



The De-industrialising City: Urban, architectural and socio-cultural perspectives

Convenors: Jörg Arnold (Nottingham), Tobias Becker (GHIL), Simon Gunn (Leicester) and Otto Saumarez Smith (Oxford)

When the Coventry-based band The Specials released their single ‘Ghost Town’ in June of 1981, they appeared to give poignant expression to a broader sense of crisis that characterised Britain’s urban environment in the early Thatcher years. The song’s invocation of urban decay, social dislocation and violence, juxtaposed to a romanticised past of ‘good old days [when] we danced and sang and the music played in a de boomtown’, struck a chord with contemporary audiences. It provided a fitting soundtrack to the urban riots that broke out in many British cities later that summer. Yet at the same time, the band’s innovative fusion of the different musical influences of Ska and Punk, their attention to branding and style, and not least of all their ethnically diverse line-up, pointed in the direction of opportunities and new departures amid the gloom that the music so hauntingly evoked. Above all, the song ‘Ghost town’ illustrated that the urban environment had become a space in which intersecting developments were taking shape that characterised the late twentieth century more generally: de-industrialisation and transformation; migration and multiculturalism; conflict and resilience; farewells and new beginnings.

The workshop takes up these multiple transformations and examines their intersections and frictions in a comparative Anglo-German perspective through the lens of the late twentieth-century city, with a particular emphasis on urban, architectural and socio-cultural developments. It emerged out of the shared interests of architectural, social and urban historians in post-war British cities, represented in workshops organized under the aegis of the Society for the Promotion of Urban Discussion (SPUD). It aims to bring together scholars from the UK and the European continent in order to explore vistas for further research on the European city as a key site of sweeping societal changes from the end of the ‘Golden Age’ of the 1970s to the present.

Monday, 12 December

12.30-13.30 Registration

13.30-13.50 Welcome and Introduction

14.00-16.00 Panel one: Concepts

De-industrialisation and Multiculturalism: a new master narrative of urban history?

Chair: TOBIAS BECKER (London)

JIM TOMLINSON (Glasgow), De-industrialization: strengths and weaknesses as a key concept for understanding post-1945 Britain

ARNDT NEUMANN and LUTZ RAPHAEL (Trier), From Fordist to Neo-liberal Urban Spaces in times of De-industrialization: A conceptual frame for a complex relationship

ELIZABETH BUETTNER (Amsterdam), Multicultural Cities: Problems or Possibilities?

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16.00-16.30 Coffee break

16.30-18.30 Panel two: Social perspectives

Community, Conflict and cohesion: the urban crisis revisited

Chair: JÖRG ARNOLD (Nottingham)

FELIX FUHG (Berlin), Teenagers Future. London's Labour Market, the Youth Employment Service and British Youth Cultures in the 1960s

CHRISTIANE REINECKE (Leipzig), Of Ghettos, Marginality and Gentrification: Global terms and local imaginaries in West Germany and France

OTTO SAUMAREZ SMITH (Oxford), The End of Urban Modernism

18.30 Reception

Tuesday, 13 December

9.30-12.00 Panel three: City-planning perspectives

Urban blight and regeneration: the case of port cities

Chair: SEBASTIAN HAUMANN (Darmstadt)

CHRISTOPH STRUPP (Hamburg), Urban economic and planning policies in an age of uncertainty: Hamburg in the 1970s and 1980s

JÖRN EIBEN (Hamburg), City of Crises? Wilhelmshaven and the 1970s

AARON ANDREWS (Leicester), 'Behind the imposing façade of the boulevards': De-industrialisation, Society, and the Built Environment in Liverpool, 1968-82

ARNDT NEUMANN (Trier), De-industrialisation and Gentrification: The inner city of Hamburg, 1956-2010

12.00-13.00 Lunch

13.00-15.00 Panel four: Cultural perspectives

'Ghost town': The late twentieth-century city in the cultural imagination

Chair: MORITZ FÖLLMER (Amsterdam)

LUCY ROBINSON (Sussex), Smiley Culture: London's hybrid voice

MALTE THIEßEN (Oldenburg), Coming to terms with Glocalization: British Town Twinning in the 20th Century

JÖRG ARNOLD (Nottingham), 'That rather sinful city of London': The coal miner, the country and the city in the British cultural imagination, ca. 1984 to 2014

15.00-15.30 Coffee break

15.30-17.30 Round-table: The late twentieth-century city in the continuum of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries

Chair: FLORENCE SUTCLIFFE-BRAITHWAITE (UCL)

MORITZ FÖLLMER (Amsterdam), SIMON GUNN (Leicester), FLORIAN URBAN (Glasgow),

NATASHA VALL (Teesside)

17.30 End of Conference