or more recent changes? Whatever your memories, I’d really like to chat with you about them!

Contact Paula:

By Phone:

Or by e-mail:

Thank you

Images courtesy of Local Image Collection, Manchester City Council, ref. m24294 and m24434
This flyer was also used as a poster in prominent public spaces such as local libraries, sports halls, churches and doctor’s surgeries.
Appendix II

Sample Interview Questions

Below is a general overview of the type of questions interviewees were asked. Each interview was slightly different. For example, the interview questions for the local councillor were different from those asked of long-standing residents, because that interviewee had experience of working in the case study estates, not living in them. If, for example, a resident had no experience of living in high-rise property the questions about high-rise were omitted. Questions were differently ordered depending on the flow of the interview, and ad hoc follow up questions were always asked where appropriate.

Demographics

- Name, place of birth, age
- Parents' jobs
- Family size
- First family home – number of bedrooms, memories of the place
- Housing history – where moved afterwards – similar questions to first family home.
- Preferred dwelling type – house or flat – why?

Old House (e.g. childhood home)

- What are the things you remember about your old house?
- Was there a ‘community’ around it?
- Tenure
- Where did you spend your free time?
- Did you like your house?
- Were there any problems in the house?
- What are your memories of the streets?
- Why did you move?

Rehousing

- Do you remember being moved from your house to another?
What did that feel like? Being told to move?
What did you think of the Council at the time?
Did you want to move or not?
How did you feel about moving? Excited/worried/stressed/indifferent?
What was it like when you were waiting to move? Did things get worse in the area?
Was there anyone you remember who refused to move?
Did your neighbours move to similar areas?
Did you see your old house demolished or is it still there?
What was moving day like?
Where would you have liked to move if you could have moved anywhere?

Low Rise - House
What did you think when you saw your new house for the first time?
What did you think of your new street?
Were there any complaints about the new houses?
What did this house mean to you?
Is your home important to who you are?
Do you like decorating?
Have you had any repairs done over the years?
Do you deal with the Council at all?
Was your new house big enough?

Low Rise – Street
How did you meet people, neighbours etc.?
What did you think of them, were they like you?
Do you spend time outside your house on the street?
Do you use your garden?
Are there any problems on the street?
Have you ever been a victim of crime?
Have you ever witnessed crime?
Do you feel safe on the streets? Do you worry about crime?
Do you think the area has a reputation?
Where did/do you shop?
Do you walk around the area a lot?
Do you like the street layout?

**Low Rise – Neighbourhood**

What do you think of as your neighbourhood?
Do you think changes to the environment (new fences, pavements, plants) make any difference to the area?
Do you use the health centre, sports centre, community centre, churches?
Have you lived in other parts of Manchester? How do they compare to this place?
Do you feel part of a community here?
What does community mean to you?
Have the recent changes to the estate changed the way you feel about it/use it?

**High Rise – Flat**

What did you think when you saw your new flat for the first time?
What floor were you on?
What did you think of the block of flats in general?
Were there any complaints about the flats?
What did your flat mean to you?
Were you happy in the flat?
Is your home important to who you are?
Do you like decorating?
Have you had any repairs done over the years?
Do you deal with the Council at all?
Was your new flat big enough?

**High Rise – Block**

Did you know your neighbours?
How did you meet them?

Were there any problems with noise/damp/wind?

Were the flats popular?

Where did you spend your free time?

Did you recognise everyone who lived in the block? Would you know if someone didn’t live there?

What sort of people lived in the flats?

**High Rise – Neighbourhood**

Did you use communal spaces? Did you feel they were yours?

Did you feel secure and safe in the flats?

Do you think changes to the environment (new fences, pavements, plants) make any difference to the area?

**Regeneration – Involvement**

What do you think of the recent changes to the estates around here?

Do you think the area is attractive to look at?

Do you think the area is attractive to live in?

Have new people come to the area?

Have you been involved in any of the recent changes?

How were you told about the changes?

Are you involved with the residents association? If not is there any particular reason?

**Regeneration – Low Rise**

Have changes to the houses improved life on the estate?

Have the recent changes to the estate changed the way you feel about it/use it?

What do you think the image of social housing is like nowadays?

What do you think it was like in the past?

**Regeneration – High Rise**

Has demolishing the flats changed the area?
Why do you think the flats were demolished?

General Questions

Do you receive material from the housing association/council?

Did you go to school here? What was that like? Do your school friends still live around here?

How many people in the local area do you know?

What’s the best thing about living here?

And the worst?

Do you go to community events such as fun days/open days/street parties?

Do you think you get good value for money for your rent?

Have you ever thought about moving away from this area?

Do you read newspapers?

What do you think the area will be like in five years time?