Research Article

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Dissipating the Political: Battersea Power Station and the Temporal Aesthetics of Development

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Abstract: This article analyses the idiom of "placemaking" in contemporary development, specifically considering the Battersea Power Station development in south London. It argues that the recourse to a highly aestheticised concept of place allows development to mediate the structural transformations they are enacting and create a narrative and discourse about development that deflects and dissipates political critique. In order for public-private "regeneration" to proceed as the default mode of urbanisation for contemporary London, developers need to not only create sound investments but also produce a hegemonic cultural narrative that articulates the stakes of their interventions in ways that make them not just compelling but inarguable and inevitable. Three modes of conceptualising the redeveloped city are considered: the concept of place, the aesthetic of the garden and rhetoric of sustainability, and the ethos of creativity. Together, these constitute a vision for the future technological city that seeks to render political disagreement marginal if not unthinkable.

Keywords: development; aesthetics; gentrification

In his 1890 novel, *News from Nowhere,* William Morris presented a utopian vision of socialist London from the point of view of the novel's narrator as he makes his way along the Thames. The famous waterway had been cleared of pollution and returned to a semi-natural state, full of vegetation. Among the trees, artisans worked in a peaceful and equal community. Today, Morris'' narrator would not be able to make such a journey along the Thames, which, as Guardian reporter Jack Shenker observes, bears a closer resemblance to a "high-security prison corridor than a public right of way" (Shenker). This is due to the proliferation of exclusive, glassy luxury apartments and office spaces, all a part of numerous, developer-led "regeneration" schemes that have transformed and gentrified many parts of London over the last four decades. The exclusivity of these developments, along with the lack of affordable housing in London and the more general decline of social housing in the UK, epitomise the opposite of Morris' vision of a verdant, creative city: a London symbolic, as it was in 1890, of economic inequity.

The latest and largest of these is the Battersea Power Station development in south London, part of the larger "Vauxhall Nine Elms Battersea Opportunity Area."[1] This development centres around the restoration of a coal power plant and several new buildings into a conurbation of corporate headquarters, luxury apartments, and flashy retail spaces, with Apple as the first confirmed corporate tenant. Battersea Power Station (BPS), however, does not explicitly frame its development in terms of the luxuriousness

1 This area extends from Battersea Park to Lambeth bridge along the south side of the river Thames

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and exclusivity of its offerings.[2] Rather, the development produces a vision aesthetically similar to Morris' utopia through the creation of a new, revitalised *place*. BPS developers thereby imagine regeneration as addressing a city in postindustrial ruin, contaminated by pollution and hollowed out of inhabitants. Emerging from this, with the help of private development, is a city of rooftop gardens and creative workers, of spontaneous pop-up spaces and peaceful views of the river. Morris' concern for economic equality may be pushed to the background in these visions, but the compensation for this is an aesthetic landscape that promises to restore futurity and community to the city.

This article analyses the idiom of "placemaking" in contemporary U.K. planning, design, and architecture, specifically considering BPS as metonymic of the wider trends and stakes of development in London. BPS is what Davidson and Lees refer to as *new build* gentrification, arguing "that despite the different character of new-build developments, there are striking parallels between those developments and previous waves London's riverside renaissance of gentrification, such that new-build developments can, and should, be identified as landscapes or as forms of gentrification" (Davidson and Lees 1166-1167). The recourse to a highly aestheticised concept of place allows development not only to mediate the structural transformations they are enacting but also to create a narrative about development that deflects and dissipates political critique. This narrative constitutes an aesthetic regime that Jacques Rancière identifies as police (as opposed to politics as such): "an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another is noise" (Rancière 29). BPS conceives of itself as inclusionary and reparative—integrated with the local, focused on community, open to creativity, and deeply concerned with sustainability. The language of placemaking pre-empts the usual criticisms—that developers do not listen to and include the local community, include affordable units, or build sustainability. In doing so, this paper argues that it seeks to render dissent to the development as irrational and unintelligible by the norms of the discourse of consensual politics. As such, finds an alternative urban topography not only unrealistic but imperceptible.

Methodologically, this article reads closely the self-conscious, meticulous effort that a small army of designers and consultants has given over to frame development in terms that are aesthetically appealing and culturally hegemonic. This cultural work takes the form of a proliferation of documentation: lengthy corporate manifestos, expansive narratives for each building and aspect of the scheme, a regular magazine with interviews and opinion pieces, an extensive web presence, and other design and planning documents that amount to thousands of pages of material. These documents are filled with images of the appealing, green urban landscapes that will be constructed, photographs of stylish architects and designers, and bright, twee illustrations accompanying terms like "place" or "community." These texts read as a kind of (acritical) theorisation of the city, replete with references to urban theorists and geographers and self-aware of the history and cultural connotations of urban planning. To take this literature seriously is to inquire about its conditions of possibility, to examine why it exists and what function it serves. This article argues that the proliferation of this documentation speaks to an attempt to create a cultural hegemony, one in which development is the solution to the problems of the contemporary city (rather than a problem itself). Here, the financial speculation[3] of BPS is based on a kind of cultural speculation through the creation of these narrative and aesthetic futures. More than implying a matter of elite taste in decor and interior design, aesthetics establishes the political conditions that allow for capital's reproduction and amplification.

More specifically, this article examines three aesthetic structures that these documents use to establish cultural hegemony. First is the concept of place and placemaking,[4] as articulated by the designers, who

2 The development of BPS involves a complex array of groups, from Malaysian financial institutions (S P Setia Berhad, Sime Darby Property and the Employees Provident Fund), the city of London and Wandsworth council, the BPS Development Corporation and an unwieldy assortment of high profile architecture and consulting firms. These groups, organised by the Battersea Power Station Development Corporation, have promoted the development through these documents, an extensive web presence, media outreach, and through special events. As such, unless otherwise specified, invocations of the "developers" or "designers" in this article refer to discursively produced subject positions.

3 Only a few years ago, it was common to read stories of unbuilt £1m studios in BPS being resold for £1.5m. (Kollewe and Osborne)

4 "Place" is a privileged term within the discourse of BPS developers, no doubt inspired by but not equivalent to the term's critical meanings.

seek to recreate a particular kind of "authentic" urban experience, planned yet open to spontaneity. Second is the aesthetic of the garden—a figure popularly associated with both a pastoral past and an environmentally sustainable future and thus serving as a metaphor for the temporal stakes of development. Third and last is the ethos of creativity. Gentrification has always been characterised not just by its tendency toward displacement but also by the middle-class practice of creative re-use. BPS is re-use writ large, and it grounds the developers' vision of a future technological city, one that has recaptured and refinished the authenticity of its former selves while projecting itself into an indefinite future. All three of these concepts are fundamentally temporal in character; together, they narrativise development and seek to render its hegemonic conclusion inevitable.

Making *Place* along the Thames

Battersea Power Station, built in two stages between 1929 to 1955, served as a large generator of coal power and was part of the standardisation of London's electrical grid. It featured an art deco design by Filton. J. Theo Halliday and Sir Giles Gilbert Scott commissioned to make the existence of a large plant in central London more appealing. Half of it was closed in 1975 and declared an English Heritage Grade II site in 1980; the other half closed in 1983, seven years before Margaret Thatcher's government would privatise electricity. By 2010, after several failed attempts to either restore or demolish the site, it was the location of a Tory manifesto launch party in which David Cameron called it a "building in need of regeneration in a country in need of regeneration"(Stephen Adams).[5]

The politics of the postwar welfare state were in many ways battles on an architectural terrain: the utopianism of modernist architects and planners was later characterised as equal parts naive folly and aloof conceit, consisting in reviled top-down, anti-human interventions. Thatcher skill as a politician was, in this sense, to connect the dots between aesthetics and politics, as when she rejected the ethos of the 60s as a "block mentality; tower blocks, trade union block votes, block schools...an addiction to welfare, nationalisation and trade union dominance" (qtd in Sinfield 297). The BPS "Community Charter" repeats this narrative, telling readers that "many mistakes were made in the design of neighbourhoods during the 1960s and 1970s by urban planners and architects, unaware that the organisation of urban space is a critical factor in encouraging social interaction and achieving a sense of community" (BPSDC "Community Charter").[6]

Post-Thatcher, London has come full circle as a prime generator of global inequality; the aesthetics of regeneration—of a building or a country, in Cameron's convenient elision—correspond to and help reproduce this function. BPS continues a long-standing trend that seeks to make Thames and Thames gateway a focal point for regeneration, one that uses neutral terms such as "sustainability" and "community," but which in fact "constitute...nothing more than state-led, private-developer-built, gentrification" (Davidson and Lees 1172-1174).[7]A disused coal plant is not just an industrial ruin but also stands for the ruination of industrialisation, a metaphor that allows development to present itself as "transforming what was essentially an urban backwater into a central component of the capital's social and cultural landscape" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 171-172). Overall, the building and site was described as "decommissioned, in disrepair and down-at-heel" and in an "under used part of London" (BPSDC "Living Architecture" 7,43). This state of disrepair, which is also an aesthetic, made it the perfect site to sound the historical echoes implied by regeneration's prefix—development configured as a revitalization of a dead and polluted structure, a restoration of its art deco interior, and a process of recycling the space for the next phases of

5 Owen Hatherley observed that this launch party—"on an industrial site where nothing is produced, upon a swathe of dereliction at the heart of a great capital, on a locus of highly dubious real-estate dealings"—was a "satirist's dream" (Hatherley)

6 Adjoining this text is a picture of a looming, grey, concrete council tower, which is then juxtaposed with the image of yoga practitioners in a sunny park in the next section, entitled "community renewal" (BPSDC "Community Charter" 18))

7 Already in 2005, Davidson and Lees point to rapidly increasingly prices of one-bedroom flat rentals in Battersea.

gentrification and financial speculation. [8] This historical palimpsest confers on the space a sense of history and a potentially stable future.

To accomplish this, BPS exhibits a concern with *place*—designers call themselves "placemakers," write a 230-page master-document called the "placebook," and continually articulate their desire to "create a genuine sense of place"(BPSDC "Living Architecture" 56). Placemaking promises to extend the life of the city into a limitless future—a green, creative, technological utopia that will sustain itself while creating conditions that favour the temporary, vanishing moments of urban life. This seeming irony or contradiction between a creatively ephemeral present and a secure future is articulated as a mediated and mutually-reinforcing relationship, one that manages the risk of contingency within a stable framework. For example, BPS architects frame their practice as one that attends to the local by creating the formal conditions for urban spontaneity and creativity, thus disavowing the ethos of postwar architecture as described above, which planned cities with a birds-eye view. As opposed to this, Rockwell group founder David Rockwell, responsible for the "public areas" of BPS, suggests that while "it seems counterintuitive to think about architecture in terms of agile structures or impermanent spaces…cities are more about the shifting, messy vitality and surging energy of the streets and less about the heroic view from above" (BPSDC "An Englishman in New York" 4). This "messy vitality" counterposes any perception of sterility that might be associated with large-scale development.

Architectural design surpasses those limitations by suggesting that its intervention actually lies in creating the context for spontaneous, "surging energy," rather than determining what that energy looks like. A well-designed playground, for instance, cannot simply be "swings and slides" but rather should be "a place with genuine opportunities for improvisation and creativity…[to] even get muddy or wet," surely a sign of messy vitality and surging childish energy (BPSDC *The Placebook* 75). Likewise, retail must "genuinely enhance the experience of being in a particular place" and be attentive to the "drama involved in the physical realities of shopping" like the "real stimuli…real interactions with customers and shop assistants; real movement through space" and the "texture and tactility" of consumption (BPSDC *The Placebook* 84, 89, 94). The well-read designers cite Benjamin on this point, though in their gloss his work becomes less about politicising aesthetics than about the colonial sensuality of "vivid shop windows of imported foreign goods and the Parisian 'flaneurs' who strolled along to see what he called the 'phantasmagoria' " (BPSDC *The Placebook* 89). In sum, as opposed to the bird's eye view, this is planning and design on the ground to build a "bottom-up neighbourhood" organised around "third spaces" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 129). It is concerned with reproducing its version of the local, imagined as physical, sensual, and *real* in a way that other scales are not.

At the same time, developers seek to allow for this flourishing of the momentary and the temporary within a larger scheme that promises a permanent revitalisation. BPS developers specifically divide their planning into four phases: Meanwhile, Pioneer, Emerging, and Mature (BPSDC *The Placebook* 44). This mimics critical discourse on phased gentrification, minus the criticality. The stages reconcile the immediacy designers seek from urban life—its fleeting, temporary, Baudelaireian character—with the need to cast their intervention as a permanent and sustainable urban good. This "Staged Placemaking" is a kind of theatre of gentrification, "a subtle art that seeks the highest returns for a site, by focusing on what it takes to make somewhere special every step of the way" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 47).

The first, "meanwhile" stage is a trend in contemporary London Development, a way of capitalising on the popularity of the pop-up. They aim to produce "idiosyncratic, thrilling, catch-it- while-you-can experiences;" these are modelled after "temporary cultural events taking place in unusual settings such as abandoned buildings, museum galleries and railway stations," that will have "a scarcity value and [that] come imbued not only with a strong sense of authenticity but also exclusivity" (BPSDC *The Placebook*

8 " 'Back to the original place or position'; 'Again', 'anew', originally in cases implying restoration to a previous state or condition" "Re-"

65-66).[9] These "unusual spaces" aspire to give the development an up-and-coming character while at the same time ensuring the capital investment. Likewise, the "meanwhile" is especially designed to attract artists, or "those special early individuals, with a hunger for newness and an eye for the next big thing" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 45). This is accomplished by "giving away space to people with creative energy, offering low rents to quirky shops so they can sit alongside luxury brands, putting on spectacular free events, providing temporary facilities in early phases" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 47). Ironically, they consider the gentrification that is produced by artistically-minded middle-class individuals to be more authentic than new-build corporate design, with the former leading to a "transformation [that] tends to produce more enduring places with greater cultural cachet" in trendy neighbourhoods (BPSDC *The Placebook* 192). The designers almost seem to be imagining younger versions of themselves; as such, they know that developing—"placemaking"—in phases increases cultural (and thus financial) capital of the development.[10]

The subsequent "pioneer" phase is designed for these young "creatives." Thirty years ago, Neil Smith argued that gentrification operated through a frontier spatialization, with gentrifiers occupying the position of pioneers venturing into an "empty" territory (Smith). Now, developers enthusiastically adopt settler colonial rhetoric, arguing that in the latter phases, "even though some of the early pioneers will have moved on, ready for a clean slate, a fresh challenge —more flux…the vibrancy and creativity of the early phases remains and is not snuffed out in the manner of so many areas entering late gentrification" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 47). At the same time, the "'late adopters' know that having waited so long, prices will be at a premium, but then there is comfort in this, knowing it represents a good investment for the future—reassuringly established" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 45). Phased development is thus a kind of spatial risk management, one that balances the aesthetics of the "meanwhile" with the desire for both financially secure investments and a permanent, sustainable, revitalised community.

The Garden: Naturalizing the Temporality of Development

> And what if we made your bike an easy option, accessible and stored out of the rain. Better still, you can just walk, because Battersea is a complete eco-neighbourhood with everything you need on your doorstep. At Battersea you'll get all this, plus your home would be powered by the world's largest carbon-neutral building—Battersea Power Station Development Corporation (BPSDC *The Placebook* 149)

BPS and associated developments in South London emphasise their sustainability, concretised through the aestheticised image of the garden.[11] The garden does a specific kind of culture-work and is not just an amenity but a visual metaphor to accompany the rhetoric of sustainability, one infused with desire. It encodes a quasi-mythological temporality in an accessible, seemingly-immediate, verdant presence. *Sustainability*, that is, captures the temporal stakes and contradictions of contemporary development and its animating promises of a restoration of life and an indefinite futurity. As Ross Adams remarks, "when it was becoming clear that the history of the modern city coincided with the history of ecological disaster, the figure of the city was transfigured into a technological structure of redemption, granting an eschatological

9 This includes "real festivals" which are "intimate, non-corporate and fan-friendly." This could mean "street parties thrown by and for the local residents because that's when we'll know we've succeeded in nurturing a real community" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 68). Andrew Harris argues that such events, coded as spontaneous and local, are a means by which middle-class gentrifiers selectively appropriate the "practices of the archetypal British country fair or village fete…[and a] working-class tradition for street parties" (Harris 233)

10 To wit, design critic Stephen Bayley's description of his own settlement practice in Battersea: "To a young, poor, newly-married house-hunter, the area south of Chelsea and Westminster appealed because, in 1983, it was the unlikely, but welcome, combination of 'central' and 'cheap.' These were the positive attributes. More negative were the terrible traffic (with never even a possibility of a black cab), an ugly sense of being an outcast and a generalised miasma of failure and neglect. " (BPSDC "Living Architecture" 5)

11 This includes the Embassy gardens at the new U.S. embassy, the Battersea Roof Gardens by High Line designers James Corner Field Operations, a new park by LDA designs, the BPS rooftop by Andy Sturgeon Landscape and Garden Design, and others. (BPSDC "Wild at Heart" 12).

urgency for large-scale real-estate development" (6). In solving an eschatological problem, "sustainable" development and ensuing environmental gentrification appear as incontestable goods. As Melissa Checker writes, "operating under the seemingly a-political rubric of sustainability, environmental gentrification builds on the material and discursive successes of the urban environmental justice movement and appropriates them to serve high-end redevelopment that displaces low income residents" (Checker 212).[12] Here the re-use of an area that used to contain a massive coal power station presents its luxury revitalisation as a 'sustainable' recompense for past environmental harm. In this way, corporate sustainability rhetoric enables the maintenance of a "postpolitical," public-private urban governance that defers political dissensus (Swyngedouw 605).[13] Modern laments for a lost nature and anthropocenic worries overly a rapidly collapsing future are reconciled and calmed in these green rooftops.[14]

This process is imagined through extended metaphors of *life*: "creating vitality, where previously there was none, required nothing less than a complete inversion of the existing situation—effectively re-connecting the site into its surrounding urban fabric so it could function as a logical extension of central London" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 16). Similarly, they seek not only to redevelop but to revitalise a "site [that] is for the most part devoid of life" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 44). As writer Stephen Bayley puts it, "it doesn't matter if you call this survival or revival, a precious, but once wretched, part of London is going to live and breathe again" (BPSDC "Living Architecture" 6). These metaphors raise the stakes of the development and pre-empt political-economic criticism. The purpose of development in their own articulation is not real estate speculation, but rather the respiratory creation of place where there was no place. The narrative of revitalisation recoups an imagined pre-capitalist past and a pastoral structure of feeling to ground an endlessly capitalist future. In this way, redevelopment must do the historiographic work of a narrative reversal, not only making the building functional again but making it an epitome of sustainability, in this case, the "world's largest carbon neutral building" (BPSDC *The Placebook*).

This vitality is not simply signalled by a profusion of parks, rooftop gardens, and low-energy buildings; beyond this, the city itself is imagined through natural metaphors. Natural metaphors for the city date to the nineteenth century, when "planners had fully reformulated the city as a 'biological organism', whose naturally 'functional parts' were enabled through strategies of infrastructural connectivity...the focus of city planners and politicians turned towards optimising systems of circulation" (Ross Adams 4). BPS is accordingly envisioned as a "new lung of public space" to make the city breathe again (BPSDC "Living Architecture" 56)..

Furthermore, contemporary development considers the best design for place as one that *evolves* naturally, as opposed to one that simply implemented from the top down at one time. The temporal progression of development, which BPS designers seek to reproduce through "staged placemaking" as mentioned above (Meanwhile, Pioneer, Emerging, Mature), becomes an ecological analogy:

> To reimagine 'phased development' in this way it is useful to look beyond the property world for inspiration. In nature, such a process is known as serial progression—the successive ecological stages that see barren landscapes evolve over time into lush forests, providing habitats for abundant life (the final climax community)...In this way, each successive stage of ecological development paves the way for the next, bare ground becomes grassland, grassland gives way to shrubs, shrubs to woodland and forest —more and more diverse landscape environments that support larger and more demanding forms of life (BPSDC *The Placebook* 44)

Through the imaginary of ecological succession, the developers figure the postindustrial city as a barren and lifeless area to be repopulated, as though in the aftermath of some devastating natural disaster. Ecological succession is an example of what Matthew Gandy calls the "ecological imaginary" of the city; the naturalisation of urban change presents it as "cyclical dynamic alterable through technological modifications rather than by political contestation" (Gandy 64). This naturalisation makes development's final intervention appear inevitable and permanent.

12 see (Quastel 696)

13 "reduction of the political to the 'mode of governing' is particularly prevalent in environmental practices" (Swyngedouw 605).

14 Including, somewhat darkly, tree species that "have been selected [to] thrive in the increasingly warm and wet conditions London enjoys" (BPSDC "Positive Energy" 33).

From this inauspicious beginning, design simply creates the conditions for a rich, diverse, thriving climax community, one that forms naturally, in developing stages. The garden serves to make this mediation concrete: "like gardens, great places can take a lifetime to evolve and mature. Few are created from scratch, and most are carefully planned, nurtured and tended over the years until they blossom. Although The Power Station is a well-loved landmark on the London skyline, we need to start planting the seeds for it to continue to stay that way" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 50). Added to the masculinist planned intentionality of modernist design are notions of nurturing and tending in producing, supporting and sustaining lively places.

Ironically, while the space as a whole is metaphorized as a slowly evolving garden, many of the initial actual gardens will be temporary: these "meanwhile" spaces include a plant nursery and pop-up parks (in addition to the usual galleries and cinemas). The nursery offers both literal and figurative cultivation:

> Physically, temporary landscapes will help create a green and friendly atmosphere and later the same planting may be reused elsewhere on the site. We will bring Battersea Power Station back to life, and the natural landscape will play a critical role in this transformative process. If we start early, we can 'hothouse' The Power Station as a place where things spring to life by literally growing things on-site. That is even before we get the first buildings open. In the early days, we will get the site up and running with our plant nursery, which will be able to contribute to our series of 'meanwhile uses'—a canopy of trees, a temporary pond, gardens to rival the very best the UK has to offer or an art installation that sits as one with nature —will help to cultivate our site. (BPSDC *The Placebook* 50)

These references to cultivation, hothousing, a green and friendly atmosphere, revitalisation through things that 'spring to life' casually slip between literal and figurative, as if to suggest that the development is as natural and organic as plants in an allotment garden. The literal, aesthetic greenness does the figurative work of bringing the city "back to life," with a plant nursery treated as the best way to get this large-scale development "up and running." The slow, meditative temporality of London's disappearing allotments,[15] gardens that people spend years if not decades cultivating is reversed in these "temporary" landscapes. Still, if one can assent to the cultural imaginary represented here—the peaceful vista of a (temporary) pond, in the shade of some London plane trees, next to an apparently unnoticeable art installation, Grasmere diaries in hand—then redevelopment is perhaps not so objectionable. Regeneration means trees and children and community, not speculative housing bubbles. This narrative presents urban redevelopment as an unmitigated environmental good, a temporal mediation of past environmental ruin and future sustainability, of temporary, meanwhile experience and revitalised permanence.

Through this ecological analogy, gentrification as urban colonialism itself becomes naturalised: "at the outset it will be a fledgling place—with limited local facilities, immature planting and new neighbors" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 43-44). This is because "only when there is an abundant and lush habitat available with many different kinds of trees and plants is biodiversity achieved and the most sophisticated creatures thrive" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 130). Pioneer colonisation acquires an appealing gloss of abundance and vitality when the settlers are metaphorical wildflowers and bees.[16] "Diversity" is here rendered as metaphorical biodiversity, the benefits being not so much about equality but rather about sophistication. Continuing the metaphor, the designers state that the final stage of development will be "a mature community [that] in nature comprises all the species that can happily co-exist without fighting for the supply of food, water or a place to build a nest, den, lair or burrow" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 130). The Arcadian imaginary eliminates conflict and disagreement not through repression but through the creation of an environment that, like an ecosystem, is balanced by its own natural laws.

This happy, replete co-existence defers concerns of environmental gentrification by presenting itself as beneficial to the public. Here, however, developers take definitional control of what counts as "public," recasting it as a "Meanwhile" gift rather than as a right to the city (Harvey). Parks, squares, and green

15 "The relentless pressure on land in the capital, the need to build at high densities, and, in **s**ome cases, neglect and disuse, mean that allotments are slowly but surely being eroded" (Committee 1).

16 Again, elided with the literal: "we are playing our part to ensure wildlife that has colonised the brownfield site retain as much of their habitat as possible once development of the site begins. New habitats are being provided for a wide range of insects, black redstarts and peregrine falcons as part of a series of wildlife management strategies"(BPSDC "Positive Energy" 33)

spaces of new developments are intentionally ambiguous in this regard: these spaces are often contiguous with the surrounding fabric of the city and connected to existing infrastructure, yet ultimately under private jurisdiction. BPS thus claim their rooftop garden as a "democratic gesture" and the site's affordable housing as a "principled step" because it is "indistinguishable from the private" units (BPSDC "Living Architecture" 25).[17]

This reflects changes in the city more broadly, as more ostensibly public, green space is given over to private developers who are then able to regulate and control these areas, for example by harassing and excluding the homeless (Cities). Not only this, but for many cities, there is a "strong correlation… between urban land cleanup; investment in park or open space creation or rehabilitation, waterfront redevelopment, or ecological restoration; and changes in demographic trends and neighborhood property values" (Anguelovski 24). That is, people actually affected by environmental toxins are also removed in the process of cleanup, a green gentrification (Gould and Lewis; Pearsall). The representation of these spaces in this way contains an "ideological notion of what constitutes legitimate use of public green space," which privileges a "revived and restored" nature that mitigates the "negative [environmental] impacts of urbanisation" (Dooling 629-630). That is, the supposed placemaking qualities of public riverside relaxation along the Thames—including the "strategies for extending 'dwell time' in parks and public spaces" to increase "sociability"—contains the utopian assumption that everyone would have somewhere else to sleep in private (BPSDC "Community Charter" 40).

BPS figures this usurpation of public space as a placemaking amenity. The "Community Charter" includes a section on "governance," in which developers enthusiastically informs readers that the "Community Services Team will empower local residents, office tenants and retail occupiers to influence decisions affecting the day-to-day operation of the site, engendering a sense of ownership, and a role in the stewardship of their own neighbourhood" (BPSDC "Community Charter" 69). Similarly, the developers proudly announce that they will "provide new community facilities on site that benefit the wider community including a new Library, Nursery, Health Centre, and a neighbourhood Police Station" (BPSDC "Community Charter" 83). Whatever remained of local, democratic governance is here transmuted into attentive customer service for those with a financial stake in the city and paternalistic provision for the "wider community."[18]In this way, the postpolitical acquires a spatial, visual form, where the hierarchical dynamics of consensus politics track onto the zones and boundaries of the developments themselves, from the private winter gardens to the public/private parks.

The developers suture the gap between private and public environmental goods through consumer sustainability—private, everyday lifestyles imagined as incrementally decreasing global environmental harm. Here developer regeneration, revitalisation, and restoration aligns perfectly with the consumer ethics of "reduce, reuse, recycle." Urban redevelopment is necessary because "the future is inevitably about urban living —and there are proven benefits: people living in cities have been shown to achieve greater success in the workplace and levels of educational attainment, quite apart from the fact that as a virtue of living where they do, they also have a greatly reduced carbon footprint" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 131).[19] As such, the importance of sustainability is rendered as individual, moral, and psychological. As the BPS *Placebook* acknowledges, "whatever the scientific arguments, we all feel we could do more to tread a bit lighter on this fair earth. But the problem is, when we try to be more sustainable, things seem to conspire against us, and even with the best intentions we feel guilty" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 148). Placing what they term "scientific arguments" to one side, the main problem facing consumers—guilt—can be addressed. The solution unsurprisingly lies in design: "but you know it isn't always your fault…the problem is that most of us live in places that just weren't designed to make being sustainable in any way convenient" (BPSDC

17 Indeed, in a city where developers shamelessly use "poor doors" to segregate social strata, the design-conscious garden may have to count as democratic (Osborne).

18 Ominously, this includes a police station, coinciding with the advertising of social paranoia as a design feature: "all public and communal spaces are overlooked by adjacent buildings, as research has shown that 'natural surveillance' plays an important role in minimizing crime and anti-social behaviour, allowing people to relax and socialize with others" (BPSDC "Community Charter" 52)

19 In fact, cities produce 75% of global CO2 emissions. (Bai 23)

The Placebook 149). Design resolves the guilt of contemporary living, the feeling that "we," living in poorly-designed, unsustainable non-places, are not doing enough as individuals to slow climate change.

Sustainability can then be marketed as a consumer lifestyle that is both privately and publicly beneficial. However, characteristically aware of the "hackneyed," "clichéd" inauthenticity of lifestyle marketing, they rebrand their offerings in terms of "the emerging notion of liveability," which is

> pragmatic and everyday and deals with urban lives in their complexity, rather than trying to reduce them down to a few glossy images. Liveability allows a neighbourhood to be thought of as a series of interconnected systems and spaces, that organised well can enhance enjoyment and ease of living, from growing food on the rooftops right down to waste disposal and underground drainage. (BPSDC *The Placebook* 131)

These "interconnected systems" figure the city as a natural ecology and are again paired with the literal environmental goods of rooftop allotments and the seemingly novel technology of waste disposal. Liveability, Noah Quastel argues, serves to "negotiate the demands of the urban growth machine, anxieties about environmental change, and the desires of élite consumers" (703). That is, liveability is a mode of consumption that advertises itself as sustainable and healthy for both individual and planet. In this way, sustainable livability frames individual "health and wellbeing," from organic food to pop-up gyms to the relaxing winter gardens, as a collective good (BPSDC *The Placebook* 65). In fact, Leslie Kern argues that environmental gentrification is explicitly embodied and gendered in its emphasis on "notions of detoxifying, cleansing, balancing, aligning, beautifying, and purifying [that] are applied to bodies that seek to be transformed, inside and out. Simultaneously, these bodies are actively consuming environmental gentrification in the new neighbourhood spaces" (Kern 74). Just as attention is paid to the tropologically feminine, nurturing qualities of place, imagined as continually *reproducing* creative, spontaneous, innovative activity, "healthy(-looking) women's bodies signify the health of the neighbourhood" (Kern 74).[20]

Similarly the physicality of urban experience, rendered through activities such as cycling, walking, and exercise (in parks) take their familiar role in grounding the ethical subject: "considering the number of people with obesity in the UK has more than trebled over the last 25 years," the developers write, "we all need to take a bit better care of the body we've been given" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 80). The atoning "we all" connects the health of the individual to the health of the urban, national, or even global community. That is, if lifestyle was too vapidly individualistic, livability provides space for doing good and the presumption that the everyday habits of the individual can additively produce global sustainability. With the concept "revitalisation," dissent is relegated to a perverse desire for dead cities; here, "livability" occludes the for whom of environmental goods by turning winter garden relaxation into a quasi-moral activity.[21] As if intuiting that wrong life cannot be lived rightly, contemporary developers imagine a future city where collective and individual goods are fully reconciled in ecological balance.

Creative Re-use, Innovation, and the Ethical Subject of Late Capitalism

> It is excellent that Battersea Power Station is set to become a gigantic exemplar of creative re-use. (BPSDC "Living Architecture")

The process of gentrification is closely linked with the aesthetic of creative re-use and upcycling. Restoring the power station recalls the "sweat equity" that early individual gentrifiers put into renovating deteriorating homes, but on a massive scale (Jager). By making a cultural virtue of creative salvage and remodelling, the displacement of gentrification appears as rescue. For this reason, though the developments in Battersea

20 One might add that in the imaginary of planning and the reality of gentrification, these women are often white.

21 To aid in this activity, engineers conducted light studies to maximise light in each apartment. In a crowded, rainy city, access to the sun itself is a privatised environmental good. (BPSDC "Foster + Partners Design Book" 19)

consist mostly of new buildings, they are rhetorically organised around the *restoration* of the power station. The Power Station—"iconic, unique, raw and authentic" and "every brand manager's dream"—is particularly important because it gives the designers an opportunity not just to build but to *restore* (BPSDC *The Placebook* 103). The ambition of this quasi-new build architecture is not in a master plan but in a master recycle, one that revives what is thought to be "best" and most "authentic" about the past. It is the "industrial magic" of BPS that connotes both a "rawness and atmosphere [that] are its authenticity" and a development "built to last on a heroic scale" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 34).

The production of this visual, material culture helps form a discursive seal around the gentrification process, referring the dissatisfied to 'before' and 'after' photos. The temporality of restoration—its before and after aspect— legitimises gentrification by narrating it as, unambiguously, progress and improvement.BPS is an extension at a much larger scale of what David Ley calls the "aesthetic disposition" of gentrification. Using a Bordieuian frame, Ley argues that creative re-use "establishes symbolic value through a claim to difference and authenticity, the authenticity of craft production in a setting seemingly detached from modern production and marketing" (Ley 2530). In this way the artist "deliberately presses the borders of conventional middle-class life, while at the same time representing its advancing, colonising arm" (Ley 2533). Similarly, BPS designers are tasked with restoring an industrial structure so as to put "the heart and soul back into the building" (BPSDC "Living Architecture" 29).

Michael Jager, discussing the aesthetic of renovated "Victoriana in Melbourne," has argued that architectural reuse allows for the creation of class distinction through a selective recuperation of the past. The middle class "does not buy simply a deteriorated house when it takes over a slum, nor does it just buy into future 'equity;' it buys into the past" (Jager 81). At the same time, "the effacing of an industrial past and a working-class presence**,** the whitewashing of former social stain, was achieved through extensive remodeling….the restoration of an anterior history was virtually the only manner in which the recent stigma of the inner areas could be removed or redefined" (Jager 83). Accordingly, the designers name History as one of the project's "four pillars of an icon," along with Culture, Place, and Design (BPSDC "The Icon Book" 7). However, this historical recovery is selective: a document such as the *Icon Book* pairs industrial-chic images of an empty interior with black-and-white photographs of the coal power plant's workers. In this way, design aesthetics mutes a history of class struggle and active politics. The neoliberal transition can then be described in passive voice detachment: "economies entered their post-industrial period and employment underwent a painful but inevitable shift away from heavy manufacturing towards the service industry" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 14). Creative salvage thus reclaims what it deems useful or beautiful from the debris of history and mistakes this gesture as reparative.

The aesthetic disposition of re-use appeals to "aspiring owners of a chunk of Britain's industrial history," a point that is repeated across the design documents (BPSDC "Wild at Heart" 7).[22] For example, the £11 million task of restoring the chimneys was a combination of, first, the "historical research and detective work" necessary to dismantle and rebuild the original designs, and second, careful craftsmanship, in which damaged material from the chimneys "will be used elsewhere on site, perhaps in artwork" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 217) (BPSDC "Living Architecture" 18). The 'iconic' chimneys, left "in such a bad condition that they represent a major safety hazard" can now be restored into an industrial-kitsch tower topped with a modern, glass viewing platform for tourists (BPSDC "Living Architecture" 18). The constant emphasis on the bad condition (of buildings or neighbourhoods) saturates the visuality of restoration and reuse with a sense of temporal progress and moral improvement.

The supposed urban revitalisation is also an aesthetic revival indicating, as Sharon Zukin observes, a "deeper preoccupation with space and time (Zukin 59). Namely, the "sense that the great industrial age has ended creates melancholy over the machines and the factories of the past. Certainly, such sentiments are aroused only at the end of an era, or with a loss of function" (59). This romantic nostalgia "is a way of coping with the continuous past," and as such seeks to aesthetically restore not only nature without the dirt, but also industry without the pollution—and both without the labour (Zukin 67). This impulse is reflected

22 This is helped by the fact English Heritage had listed the power station as a building of historical significance but also at significant risk of decay, thus sounding a temporal alarm.

throughout the development documents. The architects needed eight million new bricks which had to be "painstakingly matched in size and complexion with those already in place," and for this the "original supplier was miraculously tracked down and turned out to be a small village brickworks in the Midlands" (BPSDC "An Englishman in New York" 43) (BPSDC *The Placebook* 217). The cranes which used to unload coal, and which were only built in the 1950s, currently contain "asbestos, oil contaminants, lead paint and vermin waste" (BPSDC "The Cranes"). They will be restored with the aid of "original photos, drawings, paint samples and archive materials" and returned to the site as decorations.[23] Similarly metaphorized is the boiler house, which is being turned into a lobby surrounded by office buildings; once a source of literal power, this lobby is imagined as "the spark, the moment where an idea happens" for creative class workers (BPSDC "An Englishman in New York" 21). Employees from Apple and other corporations will be greeted in this lobby by "pieces of coal vacuum-sealed in illuminated glass panels, echoing its origins," and "the atrium floor will be anchored by a heroic circular fireplace at each end… a reminder of the building's past and also a catalyst for its future use" (BPSDC "An Englishman in New York" 4)[24]

In sum, "wandering around the empty and brooding Power Station you don't need to think—you can feel its authenticity—in the exposed structure, the heroic scale of the brickwork and the unexpected delights of the Art Deco Control Room" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 199). The latent industrial authenticity in these now contaminated, derelict structures makes possible a restorative aesthetic, one which selectively borrows from the cultural imaginary of the past and reassembles those pieces to construct the city's future. Safely behind glass, coal will no longer poison workers and the planet, nor will it fuel empire, but merely tell a story whose redemptive narrative arc concludes with an information economy in gleaming and green city (with Apple's electricity-devouring data centres as comfortably out of sight as the coal mines were previously). The power station thus becomes, as Quentin Willson says in praise, a "redbrick metaphor for everything that was, is and continues to be great about Britain" (BPSDC "Living Architecture" 6). He's more right than he knows: the kitsch, upcycled, mass-gentrification aesthetic of the building is a perfect match for the selective history of British greatness.

Restoration also confers attributes of character and authenticity not only to the space of the development but to the inhabitants. This, the designers state, "only works because we all think it's quite normal to dream of making a dream home in a disused agricultural building" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 135).[25] The hazy, intangible status of this desire—not even a dream home but the dream of a dream home—allows for it to be positioned as shared and universal, and thus perhaps the aesthetic basis for an equally restorative community. In this way, the particular taste for "refurbished buildings or even older properties in general" is universalised and made culturally hegemonic (BPSDC *The Placebook* 135). BPS is figured as the "kind of accommodation that might appeal to creative occupiers, or indeed any that might appreciate state of the art facilities set against the industrial, rough, exposed existing fabric of the space" (BPSDC "An Englishman in New York" 20). The architect for the BPS office space, Sebastian Ricard of Wilkinson Eyre, further claims that to attract these creative people one needs to provide "exposed brickwork, steelwork and services ensuring that everywhere in the scheme people are connected to the existing fabric" thus creating a "dialogue… between contemporary modern and the history' "(BPSDC "Wild at Heart" 10). It is curious that the trick for corporations to attract creative employees is the very particular kind of materiality of exposed brick.

However, more than just being aesthetically on trend, this materiality is a metonym for a selectively restored past that is to be reconciled with a creative, sustainable future. Here, the sprawling, optimistic, well-intentioned collection of city planners and local council members, global investment firms, designers, consultants, architects, architectural consultants, survey designers, interior specialists etc.—what might in less critical terms be called a "creative class"—form a stratum of bourgeois organic intellectuals that simultaneously occlude and naturalize the depredations and exclusivity of the London property market through active aesthetic tastemaking (Florida). The aesthetic disposition works to produce subjects

23 "It is great these iconic cranes will be as much a part of Battersea's future as its illustrious past," said one architect. (BPSDC "Wild at Heart" 48)

24 resulting in a "rough yet refined look." (BPSDC "Wild at Heart," 29)Please replace with in-text reference

25 As such, "mindful of those converted barns, our designers are being asked to put in split levels, high ceilings, double height spaces with galleries, even winter gardens you can use throughout the year" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 135)

that operate within a universalising, hegemonic consensus (Ley). In the case of contemporary urban development, this consensus relates to normative ideas of what counts as a place and what places, once properly made (or *re*made), can do to remake individuals and communities.

Thus, the importance and uses of "culture, culture culture," as the developers phrase it, is explicitly reiterated throughout the "placemaking" documents and associated with "innovation and creativity" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 35). For example, *The Placebook* writes that for "most people culture is not just some pleasant diversion—it's something that can inspire them to reflect on life and help define who they are, and it is this ability of culture and the arts to raise us out of the everyday that makes them so compelling" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 76). Culture—here elided with the arts—is important for *place* because it is what forms and situates identity and an individual's disposition toward that place. It is what transmutes the rawness of the "everyday" into the ethos of the creative, innovative subject.

As David Lloyd and Paul Thomas write, culture was key to the formation of a liberal common sense organised around the naturalness of the free market and the ethos of the representative state. A paradox for the state is how to reconcile group interests with the supposedly universal institutions of the nation-state. It is culture that "resolves that paradox, not by dissolving it but by displacing it onto a temporal schema in which the subject is defined in terms of the development of its full human capacity" (Lloyd and Thomas 2). Key to this interpellation of the individual into citizenship was the aesthetic, which they argue is an "an ethical training devoted to the educing of the citizen from the human being…aesthetic culture represents, therefore, the very form of bourgeois ideology" (Lloyd and Thomas 7). Human development is a progressive temporal schema that transforms while selectively retaining the authentic, ephemeral rawness of the particular into a collective "culture" that is above petty political fragmentation and has, accordingly, a boundless temporal horizon. Culture allows "politics to take place as if material conditions were a matter of indifference" and instead establishes a hegemony that is a "disseminated form of self-evidence or 'common sense' that regulates subjects across the differentiated domains of modern society" (Lloyd and Thomas 19).

The aesthetic cultivation and development of the citizen recur in property development as well. "Culture" is not just what BPSDC offers to future residents in the way of art exhibitions and concerts, but more substantially speaks to the universal(ized) desire for place to creatively transform identity:

> The term 'self-actualisation' is often used to describe a category of individuals seeking to transcend the everyday and create a more meaningful life. Not content with passive consumption of mainstream media (TV, film, theatre) these people are interested in 'transformational' leisure experiences, driving demand for evening classes (music, languages, craft), workshops, lectures, talks, book clubs, appreciation of art and culture and increased connoisseurship of food and drink. (BPSDC *The Placebook* 63)

The developers thus make a distinction between passive and active consumers, the latter imagined as creative, sophisticated quasi-artists. BPS will help individuals find a "meaningful life" that "transcend[s] the everyday," and therefore become self-actualised (this being opposed to the implicitly meaningless, mundane life of passive consumers). Self-actualisation refers to a creative, entrepreneurial subjectivity, in which continuous consumption and (self) production enter into a mediation that is both daily and transcendent. "Everyone," the developers write, "wants to fulfil their true potential in life. They want to experience that feeling that comes from starting something from scratch" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 52). The 'everyone' in that statement is an attempt to rhetorically universalise the ethos of the 'creative' middle class; it does not matter what set of activities constitute fulfilling one's true potential because having the opposite goal is absurd, unworkable, unthinkable.[26] Development becomes the common-sense solution to the problems of place and identity.

Conceptualisations such as this both delineate and reproduce class. The creative subject contains an ethics of active consumption, meaning not just sustainable grocery shopping, but a disposition of creativity for the purposes of self-actualisation and representation. This is distinct from those who approach the everyday, including everyday consumption, not just unsustainably but passively. The latter live in

26 "Hegemony, or ideology, is the process by which certain paradigms become so self-evident as to relegate alternatives to spaces of the nonsensical and the unthinkable" (Lloyd and Thomas 21).

"clone towns," non-places dominated by chain stores (BPSDC *The Placebook* 87). The self-actualizers, meanwhile, are self-contained entrepreneurial seeds of revitalisation, placemakers. The developers observe that Battersea is a site of "extreme potential right now, with acres of vacant space, ripe with untold opportunities," and that they "want to explore what happens when you create the sort of place where grass roots activities are the norm" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 52). Like the late capitalist obsession with technology companies formed specifically in garages, BPS developers fetishise "old warehouses on the edge of every town, crammed between and under railway lines and such" that are a "breeding ground for all kinds of companies" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 111). In other articulations, these supposedly vacant, empty spaces are a sign of disinvestment, and as such are characterised as dismal, abandoned, and bleak. Here, however, that emptiness carries a latent potential for creative re-use.

In Battersea, developers seek to capture and endlessly reproduce this otherwise fleeting moment of urban creativity by creating a space "more edgy and vital than the more corporate city and West End locations" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 112), while linking this rough edge with the concept of "innovation" and the economics of new capital investment.[27] The developers reproduce what was already the case among artists according to Andrew Harris, namely that they had become adept at "adopting entrepreneurial strategies" in order to "package themselves as exciting and alternative…against more traditional, conservative art centres in London such as the West End" (Harris 230).

To do this, the garish corporate ethos of the city or Canary Wharf is rejected in favour of a focus on "meanwhile" arts, "pioneering" creativity, "emerging" innovation, and "mature" neighbourhood community, in that specific developmental order. The master architect, having lost his halo, becomes the place director:

> Looking around London, it's obvious there are not nearly enough of those talented individuals who know how to turn a group of interesting buildings and spaces into a living, breathing place—full of the joys of life and with a few surprises thrown in for good measure. Our place director will have a master's degree in authenticity, or at least they would if such a thing existed. Instead, we'll settle for someone that has a passion for real urban experiences and a healthy disdain for corporate precincts and disneyfication. (BPSDC *The Placebook* 59)

The place director takes raw materials of everyday urban life, including its disused materiality (exposed brick, etc.), and transforms it into a breathing, joyful, surprising, authentic, healthy, *real* place. Development becomes concerned with "capturing the spirit of the place and staying true to our principles—putting culture and the arts first, championing design quality and encouraging personal creativity" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 103). Place in this idiom is a structure of capacity, everywhere actualising potential while reproducing spontaneous potentiality. In the cultural discourse of development, the spirit of place is a latent, ghostly "authenticity" that half exists in what are otherwise spaces of ruin, neglect, and decay. The task of architecture, design, and planning is to revive the dead.

Alternative Endings

A vague sense of loss, a wistful glance backwards, hope for the future—Battersea Power Station's narrative of development manifests a latent anxiety about the time of capitalism. If the goal of property speculation, as with investment in general, is to predict and manage uncertain, risky futures, the narrative of urban revitalisation constructs a temporality that reconciles environmental and political tension into a vision of a healthy, cohesive, sustainable, creative community. In doing so, it renders the aesthetics of planning and architectural design and the habitus of consumption into moral conditions for neoliberal subjectivity. The apolitics of this utopian endpoint marshals a beguiling cultural imaginary in order to render political disagreement absurd and unthinkable.

This reconciliation is the work that culture does to defer the eruption of the political as such. Neoliberal public-private governance, always "looking for an ingenious trade-off between reduced public sector

27 as in the hope that "in ten years' time, Battersea has the highest number of innovative collectives, creative mavericks and entrepreneurs per capita of any other part of London…That would be a real marker of success" (BPSDC *The Placebook* 52).

spending power and the pressing need for more homes," (BPSDC *The Placebook* 129) allies with financial capital to remake the city; the latter must, in turn, publicise its investments in the local. Thus Frank Gehry can speak of his mutually beneficial relationship with Boris Johnson: "I liked the Mayor, he was cute and sassy. He was so young, I thought and had a lot of energy. He seemed very happy with the scheme—with its direction and how many affordable units we're creating" (BPSDC "Living Architecture" 22). As Kris Olds suggests, mere economism might struggle to explain this friendly interaction between a cosmopolitan starchitect and Britain's lead Brexiteer, much less the plethora of formal and informal connections that multi-national development engenders (Olds 378). Speculation is thus a narrative form that is as cultural as it is financial. Addressing the anxiety that development "pulveriz[es] place in the process of creative destruction," BPS emphasises *place* itself as a structure of creativity and consumption, spontaneity and sustainability (Olds 366). At the same, this differentiated group of financiers, developers, planners, designers, officials, and others cohere *through* the production of narrative consensus, in this case, agreement about the ethos and desirability of place as such. As Eric Swyngedouw writes, this consensus means that the future technological eco-city is to be created "by means of a series of technological, managerial and organisational fixes" rather than through political contestation (Swyngedouw 611). To these fixes, one may add the aesthetic as that which sets the cultural parameters of urban development.

The insistence of development at reproducing its own narrative in a proliferation of voluminous planning and design documents, however, also suggests an anxiety that this consensus is fragile, temporary, with a future that is unpredictable and not guaranteed. In the case of London, it was not a financial collapse but the tragic collapse of Grenfell that drew attention to the economic inequality, developer greed, and government indifference that characterises the neoliberal consensus, meanwhile gardens and all. This act of state violence via neglect and privatisation suggests that developers and their proponents—such as Gehry and Johnson and many others—are at best unreliable narrators. Grenfell concretises the everyday social violence of urban revitalisation.[28] The unrecoverable human loss creates, while also indicating the tremendous requirements for creating, a gap within the smooth continuity of cultural hegemony, a space for alternative endings.

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