

Title: The City as a Laboratory of Shadows: Exposing Secret Histories While Thinking of the Future

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Abstract:

This paper lays out a particular way of ‘seeing’ or looking at cities – one that allows us to see beneath the physical surface of buildings and infrastructure and which thus opens the door to considering the ‘shadows’ of a city as a source of inspiration. In these shadows, it suggests, we can see the city as a ‘laboratory of ideas.’ Specifically, the paper examines the city of Liverpool but its themes are applicable worldwide. It aims to expose Liverpool’s ‘poetic’ qualities and suggests that those best placed to understand it, and guide its development, may not be architects or planners, but rather those that inhabit it most intensely – its people. As a result, the paper becomes a tale about time and movement and the everyday (and night) life of a port city with a history stretching back over centuries.

Despite this history, the city has over the past two decades received a whole range of development grants that have and are, right now, changing the physical nature of its urban environment radically. In the context of these physical, externally funded changes to the city’s make-up that mirror conditions found in cities across the world, it is perhaps more important than ever to redirect our thoughts to what lies beneath the surface – to the city’s social, economic and cultural heart. The thinking and experience that underlies this suggestion began in the 1960s when architecture was taught alongside sociology. Imagine a radical School of Art & Design with a sociologist on the staff, in which Richard Hoggart’s *The Uses and Misuses of Literacy* was on the agenda, and the writings of the Marxist social theorist Raymond Williams were essential reading – *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, in particular. This author comes out of this tradition, and it is in this tradition that this paper sees the future of cities to be a future without architects or, at least, a future in which architects do not dictate to the people for whom they design. It is an argument applicable across the globe.

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“Building Under Construction”, Liverpool. Photograph by Ben Kid

Cities are in reality great camps of the living and the dead where many elements remain like signals, symbols and cautions. When the holiday is over what remains of the architecture is scarred and the sand consumes the street again. There is nothing left but to resume, with a certain definition the reconstruction of elements and instruments in expectation of another holiday.
Aldo Rossi.¹

This paper lays out a particular way of ‘seeing’ or looking at cities – one that allows us to see beneath the physical surface of buildings and infrastructure and which thus opens the door to considering the ‘shadows’ of a city as a source of inspiration. In these shadows, it suggests, we can see the city as a ‘laboratory of ideas.’ Specifically, the paper examines the city of Liverpool. It aims to expose Liverpool’s ‘poetic’ qualities and suggests that those best placed to understand it, and guide its development, may not

be architects or planners, but rather those that inhabit it most intensely – its people. As a result, the paper becomes a tale about time and movement and the everyday (and night) life of a port city with a history stretching back over centuries.

Although the focus is on Liverpool, the paper might as well be about any of the great port cities of the world. Liverpool is at once a maritime city, a tourist image, and a world heritage site. As described by Higginson and Wailey, it is a cosmopolitan, ‘edgy city.’² It is located on the social and political edge of its country and is a city whose inhabitants are seen as ‘edgy.’³ Think of the similarity between Naples, New York, New Orleans, Kingston and Marseilles. Liverpool has been compared to all these places, as it has, photographically, with a number of other ‘Edgy Cities’: Istanbul, Marseilles, Gdansk, Bremen and Naples. See the photography collected by John Davies in *Cities on the Edge* by way of example.⁴

Like many port cities, Liverpool is a universal city in flux and, perhaps more uniquely, it has an international readership and is appreciated. It is known the world over. Mention Liverpool in conversation and not many people on the planet have not heard of The Beatles, John Lennon or its passion for Football. Its people sing ‘you’ll never walk alone.’ In examining the city of Liverpool from the perspective of its ‘shadows’ the paper presents a personal perspective of a city the author has lived in for six decades. It is however, like any city, still a work in progress. In particular Liverpool has over the past two decades received a whole range of development grants that have and are, right now, changing the physical nature of its urban environment radically.⁵

In the context of these physical, externally funded changes to the city’s make-up that mirror conditions found in cities across the world, it is perhaps more important than ever to redirect our thoughts to what lies beneath the surface – to the city’s social, economic and cultural heart. The thinking and experience that underlies this suggestion began in the 1960s when architecture was taught alongside sociology. Imagine a radical School of Art & Design with a sociologist on the staff, in which Richard Hoggart’s *The Uses and Misuses of Literacy*⁶ was on the agenda, and the writings of the Marxist social theorist Raymond Williams were essential reading – *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, in particular.⁷ This author comes out of this tradition, and it is in this tradition that this paper sees the future of cities to be a future without architects or, at least, a future in which architects do not dictate to the people for whom they design.

PART ONE – SEEING THE CITY

The City as we Know It

Throughout history cities have always been the sites of experiments in urban living. One of the first great ‘urban laboratories’ was Babylon, a walled quadrant divided by the River Euphrates and now comprising a collage of archaeological layers. The ‘Free Greek Cities’ were the birthplace of experiments in democracy and, in this context, the city was a physical expression of the society which it contained. The

independence of the city state and its controlled development were vital preconditions for the maintenance of its ethical values. The Greek City State was an architectural collage of overlaying forms and spaces crossed by the Agora. Here, philosophers, poets, artists and market stall holders all met and conversed. If we consider Athens in the context of Liverpool, it resonates on various levels – both are seaports and sites for active, participatory and, at times, conflictive, democracy.⁸

By contrast to Athens, Hadrian's Villa, near Tivoli, represents the microcosm of the Roman City. It was a 'Storehouse of Knowledge' that included a Greek theatre, Latin library, Greek library, a 'Courtyard of Libraries,' public baths, wonderful gardens and a Wonderkammer of museums. In the Renaissance, Florence, the urban state, was the site of the greatest artistic experimentation of the time. The artists of Florence suggested a whole new cultural system which was to transform artistic theory and practice throughout the world for four centuries.⁹ The artists of Liverpool see themselves in similar, if less celebrated, terms – as contributing to the city and, by extension, the culture of the globe.

Venice is an exceptional city even today, and so it was during the Renaissance and the Middle Ages, thanks to its extraordinary geographical position and its unique historical development. It became the site for the dreams of Italo Calvino and Marco Polo.¹⁰ Venice is an urbanised lagoon. Situated at the point where several natural waterways converge and flow into the open sea, passing through openings in the thin strips of land known as Lidos, its physical presence and historical legacy are as salient as each other.

Many of these characteristics resonate in other places today. If we think poetically of Liverpool, one of Venice's waterways, the Grand Canal which passes through the whole city, can be thought of as a wide exaggerated River Mersey. However, Venice resonates in the context of Liverpool not just because of geographical reasons. The late Liverpool historian and author of *Seaport*, Quentin Hughes, for example, has argued for the decay of the Liverpool docks along the lines of Venice.¹¹ This, he has suggested would have been preferable to its gentrification by the heritage industry. Seen in this light, Liverpool, like all other cities, exists in its own context, but also in the history of other peoples and other cities the world over.

The City of Tomorrow...and its Shadows

In building the future of Liverpool, perhaps these similarities can be emphasised. Currently in Liverpool there are plans for an Independent Triangle of Artists spaces and studios. It will develop its own defined inhabited 'wall' reminiscent of the cliffs and walls that defined the edge of the City State in Athens. This wall will not be a barrier, like the Berlin Wall, but a creative opposite in which facing edges come together. Thinking about a city's future involves an understanding and appreciation of its past and the past of all cities that allows these associations. It is a message of particular importance today.

We are now (re)entering a Renaissance of the 21st Century City. We call the new cities, *Morphocity*, *Ecstacity*, *Metropoli*, *Cities of Culture*, *Edgy Cities*, *Global Cities*, *Shrinking Cities*, *Slow Cities*, *Biennial Cities*, *DIY Cities* and *The Mediated Future City*. To appreciate these new cities we need to open up to new perspectives on what they actually are. In the context of city development, the theorist and commentator, Declan McGonagle, argues that: "In order to have full sight, it is absolutely essential also to consider and explore the shadows, the area of doubt, uncertainty and transgression."¹²

Along similar lines, Lewis Biggs suggests the need to seek out the “awkward evidence” in the city. In an ‘edgy’ city like Liverpool these ‘areas’ and this ‘evidence’ is legion. Biggs says of Liverpool:

[it] is the manifestation of the return of the repressed, preventing ‘them’ from rewriting the past and so controlling the present. For many artists the notion of truth telling is a sacred duty. They see themselves as a social conscience, or at any rate an inconvenient skinny-fingered seer, laying a hand on the sleeve of society. Liverpool is a gift of metaphors, an open book of awkward evidence.¹³

The idea of examining the city as site of shadows and awkward evidence was central to the Liverpool Biennial Conference on *Place* held in 2004.¹⁴ It was suggested at that event that the forthcoming theme of the Biennial Conference in 2006, should be *The City as Laboratory*.¹⁵ The subject was a logical development of earlier cultural expositions in the city: *The Art and Culture of the Modern Metropolis* exhibition at the Tate Gallery in 2001 and *Cities on the Move: Architecture, Culture and Global Cities*.

At the same *Place* Conference in 2004, Yu Yeon Kim, the New York Curator from Plexus Art and Communication, suggested the need for engaging with *absent presences*; the making of inter-cultural connections; and the re-reading of local cultures.¹⁶ To engage with these aspects of the city is to expose urban taboos and myths concerned with the forbidden, prohibited, holy, unclean, restrained, and excluded. The *absent presences* comprise these unspoken cultural subjects and to seek them out requires an intimate anthropological engagement with the city. To be an anthropological architect is a radical proposition. In the case of this author, it started with an engagement with the *Taureg* Nomads of the Southern Sahara.¹⁷ It continues today with the reading of works such as ‘*A Walk with a White Bushman*’ by Laurens Van Der Post.¹⁸

Seeing the City with Different Eyes

To engage with the city on the terms of an anthropological architect then, involves what Thomas Luckman calls ‘seeing the city with different eyes.’¹⁹ It is only then that we can see the ‘city of shadows’ and appreciate it anew. We all see things differently. Some of us are short sighted, blind, one eyed or colour blind.

The way our eyes view the world has a massive impact on how we engage with it - what we see reflects a complex personal perspective that represents a highly creative or restricted image. Some of us see through the *eyes of the skin*.²⁰ When considering the possibility of the development of the Independent Triangle of Artists’ spaces and studios in Liverpool, for example, one person might only see an industrial wasteland of empty sheds, while another might see the utopian site of an artist’s quarter.

In any cultural representation of the city that penetrates to the spirit of things through appearances and the skin, there will be some distortion. To see beyond the surface involves some partiality; some selectivity; an emphasis; some distancing mechanism. It is this distortion that brings the city to light. This involves learning to look at the city with different eyes, but also learning to look at one’s whole urban environment in a way that destroys the familiar. It may be activated by painful experience but it is essential if the scales are to fall from our eyes.

We all need our creative imagination to explore the ‘city as a laboratory’ and as a ‘site of shadows.’ Imagination means having the ability to liberate oneself from the given situation and to re-associate oneself with it at the same time. The anthropological architect must do this as a matter of course.

Collective Memory of the City²¹

“Liverpool is the Pool of Life.” Carl Jung 1927.²²

“Liverpool is the Centre of the Conscious Centre of the Universe.” A.Ginsberg 1968.²³

“Liverpool, City of the Future, City of the Past. Scouse in cyberspace: the information highway stretches from the Anglican Cathedral and into the Twenty-First Century.”
Adrian Henri, 1996.²⁴

It is significant that Jung, Ginsberg and Henri should all recognise the spiritual importance of Liverpool – a city in which the strong collective memory of its people is, inevitably, associated with specific objects and places. In Liverpool, this takes many forms, one of the most obvious of which are through its memorial-objects to war. As the historian, John Davies, has said:

War memorials are interesting pieces of sculptured city architecture which reinforce our collective consciousness and public acceptance of war. Permanent symbols are reminders that we have belonged to an active warring nation for some time. ... Liverpool has more war memorials to battles or war heroes, per square mile, than any city I know.²⁵

In the case of Liverpool, these memorials contribute to making the city itself the ‘urbis locus’ of collective memory.²⁶ This however, is not static. As the city’s architecture, its urban landscape and its artefacts have become part of its memory, new ones have also emerged and overlaid them. Although true of all cities this has been accelerated in recent years in Liverpool due to private development, government funded projects and events such as the European Capital of Culture celebrations of 2008. Today, in a positive sense, new ideas flow through the history of the city and mix with its past. One example is the use of the Victoria Monument, a Victorian sculpture dating back to the early 19th century, which was used as the site for an art installation by the Japanese artist Tatsuou Bashi in 2002.²⁷ Projects such as these give shape to future public art and new emerging memories and artefacts.

The value of history, seen as collective memory that has a relationship to place, is that it helps us to grasp the significance of a given urban structure. This helps us understand a city’s individuality. This individuality is ultimately connected to original artefacts and their stories and thus connected with architecture. Collective memory then, in the sense of a Situationist concept, is linked to “an event and a form.”²⁸ This explains why, in antiquity, the foundation of a city became part of the city’s mythology.

For example, ancient writers have credited the Etruscans with experimenting with procedures for founding a city which the Romans subsequently adopted. These involved; firstly, *inauguratio* (consulting the Gods before beginning work); secondly the *limitatio* (tracing the external perimeter and internal limits of the City); and thirdly, the *consacratio* (celebrating the newly found city with sacrifices).²⁹ If we want to establish a new Independent Artist’s Triangle of the city of Liverpool, then we need first; *to consult with the Gods of the city*, then we can *trace the external and internal perimeter of the Triangle* and, finally, we can celebrate the newly found city with *appropriate urban sacrifices*. The same is true anywhere else in the world. We must look beneath the surface and see the past before building on the land of the future.

Soft City

“This could be Rotterdam or anywhere Liverpool or Rome, ‘cause Rotterdam is anywhere, anywhere alone...”³⁰

In contrast to the sometime homogenous identity of ‘hard cities’ as described by these song lyrics from The Beautiful South, the ‘soft city’ is where you live. It is your city, your language and the music you have always known - and from which you being you, and me being me, are inseparable. You are attached to the soft city by an organic cord. The soft city is plastic but shapes us by resistance when we try to impose our own personal form onto it. It requires and permits creative adaptation. Jonathan Raban describes it thus:

It seems to me that living in cities is an art, and we need the vocabulary of art, of style, to describe the peculiar relationship between the human and the material that exists in the continual creative play of urban living.³¹

For Raban, the soft city is a city of *illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare* and is as real, maybe more real, than the hard city that one can locate on maps, explain through statistics, or read about in monographs – even ones on urban sociology and demography. It is an intangible city; a city of shadows in flux; a city of our individual and collective pasts remaking our future; a city of objects and thoughts, ideas, emotions and actions. The Soft City is a City of Situations and events and psychogeographical feelings.

Situationist City

The future cities we envisage will offer an original variety of sensations in this domain, and unforeseen games will become possible through the inventive use of material conditions, like the conditioning of air, sound and light. Harmonising cacophony...space voyages reduction of work necessary for production...maximum of social space...ground free for circulation of traffic...accessible terraces...infinite variety of ambience, facilitating the derive of the inhabitants and their frequent chance encounters.³²

The Situationist City offers us the nearest model we have to the City as a Laboratory of Shadows. For many cultural workers of the 1960’s the Situationists are old friends - they provided the text which inspired a generation. They gave us the *Revolution in Everyday life*. The future Situationist City was characterised as an architectural presence in flux, temporal freedom and human movement. The Situationists use of the city was liberated by the image of the urban nomad wandering in deconstructed settings.

For Situationists and Psychogeographers the city’s most appealing features, its industrial wastelands whose unconscious anachronisms give places their unreconstructed local distinctiveness, are the ‘victims’ of regeneration and the heritage industry today. However, walking through a city like Liverpool in a kind of navigation, drift or *derive*, still reveals the various unforeseeable accidents that break through the surface. No less than the River Mersey, the city’s urban fabric and its experiences contain constant currents and fixed points and eddies which render approach and exit of certain zones difficult, awkward and strange. The *derive* constitutes the psychogeographical relief of a city and in Liverpool, as elsewhere, it still reveals unpredictability.

The most important ‘Situationist’ architect of the 20th century is, probably, Rem Koolhaas. Koolhaas sees

the City as a free floating object adrift in a sea of plankton. His early readings of the Berlin Wall showed how it radically cut across the borderlands of communism and capitalism.³³ It showed how uncontrollable the city and its objects are, how they seem to, at times, disassociate themselves from each other and their social environments. His acceptance, or celebration, of the chaos of the city is, perhaps, an antidote to the controlling effects of the heritage industry and its focus on a controlled, totally designed hard city that ignores the soft city of memory and the imagination. Both Koolhaas and the Situationsists offer approaches that are premised on seeing the city in new ways – of getting under its skin.

PART TWO – UNDER THE SKIN OF LIVERPOOL

City of Inconvenient Truths

The collective memory of Liverpool reflects a peripheral, maverick, marginal and inter-cultural city – a free floating city in a sea of plankton. As the European Capital of Culture in 2008 the city was superficially ‘dipped’ in corporate culture. However, Liverpool already had the cultural intelligence and ‘power of place’ to exist as a city of real and mythical stories long before 2008. It already was a city of culture – its own culture. The Biennial of 2004 faced the challenge of exploring the real culture of the place beneath the surface which, four years later, would sit uncomfortably alongside ‘corporate culture.’ It attempted to emphasise a multi-layered re-reading of the city that would enable artists, curators and architects to be ‘facilitators of action’ by developing a ‘critical’ stance in relationship to the city’s cultural institutions.

The ‘field of negotiation’ for the 2004 Biennial became the anti-European, post-Colonial and local context of the city. Liverpool was seen as having, and indeed has, the potential to become a radical subject of an alternative exposition of a non-corporate city. But to really appreciate Liverpool it is necessary to ‘get down’ on to the street – to see the city through different eyes. As this author has said before in other contexts:

The space of the city accommodates a broad range of political activities-squatting, demonstrating against police brutality, neighbourhood activism, fighting for the rights of immigrants and the homeless, the politics of culture and identity, gay and lesbian and queer politics.³⁴

Much of this only becomes visible on the street. Those who cast the shadows of poverty, who lack power, those who are disadvantaged, outsiders and discriminated minorities all form part of this, and any other city. They all need to be represented through the acceptance and celebration of their cultural presence in the city. This is clearly not the case. Begging on the pavements of *Liverpool One* becomes a focus of police observation - a reason to question citizens on their passing and move them on.³⁵ However, all we need to do in order to see the subcultures of Liverpool is to take the Number 53 bus from Waterloo to the city centre passing through Litherland, Seaforth, Bootle New Strand, Stanley Road and Scotland Road. These parts of Liverpool are physically ‘shot.’ They are the city’s Arizona Road in Bosnia.³⁶ In the corporate climate of the European Capital of Culture, whether in Liverpool, Glasgow or Newcastle, these are inconvenient truths – alternative cultures.

City of the Un-Consciousness

Ethnic communities have a deep rooted history in Liverpool. The Irish, Welsh, Scottish Italian, German and Polish community's all came as immigrants to the city in the nineteenth century. The Irish migration followed the potato famine and, upon their arrival, large numbers of the Irish population suffered cholera in the Vauxhall area of the city.³⁷ Welsh builders built much of the inner city housing and chapels. The Scots, Italians, Germans and Poles spread across the expanding urban terrain of what was then one of the world's most important cities – the port being the starting point of journeys to, and trade with, the United States. The Jewish community first settled in Seel Street before moving to the Princes Road and beyond.³⁸ As elsewhere, the remnants of this history remain visible – if we look.

Reputed to be the oldest in Europe, Liverpool's Chinese community is located in one of the most historic neighbourhoods in the city. As it was close to the docks, where most cargo would have been offloaded in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was mainly frequented and inhabited by sailors from China, South East Asia, and Africa. It thus became the seaman's lodging areas until the early twentieth century. There are still many unknown cultural tales in Chinatown that have yet to be investigated, documented or understood that will reveal the multiple stories of this, and any city, that have to be uncovered if its true potential is to be explored in the future.³⁹

In the context of Liverpool, the Black Community in particular casts a long unrepresentative shadow over the city. There is an extensive, but little acknowledged, history of settlement and development stretching back over centuries. However, there are still "*white mothers of the black sons of the city ashamed to say, that Liverpool has no black consciousness today!*"⁴⁰ In particular, Liverpool has a significant Islamic and Somali community that can be traced back to the British colonial period but which witnessed, due to the widespread famine experienced in the 1980s, a more recent second phase of settlement.⁴¹

These historic layers of cultural coexistence have been supplemented in the early part of the twenty first century during which time the city has seen a new wave of Asylum Seekers from Eastern Europe; many of whom were housed, initially, in tower blocks in Everton.⁴² Take a drive along Bold Street, this author's favourite street, and all of this is visible. You don't get here the sanitised *Liverpool One* Liverpudlians! It is an environment of diversity, ethnic restaurants, vintage cloth shops and charity stores. It's the place where the multi-ethnic, alternative cultures of the city, its unconscious, become visible.

The City of an Alternative Economy

In Liverpool, massive job losses and unemployment resulted in major social problems throughout the 1980s – with the closure of the docks being the biggest contributing factor. Liverpool's history of goods distribution was decimated in the second half of the twentieth century and over one third of the city is now classified as 'derelict land' – a fact that has resulted in the ominous title of a *Shrinking City*.⁴³ Parts of the inner city landscape still today, after two decades of external regeneration funding and projects, stand comparison with shrinking and bankrupt Detroit – a real economic challenge to the notion of a European Capital of Culture.⁴⁴

One response to this was political conflict – a tradition picking up on the working class history of socialist struggle central to this city's identity.⁴⁵ However, socialist struggle has not been the only response to economic problems in this city. In a speech to Conservative Party supporters in the aftermath of rioting across the streets of Liverpool, London and other UK cities in 1981, the then Secretary for Employment of the Margaret Thatcher government, and famed right winger, Norman Tebbit, famously

told the unemployed, the docker's children, to "get on their bikes and find new jobs."⁴⁶ They did. The bravest amongst them got on planes, did deals, created new networks and employed whole new communities in a new trade – the international drugs trade.

Curtis 'Cocky' Warren took his trafficking skills from Toxteth, the focal point of the 1981 Liverpool riots, to France, South America, the Netherlands and Bulgaria. He became one of the richest individuals in the country and was on The Times Newspaper's 'Rich List' in the 1990s.⁴⁷ He was finally convicted of multiple crimes in 1999. Later, the Fitzgibbon family, ruled by the iron rod of their mother, would become another of the band of the Liverpool gangs involved in international drugs trafficking. After decades of 'successful business' they ended up in prison for 30 years.⁴⁸ Today, Liverpool Drug Barons are still being tracked down across the globe. This is an edgy city.

A Healthy and Politicised City

The direct link between high levels of unemployment, state welfare support, and health problems were highlighted during the 1980s by Professor Dr. John Ashton (President of The Royal Society of Public Health). Heralding from the city of Liverpool himself, he highlighted the connections between 'urban' heart disease, lung cancer and children's illnesses with economic conditions in modern cities. The large numbers of elderly people living in poor housing, especially in the inner city, was just one of the things his studies during this period underlined.⁴⁹

Addressing issues of contemporary concern was, however, only one part of John Ashton's work. He also focused on the history of these issues and the history of responses to them. His work indicates that responses to these issues have not always 'come from above.' For example, he indicates that there have been famous, strong, independent women associated with Liverpool for centuries - Bessie Braddock, Kitty Wilkinson and Florence Nightingale all addressed urban social problems in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁵⁰ None of them were involved in government. The working class led socialist groups of the nineteenth century also played a role in grass roots responses to health issues. The struggles of all these individuals and grass roots groups resulted in both Public Wash Houses and developments in nursing.⁵¹

In a similar vein social struggle and political activism on the ground in Liverpool resulted in developments in public housing, hospitals, schools and public libraries, to name but a few of its successes. Working alongside government institutions, there is a long and distinguished history of 'voluntary' effort in the form of housing associations, housing cooperatives and community groups that remains as active today as it did in the nineteenth century.⁵² Liverpool, then, has a history as a DIY city, both in terms of social provision and the black economy, which still flourishes today – just visit Great Homer Street Market on a Saturday.⁵³

Narrative City

Liverpool is largely a heterocentric City. Unlike San Francisco or Manchester, its closest neighbour, it hardly has a 'Gay Village' or an annual 'Gay Festival of the Street.' There are only a few isolated, so called, 'Queer Pubs' in the City centre. The oldest and most well known is *The Lisbon* which has a history at the heart of the city's gay community stretching back decades. The feminist narrative, already touched upon, is also long and continues in importance. The quality of women's public and private lives are shaped by public services and transport, more than are men's lives. Continued reports and studies

show that women still make more use of local shops, take responsibility for the supervision of children, and fear street crime more than men.⁵⁴

These same studies suggest that women have more localized networks and that loneliness and isolation are reported as problems with greater frequency than by men. In addition, they show that poverty among lone parents and the elderly is also more prevalent amongst women. Women have more contacts with the state, through schools, health services, and social services, and they are more likely to be the victims of crime and assault. These issues, and this debate, are not hidden in Liverpool – visit the book shelves of *News from Nowhere* on Bold Street. The reading is radical.⁵⁵

In a modern city like Liverpool these narratives coalesce and blur any single accepted definition of the ‘culturally normal.’ After all, who is ‘normal and who is cultured?’ Physical and mental difference and disability come in many forms. Not everybody walks through public spaces, not everybody has complete sight, and many people experience the city through mania and depression. Some people experience the city through a cocktail of prescribed and unprescribed drugs. In any full understanding of a city’s culture, the stories to be told are multiple and often difficult, shadowy, edgy, soft and painful.

Concluding in a City of Shadows

In Liverpool, these cultural narratives have in recent decades mixed some painful stories. At the Heysel Stadium disaster in 1985, thirty nine Italian football supporters were killed when a wall collapsed during rioting in the stadium.⁵⁶ At the Hillsborough Stadium disaster just four years later, ninety six Liverpool FC supporters were crushed to death before a semi-final match in Sheffield.⁵⁷ The ‘Toxteth Riots’ in 1981 caused both serious damage to property and loss of life. In 1993 the young Bulger boy was murdered after being taken from his mother in Bootle New Strand by two boys aged ten.⁵⁸ More recently, the Liverpool Chinese community felt disaster when twenty nine Chinese cocklers died trying to supplement meagre incomes when they were caught by a fast incoming tide and drowned on the shores of Morecombe Bay.⁵⁹ This city, like all cities, is a complex book full of pain. Jayne Casey says of Liverpool and its people:

We were slaves to weed, slaves to love, slaves to government policy...never again... We dont need your hell - we are all capable of creating [our]own - this is the city of sorrows.⁶⁰

Following Casey, we can see Liverpool as a De Chirico painting – full of mysterious shadows, fears and desolation. However, as this paper has attempted to underline, it is also a city of creativity, activism, self help and determination. This often makes a city like this ‘edgy’ – an uncomfortable fit for authority and those promoting commercial and corporate urban developments. This was evident in the specific context of the debates around the running of the European Capital of Culture events in 2008. George McKane, director of the arts cooperative and charity, Yellow House, suggested that it was an event run by ‘art administrators’ with little, if any, input from the city’s own cultural workers or artists – something that many in the city had warned against from the outset.⁶¹ The 2004 Biennale for example had attempted to explore places of transgression, doubt and uncertainty rather than the clean and the easy ways of developing a city represented by The Capital of Culture.

In this way it presented a belief in the ‘city of shadows,’ in which we should all be participants in the urban experiment. We all exist as fragile shadows of citizens, curators, artists, musicians, poets, and

architects. Our role should be to expose the cultural truth about our cities – to get under the skin and behind the *cultural masks* to reveal their true identity. It is then, the proposition of this paper, that it is the people of a city who are best placed to understand a city and thus advice on its development – particularly in a moment of flux and externally funded development, as has been the case of Liverpool in recent years. These are the people who are the ‘eyes of the skin’; the people who can reveal the city’s underbelly and best understand the multiple narratives that reveal its poetic potential. These are the people from whom we, as architects and planners, can learn about the ‘shadows’ of a city. These are the people who make the city a ‘laboratory’ – a place where creative ideas of the future can coexist with the memories of the past.

¹ Aldo Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1981), 10.

² Steve Higginson and Tony Wailey, *Edgy Cities* (Indiana: Northern Lights, 2006), 11-71.

³ Informal synonyms of ‘edgy’ include tense, nervous, anxious, unsettled, irritable, touchy. More formal definitions include fringe, avant-garde, innovative, offbeat.

⁴ See John Davies, ed., *Cities on the Edge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); John Davies, *Cities on the Edge: Istanbul, Marseilles, Gdańsk, Bremen, Naples, Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008); and Julianne Schultz, *Cities on the Edge* (South Brisbane, Qld: Griffith University, 2008).

⁵ Liverpool was awarded the status of Capital of Culture for 2008 with the associated European development funding that involves. It has received numerous development grants from within the UK including support from the Northwest Urban Investment Fund. It also received £54 million of European Regional Development funding from the European Commission for the period 2007-2013. Further to this, numerous external private developers have invested in the city. Most visibly is Grovenor Development Company who was behind the funding for Liverpool One – one of the region’s largest retail development projects.

⁶ Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Translation Publishers, 1998).

⁷ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

⁸ For a documentation of this history, see John Belchem, *Popular Politics, Riot and Labour: Essays in Liverpool History, 1790-1940* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992).

⁹ Leonardo Benevolo, *History of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1971)

¹⁰ See: Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974).

¹¹ Quentin Hughes, *Seaport: Architecture and Townscape in Liverpool* (London: Lund Humphries Publishers Ltd, 1964).

¹² Declan McGonagall, “Better to Stammer the Truth than Lie in the Tongue of Plato,” Liverpool Biennial exhibition catalogue (2002): 14-17.

¹³ Lewis Biggs, “Ducking and Weaving,” Liverpool Biennial exhibition catalogue (2002): 29.

¹⁴ The Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art is a ten week event every two years. It is the largest international contemporary art festival in the UK. It was launched in 1999 and is funded by John Moores, the Arts Council of England, Liverpool City Council and A Foundation. See: liverpoolbiennial.co.uk. The 2004 event was entitled ‘International 04.’ The ‘Place’ conference sat within this overarching agenda. It was held in the Tate Gallery, Liverpool.

¹⁵ The final theme set for the overall Bienalle in 2006 was ‘International 06.’ It was organised collaboratively by curators at Tate Liverpool, Bluecoat, FACT, Open Eye Gallery and Liverpool Biennial, and was advised by two consultant curators, Manray Hsu and Gerardo Mosquera. See: <http://liverpoolbiennial.co.uk/programmes/festivals/overview/6/2006>. The ‘City as Laboratory’ conference took place within this overarching framework. It was held at the Tate Gallery, Liverpool.

¹⁶ Plexus Art & Communication, New York, describes itself as “an interface to a flux of ideas contained in the writings and visual works of the artists, writers, and groups it presents and collaborates with.” It is an online site that acts as a gallery and space for the dissemination on the work carried out by artists in both digital and physical settings. www.plexus.org

¹⁷ “Walking with the Tuareg” is a paper in preparation by Rob McDonald based on an unpublished BArch dissertation (1976) at The Liverpool University School of Architecture.

¹⁸ In *A Walk with a White Bushman*, Van Der Post converses with C. G. Jung who dreamed that “Liverpool was the pool of Life.” Laurens van der Post and Jean-Marc Pottiez, *A Walk with a White Bushman* (New York: W. Morrow, 1986), 48.

¹⁹ Thomas Luckmann, “With Different Eyes,” in *Phenomenology and Sociology: Selected Readings*, ed. Thomas Luckmann. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978), 25-41.

²⁰ Stephen Holl, preface to *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, by Juhani Pallasmaa, (Chichester: Wiley-Academy, 2005), 6-78.

²¹ This term is taken from the work of Aldo Rossi. See: Aldo Rossi and Peter Eisenman *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1984), 130-131.

²² C. G. Jung and Marie-Luise von Franz, *Man and his Symbols* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964).

²³ On a trip to the UK in 1965 for a mass poetry reading he had organised at The Royal Albert Hall, Allen Ginsberg visited Liverpool. On the trip he is quoted as saying “Liverpool is at this moment the centre of the conscious universe.” See: Alfred Hicklin. “It’s like San Francisco - with greyer weather,” *The Guardian*, February 20, 2007. See also: Christophe Grunenberg and Robert Knifton, *Centre of the Creative Universe: Liverpool & the Avant-garde* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press in association with Tate Liverpool, 2007).

²⁴ Adrian Henri and Phil Redmond preface to *Morphocity: Architectural Odyssey*, Jon Humphreys and Rob MacDonald, eds. (Liverpool: Nonconform, 1996).

²⁵ John Davis “‘Call of Duty’ Remembrance Sunday, Liverpool - 13 November 2011,” John Davies.

<http://www.johndavies.uk.com/callofduty.htm>

²⁶ Urbis locus; taken from “urbis clarissimus locus” meaning “most splendid place in the city.” Used in describing the houses on the Palatine Hill, Rome, in the 3-4th centuries BC. See Andrea Schmölder, “Aqueducts for the Urbis Clarissimus Locus: The Palatine’s Water Supply from Republican to Imperial Times,” *The Waters of Rome* 7 (July 2011), 1.

²⁷ The project involved encasing the external monument so that it became an interior space used as a hotel room. Guests could pay to stay in the hotel room overnight, within which was the statue of Queen Victoria – the centrepiece of the early nineteenth century monument. See <http://liverpoolbiennial.co.uk/programmes/festivals/artists/0/8/2002/192/tatsurou-bashi/>

²⁸ M. Catherine de Zegher Constant and Mark Wigley, *The Activist Drawing: Retracing Situationist Architectures from Constant’s New Babylon to Beyond* (New York: Drawing Center, 2001).

²⁹ Rem Koolhaas, “Conference Proceedings,” (paper presented at the European Association for Architectural Education International Conference, Leuven, 1992).

³⁰ Song lyrics from “Rotterdam (Or Anywhere).” Paul Heaton and Dave Rotheray. Lyrics. Rotterdam (Or Anywhere)” *Blue is the Color* (Universal Music Publishing Group Album, 1996)

³¹ Jonathan Raban, *Soft City* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1974).

³² Constant and Wigley, *The Activist Drawing*.

³³ Koolhaas, “Conference Proceedings.”

³⁴ Robert G. MacDonald, *DIY Integrated City* (Liverpool: Liverpool Architectural Society, 2010)

³⁵ Liverpool One is commercial shopping and entertainment complex opened in the city in 2008. It was a 42 acre site master planned by BDP. New elements include 148,500 sq m (1.6m sq ft) of retail space, bars, restaurants, a bus station, BBC studios and a remodelled park bordered by a hotel, 600 apartments and new multi-screen cinema. BDP was concept architect for 5 buildings and executive architect for a further 9. They describe it as “an exemplar of retail regeneration”. See: <http://www.bdp.com/Projects/By-Name/F-I/Liverpool-ONE/>

³⁶ Arizona Road is a reference to *Route Arizona*, the name NATO forces gave to the potholed road running through the demilitarized zone dividing the Serbian-held and Muslim-held sectors of Bosnia during the Balkans conflicts in the 1990s. In 1996 it became the site of a market based on a commercial regeneration effort funded by various business interests. See: Hedges, Chris. “At Last, a Unifying Force in Bosnia: Making Money”, *The New York Times*, October 17, 1996. <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/10/17/world/at-last-a-unifying-force-in-bosnia-making-money.html>

³⁷ For a sample of this history see John Belchem *Irish, Catholic and Scouse: The History of the Liverpool-Irish, 1800-1940* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press), 2007.

³⁸ This particular history has a long history. The first major publication examining it was published anonymously towards the end of the nineteenth century: [s.n.] *The history of the Liverpool Jewish community* (London, 1877).

³⁹ Artists Moira Kenny and John Campbell are documenting Liverpool Chinatown. Their project is entitled *Chinatwon, My Chinatwon*. It is available through the Liverpool John Moores University website: http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/LSA/LSA_Images/ChinatwonMy.pdf

⁴⁰ Jayne Casey in conversation with Dr. Rob McDonald, Albert Dock, Liverpool, 1990. Unpublished transcript. Jayne Casey is a Liverpool born artistic director known for her involvement in the Liverpool punk and new wave scene in the 1970s and 1980s.

⁴¹ For a history of the black community in Liverpool, see Jacqueline Nassy Brown, *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁴² For a history of this area of Liverpool, visit the Historic Liverpool website: <http://historic-liverpool.co.uk/>

⁴³ Multiple books on this theme have been published in recent years. See, for example: Philipp Oswalt, *Shrinking Cities* (Ostfildern-Ruit [Germany]: Hatje Cantz, 2005); B.J. Wattenberg, *Fewer: How the New Demography of Depopulation will Shape Our Future* (Lanham: Ivan R. Dee – Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005).

⁴⁴ For a recent documentation of the economic decline of Detroit, see Mark Binelli, *Detroit City Is the Place to Be: The Afterlife of an American Metropolis* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012). For documentation on the economic decline of Liverpool and the political backlash from its left wing politicians at the height of that decline in the 1980s see Diane Frost and Peter North, *Militant Liverpool: A City on the Edge* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).

⁴⁵ For a documentation of the political struggle between Labour Party controlled Liverpool City Council and the central Conservative government of the 1980s, see Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn, *Liverpool: A City that Dared to Fight* (London: Fortress, 1988). For details on the longer socialist traditions in Liverpool, see John Belchem *Popular Politics, Riot and Labour: Essays in Liverpool History, 1790-1940* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992).

⁴⁶ Norman Tebbit served in the Cabinet of the Margaret Thatcher governments in the 1980s in various roles: Secretary of State for Employment (1981–83), Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1983–85), Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1985–87) and Chairman of the Conservative Party (1985–87). In the aftermath of the 1981 riots across the United Kingdom he was quoted as saying: “I grew up in the ‘30s with an unemployed father. He didn’t riot. He got on his bike and looked for work, and he kept looking till he found it.” His implication that the unemployed should leave their hometowns to look for work was widely criticised and staunchly defended in the politically divisive 1980s in Britain.

⁴⁷ For a detailed history see: Tony Tony, Richard Elias, and Peter Walsh, *Cocky: The Rise and Fall of Curtis Warren, Britain’s Biggest Drug Baron* (Preston: Milo Books, 2003).

⁴⁸ Various members of the Fitzgibbon family were jailed in 2013 for numerous international drug smuggling offences. Christine Fitzgibbon (born 1953) was described by one of the UK’s most sensationalist and reactionary newspapers, *The Daily Mail*, as “Britain’s worst mother.” Its lead article upon her conviction read: “A grandmother has been unmasked as an underworld matriarch who coached her two sons into building an international crime empire - while her family was shamelessly claiming £1,500-a-month in benefits. Christine Fitzgibbon, 60, schooled sons

Jason and Ian as budding gangsters from their early teens, then lived off the proceeds of their global drug-dealing network.” See James Tozer, “Is this Britain’s worst mother?” *The Daily Mail*, July 4, 2013.

⁴⁹ See John Ashton, *Healthy Cities* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1992).

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Margaret Braddock (1899–1970) was a British Labour politician born in Liverpool. An ardent socialist and social campaigner her special interests included maternity, child welfare, and youth crime. She was nicknamed ‘Battling Bessie.’

⁵¹ In particular, Kitty Wilkinson (Catherine Wilkinson) (1786–1860) was a key figure in this history. An Irish migrant, she became known as the *Saint of the Slums*. In 1832, during one of the city’s cholera epidemics, she is credited with allowing people with infected clothes or linens in her neighbourhood to use her boiler (One of the few in the area). It is estimated that this simple act saved numerous lives. It was, in essence, the first public washhouse in the city. Ten years later, with help from public funds, it led to the opening of a combined washhouse and public baths, the first in the United Kingdom. See: Winifred R. Rathbone and Kitty Wilkinson, *The Life of Kitty Wilkinson, a Lancashire Heroine* (1910).

⁵² One example of this is the Eldonian community. Heralding from poor Irish people fleeing the Potato Famine in the middle of the nineteenth century the community was faced with the proposed demolition of its infrastructure and forced rehousing. In 1978, facing demolition of their neighbourhood and the destruction of their community, the Eldonian community resisted with help from the Catholic Church. Today the ‘Eldonian Village’ is seen as an exemplar of a sustainable community that has won major awards for regeneration over a 25 year period. In 2004 it won the prestigious World Habitat Award in 2004. See: Jack McBane, *The Rebirth of Liverpool: The Eldonian Way* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008).

⁵³ In the 1930s Great Homer Street was the dividing line between the Catholic and the Protestant areas of North Liverpool. The left hand side was known as the Protestant side. The HQ Church of the Orange Lodge run by the Rev. H.D. Longbottom (the Ian Paisley of Liverpool) was at one end. It has been the site of an informal market for approaching a century and is the heart of the city’s ‘black economy.’

⁵⁴ Information and statistics on these issues are available through the UK Government’s Equality Office:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/government-equalities-office>

⁵⁵ *News from Nowhere* (1890) by socialist pioneer, activist and designer, William Morris is now considered a classic text of utopian socialism. It is the name of Liverpool’s principle political book shop.

⁵⁶ The Heysel Stadium disaster has been the subject of books and a proposed film: Jesse Russell, *Heysel Stadium Disaster* ([S.l.]: Book On Demand Ltd., 2012); Chris Rowland, *From Where I Was Standing: A Liverpool Supporter’s View of the Heysel Stadium Tragedy* (Leicester: GPRF Pub, 2009). The proposed film is based on the book *In the Crowd*, by French author Laurent Mauvignier. The film-maker is Jean Stephane Sauvaire.

⁵⁷ The Hillsborough disaster was Britain’s worst ever sporting tragedy. In the aftermath of the event a Police ‘smear campaign’ was organised to direct responsibility wholly onto Liverpool supporters. After a twenty three campaign for justice by the families of the victims, the *Hillsborough Independent Panel* concluded in 2012 that the largest ever police ‘cover up’ in British legal history had been carried out to direct attention away from police failures on the day of the disaster. The subsequent legal proceedings are ongoing. The ‘cover up’ was the subject of a BBC Panorama documentary in 2013, *Panorama Hillsborough - How They Buried the Truth of Britain’s Worst Football Disaster*. The disaster itself has been widely document and commented upon in various texts. Examples include: Phil Scraton, *Hillsborough: The Truth* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1999); Rogan P. Taylor, Andrew Ward, and Tim Newburn, *The Day of the Hillsborough Disaster: A Narrative Account*. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995).

⁵⁸ James Patrick Bulger, a two year old boy from the Kirkby area of the city was murdered on 12 February 1993, by two ten-year-old boys, Robert Thompson and Jon Venables. The case shocked the world for the brutality of the killing. See David James Smith, *The Sleep of Reason: The James Bulger Case* (London: Faber, 2011).

⁵⁹ The Morecambe Bay cockling disaster occurred on 5th February 2004 at Morecambe Bay just beyond the limits of the city. At least 21 cockle pickers were drowned by an incoming tide when they were cut off by the incoming tide in the bay at around 9:30 pm. They were to have been paid £5 per 25 kg of cockles, (9p per lb).

⁶⁰ Jayne Casey in conversation with Dr. Rob McDonald, Albert Dock, Liverpool, 1990. Unpublished transcript.

⁶¹ The issue of lack of city based participation was brought up by George McCane at a European Capital of Culture meeting at The Original Liverpool School of Art. It was a common concern throughout the preparations. Yellow House is a registered charity based in Liverpool. Founded in 1986 by George McKane it seeks to develop the participation of young people in all aspects of the arts. See

<http://www.yellowhouse.info/>

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