speculation nor with an interest in keeping voters happy. The value of design is that it is capable of improving people's lives; at best it can be uplifting and inspiring, making places that function more efficiently, that are healthier, safer, more interesting and pleasurable, and in general, that increase our well-being. Oscillating between pragmatism and vision, the architect's role can be described as that of agent provocateur: probing issues to provide a focus around which discussions can take place, teasing out desires and fears, and envisioning how change might be realized. It is essential that the object of design is not simply visual but has substance in people's real lives. By grounding their work in social, economic and political contexts while simultaneously envisioning change, architects can challenge assumptions and raise aspirations. Thinking sustainably is one way of connecting these aspects of design thinking in a radically new way.

The three projects emphasize different aspects of an architect's role that are essential components in successful regeneration. What they illustrate is that key factors need to come together to ensure the development of robust, cohesive communities with a sustained economic base in a good-quality environment that uses resources responsibly. These ingredients are:

- maintaining an ambitious vision

- involving people in the process

- working modestly and slowly to achieve genuine rooting of ideas within the community

- celebrating what is unique and special about place

- using resources responsibly and sustainably

- ensuring the PPP triangle is delivered.

With their feet planted on the ground and their heads full of dreams, architects, acting as agents provocateurs, can challenge the regeneration process and help bring about exceptional results.

19

Regeneration, mobility and contested space: cultural reflections on a city in transition

LES ROBERTS

In his writings on radical nostalgia,[1] Alastair Bonnett charts the ambivalent and at times contradictory place of nostalgia within Marxist critical theory and aesthetics. Citing the example of radical groups such as the Situationists and others who have embraced psychogeographic modes of urban spatial intervention, Bonnett pinpoints an inherent ambiguity in the politics of nostalgia. While, on the one hand, nostalgia has been critically aligned with a reactionary and counter-progressive politics – one antithetical to Marx's forward-looking 'poetry [...] from the future'[2] – on the other, nostalgia has increasingly been seen as a constitutive element in the formation – rather than dissipation – of engaged radical political subjectivity: 'Nostalgia is being explored today not simply as a strategic exercise, an ironic re-enchantment of the modern against itself, but as a necessary resource for those who find their political and social aspirations obliterated by monolithic versions of modernity.'[3]

Bonnett's insightful re-evaluation of the role of nostalgia in critical discourse and practice poses questions as to the scope for archival forms of representation –photographs, films, artefacts and everyday objects, maps, topographic drawings, and such like – in instilling, cultivating or enhancing a radical urban sensibility, one in which the layered spatialities of the past are exhumed, re-inhabited and brought into critical dialogue with the socio-spatial landscapes of the present. Taking the example of archive film of cities and other urban landscapes, it is instructive to note

that discussions around 'nostalgia' invariably occupy an uncomfortable critical terrain in which the consumption of the past through archive imagery (an uncharacteristically buoyant market in these economically troubled times)[4] signals a certain *evacuation* of the present: a reactionary exercise in 'temporal tourism' in which the viewer, like the geographical tourist, travels in search of an 'authentic other'[5] located in earlier times. Maintaining the denial of what Johannes Fabien terms the 'coevalness' of past and present,[6] these archival journeys reinforce the essentially dis-located nature of their temporal geographies; yielding, at best, the memorial souvenir of collective remembrance ('the way we were'), while disavowing the material spaces of memory that, for the more critical urban wayfarer, define and refine palimpsestic forms of engagement with contemporary urban landscapes. Past continually erupting into present, a radically nostalgic reading of what I have elsewhere termed the 'archive city'[7] – the material and symbolic accretion of place and urban memory – points towards a conceptual revisioning of the way archival images of a city's past may be navigated and 'mapped'. As these geographical metaphors suggest, this is a fundamentally spatial exercise: a task of excavating the landscapes of the past and allowing their affective contours to find resonance – or indeed dissonance – in today's urban fabric.

The documentary *Us and Them*, as its writer and director Peter Leeson recounts elsewhere in this volume, is a film shot in the Scotland Road/ Vauxhall area of Liverpool in 1969 and 1970. It details the slum clearances and major road developments that impacted on this area of Liverpool in the 1960s and 70s, highlighting in particular the effects on local communities and residents. Critical of the plans put forward and enacted by the Liverpool Corporation, or 'Corpy' ('Them'), Leeson, articulating the voices of the 'Scottie Road' communities ('Us'), turns his fire on the corporation's rhetoric of 'regeneration', exposing the socially deleterious and contentious impact of their planning policies. Leeson, himself a former worker in the corporation's planning department, draws critical distinction between what Lefebvre refers to as the 'conceived space' of the architects and planners (the abstract, Cartesian projection of ideational spatial forms) and 'lived space': the embodied, symbolic and experiential terrain that shaped the everyday landscapes of the Scottie Road residents.[8]

Looking back on the film forty years on, it is perhaps easy to slip into a nostalgic reverie about the loss of 'community spirit' putatively ascribed to life in and around Scotland Road prior to the 1960s road schemes (although the strident community activism, not to mention the success of *Scottie Press*, the UK's longest-running community newspaper,[9] would suggest that community spirit is as much alive and kicking as it ever was in the Vauxhall area). Indeed, as a filmic archive of life as it was lived in the late 1960s, the film arguably serves a valuable social and historical function insofar as it further instils a sense of continuity, locality and rootedness of place. However, following Bonnett's arguments referred to above, what expressly political value or efficacy can or should we attach to the role of *nostalgia* in this example? Can films such as *Us and Them* exert an influence above and beyond that which serves to satiate a deep-felt need to revisit, on occasion, 'the way we were'? In other words, what, if anything, can the film tell us about Liverpool today, a city more firmly in the grip of 'regeneration fever' than ever?

Following a screening of the film at Tate Liverpool as part of the Magical Mysterious Regeneration conference in June 2008, members of the Vauxhall community led a lively debate prompted by the issues raised in the film. Marie McGiveron, chief executive of Vauxhall Community Council,[10] presented a withering appraisal of the legacy of the 1960s regeneration plans in terms of their impact on the welfare, prosperity and overall quality of life of those living in the Vauxhall area. Pointing out that, forty years on, Vauxhall is still one of the most deprived areas in Britain, McGiveron both lends critical succour to the local voices ('Us') to which Leeson's film lays claim, as well as inviting us to reflect on what regeneration (or more precisely the 'Regeneration Industry', today's 'Them') may or may not hold in store for the same communities in the twenty-first century. Offering a longitudinal glance over nearly two generations of social and economic neglect in Liverpool, from the vantage point of 2008 (Liverpool's economic high-water mark as European Capital of Culture), the issues raised in *Us and Them* offer salient insights into a social and economic history that has witnessed the gradual honing of a new vehicle – and mantra – of capitalist accumulation: Regeneration.
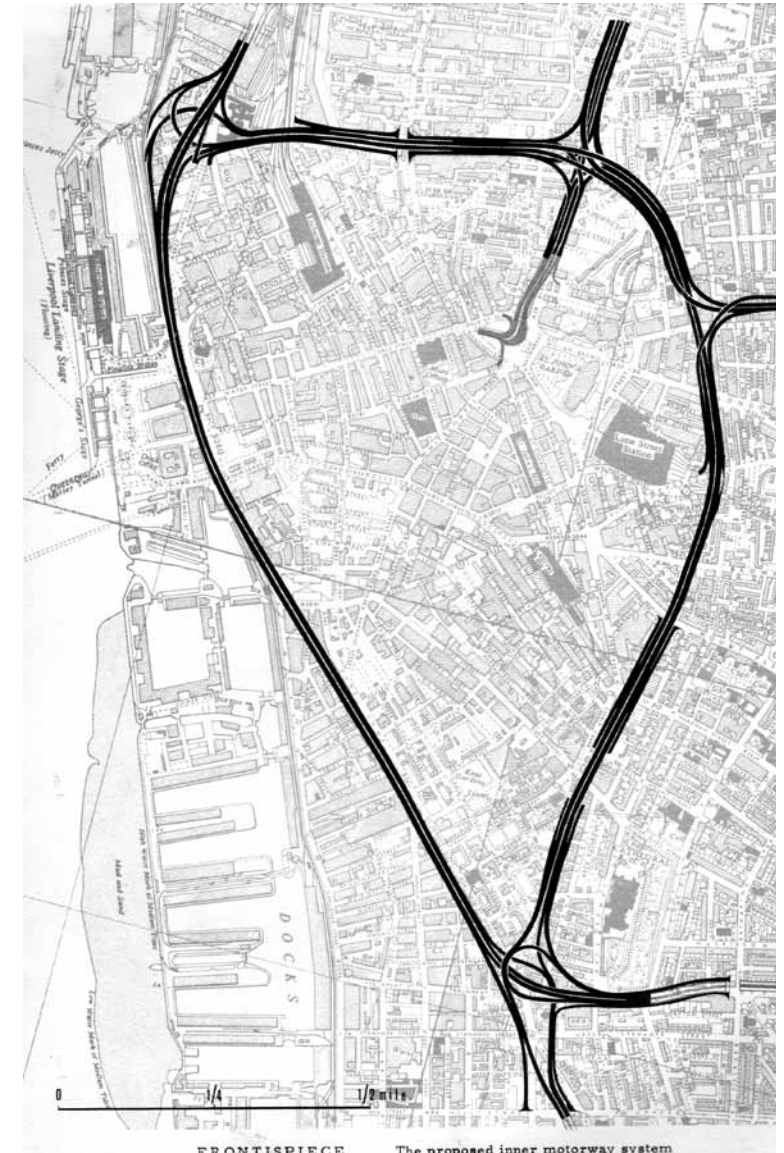
While, in 2009, the degree of long-term sustainable benefits to be afforded communities in areas of Liverpool such as Vauxhall has yet to be assessed,[11] the contested political terrain surrounding recent culture-led regeneration programmes in the city was presaged not only by development plans such as those confronted by Leeson in 1969, but also in the 1980s with events such as the Liverpool International Garden Festival. One of the more striking commonalities that unites these respective attempts to engender inward investment and economic growth (each in turn heralding the promise of an imminent urban renaissance) is the extent to which each has in some shape or form been oriented around social and cultural geographies of urban mobility.

In the case of Scotland Road the road development schemes of the 1960s and 70s – in particular the construction of the second Mersey tunnel crossing – had a devastating impact on the area, eradicating large swathes of the urban landscape to make way for the establishment of a modern transport infrastructure designed to accommodate the ever-increasing circulatory flow of vehicular traffic passing into and through the city from the wider Merseyside region. To understand the degree to which major road schemes – particularly the development of urban motorways and expressways – were embraced by city planners during this period, it is worth considering for a moment some of the plans that failed to come into fruition, most notably the proposed Liverpool Inner Motorway (LIM) that was advocated as part of a series of reports published by Liverpool City Council in 1962.

Written by the council's chief planning consultant, Graeme Shankland, the opening paragraph of report number 7, *Central Area Roads: Inner Motorway System*, provides an insight into some of the challenges faced by city planners at the time:

> The demand for greater personal mobility, one form of which is an increasingly large number of people wishing to travel by private car, is a ubiquitous feature of present day living in industrialised communities. Failure by the community to provide for this mobility will result in the decay of the city, and in particular the central area. On the other hand failure to reshape the environment to deal with the consequences of providing for this increased mobility could destroy the city itself.[12]

1 Map of proposed Liverpool Inner Motorway (from Shankland Report No. 7, 1962, City and County Borough of Liverpool)

FRONTISPIECE   The proposed inner motorway system

Bringing the motorway system into the very heart of the city, the LIM, had the plans been implemented, would have entailed the construction of a three-tiered elevated road system, potentially up to 14 lanes wide,[13] designed to allow for variable, regulated flows in traffic from local, street-level access, to bus routes and other public service traffic, to a third tier, the function of which was to circulate traffic around the city and throughout the region via routes radiating from the city centre, linking up with trunk roads and the national motorway network (see Figure 1).[14]

Although plans for the LIM were eventually shelved, elements survive in the form of the Churchill Way flyovers which connect Islington to Dale Street and Great Crosshall Street. Given the visually jarring presence of these brutalist concrete structures (which in 1971, as still evidenced today by a plaque on one of the flyover supports, were nevertheless considered – without apparent irony – worthy of a 'Concrete Society Award') it is interesting to note that one of the architectural merits of the LIM championed in the Shankland report was its purported aesthetic appeal. The modernist zeal that gripped the planners and designers of the elevated urban expressway system (as personified by figures such as Robert Moses, whose controversial Cross-Bronx Expressway in New York has attracted much critical scrutiny)[15] recalled, in the case of Liverpool, that which formerly (but less contentiously) attached itself to constructions such as the Overhead Railway, the world's first elevated electric railway.

Opened in 1893, the Overhead Railway operated along the long line of docks that stretched from Dingle in the south to Seaforth in the north. Known affectionately as the 'dockers' umbrella', the railway has remained something of an attraction and landmark architectural icon in its own right. Since its demolition in 1957, its phantasmagoric presence has continued to shape the representational spaces of the city, carving a nostalgic furrow through the fragmented and de-industrialized urban spaces that define much of the Liverpool waterfront today. Ben Parry's site-specific installation *Terminus* (2008), a virtual reconstruction of the panoramic view obtainable from the former dockside railway had it still been in operation today, draws on and distils a nostalgia of place in which the dockers' umbrella and the historic hub of Pier Head remain

2 Projection of the film Terminus (Ben Parry, 2008) on east wall of George's Dock Building, Pier Head, Liverpool, October 2008 (author's photo)

the defining topographic features. Filmed at the height of elevation of the former railway and projected onto the side of George's Dock Building at Pier Head (see Figure 2), *Terminus*'s cinematic geographies conjure a spectral urban vision that throws into stark relief the spatially dissonant and disembedded landscapes that mark – and memorialize – the site as a space of absence.[16]

As with Terence Davies's elegiac and poetic Liverpool documentary *Of Time and the City* (2008) (which includes the Pier Head sequence from Parry's *Terminus*), this virtual journey is no mere exercise in wistful nostalgia (the 'way we were' brand of temporal tourism described above); rather, by engaging past and present in the 'material and symbolic'[17] fabric of representational space, the film exerts more of a radically nostalgic aesthetic. Mobility in this instance both inscribes and disrupts the symbolic and affective contours of place. The centripetal spatial geometries[18] that were mobilized by the Overhead Railway system had the effect of 'gathering up' the port city, thereby establishing the horizontal expanse of the waterfront and dockside as the pre-eminent marker of

Liverpool's urban identity. By extension, its absence (a fundamentally *constitutive* absence in the representational spaces of artworks such as *Terminus*)[19] highlights, in contrast, the stasis and entropy associated with more recent forms of urban mobility, as exemplified by the expressway and flyover.[20]

Reviewing the Shankland report it is clear that the authors were not only aware of the historical importance of the Overhead Railway in shaping the visual iconography of Liverpool, but also that they were tapping into the affective power of its former mobilities in support of their claims vis-à-vis the aesthetic merits of the designs for the inner motorway. It is no coincidence then that it is towards the area around Pier Head and the iconic ensemble of the 'Three Graces' (the Liver, Cunard and Port of Liverpool buildings) that these visual petitions are most notably oriented. An illustration from the report depicting the view obtainable from the north-western section of the LIM (Figure 3) is of an urban vista almost identical with that represented in tourist postcards and other images of the Overhead Railway from the 1930s and 1940s (Figure 4).

It is unlikely that the case for a new integrated transport infrastructure – albeit one premised on automobility – would have proved as contentious in terms of the perceived social and environmental impacts of the proposals had it not been advanced at this particular transitional moment in the historical geography of the city, following the closure of the Overhead Railway and the decommissioning of the trams in 1957. That said, opposition to the Shankland plans quickly grew among communities that were to bear the worst brunt of the road developments. The impact of the plans on areas of inner-city Liverpool such as Scotland Road was further compounded by the slum clearance programme – a policy described by Alan Stones as a 'blitzkrieg against the inner city' by the Liverpool Corporation[21] – which resulted in the large-scale displacement of working-class residents to the 'overspill' towns of Kirkby and Skelmersdale.

One of the main charges levelled at 'the Corpy' in *Us and Them* was the abject failure on the part of the planners and architects to represent or even solicit the views of the people of Vauxhall on the impacts of the

3 View of Pier Head from proposed Liverpool Inner Motorway (from Shankland Report No. 7, 1962, City and County Borough of Liverpool)

4. Postcard showing view of Pier Head from Overhead Railway (source: Liverpool Records Office)

proposed 'regeneration' plans on their homes, communities and public spaces. As Leeson's commentary observes, this was predominantly down to questions of class and articulation:

> the authorities ('Them') have cared for the more prosperous and articulate members of the city =Will children from these communities have the same opportunities as children from the richer neighbourhoods? ... For them [the children] the planner is someone who tears down buildings =Leaders are needed that come from the communities themselves, not just professionals=

The decision to site the second Mersey tunnel crossing north of the city centre rather than in the more prosperous areas to the south was attributed to the fact that the middle-class suburban householders in that part of Liverpool voiced their objection to the construction of the tunnel in their area; or, to put it more accurately, that the objections of 'the more prosperous and articulate members of the city' were taken heed of, while those of the people in areas such as Vauxhall were afforded little, if any, consideration.

The conclusions Leeson draws in the film are well borne out by the findings put forward as part of the Liverpool Inner Area Study (IAS), commissioned by the Department of the Environment in the mid-1970s. On considerations as to the likely causes of alienation felt by individuals and community groups in inner-city areas of Liverpool (including Vauxhall and Toxteth), the report cites 'a rooted distrust of the activities of the Corporation officials and members, and a cynicism about the likely results of such activities [which] expresses itself formally in the pages of community newspapers and in the activities of community groups and organisations'. Tellingly, the report goes on to cite as a further contributory factor 'a feeling that too many Corporation officials and members are remote from the everyday experience of life in the areas, both in cultural terms and in the geographical location of the Town Hall'.[22]

In the *Social Area Analysis* report, published in 1977, the IAS statistics reveal that those living in the Vauxhall and Everton areas represented the lowest socio-economic class in the whole of the city, with almost all living in council dwellings (only 1% of residences were owner

occupied), and with two thirds of heads of households classed as semi-skilled or unskilled (only 3% of the population were in professional or managerial occupations). Unsurprisingly, as the report points out, these somewhat challenging social circumstances produced very high rates of unemployment, sickness, low educational qualifications, low car ownership and many other serious indicators of 'social malaise'.[23] The fact that almost everyone in these areas was a council tenant (unlike in the more prosperous south) meant that the corporation would be spared the expense and inconvenience of having to compulsorily purchase much of the land needed for the construction of the second Mersey tunnel. This factor probably more than any other informed the decision to site the tunnel north rather than south of the city.

The low car ownership status of communities in Vauxhall is also worth noting, in that one of the objections raised by local communities was that, in the wake of the road developments initiated in the 1960s, many of the (otherwise car-free) streets were being used as car parks for commuters travelling into Liverpool from outside the city. This issue prompted much local resentment which on one occasion resulted in activists spray-painting the windows of commuter vehicles parked in their neighbourhood. The police had been tipped off and the perpetrators were caught red-handed and arrested. Although the activists used non-permanent paint, the incident was misleadingly reported in the national press where it was claimed they had used gloss, thereby compromising their struggle to reclaim ownership of their public spaces and to raise local and national awareness of the issues at hand. Whether or not the story attracted a sympathetic reception, however, more immediately the campaign was successful: commuter parking stopped soon after the attacks.[24]

Although the destruction and social upheaval wrought by the road developments was extensive, irreversible and hugely contentious, it is nothing to what the city would have suffered had the proposed inner ring road been constructed. It is hard to conceive of a modernist – and frankly preposterous – utopian vision such as this being seriously considered today. Yet plans for the ring road – first proposed by Shankland and revisited in later planning policies put forward by the corporation –

were not in fact shelved until nearly two decades after the publication of the initial proposals. The 'homes not roads' campaign fought by anti-road protestors in the late 1970s helped to finally put an end to the controversial scheme. Similar protests were conducted in other British cities at the time as part of a wider programme of political action aimed at stopping the construction of major road developments such as those being proposed by officials at Liverpool Town Hall. In London protestors had successfully prevented attempts to build the 'motorway box' – like the LIM, a proposed elevated inner ring road – and the controversial scheme to widen Archway Road in Islington.[25] In Liverpool, as part of their campaign to prevent the construction of the inner ring road, the Vauxhall Neighbourhood Council produced 'Homes not Roads' (1978), a twenty-minute film that critically examined the case put forward by proponents of the road. This wave of anti-road protests in the 1970s and 1980s laid the foundations for resistance movements that were established in the early 1990s, waging high-profile campaigns against hotly contested schemes such as the M3 extension at Twyford Down and the Claremont Road M11 link in London.[26]

If 'homes not roads' was to be the clarion call of the anti-road campaigners, it was 'jobs not trees' that characterized the voices of opposition that arose in the early 1980s in response to plans to hold the UK's first international garden festival on a derelict stretch of waterfront at Dingle, situated in the south docks area of Liverpool. Whereas the guiding rationale that underpinned the earlier regeneration initiatives was premised on the large-scale physical development of the city (with improved roads facilitating the more efficient circulation of goods, people and traffic in and around Merseyside), the Liverpool International Garden Festival (LIGF) marked the coming of age of a new regeneration policy centred around tourism, consumption and the altogether more nebulous concept of 'culture'.

Culture-led regeneration has, of course, latterly been embraced as the pre-eminent economic mechanism to shake off Liverpool's post-industrial malaise and to usher in the city's long-awaited urban renaissance (although, with Liverpool cited as one of the UK cities likely to be worst hit by the neo-liberal created global economic recession,

these prospects are looking less encouraging by the day).[27] Mobility in this context, while engendering a qualitatively different set of issues and challenges in terms of the socio-economic welfare of the city, nevertheless poses similar concerns insofar as, as with the earlier redevelopment plans based around road construction, it potentially marginalizes the voices of vulnerable groups and opens up local structures of place, community and identity to the socially eroding – and transitory – geographies of urban development of the likes charted by Marc Augé in his work on non-places.[28]

In his introduction to the belated English translation of Lefebvre's seminal text *The Urban Revolution*, the geographer Neil Smith notes that the term 'urban regeneration' would have been dismissed by Lefebvre as 'patently ideological'.[29] With the drive towards gentrification becoming an increasingly central part of the productive economy of modern cities, it is hardly surprising that proposals to spend millions landscaping a reclaimed stretch of industrial wasteland in an attempt to 'regenerate' a city that, in the early 1980s, had some of the highest unemployment rates in the country were met with considerable scepticism – not to mention derision – in many local communities, not least those languishing in dole queues in nearby Toxteth.

'Some people have probably wondered about the relevance of organizing a garden festival in a derelict area of Liverpool.' This quote, from Queen Elizabeth's speech marking the official opening of the LIGF on 2 May 1984, hinted, with the monarch's characteristic flair for understatement, that some might indeed have questioned why trees and not jobs. With the project's detractors no doubt firmly in mind, the Queen goes on to opine, '*I* think it is most appropriate.' So began the UK's first international garden festival, which ran until October 1984.

The festival was the brainchild of the Merseyside Development Corporation (MDC), an organization established in 1981 by the former Conservative 'Minister of Merseyside', Michael Heseltine, in a bid to regenerate the south docks area of Liverpool, a part of the city that had suffered considerable social and economic deprivation following years of decline. The shift in emphasis away from production – with its tangible residues of industrial obsolescence (such as Jesse Hartley's Albert Dock

complex) – towards the new symbolic economy of culture, consumption and *in*tangible heritage precipitated the nascent stirrings of a curious faith in the role of the cultural industries in subsequent programmes of urban renewal. 'Why?', asks Jonathan Meades in his film *On the Brandwagon* (2006), a savagely sardonic assault on the architects of the 'regeneration industry' – 'because culture is GOOD […] culture will springboard you to the happiness sector.'

As a visitor attraction, the Garden Festival was an undoubted success: with nearly 3.5 million visitors it was one of the most popular UK attractions in 1984.[30] Indeed, it is inviting and instructive to draw comparisons between the LIGF and the Millennium Dome on the River Thames at Greenwich, that early monument to New Labour vacuity, denounced by Iain Sinclair as 'a fraudulent and boastful folly […] [a] Disney World trade show'.[31] Similarly mired in controversy and ridiculed at the time of opening, it was nevertheless the most popular tourist attraction in 2000.[32] Given their failure to deliver the longer-term economic benefits that Heseltine and Peter Mandelson had promised the people of Toxteth and the Greenwich peninsula respectively, the example of both these attractions makes clear that, despite short-term commercial popularity, the correlation between ticket sales and substantive (i.e. long-term) economic regeneration is fuzzy at best.[33] Fast forward eight years to the events surrounding Liverpool's tenure as European Capital of Culture, and the legacy of the LIGF (and that of the Millennium Dome) prompts salutary reflection on a city whose future prospects can in part be measured by divining the entropic consumerscapes of its urban past.

One might begin by trawling through the extensive archive of video tapes held in the Liverpool Record Office that document, in near-forensic detail, the MDC going about its business of 'regenerating' the Albert and south docks in the 1980s. Among the hours of footage detailing the roll call of corporate sponsors, plans and projections of the proposed development areas, aerial surveys of the south docks 'regeneration zone', and general MDC promotional and marketing material (including versions in Mandarin, French and Spanish), are a collection of daily video rushes of events and activities that took place as part of the LIGF programme. As with the planning models of the festival site and the

Festival Hall (now gathering dust in a museum storage warehouse north of the city), these material artefacts convey their own story, one that renders the spectacle and vision they represent strangely incongruent. Boxed up and forgotten, these relics acquire a history and geography of their own: a topography that is mapped by the pages of an archive catalogue, or by the digital contours and pathways of an online database of Liverpool films.[34] Yet the actual landscapes and events to which they so diligently bear witness remain elusive. The corporate vapidity that infuses their dormant image-spaces lends a surreal and almost other-worldly quality to these MDC-filtered remembrances of 1980s Liverpool. As archival records, these U-Matic[35] time-capsules chart the spatial materialization of an idea, nascent in form, that has since taken root and run rampant throughout the 'regenerative' urban spaces of today's post-industrial city. Despite their thoroughness, what is absent from these records are the affective attachments – and detachments – felt by those visiting the festival site; i.e. the emotional mappings of the lived spaces and heterotopic spaces (as a landscape of consumption, the festival site symbolically anchored its geography virtually everywhere but Liverpool)[36] that people experienced as part of their everyday engagements in and around the site.
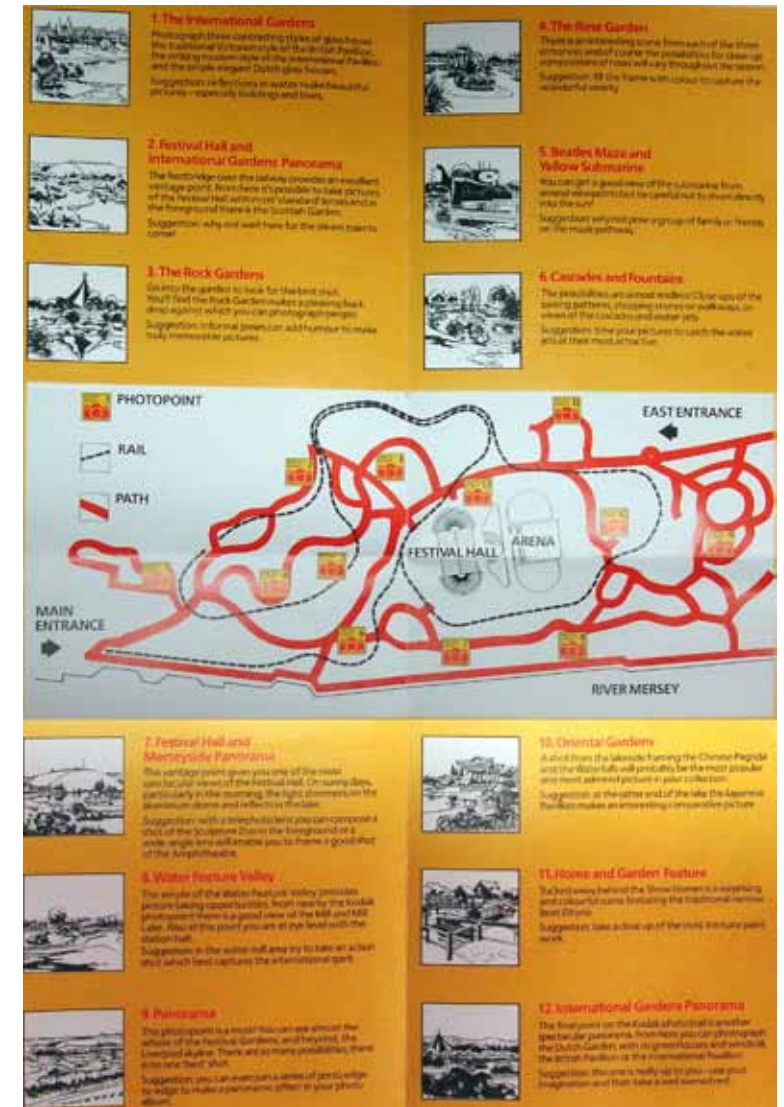
Films by independent video collectives such as Community Productions Merseyside, whose *Welcome to the Pleasure Dome* (1985) provides a critical, more locally anchored perspective on the role of the MDC, also fail to invoke any sense of *intensive* urban spatiality attached to the festival site and its surrounding landscapes. Despite their oppositional stance, as archival documents films such as *Welcome to the Pleasure Dome* feel as flat and as inured to the everyday as their MDC counterparts. Where we are afforded more of an ethnographic insight into everyday practices of the festival-goers is in footage shot by amateur filmmakers, such as the Wirral-based producer, filmmaker and collector, Angus Tilston. *Festival Travel – Liverpool 1984* (1984) charts the various transport links to the festival, including a special ferry and bus service, and train connections to and from nearby St Michael's station. For Tilston, the spectacle was as much the 'getting there' as the festival itself. Conveying the anticipation of going to the event, of wondering what

might await the visitor upon his or her arrival, the film also unwittingly taps into the wider sense of anticipation attached to the festival as a 'regenerative beacon': shining the way to a more prosperous future.

Watching *Not Just Flowers – International Garden Festival '84* (1984), Tilston's record of his visits to the festival in the summer of 1984, it is hard to draw an obvious association between the rather whimsical spectacle captured on film and the green shoots of economic recovery that the MDC believed were destined to burst forth from the site. In the film, somnambulant day-trippers and tourists shuffle between the attractions: the Festival Hall, the international gardens, a miniature steam railway, the Beatles maze and Yellow Submarine, the Chinese and Japanese pagodas, and general items of assorted kitsch (including 'model' tourist mannequins, the world's biggest teddy bear, and a bizarre statue of Laurel and Hardy sporting a pair of tusks). Performers and entertainers keep the visitors distracted, children zoom down a huge dragon's head slide, and the economic gloom that had descended over much of the city is temporarily banished, like the unemployment status of those who had laboured on the project.

If the (real) city seemed half a world away, then in many respects it was. In a striking affirmation of John Urry's thesis of the 'tourist gaze',[37] Kodak produced a visitors' map to the festival site, with numbered 'photopoints' helpfully pointing out, for those who may have been unsure, the sites deemed worthy of capturing on film (Figure 5). The insubstantiality of the cultural landscape through which the tourists and day-trippers moved (many of whom, as is clear from the tourist marketing information aimed at festival-goers, would have bypassed sites in Liverpool itself) renders the local demand for 'jobs not trees' that much more urgent. In Tilston's gaze this intangible sense of place is heightened by the almost barren artificiality of the newly landscaped festival site (horticultural developments, unlike their built counterparts, need time to grow). The languid fantasy-land that the viewer can (re-)inhabit in *Not Just Flowers* is the product of a representational space that is at once both Liverpool and not Liverpool: an urban landscape from which one can excavate the geomorphic traces of cultural memory and social contestation.[38]

5 Kodak Photographic Trail map of Liverpool Garden Festival (source: National Museums Liverpool)

As nostalgia items these archive films undoubtedly rekindle interest in an event that many Liverpudlians recall with some fondness,[39] yet in order to elicit a *radically nostalgic* response the critical urban wayfarer would do well to supplement these otherwise inconsequential nuggets of local history with a more active engagement with the landscape in and around the former festival site. In its affective materiality, the multi-layered fabric of the city is as much a repository of urban memory as any image-bank or archive collection.[40]

Fenced off to the public, the Garden Festival site today is owned by the developer Langtree McLean Ltd, which, in 2006, put forward proposals for a mixed-use redevelopment scheme consisting of 1300 private homes, shopping and community facilities, and 27 hectares of 'new iconic parkland'.[41] At the time of writing the site remains undeveloped, and reports in late 2008 that one of the project partners, the housebuilders David McLean Group, had gone into administration have placed a serious question mark over the future of the project.[42]

In their 2006 'Festival Gardens' report, the developers make the following case: 'The Vision [i.e. their redevelopment proposals] needs to be delivered to address the *degenerative effects* of the site in the locality and also to deliver the *regenerative* benefits on the ground as part of the Capital of Culture (2008) programme'.[43] That the absence of a utilitarian or economic rationale for the site might precipitate a *degeneration* of the wider locality is a view that precludes any other form of social engagement associated with the space. Moreover, its expedient logic is such that *any* development activity is rendered potentially beneficial, as if this fact alone would suffice to stem the negative, 'degenerative' energy flows otherwise emanating from the site.

This, of course, fails to consider the extent to which the space has generated and played host to a diverse array of socio-cultural practices that fall outside this overarching logic of capital accumulation and rational productivity. These other forms of engagement (in particular those prompted by the site's rich ecological and wildlife resources) can be observed and, indeed, experienced by visiting the location, access to which, without prior consent from the owners, is considered to be trespass and hence illegal. Security staff keep a half-hearted vigil near the

6, 7 & 8. Liverpool Garden Festival site, Dingle, July 2008 (author's photos)

Herculaneum entrance on the south-west perimeter of the site, yet one suspects that for the most part the presence of the errant *flâneur* goes undetected (or unconfronted).

Aside from the general atmosphere of abandonment and decay, what is immediately apparent upon entering the site is the extent to which nature has asserted its dominance over the landscape. Over the years an abundance of trees and flora has reclaimed the crumbling relics and structures that a quarter of a century ago played host to crowds of tourists and leisure consumers (Figures 6, 7 and 8). A cross between the post-apocalyptic *mise-en-scène* of Andrei Tarkovsky's 1979 film *Stalker* and the sort of spectral landscape one might expect to find in an episode of the children's cartoon *Scooby-Doo*, the festival zone today stands as both a monument to the 'degenerative' folly of the MDC (and, by extension, of the Thatcher government's free-market credo that underpinned its conception), and a socially organic space of possibility and potential. For the artist Laura Almarcegui, 'unpurposed' areas of wasteland such as the LIGF site represent 'spaces of freedom, where anything can happen'.[44] *Enclosed Garden* (2004), her photographic installation at Tate Liverpool, probed the abandoned spaces of the festival site, investing them with a utility and aesthetic value that their state of dereliction otherwise renders absent.

In an earlier work, *Making a Wasteland* (2003), situated in an empty space within Rotterdam Harbour, Almarcegui's 'construction' of the landscape consisted of essentially doing nothing: of leaving the space without design or architectural definition. As she observes, 'wastelands are important for me because I think one can only feel free in this type of land, forgotten by town planners'.[45] This anti-design aesthetic – space

re-appropriated from the rationalizing gaze of the planner and architect – expresses a radically alternative urban vision in which public spaces are reconstituted as hybrid zones: spaces where the organic and industrial vestiges of urban modernity give shape to new forms of social, spatial and affective corporeality.

Similarly, for the cultural geographer Tim Edensor, industrial wastelands and ruins define a spatial aesthetics that runs counter to those of the planner and designer. Contesting the notion that such spaces are by definition valueless, empty and 'saturated with negativity as spaces of danger, delinquency, ugliness and disorder',[46] Edensor points to their potential as socio-political and aesthetic zones of alternative 'productivity' composed of tactile, sensory and multi-layered spatialities. As he asserts, these counter-aesthetics highlight the ambiguous and contradictory nature of industrial wastelands as the material expression – inscribed in quotidian space – of the uneven and cyclical patterns of capitalist expansion:

> Urban modernity has been characterised by a tension between the disorder brought by continual change and the flux of urban life [...] and the rationalising impulse to classify and rationalise space. In western cities, these latter processes are marginalising the carnivalesque and reducing the interaction with spatial and social diversity [...] [producing] spatial formations in which difference is commodified and contained [...] Industrial ruins stand as material critiques of these processes, rebuke the shiny images through which the city is marketed, the preferred urban lifestyles and activities.[47]

Barthes' observation that it is not so important to multiply the surveys or the functional studies of the city 'but to *multiply the readings of the city*'[48] is nowhere more true than in relation to Liverpool's urban landscape. Subjected to cartographic rationality and re-sculpted to conform with the abstract designs of the architect and planner, the areas around Scotland Road and the LIGF site have borne the historic traces of a functional urbanism predicated on mobility, circulation and the de-localization of place and identity.[49] The imposition of a unitary spatial narrative has both effaced and, from a dialectical standpoint, given focus to the multiplicity of local spatial stories that these top-down strategies of urban development 'concrete over' and push to the margins of the urban imaginary.

A politics of radical nostalgia, as I have argued in this essay, prompts a revisioning of the role of the archive in terms of its capacity to engage with contemporary urban spatialities. Eschewing the reductive 'way we were' processes of temporal ordering that inhibit psychogeographic mappings of archival image-spaces, a palimpsestic model such as that outlined above informs the construction of representational spaces in which past and present are critically interwoven. Reconfiguring and remapping the layered temporalities of place and urban form, the imbricated geographies of the 'archive city' enable us to renegotiate and reclaim our stake in prosaic urban landscapes, and to bring closer critical scrutiny to the architects of regeneration whose rationalizing vision leaves precious little space for the everyday ghosts of urban memory.

NOTES

1 A. Bonnett, 'The Nostalgias of Situationist Subversion', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 23.5 (2006), pp. 23–48; Bonnett, 'The Dilemmas of Radical Nostalgia in British Psychogeography', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 26.1 (2009), pp. 45–70.

2 Bonnett, 'The Nostalgias of Situationist Subversion', p. 25.

3 Bonnett, 'The Nostalgias of Situationist Subversion', p. 24.

4 The popularity of TV programmes such as *The Lost World of Mitchell and Kenyon* (BBC 2005), *The Lost World of Friese-Greene* (BBC 2006) and *The Way We Were* (Granada TV 2004–), all of which draw on archive film to 'nostalgically revisit' the history and landscapes of twentieth-century Britain, is part of a growing interest in the use of archive moving image material in local, regional and national heritage discourses. In Merseyside, screenings of local films by the North West Film Archive and the University of Liverpool's *City in Film* project have also proved popular among local audiences.

5 D. MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1976).

6 J. Fabien, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

7 L. Roberts and R. Koeck, 'The Archive City: Reading Liverpool's Urban Landscape Through Film', in C. Grunenberg and R. Knifton (eds), *Centre of the Creative Universe: Liverpool and the Avant-Garde* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007).

8 H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

9 See www.scottiepress.org.

10 See www.vnc.org.uk

11 Despite the PR fanfare, from as early as 1 January 2009, declaring the unmitigated success of Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture, assessments as to its economic and social impacts can, of course, only be reliably gauged over the long term, i.e. when (and if) its effects are seen to translate into substantive material improvement for those living in areas such as Vauxhall.

12 G. Shankland, *City and County Borough of Liverpool Planning Consultants Report No. 7, Central Area Roads: Inner Motorway System* (Liverpool, 1962), p. 2.

13 R. Botham and J. Herson, 'Motorway Madness in Liverpool? From Rationality to Rationalisation', *The Planner*, 66.5 (1980), p. 118.

14 Shankland, *Planning Consultants Report No. 7*, p. 4.

15 See, for example, Marshall Berman's chapter 'Robert Moses: The Expressway World', in his *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), pp. 290–312.

16 L. Roberts, 'Dis/embedded Geographies of Film: Virtual Panoramas and the Touristic Construction of Liverpool Waterfront', *Space and Culture*, 13.1 (2010), pp. 54–74; Roberts, *Film, Mobility and Urban Space: A Cinematic Geography of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, forthcoming).

17 B. Highmore, *Cityscapes: Cultural Readings in the Material and Symbolic City* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

18 E. Dimendberg, *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Roberts, 'Dis/embedded Geographies of Film'.

19 At the Milan Triennale in 1994 the architect Brian Hatton exhibited work in which he advocated the building of a new Overhead Railway in Liverpool. Hatton's exhibit, *Tales of Dwelling: Narratives of the City*, put forward the argument that the former Overhead Railway gave the city a linearity and narration it subsequently lacked. Linked to this work was a future city project set in Liverpool in 2012. Conceived by a colleague of Hatton's, the Overhead Railway of 2012 was re-imagined as part of a Situationist take on the 1981 Toxteth riots (Hatton, personal communication; Hatton, 'Shifted Tideways: Liverpool's Changing Fortunes', *The Architectural Review* [January 2008], p. 42).

20 L. Roberts, 'Making Connections: Crossing Boundaries of Place and Identity in Liverpool and Merseyside Amateur Transport Films', *Mobilities*, 5.1 (2010), pp. 83–109.

21 A. Stones, 'Stop Slum Clearance – Now', *Official Architecture and Planning*, 35.2 (1972), p. 110.

22 Inner Area Study Liverpool: IAS/LI/2, *Study Review: Proposals for Action and Research*, Hugh Wilson and Lewis Womersley, Chartered Architects and Town Planners (London: Department of the Environment, 1974), p. 15.

23 Inner Area Study Liverpool: IAS/LI/22, *Social Area Analysis*, Hugh Wilson and Lewis Womersley, Chartered Architects and Town Planners (London: Department of the Environment, 1977), p. 25.

24 Peter Leeson, personal communication, July 2008.

25 Roadblock, 'Roadblock: How People Power is Wrecking the Roads Programme', 1995, www.roadblock.org.uk/alarmuk/roadblock (accessed 30 March 2009).

26 S. McCreery, 'The Claremont Road Situation', in I. Borden et al. (eds), *The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space* (London: MIT Press, 2001).

27 See the Cities Outlook Report 2009, published in January 2009 by the independent urban policy research group Centre for Cities: www.centreforcities.org/outlook09.

28 M. Augé, *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 1995).

29 H. Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. xxi.

30 J. Murden, '"City of Change and Challenge": Liverpool Since 1945', in J. Belchem (ed.), *Liverpool 800: Culture, Character and History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), p. 446.

31 I. Sinclair, 'All Change. This Train is Cancelled', *London Review of Books*, 13 May 1999.

32 See http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/2000/may/08/millennium-dome (accessed 30 March 2009).

33 See 'Building Society', *The Guardian*, 22 June 2007, www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/jun/22/buildingsociety; and 'Millennium Dome: Property crash endangering Greenwich project', *The Guardian*, 16 July 2008, www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2008/jul/16/dome.property.

34 www.liv.ac.uk/lsa/cityinfilm/catalogue

35 U-matic is the name of the first videocassette format, developed by Sony in 1971, and for many years the standard format used in commercial film and video production.

36 Although the festival did include exhibits with a Liverpool theme (such as the Liverpool Street, the Beatles' maze, and Liverpool Quiz Garden), the city for the most part was conspicuous by its absence.

37   J. Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* (London: Sage, 2nd edn, 2002).

38 Both *Festival Travel* and *Not Just Flowers* can be viewed on BFI Screenonline's *Liverpool: a City on Screen* website (www.screenonline.org.uk/liverpool/).

39 This can in part be gauged by the requests made and granted to permit the scattering of the ashes of deceased former garden festival workers on the site, an indicator of their strong emotional attachment to the site; A. Theokas, *Grounds for Review: The Garden Festival in Urban Planning and Design* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), p. 153.

40 Roberts and Koeck, 'The Archive City'; T. Edensor, *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics and Materiality* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p. 172.

41 Langtree McLean Ltd, *Festival Gardens* (2006), p. 8, www.riversidedrive.org.uk/festivalbrochure.pdf (accessed 30 March 2009).

42 www.riversidedrive.org.uk

43 Langtree McLean, *Festival Gardens*, p. 32 (emphasis added).

44 L. Britton, 'Enclosed Gardens', in P. Domela (ed.), *International 04* (Liverpool: Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art, 2004), p. 20.

45 L. Almarcegui, 'Making a Wasteland', in P. Domela (ed.), *International 04* (Liverpool: Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art, 2004), p. 19.

46 Edensor, *Industrial Ruins*, p. 7.

47 Edensor, *Industrial Ruins*, p. 168.

48 R. Barthes, 'Semiology and the Urban', in E. Leach (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 171.

49 Cf. Roberts, 'Making Connections'.