

## Building a Small Cinema: Resisting Neoliberal Colonization in Liverpool

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## Abstract

In its stated aim of “creating cinemas not supermarkets,” the Small Cinema project voiced its alterity to the recent redevelopment of Liverpool’s city center and those of other former industrial cities throughout the Midlands and the north of the UK. These regeneration projects addressed the problem of a shrinking manufacturing base by replacing them with service industries, a move which has entailed the privatization of vast tracts of public space. Conversely, the building, functioning, and general praxis of the Small Cinema project suggests a mode of practice that more accurately fits within the paradigm of a collaborative commons than a capitalist marketplace. The project’s exemption from market criteria grants it the freedom to pursue public over private goods, thereby constituting a point of resistance to the ongoing neo-liberalization of the city and changes to government policy that make it increasingly difficult for non-profit projects to exist.

Historically speaking, cinemas have been accessible to the working class in a way that other artistic media have not. However, while the history of film as a tool for political subversion is well documented, less attention has been paid to the physical construction of independent cinematic space, its programming/running, and its potential as a node of resistance to neoliberal colonization. This paper uses the case study of the Small Cinema project in Liverpool as a means by which to understand how cinematic spaces can counteract the effects of policies that continue to have such a detrimental impact on the arts and education, as well as social health and well-being.

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## Introduction

The “creative industries” discourse that has developed over the past few decades measures the value of the arts in terms of contribution to the UK’s GDP and economic growth, and has been used to restructure government policies concerning arts and culture, education, and city-building. Scholars like Toby Miller, however, have questioned the beneficial impacts of the so-called creative industries on city planning where a “creative class” builds a sustainable economy through an upsurge of small- to medium-sized enterprises. In practice, the creative industries seem to be little more than a veneer for big business interests, a post-industrial discourse that supports a new stage in the process of uneven geographical development as examined by David Harvey in relation to the differential effects of capital as it moves across global and local regions.

In its stated aim of “creating cinemas not supermarkets,” the Small Cinema project voiced its alterity to the recent redevelopment of Liverpool’s city center and those of other former industrial cities throughout the Midlands and the north of the UK. These regeneration projects addressed the problem of a shrinking manufacturing base by replacing them with service industries, a move which has entailed the privatization of vast tracts of public space.<sup>1</sup> Conversely, the building, functioning, and general praxis of the Small Cinema project suggests a mode of practice that more accurately fits within the paradigm of a collaborative commons than a capitalist marketplace. The project’s exemption from market criteria grants it the freedom to pursue public over private goods, thereby constituting a point of resistance to the ongoing neo-liberalization of the city and changes to government policy that make it increasingly difficult for non-profit projects to exist.

Historically speaking, cinemas have been accessible to the working class in a way that other artistic media have not. However, while the history of film as a tool for political subversion is well documented, less attention has been paid to the physical construction of independent cinematic space, its

programming/running, and its potential as a node of resistance to neoliberal colonization.<sup>2</sup> This paper uses the case study of the Small Cinema project in Liverpool as a means by which to understand how cinematic spaces can counteract the effects of policies that continue to have such a detrimental impact on the arts and education, as well as social health and well-being.

## The Small Cinema Project

The Liverpool Small Cinema project was initiated by community interest company, Re-Dock, under the direction of the lead artist on the project, Sam Meech, in 2015. Building on previous attempts to develop and collaboratively manage community-screening spaces in Widnes, Kirkby, and Manchester, the aim was to create a new city-center grassroots film exhibition facility. Although the project received some funding from the British Film Institute (BFI), this was allocated to the programming and functioning of the cinema rather than the building of it. The construction process therefore necessitated the use of voluntary labor, as well as recycled and/or donated materials from a variety of arts organizations in the city. In terms of finding a venue to host the cinema, initial research and discussions with Liverpool City Council and the City Centre BID (Business Improvement District) were unsuccessful, not for their lack of enthusiasm, but due to the landlords' unwillingness to support a non-commercial let. An established yet informal relationship between Re-Dock and their landlord, Creative Space Team Ltd, proved to be the way forward. Re-Dock were able to make a proposition whereby they would be able to host the cinema in a ground floor space for free in a property recently acquired by their landlord, with the understanding that it would be a positive asset to the building, and available as a facility to the landlord and other tenants. This arrangement has since been supplemented by a contribution to the electricity, but essentially remains the same. Without this free platform, the cinema would not have been possible.

The internal organization of the project facilitates autonomy across the whole volunteer team. Volunteers direct the programming, the organization of meetings and sharing of information, the booking of films and reporting of box office figures, and the running of events. Behind these many activities lies a series of shared systems of information – show reporting forms that evaluate each event, “how to” documents, shift rotas, box office figures, mail groups, and the cinema's own bank account. All of these measures help to de-centralize responsibility across the whole team. This is the key organizational difference between the Liverpool Small Cinema and top-down cultural projects in the city. Since the building of the cinema started, members of the public have been free to decide their own level of involvement, developing a range of new skills and relationships in the process. This aspect of the project constitutes one of the ways in which it is oriented more towards the public good of sustaining health and well-being than to the pursuit of a financial return.

Film cultures and other cultural activities that strive to subvert market criteria may achieve this to a significant extent by forging a similar network of relations that increases the possibility of mutual aid, exchange, and benefit. It is the looseness of this social constellation that constitutes both its strength and its precarity. On the one hand, the cinema does not suffer the pressures of having to turn a profit, allowing it to keep ticket prices to a bare minimum (£4 maximum, and no one turned away for lack of funds), and screen films by local, independent filmmakers and students. The cinema therefore relies to a large extent on strengthening a network of solidarity. On the other hand, given the exceptional nature of the renting arrangement, as well as an awareness of the speed with which the city center is being redeveloped, the project's transience is understood by its volunteers. Thus, its anchor in a semi-permanent, physical space provides only a degree of stability, which nevertheless allows volunteers to think about future developments such as long-term screening initiatives, and experiment in ways that organizations closer to the market cannot.

In terms of programming, the Small Cinema resists an economic-cultural conformity that measures the value of a film on its performance at the box office. A recent initiative by Liverpool Small Cinema volunteers has committed 58 percent of its program to screening films by women, trans, and non-binary filmmakers (which are not commercially profitable), the only cinema in the UK to have ever made such a commitment. This was prompted by the realization that 58 percent of followers on the cinema's Facebook page were women, and yet, only 18 percent of films screened over the previous year were directed by women. The initiative received national coverage in *The Guardian Guide* and a London-based film magazine, *Little White Lies*, indicating a significant degree of interest in the Small Cinema's programming. Screenings such as these are but one example of non-profit incentives operating within a model of regeneration that holds profits to be of greater importance than social cohesion. However, a lack of public funding means that projects such as these are constantly under threat of closure. Whereas government should be providing public spaces and funding as part of its remit to ensure community health and well-being, instead it is doing the opposite: revoking public funds and facilitating a transfer of space (and social wealth) to the private sector.

### **Austerity Policies and the 'Creative Industries'**

Since the election of the Conservative-led coalition in 2010, the UK government's policies on education and the arts have been entwined with the neoliberal discourse of austerity, the measures of which have been justified by the financial crisis of 2007–08. The government's argument for austerity was and continues to be that it must cut back on public spending in order to reduce the financial deficit. For universities, this has meant a trebling of university tuition fees, the complete revocation of the student maintenance grant and

its replacement with a loans system, and massive reduction in the block grant and teaching grants, the latter, targeting the arts, humanities, and social sciences, specifically – all justified with reference to a spiraling national debt that needs to be eliminated. Andrew McGettigan remarks in his analysis of these policy changes, however, that “the government is not simply implementing a change driven by temporary difficulties; it does not intend to restore the block grant when national finances improve. Instead, austerity is the occasion which makes the prominent changes more acceptable politically.”<sup>3</sup> With that said, recent changes to the school curriculum, such as the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance’s decision to scrap Art History at AS and A-level have been met with some outrage, as people find it increasingly difficult to see how an economic crisis caused by a grossly irresponsible financial sector can or should be solved by reducing the learning opportunities for children in state-funded schools.

The reduction in public funding of higher education and the arts, generally, is representative of a broader recalibration of the social fabric that has been undertaken since Margaret Thatcher’s government (1979–1990), the free market ideals of which have been incorporated into the management style of many of the UK’s public institutions. This ideological overhaul, embodied by legislation such as the Education Reform Act (1988), privatization and anti-union policy, and a broader commitment to the retreat of the welfare state, also includes the reorientation of the arts and humanities towards meeting the needs of industry. As a direct result of this, these studies and pursuits are being displaced by the rhetoric of the “creative industries,” which has been defended by some academics while drawing criticism from others.<sup>4</sup> Toby Miller’s investigation into this shift in discourse places its starting point in the late 1960s “with Ronald Reagan’s [then Governor of California] neo-liberal opposition to welfare and European attempts to create a new, practical humanities, in response to charges of irrelevancy, conservatism, and light-headedness.”<sup>5</sup> In essence, this represents a break with the idea that these areas of cultural activity are of intrinsic social value, beyond the sphere of the market. The Higher Education Funding Council of England’s ongoing support of “entrepreneurial solutions to social problems,”<sup>6</sup> and the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s latest impact report framing the value of arts and humanities research primarily in its “contributions to the knowledge, creative and digital economies” are but two examples that demonstrate how this business-oriented language is being widely adopted through government agencies.<sup>7</sup>

The discourse around the creative industries has proven to be little more than a veneer for business interests as the UK has shifted from an industrial to a services-based economy. With the diminishing public funds for the arts within education, and the subsequent waning capabilities of the publicly funded Arts Council, creative projects now rely on private finance more than ever. The diverging motivations between private and public funding are highlighted through a contrast of the opening statements of the Arts Council

England strategic plan with that of the Creative Industries Council. In the former, entitled *Great Art and Culture for Everyone* (2013), the council identifies itself as follows:

We are a custodian of public investment, and we are charged with getting the maximum value out of this: the enlightenment and entertainment arts and culture bring us; the enriching of our lives and the inspiring of our education; the vital contribution to our health and well-being and the powering of regional regeneration, tourism and our standing abroad.<sup>8</sup>

While the Arts Council is comprised of members with a range of different backgrounds in the arts, education, non-profit, and profit-oriented business sectors (many of whom hold royal honours), the council's composition represents a limitation on the influence of business and government interests. By contrast, the membership of the Creative Industries Council includes the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Karen Bradley MP), the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Greg Clark MP) as well as employees of a variety of multinationals including Warner Brothers and Facebook. Former members include representatives of BSkyB and Amazon UK. The introduction to the CIC's strategic plan (2012) reads:

It's an exciting and pivotal time for the UK's creative industries. Recent statistics show the sector punches above its weight for the economy, generating £71.4 billion gross value added (GVA) in 2012 – a 9.4 per cent increase that surpasses the growth of any other UK industry.<sup>9</sup>

Far from nurturing creativity for the sake of enlightenment, enrichment, and the health and well-being of society, the CIC's motive is laid bare repeatedly throughout the document as putting “the creative industries at the heart of the growth agenda.”

This fusion of cultural and economic policy has begun to gain greater relevance in terms of city planning. Contemporary discourse around the creative industries has laid claim to a supposed flourishing of small to medium enterprises (SMEs), which apparently serve to regenerate urban areas, giving rise to the notion of “creative cities” and the coveted European Capital of Culture award. As Miller points out, however, the evidence indicates that whatever economic growth may occur, the creative industries model is not conducive to a sustainable economy. He writes:

The European Commission's evaluation of 29 Cities of Culture disclosed that their principal goal – economic growth stimulated by the public subvention of culture to renew failed cities – had itself failed . . . And there is minimal proof for the existence of a creative class in Britain or for the assertion that “creative cities” outperform their drab brethren economically.<sup>10</sup>

Whatever mobilization of the cultural sphere that may occur by placing “creativity” at the “heart of the growth agenda,” it is insufficient to foster long-term economic stability. Indeed, an over-reliance on private finance as opposed to public investment has actually been detrimental to economic growth across the EU, particularly after the financial crisis of 2007–08. As a recent report by the Macroeconomic Policy Institute shows, public investment, including public investment in non-profit organizations, is urgently required to induce a sustained economic recovery throughout Europe.<sup>11</sup> Thus, projects such as the Liverpool Small Cinema play a crucial role at the level of local regeneration, as well as in terms of macroeconomic developments.

That public investment has, since the financial crisis of 2007–08, become such a no-go area for governments (despite the emphatic response from world-leading economists that this is exactly what is required to stabilize the economy) suggests a form of reasoning that becomes clear when viewed from the historical perspective of class struggle. It is no secret that popular culture has the potential to catalyse mass political deliberation. The didactic capacity of texts and images to circulate and foster counter-publics in the form of critically and politically engaged communities has elicited censorship, “dumbing-down,” and various forms of violence from a political and business class seeking to neutralize the politically fervent aspects of popular culture. This has been widely documented throughout the history of cinema and popular media more generally. Paul Dave notes that as early as 1909, the “effective but covert political expedients” of the UK government’s Cinematograph Act, legislation which considered audience safety in acknowledging the fire hazards presented by early cellulose nitrate film stock, also served to “smother the emergence of a proletarian counter-public sphere constituted by the so-called ‘penny gaffs’ in areas such as East London with their high immigrant communities ... Such moments help to remind us that policy combines precisely formulated forms of intervention ... [with] currents of political and ideological pressure.”<sup>12</sup> Towards a similar end, the contemporary re-orientation of the arts and humanities discussed above, aims to put cultural producers in the service of industry, power, and profit. However, history never repeats itself verbatim. Thus each historical moment, including our current one, has its own specificities.

Crucially, according to Miller, what distinguishes the creative industries discourse from other forms of industrial deliberation is the claim that this sector of the economy is not characterized by what it produces, but simply by the “creativity” that goes into producing things, a “bizarre shift in adjectival meaning [that] makes it possible for anything that makes money to be creative,”<sup>13</sup> thus broadening the scope of the creative industries to include IT, precarious and/or unwaged internships, and ancillary or service positions that have nothing to do with creative endeavor. David Hesmondhalgh et al. have documented how creative industries policy under New Labour was predominantly business oriented, comprising a focus on the UK film industry, copyright, and the “creative economy.” The original mapping of the creative



industries controversially included IT and computer software. This seems to have had two functions: firstly, it magnified the contribution made by the creative industries to GDP. Secondly, and consequently, this created the possibility of increased government funding for the creative industries, which could then theoretically be distributed to arts and culture. Academic predilections that a sustainable “knowledge economy” can be built on the creative industries are partly attributable to questionable categorizations such as this, as well as a lack of “any meaningful engagement with questions of social justice.”<sup>14</sup> Although much of New Labour’s broader cultural policy rhetoric included a nod to access, education, and excellence, the creative industries concept is a more ambiguous area, that was “shaped partly by the actions and interests of a policy group built around the interests of copyright – holding cultural institutions, specifically those with strong ties to the international and corporate level of the industry.”<sup>15</sup>

A key element of the critique of this tendency derives from Marx’s assertion in the *Grundrisse* that the mode of production determines the mode of consumption, thus establishing the relation between input and output/encoding and decoding that is crucial to understanding how culture reproduces itself.<sup>16</sup> This relation is one of the driving forces of history, and has the capacity to move it forward to the tune of dominant interests. If cultural production takes place primarily with a view to economic gain, then consumption is instrumentalized accordingly. “Commodities” such as art and education are excavated of all use-value, except that by which a subject may increase their individual financial wealth and social standing, thereby removing the political consciousness they have been known to inspire. In semiotic terms, this process is characterized by a displacement of the relation between signifier and signified, facilitating a degree of confusion about the meaning of words, as well as the creation of completely new ones, a useful method when drafting political statements and manifestos attempting to garner popular support while minimizing the requirement to make any real social democratic commitments. While not being mutually exclusive, employability replaces attaining excellence within a field of work or discipline of study, human relationships become instrumentalized “social capital,” while the artist must become a social entrepreneur. While union membership has decreased massively over the past few decades, “lifestyle activism” has become another option on offer to the rational consumer.<sup>17</sup> But leaving the choice to unorganized individuals without the platform of discussion and action that the union typically serves, means that changes to society are slow, if ever, in coming, that is, unless a government in power protects the interests of those without power. The combined effects of marketization, commercialization, and privatization are significant enough to be identified as an overall process of colonization, not of one country by another, but of all aspects of life by capital – its policy-makers within the public and private sectors, public relations and media industries, property developers, financiers, and bankers, who continue to facilitate an obscene transfer of public wealth into private hands under the auspices of austerity.

In this context, the Liverpool Small Cinema offers a model of de-financialized growth and post de-industrialization regeneration. Its practices aim to sustain the internal goods of both city building and cinema. One way of alleviating the detrimental social effects of neoliberalism (presuming, of course, that this is desirable), would be to not only abandon austerity policies, but to improve cultural policy at all levels by finding a way of accommodating non-profit organizations on a permanent basis, with the explicit understanding of their distinction from market criteria and subsequent capacity to facilitate physical and cultural access to the city, thus reducing social isolation and improving the health and well-being of residents. This function cannot be wholly given over to the market, since in this sphere the primary purpose of artistic space seems to be laying the basis for private housing developments by “upping the profile” of an area, thus exacerbating issues around gentrification.

Indeed, a recent report by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation finds that no progress has been made on social cohesion in the EU/Eurozone since 2010, citing a rise in national income inequality, with the UK as one of the front-runners.<sup>18</sup> The report concludes that “growth must be revived and lower socioeconomic strata must have a larger share of rising incomes,” partly through “more efficient taxation of high incomes and profits and capital gains [which] would help to better fund crumbling social protection.”<sup>19</sup> At the same time, a study by the Macroeconomic Policy Institute stresses the urgent necessity for strengthening fiscal policy within the EU/Eurozone through public investment and the introduction of the traditional public finance golden rule into the EU/Eurozone fiscal framework, which allows for debt-financed public investment to the benefit of inter-generational equality. One of the study’s conclusions is that public investment in non-profit organizations should be counted within the golden investment rule.<sup>20</sup> Taken together, the reports show a strong link between “austerity” measures as a macroeconomic policy instrument and the fragmentation of Europe on national and geo-political levels. Thus, public investment is required in order to halt this worrying trend.

## Neoliberal Colonization in Liverpool

In cities the world over, “regeneration” has merely been the flipside to de-industrialization, both of which are processes that arise from David Harvey’s theory of uneven geographical development, which concludes that capital needs to move from one region of the world to another in order to maintain and reproduce itself, engendering and exacerbating a global patchwork of localities that can be flourishing in one instance and rapidly deteriorating in the next.<sup>21</sup> A process of cumulative causation, whereby regions with conditions favorable to capital attract investment (because, for example, of their lower wage rates, stricter union laws, and/or government subsidies for large multinational businesses), eventually facilitates capital’s flight from the area

when local costs rise (as a result, for example, of wage demands from a newly organized labor force, rising taxes, increased tariffs and/or penalties on pollution, all of which serve to make the area “uncompetitive”). The response is usually outsourcing of production to “business friendly” areas more sympathetic to capital’s needs (and crying out for investment), engendering a cyclical process of construction/destruction that allows for the dispensation of surplus capital while tapping the vast, desperate resource of unemployed or underpaid labor coming, predominantly, out of China and India, which simultaneously applies downward pressure on wages in Europe. Crucially, uneven geographical development has cities competing with each other for influxes of capital investment in order to cauterize the wounds left by capital in the first place, an example being the annual race between cities to secure the title of European Capital of Culture or the regular competition between nations to host the Olympics and World Cup.

The regeneration of Liverpool in recent years has been a longstanding source of concern for many of the city’s residents, and has been a calamitous process to say the least. Having been designated European Capital of Culture in 2008, the subsequent boost to Liverpool’s economy has undoubtedly helped business within the city center but done little in terms of regenerating areas outside of it, as a recent *Guardian* report shows.<sup>22</sup> Regeneration of the city center has been carried out under the auspices of the City Centre Business Improvement District (BID). Although the first legislation enabling BIDs was enacted under a Labour government in 2003, the regeneration of Liverpool was carried out under the Liberal Democrats, who held a majority in the council from 1998 to 2010. This has seen the opening of projects such as Liverpool ONE, the largest privately developed and managed retail center in Britain, after the council granted a 250-year lease on the land to Grosvenor Group, a property development company owned by the Duke of Westminster. In doing so, the council relinquished control of the huge 170,000m<sup>2</sup> on which Liverpool ONE is built. Street lighting, refuse collection and, perhaps more alarmingly, a team of security officers are now all under corporate control. In May 2014, the mayor, Joe Anderson (Labour), unveiled yet another regeneration plan with a budget of £1.5 billion for the Kings Dock and Lime Street area, which are both at the city center. While more money continues to pour into the city center, its outskirts remain neglected. Liverpool ranks the highest in the country for the number of neighborhoods in the very bottom 1 percent of deprived areas.<sup>23</sup>

The inequality in the distribution of public funds between the redevelopment of the city center and its surrounding neighborhoods is compounded by measures that make city centers inaccessible to those with lower or no incomes. A recent Public Spaces Protection Order put forward by Liverpool City Council (currently under a Labour majority), for example, proposed restricting public access to the city center by introducing a £1,000 fine for those caught begging (a measure that has since been shelved). Far from registering the potential dangers of social and economic stratification that

inhere in a model of city building whose capacity to solve issues around public space is limited to wholesale privatization, it seems that UK cultural policy is increasingly geared towards following suit. From parliament to universities to local councils, contemporary institutions that are in a position to enact policies that balance the public interest with the interests of capital are pressured to favor the latter, abandoning any emphasis on personal and community development, participation, egalitarianism, and the democratization of urban space that began in the post-WWII era with the emergence of the welfare state, in favor of using cities as a platform for unfettered, environmentally oblivious economic growth. Increasingly hostile urban environments play a significant role in shaping our social-moral compass.<sup>24</sup> As neoliberal ethics are etched onto the landscape of the city and its institutions through a vast array of policies and legislation that touch all aspects of life,<sup>25</sup> so they become normalized within consciousness, insofar as our environment acts as a template of personality socialization.<sup>26</sup>

## Conclusion

Despite the changes to the cultural and political landscape discussed in this paper, the Liverpool Small Cinema project continues to hone practices that are resistant to neoliberal colonization. Insofar as the cinema is able to pursue public goods such as social health and well-being, community participation through collective management, education, and alternative or experimental screening events, it is able to do so because it is not subject to the requirement to make a profit. Although the question of making the Small Cinema accessible to those living outside the city center is tied to broader issues around the public's right to the city,<sup>27</sup> it is possible for projects such as the Liverpool Small Cinema to increase public access through its structural organization, as well as specific measures such as low-cost or free screenings. The cinema also collaborates with non-profit organizations such as FoodCycle Liverpool, which provides free meals to vulnerable people, and GYRO, a gay young person's advisory service, to screen films that are culturally accessible to marginalized audiences. Herein lies the recognition that the ability to get to the cinema is necessary but not sufficient when it comes to extending the right to the city. Cultural access beyond thinking solely in terms of profit is also important for regeneration. This concern is reflected in the cinema's diversity of programming, which again comes from its openness to suggestions from volunteers and the public. Thus the cinema acts as a public space that contends the typical profit-driven models of a city whose main regeneration strategy relies largely on privatization and commercialization.

Nevertheless, cultural projects should not hesitate to make full use of spaces while they are available, since space will continuously open and close because of the way/s in which capital moves. While the transformation from public to commercial or private space is very real, the machinations of uneven

geographical development may yield the possibility for the re-opening of space where buildings become vacant or disused. Where universities are concerned, it may be possible to work with projects such as the Liverpool Small Cinema in the traditional sense of partnership organizations, which would facilitate various opportunities for research among staff and students, as well as providing students with the opportunity to develop their own, independent practices. The lack of state funding should not discourage individuals in universities from initiating partnerships like these and encouraging governments to fund such projects. As world-leading institutions, universities should lead the way in facilitating progressive change in government policy towards the creative industries that is based on dispelling the arrogant blindness of austerity policies and allowing public investment in line with the recommendations of the Macroeconomic Policy Institute. However, this can only be done through a broader collective engagement with politics on the part of people inside and outside of academia.

Since its opening just over one year ago, the Small Cinema has provided a space that exists as far outside of the neoliberal paradigm as possible within the neoliberal city. What the project, and many others like it, continues to show is that mutual cooperation and solidarity are just as capable as the market in the reproduction of space. The Cube Microplex in Bristol, for example, has been running on a similar ethos for almost twenty years, and recently managed to raise the £185,000 required to stay open, in large part through donations. The Deptford Cinema in Lewisham, London (established in 2014), is another community-led, non-profit organization that is open to members of the public at an organizational level, meaning that anyone can organize a film screening. The Star and Shadow Cinema in Newcastle (with a history going back to the 1970s) is a member-based co-operative that again provides a space for film screenings and discussions, the type of which don't take place in the corporate multiplexes. All of these are part of the social constellation required to sustain alternative film cultures and counter the detrimental effects of neoliberal modernity. As well as these, the idea of collectively organized, non-profit screenings is increasingly popularized by film festivals, mobile cinemas, and cineastes of various guises looking for creative ways around austerity and its stifling effects on culture and public space. In this sense, the Small Cinema becomes a hub of cross-organization projects and partnerships while attracting the active participation of audiences whose previous relation with cinema may have been solely that of a static spectator. This level of interaction renews cinema's capacity to foster education, understanding, and action, forging the basis for a way of thinking about the city and our lived environment, in which, as Marshal Berman says, "man will not exist for the sake of development, but development for the sake of man."<sup>28</sup> Of course, the possibility of marketization, and thereby neutralization of the true potential of the space, is an ever-present danger.

## Notes

- 1 Ken Worpole, *Towns for People: Transforming Urban Life* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), 16.
- 2 See Fernando Solanas, and Octavio Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema." Documentary is Never Neutral, accessed July 24, 2017, <http://documentary.isneverneutral.com/words/camasgun.html>; Sylvia Harvey, *May '68 Film Culture* (London: BFI, 1978); Margaret Dickinson, *Rogue Reels: Oppositional Film in Britain 1945–1990* (London: BFI, 1999); Kodwo Eshun, and Ros Gray, "The Militant Image: A Cine-Geography," *Third Text*, 25, no. 1 (2011): 1–12; Steve Presence, "The Political Avant-Garde: Oppositional Documentary in the UK since 1990" (PhD thesis, University of West England, 2013), accessed July 24, 2017, <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/20924/>; Anthony Killick, "Building a Small Cinema in Liverpool," *Sight and Sound*, August 4, 2015, <http://www.bfi.org.uk/explore-film-tv/sight-sound-magazine/video/building-small-cinema-liverpool>
- 3 Andrew McGettigan, *The Great University Gamble: Money, Markets and the Future of Higher Education* (London: Pluto Press, 2013), 1.
- 4 For arguments in support of the creative industries, see for example, Terry Flew and Stuart Cunningham, "Creative Industries After the First Decade of the Debate," *The Information Society* 26, no. 2 (2010): 1–11. For a critical view on the creative industries, see, for example: Toby Miller, "From Creative to Cultural Industries," *Cultural Studies* 23, no. 1(2009): 88–99; David Hesmondhalgh, Kate Oakley, Melissa Nisbett, and David Lee, *Culture, Economy and Politics: The Case of New Labour* (London: Palgrave, 2015).
- 5 Miller, "From Creative to Cultural Industries," 93.
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- 9 Creative Industries Council, *Create UK: Creative Industries Strategy*, Creative Industries Council: 2014, [http://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/media/243587/cic\\_report\\_final-hi-res-.pdf](http://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/media/243587/cic_report_final-hi-res-.pdf).
- 10 Miller, "From Creative to Cultural Industries," 93, 95, 96.
- 11 Will Denayer, "New IMK Paper on the Need for Public Investment and Reform of the EU Fiscal Framework," *Flassbeck Economics*, July 14, 2016, accessed July 25, 2017, <http://www.flassbeck-economics.com/new-imk-paper-on-the-need-for-public-investment-and-reform-of-the-eu-fiscal-framework/>.

- 12 Paul Dave, “Film Policy in England: The Politics of Creativity,” in *The Routledge Companion to Film and Politics*, ed. Yannis Tzioumakis and Claire Molloy (London: Routledge, 2016), 186.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 95.
- 14 Hesmondhalgh et al., *Culture, Economy and Politics*, 185.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 103.
- 16 Stuart Hall, “Encoding and Decoding in Television in Television Discourse,” paper, University of Leicester, September 1973, accessed July 25, 2017, <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-artslaw/history/cccs/stencilled-occasional-papers/1to8and11to24and38to48/SOP07.pdf>.
- 17 A June 2015 statistical bulletin by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills reports that union membership in the UK has decreased by about half, from over 13 million in 1979, to 6.4 million in 2014. One of the effects of neoliberalism over those decades is that it has eroded the boundaries between social interests and the interests of capital. The rise of fair trade commodities, for example, while undoubtedly doing some good in the world, has also served to channel people’s desire to exert political will into a form of moral consumerism that is more amenable to government and business interests.
- 18 The report finds that between 2013 and 2014, EU incomes on average increased more quickly the higher they already were. While the incomes of the poorest quintile increased by 0.2 percent, the incomes of the richest went up by 3.5 percent.
- 19 Will Denayer, “Friedrich-Ebert Foundation Study Says that No Progress on Social Cohesion Has Been Made in Europe Since 2010,” *Flassbeck Economics*, July 20, 2016, accessed July 25, 2017, <http://www.flassbeck-economics.com/friedrich-ebert-foundation-study-says-that-no-progress-on-social-cohesion-has-been-in-europe-since-2010/>.
- 20 Denayer, ““New IMK Paper on the Need for Public Investment and Reform of the EU Fiscal Framework,” *Flassbeck Economics*, July 14, 2106, <http://www.flassbeck-economics.com/new-imk-paper-on-the-need-for-public-investment-and-reform-of-the-eu-fiscal-framework/>.
- 21 David Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital and the Crisis of Capitalism* (London: Profile Books, 2011), 142.
- 22 John Domokos and John Harris, “A Tale of Two Kensingtons: London and Liverpool and the Election’s Inequality Gap,” video, 10:03, *Guardian*, April 9, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/video/2015/apr/09/kensington-london-liverpool-election-inequality-video>.
- 23 Tom Belger and Claire Miller, “Deprivation on Merseyside: Liverpool No Longer the Most Deprived Part of England,” *Liverpool Echo*, October 4, 2015, accessed July 25, 2017. <http://www.liverpooecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/deprivation-merseyside-liverpool-no-longer-10182118>.
- 24 Perhaps the most galling example of this is the appearance in city centers of what is called “defensive architecture,” which consists primarily of “homeless spikes” on flat surfaces, tubular bus stop seats, and a diverse range of barriers, bollards, and “anti-bum” apparatus that are placed to impede mobility in a given area. Increasingly then, city centers are becoming hostile to the very idea of civic interaction, while the open hostility towards rough sleepers is now commonplace.

- 25 Examples of these policies and legislation include, but are not limited to the creation of BIDs (2003), the recent, countrywide multiplication of Public Space Protection Orders, the trebling of university tuition fees, the Welfare Reform and Work Act (2016), the Trade Union Act (2016), the recent attempt to turn every school in the country into an academy, and a continuous array of cuts to funding for arts, education, and public services.
- 26 Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) came into effect in 2014 under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act. They are a geographically defined version of the controversial Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) introduced under New Labour. They can be targeted at specific groups of people and criminalize activities that are not illegal. A Manifesto Club Freedom of Information survey published in February 2016 showed that 130 PSPOs had been issued by 79 local authorities, which included 9 bans on swearing, 3 bans on rough sleeping, and 12 bans on loitering or standing in groups.
- 27 The right to the city opens up the question of precisely who has a right to change, live in, and move around in the city, and for what purposes. From the perspective of this paper, it involves acknowledging the degree to which environments shape human consciousness, and exerting a collective power over the processes of urbanization.
- 28 Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso 1993), 86.

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