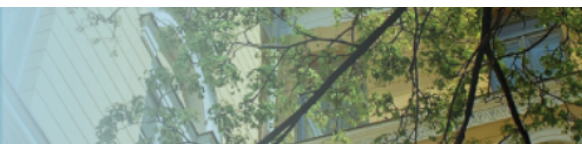


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Transforming Historic Images and Ascribing Contemporary Values:

The Re-representation of the City

Changing the perception of place is vital to unlocking the regenerative potential of cities. The re-use of places, i.e. historic buildings and the reconfiguration of urban spaces, i.e. the access roads/routes, infrastructure and open spaces surrounding the buildings are essential elements in securing an urban renaissance. However, there also needs to be a requalification of the ideas and images of the city, i.e. the mental space to accompany the changes to the built environment. Transforming the image of place and thus changing the mental landscape is a necessary pre-requisite of securing sustainable and successful physical urban change. Nowhere was this more evident than in the transition from (de)industrial to post-industrial city. The industrial environment contained within the industrial, deindustrial and post-industrial city was subjected to conflicting images and shifting perceptions as it function, redundancy and re-use contributed to the rise, fall and reinvention of European cities. This paper will illustrate how the image of the industrial city was transformed and manipulated by urban agencies and what this reveals about the contemporary values placed on the historic industrial environment. The case study of Manchester and in particular the Castlefield district offers an insight into the long-term conscious transformation of the image of the industrial city which accompanied the physical regeneration of the urban centre and illustrated how the amalgamation of textual and visual representations of place were essential in securing the transition from deindustrial to post-industrial city.

The transition from deindustrial to post-industrial city has been explored by academics who have noted the rise of the notion of the ‘creative city’, the importance of technology, science, knowledge, flagships and above all aggressive marketing campaigns.ⁱ In many European cities the policy was to find a unique selling point (USP) that the dominant actors believed gave place distinctiveness. Ashworth and Voogd believed that ‘a place can only be commodified by means of rigorous selection from its many characteristics’ⁱⁱ and it is this conscious selection that mediates the representation of the industrial city since it influences the ways in which historic industrial buildings are re-used and the symbolism associated with these retained warehouses, factories and associated industrial structures.

1. Industrial Images and the Deindustrial Backlash

Traditionally, the image of the industrial city polarised opinion as numerous urban agents from polemicists, commentators and novelists voiced their opinions on the condition of the nineteenth-century industrial city. This was particularly evident in nineteenth-century Manchester as the shock-city of its time. Manchester became the cradle of the industrial revolution and the city at the forefront of urban, economic and industrial development.ⁱⁱⁱ Urban commentators were thus drawn to Manchester from within Britain and across Europe to witness this industrial and urban phenomenon. Their accounts were both high profile and damning in their condemnation of the social and environmental ills associated with the industrial city. Engels’ infamous account of Manchester led him to label the city as a place of ‘filth, ruin, and uninhabitableness’.^{iv} This was supported by Priestly who wrote almost a century later that Manchester represented an ‘Amazonian jungle of blackened bricks’.^v The city was however praised in certain quarters as a model of economic development due to

its pre-eminent position in the industrial revolution and its trading links with the four corners of the world. The industrial city thus polarised opinion, a fact that was succinctly summarised by de Tocqueville who found that:

‘the greatest stream of human industry flows out to fertilise the whole world. From this filthy sewer pure gold flows. Here humanity attains its most complete development and its most brutish; here civilisation works its miracles, and civilised man is turned back into savage’^{vi}.

This dual image of industrial history was utilised to support and legitimise urban development and improvement plans in Manchester during the immediate post World War II period. In the post war world of a new and better Britain there was a desire that ‘smoke need no longer befog us nor noises deafen us nor disorder assault our eyes.’^{vii} In light of this urban plans prepared both during and immediately after World War II were resolutely forward looking and condemned the industrial past. In the post-war world of a better tomorrow there was a ‘revolt against the dreariness of the Victorian town’.^{viii} Sharp’s 1947 plan for Exeter stated that ‘to rebuild the city on the old lines would be a mistake’.^{ix} If certain cities such as Warwick and Edinburgh did embrace their historical past then the industrial cities condemned their industrial past.^x The Manchester advisory plan of 1945 took these visions one-step further and promoted the demolition of Victorian buildings. Indeed the nineteenth-century town hall was deemed unnecessary in the ‘new’ Manchester. The historic industrial environment and the inner cities were to play little part in a ‘better’ Britain.

Development plans for Manchester during the period 1945-77 illustrated the negative image that surrounded the industrial city. The buildings which had once made

Manchester the world's first industrial city were condemned as 'industrial slums'.^{xi} Indeed post-war planning was determined to not repeat the 'indiscriminate building of the industrial revolution.'^{xii} There was no reference to the wealth that the functions of these buildings helped to create nor of the development of the industrial city just a focus on the 'image of grime and obsolescence inherited from the industrial revolution.'^{xiii} Into the twentieth and twenty first centuries the image of the industrial environment became tied first to the needs of urban and regional policies and then to securing an urban renaissance. In each of these policy and regeneration initiatives the image of the industrial city was transformed by urban agencies to meet the contemporary urban regeneration agenda.

2. The Rise of the Post-Industrial City

'The buildings, canals and viaducts of the 18th and 19th century will be the building blocks from which the city of the 21st century is built.'^{xiv}

The dual processes of deindustrialisation in which the inner city lost one in three manual jobs in manufacturing between 1966 and 1972^{xv} and depopulation whereby Manchester's inner six wards lost 75 per cent of the total population of Manchester as a borough during 1951-91^{xvi} left the inner city of Manchester empty, redundant and devoid of life, function and meaning. In order to revitalise the city the industrial environment on which Manchester's prosperity and decline had been founded various urban agencies from the voluntary, public and private sectors manipulated Manchester's industrial history to requalify the industrial legacy and ascribe contemporary values to the past. This process of reversing the negative image attached to the redundant, derelict industrial environment ingrained by depopulation

and deindustrialisation was incremental and relied on urban agencies working within the institutional framework and within the parameters of a changing local, national and international framework. The motives for the requalification of the industrial environment thus reflect the intricacies of urban politics, the influence of wider agendas and expose the ways in which the historic industrial environment can be manipulated to re-present the city.

Castlefield, located in inner-city Manchester encapsulated the ways in which the industrial environment was requalified and thus ascribed a contemporary value during the late twentieth century. Castlefield's role in Manchester's position as the world's first industrial city rested with two landmarks. Firstly, the opening of the world's first modern cut canal, the Bridgewater in 1764 and secondly the opening of the world's first passenger railway station, Liverpool Road Station in 1830. From this basis, Castlefield like the rest of Manchester developed an identifiably industrial character complete with warehouses, goods sheds, railway stations, viaducts, canals and locks.



Fig.1 Aerial View of Castlefield located in the central and right parts of the foreground and extends as far back as the skyscraper (Beetham Tower)
Source: www.webbaviation.co.uk (Item name : aa02275b.jpg, Manchester City Centre from the air, 2006)

However, following the dual processes of deindustrialisation and depopulation outlined earlier, Castlefield, like much of industrial, inner-city Manchester was ‘pitted by crofts, crumbling buildings and silted waterways’ as the historic warehouses all closed before 1980.^{xvii} Castlefield was a ‘hostile’ place in the 1970s and entering the area was to ‘take your life into your hands’.^{xviii} Only people working in the noxious industries and vagabonds did so; indeed, the area was described in 1979 as a ‘den of thieves and vice’.^{xix} Consequently, Castlefield went from the birthplace to the ‘grave of the industrial revolution’.^{xx} History in the form of the industrial environment in Castlefield stood condemned.

However, from the late 1960s the historic industrial environment in Castlefield was increasingly acknowledged as historically significant by certain groups and thus worthy of contemporary attention. In this context both local and national agencies in the first instance from the voluntary, then public and finally the private sectors invested a series of contemporary values in the historic industrial environment. This was reflected in the ways the industrial district of Castlefield was re-presented both visually and textually.

3. Requalification through Recognition

The campaign to ascribe contemporary values to the industrial city originated from an increased recognition and awareness of the historic significance of the industrial structures found within Castlefield. This movement commenced with the work of various local historical societies in Greater Manchester. The Manchester Region Industrial Archaeology Society (MRIAS) motivated by a by a fear that ‘the large-scale redevelopment of Manchester was threatening to wipe out the industrial

remains^{xxi} started in 1968 to uncover the layers of history apparent in Castlefield. At this time, Castlefield was considered one of many potential MRIAS projects and Castlefield was ‘not given any special attention, the main task of our society was to record as many industrial remnants as possible’.^{xxii} Running parallel to the recording work of MRIAS was the research undertaken by the Civic Trust. Provoked by the desired expansion of a television company located in Castlefield, the Civic Trust researched the history of the Castlefield area – a process which resulted in three reports which came together to form *Historic Castlefield*, the first conservation and planning guidelines for the area in 1976. From being a decayed backwater, characterised as a ‘den of thieves and vice’ Castlefield was re-presented as historically significant.

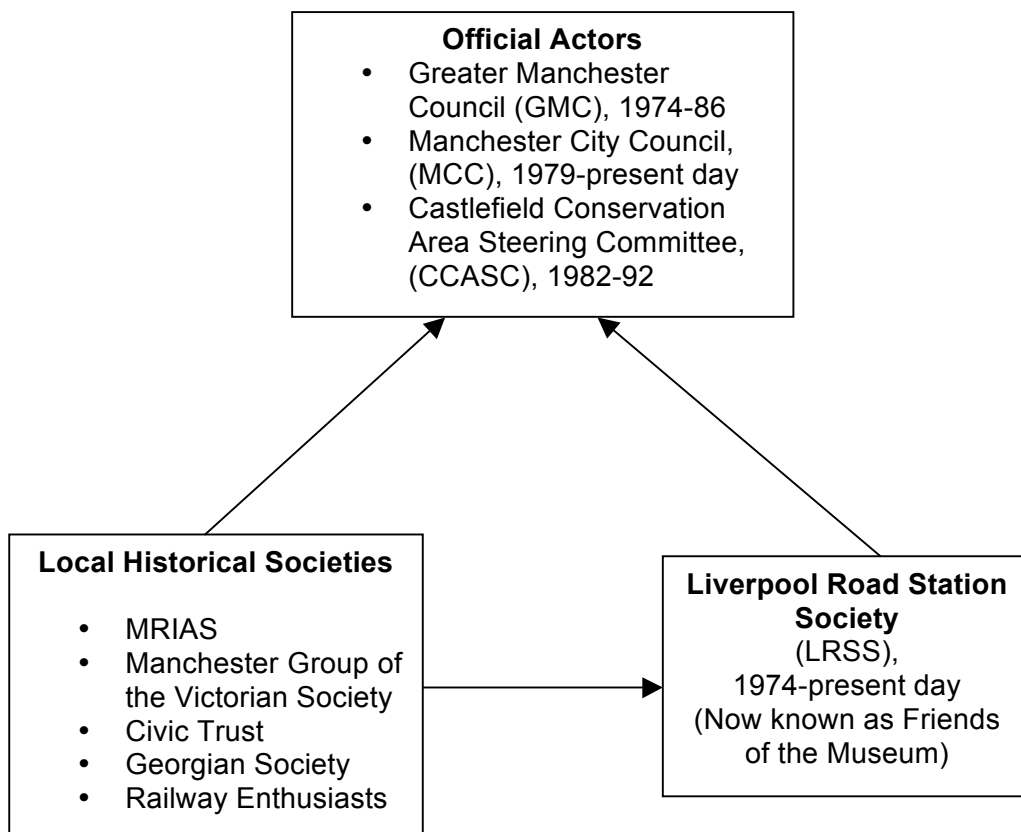


Fig.2 Actors involved in recognising Castlefield’s historic significance

These moves by local historical societies to raise the profile of historic Castlefield reached their peak in 1983 with the re-opening of Liverpool Road Station as the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry. A number of railway enthusiasts and members of various local historical societies joined together to form Liverpool Road Station Society (LRSS) in 1975, the same year as European Architectural Heritage Year thus showing the local dimension of the increasing international awareness of heritage and conservation. LRSS brought the plight of the redundant, derelict Station to the attention of the local media and local urban agencies such as the County Council in moves which secured the re-use of the Station through using the financial and administrative capabilities of Greater Manchester Council and the re-presentation of the image of the area through newspaper articles entitled ‘Treasures in a City’s Backyard’ which described Liverpool Road as the ‘spine from which history radiates in almost every direction’.^{xxiii} The historic significance of the industrial environment was now recognised, emphasised and used to sell the city to tourists and to re-make place.

Liverpool Road Station Society

Manchester



SAVE OUR STATION!

Fig. 3 Campaign Poster for Liverpool Road Station
Source: Reproduced with kind permission of the Friends of the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry

These local initiatives were supported by a growing national awareness of the historic significance of the industrial environment as manifested through the listing process. Gradually buildings of an industrial character were given official recognition of their historical significance; Liverpool Road Station was Grade I listed in 1968, the 1830 warehouse adjoined to the Station was listed in 1973 and the former Bridgewater Canal Offices and the Victoria warehouse were both listed in 1974.^{xxiv} However, it was not until 1988 when the profile of the area was raised by the campaigns of local historical societies such as LRSS that the majority of the industrial structures were recognised and listed.^{xxv} Merchant's, Middle, Lower Byrom Street warehouses, the Power Hall in the surrounds of the former Liverpool Road Station, two railway viaducts, two railway bridges, Hulme Junction Locks, Canal Flour Mill, Lock 92 and the Bridgewater Canal Basin were all listed within this six-year period between 1988 and 1994.

4. Requalification through the Emerging Urban Agenda

Whilst the buildings may have been listed, with the exception of Liverpool Road Station, many of the historically significant structures remained redundant and derelict. In a decaying, degenerated city retaining a historical building had to serve a purpose; it was not enough to preserve the building in aspic for people to admire its historical significance. Rather the building had to be adaptively re-used; it had to be able to meet the contemporary needs of the city. The urban agenda was thus the pre-eminent factor in determining the contemporary value of the historic environment and thus the projected image of the industrial buildings.

Partly buoyed by the success of re-using Liverpool Road Station to attract tourists, the historic environment in Manchester started to be viewed as a tool to secure regeneration. This was expressed by the objectives for the Local Plan (1984). The main objective was to increase activity in the city centre after decades of decentralisation. In three of the main objectives: housing, office space and tourism, the emphasis was placed on ‘conservation and best use of the existing urban infrastructure’.^{xxvi} The goal of the Local Plan was to have a city centre that was ‘economically sound and that respects its own history’.^{xxvii} The Plan also stated that:

‘over half of the vacant office space in the city centre was built before 1915. Many of these buildings are important to the Victorian and Edwardian character of the city centre – valuable potential assets if new roles can be found for them’.^{xxviii}

This contrasted sharply with the 1945 plan which viewed these same buildings as industrial slums. Industrial heritage was increasingly considered as a vital component in securing the regeneration of the inner city.

Central Manchester Development Corporation (CMDC) extended the work of the local historical societies, Greater Manchester Council and Manchester City Council by bringing in private sector agencies and by diversifying the land uses in the area. CMDC’s remit was to ‘bring money in and get things done’. CMDC also recognised that they were best placed to ‘channel significant amounts of government money’ and also recognised the limitations of Manchester City Council who ‘had to represent the whole of Manchester and therefore administratively, physically and financially they were unable to focus their attention on one area like CMDC could’.^{xxix} At 187 hectares Central Manchester Development Corporation was the smallest Urban

Development Corporation in the UK and consisted of six sub-areas located in the southern third of Manchester's city centre. CMDC was operational from 1988-96 and focused on bringing land and buildings back into effective use, stimulating the private sector, and raising Manchester's profile as a European city.

During this phase the area was consciously re-presented and aggressively marketed as the industrial legacy became one of the area's main selling points. Distinctiveness became a major European marketing ploy (Guggenheim, City of Culture etc) and a significant arm of urban policy during this period as the locational advantages associated with industrial cities were replaced by a footloose service sector economy. From the outset CMDC recognised Castlefield's historic significance and saw this as the city's distinctive quality, as illustrated in the development guidelines (1989) which acknowledged that:

'important chapters in Manchester's history are recorded in Castlefield's architecture and urban development pattern. The historic significance of the Castlefield area, its built environment and artefacts, represent an opportunity which cannot be replicated or recreated. These elements are invaluable in creating a design theme for Castlefield, a recognisable and marketable identity.'^{xxx}

There was therefore an explicit desire to capitalise on the uniqueness of the area and use the area's historical significance as a marketing device. This was supported by the Corporation's desire to 'ensure that wherever possible, Manchester's fine Victorian and Edwardian architecture is conserved, yet brought into twentieth-century use'.^{xxxi} The Development Corporation viewed these existing assets as potential economic resources to secure grants and loans for 'viable projects that were otherwise difficult to start'.^{xxxii} CMDC's emphasis on attracting inward investment was reflected by the

£1.1 million that they spent on promotion and publicity in the financial year 1992-93^{xxxiii} and the near £8 million invested in key projects in Castlefield such as Merchant's Warehouse, Castlefield Hotel and the Castle Quay housing development. Furthermore, the Development Corporation did not just view the historic structures as an economic resource to capitalise on; they also made reference to the character and spirit of the city as represented by the industrial historic environment. CMDC evoked memories of an era of success and innovation and promoted the human qualities that had secured Manchester's wealth:

'Manchester was at the forefront of the industrial revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries. It was the first Industrial City. It was a city rich in ideas and with the people possessing the initiative, drive and determination to turn those ideas into reality. The legacy of the invention, prosperity and confidence of this period of bold growth remains: canals, railways, mills, warehouses and offices.'^{xxxiv}

In this sense CMDC fused the urban landscape with desirable human characteristics – the body and the city could not be untangled. These were exactly the type of characteristics that CMDC sought to attract to Manchester to secure its renaissance. The use of a marketing strategy that highlighted both the human spirit and economic potential of historic buildings illustrated the importance placed on the existing capital stock during CMDC's eight years in charge of securing an urban renaissance and embedding Manchester as an emerging international city. CMDC therefore selected, emphasised and re-presented certain aspects of Manchester's past in order to improve the urban future.

5. Conclusion: The Contemporary Value of Malleability and Mutability

The inherent malleability of the historic environment and the capability of urban actors to mould, manipulate, mutate and mute the ideas of the industrial city were instrumental in the re-presentation of the industrial city. Valuing the historic environment was conditioned by the degree to which the image of Manchester's industrial history could be moulded to fit the various urban agendas apparent during the process of urban regeneration. The inherent malleability of Castlefield's industrial history allowed it to be perceived differently and conceived as fulfilling several different urban roles, expressed as different urban actors became involved. At every stage of the urban transformation, as well as the physical reconstruction as the areas surrounding the historic buildings were reconfigured shown by the increased access into and through Castlefield with new bridges, steps, walkways and roads; and places were given new functions such as the Museum of Science and Industry in Liverpool Road Station and thus invested with new meanings, the mental urban landscape was moulded to fit with the emerging urban agenda. The image of industrial Manchester was selected and sanitised at every stage by the voluntary, public and private sectors in a holistic attempt to manipulate the ideas surrounding the industrial city in order to power the post-industrial urban renaissance.

This aligns with the work of Maurice Halbwachs and Mary Douglas who both found that certain memories and wishes were both capable of being muted and mutable dependent on contemporary factors. Using Halbwachs concept of collective memory and applying it to urban memories in the respect of the historic environment similarities were found to exist. Halbwachs found that 'collective memory' only 'retains the elements which continue to live, or are capable of living in the consciousness of the group that keeps the memory alive'.^{xxxv} The ability of actors to

mould the spaces, places and ideas allied to the receptiveness of the historic building to facilitate change regulated the degree to which urban memories, in the context of the industrial development and history of Manchester, were allowed to live on in the consciousness. Douglas placed Halbwachs' views into the context of institutions to conclude that memories took on a particular form according to a group's wishes. The way in which urban actors working within the institutional framework perceived urban memories and the degree to which they could be moulded to fit their remit correlated with the findings of both Halbwachs and Douglas.

This research has shown that the industrial environment had the capability to polarise opinions between agencies and over time periods. Moreover, the dual image of the industrial city highlighted by de Tocqueville's quotation gave urban agencies the legitimacy to select and sanitise aspects of industrial history in order to serve an individual, collective or emerging urban agenda. Accompanying the visual reorganisation of the industrial legacy as railway stations became museums and warehouses became apartments was a conscious textual re-presentation of industrial history as the symbolism of the industrial environment was manipulated, muted and managed to fit with the emerging agenda of the post-industrial city.

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- iv F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 65.
- v G. Messinger, *Manchester in the Victorian Age; the Half-Known City*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985),195.
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- xvi R. Mellor, *Changing Manchester*, Occasional Paper No. 44, Department of Sociology, (Manchester: University of Manchester, December 1995), 3.

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- xvii Manchester Evening News, Treasures in a City's Backyard, 29 October 1979.
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- xxvii Ibid, 9.
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