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‘Soaring Skyward’: Urban Regeneration

The redevelopment of Liverpool and Manchester was a product of the unique post-1918 period and the challenges they faced. In particular, both cities confronted a number of problems in the immediate aftermath of war. Although the First World War finally ended in 1918 and was strongly welcomed by the millions who marched across Britain on the Peace Day of July 1919, the transition to peace did not always remain smooth.¹ For example, waves of racially motivated riots occurred in several port cities in 1919, including Cardiff and London. Provoked by concerns about unemployment and miscegenation, violence targeted black seamen and dock workers.² Liverpool saw the worst of the violence with murderous results: a young black sailor named Charles Whootton died following a chase through the city by a lynch mob; pursued by a baying crowd which shouted ‘let him drown!’ he was either pushed or jumped into the docks.³ In the same year, Liverpool also experienced the highest proportion of strike action in the Police Strike of 1919, in comparison with London, with five times as many policemen striking.⁴ The strikes led to considerable unrest throughout the city and ‘resulted in wholesale destruction of property, much looting and the eventual repayment via the public taxes.’⁵ Although Manchester did not witness this kind of violence, it did also experience significant social tensions. For instance, in 1926, the General Strike brought the city to a standstill and the city suffered from numerous attacks by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) throughout the 1920s.⁶

These post-war social tensions emerged alongside persistent economic instability in both Liverpool and Manchester. The problem of unemployment plagued Britain’s northern industrial cities more generally throughout the post-First World War period as they were particularly ill-affected by economic depression: whereas London’s official unemployment rate stood at 12 per cent in 1932, the peak of the economic depression, it reached nearly 27 per cent in North West England and approached 30 per cent in the North East.⁷ As the

old staple industries such as coal, steel, cotton and shipbuilding collapsed dramatically in England's industrial heartlands, the new light industries, such as the factories manufacturing consumer durables like radios and washing machines, emerged in the South East and the Midlands.⁸ Northern England's landscape became strongly associated with poverty and decay: 'You could see the scarred mess that greedy men have made of this handsome country,' the documentary film-maker Paul Rotha wrote when he visited Lancashire during the 1930s.⁹ As we shall see, both Liverpool and Manchester experienced severe challenges to their economies, which, in conjunction with wider social tensions, brought new concerns about instability.

At the same time as social and economic turmoil, the advent of mass democracy prompted considerable debates about the nature of the electorate.¹⁰ Britain had a cross-class electorate for the first time after the First World War and, as the rest of Europe and Russia witnessed political turbulence and the rise of political extremism, both national and local politicians took important steps to engage and communicate with the new electorate. Although the impact of mass suffrage on national politics has attracted notable scholarly attention, especially regarding the implications for political marketing, the impact on local politics remains notably under-researched.¹¹ Rather, historians tend to assume that a fall in the influence of local government heralded the decline of England's provincial cities. In particular, scholars tend to view 1914 as a turning point in the dramatic demise of civic power.¹² Yet, Richard Trainor has drawn attention to J. B. Priestley's assertion in 1934 that England was 'the country of local government'.¹³ By highlighting the involvement of the middle classes, rather than the industrial elite, more generally, Trainor suggests that the idea of decline in the 1920s and 1930s remains exaggerated.¹⁴ This chapter goes further and suggests that civic pride thrived in Liverpool and Manchester between the two world wars in response to post-First World War turbulence, but it was a civic culture that was different from the one that had flourished during the nineteenth century. Then, the great men of the industrial revolution invested in their cities to boost trade and to dwarf their competitors but also, and perhaps more importantly, as a way to wield power over the urban working class.¹⁵ After 1918, the building of public and grandiose monuments remained no less important, but the civic culture that emerged was more demotic and populist and reflected the new mass democratic age.

Local politicians in Liverpool and Manchester responded to the unique problems they faced after 1918 by investing in ambitious programmes of

urban transformation that fostered a rich culture of civic pride. By focusing on housing reform, public transport and new forms of civic and commercial architecture, this chapter highlights the innovative and imaginative strategies employed by Liverpool's and Manchester's local politicians and urban planners in the face of potentially crippling economic and social problems. Although formal, published plans did not emerge in Britain until the Second World War, interwar urban transformation was heavily publicized in the press and through municipal publicity material with a proliferation of images of the transformed urban environment, both real and imagined.¹⁶ Urban transformation and the accompanying publicity material helped to create new urban images that reinvigorated local cultures and boosted the local economies. The symbolic impact of these grandiose schemes – including those that remained incomplete by 1939, such as housing reform – was profound. Urban transformation and the accompanying urban images had important implications for urban culture more generally. As subsequent chapters explore, the ambitious programmes of redevelopment uncovered here revitalized local culture and produced new forms of civic, consumer and religious urban cultures that reflected an important localized manifestation of modernity.

Innovation and civic design in the age of political and economic turbulence

The image of Liverpool and Manchester as dynamic and innovative cities does not match the typically bleak image associated with northern towns and cities more generally between the two world wars. The 'old' staple industries such as coal mining, shipbuilding and cotton suffered from increased competition from abroad and decreased domestic demand, which caused high levels of unemployment in Northern England, Scotland and parts of Wales.¹⁷ Liverpool experienced severe challenges to its port trade and its share of national imports fell significantly across the period, from 33 per cent in 1915–20 to just 20 per cent for 1924–38.¹⁸ Just as damaging were the losses in passenger trade. The more lucrative north Atlantic trade shifted towards the newer ports, especially Southampton. Several shipping companies, most notably Cunard, moved their headquarters out of Liverpool and caused significant white-collar unemployment in the city.¹⁹ Unemployment rates hit 33 per cent in 1932 and it is no surprise that Liverpool suffered from particularly high levels of poverty

as a result of the city's economic problems.²⁰ By 1932, 700 people per 10,000 claimed poor relief, in comparison with just 297 per 10,000 nationally.²¹ Yet Liverpool was never officially designated a depressed area because it suffered less than other struggling towns and cities.²² Instability, rather than simple decline, characterized its interwar economy. The economic landscape shaped the marketing of interwar urban redevelopment, which fuelled an image that stressed commercial stability and faith in the city's future.

Lancashire did not escape post-First World War economic turbulence and its famous cotton industry collapsed irrecoverably during the 1920s. By 1939, cloth exports amounted to only one-fifth of their 1913 levels.²³ The collapse severely affected mill towns throughout the region, such as Blackburn, where the cotton industry had accounted for 60 per cent of employment; however, it had an unemployment rate of 46.8 per cent in 1931.²⁴ By contrast, the city of Manchester was better equipped to cope with the cotton industry's collapse. Certain parts of the city experienced crippling levels of unemployment and poverty. In 1934, for example, a study by Manchester University found that a quarter of all households had no member in employment and the overall unemployment level never fell below 42.5 per cent while the survey was undertaken. Nevertheless, other parts of the city saw greater prosperity and overall levels of unemployment never reached the national rate.²⁵ It was also a period of striking innovation and commercial diversification for the city. Manchester's Ship Canal (completed in 1894) became particularly important in developing and diversifying trade between the wars. Trafford Park, an industrial zone to the south of the city, attracted significant investment and, by 1933, was home to over two hundred American firms and also to a municipal airport, which was opened in 1929.²⁶ The economic context explains why presentations and depictions of Manchester's urban transformation highlighted its diverse economy and portrayed a shift away from the city's Victorian image of 'Cottonopolis'.

Alongside economic turmoil, political change characterized the decades following the First World War with the advent of mass suffrage. The national Conservative Party proved to be the most effective party in communicating across class divisions. In particular, the leadership of Stanley Baldwin fostered an inclusive rhetoric of 'Englishness' and a cosy approach to political broadcasting that enabled the party to engage effectively with voters across class lines.²⁷ Yet historians often characterize Liverpool, in particular, as being outside of the national political culture and marginalized from Baldwin's unifying rhetoric.²⁸ The apparent exceptionalism of cities such as Liverpool does seem to have

been overstated, however, since the Conservative Party remained the majority party in municipal elections in both Liverpool and Manchester throughout the interwar period but lost some seats following a rise in support for Labour, largely mirroring national trends.²⁹ We can see urban transformation and the accompanying images promoted to inhabitants as part of a broader scheme by the local Conservative Party to engage with the new mass electorate. The approach made by local politicians to engage with the newly enfranchised citizen, therefore, reveals similarities to marketing tactics adopted by the national Conservative Party in response to anxieties about mass suffrage in the early 1920s.³⁰

The more demotic local political culture adopted in Liverpool and Manchester between the wars emerged within a wider internationalist and innovative culture of urban planning. From the 1900s, for example, the work of American planner Daniel Burnham and his peers responded to criticisms that planners had spent far too much time expanding the infrastructure of cities such as Chicago to the detriment of the quality of civic culture and urban life.³¹ The link between planning and a demotic and inclusive approach to citizenship was also clear in Liverpool and Manchester: in 1925, Manchester's Town Planning Special Committee was instructed to prepare a general survey of the city's needs because 'the publication of a survey as suggested should do much to assist the municipal government and the Citizens in general to visualise living and other conditions within the city and to create a greater sense of citizenship'.³² Planners and politicians in Liverpool and Manchester, thus, adopted wider ideas about planning as a means to communicate with the classless urban citizen. Their strategy promoted a new kind of civic culture that represented a shift away from cultures that reinforced the middle-class power and dominance in the Victorian city.³³

Local politics, urban planning, architectural innovation and civic pride were interlinked and often overlapped in Liverpool and Manchester between the two world wars. The energetic ambitions of a few local and influential individuals helped to drive the vibrancy of urban redevelopment. Manchester's key figure was Lord Ernest Simon, who donated land to the south of the city for the council's ambitious project to build the Wythenshawe housing estate, the largest municipal estate in Europe.³⁴ An ardent socialist, Simon was politically active at both national and local levels and was particularly interested in improving housing for the working classes. Simon also campaigned for a more comprehensive approach to town planning with greater state involvement and advocated the

municipalization of urban land.³⁵ Manchester established a number of civic societies with links to the council and Alderman Sir Percy Woodhouse was central in convening a civic committee in 1930 to ‘take advantage of any and every opportunity arising to retain existing industries in Manchester and to seek the introduction of new industries.’³⁶ Manchester was notable for appointing a city architect, Henry Price, in 1902, who retired in 1932 and was replaced by George Noel Hill, who was charged with overseeing all municipal building projects and advising on planning and civic design.

Sir Charles Reilly, architectural expert and emeritus professor at the University of Liverpool, was instrumental in driving redevelopment in Liverpool and, to a certain degree, also in Manchester and beyond.³⁷ Reilly’s legacy lay less in his own architectural work and more in importing American ideas and trends in planning and civic design to Britain. Impressed with what he witnessed while travelling through America just before the First World War, Reilly became devoted to promoting the role of architecture in British society. He became a prolific journalist, a role in which he championed American innovations in architecture and planning, called for British cities to take on these trends and celebrated those that did.³⁸ Reilly visited America on numerous occasions, often returning with large stacks of planning material and periodicals, and during one trip, he made a dash to Chicago to take up an opportunity to meet with Burnham, whom he much admired.³⁹ Reilly’s architectural critiques of Liverpool and Manchester, published in the early 1920s, are landmarks in the emergence of a greater interest in planning and urban redevelopment in both cities, which owed much to his experiences of America.⁴⁰ Reilly was highly effective in developing the professionalization of town planning through the University of Liverpool’s School of Architecture. The school established the *Town Planning Review*, and he convinced Lord Lever to finance the first-ever professorship in planning in 1912. Reilly’s friend Patrick Abercrombie, holder of the chair from 1915 to 1935, was also important in developing the discipline and together they pursued a holistic approach to regional planning.⁴¹ Reilly’s colleague John Brodie, city engineer from 1898, provided a direct link between Liverpool Corporation (the city’s government) and the university, following the creation of a special lectureship for him in engineering. Brodie’s achievements were striking: he was one of the first to suggest an electric tram system for Liverpool, designed the Mersey Tunnel (inspired by New York’s Holland Tunnel) and pioneered a circumferential boulevard around the city. Brodie also led experimental use of prefabricated housing, assisted in the planning of New Delhi and, as his proudest achievement, invented the nets used in football matches.⁴²

In politics, the role of Sir Archibald Salvidge (chairman from 1892 to 1928) was fundamental in shaping the Conservative Party's approach to local politics. Nicknamed the 'King of Liverpool', Salvidge fashioned a deliberate 'Tory democrat' image for the Conservatives in reaction to Labour's first parliamentary seat in Liverpool in 1923.⁴³ Salvidge remained concerned about the rise of Labour and the implications of universal suffrage on local politics. Following the municipal elections in May 1926, Salvidge lamented the loss of three key districts and 'urged councillors, in their own interests, to give more time and attention to the affairs of the respective Wards to meet the ceaseless propaganda of their opponents'.⁴⁴ Yet such concerns were not limited to the Conservative Party. In the preface to Simon's 1926 publication, *A City Council from Within*, for example, the political psychologist and educationalist Graham Wallas explained that the book was aimed at younger members of the Labour Party. Wallas warned that the 'inevitable transference of power from the middle to the working classes in our English cities might be so directed as to be disastrous in some cases to administrative efficiency'.⁴⁵ Salvidge and Wallas thus exposed the tensions and anxieties both between and within the Labour and Conservative parties on a local level over the issue of mass suffrage.

One of the most influential individuals who helped to promote Liverpool's and Manchester's economies abroad was Sir Harry Gloster Armstrong, consul general in New York from 1920 to 1931. Armstrong and his wife were extremely popular in New York society and contributed much to the social, civic and religious culture of the city.⁴⁶ They left New York in 1931, to many farewell dinners and celebrations, after Armstrong obtained an unprecedented two extensions to his term and served until he reluctantly retired at the age of seventy.⁴⁷ On retirement, Armstrong moved to Manchester to become chairman of the Manchester Ship Canal and established its first American office in New York. Armstrong did much to forge close relationships between British and American cities and, as we shall see, he organized highly publicized visits from Liverpool's and Manchester's mayors in 1931. Armstrong's success was notable and on his death in 1938, the British ambassador Sir Ronald Lindsay paid tribute: 'His duty has been in New York to look after British interests and British subjects and British commerce, and I think he has done it with energy and with success'.⁴⁸ Armstrong was, therefore, symbolic of an attempt to publicize and promote British cities abroad, despite a broader strategy of economic protectionism pursued by the national government.⁴⁹

Local politicians, planners and architects were able to finance their ambitious programmes of urban transformation and accompanying propaganda

campaigns because their rateable incomes and loans from the central government increased (above inflation) between the two world wars. They also received increased profits from public transport and amenities such as electricity and gas. Liverpool Corporation had a total income of £5,366,155 in 1924 (£2,753,508 from rates), rising to £9,400,589 by 1935 (£4,367,220 from rates).⁵⁰ Manchester Corporation's income also rose substantially, from £4,947,920 in 1924 (£2,872,912 from rates) to £8,621,477 in 1935 (£4,623,801 from rates).⁵¹ This increase occurred partly because rates nearly doubled between 1915 and 1922.⁵² Both the corporations invested heavily in their respective cities. For example, Manchester Corporation consistently invested far more money in libraries and art galleries (£126,864 in 1935) than on maternity and child welfare (£83,732 in 1935). There were also revealing distinctions in how each corporation spent its income. Manchester Corporation spent significantly more money on streets: £450,528 in 1926, compared to Liverpool's expenditure of £229,027. By contrast, Liverpool's civic leaders invested more in policing, perhaps by way of response to the 1919 Police Strike, and in 1927, Liverpool Corporation spent £799,562 on policing, in comparison with Manchester's £484,745.⁵³ The choice to invest in transforming the urban environment, rather than in health and welfare, was key to local politicians and planners' ambitions to revitalize their urban landscapes. Both Liverpool and Manchester Corporations began these programmes of redevelopment and regeneration by starting with housing reform.

Housing reform

Housing was a priority in Britain after the First World War ended and the national government took significant steps to assist councils and private builders in demolishing inadequate dwellings and to construct state-subsidized replacements.⁵⁴ As they were home to some of the poorest housing in the country in 1918, it is unsurprising that both Liverpool and Manchester Corporations embraced housing reform.⁵⁵ In Liverpool, Sir Lancelot Keay, city architect and director of Housing, undertook much of the work from 1925 until 1948. The corporation rehoused 140,000 people (15 per cent of its population) in 33,355 purpose-built suburban houses between the wars.⁵⁶ Like much of the rest of the country, the council embraced suburbanization, and in 1934, the Social Survey of Merseyside reported that 96 per cent of corporation houses built after 1919 were located in the suburbs.⁵⁷

Progress made in housing reform was striking, yet incomplete. In July 1928, Liverpool's housing committee abandoned a plan to clear congested areas near the city centre in favour of supplying cheap houses nearby to relieve the acute shortage of affordable accommodation.⁵⁸ Scotland Road, the area between the port district and the city centre, was home to a large Irish Catholic population and epitomized 'squalid Liverpool' to late Victorian health reformers. It remained a site of great poverty and unemployment in the interwar period and was not subject to major clearance until the 1950s.⁵⁹ Those rehoused to the suburbs often experienced feelings of alienation and isolation due to the lack of community and social amenities. Nevertheless, many inhabitants were enthused about suburban life, although the negative sentiments towards the new suburbs by residents are well documented.⁶⁰ Liverpool Corporation did include the provision of shops in the new estates, but such businesses struggled financially, and the council often denied permission for the newly emerging chain stores, such as Woolworths, to open in the new estates as they wished to control the types of trades undertaken.⁶¹

Although Liverpool's process of housing reform remained varied in its scope and success, municipal leaders publicized their progress to encourage confidence in the city's economy. 'Nowhere has the appalling post-war problem of house shortage been more bravely and successfully tackled,' announced Lord Mayor Thomas Dowd in 1924. Dowd continued,

It would have been impossible for the city to undertake works of such magnitude as this if its financial stability were not impregnable. But happily, Liverpool's financial credit is high – so high, indeed, that on more than one occasion it has been able to borrow money in the open market more cheaply than the Imperial Government itself.⁶²

Lord Mayor Edwin Thompson repeated these sentiments in 1931, when he also turned to the changing urban environment to express optimism in the city's commercial future. 'Evidence of this faith in the future meets us at every hand on both sides of the river,' he declared, 'it is to be read in ... the vast development of our suburbs; in the contemplated attacks on our slum areas; in our new arterial roads and town and regional planning schemes.'⁶³ Municipal leaders acknowledged that Liverpool's programme of housing reform was incomplete, but claimed it was 'progressing step by step, thanks to enlightened civic management and courageous private enterprise. ... Liverpool, believing in its own future, is equipping itself for the good times ahead, and at the same time lengthening her lead over all rivals, both as a city and as a port.'⁶⁴ There was,

thus, a clear attempt to promote the city's progress within a broader narrative of optimism concerning the city's economy.

The 'booster' narrative around Liverpool's investment in housing was strikingly effective and became associated with the city's international reputation. The *New York Times* made several reports on Liverpool's housing schemes between the wars and in 1933 the newspaper suggested that the city was home to 'one of the greatest slum clearance schemes produced in England'.⁶⁵ As early as 1925, the *New York Times* celebrated Liverpool's success in housing following the visit of Helen Hanning, chairman of the City Parliament of Community Councils, to examine the use of state credit in the provision of working-class housing in Britain. Hanning visited several of Britain's industrial cities but chose to highlight Liverpool's specific success in housing reform at a meeting of the City Parliament. 'This city was supposed to have the worst slums in England,' she reported:

The development there is wonderful – both in the densely populated districts and in the suburbs. ... They had also worked out a scheme and were about to erect 1000 electrically equipped and heated houses, the plan being a joint project of the Housing and Electrical Commission, the latter being city-owned. This plan contemplated selling electricity at a very low rate ... great thought has been given to recreation and playgrounds provided for even the most densely populated centres. ... I was much impressed by the many moderate-sized parks with their tennis courts, ball grounds, bowling greens and children's playgrounds, always crowded in the evenings, even dancing facilities having been provided in most of them.⁶⁶

Such a glowing report in the *New York Times* was the kind of positive publicity for Liverpool that money could just not buy. Although it was promoting housing, the reportage gave an image of an entrepreneurial and innovative city and undermined Liverpool's association with urban decay and economic deprivation.

Manchester was also ambitious in tackling housing reform and built 21,859 new suburban council houses by 1933.⁶⁷ Manchester's famous Wythenshawe estate, established on a large stretch of land to the south of the city centre, provided suburban homes specifically for the working classes:⁶⁸ a total of 40,000 inhabitants occupied 8,145 homes in Wythenshawe by 1939, which was nearly half way towards the corporation's goal of 100,000 people.⁶⁹ The corporation's investment in housing led to rather grand claims about the success of housing reform and Lord Simon claimed that no cellar dwellings were remaining in

Manchester by 1938, and whereas there had been 10,000 back-to-back houses prior to 1918, there were less than forty by 1938: 'Really bad slums, which are still common in other cities, do not exist in Manchester.'⁷⁰

The Wythenshawe estate was the corporation's showpiece in its ambitious programme of urban redevelopment. It was 'a bold experiment' and the first to combine important planning principles such as parkways, neighbourhood unit planning and agricultural belts: 'In no other example have all these elements been correlated and combined to form one self-contained entity,' explained the *Town Planning Review* in 1935.⁷¹ Wythenshawe incorporated the use of neighbourhood units, where 'the land is divided into large sectors for housing purposes, each sector being bounded by traffic routes, and having the school near the centre of it.'⁷² Historical scholarship on Manchester Corporation's interwar investment in housing tends to present it as an extension, or 'last gesture' of Victorian civic pride.⁷³ Yet municipal publicity material presented the new suburbs as symbols of a clear break with the city's Victorian past. A brochure, published in 1938 to celebrate the corporation's centenary anniversary, encouraged citizens to recognize the improvement in the city's housing stock. During the Victorian years,

slums were crowded, and street after street of cheap little houses was rushed up, often without foundations, and with walls half a brick in thickness, crowded together to make the builder's profit out of a piece of land as high as possible. ... We are now in the city of today, as clean and as healthy as the town we have just described was dirty and horrifying.⁷⁴

Figure 1.1 shows the corporation directly contrasted housing from the mid-nineteenth century and the 1930s. Indeed, publicity material consistently presented a negative image of Victorian Manchester, particularly following the collapse of the cotton industry.⁷⁵ A local newspaper, the *Manchester City News*, also compared the Victorian slums with the new suburbs in an article entitled 'Hulme Vs Wilbraham Estate'. 'Instead of dreary, depressing long rows of houses opening onto the street front ... and backing onto narrow, dirty passages,' the article claimed, 'we have ... houses into which the sunlight can penetrate ... with good gardens and plenty of space.'⁷⁶ Manchester's inhabitants were encouraged to see the new suburbs as a symbol of change, presented as a tangible example of the city's broader development.

Celebratory representations of housing reform in Manchester masked a darker reality, however. In 1930, the pressure on housing was acute and Manchester Corporation decided to delay the clearance of Hulme, an area

HOUSES—OLD AND NEW.
UPPER : HULME. LOWER : WYTHENSHAW.

Figure 1.1 ‘Houses – Old and New’

Source: Manchester Corporation, *Centenary Celebration of Manchester’s Incorporation: Official Handbook to the Exhibition of Civic Services May 2–7 1938* (Manchester: Percy Brothers, 1938), 84.

close to the city centre, until rehousing was available to its inhabitants.⁷⁷ The need for more housing was urgent and there were 10,000 people waiting for corporation housing in 1931.⁷⁸ A report by Manchester Corporation in 1932 found that 30,000 houses in Manchester needed clearing but, since that was impossible because of the acute demand for homes, the report recommended that a target of 15,000 by 1938 was more realistic.⁷⁹ Under pressure, Manchester Corporation modified its plans for housing reform. In 1932, a report for the

corporation on the Hulme Clearance Area was undertaken by the Manchester Salford and Counties Property Owners' Association, which claimed that there were no back-to-back houses in Hulme, that each had a private yard, all but nine had water carrier systems and at 4.43 persons per house 'cannot be taken as serious overcrowding'.⁸⁰ The report suggested that the Wythenshawe estate was an impractical alternative location for Hulme residents because of travelling expenses and that 75 per cent had already refused to move to the Platt Lane Estate, which was much closer. Clearing the area, recommended the report, would merely increase overcrowding in the surrounding areas.⁸¹ In response, the architect's report suggested that a better alternative was the destruction of half the houses in Hulme near the city centre. The plans show that the aim was to create as many open spaces as possible and suggested reducing density to twenty-five houses an acre with a focus on reconditioning surviving houses.⁸² Corporation propaganda was careful to ensure that the grandiosity of the Wythenshawe estate overshadowed older types of housing that did survive, such as that in Hulme. Although a striking and ambitious project, Wythenshawe did not represent the reality of all housing in Manchester by the mid-1930s. Nevertheless, the ambition in Manchester was strong and planners went further to transform Manchester in a way that revitalized local culture.

'Transport is vital to a modern city:' Replanning the city and defining the 'civic centre'

Ambitious plans for urban transformation were not limited to housing reform in Liverpool and Manchester. The interwar period was the golden age of mass public transport in both cities as impressive transport networks were established in these cities during this era. By as early as 1924, trams in Liverpool covered Allerton, Woolton and Walton on the city outskirts and, during the morning and evening peak hours, three hundred cars entered and left the Pierhead.⁸³ By 1939, Liverpool Corporation claimed that its public transport system carried 282,045,776 passengers and covered 24,620,064 miles every year.⁸⁴ Public transport expansion ensured that large numbers of people congregated in two key areas of the city, notably the Pierhead and St George's Hall. The Pierhead became 'the transport hub of the city' and 'a bustling interchange between ships and trains, ferries and trams'.⁸⁵ From there, the 'majority of routes radiate in

fanlike formation' and an estimated four thousand trams visited the Pierhead every day.⁸⁶

Investment in public transport reshaped the urban environment and, in particular, led to more clearly defined civic centres. In Liverpool, rather than build new civic architecture, the extended mass transport system was organized around St George's Hall, which cemented its position as the city's civic centre. This shift was a response to anxieties from around the time of the First World War that although St George's Hall was the 'finest example of trabeated stone architecture in Europe ... very few people seemed to have seen it. It is curious how great works of art can, as it were, disappear into a cloud.'⁸⁷ As Figure 1.2 shows, the expansion of Liverpool's public transport accentuated the role of St George's Hall, which had become the main terminus by 1935. The picture depicts how planners understood the impact of the Mersey Tunnel (completed in 1934) as they envisioned St George's Hall to be the centre of all forms of transport. By presenting an image of a coherent and ordered transport system around Liverpool's grandest and most impressive building, the image evokes a sense of grandeur. The image features Liverpool's other impressive Victorian buildings alongside St George's Hall, including the Walker Art Gallery and Lime Street Station. Planners in Liverpool appropriated these grand symbols of Victorian civic pride, when Liverpool thrived commercially, to nurture a sense of continuity with the present. For instance, the laying of the foundation stone of St George's Hall commemorated Queen Victoria's coronation, although the building was not actually completed until 1854.⁸⁸ Situated above the city and adjoining Lime Street Station (built in 1836 and rebuilt in 1850 and 1871), planners specifically chose the site of St George's Hall because it expressed 'the pride and confidence of the thriving town.'⁸⁹ By placing St George's Hall at the centre of the city's interwar public transport network, therefore, planners drew attention to Liverpool's strong history of commercial success in order to inspire confidence in its future.

The image featured in Figure 1.2 is notably similar to the system of traffic circulation proposed for public places by Eugène Hénard. Hénard, the French architect, urban planner and expert in traffic studies, designed to reduce conflict in currents of traffic.⁹⁰ Hénard presented his work at the 1910 Town Planning Conference in London, where Brodie was also in attendance.⁹¹ Brodie, like Hénard, was especially interested in the role of boulevards in urban planning and was responsible for Queen's Drive, a circumferential boulevard around Liverpool that was a minimum of 84 feet in width, going up to 108 feet in places.⁹²

Figure 1.2 'A Vision of the Future of Kingsway'

Source: *Liverpolitan*, January 1935, 15.

Brodie described the road as the 'lungs' of the city and credited Burnham's *Plan of Chicago* with shaping his designs.⁹³ 'By using this road it will be possible for traffic coming in by any of the main approaches to the town to skirt the busy business centre and to reach any part of the city without passing through the congested area,' Brodie wrote.⁹⁴ The links and influences between Hénard, Burnham and Brodie are important because they illuminate the international cultures of planning and the global influences on urban transformation in Liverpool between the two world wars. These connections and shared influences on urban design demonstrate that local cultures of modernity were outward-looking and in no way parochial.

Brodie was especially influential in designing and implementing Liverpool's interwar transformation. Brodie's greatest triumph was the Mersey Tunnel (although he personally claimed it was the invention of the nets for football goal posts), which connected Liverpool and Birkenhead and became the world's longest and largest subaqueous road tunnel. The Holland Tunnel, connecting New Jersey and Manhattan under the Hudson River, which was begun in 1920 and was completed seven years later, inspired the Mersey Tunnel. It was championed by Sir Archibald Salvidge, chairman of the Conservative Party

in Liverpool from 1892 until his death in 1928, who, claimed Reilly, ‘ruled Liverpool almost like an American boss.’⁹⁵ He displayed a passionate civic loyalty and an energetic commitment to civic pride. Known as the ‘King of Liverpool’, Salvidge embraced a more inclusive approach towards local politics in response to Labour’s first parliamentary seat in Liverpool in 1923.⁹⁶ For Salvidge, the only way for the local Conservative Party to face the threat from Labour was to take a more active role in civic culture and to focus on economic regeneration. Salvidge’s populist approach was to prove fundamental in Liverpool’s interwar urban redevelopment, and he realized that a prestige project like the tunnel would encourage investment and boost the local economy by improving traffic to the city’s port trade. Salvidge received the Freedom of Liverpool for his success in obtaining 50 per cent funding from the central government for the tunnel with the passing of the Mersey Tunnel Act in 1925.⁹⁷ The tunnel project was not without problems, however, and cost 26 per cent more than original estimates allowed and the project borrowed a further £1,369,04 from the Ministry of Health.⁹⁸ Sadly, Salvidge never lived to see the tunnel, dying in 1928, and Brodie only just lived to see its completion, dying just four months later in November 1934. Nevertheless, the tunnel proved to be one of the most symbolically important innovations in Liverpool’s interwar programme of redevelopment.

The importance of the tunnel lay not only in its potential benefits to the city’s economy but also in its ‘booster power’ that such a grandiose project would make about Liverpool to the rest of the country. For example, the tunnel was described proudly by its chairman as ‘a mighty piece of engineering, the tunnel will rank as one of the wonders of the world, as well as a monument to the civic enterprise of the city of Liverpool and the borough of Birkenhead.’⁹⁹ King George V formally opened the tunnel on 18 July 1934, amid great pomp and ceremony during a ‘Royal Tunnel Week’. The Lord Mayor accompanied the King, alongside other municipal councillors, and the Anglican Bishop, who formally offered God’s blessing to the tunnel.¹⁰⁰ Liverpool used the tunnel’s opening celebrations to promote its history in order to encourage confidence in its future. The celebrations included a pageant of women dressed as the ‘Spirit of Liverpool’ in medieval clothes and bearing beacons of virtues such as charity, progress, vision and commerce.¹⁰¹ Crucially, accompanying publicity material and rhetoric presented the tunnel as a symbol of confidence in the city’s economy: ‘What, indeed, is the great new Merseyside Road Tunnel but an act of faith unmatched probably in all of Europe?’ asked the Lord Mayor in a 1931 speech to the city.¹⁰²

As in Liverpool, investment in public transport was also important to Manchester's redevelopment. Manchester's buses carried 6.9 million passengers in 1925, increasing to 20.2 million in 1929 and by 1938, at least one tram passed through the main shopping street in the city centre, Market Street, every 24 seconds.¹⁰³ Again, there was a link between improving transport and alleviating unemployment in the area: in 1929, a Report of Works for the Unemployed Special Committee proposed a comprehensive programme of road works in Manchester over a period of five years, with 60 per cent of the cost expected from the central government.¹⁰⁴ Municipal publicity material consistently presented developments in Manchester's public transport as a symbol of the city's progress. Manchester's *Commercial Year Book* of 1925 declared, 'Transport is vital to a modern city,' and it offered statistics to 'enable every citizen to study our great municipal enterprise'.¹⁰⁵

In the 1930s, municipal publicity material continued to stress the progress made in the city's public transport in comparison with the Victorian years. In 1935, the corporation asked its citizens to contrast the 'early motor buses', which 'were a somewhat doubtful proposition from the point of view of reliability and were anything but quiet and smooth', with Manchester's newer system of operating 'motor buses parallel with and supplementary to the tramway services, each type of vehicle functioning to the best of its ability'.¹⁰⁶ The article further claimed that 'Manchester has always been a pioneer in transport'.¹⁰⁷ Public transport was also an important aspect of the centenary celebrations of Manchester's incorporation in 1938. The *Manchester Guardian's* article, 'From Horse Bus to Motor Bus', encapsulated the way public transport was used to portray municipal progress. It contrasted Manchester's first omnibus of 1824, 'a relatively exclusive conveyance' which was 'narrow and cramped', with the sophisticated and comfortable public transport available in 1938.¹⁰⁸

The impact of mass transport had a profound impact on shaping a clearly defined civic centre in Manchester. Again, evidence suggests Manchester's transformation emerged within an international culture of knowledge exchange. First was the influence of Robert Pilcher, who trained as an electrical engineer at the Montreal Street Railway before becoming the general manager for the Manchester Corporation Transport Department in 1929 until 1946. Pilcher advocated the promotion of public transport among local citizens and actively encouraged the link between civic pride and mass transit.¹⁰⁹ Secondly, the role of Town Clerk was also instrumental in fostering international influences on urban planning in Manchester. In 1925, Percy Heath held the post and he represented

Manchester in the International Town, City and Regional Planning Conference in New York. On his return, Heath reported that Philadelphia was a city that afforded comparisons with Manchester:

With many other cities, Philadelphia, population 1,894,500, affords a good example of what is being done in a built-up area by the construction, at a cost of 30,000,000 dollars, of a new artery in the form of a magnificent parkway from the City Hall in the centre of the city to an existing park on the outskirts of the city. Private citizens take considerable interest in all matters relating to the well-being of the towns and cities, and considerable co-operation exists between the municipalities and commercial bodies or individuals in all matters relating to town planning and development.¹¹⁰

These international influences ensured that the expansion of public transport in Manchester possessed a prominent role in civic culture and contributed to the emergence of a clearly defined civic centre in the heart of the city. Following expansion, the tram system terminated in Piccadilly and many ran past the rear of the Victorian Town Hall (completed 1877). ‘The routes extend from the districts beyond the City on all sides and pass through the centre of the City, thus affording the opportunity of transferring from one route to another,’ described one public transport handbook in 1928.¹¹¹ The area behind the Victorian Town Hall (St Peter’s Square) became the focus of civic culture with the building of Manchester Central Library (1934) and the Town Hall extension (1938). The impact of public transport expansion was fundamental to this shift and municipal investment in the library and public transport went hand in hand.¹¹²

The interest in reshaping civic space in Manchester followed numerous criticisms of the city’s civic design and architectural form that emerged in the early 1920s and led by Reilly, but his calls for reform gained momentum quickly. In 1921, for instance, the *Manchester Guardian Yearbook* complained that

Manchester does not rank highly among the world’s beauty spots. ... Manchester is a conglomeration of architectural accidents that sprang up as commercial interests of the moment dictated. A finely conceived city should have its great public and administrating buildings grouped for combined effect in a stately civic centre. ... The root of the trouble is a lack of organic planning and corporate imagination.¹¹³

These kinds of criticisms helped to provoke a new interest in planning and development from the early 1920s. Concerns focused particularly on the area

where the corporation eventually built the new library and Town Hall extension. In 1924, the area, then known as 'Jackson's Row' and covering 1,618 square yards, was considered the 'heart of the city' and described as 'an exceptional site'. A report commissioned by the corporation warned against piecemeal allocation, but suggested that the area should not be left vacant. It recommended that a representative 'should be appointed and charged with the duty of immediately preparing comprehensive schemes for the utilisation *en bloc* of these extensive and important sites'.¹¹⁴ The new approach to the 'heart of the city' appears to have emerged directly from the Town Clerk's trip to the regional planning conference held in New York City in 1925. His report states that the redevelopment of Manchester was to 'be properly regulated in conformity with a pre-determined plan of development', in response to the trends and innovations he witnessed at the conference.¹¹⁵

In 1925, and perhaps again in response to the Town Clerk's experience in New York, the Town Hall committee – originally set up to oversee the care of all monuments and statues owned by the corporation – decided that a new library was in 'urgent need', alongside an extension to the Town Hall.¹¹⁶ By 1931, however, the committee (renamed the Town Hall extension committee) reported that the Unemployed Grants Committee, which the committee hoped to claim from, no longer considered grants towards Town Hall schemes and the plans for Jackson Row were postponed for two years.¹¹⁷ Despite these delays, the corporation finally completed the Manchester Central Library which was opened amid great pomp and ceremony by King George V on 17 July 1934. Costing almost £600,000, the library accommodated one million volumes and seated over three hundred readers in the Great Hall, which made it, in size, second only to the British Museum's reading room.¹¹⁸ Manchester Corporation presented the library within a rhetoric of populist civic culture: in 1938, municipal publicity material claimed the building was 'used by all classes in the community'.¹¹⁹ Again, the corporation presented the library as a sign of the city's progression and suggested a 'story of pioneer experimental work'.¹²⁰ The library was adjacent to the Town Hall and Town Hall extension, creating a cluster of civic buildings. Manchester also hoped to build a new art gallery, but financial restrictions hampered the project.¹²¹ Nevertheless, great admiration greeted the new building and Reilly envisioned its impact in characteristically dramatic terms:

Whatever forms of architectural expression Manchester today maybe choosing, she is undergoing one great change. A single building, it seems to me, is altering

her whole aspect ... the new Reference Library will, I think, change Manchester. Already its magnificent outline can be seen complete from St Peter's Square. It is like the Colosseum, a great isolated building planted down in the centre of the town and having no truck with its surroundings.¹²²

The library thus represented an important shift in architectural design in Manchester and became a new kind of civic monument that was unprecedented in the city.

Adjacent to the library, the Town Hall extension, designed by English architect Vincent Harris, opened in 1938 as part of the centenary celebrations of Manchester's incorporation. Costing £750,000, the building represented a notable departure from Victorian town halls: the new extension included a new council chamber, Gas and Electricity Departments with their own showrooms, cinemas and demonstration rooms. Gas showrooms represented 'a public gathering place', particularly for women.¹²³ The showroom in the Town Hall extension reflected a specifically female form of citizenship and articulated a wider attempt by the corporation to define the female citizen through her consumption of corporation goods and services, especially gas and electricity.¹²⁴ However, despite their important public role and link to women's citizenship, the new building marginalized such showrooms. In 1924, for example, the Town Hall committee decided that they would locate the showrooms in the basement of the extension as 'anything in the nature of shop windows would detract from the general appearance of the building, and would not be a desirable feature.'¹²⁵ This decision hints at tensions within the decision-making process as the committee attempted to design a civic area that appealed to the new franchise, both in terms of class and gender.

Crucially, Manchester Corporation fostered a populist rhetoric around the Town Hall extension and claimed it was 'the absolute property of the Citizens'.¹²⁶ It claimed the building was 'designed with a view to the convenience of the public' and provided 'the seat from which the city's municipal affairs are directed, and is the centre of much of the social life of the community'.¹²⁷ Victorian town halls, such as Manchester's, were associated with the imposing power of the industrial elite, seeking to impose their power over the new cities.¹²⁸ In contrast, in the 1930s, Manchester Corporation aimed to foster a more inclusive and demotic culture around its civic architecture and as Figure 1.3 shows, these new buildings were not just the civic centre of the city, but also represented 'Modern Manchester', from which the Victorian Town Hall appeared marginalized.

Figure 1.3 'Modern Manchester'

Source: Manchester Corporation, *How Manchester Is Managed* (1938), inside cover.

New commercial architecture

Municipal leaders' investment in civic architecture reflected a period of increased scrutiny about the Liverpool's and Manchester's older architecture, led by Reilly. Reilly championed New York's architectural style and canvassed planners and architects to rebuild Manchester using American methods: 'New York is developing a new kind of architecture – perhaps even a world style – before our eyes. ... The skyline then of the new New York which is forming now will be unlike that of any other city in the world. It will be more romantic than that of any other city', he wrote in the *Manchester Guardian*.¹²⁹ Redesigning the city centres, thus, became a greater priority by the 1930s, following key developments in housing reform and public transport. In 1929, for instance, Manchester's city architect,

Henry Price, claimed that demolition in the centre had already begun and the ‘general appearance is fast changing.’¹³⁰ In Manchester, planners and architects developed new forms of architecture that moved away from the city’s Gothic heritage.¹³¹ Whereas Manchester’s Victorian architecture was associated with the cotton trade, the most notable buildings of the interwar period reinforced the portrayal of a commercially diverse and cosmopolitan city.

Manchester’s planners and architects took up Reilly’s challenge and the first in the new architectural style was the Ship Canal building (1926), which was far taller than any other buildings in the city and required an act of Parliament to overrule pre-existing regulations on building height and intended to be ‘the focal point of a comprehensive development of the area.’¹³² Reilly claimed it was the ‘tallest office building in the country’ and hoped that Manchester would build further tall buildings to imitate the effect such tall buildings had on the New York skyline.¹³³ Although Manchester never reached the heights and scale of New York’s skyscrapers, important buildings did emerge in the 1930s. They included Lee House, Great Bridgewater Street (1931); Sunlight House, Quay Street (1932), then the city’s tallest commercial building; Kendal Milne’s, Deansgate (1938); and Edwin Lutyens’ Midland Bank on King Street (1935). The light Portland stone of Manchester’s interwar commercial architecture represented a clear visual break from darker Victorian architecture of sandstone and terracotta.

The new architecture was celebrated in municipal publicity material and the local press. The Ship Canal building was ‘a sign the city was progressing’ and, as we shall see in Chapter 2, a central attraction of Manchester’s Civic Week 1926 when it was decorated with lights to provide an important aspect of evening entertainment.¹³⁴ This celebration of the Ship Canal building reflected a new and more positive approach to Manchester’s architecture. Between 1926 and 1937, the *Manchester Guardian*’s semi-regular feature titled ‘A New Building for Manchester’ celebrated the city’s new architecture, including those that were not built, such as proposals for a seventeen-storey ‘skyscraper’, which the newspaper claimed ‘Manchester was promised.’¹³⁵ In 1927, the mayor praised Manchester’s ‘recent improvement in its buildings’, suggesting ‘it was good architects now studied not only the framework of a building but the work that was to be carried in it. ... Newspapers and especially the “Manchester Guardian” were doing great service by showing that there was something in architecture than mere building.’¹³⁶ The new buildings were consistently marketed in the press to emphasize the diversity and strength of Manchester’s economy. Rylands

Building, for example, was described as 'another symbol of Manchester's enterprise' in 1930.¹³⁷ Similarly, the new Kendal Milne department store was considered a 'modern building ... one of the largest in the country'.¹³⁸ There was a far more celebratory attitude to architecture in Manchester's press from the late 1920s onwards and this boosterism was used to emphasize a new era for a city that drew attention to the vitality of the city's economy.

In Liverpool, Reilly's energy and his role at the Liverpool School of Architecture ensured that the city was at the forefront in innovations of design and urban architecture. The wealthy industrialist William Lever had become interested in American architecture at the end of the nineteenth century. Lever opened offices in New York City and Philadelphia in 1895 and was responsible for Reilly's first visit to the East Coast in 1909. Reilly was very impressed: 'Ordinary American citizens ... even knew the names of the architects of their chief buildings. It was very different to the outlook of the ordinary Manchester or Liverpool citizen about his town to which I was not accustomed.'¹³⁹ The experience inspired Reilly to import American trends in civic design and architecture into Britain. As the *Manchester Guardian* reported in 1923, Reilly's contribution ensured that 'the Liverpool School is the one English School of Architecture which has persistently followed American methods and has established connections in America'.¹⁴⁰ The School of Architecture emerged to become a world leader under Reilly's energetic leadership and during Reilly's thirty-year tenure his students received the Prix de Rome scholarship on more occasions than any other architectural school in Britain.¹⁴¹ One of Reilly's most successful innovations was to send a handful of fourth-year students to gain experience of American architectural offices and Reilly expected these students to return and share their experiences with their fellow students during their fifth year of study. Two of these students even worked on the Empire State Building.¹⁴² Reilly's most famous student was Herbert Rowse, who visited America at the same time as Reilly, but stayed longer.¹⁴³ Rowse's experience of America heavily shaped the style of buildings that emerged in Liverpool during the 1930s, which are in the New York modernist style.¹⁴⁴

New York's influence on architecture in Liverpool is clear from 1930, when a flurry of neo-classical and, later, modernist buildings were completed. They included India Buildings (1930), Martins Bank (1927–32), Philharmonic Hall (1939) and George's Dock Ventilation and Control Station (1932), which were all designed by Rowse. Architect and writer Harry Stuart Goodhart-Rendel described the fashion for American commercial architecture, which, he claimed,

most English architects in 1930s Britain were unable to imitate. Rowse's work was the exception, he wrote:

That an Englishman should have produced single-handed a specimen equal to America's best is undoubtedly gratifying, although the flawless magnificence of Martins Bank at Liverpool may evoke in us admiration unmingled with affection. This building is a remarkable one, displaying great technical accomplishment on the part of its designer.¹⁴⁵

Again, depictions of changes to Liverpool's urban environment aimed to encourage citizens' optimism and faith in the city's economy. As we saw in the opening paragraph to this book, in as early as 1924, Reilly claimed that 'Liverpool, like New York, is soaring skyward. In all parts of the city splendid new buildings, such as the Adelphi Hotel, reflect the influence of the best modern American architecture.'¹⁴⁶ By suggesting favourable comparisons with American architecture, and New York particularly, Reilly hoped to present an optimistic and positive image of Liverpool more generally.

Liverpool's planners and politicians went further to forge links with New York City and in 1931 the Lord Mayor, Edwin Thompson, made a much-publicized civic visit to New York and was the first Liverpool mayor to cross the Atlantic during office.¹⁴⁷ Invited by New York's Mayor Walker, the visit was part of a broader attempt to improve trade between Britain and America, but Thompson, unsurprisingly, ensured that Liverpool would benefit most.¹⁴⁸ Huge crowds gathered to see the mayor's ship leave Liverpool for New York in the company of a large British commercial delegation heading to Washington for the congress of the International Chamber of Commerce. Organizers lit the ship, the *Britanic*, brightly for the occasion and the Lord Mayor broadcast a message to the city. He explained 'he was going out to cement still closer the close relationship between the two cities. Liverpool was the natural gateway to Lancashire and the industrial North and he wanted to emphasise this point by personal contact with the municipal and commercial life of New York.'¹⁴⁹

On his arrival, the City Hall officially received Thompson to great celebrations, including performances by Martha Atwood, formerly of Metropolitan Opera Company, singing the 'Star-spangled Banner', and from the Municipal Band, broadcast locally and nationally.¹⁵⁰ In his arrival speech, Thompson stressed the well-established links between Liverpool and New York. 'Ever since the first regular steamship service between Liverpool and New York started in 1847', he said, 'the commercial interests of the two ports had been identical.'¹⁵¹ Thompson described Liverpool to his New York counterpart as the 'most American of English

cities', and claimed Liverpool would also build skyscrapers.¹⁵² In doing so, the Lord Mayor hoped to evoke confidence in Liverpool's economy and Thompson also used the trip as an opportunity to encourage a positive image for Liverpool's commercial position. 'Commenting briefly on current business conditions, Lord Mayor Thompson said he believed there was too much pessimism about them, and that a definite feeling of optimism was well justified now,' reported the *New York Times*.¹⁵³ Also aiming to boost international trade, businessmen in Liverpool sought to establish links with Chicago through publicity stunts.¹⁵⁴ The ceremony at the opening of Chicago's new Board of Trade in 1930, for example, saw a message of greeting from the Liverpool Corn Association appear on the trading floor. A wireless phone conversation between John Bunnell, president of the Chicago Board of Trade, and Charles Sydney Jones, deputy mayor of Liverpool, also took place. In their conversation, Bunnell 'expressed hope that the occasion would help to cement the relations between the two cities.'¹⁵⁵ What emerges from these exchanges is an image of Liverpool as an innovative and outward-looking city whose leaders sought to extend existing links with Chicago and New York, the cities that the world was watching, in order to boost its own profile.

Not to be outdone, Manchester's Lord Mayor, George Frank Titt, also made a civic visit to New York City in October 1932. Assisted by Harry Armstrong, Titt ensured that his trip had greater pomp and fanfare than his Liverpool counterpart had. To drum up support prior to his departure, for instance, Titt delivered a radio broadcast in New York, in which he emphasized the interdependence of all nations. Titt spoke of his enthusiasm to 'tell the United States about Manchester. Manchester was looking forward to better times. ... Manchester was confident in its ability to consolidate its position in the world, and to attract new enterprises.'¹⁵⁶ Not just designed to sell Manchester to New York, the trip also aimed to sell Manchester to its own inhabitants. Prior to his departure, the Lord Mayor assured the Town Hall committee that he

would leave no stone unturned to draw particular attention in America to the importance of Manchester, not only as a city, but as a great port, and, in his opinion, the greatest distributing and consuming centre in the whole of the United Kingdom. That had never been stressed as much as it ought to be, because in the past, he feared Manchester people had not 'boomed' themselves quite as much as they might have done.¹⁵⁷

The *New York Times* also reported that the visit was aimed to cement friendship and cooperation of trade between Manchester and New York. It quoted the Lord Mayor as saying, 'Manchester people have not advertised the city as much as

they might have done in the past, and I hope this delegation will place before the American people the great importance of Manchester and draw attention to the fact that Manchester is a far greater city than many might be inclined to imagine.¹⁵⁸ The Lord Mayor's speeches are important because they illuminate the duality of interwar urban transformation in Manchester, which intended to encourage economic growth but also to engage with citizens at a time of political and social disruption.

Armstrong's contacts and enduring popularity in New York ensured that Manchester's Lord Mayor's visit made a real splash in the city. Titt received a gold medal by the Lord Mayor of New York and a reception of the National Industrial Conference Board and the New York Chamber of Commerce held a luncheon for him.¹⁵⁹ Titt also visited the New York Cotton Exchange, which suspended trading in his honour, where he called on the American market to buy more British goods and claimed that Manchester could produce the best quality goods. 'Manchester found that she must advertise as well as produce articles of good quality, and Manchester was fully alive to the new challenge and prepared to meet it,' Titt declared to a cheering audience.¹⁶⁰ Following on from his visit to New York, the Lord Mayor went on to 'visit Washington to be presented to President Hoover ... attend the celebrations in Boston on Columbus Day at the invitation of Mayor Curley' and, to reinforce the civic aspect of his tour, Titt then travelled to Manchester, New Hampshire and Manchester, Connecticut.¹⁶¹ On his return, Titt assured a welcome party at the Town Hall that 'the visit had been a great success' and went further:

He assured them Manchester had been well advertised, and suggested that they would be amazed if they knew how many influential people they had met ... who had not realised how important Manchester was as a banking clearing-house, as a port, and as an industrial centre which covered many important industries in addition to our staple trade.¹⁶²

The visit to America, thus, reflected Manchester's broader attempt to embrace a period of economic diversification, which the city needed to do in order to weather a very challenging economic storm.

Conclusion

Civic visits by British mayors to New York City were an important symbol of attempts made by planners and politicians to boost the image of Liverpool and

Manchester. Local politicians in these two cities responded to economic, political and social turmoil by investing in ambitious and grandiose programmes of urban transformation. Some projects, such as housing reform, remained incomplete, but redevelopment helped to create new images of these cities. These programmes of urban transformation emerged within a culture of international knowledge exchange. As we have seen, Reilly and the Liverpool School of Architecture were fundamental to the importation of East Coast American trends in planning, architecture and civic design. Reilly even claimed to have turned down a chair in architecture in Chicago, managed to get the American immigration laws waived for his visiting architectural students and became an honorary corresponding member of the American Institute of Architecture.¹⁶³ Reilly was also integral to fostering a more public role for architecture through his prolific journalism, which advertised and promoted both international developments, including the new forms of architecture that were emerging in Britain.¹⁶⁴ Yet Reilly's protégées and collaborators, most notably Rowse and Brodie, could implement their ideas only due to the vision and ambition of local politicians. Salvidge of Liverpool and Simon and Woodhouse of Manchester were notable for their energetic and imaginative responses to economic and political turbulence. Harry Armstrong's popularity in New York and links to North-West England were also important in helping local politicians to build links with East Coast America. During a celebratory dinner for Armstrong in London in 1931, for example, he regarded this closer relationship as the legacy of his consulship: 'Relations between Great Britain and the United States, he said, are now better than ever before. "American newspapers carry a great deal more news about British affairs than British papers print about America."' ¹⁶⁵ As we have seen, the *New York Times* reported favourably on Liverpool's programme of housing reform, in particular.

The local press heavily promoted urban transformation in Liverpool and Manchester alongside civic handbooks printed by the councils to publicize the new urban landscape to citizens. In doing so, their reportage helped to foster new urban images of the transformed cities. As we have seen, in Manchester, representations of redevelopment portrayed a new period for the city and evoked an image of an ordered, carefully planned city with a diverse economy, whereas Liverpool sought to foster a sense of stability and of confidence in its commercial future. In both cities, urban transformation related closely to citizenship and its representation functioned as a communication that engaged with the classless urban citizen. It is difficult to know how far citizens accepted these images; the work of local politicians to communicate with the citizens lends weight to the suggestion that there was a greater interest in 'the people' between the wars.¹⁶⁶

Faced with a turbulent economic and political climate, therefore, municipal leaders in Liverpool and Manchester invested in grandiose and ambitious programmes of urban transformation. Yet, it is important to emphasize that the work of planners, architects and local politicians in interwar Liverpool and Manchester reflected a shift away from the civic pride that had dominated these cities during the nineteenth century, which had emphasized the power of the industrial middle classes. Rather, what emerged between the two world wars was a rich civic culture that attempted to foster a more inclusive and demotic urban culture that sought to engage citizens. As we shall move on to see, politicians in both cities could not manage to avoid criticism or silence the threat of instability completely, but the civic celebrations that Liverpool and Manchester invested in encapsulated the link between urban transformation and citizenship. Civic celebrations became crucial strategies to promote positive images of these cities and to engage the classless citizen in local culture more explicitly, but also reflected the intense civic rivalry between Liverpool and Manchester.