

# Landscapes of Hope and Crisis: Dereliction, Environment, and Leisure in Britain during the Long 1970s

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**Abstract** This article surveys plans that envisioned new leisure uses for derelict landscapes in Britain from about 1966 to 1979. These plans were an attempt to transform areas of Britain in ways that cut across issues ranging from deindustrialization to planning, landscape, environmentalism, industrial heritage, and leisure. The author argues for the importance of the profession of landscape architects in setting the agenda for tackling industrial dereliction. It then shows these issues playing out in three locations: in the Lea Valley, in Stoke-on-Trent, and in Telford New Town. Derelict landscapes were a visual manifestation of the various crises that continue to structure historians’ accounts of the 1970s, but the author shows how the response to the issue was characterized by an almost utopian optimism that these problems could be resolved in a way that would stimulate new forms of living.

In 1966, the minister of housing and local government, Richard Crossman, wrote in his diary about a visit to Stoke-on-Trent, “As I was driving through I suddenly felt ‘Here is this huge, ghastly combination of five towns—what sense is there in talking about urban renewal here? Other towns have a shape, a centre, some place where renewal can start, perhaps a university. But if one spent billions on this ghastly collection of slag heaps, pools of water, old potteries, deserted coal mines, there would be nothing to show for the money.’ There is nothing in Stoke except the worst of the industrial revolution, and the nicest of people.”<sup>1</sup>

Stoke-on-Trent had more derelict land than any other county borough in the country, mostly caused by coal mining or marl extraction, covering 1,800 acres or 7.9 percent of the land area of city.<sup>2</sup> The city council worried that the level of dereliction presented an “image of ugliness, backwardness and lack of enterprise” and blamed the city’s dramatic population loss (14,245 people left between 1966 and 1971) largely on the poor physical environment.<sup>3</sup> Although Stoke-on-Trent was an epicenter for the issue of derelict land, it was a topic with national reach, and one

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, 3 vols. (London, 1975), 2:151.

<sup>2</sup> “Stoke Reclamation Programme,” *Institute of Landscape Architects Journal* (UK), May 1970, 14–24.

<sup>3</sup> *Land Reclamation, City of Stoke on Trent* [1974/75?], 10 (uncatalogued pamphlet consulted in the Stoke on Trent City Archives).

that was increasingly understood as a visual manifestation of issues at the center of Britain's economic travails. At the heart of the question of derelict land was the long shadow of the industrial revolution and the obsolescence of its infrastructures; as a report by the landscape architecture firm Land Use Consultants put it, "Our cities and towns are full of the relics of the age of steam and the waste products these bygone technologies produced. Abandoned sites once used by public utilities, and ghostly tracks of derelict railway lines combined with the spoil heaps of exhausted industry lay waste at the heart of many cities."<sup>4</sup> Derelict land was therefore a symbolically charged and highly visible manifestation of the British government's struggles to follow through on cross-party promises of modernizing the economy; it was what remained when the sun had set on Britain's twilight industries. As the chairman of the national coal board, Lord Robens, put it in 1970, the most conspicuous areas of dereliction were concentrated in "regions of the country which have been crippled by the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution."<sup>5</sup>

Although Crossman was deeply pessimistic about the ability of places like Stoke-on-Trent to be transformed, 1966 was the year that a profoundly optimistic set of ideas about the potential of renewing derelict land gained widespread traction. The sheer quantity of planning documents, books, technical manuals, and government directives that emerged from the late 1960s and into the 1970s envisioning the widespread reclamation of derelict land were so plentiful that landscape architect Brenda Colvin feared that the "repetition and rereading of what we already know tend towards their neglect."<sup>6</sup> They are nevertheless a fascinating source for an historian of modern Britain, as through them we see historical actors imaginatively grappling with attempts to transform areas of Britain in a way that cuts across issues ranging from deindustrialization to planning, landscape, environmentalism, industrial heritage, and leisure. Derelict land might be turned toward agricultural uses, forestry, new industry, or housing, but in this article, I focus on a significant number of plans reimagining derelict land as spaces of leisure and recreation. Recreation uses were often necessitated by the fact that, especially in the case of coal mining, the areas remained unstable and therefore unsuitable for new housing or industrial uses. The conjuncture of the two issues of dereliction and leisure in these plans is highly suggestive of how elites in this period imagined the future.<sup>7</sup>

Derelict landscapes have recently been chronicled by a swarm of urban poets, wasteland flaneurs, and psychogeographers.<sup>8</sup> Such accounts treat derelict land only as space left over after planning, but I suggest understanding them as the location of planning effort. My approach is emphatically that of an historian rather than a physical geographer or an ecologist, in that its primary focus is on the people and

<sup>4</sup> Land Use Consultants, *Low Cost Urban Improvements, Preliminary Draft* (1975), consulted in the Land Use Consultants archive, which I understand is to be transferred to the Museum of English Rural Life at the University of Reading.

<sup>5</sup> Lord Robens's talk to the Civic Trust conference, 1970, COAL 74/1309, National Archives, London.

<sup>6</sup> Brenda Colvin, "Review of Derelict Britain," *Landscape Design*, September 1970, 31.

<sup>7</sup> In this, plans for derelict land parallel those for leisure centers in the same period. See Otto Saumarez Smith, "The Lost World of the British Leisure Centre," *History Workshop Journal* 88, no. 2 (2019): 180–203.

<sup>8</sup> For example, see Michael Symmons Roberts and Paul Farley, *Edgelands: Journeys into England's True Wilderness* (London, 2012).

processes that go into forming and conceptualizing a landscape.<sup>9</sup> Intervening in the historiographies of planning, of Britain in the 1970s, and in the meaning of landscape, I focus on the public and private agencies that conceived of reclamation work in plans, including local authorities and new town development corporations, the Civic Trust, and the Coal Board, as well as planners and landscape architects. Plans are a useful source for what they reveal about physical change of the environment, but in line with a recent trend in planning history, I use them here primarily for what they reveal about the aspirations and fears of a culture.<sup>10</sup> Recent work in planning history has also stressed that, in contradistinction to Jane Jacobs's influential 1961 *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, planning practice evolved throughout the postwar period—and I describe a discrete moment in the evolution of British planning practice.<sup>11</sup> Specifically I reveal the transformative planning ambition of the profession of landscape architects to reshape society through landscape reclamation. The plans created by landscape architects are part of an historical moment in which the tools of social-democratic planning developed during the postwar period were harnessed to deal with newly emerging problems of deindustrialization, leisure, and ecology.

Historians have shown how, since at least the seventeenth century, landscape, understood as both physical places and their representation across a range of media, was commonly perceived as a highly visible bellwether of social and economic change, invested with a range of symbolic meanings. Landscape has been shown to have been an agent of historical change and not merely a background. The improvement of wasteland especially was informed by deeply held cultural attitudes.<sup>12</sup> Landscape studies have provided rich insights into conceptual issues from the Protestant Reformation to English national identity.<sup>13</sup> In what follows, I apply the approaches of landscape history to the more recent past. Jim Tomlinson has made an argument for deindustrialization as a metanarrative for postwar British history.<sup>14</sup> The issue of derelict land helps us get beyond seeing the process of deindustrialization in abstracted or purely economic terms and instead as an event that inscribed itself

<sup>9</sup> Philip Waller, ed., *The English Urban Landscape* (Oxford, 2000). See also Andrew Seaton, "Environmental History and New Directions in Modern British Historiography," *Twentieth Century British History* 30, no. 3 (2019): 447–56.

<sup>10</sup> Guy Ortolano, "Planning the Urban Future in 1960s Britain," *Historical Journal* 54, no. 2 (2011): 477–507; Rosemary Wakeman, *Practicing Utopia: An Intellectual History of the New Town Movement* (Chicago, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York, 1961); Guy Ortolano, *Thatcher's Progress: From Social Democracy to Market Liberalism through an English New Town* (Cambridge, 2019); Lizbeth Cohen, *Saving America's Cities: Ed Logue and the Struggle to Renew Urban America in the Suburban Age* (New York, 2019); Otto Saumarez Smith, *Boom Cities: Architect Planners and the Politics of Radical Urban Renewal in 1960s Britain* (Oxford, 2019).

<sup>12</sup> Vittoria Di Palma, *Wasteland: A History* (New Haven, 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2011); David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, 2nd ed. (London, 2016); Paul Readman, *Storied Ground: Landscape and the Shaping of English National Identity* (Cambridge, 2018); Elizabeth McKellar, *Landscape of London: The City, the Country, and the Suburbs, 1660–1840* (New Haven, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Jim Tomlinson, "Deindustrialisation and Not Decline: A New Meta-narrative for Post-war British History," *Twentieth Century British History* 27, no. 1 (2016): 76–99.

on landscapes and physical spaces—while also intersecting with other social and economic changes.

Derelict land was a visual manifestation of titanic shifts in Britain's economy and society, but what is intriguing is that these areas were simultaneously conceived as sites of tremendous potential for the creation of a new type of society. In "combining planning for leisure with the salvation of derelict land,"<sup>15</sup> many plans from the mid-1960s and into the 1970s merge two contrasting imaginaries through which people conceived of social change in Britain. On the one hand, derelict land was all too obviously a symbol of relative decline and the widespread obsolescence of a sclerotic economy; on the other hand, the plans for these areas, through their optimism and ambition, speak of another set of issues through which people understood the changes happening to society and the economy, powered by unprecedented increases in incomes, leisure time, personal mobility, and better education. The subject therefore cuts to the heart of Britain's Janus-faced experience of change in this period. The planning mechanisms of the postwar period, and the meliorist or even utopian belief in their transformative potential that underlay them, were not abandoned but were applied to newly emerging intersecting problems of deindustrialization, leisure, and ecology. The plans for derelict land are therefore an example of what Guy Ortolano has recently described as an evolving and dynamic welfare state in the 1970s.<sup>16</sup> They can be conceived, perhaps, as a physical correlative to the rediscovery of poverty in this period—landscape poverty, if you will. Like the rediscovery of poverty, the reclamation of derelict land was an attempt to shift the focus of the welfare state to areas or constituencies felt to have been left behind in the move toward general affluence.<sup>17</sup> Both movements see the welfare state expanding its purview.

The economic and social upheavals occurring during the 1970s were conceived by most people not through economic data but through their visibility in landscapes and particular places. Grounding a history of deindustrialization in particular places helps us to intimately link these late-twentieth-century processes with a much longer environmental history of the industrial revolution—as can be seen in case studies of places freighted with industrial history and heritage such as Stoke-on-Trent or the Ironbridge Gorge in Shropshire. These particular places support an extended chronology of deindustrialization; dereliction had a long and accretive history in these places. What was new from the late 1960s was not the existence of derelict land, as dereliction had been growing for decades: it was the desire to conceive of totally new uses and roles for these areas. By focusing on this neglected but key aspect of deindustrialization, I complicate narratives of decline and crisis that have until recently structured our accounts of Britain in the 1970s.<sup>18</sup> It does not deny the devastating impact of deindustrialization; instead its core revelation is to show that the developmental state was flexible, responsive, ambitious, and above all optimistic, in its tackling of these new

<sup>15</sup> 709 Parl. Deb. H.C. (5th ser.) (1965) col. 958.

<sup>16</sup> Ortolano, *Thatcher's Progress*, 17–22.

<sup>17</sup> On the rediscovery of poverty, see Rodney Lowe, "The Rediscovery of Poverty and the Creation of the Child Poverty Action Group, 1962–1968," *Contemporary British History* 9, no. 3 (1995): 602–11.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Saunders, "Crisis? What Crisis? Thatcherism and the Seventies," in *Making Thatcher's Britain*, ed. Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (Cambridge, 2012), 25–42; Colin Hay, "Chronicles of a Death Foretold: The Winter of Discontent and the Construction of the Crisis of British Keynesianism," *Parliamentary Affairs* 63, no. 3 (2010): 446–70.

challenges. In so doing, it is therefore a response to the call of Lawrence Black, Hugh Pemberton, and Pat Thane for alternative readings of the 1970s, showing how a sense of crisis during the period was conducive to new ideas and approaches.<sup>19</sup>

## LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS AND THE POTENTIAL OF DERELICT LAND

The ability to reclaim derelict land was not new in the mid-1960s. A history of reclamation might stretch back to the removal of a devastated iron works as part of Humphrey Repton's landscape at Attingham Park in Shropshire in the eighteenth century. By the interwar period, especially in the North of England, landscapes of dereliction had gained an important symbolic role in arguments for modernization.<sup>20</sup> But government, certainly central government, had rarely become involved. A 1964 Civic Trust booklet outlines the range of schemes carried out since the Second World War, detailing projects that turned derelict land to agricultural use, playing fields, golf courses, or forestry, yet their overwhelming narrative was one of "inertia."<sup>21</sup> The Lower Swansea Valley study of 1967 similarly gives an indicative history of inertia over a derelict area, stretching back to the nineteenth century; it described how "the size of the area, the vast quantities of its debris, its physical fragmentation, its multiple ownership, all contributed to a feeling that the cost of the physical redevelopment of the area was, in the circumstances, beyond the resources of the County Borough. Government help was looked for and, as we have seen, was not forthcoming."<sup>22</sup>

The major legislation that provided funds for local authorities to tackle derelict land was the 1966 Local Government Act, giving local authorities a 50 percent grant for the reclamation or improvement of "derelict, neglected or unsightly land." The act was widely understood as a response to that year's Aberfan tragedy, although it was also a recognition that the need for such legislation had been growing within central government for some time.<sup>23</sup> A larger grant for places that counted as development areas could be awarded under the 1966 Industrial Development Act. The amount available was increased to 75 percent in 1970 and to 100 percent in 1975.<sup>24</sup> Apparently no other country had a comparable system of legislation or grant aid for the reclamation of past dereliction, although the approach to the issue in Germany's Ruhr Valley, including its system of leisure parks, was widely cited as being in advance of what had been achieved in Britain.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Lawrence Black and Hugh Pemberton, introduction to *Reassessing 1970s Britain*, ed. Lawrence Black, Hugh Pemberton, and Pat Thane (Manchester, 2013), 1–25.

<sup>20</sup> Dennis Linehan, "A New England: Landscape, Exhibition and Remaking Industrial Space in the 1930s," *Geographies of British Modernity: Space and Society in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David Gilbert, David Matless, and Brian Short (London, 2003), 132–50.

<sup>21</sup> Civic Trust, *Derelict Land: A Study of Industrial Dereliction and How It May Be Redeemed* (London, 1964), unpaginated.

<sup>22</sup> Kenneth J. Hilton, *The Lower Swansea Valley Project* (London, 1967), 43. Both University College Swansea and University of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne had large interdisciplinary projects on the issue of derelict land in 1960s.

<sup>23</sup> An earlier government announcement was the pamphlet Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *New Life for Dead Land: Derelict Acres Reclaimed* (London, 1963).

<sup>24</sup> See Historical Background, February 1970, AT/48/26, National Archives.

<sup>25</sup> Tandy, *Landscapes of Industry*, 288; Talk by Dr. Luger Wierling to the Civic Trust, AT/48/26, National Archives.

Central to calls for rehabilitating derelict land was the increasingly confident profession of landscape architects. The late 1960s saw architecture losing its dominance as the leading profession in planning. Controversies over slum clearance and industrialized building materials did much to delegitimize the architectural profession.<sup>26</sup> Other disciplines, including economics, computing, management, sociology, and even futurology jostled for dominance.<sup>27</sup> The issue of derelict land was a key area over which landscape architects asserted their transformative ambitions. In a few decades the profession had gone from designing gardens for the wealthy to wanting to transform the entire environment, and through it the social and economic life of Britain. Landscape architecture's plans for derelict land were not just about improving the attractiveness or amenity value of areas but about shifting Britain's economic geography by making rundown areas viable.<sup>28</sup> Such arguments were made with expressive and rhetorical force by a generation of wonderfully articulate propagandists for the profession, including Nan Fairbrother, Sylvia Crowe, Geoffrey Jellicoe, Cliff Tandy, and Brenda Colvin—all of whom combined professional practice with public writing that stressed the transformative potential of landscape architecture for society as a whole, especially through the reclamation of derelict land.<sup>29</sup> Notably, it was a profession that gave scope to women practitioners.<sup>30</sup>

Landscape architects had been given extra clout through recently developed technologies, such as earth-moving equipment of often staggering scale, allowing them to create shelter belts, artificial lakes, and complex land forms. They made use of the Vermeer tree spade, which could pick up and deposit a whole tree with its roots, as well as an increasingly sophisticated knowledge of plants that could grow on waste, “methods of making soil, and hydromatic seeding of difficult areas.”<sup>31</sup> Many of these machines and techniques had emerged as a byproduct of technologies developed during the Second World War.<sup>32</sup> The Civic Trust observed that “the outlook has been transformed by the conjunction of two technical revolutions—in the mechanics of muck-shifting and tree-moving and in the science of soil-making. We can now bring to bear a battery of machines whose power, versatility, and sheer number were inconceivable before the war; we can establish grass and trees in raw unweathered rock, devoid of vegetable soil, and we can transplant mature trees cheaply.”<sup>33</sup> Cliff Tandy wrote even more excitedly about new technologies, deploying a

<sup>26</sup> For example, see Malcolm MacEwen, *Crisis in Architecture* (London, 1974).

<sup>27</sup> See Saumarez Smith, *Boom Cities*, 159–75; Lise Butler, *Michael Young: Social Science and the British Left, 1945–1970* (Oxford, 2020), 187–216; Mike Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940* (Oxford, 2010), 112–36; David Rooney, *Spaces of Congestion and Traffic: Politics and Technologies in Twentieth Century London* (London, 2018).

<sup>28</sup> See Matthew Kelly, *Quartz and Feldspar: Dartmoor* (London, 2015), 193–350.

<sup>29</sup> Nan Fairbrother, *New Lives, New Landscapes* (London, 1974); Sylvia Crowe, *Tomorrow's Landscape* (London, 1956); Cliff Tandy, *Landscape of Industry* (London, 1975); Brenda Colvin, *Land and Landscape: Evolution, Design, and Control*, rev. ed. (London, 1970).

<sup>30</sup> Luca Csepely-Knorr, “Celebrating the Not Seen: Introducing the Women of the Welfare Landscape Project,” *Landscape: Journal of the Landscape Institute* 3 (2002): 10–17.

<sup>31</sup> Fairbrother, *New Lives, New Landscapes*, 110. See also Tandy, *Landscape of Industry*, and J. R. Oxenham, *Reclaiming Derelict Land* (London, 1966), for the various technologies available.

<sup>32</sup> Ralph Harrington, “Landscape with Bulldozer: Machines, Modernity, and Environment in Post-War Britain,” in *Histories of Technology: The Environment and Modern Britain*, ed. Jon Agar and Jacob Ward (London, 2018), 41–61.

<sup>33</sup> Civic Trust, *Derelict Land*, 8.

common trope relating the task ahead to an eighteenth-century history of landscape transformation: “The great masters of landscape design, such as Capability Brown, would undoubtedly have warmed to the challenges of modern technologies and modern ways of life. They would have welcomed the immensely greater opportunities arising from modern machines for moving earth or transplanting trees and the immensely greater range of exact knowledge and professional skills now available to teams engaged in designing landscapes.”<sup>34</sup> Brenda Colvin stressed “the enormous potential which lies in the use of waste as a means of creating beauty in fine new landscape forms, with all the resulting long-term economy that would bring about.” She “advocated the use of waste material to recreate new landscapes of hills and interesting sculptural land forms instead of always trying to bury it.”<sup>35</sup>

A feature of landscape architects’ approach to derelict land was that it was not just something to be erased. Derelict land was being reconceived as both inherently beautiful and a site of potential. As early as 1936, W. H. Auden, referring to recently abandoned mines at Rookhope, County Durham, had written, “Tramlines and slagheaps, pieces of machinery, / that was, and still is, my ideal scenery.”<sup>36</sup> Many aspects of the Victorian city and its legacies were being reexamined from the mid-1960s, reinforced by the cross-cultural rejection of architectural modernism.<sup>37</sup> The ecology movement bolstered a growing tendency of seeing the beauty and rich wildlife environments that could be found in derelict areas, further confirming them as spaces of potential, especially for new leisure uses. Richard Mabey’s *The Unofficial Countryside* is perhaps the most lyrical account of searching for birds and flora among sewage works, gravel pits, and rubbish dumps.<sup>38</sup> Birdwatchers had long appreciated the ecological diversity of gravel pits.<sup>39</sup> The surprise discovery by primary schoolchildren in 1954 of a variety of orchids in an old waste tip in Bolton had paved the way for a host of studies of the plant communities of industrial wastelands.<sup>40</sup> The discovery that the much-loved landscape of the Norfolk Broads was the inadvertent result of medieval peat extraction suggested how scarred landscapes could imperceptibly be transformed into areas of beauty and leisure over time, a natural process that the landscape architect could artificially speed up.<sup>41</sup>

The architectural journalist Ian Nairn went further than most and received some criticism for suggesting that many pit-heaps should be preserved as “industrial relics” and “splendid pieces of landscape,” but landscape architects nevertheless agreed that new uses should look for possibilities inherent in the existing qualities

<sup>34</sup> Tandy, *Landscape of Industry*, 62.

<sup>35</sup> Colvin, “Review of *Derelict Britain*,” 31.

<sup>36</sup> W. H. Auden, “Letter to Lord Byron,” in W. H. Auden and Louis MacNeice, *Letters from Iceland* (London, 1936), pt. 2, 49.

<sup>37</sup> See Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London, 1963), which gives a more sympathetic account of industrial Victorian cities in stated opposition to earlier commentators such as Lewis Mumford.

<sup>38</sup> Richard Mabey, *The Unofficial Countryside* (London, 1974).

<sup>39</sup> For example, see Kenneth Allsop, *Adventure Lit Their Star: A Story of the Little Ringed Plover* (London, 1949).

<sup>40</sup> David Goode, *Nature in Town and Cities* (London, 2015), 112. Today it is widely recognized that industrial wastelands are often far more ecologically diverse than modern agricultural areas; see Tom Williamson, *An Environmental History of Wildlife in England, 1650–1950* (London, 2013).

<sup>41</sup> National Coal Board, *Opencast Coal: A Tool for Landscape Renewal* (Bristol, 1967); David Matless, *In the Nature of Landscape: Cultural Geography of the Norfolk Broads* (Chichester, 2014).

and potentials of derelict landscapes rather than merely flattening them.<sup>42</sup> An appreciation of their complex ecologies led landscape architects to work with the grain of areas they increasingly described in romantic terms. Sylvia Crowe, for example, wrote beautifully of the “vast complex of worked out chalk pits” along the Thames estuary: “Within them is revealed a new landscape of white chalk cliff and peacock blue pool, of stunted Birch and cascades of wild Clematis and Valerian. At present they are deserted except for occasional children playing with the old rubbish which has found its way into the pools, and their landscape potential is one to be glimpsed here and there. But they and hundreds of areas like them are waiting to be transformed into the recreational landscape of the future.”<sup>43</sup>

A development plan for the Rhondda Valley by Building Design Partnership was candid about the surprise the planners had had in finding beauty and potential in the area:

We find it hard to imagine a planning commission more charged with potential. Potential for discovering a new role for the mining valleys, as well as potential for failing to understand their spirit or for proposing a solution which is inimical to the physical form and social character of these vital communities. Prior to the summer of 1967, few of our team had visited South Wales, let alone been into the Rhondda Valleys. We were prepared for a landscape defaced with the black accretion of a century’s thoughtless industry. We expected ample evidence of a grim industry that is no longer the life blood of the community. . . . Our first approach from the Heads of the Valleys road took place in bright sunshine, and as we looked into Rhondda Fawr it would be difficult to imagine a more rural scene. . . . From that distance we looked in vain for the ugliness for which we had been prepared. No tip gear rising from the grey knots of buildings below us, nor black cones of slag menacing their life as in the tragedy of Aberfan. . . . we are dealing with an environment which is physically beautiful and full of possibilities.<sup>44</sup>

Central to what Building Design Partnership described as the “magnificent opportunity” that many saw in purportedly derelict landscapes was the idea that areas such as the Rhondda Valley might be transformed into spaces of leisure, recreation, and tourism. The designers therefore argued that their plan should attempt to harness “the recreation potential of the land, not only to benefit local inhabitants but also as part of a unified scheme for displaying and developing the natural beauty and industrial history of the valleys.”<sup>45</sup> Such ideas were responding to fears and hopes such as those set out in conferences of The Countryside in 1970 in 1963, 1965, and 1970 and in the 1966 government white paper *Leisure and the Countryside*.<sup>46</sup> The view was that focusing leisure on previously derelict areas would help take

<sup>42</sup> Ian Nairn, “Save Our Slagheaps,” *Observer*, 13 September 1964, 29.

<sup>43</sup> Crowe, *Tomorrow’s Landscape*, 150.

<sup>44</sup> Building Design Partnership, *Rhondda Valleys Development Plan: A Future for a Former Mining Community* (Cardiff, 1970), 6.

<sup>45</sup> Building Design Partnership, *Rhondda Valleys Development Plan*, 6.

<sup>46</sup> See J. Allen Patmore, *Land and Leisure in England and Wales* (London, 1970); John Sheail, “Leisure in the English Countryside: Policy Making in the 1960s,” *Planning Perspectives* 16, no. 1 (2001): 67–87. See also Advisory Committee on Industry and the Countryside, *The Countryside in 1970: Report of the Sub-group on Damage to the Countryside by Industry Report* (London, 1967).



pressure off the countryside.<sup>47</sup> Michael Dower's 1965 article "Fourth Wave: The Challenge of Leisure" was widely cited in planning circles for its argument that leisure needed to be a key ingredient of future plans: "Three great waves have broken across the face of Britain since 1800. First, the sudden growth of dark industrial towns. Second, the thrusting movement along far-flung railways. Third, the sprawl of car-based suburbs. Now we see, under the guise of a modest word, the surge of a fourth wave which could be more powerful than all others. The modest word is leisure. . . . Leisure must be given equal weight with housing, schools, factories, hospitals, in the fight for space: nay more, it must be built into all these things."<sup>48</sup>

It was therefore envisioned that the leisure pursuits demanded by this emerging society would come to inhabit the spaces left behind by the decaying industrial infrastructure of Victorian Britain while also providing amenities to bring new constituencies to depressed areas: "Canals, after their workaday past, can be turned into waterways for cruising, canoeing and angling; their towpaths into routes for walking and nature study; their warehouses into museums, hostels and field-study centres. Disused railways can become private steam railways, bridlepaths or cycle-tracks. Disused gravel pits can become water-sport centres or be landscaped as the setting for waterside restaurants. Open-cast coal workings can be sculpted to form lakes, stadia and artificial ski-slopes. Disused engine houses, maltings and dock warehouses can become arts centres, opera-houses and studios."<sup>49</sup>

Worked-out quarries were seen as having particularly "great potential as future open spaces for recreation, as they have good road access, usually some measure of wind shelter, and services such as water and electricity."<sup>50</sup> Especially when near urban areas, they provided ideal venues for "rallies, or gymkhanas, pop festivals or circuses, rock climbing or botanizing."<sup>51</sup> The many disused railway lines that had been closed following the so-called Beeching cuts were another area of enormous potential, as they could be refashioned as greenways and linear parks.<sup>52</sup> By 1970, twenty lines had also been converted or proposed for conversion to heritage steam-railway use.<sup>53</sup> Canals were one of the earliest areas where envisioned new recreational use combined with emerging appreciation of the heritage value of industrial archeology.<sup>54</sup>

The approach to the issue of industrial dereliction after 1966 was underlined by optimistic predictions about its potentials for a new society oriented more toward

<sup>47</sup> Michael Dower, "Leisure," in Royal Society of Arts, *Countryside in 1970: Proceedings of the Third Conference, October, 1970* (London, 1970), 118–24, at 120.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Dower, "Fourth Wave: The Challenge of Leisure," *Architects' Journal* 141, no. 3 (1965): 122–24 at 123.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Dower, "Planning for Leisure," in *Leisure and Society in Britain*, ed. Michael A. Smith, Stanley Parker, and Cyril S. Smith (London, 1974), 309–20, at 317.

<sup>50</sup> Sheila M. Hayward, *Quarries and the Landscape* (London, 1974), 35.

<sup>51</sup> Hayward, *Quarries and the Landscape*, 35.

<sup>52</sup> Countryside Commission, *Schemes for Recreational Use of Disused Railways* (Cheltenham, 1970). The Beeching cuts, line closures based on British Railways chairman Richard Beeching's reports in 1963 and 1965 to increase the efficiency of the nationalized railway system, were largely completed by 1970.

<sup>53</sup> Countryside Commission, *Schemes for Recreational Use of Disused Railways*, 19–22.

<sup>54</sup> For example, see London Canals Consultative Committee, *London's Canal: Its Past Present and Future* (London, 1969); David Horsfall, "Canals and People," in *Essays in Local Government Enterprise*, vol. 1, *Arts and Festivals*, ed. Ellis Hillman (London, 1964), 69–79.

leisure than production. Plans envisioned transforming derelict landscapes to give opportunities for leisure pursuits, but in a way attentive to preserving something of the *genius loci* of the industrial histories on which they would be superimposed. These themes are further explored in the next three sections, each of which takes the form of a case study: the Civic Trust's plan for the Lea Valley, Land Use Consultants' plan for Stoke-on-Trent; and the Development Corporation of Telford New Town plan. These sections help to embed the transformation of derelict land in particular deindustrializing places but also show a variety of both state and non-governmental agencies that engaged with the issue.

### LEISURE, DERELICTION, AND THE CIVIC TRUST

The Civic Trust was a charity set up by Conservative MP Duncan Sandys in 1957 with the aim of improving the quality of urban life.<sup>55</sup> It was an important organization, arguing that issues of both derelict land<sup>56</sup> and planning for leisure<sup>57</sup> should become objects of major government intervention. These interests were merged in the Civic Trust's plan for a Lea Valley regional park, advertised as an "essay in the use of neglected land for recreation and leisure."<sup>58</sup> As far back as 1943, the Forshaw-Abercrombie County Plan had suggested that this area in East London, which had been home to a diverse range of industries, gravel pits, distilleries, and munition factories, should be freed of industry and turned into a continuous open space. In the early 1960s, however, much of it remained "damp and derelict, unheeded and ill kempt." From 1963 on, the Civic Trust worked with the architect planner Leslie Lane and local authorities to imagine how the area might be transformed into "London's Playground." They predicted that, based on American trends, demand for outdoor leisure would treble by the year 2000. They noted that the main achievement of the postwar period for leisure planning had been the conservation of beautiful countryside (in which incidentally Michael Dower's parents had had a central role, through the creation of National Parks), but now the most pressing need was to find spaces for leisure provision in and near cities—in part to alleviate a countryside that could not cope with the heavy usage put upon it by an increasingly mobile population. Because the process of "carving out new open spaces within these cities is long and agonising," the existence of "thousands of desolate, neglected, forgotten acres" within their boundaries was a huge opportunity.<sup>59</sup>

The report suggested taking inspiration from eighteenth-century exemplars, including the Bath, Vauxhall and Ranleigh pleasure gardens and the Brighton Pavilion. It proposed sixteen interlinked areas, with a dazzling array of new uses including "a great urban park, of Hyde Park scale" with playing fields, and a promenade "capturing the spirit of the sea-front or that created temporarily on the South Bank in

<sup>55</sup> Lionel Brett, *The Continuing Heritage: The Story of the Civic Trust* (London, 1982).

<sup>56</sup> Civic Trust, *Derelict Land*; Civic Trust, *The Rhondda Valleys: Proposals for the Transformation of an Environment* (London, 1965).

<sup>57</sup> Civic Trust [Michael Dower], *Fourth Wave: The Challenge of Leisure* (London, 1965).

<sup>58</sup> Civic Trust, *A Lea Valley Regional Park: An Essay in the Use of Neglected Land for Recreation and Leisure* (London, 1964), unpaginated.

<sup>59</sup> Civic Trust, *A Lea Valley Regional Park*.

1951,” a new “Riverside Pleasure Garden” rivaling the “Tivoli Gardens at Copenhagen,” an “Ice Palace, with skating rink and artificial ski slope,” a children’s farm, a rose garden, boating ponds and yachting lakes, an aquarium, an “architectural maze,” a sculpture park, a bird sanctuary, a golf range, picnic spots, riverside pubs, cafes, and restaurants. All of this was to be linked by “silent, useful and amusing” forms of transport such as electric trolleys, light electric railways, travellers, and a mono-rail.<sup>60</sup> The Lea Valley was also to be the location of Cedric Price and Joan Littlewood’s famous Fun Palace Project. (It is perhaps notable that Price was also intensely interested in derelict land in these years through his Thinkbelt Potteries scheme).<sup>61</sup> Throughout the report, there is an acceptance of the need to work with the potentials implicit in derelict land to create a new kind of urban landscape:

There is no pretence that the southern Valley is a strip of remote countryside. It will be a playground for Londoners against the background of London. This background—power stations, gas works, factories, railways, houses and flats—must be accepted and acknowledged in the landscape theme. Some of the industrial installations have their own beauty. . . Each of the bewildering number of recreational and leisure activities will have its own form of expression in landscape terms. The rich green of golf courses; the colourful sails of the dinghies; the flat stretches of playing fields; the walks; the rides on horseback—all will need to be set off, one against the other, and interspersed with parkland and busier areas where crowds will gather.<sup>62</sup>

As with many of the more utopian of 1960s visionary planners, the Civic Trust struggled to suggest how all this would be financed under existing legislation, recommending that perhaps it required development corporation powers or the kind of public-private partnerships found in city-center redevelopment.<sup>63</sup> The Civic Trust’s report nevertheless led to the establishment of the Lea Valley Regional Park Authority in 1967 following an act of Parliament.<sup>64</sup> The Civic Trust helped combine two disparate issues, leisure and dereliction, in its campaigns for improving the quality of urban life in Britain. But it struggled to realize its plans. Below I explore two cases: regions where these issues were taken up and where the organizations involved had the clout to carry out their plans.

## STOKE-ON-TRENT AND LAND USE CONSULTANTS

When the architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner visited Stoke-on-Trent for the last volume in the *Buildings of England* series, he described “an urban tragedy.” He was particularly struck by the setting of the euphoniously named Etruria Hall of 1770, once the home of the celebrated eighteenth-century potter Josiah Wedgwood. He found it forlorn among the ruins of the Shelton Iron and Steel Works, with

<sup>60</sup> Civic Trust, *A Lea Valley Regional Park*.

<sup>61</sup> Cedric Price, “Potteries Thinkbelt; A Plan for an Advanced Educational Industry in North Staffordshire,” *Architectural Design*, no. 36 (1966): 484–97.

<sup>62</sup> *A Lea Valley Regional Park*.

<sup>63</sup> Leslie Lane et al., “The Evolution of the Lea Valley Proposals,” *Official Architecture and Planning* 27, no. 9 (1964): 1044–48; Leslie Lane, “Lea Valley Scheme,” *Journal for the Royal Society of Arts* 113, no. 5109 (1965): 588–604.

<sup>64</sup> See Tony Travers, *From Wasteland to Playground: Lee Valley Regional Park at 50* (London, 2017).

the gigantic Hanley Deep Pit slag heap looming behind: “From his house Wedgwood could look across landscape to the canal, inspired by him, and the works, built by him. Now that view is all desolation.”<sup>65</sup> The industry that produced delicate Wedgwood pottery had been based on deposits of coal as much as it was on deposits of clay, with the six towns that make up the Potteries region following a thin seam of coal measures.<sup>66</sup> Pottery is so important for the area’s self-identity that coal mining and steel are often forgotten. The combination of these industries produced an exceptionally dispersed urban form and a uniquely intense legacy of industrial dereliction.

It was not surprising, then, that the City of Stoke-on-Trent was one of the authorities to take advantage of the 1966 legislation to tackle their derelict land, making use of a 50 percent grant from Central Government (increased in 1970 to 75 percent). In 1967, the city established a joint working party with the National Coal Board and their landscape architects, Land Use Consultants. The plans for Stoke were directed by Land Use Consultants, with the landscape architect Cliff Tandy directing. Land Use Consultants had been set up as Britain’s first multidisciplinary environmental consultancy in 1966 by the pioneering environmentalist Max Nicholson, who remained its chairman.<sup>67</sup> The firm had been involved with planning for derelict land after being initially hired by the Coal Board following the Aberfan disaster in 1966. At Aberfan, the firm advised the entire removal of the tips after residents rejected an earlier scheme suggesting they be stabilized and landscaped.<sup>68</sup> Land Use Consultants did a large number of plans for the Coal Board. These plans attempted to diversify the Coal Board’s activities in light of the projected rundown of the coal mining industry; by 1970, the board was estimating that there would be ten thousand acres of “new” derelict land arising from pit closures over the next fifteen years.<sup>69</sup> The Coal Board’s interest in reclamation can therefore be seen as part of the moral-economy arguments being made during the contraction of the industry in the period—attempting to offset closures with initiatives to stimulate new employment opportunities.<sup>70</sup> The plans for reclamation were about envisioning a new economic life, through a new environment, for areas previously dominated by a now declining industry. As Duncan Sandys noted in 1970, “The greatest dereliction occurs in areas where long-established traditional industries are declining. Coal is, of course, the outstanding example. In such districts, the restoration of the landscape is essential, not simply to give the place a more pleasing appearance, but to attract new industry to replace the old.”<sup>71</sup> Land Use Consultants’ plans included suggesting

<sup>65</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Staffordshire* (London, 1974), 259.

<sup>66</sup> Diane Barker, *Potworks: Industrial Architecture of the Staffordshire Potteries* (London, 1991). The fine clay for porcelain mostly came from Cornwall, where mining created its own dereliction in the form of china clay pits, especially around St. Austell. For every ton of clay, Josiah Wedgwood needed ten tons of coal.

<sup>67</sup> Jeremy J. D. Greenwood, s.v. “Nicholson, (Edward) Max (1904–2003),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/89908>.

<sup>68</sup> Land Use Consultants, *Proposals for the Aberfan Site, Second Report* (London, 1968).

<sup>69</sup> Briefing for the Secretary of State for Local Government and Regional Planning, Mr Crosland’s Speech on the Derelict Land Reclamation Programme at Civic Trust Conference, Stoke on Trent, 16–17 April 1970, AT/48/26, National Archives.

<sup>70</sup> Jim Phillips, “Deindustrialisation and the Moral Economy of the Scottish Coalfields, 1947 to 1991,” *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 84 (2013): 99–115.

<sup>71</sup> Duncan Sandys, opening address, quoted in Civic Trust, *Reclamation of Derelict Land: Report of a Civic Trust Conference, Stoke-on-Trent, April 1970* (London, 1970), 5

former mining areas be returned to agricultural use or made into industrial parks or even motorway-hotel sites. The firm's most striking proposals involved changing areas to new leisure activities, hoping that new leisure would encourage new prosperity through bringing to an area new industries and new constituencies. The plan for Stoke-on-Trent was the most ambitious of their plans and the most extensively realized.

At the heart of the proposals achieved over the next decade was the restoration of the Hanley Deep Pit to form a hundred-acre park. Coal mining at the Hanley Deep Pit (in operation from 1867 to 1961) and marl extraction for the adjacent brick works had produced a dramatic, lunar-like landscape with three enormous cones of black colliery shale, gaping marl holes, and large areas of pitted and gullied mineral wastes. This oppressive landscape formed the setting for a jumble of industrial artifacts, including disused mineral lines, decaying buildings, mine shafts, and heaps of rubble. The area's desolation was heightened by a scarcity of vegetation and an abundance of household refuse and scrap metal.<sup>72</sup>

Out of this unpromising landscape, the reclamation team aimed to create a "forest park," taking inspiration from Hampstead Heath, as well as Bos Park on the outskirts of Amsterdam. The reclamation team molded rather than flattened the slag heaps, with the intention of creating an ecologically rich "stretch of landscaped countryside, with the life-cycles and sounds and sights and smells of the countryside."<sup>73</sup> By 1979, the reclamation team planted more than three-quarter of a million trees.<sup>74</sup> The "idea was broadly to establish a semi-natural landscape of wooded slopes, grassy glades and flowering meadows, speeding up the natural process of vegetational succession in which first grasses and mosses and later trees and shrubs, might have recolonised the site. . . . From the start the designers were steering towards a design solution based on actual ecosystems which would bring birds, butterflies and wild flowers back to the centre of the city and provide the townsfolk with an exciting varied landscape in which to walk, study, sport and play."<sup>75</sup> Seating areas, bollards, and litter bins were constructed from railway sleepers, and burnt red shale was used to form informal path surfaces—the materials used were therefore "local, robust and cheap." The design was meant to grow out of the existing potentials and uses of a site rather than overlaying it with a new identity: "Ironically coal mining and marl extraction produced a varied topographical form which has outstanding design potential. The massive cones of colliery shale formed prominent landmarks in the townscape. Although in its original state it had served as a grim reminder of the despoliation caused during the industrial age it had, nevertheless, served an important function as an orientation point from other parts of the city. In an urban landscape characterized by an invisible network of quite distinct landmarks and high points, the treatment of the tips was a crucial element in the design."<sup>76</sup>

The Forest Park was the centerpiece of many schemes carried out throughout the city. Westport Lake—originally a huge water-filled hole, disfigured by industrial

<sup>72</sup> Land Use Consultants, *Central Forest Park Reclamation Project* (Stoke on Trent, 1974), 3.

<sup>73</sup> Tony Aldous, "New Capabilities," *Illustrated London News*, 27 December 1975.

<sup>74</sup> David Knight, "Reclamation of Derelict Land in Stoke on Trent," *Parks and Recreation*, July 1979, 16.

<sup>75</sup> Land Use Consultants, *Central Forest Park Reclamation Project*, 8.

<sup>76</sup> Land Use Consultants, 12.

tipping and fed by a badly polluted stream—was reclaimed. As a waterpark, it would provide for both the traditionally popular pastime of fishing and the rapidly growing take-up of various water sports. Linking recreational sites throughout the city and in the countryside beyond were the derelict mineral railways that were to be turned into a “greenway,” a connected system of pedestrian, horse-riding and cycle trails that would link together the disparate linear town spaces of Stoke-on-Trent, while also acting as a pedestrian “Radburn system” leading onto the back gardens of houses (an idea perhaps taken from Cedric Price’s Thinkbelt Potteries plan).<sup>77</sup> These greenways, intended to have the atmosphere of a country lane, would “provide a safe and easy movement system through the city and out to the country, especially for the young.” To be added to these eleven miles of greenway were a proposed thirty-seven miles of “blueways” along canals and rivers. With an increase in pleasure crafts using the Trent and Mersey canal, Stoke might eventually be “at the centre of a highly desirable cruising area” within a wider recreational context of “youth activity centres, walkways, canoeing centres, angling facilities, waterside leisure spaces, pubs and restaurants.”<sup>78</sup>

A local survey had found that residents preferred the Sneyd mound be retained and landscaped rather than removed entirely, “because it already is an important and dramatic landmark in the city.” This was an example where “some of the visual qualities of derelict areas aroused strong and positive responses from members of the public.”<sup>79</sup> The intention was also to preserve the Hanley Deep Colliery winding gear as a feature of the park, from which locals would be able to climb up and view the changing landscape; it would be “Stoke’s Eiffel Tower,” Alderman Kenneth Wright joked.<sup>80</sup> The overwhelming focus on outdoor leisure rather than new industrial or housing uses was in large part because restored land could not be built on for some time because of problems of settlement and compaction. However, it was imagined that by replacing “the original industrial core of the city with open space,” it might eventually become available for building development.<sup>81</sup> Killing two birds with one stone, at Berry Hill earth moving machines shifted a two-hundred-foot mountain of 1.2-million cubic yards of shale into a 2.25-million-cubic-yard marl hole, making the area available for new industrial uses.

All of these schemes were to be achieved in an area suffering “mine subsidence, a peppering of pit shafts and the sheer bulk and dangerous gradient of many of the pit heads.”<sup>82</sup> Molding and replanting the giant three-million cubic yard Sneyd Tip, they had to neutralize 1,000-degree Fahrenheit heats, as the mound was still highly combustible.<sup>83</sup> Reclamation was a complex and multifaceted operation involving a wide

<sup>77</sup> For the idea of greenways, see Michael Dower, “Greenways: A Positive Future for Britain’s Cast-Off Railways,” *Architectural Review* 134, no. 802 (1963): 387–93. Radburn planning involves a form of pedestrian segregation from traffic with houses fronting onto communal greens, first outlined in a 1929 plan for Radburn, New Jersey.

<sup>78</sup> Land Use Consultants, *Trent and Mersey Canal Survey* (London, 1973), 3.

<sup>79</sup> *Land Reclamation, City of Stoke on Trent*, 22.

<sup>80</sup> Tony Aldous, “Transforming the Wasteland,” *Times*, 11 May 1971, 14. Unfortunately, this did not happen.

<sup>81</sup> *Land Reclamation, City of Stoke on Trent*, 18.

<sup>82</sup> “Stoke Reclamation Programme,” *Institute of Landscape Architects Journal*, May 1970, 14–24.

<sup>83</sup> John Sheail, “Burning Bings’: A Study of Pollution Management in Mid-twentieth Century Britain,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 31, no. 1 (2005): 134–48.

array of techniques and technologies, especially in a landscape as devastated as the Hanley deep pit:

The site had many of the typical problems encountered on the reclamation of colliery spoil heaps: there were unstable slopes to regrade and landforms to reshape, pitshafts to locate and treat by pressure grouting and capping, derelict buildings to demolish, bare surfaces to protect from run-off erosion, indeterminate drainage patterns to reshape; combustible coal washings to excavate and spread; and not least of course the substrate itself which largely inhibited plant growth through poor texture, lack of humus and of nutrients, extremes of pH, presence of toxic substances, and lack of, or over-abundance of, water. In the main, standard techniques were used in the reclamation work. Earthworks were tackled as cut and fill operations using tractor drawn scrapers, box scrapers, graders, crawler shovels, back tractors, bulldozers, and even a dragline. After treating the pit shafts and regrading the spoil to form suitable and stable landforms, the surface was spread with a soil-forming medium and cultivated. Generally a layer of topsoil was spread on pitches to speed up the establishment of grass. Elsewhere several grades of sewage sludge were used as an alternative to improve the shale, while still other areas were seeded direct onto the bare shale.<sup>84</sup>

Between 1968 and 1981, 2,153 of Stoke's derelict acres were reclaimed, at a cost of around £2,000 per acre.<sup>85</sup> Both the park and the lake won Civic Trust awards. The extensive press cuttings about reclamation preserved in a file in the city archives give a sense of the enormous pride in these achievements, the city even conducting sold-out coach tours of the ongoing reclamation work. The Forest Park was opened by the queen and Westport Lake by the prime minister, Edward Heath. David Knight summed up the achievement of the landscape transformations in the city in a way that nonetheless celebrated its industrial past:

Stoke is not, and may never be, a garden city, but it already is, and will increasingly become a landscape city. As other landscapes reflect their geology and historical usage, so the newly reclaimed landscape speaks of an unprecedented upheaval wrought by 200 years of rapid industrial expansion. The colliery spoil heaps' contours are mellowed now and clothed in green, but even when its hillside forest matures it will remain unmistakably a work of man. The old railway network transformed into leafy walkways *will* forever tell the story of when steam was king. This is as it should be. It is also fitting that those who toiled in mine and factory, and their descendants, should benefit from the money that has finally returned to deal with the muck that helped to create it.<sup>86</sup>

Despite these efforts, the city failed in the long term to significantly reorient its economy or even to change its image. Matthew Rice has questioned the surfeit of useless green space in the city and lamented that more was not done to preserve the city's unique industrial heritage.<sup>87</sup> Improvements to landscape, however laudable, were certainly not sufficient for the task of economic regeneration, and many

<sup>84</sup> Land Use Consultants, *Central Forest Park Reclamation Project*, 32.

<sup>85</sup> Richard Flenley, "Derelict Land Becomes Parkland at Stoke-on-Trent," *Parks* 6, no. 2 (1981): 11–13.

<sup>86</sup> Knight, "Reclamation of Derelict Land in Stoke-on-Trent," 20.

<sup>87</sup> Matthew Rice, *The Lost City of Stoke-on-Trent* (London, 2010).

of the more optimistic predictions about the benefits of landscape renewal read today as inadequate and naïve. Land Use Consultants' plan for Stoke-on-Trent had opined that by the end of the reclamation many unpleasant popular misconceptions about the area would be forgotten. The focus on environmental improvement as a response to labor-market failure is a peculiar feature of the plan for Stoke and many like it, and though they undoubtedly made blighted areas pleasanter, it would be hard to argue that they succeeded in the aim of shifting the economies—or even the conceptions—of such places, as unhelpful but widespread clichés about postindustrial “chavtowns” show.<sup>88</sup>

If Stoke's attempts to realign its economic fortunes through landscape renewal must be deemed a noble failure, the way that it reinterpreted postindustrial wastelands as places of potential value was of lasting value and influence. The professionalization of urban ecology was largely a phenomenon of the 1980s, but it arguably grew out of the story I have been describing here.<sup>89</sup> W.G. Teagle's 1978 *The Endless Village* is widely recognized as an influential book for the birth of urban nature conservation. It surveyed the rich wildlife of Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall, and Wolverhampton. Teagle argued that the “term ‘industrial wasteland’ is derogatory, and in the popular mind it conjures up a picture of lifeless desolation. Yet ironically, these old sites often provide some of the richest wildlife habitats in the West Midlands.”<sup>90</sup> John Thompson, the regional officer who commissioned the report, had been involved in the ecological restoration in Stoke. The switch of the Nature Conservancy Council toward dealing with urban ecology was signaled by the 1979 report *Nature Conservation in Urban Areas*, commissioned from Land Use Consultants and written by the landscape architect Lyndis Cole, who had also been heavily involved in the Stoke project.<sup>91</sup>

## TELFORD NEW TOWN

The Ironbridge Gorge in Shropshire is one of the most beautiful places in England. Tourists visit it for its museums and industrial heritage sites, as the “Birthplace of the Industrial Revolution” and as a UNESCO World Heritage site. I suspect many are surprised to find these historic industrial attractions embedded within such a lushly Arcadian landscape, in which the River Severn carves through steep wooded hills on which dark reddish-brown brick buildings precariously perch. When John Piper and John Betjeman visited the area for the Shell guide to Shropshire in 1951, they found a “broken and forlorn” landscape of “dead collieries, branch railways, tileworks and iron foundries [lying] among waste heaps now and then left bare for a common; sinister pools of black water.”<sup>92</sup> Not a hint of the satanic now remains here; indeed, it is barely urban. Although the focus of visitors is exclusively

<sup>88</sup> Louise Elliott, “Rundown Chavtowns”—The Scathing Things People Are Saying about OUR City,” *Stoke-on-Trent News*, 15 August 2018.

<sup>89</sup> Goode, *Nature in Town and Cities*.

<sup>90</sup> W. G. Teagle, *The Endless Village: The Wildlife of Birmingham* (Shrewsbury, 1978), 20.

<sup>91</sup> Nature Conservancy Council, *Nature Conservation in Urban Areas: Challenge and Opportunity* (London, 1979).

<sup>92</sup> John Piper and John Betjeman, *Shropshire: A Shell Guide* (London, 1951), 26.



on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sights, the landscape they experience is in large part a result of a largely forgotten late-twentieth century history.

Ironbridge is one of a number of former settlements swallowed up within the sprawling new town of Telford. Telford is an odd place to visit. It is spread out, car-dependent, and has so little urban grain that it makes earlier new towns like Harlow or Stevenage feel positively metropolitan. Another reason for Telford's obscurity is that it has always been in the shadow of Milton Keynes, which it parallels in its original conception, although Telford had its size and ambition clipped much more than did Milton Keynes.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, Telford is worthy of study, and celebration, as it shows the new town program's adaptations to emerging problems and challenges of the 1970s, as well as an exceptionally complex regional context because of the area's industrial history. Telford was the most extensive attempt in Britain to grapple with the issue of derelict land.<sup>94</sup> The new town encompasses an area that was one of the birthplaces of the industrial revolution. Coal mining, iron-works, and ceramics all had a long history here, and the industrial decline of the area was a slow but long-term phenomenon, which accelerated after the Second World War.<sup>95</sup>

Telford, intended to take overspill population from Birmingham and the West Midlands, was first designated on a smaller scale as Dawley New Town in 1963, and then in its expanded form in 1968. The 1960s plans, written by the architect John Madin, had architecture to the fore, with a high-rise modernist city center. By the 1970s, architecture had been abandoned as the lead discipline in the creation of the new town, with Don Fentner, the city architect, writing proudly of his low-density housing, "What you'll see in Telford isn't *great* architecture, it isn't the stuff that people fall down on their knees to but its good, warm liveable stuff that works."<sup>96</sup> In writing histories of postwar housing, we have too often taken large-scale mass housing projects like Sheffield's Park Hill as indicative, but this kind of proudly boring Telford approach is perhaps more representative of the mainstream and has much to recommend it. The city covered a spread-out area of some thirty-two square miles, encompassing a series of existing towns and new neighborhoods "linked together within a total Telford identity." Landscape became the tool that would bind this disparate city together, giving the town "unity, identity and character."<sup>97</sup> Telford was unique among new towns in having a landscape structure plan that ranked equally with its basic development plan. It aimed to create what the planners termed a "forest city."<sup>98</sup> As a pamphlet advertising the New Town boasted, "Telford is an area of strong contrasts. On the one hand you have a modern mixture of futuristic shopping centres, forward looking factories and multi-styled

<sup>93</sup> In contrast to the growing literature on Milton Keynes, very little has been written on Telford, although a good official history was written on the winding up of the Development Corporation; see Maurice de Soissons, *Telford: The Making of Shropshire's New Town* (Shrewsbury, 1991).

<sup>94</sup> Telford Development Corporation, *Telford City of the Future, Draft Structure Plan* (1971), Shropshire Archive, 6235/62.

<sup>95</sup> Neil Cossons and Harry Sowden, *Ironbridge: Landscape of Industry* (London, 1977), 16–17.

<sup>96</sup> Kate Wharton, "New Town Triumph, Telford Improves with Each Visit," *Architect* (London), August 1974, 27–28.

<sup>97</sup> Telford Development Corporation, *Telford: Basic Plan Proposals* (Telford, 1970) Shropshire Archive, 6235/62.

<sup>98</sup> Notes on Landscape Structure Plan Meeting, 22 June 1977, Shropshire Archives, 6235/478.

housing estates. On the other there are the bare-bricked industrial ruins, the older villages and towns, numerous little pockets of meadow and woodland and the much bigger areas of mature parkland and the wilder wooded places of the Iron-bridge Gorge. Telford is a jigsaw of different elements.”<sup>99</sup>

Telford embarked on the largest land reclamation program ever conducted in Britain. The long history of industrial exploitation and subsequent decline had left the area “visually, economically and socially blighted by past industrial activities,”<sup>100</sup> an ugly and dangerous hodgepodge of disused mine shafts, derelict pools, and abandoned, yet often still combustible, colliery spoil mounds. The Telford Draft Plan included a “measles map” showing the 5,230 acres of blighted industrial landscape that had to be reclaimed. Reclamation would “involve the finding and making safe of 2500–3000 mineshafts (some over 1000ft deep), the draining of hundreds of acres of water logged land, removing and re-shaping of millions of tons of colliery spoil and the filling in and stabilising of many areas undermined by shallow mine workings or affected by landslip conditions.”<sup>101</sup> Alongside mining spoil was the rubbish left by other defunct industries, including “blast furnace slag (from the iron smelting process), boiler and furnace ash, foundry moulding sand, ceramic shards from the brick, tile and refractory industries alongside more usual domestic refuse.”<sup>102</sup>

Much of this landscape was not just ugly but also dangerous. Mines closed before 1872 had been left unrecorded; those closed before 1911 had rarely received any provisions to make them safe. They presented a serious public safety hazard, especially to children, and were liable to emit noxious, poisonous, or explosive fumes and gases. They also imposed major restrictions on new development through the fears of settlement, subsidence, or collapse. A huge task of the development corporation was simply to ascertain where all the mines were before the task of stabilizing and reclaiming them could even begin.<sup>103</sup>

The landscape plan, written explicitly in light of “the emergence of greater awareness and interest in all environmental and ecological matters,”<sup>104</sup> nevertheless saw potential as well as despair in derelict sites. “From a natural history point of view, probably the most valuable areas today are those areas of semi-natural landscape that have largely been produced unwittingly by the extractive and manufacturing industries. With the passage of time these areas of semi-natural landscape have developed on previously derelict, disturbed, and unmanaged areas, and have in certain instances become of moderate and even high scenic value. Furthermore, because of their sheer variety and scale they have become exceedingly rich in wildlife.”<sup>105</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Silkin Way booklet, post-1977, consulted in the Community History Centre at Wellington Library, Telford.

<sup>100</sup> Telford Development Corporation, *Sixteenth Annual Report for the Period Ended 31st March 1979*, consulted in the Community History Centre at Wellington Library.

<sup>101</sup> Telford Development Corporation, *Telford: Basic Plan Proposals* (Telford, 1970), Shropshire Archives, Shrewsbury, 6235/62. See also Mervyn Whitcut, “Derelict Land and Reclamation Problems in Telford,” *Chartered Land Surveyor/Chartered Minerals Surveyor* 3, no. 2 (1981): 3–26.

<sup>102</sup> Whitcut, “Derelict Land,” 8.

<sup>103</sup> Whitcut, 8.

<sup>104</sup> Draft Landscape Structure Plan, [1974?], Shropshire Archives, Shrewsbury, 6235/478.

<sup>105</sup> Draft Landscape Structure Plan, [(1974?)], Shropshire Archives, Shrewsbury, 6235/478. See also Bob Tobin, *Wildlife in Telford: A Guide to the Plants and Animals of the New Town* (Telford, 1981).

Ecological thinking (alongside the need for economy, and for minimal maintenance) was a major reason that the landscapes created would be semi-natural rather than ornamental: although “mown grass, standard trees and decorative planting has civilised qualities, it is of comparatively low ecological value, and in certain respects of low environmental value.” The landscape plan aimed to create a variety of habitats—mature woodland, scrub, meadows, heathland, marsh, and farmland, each of which would contain “its own characteristic plant and animal species.” The existence in the area of many water-filled hollows formed by subsidence, known as flashes, such as the Priorslee Flash, Trench Pool, and the Madeley Court Pools, were celebrated as “particularly attractive focal points for recreation and provide a valuable habitat for a wide variety of wildlife.”<sup>106</sup>

According to one estimate, Telford Development Corporation planted in excess of five million trees, using over 150 different cultivars and species, resulting in approximately 80 square meters of woodland for every resident of the town.<sup>107</sup> The town had its own twenty-five-acre nursery, where at any one time “over 160,000 shrubs and 70,000 trees [awaited] their appointed place in the Landscape Structure Plan.” At the center of the town was a 450-acre park featuring flooded clay pits transformed into ornamental lakes and a heather and rhododendron garden on top of a hundred-foot-high pit mound. The Development Corporation made use of 121 miles of disused mineral tramways, railways, and canals to make wildlife corridors, not least the fourteen-mile Silkin Way that runs through the town. Total expenditure on reclamation work by the Development Corporation between 1970 and 1980 was approximately £8.5 million, about 3–4 percent of the overall cost of the total new town development budget.<sup>108</sup> Telford was a highly ambitious response to healing the scars of dereliction and deindustrialization. The Development Corporation placed landscape at the heart of a 1979 pamphlet advertising the new town to potential inhabitants, using lushly romantic language:

New landscape is being created on a scale unknown in this country since the 18<sup>th</sup> century days of Capability Brown. Telford is one of the leading exponents of the 20<sup>th</sup> century professional skills of landscape architecture. The town is being given an evolving landscape harnessing the young vigorous shapes of disturbed soils of the past and merging them with massive earth moulding, tree planting and open grassland. The eventual effect will be to create a landscape unique in major urban areas of Britain and an interesting and exciting projection of urban development philosophy. Each springtime, Telford is a blaze of colour from cascades of the three million daffodils and tulips planted alongside main roads and in the new leisure areas. An outdoor leisure area is gradually emerging at the heart of Telford where once derelict pools and abandoned colliery spoil mounds are being replaced by a 450 acre town park with its amphitheatre, giant sports arena, ornamental lakes, wooded walks, rugby, hockey and tennis facilities and, eventually, an arboretum, Go-skate rink and other facilities.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>106</sup> “Information for Press Release,” [late 1970s], Shropshire Archives, 6235/478.

<sup>107</sup> Alan James Simson, “The Post-Romantic Landscape in Telford New Town,” *Landscape and Urban Planning* 52, nos. 2–3 (2000): 187–97.

<sup>108</sup> Whitcut, “Derelict Land,” 25.

<sup>109</sup> Telford leaflet, ca. 1979, in box of loose pamphlets, uncatalogued, consulted in local history section of Wellington Library.

The plan for Telford is part of a discrete moment in planning history when a new hyper-decentralized, polycentric city was envisioned, bound together by roads and landscape. Milton Keynes is the most famous of these plans, but a flavor can be seen too in plans for Ipswich, Peterborough, or Warrington new towns, among others. Although in some ways a reinvestment in Ebenezer Howard's original garden city conception of a merging of town and country, it was fueled by a utopian futurist understanding of changes brought about by an increasingly mobile and affluent population, as well as new technologies. It was a total rejection of the value of high-density urbanity that had dominated the imagination in much of 1960s planning.<sup>110</sup> As Terrence Bendixson described it, "the finite, even walled, city portrayed in Renaissance paintings (and its Victorian mill-and-cottages successor) was being replaced by a city composed of both town and country and bound together by the telephone and the car."<sup>111</sup> In Telford, this new urban form would emerge directly out of the carcass of the industrial past. Telford healed but did not erase its industrial past, as places such as Ironbridge and Coalbrookdale, resonant with industrial heritage within the designation, were restored and celebrated as an integral part of the New Town project.<sup>112</sup> Through Telford, we see the conservation and ecological movements as features of modernism, not in opposition to it.

Telford is the key monument to the set of ideas I describe, which envisioned deindustrialized landscapes as the basis from which a new type of society might be created. Telford is a significant and relatively rare postindustrial success story, and (in common with other so-called Mark III New Towns) remains among the fastest growing towns or cities in Britain.<sup>113</sup> Of course landscape renewal was only a part of the large-scale infrastructural program the Development Corporation carried out at Telford, alongside a very active campaign to attract private-sector investment—but the landscape improvements were a significant part of the economic and social changes of a radically and successfully transformed region.<sup>114</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In 1982, the journalist Ian Jack went on a pilgrimage in the footsteps of George Orwell to Wigan, where Orwell had famously visited a coal mine:

We stood among the saplings in what is known as The Three Sisters Recreation Area. There was bird-song, the distant rattle of a tractor, but no sign that here generations of men had toiled underground for miserable wages so that, in Orwell's words, 'you and I and the editor of the Times Lit Supp, and the Nancy poets and the Archbishop of Canterbury and Comrade X, author of Marxism for Infants' might live decently.

<sup>110</sup> Saumarez Smith, *Boom Cities*, 161–62.

<sup>111</sup> Terence Bendixson, *The Peterborough Effect: Reshaping a City* (Peterborough, 1988), 69.

<sup>112</sup> *Ironbridge '75*, uncatalogued booklet, and *Ironbridge Coalbrookdale and the Severn Gorge Policy Plan Report* (ca. 1968), both consulted in Wellington Library.

<sup>113</sup> UK 2070 Commission, *Make No Little Plans: Acting at Scale for a Fairer and Stronger Future; Final Report of the UK 2070 Commission* (Sheffield, 2020), 28.

<sup>114</sup> Soissons, *Telford*, 79–116, details the Development Corporation's huge program of attracting development to the area.

No winding gear, no spoil heaps, no shaft, nothing but green. ‘Never mind,’ said [my guide] Mr Anderson, ‘you can say you stood on the *site* of Orwell’s pit.’<sup>115</sup>

A deeply symbolic landscape of industry had declined into an equally symbolic landscape of dereliction. But the subsequent transformation into a landscape of recreation is a largely forgotten achievement, leaving nothing but trees, flowers, and birdsong.

Plans that emerged in the decade or so after 1966 regularly envisioned new leisure-oriented uses for landscapes scarred by the environmental legacies of the extractive economy, most notably coal mining. Yet reflecting the different trajectories, geographies, and timescales of deindustrialization, derelict land increasingly became an issue seen to be affecting many more places than these classic mining areas, one that struck at the very heart of cities. The Civic Trust’s 1977 booklet *Urban Wasteland* returned to an issue the trust had long campaigned about, but its cover, showing a derelict wilderness in Vauxhall in view of the Houses of Parliament, illustrated its argument that the location of the problem of derelict land had shifted from the periphery of national consciousness to the center.<sup>116</sup> The gathering pace of deindustrialization meant that areas of dereliction were proliferating at an alarming rate, although they covered a range of types of places. These included vacant acres where comprehensive redevelopment, slum clearance, and projected road-building programs had bulldozed areas but alternative uses had failed to materialize; industries devastated by deindustrialization or relocated through policies of decentralization; areas suffering planning blight; docks closing due to containerization; and land owned by various public bodies like the railways being disposed at a painfully slow rate. Tower Hamlets, for example, between 1964 and 1977 saw a 44 percent fall in the area of land within the borough occupied by factories, a 25 percent fall in the area of land occupied by utilities; a 38 percent fall in the area of land occupied by residential, commercial, and public buildings, and a 20 percent and a 37 percent in the area occupied by docks and railways, respectively. All this resulted in an astonishing 295 percent increase in derelict land.<sup>117</sup>

The causes behind this inner-city dereliction were various and the diagnoses much contested.<sup>118</sup> These proliferating derelict landscapes gathered a tremendous symbolic resonance as a physical manifestation, as well as a cause, of a range of issues gathered under the rubric of the inner-city crisis.<sup>119</sup> As Aaron Andrews has argued, derelict land was seen as both a symptom and a cause of decline.<sup>120</sup> Deindustrialization was also changing the way that people understood leisure; no longer was the free

<sup>115</sup> Ian Jack, *Before the Oil Ran Out: Britain, 1978–86* (London, 1987), 143.

<sup>116</sup> Civic Trust, *Urban Wasteland: A Report on Land Lying Dormant in Cities, Towns and Villages in Britain* (London, 1978).

<sup>117</sup> John Loveless, *The Waste Land* (London, 1983), 7.

<sup>118</sup> The three Inner Area studies published in 1977 were the government’s official pronouncement on the issue. See Otto Saumarez Smith, “The Inner City Crisis and the End of Urban Modernism in 1970s Britain,” *Twentieth Century British History* 27, no. 4 (2016): 578–98. See also Alice Coleman, “The Death of the Inner City: Cause and Cure,” *London Journal* 6, no. 1 (1980): 3–22, for a dissenting but ultimately hugely influential view that the inner-city crisis was the result of government planning.

<sup>119</sup> Smith, “Inner City Crisis and the End of Urban Modernism in 1970s Britain.”

<sup>120</sup> Aaron Andrews, “Dereliction, Decay and the Problem of De-Industrializing Britain, c. 1968–1977,” *Urban History* 47, no. 2 (2019): 236–56.

time engendered by automation and mechanization a positive thing, but the focus was increasingly on levels of unemployment. Despite huge efforts to tackle the issue of derelict land, the goal was ever receding. *The Survey of Derelict Land* of 1982 found that there had been a total growth of 2,500 acres since 1974.<sup>121</sup> This 5 percent overall growth across England covered much more substantial increases in areas such as Merseyside, the West Midlands, and the North West.<sup>122</sup> The Economic and Social Research Council summarized the situation: “Disinvestment, especially by manufacturing industry, has increased the stock of dereliction faster than ameliorative policies have brought land into productive use.”<sup>123</sup>

The Thatcher government had its own ambitious plans for derelict land, from urban development corporations and enterprise zones to garden festivals and industrial museums, as well as a large-scale expansion of the Derelict Land Grant; by 1984 an area the size of Grimsby was being reclaimed every two months.<sup>124</sup> Whether there was something fundamentally new, or Thatcherite, about the approach is a question beyond the scope of this article, although Sam Wetherell has recently argued that garden festivals pioneered a fundamentally new kind of urbanism.<sup>125</sup> Pierre Botcherby’s account of Operation Groundwork in St. Helens suggests that the main development in government-sponsored renewal strategies during the 1980s was a greater emphasis on voluntary and community participation.<sup>126</sup> Derelict land in inner cities was nevertheless an important area where the essentially neoliberal argument that the inner-city crisis was in fact the result of government action. It is suggestive that Alice Coleman—a favored urban thinker of Margaret Thatcher—made extensive studies of the issue of derelict land in cities, before her better-known work on public housing.<sup>127</sup> But the sheer number of government projects aimed at the issue throughout the 1980s suggests that, in common with many areas of 1980s inner-city policy, there was an expansion rather than a diminution of the role of the state.<sup>128</sup> The famous photograph of Thatcher striding across a desolate wasteland in the Tyneside Enterprise Zone is indicative that derelict landscapes retained a potent symbolism. The representative reuse of derelict areas of this period was not for recreational uses, but instead distribution centers and out-of-town business parks.<sup>129</sup> The closing down of collieries also went from a relatively consensual project to one that left considerable and lasting bitterness that affected how the

<sup>121</sup> Planning Policy, Minerals, New Towns Directorate, *Results of the 1982 Survey of Derelict Land in England* (London, 1984).

<sup>122</sup> Civic Trust, *Urban Wasteland Now* (London, 1988), 19.

<sup>123</sup> Victor A. Hausner and Brian Turnbull Robson, *Changing Cities: An Introduction to the Economic and Social Research Council Inner Cities Research Programme* (London, 1985), 34.

<sup>124</sup> Otto Saumarez Smith, “Action for Cities: The Thatcher Government and Inner City Policy,” *Urban History* 4, no. 2 (2020): 274–91.

<sup>125</sup> Sam Wetherell, “Sowing Seeds: Garden Festivals and the Remaking of British Cities after Deindustrialization,” *Journal of British Studies* 61, no. 1 (2022): 83–104.

<sup>126</sup> Pierre Botcherby, “Community, De-industrialisation, and Post-industrial Regeneration in a Merseyside Town: St Helens, 1968–2018” (PhD diss., Warwick University, 2022).

<sup>127</sup> Alice Coleman, “Dead Space in the Dying Inner City,” *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 19, no. 2 (1982): 103–8.

<sup>128</sup> Otto Saumarez Smith, “Action for Cities: The Thatcher Government and Inner City Policy,” *Urban History* 4, no. 2 (2020): 274–91.

<sup>129</sup> Sam Wetherell, *Foundations: How the Built Environment Made Twentieth-Century Britain* (Princeton, 2020).

new landscapes of retail and business were understood, even when they provided much-needed jobs. So John S. Rodwell wrote:

As a child, I heard, smelt, tasted on the air even, the collieries around, and, from the top of the hill where my father, then a pit wages clerk, launched his model aeroplanes and where I first learned the difference between the small copper butterfly and the little skipper, I could look down on Cortonwood where my grandfather started work, at the age of ten, in 1887. What I see now from the same spot is the 200-hectare Cortonwood Business and Retail Park with a Next, Argos, Boots, distribution warehouses and call centre, a lakeside residential area, the Dearne Valley Parkway and behind them the graded slopes of the spoil heaps, grassed over and planted with trees. For some reason, the sight of this “great development success story” makes me frustrated and angry.<sup>130</sup>

Feelings of despair and anger remain widespread around the issue of deindustrialization. The polarization between different parts of the United Kingdom has grown since the 1970s, and is today a much-publicized political issue with the Conservative party’s “levelling up” agenda.<sup>131</sup> Such areas have become increasingly politically salient, whether through the neologism of the “Red Wall,”<sup>132</sup> MP Lisa Nandy’s “towns,” or the idea of “left behind Britain.”<sup>133</sup> It is striking in this context to note the almost-utopian optimism of an earlier period, even if it was a brief moment. The ability to envision an alternative future is something critics have argued has been lost since the 1970s.<sup>134</sup> The future these plans predicted largely failed to emerge, but they give a more complex portrait of how the process of deindustrialization was understood by elites as it was happening, showing how, at least initially, these derelict areas were simultaneously conceived as landscapes of hope and of crisis.

<sup>130</sup> John S. Rodwell, “Forgetting the Land,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 21, no. 2 (2008): 269–86.

<sup>131</sup> John Tomaney and Andy Pike, “Levelling Up?” *Political Quarterly* 91, no. 1 (2020): 43–48.

<sup>132</sup> This term is used to describe constituencies in the Midlands and Northern England that historically supported the Labour Party

<sup>133</sup> Lisa Nandy, “Back to the Future: The Pulling Apart of Our Towns and Cities,” *Political Quarterly* 91, no. 2 (2020): 324–33.

<sup>134</sup> See Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (London, 2014). For an explicitly architectural iteration of this argument, see Douglas Murphy, *Last Futures: Nature, Technology, and the End of Architecture* (London, 2015); see also Owen Hatherley, *Guide to the New Ruins of Great Britain* (London, 2010).