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Chapter Eight

Managing Arcadia: from the King's Cross Estate to the Bretton Estate

In Turnhalle Square, at the entrance of the King's Cross Estate next to London's King's Cross railway station, stands a 12-metre high oak tree transported from a horticultural nursery in Hamburg, Germany. The 63-year old pin oak can be expected to grow up to 20 metres in height, and currently weighs eleven and a half tonnes. The *"Big [German] Tree,"* as the developers of the King's Cross Estate have named it, has its own international passport. This tree is one of 400 mature trees strategically planted within the multi award winning urban development of the private for public use King's Cross Estate. The 67-acre site is one of the largest areas of urban development currently taking place in Europe. Opened to the public with its first tenants in September 2011, when completed, the site will include 50 new and restored buildings, 1,900 new homes; 500,000 square feet of retail; 26 acres (which accounts for 40% of the entire development) of open space in the form of 20 new streets, 10 new public parks and squares, gardens, three new bridges, and 42,000 residents.

With its own assigned postal code of NC1, the estate is the largest mixed-use development of a single ownership – the King's Cross Central Limited Partnership – to be developed in London for over 150 years.[i] Land ownership of Greater urban London is mostly private. This is also the case with the rural and urban land that makes up Britain, which, to this day, is held by a small fraction of the population: whether by individuals or corporate capital investment. The largest owners of Greater London's urban area are the Crown Estate, the City of London Corporation, private property corporations, and the four great aristocratic family estates known as the landed urban gentry: Grosvenor, Cadogan, Howard de Walden, and Portman. Indeed, it is the King's Cross Central Limited Partnership's vision that its namesake be one of London's next great estates, with parks, squares, streets, and civic structure akin to the privately-owned landholdings of 18th century estate developments. These were the Georgian estates that Anna Minton (*The Guardian,* 2012) reminds us were:

> [A] pre-democratic model of land ownership. Today, the Georgian squares and terraces are part of the fabric of the city, but what is no longer visible is that these places were once barricaded and closed to the public.

A visual re-imagining of past times through urban regeneration is utopian in principle. It re-imagines somewhere "good", a visual model that can be applied "anywhere". David Pinder suggests that in urban regeneration there is a tendency for space to be considered a "distinct realm as if it were the preserve of specialists such as architects and planners" (2005, 22), and through which:

> Strands of utopian urbanism often appear in the form of neoliberal visions of the market, as an ideal realm of free exchange and consumer satisfaction, running smoothly with flows of money and commercialised desire. (2005, 13)

Historically open spaces have been designated by the controlling state – secular, religious, royal – for the use of its citizens, thus, generally understood to be publicly owned open-spaces (in an assumption that citizens and the state are homologous). Since Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister in 1979, Britain's biggest privatisation project has been its land. Hence the proliferation of privately-owned urban redevelopment of private for public use spaces designated for the use of citizens by controlling private corporations such as the King's Cross Estate development. Ownership of land confers power over access – denoting inclusion, and exclusion of resources, economy, health, pleasure, outdoor space; and ultimately, people themselves. Known as the "Private enterprise," as Jonathan Harris and Richard Williams note:

> [...] has become the essential 'partner' in, and driver of, [the regeneration of cities] while the capitalist mode of production – now radically globalized – remains the all –powerfully determining force within the dynamic. (2011,14)

The high operational costs, leave local councils unable to finance regeneration and redevelopment projects, allowing private corporations to take advantage of financially favourable and subsidised opportunities (aided by successive British governments and tax benefits), ultimately resulting in redevelopment carried out at the expense of public spaces for the alternate private for public use spaces. This privatisation and its effects, are readily acknowledged by the current British Prime Minister and then Mayor of London Boris Johnson in his 2009 *London's Great Outdoors: A Manifesto for Public Space*. In the manifesto, which sets out the mayor's ambition for London's public space, as well as objectives, promotion, ownership and strategy amongst other issues, Johnson notes:

> There is a growing trend towards the private management of publicly accessible space where this type of 'corporatisation' occurs, especially in the larger commercial developments, Londoners can feel themselves excluded from parts of their own city. (Mayor of London 2009, 8)

However, Johnson cites King's Cross (which at the time of the manifesto was still in its planning stages) as a good example of unrestricted 24-hour access to streets and public areas. Johnson makes no mention in the manifesto of the imposition of high private securitisation that accompanies this supposedly unrestricted access, other than under the guise of safe and secure open spaces. The overarching tone of the manifesto permeates around the premise of branding the image of London through its public spaces; how it is viewed, experienced, and how this contributes positively to future capital investment:

> Public spaces are part of what defines a city. They are the places where people come together […] they shape the way communities and neighbourhoods mesh together. They inform the way everyone sees the city, and they contribute to the lives of its residents and the experiences of its visitors […] a city with a wonderful well-used network of public space, which can offer a great quality of life, is one in which people will want to live and invest. By investing in high quality public space now, we can begin to adapt London to continue to be a great, a successful, and an eminently 'liveable' city for the 21st century. (Mayor of London 2009, 1)

A city, Johnson continues, "that can compete nationally and internationally attracting and fostering businesses […] a London with spaces that are fit for a world city" (2009: 2). The Kings' Cross Estate, is a prime example of corporatisation of the urban, illustrating a neoliberal experiment in privatising public space to create new markets.

Yet until the early 19th century, the area that now constitutes the King's Cross Estate, was a rural idyll; popular amongst Londoners for its country inns and health spas. The 1820 completion of the Regent's Canal precipitated King's Cross' industrial purpose and heartland as a canal, road, and rail link to the Northern industrial cities. This expansion was complete with the building of the Great Northern Railway (GNR) terminus in 1852. However, from the mid 20th century, the area was affected by vast industrial decline due to the lessening of rail freight transport. Decommissioning ensued, and the area of the King's Cross Estate became derelict lands of abandoned buildings, warehouses, rail debris, and contaminated soil that became known in the 1990s for the repurposed abandoned warehouse spaces such as the rave venue Bagley's, Cubitt Artists' studios, gallery, and education space, and film stage sets. After graduating from their Masters course at Goldsmiths In the early 1990s, the Turner Prize nominated artists Jane and Louise Wilson moved to King's Cross to make film works in the seedy bed and breakfast accommodations which, at the time, were in abundance in King's Cross. A decade later the artist Richard Wentworth, himself a long-term resident of King's Cross, sited his Artangel commissioned project *An Area of Outstanding Unnatural Beauty*

(2002) in the vacant General Plumbing Supplies on York Way, King's Cross. Through an installation work comprising walks, talks, film screenings, and a table tennis tournament on specially made sculptural tables, his project tackled the very issues of regeneration, historical preservation, culture, and identity that were surfacing in rising campaigns in these early stages of development. Following an investment of over £2.5 billion in the area, beginnings of the construction of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link in 2001, subsequent restoration of St Pancras International Station, and the development of the King's Cross Estate were underway, today the King's Cross area is once again a major international transport hub in central London, location of the knowledge cluster The Knowledge Quarter[ii] and multi-million pound residential and commercial properties. Such is the transformation from decades of industrial dereliction and notorious red-light district, that the neighbourhood of King's Cross is now described by the London daily newspaper *Evening Standard* as a "rising phoenix."

The short walk from King's Cross Rail Station along the estates' main street – King's Boulevard – towards Granary Square, that is the heart of the estate, takes you past the core of the development of corporate premises and its most eagerly awaited prospective tenant the Google UK Headquarters, which at the time of writing is still under construction. The area has become a prime focus for 'Silicon Valley' real estate, drawing not only Google, but akin high-tech companies like Facebook, BenevolentAI, DeepMInd, and Automata.

The construction boarding that lines the boulevard and other parts of the development – a feature since opening to the public in 2011 – advertises multi-million-pound residential apartments, events schedules, and retail destinations located in the estate. More importantly, for much of the first nine years of the development, and still in some areas of the estate, the design of the construction boarding is comprised of painted green leaves in a quasi-manicured urban nature style, and photographic scapes of a true to scale tree lined landscape; an eco-brand identity that permeates the entire estate. This faux environmental aesthetic complements the strategically planted trees, planters, and positioned outdoor seating along the boulevard.

The heart of the estate, Granary Square, approximates the size of Trafalgar Square in London, and is one of the largest open squares in Europe. With its 1000 electronically operated and choreographed fountains, the square is bordered by the Granary Building housing Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London, restaurants, bars, Coal Drops Yard shopping complex, and the Regent's Canal. Outdoor seating attracts visitors to sit, eat, and relax. Children and dogs play in the fountains. On a sunny day it appears a truly idyllic space: indeed, the appearance of a commons. The developer's assertion is that:

> These [open 'private'] spaces put people first and are designed to host art, events, street food, play and performance. People are welcome to meet, sit, eat their lunch, use the free wi-fi, watch the spectacular fountains in Granary Square, or simply wander through. (King's Cross Central Limited Partnership, *The development*)

Granary Square is the central feature of the King's Cross Estate; the "square," Andrea Phillips contends (2013, 250), is the "urban apparatus" through which is revealed:

> a culturally embedded idea of spatial civic organization that is both highly visible at an urban scale and woven into the psychic apparatus of subjectivity.

Paradoxically and problematically, Granary Square is the site through which the developer's ideologies and ambitions are principally enacted: how the space is viewed visually, used spatially, and perceived conceptually by the public. It is played out through the daily activities enacted by visitors and businesses alike, and the year-round spectacle-based events and performances hosted by the square that have so far ranged from music concerts, to Victorian fairgrounds, dance events, large screen coverage of Wimbledon tennis championships, and rolling public art programmes that exists throughout the estate. In August 2014 for instance, a public event themed Boudicca VS the Romans under the rubric of 'Battle Bridge', took place in the square over a weekend. Stage scenery was constructed encompassing a Roman arch, columns, and homes, with the square inhabited by actors in full costume taking on the roles of Romans and the Iceni. With the stage set, the public visitors to the estate were encouraged to walk through and interact with the spectacle. Whilst endeavouring to be historically based on an assumption that this was the site of the battle between the Romans and the Iceni, it was in effect a contemporary symbolic re-enactment of the Roman "breads and circuses," what David Harvey (1990, 265) calls, "the ancient Roman formula for social pacification of the restless plebs." A "formula," Harvey continues, "passed on into capitalist culture […] where festival and the urban spectacle [have become] instruments of social control" (1990, 265).

These events are required to be officially proposed (and independently financed) to the developers who actively market the square and the adjoining canal-side steps as event space and natural amphitheatre (a space of visual public spectacle) with a capacity to hold what they term delegates, that is, a public, of 4,000 and 200 people respectively.

Urbanism as process and product has become the source and profit of capital production. Hence the city, its urban fabric and socio-spatial structure manifest and correlate with its economy. Art and artists have long been at the centre of the economic transformation of the city with a well-established relationship between the arts sector and the private commercial sector of urban regeneration and gentrification. This varies from the temporary inhabitation of post-industrial urban areas and buildings under disrepair as artist studios, galleries, and sites for temporary art works, through to the flagship tenant status of educational, gallery and museum institutions. In London itself, the contribution of the creative industries to its economy is 42 billion pounds a year. The King's Cross area and the estate development itself is a prime example of the relationship between the cultural arts sector and urban regeneration, with Central Saint Martins art school and its public facing art gallery acting as the development's central architectural

feature flagship and earliest tenants in September 2011, as well as the King's Cross Estate art programme itself.

The intrinsic role of art itself within the estates' development was implemented into the King's Cross Central Public Realm Strategy as early as 2004, in which it recognised that "activated, animated, welcoming public spaces are critical to the success of the development" (2004, par. 2) To date there have been a series of temporary and permanent sited artworks that have taken place in these public spaces and within the buildings in the development. Whilst some of the projects have been hosted by the estate, others have been commissioned by the King's Cross Central Limited Partnership through its appointed curators and The King's Cross Project art commissioning programme. One of the earliest projects was emblazoned across the façade of the Granary building and other buildings surrounding Granary Square. Artist Felice Varini's *Across the Buildings* in 2013, consisted of giant geometric shapes of reflective tape that from a certain perspective formed one coherent image. Other artists to have exhibited so far include Rasheed Araeen, Rana Begum, Eva Rothschild, and Amalia Pica amongst others. A much-publicised temporary art project was *Of Soil and Water: King's Cross Pond Club* (2015-6) by artist Marjetica Potrč and Ooze Architects. Located in what is now Cubitt Park, the living art installation commission brought an ecological debate to this urban regeneration heartland as the UK's first ever man-made fresh water public bathing pond. The constructed 10 metre x 40 metre public swimming pond was chemical free and had the pond water:

> [...] purified by natural processes using plants, nutrient mineralisation and a set of filters to supplement natural filtration. Once cleaned, the water loops back in to the pond to complete the water cycle. The daily number of bathers is restricted by the amount of water the system is able to clean. Thus, the use of the pond remains in balance with what nature can absorb and regenerate. (ooze 2015)

Its immediate surroundings – part of the installation itself – was a landscaped area of soil with grass and wildflowers that cleaned and enriched the soil as they grew. The artist and architects of *Of Soil and Water: King's Cross Pond Club* sought to create an experience in which swimmers coexisted with nature through which they could "watch the evolution of the surrounding neighbourhood and the ever-changing city, where new possibilities and new futures are being born" (ooze, 2015). As an art work it could be experienced in two ways; as a

viewer, and/or as a swimmer (an active participant). A viewing platform open to the public was erected overlooking the pond and its environs.

Its overview of the installation was akin to that of an urban oasis; a fertile area with water amidst the dry building-site environment. The experience of the art work as a swimmer is perhaps where its concept as a living art installation was most felt, that is, if thinking of it as an art work while swimming was a consideration. In the pond itself, the plants grew over time, rendering its water and pond's architectural structure to be taken over by its ecological habitat. This afforded swimmers with a pseudo wild swim experience amidst, what was at the time, the heart of a working building site. Whilst attempting to highlight and open up a debate on the role, experience, and future possibilities of constructed ecologies within urban environments, the practicalities of this project unintentionally highlighted what is intrinsic to regeneration – inequality of access. Whilst over 20,000 swimmers are said to have bathed in the pond, with a strong campaign to keep the pond open at the end of its temporary installation, to no avail, this demographic was mostly constituted by dedicated swimming enthusiasts and local office workers in a city with plentiful lidos and wild swimming spots such as the Serpentine, and Hampstead Ponds in Hampstead Heath. Access to the pond was restricted to capped daily numbers, pay per entry, and limited time period. It's restrictions, environment, and atmosphere

were not family oriented. It is proven that the presence of art, artists and their cultural and educational institutions in urban areas in particular, build a positive image of a cultural creative hub that attracts a different social set to the area, which thereby adds commercial value to the land and property of said area. *Of Soil and Water: King's Cross Pond Club* is a good example of an art project that achieved just this.

The transitory nature of artists' living and working conditions have been historically linked with low rental accommodation, work and gallery space, and funded project opportunities that ultimately utilise artist work to give credence to developer and governmental strategies of delivering art projects "to" disadvantaged communities under the aegis of providing social good, and thus allowing "the artist" to be co-opted into the regeneration and gentrification processes that all too often help striate the socio-economic make up of urban areas from which they eventually also end up excluded. Subsequently this added cultural and commercial capital value becomes a greater asset for the developers to render art and artists as complicit agents in social and economic injustices and inequalities through regeneration and gentrification processes.

Despite what might appear as the aesthetics of social collectivity in the spaces of the King's Cross Estate, this is fictitious; what is posited and marketed as public squares, streets, and open spaces, are of course privately owned, managed and securitised for public use. It is predicated on agenda ridden profiteering, based on the privatised capitalist concerns of a neoliberal society in which regeneration projects are invested and manifested as sites and sights of economic consumption. How these spaces are managed, marketed, shaped, and securitised, are, in this case, outsourced to another private company, King's Cross Estate Services, who manage the street food stalls, entertainment events, Canopy Market, temporary outdoor broadcast screens, as well as the cleaning and security, in and of, these privately owned for public use spaces. The role and presence by the managing company in these outdoor spaces is very publicly performed by distinct, red-capped uniformed employees armed with two-way radios. The ambition of the developers, is that the 67-acre site:

> […] will be the best managed estate in the UK. A place that is clean and safe at all hours of the day and night. A place that all people will want to visit and enjoy. (King's Cross Central Limited Partnership, *Open Space Granary Square*)

To this end discreet yet direct signage posted around the area welcomes visitors to 'enjoy' their visit to the private King's Cross Estate, and for their own safety CCTV images are being recorded. In 2019 it came to light that the King's Cross Estate had installed facial recognition technology (FRT) without any signage or notifications disclosing this to visitors. After considerable media attention, and an investigation by the Information Commissioners Office, the King's Cross Central Limited Partnership issued a statement that the FRT system had been in operation between May 2016 and March 2018. It is now claimed to no longer be operational.

The very concept that we as a society have of public space, becomes problematic when played out within the regulatory confines of privatised public space, for as Andrea Phillips notes:

> [...] the idea of public space is ingrained very deeply into a psycho-social condition that affects the way we think civility – citizenship – and the way we act as citizens. (2013, 250)

Yet it is how citizens act in these open spaces of the estate that is closely observed, monitored, and ultimately curbed not only by CCTV, but by security staff on the ground, with what is deemed to be inappropriate (moral, political, anti-social) behaviour quickly suppressed by the red-capped employees. Instead any form of spontaneous performative, social, or spatial engagement (political is out of the question) within these privatised spaces, as they are highly regulated, garnering permissions to be gained and officially sanctioned in order for events to take place. In consideration of pre-managed performing spectacles, it is imperative however to take note of Saskia Sassen when she writes:

> An important distinction must be made between public space and a space with public access, in the latter there is no poesies, no making of public space. (2005: 2)

There has however been one exception in unauthorised interaction with the open space, that of the Granary Square fountains. During the summer months of 2013, the fountains and the surrounding space in the square were appropriated by families with young children from the neighbouring social housing to create an unofficial urban beach with deckchairs, beach towels, sun cream, swimming costumes, and packed lunches, strewn across the square. On the surface the spatial appropriation of the fountains by the families might appear to be a positive and enhancing contribution to the surrounding communities, especially in the light of Johnson's

(2009) assertion as such, about the value of public spaces. It was also seen as a valued contribution to the image of the area by the developers, so much so that it was subsequently co-opted for official marketing purposes by the estate. The following year in 2014, in anticipation of warmer weather, the developers unveiled a huge building wrap hoisted around the German Gymnasium building greeting travellers emerging from King's Cross rail station, promoting and encouraging the public use of the fountains at Granary Square to 'get wet' (amongst other activities), as an official active, spatial, and now integral component of the urban redevelopment of the area. It did not escape the developer's commercial interests that the popularity of the fountains would attract more visitors to the square and thereby the bars and restaurants located in it. It is the case that the developer forgoes rent with one of its tenants in exchange for a share of its financial profits. To this day, the fountains, together with those located in Lewis Cubitt Square, also in the estate, continue to prove popular during the summer months.

On closer inspection how and why the fountains and surrounding space were appropriated, point to aspects of social exclusion and stratification which are enacted both in, and consequence of, the privatised open spaces of the estate. Ultimately the influx, as courted by the estate, of high-end retail commerce, business, culture, entertainment, fine dining, and luxury housing, alongside affordable housing has, through economic consumerism, created a social division whereby the spontaneous spatial appropriation of the fountains in Granary Square was, and is, one of the few activities that the existing neighbouring communities can financially afford to partake in. However, this is not the bourgeois public sphere in the Habermasian sense, where "private people come together as a public," as Jürgen Habermas argues, in which the people claim:

> [...] the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labour. (1969: 27)

The public sphere is one in which, as David Harvey notes: "Under the social relations of capitalism, spatial practices [have] become imbued with class meanings" (1990, 259). It is here where this redevelopment perfectly exemplifies what Sharon Zukin terms "pacification by cappuccino": this is when regeneration gentrifies urban space as a site for entertainment and commerce that is geared towards those that can afford it.[iii] Any notional perceptions of freedom

and democracy that citizens associate with concepts of public space (Phillips, 2013) when, and if, the privatised space is contested in the slightest form, are surreptitiously eroded through regulatory control based on privatised capitalist concerns.

Therefore sight, visibility, and the image created and portrayed of Granary Square and the King's Cross Estate as a whole, is crucial to its existence. Observing and seeing from these urban spaces, and questioning for what purpose, how they are negotiated, and how they are perceived, is essential to the image the state and the developer aims to portray under the neoliberal project.

Despite the antonyms of the urban and the rural, historically urban and rural landscapes have been created, modelled, shaped, and understood by, and for, views, that are not merely for the acquisition and postulation of a view, but as a consequence of a point of view. Namely the same working class, that perpetuated the labour to create these views. The twenty first century urban development of the King's Cross Estate is akin to the estates of the landed gentry in England that – in particular – underwent redevelopments during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The King's Cross developers have themselves declared this as one their aspirations for the estate. The rural 500-acre Bretton Estate near Wakefield in West Yorkshire, UK, in which Yorkshire Sculpture Park is located, is such an example whereby historically the landed aristocracy transformed the hunting woodland into the landscape park, at which point the "invention of scenery" (Williams 1973, 122) took place. Recorded in William the Conqueror's Domesday Book of 1086, a manuscript surveying landownership of England and parts of Wales, the Bretton Estate has been owned by a small number of families – the Brettons, Dronsfields, Wentworths, and Beaumonts – with each increasing its land acreage and status until the late eighteenth-century. In 1948 the Palladian mansion Bretton Hall and parts of its land were sold to the local West Riding Council by its successor Viscount Allendale, and followed by the eventual sale of the rest of the estate by his son. From 1949 to the mid 2000s the Hall became the arts teacher training college Bretton Hall College, with the Yorkshire Sculpture Park founded in its grounds in 1977 by one of its lecturers Peter Murray. Nowadays the estate country park combines a number of outdoor sculptures, most famously by Henry Moore, art galleries, Visitor Centre, the Hall, Chapel, lodge, glass houses, and follies, with formal gardens, fields, designed vistas, woodland, hills, valleys, and lakes, all of which have been carefully designed and constructed through the centuries.

As other landed estates in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Bretton Estate too was influenced by the fashion for European Grand Tour travels. Mainly involving aristocratic young men, travellers would spend a number of years visiting France and Italy with long sojourns in the latter, to round off their education learning about architecture, painting and sculpture, languages, and literature. This became an avenue for colonial collecting and gathering, and thus defining systems of mastery and control, over other cultures. Upon their return, under this colonial influence, family estates were re-fashioned to resemble picturesque Arcadian aesthetics as exemplified by the paintings of Claude Lorrain, and Nicolas Poussin.

This extreme landscaping involved uprooting, moving and planting trees, creating artificial lakes, and reshaping of hills and valleys. When viewed through the windows of the country houses, these re-designed landscapes reflected the Arcadian imagery of the paintings hanging in their interiors. Sir William Wentworth who inherited the Bretton Estate in 1706 at the age of 19, went on a Grand Tour of Europe for three years. William built the Palladian-style Bretton Hall, with his son Sir Thomas Wentworth, under the direction of the landscape designer Richard Woods (a lesser known contemporary of the famous Lancelot 'Capability' Brown). Wentworth assumed responsibility for much of the parks and gardens, including the damning of the River Dearne to create the lake to the south of the Hall. Later additions to the grounds of the estate include the Summer House semi-circular Greek Temple, an obelisk, a Boat House, Menagerie Woods, Camellia House, and stone grotto among others. The inclusion of Ruins and follies such as classical temples and obelisks formed part of what were considered at the time as creating a picturesque view.

Striving against the French formal gardens popular at the time, these landscapes, falling under the rubric of the English landscape garden tradition, were designed and managed to purport a natural and wild looking image. Derived, as already mentioned, from Arcadian pastoral landscape paintings of Roman and Greek countryside, this became a new way to conceptualise

the landscape view; designed, created, and admired through paintings and for the purposes of painting. The effect of the pursuit of this idealised gaze was not only to create a socio-politically constructed notion of the aesthetic and psychic landscape 'scenery' view, but to compose and organise a class-based framing of an ideal landscape view that removed the traces of people, and at the same time eradicated an untamed land of working labour, thus instilling a notion of separation and observation (Williams, 1973). The picturesque, as in effect this was, worked, as Simon Ryan writes:

> [...] to delimit the continuity of the universe, to produce a frame which makes a text of the landscape so that it may be read and compared to the ideal. Framing landscape, and labelling it picturesque, combats its threatening vastness and unfamiliarity and demonstrates the triumphant portability of visual taste. (1996, 60)

Whilst enacting both as frame, and virtual screen "picturing" landscape vistas, the architectural windows of the houses of the landed estates can be understood in terms of, "how the world is framed may be as important as what is contained within that frame" (Friedberg 2006, 1). The "framing" enacted by the country house window, constructs a virtual image. According to Manuel Castells (1996) however, all reality is virtual as cultures and societies throughout history are made up of communication processes, which in turn are based on the production and consumption of signs. With no separation between "reality and symbolic representation," (1996, 372) all reality is virtually perceived.

The country house windows imbue a value loaded cultural, and moral image to the landscape vistas perceived through their frames. The landscape both viewed through, and contained within, the frame of the window is not however, as Denis Cosgrove notes, "merely the world we see, it is a construction, a composition of the world" (1984, 13). Landscape is understood as a "way of seeing" (Soper 2003, 341), an "enframing" as Kate Soper writes:

> [...] that requires a certain distance, a standing back, both social and spatial, from that it looks upon, and which is not available to, or at any rate quite different from the experience of, those whose labouring activity and means of livelihood render them 'closer' to the land and more immersed within it. […] [it is] a gaze that abstracts from the changing patterns of land ownership, economic power, and organisation of labour […] Instead, the landscape gaze has typically regarded the rural scene as reflecting not discord and social division, but an organic unity, a harmonious and naturally ordained order of

> wealth and reproduction, and thus confirming the privilege and status of the viewer. (2003, 341)

The framing of the ideal view by the windows of the country houses, such as in Bretton Hall, visually eradicated the gaps within which existed the working countryside, the sweat and toil of the land, the labourers, and the lower classes. If you think further back to Elizabethan times, the only people who walked in the countryside, aside from country labourers, were considered societally to be vagabonds. Stone grottos, as the one located at the Bretton Estate, were popularly built by landowners to employ hermits to live within them, adding a rustic wilderness living performative image to the landscape view; though it is not known if in this instance a hermit was indeed employed at the Bretton Estate. It would not be too far-fetched to draw parallels between the fashion for employing hermits to populate these estates and the 21st century Boudicca VS the Romans re-enactment event held in the King's Cross Estate mentioned earlier in this chapter; human spectacles which Harvey refers to as "instruments of social control" (1990, 265). Ultimately, the endeavour of creating these idealised views were for visual, value, and moral effect.

The spatial and the social in their interrelationship, are created, shaped and understood through ideological and visual points of view. An example of this is the spatial, psychic, and image identity of the British landscape as a definition of nationhood. David Matless (1998) asserts that the landscape in England has been central to definitions of Englishness for centuries. Defining where visions of the past, present and future have met in conflict over questions of national identity, disputes over history, modernity, and ideals of citizenship and the body. Symbolic of Englishness is a utopian, bucolic, green and pleasant land, what Raymond Williams would attest to be the embodiment of a "sentimental and selectively nostalgic version[s] of country life" (1984, 209) of the English rural fantasy of the collective (British) psyche. Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels define this and other landscapes as a "cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolising surroundings" (1988, 1), through which W. J. T. Mitchell argues "social and subjective identities are formed" (1994, 1).

In his *Essays on Travel* published 1918, Robert Louise Stephenson noted, "inside a garden we can construct a country of our own." The recreation of an ideal landscape, a vision of paradise has been a constant preoccupation throughout history. The most famous, the fabled Hanging

Gardens of Babylon, was built by Nebuchadnezzar II for his homesick wife, who longed for the landscape of her native Persia and its pleasure gardens or *paradeisos.*

At the end of the last Ice Age you could only attribute about two hundred surviving species of indigenous flora to the landscape of Britain. Subsequent plant introductions into the landscape, in particular during the height of the British Empire, reflected the geographical explorations of the nation and expansion of the Empire; the date of the arrival of a plant reflecting the exploration of a new country. It is this endeavour that shaped and developed the landscape and gardens of Britain. This introduction of foreign plants, in particular to gardens of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, became a horticultural expression of patriotism and imperial display. Domestic gardening was viewed and marketed, Rebecca Preston observes, as "a patriotic duty and a domestic pleasure. Practically and ideologically the garden was central to private understandings of the empire and of the wider world as a site of imperial potential" (1999, 196). Thus, the English garden provided a framed imaginary view of distant colonised lands from the comfort of home. Paradoxically the countryside was considered, Preston continues, as "wild and in need of rational, systematic order […hence the…] expansion of the towns and suburbs – the habitat of many middle-class naturalists – was also identified as [positively] squeezing the wildness out of the countryside" (1999: 202-3). Maria Kaika expands further by pointing out what she deems a "dual scripting" of the meanings of "nature" and the city:

> Nature stands for the "uncivilized", the dark untamed wilderness that requires control and whose frontier has to be pushed outwards as "progress" accelerates. On the other hand, nature is also perceived as inherently "good", as the embodiment of some innate superior moral code that has been subverted and perverted through "civilization" and "urbanization and needs to be restored. [The city] is often branded as "evil", harbouring the underbelly of modern society, while at the same time, it is heralded as the pinnacle of civilization, as man's triumph over the barbarism of uncivilized earlier times and as a hallmark of the success of the project for pushing forwards the frontier of a wild and untamed "nature. (2005, 14)

The enclosure of common land through the seventeenth century Enclosure by Act of Parliament – though it gained more popularity form the eighteenth century onwards – allowed for the appropriation, subdivision and fencing of common land shifting from public to private ownership. This allowed for the landscape terrain to become highly fragmented and compartmentalised into working fields precipitating the Agricultural Revolution. The Acts enhanced the wealth of landowners, and forced agricultural labourers to turn to the

industrialised city in search of work. Williams (1973) points out that it is this effect that aligns negativity (within the country and city myth) to the transition from the rural to industrial society precipitated by the Industrial Revolution. A societal change occurred through the migration of citizens from the iconically utopic green and pleasant land of the rural past to the dark satanic mills of modern industrialisation of the urbanised future.[iv] To this day private ownership of land/urban/scape throughout England is held by a fraction of the population, whether individual or corporate capital investment. The rural myth of an "untouched landscape" existing "outside" and – in opposition to – the "man-made," is further eradicated by Martin Warnke who writes:

> Even the simplest topographical features are the results of political decisions. The size and disposition of the fields, the crops that are grown in them and the locations of the farms are determined by re-allocations, 'green plans', agricultural subsidies and control of the market. Fields, patches of woodland, dykes, pastures and meadows are all the outcome of agrarian policies. (1994, 10)

The concentric symbolism of the rural (country) versus urban (city), and the mythic "image" of Englishness (though contextually stored under the rubric of Britishness), are continuously reaffirmed, and defines English, societal, geographical, and middle-class aspirational identity.

The Bretton Estate is today best known as the setting for the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, and public leisure access to its grounds. The park encompasses a number of indoor galleries, the 500-acre open-air gallery hosts changing exhibitions of temporary sculptures alongside permanent works by national and international artists. Artists with permanent works include Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Ai Weiwei, James Turrell, Lucy and Jorge Orta, Niki de Saint Phalle, Hemali Bhuta, Antony Caro, Alfredo Jaar, and David Nash amongst others. At the time of writing there is a temporary outdoor exhibition of sculptures by Damien Hirst, whilst more recent temporary outdoor exhibitions have included Kaws, Katrina Palmer, Giuseppe Penone, and Not Vital. The estate has grown in its logistical complexity from its heyday during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with areas of the landscape partitioned over the years under different ownership and managed for different purposes such as farmland, grassland, parkland, hunting ground, pleasure gardens, and woods. Yet it is still the case that this landscape contains the vestiges of its design, extreme reshaping, contrived vistas, and man-made fabrication; all of which have come to shape this distinct landscape. The park is now managed for the purpose of enhancing the art viewing experience for visitors. Perhaps not so different to the construction and inclusion of ruins and follies centuries past for the attainment

of picturesque aesthetics. In addition, true to the established private estate ethos, public access to this landscape is restricted to opening hours.

Over the centuries the Bretton Estate has developed, yet does not deter from the fact that for centuries it was designed and managed to attain a specific image and experience of its environment. Today it is still being managed, yet to attain a specific view and experience of art in its environment. For both the Bretton and King's Cross estates – though centuries apart – are developed to represent a particular image of the view and as a view. Their visual appearance is critical to their physical and psychological experience. What are posited as views, and their historical signification as views, are visual, spatial, and conceptually ideological, constructed, political positions that determine how we experience, understand and relate to others in public. Therefore, what is seen, perceived and understood as a view is not neutral; the view is in actual fact contrived and a highly contested political term; the view itself assumes a position of power.

The rural and urban scapes of England play crucial ideological roles inherent in their imagery; urban London as *Heart of Empire*, and the *green and pleasant land* of the English landscape as a definition of national identity as Matless argues. Traditionally viewed as quintessential English values, connecting what Stephen Daniels describes as the "imaginative geography of landscape' with the 'imagined community of the nation" (1993, 243), the traditionally accepted oppositional imagery of urban versus rural, capital versus pastoral cannot be separated. As Raymond Williams notes "capitalism" traditionally associated with the urban:

> [A]s a mode of production, is the basic process of most of what we know as the history of country and city. Its abstracted economic drives, its fundamental priorities in social relations, its criteria of growth and of profit and loss, have over several centuries altered our country and created our kinds of city. In its final forms of imperialism it has altered our world. (1973, 302)

Therefore, though historically and ideologically assumptions contemporaneously posited as distinct and opposed, the urban and the rural inform, affect, and come to define each other economically, socially, and politically; they are intimately intertwined. It is therefore no surprise that in a coming together of the historical and contemporary fabrication and management of rural and urban landscapes, public for public use spaces have coalesced into privately owned estates: spaces that to all intents and purposes to the visitor appear to be public in an effect that Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift would suggest, is "a weaving together of official

and private power and influence" (2013, 117). In this current scenario James C. Scott's theory of "seeing like a state" (1989, 2) contends that the state makes society legible through standardisation, organisation and design of cities in order for the state to have command and control over its citizens), is being replaced by 'seeing like an estate', in which citizen spatial participation and contestation is regulated by the capitalist ideology of private estate owners.

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[i] King's Cross Central Limited Partnership consists of Argent King's Cross Limited Partnership that is backed by the property developers Argent, and Hermes Investment Management on behalf of the British Telecom Pension Scheme, and AustralianSuper who are Australia's largest pension fund.

[ii] The Knowledge Quarter is a consortium of over 100 partner organisations based within close proximity around King's Cross, Euston Road, and Bloomsbury, that are engaged in advancing and disseminating knowledge.

[iii] This is a term widely attributed to Sharon Zukin from 1995.

[iv] This refers to William Blake's poem 1804 poem "And did those feet in ancient time" or better known nowadays as the lyrics to the hymn "Jerusalem."