London in-between

Ritual, habit, and collective space

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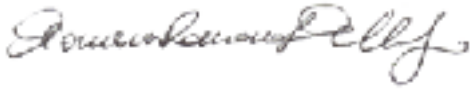

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ABSTRACT

The current architectural debate has reduced the discussion concerning our cities to a mere infrastructural and domestic discourse. It has forgotten their secular, collective meaning. Françoise Choay and Joseph Rykwert, in the second half of the 20th century, spoke about the city as an *anthropological form*, wherein – if anthropology is conceived of as the study of the human race, its culture and society – architecture is nothing but the direct traces that society leaves behind. These traces can be identified as rituals: collective, repetitive and rhythmical series of movements, which have often been understood as paradigms that generate physical forms. However, the paradigmatic nature of rituals has also facilitated the deterioration of the city into a prescribed agglomeration of secure and anonymous buildings made of private or pseudo-public space. Rituals have thus generated a standardised and collective *forma vitae* that spans from our domestic to our collective sphere, slowly minimising their meaning to that of habitual actions.

The contemporary misunderstanding between rituals and habits has inevitable consequences for architecture: the repetition of behaviours can produce predictive and standardised forms, yet a latent margin between ritual and habitual exists. There is only one character that ritual possesses over habit: rituals are collective temporary actions, which happen within a liminal condition. Rituals can therefore be intended as temporary and unpredictable actions, capable of manifesting in the space of the city and altering its status quo. A ritual produces a break in the loop of the ritual and habitual cycle, explores alternative social meanings and questions the indisputable standards that architecture obstinately and recursively puts into form.

This condition is most evident in London, a city in which this monotonous form of everyday habitualness has seen a long and complex evolution that dates back to 1666. This was not only the first moment when the capital had to face the prospect of reconstruction and commenced its slow transformation from a city constructed at first in timber, then in bricks and stone, to a city made entirely of steel, concrete and glass. But it was the moment when collective outdoor spaces, as we know them today, started appearing across the city. From the fall of Charles I's tyranny to the slow rise of what Michel Foucault calls biopower, this research selects a series of moments throughout the history of London when a clear formalisation of the dispute between ritual and habit had spatially emerged. These case studies are read starting from the collective life that was shaped within their boundaries, bringing to light the coexistence of powers that have affected their evolution and the role of the architect in the project of the city. The intention of this research is not to find a solution to the problematic way in which we design our city as a compromise between investors, developers and builders, but rather to propose that which should be considered once again as an anthropological urban form, wherein the architect can hopefully find again an active and participative role.

The thesis begins from these premises, re-asserting that rituals are crucial to the meaning of architecture, but only if separated from the monotony of their repetition and conceived of as the constitution and perpetuation of quotidian social relations between the human body and its environment. Rituals can still act as space-making devices that are highly relevant to the discourse about architecture and the city, and must be reconsidered today as we face an unprecedented expansion of construction that risks superseding the act of building with the act of thinking.

GLOSSARY

Anthropology is the study of the human race and society, and the cultural development that stems from it. Architecture has historically approximated anthropology into a quantitative method—ethnography—especially in recording the modes and patterns of inhabitation in buildings and urban spaces. Anthropology will be here considered, instead, a fundamental interlocutor to architecture, from which the discipline, which is to say the subject of architecture and how it is taught, can learn to add a crucial step in the design process: to stop and observe the contingencies within which architects are called to intervene.

Architecture is part of the cultural production of a society; it is an active and permanent component of its cultural development. Architecture can be read as part of the traces that society leaves behind. By adopting an anthropological gaze, architecture can learn to ground the design process into behavioural observations and in a careful study of how the built environment is shaped by people lives, rather than framing it into a collection of symbols or into an object of formal analysis.

Arteriality is a vital course of flow. The word since the early 19C was associated with infrastructures at large, from rivers to railways. As such it will be here adopted to define the space within which contemporary collective rituals can take place; the only space that the city does not reduce to a legible form, but that generates a form—a mould—in return.

Between is an enclosed space with defined boundaries. Tim Ingold refers to it as a bridge, a hinge, a connection, an attraction of opposites, a link in a chain, a double-headed arrow that points at once to this and that. It is the most consolidated and direct architectural association between enclosure and rituals, which justifies the meaning of form as a finite and concluded object.

Collective comes from the Latin word *colligere*, "to gather together", it is a term that implies the necessity of coming together in the space of the city, echoing what Hannah Arendt defined a "space of appearance," a space shaped by the network of arterial human behaviours, which directly connects action with form, and allows the collective to exists in a form of in-between.

Form comes from the Latin word *forma*—mould—, which reminds us that form etymologically refers to the void it creates, and it moulds. This is an important meaning that architecture has now forgotten. While form in architecture is often associated with geometry, becoming therefore an instrument of control, it will be here revised from seeking order in chaos to being in a more relational dialogue with the forces of the ground and of the people that interact with it. Form can become thus a frame that accommodate people's behaviours instead of seeking order in it.

Habit comes from the French word *habit* (clothing) and the Latin *habitus* (dress; appearance), and later developed into a social status. But instead of looking at habitus as a social contribution to capital production, habitus will be considered as a set of behaviours and gestures related to social education, which therefore allowed cultural life to happen. Habit is as fundamental to culture as it is ritual: they

both equally belong to the ethos of a society and contribute to the construction of knowledge. Through the repetition of a technique, habit becomes experiential: it relies on an attentive experience that men undergo as a process of becoming. With habit as embodied knowledge, human being then move to the "space of appearance" and partake in that web of relations that is the in-between.

Liminality comes from the Latin word *limen* (threshold) that evolves into the meaning of 'limit' and 'boundary'. Here the word will be restored to being not just a line of separation but a threshold where sacred and mundane coincide; a space of passage that we leave in order to enter a different state, where there is an opportunity for growth and change.

In-between is an intangible state of potential actions that induces a change or a movement. It is a "space of appearance", an arterial condition where movement is the primary and ongoing condition of the subject. It is the space in which architecture can acquire a new understanding of its social and political role, and that architect can ultimately learn to nurture and protect. Its form is a void where nothing is fixed and everything is in motion: the arteries of the city; the leftover urban spaces.

Public is a word that carries an elitist meaning for the contemporary city. It comes from *populos* in Latin, members of the population essentially and exclusively identified as adult males, referred to as *pubes.* Additionally it is a word that can hardly be applied to the context of London, where the distinction between *res publica* and *res privata* is very vulnerable. It will be here substituted with the more appropriate word "collective".

Ritual is a communication between individuals; an emphatic transgressive and unpredictable action in our daily life which, whether collective or individual, is capable of generating and altering the equilibrium of a given spatial condition. A ritual interrupts, surprises but also belongs to our everyday.

Transgression comes from the Latin word *trans-gredio,* which literally means going over/across. It can be interpreted as a moment of transition from a state to another. It also refers to a violation of a norm, rule or code of conduct, which means that a transgressive action can be a reactive form of resistance to a legislative and political power that administers citizens' life.

Typicality is the understanding of form that contrasts with type, intended as a form reduced to an object. A typicality embraces the complexity of human behaviours, helping contracting the reduction of form into information. Typicality is a term coined by Peter Carl, indicating never an abstract form but rather a form embedded within constituencies.

CHAPTER SYNOPSIS

1. *Prologue*

IN BETWEEN RITUAL AND HABIT

A complex anthropological dispute and its urban consequences

Within contemporary vocabulary, "ritual" and "habit" have become interchangeable terms. The latter has gradually acquired a more negative connotation as an addictive and mechanical behaviour, while the former retains its collective meaning as something capable of bringing society together, yet they are, for the most part, used synonymously. Indeed, they are both behaviours that belong to all living creatures, whose bodies are present, visible, and interact with the environment. For human beings, in particular, the two words are rooted in the ethos of society: they respond to rules and produce codes of behaviour that are repeatable both collectively and individually, generating social constructs and cultural life as a result. Habitual practices allow individuals to develop embodied knowledge and to construct a social condition that inevitably clashes with the collective sphere where rituals are set to organize our relationships and bring us together. Without habits, rituals cannot exist, because ritual and habit are two complementary sides of the human condition.

This blurring of definitions has necessarily had consequences for architecture: the repetition of behaviours produces predictive and standardised forms and yet a latent margin between the ritual and the habitual exists and can be identified with the notions of exceptionality and sacredness. Rituals are emphatic habits that happen in a condition of liminality—separate from the ordinary life. This "sacred" condition of rituals, in architectural terms becomes an enclosure, something exceptional and set apart from daily life. This liminal enclosure does not have to be determined by fixity, but it can be interpreted as an *in-between* condition or as a state of potential actions, of *arteriality,* that induces a change or a movement. In other words, we could claim that rituals happen in a state of transgression (from Latin *trans-gredio*, meaning "crossing over"). In this definition, rituals become temporary and potential disruptive actions in our daily life, generating a collective space, a space of appearance, which does not exist forever, but whose lifespan becomes revelatory of the tension between the ephemerality of rituals and the fixity of architectural form. From this clash, architecture should learn to restore its own political awareness and its role in the design of cities.

2. **FROM CHURCH TO PRECINCT**

The birth of London's outdoor collective space

For various reasons, the seventeenth century represents a very important period for London. After the brief interregnum, Charles II was crowned king, marking a significant shift in the governance of the city, which moved from being guided by an absolute sovereignty to an alliance between king and parliament. It was also during the 17th century, in 1666, when the Great Fire burned down most of the medieval city, offering London the opportunity to be reshaped in the guise of a Baroque city, articulated around geometry and legibility. After refusing a series of plans and being accused of being too authoritarian, the city ended up reconstructing itself through stages: first, houses and businesses and, later, collective spaces, which, at this point in time, were administered by the church. The Restoration of the collective sphere was then supervised by chief surveyor, Christopher Wren, who

designed the new churches based on the traces of the previous ones. But, in the early decades of the 1700s, we began to see a shift in this approach: Wren's successor, Nicholas Hawksmoor, in response to Queen Anne's request to expand the boundaries of the city towards the East End, built five churches with one common denominator: Hawksmoor designed a precinct around the sacred space, moving the space of the collective from indoors to outdoors.

This urban intervention represents a very crucial shift for this thesis: collective life moved from taking place within the indoor premises of the church to a 'loose' space adjacent to it. The addition of the architecture of the precinct ossified the fundamental urban role of the public square as the primary, space for collective life to flourish in the city. The precinct was neither a vehicle of enclosure nor separation but the translation of the liminality typical of a collective ritual, within which the diversity of society could be staged in contrast to the rigidity of the liturgy of religious rituals. This spatial shift provoked a thorough social change: through the creation of a complex network of sacred spaces across the city, Hawksmoor's London sought to respond to the common needs of the population—both civic and religious—reinventing the role of collective space within the urban form.

3. FROM SQUARE TO GREENERY

The institutionalisation of the ritual

After refusing any urban rigour, London continued to affirm its architectural independence from the rest of the Western Europe through the design of its squares. The London square differs from a *piazza*, mainly because it is surrounded by private architectures and not by public institutions. As such, the London square is widely recognised to be an instrument of the capitalist development that has shaped the whole city centre, from Bloomsbury and Soho to part of the West End. This chapter, however, looks at the evolution of the London square outside of this well-known connotation and places the square at the centre of frenzied Georgian life, where an emerging division of classes was being enacted. This chapter argues that the outdoor space that Nicholas Hawksmoor unveiled in the previous century with its precinct, was, in the eighteenth century, adapted into the design of the London Garden Square.

Through a close reading of Lincoln's Inn Fields, one of the most controversial Georgian Squares in London, the chapter investigates this liminal architecture starting from the development of its boundaries, which are read as a testimony of the impotence of the architectural project of controlling chaotic Georgian life. The precinct went from being defined by a low railing to a line of trees, a decision that was immediately met with dissent from the aristocracy. The shade provided by the trees, in fact, created a greater opportunity to transgress the private boundaries of the square, a common practice not only for the lower classes, but also for the aristocratic inhabitants of the houses around the square. Slowly, squares across the city began to open to the public only for planned occasions, such as flower shows. This signals an important change in the collective behaviours performed in and around the square: by introducing a set of regulations that dictated decent and acceptable interactions, the London Garden Square can be considered responsible for the institutionalisation of the collective ritual in the city. The precinct became an incentive of this institutionalisation, since it allowed for a portion of land to be fenced off and monitored, signalling the social and architectural failure of the London Garden Square as a collective space in the city.

4. **FROM INFRASTRUCTURE TO POLITICAL SPACE**

The rise of habitus

Architecture returns to the urban scene, which in the 18th century was widely dominated by botanists, gardeners, and landscapers. The architects of Victorian and Regency London intervened in a public sphere fragmented into individuals with their social classes, costumes, and spatial enclosures. From this fragmentation emerged a new social class, which was deeply involved in the commercialisation of the city. The rituals of this middle class—between aristocracy and working class—revolved around shopping and community, practices deeply associated with the affirmation of social status to such an extent that "ritual" began to shift in meaning into "*habitus*." In opposition to this new middle class, however, marginal behaviours were gradually becoming more evident: these were the practices by which urban spaces were produced, conducted by workers on various building sites across the city. These two forms of life took place in two different areas of the city, the street with its grand architecture and shopping arcades, and the tubular underground, where members of the working class worked or commuted to the peripheries.

The street was the perfect synthesis of the existing friction in the collective sphere between infrastructures and commercialisation of leisure and their two opposite scales, the urban and the human. At the time, London streets were more than wide-open cuts in the city. Regent Street, the stage of the middle class, was yet another failure of the control and order dictated by the crown and, through the hands of the architect, it was later dismantled with the demolition of the colonnade in the mid-nineteenth century. But there were other hidden narrow lanes, like Holywell Street that resisted the Victorian project of modernity. The working class slowly affirmed itself as the new subject of the city—represented in paintings and etchings—actively revitalising the meaning of collective rituals. By staging their discontent with the disparity of life in the city, the working class transgressed some of the civic ceremonies organised by the authorities, interrupting their orderly flow and control. These forms of rebellious manifestations soon grew into rituals of protests, performed mainly in the civic core of the city, Trafalgar Square. Through this example, the chapter argues that by refusing to partake in the civic rituals of society, where social order manifested into individual habitus, the working class shifted their ritual from the civic sphere to the political one, paving the way for the most secular ritual to survive in the contemporary city: the ritual of protest.

5. Epilogue

REBEL WITH A CAUSE

Transgression as an act of design

Etymologically, to "protest" means to "put witness publicly." A protest is a political act that needs the stage of the city to be performed in front of an audience—whether the state or the crowd. This chapter looks at protests as performative acts, which are non-violent but are based on a form of hedonistic gathering and intend to deliver a message in a form of festive collaboration. This form of protests, different from the burst of the eighteenth and nineteenth century riots, is, in this chapter, considered to be the only surviving ritual in the city. These transgressive actions against the authority of the state and its legislation, reveal a condition of sacredness in which collective rituals can take place. These forms of sacred space are, however, not so visible but are part of the network of collective spaces that were implemented and created under the work of improvements in Victorian

London. Notting Hill Carnival and Extinction Rebellion are two examples of these performative protests. Though both have different beliefs and intentions, these forms of resistance manifest in the arterial spaces of the city, streets, lanes, bridges, and thoroughfares—all forms of collective architecture that Victorian London designed.

This chapter analyses these two forms of protest in detail. It goes back to the initial definition of ritual delineated in the prologue, explaining it through these two case studies and arguing that similar forms of protest are the only practices in the city that open the possibility of a new urbanity. They reveal a new form of space in the city, one that contrasts with its daily use, which is closely related to efficiency and commerce, and can be halted with new temporary collective actions capable of transforming bridges into squares and streets into rooms. From these rituals, architects can learn how to challenge a stereotypical and now stagnated design of the city.

INTRODUCTION

Form, ritual and agency

Ritual and architecture beyond legibility

This research intends to address the relationship between anthropology and architecture—two disciplines that have a long, shared history. If the former looks at the history of humanity and the cultures that stem from it, the latter is an active and permanent component of that culture. This relationship will constitute the framework of this thesis from which a new methodology for the design and theory of architecture and the city can be developed. One that begins from processes of behavioural observation and the careful study of how the built environment is shaped by people lives, rather than what it signifies as a collection of symbols or an object of formal analysis. In doing so the thesis begins by narrowing down the link between the two disciplines by considering both through the lens of ritual practices in the city.

The relationship between rituals and architecture has often been limited to legibility: to any form in architecture corresponds a form in society.[1] In a lecture at the IUAV University of Venice, Manfredo Tafuri makes visible this accustomed correspondence of rituals with architectural forms through a comparison between the Procuratie Vecchie in St. Mark's Square and a painting by Gentile Bellini, *Procession in St. Mark's Square* (1496). Tafuri sees a direct correlation between the white-dressed procurators at the forefront of Bellini's painting and the arches that decorate the façade of the buildings, which Tafuri calls "a procession made of stone."[2] A legibility between the physicality of the built form and the formality of a ritual action has been demonstrated to have been present ever since the founding of Roman cities: Joseph Rykwert's famous study *The Idea of a Town*, which was originally published in 1964, argues that the performance of the rites of foundation of Roman cities begun with the trace on the ground of the *sulcus primigenius*. This trace set the physical boundaries of a town and was performed as the first of a series of rituals, repeated year after year, on the anniversary of the birth of the city. Rykwert, proceeds to claim that this tradition was

[1] Forty, 166

[2] First of all we will focus on the relation between the procession depicted by Gentile Bellini and the processional sequence of the arcades visible on the elevation of the Procuratie, the houses of the massima magistratura, who like the Doge is the only elected for an entire life. What is relevant here is the clear evidence of the meaning of the "Legge Daulia": the procession is here a stone procession, where each element is identical to one another." (author's translation) Manfredo Tafuri, *Le forme del tempo: Venezia e la Modernità*, 22 Febbraio 1993.

anchored in the Etruscan *Libri Rituales*, according to which collective rituals "fixed the physical shape of the city."[3]

In the last decade, Pier Vittorio Aureli clearly exposes a twofold connotation of legibility in architecture as a means of control and organisation: on one hand "the invention and development of geometry, and its power to give form to space was the outcome of how land was governed;" on the other, "the will to geometrically organize space also responds to one of the most important features of early sedentary communities: the ritualization of life. Rituals, sets of actions performed according to a more or less prescribed order, provide an orientation and continuity upon which patterns of behavior can be both established and preserved."[4] This has been the case since early nomadic communities, continues Aureli, when "daily life meant confronting extreme environmental conditions, and the ritual offered a way to crystallize necessary routines against the chronic unpredictability of existence. This is why when sedentary life began, the ritualization of life shaped the very layout of prehistoric dwellings."[5]

In Western cities, rituals have been historically considered the means through which form develops from archetype to type, contributing to a legible, acceptable, and replicable vocabulary of architecture. Ancient Roman architecture is an ideal example and end product of this process, and buildings such as baths, forums, circuses, and theatres were prolifically used as tools for the expansion and affirmation of the empire. Each urban and architectural form has maintained a certain degree of legibility throughout time, even though society has evolved more rapidly than the built form. Each collective form persists as an independent architecture that has spread across every European city and become recognisable as a collective identity.[6] Following the Western canon of the history of architecture, the sphere of

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[3] Rykwert, 30. Following Rykwert, other Italian scholars have insisted on this semantic relationship between social and built form: Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* originally published in 1966, and Marco Romano, *L'Estetica della Città Europea*, published later in 1993. Both recognise the discrepancy between the two, whereby the former is more rapidly changing than the latter, thus altering the compatibility between action and form.

[4] Aureli (2017)

[5] Aureli (2017)

[6] Aldo Rossi explains this collective identity as a re-enactment of the ancient rituals in each building, which he calls a "primary element" It is only through actions that memory survives. Every architectural form carries an inner meaning, so Viollet Le Duc was writing in the XIX century: a theory that sees the importance of the permanence of built form for collective identity survived even throughout modernist theories. A famous example is the Plan Voisin drafted by Le Corbusier, which erases most of the Right Bank of the Seine, while keeping some of the historic monuments—visible in the famous picture of the Attic de Beistegui, in which, behind a white wall, we see the Arc du Triomphe.

collective rituals finds a particularly clear resonance in European modern cities, whose "forms depend on real facts, which in turn refer to real experiences,"[7] and whose urban plans have been constructed as a direct representation of legible powers in spaces. Le Baron Hausmann for Paris, the squares of Ildefonso Cerdà in Barcelona, and even the antecedent case of the Rome of Sixtus V, are designs that confirm the power that architecture holds over collective life. In these instances, the urban form was imposed from above; it was used to oversee and determine the life of the city, through the skilful hands of the architect, who acts as the direct executor of the sovereign's will.

This research does not intend to diminish the importance of formality in this relationship between architecture and rituals. Rather it aims to reassess the architectural understanding of form not as a comprehensive abstraction of behaviours into measurements, but more as a multitude of frames for progressive behaviours. Architecture needs to face the unpredictability of life in the city and be prepared for it. Yet, there seem to be still a tacit misunderstanding that rituals generate and justify architectural and urban forms, which, in return, are subjected to little or no alterations, because they remain grounded in the city form as a testimony of their own history.

Anthropology is not ethnography

Anthropologist Victor Turner recognised in 1988 that such notion of ritual as rigid, stereotyped and obsessive is, in fact, a particular prejudice of Western societies,[8] and that "each individual's life experience alternated between two extremes: state and transition, which he redefines as "structure" and "*communitas*"—or "anti-structure."[9] More or less coeval to his work, was Kevin Lynch's book *A Theory of Good City Form*, published in 1981. Here, Lynch writes that the passage from village to city, the emergence of a permanent urban form, coincides with the move from a non-structured to a stratified and structured society; in essence, from equality to inequality. The city emerges thus as a system of relations, class, and infrastructures,[10] consequences of "a settled peasant society, which is capable of producing a food surplus and which, in local shrines and rituals, has articulated its pervasive anxieties

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[7] Rossi, 21

[8] Turner (1988), 26

[9] Turner (1966)

[10] Lynch, 7

about fertility, death, disaster and the continuity of the human community."[11] I hereby, argue that the city today is still the result of a constant re-settlements of people: the contemporary city is not a finite, absolute object often easily abstracted into a metaphor,[12] but it is more like an organism constantly inhabited by different subjectivities. This inhabitation inevitably brings collective rituals and daily behaviours to eventually contaminate one another, which, together or in contrast with the existing architecture and ways of living, generate brand new forms of life.

Joseph Rykwert's theory on the anthropology of the city—mentioned above as one of the pioneering studies on rituals and architecture—was soon followed by the research of architect Kari Jormakka who in 1995 published *The Heimlich Manoeuvre*, a lesser known study on the relationship between rituals and architectural form. Here rituals for the first time in an architectural context were revised into a relationship between subjects and the built environment, and not only read as one the consequence of the other.[13] My work comes as an attempt to combine and update these precedent studies and reopen a discussion on the meaning of rituals in architecture, by looking at the city through what I define as an "anthropological lens," which allows architects to acknowledge the life of its inhabitants. Form in architecture indeed corresponds to form in society, yet it is the same crossing of cultures and societies that contributes to the image of the city at large.

Architects, however, have often discussed rituals in the form of a diagram. A continuation of this approach can be found in the work of Tali Hatuka on the choreography of protests or in that of Pier Paolo Tamburelli and his students at the Politecnico di Milano,[14] on the "embellishment" of people's behaviours around pilgrimage sites. These publications confirm the approximation of anthropological studies into quantitative methods of ethnography: architects seem to prefer data analysis over observation.[15] Overall, aside from these attempts,

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[11] Lynch, 8

[12] On the city as a metaphor see Ungers O. M (1982) *Morphologie: City Metaphors.* Köln: Buchhandlung Walther König.

[13] Jormakka, 2

[14] Amongst the recent works on this diagrammatic understanding of rituals one can look into the very interesting study of Tali Hatuka on the choreography of protest: Hatuka T. (2018) *The Design of protests. Choreographing political demonstration in public space.* Austin: University of Texas Press; or the work of Tamburelli P.P. (2016) *Project of Historical Architecture. Fatima, Lourdes, Mount Rushmore.* Melfi: Libria.

[15] For Example, Francesco Lenzini's *Riti Urbani* dedicates an entire chapter of his research to the aperitivo and the spritz-hour as the ultimate addition to the list. See Lenzini F. (2017) *Riti Urbani.* Macerata: Quodlibet.

the struggle to deeply understand and challenge the consolidated link between human action and architectural form, but also its impact on the profession remains vivid. This, I consider to be mainly a fault of architecture, since it has historically approximated anthropology into a quantitative method, especially in recording the inhabitation of buildings and urban spaces. The tools of ethnography and data collection have distanced architects from their role as participants in a living, changing built environment. Further still, they have fostered within the discipline an attachment and subservience to the market logics that control the practice and profession of architecture, reducing it to a means and service by which to solve everyday problems. Rituals are thus commonly perceived as fixed sets of actions that are performed according to a more or less prescribed order that perpetuates and preserves patterns of human behaviours; architecture then follows by merely crystallising these actions into a geometrical organisation of space within which ways of living are replicated over time.

Anthropologists' interest in architecture has been rather consistent instead: observing society and its behaviours inevitably generates an interest towards the built environment that society either produces or interacts with. Bronisław Malinowski considers the built environment to be divided into functions and institutions: the former being related to our personal and intimate sphere, while the latter pertains the collective sphere;[16] Michel de Certeau invites us to observe the built environment by immersing ourselves into it;[17] Victor Turner considers the built environment the interlocutor of society,[18] and so did Catherine Bell, who discussed rituals not as a relationship between men and the divine, but more akin to the interaction amongst people and the built environment.[19]

Ritual studies also mention, even if not always directly, the role of form in the ritual process, often referring to it as liminality. Arnold van Gennep introduces the concept of liminality in his *Rites of Passage* to describe a state of transition between different phases of life.[20] Liminality can be easily (mis)interpreted as an enclosed and limited transitory state, and such understanding has slowly taken the connotation of sacredness—intended as separation:

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[16] Malinovski (1960)

[17] De Certeau (1984)

[18] Turner (1996)

[19] Bell (2002)

[20] van Gennep, 3

rituals became exceptional actions that take place without affecting the flow of daily life. Ultimately, liminality developed a twofold meaning: in architecture it acquired the meaning of enclosure and finite form; while in anthropology it remained associated to a state of passage, a threshold. This architectural misinterpretation of liminality into an enclosed and legible form became one of the critiques at the core of this research, and it will be here used as a lens through which we can reassess the relationship between rituals and form, between architecture and anthropology.

A revision of form: from enclosure to in-between

In the last decade, Tim Ingold, with his work on lines and his research concerning the four a's (architecture, anthropology, archaeology, and art), has directly mentioned architecture as a fundamental field for anthropology. Ingold addresses architects directly and invites them to revise the use of anthropological methods in their projects and offers a fresh way of approaching architecture by means of observing and inquiring into the conditions of life.[21] In doing so, Ingold traces a clear distinction between architectural anthropology and ethnography: a participant observation would prevent architects from stepping out from the field of inquiry; architects should participate in order to observe. An ethnographic approach is instead a mere data collection, which produces an objectification of the field of inquiry preventing architects from experiencing it as interlocutor. Ingold is very critical of ethnography, which he considers utterly problematic because it distances the observer form the participant. He reminds us to look at architecture as a set of questions and not as a set of solutions, and this anthropological way of doing architecture can only be carried through by means of observing: buildings exist to speak about something, instead of being simple interlocutors of a silent communication that relies on symbolic meanings.

Ingold re-proposes a relationship between architecture and anthropology that is less theoretical and more practical, exposing architecture to an uncertain but inspiring existence. Borrowing from his own words, I will call this emerging condition "in-between"—"a movement of generation and dissolution in a world of becoming where things are not yet given but on the way to being given."[22] Starting from Tim Ingold's invite, this research intends to propose a new method for the project of the city that combines lived experience

[21] Ingold (2022)

[22] Ingold (2015)

and physical form. It posits a method that is rooted in the history of spaces and that can be a fertile ground for discussion that considers architecture not as a finite set of forms but as a set of processes that can be encapsulated in the expression "in-between."[23]

In the following pages, I will connect Tim Ingold's anthropological studies with those conducted by urbanist and sociologists in the second half of the twentieth century, who have attempted a discussion around the decommodification of the city starting from small pockets of informality. This was at the core of the American New Urbanism in the second half of the twentieth century, in the work of Jane Jacobs' *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), Christopher Alexander's *A New Theory of Urban Design* (1987), and Kevin Lynch's *A Theory of Good City Form* (1959). These theories formed the roots of a practice called *Everyday Urbanism*,[24] which emerged in the North American West Coast, in particular in the city of Los Angeles, with the intent to enhance social change, not via abstract political ideologies imposed from outside but through specific concerns that arise from the different experiences of individuals and groups in the city. In Europe, at the same time, a similar approach could be found in the postwar anti-functionalism theories of Team X, a group of young architects (amongst many others, there were members of the British Independent Group, Alison and Peter Smithson, Italian architect Giancarlo De Carlo, the Dutch Aldo van Eyck, and the Portuguese Pancho Guedes) who contrasted the top-down functionalist theories of modernist architects, like Le Corbusier, with a more bottom-up approach to city design, one that begins from the social needs of individuals and calls for a return of humanism in urban design.[25]

Psychogeography attempted to go down this path in the late 1960s by trying to combine subjective and objective modes of study: "on one hand it recognised that the self cannot be divorced from the urban environment; on the other hand, it had to pertain to more than just the psyche of the individual if it was to be useful in the collective rethinking of the city."[26] Psychogeography, indeed, challenged the conventional representations of the city form,

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[23] This is a definition that not long before Ingold, Hannah Arendt associated with the political spaces of the city, those which she defines, spaces of appearance, spaces that last only as long as men physically remain in them: "This second, subjective in-between is not tangible, since there are no tangible objects into which it could solidify; the process of acting and speaking can leave behind no such results and end products. But for all its intangibility, this in-between is no less real than the world of things we visibly have in common. We call this reality the "web" of human relationships, indicating by the metaphor its somewhat intangible quality." Arendt, 183

[24] See Chase, Crawford, Kaliski (2008)

[25] The Team X theories were proposed in the last CIAM in Otterlo in 1959, which ultimately caused the organisation to dissolve.

[26] Sadler, 77

through a clashing of scales: the famous maps of Guy Debord and Asger Jorn are even more eloquent than the final work of the Situationist International group, where the overlapping of the plan of the city with different representations of various neighbourhoods, photographs, and texts, create a completely illegible map with a strong visual impact. Yet, this constant necessity to reconcile the wholeness of the city form with its fragments can still be perceived as a limitation. What the Situationists further neglected in their theory is that by becoming simply technical facilitators, "architects were not able to use their embedded knowledge transformatively."[27] Psychogeography found their origins in the Dadaists theories who were promoting chaos, disorder and lack of form as the qualities of art; this interest continued amongst the Surrealists, and was best expressed by the French critic Georges Bataille. Bataille's 1929 *Critical Dictionary* included an entry on *L'Informe* or the "Formless," a category that celebrates meaninglessness and, as a term, serves to bring things down in the world.[28]

This all comes back to a revised meaning of form, which not by chance, etymologically comes from the Latin word *forma*—mould—and, therefore, a form inherently depends on the void it creates. The presence of a built object has a direct impact on the outdoor space that sits around it, which had existed far before its construction. Thus, the meaning of form in architecture still has relevance, but it must shift from seeking order in chaos to being in a more relational dialogue with the forces of the ground and of the people that interact with it. Under this framework, architects can imagine without the burden of control: "to have a vision […] to be adjusted to circumstances. […] the making of a choice is neither relativist nor determinist because we enter into those choices as sentient, knowing, and situated people."[29]

[27] Till, 165

[28] Forty, 170

[29] Till, 59-60

London: a paradigm

If rituals are actions that happen in a space of in-between, and their sacredness can be revised into a state of constant movement, I, therefore, propose that rituals can happen in a state of transgression (from Latin *trans-gredio*, meaning "crossing over"). The prologue to this thesis intends to frame this new definition of rituals, by tracing a literature review around the topic grounded in both the world of architecture and anthropology. It intends to locate the formal discussion on rituals understood as temporary and potentially disruptive actions capable of generating a space of appearance, which does not exist forever, but whose lifespan becomes revelatory of the tension between the ephemerality of rituals and the fixity of architectural form. The aim of the prologue is to reveal this clash as a fundamental step to be acknowledged in order for architecture to restore its own political awareness and its role in the design of cities.

From this definition of rituals as transgressive actions, the thesis decides to transcends the study of indoor, enclosed spaces preferring to look exclusively at outdoor spaces and their rituals, in order to reinforce the caesura between legibility, form and human actions; in fact, the outdoor space is much less quantifiable and readable as a concluded form. It is worth noting that throughout the thesis I will avoid the use of the term "public," which was meaningful in the second part of the twentieth century for sociologists like Jurgen Habermas or Hannah Arendt, but it is less so now. I would rather use the more appropriate term "collective", a term that is perhaps more faithful to our current living condition, where the distinction between public and private is weakened by the presence of the digital space, which we participate in from the safety of our domestic walls: "collective" comes from the Latin word *colligere*, which means "to gather together." "Collective" is a term that implies the necessity of coming together in the space of the city, echoing what Arendt called a "space of appearance," a space shaped by human behaviours,[30] which directly connects action with form. The word "collective" is, therefore, rather different from the word "public," which carries a more elitist meaning, by referring to the people, *populos* in Latin, who were essentially exclusively identified as adult males, referred to as *pubes.*[31]

[30] Arendt, 199

[31] This distinction will be further explained in the following chapter, *In between ritual and habit.*

This decision is even more appropriate if applied to the context of London, a city where the *res privata* has almost totally eroded the *res publica*, and which is used here in the three central chapters of the thesis as a paradigmatic case study. London is, in fact, a city that has never crystallised into a precise urban form; it is a city that has constantly refused the imposition of an urban plan since its major catastrophic event, the Great Fire of 1666 and, hence, it can hardly be considered to have a legible urban form.[32] Gradually, after a brief hiatus during Georgian London, "by the end of the eighteenth century, the strength and wealth of a state depended increasingly on the health of its population,"[33] arguing that the individualisation of society brought a consequent normalisation and securitisation of its collective life. This is confirmed by the state of our built environment and, even more so, by the state of the collective spaces in our cities, which are heavily monitored, normalised, and, hence, de-ritualised. The state of security as a new governance of collective life is further confirmed by London's attitude towards its collective space today, where the loss of the Arendtian space of appearance and the consequent affirmation of the individual over the collective reached its peak starting from the nineteenth century.[34]

However, this thesis argues that, prior to the 1800s, when the advent of Victorian infrastructures turned collective space into an efficient place for transit (which were destined to be short lived), London offered a dialogue between collective subjects and form, through

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[32] "Two chief types are distinguishable among large cities. The concentrated and the scattered. The former is the more common on the continent and is clearly represented in the big government seats of Paris and Vienna, which were the prototypes of European town-planning at the end of the last century. [...] London, the largest city in the world, is the very type of scattered city." This is how Rasmussen begins his famous *London: The Unique city*; in the failure of the 1666 urban plans, he sees the triumph of London uniqueness: "Wren's plan, finished in a few days, *is* a fine example of a certain type of town-planning –that type which is now going to be abandoned. It is the town-planning of Absolutism. [...] According to modern ideas it is impossible to give a town a definite and fixed form. A town plan is no longer a beautiful pattern of streets which a clever man can design in a day or two. [...] That Wren's ideas are old fashioned as seen by modern eyes is not surprising, and it might seem out of place to introduce the subject of modern views in connexion with these old plans [...] That the King had to give up the plan immediately is but one of the numerous expressions of the failure of Absolutism in England." Rasmussen, 104–105. Wolfgang Braunfels echoes Rasmussen in his *Urban Design in Western Europe*: "In the 19th century, London had become the largest city in the world, without ever looking upon itself as a unity [...] diversity was treasured and size was unimportant." Braunfels, 327. The only legibility in urban London, which architect Terry Farrell exemplifies in his book *Shaping London*, is to be found in the triangle of power between Trafalgar Square, Parliament Square, and Buckingham Palace: "There is a surprisingly clear physical expression in London's plan of the relationship of the primary components of power—as clear as any written constitutions". Farrell, 260.

[33] Lorey, 25

[34] Far before this realisation, when England was under the reign of Queen Victoria and individualism began to shape society into the formation of classes. In the mid-nineteenth century, Alexis de Tocqueville introduced, for the first time, the word "individualism" in the American context. He used it to describe the "American" character that was emerging in a society that at that time was driven by a growing market economy. Tocqueville described the phenomenon of individualism as "each person, withdrawn on himself, behaves as though he is a stranger. His children and his good friends constitute for him the whole of the human species. As for his transactions with his fellow citizens, he may mix among them, but he sees them not; he touches them, but he does not feel them; he exists only in himself and for himself alone. And if on these terms there remains in his mind a sense of family, there no longer remains a sense of society." Stephenson, 111. George Simmel reads the same phenomenon, a century later, with a similar provocation in relation to a "less sociable, less convivial" society, claiming a disappearance of "public form of culture, such as collective ritual." Simmel, 15–59

which the project of the city was gradually shaped and influenced by its rituals. The first chapter in fact goes back to the aftermath of the Great Fire of London in 1666, since the fall of Charles I brought about the transfer of a juridical sovereignty from the hands of the king to those of the people, or, in other words, allowed for their self-regulation. This shift is spatially identified in the projects of Nicholas Hawksmoor, who followed Queen Anne's request to expand the boundaries of the city towards the East End. Hawksmoor's design strategy was to add a precinct around the sacred ground, which became an outdoor space for the collective, an alternative to the inner space of the church.

If in the early 1700s the outdoor collective space first sporadically appeared in the spaces of the city, it soon flourish into a typology, a tool for expansion and social control of the centre of London. In the second chapter, I will investigate how the precinct of Hawksmoor develops into the London Garden Square, one of the most controversial and distinctive British urban design. The Garden Square was a social apparatus, "anything that had in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living being;"[35] a tool that the first developers across the city used to bring values to their properties; but it exposed also the difficulties around land ownership that haunt the country to this day. The architecture of the precinct in Georgian London evolved in different phases: a railings, a line of trees, a dense series of bushes; it was intended to prevent mischievous behaviours that possibly disturbed the affluent inhabitants of the square, but it never managed to succeed until its partial removal in the 1800. The London Garden Square with its precinct became a great example of the failure of architectural and spatial control in London.

The third chapter demonstrates how Victorian London and the grandiose project of urban infrastructures brought back the necessity to contain the city within a singular and finite image. The outdoor space intended as a space for collective gathering was completely overpopulated with infrastructures: railways and streets became the new stages of society, which developed new rituals accordingly. However, while class distinction becomes much starker, rituals became less identifiable and more varied: to the shopping and parading of the upper class, contrasted the working and protesting of the working class. The city was stuck

[35] Agamben, 11, 15

between these two poles, a dichotomy that was clearly represented in the urban portrayals of the time.

The epilogue, finally, resumes the theoretical findings of the prologue and applies them to the contemporary city, by considering the act of protest the most visible and meaningful collective gathering at the turn of the twentieth century. It analyses how the protest evolved from being a liminal march in the most legible spaces of the city—Trafalgar Square, the Mall and Parliament Square—to an arterial network of movements that has the power to halt and transform the city we are accustomed to. The Notting Hill riots in the 1950s, that echo through the celebration of the Carnival until today, are read and compared to the most recent performances of Extinction Rebellion: both movements target the same infrastructures that Victorian London used to redesign the city, by transforming bridges into squares and streets into rooms. Both forms of protest become a contemporary adaptation of the theories behind this thesis, according to which rituals can be read as a challenge to the stereotypical and stagnated design of the city.

Misfits

Anthropologists claim that, from prehistoric settlements to modern individualism, "to think about ritual, is to reflect on human nature, sociality and culture."[36] Rituals "reflect social structure"[37] and have always played a fundamental role in the disciplines of architecture and the city, or, better yet, in the process of its design: "they provided visual symbols to represent the nation and places with which a citizen could identify".[38] Rituals have always formalised a physical space, the space of the city, yet Chris Jenks writes that "every rule, limit, boundary or edge carries with it its own fracture, penetration, or impulse to disobey."[39] The following chapters build up on this understanding of ritual as transgression in order to contrast the given assumption that the relationship between rituals and architecture is rooted in the clarity of form and order. The thesis will focus on a set of informal, urban activities in London, which throughout the centuries have not frozen into institutional actions and whose spontaneity can inform the ways we produce space. These sets of activities follow in the flow

[36] Stephenson, 5

[37] Staal, 9

[38] Jormakka, 129

[39] Jenks, 21

of and mirror social evolution that opposes itself to the scenography of the architectural and urban forms: rituals of collective life are the metre of social change, to which architecture can only find ways to adapt. This thesis aims to serve as a reminder of these *misfits* by inviting architects to be cautious towards the built environment, by observing these differences and emphases across the city that require our anthropological observation before a response with a built form can be formulated.

Building upon the case study of London, a new urban theory needs to be delineated in order to face the catastrophic overbuilding that all of our cities—from East to West—are undergoing. London is a city where the investments are overwhelming, and citizens are no longer agents of the development of their own city—and neither are architects. This thesis intends to demonstrate that architecture can be liberated from the need of legibility and order in favour of a contamination with the reality of the socio-political contingencies of our existence and with the practices of people and society as they happen out in the everyday city:

> "Now if I say city it amounts to suggesting figures that are, in some way, regular, with right angles and symmetrical proportions, whereas instead, we should always bear in mind how space breaks up around every cherry tree and every leaf of every bough that moves in the wind, and at every indentation of the edge of every leaf, and also it forms along every vein of the leaf, and on the network of veins inside the leaf, and on the piercings made every moment by the riddling arrows of light, all printed in negative in the dough of the void, so that there is nothing now that does not leave its print, every possible print of every possible thing, and together every transformation of these prints, instant by instant, so the pimple growing on a caliph's nose or the soap bubble resting on a laundress's bosom changes the general form of space in all its dimensions."[40]

With these words written by Italo Calvino in 1965, I would like to invite architects to look at the city with its flaws and contradictions; to have a more indulgent eye towards the use of the

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[40] Calvino, 119-120. "Ora dire città equivale ad avere ancora in testa figure in qualche modo regolari, con angoli retti e proporzioni simmetriche, mentre invece dovremmo tener sempre presente come lo spazio si frastaglia intorno a ogni albero di ciliegio e a ogni foglia d'ogni ramo che si muove al vento, e a sogni seghettatura del margine d'ogni foglia, e pure si modella su ogni nervatura di foglia, e sulla rete delle venature all'interno della foglia e sulle trafitture di cui in ogni momento le frecce della luce le crivellano, tutto stampato in negative nella pasta del vuoto, in modo che non c'è cosa che non vi lasci la sua orma, ogni forma possibile di ogni cosa possibile, e insieme ogni trasformazione di queste orme istante per istante, cosicché il brufolo che esce sul naso d'un califfo o la bolla di sapone che si posa sul seno d'una lavandaia cambiano la forma generale dello spazio in tutte le sue dimensioni."

city and its architecture by its inhabitants, which are the first and foremost interlocutors of our work.

1 - IN BETWEEN RITUAL AND HABIT

A complex anthropological dispute and its urban consequences

1.2 From collective to individual

"Ritual does not refer to religious symbolism but the non-linguistic and non-referential 'meanings' inherent in many kinds of built structures," wrote Kari Jormakka in 1992.[1] Ritual, he continues, is "the constitution and perpetuation of quotidian social relations through the interaction of the body with a structured environment."[2] Normally, we tend to associate rituals with the most disparate pool of actions: from a ceremony, which consists of a specific sequence of rituals performed in public, to unconscious personal actions, such as a daily routine made of a morning coffee and a commute to work. Today, a ritual largely embraces any action that is considered to be repetitive and consistent in our lives, from the ordinary to the exceptional—an annual leave or a summer concert—that interrupts our weekly schedule. This all-encompassing definition has made the word "ritual" interchangeable with "habit." Whereby the latter acquires the more negative connotation as an addictive and mechanical behaviour, the former retains its collective meaning as something capable of bringing society together. And yet, they are, for the most part, used synonymously. This blurring of definitions inevitably has consequences for architecture. If architecture is considered to be the direct translation of human actions into form, then repetitive behaviours, such as rituals and habits, can produce the same predictive and standardised built forms, which, today, are driving the development of urban centres across the world.

However, rituals have not always been considered extraordinary actions. In Anglo-Saxon England, for instance, collective rituals coincided with harvesting activities: for instance, a cross-shaped piece of blessed wood was placed on the agricultural field to protect corn from mice and pests or a piece of bread was blessed in a ceremony during the harvesting of the first corn. This particular set of actions took place during the so-called Lammas Festival, an important episode during the calendar year, related to religious cults—a combination of Christian and pagan cults—that happened at the very

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[1] Jormakka, 2

[2] Ibid.

beginning of August and signalled the advent of the autumnal season to "all people on earth."[3] The cyclical nature of harvesting and the sacredness of religion were combined into one collective ritual that was beneficial to the whole community, an "emphatic" action that appears in a particular moment of its social life. This ordinary understanding of ritual was discussed by Richard Bradley in a recent study on rituals in prehistoric societies. Bradley questions the insistence of prehistorians to distinguish sacred rites from ordinary life and accuses this insistence to be founded on the modern assumption that ritual activity is something set apart from ordinary life. As some studies show, such an approach has resulted in mere confusion.[4] According to Bradley, in Prehistoric England, rituals were more "easily identified as actions of a specialised kind,"[5] that "emphasise key transactions in social life,"[6] where participation and commitment were what mattered the most. Rituals should not be entirely related to religion, but they should be understood as a practice, "a performance which is defined by its own conventions" that can take place in different contexts, from "local, informal, and ephemeral to the public and highly organised, and their social context vary accordingly."[7] Bradley, hence, opens up a conversation about individual rituals and their socio-political implications. This is a pivotal thought for this study, as it was the first time that rituals were considered not solely collective actions but also individual actions that bear collective implications: "certain transactions may be attended by a greater degree of formality than others. For this exact reason, rituals can extend from the private to the public domains and from the local, even personal, to those which involve larger numbers of participants."[8] When religion later appropriated the world of rituals and turned them into a sacred activity and an exceptional social event, rituals became contained sequences of actions, dictated by a specific controlling power, which uses them as a weapon of order and control.

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[3] There is not much recurring mention of the Lammas Festival in English literature, the first one appears to be an old manuscript in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, commonly known as the *Menologium*. An accurate description of the mediaeval calendar year, which is still used today by Early mediaeval historians and scholars as a reference of time in Mediaeval societies. The manuscript dates back to the 11th century:
"And after seven nights
of summer's brightness Weed-month slips
into the dwellings; everywhere August brings
to people on earth Lammas Day. So autumn comes,
after that number of nights but one
bright, laden with fruits. Plenty is revealed,
beautiful upon the earth."

[4] Bradley here discusses in particular the example of *Viereckschanzen*, a rectangular enclosure in central Europe that dates back to the late first millennium. Usually recognised as monuments, these are here instead challenged to be simply small farms, "which archaeologists had distinguished from others by paying too much attention to the perimeter earthworks." Bradley, R. (2003) 'A Life Less Ordinary: the Ritualization of the Domestic Sphere in Later Prehistoric Europe'*, Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 13 Issue 1, pp. 5-23.

[5] Bradley, 12

[6] Bradley, 20

[7] Bradley, 12

[8] Ibid.

In contemporary society, rituals have been said to be disappearing. Korean philosopher Byung Chul-Han, when associating the fading of rituals with the loss of social and collective values in a time that is entirely devoted to production, sits in a long line of precedent theorists of modern culture.[9] Before him, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Walter Benjamin explained the flattening of social value by claiming that capitalism was becoming the ultimate religion.[10] A similar sign of decay of a collective consciousness was already revealed by other scholars, who considered ritual to have been abandoned from the life of the contemporary man. Mary Douglas and Richard Sennet, amongst others, have described the lack of belief of contemporary society to be manifested in a lack of ritual.[11] The world of human sciences often reveals a contemporary society subjected to the quickening of time, resulting in a society that is not allowed to linger and is entirely surrendered to capital production. Societies that used to revolve around rituals and their symbolic actions that shaped a community without communication are now entirely constructed on communication without community, where the only belief is the one guided by production.[12]

Losing rituals implies, therefore, losing a sense of collectiveness: individuals are absorbed in the biopolitics of capital production, where living together is no longer a priority and social values have shifted towards the preservation of the individual over the collective. Some scholars, like Pierre Bourdieu in the late 1970s, have looked at this emerging social behaviour and called it "habitus," a drive for capitalist production.[13] Habitus is something that becomes ingrained in people's lives and behaviour that can be easily misunderstood as a natural feeling, as it is hard to distinguish them. Pierre Bourdieu noticed that "the habitus is not only a structuring structure, which organises practices, but also a structured structure: the principle of division into logical classes which organises the perception of the social world."[14] In contemporary society, habitual actions, whether those are individual or collective, are essentially reduced to mere performances oriented towards efficiency. This negative connotation of habit opposes itself to ritual, as a direct consequence of a pessimistic social analysis of the contemporary lack of social values and beliefs: such negativity persists until now, when habit is still considered to be a settled or regular tendency or practice, so addictive and automatic that it is hard to give up.

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[9] Han, 15

[10] Benjamin, 288

[11] Douglas (1970); Sennett (1977)

[12] Han, 10

[13] Bourdieu, 165-166

[14] Bourdieu, 166

1.2 Function vs institution

In this work, habit and ritual will, instead, be considered two sides of the human condition, yet with the development of a capitalist modernity, habitualness—as well as rituals in some psychological sciences—is gradually associated with repetitive compulsion. Paolo Virno discusses habitualness as something that can represent the basic guiding beliefs and ideals of a community.[15] This common inclination towards repetition, typical of both habitual and ritual actions, is the key to cultural affirmation and anchors both rituals and habits in the ethos of society. Repetition is the most conservative aspect of a ritual, but it is also what guarantees its cultural value and perpetuation across time: only through a structure can a ritual be cyclically re-enacted, become recognisable, and culturally viable. In other words, it is institutionalised: it becomes a cultural paradigm.

Society, according to sociologists and anthropologists from James George Frazer to Bronisław Malinowski, is a constant balance between two paradigms: functions and institutions. Frazer distinguished "animalistic activities" from "ritualistic" ones,[16] while Malinowski renamed ordinary actions as "functions" and opposed them to "institutions."[17] Malinowski pushes this distinction further by referring to function as the satisfaction of basic human needs, while institution pertains to the realm of performative actions that gather within one recognisable jurisdiction: the collective subject at large. Functions, therefore, pertain to the sphere of the everyday, the ordinary, while in the realm of institutions exceptional actions, such as rituals, take place. Such actions constitute a system of organised activities, "which, in their agglomerate, really constitute our culture. Home and business, residence and hospital, club and school, political headquarters and church, everywhere we find a place, a group, a set of by-laws, and rules of technique, and also a charter and a function."[18] Nonetheless, both constitute equal parts of society's cultural existence: every function must pass through an institution in order to be effectively incorporated into the cultural heritage of a group,[19] no element, trait, custom, or idea is defined or can be defined if it is not placed within its relevant and real institutional setting.

According to Malinowski, our whole political and collective existence is related to the role of institutions: "some commercial or industrial business, to a school or a religious institution, to a political

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[15] Virno, 13–16

[16] Wittgenstein, 26

[17] Malinowski, 38-39

[18] Malinowski, 47

[19] Malinowski, 54

association or a recreational organization of which [we] are the official or the servant."[20] Rituals belong to the political sphere of society, where society comes together following a collective ideal and belief. Ritual follows a structure, because structure in the life of human beings is unavoidable. Every collective activity in the contemporary city is related to an institution: one of our rites of passage, graduation, is the result of a society that us to become virtuous citizens through education, which represents the collective life of our early age, and, yet it exists within the institution of the school. It is not by chance that Ivan Illich used the gerund form, *(de)schooling*, to describe education as a social ritual.[21] Malinowski teaches us that the institutionalisation of life is practically inescapable, even if the original nature of a ritual is a transient act, it will always end up being affirmed through the role of an institution.

If we go back, once again, to Richard Bradley's studies, this process of institutionalisation of rituals might be read in a different key. He suggests, instead, to look at ritual not as an "inflexible concept" but as a process, that he calls "ritualisation," a process that Bradley considered to have affected many aspects of ordinary life in Prehistoric Britain. This is not far from Malinowski's thesis, according to which human needs are the reason for the existence of a particular culture. Following Malinowski's related discussion of functions and institutions, Bradley claims that there is one main reality in which actions take place, some of which simply assume a more performative character than others—such as the blessing of the bread in Lammas rituals. We can, thus, begin to redefine rituals as a "means," as a formalised practice through which individual perception and behaviour are collectively appropriated and conditioned. This will eventually allow rituals to retain that transient character widely recognised to be the main, meaningful loss nowadays. Ritual is an action *in fieri* and an experience ultimately achieved by the cooperation of a collective of individuals, though it can begin from the individual sphere. It is only through its actions that society constructs a cultural heritage, which makes its life influential and transmittable.[22] In prehistoric settlements, the use of tools innovated by the first hominids to satisfy their basic needs, such as hunger and bodily comfort, would have had to be approved by the community in order to define a proper shared cultural function.[23] Once a weapon is recognised to be a necessity, it is institutionally officialised within society: the hunting weapon becomes a trace of a way of life and of a ritual and is, therefore, easily transmittable from each generation to the next one. Culture begins as a basic function and later acquires an institutional role in society.

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Illich, 10-11

[22] "it is through common action that society becomes conscious of and affirms itself; society is above all an active cooperation". Durkheim, 491

[23] Malinovski, 134

1.3 Un produit de cause sociale

Ritual and habit are both rooted in the ethos of society: Émile Durkheim, the father of ritual studies, defines this quite clearly when he states that ritual is intended as a physical expression of a cult, a belief that unifies a community, *"un produit de cause sociale*" [a natural product of social life]. [24] In a complex thought proposed at the end of *Les forms élémentaire de l'architecture religieuse*, Durkheim set the first parameter that would define the solemn ritual: a practice that necessitates a community and a common belief to exist. The main argument put forward by Durkheim, which was unprecedented, is that rituals develop within the social condition and it is only within the frame of a cooperative society that they generate culture. Albeit often associated with religion, in Durkheim's work, the use of the word "cult" cannot be considered a purely casual choice: due to its etymology residing in the Latin word *cultus*, it is possible to redefine the word "ritual" within the broader sphere of culture, and thus detaching it, for the first time, from its religious meaning. This reading is confirmed by Catherine Bell in her seminal *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* in which she describes ritual as connected to a general idea of belief, an idea that is capable of describing society at large and its behaviour. Bell states that over the last two centuries, anthropologists have moved from the common association of ritual with religion to having found ritual to be "fundamental to the dynamic of culture."[25] Rituals are, thus, a necessary measure of cultural development in society; they are a translation of the cultural values and beliefs of a group of people.

In London, this detachment of rituals from religion appeared far earlier than in other Western societies. At the end of the 1600s, the church was still the focus of both leisure and faith, and the pub, which today is perhaps one of the most popular sites for collective gatherings across the UK, originated from the sacred space of the church and the alehouses located in their backyards.[26] But with the beginning of the Stuart Restoration of England, in particular through the projects of Nicholas Hawksmoor, we witness the first spatial separation of church and leisure, which gave society the opportunity to finally choose between the church and the yard.

The association of belief and culture entirely redefines the understanding of ritual, which once detached from the religious field, is elevated to being a social belief capable of gluing society together.

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[24] Durkheim, 424

[25] Bell, 14

[26] "Before the Reformation, Parish Churches provided quasi-secular activities such as plays, pageants, feasts, festivities and critically, the production of Church-ales. Comparatively, Protestantism or Puritanism was more austere, seeing drinking and frivolity as inappropriate in the Church and a "profanity" to be forced outside the "sacred space". The Alehouse, as the antecedent of the pub, stepped into the Protestant Church to provide both alcohol and hospitality services. In consequence, the Alehouse came to adopt a culturally significant role and was not just a place of alcoholic excess.". Stone L. (2019) *A Brand new 'Old Pub'. The Quest for Authenticity, the Commercialisation of the Pub and the Strategic Deployment of Domestic References*. Royal College of Art, History and Theory Dissertation Thesis. For further readings on the topic, see Hailwood, M. (2014) *Alehouses and Good Fellowship in Early Modern England*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press.

This idea is, however, not far from Tim Ingold's reading of the habits of craftsmen, artisans, and musicians as an embodied form of knowledge, dependent on the repetition of their techniques. This only happens if a habit is performed in a unified experience of body and mind, with habit inevitably contributing not only to the production of the self but also to the construction of knowledge that will affect the individual's role in society. Therefore, society is above all "an act of cooperation" between individuals, their rituals, and habits, and culture is what stems from it.[27] The cultural production of a society is nothing more than the physical traces that it leaves behind, which are the result of a combination of ritual and habitual actions. Culture that begins from an individual action is ultimately turned into a communal one: each individual activity gains cultural value only when it becomes the subject of collective agreement and decision. In essence, culture is only possible when ritual and habit cooperate and are read as two balanced sides of the human condition. If ritual is a physical manifestation of a collective belief and habit is the embodied knowledge that contributes to the production of culture, then they can equally be recognised as both social products through which we can read the development of society throughout the years.

1.4 Habit, just another ritual

Habits are thus repeated, formalised rituals. The overlapping of rituals and habits through time can create such a convincing world that it is difficult to distinguish a normalised action from a spontaneous one, since both are subjected to structure.[28] Though habit develops from ritual, it is a concept that is intrinsically tied to a social status, which is a category that rituals fall into upon becoming institutionalised. Anthropologist Marcel Mauss discusses *habitudes* as human behaviours and gestures related to social education and cultural life. He recognises that some children are more inclined than others to imitate the behaviours that they observe, despite having grown up together.[29] This set of human interactions is enshrined in a cultural and social tradition and is ultimately termed the Latin word *habitus* by Mauss.

Pierre Bourdieu, unlike Mauss, detaches *habitus* from the human body and its presence in space. He discusses *habitus* mainly as a social structure, which denotes a specific social condition that is closely related to production.[30] *Habitus*, for Bourdieu, is a product as well as an instrument of capital, whereby the minor individual character disappears in a society devoted solely to production. There is no room to escape the social values and influences that an established *habitus* has on any given social structure.

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[27] Durkheim, 427

[28] Kertzer, 184

[29] Mauss, 1934

[30] Bourdieu, 166

Habitus is a creation of the same society that anthropologist Victor Turner defines as a structured and rational hierarchy of relations, in which human beings live in response to norms, customs, traditions, and rules that "are the result of an interaction between organic processes and man's manipulation and re-setting of his environment."[31] *Habitus* is what controls social relations between individuals with its social meaning, *Habitus* has the role of contributing to the affirmation of a collective culture in the same way that a repetitive ritual praxis does. *Habitus* continues to define human behaviour, "whether we call it norm or custom, habit or *mos*, folkway or usage, matters little," it still contributes to the formation of social culture and the urban environment as much as ritual does.[32]

By definition, "habit," "habitus," "habituation," and "habitude" are all different ways of describing a repetitive, ingrained behaviour and, etymologically, they all stem from the old French work *abit* and the Latin word *habitus*, which identifies a condition or an appearance, as well as something embedded in our behaviour, much like personal knowledge or a distinctive character. Therefore, "habit" can be alternatively read as "the root of reason, and indeed the principle from which reason stems as an effect."[33] Habit is, according to Tim Ingold, experiential, as it is through experience that we, as human beings, undergo a process of becoming.[34] Before Ingold, Friedrich Nietzsche tried to positivise habits by distinguishing them into brief ones and enduring ones: the former types of habits are "invaluable means for getting to know many things," while the latter are like "[tyrants who have] come near me and the air around me is thickening when events take a shape that seem inevitably to produce enduring habits."[35] Brief habits are short-lasting and, therefore, require control and decision, but enduring habits are entirely subject to external social (moral) imposition: "for instance, owing to an official position, constant relations with the same people, a permanent residence, or uniquely good health."[36]

It is commonly understood that habits are a bad mechanisation, performed without any awareness. They are thought to be behaviours that are so ingrained in our ordinary lives that it is hard to identify them while they are happening. Though habits are brief, transient, and ephemeral like rituals, they are a means through which we construct knowledge. Yet, if a ritual belongs to the sphere of the supernatural, of beliefs and moralities, a habit, on the contrary, is rooted in the construction of

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[31] Malinowski, 69

[32] Malinowski p. 69

[33] Deleuze, 66

[34] Ingold (2019), 12

[35] Nietzsche in O'Keffe, 71

[36]Ibid.

knowledge. Therefore, we rely on habits in the process of making and experiencing, in the process of in*habit*ing the city. A habit is as empirical as a ritual and, more than a ritual, it is capable of identifying who we are.

1.5 Architecture as liminality

Once culturally viable, a ritual with its own beliefs and formal set of behaviours falls into a script. It solidifies into a set of regulations that favour its perpetuation across time. For rituals, order and formality are crucial means of affirmation. For the duration of ritual actions, participants must be aware of their role in the community, and they must carefully balance their bodily movements in order to respond to a prescribed moral behaviour—this is the case when participating in anything from a church mass to a formal dinner. It is through the repetition of a formalised and recognisable rhythm that rituals come to develop cultural impact, and it is through a repeated set of carefully performed and attentively followed actions that rituals increase their cultural value and acquire a collective meaning. This generates a cyclical cadence: rituals are repeated, subsequently favoured, and ultimately translated into forms.

Architecture is the crystallisation of a ritual, it ensures its cultural recognition, perpetuation, and re-enactment across time. When actions become forms, they become replicable everywhere and emerge as a rule, a standard, a *type*. This is confirmed by the sheer urbanisation that began shaping our cities after the Second World War. Architecture can, hence, be read as a progressive step between rituals and form that make its subjects lose awareness of the ritual act, as well its meaning and belief that were initially socially agreed upon. Ritual and architecture are tied together by a need for legibility: they are both readable forms of behaviours and geometry that, once intertwined, guarantee the stability, duration, and cultural permanence of a particular belief. In this process of formal translation, a ritual practice becomes a *praxis*—an accepted practice or custom—that gradually draws near to what we had previously recognised as the contemporary connotation of habit, a settled or regular tendency or practice.[37]

There is, however, a character of ritual that habit does not possess: what anthropologists have identified as ritual's liminal condition. Arnold van Gennep, the most famous theorist of liminality, describes a rite of passage as a signal of a movement of status, which creates a formal condition of exception. In practice, liminality distinguishes ritual from habit by its being an emphatic action, while in its spatial translation, it takes the form of an enclosure. "Liminal," in fact, derives from *limes*, the

[37] Definitions taken from the Cambridge English Dictionary. This is the translation that Joseph Rykwert exemplifies in the practice of tracing the *Sulcus Primigenius* on the ground of a newly-born Roman town, which then becomes the walls of the city. Rykwert, 29.

Latin word for boundary. Robbie Davis-Floyd, in the *Third Edition of the Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, lists liminality as one of the main characteristics of rituals, alongside patterns, repetition, formality, symbols, and performance, which are all nonetheless essential qualities of habits as well.[38] Ritual, according to this notion of sacredness, of being set apart from the ordinary, is, therefore, entirely constructed around separation from daily life, and it is from such separation that the commonly held understanding of ritual as an extraordinary action is derived.

The liminal condition of rituals allows them to provide a rhythm, articulate time and space, and give an impression of order,[39] by creating a condition of exception which formally translates into a boundary or a threshold: "liminality refers to the threshold, the interstitial period between two states. The notion of limen centres around separation: the ritual participant is symbolically separated from the ordinary."[40] This passage from an ordinary state to an extraordinary state does not necessarily have to be identified with a limited enclosure. Allan Doig, in his *Liturgy and Architecture*, proposes an interesting example that physically translates the liminal condition of a ritual action into the domestic threshold—either the house of god or the domestic sphere—which signals our act of entering into a space, of passing through two states.[41] Once we cross into this state, we begin to perform a set of actions that belong to our intimate behaviours—we leave our keys in the same place, we hang our coats, and take off our shoes—and this physically symbolises the starting of a ritual. The *limes* is nothing but a physical mark that spatially distinguishes two separate spaces at different scales: a geographic boundary, a domestic threshold, or even the two stages of life, life and death, similarly to the case of van Gennep's rites of passage. Tim Ingold identifies this condition with the "in-between," which he describes as a state of potential action "a movement of generation and dissolution in a world of becoming where things are not yet given."[42] Ingold further proposes that the in-between is not a liminal condition, which would imply two extremities and one directionality, it is instead "arterial," where movement is the primary condition of the subject.

The arterial condition, which Tim Ingold reveals to us, sits in contrast with the most common physical translation of sacredness, as a state of exception: the enclosure. An enclosure is a widely acknowledged physical separation. In architecture, the enclosure has historically been reflected in ritual actions. Joseph Rykwert has studied the foundation rites of ancient Roman cities, where the

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[38] Davis-Floyd, 261

[39] Han, 35

[40] Jormakka, 36

[41] Doig, 1-4

[42] Ingold (2015), 147

primitive action of tracing a *sulcus primigenius* [first boundary] was the result of a ritual and the first step in drawing the urban form of the newly established city. In this thesis, the enclosure, as an exceptional condition of a ritual performance, will be a recurring theme across the history of London, which begins with the precinct of Hawksmoor's religious architecture and goes on to consider the use of the same urban detail for the development of the garden square in Georgian London. The precinct as an urban enclosure was the stage where the clash of rituals was taking place, which is why it is understood here as an in-between space, where powerful transformative action takes place and where the spatial construct that derives from this liminal—or better arterial—condition is always tightly related to the presence of a subject in the space.[43] Without this presence, the function that human movement gives to a space would remain meaningless. If the first gesture of an architectural project, to generate an initial form, is the enclosure of a space, then "a wall is the architectural element that formally represents and makes visible the *enclosed space as such*,"[44] such an enclosure requires a specific function in order to become space and this specific function is exactly the ritual.

Liminality is both an interruption to the natural flow of life, through the means of a new set of actions that contrast with the preceding status quo. Liminality, if reinterpreted in its active connotation, advances individuals into a different social condition by opposing a new state that sets them apart from a precedent setting; ritual, as a consequence, is nothing but a transient performance situated in a broader path. Liminality, in fact, denotes ephemerality, adding to ritual a further significance of action performed within a limited time span, where rules and moral codes of daily behaviour halt in favour of a set of actions that opposes itself to an existing condition. It is from within this new lens that we can start aligning rituals with a transgressive connotation: Byung-Chul Han writes that transgression is, in fact, part of festive rituals.[45] The sacredness of a ritual is, nonetheless, an exceptional and separate condition that can be read as disruptive and capable of dissolving the norms and structures of the relationship between individuals and society. Even the most important theorist of the everyday, Henri Lefebvre, discusses that the alienation and oppression of everyday life can only be resolved through revolutionary changes.[46]

1.6 Communitas *vs society: the social condition of rituals*

This transgressive connotation of ritual opens up a further discussion around the social condition within which they take place, as opposed to the one that they aim to contrast. On this conflict, there is

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[43] "the spatial construct is, so to speak, an emanation of the human being present, a projection from within the subject, irrespective of whether we physically place ourselves inside the space or mentally project ourselves onto it". Schmarsow, 289, 296

[44] Semper, 247

[45] Han, 26

[46] Lefevbre, Levich, 9

an interesting thread of studies that oppose two social conditions, which began with Ferdinand Tönnies. In 1887, Tönnies described society to be a technical construct, a definition that he put in opposition to the meaning of community as an organic life. Hence, if community is the real meaning of togetherness, then society, on the other hand, is identified as a group in which individual needs are more valuable than collective ones and living together is a functional necessity to this end.[47] British anthropologist Victor Turner stresses this distinction further by adding a new word that he considered to be more appropriate to define the social condition within which a ritual can take place: *communitas*.[48] Turner also contraposes society and community, but he decides to do so by focusing on social relationships amongst individuals rather than on the whole societal composition and the hierarchy of its togetherness. This is not far from what Tönnies defined as *Wesenwille*, a condition whereby humans are unified by a shared common will, which is the result of their own face-to-face interactions. This is a bond that keeps a community together for life and can be perceived in opposition to the rational relations that humans are subjected to in a society. Turner's definition is built on a similar line of thought and states that every collective subject balances its way of life between a structured and hierarchical society and a life in communitas. The latter is ultimately elevated as something purely and naturally formed by the collective will of individuals against hierarchical, normalised, and structured society. Rituals are generated within this natural will, typical of a *communitas*, which confirms, once again, that all that concerns a ritual activity stands against the social structure of a normalised daily life.

This theory ties ritual to a collective sphere that challenges social hierarchies, which clarifies the necessity to limit this study in the collective spaces in the city and, additionally, implies that one condition cannot exist without the other. *Communitas* gains meaning only when placed in opposition to society and vice versa,[49] because "*communitas* emerges where social structure is not […] *communitas* is made evident or accessible, so to speak, only through its juxtaposition to, or hybridization with, aspects of social structures" and it manifests in rituals.[50] *Communitas* is a necessary but transient condition of rituals, which does not coincide with society at large, but whose biases and partialities can stand in opposition to the universalistic laws of society. This is quite a revolutionary theorisation of ritual actions, which brings us back to that transgressive connotation that we read in its liminal condition. The sacredness—the exceptional, separate condition of rituals, which is now far from its original

[47] Tönnies, 17-18. This direct association of society with a functional structure will be a vital component to Pierre Bourdieu's definition of *habitus* that Bourdieu as a consequence of a social status imposed by society.

[48] Turner particularly stresses the use of the Latin "to distinguish this modality of social relationship from an 'area of common living'. Turner, 97

[49] On this note see the Eliade M. (1957) *The Sacred and The Profane. The Nature of Religion.* Translated from French by W.R. Trask New York: Harvest Books.

[50] Turner, 126

supernatural meaning contested by Bradley—can become a disruptive action capable of dissolving the norms that structure and institutionalise human relationships in society. It is a transgressive state, in which movements construct what Hannah Arendt calls the "space of appearance" that "comes into being wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action, and therefore predates and precedes all formal constitution of the public realm and the various form of government, that is, the various forms in which the public realm can be organised."[51] Transgression takes place in a temporary space, a space dedicated to public life, where actions are the primary condition of its state. Once these actions cease to exist, such spaces of transgression disappear. This is the space of appearance, which "disappears not only with the dispersal of men but with the disappearance or arrest of the activities themselves. Wherever people gather together, it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever."[52]

The social condition of a ritual is, therefore, between *communitas* and society. It is a space of appearance where the movements and actions of human beings are the *conditio sine qua non* of its existence. In other words, it is the coexistence of different beliefs and identities that come together under a shared resistance against the globalised state. It describes a multitude where identities converge not to unite into one large centralised group but remain different and independent and link together in a new network structure, which defines both their individualities and their commonalities.[53] A multitude is a network that gathers different, individual voices, independently of class, race, faith, and politics, each of whom are able to reinvent the means of articulation of the social, not as a hierarchical fusion but rather as provisional horizontal networks.[54] The multitude is, therefore, according to Paolo Virno, "a crucial tool for every careful analysis of the contemporary public sphere," and transgression—or "civil disobedience," as Virno puts it—is its political action.[55]

1.7 Extinction Rebellion: new ritual, a new belief

Under these premises, if we go back to the second half of the twentieth century to observe the contemporary society that was described so hopelessly by Mary Douglas and Richard Sennett, it is exactly in this transgressive connotation that we might find some space for new rituals to take place, and it is exactly this that this thesis intends to focus on. One of the recurring rituals of this work is, in

[51] Arendt, 199

[52] Ibid.

[53] Virno, 22

[54] Virno, 25

[55] Virno, 21, 69

fact, the rituals of protest,[56] which are often considered illegal actions, revolutionised in contemporary society by the climate movement, Extinction Rebellion (XR). Extinction Rebellion is an international movement that uses non-violent civil disobedience to call for a halt of mass extinction and minimises the risk of social collapse.[57] The movement enacts temporary rituals, adopting symbols and transmitting messages that oppose the rhythm of daily life of society unified under a belief in environmentalism: a contemporary and widely shared belief that positions the urgent issue of climate change as eventually causal of an imminent end of the world and calls for more responsible human behaviour. This contemporary rebellion differs from its predecessors by its being an action group calling for and educating towards more responsible behaviour through a carefully planned cadence of exceptional performances, interrupting the highly productive daily life of London's society.[58]

These interruptions decelerate society's usual way of life, and are, according to John Berger, one of the key elements of a 'good' protest. In analysing the 1968's students' protest, he wrote that: "demonstrators interrupt the regular life of the streets they march through or of the open spaces they fill. They 'cut of these areas.'"[59] Here, the liminal condition described by van Gennep becomes an ephemeral stage in the heart of the city, which turns a liminal condition into an *arterial* condition, "an 'in-between' [that] is not tangible, since there are not tangible objects into which it could solidify […] But for all its intangibility, this in-between is no less real than the world of things we visibly have in common. We call this reality the 'web' of human relationships, […] which exists wherever men live together."[60] Transgression is a state of transit and in-between, where movement is the primary and ongoing condition and men meet as individuals and become part of a collective: it is the space in which architecture can acquire a new understanding of its social and political role and it, ultimately, should intervene.

The power of ritual to disrupt the institutional rigidity of society and acquire an arterial condition through an ephemeral stage is, perhaps, the character of rituals that most architects tend to underestimate, preferring instead to simplify these actions into legible geometries. This transgressive and anti-structural nature of rituals is also one of the main characters that can be lost in the aforementioned cyclical repetition, through which ritual action is developed into ritual praxis. With

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[56] A recent analysis of the choreography of protest, can be found in Hatuka T. (2018) *The Design of Protest. Choreographing Political Demonstrations in Public Space*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

[57] XR website

[58] In these interruptions the movement decides to target institutions across the city that enhance a toxic behaviour towards the environment –the Shell building, or Heathrow airport, the BBC or Google headquarters. The performative actions of XR will be analysed more in depth in the final chapter of this thesis.

[59] Berger (1969)

[60] Arendt, 183

their acts of civil disobedience and non-violent resistance, XR, instead, represents the most accurate definition of contemporary ritual transgression. The group managed to gather rebelling crowds that have contributed to the occupation of some of the most canonical spaces in cities across the United Kingdom and the world. The bodies of these rebels can be read as real architectures that contrast the existing urban fabric, creating an extraordinary visual clash that destabilise ordinary city life. Extinction Rebellion confirms the existence of contemporary rituals by responding to a collective belief with disruptive and anti-structural actions.

1.8 The fall for a new structure

XR usually stages a set of actions that emphasise both the temporality of the liminal condition discussed by Turner and the performative nature of the Arendtian space of appearance. The group's performances—like any other ritual—are not entirely spontaneous, instead, they are carefully planned with an annual cadence: since 2018, usually at the beginning of fall, XR sets the stage for performances across the city for the duration of three weeks, occasions on which society in its entirety can take part. Following Turner, if in the case of XR, the agency belongs to a closed community, the audience to which such an initiative is addressed is society at large. However, such a distinction is not so stark: in fact, in one passage of his *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Turner reveals that once a *communitas* [a temporary set of human relations] affirms itself against the institutional rules of society (the hierarchical condition of men), it conversely begins looking for new rules, hence a new structure of its own. Structure is the ambition of every *communitas*, since it is the *conditio sine qua non* of its survival. He writes, "*communitas* cannot stand alone if the material and organisation needs of human beings are to be adequately met. Maximization of *communitas* provokes maximisation of structure, which in its turn produces revolutionary strivings for renewed *communitas*. The history of great society provides evidence at the political level for this oscillation."[61] Once we oppose our transgression to the rule of society, the same transgression ultimately risks becoming a rule of its own.

Rituals, therefore, emerge as anti-structured behaviour in search of a new structure. This paradoxical character of rituals has been recognised to be an intrinsic feature of our human nature. In 1946, Ernst Cassirer cynically wrote that "in everything we do it is evident that we are truly pleased by the clarity of obedience to law, by the distinctness of recurrence, by regularity and by purity."[62] Every *communitas* we create eventually falls in favour of a new structure. This is the risk of repetition: even a transgressive act, if repeated with a regular cadence, is ultimately affirmed and made recognisable. It risks losing its meaning of opposition to the status quo, becoming part of and falling into a structured

[61] Turner, 129

[62] Cassirer, 285

collective movement and recognised as a part of the structure of society. Protests, therefore, gradually come to belong to daily life and detach themselves from the interruption that Berger describes as being typical of the 1968 student protests and from the physical liminal condition that allows us to read it as an exceptional activity.

But the Extinction Rebellion is, once again, very vigilant on this front: they rely on the performance as a transient and constant alteration of the urban space. They wear stage clothes and use props as instruments of a protest. The pink boat lifted from the ground of Oxford Street during the April intervention of 2019, was one of the most famous gestures. Here, nothing was arbitrary: the boat was used as a symbol of a sinking society, and the choice of the pink colour was a peaceful sign of hope. Not even the urban stage was accidental, since Oxford Street is one of the most lively commercial arteries of the city, and organising a protest there at rush hour, makes the disruption much more efficacious.

Fig. 1.1 - *The Pink Boat on the Strand*, London. April 2019. (XR Website)

Even if guided by the element of surprise, XR does not undermine the importance of a structured performance. In 2019, the group published a handbook, a manual to organise a civil protest.[63] In the book, a series of essays written by scientists, scholars, and researchers alerts us to the condition of our planet, appearing alongside a collection of testimonials by people who belong to the rebellion group. The book is cleverly organised to build towards a climax: the laying out of climate contingencies brings the reader towards a much clearer awareness of the world's problems at large and, yet, after a selection of scientific essays, the articles become shorter and much more straightforward, becoming what can be perceived as a more canonical series of guidelines. They explain how each protest was articulatedl how to construct a rebellious action, and the purposes and rules of such a civil resistance model. Cumulatively, the selection of contributors demonstrates the necessity of including different professional figures, including public relations managers that agree on strategies for advertising, decidedly contributing to the escalation of the protest at large. All of this formal organisation is not hidden between the lines but is clearly stated in order to present the importance of an impeccable structure to create an efficient action.

Structure is, therefore, an inevitable and almost pre-determined attribute of rituals. It is what allows rituals to be repeatable, recognisable, and, ultimately, to attain cultural affirmation. Ritual actions are inclined towards repetition and formality, through the following of a script where things might no longer be casual, but precisely where "order matters, and the feeling is formal. Participants must pay special attention to body movements to be sure they are behaving appropriately, as in church or at a formal dinner."[64] Through repetition, a ritual becomes a rhythmic sequence of actions, which develop cultural impact, increase in cultural value, and acquire collective meaning. With their performative protests, Extinction Rebellion confirmed the importance of following rules of conduct to deliver a message: the sequence of actions is carefully planned, from the opening to the closing ceremonies, which, alongside the set of events between, resonate across the space of the city for weeks. The ritual of protest is a means to deliver a message and the more it is structured, the more it becomes efficacious.

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[63] Extinction Rebellion (2018) *This is not a drill. An Extinction Rebellion Handbook*. London: Penguin includes texts by: environmental lawyer Farhana Yamin, Professor William J. Ripple and Nicholas R. Houtman, ex-president of Maldive Mohamen Nasheed, Indian-Himalayan hill farmers, Kamla Joshi and Bhuvan Chand Joshi, authors JS Rafaeli and Neil Woods, a firefighter from California, geographer Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, author and documentarian Douglas Rushkoff, psychoanalysis and psychotherapist Susie Orbach, writer Matthew Todd, Professor Jem Bendell, author Dougald Hine, activist Jay Griffihs, activist Roger Hallam, professor Danny Burns and political scientist Cordula Reimann, activists Tiana Jacout, Robin Boardman and Liam Geary Baulch, food coordinator Momo Haque, activist James and Ruby, activist Miles Glyn and Clare Farrell, media and messaging coordinator Ronan McNern, activist Cathy Eastburn, XR Legal Team, activist Wiliam Skeaping, MP Caroline Lucas, economist Kate Raworth, MP Clive Lewis, professor Paul Chatteron, journalist Hazel Healy, ex-diplomat Carne Ross, Bishop Rowan Williams, activist Gail Bradbrook, writer Adam Wagner.

[64] Davis-Floyd, 261

1.9 Transience of rituals, permanence of architecture

By being the act of translation of human behaviour into form, architecture has a crucial role in this search towards a permanent structure. According to Aldo Rossi, function is always readable through form, which is permanent in the totality of the city. And though form is permanent, that does not mean that function is as well. On the contrary, the transformation of actions into permanent forms is what constructs the stratigraphy of city life. Rossi describes the city as the result of the progress of human reason, it is a *chose humaine par excellence*, between natural and artificial elements, natural object and cultural subject.[65] "You are yourself the town, wherever you choose to settle," said Nicia to his Athenian soldiers during the Peloponnesian Wars. He continued, "It is men that make the city, not the walls and ships without them."[66] By contrasting the permanence of architecture to the transience of the actions that take place within it, it becomes evident that the dispute between spontaneity and permanence, typical of rituals, is also embedded in architecture. In other words, architecture freezes actions into form and, in doing so, favours their repetition and permanence over time.

However, in our daily lives, we inhabit buildings whose functions have changed over time, though their forms have remained unaltered as they contribute to the overall image of the city. These buildings, whose forms are closely related to the history of the city form, are often recognised as institutions. In London, however, Aldo Rossi's theory on primary and secondary elements in the city does not apply.[67] Bedford Square in central London is, in fact, one of the best-preserved Georgian squares, where the gentry once rented houses from the nobility who owned them, and. today, the same houses host a school, a publishing house, and an archive. The square's buildings rarely maintain their original domestic purposes though their forms have remained unaltered as the form of the square. This, however, responds to Rossi's critique against *funzionalismo ingenuo* [naïve functionalism],[68] according to which each form corresponds to a specific and invariable function. Form does not follow function, it, instead, follows rituals, which means that form is not a crystallisation of one single function but that it opens to the transgression of rituals. Like rituals, architecture is a means through which the form of the city persists as a stratigraphy of human actions. Ritual is not just a mere function but the very reason behind architecture.

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[65] Rossi, 26. He refers here to the work of Lévi-Strauss C. (1955) *Tristes Tropiques*, Paris: Librairie Plon

[66] Thucydides (1629). The Peloponnesian Wars. Translated from Greek by T. Hobbes. London: John Bohn. VII, 63, pp. 308-09

[67] Rossi (1966) writes that the city fabric is made of two different elements: primary and secondary, whereby the former are the permanence that contributes to designing the form of the city—alternatively called monuments; while the latter is all that concerns residential architecture, that from the ground of the city, its urban fabric.

[68] Rossi, 34

It is, however, within this dichotomy between the permanence of form and the transience of ritual that the controversy of their projective intents lies. After the formalisation of a ritual, its spontaneity is lost, and it becomes a repetitive, unconscious, and unaware action. The testimony of this translation, for scientists and empirical anthropologists, is the production of the environment, which is, therefore, nothing more than the traces left by cultural cooperation of society organised into a structure.[69] What becomes crucial in this structured and cyclical theory of life is that one of the main characters of ritual is its structural repetition, its formality—something that Robbie Davis-Floyd clarifies in her definition of ritual.[70] Such repetition is legible in the form of its architecture, which, as a democratic instrument of participation, is bonded by rules. Yet as Aldo Rossi proposes, such permanence derives from repetition and does not need to be intended as a restriction or as a limitation to a ritual. On the contrary, it can host new rituals, which evolve as it is subjected to time and social contingencies. The cultural life of a community grows, undergoing some changes and an evolution of needs, which becomes formalised in new institutions that guarantee their perpetuation and generate new habits from new rituals: "why should conditions that fitted yesterday, set tomorrow's standards?"[71]

1.10 Architecture as collective symbols

In this process of translation from actions into form, architecture can be elevated to a symbol of a community and its life, of a nation, and as a place with which citizens can possibly identify.[72] Architecture is both a symbol of a way of life, whose presence suggests the consolidation of a precise behaviour, of a ritual praxis, as well as the background of such actions. Robbie Davis-Floyd mentions that symbols are one of the essential characters of rituals, they are what makes the action experiential: under this light, we are able to read architecture as a symbol as well, whose built form becomes the means through which rituals take place, and it is part of the plethora of symbols through which a ritual becomes easily identifiable.[73] Extinction Rebellion, for instance, uses architecture to create such a symbolic meaning during their actions: they target punctual architectures of powers, such as the Shell Building or Heathrow Airport, as primary polluters of the environment, or the Google and BBC headquarters, as the focus of impotent media vehicles. All these iconic architectures allow the movement to mediatise its message and act as well-known symbols across the world by retaining a

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[69] Malinovski also talks about environment, in relation to culture, as the physical and empirical translation of this process of functions and systems that characterises the structure of society.

[70] Davis-Floyd, 260

[71] Bing, 37

[72] Jormakka, 129. Once again, it is worth remembering that such statements are part of a research that is circumscribed within a Western reading of rituals and architecture.

[73] "Ritual sends its messages through symbols, A symbol, most simply, is an object, idea, or action loaded with cultural meaning." Davis-Floyd, 260

direct decisional power against which the movement intends to fight: these architectures are symbols of the toxic control that is the ultimate target of the rebellion.

Byung-Chul Han reinforces this relationship between symbols and rituals by describing rituals as symbolic actions constructed through symbolic perception. Symbol, from the Greek word *symbolon*, indicates a sign of recognition between guests: the host cuts a piece of clay and gives it to another guest, as a welcoming gesture.[74] This is a gesture that is repeated over and over with each guests. Additionally, Han notices that the same root words are found in the word *symballein*, which, in Greek, means to bring together: hence, rituals are a symbolic practice that bring people together and create a bond, a totality, and a community.[75]

Symbols, like architecture, emphasise the prescriptive character of rituals, contribute to the formation of a paradigm, unify individuals under a common belief, and, often, invite them to perform a collective behaviour to which participants do not always feel related. Therefore, symbols, exactly like architecture, can become instruments and a reinforcement of authority and social controls, something that Mary Douglas defines as the tool of "legitimacy of the system," and that implies that any action is identified as part of an accepted social process, whose political intentions are proposed and hidden behind the use of symbols. "Political reality is in good part created through symbolic means," Professor David I. Kertzer writes, "creating a symbol or, more commonly, identifying oneself with a political symbol can be a potent means of gaining and keeping power, for the hallmark of power is the construction of reality."[76] This is particularly readable in historical moments when political regimes take totalitarian control of the state—Nazism or Fascism in the Western context of the first half of the twentieth century—whereby an ideal society is promised to the nation, which ultimately becomes nothing but "an imagined political community." Kertzer states that "symbolism is the stuff of which nations are made,"[77] and this is something that London has understood well. In the context of this research, architecture as a symbolic presence can be read from the London of Charles I, where the use of obelisks and the readaptation of the European *piazza* were considered to represent the strength of

[74] Han, 10

[75] Ibid.

[76] Kertzer, 5. Durkheim's theory of society as a balance between realities and ideals, between reality and supernatural is not far from this understanding of symbols as driving morality and constructors of reality.

[77] Kertzer, 6

the reign, as well as a form of control of collective rituals of society.[78] And, similarly, architecture was used as a tool to sensitise people towards staying together in the reconstruction of the country after the war (fig. 1.2; 1.3).

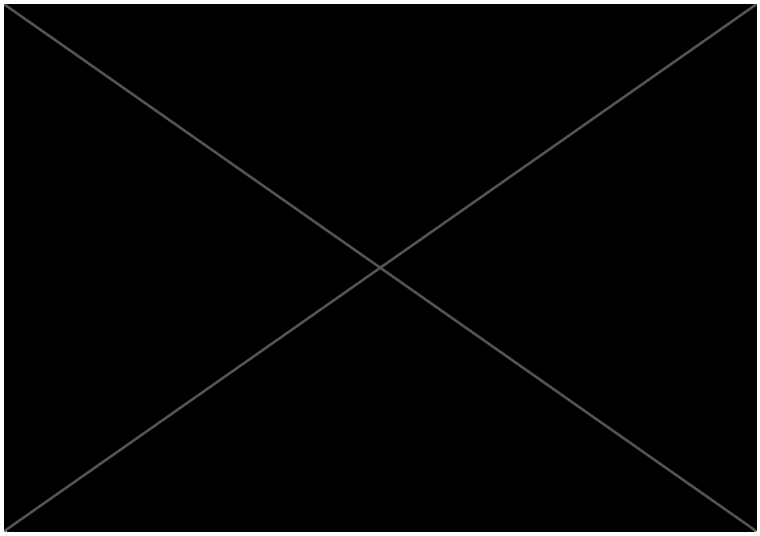

Fig. 1.2 - Games Abram, *Your Britain. Fight for it,* 1943. © IWM (Art.IWM PST 2911)

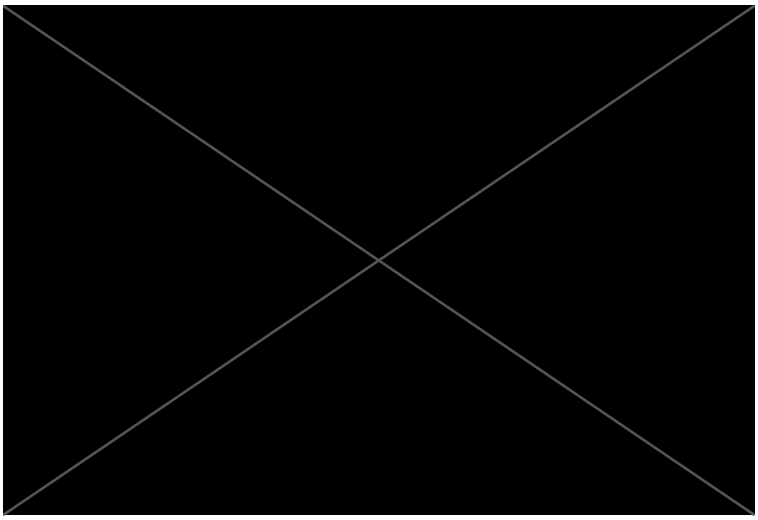

Fig. 1.3 - Frank Newbould, *Your Britain. Fight for it,* 1942. © IWM (Art.IWM PST 3641)

[78] Symbols for ritual praxis—besides being read as conventional representations of a function or a process, which makes them, and their corresponding actions, easily recognisable and associable to a particular meaning and used as exceptional instruments for social control—are inevitably produced by someone, whether this is a single person or a community at large. To better understand this intentionality, we can return to Jean-Jaques Rousseau's understanding of civic festivals. Rousseau explains that festivals have a similar effect to the symbolism in rituals: festivals reinforce the national character of a place, strengthen new tendencies, and give new energy to all passions. Festivals are instruments that reduce social inequality and class systems, in favour of stronger social solidarity; they are gatherings that foster community and sociability. The 1951 Festival of Britain, which was inaugurated after the Second World War, was used in the aftermath of a world war as an eloquent demonstration that the country could rise again by coming together, united in a big collective gathering. This event confirms how rituals have a dramatic and mimetic influence on society and that their role is to provoke an emotional response.The 1951 Festival was, not by chance, a replica of another successful event, the 1851 International Exhibition and, similarly to its predecessor, it aimed to re-propose the same cultural impact as well as social and civic participation. Architecture reinforces the iconicity of symbols, becoming a symbolic statement itself—in the instance of XR, a demonstration becomes the symbolic capturing of a city.Through the means of architecture, the 1951 Festival re-proposed the power of symbolic meaning through the construction of an iconic building, in this case the Royal Festival Hall, which made the site and the event entirely recognisable and associative of a specific feeling and allowed the collective ritual of art and theatre to become repeatable throughout time.

According to Kertzer, ritual is just a means through which society gathers together in a dramatic act: "just as emotions are manipulated in the theatre through the 'varied stimuli of light, colour, gesture, movement, voice' so too these elements and others give rituals a means of generating powerful feelings."[79] The ritual, hence, generates the same *catharsis* that Aristotle recognised in dramatic liturgy, which can appropriate and, therefore, portray collective values. Through symbols, these values become common concerns. We begin to identify and replicate them through the propagation of symbols, following an organising principle that links "the pattern of an individual's life with that of society at large" according to its transformation of a particular situation into a paradigm.[80]

1.11 Ritual becomes a social paradigm

In our contemporary realm, symbols are very difficult to identify. Our meaning of symbols has been completely flattened by the speed of visual communication, where letters and numbers, from having once been conventional signs, are now referred to as symbols.[81] Norms are nothing but impoverished symbols, which, today, has become a primary reference for collective living in collective spaces. If we look at collective spaces in London—as the places where rituals, intended as social products, should take place—signs act as codes of conduct upon which we collectively rely and generate standard social behaviour, considered to be morally acceptable in public life. This connection between behaviour and morality is what is usually associated with the definition of habit. In Western philosophy, this understanding is divided between a Kantian belief that habit, as a standardised and unaware behaviour, restricts morality, because respecting the law without consciousness and only for habitualness generates a society in absence of morality. Aristotle, on the other hand, believed that a good person must be of good *habitus*—i.e. of good behaviour or manners—and habituated and engaged in good pursuits.[82]

With the introduction of morality, however, ritual becomes a model to which to aspire, a social paradigm that is based on "the principle of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world."[83] In the context of this research, such a social paradigm arises more clearly in Victorian England, when the social structure of class becomes readable in the life of the city. From the nineteenth century onwards, the coming together of society was a stage for revealing habits and costumes, and, since then, collective spaces have become evidentiary of a hierarchical system that we

[79] Kertzer, 11

[80] Lawrence, 854

[81] Arnheim, 71

[82] Philosophers expand this relation between habits and morality by exploring the relation between body and mind. When those are unified, habits are a free and moral action, but if separated habit falls into a simple unaware sequence of actions. O'Keiffe, 75

[83] Bourdieu, 166

have all grown accustomed to. Before becoming a tool for social labelling, rituals were the staging of correct manners and behaviours through which society needed to be educated. In late Georgian London, with the opening of Georgian squares and the later opening of parks, all citizens were allowed to enter these green premises with the goal of their being educated to adopt a correct lifestyle. In Victorian London, this coexistence was turned into a new degree of separation, where rituals constituted the metre of judgement of belonging.

Once turned into a paradigm, a ritual gradually identifies characters that distinguish the culture, education, and class heritage of an individual. Ritual begins to follow a controlling script that generates self-consistency as well as a stable routine in the lives of collective subjects. The separation of people into different classes generates feelings of addiction and desire, which is something that René Girard found to be an intrinsic value of a ritual, since such actions usually belong to a circle of mimetic desire that controls our relations with the symbol and other individuals. Girard calls these elements the subject, the object, and the rival: "the subject desires the object because the ritual desires it."[84] The state of desire is a contagious disorder through which individuals manipulate one another in a community, yet this contagion "serves the oblique objective of making a group of persons into a community; it is a means of mutual moral coercion and is susceptible of analysis in political and social terms."[85]

This cosmological aspect of a ritual identifies it with a habit and establishes a cyclical repetition of its performance that makes its vital, transgressive connotation and ephemeral performance disappear into a fixed, structured repetition. This is another reason why, today, we struggle to recognise rituals: a ritual can only survive as a transgressive act, as an anti-ritual, through which a new ritualistic belief can ultimately be produced.[86] An established ritual, rooted in society, needs to be prepared to be interrupted by and invested with new beliefs and practices, instead of incessantly focusing on its repetition, which, over time, generates unawareness and lack of collective identity and belief. Rituals need to find a new emphasis, in Bradley's terms, new anti-structures, new transgressions of their structures, and it is only by doing so that can they once again become prolific design tools for architects.

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[84] Girard, 146

[85] Douglas, XV

[86] Douglas, 151

1.12 In between ritual and habit

Hopefully, it is now becoming clear how this quarrel between ritual and habit is so important to the discipline of architecture. Architects bear the knowledge of the impact that form has on human behaviour; they generate form out of human behaviours; they give meaning to what appears. This meaning depends exclusively on the presence of a subject: "a physical form expresses a character only because we ourselves possess a body […] our own bodily organisation is the form through which we apprehend everything physical."[87] A form generated around the presence of a subject is a space, an architecture. We enclose the subject in a space with its actions, which are elevated to rituals as repetitive, formalised, and standardised sequences: this, according to August Schmarsow, has always been the role of architecture. In the early twentieth century, Schmarsow wrote with a—slightly insensitive—degree of generalisation that "from the troglodyte's cave to the Arab's tent; from the long processional avenues of the Egyptian pilgrimage temple to the Greek god's glorious column-borne roof; from the Caribbean hut to the German Reichstag building—we can say in the most general terms that they are all without exception *spatial* constructs. […] The one essential feature is the enclosure of spaces."[88] Therefore, form is that which transmits meaning, and the structure of the city lies, rather than in its geometry, in the activities that human beings perform within it, which geometry makes intelligible. As architects, we need to re-learn that form is not what fixes activities in the city but that it is the performance of rituals that influences the physical forms of the city. Joseph Rykwert was the first scholar who attempted to introduce this concept in the late 1960s with his book *The Idea of a Town*. In his analysis of the rites of foundation of a Roman city, when discussing the tracing of its boundaries, he quotes a passage from Plutarch that visually describes the importance of the action as a generator of a form: "the founder fitted a brazen ploughshare to the plough, and, yoking together a bull and a cow, drow himself a deep line or furrow round the bounds; while the business of all those that followed after was to see that whatever was thrown up should be turned all inwards towards the city, and not to let any clod lie outside. With this line, they described the wall and called it by a contraction *pomoerium* – that is *postmurum*, after or besides the wall."[89]

Unfortunately, architects have forgotten this historical heritage that architecture has in anthropology. Rykwert goes further when he mentions the fall of form into diagrams: "patterns of behaviour, even of movement may sometimes be explained as being attempt to reconcile a conceptual model with the actual, with the physical structure of the city of which inhabitants may be aware only in the form of

[87] Wöfflin in Forty, 159

[88] Schmarsow, 286

[89] Plutarch in Rykwert, 29

diagrams—as of underground trains or bus routes."[90] From modernism onwards, architects have contributed to that rationalisation, according to which form follows scientific explanation and technological development in which the relationship between actions and form have become a matter of efficiency. Architects are, therefore, direct agents in the state of the contemporary city. They contribute to the lack of understanding of urban spaces, which were once spaces destined for collective rituals and are, today, reduced to mere infrastructural routes. If the architecture of the domestic sphere has been invested with the proliferation of identical typologies, then the space of collective life is left to survive as the space in between buildings, through which individuals constantly move, instead of lingering and dwelling. The recent Design District project in the Greenwich Peninsula in London is a perfect example of the current condition of collective spaces in the city, and how they are conceived of in the process of design. An archipelago of introverted architectures, which make up a project designed by famous practices that seem to hardly have had any dialogue with one another (fig. 1.4). The final project render seems to reveal a set of exercises put forward by each practice, where the canvas of the artificial island constitutes nothing but a "self-contained and self-referential languages of architecture."[91]

This condition of the contemporary city confirms the long-standing fear of anthropologists and sociologists with which we began this chapter, that of contemporary society as one without rituals and, therefore, without collective forms. In this society, architecture becomes a system of power relationships, an *apparatus*, "in which living beings are incessantly captured" and that in some way has the capacity to orient, control, and secure the gestures, behaviours, as well as the opinions, and discourses of living beings.[92]

[90] Rykwert, 25

[91] Wigglesworth, Till, 7

[92] Agamben, 13

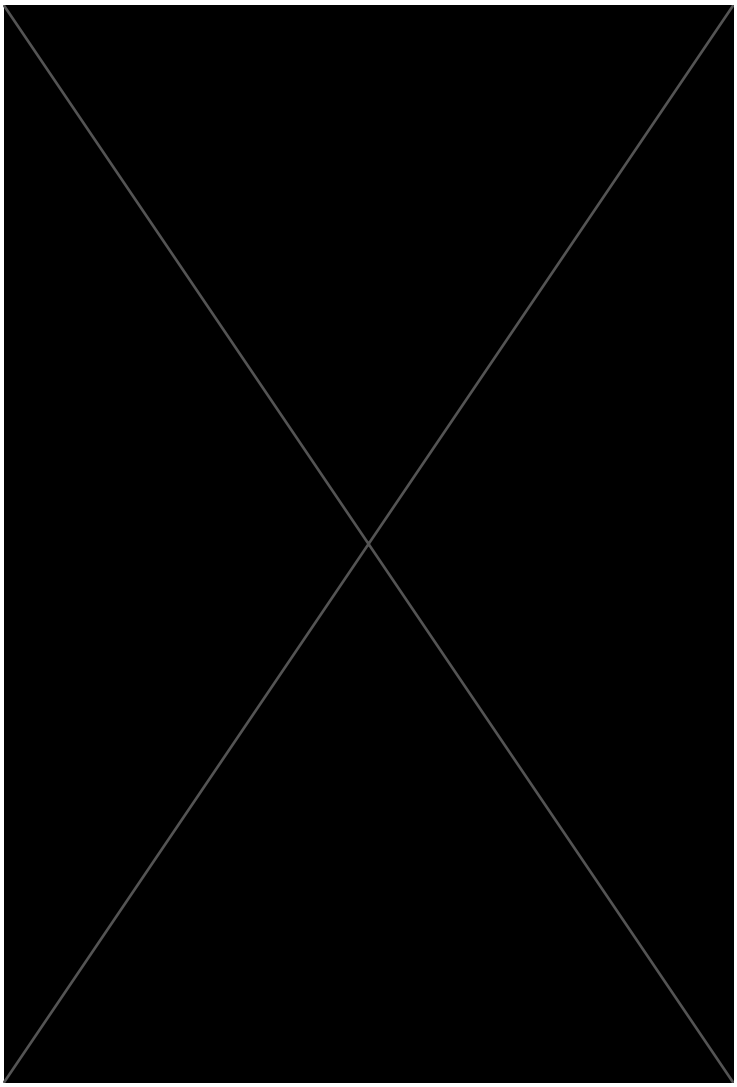

Fig. 1.4 - *Design District, London,* 2018. (© Knight Dragon Developments Ltd)

This finds an echo in the contemporary understanding of *habit* as a settled or regular tendency or practice, or an addictive practice or an automatic reaction to a specific situation.[93] A reading that is perhaps rooted in Bourdieu's understanding of habit as "a virtue made of necessity [that] imposes a taste for necessity which implies a form of adaptation to and consequently acceptance which is in no way incompatible with a revolutionary intention, although it confers on it a modality which is not that of intellectual or artistic revolts."[94] In this negative connotation, rituals indeed generate habituation: "the cognitive simplification of that ritual works to engender in its participants by rendering complex ideas more straightforward or unitary."[95] Habituation can be intended, therefore, as the excess of order and precision, which once combined with the repetitive nature of rituals, can only induce

[93] Definition from Cambridge Thesaurus Dictionary.

[94] Bourdieu, p. 373

[95] Davis Floyd, 262

individuals to do things in a singular one way.[96] According to such a pessimistic connotation, it should be impossible to recognise rituals in contemporary society.

However, Tim Ingold, tries to shed a brighter light on this gloominess, when he writes that "habituation to this one way can be efficient; it can also preclude openness to new and perhaps better ways."[97] Habit, as we noticed earlier, sits between making and experiencing. "[It is] an awareness of a different kind. It is the awareness of hapticality."[98] Here, Ingold intends habit as the process of growing and improving through sensations. Habits are a way of experiencing and communicating between individuals and society. Habits are the personalisation of a knowledge, an embodied knowledge, against their mechanisation, what Ingold calls "articulate knowledge."[99] This type of knowledge is the one that derives from practices that involve the simultaneous use of the body and the brain, especially when it comes to craft-based practices—like architecture—where tacit knowledge dictated by general norms and regulations can be challenged by the individual presence of subjects in space and the variation of such presence. Here, there is no permanence, additional decisions have to constantly be made.[100] Learning a craft is both a dynamic and responsive process, which involves a continual dialogue with the environment and the subject to which it is addressed.[101] Habit allows us to dwell in the process of becoming, we inhabit the world. "We dwell in habit."[102]

1.13 The responsibility of architecture

Architecture, intended as a craft, should be both a habit and a ritual, following knowledge and techniques, but it is also inspired by a search for an aesthetic idea. Rituals, when translated into architecture, become a mechanism for mass involvement and their crystallisation into permanent forms has a huge impact on our cities and their architectures.[103] The spatial effects of this lack of transgression are evident in the way our cities are taking shape, where the repetition is translated into construction standards that are applied to spaces, from the domestic to the collective, and to which

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[96] Davis Floyd, 263

[97] Ingold 2019, 12

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ingold 2015, 150

[100] Ingold 2019, 10

[101] Paraphrasing Odland Portish A. (2010) "The Craft of Skilful Learning: Kazakh Women's Everyday Craft Practices in Western Mongolia," in *Making Knowledge: Explorations of the Indissoluble Relation Between Mind, Body and Environment.* Edited by *Trevor H. J. Marchand.* Oxford: Wiley Blackwell. p. 69. Quoted in Ingold (2019), 10

[102] Dewey J. (1987) "Art as Experience" in *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925-1953.* Edited by Jo Ann Boydston. Vol. 10. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 109; cf. Ingold T. (2017) *Anthropology and/as Education.* Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge. pp. 21–22. In Ingold (2019), 13

[103] Kertzer, 153

citizens inescapably adapt. Architecture is partially responsible for transforming rituals and habits into enduring paradigms that fit into an inescapable social structure. By crystallising these actions into space, architecture freezes them into forms that can be perpetuated through time and reduces the opportunities to transgress its use. In doing so, architecture, indeed, contributes to the cultural affirmation of rituals—as both a symbol of their praxis and a translation of their structure—it survives as a permanent trace of rituals, becoming part of the environment that Malinowski defined as a result of the cultural activities of men, and what Hannah Arendt recognises as incapable of existing without the human activities that produce it.[104] Yet, this impossibility to distinguish a brief, in-between action from an established praxis drives architecture to lose that intrinsic dialogue between body and space, whereby space exists because we each have a body and space is generated by it.[105]

With its permanence, architecture generates a permanent set of forms and codes of behaviour, and, through time, its subjects become constrained by them. The architect is, therefore, responsible for these standards, which should be revised based on the constant observation of ever-changing human practices, otherwise the project of architecture will become a standardised form that produces a standardised way of life. Working through the relationship between anthropology and architecture is a fundamental step to undertake during the design process in order to understand the tendency of behaviour to evolve over time. This requires a fine balance between the techniques of construction and observation of the life within architecture: in other words, achieving this balance is what produces the radical difference between a building and an architecture.

Today, buildings prevail over architecture through the immediacy and efficacy of construction techniques that allow for the monetisation of the development of architectural production. This approach, particularly in London, dates back to 1666, when the city needed to be constructed fast and efficiently after the Great Fire that demolished most of the existing urban fabric, which makes London a very interesting case study on the topic. Since then, architecture developed as a manual of construction, which established the notion of the "standard," favouring the idea of assemblage that entirely diminished the architect's role and saw the establishment of figures such as developers and contractors. This approach facilitates the reiteration of anonymous but highly codified typologies that make the city we *live* in no different than the city we *work* in. Materials changed while the aim remained unvarying: the London of bricks and stone became the city of steel—or concrete—structural frames and glass. Today, these monotonous towers act as a confirmation of the lost attempt of monitoring—or at least softening—the expansion of neoliberalism. These interventions represent

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[104] Arendt, 22

[105] Something that echoes the same concept of enclosure that Schmarsow in early 1800 underlined as fundamental to architectural form. Schmarsow, 289, 296

the translation of citizens' lives into a constant rise of anonymous typologies of the same species that offer no distinction between the domestic and working lives of the individual.

London is a city where, rather than being a reading of space as a formalisation of bodies, the control over form and body becomes an imposition on movements: a firm and rigid script in stone that must be followed without exceptions. Michel Foucault recognised in such a control over the human body as a control over the human life, a phenomenon that he calls biopower: the *modus operandi* of power relations that aims at the administration of life.[106] Biopolitical power, thus, operates on two different scales: the scale of the subject that becomes an object, a product of individualisation, a means of monitoring the body politic, which is fractured into a living multiplicity; and what Foucault identifies with "population," which appears when individuals are collectively treated as a statistical phenomenon that aim at providing capital for human reproduction and life.[107]

By this point, society and the collective subject have become a sort of terrain for interpretation and statistical improvement, both crucial to the functioning of the city system. Society is no longer a living entity or an active participant in the body politic, it is, rather, an *obsequious flock*, which has turned into an instrument through which the city is capable of continuing its evolution and development, where there is no distinction between economic, cultural, or political production but all three exist under the umbrella of biopolitical production.[108] Architecture is an active component of this system, of a controlled and rule-governed machine-system that gradually refines itself, transforming our cities into urban conglomerates dominated by fast and disordered developments that act as exemplar testimonies of this new *modus operandi*, where the architect is a mediator between much stronger powers.

How can we untangle this relationship between the immediateness of a ritual action and the permanence of architecture? How can architecture help ritual from falling into the realm of prescribed behaviours and once again find its transgressive connotation? Architects must learn to find rituals and learn to read them as variable human behaviours instead of as frozen functions. What we need to look for are actions that sit in contraposition with the status quo, suggesting a social and spatial change and "must be expressed in a revolt against rituals."[109]

It is urgent to bring back the discussion of the transient, liminal—or better arterial—condition of ritual, with which we started this prologue, in order to rethink its collective dimension and invaluable

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[106] Foucault, 1-2

[107] Wallestein, 10

[108] Canetti, 25

[109] Douglas, 50

contribution to design. If the form of architecture persists, it is vital, for the sake of our discipline, to observe the various forms of appropriation of space. Extinction Rebellion, once again, helps us to visualise alternative ways of living with the permanence of architectural forms. Architecture ought to start opening itself as a discipline to a different set of knowledge, techniques, and strategies that contribute to the emergence of a new type of subjectivity. Throughout the history of London, there are moments in which the conservative attitude of architecture has been challenged, mainly by the rituals of the collective, whose transgression of this praxis favoured a consequent architectural revision of forms and projects.

In the following chapters, we will see how the history of collective spaces in London, if read as a response to the socio-economic contingency of each century, does not always follow a clear and linear chronology[110]. The thesis opens this history starting in the seventeenth century, when the Stuart Restoration signed the passage from the absolutism of Charles I to the distribution of power between his son, Charles II, and the Parliament. This political shift was spatially translated into the architecture of Nicholas Hawksmoor, which began to have a social and urban impact under the reign of Queen Anne in the early eighteenth century. This was right before the appearance of what would soon come to be known as the London Garden Square, a model of urban and commercial development that will shape a great portion of the city centre during the eighteenth century. This typical London square, which was the English response to the European *piazza*, bears, indeed, a controversial history that extends far into the nineteenth century. It is a history that has, nonetheless, managed to retain a certain degree of architectural independence from the urban developments conducted under the reign of Victoria, which slowly moved the discussion towards the collective spaces of the city to an infrastructural issue. This represents the current condition of collective spaces in London, a condition that sits as a spatial frame for the final chapter that investigates the possibilities of London's contemporary collective spaces and its surviving rituals. This difficult chronology of the development of the collective space in London, can be read as a confirmation of the lack of a totalising urban plan for the city, which preferred instead to grow gradually following the diverse ways of collective living. London offers us an opportunity to look at the city as a direct response to a social condition, not with a nostalgic attitude, since we will see that this response is not always a positive implementation, and, yet, the unfolding of Londoners' lifestyles, behaviours, rituals, and habits have been a fundamental ingredient for the project of the city and its collective spaces.

[110] This is something that John Summerson points out in his study on Georgian London, acknowledging that the history of London, in particular of that period, is made of "long threads at either end which cannot be cut. We must glance backwards and forwards, therefore". Summerson, 1

2 - FROM CHURCH TO PRECINCT

The birth of collective space

This thesis begins in a very specific moment in the history of the city, the Great Fire of 1666.[1] The reason for this is twofold. First, London, after this unmerciful event, for the first time had to face an urban reconstruction, while balancing the recovery of its commercial life and the language of its architecture, which had adopted a completely new set of construction materials (the large amount of wooden architecture of the old mediaeval city being responsible for the massive impact of the fire). On the other hand, this was also the first time, in the plan of London's restoration, when an antecedent of what today we identify with the collective sphere, detached from the church, began to appear in drawings and maps across the first century of the restoration. Before the fire, collective spaces in London were mostly associated with indoor spaces, like churches or Elizabethan theatres, which were both at the core of the social life of the city.[2] Occasionally, big events brought people together in formal processions and gatherings, like the coronation of Charles II or the Great Frost Fair in 1684, which were still demonstrations that the collective sphere was still under the control of the sovereign and the state.

The following chapter will look at the first of the transitions that articulate this thesis, from the moment of controlling and shaping of the public sphere, in which the powers of architectural production, governance, and religion coalesced into one single, unhindered figure to slowly approach the emergence of a *modern* city, composed of unrelated and unstructured individuals, a city in which the figure of the sovereign disappears and the will of the crown sees its power stymied by the rising influence of the Parliamentarian force.

The active engagement of the Parliament in political decisions alongside the Crown is demonstrated by the succession of the Acts of Parliaments that contributed to reshaping the city of London from

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[1] The bibliography on the 1666 Great Fire of London is rather extensive, perhaps one of the most detailed and direct descriptions of the event are those narrated in the diary of Samuel Pepys and John Evelyns, who both wrote a vivid account of the fire. Later books on the fire and the reconstruction of the city were published, amongst those worth of notice are: Bedford J. (1966) *London is burning*. New York: Abelard-Schuman; Bell W.G. (1920) *The Great Fire of London 1666*. London: John Lane; Gwynn J. (1969) *London and Westminster improved*. Upper Saddle River: Gregg Press; Hearsey J.E.N. (1965) *London and the Great Fire*. London: John Murray; Porter S. (1996) *The Great Fire of London*. Stroud: Sutton.

[2] It is worth mentioning that at this time, public institutions in London were very few, theatres and playhouses. Additionally, by the time the Great Fire destroyed a big portion of the Mediaeval city, London already endured another dramatic event, the plague of 1665. In this interval the whole population was brought together in a strong collective reaction to these catastrophes, according to the testimonies of both Pepys and Evelyn.

1666.[3] This was a pivotal historical moment in the evolution of the collective spaces across the city and their designs and public roles. These spaces moved from being shaped by the sovereign's will, Charles I, who exercised both a religious and monarchical power, thus controlling the collective life of the city,[4] to then being fully opened through the projects of Nicholas Hawksmoor, which addressed to the population at large without constraining the collective ritual into the walls of a sacred institution.[5]

This chapter will investigate the urban consequences of this shift, from a hierarchical clarity—expressed by the sovereign political power represented by Charles I and his architect Inigo Jones—to the gradual emergence of a civic condition that responded to the more disparate needs of a growing and increasingly diverse population. To do so, this chapter will focus on a particular typological shift, from the church to the emergence of a loose outdoor space adjacent to it, enclosed within a precinct. The collective power finally moved from being expressed in the interior of the church into becoming a means through which the city started expanding in a larger urban plan. But before arriving at the appearance of a precinct in the London urban fabric, the space of possible encounters between different classes of the population remained the church. After the Great Fire, the redesign of these churches was crucial to the strengthening of the morale of the population but was also one of the main focuses of the plans proposed during the Restoration under Charles II, alongside houses and commercial buildings. This moment was a testament to the fundamental role that the collective sphere played in the discussion about city form. After the Great Fire, collective space, associated mainly with the institution of the church, was a fundamental counterpart to a developing city, which, when superseded by the necessity for housing construction and infrastructure, has slowly, century after century, dissolved the role of the collective and ritual space into an almost non-existent consideration.

2.1 Charles I: the sovereign and the church

Right before the fire, in early seventeenth-century Britain, there was one single ruling voice, one single legislative power, and one single civic authority, all of which were bound together through religion and manifest in the King of the three kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland: Charles I. Believed to have divine rights as the directly chosen representative of God on earth, the sovereign, at this time,

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[3] This was evident in the proclamation of each act, conducted by the King, where it is evident that "It is no more the Absolute King who commands" Rasmussen, 107. The speech of the King contained expressions like "the loss and damage that We Our Self have sustained" or "since it hath pleased God to lay heavy Judgement upon Us all in this time, as an evidence of his displeasure for Our sins, We do comfort Our Self with some hope, that he wil upon Our due humiliation before Him, as a new instance of his signal blessing upon Us, give Us life, not only to see the foundations laid, but the buildings finished, of a much more beautiful City than is at this time consumed". Rasmussen, 107-108.

[4] In the 16C and 17C, the church was "bound to itself and to the destiny of the monarchy". Harvey, 156

[5] According to John Stow's survey of London, conducted in 1598 all kinds of entertainment of the 17C London were tight to the church: "I do not think that there is any city wherein are better customs, in frequenting the churches, in serving God, in keeping holy days, in giving alms, in entertaining strangers, in solemnising marriages, in furnishing banquets, celebrating funerals, and burying dead bodies." Stow, 74:4

needed to prove his embodiment of law and order.[6] Professor Richard Harvey explains that the church was an institution that ensured social order. Being the embodiment of a unifying belief, individuals loyally respected and obeyed to the institution:[7] "Early modern European society displayed social bonds and political bonds; and those bonds, ideological in nature, were primarily shared beliefs and values and myths [...] social stability [...] was more frequently (and ideally) habitual or voluntary —i.e. it was based on faith in social beliefs."[8]

The absolutism of the monarch had a particular influence on the urban evolution of the city through the work of one single architect who was entrusted with the task of expressing the monarchical intentions. Such an attitude resulted in the invention of a new architectural language coherent with the majestic power of the crown: the language of the Renaissance was transcribed into a British classical vocabulary in order to express the one and only place where the King was able to establish his control, as a direct and rigid geometrical abstraction of his normative power.[9] The architect in charge of this specific time frame in the history of English architecture—the English Renaissance—was Inigo Jones, whose well-known works dot the capital from Greenwich Palace up to Banqueting House, confirming his role as the architect of the Crown. With Inigo Jones, the collective space of the city was part of the wider project of ceremonial London, which acted as a response to a clear and direct sovereign power, free from bureaucratic or democratic interferences. The reign of Charles I was synonymous with the totalitarian control of both the religious and the political sphere of the city,[10] and as Thomas Hobbes would later come to note in his *Leviathan*, such a despotic power was described with the idea of tyranny, a word commonly used at the time for defining monarchy.[11] It was not by chance that this particular kingdom ceased with the beheading of the sovereign, almost ironically staged in front of the Banqueting House at Whitehall, the most famous surviving project for the Crown made by Inigo Jones as a testimony of the brief Renaissance that English architecture welcomed in the first half of the seventeenth century. This prosecution marks the suspension of the monarchy and the beginning of the first and only English Republic.

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[6] On the reign of Charles I, see Quintrell B. (1993) *Charles I, 1625-1640*. London: Routledge; Hart V. (2011) *Inigo Jones. The Architect of Kings*. New Haven-London: Yale University Press. A full account of the Trial of Charles I can be found in Wedgwood C.V. (1964) *The trial of Charles I*. 2nd ed. London: Collins.

[7] Harvey, 157

[8] Ibid.

[9] Hart (2011); Summerson (2000)

[10] The kingdom of Charles I and the causes that lead to the Interregnum will be more extensively treated in the previous chapter, this particular one intends to start discussing from the Commonwealth of England, i.e. 1949.

[11] Hobbes, Chap. 46 Part 4.35. "A *tyrant* originally signified no more simply, but a *monarch*"

In the latter half of the seventeenth century, the population of London endured a prolonged period of turmoil, grounded in a series of monumental upheavals—political, religious, medical, and architectural. We will see how tumultuous episodes such as the Interregnum, the Great Plague, and the Great Fire have gradually but radically influenced the role of the monarchy in Britain and the consequent secure grip of sovereign control on urban decisions. Though brief, this era in the long history of London, from the execution of Charles I in 1649 to the passing of the New Churches in London and Westminster Act of 1711, these short years have had a profound impact on the nature and evolution of the city to date, as well as ramifications that will seemingly extend into its foreseeable future. This significance is derived not only as a consequence of the erasure of a large majority of the mediaeval city's urban fabric in the fire of 1666 but because this period, more generally, signalled a pivotal moment in the history and role of the sovereign monarch, whose secure and absolute rule was being confronted with the growing strength of parliamentary political power. The coupling of these socio-economic, political, and religious reconfigurations amid a sequence of successive civic catastrophes marked a significant shift in the nature and urban form of the city, which gradually witnessed the erosion of sovereign absolutism and the evolution of public attitudes to space, which were manifest in its architecture, particularly, through the paradigmatic lens of the Church.

The first major focal point in this period of turbulence coincides with the ruling monarchy's suspension in favour of the Commonwealth of England, the Interregnum. These revolutionary days, from 1649 to 1660, began with the execution of Charles I and ended with the proclamation of King Charles II. This short-lasting revolutionary act, orchestrated by the middle and military classes, favoured the gradual establishment of the Parliament, which has endured the following monarchies. The institution of the Parliament is the major signal of the passage that England took from being an absolute monarchy derived from divine rights, represented by the previous kings in charge before the crucial date of 1666, to the monarchs who would inevitably have to start to contemplate the Parliament in every considered move. The Parliament gradually developed a stronghold during these decades of the Commonwealth as the result of the civil war between the King and the Parliamentarians, which ended with the execution of Charles I.

As a result of the dissatisfaction of some Parliamentarians, the New Model Army was formed, and with its puritan values, it was strongly against the gradual power the King held on the basis of religious principles. Guided by Oliver Cromwell, the New Model Army became the major force of the state, eventually declaring the first Constitution of England in 1653, which resulted in the unification of England, Scotland, and Ireland under the Protectorate in 1654. This political change was instituted by the Council of State and formed the unexpected Republic, which was guided by Cromwell himself as Lord Protector. But this seemingly democratic condition was, in practice, not so far from a military

tyranny, where Cromwell was exercising what was once the king's exact power and whose firmness was evidently not inherited by his son, Richard Cromwell, whose mandate resulted in another civil war. The failure of the Republic and the consequent reestablishment of the Parliament in 1660, confirmed Hobbes' prophecy at last: "for in the condition of men that have no rule of good, and evil actions […] without such arbitrary government, such war must be perpetual".[12]

The Protectorate was, in fact, working exactly as a monarch, where the people, using Hobbes' words, "are governed not as every one of them would himself, but as the public representant, be it one man, or an assembly of men, thinks fit; that is an arbitrary government."[13] The "democratic" rebellion came from the middle class, which was a momentarily emerging subject that Marx would define as the bourgeoisie, therefore, the "appetite" is the one of men whose interest is self-reflected and can easily change from revolutionary to conservatory. As such, the brief Interregnum brought about an interesting political transition that softened the role of the sovereign and tempered it with that of the state. At the time, the combination of the monarchy and the state did not radically influence the role of the collective space, which during the Interregnum, remained controlled not by one sovereign tyrant but by a military oligarchy, which is not all that different from the prepotence of Charles I and the power that was later held by the combined power of state and crown. The Interregnum did not last: the return of the monarchy was just around the corner and it was eventually restored by the commander of the English forces in Scotland, who had been faithfully appointed by Cromwell to form the Protectorate. George Monck was the man who called back from exile the son of the previous monarch, after having restored the purged Parliament. During a secret correspondence between Monck and the exiled future King, the Declaration of Breda was signed as an admission of the mistakes made by the previous sovereign, which was finally restored to the Monarchy in England. In 1661, Charles II was crowned king.

2.2 The reign of Charles II

The initial years of Charles II's reign were very calm compared to the previous capricious monarchy of his father. Charles II was the right ruler at the right time, well regarded by both the masses and Parliament. He made his mark on history as the King of the Restoration of England, demonstrating a new consideration of the state power represented by the Parliament. What is noticeable is that Charles II was "almost an ambassador for a new era of urbanity,"[14] when the architectural response during his reign turned out to be very different from "his father's frigid pomp and the interregnum's military

[12] Hobbes, Chap. 46 Part 4.32; 4.35

[13] Hobbes, Chap. 46 Part 4.35

[14] Porter, 99

austerity."[15] The sovereign power is for the first time a mediation between different forces, whereas once used to be the one and singular apex of the hierarchical pyramid of power. Additionally, the monarchy started being more aware of the collective needs of its citizens, only later on with the second Act of Parliament, including both intellectual as well as leisure interests –an approach confirmed by the foundation of the Royal Society of London in 1662. Together with it, Charles II also, instructed the re-building of two new theatres, whose social role was seen sceptically by the Republic[16], as a potential interference with the religious rigour of the Londoners' life.

In 1665, the London population was decimated because of the Great Plague; by this point, London exponentially grew, it was not anymore the city depicted in the view of Anthonis van den Wyngaerde in 1544 (fig. 2.1), the plague managed to propagate around the city –although unequally, some neighbourhoods, in fact, remained completely untouched. London was overall a ghost town[17] : "Lord, how empty the streets are and melancholy, so many poor sick people in the streets, full of sores: and so many sad stories overheard as I walk, everybody talking of this dead, and that man sick, and so many in this place, and so many in that."[18]

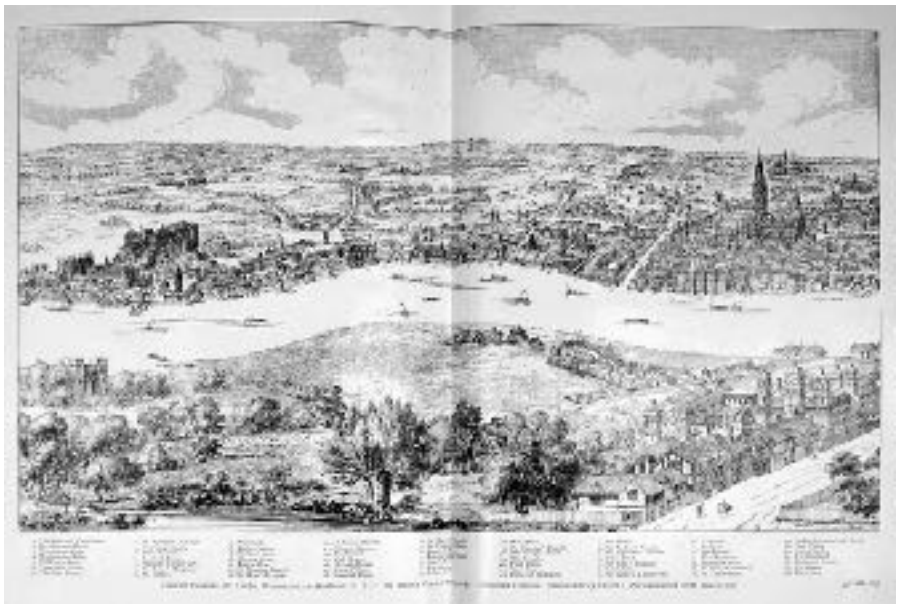

Figure 2.1 – Anthonis van den Wyngaerde, *View of London*, 1544. (Wikimedia Commons)

[15] Ibid.

[16] In 1942 the Parliament banned theatres from Londoner's social life accusing them of being a spectacle of pleasure that did not agree with "Calamities" and "Season of Humiliation": "Public Stage Plays shall cease, and be forborne, instead of which are recommended to the People of this Land the profitable and seasonable consideration of Repentance, Reconciliation and Peace with God". Firth and Rait (eds.) "Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum". I, 26-7 in *The Cambridge History of British Theatres*, 439. Such control over social life confirmed that the Interregnum came as a sort of continuation of the authoritarian regime of Charles I.

[17] Ibid. 105

[18] Pepys, 16 October 1665

King Charles II returned to London only in February 1666, yet seven months later, on Sunday 2nd of September in a bakery on Pudding Lane –the one who used to serve the crown– burst the greatest fire London has ever seen. The fire radically burned down the mediaeval face of the east side of London; the City we know nowadays was totally empty.[19] All the timber houses and constructions were erased, leaving only ashes and smoke. The City of London, for the first time in such a massive extent, was turned into a *tabula rasa* (fig. 2.2).

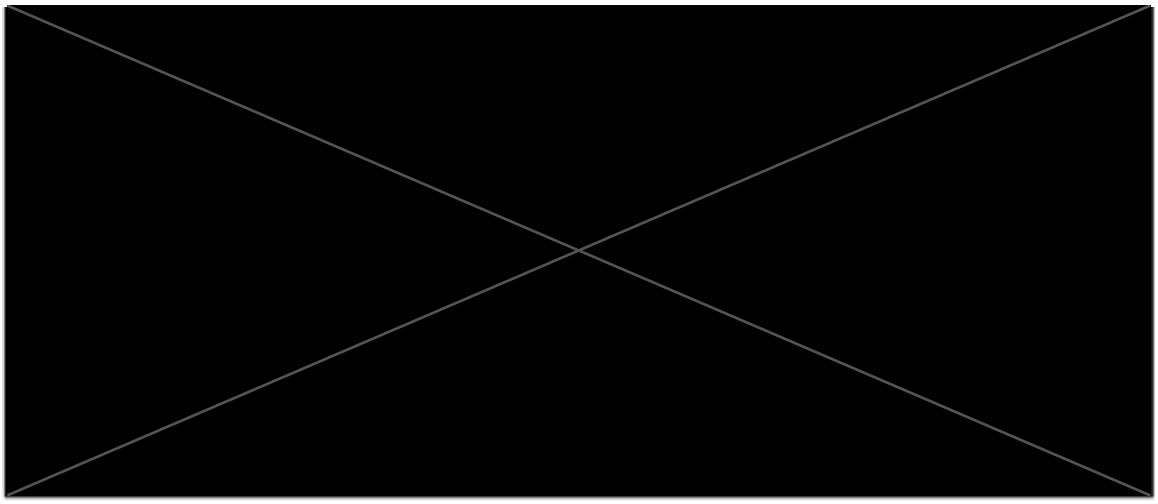

Fig. 2.2 -John Leake, *General map of London showing the damage caused by the Great Fire*, 1723. (© City of London: London Metropolitan Archives)

The city needed to be reconstructed as fast as possible and a series of Parliamentary Acts[20] started to be issued in the following years with a quick cadence. Each one had a very specific purpose, such as houses, commerce, and churches. The Acts of Parliament, conducted in a truthful collaboration between the Parliament and the Crown, responded to the population's primary need, starting from the private sphere. As Rasmussen puts it, Charles II proclamations of the Acts of Parliament were "full of common sense. It says that it is but attempts must be made to avoid the annoyance arising from a premature rebuilding of individuals."[21] In the first Act of Parliament in 1667, citizens were allowed the power to ask for individual building control of their portion of land. Charles II declared: "And

[19] A precise and personal description of the damages of the Great Fire is given by Samuel Pepys' and John Evelyn's diaries: "O the miserable and calamitous spectacle, such as happily the whole world had not seen the like since the foundation of it, not to be outdone till the universal conflagration of it!" Evelyn, 3rd September 1666; "So I rode down to the waterside, and there got a boat, and through bridge, and there saw a lamentable fire…Everybody endeavouring to remove their goods, and flunging into the river or bringing them into lighters that lay off; poor people staying in their houses as long as till the very fire touched them, and then running into boats , or clambering form on repair of stairs by the waterside to another." Pepys, 2nd September 1666.

[20] Jeffery, 17. The first act for the rebuilding of the City of London was passed in February 1667. It proposed that all new buildings had to be constructed of brick or stone against the future perils of fire. It also imposed a maximum number of storeys per house for a fixed number of abodes to eliminate overcrowding. This is when the Nicholas Barbon house model was officialised. Summerson, 51

[21] Rasmussen, 107

because no man shal complain or apprehend that by this caution or restraint of Ours, they shal or may for a long time be kept for providing Habitations for themselves [...] We do declare that if any considerable number of men shal address themselves to the Court of Aldermen, & manifest to them in what places their Ground lies, upon which they design to build, they shal in a short time receive such order and direction for their proceeding [...] And so We proceed to the setting down such general to which all particular design must conform themselves."[22]

2.3 The modern *city and the* drawn *piazza*

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, this moment was pivotal in that until 1666, no comprehensive urban plan for London had ever been proposed. The city, in this moment, urgently needed to be re-thought and re-planned.[23] Before the issuance of the Acts of Parliament, at the wake of the Great Fire, several visions were proposed, but they were either too utopian or heavily pragmatic and none of them would be chosen and the city would remain without a plan. However, what is of particular interest for this research, is that even if—as we will see in the following chapter—Covent Garden is recognised to be the first English *piazza*,[24] it is at this very moment in the history of London that the representation of *piazza* inspired by the European model emerged for the first time in the drawn form. This formal project, ultimately, coincided with the insurgence of a *modern* city, a city composed of unrelated and unstructured individuals in need of a space of identity and collective life in the reconstruction of their city. The *piazza* is introduced for the first time in drawn form in the plans proposed to the King after the Great Fire of 1666, which we will now try to explore more in detail.

In these plans we can read the *piazza* and the street as urban elements of design and formal organisation. In line with the language of the Renaissance that shaped Rome a few centuries earlier, most of those plans were aiming to restore the same urban splendour and formal control that Charles I had attempted to realise through the hands of Inigo Jones. Axes and perspective became, therefore, fundamental ingredients of this ideal city and, in this set of proposals, they are imposed onto a chessboard-plan, where each intersection between an oblique street and a grid's axis is generally a called *piazza*.[25] Each of these *piazze* often housed a church, a choice that confirms the importance of religion in the shape of collective life at the time.

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[22] Rasmussen, 108

[23] Rasmussen, 105

[24] Rasmussen, 153; Pevsner, 184; Summerson, 77-78

[25] Of these plans we have some accurate written description that confirms the use of the word piazza to refer to these intersections. In particular John Evelyn is the most prolific and faithful testimony of the time.

This collective role of the church is especially readable in the schemes of Richard Newcourt and Robert Hooke, who both designed a city constructed on the basis of alternating void and lines.[26] The square, in both plans, is the central space of deference and power. Newcourt's plan is the most diagrammatic of the two: here, London is made into a geometric grid of streets and quadrangular housing blocks, each of which was to be developed around a church and a bell tower (fig. 2.3). The voids imagined by Hooke, who was a careful mathematician,[27] are, instead, the foundational elements of the overall grid (fig. 2.4). Both appear to come from a totally different conception, perhaps because each recognises and represents the different powers coexisting in in the city:[28] the political, the monarchic, and the religious powers.

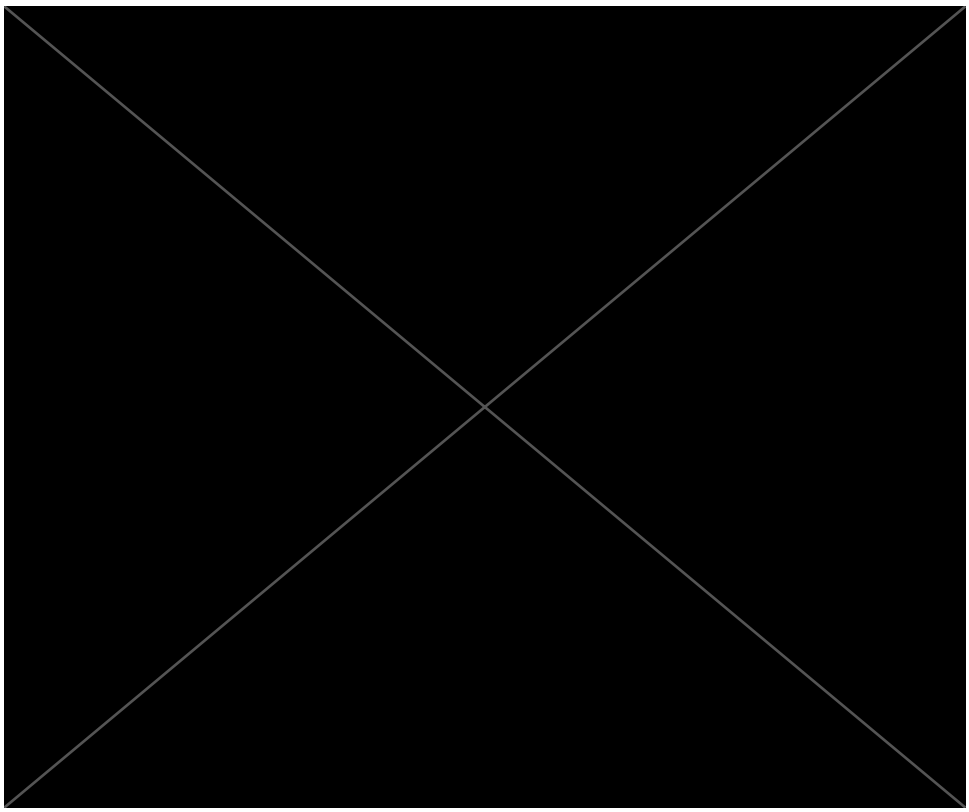

Fig. 2.3 - Richard Newcourt, *London plan*, 1666. (© City of London: London Metropolitan Archives)

[26] Rasmussen, 102

[27] Ibid.

[28] Rasmussen in his famous reading of London reported that there might have been a few drafts of this plan, the first one of which was immediately dismissed because totally out of scale. Unfortunately, none of them survived, and the only remained testimony of it—although such a scheme might be very easy to imagine—is part of an engraving of the fire of London made by a Dutchman, Doornick, where in a small corner he draws a chessboard plan, with the caption "a new model for the rebuilding of the city of London, destroyed by the fire". Such practicality will bring him to be appointed Surveyor of the first commission of Rebuilding of London, where he mainly delineated a strategic drawing for the streets' layout.

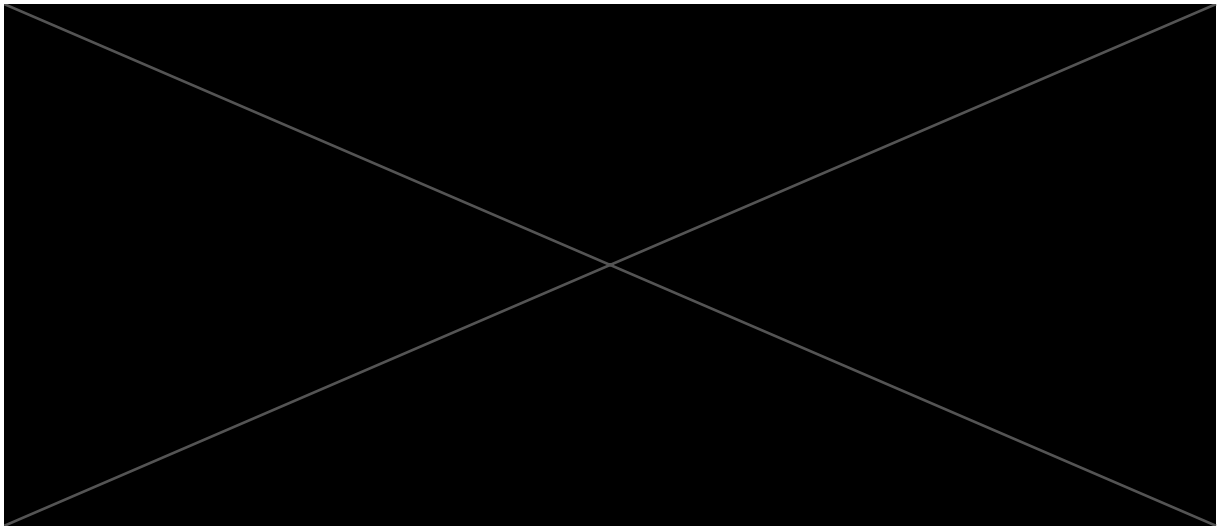

Fig. 2.4 - Robert Hooke, *London plan,* 1666. (© City of London: London Metropolitan Archives)

The most famous of the plans proposed after the Great Fire is, perhaps, that of Christopher Wren, who was also the most faithful to the legacy of the Italian Renaissance. It focused, in fact, mainly on the centrality of the *piazza* that constellate the radiant system.[29] Wren's design was built around four main streets that depart from London Bridge and develops into a triangle-shaped geometry, whose apexes are the three alternating powers in the city: the Stock Exchange in the east, Ludgate in the west, and of course St. Paul as the main central focus, in the north.[30] What Christopher Wren added to the regularity of the monotonous chessboard plan of the two previous models was basically a system of axes, which interrupts the background grid as oblique, connective elements between the *piazze*. (fig. 2.5) It is highly possible that Wren visited, or simply saw a representation of, the Piazza del Popolo in Rome[31] (fig. 2.6) and its three main axes that depart from its core, through the work of

[29] Although at that time Wren was professor of Astronomy in Oxford, he became closer to Architecture, a fascination which brought him to travel around Europe and to witness the design of cities like Rome or Paris. It was therefore, implicit that Wren's ideal city has bridges and gates to act as entrances, which, through both diagonal and orthogonal axes, should makes all the part of the town easily accessible, but it also has rectangular houses as well as rectangular street corners; and, above all, both the commerce centre and the religious centre —the Stock Exchange and Saint Paul– must be in dominant positions. Wren was exercising during a golden period of experimentation on the city: "The effect of many streets which in this way meet in one place was one of the favourite devices in town planning and was used in different ways. It was almost a matter of course in a system of streets with a gate as a starting point. The greatest example was the Piazza del Popolo in Rome with three streets intersecting the city. During the reign of the French king, Henri IV, that is to say the beginning of the seventeenth century, a fan-shaped system of streets was planned in Paris radiating from a bridge over the Seine with a crescent surrounded by uniform buildings. The plan was never carried out, but Wren may have seen an engraving of it; at any rate it was a plan which was quite natural for the period." Rasmussen, 98

[30] "one leads to the Stock Exchange lying in a spider's web of straight streets just as the tower in an ideal town; from the gate on the west, Ludgate, two great main lines issue; and in the very acute angle between them, Saint Paul's Cathedral was to be situated as a dominating feature." Rasmussen, 98

[31] The image here chosen to depict Piazza del Popolo in Rome is dated 1748, and is that of the Nolli Plan. So is a much later configuration of the piazza, in relation to what Chirstopher Wren might have seen. The square had a long stratigraphy of projects of its own; the obelisk (obelisco Flaminio, was a Domenico Fontana work, therefore constructed under the papacy of Sixtus V), yet the square itself as an architectural project, dates much later, almost a contemporary project of Chirstopher Wren (the twin churches were added in the late 1600, perhaps coinciding with the arrival of Christina of Sweden in 1655 which was the the opportunity for a major renewal of the square as northern access to Rome.

Domenico Fontana for Sixtus V in the late 1500s (fig. 2.7).[32] This project "so great and so rapid,"[33] that it is widely considered to be the highest example of an urban design that places sacred spaces at the centre of the city's political and collective life.

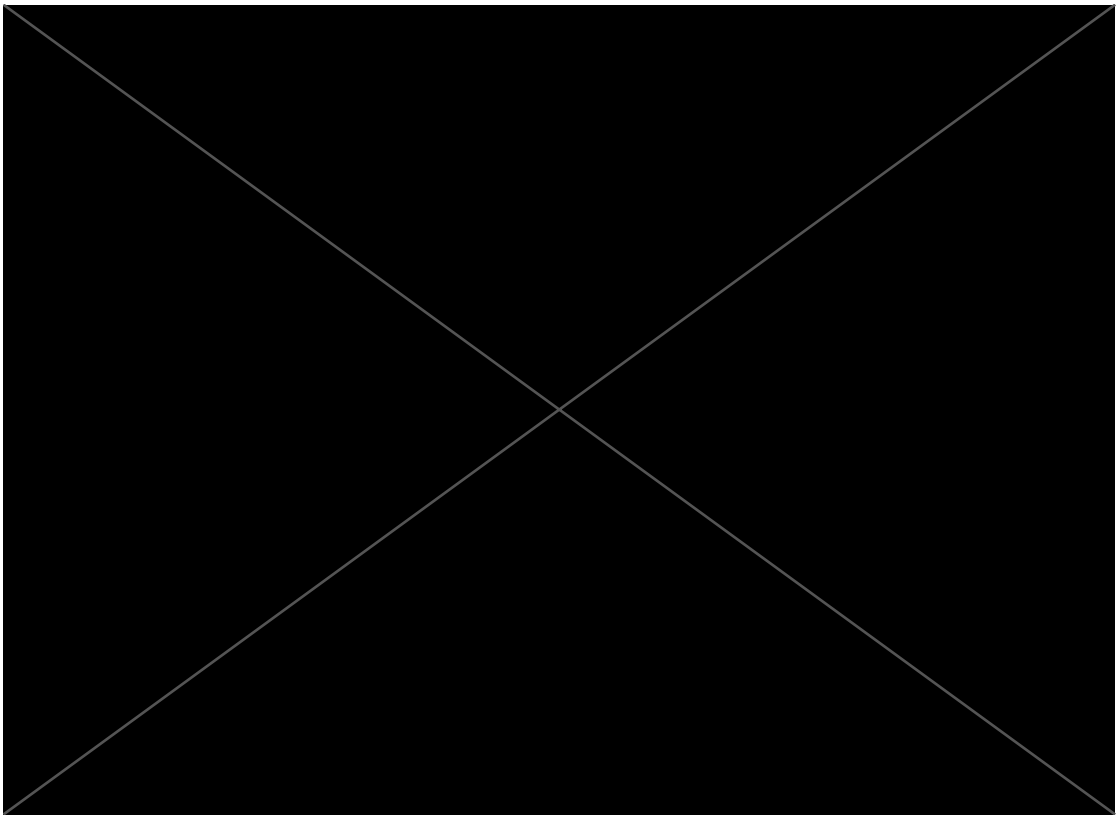

Fig. 2.5 - Christopher Wren, *London plan*, 1666. RIBA21865 (© RIBA Collections)

Fig. 2.6 - Gianbattista Nolli, *Piazza del Popolo, Rome*, 1748. (Wikimedia Commons)

[32] Rome urban clarity preceded these visions for London, with its Sixtus V plan in the late 1500, and depicted by G. F. Bordino in his *Map of Rome* in 1588

[33] Giedion, 95

Perhaps even closer to the plan of Domenico Fontana is the scheme proposed by John Evelyn (fig. 2.8).[34] Similarly to Hooke's plan, Evelyn's plan is designed from the inside out: unlike Wren's interest in streets and axes, Evelyn prefers to focus on the presence of the void—or *piazze*—which become, here, the places where axes as streets originate, instead of remaining simple points of encounter. Evelyn, accompanied each drawing with a text,[35] in which he described each *piazza* as an enlarged junction, as a space that he envisioned as enriched by markets and parking and embellished by fountains—in line with the Renaissance mannerism.[36] The *piazza*, in Evelyn's London, was at the core of collective life of the city, where ceremonial paths originate and from where promenades are propagated. Squares and churches are "both clearly legible urban form and symbolic forms. Their power was not in the single object rather in their constellations, in their overall urban composition […] that would make sense only if connected through a legible path."[37] Evelyn's plan is perhaps the one that best reflects the political circumstances at the time, when an overlap of powers was taking shape in London and the city was driven by economic, religious, and political interests.

Nonetheless, all these plans gave the sacred space of the church a rather unprecedented urban role, one that moved from being scattered and camouflaged in the urban fabric of the mediaeval town to acting as "a sphere that highlights and makes legible the way urban form becomes an instrument of both sovereignty and government;"[38] a driving component of the city's rebirth and ultimate control, which was, earlier, entirely associated with the power of the monarchy. Additionally, these plans, all seemed to take care to make the sacred space legible in the city form, an attitude that borrows directly from the tradition of the Renaissance, which is recurrently, albeit conventionally, taken as one of the earliest examples of the strict relationship between rituals and architecture, where movements and

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[34] Although he travelled as much as Wren, Evelyn demonstrated to be "a careful and sensible man, who has used his eyes well when travelling and who now puts down a series of practical and aesthetic details which he recommends as suitable for London." Rasmussen, 101-102. John Evelyn was in control of his thoughtful cross-scale scheme, (figure 6) without focusing only on its formal outcome he enriched it with detailed indications on how to realise such project, from the more architectural solution on the street paving and the town-gates decorations, up to some deep and thoughtful reports on technical aspect such as the waste-pipes and gutters. He preferred to list each ingredient of the plan rather than give an overall view on his geometric appearance.

[35] Rasmussen, 101-102

[36] "in the disposure of the streets due consideration should be had, what are compitant breadths for commerce and entercourse, cherefullness and state; and therefore not to pass through the city all in one tenor without varieties, usefull breakings, and inlargements into piazzas at compitant distances which ought to be built exactly uniform, strong, and with beautiful fronts. Nor should these be all of them be square, but some of them oblong, circular, and oval figures, for their better grace and capacity. I would allow none of the principal streets less than a hundred foot in breadth, nor any of the narrowest than thirty…" Evelyn in Rasmussen, 102

[37] Evelyn in Rasmussen, 102

[38] Aureli, Giudici (2015)

spaces can be merged into one perspective.[39] This does not happen in London, whose urban legibility at the time, and still today, remains quite blurry and it is for this particular reason that London is, in fact, hardly considered to be a ritualistic city. It is exactly because the city refused the order and legibility typical of this relationship and due to its collective rituals not being confined to one particular space of the city but spread across the arteries of the city, making it, therefore, difficult to decipher their architectural spaces in the urban plan. Refusing such formality, typical of rituals, did not mean, however, that London refused rituals altogether, only that it renounced the legibility and the existence of one single, collective life.

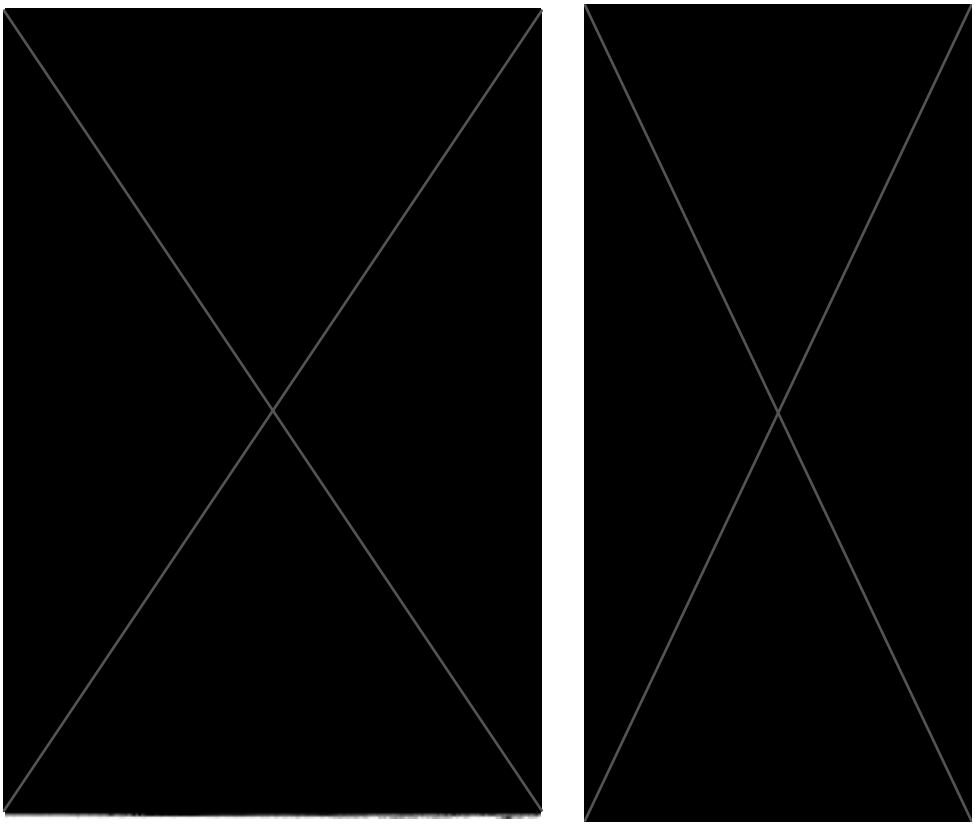

Fig. 2.7; 2.8 – Giovanni Francesco Bordino, *Roma in syderis formam*, 1588; John Evelyn, *London Plan*, 1666. (© RIBA Collections)

2.4 Lose the piazza, keep the church

Even if these plans were finally visualising the ideal role that a *piazza* might have had in a newly designed London, they were considered old-fashioned,[40] not simply for their theoretical value but also due to their impracticality: they would have required a long process of realisation, which, at the time,

[39] The Renaissance is in fact considered by historians the birth of the perspective, by which the portrayal of the urban space of the city and its life could be read in one single image. Paintings such as *La Flagellazione di Cristo* by Piero della Francesca, are the famous demonstration of this association.

[40] When the King announced the refusal of the plan on September 13th, 1666, Rasmussen hypothesised, since we do not know exactly what happened in the meantime "that the King has been influenced by representatives from the City. It seems likely that the Lord Mayor of London—startled by the first letter and the rumours about Wren's plan—had been to the King to assure him that it would be absolutely impracticable to carry out an ideal plan." Rasmussen, 105-107

London could not have afforded. These plans were also perceived by citizens as hazardous and oppressive as they drastically altered the foundation of the precedent city, while drastically asserting the power of the sovereign over citizens' lives. London was not a city that could wait, it needed to resume quickly.[41] This is why the restoration preferred starting promptly and substantially through a series of building acts issued by the collaboration between the Parliament and the King. The first building act was passed in 1667 and it mainly posed restrictions on the fabrication of buildings of all uses: which all had to be constructed in stone and bricks exclusively and each house had to reach a limited and specific number of storeys (fig. 2.9). As noted in the previous chapter, this was the first step towards a standardised architecture, where buildings gradually need less design and more regulations.

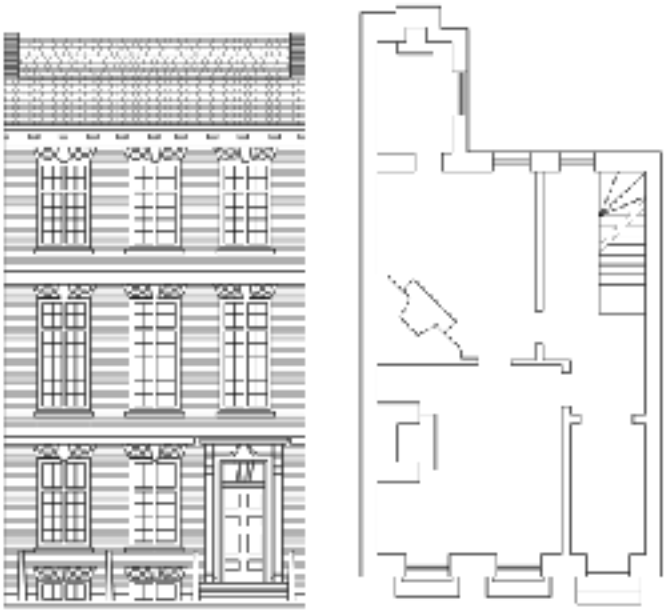

Fig. 2.9 - *Typical house after the Great Fire, designed and built by Nicholas Barbon.* (Drawing by author)

The impact that the coalition of monarchical and parliamentary powers had on the (re)design of the city. especially on its collective sphere, was rather significant. They, in fact, had to also liaise with the church as well and, at first, it seemed "impossible to lay down rules for the rebuilding of the City."[42] Even though a total of 87 churches[43] were destroyed during the fire, their restoration as collective space did not appear as the first priority in the 1667 act. Before the fire, each parish church in London

[41] "The court aided those who were willing and able to rebuild, at the expenses of those who were unwilling or unable. [...] In many ways it dispensed rough justice, but it cut through red tape and across private interests where these did not serve the best interest of the City. Without the Fire Court to cancel agreements and substitute others, the flood of litigation would have delayed the rebuilding for decades." Jeffery, 17

[42] Rasmussen, 108

[43] Birch (1896) reports, instead, ninety-three plus Saint Paul.

was a core of administrative, political, and social life of the city: they were in charge of the security of the streets and providing assistance to the poor and als guaranteeing law and order.[44] This public role of the church was essential to the collective life of the city, however, by this time, there were very few resources to be invested into the reconstruction of the churches. Prior to the fire, each parish church's income was incremented by property rents, but this, soon after 1666, totally vanished,[45] and, therefore, the reconstruction of the bygone churches had to be carefully planned. In addition to this, the church warden was a very conservative body deeply attached to the earlier imagery of their beloved churches. The church warden was, therefore, seeking to obtain buildings that looked like the pre-fire ones. This "nostalgia" was not just related to the appearance of the church, to its architecture, but also to its urban role, which represented the power that the institution exercised on the collective life of the city: "this multiplicity of churches was essentially English, for in all our cities the parishes were very small in extent, […] and apart from the large conventual churches, the parish churches were necessarily small."[46]

Even though Charles II and the Parliament issued the Act of Uniformity in 1662, which established a new means of unifying a broken church[47] through the inclusion in the Book of Prayers of other forms of public prayers, sacraments, and religious rituals, the state of the Church of England in the late seventeenth century was still vacillating: "multiplicity marked the life of the church in England"[48] during the Civil War and, therefore, "with the loss of consensus in religious policy went the loss of consensus in political ideology."[49] This left a fragmented society, which lacked social, political, and religious stability, since the only cohesive element, the only common belief, religion, had failed to be strong and survive as united following the war. At this point, the church began to question whether individuals "could come to have voluntary confidence and trust in the traditional institutions and belief of their society."[50] This was the responsibility of the church at the time of the Restoration, which was stuck between coercive manners to secure the cohesion of a lost society, and the voluntary

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[44] Harvey, 157

[45] "This ensured that the organisation of the City parishes, the vestries which had collapsed as the churchwardens fled from the fire, soon recovered. However, parish incomes, derived mostly from property rents, had virtually vanished and even those parishes with the will to rebuild lacked the resources to do so". Jeffery, 17

[46] Birch, 3

[47] "During the civil wars years, Roman, Anglican, Presbyterian and sectarian presuming a monopoly in the true path of salvation. The Roman claimed truth, for he had always known truth; the Anglican claimed truth, for he claimed to be part of one true Christian Church; the presbiterian claimed truth, for he had found indubitable truth in the Scriptures; and the sectarian claimed truth, for he had enjoyed direct and private access to the fount of truth". Harvey, 159

[48] Harvey, 159

[49] Ibid.

[50] Harvey, 160

participation to religious life evoked by Christian communitarian goals.[51] In short, this was the moment in which the church could establish its authority once again, an authority that could be uniquely concerned with the fabric of society, its bonds, relationships, and goals.[52] And, most importantly, this could prevent a further fragmentation of society: religion at this point in time, was perceived as the cohesive belief around which a society would gather, and "if strength or stability of religious beliefs and habits ebbed, disruptions of the social order must surely follow."[53]

It is worth making a quick note remarking on the difference in control of such an approach towards the city design. If the attitude of Charles I was that of identifying the will of the Monarch with that of God, his singularity was also guided by a single hand, that of Inigo Jones, who was in control of the design of any institution and collective space. Now, with this transition from one figure to a sum of powers made of different heads, the monarch, the parliament, and the church,[54] design was in the hands of a Commission of building works, who was in charge of the reconstruction of the collective spaces—churches. At the head of the Commission was Christopher Wren who was appointed in 1667 and called by the Parliament to form the team that would be responsible for the rebuilding of the main City Cathedral and some of the 86 parish churches of the City of London that were damaged over the years that followed the fire. At first, the most urgent design project was the rebuilding of the main St. Paul Cathedral and its square. St. Paul, in fact, ought to stand out amongst the other 51 churches that Wren was called to restore. St. Paul's position was crucial and remains faithful to its previous location, as it has been invested with a coronation role and was the only monumental voice in the new London fabric of parish churches.[55]

The first 1667 Act of Parliament provided for the reconstruction of 39 churches, a selection made by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London.[56] The money for the restoration of the parish churches was supposed to come from a tax on the coal that passed through the port of London.[57] It was supposed to be a tiny sum of money from everyone who burnt coal at the time, and

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[51] The church enforced "the obedience to the government and to preserve the form of society then in existence". Morley in Harvey, 161.

[52] Harvey, 162

[53] Ibid.

[54] Rasmussen, 108

[55] We might see a connection between Inigo Jones' project of the ceremonial route for Charles I and Wren's attitude towards the reconstruction of Saint Paul Cathedral. The French and Italian inspiration of Covent Garden can be found again in Wren's project: "His knowledge of architecture he had mostly acquired from books. During the Great Plague [...] he had been in Paris where his studies as much as possible of the new architecture. [...] At that time no English architect had so great reputation as that of Inigo Jones (who died in 1651)". Rasmussen, 96

[56] Birch, 2

[57] Ibid.

each parish was to pay for its specific church, but the churches selected in this first Act were mainly paid for with the money that came from their land: "the old historic names of the streets survived, and the greater number of the old City Churches were rebuilt on exactly the same sites and, in most cases, utilizing the old foundations."[58] This first act, though, was not warmly received, because the selection of churches made by the Archbishop and the Bishop[59] was not justified enough and the religious population was not accepting of this certain favouritism. In order to allow for the potential reconstruction, some preferences were inevitable and the original number of 86 churches must have been reduced, if not so drastically, at least partially. This discontentment was accepted by both Parliamentarians and the King, who decided to reconsider the Act.

This manoeuvre was followed by the 1670 Parliament Act, which issued a much more detailed list of churches for the reconstruction, which was mediated by the Commission guided by the Chief Surveyor, Christopher Wren. The list represented a thorough consideration of the churches that existed before the fire and how each parish could potentially be combined with one another. This Act also clarified a strategic plan for funding from the coal tax and for the overall management of their rebuilding. The initial number of churches was raised to 51, with a few churches or more merging under one single parish, although there was a common reluctance in losing each one's institutional identity. This merging was well received by everyone, but they wanted them to remain legally separated, "they were to continue to obtain funding by rates upon their inhabitants, with access to law compel compliance. The only joint expenditure was to be for the maintenance of the fabric of the church and its services, each parish paying its own separate contribution in a proportion agreed between them."[60] Overall, these new buildings were still conceived of as sites of collective debate and discussions, albeit newly situated in the shade of an emerging capitalism, where Lloyd's and the Bank of England were soon to be established.

The churches realised that until now, with the previous two acts, they were still confined within the city boundaries touched by the fire, as a reiteration of their previous crucial and unique role as a sacred space for collective rituals, as the one and only episode of communal life gathering in the city. Their reconstruction aimed to establish the same role once again. These churches were designed by Wren and were the only existing architecture for the public sphere. They consisted of a single space, where every aspect of public life could be staged. Such a simple plan consists of one simple room—a court

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[58] Birch, 2

[59] An agreed list of churches to be united can be found in Tanner MS 142, fos 38, 42.

[60] "No document has apparently survived to indicate who was responsible for compiling this list of fifty-one parishes, how it was prepared or what principles were used to guide the choice of parish partners. Humphrey Henchman, Bishop of London, presumably had much to do with it. The parishes joined were all adjacent pairs and some effort seems to have been made to join smaller parishes with larger ones." Jeffery, 26

room—which makes the church resemble a neutral arena, where all patterns of behaviour can be performed—from law and politics to religion—and they can be subjected to external judgement detained by the King. The single space of the court room could be considered the direct translation of the absolutism of the Monarchy prior 1666: one sovereign, one architect, one space. (Fig. 2.10; 2.11; 2.12)

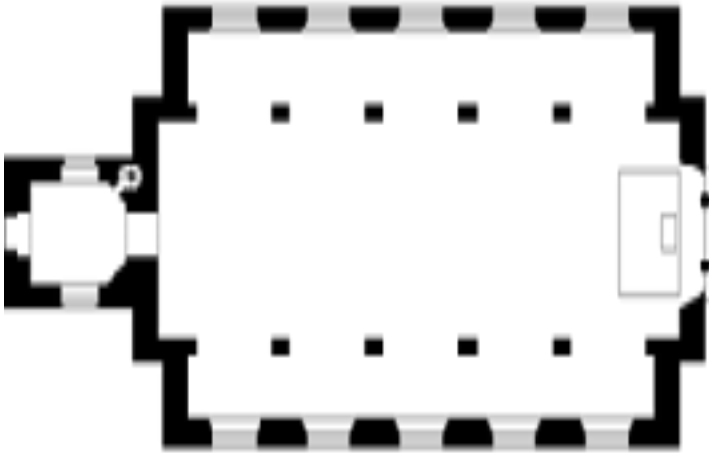

Fig. 2.10 - *St. James Piccadilly, Westminster* (1676-84). The parish was named St James as part of the ancient parish of St Martin in the Field. (Drawing by author)

Fig. 2.11 – *All Hallows, Bread Street* (1684 and demolished in 1876). This parish was combined with that of St John the Evangelist Friday Street in the 1670 Act. (Drawing by author)

Fig. 2.12 - *St Edmund the King and Martyr*, Lombard Street (1679). This parish was united with that of St Nicholas Acons in the 1670 Act. (Drawing by author)

Out of respect for the conservative request of the church-warden, London parish churches realised in 1711 were, and still remain, urban episodes that tend to camouflage themselves within the urban realm. Christopher Wren, while in charge of the Building Commission as Chief Surveyor, tried to propose churches true to their former nature. Such an attitude would soon be radically changed with the act that followed, which is the most important one for this research. The act in question was issued on June 12, 1711, during Queen Anne's reign, and lasted until 1716 thanks to the extension of the same coal tax that financed earlier churches.[61] The peculiarity of this new act was to consider widening the area of the distribution of the parish churches due to the increasing population, expanding it towards the East End. At the head of the Commission was newly appointed architect, in lieu of Christopher Wren, named Nicholas Hawksmoor, whose unconventional genius brought the conversation about collective spaces to a new unpredictable and challenging level.[62]

Hawksmoor was only 18 years old when he entered the Commission for Building Fifty New Churches under the supervision of Christopher Wren. Beyond the advantages concerning the professional experience gained from this position, as a young architect he was afforded the opportunity to develop a personal and highly original approach towards his practice, through the meticulous reading of his own expanding collection of treatises and books on the Italian Baroque and Renaissance.[63]

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[61] This act was issued by the Government and announced by Queen Anne. The intention behind the act was to allow the increasing population to participate in religious ceremonies, while strengthening the authority of the Church of England, in light of the Civil Wars (1642-1651).

[62] On Nicholas Hawksmoor, see Hopkins O. (2015) *From the Shadows: The Architecture and Afterlife of Nicholas Hawksmoor*. London: Reaktion; Hart V. (2007) *Nicholas Hawksmoor. Rebuilding Ancient Wonders*. New Haven-London: Yale University Press; Mostafavi M. and Binet H. (2015) *Nicholas Hawksmoor. London Churches*. Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers; Dowen K. (1970) *Hawksmoor*. London: Thames and Hudson.

[63] "Hawksmoor owned the famous edition of *Vitruvius* by Barbaro and Perrault, as well as the treatise of Alberti, Serlio, Du Cerceau, Palladio, Scamozzi and Carlo Cesare Osio". Hart, 16

Hawksmoor's ability, therefore, immediately stood out, completely distinguishing him from his predecessors. He designed his churches with high capability and great use of imagination in order to combine their desire and the zeitgeist of his time: "his ingenuity and inventiveness raised him from the ranks of just another British architect to that of sheer genius. It is true that he had the opportunity of producing a new and revolutionary design, but it is what he did with that opportunity that makes him so special and, perhaps, the most brilliant of all English architects."[64] His meticulous care for the building, from its conception to its realisation, brought him to complete only six parish churches, as opposed to the dozens realised by his predecessors. The first official one is St. Alfege in Greenwich constructed between 1712 and 1718, followed by St. Anne in Limehouse, St. George-in-the-East in Wapping, Stepney, Christ Church in Spitalfields all realised between 1714 and 1730, and later St. Mary Woolnoth in the City and St George in Bloomsbury constructed between 1716 and 1731.

2.4.1 Steeple

Although, on paper, Hawksmoor started by being appointed Wren's personal assistant in 1679, after taking over Robert Hooke's place in the Commission, he must have presumably intervened earlier, especially on the realisation of the steeples that still today scatter London's skyline. These steeples were certainly not focal points in the plans that predates the 1711 Act, which enabled "more towers and steeples to be constructed. There is some evidence that, given further resources, the steeple-building programme would have continued until steeples had been added to the towers of all the City churches."[65] According to historian Paul Jeffery, it is quite evident that these steeples were gradually added by Hawksmoor as a demonstration of his care for the urban context in which the churches were sitting; this was a very different approach from Wren's urban strategy, which was more put more care into the single artefact and remained faithful to their earlier patterns and designs.

In fact, besides a few limited exceptions, if we look at the steeples of some of Wren's churches, they appear to be totally detached from the spatial sequence of the court room—almost as an admission of their secondary role (Fig. 2.13; 2.14). However, these steeples and towers carry a strong urban meaning, their only function seems, in fact, to be in relation to the city. Besides stressing the main entrance to the church, they are certainly visible in the skyline of the city as recognisable landmarks, which undresses the church of its introverted role of a court room, while opening it towards a wider view of the city (Fig. 2.15; 2.16).

[64] Jeffery, 40

[65] Jeffery, 28

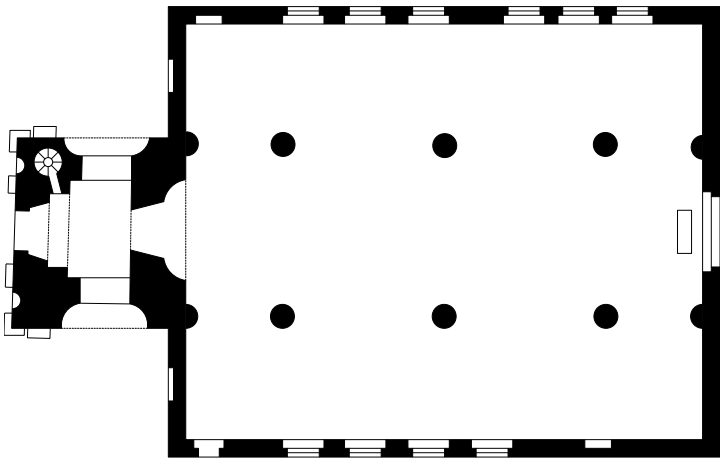

Fig. 2.13 – *St Magnus Martyr*, London Bridge (1671-76, steeple added in 1705). (Drawing by author)

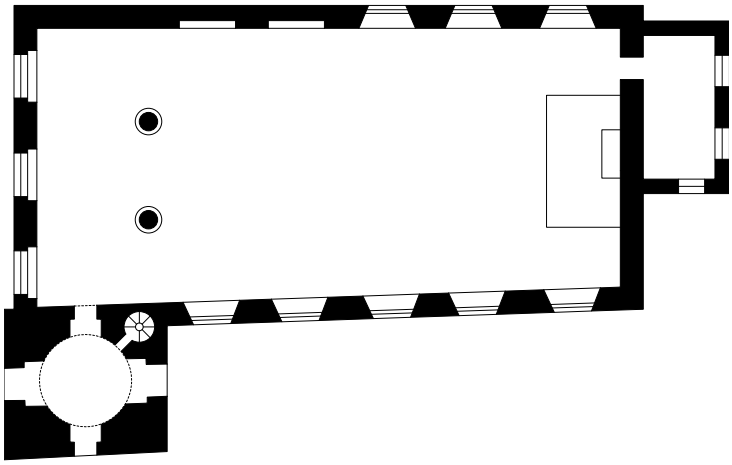

Fig. 2.14 – *St. Mary Somerset,*Thames Street (1686, the distinctive pinnacles on the towers are a later addition. The church was demolished in 1871). (Drawing by author)

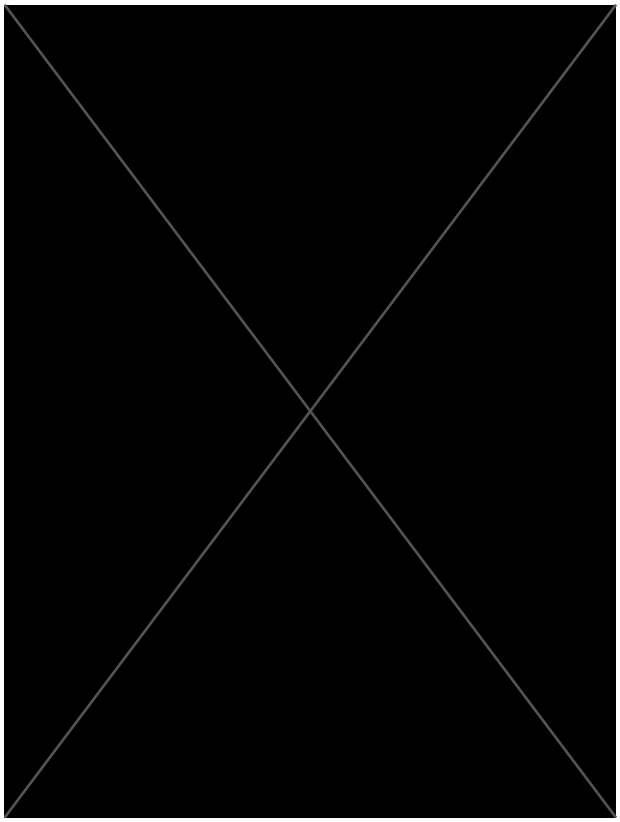

Fig. 2.15 - *St Margaret Pattens* (1684-87, steeple added in 1702). (G. H. Birch*, London parish churches*, 1896)

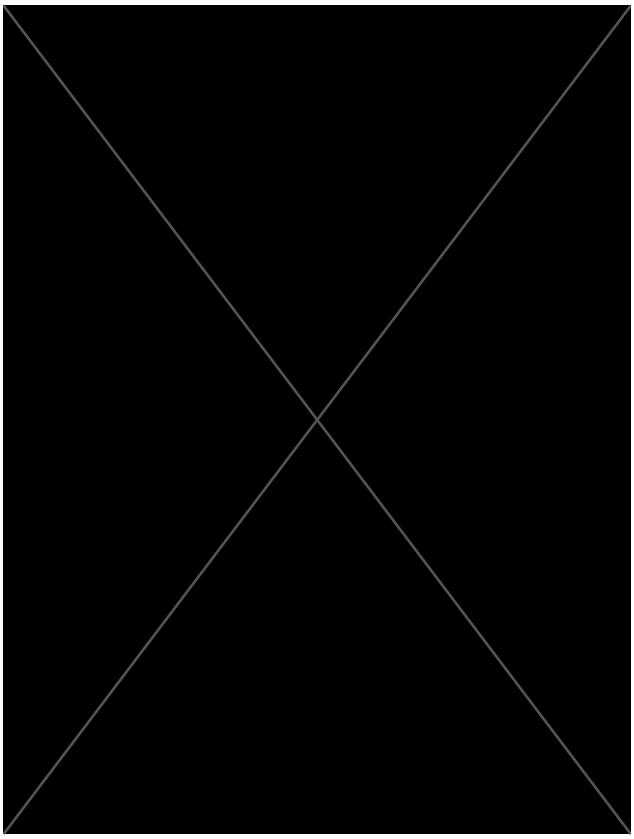

Fig. 2.16 – *St Mary-Le-Bow* (1670-75, steeple added in 1680). (G. H. Birch*, London parish churches*, 1896)

It is very likely that most of the steeples, particularly those realised after 1689, were conceived of by Nicholas Hawksmoor, which is an assumption that reveals his singular care for their urban collocation.[66] On a side note, this visual articulation of the steeple around London might remind us once again of that same attitude that Sixtus V had in Rome, where vertical elements, obelisks instead of steeples, identified the spaces of power and collective life across the city. Similarly to Sixtus V's plan, Hawksmoor's approach further demonstrated that the role of sacred space within the city is a means by which to construct its image, its form: this can be read not only in Hawksmoor's own projects but also in the interventions that he made on Wren's existing churches,[67] which cumulatively added up to a broader vision of London and anticipated the plan of urban expansion that the Queen soon called upon him to accomplish, inviting him to take over from Wren in the role of Surveyor of the Building Commission in 1711. The steeple plays a fundamental, if not the primary, role in the designs of Hawksmoor's churches: they characterised their urban presence as well as their spatial composition. The steeple and the tower were still positioned in front of the church, emphasising the entrance, however, their language aims more to accentuate their imposing urban presence made of stone, which strikes a vivid contrast with the bricks of the surrounding houses. (Fig. 2.17)

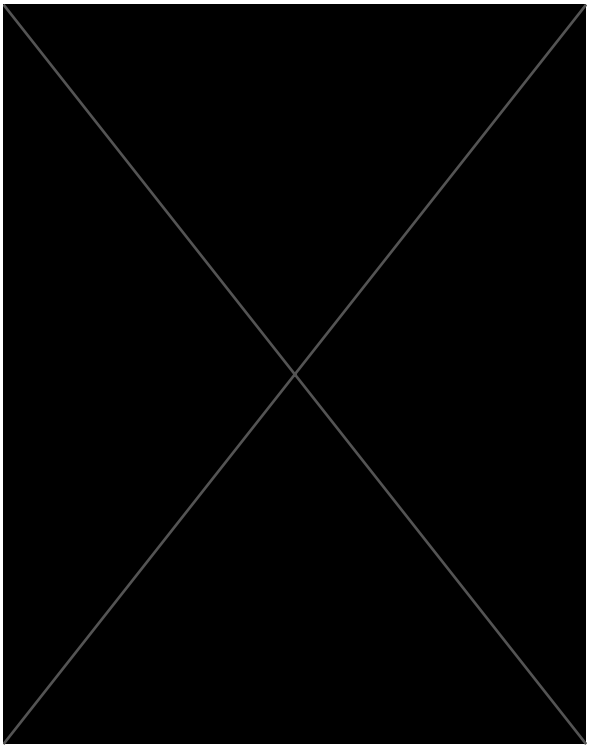

Fig. 2.17 - St Luke, Old Street, 1727-33, ph. Héléne Binet. (Mostafavi M. Binet H. *Nicholas Hawksmoor. London Churches.* 2015)

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[66] Geraghty, 2. The drawings relating to steeples are published in Wren Society, X, 1933 plates 1-10, and John Summerson, "Drawings from the London churches in the Bute Collection: a catalogue" in *Architectural History,* XIII, 1970, 30-42. However, in neither publication there is an attempt to identify Hawksmoor's draughtsmanship.

[67] Only two of the steeples' drawings, both for St Augustine, Watling Street, have been so far attributed to Hawksmoor by Kerry Downes, yet Paul Jeffery in his *The city Churches of Christopher Wren*, does not mention Hawksmoor name.

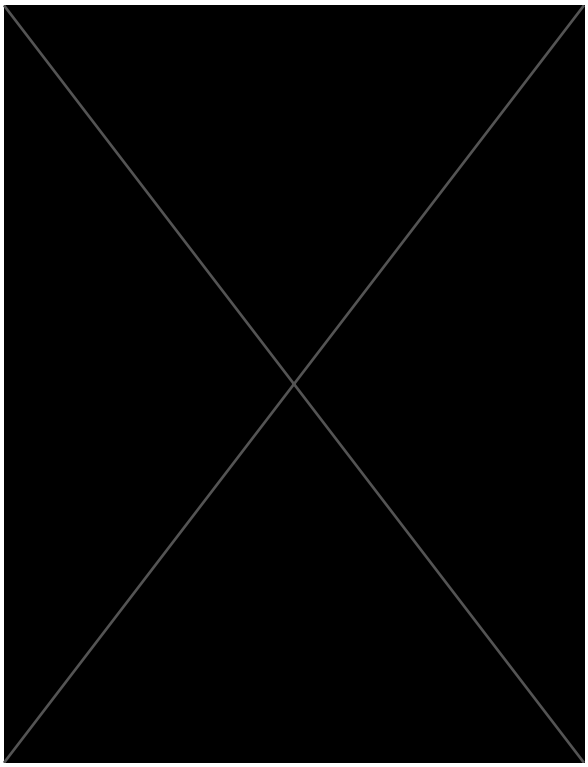

Fig. 2.18 - St Luke, Old Street, 1727-33, ph. Héléne Binet. (Mostafavi M. Binet H. *Nicholas Hawksmoor. London Churches.* 2015)

2.4.2 Façade

The church, as a collective space through the use of the steeple, begins to connect to the immediate context of the city (fig. 2.18). This ambivalent role of the steeple signified the quick transition between the work of Wren and Hawksmoor, which sees James Gibbs as one of the main dominating figures.[68] Gibbs realised only one church, St Mary-Le-Strand (1614–1617), during this Fifty Churches Act and was soon "jobbed out due to his political affiliations."[69] Gibbs, however, remained an interesting character amongst his contemporaries having studied under the supervision of Italian architect, Carlo Fontana, he came back to England and added two new architectural elements typical of Palladianism to the main façade: the portico and the plinth (Fig. 2.19; 2.20).[70]

Whether or not this influenced Hawksmoor once he started working with the Commission is not of main relevance here, instead, that these two features made a radical and subversive change in the relationship between the church and the city is pivotal. They were radical gestures that detached the communal space of the church, which ceased to be identified with the court room of the parish

[68] Summerson (1958), 204

[69] Summerson (1958), 198

[70] Summerson describes St Mary-Le-Strand as "conceived in the mannerist of the sixteenth century than in that of the Baroque masters (Including Fontana) of the seventeenth century". Summerson (1958), 202

architecture representative of Christopher Wren's ideas. Hawksmoor's churches are conceived of in all their monumental character, they act as a stage within the city. Churches like St. Martin in the Fields, St. Mary-Le-Strand or St. Giles in the Fields stand at the very beginning of this transition.

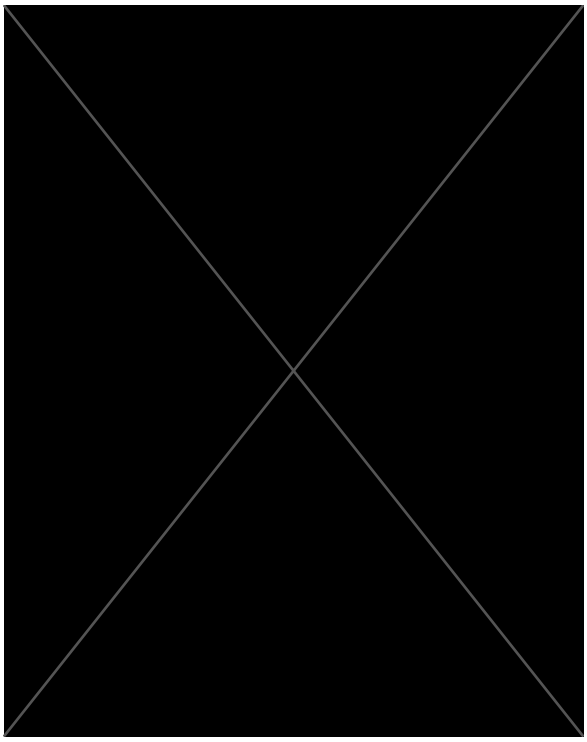

Fig. 2.19 - *St Mary-Le-Strand* (1714-17). (© RIBA Collections)

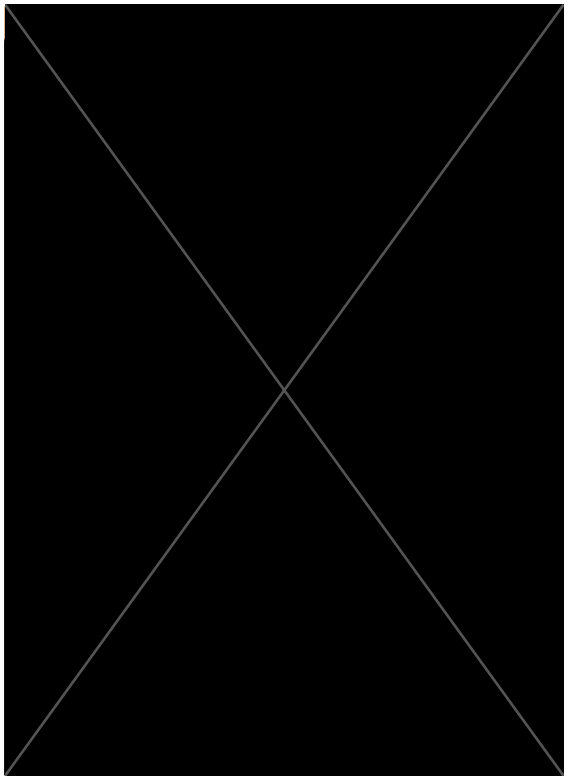

Fig. 2.20 - *St Martin in the Fields* (1722-26). (G. H. Birch, *London parish churches*, 1896)

This emphasis on the outdoor presence, though, implied a radical change in the indoor space of the church: the building gradually started closing into itself and turning its indoor space into an obscure and dark room, which highly contrasts with the bright and vibrant decoration of Wren's interiors. The indoor space, for Wren, was the public space itself, without need of mediation with the immediate outdoor surroundings. His churches were placed in an uninterrupted continuity of interior and exterior: the absence of thresholds, like plinths and porticoes, turned the court room into an extension of the outdoors. The plans of Hawksmoor's churches are peculiar for the time, especially compared to the almost canonical, longitudinal, and single-room plans of Wren's churches. Hawksmoor's projects treated sacred space as a sequence of rooms, a composition that accentuates the gradual process of the ritual (fig. 2.21; 2.22). The replacement of the court room with a series of rooms almost became a metaphor of the gradual transition of power that from an absolute monarchy—the single court room —to being held in dialogue between crown and state.

If Wren's churches needed no mediation between indoor and outdoor, the façade in Hawksmoor's design plays, instead, a crucial intermediary role, a link between the architecture and city. The envelope of the churches that follow 1711 are, in fact, much more attentive and carefully designed in relation to their surroundings—while maintaining their proud monumentality, these churches sit in a respectful harmony with their specific context.

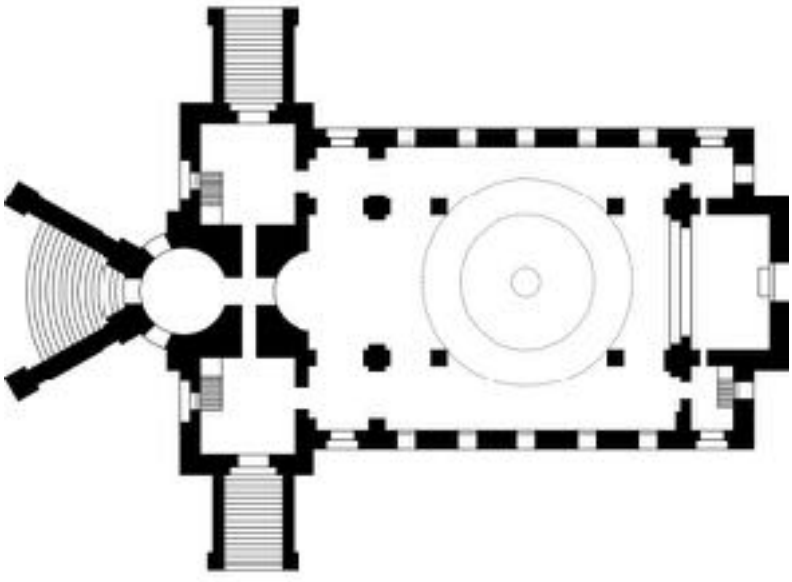

Fig. 2.21 - *St Anne Limehouse*, 1714-1730. (Drawing by author)

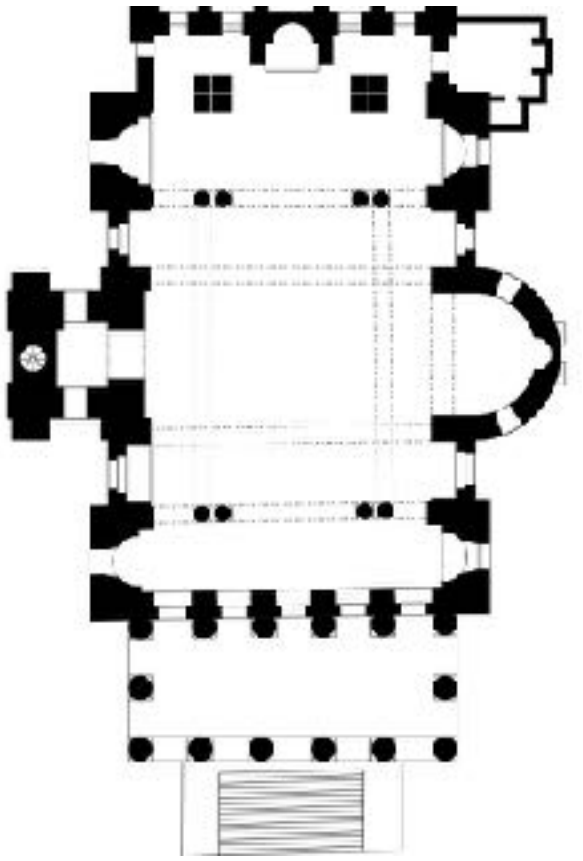

Fig. 2.22 - *St George Bloomsbury*, 1720-30. (Drawing by author)

2.4.3 Scale

Hawksmoor's churches sit within an ambivalence of both scale and meaning. As previously mentioned regarding their steeples, Hawksmoor's churches demonstrate an attentive urban consideration of their context, which speaks a twofold language that refers to two different scales: the main elevation speaks a monumental language that opens a dialogue with the city, while the side elevation acts almost as a tail of a big, decorated urban mask. When looked at in section, the Christ Church in Spitalfields respectfully reflects the existing urban fabric by maintaining the same height of the brick houses that populate the immediate surrounding area (Fig. 2.23).

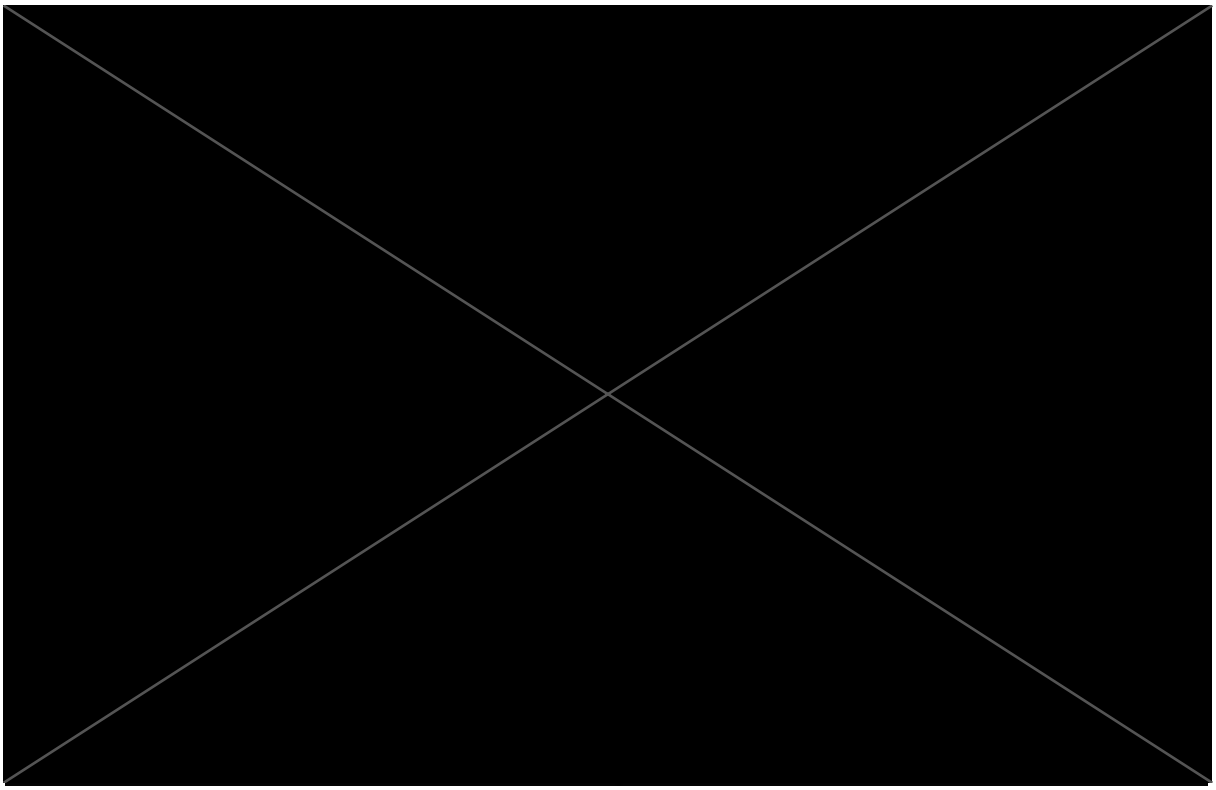

Fig. 2.23 - *Christ Church Spitalfields* 1714-29. Side elevation (Mostafavi M., Binet H. *Nicholas Hawksmoor. London Churches.* 2015)

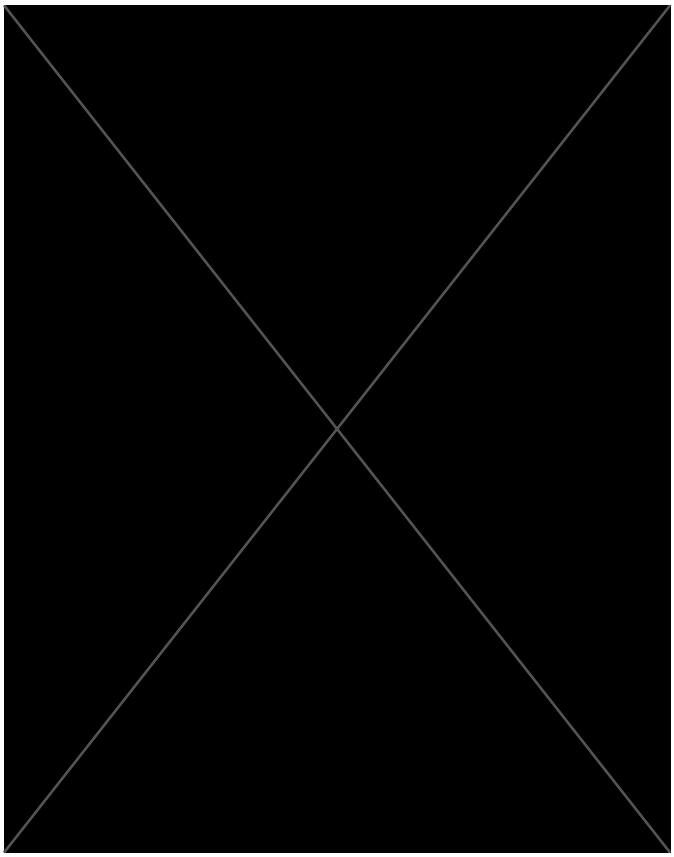

Fig. 2.24 - *St. George Bloomsbury* 1720-30. (G. H. Birch*, London parish churches*, 1896)

Although Hawksmoor's churches occasionally seem to be dressed in a quasi-aggressive monumentality, like in the instance of St. George Bloomsbury (fig. 2.24), thanks to their duality in scale, they become a respectful gesture, through which collective spaces in the city ultimately manifest their urban role.

With this emphasis on the outdoor presence of these churches, after 1711, we begin to see a very successful attempt of creating an urban space around the architectural object of the church, within which, until now, collective rituals had been confined. Unlike Wren's parish architecture, which was so introverted that it almost disappeared in the urban fabric, Hawksmoor's churches try to respond to a much broader audience—not only a religious one. The revolutionary and radical act of these churches was to generate a public, external space. These spaces were directly dependent on the shape and presence of churches they were designed around—a very dissimilar approach to Wren's, whose outdoor spaces were a perspectival manoeuvre that framed the architectural object of the church. This is still visible today in St. Luke's, Old Street, St. George in the East, St. Anne's Limehouse, and Christ Church, Spitalfields (Fig. 2.25; 2.26; 2.27; 2.28).

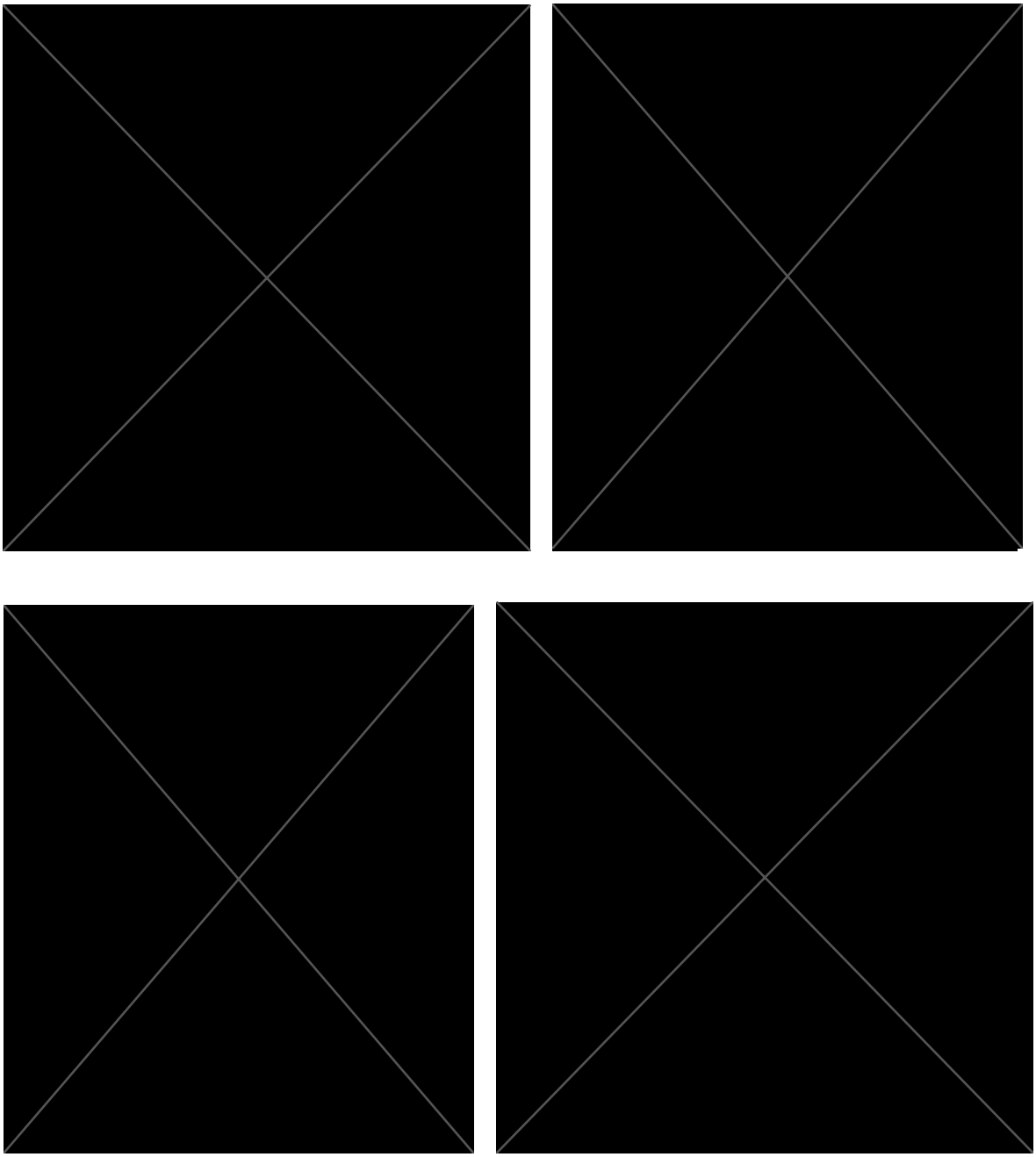

Fig. 2.25; 2.26; 2.27; 2.28 - *St Luke, Old Street; St George in the East; St Anne's Limehouse; Christ Church Spitalfields.* (Mostafavi M., Binet H. *Nicholas Hawksmoor. London Churches.* 2015)

2.4.5 Decoration

These dissimilarities underline an interesting contrast between two approaches to the design of the church as a collective space: Wren's use of details and decorations—unlike that of Hawksmoor's—does not contribute to the monumentality of his churches' external presence. Wren's churches remain surrounded by bricks and houses and, with their modesty, do not impose any aggressive or temperate novelty on the existing architecture (fig. 2.29). Most importantly, considering that Wren built these churches exactly where the ones destroyed by the fire were standing, faithful to their original footprints, he does not add any outdoor space to them: their interiors remain the extension of the street and represent the only collective space where the gathering, intended mainly as a religious rituals, could take place.

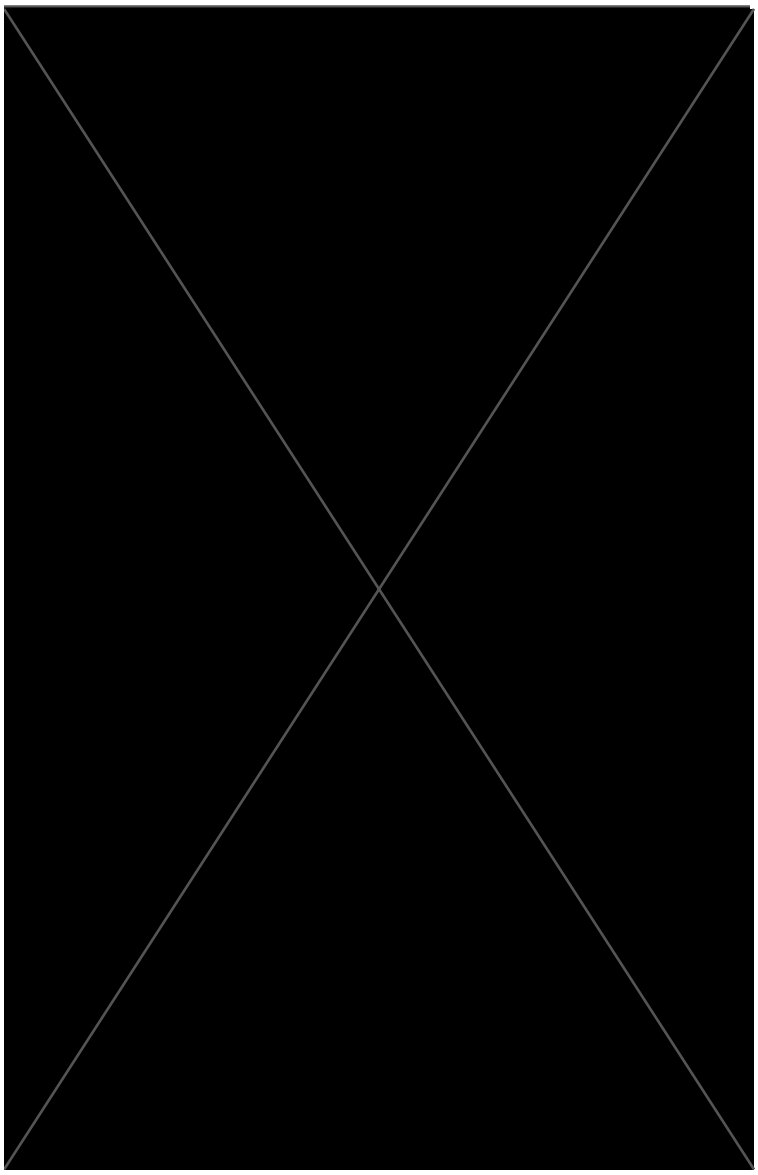

Fig. 2.29 - *St James Piccadilly*, 1676-84. (T. H. Shepherd, engraving ca. 1800. (© City of London: London Metropolitan Archives)

In Christopher Wren's churches, we find the highest expression of monumentality in the interior, through lavish decorations and richness of light. Wren's manoeuvre seems to drive the focus of the participant to the collective ritual, directly within the interiors of his architectures. The interior of the church, in sacred spaces like that of St. James Piccadilly, was the place where the crowd processionally flows into and gathers in awe of the liturgy of the sacred. The crowd, in Wren's churches, seems to be invited inside by the harmonious movements of the vibrant baroque façade, which moves together with the community towards the altar and the space of the court room, where the ritual can finally take place (Fig. 2.30). We might hypothesise that when Wren was the Chief-Surveyor of the Commision, the economic plan in support of the churches' reconstruction was quite strong, since the list of the churches was made in agreement with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London; as opposed to Hawksmoor's churches, which were intended as a strategy to contain the growth of and satisfy the population in the, less considered, East End.[71]

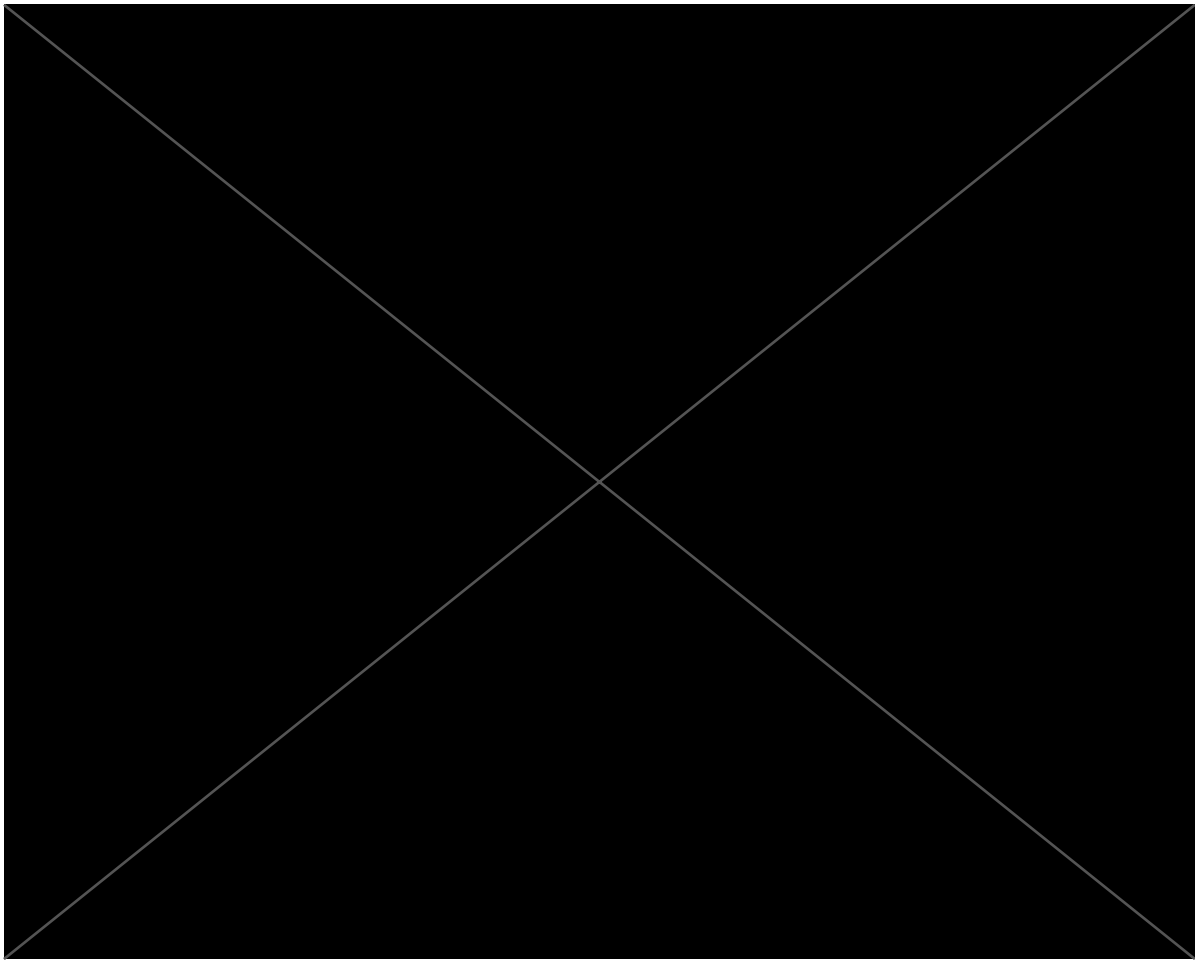

Fig. 2.30 - *St James Piccadilly* 1676-84. The Altar. (G. H. Birch*, London parish churches*, 1896)

[71] Additionally, this might have been related to the fact that the church at this point was losing the authoritative power it used to have. Harvey, 158

In fact, Hawksmoor, conversely, does not exceed in any pompous decoration and rather maintains the façade to a minimum, sober level of detailing, with only the occasional emphasis of single elements, which he liked to overscale—like the key-stone, which, in most of his churches, is turned into a decorative element, moving from being a simple structural detail to a formal expression of pure matter (fig. 2.31). These elements, though decorative, remain extremely bare and geometric, almost symbolic in their absurd, scaleless presence (fig. 2.32). This might have had something to do with Hawksmoor's approach towards freemasonry in the late 1730s, in which he explored his fascination with mythology and geometry.[72] Hawksmoor uses few architectural elements to express his monumental gesture and make it as evident as possible: the pediment and the portico are so majestic, like in the example of Christ Church in Spitalfields, where they act as an announcement of the presence of a sacred space, which is reduced almost into a secondary space and turns the church into an almost a self-standing scenography in the city, which stands in a dominating position with its strong ceremonial presence.

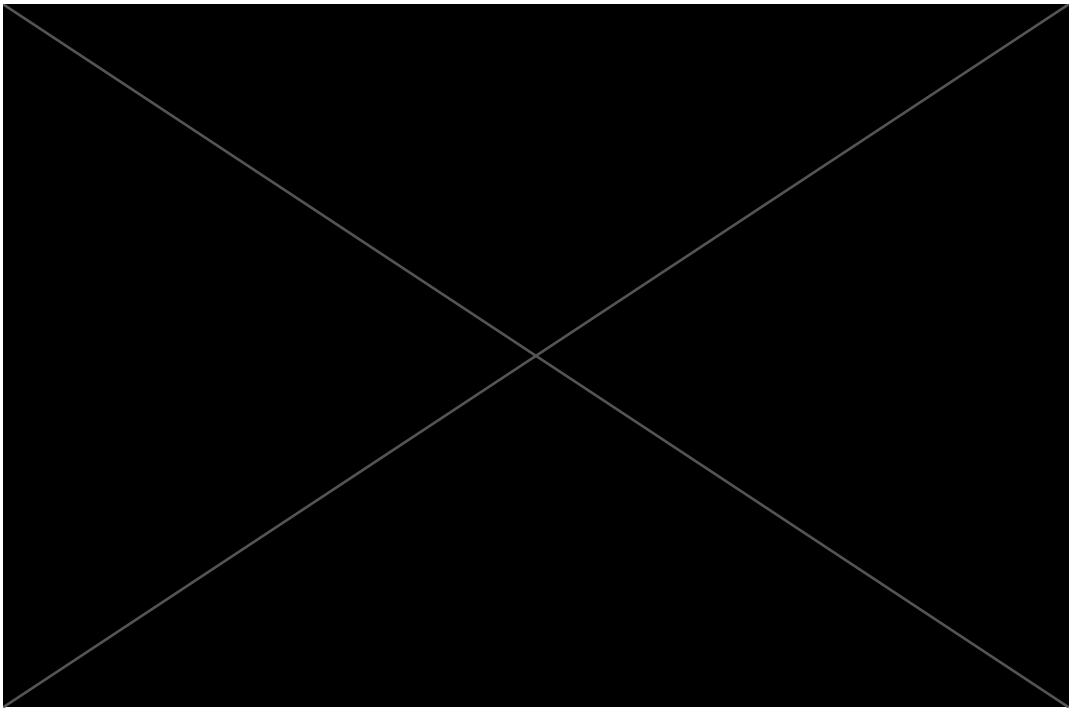

Fig. 2.31 - *Key-stone*, St George in the East. (Ph. Nigel Green)

[72] This detail of its life has oscillated between fantastic narratives of Peter Ackroyd, or Ian Sinclair, who go beyond the decoration of his churches and see the occult of pentagrams: "a triangle is formed between Christ Church, St George-in-the -East, and St Anne, Limehouse […] St George, Bloomsbury, and St Alfege, Greenwich, make up the major pentacle star" (I. Sinclair. *Lud Heat*. London, Skylight Press 2012). Very little is the historical accuracy on the matter, with the exception of Hart V., *Nicholas Hawksmoor. Rebuilding Ancient Wonders*, New Haven-London 2007

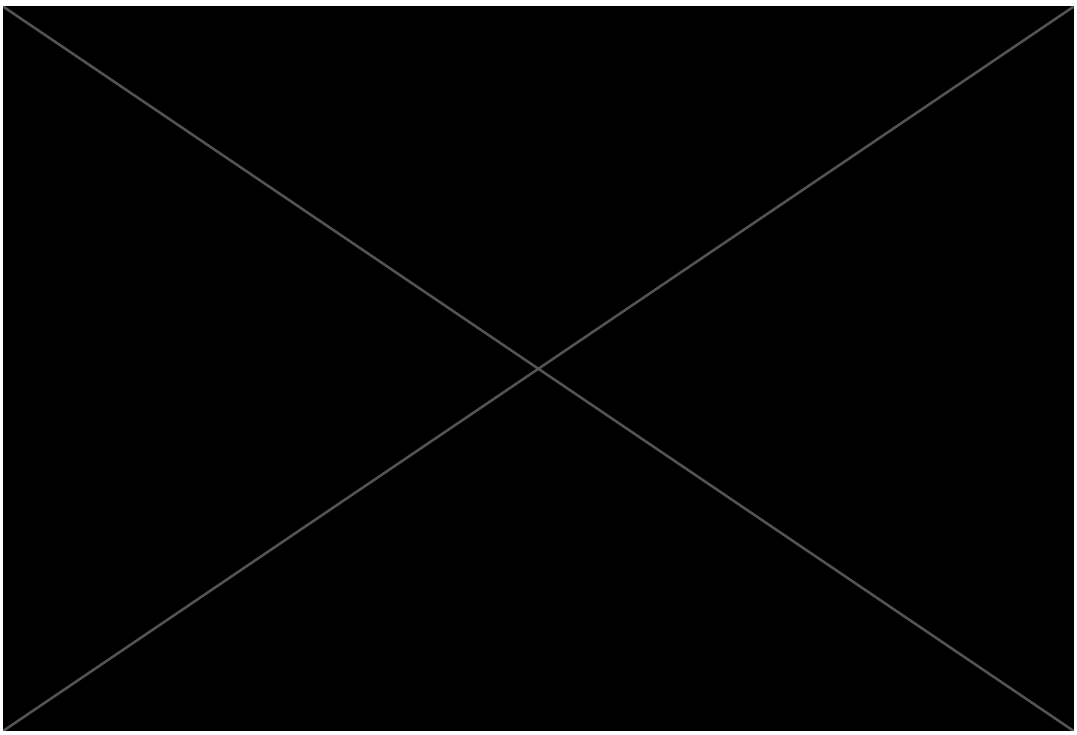

Fig. 2.32 - *Key-stones*, St Alfege. (Ph. Nigel Green)

2.5 From church to precinct: a shift of focus

This radical subversion between the indoor and outdoor approach of the two architects is clearly legible in their different proposals for the precinct and external paving of St. Paul's Cathedral between 1685 and 1687. After the fire, a particularly nervous attention was placed on St. Paul's. Initially, Wren's personal strategy for the cathedral was intended as a partial realisation of his urban plan (fig. 2.33). When we look at his drawing, in fact, we recognise that same convergence of axes and roads that was already proposed in his plan for the reconstruction of the city after the Great Fire. The street, for Wren, was entirely used to emphasise the staged monumentality of the Cathedral confirming Wren's consideration of the interior of his architectures, which was the culmination of a sacred, ritualistic procession that began on the street and ended in the sacred space. In Wren's proposal for St. Paul's precinct, the outdoor is just a prelude to the spectacularly decorated interior, it flows into the indoor without interruption.

However, alongside Wren's proposal, other members of the Building Commission began working on the precinct for the city's Cathedral, which is when Nicholas Hawksmoor's proposal emerged as particularly striking. The pupil, setting the tone for his future urban projects, included the outside as an essential part of the conception of the sacred space. Hawksmoor still framed the architectural object with the line of the precinct but also turned the external surrounding area into a totally liveable urban space, a place of stasis rather than a purely perspectival mechanism: in line with his ongoing

project, Hawksmoor reversed the focus, which moved to the outside rather than giving prominence to the interior of the church (fig. 2.34). The precinct becomes not simply a way to enclose the monumentality of the church but the outline of an alternative life that could happen within it.

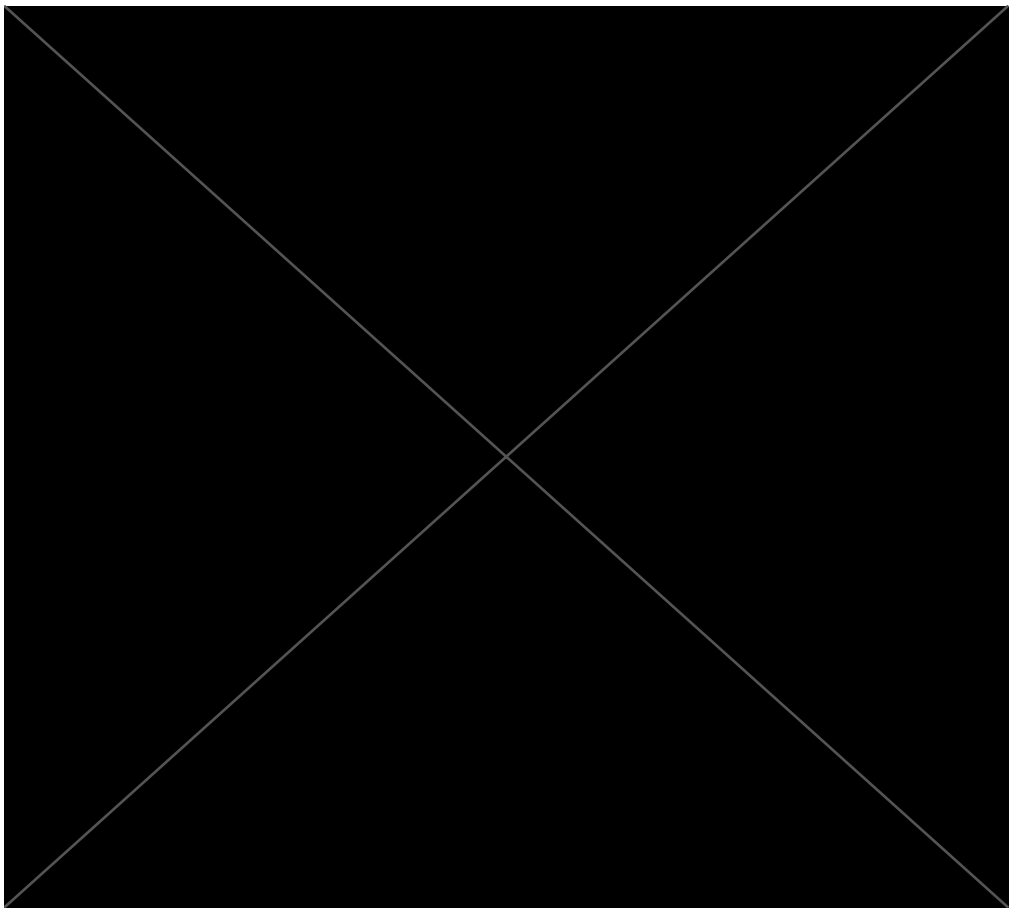

Fig. 2.33 - Christopher Wren, *St Paul Precinct*, 1685-87. (© St. Paul Cathedral Archive)

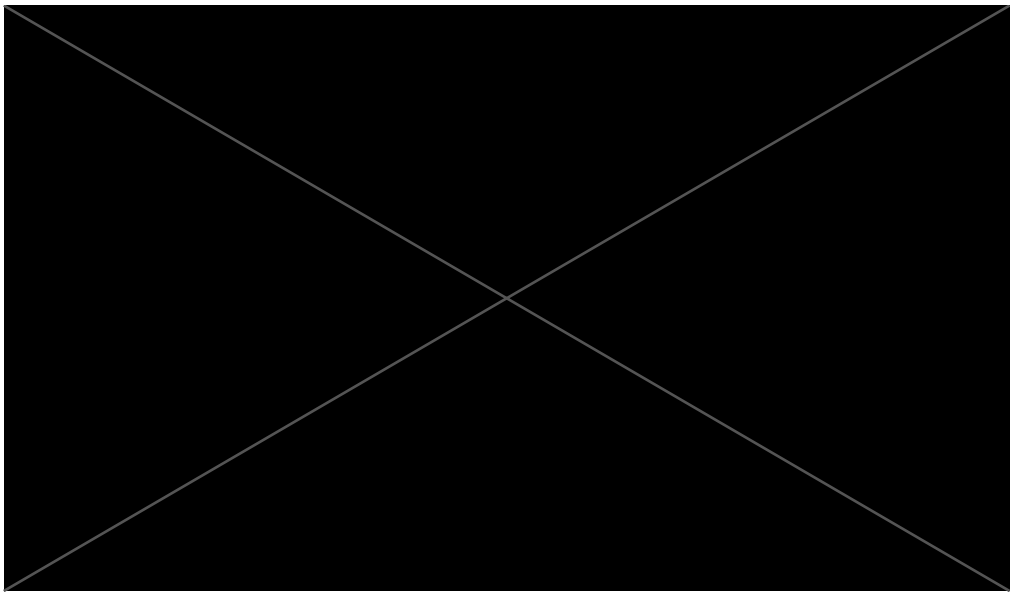

Fig. 2.34 - Nicholas Hawksmoor, *St Paul Precinct,* 1685-87. (© St. Paul Cathedral Archive)

Hawksmoor's sheer genius and inclination towards the construction of a new architectural language elevated him above his contemporaries, yet I would argue that it was his care for urban strategies that made him so special and, perhaps, the first ever urbanist in London,[73] the first architect capable of giving form to a collective space that was not religious.[74] This urban attitude is confirmed by Mohsen Mostafavi, who considers the presence of the spires in Hawksmoor's churches as "important urban makers. In the absence of a formally laid out city, as proposed by Wren and others after the Great Fire, they helped to present a vision of the domination of the Reformation church over the expanse of the urban topography—in much the same spirit as the axial planning and the placement of pagan obelisks acted as new symbols of the Counter-Reformation church in Rome at the end of the sixteenth century."[75]

While, at the time, architects were travelling mainly across Europe to enrich their vocabulary and study Renaissance and Baroque treatises, Hawksmoor developed a personal approach towards architecture, confronting himself with more exotic architectural principles depicted in other publications, amongst which there was the remarkable work of Fischer von Erlach, *Entwurff einer historischen Architektur*, that was published in 1721.[76] The book presents a collection of monuments throughout the history of architecture carefully selected and redrawn, where each example is explained through a drawing—accompanied by a written description—which portrays architecture as an urban project, a balanced relationship with the city and the choreography of the movements that generates it (Fig. 2.35).

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[73] "The act of 1711 conceived of the new churches as a key component of the urban development process", Mostafavi, 8. Mohsen Mostafavi and Héléne Binet book on Hawskmoor's churches, is an accurate visual study of Hawksmoor churches in London, that brilliantly reconsiders these architectures in the frame of a bigger urban project.

[74] "His ingenuity and inventiveness raised him from the ranks of just another British architect to that of sheer genius. It is true that he had the opportunity of producing new and revolutionary design, but it is what he did with that opportunity that makes him so special and, perhaps, the most brilliant of all English architects." Jeffery, 40.

[75] Mostafavi, 9

[76] Neville, 107. The only scholar that attempted to draw a subtle connection between Hawsmoor and Fischer von Erlach, is Vaughan Hart, who, in his *Nicholas Hawksmoor: Rebuilding Ancient Wonders*, he mentioned Hawksmoor's rich library, which contained a copy of *Entwurff einer historischen Architektur*.

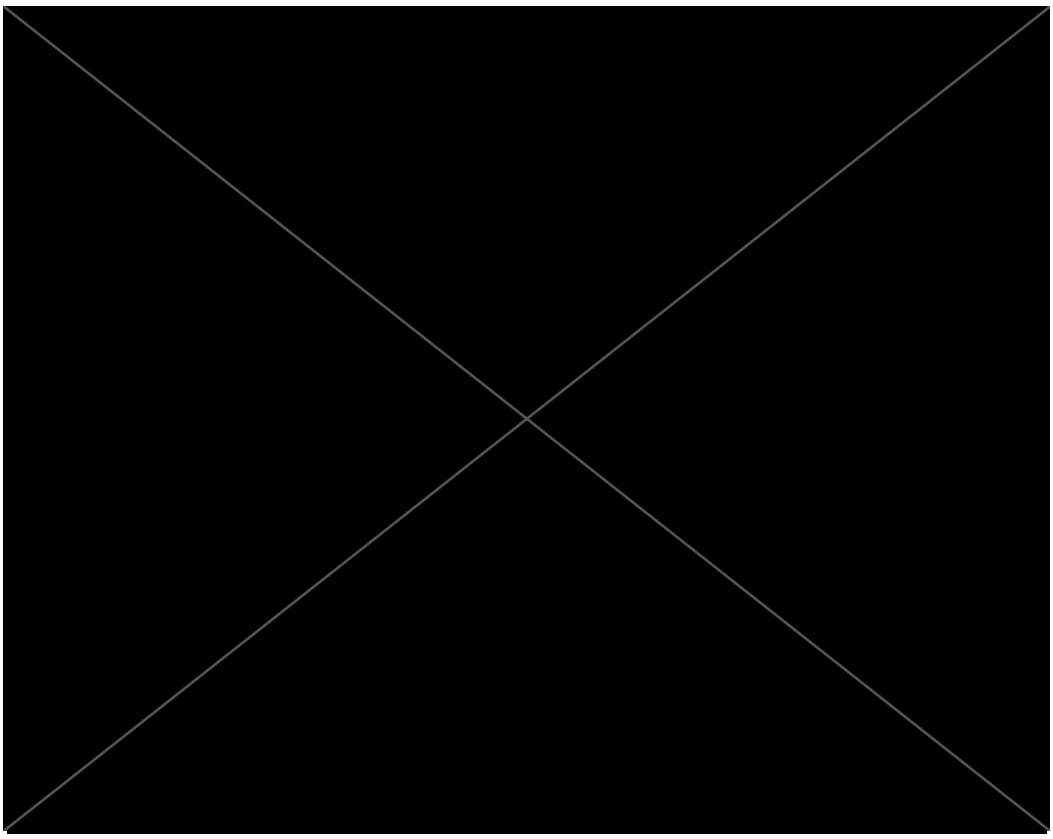

Fig. 2.35 - J. B. Fischer von Erlach, *Karlskirche.* (J. B. Fischer von Erlach. *Entwurff Einer Historischen Architektur* 1721)

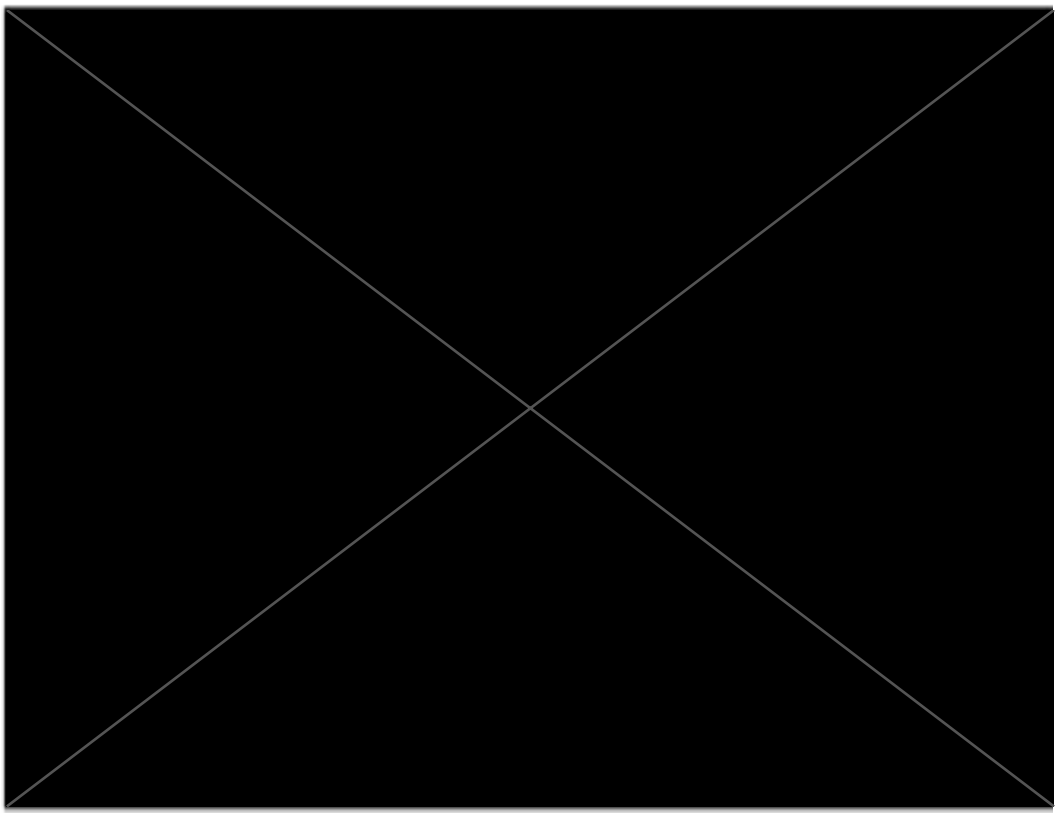

Fig. 2.36 - Thomas Allin, *St Anne, Limehouse,* 1750. (© City of London: London Metropolitan Archives)

Hawksmoor's design, exactly like Fischer's drawings, stages a monumental exterior, which, particularly in Hawksmoor's churches, deviates the attention from the bare and dark interior. This awe-inspiring presence of either baroque (in the instance of Fischer's Karlskirche in Vienna) or the overscaled keystones of Hawksmoor's St. Alfege—which I referred to earlier—invite us to read both projects in relation to their surroundings. This reading argues that the plan in both instances does not seem to be the most suitable architectural representation. Hawksmoor not only subverted the reading of the collective space by introducing a new unprecedented form of outdoor collective space, but he proposed a fully new mode of observation and design entirely dependent on its use and its inhabitants (fig. 2.36).[77] The churches of Christopher Wren were, until this point, clearly legible in their spatial connotation in plan, as a room, a diagram, where one type of movement of ritual was envisioned: the sacred procession and the religious gathering. Hawksmoor's churches, on the contrary, are far more eloquent if represented vertically, in their elevation as opposed to their plan, which begins, indeed, with a single room, yet it becomes more complex when it "incorporates the base of the tower and the east portico that faces the street."[78] The area around these churches, the fragmentation of the rooms in their plan, represented the option to open up towards the diverse population that began to dwell around the East End. A new and different set of subjects was contributing to the meaning of this new sacred collective architecture, as well as its outdoor space within the precinct. In other words, the collective spaces of the city shifted their urban connotation and began to be readable not just in plan but in elevation, allowing them to generate a new urban subjectivity no longer controlled by the authority of the church and subjects that were free to choose their own collective rituals.

Hawksmoor's churches were undoubtedly different from those of his contemporaries—Wren's and Gibbs' designs, in particular. Hawksmoor's architectures offered a choice, such that the collective subject could finally choose between the religious liturgy dictated by the sacred cell or the loose space right in front of it. What this means for the collective evolution of the rituals of this precise time is hard to decipher because little is known about the life of that growing part of the city at the time. The collective life of Londoners that we know at this point is that of the aristocracy and upper-middle class, from witnessing the words of Samuel Pepys or John Evelyn and strengthened by the success of periodic publications such as *The Spectator* (1711), *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1731), *The Tatler* (1709), *The Idler* (1758), and *The Rambler* (1750)—none of which seem to have been addressed to the growing population of the East End. Roy Porter, in his chapter on London's social life between the Restoration and Regency period, confirms that the social literature of the city at that time mainly revolved around

[77] His meticulous care for the building, from its conception to its realisation, brought him to complete only six parish churches: the first official one is St Alfege in Greenwich constructed between 1712-18, followed by St Anne in Limehouse, St George-in-the-East in Wapping, Stepney, Christ Church in Spitalfields all realised between 1714 and 1730; and later on St Mary Woolnoth in the City and St George in Bloomsbury constructed between 1716 and 1731.

[78] Mostafavi, 9. The church he is referring to in this passage is St Alfege.

the lifestyle of the rising upper-middle class and the established aristocracy who lived in the West End. There is very little material on the life in the East End at the time.[79] London was a city radically divided between rich and poor, a disparity that can be partially related to its sheer scale that increased since its Roman foundation, when it was already the biggest city in the country.[80] The combination of rapid growth and unequal wealth distribution made almost inevitable the tendency to overlook the conditions of life in the poorest areas of the city, privileging instead the affluent ones, where life might have been perceived as more exciting and worth noting.

Roy Porter reports that London grew from "about 21,000 souls in 1600 to over 91,000 by 1700."[81] With little doubt, the East End was an overcrowded part of the city with a mixed population of sailormen and workmen who were employed mainly in the construction of ships. Hawksmoor's churches were of a different scale from their precedent: enclosed within a generous outdoor space, they seemed large enough to welcome this increasing population. Some of them, according to Porter, were even "respectably bourgeois"—earlier in the century, even Spitalfields, before Hawksmoor's Christ Church, "wore a comely air."[82] We cannot be certain about the impact that Hawksmoor's churches had on the religious collective rituals, however after a close reading of both these architectures and the historical contingencies within which they were built, they emerge as a possible testimony of an interesting change in the collective life of the city. Hawksmoor's churches can be read as promising collective spaces in the East End; spaces that were capable of empowering the society at large, including the lower classes—who were indeed the majority of the population in the East End at the time—to take an active part in the life of the city.

Hawksmoor contributed to the formation of East London, which, by the 19C, became "essentially and above all things, a city of the working-man".[83] This is confirmed by the work of some early modern historians who had attempted to explore the life of the time from the eyes of those working men, who might have benefited from the new collective spaces that Hawksmoor welcomed in his architectures. Lindsey German and John Reese, for instance, in their *A People's History of London*, traced this history in a timeline of insurrections and collective discontent of those "who found themselves excluded from a political system still largely dominated by the aristocracy" and made London "the riot

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[79] "I said that there is no history to speak of in East London. The Pool and the port must be excepted; they are full of history […] the history of shipbuilding, the expansion of trade, the pirates of the German Ocean". Besant, 46

[80] "After it was rebuilt in the early Middle Ages, it became, again, the largest urban area in Britain. Soon it would become the largest city in Europe". German, Rees, 10. See also Dorling D. (2015) *Injustice: Why Social Inequality Persists.* 2nd edition. Bristol: Policy Press. "Such diversity, however, "forces its inhabitants to come together in all sorts of different ways to try developing community, organization and civil society so as to alleviate some of the worst features of city life. German Rees, 11.

[81] Porter, 141

[82] Porter, 142

[83] Besant, 19

capital of the world"[84]. This was also a time in which the police was absent from the spaces of the city, until the nineteenth century[85], therefore, Hawksmoor spaces might have contributed to the formation of the crowd and its transformation into a mob,[86] a term "coined in the eighteenth century to describe the labouring poor."[87]

Hawksmoor's churches are a translation of the revised institution that was the eighteenth century church into stone. With their flattened scenographic façades, occasionally emphasised by the use few architectural elements to express their monumental presence—elements that he liked to overscale, an example being that the keystone in most of his churches was turned into a decoration, passing from a structural detail to an expression of pure matter; or the pediment and the portico, which are both majestic announcements of the presence of a sacred space reduced almost into a secondary space. Hawksmoor's churches symbolise a new institution that, ultimately, began to focus mainly on social, rather than political stability.[88] This institution addresses a diverse and growingly unequal society that from the Restoration came to discover the possibility of choice between coercing liturgy and voluntary will. This is the society that Hawksmoor revealed with the design of his precincts, spaces for a society that gradually began to acknowledge inequalities and injustices, for a society that was in need of a space of its own, for a society that does not necessarily prescribe a way of living but can be used as a canvas to construct new non-religious theories of gathering. This new collective space allowed for the building of the foundations for "a new consensus: this creativity had found expression in new and old concepts as the law of nature, the state of nature, the social contract, the sovereignty of the people and so forth."[89] Hawksmoor's churches became a scenography within a precinct, which protected a new set of possible collective rituals and that would inhabit outdoor spaces in London for years to come.

2.6 From the absolute to the collective

Through the creation of a complex, linked network of fenced, sacred spaces across the city, Hawksmoor's London sought to respond to the larger—civic and religious—needs of the population and, in so doing, triggered new processes of ritualisation, which cemented the role of public space

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[84] German, Rees, 98

[85] "By the early nineteenth century the city's aldermen and politicians could not risk the assault on property and the rule of law that the mob threatened, hence the establishment of a London police force". German, Rees, 9

[86] "The struggle for reform of the political system that commenced in the mid eighteenth century and lasted until the passing of the Great Reform Bill in 1832, was centred on London, though it had important bases of support throughout the country" German, Rees, 97

[87] German, Rees, 8

[88] Harvey, 160

[89] Harvey, 165

within the urban form. The precinct was, for Hawksmoor, not a vehicle of enclosure and separation and neither was it just an architecture with a specific function apt at contrasting the power of the church, rather, it was the translation of the liminality typical of a rituals, within which the diversity of society could be staged free from the rigid liturgy of a religious ritual. Additionally, for Hawksmoor, it was crucial to ensure that this web of interlinking interventions was highly visible in the chaos of the un-urbanised city, through its vertical spires. This is evident also in the façades of his churches, which stand as strong architectural statements in stone, fixed presences of stable mass in what would have been a disordered aggregation of cumulative surrounding matter, their conscious absence of decoration contributing to the austere gravitas of their demeanour.

Through the repurposing of classical principles and their simplification into a very pared-back, almost elementary composition, Hawksmoor marked a major shift in the architectural presence of the church as a collective institution: sacred space, the main collective space at the time was, in effect, turned on its head. Or, more precisely, it was turned inside out by being given new open boundaries through the means of the precinct. From being identified with a single, interior-centred architectural object, the railed precinct allowed for transparency and visibility for a new social strata in the East End of the city that was not necessary subject to the most established collective rituals controlled by the church. Wherein, previously, the church had internally been conceived of as an extension of its external surroundings and for congregation in a single room, for Hawksmoor, the interior became a mere secondary requirement in the affirmation of a much broader role for such architecture; a simple mechanism by which the immediate vicinity could be shaped in order to facilitate a far more diverse range of collective uses and necessities. Sacred space was no longer internal and confined, but external, public, and visible—the façade, with its ambivalent scale, acting as the sole architectural element mediating with the city beyond it and was no longer simply a shell. This definitive subversion, from inside to outside, was not only a practical architectural innovation at the time, but furthermore transformed sacred architecture into an accessible civic and political stage and catalysed the emergence of a wide variety of activities expressed in communal rituals: it was transformed into a collective space.[90]

The architectural interventions that punctuate London's expansion throughout Hawksmoor's supervision of the Building Committee demonstrate a dramatic change in the nature of outdoor space, from the occupation of a simple perspectival and infrastructural role to its emergence as a

[90] By this time, London was growing in two different cities: the West End on one side, and the East End on the other, where most of Nicholas Hawkmsoor churches were located. The rituals of these two growing populations were most likely to be different: Roy Porter wrote that "The inhabitants of St. James's, notwithstanding they live under the same laws and speak the same language, are a distinct people from those of Cheapside' – London was thus becoming 'an aggregate of various nations distinguished from each other by their respective customs, manner and interests'. Such polar division was confirmed from a *Spectator* issue of the time, which, however, was destined to address the *bon ton* Londoners, who lived in the West End, while "the *hoi polloi* were elbowed into the extramural East End". Porter, 117.

dynamic component of the church, a ritualistic place where the crowd can independently decide to orchestrate, perform, and evolve their collective spatial activities. During the aftermath of the Great Fire, a period during which Acts of Parliament see Christopher Wren beginning to construct churches as an extension of the street, Hawksmoor sees through the Restoration with an affirmation of the role of public space in the city and of an architecture that can be possibly shaped by collective rituals.

The period of absolute, tyrannical power of Charles I—and Oliver Cromwell—and its manifestation in monumental architectural pomposity, was finally tempered by the democratic will of parliament; it was finally lost in favour of a "town not dictated by despots and their architect toadies, but to the principles of properited patricians."[91] Architecture—as a translation of such a relationship—had to demonstrate this mediation of church and state, of collective participation and governmental power, and of a planned but lucid urban elegance through strong, punctuating civic elements. It must be acknowledged, however, that this architectural will was not the product of a singularity. On the contrary, if during the despotic reign of Charles I, Inigo Jones was the sole architect to satisfy the will of the absolute and normative power, the Acts of Parliament that followed the Great Fire in 1666 witnessed the coexistence of multiple leading figures. Whether working together or in sequence, these architects—Wren, Gibbs, and Hawksmoor—influenced and confronted one another, their plurality giving rise to a new, more variable and open architectural language. It is therefore in this short period of roughly 50 years, during the Restoration, that a totally new and highly distinct spatial attitude was delineated in the capital, which Nicholas Hawksmoor, above all others, managed to declare. It was an approach that not only reflected a wholesale political shift from the absolute to the collective but one that marked a turning point in how, specifically, architecture in London assimilated the democratic will of its population and their rituals.

This was, however, an architecture that tended to mainly shape the East End, the unknown boundaries of a city in expansion, while the West End slowly consolidated around a *bon ton* life, affirming itself as the finest place to live and spend money, "to entertain or just to bask in being."[92] This elitist social life developed alongside the rise of the financial city, where "bankers trickled out of Cornhill and the Cheap into the splendid squares shooting up further west, and fine folds flooded from the shires."[93] It is in these squares that the Hawksmoor's model of the precinct as a loose space for collective gathering was beginning to be reinterpreted with a whole new negative connotation.

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[91] Porter, 119

[92] Porter, 116.

[93] Porter, 116

Nonetheless, London's attitude towards the public realm and the possibility of revising its established rituals, evolved and, ultimately, reached its peak in the architecture of Nicholas Hawksmoor. 1666 is not simply a year that closed the door to the English Renaissance—a tributary of the simultaneous force shaping many other European cities at the time—but it was when the ongoing testimony of a city that began to think at an urban scale could be witnessed. The city heavily invested in its *Forma Urbis*, seeking legibility in its totality. It was a fundamental turning point for London; a demonstration of its uniqueness and its successful democratic rebellion against absolute monarchy, and, moreover, its welcoming of a highly innovative and contemporary socio-political conception of the role of the collective ritual in the city, of sacred collective spaces not closed-off and confined to the interior but unfolding through the means of the precinct in the public urban realm beyond. A complete vision of the city form, first laid out in the extensive and radical plans in the wake of the Great Fire, was accomplished not through the imposition of a totality, but through specific, punctual and firm interventions of stone, which, in their rigidity as objects, permitted the flexible creation of the surrounding collective sphere. London did not miss the opportunity to be modern in 1666. It was, contrarily, rather far ahead of its time, and it will continue to be in the years to come, when such urban strategy of punctual precincts would be used, yet misinterpreted, in the reconfiguration of central London.

The seventeenth century was perhaps the only moment in the history of the city during which ritualisation processes became enshrined in democratic public policy and architectural design evolved in concert with the government. The 1711 Act of Parliament that saw the evolution of the importance of collective space also bore witness to the emergence of a new, capital driven economic condition in London that engulfed the city. The shift in focus from the architectural interior to the urban exterior, readable in the architecture of the precinct, fleetingly ossified the fundamental urban role of the public square as the primary, flourishing collective space in the city. This is the first time that an architect was able to creating a democratic, political space that not only listens and responds to but also nurtures the needs of the population and its collective life, instead of being the translation of a sovereign and normative will.

This chapter does not discuss an architecture that responded to specific delineated and legible rituals, but it exposes the project that made London's growing population coexist within the outdoor collective space of the city. Hawksmoor's projects had no function. On the contrary, their lack of function made them the first appearance of collective spaces in the city, outside of the control of the sovereign, the state, and the church. Hawksmoor designed the first collective space in the city as one without a purpose, whose function could be invested only by the subjects who inhabit it. This can be interpreted as both the rise and fall of the collective space: very soon after its introduction, the precinct will be

used to enclose hierarchical values of class and social and economic status, though that same architecture was designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor as a way of welcoming and gathering the emerging diversity in the population of the capital during a unique moment for the city. It was probably the last and only time in which the potential importance of public space was consciously a primary consideration of both power and population, wherein the common intent was a testament to the hidden but powerful relationship between the architectural artefact and the urban form of the city. This same space soon became the space where the meaning of collective and its rituals would gradually be endangered and exposed to a new but different control of architecture.

3 - FROM SQUARE TO GREENERY

The institutionalisation of rituals

3.1 Church aside, arises Georgian life

In the previous chapter, we saw the church holding a very crucial role in Londoners' collective life. It was an indispensable institution that administered social order and to which citizens were attached by either belief or accustomed habit.[1] Hawksmoor, however, revealed an alternative space to such a strict hegemony, which paved the way for a more diverse social life in eighteenth century Georgian London. Despite the restorative attempt to rebuild a city around one main collective institution, which orchestrated collective life, in the following decades, the urban life of Londoners gradually grew detached from it. They were no longer inclined to participate in religious activity, to which they preferred a more mundane and hedonistic life.[2] These ways of gathering started taking place mainly in outdoor spaces, similar to the architecture Nicholas Hawksmoor that was designed to expand the boundaries of the city under the reign of Queen Anne: a low-fenced boundary with an empty space at its core. Hawksmoor's projects can be read as inspiration for the development of another part of the city, aside the East End, one that has shaped the centre of London, opening towards a new possible model of social life that involved a shift in the city's ethical, personal, and social interactions.

The life of Georgian Londoners, once they abandoned the liturgy of the church, was oriented towards the streets and other outdoor spaces across the city. The Georgian citizen would not only spend the day in a tavern or a shop but also in other *en plein air* spaces across the city that would slowly start to be dominated by commerce, hence, signalling a shift from the more legible and prescribed hierarchies of seventeenth-century, collective spaces, where life was mediated by the church. This new way of living gave birth to a new social culture, which Roy Porter described as the early identifiable commercialization of leisure that would characterise London for the years to come.[3] The success of this affirming modernity is a consequence of the urban restoration that followed the Great Fire, when the old mediaeval town was substituted by wider streets that were ready to be occupied by the early *flâneurs*.[4] The life of Londoners, from having been divided between the home and the church, began

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[1] "The conception of an intimate relationship between religion and social sense sprang from the fact that (1) men shared uniform beliefs, values, life aspirations, and attitudes toward their institutions –the family, their social superiors and inferiors, the local and central government authorities, and the church; and from the fact that (2) all belief, all attitudes, and all institutions were bathed in the aura radiated by religious belief." Harvey, 161-162.

[2] Many are the studies revolving around Georgian life, amongst others: Cruickshank D., Burton N. (1990) *Life in the Georgian City*. London: Viking; George D. (1930) *London Life in the Eighteenth Century*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. LTD; Longstaffe-Gowan T. (2012) *The London Square*. New Haven-London: Yale University Press; Porter R. (2000) *London. A Social History*. 2nd edition. London: Penguin.

[3] Porter, 203

[4] Ibid.

slowly to expand towards new and unknown, yet promising, urban spaces. Inhabitants were invited to perform in a city that Porter describes as a "well-mapped topography of pleasure."[5] London became a crowded place that shaped the modern man who participates in collective spaces dominated by tumult and hurrying along streets busy with animals and carriages.[6]

Georgian London, with its frenzied society and lavish domestic sphere, opened the door to the rise of capital development and the market economy. It was a modern substitute for what was once the city of merchant-princes, controlled by the king and his architects, which shaped the areas of the Strand, Piccadilly, and St James. This new stage of development in capitalism, based on the switch of the model of capital production from commerce to finance capital,[7] was confirmed by the rise of institutions such as the Bank of England and insurance companies like Lloyd's.[8] In contrast to this sphere of commercialisation of collective life, another stage for political life soon began to spread and will come to play a very crucial role in the social failure of the stage of the Georgian elitist lifestyle: printing. Daily papers rapidly became ubiquitous in the life of Londoners and were gradually used as a political tool to address the public, either in favour or in opposition to parliamentary actions. This new sphere of life in Georgian London could be described, in Jürgen Habermas' terms, as dominated by commodities and news.[9]

Notwithstanding the radical social and cultural differences, Georgian London became a well-known stage were all members of different social classes lived together on the street, mixing socially in way that was extraordinary for the time. This was one of the consequences of the reduced power of the king and the church, which fell at the hands of commerce, cultural entrepreneurship, and public taste. In this chapter, we will observe life in Georgian London—outside of domestic life, which would require entirely different research[10]—where social diversity and class were becoming more evident in a collective life where everyone participates "in public commercial culture, in processions and pageantry,

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[5] "Life was happening outdoor as much as indoor with the appearance of places such as the coffee-house, where the Englishman went to thread the news: newspapers were the daily mirror of London's life". Porter, 206

[6] Porter, 199-201

[7] "England in the mid-eighteenth century generated the first successful capitalist state in world history, which would prove itself, over and over again, astonishing at commodity production and money-making." Rosen, 27. See also Lawrence, 92; Cosgrove, 63.

[8] "banking, treasury, and bureaucracy were coordinated under the direction of men trained in seventeenth century productive ventures, who then met annually in the parliament and the City. [...] The credit system, built between 1690 and 1720, came into being only after the process of basic accumulation of wealth had been secured and not as a result of wars". Rosen, 34-35

[9] Habermas, 15

[10] The lower classes by this point were living outside the city centre, which was mainly populated by the gentry. Such division will soon be reversed, when in early Victorian London the aristocracy in search of more privacy migrated towards the countryside, leaving their Georgian houses overcrowded with tenants, whose difficult living conditions were disclosed by the work of Friedrich Engels and Charles Dickens.

in political crowds, the hustings and the hubbub of the streets".[11] The main stage of this new urban life was the London square, a hybrid typology invented in response to the European *piazza*, which borrows from both the project of Covent Garden designed by Inigo Jones and the churches of Nicholas Hawksmoor.

Initially, each square had its own character: "the rural Lincoln's Inn Field, the park-like Leicester Square, the graveled Bloomsbury and St James' Squares and the paved Covent Garden."[12] Soon after their introduction, they began spreading very quickly, dotting the entire city centre. This typology of a fenced area surrounded by houses gradually became an efficient tool for real estate speculation and development, promoting quick sales and long-lasting value. Amongst these types of squares, Bedford Square (1776) and Fitzroy Square (1780) remain almost completely intact today. These squares were mainly spread across West and Central London[13] and constitute the beginning of a new city that would focus exclusively on the needs of the richer classes, while pushing the rest of the citizens to its edges—to the same margins where Hawksmoor's churches and green precincts were located. Pevsner, in describing the evolution of Georgian London, subtly traced an interesting parallel between these two cities and their ways of living: "walking through West London from square to square, was a modern and more profane version of the typical English feeling of walking from church to church."[14] The evolution of these two parallel lives in the city and their consequences for the design development of these open spaces will be the core of this chapter.

3.2 The London square and the 'loose' space

As discussed in the previous chapter, the European *piazza* was not a long-lasting concept in London. On the contrary, it took a very different evolutionary path: besides the agreed historical interpretation of Covent Garden as a European *piazza*[15] and the drawn prototypes that we find in the post-Great Fire plans, this typology in London soon mutated into what is today known as the London square. This square, in practice, differs from the European *piazza*, because it proposes a completely different urban approach. The square, particularly in the context of central London, is well known for being a

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[11] Porter, 218

[12] Lawrence, 94. Amongst the first squares to be built there was Lincoln's Inn Fields, started by Inigo Jones in 1618 which took inspiration from the model of the commons, in that it aimed at being a pleasurable walking field. Longstaffe-Gowan, 19. Soon similar projects followed: St James' Square was laid out in the 1667s; Leicester Square began to appear in the 1670s; Bloomsbury square in the late 1665. Chancellor 1907, 82; 152; 183

[13] This process began in the 1670s, and slowly developed in the suburbs of the city: Hoxton Square (1983), Webb's Square (1684), Charles Square (1685). Longstaffe-Gowan, 33-34

[14] Pevsner, 186-187

[15] "Inigo planned an Italian Piazza, five hundred feet long and four hundred feet wide, surrounded by tall houses whose first floors projected over the pavement and were supported by plaster-covered brick pillars to form arcades. The vegetable plots and sentient fruit trees all disappeared, and the builders set to work. Londoners were entranced by the novelty of the piazza and the arcades, which they also called 'piazzas': they have been called the piazzas ever since." Cathcart Borer, 16

synonym for development and speculation, intended as a vehicle to implement housing market value—a definition corroborated by the official meaning of the square: "an open space in the town surrounded by buildings."[16] These buildings in a London square, however, are not monuments, they are "just" urban fabric.

The London square appeared at first in what are, today, the areas of Soho and Bloomsbury and immediately became a valuable principle of orderly urban planning, opposed to the axes and grand vistas applied to the European city. In London, "each square forms a little world of its own [in] the same effect as a room. In being non-directional, it suggests contemplation and stasis, instead of movement."[17] London begins to become familiar with the concept of the square through the baroque plan and its *piazze*—as demonstrated by the 1666 plans—but it soon comes to offer a very distinct—and perhaps controversial—contribution to urban design.

It is worth noting that before becoming an instrument of financial and building speculation, the square in London was an agricultural field in the Middle Ages.[18] The square soon mutated into greenery and later into a garden, becoming an early influence on the development of what would become English public parks.[19] Even according to this simplified linear evolution, the London square always remained a sort of 'loose' space, closely related to the social contingencies unfolding around it. Todd Longstaffe-Gowan considers the London square to be a "tangible evidence for singular and well-developed social organism,"[20] echoing both Choay's and Rykwert's understanding of the form of the city as a translation of social structure and human actions. "Squares, in fact, take on a kind of life dynamic," continues Longstaffe-Gowan. "They are uniquely complex communities made up of independent individuals and groups more or less closely connected with one another, for whom health is dependent on the harmonious interworking of the communities' culture, politics and economics."[21] The London square represents a cut in London's urban fabric and it exposes the tension between rituals and habits generated by its architecture, a spatial tension that inevitably became the ground for a social dispute over access to open space. The London square developed in two opposing traditions: on one side, it became a large, fenced area that protects the field from being privatised—the

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[16] Definition taken from the Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of English Language.

[17] Kenneth Browne in Longstaffe-Gowan, 262-264

[18] Paul Zucker in his *Town and Square: From the Agora to the Village Green,* published in 1959 traces a parallel between the squares and the village green, as both projects of the void.

[19] Longstaffe-Gowan, 2

[20] Longstaffe-Gowan, 6

[21] Ibid.

commons;[22] and on the other, it presents itself as an enclosure, framed by unfolded, identical façades —the London square. Yet, what links both urban forms is the ambiguity of the square's juridical presence, between private and public use, which make it oscillate from being in the hands of the state to those of speculators.

Similar to the role that churches played during the Restoration, the London square was used as an urban planning tool, following the construction of a group of houses. Yet, unlike the church, which, after the Great Fire, underwent a different process of construction from that of the houses, the garden square is connected to the domestic architecture that surrounds it. This immediately subjects the London square to building speculation: legislatively, it represented a percentage of openness that guaranteed the construction of domestic fabric.[23] Comparably to the case of Covent Garden, many central squares were leased to property developers, who turned the surrounding area into what could be read externally as a continuous façade of domestic nobility. This consolidation, as well, finds root in the Restoration period, when such uniformity of façades was initially proposed by Nicholas Barbon, who previously constructed a high number of houses across the city, opening the city to "those with money to burn and time to kill."[24]

London affirmed itself as the capital of world-trade industry, inhabited by consumers, and retired capitalists.[25] The average dwellers in the earlier London squares were mainly countryside gentry, who invested their money in developments and lived a seasonal life in the city. This provoked an interesting split of ideals in Britain between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which saw the growing capital, on one side, and the countryside with its idyllic and desired imagery, on the other. Voltaire described such an opposition in his definition of London as "the cradle of social freedom and mobility by contrast to the rigid hierarchies of the fields."[26] The vibrant and incessant city began to oppose the melancholy of the countryside, a polarity that the London square would soon be capable of merging into what can be considered the most personal and successful English response to the European square and, perhaps ,to the whole Renaissance: the London *garden* square.

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[22] Common lands are usually owned by commoners –a group of people, or one single person– and used as agricultural or pasture land. Examples of surviving commons today are all across London: Clapham Common a triangular portion of land that belong to the parishes of Battersea and Clapham, turned into a parkland in 1878; or Hampstead Heath, which albeit being fragmented and recomposed through time, today is managed by the City of London Corporation. Common land began to decline after the issuing of the first Enclosure Act in 1773.

[23] During the monarchy of James I –and later Charles I– the square was intended as a tool for aristocratic developers to expand the boundaries of the city, with the promise of maintaining open fields between them. Here, the monarch, the state and the aristocracy began to find in urban planning a powerful tool of control.

[24] Porter, 203

[25] Rasmussen, 152

[26] Porter, 194

The first prototypes of London garden squares were initially not fully green but had a paved cross at their centre (fig. 3.1).[27] Borrowing from the Italian concept of *piazza*, the garden squares created "large open places at the centres of the city's new residential neighbourhoods."[28] But, gradually, the necessity to use outdoor spaces instead of indoor ones, the needs of walking and leisure in the city, called for an emergence of a pleasure field to rest from the city's increasing trafficked life. The London garden square almost became a rule of urban composition in a densely populated city, which favoured increasing the attraction of those spaces that ultimately turned London into the centre of English social life.

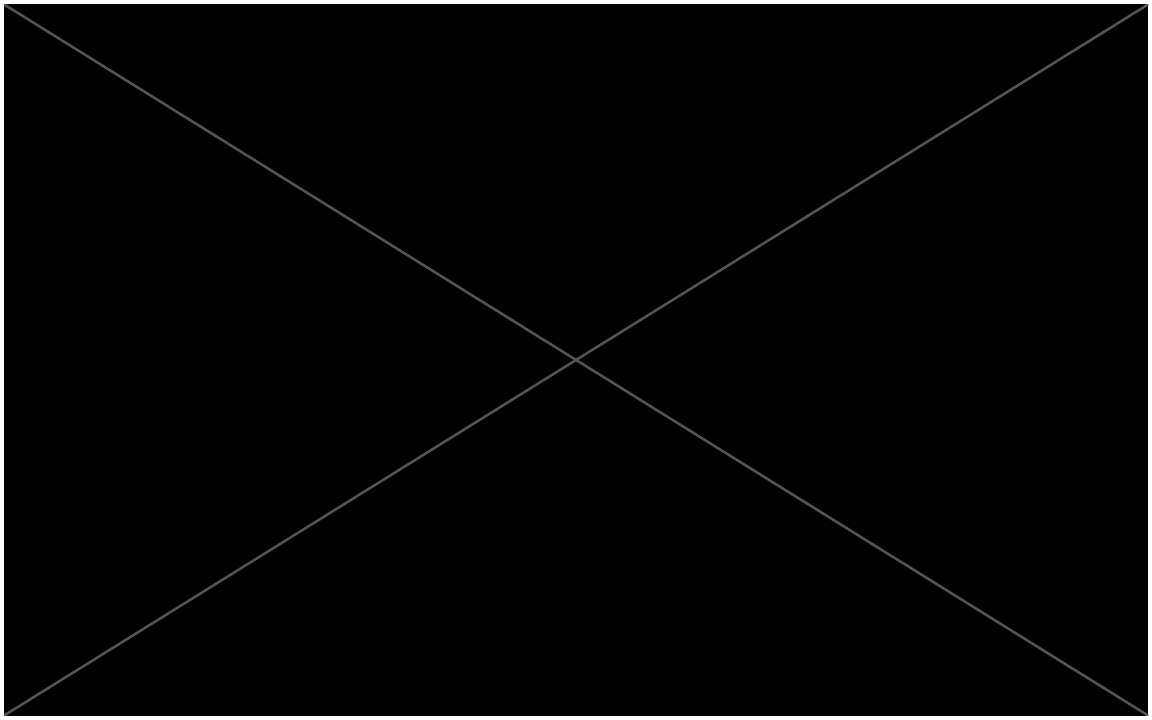

Fig. 3.1 - Sutton Nicholls, *Hanover Square*, 1731. (British Museum)

3.3 The urban strategy of the greenery

The model for this development resides in a very precise urban strategy, urban landscaping, which is nothing but a bastardised translation of the French word *paysage*—appropriate because it shares its etymology with the word *pays*, so as to indicate the treatment of nature in the likelihood of a city.[29] In a 1982 issue of *AA Files*, English historian Andrew Saint unequivocally described the British as "not an

[27] Lawrence, 91; Longstaffe-Gowan, 34

[28] Longstaffe-Gowan, 4.

[29] *Paysage* refers to a landscape, especially as depicted in art from the Oxford Dictionary of English. In French the word *paysage* literally means countryside.

urban people,"[30] words that he uses as an echo to a harsh criticism raised by Sir John Summerson less than twenty years earlier, exposing the difficulty of Britain to design what he called an attractive urban architecture.[31] Saint, however, advocates in favour of the British by stating that even if they are not so good with cities, they can rely on a piece of resistance: parks and country dwellings.[32] It is hard to argue against Saint, particularly if we consider Britain the birthplace of the *picturesque* tradition, represented at best in the proliferation of a long pictorial tradition that spans from Thomas Girtin to Victor Turner.[33] The fascination with landscape, nature, and the romanticism of the countryside coincides with the beginning of a fashionable inclination towards urban landscape that spread in London across the eighteenth century.

Albeit being rooted in the English country house[34], the quintessence of the British urban landscape can be found in the London square, described earlier as the synthesis between the capital and the countryside, which is introduced by Longstaffe-Gowan as the result of a process called *rus in urbe*, literally referring to an illusion of the countryside in an urban environment.[35] We should remind ourselves that this process is not so distant in time from that which Nicholas Hawksmoor was implementing in the East End: his churches' precincts were surrounded by what seemed still to be pastoral spaces (fig. 3.2), while central London developed according to a contained scheme of open fields that soon became known as *garden* squares (fig. 3.3).

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[30] Saint, 22

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Watkin, vii-viii. "However sceptical we may wish to be on this point, there is little doubt that a moist and temperate climate is favourable to a gardening style dependent on grass and trees; and that the gentle valleys of a small island have provided a friendly rather than daunting setting in which it has been appropriate to lay out gardens that look like landscapes, and landscapes that look like gardens." The difficulties on defining the picturesque are shared by many historians including John Ruskin, John Summerson and Nikolaus Pevsner, and are clearly explained in Watkin's introduction to *English vision. Picturesque in architecture, landscape and garden Design* published in 1982. Watkin, ix-xi.

[34] Watkin, vii

[35] Longstaffe-Gowan, 2

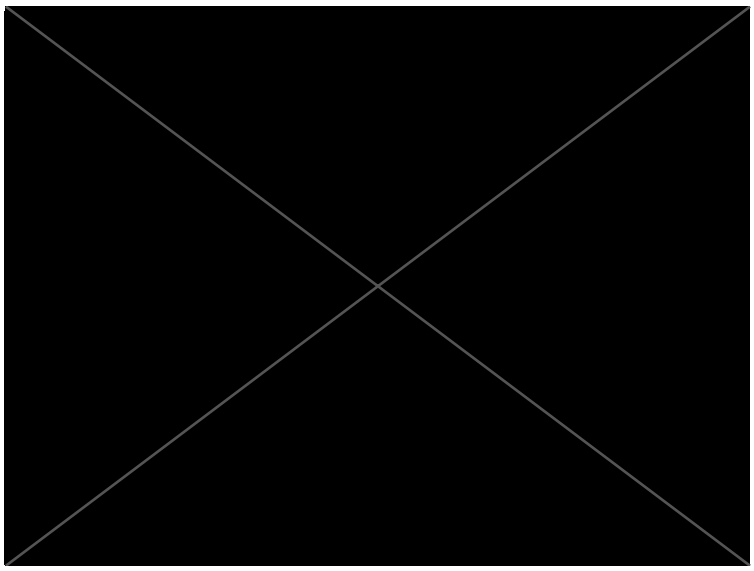

Fig. 3.2 - Unknown artist, *North view of St. Anne Limehouse*, 1800. (© City of London: London Metropolitan Archives)

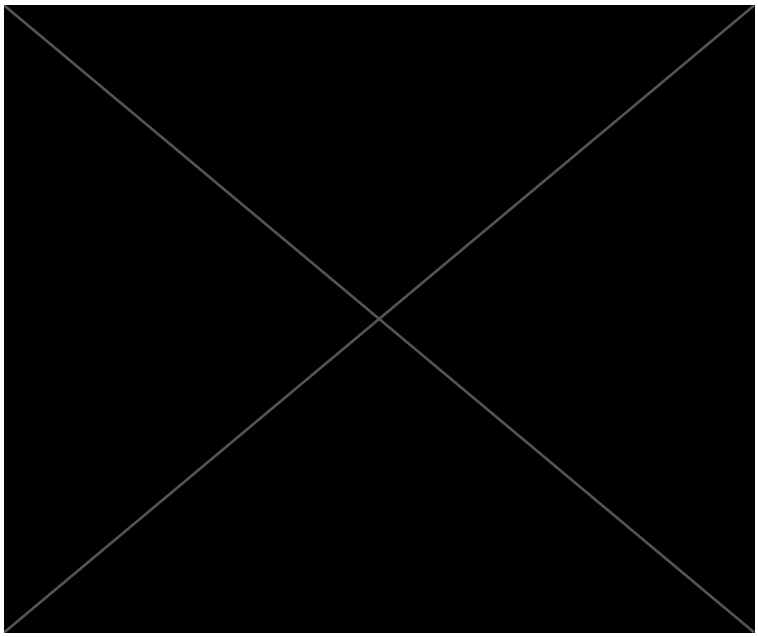

Fig. 3.3 - Elias Martin, *View of Hanover Square*, 1769. (T. Longstaffe-Gowan. *The London Square.* 2012)

In order to understand the urban evolution of the garden square, it is perhaps essential to mention that the relationship between greeneries, landscape, and architecture goes back to the second half of 1600s. The early gardens, subjected to architectural intervention, appeared in England during the reign of Charles II. The king was quite a passionate admirer of French gardening, especially of the work on royal gardens of both André Le Nôtre and Claude Mollet.[36] Back then, the garden was designed merely as an extension to the king's house, where he and his circle could make use of an area broad enough to be occupied by yards for fruits and flowers, horse riding spaces and other sports, and pleasant walks. Charles II and John Evelyn were both quite keen on populating the country with trees

[36] Scott-James, Lancaster, 39

and plants, following a similar geometry to what he had proposed in the Restoration's urban plans. Evelyn was, in fact, still a keen mathematician obsessed with symmetry, a principle that he applied to his study on the greenery imported from his knowledge of French gardens.[37] After founding the Royal Society, Evelyn through gardening, demonstrated an intention to repair the damage of a civil war and reinstate management and life in the city.

This geometry can still be seen in some of the estates outside London, such as Hampton Court, which was based on the so-called French style, which was entirely developed by pupils of Le Nôtre. What followed this moment of French-charm was a decisive caesura: the birth of a style of gardening that was much freer and sinuous, whose "design can be exquisitely drawn, a flower can be painted or photographed, but a crowded flower-bed must be left to the writer."[38] In fact, the most lively ambassadors of the new style of gardening were mainly writers, amongst which we recognise the prolific Alexander Pope and the architect of Chiswick House, Lord Burlington. The former was a vivid critic of any excess of geometry, a theory that was literally exposed in *The Guardian* in 1713: "I have laid it down as the first Rule of Pastoral, that its Idea should be taken from the Manners of the Golden Age, and the Moral form'd upon the Representation of Innocence."[39] It was a fascination that deeply inspired landlords across the country, who decided to evict peasants from their lands, in order to initiate their own personal processes of natural sublimeness.[40]

This is the only space where the figure of the architect marginally emerges in Georgian London: Robert Adam, initially famous for his housing development and failed projects, like that of the Adelphi Terrace,[41] is an interesting and controversial figure, not often associated with projects of gardens. However, in his late life, he was drawn into the countryside, where he and his brother James dedicated their late lives to the design of country estates for the nobility.[42] The landscape of most of these projects was designed by Lancelot "Capability" Brown, who was the protagonist of landscape

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[37] Scott-James, Lancaster, 32

[38] Scott-James, Lancaster, 43

[39] Pope in *The Guardian* (1713). This was not the same newspaper we know today, but one that had a shorter life, published in London from 12th March to 1st October 1713. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 18, 537.

[40] Watkin, ix

[41] The Adelphi is one of the most famous Adam's projects located along the Strand. It was a residential development on an artificial series of platforms along the Thames, which was rather radical for the time: the density of the apartments was destined to break some traditional rules on the urban fabric in London at the time. The project was an economic failure, starting from its ambitions and the difficulties of the lease contract from the Duke of St. Albans, it was never completed due to the failure of the Bank—Fordyce Bank—that was financing the Adam's. See Rykwert J., Rykwert A. (1985) *The Brothers Adam. Men and the Style.* London: Collins.

[42] Rykwert (1985), 170

design from 1751 onwards, intervening on over two-hundreds estates.[43] Brown's landscapes contrasted the gothic appearances of the castles designed by Robert Adam and his brother John, thanks to their bare simplicity: Capability Brown "abolished the garden, swept the lawn right up to the house, and used as his materials the contours of the site, turf, water and trees. He did not care for temples and statues or the other pictorial features of his predecessors, and indeed destroyed many in redesigning the estates of his clients."[44] Brown's attitude towards the English landscape grew from a different emerging interest, which Robert Adam seemed to obsessively represent in most of his drawings at the time, one that demonstrates a particular devotion towards trees (fig. 3.4; 3.5); a fascination that was essentially opposite to that of Brown, who thought about trees "essentially as a punctuation mark."[45]

It is not the scope of this chapter to run through the extensive and complex British history of landscape, yet it is worth mentioning that it was never entirely separate from the architectural project. Before Capability Brown, the design of gardens used architecture as a guiding feature through the landscape, capable of dictating one's movement within it—a tradition inspired by the Renaissance of Italian and French gardens, which resulted in a geometry of lines and paths.[46] But, again, the British were capable of developing a different, more authentic and personal approach based entirely on pastoral aesthetics: a garden of "natural" beauty, a pastoral garden. The pastoral carved its role in English history with patience and intellectual determination, substituting a style of gardening that was more geometric with one that is more naturally beautiful.[47] These gardens were punctuated with classic antiquities, inspired by Virgil's *Eclogues*: streams, bridges, and shady groves, as well as the romantic suggestion of agriculture, "in order to combine the pleasures of a garden and of an open view without having cows and sheep charging into the garden."[48] The garden was ultimately merged with the house, evoking the image of classical objects populating the land.

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[43] Scott-James, Lancaster, 57

[44] Scott-James, Lancaster, 58. On Lancelot "Capability" Brown see: Stroud D. *Capability Brown*. London: Faber 1975; Turner R. *Capability Brown: and the eighteenth-century English landscape*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1985; Brown D., Williamson T. *Lancelot Brown and the Capability Men. Landscape Revolution in Eighteenth-Century England*. London: Reaktion Books 2016.

[45] Ibid.

[46] On Italian gardens see: Hunt J. D. (2016) *Garden and Grove: The Italian Renaissance Garden in the English Imagination, 1600-1750*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press; Shepherd J. C., Jellicoe G. A. (1986) *Italian gardens of the Renaissance*. London: Academy Editions.

[47] Watkin, vii. "[…] the picturesque had helped foster a literary and intellectual approach to the appreciation of architecture, gardening and scenery". The influence, according to Watkin, came from Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, published in 1757. "His emphasis on passion and emotion rather than reason encouraged the theory of Association by which, for example, architectural forms were adopted not for their beauty or functional appropriateness, but for what ideas they suggested". Watkin, ix; Watkin, 75.

[48] Scott-James, Lancaster, 54. A contemporary of Capability Brown, Humphry Repton (1752- 1818) who was more aware than Brown "that architecture was, as he put it, 'an inseparable and indispensable auxiliary' to landscape gardening." Watkin, 81.

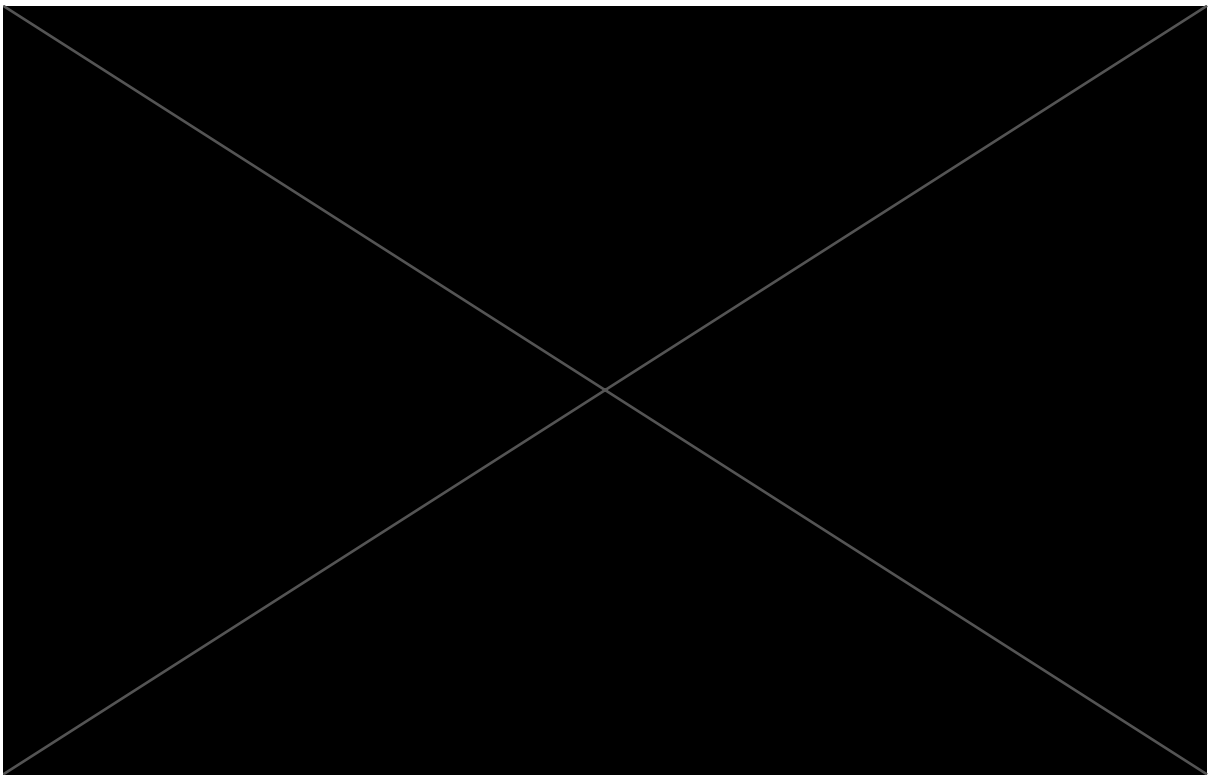

Fig. 3.4 - Robert Adam, *Study for four separate, deciduous trees of varying age*, 1745-50. (© Soane Museum Collection)

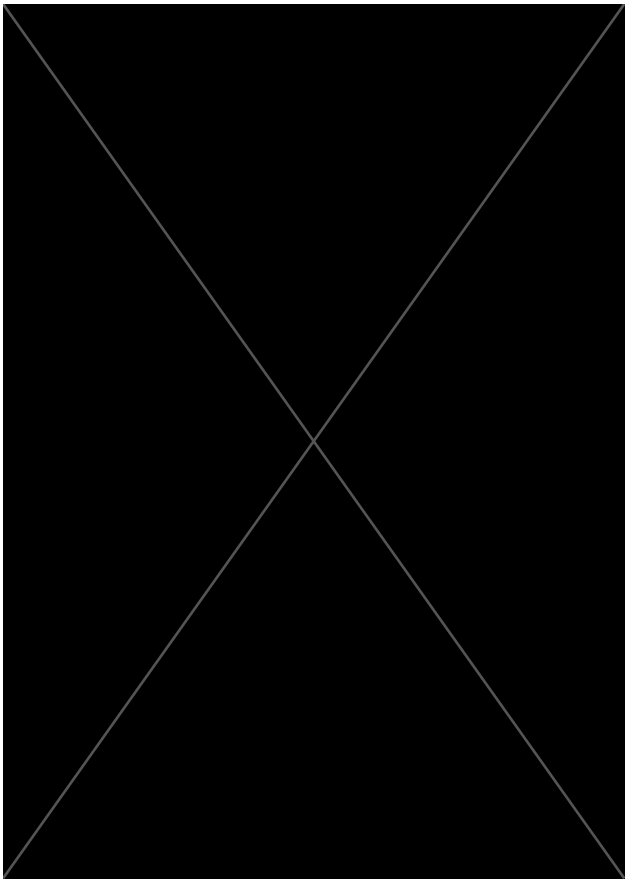

Fig. 3.5 - Robert Adam, *Study of tree twisted in leaf growing out of rocky ground*, 1751. (© Soane Museum Collection)

Another peculiar architectural connotation of this garden was its treatment as a canvas, one that could always be captured in a frame.[49] The relationship with architecture of the English greenery was condensed within a process: "paint as you plant," wrote Alexander Pope to Lord Burlington, "and, as you work, designs."[50] Architecture was a means to control the greenery through small gestures; albeit, inspired by French landscapes, the English garden managed to produce a more personal and original approach, one that was eventually capable of entering the rigidity and the messiness of the urban environment, through the means of the London garden square.

3.4 The green and the plain: Lincoln's Inn Fields

This digression on a very concise, but hopefully comprehensive, history of the greenery is fundamental to understand greenery not just as an aesthetic component of the Georgian square but also as the reason behind its inhabitation, as well as the key to understanding its social evolution. Initially, after Covent Garden, the London squares that did stop being common land were a simple bed of greenery surrounded on their four sides by a street and limited by a very low, slim fence (fig. 3.6). They were almost *horror vacui*, where little social life was happening, and everything was visible. It was, indeed. readable solely as an instrument of speculation and building development for the upper class.

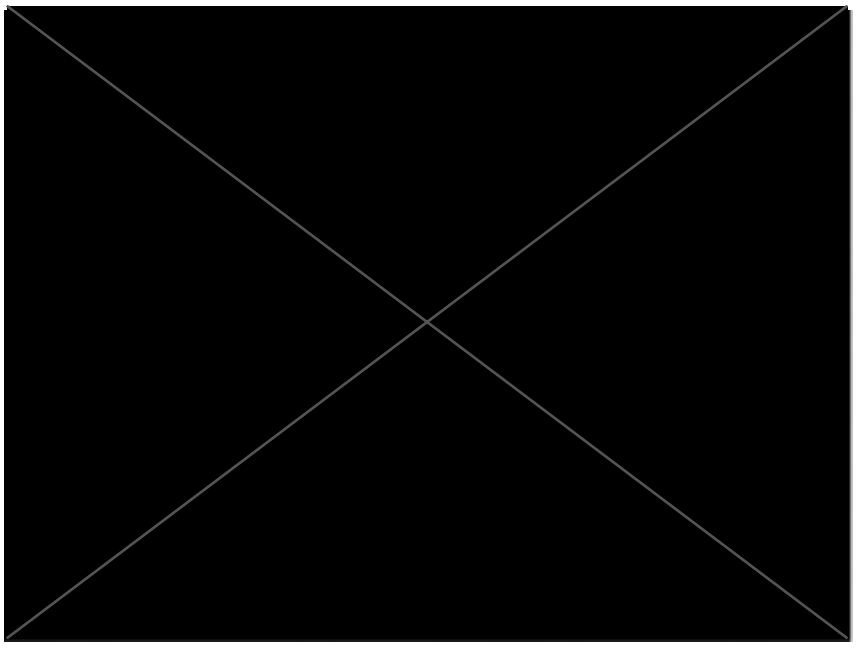

Fig. 3.6 - Francis Jukes, Robert Pollard, Edward Dayes. *View of Bloomsbury Square*, 1787. (© Government Art Collection)

[49] Watkin, vii. "Between 1730 and 1830 English poets, painters, travellers, gardeners, architects, connoisseurs and dilettanti, were united in their emphasis on the privacy of pictorial values The Picturesque became the universal mode of vision for the educated classes. Thus for Horace Walpole in 1770 landscape gardening meant that 'every journey is made through a succession of pictures".

[50] Pope, *Guardian* (1731)

One of the first squares that challenged such a role was Lincoln's Inn Fields, a private London garden square, like any other in the centre of London, yet whose controversial jurisdiction due to the presence of one of the lesser known Inns Courts in London alongside residential developments made it a hybrid example worthy of investigation: Heckethorn wrote that in Lincoln Inn's Fields "the law has here some of its grandest temples, and hundreds of its followers cluster around it in offices and chambers."[51] In the preface of his book on Lincoln's Inn Fields, Heckethorn does not hesitate to exaggerate this central condition of the square due to the presence of the Inn Court: "Lincoln's Inn Fields is the topographical centre of London; London, as will be seen by a glance at any map of the world, is the centre of the terrestrial half of the globe (to which in fact is due its being the commercial emporium of the world); hence Lincoln's Inn Fields is the very centre of all the land in this earth."[52]

We learn from John J. Sexby that after having been a property of the Blackfriars, the land of Lincoln's Inn Fields was granted to the Earl of Lincoln, who built his home surrounded by gardens enlisting apples, pears, large nuts and cherries which produce a fair amount for sale, alongside vegetables, beans onions, leeks, and garlic, as well as vines and a variety of flowers.[53] The square sat next to the Lincoln's Inn Gardens a *terram sive campum pro saltationibus*, property of William Cotterel and lent to the Templars, and it was known as New Square—adjacent Lincoln's Inn Fields and next to Lincoln Inn garden—and remained under the private property of the Lincoln's Inn. The Lincoln's Inn was one of the oldest legal societies in the city, one of the four Inns of Court alongside Gray's Inn and the Inner and Middle Temples, which all functioned as dormitories and workplaces for the legal community. And we will soon see that its role in the history of the square accessibility will be crucial, especially when confronted with the leaseholder that controlled the housing development across the perimeter. The control of the central ground of the square always remained with the Inn, while the right to build across the square was granted to a few aristocrats, amongst which were William and James Cowper together with Robert Henley, who managed to erect the building on the north and south sides of the square.

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[51] Heckethorn, xi. The complexity goes perhaps even deeper: "the areas surrounding it, and included in our plan, form an epitome of English culture, knowledge and achievement. All the learned profession are represented: Theology, in its orthodox character, stands forth in Lincoln's Inn Chapel; Roman Catholicism has its home in Sardinia Chapel; dissent in the Wesleyan Chapel in Great Queen Street; Medical Science is nobly lodged in the College of Surgeons and King's College Hospital; the Law has here some of its grandes temples, and hundreds of its followers cluster around it in offices and chambers; Art displays one of its finest collections in the Soane Museum; Music and singing may be heard of perfection in Lincoln's Inn and the Sardinia cHapels; Literature asserts itself in the splendid libraries collected in Lincoln's Inn, the College of Surgeon and the Soane Museum, nor must we omit to mention the many booksellers, chiefly second-hand who affect this neighbourhood; Freemasonry here has its most gorgeous habitation; the greatest triumph of modern science and industry may be witnesses in the Sardinia Street Electric Lighting Station; proofs of all embracing charity are to be found scattered over the whole district in schools and benevolent institutions." Heckerhorn, xvi, xvii

[52] Heckethorn, xi

[53] Sexby, 497

The first historical event that happened somewhere around the square was during the reign of Elizabeth I, when the conspirator Anthony Babington was found guilty of plotting against the Queen and was ultimately assassinated.[54] Albeit being the place where the law has one of its "grandest temples,"[55] the field seemed to be the favourite stage for a high number of transgressive behaviours: "in it the rabble congregated every evening to hear mountebanks harangue, to see bears dance, and to set dogs at oxen. Rubbish was short in every part of the area, and left unremoved for any length of time. Horses were exercised there, and, for want of proper fences, many persons crossing the square were seriously injured by them. Beggars, cripples, idle apprentices swarmed in the square, and annoyed passers-by, committing robberies, assaults, and outrage of every kind."[56]

From daily transgression, which continued to be documented by daily papers like the *London Gazette* and the *Daily Post* in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Lincoln's Inn Fields, being the field closest to the Inn Court, officially became the stage of public executions. This already happened in 1586, when the life of Elizabeth I was threatened by two conspirators, and it continued later under the reign of Charles II. Transgression was not only a ritual performed by the less privileged, it was also pertinent to some of affluent members of society: for instance, Lord William Russel was an aristocrat who made an attempt on the life of the king and was beheaded in 1683 and less than ten years later, in 1692, a duel was fought "between the Earl of Clare and the Earl of Thanet; the frome was wounded in the hand, the latter through the arm."[57] Londoners might have attended these moments of transgression with a high degree of curiosity, which attracted speculators keen on making a personal fortune out of such events. Heckethorn mentioned that in the same years, two "serjeants-at-arms, John Williams and Thomas Dixon," purchased a portion of land in the square to build an amphitheatre, "to exercise therein martial discipline (of the trained bands)."[58] This was followed by the closure of all the theatres in the Bankside area for at least one day per week, which ensured the success of the Lincoln's Inn Fields venue which "was startled by the threatened invasion of drums and trumpets."[59] This kind of entertainment did not last long in Lincoln's Inn Fields: the inhabitants of the square would soon complain to the Secretary of State, who established the place as inconvenient for the purpose, ordering to move all events back to the playhouses and beer gardens of Bankside.[60]

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[54] Heckethorn, 71

[55] Heckethorn, xi

[56] Heckethorn, 69

[57] Heckethorn, 72

[58] Heckethorn, 73

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

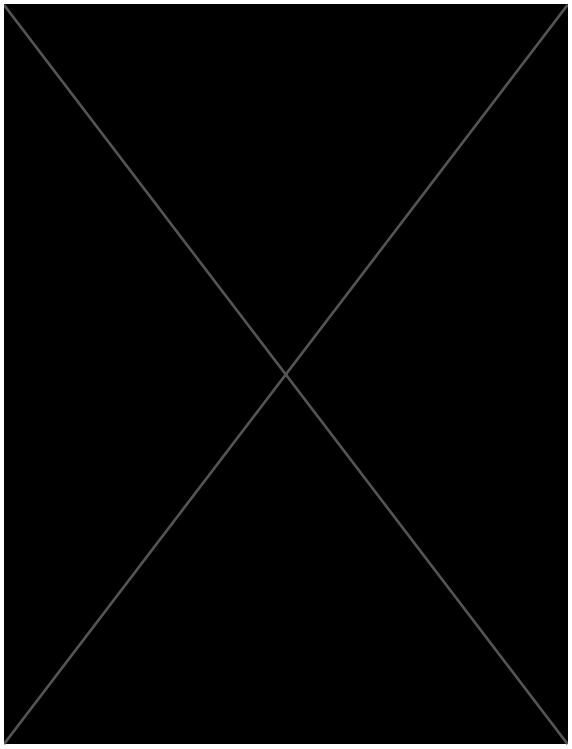

Fig. 3.7 - Richard Newcourt and William Faithorne. *An exact Delineation of the Cities of London and Westminster and the Suburbs thereof, together with ye Borough of Southwark, 1658*. (British Museum).

Lincoln's Inn Fields, as we know it today, is a project that followed the design of Covent Garden by Inigo Jones. Jones, in fact, ended up being part of the commission, appointed by King Charles I to deal with the Lincoln's Inn Fields area and was asked to draw the initial design. The project was supposed to take inspiration from Moorfields, a famous public area, located just outside, of the northern side of the mediaeval walls (fig. 3.7). During the Norman Conquest, the Moorfield area was maintained as a recreation space for citizens and, at the very beginning of the fifteenth century, was adorned with trees, benches, and walks and was developed into a "pleasurable place of sweet ayres for Cittizens [including the poore and the sucourlesse] to walke in."[61] This exceptional management of an open space inspired the inhabitants of Lincoln's Inn Fields, who were at the time adverse to the development and parcellation of the land into private portions. Moorfield can be considered to be a very successful prototype of London commons, which "have a peculiar charm in their freedom and their natural beauty as opposed to the restrictions and the artificialness of a made park"[62]—and remain "the only relics of the feudal system."[63]

[61] Johnson in Longstaffe-Gowan, 19

[63] Sexby, xvii

The Commission, including Inigo Jones, was, therefore, asked to preserve the space of the field, while they had no decisional power over the development of the surrounding area. In fact, between 1636 and 1641, something like 46 houses similar to the ones that circumscribed Covent Garden were built.[64] By mid-century, three quarters of Lincoln's Inn Fields was surrounded by houses and the central part of the square was fenced with a low railing. One of the few images portraying the space at the time is an etching by Wenceslaus Hollar's *Prospects of Lincoln's Inn Fields* (fig. 3.8), where we can begin to witness the social life within the square as a mix between daily traffic and strollers around it, while a central tent, either temporary or permanent, was under construction.

Due to its its governance, Lincoln's Inn Fields was a rather controversial piece of land to deal with, balanced between private property, tenants' associations, and public space. This is why it represents, perhaps, the most interesting case study through which to understand and visualise the tension between ritual and habitual actions in the urban context of Georgian London, where different subjects are entitled to make decisions regarding its use and costumes.

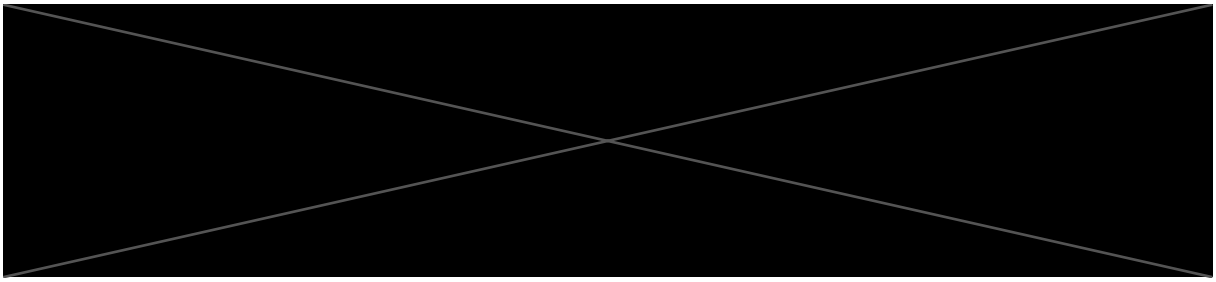

Fig. 3.8 - Wenceslaus Hollar, *Prospect of Lincoln's Inn Fields from ENE*, c.1641-53. (British Museum)

The tension between the leaseholders and the legal society is one of the reasons that Lincoln's Inn Fields is different from any other London garden square. By its completion in 1659, Lincoln's Inn Fields was, indeed, a residential square, yet its central space remained accessible and kept its rural character for many years to come. Lincoln's Inn Fields is a demonstration, perhaps, of what Longstaffe-Gowan positively defined as the one of the most important characteristics of the London square: it is an attempt to protect portions of common land that might otherwise have been threatened by new developments. Lincoln's Inn Fields is, thus, an interesting reference that contrasts the proliferation of garden fields that began to populate the city centre during the height of Georgian London. At the beginning, it was a field akin to the monastic gardens that populated the city before the Reformation. Later on, it inevitably followed the other squares, growing into more of a drawn garden with geometric walks dividing the space into quarters, whose artificial appearance intended to

[64] Longstaffe-Gowan, 20-21

prevent an indecorous use of the open field, with the help of what was usually a low railing that ran along the edges (fig. 3.9; 3.10; 3.11; 3.12).

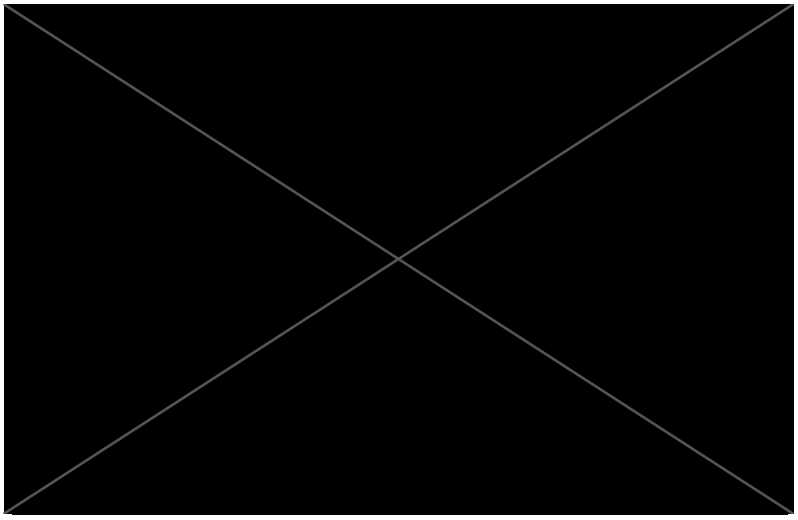

Fig. 3.9 - Lincoln's Inn Fields, 1560. (C.W. Heckethorn. *Lincoln's Inn Fields and the localities adjacent: their historical and topographical associations. With illustrations by A. Beaver, etc.* 1896)

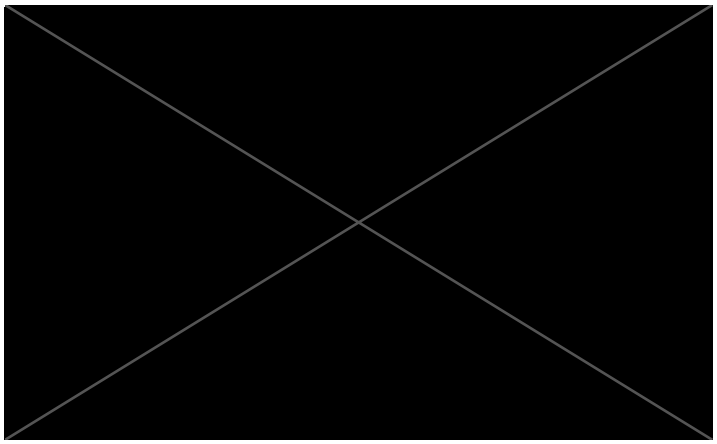

Fig. 3.10 - Lincoln's Inn Fields, 1658. (C.W. Heckethorn. *Lincoln's Inn Fields and the localities adjacent: their historical and topographical associations. With illustrations by A. Beaver, etc.* 1896)

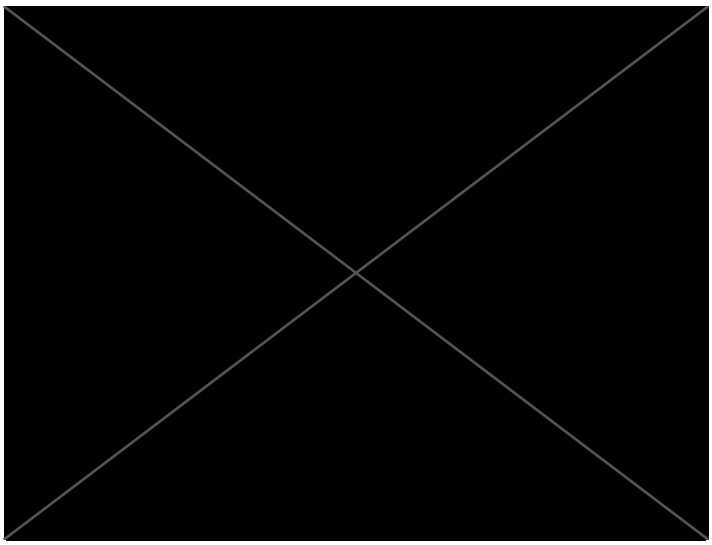

Fig. 3.11 - Lincoln's Inn Fields, 1780. (C.W. Heckethorn. *Lincoln's Inn Fields and the localities adjacent: their historical and topographical associations. With illustrations by A. Beaver, etc.* 896)

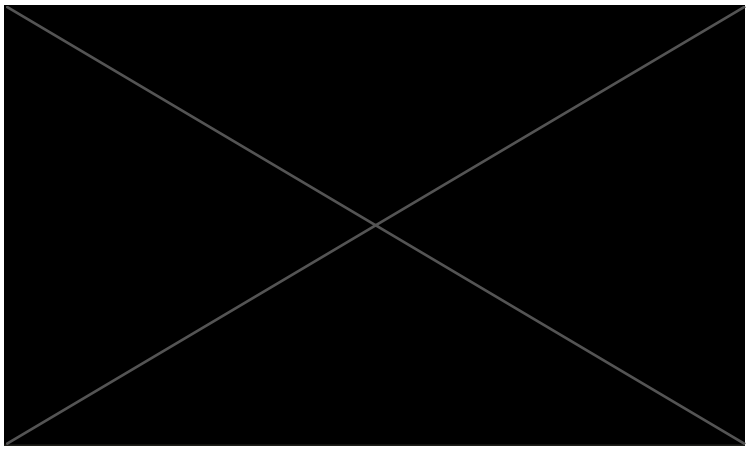

Fig. 3.12 - Lincoln's Inn Fields, 1829. (C.W. Heckethorn. *Lincoln's Inn Fields and the localities adjacent: their historical and topographical associations. With illustrations by A. Beaver, etc.* 1896)

The romance of Lincoln's Inn Fields is recognised exactly in the social mix of its usage, perhaps the liveliest square in Georgian London. According to Beresford Chancellor, the life in the field exposed "the decorative of one class and the squalor of the masses,"[65] and continues "the barrier between them were in certain respects less marked than has since been the case, and the noble was quite content to be cheek by jowl with his inferiors, and was, indeed, less squeamish in the matter of such propinquity than later ages have become."[66] In the following century, when the noble class moved west, the square was left to the lawyers of the Inn, and its livelihood gradually disappeared.[67]

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[65] Chancellor, 33

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

3.5 The rural manner: wilderness becomes a precinct

In the first half of the eighteenth century, all of the London garden squares were a rather homogeneous greenery, they were built on turf or grass, occasionally maintained by a flock of sheep. London nurseryman, Thomas Fairchild, considered this plain green a poor example of gardens and questioned whether "may we not in many Places, that are airy in the Body of *London*, make such Gardens as may be dress'd in a country manner? There is St *James's* Square, *Lincoln's Inn* Fields, and *Bloomsbury* Square, besides others which might be brought into delightful Gardens."[68] Fairchild thought that the London garden squares of the time were not entertaining enough to be considered amusing leisure spaces. He condemned their lack of imagination and initially proposed to substitute the "dull grass" with "wilderness with birds and a variety of trees."[69]

His treatise *The City Gardener,* published in 1722, is a guide to the species of plants that can grow in the garden squares, as well as their possible layouts. Such wilderness, however, was only a façade, which was carefully designed and required regular maintenance. This contrast hides between the aristocratic appearance of the garden and the daily life of its maintenance, which is perhaps a more truthful portrait of the actual life that happened within the square. Of course, a decorous treatment of the central greenery was not only an indicator of a livelier connotation of the square but it also increased the value of the properties around it, which could finally experience a piece of countryside.

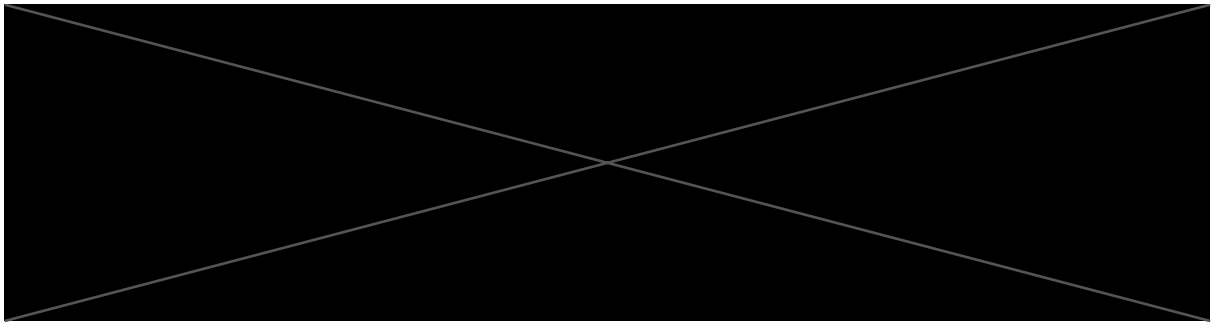

Fig. 3.13 - Francois Gasselin (?) *drawing of the view east from the garden of Lincoln's Inn*, c. 1683-1703. (T. Longstaffe-Gowan. *London Square*. 2012)

[68] Fairchild, 11-12

[69] Scott-James, Lancaster, 87

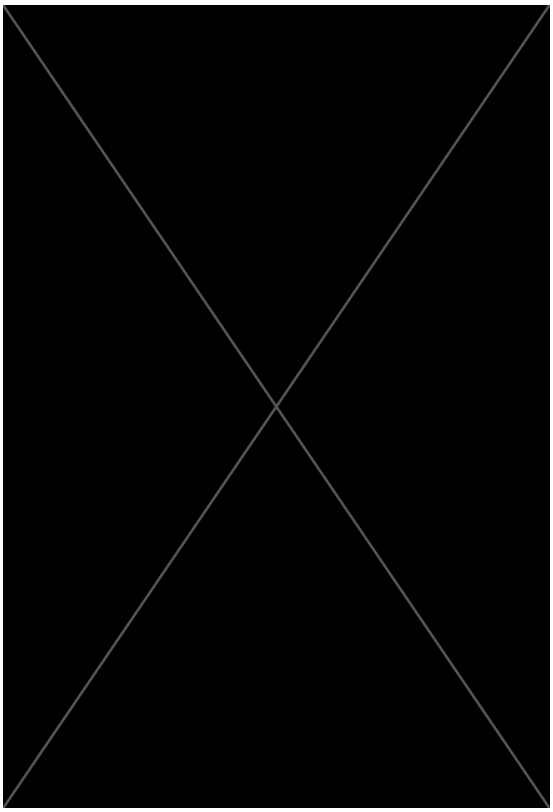

Fig. 3.14 - Adolphe-Francoise Pannemaker, *Margin of a London Square, with Edge of Plantation Designed to Cut Off the View (Park Crescent).* (T. Longstaffe-Gowan. *London Square.* 2012)

The process of wilding the squares was initiated with Fairchild's manual and was, on one hand, a luxurious detail for its inhabitants and its property value and, on the other, it increased the detachment of the central space of the square from that of the street. The low precinct that framed the square during its appearance in the first half of the eighteenth century slowly became decorated with a line of trees and bushy leaves (fig. 3.13; 3.14). This neat separation favoured the shift of the square from being a collective space of encounter—and friction—that belongs to the city to being another domestic room and an extension of the domestic space, accessible only go the surrounding residents. The process of wilding the square shifted its role from being vulnerable to social life and its collective rituals to being an elitist stage for private life. The London garden squares soon became a place where residents could finally enjoy "fine trees, reasonably long walks and neat if sooty shrubberies and flower-beds. Children who live in these squares and went to one of the many good schools nearby were the envy of their fellows, whom they could patronize with invitation to Sunday tea."[70] At this time, albeit being evidently occupied by the wealthy upper class, the open field of the Georgian squares had a twofold role, a place of spectacle and control, making the life within the square more insular and, in turn, making it easier to monitor any form of collective life. The square moved from being the platform of observation and interaction between classes to becoming a framed space

[70] Scott-James, Lancaster, 88

dedicated to the residents of the area. The rows of trees along the perimeter achieved what the low fence did not: the life inside the square was barely visible and moved from being an open lawn to a small, shady park.[71]

Trees became an essential character of the London square, moving from the background of its representation to its foreground, acting both as characters and frames of the greenery in the square. The London garden square—in line with the English landscape tradition—articulated according to a series of frames, where the architecture in its background was visible and actively present in the scene. Soon, architecture would be entirely replaced by nature (fig. 3.15). Framed by trees and woodland, scenes of gardens began to depict a fully different atmosphere, one that was much more picturesque and evoked a bucolic arcadia.[72] This new green space became the place of a new way of life, which staged the spectacle of upper-class domesticity in front of a more modest inhabitation. The emergence of the rural manner that adorned the garden squares created much more division in terms of behaviours and underlined the difference of the social strata that coexisted in the city. The seclusion aimed by the wilderness of the precinct was not enough to prevent the invasion of the intimate privacy of what now became a proper residential garden. At the same time, the population of London at this specific time, grew exponentially, tending toward an overcrowded city, which was hard to control as a mixture of classes and behaviour.

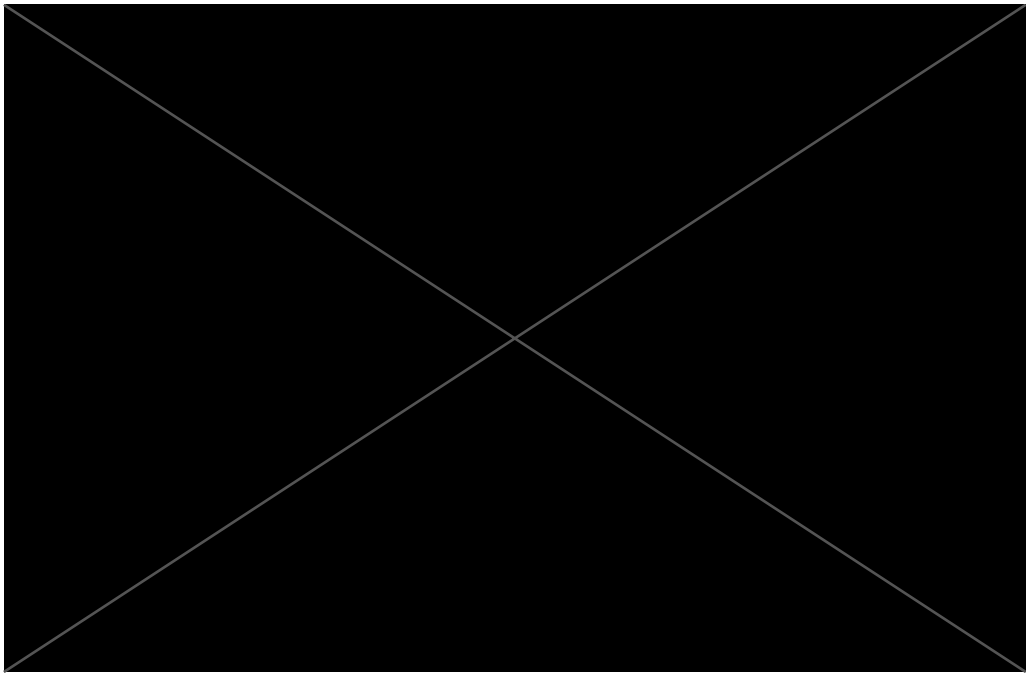

Fig. 3.15 - Robert Chantrell, *view of London from the top of N. 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields* (Sir John Soane House), 1813. (© Soane Museum Collection)

[71] Lawrence, 104

[72] Ibid.

3.6 Design as a tool of control

The dichotomy between the domestic affluent upper class and daily workers continues throughout the eighteenth, becoming one of the main characters of the London square. Fairchild discovered that the wilderness as a design process could be an extremely valuable ally to control human behaviour, an efficacious safety measure against potential transgressions. Alongside wilderness work, Fairchild proposed to use a clear geometrical design based on a system of diagonal routes and walks that cross their centre in the garden squares as an invitation towards their cores, where everyone was visibly connected (fig. 3.16). Longstaffe-Gowan remarks how, notwithstanding, this vocation towards a wilder geometry, when adapted to an urban environment, it could take on a completely different meaning: "Wilderness-Works, indeed were to prove to be places in whose leafy depths every proclivity towards licentiousness and transgression could be freely indulged."[73] Although Fairchild was not able to prevent the current state of degradation of the garden squares across the city, he was nonetheless asked by Sir Richard Grosvenor to intervene at the core of the development of his own estate, a 100-acre land in Mayfair. "The square sat within a grid of regular streets. Among the more interesting aspects of the new development was its planning: mews ran parallel to the main streets and contained the stables and the outbuildings of the houses,"[74] writes Longstaffe-Gowan (fig. 3.17). In social terms, the novel layout of Grosvenor Square achieved its objective, preventing the social prestige of the central oval, from the visual and physical accessibility of the passer-by. Architecturally, however, it was not entirely successful: "the architectural will to achieve uniform terraces was not there, and the corners remained practically awkward, giving a sense of the architecture leaking away."[75]

[73] Longstaffe-Gowan, 50

[74] Ibid.

[75] Longstaffe-Gowan, 51

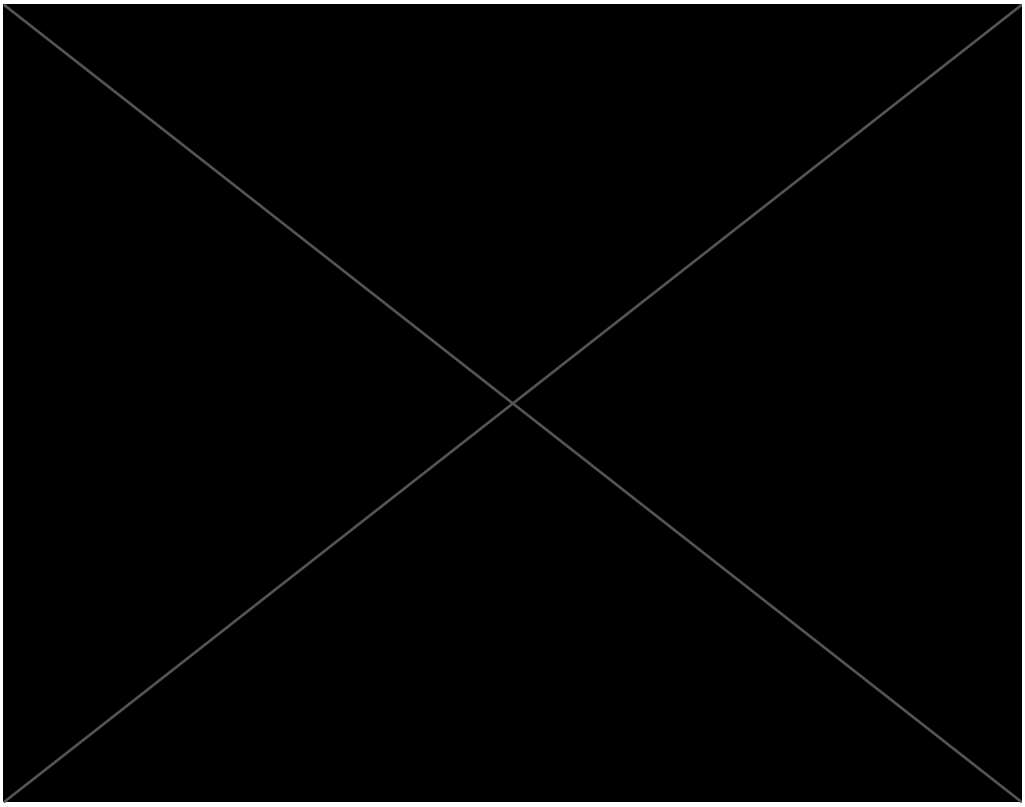

Fig. 3.16 - Thomas Fairchild, *The city Gardener*, 1722. (RHS Lindley Collections)

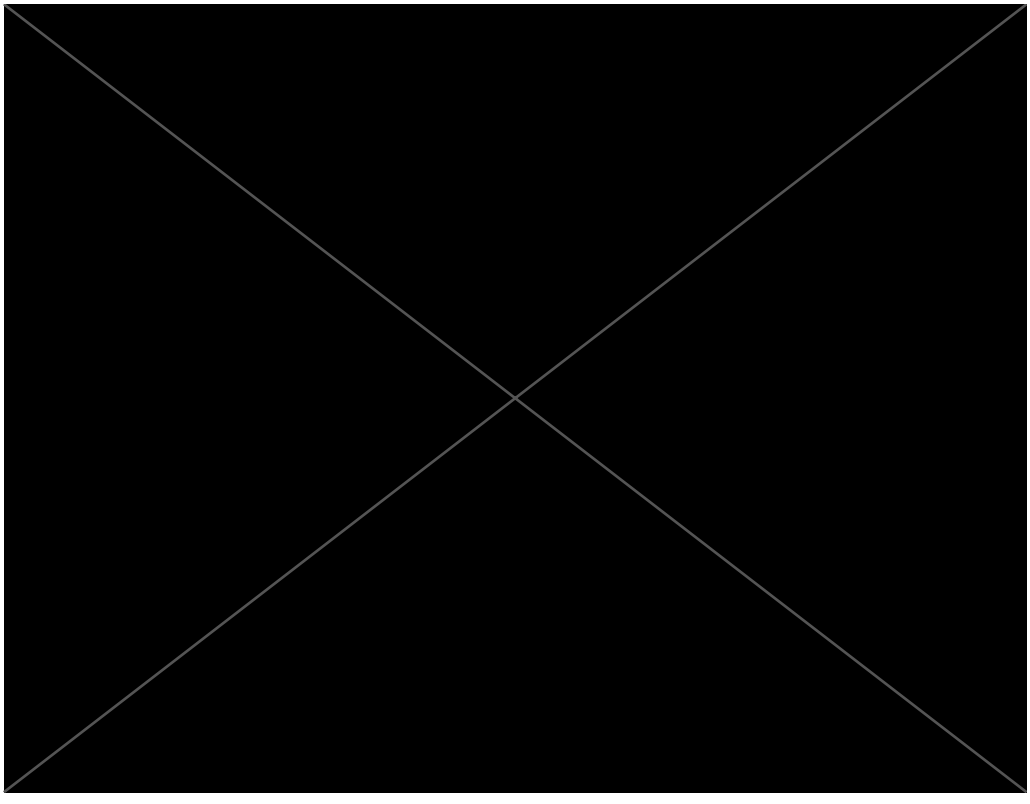

Fig. 3.17 - John Mackay, *Map of Grosvenor Estate (detail)*, 1723. (T. Longstaffe-Gowan. *London Square*. 2012)

This will soon become the design that articulates the rest of these squares across the city, until the constant coexistence of classes called for a much more radical solution than a simple geometric rigour. This solution was issued by the tenants of the garden squares, who called for a juridical resolution of their maintenance. The tenants decided to appeal to the parliament in the hope of preserving the state of their squares, by distancing beggars, vagabonds, animals, horse ridings, rubbish—anything that could potentially degrade the appearance of the square. In other words, they asked for, what officially in 1773, passed as the Enclosure Act, which would preserve the garden squares with physical separation between the inside and the outside, creating a precinct.[76] Lincoln's Inn Fields was amongst the first squares to be enclosed by the act of parliament,[77] "to enable the present and future proprietors and inhabitants of the houses in Lincoln's Inn Field to make a rate for themselves and raising money sufficient to enclose, clean and adorn the said field."[78] Socially, the enclosure was a formal distinction of social status, seen by the upper classes as an improvement to obtain efficiency: it favoured an increase of the rents of all the domestic properties around the area, preserved the greenery, and, eventually, improved the productivity of the land. Architecturally, it was a revision of the democratic gesture that Hawksmoor proposed at the beginning of the century with his precincts, where the collective ritual of society had the opportunity to proliferate and, ultimately, detach from the authoritarian control of the church.

Tenants of the houses that surrounded Lincoln's Inn Fields began to form a new governing body, which became known as the Trustees Board, who compensated the leaseholders.[79] The foundation of trustees and the tenants' association was a side of the public sphere of Georgian London that slowly became very influential in the decision making of the state authority. The lack of regulations and more general law enforcement was essentially substituted by this newly institutionalised decisional body, which could be considered akin to what Habermas recognises as "the public active in the political realm [which] established itself as an organ of the state."[80] From this point onwards, these organisations controlled all of the expenses related to the safeguarding and maintenance of their "own" privately owned public space. In Lincoln's Inn Fields, for instance, they managed to enclose the central part with railings on a stone plinth; to appoint a Scavanger who maintain the space clean from rubbish and a Guard to enforce the act; and to arrange the design, embellishment, and lighting of the

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[76] Enclosure Act 1773. Section 14: *Boundary stones to ascertain every person's property may be erected.* Provided also, that the person or persons ploughing any such balk, slade or meer shall, by proper bound stones, sufficiently mark and distinguish the several lands ploughed, and the several lands laid down in lieu thereof, so that the property thereof, and each person's right therein, may be clearly known and ascertained.

[77] Longstaffe-Gowan, 55

[78] Palmer, 12

[79] Palmer, 12

[80] Habermas, 59

central garden, following religiously Fairchild's manual and his model plan for on Grosvenor Square. With the Enclosure Act, the tradition of the urban common field slowly disappeared, even its famous precedent, Moorfield, was subject to a similar fate in 1790, when it became a residential square with an enclosed garden designed by George Dance: "the green square had come full circle, transforming even its own progenitor."[81]

The 1773 Enclosure Act pushed the process of expropriation of land, which started with Henry VIII Reformation and the dissolution of the monastery across the country towards acquiring a more capitalist form.[82] The problem with enclosures is often associated with the issue of land ownership, but it is worth noticing that trustees, as the managing bodies of the squares, became so powerful that landlords often attempted to prevent them from having too much control over the inner square. This first Enclosure Act exposed the controversial nature of the garden squares across the city centre: even if the squares were private property, the issue around their public use was not strictly a matter of property but an issue of management—even if their private ownership remains utterly problematic on urban and socio-economic grounds. Because of this contention, the social use of the London square was never clear.[83]

3.7 The precinct becomes enclosures: the first transgressions

The presence of more invasive greenery alongside the strengthening of the architecture of the precinct favoured mischievous and transgressive behaviour to take place amongst the bushy and leafy trees. Rasmussen noted that there was a remarkable difference in the city between day and night that contributed to creating the friction between habits and rituals in these squares.[84] At night, there was no surveillance, and the square turned into a scene of decadence, with robbery, assaults, and general decay taking place. Occasionally, the actual precinct around the square, which in the early seventeenth century, used to be a sign of social freedom, was now an additional source of abuse. For instance, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, the low railings surrounding the square hidden by the trees generated a high number of dangers such that described in the famous verses of John Gay in 1716:[85]

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[81] Lawrence, 99

[82] Ibid.

[83] On a side note, it is interesting how visitors –still today– perceive these spaces as magnificent, picturesque exceptions of greenery in the urban fabric. This misunderstanding is confirmed by information distributed in the guidebooks of London which contribute to a wide misinformation on the urban role of those spaces. *The Foreigners' Guide* of 1740, for instance, writes that "those who take delight in the Walking-Exercise' would find some satisfaction in the many public squares enclosed and laid out gardens…free for every Person above the inferior Rank, and…constantly full of Company". This was, of course, a false statement, since by 1740 most of the squares in the centre were only accessible to rate-paying key-holders. Longstaffe-Gowan, 63

[84] Rasmussen, 156-157

[85] *Trivia*, 1716

Where Lincoln's-inn, wide space, is rail'd around,
Cross not with vent'rous step; there oft' is found
The lurking thief, who while the day-light shone,
Made the wall echo with his begging tone:
That crutch which late compassion mov'd, shall wound
Thy bleeding head, and fell thee to the ground.

Albeit being monitored by laws, the London square gradually became the epicentre of a clash of behaviour and social background, where the presence of occasional and daily visitors was not seen positively by residents.[86] Their contrasting behaviours were accentuated by this new configuration of the field, which sees, on one hand, a very prescribed and rigorous use of the enclosed space destined mainly to domestic life and aristocratic *flaneur*-ing during daylight, when wheels and clogs were prohibited in the premises and children's games were supervised by maids or schoolmasters, and, obviously, ball games or any sort of sport were banned.[87] On the other hand, the night time brought mainly indecorous disturbances across the square, with beggars, vagabonds, and all other varieties of mischief.[88] But at the same time, these initial transgressions to the habitual life established by the residents of the garden squares generated interesting frictions and new potential readings of the space in its early years.

Beresford Chancellor, when narrating the early history of Lincoln's Inn Fields,[89] described how the illegal game of tennis used to be played in the field, which later in the century brought to its institutionalisation, with the addition of two courts at its core: "Lilly the astrologer, when a servant at Mr Wright's, at the corner house over against Strand bridge, spent his idle hours bowling with Wat the cobbler, Dick the blacksmith and such other companion."[90] Other sports that were illegally played in the field attracted a broader public: "older people sit amongst the trees, crowds were accustomed to assemble to witness the gyration of acrobats and the exertions of wrestlers and boxers whom Locke, in his Direction to foreigners visiting England, specially mentions: while beggars kept up their perpetual Chauncey for alms, and thieves found occasion to relieve the more likely looking loiterers of their purses or their wild handkerchiefs, within sight of the pillory which stood probably at the south east corner of New Square, then Lincoln's Inn Fields, and where Luttrell records at least one delinquent as

[86] Longstaffe-Gowan, 76-77; Chancellor, 33; Palmer, 16

[87] Rasmussen, 157; Palmer, 16

[88] Ibid.

[89] Chancellor, E. B. (1932) *The romance of Lincoln's Inn Fields and its neighbourhood*. London: Richards.

[90] Sexby, 499

being kept in durance."[91] This was an interesting episode that confirmed that sports were seen as illegal transgressions to the domestic greenery mainly destined for well-behaved residents. From being an occasional and temporary ritual offence, sports were later legally allowed in the square:[92] sport, as the exercise of the body, Rasmussen notes, soon became part of the proper formation of an Englishman.[93]

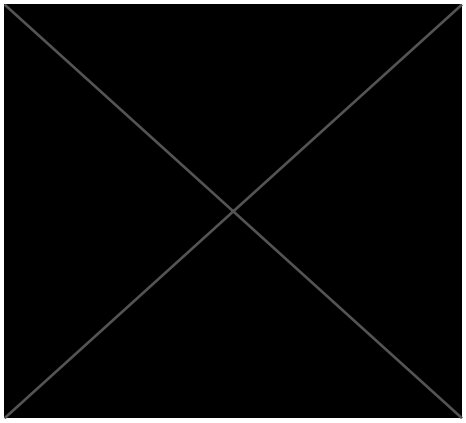

Fig. 3.18 - Edward Linley Sambourne, *Sport in a London Square*, from *Punch 77*, 1879. (T. Longstaffe-Gowan. *London Square*. 2012)

If the strengthening of the precinct became a tool of social control and security, then it also simultaneously generated different types of rituals, rituals of transgressions and of reactions against the rules it spatialised. Therefore, trespassing the rails to exercise horses or play cricket, steal fruits or pick flowers, and occasionally partake in adulterous sexual encounters[94] made the space more attractive for its exceptional usages, which became even more common activities. There were some exceptions, like when these transgressions became more public forms of protest. One of the famous riots conducted in the premises of the enclosed Lincoln's Inn Fields, was the Gordon Riot, an anti-Catholic protest, following the Papist Act of 1778, which allowed Christians to join the army in the Battle of Independence against America, France, and Spain. This protest destroyed the old Sardinian Roman Catholic Chapel, which used to be the centre of Catholic worship and which now serves as a simple church for the neighbourhood (fig. 3.19).

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[91] Chancellor, 32

[92] After its public opening in 1895. Palmer, 56

[93] Rasmussen, 230-231

[94] Longstaffe-Gowan, 63; Palmer, 24

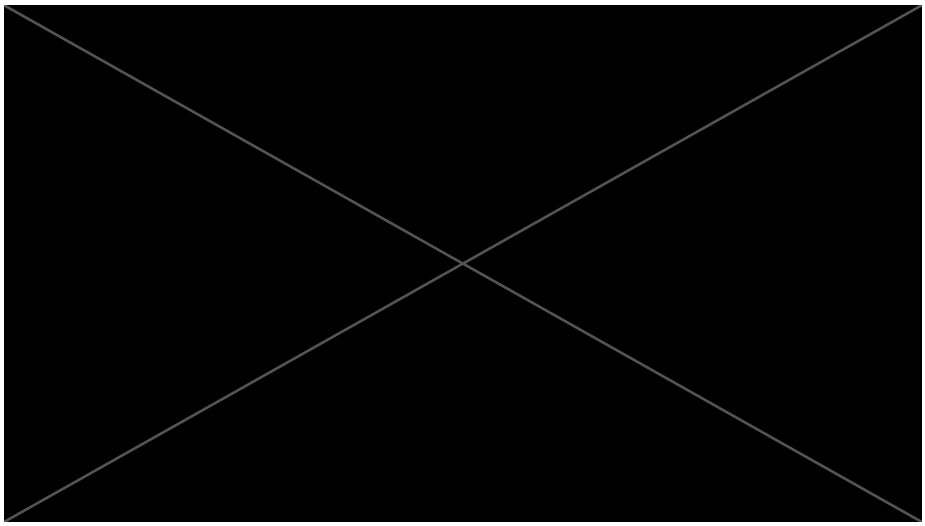

Fig. 3.19 - Fielding and Walker, *The Mob Destroying & Setting Fire to the King's Bench Prison and House of Correction in St George's Field*, c.1780-5. (Wellcome Collection)

Similar transgressions also happened in the "first London *piazza*," Covent Garden. The market, at its core, was always inhabited by a high number of farmers and workmen whose presence starkly contrasted with the fashionable and exclusive tone of the aristocratic residences and their tenants that surrounded the piazza: "early in the morning people arrived from the country with their carts and baskets and the whole morning Inigo Jones's Roman piazza rang with street cries and screams and it was overflowing with cabbage leaves and radishes."[95] In the night the following degradation was also visible: "Covent Garden Market when it was a market morning, was wonderful company. The great wagons of cabbages. With growers, men and boys lying asleep under them and with sharp dogs from market garden neighbourhoods looking after the whole, was as good as a party. But one of the worst night-sights I know of in London is to be found in the children who prowl about this place; who sleep in the baskets, fight for the offal, dart at any objects they think they can lay their thieving hands on, dive under the carts and barrows, dodge the constable, and are perpetually making a blunt pattering on the pavement of the Piazza with the rain of their naked feet."[96] The escalation of the social confrontation arrived with the concentration of activities at the centre, which brought about the deterioration of the surrounding streets and alleys. This emphasised the clash between the aristocratic domestic life and the transgressive use of the space by daily workers.

Covent Garden, aside from the wealthy inhabitants of its surrounding, was then considered to be a disgraceful spot, something that the Duke of Bedford failed to foresee when he permitted the presence of a vegetable market at its core back in 1671.[97] He eventually decided to confront this excess of

[95] Rasmussen, 157

[96] Dickens, 133-134

[97] Rasmussen, 157

behaviour by imposing a physical, top-down presence in the market square and, later in 1827, after obtaining legal permission, a permanent market hall, exclusively dedicated to selling fruits and vegetables, was erected at the core of Covent Garden.[98] Here, architecture was used as a tool of control and life management, capable of dictating the use of the space, which during the day was accessible, while at night it was closed to prevent illegal occupations. With the erection of further buildings, such as shops and temporary stands, Covent Garden became a safe place to go to, more controlled and dignified, while other open squares, such as Lincoln's Inn Fields remained sites of "great mischiefs, and the resort of many wicked and disorderly persons, and the Great Square Place of St James's Square was a rude was in an uncleanly state."[99]

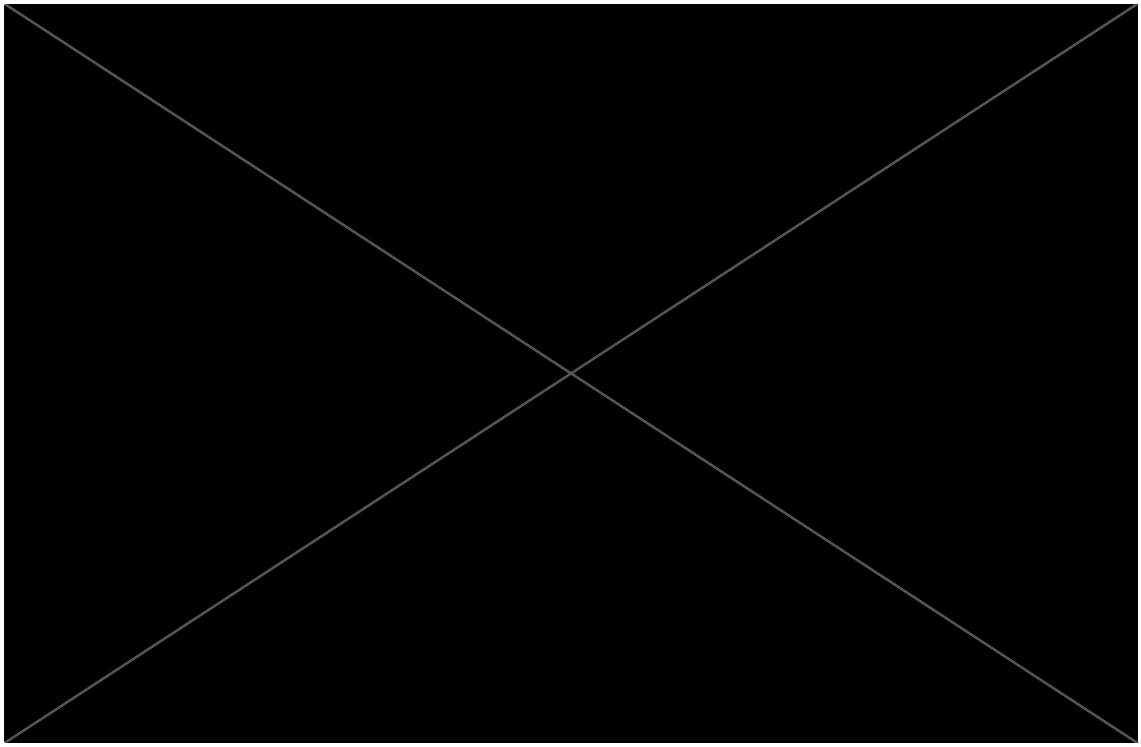

Fig. 3.20 - Henry William Bunbury, *The Humours of a Promenade in St James's Park*, 1783. (British Museum)

The precinct, unlike the market building in Covent Garden, is an architectural gesture that did not seem to act as a proper, formal imposition but more as an incentive capable of generating alternative rituals and enhancing the coexistence of classes, which were not necessarily prevented by the Enclosure Act. The natural appearance of a garden in the Georgian Square is not just a delightful representation of aristocratic life but also reveals the tensions between transgressive acts and the habitual *flaneur*: this is well pictured in the famous parody *The Humours of a Promenade in St James's Park*

[98] "The battered old shed and booths were cleared away, and William Fowler was commissioned to design the covered market hall, which almost filled the square, covering and area of 1 ½ acres." Cathcart-Borer, 129

[99] Longstaffe-Gowan, 51

by Edward Hedges, which was published in 1783 and brings together well-dressed aristocrats who are tempted by the opportunities of random vices (fig. 3.20). By the end of the eighteenth century, these transgressive rituals were still performed illegally during the night, however these acts of transgression did not suffice to prevent the square from becoming synonymous with opulence and exclusivity in London life, which entirely overshadowed its collective nature.

Lawrence states that by the early nineteenth century, London squares "began to express a new set of landscape values, reflecting a bourgeois sensibility centred on family and the home as possession rather than social venue."[100] To continue to prevent similar transgressions, the squares strengthened their surveillance and were provided with patrol guards. The processes of greening and "ruraling" that these squares were invested with since the publication of Thomas Fairchild's manual, an actualisation of that famous *rus in urbe*, is read here as a mechanism that ultimately eliminated the common right, allowing tenants' association to shape and take control over the space. The square moved from being a space of encounter to a stage for the leisure of the upper classes, a shift that Lawrence identified with the process of domestication of the London central square.[101]

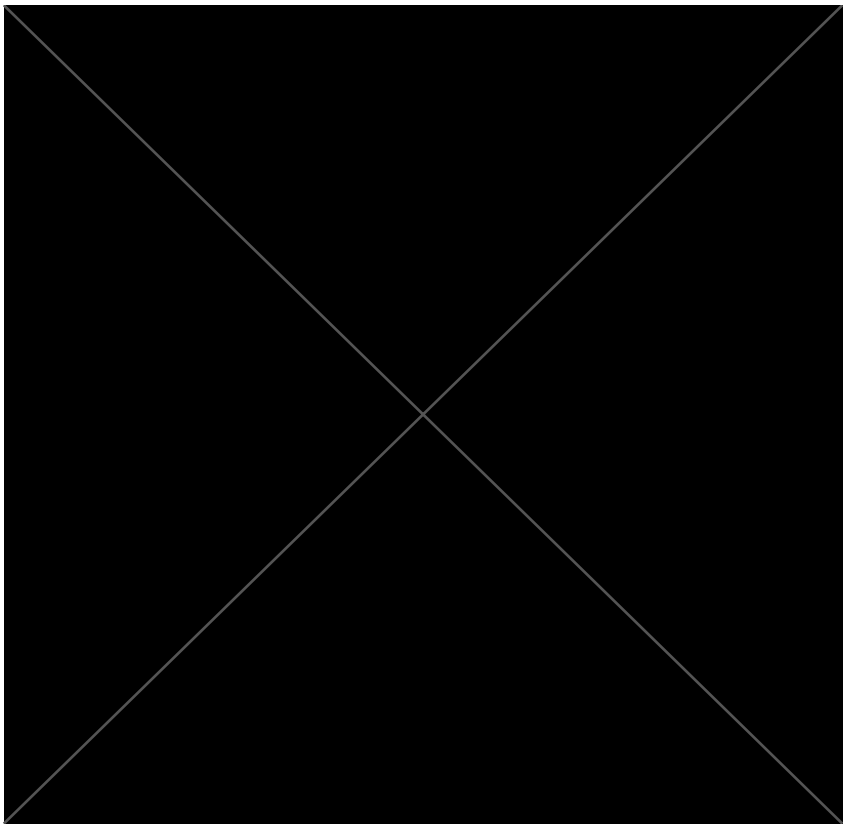

Fig. 3.21 - Unknown Artist, *The Oak Tree Scene and the Furze Bush Scene, Frontispiece to the Trial of Lady Ann Foley; for Adultery with Charles Henry, Earl of Peterborough*, 1785. (British Library)

[100] Lawrence, 108

[101] Lawrence, 106

3.8 The social and political failure of the garden square

The erection of precincts around parks, can be defined as an attempt of separation of mankind in general.[102] It represents an antithesis of the meaning of the garden square, therefore marking its highest social failure. The squares no longer represented social collective values, but reflected an exclusive sensibility of wealthy individuals and their families. However, if the goal of the Enclosure Act was the preservation of inner gardens, squares such as Lincoln's Inn Fields, even with the appointment of a gardener, continued to be subjected to constant intrusions. The detailed report of the Trustees of Lincoln's Inn Fields denounced constant transgressions,[103] from tree climbing to pick fruits, to prostitutes parading around the railings and the presence of beggars and vagrants. The presence of children running and young gentlemen playing games reinforced the need for regulation that prevented ball games from taking place on the square; exercise was only allowed if handled in an orderly manner and with a responsible person in charge. Occasionally, there were some reports of people, often keyholders, entering the square "at all hours of the night, frequently accompanied by females."[104] (fig, 3.21) This resulted in much stricter regulations: no one was allowed to enter the garden after 10pm.[105] The number of bans issued for the proper maintenance of the squares was becoming ridiculous and unsustainable, by 1855, almost everything was prohibited from taking place in Lincoln's Inn Fields:

> That no dogs be admitted within the Inclosure
> That the Gardener and Beadle be directed to enquire of all person entering…and who are not known to them as Proprietors and Inhabitants by what right they enter.
> That the flowers and Shrubs…be on no account gathered or destroyed;
> That persons having charge of children, do prevent them going on the Flower Beds and Borders; and that Nurses and Servants of families having the privilege of the Garden inclosure are strictly forbidden to admit strangers, or to part with the key, and that no Men Servants of Porters, nor their families having the care of Chambers, be admitted into the Garden Inclosure on any pretence.[106]

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[102] Lawrence, 108

[103] Palmer, 12. Most of the records of the Trustees are in the British Library. MSS 35,074-35,083; other correspondences can be found in the Holborn Local Studies Library and at the Soane Museum.

[104] Palmer, 23

[105] Ibid.

[106] XVi.A.2.12 Private Correspondence from SM Archives in Palmer, 24

Gradually, the widespread enclosures across London's open spaces, where all gatherings were prohibited, attracted the attention of the print media and, in particular, that of journals and satirical magazines published weekly, like *Punch* (fig. 3.22). As opposed to trustees and other private businesses, print media began to detach from being a merely representative organ of city life and became a loud platform for discussion and freedom, through which Londoners would connect with one another to reclaim some of the open spaces that originally belonged to them. The criticism raised by the public and propagated in the media was essentially driven by the unfair, limited access to the square. Landscape architect and botanist, John Claudius Loudon deplored the unfair use of the greenery in most London Squares, which he confronted with the *piazza* across the continent. In the *Encyclopedia of Gardening*, he claimed that the indulgence in luxury of the aristocracy could no longer prevent comforts from the rest of society.[107]

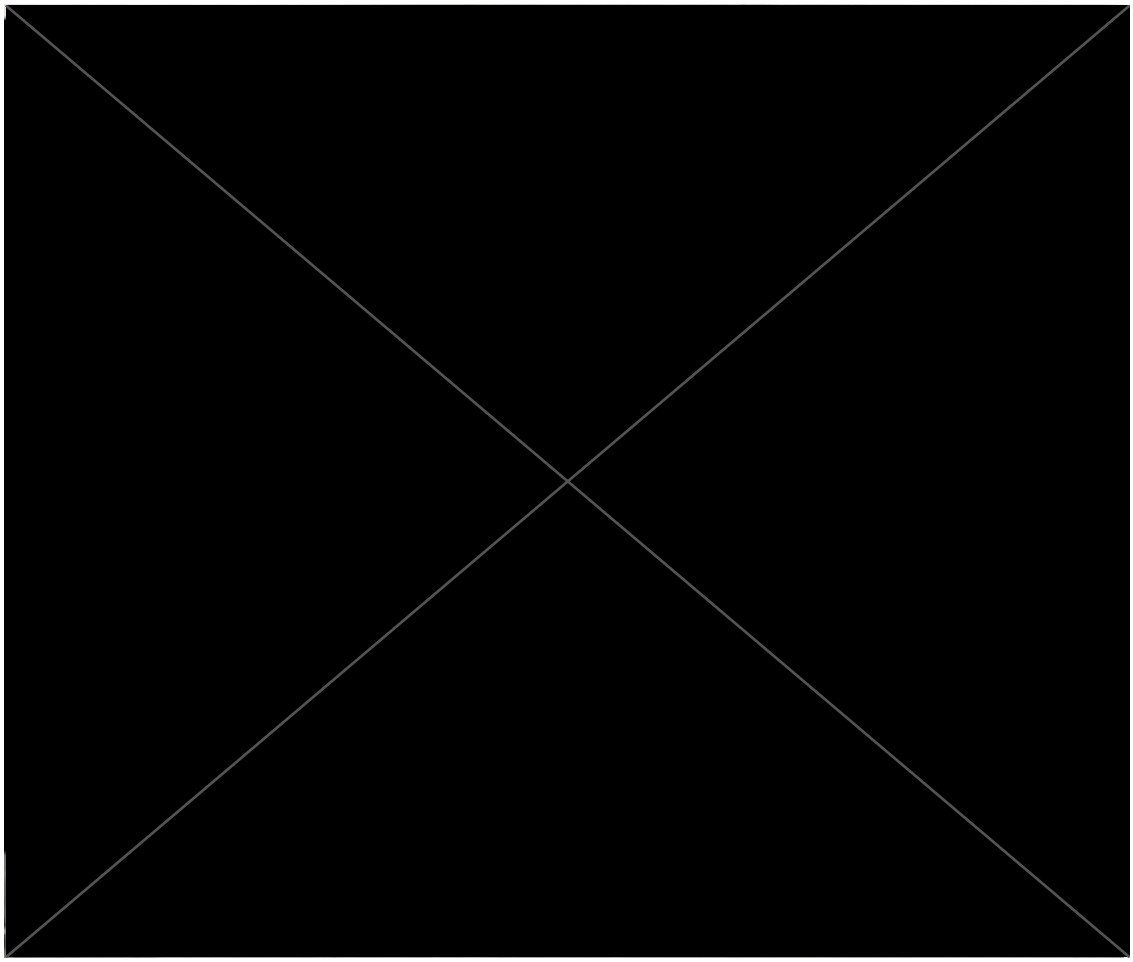

Fig. 3.22 - John Doyle, *Manners and Customs of ye Englyshe in 1849*, sketch, from *Punch* 17, 1849. (T. Longstaffe-Gowan, *The London Square*. 2012)

[107] Loudon, 336-7. Loudon is considered by Watkin to be the first theoretician of the replacement of the picturesque, the 'Gardenesque'. "Thought the 'Gardenesque' may not be essentially picturesque in character, it is important to realise that I was a revival and development of the tradition of the flower garden which, despite the grand parks of Brown and Repton, had flourished during the eighteenth century." Watkin, 88

A sequence of articles begun appearing in daily papers as well: on August 18, 1837, an anonymous article in the *Morning Chronicle* suggested that Trafalgar Square should not be sacrificed like Golden Square or Leicester Square, and it should be paved like any other European *piazza*, following the models of Piazza del Popolo in Rome or Place Vendome in Paris.[108] In *Lady's Newspaper*, a rather provocatory essay titled "Our Square," discussed the perfect square in the perfect world, where everyone would be admitted (fig. 3.23).[109] This idea was particularly praised by the co-founder of the satirical magazine *Punch*, Horace Mayhew, who later published an accurate analysis of London's squares, traced by architect William Weir, who divided them into two types of spaces: "fashionable," on one hand, were the squares located on the western side of Regent Park; and "line of demarcation," on the other, were those in the centre of town, between Regent Street and Chancery Lane.[110]

The domestication of the garden squares and the increased density of the greenery at their cores, pushed the squares from being outdoor rooms to look like small private parks. The change in vegetation induced an alteration in the attitude of users, who rather than aiming to engage in social encounters sought "private relaxation, as individuals and as families, privileged to have a park of their own out of their front door, safe behind railings."[111] (fig. 3.24) This was visible in representations of the squares, which mainly portrayed families with children or nursemaids pushing carriages. Yet, a need for more secure privacy increased amongst wealthy residents, who realised how much more intimacy they could achieve in a country home with a private garden over what was possible in a collective shared square.

The collapse of the design of the London square began half-way through the nineteenth century. They excluded spacious informality, which "was classified as a quality that could not be reconciled with the indomitable uniform and formal character of the surrounding architecture and the street, is

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[108] "Every one, I think, who is interested in the architectural beauty of the metropolis must regret that the finest spot in any city in the world is to be sacrificed in attempting to create a second Golden or Leicester square. All who have observed the fine effect produced by open spaces in a town such as Piazza del Popolo at Rome, the Place Vendome at Paris, and the Wittelsbacher Platz in Munich, and who have remarked the gloomy appearance and dingy vegetation of London squares, will at once decide that good taste had nothing to do with determination with the determination to make Trafalgar Square an inclosure. Indeed, during the last two or three years that the improvements have been going on in that neighbourhood, I have never met with any one acquainted with art who did not express a desire that the square should be left an open space." *The Morning Chronicle*, 18th August 1837 in Longstaffe-Gowan, 137.

[109] Our Square was based on "a new plan of Social Geography…drawn after a recent survey of 'Our Square', forming a map (in neutral colours) of one of the most select features of London, by the Oldest Resident. A key to Our Square will be given to anyone who wishes to explore the interior, with a view of studying the manners, customs, sports, pastimes, and idiosyncrasies of its inhabitants, and of describing, in all their branches, the various rare plants which are cultivated by them. Everyone is admitted". *Morning Chronicle* 29th July, 1942. "[Our Square] was no mean, ill-endowed, suburban square, into which all classes are admitted indiscriminately, like a vulgar park", Horace Mayhew "Our Square" in *Lady's Newspaper* 31st July 1847. Longstaffe-Gowan, 139-140.

[110] Weir, 145. In the same article Weir made quite a remark where he distinguished between 'genuine square' and 'new squares' or 'places': where a 'place' is associated with a continental vacuum typical of other European urban design; the central squares in the city are the result of the 1666 Great Fire, they are simply misused churchyards that stand between a court and a square.

[111] Lawrence, 108

as the animated and ostentatious residents who lived in the squares were averse to the genuine pursuit of the gentle and simple pleasure of inconspicuous rustication."[112]

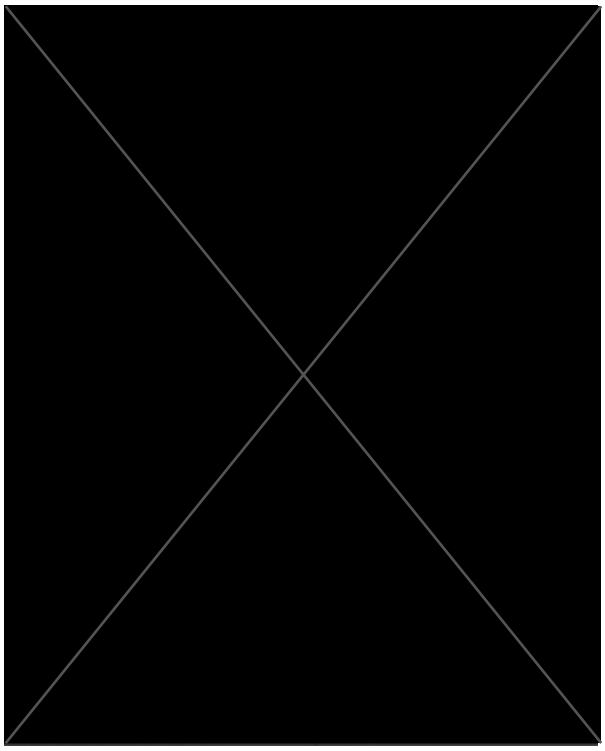

Fig. 3.23 - Unknown draughtsman, *Plan of a London Square*, from Horace Mayhew, "Our Square", 1847. (T. Longstaffe-Gowan. *The London Square*, 2012)

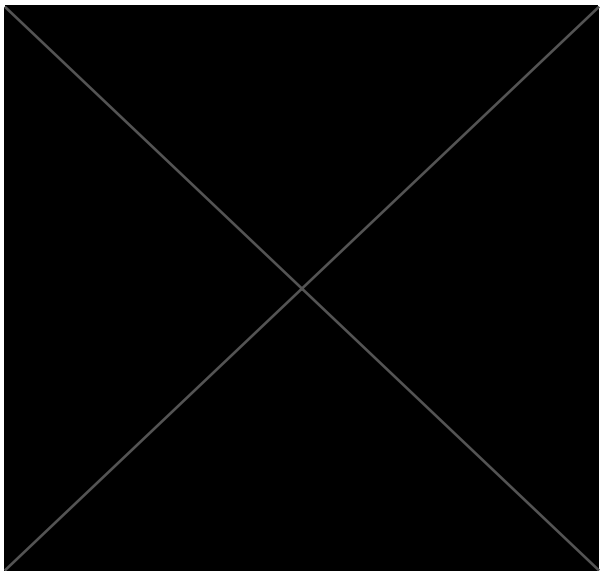

Fig. 3.24 - Unknown artist, *How to Make Chatelaine a Real Blessing to Mothers*, engraving, from *Punch* 16, 1849. (T. Longstaffe-Gowan. *The London Square*. 2012)

[112] Longstaffe-Gowan, 147. A similar informality was found at the same time in the Pleasure Gardens, which were icons of transgressions with their modes of entertainments that span from music and drinking to masquerades and brothels, as such they had admission fees, which guaranteed class separation, unlike the early state of the London Garden Squares. The most famous was the Vauxhall pleasure garden established in 1729 and closed in 1859.

3.9 The first openings: the institutionalisation of the ritual

A contribution to this failure was the slow migration of the residents of the squares to countryside estates or mansion flats with their own gardens in the West End, as opposed to the continuity and near anonymity of the terraced houses that surrounded a London garden square. In Lincoln's Inn Fields, the houses were emptied by residents leaving spaces to Chambers: at mid-century, only 67 houses were inhabited by families[113]—a fact that had quite the inevitable consequence on the reduction of the role of the Trustees of the square, since an increasing number of requests to open the garden to public access were made.[114] With the migration of the gentry to the margins of the city, the lower classes began to occupy their houses: numerous families overcrowded into what once were aristocratic domestic spaces, creating favourable conditions for the spread of diseases.[115] This is when the garden squares were asked to welcome the sick population, allowing them to walk into the gardens during evenings.[116]

When the epidemic of cholera hit these crowded areas of the city in the early 1830s, access to the garden squares became a necessity and, so, were the other green areas of London opened. Bigger green spaces were needed, especially in the densest parts of the city, such as Central London and the East End. Parks began to proliferate across London: in 1840, Victoria Park opened in the East End, providing outdoor spaces aimed at improving both the health and manners of the working class.[117] This opening strategy had a two-fold mission: with the excuse of health care, the population could be tamed. After a 1833 report of the Select Committee on Public Walks revealed that only Hyde Park and Green Park, both located in the western area of the city, were in fact opened to bon-ton rendezvous, other parks, such as St. James, Kensington Gardens, and Regent's Park, occasionally welcomed well-behaved and properly dressed citizens.[118] The opening of the parks and garden square was a strategy that attempted to civilise London's population and change their rituals, instilling what was considered to be good character and behaviour in the lower classes. By opening to the public, the square became an instrument of control no different than the strengthening of the precinct around the square that followed the Enclosure Act in the second half of the eighteenth century.

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[113] Palmer, 23

[114] Palmer, 24

[115] "The cholera epidemic of 1832 struck particularly harshly in the crowded slums areas of London, especially in the eastern part of town" Lawrence, 109.

[116] "By the 1 830s the need for public open space was becoming acute in some of the older parts of London, and the private green squares were eyed longingly by nearby residents denied access to them."Lawrence, 109.

[117] Lawrence, 111

[118] Ibid.

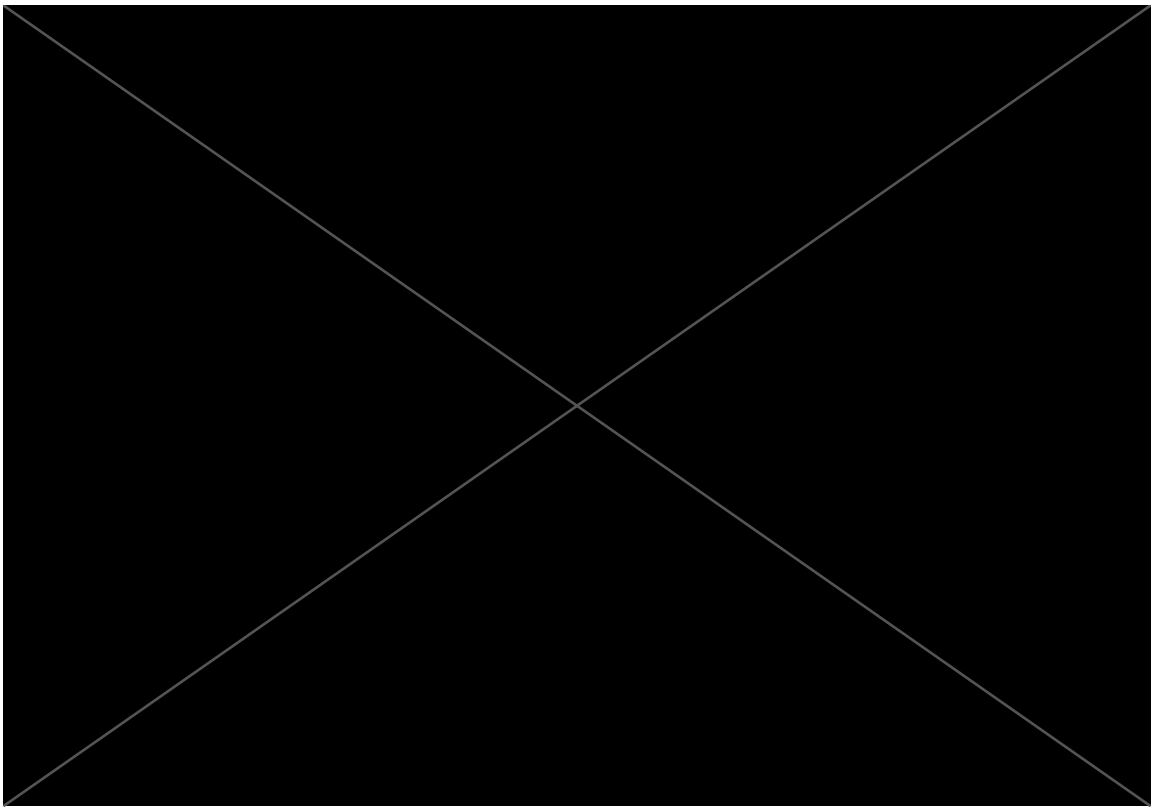

Fig. 3.25 - William Hogarth, *Southwark Fair,* 1734. (Royal Academy of Arts)

During Queen Victoria's reign, the enclosure of the garden square and other green spaces in the city was often interrupted by official events like processions, fairs and festivals, and other celebrations. Hosted in collective spaces, these events offered an opportunity for the crown and the state to marginally control the crowd through sedative pleasures (fig. 3.25). By 1840, following a large volume of petitions from charitable institutions and religious and secular bodies, garden squares began to open daily for a few hours to the public to offer fresh air and cleanliness to everyone.

Initially such a request was denied, but, a couple of years later in 1858, Lincoln's Inn Fields accepted to open temporarily for a flower show, and later it opened for more and more events until the square was fully accessible to everyone.[119] This temporary ritual turned into a trial period during which the keys to the garden were offered to the neighbourhood's residents, with each new keyholder having to have been recommended by a member of the Trustees.[120] The experiments were renewed and the number of granted keys was increasing exponentially. Complaints soon began to circulate, particularly those referencing the mixing of children of different classes, with the *habitus* of upper-class children being contaminated by the offensive language of the children of lower classes. Schools and other

[119] Palmer, 27

[120] Palmer, 28

educational institutions asked to integrate the use of the outdoor space into their curriculums to allow all children an equal education. In 1863, the Bloomsbury Flower Show in Russell Square (fig. 3.26) was the first to invite not only "acceptable people" but a large number of members of the working class into a private London square.[121] By the end of the nineteenth century, most garden squares' precincts were opened, "among the major squares, Lincoln's Inn Fields was opened to the public in 1894, but others held out longer. Leicester Square was opened to the public only in 1933; that same year St. James's Square was opened to the public at lunch hours, though gradually the hours have been extended."[122]

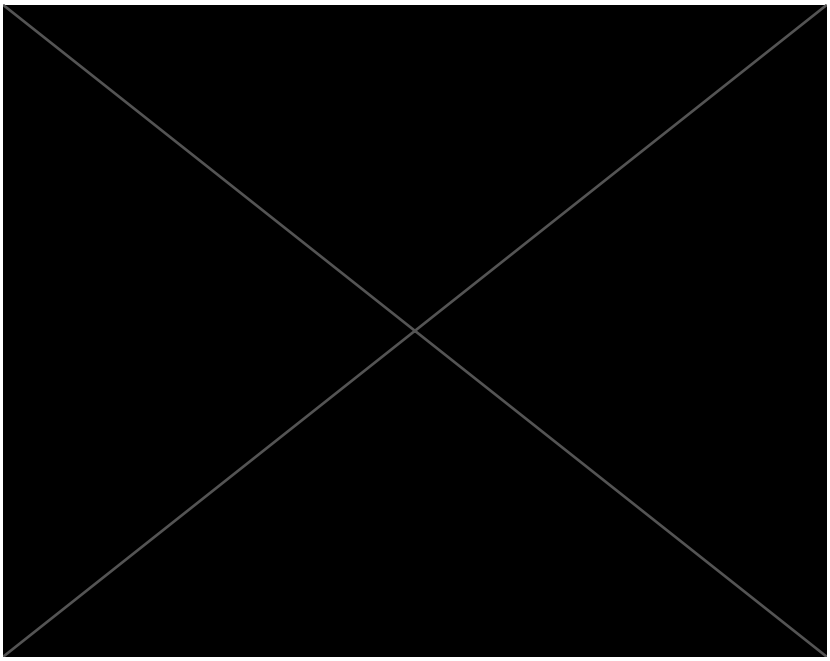

Fig. 3.26 - *The Bloomsbury Flower Show in Russell Square Inclosure*, engraving, from *Illustrated London News*, 23 July 1864

Those festivals in the city are read as one of the highest forms of ritualisation, where members of society came together to celebrate according to similar beliefs and interests.[123] They are an exceptional moment in the daily life of all citizens. Festivals are scheduled interruptions in our habitual life, perhaps one of the most secular rituals of society that still survives today, and this is not just the case in London. Though, socially, festivals bring society together, architecturally and spatially, however, they clearly represent the state of collective rituals in the city at the turn of the nineteenth century. Festivals

[121] Longstaffe-Gowan, 177

[122] Lawrence, 114

[123] Rasmussen, 294. In the prologue we mentioned the ritualist relevance of festivals, which, according to Jean Jacques Rousseau, reinforce the national character of a place, strengthen new tendencies, and give new energy to all passions. Festivals are instruments that reduce social inequality and class systems, in favour of stronger social solidarity; they are gatherings that foster community and sociability. Kertzer, 143.

are rituals that fell into that commercialisation of leisure that we saw appearing in early Georgian London and will be predominant throughout the rest of the century.

With time, festivals fenced portions of land as ticketed events and prevented the collective from using the same space informally. Today, similar forms of openings continue to take place.[124] If we consider Hyde Park or Victoria Park festivals, just a few amongst many others, these are undoubtedly hedonistic moments that contribute to strengthening collective life and yet they remain elitist forms of gatherings, accessible only via the purchasing of tickets, while spatially, they exist as an enclosure. These festivals happen in a portion of greenery, usually "borrowed,"[125] which is later enclosed to welcome a limited audience. If festivals were once used as an interruption to the stiff and domestic life of the garden square—or the park—today, they readapt the archetype of the precinct into an enclosure that responds to a small portion of society: "events are staged in prominent public spaces to add to the symbolic capital of events, rather than to transform those spaces. Nevertheless, staging events causes a series of intended and unintended consequences for public space provision. When events are ticketed, and where they require large installations, they exclude people symbolically and physically."[126] The festivalisation of public space opens the space to a more elitist audience, which appears to be rather incompatible with the original nature of the public sphere as described by Habermas, as the space open to all.[127] Additionally, within this precinct, subjects can use the space, but they need to respond to a series of codes of behaviours dictated by the organisation putting on the festival. Festivals began as spaces of exceptions, but, ultimately, with the recurring hosting of commercial events became a permanent condition in the city.[128]

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[124] London parks are often used for festivals and events, a range that spans from music festivals to community led activities. The growth of private ticketed events, however, has led to concerns on the disruption of the life of parks as well as negative environmental impacts on them. In 2020, Dr Andrew Smith and Dr Goran Vodicka published a survey on the London parks, titled *Events in London Parks: a friends' perspective*, which "explores the different types of events staged in London parks and assesses the range of impact they have both positive and negative". Smith, Vodicka, 1. The events that seemed to have more negative impact are essentially "large scale festivals; and to a lesser extent fun fairs and circuses". Some of those were reported to be Gala in Peckham Rye, or Wireless and Community in Finsbury Park, Easter Electric in Morden Park, Mighty Hoopla and Cross the Tracks in Brockwell Park and Lovebox in Gunnersbury Park. The restriction of the accessibility to the park is one of the common denominators amongst the negative impacts listed in the report.

[125] Andrew Smith in his paper, *Borrowing' Public Space to Stage Major Events: The Greenwich Park Controversy* published in 2014, uses the term "borrowing" to imply that the temporary use of public spaces is often labelled as a gesture in the national interest. Using the case study of Greenwich Park and the equestrian earmarked as the venue for equestrian events: "using the Park was 'in the national interest'. Advocates were heard saying 'we have all got to do our bit for Britain', with restricted access to Greenwich Park justified as a 'sacrifice' worth making. The notions of 'borrowing' and 'sharing' were also apparent within the discourses used by those keen to see Greenwich Park become an Olympic venue. Supporters claimed they wished merely to 'borrow' the Park for a good cause and urged Greenwich residents to show 'generosity of spirit' to 'share the Park with the world'" Smith, 254.

[126] Smith, 260

[127] Habermas, 4

[128] "Just as Agamben thinks that the state of exception has evolved into a permanent phenomenon, there is a danger that staging exceptional events becomes the norm for public parks." Smith, 260

The informality of the use of an open collective space is perhaps the most important aspect of its publicness, as opposed to it becoming an active stake of the capital gain in the city. When private events on a portion of common group are enclosed by a railing, the public sphere ceases to exist and threatens to become a condition extended across and beyond the city limits. Borrowing from the public is the key to appropriation,[129] writes Andrew Smiths, who adds that, by legalising and proliferating this borrowing strategy, private events such as festivals will become gradually less temporary and more permanent, inviting investors to invest and generate revenue from them.

Park and garden squares in London, as we have seen, are particularly vulnerable portions of land. Their management is still unsettled and their funding is limited—usually coming from charities—therefore, such types of events become an appealing source of income, as we have seen happening in Lincoln's Inn Fields with the building of an amphitheatre dedicated to martial disciplines in the late seventeenth century. Festivals began in the limited boundaries of a garden square to contrast the enclosure of its greenery and went on to apply their own extensive enclosure model in London parks, creating an interesting, yet controversial, continuity between the two typologies, which might inevitably link the growth of the London garden square into the London park.

3.10 From topography to pedestrian view

The garden square is perhaps the most readable urban form in London: it represents an attempt to organise land across the centre of town, while producing a continuous clash between the form of the space and the actions that take place in and around it. These squares, at the very beginning, characterised the British urban strategy as opposed to that of other contemporaneous European capitals, like Paris and Rome. After the plans of 1666, the London square represented a clear planning tactic, which failed to be accomplished, because it was still perceived as a gesture that expressed the direct will of the sovereign and the state. In Georgian London, the inhabitants of the city began to gain power, as developers, as part of a new emergent governing body, as merchants and business owners, but also as transgressors. This multiplicity of individuals is made of up people who, at first, dwelled in the variety of garden squares, welcoming them as places of collective encounters. The same spaces, though, deceived the population, shortly after their appearance, by becoming places of domestic exclusivity and class management.

What is of interest here is that those open spaces, however, with their low or high fences, formalised the same precinct that distinguished Hawksmoor's collective spaces and applied it to the city following a similar plan of expansion and urbanisation—one that, in the centre of London, was far more

[129] Ibid.

condensed and controlled than that which Queen Anne asked Hakwmsoor to fulfil. The diversity of garden squares, due to their association with different activities, testified the incapability of the crown and the state to hold control over collective life, which slowly came to be guided by market forces, favouring what seems to be an apparent social variety and economic change. The same typology of an outdoor and often green space fenced by a railing was used in the East End by Hawsmoor as an alternative space where the diverse classes of the population, once unified under the cult of the church could express their social needs. The precinct is, thus, the shape of Georgian public culture, which began through Hawksmoor's projects of sacred fields and precincts, developed into the garden square, and was, later, transformed into public parks, and it was designed not only as a tool of social recovery but also of urban expansion.

In this chapter, I am proposing a reciprocal continuation of these two types of urban strategy at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but where Hawksmoor's precincts was a social success, the enclosure of the garden squares was a social failure. Hawksmoor's precincts introduced an alternative model of collective life, making the square a much broader and scopeless outdoor space. That same architecture was later used as an instrument of class division and affirmation of an aristocratic model. Both models, however, concurred on the same idea of landscape, which was used as a symbol for social and, later, economic value: both urban morphologies propose an urban process in the context of London.

This was identifiable in the various representations of greeneries, which radically changed the topographical view of London by lowering it to a pedestrian viewpoint. In the 1700s, outdoor space began to be represented from a human perspective, evoking the picturesque tone of that the combination of landscape and architecture suggested. The views of these spaces were also much more humane, more accurately portraying, though still poetically and ironically, the life of the space, focusing on the external circles of the area and not on their enclosures (fig. 3.27; 3.28). This, inevitably, proposed a new reading of the architecture and the urban landscape, which both acquired a rather symbolic statement by portraying the subjects that inhabit the space: their clothes and their habitus became a manifestation of a distinct social life. (fig. 3.29).

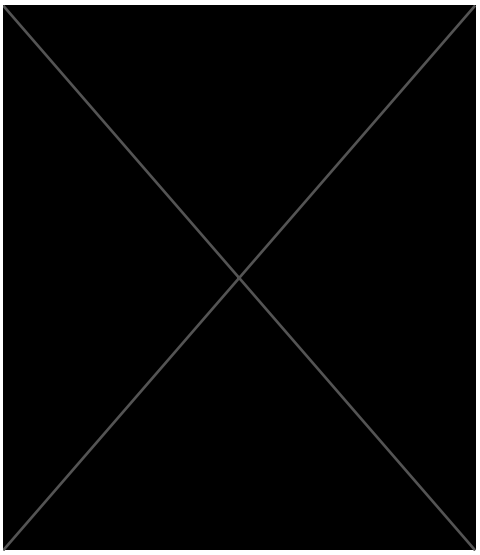

Fig. 3.27 - Richard Dighton, *A London Nuisance… A pleasant Way to Lose and Eye*, 1821 (T. Longstaffe-Gowan. *The London Square.* 2012)

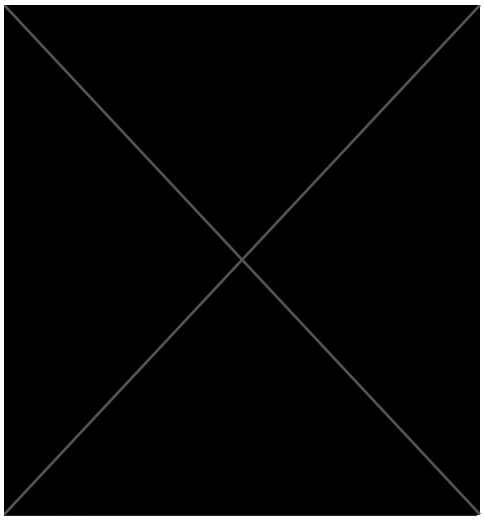

Fig. 3.28 Unknown artist *London Out of town,* Punch 11 (1846): 62

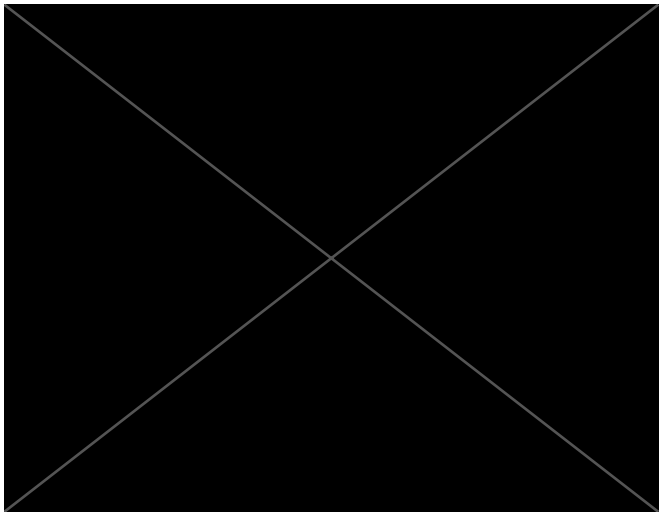

Fig. 3.29 - George du Maurier *Getting One's Money's Worth.* Punch 93 (1887): 6

The urban system of garden squares also reveals another interesting controversy of London collective spaces and their governance, something that continues to be at the centre of discussion today. The necessity of the legislative administration of these spaces is actualised through temporary solutions that control and meticulously open the spaces to small, private events and become nothing but instruments of control and capital gain for the private sector. We have looked closely at the case of Lincoln's Inn Fields, a particular hybrid case, where the public and the private clash in the use of the space. When Lincoln's Inn Fields' inhabitants, seeking legislative support, formed a new body, the Trustees, today, renamed "Friends of Lincoln's Inn Fields,"[130] which still provides for the preservation of the historic public open space, controlling the festivalisation of the space in the form of permanent marquees, which are rented to corporate groups for events. This is supported by the Camden Council and sits in line with the institutionalisation of collective space through rituals that took place in the late Georgian and early Victorian times.

From a social perspective, London garden squares, unlike the *piazze* in Western cities, are remarkable stages where the social changes of the population and the political and economic powers exercised in the city, become evident. Through the London garden square, we can witness the social frictions of the city clashing in one single architecture. Indeed, the garden square is ultimately subjected to commercialisation, but unlike other squares, the London square was still influenced by a feudal system that had possibly paved the way to its contemporary struggle. Since Hawksmoor exposed the outdoor open space as a 'loose' space, the collective in the city became an instrument of political control and, later, of capital investment, where the social clash and transgressive behaviour are finally unveiled.

The intent of this chapter is far from tracing an history of the complex urban typology of the London square but is mainly to read it as an outdoor collectiveness, as a relation between subjects and urban form, where ritualistic and habitual behaviours emerge as a consequence of and often influence its design. The collective space was never just a "simple square" in London, it was a paved space, a garden and, ultimately, a park. Lawrence argues that the London garden square is the precursor of the London park: "the terrace housing surrounding [Regent's] Park was an extension of the form of the residential square, but the detached villas in the middle of the park expressed more strongly the values of isolation and privatisation of open space."[131] (fig. 3.30) Lawrence continues, "beginning in the 1830s, many cities and towns were laying out public parks, most often with surrounding terraces or

[130] Palmer, 62

[131] Lawrence, 110

villas on the model of Regent's Park, to generate revenue."[132] In London, the square, intended in Western European tradition, was suddenly turned into a greenery, whose urban, social, and environmental potential have been read as a clear urban strategy until today.[133] The London garden square as well as the London park, albeit being subjected to different governmentality, both end up being loose, green spaces that have an impactful legacy in the contemporary city, by offering "an ideal place for an outdoor life."[134] Both urban strategies place greenery at the core of their success, which still today survives as an hybrid tool between building development, landscape picturesque, and governance: "the English landscape garden was created by such people who loved cows and pastoral life [...] but their posterity of the nineteenth century discovered that they need not content themselves with merely looking at the Arcadian landscapes, they might use the gardens , use them for playing and sports [...] Sport tears people away from everyday life."[135]

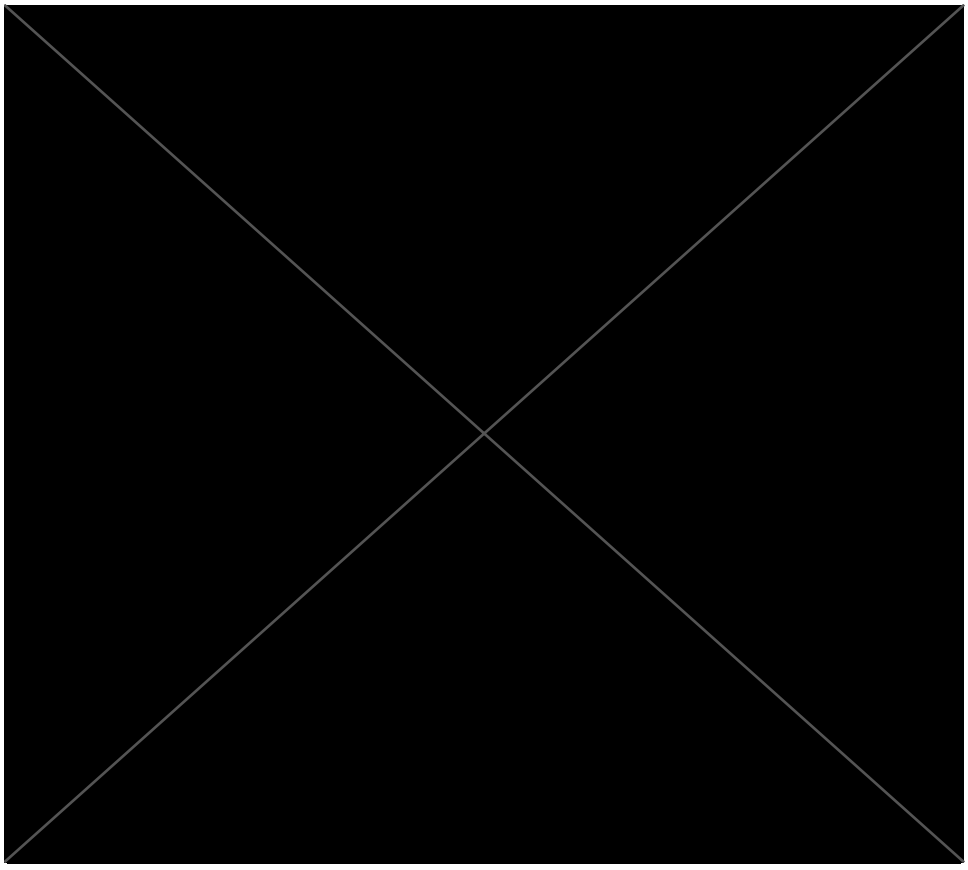

Fig. 3.30 - *Regent Park plan*, 1820 (Elmes 1821)

[132] Lawrence, 111

[133] "Thus, by the 1830s, the urban amenity landscape had become the concern not just of developers and aestheticians, but also of social reformers, epidemiologists, and the police as well. The residential squares that stood for high status and the values of property provided a model for the use of public parks imbued with another, more vital value, as protectors of the public health and keepers of the public order." Lawrence, 111.

[134] Rasmussen, 225

[135] Summerson, 231

This urban setting that derived from Georgian London has hardly changed today, the presence of the Georgian squares has remained legible, even after the radical improvements that revolutionised London under Queen Victoria. However, the division between the street and the square was soon strengthened until the former became a simple line of demarcation and movement and the latter just a fashionable outdoor area reserved to the caprices of the surrounding inhabitants. In the mid-nineteenth century, while the Georgian square failed in its social intent and remained simply a speculative tool for an expanded domestic life, the city was ultimately emptied of its collective life. London ceased to build collective stages for social life and began to respond spatially to the habits of the individual. The consequence of this development in collective spaces was indelible: a very divisive collective body in the city emerged into a social life, extremely divided by class and economic status. Collective rituals in the public sphere disappeared in favour of the proliferation of different habits that were, ultimately, representative of a social structure. London, the capital of social life, of the mixing of social classes, and the vibration of market, intellectual, and artistic discussions, slowly retreats into its interiors and leaves the exterior to what will be the success of Victorian architecture, which can be largely summarised as the building of infrastructures.

In the following chapter, we will see how architecture responds to this social division, by renouncing to discuss the collective in the city and preferring to substitute it with the efficiency of the infrastructure. Architects slowly became detached from their interest towards the matter of urban life and focused on the individual interests of the upper classes of society, forgetting a big portion of the population that was living in poverty. The lack of collective spaces and the chaotic predominance of the industrial revolution will be the central interest of many artists, writers, and journalists over the course of the next century, when reportage became a very useful means of anthropological and spatial understanding of the city that finally began to acknowledge the class distinction that had been emerging at the time. At the peak of the nineteenth century, Flora Tristan wrote, "my work is an exposition of the social drama that England resents to the world: it shows you the pitiless selfishness, the revolting hypocrisy, the monstrous excess of this English oligarchy—so powerful and so guilty towards the people."[136] Alongside her *Promenade dans Londres*, this social discrepancy would be documented by other intellectuals, such as Gustave Doré and Blanchard Jerrolds, Henry Mayhew, and Fredrich Engels as well as portrayed by painters and artists. The precise image of the decay of the collective body and space and the rise of the social habits that characterise Victorian London would be synthesised in a dichotomy between elitism and poverty that remains predominant in the whole country today.

[136] Tristan, 52, 53

4 - FROM INFRASTRUCTURE TO POLITICAL SPACE

The rise of habitus

4.1 The return of the architect and the loss of publicness

In the second half of the eighteenth century, London begun to grow on two different and independent levels: while the collective space was turned into greenery, carefully shaped by botanists and gardeners according to the fashionable model of the *rus in urbe*, domestic architecture was entirely in the hands of developers, who strictly applied the same building regulations that were initiated after the Great Fire of 1666. Apart from these two professional figures, there were no architects in the Georgian city.[1] Little seemed to have changed since the Great Fire, from this pivotal moment onwards, London continued to develop according to these two urban models: squares and precincts for the collective life and houses for the domestic one. However, at the turn of the century, the preoccupation with the aesthetic of the urban form was brought back to the discussion by characters like John Nash and John Soane, who famously described the brick monotony of Georgian London as "disgusting insipidity."[2] The architects of Regent London used the façades of their buildings to express a new freedom of taste —John Soane's notorious revamp of his house on Lincoln's Inn Fields is an example of this attitude— with which they pursued a moral and political significance of form in the city through their creative visions of architecture. These forced appearances of magnificence and personal taste brought historians like John Summerson to contest the architectural decency of Victorian London, where the sense of publicness and urban responsibility had broken down in favour of an individual connotation of architecture.[3]

Alongside this individual creative estro, major public works began manifesting in big urban and infrastructural projects like New Oxford Street (1839) and, later, the Thames Embankments (1862–74), Shaftesbury Avenue (1886), and Charing Cross Road (1887).[4] This distinction between architects of the private sphere and architects of the infrastructure, throughout the entire nineteenth century, is quite revealing of the difficulty to produce architecture for the public.[5] It is not by chance that this architecture hardly left a mark on Victorian London, not even in the form of infrastructure; while, parallelly, the domestic space that gradually shaped into a wealth of suburban villas, which became a luxurious symbol of the nation. In this chapter, however, we will try to salvage some public gestures of

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[1] Summerson (2006), 131

[2] Soane (1929), 156

[3] Summerson in Saint, 22

[4] Summerson 2006, 340

[5] Summerson in Saint, 22

Victorian Architecture, those which reside mainly in projects whose infrastructural scale tries to reconcile with an architectural language.

The gradual rise of individualism and disappearance of the collective space from the architectural discourse and profession during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries gave way to the undoing of the sense of community that was so lively during the early years of Georgian London. The collective together with its architecture that Hawksmoor so "transgressively" exposed were gradually destroyed until it became elusive in a city that is now entirely shaped according to a specific class segregation, one that was initially made visible across the city centre by the 1773 Enclosure Act. This social distinction was not just readable in the design of central London and its garden squares, but it was also scaled up through the project of parks and their corresponding neighbourhoods. Regent's Park by John Nash was one of the first grand projects of Victorian individualism and class distinction. It was the first suburban development in West London that responded to the needs of the aristocracy to have an outdoor space for their private use[6] and to have a sense of privacy and intimacy outdoors, right at their doorsteps. The land on which Regent's Park sits was property of the Crown, and it was later leased for the development of residential villas, which allowed John Nash to design his famous speculative project. Regent's Park is, however, an interesting example of the domestication of the English garden square through the Enclosure Act that we analysed in the previous chapter, and which John Nash applied to a much larger scale.

Society was divided and so was the city: some Londoners from the upper class decided to leave the city centre to the lower classes, others, instead, remained in the centre, where deeply diverse social conditions coexisted. This social contrast is still readable in the famous survey produced by Charles Booth, which was published at the end of the nineteenth century.[7] His research was accompanied by a map, which was a visual translation of the division of London society, a great portrait of the mixed condition of living in the city and how these particularly clash in one single area, that comprises Bloomsbury, St. Giles', and St. Martin's Lane. This allowed the London of *habitus*[8] to slowly emerge through a clear social zoning: Charles Dickens famously labelled each neighbourhood and its square where its social life took place, "aristocratic gravity of Grosvenor Square and Hanover Square and the dowager barrenness and frigidity of Fitzroy Square."[9]

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[6] Lawrence, 109

[7] Charles Booth published the first two volumes of *Life and Labour of the People in London*, one in 1881 and the other in 1891. Soon after, between 1892 and 1897, he published a second edition composed of nine volumes. The London School of Economic in London holds the archive of all the notebooks and maps that Booth and his team produced during their research.

[8] Habitus is here referred to with a negative connotation, that given by Bourdieu: "the principle of division into logical classes, which organise the perception of the social world". Bourdieu, 166

[9] Dickens in Longstaffe-Gowan, 142

The weakening of the collective sphere in nineteenth-century London was also incentivised by the retreat of public life into indoor spaces, which turned the street into a simple means of transport. The street was no longer an extension of the precinct that framed the garden square and contributed to stage the diversity of the collective: the street was now a matter for engineers—not architects. We abandoned the frenzied life of Georgian London, where the street was an extension of the square, the place for staging diversity and collective rituals: the street was now entirely at the service of the new market economy that dominated the public sphere: it ought to make movements efficient and connections fast. The actual life of the social sphere fully retired to indoor spaces: theatres, clubs, cafes, and pubs.[10] The commercial viability of the space became more relevant than its spatial connotation: the deep reading that Walter Benjamin reports, in his unfinished but pivotal masterpiece *Arcades Project*, is a written testimony of this attitude of condensing public life indoors and merging it with a commercialisation of leisure.[11] The withdrawal of nineteenth-century collective life into indoor spaces was a continuation of the institutionalisation of rituals, which from the late Georgian period onwards were gradually advancing in the collective spaces of the city.

4.2 The rise of the middle class and its rituals

Victorian cities were unified by an evident and formalised struggle between classes, political parties, and architectural styles,[12] as opposed to Georgian cities, which were challenged by social acceptance and urban coexistence. If in Georgian times, social classes found unity in their leisure time, while domestic life was rather divisive, then, with the advent of industrial revolution, social distinctions proved to be quite stark in all nuances of city life. This division was emphasised by the emergence of a middle class, which was neither aristocracy nor working class.[13] It was a different social group altogether, one whose members owned properties because they actively partook in the running of a productive economy. The middle class, or bourgeoisie, was socially taking shape and spatially inhabiting the city, while its culture began to dictate a new social agenda and new spatial

[10] This might be also due to the increasing pollution and dirt that the industrial revolution together with development of infrastructure produced, and that during Hawksmoor times were not present.

[11] Benjamin, 41

[12] Gunn, 13; Girouard, 190-92

[13] The origin of the middle class, or bourgeoisie, in England began with the Revolution at the end of the 17C and grew with the growth of industrial capitalism until its urban and political affirmation in the middle of the 18C, and its later fragmentation in the 19C. "On one side, the class was given social form by the industrial revolution between 1780 and 1930 which brought into being a new group of manufacturers and merchants, concentrated in the burgeoning towns of the Midlands and north." Gunn, 15. On the origin of the bourgeoisie in England there are numerous studies: aside from the reflection of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engles, *Communist Manifesto*, published 1848, in particular the first section "Bourgeois and Proletarians", other studies include: Gunn S. (2007) *The public culture of the Victorian middle class.* Manchester: Manchester University Press; Rosen M. (1981)"The dictatorship of the bourgeoisie: England 1688-1721*". Science and Society*, vol. 45, n. 1, 24-51; George C.H. (1971) "The making of the English Bourgeoisie". *Science and Society,* n. 35, 385-414; Thompson E.P. (1965) "The peculiarities of the English". *The Social Register*, 311-362.

configurations. Simon Gunn identifies the public bourgeois culture with the "rise of the civic, associated with grandiose town halls and programmes of urban improvement carried out under municipal auspices."[14] Most of those significant urban changes manifested in indoor commercial typologies for casual entertainment, like shopping centres and theatres, and in the construction of monumental transport lines, which strengthened an already commercialised public sphere.

This specialisation of indoor spaces and forms of leisure produced a specialisation of habitus, which is often mistaken with ritual. Historians of London, like Steer Eiler Rassmussen, claim that the ritualisation of daily life reached its peak in Victorian London, where hours dedicated to the consumption of meals and sports activities articulated the day of the Englishman: "idleness is thoroughly systematized, that in order to comply with all the rules of convention a man is kept busy from morning till night according to a fixed scheme."[15] But what Rassmussen describes is the life of a middle class white British man, which revolved around brief actions that soon acquired a widely habitual character.[16] Unlike the Georgian collective subject, the Victorian one was entirely devoted to his own individual sphere, where he performed a prescribed sequence of actions to confirm his social status. The Victorian man abandoned the crowded daily life of central London, which had seen the vivacity of the social life of the country condensed into the core of the city and its squares and began to value familial and class segregation: "by the 1870s, family and domestic space had become the site of a great deal of symbolic activity previously located in other places such as the church or the community. The sacredness of the Victorian home was more than just a metaphor."[17] In describing the Victorian lifestyle, Rasmussen spares no words for the collective as the main frame of ritual actions: rituals, in Victorian London, were fully detached from that social frame that Durkheim recognised as essential to their performance.[18] It quickly became clear that in Victorian London solitude prevailed over the necessity of a collective political presence—a detail that might explain why the architecture of the domestic sphere was far more successful than that of the public one.

Rituals, thus, emerge as individual acts linked to a specific typologies designed for precise forms of pleasure—the theatre, the arcade, the pub, and so on. Moreover, according to this spatial association, ritual became an indicative behaviour of a social belonging, a custom that revealed the class of the

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[14] Gunn, 28

[15] Rassmussen, 294.

[16] On the rituals of the middle-class see the work of John R. Gillis, and in particular Gillis J. R. (1989) "Ritualization of Middle-Class Family Life in Nineteenth Century Britain" *The International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*.

[17] "Symbolization and ritualization of family life reflected a cultural and social shift of epochal proportions." Gillis, 214-215

[18] The prologue of this thesis analyses the definition of ritual given by Durkheim in his *Les forms élémentaire de l'architecture religieuse* published in 1912, where rituals is intended as "a natural product of social life". Durkheim, 424

individual. A set of typologies of pleasure began to shape the city's leisure-life, such as the department store, the luxury hotel, the restaurant, the theatre, and the coffee house. However, the commercialisation of leisure was not available to everyone: to visit such spaces, it was necessary not only to be able to afford the experience but also to know "the etiquette or 'form' which dictated behaviour in those settings."[19] Such a vision of leisure was entirely built on social distinction: a pub could be open to all but the entrances and the rooms must be of a different nature.[20] Class division amongst Londoners becomes more and more readable, both indoors and outdoors, damaging that unique urban mosaic[21] that characterised the metropolis since the late 1700s, with the emergence of the collective space.

It was the appearance of the middle class in Victorian cities that essentially contributed to the misunderstanding of collective rituals and habits. The bourgeoisie constructed a legible, formalised, social, public appearance from individual self-presentation to collective display. They partook in different but diverse activities, concerning civic ceremonies, promenades in the shopping streets. The rise of the bourgeoisie coincided with the necessity of setting boundaries in the existing class system to visualise social differences through behaviour and symbolic gestures, such as property, ownership, and business involvement.[22]

4.3 Regent Street: a project of habitus

The highest representation of the space of appearance of this middle class was a street, which remains an iconic line of division between East and West London today and represents one of London's biggest shopping arteries: Regent Street. In the 1820s, Regent Street represented a prime shopping location. Its construction was an "epochal event in urban design, privileging motion over assembly, the individual moving body over the organised crowd."[23] Here, again, we encounter John Nash, one of the most successful architects, who best staged social division and class segregation in Victorian London and translated them into form. After being appointed by King George IV to be Chief Commissioner of Woods and Forest and designing Regent's Park, between 1817 and 1823, John Nash channelled his efforts into a long thoroughfare that connected Portland Place—and Regent Park

[19] Gunn, 29

[20] The architecture of the pub has changed little since Victorian times, and this division remains evident, for instance, in pubs with different rooms and respective entrances. An example of this unaltered Victorian pub could be the Fitzroy Tavern on Charlotte Street. See Girouard M. (1975) *Victorian Pubs,* London: Studio Vista; Haydon P. (1994) *The English Pub.* London: Hale; Lane C. (2018) *From Tavern to Gastropubs: Food, Drink, and Sociality in England.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[21] Urban mosaic is an expression used by Duncan Timms used in his book *Urban Mosaic, Towards a theory of Residential differentiation* published in 1971 by Cambridge university press to denote the coming together of similar population in the city, where each neighbourhood has a locality made of sentiments, traditions and history of its own.

[22] Gunn, 30

[23] Gunn, 48; Sennett 1994, 328

—with St. James Park: Regent Street.[24] This was the stage of the spectacle of an ideal life, which Franco Moretti describes as a neoclassical barrier, constructed almost as a material offer to the symbolic topography of Victorian literature.[25] Regent Street, in fact, since its realisation, was intended as a symbolic wall that cut the city into two parts, simplifying its fragmented reality. Jane Austen's and Edward Bulwer-Lytton's novels all focus on one side of the barrier,[26] the West End, and Regent Street is the last knowable boundary, and all that lies beyond it has no name.[27] Dickens was perhaps the only one who tried to put together the two divided halves in his novel *Our mutual friend*, through the description of Regent Street as an infrastructure where London becomes the complex sum of all its parts.[28]

Notwithstanding the architectural grandeur of Nash's project, it is often forgotten that the social intention hidden underneath his design was to socially divide: it was "a boundary and complete separation between the Streets and Squares occupied by the Nobility and the Gentry [and the] narrow streets and meaner houses occupied by mechanics and the trading part of the community."[29] Regent Street is an important example to contextualise the difficult ritualisation of the city, where architecture and design made evident, more than ever, the connection between property-holding and the political rights of citizens. There is a quite revelatory drawing that clarifies the abruptness of Nash's proposal, where the big scale of an imperial architecture replaced the small houses of the shopkeepers in the city centre (fig. 4.1). Nash worked directly for the Crown and his project for Regent Street had to be located on their property, as the enlargement that connected Whitehall with the northern part of the city.

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[24] The most famous study on John Nash is that published by John Summerson, *The Life and Work of John Nash Architect* in 1980. Another interesting research on Nash is that of Terence Davis' *John Nash. The Prince Regent's Architect*. Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973

[25] Moretti, 83

[26] Moretti, 84-85

[27] According to Moretti, what happens in the East End is described in the so-called Newgate novels such as Oliver Twist. Stories of murders and delinquencies. The narrative of the city was divided into two: City novels, in the west end, and Newgate novels in the east. Moretti, 88. Roy Porter writes that in Early Victorian London "east London was, of course, real enough. At its heart, with its warehouses, docks, industry and tumbledown tenements, lay Stepney, with a quarter of million people by 1850, no public drainage but a name for cholera." Porter, 267

[28] Moretti, 3

[29] *1st Report from the Select Committee on the Office of Works*, 89, in Davis, 66

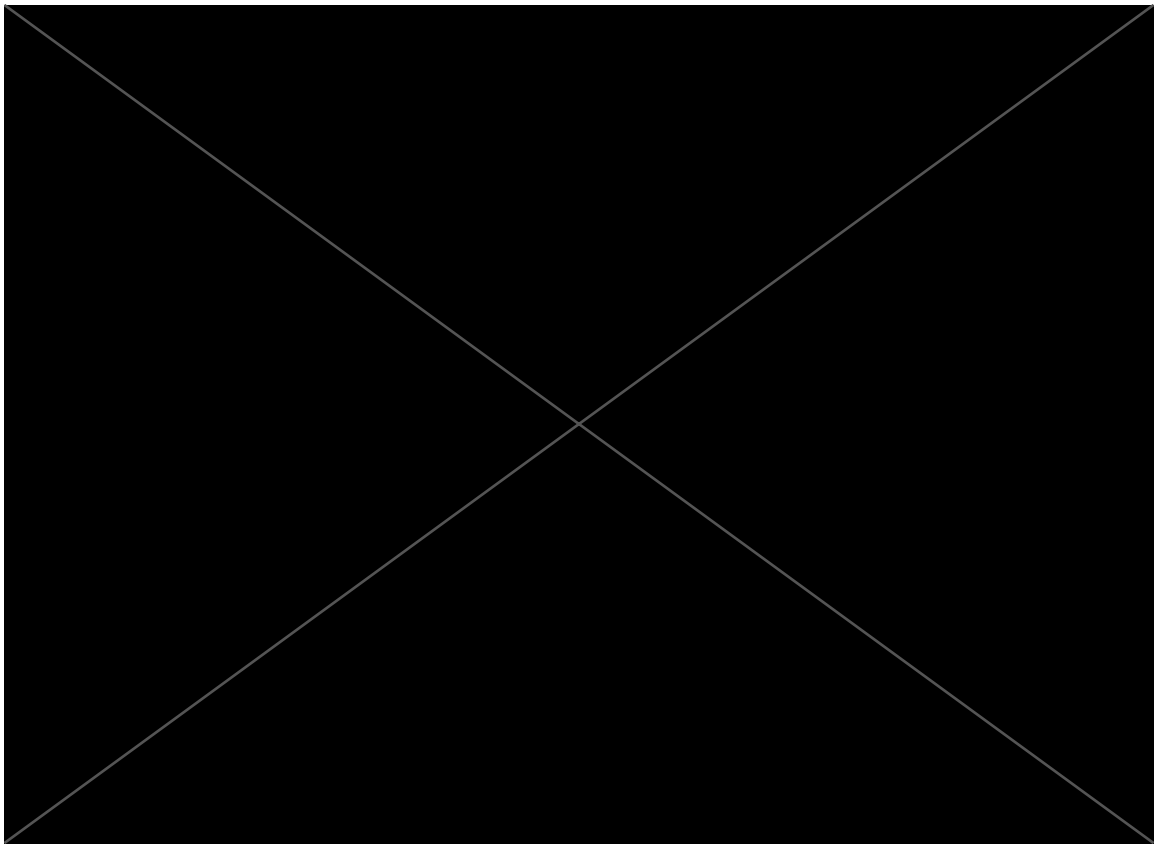

Fig. 4.1 - John Nash, 1826 proposal for improving Charing Cross, St. Martin's Lane and the entrance to the Strand. The plan clearly shows how these improvements were intended to sweep away the innumerable small plots and replace them with a few much larger ones. (R. Mace. *Trafalgar square. Emblem of Empire*. 1976)

In this drawing, it becomes clear how Regent Street represents a project of habitual imposition over a daily existing ritual life conducted by residents and small shopkeepers in the area. The drawing also reveals "a collision between alternative ways of perceiving space. The history of Regent Street surely shows that space is not pregiven but produced, that it emerges from relation between mental, physical and social dimensions, a reality that Nash [and the crown] sought to deny."[30] Moreover, this space was generated by different modes of occupation and spatial invasion, which allows us to distinguish the population in diverse social groups that inhabit the city. It was a project to show the strength of the gentry over the daily workers, as well as their influence on the architecture of the city. The winding kinks at multiple sections of the boulevard manifested the contrast between the Crown's desire to impose order on a disorderly capital and the resistance of the city's social geography and its class of landowners.[31]

[30] Flinn, 366

[31] Summerson 1980, 88

In fact, Regent Street was part of a plan to turn London into a capital, and "emblem of the Empire;"[32] an attempt to do the same for Georgian London previously failed. The system of Georgian squares was an archipelago of enclosures, whereby the whole architecture that contributes to its design constructs a secluded and safe environment. The street, at the time, was part of this system of islands, together with the fence and the greenery. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the street acquired a more monumental meaning, one that does not subside to the islands of enclosure and serves, instead, the whole image of the city. John Nash was part of this refashioning of London into a grand capital, and Regent Street was the first step in this direction, where legible vistas were preferred over the narrow mediaeval lanes of the city. The message was clear: London needed to be perceived as an orderly, clean, and virtuous capital that fit into its role as a growing colonial empire.[33]

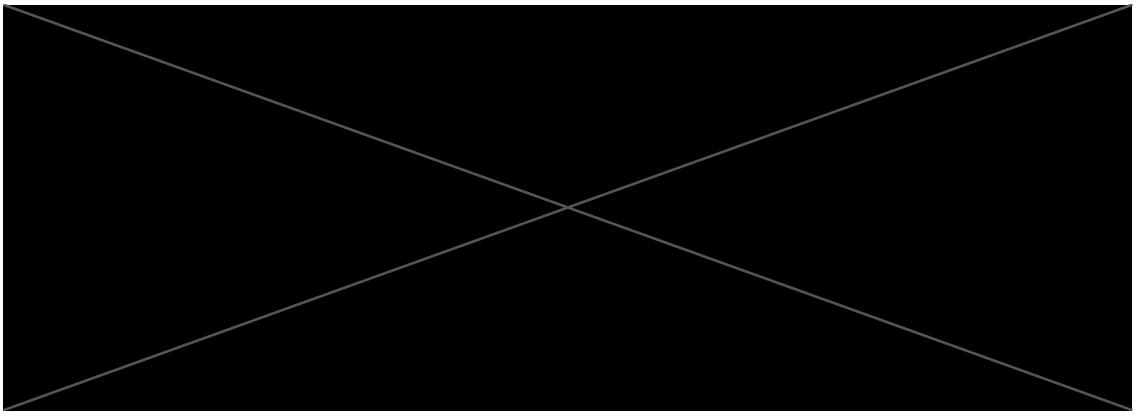

Fig. 4.2 - *Plan of a New Street from Charing Cross to Portland Place. From the First Report of the Commissioners of Woods, Forest and Land Revenues*, 1812 (J. Summerson. *The Life and work of John Nash architect.* 1980)

Regent Street was designed, in John Nash's words, as a "boundary and complete separation between the dwellings of the nobility and those of the commercial class."[34] This was spatially evident, as the boulevard drew a harsh line between the "noble" Mayfair and the "commercial" Soho. Although the street itself could be viewed as a monumental emulation of Haussmannian Paris, it was also conceived of as a threshold—a liminal state between two opposing realms of London that had now finally found a place to converge and confront: "my purpose," Nash wrote in 1828, "was that the new street should cross the eastern entrance to all the streets occupied by the higher classes and to leave out to the east all the bad streets."[35] The first plan of the street was proposed by Nash in 1812 (fig. 4.2), when the Prince Regent George IV expressed the need for a direct route that could get him straight from his townhouse, Carlton House, to the country home "he had planned to build surrounded by the big park

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[32] Rodney Mace titled his book *Trafalgar Square. Emblem of Empire*, published in 1976

[33] Mace, 19

[34] Epstein Nord, 169; Summerson 1980, 77

[35] *1828 Report from the Select Committee on the Office of Works*, 74 in Summerson 1980, 77

with its fine views."[36] Such an "immense speculation"[37] needed the support of a Parliamentary grant, which arrived in 1813, "as a means of improving the sanitation of the unhealthy quarters."[38] This New Street Act allowed for the compulsory purchases of all the land necessary for the project.[39] Nash had originally planned a straight line, but because of the difficult land purchase negotiations, eventually, the street was pieced together in different stages, which "allowed individual expression by different users but at the same time aimed at shuffling the accidental into picturesque coherence."[40]

The street took more than a decade to be completed, principally due to the land negotiations, like in the instance of the stretch between Oxford Street and Piccadilly, for which "to avoid too great expense, the street had to be swung round for some distance,"[41] (fig. 4.3) introducing what the Commissioners of Woods, Forests, and Land Revenues defined as "a bending street, resembling in that respect the High-street at Oxford."[42] The history of the designing, planning, and building of Regent Street also reflected the competing ideologies between the Crown and the local residents. While the former desired to impose a rational, ordered, geometric space upon London, the latter were dismayed by the violent disruption of their practised spaces: "These were the years when the public first became conscious of what was happening Familiar streets were blocked, house after house was left derelict, then torn down, clouds of dust from builders' rubbish got into eyes and noses, Swallow Street was a scene of desolation and ruin from end to end. Nothing like it had ever been seen and the obvious conclusion to be drawn was that some kind of disaster had overtaken London."[43] These conflicts served to challenge the notion of urban projects as "improvements" to the city and highlighted the discourses of customs, equity, and political economy.[44] Although Regent Street predated the Victorian project of vast slum clearance, there was also an innate attempt to reinforce the social hierarchies of the West End. Its alignment was chosen along existing socio-economic boundaries, and the placement of intersections and entrances were designed to protect the "residents of the better streets from exposure to the alleys, ale-houses, and lanes of the dirty narrow streets."[45] The Crown had imagined

[36] Rasmussen, 202

[37] Charles Pitt in Flinn, 365

[38] Rasmussen, 203

[39] Flinn, 365

[40] Summerson 1980, 132

[41] Rasmussen, 203

[42] Summerson 1980, 79

[43] Summerson 1980, 83-84

[44] Flinn, 364

[45] Flinn, 366

the boulevard as a space of strict curation and control, exerting influence over the appearance of new buildings and the sort of tenants they housed.[46]

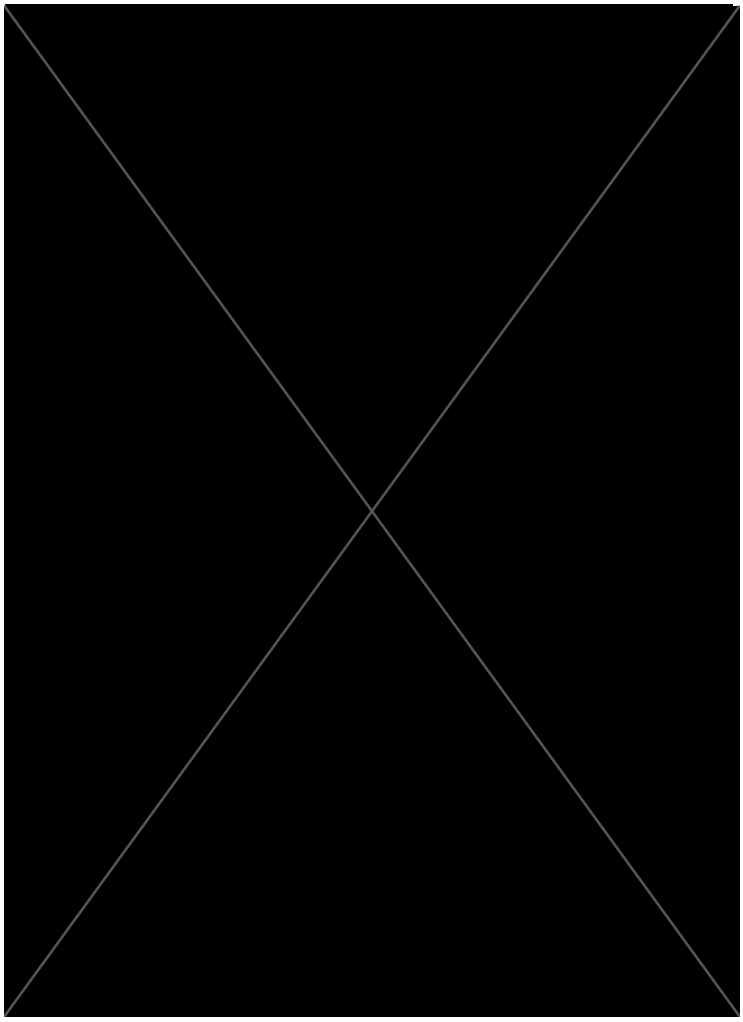

Fig. 4.3 - *Map of the New Street*, published by W. Faden, 11 May 1814 (J. Summerson. *The Life and work of John Nash architect.* 1980)

The Quadrant Colonnade (fig. 4.4) was another sort of legal compromise,[47] originally aimed to unify the whole façades of the buildings along the street.[48] It was designed by Nash to offer shelter to the "classes who have nothing to do but to walk about and amuse themselves [...] and such a covered Colonnade would be of peculiar convenience to those who require daily exercise."[49] It also provided a balcony for the inhabitants above to gaze down on the comings and goings of the boulevard: "the Balustrade over the Colonnades will form Balconies to the Lodging-rooms over the Shops, from which the Occupiers of the Lodgings can see and converse with those passing in the Carriages underneath,

[46] Flinn, 381

[47] Summerson, 1980, 78-79

[48] Summerson 1980, 77; 135

[49] *1st Report of the Commissioners of Woods, Forests and Land Revenues* 1812, 89 in Summerson 1980, 77-78.

and which will add to the gaiety of the scene."[50] However, the arcade proved to be a dark, dingy passage that provided a favourable and convenient place for the gentlemen of Mayfair to patronise the services of Soho prostitutes.[51] By the mid-nineteenth century, the area between Regent Street and Haymarket would become a "concentration of all the blackguardism and depravity in London."[52] As the authorities were unable to clamp down on the ubiquity of prostitution, it necessitated more drastic measures, leading to the Colonnade's demolition. The gradual deterioration of the street, both structurally and financially, also pre-empted the comprehensive reconstruction later in the 1890s. In fact, after a series of redevelopment and regulation efforts to turn the street into a space for more "dignified" services, the Crown had perceived the commercialisation and "feminisation"[53] of the street as the catalyst to remake it in service of more "dignified and imperial values."[54]

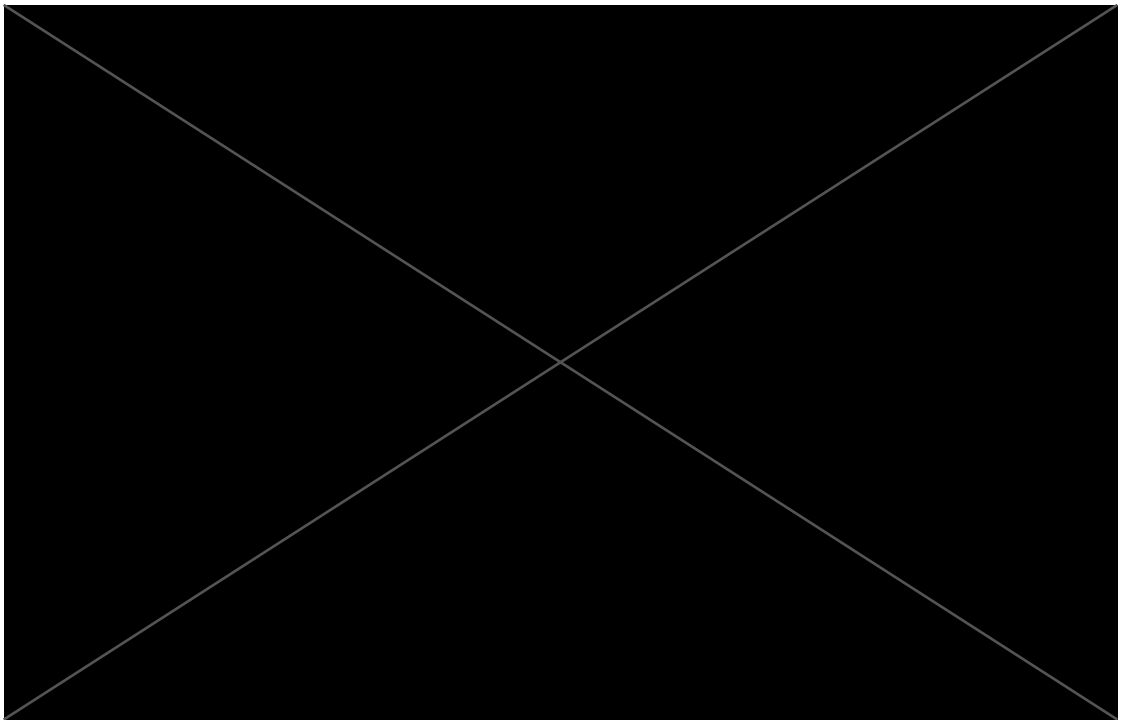

Fig 4.4 - William Wallis, *The Quadrant, Part of Regent Street,* 1828. (British Museum)

[50] Ibid.

[51] "Such a repository for Damp, Obscurity, Filth and Indecency as no Regulation or Police will be able to prevent". *Crown Estate Commissioners* 26/17 in Summerson, 78

[52] Flinn, 382

[53] The retail market that arose in the late 19C, was mainly frequented by middle class women.

[54] "Many of Britain's most respected architects and Crown officials assumed that mass retailing and large crowds of predominantly female shoppers signified and helped produce England's decline. They denigrated mass consumption and leisure by relying on the age-old trope that it was vulgar, ugly, and feminine." Rappaport, 96-99

Projects such as John Nash's Regent Street were unsuccessful both in terms of collective use and in terms of public architecture and economic viability.[55] The individual style on the continuous façade was a "curious mixture of laissez-faire" shuffled into a "picturesque coherence,"[56] which was not considered the ideal example of a stage for displaying habits in public architecture.[57] The process of construction was subjected to public humiliation as well as official complaints that ultimately resulted in the demolition of portions of the street. The accusations made of Nash's project were mainly generated by previous residents of the area around the New Street, who thought the project to be a formal tyranny of state power, incapable of considering the history of the area: "residents refused to sell the space of their livelihood to a homogeneous, rectilinear, Euclidean space of John Nash's dreams."[58] Additionally, the use of public money in projects thought to benefit the crown were considered utter frivolities: "Neither Nash nor anybody else could have forecast how Londoners would react to a situation of the kind imposed on them by the Act of 1813. They reacted of course, almost to a man, with a virulent combination of resentment and greed."[59] This was also openly and shamelessly confirmed by Nash himself, who recognised Regent Street as a new thoroughfare whose main goal was to connect Regent's Park to a different portion of the West End. The appearance of the street was meant to be highly scenographic, a perfect model for the photographic vistas and strolls of wealth.

It is unsurprising that the project was followed by open lamentation that claimed that familiar places to have been replaced by "empty spaces."[60] "Sometimes when I walk there, which I do as seldom as I can, I shut my eyes, and then in vision there appeared to rise up before me the old, straggling, dark, and beloved buildings, now gone. I see in the gleaming lights the windows departed—and the bell of defunct tap-rooms rung by invisible waiters. The old faces of friends come before me beaming through the smoke of tobacco and the mist of years—the sound of songs now never sung, rings in my ears—even the old odour salutes my nostrils. I forget the destroying hand of Nash, when some rude jostle of a passer-by induces me to open my eyes, and I wake to Regent-street! and hasten to bury myself in some of the yet unsubdued recesses about Leicester-square."[61]

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[55] "By the time Regent Street was completed, however, it had far exceeded its budget, due in large part to the cost of destroying an established neighborhood to make way for the new boulevard" Flinn, 365

[56] Summerson, 132

[57] "Regent Street's history has been told before but often it has served as a kind of morality tale revealing the various problems that English urban reformers and architects faced when they attempted to improve the capital." Rappaport, 98

[58] Flinn, 366

[59] Summerson 1980, 88

[60] Smith J. (1825) "Lamentations over London". *European Magazine* in Flinn, 383

[61] Ibid.

4.3 Railway: a use for the public and the ritual of commuting

The appearance of shopping streets in Victorian London confirmed the association of leisure with money:[62] shopping and commerce were newly born rituals. But alongside the projects for the street, which were emerging on the surface of the city, other hidden yet more radical changes were taking place. Railways and underground systems began to proliferate in Victorian London and contribute to shaping commuter subjects and their daily habits.[63] The act of commuting also contributed to that misunderstanding of daily Victorian practices as rituals, since it gradually "took an air of ritual sanctity" and "business became a habit," where "particular seats in the compartment are considered by the regular occupiers to be as clearly their right as the head of the dinner table at home."[64]

The way people circulate around the city soon became a highly stylised and repetitive form of life: "the wealthy transacted movement to and from the centre and registered their presence within it during the mid- and later Victorian decades."[65] This can be misinterpreted as a ritualistic behaviour, especially because of its repetition, which ultimately developed into more all-encompassing codes of conduct, into a standardised mode of behaviour: living in suburban villas meant that a visit to the city centre for a Saturday promenade needed to be planned at the beginning of the week. However, outside of the weekend shopping promenade, the commuting ritual between suburban and central London was also happening during the week,[66] mainly for working reasons: the advent of the train allowed the working class to become more efficient in the working commute to and from the suburbs.[67]

Initially, Victorian culture did not promote train carriages as objects of poetry. Trains were not a fascination for writers until they were used by all sections of the population. From being defined as "clumsy boxes"[68] to being considered an essential part of the Englishman's daily life, trains only later

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[62] "By imagining that imperial architecture could and should remain untainted by mass commerce and mass tastes, these civic architects and government officials demonstrated an angst about commerce and 'trade' that was a pervasive feature of English culture." Rappaport, 98

[63] "London's first railway, from Bricklayer's Arms, in Southwark, to Deptford, began operating in December 1836; it soon extended to London Bridge and to greenwich. The London and Croydon Railway opened in 1839, and the London and Brighton in 1841. The Greenwich line grew into the South Eastern Railway, the others became part of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway, and all brought passengers into London Bridge Station, the first real terminus." Porter, 274-275

[64] Gunn, 73

[65] Gunn, 72

[66] "Commuting came late. There were only around 27,000 daily rail commuters entering London in the mid-1850s –a tenth of the number of foot and omnibus passengers". Porter, 276

[67] This stratigraphy of the class system, which was always present in the previous chapters, in Victorian London, becomes more and more readable in the architecture of the collective sphere.

[68] "… Cast your eyes for a moment on yonder train about to start and answer conscientiously whether it is possible to conceive anything much more clumsy or more thoroughly frightful than the boxes into which some 200 passengers are being stowed, unless it be the snorting and shrieking machine they are about to pursue". *New Quarterly* 1854 in Olsen, 310

came to be read through their architectural fascination.[69] Railways facilitated employment and business, as well as countryside vacations: catching a train became a necessary habit, which, in its early days, was a rather uncanny ritual.[70] Trains were initially used seasonally predominantly by the middle class: "during the summer months large numbers of the middle classes run off by rail in search of healthy villages, or farm-houses, at a moderate distance from the metropolis, where their families can be lodged, and which can be reached after business in the evening, and allow of the return by sufficient time in the morning."[71] The train, initially, was a reinforcement of the social attitude that was spreading through Victorian London. It was a mirror of the individualism that invaded the section of the society who could afford to travel. This is one of the reasons why trains were not widely praised, because, at the beginning, railways accentuated the fragmentation of social classes and, only later, did they become the means for the working class to sustain their wages.

The city and its infrastructure soon became a stage where society and the social status of its members could be displayed in different modes of dwelling habits: the project of infrastructure was, thus, just a way to contain, within a broader urban image, society's different behaviours, and, as such, it was the only space for collective social interactions in the city, mainly identified with movement and circulation. The underground station changed not only the perception of movement in the city but also generated a social behaviour in the commuting life of Londoners that still remains quite recognisable and identifiable in "a constant stream of human life to and from […] that resemble only the march of an enormous army."[72]

The architecture of these networks of spaces hidden underground manifested on the surface of the city through train stations and termini: "If we want to see our representative buildings we must turn to our railway stations,"[73] writes Carol Meeks, when discussing Victorian developments like Charing Cross. In London, these projects were tainted by an anachronistic monumentality: in an article published in *The Architect*, in 1873, the monumental Euston Great Hall designed by Philip Hardwick (fig. 4.5;4.6) was described as a "display of grandiose style, and lavish, if not utterly wasteful expenditure […] more fitted for the performance of an oratorio on a gigantic scale than as the

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[69] "That most Victorians of sensibility themselves either condemned or ignored the railway in their writings may mislead the modern scholar. [...] but assuming that most people find noise more exhilarating than silence, and that speed is inherently appealing, one suspects that the love affair of the British with their trains became very early as intense as those with their horses and their dogs." Olsen, 310-311

[70] "Whatever their impact on the physical and economic structure of the realm and on both the cultivated and the popular imagination, the railways in their early years were not a part of the daily experience of the ordinary Londoner." Olsen, 311

[71] *Builder* 1859 in Olsen, 312

[72] *Builder* 1868 in Olsen, 317

[73] Meeks, 90

receptacle for the box and portmanteau items of personal luggage, or for the wanderings of bewildered travellers."[74] These new architectures produced a fully new urban experience, which were based on daily exchanges between the chaos of the city and the quietness of suburban London, the "burst from darkness into blinding light as the tube train emerges from the tunnel—to experience London is to find the magical transformation of the pantomime continually being translated into life."[75]

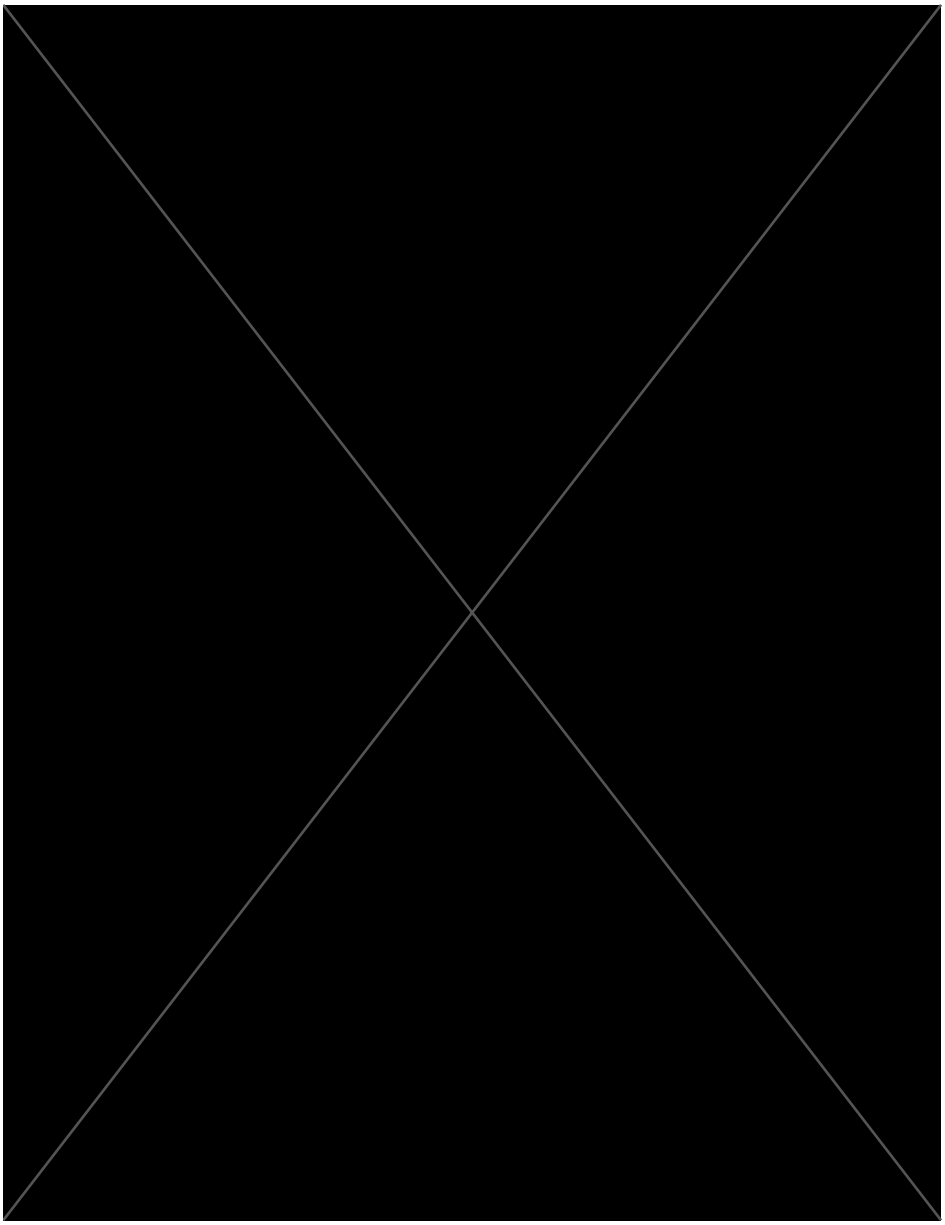

Fig 4.5 - Philip Charles Hardwick, *The Great Hall, Euston Station*, 1849. (D. J. Olsen. *The growth of Victorian London.* 1976)

[74] Olsen, 87

[75] Olsen, 323

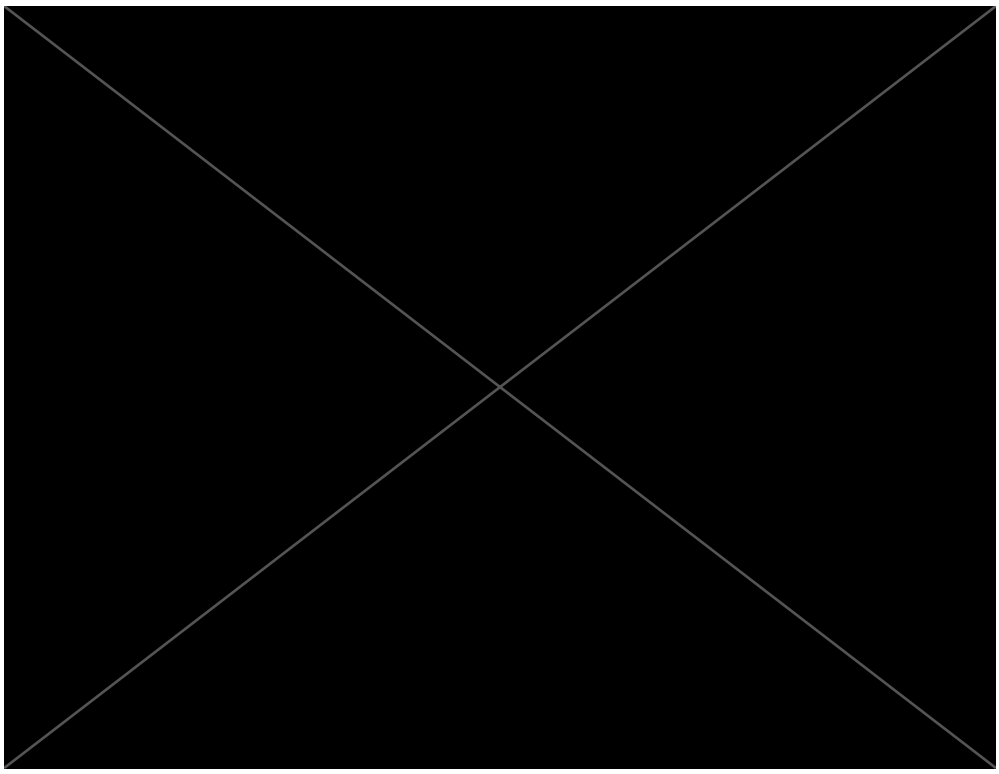

Fig. 4.6 - *The Great Arch, Euston Station*, 1890s (D. J. Olsen. *The growth of Victorian London.* 1976)

London moved from being a city where collective spaces were thought of as a pause in the urban fabric to one where they are entirely devoted to movements. Members of the middle-class, however, as opposed to those from the working-class, experienced the ease and necessity of movement through a variety of aspects that resonate in the metropolis at any given day, week or year.[76] "Children, if they went away to boarding school, would experience a comparable rhythm of ritualised lifestyles. His wife, more totally confined to house and suburb, was in greater danger of succumbing to boredom: the possibilities offered by the department store being perhaps her greatest solace. For all, the annual seaside holiday would both extend and contrast with the possibilities inherent in London itself."[77] The bourgeoisie standardised a set of behaviours, making them reachable, acceptable, and predominant, while obscuring the collective subject, which was eventually forgotten in the observations on the lifestyle of the time, but still dwells in the architecture of the city with a different rhythm. In other words, Donald J. Olsen defines Victorian London and the rise of the middle class as a democratisation of aristocratic pleasures: the middle-class householder began to look at the gentry with envy and at the working class with pity.[78]

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[76] "During the Summer months large numbers of the middle classes run off by rail in search of healthy villages, or farm-houses, at a a moderate distance from the metropolis, where their families can be lodged, and which can be reached after business in the evening, and llow of the return by sufficient time in the morning". *Builder XVII,* 1859 in Olsen, 312.

[77] Olsen, 325

[78] Olsen, 325

If looked at from this perspective, railways might be considered a damaging improvement, especially when compared to the social life of the Georgian street. Railways were mainly cuts in the urban fabric that did not generate any publicness, any leisure improvements, or any pleasing architectural aesthetic. They "do not, like the Holborn Viaduct and the Thames Embankment, give us open new streets in exchange of narrow, close, unhealthy old ones; nor do they like the Viaduct and the Embankment, bring into favourable prurience fine old structures, formerly hidden in narrow streets, or create favourable sites for new public edifices…"[79] Railways were initially used by the middle class who "took up a great deal of room and gave a great deal of employment."[80] It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the working class were officially admitted onto trains.[81] The popular impression was that railways were not bad overall, but they were, indeed, socially impactful, because they increased class segregation. Railways were a maligned project of "displacing the poor from their homes, congesting the streets, polluting the air, blighting districts through which they passed, and distorting the value and uses of land near their stations and termini," Olsen writes. [82] Nonetheless, the train was and still remains a transitory experience, but its urban impact can be readable at two urban scales: the scale of movement and the city, where we see an expansion of the city boundaries and the punctual presence of the termini that began to populate the city and remain to this day one of the built testaments of the monumentality of Victorian public architecture.

4.4 Two scales of the city

With the expansion of the railway system and the later development of the underground system, "a skeleton was created but overall the impact of the railway was patchy and tardy."[83] Porter continues his report on the social history of Victorian London by noticing that in this city there was no administration, there was no logic.[84] However, such chaos was, ultimately, controlled by a process of mapping the evolution of such railways, which revealed a new image of the city, one that was, indeed, different—but also necessary.[85] The urban legibility that was refused in the seventeenth century was

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[79] *The Architect X* 1873 in Olsen, 295

[80] Olsen, 312

[81] The Railway Regulation Act of 1844 required at least one journey a day to include affordable tickets, a third-class ticket. "No more that 6,000 persons commuted into central London by rail in 1854", which is when the Great Eastern Railway took over the Easter Counties Railway, and gradually became "pre-eminently the line of the working class". Olsen, 312. "By the end of the century 19,000 people arrived early every morning in Liverpool Street by workmen's trains, followed by another 35,000 on trains on which reduced, but not workmen's fares were charged; followed after 9:00 by the regular season-ticket holders. There was thus a threefold segregation of commuters by fare and time of arrival, in addition to their universal segregation into first, second, and third class carriages". Olsen, 318. However, Roy Porter reports that "in 1873 the *Workman's Magazine* stated that many of the working classes never travelled by train". Porter, 276.

[82] Olsen, 308

[83] Porter, 275

[84] Porter, 289

[85] Olsen, 309

now finally achieved in an image reduced to a diagram that was made of a sequence of lines and dots: a mobility map. Mapping movements revealed an attempt to keep everything together, an opportunity to contain London within a semblance of unification, resulting in a large-scale map. (fig. 4.7).

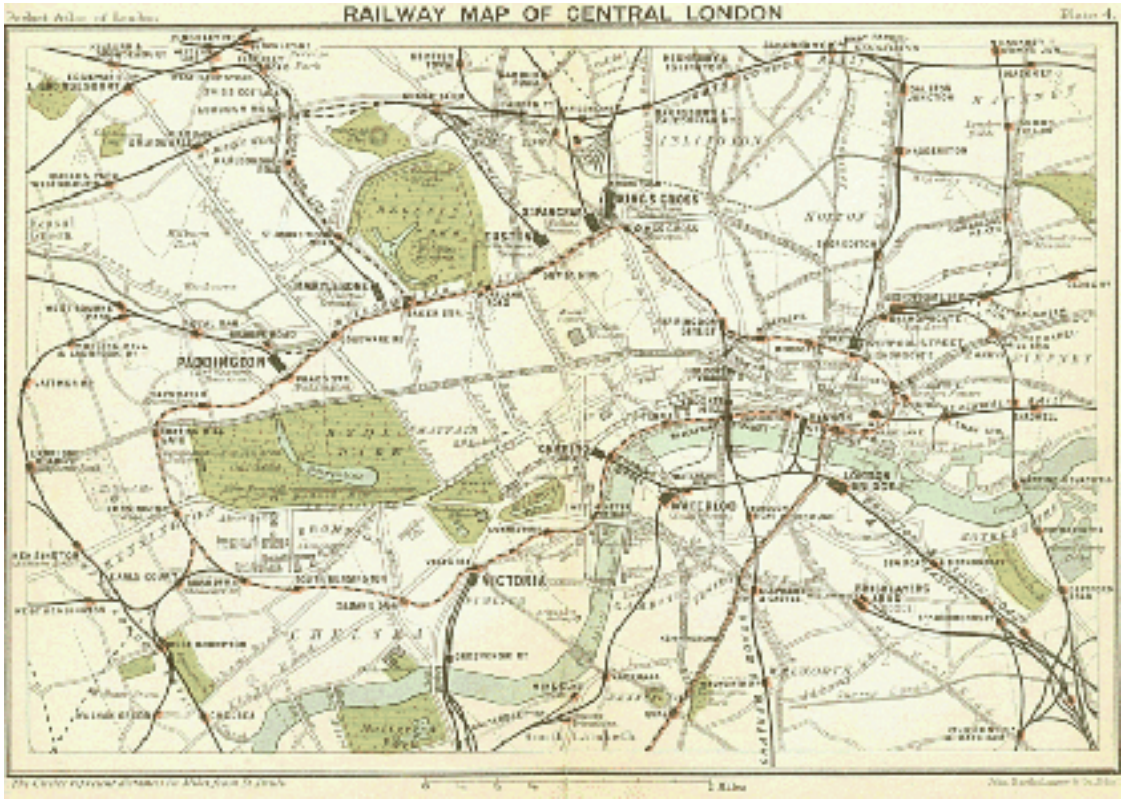

Fig. 4.7 - Railway Map of Central London, 1899. (Wikimedia Commons)

Lynda Nead writes about the nineteenth century as a century of radical change, especially when compared to Georgian London: "Mid-Victorian London," she argues, "was shaped by the forces of two urban principles: mapping and movement."[86] And the two are obviously related: if movement was implying all sorts of fluxes from pedestrians, goods, and transport, then mapping was a necessary component of controlling the efficient running of those movements. The tube needed to be mapped, as did the street need to gain efficiency in the frame of the new city. Streams of water, too, needed to be mapped to respond to the population's domestic needs. Victorian Londoners walked, while the new urban setting of the city took shape in bridges, thoroughfares, railways, and trams.[87]

Considering the failed attempt to give London an urban readability in the past two centuries, mapping, used as an instrument of order and control, was a novelty. However, mapping finally allowed London to reach a unified urbanity, but it detached the morphology of the city from life that was

[86] Nead, 13

[87] Olsen, 323

happening at the human scale. This new image of the city separates the architecture from the life of its inhabitants. A view from above, as Michel de Certeau writes, "is a way of keeping aloof, by the space planner urbanist, city planner or cartographer. The panorama-city is a 'theoretical' (that is visual) simulacrum, in short a picture, whose condition of possibility is an oblivion and a misunderstanding of practices. [...] The ordinary practitioners of the city live 'down below.'"[88]

An attempt to reconcile these two scales can be found in the maps in Charles Booth's *The Life and Labour of the People of London* (fig. 4.8). Booth's map translated the patterns that made life in London unique at the time: it represented the commercial streets—Tottenham Court Road and the Strand—in a vivid red trace, while dividing the poverty and wealth between the East and the West Ends, respectively. The map clarifies the dichotomy between the scales of representation of the city, which, at a macroscopic level, reads as a clear series of introverted forms, while, at a microscopic level, it evidences the contradiction in the cohabitation of different subjects. Moretti describes Booth's map as a drawing where the overall is ordered but its parts are still left to chance:[89] London was chaotic, the urban confusion of the city was readable in all of its parts, in its streets. Russell Street, on the map, is identified as bourgeois, and hosting a"fairly comfortable lifestyle,"[90] next to it, Oxford Street is evidently a black zone that houses "vice; semi-criminal."[91] On the northern part of the centre of town, Russell Square is a wealthy area, but, next to it, towards the east, the working class lives in real misery. When we zoom into this map, we begin to grasp the real meaning of Benjamin's words when he describes the uniformity of the eighteenth-century city as only apparent where the real meaning of the fragments of this unity can only be found in between sounds, neighbourhoods, life, and classes.[92]

[88] De Certeau, 92-93

[89] Moretti, 82

[90] Moretti, 81

[91] Ibid.

[92] Benjamin, 7-8

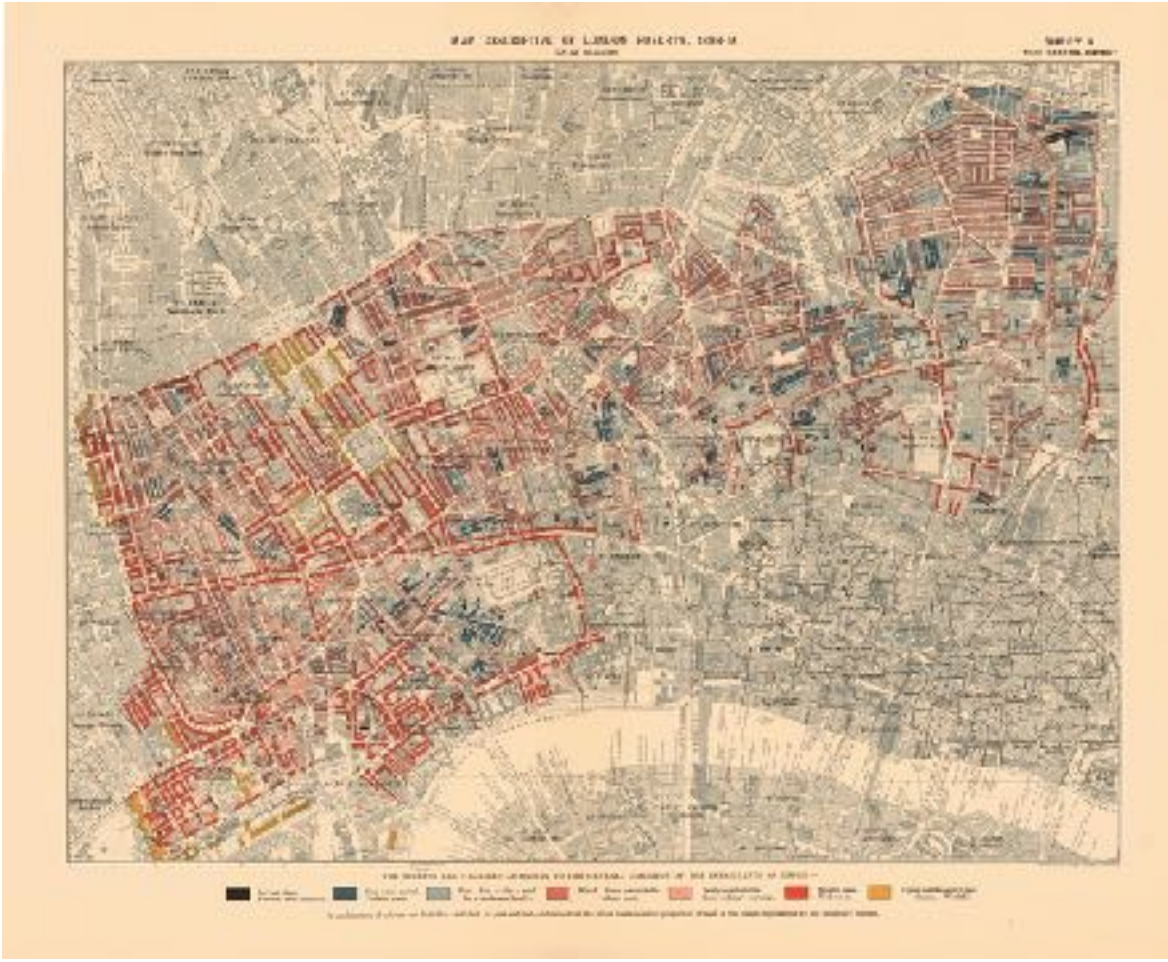

Fig. 4.8 - Charles Booth, *Map descriptive of London Poverty*, 1898-9, Sheet 6 – West Central District. (LSE - Charles Booth's London)

This clash of scales was experienced in 1862 by Henry Mayhew, when he agreed to fly over London on an air balloon. A little more than a decade before he published the extensive reportage *London Labour and the London Poor*,[93] thanks to which he familiarised himself with all the streets—and their lives—of the eighteenth-century city. Once he left the ground, Mayhew was shocked to face a completely different city than the one he remembered from his previous research, a growing and expanding city devoured by industrialisation, a city that stood in contrast to the disorder and unpredictability of its narrow lanes.[94] These two opposite scales of the city are not easy to combine, especially during a peak of urban expansion that London reached in the nineteenth century. Lynda Nead epitomised this

[93] Started in the 1840s as a series of articles for the *Morning Chronicle* reporting the life of the working classes in the mid-nineteenth century and later, in 1851, published in the form of a book composed of four volumes: "according as they *will* work, they *can't* work, and they *won't* work". Mayhew, 1851. Mayhew was born in a conservative family, but was drawn to this task after witnessing the consequences of cholera in the borough of Bermondsey, in South London.

[94] "We had dived into the holes and corners hidden from the honest and well-to-do portion of the London community. We had visited Jacob's Island…in the height of the cholera, when to inhale the very air of the place was to imbibe the breath of death… We had examined the World of London below the moral surface, as it were; and we had a craving, like the rest of mankind to contemplate it from above. [...] and as the intellect experience as a special delight in being able to comprehend all the minute particulars of a subject under one associate whole, and to perceive the previous confusion of the diverse details assume the form and order of a perspicuous unity; so does the eye love to see the country or the town, which it usually known only as a series of disjointed parts –as abstract fields, hills, rivers, parks, streets, gardens, or churches– become all combined, like the colouured fragments of the kaleidoscope, into one harmonious and varied scene". Mayhew, 7-8

London with the term "Victorian Babylon,"[95] a city that grew from a fragmented metropolis into a modern city. London was mapped and improved: "its diverse routes were re-presented through tourist itineraries and in travel fiction. Its wayward pedestrians could even be managed through the codes and customs of street etiquette. Ultimately, however, Victorian Babylon resisted these attempts at spatial ordering and Mayhew, the balloonist, had to descend once more to street level."[96]

These two urban principles ultimately merge in one particular architecture in the city, whose ambiguity embraces both the scale of infrastructure and the human: the street.[97] If the unified image of the city erased social conflicts while converging attention on its overall form, then a representation of the street from a human perspective would expose this clash,[98] as well as the controversial nature of the street as a collective space.[99] At the time, the magazine *Building News* reported a short description of this disparity: "in passing from the crowded streets and lanes of the City to the western suburbs a remarkable contrast is to be found, indicating different social habits. It is the contrast of busy competition, life, and energy, with the calm of relaxation and repose. Architecturally the aspects of Cheapside or the Strand present a significant antagonism to the aristocratic localities of Belgravia and Mayfair. They manifest, indeed, a strange difference in style and sentiment—the street and traffic of the one being heterogeneous, multiform, and cosmopolitan, while those of the other are homogeneous and destitute of all variety."[100]

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[95] Nead, 3

[96] Nead. 79-80

[97] "The story begins on ground level, with footsteps". de Certeau, 97

[98] The street could be thus intended as what Christopher Alexander calls a unit, a fixed part of the city that "derives its coherence from the forces which hold its own elements together, and from the dynamic coherence of the larger living system which includes it as a fixed variant part. [...] whatever picture of the city someone has is precisely defined by the subsets he sees as a unit" Alexander, 59

[99] Streets in the studies on the twentieth century city, were considered by scholars: "the main public places of a city, are its most vital organs" (Jacobs, 29) or "a microcosm of differences" (Choay, 26)

[100] *Building News, XXXI* (1876), 357

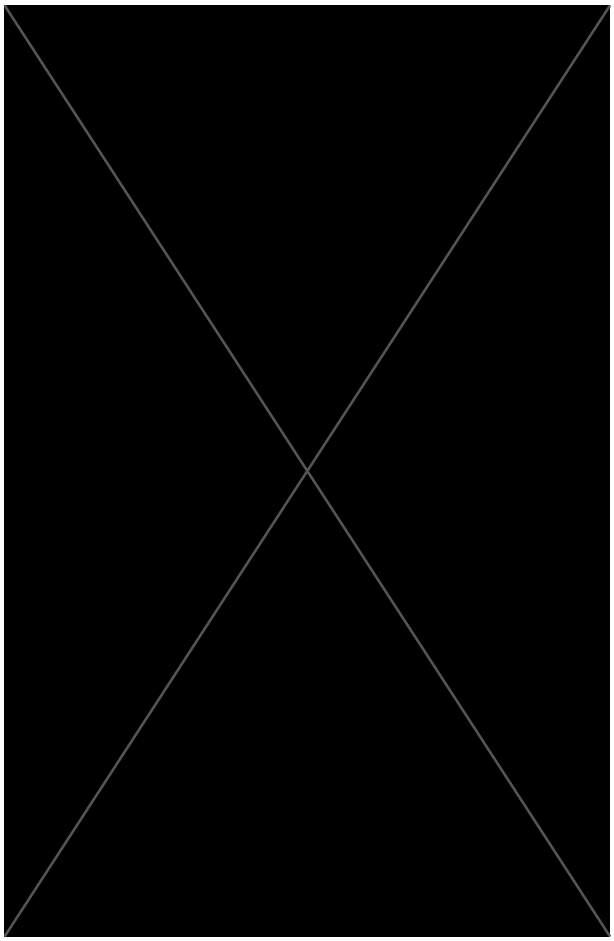

Fig. 4.9 - The metropolitan Railway, in the *Illustrated London News*, 7 April 1860

The tension of the street between movement and commerce was often spatially explained and visually portrayed in section drawings. Looking at the newspapers of the time, especially in the *Illustrated London News*, the perspective section, in particular, becomes an interesting instrument to represent and exemplify the secluded social life of Victorian Londoners, whose rituals were summarised on two levels: the commercialisation of leisure and a monumental domestic architecture above ground, which contrasts the "tubular" spaces underground, where members of the working class wait for their trains home (fig. 4.9): "In these images the full wonder of the Underground could be displayed; an apparently normal street above the ground and then, below the gas pipes and sewers, another parallel world of passengers, locomotives and airy tunnels illuminated by gas."[101] On the surface, the commercialised leisure of the upper and middle class continues with their parading habits, while, in the underground, daily commuters move from work to home (fig. 4.10). These drawings translate onto paper the social distinction of fragmented collective life in the Victorian city and their perspective view of the space can be read as a means to humanise the project of infrastructures, revealing a mirror image of London society, through the inclusion of different subjects in space—a reading of the

[101] Nead, 39

space that is reminiscent of some of the perspectives of Hawksmoor's precincts or some of the topographical views of Georgian squares.

On the street, both lives and scales of the city can be staged: on one hand, we can read the ordered boulevards and thoroughfares, like Regent Street, Oxford Street, the Strand, and the Mall, as where the new rituals of retails and habitus emerged,[102] and, on the other, we can experience the crowded narrow lanes, the "abominable little labyrinths of tenants crowded and huddled up together to the perpetual exclusion of light and air, and the consistent fostering of dirt, disease and vice,"[103] where collective rituals resist the reshaping of the entire city into a unified urban form. Narrow lanes were the opposite of the boulevards; they were stagnant and claustrophobic spaces, where the crowd was living in rows of congested houses in "terrible physical proximity […] in this tangled knot, disease and sedition spread and threaten the well-being of the entire metropolitan body."[104]

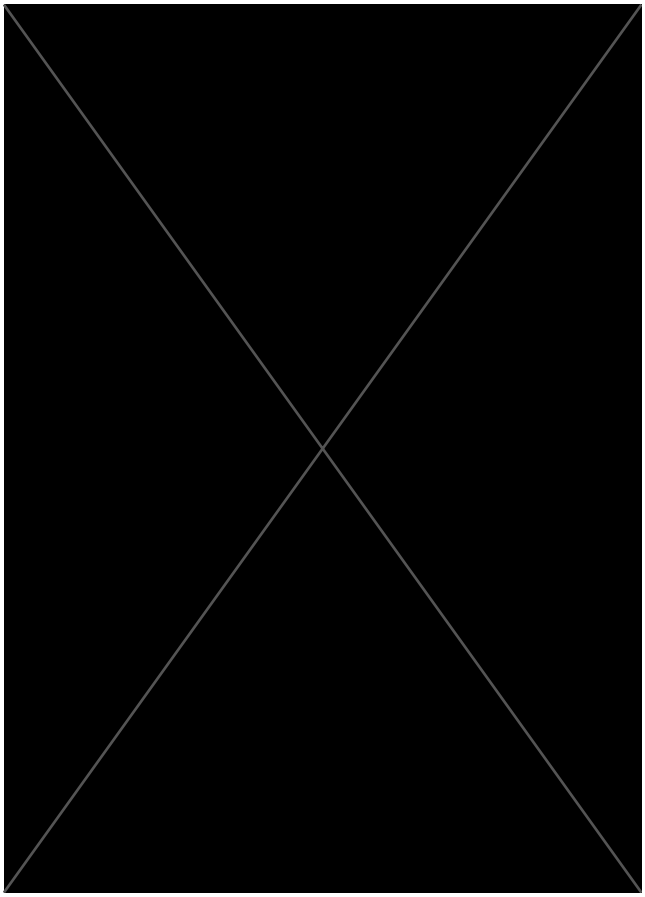

Fig. 4.10 - Underground Works at the Junction of Hampstead Road, Euston Road and Tottenham Court Road. *Illustrated London News*, 28 May 1864

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[102] "The eighteenth century brought the emergence of high-class shops, in the City, Piccadilly and Mayfair [...] With the additions of Knightsbridge and Westbourne Grove, these remained the key Victorian shopping zones" Porter, 241

[103] Sala G. A. (1864) "The Streets of the World" *Temple Bar,* 10, 335 in Nead, 163

[104] Nead, 163

4.5 Holywell Street and the new picturesque

Holywell Street was perhaps one of the most suitable prototypes of narrow lanes. It was a space of physical and spatial disorientation in the city: a "spatial aneurysm"[105] in the most vital part of the body of the city. Holywell Street, in fact, lay just behind the Strand, the only existing thoroughfare between the City and Westminster.[106] It was well known for the sale of pornographic books or, more generally, what were then considered to be "low publications."[107] A place of obscenity, whose name ironically, derives from a "holy well," which is thought to have been located in the area and visited by the pilgrims moving to and from Canterbury, who believed that the well had curative waters.[108]

Holywell Street was threatened to be demolished in favour of a wider, straighter, and cleaner street, because, in Victorian London, a visitor who walked across the city needed to be able to orient themselves and understand London's urban configuration. Narrow lanes were obviously a distraction from proper circulation—they certainly did not facilitate swift movements.[109] Holywell Street was one of the last streets that resisted the project of Victorian improvements, mainly due to its preserving an authentic Elizabethan character: "the view of Holystreet includes a number of elements, such as the overhanging eaves, deep bays, high gables, carved crescent moon shop sign and print shops, with people gathered round their windows, which recur in most visual representations of this site throughout the century."[110] This was one of the reasons behind the resistance towards its destruction in favour of the widening of the Strand and the building of a new Law Court, something that Lynda Nead calls the "metropolitan picturesque."[111] The conflict around the future of Holywell Street was divided between the attraction to this metropolitan picturesque and the location of Holywell Street,

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[105] Ibid.

[106] The strand is one of the oldest arteries in London, which dates back to the Middle Age. However, major alterations to the route were made in the seventeenth century with the design of the Somerset House partly realised by Inigo Jones as part of a "monumental scheme for rebuilding along the Strand" during the reign of Charles I. Summerson (2000), 71. It was later altered again by the improvements of John Nash contained in the New Street Act of 1826 to "Charing Cross, the Strand and Places adjacent", Summerson 1980, 143. "The question of the improvement of the Strand dragged on until the end of the century, when Holywell Street was, at last, pulled down to make way for the construction of Aldwych and Kingsway." Nead, 165. On the improvements of the London streets at the time see Edwards P. J. (1989) *London County Council: History of London Street Improvements 1855-1897*. London: P. S. King & Son.

[107] Nead, 165

[108] Nead, 164. This is reported in a number of sources including Walford, *Old and New London*, 33; Department of Maps and Prints, Guildhall Library, Corporation of London SW2/HOL 3 Oct. 1889.

[109] Nead reports a legend from Edward Walford, *Old and New London: A Narrative of Its History, Its People, and Its Places* published in 1875, "about a young man from the country who found himself in this part of London one winter's night, intending to make a short journey of a few yards to the main thoroughfare of the Strand. He soon became lost in the labyrinthine alleyways and it was said that his ghost haunted mid-Victorian London; wandering round and about, constantly returning to the original starting point of his journey." Nead, 163

[110] Nead, 166

[111] Ibid.

which was, in fact, too central and too close to "the most important thoroughfares of the metropolis,"[112] and once these obscenities were exposed to public view, they could not be ignored.

A high number of artists attempted to capture the metropolitan picturesque of Holywell Street, its spatial articulation, its collective life, and its social and cultural appearance—among them: John W. Archer, Thomas Shepherd, and Charles J. Richardson—which helped to delay its looming demolition[113] and "to record its eaves, gables, and shop fronts and to preserve its image for posterity".[114] In most of these representations "the picturesque character is more strongly emphasised —the roadway is made narrower and the flanking houses taller and more cliff-life—and the nature of the people in the street becomes more or less reputable, or perhaps more difficult to classify, but in general terms, the visual iconography of Holywell Street remained remarkably consistent and stable."[115] (fig 4.11)

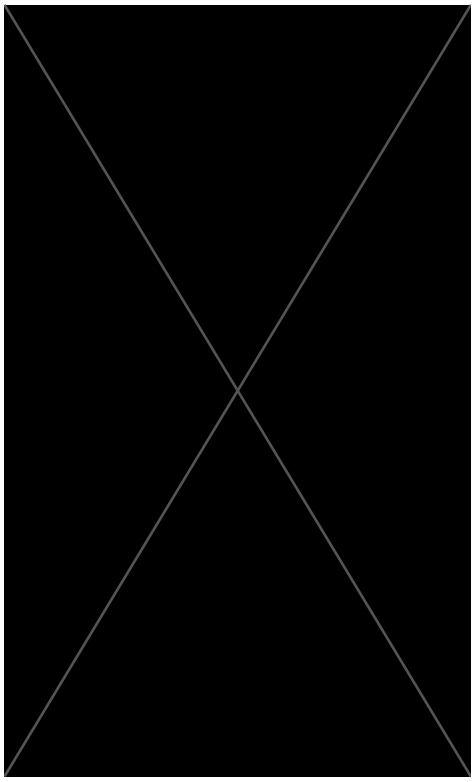

Fig. 4.11 - Holywell Street, from *Builder* 6 April 1861

[112] *The Times*, 23 July 1857: 8

[113] In 1861, the *Builder* published an article on Elizabethan London, in response to the latest bill to clear the area, accompanied by three illustrations on three historical locations in the area. *Builder,* 6 April, 1861.

[114] Nead, 167. Frederick Crace was an architectural decorator and a member of the Commission of Sewers, which brought him to consult old maps of London and make decisions on the state of its drainage and possible demolitions. This dual vocation of Crace, attracted him to Holywell street, understanding its repulsion yet its beautiful heritage. He commissioned Thomas H. Shepherd a series of views of the street. Most of those drawings are collected today in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum.

[115] Nead, 166

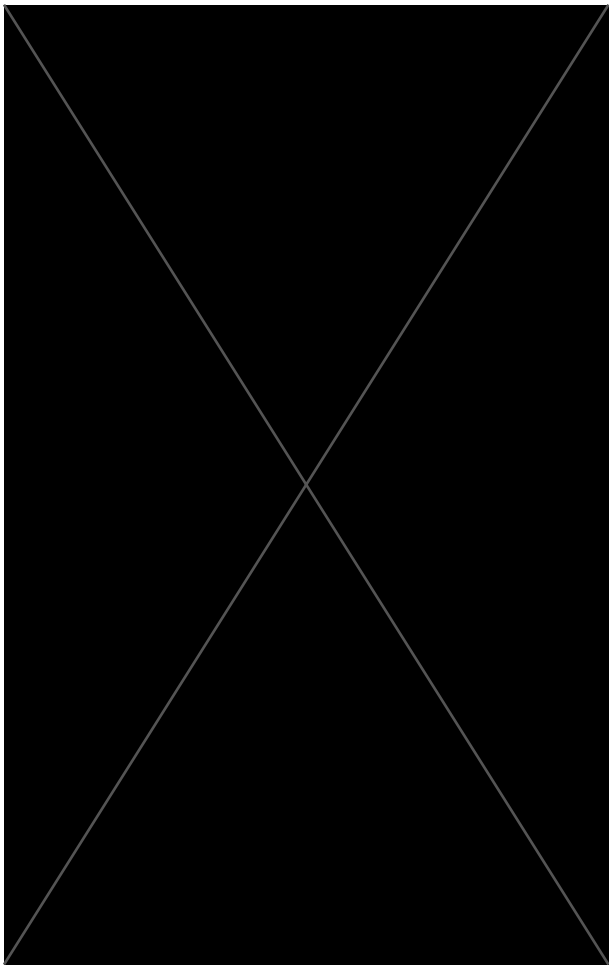

Fig. 4.12 - C. J. Richardson, Holywell Street, June 1871. (© Westminster City Archives)

Holywell Street was the theatre of salesmen, whose old-fashioned stalls blurred the boundaries between the inside of the shop and the street pavement. The whole configuration of the street challenged "the conventional analytical opposition between public and private, or interior and exterior".[116] In a drawing by Richardson (fig. 4.12), it is visible how the wooden stalls extruding from the window-shops became part of the urban stage that was the street. The audience of the street was often assumed to be male, however women happened to be present on the street as well, either as consumers or as producers of the obscene publications.[117] This was an alarming fact, since women were considered to be the weaker sex, hence with a "more particular disposition or vulnerability towards the harms of obscenity."[118] However, women, either as passerbys or as consumers of the objects of obscenity, might have actively been part of the rituals that took place in Holywell Street, by "furtively peeping in at these sin-crammed shop-windows, timorously gloating over suggestive title-

[116] Nead, 179

[117] Nead, 182

[118] Nead, 183, this preoccupation led to the issue of the Obscene Publication Act in 1857.

pages, nervously conning insidious placards, guiltily bending over engravings as vile in execution as they are in subject."[119]

In this collapse of spatial boundaries that Holywell Street promoted, between inside and outside, between private and public, there is another that Lynda Nead mentioned, that between gender and space, where appearances could be deceptive and social manners could mask transgressive dreams and desires. "The intermingling and proximity presented by such public spaces as Holywell Street demanded a continual process of redefinition and renegotiation of self," writes Nead. "Neither masculinity nor femininity was fixed; gendered identities could be adopted or assumed for a time and then relinquished."[120] An anonymous watercolour painting dated staged these uncertainties and fixities: here, we see the protagonists of the street at a distance, they seems like actors on a theatrical stage with their costumes and manners, but we cannot really define what each of them is reading, observing, or buying and, certainly, it is hard to decipher the actual interactions between them (fig. 4.13).

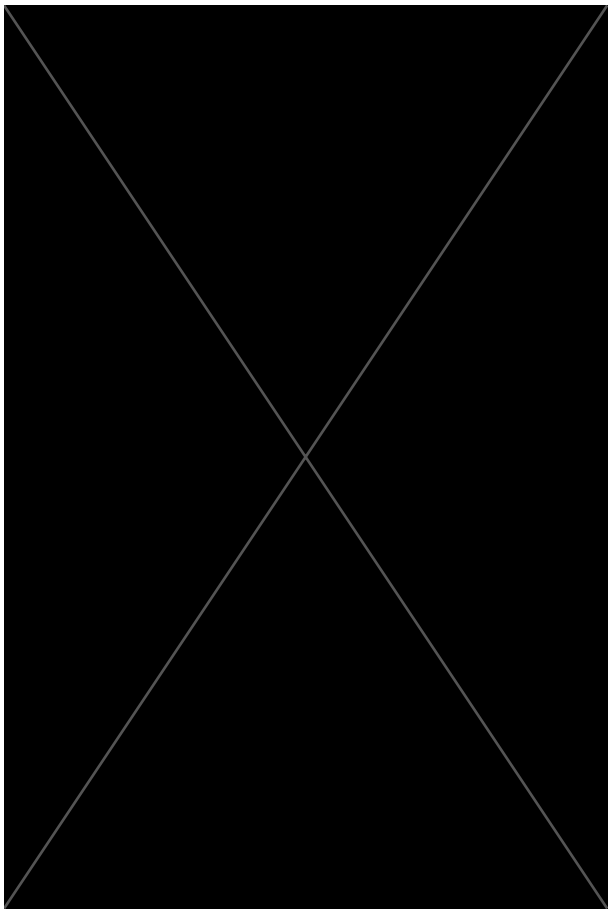

Fig. 4.13 - Anon. *Holywell Street. Strand 1870.* (L. Nead. *Victorian Babylon.* 2000)

[119] *Daily Telegraph,* 17 June 1857: 3

[120] Nead, 184

Originally, in the first decades of the nineteenth century, the shops were concerned with publishing texts on politics and religion from radical pressmen and freethinkers, inspired by the protests of the French Revolution. Later, the street "bore the traces of this political radicalism through the nineteenth century, as its activities shifted from freethinking to pornography."[121] Holywell Street has always been a place open to transgressions[122]—from political to sexual revolutions—which were constantly monitored by police and aimed to expose the hypocrisy and immorality of the ruling class. Paraphrasing Victor Turner's words used in the prologue to this thesis, Holywell Street was a vital stage of *communitas* through which its rituals opposed the rigid structure of the state and its hierarchical social systems.[123]

Holywell Street sat between the compulsion to demolish and improve, on one hand, and, on the other, the attraction and fascination for its "narrow pavements, dirty streets, old-fashioned shop-fronts and decrepit housing,"[124] (fig. 4.14) widely celebrated in watercolour drawings and early photographs (fig. 4.15) during the nineteenth century, the social value of Holywell Street was a fundamental testimony of the spaces of resistance against the radical urban transformations of the city. It was part of an effort to store the layers of the city's history. In the nineteenth century, when London was a constant building site, places like Holywell Street were able to combine the representation of the old city with the new one: "it was a disordered, crumbling, labyrinthine, rather than straight, singular and purposeful."[125] With the enchanting presence of its window-shopping, Holywell Street generated a different ritual in Victorian London, one of stopping, looking, and imagining, and, thus, it produced a completely different type of urban space in the chaotic metropolis, one entirely dedicated to stasis and reverie.[126]

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[121]Before then, around the mid-eighteenth century, Holywell street became a ghetto: "the polymourphous space of the street became associeted not simply with poverty and criminality, but with specific ethnic version of these Holywell Street became a Jewish street and experienced renewed notoriety in the ugly form of Victorian anti-Semitism [...] Holywell Street was a double affront to Victorian economic principles: dirty books and Jewish rag traders epitomised the underside of London's commercial and cultural life." Nead, 177-178

[122] Cunningham, 1849. It is not a chance, that sociologists have found some links between erotism and transgression. Starting from George Bataille's *Historie de l'œil* published in 1928, and later confirmed by Michel Foucault brief history on transgression exposed in his "Preface to Transgression", published in *Critique* n. 195-196, monographic issue on George Bataille "Hommage à George Bataille" in 1963, and published in English in 1977.

[123] Nead, 178; Turner, 97

[124] Nead, 173

[125] Nead, 179

[126] Nead, 184

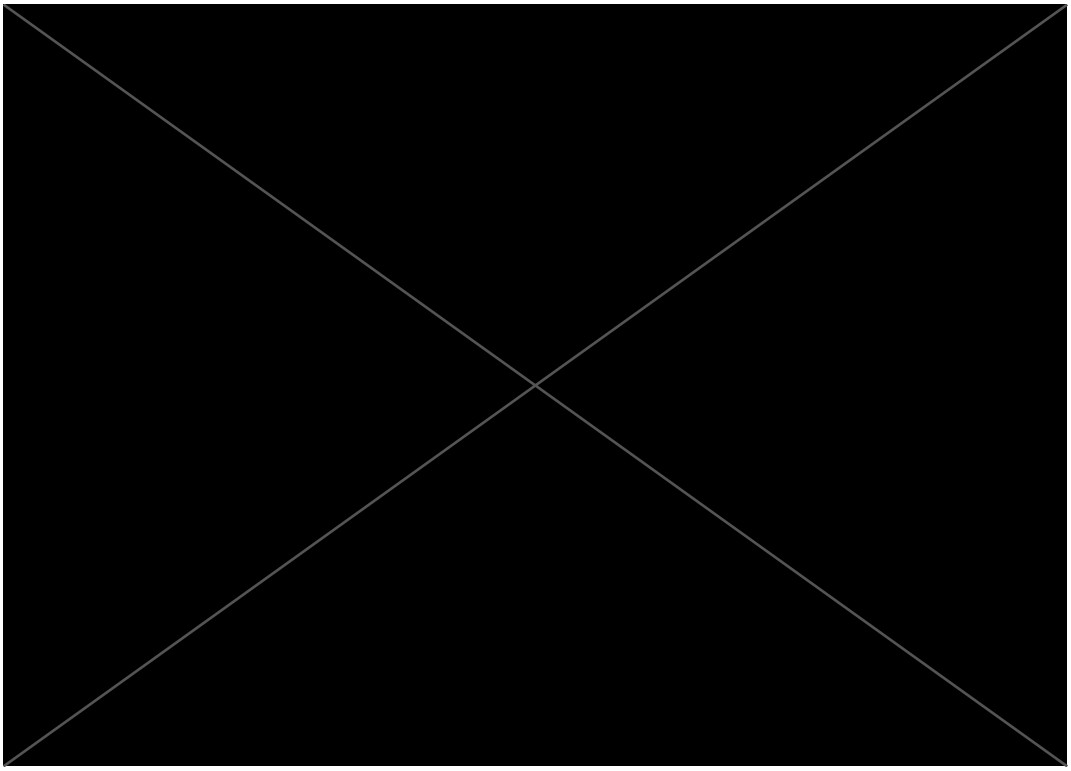

Fig. 4.14 - J. W. Archer, 'Old Entrance to Lyon's Inn, Holywell Street, Strand, April 1847' in "Drawings of Buildings in London and the Environs" vol. 10-4. (British Museum)

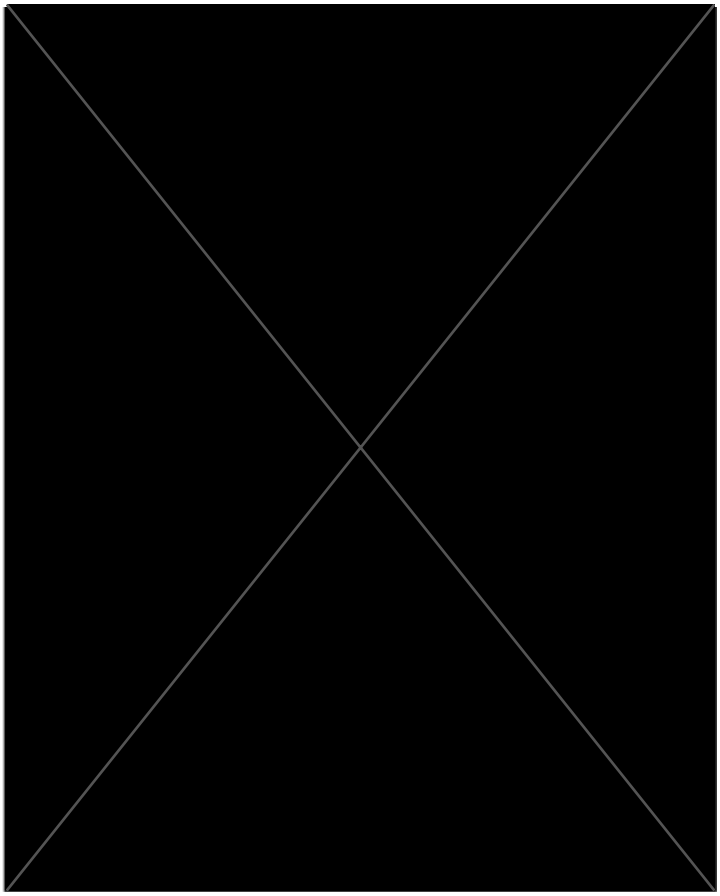

Fig. 4.15 - Holywell Street right before demolition, 1901. (© City of London: London Metropolitan Archives)

The *Illustrated London News* acted as the archive of this palimpsest.[127] In the 1850s, the paper commissioned the production of a series of images taken from the street, which captured the different stages of changes of the metropolis, while showing them in contrast with an architecture that belonged to the past and that was under threat of demolition.[128] This tendency to portray the new developments in contrast with old "monuments," contributed to that metropolitan picturesque discussed by Lynda Nead and that created a rather different contribution to the city's image when compared to the picturesque of the greenery and arcadian projects, discussed in the previous chapter.[129]

This new picturesque depicts the city from a personal and less idealistic perspective, one that belongs to the citizens. It looks at the city through what resembles the lens of a real camera: the drawing becomes a nostalgic hint of the urban archaeology of a city that no longer exists.[130] The object of interest of this new picturesque was not the green space but the ruins of a demolished past in a city in constant transformation. Gustave Doré and Blanchart Jerrold's *New Zealander*[131] is, perhaps, one of the most famous representations of this archaeological nostalgia. Jerrold's drawings portray a city divided into two: all its glorious monuments are assembled in the background, half sunken in the river or partly demolished, in contrast with the emptiness of the ground in the forefront of the engraving, where the traveller, the New Zealander, tries to capture this moment before it disappears (fig. 4.16). These new imaginative representations of the Victorian city manipulate and rework older aesthetic conventions to represent an emergent social formation, a new social geography of London. They represent a process of change, where one can find familiar traces of the past, but they were also informative of the way these continuous urban changes ultimately alter social relations.

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[127] The *Illustrated London News* ran between 1842 until 1971 as a weekly publication, and ceased in 2003. It was the first ever newspaper with illustrations. It began with the reporting of every stage of the sewers plan and then moved onto the reporting of falling buildings, "cases where old London houses collapsed either as as a result of damage from nearby excavations, or simply through age and decay". Nead, 29

[128] "The nineteenth century sweeps everything old away". *Illustrated London News*, 30 July 1864: 114.

[129] A fundamental distinction between the 18C and 19C picturesque is the mediatization of the image, the latter in fact ought to be found in a much broader pool of references that varies from posters theatrical and advertising to daily papers and illustrated magazines Caroline Arscott and Griselda Pollock convey. The two authors in their essay "The visual representation of the early-nineteenth century city" published in Wolff J., Seed J. (1988) *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power and the Nineteenth Century Middle Class*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, invite to reflect upon the relation between these forms of representation to be found in the cultural production of the time, distributed often in the variety of consumption sites.

[130] Something that echoes the 18C picturesque, where the architectural side of nature could be framed within the artificiality of a portrait. Pope, *Guardian* 1731

[131] Journalist Gustave Doré and French artist Blanchard Jerrold published *London: A Pilgrimage* in 1872. It was a narration of the state of London in the second half of the nineteenth century, accompanied by 180 engravings that depict the shadow and sunlight of London.

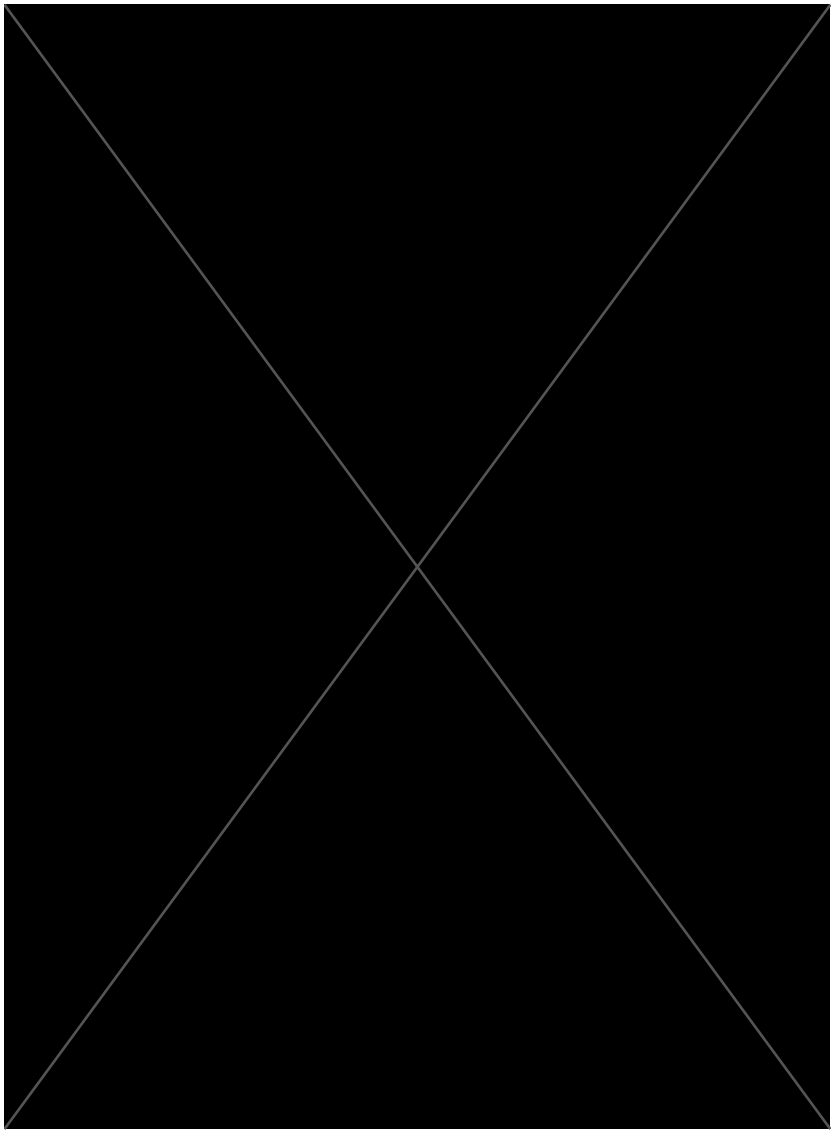

Fig. 4.16 - Blanchard Jerrold "The New Zealander", 1872. (G. Doré, B. Jerrold. *London: A Pilgrimage*. 1872)

From the *Illustrated London News* archive, one image in particular exemplifies this new picturesque and also reveals a new emerging subject in the life of the city, one capable of contrasting the consolidated rituals of the middle class. *The Demolition of Hungerford Market*,[132] published on December 27, 1862 (fig. 4.14), situates the ruin at the centre of the image, while everything that surrounds the demolition site remains vacant and it is barely recognisable. In this scene, we can see a group of workers who belong to a different economy, one that is distant from the agricultural life of Georgian times. They are builders and workers on a construction site, who vaguely resemble the Georgian shepherds with their horses and pastoral animals: unlike the arcadian one, this new picturesque aims to uncover "the forces of change, rather than rural continuity."[133]

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[132] Hungerford Market was built in the 1830s by Charles Fowler, who was the same architect who built the Covent Garden Market in 1827. It was situated on the Strand, not far from Holywell Street, and was demolished for the development of Charing Cross Station in 1864.

[133] Nead, 32

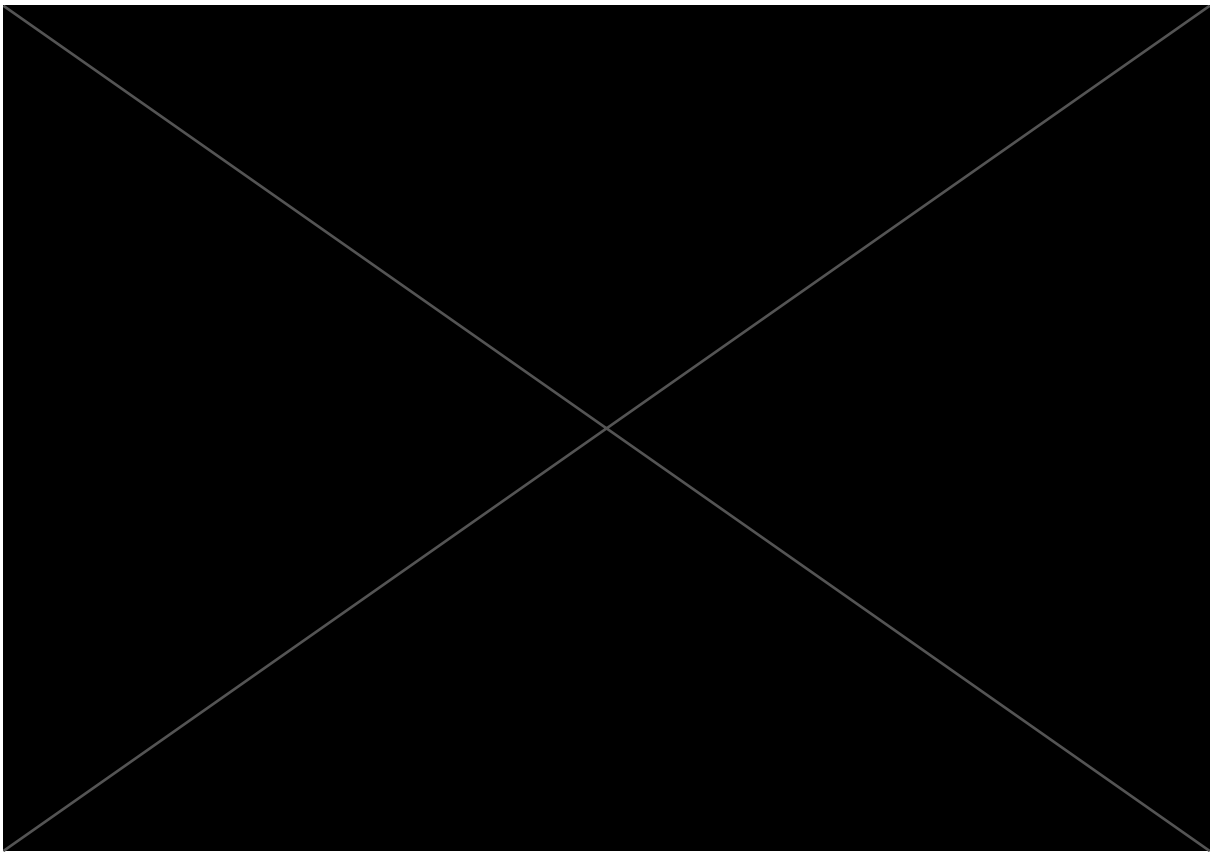

Fig. 4.17 - Demolition of Hungerford Market, *Illustrated London News*, 27 December 1862

The urban transformation and the radical development of infrastructures produced a new form of labour for the working class, whose daily life revolved around labour and commuting. These daily workers became the new subject of London's collective sphere. These images might have been used to promote the goodness of the new industry and intended to reduce what was widely received as a destructive character of the railway by showing that a new possible life could benefit from its presence.[134] A new social life that sits in the shadow of a surviving symbol of the old collective life of the city is represented by the spires of Hawksmoor's churches.

If compared to some of the images of the city that were circulating in Georgian times, where architecture was just a stage, a continuous unfolding scenography made of bricks where collective life was performed by all classes and social differences were flattened into one big picture of idleness, then the reality portrayed in this new picturesque becomes even more striking. These images and their descriptions in the *Illustrated London News* are more realistic when compared to the narratives of the life of Londoners analysed in the previous chapters. Until now, the descriptions of daily life and the collective rituals were mainly filtered through the eyes of the wealthy classes, but, in the mid-

[134] "The construction of tunnels gave their artists an opportunity to celebrate a new form of heroic, manly labour and a reworking of classical symmetry in the architecture of the vast tunnels". Nead, 24

nineteenth century, the ritual of this new collective subject changed: idleness was no longer contemplated in the collective life of Londoners and the production of architecture contributed to accentuating the difference between classes. Architecture was no longer an endless bidimensional curtain but it was used to express a diverse social system, contributing to that pastiche of individual taste that Summerson reads in the facade of Regent Street or in John Soane's personalisation of his own house on Lincoln's Inn Fields.[135] The role of architecture in the nineteenth century transitioned first from being a gesture of "redemption" of the architect returning to the urban scene to becoming a symbol of the past—the spires of Hawksmoor—as well as a social symbol of the present—the building site of the infrastructure. Architecture gradually grew into being the crystallisation of a class system that was quickly and inexorability being consolidated. In other words, it contributed to the rise of habitus. Well-dressed, upper-class citizens walked and strolled on the surface of the street, while the building sites were populated by working class men, who constructed the foundations of this spectacle below street level.

The haunting character of this collective subject of the new picturesque was incessantly portrayed by Arthur Boyd Houghton.[136] Victorian streets in Houghton paintings revealed to be a complex interaction of soldiers, children and nursemaids, well dressed gentlemen, and other figures of all sorts (fig. 4.18). Even if his drawings have been described to evoke a similar dark "craziness" to those of Francisco Goya,[137] Houghton focuses on depicting the real yet often disquieting image of the streets of London where "the very turmoil of the streets has something repulsive, something against which human nature rebels,"[138] where the working class gradually emerged in the urban scene and revitalised the meaning of collective rituals.

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[135] Summerson, considers Regent architecture a sort of hiatus between Georgian and Victorian architecture, that stands against "the dull wartime background". Summerson 2007 [1945], 166

[136] Arthur Boyd Houghton was a painter and illustrator. Amongst his works there are illustrations for both weekly newspaper *The Graphic* and for books, including *The Arabian Nights*, *Don Quixote* and Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend a*ll of which can be found at the British Library. For a complete checklist of his oeuvre see Hogarth P. (1975) *Arthur Boyd Houghton: Introduction and Check-List of the Artist's Work*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum.

[137] Vincent Van Gough wrote to his brother Theo that "[Houghton] was weird and mysterious like Goya". Hogarth, 14-15

[138] Engels, 57

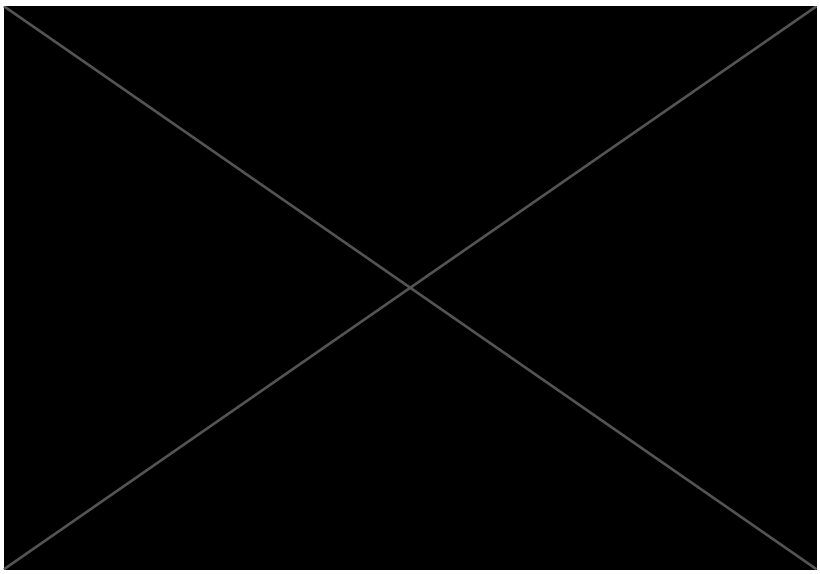

Fig. 4.18 - Arthur Boyd Houghton, *Itinerant Singers*, 1860. (© English Heritage Photo Library)

4.6 The shift from civic to political: ritual become protest

Houghton's paintings revealed that, in Victorian London, daily practices became more associated with symbols of belonging—costumes, tools, accessories—with identifiable postures and facial expressions: the diversity of the collective was gradually legible through the individual characters of society. Rituals became a label through which society could be recognised and identified—even within a messy crowd. Each class developed their rituals into consistent habits, such as promenading, for instance, which in the eighteenth century was a mode of encounter between the members of social classes and was, now, turned into a spectacle for the upper class. A clear emphasis on habitus and cultural belonging emerged: the train, for instance, was inhabited on a weekly basis by workers commuting to and from the city and, on weekends, by the bourgeoisie eager to go for a Sunday walk in the city centre.[139] Ritual becomes habitus, a label for class distinction that was visible and identifiable in the social inhabitation of the urban space. Ritual, in Victorian London, became a means of enhancing boundaries and class distinction: its collective meaning was lost and, ultimately, substituted by an inevitable spectacle of social difference. The proliferation of indoor rituals, where the control of social division was more easily exercised, was a proof of this shift. If the Georgian promenade was open to a certain degree of transgression, then the restrictions on life in the Victorian pub made this coexistence near impossible.[140]

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[139] The cyclicality of the week of a bourgeois family is far different from that of the old aristocracy in Georgian London. Being part of the productive system, the bourgeoisie perceives the importance of weekends, as breaks in their weekly routine. "The day, the week, and the year were reoriented around new concepts of "family time," creating the Victorian Sunday and the most important of all modern family rituals: Christmas." Gillis, 314

[140] In the second half of the nineteenth century, after the restrictions on licensing hours in 1855, pubs reflected the individualisation of society by growing into a fragmented typology: divided into class entrances, and activities but slowly it "became a more exclusively working-class resort, as bourgeois distaste – and the rise of clubs, with their unregulated hours – lured the rich away. Meanwhile, activities formerly at home in the pub had been given specialised premises elsewhere, such as concert halls and sports venues". Wilkinson T. (2016)"Typology: Pub". *The Architectural Review.*

Rituals from Georgian to Victorian London essentially moved from being a collective practice to an individual one, from being a gathering activity to an instrument of division and social order. Rituals as habitus became a tool of social control similar to that used by Charles I before the appearance of Hawksmoor's precincts: it made "social order visible to an anonymous 'public.'"[141] In any social event during the nineteenth century, the crowd became distinguishable as and organisable into different classes and social ranks, which were identifiable through their dress, public behaviour, and formal manners. In this social distinction, the behaviours of the middle class provided an example of correct public behaviour and became the model that all other classes must follow.[142]

The order of participation in public processions strictly followed social ranking: a large section of the population marched "without deliberate aim or purpose other than the pleasure of participating in a traditional spectacle of urban life."[143] Processions, however, staged a very specific social hierarchy, often entirely populated by men: the civic space was, in fact, exclusively a male space.[144] It was in this social occasion that the transgressions to this institutionalised ritual first appeared: the lower classes refused to participate in established and conformed rituals and decided to appropriate and reinterpret this form of gathering, conferring a completely different meaning to it. In Victorian London, each social class developed its own culture and habitus: if business was the interest of the middle class and leisure that of the gentry, labourers' rights were at the core of working-class discussions: "the entry of working-class groups into the civic arena was an inherently ambiguous enterprise, the significance of which was constructed in different, and sometimes conflicting, ways."[145]

It was exactly the members of the working class who revised the meaning of rituals by transgressing processions and long marches and investing them with a stronger political meaning. These transgressions were essentially acts of protest, united under a "newly-recognised brotherhood of labour."[146] The procession became a social stage of discontent, which marched through central streets and civic buildings to stage the discontent against the distribution of wealth and power. In these temporary occupations, the working class asserted their right to public space and refined their political

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[141] Gunn, 77

[142] Something that sits in continuation with what happened in the eighteenth century, with the domestication of the garden square and parks, and the consequent institutionalisation of collective rituals, analysed in the previous chapter.

[143] Gunn, 172

[144] Ibid.

[145] Gunn, 173

[146] *Manchester Guardian*, 22 June 1874: 5. This was published on occasion of a Manchester protest of agricultural labourers in 1874.

voice: "by participating in parades, social groups and institutions rendered themselves visible to the urban public and tasted their claim to a place within the social body of the town. At the same time, the hierarchical ordering of civic processions frames such events and gives physical form to the expression of social authority."[147]

If rituals slowly degraded from being a collective act to mere class-labelling, the appropriation of processional routes by the working class began to denote a different meaning of collective rituals, one that was more inclined and devoted towards establishing a political voice in the city. These newly staged forms of gatherings reflected the meaning of rituals that we described in the prologue to this thesis and which, according to Durkheim, find their roots in society.[148] A new counter-society self-regulated itself as a *communitas* against the structured society ordered according to a series of rules of conduct, of habitus, a society that was accused to generate a "considerable degree of sameness."[149] These marches were forms of resistance that demonstrate that an alternative collective ritual could possibly exist, one that could be separated from the institutionalisation and the commercialisation of popular culture and the conformity of civic authorities, while revealing a new sacredness in the city. Protests happened on the streets and in front of civic buildings,[150] because London was not capable of offering a place where political gathering and civic discontent could be staged, the space that Habermas discusses as the sphere where public opinion could be formed:[151] "By processing around the central streets and major civic buildings, organised labour asserted its rights to public space and a political voice."[152]

4.7 Trafalgar Square: from infrastructure to political space

There is, perhaps, one project through which we can attempt to spatialise such a social clash; a hybrid space at the core of the city that still bears a lot of controversy. Trafalgar Square was originally just a

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[147] Gunn 174. This was the same period of the Paris Commune, which was happening more violently if compared to the orderly processions of British workers which still borrowed the protest language from civic processions. This will be considered in the following chapter when discussing the case study of Extinction Rebellion as the last of these long series of processional performative protests.

[148] Durkheim, 424

[149] Gunn, 179

[150] "From the 1860s popular participation occurred on different terms, trade and friendly societies using such events to assert an independent social identity as well as to demonstrate local patriotism". Gunn, 173. In 1874, in an editorial in the *Manchester Guardian*, these independent demonstrations were described as "newly recognised brotherhood of labour".

[151] Historian J. F. C. Harrison discovered that most of the protests in the first half of the 19C were occurring outside working hours, either in the evening or at lunch time, which means that the participants could not take time off work to riot. Harrison, 127. A recent and comprehensive account of protests in Modern England can be found in Archer J. E. (2000) *Social Unrest and popular protests in England 1780-1840*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Tilly C. (2004) *Social Movements 1768-2004*. London: Routledge.

[152] Gunn, 174

meeting of streets, a junction on the southern side of the Royal Mews,[153] where the stables of the King were located.[154] (fig. 4.19) Named in the 1830s, the square is surrounded by buildings, which according to John Summerson are not worthy of its grandeur—including the National Gallery by William Wilkins that was built between 1832 and 1838 and considered to be quite a shy architecture for such a pivotal urban space. Trafalgar Square is probably the first and only square in London with a civic role similar to that of the European *piazza* (fig. 4.20): it was, in fact, considered to be the emblem of a nation and its triumphal battles.[155]

Before appearing on the map, the square was part of an important thoroughfare—Charing Cross—that was originally supposed to connect Whitehall to the Strand. In fact, it had long been the place of passage of artilleries as well as a place of execution.[156] But unlike the executions in Lincoln's Inn Fields, the ones in Trafalgar Square were more accessible. And considering that Trafalgar Square was so visible as and so close to the symbols of power, this grew the fear in the authorities that some of the participants might end up sympathising with the victims, which could lead to civil disorder. This was one of the initial frictions manifested in the square, and the government immediately decided to act by moving all executions to Tyburn. Trafalgar Square was also the location of several pubs and taverns, which back then were considered to be places where plots against the Crown could be planned: something that contributed to developing the square into a space for transgression.[157]

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[153] Pevsner, 90

[154] Since 14C the Royal Mews were property of the crown, where Geoffrey Chaucer was a clerk of works there under Richard II. Mace, 26

[155] Mace, 48

[156] Mace, 24

[157] The history of preventing public gathering from the sovereign was not so recent, according to Mace, after the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII the right of communing on Charing Cross Field was given to the parishioners of St Margaret's (Westminster) and St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, incidentally both Royal churches, this right existed up until the beginning of Elizabeth's reign. Elizabeth, wanting to increase her revenues, leased a greater part of the area to a man called Dawson. Dawson immediately divided and enclosed it, depriving the parishioners of these common rights. Angered by this, the parishioners assembled with picks and spades, destroyed all the fences, filled up the ditches and generally returned the ground to its original condition. Representations were made to the Queen and after an investigation it was found that the revenue from Dawson was so small that the common rights were restored and Dawson's lease terminated. Mace, 26

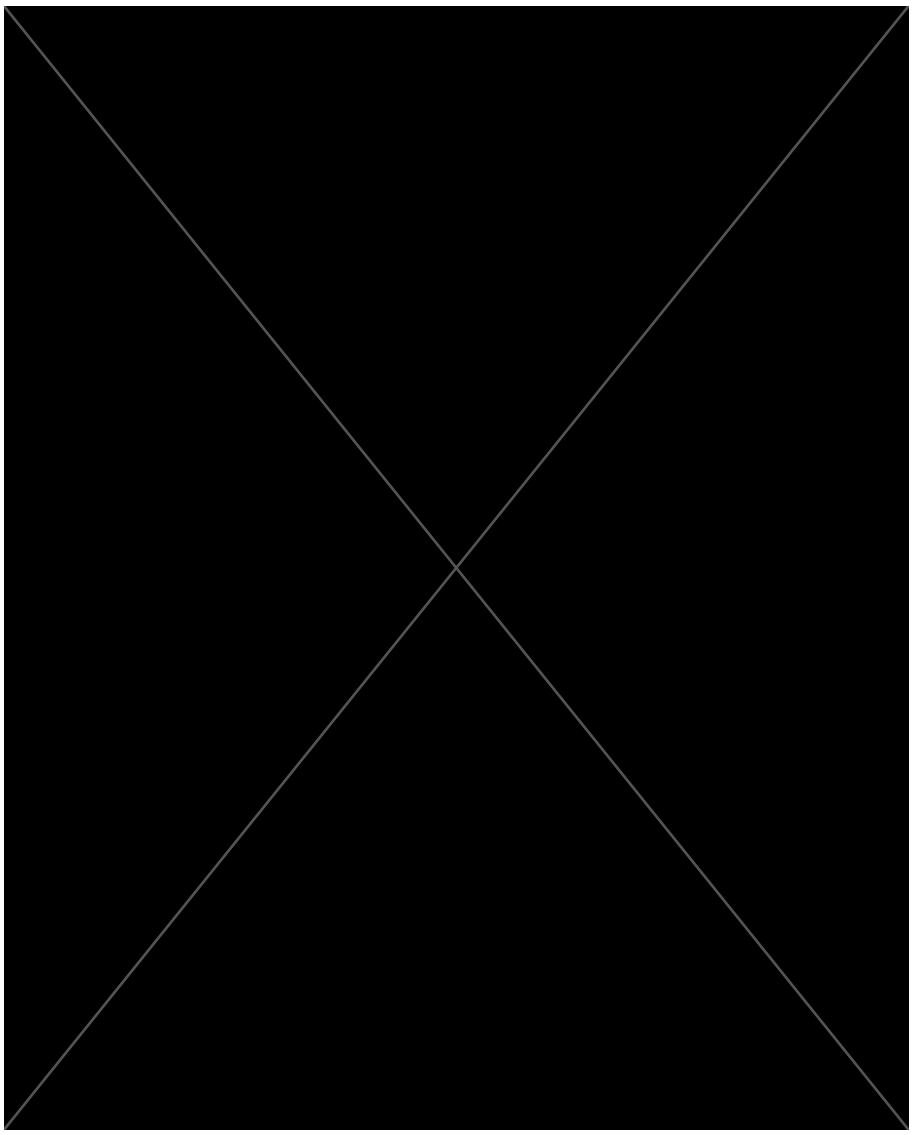

Fig. 4.19 - *The Royal Mews at Charing Cross,* 1796. (R. Mace. *Trafalgar Square. Emblem of Empire.* 1976)

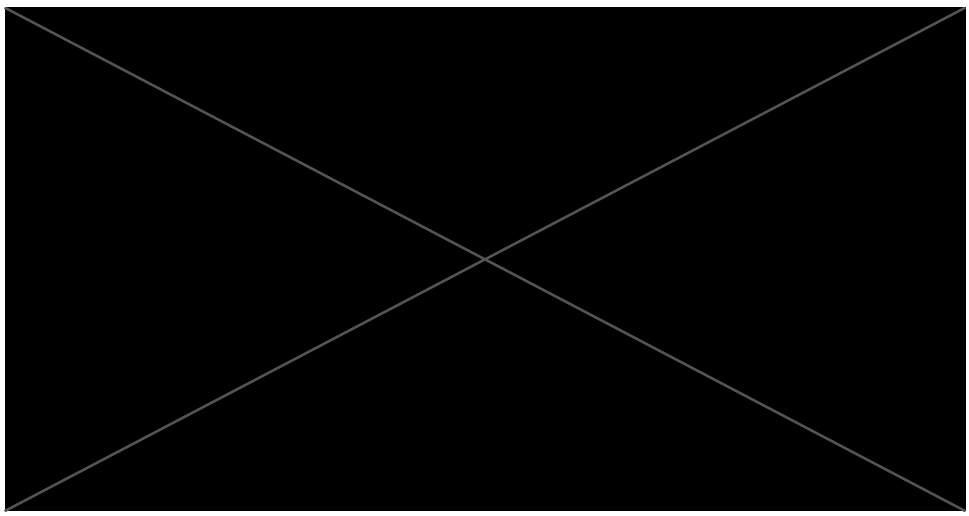

Fig. 4.20 - *Trafalgar Square*. One of the few sketches of the whole square. (© RIBA Drawings and Archive Collections)

Trafalgar Square was not only the place where the power of the sovereign and the people clashed, but, similarly to Regent Street, it was also a junction where East and West End encountered one another: John Summerson was recognising this when he stated that Regent Street was the "germ" of the square.[158] The first known report on the project was followed by an Act of Parliament, which allowed the strengthening of the communication from Marylebone Park to Charing Cross. This was the first moment that Trafalgar Square was referred to as an "open square in the Kings Mews opposite Charing Cross."[159] Trafalgar Square, thus, emerged as part of a bigger urban project designed by John Nash and was officially affiliated to the development of Charing Cross. Such connection emerges as well in an intention that Nash states in one of the first reports: "to add to the beauty of the approach from Westminster to Charing Cross, a Square or Crescent, open to and looking down Parliament Street, might be build round the Equestrian Statue at Charing Cross, which at the same time that it would enlarge that space, from whence, as before observed, the greatest part of the population of the Metropolis meet and diverge, it could afford a magnificent and beautiful termination of the street from Westminster."[160]

The social use of Trafalgar Square was very far from its name, it was not a square in its early days, hardly a junction whose form was the result of the streets and the building that surrounds it. The urban form of Trafalgar Square was never driven by an architectural project, instead it was the consequence of an authoritarian will that controlled the development of buildings in the entire area: the form of Trafalgar Square is a void that critically depends on its immediate surroundings. The architecture of this square, however, was never thought of as a gathering space, a reading that is corroborated by the drawings that survive today, which, beside the plans of John Nash, are essentially detailed drawings of railings, bollards, and fences—all elements that control potential forms of gathering in the square. The collective project is, here, confirmed to be reduced to the design of details that prevents the crowd from using the space, drawn by Charles Barry in 1838 (fig. 4.21; 4.22; 4.23).

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[158] Summerson, 130-145

[159] All the reports and a more accurate history of the Square could be found in Mace R. (1976) *Trafalgar Square. Emblem of Empire.* London: Lawrence and Wishart.

[160] *First Report to His Majesty's Commissioners for Woods, Forests and Land revenues* London 1812, 90

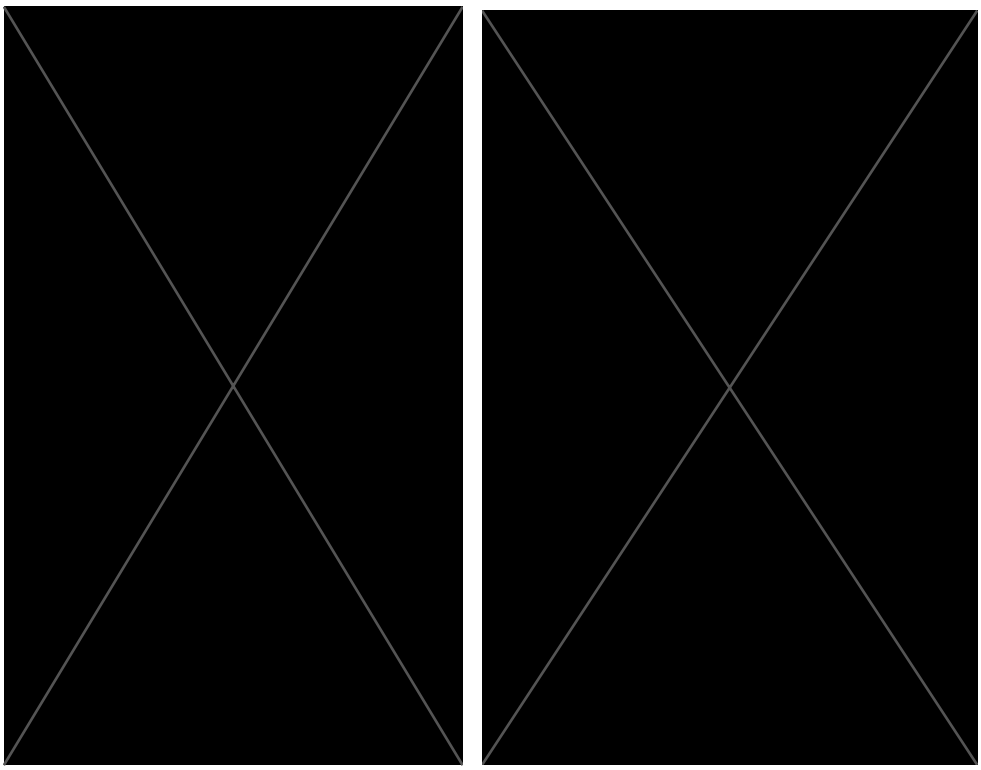

Fig. 4.21; 4.22 - Charles Barry, *design for Trafalgar Square*, 1838. (© RIBA Drawings and Archive Collections)

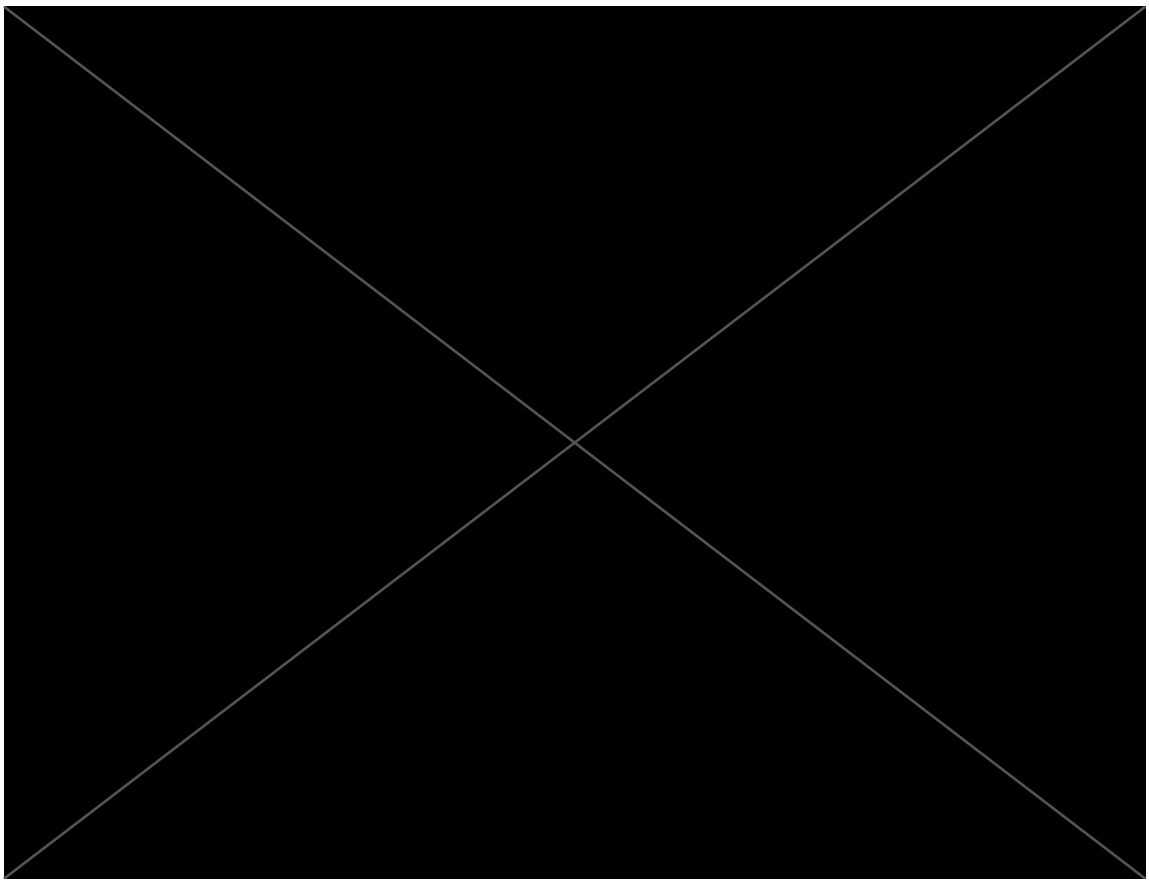

Fig. 4.23 - Charles Barry, *design for Trafalgar Square*, 1838. (© RIBA Drawings and Archive Collections)

This architecture demonstrated that Trafalgar Square was a space feared by the authorities, who tried to prevent citizens from coming together and stage their discontent. The square, however, soon became the place where this authoritarian power and the transgression against it finally encountered one another. If we look once again at Booth's map, we immediately realise that the area surrounding Trafalgar Square was essentially crowded with lower and working-class citizens, whose needs were never considered by Nash. Trafalgar Square was thought to be a place for institutions, a place where the authority of the state was physically manifested. But it was, simultaneously, the place where some of the city's poorest inhabitants reside mainly in the northern and eastern part of it, around St. Martin's Church. Perhaps, it is also because of this concentration of collective power that the square soon became the stage of a sequence of riots and protests that vehemently expressed the dissatisfaction of the surrounding residents.

The dispute between the project of displacement of Nash's square and the reality of the existing urban fabric was translated almost immediately in the reaction to the use of the space, where a mass of people from the working class occupied the square from its early times. It is interesting to think that Trafalgar Square soon shifted from being a junction to being a political space, where citizens could return to being political beings and not just biological entities. Trafalgar Square was the only outdoor space in the city where diversity could take place: the space of coexistence that Jane Jacobs defined as a natural component of big cities. Such spaces, Jacobs writes, are where "people must appear at different times,"[161] where different categories, and classes, are drawn together in one big picture that needs to be kept together.[162]

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[161] Jacobs, 152

[162] Of course, at this moment in time in London the street consolidates its urban presence as a line of circulation and an infrastructure. In the previous chapter we have seen the subsidiary role that the street played in the collective life of the city, as part of a scenography where public life used to happen through ceremonies and collective gathering. Yet the street remained in the background as a connection route from piazza to piazza, which was identified as the place of collective life at its peak. The precinct added a further degree of separation between the square and the street, favouring the detachment of the latter from the public space and allowing it to become a simple line of connection. If one recalls the plans drafted after 1666, which were carefully faithful to the Baroque urban tradition of European capitals, the street was in fact conceived as an axe that frames the institution that detain the power over the city –the church, the royal palace and so on. The streets of Christopher Wren or John Evelyn inspired by the Rome of Sixtus V, were a further confirmation of the heavy impact that the powers that govern the city can always be readable in its urban form: here the absolute monarchy was reflected in the urban clarity of both the form of the city and its architecture. Prior to this moment, the projects that Charles I assigned to Inigo Jones, were used as a tool of order and control of the masses. It is exactly in this narrative that the street grew to consolidate its linear connotation and to eventually develop into a diagrammatic tool of representation of the city. In Victorian maps we find again straight and orthogonal lines that favour a similar urban clarity.

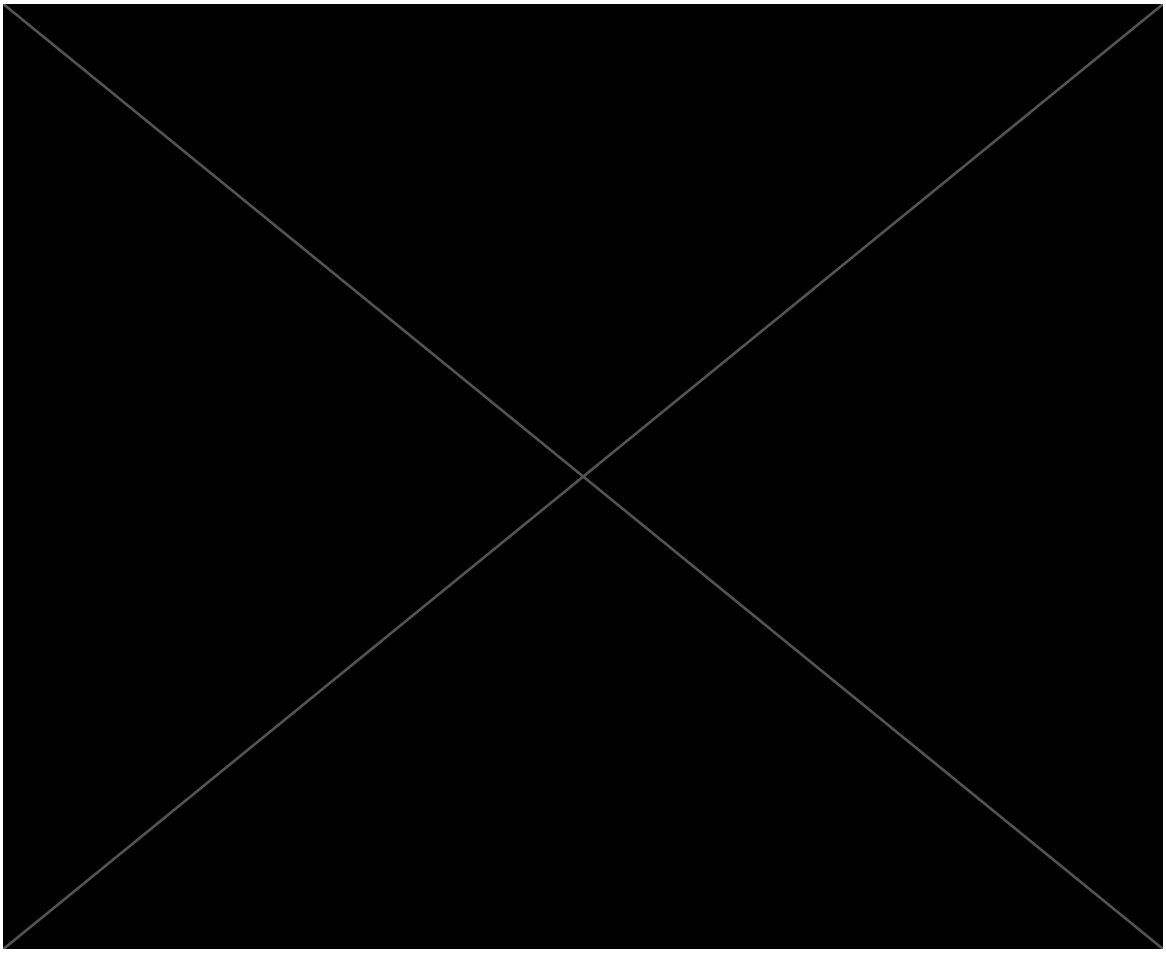

Fig. 4.24 - *Trafalgar Square. Protest against income tax*, 1848. (© City of London: London Metropolitan Archives)

Throughout the nineteenth century, these kinds of assemblies, contesting the legislation that majorly impacted the working classes, were hosted predominantly in Trafalgar Square.[163] The state and the police, therefore, decided to issue a series of legislation that prevent such gatherings. On March 6, 1848, a large crowd of almost 10,000 members of the working class, inspired by the French Revolution, gathered in the square to protest against the income tax raise: "We'll respect the law, if the law-makers respect us"[164] (fig. 4.20). The day after, the authorities published a notice that banned these assemblies, accused of disturbing the lawful daily business of Londoners.[165] This notice,

[163] Amongst the most famous ones, there is the protest of Bloody Sunday, which was initially a demonstration in defence of the freedom of assembly and against the imprisonment of MP William O'Brien in Ireland. The clash between police and protesters was one of the deadliest of British History. A precise account of the events and illustrations can be found in Mace, 179-192.

[164] "Chartists held General Conventions of the Industrious Classes more or less annually from 1839 to 1848. Although these conventions followed a two-decade- old radical program of forming a counter-Parliament to dramatize weaknesses of the existing body, to have held elections for a large national assembly would have directly challenged Parliament's legal claim to represent the nation." Tilly, 47

[165] Mace, 136. As a consequence of the ban, assemblies moved to Hyde Park, which "represented, as a *place*, less of a threat to the centre of Government than did Trafalgar Square" Mace, 156.

additionally, gave the police the right to violently interrupt any form of mass gathering.[166] This episode, however, did not block the protests, on the contrary, it pushed organisation of riots and demonstrations further.

A physical conflict between governance against the local resistance emerged as "one of the competing philosophies of urban space: the rational, ordered, geometric space imagined by Crown improvers on the one hand, and the customary, practised spaces of residents on the other."[167] This clash offered the best ground for collective rituals to finally emerge and shift their meaning, from controlled by the authority of the state to the appropriated by the diversity of the population and its discontent. At the end of the century, the entry of suffragettes, workers, and other groups onto the urban stage effectively challenged the spatial presence of the authority in the collective space, which had administered the "official" public life of the city between the 1850s and the 1880s.[168] Men of wealth and influence no longer had privileged control of the visual and symbolic register of collective life, and emerging members of society learned how to subvert it for their own ends. The way Trafalgar Square was gradually occupied through time contributed to the radical shift of rituals from civic to political actions, which allowed the square to change its urban meaning (fig. 4.25): from being a junction in its early days, Trafalgar Square now became a real space of appearance, a space full of political meaning.

[166] The police officially became a state force in 1828. Home Secretary Robert Peel saw the increase in criminal activity as a threat to the stability of society, and proposed a bill in 1828, which was later approved by Parliament in 1829. The Metropolitan Police Bill established a full-time, professional and centrally-organised police force for the greater London area under the control of the Home Secretary, which substituted the fragmented parish forces who were operating during the eighteenth century (UK Parliament, Acts of Parliaments).

[167] Flinn, 365

[168] "Public space in the industrial cities was decreasingly the monopoly of he middle-class men from the late Victorian decades" Gunn, 191

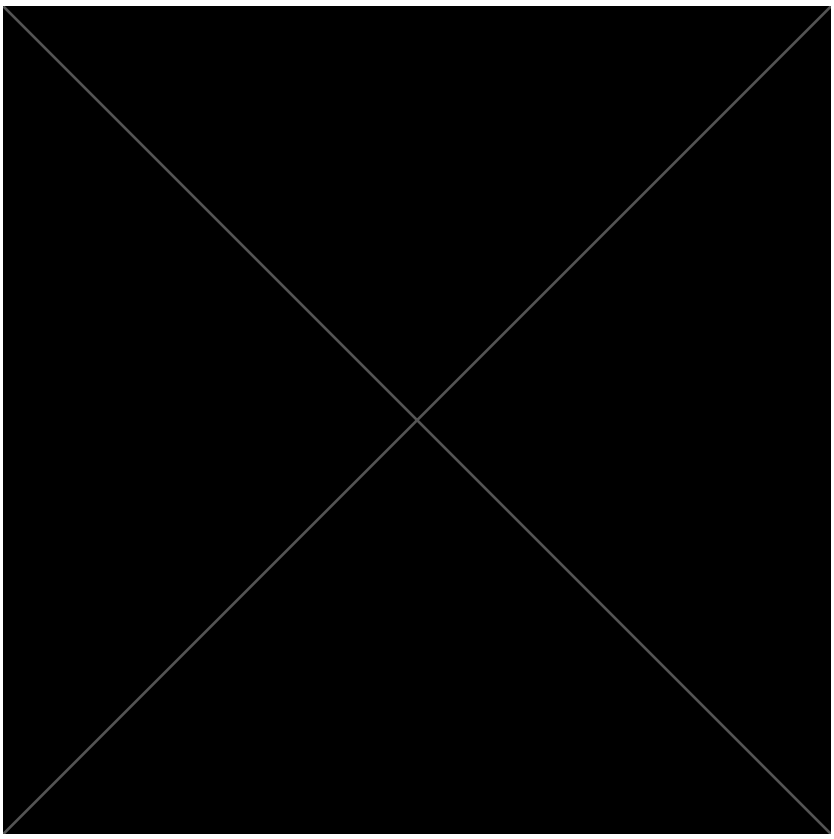

Fig. 4.25 - *Trafalgar Square: Crowds at reform demonstration,* 1867. (© City of London: London Metropolitan Archives)

4.9 Ritual against the space of authority

Victorian London constructed a socially and spatially fragmented image of the city, which confirms Summerson's suspicion that in England there was no architecture for the collective at the time.[169] It seems now quite evident that over the course of the nineteenth century the very meaning of collective was basically non-existent, let alone was the role of the public sphere to be a place open to all members of society. The only collective space where citizens could gather without being subjected to codes of behaviour and habitus was the street, but not the street of the grand projects for the bourgeoisie like Regent Street, but the narrow lanes, untouched by the development of the infrastructural system, like Holywell Street. The collective space in Victorian London shifted from being the space of social identity and widely shared belief to being the space of unruled, disordered daily life. It is precisely for this reason that the meaning of the street in architecture still manifests an interesting contradiction, and it can be considered the most truthful stage for rituals: the clashes on the stage of the street are the same ones that cover the clashes between ritual and habitual, the togetherness and the social status, and the freedom of the public appearance and the regulation of its infinite possibilities. The street was, indeed, the space where the diverse strata of society came together but, this was considered to be a threat which made it grow into an urban space heavily subjected to

[169] Summerson in Saint, 22

legislation, which soon lost its semantic meaning[170] and became controlled by a necessary code of behaviour for performing any public activity.[171]

Freedom of movement implied an apparently free society, yet the 1800s is also a moment where the friction between the laissez-faire attitude of the individual began to require the control of the state through legislation. Such individualism proceeded alongside architectural control: the more individualism strengthened its role, the more laws and power held by political institutions was consolidating its civic status: "the rule of law and the power of political institutions manifestly strengthened during Victorian period at the same time that the real freedom of the individual to pursue his own life increased."[172] Security on the street was enhanced through street lighting, which conversely contributed to the romanticisation of the London street: "Civic buildings were illuminated on special occasions, and routinely from the 1890s. The central streets, too, were transformed after dusk by exotic effect of different types of lighting…By gaslight even poverty could be construed as 'picaresque' to the well-to-do nightwalker seeking vicarious amusement."[173]

The case of Trafalgar Square clearly demonstrates the increasing role of the police as the ultimate means through which regulations ought to be observed and imposed to maintain public order and safety. Urban policing was necessary to keep the city clean of any threat of rebellions and transgressions. These acts of resistance, mainly staged by the lower classes, were crossing the boundaries of respectability that the appearance of the bourgeoisie considered to be socially acceptable; these boundaries were usually identified with urban infrastructures, like Trafalgar Square. The physical expression of authority continued to be implemented throughout the twentieth century with the addition of details and barriers coated with architectural dignity: the last confirmation of this, was Edwin Lutyens' fountain, constructed in 1939, to prevent gathering across the square (fig. 4.26) and later, in 2003, with the pedestrianisation of the north side of the square by Norman Foster (fig. 4.27).

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[170] Choay, 88

[171] Johnathan Sumption describes the street as the place where we can better understand the urban impact of legislation: only when we disobey the law do we come to terms with its existence. Sumption uses the example of the cycling lane, whose continuous lines indicate the paths, and when one crosses it might get fine. With that fine we understand the meaning of law, through the same transgression we have analysed until this moment.

[172] Olsen, 62

[173] Gunn 53

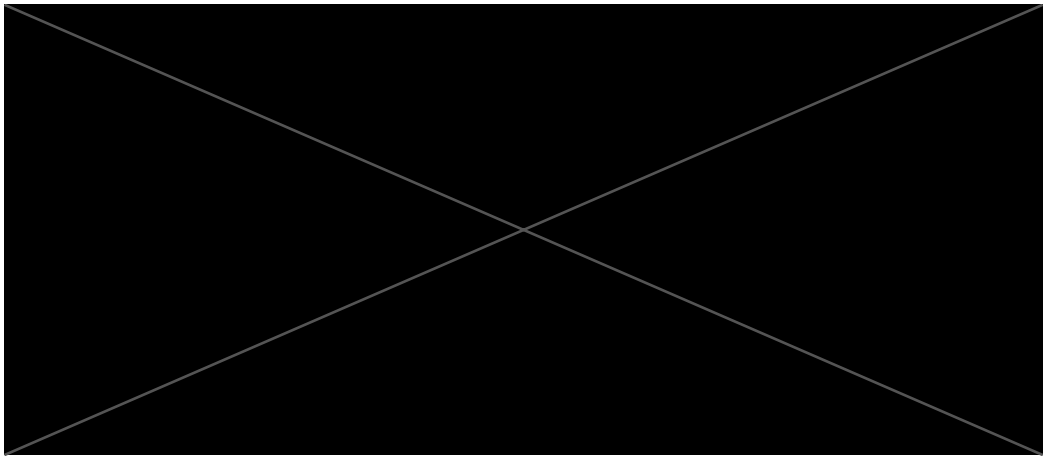

Fig. 4. 26 - Impression of Sir Edwin Lutyens' design for the fountains in Trafalgar Square, Westminster, London, by William Walcot. (© RIBA Drawings and Archive Collections)

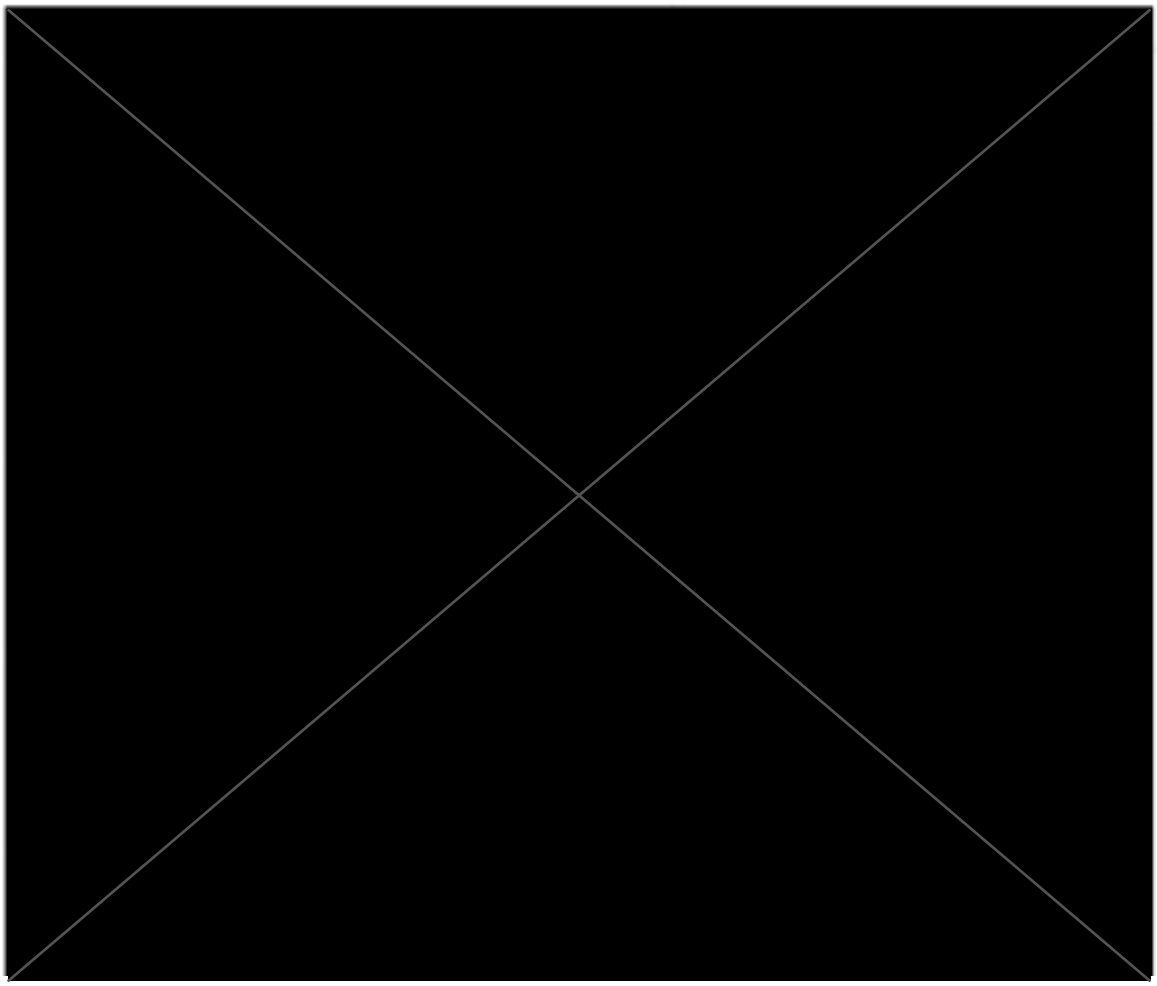

Fig. 4.27 - Foster + Partners, *Trafalgar Square 1996-2003*. (© Foster + Partners Archive)

The only reminiscence of collectiveness that Nicholas Hawksmoor welcomed in his projects is now destined to be performed in the space of Victorian thoroughfares: "the spirit of London is in her thoroughfares," writes Thomas Byerley, "–her population! What wealth – what cleanliness – what order – what animation! How majestic, yet how vivid is the life that runs through her myriad veins! How as the lamps blaze upon you at night, and street after street glides by your wheels, each so regular in its symmetry, so equal in its civilization, – how impressively do you feel, that you are in the metropolis of a *free people*, with its healthful institutions, and exulting still in the undecayed energies of national youth and vigour." [174]

Thoroughfare, streets, and narrow lanes are arteries in the city form. They are voids in-between buildings, and a void is inevitably easier to control. Here, architecture is free to intervene as a barrier, a physical translation of regulations and prohibitions. Richard Sennett writes that the safety of a space is endorsed by its emptiness: "the cleansing and emptying of the industrial city in the second half of the nineteenth century, together with the construction of monumental buildings and distinct functional spaces, represented the attempt to order the modern city ways that sought to embody and envision the concepts of precision, authority and security. It recreated the city centre as a stage-set, a space where authority and identities of class and gender could be performed and tested."[175] Victorian projects aimed to reach such cleanliness, their large safe streets were mainly used for movement and nowhere was there a space for collective encounters—both the shady colonnade on Regent Street and the indecorous Holywell Street were ultimately demolished.

Once the street was cleared, the fear for social crimes diminished and a new middle-class culture, with its needs entirely satisfied by individualism and commerce, could rise.[176] The middle class was safe to appear on a clean street, to regulate its social interactions, and, most importantly, to manage its spaces of appearance against the presence of the working class. The rise of class division and the consequent urban inhabitation and individual habits, as well as the urban infrastructures as the only stage of collective life, are Victorian values that set the roots of modern London. These were, however, not rituals as we intend them in this thesis: they were tame, codified, and standardised behaviours of a portion of society, which favoured the rise of a truer form of ritual practice that gradually found its space in the city, as demonstrated in the projects of Regent Street, first, and, later, Trafalgar Square. However, both projects were characterised by the constant struggle between policing, enclosure, and

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[174] J. C. Robertson, T. Byerley, *London,* 1823, III, 353-5, in Olsen, p, 56

[175] Gunn, 54

[176] Gunn, 78

transgression, and, ultimately, they both stand as another failure of the built form to control and prevent the emerging rituals of society.

The end of the nineteenth century revealed that collective ritual can survive in the form of civic discontent, whose belief is stored in a political credo that is opposed to the one exercised by the ruling class. The rise of the working class and its discontent, led to the appropriation of new rituals to oppose the ones controlled by the habitus of society and with them, ultimately, challenging the authority on space and the right to the city. The organised protest movement that began in the middle of the nineteenth century took advantage of the urban values of the infrastructure and the social meaning of its architecture. This new ritual, in fact, used the street as the only remaining stage for political life and civic participation, the only space of democracy, where the crowd becomes a community.

A century later, Colin Ward and Anthony Fyson wrote that we have to educate ourselves on the street again: the essential attributes of the street are not taught to architects and planners, let alone to the citizens; freedom of the street is freedom of the city.[177] Echoed in the Parisian motto *la beauté est dans la rue* [the beauty is in the street],[178] which promoted the street and the infrastructure to spaces for collective ritual that belong entirely to the citizens, their social processes, and human relationships. In the following chapter, we will read how two protest movements in London combine the diverse complexities of ritual, its performance, its need for regulations, and its collective belief together with the architecture of the street. Both movements translate a protest formally in the space of the city by taking advantage of its reduced space of collectiveness and, eventually, create an alternative urban form that implicitly but actively denounces the need for an anthropological approach to architecture and urban design.

[177] Ward, Fyson, 17-18

[178] *La beauté est dans la rue* is a poster made by famous art student movement, Atelier Populaire. This series of posters that the collective attached across the city, became the symbols of the whole '68 student movement of the time, spanning from feminist's connotation to more grounded right to occupy, this movement remained of crucial relevance for the contemporary protest that liven up our cities: from occupy to 2010 student protest, the May 68 remained of great reference.

5 – REBEL WITH A CAUSE

Transgression as an act of design

5.1 Margins of resistance

Rituals in Victorian London were divided between individual habits and collective civic actions: the former, circumscribed the activities in middle-class domestic space,[1] while the latter, aimed to "merge the identity of the corporation with the city, so that the city, its trades and institutions, were the subjects of simultaneous celebrations."[2] The grand gestures of civic architectures—town halls, shopping malls, arcades, railway termini, and so on—spatially affirmed the middle class and the rituals around these buildings were organised to strengthen their symbolic civic authority. Collective rituals were thus associated with grand civic events, such as royal celebrations and openings of town halls, and less notable events like the unveiling of memorials and statues, the inauguration of public buildings, processions, and festivals.[3] These Victorian events strengthened and, perhaps, even welcomed the definition of rituals as ceremonial sequences of actions that follow a prescribed order,[4] resulting in processions and parades, where all the population was invited to participate.

However, the civic space, as mentioned in the previous chapter, was predominantly a stage for male citizens and women's involvement, for instance, was "perceived as largely passive, as spectators of organisers of private events."[5] Until the 1850s, collective rituals in the space of the city remained widely associated with civic procession where civic authority and economic status were aligned and legible in the hierarchical order that dictated the participation in such events:[6] gentleman on the stage and women and members of the working classes in the audience.

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[1] On this topic the work of John R. Gillis on the ritualisation of the middle-class life, was mentioned in the previous chapter: "by the 1870s, family and domestic space had become the site of a great deal of symbolic activity previously located in other places such as the church or the community. The sacredness of the Victorian home was more than just a metaphor." Gillis, 214-215

[2] Gunn, 169

[3] Gunn, 167

[4] From *The Oxford Dictionary of English Language.*

[5] Gunn, 172

[6] "It was customary for the town's largest employers to be invited as 'gentlemen' where they were not council members and named individually in the press reports, this adding economic to political weight" Gunn, 173

However, next to this majestic civic spectacle of social order,[7] there were other "social movements"[8] that gradually took a political form in the city: "from the 1860s," wrote Simon Gunn, "popular participation occurred on different terms, trade and friendly societies using such events to assert an independent social identity."[9] What differentiated these processions from the civic-based ones was the composition of its mass: "nearly every group in the line belonged to the same larger combination of workmen."[10] These were also disciplined marches that, Gunn claimed, were taken equally as demonstration of civic order, a respectable model of collective behaviour, different from other forms of popular protest in London or abroad, as they performed their actions as a "self-regulating urban community that policed itself through its own inherent coded of conduct. Order was maintained less by the overt assertion of authority than by the tacit rules that regulated the ritual itself."[11] They were a rival public spectacle to the approved civic demonstration controlled by the authority and performed by the wealthy middle class: "by linking visibility, identity and power in explicit yet exclusive ways in the nineteenth century it paved the way for the return of the repressed in the early twentieth."[12]

Collective rituals, in the 1800s, were events that combined the civic with a spectacle. Such identification reminds us of the common understanding of rituals as parades and processions through the street that include the use of ceremonial dress.[13] However, in this conventional definition of rituals, one particular aspect that relates rituals to performance emerges. This is a parallel emphasised by Victor Turner and his theories around the anthropology of performance, in which he uses often the term "social drama"[14] to explain the liminal condition of rituals not necessarily as ordered rigid scripted actions but as a *critical* moment in the social process: "social dramas," writes Turner, are public actions, "units of aharmonic or disharmonic social process, arising in conflict situations."[15]

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[7] "Press reports of the crowds noted not only their size and orderliness, but also their precise social composition." Gunn, 166. The *Manchester Guardian* talked about a "community based upon the orderly, sober and peaceful industry of the middle classes". *Manchester Guardian*, 11 October, 1851: 8

[8] Social movement is here intended in the definition of Charles Tilly, "social movements will contain the significant strata of society such as workers, women's groups, students, youth and the intellectual component […] By the turn of the twenty-first century, people all over the world recognized the term "social movement" as a trumpet call as a counterweight to oppressive power, as a summons to popular action against a wide range of scourges." Tilly, 1-3.

[9] Gunn, 173

[10] *Manchester Guardian*, 22 June 1874: 5

[11] Gunn, 175

[12] Gunn, 182

[13] From *The Oxford Dictionary of English Language.*

[14] Turner 1975, 37; Turner 1987, 74. Robbie Davis-Floyd too in her entry "Ritual" in the *International Encyclopaedia of Social Science,* discusses performance and framing as two fundamental characters of rituals: "Like a play, ritual is performed, often giving it an element of high drama. […] A major part of ritual's job is to imbue participants with a strong sense of the value, validity, and importance of the belief system being enacted." Davis-Floyd, 261

[15] Turner 1987, 74

Such actions begin with a *breach* of norm-governed social relations, creating a *crisis*, which generates a *liminal* condition within which social action takes place. The crisis could then be redressed, by creating a dialogue between the authority and the performers, a step that could eventually lead to the reintegration of the social group in society.[16] This definition of social drama is strengthened by Turner's understanding of rituals as a "transformative performance revealing major classifications, categories and contradictions of cultural processes."[17]

In this chapter, we will investigate this performative condition of rituals by looking at the contemporary city and the spatial consequences derived from the political presence of such performative social dramas. The state of collective rituals in contemporary London manages to, in fact, combine both the discontent of the marginalised faction of society with the performative actions of ritual processes. These performances reflect and react to the current condition of collective spaces, whose nature is blurred between private ownership and infrastructure. If the late 1800s witnessed the erosion of the collective sphere in favour for its infrastructural nature, then, today, that same nature is embraced and considered to be an obstacle for collective gathering. The collapse of the collective sphere might be the death of civic spaces as Sennett and Douglas recognised,[18] but it has not prevented the staging of collective discontent, which must, indeed, be considered a form of collective gathering. Unsatisfaction is, therefore, spatialised into a marginal condition, one that bell hooks describes as a space of possibility, a central location for a new subjectivity to emerge, "for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives [...] it is a site one stays in, clings even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist."[19] This definition of spaces of resistance accompanies this final chapter on the contemporary city and its rituals, as an opportunity to see, create, and imagine an alternative form.

5.2 Notting Hill Carnival and Extinction Rebellion: two social dramas

Protests, since the mid-nineteenth century in England, have usually been identified with political acts of discontent, disapproval, or objection, usually conducted by a part of the population who feels exploited, seeking to improve the socio-economic condition of their lives.[20] Minimum wages and living conditions, in general, were amongst the most vocal discussions conducted by the working class at the

[16] Turner 1975, 37-41

[17] Turner 1987, 75

[18] Sennett (1977); Douglas (1970)

[19] hooks 2015, 150

[20] Tilly, 46

turn of the century,[21] in what we can call their act of *appearance*[22]—an act that becomes political and clearly manifests in the spaces of the city, like Trafalgar Square.

Later, in the mid-twentieth century, in what was the initial form of post-colonial London, unsatisfaction grew into a racial discussion: the struggles of ethnic minorities in certain areas of the city echoed some of the requests of the lower classes in previous decades, but they sometimes developed into a different form of collective gathering: one that sits between a protest and a performance. The location was also different this time, the actions took place in marginal spaces across the city, such as the residential areas of the West End, in particular, in the boroughs of Kensington and Chelsea in North-West London. Here, since the 1950s, a strong community of West Indians consolidated around what became one of the most important ritual events of post-colonial England: the Notting Hill Carnival.

Today, the Notting Hill Carnival is considered a joyous, hedonistic ritual that takes place at the end of summer, although it is often forgotten that it was initially a response to the Notting Hill riots in 1958,[23] Journalist Darcus Howe wrote, "if there weren't race riots in Notting Hill I don't believe that we would have had the Notting Hill Carnival. If it wasn't for the murder of Kelso Cochrane, Carnival wouldn't have happened."[24] Similarly, Jules Walter, an actor and the cousin of Cochrane, declared: "The Carnival came out of a situation of rebellion, a bohemian rebellion against the whole society. It was created by people who were left out of the structure by the conservative society."[25] The carnival is

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[21] "Published in May 1838, the People's Charter issued from negotiation and compromise between radical and reformist leaders. It dropped, for example, radical demands for female suffrage and a ten-hour limit to the working day. […] the center of gravity remained the collective placing of demands to equalize political rights in the United Kingdom […] the Chartist movement provided a seedbed and a template for the nineteenth century's major popular mobilizations" Tilly, 46-48. Their demands were:
"1. Universal [that is, adult male] suffrage;
2. secret ballots [instead of viva voce voting] in parliamentary elections;
3. annual parliaments;
4. Salaries for Members of Parliament;
5. abolition of property requirements for membership in Parliament; and 6. Equal electoral districts across the country." Black, 127-31

[22] *Spaces of Appearance* across the thesis are intended in Arendtian terms, as a manifestation in the political life of the city. Arendt, 199

[23] The Notting Hill riots started because of the continuous attack from a criminal gang of white English boys named Teddy Boys. They were backed by Sir Oswald Mosley, the founder of the pre-war British Union of Fascist (1932). The dissatisfaction towards the growing number of Black families in the Notting Hill area escalated in the Summer of 1958, when the Teddy boys began systematic aggressions toward any Black men, Black women or White woman who was seen with Black men, until they seriously injured five Black men in Shepherd's Bush and Notting Hill. Riots started on the 30th August and ended on the 5th September, with arrest of mostly White people. Even if the riots calmed down, racial behaviour towards Black communities continued, leading to the stabbing of Kelso Cochrane, in Kensal New Town by a group of White men in 1959. There is not much material on the event, with the exception of some articles from newspapers like the Guardian or the Independent. However Michael La Rose discusses in dept the origin of the Carnival in his article "40 Years of Notting Hill Carnival: an assessment of the history and its future" in "*Soca News*" (July 2004). A recent book by Mark Olden, *Murder in Notting Hill,* was published by ZeroBooks in 2011.

[24] Blagrove, 24

[25] Blagrove, 78

said to have started in 1958, when political and cultural activist Claudia Jones proposed the organisation of a Caribbean carnival as an act of pride in support of the Black community targeted by the attacks of white supremacists backed by the police. It was the middle of winter in London, therefore, the Carnival could only be organised indoors. St. Pancras Town Hall was chosen as a venue at first[26] and it was later moved to Seymour Hall. The celebrations involved a small outdoor procession with a band, costumes, and a series of indoor events, like a beauty contest and a prize ceremony for the best costume in the parade. Until Jones' death in 1964, the Carnival remained a one-day Caribbean ritual, a popular source of pride for West Indians. In 1965, the first Notting Hill Carnival was finally staged. It was a great success, with its colourful parades and marching bands; it was also documented by photographer and filmmaker Horace Ove.

It was the half-Native American Rhaune Laslett,[27] in collaboration with the London Free School,[28] who officially moved the Carnival into the street, a move that made it the famous Notting Hill Festival.[29] Rhaune Laslett had connections with the police, the local community, and other social organisations around the area: her central role was crucial to get permission to have a festival on the streets.[30] The first Notting Hill Carnival, under the supervision of Rhaune Laslett in 1966, "was an eclectic union of individuals and groups under the umbrella of the London Free School and cooperating across cultural, class, racial and religious boundaries. The objective was to entertain the children of the areas, to lift the spirit of those who lived in poor slum conditions, to ease the racial tensions still persisting in the wake of the race riots of 1958 and to demonstrate the spirit of cooperation common to the progressives and activists who lived and operated in the area."[31] All of this took the form of a festival on the street, which consisted of a parade and a variety of shows in All Saints Hall and an inter-pub dart match.[32] Initially, it was entirely addressed to the children of the area, in fact, Rhaune Laslett "used to rent a truck and the children would be on the back of the truck

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[26] St Pancras Town Hall was the meeting place for the Camden Borough Council until 1965. It was briefly used as a venue for events, with its large assembly hall on the ground floor. Amongst which list the first Notting Hill Carnival in 1958.

[27] Lasslet "was a notable figure in the community of Notting Hill, who had adopted a proactive role in healing the racial tensions in the area since the race riots in 1958 and the 1959 murder of Kelso Cochrane. She set up an adventure playground called "Shanty Town" for the children of the community and established a voluntary Neighbourhood Service that provided free 24-hours legal advice to immigrants, local residents and the homeless." Blagrove, 12

[28] This was "a community action adult education project co-founded by Laslett with photographer and political activist John Hoppy Hopkins and an amorphous group of contributors drawn from the local community" Carnival p.12

[29] This separation between the figure of Claudia Jones and Rhaune Lasslet is of crucial importance for the Carnival organisation, still today. Claudia Jones is erroneously considered the inventor of the carnival as the street parade it is today. Rhaune Lasslet is often left out from the story, since a white woman cannot be associated with the Carnival. See Blagrove Jr., 46, 47.

[30] Blagrove, 53

[31] Blagrove, 14

[32] La Rose, 2004

and their parents would make them different costumes and feathers."[33] It was a "multicultural affair," wrote Michael La Rose: the carnival was not only a Caribbean event, it was the result of the whole community coming together: wrestlers, musicians, activists, writers, and, artists in general all "came together with no one really sure of what is was going to be."[34]

It was when Leslie Palmer took over the role of leader of the organisation that the Carnival was transformed into a festival of popular culture with an estimated 150,000 participants.[35] Palmer was a young Trinidadian who continued Laslett's educational approach towards the carnival. Palmer's intention was to expand the audience of the carnival by embracing the "British born young black who were more interested in reggae and sound-system."[36]

A similar convivial approach towards the socio-political state of the city is expanded in the actions of Extinction Rebellion (XR) on the stage of contemporary London. Albeit far more organised than the first carnival events in Notting Hill, XR published a handbook, *This is not a Drill. An Extinction Rebellion Handbook*, which explained their strategy for rebellion in 2018. XR describes itself as "an international movement that uses non-violent civil disobedience in an attempt to halt mass extinction and minimise the risk of social collapse."[37] XR is a more globalised movement, which bases its actions on three key demands: "1. The government must tell the truth by declaring a climate and ecological emergency, working with other institutions to communicate the urgency for change; 2. The government must act now to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse-gas emissions to net zero by 2025; 3. The government must create and be led by the decision of a Citizens' Assembly on climate and ecological justice."[38]

The strategy of XR is to respond to the climate crisis by staging the crisis in the space of the city. For their first action, on the October 31, 2018, six-thousand people converged in London "to peacefully block five major bridges across the Thames. We planted trees in the middle of Parliament Square, and dug a hole there to bury a coffin representing our future. We super-glued ourselves to the gates of Buckingham Palace as we read a letter to the Queen."[39] XR physically decentralised their battle

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[33] Blagrove, 67

[34] Blagrove, 74

[35] La Rose, 2004

[36] LaRose, 2004

[37] XR website

[38] XR, 11

[39] XR website

throughout spaces of the city, making their actions more invasive and arterial. Their actions are cyclically run every year and are intermitted by a smaller, but equally clamorous, set of actions: "It has to go on day after day. We all know A-to-B marches get us nowhere – and the truth is, neither does blocking a capital city for a day. It's in the news and then its over. To create a real economic cost for the bosses, you have to keep at it. The first day or two no one is bothered, After a few days it become 'an issue.' After a week it's a 'national crisis.' This is because each day your block a city the economic costs go up exponentially—increasing each day."[40] This performative discontent is, in fact, not something we have witnessed before, it is a rather unprecedented act. When recalling the riots that took place at Lincoln's Inn Fields and Trafalgar Square, discussed in previous chapters, it becomes clear how these were more insurgent reactions than planned prolonged acts: the stress was expressed more in a burst more than in a long duration.

If we extract, for a moment, the term "protest," from its context, we realise how this performative nature is part of its genesis. Etymologically, the word comes from the Latin *protestari*, meaning "to bear witness publicly." The presence of the public is, therefore, a fundamental presence in the understanding of the protest as a ritual, as a collective and political act of appearance. Paraphrasing Berger's words about the '68 revolution, mass protest diverges from a simple mass gathering, because it is an act whose main function is to congregate in order to conceive a message:[41] protesters are rebels *with* a cause. Another crucial detail of the performative protest is that audience and participants of a mass protest are both aware of the message, which is the most ritualistic aspect of a protest, bringing us back to the recurring words written by Durkheim, ritual is a product of social causes. The message to be conveyed by protesters and shared by their audience is usually built upon principles and meanings, which are considered the shared, common faith amongst all the participants in the gathering—Environmentalism, for XR, is a belief, as much as social justice is the hope of the Notting Hill West Indian community.

This chapter will look at these contemporary forms of transgressions. A transgression that is possibly endorsed by a diverse range of collective movements: from revolutions to protests and from disobediences to occupations, it can be labelled accordingly. The act of transgression is a reactive form of resistance to this legislative and political power that administers citizens' life, becoming a "symbolic transgression"[42] and, therefore, a protest can be defined as a manifestation of mistrust of those powers

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[40] XR, 102

[41] Berger 1969 "A mass demonstration distinguishes itself from other mass crowds because it congregates in public to create its function, instead of forming in response to one: in this, it differs from any assembly of workers within their place of work – even when strike action is involved – or from any crowd of spectators. It is an assembly which challenges what is given by the mere fact of its coming together"

[42] Turner, 75.

that alienate citizens from their individual and collective will, controlling their life and goods.[43] Yet, what clearly consolidates those forms of ritual gathering is their counteractive response to the status quo, resulting from the legislation that our governments prescribe for society's public—and private—life. For reasons of contrast against and dissatisfaction with the status quo, the most common connotation of a transgressive act is usually perceived as damaging and occasionally harmful.

The Notting Hill Carnival and Extinction Rebellion are both transgressive rituals that are planned and staged and use the city as their own stage: London becomes the theatre for their rebellion. This active relationship with urban space allows us to decipher a new image of the city: staging rituals across the city means transforming streets into camps, pathways into debates sessions, and bridges into squares. These rituals reveal an alternative city and a new palimpsest that can teach architects to challenge the current standardised architecture of the city. We opened this thesis mentioning the case study of XR to anticipate the case for the contemporary rituals in the city. However, we will now look at it more closely, more specifically, we will fragment their actions and trace them back to the Notting Hill Carnival to understand in more detail the origin of the performative act of protest in London and its consequences on the city.

5.3 A transgression to the norm is a secular ritual

XR defines its non-violent tactic as an act of transgression to the rule, meaning any type of rule, from the one issued by the state to the most basic distancing measures in the use of a privately owned urban space. This form of unlawful rebellion brings us back to the origin myth of a protest in Western society, the one embodied by the Greek heroine Antigone, narrated by Sophocles in the homonymous tragedy around 440 BCE. Antigone is widely considered to be the first civil disobedient, the first rebel against the injustice of a totalitarian power.[44] The choice of dignifying her brother Polynices with a proper burial against the will of Creon, King of Thebes, turned the tragedy into a myth that became the first Western act of transgression.

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[43] Arendt 1968, 150

[44] Sophocles' *Antigone* has been the subject of numerous socio-political readings from Hegel's reading of Antigone as representative of the conflict between family and polis, between divine law and human law, in both his *Philosophy of the right* (1967) and *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977); Lacan's one that sees Antigone as the real ethical and moral hero, who feels no pity or fear, in *Seminar VII, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (1992); and the feminist reading of Judith Butler, who tries to overcome the dichotomy between kinship and sociality, preferring to focus on a reading around the forces of power and desire that guide Antigone in her choice making her the unconscious hero of an unwritten law. *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death* (2002).

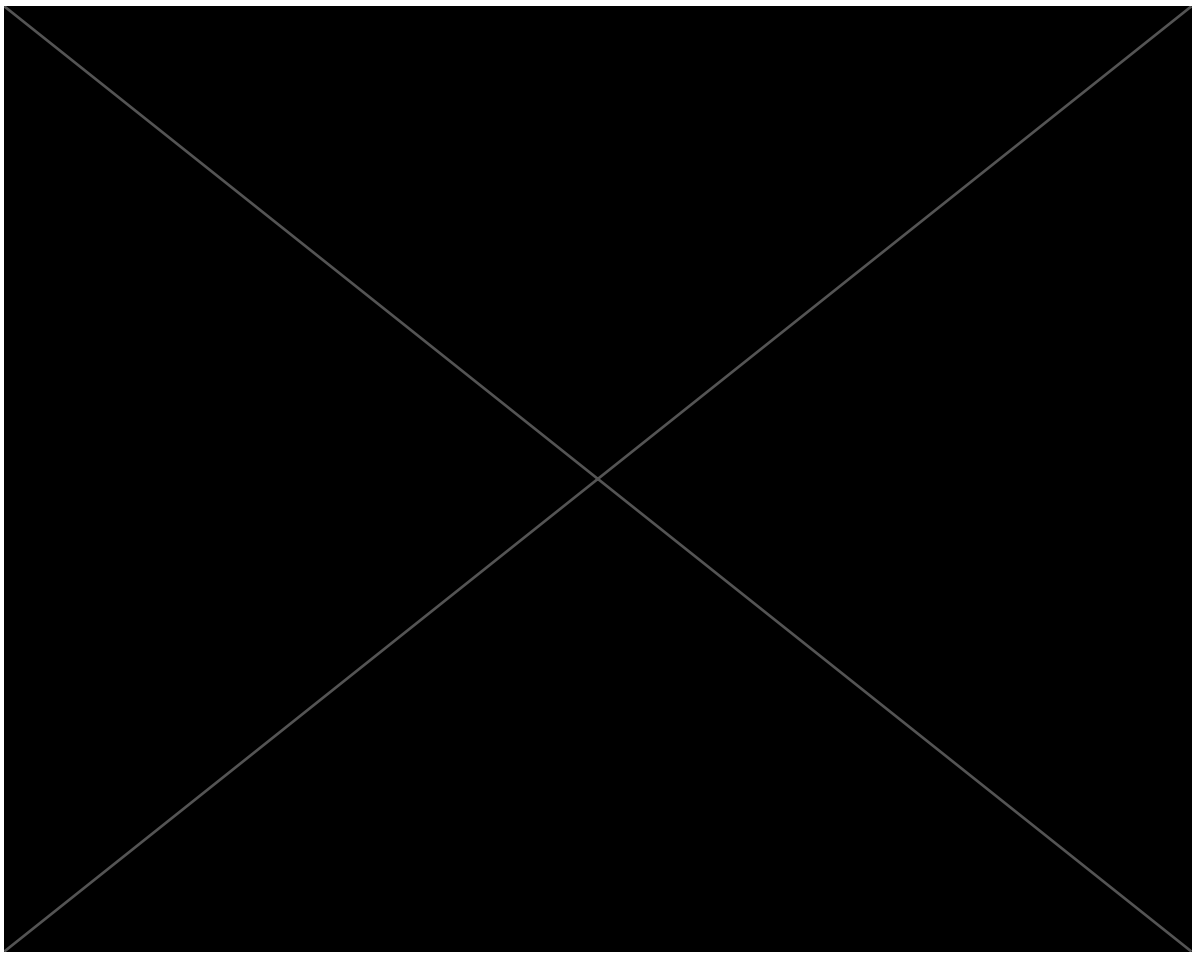

Fig. 5.1 - Norblin de la Gourdaine ,Sèbastien Louis Guillaume, *Antigone buries Polynices*, 1825.

CREON: And that law, knowing, thou didst dare to break?
ANTIGONE: I deemed it not the voice of Zeus that spake
That herald's word, not yet did Justice, she
Whose throne is beyond death, give such decree
To hold among mankind.[45]

[45] Antigone, p.38 vv. 451-455

"Transgression" etymologically comes from the Latin construct *trans-gredio,* which means "going over, going across." Transgression, therefore, refers to a change of state, which in spatial and anthropological terms is referred to as "liminality."[46] It is an interruption, which, in the world of a protest, becomes an act that *interrupts* the regular life of the street.[47] With this understanding, protests will be considered a secular, urban ritual: the most latent and strident collective actions in our cities are the only ones capable of exposing the friction between behaviours and fixed urban form. Moreover, in a contemporary city like London, heavily monitored by cameras and profoundly controlled by customs and conventions, a protest, capable of transgressing rules and legislations and mediating our collecting living, becomes a breath in the urban scene, where the city is, just for one moment, challenged by a ritual, by a transgressive act.

Legislations are, today, the sole intermediary of democracy. Since the Victorian period, in order to live cohesively together in collective spaces, individuals were meant to observe rules, norms, and regulations, to which they tended to become accustomed, "and they can no longer do without it. They need it as they need food and anything else which is part of their existence."[48] We have seen how this particular shift slowly began at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the act of governance moved from being a legislation constructed according to the king's will to a legislation built upon the individual needs of citizens who constructed the public sphere. The French Revolution was the stepping-stone for this achievement in Western culture: it fought for equal human rights, yet, later on, the very same reason became the main interest of the state, who used it as a means to finally enlarge its hegemony through the presence of law. According to Hegel, after the French Revolution, an act of disobedience anticipated—without foreseeing—the institutionalisation of the purpose of the fight: the exception became the norm.[49] Rights becoming rules represents one of the inevitable stigmas of rituals: rituals, once ingrained in society, once institutionalised, can be turned into an instrument of control of society at large.

Before 1789, there was no mention of civic rights, which are now the focal centre of a government's legitimacy that uses citizens' rights as an excuse for enhancing protection. Hegel writes that this legitimisation of rights "had become the dominant strategy or justifying political institution,"[50] the end of the eighteenth century, signs the shift of the possession of rights from being an indicator of

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[46] In the prologue we have discussed liminality as an important anthropological concept, Arnold Van Gennep discusses it in his rites of passages as passages of social status, or Victor Turner discusses liminality as a halt of social structure as typical of rituals.

[47] Berger, 1969

[48] Canetti, p.25

[49] Smith, 1989

[50] Smith, 253

freedom to an indicator of belonging to an appropriate social and political group, what Bourdieu defines *habitus*, which the government can control and protect.[51] Governments began exercising control over the individual by addressing issues of security through what Foucault calls a biopolitical power, following which Western society treats human beings as a species,[52] who they direct through "policing"[53] individuals' behaviour towards a healthy and secure way of life.[54] Individuals began to be considered an instrument of the state: they lived and worked in order to contribute to the efficiency of the machine. Yet, through a "conduct of conducts"[55] issued by the state, each citizen can self-govern both its individual and social identity, constructing what we have come to know as the Western subject, a legal entity between "subjugation and empowerment."[56]

Hannah Arendt writes that "the highest purpose of politics was the guaranty of security"[57] and law guaranteeing an "undisturbed development" of collective political life—*vita active*—assuring that security.[58] Law became a facilitator of maintaining morally correct behaviour in public spaces, which, back then, began to be inhabited by a coexistence of subjectivities, what Ancient Greeks called *synoikismos.*[59] This favoured its mutation into the endurance of security and control of risks, which are mainly exercised on the space of the infrastructure: here, regulations of all sorts, from speed limits to moral street codes, are applied in order to reduce accidents. Risk, therefore, jeopardises our wellbeing in the public realm and, hence, it legitimises the law to intervene on public order, health and safety,

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[51] This might echo Bourdieu's theory on habitus as a behavioural social structure, which we considered in the previous chapter.

[52] Foucault, 1

[53] Foucault, 322

[54] Foucault, 323-328

[55] Lorey, 34

[56] Lorey, 33

[57] Arendt 1968, p. 150

[58] Arendt 1968, pp. 146-151. Hannah Arendt acknowledges that the highest presence of freedom in life is not to be found in the *vita activa*, yet in the *vita contemplativa*. The abstention to the political sphere. Not by chance "when freedom made its first appearance in our philosophical tradition, it was the experience of religious conversion. –of Paul first and then of Augustine – which gave rise to it"

[59] Aristotle talks about the polis as a coexistence of *oikos*, households. "[…]natural unit established to meet all man's daily needs... then, when a number of *oikia* are first united for the satisfaction of something more than day-to-day needs, the result is the village... finally the ultimate partnership, made up of numbers of villages and having already attained the height... of self sufficiency - this is the polis." Politics 1, 1252-3. After him Thucydides and Pericles, both recognised in *synoikismos* the origin of the Polis. In London this is spatially translated into the work of Nicholas Hawksmoor, who, through his project of churches designed in the eastern end of the city promoted the shift of collective life from indoor to outdoor. Hawksmoor freed the collective from the constraint of an indoor space –the church–, but in doing so his projects welcomed the emergence of law in collective spaces. This is the topic of the first chapter *From church to precinct. The birth of collective spaces.* This chapter focuses on the work of Christopher Wren and Nicholas Hawksmoor and their role on the commission of the reconstruction of the 50 churches under the reign of Charles II at the turn of the 17C and 18C After the Great Fire in 1666, Wren re-constructed the churches in the city of London where they were and as they were; while Hawksmoor uses those churches in order to expand the boundaries of the city towards the East End. More importantly he designed an adjacent outdoor space to each church, allowing the collective to choose whether to use the indoor or the outdoor space as an expression of their collective ritual. He introduced the outdoor collective form in London.

and employment and consumer protection. Our interaction with law gives us the perception of collective conformity, we have accepted, by now, the legitimacy of law as the abiding vigilant eye on our collective living, as a collective expectation and a reliable source of collective living.[60]

5.4 The politics of (non)violence

Protests are a form of secular ritual that still survive today in the city. Albeit no longer directly associated with class-struggles, protests are still identified with violence.[61] The act of *appearance* of a protest, its performance, carries a series of conflicts and confrontations, which might be perceived as dangerous and harmful and whose intensity might damage the principles and messages that guide the protest as a political act. Violence and confrontation are the main, potentially derogative characters of a protest, they are both used by the media to reduce protest to an act without argument or speech that does not consider its possible consequences.[62] This particular connotation identifies the protest with a violent act of disruption, one that is supposedly inclined towards becoming a criminal action of deviance, yet it must survive as an act of communication that addresses a change in the political government and in society. In order to endure this vocal political presence, a protest must be credible, and such credibility is heavily dependent on the use of violence.[63]

Yet, the use of violence can also be read as an act of resistance, derived from a lack of communication and intended to promote justice and civil rights: the student protest that exploded in 2010, who, though fighting for a valid cause—the unjustified increase of tuition fees—are, today, unfortunately remembered merely for the violent outcome of their actions. Violence can, therefore, be interpreted as a rational response that aims to readdress the irrationality of injustice and the logic of damage stands as a communicative and intrinsic act of the protest, which results as a consequence of the lack of communication between the decisions of the government and the ones who are directly affected by them.[64]

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[60] On this note an extensive reading has been given by Sir Jonathan Sumption in his Reith Lecture in 2019. Jonathan Sumption underlines how in the 17C under the absolute monarchy, law acted to assure security, while in 20C law's intervention in our lives became a collective expectation, a reliable source of collective living. Lord Sumption claims that from an absolute monarchy we moved to an absolute democracy. What we can learn from this, is that the reason why law has always been present in collective living, is mainly because it calls for conformity, it allows us to behave coherently within a space inhabited by a coexistence of subjectivities, and it is what in the previous chapters have been described as a necessary rule for a collective living.

[61] What Cammaerts calls "symbolic damage tactic", violence becomes part of protests' struggle for visibility. Cammaerts, 531

[62] Cammaerts, 527

[63] Ralph H. Turner, defined two different potential means of credibility of a protest: length and apparent spontaneity. Both of which we will see coexisting in XR. "First of all it must extend through a long period which encourage "powerlessness and grievances"; spontaneity must come clear. any intentional violence weaken the credibility of the protest. this should come as unplanned. without being totally seen as naïve" Turner 1969 p. 819

[64] Cammaerts, 528. In this conflict, Bart Cammaerts, recognises three possible uses of political violence: revolutions, propaganda by the deed (or act of terror), insurrectionary symbolic damage. All three are efficacious in bringing to the foreground a public discontent, while enhancing the communicative proneness of the act of protest to publicly reveal the illegitimacy of the private

It must be acknowledged that violence is not forcefully initiated by a protest gathering, but it mostly emerges as a consequence of a confrontation against police, which is the body that exercises the legislation issued by the state.[65] And this encounter between forces is not always peaceful, often due to the intervention of the police. This was the case of the Notting Hill Riots in 1958, when the police backed the White supremacist gang against the violent response of the Caribbean community armed with "Molotov cocktails and fighting skills." [66] John Berger, in his analysis of the 1968 protests, writes about a choice that the authorities can make: to let the crowd live or disperse it with violence. The latter is usually the favourite route of police forces, who use it as a threat, which "is essentially symbolic. But by attacking the demonstration authority ensures that the symbolic event becomes an historical one: an event to be remembered, to be learnt from, to be avenged."[67] In 1986, a new Public Order Act was issued in the UK, which aimed to monitor the public sphere in its collective life: processions and assemblies, sporting events alongside riots, public disorders, and unlawful assemblies and affrays. This justified political violence, as a possibly damaging vehicle of protest, allows the same violence to be used as an instrument of policing. In 2022, the police crime sentencing and court bill extended and strengthened the 1986 act by giving more power to the police to interrupt and disperse the crowd, essentially allowing them to interrupt any kind of collective gathering.[68]

Violence can be a typical consequence of unthoughtful and abrupt decisions, which goes against some of the principles of XR actions. For the group, in fact, the disruptive action must be planned as a

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[65] Williams, 116. This form of protest is a performance of a protest, something that has been recognised in the student protests in the UK in 2010 (4 days of protests: 50.000 to 30.000 in the last day, 10th November, 24th November, 30th November, 9th December)

[66] La Rose, 2004

[67] Berger 1969

[68] The 1986 Act creates new public offences, replacing some of the common law offences of the 1936 Public Order Act –An Act to prohibit the wearing of uniforms in connection with political objects and the maintenance by private persons of associations of military or similar character; and to make further provision for the preservation of public order on the occasion of public processions and meetings and in public places. The *1986 Public Order Act* introductory statement reads: "An Act to abolish the common law offences of riot, rout, unlawful assembly and affray and certain statutory offences relating to public order; to create new offences relating to public order; to control public processions and assemblies; to control the stirring up of racial hatred; to provide for the exclusion of certain offenders from sporting events; to create a new offence relating to the contamination of or interference with goods; to confer power to direct certain trespassers to leave land; to amend section 7 of the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act 1875, section 1 of the Prevention of Crime Act 1953, Part V of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 and the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985; to repeal certain obsolete or unnecessary enactments; and for connected purposes." *Public Order Act 1986: Chapter 64*. The implementation of this Act is the *Police, Crime, Sentencing, and Courts Act* issued in 2022, which reads: "An Act to make provision about the police and other emergency workers; to make provision about collaboration between authorities to prevent and reduce serious violence; to make provision about offensive weapons homicide reviews; to make provision for new offences and for the modification of existing offences; to make provision about the powers of the police and other authorities for the purposes of preventing, detecting, investigating or prosecuting crime or investigating other matters; to make provision about the maintenance of public order; to make provision about the removal, storage and disposal of vehicles; to make provision in connection with driving offences; to make provision about cautions; to make provision about bail and remand; to make provision about sentencing, detention, release, management and rehabilitation of offenders; to make provision about secure 16 to 19 Academies; to make provision for and in connection with procedures before courts and tribunals; and for connected purposes." *Police, Crime, Sentencing, and Courts Act 2022:* Chapter 32

long-term strategy,[69] only through time, it is capable of remaining in the consciousness of society and making a cultural impact. The extended period of performance and the element of surprise is what can only be perceived by the authorities as an issue, because it can become influential and gravitate the attention of a broader public. A planned method of disruption is the key factor to being effective and persuasive in delivering a political message. This is one of the strengths of XR's actions: when they appeared on the street during the autumn of 2018, they managed to occupy the bridges of Southwark, Blackfriars, Waterloo, Westminster, and Lambeth, in an act of civil rebellion: "we shut down five iconic locations in central London: Oxford Circus, Marble Arch, Waterloo Bridge, Piccadilly Circus and Parliament Square. We stayed there for ten days, delivering a rolling programme of speeches, discussions and public assemblies. We closed down fossil-fuels companies, clocked the roads around the Treasury and glued ourselves to the London Stock Exchange. We attempted to case as much economic disruption as we possibly could."[70]

Violence, according to XR, is a brilliant tool that funnels attention, yet it can be very counterproductive if it is used to create a discussion on progressive change: the group claims that "violence destroys democracy and the relationships with the opponents which are vital to creating peaceful outcomes to social conflict."[71] This is the main reason behind the non-violent action that denies any sort of physical confrontation, and it is also far more efficient than a violent one, which mainly focuses the attention of the opposition on the violence, while completely distracting from the main principles that supported it. The essential modus operandi of a non-violent action is to break the law and transgress the rule, so to put the opposition in front of a dilemma: open to a dialogue or respond with violence.[72] Bart Cammaerts, in his analysis of the 2010 student protest in UK, examines the role of mainstream media as biased and defensive towards the establishment, with what he calls a "symbolic damage tactic"[73] that produces division, negative representation, and delegitimization, yet he argues that by using violence, authorities damage themselves and their international reputation. Besides, this solution would provoke more participation and more actions from protesters, which may eventually escalate into a threat to the stability of the government. [74] If the escalation of such a decision appears quite damaging and irreversible, the dialogue stimulated from a transgression appears to be a more appropriate consequence. Sitting down on roads, painting governmental

[69] XR, 99

[70] XR, 10

[71] XR, 100

[72] Ibid.

[73] Cammaerts, 526

[74] Cammaerts, 527-528

buildings, and blocking a bridge or a road are some of the non-violent actions staged by XR, which are always accompanied by banners that through symbols and words express the non-violent intention as a visual reminder to the public (fig. 5.2).

Fig. 5.2 - XR, October 2018. (XR website)

A non-violent protest aims to disrupt the economic model, the lymph of the state life: if the disruption attacks the economy by interrupting the life of major cities across the country, where the source of the capital is stored, it inevitably causes a state of emergency that requires discussion and revaluation. Non-violence cannot be intended just to be functional and practical, but it is also an ethical foundation of the movement.[75] This particular type of rebellion differs from any precedent for a multiplicity of reasons that we can roughly summarise into three main brackets: a non-violent and peaceful mode of rebellion, the building of a common language in preparation of their performative action, and the use of the city as a stage.[76] In this chapter, we will study how this movement physically

[75] "The alternative, then, is non-violence. This option was, of course, important in the twentieth century, used successfully by the civil rights movements in America and the Indian Independence movement. From all the studies, the message is clear: if you practice non-violence, you are more likely to succeed". XR, 100. On non-violent movements see the famous work of Sharp G. (1973) *The Politics of nonviolent actions*. Boston: Porter Sargent Publisher; Roberts A., Garton T.A. (2009) *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action from Gandhi to the Present*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; Chenoweth E.; Stephan M. J. (2012) *Why Civil Resistance Work. The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press.

[76] In the Rebellion handbook, these three elements are translated in: Disruption, Outreach and Visioning. "to create disruption through mass civil disobedience, towards achieving our demands; to tell the public the truth and bring people together at the protest, or through media; to demonstrate the future we want to see through beautiful creative collaborative actions". XR, 109

translates into the space of the city, as a decentralised network that strategically uses pieces of urban fabric, as arteries that allow an alternative reading of the city to emerge. The non-violent rebellion for XR reaches its peak when it interrupts the daily life of Londoners, when the policy of "business as usual" that identifies London as a highly productive city becomes the most efficient target of the group to awaken society to the dangerous consequences of climate change. The process of interruption of this daily rhythm is to decelerate the usual way of living of society. This is the actual act of protest, the transgression, which, using John Berger's analysis of the '68 student protests, is the interruption of the "regular life of the streets they [the students] march through or of the open spaces they fill. They 'cut off these areas, and, not yet having the power to occupy them permanently, they transform them into a temporary stage on which they dramatise the power they still lack."[77]

5.5 The rise of body-architecture

The enforcement of policing bodies became an unsustainable consequence of a constantly monitored social life, uncovering injustices based on racial prejudices. But as some of the late-nineteenth-century marches demonstrated, the history of the protest should not be identified with a history of violence: a protest can detach from being a mere urban blockage to instead become a space of dialogue, of "moral significance."[78] Here, protesters and law enforcement face one another in a moment of confrontation, in which, whether pacific or not, lies the most vivid and contemporary architecture of the protest. This frontality between protesters and law enforcement can translate into different spatial outcomes: the 1848 French Revolution constructed what became known as the barricade—a structure, originally made of barrels (*barriques*), erected by protesters to protect and defend themselves against foot soldiers, police, and cavalry (fig. 5.3). Being historically the most iconic architecture of the protest, the barricade was not a mere blockage, but it generated a space of physical encounter and potential change. In parallel, the act of construction of the barricade became part of the ritual of protest, which Dominique Raemy defines as a ritual act that "helped focus the participants' attention and strengthen their willingness to resist."[79] From an architectural perspective, the construction of the barricade should be analysed beyond its violent meaning, it becomes a rite of passage that detaches the revolution from the normalcy of daily life. The barricade is, first of all, a gesture that gains meaning in its immediate intention of challenging the authority of the state. (fig. 5.4; 5.5)

A few centuries later, XR faced the contemporary city with a different maturity, acknowledging that the barricades were a product of a socially divided urban context, the same context that, today, turned

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[77] Berger 1969

[78] Leon Trotsky in *Meine Rede vor Gericht*, a speech given at the Meeting of the Special Delegation of the Petersburg Supreme Court on October 17, 1906, quoted in Raemy article in Roger, Voegeli, Widmer, p. 415

[79] The definition of this process as a ritual one is taken by Mark Traugott, who talks about this ritual as a ritual of transition, that of the everyday and that of the revolution, quoted in Raemy article in Roger, Voegeli, Widmer, p. 416

into a "dénominateur minimal commun,"[80] globally normalised by a bureaucratic state and ultimately instrumentalised by law. XR realised that erecting the oxymoron of a barrier of communication was not so effective, because the same clash can be obtained by the presence of bodies in space to interrupt the flux of urban life. If the barricade ceased to be the most vivid physical translation of a protest act, what can be considered to be the architecture of the contemporary protest?

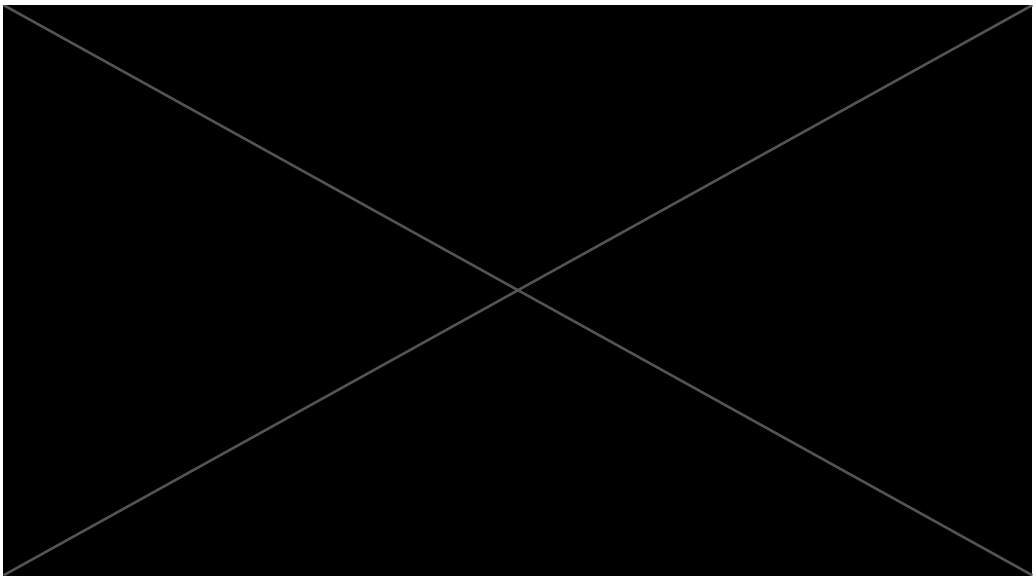

Fig 5.3 - Parisian Communards posing on a barricade in Rue de Flandres on March 18, 1871 (Rogger B., Voegeli J. and Widmer R. *Protest the Aesthetic of Resistance*. 2018)

Fig. 5.4 - October 2018, city airport demonstration. (XR Website)

[80] Choay 2006, p. 362

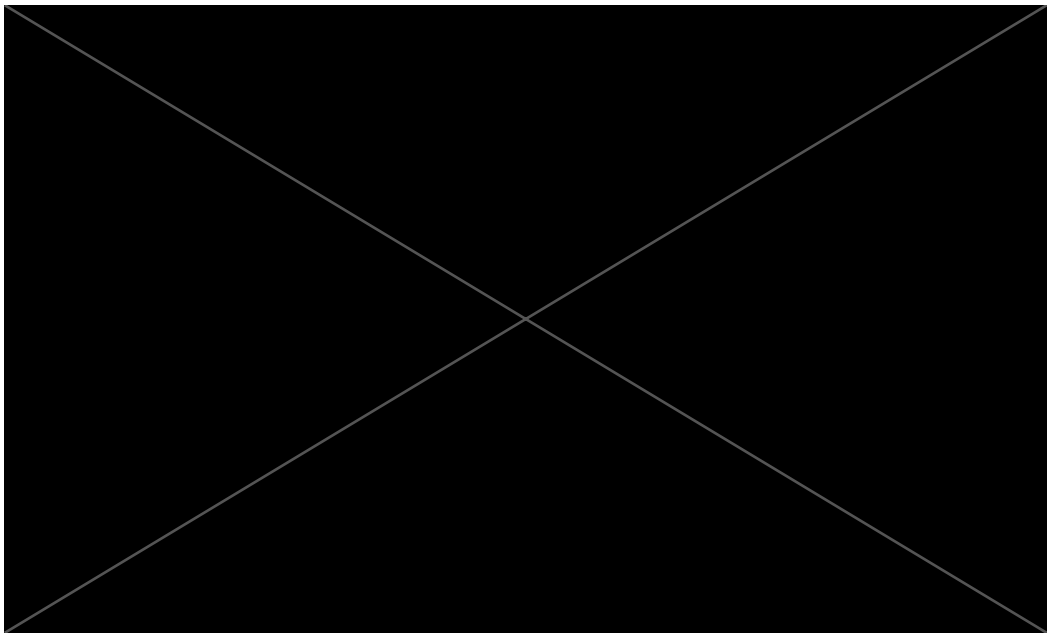

Fig. 5.5 – Acklam Road. Youth go head-to-head with police. (I. Blagrove. *Carnival. A photographic and testimonial history of Notting Hill Carnival.* 2014)

When Alton Sterling, a 37-year-old Black man, was shot to death by two white police officers in Baton Rouge, Louisiana on July 5, 2016, a Black Lives Matters rally was organised and immortalised by one of the most famous pictures of that year. Here, we are not interested in the widely spread analysis of Ieshia Evans as a Warburghian Nymph or as a Superhero,[81] what the photographer Jonathan Bachman captured was the clash, where the physicality of the contemporary protest is grounded. Her body became an architecture and a symbol, simultaneously a space of division and of social encounter. Ieshia Evans' body *is* the new barricade (fig. 5.6). The ultimate architecture of the protest lies within the encounter between bodies, which may sometimes clash into contention. Evans' immobile position acquires the vest of a contemporary Antigone, representing the agency of resistance. In the clash between police and protesters, one of the spatial translations of this secular ritual becomes legible, where architecture can be read as "frontality": bodies that face one another, where they become "the primary means of expression."[82] If the 1848 French Revolution taught us to physically manifest confrontation through the barricade, today, with XR, that physical interruption is readable and made visible solely by the presence of bodies on the stage of the protest.

[81] Teju Cole, *The Superhero photographs of the Black Lives Matter movements*, New York Times July 26th 2016

[82] Roger, Voegeli, Widmer, p.42

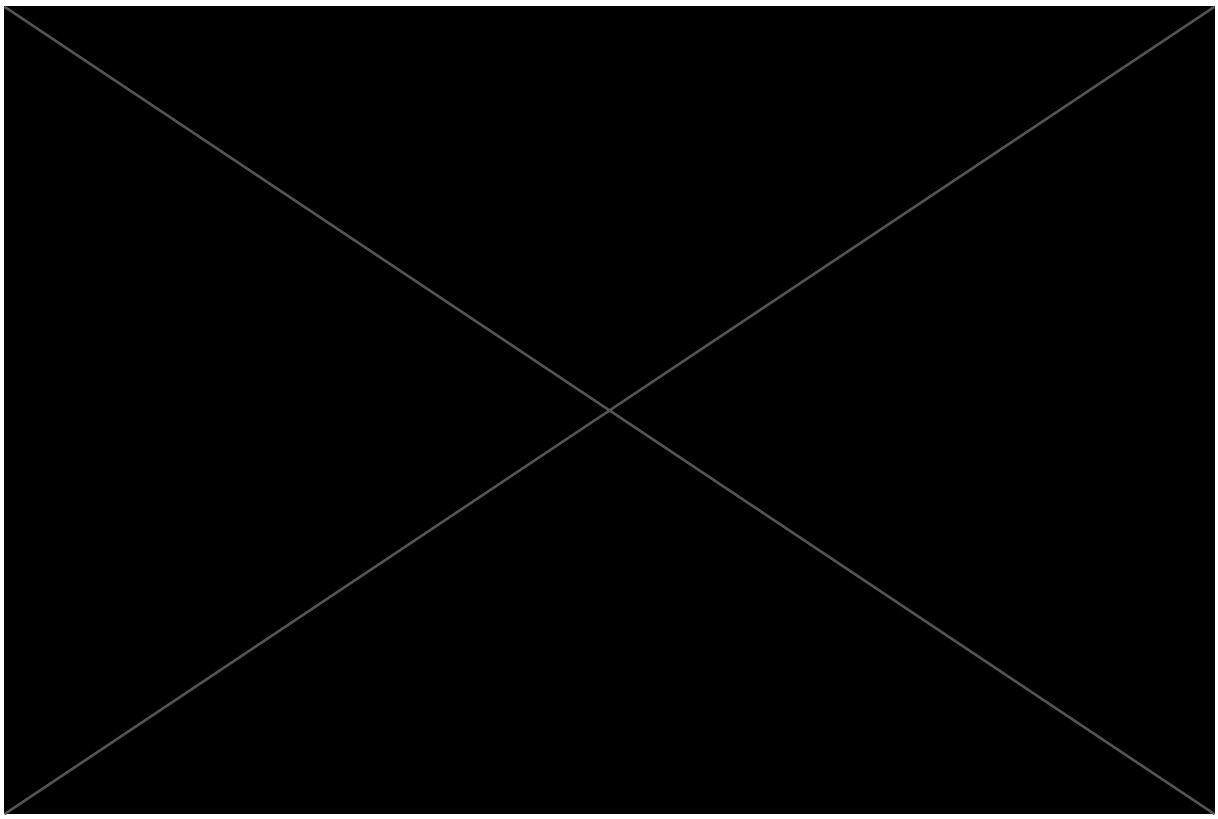

Fig. 5.6 - Ieshia Evans in Baton Rouge July 2016. Ph. Bachman. (New York Times)

The era of barricades is over and the one of the bodies begins, where the body is intended not as a simple individual entity but as a body-community and as the main means of expression and physical translation. In a body-community members act together as individual limbs of the same creature.[83] During an XR performance, this architecture of the body as a symbol of communication becomes highly visible. Rebels glue their hands to one another, to the floor, and to the top of the train to achieve an extreme but effective gesture that radically disrupts the flux of daily life (fig. 5.7). From being an element of interruption, the body becomes a symbol that carries a clear message or an architecture where a possible space of discussion can emerge. This duplicity of the body as a barrier and as a space of encounter echoes what the barricades in the French Revolution were symbolising: a simple gesture of blockage but also a space of peaceful and productive confrontation. This physical translation of the space of appearance into a space of disruption, through the meaning of the body in space is the core of the XR movement and constitutes a nonviolent action.

[83] Canetti, 34

Fig 5.7 - XR 2020, *When the only guns in your arsenal are glue guns,* ph. Gareth Morris. (XR website)

5.6 A performance is a political act

Hannah Arendt, in her investigation on "What is Freedom?"[84] defines courage as an indispensable ingredient for political actions: courage means to acknowledge that individual life is not a primary concern of politics, which conversely ought to address the interests of the social realm, "where the concerns for life has lost its validity."[85] Courage means being eager to sacrifice our individual interests in favour of a collective living, which is akin to one of XR's principles of action, which they discuss when they write about leaving their comfort zones to take action for change: "members of XR are ready to sacrifice their liberty for the principles they fight for, they are willing to be imprisoned for non-violent civil disobedience […] seeking arrest means putting yourself on the line: rebel with a cause, gently disarming the arm of the law by linking arms with it."[86] Occasionally, these actions lead

[84] Arendt (1968)

[85] Arendt (1968), 156

[86] XR, 96

to criminal charges and arrests, which is nothing but a crucial component of their transgression: on the XR website, the group declares that the act of disobedience is a necessary step for change.

The strategy of XR is a political act of resistance against an authority, which, more than being an aversion to a stagnant condition, relies on being a rupture of the norm similar to that staged by our first rebel, Antigone. With this understanding, transgression becomes a civil form of resistance against authority—whether this is law, politics, or religion[87]—that must appear in the public sphere of the city in the form of a protest. The appearance of disobedience is the performance of an act of discontent, which is staged through transgression. The rebels of XR block roads, occupy public spaces, and interrupt the flux of transport, embodying the transgression in these public acts of appearance. The protest is, thus, the political manifestation of a rebellion that breaks the physical space of the city.

Deleuze wrote that a revolution is an accident, an intrusion of the pure real:[88] it is an act that acquires political meaning and social strength through its immediacy within the time frame of its duration, in the same way a ritual does.[89] For this reason, in the ritual act of a protest, what becomes important is the *appearance* of the act—its presence in the city—for which the space of the city becomes the crucial stage where the virtuosity is invested with a political meaning. A virtuous action is one that emphasises the duration of its performance and it relies on the presence of the public. Arendt compares a virtuous action to a political one to distinguish it from any other human action that tends to focus on its outcome. This is probably the most reliable parallel between the protest as a political virtuous action and the definition of ritual as a praxis that gains meaning while it lasts: the equation between message and action reveals the strong affinity that the performance of a protest has with politics.[90]

Performance is, therefore, the highest political instrument of a protest, a curated and rehearsed praxis that allows it to be visible within the space of the city. It is a declaration that art generates freedom in a city that is heavily controlled and monitored, and the occupied zone becomes a free zone of liberation, a collective space. [91] The Notting Hill Carnival conceived of the performance precisely as a political act: the first carnival was not only a spectacle to be observed or a ritual to be performed but, as a

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[87] This recalls the very same act of protest put forward by the reformists under Martin Luther, when deciding to sign the letter against the papacy in 1529, originating the Protestant movement.

[88] Deleuze 2000, p.192

[89] A similar analysis was professed by Deleuze and Guattari, when talking about the events of 1968 as a rupture with the casualties of daily life, a protest as a revolution becomes a deviation which involved instability, yet it opens towards other possible fields: "l'événement lui-même est en décrochage ou en rupture avec les casualités: c'est un bifurcation, un deviation par rapport au lois, un état instable que ouvre un nuveau champ de possible. Deleuze, Guattari, 75

[90] Arendt 1968, p. 154.

[91] The virtuous nature of a protest is echoed by artist Kacey Wong, who, when discussing The Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong in Rogger, Voegeli, Widmer, 370-373

participatory and transformational art form, an adjunct to protest. It was an immediate reaction to an unfair situation, one that was not entirely planned until the arrival of Leslie Palmer: "there was no formatting of the carnival until Leslie Palmer took it on in 1973; the previous seven years there was nothing. If you wanted to turn left, you turned left; if a bus was coming, you'd just pull your band to the side so the bus could get by."[92]

It, therefore, happened long before XR that a protest was intended as a performative act of transgression that occupies the street with the auxiliary of masks—the centrepiece of Black expression[93]—and the first ever appearance of a sound system on public ground.[94] The meticulous performative gestures of XR are not entirely new, yet they are much more organised, when compared to the initial iteration of the Notting Hill Carnival. The performances staged by XR are the physical translation of the crisis that we are fighting: in 2018, activists organised a funeral procession in Parliament Square to mourn the loss of our planet and, in 2019, eight young activists locked themselves to the railings outside of the London Parliament with banners reading "Our futures are chained to our actions." Other actions are a less direct manifestation of a crisis and more of an open denunciation, like the "Fashion: Circus of Excess" action, which staged a symbolic catwalk in Oxford Circus, to bring attention to the impact that fashion has on the climate and environmental emergency; or the planting of trees in Parliament Square to collectively face the climate and ecological crisis and demand that the government tell the truth.

[92] Peter Joseph, steel-pan musician in Blagrove, 97

[93] Busby (2019)

[94] Duke Vin, born Vincent George Forbes, is credited as being the co-founder of the Carnival for having brought the first sound-system to the UK in 1955 on a ship from Jamaica, and to the Carnival in 1973, which paved the way for many sound-system that operate at the Carnival today.

Fig 5.8 - XR Opening Ceremony 2019. Ph. John Banyard. (XR website)

The performance of a protest is a political and ritual action that maintains meaning only while the principles it is based upon remain unaccomplished. In the case of the Notting Hill Carnival, the performative protest was a condemnation of police brutality; in the instance of XR, if one of the three principles on which the movement founded itself disappears—creating a citizen assembly, declaring a climate emergency, and reaching zero-carbon emission by 2025[95]—the movement declares that it will inevitably lose strength and meaning.[96] XR believes that its role is appropriate to this particular time and contingencies, if its targets are achieved, the movement will inevitably cease to exist, since the toxic climate it fights against will disappear. Rebels agree on a finite duration of the

[95] XR, 11

[96] XR, 9

movement, where principles and actions coincide: principles become manifest through the public act of performance and last as long as this action lasts.[97]

A protest relies very much on the immediacy of its act of appearance, on its performance, which is often constructed, planned, and staged ad hoc. It is Berger, who once again, reminds us of the artifice of a protest: "a demonstration, however much spontaneity it may contain, is a created event which arbitrarily separates itself from ordinary life. Its value is the result of its artificiality, for therein lies its prophetic, rehearsing possibilities."[98] The emphasis on the process, on the duration of an act of appearance, is perhaps the feature that echoes the most powerful meaning of a collective ritual, which distinguishes a ritual praxis from an habitual one: the ritual process is where the gathering and connection between participants happens, within a shared condition of beliefs and intentions that are conveyed in the messages transmitted,[99] and it is not at all concerned with its outcome. This stress on the process and the message also confirms that a protest is an act of political expression by forming a site of resistance in response to a dominant power—after all, "the appropriation and use of space are political acts."[100]

Ultimately, the presence of a message to be delivered, the prophetic tone of an act, is the main connection that ritual has with religion: this, in Durkheim's words, indicates our belief, which is nothing but the house of our moral principles: the ideal world that religion proposes.[101] According to Durkheim, the purpose of religion or magic is, in fact, not to make us think or enrich our knowledge, but it is to bind us together under the same shared belief. Religion finds its etymological roots in the Latin term *religare*, which means "to bind," hence, to live collectively; religion is "the epitome of collective life."[102]

5.7 Symbols and identity

The original political message of the Notting Hill Carnival was initially subtle, it was hidden behind the events during the one-day Caribbean celebration. It was when Leslie Palmer took over the carnival in 1973, that the message came back on the front line (fig. 5.9). The carnival was finally used as a vehicle for protest, a means through which to highlight social injustices: "we called the 1973 carnival

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[97] Arendt 1968, 153

[98] Berger 1969

[99] This topic was a theme discussed in the previous introductory chapter

[100] Pratibha Parma quoted in hooks 2015, 152

[101] Durkheim, 423

[102] Durkheim, 421

'Mas in the Ghetto'. I wanted to emphasise the dreadful housing and slum-like conditions under which we lived in the Royal Borough."[103] Leslie Palmer did not only return to deliver political messages through the carnival but consulted with the local population as well as with the police—he was a "calming force between tensions."[104] This, obviously, as mentioned earlier, turned the festival into an organised, coordinated, and thoroughly planned event: "[Palmer] began coordinating all the aspects of the carnival, like liaising with the police, the route, the stalls, the bands, stewards and all those sorts of things, It was the first time the carnival has seen that level of organisation."[105] The carnival, indeed, with its messages of hope and protest, brought the lively appearance of costumes and masks to the street—or better the Mas culture of the Notting Hill Carnival (Fig. 5.10).

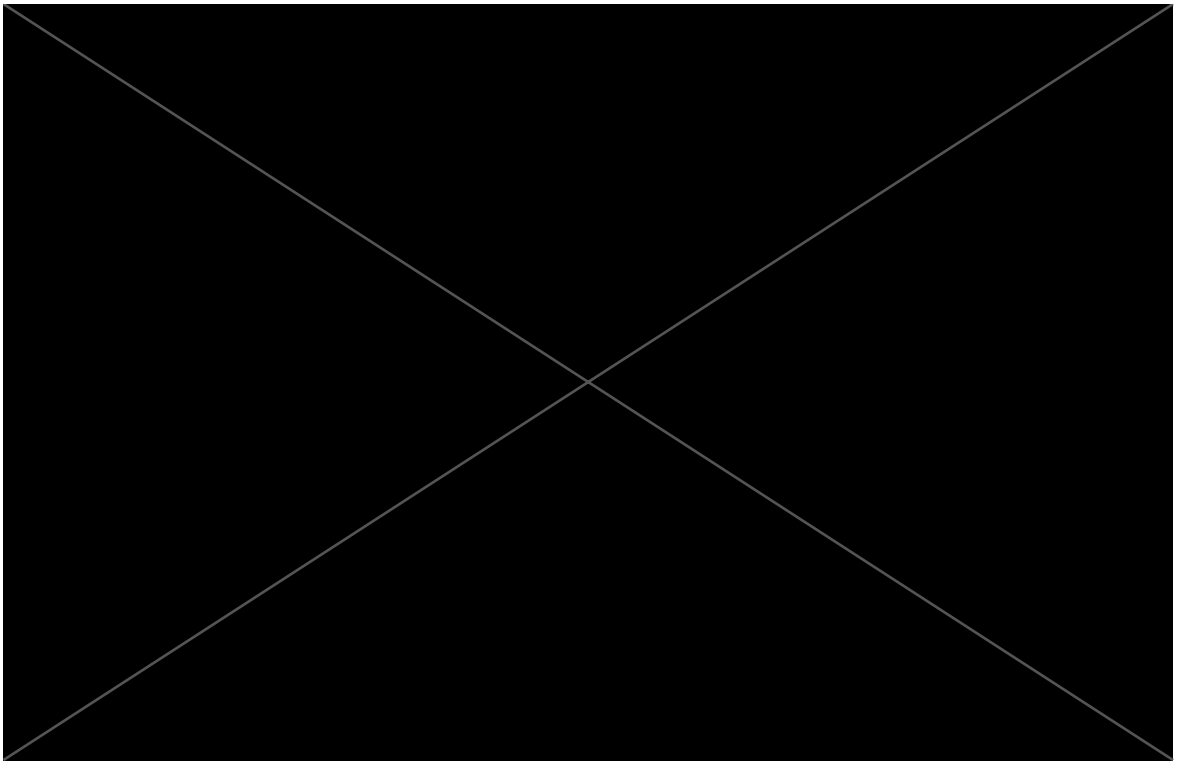

Fig. 5.9 - Mas in the Ghetto. Ph. Chris Bell. (I. Blagrove. *Carnival. A photographic and testimonial history of Notting Hill Carnival.* 2014)

[103] Palmer in Blagrove, 98

[104] Victor Crichlow, Carnival Treasurer 1974-81 interviewed by Blagrove, 101

[105] Victor Crichlow, Carnival Treasurer 1974-81 interviewed by Blagrove, 101

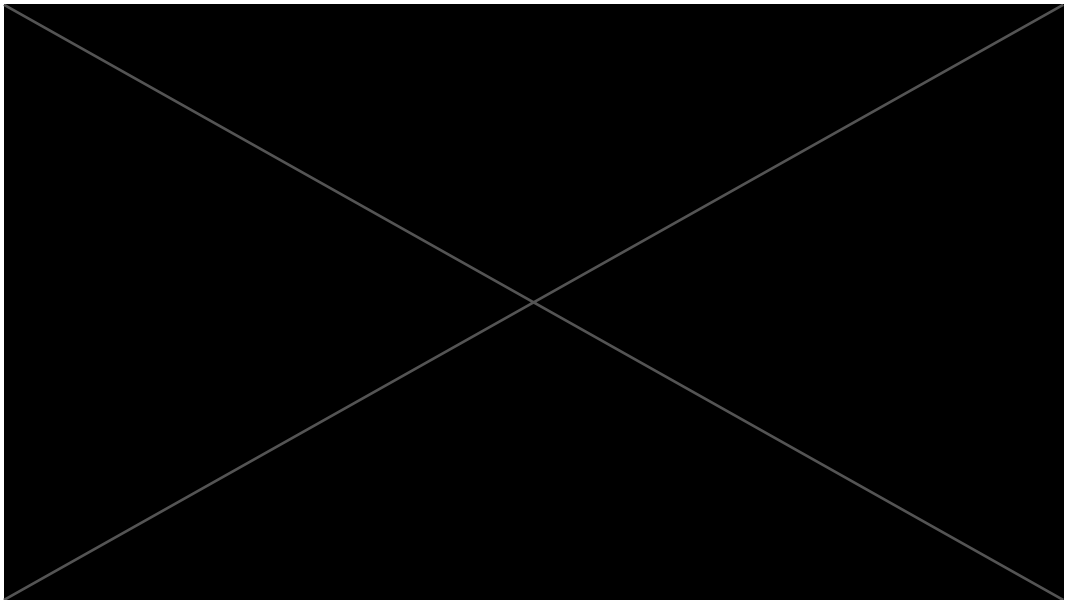

Fig. 5.10 – Trinbago Carnival Club. Ph. Allan "Capitan" Thornhill. (I. Blagrove. *Carnival. A photographic and testimonial history of Notting Hill Carnival.* 2014)

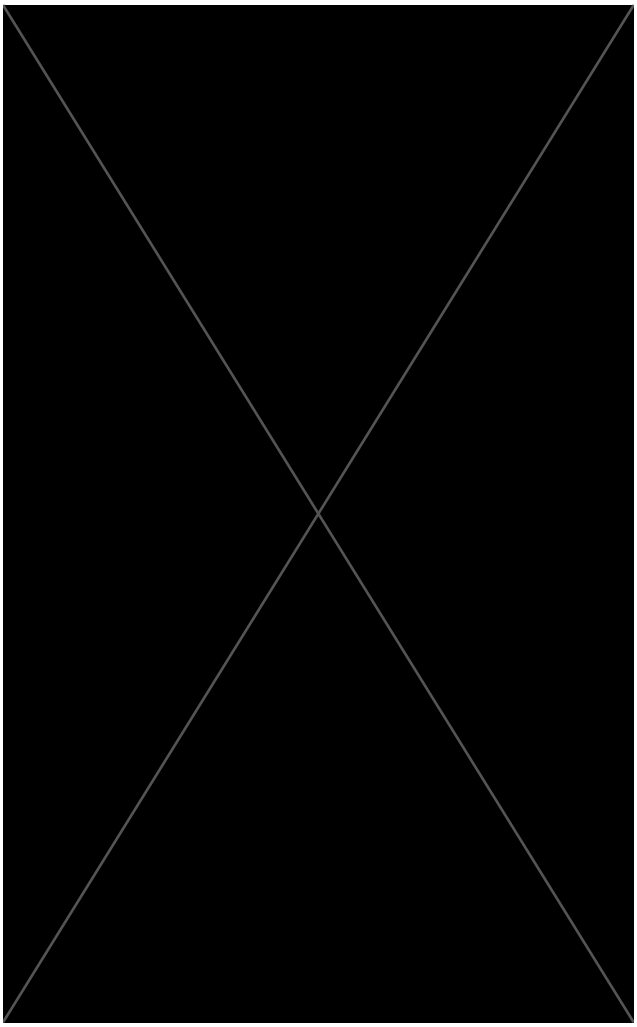

Fig. 5.11 - Rocky Byron. A Native American chief. Ph. Carl Gabriel. (I. Blagrove. *Carnival. A photographic and testimonial history of Notting Hill Carnival.* 2014)

Mas is a strong, recognisable symbol of the carnival, one that is almost magic, as it provides anonymity and freedom of expression. Mas represents a theme, often shared by one of the bands involved in the carnival—each band has its own dance, which goes hand in hand with its costumes. Participants can decide which band to join and choose what costume to wear from a selection made by the band designer. One of the first Mas-makers was Lawrence Noel, who specialised in the depiction of past and present civilisations, such as Aztecs and Native Americans. (Fig. 5.11). Later, the creativity of Peter Minshall was showcased on the streets of Notting Hill, as well (Fig. 5.12; 5.13). The presentation of Minshall's costume was the first time that England had seen such colourful clothing. They were symbols of freedom and of the portrayal of a culture and its affirmation: "From that early stage you could see his skills in using different materials for effect. That is when he used plastics and created the things on wings, when it was flat it shone in the evening sun and people couldn't understand it until they got close to it and saw it was just pieces of plastic."[106] The use of the mask and its symbolism were not just a testimony of Caribbean culture and its many aspects that Palmer wanted to have represented on the street as a gesture of bonding community and heritage pride, but it also provided a sense of empowerment and theatrical, physical presence on the London street, whereby a community that was usually left out from the daily life of the city could now find a space of appearance.

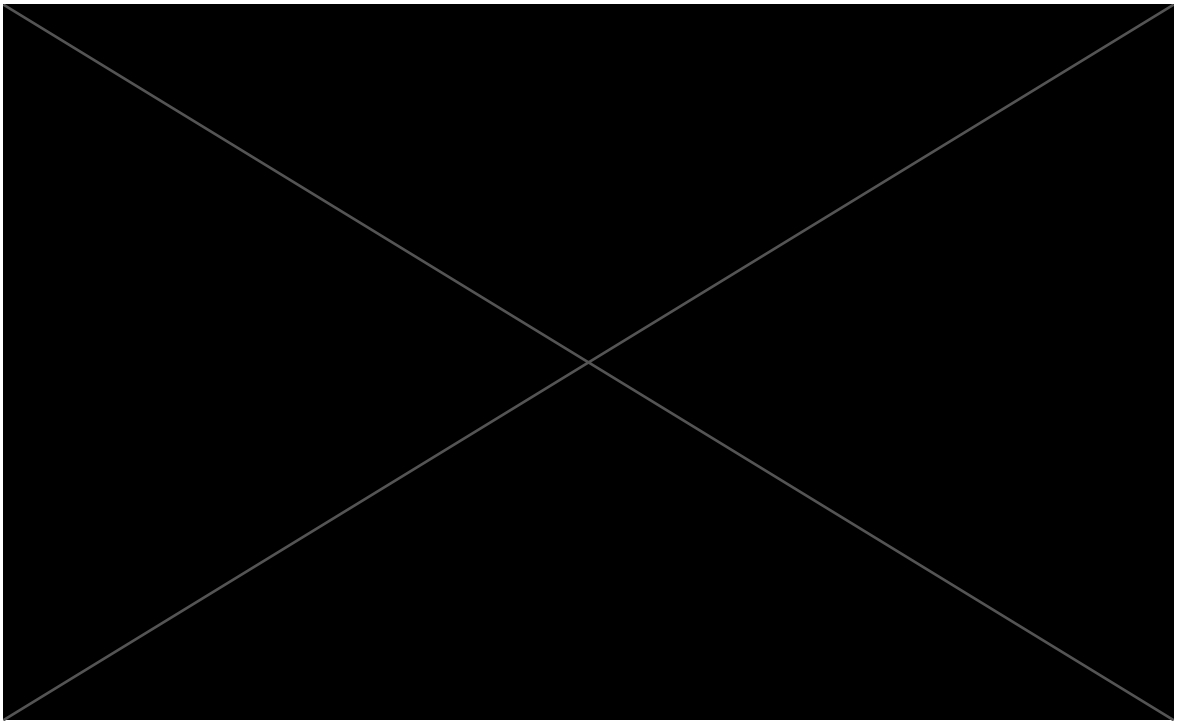

Fig. 5.12 - Peter Minshall. Ph. Alan "Capitan" Thornhill (I. Blagrove. *Carnival. A photographic and testimonial history of Notting Hill Carnival.* 2014)

[106] V. J. Ramlal, Former Carnival organiser interviewed by Blagrove, 111

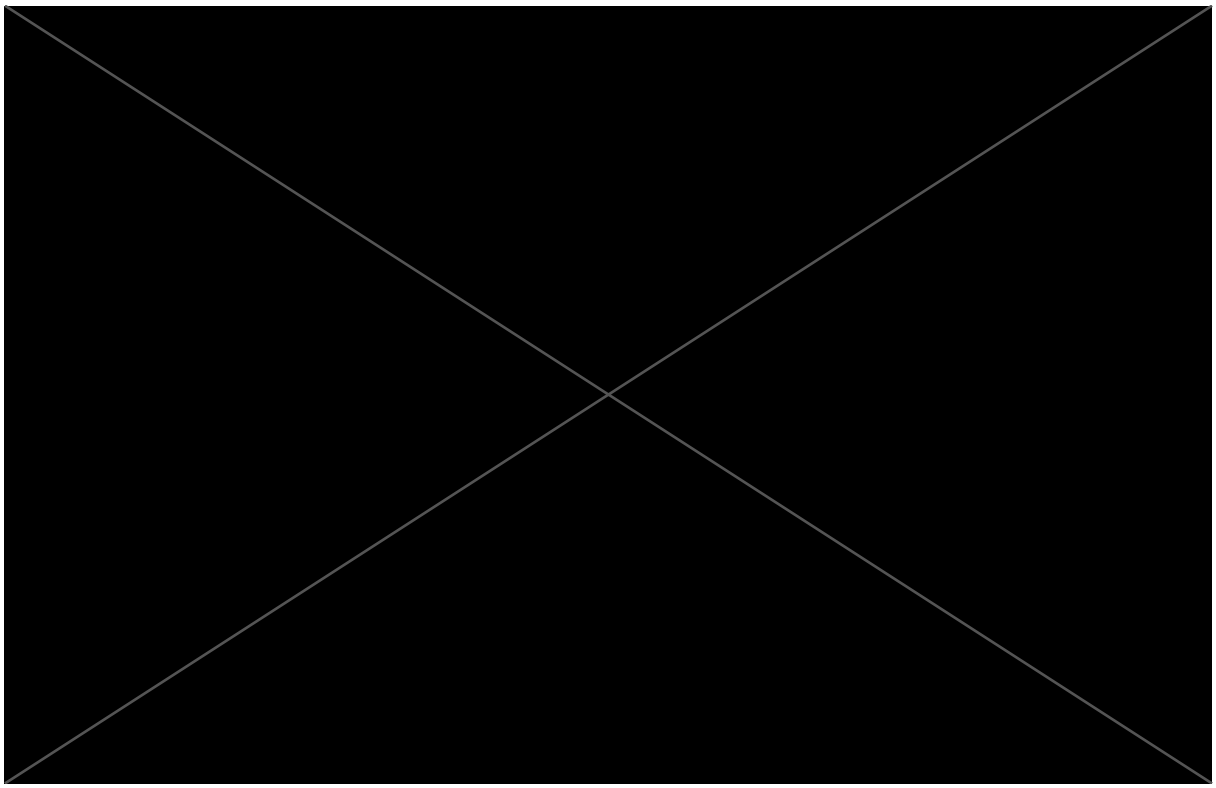

Fig. 5.13 - King Carnival Raymond Maclean. Ph. Alan "Capitan" Thornhill (I. Blagrove. *Carnival. A photographic and testimonial history of Notting Hill Carnival.* 2014)

Michael La Rose, one of the former carnival organisers, traced the Mas back to traditional masquerades in Africa but also to Western Roman Catholic countries, where there is a trend of cross-dressing. In all instances, he claims that this practice is considered to be an expression of freedom, "it is saying that you are powerful enough in a carnival to express yourself by dressing up as a woman."[107] Aside from being a novel transgression, the masquerade was, additionally, a process of understanding the origin of the culture. Alongside the national costumes of the West Indies, other Black cultures begun to inhabit the street with their own Mas: African costumes, for instance, provided another important opportunity to display and discover African heritage and indicated a spiritual connection with ancestery, even more so when combined with musical instruments, like thedrums: "the spirituality and dressing up over Carnival came from our ancestors. Without the spiritual side of Carnival it would have no meaning. When we beat the drum we are calling our ancestors and every beat of the drum has a spirit. If you don't know what you are beating then you don't know who or what spirit you are calling."[108]

[107] La Rose in Blagrove, 120

[108] Bubbles, steel-pan musician interviewed by Blagrove

In all these cultures, masks and their preparations were part of a ritual. They had a meaning in the collective performance but also in the political life of the community or an association with religion: "In England if you say to somebody I'm going to make a Mas, or I'm going to a mas camp, then the first thing that will come to their mind is that you are going to church. […] Mas comes from traditional African ceremonial or religious practices. In the Caribbean we no longer have that connection so much with Africa and so we have transformed the religious purpose into a secular one."[109] Mas occasionally coincided with the message, often in the case of political themes. such as in the case of the Mangrove Mas band (fig. 5.14).

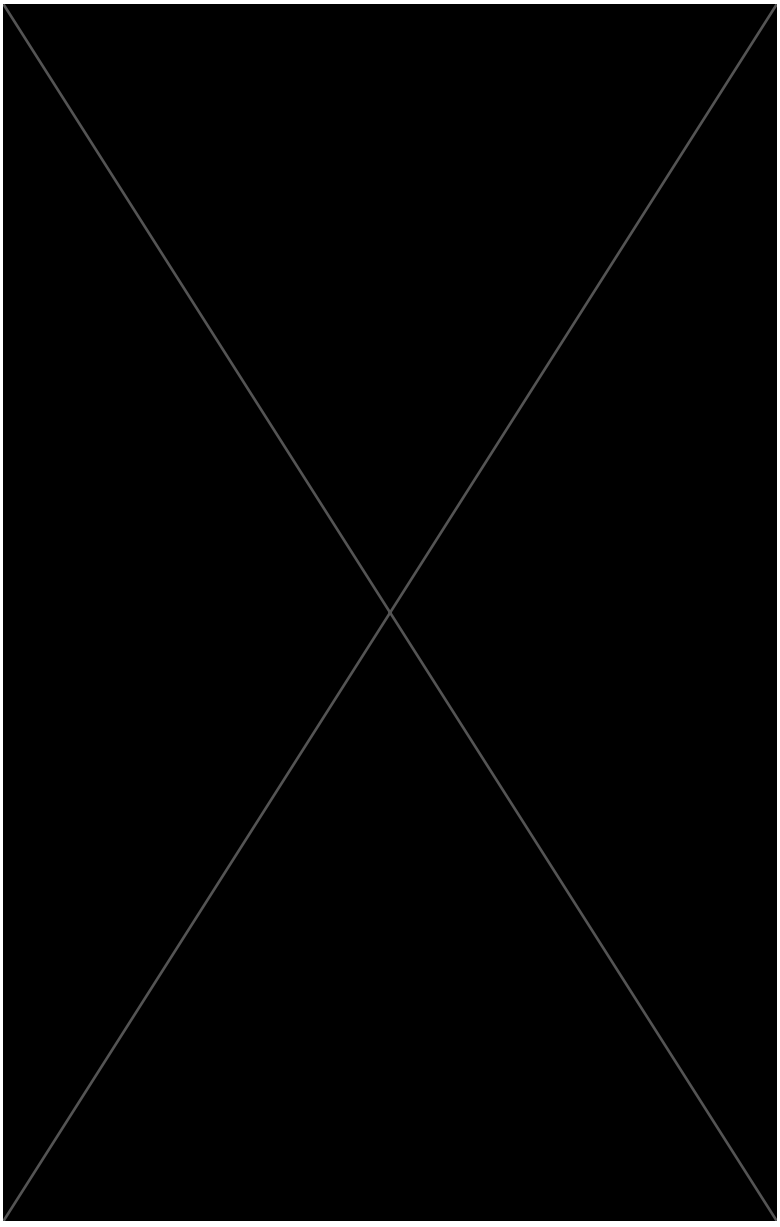

Fig. 5.14 - Peace to the world. Social and Political themes are characteristic of the types portrayed by the Mangrove Mas Band. Ph. Allan "Capitan" Thornhill, 1986. (I. Blagrove. *Carnival. A photographic and testimonial history of Notting Hill Carnival.* 2014)

[109] Carl Gabriel, Carnival Activist interviewed by Blagrove, 168-169

Mas are symbols that contribute to the communication of a message, and they disclose an intention to be part of a real democracy by engaging in something that is massively open. Extinction Rebellion, as well, creates a strong presence and a dialogue with the public through the use of symbols: the pink boat on Oxford Circus (Fig. 5.15), for instance, was not a fortuitous choice. It stands to indicate a sinking world, while ironically remaining stuck to the ground of the street; the choice of the colour is not gratuitous either, pink is a colour that can hardly be associated with violence. Hence, the boat becomes a loud condemnation through a peaceful and friendly gesture. This conscious appearance and the use of the pink boat as a symbol during that first week of protest, confirm what anthropologist Mary Douglas claimed about symbols: that they are necessary elements by which to accomplish an efficient action.[110]

Fig. 5.15 - Pink boat on Oxford Circus, 2018. (XR Website)

In the prologue we have already discussed the role that symbols play in a ritual praxis as easily recognisable conventions that allow a protest to persist; in this chapter, we finally read them in context. Symbols are familiar images that convey a familiar meaning and they are crucial, immediate tools that keep the group together, clarify the principle behind its action, and, moreover, maintain the high

[110] Douglas, 1974

morale of a collective through constant identification.[111] The hourglass, the typical symbol of XR (Fig. 5.16), combines all of these features precisely: it is simple and direct and it contains the letters "X" and "R," while also conveying a message of hope: when we flip the hourglass, we can start all over again. The hourglass reminds society that our future is approaching, but we can still be agents in its path: the hourglass guides the collective of the movement, while supporting a deep sense of belonging. In this context, protest symbols differ from religious ones, which are more likely to be anchors for an irrational explanation. Very often, the presence of symbols is the product of an artistic intervention: XR, similarly to any other religion, relies on art for the creation and propagation of symbols—the illustrator behind the hourglass is a famous volunteer who prefers to remain anonymous. However, from the use of the cross in Christianity to Rafael's paintings for the Vatican rooms of Pope Giulio II, religious symbols become the end of a spiritual process and that they appear as a work of art is what remains meaningful and eternal to the faithful. But, in the art of XR, Mas designers, and Calypso musicians, symbols are means to visualise the message announced by the protest: the symbol coincides with the performative process and does not outlive it as a posthumous shrine.

Fig. 5.16 - XR Symbol on Westminster Palace, 2018. (XR Website)

[111] Kerzer, 153

To clarify this particular distinction, it is worth mentioning a particular XR action that was staged during the spring of 2020, when collective gatherings were banned due to the national lockdown. Naturally, this prohibition did not deter XR activists, who continued with the performance composed of modest little actions: one of which consisted of laying out nearly 2,000 pairs of baby shoes in Trafalgar Square (Fig. 5.17). This was a strong and visible message that urged people not to forget the climate crisis amidst the danger of the COVID-19 pandemic—children are involved in both instances, and we must save their future. The picture of the shoes as traces of humanity circulated online, awakening, once again, the necessity for climate justice. This is exactly the strength of the movement: playing with popular and clearly recognisable symbols and transforming them into strong voices that are understandable and shareable by the entire world. The symbol coincides with the performance; the children's shoes *are* the performance; the medium *is* the message.

Fig. 5.17 - XR May 2020. (XR Website)

5.8 Collective struggles build collective knowledge

By clarifying and visualising the message behind a protest, symbols, together with their intentions, targets, principles, and shared beliefs, with which participants can identify, become an instrument by which to construct and propagate a common language. This common language is not a mere idiom but a democratic instrument of discussion and conversation, crucial in the process of organising a protest. XR, for instance, uses a so-called "facilitator" during group discussions, who, appointed on a

rotation, allows for this common language to be spoken without friction. This allows them to contrast top-down, hierarchical conversations with a different, respectful, and cohesive dialogue. In these discussions, the body becomes the central tool of verbal exchange: the group uses their hands to express both opinions and call for interventions.[112] XR's common language consists of a series of signs and gestures that allow for collective decisions to be made: bodily gestures are identified as the hygiene of the meeting. XR developed a more general collective language that the whole group uses to communicate when meeting altogether.

The organisation of the Notting Hill Carnival is more complex: the collective that derived from the first informal reaction to the 1958 riots had to officialise its status to survive. In 1970, the Caribbean community in North Kensington was known as "De Grove" and was gradually establishing its own institution. They needed a place to meet, which later became the Mangrove, a Caribbean restaurant on All Saints Road. The Mangrove was identified as the symbol of this community, where the Black Panthers, Black Liberation Front, and Black People's Information Centre gravitated to for social and political discussions. For this reason, it was the focus of police force and unjustified violence.[113] Back then, the carnival was still a community event coordinated by De Grove together with the help of some local organisations—the North Kensington Amenity Trust, St. Mary of the Angels Church, and the Notting Hill Adventure Playground.

The success of Leslie Palmer's festival, of course, attracted the police's intervention and some of the white residents' associations called for the government to issue a ban against the event. To oppose such a threat, an official Carnival Development Committee (CDC) was formed following a democratic election. The CDC was an official organ capable of contrasting the police, and, in 1977, when political activist and journalist Darcus Howe became chairman of the committee and Selwyn Baptiste became director, the CDC published a newsletter *Mas*, with the democratic structure, programme, and policy of the committee, together with a resistance document titled *The Road make to walk on Carnival Day.* The intention behind these two documents was to show the ability of the CDC to organise and the possibility for it to take top-down control of the event.[114] For the Notting Hill Carnival, the construction of collective knowledge was directly dependent on their collective struggle: only by demonstrating that a strict organisation was possible could the carnival last to this day.

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[112] This description is based on a participation of the author to one of XR meetings in Spring 2019

[113] A recent documentary, *Mangrove*, written and directed by Steve Mc Queen was aired on the BBC in 2019 as part of his *Small Axe* series. It crudely depicts the police brutality in the late '70s Notting Hill.

[114] La Rose, 2004

Coming together as a community implies that participants have agreed upon a set of common rules, to which they all must respond as to allow the collective to survive. In the instance of XR, the construction of a common language is *the* common rule that helps the collective to assess toxic issues through a healthy meeting environment. The rule, here, becomes a method that, far from being strict, allows for changes: a common language allows for a more thought-through and efficient reaction to the status quo. A common language prevents individual emotions from influencing and prevailing over collective discussion: collective feelings in ritual actions, writes Byung-Chul Han, have nothing to do with individual psychology.[115] In rituals, the collective is the real subject, and the sentiment is objectivised and not made personal or individual. Han clarifies this through the example of a funeral, where the whole community suffers the loss, but each individual experience is consolidated in coming together and sharing the loss as a collective consciousness.[116]

This is particularly crucial when the audience is globally varied: in the instance of XR, different personalities—from scientists to academics, from students to lawyers, and from families to public figures—volunteer to contribute to the formation of the collective knowledge of the group. Sharing a collective knowledge before acting together is a preparatory act that protects the movement, something that XR confirmed in their manual that was published in 2018. Once again, XR borrows from the history of protest and, in particular from the famous students' protests in 1968. The modus operandi was similar, even if the setting was different: the 1968 protests were conducted predominantly in spaces of education to directly confront themselves with the status quo they were contesting. In 1968, students taught us that it was crucial to learn from the condition which one seeks to oppose, and the construction of collective knowledge is the most valuable ingredient for a rebellion. This coming together, back then, had a very specific formality, spatially translated into a circle: either sitting around a table or on the ground of a square, or marching in circle at the boundaries of a roundabout.[117] This spatial gathering becomes an effective image of democratic actions, a new stage for political presence.[118] The circle is expanded in the contemporary protest, yet the construction of knowledge persists: learning before acting seems to still be a relevant motto for XR. In their manual, they explain that the ethos of the group is based on several years of studies conducted by academics

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[115] Han, 18

[116] Ibid.

[117] On the importance of the circle for protest, see Eyal Weizman, *The roundabout revolution*, London: Sternberg Press 2015

[118] Virno 1980. Paolo Virno describes the '68 as a moment of intellectual revolution, from which to learn that "forms of qualitative knowledge are politically rooted and fertile only if born from the same constellation of knowledge and production within which the struggle operates." "Forme di conoscenza qualitativa sono fondate e fertili politicamente solo se sono esse stesse parte di quella costellazione di sapere e produzione entro cui le lotte operano. Ma allora è necessario individuare e nominare i soggetti materiali che costituiscono quelle forme e diffusamente se ne servono per comunicare ed interagire (P. Virno 1980, p. 51). Occupation in 1968 became an intellectual and regenerative project that allowed academia to move from the authoritarian ipse dixit to a collective research. Students felt that to learn and demonstrate they were capable to own and counteracting similar knowledge to their professors, their intellectual ambition guided their actions.

and activists that can essentially be summarised into two main questions: "Why have we failed so miserably to stop climate change? And how the hell are we going to stop it?" The text opens with a declaration of commitment: "To answer these questions, we went to the library. We studied decades of work looking at organizational systems, collaborative working styles, momentum-driven organizing and direct-action campaigning. This research, alongside the site research we have carried out ourselves, has been invaluable to the development of our ideas"[119] Students staged political actions in order to profess equalities amongst different subjectivities present in academia; similarly, members of XR are individuals materialising into groups and willing to be an active part in the construction of the world they inhabit by advocating for climate justice for the future generations.

This global understanding of the struggle was much harder for West Indians who arrived in London in the second half of the twentieth century. Their construction of a collective knowledge was immediately a collective struggle for them, and it was evidently embraced by the local community, even before the officialisation of the carnival as an institution. The relevant role that the *West Indian Gazette* (Fig. 5.18) had on the consolidation of an anti-colonial culture in Britain has been widely acknowledged. It is not by chance that Claudia Jones, the person considered to be responsible for the first Notting Hill Carnival, was also one of the founders of the *Gazette*. "Much of the originality of the *Gazette*," writes Bill Schwarz, "was to be found in its attempt to connect the local with the global: to link, say, the specific neighbourhood concerns of its readers in Notting Hill to the wider global of anti-colonialism and the civil right movement."[120] The *Gazette*'s distribution expanded quite quickly as an affirmation of a black locality, of an "improvised institution of a nascent black civil society."[121] The *Gazette* was also responsible for the affirmation of a culture that had been marginal to the empire for too long, which, at the time, thanks to the conspicuous wave of immigration, was finally brought into the heart of it: the uneven creolisation of the metropolis was now contrasted with the birth of a new syncretic culture, made of new soundscapes like Calypso and Ska, which would be the protagonist of the carnival that was soon to be nationally established.

Before the famous Claudia Jones' carnival, the *West Indian Gazette* was promoting interracial dances, and contests, such as the Annual British-Caribbean Christmas Ball, in different locations across the city, from Lambeth to Stoke Newington and Kensington Town Hall. Schwarz acknowledges that these activities were a breakthrough in the culture of Britain in the mid-twentieth century. They were rather peripheral compared to the great carnival that Jones organised in 1959, for which "the *Gazette*

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[119] XR, 99

[120] Schwarz, 270

[121] Schwarz, 272

functioned as the effective public organiser. In Claudia Jones' imagination," Schwarz continues, "these two institutions—the *Gazette* and the Carnival—worked to the same purpose: they were to become the means through which the West Indian community conscious of its history was to be born on British soil."[122] The *Gazette*, with its editorial board and intellectual voices, was the tool through which the common language that made the affirmation of West Indian culture, its roots, and the genesis of its nature possible proliferated. Claudia Jones wrote in the souvenir programme in 1959, "A pride in being a West Indian is undoubtedly at the root of this unity." It was part of an attempt to find the local in the global of the metropolis, in the same way that the *Gazette* was aimed to, as a symbol of a generation of Caribbeans who have made the journey to London. The highest achievement of these revolutions is that everyone's story is important and worth listening to. The personal stories of the members of a collective are a precious contribution to the collective discussion at large.

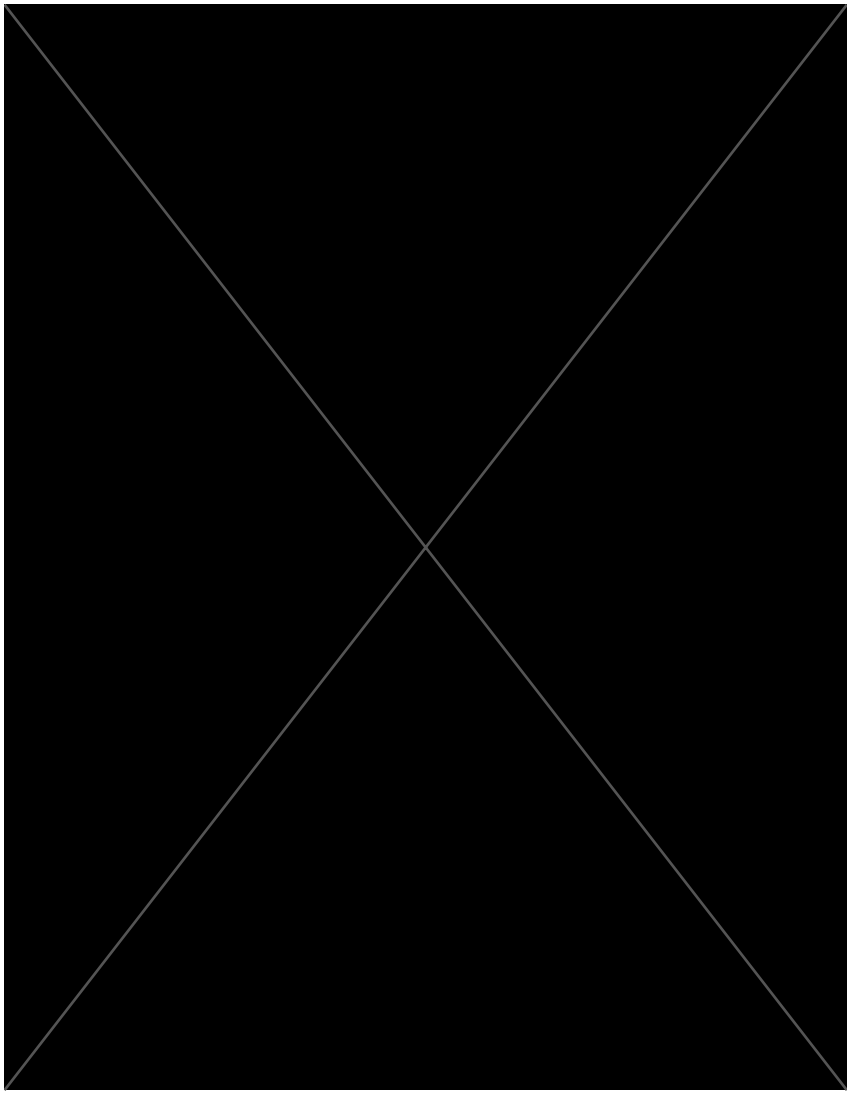

Fig. 5.18 – West Indian Gazette, July 1962. (© Lambeth Landmark Archive)

[122] Schwarz, 273

5.9 Architecture: symbol or stage?

Looking back at the two case studies of XR and the Notting Hill Carnival, we can deduce that bodies, crowds, and cities are the main spatial condition of the ritual of protest. To efficiently convey a message, the selection of the city as a stage of a protest is crucial indeed, and capital cities—like London—are undoubtedly more persuasive theatres than smaller centres.[123] In this setting, the volume and presence of the crowd becomes a *sine qua non*: the higher the number of bodies organised into a body-community is, the more efficacious the action is. But the crowd is composed of both participants and spectators, all of which are bodies purposefully gathered, "formed, reshaped, toughed, repelled, and fused"[124] together. Bodies, in these case studies, do not only come together but they perform, they have fun: XR writes that "it has to be fun. If we can't dance at it, it isn't a real revolution. The artistic communities need to be on board: it's a festival. We are going to show the media that we are not sitting around waiting to die any longer. We're gonna have a party, obviously."[125] The Notting Hill Carnival is obviously a different form of protest, one that challenges social and racial issues that were —and still often are—ingrained in the structure of society. Nonetheless, the importance of having a party together is a crucial for the strengthening of a community: "Mas is about getting people together and having fun time, forgetting the pressure of life and breathing a little."[126] There is, however, a small difference in these two performative protests: XR relies on the number of spectators to gain momentum—for instance, a performance at the Bank of England must be staged on a weekday, otherwise there may not be spectators. In the carnival, spectators and actors are all part of the same street party.

As architects, when analysing rituals, we look at bodies, their occupation of space, and the consequent alteration that such an occupation produces, we look at bodies in their presence as a mass. On this formal analysis of the crowd, there is a very interesting theory outlined by Elias Canetti, in his brilliant work titled *Crowd and Power*, which was published in 1960. Canetti writes that there are two types of crowds: a "closed" and an "open" one. The first type of crowd manifests when a group of bodies gathers together in an outdoor space and fills it to its capacity: "the closed crowd renounces growth and puts the stress on permanence. The first thing to be noticed about it is that it has a boundary."[127]

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[123] "You have to go to the capital city. That is where the government is, that's where the elites hang out and it's also where the national and international media are usually based. The truth is, they don't mind you doing stuff in the provinces. They do mind when you set up camp on their lawns, because they are forced to sit up and pay attention." XR, 101

[124] Roger, Voegeli, Widmer, p.42

[125] XR, 102

[126] Blagrove, 203

[127] Canetti, 17

An interesting example of this type of crowd in London can be seen in the 2011 Occupy London movement. Occupy London was born out of international solidarity with the famous Occupy Wall Street movement, which was equally based on informal leadership and a multitude of voices united against economic inequality. Occupy London initially took over Paternoster Square, the house of the London Stock Exchange, but they were forced to leave almost immediately, accused of occupying a private property.[128] For this reason, the movement eventually ended up in the space in front St. Paul's Cathedral.[129] (Fig. 5.19) Occupy London was looking for a meaningful space to host their battle and the Stock Exchange seemed to be the appropriate space to voice their discontent against capitalism. However, the relocation to St. Paul's Cathedral denounced, once again, the existence of an urban theatre for collective actions in the contemporary city.

The land around St. Paul's Cathedral reminds us of Hawksmoor's project by unveiling a whole new and alternative urbanity where almost 500 people managed to gain the actual political power, which Canetti claims to be distinctive of a closed crowd: the boundary of a precinct "prevents disorderly increase, but it also makes it more difficult for the crowd to disperse and so postpones its dissolution. In this way the crowd sacrifices its chance of growth, but gains in staying power,"[130] This episode opens a twofold discussion on the contemporary state of London: on one hand, the meaningfulness of the urban design of Nicholas Hawksmoor from the seventeenth century in the twenty-first century,[131] and, on the other, the impossibility of a civic existence within the boundaries of the city of London, where the spread of private property has prevented any possible forms of *vita activa*, forcing protesters to seek refuge in a sacred space of St. Paul's. This episode is evidence that the *res sacra* is the new *res publica*.[132]

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[128] Paternoster Square is owned by Mitsubishi Estate and is part of a long list of Privately Owned Public Spaces – known as POPS.

[129] Their journey continued later on towards Finsbury Square and other spaces in the north-east of the city. Occupy London became a movement that expanded its action beyond their original manifesto and begun helping facing issues such as homelessness across the city.

[130] Canetti, 17

[131] This particular project will be read in comparison to Hawksmoor's proposal for the same site in the chapter *From absolute to collective: the birth of collective spaces*.

[132] It is important to mention that due to the length and form of this occupation, they introduced a new component to the ritual of protest: a domestic asset, sleeping and eating together became an integrated feature of the movement.

Fig. 5.19 - Occupy London in Saint Paul precinct, 16.10.2011. (Wikimedia Commons)

The second type of crowd that Canetti describes is more appropriate to the case studies here proposed; it is the "open crowd," a crowd capable of disrupting the physical boundaries of a space. This, according to Canetti, is a more natural crowd than the closed and disciplined one, since "it exists as long as it grows; it disintegrates as soon as it stops growing."[133] This definition visibly resembles the urban presence of both XR and the Notting Hill Carnival, whose occupation of the city lies in its arteries, streets, and infrastructures. The open crowd selects a space, but it is not confined to it: the dances of Notting Hill Carnival, spill beyond the boundaries of the street creating "a spatial practice [...] which confronts the operations of authority with the contingency and inventiveness of a spontaneous trajectory."[134] XR's actions, on the other hand, expand across the city's streets because they do not want to confine their message to one singular interlocutor, housed in one symbolic architecture. XR, in fact, prefers to march towards all the well-known symbols across the city that retain the toxic hegemonic power across the world: the Shell Building or the Google Headquarters, but also the BBC Building and Heathrow Airport, which are both portals of communication with the world outside London. This is not the case of Occupy London, which, relocation aside, needed to

[133] Canetti, 22

[134] McLeod, 26

address their frustration towards one specific symbol of power, represented by one architecture in the city: the Stock Exchange. Or, similarly, the student protests that, in 2010, provoked a confrontation with Parliament, which had introduced a dramatic and unjust alteration of the university's funding system.[135] Protests in London, traditionally, followed a path that goes from Trafalgar Square to Parliament Square,[136] (Fig. 5.20) which reveals a clear scheme of sovereignty that protesters must face. Nonetheless, Occupy London demonstrates that a protest acquires meaning from the space that surrounds it, the architecture becomes part of the construction of the message that the movement intends to deliver: St. Paul's, for Occupy London, became *the* symbolic space, because it was *the* space in which they spent the longest amount of time.[137]

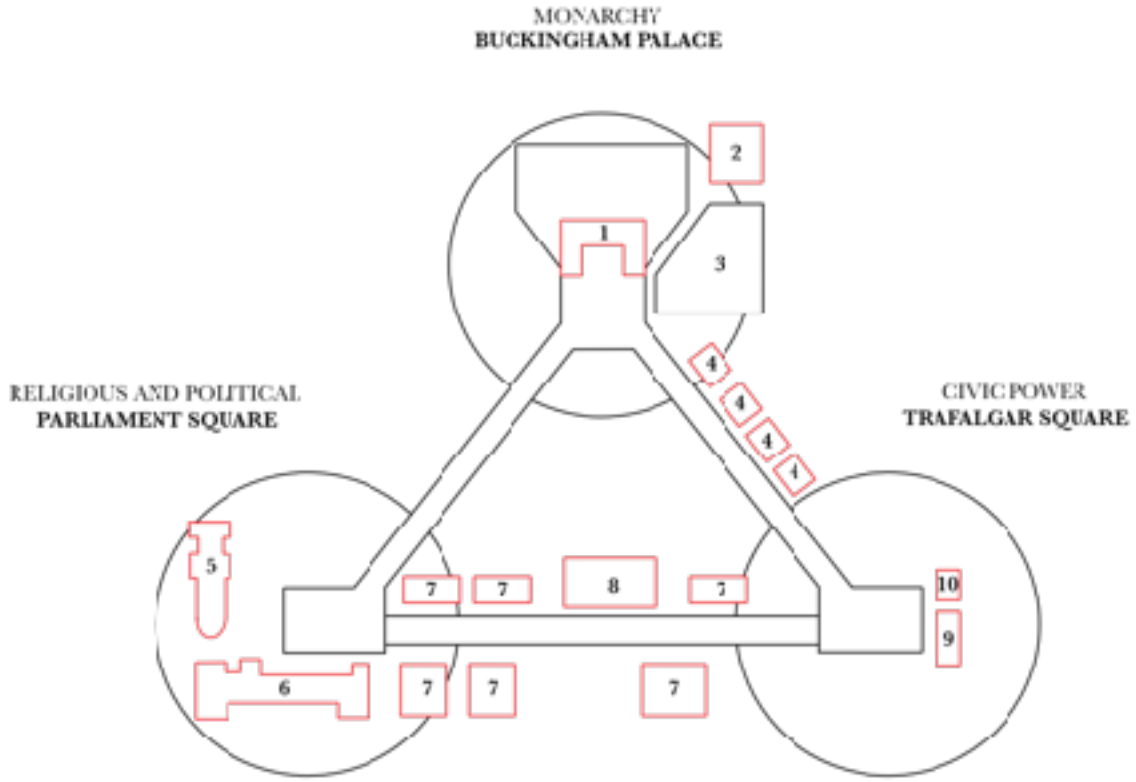

Fig. 5.20 - Diagrams of the triangulation of powers in Central London. (Drawing by author)

[135] Cammaerts 521. In Autumn 2010 the UK coalition government of Conservatives (Tories) and Liberal Democrats introduced radical changes to the way universities would be funded– for example funding for teaching in the humanities and social sciences was cut by 100% and the amount which students have to contribute was raised from £3,000 (US$4,800) to a maximum of £9,000 (US$14,400) per year. Besides this, the UK government also decided to scrap the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), a weekly-amount college students from low-income families received in order to stimulate them to continue studying.

[136] Only occasionally Buckingham Palace is thrown into the mix, which is rather telling about the active political power exercised by the Monarchy today.

[137] and it is probably not by chance the same place where this reading of collective spaces started, which might be revelatory once again on the legislative presence in the 'public' space of the city.

This exclusive relationship between architecture, either as a symbol or as a stage, and mass protest reveals an essential urban character of the protest. It is once again John Berger who articulates this very clearly when he discusses the '68 movement: "demonstrations," he writes, "are usually planned to take place as near as possible to some symbolic centre, either civic or national. Their 'targets' are seldom the strategic ones—railway stations, barracks, radio stations, airports. A mass demonstration can be interpreted as the symbolic capturing of a city or capital. Again, the symbolism or metaphor is for the benefit of the participants."[138]

Such legibility of institutional targets is not so evident in the Notting Hill Carnival, which gains its meaning exactly from the site where it is performed and rarely changes location—if anything it simply extends from the original street of Ladbroke Grove. This is because the message that it initially intended to deliver, which was derived from a series of social injustices that happened in the Borough of North Kensington, where a large wave of migrations from the West Indies arrived in the mid 1920s and soon begun to be exploited by landlords like Peter Rachman. The area was a slum of dilapidated houses with no bathrooms, electricity, or hot water: "a large population of internal migrants, gypsies and Irish, mony of them transient single men, packed into a honeycomb of rooms with communal kitchens, toilets and no bathrooms."[139] The condensing of bodies together with "dodgy pubs and poor street lighting [...] gang fighting, illegal drinking clubs, gambling and prostitution" were crucial conditions that generated a discontent that find its collective response in the carnival: such parts of the city, nonetheless, are "frequently those where London's new communities take root, transforming these sites into new spaces of social and cultural creativity."[140]

The street in this ritual was not initially a simple stage, but it was more of a given condition, one that the inhabitants of the area used as an extension of their domestic spaces. The ritual was not an act of occupation, it was an act of reappropriation and dwelling. This attitude continued during the carnival, when "West Indians flooded the streets upon hearing the familiar musical sounds from home."[141] This was not only a reaction from West Indians but from the local community at large, curious about the singular sounds that diverted people away from what they were doing: "people stopped shopping, some came to their windows and doors, and one eye witness even recalls a woman coming out of her home with shampoo in her hair […] people coming out of their homes with aprons on. They'd be

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[138] Berger 1969

[139] Phillips and Phillips, 171

[140] McLeod, 50. Famous is the description given by MacInnes in his Absolute Beginners, where he declared: "however horrible the area is you're *free* there! No one, I repeat it, no one, has ever asked me there what I am, or what I do, or where I came from, or what my social group is, or whether I'm educated or not". MacInnes, 48

[141] Blagrove, 15

cooking or something."[142] (fig. 5.21; 5.22) It seems like the street expanded, its section widened up to the point of including in its stage the ground floor of the houses facing the street. The domestic space became an active part of the street and its rituals, where people were welcomed for a drink, to use the toilet, or even to have a short break.

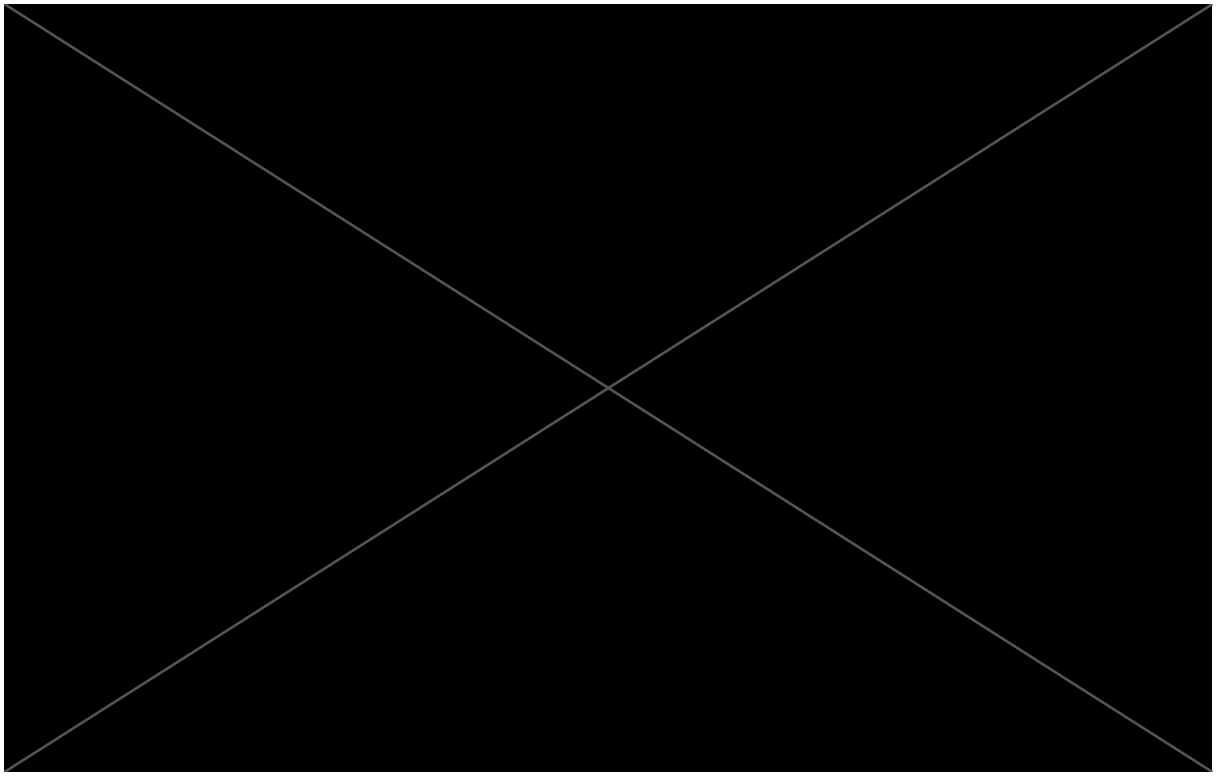

Fig. 5.21 - Local Youths enjoy a game of dominos. Ph. Chriss Bell (I. Blagrove. *Carnival. A photographic and testimonial history of Notting Hill Carnival.* 2014)

[142] Jim O'brien in Blagrove, 15

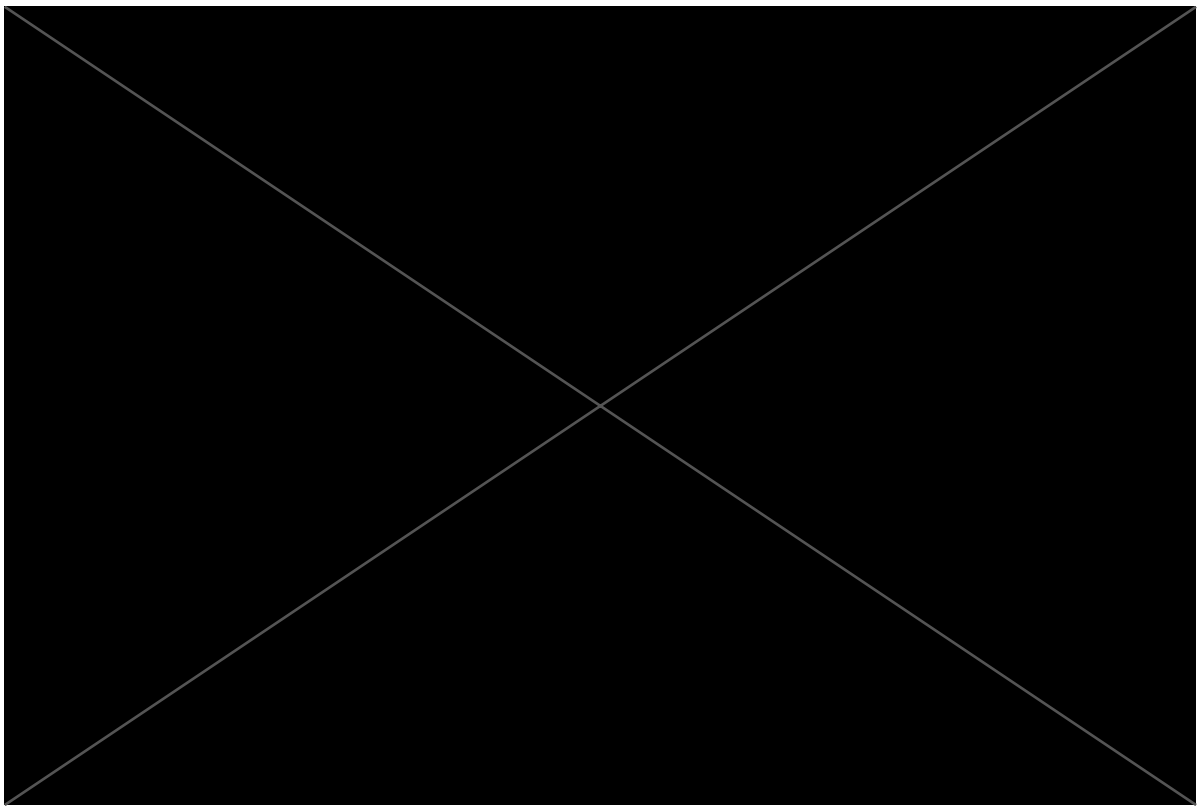

Fig. 5.22 - Party Procession. Ph. Fitz Piper 1968 (I. Blagrove. *Carnival. A photographic and testimonial history of Notting Hill Carnival.* 2014)

XR proposes a similar use of the street by expanding the meaning of its ground floor through the staging of unusual activities, from traditional occupation of the ground with tents (fig. 5.23) to holding an impromptu yoga class to occupy a trafficked bridge (fig. 5.24). Both performative protests give the streets of the city a new meaning. They allow us to read them, even if for a brief duration, in alternative ways: the urban fabric is not cancelled, it is rather reinterpreted and given a second chance to act as a political space.

Fig. 5.23 - XR Camp on Marsham Street, 2018. (XR website)

Fig. 5.24 - XR Yoga on Westminster Bridge, 2018. (XR website)

We have seen how in the late 1800s, the street was divided into infrastructure and narrow lanes, the latter was eaten up by the project of modernity, which reconfigured the way we moved in the city with the advent of the tube. This was the state of the street in London until the arrival of the Notting Hill Carnival in the '60s, when it was still considered a mere line of communication. This ritual of protest, instead, shows how the city can be read as a vulnerable canvas, where the cultural and political clash can be staged. XR pushes this further to hidden sites. According to the group, one of the civic spaces in London with the most potential—the tube—is barely considered by architects. Here, they claimed to have performed some of their most challenging and successful actions.[143] The tube is a space that we dismiss as merely infrastructural, certainly not urban—as we have seen in the representation of the Victorian city. It has no visible connotation on the ground floor of the city with the exception of its stations, but, with XR's actions, it, for once, acquires a powerful meaning.

The tube is a paradox of the contemporary collective space: it is a *stasis* in *movement*. In the tube, people feel trapped within the boundaries of an enclosed space underground that moves from one destination to another. Usually, asking people to stop and participate in a performance is a challenge, they feel pressured to put their time on hold, yet it is the pause that allows people to think, which is an extremely important interruption before any reaction. The tube is a civic space, where this break can be permitted, even if it is still dependent on the incessantly productive rhythms of the city. Biological rhythm, heart or brain rhythms, spatial rhythm, these actions are new rhythms introduced into well-known urban ones, exactly like in the case of the Notting Hill Carnival. It is through these new rhythms that we can start reading an urban disruption of the form of the city that is entirely dependent on the rhythms of its daily life, of its habits.

5.10 An alternative urbanity

By altering time and space, the Notting Hill Carnival and XR have the power to generate alternative urban spaces, unveiling new subjectivities and new relationships through bodies, new rhythms of time, and new cultures.[144] Such events demonstrate that a new temporary city exists, one that can be designed in unanticipated ways.[145] Waterloo Bridge is not a renowned space for gathering, built in 1817—and later demolished and rebuilt by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott in the 1940s—its role since its construction was that of connecting the two sides of the Thames, with the exception of civic spectacles like its inauguration event (fig. 5.25). Still, in in our daily lives, Waterloo Bridge is a mere

[143] From a discussion between the author and the Theatre Group of Extinction Rebellion, in Spring 2019.

[144] Deleuze, Guattari (1984)

[145] McLeod, 26. Here McLeod was referring to the Lord Kitchener's (the stage name of calypsonian Aldwyn Roberts) dance in occasion of the historic victory by the West Indies over England in the Cricket Second Test on 30th June, 1950. A dance that captures a "transgressive and festive creativity of music and dancing in London in 1950s", McLeod, 26

infrastructure, which, through the actions of XR, is transformed into a motionless urban theatre, a space to be reclaimed: in April 2020, "it became a lush landscape, a Garden Bridge for the people, by the people (fig. 5.26). We handed out chalks for rebels to create a colourful tapestry on the road surface, and along with music, dancing, workshops and free food the space was completely transformed."[146]

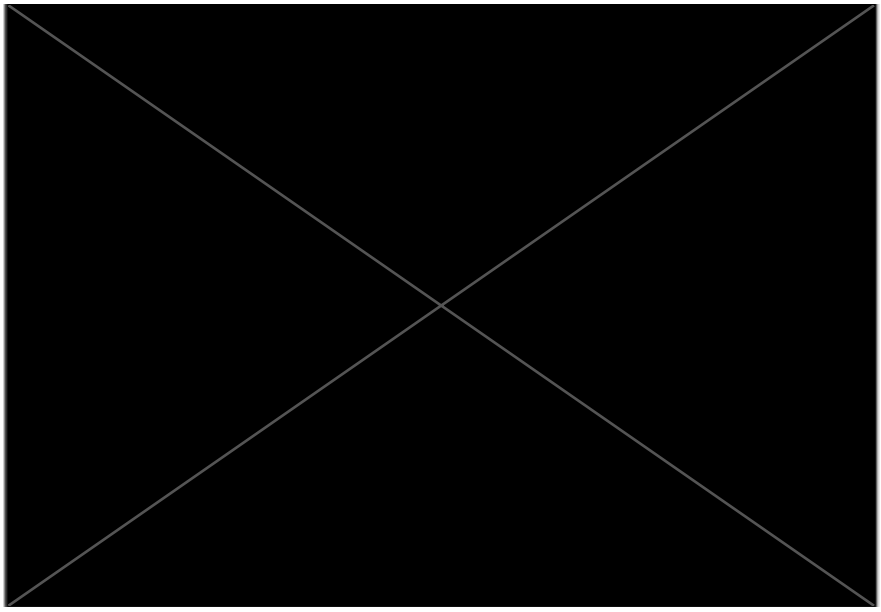

Fig. 5.25 - Waterloo Bridge, 1817. George IV and the Duke of Wellington visiting Waterloo Bridge for the first time on 18th June, 1817. (© City of London: London Metropolitan Archives)

Fig. 5.26 - Waterloo Bridge, 2020. (XR Website)

[146] XR, website

Similarly, Ladbroke Grove is a considerably anonymous street that once a year expands and transforms into a lively cultural presence. In this friction between the city we know and its potential alternatives revealed to us in these moments of transgression, we learn that London can be something more than a restless space that drives its subjects to unrest. These events momentarily erase the city that is familiar to us, staging an alternative urbanity: this interruption, this change of sight, is the most fertile frame of observation for architects—a fundamental step that we must consider before designing our cities.

Usually, architects tend to translate movements in the city into diagrammatic plans, populated by arrows or dots, whose scope is that of reporting precise data and numbers that confirm Foucault's theory of man as a number of the population.[147] The understanding of rituals and habits in the city as the mere mapping of movements is no longer enough to produce a good city form, the design of architecture must acquire a visual perspective on the life of the city, because life and behaviours are not fixed, and their transgressive nature can contribute to design. These performative protests have taught us that the form of a city, albeit perceivably prescribed, can be challenged by its rituals. Our role as architects is to observe these rituals and respond to them with new forms. In the past chapters, we have learned that these moments of transgression, of interruption of the accustomed city flow, have indeed influenced the architecture of collective spaces across London: Nicholas Hawksmoor's projects were the first step towards this long-lasting challenge against a controlled and fixed city form. Since then, we have seen a city predisposed towards its inhabitants, its accused lack of form was contrasted with an attempt to bring together behaviours and city form, subjects and built environment.

A performative protest has the power to unveil a process of urban metamorphosis, where spaces of the city that are usually transient open areas that enable our daily existence are transformed into the theatre stages of appearance of an alternative collectivity. Extinction Rebellion and the Notting Hill Carnival push the possibilities of the urban presence of these stages of protests beyond the boundaries of the location of powers identified by other protests, such as Occupy London and the student protests in London. The performative nature of the carnival and XR, in fact, reveal a city impatient to unravel its militant life, which opposes itself to the city as an efficient infrastructure by turning bridges into squares and streets into parades (fig. 27, 28).

[147] Foucault, 96

Fig. 5.27 - XR on Waterloo Bridge, April 2018 (XR website)

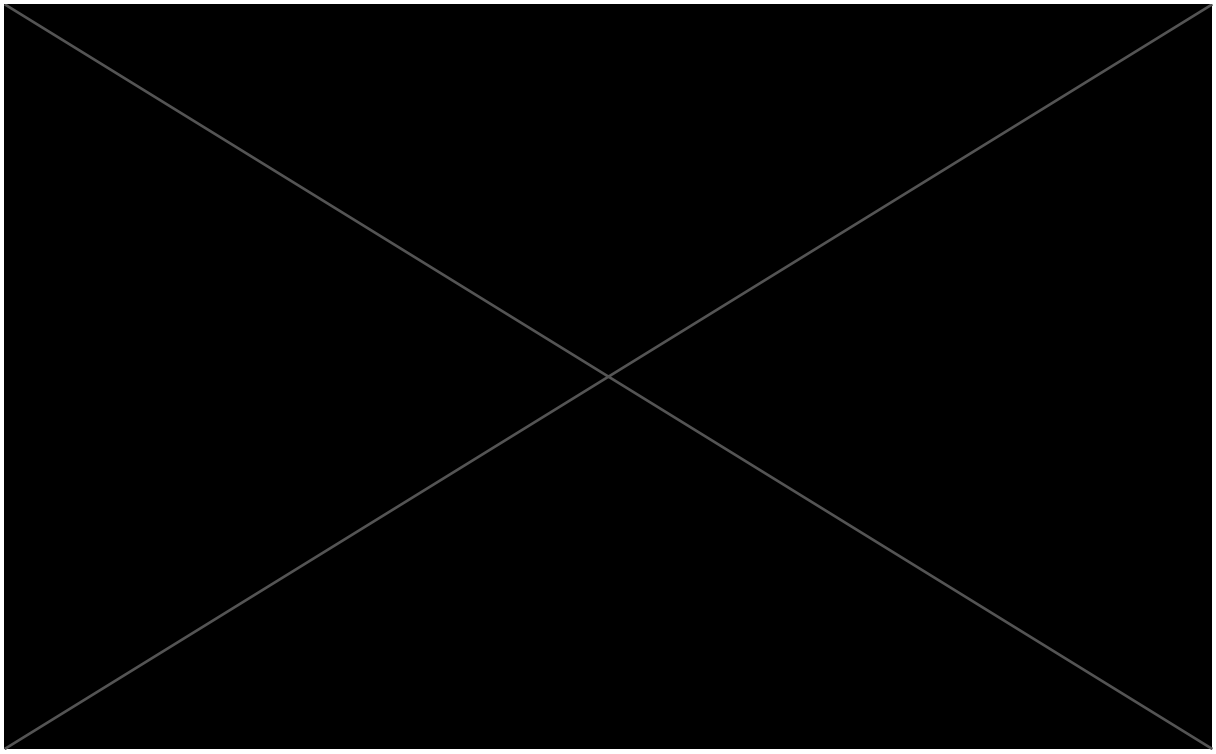

Fig. 5.28 - Notting Hill Carnival 2013 (I. Blagrove. *Carnival. A photographic and testimonial history of Notting Hill Carnival.* 2014)

If we go back to that spatial concept of liminality that anthropologists discuss as typical of rituals, we begin to see the architectural limitation of such connotation in reference to these two case studies. The performance of these protests creates a new dimension, a new suspended space "where possibilities are glimpsed rather than a new social relationship cemented."[148] Instead of being an enclosure, a liminal condition, this can be defined more as an arterial condition, one that Tim Ingold describes as the in-between, where nothing is fixed and everything is in motion.[149] They both expand through a decentralised network across the city, giving birth to a new temporary city constructed on what Richard Sennet defines a "decentralised democracy."[150] Together, they create an "open crowd" capable of persisting in this public stage of the city through its collective action. This crowd does not converge into a unicum, into a singular centripetal force, but it maintains its individualities and takes the name of a *multitude*.

The multitude is a condition of the many, as Paolo Virno reports, "the *multitude* indicates a *plurality which persists as such* in the public scene, in collective action, in the handling of communal affairs, without converging into a One, without evaporating within a centripetal form of motion. Multitude is the form of social and political existence for the many, seen as being many."[151] Borrowing from Spinoza, Virno, claims that the multitude challenges the dichotomy of public and private, because the private sphere of the individual coalesces into the public sphere of the collective: "Multitude signifies: plurality—literally: being-many—as a lasting from of social and political existence, as opposed to the cohesive unity of the people. Thus, multitude consists of a network of individuals; the many are a singularity"[152] and the most natural political act of the multitude is civil disobedience.[153] The multitude, in our case studies, stages a network that recognises no centre, according to Hardt and Negri, it is a coexistence of different beliefs and identities that come together under a shared resistance against the state. Those identities "converge not to unite into one large centralized group; they remain different and independent but link together in a new network structure, which defined both they

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[148] McLeod, 39

[149] Ingold, 147

[150] Sennett (1998). In his *Spaces of Democracy*, Richard Sennet expands on this notion of Decentralised democracy: "in the modern world economy, the fragmentation of urban settlements has radically increased. Decentralized democracy is an attempt to make a political virtue out of this very fragmentation, an attempt which appears in demands for local, communal control of schools, welfare services, or building codes."

[151] Virno 2004, 21

[152] Virno 2004, 76

[153] Virno 2004, 69

individualities and their commonalities."[154] These protests manifest into a decentralised network that allows to visualise the contemporary image of the city as an infrastructure for ritual actions, where different individual voices come together, independent of classes, race, faith, and politics. The network "obliges us to reinvent the means of articulation of the social, not as a hierarchical fusion but rather as provisional horizontal networks."[155]

The city becomes a democratic stage that does not aim to find any cohesion or unification under a single principle, but, on the contrary, by broadening its participation, it becomes more fragmented and partial in form.[156] Decentralised democracy has a particular affinity for the modern city; Aristotle conveyed that the city is very rarely a coherent human settlement, being instead more akin to a *synoikismos*—a coming together of differences of families or economic interests or political views. In the modern world, the fragmentation of urban settlements has radically increased the power of decentralised democracy, which attempts to make a political virtue out of this very fragmentation.

The Notting Hill Carnival and XR are the last of a series of moments across the history of London where the friction between opposites, between rhythms and flows, between private and state interests, between ritual and habitual latency lies. By formalising this clash of rhythms, voices, and spatial practices, these protests encourage us to rethink our city from an anthropological perspective, to observe the constant changes in the behaviours of its inhabitants and embrace them with new projects for the city. They caution us to stop and think before intervening in our cities, they propose a form of activism from which architects can learn to contrast the overbuilding that is disintegrating the cultural identities of the communities that intersect and make our cities. They are an invitation to reflect on the Vitruvian balance between *fabrica* and *ratiocinatio* [building and thinking] and propose to redirect our profession towards the latter. A break before action is a fundamental step towards better understanding our cities and their inhabitants and to use their rituals not simply as analytical canvases but as instruments to rethink the city as a project.

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[154] Hardt, Negri, 288. In the same book they also use the words of Bolivian politician Alvaro Garcia Linera to better explain this networked nature of the multitude, as a common ground that gathers together different individual voices, independent from classes, race, faith, politics. Linera says the network "obliges us to reinvent the means of articulation of the social, not as a hierarchical fusion but rather as provisional horizontal networks". Ibid, 110-111.

[155] Bolivian politician Alvaro Garcia Linera in Hardt and Negri, 110-111

[156] Sennett (1998)

7 - CONCLUSION

An invite to transgress

For an architecture of the everyday

Since the post-industrial revolution, the noise of machines and industries has left the ground to the excess of communication technologies,[1] and to this day, architecture has responded to this excess with identical forms of simple construction and unequivocal standardised forms that can be repeated without encouraging any distinctive character. In London, spaces of appearance, as we have read them in earlier centuries, made entirely of human behaviours and interactions, are no longer recognisable—with the rare exception of transgressive and performative occupations, such as Extinction Rebellion and Notting Hill Carnival.

The *immer gleich* is how Walter Benjamin's calls the eternal return of the same: "in the capitalist production of commodities, the new and the novel stimulate demand by reintroducing meaning. At the same time, the process of repetition organized from commodity production, imposes the eternal return of the same. In a world of stereotypes, the question becomes knowing how to tear the new from the always-the-same."[2] For too long architecture contributed to this ceaseless circle as the process of translation of behaviours into forms, which means that all actions—whether collective or individual—can finally become legible accepted practices perpetuated through time. While Benjamin points to capitalism as having flattened society and its rhythms[3], therefore, we must admit that architecture is guilty of a similar crime: by turning behaviours into forms, architecture turns life into standards. And, yet identicalness makes cities boring.

Part of this standardisation is the consequence of an architecture that today is utterly controlled by money and neoliberal markets, where developments are not intended to optimize the quality of life but are mainly intended for personal gain; London, for instance, is a city where the rationality of form is expressed through rules and codes of conduct that dictate our ways of living. Architects in this new scheme became quite obsolete figures, which are surpassed by other more relevant characters that inevitably gain control over a great

[1] Han, 19

[2] Teyssot, 18

[3] Benjamin, 288

portion of the built environment. The city and its collective spaces—and London is a great example of this—is shaped entirely by developers and constructors, while architects are relegated to softer, more nuanced architectures of private commissions. To regain that lost agency in the architecture of the city, I propose to revise the use of anthropology in the design process without limiting it to mere ethnographic data. The invitation that lies between the lines of this thesis is for architects to learn how to stop and observe: look first and then think, rather than think first and then look for places to impose thinking.[4] It is only once we observe the world that we might realise that it is a world that "resists ordering."[5]

The city has too long relied on "metaphor, analogy, and planning processes, rather than on the specifics of reality,"[6] that constituted of different communities, cultures, and beliefs, hence different spatial practices all along. For these reasons, our collective rituals have developed into prescribed actions, where movements and behaviours have become predictive diagrams oriented towards the production—and control—of public spaces. From the division of society into distinct classes and the consequent establishment of habitus, London's collective spaces became either a mere means of transport or a leftover space between building developments. Architecture favoured this shifting role and meaning of the collective by insisting on building without questioning the relentless process of standardisation. If the production of architecture has prevented forms of collective gathering, this thesis tries to provide reassurance that we must maintain an optimistic reading of the built environment as a physical framework that can enhance and facilitate collective living.

In order to do so, architecture needs to learn how to break the ceaseless circle of standard by learning how to transgress the current design process. This transgression comes from acute observations of the actual behaviours that already transgress, counteract the static structure of the city—occasional, transient behaviours that visibly suspend the prescribed uses of the city as transgressions manifested into rituals, as collective or emphatic actions in our daily life, that interrupt, surprise but also belong to our everyday. Everyday activities "act" and do not "plan," as Michel de Certeau argues. They are *tactics* of resistance against capitalist

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[4] Till, 49

[5] Ibid.

[6] Chase, Crawford, Kaliski, 104

consumption.[7] It is the *everyday space*, which is a space that goes "beyond the culturally defined physical realms of home, workplace, and institution,"[8] where a possible urban "sacredness," in its real meaning of being "cut off" or "set apart" from the whole, can be found. Architecture should thus learn to welcome accidents by embracing the mundanity of life in the design process, where everything is performed without a plan, it is uncontrollable and simply happens. But, the everyday frightens us because it is chaotic, and incidental; it is made of habits prone to changes, indeed, not visible from a form above.

Architecture as process

This thesis intends to demonstrate that there is another possibility for architecture to avoid succumbing in a world of stereotypes and hopefully helps it finding a glimpse of new: if ritual belongs to our everyday, it means that spaces of appearance can continue to exist in a hidden condition between buildings. The everyday is made of "pure" actions, it is about coming together without a prescribed plan, it is incidental, it is an *in-between*, where unsurveilled processes can be more transgressive than institutionalised rituals—intended as official civic ceremonies, festivals, etc. In these in-between spaces, a collective expression can be staged outside of the state's governance and normative control: these are spaces that, even if for a brief fragment of time, become something different, where "lived experience and political expression come together."[9] These are spaces, neither private nor public, that exist at the junctures between the institutional and the domestic: they *are* collective spaces,[10] which "contain multiple and constantly shifting meanings rather than clarity of function."[11]

It is through these informal pockets of life that we can learn how to redefine the space of the city: today, informality is the exception to the norm, the more eloquent state of exception capable of contrasting the flattening of social life in the densely networked metropolitan centre. Much like the precinct was in the 1700s, these spaces exist beyond the sphere of buildings, or better they are surrounded without being influenced by them, these spaces

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[7] De Certeau, 35

[8] Chase, Crawford, Kaliski, 25

[9] Chase, Crawford, Kaliski, 28

[10] Something that Lefebvre identified with the word "thirdspace", a space that is neither material nor representable. A space that bears the possibility of new meanings, a space activated through social actions and the social imagination: a space in-between. Further studies on the nature of Thirdspace have been conducted by Edward Soja, *Thirdspace*. Blackwell Publisher: Malden (MA) 1996

[11] Chase, Crawford, Kaliski, 28

become "venues for the expression of new meanings through the individuals and groups who appropriate the spaces for their own purposes. Apparently empty of meaning, they acquire constantly changing meanings."[12] They are never formally defined and remain hidden in-between buildings; they are never particularly identifiable in planning documents, which is why we can use the same documents to recognise these spaces as potential sites for observation and intervention. Vacant lots, sidewalks, front yards, parks, and parking lots are all outdoor spaces, empty of form and therefore of standards. Spaces whose meanings are not immediately evident but unfold through the repetitious acts of everyday life."[13] These spaces are appropriated by the life of their inhabitants, who decide how to make them to appear: skaters can use parking lots for training; sidewalks are spaces where people also suddenly stop to greet someone; front yards are opportunities for sharing domestic life.

Before this chaotic use of a space that was built with a clear purpose of transition, people find opportunity for stasis. These opportunities can be observed by architects in their design processes, by becoming not simple translators of people's lives but more facilitator, mediator in their lives. Architects mediate between inhabitants of the city and urban legislations, between constructors and developers, between clients and policies and legislations. They could also find a new role in empowering inhabitant to become the self-makers of their own spaces, to teach how best to dialogue with policies accepting their role in the project of architecture. In 2009, Finn Williams (one of the founders of Public Practice) with David Knight alongside Cristina Monteiro co-founders of DK-CM—ran a summer school at the Architectural Association. The outcome of this programme was titled *Sub-Plan*, a collection of studies of planning policies and regulations in the UK conducted by students, who found loopholes in the texts—the new in what seems always the same[14]—and proposed ways to engage with these accidents. *Sub-Plan* is a demonstration that a different architecture is possible, one that allows to escape from its conventional formality, and welcomes the consideration that rules and norms can be interpreted and possibly subverted, transgressed. Architecture can aspire to become a thinking process and does not need to remain confined to being just a finite outcome.

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[12] Chase, Crawford, Kaliski, 28-29

[13] Chase, Crawford, Kaliski, 29

[14] Paraphrasing Benjamin, 288

Throughout the chapters of this thesis, in the evolution of London's collective spaces, I have tried to find similar urban loopholes where the transgression of architecture could be expressive of a formal change. Where architects observed and used actions as catalyst for a formal change. Nicholas Hawksmoor, for instance, counteracted the imposing interior religious space of the church, as the only architecture where collective gathering took place, with the invention of a precinct around the church, where alternative rituals could eventually take place. The nature of the same precinct was further tested in Georgian London, through the investigation of its materiality: sporadic, low iron fences were soon substituted by lines of vegetation, which were ultimately consolidated into high railings with copious greeneries at their core. Every stage of the Georgian precinct thus generated new ritual practices, initiated by transgressive actions. This was particularly noticeable when tall railings where erected around Georgian Squares in central London, which, though originally intended as a gesture of social segregation, ultimately failed to prevent unlawful behaviours from taking place. On the contrary, such enclosures invited "transgressors" to perform their rituals, which only later were deemed socially acceptable praxes. A famous case was that of the game of tennis in Lincoln Inn's Fields, initially practised against the law and later institutionalised with the establishment of tennis courts on one side of the square.

If in the seventeenth century, architecture in London opened the possibility of an outdoor collective space, in the eighteenth century, the same space became a stage for a frantic urban life and its collective rituals. Until the nineteenth century, when the project of modernity, with its cumbersome infrastructures, finally managed to bring its obsession of order and legibility to London, reducing its collective space into a network of efficient movements and private spheres.[15] And this is the city we live in today, where social distinctions are palpable in the democratic space of the city, and the network of greeneries, transports, and commerce remain the only architecture for opportunities and interactions—a network that is, nonetheless, considered to be the highest achievement of a metropolis.

But architects need to learn to let go of the fears of "the other," of chaos and transgressions and encounter the everyday life in the city. In order to face the accidents of the everyday architects must learn not to forget that they are citizens before being designers, who walk at street level, ready to observe and look around at what exists and appreciate the changes that

[15] What Byung-Chul Han calls the sphere of narcissism, that generates the "the Hell of the sameness". Han, 25

society goes through, and abandon the voyeur-god view of the city, an "all-seeing power" which disentangle them "from the murky intertwining daily behaviours and make himself alien to them."[16] This thesis in fact concludes this aspiring revolution with an epilogue that invite architects to observe our society and its rituals as transgressions that suspend, interrupt, and go beyond accepted, normative, and hierarchical life and open up possible alternatives for preventing architecture and the city from stagnating into conventional forms of life: the Notting Hill Carnival and Extinction Rebellion revealed that this alternative city can live by marking "the suspension of all hierarchical ranks, privileges, norms, and prohibitions."[17]

A matter of scale

John Leighton Chase writes that the "the architect in the present city must produce work that embraces spontaneous and discursive multiplicity. Yet what does this architecture feel and look like?"[18] A possible response can be found in some of the practices that in the past decades have emerged in London, amongst those Muf Architecture/Art and, later, DK-CM are quite exemplar.

Both offices' work oscillates between small gestures and urban strategies, and each project is often led by public consultation processes with the residents and other members of the public that interact with the site of intervention. The DK-CM project in Barkingside, a neighbourhood in East London, is an incredible example of this. It reveals a certain degree of respect and confidence in the architectural project—not as an isolated gesture but as a dialogical intervention between parties and existing forms in a given context (fig. 6.1; fig. 6.2). This is particularly striking when we compare this project to a bigger and more famous development, the Design District in the Greenwich Peninsula.

[16] De Certeau, 93

[17] Bakhtin in Sara, 18

[18] Chase, Crawford, Kaliski 106

Fig. 6.1 - DK-CM, Barkingside Town Square, 2014. (Ph. by author)

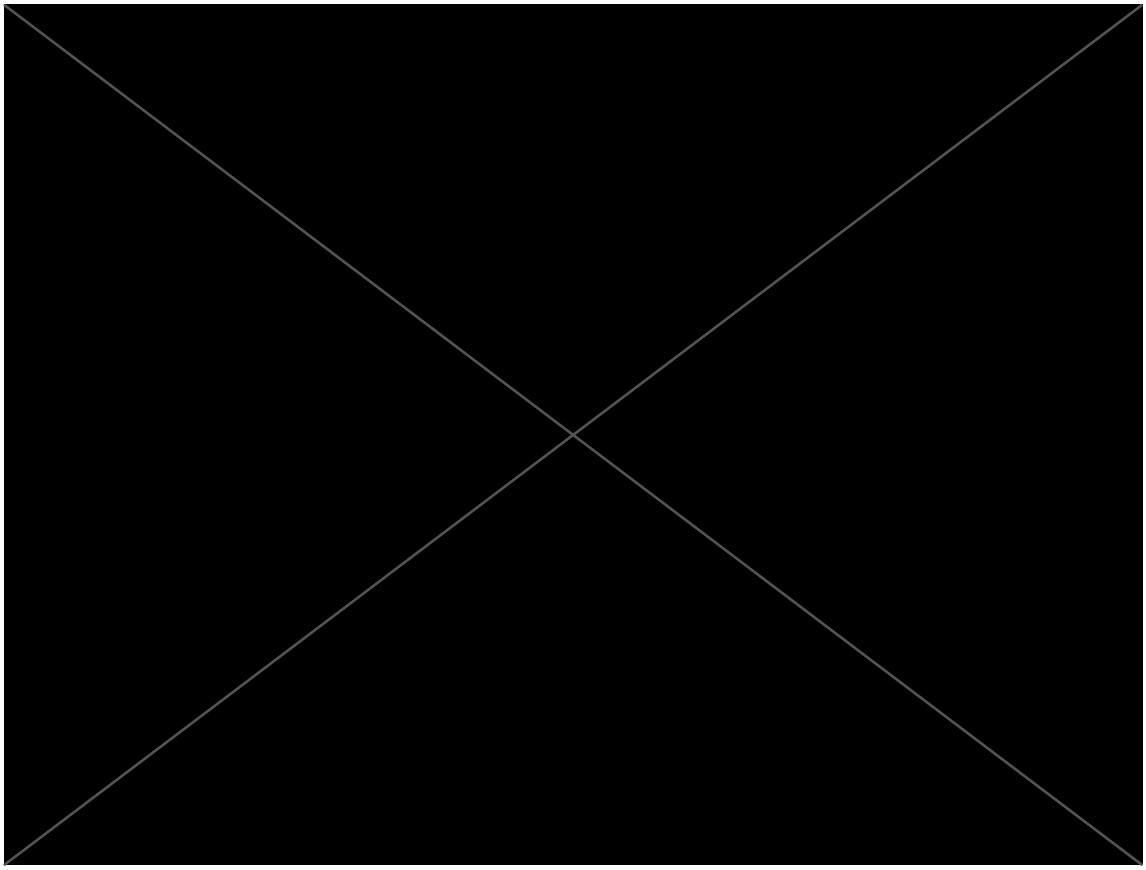

Fig. 6.2 - DK-CM, Barkingside Town Square, 2014. (© DK-CM website)

Both projects propose two opposite forms of urban regeneration, which, though not so distant in time, derive from two radically different approaches towards the city and its communities. If in the first case, we are in front of a minimal architectural gesture that gently transforms a central square—just off Barkingside High Street—by creating a new civic space through a colonnade that connects the existing Leisure Centre and Fullwell Cross Library, which contributes to the softening of the edges of both buildings in their urban context. The latter is a more extensive and a far more insular and fragmented intervention in the middle of what still looks like a construction site in the Greenwich Peninsula (fig. 6.3). If one project addresses and welcomes a possible life between buildings, the other seems to prevent that very same life from occurring. For instance, on a normal workday at the Design District, its users prefer to eat their packed lunches at their desks, instead of using the food pavilion expressively designed for them by the Spanish firm SelgasCano. Additionally, it is worth noting that the seating arrangements do not welcome any collective exchange either, seating is, instead, laid out across the space like individual working stations—a living testimony of the individualistic society that began to take shape in late-nineteenth century Victorian London.

The Design District is a big comprehensive development where architects have been called to fill a plot of land with two projects that, according to the brief, must not have any relation to one another (fig. 6.4). The intervention of DK-CM in Barkingside counteracts this approach with a more careful and contained design entirely focused on the public. This might be a direct demonstration that a comprehensive design for the city is not the ideal strategy to enhance collective life. Smaller, more careful, and punctual interventions that reflect the equally fragmented social and urban reality of the city are, instead, more impactful gestures for citizens. They act at the scale of the human rather than at the scale of the city; they prefer the informality of voids over a proliferation of forms. Architecture must scale down, if it hopes to find a new agency.

The Barkingside's project is a demonstration that architects can act as a link between the city and its inhabitants and between the building and the city by participating in and responding to collective rituals that disrupt space and set up new projects for the future. This is the result of an architecture that focuses on the particular over the whole and of the work of an architect whose choices are influenced by the contingencies of the city and its inhabitants—contingencies that are grounded in a concrete reality.

Fig. 6.3 -Design District in the Greenwich Peninsula, 2020. (Ph. by author)

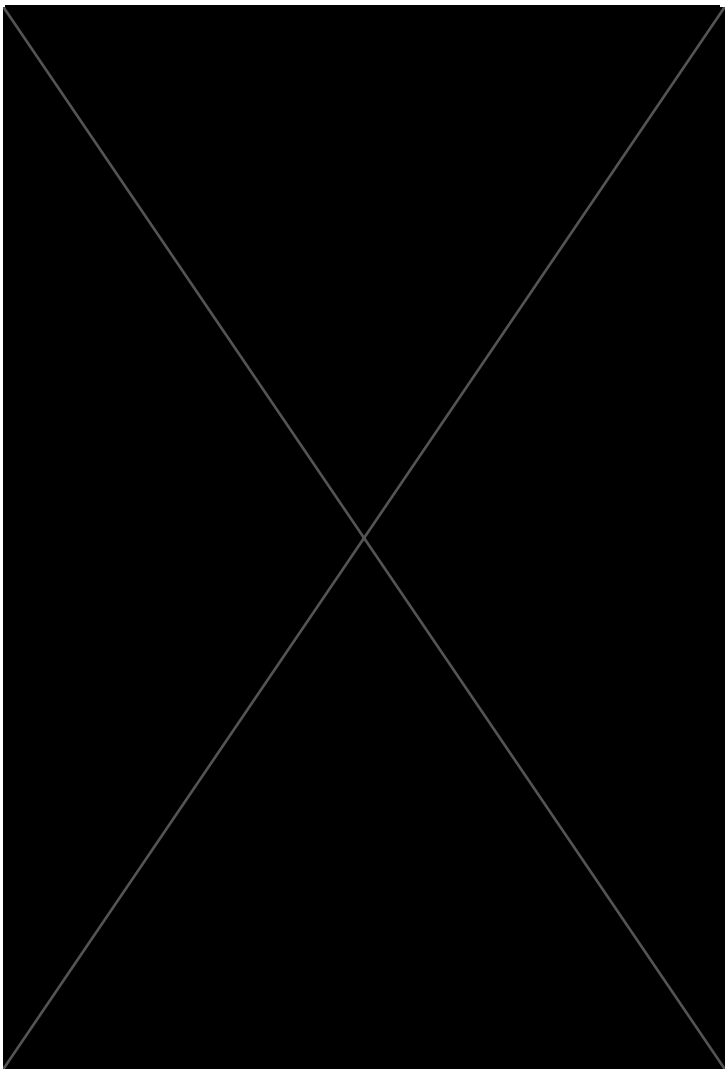

Fig. 6.4 -Design District in the Greenwich Peninsula, 2018. (© Knight Dragon Development)

This thesis is not a nostalgic invitation to find a new meaning of architecture; it is far from postmodernist theories that value an explicit meaning of form—a critique accused of standing against "something that had already disappeared."[19] This research, indeed, borrows from architectural studies that were outlined from the 1960s onwards, but if these urban theories were still concerned with the meaning of form (Françoise Choay, amongst others, has written that the architect gives form to the practice), my aim here is to subvert this very same concept: the architect is in a dialectical relationship with the practices that take place in space, its contingencies: "to face up to contingency is to stare into the mirror of one's fragility, to see one's shared impotence at the wheel of the juggernaut."[20] What this thesis intends to put forward is that the meaning of architectural form comes from the practices that are exercised on the site and not vice versa.

The city is no longer. We can leave the theatre now.[21]

Form in architecture should not refer to a stand-alone object, to an introverted concept that exclusively pertains to the building, rather it should be appreciated as the space that the building generates through its presence, as the space that sits in between buildings (fig. 6.5). The meaning of form in architecture still has relevance, but it must shift from seeking order in chaos to being in a more relational dialogue with the forces of the ground and of the people that interact with it. Under this framework, architects can imagine without the burden of control: "to have a vision […] to be adjusted to circumstances. […] the making of a choice is neither relativist nor determinist because we enter into those choices as sentient, knowing, and situated people, not as innocents abroad int the detached knowledge of others."[22]

We thus need to distance architecture from being a problem-solving machine that responds to each question with a fixed answer that is found in a single building. We should, instead, embrace architecture as a process that allows disparities, frictions, tensions, realities, and, hence, problems to be faced, enabling them to find a space in the city and allowing different and new social relationships to emerge: "the prospect is for architecture to move from object-

[19] "PoMo was simply a reworking of a set of internalised codes: the deckchairs may have been arranged into different patterns, but the good ship Architecture plowed on regardless. Although things looked different, the reorganization of the pieces was only formal; the underlying social conditions remained largely ignored." Till, 50-51. On this, see also Bruno Latour, *We have never been Modern*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge (MA), 1993

[20] Till, 50

[21] Koolhaas, Mau, 1264

[22] Till, 59-60

oriented formalist thinking towards new understanding of complex integrations of formal/informal and order/disorder."[23] The agency is to be found in the transformative responses of our designs more than in the fixed outcome of buildings: this is the difference that Jeremy Till describes by dichotomising "transformative agency" and "problem solving."[24]

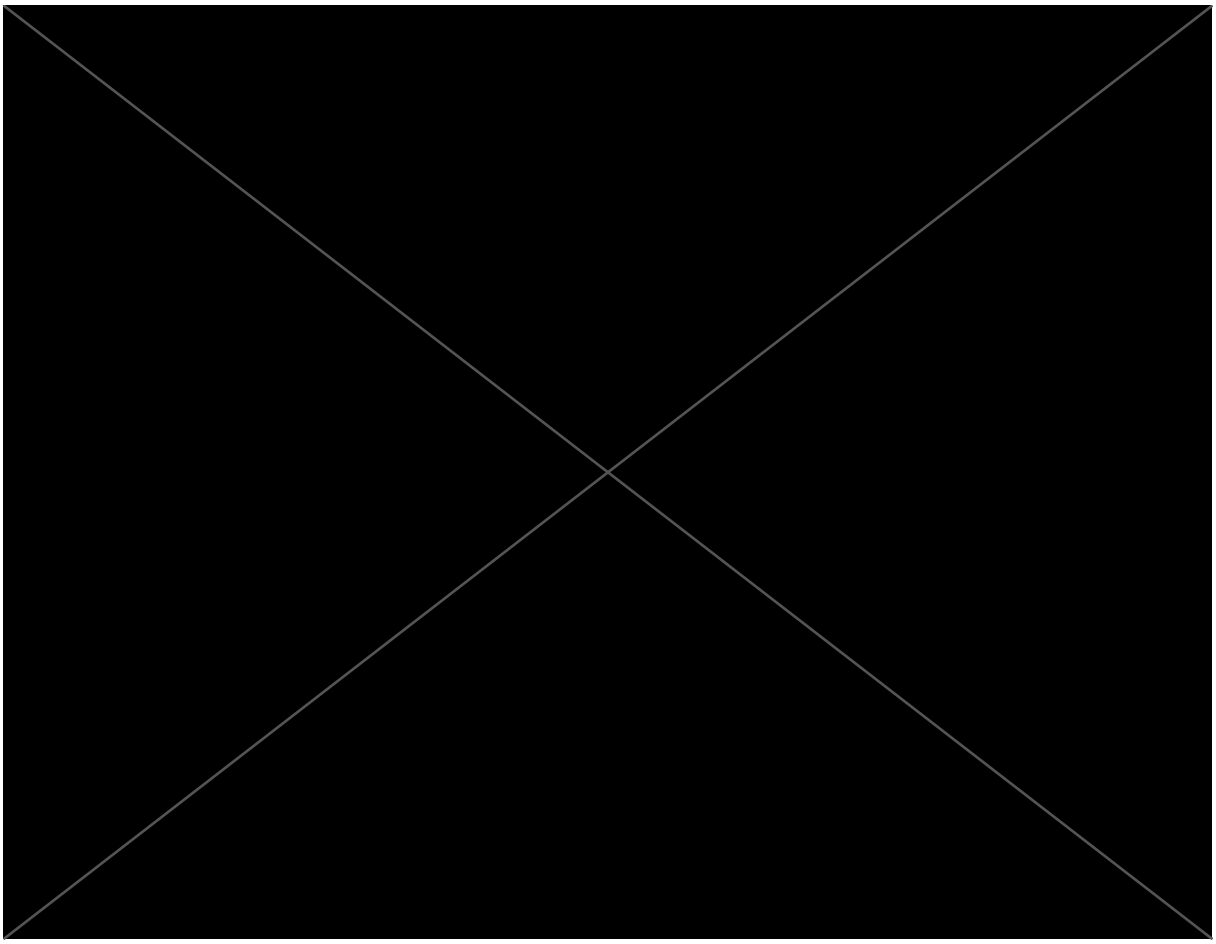

Fig. 6.5 - Muf Architecture/Art, *Ashwin Street*, 2019. (© Muf Art/Architecture Website)

The form of the city of London in the past centuries was not a matter of grand plans, but more a response manifested in small gestures that responded directly to the life of the city. Every time a grand plan was attempted, it was immediately rejected in favour of a more contained series of forms that directly targeted a condition of a portion of the city. If London is a city where "the free market is justified as the end game of 'rational' economics;"[25] it has

[23] Dovey, 88

[24] Till, 167

[25] Till, 49

nevertheless proved that there is a possibility for architecture, one that is rooted in the history of the city and its inhabitants.

Even though transgression is a concept that was born in the 1930s,[26] there was a moment in the second half of the 1700s when London offered us a glimpse of this history, when the city created spaces intended to be appropriated. London has been the capital of the world for more than two centuries, demonstrating its strength and exporting its way of life through architecture. It has been the head of a colonial empire for a long time, and, as a city, it has set the stage for spatial innovations that were later exported everywhere: the precinct was the precursor to parks and garden squares, which, even though largely still governed by private interests, were the perfect stages of the fragilities of the social life of the time. By refusing Western architectural dogmas as an act of imposition, London has produced a strong legacy of bottom-up forms of collective gatherings, which still constellate its boroughs and constitute an incredible set of social and spatial possibilities.

Starting in the 1950s, the asymmetries and violence of the postcolonial city were challenged by disempowered communities, "whose determined attempts to open new spaces in London expose the city's plasticity and deliver it up to the democratizing possibilities of spatial creolization."[27] These processes, like the Caribbean Carnival and its anti-authoritatian dance and music, were particularly important in the reimagining and reconstructing the London that we know today.[28] These instances reveal a city made of marginal communities that coexist together: "the prospect of dancing calypso style to Britain's national anthem suggests another kind of stance, where the pedagogical dissemination of national identity is brought into contact with, and changed by, the performative cultural resources of London's latest newcomers."[29] American author bell hooks allows us to see the potential of such a condition, by defining the life *at* the margins as a life *in* the margins, implying that this is a place of radical possibility, a space of resistance that can offer a new vision of reality.[30]

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[26] Jenks, 20

[27] McLeod, 26

[28] McLeod, 25

[29] McLeod, 39

[30] hooks 1984, ix

Architects should try to create opportunities in the space of the city through small formal gestures that frame a multitude of spatial practices, by looking closely at the sacredness of the everyday. The scope is not that of designing the everyday in order to control it, but to accommodate it, to mould it, to leave it a breath of action. Architecture should look and find ways of framing the everyday, by reducing the scale of intervention to the ground of the city. This, I argue, is different from quantifying the everyday but is more about looking at its facets, nuances, and possibilities. Architects should not respond to it through the design of types but through transitional forms, or what Peter Carl defines "typicalities": "types are isolated fragments of a deeper and richer structure of typicalities. The principal difference between typology and typicality is that the former concentrates upon [architectural] objects, the latter upon human situations"[31]: this, I argue, is the difference between *ethnographic* architecture and an *anthropological* one. So far, "the apparatus of codes and techniques […] has come to dominate architectural design and the making of urban contexts."[32]

Very recently, the city became a temporary stage for typicalities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the upper middle classes of London—who, today, are the same gentrifiers that contribute to the turning of the city into a standard—moved to their second homes and left the city to the people who could not afford the luxury to move and, therefore, remained in their neighbourhoods, caring for and dwelling in them and transforming their spaces into new stages of the collective everyday. At this time, I was living in an apartment block in the east of London. On the ground level, there was a patch of green, often used by lazy dog-owners to walk their animals. During the heatwave that took place during the first lockdown, most of the building's residents, armed with towels, beers, and books, migrated downstairs, transforming this space into a stage of collective life. This is a little testimony of a city that during the pandemic was reappropriated by its population: streets were emptied of cars and filled with cyclists and pedestrians and parks remained busy with people playing games, chatting from safe distances. The entire city spaces of commerce were halted and substituted with an alternative city made of new human liturgies, driven by the need to be together.

After the pandemic, this pure informality was lost at the same velocity with which it was gained. No trace of that life remains, and we have returned to the fixities of our homes and

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[31] Carl, 40

[32] Carl, 41

have continued using the spaces of the city in oblivion of their potential. Architecture, during this hiatus, could have taken the chance to raise some questions, beyond the wonders of a "15-minute city" and the efficiency of its collective spaces or the importance of the greenery and the outdoor spaces in our homes. The use of collective outdoor spaces across London by citizens whose homes did not have a balcony, garden, or terrace, was indeed frolicsome. People met at outdoor gyms, sat on park benches with their coffees and papers, and brought their kids out to play in the collective spaces of the city, whether those were gardens, parks, or streets. This was the lesson that the pandemic left us with: an alternative city exists and can be made by its inhabitants. A city that cannot be identified with an image of a legible form anymore, but with one that is more akin to syncretic theatres of life: a city where spaces of appearance are in fact not dead.

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4.16 - Blanchard Jerrold. *The New Zealander*. 1872. (Source: G. Doré; B. Jerrold. *London: A Pilgrimage*, 1872)

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4.18. Arthur Boyd Houghton, *Itinerant Singers*, 1860. (Source: English Heritage Photo Library)

4.19 - The Royal Mews at Charing Cross, 1796. (Source: R. Mace. *Trafalgar Square. Emblem of Empire,* 1976)

4.20 - *Trafalgar Square*. One of the few sketches of the whole square (Source: RIBA Drawings and Archive Collections)

4.21 - Charles Barry, *design for Trafalgar Square*, 1838. (Source: RIBA Drawings and Archive Collections)

4.22 - Charles Barry, *design for Trafalgar Square*, 1838. (Source: RIBA Drawings and Archive Collections)

4.23 - Charles Barry, *design for Trafalgar Square*, 1838. (Source: RIBA Drawings and Archive Collections)

4.24 - *Trafalgar Square. Protest against income tax*, 1848. (© City of London: London Metropolitan Archives)

4.25 - *Trafalgar Square: Crowds at reform demonstration* 1867. (© City of London: London Metropolitan Archives)

4.26 - William Walcot. *Impression of Sir Edwin Lutyens' design for the fountains in Trafalgar Square*. (Source: RIBA Drawings and Archive Collections)

4.27 - Foster + Partners, *Trafalgar Square*, 1996-2003. (© Foster + Partners Archive)

5. Epilogue. Rebel with a cause. Transgression as an act of design

5.1 - Sèbastien-Louis-Guillaume Norblin de la Gourdaine, *Antigone buries Polynices*, 1825. (Source: https://www.worldhistory.org/image/8527/antigone-with-polynices-body/)

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5.3 - *Parisian Communards posing on a barricade in Rue de Flandres on March 18*, 1871. (Source: Rogger B., Voegeli J. and Widmer R. *Protest the Aesthetic of Resistance*, 2018)

5.4 - *October 2018*. (Source: XR Website)

5.5 – Acklam Road. *Youth go head-to-head with police*. (Source: I. Blagrove. *Carnival. A photographic and testimonial history of Notting Hill Carnival*, 2014*)*

5.6 - *Ieshia Evans in Baton Rouge July 2016*. Ph. Bachman. (Source: *New York Times*)

5.7 - *XR 2020. When the only guns in your arsenal are glue guns*. Ph. Gareth Morris. (Source: XR website)

5.8 - *XR Opening Ceremony 2019*. Ph. John Banyard. (Source: XR website)

5.9 - *Mas in the Ghetto*. Ph. Chris Bell. (Source: I. Blagrove. *Carnival. A photographic and testimonial history of Notting Hill Carnival,* 2014)

5.10 – *Trinbago Carnival Club*. Ph. Allan "Capitan" Thornhill. (Source: I. Blagrove. *Carnival. A photographic and testimonial history of Notting Hill Carnival,* 2014)

5.11 - *Rocky Byron. A Native American chief*. Ph. Carl Gabriel. (Source: I. Blagrove. *Carnival. A photographic and testimonial history of Notting Hill Carnival,* 2014)

5.12 - *Peter Minshall*. Ph. Alan "Capitan" Thornhill. (Source: I. Blagrove. *Carnival. A photographic and testimonial history of Notting Hill Carnival,* 2014)

5.13 - *King Carnival Raymond Maclean*. Ph. Alan "Capitan" Thornhill. (Source: I. Blagrove. *Carnival. A photographic and testimonial history of Notting Hill Carnival,* 2014)

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5.15 - *Pink boat on Oxford Circus*, 2018. (Source: XR Website)

5.16 - *XR Symbol on Westminster Palace*, 2018. (Source: XR Website)

5.17 - *XR May 2020*. (Source: XR Website)

5.18 – *West Indian Gazette*, July 1962. (Lambeth Landmark Archive: 05368. Source: https://boroughphotos.org/lambeth/west-indian-gazette-cover-of-the-july-issue/)

5.19 - Occupy London in Saint Paul precinct, 16.10.2011 (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

5.20 - *Diagrams of the triangulation of powers in Central London*. (Drawing by author. Source: T. Farrel. *Shaping London: the patterns and forms that make the metropolis*. 2009)

5.21 - *Local Youths enjoy a game of dominos*. Ph. Chriss Bell. (Source: I. Blagrove. *Carnival. A photographic and testimonial history of Notting Hill Carnival,* 2014)

5.22 - *Party Procession*. Ph. Fitz Piper 1968. (Source: I. Blagrove. *Carnival. A photographic and testimonial history of Notting Hill Carnival*, 2014)

5.23 - *XR Camp on Marsham Street*, 2018. (Source: XR website)

5.24 - *XR Yoga on Westminster Bridge*, 2018. (Source: XR website)

5.25 - *Waterloo Bridge, 1817. George IV and the Duke of Wellington visiting Waterloo Bridge for the first time on 18th June,* 1817. (© City of London: London Metropolitan Archives)

5.26 - *Waterloo Bridge*, 2020. (Source: XR Website)

5.27 - *XR on Waterloo Bridge*, April 2018. (Source: XR website)

5.28 - *Notting Hill Carnival 2013* (Source: I. Blagrove. *Carnival. A photographic and testimonial history of Notting Hill Carnival.* 2014)

6. Conclusion. An invitation to transgress

6.1 - DK-CM, *Barkingside Town Square*, 2014. (Source: Ph. by author, 2022)

6.2 - DK-CM, *Barkingside Town Square*, 2014. (Source: http://dk-cm.com/dkcmprojects/barkingside-town-square/)

6.3 - *Design District in the Greenwich Peninsula*, 2020. (Source: Ph. by author, 2022)

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