# Beneath the Arches:

## Re-appropriating the Spaces of Infrastructure in Manchester

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

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# Appendices

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**Appendix 2:** Photographic survey of Manchester South Junction viaduct by Len Grant, 2002.

Photo appendices may be found on an included DVD.

# List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

BRPB: British Rail Property Board

Corridor: The Whitworth Street West corridor

CMDC: Central Manchester Development Corporation

GMPTE: Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive

MCC: Manchester City Council

MOSI: Museum of Science and Industry

MSJ: Manchester South Junction Railway

MRIAS: Manchester Regional Industrial Archaeology Society

NRP: Network Rail Properties

WSW: Whitworth Street West

# Abstract

11th November 2013
The University of Manchester
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PhD

**Beneath the Arches: Re-appropriating the Spaces of Infrastructure in Manchester**

This thesis sets out to explore the implications that transport infrastructures have on the production and perception of the urban built environment. Particularly, it focuses on the Victorian brick viaducts constructed to support the elevated railway in Manchester, England. It concentrates on Manchester's post-industrial restructuring and re-imaging since the late 1960s, exploring how the presence of brick railway viaducts, as well as the uses beneath their arches, have impacted strategies for revalorisation in the wake of gradual deindustrialisation. In exploring the changing symbolic economy of landscapes dominated by railway infrastructure, as well as the shifting uses and images of railway arches, this thesis explores the interplay between political economy and the aesthetic and symbolic dimensions of urban regeneration.

Upon establishing the mutually constituted history of Manchester's elevated railways and its city centre and demonstrating how this 19th century process has shaped the form and character of the city, it excavates a cultural history of the infrastructural landscapes of the city. Special emphasis is placed on the uses and perceptions of railway arches, which have long served as symbols of dereliction and social disorder. These spatial and cultural histories act as a foundation for analysing how the city's railway viaducts have been implicated in the re-imagining of Manchester as a post-industrial city. These histories and representations are explored in relation to property-led strategies of environmental improvement, industrial displacement, and heritage tourism along the southern fringe of Manchester city centre, focusing on three thematic and spatially bound case studies. These case studies rely on documentary data of planning and design strategies, interviews with elite actors involved in the re-imaging of Manchester city centre, and ethnographic observation. Using critical discourse analysis, the thesis unpacks the narrative relationship between dominant representations of these spaces and professional justifications for their material and symbolic reconfiguration.

# Declaration

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

I first visited Manchester in June of 2008 to exhibit a series of photographs at a conference at Manchester Metropolitan University called Territories Reimagined: International Perspectives. Having lived most of my life in former industrial cities of the Northeast United States and recently completed a Masters degree in urban planning, I was eager to get lost in the superlative, post-industrial landscapes of Manchester. To this point, my main reference points were Friedrich Engels' indictments of unplanned capitalist urbanisation and the austere post-punk of Joy Division and The Fall, coupled with a vague knowledge that Manchester was held up as a 'renaissance city' in planning literature. With no intention of ever returning to the city, I reflected on my experience in Manchester on my travel blog, *Tour de Awesome*:

> I went on a number of walks, with varying degrees of structure…. along the canals of the city, which appear in the interstitial spaces of the city and then disappear just as quickly under the overbuilt city center. Along the canal was… the site of the first train tracks [sic] and passenger station in the world, the sites that might be considered the birthplace of industrial globalization, and a few industrial ruins that were left behind as the city scurried to 'regenerate' itself as a neoliberal center. Much of this area has been converted from a corridor of vice to sanitized public walkways, but I was most drawn to the traces of the past and the plants that grew from mortar where the groundskeepers could not reach…. (Rosa 2008)

It was not exactly authenticity that I was looking for, but some sort of feeling that the visual image and material fabric of the city would channel its industrial history (as I had imagined it). The plants I had described were growing from the mortar of a railway viaduct in Castlefield: one of Manchester's flagship regeneration sites, a conservation area based on transport heritage, and a site that would become central to this thesis.

Upon a visit to London in 2009, I was reminded of my experiences in Manchester and once again fascinated by Victorian viaducts as I explored Bethnal Green and Deptford. Unlike the viaducts in Castlefield, which seemed unmaintained but were clearly treated as heritage setpieces, many of East London's arches appeared immune to the environmental improvement strategies associated with urban regeneration. To an American urbanist, these structures had another level of curiosity: unlike the steel and concrete elevated

transport infrastructure I was familiar with, the ubiquitous form of the arched brick viaduct created ready-made, individuated, sheltered spaces beneath. Over time, these serial spaces had been converted to commercial premises, constructed with materials of varying appearance, quality, and durability. The passage of time was evident in their varying conditions, textures, and materials. It was readily apparent that, in the fringes of British cities, railway arches were among the last visually prominent spaces continuing to be occupied by industry and warehousing. Compared to the increasingly homogenised post-industrial landscapes surrounding them, their hodgepodge materials and bright signage attracted the eye, and the warehouses and workshops filling the arches connected them directly with their urban pasts. A clear transition was occurring, however; long stretches of these arches were being refurbished and visually standardised. All the while, viaducts continued to serve the purpose for which they were built: to carry railways over the urban throngs on a committed right-of-way.

This blend of physical experience, vision and memory inspired this thesis: what could the banal, everyday spaces of railway arches tell us about post-industrial urban reinvention? My pursuit of this question, allowed me to extend my body of work relating to urban infrastructural spaces (Rosa 2009) and the visual and material dimensions connecting deindustrialised cities to their pasts (Garrett et al. 2011). It also allowed me to engage with questions of 'left-over' infrastructural spaces occurring in design discourses (Solà- Morales Rubió 1995; Doron 2000; Picon 2000; Hauck et al. 2011), while injecting a critical, political economic element.

Aside from a few exceptions in art history (Hills and Tyrer 2002), archaeology (Dwyer 2009) and planning (Haywood 2008), railway viaducts had not been the subjects of detailed scholarly analysis. Occasionally, their presence had been problematised by regeneration agencies in London (for the clearest example, see Cross River Partnership 2004), but otherwise they have been strangely absent from discussions of urban change. In an informal conversation, one visual sociologist suggested that viaducts were so banal as to elude attention: they were a blind spot. This comment helped me to realise that my attuned perspective as a foreigner would serve as an asset in foregrounding these banal backdrops to the urban landscape: to focus on "interrogating the geographies of the familiar" (Kaika 2004).

This is not to say that there isn't an emerging and dynamic conversation on infrastructure in the social sciences. The socio-spatial significance of networked

infrastructures (such those supporting transportation, water systems, electricity transmission, etc.) is absolutely elemental to the existence of cities (Harvey 1985), and these infrastructures are increasingly being theorised and studied in geography (Gandy 1999; Graham and Marvin 2001; Kaika 2005; Bakker 2011); science and technology studies (Coutard and Guy 2007; Hommels 2005; Coutard 2008); and a variety of related fields. However, there is less discussion focused on how they are understood and experienced as built form, as a material aspect of everyday urban life (though, see Robertson 2007; Gandy 2011; Harris 2011). Even as I wrote this thesis, changes occurred. The reimagining of infrastructural spaces is increasingly widespread: one needs to look no further than the recently completed High Line park in New York City, which repurposes a disused railway viaduct and has inspired a worldwide onslaught of proposals for linear parks.

With the High Line as the most prominent example, spaces of infrastructure are increasingly becoming the focus of theory and practice in design fields (Waldheim 2006; Corner 2006; Bélanger 2009). Furthermore, the interstitial spaces (Wall 2011) created by large-scale urban infrastructures are the subject of a recent volume that focuses on the "spatial design implications of technical and transport infrastructure," claiming that "infrastructure generates its own category of urban territory" (Hauck et al. 2011, p.9). Design theorists, in fact, have long showed concern about the challenges that aboveground transport infrastructure creates for spatial planning and design (see Lynch 1960). Motorways and railways have been lamented as barriers to movement and generators of seemingly left-over and un-maintained spaces since their construction. To some, these residual spaces have been celebrated as 'magical' (Solà- Morales Rubió 1995), heterotopic (Doron 2008), or 'loose' (Franck and Stevens 2006), in the sense that they are relatively un-programmed and allow for a dynamic diversity of unplanned uses. These analyses of infrastructural spaces, at the scale of the body, tend to be more instrumental than critical: beyond any celebration of the seeming freedom embodied in these 'vague' spaces (Solà-Morales Rubió 1995; Kamvasinou 2006; Miller 2006), they tend ultimately to feed rationales for design interventions.

The social sciences have largely failed to engage with infrastructural spaces at the scale of everyday experience. Geographers, whose spatial emphases best equip them to deal with such a topic, tend to conceptualise infrastructure at a larger, networked scale. Critical analyses of infrastructure, particularly arising from spatial political economy

(Harvey 1982; 1985; Graham and Marvin 2001) and urban political ecology (Gandy 2005; Kaika 2005; Heynen et al. 2006; Swyngedouw 2009), often focus on the role of infrastructures as circulatory and/or metabolic systems. As fixed capital, infrastructural networks circulate people, capital, and materials through and between cities and across vast distances. These analyses contribute greatly to an understanding of the transformation of the urban built environment, but primarily on a scale that excludes the consideration of locale.

Despite rising interest among urban scholars and designers in infrastructure, these aforementioned conversations have occurred in relative isolation. Infrastructure as an element of the built environment receives considerably less consideration than, for example, architecture and public space. This is changing, though, as more geographers examine the political and symbolic values of infrastructure in the urban built environment. For example, Kaika and Swyngedouw (2000) explore the fetishisation of technological infrastructure as an emblem of modernity, followed by its normalisation and eventual burial. Matthew Gandy provides one of the most sustained analyses of the landscapes of infrastructure with his exploration of the relationship between infrastructure, modernity, nature and visuality through case studies in a number of cities (1999; 2003; 2005; 2011). The discussion of infrastructure and modernity in this thesis draws from these studies. This thesis diverges from such analysis, however, in its specific discussion of infrastructure designated as historically distinctive, with inherent value beyond its utility. In the case of Manchester, modernist symbolisms of the sublime and the monumental return through heritage discourses and changing aesthetic tastes, shedding a different light on the cultural landscapes of infrastructure. Generally historical infrastructure as it is perceived and experienced today is primarily the subject of heritage and design discourses, with geographers relatively silent.

This thesis seeks to understand the role that transportation infrastructure plays in shaping a city, not only at construction, but as the city continues to grow around it. Particularly, it addresses the role that industrial-era railway infrastructure plays in the transformation of a city into a post-industrial landscape. I explore this by examining the changing perceptions and uses of the spaces beneath and along railway viaducts. It retains the politico-economic focus of geographical analysis while shifting scales to offer a more fine-grained account of the effects of transportation infrastructure on its urban locales: the scale of everyday embodied and visual experience. It also aims to enrich accounts of urban

political economy through exploration of the symbolic value of transportation infrastructure and its relationship to strategies of urban regeneration. While scholars have increasingly examined landscapes of infrastructure and their representations, the case study of Manchester offers a critical interjection to this dialog. Namely, what does it mean to think of infrastructure as heritage, having an intrinsic cultural value beyond its utilitarian origins? In Manchester, it is transportation infrastructure itself that serves as the primary attraction of an urban heritage park, with both individual viaducts and the entire industrial landscape being preserved as a visual and recreational amenity.

To fulfil these goals, this thesis 're-materialises' infrastructure (Latham and McCormack 2004) and geography (Lees 2002), while at the same timing exploring the relationship between representation and urban redevelopment. With the case of elevated transport infrastructure, which, unlike many infrastructures is visibly and palpably *there*, the relational and distributive space of infrastructure can also be explored as an element that shapes, and is shaped by, the rest of the built environment. In this sense, the absolute, material space of infrastructure, as well as its changing representations and aesthetic appeal, offer different insights into the spaces of infrastructure than previous conversations, which have been held in isolation.

Manchester has been selected as the focus of this thesis because it is the British city whose form is most heavily impacted by the railway (Kellett 1969; Freeman 1999). After London, Manchester has the largest number of railway arches in Great Britain (Network Rail 2004), and like many other formerly industrial cities, it has pursued a strategy of re-imaging itself as 'post-industrial' (O'Connor and Wynne 1996; Peck and Ward 2002). Some historians recently argued that Manchester's railway arches are the single most emblematic features of the city (Hills and Tyrer 2002; Crinson 2005). Further, exploring my adopted home offered the chance to deeply engage with the environment I studied, immersing myself in my study area.

As I will establish, the presence of viaducts acts as both an asset and a detriment to the process of post-industrial reinvention. They have shaped the southern fringe of Manchester city centre, an area that was identified as a priority for regeneration in the mid-1980s. As this area is largely defined by the elevated railway and its proximity to the city's established core, it provides an opportunity to examine how the city's viaducts impact strategies of post-industrialisation.

The periodisation of this thesis begins in the late 1960s, which I identify as the point of Manchester's transition from de-industrialisation to post-industrialisation. This transition dovetails with the shift from the railway to automobile dominance. While this analysis focuses on the past half-century, to excavate the socio-spatial impacts of Manchester's elevated railways requires a 'spatial history' (Lefebvre 2009) of these structures back to their construction in the nineteenth century. For this reason, Chapters 3 and 4 discuss the socio-spatial history and cultural representations of the city's railway viaducts since the point of their construction. This expanded historical account is elemental, as beginning in the late 1970s, the city's railway infrastructure was claimed as built heritage and ascribed cultural value (see Chapter 7).

The term 'post-industrial' is essential to the conceptualisation of this thesis, although Manchester clearly is not devoid of industrial activity: its railway arches are case and point. Rather, I discuss 'post-industrialisation' as the process through which the city transitioned away from its traditional economic base through active restructuring and reimaging, and 'post-industrial' as an aspirational image that urban elites attempted to project onto this process. These images have often translated into processes with significant material and social consequences. The presence of the railway viaducts and the uses of their arches are ideal points from which to observe the city's socio-spatial change.

The image and imageability (Lynch 1960) of railway arch spaces have been integral to revalorisation strategies on the fringes of Manchester city centre. Therefore, I examine the discursive production and cultural representation of railway arch spaces in post-industrial revalorisation strategies. I increasingly conceptualised this question in terms of a shifting urban imaginary, by which I mean the aesthetic and symbolic dimensions of the city and the way that these elements are implicated in ongoing socio-spatial transformation. The theoretical ambitions and empirical aims of this thesis ultimately lead to the formulation for my primary research question:

*How are industrial-era railway viaducts implicated in the socio-spatial dynamics and urban imaginary of Manchester in a post-industrial era (1967 to 2013)?*

Drawing from Lefebvre (2009), the social production of space entails a dialectical relationship between the ways in which the city is perceived, conceived, and lived. In my interpretation of this framework, urban space is produced by everyday practices, but those

who have the power to reconfigure the built environment primarily conceive the form of the city. Perception, conception and everyday life are not imagined separately: urban elites—planners, property developers, place marketers, etc.—have increasingly been concerned about shaping the symbolic economy of cities (Zukin 1995), and through their actions influence the urban environment. What is at stake is manipulation of both the material form and symbolic value of the city. Therefore, to understand the implications of Manchester's railway arches in post-industrial transformation, the historical geography and longstanding cultural representations of railway viaducts must first be excavated. To do so is the task of the first two sub-questions of the thesis.

The first sub-question asks: *What were the circumstances of the construction of Manchester's dense assemblage of railway viaducts and how has their presence influenced the land uses and property values of their immediate environs? How did this change during de-industrialisation and post-industrialisation?* This question of spatial history is elemental to unpack the re-imagination and re-configuration of viaduct spaces of in the past five decades. This question will be approached through an historical analysis dating back to the construction of Manchester's viaducts between the 1830s and 1890s.

The methods employed to address the early effects of the railway on Manchester include review of primary and secondary literature referring to the construction and regulation of Manchester's viaducts and stations, the uses of viaduct arches, contemporaneous accounts of slum clearance schemes, and Parliamentary and Town Hall hearings. In exploring these questions during the primary periodisation of this thesis, methods include extensive documentary analysis of land use, planning policy, and property records of railway viaduct properties and their relation to their surroundings, as well as archival photographs, newspaper articles, and interviews with historians, planners, and heritage officials. Clearly, the effects that viaducts have on their immediate environs are interdependent with the cultural representation of these spaces. Therefore, cultural representations are foregrounded as objects of analysis in their own right. This is interpenetrated with the second sub-question.

In approaching the history of Manchester's railway viaducts from the perspective of cultural representation, this thesis also asks: *How have the spaces of railway viaducts and their arches been depicted in popular culture and imagination, and how do these representations compare to the official discourses and personal attitudes of urban professionals (urban planners and architects, historical preservationists, regeneration*

*specialists and property developers, etc.)?* Like the previous sub-question, this inquiry requires significant historical contextualisation: as viaducts were almost exclusively constructed in the nineteenth century, cultural representation is clearly ingrained in longstanding attitudes and imageries. This question aims to ascertain dominant cultural representations of railway viaducts and their arches, with the primary goal of understanding how these images have been mobilised and/or suppressed in the post-industrial era. I hypothesised that the dominant representations of these spaces would be negative, since otherwise there would be little justification for the reconfiguration that I observed. The empirical approach to addressing popular imagination relies on an exploration of the use of viaducts and their arches as settings for works of art, literature, theatre, and film, presuming that such examples reveal underlying assumptions about the character of these locations.

In considering official discourses and personal attitudes of urban professionals, this thesis relies on a variety of data sources. For historical context, primary sources include an analysis of Acts of Parliament and Town Hall hearings, while relying heavily on the secondary accounts of urban and transport historians. Interviews with a variety of elite actors in Manchester, including planners, developers, property managers, heritage officers, and quantity surveyors, provide insight into the personal attitudes of contemporary urban professionals.

Following on the dominant cultural representations and professional attitudes toward the spaces of railway infrastructure in Manchester, a third sub-question interrogates how particular urban imaginaries are manipulated in regeneration strategies: *Upon mobilising these images and imaginaries, through which strategies have the spaces of elevated railway infrastructure in Manchester been approached by these urban professionals?* This task takes into account the results of the first two sub-questions to explore the relationship between socio-spatial change, shifting urban imaginaries in Manchester, and processes of re-imaging in aspirations for creating a post-industrial urban landscape.

Researching a largely uninvestigated topic is deeply rewarding, but also offers a number of challenges. These challenges, in turn, require the employment of multiple methodologies. From the beginning, it was clear that the research questions would be explored through visual and textual discourse analysis. With knowledge of regeneration strategies revolving around railway arches in London (Cross River Partnership 2004,

2005; WWM Architects 2007), I presumed that railway arches would be spaces that were openly problematised by planners, designers and property developers in Manchester. However, direct supporting evidence proved to be scarce. Despite the lack of easily accessible data, viaducts feature so prominently in Manchester's landscape that they were clearly the objects of considerable, if inexplicit, concern. In terms of exploring viaducts in relation to built heritage and their relative importance to a city's overall image—marketing itself as 'the original modern'—Manchester nevertheless provides an ideal case to examine these emblems of modernity.

The deficit of directly relevant archival materials to Manchester's viaducts ultimately served as an asset rather than a hindrance, because it encouraged methodological innovation. As a response, data was generated through interviews with urban elites such as planners, property developers, architects, and property owners. These interviews provided rich data on planning and development processes at a level of detail unattainable through official records. They further generated discourse with these actors about their motivations, judgments, and strategies. Central to this is an exploration of how they characterised the spaces they were seeking to reconfigure. These interviews are supplemented by, and sometimes counterposed with, interviews with business owners and employees operating from railway arch premises.

At points throughout the thesis, examples in Manchester are compared or supplemented with examples from London, or contextualised within national trends. While Manchester is the clear focus, in some cases is useful to cast the net wider. This is particularly relevant in relation to cultural representations of railway arch spaces: precisely because they are often imagined to be marginal and placeless, and because research materials point to the relatively consistent representation and use of viaduct spaces in other British cities, these examples can be extrapolated to be stand in for a more generalisable urban experience. Furthermore, the re-imaging and refurbishment of Britain's railway arch property estate tends to be coordinated at a national scale, with regional offices operationalising strategies devised in, and largely focused on, London (Biddle 1990). Therefore, an exclusive focus on Manchester misrepresents the scale at which decisions have typically been made.

To briefly explain the periodisation of this thesis, the late 1960s represent a starting point because this era witnessed a definitive, national shift from the locomotive to the automobile as the dominant form of urban transport. This had particularly strong

implications for Manchester, not only in terms of the use of railway infrastructures themselves, but on the increased decentralisation of the city and massive changes within its built environment. 1967 saw the completion of an inner city elevated ring road (the Mancunian Way), as well as the City and Council Borough of Manchester's publication of the *City Centre Map*, which was the primary planning document guiding Manchester city centre's redevelopment until 1984. By 1969, on the recommendation of the notorious Beeching Report, entire viaducts and massive railway stations were made redundant. As Manchester was already amidst a process of steady deindustrialisation and industrial decentralisation, coupled with the development of modern office blocks in the city centre, this was a primary point of transition to what would become the post-industrial city.

Chapter 2 situates the thesis within a broad theoretical framework and contextualises its contents within strands of critical urban scholarship emerging primarily from geography, planning and sociology, but also from the fields of design (architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design). This chapter identifies the discussions that this thesis contributes to: primarily, conversations regarding the conceptualisation of infrastructural spaces and the enduring effects of infrastructure on the urban built environment. It demonstrates that conversations regarding urban infrastructure are enriched by exploring their entrenched cultural representations and by shifting scales to explore the locales that infrastructures occupy.

Chapter 3 connects this theoretical framework to a set of methodological approaches, while situating the aims and objectives of this thesis with a research model that elicits a rich set of case study data drawing on discourse analysis. It also situates the interpretive context of Manchester as a case study, connecting this research endeavour within a city that has often been held up as superlative and distinctive.

The histories of the spatial impacts and social costs of railway building are addressed in detail in Chapter 4: this is integral to understanding the relationship between railway viaducts and their surroundings and unpacking the ways in which heritage-based regeneration strategies selectively celebrate and suppress histories. It establishes railway building and industrial urbanisation in Manchester within broader processes of modernisation, exploring themes of creative destruction, changing spatio-temporalities, and the mutual constitution of slums and suburbs, which play an enduring role in the social geography of Manchester.

Chapter 5 approaches the cultural representation of railway viaducts and their arches in a thematic manner, drawing from their construction in the nineteenth century to contemporary popular culture and news media representation. The deviation from the general pattern of this thesis, which is organised based on thematic periodisation, is due to the fact that many cultural representations of railway arches spaces may be traced back to the time of their construction, while others are relatively recent. For example, railway arch spaces have been associated with vagrancy, vice and criminality since the time of their construction. While these depictions still hold strong cultural sway, we can also identify the increasing trendiness of railway arch spaces as 'post-industrial chic,' often playing on these transgressive associations as part of a process of aestheticisation.

Chapter 6 focuses on the treatment of railway viaducts as heritage amenities in Manchester's earliest regeneration strategies from the late 1970s to the 1990s. Exploring Castlefield, designated as a Conservation Area since 1979, this chapter connects the historical and cultural representations of railway viaducts with post-industrial re-imaging through the analysis of built heritage. It explores the reinvention of what was widely considered a 'little known backwater' and a 'no-go area' to a heritage landscape marketed for leisure and tourism. Upon examining instrumental processes of industrial displacement, renovation and urban design, it explores the impediments that such a designation has placed on further development and conflicts around subsequent property development.

Chapter 7 explores the ownership and shifting management regimes of railway arch spaces, which have typically been conceived at the national level but have had specific ramifications in the case of Manchester. This chapter draws from industry reports and professional journals as well as interviews with professionals working in the railway property industry. This chapter further contextualises the following three chapters, which explore specific strategies for the revalorisation of landscapes dominated by railway infrastructure in Manchester.

Chapter 8 explores the role that Manchester's railway viaducts, particularly the 1848 Manchester South Junction (MSJ) viaduct, have played as barriers to the expansion of the commercial functions of Manchester city centre from the mid-1980s to the present. This viaduct, from the mid-18th century until the late 1960s, was considered the southernmost boundary of the commercial functions of the city centre. The chapter focuses on the site of the former Gaythorn Gasworks, directly south of the viaduct from the

established city centre, to explore how the 'barrier effect' was implicated in redevelopment schemes on this site from the 1980s to present. Through examination of masterplans, public-private regeneration initiatives, and city council strategies, as well as interviews with city officials, property developers, and railway arch tenants, it explores how the viaduct manifested as a barrier in concerns for the permeability of pedestrians and of capital.

Chapter 9 explores the process of industrial gentrification of the Whitworth Street West corridor (the Corridor). This sub-area, defined by Manchester City Council (MCC) since the early 1980s as a linear cultural district, offers a test bed for exploring the cultural, political, and economic factors driving industrial displacement. As opposed to Castlefield, where heritage was the driving force behind revalorisation strategies, the Corridor has a long association with cultural innovation and a different sort of post-industrial aestheticisation. This chapter explores the motivations of a variety of actors—from clubbing entrepreneurs to property developers, the city council to railway property managers—to examine how the railway arches along the Corridor have gradually been invented as a frontier for entrepreneurial, culture-led redevelopment.

Chapter 10, the Conclusion, considers the findings of these individual chapters to synthesise a response to the research questions of this thesis. It situates the theoretical and empirical contributions of this study within contemporary academic discourse regarding spaces of infrastructure and their role within the re-imaging of the post-industrial built environment. It also considers potential directions for future research.

# Chapter 2: The Tension of Fixity and Motion: Theorising Urban Infrastructure from the Ground Up

## 2.1 Introduction

Infrastructure is an increasingly trendy topic among social scientists as well as design scholars and practitioners. However, these conversations often approach socio-spatial aspects of the built environment at different scales and with different goals in mind. Some of the more sophisticated theoretical insights into the nature of urban infrastructure come from geography; interdisciplinary conversations in urban political ecology; and environmental history. Within the social sciences, studies of infrastructure tend to focus on their distributive nature, emphasising relational theorisations of socio-spatial processes at inter-urban or regional scales. These discussions are more focused on policy imperatives or sustainability than the more cultural aspects of the spaces and landscapes of infrastructure. Contemporary infrastructure is accepted as invisible and normalised: a substructure to the urban. However, the specific implications of above-ground transport infrastructures, once explored, show that their visual and material presence in the built environment is formidable.

Design and planning, on the other hand, have increasingly focused their attention on repairing the seemingly leftover, irrational spaces created by elevated transport infrastructures in cities. These practices are relevant to the scale at which of this thesis is conceived, but consideration of the spatial implications of urban infrastructure in the design fields tend to be instrumental. In this sense, the spaces and landscapes of infrastructure are perceived primarily as opportunities for recuperative professional practice. Design scholars dwell upon the residual spaces created by infrastructure and their disruptive nature on the ground, but generally elide the historical context that lead to their construction.

By exploring the spaces and landscapes of infrastructure at a scale typically associated with urbanism, but with the critical political economic focus that drives the more incisive critical work on infrastructure, this thesis bridges the gap between disparate dialogues. It argues that relational spatio-temporal thinking is essential for understanding infrastructure and its social implications, but that infrastructure—and particularly

elevated transport infrastructure—also needs to be examined as an integral, material element of the built environment. This multidisciplinary approach is the framework for interpretation of Manchester's elevated railway viaducts throughout the thesis. It explores the role of the city's transport infrastructure in the social production of space, and the relationship this has to underlying priorities of restructuring and reimaging Manchester's city centre as post-industrial. Consideration of these structures in the political and symbolic economy of the built environment lays the groundwork for the methodological approach employed in this thesis and the underlying questions that guide its interpretation.

## 2.2 Theorising Urban Infrastructure: Relational Conceptualisations

The term 'infrastructure' has been used in the English language since the 1920s to "refer collectively to the roads, bridges, rail lines, and similar public works that are required for an industrial economy, or a portion of it, to function" (American Heritage Dictionary 2000). Since its coinage, the word has expanded to include the underlying physical facilities, services and installations in engineering and military strategy, and metaphorically, as any substructure or underlying system. I use the term as originally defined: a subsection of the overall built environment that is intra-urban or larger in scale, networked, and distributive in nature.

Infrastructure is an integral and constitutive element of the urban built environment. No more apparent is this relationship than in cities, which require dense assemblages of infrastructure for their sustenance and operability (Graham and Marvin 2001). At face value, infrastructures seem intrinsic: substructures and predecessors to the physical and economic development of cities. The interlinked relationship between infrastructure and the city had been understudied and under-theorised in the social sciences until the last decade. The subtext, according to Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin, is that "compared with other 'point-specific' urban services like shops, banks, education and housing, [infrastructures] are of relatively little interest to urban researchers because, to all intents and purposes, they don't really *have* an urban geography in the conventional sense" (2001, p.9). According to Matthew Gandy (2005), late modern society has normalised infrastructure as an 'exoskeleton,' while Maria Kaika and Erik Swyngedouw (2000) describe this normalisation as a fetishism through which products

and services are separated from the processes and relations of their production. This critique is especially potent when examining design discourses.

Metabolic networks of infrastructure (Gandy 2004; Swyngedouw 2009), connecting the urban to the rural, the local to the global, are increasingly considered in the social sciences, design fields, and science and technology studies as "material mediators between nature and the city" (Kaika and Swyngedouw 2000, p.120). This thread is developed through the subfield of urban political ecology (Heynen, Nik et al. 2006). In most contemporary scholarship, to think infrastructurally presupposes a relational, networked ontology, and the conceptualisation of infrastructure is therefore constructed at a variety of scales and temporalities.

As Jochen Monstadt notes, "the interlinkage of infrastructure and urban developments has hitherto [...] been undertheorised and empirically understudied both in the social studies of technology and urban studies" (2009, p.1924). When links between infrastructure and urban development are made, they tend to focus on environmental policy and governance; technological innovation processes; and/or urban sustainability (Gandy 2011). With the exception of urban political ecology, the work of David Harvey (1982; 1985; 1996), and some scholars of socio-technical systems (Graham and Marvin 2001; McFarlane and Rutherford 2008), urban infrastructures are often depoliticised, or as Leigh-Star (1999, p.377) has claimed, "singularly unexciting. They appear as lists of numbers and technical specifications, or as hidden mechanisms subtending those processes more familiar to social scientists." The very essence of infrastructure is its ability to be ignored and unacknowledged as we go about our daily lives. For these reasons, infrastructures are relatively invisible, and taken for granted until they fail (Hommels 2005; Graham 2010).

This thesis deals with the relationship between the 'sunk capital' (Harvey 1982) of infrastructure, which functions in a both a relative, conceptualised space based on the circulation of capital, and an absolute, material space that the railway viaducts occupy. From the early 1980s, Harvey's engagement with 'fixed capital' addressed the circulation of capital in the built environment, manifesting not only in architecture, but especially in infrastructure. As Harvey emphasises, (echoing Marx's description of capitalist development's 'annihilation of space through time,') urbanisation is deeply interwoven with the history of advances in transport and communication technologies. "The overcoming of spatial barriers and the restraints of particularity of location through the

production of a particular space of transport and communications has been of enormous significance within the historic dynamic of capitalism, turning that dynamic into a very geographical affair" (Harvey 1996). Infrastructure is increasingly discussed, particularly in urban political ecology (Kaika 2005; Heynen, Nik et al. 2006; Monstadt 2009); science and technology studies (Hommels 2005; Coutard and Guy 2007; Monstadt 2009; Furlong 2010); and environmental history (Cronon 1991; Gandy 2003; Melosi 2010). While infrastructural systems are by no means isolated to cities, they have often served, and continue to serve, as the central nodes of distribution and consumption of materials, as well as the colonisation of hinterlands.

Infrastructures both respond to and create the flows of capital from one point to another (Castells 1996): the rise of the globalised industrial city, (with Manchester among the first), could not be imagined without the network of canals, and later railways, that connected points of production, distribution, exportation, warehousing and retail of consumer commodities, as well as the transportation of labourers themselves. Harvey points out a central contradiction of infrastructure, and of the built environment more broadly: it is tailored to a specific mode of production at a particular moment. However, as much as infrastructure may reduce spatial barriers and 'annihilate space with time', it may also fall into obsolescence.

> Spatial barriers can be reduced only through the production of particular spaces (railways, highways, airports, teleports, etc.). Furthermore, a spatial rationalisation of production, circulation and consumption at one point in time may not be suited to the further accumulation of capital at a later point in time. The production, restructuring, and growth of spatial organisation is a highly problematic and very expensive affair, held back by massive investments in physical infrastructure that cannot be moved, and social infrastructures that are always slow to change. (Harvey 1989b, p.232)

Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin outline an approach for examining the effects of infrastructure in the city. They describe the process and condition of 'splintering urbanism', through which socio-spatial inequalities are exacerbated through the construction, provision and access to infrastructure (2001). In such a conceptualisation, socio-technical infrastructure systems selectively transcend space and time by following one path over another, determining who has access to public goods and who do not. In other words, infrastructures are the material manifestation of social, economic, and political power.

While Graham and Marvin explore the splintering effects of infrastructure in cities, the relational aspects of infrastructure continue to dominate the social sciences, particularly geography. Less discussed is the static, material presence of infrastructure within the larger built environment. Above ground, highly visible infrastructures such as transport infrastructure (as well as high tension power lines and other linear rights of way) are an integral part of the contemporary urban landscape and deserve consideration as their own category.

## 2.3 Grounding Infrastructure: Spaces and Landscapes of Infrastructure as a Distinctive Category

Large technical systems (Coutard and Guy 2007) are imagined from a relational standpoint as spaces of flows and metabolisms, but the actual materiality of infrastructures, their effects on the socio-spatial dynamics, and the specificity of their landscapes often elude attention. For this reason, a goal of this thesis is to explore the effects of large-scale, elevated transport infrastructure 'on the ground' from a historical perspective.

In a 2011 essay, Matthew Gandy touches on some concerns raised by contemplating the role of urban infrastructures as constitutive elements of the urban landscape:

> Both landscape and infrastructure are now the focus of a renewed wave of urban analysis marked by themes such as the adaptive capacity of cities to climate change, the application of ecological ideas to urban design, or the reuse of former industrial spaces. Yet much of this emerging literature lacks historical perspective: an overriding emphasis on 'policy relevance' has ironically precluded many possibilities for critically rethinking the role of landscape and infrastructure in the contemporary city. (Gandy 2011, p.156)

Gandy's quote emphasises that there has been little intellectual attention to landscapes of infrastructure outside the realm of instrumental questions of 'fixing' apparent inefficiencies (be they economical or ecological underutilisation). This is true within the social sciences as well as the design fields: infrastructure is something to be fixed, and something that can fix. But what of these landscapes as they currently stand? Aside from some notable examples, (Kaika and Swyngedouw 2000; Gandy 2003; Kaika 2005; Robertson 2007; Gandy 2011), the symbolic role of urban infrastructure in the built

environment of advanced capitalist countries is largely ignored. Studies in the developing world, particularly Mumbai (McFarlane and Rutherford 2008; Harris 2011) are exceptions, but they resonate more with historical narratives of modernisation in the global West (Berman 1988; Dennis 2008) than post-industrial transitions.

When elevated transport infrastructure is explored in terms of its material and symbolic presence in the built environment, nearly all attention is paid to motorways (though, see Hormigo and Morita 2004). Some of the earliest examples are the work of Kevin Lynch (1960) and Lawrence Halprin (1966), both of whom examined the newly-created landscapes of highways in the United States and expressed concerns about the lack of use (or misuse) of land along and beneath them. In recent years, scholarship related to landscapes of infrastructure relate to the contemporary condition of British cities. Peter Merriman (2004; 2006), for example, has explored English landscapes of 'automobility' from a cultural geographical perspective, and Joe Moran (2005) interprets motorways as everyday landscapes through literary symbolism. London's Westway motorway, in particular, has featured heavily in these accounts of infrastructural landscapes (Moran 2005; Robertson 2007; Wall 2011; Gandy 2011). One particularly relevant study of this stretch of urban elevated motorway is Susan Robertson's (2007) examination of how infrastructural spaces "are understood and experienced as built-form, as a material aspect of everyday life" (p.74). Peculiarly, the spaces of elevated railway infrastructures—nearly all built in the era preceding the rise of the automobile—have largely been overlooked in these conversations. Elevated railways are often treated as emblematic of modernity and urbanisation (Kellett 1969; Schivelbusch 1986; Freeman 1999; Dennis 2008), but less frequently are their contemporary effects on cities considered. Though both railways and motorways are held up as technological images of modernity (Berman 1988), railways seem to harken a more historically oriented approach.

Conversations about the spaces and landscapes of transport infrastructure have taken on a character reflective of the ambiguity and interstitiality (Hills and Tyrer 2002; Robertson 2007; Wall 2011) of their spatial products. These tend to be inter- or trans-disciplinary, blending approaches associated with cultural geography, architecture, literature, and visual art. There is an interesting parallel discourse in the design fields about the indeterminate, left over, and seemingly irrational residual spaces produced by large-scale infrastructures. Again, in this case, most attention is paid to the spaces created

by elevated motorways. As Karen A. Franck notes, utilitarian infrastructures often create their own sorts of unintended spatial by-products in cities.

> Ironically, building the city that is intended to be efficient with clearly designated and segregated uses results in many leftover spaces without planned uses, including areas near or under highways, bridges, and overpasses…. All these spaces retail a spatial, social and legal openness (if not ambiguity) that allows citizens to appropriate them for a variety of activities…. What ensues is a certain degree of freedom and risk, greater liveliness and unpredictability, and, in the eyes of some, messiness, reduced efficiency and disorder (2011, p.117).

What Franck's comments emphasise, and what is essential to these conversations, is that networked infrastructures function precisely to increase efficiency and communicate quickly across vast distances, but at the scale of the urban fabric they often impose and disrupt, severing connections between proximate districts. From the perspective of landscape and urban design, this is a problem to be solved, and thus an opportunity for professional practice. These are not new theoretical concerns in urban design and planning: much of Kevin Lynch's (1960; 1990) work ruminated on the character of 'wasted' infrastructural spaces and how they could be reincorporated within the urban fabric of the city. This is particularly true of *Wasting Away* (1990), which wrestles with the social freedoms and dangers associated with dereliction and abandonment. Lynch (1990) emphasises the ambivalence that he and other urbanists feel toward wastelands:

> Waste things are shifted to the social margins: low-income areas… road edges, vacant lots… and the outer rims of cities. Today, the great cities have absorbed those waste regions…transforming them into underused central city lands and marginal urban classes…. Wastelands are the havens of marginal, illegal people…. [They] are places of despair, but they also shield relics, and the first weak form of some new thing…. They are places for dreams, for antisocial acts, for exploration and growth. (pp.152-153).

Spaces and landscapes of infrastructure have generated considerable interest in recent architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design discourse (for example, see Bélanger 2009; Varnelis 2009; Wall 2011; Kamvasinou 2006). Infrastructure's 'leftover' spaces, as well as its operative scale, provide theoretical fodder for design, inspiring new ways of thinking about practice. Increasingly, the spatial impacts of urban infrastructures

on their surrounding locales are also viewed as a problem that needs to be fixed. Many of these discussions can be traced back to the concerns Roger Trancik raised in *Finding Lost Space*, one of the most commonly used urban design textbooks:

> Too often the designer's contribution becomes an after-the-fact cosmetic treatment of spaces that are ill-shaped and ill-planned for public use…. This is especially true along highways, railroad lines, and waterfronts, where major gaps disrupt the overall continuity of urban form. Pedestrian links between important destinations are often broken, and walking is frequently a disjointed, disorienting experience. It is important first to identify these gaps in spatial continuity, then to fill them with a framework of buildings and interconnected open-space opportunities that will generate new investment…. (Trancik 1986, pp.1–2).

Echoing Trancik, Gary Strang notes that "utilitarian intrusions—which often result in disturbed landscapes, defaced retrofitted buildings and the erasure of nature that we have come to accept as the everyday urban and regional landscape—are actually opportunities" (1996, p.19). Reconsideration of infrastructure by designers occurs at a variety of scales: infrastructure offers a new, larger scale for design to occur (Waldheim 2006), and 'undesigned' leftover spaces created by infrastructure are the frontiers of new forms of design practice. Idiosyncratic spaces and cluttered, 'anxious' landscapes of infrastructure (Picon 2000) are subjected to design-oriented scrutiny precisely because they are the sites for potential professional practice. For these spaces and landscapes to be justified as needing redesign, their previous uses must be represented as sub-optimal.

One example of the rising interest in the spaces and landscapes of infrastructure is the recent publication of the edited volume *Infrastructural Urbanism: Addressing the In-between* (Hauck et al. 2011). A stated goal of this publication is exploration of infrastructure as a potentially distinct category within urban design. The editors note the importance of what they call 'reclaimed interspaces' in design practice: where previously 'spaces that were not classified as usable' were gradually 'recovered by informal uses' over time, through which users "have discovered aesthetic and functional potential in these condemned spaces" (Hauck et al. 2011, pp.14–15). Another recent publication, *Infrastructure as Architecture* (Stoll and Lloyd 2010), leaves little doubt that infrastructural spaces are no longer 'left-over': they are the frontier of contemporary design.

### *2.3.1 Indeterminacy and the Residual Spaces of Infrastructure*

1970s landscapes of deindustrialisation serve as a starting point for understanding theorisations about the residual spaces of transportation infrastructure. Since this time period, planning and landscape practice have shifted away from large-scale projects to more diffuse, piecemeal approaches to the urban fabric (see Harvey 1989), often in an attempt to counteract or ameliorate the repercussions of the deindustrialisation process. One manifestation of this shift is the increasing focus of architecture, planning, and landscape architecture on sites abandoned by, or left over from, the industrial era. This relates not only to the prioritisation of urban densification and construction on brownfields, (a keystone of British regeneration policy since the 1990s) (DETR 1999), but also the reappraisal of urban infrastructural spaces.

In one sense, it is difficult to think about the spaces of transport infrastructure (such as canals and railways) as separate from the industrial districts that tend to cluster along their 'metropolitan corridors' (see Stilgoe 1985). Transport infrastructure is often prominent in industrial (and post-industrial) urban landscapes precisely because they were mutually constituted. Thus, the wastelands and voids left behind from outmoded industrial activity and the leftover spaces created by infrastructure tend to occupy the same urban districts. These sites, often dominated by ruins, dereliction, and overgrown natural plant life, are a source of fascination among artists, landscape architects (Shane 2003), design scholars (Ocampo 2013), and a variety of subcultures (Sheridan 2007) such as skateboarders, graffiti artists, and urban explorers (see Edensor 2005). In one way or another, these practices and discourses revolve around themes of indeterminacy and freedom. For example, as Daniel Campo has recently illustrated, abandoned sites along the Brooklyn waterfront have long been re-appropriated as an 'accidental playground' (2013).

Despite the celebratory tone used for indeterminate spaces in this strand of design theory, to a critical urban scholar there is also a central contradiction to the exaltation such spaces receive. This conflict is between this celebration of these spaces as the new frontier of design possibilities and their existence as unregulated and seemingly unregulatable, yet replete with use value. There is also a moral ambiguity to the treatment of these spaces, as they tend to serve the function of supporting transgressive, and sometimes illegal, behaviour. This was noted by Ignasi de Solà-Morales Rubió, an architect and critic, one of the earliest to tackle the contemporary interest in indeterminate spaces. Rubió used the

term *terrain vague*, borrowed from an expression in 1970s French filmmaking, as a theory for designing these territories because, "While the analogous terms that we have noted are generally preceded by negative participles (in-determinate, in-precise, un-certain), this absence of limit precisely contains the expectations of mobility, vagrant roving, free time, liberty" (1995, p.120). In other words, these places *seem* to be outside the realm of regulation. Rubió suggested that urbanised areas associated with past industrial or other economic uses, often falling between waves of investment, are generally ignored by designers because they are isolated from the dominant economic centres of the city. However, his primary critique of design practices focusing on *terrains vague* remains quite prescient. He lamented that architects tend to design specifically to remove this type of free, unregulated condition in favour of imposing order and rationality.

Dougal Sheridan (2007, p.98) recasts the terrain vague as the 'indeterminate,' which he identifies as "an absence of limits, often resulting in a sense of liberty and freedom of opportunity," arguing that "architecture is associated with a degree of determination or ordering that reduces the possibilities and potential embodied in the vacant site." Indeterminacy refers to the seeming irrationality of a particular urban space (or landscape) that has outlived its purpose, or for which a specific purpose was never designated. They are the 'urban voids' and 'wastelands' in-between spaces with more strictly defined and regulated uses, akin to what Boyer would call the 'disfigured' city which subverts the tidiness and orderliness of the 'figured' city (1995). Along with outmoded industrial spaces and abandoned districts on the fringes of cities, within the category of indeterminate spaces are the irregular, seemingly incidental spaces created as a result of large-scale infrastructural systems: what Gil Doron calls 'blank spots on the map' (Doron 2000). Doron argues that leftover spaces are heterotopic (2008), and that the temporary re-appropriation of these spaces should be recast as the 'architecture of transgression' (2000). The 'freedom' embodied in such spaces, which tend not to be policed or tightly regulated, may also allow them to be used as what Denis Wood (1978) calls "shadowed spaces," visually screened and marginal spaces sought out for transgressive activities.

As should now be clear, infrastructure is becoming a new site and a generating metaphor for design practice, following on the recuperation of its industrial surroundings. Projects such a New York's High Line demonstrate that the aesthetic value of infrastructural spaces are under reappraisal. The disciplinary gaze of architecture,

landscape architecture, and urban design may be more fixed on the material, visible spaces of transport infrastructure in cities than geography or other social sciences. However, these sites have become colonised by theories conceived by those who seek to reconfigure them. As Robert Beauregard has pointed out, "Planners and designers take control of a place by distilling its narratives. They eliminate ambiguities that might derail the project by casting doubt that it is the best and only viable option. Their intent is to create opportunities for action. Given a set of conditions or a sense of unease, they represent places in terms that enable them and others to intervene" (2005, p.41). It is no surprise that designers are interested in exploring the design potential of urban spaces that are severed, disjointed, and undervalued. Reincorporation of these previously 'wasted' spaces into dominant social and economic circulation deserves a non-instrumental analysis to unpack the political economic underpinnings of these processes.

## 2.4 Analysing the Social Production of the Urban Built Environment: Political and Symbolic Economy

If design theorists and practitioners focus on fixing the irrational spaces of infrastructure created under previous modes of economic accumulation, spatial political economy targets its analysis squarely in the production of the built environment. As Edward Soja explains the dialectical relationship between society and space (1980, p.207), "Space is not a scientific object removed from ideology and politics….. If space has an air of neutrality and indifference with regard to its contents and thus seems to be 'purely' formal, the epitome of rational abstraction, it is precisely because it has been occupied and used, and has already been the focus of past processes whose traces are not always evident on the landscape.... Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies." In this thesis, analysis focuses on particular, absolute spaces of the city: the built environment. In other words, the bricks and mortar, constructed elements that constitute a human landscape, and the voids between them. Through the relationship between spatial planning and private development, increasingly codified in processes of modernisation, the built environment is embedded within complicated and dynamic relationships between the state, private capital, labour, politics, and the everyday practices of urban citizens. As David Harvey emphasises, in advanced capitalist societies:

> Elements in the built environment have spatial position or location as a fundamental rather than an incidental attribute…. The whole question of the spatial ordering of the built environment has then to be considered; the decision where to put one element cannot be divorced from the 'where' of others. The built environment has to be regarded, then, as a geographically ordered, complex, composite commodity. (1982, p.233)

Thus, as a complex, transmogrifying commodity, the urban landscape exists in a state of flux (Gandy 2009): in construction as well as decay, it is in a constant state of transformation. This requires a theoretical lens that views the interrelationship between socio-spatial processes and material products within the contexts of capitalism and urbanism.

In this thesis, the ultimate goal is to see objects in the built environment (in this case, railway viaducts) as dynamic artefacts of social, economic, political and cultural relationships in a particular moment, recognising their historical contingency and multiplicity of meanings. In considering the built environment is a 'complex, ordered commodity,' as well as a lived space, tensions between the use value and exchange value of urban space become elemental to understanding the built environment as a social product (Lefebvre 2009 [1974]). These tensions, so evident in the ambivalence of designers toward erasing the 'looseness' (Franck and Stevens 2006) and 'vagueness' (Solà-Morales Rubió 1995) of leftover infrastructural spaces, deserve a non-instrumental analysis of the social production of the urban built environment.

Foundational to the understanding of the social (re)production of the urban built environment is Henri Lefebvre's idea of the social production of space (2009 [1974]). Lefebvre argues that every society in history has created a distinctive social space for itself, reflecting the requirements for economic production and social reproduction: in other words, "society secretes space." Within this conceptual foundation, 'space' is not simply a container in which life is played out: the way space is perceived, conceived and used is the product of social, economic, cultural, and political processes. Space is at once absolute in the form of a product (the built environment at one moment in time), and relational in the form of a process (capital accumulation, globalisation, planning, etc.). This thesis will focus more on absolute spaces, but with a relational understanding of their production.

While Lefebvre's has been central in shaping the conceptual approach to this thesis—including its method—this thesis draws more heavily from the critical urban theory of his successors. Lefebvre's influence on geography and urban studies can be felt

most strongly through the development of a neo-Marxian spatial political economy approach, of which the most influential contributor has been David Harvey, particularly since the 1980s. The link between Lefebvre and Harvey is essential here because Harvey greatly developed an analysis of capital flows as they have manifested in the built environment, producing a convincing schema (1982; 1985) exploring the urbanisation of capital and the implications of infrastructure.

In Harvey's work, the built environment functions as *fixed capital*. It plays a 'peculiar role' in capitalist relations because "items can be produced in the normal course of capitalism commodity production, but they are used as aids to the production process rather than as direct raw material inputs. They are also used over a relatively long time period" (1985, p.6). As Harvey and Smith point out, one of the inherent contradictions of capitalism is that financial capital is sunk into immobile, resource-intensive fixed capital such as factories, warehouses and infrastructure to ensure processes of production and circulation. While financial capital is mobile, fixed capital is not. Capital (at the scale of the city, region, or nation state) may shift according to profit rates, devaluing the locations left behind (Smith 1984). In this process, we see urban dereliction and decay as fixed capital outlives its purpose.

This is another way of thinking about urban dereliction and wastelands: the 'problem' to be solved by design practitioners is the result of political economic processes that inevitably lead to uneven geographical development. Over varying periods of time, in these processes of accumulation and crises, the built environment is subject to place-specific devaluation (Merrifield 1993), leading to widespread obsolescence of fixed capital. Through uneven development, "capital attempts to seesaw from a developed to an underdeveloped area, then at a later point back to the first area which is by now underdeveloped, and so forth…. Capital seeks not an equilibrium built into the landscape but one that is viable precisely in its ability to jump landscapes in a systematic way" (Smith 1984, p.198). Smith describes the process of capital's attraction to built environments at the peak of their devaluation (usually the deindustrialised inner city), when the difference between capitalised ground rent and potential ground rent becomes sufficient to redevelop a site in a 'higher' use: this spatio-temporal phenomenon is known as the *rent gap*. While this concept offers limited explanatory function, it identifies the temporal aspects of urban decline and renewal as evidence of the cyclical nature of capitalist investment and disinvestment. It is in the moment that the rent gap is realised that the role of the designer

becomes important in remediating a site so that it presents a more palatable landscape to re-development.

Spatial political economy explains the production of the built environment by applying economic analysis to accumulation schemas, the circulation of capital, and fixed capital of material space. Questions of 'wasted space' and the dereliction associated with deindustrialisation and remaining industrial infrastructure are recast when considering their social production. Urban planning, and to a lesser extent design (Cuthbert 2006) are prime targets of spatial political economic critique because they foreground the relationship between private capital and the state in mediating, apportioning and regulating development. The role and ideological positioning of the state is subject to major shifts, responding to and provoking change within the reproduction of the built environment. Changing processes and ideologies of urban planning are central to understanding the transformation of the built environment. For example, spatial planning in the British context made a drastic shift from managerialism to entrepreneurialism in the rise of neoliberalism (Harvey 1989a), focusing more narrowly on an agenda of private sector growth and less on social reproduction of labour.

The rise of entrepreneurialism, as Harvey notes, is connected to the "postmodern penchant for the design of urban fragments rather than comprehensive planning, for ephemerality and eclecticism of fashion and style rather than the search for enduring values and *for image over substance*" (Harvey 1989b). Harvey insists that cultural shifts, embodied in post-modernism and 'flexible accumulation,' should be understood as manifestations of their macroeconomic underpinnings. However, It is precisely in the production of images, and their role in processes of urban redevelopment (Kennedy 2004), spatial political economy reveals some limitations to its explanatory power.

Sharon Zukin, despite being greatly influenced by Harvey's work, accuses him of turning a blind eye to aesthetics and taste in favour of economic reductionism (2006). In *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989b, p.77), Harvey noted that the built environment was increasingly becoming an instrument of 'symbolic capital': the consumption and display of luxury goods as a way for the owner to convey taste and status. By the 1980s, this definition extended to the consumption of urban landscapes themselves (Zukin 1995) though the rise of heritage, tourism, and new city centre lifestyles associated with post-modernism (O'Connor and Wynne 1996). This was, particularly in Manchester, an essential element of post-industrialisation. These development strategies often reacted to cultural

innovation districts, rather than stimulating their creation (O'Connor and Wynne 1996; Mellor 1997; Allen 2007).

### *2.4.1 Landscape and Symbolic Economy*

> Landscapes can be deceptive. Sometimes a landscape seems to be less a setting for the life of its inhabitants than a curtain behind which their struggles, achievements, and accidents take place. (John Berger, cited in Merrifield 2002, p.19)

Geographical political economists' work on urbanisation and the geography of capital flows tends to underemphasise the cultural connotations and aesthetics of urban landscapes in processes of redevelopment. This may result from concern regarding demand-side explanations for urban change, which weaken arguments emphasising the capitalist production of space. However, it is also clear, particularly from the 1980s forward, that urban revalorisation strategies consistently focus on reclaiming central space for leisure, entertainment, and lifestyles of 'bars, boats, and bistros' (Mellor 1997, p.53). Throughout North America and Europe (Harvey 1989b), capital's conquest of the central city takes the form of cultural consumption and image-making. In analysing the cultural commodification of urban landscapes, questions of symbolism come into play. In addition to the traditional political economic concerns of land, labour and capital, this thesis concerns itself with shifting urban imaginaries in processes of urban restructuring and reimaging. City centres have been reconfigured as new 'sensescapes' of consumption (Degen 2008), and these strategies have particularly emphasised the visual. Furthermore, municipal authorities have increasingly been involved in pursuing place marketing and branding strategies to manipulate a city's public perception by tourists and residents alike.

The earlier work of Sharon Zukin (1970s-1990s) extends Harvey's neo-Marxist formulation of urban development into an analysis of symbolic strategies of revalorisation. This is particularly true of her early work on 'loft living' (1982), a reading similar to Harvey's work on the urbanisation of capital (1985), but with a stronger focus on the commodification of culture in the consumption of the post-industrial. Zukin identifies the reimagination of deindustrialising districts, with landscapes of industrial production increasingly reinvented as landscapes of cultural consumption and leisure, as elemental strategies of urban reinvention.

The term 'landscape,' of course, has a long and varied history. While cultural and historical geographers have produced significant work on the meanings and values of landscapes (see, for example, Meinig 1979; Cosgrove and Daniels 1988; Hayden 1997; Cosgrove 1998; Hayden 2005), I use the term in a specific manner. This thesis does engage with the traditional understanding of landscape as a visual panorama arising from landscape art, a topic addressed to a degree in Chapter 5. I am specifically interested in emerging considerations of landscape as "a more nuanced and dynamic interpretation of the precise contexts within which landscapes are produced and experienced" (Gandy 2011, p.157). As Dolores Hayden has noted, exploring urban landscape history requires the attentiveness of the cultural geographer to the human experience of place, but "the cultural geographer's model of landscape needs to be better anchored in the urban realm, retaining the … insights necessary to convey the sense of place while adding more focused analysis of social and economic conflict" (Hayden 1997, p.17). The task is to examine changing perceptions of urban landscapes while staying attuned to the economic and political underpinnings of their (re)production.

Landscape, both in geography and in design practice, is primarily concerned with the design and symbolic representation of spaces as they pertain to the visual and affective qualities of a particular environment (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988). In the case of the city, landscapes are dominated by spaces designed by humans. Landscape is not static, but rather an ongoing process (Bender 2001). This approach draws upon Lefebvre's idea of space as both product and process, but dwells more specifically on the relationship between spatial symbolism and physical change. As Zukin emphasises, "[N]ot only does [landscape] denote the usual geographical meaning of 'physical surroundings,' but it also refers to an ensemble of material and social practices of symbolic representation…. A landscape mediates, both symbolically and materially, between the socio-spatial differentiation of capital implied by *market* and the socio-spatial homogeneity of labour suggested by *place*" (Zukin 1993, p.16). Landscape can be used to analyse capitalist urban development, which uses 'culture' as a product to be marketed and consumed in thematic landscapes (Boyer 1995; Boyer 2001; Sorkin 1992; Zukin 1995).

With urban economies' increasing basis on symbolic production, and cultural commodification intrinsic to urban redevelopment, the manipulation of landscape is integral to contemporary spatial practice. In Lefebvrian terms, the manipulation of representational spaces as themed landscapes of consumption is an essential strategy

within representations of space that seek to revalorise or reinvent the urban built environment. The planning, construction and management of urban spaces embody class politics and enclose public spaces through prioritising landscapes of consumption of those members of society with leisure time and disposable income.

Zukin (1995) explores the interrelation of culture and economic power in urban redevelopment with a focus on the *symbolic economy*. This explores the way that representations of social groups and the (primarily visual) sensuous arrangement of urban space include or exclude particular social groups, producing a dominant representation of a city through architecture, urban design, and marketing. In other words, the shaping of a recognisable urban image, or brand, and while negotiating and manipulating cultural meanings in the process. In this line of thinking a materialist analysis of urban development cannot be separated from attunement to the symbolic strategies employed in revalorising and marginalising different urban locales. In synthesis with more traditional approaches to geographical political economy, Zukin's earlier work (1982; 1993; 1995) explores how culture is used to control and define the image of cities consistent with the interests of property capital. "Building a city depends on how people combine the traditional economic factors of land, labour and capital. But it also depends on how they manipulate symbolic languages of exclusion and entitlement. The look and feel of cities reflect decisions about what—and who—should be visible and what should not, on concepts of order and disorder, and on uses of aesthetic power" (Zukin 1995, p.7). Since the 1970s, commentators have observed the rise of 'place entrepreneurs' (Molotch 1976), with municipal entrepreneurialism heavily reliant on image manipulation of cities since the 1980s (Harvey 1989a).

Likewise, Boyer (1995) explores the 'political economy of imageability' in the 'postindustrial mode of global capitalism' by analysing the ways in which planning uses particular images through urban design and historical preservation. She presents a dialectic between 'figured' and 'disfigured' urban space as an inherent contradiction in the entrepreneurial city. "[F]ragmented and hierarchised…abstract city space is like a grid of well-designed and self-enclosed places in which the interstitial spaces are abandoned or neglected" (p.81). In the 'imageable,' figured city, the 'historical and decorative tableaux' are emphasised through "homogenised zones valued and protected for their scenographic effects" (p.105). The disfigured city "remains unimageable and forgotten and therefore invisible and excluded" (p.82). Elsewhere, Boyer (2001) explores how collective memory

and heritage preservation are selectively deployed in strategies for the 'revilatisation' of urban property.

While Zukin and Boyer do not openly contradict the ideas of political economists such as Harvey and Smith, they do explore strategies of revalorisation that rely primarily on image, imageability, and re-imaging. To understand the way the symbolic economy is utilised and manipulated requires a framework that is more interpretive, post-structuralist, and attuned to aesthetics. Zukin's work on the symbolic economy examines capitalist urban redevelopment wherein culture is expressed as both changing middle-class tastes and patterns of living, and as a commodity that is bought and sold in the processes of urban redevelopment.

As both Zukin and Harvey (1989b) conclude, cultural goods and services, including re-imaged urban landscapes, interact as circuits of economic and cultural capital. The manipulation and marketing of cultural consumption, intertwined with active re-imaging and marketing of cities, suggests that the idea of culture is completely instrumental to the ideology of capital. One can argue that focus on the symbolic economy and imageability merely trace and critique the entrepreneurial impulse to re-strategise development by commodifying prioritised urban landscapes of consumption. In this case, the totalising theorisation of capital expansion is curtailed in order to dwell on representations.

This thesis suggests that cultural production and consumption may often drive revalorisation strategies. it also notes that while oppositional culture may be commodified and repackaged, culture is not merely an arm of capitalist expansion. This understanding of culture resonates with Manchester's history, where counterculture is often attributed to stimulating activity in the city's centre between the 1970s and 1990s (Allen 2007). This approach diverges from traditional Marxist accounts of the process and ideology of urban development, such as those of Harvey and Smith, since it acknowledges that demand-side arguments for urban redevelopment have some explanatory power.

As the following sections will emphasise, transport infrastructure has often been left out of academic and professional discussions about the urban built environment. Drawing on a strong foundation of geographical political economy, but incorporating a more rich account of the importance of symbolism and competing urban imaginaries, this framework brings the spaces of elevated transport infrastructure into larger debates about cultural consumption and capitalist urban redevelopment.

## 2.5 Conclusion, Or, What it Means to Rethink Infrastructure from Below

As Gandy suggests, "The combination of landscape with infrastructure necessarily brings questions of aesthetics and cultural representation into our analytical frame and immediately unsettles a narrowly social scientific approach to the study of cities" (2011, p.169). To explore the spaces and landscapes of infrastructure and their implications for the (re)production of the urban built environment, it is essential to create a dialogue between neo-Marxian political economy and practical concerns of urban design practices. This is not to reconcile one with the other, but to critically interrogate divergent concepts of infrastructural landscapes as a justification for their reconfiguration.

Put another way, if we are to come to terms with the role that sociotechnical systems play in the built environment of contemporary cities, and specifically above-ground transportation infrastructure, it is necessary to switch scales to observe the way that these sites are characterised 'on the ground'. Urban and cultural theory's emphasis on blurred boundaries and intertwined networks, and their view of urban functions as metabolisms and circuits, steer us away from the fact that these systems still require physical infrastructure, and that these infrastructures still occupy the absolute space of the city. In Harvey's description of infrastructure as representing the tension between 'fixity' and motion, fixity can be lost in the fray. In a similar vein, what does it mean to look at infrastructure from the "ground up" instead of from the top down? , It makes little sense to think about the residual spaces of infrastructure in a way that divorces them from the processes in which they were created. In thinking about the socio-spatial significance of transport infrastructure without carefully examining the local implications of its urban presence, we run the risk of reifying the abstractness of such spaces and underplaying their importance in everyday urban life.

As Michel de Certeau (1998) famously observes, the perspective from which we view the city greatly alters our understanding of how it operates. When we look at everyday infrastructural spaces in a city, they tell a different story than do the networks of infrastructure viewed as a single system. Understanding infrastructures as sociotechnical systems develops a sophisticated schema for investigating the spatial relationships between technology and society, but this perspective tends to deemphasise infrastructure's physical occupation of particular locales of cities (and beyond). Motorways in urban hinterlands may represent what Marc Augé (1995) has described as

"non-places," yet urban infrastructure is embedded within neighbourhoods, industrial and commercial zones. When spaces that are highly ordered, networked and designed from a systematic perspective are examined from a particular locale, they become indeterminate, vague and ambiguous—spaces outside of the assumed order of the city.

A goal of this thesis is to 're-materialise' infrastructure (Latham and McCormack 2004) through in-depth case study, as well as to consider the role of infrastructure in the contemporary urban landscape (Gandy 2011) while also exploring the relationship between representation and urban redevelopment. In the case of elevated transport infrastructure which, unlike many infrastructures is visually and palpably *there,* the relational and distributed space of infrastructure can also be explored as an element which shapes, and is shaped by, the rest of the built environment. In this sense, the absolute, material space of infrastructure, as well as its changing representations and aesthetic appeal, offer different insights into the spaces of infrastructure than those studies that explore infrastructures as relational systems and processes.

Through a focus on the shifting perceptions and conceptions of spaces and landscapes dominated by the presence of railway viaducts, this thesis explores the symbolic economy of the industrial built environment and the aspirations of public and private sector elites to reimage Manchester as a post-industrial city. The following chapter will explore how these theoretical concerns are addressed through a multi-method approach to data collection and analysis.

# Chapter 3: Exploring the Discursive Production of the Built Environment: A Mixed-Method, Case Study Approach

## 3.1 Introduction

Method is, within itself, a theory: it is both a process and product, and foundational to the way that theory is tested and (re)produced. This thesis traces the 'history of space' in relation to a specific set of bounded locales, dominated by the presence of Manchester's elevated railways. With an understanding of space as both product and process (Lefebvre 2009) and the built environment as a medium (Harvey 1996a), a case study framework is used, with data generated through archival, photographic, and qualitative interview research. Data is analysed through textual and visual discourse analysis, focusing on the shifting symbolic economy and consensual elite ambitions for reimaging formerly industrial districts dominated by railway viaducts.

The goal of this thesis is an exploration of the use and characterisation of industrial-era railway viaducts in the urban built environment, with a specific focus beginning in the late 1960s. Also considered are the aspirations of Manchester, like many other former industrial cities, to re-image itself as 'post-industrial' in the wake of massive economic shifts (O'Connor and Wynne 1996; Peck and Ward 2002). The assumption underlying this topic is simple: that, like cities throughout the world, elevated transport infrastructures have had a tendency to sever the urban fabric and have a dominating presence on their immediate surroundings (Moran 2005; Robertson 2007; Wall 2011). Manchester's railway viaducts are among the most visibly prominent structures in the landscape of the city centre, and certainly the largest. How, then, have these massive structures been culturally depicted, how have they influenced (and been influenced by) their surroundings, and most importantly, how has their dominating presence in the city been addressed by urban professionals (planners, designers, developers, heritage and regeneration officials, etc.)?

The exploration of three contiguous case study areas offers an opportunity to test theoretical understandings of the social and discursive production of space; the findings of this study provide a concrete and detailed example of the role of transportation

infrastructure on the (re)shaping of a city during a period of economic restructuring and reimaging.

## 3.2 A Mixed Method, Case Study Approach

Case study research is one of the more common approaches in the interdisciplinary fields which have inspired this thesis (see, for example, Cronon 1991; Merrifield 1993; Gandy 2003; Kaika 2005). In broader discussions regarding qualitative research methods, case studies are sometimes conceptualised as methods, strategies of inquiry, or comprehensive research strategies (Yin 2003; Denzin and Lincoln 2005). While some scholars consider qualitative case studies to be methodologies within themselves, I understand them as *approaches* in which the investigator "explores a bounded system (a *case*) or multiple bounded systems (*cases*) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving ***multiple sources of information***" (Cresswell 2007, p.73, emphasis in original). Thus, a case study is a format of the research and requires a detailed description of the research techniques used, which will be addressed further in the chapter.

Flyvbjerg (2006) notes that some of the most common critiques of case studies are that they are not generalisable, and thus not rigorous social science; that case studies are only appropriate for pilot studies rather than full-on research endeavours; and that case studies are too subjective and interpretive, thus seen as less valid to positivists. He notes that conventional knowledge in the social sciences regards the case study approach (particular the singular case study approach) as inferior, insufficient, or purely supplementary to research which explores larger or multiple data samples. However, Flyvbjerg contends that the role of social science is rarely to create general, context-independent, predictive theory, as is often the goal of what Kuhn (1962) has called 'normal science.' Rather, the generation and interrogation of theory in the social sciences relies on concrete, context-dependent understanding of particular phenomena. Contrary to common arguments, case studies can be generalisable, especially if they identify commonly-held concepts as falsifiable or subject to variation. In this sense, even a narrow understanding of the value of generalisability as a 'force of example' is overemphasised.

One significant critique is that city-specific case studies cannot adequately address the scale at which social and economic phenomena occur; this is a formidable challenge. However, I demonstrate that there is value in looking outward from particular sites to

explore the social production of space and the processes that (re)create the urban built environment. Identifying a bounded site does not preclude multiscalar and relational thinking, but bounds processes in one particular history of place.

### *3.2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis*

The primary method of analysis utilised in this thesis is a heterodox application of discourse analysis to written and visual data gathered through archival and interview-based research. I use the term 'discourse' as interconnected, but not synonymous, with discussion. It refers to the ideas of a particular subject that influence that subject's contributions to a discussion: the terms in which an issue is discussed. In urban studies research, discourse analysis is increasingly deployed as "a methodology to understand the urban policy implementation process, in particular, the ways in which key actors exercise power" (Jacobs 2006). In its simplest definition, discourse analysis is "the study of talk and text in context" (van Dijk 1997), in which 'text' can also refer to images. The use of discourse analysis in geography, and particularly in urban policy research, has been noted by Lees (2004) and Jacobs (2006). While this methodological approach has influence well beyond geography, Hastings (1999) traces a growing interdisciplinary interest to the "sprawling sub-discipline of cultural geography which, since the early 1980s, has been engaged in exploring the contested meanings that are a feature of city life" (p.8). These concerns, along with their political economic underpinnings, are central to this thesis.

Hajer defines discourse analysis as "the examination of argumentative structure in documents and other written or spoken statements as well as the practice through which these utterances are made" (2006, p.66). In examining the social (re)production of space and spatial politics, the methodological assumption of this approach is that different interest groups, with varying degrees of power, seek to establish particular narratives or versions of events as a means to pursue their objectives. In the case of Manchester, the discourse surrounding urban regeneration generated in planning and policy documents characterise spaces in order to justify their reconfiguration.

Of particular influence in discourse-based approaches is a strand of 'critical discourse analysis' (Lees 2004) arising from Marxian political economy, emphasising the significance of ideology in imposing hegemonic visions for political (and socio-spatial) change. In terms of exploring discourse analysis, this thesis adopts a simplified version of

Norman Fairclough's framework, placing less emphasis on vocabulary and grammar and more on discursive and social practice. Fairclough's framework is outlined by Jacob (2006, p.42) as such:

- *text analysis:* the study of the structure of text, vocabulary and grammar cohesion.
- *discursive practice*: the analysis of the process in which texts are framed, that is, the context in which statements are made and feed into other debates; and
- *social practice*: a study of discourse in relation to wider power structures and ideology.

De-emphasising the minutiae of linguistic variations and syntactical questions of language, this thesis analyses the production of narratives within discursive and social practice. It draws heavily on the use of images in discursive production: not only verbal imagery, but the use of maps, photographs, and architectural renderings to explore how these 'texts' respond to, and influence, the reconfiguration of the built environment.

Discourse analysis as a method, when exploring urban political economy, is often synthesised with the study of 'discourse coalitions' (see Davoudi & Healey 1995; Newman 1996; Mossberger & Stoker 1997). These coalitions are groups of actors that, "in the context of an identifiable set of practices, share the usage of a particular set of story lines over a particular period of time" (Hajer 2006, p.70). In the case of elite actors involved in the reconfiguration of the built environment, this can be related to Molotch's classic definition of the 'growth coalition' (1976). In this thesis, however, the focus is broadly related to the construction of a narrative, rather than to the analysis of shared material interests of actors. As Lees (2004, p.102) describes, this approach "involves the close semantic scrutiny of rhetoric and turns of phrase to discover particular narrative structures, issue framings and how storylines close off certain lines of thought and action at the expense of others." In the course of fieldwork for this thesis, some interviewees self-consciously reflected on their roles in discursive construction: according to Dave Roscoe, long-time planner and Planning Manager for the Executive Office of MCC:

> *The words that we write are often to serve a purpose… it's no good just writing 'well, everything's really nice down there'…. We're trying to convince people that we need to make a change. So the words we write often reflect what we are trying to deliver in an area, rather than perhaps what is our overall view.* (personal interview, 2011).

With discursive construction in mind, the methods employed in this thesis attempt to reveal not only the processes and narratives employed in urban redevelopment, but also the use of narrative as a tool by which elites justify their actions. This, in turn, enriches analysis and offers subtextual and contextual data.

While the archival and interview data were sometimes generated separately in the fieldwork, these two sources are both analysed as different forms of utterance. This is a particularly useful way to approach policy/strategic documents because it aims to explore of the use of specific narratives and framing devices to construct problems in the process of generating strategies. In connecting the 'discursive production of meaning' and the analysis of socio-spatial practices, "the analysis of discursive constructions such as narratives, story lines or metaphors is especially powerful when done in the context of the study of the socio-historical conditions in which the statements were being produced and received" (Hajer 2006, p.67).

This thesis explores Manchester's regeneration narratives, and the role of viaducts in these processes is considered through an analysis of varied textual sources: primarily policy and planning texts, planning applications and regeneration frameworks, newspaper articles, etc. Since elite representations and value judgments relating to districts dominated by Manchester's railway viaducts are often implicit rather than explicit, in these reports data were also generated through semi-structured interviews with elite actors such as planners, property developers, and local entrepreneurs.

As Marston (2002) emphasises, discourse analysis within itself is insufficient to understand the specific context in which it operates: it does not fully capture the complexities and nuances of political (and more broadly, socio-spatial) processes. He advocates that, for discourse analysis to be fully effective as a method, it must be supplemented with other qualitative techniques which contextualise and verify the purely textual aspects of contemporary development. The methodological approach utilises not only discourse analysis, but a variety of supplementary research methods to enrich contextual understanding of the case study (See Section 6 for further explanation of the analytical methods employed).

## 3.3 Interpretive Context: The Southern Fringe of Manchester as a Case Study

Manchester is no stranger to the role of exemplar, due to its position as one of the 'birthplaces' of the industrial revolution, and later as one of the first post-industrial cities (Peck and Ward 2002). Friedrich Engels' (2009 [1848]) *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, written in 1844, could be considered one of the first socio-spatial studies of a particular city and its built environment (see Chapter 4). In its archetypal role as an industrial city and a 'hypocritical city' (Engels 2009) in which the socio-spatial arrangements of capitalist class conflict are laid bare, Manchester was the focus of case studies before the social sciences had been invented as academic fields.

More recently, Manchester has been the subject of a number of case studies on urban transformation, particularly from the perspective of regulation theory (see, for example, Peck & Emmerich 1992; Cochrane et al. 1996; Ward 2000; Peck & Ward 2002), as well as explorations into the role of cultural production and consumption in urban redevelopment (for example, O'Connor & Wynne 1996; Wynne & O'Connor 1998; Allen 2007). In addition to emphasising that Manchester city centre's so-called 'renaissance' has been of international note to urban scholars (though much less so in the past decade) these cases enrich an understanding of processes of urban restructuring and re-imaging with a relevance that is worldwide in scale. Manchester has long been seen as a 'revolutionary' city, identifying patterns that would soon emerge elsewhere. As Peck and Ward (2002, p.1) have put it, "[Manchester] has always been on a hurried path to (some kind of) improvement, and has little time for those who would put obstacles in the way. Always on the move, it has been in an almost perpetual state of restructuring." As a case in the social production of the urban built environment, Manchester seems to lend itself to exemplary status.

This thesis explores a number of specific defined sites within Manchester city centre that have been subject to re-imaging and redevelopment initiatives related to the dominating presence of railway viaducts in the city. Manchester is generally considered to be the British city with a built environment most heavily affected by the presence of the railway (Kellett 1969; Dennis 2008). I selected Manchester city centre as the focus of analysis for this reason; it serves as a coherently bounded, identifiable and appropriate case for approaching the research problem.

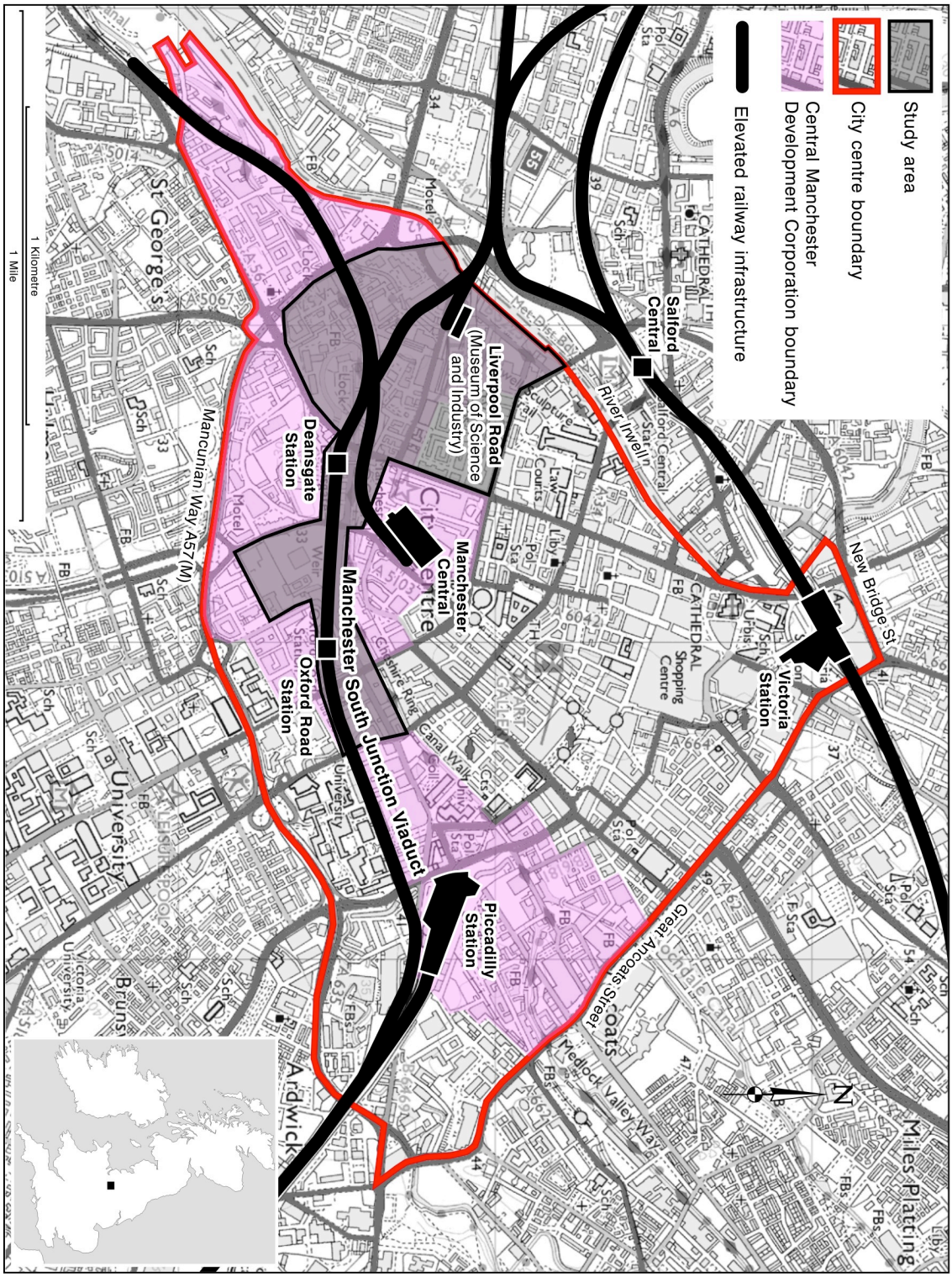



*Figure 1: Map of Manchester city centre and its elevated railway infrastructure, including the boundaries of the study area in relation to the boundaries of the Central Manchester Development Corporation, 2013. Image source: Graham Bowden, University of Manchester Cartographic Unit.*

In focusing on Manchester city centre, whose boundaries have long been the viaducts themselves (see Chapters 4 and 8), my initial intention was to explore *all* of the city's railway viaducts. The scale of this approach was ultimately infeasible, particularly because the railway viaduct defining the northern boundary of the centre is actually in the municipality of Salford (see Figure 1). If the time frame of the thesis had allowed, it would have been fruitful to draw out comparative results between the histories and revalorisation strategies of the two municipalities, but this would have required doubled documentary analysis and interviews with a number of additional elite actors. In some instances, the entirety of viaducts in Manchester city centre are considered, because in certain cases it is prudent to consider the socio-material construction of the city centre itself. For the majority of analytical purposes, however, a set of three case study areas was selected, collectively forming the 'Southern Fringe' of the city centre, through which the MSJ railway viaduct forms a spine. (See Figure 2). The resulting series of contiguous study areas (Whitworth Street West Corridor, Gaythorn, and Castlefield) all border the MSJ, which had served as the southern boundary of the city centre for over a century, and continues to serve as a boundary between planning areas. The boundaries of these study areas are taken from the districts defined by the Central Manchester Development Corporation (CMDC), an Urban Development Corporation designated by the national government to encourage commercial expansion in the Southern Fringe, in 1988. The focus on these pre-defined boundaries reflects the geometrical linearity of the viaduct and its transecting role in the built environment, which has been criticised by various elite concerns for its 'barrier effect' limiting the southward expansion of high-value commercial property since its construction (see Chapters 4 and 8). Consideration of this particular viaduct also reflects the widespread, consistently reinforced perception (by urban professionals and everyday users alike) that this structure acts as a 'city wall' (Griffin 2005).

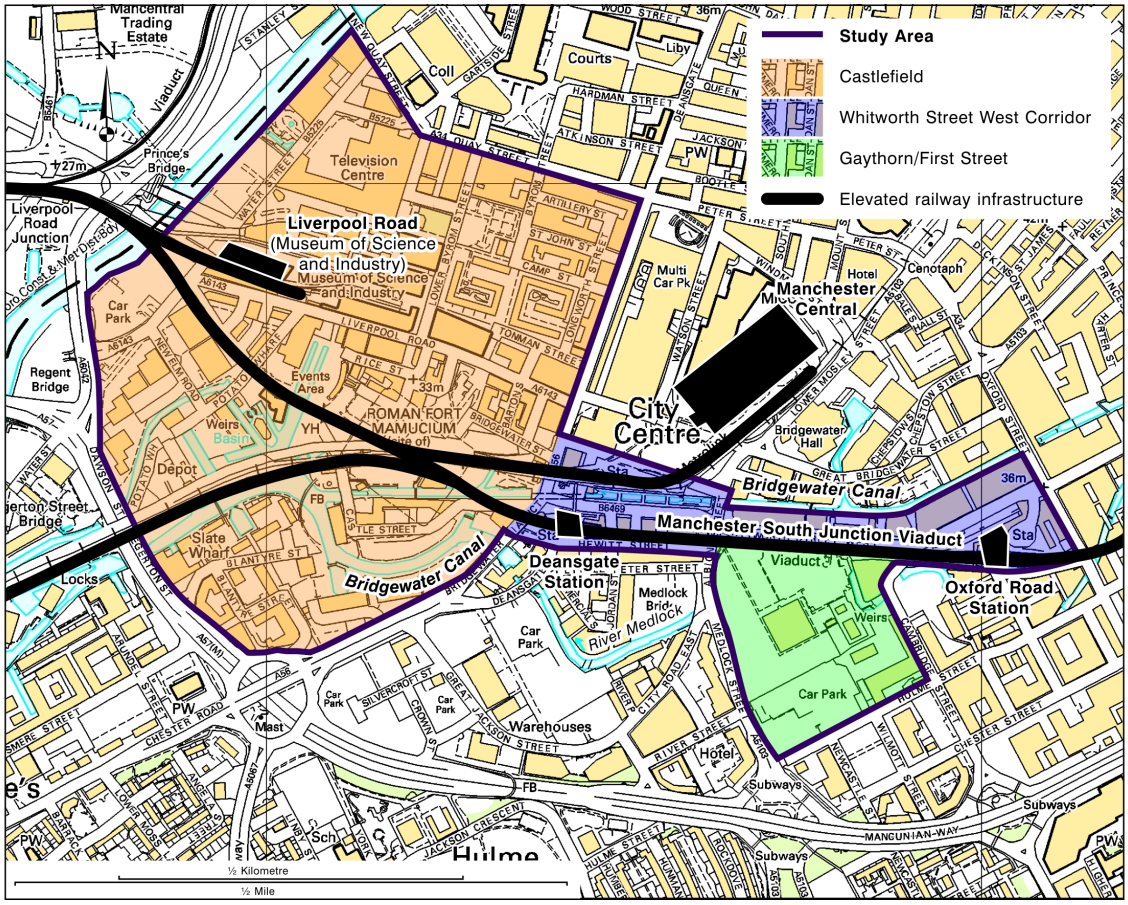



*Figure 2: Map of three case study sub-areas within southern fringe study area, 2013. Image source: Graham Bowden, University of Manchester Cartographic Unit.*

## 3.4 Methods of Data Collection

The methods discussed herein were employed to access and produce data acquired for analysis. The following subsections are adapted from Hajer (2006). It must be emphasised that the order of data collection presented is not completely chronological: the research process followed this general order, but the reflexive collection and analysis of data required that these processes often occurred simultaneously. For example, the results of archival research might prompt the interview of a public official, which would in turn require the review of additional archival documents, which might inspire a follow-up question by email.

The fieldwork for this thesis was conducted in stages: participant observation and visual methods commenced in September 2009, with interviews commencing in February of 2011. Interviews and visual surveys were finalised in January 2013, with a total of 31

interviews completed. Due to the nature of this research and the available data sources, research was primarily conducted in Greater Manchester, though occasionally securing archival texts and interviews would require travel to London and York. The following subsections will contextualise the variety of research methods employed, upon which the interpretative context of Manchester will be outlined in Section 6.

### *3.4.1 Preliminary Desk Research*

Fieldwork began with a wide reaching, general web-based survey of contemporary plans, strategic documents, and newspaper articles referring to issues related to railway viaducts/arches in the urban built environment of Britain. At this point, I was still considering a comparative study between Manchester and another city, and sought to explore discourses around spaces of railway infrastructure beyond the limits of Manchester. An extensive review of primary and secondary data revealed a severe lack of studies or strategic documents addressing the role of railway viaducts in Manchester's built environment in detail, which in turn steered the research design more clearly toward a strong element of interview-based data collection. A review of London-based spatial planning and regeneration documents, though generally inapplicable to this thesis, offered insight into the way that railway viaducts are discursively framed in design, planning, and property development strategies (see, for example, Cross River Partnership 2004, 2005; Southwark Council 2010; Team London Bridge 2010).

### *3.4.2 'Helicopter Interviews'*

Particularly toward the beginning of data collection, as well as in cases where clarification was needed in exploring sub-topics, my analysis was informed by conducting what Hajer (2006) calls 'helicopter interviews' with actors chosen because they have a broad view of a particular topic and could offer guidance and assistance on documentary sources. These semi-structured interviews tended to be with scholars and authors rather than practitioners, including a planning scholar, an architectural writer, a journalist, and two local historians. These served not only to develop a greater historical understanding of spatial planning and policies in Manchester, but also to generate contacts with a number of

local practitioners for interviews. These interviews served the additional function of identifying relevant archives.

### *3.4.3 Archival Research*

The 'archives' in archival research are both virtual and physical: many materials were available for download or review online, while others required visits to museums, research centres, libraries, city archives, and individual collections. Archival research often coincided with interview-based research, though generally not on the same topic.

After narrowing down the relevant archival documents through desk research and clarifying the spatial and historical scope of the thesis, the method for collection and collation of archival materials depended on their accessibility. Recent plans, strategic regeneration frameworks, planning applications, and newspaper articles could be accessed through web-based searches. A number of digitised historical research sources were accessed online, including the British Newspaper Archive and historical Acts of Parliament. Additionally, historical photographs were accessed online through the Transport Archive, The Manchester Local Image Collection, and the Archive & Special Collections of the University of Salford. Historical Ordnance Survey maps were accessed through the University of Manchester's John Rylands University Library Image Collections.

For older paper documents, including maps, plans, studies, and newspaper articles, the strategy was to photograph or scan materials whenever possible and permissible: this would prove time consuming, yet invaluable at the point of data analysis. Archives consulted include the National Railway Museum in York, the Greater Manchester County Records Office and Archives, The Manchester Archives and Local Studies Libraries, the Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit, the Map Collection at the University of Manchester Library, the British Library (London), The John Rylands Library (Manchester), and the Widener Library at Harvard University (USA). Of particular use was the extensive archive of (un-catalogued) planning-related documents (approximately 1945-1996) located at the University of Manchester's Kantorowich Library. Other archival materials were acquired by scholars with private collectors of planning documents, as well as unpublished reports and development proposals provided by interviewees.

A notable gap in available data was the difficulty in acquiring images of the study area between the 1970s and 1990s. While the Manchester Local Image Collection has a

large archive of images, they tend to drop off around 1970: presumably, more recent images are not considered historic. From the 1990s, when digital photography became more common, images begin appearing with more frequency through web-based searches. However, images from this gap period were incredibly difficult to access: quite often, the only available images were found in planning and regeneration documents themselves.

Commentary among semi-anonymous forum members in the website SkyscraperCity—presumed to be primarily architects, planners, academics and otherwise interested parties in urban redevelopment—offered insight into conflicting opinions about particular regeneration schemes. These materials were not used as data, though they helped to contextualise the attitudes of local interested parties. The main use of SkyscraperCity was as an archive. Threads, many of which traced back to the mid-2000s, were excellent sources for review of planning applications, newspaper articles, photographs and renderings, and progress on various study sites. Additionally, on more than one occasion, forum members were contacted if they indicated insider knowledge on contemporary processes occurring in the study areas.

Among the less orthodox, but incredibly rich, web-based data are videos uploaded by Marketing Manchester on Youtube from MIPIM (le Marché International des Professionnels de l'Immobilier), an international property fair held in Cannes. These videos, which feature property developers, architects and municipal officials from Manchester promoting new public-private development schemes, proved invaluable for Chapter 8. Presentations by Manchester's Chief Executive and property developers at this conference hinted at future developments that were not yet publicly known.

Another form of archival research employed, mainly for Chapter 5, was the often tedious and time consuming review of cultural depictions of the spaces of railway viaducts and their arches. This was accomplished through keyword searches in internet search engines, historical newspaper databases, and largely through leads from interviewees and casual conversations in the course of participant observation and informal discussion with academics and non-academics alike. Upon describing my research, it was not uncommon for an individual to begin singing a popular song "Underneath the Arches," to recall a scene in a film, or a chapter in a novel. At face value, this might seem simply as background information for this thesis, but these casual mentions and thematic excavations actually form an essential part of the dataset: to understand the changing perceptions of railway arches by urban professionals, it is essential to compare their characterisations of these

spaces with the cultural representations that had reinforced particular imaginaries since the Victorian era.

### *3.4.4 Semi-Structured Interviews with 'Key Players'*

The method of interviewing elites offers a number of particular challenges (Dexter 1970; Ostrander 1993; McDowell 1998), both in terms of gaining access and technique. Even the definition and shifting meaning of elites is subject to longstanding debate (Richards 1996), and some scholars have openly questioned the usefulness of the term (Woods 1998; Smith 2006). I use the term 'key player' to broadly signify those who occupy positions of decision-making power and influence with particular institutions—in this case in the planning, design and development of the built environment—as well as those holding strategic positions within local professional networks. One's status as a 'key player' is embedded in a particular space and time. For example, a retired former executive at the CMDC may have held a position of great strategic importance in the 1990s, but his current political involvement is contained to commenting on online news stories. Thus, in exploring his reminiscences I may understand the processes of his decision-making, but he would no longer be considered a key player. While this research is situated within theory that presents a radical critique, and many social scientists tend to focus their study on the less privileged, an understanding of the mechanisms of power in the urban built environment demands an analysis of the strategies of dominant decision makers. As R.A. Sayer (1985) points out, those in positions of power are also worthy of study in radical research.

Aside from gaining details regarding specific processes, the goal was to *generate discourse* about strategy and policy that I was unable to access through documentary analysis. With the aforementioned lack of strategic documents that addressed Manchester's railway viaducts in any sort of comprehensive fashion, these discussions could later be analysed to generate unpublished but relevant discourse.

A particular challenge of conducting resource on indeterminate urban spaces (see Chapter 2) has been that, quite often, it was not immediately clear who was responsible for these spaces, or what they were used for. Often, they seemed quite literally to be 'no-man's-lands,' though it was clear that the operational infrastructure of the railway was subject to periodic inspection and maintenance. Such is the complication (and importance) of ownership and management regimes of railway viaduct spaces; I have dedicated Chapter 6

to clarifying these relationships. Interestingly, with so many individuals performing specific functions relating to the maintenance, security, and regulation of these (seemingly) uncared-for spaces, an overall view of the way that railway arch spaces are managed was difficult to ascertain. More useful than reviewing industry reports or interviewing specialised technicians and managers, was a global view offered by a media relations specialist at Network Rail.

Initially, gaining access to key players in both the public and private sector proved quite difficult. My primary strategy was to send an email tailored to the work of a particular organisation or individual. I included an information sheet about my research, and used an email signature with my academic credentials to lend myself some legitimacy to key players. Despite email contacts, and later phone contacts, accessing many interviews required a great deal of persistence. One interview, for example, took more than two years to plan. It was often difficult to determine the appropriate employee of an organisation to contact in order to discuss a particular process; I was frequently steered toward employees whose work focused on public and media relations. While in some cases these contacts were fruitful (as this thesis deals with cultural representation), these employees often could not provide insight into decision-making processes. In cases when I knew the name and organisation of a particular interviewee, did not have their email contact, I found that a strategy of mimicking the format of other employees' addresses would sometimes create a useful contact. For example, if I knew that there was a john.smith@corporation.com, this format would likely be the same for the person I was trying to contact. This method of contact proved successful a number of times when other channels were unsuccessful.

Another difficulty in accessing potential interviewees, as well as dynamics in interviews themselves, was the power imbalance between me and interviewees. As a young postgraduate with a North American accent, I was often self-conscious. While I would suggest meeting in a 'neutral venue' such as a public space, atrium or café, interviews often took place in the meeting rooms of public and private agencies. While this was not perceived to be a major issue, it is clear that the location of an interview can influence the type of information interviewees are prepared to disclose: when conducted in a workplace, respondents may be more apprehensive to disclose confidential information or to provide additional time (McDowell 1998). On the other hand, interviews in cafes and other public areas created difficulties for audio recording and transcription due to the amount of background noise.

Although I hold a Masters degree in urban planning, another issue was the professional vocabulary and terminology of British planning: not only did I need to enter an interview knowing the field and the fine details of particular projects (Peabody et al. 1990), but I needed to demonstrate that I understood the terminologies inserted into an ad hoc conversation. As feminist scholars have noted, the power dynamics between an interviewer and interviewee has direct implications on the type of knowledge that is created (Conti and O'Neil 2007), and I did not want interviewees to dumb down their responses. I needed to develop an understanding of the evolution of Use Classes in British planning and the role of the quantity surveyor neither term is used in the United States.

It became clear that the ability to gauge and mirror the tone and mannerisms of an interviewee was essential in establishing a rapport, which served not only to evince valuable data, but also to gain the trust and respect of the interviewee (Oinas 1999). In most cases, interview contacts were ultimately made through snowball sampling and personal references: once a key player had suggested I speak to his/her colleague in his/her organisation or a collaborating agency, the ability to 'name drop' became integral to successfully making contact. These individualised references also ensured that I had the appropriate contacts for individuals with strategic roles in relevant organisations (be it planning application, architectural design, or regeneration framework).

From early on in the process of interview transcription, the software f5 was utilised; this integrates an audio-visual media player and a word processer into one window. Not only did this program save time in switching between an audio player and Microsoft Word, it offered a number of useful functions (such as slowing the speed of the audio) and customisable key commands. The most useful tool for analysis, however, was a hyperlinked time-stamping function: in this program, when you press "enter," the program connects the transcribed text to the point in the audio file being transcribed. With this function, it was possible to paraphrase certain elements of a conversation, yet click on the hyperlink to take me back directly to any point in the interview that I wanted to review at a later point. This was both a labour saving device and a useful navigational tool in the analysis phase.

Despite the rich data generated from these interviews, which underpins this research, such a method of sampling has obvious limitations: in a medium-sized city and a relatively small professional milieu of individuals who collaborated regularly, it would be clear that I had gained access to central players in a discourse coalition. This would be hugely helpful in identifying particular narratives about redevelopment in Manchester, but

less so in identifying specific conflicts and differences of opinion among key players. There is some potential biasing of data involved in speaking with people who are part of a particular social network. Within the context of a case study of professional practice(s) in Manchester, this could only be alleviated to an extent by pursuing multiple avenues for access to elite populations. Identifying conflicts between elite actors was often difficult, as the MCC operates though an 'alliance' model of development in which most negotiations are made at the private, pre-plan level. By the time a Strategic Regeneration Framework draft is made available for public consultation, it has already been vetted by key elite stakeholders from the public and private sector.

While some agencies were particularly transparent and accommodating, in other cases, access issues were compounded by multiple levels of 'gatekeepers.' This was not always a hurdle, and the ability to quickly summarise my research aims and objectives became an essential skill. However, in the case of MCC, I received no response to any of my email queries for well over a year, aside from a scripted response that the Council could not help with student research. It was only when I was given a direct contact by a powerful property developer that I successfully made contact. This individual, a key player who worked between the Planning Department and the Executive Office, was responsible for managing all planning in the city centre. However, this individual was insistent that if I needed any information or had any additional questions, I deal with him/her directly. Therefore, although the City Council was a primary actor in my research, data analysis relied almost exclusively on documentary analysis and quotes from city officials disseminated by the media and press releases.

In total, elite interviews were conducted with officials from MCC, Transport for Greater Manchester, English Heritage, the Railway Heritage Trust, Network Rail, Network Rail Properties (x2), ASK Developments (a property developer), Urban Splash (a property developer), Drivers Jonas Deloitte (a property consultancy), Ian Simpson and Associates (an architecture practice, x2), and Marketing Manchester. All of these interviews were recorded with a handheld audio recorder. While a few interviewees had concerns about being recorded or preferred to discuss certain issues 'off the record,' the use of the recorder allowed me to engage more fluidly with the respondent (Richards 1996). To avoid ambiguity, quotes derived from direct quotation will be presented in italicised block quotes throughout the thesis, while quotes from text will not be italicised.

Considering the amount of visual material discussed and referred to in interviews, in hindsight it might have been wise to record video as well as audio. This method of data collection was rejected due to concerns that the video camera would make myself and/or the interviewee overly self-conscious. In general, the inherently visual nature of planning and architecture offered complications, most notably when an interviewee narrated a process through reference to a plan. I was often able to trace their argument through reviewing a document after the interview, but on more than one occasion the document being discussed was not available for public review. In these cases, data could only be analysed as discursive rather than explanatory.

As Hajer emphasises, 'causal chains' (*this* led to *that*) tend to be the assumed core of the meeting on the part of interviewees (2006, p.73). These questions were indeed important in gaining a deeper understanding of processes. However, questions largely focused on how 'problems' of the viaducts are perceived, whether in terms of planning and design, economic development, or railway arches as commercial estate. Typically, the interviews would progress from causal chains to the elicitation of narrative interpretations of events: Why was this particular decision made? What did it mean in your organisation's document when it said "_____"? How had strategies changed? These questions, were not asked only to clarify decision-making processes, but also to ascertain the ways in which particular discourses are constructed: language and metaphor were later analysed in comparison with other interviews to explore issues of discursive institutionalisation. At points, interview responses would reinforce understanding of the unspoken assumptions and values behind particular decisions, and in others would clarify questions and assumptions raised from the review of these documents.

| Interviewee | Institutional Affiliation | Position | Date Interviewed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gary Colleran | Ian Simpson and Associates | Project Architect | 21/2/2011 |
| Daniella French | Network Rail Properties | Letting Agent | 28/3/2011 |
| Steve Curtis | green room theatre (railway arch, closed 2011) | Technical Director | 14/4/2011 |
| Jonathan Schofield | Manchester Confidential; Jonathan Schofield Tours | Editor; Tour Guide | 22/5/2011 |
| Julian Holder | English Heritage | Historical Areas Advisor, North West | 7/6/2011 |
| Keith Lumley | Network Rail | Head of Media Relations, North West | 9/3/12 |
| David Roscoe | Manchester City Council | Planning & Development Manager | 27/9/2011 |
| Paul Tempest | Ferrious (furniture and interior design showroom in railway arch) | Co-Owner | 28/9/2011 |
| Andrew "Cass" Casserley | Spearfish (cultural events promotion); EuroCultured Festival; tenant, Hotspur Press | Director | 6/10/2011 |
| Derek Brumhead | New Mills Heritage Centre, various local history and heritage groups since 1970s | Retired adult educator, volunteer | 6/10/2011 |
| Hannah Thorne | Drivers Jonas Deloitte | Planning and Development Surveyor | 25/10/2011 |
| Mike Mellor | Transport for Greater Manchester | Head of Property | 12/11/2011 |
| Terry Wyke | Manchester Metropolitan University; various local history and heritage groups since the 1980s | Professor of History | 17/11/2011 |
| Michael Hebbert | University of Manchester | Professor of Planning | 22/11/2011 |
| Bill Harvey | William Harvey and Assoc. (railway engineers) | Owner/Director | 1/4/2012 |
| Len Grant | Self-employed; formerly on contract with Manchester City Council | Photographer | 16/4/2012 |
| Sid Gordon | Gordon and Assoc. (metal bashers working from railway arch since 1964) | Owner/Manager | 20/4/2012 |
| Kay Gordon | " " | Administrator | " " |
| Alex Walker | Whim Wham Café | Co-Owner | 20/4/2012 |
| Jessica Naven | " " | " " | " " |
| Ken Knott | Ask Property Developments | Chief Executive | 21/4/2012 |
| Nick Johnson | Urban Splash (property developer); Marketing Manchester; Atlas Bar (in railway arch) | Director; Chairman; former owner | 21/5/2012 |
| Nick Mullen | Network Rail Properties | Property Director, North West England | 23/5/2012 |
| Zefa Mongan | Tilney Shane Architects | Director | 24/5/2012 |
| Shannon Pope-Ellis | Tilney Shane Architects | Project Architect | 24/5/2012 |
| Peter Bowman | Coffee Roaster (in railway arch) | Owner | 24/5/2012 |
| Phil Griffin | Fugitive Images; formerly City Life | Architectural critic, author, and curator | 14/6/2012 |
| Malcolm Wood | Railway Heritage Trust | Secretary | 19/6/2012 |
| Dave Haslam | Self-employed, formerly the Haçienda (1984-1997) | Disc jockey and author | 17/1/2013 |
| Matthew Ayres | Ian Simpson and Associates | Project Architect | 18/1/2013 |
| Aidan O'Rourke | Self-employed, formerly of City Life | Photographer, author and filmmaker | 18/1/2013 |

*Figure 3: Table of interviewees and their institutional positions.*

There was a great deal of complementarity between elite interviews and archival data: understanding that my analysis would involve, at least some degree, discourse analysis, interview questions were often tailored to investigating the metaphors, narratives and

assumptions mobilised in strategic documents. In some cases, interviewees themselves had written the texts. This required me to be familiar with published documents that addressed particular sites and processes I was exploring. The purpose of the interview was to dig deeper into practitioners' attitudes; in other words, to make the implicit explicit. Through the process of interviewing, I was frequently offered unpublished documents or referred to unknown published documents, thus returning back from interview to archival materials.

### *3.4.5 Interviews and informal discussions with owners, employees and patrons of businesses operating from railway arches*

In addition to 'helicopter interviews' and 'interviews with key players,' I also interviewed eight current and former owners and employees of businesses operating from railway arch premises in Manchester city centre. These interviewees were not mutually exclusive from the 'key players;' one of these businesses, the Atlas Bar, was jointly owned by an architect and a property developer. It is recognised that the predominance of data presented in this thesis reflects the opinions and attitude of elite actors, but these data are also essential to understanding contextual gaps and potential counter-narratives to those of elite discourse coalitions.

In format, these interviews did not differ significantly from the 'key player' interviews: they were also semi-structured, audio recorded, and frequently conducted in the interviewees' workplaces. The purposes of these interviews were multiple: to ascertain interviewees' attitudes towards railway arch spaces; to understand the ways in which their surrounding environments had changed over time; to explore any issues they experienced specific to working in a railway arch; and to understand whether they were concerned about displacement in the wake of regeneration schemes. In contrast to the 'key player' interviews, in most cases these interviews were scheduled by stopping by the business in person and introducing myself and my research. These interviews were focused specifically on the arch spaces along the Corridor, the focus of Chapter 9. I made a deliberate attempt to interview owners and employees of businesses with different uses and tenure within their particular locations. However, it was difficult to interview owners of less publicly oriented businesses. Cafés, for example, were easier to walk into than a motorcycle repair shop; I was particularly challenged by businesses that were unbranded and had no phone numbers listed on their signs.

Along with interviews I conducted personally, another particularly rich source of data came from a series of ten unpublished interviews with railway arch tenants on Whitworth Street West (WSW) in 2000. I discovered these data through an informational conversation with University of Manchester historian Mark Crinson. These interviews (Tyrer 2000), conducted by historian Paul Tyrer while he was a working as a postdoctoral research associate with Crinson's Urban Memory in Manchester project, were an invaluable source. Tyrer, who conducted the interviews for an article with Helen Hills on post-industrial interstitial spaces (2002), interviewed a number of business owners who still occupied the arches, as well as the owners of businesses that had not survived. Thanks to Tyrer's generosity in sharing these data, and Crinson's archiving of these documents, I was able to gain a richer and more detailed understanding of prevailing attitudes during the height of railway arch refurbishment and industrial gentrification. I was also able to interview a number of the same interviewees to gain a depth of temporal data that would have been otherwise unattainable.

Formal interviews were supplemented with informal, unstructured conversations with employees and patrons of ten businesses operating from railway arch premises along the Corridor. In many cases, business owners were happy to speak but reluctant or unwilling to sign releases. Nevertheless, these often candid conversations offered rich insight into varying perceptions of particular urban locales and the character of railway arch premises, as well as the majority of leads regarding the cultural representations of railway arches and viaducts. For this I am particularly indebted to a long conversation over a pint with the cook at the Thirsty Scholar pub. These interviews strongly suggested that, although there was little coordinated resistance to development policies in the city, business owners operating from railway arches feel that they are in an insecure position in the face of development pressure.

For interviews with tenants, questions focused largely around the experience of operating a business from within railway arches; tenants' understanding of their shifting usage in relation to changes around them; and their reflections on the public image of railway arch spaces in Manchester.

### *3.4.6 Visual Methods: Photographic Surveys*

In the course of this thesis research, images were not only analysed, but produced. In particular, photography has been used as a research tool, with photographs providing important data. In this thesis, photography was used primarily as a form of documentation and description rather than a method in its own right. This was a significant shift from the initial goal of this thesis: early on, as part of my 2010 continuation report, one of the stated objectives was to "explore how 'spatial practices' of phenomenological methods and photographic representation might be used as heuristic tools to interpret everyday urban spaces, contextualising specific sites within larger processes of spatial production." As an internationally exhibited photographer, I began the thesis assuming that it would be heavily visual. However, as fieldwork progressed, I ultimately found this approach to be incompatible with the other goals that I sought to achieve. I was unable to reconcile the contradiction between critiquing the aestheticisation of post-industrial urban spaces and yet actively taking part in that same pursuit. To address this tension self-reflexively would have forced me to place more emphasis on my role as a producer of images, adding another layer of complexity on top of what was already a methodologically diverse approach.

Thus, I ultimately employed photography as a research tool through the method of repeat photography, or 're-photography,' which Mark Klett (2011, p.114) defines as "a photograph specifically made to duplicate selected aspects of another, pre-existing photograph," which "typically repeats the spatial location of the original, showing the visitor the same scene once again and inviting comparison." Particularly in sociology and anthropology, re-photography is treated as one way to document indicators of social change (Rieger 2011). While preparing to complete a photographic survey of the railway arches of the MSJ viaduct, I became aware of the work of Mancunian photographer Len Grant, who had done the same in 2002 as part of the *This City Wall* exhibition (see Chapter 5). Since Grant documented each railway arch along the viaduct, I could, to a reasonable extent, use re-photography to explore the extent to which the uses and conditions of these arches had changed as a decade passed.

In this particular exercise, I produced a visual taxonomy of railway arches from Manchester Piccadilly station to the Pomona Docks. These demonstrate the continuum of arches from high-end café-bars with glazed frontages; to anonymous, graffiti-covered lock-ups; to overgrown, open canalside arches on the furthest fringes of the city centre.

Although it is impossible for a photograph to be a purely objective representation of reality, these images were made with the intent of offering a clear, straightforward, and formal representation of the railway arches along this viaduct. This photographic survey, conducted by foot, is included as an appendix to this thesis. I suggest that the reader peruse these photographs before reading the empirical chapters of this thesis.

### *3.4.7 Ethnographic Research*

Through participant observation, I was able to transcend the methodological strictures of documentary and elite interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the sites under investigation. Participant observation took a number of forms in the course of this thesis, and living in Manchester for the first three years of this thesis gave me ample opportunities to immerse myself in the environments I was studying. These experiences were often not the ultimate subject of data analysis, but instead steered me toward new ways of thinking about my research topic.

In the case of both Castlefield and the Corridor, the landscapes of railway viaducts have gradually (but incompletely) yielded to activities revolving around cultural consumption and leisure. By accompanying walking tours focused on the heritage of Castlefield; attending gigs and theatrical performances within railway arch venues; and visiting café-bars and nightclubs located within arches, my understanding of the values and activities embedded in these re-appropriated residual spaces offered greater nuance to more socially and culturally detached research methods. Some of this thesis, in fact, was written in the Atlas Bar, located in a railway arch on WSW. When possible, I would engage the daytime cappuccino drinkers and the nighttime revellers in these spaces to ascertain their attitudes toward the spaces: why did they choose to spend their time under the railway? What was it like to work in such spaces? Do you know what used to be here, and does that matter? More often than not, such excursions involved simply watching and listening: wandering through the Castlefield Artisans Market and watching street artists transform railway arch lock-ups to graffiti murals at the EuroCultured festival.

Other ethnographic methods included participant observation with guerrilla gardeners atop the disused Castlefield Viaduct and crawling into inspection covers in order to search the dank vaults beneath Manchester Central Station with urban explorers. Among the most informative conversations guiding this research were numerous Sunday walks

around Manchester with two interrelated groups: the psychogeographers of the Loiterers Resistance Movement and the idiosyncratically preservationist Manchester Modernist Society. Members of both of these groups, from retired history teachers to pink haired anarchists, offered insight and inspiration for the way I have come to understand the city. Data were recorded in a field notebook during and after observations, and sometimes on a smartphone to avoid conspicuousness.

## 3.5 Methods of Data Analysis

The primary approach to data analysis in this thesis was driven by a particular interpretation of discourse analysis. As Lees (2004) and Berg (2009) note, there is a general confusion about the definitions and particular analytical methods encompassed by this particular term, and it tends to be used quite loosely. The approach employed in this thesis is more akin to the use of discourse analysis in some strands of political economy, political science, and urban geography, as a critique of ideology and an analysis of the ways in which 'key players' strategically construct particular narratives. This approach shifts analytical focus from positivistic concerns with objective facts to concerns of meaning-making and identity within politics. However, the politics explored in this thesis are not generally constructed as such: rather than inspiring contestation and social antagonism, the policies and strategies of the 'key players' involved revolve around consensual decision making and the foreclosure of alternatives. In this sense, it is not the dominant form of discourse analysis employed in critical human geography, which is more directly related to the work of Michel Foucault, and rejects the pre-given identity of political actors (Lees 2004). Both approaches were employed at various points, as situations warranted.

The archival data and interview data analyses in this thesis were considered as different forms of utterance by research subjects (individuals and/or institutions). Discourse analysis is a particularly useful way to approach strategic documents, because it focuses on the use of particular narratives and framing devices to construct problems in the process of generating strategies. Thus, in connecting the 'discursive production of meaning' and the analysis of socio-spatial practices, "the analysis of discursive constructions such as narratives, story lines or metaphors is especially powerful when done in the context of the study of the socio-historical conditions in which the statements were being produced and received" (p.67). Discourses and narratives 'translate' and 'condense' economic and

political relations and processes (Harvey 1996b); and necessarily require 'discursive simplification,' a selectivity of what discourses are included (and excluded), thus constituting discourses as 'imaginaries' (Fairclough 2005). Harvey (1996b) identifies a 'dialectics of discourse' in which the relationship between discourse and non-discursive elements operate within a cyclical character. Fairclough (2005) identifies a cyclical character within processes of political struggle mediating the 'internalisation' of these elements:

> A. Emergence of discourses/narratives as "translations/condensations" or "simplifications" of complex realities (including non-discursive elements) in association with strategies to redirect (including "re-scale") those realities.
> B. A political process of gaining "plausibility" for discourses/narratives, diffusion, hegemonic struggle.
> C. Discursive reconstruction of (non-discursive elements of) realities, materialisation, institutionalisation, enactment ("scaffolding", "framework for action") and inculcation ("common sense"). (p.57).

As mentioned previously, 'texts' are understood not only as the written elements of documents and the dialogue within interviews, but also images: plans, architectural renderings, and marketing materials are also treated as text and analysed as such (see Rose 2007). At numerous points in the thesis, images are used to demonstrate the use of visual materials to construct particular narratives.

In terms of analysis, documentary data led to scant but evocative depictions of the spaces of Manchester's railway viaducts, occasionally cropping up in planning documents as early as the 1940s, and much more intensively by the 1980s. Viaducts were unanimously portrayed as lamentable problems to be fixed: they were 'barriers,' 'dreary,' and 'imposing.' The images depicting viaducts, which I treat as another 'text' in the discourse, equally emphasise dereliction and gloominess. As their mentioning increased in the 1980s, these characterisations were increasingly followed by particular strategies to solve the 'problems' of the viaducts.

As previously discussed, the scanning of documents became an essential element of research analysis. This was not only important for the ability to archive and organise pre-digital strategic documents, but in the process of analysis itself. After weeks of content analysis of a massive, un-catalogued archive of planning reports at Kantorowich Library, I began scanning sections for review at a later date. This process took approximately sixty hours, but ultimately served as a massive time saving technique when I began to use Adobe

Acrobat Pro to convert image files so that text could be recognised. This was essential, as it allowed me to search entire documents by keyword rather than visually scanning them in their entirety. Not only did this technique allow me to find relevant sections of documents (such as searching the terms "viaduct" and 'railway arch") and copy and paste texts for quotations, but it also enabled me to test the consistency of emerging discursive themes. In one case, repeated spatial and thermodynamic metaphors appeared in both interview and archival data analysis: these terms emerged as motifs around which strategies could be understood. For example, railway viaducts as 'barriers,' the 'growth' and 'expansion' of the city centre, and harnessing the 'pressure' of property development (see Chapter 8). Many of these terms referred to locales dominated by viaducts, whether or not infrastructure was mentioned directly, so I was able to search broader textual samples to trace emerging discourses that were consciously or unconsciously framed by the author or interviewee. This preliminary analysis of utterances then allowed me to reflexively respond to such emerging themes by testing out these specific terminologies in open-ended interview questions. In doing so in situations with a variety of actors from both the public and the private sectors, I was able to more clearly identify discourse coalitions and the process of 'discourse institutionalisation': when a particular discourse 'solidifies into particular institutional arrangements' (Hajer 2006).

## 3.6 Limitations

One criticism about discourse analysis that I take quite seriously is that posed by Andy Merrifield: most discursive research is not actively engaged beyond critique, and therefore is not easily utilised in political activism (1995). In the same vein, one concern of this thesis was that remaining 'traditional' industrial tenants of the viaduct arches were being summarily gentrified from the city centre of Manchester to make way for higher value leisure uses. However, despite interviewing a number of business owners and ascertaining their fears of unsecure tenure, I was unable to explore this phenomenon in more detail. Engaging in more depth with this process could have added more relevance to critiques of contemporary processes of property revalorisation in Manchester.

Additionally, discourse analysis tends to focus on the production, rather than consumption, of meaning. Aside from interviews with railway arch tenants and participant observation of their social uses, there was little opportunity to examine whether narratives

of regeneration and post-industrialisation necessarily resonated with the people who used these spaces.

Another weakness of discourse analysis is that it can sometimes overemphasise the agency of individuals and underplay structural constraints to action (Badcock 1996), reducing more complex phenomena to simpler activities. This is particularly true in dealing with planners and architects, who sometimes have little autonomy: planners' work is largely guided by the interpretation of myriad national policies, and architects often operate within tightly defined briefs. As much as decisions and attitudes were contextualised within larger processes in the analysis, at points there is a risk in assuming the actions of individual actors and organisations were based on choice rather than necessity.

Attempts to identify counter-hegemonic narratives relating to the re-imaging of Manchester's railway arches and viaducts proved particularly difficult, although some criticisms of the process became clear through interviews with owners, employees and property managers working with/within railway arch estates. Despite obvious conflicts between use value and exchange value, there were few avenues for these grievances to be voiced outside of the context of individual interviews. This may reflect what Swyngedouw (2011) and Allmendinger and Haughton (2012) have called the 'post-political' condition of urban politics, where the desires of political stakeholders are withheld from political debate by consensual, 'expert' actors. For this reason, the claims of this thesis are more limited in terms of its analysis of spatial practice because by focusing on the discourse of elites, it underplays the conflicts which are apparent yet unarticulated in larger public, political discourses around the reshaping of the city.

In specific cases, such as interviews with an architecture critic and a business owner, semi-structured interviews were conducted in a manner inspired by the 'walking interview' method employed by Evans and Jones (2011), in which the interviewer and interviewee walk though a particular space to evoke memories and associations that might not be uttered in a more traditional environment. This method proved generally infeasible due to the time constraints of the 'key players' interviewed, but it could be more appropriate for interviewing a broader segment of society.

## 3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the methodological approach of this thesis, drawing on archival and semi-structured interview methods as well as ethnographic and photographic approaches to exploring the southern fringe of Manchester city centre. The three study areas located within this district will each be the subject of one analytical chapter, which will explore a specific theme related to the interaction between railway viaducts and the surrounding built environment. These themes were drawn out from an approach to data interpretation driven by discourse analysis, in which the strategies and narratives utilised by elite actors were excavated to demonstrate the relationship between representations of space and aspirations for reimaging the southern fringe as a post-industrial landscape. Before exploring how the cultural representations and spatial history of the southern fringe—and of railway viaducts more generally—are approached in promoting a new urban imaginary, the next two chapters will explore the impact of Manchester's railways on the socio-spatial change and cultural representation of the spaces they occupy.

# Chapter 4: The Spatial Impacts and Social Costs of the Elevated Railway in Industrial Manchester: 1830 to 1945

## 4.1 Introduction

As Chapter 1 established, infrastructures tend to be conceptualised as networked, large-scale systems: substructures to urban processes. While the majority of this thesis focuses on 'post-industrial' Manchester, most of the city's railway infrastructure was built during the height of industrialism: the period between the 1830s and the 1890s. This chapter examines the relationship between the railway, industrial urbanisation, and the built environment, emphasising a multi-scalar understanding. As later chapters demonstrate, this exploration is essential, not only because it traces the socio-material construction of railway viaducts as fixed capital of industrialisation, but because the effects of viaducts on the urban landscape evoke particular cultural responses, with the historicity of these structures playing an important role in discourses of heritage and post-industrialism. The focus of this chapter is an historical analysis of the effects of railways on the physical fabric of the city, as well as social and economic relations, with particular reference to the city's southern fringe.

Manchester is the archetypical industrial city in form, society, and economy (Mumford 1961; Hall 1998), and it is the British city whose character is most influenced by the presence of the railway (Kellett 1969; Freeman 1999). To keep these facts in mind, yet not be consumed by them, this chapter presents a selective synthesis of commentary from contemporaneous authors, secondary materials from urban and railway historians, and primary archival research of public debates, property registries, reformist reports, and maps.

Discussion revolves around three interconnected themes: the creative destruction wrought by railway construction; the instrumentalisation of railway building as a tool of slum clearance; and the mutual constitution of slums and suburbs.

## 4.2 "Like a Spider's Web": The Railway and Urbanisation in Manchester, 1830-1899

> [It] was the influence of the railways, more than any other single agency, which gave the Victorian city its compact shape, which influenced the topography and character of its central and inner districts, the disposition of its dilapidated and waste areas, and of its suburbs, the direction and character of its growth; and which probably acted as the most potent new factor upon the urban land market in the nineteenth century. (Kellett 1969, p.xv)

The railway played a pivotal role in large-scale urbanisation of capital, rapid commodity circulation, the rise of conspicuous consumption in cities, and the shifting built environment of nearly all towns and cities of Britain. This was observed earliest and most clearly in Manchester (Kellett 1969; Freeman 1999). This section outlines these multi-scalar processes to contextualise a focused inquiry into more specific effects the railway has had on the urban spaces of the city.

The arrival of the world's first mainline railway, connecting Liverpool to Manchester in 1830, stoked the flames of ever-increasing industrial urbanisation in England's Northwest. Even then, to call Manchester an 'industrial city' was a gross oversimplification. Manchester had already begun to develop a distinctive factory mode of production, heavily dependent on the increased communications and faster transport associated with the railway's predecessor: the canal (Mumford 1946). In addition to the industrial metabolism of import and export undergirded by the canal system's link to the port of Liverpool, this network of engineered waterways also allowed the city to outsource its labour to new mill towns such as Oldham and Ashton. Much of Manchester's industrial dominance was predicated on establishing a constellation of ever-more specialised centres of manual labour in Lancashire, connected by a network of canals converging in the Castlefield basin of Manchester. Unsurprisingly, Castlefield was also the terminus of the Liverpool & Manchester railway, at Liverpool Road, in 1830. With faster speeds and less susceptibility to weather-related delays, railways absorbed or usurped canals in the city's industrial metabolism.

The railway instigated, expanded, and sped up the decentralisation of textile production, further solidifying Manchester as a mercantile centre. The legacy of the canals, with the city relying on a ring of specialised industrial towns, made Manchester a magnet for railway promoters. More than any other city in Victorian Britain, Manchester's position

within the railway network allowed it to use a broad network of smaller industrialised towns and villages, "virtually as production lines in a system of industrially inter-related cities" (Kellett 1969, p.192). At the same time, the railways allowed for storage of textiles, which were bulky and required significant storage space, at the urban periphery (Simmons 1978, p.279). The city's reliance on its hinterlands was evocatively described by Léon Faucher in 1844, who likened this complex network to a 'spider's web':

> The Leeds railway connects Manchester with Oldham, which contains 60,000 inhabitants; also with Bury, Rochdale, and Halifax, each of which numbers from 24,000 to 26,000 souls; the Bolton railway connects it with Bolton, Preston, and Chorley, which together have more than a hundred factories and 114,000 inhabitants. On the Sheffield line a few minutes suffice to reach the establishments of Stalybridge, Ashton, Dukinfeld and Hyde, people by more than 80,000 inhabitants; the Birmingham line incorporates with it, so to speak, the 50,000 inhabitants of Stockport; and that of Liverpool connects it with Wigan and Warrington. Thus we have 15 or 16 sets of industry forming this great constellation…Execution is almost as quick as thought. (Faucher 1969 [1844], p.15)

By the 1840s, this constellation included five railway lines radiating from four termini (for a map of the railway at its full development, see Figure 4). At points, up to railway companies were involved, a figure surpassed only by London (Brumhead 2004, p.135). As architectural historian John J. Parkinson-Bailey notes, "It is significant that Manchester had four great railway terminuses—a generator of railway lines rather than an inheritor of them" (2000, p.54). While additional railways were built throughout the century, these hastily developed inter-city routes formed the framework for today's passenger railway network.

With the surrounding cities in Lancashire, Yorkshire and Derbyshire providing additional productive labour and facilities in this dispersed industrial region, the centre of this network was dedicated to exchange, warehousing, retail, finance, and transport: a Victorian-style 'logistics' centre. Property values in the urban core skyrocketed by the mid-18th century (Kellett 1969): the increasingly mercantile metropolis witnessed the widespread demolitions of mills, factories and housing, yielding to new commercial buildings, warehouses, and the railway itself. However, (as will be detailed later in the chapter) the railway's stimulation of property values had the opposite effect on land directly adjacent to its viaducts.

The rapid expansion of the railway network served to connect far-flung places like never before, fundamentally equating distance with duration of a journey rather than proximity.

The circulation of capital became so mechanised that raw cotton could be transported to Preston at 3 a.m. and be back as shirting material by 7 p.m. the same day (Faucher 1969 [1844], p.172). Karl Marx, a contemporary observer of the development of early industrial development in Manchester, used railways as his archetypal example of fixed capital: their primary function was to accelerate, standardise, and rationalise the circulation of capital, driving down all spatial barriers in the process. This idea became known as the 'annihilation of space by time,' so that the circulation time of capital could be decreased to the point where it would be nothing but a 'twinkling of an eye' (quoted in Harvey 1982, p.377). This had major implications for urban growth, concentration and structure: conquering ever increasing distances at rapid speeds, along with constant industrial innovation, required massive migration of workers and mobilisation of resources.

During intense eras of railway building, particularly the 'manias' of 1824-5, 1836-7, and 1845-7, "the Victorians … looked like a race imbued with some daemonic energy" (Michael Robbins, cited in Freeman 1999, p.1), and for the following half-century, railways continued to expand their massive footprints on cities, creating ever-increasing auxiliary infrastructure. Unlike in continental Europe, where railways were state-owned and planned allowing for a massive central stations (Bahnhöfe, for example), in Britain, railway companies were private enterprises set up independently through Acts of Parliament (Simmons 1978). This initial form—in which disconnected inter-city railways radiated from the fringes of the city centre—dictated the pattern in which Manchester and most other Victorian cities would develop.

With such a laissez-faire approach, companies competed fiercely with one another to acquire land and construct the infrastructure for their routes, leading to redundancies and inefficient linkages that continue to limit urban transportation development to the present day (Haywood 2009). In addition to these often duplicated and disconnected infrastructures, at the scale of the city, this mode of development ultimately led to disconnected passenger services and a landscape dominated by railway infrastructure. In Manchester, as railways approached the city from every direction, the viaducts, goods stations, passenger stations, marshalling yards and termini formed 'a ring of iron, brick and stone' (Freeman 1999, p.123).

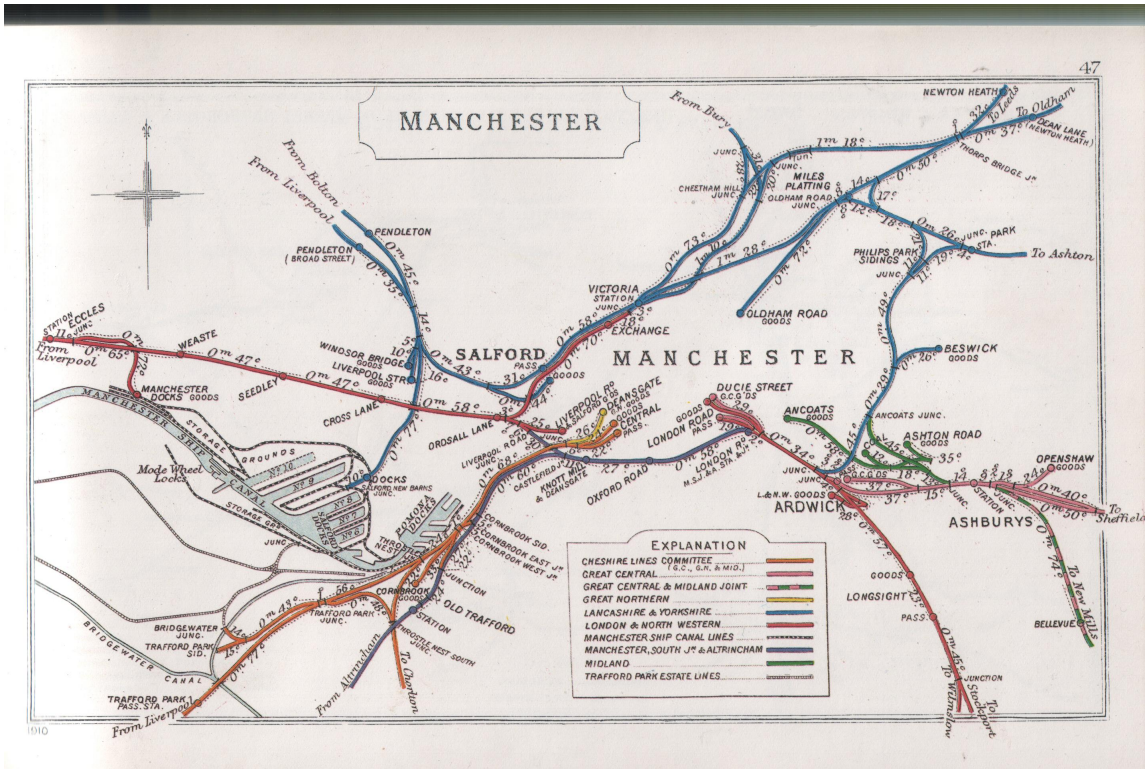



*Figure 4: The Manchester railway network, 1910. Image source: Railway Clearing House.*

## 4.3 Creative Destruction: On the Railways 'Smashing their Way Through' Manchester

*Figure 5: Workers constructing railway viaducts, 1903. Image source: transportarchive.org.uk*

> The object produced often bears traces of the materiel and time that have gone into its production—clues to the operations that have modified the raw material used. This makes it possible for us to reconstruct those operations. The fact remains, however, that productive operations tend in the main to cover their tracks; some even have this as their prime goal.... When

> construction is completed, the scaffolding is taken down; likewise, the fate of the author's rough draft is to be torn up and tossed away. (Lefebvre 2009, p.113)

To this point, the description of the railway network has been abstract, and in many senses, the railway functions in an abstract space mapped by engineers and surveyors. The space of the town—in this case, Manchester—disintegrated not only through its subservience to larger scales of the circulation and accumulation of capital, but also in a very physical and material way. Since Manchester was already a densely built and steadily growing city by the early nineteenth century, railways would have to 'smash their way through' already-developed areas (Kellett 1969), demonstrating how "a sudden break with past technological mixes and spatial configurations often entails massive devaluations of the pre-existing capital" (Harvey 1985, p.138). The construction of the railway in Manchester was emblematic of what Harvey and Berman (1988), reinterpreting Joseph Schumpeter, call 'creative destruction' in processes of modernisation: the massive destruction and reconstruction of the built environment in the service of the increasing urbanisation of capital.

The *creation* implied in creative destruction was the construction of Manchester's railway networks between the 1820s and the 1910s, with its most intense periods in the 1840s and 1860s. For the first elevated urban railways, the chief technical challenge was the need for an exclusive right of way, allowing operation unencumbered by street-level traffic. Industrial urbanisation had already created a network of paths, roads and waterways, so railways in cities were required by Parliament to be elevated, allowing traffic to pass underneath. For this reason, viaducts, a variant of bridge also used to span river valleys and other topographical hurdles, were constructed for urban railways. To further this challenge, since railways needed to pass through cities on viaducts and locomotives could only pull their freight at near-level grades, the entire railway infrastructure of central Manchester was elevated. The scale of technological and material configuration involved with this task was so massive that it saw the professionalisation of civil engineering and quantity surveying (Biddle 1990).

The methods used in construction of the Liverpool & Manchester provided the model for the construction of early railway infrastructure in throughout Britain. Viaducts, goods stations, and termini were built atop brick arches, with the railway passing thirty feet above street level. The use of brick was based on a calculation of available engineering

technology, the costs of material extraction and transportation, and the structural requirements of the railway; in other British cities, viaducts were built of stone. Though it is beyond the scope of this thesis, the structure of brick (or stone) arches was used for railway infrastructure, and for road works, embankments, and nearly all other forms of civil engineering, until technology developed economical load-bearing structures of iron and steel later in the nineteenth century. Arches came to represent not only the residual spaces of railway infrastructure, but of nearly all large, engineered structures (see Chapter 5 for arches and their 'underground' and 'cavernous' qualities more broadly).

When brick arches were insufficient to span wide roads and waterways, bridges were constructed of iron. As the railway gained legitimacy as a viable and profitable form of transport after the Liverpool & Manchester, railway companies increasingly built ornate and architecturally elegant station termini, as well as decorative and colourful steel bridges to cross busy thoroughfares. As we will see in Chapter 6, though few in number, these bridges would come to be treated as the heroic and aesthetically pleasing elements of railway infrastructure. However, outside of areas most visible by the bourgeois public (Figure 6), viaducts in Manchester were constructed at minimal cost, and were purely utilitarian in form (Figure 7).

Victorian engineers may have overcome technological hurdles posed by the construction of the elevated railway, but the financial challenges of railway building were more limiting. Despite their representation as unstoppable juggernauts, railways were unable to penetrate Manchester's central business district, the 'square half mile,' due to insufficient capitalisation (for more on the role of railways in defining the city centre, see Chapter 8).

*Figure 6: "Railway Engineering, Victoria Railway Arch," 1850. Image source: Local Image Collection, MCC.*

*Figure 7: "The Stockport Viaduct, just south of Manchester," 1910. Often considered the largest brick structure in Europe, this viaduct was constructed by the Manchester & Birmingham Railway from 1837 to 1840. Image source: Greater Manchester County Records Office.*

### *4.3.1 The Destructiveness of the Railway: Slum Clearance as Elite Consensus*

> The making of a slum is too large and general a process to be ascribed to the railways alone, but it is noticeable that districts divided and confined by the railways tended to be cast finally and irretrievably into the new familiar mould of coal and timber yards, warehousing, mixed light and heavy industrial users, and fourth-rate residential housing. (Kellett 1969, p.293)

While the earliest railways sometimes secured routes through relatively undeveloped land on the city's fringe—such as the southern approach to London Road (now Piccadilly) station in the late 1830s—this resource disappeared quickly. From the 1840s onward, with each successive railway campaign, the demolition of the urban fabric became increasingly intensive and destructive. Faucher noted that "the railways penetrate the town upon immense arcades which had torn down everything in their paths," with "too little attention…paid to the health and convenience of the inhabitants; of the want of public squares, fountains, trees, promenades, and well-ventilated buildings" (1969, p.11). Among railway company chairmen and (in their limited capacity), the Manchester Corporation, slum clearance emerged as a consensual solution to dual concerns of industrial urbanisation in Victorian Britain. Railways eradicated many of the original workers' cottages built since the 1780s, while simultaneously creating new and more congested slums in their wake (Kellett 1969; Brumhead 2004). I use the term 'slum' with some hesitation due to its pejorative tone and ideological baggage. However, this term that was overwhelmingly used at the time, both by authors who associated their living conditions with the moral impurity of their residents, and commentators who presented them as emblematic of the excesses of industrial capitalism. For this reason, a revisionist term would fail to shed light on slums, themselves a discursive construct with which I am engaging. For a discussion of the relationship between Victorian slums and their contemporary manifestations in the developing world, see Mike Davis' work on slums and urbanisation (2007, pp.21–22).

The imperative for slum clearance and the use of railway building as a tool to do so could be considered the first discourse coalition in the management of the built environment of Manchester. According to historian John R. Kellett (1969), slum clearance became the preferred provision for railway access into Victorian city centres for two interconnected reasons. First, tenants at the time had minimal legal recourse to object to their decantation, and numerous loopholes made it unlikely that they would receive compensation for their troubles. Second, railway builders sought to construct approaches,

yards and termini on the immediate outskirts of the urban core, often on lands located adjacent to canals. These sites, of course, had been the favoured sites of industrial production, which were gradually retreating to Manchester's emerging satellite towns. Speculative developers, who acted as absentee landlords, often built slums themselves; these individuals tended to own larger estates and were amenable to selling. This required less effort for railways than lengthy processes of compulsory purchase. Kellett (1969) notes that, in many cases, the discovery of a path through slum housing was the spark leading to the proposal for a new railway.

John Leigh, Manchester's Medical Health Officer, reported in 1881 that "anyone acquainted with the houses yet remaining in the centre of the city will desire that [slum clearance] may go on" (cited in Brumhead 2004, p.140). With the rise of door-to-door social surveys in the 1830s by groups such as the Manchester Statistical Society and a massive cholera outbreak killing thousands in the 1840s, slum demolitions for railway construction were lauded as a solution to the problem of unsanitary and overcrowded dwellings.

Slums in the early industrial era, as today, are a by-product of rapid urbanisation by a population of migrant workers, often itinerant day labourers who had left surrounding rural areas or other countries (Ireland, in the case of Manchester) due to economic restructuring, conflict, and/or famine. In the Manchester described by Engels in 1845, slums were wedged in irregular sites around industrial facilities, along flood-prone riversides and polluted waterways. Pinned down by transport infrastructure(s), slums were often hidden from view and inaccessible to those who did not live in them. With slum dwellers predominantly traveling by foot, and often relying on day-to-day employment in the urban core, slums were located, like mills and factories, on the perimeter of the centre commercial district.

While most of the main lines, and all but one of the primary station sites, were occupied by the 1840s, the creative destruction of railway expansion continued steadily through the nineteenth century. A number of 'belt lines' were built in the periphery of the city centre, communicating between lines. Additional passenger and goods stations were added until 1910. Along with these came new railway warehouses, marshalling yards, sheds for locomotives and carriages, and a variety of other facilities; by its peak the railway consumed 137 acres—or 7.3 per cent—of Manchester's central zone, with viaducts being the single largest presence (Kellett 1969, p.290). Even then, the railway's dominance on the urban environment was (and is) considerably higher along the southern fringe.

While the presence of the railways stimulated a rapid increase in property values in the urban core and in the immediate vicinity of passenger stations, lands abutting viaducts stagnated, falling into prolonged disrepair and ill repute. This effect was especially evident in the Ancoats section of Manchester, where Leigh noted in 1884 that the district

> …has not a single road or street enabling the vast population to communicate in a fairly straight line with the city with which its business chiefly lies. A series of zig-zags, along narrow streets, form its avenues to the city. Every year adds to its dismal character, and lessens the enjoyment of its inhabitants. (cited in Kellett 1969, p.343)

The demolition of the working class districts through which railways passed, as Dyos (1955) points out, did not end with the destruction of the built environment and the dispersal of residents. While streets were severed and buildings demolished, contemporary observers such as Engels (2009 [1845]) and public health reformers (Marr 1904) noted that evicted residents settled nearby in even more crowded and dilapidated districts on the industrial fringes.

By the 1860s, critics were increasingly vocal about the effect of railways on urban housing. Novelist George MacDonald, in his novel *Robert Falconer* (1868), decried

> The utter wickedness of railway companies, who pulled down every house that stood in their way, and did nothing to provide room for those who were thus ejected -- most probably from a wretched place, but only, to be driven into a more wretched still.

The resulting trend, as study by the Manchester Statistical Society made clear, was that the construction of railways and the southward movement of warehouses amounted to the working class residents being 'summarily elbowed' further into the periphery (Baker 1885, p.9).

By the publication of Marr's *Housing Conditions in Manchester & Salford* report in 1904, aside from a few houses wedged between Central Station, the Great Northern Railway (GNR) warehouse, and the former Liverpool Road station (converted to a goods depot), as well as a handful of dwellings between Exchange station and the river Irwell, nearly all residential use of the centre of Manchester had been pushed out (Figure 8). Overall, John J. Parkinson Bailey (2000, p.53) suggests approximately 20,000 people were directly

displaced by the building of the railways. Michael Freeman (1999, p.124) estimates this figure at between 41,000 and 55,000, based on the amount of acreage occupied by the railways and average population densities in the mid-nineteenth century. Most of this displacement presumably was caused by the construction of viaducts, since they have the largest footprint of any railway infrastructure in the city. When considering displacement caused directly in relation to the construction the railway, the numbers are significantly higher: the area around Liverpool Road, which housed approximately 50,000 people at its height in the nineteenth century, had few dwellings remaining by the end of the 19th century (Brumhead 2004). With increasing orientation toward railways as the area became a primary transit interchange, houses were either converted to small warehouses or demolished for the construction of warehouses and factories.

*Figure 8: A cropped selection from 1904 map of housing conditions. Grey signifies business premises, while the conditions of housing are represented in a gradient from dark brown to yellow (dark brown being slums). Image source: Marr (1904).*

*Figure 9: "Duke St., Brick arch railway bridge," 1900. Terraced housing backing up to the MSJ viaduct in Castlefield, with viaduct leading to Central Station passing above. Image source: Local Image Collection, MCC.*

*Figure 10: "Ivy Street, near Liverpool Road," 1900. Image source: Local Image Collection, MCC.*

## 4.4 Railways and the Mutual Constitution of Slums and Suburbs

Railways were imbued with class division not only because their construction served the interests of those in control of the means of factory production over the 'reserve army' of industrial labours, or because the paths of their viaducts summarily obliterated working class districts that got in the way. The technology of the railway also allowed for the apportionment and development of rural land in the countryside for the construction of villas for the bourgeoisie. "Together with the parallel development on the lines to Chester and Warrington, and on the Midland's route into Central Station, the city soon displayed—even more sharply than Engels could describe—the segregation of land uses and residential classes that forms an archetypal manifestation of the working of the capitalist land market" (Freeman 1999, p.140). In Figures 9 and 10, the image is quite evocative: railways carrying passengers to suburbs would pass over the roofs of houses left over from various phases of slum clearance.

As Dyos and Reader (1973) evocatively illustrate in their case study of London, slums and suburbs in Victorian cities were mutually constituted:

> In the crudest model of their development with which we might begin, it is here that urban society most visibly diverged. Centrifugal forces drew the rich into the airy suburbs; centripetal ones held the poor in the airless slums. [T]he compelling pressures of expansion caused ripples of obsolescence…. Yet this disintegration was not a disconnected process. (1973, p.360)

Housing patterns were drastically changing in Manchester. Middle class and wealthy residents, who vacated the city centre in the 1820s and 1830s, moved ever further from the core. In patterns of succession, as bourgeois residents moved further out, their homes were demolished, subdivided as housing for poorer people, or converted to warehousing or industrial usage (Dennis 1984, p.130). Railways aided suburbanisation: in some cases, train companies offered free first-class passes to homebuilders as a way of stimulating passenger traffic: in 1846, the London and North Western railway issued such tickets for a period of 21 years for new residents of the Manchester suburb of Alderley Edge, inducing additional suburban growth (Biddle 1990, p.123). Manchester's business elites lived on the shores of Lake Windermere, in Altrincham and Sale, commuting into the centre by train (Dennis 1984).

By the1840s, the near absolute socio-spatial segregation of Manchester was readily apparent to foreign commentators such as Leon Faucher and Friedrich Engels, both of whom described the remarkable divided nature of this new industrial city. The city's uses were divided into concentric zones. There was the core, with its financial and municipal institutions, trading floors and warehouses. Workers and the 'reserve army' of itinerant labourers lived amidst the industrial belt surrounding the core. The boundary between the core and the industrial belt was the railway viaducts and termini themselves, as indicated in Faucher's diagram. Surrounding the belt of industrial land uses and workers' quarters was the new middle bourgeoisie, settled in a more regularly gridded outer ring. Beyond this ring, in the formerly rural periphery, were the gardened villas of the upper bourgeoisie (see Figure 7).

Largely thanks to Engels' description, Manchester has become the prototypical and classic illustration of the way that class struggle is expressed spatially. In Bourgeois Utopias, historian Robert Fishman claims that the suburbanisation of Manchester in the 1840s created the basic structure of the Anglo-American industrial cities that would follow through the rest of the century (Fishman 1987, p.73). As an example of this dramatic transition, Fishman indicates that, in the decade from 1835 to 1845, Manchester achieved a higher level of suburbanisation than London did until 1870 (1987, p.74). In this sense, the prototypical urban form demonstrated in the diagrams of Faucher and Engels was created by middle class suburbanisation itself: the position of the suburban belt hemmed in the factory belt, and the core shifted purely to business uses. With the incentive of an ever increasing and affordable (to the middle class) system of omnibuses and railways that offered rapid transportation to leafy estates in the urban periphery, and the disincentive of being surrounded by the immensely disruptive construction of the railway infrastructure and termini, this process became self-perpetuating.

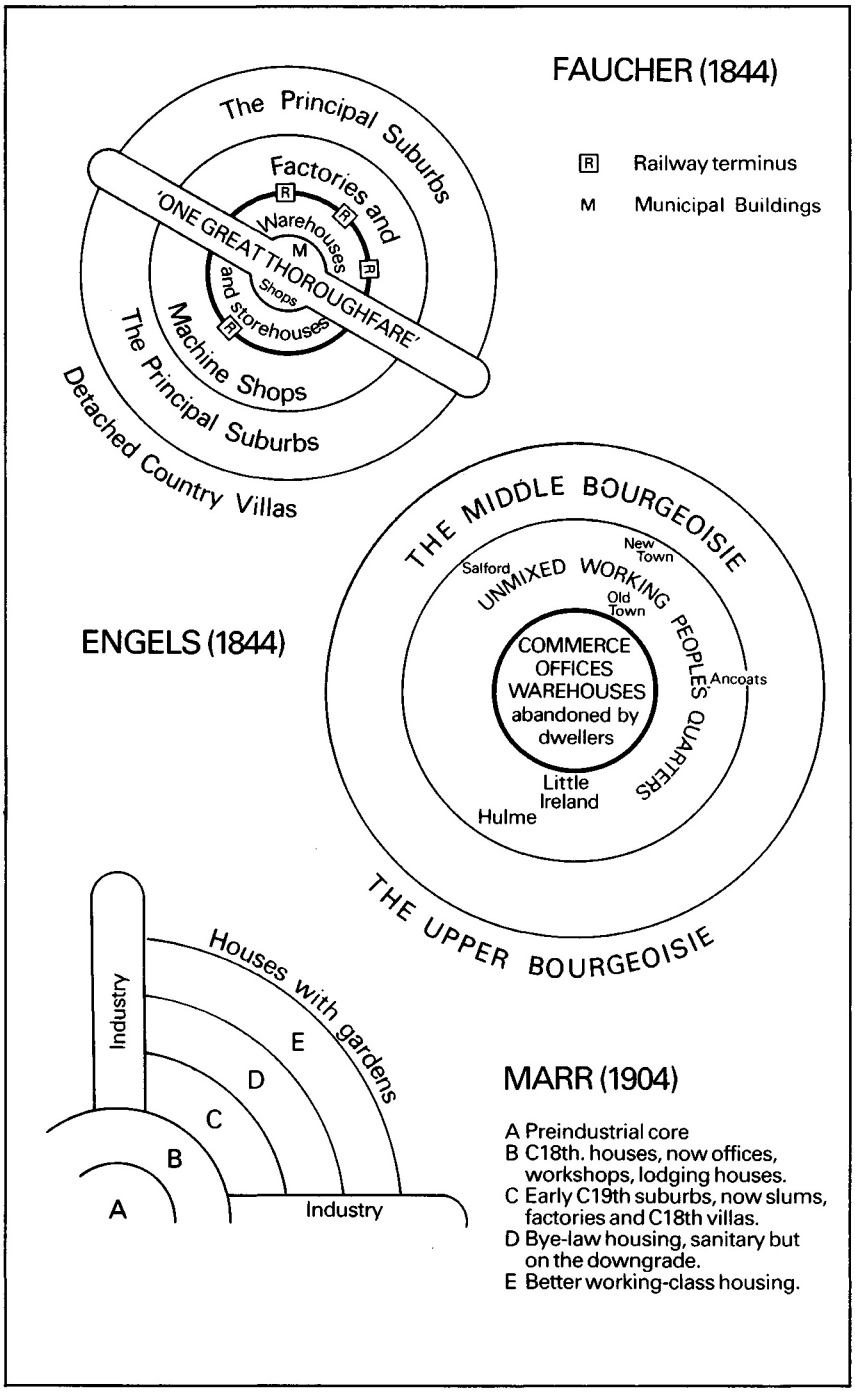



*Figure 11: "Models of Manchester: Faucher, Engels and Marr (based on information in Faucher, 1969; Engels, 1969; Marr, 1904)." Image source: Dennis 1984, p.82.*

## 4.5 Railway Viaducts and their Aftermath: The Southern Fringe of Manchester and the Persistence of Dereliction, 1835-1945

It is no exaggeration that the southern fringe of Manchester city centre is among the urban landscapes in Britain most greatly affected by the presence of elevated railway infrastructure. Since the following chapters will focus primarily on the spaces along and below railway infrastructure in this zone, a more in-depth spatial history is in order. The following subsection will trace the effects of railway infrastructure on the social and built environment of the southern fringe from the construction of the MSJ in the 1840s until the end of WWII, when the Manchester's first plan was published.

### *4.5.1 The Construction of the MSJ Viaduct*

The MSJ viaduct, the first to be built through the southern fringe (1845-1849), has long been an archetype of the negative effects of railway viaducts on British cities. Richard Dennis has described it as such:

> The most powerful symbol of railway blight was the viaduct, intended to save land and avoid street closures, but in practice creating a belt of unsavoury land uses, underneath the arches and on land in their shadow. Even if roads continued to pass under the arches of the viaduct, an impermeable mental barrier between districts on either side was established. The classic example was the Manchester South Junction viaduct which delimited the southern edge of Manchester's business district and condemned areas to the south to decay. (1984, pp.130–131)

The MSJ (see Figure 12) was built during the height of 'railway mania' in the 1840s, arising from a thwarted scheme to convert the entirety of the Bridgewater Canal to a railway connecting Manchester westward to Runcorn (Patmore 1964). Ultimately, the viaduct was built alongside this and other waterways for one and three quarter miles between London Road (now Piccadilly) station and Ordsall Lane in Salford. The viaduct was mostly built by Irish 'navvies' on 224 arches, using 50,000,000 bricks. It crossed thirty streets and blocked many more (Kellett 1969, p.13; Brumhead and Wyke 2004, p.26).

Much of the area through which the MSJ viaduct passed had been heavily industrialised in the decades immediately following the construction of the Rochdale Canal, completed in 1804. Between 1804 and 1838, this district in Chorlton-upon-Medlock

contained an immense number of factories, mills, and distilleries between the canal and the River Medlock, particularly the Chorlton Mills complex (Busteed 1995). Wedged between the industrial sites, river and canal was Little Ireland, a slum described in vivid detail by Friedrich Engels in The Condition of the Working Class in England (2009 [1845]) just before construction of the viaduct began. Dwellings in this area were so low-lying that, although some were three storeys high, only their chimneys could be seen from Oxford Road (Kidd 2006, p.46). Engels, in his indictment of capitalist urbanisation, described the district:

> The most horrible spot… is known as Little Ireland. In a rather deep hole, in a curve of the Medlock and surrounded on all four sides by tall factories and high embankments, covered with buildings, stand two groups of about two hundred cottages, built chiefly back to back, in which live about 4,000 human beings, most of them Irish. The cottages are old, dirty, and of the smallest sort, the streets uneven, fallen into ruts and in part without drains or pavement; masses of refuse, offal and sickening filth lie among standing pools in all directions; the atmosphere is poisoned by the effluvia from these, and laden and darkened by the smoke of a dozen tall factory chimneys. (p.72)

In the four years following Engels' observations, construction of the viaduct and Oxford Road station required the demolition of five residential blocks in the north of Little Ireland, leaving residents overshadowed and large areas of wasteland to the immediate north and south of the viaduct.

The remaining fragments of Little Ireland existed until the end of the century, hemmed in by factories, the viaduct, and the river, which was prone to flooding. Residents were exposed to noxious fumes, waste and effluent from the factories, perpetual damp, and the vibration, smoke and soot from steam trains above. Engels returned to Little Ireland as an archetype of the industrial slum in The Housing Question, written in 1872. Noting that much of the district had since been occupied by Oxford Road railway station, and that the construction of the railway "laid bare and improved some of the worst districts" or abolished them altogether, he emphasised that this was a matter of displacement rather than abolition of poverty.

> The bourgeoisie pointed with pride to the happy and final abolition of Little Ireland as to a great triumph. Now last summer a great inundation took place… and it was then revealed that Little Ireland had not been abolished at

> all, but had simply been shifted from the south side of Oxford Road to the north side, and that it still continues to flourish. (1887, p.45)

Most people displaced by railways found lodging in the other, increasingly crowded slums wedged in the in-between spaces of the city fringe, while others made their homes in the arches of the viaduct itself (Chadwick 1973, p.250). An 1854 study by the Manchester and Salford Sanitary Association, surveying the remaining dwellings of the district, noted that "several of the railway arches along the st. are not enclosed, are nothing better than receptacles for filth on a larger scale" (cited in Busteed 1995, p.17). Even before the construction of the MSJ, editorials addressed these spaces with righteous indignation: "Every arch in the township was a receptacle for thieves and vagabonds," lamented the Manchester Courier, "and ought to be fenced off" (1844).

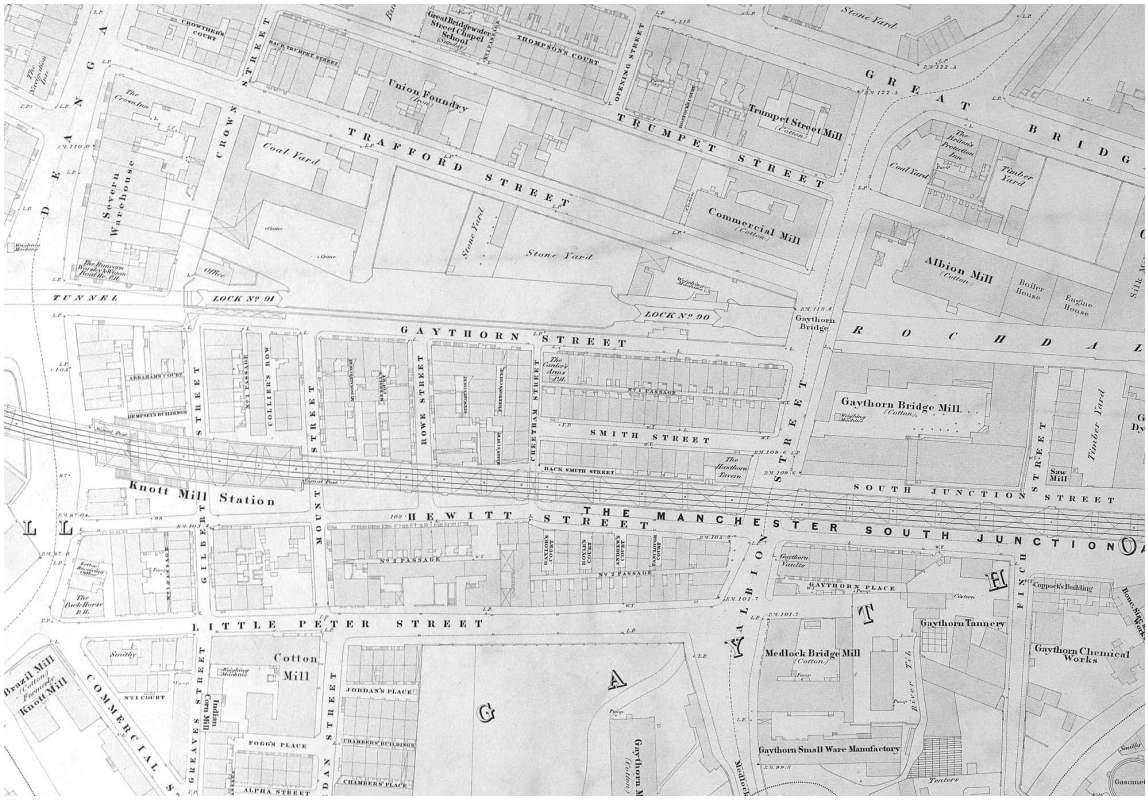



*Figure 12: Housing clustered around the MSJ viaduct two years after its completion, 1851. Image source: Ordnance Survey.*

Not all railway arches, however, were left open. In Manchester, as in other Victorian cities, early railway arches accessible to stations and with road frontage were leased out by the railway company. By 1848, arches along the MSJ were rented primarily for industrial uses:

property registries from that year list tenants as diverse as an engineer and machinist, a blacksmith, a marine stores dealer, an iron dealer, and a window blind maker (Kelly and Co. 1858). These businesses were, by that time, intermingled with facilities focused on charity and social reform: a temperance hall and a ragged school were located across the street from a beer store on Hewitt Street.

### *4.5.2 Confirming Dereliction and Stagnant Property Values*

Attitudes of civic elites towards railway viaducts and their arches in Manchester, and particularly the MSJ, turned sour by the 1850s. The Manchester Corporation had an increasingly negative view of the effects that railway viaducts had on the city centre. It was apparent that, for one reason or another, viaducts seemed to *produce* dereliction by their very presence, and throughout Britain, the blighted environment of railway viaducts often served as emblems of the down-and-out in the Victorian city (see Chapter 5).

Perhaps the most poignant example of civic elites' attitudes toward railway viaducts in Victorian Manchester is shown in a statement made by John Lynde in 1866. Lynde, who served as City Surveyor of Manchester from 1857 to 1878, witnessed the 'railway manias' of the previous thirty years. As part of a new parliamentary sub-committee at Manchester Borough Hall to review and scrutinise Bills affecting the city, he was pressed to opine on the effect of railway viaducts on the economic growth of the city (Parkinson-Bailey 2000, p.54). This testimony was related to the proposed construction of a three-mile, trans-urban viaduct by the Manchester Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway, which would essentially cut the city in two. Though the city originally acquiesced to this plan, Lynde criticised the construction of the viaduct primarily on the grounds that it would sever the central business district and that it would further delimit the southward expansion of warehousing in Manchester city centre. Lynde described the lack of pavements, massive piles of lumber, and congestion caused by the horses and carts associated with the 'low class' and 'inferior' trades operating in the railway arches, such as "smithies, marine stores, stables, mortar mills, the storage of old casks and lumber" (cited in Kellett 1969, p.17). Due to the presence of these businesses and the imposing structure itself, "no improvement has taken place in that district in the proximity of the viaduct. We still have the low class of property which was there years ago when the viaduct was built" (ibid., p.17). Lynde further noted that other parts of Manchester saw property values rise by 75 per cent in the 20 years following the

construction of the MSJ, yet the property values along the viaducts remained stagnant, because "Parties willing to occupy warehouses alongside the viaduct could not be found," because the railway arches and their environs brought "a low class of person into the neighbourhood" (ibid., pp.308–309). Accordingly, a contemporaneous Town Clerk of Manchester noted "if you go along a railway with a viaduct; the very character of the property you look down upon shows that it is not the place where improvements may be looked for—the viaduct puts a stop absolutely to any improvement from the time it is constructed" (ibid., p.346). While the city government was concerned that railway viaducts and their arches came to represent criminality, destitution, and poor physical and moral hygiene, the spectre of limited southward expansion and stagnant property values became a more pressing concern (see Chapter 8). In Lynde's testimony, we see how the expansion of the commercial functions of the city centre was limited by the presence of the MSJ viaduct as a de facto city wall. The stagnating property values of railway arch spaces were also directly related to the public's perception of the users and physical conditions of these spaces, further limiting potential growth. This would be an omen for similar attempts at environmental improvement schemes along the viaduct ever since.

By the 1860s, the successive construction of urban railways was increasingly described as an 'invasion' (Kostal 1994, p.144), and the landscapes of perpetual railway demolitions were likened to wartime and natural disasters. A detailed account of the use of railway arches in Britain, part of an essay written by John Hill during the recession in 1870, warrants direct quote due to its evocation of the attitudes of railway companies toward their residual property estate:

> The economy to which railway companies must—for a time, at least—resort, opens another hopeful prospect to shareholders, in the necessity which the directors at last feel of making the most of surplus property, some by sale, other part by letting. How many thousand arches there are or railway viaducts in towns shut up and tenantless! The directors would have scoffed, a few years ago, at troubling themselves at such trifling saving as letting a railway arch. If anybody wanted one, he could have it; but they never went out of their way to find tenants. Things are different now. Railway arches make capital workshops, good warehouses for rough materials, tolerable farm homesteads, and in many town localities might be turned into markets with great advantage […]. It is true that no manager can expect to pocket a premium from the tenant of the arches […] but public opinion, acting through some recognised authoritative body, which we hope soon to see created, will force considerations of this humble kind on reluctant directors and contemptuous managers. (1870, pp.47–48)

Hill's account demonstrates that concerns about the condition of railway viaducts and the perceived underutilisation of their arch spaces were increasing, and that railway owners were pressured to improve their estates, particularly in times of economic hardship. These will be recurring themes emphasised throughout the following chapters.

### *4.5.3 'Improvements' of the Late 1800s as Proto-'Regeneration' Strategies*

While construction represented the continued intrusion of the railway in central Manchester, with Central station coming the closest to penetrating the urban core, the Manchester Corporation increasingly took advantage of such upheavals to push for environmental 'improvements,' such as street widening, increased lighting, station renovation, and continued demolition of the last of the 'twilight zones' (see Figures 13 and 14). These were the ambiguous zones between two parts of an urban area that were left behind from another era. "Twilight zones, or zones of transition, were characteristically squeezed between the established infrastructure of the metropolitan core and the settled residential communities of the Victorian inner suburbs" (Mort 2008, p.317). Increasingly, the Corporation pressured railway companies to maintain, improve and add decorative elements to their properties in exchange for building permits (Tyrer 2000). In these actions we see the earliest efforts to address head-on the perceived deficiencies of these infrastructural spaces through spatial rationalisation and strategies of visual concealment.

One approach to reducing the perceived detrimental effects of railway infrastructure on its surrounding environment was through visual screening. For example, the demolition of an iron foundry, cotton mill, wharfs, and a timber yard at Eagle Quay, associated with the creation of Whitworth Street (1890), opened a wide space between the new street and the MSJ (see Figure 12). In this space, over the following fifteen years, a number of Manchester's largest and most opulent Georgian buildings were built: the Lancaster House and India House (1905-1912), the Refuge Assurance (1891-95), and the Palace Theatre of Variety (1891). These buildings demonstrated the continuous southern motion of commercial buildings to an area formerly dominated by industry and slums, while at the same time block the viaduct from view on Whitworth Street. An even clearer example of these attempts at visual screening was on Deansgate, where the GNR constructed what "is thought to be the longest Victorian street frontage in existence",

erected to block the view of the warehouse and its approaching lines from the commercial thoroughfare (Worthington 2005, p.59).

*Figure 13: "Bugle Street off Gaythorne [sic] St., Knott Mill," 1896. Due to note on bottom right, it appears that this image was created as a record for city council as part of the compulsory purchase process. Image source: Greater Manchester County Records Office.*

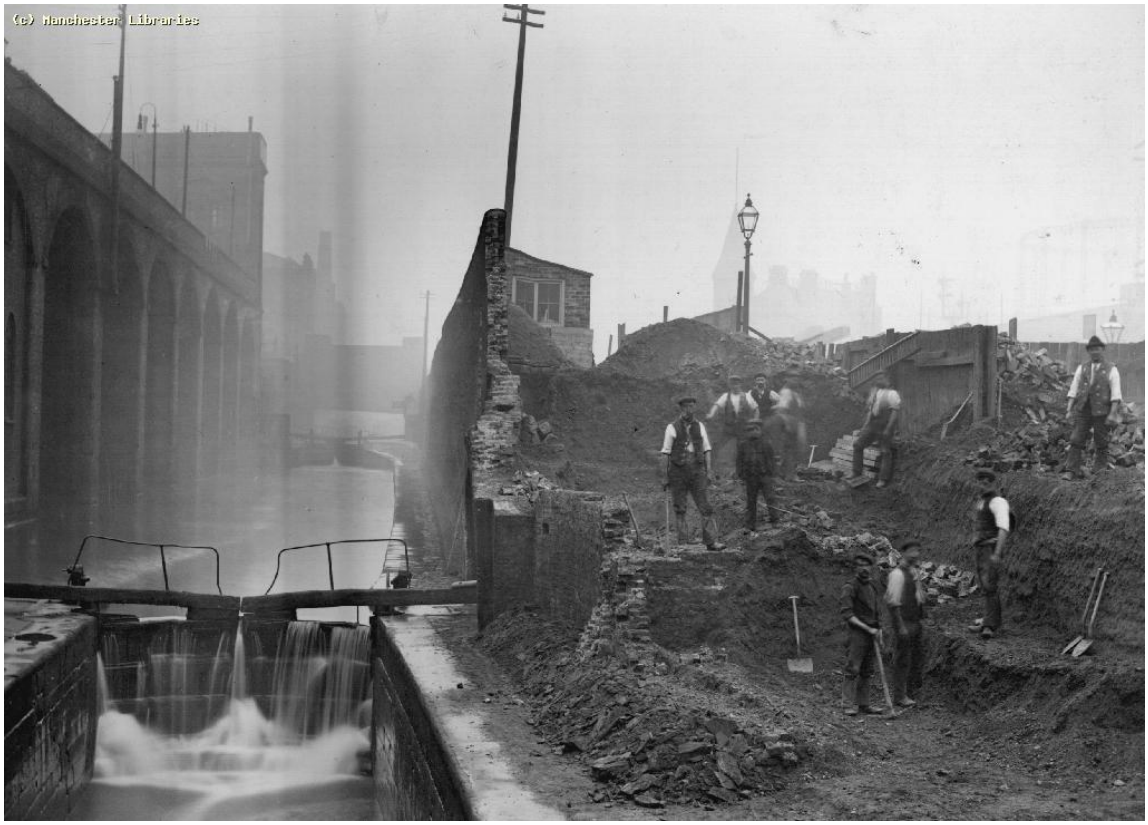



*Figure 14: A. Bradburn, "Canals, Rochdale Canal, looking towards central station city, Manchester," 1902. Image depicts the demolition of houses along Rochdale Canal associated with the creation of WSW. Image source: Local Image Collection, MCC.*

Beyond attempts at simply blocking views of the viaduct through new construction (which were later more overtly suggested as policy in the 1945 *Nicholas Plan*) the Corporation took upon itself a number of 'improvements,' including the reconfiguration of short, narrow roads to create Whitworth Street West (WSW) in 1898. WSW, a wide thoroughfare connecting Oxford Road/Oxford Street to the west and Deansgate to the east, consumed the strip of land between the viaduct and the Rochdale Canal, creating a 'cut' of three parallel transport infrastructures. Additionally, Knott Mill station was remodelled in 1898, around the same time as the GNR warehouse was built, replacing a station described as 'worthy of the insalubrious neighbourhood in which it is situated' (cited in Brumhead & Wyke 1989, p.23). This scheme (see Figure 14) resulted in the demolition of over one hundred additional houses (Brumhead and Wyke 2004, p.18), though by this point the Corporation ensured the re-housing of displaced tenants. In nearby Castlefield, where the construction of the Castlefield viaduct demolished of the ruins of a Roman fort, railways responded to

widespread protests by decorating the iron viaduct with castle-themed motifs (see Chapter 5).

Tyrer (2000) notes that a number of businesses near the MSJ left the area for the new industrial estate of Trafford Park upon the opening of the Manchester Ship Canal. This indicates that industries operating on the fringes of Manchester city centre were continuing to decentralise. In place of mills and factories at the axis of Oxford Road/Oxford Street and Whitworth Street/WSW, the Refuge Assurance Company and the Palace Theatre appeared. Functions such as timber yards began to be displaced; already in the late nineteenth century, the area to the north of the viaduct was transforming from an industrial and residential district to one focused on commerce and entertainment. However, this expansion stopped at the viaduct, never penetrating its boundary to the south. This is shown clearly in Marr's 1904 map (Figure 15).

The construction of WSW served to further cement the MSJ viaduct as the southerly limit of the city centre. With more railway arches fronting WSW, and others having access to a widened Hewitt Street, more arches were closed off for use as industrial premises. Visually, this emphasised the viaduct as a wall. The proliferation of inexpensive industrial space in the area was further increased by the construction of Manchester Central Station. Since the entire station was built at a high elevation on arched brick vaults (as its approaching viaduct needed to span the MSJ) there were massive sheltered spaces located beneath the station itself.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the railway arches in the southern fringe along the MSJ continued to be used for industrial and storage purposes: the Hewitt Street arches were home to a hay merchant, carting agent, letter cutter, and saw maker. The arches of the newly-created WSW contained a carriage builder, wine merchant, coal merchant, timber merchant, lamp maker, joiners and builders, lathe maker, iron merchant, and a hairdresser (Slater's 1905). The near exclusivity of industrial uses of railway arches along the MSJ continued until the 1930s, when a major and rapid shift in uses dominated the area for the following half-century: from thereon, the arches became the domain of the motor trade: manufacturers of tyres and motors, motor lamps, accessories and seats, as well as a garages (Kelly and Co. 1931).

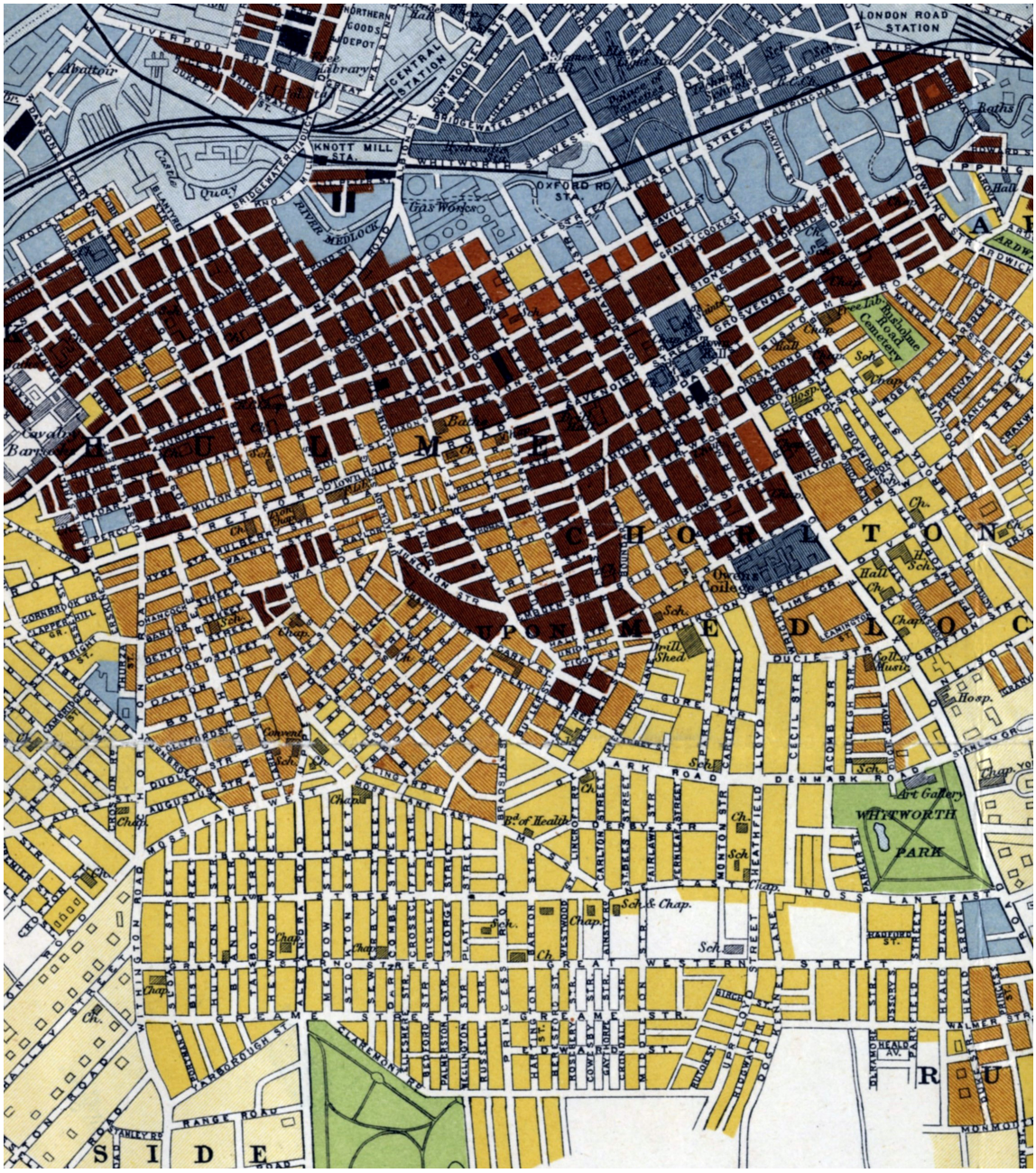



*Figure 15: Zoomed selection from Marr's map of slums in Manchester. Brown represents slum housing, with the MSJ viaduct and Central Station at the top. Image source: Marr, 1904.*

### *4.5.4 The 1945 Nicholas Plan*

At the conclusion of World War II in 1945, Manchester's first plan was published. The plan, written primarily during wartime, presented the potential bombing damage inflicted on the city as an opportunity to rebuild the 'ugly, dirty and congested' city (Nicholas 1945, p.1). While the Blitz caused extensive damage to Exchange and Victoria stations, and the MSJ

viaduct was breached between Castlefield and Old Trafford Junctions, (Hall 1995, p.90) damage to the city centre was much less extensive than in other British cities. This fact was expressed with some lament:

> Many of our present difficulties are complicated by the fact that in the last century commercial and other buildings were designed to last too long; they have remained structurally sound long after they have been rendered obsolete by changes of function and progress of building technique. (Nicholas 1945, p.202)

Nicholas' plan was explicit about the negative impact of railway viaducts on their surrounding environments, having, for example, 'disastrously divided Manchester and Salford (Nicholas 1945, p.207). In addition to proposing an underground tube system. an idea that persisted until the 1970s (Brook and Dodge 2012), Nicholas zeroed in on the physical condition and appearance of Manchester's viaducts.

> The possibilities of improving the appearance of railway viaducts must be considered…. Viaducts have tended to divide areas of development, and generally to impair the character of their neighbourhoods by the dreariness of their continuous brick arches, and by the conversion of the voids under them into decrepit storage accommodation. There is no reason why satisfactory architectural treatment should not be given to new viaducts constructed on more open lines. Moreover, electric traction, by eliminating smoke, would enable commercial buildings to be constructed close to the viaducts, which would then be visible only where they crossed over roads. (p.67)

This modernist vision of the future, in which railways would be buried or constructed 'on more open lines' with 'satisfactory architectural treatment' proved to be untenable, but some of Nicholas' suggestions eventually came true. The conversion from steam locomotion to electric and diesel traction offered an opportunity to modernise 'decrepit' railway arch premises and yield higher rents, though this initiative was not completed until the late 1960s. Notably, the Nicholas plan recommends the expansion of non-industrial land uses immediately south of the MSJ viaduct: "Development in this area should serve to screen the viaduct and also form a suitable transition from the entertainment zone to the suggested cultural centre" (Np.193). As Chapter 9 demonstrates, this suggestion presaged a process that began in the mid-1980s and continues. In some cases, modern office buildings were

indeed built along Manchester's railway viaducts in the city centre. However, the strategy of erasing the visual presence of viaducts was untenable for most locations in the city.

## 4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the historical relationship between the railway, industrial urbanisation, and the built environment in Manchester. Viaducts, as the most visually and physically dominant artefact of the railways' fixed capital, served to sever the city's built fabric at the same time as they connected Manchester to far flung locations. As soon as they were constructed, their arches were appropriated for low-cost industrial and storage premises, and the character of their corridors associated with stagnating property values, residential backwaters, and the clustering of 'bad neighbour uses.' Viaducts 'smashed their way through' working class residential districts, often as a deliberate tool of slum clearance, and enabled the colonisation of the countryside for new suburbs. An understanding of these processes is essential in deciphering the way that viaducts and their arches have been perceived over time, and how particular historical narratives are mobilised in eras of de-industrialisation and post-industrialisation. As following chapters will show, Nineteenth-century concerns about the environments of railway viaducts established the discursive palette which came to dominate narratives regarding post-industrial environmental improvement strategies of the late Twentieth century. This knowledge is essential to understanding the dominant cultural representations of these spaces and landscapes (Chapter 5) the way that narratives of heritage and post-industrialism have selectively mobilised and suppressed the spatial history of the railway (Chapter 6). The following chapter excavates the cultural depictions of these spaces in Manchester, and in Britain more broadly, and also serves as essential context to understanding the process through which these spaces have been strategically re-imaged (Chapters 6 though 9).

# Chapter 5: Underneath the Arches: Cultural Representations of Urban Railway Viaducts and their Arches

## 5.1 Introduction

> A train is an extraordinary bundle of relations, since it's something through which one passes; it is also something by which one can pass from one point to another, and then it is something that passes by. (Foucault 1998, p.178)

As Chapters 6 through 9 will emphasise, much of the attention paid to Manchester's railway viaducts since the 1960s has been out of concern for their image—both perceptual and imagined. Clearly, then, re-imaging processes can only be unpacked if we are to come to terms with the dominant urban imaginary attributed to the spaces in question. This chapter focuses on British railway arches as representational spaces in various cultural depictions across time. It is my aim to excavate some of the more dominant and recurring images of these spaces, many of which originate from the Victorian era and continue to be perpetuated. As I will demonstrate, there are some clear and repeated tropes that connect these spaces and landscapes to particular, primarily negative, representations. Many of these representations trace back to the historical conditions in which viaducts were constructed, connecting the spatial history of Victorian railways to the contemporary urban imaginary.

Overall, the emphasis of this chapter is placed on the spaces of railway infrastructure as metaphorical and actual *scenography*: settings where plots may unfold. This reflects a methodology that traces the cultural references attributed to the spaces of urban viaducts (and particularly their arches) in a manner that explores implicit attitudes toward them (see Chapter 3). Whether in the realm of social realism or macabre imagination, society's choice to locate particular narratives, plots and activities within a particular type of urban space reveal underlying attitudes about what these spaces mean and how they are imagined. This approach is inspired by art historian Nicholas Green's (1990) method of unpacking the discursive relation between the visual environment and bourgeois culture through examining "the way … vocabulary works to convey the social character of the scene through *visual* signifiers," where environments are "imbricated with

social meaning" (p.11). While Green was exploring nature and modernity and Paris, this same approach is applicable to modern infrastructural spaces in Manchester. Through this lens, the uses of the image and environment of the railway arch nod to long-standing perceptions of these spaces and landscapes as signifying a setting for particular activities.

Much of the rest of the thesis will focus on attempts to re-image railway viaducts and their arches as desirable features of Manchester's urban landscape. As such, the primary focus is not simply on *things* (the viaducts themselves), but on the processes and relationships that continue to shape them. Their past uses and cultural connotations have played a role in shaping the way they have been used, perceived, maintained and managed, so unpacking these histories becomes essential to understanding their enduring impact on the city.

I focus primarily on cultural representation of railway arches in Manchester but also draw on depictions in London. The chapter is organised thematically rather than chronologically, addressing these imagined geographies through examining representations of the spaces and landscapes of railway infrastructure from afar (viaducts as scenography), from above (the experience of the traveller), and from below (the uses and representations of railway arches themselves). These examples are by no means exhaustive, but they trace the dominant images that the spaces of elevated railways have projected through their history, and the resultant cultural expressions that make direct reference to them.

## 5.2 Viaducts as Scenography: From the Infrastructural Sublime to Banal Backdrops (and Back Again)

Since its construction, the railway has undoubtedly stood as one of the defining technologies of the modern world; a symbol of the creative destruction of modernisation and archetypal emblem of confidence in technological modernity (Revill 2012; Freeman 1999). Visually and materially, its presence is symbolised foremost in its composition of rolling stock, buildings and infrastructures that, despite their separateness, came to be imagined as a 'machine ensemble,' with route and rail becoming "technically conjoined" (Schivelbusch 1986, p.16). Images of viaducts, as emblematic of the entire machine ensemble of the railway, were among the most commonly produced representations during early railway construction (Revill 2004). Cultural historians of the British railway note that, particularly by the end of the eighteenth century, railroads became famous for "the way that

they thrust unimpeded through the landscape of nature" (Schivelbusch 1986, p.5), while at the same time, they were emblematic of the accelerating processes of industrialisation and urbanisation.

Awe-inspiring landscapes of infrastructure, especially in previously inaccessible terrains, evoked associations with the sublime: a perceptual experience which had hitherto been associated exclusively with the natural environment (Gandy 2011). Particularly in their early years, viaducts would have inspired feelings of awe and terror, as well as fascination, with forces and at scales beyond human control. Like 'the beautiful' and 'the picturesque,' 'the sublime' was a cultural lens through which the emotional and physical experience of a landscape was described. In the eighteenth century, Edmund Burke illustrated characteristics of the sublime through views from mountains, massive storms, and other natural elements that instil a feeling of powerless, fear, and/or insignificance. Kant, who expanded on Burke's idea, emphasised that the sublime evoked feelings of pleasure and pain; therefore. it was not simply the opposite of the beautiful. If the beautiful was linked to quality, the sublime was linked to quantity and scale (Nye 1994, p.6). Burke listed a number of qualities of the sublime, including vastness, succession and uniformity, infinity, magnitude in building, astonishment, power, and privation: all of which have deep resonances with the construction and presence of the railway, particularly in cities (Taylor 1973). Like a horizon of chimneys, massive mills, and imposing stations, viaducts were part of a new upheaval that would reconfigure everyday perceptions—as well as visual and literary representations—of the industrialising British landscape.

The sublime nature of railway infrastructure was dominant in visual and literary representations, particularly during the era of its construction in the early- to mid-nineteenth century. Despite cultural ambivalence towards the impact of railways on pastoral landscapes and manorial properties, most famously by philosopher John Ruskin, geographer George Revill notes that "perhaps most remarkable for railway development was not the confrontation and conquest of nature by culture but rather the easy and naturalistic accommodation of railways into the landscape" (2004, p.85). This was no doubt aided by the fact that railways were often complicit in commissioning artistic depictions of engineered works of permanent way that would augment—and enhance—the pastoral landscapes through which they passed. If, by the late nineteenth century, railways were accepted as essential parts of the British landscape, there were a number of objections to the construction of railways on aesthetic grounds. Early opposition was strongest from

wealthy landowners who had invested in landscaping parks and improving agriculture and were concerned about railways' visual effect on the rural British landscape, drawing on the altruism and the concept of the picturesque from the romantic movement (Biddle 2003). Many would ultimately demand payment, deviation of route, tunnelling, or the construction of ornamental railway bridges. Writers and poets were also vocal critics of the railway's effect on the environment, particularly William Wordsworth and John Ruskin. Wordsworth, in a well-known 1844 sonnet responding to the construction of the Kendal & Windermere Railway in the Lake District, asked "Is then no nook of English ground secure / From rash assault" (cited in Biddle 2003, p.121).

In the 19th century, urban railway infrastructure (aside from monumental stations) was much less frequently the subject of visual representation. Furthermore, with all but the largest viaducts (see the Stockport Viaduct in Figure 7), the areas through which viaducts passed could rarely be represented from a removed, panoramic perspective as they could in the countryside. However, due to Manchester's superlative status as the progenitor of the first intercity railway line, the built structures of its earliest railways were subject to numerous commemorative representations. Emphasis was placed on the more ornamental, decorative, and impressive aspects of the railway's dowry: technological feats (Figure 16), new stations (Figure 17) and decorated steel bridges over major thoroughfares. The neoclassical facades of stations, the ornamentation of the most visible bridges, and the form of the viaduct (best viewed from afar) all reflected the "expression of the typical nineteenth-century desire to disguise the industrial aspect of things by means of ornamentation" (Schivelbusch 1986, p.175). There was little commercial incentive to represent the utilitarian brick viaducts. For example, in Figure 6, Tait's painting focuses on the few decorative elements of Manchester's elevated railways: the ornamental steel bridges which spanned major roads representing elegance and none of the urban squalor with which the viaducts were so closely associated. In many of these images, industry is scarcely noticeable.

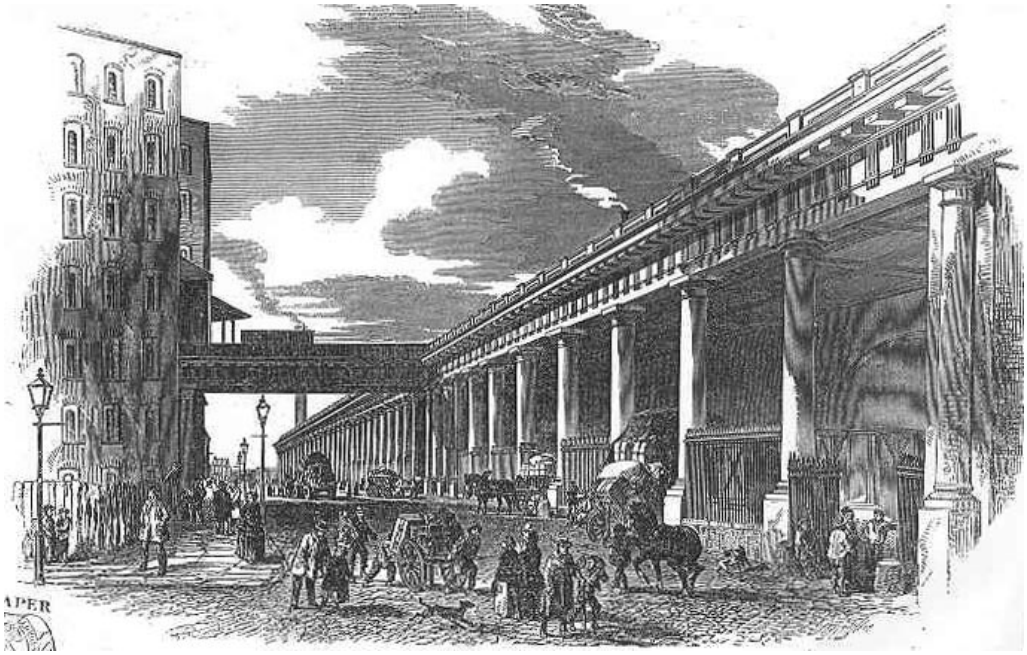


*Figure 16: "New Iron Railway Viaduct at Manchester," 1851. Original description from the Illustrated London News reads "This stupendous Viaduct …carries the railway traffic over the good-station of those Companies, with which it communicates by hoists. It consists of an immense platform… supported by large cast-iron girders resting on Doric columns." Image source: http://www.victorianweb.org/periodicals/iln/26.html.*

*Figure 17: S.G. Hughes, after T.T. Bury. "Entrance Into Manchester Across Water Street," 1831. Image source: Science & Society Picture Library, image No. 10302187.*

David Nye (1994) suggests that American culture, more so than British culture, was largely receptive to the effects that large technological structures had on the landscapes they occupied. However, feats of railway engineering were not without their admirers during the height of British 'railway mania'. A public lecture on architecture in Manchester, republished in a newspaper in 1845, acknowledges that railway infrastructure was often considered inferior to great works of architecture and human endeavour, but makes a strong appeal for the appreciation of these novel structures:

> Let it not be said, as it frequently is, that the railway bridges, viaducts, tunnels, cuttings and embankments, are, in their nature, dull, prosaic, and common-place, and deficient in true architectural interest. On the contrary, they are grand, consistent, original things, copied from nothing, for their like has never existed in the world before; and when centuries shall have clothed them with the venerable garb of antiquity, they will as surely furnish the elements of poetry to future generations as the doings of bygone ages furnish them to us…. For in after-ages, when our architectural affections shall have become ridiculous, they will stamp the nineteenth century with a character as exclusively its own…. it may be questioned whether any of the greatest works of the Romans even surpassed in extent and magnificence the London and Birmingham Railway—certainly none of them in scientific construction or skilful workmanship; and as for the picturesque, we have only to imagine the great viaduct of Stockport in ruins, grey with age, its broken arches garnished in ivy, and tufted here and there with the waving grass, and then even in that quality they will not be deficient. (Gregan 1845)

As indicated in Gregan's description, the representation of the sublime results of human action through engineering were often coupled with a fascination with antiquity: ostensibly placing Victorian England in an epoch which would rival the achievements of ancient Greece and Rome. The elegance of these heroic engineered structures was associated with antiquity: helped, in part, by viaducts' formal descendence from the Roman aqueduct.

Now more easily reduced to cliché, the sublime would become an important literary image in Victorian Britain, because, as Nicholas Taylor argues, "the images through which men sought to discern common themes in uncertain reality" had changed (1973, p.431). Writing at the peak of Manchester's industrial decline, Taylor noted "if we are to get to grips with Victorian 'ugliness' […], we must be prepared to accept that the vast majority of intelligent men did not regard [industrial structures] at the time as being expressions of ugliness, but as being exciting and 'awful' in the true sense of the word" (1973, p.434).

Notwithstanding, these 'intelligent men' presumably did not have to live in the railways' shadows.

The perceived 'ugliness' of urban railway viaducts became a more common cultural response by the 1870s, when new railways were increasingly represented as 'vandals' to cityscapes (Biddle 2003). The general lack of improvement to the areas surrounding urban railway viaducts was creating widespread public dissatisfaction. Richard Dennis (2008) suggests that a rationale for the construction of the London Underground was the negative role of viaducts on the urban landscape (p.334). This process parallels Kaika and Swyngedouw's (2000) description of the gradual burial of water infrastructure in the modern era upon the loss of its symbolic power. When the 'urban dowry' of networked infrastructure was initially viewed as "the iconic embodiments of and shrines to a technologically scripted image and practice of progress" (p.121), it would gradually fall from grace. This gradual burial of infrastructures, which Stephen Graham refers to as 'invisiblisation" (2010, p.8) represents a process of modernist fetishisation through which the metabolic networks of the city are divorced from their historical and social processes of production. Railways, however, proved more difficult to bury, and Manchester's viaducts continued to exist in the same form as the city transformed around them.

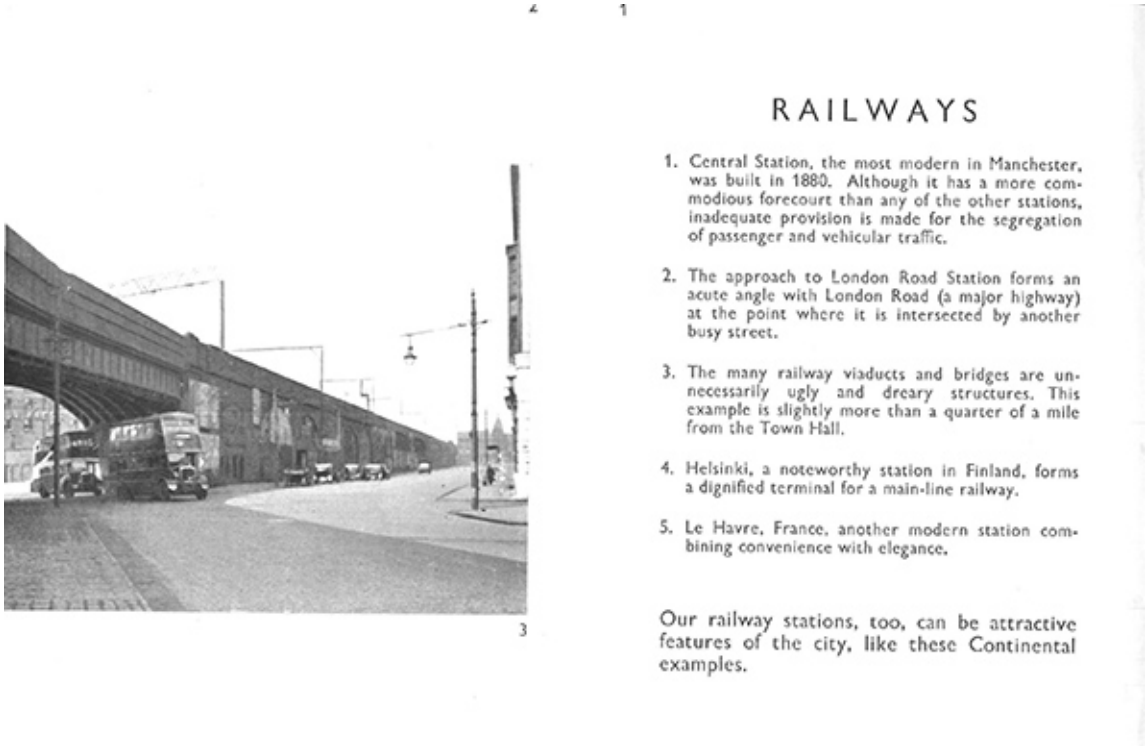



*Figure 18: Image from 1945 Nicholas Plan exemplifying the dreariness of railway viaducts. Image source: Nicholas (1945).*

For the first half of the twentieth century, this ugliness would be tolerated as a regrettably inevitable by-product of industrialism. With the 1945 *Nicholas Plan*, the city's unfortunate griminess was represented visually through an image of the MSJ viaduct (Figure 18). In the ruins of Manchester, rapidly deindustrialising by the mid-twentieth century, technologically outmoded structures such as warehouses and railway viaducts did take on a ruinous quality—though perhaps not as glamorously as Gregan had imagined them in 1845. The German author W.G. Sebald addressed these landscapes in After Nature, a 2002 prose poem evoking Manchester in the 1960s. As in Sebald's other work set in Manchester, The Emigrants (2002b), the narrator recollects the psychogeography of Manchester through the evocation of dereliction and ruination, pervaded with a sense of melancholy and loss: "I arrived there and took lodgings / among the previous century's / ruins. Often at that time / I rambled over the fallow / Elysian Fields, wondering, / at the work of destruction, the black / mills and shipping canals, / the disused viaducts and / warehouses, the many millions / of bricks, the traces of smoke, / of tar and sulphuric acid…" (2002a, p.95). Elsewhere, Sebald noted "Even the grandest of the buildings…which had been built only a few years before, seemed so empty and abandoned that one might have supposed oneself surrounded by mysterious facades or theatrical backdrops" (2002b, pp.156–7). These once sublime features, in their very prominence, had definitively fallen from glory.

The 1960s and early 1970s, the height of Manchester's economic distress, also coincided with massive downsizing of the railway network. As Sebald demonstrates, railway viaducts—particularly once they had become disused—became emblematic of the city's depressed state. With nearly half of the city's railway infrastructure made redundant, their perceived ugliness was only heightened. The media magnate Sir Sidney Bernstein, owner of Granada Studios in Castlefield, made an impassioned appeal to the House of Lords in 1972, decrying these deleterious effects:

> When I left Manchester at noon today I was told that the bridge into Deansgate, which is an arched bridge of 130 feet, has not been used since 1960. Helicopter photographs taken three years later show it being used as a car park. Is the noble Lord aware that Manchester City Corporation… feels very strongly about the pollution—I do not like to use that word: the poisonous effect—of railway arches in the centre of the city? (Bernstein 1972)

It is perhaps fitting that, only three years later, Granada Studios purchased the land adjoining Liverpool Road station upon its closure as a goods yard, ultimately using its redundant viaduct as a backdrop for the nostalgic soap opera, *Coronation Street*. It was be the railway viaducts, canals, and warehouses of this very area, Castlefield, which ultimately saw the first stirrings of Manchester's slow process of reinvention, in which its industrial heritage would be recast as an amenity to be consumed and celebrated. In this process the infrastructural sublime, coupled with anachronistically conflated referrals to antiquity, re-emerged in the wake of deindustrialisation. These themes will be explored in further detail in Chapter 6.

### *5.2.1 Backdrop to Working Class Life*

*Figure 19: John Phillips. "52438 leads the Old Manchester Railtour Around the Ardwick Jn-Midland Jn Curve," 1956. Image source: http://flickr.com/photos/72213853@N03/6956300260/.*

As established in Chapter 4, in Manchester, railway viaducts smashed through districts dominated by industry and the homes of the 'labouring classes.' In the first half of the

twentieth century, what is notable about the representation of railway infrastructure in art, literature and historic scholarship is precisely its absence. However, some examples include artists seeking to evoke Manchester's everyday landscapes. An important figure in the visual representation of the city was the late impressionist French painter Adolph Valette, based in Manchester from 1906 to 1920. Like Sebald half a century later, Valette emulated the Parisian *flâneur*, producing atmospheric scenes of modern industrial life and urban landscapes. He emphasised smoke, steam and fog, and often featured railway viaducts as backdrops and framing devices, as well as depicting views from the train above. Valette's focus was on the dynamism of the modern city. In *York Street leading to Charles Street* (Figure 20), Valette's last painting of an urban scene in Manchester (Manchester City Galleries 2007,n.p.), he depicted workers making improvements to a bustling street on typically gloomy day, with a locomotive huffing steam atop the viaduct.

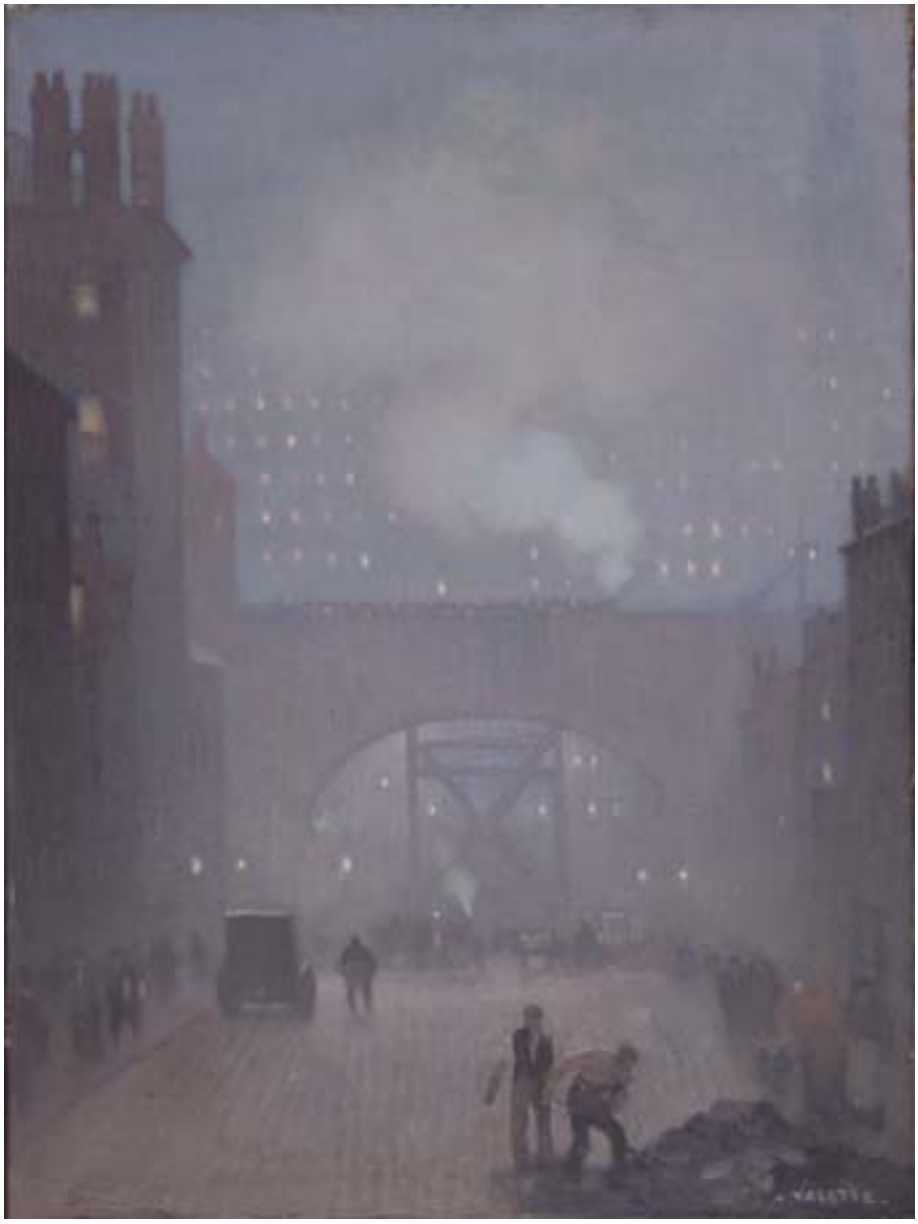


*Figure 20: Auguste Valette. "York Street Leading to Charles Street," 1913. Image source: Manchester Art Gallery.*

Valette's student, L.S. Lowry, became the visual artist most closely associated with industrial Manchester. Unlike Valette, Lowry's scenes "are not real scenes but composite ones made up from different elements, first seen then distilled through his imagination, the stylised industrial landscape forming a backdrop to the drama enacted in the street" (Manchester City Galleries 2007, n.p.). The fact that Lowry created imagined, stylised landscapes makes it all the more relevant that he often used railway viaducts as features in, and subjects of, his paintings and drawings.

*The Viaduct, Store Street, Manchester*, one of Lowry's earlier works depicting a viaduct carrying the Ashton Canal (Figure 21), presented a scene in a relatively realist fashion, despite the cartoonish characters surrounding it. *The Viaduct, Stockport* (Figure 22) presents the massive structure in this imagined landscape as dominating the desolate foreground. All that exists, completely out of scale with the viaduct itself, are two rows of terraced housing and a pub, with two men trundling toward it. This image could be interpreted to represent the Stockport viaduct as increasingly monolithic in the wake of widespread demolition.

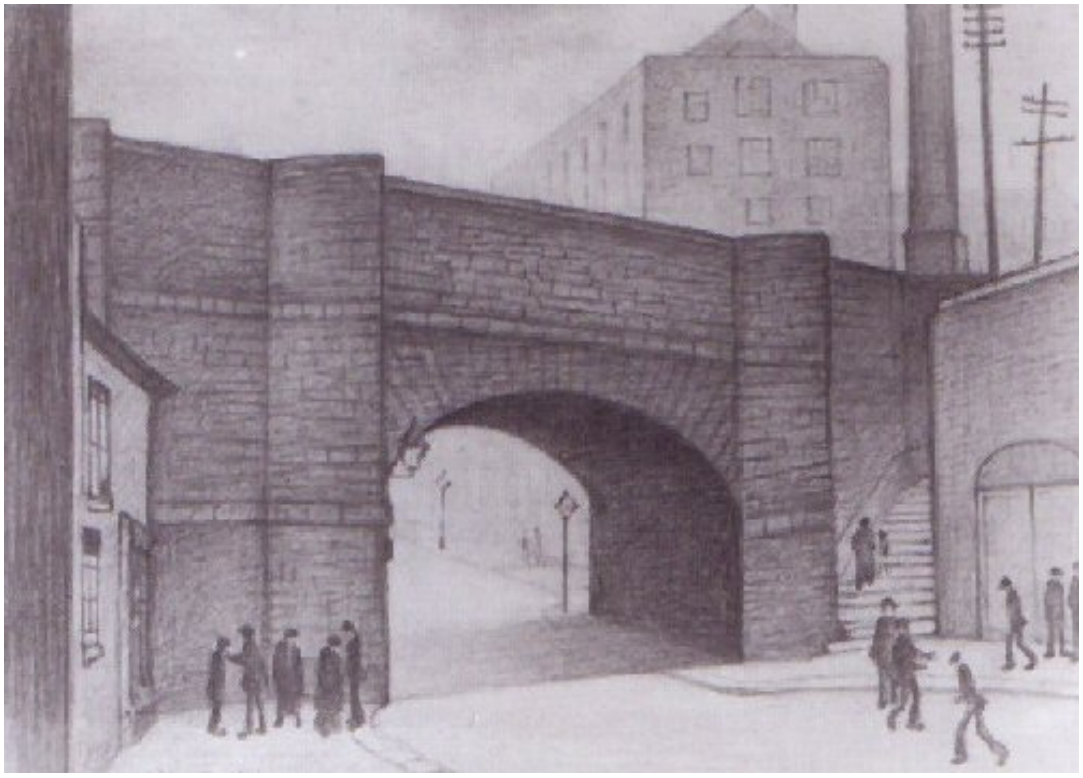


*Figure 21: L.S. Lowry, "The Viaduct, Store Street, Manchester," 1929. The mill and chimney in the background, as well as the viaduct itself, have since been demolished. Image source: Manchester City Art Gallery.*

*Figure 22: L.S. Lowry, "The Viaduct, Stockport," 1969-1972. Image source: http://www.tate.org.uk/art/images/work/P/P03/P03279_10.jpg*

Toward the end of Lowry's long career, his work began to evoke less of a quotidian view of Manchester's landscape than nostalgia for a quickly disappearing way of life. In the artworks of both Valettee and Lowry, the presence of railway infrastructure in a landscape signifies a backdrop to the everyday urban life of the working class. Viaducts themselves are hardly, if ever, foregrounded: they appear mainly to lend a sense of realism of a scene. In this manner, brick viaducts become icons to represent the northern industrial city: neither beautiful nor ugly.

The railway viaduct was also utilised in the scenography of another nostalgic cultural product: the soap opera *Coronation Street.* One of the longest running and most popular of British television programmes, the soap opera is considered one of the most recognisable images of the northern England (Shields 1991; Couldry 2005). The program, which began filming in 1960, depicts Weatherfield, a fictitious town on the fringes of Manchester.

Even when the show began, it consciously represented a lifestyle that was rapidly vanishing: at a point when vast neighbourhoods of uniform brick houses were demolished in slum clearances and modernist towers and estates were built in their place, *Coronation Street* depicted a working class neighbourhood threatened by redevelopment. The setting of the opening scene of the series, shot in Salford, was soon demolished in a slum clearance scheme.

The set, built to resemble a typical (if anachronistic) Northern urban neighbourhood, had cobblestone streets, rows of "two up two down" brick houses, and a railway viaduct in the background. The first outdoor set was built in 1967, and while the rest of the neighbourhood was replica, the railway sidings were real. Even as the show's set changed locations multiple times, a railway viaduct appeared prominently as the backdrop to the neighbourhood in the opening credit of each episode since 1960. What was at once a real viaduct eventually became a scale replica, demonstrating the centrality of the structure to the fictitious landscape, as "the terraced houses, a railway viaduct, the backyards all function as the adequate backdrop of northern English street life" (Schmid 2007, p.358). This juxtaposition of tradition and modernity is only heightened by the 'trains' running along the viaduct: what were diesel trains lumbering by in the distance until 1975 have, since 1992, been computer generated images of the city's new Metrolink trams. In 2013, the imagined landscape of Weatherfield remains among the few locations where working class Mancunians continue to live in terraced housing overlooking an elevated railway.

## 5.3 Looking Down on the City

To fully explore the role that railway viaducts have played in the representation of Manchester, one must consider not only the view from below them, but also the privileged view of the early railway passenger. As Wolfgang Schivelbusch (1986) emphasises, the railway journey was not only a means of transportation, but also a heavily marketed form of entertainment. The experience of traveling on a railway was likened to a panorama—an early motion picture technology that became popular by the early nineteenth century. Like the panorama, in which rapidly moving images simulated the perception of movement, the view from the window of a train carriage presented "a primitive movie film, a motion picture, but one in which there was no discernable narrative or plot" (Beaumont and Freeman 2007, p.22). The impact of the railway on perception was so elemental that Michel

de Certeau (1998, p.112) claims the embodied experience of modernity can be understood through two interrelated principles: seeing through the windowpane of a train and movement via the railway line. Likewise, Nicholas Green (1990) and Richard Dennis (2008) point to the view from an elevated railway car as a primary structuring motif of modernity and changing perceptions of landscape.

While this novel experience played a major role in the early popularity of railway travel through newly accessible countryside (Revill 2012), the view from the railway carriage in cities would have considerable social and cultural implications. Instead of offering panoramic views of fields and sleepy village stations flashing by at rapid pace, trains in cities travelled at a crawl or completely stopped atop the viaducts. The oblique view from the window of a railway carriage gave unimpeded views of the 'twilight zones' of run-down workers' quarters intermingled with noxious industrial sites. This top-down perspective was often mobilised by social reformers, critics, and social realist authors from the 1840s well into the twentieth century. Friedrich Engels, evoking the self-consciousness and moral complicity of the bourgeois traveller, drew connections between the creative destruction of the railway and the stark realities of urban property speculation through descriptions of visual stimuli:

> The recently constructed extension of the Leeds railway … has swept away some of these courts and alleys, laying others in turn, and for the first time, completely open to view. Thus, immediately under the railway bridge, there exists a court that in point of filth and horror far surpasses all the others—just because it was formerly so shut up, so hidden and secluded that it could not be reached without considerable difficulty. I thought I knew this entire district thoroughly, but even I would never have found it myself without the breach made here by the railway viaduct. (2009 [1845], p.90)

Engels' example represented a rare deviation from his description of Manchester in The Condition of the Working Class in England, where he described the 'hypocritical plan' of the city that shielded the eyes of wealthy suburbanites from the domestic lives of the working class. From atop the viaduct, these districts were laid bare.

Charles Dickens used a similar motif to demonstrate the moral corruption of Victorian society in Dombey and Son, in which he chronicled the construction of the permanent way of the railway in Camden Town, London. In one scene, set in the carriage of an elevated train,

> Everything around is blackened. There are dark pools of water, muddy lanes, and miserable habitations far below. There are jagged walls and falling houses close at hand, and through the battered roofs and broken windows, wretched rooms are seen, where want and fever hide themselves in many distorted chimneys, and deformity of brick and mortar penning up deformity of mind and body, choke the murky distance. As Mr Dombey looks out of his carriage window, in is never in his thoughts that the monster who had brought him there was let the light of day on these things; not made or caused them. (Dickens, cited in Marcus 1973, p.268)

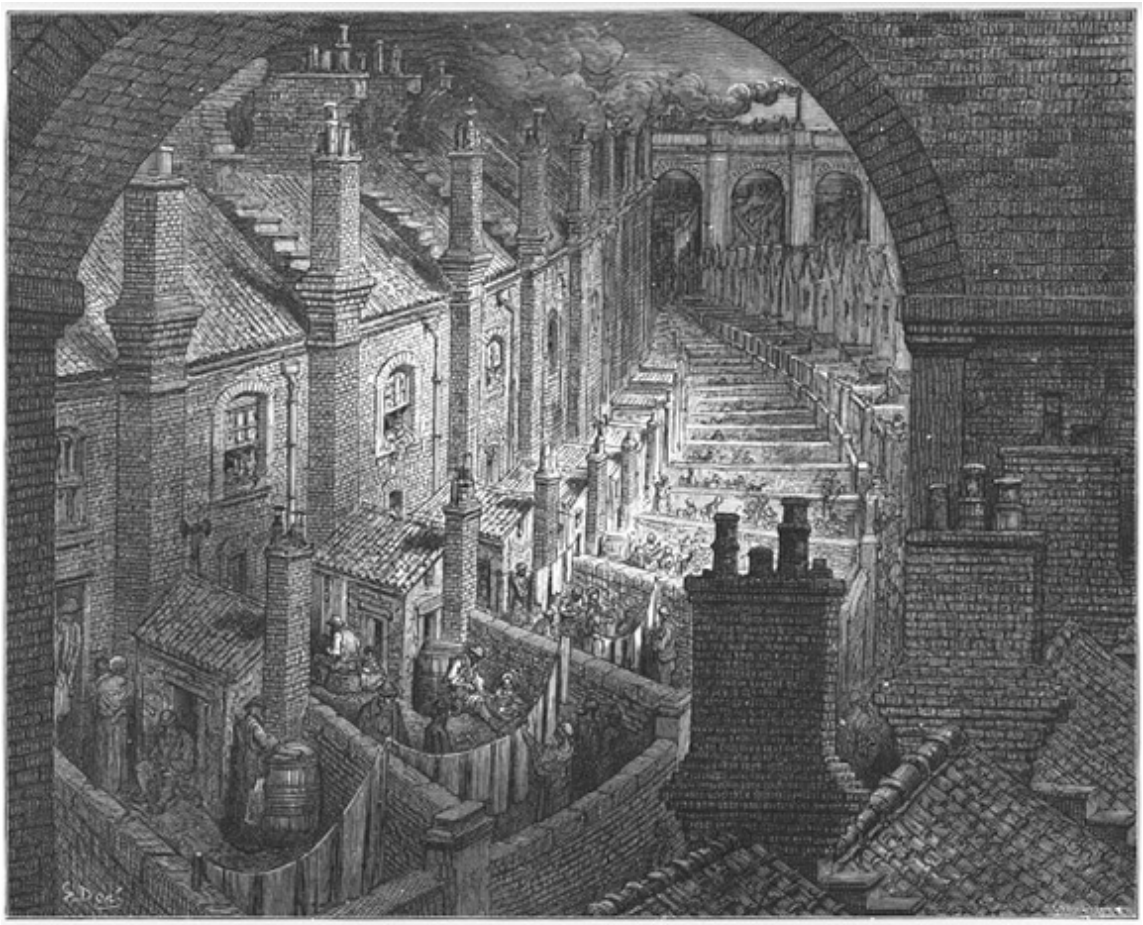



*Figure 23: Gustave Doré, "Over London by Rail," 1872. Image source: Science & Society Picture Library.*

In a similar manner, Gustave Doré's engraving (Figure 23) from Blanchard Jerrold's London: A Pilgrimage (1872), illustrates a hyperbolic landscape of railway viaducts and Victorian slums. The scene is framed by a brick railway arch, with yet another viaduct imposing itself in the background. Across passes a steam locomotive, spewing a plume of smoke that dissipates into the air, darkening the sky. Below the railway, monotonous terraced houses with their clay roofs and chimneypots extend into the distance, filling every possible space

left over between the railways. Every garden is packed with adults and children, with more yet peering out the windows. The bricks of the houses and the railway seem to meld into one. The oblique perspective of the scene, from a point elevated above this dense residential district in London, evokes the view from a railway carriage.

To Richard Dennis, whose Cities in Modernity (2008) explores representations and productions of space in the modern city, an examination of New York's elevated railway serves as a conclusion to the book: "By considering different themes—the trains, the superstructure, life over and under the el, the view of and from the el, we can see how the el functioned as both an icon of modernity and modernity's other" (p.338). The following section describes precisely the 'othering' wrought by the railway.

## 5.4 Beneath the Arches: The Underside of Modernity

While the districts directly adjacent to urban viaducts made visual the conditions in which the working classes lived, the railway traveller was inevitably unable to perceive the arches directly below them. Railway arches, however, figured strongly in the cultural imaginary. As incidental, residual spaces created in the wake of railway building, they were largely unconsidered, sheltered spaces, immediately appropriated by those seeking rudimentary shelter.

Through an examination of Acts of Parliament relating to Manchester's railway viaducts, it is clear that, from the earliest days, there were governmental concerns regarding the safety, security and appearance of spaces beneath the elevated railways. By law, as part of each act governing the construction of railways in Manchester, railways were required to "erect gates for the protection of adjoining lands," and "owners of lands empowered to erect gate, &c, in case of insufficiency of those erected by the company" wherever arches were not needed for the functioning of the railway or street-level traffic (MCC 1901, p.192). By 1839, railways were additionally required to keep their properties in "good, perfect, and complete repair" (p.218), and if they did not make a repair within a month of complaint, the city could make repairs and recuperate costs from the railway. By 1845, it was added that railway arches should "be made and maintained drop-dry at all times" (p. 289). This was downgraded, by 1859, to "the arch of every bridge should, as far as practicable, be made and maintained drip-dry at all times" (369). The continuous revision and updating of these regulations not only offers insight into the ways in which

railways were governed, but also a view into legislators' increasing concerns relating to railway arch spaces. Clearly, the uses and security of railway arches were a major concern, as were their physical and visual conditions, and the chronic failure of their drainage systems. With only minor variations, these are the same concerns that dominate discourses surrounding arches, as well as regulatory concerns, to the present day (see Chapter 7).

Since the construction of Britain's railways, the arches of its urban viaducts have been spaces that evoked images of moral panic and dark intrigue. This has been particularly true of arches that—out of functional necessity or railway companies' lack of interest—were left open and unsecured. With ever-increasing urban overcrowding, waves of migration, and fluctuating labour markets, open arches were immediately appropriated as impromptu shelter by the destitute and the inebriated. Although arches were (and are) notoriously dark and damp, often described as 'cavernous,' they offered some shelter from the elements and from the eyes of night watchmen. As literary scholar David Pike notes, these were among the many urban spaces created in the technological recesses of the modern city.

> As the city changed, and the second industrial revolution in the later nineteenth century introduced an even more complex and varied underground infrastructure, alongside the more mythic and metaphorically underground spaces of poverty and crime, the two emblems became less predictable and more confused. The actual spaces of sewers, tunnels, underground railways, arches and viaducts, storage vaults, subterranean parking, and covered passageways became intertwined, sometimes materially and often imaginatively. (Pike 2005, p.11)

Even if railway arches were technically aboveground, they would be 'underground' in terms of their physical and associative character. It is noteworthy that the majority of these foundational and infrastructural spaces, railway-oriented or otherwise, were built in the form of brick or stone arches: the form of the arch itself became a stand-in for destitution.

In some cases, such as the vaults beneath massive railway stations, whether spaces were underground or aboveground could be largely indiscernible: in a new multi-levelled city, arches might also be quite lengthy tunnels, impermeable by natural light. Pike (2007) notes that arches, whether they be under river bridges or railways, were "a frequent setting for spectacle scenes in plays and novels, and a shelter for the down-and-out" because of their "central location, vast scale, and much greater sense of enclosure and isolation" standing for "what was seen generally as the illicit use of public spaces of the city by the

poor" (2007, p.252). Other common representations of railway arch occupants were that of the drunken sailor, the banished woman, or the 'street urchin.'

Drawing on the fear of this netherworld, particularly among wealthier classes, the seedy image of the railway arch was a staple of Victorian cautionary tales. For example, in the 1860 evangelical Christian The Railway Accident, the relationship between travellers above the arches and the depravity below are vividly illustrated: "Right over and right through this labyrinth of wretchedness, straight, high, unbending, runs the line of railway . . . carrying aloft its passengers and its traffic over many an acre of want and misery below" (cited in Harrington 2001). This space beneath, often unseen but routinely imagined, was the receptacle of the outcast, downtrodden, subversive and unwholesome. Likewise, in Augustus Egg's cautionary series of paintings, *Past and Present* (1858), a woman who is caught committing adultery finds herself seeking shelter beneath the arches (Figure 24).

*Figure 24: Augustus Egg. "Past and Present, No. 3," 1858. Image source: http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/egg-past-and-present-no-3-n03280*

The fact that thousands of people were sleeping rough within the recesses of modern technological structures represented the underside of the triumphant domain of Victorian technological prowess. Rough sleeping has been, and continues to be, among the most consistent and enduring images associated with the spaces of railway arches. Likewise, urban decay has long been conflated with social decay: one needs only consider the dual meaning of the word 'derelict.'

*Figure 25: 1932 Cover of Flanagan and Allen sheet music published by Campbell, Connelly & Co. Ltd, reused under fair use under United States copyright law. Image Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Underneath_the_Arches_sheet_music.jpg*

In the twentieth century, the connotations of spaces 'underneath the arches' were greatly reinforced by a song of the same name, which over a number of decades became one of the most recognisable English pub songs. Originally performed by singer-comedians Bud Flanagan and Chesney Allen in 1932, and later the theme song of a 1937 comedy film of the same name (Figure 25), it has continued to go through waves of popularity for at least fifty years. The lyrics are as follows:

> Underneath the arches / We dream our dreams away / Underneath the arches / On cobblestones we lay / Back-to-back we're sleeping / Tired out and worn / Sorry when the daylight comes creeping / Heralding the dawn / Sleeping when it's raining / And sleeping when it's fine / I hear the trains rattling above / Pavement is my pillow / No matter where I roam / Underneath the arches / We dream our dreams of home.

A less famous sequel to "Underneath the Arches," called "Where the Arches Used to Be," was produced by Flanagan and Allen in 1935 for the film *A Fire Has Been Arranged*. This poignantly addresses not only homelessness, but also the creative destruction associated with urban development. Flanagan and Allen's characters lose their adopted home in the arches when the viaduct is demolished to build new flats.

> Underneath the arches / That's where we used to stay / But they shifted us one day / And sent us on our way / Now we're traveling onwards / Way up to the west / What's become of our home / Our haven of rest? / They're building flats where the arches used to be / There's somebody eating / Where we used to be sleeping / They're paying rent where / We once lived rent-free…. / We're walking 'round now / As sad as can be / They're building flats where / The arches used to be.

Flanagan and Allen's lyrics, and their popularity, suggest a representation of men sleeping rough as more akin to the image of the loveable 'tramp' or 'hobo': transient, marginally employed workers who were perpetually traveling (see Cresswell 2001). Particularly in the United States, as literary characters as well as the topic of social debate from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, tramps would represent a threatening and deviant figure, but by World War II they had entered the realm of nostalgia. More often than not, however, those sleeping rough in railway arches have been represented either as deviant, intemperate, or victimised.

Undoubtedly, railway arches are still deeply associated with homelessness. *Under the Tracks* (2008) is a contemporary short 'social drama' film shot in Manchester, primarily beneath disused railway arches on the periphery of the city centre. In locating sites to film, producers "had to scour inner city Manchester for suitable railway arches, then get them cleared of syringes and other dangerous detritus" (Tomlinson 2012). Conceived by participants in the organisations' acting workshops, the film depicts a day in the life of a long-time homeless man who is kicked out of a day centre and ostracised by fellow squatters: he is shoved from their dwelling in a vacant commercial space and told "go to the arches!" The conception and execution of the film, intending to be symbolic of the experience of homelessness from the perspective of those that have lived it, suggest that unsecured railway arches on the edge of the city centre are, as they always have been, the most recognisable sites for sleeping rough in contemporary Manchester. More than simply an image perpetuated by popular culture, peripatetic and interview-based fieldwork for this thesis affirm that open railway arches in Castlefield, St. George's, Pomona, and Hulme quite often serve as shelter for rough sleeping.

### *5.4.1 The Lock-up: Dodgy Dealings and the Workingman's Milieu*

In the case of open arches, their uses and corresponding cultural connotations are not completely unlike the residual spaces of other infrastructures, which are informally appropriated by a variety of actors. What is more culturally specific to the uses of the residual spaces of railway infrastructure in Britain is the use of brick arches as 'lock-ups.' Due to the form of Victorian viaducts, arches would only need to be fenced or walled on each end to create inexpensive and (somewhat) secure, sheltered spaces. From the beginning, the revenue-generating commercial uses of lock-ups were preferable to railway companies and city councils, but their reputations were only marginally better than empty arches. Aside from particular junctures when railways were pressured by MCC to make environmental improvements to their arches in concert with redevelopment schemes (primarily the 1890s and 1980-present), track authorities have shown little interest in the comparatively miniscule revenue-generating possibilities of the arches. More appropriately, the arches served as a burdensome but necessary nuisances, generally leased and managed in an ad hoc fashion until the 1970s. This served to perpetuate the image of the railway arch tenant as marginal, transient, and fly-by-night: a suspicion conflating the rental of low-

value, marginal spaces with the character of their tenants. They would be spaces which were—due to political will or lack of resources—incredibly difficult to police, which would also serve to perpetuate the image of railway arches as the site of 'dodgy' businesses. The image of criminality and the anonymity of railway arch lock-ups have responded to, and perpetuated, the image of these spaces as haunts of criminals seeking to escape from the prying eyes of authorities and other rivals. This was heightened as cities underwent deindustrialisation, with the spaces surrounding viaducts often dominated by abandoned industrial sites and neglected canals: in the social imagination, to occupy such a marginal twilight zone of the city would evoke suspicion within itself.

The railway arch as a setting for criminal behaviour has been elevated to a trope in British television. For example, the police procedural series *The Sweeney* (1975-1978) and *The Bill* (1984-2010) as well as the criminal comedy-drama *Minder* (1979-1994), plots have often revolved around officers seeking criminals operating from anonymous lock-ups. In the first series of *The Minder*, the primary character Arthur Daley operates a variety of illegal endeavours from lock-ups around London, such as distributing stolen and counterfeit goods. In such programs, as opposed to those shot on studio sets, action scenes are often set along railway arch sidings, within arches, and around abandoned warehouses and factories to create an air of 'reality' and credibility.

Perhaps the most recognisable cinematic representation of the railway arch lock-up can be found in the film *A Fish Called Wanda* (1988). In this comedy, a nondescript railway arch lock-up in Clapham, London serves to signify an anonymous, unregulated space outside of the public eye: the perfect site for thieves to hide £20 million of diamonds in a safe, evading the eyes of authority. Throughout most the film, accomplices double-cross each other while seeking to ascertain the location of the diamonds, making the railway arch a pivotal, if rarely featured, character.

The more recent television program *Life on Mars* (2006-2007) plays with these well-established tropes, mocking the styles and attitudes of 1970s England. Combining science fiction and police procedural genres, the main character, an officer with the Greater Manchester Police, is struck by a car and travels back in time to 1973, where he finds himself working as an officer at the same station. Shot on location, the show is filmed in locations where traces of post-1970s objects are unrecognisable and industrial decay is rife. Private conversations between officers are often held on strolls along canals and viaducts, and railway arches feature as sites of forensic murder investigations.

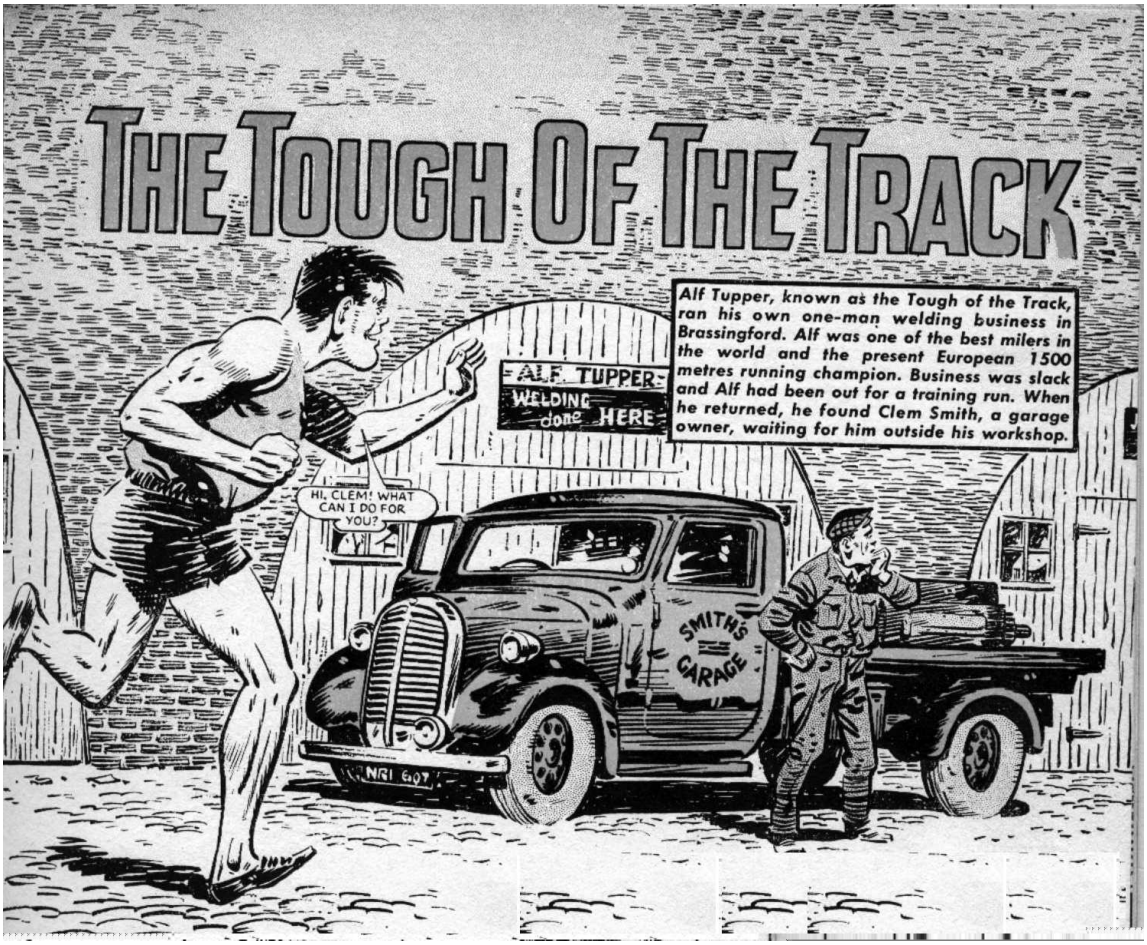



*Figure 26: Alf Tupper helps a man with a broken-down lorry. Image source: http://www.toughofthetrack.net/*

A rare exception to the general representation of railway arch tenants as untrustworthy, secretive, or suspicious was the comic book character Alf Tupper (Figure 26). Tupper, appearing from 1949 until the early 1990s, was an everyman from Greystone: another fictitious, large industrial city in the North of England. He appeared in a number of comic book series and boys' annuals for over fifty years, including *The Rover* and the *Victor*, in which he slowly aged from a teenager to a grown man. In austere post-war Britain, Tupper held many working class jobs involving skilled manual labour, but mainly worked as a welder. As an apprentice, Tupper worked underneath the arches, and at times of greater destitution, slept in an arch on a mattress next to his workbench (Victor n.d.). By the late 1960s, he was self-employed in a welding shop in the "unmistakable workingman's milieu" (Bale 2004, p.124) of a railway arch. Tupper's workaday life was contrasted with his passion for running, a sport decidedly for the wealthy. This element of his persona added to

his mystique as a perpetual underdog and anti-hero. Tupper's character became one of the top runners in England, despite the fact that he often had to hitchhike to races and that he would sometimes pawn his running shoes to buy fish and chips. Known as the 'tough of the track',

> It was the working-class streets of terraced houses, amid factories with their chimneys belching smoke, and along canal towpaths that Tupper trained in the rain [...] fuelling the dreams of working-class grammar school boys of the 1950s. (Bale 2004, p.124)

What sets Tupper's physical and social environment apart from most dominant representations of railway arches (and their occupants) is that he is a hard-working, skilled labourer who is honest and goes out of his way to help people. He is a 'working-class hero' figure not only because he beats his elite and well-educated opponents against all odds, but because he continues to occupy everyday working class status. The comic strip came to an end in the early 1990s, the point at which a great change was being observed in the uses of urban railway arch spaces: they were quickly becoming imagined as post-industrial spaces.

The gradual shift in representations of railway arch spaces could also be seen in the imagined geographies of *Coronation Street*'s Weatherfield (Figure 27): the shifting economy, social relations, and modifications to the built environment in Manchester were mirrored in the evolving uses of railway arches in the series. The consistency of the viaduct in the face of massive social upheaval is heightened by its dynamic surroundings, the uses of the arches, and the occupations of the residents themselves. Over the years, the environment of Coronation Street has grown greener, the residents have transitioned from industrial to service sector jobs, and auto repair shops have given way to nightclubs in the railway arches. Notably, the same trend occurred in the London-based soap *Eastenders*. While the original 1967 set of 'Corrie' is no longer in primary use, scenes set in and along the railway arches are still shot there. According to the fan-edited wiki Corriepedia, for example, what had once been Turner's Joinery, had by 2010 been converted into a pub called The Joinery and then refurbished in 2011 and renamed as Nick's Bistro. Other businesses that have occupied this stretch of arches since the 1990s include an auto repair garage, a sporting club, an Italian restaurant, a strip club, and a soup kitchen. These changes of use mirror changes in the real-world arches of Manchester, as is traced in Chapter 7.

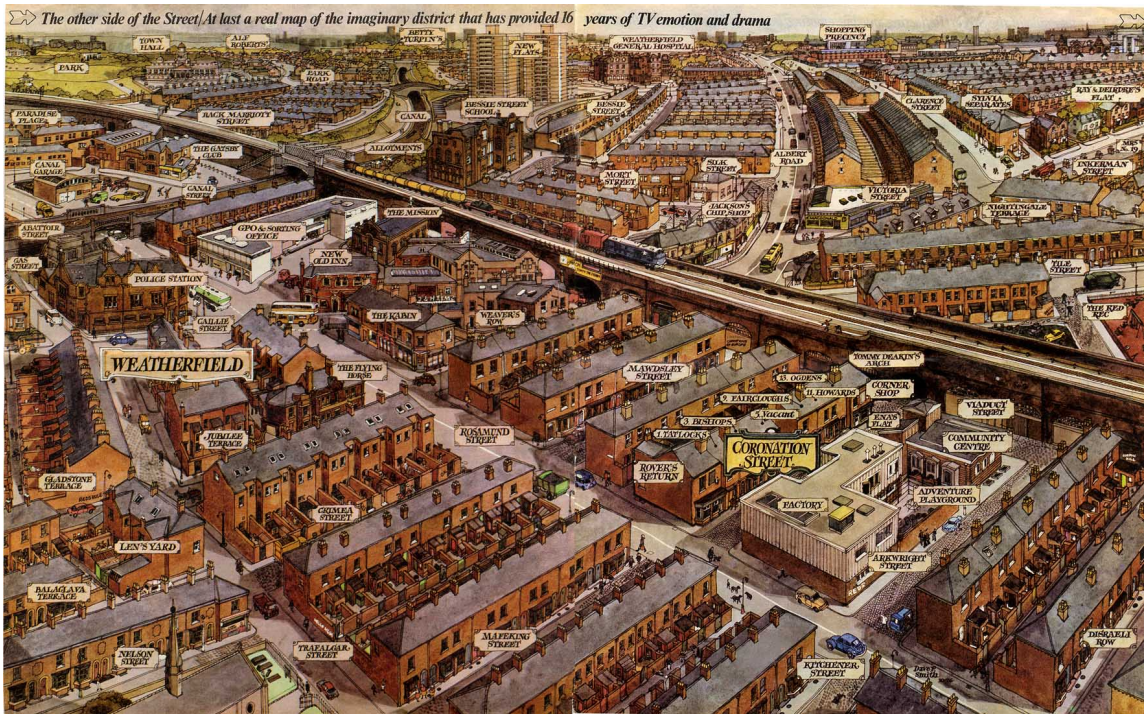



*Figure 27: "The Other Side of the Street." A map of Coronation Street's imaginary geography in 1975. Image source: Corriepedia http://coronationstreet.wikia.com/wiki/File:Coronation-street-map-1975.jpg.*

The representation of railway arches as spaces of secrecy and criminality is clearly hyperbolic and, ultimately, classist. A more accurate depiction of arches might be that they are simply inexpensive, simple rental properties, generally with flexible leases, which cater to entrepreneurs and small start-ups of all sorts. However, the repeated representation of the railway arch tenant as untrustworthy or marginal plays an active role in discourses around urban regeneration; since the 1980s, this image has been repeatedly mobilised as a justification for the displacement of businesses which have traditionally operated from railway arches (see Chapter 9).

It is undeniable that railway arches carry with them an air of mysteriousness and anonymity: windowless and often unmarked, it is often difficult to discern what is happening behind the metal shutters. The small-scale operations that operate from railway arches and the fact that their lease arrangements tend to attract short-term tenants help to reinforce this image of unregulated activity. Likewise, that marginal activities are associated with marginal locations is not only a tool of the film studio's location scout, but a logical inference: railway arches are indeed an excellent space to evade prying eyes.

### *5.4.2 The Urban Gothic*

As Pike (2005; 2007) has emphasised, railway arches are among the material and metaphorical 'underground' spaces that have caused fascination since the Victorian era. Part of this fascination is related to the reputation of these spaces as dark and damp, connecting them imaginatively to caverns, catacombs, and dungeons. This macabre association is as old as the railway itself, as "imaginary underground spaces had frequently been formulated for West End audiences in the 1860s and often based on a descent into hell using the classical mythology of Hades" (Welsh 2010, p.33). All of these associations lend a ghastly air to railway arches, particularly considering that the undercrofts of many railway stations, including Manchester Victoria, were used as mass graves during cholera epidemics. Welsh explains that railway arches were common as Victorian settings for suicide attempts due to 'the imaginative association of the arch with damnation' (2010, p.30). Citing B.E. Maidment, Welsh argues that arches were often associated with 'visual genres of social investigation' and were imagined as 'menacing and oppressive' (Welsh 2010, p.30). In exploring the work of novelist George Gissing, whom Welsh calls the 'fictional cartographer' of London's railways (p.2) in his 1889 novel The Nether World, the 'looming presence' of railway arches functioned as 'portals of eternity' (p.2) and 'portals between two worlds.'

In Manchester, the pair of railway arches on WSW containing the café and concert venue Gorilla were the subject of a hauntology study by researchers from the University of Liverpool. Upon outreach from employees of the former green room theatre, researchers discovered that this was the site where a number of workers were killed when part of the MSJ viaduct collapsed during its construction in the 1840s (personal interview with Steve Curtis 2011).

One particular television series, though also related to crime and secrecy, also plays with notions of the urban gothic. The first season of the detective series *Prime Suspect* (1991) follows police investigator Jane Tennison through an investigation of a series of suspected kidnappings in London. The investigation ultimately leads to a nondescript railway arch lock-up on St. Pancras Road (Worsley 1998), along a row of automotive repair shops. The police investigators find a dark, leaky, dungeon-like space where the suspect had raped, tortured, and mutilated six women over the course of seven years: a space where the suspect had managed to evade detection for years due to its anonymity. Later, forensic

investigators re-entered the arch, armed with floodlights, and reconstructed the series of events that had occurred here (Figure 28). Shackles were installed on the wall, where the women had been bound and tortured. In a later season of *Prime Suspect,* set in Manchester, a criminal leads a chase through the abandoned Mayfield Station, further adding to the villainous image of decaying railway spaces.

*Figure 28: Scene from crime scene investigation in Prime Suspect. Image source: screen capture by Brian Rosa.*

The use of railway arches as imaginative settings evoking fear, isolation and darkness has extended from filmic representations to immersive, embodied experiences. Entertainment venues have also appropriated the "dungeon-like" spaces of arches as themed environments that play on their dankness and darkness. The aestheticisation of railway arches as dungeon-like spaces may also be seen in the macabre tourist attraction the London Dungeon, which was located in the massive vaults beneath London Bridge station for thirty-seven years until the station's refurbishment in 2012 (Daily Mail 2012). Likewise, at another nearby tourist destination in London, the London Bridge Experience, actors lead

visitors through 'dark' moments in London's history, where they can "plunge into the inky blackness of a disused railway tunnel" where "danger lurks in every shadow" (The London Bridge Experience 2013). It is attached to The London Tombs, a sister attraction set in a former plague pit.

In 2006, a wooden walkway collapsed outside a railway arch nightclub in Manchester, dropping three club-goers twenty-five feet off a wooden smoker's patio into the River Irk and requiring a special inland waterway rescue team. This non-licensed, privately-owned venue, located in an anonymous arch beneath a redundant viaduct leading to Victoria Station, had no signage and was known simply as The Arch. The venue hosted a monthly fetish night with a 'well-equipped dungeon' catering to rubber and leather fetishists, exhibitionists, and swingers. As Chapter 9 will explore, the trend of appropriating the 'gritty' and 'rough but exciting urban underbelly' embodied in railway arches has also been a trend observed in Manchester and London nightclubs since the 1980s (see Andersson 2010). The transgressive and dangerous nature of railway arch spaces and their occupants expands far beyond representations of the macabre, gothic, and taboo. More often than not, they have been associated with subterranean economies.

## 5.5 Commodifying a Negative Image

Following chapters will explore the ways in which railway track authorities have sought to re-brand railway arch spaces and revalorise them as post-industrial spaces, and how the post-industrial aesthetic has been applied to these spaces. However, in a peculiar twist of fate, property owners also attempt to commodify these spaces in ways that play off their negative images. For example, Network Rail Properties (NRP) rents out arches as locations for shooting films and television shows. In the NRP website's search tool, there is an option for seeking "Dark and Moody" locations (Figure 29). Film crews can rent derelict railway arches by the day, "the perfect gritty location," complete with authentic refuse left by fly-tippers and junkies, or of "a business estate in a private compound offering views of central Manchester from an industrial perspective" (Figure 30). According to the site, these spaces are "dark, moody and industrial - and at the same time ecclesiastical," allowing railway arches and station undercrofts to "double for church vaults, crypts, or tunnels." They are readymade sets for macabre scenes.

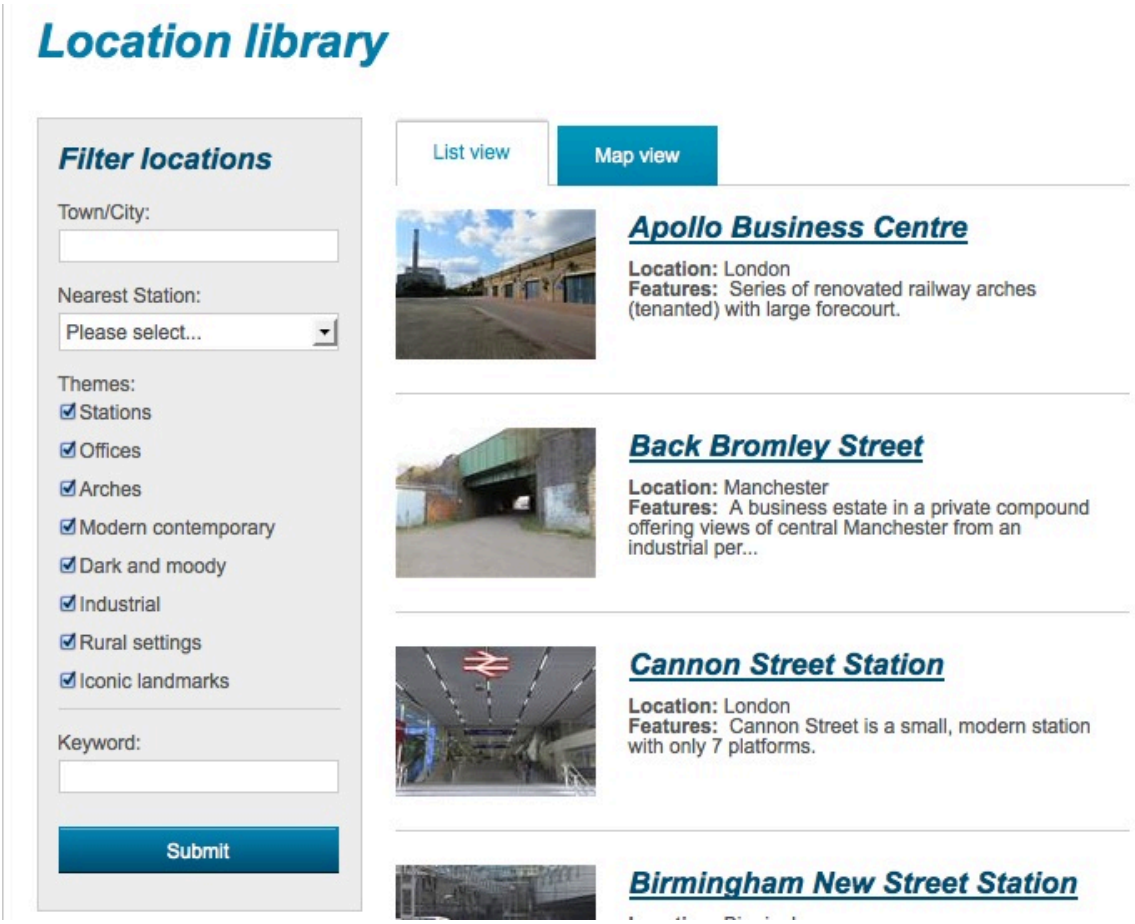



*Figure 29: Screen capture from Network Rail Property's Location Library website. Image source: http://filming.networkrail.co.uk/locationlibrary.aspx.*

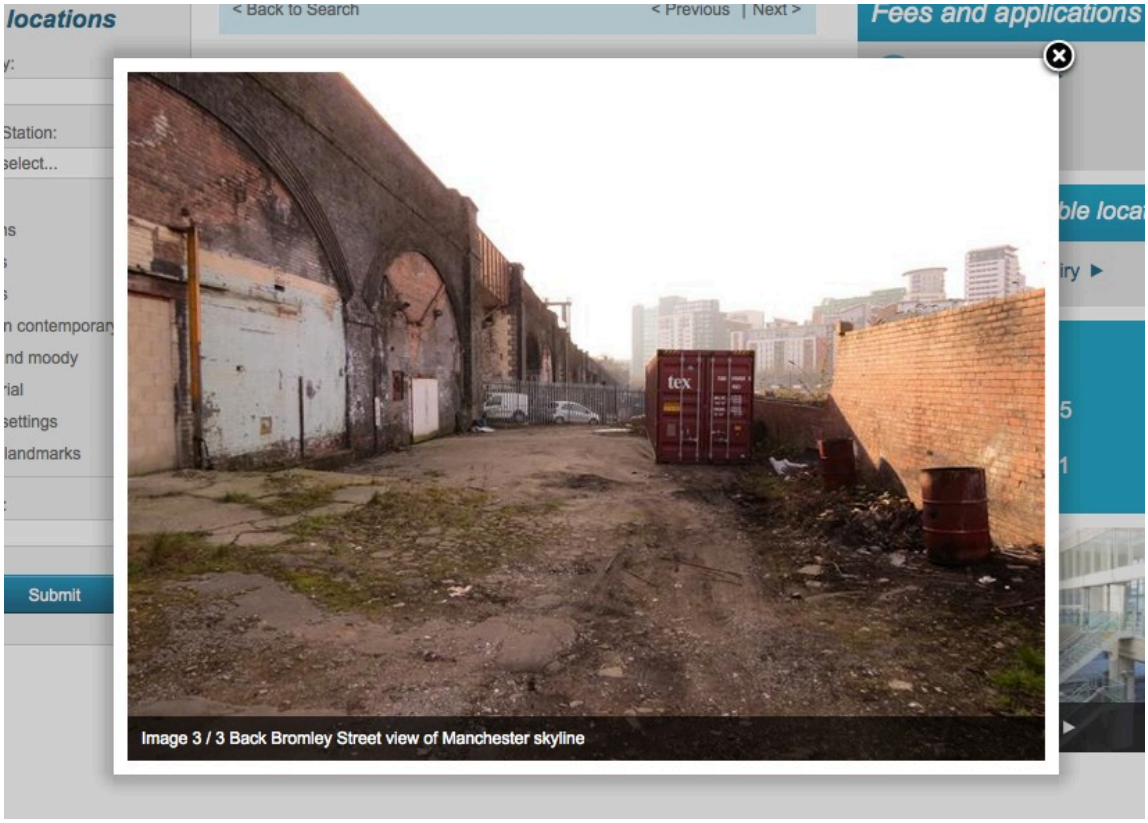



*Figure 30 Screen capture from Network Rail Property's Location Library. Image source: http://filming.networkrail.co.uk/locationlibrary/backbromleystreet.aspx?t=1&theme_22=on.*

This practice is not constrained to NRP: Peel Holdings, property conglomerate and owner of the Manchester Ship Canal, much of Castlefield, and the disused Pomona docklands, promotes their property in a similar manner. As they note in their location guide, the *Little Book of Great Locations* (Figure 31), Peel is "a major investor in regeneration, and therefore has a wide range of sites which are currently held awaiting development. [...] a key example are the railway arches the Group owns in Castlefield on the outskirts of Manchester City Centre" (The Peel Group 2011, p.13). These 'pretty vacant' settings, disused as they await speculative redevelopment, in the meantime serve as post-industrial cinematic spaces.

Even in Castlefield, an area valued for its industrial heritage and subject to massive investment in environmental improvements (see the next chapter), the landscape of canals and viaducts are deeply associated with criminal imagery. With Granada Studios located in Castlefield, the spaces beneath the viaducts have been a staple for murder and chase scenes in numerous television shows such as *Sherlock Holmes* and *Coronation Street*. Even as the district was reimagined as a heritage landscape of tourist and leisure consumption, it is

often cordoned off for imaginary crime scenes. While this is partially attributable to the proximity of the Castlefield canal basin to Granada, this certainly serves to reinforce a particular image.

*Figure 31: Image from Peel Location Guide. Image source: Peel (2011).*

## 5.6 This City Wall

In 2005, as part of Architecture Week in Manchester, photographer Len Grant and curator and writer Phil Griffin put together an exhibition of photographs called *This City Wall.* Presented as a 44-metre continuous row of images along a platform of Manchester Piccadilly, this exhibition would feature Grant's photographs of every arch of the MSJ viaduct from Piccadilly station to Pomona. While the exhibition was due to be on view for six months, it remained on Platform 12 until 2010. In presenting the viaduct as one continuous row of images, and exhibited in the space of the railway station itself, the work connected passengers with the spaces of Manchester through which they passed. Griffin's curatorial text, which was displayed with the images, was neither celebratory nor damning of the structure, instead attempting to situate it within the city's gradual post-industrial reinvention:

> The railway viaduct from Piccadilly Station to Pomona is a formidable structure, backbone to the North West's industrial corpus, or at least an important vertebra…. The railway viaduct is an inhabited thing; bars, a

> theatre, smelters, car mechanics, workshops, and rehearsal rooms…. This city wall is… a big ugly railway viaduct and it cuts through the city like a rusty saw. A place to store skips, abandon cars, close nefarious deals. The railway arches back along Fairfield Street are huge cathedral spaces dedicated to making, assembling, and storing…. THIS CITY WALL attempts to rout out a familiar structure that the city may just have grown to hold in contempt. We do not argue its grace or beauty, but we loudly celebrate its place. (Griffin 2005)

Grant and Griffin's work speak to many themes which will become increasingly apparent in the following chapters: First, that the barrier effect of Manchester's 'formidable structure[s], backbone to the Northwest industrial corpus' is an ongoing issue for the city's growth (see Chapter 5). Secondly, despite concerted efforts of track authorities, redevelopment agencies and the city council, the reimaging of railway arches has been at best piecemeal (see Chapters 7 and 8). Perhaps more than anything, *This City Wall* is indicative of the deeply ambivalent relationship between Manchester and its industrial past. That the exhibition was underwritten by Network Rail, a variety of property developers and architecture firms, and Arts Council England, suggests that the spaces and functions of railway viaducts and their arches are currently under cultural reappraisal. And, while it is impossible to quantify the impact that the exhibition had on the attitudes of residents, commuters and visitors passing through Piccadilly, the exhibition would make visible the terrain over which they passed on their railway journeys. With the permission of Len Grant, the entirety of the photographs from *This City Wall* are included within the Appendix of this thesis. This allows comparison with the photographic survey conducted along the same route in 2012.

## 5.7 Conclusion

Urban railway viaducts have been consistently present in cultural imaginary and imagery, even when their material presence was not so obvious. They have particularly served as markers of everyday landscapes of the urban working class, with shadowed spaces of destitution and prostitution, and with 'low value' light industrial trades shielded from the public eye. Their arches have long been the spaces sought by those who did not want to be seen, or who had nowhere else to go.

While the uses and depiction of railway arches have begun to change, particularly since the 1990s, these representations continue to affect the way that these spaces are

perceived and utilised. Particularly in the case of transgressive behaviour and working class labour, these powerful images have been co-opted as thematic environments playing on notions of the gothic and the post-industrial. Regardless of the more recent appropriation of railway arches as leisure spaces in particular urban locales (see Chapter 9), images of tawdriness, furtiveness, and 'low-value' uses still dominate the cultural representation of railway arches. These images continue to be a hindrance to track authorities, planners, and property developers, thwarting the environmental improvements that have been central to strategies for revalorising properties along viaducts since the 1890s. In comparison to the rapidly changing built environment in Manchester, including massive rehousing schemes, demolitions and later adaptive reuse of industrial-era buildings, the character and reputation of railway arches may be the most consistent of any spatial typology in contemporary Manchester.

As future chapters will establish, what is particularly remarkable about the longstanding cultural representations of railway arches is that the same discourses that dominated Victorian concerns for these spaces are still very much at play. In the 1840s, as now, their hidden and subversive images have structured an urban imaginary that has pervaded everyday urban life, but has also driven strategies for the recuperation of these spaces. These approaches—be they through the sterilising approaches of heritage or more 'gritty' aestheticisation—all play on longstanding narratives of these 'cavernous' spaces. These various forms of recuperation and re-imaging, whether through cultural reappropriation or policy-driven environmental improvements, will be explored in the following chapters.

The next chapter will explore one way in which the history of the elevated railway has been mobilised within a particular cultural narrative: that of built heritage. Through re-imagining Castlefield as an Urban Heritage Park, and through re-presenting its infrastructural landscape as historically relevant and consumable, the sublime character of Manchester's viaducts was restored as a model of post-industrial reinvention. This, however, required an emptying out of its previous activities and meanings.

# Chapter 6: Railway Viaducts as Monuments: Heritage, Design, and Revalorisation in Castlefield, Manchester

## 6.1 Introduction

The social, economic and cultural significance of Manchester's railway viaducts have so far been analysed by exploring their spatial histories and their scenographic role in the urban landscape. This chapter focuses on the intersection of ownership, history, and cultural representation through the treatment of Manchester's viaducts as historically valuable objects and landscape features: in other words, as built heritage.

Despite overwhelmingly negative or simply absent representations of railway-dominated landscapes, changing attitudes towards industrial heritage sowed the seeds for revalorisation of some specific landscapes. Nowhere in Manchester, and likely, in Britain, can the interlinked history of industry and transport be traced more clearly than in Castlefield, where crisscrossing canals and railways have been transformed into a landscape of heritage tourism, loft living, and leisure. Some excellent studies have explored the broader context for heritage-based regeneration in Castlefield (Degen 2003; Law 2007; Leary 2009; Madgin 2010), but this chapter tells the story differently, by foregrounding infrastructure. Infrastructure, after all, is what makes Castlefield distinctive from other formerly industrial districts subject to heritage-driven regeneration. With the entire district designated as a heritage landscape, the viaducts were transformed to monuments through industrial displacement, urban design, renovation, and reimaging. No longer the backdrop to an industrial wasteland, they became the set-pieces of a post-industrial playground.

It is essential to note that Castlefield is anomalous in terms of land ownership beneath railway viaducts: more typical arrangements will be explained in the following chapter. Castlefield's specificity results from savvy land deals in the mid-18th century by the Duke of Bridgewater, owner of the Bridgewater Canal. In allowing the railway to be constructed across his property, he granted railway companies the right to the land where viaduct piers sat, retaining the spaces beneath and alongside the structures. Thus, the visible legacy of the Industrial Revolution was circumscribed by land deals completed

nearly two centuries earlier. Ownership of this land was eventually transferred to the Manchester Ship Canal Company, and in 1991, to Peel Holdings (Manchester Evening News 2005). This is essential context when examining the coordinated reconfiguration of the district beginning in the late 1970s. Although it was an indeterminate landscape with low-intensity usages, it was not without interest to property investors.

This chapter explores the use of heritage as a tool in the process of property revalorisation, tourism and landscape consumption. It also considers the conflict between maintaining a heritage landscape and ongoing processes of modernisation. As I establish, history is alternately mobilised and suppressed in order to assemble simplified and marketable heritage themes and narratives (Lowenthal 1985; 1998). The same designation of cultural value that stimulated investment in the 1980s and 1990s has also limited redevelopment in the 2000s, pitting concerns regarding historical authenticity against desires for more intensive, modern redevelopment.

In professional discourses regarding the heritage of the industrial built environment, infrastructure is a latecomer (Cossons 1997; 2010), among the last typology of buildings and structures from the Victorian era to be given protected status. This did not occur until shifting notions of conservation came to define heritage not only as the physical character of individual built structures, but of districts and landscapes (Bowdler 2010). Until the completion of the High Line in New York, scholars had not paid much attention to the ways in which infrastructure could be treated as a discrete objects with heritage value.

The chapter is structured as follows: first, it offers a short introduction to the idea of heritage in Britain; second, it introduces the history of Castlefield; third, it provides a detailed chronological account of heritage practices and discourses in this district, drawing from archival materials and interviews; and lastly, it discusses conflicts and contradictions involved in treating infrastructure as heritage.

## 6.2 The Rise of Industrial Heritage

Heritage is a contested term, both in its meaning and its purpose (see Harvey 2001). For the sake of simplicity, in the context of urban redevelopment it can be defined as the historical traits of buildings, structures and landscapes that are seen as attractive (and therefore commodifiable). Practices promoting heritage selectively mobilise historical narratives through emphasis on particular histories and views—told through the built

environment—while suppressing others (Hewison 1987). In the British context, the practices of built heritage can be split into two interlinked terminologies: preservation and conservation. *Preservation* is a process in which the maintenance of a historic building or structure entails no modernisation aside from structurally necessary maintenance work. *Conservation*, though subject to long-standing debates, describes the adaptive reuse or other modification of a historic building or structure to fulfil a particular agenda.

Graham et al (2000) argue that built heritage is a "cultural product and a political resource," (p.18) which foregrounds particular types and interpretations of history, promoted through evolving systems of regulation and popular debate. In this 'circuits of heritage' model, heritage is a mechanism of the production and reproduction of meaning through which rules, values, and conventions are organised. Built heritage is a cultural and social production dependent on a "complex process of selection, protection and intervention' (Phelps et al. 2002, p.3). It is institutionalised through "selective regulatory mechanisms that seek… to protect elements of the townscape for the common good" (Short 2007, p.104). Agencies promoting such treatment of history justify their actions primarily on cultural grounds: the maintenance of the historic built environment is a way to connect the experience of the present with some understanding of the way people lived in the past. In the 1980s, heritage emerged as a major industry with close ties to tourism and property development, inspiring criticisms that heritage was simply the packaging of the past for palatable consumption (Hewison 1987; Boyer 1988). Thus, heritage combines cultural and economic values embedded in the built environment. As Lowenthal (1998) cautions, heritage is often labelled as inauthentic, self-serving, and inaccurate, with an assumption that it is 'bad history'; but "heritage is not history at all… not an inquiry into the past but a celebration of it, not an effort to know what actually happened but a profession of faith in a past tailored to present-day purposes" (p.X). Heritage works from history, but utilises certain physical elements and historical narratives to present a simplified and consumable past. The social construction and instrumentalisation of built heritage is best understood through with exploration of the various groups interested in promoting it and these groups' manners of promotion.

As Raymond Williams (1973) emphasises, British cultural identity has a long association with the simple, quaint past; the city is tarred as inferior and the site of loss: a "dark mirror" to the countryside. With the establishment of the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947, (the first planning legislation to propose a rigorous survey of historic

structures throughout England), the cut off date for listing was 1840. This bias toward pre-industrial buildings, structures, and monuments is still dominant in some strands of conservation ideology, with conservationists "tarred with the brush of nostalgic recidivism" and accused of "trying to rekindle some mythic arcadian past" (Cossons 2010, p.4). However, a shift in attitudes toward industrial heritage was observable by the 1960s, spurred by the rise of amateur and professional interest in industrial archaeology. Professional and hobbyist factions in archaeology shifted their focus from the distant past, challenging conventional attitudes toward the cultural value of industrial buildings and landscapes (see Rix 1955). The character of heritage, and what deserved retention, became the matter of public debate in the face of modernisation. Demolition campaigns of local authorities and developers were subject to increasing criticism from civic groups in cities throughout Britain (Orange 2008). Opponents of widespread demolition argued that the landscape of brick elevations and chimneys, particularly in cities where the industrial mode of production was dominant, was 'at risk,' along with collective memory and identity (Crinson 2005). In regard to the memorialisation of the recent past, Tim Edensor refers to the speeding up of time in the 'commodification of that which has only just passed into history,' connecting the practice of archaeology with its increasing fixation on the recent past:

> This nostalgia for that which has just happened seems to refer back to what was earlier identified as an accelerated 'archaeology' in which the recent past becomes ancient history in the endless production of the new. (2005, p.128)

Shifting attitudes toward the idea of heritage led to less focus on specific monuments and more attention to their surroundings: the Civic Amenities Act of 1967 created Conservation Areas of special character or merit, protecting entire townscapes. By 1983, English Heritage was established as an amalgam of previously separate governmental institutions: a non-departmental public body in charge of the designation (or 'listing') of built heritage assets. Listing criteria for the English Heritage relies on a building or structure's 'intrinsic value,' defined as "special architectural, historic, planning, engineering and technological interest," (EH 2008) and various grades of categorisation determine the extent to which structures and views may be altered. English Heritage also functions as a statutory advisor and/or

consultant on all issues dealing with heritage assets, and in some cases, owns and maintains these assets themselves.

By the early 1980s, industrial landscapes, often with waterfronts and located near central business districts, were increasingly marketable in the promotion of tourism, and later mixed use development (Harvey 1989). Through this process, certain 'heritage landscapes' were slowly revalorised in many locations in Britain, with Manchester as a frontrunner (Kitchen 1997; Williams 2003). This presaged the emergence of a 'heritage industry' playing on nostalgia for England's faded industrial past (Hewison 1987).

The listing of buildings and structures—an assignment of cultural value with statutory ramifications—has had various impacts on the economic value of buildings and locales. Heritage protections may limit the demolition and alteration of buildings and structures, impeding developers' plans. With the rising rhetoric of sustainability, urban density, and regeneration, however, the state increasingly has provided assistance in the form of 'environmental improvements,' subsidies, and tax breaks.

If heritage is meant to reflect an understanding of the past through the sensuous experience of buildings and landscapes, one must be sensitive to the simplification of disorderly and stigmatised spaces into a neatened, sanitised version of industrial history (Lowenthal 1998). The following case study of Castlefield will explore how these processes occurred on the ground, with particular attention played to the treatment of the district's viaducts in the process.

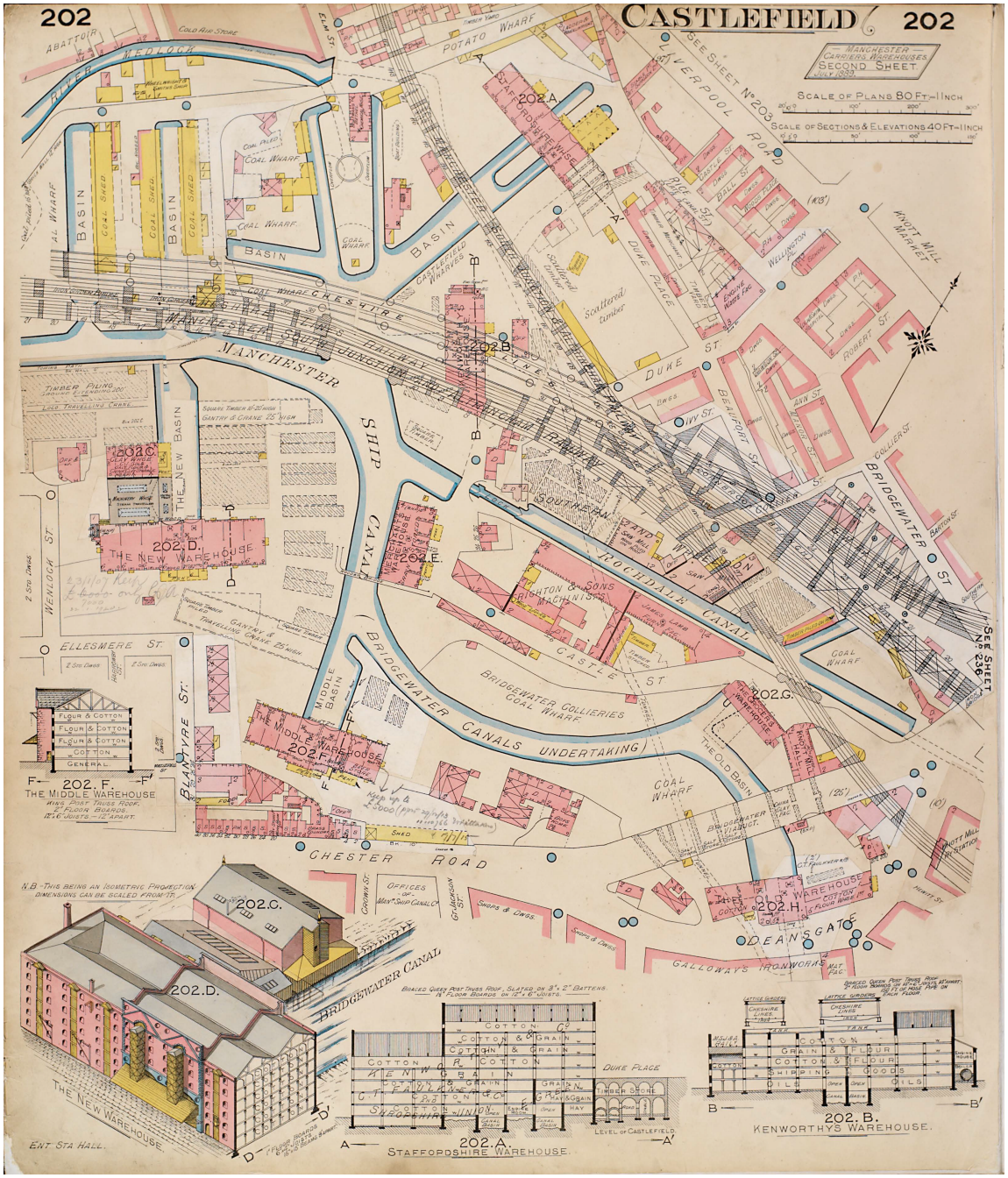



*Figure 32: 1889 Goad insurance map of the Castlefield Basin. Image source: Digital Archives Association CD-ROM, accessed at the Map Library of the John Rylands University Library, Manchester.*

## 6.3 Castlefield

There is no shortage of historical accounts of Castlefield, which is remarkable considering that, by the 1970s, its name had fallen out of popular usage (Officers Working Party 1982). As one of the flagship heritage-led regeneration schemes in Britain—legitimised by guides

and brochures detailing its historical significance (MCC 1980; Brumhead and Wyke 1989; Brumhead and George 1996; Law 2007), Castlefield is the subject of considerable academic discourse regarding the use of heritage in processes of regeneration (Degen 2003; Degen 2008; Leary 2009; Madgin 2010). The history of Castlefield in itself , is important to this chapter, and will be summarised. Of particular importance is the simplified 'traditional narrative' of Castlefield's regeneration (Leary 2011), which is told and retold, and how the railway viaducts and their arches factor into this discourse.

Castlefield is a district located at the westernmost fringe of Manchester city centre, bordering Salford (see Figure 2). The original site of Roman settlement of Mamucium, this district is often considered the 'birthplace' of Manchester (Brumhead and Wyke 1989). By the eighteenth century the fort had been abandoned for over a millennium, a ruined "castle in the field" on the outskirts of town. Due to its ample water supply, level topography, and proximity to the commercial core, Castlefield became a central site for canals construction: the Bridgewater Canal was completed in 1764, and the Rochdale Canal linked to it in 1804. Wharves, warehouses, and workers' housing dominated the area: it was a centre of distribution supplying the industrial metabolism of the city. From the opening of Liverpool Road Station in 1830, the area became increasingly dominated by transportation infrastructure and industrial facilities. The final push of railway building in the late 19th Century, the construction of Manchester Central station and the Great Northern Warehouse, produced a landscape where towering iron viaducts carried locomotives over their diminutive brick predecessors. Particularly in the last building campaign, the Cheshire Lines Committee viaducts (1879) and the Great Northern (or "Castlefield") viaduct (1898), obliterated the remaining ruins of the Roman settlement and the 'old town' of Aldport, with four lines converging at one point. The result, by the turn of the century, was a unique, multilevel interchange, with viaducts striding over rivers, canals, and roads.

The Goad insurance map (Figure 32), first surveyed in 1889, gives a sense of the scale of infrastructural development at its peak. The following century saw a gradual decline in land use intensity along the canals. This was the result of precisely the innovations in transport that created the district in the first place: with the construction of the nearby Manchester Ship Canal (accommodating ocean-going liners) nearing completion in 1892, the canals of Castlefield became largely obsolete (Gibson and Hardman 1998, p.41). In this sense, Castlefield is a clear artefact of David Harvey's observation that the fixed

capital of infrastructure becomes obsolete by precisely the technological advances that led to its construction (Harvey 1985).

With the exception of city centre locks, all navigation rights ceased on the Rochdale Canal by 1952, and its last commercial load was conveyed in the early 1960s (Fletcher 2002, p.30). As railway freight continued to cross Castlefield on its multi-tiered viaducts, it increasingly bypassed the warehouses lining its path. Castlefield was becoming a terrain vague (Solà-Morales Rubió 1995), with canals and warehouses falling precipitously into disrepair (Figure 33). With the notable exception of the construction of the Granada Studios television complex in 1956 and its expansion in 1962, this area was no longer on Manchester's mental map. A description from a local newspaper demonstrates that the area had become an abject reminder of the city's declining status, displayed within plain view of railway travellers entering the city.

> Castlefield is a decaying little known backwater in the fringe of Manchester's city centre… Like a doormat trodden on by the passage of time, it lies now in Manchester's forgotten no man's land—a city's classic backyard. There are places where the sun never shines beneath the stairway to the city's history. It is pitted by crofts, crumbling buildings and silted waterways and the weeds sprout up everywhere (Manchester Evening News, 29 October 1979, cited in Degen 2008, pp.79–80)

However, this quote also nods to the fact that, despite its decades of continuous decline and decay, Castlefield was once again being placed on Manchester's map: it was being rediscovered as an urban frontier of revalorisation (Smith 1996).

As Leary (2011) emphasises, the dominant narrative of Castlefield's decline and rebirth centres around its derelict and stagnant condition in the 1970s, but this is been a strategic oversimplification. Castlefield was not 'empty', nor was it fully deindustrialised. Its initial 'rediscovery' was largely related to archaeology: specifically, the excavation of the Roman remains that the railways had nearly erased. Though this landscape was dominated by land uses typical of the leftover spaces of infrastructure, it was recast as a priceless historical landscape worthy of conservation and study. This is in line with Tim Edensor's suggestion that there is a purposive need within society to reinvest space with (positive) meaning: "If spaces are conceived as disturbingly non-functional, they must be replaced and filled in — turned into abstract space — to remove these signs of unproductive and unfunctional blankness" (2005, p.48). The dominant narrative of Castlefield as an

underutilised wasteland has a particular utility in demonstrating the municipal authority's imperative to reinvent the area. The following subsections will explore the manner in which Castlefield was emptied out of its previous uses, reimaged, and then filled back in with new meanings and new economic value, bearing in mind the way that viaducts were implicated in the process of creating a heritage landscape.

## 6.4 1967-1978: The Rising Cultural Value of Castlefield as a Heritage Landscape

While most narratives of Castlefield's regeneration begin in the 1980s or 1990s (Leary 2011), it helps to trace earlier attitudes toward, and policies regarding, conservation in Manchester from the 1960s. The 1967 *City Centre Map*—Manchester's most important city plan since the end of World War II—makes little mention of conservation, but offers some insight into prevailing attitudes toward industrial heritage at the time. Noting that some of the best examples of Victorian architecture had cultural value, the plan suggested listed buildings should be restored for new uses when possible, or relocated to 'more appropriate settings' if prudent. At this point, heritage was primarily conceptualised as an attribute belonging to structures rather than entire landscapes (English Heritage 2011). The plan identified canals and railway infrastructure as the most dominating townscape features of the city centre, and the city's canals were, for the first time, identified as assets worthy of pedestrianisation and 'imaginative landscape treatment' (1967, p.41). The viaducts continued to be viewed negatively: they were nothing more than 'barriers' and 'obstacles' about which little could be done, representing "the image of grime and obsolescence" and the "dark ages" of industrialism (p.39). By this point, Liverpool Road and Manchester Central stations had been listed, but the dominant feeling was that railway infrastructure was an obstacle to modernisation.

In the aftermath of the downsising associated with the 1963 Beeching Report, thousands of railway properties were left disused, for which the nationalised British Rail had a statutory obligation to maintain. The dereliction of Manchester's railway infrastructure was heightened once its fixed capital became obsolete, and Castlefield was left with a combination of functional and redundant viaducts and stations. Regardless, the residual spaces of these structures continued to function in the same manner: as scrap yards, timber merchants, auto repair shops, and parking spilling out onto vacant lots.

Castlefield became a scrapheap of outmoded technologies, an 'anxious landscape' (Picon 2000) that was a curiosity for enthusiasts of industrial history and archaeology, most notably the Manchester Regional Industrial Archaeology Society (MRIAS).

From 1966, this group documented, photographed and mapped buildings scheduled for demolition. In 1972, during the razing of the last remaining terraced housing in Castlefield (Madgin 2010), the Greater Manchester Council commissioned an archaeological survey of the Roman fort beneath. With public interest increasing, the MRIAS conducted a complementary photographic survey focussed on the transportation history of the surrounding area (Parkinson-Bailey 2000, p.214). In the process, one small piece of the fort was discovered, sealed off within a non-descript railway arch lock-up (Brumhead and George 1996). Castlefield was a well-preserved visual and material archive of the city's industrial metabolism, a terrain vague that offered clues into the city's past. Through the use of photography, the MRIAS documented particular buildings and structures, creating a striking serial representation of Castlefield at the peak of its disarray and dismantling. This practice, in recording abandoned mills and factories, is analogous to contemporary practices of urban exploration and fascination with industrial ruins (Edensor 2005; DeSilvey and Edensor 2012; Garrett 2013).

Historian Terry Wyke, who later became active in the study and promotion of the area's heritage, narrated the psychogeography of Castlefield in this time period:

> *In Castlefield, I think one has to say that at that time my dominant attitude was fear, was anxiety, because these scrap dealers…they had these… serious man-eating dogs. […] Just wandering in that area—you're under the brick viaduct—the original impression was that it wasn't the sort of place that you went. People…were dealing in used cars, or as everyone in Manchester used to say, stolen cars.* (personal interview 2011)

Wyke, who was exploring the area while researching an abandoned hospital, evokes the excitement of visiting an area that felt transgressive and disorderly: a place where he was not meant to be, possessing little-known historical treasures (Edensor 2005). Although there were certainly a number of demolitions between the 1950s and the 1970s, Castlefield was left partially intact precisely because it was peripheral to the dominant economic circuits of urban redevelopment.

*Figure 33: "Rochdale Canal," 1974. Image source: Salford Local History Library. http://www.transportarchive.org.uk/getobject.php?rnum=T2384&searchitem=manchester&mtv=T2&pnum=7.*

## 6.5 1978-1988: The Emergence of a New Tourist Landscape

As Rebecca Madgin notes in relation to Castlefield, "set in the context of deindustrial society and a seemingly inescapable spiral of urban decline, the love of historic industrial places up until the mid-1970s was an oxymoron" (2010, p.30). Considering the rising interest in industrial archaeology, this is overstated. It was not until the proposed demolition of Liverpool Road station following its 1975 closure, however, that the preservation of Castlefield's heritage became the subject of civic action. The first coordinated campaign to protect industrial-era buildings and structures in Manchester revolved around the activities of the Liverpool Road Station Society (1982). Despite British Rail's desire to demolish the station and redevelop the site, they eventually released ownership to the Greater Manchester Council for £1 in 1978 (Brumhead and George 1996, p.4). The Council then transferred ownership of the station to the Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI) for its future home.

The local news media began noting the curious activities occurring in this industrial backwater, making claims that must have seemed grandiose:

> Today it is a grimy back alley of the city's past, tomorrow it could be Manchester's South Kensington. It's not the product of a planner's rose-tinted dreams either, but a possibility well on the way toward fulfilment as part of Manchester's historic awakening (Manchester Evening News, 31 October 1979, cited in Degen 2008, p.84)

The Council used the conversion of the station to leverage a strategy of cultural re-signification of its surrounding district: the name "Castlefield" itself, rescued from its long erasure from the city's maps, was re-codified when the city named the district a Conservation Area in 1979 (Liverpool Road Station Society 1982). With the urging of the Greater Manchester Council, by 1980 the Department of the Environment designated the district as an Outstanding Conservation Area, and in 1982, justified by self-designation through a tourism strategy (Officers Working Party 1982), Castlefield became Britain's first Urban Heritage Park (now a defunct designation).

With a rising appreciation of industrial heritage in the late 1970s, cash-strapped British Rail was pressured by civic amenity groups, conservationists, and the Council to improve its stewardship throughout the city. As a publicly funded entity with tight budgets and a primary remit to ensure that railways operated safely and efficiently, British Rail responded by entering a partnership with the Council. Examples of joint projects between the railway and the Council included the demolition of buildings in front of Manchester Victoria Station and the cleaning its façade to emphasise its grandeur. In other cases, British Rail revised scheduled maintenance to incorporate cosmetic flourishes, such as painting iron viaduct bridges in multiple colours instead of the customary, drab 'engineering grey' (Kaukas 1983). Stations and iron bridges were increasingly reimagined as architectural assets imbued with cultural and economic value.

A 1980 guide published by the City Planning Department promoted Castlefield through a combination of archaeological emphasis and aspirational language, leaving the character of future development ambiguous. Its history was emphasised in describing the "neglected historic area" that came to represent the city's "new found confidence" in creating the "combination of a tourist, historical and working environment" (MCC 1980). This was the beginning of Castlefield's heritage-led regeneration narrative.

By that point, ongoing academic debates questioned whether heritage was, or could be, commodifiable. These unresolved ambivalences and antagonisms regarding the value(s) of heritage are encapsulated in the commentary of Stephen Emmit: "there is a strongly felt view that any attempt to attach economic values to heritage is at best a pointless

irrelevance and at worst an unacceptable soiling of the aesthetically sublime with the commercially mundane" (cited in Madgin 2010, p.31). However, from early on, Manchester's municipal authorities viewed its industrial image as something to selectively emphasise.

Though railway stations a primary focus for conservationists, viaducts did not feature prominently in heritage discourses. Interviews with heritage officials and planners suggest that the reason for this was fourfold. Firstly, viaducts were not 'in danger': most continued to serve their original purpose, and the others were maintained in a state of 'managed decline'. Second, there were few concerns that any viaducts, were in danger of demolition; this would be too costly. Third, there were not yet any proposals for re-use of railway viaducts spaces their absence (later, in the 2000s, demolitions of viaducts became more commonplace). Most importantly, the heritage value of these structures were not considered on par with the district's waterways, industrial buildings and Roman ruins, nor had there been criteria established to discern their value. This is made clear by Manchester-based English Heritage official Julian Holder:

> *We do find different categories of buildings have a certain prejudice against them. And I would think railway viaducts, railway bridges—viaducts more than bridges—probably have that prejudice. You know, we value them, we see them as heritage, we list them, but we never list them too highly, because what's the difference between one and another? How do you distinguish a great viaduct from a mediocre viaduct?* (personal interview, 2011).

Still, as the most imposing visual and physical presence within the cluttered, de-industrialising landscape of Castlefield, viaducts were structures that could only be embraced: there was no other option.

The mid-1980s saw capitalisation on the rent gap (Smith 1984) that had appeared in Castlefield, and the deterioration of many of Castlefield's warehouses was increasingly misleading. Pioneering Salford-based bookmaker Jim Ramsbottom, who owned a betting shop on the corner of Liverpool Road, began speculatively purchasing buildings in 1982 through his business Castlefield Estates. Over the following two years, Ramsbottom purchased the 1827 Merchant's Warehouse in for the price of salvaged brick and timber (Parkinson-Bailey 2000, p.289), the lockkeeper's cottage on the Rochdale Canal for £15,000 (Mayoh 2012), and the stables of the Bridgewater Canal. In the oft-repeated narrative of Castlefield's rebirth, Ramsbottom was to become celebrated as a figure who "foresaw the

potential of the area long before anybody else" (Parkinson-Bailey 2000, p.289) and stimulated reinvestment in the area.

Castlefield still had an outward appearance of dereliction and inactivity—in part due to early phases of Council- led industrial displacement. Music journalist and DJ Dave Haslam described his experience of the area in the 1980s:

> Occasionally on a Sunday some of us would… go down into muddy, decaying Castlefield…. We wouldn't see a soul as we wandered under viaducts and along canals, sometimes dreaming of gangster films we'd one day set there or choosing sites for warehouse parties that never happened, peering into broken-down workshops and climbing over rusty pipes and fractured girders, the debris of industry and history piled up all around us… ruins, scrap value and nothing more. (Haslam 1999, p.249)

Haslam's story suggests another sort of aesthetic and affective appreciation for Castlefield's crumbing industrial environment: as interviews with numerous members of the 1980s art and music scene in Manchester have revealed, the district also attracted artists and ravers (see Chapter 9) who were specifically attracted to the desolation and decay that the city council was attempting to erase. Haslam's attitude towards early tourist-oriented developments identifies the inadequacy of treating Castlefield as an open-air museum: "Even with these developments it was still death sentence heritage. It was as if we were all destined to no better future than re-creating a tourist version of the old days; Manchester as hygienic industrial theme park" (p.250).

While such critiques point out the artificiality of reinventing historical landscapes as 'theme parks', much as Sorkin (1992) and Zukin (1993) have in relation to American cities, it was unclear in the mid-1980s that this approach was tenable: not all buildings in Castlefield could be converted to museum attractions. Further, the remaining industrial use of canal banks and beneath railway arches was an uncomfortable reminder that the area was not yet post-industrial (see Figure 34). For the period from 1984 to 1988, the MCC increasingly focussed on raising awareness of the area's historic significance. However, it was the 1988 establishment of the Central Manchester Development Corporation (CMDC) that catapulted Castlefield into the spotlight of heritage-based development.

*Figure 34: Aerial photograph of Castlefield, 1989. Image source: Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England, courtesy of the Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit.*

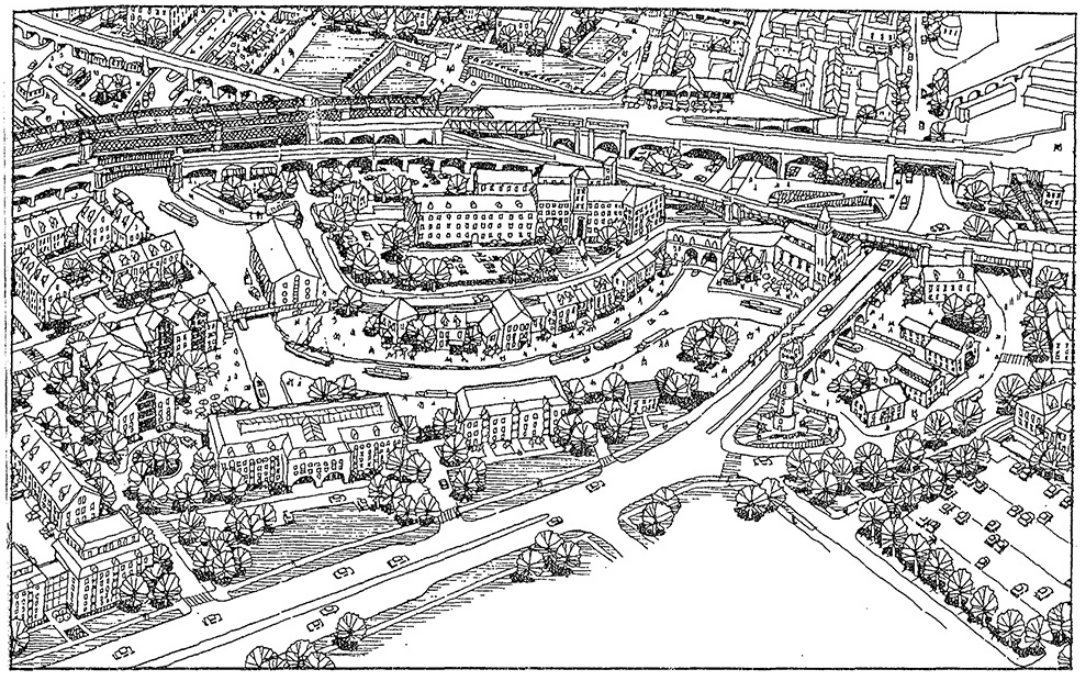


*Figure 35: An illustrated aerial view of Castlefield's future landscape, 1989. Image source: LDR International/CMDC (1989).*

## 6.6 1988-1996: Commodifying the Heritage Landscape: The Central Manchester Development Corporation and the Reimaging of the Castlefield Basin

> Important chapters in Manchester's history are recorded in Castlefield's architecture and urban development pattern. The historic significance of the Castlefield area, its built environment and artefacts, represent an opportunity which cannot be replicated or recreated. These elements are invaluable in creating a design theme for Castlefield, a recognisable and marketable identity.' (CMDC, 1989, p.1)

1988 was a major turning point in the fate of Castlefield, largely due to the creation of the CMDC (for more on its purview, see Chapter 8). Despite MCC's previous attempts to capitalise on the heritage of Castlefield as a driver for economic development, the CDMC initiated a radical shift in the commodification of Castlefield. Armed with a £14 million annual budget, along with planning and compulsory purchase powers, the CMDC swiftly commissioned studies from heritage, urban design, tourism, and branding consultants to orchestrate a rapid and comprehensive re-imaging strategy for Castlefield (CMDC 1990).

The Corporation and local councils concurred that it was insufficient to treat the area as an outdoor museum: it was to be reimagined as a mixed use 'urban village' with a heritage aesthetic (English Tourism Board, LDR International 1989). With Castlefield bordering the municipalities of Salford and Trafford, a number of economic development-oriented partnerships emerged between the local councils, with the Conservation Area (Figure 36) as the centrepiece.

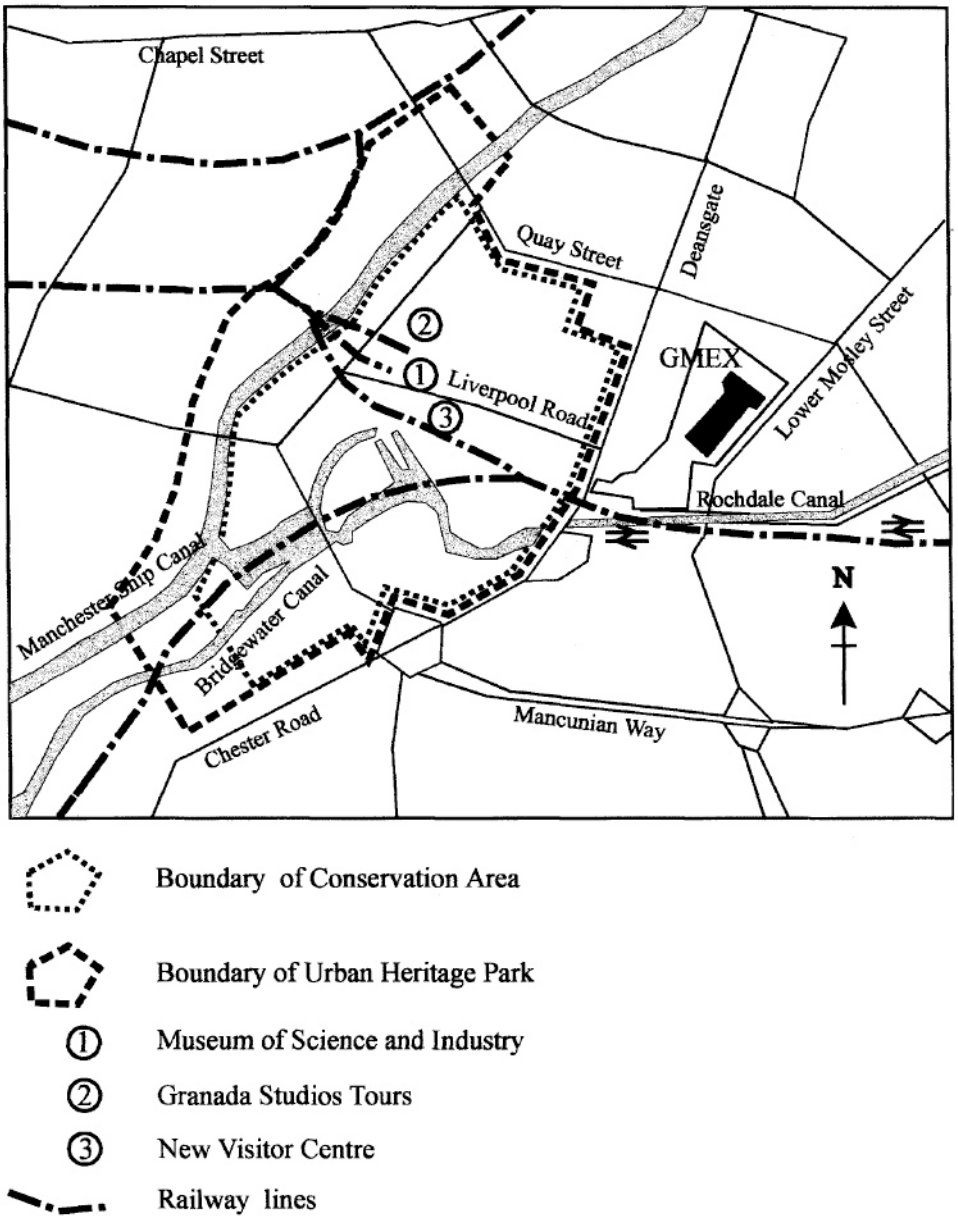



*Figure 36: Map of Castlefield, including railway lines and the boundaries of the Conservation area and Urban Heritage Park, 1998. Image source: Gibson and Hardman (1998, p.42).*

The treatment of Castlefield's viaducts and their surrounding landscapes demonstrates the impact of rapid and coordinated commodification of the cultural value of historical townscapes. It also reveals the economic multiplier effects these heritage 'assets' could generate if properly refurbished and marketed. Reflecting trends in conservation and archaeology that conceptualised heritage as a feature of landscapes rather than individual structures (English Heritage 2011), the CMDC begin its quest to reinvent Castlefield as an all-encompassing heritage landscape. This was reflected, in its first year, by commissioning urban design strategies (CMDC and Building Design Partnership 1989, LDR International 1989) focussed on manipulating the symbolic economy and physical environment of Castlefield.

CMDC's primary attempt to revalorise Castlefield as a heritage landscape was through funding environmental improvements. These actions included the demolition of buildings and structures deemed 'out of character', the cleaning of facades, and canal dredging. No buildings less than fifty years old were considered appropriate and required dismantling: this included industrial sheds built by the Council less then a decade earlier. The Council's previous preference for industrial retention (MCC 1984) was swiftly overturned.

In creating a landscape of industrial heritage consumption, an important question arose: what should be emphasised and what should be erased? LDR's (1989) design guidelines were clear. Strategies were focused on the visual, tiptoeing around the significant displacement of the remaining businesses occupying the fragmented infrastructural spaces of Castlefield (see Figure 37). Displacement, whether through negotiation or compulsory purchase, was justified on economic and aesthetic grounds. Prime property was 'under-utilised' and the messiness of this 'wasteland' undermined the visual coherence of a landscape that (ironically) celebrated the industrial. To my knowledge there was no active opposition to this process. As the following chapters will demonstrate, the initial reinvention of Castlefield was the first in a successive round of industrial displacement campaigns pairing environmental improvement strategies with property-led regeneration.

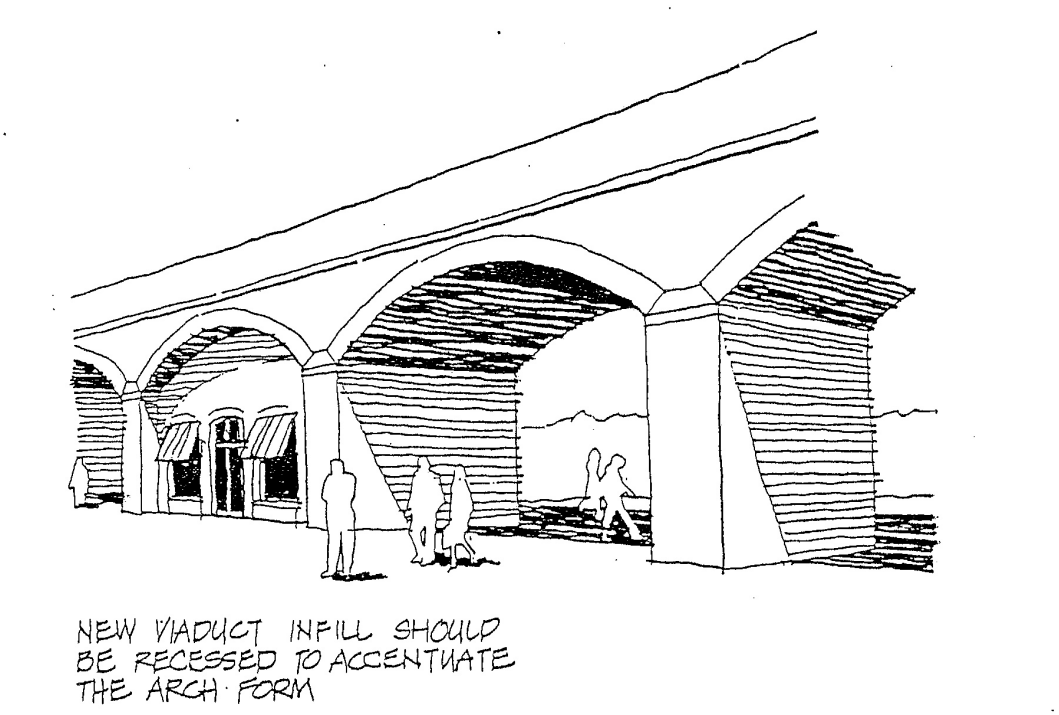



*Figure 37: Recommendation for railway arch infill from Design Guidelines. Image source: LDR International/CMDC (1989).*

Within months of the CMDC's founding, the Castlefield Viaduct and a large section of the MSJ viaduct became Grade II listed structures. In rapid succession, the canal basin and locks, additional warehouses, and a flourmill were successfully nominated for statutory protection. By the late 1980s, viaducts were being elevated to iconic status: they were no longer called 'structures,' but 'architecture' (CMDC, 1989, p.14).

By this point, industrial archaeologists shifted from identifying artefacts or landscapes of cultural value, to guiding the CMDC in the process of area development. Their role transitioned from passive boosters to instrumental actors in the re-imaging process. Conducting a visual survey of the architectural resources of Castlefield, the Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit (GMAU) emphasised that Castlefield's "unique concentration of viaducts" (p.13) formed a "striking northern visual boundary to the canal terminus area" (p.16), and "the conjunction of these viaducts… forms the largest and most dramatic historical monument" (GMAU 1989, p.23). Starting off as marginal hobbyists and academics, industrial archaeologists and local historians became central players in this process by further legitimating Castlefield as an outstanding heritage landscape and

validating the CMDC's approach to redevelopment. The GMAU report argued that viaducts "should be considered of equal historical importance" to all other buildings and structures (p.24). Likewise, the 1989 *Development Guidelines* presented viaducts and bridges as central features of the holistic heritage landscape.

Beyond simply arguing the cultural value of the viaducts, the *Development Guidelines* monumentalised Castlefield's viaducts in painstaking detail. It recommended opening nearly all the arches, and removing all lean-to's, additions, extensions and signage. The viaducts were reinvented as important set pieces in a new thematic landscape, inverting the environmental improvement schemes that used visual screens to hide them. In order to make the viaducts suitably 'historic,' they were reduced to their pure forms as engineered structures, erasing any evidence of use, wear, and alterations. Bricks were cleaned and repointed, bridges repainted, signs any other objects not required for the railway's operability removed. British Rail acquiesced to these plans: while they did not gain from the increased ground rent of their railway arches in Castlefield, refurbishment campaigns improved their public image.

The 1990 *Liverpool Road Environmental Improvement* took the monumentalisation of the viaducts even further: after they were cleaned and their additions stripped, this report recommended that the viaducts be floodlit, adding "definition and sparkle to the streetscape" at night (DEGW 1990, p.50). This served two purposes: to emphasise viaducts as integral landscape features, while at the same time discouraging the criminal activity for which 'the arches' had come to serve as a metonym.

Renovation of viaducts and industrial displacement were staggered to coincide with redevelopment: the 'messy' remaining uses "should remain in the early years, gradually being replaced by mixed-use with ground floor commercial uses which service the visitor traffic. The various auto service-oriented facilities should be relocated outside the Castlefield area" (CMDC, 1989, p.16). Well before any of these processes began, new aspirational representations of the future of Castlefield presented the viaducts with uniformly empty arches, devoid of any use value (see Figures 35 and 37).

Emptying the railway arches in Castlefield was not only an aesthetic alteration; it was also meant to increase pedestrian permeability in the area (for more on railway arches and permeability, see Chapter 8). Without public parking, the presence of which was perceived to detract from the historic image (Law 2007), the district relied heavily on

pedestrian (and cyclist) accessibility, using railway arch passages and rebuilt canal towpaths as new routes through this previously enclosed area (Figure 38).

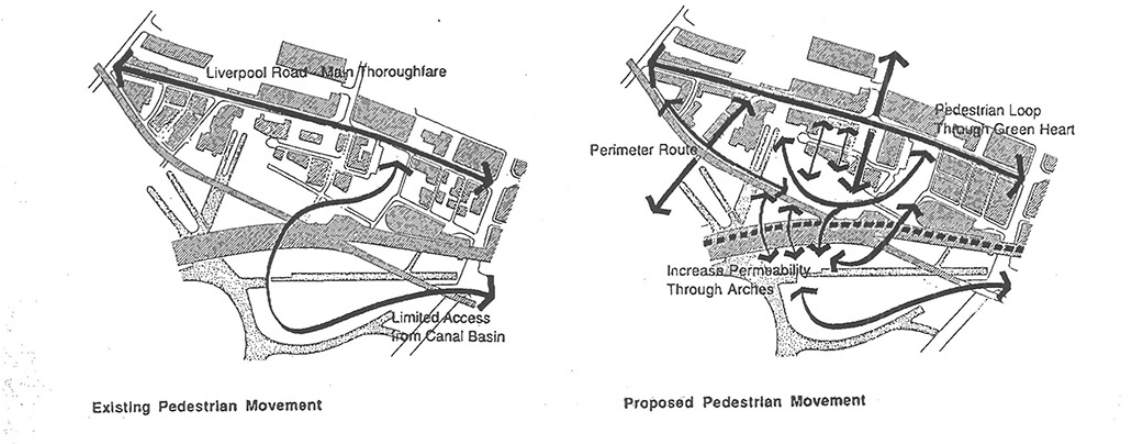



*Figure 38: Pedestrian movement diagram in Liverpool Road Environmental Improvement Strategy, 1990. Image source: DEGW/CMDC (1990).*

The assignment of cultural value to the urban landscape included the museumification of Castlefield through a branding and signage strategy. These elements, marking Castlefield as a cohesive environment, also included the creation of interpretive texts. After removing all remaining traces of industrial signage, viaducts were recommended to be adorned with Castlefield branding (see Figure 39) and, in some cases, murals bearing industrial motifs. Interpretive texts mounted on weather-resistant boards at dramatic viewpoints contextualised the historical value of buildings, waterways, and railways to visitors (L&R Leisure 1994). All of these interventions were the hardware of heritage tourism. These branding activities, and the rationalisation of Castlefield's landscape are heightened when compared to the actual landscape of the district in 1989 (see Figure 40). The landscape was still largely unchanged, but a shiny new brand was already overlaid upon it in the representational spaces of 'heritage entrepreneurialism' (Crang 1995).

Once all of the railway arches in Castlefield were cleared of tenants, cleaned and restored, the CMDC employed a strategy of the "introduction into key arches of active uses of interest to tourists and other visitors sited along a key new pedestrian route between the viaducts from Deansgate to the Outdoor Events Arena" (CMDC, 1989, p.68). Initial suggestions for the uses of arch spaces were primarily exhibits accentuating historical themes, much like the three railway arches beneath Liverpool Road Station that were converted to the MOSI's National Gas Galleries in 1986 (Parkinson-Bailey 2000, p.215).

Other recommended railway arch displays, none of which came to fruition, were an exhibit on Roman Manchester and a "national museum to British railway engineering" located in a set of "massive glazed arches" (CMDC & BDP 1989).

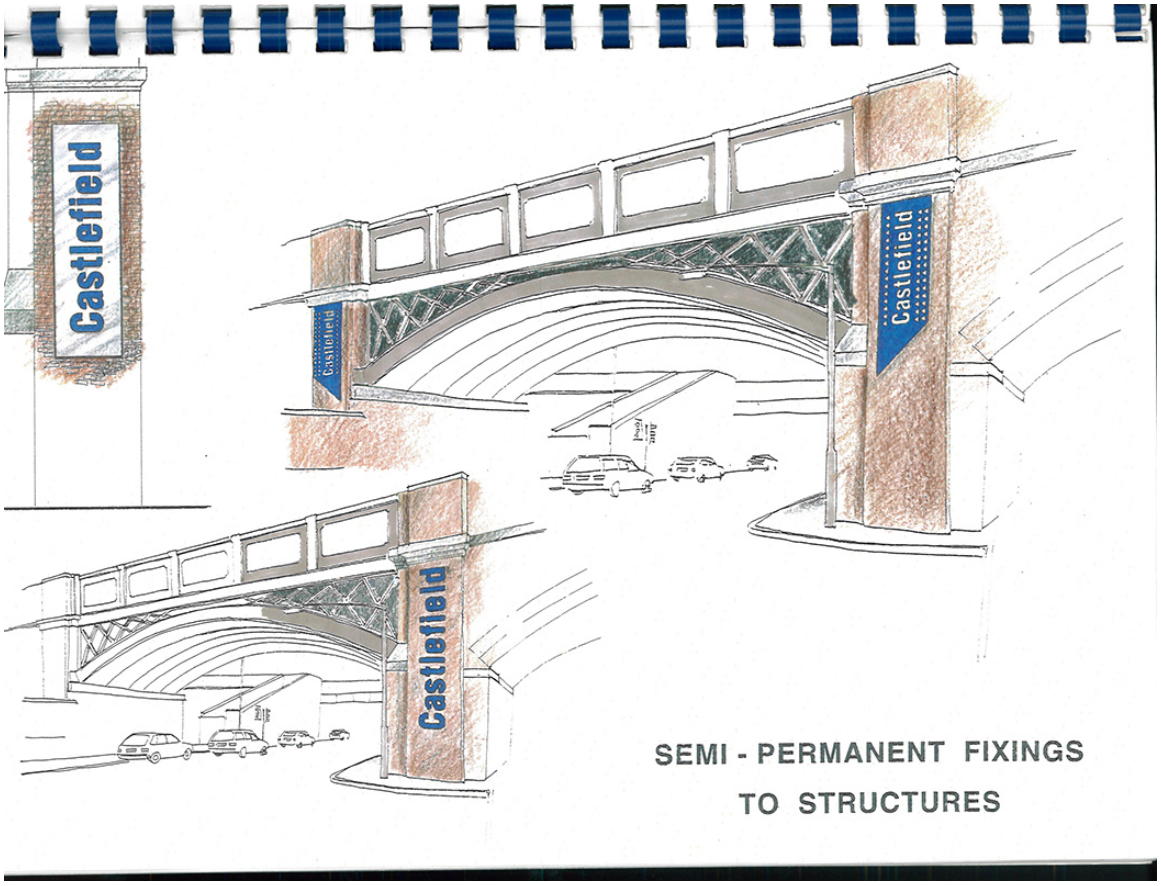



*Figure 39: Illustration of possible choices for viaduct signage in a Castlefield branding exercise, 1994. Image source: L&R Leisure (1994)*

*Figure 40: Castlefield Junction, viewed from a train window, 1990. Note the signage for the Southern & Darwent timber merchants, who were soon to be displaced from their canal side location. Image source: Derek Brumhead.*

Early strategies for property development in Castlefield focused on the adaptive reuse of buildings, many of which were held by Castlefield Estates and Urban Splash, a design-savvy, Castlefield-based developer that rose to prominence in Manchester. Following the recession of the late 1980s, buildings were converted (with varying subsidies) to residences, offices, and studios for artists and designers, a strategy built on the model of 'loft living' (Zukin 1982) derived from New York City (see Chapter 9). In total, the CMDC leveraged £3.8 million in European Regional Development Funds for environmental improvements, in addition to government, city, and private funds (Gibson and Hardman 1998, p.46). Railway viaducts, too, were considered for adaptive reuse. The redundant Cornbrook Viaduct (1877) was initially imagined as part of a tourist-oriented steam railway (LDR International 1989, p.11), it was ultimately re-used for the Metrolink tram line opened in 1992.

*Figure 41: Executives from the CMDC reviewing their model of Castlefield's future, 1989. Image source: CMDC (1990a).*

By the mid-1990s, adaptive reuse reached its saturation point, as demand for offices and homes in Castlefield outstripped supply. This was an essential turning point, as it became clear that nearly all structures worthy of adaptive reuse were already renovated and occupied, either as residences, offices, or bars and cafes. Loft conversion moved on to neighbouring Knott Mill. However massive swathes of undeveloped land was still actively marketed by the CMDC. This challenged the heritage landscape concept: with a built environment dominated by the ossified shells of industrial-era structures, what uses and architectural styles were acceptable for the infill development? In the short-term, solutions were found in the pseudo-industrial: the construction of buildings that mimicked their surroundings, simulacral 'warehouses' built of brick and steel with oversized windows. Around the same time, the CMDC dug out new canal arms to increase the provision of developable waterfront property.

By the 1990s, many historians and archaeologists involved in the initial promotion and conservation were dismayed, as heritage was aestheticised to the point of historical

inauthenticity. Many were upset that their work was used to create an historically irrelevant landscape. Historian Terry Wyke notes that he was 'fundamentally disappointed' by the manner in which Castlefield was developed:

> *I thought this was an opportunity to really unpeel the different layers of history, whether it be for schoolchildren or for that matter academics visiting, so that you could really understand the significance of this space…. There aren't many places in the history of industrialised, urbanised societies where you could look at a place like that. And I've been disappointed in the way they've tried to present it.... I just think they've missed the opportunity to tell the story of the industrial revolution.* (personal interview, 2011).

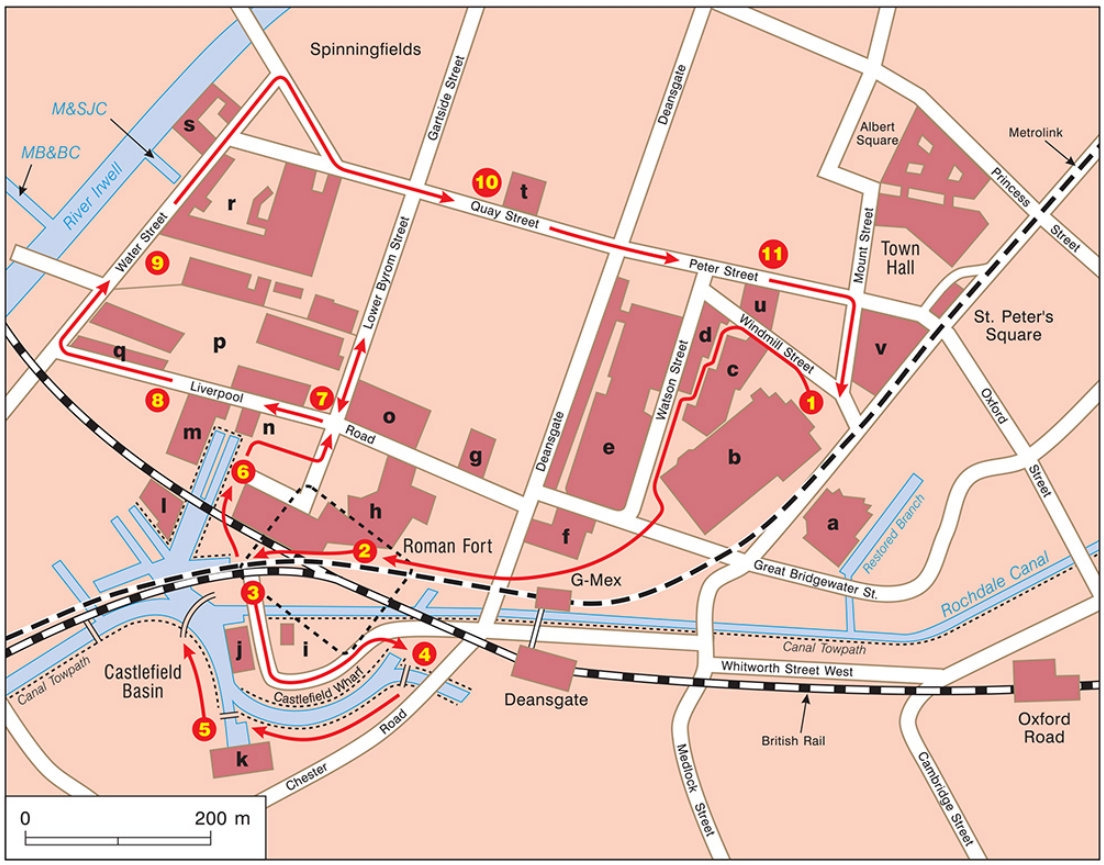
To the untrained eye, it had become difficult to distinguish the tidied canal warehouses from their contemporary simulacra in Castlefield. This sort of environmental design, justified by its contextual response to the site, is increasingly criticised. An interchange with Derek Brumhead, another local historian who has researched the area's history and written tourist brochures since the late 1970s, illustrates this point:

> Respondant*: I remember taking a party around Castlefield and I was talking about the regeneration of the apartments, and I said that the warehouses were ideal for turning into apartments. And we moved to another part of Castlefield and a lady said 'oh, there's another [loft] apartment!' but it wasn't, it was a copied building. And there was no way these people would know that it wasn't an original warehouse redevelopment*.
> Interviewer: *Maybe, someday, there will be replica railway arches too.*
> Respondant*: Yes! Put up an artificial railway viaduct, because we need more arches. We haven't got any more arches! It sounds crazy but that's the way, sort of, developers and people like this think.* (personal interview 2011)

Brick railway viaducts have, in fact, been the subject of architectural mimicry. In the early 1990s, a ramp created to elevate the Metrolink from ground level to the former Central Station viaduct was built of concrete, but clad with non-structural red brick arches (Figure 42). In the following years, this approach to design lost favour, as it pleased neither the more orthodox conservationists nor those seeking to reinvent the city with new, bold architectural statements.

*Figure 42: A new viaduct for the Metrolink tram clad in 'fake' brick arches, 2010. Image source: Brian Rosa.*

## 6.7 1996-Present: The Limits of Heritage and 'Killing Castlefield'




**a** Bridgewater Hall
**b** Manchester Central
**c** Convention Centre
**d** Great Northern Tower
**e** Great Northern Warehouse
**f** Beetham Tower
**g** Upper Campfield Market
**h** Roman Gardens and Wall
**i** Dukes 92 Public House
**j** Merchants' Warehouse
**k** Castle Quay
**l** Youth Hostel
**m** YMCA Castlefield Hotel
**n** Castlefield Visitor Centre (closed)
**o** Air and Space Museum
**p** Museum of Science and Industry
**q** Liverpool & Manchester Railway Station
**r** Granada T.V. Studios
**s** Victoria and Albert Hotel
**t** Opera House
**u** Radisson Edwardian Hotel
**v** Midland Hotel

*Figure 43: Map from 1998 Castlefield Guide. Image source: Law (2007).*

By 1996, when planning power for the southern fringe was returned to MCC, many of the alterations suggested by the CMDC had become a reality: in the Castlefield Basin, storage and industrial uses were removed, non-conforming buildings demolished, and the arches previously used by 'back street businesses' cleared; "Acquisition and clearance have extinguished virtually all those uses" (CMDC 1995, p.25). The cleaning and floodlighting of viaducts in the district cost, in total, nearly £1 million, and were paid for by government grants, city council funds, and private capital (CMDC 1995, p.75). Concerns about the

maintenance and upkeep of the Urban Heritage Park arose once the CMDC withdrew in 1996: these would become heightened in the next decade, as the City Council focused its redevelopment and maintenance energies elsewhere.

Offices in refurbished warehouses were dominated by what Richard Florida (2004) calls the 'creative class': young, well-off, childless, and primarily working in the knowledge economy. "Nine-to-fivers they are not, but individuals, people who work independently as designers, musicians, IT sorts, the lovers of specialist coffees, the type of people fellow entrepreneur Jim Ramsbottom affectionately calls the 'pony-tail brigade'" (Schofield 1997). By many accounts, Castlefield was a successful model of heritage-driven regeneration (Gibson and Hardman 1998): a number of industrial- era buildings and structures had been restored, which, without public investment, would have otherwise fallen into ruin or been demolished. However, much of the area's promise for economic development had not fully delivered.

The mid 1990s witnessed Castlefield's transformation from a quiet site for daytime tourism and loft living to one of the city's most popular nightlife districts, in part due to its proximity to the Corridor (see Chapter 9). This resulted from the city's embrace of the 24-hour economy (MCC 2001) and the CMDC's promotion of a district based on the café-culture of Western Europe, embodied in the creation of Catalan Square. This quasi-public area was dominated by Barça (now the Twisted Med), a café-bar located in two railway arches. Created for a theatre festival between Manchester and Barcelona in 1996, Catalan Square has been used as a seating area for the café-bar on sunny summer days (Figure 44).

*Figure 44: The Twisted Med, the café-bar that succeed Barça at Catalan Square, 2010. Image source: Brian Rosa.*

The re-occupation of railway arches with non-industrial usages ended decidedly different, both thematically and aesthetically, from the initial *Design Guidelines*. Not long after Castlefield's railway arches were emptied out of their industrial tenants, some were re-enclosed with café-bars. This was in line with larger 1990s city centre trends described by Parkinson-Bailey: "the growth of leisure outlets throughout the city has been remarkable; café bars, restaurants or pubs…have been inserted into the ground floor of almost any building with space, and what characterises them are large windows and, where there is room, tables and chairs set out on the street" (2000, p.286). In the summer of 1999, a new bar, Canteena, opened in an army surplus tent next to Barça, with a DJ booth in a military surplus vehicle (BBC News 2004). The 'pop up bar' became a "regular haunt for the city's leading creative lights… style magazines from as far afield as London and Tokyo feted its mix of cutting edge music and Pan-Asian cuisine" (Manchester Evening News n.d.). Castlefield was a thematic environment, but the theme no longer had much to do with heritage per se. The heritage aesthetic in Castlefield continued to wane when the Quay Bar, another café-bar that utilised a railway arch as part of its design, was built. Constructed in 1998, the Quay Bar was one of the first and only bars to be built in Manchester as a

contemporary building. Its design, which won the 1998 RIBA Award for Architecture and was short-listed for the Stirling Prize, was wedged between a viaduct and a canal, built of steel, and protruded from the railway arches. Parkinson-Bailey notes "the choice of materials and shapes reflects the canals, bridges and viaduct, paying heed to the nineteenth century, but not copying it" (2000, p.288).

The heritage aesthetic initially present in the refurbishment of railway arches was subverted by the demands of leisure-oriented development. The 'public' space of Castlefield, too, was dominated by a subsector of society with disposable income and an attraction to the area's increasing trendiness: presence in this landscape offered symbolic capital (O'Connor and Wynne 1996). Heritage was increasingly a subservient theme: contrary to original guidance encouraging clear sight lines to the viaducts and design approaches emphasising their form, designs shifted toward 'responses' to the viaducts in a postmodern pastiche of styles and materials. The design sensibilities of Barça and Quay Bar, in accord with newly constructed housing in Castlefield, suggest that the heritage aesthetic was losing its symbolic power, with a post-industrial aesthetic based on juxtaposition and reference emerging (see Chapter 9).

Leading up to Manchester's 2002 hosting of the Commonwealth Games, Castlefield was described as the 'Jewel of Manchester' on the city's tourist website (Niblock 2008). It had its own purpose built Visitors Centre, a team of specialised "urban rangers" patrolling and maintaining the area, and in 1999 was included in Great Britain's New Tentative List for UNESCO World Heritage Site designation, the first step in the nomination of World Heritage Sites (McNeil and Walker 2002). The heritage discourse in the materials was particularly powerful: a guide supporting the nomination pronounces that "At Castlefield the cast iron viaducts combining brute strength with romanticism are spectacular features of the landscape around the Bridgewater canal and serve as enduring symbols of the power and majesty of the railway. (McNeil and Nevell 2000, p.4) However, with the Council's increasing emphasis on the construction of tall buildings nearby, their ambitions for World Heritage status began waning (Short 2007).

As leisure development spilled to nearby WSW and other parts of the city centre, a number of leisure-oriented properties shut down or repeatedly changed hands. It seems that café-bars and outdoor seating were not enough to turn Castlefield into Barcelona. As Madgin (2010) recently noted, "If history had stopped at the end of the 1990s then it could be convincingly argued that Castlefield was a successful example of urban change and

reinvention" but in recent years the area has been "popularly perceived as an area in decline, neglected and forgotten by planners, residents and entrepreneurs and policy" (p.45). Castlefield's existence as a conservation area—a designation that once fuelled investment and international attention—increasingly led to unsatisfactory results. Conservationists lamented views spoilt by new residential developments, while cultural critics noted that its museum-like state left it lifeless and disconnected from the vivacity of the city centre. One local artist and blogger commented that "Somehow it has become forgotten, a space detached from the ordinary and the everyday, its canals, warehouses and historic railways one giant mausoleum, a place so successfully 'preserved' for posterity that we have actually made it invisible" with the "shock of rampant decline, dereliction and disappearance of much that is unique about the area" being accelerated by unsympathetic housing development" (Niblock 2008).

In these various and sometimes contradictory criticisms, it is nonetheless apparent that Castlefield has faded as an attraction for tourists and punters, becoming a residential environment surrounded by the dead landscape of historical leftovers. This happened as the population of Castlefield ballooned into the thousands. With liberal planning permission policies (Hebbert 2010) coupled with increasing demand for city centre living, housing development quickly overtook the remaining void spaces in Castlefield.

Quay Bar went out of business in 2003, was sold to property developer Urban Splash, and ultimately left vacant in 2005. Some residents speculate that this was deliberate so that the developer could build a residential tower. Indeed, an Irish developer sought to build a 15-storey residential tower (Waite 2007), though this scheme was aborted at the onset of the financial crisis. The building subsequently fell into disrepair, appropriated by squatters and subject to vandalism and arson attacks before its demolition in 2007. Since no planning application was ever filed, it is unclear whether such out of character development would be approved by the Planning Department; the subsequent economic downturn left this site, like many others, vacant. The railway arch designed for Barça, too, changed hands a number of times, indicating a modern bar in a railway arch, spilling onto an ad hoc plaza, was not a profitable undertaking. Additionally, many of the spaces in Castlefield that residents assumed were public were developed, and others quickly fell into disrepair as the city focused on new regeneration projects elsewhere.

2007 was a turning point in Castlefield, spurred by architectural critic Phil Griffin for *Manchester Confidential,* who asked, "Why has the city abandoned its former showpiece

area? Why is Castlefield collapsing into a dump?" (Griffin 2007). Griffin lamented that the area was dominated by "a few dedicated joggers and defecating Canada geese," surrounded by neglect. This post alone generated over 100 comments and stimulated ongoing discussion about the future of the area. Dissatisfaction was chiefly aimed at the city council, which was accused of failing to maintain the public realm and having too permissive an attitude toward new development.

*Manchester Confidential*, edited by part-time tour guide and Castlefield booster Jonathan Schofield, became the mouthpiece of the Castlefield Forum, an organisation formed by residents in opposition to new housing development. Articles by Schofield and numerous comments by residents and local business owners, pointed out a slew of interrelated concerns about the future of Castlefield: it was becoming dominated by violent drinking culture; developers were pushing forward ugly and unsympathetic new high-rise residences; public events were infrequent; and maintenance of paving and lighting was lacking following the dissolution of the Castlefield Management Company. Residents increasingly complained about the 'undesirables' loitering in the area's public spaces: the presence of "the Burberry cap posse," "the bad boys of Ordsall," "scallies from Salford and Cheetham Hill" and "lager louts" were motivating some residents to move away or go out elsewhere. The "yuppie ghetto" had thousands of residents, but its communal spaces were in disrepair, and considered a dangerous spot for muggings and fighting at night. All of these comments allude to a widespread belief that the city had left Castlefield behind as a priority area and that it was becoming derelict yet again. Increasingly, the very permeability that was promoted in the 1989 *Design Guidelines* was recast as a problem for Castlefield: the district was attracting the 'wrong kind' of people. Among residential development, gated communities became increasingly popular in the area (Wainwright 2002). The class connotations of the 'undesirable' elements taking over Castlefield, as well as vocal concerns about the lighting of the railway arches, suggest a concern among residents that the area would revert to a stereotypical landscape of low class, uncultured behaviour. The exclusivity, and thus the symbolic capital, of the heritage landscape appeared at risk.

Julian Holder, a Manchester-based officer at English Heritage, feels that Castlefield is a symptom of the over-professionalisation of the conservation movement and an example of how heritage-based regeneration may serve to limit the way that a city can reinvent itself:

> *I think with regeneration itself being a somewhat recent phenomenon, it goes in cycles. Castlefield now needs regeneration:* ***We need to regenerate regeneration****, because there's a sense that it looks a bit too fossilised now […]. When we go to a grotty, run down area and we know it's going to be regenerated we can predict the results, but I don't know what the alternative is. I suppose that's what's lying behind my unease about Castlefield now, that there is something now about Castlefield having been regenerated,* ***it's now becoming regeneration ruination****.* (Personal Interview with Julain Holder 2011, emphasis mine)

The central issue is the conflict between the public space and heritage value of Castlefield and its value as developable land, which is limited by the area's status as a Conservation Area. Further, physical infrastructure was installed to make Castlefield into a public space, with arenas, walking paths, and footbridges. However, the Castlefield Management Company, a public-private partnership spun off from the CMDC in 1990 to maintain the district (Gibson and Hardman 1998), was dissolved by the mid-2000s. While the area may have provided for lucrative housing development, this activity ironically lessened the actual use of the Castlefield canal basin as a leisure space. The Castlefield Visitor's Centre, custom built in the 1990s, shut down by the mid-2000s, and by 2011 was occupied by squatters (Manchester Evening News 2011). While the physical infrastructure of the heritage park remained, the public infrastructure was gradually dismantled.

In a sense, Castlefield maintains a dual representation: it is considered a historic industrial landscape, though the character of that landscape gradually transitioned from an applauded attraction to a mishmash of renovated industrial-era buildings, architectural mimicry, and new built apartment blocks. Its public nature, and its permeability (caused through industrial displacement and the installation of pedestrian infrastructure), made it a large draw for over a decade, at points attracting more than three million visitors per year (Gibson and Hardman 1998). However, the decline in leisure activities in the district by the early 2000s, coupled with gradual disinvestment from the soft infrastructure of tourism and maintenance, mean that the district's quasi-public nature is increasingly problematised by the middle-class residents and business owners who occupy the area. Some argued that it was transitioning back to a terrain vague, in which informal appropriation and transgressive activity flourished in increasingly indeterminate spaces .

The period since the late 1990s has presented unresolved ambiguities regarding the public-ness of public space in Castlefield. In its initial conception as a heritage park and conservation district, it was the 'sensescape' (Degen 2008), and particularly its visual

effects, that justified government expenditure to make it more publicly accessible. As Castlefield was gradually accepted as a space for tourism and leisure focused on consuming the (post)industrial landscape, enclosure of presumed public space threatened the sustainability of the district as a heritage landscape. New buildings, including the Beetham Tower skyscraper, altered the view of a thematic landscape of red brick and canals, threatening the district's designation as an UNESCO World Heritage site (Short 2007). With the rise of residential development in Castlefield and the withdrawal of amenities, the cultural value of the heritage landscape is subsumed by the economic value of new development.

The monumentalisation of Castlefield's railway viaducts by the CMDC proved successful. So successful, in fact, that their presence became a challenge to the continued property development in Castlefield. As accepted elements of the historic nature of the district, constantly reinforced through interpretive plaques, brochures and urban design, the heritage value of railway infrastructure became a hindrance to redevelopment as priorities shifted away from promoting Castlefield as a heritage landscape.

## 6.8 Discussion: Castlefield and the Contradictions of Treating Infrastructure as Heritage

By establishing Castlefield as a conservation district in 1979, Manchester was pioneering in its exploitation of rising interest in landscapes of industrial era infrastructure. Among professions dealing with heritage, conservation, and preservation, the heritage character of infrastructure has only recently received much attention. In 2010, English Heritage published its biannual *Conservation Bulletin* on the themes of "inherited infrastructure," and a year later published its first guide specifically outlining selection criteria for transportation buildings. The listing of infrastructures—including railways, motorways, and electrical transmission pylons—is recent and controversial: the historic and aesthetic values of such structures are still debated. As the former Chairman of English Heritage notes, "Today, it is the infrastructure debate as no other that challenges the motives and credentials of those who seek to protect the qualities of the nation's historic environment—that, and the fact that our views evolve and mature over time: *yesterday's eyesore is tomorrow's monument*" (Cossons 2010, p.6, emphasis mine). This 'infrastructure debate'

refers both to aesthetic opposition to new infrastructural projects, as well as resistance infrastructure itself as an element of heritage.

The preservation and restoration of infrastructures is subject to similar criticisms as the preservation of modernist architecture: what does it mean to preserve a structure that shows no regard for the past? This point was raised recently in a short essay by David Gissen (2012), in response to a proposed 'historic preservation' of the Cross-Bronx Expressway in New York City. Constructed in 1955, this highway—much like its predecessors in the elevated railways—left in its wake the homes of thousands of urban dwellers, severing previously connected neighbourhoods in the South Bronx (Berman 1988). Gissen notes that mid-century urban elevated highways are "anti-preservation incarnate" and "so suspect that they are outside of the realm we call culture" (p.63). This same analysis is convincing in the case of railway viaducts.

Renovating viaducts and promoting their heritage value also calls into question the ways in which heritage and redevelopment interact. One might cynically argue that any obsolete object that cannot be removed (for financial and structural reasons) should be reimagined as a monument. As an example, in a recent publication by property consultants Colliers International, planners and property developers are advised that, if an industrial structure is 'at risk,' and if it is "hard to foresee any prospect of a commercially-driven use for the asset," the favoured approach is to either "lose the asset" or "to restore it as a 'monument'" (2011, p.31). With such strategies laid bare it becomes strikingly obvious the extent to which monuments are not intrinsically valuable, but a culturally produced reflection of the present as much as the past (Lowenthal 1985). This begs to ask whether built heritage even needs to engage with its inherited cultural meaning, or whether industrial era structures have some sort of inherent, imagined value revealed through restoration.

To an extent, treatment of infrastructure as heritage also poses political questions: the economic value generated from listing a railway viaduct rarely serves to financially benefit the owners of these structures. Both Network Rail and track authorities, running on tight budgets and obligated only to keep infrastructure structurally sound, have few incentives to make purely cosmetic alterations. This point was demonstrated evocatively by a media relations representative for Network Rail:

> *The fact that across the country we must have thousands of railway arches that are unloved, uncared-for, whatever, and are doing nothing other than sitting there and getting grubby and looking run-down…. We don't have spare money just to tart things up, for the aesthetics of it…. So, sorry Mr Councillor, it might not look very attractive, but that's what you're going to get (Personal Interview with Keith Lumley, 2011).*

Accordingly, nearly all viaduct cleaning and restoration campaigns since mid-1980s have been funded by public-private regeneration partnerships as elements of environmental improvements. It is an open question whether such expenditure ultimately serves to benefit citizens, in Manchester or elsewhere.

*Figure 45: Recommendations on the visual framing of Castlefield's viaducts in the Water Street Strategic Regeneration Framework, 2010. Image source: AECOM et.al. (2010).*

Conflicts between heritage preservation and housing development also cannot be oversimplified by assuming that developers have no interest in retaining the heritage landscape as a valuable amenity. This can be encapsulated in differing attitudes between

design-savvy developer Nick Johnson of Urban Splash and architect Ian Simpson. According to Johnson, who began his development career in adaptive reuse in Castlefield in the 1980s:

> *I think that the space beneath the cast iron viaducts in Castlefield is probably one of the greatest urban industrial landscapes in the country…. They are an amazing asset, whether it's just because of their spatial qualities, like in Castlefield—thank goodness in a way that it remains underexploited, because that's what I love about that space … The space that is left beneath the railway are often really quite interesting: inadvertent, undesigned. And, for all those reasons, have a particular charm… They're like these trees that stand forever and just observe what happens beneath them. They're constantly reinvented*. (personal interview 2012)

Johnson's quote touches on a number of important points: first of all, to a developer, housing in Castlefield can only maintain a monopoly rent if the area continues to be perceived as historic and monumental, and this character is maintained in part by leaving viaducts as a landscape feature (see Figure 45). The full 'exploitation' of land—in terms of extracting as much rent as possible—is detrimental to the heritage character of the district. In this sense, the continuing development of the area represents a loss not only of use value (in terms of public space and visual amenity), but of exchange value. Johnson, as a lifelong Mancunian, views Castlefield as a special and unique space that deserves its protected status. However, he also reflects the conservationists' ambivalence toward contemporary architecture and the irony of preserving the view of something that was constructed with little concern for its surroundings:

> *I think if you were to suggest that the construction of railway viaducts in the contemporary city they'd be blocked every single opportunity. They would be scars on the landscape. Of course, they aren't…. That's when engineering was really quite fantastic, quite inadvertently beautiful. Maybe it wasn't so inadvertent, but certainly there wasn't an awful lot of deliberation.* (personal interview 2012)

Architect Ian Simpson, however, has been outspoken in his belief that conservation has been a hindrance to the city's reinvention. In 2012, the architect considered most influential in the city's 'new look' (Williams 2004; Linton 2012) offered an interview to *Manchester Evening News* to respond to critics of his visually dominating buildings such as the Beetham Tower. According to Simpson, "Any change attracts criticism and, from my

perspective, it's completely unjustified because cities have to change, particularly a post-industrial city like Manchester. We're not in Sienna or the heart of historic Rome. There's got to be a vision and there's got to be change…" (Linton 2012). The relationship between the Beetham Tower and Castlefield's viaduct is deeply symbolic in understanding heritage and Manchester's post-industrial aspirations: the Tower not only threatens the World Heritage status of Castlefield, but was also built on the site of a demolished, listed viaduct which led to Manchester Central station.

The successes and failures of infrastructural heritage as a tool of landscape revalorisation are encapsulated by Castlefield. Through the dispersal of industrial tenants, demolitions, cleaning, and lighting, railway viaducts were elevated to monuments through physical intervention as well as discursive reconstruction. In Castlefield, as in few other places, the history of transport infrastructure was promoted as heritage and drove tourism, leisure-based businesses, and office and residential development. In a way, the sublime nature of railway viaducts was re-created (see Chapter 5), though with a tidiness that separates them from the entirety of their history. Tracing a history of Castlefield's viaducts from the 1970s to present, we can see a remarkable transformation, in which spaces of dereliction became a vessel for revalorisation of the urban landscape, only then to become an impediment once again through the restrictions they placed on the height of newly constructed residential developments.

To understand how the spatial and representational history of Manchester's railway viaducts factors into Manchester's aspirational, post-industrial re-invention requires a clear understanding of the structure of ownership, regulation, and management of viaducts. This is the subject of the following chapter.

# Chapter 7: From Reluctant Rentiers to Structural Speculators: Railway Arches as Property Estate

## 7.1 Introduction

In exploring the political and symbolic economy of Manchester's elevated railways, it is essential to outline the ownership of railway arches and the evolution of how these spaces have been regulated and managed, including increasing public sector intervention through environmental improvements and other subsidies. The term 'reluctant rentier' is used to reflect the position of railway infrastructure managers as landlords *by default*: their role as stewards of the railway's right-of-way leave them in charge of the spaces beneath the arches. This, despite the fact that these properties are largely incidental to their primary remit of managing the effective and safe functioning of the railway network.

This chapter traces changing management regimes of railway arch spaces as they transitioned from public to private ownership. It also explores the increasing pressure placed on viaduct owners by public-private partnerships to improve their outward appearance and the reputation of railway arch tenants in Manchester. These pressures demonstrate the importance placed on overcoming the traditional images of railway arches and their tenants (Chapter 5), as well as the centrality of aesthetics in urban regeneration since the 1980s. It was at this point that British Rail, both at a local and a national level, began focusing more acutely on the income generating potential of their railway arch estate. Additionally, it offers some explanation for the material conditions of railway arches which have so heavily influenced public perception of these spaces.

Due to the inherently networked nature of railway infrastructure, necessitating centralised coordination, the management of railway viaducts and their arches occur at regional and national scales. Since many policies regarding the railway arch estate are coordinated in London, this chapter situates Manchester's southern fringe within a national as well as a local context. Through exploring track authorities' role as property owners and landlords, this chapter touches upon the sometimes frought relations between the railway, Manchester's town hall, and property developers, as well as the political pressure that led to increasingly active management of the railway arch commercial estate. These shifts have

been concommitant with larger political and economic transitions in Britain: particularly deindustrialisation, decentralisation, and the privatisation of public goods (including the railway itself).

Despite the clear importance of track authorities in processes of urban redevelopment, their direct presence is curiously absent from most academic literature regarding regeneration and planning policy in British cities (with the exception of Haywood 2008). Even in Haywood's (2009) in-depth examination of the relationship between railways and urban planning in Britain, railway arches are hardly mentioned. This chapter fills this gap, while at the same time contextualising that railway viaducts and their arches factor into the property dynamics of urban regeneration.

## 7.2 The Ownership of Railway Arches in Manchester

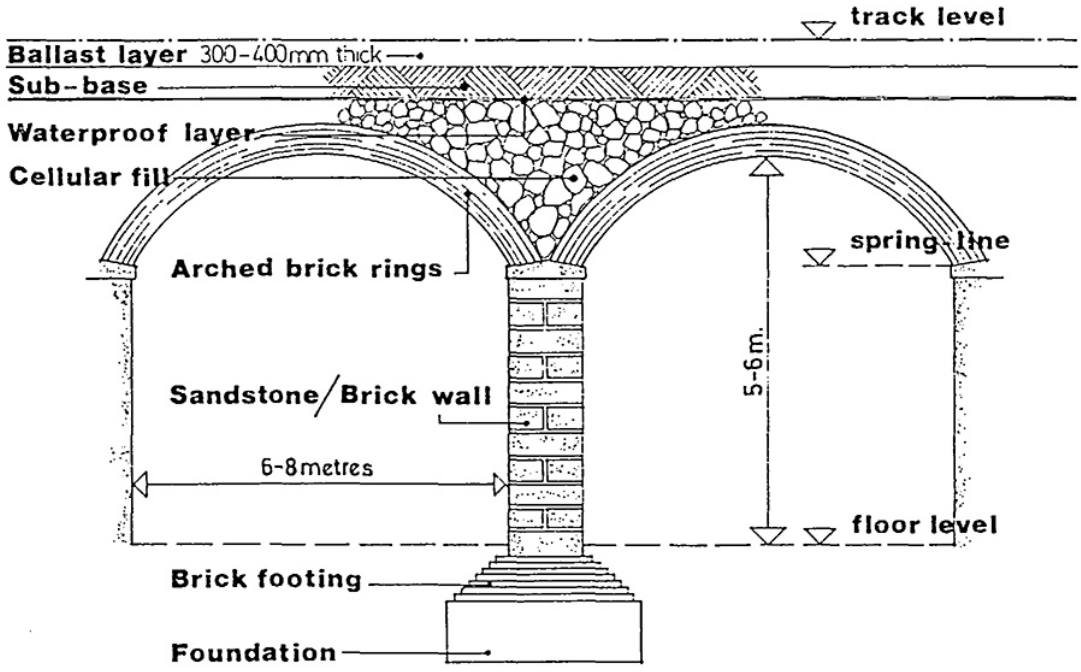



*Figure 46: A Typical Railway Arch Cross-section. Image source: Hendey (1987).*

From the earliest days of the railway, the design, construction and layout of urban viaducts tended to be fairly standardised (Biddle 1990): the engineering of this particular form is illustrated in Figure 46. With railway viaducts constructed by private companies for the purpose of providing a committed right of way for trains, the arched spaces beneath viaducts were largely incidental and under-considered. However, these void spaces were,

since the earliest days of railway construction, let as simple, inexpensive, primarily industrial workspaces (Kellett 1969; Biddle 1990; Dwyer 2009). Historical studies of railways in Victorian cities suggest that the management of the railway's commercial estate was (and continues to be) focussed primarily on termini stations, and that railway arches had traditionally been let in an ad hoc manner (Kellett 1969). The increasingly stringent regulations on the use and maintenance of railway arches in the Victorian era demonstrate longstanding municipal concerns regarding the railways' laissez faire attitude toward the conditions of these spaces and the activities of their tenants (see Chapter 5). In most cases, the land and airspace beneath viaducts remained the property of individual railway companies, deriving from the original negotiations leading to the construction of the railway. This arrangement continued for over a century, until Britain's railways were nationalised in 1948.

From that point onward, nearly all viaducts in Britain—and thus the spaces beneath them—were consolidated under single ownership by a 'track authority'. This term refers to the (public or private) body that owns, maintains, develops and manages railway infrastructure (Biddle 1990). Throughout the remainder of this thesis, I refer to the names of individual companies when relevant, and the term 'track authority' to more generically discuss railway management and stewardship. The first track authority, as a product of the railway's nationalisation, was British Rail. This institution, as the track authorities following it, found itself responsible for commercial premises within thousands of urban railway arches throughout the country, despite the fact that its primary remit was to maintain a safely and effectively operating railway system.

Even if the track authority has traditionally owned the vast majority of urban railway arches, there are notable exceptions, and these exceptions are particularly important in understanding the dynamics of urban change in Manchester. Firstly, since the construction of the railways, the municipal government retained ownership of the land and airspace beneath arches that were used as rights-of-way. By the 1950s, some arches were also leased from British Rail to be kept as pedestrian rights-of-way by major institutions such as Manchester Polytechnic University (School of Mechanical, Aerospace, and Civil Engineering n.d.). As the previous chapter demonstrates, and the following will illustrate, instances of opening arches for non-vehicular permeability have been rare, but such occurrences have had major implications for urban design associated with regeneration schemes. As these chapters detail, nearly all cases of the opening of arches for permeability

have occurred on sites where the track authority, through anomalies of Victorian land deals, did not own the land beneath certain arches.

## 7.3 Railway Arches: Residual Spaces of Infrastructure as Commercial Property

Despite the fact that opening railway arches has been an important element of particular regeneration schemes in Manchester (Chapters 6 and 8), the vast majority continue to function as commercial premises. Railway arches are quite peculiar as commercial spaces, because they are buildings embedded within the substructure of a functioning system that requires continuous monitoring and maintenance. In terms of considering new uses for formerly industrial spaces (explored in further detail in Chapter 9), railway arches present a number of specific challenges in their use as commercial units. As a quantity surveyor working for the track authority noted in the 1980s, "there are various problems to be met when considering the use of arched premises for modern commercial purposes—such purposes can often conflict with the primary purpose of railway viaducts, i.e. to support the operational railway" (Hendey 1987, p.33). This condition creates a number of limitations regarding how arch spaces may be used and modified. Hendey (1987) identified the 'basic problems' associated with managing railway arches as commercial premises, from which the following list has been adapted:

> **Water penetration and dampness**: The gradual deterioration of inbuilt drainage systems and waterproofing elements has resulted in the percolation of water through the viaduct. Dampness is further increased by poor ventilation and lack of direct sunlight. In some cases, water ingress leads to arches being un-letable, and more often, commanding low rents.
> **Noise and vibration**: The disturbance caused by trains passing overhead may limit the uses appropriate for railway arches.
> **Statutory obligations**: Increasingly stringent controls over fire safety and environmental health makes compliance increasingly difficult for owners. Additionally, any alterations made by tenants may need to be removed at any point so that the arch can be inspected or maintained.
> **Natural Light:** Sunlight can only be provided at the two ends of an arch, and in many urban areas windows are less likely to be utilised out of security concerns. Also, light may be blocked by taller buildings. The longer an arch, the more this is an issue.
> **Appearance**: Until the 1980s, the enclosures of urban railway arch spaces—usually achieved through the walling of arches on each end to

> create a 'lock-up'—have traditionally been completed and modified by tenants themselves.

Traditionally, few of these issues represented significant concern for track authorities: their tenants sought large, inexpensive, sheltered spaces, and additional amenities or facilities were to be installed by the tenants themselves. The norm was for the track authority to rent out arch spaces on an 'unimproved' basis and provide basic guidelines for their alteration. According to Gregory Beecroft (1992), former property manager for the British Rail Property Board (BRPB), the 'principle failure' of railway viaducts have been their drainage systems. In most cases, viaducts have never been stripped back to their arched brick rings (see Figure 46) for repairs: to do so required costly stoppage of the railway network. Due to this issue, "with few exceptions, such as arches underneath roofed station concourses, it is necessary to assume that water penetration can and will occur" (1992, p.350).

Through Hendey and Beecroft's descriptions of the challenges to managing railway arches as commercial properties, coupled with the dominant cultural representations of these spaces and their occupants, it is possible to construct a typology of a standard railway arch premises leading into the 1980s, and one that still encompasses more peripheral areas of cities like Manchester (see Appendices). It is be dark, damp, with minimal facilities, and often in a state of disrepair. It likely serves as a workshop, an auto repair facility or warehouse, perhaps spilling out onto a yard or pavements (see the Castlefield example in Chapter 6). It is the realm of primarily male, working-class, manual labour, tucked away the central business districts but proximate enough to easily service it.

The fact that the track authority was focussed on publishing articles about the condition of railway arches as commercial properties in the late 1980s and early 1990s is indicative of a major shift occurring the way that railway arch spaces were managed as commercial properties: the traditional 'lock-up' (Figure 47) was undergoing a makeover.

*Figure 47: An example of an un-refurbished lock-up in one of the "scruffy bits": Ardwick, Manchester, 2010. Image source: Brian Rosa.*

## 7.4 Changing Ownership Regimes, Management Strategies, and Public Sector Intervention in Manchester's Railway Arches

The role of the national track authorities as rentiers—as well as their relationship between other public and private sector elite actors seeking to boost urban property values—can be explained through John Logan and Harvey Molotch's 'social typology of entrepreneurs' (1987, pp.29–31). Within their conceptualisation of urban growth coalitions, in which urban elites demonstrate the "ability to manipulate place successfully, including altering the standing of one to another" (p.3), key players seek consensus regarding pro-growth policies. Over time, as the track authority changed hands from the public to private sector, it gradually shifted from the position of a passively 'serendipitous entrepreneur' to a slightly more calculated 'active entrepreneur,' seeking to second-guess market trends and put themselves in the 'path of the development process.' Finally, by the late 1990s, the track authority began behaving as a 'structural speculator,' taking increasing risks on the exchange values of their properties through speculative refurbishment. As Ward (2000) notes, a particular actor can take different positions within this typology at different points.

The following subsections trace how this transition of management strategies can be read through the changing uses of railway arches as commercial properties.

### *7.4.1 1969-1985: Shedding Surplus Property and Entering the Market*

The railway's increased involvement in property arose from the crisis of rapid downsising as government priorities for the provision of transportation infrastructure continued to shift from the rail to the automobile (Haywood 2009). The 'Beeching Axe' made a number of goods yards, stations, and viaducts in Manchester redundant in the 1960s and 1970s (Chapter 6). In this time period, British Rail's primary goal in relation to property was to dispose itself of surplus land and structures to invest profits back into the railway network, which was running at a deficit (Biddle 1990).

It was not until the late 1960s that British Rail began systematising and streamlining its property management function in response to its increasing role in the sale and management of land. In 1969 British Rail's Property Committee was reconstituted as the British Rail Property Board (BRPB), operating for the first time as a professionally managed property company whose remit was "to control all property matters for the whole of the Railway Board's undertakings, with particular regard to the commercial development of its property (BRB 1969, p.52). Through becoming increasingly involved in the property market, the BRPB entered a closer relationship with local planning authorities (Haywood 2009, p.138).

Upon disposing of many of its surplus properties in Manchester, the BRPB continued to have a "long-established and somewhat uninterested attitude toward ancillary activities like estate" (Biddle 1990, p.206). However, a 1985 Secretary of State for Trade and Industry report required the BRPB to "review and assess the Board's husbandtry of [its] large estate of land and property." One aspect of their response was to re-evaluate "the dreadful legacy of disreputable arches carrying urban viaducts" (ibid., p.232). From the beginning, public concern about railway arches responded to both the condition of the properties and their 'disreputable' tenants.

In many cases, the immediate concern around railway properties was their visual character: the British Railway Board's Director-Environment, Bernard Kaukas, notes in 1983 that

> The results of British Rail's conservation efforts have been fully justified by the public reaction. Although the cost of proper conservation is high, the cost of cleaning (as opposed to fully restoring) the building fabric is surprisingly modest, and the visual improvement makes such a small investment a bargain in conservation terms. Such work encourages other building owners to follow suit and engenders a growing confidence in our decaying city centres. (p.27)

"The Victorians built too well," Kaukas lamented, and "many railway buildings which are still in busy daily use are also suffering from the effects of old age. The term often used in connection with railway buildings—crumbling infrastructure—is only too accurate" (1983, p.25). Along with this national public pressure placed on the BRPB, they were being actively pushed to refurbish and reimage their railway properties in Manchester, particularly in the Southern Fringe. While the task in Castlefield had been to clear railway arches of their tenants to create a space for leisure and tourism (Chapter 6), in the rest of the Southern Fringe the strategy was to attract tenants more befitting of the post-industrial image the city sought to project. This was particularly important as the City Council, and later the CMDC, encouraged the southward expansion of the commercial expansion of the city centre past the 'barrier' of the MSJ viaduct (this point is explored in detail in Chapter 8). British Rail—as well as later track authorities—hesitantly acquiesced to such endeavours with the understanding that this re-imaging ambition required increasing public sector involvement and scrutiny.

### *7.4.2 1985-1993: Refurbishment and Industrial Upgrading*

1985 was a major turning point in the management of Britain's railway arch estate, having particularly strong implications on the redevelopment of Manchester city centre. Despite British Rail being a publicly owned company, the BRPB became increasingly autonomous and entrepreneurial. In response to government pressure, they initiated a £60 million, 10-year program investing in its property estate. Through newly-established regional property offices in major cities (the North West's office located in Manchester), British Rail orchestrated a campaign to refurbish and remarket over 1,000 of its approximately 8,000 arches nationwide (Hendey 1987; Biddle 1990; Beecroft 1992). Clearly this was motivated by the desire to increase rental revenues, but also influenced by local and national urban regeneration agendas. British Rail was transitioning from the role of serendipitous

entrepreneur to a more active role, through which it engaged in partnership models with public and private sector property interests.

Through the late 1980s and early 1990s the BRPB systematised a particular refurbishment approach that was replicated throughout England and Scotland. Notably, as opposed to some later examples in Manchester, most refurbished arches were intended to remain as industrial and storage premises (Beecroft 1992). As in the earlier regeneration strategies for Castlefield, maintaining industrial uses was not considered a hindrance to general 'environmental improvement' at first: the post-industrial imaginary had not yet fully taken hold.

In most cases, refurbishment in more peripheral urban locations has tended (and continues) to occur in the same manner. In the refurbishment campaign of the 1980s, emphasis was placed on maintaining traditional uses while revising the image of arches as suitable for 'respectable' businesses:

> These programs provide premises at low rents for small businesses needing a fairly central location, usually for light industrial use or storage [...]. Arches receive attention as leases fall due for renewal, with emphasis on access, services, and improved appearance that attract a good class of tenants. (Biddle 1990, p.235)

The BRPB had already begun excluding certain businesses from the 'good class of tenants', regardless of whether or not they were capable of paying the increased rents following refurbishment: all motor repairers have been excluded from leasing refurbished arches since the mid-1980s (Biddle 1990). In this sense, industrial displacement was not only driven by regeneration pressure or market shifts, but by track authorities' desire to dissociate themselves from more stigmatised trades.

In the BRPB's streamlined refurbishment strategy, a formula was clearly evident. To create modern industrial and warehouse premises, the typical refurbishment process has entailed the installation of sheeting to limit water ingress, sealing floors, updating (or installing) plumbing, electricity and other utilities, and the visual standardisation of exteriors (see Figure 48). For the maximisation of visual effect and the minimisation of cost, such conversions have tended to be implemented in rows (personal interview with railway letting agent Daniela French, 2011).

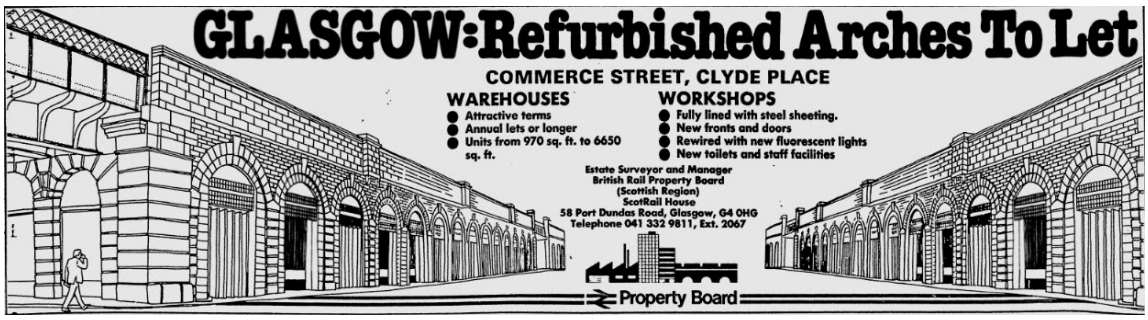



*Figure 48: 1985 BRPB ad. Image source: Glasgow Herald (1985).*

In Beecroft's (1992) guide to refurbishing BRPB's arches, the technical constraints for refurbishment are as follows:

> It is extremely unusual to be able to make changes to the viaduct structure…. This can make it difficult to improve internal layouts and create fire escape routes…. Railway engineers are required to inspect the structure periodically to ensure that it remains in safe condition. For this reason it is not acceptable to erect any structure that permanently conceals the brickwork…. These restrictions taken together severely limit the methods and materials that can be used to refurbish arches. (pp.350–351)

With these constraints, coupled with formulaic processes of refurbishment, the transformation of traditional lock-ups to modern industrial premises entailed widespread aesthetic standardisation (the aesthetic strategies of railway arch refurbishment are explored further in relation to the symbolic economy of gentrification in Chapter 9). Through refurbishment, the BRPB was able to immediately raise rents in some cities by 25 to 50 per cent (Rantell 1985), more than offsetting the costs required for refurbishment. With such knowledge, regional offices of BRBR increasingly reviewed which urban districts were suitable for refurbishment, using criteria focused on access to major roads, proximity to city centres and railway stations, and existing regeneration initiatives. This also stimulated the re-evaluation of which types of businesses to seek out as tenants, including the possibilities for attracting higher-yielding use classes such as leisure (O'Brien 1992).

In certain locales, railway arch refurbishment proved to be a justifiable expenditure for the track authority, as pilot initiatives had demonstrated a sufficient return on investments (Biddle 1990). However, addressing the superficial conditions of viaducts themselves was rarely justifiable, as the outward appearance of these structures played no role in their structural integrity in supporting the railway (personal interview, Keith

Lumley, 2011). As Lumley illustrates, this has been a longstanding and unresolved point of contention between city councils and the track authority:

> *We quite often get councils complaining to us about scruffy bridges needing a new coat of paint. Perfectly true—there are some bridges in town centres, for example, that do need a coat of paint because they're rusting, but structurally they're sound. They're fit for the purpose as far as running trains is concerned. And that's where most of our money must go. So, sorry mister Councillor, it might not look very attractive, but that's what you're going to get…. We've got more arches than we can actually deal with… so what are we going to do with them? We're not going to spend a great deal of money on them, because they don't earn us any money anyway.* (personal interview, 2011)

Like much of the rest of the industrial era architecture of Manchester, viaducts tended to be darkened by soot and automobile exhaust (Crompton 2012): a material residual of the city's past. Until the mid-1980's there is no record of any completed initiatives to make purely cosmetic repairs to railway viaducts, though bridges have been painted decoratively since the late 1970s (Kaukas 1983).

The BRPB were typically unwilling or unable to justify purely cosmetic improvements to railway infrastructure, but they were increasingly conscious of the negative image of railway arch properties and how this might effect their bottom line. Hendey (1987, p.38) noted:

> Over the years railway arches have acquired a somewhat dubious image—notoriously as the haunt of car-breakers and such small-time operations. Due to the extent of the properties, little has been done to improve the environment and the typical arch was generating a below-potential rent.

Early refurbishment strategies were driven by a variety of motivations: to make overdue updates to facilities, to increase rental revenue, and to revise the public image of railway arch properties. Above all, these shifting priorities were attributable to increasing pressure from various local authorities seeking the regeneration of formerly industrial urban districts, such as Manchester. Rather than resisting, British Rail began entering public-private partnerships in Manchester by the mid-1980s.

According to Biddle (1990), railway arch improvement schemes drew over £3 million per year from local authorities and the European Regional Development Fund (p.235). Manchester was a forerunner in this regard: by the mid-1980s, as the city council

shifted its economic competitiveness agenda under the motto 'Making it Happen' (Hebbert 2010), they began to actively support refurbishment and environmental improvement initiatives. A major project involved the subsidy of the cleaning and repointing of the MSJ viaduct along WSW (Parkinson-Bailey 2000, p.214). Here, along with the Gaythorn site (see Chapter 8), have been the subject of successive redesign and refurbishment initiatives since this period, when MCC and British Rail began a joint initiative focused on "trying to improve the appearances of, and activities within, railway arches" which "were perceived as being these areas of blight, rightly or wrongly" (Personal Interview with David Roscoe, 2011). This period saw the first clear examples of what has been a slow, but ongoing, process of transition on WSW: a combination of converting the traditionally industrial usages of the railway arches, such as auto repair and industrial fabrication, to office, showroom, cultural and leisure uses (see Chapter 9). By this point, the Council was noting that "Car repair and related activities in the railway arches present an active but unattractive street scene"(MCC 1984, p.93) and encouraging a strategy to promote arts and culture for the area.

With the establishment of the CMDC in 1988, the conditions of viaducts and the uses of their arches were increasingly problematised. During this time, railway viaducts became clearly earmarked as major barriers to the revalorisation of the southern fringe, particularly along WSW. The CMDC's *Development Strategy for Greater Manchester* (1990) demonstrated a significant concern for the condition of the railway viaducts which were clustered among "semi-derelict sites, un-landscaped surface level car parks, marginal and at times disruptive business uses and underused dirty buildings (1990, p.6). The presumption behind the CMDC's massive environmental improvement strategy was that it would "give developers confidence to undertake investment within the area in the knowledge that the local environment will be improved and enhanced," which would "encourage people to live, work, and partake in leisure activities in the area" (p.6): in other words, to manipulate the symbolic economy of this zone.

While the viaducts themselves, like waterways and Victorian architecture, were considered 'assets' to postindustrial reinvention, the problem was that their arches were occupied. The CMDC's strategy toward viaducts was initially quite similar to the approach employed in Castlefield:

- ensuring links through the viaducts and opening arches where this is necessary on visual and functional grounds

- cleaning up and floodlighting viaducts and bridges in appropriate locations
- attracting appropriate new uses into currently vacant and under-used arches where this does not create unsuitable barriers to important routes or views (p.9)

Notably, this third point was not in the CMDC's draft *Strategy for Consultation*. While it cannot be surmised whose interest it was in to add the third point, it certainly demonstrates that there was an active push to displace businesses from 'under-used' arches from more than just the CMDC. For their part, British Rail was unwilling to open any of the arches they owned, claiming concerns for lost revenue and security concerns (personal interview with Nick Mullen 2012).

While the environmental character of viaducts and their surroundings was altered significantly during this period, the arches continued to be a nagging problem for the CMDC. Their 1996 *Gaythorn Area Framework*, completed for the transferral of planning powers in the southern fringe back to MCC, emphasised that:

> Many railway viaduct arches are in use as workshops, shops and restaurants. Although the majority are well kept and attractively designed, some appear run down…. This issue needs to be addressed. Cleaning the railway viaduct would improve the area's image and environment. (CMDC, 1996)

The CMDC had significant funds at its disposal and, based on its own criteria, achieved a great deal in reinventing the Corridor as a landscape for leisure, tourism, and office and residential development.

Another major policy shift that had strong (if not immediately noticeable) implications for railway arch properties was the emergence of the B1 use class in 1987. Under this new land use category, previously separate light industrial and office use classes were combined into one category. This regulatory mechanism had significant effect on the reuse of industrial premises, since it allowed changes of use without the requirement of planning permission (Kitchen 1997, p.109). While changes of use between light industrial and office usages were uncommon in 1980s Manchester, this practice became increasingly common by the 1990s.

## 7.5 Making Spacia: Privatisation and Strategic Shifts of Railway Arch Management, 1993-2002

In 1993, as the initial refurbishment campaign was approaching completion, the British railway was privatised. Operational infrastructure and properties were eventually taken over by a newly established company, Railtrack, in 1994, while redundant viaducts and stations were to be managed by a publicly owned trust, the British Railway Board, Residuary. Though outside the reach of this thesis, it is important to note that the 'private' nature of Britain's railways since 1993 is a matter of some debate (Haywood 2009): while privatisation fell within a wave of Thatcherite pro-market reforms and was intended to relieve the state from the financial burden of maintaining public services, the maintenance of the railway network has been subject to continuous government intervention and subsidy. This has led some to criticise Britain's railways as 'nationalised in all but name' (Elliot 2006.)

Privatisation boosted the track authority's capitalisation of its railway arch estate, indicated by the establishment of Spacia in 1998: Railtrack's semi-autonomous property arm. According to Lumley,

> *Far more was done [since the establishment of Spacia] than was ever done in British Rail days. I think going back to BR days, if we didn't need an arch we just left it. We weren't particularly bothered with what it was used for and how it appeared, we just bricked them up, boarded them up, hoarded them up […] and just effectively left them to rot.* (Lumley 2011)

The branding of Spacia and increasingly entrepreneurial refurbishment campaigns heralded the transition to structural speculation. In creating a separate brand and relatively autonomous management structure, Spacia dissociated itself from the role of railway arch landlord that the BRPB had held. By 2001, Spacia spent £20 million yearly on renovations nationally (Lawson 2001). The accelerated strategy is clearly indicated in Railtrack's 2002 *Network Management Statement*:

> Spacia is part way through a process of change: from a traditional landlord to a service based provider of small business accommodation and associated services…. The key to growth is the potential for capital investment to unlock significant income opportunities. […] Over the past 3 years Spacia has created or refurbished approximately 1 million sq ft of accommodation and

> this is radically changing the perception of its estate. […]. Most lettings are undertaken on short-term lease arrangements, usually up to three years and sometimes outside of the protection of the Landlord and Tenant Act. In April 2002 Spacia launched a new flexible letting package for its smaller customers, called Solutions, which offers index-linked rent reviews and more flexible termination and payment methods. (Railtrack 2002, Section 6, p.22)

Spacia saw itself as an innovator which would function more along the lines of an estate agency which specialised in the needs of small businesses, the fact that it dealt mainly in railway arches being circumstantial. As the name suggests, they were simply marketing commercial space. The changing strategies outlined in the *Network Management Statement* guided subsequent track authorities' approaches to their railway estate until the economic downturn of 2008.

Since 2002, the *Solutions* lease agreement—ostensibly created to allow more 'flexible' lease arrangements for tenants—also has made it much easier for Spacia rebranded as NRP in 2012) to deny lease renewals. The agreement makes clear that either the tenant or the owner of a railway arch property may terminate a lease agreement with three months notice (Network Rail 2012b). While some businesses gained from the flexibility of short-term leases, Spacia became more agile in its speculative refurbishment initiatives: this time, it was no longer focusing on refurbishment to retain traditional tenants, but converting railway arch spaces for office usage. Typically, upon terminating the lease of industrial and storage users, Spacia constructed new arched premises with fully glazed frontages, interior walls, and if the arches were tall enough, mezzanine levels with spiral staircases (Figure 49).

*Figure 49: The Spacia conversion of an auto repair garage into a letting agency, 2000. Image source: Len Grant.*

If previous strategies had been largely reactive to planning guidance and regeneration strategies, this new approach was proactive and speculative. Spacia estate agents were recast as Portfolio Managers, with their position increasingly focused on identifying which arches would be appropriate candidates for refurbishment to leisure, office, and retail uses (personal interview with Daniella French, 2011). Spacia began behaving as a property developer: it was no longer refurbishing arches with the intention of keeping similar uses, but actively displacing tenants in order to insert higher values uses into strategically located arches.

### *7.5.1 Network Rail: From Reluctant Rentier to Structural Speculator (and Back Again): 2002-present*

*Figure 50: Cover of Spacia Corporate Overview, approximately 2006. Image source:* Spacia (no date).

In the initial era of privatisation, Railtrack had outsourced its infrastructural maintenance to a number of engineering maintenance firms. However, a series of fatal accidents attributed to inadequate track maintenance—most notably the 2000 Hatfield crash—left the government with no confidence in Railtrack's ability to safely manage the country's

railway infrastructure. As a result, Network Rail was established in 2002: a heavily subsidised, state-sanctioned monopoly to replace Railtrack.

As a testament to Spacia's virtual autonomy, it persisted unaffected by this transferal of power. For its part, Network Rail sought to dissociate itself from property functions. Some interviewees employed by the company suggest that this was due to concerns about public perception: the concern was giving off the appearance that the track authority was overly concerned about property revenues and too lax in the maintenance of the railway infrastructure itself. By 2003, Network Rail attempted to sell Spacia outright, aiming to capitalise on the rental value of the arches to invest more on maintaining the rail network. Spacia was considered to be 'non-core'. This was not due to the fact that the arches were valueless, but quite the opposite: Network Rail hoped to generate £400-600 million from their portfolio of arches, which were taking in £70 million per year in rent, by selling and leasing back their arches or securitising them through bonds backed by rental incomes (Hirst 2003). Regardless, this action was ultimately judged illegal due to Network Rail's responsibility for inspecting and maintaining arches: they had to persist as reluctant rentiers.

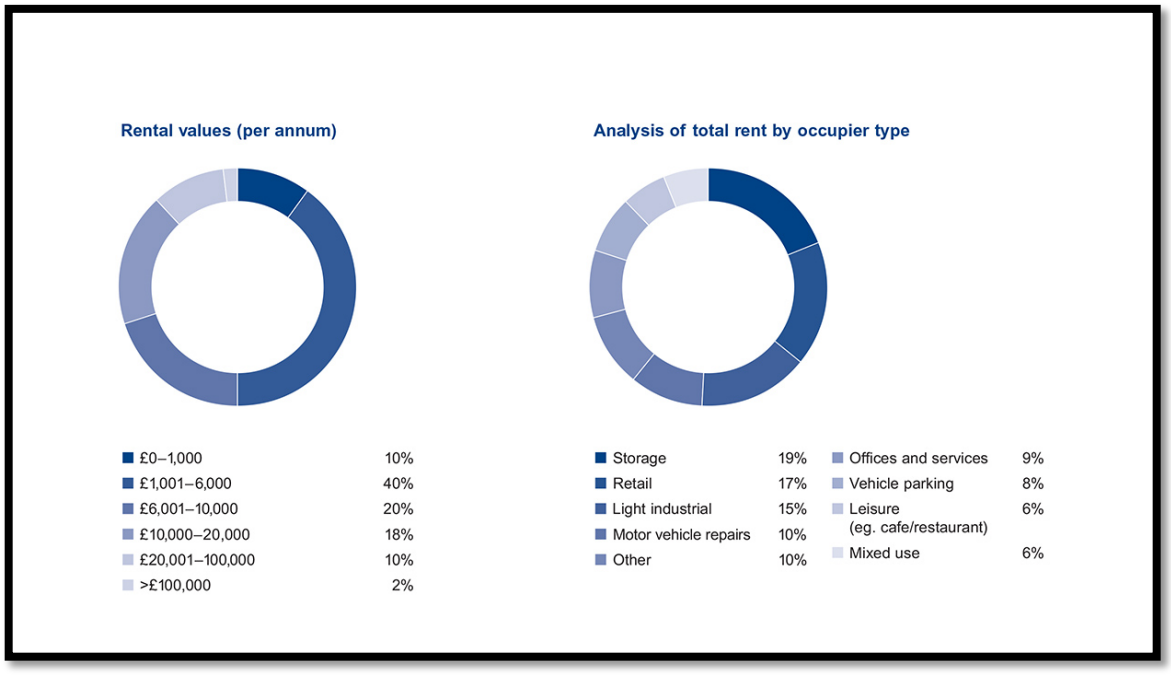



*Figure 51: Breakdown of Spacia's commercial properties by rental values and occupier type, circa approximately 2006. Most, but not all, of these properties are railway arches. Image source: Spacia (no date).*

#### *7.5.1.1 Examining the Slowdown of Railway Arch Refurbishment*

Despite office and leisure-oriented refurbishment occurring in railway arches along Manchester's southern fringe, it is important to note that changes of use were still the exception. As Figure 51 illustrates, as of 2006, over half of Spacia's property portfolio still consisted of traditional tenants: industrial, parking and storage. After successive waves of refurbishment campaigns since the 1980s, this raises the question of why all the railway arches in the study area have not been refurbished (see the photo Appendix). The process is still far from complete, even in areas that have been subject to considerable reinvestment.

Since the mid 2000s, refurbishments and changes of use occurred infrequently. While some refurbished arches have changed hands or been redesigned, new refurbishments in the southern fringe halted completely. According to NRP portfolio manager Daniella French (personal interview 2011), one reason for this slowdown has been that long-standing tenants, particularly in properties rented out at an 'unimproved' rate, are protected by the Landlord and Tenant Act of 1954. Under this law, any tenant who has rented a property for more than five consecutive years is entitled to compensation upon termination of a lease agreement. Terms of more recent *Solutions* agreement have increased the track authority's rights to evict tenants (Network Rail 2012, pp.15–17). However, with long-standing tenants, unless the track authority is certain of the commercial prospects to be gained from mobilising a 'redevelopment clause' or a third party foots the bill, they prefer to wait until a business willingly vacates or goes out of business. At this point, they decide whether to seek a tenant who wishes to refurbish the space themselves or whether they will make the conversions. As Chapter 9 emphasises, 'raw' industrial spaces with bespoke designs are highly sought-after commodities for arts and leisure-oriented tenants, with Spacia/NRP standardised post-industrial refurbishments being seen as unsuitably unique.

French explains that their strategies for refurbishment and change of use applications as such:

> *Changes would probably be initiated by changes in the market. […]. We did [terminate a lease] on New Bailey Street […], we had a tenant who had a garage and […] we moved him to a location that was suitable for his business […]. Then we turned that arch into a retail/leisure unit. It's not let yet, unfortunately, but that's what we've done […]. I haven't seen much [use of the redevelopment clause].* (Personal Interview, 2011)

French emphasises that they have relationships with their longstanding clients and that they attempt to find them more appropriate accommodations elsewhere, often in an arch slightly beyond the frontiers of industrial gentrification. A second reason for NRP' return to a reactive approach is evident in French's quote: if they pay a tenant to vacate an arch, only to find that the newly-refurbished property un-let, they have encountered a doubled loss in revenue. Therefore, much as in the 1980s, they are unlikely to refurbish a property unless it is in an area where public sector regeneration funds are available, or in an area where significant new residential or office development is occurring. This has been particularly true since the property slump associated with the economic crisis: in 2013, there are numerous refurbished arches around Manchester city centre that have never attracted occupants.

As one such example, despite constant marketing from 2005 to 2013, Spacia/NRP had been unable to let Arch 58 on WSW, despite constant marketing since 2005 (NWM Design Studio 2011). Upon the departure of its previous tenant, Laserquest, they gutted the space, installed a glass frontage, and painted the arch lining and floor white. This situation, at a highly visible site, demonstrates an unanticipated and debilitating issue regarding speculative refurbishment: when a traditional lock-up is vacant, there is no outside indication that it is unoccupied. However, when an arch with a glazed frontage lies unoccupied, it is very obviously empty. It visually indicates market failure, reflecting poorly on the track authority and its surrounding properties and discouraging them from seeking a more active refurbishment campaign.

While Spacia/NRP have tended to act more reactively since the mid-2000s, the company is attempting to revise its business strategy. According to Nick Mullen, NRP's Commercial Property Manager for the Northwest,

> *When there was a lot of development activity going on—which prompts regeneration within itself—we, as the custodians of the railway estate, tended to act reactively because we could do. We'd just sit back and wait for development to happen, we'd be aware of what development was going on in and around the viaducts, just through local knowledge and discussions with other people, and general research, planning, et cetera. But we'd just sit and wait. And then we'd kind of design the arch space around what developments were gonna be there. And there's good reason for that, because there's less risk.* (Personal Interview 2012)

In the period leading up to the financial crisis, this proactive search for sites to refurbish and change use were unnecessary, but the current strategy returns to:

> *Developers actually started coming to speak to us [saying] "we're gonna do this fantastic development, but unfortunately our occupiers are gonna be looking right over some really ugly-looking arches. So, what can you do? We're gonna commit to do this, what are you gonna do to commit to improve them?" […]. We're now having to take more risk if we want to grow our estate and invest in it and build income, because we can't wait for developments anymore, or if we do, we could be waiting ten years […]. We're trying to get a lot closer to local authorities, we're trying to get a lot closer to developers, we're looking at creating partnerships and working together rather than working in isolation […].* (Personal Interview with Nick Mullen 2012).

David Biggs, national director of property for NRP, has begun meeting with Manchester Chief Executive Howard Bernstein multiple times throughout 2012 and 2013 to discuss regeneration strategies for sites where they have large land holdings. These meetings regard a newly reinvigorated attempt to create a corridor focused on culture and leisure along WSW, much as the Council has been attempting for the past thirty years. Although unmentioned in fieldwork interviews, these discussions also clearly relate to future plans to massively reconfigure the area as part of the Northern Hub railway modernisation scheme (see Chapter 10).

## 7.6 Conclusion

Even in 2013, employees of small and medium-sized enterprises in Britain are more likely to rent from the current track authority, Network Rail, than any other landlord. In Manchester alone, Network Rail owns over 350 properties covering 1.3 million square feet, most of which are railway arches (Network Rail 2010). The sheer amount of letable railway arch spaces demonstrates that the track authority plays a major role in the dynamics of urban commercial property. This chapter has explored the origins of this peculiar arrangement, in which an infrastructure provider also functions as a landlord by default.

As a property owner and landlord, the track authorities' role in the reshaping of Manchester's built environment is highly unorthodox and without parallel: it is at once a letting agency, a rentier, and at points, a property developer. However, the primary remit of

the track authority has always been primarily focused on the maintenance of the safe and efficient maintenance of the operational infrastructure of the railway. Traditionally, in its limited attempts to develop its estate of railway arches, the track authority tended to provide raw, unfinished industrial spaces ('shells' or 'lock-ups'). Until the 1980s, through the industrial era and deindustrialisation, it tended to act reactively—if at all—to changes occurring around (and within) its properties: tenants would seek out arch spaces if they sought simple accommodations for workshops, warehouses, small-scale manufacturing, and various light industrial uses.

Track authorities' abilities to manage their railway arch estate has been severely limited for a number of reasons:

1- They have had a primary remit to ensure the safe and reliable operation of the railway network. For this reason, their limited budgets from state subsidy and rental revenue determine the amount of non-essential maintenance they can commit to environmental improvements and refurbishment.
2- Due to their primary obligations to maintain the functioning of the railway, track authorities must be able to regularly inspect railway arches for structural deficiencies, meaning that any interior cladding or built structures are required to be completely removable. This also means that track authorities cannot sell the land within railway arches: they become among the largest landowners in cities, taking the liabilities coming along with such a status.
3- Due to the history of railways in industrialisation, the popular image of railway arch spaces and the generally marginal location of railway lines, there has not traditionally been demand for railway arches to be used for anything more than lock-ups and workshops. While other former industrial buildings (or their land) could be sold and converted to new uses, this has not been the case with arches.
4- Owning little more than the land required for the operation of the railway, the track authorities have been unable to fully participate in the financialisation of land and speculative property development. Thus, their ability to generate revenue from land holdings has generally been seen as the least important element of the track authorities' responsibilities.

For all of these reasons, railway arches have long been considered tertiary as modern work spaces and continue to retain uses that had long since been displaced elsewhere the city centre.

From the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s, Manchester saw the manifestation of British Rail's nationwide campaign to refurbish 1,000 of its railway arches, upon pressure from a variety of public agencies pushing forward an agenda of urban regeneration and environmental improvement. As track authorities increasingly shifted from reactive to proactive responses to regeneration, they increasingly became active agents in the displacement of their traditional tenants. However, due to the risk involved in speculative refurbishment of railway arches, this strategy has largely died down since the 2005. Despite a great deal of refurbishment since the 1980s, including changes of use to retail, leisure, and office uses in the 1990s and 2000s, a number of railway arches in the Southern Fringe continue to house businesses that have otherwise disappeared from the city centre.

The circumstances of Manchester suggest that the refurbishment and reimaging of railway viaducts, as well the appearance and character of their arches, was driven primarily by public sector concern that their appearance was thwarting regeneration. The following chapter will explore how the viaducts have manifested as another sort of barrier in the postindustrial reinvention of Manchester's Southern Fringe. While the barrier described in this chapter has been primarily economic and symbolic, the MSJ viaduct has also appeared in the discourses of urban regeneration as a very material hindrance to the southward expansion of the commercial functions of Manchester City Centre.

# Chapter 8: Infrastructure as Barrier to Commercial Expansion: Reinventing Gaythorn

## 8.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the obduracy of infrastructure in the face of urban change (Hommels 2005a; 2005b). As Chapter 4 established, the MSJ viaduct had served to define the southern boundary of Manchester city centre since the mid-Nineteenth Century. The 'barrier effect' of this particular viaduct has long subverted the aspirations of the MCC, the CMDC, and property interests, to expand high value commercial functions of the city centre southward. The most impenetrable area of the Southern Fringe, Castlefield, had overcome these barriers through a costly design strategy focused on pedestrian permeability, environmental improvements, and industrial displacement. However, this task has been less successfully implemented south of the Corridor in Gaythorn, despite efforts since the 1980s. This was due to the ownership pattern of the railway arches and the fact that Gaythorn's landscape was insufficiently 'historic'. Transformation began with the erasure of all material remains of the gasworks that dominated the site—as well as the environmental contamination it had caused—to create a tabula rasa of developable land. For decades, this site failed to attract significant construction, ultimately making it the largest undeveloped site of the city centre.

Upon contextualising the history of the spatial and economic haemorrhaging of the city centre, this chapter explores the ways in which the 'barrier effect' of transportation infrastructure has been framed in the interlinking processes of policymaking and property development strategies. In regard to the financial success of newly developed districts on the city centre's fringe, questions of pedestrian and perceptual 'permeability' have long been seen as major issues. In the case of Gaythorn, the use of architecture and urban design to produce images of permeable infrastructural spaces are explored. However, the chapter demonstrates that the discursive construction of 'permeability' is one that relates to the permeability of capital. What emerges is a discursive and physical manifestation of a 'permeability fix' to enable the expansion of the secondary circuit of capital.

Through exploring the proposed redevelopment and re-imaging of Gaythorn through its aspirational branding as the 'Central Spine,' and later 'First Street', this chapter examines the various actors, processes, and strategies involved in creating representations of space. It is no coincidence that property developers speak of their 'visions' for a site and planners and architects organise 'visioning' exercises. These representations, few of which have ever left the page and materialised, demonstrate the increasingly entrepreneurial aspirations of MCC, along with a variety of investors, developers, and designers, in seeking these 'visions.' This presents a perspective to interrogate how railway viaducts have been implicated in the (re)production of urban space in Manchester city centre, and how they serve to delineate what the centre actually is.

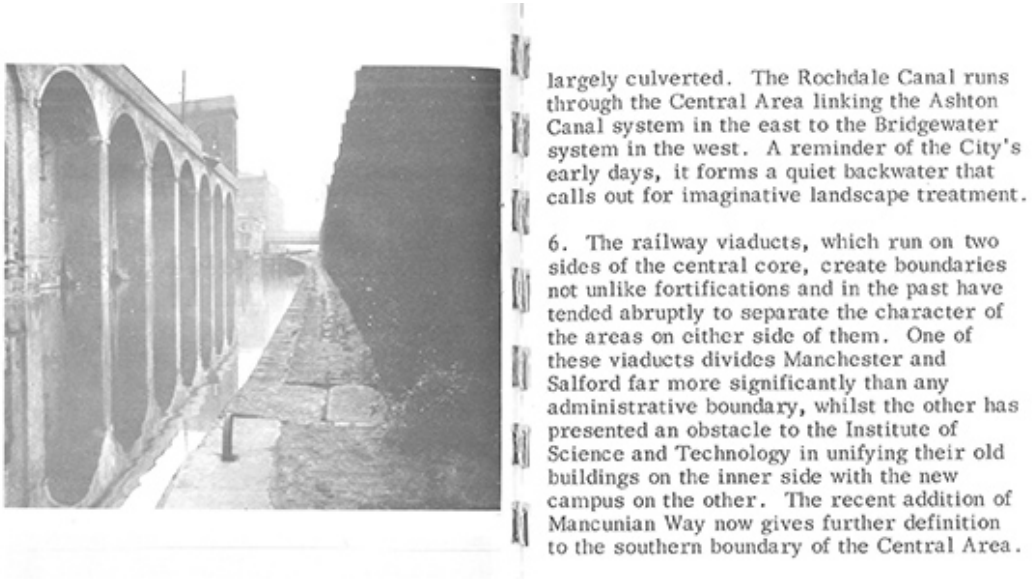
## 8.2 Where is the City Centre and Why Does it Need to Expand?

As established in Chapter 4, the fixed capital of the railway, so crucial to the city's industrial urbanisation, had long defined and delineated the centre as early as 1866; this was cause for lament by city officials seeking to promote southern commercial expansion. This process may still be read in the landscape of the Southern Fringe, particularly along Whitworth Street, where factories, mills and workers housing were usurped by opulent warehouses and offices in the late nineteenth century: buildings that became most emblematic of the city's financial fortune in the industrial era (Parkinson-Bailey 2000), and the first to be converted into loft apartments. The division between the south and the north of the viaduct was stark and resolute.

The first official definition of the city centre was, tellingly, imprecise; in the publication of the *City of Manchester Plan* (Nicholas 1945), it was defined as "the roughly triangular section between the Victoria, London Road, and Central stations" (p.183), an area of slightly less than a square mile. In its nebulous form, the outermost limits of the city centre continued to be defined absolutely by railway infrastructure until 1967. Notably, the new southern barrier of the city centre was itself a piece of elevated transport infrastructure (see Figure 52): the A57(M) elevated relief road (commonly referred to as the Mancunian Way). Though beyond the breadth of this thesis, recent years have seen the publication of excellent studies exploring the socio-spatial implications of the Mancunian Way on the city (Millington 2011; Brook and Dodge 2012), and it is also subject to

considerable discourse regarding its formidable role as a barrier between the centre and its poorer inner city (Mellor 1984).

The *City Centre Map* (1967, p.41) offered detailed analysis of the perceived problems of the deindustrialising city and strategies for redevelopment, noting lamentingly that "The railway viaducts, which run on two sides of the central core, create boundaries not unlike fortifications and in the past have tended to abruptly separate the character of the areas on either side of them" (see Figure 52). They were city walls by default.



largely culverted. The Rochdale Canal runs through the Central Area linking the Ashton Canal system in the east to the Bridgewater system in the west. A reminder of the City's early days, it forms a quiet backwater that calls out for imaginative landscape treatment.

6. The railway viaducts, which run on two sides of the central core, create boundaries not unlike fortifications and in the past have tended abruptly to separate the character of the areas on either side of them. One of these viaducts divides Manchester and Salford far more significantly than any administrative boundary, whilst the other has presented an obstacle to the Institute of Science and Technology in unifying their old buildings on the inner side with the new campus on the other. The recent addition of Mancunian Way now gives further definition to the southern boundary of the Central Area.

*Figure 52: The description and visual imagery of railway viaducts as boundaries in the City Centre Map. Source: City and Council Borough of Manchester (1967).*

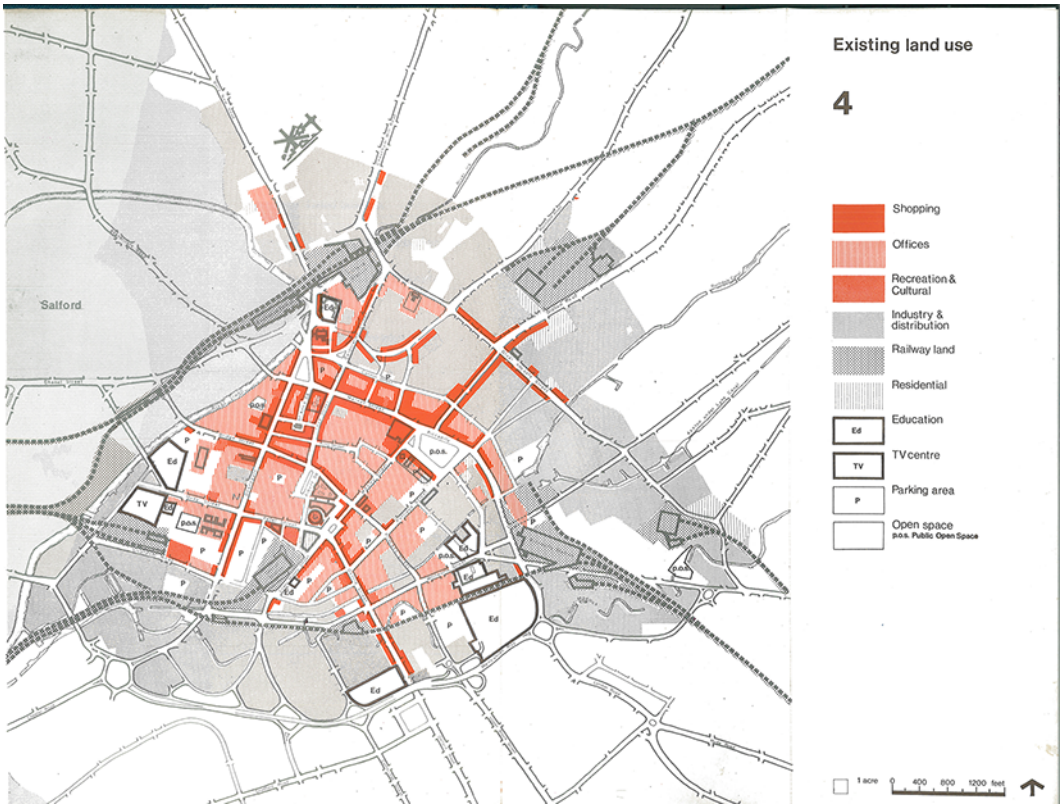



*Figure 53: The entire area of the city centre between the MSJ viaduct and the Mancunian Way were exclusively of industrial and distribution-based land uses, with the exception of the educational precincts and new BBC headquarters on Oxford Road and the newly built University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology campus. Equally striking is the clarity in which the railway viaducts hemmed in the zones of shopping, offices, and recreational and cultural uses of the city centre. Image Source: City and Council Borough of Manchester (1967).*

### *8.2.1 The Imperative for Growth: Economic Restructuring and Neoliberal Expansionism*

In the 1980s, the city was left scrambling to react to a neoliberal political landscape. As Harvey noted, political economic shifts in the 1980s spurred competition between cities to attract footloose capital, leaving "local coalitions having no options given the coercive laws of competition, except to keep ahead of the game" (Harvey 1989b, p.12). As Quilley (2002) explains, drawing on Harvey (1989a), Manchester responded to this political shift through an 'entrepreneurial turn': a rapid transition from a general welfare statist agenda for the city to one that embraced and encouraged private sector-led development in the city (Deas et al. 1999; Quilley 2002; Peck and Ward 2002). Strategies for development quickly shifted from an image of the city centre as primarily functioning as a service centre for a population that lived elsewhere, to a residential, leisure and tourist zone that would drive subsequent development.

In the CMDC's approach, 'growth' was understood not only as increased economic activity and capital accumulation, but also physical expansion: quite literally pulling the city's commercial core southward. The CMDC would have a number of financial and legal tools at their disposal to stimulate this process. According to the *Development Strategy for Central Manchester*, one of the four main roles of the CMDC was described as such:

> The Development Corporation aims to extend the city centre *both functionally and geographically* by bringing into its area new or under-represented types of economic activity, such as city centre housing and tourism and by providing specialist facilities for commerce and industry which build upon the area's location and complement current activities in the city centre. (CMDC 1990, p.4, *emphasis mine*)

With pressures for southward expansion, the presence of railway viaducts was a major concern. In the section titled "Built Environment and Conservation" of the CMDC's 1990 *Development Strategy*, the railway viaducts were the only physical structures to be specifically singled out as priorities. However, despite the CDMC's best attempts to overcome the barrier of the viaducts, the map of their area and sub-areas (Figure 57) show that the viaducts continued to be conceptualised as the boundary they were attempting to underplay. The black line, which represents the railway viaducts, constitutes the boundary between each sub-area, or the boundary between the city centre and its periphery, in the case of every area but Castlefield.

The decade following the handover of the planning powers from the CMDC to MCC in 1996, was undoubtedly the period of the most rapid economic growth, and physical expansion, of the city centre since the post-war era. In particular, this era saw an explosion of housing development, first through loft renovations, and later through new build housing complexes, with the new residents of the city centre being significantly higher income than those of the rest of the city. However, this city-centric approach to community and economic development was not producing the trickle-down effects that had been promised.

> The focus was placed on *opportunities* for growth, investment and development, rather than licking the wounds of employment decline and public-sector budget cuts…. Underlying this policy prescription was the belief that what was good for the central business district was good for the whole conurbation (Peck and Ward 2002, p.14)

Expansion, both in terms of Manchester city planner Graham Stringer's 'crane index' of high rises and lateral growth, was considered to be a self-evident indication of progress. By 2003, the city council and CityCo (the city centre's private sector-led Business Improvement District) boasted that

> The core rebuilding program at the heart of the Regional Centre has been the key catalyst for major private investment and new uses, which for the first time in decades has extended the economic boundaries of the city centre. (MCC & CityCo 2003, p.7)

By this point, MCC was expressing concerns that it was more difficult to assemble larger plots of land for developers within the centre: development had met a saturation point in its most desirable locations:

> Growth and development of commercial office space that is capable of meeting the market demands of international investors has been constrained by the lack of opportunities to provide strategic sites. There is a continued need to identify premium development sites that are capable of meeting demands of indigenous and new strategic investors. Regeneration initiatives… are central to strengthening and expanding the economic base of the city centre and its growing reputation as an international destination of choice for world class investors in financial and professional services, creative industries and other high value-added sectors. (MCC & CityCo 2003, p.11)

Since the late 1990s, the MCC has attempted to drive development in regeneration areas in contiguous zones outward towards the periphery of the city (personal interview with planning official David Roscoe, 2011). A prerequisite for this process is that each new regeneration scheme is necessarily contiguous to other areas in the city centre that have already undergone processes of market-led redevelopment. Many of the sites that were considered more difficult to develop, due to their peripherality from the city centre's core, existed in a state of regeneration limbo: they either contained the last vestiges of industrial activity, were the sites of large abandoned complexes, and/or were brownfield sites in need of remediation before they could be redeveloped. In all cases, tellingly, they were heavily influenced by the presence of railway infrastructure.

In the wake of the economic crisis since 2008, the expansionist imperative of MCC has only strengthened, even if development had nearly come to a standstill in the following

years. While, since the early 2000s, property development in the city centre was engorged with international capital and required little or no public subsidy, the financial landscape has changed considerably. The City Council, desperate for an opportunity to showcase Manchester as a dynamic city, has emphasised the need to continue its focus on the centre. These motivations are made quite explicit in the City Council's policy memos:

> Much of the expansion potential of the city centre lies in and around its southern gateway approaches and along the City South area. Historically growth opportunities in the area have been limited by poor quality local infrastructure and the sense of 'dislocation' from the rest of the city centre created by the barrier effect of the railway line between Oxford Road and Deansgate stations. There are, however, already a number of clear indicators that expansion of the city centre southwards is a deliverable ambition. Failure to achieve proper integration will result in only low level economic growth in these areas, fundamentally inhibiting the required expansion of the City as a whole. (Chief Executive Office, MCC 2008)

While the City Council is intent that the centre needs to continue to expand, where and how it will expand is something they have less control over. In practice, *where* the city centre expands is more related to where developers see a market emerging rather than where planners would like for it to happen. This is due, in part, to the fact that the Council owns a relatively small portion of the developable land in the city centre (Hebbert 2010). This subservience of the planning system to the private market is acknowledged by Dave Roscoe, the Planning and Development Manager for MCC and a planner in Manchester since the early 1980s.

> *Unless you work with the market, you'll never deliver change in a city, because the nature of the economy—and this is true for the past 10 years…. You cannot change markets through planning or regeneration processes…. Most outcomes, certainly in the British planning system, are market-driven rather than planning or regeneration-driven*. (personal interview, 2011)

By 2008, before the extent of the economic downturn was recognised, the city's aspirations for expansion had reached their peak. Figure 54 demonstrates that the entirety of what was considered the 'city centre' would, by 2015, become the 'core,' and that office-based development would finally, truly expand beyond the southern barrier of the MSJ viaduct.

1996 2008 2015

*Figure 54: An image of Manchester City Centre's 'Evolving Central Core' as consensually agreed by MCC, property developers, architects and surveyors as presented in the 2008 Whitworth Street West Strategic Regeneration Framework. The MSJ viaduct is the curving black line at the southern edge of the 2008 central core. Unfortunately, the image in the publicly available PDF is of low resolution. Source: HKR Architects et al. (2008).*

Working in partnership with developers in the creation of regeneration frameworks, is what, aside from accepting or denying planning permissions, gives the planning department influence. For this reason, the Council tends to develop frameworks for redevelopment in the pre-planning stage, virtually ensuring that all development in the city is approved (Hebbert 2010). Despite questions over the democratic accountability of such an approach, this is a way that the Council wields power over the nature of development in the city. However, part of this partnership model requires assistance in terms of assembling land, and often financial assistance, for returns which will be captured primarily by the developer.

The expansionist imperative and growth ambitions of neoliberal planning (Baeten 2012), evident in both the actions of the CMDC and the Council, are now up 'against a brick wall': the areas targeted for the expansion of Manchester city centre are, in nearly all cases, heavily influenced by the presence of railway viaducts (HKR Architects et al. 2008; Drivers Jonas Deloitte et al. 2010; AECOM et al. 2010). Their presence, as well as the historical patterns of industrial development along their corridors, is perceived by planners and developers to be what has held many areas back from the economic expansion that was prescribed since the 1980s; development 'pressure' had still not built up enough, particularly during an economic recession, to penetrate the barriers of the viaducts. This will become clear in the example of Gaythorn.

## 8.3 Reinventing Gaythorn: Attempts to Create "A New City Centre Neighbourhood" on the "Wrong Side of the Tracks"

*Figure 55: "Aerial Views, Hulme, Medlock Street District, Gaythorn Gas Works, Aerial view, Manchester," 1930. Image depicts MSJ viaduct diagonally from top right to centre left. Gaythorn Gasworks and MacIntosh Mills can be seen to the South of the viaduct, with the limits of the commercial city centre ending abruptly at the viaduct. Image source: Local Image Collection, MCC.*

### *8.3.1 Introducing the Site*

The immediate environment of Gaythorn is no stranger to environmental improvement campaigns: it sits directly next to the site of Little Ireland, the slum made famous by Engels, which would be largely demolished in the building of the MSJ viaduct in the 1840s (see Chapter 4). Knott Mill, directly to its west, as well as WSW to its north, was the subject of further slum clearance, road widening and station renovations in the 1890s. Nowhere in Manchester can the barrier effect of the railway viaducts be more clearly read than along WSW, which, at some points, is flanked on both sides by the elevated railways. The northern section of the site had been used primary as a gasworks for over 100 years until

1929, supplying gas to the entire working class district of Chorlton-on-Medlock. At that point, it was converted into a gas distribution centre, its landscape dominated by six massive storage gasometers that towered over the viaduct (Figure 55). Gaythorn remained an operational site for British Gas into the 1980s, when they began actively pursuing the sale of the property. Just southeast of the gasworks was a sprawling complex of brick factories belonging to the Dunlop Rubber company, which continued to operate until the year 2000.

As of 1984, when both the Gaythorn Gasworks and the Dunlop Rubber plant were still being utilised for industry, the City Council had not yet given up on a strategy of industrial retention on the fringes of the centre; indeed, they sought to keep the sites in industrial use with improved surface level parking provision (MCC 1984). With Medlock Street being one of the primary routes into the city centre from the airport and other points south, the Council encouraged the construction of a frontage of low-rise offices and showrooms, screening the industrial site from the view of motorists entering the city (Figure 56).

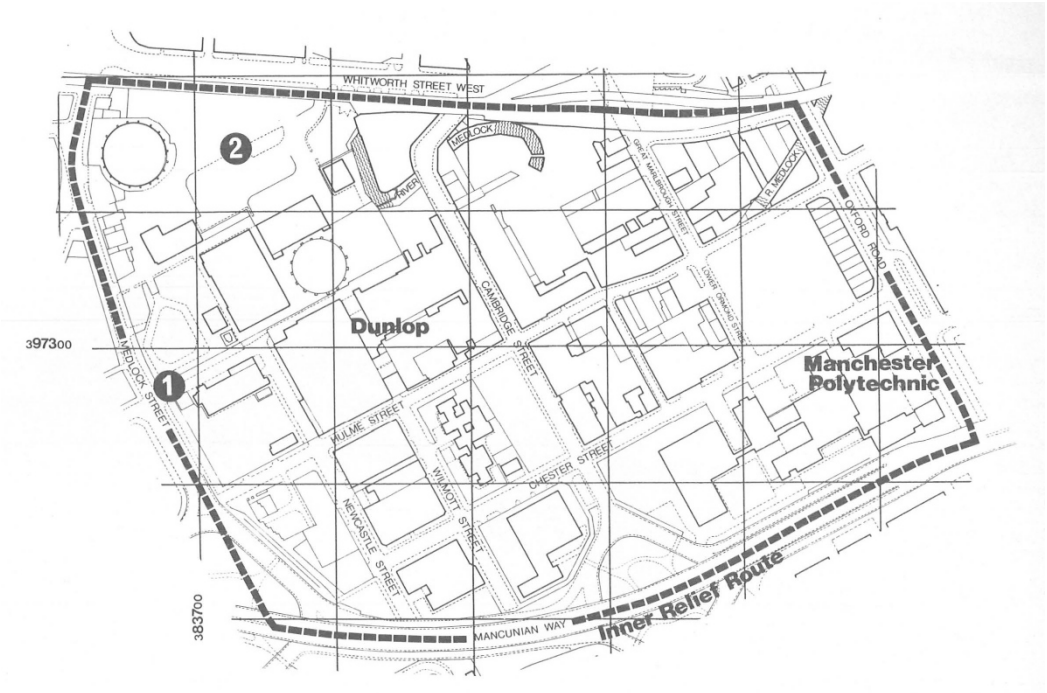



*Figure 56: Gaythorn sub-area of the 1984 City Centre local plan. Northern Boundary is defined by the MSJ viaduct. Image source: MCC (1984).*

*Figure 57: Planning sub-areas for the 1984 City Centre Local Plan. The MSJ viaduct not only defines the boundary between sub-areas 20 and 21, but also between 19 and 18, 22 and 23, and part of 17 and 15. Image source: MCC (1984).*

At this point, the separation between the Gaythorn site and WSW was near absolute: as indicated by Figures 56 and 57, the viaduct functioned as a boundary between the two small area framework sites, which were defined as having "their own particular character, atmosphere and range of activities" (MCC 1984, p.50), as well as the adjoining sub-areas.

At the interface of Gaythorn and WSW, there were few points to travel north-south; along approximately 500 meters, the only points of passage were through Great Marlborough Street, Cambridge Street and Medlock Street, the first two being long, dark tunnels passing underneath Oxford Road Station.

*Figure 58: The Gaythorn Site in the late 1980s, after arches were cleared but before environmental remediation. Image source: CMDC (1996).*

A growth coalition (Molotch 1976; Logan and Molotch 1987) was emerging in the area in 1987, consolidating in the non-profit Manchester Phoenix Initiative (Phoenix). Phoenix, a non-profit organisation of construction industry representatives, union leaders and property owners including British Gas, would unite in their desire to stimulate demand for new development. With the support of private sector investment and regeneration grants from central and local government, Phoenix commenced redeveloping "fine Victorian and Edwardian buildings of great stature," as well as "derelict sites providing overall an unattractive introduction to the inner city from the south" (Parkinson-Bailey 2000, p.356). Phoenix brokered talks between British Gas and BTR (the owner of Dunlop Rubber) to redevelop Gaythorn, commissioning local architecture firm Building Design Partnership (BDP) to create a development framework (Parkinson-Bailey 2000, p.227).

It was at this point, then, that pressure for property development finally 'hit the brick wall' of the viaduct. The following year in 1988, the CMDC would take over the planning and design of the area, adopting a revised version of BDP's design guidelines. In BDP's report, the bisecting role of the viaduct would be dissected in detail, approaching the barrier effect of the viaduct as a challenge that could be overcome with landscape design:

> Overcoming present barriers, such as the rail viaducts, with the creation of physical and visual linkages is an essential part of regeneration through the spread of activity. A good example is the need to bring the Gaythorn area into contact with the City Centre… and flow under the railway viaduct. (CMDC & Building Design Partnership 1989, p.30)

*Figure 59: A new walkway along the opened arches on Gaythorn site, circa approximately 1991. Image source: CMDC (1992).*

Much like in Castlefield (Chapter 6), shrewd property transactions in the 19th Century ensured that the owner of the gasworks property also retained ownership of six arches beneath the viaduct along the Gaythorn site. Upon BDP's recommendations, five of these

railway arches were punctured (Figure 59), with their auto trade-related businesses being displaced. According to architect Matthew Ayres, the sixth arch had to be left closed, as it was damaged by bombing in WWII and contained supports, rendering it unoccupiable (personal interview, 2013). In these five new apertures, British Gas and the CMDC installed a series of environmental sculptures called "Artworks from the Gasworks" (see Figure 61). According to the commemorative plaque mounted to one of the arches (Figure 60), the sculptures were 'historical reproductions' of hydraulic mains from 'a typical coal gasworks': a particularly postmodern twist on industrial heritage. The opening of the arches was very much focused on visual (rather than pedestrian) permeability; in all but one arch, railings prevented passage through the arches to the Gaythorn site. Aside from providing a thematic decoration and displacing some of the remaining light industrial tenants, this action opened the developable site to view, visually connecting the newly-branded 'Grand Island' site to WSW.

*Figure 60: Plaque affixed to the MSJ viaduct at the former site of Artworks from the Gasworks, 2012. Image source: Brian Rosa.*

To be developable, the brownfield site underwent significant demolition and environmental remediation in the early 1990s, dually financed by the CMDC and British Gas. The design strategy and its aspirational underpinnings were explicitly stated; what was required was:

> …drawing the Gaythorn area into a relationship with the city centre, allowing it to benefit from the expansion of the city core…. [T]he use of the existing railway arches to connect through the viaduct creating north south linkages through the City are pre-requisites for the successful development of the Central area…. The British Gas site represents a major opportunity once this area has a new relationship with the more buoyant areas north of

> the canal and railway. The use of the site for a prestigious building within a landscaped setting would contribute significantly to the changed fortune of the area. (CMDC & BDP, 1989, p.72)

In a sleight of hand, the site, which had been described as 'vacant', landed the British Council—a particularly high-profile tenant. British Gas had only vacated that year in anticipation of redevelopment (see Figure 62). The desire to construct one singular 'prestigious building' on the vast site alludes to the relatively low land value at the time. Such an extensive landscaped setting could serve as a 'meanwhile use,' replicating the image of an out-of-town office park on the edge of the centre.

*Figure 61: One of the 'Artworks from the Gasworks' installations, circa early 1990s. Image source: Aidan O'Rourke.*

While the landscaping of the site and the industrial era installations were intended to soften the harshness of the industrial grit that still predominated in the area, these landscape

interventions proved, in many ways, counterproductive to the desires of those who sought to see the area regenerated. The newly-opened arches became popular sites for skateboarders during the daytime (personal interview with Phil Griffin 2012), and landscaped fringes of the site provided shelter for homeless people living in tents (personal communication with Michael Hebbert). At night, the arches were popular with graffiti artists, who had covered the walls as well as the 'artwork'. Additionally, with the WSW strip being the centre for the city's clubbing and drug culture (see Chapter 9), the arches were presumably appropriated in myriad ways. According to Phil Griffin, an architectural writer involved in the art scene, skateboarders were routinely harassed by police, graffiti was sandblasted off the bricks, and eventually, the gasworks machinery were permanently removed (Tyrer 2000, p.24).

At the end of the CMDC's tenure it produced a regeneration framework for the Gaythorn area that was subsequently adopted by the Planning Department in the March, 1996 handover of planning authority to MCC. Already at this point, Gaythorn had been earmarked as a location for the desired expansion of the 'Higher Education Precinct,' focused on leisure, tourism, the arts and nightlife, connecting the Oxford Road area with Castlefield.

*Figure 62: Aerial photograph of British Council building and Gaythorn site with extant Dunlop factory awaiting redevelopment, circa approximately 1993. MSJ viaduct is located diagonally on the top left of the frame. Image source: MCC (1993).*

However, from that point, little development would be stimulated on the site and it would remain largely cleared. By 1997, the British Council had vacated the Grand Island building for smaller premises, and tenancy was taken over by British Telecom. With increasing development on the other side of the railway viaduct and the conversion of warehouses in Knott Mill into lofts, Grand Island was still peculiarly separate from the city centre. Indeed, it had the appearance of being an island, with one new building surrounded by a large landscaped area, and its only neighbours being abandoned factories, surface level car parks, and vacant land inaccessible by roads. It was only oriented toward the city centre, with no further construction nearby, yet still separated from the centre by the viaduct. The circumstances behind this relative isolation were not, however, indicative of lack of investor interest. To the contrary, over the preceding decade local developers ASK, armed with international finance capital through its partner Henderson Global Investors, had purchased the British Telecom building and begun assembling land around it (Hipwell 2007).

Central Spine, as the site was rebranded, was intended to be a development comprising of 5-10 storey office blocks and a number of residential blocks of up to 40 storeys designed by Ian Simpson and Associates (Skyscrapernews.com 2005). As described by Stephen Cliff, development director of ASK, " We're trying to bridge the divide between this area and the city centre…. At the moment when you get past the railway viaduct there's not really the same density" (Taylor 2005). Projected onto the ground of unassuming surface level parking lots were renderings of skyscrapers (see Figure 63). These aspirational images were picked up and promoted by local media; news reports emphasised that "both the developers and the council believe the complex, while will provide 3.2m sq ft of floor space, will become part of the city centre rather than a separate business park" (Taylor 2005). In the atmosphere of 2005, the height of city boosterism, Manchester Evening News gloated that the redevelopment amounted to "£700m to make the spine tingle".

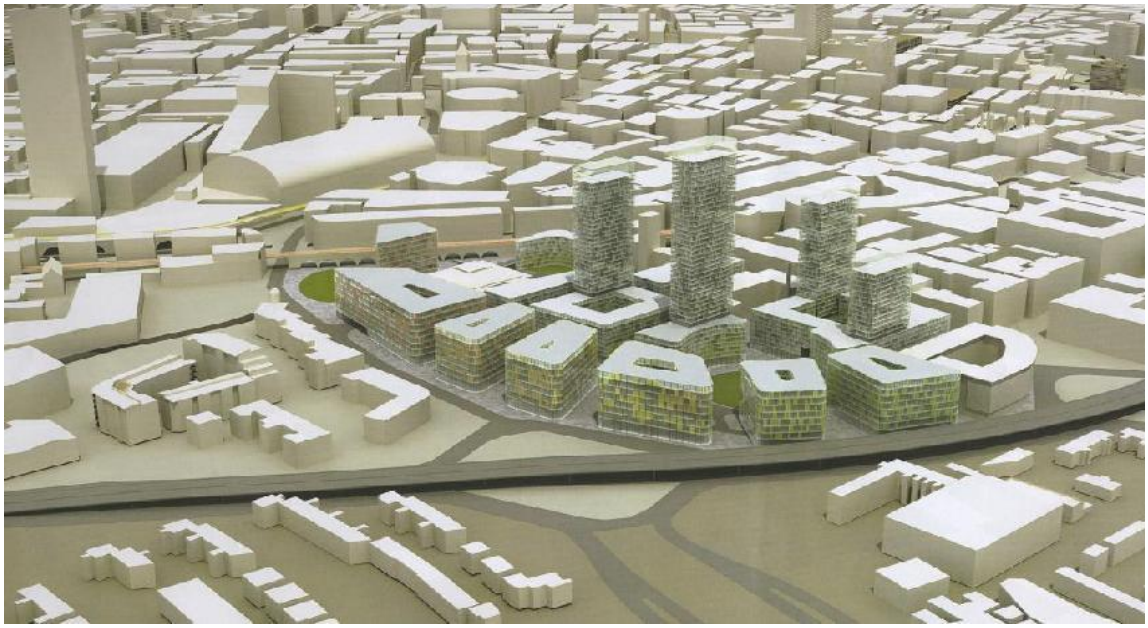


*Figure 63: Model of the proposed Central Spine development, 2005. Image source: FPD Savills (2005).*

What is most notable about this site is its huge scale: ASK had purchased land extending the entire territory from the railway viaduct to the Mancunian Way, the last large piece of undeveloped land in the city centre. The glossy images of Central Spine, however, were just images, and it was only one of many scenarios ASK had produced in response to market analysis. As exemplified by the relocation of the British Council, most of the large-scale redevelopment schemes along the periphery of Manchester city centre have been focused around securing sites for large-scale public sector investment, with the hopes of stimulating spin-off effects in the areas surrounding them (personal interview with David Roscoe, 2011).

*Figure 64: Later site plan of Central Spine, 2007. Image source: Squire and Partners (2007).*

While ASK was applying for planning permission to develop the Central Spine, it had also been partnering with MCC since 2003, seeking to win the bid for the relocation of five BBC departments and 1,500 staff to Northern England. ASK, the Council and the Northwest Development Agency announced their bid to create BBC Media Zone (Figure 65), a mix of offices, cafes, restaurants, shops and public spaces (Wylie 2006). In the process, the city had contributed over £1 million, offered compulsory purchase powers if ASK was unable to acquire remaining land, and approved £20 million in funding to support the BBC's location to Manchester (Chief Executive Office, MCC 2006). The Manchester partnership, however, lost the bid to another city council-developer partnership: that of Peel Holdings and Salford

City Council's Salford MediaCity (Wylie 2006). Projected onto these mostly-vacant lots were the interests of the Manchester City Council, adjacent landowners, and ASK and its international investors. These included the US investment bank Morgan Stanley, who had bought a quarter of ASK's interest in the site (Rose 2006). Among reasons cited for the BBC's choice of Salford were additional site remediation needed to deal with the culverted river, buried gas infrastructure, and the boundary created by the active railway line, causing poor pedestrian circulation (Chief Executive Office, MCC 2006). This was a major blow to the Council and ASK, and required further re-evaluation of the role of these viaducts.

*Figure 65: Rendering of Media Zone Manchester, 2006. Image source: Skyscrapercity.com, originally from mzmanchester.org.*

After the loss of this bid, a new approach to the site emerged with the MCC more heavily involved; it was now set to become a speculative office development and 2,000 residential units. Upon the departure of British Telecom in 2007, ASK re-doubled their efforts, refurbishing the site's only building and adding two additional floors; they also acquired an additional three acres of land to total 20 acres (Unger 2006).

As of 2008, the Gaythorn site was once again rebranded and re-imagined, this time to its current iteration, as 'First Street.' The unveiling of First Street demonstrates the

extent to which this plot of land existed as an abstract space and a product. The relaunch of Central Spine as First Street occurred as part of the Manchester delegation to Le Marché International des Professionnels de L'Immobilier (MIPIM), an international real estate conference, 'before a packed audience' (Barry 2008b). Since 2002, a delegation consisting of dozens of high-level city administrators, property developers, employers from Marketing Manchester, and local media boosters, have make the trip to Cannes, France to advertise the city's office and leisure products (Ward 2000). Manchester Evening News published sound bytes from Ken Knott, the chief executive of ASK, as well as Howard Bernstein, the Chief Executive of MCC, promoting First Street and its importance to the city. Knott proclaimed, once again, a re-tooled 'vision' for the site: "We are very excited about First Street, which we are confident will become a favourite destination for Mancunians and visitors alike. Our vision is for a dramatic new quarter to extend the heart of this great global city from the historic railway viaduct to the Mancunian Way" (Barry 2008b). Bernstein echoed Knott's proclamation in the logic of municipal entrepreneurialism:

> We welcome the energy and innovation which characterises this new vibrant initiative by ASK. Our continued capacity to deliver growth will depend upon bringing forward exciting new quarters such as this and we have every confidence that in working with ASK, the area will become a major part of an increasingly successful regional centre (quoted in Tinniswood 2008).

First Street, as imagined, was to be dotted with quasi-public squares and a tree-lined pedestrian promenade, 18 meters wide and 300 meters long, extending through the site (the "First Street" of the development's namesake). The development was initially intended to include 1.8 million square feet of office space, around 1,500 residential units, and 350,000 square feet of retail and leisure space (Tinniswood 2008). The First Street development even seemed to promote an image in which Manchester would no longer be affected by its famous weather: the new public relations website for the development was launched as www.nomoregreydays.com.

In May of 2008, Morgan Stanley poured an additional £20 million into the creation of the pedestrianised boulevard, in anticipation that this feature would draw additional investment into the site, of which they already owned a 25% stake (Doyle 2008): the public realm was be funded by a multinational property investment firm seeking to speculate on the future value of the site.

Aside from the refurbishment and addition of floors to the original building on the site, nothing would immediately become of the First Street vision. In the midst of the financial crisis that has severely curbed property development in Manchester, the viability of the entire project was called into question by investors and business-oriented media (Binns 2008b). With Morgan Stanley's increased investment, ASK was under additional pressure to attract tenants. Plans for the shopping and public space elements of the scheme were put on hold until ASK could find a tenant for the former British Council building upon its completed renovation. Knott was quoted as declaring that the property investment market had generated a 'disaster scenario' in which costs had risen, and demand for and revenue from commercial and residential property had fallen: "If values have fallen by 20 per cent and your costs have gone up, the question is of viability. No one is going to develop a scheme with no profit" (quoted in Barry 2008). Knott called for a 'creative solution' between the MCC, the North West Development Agency, English Partnerships and Manchester's major property developers, involving 'financial risk sharing' and the injection of 'real equity' by the public sector to prompt banks to increase debt funding (Barry 2008c). In other words, sustained speculative development in the city centre needed further public subsidy. The goal was to try to attract major investment banks as anchor tenants in the First Street scheme to convince these, or other, banks to release further debt funding. However, the distribution of risk was such that, by the end of 2008, Morgan Stanley held 80% of the £115 million cost of the first phase of the project, which was the building refurbishment. As Knott noted, "It's a big, big building and that is standing empty in very difficult market conditions and it would not be sensible for us to have taken that risk on our own" (quoted in Barry 2008). Knott emphasised, in seeing the crisis approaching, ASK had 'ripped up' its original plan and had 'de-risked,' refinanced and made a number of workers redundant, and would go forward on only pre-let schemes.

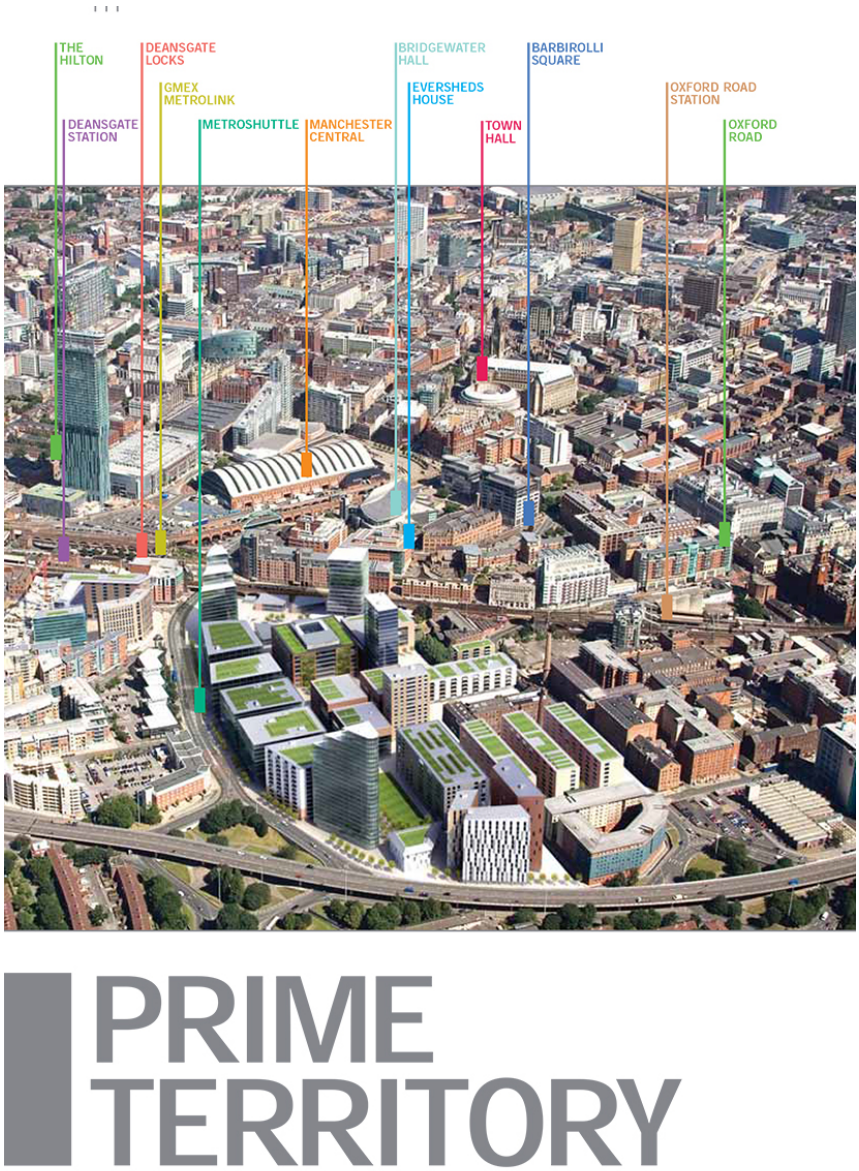



*Figure 66: Promotional brochure for Number One First Street building emphasising that it will be surrounded by tightly massed new buildings with green roofs, located close to important buildings of the city centre, 2011. Image source: ASK Developments (2011).*

In 2008, the role of MCC in the development of First Street become central to the trajectory of the site, with the announcement that they themselves would occupy the majority of the Number One First Street building. The Council had also been investing in land in the First Street area, and entered a joint venture with ASK (MCC 2009). With the planned three-year refurbishment of the Town Hall Annex, MCC relocated 1,400 staff to First Street from the beginning of 2010 until the end of 2012 (Binns 2008a), occupying five and a half of the eight empty floors (Fahy 2010). As a MCC memo emphasised

> This important letting will be the catalyst to encourage other occupational interest in the area…The Council's occupation of No. 1 First Street, the remediation already undertaken to the site, and the public realm improvements which are planned, will actively stimulate and promote the development of future phases—creating the conditions for capturing growth as the economy starts to improve. The proposals in this report should therefore be seen as another manifestation of the Council's role in leading the City through recession." (MCC 2009, pp.20-21).

The concrete for the boulevard of First Street, still leading to nowhere, was poured in March of 2010, with tree plantings and lighting completed in the following months; quite literally it served as a symbolic invitation to developers. Sculptures along the path went up in September. Around the same time, the Council and ASK began promoting public events on the 'public realm' sites of First Street: the grassy lawns that were to be the sites of future developments. Activities such as urban fitness 'boot camps' were encouraged, with the hope that these activities could bring increased attention to the site and encourage the surrounding residential and business occupants that the development was still underway (Rigby 2010).

Knott describes this process of addressing spaces dominated by railway infrastructure from a property developer's perspective:

> *I think understanding the barrier impact that those structures have had is terribly important, because only when you engage in the scale of that issue do you think most deeply and carefully about how you might overcome it […]. Once you've understood the scale of the challenge, I think it's then about surrounding yourself with the most talented designers, master planners, and professions to help you articulate a strategy which not only potentially overcomes the barrier, but almost celebrates the structure, and creates the proposition that will deliver the investment capacity that's been achieved on the right side of the tracks onto the wrong side of the tracks. And therefore you naturally take the city to a different boundary point.* (Personal Interview 2012)

Knott's comments are telling, as ASK has come to specialise in sites dominated by railway viaducts. Between their current branding and their previous incarnation as Westport, ASK has developed railway arch café-bars in Castlefield (Chapter 6), and Deansgate Locks (Chapter 9), and is currently developing an office complex which incorporates a viaduct at Greengate in Salford. Nearly their entire portfolio is focused around expanding the city centre beyond railway viaducts through public-private regeneration partnerships.

By September of 2010, MCC was coming under attack for its investment in the landscaping and public art in the privately owned First Street development. Anger was directed primarily at the city's £150,000 expenditure—along with European Union funding—on the sculptures flanking First Street. The sculptures were used by local Liberal Democrat councillors to demonstrate the excessive spending on decorative elements in an era dominated by cuts to public services (BBC 2010). The sculptures themselves were widely criticised on aesthetic grounds as well. Chief executive of MCC Howard Bernstein defended the expenditure, claiming "This is part of a much wider scheme to improve the environment around First Street, a major development which will create thousands of jobs and millions of pounds worth of investment in Manchester City Centre"(BBC 2010).

In November 2010, having already made significant investment and seeing no new development occurring, the Council unveiled its ambitions to establish an cultural institution on the First Street site. As part of their partnership with ASK, they proposed to build a yet-unnamed, purpose-built cultural facility, described as an 'under-one-roof art factory,' on the site closest to the railway viaduct, passing a £19 million budget to do so in November 2010. In the same week, ASK secured its first private sector tenant at Number One First Street: the Manchester-based marketing company Amaze agreed to move its 120 employees from Castlefield (Place North West 2010).

At the time of the writing of this thesis, Cornerhouse is still located at the corner of Oxford Road and WSW, with one freestanding building as well as a theatre that is located in a large railway arch directly below the platforms of Oxford Road station. The freestanding building, from which the institution gains its namesake, is owned by MCC (see Chapter 9). This complex, to be branded as *Home*, is under construction and set to open in 2014.

The proposed 'cultural hub' was envisaged to be a 'major anchor institution' that would "relate well to other similar activity along WSW and Deansgate Locks, and provide a strong people-based attraction at the 'gateway' to First Street" to "provide a crucial catalyst that could drive private sector investment in a range of leisure activities." (MCC 2010, Appendix A). The Council noted that there were two main reasons that First Street had failed to attract occupants up until that point: 1) its offering was 'over-specified' and was too pricey for the amount of facilities it offered and 2) it lacked amenity and footfall. Pedestrian permeability again became treated as a major unresolved issue at the Gaythorn site: access was no easier than it had been in the late 1980s. The cultural hub's "unique selling point" was to drive the leisure-oriented developments to the north of the site to

"capture and nurture new business opportunities that will emerge as knowledge-based activity continues to expand" (MCC 2010, Appendix A). In a newly produced development framework, this issue was addressed head on:

> Whitworth Street West is an important route and offers good connections and visibility to the First Street site but it lacks any great liveliness or street activity. Incorporating the arches of the viaduct into new development, bringing retail, café and entertainment uses into the gaps created by the arches, will effectively "pull" the site out onto Whitworth Street West to provide frontage and activity along it. A substantial redevelopment of the Oxford Road Station site, with entrances from Whitworth Street West, will provide a vital stimulus to this important objective. (ASK & MCC 2010, pp.36–37)

According to Dave Roscoe, Planning Manager for MCC, the 'barrier effect' is very real, and the reason that First Street was stalling was because valuers were not convinced it was part of the city centre. The problem, says Roscoe, is one of perception:

> *Those railway viaducts are fantastic components of Manchester's history…. But the truth is, throughout the city centre…they cause massive degrees of severance and they are large, imposing structures. For instance, down at First Street, it's a key part of the city centre, but because of the severance caused by the railway viaducts… the perception is that it's not functionally, you know, physically and psychologically…part of the city centre. So we've really struggled to drive investment around here, because of that severance that's caused by the railway viaducts. But that's perception—that's in the minds of … people who value land and people who advise people about where they want to locate—'that isn't part of the city centre.' Whereas, to our minds, it's very much part of the city centre and what we're trying to do is overcome those obstacles that are caused by those unreal barriers. But they're psychological barriers in the minds of people who try to drive investment in the city.* (personal interview, 2011)

A number of points can be drawn from Roscoe's comment: whether or not First Street is or is not officially part of the city centre on the council's maps is no assurance that valuers view it to be so. A city centre location is a marketable commodity within itself: it commands monopoly rent (Harvey 2001b). Ultimately, whether or not an area can command monopoly rent as a 'city centre' location relies not only on maps, or statistical calculations, or economic forecasts, but also largely on perception. Regardless of the site's proximity to the city's core, investors make risk calculations based on reputation and the prospect of a

significant return. Likewise, Knott emphasises that "A landmark new cultural hub with associated leisure and amenity retailing to augment the Number One building, its outstanding public realm and public art, will transform people's perception of this location" (quoted in Fahy 2011). In this, we clearly see how representations of spaces and the construction of discourse serve to re-image an urban locale.

*Figure 67: The First Street site as seen from the 23rd floor of the Beetham Tower, 2012. Image source: Brian Rosa.*

Along with new market analysis and a reconsideration of what sorts of businesses were likely to want to relocate to First Street, as well as what sort of amenities would make the site attractive, the MCC and ASK revisited the ways in which the Gaythorn site could draw people (and investment) in from its north. The cultural facility was one tool in this strategy, with the goal of drawing one million visitors to the site each year. The creation of a new destination, and the conceptualisation of First Street as a 'cultural and business quarter' (Cunningham 2011), meant that the site had been reimagined as a 'culture-led' destination, with capital (hopefully) to follow. However, to draw pedestrians in from the east and north of the site, the presence of the viaduct needed to be addressed head on; in many ways, this was a return to the same strategies articulated in the CMDC's work in the late 1980s. The

solutions to finding the right tenants was a matter of marketing and business acumen, and the solutions to generating interest were public events and a cultural hub, but the solution to the issue of permeability was architectural.

Various concerns regarding the barrier effect of the viaducts led to an addition being made to the original planning application, in which one arch would be integrated into a stage door entrance, meeting room and education suite for the *Home* complex. In addition Ian Simpson and Associates was commissioned by ASK to examine "how the site locks into the city centre to explore how the rail viaduct and arches could be turned into a positive connector" (Simpson 2012). In his presentation at the MIPIM property development conference in Cannes in 2012, Simpson went into great detail about how design might connect the First Street site to WSW, and the city centre more broadly. The following quotes are included at length, because they clearly demonstrate the connection between urban design and property development, particularly on a site that is isolated due to its identity as a wedged, leftover former industrial space between a railway viaduct and an elevated motorway. For Simpson, the goal is:

> *To establish a vibrant and successful east-west creative ribbon linking Oxford Road and the Corridor with Knott Mill and Castlefield […]. This is the ribbon in the city context: we would like to see a reworked Oxford Road station, with new entrances and connections […]. Opening up the arches and unifying the whole through a robust and elegant landscape, breaking down the barrier […]. New pedestrian routes through the arches, and between the buildings, supporting and enhancing the existing community of artists and businesses. Creative reuse of industrial structures […] could create a vibrant, mixed-use community and bring a derelict part of the city to life […]. A place for transaction and ideas, a bazaar complementing the commercial proposals envisaged for First Street, all connected and unified by opening up rail arches and new routes, a robust landscape and linking canopies. We can transform the existing fabric, improve visual and physical connectivity, create newfound places for the city. A threshold, not a barrier. A series of curated spaces with strong, clear and legible routes.* (Simpson 2012)

Simpson, one of the most influential figures in the reshaping of Manchester city centre (Hebbert 2010) and a savvy entrepreneur, has also been one of the pioneers in aestheticising railway arches as spaces of consumption within a post-industrial aesthetic (see Chapter 9). He interweaves the language of permeability with 'connections' that would 'break down the barrier' and 'open up' the site, with the arches as 'thresholds': active performers designed into the ensemble.

By July of 2012, the MCC executive approved £2.5 million extra to incorporate four railway arches into the arts centre scheme, with a cost of another £600,000 for associated enabling works (Linton 2012), which were approved, with groundwork starting in 2013. The Dutch postmodern architects Mecanoo were commissioned to design an iconic building for Home. Finally, upon the announcement of the arts centre, ASK began attracting additional occupants: the Spanish hotel group Meliá, a multi-storey car park, and high-rise luxury student housing.

The study commissioned by ASK and MCC for promoting permeability through the viaduct has remained confidential, and its strategy has not yet been granted planning permission. According to Matthew Ayres of Ian Simpson and Associates Architects, the process of "bringing the city down through it" would involve "puncturing" some of the arches, demolishing some remaining industrial buildings, and "dragging" pedestrians towards the First Street site (personal interview, 2013). This increased permeability would be combined with designed elements that would emphasise the "strong linear form" of the top of the viaduct and the "strong sculptural element" of the arches. As opposed to design approaches to Castlefield in the 1980s and 1990s, which had been focused primarily on restoration, the interventionist approach to the viaduct potentially included hiding the "fragmented" and uneven parapet on the top of the structure, or illuminating the outline of the newly opened arches with LED lights, emphasising their apertures: "that way, when you're here, you begin to get an idea that it is a space that's linked rather than just a passageway." The conflict in doing so would be twofold: tenants would need to be displaced, and NRP, who own most of the arches, are not willing to release their commercial properties in an act of goodwill to improve the public realm. This connects to the longstanding conflicts of interest between the track authority and the city administration: as property owners, Network Rail is only willing to lose the rental revenue from these spaces if the city or ASK as willing to pay to use the arches as rights-of-way or offer some other economic incentive (personal interview with Nick Mullen, 2012).

Further emphasising the economic rationale behind increasing permeability, the MCC and ASK development strategy explains that

> Whitworth Street West is an important route and offers good connections and visibility to the First Street site but it lacks any great liveliness or street activity. Incorporating the arches of the viaduct into new development, bringing retail, café and entertainment uses into the gaps created by the

> arches, will effectively "pull" the site out onto Whitworth Street West to provide frontage and activity along it. (ASK & MCC 2010, pp.36–37)

While the previous quote focuses primarily on the physical accessibility of the site and the opening up of railway arches to increase permeability to the First Street site, Simpson also describes ways through which the First Street development aims to overcome the visual barriers of the railway viaducts: for this 'new neighbourhood' to be considered viable, it needs to be clearly visible. Simpson's proposition involved placing a "rooftop display structure; a beacon" on the top of the four star hotel he is designing to "maximise the view of the cultural facility." Additionally, he emphasises the necessity of massing buildings that are tall enough to be clearly visible from the north side beyond the viaduct:

> *On approach from the south, the public square, the cultural facility, reveal themselves as a destination, a beautiful and inviting new place at the gateway to the city core. These sketches illustrate how visible the buildings will be in the wider context: the need for city scale to break down the barrier of the rail viaduct. Views… will act as a signpost, removing preconceptions and isolation and distance, reinforcing identity. (Simpson 2012)*

With First Street, then, the design strategy to support the property-led desire for expansion of the city centre through the viaduct, employs not only strategies for controlling the movement of people into and out of the site from specific locations, but also uses the height and massing of buildings, as well as flashing lights (literally 'beacons').

While not subject to much critical press, the relocation of the Cornerhouse as a carrot for the First Street development has been the cause of considerable controversy among small business owners. Arguments tend to rest on the sense of place created by the Cornerhouse: it had been a cultural hub for creative communities since the mid-1980s, was located at the busiest intersection to the south of the viaduct (Oxford Road and WSW), and its bar, cafe, and bookstore have long been popular with passing trade. Even the name 'Cornerhouse' was a response to the particular site where it was located. In the 1980s, the Cornerhouse had been selected as a site for an arts centre by the Council because it was intended to stimulate cultural production and consumption in the area. To critics, Cornerhouse was being used as a tool to draw attention to what would otherwise be a lifeless business park (Tolman 2012). Whether or not the management of Cornerhouse was pleased with the move to a purpose-built location at First Street is difficult to discern: while

press releases emphasised their enthusiasm, there was really little choice – MCC had been their landlord since 1985 and had offered their facility at a peppercorn rent.

A wrench in the works of the First Street development, is Network Rail Property's defiance to opening up the railway arches it owns as a right of way for pedestrians accessing the site. According to Nick Mullen, Network Rail's commercial properties manager for the North West:

> *Permeability and improving access and linkages [along the First Street Site] is something that we'll be looking at as part of the overall strategy for redeveloping those arches. The problem we've got is Sir Howard [Bernstein] would love us to open them all up and I'd like to open them all up, but they generate income for us…. So it's not an easy one…. What we tend to find with these access arches that are reserved purely for access and permeability is that they're put on a long lease to a local …they take responsibility for maintenance and lighting of that area, public liability, that kind of thing. And they'll pay, if anything, a nominal rent; 9 times of out 10 it would be a peppercorn rent. Any income loss that we suffer as a result of that scheme we'd have to make up somewhere else within the scheme, but also achieve more than we are getting now, because otherwise why do anything? You might as well just keep the status quo.* (2012)

Mullen suggests that the only way it would be feasible for NRP to accept the losses for the opening of the arches, would be if they were paid market price for the rental of the arches or if the council or ASK would be willing to give NRP land to allow them to develop their property estate.

> *Whether we can help Sir Howard achieve his vision is another thing because at the end of the day it comes down to bottom line…. The money's just not there anymore, so we've got to look at other ways of how we can deliver these schemes and really think outside of the box, such as maybe saying to the Council 'alright, you can't give us a financial contribution, but you've got maybe land you can give us, which we can develop out into something else or help us develop some of our other property, which will release value, which we can then offset against.* (2012)

Considering that MCC will likely be selling the Cornerhouse building to recoup the costs of First Street, his inference suggests that NRP and MCC are in negotiations over the Cornerhouse land directly next to Oxford Road Station, which is due to expand through the construction of the Ordsall Chord (see Chapter 10). With the MCC and NRP having a strong

working relationship at a number of sites in the city, it would be unlikely for MCC to seek, for example, compulsory purchase powers.

*Figure 68: Breaking ground for the construction of HOME, 2013. Image source: [www.homemcr.com](http://www.homemcr.com).*

## 8.4 A Barrier to Whom (and What)? The Permeability Fix

> In order to overcome spatial barriers and to annihilate space with time, spatial structures are created that themselves act as barriers to further accumulation… The effects of the internal contradictions of capitalism, when projected into the specific context of fixed and immobile investment in the built environment, are thus writ large in the historical geography of the landscape that results. (Harvey 1985, p.25)

As the Oxford English Dictionary defines it, a barrier is alternately "a fence or material obstruction of any kind erected (or serving) to bar the advance of persons or things, or to prevent access to a place." That viaducts have historically served as barriers and boundaries, playing the role of 'splintering' cities, has already been well established in previous chapters, as have some design approaches to remedying this condition. Planning policy and urban design have been employed as a remedy to the barrier effect of

Manchester's railway viaducts, but exactly *what* they are barriers *to* tends to be vague and multivalent.

In the British context, when spatial planning, property development and design discourse have addressed the barrier effect of railway viaducts, reconfiguration and renovation of these structures have been justified on the grounds of pedestrian connectivity or 'permeability,' defined as "the number of alternative ways through an environment" allowing "people to move around with greater ease and with more choice of routes" (RUDI, unpaginated, n.d.). Normative urban design theory has addressed the issue of infrastructural barriers since at least 1960, coinciding with the rise of urban motorway construction (see Chapter 2). For example, In *The Image of the City,* Kevin Lynch notes that "an edge may be more than simply a dominant barrier if some visual or motion penetration is allowed through—if it is, as it were, structured to some depth with the regions on either side. It then becomes a seam rather than a barrier, a line of exchange along which two areas are sewn together" (1960, p.100). In the proliferation of practice-oriented academic literature on sustainable transportation, transportation equity, and 'walkability,' the increasing permeability of urban fabric and mobility is often associated with alleviating inequality, increasing access to work, and economic development.

The discursive construction of permeability in Manchester is rhetorically driven by the desire for increased connectivity within the city and the encouragement of sustainable transportation, but belies an economic development imperative. This can be seen in both the Gaythorn case and the Castlefield case. If permeability is an inherently good thing that allows increased opportunities for residents to travel more freely and easily around the city, this begs the question as to why initiatives attempting to remediate the barrier effects of Manchester's railway viaducts occur only in very specific places: with the exception of a poorly-maintained footbridge connecting Hulme and Salford, viaducts have rarely been addressed as barriers outside of the lucrative city centre. The ease of pedestrian access is much less likely to be encouraged between socially marginalised inner city areas and the city centre than between the city centre and its frontiers of revalorisation. In this manner, the rhetoric of permeability and accessibility is not an assertion of improving universal access, but maintaining the separation of inner city areas from the expanding centre. In Manchester's case, the inner ring road (and especially the Mancunian Way) is repeatedly reinforced as the absolute boundary and barrier of the centre, with minimal interventions to ameliorate this socio-spatial dynamic. In most of the city, this is also true of its railway

viaducts. In effect, this demonstrates the instrumentality of permeability in encouraging the 'spatial fix' of capitalist redevelopment. As Harvey notes,

> Capital has to build a fixed space (or "landscape") necessary for its own functioning at a certain point in its history only to have to destroy that space (and devalue much of the capital invested therein) at a later point in order to make way for a new "spatial fix" (openings for fresh accumulation in new spaces and territories) (Harvey 2001a, p.25)

The promotion of permeability in relation to regeneration initiatives in Manchester focus narrowly on particular sites which have been earmarked for redevelopment, and that are perceived to be impenetrable due to their physical and perceptual disconnectedness from areas of higher property values. In this sense, what is at stake is pedestrian permeability, but more so, the *permeability of capital*. Architectural and planning approaches to permeability in Manchester, largely divorced from their normative value in increasing mobility and accessibility for all who use the city's spaces, are foremost enabling the expansion of development from the centre through opening physical and visible pathways to designated, consumption-oriented destinations. Thus, this practice could be defined as the 'permeability fix': piecemeal planning and design practices which aim to remove obstacles to pedestrian passage through an environment, in tandem with the redevelopment of sites designated for large-scale, consumption-oriented uses. Some barriers are overcome, and in the process others are emphasised.

Discrepancies between where permeability is and is not promoted also raises the question of whether pedestrian accessibility is an attribute that is universally encouraged in local and national planning policy in Britain. The permeability fix can be conceptualised not only as a tool to encouraging pedestrian passage into a certain area, but through actively retaining barriers to limit movement from one point to another. Urban design scholar and Spatial Syntax practitioner Tim Stonor draws attention to the 'permeability paradox':

> [A]lthough the role of space and the importance of the user are increasingly acknowledged in policy and practice, we are time and again seeing that certain principles are poorly understood and therefore poorly applied. The most common error seems to be in dealing with the concept of permeability, where the creation of connections per se is perceived by many as being a kind of panacea. In reviewing urban design projects, we commonly find too many connections, where once we would typically find not enough. Too

> much permeability can bring with it the risk of underused linkages. Access without use is a formula for abuse. (Stonor n.d.)

This 'paradox' of permeability suggests that too many barriers to movement in the absolute space of the city is a hindrance, but so is too much mobility: essentially, giving pedestrians too many options for passage or allowing access to the 'wrong type of people' serves to create concerns for safety, surveillance and policing. These issues are taken up in *Safer Places: The Planning System and Crime Prevention*, a report by Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Home Office:

> Too few connections can undermine vitality, too many — and especially too many under-used or poorly thought out connections — can increase the opportunity to commit crime. The right level and type of access, resulting in places that are both well connected and secure, is achieved through careful and creative design based upon local assessment. (2004, p.16)

The report singles out the residual spaces of the railway as prospectively dangerous and requiring vigorous design considerations in a 'well-defined movement framework" to "avoid creating intimidating spaces such as subways, footbridges, underpasses and areas below viaducts" (p.16).

The official assessment of pedestrian permeability in Manchester tends to focus exclusively on promoting retail, tourist and leisure uses of the city centre, rather than connecting the centre with its peripheral working class neighbourhoods. Transportation planning policy in Manchester suggests the following: "Planning improvements in the city centre for pedestrians will take account of key desire lines, with the city council working with developers and other agencies to identify opportunities for improving access by removing barriers to movement" (MCC and GMPTE 2010, p.33). The report fails to specify whose desires these 'desire lines' represent. If permeability is encouraged in some areas to overcome the barrier effect, then the avoidance of addressing accessibility elsewhere is, in effect, an endorsement of socio-spatial separation.

## 8.5 Conclusion

Since the late 1980s, and particularly since 2005, the Gaythorn site has repeatedly been reinvented and rebranded, with representations of space projected onto cleared ground.

The vastly changing ambitions of developers and various entrepreneurial public bodies, with the corresponding semiotic projections of collaborating architects, can be read like a bar graph measuring aspirations for growth. Low-rise, integrated public sector campuses replaced by speculative residential skyscrapers and offices for (a?) panoply of assumed tenants. And yet, as of 2013, ground is only beginning to be broken for the first new building on the site in over twenty years.

Currently, much as in the 1980s, the barrier effect of the MSJ railway viaduct continues to be blamed for the stagnant demand for office property on the 'wrong side of the tracks,' a dynamic which planning officials and developers blame on misperception. And again, as in the late 1980s, public sector funds are being poured into environmental improvements in the name of permeability and the relocation of a cultural institution in an attempt to 'prime the pump' for development. In this drawn-out process, the 'new quarter' of the city centre has become an increasingly desperate attempt by the City Council to demonstrate their continued dominance in business-led development, with First Street being considered an essential ingredient in retaining Manchester's competitiveness to attract footloose capital. Through a new attempt at a permeability fix, emphasising visual and physical connectivity through the viaduct, long-standing issues of the barrier effect re-emerge as a central frustration in the 'natural' expansion of the city centre, and the fixed capital of one period of laissez faire development causes difficulties to the expansion of speculative property development.

The language of property developers, as well as the MCC, is rife with loaded metaphors that suggest that development in the city centre is an inevitable process of inertia. Where designers and planners emphasise 'flow' and 'permeability' and the need to create 'thresholds' and 'gateways,' developers emphasise that the 'pressure' of development builds up and needs to 'penetrate' barriers. The viaducts represent impediments that halt the 'momentum' of the 'natural expansion' of the city centre. These are the spatial manifestations of urban policies that prioritise growth and focus disproportionately on the centre. These processes also tend to be predicated on displacement—yet another physics metaphor—though this is less readily acknowledged.

Clearly, in relation to the MSJ viaduct and its relation to the Gaythorn site, the barrier effect is both physical and imagined: to overcome it requires both redesign and re-imaging. What is particularly important, whether considering the material presence of the viaduct or the role that it is imagined to play in delineating the city centre, is that its role as

a barrier is primarily symbolic. The following chapter will demonstrate how the reimagining of the postindustrial landscape, as well as its attendant need to displace (or gentrify) remaining industrial usages, can also be understood from the position of changing aesthetic tastes and symbolic capital as consumed in the urban landscape. In Manchester, this is most clearly read in the railway arches of the Corridor, offering a backstory to strategies for revalorisation of this area since the 1980s.

# Chapter 9: Narrating the Symbolic Economy of Railway Arches: From Industrial Gentrification to Post-Industrial Aestheticisation

I did everything, everything I wanted to,
I let them use you for their own ends,
To the centre of the city in the night, waiting for you.
To the centre of the city in the night, waiting for you.

Lyrics from Joy Division's "Shadowplay," from the 1979 Factory Records album *Unknown Pleasures*.

## 9.1 Introduction

Manchester's early redevelopment efforts were driven by an emphasis on heritage-based tourism, leisure activities and the adaptive reuse of industrial era buildings for residential and commercial uses. However, east of Castlefield in the Corridor, industrial premises were also being transformed by the late 1970s, albeit for a quite different manner of cultural and leisure use. As in Castlefield, railway arches were essential spaces in the imagined and material transformation of this district on the southern fringe of the city centre. The uses and perceptions of the post-industrial built environment in the Corridor were considerably different, associated more with psychotropic drugs than walking tours.

The district's relative dereliction and isolation in the 1970s and 1980s served to enhance its cultural cache: it saw the emergence of a world-renowned clubbing scene revolving around punk rock, and later rave and acid house music heavily associated with drug use, between the late 1970s and early 1990s. Some commentators have described these activities as playing an equal or even larger role in stimulating this regeneration than any formalised strategy (Haslam 1999; Allen 2007). This is compounded by a curious trend in which many individuals involved in marketing, design, and more 'edgy' property developers (such as Urban Splash) trace their lineage to Manchester's music scene: what O'Connor has called Manchester's 'post-rave urban growth coalition' (quoted in Hatherley 2010)

Though exploring the centrality of new cultural activities in the Corridor and their importance in the narrative of renaissance in this area, this chapter aims to explore the

ways in which culture and aesthetics have been mobilised in the redevelopment of railway arches and their immediate surroundings, and the implications that these processes have had for the remaining light industrial uses associated with such 'fringe' locations. This chapter explores gradual changes of land use (i.e. industrial displacement) and social activities on a local scale, while expanding an argument concerning renewed interest in heritage and post-industrial aesthetics highlighted in Chapter 6 and the processes of city centre expansion highlighted in Chapter 8.

Having established the dominant policy of industrial decentralisation in Manchester city centre, and the expansionist rhetoric that has pervaded the City Council's strategies since the 1980s, it might seem redundant to belabour industry in a city centre that projects an avowed post-industrial image. However, the deindustrialisation of Manchester city centre's railway arches is still incomplete in 2013: light industrial businesses such as metal bashers and taxi dispatchers stubbornly interject. Railway arches are, indeed, among the very last buildings utilised for such uses.

This chapter not only traces the spatial history and cultural reinterpretation of these unique infrastructural spaces, but also intervenes in theoretical arguments about the nature and processes of gentrification. In doing so, it melds cultural (or demand-side) explanations of gentrification processes, narrated primarily through shifts of cultural consumption, lifestyle, symbolic capital and leisure, with supply-side explanations more readily associated with geographical political economy. These two modes of argumentation, often held in opposition to each other, are synthesised in a dialectical manner. Particular focus is placed on the entrepreneurs, property owners, developers, and the local authority in promoting an agenda of postindustrialism and reimaging along the Corridor. I highlight some of the more emblematic post-industrial establishments in railway arches and their immediate surroundings, focusing on the locational and aesthetic choices made by their occupants.

This chapter also aims to explore the ways in which railway arches are exceptional to more conventional conceptions of 'industrial chic' and adaptive reuse, and further develops arguments surrounding the particular difficulties of fully assimilating these spaces into the post-industrial when they still continue to function as essentially industrial structures.

## 9.2 Contextualising Gentrification

The main goal here is to identify the key currents in critical scholarship relating to processes of gentrification, and to suggest that the displacement of industrial usages for 'higher-order' land use, through a combination of market forces, economic development policy, and changing middle class tastes, constitutes a particular type of gentrification that has been understudied in geography, and in urban studies more broadly. While Chapter 7 had primarily explored the supply-side context of railway arch management and redevelopment, this explores concomitant cultural shifts as they played out in the reappropriation of formerly industrial railway arch spaces.

The meaning of the term 'gentrification' itself has seen considerable debate, from the spatial and substantive extension of the term to its usefulness and ideological baggage. In accordance with Ruth Glass's (1964) definition of the term, the process has been closely associated with the renovation of particular types of inner-city housing, such as Victorian terraces and Georgian townhouses (in the UK example), by middle-class outsiders (whether from within or outside that city). In earlier stages, gentrification is also associated with 'sweat equity', through which new owners with limited means work to rehabilitate their own properties, a process often met with the state's investment in environmental and service improvements. Along with these shifts often come changes in tenure from renter to owner occupation, inflation of property values, widespread renovations, and an increase in local amenities. As the term is most often used, it implies the displacement of lower class residents, usually from an older housing stock in or near a city centre, by more affluent incomers. This conceptualisation, which I will refer to as the 'classical' definition of gentrification, tends to imply *the displacement of residents by other residents.*

By the 1980s, however, the definitions of gentrification were up for debate. Among the earliest scholars to expand the term's definition was Sharon Zukin, whose seminal work *Loft Living* (1982) described a process of industrial displacement in Lower Manhattan, in which factories and warehouses were converted into residential lofts. Zukin noted that the obsolescence of these buildings as industrial spaces was often manipulated: many still functioned as industrial premises, but to attract the higher rents commanded by residential conversion, it was in the interest of developers to present them as out-dated and outmoded. With few exceptions, this manner of gentrification, the *displacement of commercial establishments for residential usage*, was not well researched until the last decade (Lloyd

2002; Hamnett and Whitelegg 2007; Pratt 2009). Still, as this process involved the residential rehabilitation of urban areas and an act of displacement, Zukin's example fits in as an extension of the classical definition.

As the use of the term has proliferated, more recent debates about its use have revolved around whether or not it is appropriate to describe processes outside inner cities, and whether it should include new-build developments as well as the more traditional refurbishment projects (Davidson and Lees 2005). However, as early as the 1980s, scholars such as Smith have contended that gentrification should be seen as a process with a much wider scope than simply residential rehabilitation and changes in tenure:

> It should be clear that we are concerned with a process much broader than merely residential rehabilitation… Gentrification is a visible spatial component of this social transformation. A highly dynamic process, it is not amenable to overly restrictive definitions. (Smith & Williams 1984, cited in Slater 2011)

Individual actors that saw value in the historical homes of working class district once led the process of gentrification, but this process has also long been instrumentalised in policies actively pushing for, and incentivising, gentrification of dis-invested urban areas (Rosa 2009; Rousseau 2009). In Manchester, as in many deindustrialising cities, this may involve the active promotion of former industrial, central locations to high-income groups to work, live, invest, and visit (See Chapter 6 for the example of Castlefield).

A central and ongoing debate regards whether gentrification can be explained primarily as a change of taste among some sections of the middle class (Ley 1996), or whether it should be considered as part of a larger political economic shift, conditioned by the roles of capital and state regulation in the encouragement of inner city development (Slater 2011). Production-side arguments often explain gentrification through dynamics of uneven spatial development of capital through investment and disinvestment in the utilisation of urban land and the built environment, drawing from neo-Marxist theories of land rent and the uneven development of capitalism. Investors and property developers, often aided by public agencies, seek out properties that have been systematically disinvested or rendered obsolete. A highly influential concept in this approach was Neil Smith's (1979) 'rent gap' thesis:

> The rent gap is the shortfall between the actual economic return from a land parcel given its present use and the potential return if it were put to its optimal, "highest and best" use. As the rent gap grows larger, it creates lucrative profit opportunities for developers, investors, and home-buyers. (Slater 2011, p.581)

With his emphasis on the devaluation of property on potentially valuable inner city land, Smith was particularly sceptical of demand-side theories of gentrification that stressed consumer choice and preference, arguing that the calculated decisions of property developers, investors, and realtors were the primary driving forces behind gentrification, with consumers coalescing to these changing lifestyles engendered in and marketed through these strategies (Smith 1996). This fact is not lost in geographical political economy: urban entrepreneurialism (Harvey 1989a) through flexible accumulation may have at its goal the revalorisation of inner-city property values, but this is achieved largely through 'culture-led' strategies. These strategies often co-opt, rather than generate, cultural trends. Therefore, to disentangle whether changes in tastes lead to shifts in markets, or vice versa, is particularly complicated and ideologically loaded. Still, there is significant data to suggest that the revitalisation of the Corridor was driven by cultural activity, some of which was difficult to commodify.

### *9.2.1 The Specificity of Industrial Gentrification*

Research on gentrification has overwhelmingly been concerned with residential renovation of the urban built environment. As previously noted, the displacement of industrial workshops for residential usages—such as loft conversion—is more commonly understood as a process of gentrification, and is also clearly an act of industrial displacement. I am using the term *industrial gentrification* in a more specific manner: the process through which a formerly-industrial area is actively reimaged by a coalition of elite actors, seeking to promote monopoly rent (Harvey 2001) through office-based employment, housing, and leisure usages of a particular locale, necessitating the expulsion of businesses which do not fit into this image. This is coupled with the projected increase of rising property values through change of use to non-industrial use classes: a process which requires the consensus of developers and municipal planning authorities. Industrial gentrification is contextualised within the entrepreneurial restructuring of post-Fordist cities as a whole (Harvey 1989a). It relies on market dynamics, but not exclusively: state interventions through changes in

land use strategies, as well as speculative development on anticipation of those changes, play particularly important roles.

Recently, a handful of researchers have explored industrial gentrification (Hutton 2008; Hutton 2009; Catungal et al. 2009; Barnes and Hutton 2009; Ferm 2011). What becomes clear is that, beyond the simplified explanation of industries shutting down or being forced to relocate due to an ability to pay city centre rents, a number of interrelated processes are at play. Industrial displacement has been explained by the influence of 'growth coalition'-style alliances between politicians and urban business elites (Rast 2001), the relationship between property entrepreneurs and the affirmative mass media (Indergaard 2009), and the absence of any political will for supporting the remaining industrial uses in cities (Curran 2004). All of these influences are evident in the case of Manchester's southern fringe.

Although still focused on residential conversion, the work of Curran (2004, 2007, 2010; Curran & Hanson 2005) is of particular importance. Curran examines the relationship between rezoning, industrial displacement and residential gentrification in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, but her work clearly illustrates the connection between displacement of blue-collar labour and gentrification. This is particularly true where Curran (2004) examines the persistence of industrial labour in an area where deindustrialisation is imagined to be complete. This has particular resonance with the Southern Fringe of Manchester. Curran identifies a process through which "gentrification is linked not only to the displacement of industrial uses but also to the degradation and informalisation of the blue-collar work that remains" (Curran 2004, pp.1243–1244), and that industrial premises in the wake of residential market expansion represent 'emptiable spaces'. Thus, the mere existence of industrial functions, rendered anachronistic and obsolescent through the narrative of inevitable deindustrialisation, becomes problematic to the gentrifiability of an urban locale. This is the same dynamic I have previously identified in the impediment that industry places on the post-industrial imaginary. According to Curran,

> Constructing industrial space as obsolete makes the removal of industrial factories and warehouses that remain in central cities, as well as the jobs they provide, in order to open up industrial areas to high-end uses a pragmatic response to global economic change…. Those industrial uses that remain are framed not only as obsolete but also as dirty barriers to progress and a more beautiful urban landscape. (Curran 2004, p.1245)

This argument stands in stark contrast to conceptualisations of (primarily residential) development of formerly industrial districts as 're-urbanisation,' arguing that such a process does not constitute gentrification if it does not involve the direct displacement of poorer residents from their homes (see Lambert & Boddy 2002, Seo 2002).

The following subsections explore the railway arches along the Whitworth Street West Corridor (the Corridor) as a case study to ascertain the processes through which industrial gentrification has occurred, exploring demand-side processes of revalorisation to interplay with the description of railway arch refurbishment previously outlined (Chapter 7).

## 9.3 Industrial Displacement as Entrepreneurial State Strategy: Tracing Policy in Manchester

By the 1970s, as has been demonstrated in Castlefield, a number of policy measures and comprehensive planning mechanisms were employed, which demonstrated bias against new development or retention of industrial usage in the city centre. This was concurrent with similar processes in a number of de-industrialising advanced capitalist counties (Marcuse & van Kempen 2000). MCC regularly mobilised compulsory purchase orders to displace remaining industrial uses from the inner city (Kitchen 1997). In their 1978 study of manufacturing in inner city Manchester, Lloyd and Mason (1978) calculated that 13% of all 1960s plant closures in the city centre were direct results of compulsory purchase, with a large but immeasurable quantity of other businesses vacating the area due to a lack of business confidence and dismantled economic clustering. Numerous plants continued to seek inner-city sites, and "plants moving voluntarily or involuntarily from inner-city premises showed a reluctance to leave their immediate area" (ib id. p.82). This industrial decentralisation disproportionately affected smaller plants and lighter industries. All of this sheds light on the dominant narrative of market-driven, near-complete de-industrialisation and de-centralisation of the city.

By the early 1980s, the residual spaces of the railway were among the last locations in the southern fringe to retain their character in the midst of massive decentralisation. In keeping with their ingrained cultural representations, railway arches seemed intractably obdurate in their industrial nature. Lloyd and Mason (1978) noted

> Where industrial uses were permitted to remain, they were often allowed only the least desirable sites (for example, enclosed railway arches, run-down mill premises, abandoned churches and schools) in the least attractive areas—fossilising in the industrial geography of the inner area some of the poorest industrial conditions of the nineteenth-century city. (p.69)

Here, railway arches stand as exemplars of the incomplete deindustrialisation of Manchester's inner city: they were imagined as residual spaces not only of the railway infrastructure itself, but categorised with the rest of the fixed capital of industrial capitalism that was quickly becoming outmoded.

One result of policy-led deindustrialisation and decentralisation, along with increasing speculative office development in Manchester in the 1970s (Parkinson-Bailey 2000), was that industrial buildings were generally regarded as nuisances and impediments to the modern reinvention. The amount of industrial era structures remaining for conversion in the 1980s and 1990s give a misleading impression of the widespread demolition occurring in preceding decades. Often, industrial structures remained to be celebrated as industrial landscapes only because they had not been considered worthy of demolition. Thus, the 'loft living' trend (explored later in this chapter) was only able to arise in the next decade because industrial properties had become so devalued that they remained standing through an era of speculative demolition and redevelopment.

A major legacy of this period was not only derelict buildings but also profuse surface level car parks. In many cases, developers demolish buildings with the motivation of simply capitalising on future land values of a site (Parkinson-Bailey 2000), providing a clear example of property owners seeking to exploit the rent gap. In the southern fringe, industrial and warehousing tenants were allowed to remain well into the 1990s; although they brought in less revenue than higher-value uses, they were still valued as renters when no other viable uses were foreseeable. Land, however, is one of the few commodities that (potentially) gain in value even if nothing is done with it (Cuthbert 2006), and even if it is degraded from its former use.

*Figure 69: "Whitworth Street West," 1964. Arches of the MSJ viaduct. Image source: Local Image Collection, MCC.*

The germs of revalorisation were already apparent in the late 1970s in attempts to reclaim Castlefield from industrial usage (see Chapter 6). WSW was likely one of the sites that Lloyd and Mason (1978) specifically had in mind in describing of the fossilisation of these 'least desirable sites' in Manchester (see Figure 69). The southern fringe, deemed too undesirable and/or peripheral for commercial redevelopment in the first wave of redevelopment, but the first wave of deindustrialisation north of the MSJ viaduct, imposing financial and regulatory pressure on the manufacturing and light industrial sectors, was wrapping up in the early 1980s.

### *9.3.1 From Industrial Displacement to Industrial Gentrification*

Through the 1980s and 1990s, many of the robust and ornate industrial-era warehouses, mills, factories and civil society buildings had converted into residences and offices. Formerly industrial buildings served (in the interim before the housing boom) as secondary

offices for businesses that did not, or could not, seek the monopoly rents of the urban core, closely mirroring a process in many parts of inner city London (Hamnett and Whitelegg 2007). Many industrial buildings and structures had already succumbed to demolition, and the canals had been cleaned up and pedestrianised through the efforts of the CMDC. In all but the most peripheral sites of the city centre, the railway arches were the last properties in which rentable space was available and affordable for small, light industrial firms. The strategic displacement of industrial usages can be clearly identified in CMDC's *Development Strategy for Central Manchester*:

> The relocation of industry will take place where this is both feasible and desirable […]. Because the Development Corporation's area lies at the fringe of the city centre, it has provided attractive for fringe type uses […].It is inevitable that the regeneration of the area will result in some of these fringe uses being displaced […]. The possible scale of displacement needs to be assessed and the possibility of identifying land or buildings for relocation outside the Development Corporation's area needs to be examined with the City Council and other relevant agencies. (p. 16)

As the CMDC was funded by national government with support of the municipal authority, using funds to stimulate the dispersal of remaining industrial usages and to encourage residential and leisure developments, these strategies represented was what Max Rousseau calls 'policy-driven gentrification' (2009).

The displacement of small businesses was not limited to light industrial and manufacturing firms: smaller, low-value commercial undertakings occupying formerly industrial premises were also displaced. A 1991 report, commissioned by the CMDC, found low support among established city centre businesses for new development due to, among other factors, "the possible displacement of businesses from buildings which might be refurbished for housing purposes" and "the perceived incompatibility with industrial development in a city fringe location" (Tym et. al. 1991, p.46). Tym found that while businesses were pleased about environmental improvements, parking provisions, and financial grants associated with the CMDC, "there [was] some evidence of concern […] about the potential future over-supply of offices and the displacement of businesses which might occur as a result of future housing development. As a consequence, there is less support for comprehensive redevelopment" (p.46). Even more striking was the aggressiveness of the CMDC in excluding any new industrial functions from taking place in their remit area (Tym et. al. 1991). In the two years since their planning powers began in 1989, 332 businesses

departed, of which 27 per cent were of the manufacturing sector, representing 25 percent of employment losses. Among incoming businesses, however, new developments and refurbished properties attracted 51 per cent firms occupying office developments and 44 per cent in hotel and leisure developments. According to the study, no new manufacturing premises were provided. Of the businesses forced to relocate, 47 per cent did so due to redevelopment or refurbishment of their premises. The business owners' fears about displacement through residential conversion were well founded: while initial post-industrial conversions and environmental remediation was heavily subsidised by the CMDC, by the mid-1990s these subsidies were no longer necessary. The CMDC had, by their own standards, successfully 'primed the pump' for new property-led redevelopment, primarily through residential conversion (Allen 2007). With increasing residential and leisure uses of this district and neighbouring Castlefield, railway arches were increasingly incorporated into the economic and aesthetic recuperation of the industrial landscape.

## 9.4 The Central Role of Culture and Aestheticisation in the Invention of the Post-Industrial Railway Arch

Through the 'image' of the railway arch, I refer to both with the discursive construction of railway arches and their commercial tenants detailed in Chapter 5, as well as their visual presence, which predominates much of the southern fringe.. As David Harvey emphasises, "The production of images and of discourses is an important facet of activity that has to be analysed as part and parcel of the reproduction and transformation of any symbolic order" (Harvey 1989b, p.355). Any consideration of the neoliberal restructuring of the city centre must pay close attention to the role of symbolism and aesthetics in this transformation. Notably, political-economic readings of urban transformation often under-emphasise the central role that visual amenity of the city play in the aspirations of regeneration. Images and visuality constitute a huge part in the narrative of regeneration, and elements of the built environment that seem disorderly, left-over, or illegible subvert the ideal of the regenerated city centre. This reimaging and reimagining of a renewed city centre, playground of leisure and consumption, is exactly the image that the city council, regeneration officials, and historical preservationists would like to project – a city that has reinvented itself while maintaining the historical pedigree of a former industrial prowess.

The shifting visual image and cultural imaginary of the city centre is integral to re-valorisation of what had formerly been portrayed as a doomed, industrial wasteland. As art historian Richard J. Williams notes, in the 1990s,

> for the first time in over a century, [Manchester] became an *aesthetic* project, both in terms of the architectural interventions by private and public developers, and of the reimagining of the city undertaken by political and business elites. What was at stake in each case was the city's *look*" (Williams 2004, p.209).

As a prolonged narrative of post- WWII urban decline was gradually replaced by a heavily visualised narrative of urban renaissance, a new symbolic economy was emerging; the city increasingly mobilised cultural consumption and their attendant industries through symbolic and material space. This could be described as the way that a (selective) image of urban life can be mobilised through sensorial, primarily visual, cues. As Zukin (1995) states, "the look and feel of cities reflect decisions about what—and who—should be visible and what should not, on concepts of order and disorder, and on uses of aesthetic power" (p.7).

The regeneration of Manchester city centre was, and continues to be, heavily reliant on design, both at the scale of individual buildings and of urban design and landscaping (Hebbert 2010). The rationale for this is laid out in *Towns & Cities: Partners in Urban Renaissance:*

> A major challenge for metropolitan cities has been improving their image. Manchester's renaissance partly reflects the city's stress on the importance of quality design in the built environment…. Manchester's interest in quality design stems from the realisation that the city could not count itself as a great European city and promote urban repopulation unless it explored new forms of urban development to make areas attractive to residents and investors (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2002, p.110).

The longstanding light industrial usage of railway arches along the Corridor were no longer deemed appropriate for the area by planners and developers. The uses that initially came to replace them, however, also provided challenges for the city. These activities projected a new image and stimulated new activities, but not in a manner that was easily inserted into a marketing brochure.

### *9.4.1 The Countercultural Narrative of the Corridor's Reinvention*

A parallel but deeply connected narrative about the regeneration of Manchester city centre, and particularly the Corridor, is that it was discovered and revived by a lively independent cultural scene, which had already achieved international acclaim (Haslam 1999). In this alternative scripting, more accurately a parallel narrative to policy-driven industrial gentrification, the rising cultural prominence of the Corridor pioneered a regeneration strategy focused on the arts, nightlife, theatre, and other forms of cultural (and sometimes countercultural) activities. In the following subsection, offer some contextualisation to the setting and mood of the Corridor, before exploring the specific implications this would have for railway arch spaces.

Unlike many accounts of gentrification of deindustrialising inner cities, which are familiarly scripted through an influx of artists seeking inexpensive living and/or working spaces (Zukin 1982; Smith 1996; Ley 1996), Manchester's cultural revival was centred around its music (and to a lesser extent, art) scene. The role of nightlife in processes of gentrification has received significantly less attention in critical urban studies scholarship (though see Chatterton & Hollands 2003; Talbot 2006; Hae 2012). Manchester, in many ways, seemed to balk the dominant trends for culture-led revalorisation of industrial landscapes. This Mancunian exceptionalism can be traced by briefly narrating the ground-breaking role that musical production, consumption, and clubbing have played in the socio-spatial changes and external identity of the Corridor from the late 1970s to the late 1990s.

To adequately narrate the influence of Manchester's music scene on the spatial, economic and aesthetic implications of Manchester's re-imaging requires an unpacking of some mythology perpetuated since the late 1990s—around the same point in which this outpouring of cultural expression had fallen from the limelight. A number of local entrepreneurs, involved in cultural promotion as well as property development (and often both), have developed a familiar script about the relationship between punk rock, raves, and the emergence of city centre chic. For example, the directors of the pioneering Manchester-based 'hipster property developer' Urban Splash (Spring 2006) place the birth of Manchester's renaissance on a particular date, the punk band the Sex Pistols' first Manchester gig in 1976. This gig, mythologised in films such as Michael Winterbottom's *24-Hour Party People* (2002) and a slew of documentary's on Manchester's music scene, germinated Manchester's home-grown punk scene, stimulating the establishment of a

number of local bands as well as the creation of the city's influential label, Factory Records. The 'post-rave urban growth coalition' of designers, developers and entrepreneurs, as described by O'Connor (cited in Hatherley 2010), leveraged and embellished their involvement in the Manchester music scene to lend cultural cache to the hip new image they projected onto Manchester city centre in the 1990s and 2000s. This narrative is important to keep in mind in the examination of this wave of cultural expression, which is at once deeply significant and retold to the point of hyperbole.

Doubtlessly, punk rock played a germinating role in the 'rediscovery' of the southern fringe during the late 1970s, and this activity was centred on the Corridor. Musicians begun to identify with the area due to the number of rehearsal spaces located in the former industrial buildings of Knott Mill. Among the earliest appropriations of industrial buildings by the music scene the conversion of T.J. Davidson's, a vacant mill, into recording and rehearsal facilities. This would be the site where a number of the most successful Mancunian punk bands, such as the Buzzcocks and Joy Division, would frequent (Figure 70).

Figure 70. Kevin Cummins. "Joy Division. TJ Davidson's Rehearsal Room, Little Peter Street, Manchester, 19 August 1979.". Image source: The British Council Collection.

Upon the commercial success of the band Joy Division and the subsequent suicide of the band's singer Ian Curtis, remaining members formed New Order. This band, along with associates at their local recording label Factory Records, collectively opened a co-operative, somewhat utopian venue and club in 1982 called Fac 51 Haçienda (the Haçienda). This club, which existed from 1982 to 1997, was located in an isolated, canalside building previously housing a textile showroom, and was wedged between railway viaducts on both sides. According to Dave Haslam, music journalist and DJ at the Haçienda for over a decade,

> *The Haçienda was, when it came to open, seen as totally out on a limb [….] You couldn't really have gotten much more out of the way [….] So that area of the city was already known to the music community, but generally it was a no-go area, it was under-populated—there was no reason to go there.* (personal interview with Dave Haslam 2013)

The locational choice for the Haçienda was self-consciously idiosyncratic, but there was some precedence for seeking a large, formerly industrial space to house a nightclub. The re-appropriation of de-valorised, industrial-era buildings for dance subcultures had been gaining momentum in New York over the previous decade (see Hae 2012), and Factory self-consciously imported this model to Manchester. As indicated in the record label's name, they associated themselves with the industrial decay that had come to represent Manchester to the outside world. This was a considerably different approach than those pursued in the cultural activities, which were re-animating Castlefield. Rather than museumifying the district, this early music and clubbing scene sought to reinvigorate a seemingly dead zone with new forms of production.

Notably, Factory's original intent was to move into an arched undercroft below Oxford Road railway station, and the final site of the club was completely dominated by a landscape of arches. According to Haslam, the arches were considered appealing to Factory because

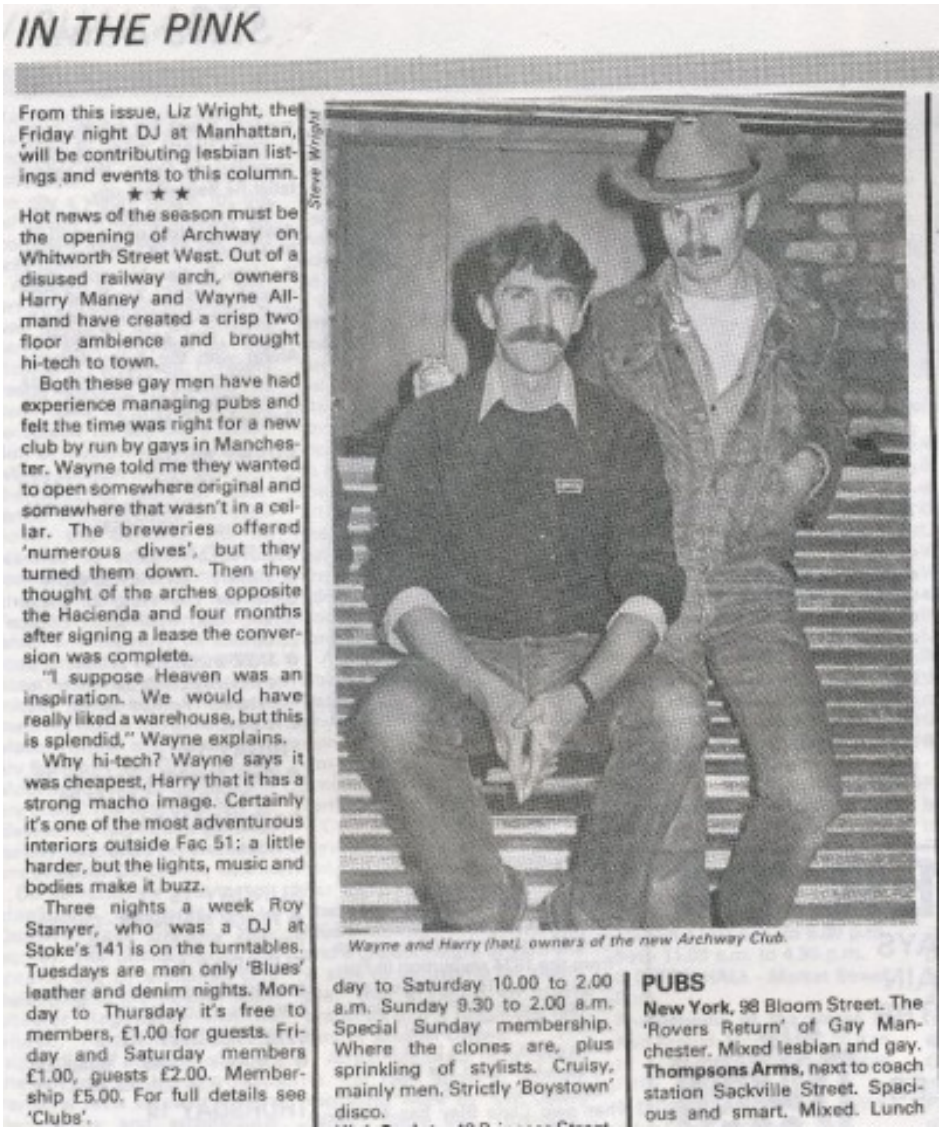
> *…they were seen as being dirt-cheap and in the kind of culture that I come from—music, art, maverick bohemian underground culture—cheap city spaces are where it's at […]. The bigger businesses and corporations want something that's glitzier and has good footfall. […It was] part of that mind-set that there is a little bit of a cultural cache to being somewhere that doesn't feel tidy and neat and controlled.* (Personal interview, 2013)

Haslam's comment draws out a juxtaposition between legibility and illegibility: in establishing a formal space for a specific non-industrial use, they ultimately enhanced the profile of the entire district, despite their desire to escape from mainstream city spaces. The Haçienda not only pioneered the post-industrial use of an industrial building in the area, but also the self-conscious aestheticisation of the post-industrial. The club's 'cold and minimalist' interior, a-historically re-appropriating a vacant industrial building, was a harbinger for changing tastes in Manchester. While it was considered brash and over-the-top at first, the interior of the Haçienda became undeniably iconic and fetishised, being recreated at least twice after the club's 2000 demolition: once, for the set of the film *24 Hour Party People*, and again for a 2012 exhibition at London's Victoria and Albert Museum. Property developer and café-bar owner Nick Johnson called this interior 'the genesis of the Manchester aesthetic' (personal interview, 2012). Recasting the supposed emptiness of the Southern Fringe by day, in the early 1980s, new nightclubbing spaces—both legal and illegal—projected a new cultural cartography onto a city that was in the depths of deindustrialisation and its attendant urban decay: a landscape that would, in fact, become emblematic of the angst, and reflected in the lyrics, of the punk and post-punk music scene (for more on this connection, see Grant Gee's 2007 documentary *Joy Division*). This music scene, which overlapped with a vibrant visual and performance art scene, began appropriating more inexpensive, large industrial spaces in the Corridor. Gaining international spotlight, the explosive emergence of Manchester's home-grown music scene provides the lineage of the 'countercultural' origins of the changing character of Manchester city centre (Allen 2007). In the process, railway arches began to play a central role.

Inspired by the popularity of the Haçienda in the mid-1980s, a number of other clubs, such as the Boardwalk and the Venue began opening in other vacant industrial-era buildings in the immediate vicinity. As formal and informal conversations with numerous members of this cultural milieu revealed, the emerging aesthetic appreciation for industrial spaces was not the primary motivation for appropriating these spaces, In fact, many individuals actively disliked what they perceived as stuffy and bourgeois notions of heritage emerging in the museumification of Castlefield. The choice to socialise in this gritty environment occurred for four main reasons, 1) These utilitarian spaces were simply the least expensive premises within walking distance from the core, the universities, and the Hulme neighbourhood. 2) Such a location lent them cultural cache and fit in with the oppositional, do-it-yourself punk ethic. 3) They sought to establish a social scene that was

insulated from the violence, conventionalism, heteronormativity, and dress codes of mainstream pubs and concert venues in the city. 4) Locating in a more peripheral, industrial environment meant that there were be little concerns over noise complaints or unwanted attention. Thus, countercultural and subcultural distancing was not only symbolic—in terms of expressions of taste through music, fashion, and lifestyle—but also spatial, in terms of appropriating particular urban locales as preferred sites of activity. However, with the success of the Haçienda and the overwhelmingly industrial character of the district, this cultural scene became increasingly aestheticised.

From early on, railway arches were among the industrial spaces utilised for gigs and nightclubs in the Corridor, particularly due to the laissez-faire attitude of British Rail towards the terms of their leases. The first post-industrial use of the railway arches on WSW was the Archway (1983-1986), a gay nightclub located across from the Haçienda. Within a large lock-up, owners Harry Maney and Wayne Allmand (see Figure 71) built a mezzanine level within an arch, creating a two-floor, 'high-tech' gay nightclub. They sought somewhere near the Haçienda that offered 'somewhere original' with a 'strong macho image' that wasn't a typical 'dive.' "We would have really liked a warehouse" said Allmand, "but this is splendid" (City Life 1983). Like the Haçienda, a former industrial space was selected upon its allusion to a particular image of the past, and was in part due to a self-conscious connection with a furtive industrial ambiance. In this case, the associations of railway arch spaces with masculine labour and transgressive behaviour were packaged into a subcultural niche. WSW, particularly after dark, was an ideal site to seek refuge from the eyes and ears of outsiders.



IN THE PINK

From this issue, Liz Wright, the Friday night DJ at Manhattan, will be contributing lesbian listings and events to this column.

★ ★ ★

Hot news of the season must be the opening of Archway on Whitworth Street West. Out of a disused railway arch, owners Harry Maney and Wayne Allmand have created a crisp two floor ambience and brought hi-tech to town.

Both these gay men have had experience managing pubs and felt the time was right for a new club by run by gays in Manchester. Wayne told me they wanted to open somewhere original and somewhere that wasn't in a cellar. The breweries offered 'numerous dives', but they turned them down. Then they thought of the arches opposite the Hacienda and four months after signing a lease the conversion was complete.

"I suppose Heaven was an inspiration. We would have really liked a warehouse, but this is splendid," Wayne explains.

Why hi-tech? Wayne says it was cheapest, Harry that it has a strong macho image. Certainly it's one of the most adventurous interiors outside Fac 51: a little harder, but the lights, music and bodies make it buzz.

Three nights a week Roy Stanyer, who was a DJ at Stoke's 141 is on the turntables. Tuesdays are men only 'Blues' leather and denim nights. Monday to Thursday it's free to members, £1.00 for guests. Friday and Saturday members £1.00, guests £2.00. Membership £5.00. For full details see 'Clubs'.

Steve Wright

Wayne and Harry (hat), owners of the new Archway Club.

day to Saturday 10.00 to 2.00 a.m. Sunday 9.30 to 2.00 a.m. Special Sunday membership. Where the clones are, plus sprinkling of stylists. Cruisy, mainly men. Strictly 'Boystown' disco.

**PUBS**

**New York,** 98 Bloom Street. The 'Rovers Return' of Gay Manchester. Mixed lesbian and gay.

**Thompsons Arms,** next to coach station Sackville Street. Spacious and smart. Mixed. Lunch

*Figure 71: Wayne and Henry of the Archway, featured in the January 1983 issue of City Life. Image source: MDMA http://www.mdmarchive.co.uk/archive/showartefact.php?vid=580.*

Before the nearby Gay Village was openly embraced and marketed by the City Council and the CMDC in the 1990s, "The older gay venues were furtive and seedy places" that "tended to be hidden away in liminal zones of the city, and indeed seemed to cultivate a furtive aesthetic" (Williams 2004, p.261). According to conversations with club-goers and written reminiscences, the spaces of punk rock gigs, straight and gay clubbing scenes of the 1980s and 1990s would have significant crossover. The Archway was also rented out for punk gigs in the mid-1980s. Haslam described the club as such:

> [T]he Archway was a hardcore gay club, rudely furnished, the tarted-up damp bricks and steel beams from the railway arch fused with a few cold metal rails, a small balcony and a DJ box suspended on the back wall. Nothing was fake about the Archway, just stripped down and very dark, a bit claustrophobic. (Haslam 1999, p.200)

Up to this point, there is no indication that anyone using railway arches for nightlife purposes sought these spaces due to the fact that they were particularly unique. Utilitarian, red brick, leaky premises, became associated with the Mancunian alternative clubbing scene largely by default. Railway arches were undifferentiated from other warehouses. This was further indicated by the indie nightclub that would open in the Archway's wake: it would be called the Brick House (1991-2011) before being occupied by Club HD (see Figure 72).

*Figure 72: Club HD, former home of The Archway, 2011. Image Source: Brian Rosa.*

The better-known association between railway arches and clubbing from the 1980s, in Manchester and elsewhere, was the illegal rave scene. As much as the Haçienda and the Archway postured themselves as 'underground' and transgressive, a parallel, illegal club scene was emerging. As Williams (1992) and Pike (2005) note, there is a long connection between 'underground' activities and spaces, within which railway arches have traditionally

been embedded (see Chapter 4). "Warehouse parties," a phenomenon in the mid-1980s centred on the band Stone Roses, were held in various arches around the fringes of Manchester city centre. The first of these parties was held in a railway arch on Fairfield Street, beneath Piccadilly Station, in 1985 (see Figure 73). A local promoter sought a venue for Stone Roses "to give them that mystique, that edge" (Robb 2012, p.140). The first "Flower Show" drew over three hundred people down a back alley to regroup at a secret location, the derelict Mayfield railway station. Still, the mere fact that these parties were named after warehouses—even though they were specifically hosted in railway arches—suggests that there were no major distinctions between railway arches as spaces unique to other damp, brick, former industrial premises which could be re-appropriated for temporary cultural uses. As informal conversations and participatory observation have revealed, to this day, railway arches continue to be re-appropriated for illegal parties in peripheral urban sites of industrial character, as well as more traditional warehouses and factories. I have found that to many Mancunians in their thirties and forties, raves are one of the primary associations they have with railway arch spaces.

*Figure 73: Photograph of a flyer of the Stone Roses' first "Warehouse Party," held in a railway arch beneath Manchester Piccadilly Station in 1985. Image source: http://thestoneroses.co.uk*

By 1987, the same year that residential refurbishments were first occurring in the area, the Haçienda was selling out four nights a week (with a capacity of 1200). The United States magazine *Newsweek* was featuring the Haçienda on its front cover, calling it "the most famous nightclub in the world" (Qureshi 2012). This period (approximately 1987-1991) marked the ascendance of 'Madchester,' as the new club culture was dubbed. To much of the rest of the world, the results of this music scene would be the recordings of 'acid house' music (and other variants combining rock with electronic dance music), the rise of the illegal rave, and the new cultural icon of the celebrity DJ. In Manchester, though, this cultural manifestation had a distinct spatial and temporal manifestation in the rise of new forms of nightlife.

*Figure 74: The Haçienda with the MSJ viaduct located to the right and, the former Central Station to the left, 1992. Image source: Aidan O'Rourke.*

### *9.4.2 Competing Images of Transgression, Pacification, and Indoctrination of Culture along WSW*

The Corridor had become known as the centre of innovative and alternative cultural expression (both production and consumption) in Manchester. This was not only true of the nightclubs, but also new cultural facilities within the railway arches beneath Oxford Road station. While by night he Corridor was the centre of Madchester, by day activity was increasing as artists, designers, and other creative practitioners increasingly comingled with the musicians who had originally claimed the territory. Before the language of 'culture-led regeneration' became hegemonic, a coalition of public and private agencies were encouraging non-industrial activities in the area with increased intensity. The City Council, for example, had been tentatively promoting WSW as an 'arts corridor' since 1985,

offering financial support and facilities for a new contemporary art, cinema, and café complex: the Cornerhouse. This cultural institution was (and continues to be) housed in two prominent and central buildings, The main building, a curved, five-storey Victorian building, had most recently rented out as a carpet warehouse. Cinema 2, across the station approach, was a large arch in the undercroft of Oxford Road Station, which had most recently been used as a pornographic cinema.

The Cornerhouse has had great influence on the cultural and social life in Manchester city centre (Turner 2005). It quickly became nationally renowned for its cinema, bookstore, and art exhibitions. Two years later saw the opening of the green room (1987-2011), an avant-garde theatre and live art venue that was originally meant to merge with the Cornerhouse, open in the two railway arches next to Cinema 2. According to Steve Curtis, Technical Director of the green room from its opening until its closure in 2011, the location of a railway arch was considered highly unorthodox, but the organisation chose this site for the location based on a number of interrelated factors.

> *It was the fact that we'd have Cornerhouse as neighbours, and also accessibility. It made sense to the Council for us to be here because we were obviously encouraging redevelopment in this area. Opposite us was an empty wasteland [...]. The City Council was willing to release funds [...] to help develop this, and they had the idea of regenerating this cultural corridor potentially, which encompassed various nightclubs, venues, and other cultural activities.* (Personal Interview, 2011)

Aside from the Cornerhouse becoming a well-renowned cultural centre, it also became know for being the first venue in Manchester to popularise cappuccino, and its café quickly became a social hub for Manchester's creative community (Justin O'Connor, quoted in Chrisafis 2001). The confluence of increasing daytime leisure usage of this former industrial area and related environmental improvement schemes was a particularly literal example of what Zukin (1995) has called 'domestication by cappuccino,' characterised by revitalisation and design-led strategies in which the public realm is improved while simultaneously expanding consumption behaviours and shaping patterns of acceptable behaviour in public space.

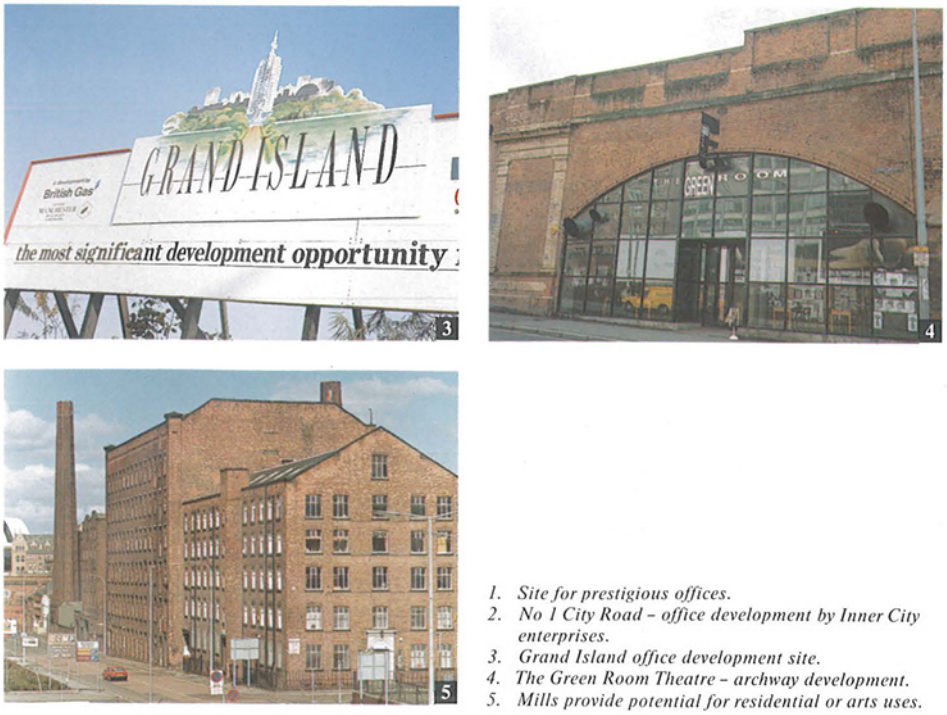



*Figure 75: Promotion of the Corridor as a "business, education and arts quarter," including the green room, in the CMDC's primary strategic document, 1990. Image source: CMDC (1990).*

BBC producer and music journalist Bob Dickenson evocatively illustrates the atmosphere of the Corridor's cultural scene in describing a conversation with a younger patron in the arch formerly occupied by the green room:

> You didn't used to go there, did you? To see all that *lefty experimental shit*? …. This person was a lot younger than me, and perhaps didn't remember Manchester before the first attempts at regeneration in the 1980s, when the Green Room, Cornerhouse and the Haçienda led the way…. All three of those venues took risks, and crossed cultural boundaries, mixing popular culture with avant-garde scratchiness, bringing people together to help build a new creative infrastructure for the city…. Experiment, rather than fast restaurant service, was what mattered. (Dickinson 2012, p.8, emphasis in original)

While the Cornerhouse and green room were funded by the MCC and the CMDC, they were deeply connected to more countercultural activities. The height of these interrelated activities was the 10th Summer of Punk in 1986, celebrating ten years of punk rock in Manchester and hosted at a variety of the new venues popping up along the Corridor.

The first of the cultural institutions along WSW were described by a number of participants as having a cooperative, rather then competitive, spirit. However, the funding

bodies and interested developers who facilitated the creation of these cultural institutions were increasingly framing their actions through the rhetoric of inter-city competition for economic development, with the promotion of culture and leisure uses as one such vessel. Cultural expression, though arising largely independently of state sanctioning and funding, was becoming an active element of the commodification of the post-industrial landscape. While the promotion of 'culture' in Castlefield was focused on heritage, the Corridor was imagined as zone focused on cultural innovation.

By the late-1980s, the promotion of the arts, the nocturnal economy, and alternative lifestyles were becoming increasingly interesting to the MCC and the CMDC, encouraged by policy reports such as the Centre for Local Economic Strategies' 1989 report *Making an Industry of Culture*. With a deflated city centre property market, and strong indications that cultural activities provided increasing employment and a stimulus for investment, the intermingling sectors of culture and leisure were increasingly becoming seen as viable stimuli for a post-industrial city centre.

Historically, in Britain, nightlife had been treated with suspicion, something associated with social problems and deviance that needed to be contained through strong, codified regulation and policing, a threat to order (Schlör 1998). With their shady image, railway arches only served to play up this dynamic. However, particularly from 1992 onward, a major regulatory shift was apparent in the actions of MCC, including an increasing tolerance for activities that had previously been prohibited on moral grounds; regulations were relaxed for late-night drinking and licensing for drinking establishments, and nightclubs became more easy to come by (O'Connor and Wynne 1996). The counterculture of Madchester had officially become embraced by the city. Far from discouraging the ever-increasing drug activity associated with nightlife, which was bringing tens of thousands of people in Manchester city centre, a prominent city councillor told local cultural magazine *City Life that* "Ecstasy, in our view, is part of a cultural package alongside music and clothes. This kind of entertainment economy makes a city a more exciting place to live." (cited in Schlosser 1998).

As one might ascertain, 'culture' in the Madchester era was not dominated exclusively as highbrow, or focusing specifically on upper-income symbolic capital. In this case, the more common narrative of the middle-class appropriation of former industrial premises for residential and leisure purposes (Zukin 1982; Ley 1996) was not readily apparent along the Corridor until after 1993, and would be intermingled with more pop

cultural sensibilities. As Wynne and O'Connor would note, "Manchester is tying its fortune as a city of culture as much to the previously marginal world of pop culture as it is to the mainstream art worlds" (1998, p.856). Whereas other cities may have promoted 'culture' as something with more bourgeois aspirations, Manchester took a more populist approach, promoting itself through a combination of high culture (the construction of the Bridgewater Hall, for example), alternative culture (the Gay Village, underground music and cultural expression), and popular culture (Mellor 1995). The city's responses to affirmative valuations of the economic value of nightlife, as well as the promotion of alternative lifestyles, were manifold.

### *9.4.3 Consuming the Postindustrial Aesthetic: Loft Living and Railway Arch Chic (1993-2003)*

Through the rising cultural cache associated with the postindustrial aesthetic, the Corridor became a more palatable and consumable landscape. While referring to the 'gritty' origins of the districts re-appropriation by musicians and artists, the furtiveness of 'raw' spaces would be replaced by juxtapositions of grime and patina with Italian leather and polished stainless steel. These transformations were not only apparent in the post-industrial residential spaces created by developers such as Urban Splash, but also in the design of leisure spaces in railway arches.

The rising trendiness of alternative lifestyles sat quite well with the CMDC's strategy of reconfiguring the Corridor as a symbolic landscape of consumption: the market would be self-fashioned middle class bohemians with spending power. Among the most emblematic spaces for the performance of cultural capital in Manchester were newly opened cafes, bars, and restaurants. All three of these types of establishments are commercial hospitality spaces, which increasingly sought to differentiate themselves through communicating a particular message and style through their design, and nearly all of the new café bars, restaurants and venues were opening in railway arches.

The post-industrial aesthetic had become the dominant design sensibility of the new city centre lifestyle by the mid- to late-1990s (Hills and Tyrer 2002). The influences of this style were manifold, and certainly not specific to Manchester. However, this had implications for the ways in which railway arch spaces would be designed, perceived, and consumed as distinctive. As Campkin (2007, p.382) notes, "the conversion of ex-industrial

space has become one of the dominant modes of architectural practice in late-modern cities, and a self-conscious 'aesthetic of recycling' on of its principal aesthetic modes." This aesthetic was most apparent in the rising fashionableness of former industrial buildings for lofts, design studios, offices, and leisure spaces.

The residential loft was the single biggest influence on the design of new, bespoke café-bars, furniture showrooms, and arts institutions appearing in railway arches along the Corridor. The connection between lofts and railway arches were not only aesthetic: residential development was an essential component of this shift. By their very nature, railway arches occupied locations near red brick warehouses, and they lent themselves to incorporation into a consumable landscape that re-appropriated former industrial spaces for new uses. Furthermore, the new residents and workers occupying converted industrial buildings provided clientele for these new establishments. Whereas nightclubs brought revellers from afar, café-bars provided largely for a local clientele.

To a certain extent, arches accommodated the 'loft' aesthetic, but with a number of limitations. Arches created a number of complications not encountered in the refurbishment of industrial buildings, which no longer had any formal use. In the 1980s, when arches were conceived primarily as large 'raw,' and 'empty' spaces, if arches held any aesthetic appeal, it was specifically related to their grittiness and dankness. According to Haslam,

> *The fact that there was water coming through the brickwork and the entry and exit were hard to find and it was dark and underlit, that was actually not a negative thing. Like it would be if you were opening a boutique or selling groceries or whatever else you might do, or you were a solicitor's office. You wouldn't open a solicitor's office if there was rain coming in through the brickwork, but you could open a club.* (personal interview, 2013).

As the following examples of railway arch businesses along the Corridor will illustrate, the 'gritty' character which had overshadowed railway arch premises for so long would serve both as a source of 'edgy' cultural distinction, but the condition and continued railway use of these structures would also major setbacks to postindustrial aestheticisation.

Like later phases in Castlefield, heritage-based design approaches were being replaced by something new in the Corridor. While largely maintaining the minimalism and 'rawness' of industrial structures, design approaches became more prone to experiment with juxtapositions of materials with less concern for historical accuracy. In terms of the

modular uses of large spaces, and more functionalist, utilitarian furnishings, the post-industrial often incorporated elements of modernism. This trend could also be seen in the changing aesthetic sensibilities of lofts:

> While some commentators note that the popularity of loft apartments—and the way that their spaces are utilised—are related to nostalgia and a quest for authenticity, others argue that loft architecture is more related to the modern movement. In such a view, the space of the loft (or arch) is a "shell" and a "raw space" to be approached through free plans and minimalist interiors which are juxtaposed with bare bricks and exposed beams (Field and Irving 1999).

Field and Irving (1999) touch on one way in which the post-industrial aesthetic has manifested itself. In terms of interior spaces, it could be loosely defined as using a combination of the reuse of industrial structures, which references their materiality and infrastructure while superimposing a modernistic logic onto the (re)use of the space itself. The sensibilities of this aestheticisation of industrial 'rugged authenticity' is evoked in one recent coffee table book:

> A loft, which is essentially a salvaged space, provides the perfect home for reclaimed materials and salvaged fittings and fixtures. [. . .] Most, but not all, salvaged materials are cheaper than new, and they generally have the rugged authenticity that comes from decades of wear and tear, a characterful patina that is almost impossible to simulate. (Wilhide 2002, p.92)

Property developers, for their part, self-consciously marketed loft living as a lifestyle, having recuperated and instrumentalised the process of the gentrification of industrial buildings as described by critics such as Zukin (1982). Railway arches were an extension of this, as a particular sector of the middle class became more comfortable occupying former industrial spaces as homes and workplaces. Even the rumbling sound of the railway above was marketed to potential patrons of café-bars, adding to their quirky distinctiveness (Hills and Tyrer 2002).

Clearly, changing patterns of taste, lifestyle, and symbolic capital were not divorced from larger processes in which the Corridor, shedding its image as industrial but remaining dominated by its image, could be reinvented as a landscape of consumption. Zukin's work in *Loft Living* (1982) dissected similar processes of aestheticisation in the increasing

popularity of loft residences among certain design-conscious sectors of the middle class, who sought to associate themselves with the lifestyles of artists, thus pushing out many of the remaining industrial tenants (and later artists) from the industrial buildings of SoHo in Manhattan.

This creation of a 'loft living habitus' (Podmore 1998), in which industrial spaces are increasingly popularised as residences—first as live-work spaces for artists, then as purely residential spaces—was described by Zukin as the 'artistic mode of production.' This mode of production was related to a growing connection between accumulation and cultural consumption among a particular sector of the population, whom Ley referred to as the 'new middle class' (Ley 1996). In this process, which expanded in various guises in deindustrialising cities throughout the developed world, property owners could generate significantly higher rents from residential than industrial usage. Zukin found that businesses were closed or displaced, and jobs lost, because incoming residents wanted the neighbourhood to "*look industrial*, not *be* industrial" (1982, p.104), a process of 'manipulated obsolescence.' Similar processes have been identified in cities as diverse as Chicago (Giloth and Betancur 1988; Rast 2001), Sydney (Watson 1991), London (Hamnett 2001; Hamnett and Whitelegg 2007; Pratt 2009) and Brooklyn (Curran 2004; Curran 2007).

*Figure 76: The postindustrial juxtaposition of 'raw' brick with modernist furniture and clean, white walls at Ferrious, 2011. Image source: Brian Rosa.*

Between 1992 and 2002, with considerable overlap with the increasing fashionableness of loft apartments in Manchester city centre, the post-industrial aesthetic increasingly appeared in railway arches along the Corridor (see Figure 76). This was instigated by the enclave of architects and designers moving into warehouses in Knott Mill and converting them to studios and showrooms in the early 1990s (personal interview with Phil Griffin 2012). The emergence of leisure and retail usages of railway arches (to the exception of continuing of further industrial service usages) was emblematic of a broader shift from production to consumption. This shift is implicated in the rising cultural power of the new middle class who sought the centrality and aesthetic dimensions of city centre living (Ley 1996). From 1993 onward, there could be little doubt that industrial gentrification was occurring, and that remaining industrial uses in railway arches were largely incongruous with the post-industrial image – industry was something to be celebrated, but only as history and aesthetic. Despite an overlap between the underground clubbing scene and café culture along the Corridor, it was becoming clear that the (sometimes) oppositional cultural activities, which had put this district on the map, were finding themselves overwhelmed by a landscape of café-bars, loft apartments, restaurants, and letting agencies.

Until 1993, aside from the restaurant Cocotoo (opened in 1989), few of the railway arch establishments would be considered entrepreneurially orientated. Most were subsidised cultural facilities, created to increase public access to the arts or (arguably) in the case of The Archway, to create a safe social space for transgressive sexual performativity. However, the story of the transformation of railway arches from 1993 onward is largely the story of individual or partnered entrepreneurs seeking railway arch spaces, for lifestyle-related purposes, to maximise the amount of space and to minimise cost in an increasingly commodifiable location. While the structures of the built environment themselves—the buildings, streets and indeed the viaducts—were not to change much until the 2000s, the cultural power surrounding the Corridor was beginning to change significantly by the 1990s (Figure 77). The most obvious examples would be the increasingly public emergence of conspicuous consumption.

Figure 77: WSW in the early 1990s. Image source: CMDC (1992).

## 9.5 The Height of Railway Arch Chic and the Rise of the 'Independents'

*Figure 78: The upper level furniture showroom of Ferrious, 2011. Image Source: Brian Rosa.*

The intermingling of various cultural elements at play in the Corridor, as well as the rise of the postindustrial aesthetic, can be read in Arch 61 of WSW: the home, since 1996, of Ferrious. A furniture designer and manufacturer turned showroom and interior design consultancy, Ferrious moved here from a railway arch elsewhere in the city. Occupying a massive arch, which had most recently housed an automobile engine rebuilder ten years prior, owners Paul Tempest and Jeremy West converted the arch into an office and two-floor showroom with a workshop in the back. Being a manufacturer as well as a purveyor of the aspirational high-design lifestyle, Ferrious serves as one of the most emblematic transitional spaces in the re-imaging of the arches. Ferrious was connected to both the design scene and the music scene. Earlier on in their tenancy, Tempest and West illegally subleased their rear storage room at night as rehearsal space for punk bands. Tempest describes this arrangement:

> *We built band rehearsal rooms in the first arch and the second arch totally illegally and we would sublet those [...]. There were a whole load of bands that*

> *used to congregate around this area so basically we had two rehearsal rooms and that used to pay our rent for years and years and years. And when we were a factory it didn't matter because we had saws and drills going here [...].It's more regulated now so it would be more difficult to get away with probably because of people living in the city centre, whereas in those days you know, the main criteria for bands was that they wanted the spaces that they practiced in to be anonymous, because they were prone to getting ripped off.* (personal interview 2011)

Tempest associated very much with the loft living aesthetic, comparing the space of the railway arch to "a kind of loft type space where they take a Victorian building and they strip it back to the bare brick" (personal interview 2011). Ferrious, which eventually shifted from producing bespoke modern furniture to functioning as a showroom for Italian-made interiors, found the railway arch to be an appropriate space to suit their needs (see Figure 78).

> *We thought it was very important that the showroom reflect our design philosophy and be the kind of correct environment to show the furniture and lighting that we do [...]. We wanted this to be quite minimalist and modern, pared down but with some nice detail and some kind of innovative use of materials so you've got the pressed steel panels [...] white walls, silicone radiators.* (personal interview with Paul Tyrer 2000)

By this point, the uniform refurbishments of the railway arches (see Chapter 7) were criticised by this new type of tenant, drawn as they were to railway arch spaces for their newfound uniqueness. This could be seen in businesses that continued to open in the railway arches throughout the 1990s.

As Manchester emerged from the recession of the early 1990s, the commercial and residential conversion of mills and warehouses was occurring at a staggering rate. A pivotal institution within this shift was the opening of Atlas Bar (Figure 78), located in an arch below Deansgate rail station, in 1993. Atlas, one of the first of many café-bars, catered to the pre-clubbing crowd during the evenings, but also opened for lunch for the increasingly large office-based workforce in the surrounding area of the Corridor.

*Figure 78: The interior of the Atlas Bar, displaying design from a later refurbishment, 2012. Image source: Brian Rosa.*

By 1990, Knott Mill (a district adjoining Castlefield, Gaythorn, and the Corridor) was gradually being taken over by architecture and design firms who actively renovated derelict industrial buildings into bespoke, spacious offices. This was led by Ian Simpson architects, who redeveloped the Commercial Wharf building, kick-starting an influx of creative industries into the area (Prospect Magazine 2005). Co-founders of the firm, Ian Simpson and Rachel Haugh, joined up with design-savvy property developer Nick Johnson (later of Urban Splash) as consultants to produce the CMDC's Knott Mill Regeneration Strategy. The future location of Atlas Bar in a railway arch beneath Deansgate Station, which was then Atlas Motors, was identified in this report as a gateway to Knott Mill, which they described as a "rich island of cultural and commercial land uses" whose "unique qualities can be harnessed and a derelict quarter turned into a wealth and cultural generator for the city" (Knott Mill Association 1991, pp.1–2). Knott Mill also became the home of many of the cultural elite: Tony Wilson moved into a loft there, converted from a printing press, in 1997, and Ian Simpson lived in a loft of his own design there from the late 1990s until 2002 (McConnell 2002). Atlas bar will be discussed in length, as it was not only one of the most

influential post-industrial railway arch spaces, but also a cultural institution from which new aspirations for Manchester city centre were to emerge.

After identifying the site as a priority for public use, and with development and design work slowed by the recession, the partners decided to develop the café-bar themselves. The business model of Atlas Bar proved incredibly influential. Like the Cornerhouse on the other end of WSW, Atlas provided café culture during the day, with a lounge atmosphere, espresso drinks and sandwiches, while transforming into a pre-clubbing venue in the evening, serving mixed drinks and hiring DJs to provide a soundtrack. This model was novel because the only night-time options in Manchester, up until the 1990's, were pubs and clubs, which tended to operate distinctly. The Atlas provided a space for the alternative and design-conscious scene to meet up for meetings, go out before clubbing, or as an alternative to going to either pubs or clubs. According to Luke Bainbridge, editor of *City Life*, "They needed a different kind of drinking establishment, not like the kind of place their big brothers went" (quoted in Vallely 2001). Just as lofts were beginning to provide the city with a new city-centre housing option, café-bars provided many of the people who lived and worked in converted industrial buildings nearby an easily accessible place to work and/or socialise (at this point the barriers were becoming increasingly fuzzy). Atlas Bar was at once symbolic in the ideological dominance of post-industrialism, emblematic of the post-industrial aesthetic that would take the city by storm, and the physical site in which many of the deals, meetings, and informal conversations among urban elites and aesthetes would occur.

By this point, there was nothing particularly countercultural about the use of a railway arch as a café-bar. Rather, it was the entrepreneurial calculation of two designers and a developer who were conscious of emerging national and international trends in design and of Manchester's shifting property market: they were their own clients. They were working in an area that they believed to be undervalued, surrounded by industrial architecture that was the favoured environment of 'creatives' at the time, and they had the support of the CMDC, which funnelled public funds into environmental improvements revalorising the area. The design aesthetic for Atlas was described by Nick Johnson in an interview with Paul Tyrer in 2000:

> *We would have loved to expose the brickwork [...] all the field drains are knackered basically. So all the water leaks through the railway arch so we had to protect it. [...] We couldn't really preserve the brickwork or the jack-arches.*

> *The jack-arches were fantastic because they had big sandstone corners—we just couldn't keep any of that unfortunately. So we had to clad it and the cladding in plywood was the cost-effective option [...] The influences were clear. Ben Kelly defined the Manchester aesthetic with the Haçienda and subsequently the Dry Bar..... But you know that industrial aesthetic that Ben did was very easy to do in Manchester because of the heritage here and what you're working with [...]. Even though we had to clad it, it does give you some form and it's not that new build stuff, so you've got a bit of inbuilt history. It's nice to contrast that history with a clean and crisp modern interior.* (Personal Interview with Paul Tyrer 2000)

In the spirit of the recycling aesthetic, Johnson, Simpson and Haugh went as far as attempting to salvage bits of leather, buried from when the arch was once the manufacturer of automobile interior components, for coasters.

Symbolically, the significance of Atlas Bar went well beyond its importance as the first railway arch café bar. Being the nearest bar to the enclave of home-grown graphic designers, marketing agencies, architects and design-savvy property developers, it became the centre of a particular social milieu. As a curator and architecture critic put it, Atlas was "a kind of a salon to the Manchester city centre renaissance" until it was sold in 2002 (Pop Up Gallery 2013). It was a place for lunchtime meetings and after-work pints for those individuals whose work was central to the re-imagining of Manchester city centre. In 2001 Atlas was called 'the city's hippest bar' by *The Independent* (Vallely 2001), and numerous interviews revealed that city officials, surveyors, and property developers would also socialise there, alongside architects, furniture designers, DJs and artists. It was at the intersection of the creative class and the political elite, which tellingly frequented the same establishment.

*Figure 79: Illustration of man walking dog in Knott Mill. Image source: Pop Up City, 2012.*

More than any other singular site in Manchester city centre, it was in Atlas that a new design vision for Manchester city centre emerged. Through their work on early Castlefield adaptive reuse schemes and their entrepreneurial approach to adaptive reuse of Knott Mill, Simpson and Johnson were becoming the go-to team for city centre redevelopment. Soon after opening Atlas, Simpson redesigned the green room's arches, complete with new café-bar, in 1996. In that same year, in the wake of the 1996 IRA bombing near the Manchester Cathedral, Simpson and Johnson played an integral role in the master-planning strategy for the new Cathedral 'quarter,' regarded as the single most important moment in the reinvention of Manchester city centre (Robson 2002).

Atlas was not only the site of consensual discourse coalitions seeking to reinvent the city in their own mutual interest, it was also a site of conflict over competing visions for how the city should develop. At the height of its popularity in the early 2000s, Atlas was also the symbolic home for a battle for the image and marketing of Manchester. The immensely lucrative property boom in the city centre, as well as the deregulation of the licensing of drinking establishments, created an environment in which local, independent entrepreneurs were feeling increasingly threatened by corporate developers and drinking establishment chains. The national spotlight was on the Corridor, having implications that

were not entirely welcome to a group of entrepreneurs who felt that they had built something unique. The buzz around the area is summed up in this excerpt from London-based newspaper *Financial Times*.

> Manchester is beginning to look and feel like a European city. Magnificent warehouses from an earlier age are being converted into modern loft apartments and offices. Railway arches are being turned into café bars and shops alongside the canals. The city centre trams give a continental European look. Residential developments in areas such as Castlefield on the edge of the city…are luring people back into the city to live. Manchester is shaking off its dirty industrial image…Business people outside the city are already saying it is an attractive place to invest. (Financial Times 1998)

To this point, property development and nightlife establishments had been spearheaded by risk-taking local entrepreneurs, but by the early 2000s the city was flush with international capital, large scale property developers, and London-based investment interests. Voguish café-bars were increasingly encroached upon by chain drinking establishments. Opposing what they saw as the corporate commodification of something that was independent and local, Nick Johnson led a group of 600 independent entrepreneurs (alternatively called The Independents or the McEnroe group) to question the route that MCC was taking in imaging the city (Ward 2000). The Atlas bar served as their headquarters. Members – the most prominent being Johnson, his developer partner Tom Bloxham, and Tony Wilson and Peter Saville of Factory Records – claimed that corporate interests were homogenising the city and erasing its identity. Johnson, in a 2001 interview with *The Independent,* claimed that

> Sterilised entertainment is sucking the soul out of Manchester. The city is becoming manufactured, mass-produced; it's almost a city without a soul […]. Independent shops, bars, restaurants and so on are what give a place its distinctive character. Without them the soulless corporates and chains make everywhere feel the same. It's about culture, not just economics." (Johnson, quoted in Chrisafis 2001).

The transition from counterculture to increasingly conspicuous and mainstream consumption was the point of considerable commentary in the late 1990s and early 2000s: the Corridor had passed its prime as an 'independent' district for nightlife and alternative cultural expression, having become increasingly gentrified.

Atlas Bar continues to occupy the arch beneath Deansgate Station under new ownership, and Ferrious continues to operate from the same arch. While the opposition of the "Independents" instigated little change in the immediate vicinity of the Corridor, Simpson and Johnson emerged in the 2000s as among the primary progenitors of Manchester's image: the 'post-rave urban growth coalition.'

## 9.6 The Shift from the "Independents" to the "Corporates" and the Mainstreaming of the Corridor: 2002-2011

*Figure 80: The refurbishment process at Deansgate Locks, 2000. Image source: Aidan O'Rourke.*

The Corridor's transition away from its independent origins is embodied in the Deansgate Locks development, located across the street from Atlas Bar and next to the Haçienda. Created in the early 2000s, 'the Locks' is a parade of ten arches, spanning 150 meters, located within the vaults below where the Manchester Central station train shed used to sit. It was one of the centrepiece developments leading up to Manchester's hosting of the 2002 Commonwealth Games, and was partially funded by the regeneration agency English Partnerships.

The strongly divergent reactions evoked by the Deansgate Locks development demonstrate the immense difference of opinion between supporters of Manchester city centre's alternative nightlife roots and boosters of flagship regeneration projects. In an *Independent* article, Luke Bainbridge, then editor of *City Life*, lamented the unforeseen consequences of the deregulation of licensing in the late 1990s. "It's brought about a dumbing-down. What we've ended up with is huge numbers of drunks marauding round the city, crawling along Deansgate Locks not even knowing what bar they're in" (quoted in Vallely 2001). A common criticism, lodged particularly vehemently by the Independents, was that the imperatives for continuing redevelopment should be better balanced with

maintaining the character of areas such as the Corridor, which were, after all, the result of nearly twenty years of independent enterprise and co-operation among cultural and leisure-oriented institutions.

In the property media, however, the regeneration and leisure-focused property developer Nick Payne, of Westport Developments, was lauded: "Turning a 150 m stretch of derelict, off-pitch railway arches into a stylish leisure area of bars and restaurants showed their awareness of what local people really wanted," and quoting Payne as explaining, in Orwellian double-speak, that "We wanted to put the face back into property because property is full of suits or fortune-in-a-fortnight developers. We wanted a business that had longevity but was with it'" (McConnell 2003). Payne had, in fact, built an entire career in property development out of converting railway arch properties into leisure uses, starting with Barça in Castlefield. All of the original tenants of Deansgate Locks were local or national chains, including the Comedy Store, a London-based chain of comedy clubs), and Loaf, Bass Ale's 'concept' café-bar.

It is ironic that the 'corporate' development of Deansgate Locks was the only development that could fully realise the full extent of the post-industrial aesthetic. This is because, unlike the MSJ viaduct across the street, the arches did not have issues of water ingress or require as many structural inspections because the viaducts were carrying trams rather than heavy rail. Much of the area above these massive arches is a paved car park, so the arches are relatively sealed. This meant that design approaches to the arches, unlike any of the arches along the MSJ, could capitalise on the exposed brick aesthetic.

As it turned out, the early 2000s would be the peak of railway arch conversion for high-value leisure and retail-based usages and the bespoke design of railway arch spaces. The arches of Deansgate Locks, which Hills and Tyrer had described at the time as gaining its symbolic value precisely from the charisma of their erstwhile marginalisation and 'Otherness'" (2002, p.108), could alternatively be seen as the exhaustion of railway arch 'chic' and the nail in the coffin of the Corridor's thirty-year streak of 'independent' cultural and leisure lifestyles.

The rise of Deansgate Locks was paired with the demise of the nearby Haçienda, the fate of which is often considered highly symbolic of the cultural fate of Manchester city centre (Hanson and Rainey Forthcoming). In 1997, after a temporary closure in response to escalating drug-related violence, the Haçienda closed for good. Two years later the Boardwalk closed as well. Overloaded with symbolism, the Haçienda was demolished, and

in its place was constructed a new residential building, the first on WSW. Constructed by Crosby Homes, the new building mimicked the brick materials and shape of its predecessor, only with extra floors. The choice to assume the name of the club caused considerable controversy. The Haçienda Flats (Figures 81 and 82) were completed in 1998, targeting childless 'new middle class' (Ley 1996) households who were perceived to appreciate the references to the legendary but out-dated image of the district. Across the street from the Haçienda flats, two more railway arches were refurbished in 2000; however, they were not converted to leisure uses, but to estate agencies. Likewise, the ground floor of the Haçienda became a property investment firm. While arches have changed hands between different tenants in the period following, these would be the last arches to be converted from industrial to post-industrial usage to the present day.

*Figure 81: The Haçienda building, shortly before its demolition for the Haçienda apartments, as framed by a railway arch, 1997. Image source: Aidan O'Rourke.*

*Figure 82: The Haçienda Flats, as seen from the First Street site, 2011. Image source: Brian Rosa.*

The Corridor continued to witness a proliferation of housing developments, many of them new-build. As indicated by the example of the Haçienda Flats, industrial-era warehouses were no longer the favoured buildings for residential development in the southern fringe. This may be interpreted in a number of different ways. Firstly, nearly all structurally sound industrial buildings had, by then, already been converted. Secondly, inflated property values made the conversion of smaller industrial era buildings cost prohibitive. While the difficultly in earlier redevelopment of such buildings was associated with the cost of rehabilitation, for which public subsidy filled the gaps, difficulties in the early 2000s were more directly related to the limited rent that could be generated within the finite space of low-rise buildings. Thirdly, there are indications that postindustrial spaces were losing their trendiness as developers increasingly constructed new residential buildings, offering amenities that lofts could not offer. Johnson, who had made his fortune converting former industrial buildings to housing in Manchester, suggests that lofts were simply 'of their time' and consumer demands had shifted (personal interview, 2012).

Surely, it would be in Johnson's interest to claim that the loft aesthetic was not the height of fashionableness—as Urban Splash had primarily moved to new build, late modern

designs—but this theory does hold some weight in terms of the way in which the Corridor would develop. Johnson is vehement that the post-industrial aesthetic has lost most of its currency in Manchester:

> *The lofts were simply aped Manhattan […]. That was that sexy, post-industrial aesthetic that was inspired by the artists of New York and we experienced in various guises—it was sexed up […]. I would have to say that all of this was on the back of a romantic view of post-industrial heritage. That was a particularly appealing aesthetic that we now don't have. That abandonment and that rawness, and that failure of subsequent generations to recognise that it had any real aesthetic appeal, was seized upon by my generation, and it doesn't any longer exist. Because it's been done.* (personal interview, 2012)

Johnson's candid comments touch on the fact that the relation between 'independent' culture, an 'imported' postindustrial aesthetic, which suited the landscape of Manchester, and the symbolic capital of 'loft living' were not some sort of accidental collision, but rather the result of the entrepreneurial opportunism of local developers and architects. With a certain amount of cynicism, Johnson demonstrates not only that culture and property development go hand in hand, but that critical scholarship examining the processes of gentrification may easily be appropriated and instrumentalised by developers.

## 9.7 A New Wave of Industrial Gentrification? 2011-present

In an interview with Paul Tyrer in 2000, Paul Tempest of Ferrious expressed his concerns about the increasing activities of property developers in the area and the implications for his business, including whether or not they would be able to stay at their current location:

> *Basically we got involved with individuals and entrepreneurs, small companies that wanted to give facelifts and build up and regenerate, which they did very successfully. And on the back of that […] big companies got involved and identified what they were doing and that they were doing it successfully […]. You've got a lot of corporate finance also sniffing around […] and it's become a bit of a turf war […] They're trying to buy up everything and develop everything…. We don't want Manchester to become a bland and corporate thing, and basically the upshot of that might be that our business might be forced out of here.*

While development along the Corridor had slowed significantly since the early 2000s, and a number of businesses and institutions had left arches vacant in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, there are a number of signs to suggest that a new wave of commercial gentrification is occurring.

Similarly, Gordon's, the metalwork shop which had been on WSW since the 1960s (Figure 83), had been offered payment by Westport Developments (developer of Deansgate Locks and later to become ASK) to vacate their arch premises: "The builder […] they were willing to pay for our removal costs because they wanted to knock the arch through so that it had a vista down the River Medlock at the back. We agreed to do that and we shook hands on it, I found new premises, and then they pulled out, so we remained where we were" (personal interview with Gordon 2012). Housing development was increasingly seen as incompatible not only with the remaining industrial premises such as Gordon, but also with the venues, which had initially drawn attention to the area. The green room, for example, increasingly had issues with the tenants of the 154-unit Lock Building, a new residential development on WSW completed in 2005. According to Curtis:

> *When [the Lock Building] got built, the green room thought, perhaps naively, "Oh great, neighbours on the doorstep, new trade". In actual fact, it's the other way around…. Certain neighbours have complained about noise pollution. You're living in a city centre environment, you buy a flat opposite a venue, I think it goes with the territory. And right opposite a railway station. But no, they complain… so we have to maintain much more stringent noise levels in here […] We have a live music night twice a month, and that has to really be curtailed and controlled in terms of late noise.* (personal interview, 2011)

In a number of cases, new residential development led to consistent noise complaints in the Corridor, particularly after the completion of the Beetham (Hilton) Tower in 2003. It was becoming increasingly apparent that residential and nightlife uses of the area were being seen as incompatible.

*Figure 83: J.E. Gordon, one of the few remaining industrial railway arch tenants on WSW. Image source: Brian Rosa.*

Through the mid-2000s, well before the onset of the financial crisis that has persisted throughout the writing of this thesis, the leisure and retail functions of the Corridor were increasingly suffering, and between 2011 and 2013, a number of tenants went out of business. These included Cocotoo restaurant (opened in 1989), the green room (opened in 1985), a late-night takeaway, and an estate agency. Upon the closure of the green room, employees speculated that their displacement was part of rumoured plans to redevelop the Oxford Road station above (for the potential validity of this theory, see Chapter 10 on the Northern Hub development). In the meantime, NRP refurbished a number of arches along Hewitt Street, but opted to re-do most of them as lock-ups – the market was insufficiently active to attract anything but light industrial and storage tenants, and they were failing to attract tenants (personal interview with Nick Mullen, 2012. Also, see Mullen's comments on p. 228). Among these arches would be found the remnants of a massive, recently abandoned cannabis factory, bringing back memories of the shadier past of the area.

However, 2012 saw a significant revival in the activities within the railway arches along WSW. This was largely stimulated by the proposed development of the First Street site, which was expected to draw pedestrians down WSW. The green room, which had lay

vacant for over a year, was redesigned into a restaurant, bar, and concern venue called Gorilla. Cocotoo, the Italian restaurant, has been converted into a bowling alley called Dog Bowl, and the refurbished arch that had lay vacant was converted into a high-end billiards hall. A new second wave of leisure-oriented businesses have re-emerged at the axis of WSW and Oxford Road, beneath Oxford Road station, just where the first railway arch refurbishments had begun in the mid-1980s.

It is worth looking in detail at the aspirations that NRP has for the future of this long-problematic stretch of railway arches along WSW, particularly as the First Street development is now underway (see Chapter 8). According to Nick Mullen in a 2012 interview,

> *We're kind of looking at a masterplan for how we can maximise value and attract better—well, improve the arches initially—but then also attract better types of uses. Because I think [City Council Chief Executive] Sir Howard's got this vision of that area becoming kind of an arts hub for the city and so at the moment if you look at Whitworth Street West, the tenant mix, you've got restaurants, a lot of them failing or struggling…. So they're gonna be going.*

Mullen sees WSW as a zone that is struggling because it lacks uniformity of use, and the fact that some businesses operate only at day or night, which creates an environment in which some businesses are always closed.. His concern is that some of the arches of the MSJ viaduct are still trapped in the past, bringing down the value of the whole district:

> *I mean, you've got some really nice looking units down there… but yeah, and you've got Barry and Buckley… a taxi repairing company, and then you've got Gordon's metal processors…. The time is coming, unfortunately, where, and this what we are looking at the moment, we've got to get the use mix right. We've got to get some consistency of how that viaduct should look, because at the moment it doesn't look great….* (personal interview 2012)

Here, the relationship between visuality and symbolic capital come head-to-head with the reasons why the arches along WSW seem so resistant to change. Mullen feels that the whole viaduct needs a complete overhaul, and that the time has come for the remaining industrial tenants and struggling small businesses to move on.

Aside from the interest in the most expensive, spacious, and dry arches beneath Oxford Road Station, where there is also the highest amount of footfall, other entrepreneurs

are opening businesses that seek to capitalise on (projected) increased foot traffic associated with the First Street development. Two of them also suggest that there is an active attempt to revive the post-industrial and nostalgic heritage aesthetics of the 1980s and 1990s, along with reinvigorating culture and leisure in the district. For example, the entire roof of Gorilla is clad with salvaged floorboards and the bar is clad with 'upcycled' glazed tiles, and various corners reveal exposed pipes of indeterminate function. Slightly further down the viaduct is the Whim Wham Café, opened in 2012. The proprietors Alex Walker, an arts event promoter and Jessica Naven, a former urban planning consultant, sought a railway arch in the Corridor due to the saturation of drinking establishments and restaurants in the Northern Quarter. According to Walker,

> *I always liked looking at old buildings and old little disused shops—you know, an old place—and they are always very expensive to covert […]. So really I was considering all of the options and we walked around the corner here one day, … and I'm like 'no way, that's up for rent' and I knew there was something behind it of interest, because I've been coming down this street since I was, you know, a young teenager.* (personal interview 2012).

Walker, who runs vintage nights and cabaret events, self-consciously produced an environment within the arch that makes oblique references to its (imagined) past. He felt that the Corridor was about to experience a revival of "alternative drinking culture" and sought to create a thematic environment specialising in gin and classic British cuisine.

> *The bar's going to be clad in sort of a Victorian counter style… so when you walk in, it feels like you're walking slightly a step back into another time. We're gonna have some slight 'railwayana' […] The artistic vision is when you walk in here, someone can feel like 'hold on, how long has this place been here'. It's in a railway arch so it could have been here years…. We can't be a totally authentic industrial revolution Victorian place, but that's the heritage of this area. We want to nod to what it is and where it is.*

The primary concern of the owners of the Whim Wham, as well numerous other businesses operating in the arches, is that they have no certainty about how long their leases would last. This has become a particular concern with rumours about massive redevelopment associated with First Street. As they are all tenants of Network Rail Property, their leases are subject to termination with six months notice. Considering that design proposals for the First Street development suggest opening many of the arches along WSW to increase

permeability, there is a great deal of unease about who, and what, will be allowed to remain in the arches. As Naven acknowledged,

> We were aware of the planning application that's in at the moment… my worry is, when this lease is up in five years, do they then turn around and go "okay, well, we're doing a deal with [property developer] ASK where they take all these arches, so you're rent's gonna be doubled, tripled," and you're like "what?" And they're like "well sorry, if you can't afford it you're out."

In this sense, combined with tenants' inability to purchase their railway arch properties (see Chapter 7) the independent entrepreneurs opening post-industrial establishments in railway arches may now be susceptible to yet another phase of corporatisation, reminiscent of Deansgate Locks ten years earlier.

## 9.8 Conclusions

Coupled with the previous chapters' outlining of site-specific spatial histories and practices, this chapter suggests that an elite consensus emerged since the 1980s that reminders of industrial labour would need to be erased before post-industrial reinvention would be complete. A constitutive assumption in the narrative of the 'post-industrial' city is that deindustrialisation is complete, or needs to be completed for the industrial economy to be fully seceded by the 'new economy' of services, research, and information. At the very least, this has generally been understood to require the peripheralisation of industrial usages through the rational choice of locational costs and benefits. However, looking at the Corridor, it becomes clear that the post-industrial narrative is an oversimplified aspiration. Even now, taxi dispatches and metal bashers function profitably in these spaces, as avowedly post-industrial uses come and go. Their survival is not an issue of their ability to pay rent, but of their subversion of a particular aspirational image wrapped up in the symbolic economy of gentrification.

The story of the cultural revival of this formerly industrial corridor, coupled with the gradual aestheticisation of industrial spaces and materials in the symbolic capital of leisure consumption, has been occurring now for over thirty years. Contemporary narratives offer a déjà vu response to the public-private initiatives of the 1980s, in which

the presence of the viaducts and the shabbiness of their arches were barriers to revalorisation.

It is also notable that, even with the direct proximity of the Corridor to Castlefield, attitudes and practices regarding cultural production and consumption are considerably different. Even in case studies of relatively small, proximate districts, competing narratives regarding the value of the (post)industrial built environment emerge. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, while the promotion of Castlefield revolved around daytime ambling, drifting canal boats and museum visits, along the Corridor decidedly nocturnal activities and economies were emerging.

The transformation of railway arches as post-industrial spaces through public sector subsidy demonstrates that strategies for reimaging the WSW corridor focused on displacing industrial labour while retaining a mishmash of 'raw' industrial symbolism and the emerging loft aesthetic of the 1990s. However, at the same, time, the arches of functioning railway viaducts resist post-industrial aestheticisation by the simple fact that they are still industrial structures with stringent limitations of their modification. As much as the early cultural appropriation of formerly industrial spaces made little differentiation between railway arches and other run down, brick, utilitarian spaces, they have never been as easily incorporated into the complete reimaging of the industrial landscape. This is, to a large extent, what makes railway arches distinctive features of the deindustrialised urban landscape: they are symbolic of the industrial past, but serve as concrete and perceptual barriers to post-industrialisation. In 2013, the MSJ viaduct and (some of) its arches is still, in fact, industrial spaces; the viaducts continue to serve as fixed capital for their original purpose of supporting a massive technological system.

As previous chapters have demonstrated, industrial displacement, far from an unintended outcome in regeneration strategies, is often embedded within them. The displacement of 'traditional' tenants from the railway arches is directly related to the processes of, and aspirations for, class-based neighbourhood change, in other words, in industrial gentrification.

# Chapter 10: Conclusions

## 10.1 Results and Key Contributions

This thesis uses three sites along the southern fringe of Manchester city centre to produce detailed, thematic case studies exploring the changing spaces and landscapes dominated by industrial-era railway viaducts. It analyses how these historical, utilitarian structures have served as both assets and hindrances to ambitions for property-led urban redevelopment from the 1980s to present. This is deeply engrained in the role railway viaducts have traditionally played in shaping the urban fabric; in defining the southern margins of the commercial core and confirming the prolonged dereliction of their surroundings.

Railway viaducts are the largest, among the most emblematic (Hills and Tyrer 2002; Tyrer and Crinson 2005; Hetherington 2005), structures of Manchester. The dominance of railway infrastructure is a feature that has alternatively been suppressed and emphasised in Manchester's entrepreneurial reclamation of the southern fringe from its longstanding 'low value' uses. Various public-private initiatives, with the most influential being the Central Manchester Development Corporation (1988-1996), have reckoned with the spaces of Manchester's viaducts and strategised how they could be re-imaged and re-valorised. To understand how viaducts are implicated in the symbolic economy and urban imaginary of Manchester, this thesis reconstructs a spatial history (Lefebvre 2009 [1974]) of the southern fringe through three thematic, site-specific case studies. What becomes clear is that the socio-spatial effects and cultural depiction of railway viaducts in Manchester are deeply ingrained in the Victorian imagination (Kellett 1969; Freeman 1999; Brumhead 2004). To understand post-industrialism requires an excavation of the industrial city. This is particularly important in the case of Manchester, where strategies of revalorisation have often relied of heritage narratives, projecting historic and economic value onto the physical remains of the city's industrial past.

Due to the centrality of heritage narratives in ascribing new values onto Manchester's railway viaducts (Chapter 6) and the subcultural re-appropriation and post-industrial aestheticisation of railway arches (Chapter 9), the re-imaging of these spaces must be understood in dialogue with their spatial and cultural histories. In the creative

destruction of industrial urbanisation, the railway served as one of the most emblematic symbols of modernity (Schivelbusch 1986; Freeman 1999; Dennis 2008). Elevated railways fed the industrial metabolism of Victorian Manchester and connected the growing city to a massive network of rapid communication. At the same time, the construction of railway infrastructure had particularly destructive effects on the fabric of the city; effects that are still the subject of remediation. Viaducts are enduring artefacts of the immense upheaval associated with slum clearance, the spatial segmentation of the city, and the devaluation of land along their corridors (Kellett 1969; Freeman 1999).

Like many modern infrastructures, they had initially been associated with the sublime (Nye 1994; Gandy 2011), but were soon normalised and rendered banal (Kaika and Swyngedouw 2000). As for their arches, these relatively unconsidered spaces developed their own character. I refer to the history of railway arches as the underside of modernity. As these largely unregulated residual spaces were re-appropriated as cheap industrial workshops and as ad hoc shelters for the destitute, they subverted the modern order imposed by the railway. While nominally aboveground, these shadowed spaces (Wood 1978) have long been associated with the underground (Williams 1992; Pike 2005, 2007). These residual spaces existed directly beneath the paths taken by the bourgeois railway traveller, who saw the world pass by in a rapid, fleeting panorama (Schivelbusch 1986). The environments surrounding and beneath railway viaducts, embedded within this emblem of modernity, have connoted all that was dodgy, underground, and furtive.

By the 1980s, landscapes of infrastructure, including railway arches, were being re-inscribed with new cultural meanings. Viaducts were central to the post-industrial re-imaging of Manchester, first through attempts to commodify Castlefield as a landscape of 'entrepreneurial heritage' (Crang 1995). Being the largest and most visually imposing structures in Castlefield, they were gradually monumentalised through renovation, listing, and the displacement of tenants from their arches.

The primary activity through which the CMDC attempted to revalorise Castlefield as a historic landscape was through funding environmental improvements. These included the demolition of buildings and structures deemed 'out of character' or unable to be resuscitated, the cleaning of building facades and viaducts, and canal dredging. Industrial displacement, whether through negotiation or compulsory purchase, was justified on both economic and aesthetic grounds. Prime property was 'under-utilised' and the messiness of this 'wasteland' undermined the visual coherence of a landscape that (ironically) celebrated

the industrial. What had once been a terrain vague was becoming a frontier for entrepreneurial redevelopment.

The successes and failures of using infrastructural heritage as a tool of landscape revalorisation are manifold in the example of Castlefield. Unique in its time, the history of transport infrastructure has been promoted as heritage and driven tourism, leisure-based businesses, and office and residential development. In a way, the sublime nature of railway viaducts was resuscitated, though with a tidiness separating them from their origins. Through explaining their historic pedigree in interpretive texts and tour guides, exalting them as landscape features, cleaning off all signs of age and floodlighting them, viaducts have been monumentalised through physical intervention as well as discursive reconstruction.

Still, there have been considerable difficulties in ensuring the complete aestheticisation of railway viaducts and their arches as post-industrial spaces, precisely because they continue to serve industrial functions. In 2013, some railway arches in the southern fringe still house industrial and warehousing premises. Even more so, railway arches are industrial spaces because viaducts still serve in the utilitarian manner for which they were designed. The problem for post-industrial reimaging and revalorisation is that viaducts are *not* obsolete.

The complete deindustrialisation of Manchester has still yet to occur, despite policy-led industrial displacement beneath and along Manchester's railway viaducts since the early 1980s, and this can be read along the railway arches. The gradual clearance of remaining industrial uses has been a case of 'manipulated obsolescence' (Zukin 1982) to promote a post-industrial symbolic economy. Regardless, railway arches must be considered separately from other reconfigured industrial spaces. Unlike mills and warehouses that have accommodated post-industrial conversion, arches have a number of limitations due to their performance specifications. Due their physical and economic supporting role of the railway, arches offer limited possibilities for refurbishment as post-industrial spaces (leisure, retail, offices). In some instances, interiors may need to be ripped out for maintenance, they are quite often leaky and damp, and it is impossible for the railway track authority to relinquish ownership.

Aside for their conversion for new commercial uses, railway arches may also be subjected to post-industrial reinvention through opening their arches. In both Castlefield and the Corridor/Gaythorn, this strategy allowed for increased visual imageability and

pedestrian permeability (Lynch 1960), while allowing viaducts to be showcased as listed industrial monuments. It must be noted that in both of these cases, the displacement of tenants and opening of arches was only possible due to the idiosyncratic histories of landownership. In these case study sites, the developers of adjacent properties, who opened arches to make their properties more accessible and visible, owned specific railway arches. It has rarely been in the track authorities' interest to open arches they own, as this would be a loss of rental revenue and an increased liability. There has been little reason for the track authority to acquiesce to such strategies unless the City Council or a property developer is willing to pay market rate for an arch to be opened as a new right-of-way.

It is essential to note that the conditions of railway viaducts, and the uses of their arches, have only been considered a problem by municipal authorities in periods of economic expansion. This has generally entailed the spatial expansion of the city centre functions that demand higher land rent, which has not only been observed in the previous thirty years, but in the 19th century as well. Discourses of 'environmental improvement' come forward in urban policy when development pressure encroaches on the traditional boundaries of Manchester city centre: the viaducts themselves. The solution to this barrier effect, particularly since the 1980s, has been the subject of numerous design initiatives supported by public funds.

Elite discourses regard viaducts as, first and foremost, barriers. In terms of the physical effect of the railway arches at a citywide scale—in severing routes and relationships between proximate locales—there are clear parallels between the presence of railway viaducts in Manchester and the roles played by other large-scale infrastructures in cities throughout the world (Lynch 1960; Graham and Marvin 2001; McFarlane and Rutherford 2008). In the material manifestation of the 'barrier effect,' viaducts exist as 'city walls' hemming in the commercial core of the city, punctuating division between land uses (and property values), and providing obstacles to the permeability of pedestrian movement. In turn, for the physical barrier created by elevated infrastructure to be overcome, city officials and regeneration agencies have sought to promote planning solutions encouraging increased passage beneath viaducts. From the mid-1980s to present, the MSJ viaduct has increasingly been perceived by the MCC, the CMDC, quantity surveyors and property developers as a barrier to the southward expansion of the city centre's commercial activities and residential development. Concerns of pedestrian and perceptual (visual and imagined) 'permeability' became central to a series of design and economic development

schemes intended to 'drag' economic activity to the southern side of the viaduct. Thus, the primary concern since the late 1980s has been the permeability of capital, through which the discursive and physical manifestations of a 'permeability fix' emerges (Chapter 8).

The 'barrier effect' serves as central motif in this thesis, but not only in the sense that viaducts inhibit the permeability of pedestrians or city centre expansionism. Railway arches *can* perform as physical barriers, but even more so, as perceptual barriers embodied in their visual and reputational image of arches and their traditional tenants. As archival research has revealed, particularly along WSW, viaducts have been subject to environmental improvement initiatives for well over a century, since they seem to produce dereliction and ensure the sustained devaluation of properties surrounding them.

This dual barrier effect also demonstrates the difficulty of exploring socio-spatial change without taking symbolism and perception into account; the MSJ viaduct functions as a barrier because it has long been imagined to be so. For over a century it defined what was "in" and "out" of the city centre, and the threshold one passed between industrial squalor and commercial order. The spatial disjuncture and segmentation of land uses wrought by railway construction has played—and continues to play—a dominant role in the manner in which urban space unfolds in the city.

To expunge railway arches, and the surrounding landscapes of viaducts, of their negative image has most often entailed processes of industrial displacement. This was evident in all three cases analysed in this thesis. Herein lies the central contradiction of the post-industrial image: it relies on the imagery and memory of the industrial past but disavows any sort of industrial present. Since the 1960s, but particularly since the emergence of the CMDC in 1988, industrial displacement has been an utmost matter of policy for the property-led revalorisation of the study area. This strategy was systematised by the CMDC during its tenure from 1988 to 1996 and adopted by MCC. Certainly track authorities have been instrumental in this process, through refurbishment schemes and denial of lease renewals for railway arch tenants, but the primary drivers have been public-private partnerships promoting property-led regeneration.

Even if Manchester has failed to completely recuperate industrial-era railway infrastructure into the post-industrial image, it has gone further in doing so than most other cities. It is remarkable to imagine that in 1970s Castlefield, a landscape dominated by railways crisscrossing over canals and scrapyards, became one of the city's centrepiece tourist destinations. Before the completion of the first phase of New York's High Line in

2009, itself highly influenced by Paris's Promenade Plantée (completed in 1993), there have been few examples of utilitarian transport infrastructures being recast as recreational amenities. As much as landscapes of transportation infrastructure have tended to be problematised as derelict, under-utilised or ugly, this thesis considers the specificity of heritage-led redevelopment that places historical infrastructure at the foreground. It demonstrates that utilitarian infrastructure can been re-imagined as a monument and its landscape as an amenity, but that there are numerous obstacles to the aestheticisation of such structures.

Public sector bodies at the local and national scale, whether on their own volition or through public-private partnerships, have invested considerable funds to make cosmetic alterations to railway viaducts, as well as mobilising compulsory purchase powers to displace industrial tenants from their arches. These strategies have been integral elements to strategies for 'environmental improvements' to induce property-led regeneration. The political underpinnings of this strategy of industrial gentrification had not previously been subject to criticism in Manchester. In whose interest is it that public funds be channelled toward projects through which speculative property developers capture most of the gains? The shift from industrial retention to industrial gentrification, embodied in MCC's embrace of municipal entrepreneurialism (Harvey 1989), is one of many examples of trickle-down neoliberalism manifested in urban restructuring. Chapter 9 emphasises that, more than simply industrial displacement, the post-industrial reinvention of the Corridor has represented a particular form of gentrification. Still, the term 'displacement' also has resonance when discussing the importance of symbolic economy. Not only were industrial activities displaced further to the periphery of the city, but the industrial image was displaced as well. Zukin's (1982) notion of 'manipulated obsolescence' is particularly apt in the case of Manchester's railway arches. In a post-industrial landscape, industry itself can only become anachronistic.

The key contribution of this thesis has been to demonstrate how changing perceptions of infrastructural spaces can be understood in relation to emerging processes of entrepreneurial urban redevelopment through a detailed trio of case studies in Manchester. It has done so through examining the interplay between cultural representation and spatial political economy. It has excavated the social, economic, and cultural histories of Manchester's elevated railways, exploring how these ingrained spatial histories have manifested in urban elites' attempts to adapt the urban fabric of the city in

response to widespread deindustrialisation and decentralisation. It reveals the extent to which the enduring presence of the city's railway viaducts—manifesting both a physically and symbolically—have come to provide a unique set of challenges for those actors who have sought to re-image and revalorise Manchester city centre. Through foregrounding these backdrops, the past and future of the city can be seen in a new light, and the city's aspirational transition to a competitive post-industrial centre can be critically examined. As peripheries and thresholds, static in the face of urban transformation, Manchester's railway viaducts are an ideal vantage point from which to observe urban space unfold. They are, after-all, *still* industrial spaces, presenting a unique set of challenges, opportunities, and more than a few ironies to urban professionals who seek to re-image the city.

## 10.2 Limitations

One limitation of this thesis is its specificity, both in terms of its focus on a particular type of elevated infrastructural space and its examination of one particular city. In regard to the first of these considerations, the aim of the study has not been to expound a generalisable theory of residual spaces of infrastructure. If anything, it demonstrates that residual spaces should not be conceptualised as an easily generalisable category. In their particular form and function, the uses of Victorian railway viaducts are unique and should be considered so.

Rather than suggesting an overarching analysis of the residual spaces of infrastructure, this thesis has expanded on the excellent work that has already been done to come to grips with the specificity of such urban spaces. It uses railway arches and corridors as emblematic of a particular type of residual space: one that, by its very form, is accommodating to re-appropriation. Regarding the limitations of a case study exploring one city, this has been a necessary strategy to explore the issues raised in this thesis in a rigorous and detailed manner within the time frame of a doctoral thesis. Nevertheless, Network Rail's national property management strategies suggest that their approach to railway arches in Manchester is consistent with nationwide strategies.

Focusing on three contiguous sub-areas allowed for thematic tightness related to the reinvention of landscapes dominated by railway viaducts, particularly the MSJ. However, this sharpened analytical focus required the omission of two additional districts explored in the fieldwork. The first omitted site is a stretch of the MSJ viaduct that cuts through the campus of the former University of Manchester Institute of Science and

Technology (UMIST), currently part of The University of Manchester. This is located between Manchester Piccadilly station and the Whitworth Street West Corridor (see Figures 2 and 3 and images 13-25 of Appendix 1). Notably, this was the first site in Manchester where railway arches were opened to promote pedestrian permeability, part of campus expansion in the late 1950s (UMIST, n.d.). This site has been the subject of considerable industrial displacement and numerous design interventions in the creation of a modernist campus. Notably, a number of sculptures were commissioned to formally respond to, and sometimes occupy, railway arches. However, it was omitted from analysis because the stretch of the viaduct between UMIST and the Corridor (images 26-49 of Appendix 1) is visually screened (see Chapter 4), playing a comparatively insignificant role on the visual character of the city centre. While this site has historic relevance and exemplifies many of the themes and processes explored in this thesis, I decided that including the area would detract from it cohesiveness.

The second site was the subject of a chapter that was removed from the thesis, and one which deserves further exploration. The former docklands of Pomona, located southwest of Castlefield and bordering Salford (see Figures 2 and 3), is the most peripheral, liminal, and neglected zone of the CMDC's remit area, and is a site dominated by railway and canal infrastructure. It continues to contain some industrial usages displaced from Castlefield, but is dominated by a large, overgrown lot awaiting redevelopment. I conducted a significant amount of archival, interview, and ethnographic research in Pomona, focusing on theoretical considerations of infrastructural 'wastelands' and temporary appropriation of residual space. This chapter was ultimately omitted because, though it engaged with important theoretical questions addressed in this thesis, it was tangential to the empirical foci on the city centre. I felt that its inclusion would weaken the thematic cohesiveness of the thesis. However, this research was presented as a conference paper (Rosa 2013), and I expect to publish the findings as a book chapter.

## 10.3 Areas for Further Research: Striking a Chord

*Figure 84: Design proposal for revamped MSJ viaduct on WSW. Image source: Kirby (2013).*

Castlefield, where the inspirations of this thesis were first germinated, is also a key site where the future of Manchester's railway infrastructure may be observed. As I write this Conclusion, the relevance of this thesis is validated through a series of recent events. Throughout the process of conducting fieldwork, interviewees alluded to the fact that there might be major reconfiguration of the railway network in the city, but would cautiously decline to offer many specific details about what these changes might entail. The reason behind off-the-record comments and uncomfortably vague responses was that Network Rail was in the process of announcing a massive modernisation scheme focused on Manchester, the Northern Hub. While this was public knowledge, its details were the realm of confidential negotiations.

By the time that the first details of this scheme were made public in December 2012, the fieldwork of this thesis was nearly complete. I have resisted the temptation to engage with new strategic documents, though they offer rich data. The implications of the Northern Hub have weighed heavily on my consideration of this thesis and its potential relevance, as well as opportunities for expanding its inquiry into the nature of infrastructural change in the city.

The Northern Hub is an initiative to increase the capacity of Northwest England's railway network. From a technocratic point of view, its genesis entails travel forecasting, feasibility reports, and alignment proposals on cadastral maps. It promises to increase the efficiency of mass transit, increasing Manchester's role as the central node in the Northwest's rail network, and therefore having major implications for the economic development of the city. As I have emphasised, these are the most common criteria on which infrastructural systems are assessed: efficiency, sustainability, and economics.

In relation to this thesis, the primary relevance of the Northern Hub is the significant alterations to the built environment of the city it will require. If undertaken, it will impose indelible modifications to the urban landscape. As many of the proposed modifications will be on the MSJ viaduct, its influence will be focused primarily on my study area. This £530 million modernisation scheme proposes a number of demolitions, alterations, and reconfigurations of Manchester's railway infrastructure. The most contentious element is proposed construction of the Ordsall Chord, a new viaduct connecting lines radiating from Piccadilly and Victoria stations. Aside from a short viaduct constructed as part of the Metrolink tram system in the 1990s, this is the first railway viaduct to be constructed in Manchester in well over a century. The Ordsall Chord will require the alteration and demolition of a number of listed industrial-era railway structures, significantly altering the visual character of Castlefield. This has already raised the ire of some heritage-oriented organisations, particularly the Museum of Science and Industry (Graham 2012; Schofield 2012). In such a conflict of values, environmental sustainability and heritage come head to head in the form of railway infrastructure. These monuments of modernity, smashing everything in their path, are themselves subject to modernisation. The specificity of these processes can offer empirical backing for a deeper analysis of the contradictions of treating transportation infrastructure as heritage, as outlined in Chapter 7.

Later, on 13th July 2013, the same day that I completed the first draft of this thesis, a headline in the Manchester Evening News provided further validation regarding the contemporary relevance of this thesis to Manchester's future. The article, entitled "Revealed: What the WSW revamp could look like" (Kirby 2013), summarises the recommendations of a report calling for a massive overhaul of the MSJ viaduct. It became clear that the city council's stalwart push toward developing the First Street development at Gaythorn had been devised in coordination with knowledge of this scheme. In the case of WSW, the Northern Hub scheme includes the widening of the viaduct and the retail-led

redevelopment of its arches (Figure 84). If executed as planned, it will be the largest spatial reconfiguration of the Corridor in over a century. As the title of the article suggests, one of the main issues of public interest is the visual effect of such a reconfiguration.

The Northern Hub initiative demonstrates the extent to which railway infrastructure in Manchester continue to influence socio-spatial change in the city. The announcement of these massive schemes validates the attention this thesis has placed on Manchester's railway viaducts. If approved in its proposed form, will be implemented between 2016 and 2018. Through examining the newly published environmental assessments, plans, and consultation exercises, there are a number of opportunities to extend the scope of this thesis and enrich its empirical depth. Whether or not I am ultimately able to implement this research, I hope that this thesis provides a critical context for exploring this process.

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