

1

Two Swedish modernisms on English housing estates: cultural transfer and visions of urban living 1945-1969

*Short title:* Two Swedish modernisms

*Abstract:* This article examines the transfer of Swedish concepts of urban modernity to British cities after 1945. It shows how an affinity between design and architecture elites facilitated the transfer of key concepts that were mediated in cities. Moreover, it argues that the often contested transfer of Swedish modern architecture and design to northern English cities initially meshed with municipal ambitions to improve working-class housing and culture. Thereafter the influence of Swedish modern was continued in altered form by the preponderance of Swedish prefabrication techniques in the construction of new poured concrete and high-rise estates during the 1960s. These aspirations to improve the urban environment with Scandinavian examples of good living often magnified the difficulties of modernising the industrial conurbations of the north.

For British journalists the appearance of urban blight in Swedish cities by the beginning of the twenty-first century served as a warning to native urban planners and politicians. The message that the recent privatisation of Sweden's 'innovative' housing had produced unprecedented segregation, pushing poor, non-white Swedes out to deprived peripheral estates, was unequivocal: 'in Stockholm, the centre was cleared of the poor . . . the stark segregation there means that *for the first time* it should stand as an example to London planners of what not to do'.<sup>1</sup> The touch of *Schadenfreude* in the reporting of riots in Stockholm revealed the long held ambiguity of both popular commentators and a section of the architectural and planning

profession towards the much lauded success of the Swedish social democratic housing model as a panacea for modern urban problems. Scandinavian modernism, particularly the Swedish version, received international acclaim during the 1930s for its combination of domestic interior functionalism and modernist, vernacular architecture. The long period in office of the Social Democrats and the country's neutrality during the war allowed the Swedes to develop social housing in another, very different modernist style, which appeared to be far in advance of other western European countries. The popularity of interventionist politics in western Europe after 1945 led many city bosses and government officials to seek inspiration from examples of Swedish social housing.

Despite the transnational appeal of Swedish concepts of urban modernity, their impact upon cities remains relatively underexplored.<sup>2</sup> Within historical research there are few studies addressing cities, regions or parishes, in either a comparative or a transnational Anglo-Swedish perspective, despite the strong tradition of local and micro-historical studies in both countries.<sup>3</sup> The historiography of both societies more generally has been dominated by social scientific studies of political models, especially social democracy, drawing upon contested notions of 'national difference'.<sup>4</sup> In this vein housing research has fallen under the auspices of broader welfare state studies, which have emphasised its 'fundamental difference' from the British context. In particular, the Swedish language of policy making, particularly its emphasis upon home-centeredness, has been seen as characteristic of a welfare rhetoric that evolved to implement the Social Democratic 'People's Home' from the 1930s.<sup>5</sup> Arguably a focus on the distinctive trajectory of the Swedish welfare model has overlooked the appeal of the emphasis on home-centeredness for British onlookers.<sup>6</sup> Equally, to stress the well-known attraction of British design and architecture elites to Swedish modern

housing ideals conceals a process of transfer that was often contested. Local attempts to deploy transnational models of architecture and house building could be especially challenging, particularly so in industrial conurbations where structural difficulties often impinged upon the implementation of Swedish modernism. Local concerns emerged in conjunction with external approaches to architecture and planning. Municipal politicians may thus have appreciated the ‘global frame of reference’ for cities, but this threw up new challenges and, perhaps more importantly, contingent responses. This aspect of transnational urban influences has yet to be fully appreciated.<sup>7</sup>

The following discussion examines two aspects of Swedish modernism on northern English housing estates between 1945 and 1969. It reveals how during the late 1940s a version of Swedish modernism that emphasised home-centeredness and vernacular architecture was an attractive, as well as controversial, aspect of the planning and construction of new estates. In the 1960s Swedish modernism, by contrast, was viewed as a possible solution to urgent housing needs because of its prominence as a provider of high-rise, system built housing estates. Drawing upon evidence from northern England, the article charts the transition from the 1930s inspired vision of Swedish modern, with its humane scale and vernacular details, to a very different vision associated with the construction of high-rise estates during the 1960s. It examines the case of Peterlee New Town in County Durham, which evolved during the 1950s against a background of local political inclination towards Swedish modern as a mechanism for improving the quality of life in urban working-class communities. This is followed by an account of the evolution of concrete utopianism in the north during the early 1960s, characterised as the second instance when Swedish modern exerted an influence over British cities, albeit in altered form. These local experiences

are contextualised by a preliminary discussion of the well-known affinities between national design and architectural elites across both countries.

## I.

The distinguishing features of Swedish modern had reached British audiences through the internationally acclaimed 1930 Stockholm Exhibition, which showcased functionalist architecture and domestic design. After the Second World War the pragmatism of Swedish modern architecture was increasingly viewed as a measured departure from Le Corbusier's brutalism. However (?), Swedish observers failed to appreciate these qualities initially. Swedish press appraisal of 1930s functionalism criticised its austere, minimalist overtones. Thereafter Swedish modern's survival as both the architecture of the welfare state at home, as well as an international design and planning export, has been attributed to the intervention of the exhibition curators, including Gregor Paulsson, who successfully connected functionalism to the older vernacular architecture of Swedish provincial towns.<sup>8</sup> Its appeal thus encompassed conservative critics and addressed contemporary concerns regarding social change in cities. Perhaps most importantly, Swedish modern's ambition to inculcate 'reasonable consumers' who would help in the creation of a 'democratic market' allowed the private home to assume a central position in contemporary political economy. Paulsson thus drew parallels between the consumer as a potentially decisive participant in the development of architecture and working-class participation in industrial politics. As Helena Mattson suggests, this idea was exemplified in the new

architecture of the 1930s, particularly with the emergence of prefabricated ‘summer houses’. These were of simplistic minimalist design, referencing the pragmatic inheritance of ‘traditional architecture’ in small towns. At the same time they were designed to be located anywhere and their form evoked modernity’s standardised lack of personalisation. These qualities were underpinned by an ambition to mobilise consumers as confident appraisers of the landscape of mass consumption, especially its new housing forms.<sup>9</sup>

Arguably the principal motivation for importing Swedish ideas about design and architecture to Britain reflected the broader international appeal of its small town modernism that combined the promise of functionality and reasonable consumption. Swedish modern design consolidated its global influence during the 1950s and maintained its leading position for most of the decade.<sup>10</sup> Swedish modern architecture had been profiled in British architectural journals after the 1930 exhibition, where its reconciliation of folk populism with avant-garde modernism was described as the ‘architecture of democracy’.<sup>11</sup> Its housing forms, with pitched roofs and natural adornment, chimed with ideas from the English Garden City movement, evoking its diminutive scale, with vernacular detailing bounded by green space. Thus the initial appreciation of Swedish modern was assisted by its resonance with English Garden City ideals, which assumed a prominent place in the context of British urban redevelopment after 1945. Thereafter this affinity was enhanced by a mutual appreciation of Anglo-Swedish urban developments. Abercrombie and Forshaw’s *County Plan of London* was an important reference point for the development of many Swedish cities after the Second World War. This dialogue was taken forward by the building of flagship Swedish suburbs such as Vällingby in 1953.<sup>12</sup> Drawing on British town planning ideals, the suburb was created along ‘a-b-c’ principles

(arbete/work, bostad/home, centrum/commercial centre) and soon became a draw for international planning figures, including those from the United States, where master urban developer James Rouse would later credit Swedish exemplars as inspiring the development of Columbia New Town. Rouse was especially impressed by the successful capture of the ambience of small town life within (?) a harmonious natural environment.<sup>13</sup>

The international appeal of Swedish modern architecture and design extended far beyond aesthetic considerations. During the 1930s it was increasingly appreciated as a broad social project that stood for an entire way of life. This rested upon the successful dissemination of the Swedish social democrats' reconciliation of a new architectural aesthetic with pragmatic social policy. As Mary Hilson has written, 'the new people's home was to be constructed not just metaphorically, but literally', using modernist architecture in 'new forest suburbs' where citizens would enjoy closeness to nature.<sup>14</sup> It was a progressive adaptation of the past that carried forward notions of home-centeredness, comfort and a human scale. The special and attractive qualities of this project were of course heightened by the international political context. Six years after the Stockholm Exhibition the American journalist Marquis Childs published his seminal account of Sweden as the 'middle way' between capitalism and communism to international acclaim.<sup>15</sup> This publication helped to secure the external construction of the 'Swedish model' as the embodiment of a politically secure, yet modern and progressive, social project. Whilst the cultural stereotyping of the 'Swedish model' has been subject to extensive critical appraisal, this process undeniably helped to extend the appeal of Swedish modern beyond an architectural audience.<sup>16</sup> In short, on the one hand Swedish modern offered architects a template of modernism free from the ideological constraints of communism and fascism. On the other, politicians and

planners, especially those with responsibility for the development of new housing estates, could present a vision of a new urban future that could be achieved without major political turmoil.

For some professionals, especially architects on the left, the affinity of interests that coalesced around the idea of Swedish modern could be troublesome. For instance, after 1945 the early promise of Swedish modern to deliver design and architecture with a 'small town', 'harmonious' feel, in conjunction with the equally important promise of functionality and working-class consumption was often difficult to fulfil. In Britain it occasionally clashed with the ambition amongst architects to develop a more radical modernist style of architecture. Reyner Bahnam, for instance, felt the allusion to Swedish modern in post-war British architecture was a retrospective force, providing a 'veiled way of ensuring that nothing would change'.<sup>17</sup> In London the LCC built Roehampton estate, constructed during the early 1950s, exemplified these controversies.<sup>18</sup> The first part of the estate reflected the Swedish influence. With its pitched roofs, low-density cottage style maisonettes interspersed with green space, it was also evocative of the English Garden City.<sup>19</sup> This was derided by a minority of radical architects and critics, including Banham, as 'Swedish bourgeois vernacular'. James Stirling memorably exclaimed, 'let's face it, William Morris was a Swede!'<sup>20</sup> In Alton West, the second part of the estate, the use of flat roofs and unclad concrete, combined with a more formal layout, have been read as homage to Le Corbusier's Unité and a reaction *against* the perceived Swedish influences.<sup>21</sup>

Likewise, the functionalist aspiration for the reasonable consumer could also be difficult to fulfil in the British context. This was exemplified by the contact between the British and Swedish design communities after 1945. For example, the 'Britain Can Make It' exhibition held at the V&A in 1946 witnessed increased mutual

appreciation and dialogue between the British Council of Industrial Design (BCID) and the long established Swedish Design Council (Svenska Slöjdföreningen, created in the 1850s). Their representatives were both eager to point out that efforts to promote good design and rational consumption transcended national boundaries.<sup>22</sup> Even so the transfer and influence of shared ideals could be ambiguous. Whilst Swedish modern architecture was too retrospective for radical British architects, for arbiters of British domestic design the forward looking rationality of Swedish modern was perhaps ahead of its time. Thus, the eventual departure from the principles of Swedish minimalism in domestic design have been ascribed to the feeling that British urban dwellers ought to have a ‘warmer, more richly textured domestic environment’ after the sacrifice of war.<sup>23</sup>

By the end of the 1950s the idea of Swedish modern architecture and planning that had evolved during the 1930s, with its initial commitment to small-scale neighbourliness, had been eroded by the ascendancy of the Fordist mode of planning and construction in Sweden that characterised the new landscape of high-rise estates.<sup>24</sup> Paradoxically, this shift opened up new opportunities for the transfer of Swedish housing ideas to the British context. In order to construct the new, soon to be dubbed ‘brutalist’, housing estates British architects and builders often utilised the radical new prefabrication methods developed by Swedish companies. The following sections reveal how earlier affinities between Swedish and British architects and planners were replaced by contacts between representatives of the construction industry. This transfer was often encouraged by grandstanding municipal politicians, whose attraction to Swedish concrete utopianism reflected their ambitions to revitalise the urban landscape of the industrial north. Nonetheless, as shall be seen, the transfer



of construction methods to British cities during the 1960s could be as difficult to realise as the earlier Swedish inspired aspiration for small town modernism.

## II.

Swedish modern first captured the attention of municipal politicians during the 1950s, when it meshed with ambitions to create a balanced and amenable urban environment.<sup>25</sup> Nationally, Scandinavian social democracy appealed to the moderate wing of the Labour Party and Tony Crosland's 1956 vision of 'better designs for furniture and pottery and . . . statues in the centre of new housing estates' echoed Sweden's 'Peoples Home'.<sup>26</sup> Local Labour politicians were understandably determined to revitalise the landscape of housing in towns and cities across north-east England after 1945. With its legacy of 'pit row' colliery settlements, many labelled 'Category D' and earmarked for demolition in the 1951 Durham County Plan, urban conurbations dominated by poor quality, overcrowded terrace housing and a visual landscape that drew film documentary makers and photographers such as Bill Brandt eager to capture the dismal vistas, a new generation of municipal politicians were determined to create the 'New Jerusalem'. Having had their ambitious interwar council housing schemes thwarted by the national government local politicians were anxious to reap the benefits of the post-war settlement which was tilted in favour of working-class improvement.<sup>27</sup> A forward looking mindset arguably evolved as a reaction to this legacy of poor, working-class housing, creating a local political culture that was receptive to external examples of urban modernism.

In this context Swedish, or otherwise Scandinavian, design ideas captivated the imagination of local politicians in their search for rational urban living, thus extending its influence beyond a metropolitan design elite. Taking their cue from the

BCID there had been clear emphasis in cities like Newcastle towards the use of housing exhibitions and show homes to promote good taste, drawing upon Scandinavian influences as models that residents might ‘learn to admire and adopt’.<sup>28</sup> Initially the approach was ‘ad hoc’, with the provincial city absorbing and reproducing aspects of ‘Britain Can Make It’.<sup>29</sup> However, there was growing awareness of the wider significance of these events. In 1945 the municipal exhibitions’ committee met to discuss how the problems of reconstruction in the city be assisted by ‘useful work . . . in museums . . . in drawing the attention to good design and craftsmanship’. In particular they recognised their important role in ‘promoting the wide application of art to everyday life’.<sup>30</sup> In 1947 a travelling exhibition of Danish domestic design was hosted in the city. Whilst it had credible metropolitan pedigree – items had been pre-selected by the Arts Council in collaboration with the BCID – it nonetheless reflected a strong local curatorial appetite to embrace the application of art in daily life, especially in domestic housing, as well as the patrician message to promote ‘good design in the home’.<sup>31</sup>

Two years later Newcastle hosted a Swedish Week Exhibition, in which the display of domestic crafts culminated with a finale involving a performance of traditional dance by ‘Swedish girls dressed in peasant costumes still to be found among peasants of the country’. The exhibition was allegedly visited by thousands of people from the city and beyond. This reveals how Swedish design tropes, and specifically its combination of folk populism and modernism, meshed with local ambitions to promote art in everyday life that were connected to a broader celebration of European folk culture amongst (?) post-war city dwellers.<sup>32</sup> These initiatives helped to assure the place of Scandinavian, and especially Swedish, prominence as the leaders of European design modernity during the 1950s.<sup>33</sup> But in the local setting the equivocal progress towards

reconstruction in British cities provided fertile territory for these marketing techniques, as well as evoking new anxieties. Here an instructive exhibition strategy that yoked vernacular traditions to the promotion of modern rational consumption in the home could be useful. With Britain's highest levels of overcrowding and tuberculosis, Tyneside and Newcastle were keen to replace their poor quality Victorian working-class housing stock.<sup>34</sup> Thus the appeal of 'beauty in everyday life', as a remedy for the increasingly desperate task of post war reconstruction, appealed to curators in Newcastle and more broadly across the north east. This both mirrored and was an extension of a growing national preoccupation with working-class consumers in domestic politics.<sup>35</sup>

The ambition for good living in the city extended beyond aesthetic appreciation of domestic design. The growing anxiety over the capability of tenants to fulfil the expectations of the new urban landscape of social housing was also an important driver. In Nordic states the pressures of the quickly expanding cities gave rise to widespread desire to steer a rural working-class population towards rational ways of good living in the city. In Oslo the construction of new social housing estates was accompanied by publicity materials directed specifically towards rural incomers, especially women. The promotion of urban society as a remedy for the dangers of rural poverty arguably mirrored broader social engineering concerns in the Norwegian and wider Nordic context.<sup>36</sup> In post-war Britain urban redevelopment also rekindled earlier anxieties. In contrast, these built on pre-war concerns over poor city dwellers, whose habits and lifestyles were viewed as potentially damaging to future urban development.<sup>37</sup> Added to this was the often explicit mistrust of tenants amongst housing management committees across the country, who carried forward the public health concerns of the thirties into the construction of post-war social housing estates.

Municipal authorities, whilst open to design-led promotion of good living in cities, were equally concerned to construct a compliant tenure group. The extensive monitoring of tenant behaviour in northern cities, and especially of slum dwellers on council housing waiting lists, reveals how a management culture emerged that was not especially reconciled to the idea of 'active' citizenship amongst city dwellers.<sup>38</sup> Thus, where exhibitions were deployed promoting Scandinavian home life, they often masked deep anxieties over the ability of tenants to meet the requirements of a minimalist and rational way of life.

Within this culture of managerial mistrust of working-class tenants there were exceptions for whom the old ways of industrial society continued to be championed. In provincial cities with large working-class populations, British Communist Party architects could escape from the London-based fascination with Swedish 'bourgeois vernacular'. For example, Berthold Lubetkin, a Russian émigré and pioneer of British modernism, hoped that an invitation to plan the Peterlee New Town in County Durham would assuage his disappointment with the progress of the British Labour Party's post-war programme of change.<sup>39</sup> Lubetkin was approached to act as chief engineer in 1947 for the construction of a New Town in County Durham to rehouse 30,000 miners. His appointment was met with enthusiasm by the British Communist Party with its local branch debating at length the possibility of developing a 'socialist realist' urban community in Peterlee.<sup>40</sup> Naturally Lubetkin's plans reflected his wish to inculcate a collective urban way of living. Although the houses provided modern amenities, these were planned to restrict a drift towards excessive domesticity amongst tenants. As often as possible, domestic facilities were positioned in communal space, such as on the ground floor of blocks of flats, where small rudimentary kitchens and a common meeting room provided space in which residents

would likely be inclined to engage in communal activities.<sup>41</sup> However, the timing of these innovations and his broader plan for Peterlee was ill-fated, coinciding with the 1947-8 financial crisis that made them both unaffordable and impractical.<sup>42</sup>

Beyond these structural impediments it was the rejection by the NCB of his modernist ideals that was most disturbing to Lubetkin. He found the NCB's appetite for stereotyped semi-detached houses disappointing since, along with other CP figures, he had hoped the development would provide an escape from the 'low-density' garden city cosiness of other dormitory suburbs.<sup>43</sup> The Peterlee Development Corporation's discussions during this time reinforce the sense of impasse that his expectations created. In Lubetkin's plans all open areas were to be shared, with no boundaries or fencing enclosing private space. However, the NCB's insistence on the provision of private garden space was strong; it stated in the 1949 compromise that 'all houses should have a small enclosed space attached which could be considered most properly as an "open air room"'.<sup>44</sup> In Lubetkin's plans traditional subdivision of land was not considered appropriate: allotments were to be grassed over and turned into children's play areas. Where fencing was required special consideration had to be given to its design: 'ordinary design of fence would not do. It was hoped, however, that fencing would not be necessary'.<sup>45</sup>

The ambition to manage the space outside the home for activities that would militate against the draw of the domestic interior resonates with efforts elsewhere to create a landscape that clearly rejected the nostalgic qualities of post-war Swedish modern. For the architects of Sheffield's Park Hill estate, constructed between 1957 and 1961, the adoption of the now infamous deck-access system drew inspiration from Peter and Allison Smithson, pioneers of British 'new brutalism'. The Smithsons were noted for their dislike of the nostalgic qualities of suburban housing schemes with Scandinavian

overtones.<sup>46</sup> In Sheffield's Park Hill their influence over the ambition to develop a socialising architecture was reflected in the construction of deck space outside the flats. The decks were intended to reinforce the solidarity of Park Hill residents by providing shared space in which they were 'free to perform communal activities'.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, Lubetkin's plan for shared outdoor areas in Peterlee recognised social space as the determinant of tenant behaviour and action.<sup>48</sup>

Perhaps architects including Lubetkin deployed these 'techniques of power' in rehousing working-class communities as a defence against the retrospective influences of Swedish modern. However, this evolved alongside a noticeable drift towards a way of life in cities and New Towns that undercut the central idea of communal space as the determinant of social action. Shortly after Lubetkin's departure from Peterlee New Town's managers drew back from earlier plans for collective social space. Anxieties over the 'social problems of the area' were to be remedied using a 'show home', equipped with 'well-designed furniture', to help Peterlee's inhabitants understand how they might use their internal space.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, by 1950 the initial commitment to house miners on the 'Peterlee' list was being eroded by pressures towards tenant selection based on 'the necessity to produce a balanced population . . . and to meet the more pressing need of having tenants who were able and willing to pay the rents charged for corporation housing'.<sup>50</sup> Lubetkin's fears were to be prescient as the push towards 'social mixing' and the production of a 'balanced community' essentially moved the New Town away from its commitment towards the specific housing needs of miners. When new architects produced a replacement plan, the result was, as Lubetkin might have predicted, an opening for faux Swedish modern: 'a somewhat mundane plan, based on low-density

neighbourhood units surrounding a town centre: a mixture of Radburn principles and vaguely Scandinavian execution'.<sup>51</sup>

Broader social shifts worked against the possibility of producing a workers' urban landscape as the 1950s progressed.<sup>52</sup> In Swedish cities and elsewhere in western Europe the left's post-war optimism for the viability of urban socialism was gradually vanquished by new ways of city living. The aspiration of many working-class people to live in a house, rather than a flat, increasingly undermined the politics of, as well as the means of living by, collective principles. After the Second World War the acute need to rehouse industrial workers living in cramped inner city housing was often the apotheosis of municipal socialism. Even in cities like Malmö in Sweden, where flats continued to be the dominant housing form, a shift away from collective tenure systems eroded the potential of municipal socialism. The Social Democratic city authority responded to housing need by creating a municipal housing authority in 1948, drawing down state funding to support the planning and housing of post-war urban boom. However, the early efforts to 'socialise' the housing market were quickly undone by Sweden's 'innovative' cooperative housing strategy. This reflected the historic predominance of the cooperative movement in the housing market, which laid the ground for the principle of tenant co-ownership that was to characterise much of Sweden's post-war social housing policy. In Malmö cooperative housing personnel were prominent within the ranks of the Metalworkers Union. In 1954 the local branch of the National Association of Tenants and Buildings Societies (HSB) persuaded the city's major shipbuilder, Kockums, in conjunction with the Metalworker's Union, to subsidise a deposit for employees willing to live in cooperative flats. The initiative was enthusiastically taken up by industrial workers impatient for new accommodation.<sup>53</sup> Thereafter the opportunities for the influence of municipal

socialism within housing diminished in line with the consolidation of cooperative housing.<sup>54</sup> More broadly across Sweden this ‘third way’ in social housing was often the handmaiden of Swedish modern architecture with its emphasis upon small scale and ‘mixed’ tenure. Its ascendancy was legitimised further by its presence within flagship architectural exhibitions from the 1930s to the 1950s. Here it played a central role in underpinning the broader thrust of Swedish post-war social policy to construct a ‘reasonable [and rational] consumer’. HSB was the flagship sponsor of many exhibitions directed towards the consolidation of rational consumption within the home.<sup>55</sup>

The Swedish the aesthetic and social focus on home-centredness reflected the strong role of the national consumer cooperative organisations and their appreciation of the home as nucleus of consumer desire. From the 1930s onwards the domestic setting assumed a central place in efforts to educate Swedish citizens about the subversive forces of consumption. However, the underlying ambition was to produce rational consumers who would demand a ‘more democratic market’.<sup>56</sup> British architectural anxieties over the insidious influence of Swedish modern reflects their less ready confidence in tenants to resolve consumer society’s conflict between ‘needs and desires’, in the internal world of the home, rather than in the public domain.<sup>57</sup>

Moreover, in the urban areas of the north east, the appeal of Scandinavian design and Swedish architectural ideas did not carry through to an embrace of the Swedish co-operative tenure system. As elsewhere in the country, municipal government (especially when led by Labour) remained deeply suspicious of cooperative tenure. This was driven by the misgiving that cooperatives and housing associations were ‘run by middle class and titled people who were suspected of having Tory leanings’.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, British policy makers’ initial post-war admiration of Swedish housing



cooperation dwindled by the end of the 1950s,<sup>59</sup> when a broader shift away from the earlier flourish of Swedish small town modernism became apparent. The 1950s signature of social mixing, characterised by low-density urban living complemented by tasteful modern interiors, was eclipsed by the need to build new and expanding cities as quickly and efficiently as possible. This was amplified in Britain by the Conservative government's policy of reducing building standards in order to accelerate house building.

### III.

The idea of a Swedish urban modernity resurfaced in provincial cities during the 1960s, albeit in a different vein. During these years it became embedded in wider gestures towards a rational and efficient urban environment that reflected the regional modernising context. After the election of a Labour government in 1964, the much vaunted 'national plan' of George Brown, Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, was driven forward by local economic development boards committed to modernising the regions through the creation of a second wave of New Towns. This phase of regional planning underpinned the emergence of new industrial estates, as well the construction of new housing estates in cities. From the early 1960s onwards northern Labour-led councils asserted ownership over government reforms by evoking a transnational context for their local housing programmes. In the north east, the region's 'arch moderniser', Labour councillor T. Dan Smith, played a critical role in sustaining the appeal of a broader and more diffuse allusion to Swedish, and more widely Scandinavian, modernity in the local housing context. Like many in the Labour Party he was in favour of corporatist-style politics and an open admirer of European planning models. His background and charisma allowed him to assume a dominant position in northern regional policy, as reflected by his rise to the chair of

the northern economic development board. A self-styled internationalist, Smith often referred to the natural affinities between the political context of the north east and Scandinavian and Swedish social democracy.<sup>60</sup> In particular, Swedish influences were a central feature within the marketing and showcasing of the Newcastle Labour Council's progress in deploying high-rise construction to consolidate its social housing ambitions. However, as shall be seen, this was a precarious strategy that exposed the difficulties of achieving housing modernity in regions with a legacy of industrial slum dwelling.

The emergence of British cities in the sky during the early 1960s was underpinned by a construction boom, but also by a wider recognition amongst civic authorities that this imposing architectural form could be used to signal urban political ambition and progress.<sup>61</sup> This was also evident across other European cities, not least in Sweden, which led the Nordic high-rise moment following the launch of the 'Million Dwellings' programme. This initiative was the work of the Social Democratic majority government in 1965, and the programme audaciously promised to house one million citizens by 1975. It marked a departure from the earlier phase of intimate Swedish modern with its preoccupation with small-scale neighbourliness. These modest ambitions were swept away by the Fordist mode of planning and construction, producing grandiose and uniform suburbs dominated by system built high-rises, such as the mass housing estates in Tensta in Stockholm, Hammarkullen in Gothenburg and Rosengård in Malmö.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, the Swedish construction industry was vigorously promoted to international markets as the pre-eminent provider of high-rise housing. Representatives from this sector demonstrated an adeptness in placing themselves at the centre of this new urban form, and especially with reference to the scientific construction techniques underpinning prefabricated system built housing.

This was in part due to the international success of construction giants such as Ohlsson Skarne AB. This family-run business had by the 1940s consolidated its position as the primary construction company in the Stockholm area. During the following decades it enjoyed international success thanks in part to the marketing of its prefabrication techniques to other European countries where the industrialisation of building was increasingly popularised. Skarne houses were a key component of the 'Million Dwellings' era in Swedish cities and new suburbs during the 1960s. As Eric Stenberg has noted, the prefabrication techniques not only accelerated the volume of construction, they played a central role in shortening the distance between ideas and practice. Thus new visions of the urban could be 'tested immediately and on a grand scale'. At the same time the scientific credentials of prefabricators were legitimised by a crossover between theory and practice, as academics, including the Professor of Urban Planning Igor Degalins, became involved in the praxis of planning and building Stockholm's new prefabricated suburbs.<sup>63</sup>

Whilst the British construction industry was noticeably slower than its European counterparts to adopt prefabrication techniques, the patented Skarne system (which allowed for the complete construction of an apartment before its transfer to a building site) undeniably found a receptive audience in the UK.<sup>64</sup> A number of contracts for new high-rise social housing estates were awarded to Crudens of Musselburgh, the British agent of the Swedish 'Skarne' system.<sup>65</sup> Skarne-built estates were erected most notably in Scotland, where the Swedish industrialised construction method was used in the building of public sector housing estates in Dundee and Edinburgh (in the now demolished Whitfield and Calder Park high-rise housing schemes).<sup>66</sup> In Rochdale, near Manchester, housing committee members undertook a visit to Sweden to study the Skarne system in preparation for the development of the now demolished

Ashfield Valley estate. Construction of the deck access flats began in 1967, and housed tenants were initially pleased with their light airy apartments boasting spacious kitchens where the sun shone through every window.<sup>67</sup> In the north east Skarne high rise estates were constructed at the Nursery Farm estate at Long Benton (now also demolished) and infamously in the new town at Killingworth, where the industrialised housing system was used to give expression to Roy Gazzard's brutalist evocation of the Northumbrian 'medieval castle' (also demolished).<sup>68</sup>

Often where the Skarne system was used it mirrored local political anxieties that the housing progress was lagging behind the high-rise skyline emerging in other western European cities. As Leader of Newcastle City Council T. Dan Smith had taken the unprecedented step of creating a Public Relations Department for the city; its chief priority was to disseminate its progressive vision and specifically the modernity of its social housing programmes. Smith's outward looking regionalism was a vision of Newcastle and north-east England as increasingly compatible with international cities.<sup>69</sup> The aspirations for public housing during the 1960s nevertheless thinly disguised the scale of the rehousing problem within a mature industrial conurbation. The mounting public relations efforts to convey the modernity of Newcastle's social housing schemes was thus a useful distraction from the underlying concern that 'private owners were making more progress with regard to the improvement of property than the corporation'.<sup>70</sup> What better way to signal the corporation's advances than by grand outward looking gestures to Stockholm, Stavanger, Aarhus and Malmö. Smith complemented these by appointing the acclaimed Danish architect, Arne Jacobsen, to work on the redevelopment of the city centre, claiming boldly that 'Le Corbusier, had he not been so old, I'm sure he would have come to work here too'.<sup>71</sup> This reflected the urgency that was increased by an uncertain progress towards

urban modernity in social housing. As is well known, throughout the 1960s British citizens of working-class conurbations like Newcastle often continued to live in squalid and dilapidated Victorian housing.<sup>72</sup>

Perhaps hoping that these problems could be addressed by exposure to international models, Newcastle Housing Committee undertook a tour of Scandinavian cities during the early 1960s. Plans for exhibitions and promotional materials followed, in which the rationality of Swedish scientific building methods was emphasised to underline the modernity of the city's new housing landscape. This also marked a noticeable shift from the home-centred housing exhibition strategy of the 1950s, towards one that placed greater emphasis focus upon the scientific rationality of the built environment. Thus, the idea of Swedish modernity in housing was continued in altered form through the 1960s, despite its waning significance as an international design concept by the end of the 1950s. In 1962 a new estate of high-rise municipal flats was constructed at Cruddas Park, located on the site of decaying industrial housing for workers at the city's largest factory. The construction team deployed a much profiled 'Swedish modular design' that signalled the estate as a centrepiece of the modernising urban landscape. The Cruddas Park flats were opened in 1962 with much fanfare by Hugh Gaitskell, Leader of the British Labour Party, who had recently unveiled the Park Hill estate in Sheffield. In Newcastle the event was carefully stage-managed by Smith and coincided with a festival celebrating local industrial culture which he also orchestrated.<sup>73</sup> Smith's shrewd recognition that the spectacle of local culture could be exploited to ease the process of slum clearance was prescient and arguably anticipated the corporate colonisation of industrial heritage that came to be a signature of later urban regeneration strategies.<sup>74</sup>

1962 was a highpoint of optimism in which the convergence between the new visual landscapes of Swedish modular system high-rise on the one hand and vernacular culture on the other was possible not only in the minds of aggrandising municipal politicians but also amongst northern city dwellers, for whom the glamour of an international skyline was hard to resist. In nearby Dunston on the South Bank of the Tyne, a schoolboy overheard his form teacher speaking to a visiting MHI inspector. Gesturing expansively to the view from the window to the landscape ascending on the other side of the river he mused, 'isn't it wonderful – Newcastle is getting a Manhattan skyline'.<sup>75</sup> But the early promise of the newly constructed estates was fleeting, and the problems of the deindustrialising northern conurbations quickly ensured that the aspiration for an international skyline aligned to Scandinavian modern became more difficult to fulfil.

The ambition to create new, scientific technology hubs alongside modern housing estates which mirrored the vertical integration of the Swedish construction industry was particularly difficult to emulate. The pressure to achieve an urban landscape and integrated industrial modernity was felt intensely, and increasingly hopelessly, in northern cities as the 1960s progressed. The weight of such expectations created pronounced tensions in areas such as Peterlee New Town. Whilst the commitment to locate the British headquarters of the American multinational IBM in the town was initially celebrated, the progress towards industrial diversification was noticeably slow. By 1963 the number of non-mining employers in the town was still very small.<sup>76</sup> In response to the difficulty in launching Peterlee as a hub of modern employment opportunities, the Development Corporation managers sought out the public relations expertise of T. Dan Smith and Associates in 1962.<sup>77</sup> The company was paid annually to draw on a network of business contacts in promoting Peterlee to

an international audience. This promised to stimulate new corporate interests, whilst also rescuing the town's reputation from growing negative stereotyping.<sup>78</sup> Smith inaugurated his work with characteristic tenacity, sending an exhibition stand for Peterlee to the 'Gateway to Britain' exhibition in Bergen and Stavanger.<sup>79</sup>

Simultaneously he was introducing new clients to Peterlee, including Crudens, who agreed to take over the tenancy of a factory built by a defunct Norwegian wool company. In return Crudens were assured that the use of the Skarne system would be considered for the Corporation's housing programme.<sup>80</sup> Thereafter Crudens secured contracts to build several hundred flats in the New Town.<sup>81</sup>

Initial responses to the Skarne project in Peterlee were positive. Tenants were happy, and the houses and flats attracted international acclaim. In 1964 the town hosted a visit from Allan Skarne, the Swedish managing director of Skarne Ohlsson AB. The assurance that the Swedish system built houses would deliver the New Town as a nucleus of both employment and housing modernity look set to be fulfilled. In 1964 the Corporation Management Committee captured the mood of optimism, promising that 'the design and layout of the houses would prove agreeable and also that Crudens factory would be gainfully employed for a number of years providing such housing'.<sup>82</sup>

At first the dwellings appeared to be delivering the 'Swedish model' of vertical integration underpinned by a social democratic housing vision. Three years later the Housing Subsidies Act reduced the funding available for social housing in New Towns, which revealed the costly nature of the Skarne houses. This was coupled with increasing evidence that, largely thanks to poor execution, the maintenance cost of the flat roofed system built dwellings was exceptionally high. Peterlee's Skarne houses thereafter became costly, difficult to let reminders of the New Town's failure to deliver the government's vision of the revitalised north.<sup>83</sup> Perhaps hoping to reassure

the nervous Corporation, Crudens produced a publicity film to promote the Skarne houses in 1967. The film showcased the industrialised building system. Its close attention to both the construction process, but also to the interior layout of a prefabricated house, revealed its symbolic role in representing new ways of living in the town: the house had gas fired heating (not coal), it was furnished tastefully in minimalist 'G-Plan' style. The interior was presented as rational and efficient, with electric appliances, vinyl flooring and 'Scandinavian style' curtains. As the film ended, the mother of the house (the husband was not present) reposed in her tastefully furnished living room to read a book while her well-scrubbed children slept peacefully in their own bedrooms. She opened her book. She did not switch on the television. Outside the house the landscape was empty; there were no neighbours present, noisy or otherwise. This minimalist urban vision presented an imaginary way of life that was without interference from people outside the home or the modern media. Its rationality was one that was self-contained and individual. It spoke to the ideals of a confident and reasonable consumer, but it was uncoupled from the attendant ambition of Swedish modern for social mixing and architecture on a human scale. It was even further removed from the sociability of the Durham mining community that it was designed to relocate.<sup>84</sup>

By 1967 the rent increases and the general problems with unemployment in Peterlee meant that the image of life evoked in the promotion of the Skarne houses was increasingly at odds with the actual way of living in the New Town. During the following years the Skarne houses became increasingly 'difficult to let', and problems with managing the 'Peterlee list' meant that instances of squatting vacant and poorly maintained 'Scandinavian style' houses were a growing concern.<sup>85</sup> The Social housing and the urban modern landscape seemed to be under attack on a number of



fronts. In 1967 the Peterlee Corporation manager met with the Permanent Secretary to the Housing Ministry and representatives of building societies to discuss the promotion of owner occupation in New Towns. Thereafter a new form of marketing strategy was deployed, including the dissemination of the ‘own your own home at Peterlee’ promotional booklet to assist with the news management of new rent increases.<sup>86</sup> After 1969 no further contracts were awarded to Crudens, and the legacy of the Skarne houses was one of immense ‘damage to the Corporation’.<sup>87</sup> In the following years the discourse of social housing, as distinguished by its outward looking Scandinavian modernity, evidenced in building techniques, in model exhibitions and show homes, was undermined by its association with poor building quality, increased rents and, above all, the spectacle of local government corruption.<sup>88</sup>

#### IV.

This article has emphasised two instances when the influence of Swedish modern in housing and architecture were reflected in the urban north-east of England. First, during the 1950s the re-export from Sweden back into Britain of a vernacular, low-rise housing style, heavily influenced by the Garden City movement, understandably affronted a generation of British architects who were anxious to reshape the urban landscape based upon a radical version of modernism. Lubetkin’s experience in northern conurbations demonstrated that, by 1950, the appeal of Swedish modern had extended beyond metropolitan fascination. In particular, the idea of good living, reflected in the promotion of Scandinavian and Swedish design, had captivated municipal authorities in northern cities. Here the vision of beauty in everyday life was

embraced as a remedy for the task of post-war reconstruction. The architecture of 1950s Swedish modern, with its humane scale and vernacular details, also appealed as part of a wider celebration of European folk culture that was popular after the war. In other respects, however, the appeal of Swedish modern was superficial. Whilst New Towns like Peterlee adopted plans with Scandinavian inferences, the Swedish tenure system, and especially the adoption of cooperative housing principles, never took hold. Moreover, by the end of the 1950s the need to build cities as quickly and efficiently as possible stymied the influence of Swedish small-town modernism.

Second, by the early 1960s the British government's willingness to boost housing production by any means gave impetus to a different idea of Swedish modern. In provincial cities like Newcastle, Labour-led councils asserted ownership of Conservative central government policies by evoking a transnational context for their new house building programmes. This was given added momentum during the 1960s because the shift from low brick to poured concrete and high-rise drew heavily upon Swedish know-how and patented pre-fabrication systems. In its turn this produced new problems. The challenge of rehousing urban industrial communities housed in dilapidated Victorian housing was pronounced. In many ways the ambition to transform the cityscape and its dwellers lives by housing them in high-rise blocks of modular Swedish design was courageous. However, neither city bosses, nor tenants awaiting housing knew what the parameters were for life in this new landscape.

Whilst local people may have been able to celebrate the emergence of a skyline that placed their city in a global frame of reference in 1962, this optimism was relatively ephemeral. In 1967 the promotion of the Skarne houses in Peterlee revealed the ambiguity underpinning this vision. The imaginary lifestyle represented in this gesture did not draw on the past, but it was also equivocal about the future. Ironically, it

foreshadowed the structural difficulties that undermined the experiment with system built Swedish housing in north-east England.

Of course, the Swedish social democratic housing model was not a panacea for modern urban problems. But since 1945 its transnational appeal has been remarkably resilient. During the 1970s the fall from grace of high-rise and poured concrete paradoxically facilitated the return of Swedish low-rise, vernacular, neighbourly cosiness, as a celebrated element within the British Community Architecture Movement.<sup>89</sup> This appeal has continued to the present day. The contemporary British housing crisis has prompted a range of solutions including proposals for a new wave of Garden Cities and the rapid build solution of BoKloc prefabricated homes – the product of a joint venture by IKEA, the world's premier furniture and furnishings retailer, and Skanska, the Swedish building and construction conglomerate, one of the largest in the world and owner of Skarne AB.

---

Natasha Vall; n.vall@tees.ac.uk; Institute of Design Culture and the Arts, Teesside University, Middlesbrough, TS13BA, UK

<sup>1</sup> Owen Hatherley, 'How Sweden's innovative housing programme fell foul of privatisation', *The Guardian*, 16 June 2013.

<sup>2</sup> T. Miller and R. Kraushner, 'The Emergence of Participatory Policies for Community Development: Anglo-American Experiences and their influence on Sweden', *Acta Sociologica*, 2, 22 (1979) 127.

More recently Glenn O'Hara has explored the British appreciation of Swedish housing models: Glenn O'Hara, "'Applied Socialism of a Fairly Moderate Kind": Scandinavia, British Policy makers and the Post-War Housing Market', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 33, 1 (2008), 10. Likewise, Helena Mattsson and Sven-Olov Wallenstein's collection on Swedish modernism emphasises how the construction of the Swedish welfare state developed in communication with a transnational, and especially Anglo-American, community of architects, planners and social policymakers: Helena Mattsson and Sven-Olov Wallenstein, eds., *Swedish Modernism. Architecture, Consumption and the Welfare State* (London: Black Dog Publishing Ltd., 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Katarina Friberg, Mary Hilson & Natasha Vall, 'Reflections on transnational comparative history from an Anglo-Swedish perspective', *Historisk Tidskrift*, 127, 4 (2007), 731.

<sup>4</sup> James Fulcher, *Labour movements, employers and the state: conflict and co-operation in Britain and Sweden*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Malcolm B. Hamilton, *Democratic socialism in Britain and Sweden*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989). More recently see Jonas Hinnfors, *Reinterpreting social democracy: a history of stability in the British Labour Party and the Swedish Social Democratic Party* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); Jenny Andersson, 'The people's library and the electronic workshop: comparing Swedish and British social democracy', *Politics and Society*, 34 (2006), 431–60.

<sup>5</sup> Jim Kemeny, *Housing Policy and Social Theory* (London: Routledge, 1992), 133.

<sup>6</sup> Katarina Friberg, Mary Hilson and Natasha Vall, 'Reflections on transnational comparative history from an Anglo-Swedish perspective', *Historisk Tidskrift*, 127, 4 (2007), 731

<sup>7</sup> Useful insights on the creation of municipal connections and networks during the last decades of the nineteenth century can be found in Pierre Yves Saunier, 'Taking up the Bet on Connections: a Municipal Contribution', *Contemporary European History*, 11, 4 (2002) 507–27. This themed issue

---

details the creation of municipal connections and networks during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Antoine Vione's contribution on town twinning in post war Europe characterises an approach that lays the emphasis upon the 'global frame of reference' for cities evoked by the international 'municipal diplomacy' of the town twinning process. Antoine Vione, 'Europe from the bottom up: town twinning in France during the Cold War', *Contemporary European History*, 11, 4 (2002) 623–40. In addition Pierre-Yves Saunier and Shane Ewen, eds., *Another Global City: Historical Explorations into the Transnational Municipal Moment, 1850–2000*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008) provides critical appraisal of the transnational municipal movement, especially beyond Europe.

<sup>8</sup> Eva Rudberg, 'Building the Utopia of the Everyday', in Mattsson and Wallenstein, *Swedish Modernism*, 152. Rudberg's earlier comprehensive assessment of the Stockholm exhibition and modern architecture is also instructive: Eva Rudberg, *The Stockholm Exhibition 1930: Modernism's Breakthrough in Swedish Architecture*, (Stockholm: Stockholmia, 1999). A detailed analysis of the philosophical underpinnings of the 1930 exhibition can also be found in Uno Åren, Lucy Creagh, Mary Creagh, Helena Kåberg and Barbara Miller Lane, eds., *Modern Swedish Design: Three Founding Texts* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2008). Further insights on the artists, architects and designers who shaped Swedish functionalism can be found in Cecilia Widenheim, *Utopia and Reality: Modernity in Sweden 1900–1960*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Helena Mattson, 'Designing the reasonable consumer. Standardisation and Functionalism in Swedish Functionalism', in Mattson and Wallenstein, *Swedish Modernism*, 81.

<sup>10</sup> Kjetill Fallen, *Scandinavian Design: Alternative Histories* (Oxford: Berg, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> Peter Collymore, 'Swedish or British', *Arkitektur*, 81, 8 (1981), 32.

<sup>12</sup> Urban Lundberg and Mattias Tyden, 'Constructing the welfare state. In search of the Swedish model', in Mattsson and Wallenstein, *Swedish Modernism*, 38.

<sup>13</sup> Nicholas Dagen Bloom, *Merchant of Illusion: James Rouse, America's Salesman of the Businessman's Utopia* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004), 129–30. In 1977 David Popenoe's seminal comparison of Levittown and Vällingby confirmed these affinities, although with more explicit admiration of the benefits Swedish planning models bestowed on urban dwellers, who in Vällingby enjoyed natural beauty and generous access to public space that 'far exceeded' equivalent provision in the American suburb. David Popenoe, *The Suburban Environment: Sweden and the United*

---

*States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), cited in Barbara Miller Lane, *Housing and Dwelling: Perspectives on Modern Domestic Architecture*, (London: Routledge, 2006), 374.

<sup>14</sup> Mary Hilson, *The Nordic Model: Scandinavia since 1945* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 22.

<sup>15</sup> Hilson, 'Nordic model', 19.

<sup>16</sup> Jenny Andersson and Mary Hilson, 'Images of Sweden and the Nordic Countries', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 34, 3 (2009), 219–28; Jenny Anderson, 'Nordic nostalgia and Nordic Light: the Swedish model as utopia 1930–2007', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 34, 3 (2009), 229–45.

<sup>17</sup> Murray Fraser and Joe Kerr, *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship'. American influence on post-war British Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2007), 485.

<sup>18</sup> Fraser and Kerr, *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship'*, 28.

<sup>19</sup> Stephen Parsons, 'Communism in the Professions: the Organisation of the British Communist Party amongst the Professions', Ph.D. thesis the University of Warwick, 1990, 457. Critical insights into the disagreements amongst post war avante-garde artists are also to be found in Nicholas Bullock, *Building the Post-War World: Modern Architecture and Reconstruction in Britain*, (London: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>20</sup> Parsons, 'Communism in the Professions', 469.

<sup>21</sup> Parsons, 'Communism in the Professions', 457; Paul Oliver, 'Introduction', in Paul Olivier, Ian Davis and Ian Bentley, *Dunromamin. The Suburban semi and its Enemies* (London: Barry & Jenkins, 1994), 21.

<sup>22</sup> Jonathan M. Woodham, 'The Politics of Persuasion: State Industry and Good Design at the Britain can Make it Exhibition', in Patrick J. Maguire and Jonathan M. Woodham, eds., *Design and Cultural Politics in Post War Britain* (Leicester: Leicester University press, 1997), 56.

<sup>23</sup> Joan Ockman, 'Towards a Geneology of Modern Architecture and the Consumer Paradigm in the mid Twentieth Century', in Mattsson and Wallenstein, *Swedish Modernism*, 179.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Hall, 'Planning History: Recent Developments in Nordic Countries with Special reference to Sweden', *Planning Perspectives*, 9, 2 (1994), 153–79.

<sup>25</sup> It is important to note that whilst these ideas continued to have purchase in provincial British cities during the 1950s, this was not the case in Sweden, where planners and architects had by this time largely relinquished 1930s inspired modernism. I am grateful to Catharina Nolin, Associate Professor

---

and Director of Studies at Stockholm University's Department of Culture and Aesthetics, for this insight.

<sup>26</sup> Anthony Crosland, *The Future of Socialism* (London, Jonathon Cape, 1956), 355.

<sup>27</sup> Bill Lancaster, *Working Class Housing on Tyneside 1850–1939* (Tyne and Wear: Bewick Press, 1994), 2–7.

<sup>28</sup> Lorna Goldsmith, 'Comparative Dimensions of Social Housing in Aarhus and Newcastle 1890s–1970s: the Problem of the Political Culture of two Housing Systems', Ph.D. thesis, Northumbria University, 2007, 181.

<sup>29</sup> These developments were also the legacy of the 1951 Festival of Britain travelling exhibition, which visited various industrial conurbations, including Tyneside. On Merseyside, Festival of Britain projects included an exhibition of 'model flats' that were 'hopeful representations of life tomorrow for ordinary people'. Becky Connekin, *'The autobiography of a nation': the 1951 Festival of Britain* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2003), 166.

<sup>30</sup> Laing Art Gallery Committee Minutes, 2 Feb. 1945, MD/NC/129/6, Tyne and Wear Archive Service, Tyne and Wear.

<sup>31</sup> Laing Art Gallery Committee Minutes, 22 May 1947, TWAS, MD/NC/129/6, 65.

<sup>32</sup> Laing Art Gallery Committee Minutes, 10 June 1949, p. 109, TWAS, MD/NC/129/6.

<sup>33</sup> Nikolas Glover, 'Imaging Community: Sweden in "Cultural Propaganda", then and now', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 34, 3 (2009), 246–63.

<sup>34</sup> This feature had first come to attention with the publication in 1928 of Henry Mess's pioneering social survey of the area. Henry Mess, *Industrial Tyneside. A Social Survey* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1928).

<sup>35</sup> Patrick J. Maguire, 'Introduction: Politics and Design in Post-war Britain', in Maguire and Woodham, *Design and Cultural Politics*, 3–13, here 3.

<sup>36</sup> Laura Falender, 'Concepts of Hygiene and in the Conception and Construction of post-war housing in Oslo', paper presented at 'The Urban History Group, Annual Conference: The Living and Liveable City: Health, Lifestyle and Sustainability', held at St Catherine's College, Oxford, Mar. 2012.

<sup>37</sup> John Welshman, 'In Search of the "Problem Family": Public Health and Social work in England and Wales 1940–1970', *The Social History of Medicine*, 9, 3 (1996), 447–65.

- 
- <sup>38</sup> Goldsmith, 'Comparative Housing', 121; Alison Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture. The History of a Social Experiment* (London: Routledge, 2001), 120.
- <sup>39</sup> Parsons, 'Communism in the Professions', 470.
- <sup>40</sup> David Boyes, 'An exercise in gracious living. The North East New Towns 1947–1988', Ph.D. thesis, Durham University, 2007, 85.
- <sup>41</sup> Matthew Hollow, 'Governmentality on the Park Hill Estate: the rationality of Public Housing', *Urban History*, 37, 1 (2010) 127; Minutes of the 48th Meeting of Peterlee Development Corporation, 16 Aug. 1949, Peterlee Development Corporation, DCRO, NT/Pe 1/1/1–9.
- <sup>42</sup> Boyes, 'North East New Towns', 85. His plans were vetoed by the NCB's mining manager who exercised their right to obstruct any construction that might impede the extraction of coal on the site, particularly blocks of flats. At a time of acute national need for coal such arguments found government favour and delayed the start of building in Peterlee until 1950, Boyes, 'North East New Towns', 37.
- <sup>43</sup> Lubetkin cited in Parsons, 'Communism in the Professions', 470.
- <sup>44</sup> Minutes of the 53rd Meeting of the Peterlee Development Corporation, 31 Oct. 1949, Peterlee Development Corporation, DCRO, NT/Pe 1/1/1–9.
- <sup>45</sup> Minutes of the 53rd Meeting of the Peterlee Development Corporation, 31 Oct. 1949, Peterlee Development Corporation, DCRO, NT/Pe 1/1/1–9.
- <sup>46</sup> Fraser and Kerr, *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship'*, 486.
- <sup>47</sup> Hollow, 'Governmentality', 126.
- <sup>48</sup> Hollow, 'Governmentality', 127.
- <sup>49</sup> Social Development Committee of the Peterlee Development Corporation, Minutes of the 76th Meeting of the Peterlee Development Corporation, 6 Oct. 1950, Peterlee Development Corporation, DCRO, NT/Pe 1/1/1–9.
- <sup>50</sup> Social Development Committee of the Peterlee Development Corporation, Minutes of the 76th Meeting of the Peterlee Development Corporation, 6 Oct. 1950, Peterlee Development Corporation, DCRO, NT/Pe 1/1/1–9.
- <sup>51</sup> John Griffiths, 'T. Dan Smith: a case for the defence', paper presented at the 'Urban History Group Annual Conference', University of Leicester, July 2013.
- <sup>52</sup> Also because the influence of socialist architects such as Lubetkin, was very much diminished.



---

Fraser and Kerr, *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship'*, 28.

<sup>53</sup> Peter Billing and Mikael Stigendal, *Hegemonins Decennier. Lärdomar från Malmö om den Svenska Modellen* (Malmö: Möllevångenssamhällsanalys, 1994), 267.

<sup>54</sup> Local opposition to housing cooperatives was relatively ephemeral. Within the national Social Democratic Party controversy over recommendations for housing cooperatives surfaced, briefly, in 1919–20, in the context of discussions of continuing parliamentary collaboration with Liberals. After 1945, the presence of HSB as a major provider of social housing in the Swedish context was largely celebrated, prior to recent critical appraisal of the 'Swedish model' of welfare and housing. For a full discussion of Swedish housing policy during the twentieth century see Thord Strömberg, 'The politicization of the Housing Market: the Social Democrats and the Housing Question', in Klaus Misgeld, Karl Molin and Klas Åmark, eds., *Creating Social Democracy. A Century of the Social Democratic Labor Party in Sweden* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1992).

<sup>55</sup> Helena Mattsson, 'Designing the reasonable consumer. Standardisation and personalisation in Swedish functionalism', in Mattsson and Wallenstein, *Swedish Modernism*, 81.

<sup>56</sup> Mattsson, 'Designing the reasonable consumer', 81.

<sup>57</sup> Mattsson, 'Designing the reasonable consumer', 81.

<sup>58</sup> Peter Malpass, *Housing Associations and Housing Policy: A Historical Perspective* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000), 133.

<sup>59</sup> O'Hara, 'Applied Socialism', 10.

<sup>60</sup> T. D. Smith, *Dan Smith: an autobiography* (Newcastle: Oriel Press, 1990), 73.

<sup>61</sup> Miles Glendinning and Stefan Muthesius, *Towerblock. Modern public housing in England, Scotland, Wales and N. Ireland* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

<sup>62</sup> Thomas Hall 'Urban planning in Sweden', in Thomas Hall, ed., *Planning and urban growth in the Nordic countries* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1991), 222.

<sup>63</sup> Eric Stenberg, ed., *Structural Systems of the Million Dwellings Era* (Stockholm: KTH School of Architecture, 2013), 11.

- 
- <sup>64</sup> Charles Jenks, *Modern Movements in Architecture* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 77; Brian Finnimore, *Houses from the Factory. System Building and the Welfare State* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1989), 175.
- <sup>65</sup> Natasha Vall, *Cities in Decline? A comparative history of Malmö and Newcastle after 1945* (Malmö: Malmö Högskola, 2007), 68.
- <sup>66</sup> Glendinning and Muthesius, *Towerblock*.
- <sup>67</sup> <http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/local-news/well-it-seemed-a-good-idea-at-the-time-1037385> (last visited 1 May 2014)
- <sup>68</sup> Roy Gazzard, 'Killingworth-Half Way to Completion', *Town and County Planning*, 39, 1 (1971), 1–18.
- <sup>69</sup> Griffiths, 'T. Dan Smith'.
- <sup>70</sup> Goldsmith, 'Comparative Housing', 182; Minutes of the Housing sub-committee as to the revitalisation of older properties', 27 Mar. 1961, TWAS, MD/NC/107/12.
- <sup>71</sup> Tyne Tees Television, *T. Dan Smith and the Government Regional Plan* (1966) Film ID: 18119, North East Film Archive NEFA; Tyne Tees Television, *Dan Smith, Regional Development Council* (1965), NEFA, Film ID: 17291.
- <sup>72</sup> Goldsmith 'Comparative Housing', 190.
- <sup>73</sup> Bill Lancaster, 'Sociability and the city', in Rob Colls and Bill Lancaster, eds., *Newcastle. A Modern History* (Philiomore, 2001), 320.
- <sup>74</sup> Natasha Vall, *Cultural region: North east England 1945–2000* (Manchester: Manchester University press, 2011), 136.
- <sup>75</sup> I acknowledge Bill Lancaster for this insight.
- <sup>76</sup> Boyes, 'North East New Towns', 8.
- <sup>77</sup> BBC, *Are the New Towns the Slums of Tomorrow* (1964). In this documentary Dr. Robin Best argued that the spatial arrangements in the town were 'causing unhappiness' and utilised selected interviews with residents to support his claim. NEFA, Film ID: 17291. The spatial determinism of contemporary criticism was later reinforced in work such as Alison Coleman's *Utopia on Trial. Vision and Reality in Planned Housing* (London: Hilary Shipman, 1985), which attributed the social malaise of British council housing estates directly to their spatial arrangement.

- 
- <sup>78</sup> Griffiths, 'T. Dan Smith'; Minutes of the 250th Meeting of the Development Corporation, 4 Jan. 1962, DCRO NT/AP/7/1/34.
- <sup>79</sup> Griffiths, 'T. Dan Smith'.
- <sup>80</sup> Minutes of the 262nd Meeting of the Development Corporation, 8 Feb. 1963, DCRO NT/AP/7/1/34.
- <sup>81</sup> Significantly the Corporation's appetite for the prefabricated system was lukewarm, despite the advantages it bestowed compared to 'traditional methods'. This echoes Charles Jenks' assertion that the British were generally less willing to adopt prefabricated and industrial building techniques than were their European counterparts. Charles Jencks, *Modern Movements*, 77.
- <sup>82</sup> Minutes of the Peterlee Development Corporation, 5 Mar. 1964, DCRO NT/AP/7/1/34.
- <sup>83</sup> Garry Philipson, *Aycliffe and Peterlee New Towns 1946–1988 Swords into Ploughshares and Farewell to Squalor* (Cambridge: Publications for Companies, 1988), 183–4.
- <sup>84</sup> *Crudens, Crudens build with Skarne* (1967), Film ID: 19268, North East Film Archive (NEFA)
- <sup>85</sup> BBC, *Anniversary Peterlee* (1976), Film ID: 8136, North East Film Archive (NEFA)
- <sup>86</sup> Minutes of the 314th Meeting of the Peterlee Development Corporation, 2 Nov. 1967, DCRO NT/AP/7/1/34.
- <sup>87</sup> Philipson, *Aycliffe and Peterlee*, 183–4.
- <sup>88</sup> T. Dan Smith was charged with corruption in 1970 and 1973, serving six years in prison from 1974.
- <sup>89</sup> Emblematic of this was the Anglo-Swedish architect Ralph Erskine's redevelopment of Byker in Newcastle during the 1970s.