3 Place - material and the urban imaginary

Approach

Significant regeneration projects in recent history show a strengthening of the relationship between real estate dynamics and the inclusion of cultural references. In chapter 3 we take note of two urban case studies separated by two decades and the neoliberalisation of the UK economy, that reveal how the texture of regeneration has changed - both in the way its is framed politically and how its delivery mechanisms have been finessed: Covent Garden and Battersea Power station developments.

Their stories are characterized by narratives building on the legitimizing presence of history. If we assume that heritage is 'made' and not inherited (Graham and Howard 2008), and that memory "works by reinvesting places with new accretion of significance" (Kearns and Philo, 1993), we understand the pivotal importance in observing cultural narratives. They reveal how the process of selection has been made, and who is the final beneficiary of a certain interpretation of heritage. Moreover, they show how the urban project should be considered not only as a final outcome, but also as a resource to the same policies that generated it. As stated by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983: 16):

> "we should look at those mechanisms that, deliberately or unconsciously, collaborate in their production. On the one side the marketing strategies that make them readable, the rules that guide planning, and the languages used to convey and distribute an idea of city. On the other side the mechanisms that make these strategies possible, and therefore the market, with its enabling power and its branding attitude".

What is at stake is not only the concept of past and the power of history, but also our ability to imagine alternative futures.

The redevelopment of Covent Garden in the 1970's was driven by a London wide plan for regeneration that attempted to eradicate key infrastructure deficiencies around the vegetable and flower market through the provision of tourist and business led facilities on a scale missing from the 'London offer' at that time. The project began as a comprehensive redevelopment that through cultural resistance was transformed into a heritage led urban consolidation. Operational forces of real estate that underpinned the original strategy were required to make a significant shift that incorporated rather than swept aside historic urban fabric, the resulting revaluing of built heritage' achieving the original population displacement and capital investment potential - but without being obvious.

The project of Battersea power station, on the other hand, disclosed the pivotal role of narrative in the shaping and promotion of urban change. Far from being a banal sequence of failed projects, the history of Battersea Power Station (BPS) proves how the regeneration of the built environment needs to be observed alongside the regeneration of political, economic and social ambitions which support it. Every time, a renewed context created the opportunities, and then dismantled them. Its functions evolved, different subjects took part in the discussion, national and international interests were involved. Every time, someone was heard saying "This time it is going to happen" (Watts, 2016), and was punctually neglected. The role of history, culture, and heritage entered the narrative in different ways, being in turn the reason for the preservation of the building, the reference for marketing strategies, or for feeding a romanticized approach to the project.

The outcomes in both instances, although sharing strategic goals, differ in the way media was managed to serve key stakeholder needs. Covent Garden's local community through direct action and the use of available communication channels of newspapers, television and posters created interest so substantial that the physical restructuring of their community was abandoned. We will focus on the timeline of events through the campaign, but bring new questions around the relationship between community heritage and the built heritage that the community inhabits. The two are ostensibly the same, but subsequent events through the 1980's and 1990's show this not to be the case.

In the same timeline, community opposition by the BPS Community Group (BPSCG) battled against the economic interests behind the Battersea development, and questioned the use of the iconic building to spur private interests. What will be traced back to the present is the meaning that heritage and legacy occupy in the

marketing strategies of this project and how they evolved in time. The way modes of communication changed by employing the symbolic building inside promotional narratives, together with the vastness of the project and its pivotal role in the regeneration of London and its Opportunities Areas, make Battersea an exemplary case like no other. Here, heritage grew as one of the rising forms of asset in the deregulated landscape of housing investments. The marketing strategies are clearly influenced by a globalize mode of communication, there's a declared need to render the uniqueness of the places by including elements which can make them recognizable. However, this search of identity is increasingly linked to branding: cultural difference is one of the values that support distinctiveness and becomes more and more important as the built environment grows generic and simplified. The inclusion of heritage becomes a metaphor, easy to read and to understand because it promotes a synthetic version of the reality.

The Covent Garden and Battersea projects talk about how the concept of heritage, intended as a narrative, evolved since the 1980s. They recognize the phenomenon of heritage valorization and compel us to think about what imaginaries lay beyond the concept of history. They also ask us to acknowledge the valorization of heritage as a complex process: the patrimonialization of these objects, commonly referred to as professional practices of urban conservation, is necessarily linked to the other forms of valorization, coming from public and private subjects. The local community, the administration, the private developers all contribute to the shaping of meaning. Along with the official narrative, parallel descriptions can exist and other stories can input to the significance of heritage. The predominance of the visual narrative, in this sense, is useful in order to understand how the promotion of a patrimonial object is always shaped by someone for someone else and what constitutes the layered codes that deposit onto an image. This invites us to reflect on how the relevance of heritage is built, and for whom.

Glossary 3

Community: *noun - a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common. The condition of sharing or having certain attitudes and interests in common. A group of interdependent plants or animals growing or living together in natural conditions or occupying a specified habitat.*
A physical proximity, similar characteristics or shared attitudes, 'community' like 'material' has tangible as well as intangible significance. Care required to ensure both aspects of these keywords are understood and accounted for – in particular how the interdependency is manifest in shared attitudes and the spatial consequences of those attitudes.

Collage: *noun – to glue from the French 'Coller': the fixing of disparate physical elements together on a common plane, the juxtaposition creating associative meaning through difference between elements.*
A collage as a piece of art, defined in 1912 by Picasso and Braque, affirms and questions significance through the re-contextualisation of multiple meanings the viewer attaches to each element. Collage is a process of assembling found fragments, each of which can retain its acquired meaning but also contribute to a complex arrangement that communicates a new narrative. Collage therefore requires active 'reading' or reflection to decode potentially multiple or even contradictory messages. Collage as a practice also applies to the incremental addition of structures and building elements over time and it as old as architecture.

"A *church of the 11th century might be added or altered in the 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, or even the 17th or 18th centuries; but every change, whatever history it destroyed, left history in the gap, and was alive with the spirit of the deeds done midst its fashioning.*" (William Morris: 1877).

Curtilage: *noun - defining the edges of significance.*
The intimate setting around historic buildings affects the financial landscape as much as the visual or cultural landscape and the judgement regarding preservation, adaptation or demolition remains variable. The growth of 'Permitted Development' under successive market focussed Governments weakens the notion of curtilage. In the UK local Planning Authorities decide on the extent of the curtilage of a listed building – an inconsistent process with inconsistent rigour establishing weak precedent. A clear framework centrally considered against benchmarks is the alternative, however if development rights around a listed building are removed, then that determination requires robust justification. All listed buildings require clear fields of context to be defined around them, supported by a simple matrix of values that any proposal can be measured against, reflecting the purpose and historic relationships the ensemble of buildings sustain.

Halcyon(ism): *adjective - origin late Middle English*
Alluding to a period of time in the past that was idyllically happy and peaceful – the desire for a conflict-free and unarguable state of reaffirmation.

Montage: *noun – to mount from the French 'monter' (to mount, to put up).*
Montage is a process of assembling temporal fragments where the fragments are made, not found, holding meaning collectively in an arrangement creating a seamless, singular experience, often immersive to communicate a distinct message. In cinema, montage is the process or technique of editing together different pictorial sources into a single, coherent composition. This critical cinematic process was articulated by Sergei Eisenstein (1989-1948) as a form of dialectic - structuring how image sequences create tension and confirmation to provoke emotional responses with the viewer - for Eisenstein montage was essentially ideological. Montage overtook collage as the 20th century's preeminent assembly practice, Montage's cinematic and time based determinism grew appropriate for the computer generated representation.

Nostalgia: *noun - a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past, typically for a period or place with happy memories. Origin late 18th century: modern Latin translating German 'Heimweh' (homesickness), from Greek 'nostos' + 'algos' (to return home + pain) – note reaffirmation of a better time or place indicating profound unhappiness with the contemporary – a negative with the appearance of the positive.*

Protection: *noun - old French, from late Latin 'protectio'(n-), 'protegere' (cover in front).*
The action of protecting, or the state of being protected - is intrinsic to the SPAB Manifesto (1877) and Morris's concept of nurture rather than alteration.

Repair: *noun – replacement in order to effect ongoing performance and purpose, usually in response to a particular event or material failure.*
Repair was advocated by Morris as the means to prolong active use and sustain historic buildings.

Renovation: *noun – the interface between an historic building with new construction in order to attain new requirements for physical or operational performance.*
This operation should require a high degree of historic fabric expertise, ability in user and stakeholder engagement to co-create an effective and achievable brief that balances the needs of the users with the long term heritage interests of the building, and design ability to realise a contemporary intervention that adds positively to the fabric of the building. This is the most complex process in heritage work.

Tangible: *adjective and noun – late 16th century: from French 'tangible', or from late Latin 'tangibili' (perceptible by touch; clear and definite; real).*
Tangible heritage is a term describing apparent physical historic fabric.

Intangible: *adjective – early 17th century: from French 'intangible', or from medieval Latin 'in' + 'tangibilis' (not + tangible). Unable to be touched or grasped; not having physical presence.*
Intangible heritage is a term used to describe historical association not necessarily evidenced in the materiality of a place. Among the others, it can include notions linked to culture, memory, traditions, legacy, authenticity, locality.

Value: *noun and verb - old French, feminine past participle of 'valoir' (to be worth), from Latin 'valere'. importance, worth, or usefulness of something, estimate the monetary worth of something; principles or standards of behaviour; important or beneficial.*
Important, beneficial, useful and monetised, the concatenation of social value with financial value is a critical flaw within the word that is interchangeable between something commonly shared and used or privately owned and traded. This double bind has consequences for the language of heritage and its production.

3.1 Covent Garden

Covent Garden sustained a relationship between dense collective work and dense, collective built fabric. A market garden for the Abbey of Westminster, the presence of a vegetable market existed from the fourteenth century until the late twentieth. The consistent history of the place is one of redevelopment and displacement - Henry VIII co-opted the Convent and through his largess the Earl of Bedford build an impressive home on the 47 Acres known as Covent Garden. The 4th Earl instigated the largest urban redevelopment project in London since Roman times when, in 1630 he commissioned Inigo Jones to draw up a comprehensive Italianate piazza with exclusive housing, requiring the creation of a new Parish and church positioned in relation to the piazza as the temple was positioned in a Roman forum. The existing cottages of the poor were removed.The fire of 1666 destroyed many of London's markets, Covent Garden expanded to fill the void having escaped the fire, becoming a chartered market in 1670. The market commenced a socio-economic shift as the wealthy moved top newer areas of development, leaving space in a reverse gentrification of the 100 acres the area had become to artists, writers and performers alongside the market and small tradespeople.

By 1740 significant commercial activity characterised the area, a brewery covered 4 acres, an iron foundry filled an entire city block, printworks joined the highly mixed economy that the Bedford estate actively facilitated. In the 1830's Fowlers neoclassical market buildings filled the piazza and still stand. The positive statistics of activity came at a social cost however, as the dense urban fabric in which the urban working poor lived was squalid - Lord Shaftesbury brought his philanthropic 'Society for Improving the Conditions of the Working Classes' to Covent Garden in 1854, when a thousand people lived in thirteen ten roomed houses with no sanitation. The intensity of the place was documented by Dickens (1857) - "a place of past and present mystery, romance, abundance, want, beauty, ugliness, fair country gardens, and foul street gutters; all confused together." [1]

> "Cultural memory is the collective understandings of the past as they are held by a people in any given social and historical context [...] Ideas of cultural memory are therefore laden with politics and power relationships as statements about the past become meaningful through becoming embedded within the cultural and material context of a particular time" (Harvey, 2008: 21).

As a physical environment the tightly arranged historic street pattern and predominantly 19th century buildings sustained an intense set of occupations including printworks and a brewery in addition to the expanding vegetable and flower market. Redevelopment in the 19th century was sporadic, raised rentals arising from new buildings quickly falling foul of subletting as the community maintained its presence, although demolitions cut highways such as Charing Cross Road through the dense urban territory (which displaced four thousand people alone), were already demonstrating the priorities of the authorities who increasingly saw urban density as a problem to be solved through infrastructure – movement as a paradigm for efficiency allied to health combining to underpin a modernity that both generated intensity but expended huge reserves of capital and energy in cutting through it or undermining it. From Haussmann's Paris to Robert Moses Bronx freeways, the city fabric of human interactions and small scale entrepreneurialism was considered an issue to be mastered rather than the body politic of 'capital' itself. Covent Garden acutely illustrates this difference between social capital and a capitalised society.

By the 1960's the market had filled much of the large scale industrial space of ironworks and brewery, the exponential growth had led Bedford family to look at state adoption of the market, the unwillingness of the authorities to do this led the Beecham Estate to take it from their hands. The war damage led to a significant decline in population, dropping from 1901's census of nine thousand to only four thousand in 1960. Lower residential numbers did not mean lower working numbers however, in the 1960's the area supported thirty thousand workers in seventeen hundred businesses with five thousand in the market alone, seventeen theatres, two national newspapers, two opera houses, four hospitals and six churches. Poverty remained, with a lack of sanitation and overcrowding lasting into the 1970's.[2]
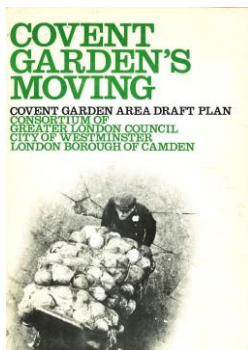
The Greater London Council (GLC) finally took control of the market in 1961, purchased at a cost of £300,000 per acre of its 14 acre site. Its removal to a peripheral site released not only congestion, but the site and the ambitions of the infrastructure led redevelopment of the site with a four lane highway through the centre of the site being the driver for change. The 'Covent Garden Area Draft Plan' was issued in 1968, within it text and image combine to articulate the GLC's attitude to the place under redevelopment.

> "Apart from few well known buildings of importance such as the Royal Opera House, the Theatre Royal, Drury lane, and St Paul's Church, the Covent Garden area may not at first sight appear to contain much of architectural merit". [3] (GLC, 1968: 20)

The Plan acknowledged the family businesses, the "special flavour" of the area, detailing "a surprisingly large number of buildings of real merit and interest" and "a long and distinctive history still subtly expressed in its present character", however also noted that preservation was within the context of "planning objectives for the area". The only record of the area within the Draft plan, entitled rather uncompromisingly *Covent Garden's Moving*[4], is a double spread of a collage of photographic fragments that cut away the ground and show a sparse number of people, emphasising the need for redevelopment and the unimportant ground on which the buildings sit.

The acknowledgement of what is about to be removed was tragic in the real sense of the word, as land values rose to £1 million per acre in anticipation of capital return, the impact on the residents through rent rise evidenced in the erosion of daily life - the thirteen greengrocers in Neal Street in 1960 fell to four in 1970, with landlords stalling building repairs in the lead up to wholesale demolition, people's environments decayed around them.

After the relocation of the flower market, the working class quarter of Covent Garden was subject to a Greater London Council *Comprehensive Development Plan*, placing an international conference centre onto Inigo Jones's piazza, hotels by the corporate architect Seifert and Partners, seven and a half thousand parking spaces (when the total car ownership within Covent Garden was three hundred cars). Some of the heritage buildings were retained in the plan, but the area was divided into commercial strips and a park, cut through with new roads and pedestrianised retail.
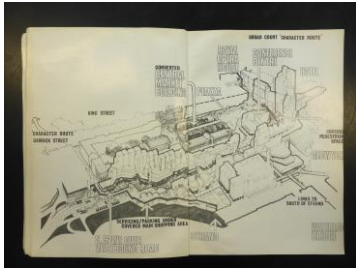
(fig 3.4 - landscape spread)

The redevelopment proposed the following:

- 5 historic theatres would be destroyed, and many more compromised.
- A new office and walkway complex would dominate the south side, with a conference centre and high-rise tourist hotel on the east side, an extended Royal Opera House along much of the north side.
- The central market halls would be rehabilitated with shops and restaurants, under a plastic roof
- The glass and ironwork floral halls, and the Jubilee market hall demolished.
- Cambridge Circus replaced by a 'major new landmark' with a sports centre, an 'elevated public transport corridor', residential units on the upper floors.
- Most of Seven Dials across to Holborn would be rebuilt as offices and new housing blocks.
- A 4 acre park would eliminate half the buildings from King Street up to Shelton Street, destroying the Woodyard Brewery and half of Long Acre.
- More than 7,500 parking spaces would be created in the area; yet the local population then owned fewer than 300 cars

The Planning authorities conducted a communication strategy using the tactics of disempowerment: described by Gordon Gardiner MP as "the most exciting comprehensive development scheme since the Great Fire of 1666." (Bransford, 2012)[5]. The sensitivity deficit was intrinsic to the belief that redevelopment benefits were strategic for the city, allied to an attitude towards the 'old city' that saw it as a dormant opportunity for financialisation. The definition of key heritage emblems to populate the 'new city' betrayed a curios echo of le Corbusier's Plan Voisin for Paris in 1925, where the central arrondissement were erased save a handful of key monuments that sporadically populated an urban park for the modern metropolis surrounding it. The requirement for compulsory purchase required a public enquiry, this legal oversight mechanism forced a more 'conservation' based approach to the redevelopment which revised the Plan in 1971, shrinking the demolition area by approximately half, dropping a portion of the ring road and facilitating only five thousand car parking spaces.

The announcement of the plan created community action, and financial reaction in equal measure. With newspaper headlines such as "London theatres at risk" and "Revolt in the Cities", Covent Garden soon became a national issue. Over the next few months *The Times* and *The Guardian* devoted entire pages to the subject. In parallel, by 1971 the land was now worth £2 million an acre. What is of interest to the discussion of cultural value is identified accurately by the cultural magazine *Timeout* in an edition on 14th May 1971 "All those tourists the GLC expected to fill the new hotels and the developers want to see shopping in the new boutiques didn't come for Covent Carnaby at all, they came looking for England. Soon they won't find it anywhere"[6]. *Timeout* understood the fundamental disjuncture between cultural value created by individuals, social collectives and circumstance, and the subsequent exploitation of the capital value that development of suh cultural expression.
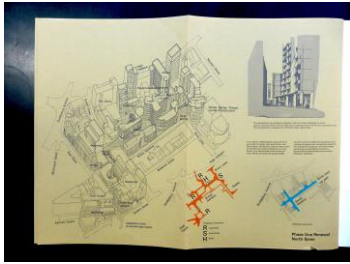
It is estimated that seven hundred residents, about a quarter of the permanent population, were moved out of Covent Garden between 1971 and 1972, by which time the land was changing hands at £5 million per acre, still without the redevelopment being ratified by Government, but with the entire expectation that it will be.

> "Individual freedom is to be sacrificed to a public good that is in the minds only of the planners – and possibly the developers. The plan aims to make the developers the privileged heirs to a domain in which individuals have long enjoyed freedom." (Robin Middleton in Bransford, 2012).

The objectors to this modernisation focused on the community, their rights and the undemocratic processes used, it was claimed, to achieve the land consolidation necessary for redevelopment, with vandalism and arson allegedly employed by the GLC to hasten the emptying of properties. The arguments countering the redevelopment were utterly valid, but conceding ground to highly publicised community action only a few years after the student led riots in Paris in 1969 would set a dangerous precedent. The mechanism that the (then) Secretary of State, Geoffrey Rippon used in January 1973 to concede a very political volte-face was to list two hundred and fifty buildings located sporadically throughout the area and require detailed public consultation on the redevelopment – effectively halting the process but without overturning the machinery of the state. Buildings that were simply built to be socially useful and never as 'heritage' became heritage and therefore a means of conserving the communities that built them and occupied them. With the buildings in poor condition, the community led a series of initiatives to demonstrate that localised repair was a viable alternative to localised redevelopment through the Covent Garden Forum - culminating in the communities alternative development plan *Keep the Elephants out of the Garden*, which was largely adopted in the new *Area Plan* in 1978. Consistent pressure form the community over the provision of social housing in the area culminated in the GLC losing a judicial review in 1981 which established for the first time the rights of community groups, not only landowners, to take legal action over land disputes.

History is (not) what it used to be

> "The sickening hideousness of London, the metropolis of the nation, which has worked out the sum of commercialism most completely, seems to me a mark of disgrace branded on our wire-drawn refinement to show that it is based on the worst kind of theft - legal stealing from the poor". (Morris, 1888)

"I just not leave the truth unstated, that it is again no question of expediency or feeling whether we shall preserve the buildings of the past or not. We have no right whatsoever to touch them. They are not ours, they belong partly to those who built them, and partly to all the generations of mankind who are to follow us". (Ruskin, 1889: 197)

Heritage and the historic built fabric can be critical in framing social relations and, in the case of Covent Garden, play a political role in the lives of ordinary people. So were Ruskin and Morris right? Can the relationship between local people and historic buildings provide a vehicle for resistance to capitalization and refocus on the key question of who inherits what when considering the space of the city?

However when articulating preservation over restoration, Ruskin was speaking about buildings of monumental importance - the Gothic and the Byzantine, the palazzi of Venice or the ruins of Rome.With the subsequent articulation of conservation through successive interpretations, this difference between the historic everyday and the monument has become blurred. When Morris extolled the virtue of historic change over time, with "history left in the gaps" [7](Morris, 1877) between historic accretion and addition was he talking about the same buildings as Ruskin? Or was he rather discussing a more prosaic version of historic buildings related to the everyday? The resistance shown to comprehensive redevelopment in Covent Garden was an attempt to secure the effective everyday, rather than preserve the monumental. Frequently we understand heritage as built fabric. Th community actions evidence an alternative reading of heritage, where the built fabric has value as an indivisible part of everyday life. Significance is not the fact that a building has a history, but that is has a present which is part of a continuity of use which has intrinsic social value and sustains social capital. This definition of heritage creates problems, however, when viewed through a conservation experts lens. If the greatest significance an old building has is that is sustains the everyday, then there is nothing to interpret. There is nothing to restore because it is what it is. Later in the book we will explore the ramifications of heritage 'as found', but the role and importance of the everyday requires further evaluation.

There is a distinct critical narrative around the political role of the everyday that has its clearest expression in the writings of Henri Lefebvre, and is usually interpreted as a valorisation of the everyday as a form of nostalgia blended with an act of resistance -

"As Henri Lefebvre emphasized, the concept of everyday life is politically ambivalent - organised passivity of mass consumer society and the historical resource for emancipation from that passivity are located in a world before the dominance of consumerism and the bureaucratic state". (Sands, 2013)[7]

The interesting aspect of Covent Garden is that, as we see in the earlier quotation from the Pall Mall Gazette in 1888, this is not a new phenomena, and consequently each generations 'everyday' is constantly shifting to defend and develop its place in the city. The cities historicisation in the late 20th century is in itself an historically derived phenomena, an extension of the commodification process that extends beyond the stimulation of desire for the new, into a realm where the old can itself be reinvented as new, re-valued, and re experienced. That hard evidence around historical significance is lacking is, according to David Lowenthal, unimportant to the public, "who are mostly credulous, undemanding, accustomed to heritage mystique, and often laud the distortions, omissions, and fabrications central to heritage reconstruction." (Lowenthal, 2011: 249) risk in using the everyday as a political rallying cry is the risk in fictionalising an area as a distinct historical trajectory - naming it separates it and defines both collectivity and segregation that historically never existed. Covent Garden and the world observed by Dickens' *Little Dorrit* had overlapping everydays, not a singular identity of a singular group. History is an interesting phenomena in this regard - while it is being made in the moment it is a complex interplay between actors and places, once studies and 'written' it becomes a partial fabrication subject to subjectivity, available evidence and hearsay. History is subject to the degradation of evidence over time, voices, memories, documentation and buildings all weather at different rates and blur the clarity of the moment as it passes. For the protestors of Covent Garden, the experience of continuity of occupation was the most immediate priority, the buildings formed part of that continuity.

The historical fabric was in effect a *de facto* 'commons', its role being to resist enclosure. The historic fabric was not a proxy for a social body, not used as a monument to be defended but simply the place in which the social body resided. This lack of sentimentality about the buildings is, perhaps explained by the consistency of

poverty in the area. there was no nostalgia for poverty as a past collective experience with which to identify and unify, it was a living, fragile actuality that simply resented being evicted through bureaucratic opportunism. This strategic use of heritage as a tactical asset was, for a short time at least, able to generate a number of locally led interventions that could be, somewhat romantically, characterised as the end of wholesale redevelopment of existing urban settings and forcing a shift to brownfield sites such as Canary Wharf or the London Docklands to realise the vociferous demands of efficient land capitalization. Only after the resistance was successful did the consequences of designating the area as 'historically significant' become visible.

The financialisation process proved itself to be highly flexible. In reality, overturning the Covent Garden redevelopment agenda simply altered the re-development agenda, rather than replacing it with an alternative. "The true and tragic irony of the original GLC plan was that the people of Covent Garden, the living, breathing Covent Garden, would be destroyed by the crowds scrambling to be part of that culture themselves" (Bransford, 2012). The original 1968 assessment of the area as having a 'special flavour' became the tool to revalue land.

> "There was a time in the 80s and 90s when it was absolute heaven – small, local, crafty shops with real community feeling. Artists, originality, greasy cafes, Covent Garden General Store, the pen shop where Charles Dickens bought his nibs! And going in there you just really get the sense that these were the floorboards Charles Dickens walked on…Then came the commercial rape when Starbucks, Costa, and mediocrity squeezed out the greasy cafes and swamped us with their crap, so uniform and corporate. The M&S on Long Acre replaced the General Store and the floorboards of the pen shop are now shiny and clean". (Jo Weir in *ibidem*)

(fig 3.7 view from the portico 197X, fig. 3.8 - facing paces, same spread inside the text width)

(fig. 3.9 and 3.10 Could be a cross a double spread? or else facing pages, same spread inside the text width)

That the Covent Garden Community Association didn't play the 'heritage card' in their initial confrontations with the GLC is not because the fabric of Covent Garden wasn't valued. On the contrary, Jo Weir's comments show exactly how significant the relationship between buildings and people was. Weir articulates very clearly that it is the unfolding continuity of action that is important, one that absorbs changing activities and faces because there is a relational value that evolves within its environment. Rape is a powerful word that she uses when referring to the new owners of a café lease – how significant is the proprietor of the café? The building and the coffee is the same surely? If buildings are heritage then there is a preservation at work that secures the significance of the place – or not? Clearly not. As Covent Garden's evolution demonstrates, when the tactics for maintaining a local social fabric is broken by corporate rental agreements and the importation of capitalized and globally standardized goods and an underpaid workforce that cannot afford to live anywhere

near central London, the disconnect between people and the buildings that occupy and define a place has profound implications.

The disconnect between buildings and actions began as soon as the GLC redevelopment plan was abandoned. The GLC Architects Department shifted attention form replanning to restoring. Fowler's Central Market Building was 'conserved' between 1975-80 as a retail venue to accommodate a pub, shopping and restaurants, the project was a model of 'scholarly' restoration and adaptation. In order to meet the demands of fire regulations, and in parallel to amplify lettable floorspace, the southern glazed hall was excavated at basement level to create a sunken floor of shops. The large 'gas' lanterns were electrified and crowned with pineapples provided 'heritage hints' to the buildings former use, whilst providing a scholarly reference to the status of the pineapple in Georgian high society, it being a highly prized indicator of wealth, influence and taste on the part of the gentry who were able to procure such hard to obtain fruits from the colonies. That the pineapple has the associations with privileged colonial exploitation might have, on reflection made its emblematic use inappropriate, however the sign has a limited number of significance levels and, as Lowenthal already noted, most people wouldn't get it anyway. Pineapple – used to be a fruit market – heritage communication done.

(fig. 3.11)

Capital has the legacy of emptying meaning whilst exploiting meaning. The natural tactic for contemporary Capital requires the neutralisation of heritage as an impediment to development, the simplest method for doing this is the adoption of its language, the language of reassurance. The increasing retention of post-industrial fragments within hard-nosed urban regeneration schemes such as Kings Cross, or any number of factory loft conversions in the major former industrial cities or docks of Britain attest to this strategy. The politically pessimistic look dejected at the way heritage buildings become heritage 'assets', how major re-developments since Covent Garden are now called 'regeneration', and projects such as Kings Cross shift landmarks and features such as gas holders, railway lines, cobblestones and connectivity, remove working class people and their jobs, privatise public space and make heritage the centrepiece of otherwise mediocre commercial space.

The tactical definition of built heritage as both sign and signifier became the mechanism by which the employment of five thousand people as a collective, socially interactive entreprise in the market and and the ability to buy groceries from a local shop are replaced with contractually tenuous retail and service sector employment. The continuity between the market costermonger and the shop assistant is that neither were paid adequately for their work, but the difference is the presence of a working community that sustained the daily life of the costermonger and the lack of it now.

So is the adoption of history a bad thing? When does 'creative reuse' for public benefit slip into the exploitation of historically derived culture for profit? Is culture really anything more than a financial transaction? This leading question is revisited through the following narrative as its implications are huge and the answers it provides are nuanced. What is the difference between contemporary heritage preservation and the one discussed by Morris? Rather than attempt to answer directly, partly because the answer is far from definitive, we would suggest that conservation has the capacity to shift power from corporate level to local level, which is intrinsically interesting, and offers a tantalising alternative mode of operation from conventional architecture which exists to fulfil the brief of individuals not the collective, often those holding corporate power.

"At one level, heritage today is about "the promotion of a consensus version of history by state-sanctioned cultural institutions and elites to regulate cultural and social tensions in the present. On the other hand, heritage may also be a resource that is used to challenge and redefine received values and identities by a range of subaltern groups". (Smith, 2006: 4)

3.2 Battersea Power Station

Battersea Power Station (BPS) is part the Vauxhall, Battersea Power station and Nine Elms opportunity area (VNEB OA)[8], a 195 hectares land including former industrial and transport spaces which have been in disuse until recently. It includes the site of the new Covent Garden, when it was moved entirely across the river to Nine Elms in 1974, when the city centre was not longer able to absorb the complex disorder associated with the place. Just on the other side of Nine Elms Lane, lays the plot of Battersea Power Station. The area was subject to a number tentative projects of regeneration since the 1980s when the power station shut down. Every time, the area of interest modified slightly, expanding from the first projects inside the single building of the power station to wider schemes involving its surrounding. Surely, both visionary plans and lucrative projects alternated, up to a point when distinguishing the two was impossible. Some of them lasted longer, under developers who more than others hold to the scheme; others were the result of competitions, open bids, or tenders forming a more ephemeral and heterogeneous group of proposals[9]. For some, BPS could be a new home for Westminster or the European Parliament, it could host flats for the elderly, an industrial museum, a church, a mosque, a sport center, a leisure center (1980); a shopping center, a conference hall, a refuse burning plan (1984), a business design center (1990); it could be transformed in a floating art piece as imagined by Cedric Price (1984) or in a Religious Theme Park as for the proposal of the Holy Trinity Church in Brompton (1996); a Noddyland Theme Park by the Trocadero company at Leicester Square (1996); a "self-contained fantasy center" in a joint venture between Michael Jackson and a Saudi Arabian Prince (1997); a new home for Chelsea Football Club and stadium as the ambitious idea of owner Roman Abramovich (2012). Planning approval was granted in turn to different projects (1982, 1986, 1997, 2000, 2005, 2010) and every time overseen by the Borough of Wandsworth, whose laissez-faire attitude had often been cited as allowing this number of failures to happen.

(fig 3.12)

In time, the area of interest around the iconic building expanded, including the borough of Lambeth. With the expansion of the city, these boroughs occupied a convenient semi-central position and plenty of available land, which had been increasing its value in time due to the failure of the projects on site accompanied by a number of planning permission with active legal status. While the city lifestyle rose in attractiveness, connections to neighbouring areas with historical prestige, such as Chelsea, started to be promoted. Wandsworth and Lambeth were desirable areas where yields could be guaranteed despite the aggressiveness of the housing market. Battersea Power station became an iconic point of reference for the area, while the presence of institutional buildings such as the US embassy contributed to building the prestige of the location. It is interesting to observe how the regeneration projects that were proposed, time after time, evolved around the narratives associated with the power station. It is argued that the expanding allusion to heritage scaled up with time, becoming a matter of global proportions. Heritage grew as a symbol of authenticity and originality, eventually supporting the economic value of the interventions through culture. The result is

> "a luxury real estate for wealthy investors to put their money into, high-spec apartments that save the needs of investors' portfolios rather than home seekers, vanity projects that in their architectural inadequacy, damage the fabric and integrity of the power station itself".

The observation of communication strategies and promotional images helps to understand the simplification of meaning associated with urban transformation and the process of value creation that employs heritage as a creator of meaning.

However, it is not our intention here to recall all the events that led to the project as we know it today, or to describe how each phase dealt with regeneration. The book by Paul Watt, *Up in Smoke: the failed projects of Battersea power station* effectively traces back the main events for the design and development of the power station since its early days and analyses in detail the evolution of the project during the Broome years (1984-1993), the Parkview years (1993-2006) and the Treasury years (2006-2010).

Rather it is interesting to operate a selected focus on heritage and to highlight the initiatives that contributed to the process of heritage valorization that built the significance of the power station with specific reference to notions of history and culture. These include planning proposals focussing on national culture, design inspirations recalling the element of English vernacular architecture, the adoption of marketing narratives rooted in popular culture, the recognition of the attractive power of heritage in terms of investment, and the will to tap into global rhetoric of national representation.

Surely, since the very start, the project for Battersea Power station was tightly bound to context-related concerns and had to address a number of issues. One of them was the pleasantness of the design: with a generating capacity of 360,000kW, it was the first building of that dimension to be created in London. It was expected to provide electricity for the whole city become a symbol of English industrial intelligence.
When in 1930 the London Power Company (LPC) announced the project, it needed to prove the quality of the design and to do so it insisted on efficiency, clean emissions, and "distinctive elevation" (*ivi*). This last point was to be cared for by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. Scott was popular for the design of the K2 kiosk, the famous red phone box. Quite interestingly, his design for the kiosk featured elements of traditional British architecture: the domed top was inspired by Sir John Soane's mausoleum and its application to a modern object, otherwise alien to the streets of the city or town, had the effect to make it reassuring (*ivi*: 51). The same strategy was applied to Battersea, where references to the past were collected, mixed and pasted together, with the aim to make the object both innovative and recognizable, massive and detailed, traditionalist and modernist. The final solution was characterized by a prevailing art deco style, but the chimneys are neo-classical fluted columns. Again, they bridge a double aspiration: if their aspect is reassuringly familiar, their size points out to a different epoch – to skyscrapers rather than temples. The building was completed in 1935. The *Daily Mail* defined it as the"flaming altar of a modern temple of power" (*ivi*: 57) and in 1937 it appeared on the cover of *Wonders of World Engineering*. As early as 1939, a poll conducted by the *Architect's Journal* voted it as the second most popular modern building in Britain (*ivi*: 61). The fourth chimney went up only in 1955, and at the time it was providing power to a fifth of London. However, the diversification of national electricity generation started to make the building rapidly obsolete and Battersea started powering down, until the very last operating chimney was shut in 1983. Before the area was sold to John Broome in the same year, some proposals were put forward.

A first proposition by Mark Leslie aimed to create a technology theme park inspired to the funfair that stood on Battersea park between 1951 and 1974. However, the idea was soon replaced by a new proposal when Broome, a funfair operator father to the Alton Towers, was brought in. The Texan firm (LARC) he appointed presented the consortium with a scheme based on their interpretation of British history.

> "They decided that Britain's' best contribution to the world was the British Empire, so they designed a whole theme park […] on the theme of the Empire. They'd never heard about Industrial Revolution, they thought America had invented everything. Except that were struggling to find anything to celebrate the Empire that wasn't contentious. They could have a cracking theme park on the horrors of Empire, slavery, massacres, sodomy – but the bankers would have hated it"

says Leslie (*ivi*: 124-125). Indeed, dealing with history was complicated. Some decades later, culture was put at the centre of the theme park, this time referring more softly to general cliché belonging to the 5 continents. Surely, the inspiration offered by local culture- as for the Leslie's scheme, and national culture - as for the LARC

proposal, was central to the approach of Battersea area. In the following years, the scheme grew less bounded to notions of memory and history: John Broome imported the idea of theme park and fit it inside the power station. The drawings of the time are generic, although some allusion to tudor architecture can be spotted inside the watercolours. In general, very scarce relationships with the context were established, to the point that the advertising materials avoided to show the power station itself. Interiors and exteriors simply excluded it, maybe due to the fact that Broome's team was finding difficulties in stitching the Alton Tower model inside an oversized location for which there were no existing regulations. Nevertheless, other references to historic buildings were used to promote the site. The Battersea Powerhouse bulletin issued in September 1985 and 1988 include a wireline 3d of the power station with St. Pauls' in it announcing: "The Battersea could engulf St. Paul's!" (Watts, 2016). This will be one of the most repeated parable in the story of BPS marketing. "You could fit Trafalgar Square and St Paul's Cathedral inside, that's how big it is" Hwang would tell to *The Guardian* in 2005. And still today, the LIVE magazine, one of the most circulated real estate brochures with an international attitude declares: "St. Paul's cathedral could fit inside the main boiler house of the Power Station". The power station brochure (no date: 14), on the other hand, does not fail to recall the connection that link the power station with the red phone box: "Two design icons, one designer. The world-renowned London telephone box was one of architect Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's most memorable creations. The other was Battersea Power Station".

(fig 3.13)

During the Parkview and Treasury years the reference to notions of history and cultured lowered all the more. The focus, back then, was on big projects and mixed use redevelopments. Luxury hotels started to be imagined for the site, along with residences, high end facilities and even a permanent location for the Cirque du Soleil. Projects from these years involved architectural firms and designers as John Outram Associates (JOA), Grimshaw Architects, Cecil Balmond and Raphael Viñoly.

In 2010 planning approval was granted to the revised scheme signed by Raphael Viñoly, and is the one that we know today. Overall, "the development was 57% residential, and of the remaining 43%, 1.2m square feet were retail and restaurants, 1.7m square feet were offices and the rest was hotel, leisure and community space" (Watts, 2016: 213). High density is promoted in the VNEB OA report as a way to "create a sense of place", a "place of growth with a distinctive heart", a "location with a strong sense of place and identity" but also an opportunity to upgrade the existing public realm, and provide strategic open space and new facilities. Well-known architectural firms were then called to deliver portions of it: Ian Simpson Architects are responsible for the apartments, offices and shops called Circus West on the railway-side; Norman Foster and Frank Gehry are inputting the scheme with some mixed-use buildings called Battersea Roof Gardens and Prospect Place; BIG is designing the Malaysian square at the end of Electric Boulevard; and Wilkinson Eyre is taking care of £1bn refurbishment of the power station, with the rooftop gardens being designed by landscaper Andy Sturgeon. The power station itself will be turned into a shopping center, with three floors of retail (as envisaged by David Roche 30 years before), a floor of leisure, a 2000 capacity arena and offices to be partially occupied by the MAC creative quarter. Cafés bars and restaurant will be placed around the corners of the turbine hall and two additional glassed volumes with 245 apartments will be built on the roof between the chimneys and above the boiler house. Some of these apartments were sold off-plan for almost £4m, and one studio flat was sold in 2014 for £1.5m, which is how much David Roche paid the entire building and the land in 1984 (*ivi*: 217). The possibilities to invest in the area are eased by the fact that VNEB OA gained the status of Enterprise Zone in 2012. Financial facilitations as the incremental tax financing (TIF) and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) propose "new power that would allow councils to borrow against their predicted future increase in business rates over a 25-year period. The borrowing could then be used to fund development projects" (Out-Law, 2012).

These tools are seen of great importance for the future of redevelopments in the absence of new money by way of Government grants. However, they also facilitate private capitals and financial interests to concentrate on specific areas, which then need to respond with proportionate returns to the risks undertook by market players. The New Covent Garden Market area, for example, will be reduced to make space to real estate development. The New Covent Garden Site announces: "new covent garden market, which currently operates on three sites totalling 57 acres, will be consolidated onto a single 37 acre site freeing up 20 acres of land for development". The shift towards real estate investments as a way to tackle the housing crisis is something that opened many debates on affordability. It is curious to notice how the present scheme for Battersea power station recalls another one that was put forward for the CEGB competition in 1983. The plan proposed a mix of luxury flats, retail, a hotel and a marina. At that time, in the hyper capitalistic 1984, the luxury flats that now dominate regeneration were considered socially unacceptable, and the scheme was rejected as being "substantially outside the brief" because it was giving nothing back to the community.

(fig 3.14)

Obviously, the political aims and economic needs which supported the project over the last 40 years changed considerably: developers grew more attentive to advertise and produce inclusive spaces, and Battersea power station ended up being a central location rich in potentiality. When in 1980 nobody was thought to love living close to an old industrial ruin, now the race for old buildings as valuable pieces of design has turned the attitude upside down. The economies supporting this trend act at both global and local level and the political discourse, more than anything else, reveals the centrality of this kind of operations.

The representation that we can see in the commercial brochures are the result of a long process that layered spatial visions and new means of representation, and that fabricated the significance of well recognizable symbols, as the chimneys of the power station. In this sense, the Computer Generated Images (CGIs) that we know today, portraying the power station from the quay along the river, embed the evolution of CGIs since the 1980s, the pictorial feelings of the scenes from the Broome years, the elevate point of view from the Parkview years, lowered and counting on city context. One of them, by Wilkinson Eyre shows the power station in the sunset, with lenient lights glimmering on the glassed facades. The tones and the colors are soft, sweetening the appearance of the giant buildings that is partially covered with reassuring and luxuriant trees. The perspective and the clouds in the sky recall another famous image, well planted in the mind of the viewer. And it's here that the lesson coming from embedding references of cultural significance is most evident. The image that is recalled is the cover of the album Animals by Pink Floyd, where the power station is portrayed with a similar angle, circled by clouds and dominating the urban context. However, the CGI by Wilkinson Eyre alleviates the anxious aspect given by the contrasting tones and dark shadows of the cover (in line with the contents of the album), and replaces them with a more pacified version of the landscape, suggesting harmonious and communal feelings.

Another symbol linked to the same album is used with ease inside the commercial brochure. This is the silhouette of Algie the pig, hanged between the two chimneys in 1977 thanks to an intuition of Roger Waters, who lived in Battersea at that time. The use of the pig and the constative tone of the album can't help but recall George Orwell's moral fable *Animal Farm* (1943), where the author was denouncing the corrupted political, moral and social landscape of the time. But Algie, in a way, did more than just become a symbol for the album and a prophetic act of contestation. It was considered fun by the people, without all its implicit political meanings, and contributed to shaping the imaginary of the power station, connecting to popular culture in a potent way. The advertisements in the brochure of the redevelopment exploit this symbol by detaching its cultural meaning from the political one, and transforming the pig into a pop icon that nothing has

to do with contestation. "Be at the heart of a pop cultural icon", says the *Office to Let* brochure of Battersea power station.

Although manufactured, the sense of continuity is a key element in the process of value creation through cultural rhetoric, because the connection with the past helps to give a sense of stability. This is central to proving the worth of big regeneration projects which, in fact, alter the surrounding extensively. However, continuity is mainly a matter of representation and little has to do with the reckoning of a layered process coming from the past. Rather, it establishes a connection with history through selected images chosen specifically to exclude any problematic legacy. In the last century, references to tradition have been widely used to instill values and behaviors whose implicit continuity with the past was expressly crafted.

When the project of the 'Crystal Palace' was firstly put forward in 1988, it reinterpreted Victorian high technology in a modern way, building on the palace's pioneering role on progressive engineering. At the time, Thatcher was eager to emulate former glories, it was clear the opportunity to restore political capital by offering continuity with the past. Similarly, Battersea Power Station, once the symbol of British industrial innovation is about to host the Apple general quarter. The old polluting image of the building that created so many controversies in the first years of its functioning, is replaced by a much brighter inaugural proposal: a "new spectacular campus" hosting 1,400 employees will make the productivity on the site active again. What is produced, this time, is clean energy. The white apple, icon of the Mac industry, becomes the symbol of a renewed way to think innovation. Advertisements talk about a 'creative industry pole' bringing benefits for all: works on site and valuable manufacturing for the masses. The allusion to continuity is clear, so is its improving nature: the new 'producer' of electronic devices will settle on the same old site that generated energy for the city. Obviously, this is a simplification. The history related to industrial production of Battersea Power Station is far more complex than this. Most of all, what is excluded from the narrative, is that the old factory offered works to local inhabitants, who were housed nearby as show the pictures of the epoch. Now, the Mac workers – as many others - will be more likely 'imported' from elsewhere, either commuting to work, or finding home close to the site thanks to a better salary. Work places for locals, in these redevelopments, are often relegated to service-related, low paid roles. Other selections informing a sense of continuity, involve specific parts of the power station. The iconic chimneys, dismantled and rebuilt 'as they were', acquire the grade of symbol of the symbol – proof of preservation and character. Once again, the preservation of the material and immaterial legacy of a site, operates through cautious choices. Manufacturing the continuity with the past aims to generate emotional and symbolic recognition, and stability can be easily recalled because present choices seem rooted in the past.

As the highest symbol of the building's past industrial activity, they are among the features that developers cared the most. That was not only a matter of heritage preservation, but a matter of image preservation that in turn meant preserving originality and securing the investment. Also, the chimneys in time became the symbol of the building and depositary of the affection that the larger public had for it. Wandsworth council leader Ravi Govindia, said: "These giant chimneys are recognised the world over. The site's owners have understood their significance from day one and have gone to great lengths to restore them to their former glory. And delivered on their promises" (Prynn, 2017). The production of surplus value pairs with the credit to originality and the will to preserve historic architecture.

Heritage building
The relevance of heritage was built thanks to a number of inputs. These include both a process of patrimonialization of the object and a tension linked to the market, interested to raise the value of the historic building. Its representations, therefore, are the result of layered efforts, some of which linked to the profession and to official recognition, others to the economic process. Both of them tap into the cultural significance of the building and exploit the affection it accumulated in time. This very special relationship between urban conservation and capital accumulation recalls Summerson's work *Georgian London* (1945), where the author analyzes the genesis and development of Georgian London, highlighting how architecture was conditioned by social, economic, and financial circumstances and discussing the value of permanence. In the case of the power station, the efforts to render it significant at the city and national scale evolved to the point where it became an international object of value. The change of scale, now tapping into global mechanisms of power, reveals how the construction of the narratives around the 'patrimonial object' shifted towards international interests. The proof being that the Malaysian SP Setia Company purchases the site in 2012 for around £400bn, and now

operates the scheme sharing the holdings with Sime Darby Property and EPF in the Battersea Project Holding Company, the joint venture which is the holding company for the project, while Battersea Power Station Development Company (BPSDC) is the main managing actor. "The Malaysian shareholders purchased the site in September 2012 and have since made significant progress including the successful completion of the first phase of the development which is now home to over 1,000 residents and a collection of independent retailers and restaurateurs," a BPSDC spokesperson said (Greenfield, 2018). Once again, the project became the vehicle of a political statement: it is "the symbol of the Malaysian's ability to play on the international stage" says Rob Tinknell, a Treasury Holding man now working for SP Setia. More recently, in January 2018, it was announced that the Malaysian sovereign wealth fund Permodalan Nasional Berhad (PNB), alongside Employees Provident Fund of Malaysia, intended to buy the Grade II listed building for 1.6bn, making Battersea power station one of the Britain's largest ever property deals (*ivi*). After the deal was announced, a BPSDC spokesman said: "The Battersea Power Station building would provide both investors with a unique investment opportunity to own an iconic development in the heart of London" (*ivi*). BPSDC will continue managing the site in this way creating a "solid platform that will ensure the protection, active management and control of the historically important building" (*ivi*).

A few months later, in June 2018 an article in the Guardian revealed that the deal was under thread after that the frontrunner of Malaysian coalition Anwar Ibrahim, leading the recently elected Pakatan Harapan, said that the purchase would be investigated as part of the "dubious" investments secured by the previous coalition (Ramesh, 2018). But let's go back for a moment. On the 14th October 1980 the Secretary of State for Environment announced that BPS was to be given Grade II* listed-building status. English Heritage explained that

> "It was added to the National Heritage list in England in recognition of its powerful scale, celebrated silhouette, and that, as a power station it was the first to rationalize large-scale distribution of power. The building is a masterpiece of industrial design. It is one of London's most prominent landmarks and one of a few with genuine claim to the title 'iconic'". (Watts, 2016: 100).

That looked unusual because, as it normally happened, discussion about listed buildings would circulate a while before they were prized. This time it happened all of sudden although two campaign groups, the Thirties Society and the SAVE Britain's Heritage, had already been pushing for Battersea's protection (*ivi*: 102). At the same time, Battersea's listed status was seen as the clog to potential exploitation. Parkview's Michael Robert said "I told them that they could do as much preservation as they wanted, but if you can't make the power station into a goose that lays golden egg, it's only a question of time before it comes down. What we wanted was something for tomorrow and all they cared about was something for yesterday" (*ivi*: 167). However, when Wandsworth calculated for a moment the possibility to knock it down to unlock development, it knew it would be a tough mission, going against both English Heritage and public opinion at the same time and so immediately discarded the option. The newspapers of the time recognized the building significance not only in the eyes of experts but also to the population. An article from *The Times* explained that Battersea had "a place in the affection of many who care nothing about architecture", and it was a "supreme embodiment of thirties ideas about cathedrals and industries" (*ivi*: 103).

Through time, not only its historical status was regarded and protected, but was also exploited to inform heritage-based projects as the one by Terry Farrell, who proposed to transform BPS in a managed ruin. This proposal came towards the end of BPS's story, when many developers tried and failed, and when the contestation over the utility to keep the artefact were reaching a tipping point. His idea was that, if the power station needed to be the centre of the scheme, you could appreciate it much better by subtracting elements than filling the scheme with other volumes. The project - a giant park with few elements in it – was influenced by La Villette in Paris and the Emscher Park in the Ruhr, both incorporating industrial relics in the landscape. Another inspiration was Benjamin Franklin's Museum in Philadelphia, which is a steel frame structure of the house on its original site (*ivi*: 205). According to Farrell, this "would create a memory of the building that is truer to its history than what will actually happen" (*ibidem*). Besides the speculation on its historic value, the building became increasingly charged in cultural meaning. Since the inflated pig by Pink Floyd informed the mind of Londoner's as a first imaginative postcard, a number of artistic productionsfollowed suit to exploit the site. The film industry, in particular, often used Battersea as a filming location. Productions include Alfred Hitchcock's *Sabotage* (1936), *High Treason* (1951),*The Quatermass Experiment* by Hammer (1955), *Smashing*

Time (1967), *Doctor Who* episode "The Dalek Invasion of Earth" (1964*), Children of Men* by Alfonso Cuarón (2006), *Superman III* by Richard Lester (1980), *The meaning of Life* by Monty Python (1983), *Nineteen Eighty Four* by Michael Radford (1984), *Richard III* by Richard Locraine (1995), *The Dark Knight* by Christopher Nolan (2008) where Batman was unfurling his cape in the main turbine hall, *RocknRolla* by Guy Richie (2008), *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus* by Terry Gilliam(2009), *The King's Speech* by Tom Hooper (2010) with scenes shot in the control room. Additionally, it was the location for BBC2 launch in 1964, it featured in the romp *Help!* from the Beatles (1965), it provided the backdrop for a number of launches (for Nike and The Simpsons), parties, concerts and challenges such as the annual Sport Vision's *London Freeze* Event.

(fig 3.15)

In 2017, the main Battersea Power Station redevelopment brochure dedicates two sections out of four to advertise the significance of Battersea Power Station through time. The sections are tiles HISTORY, CULTURE, PLACE and DESIGN. The first two can be read as a sort of legitimizing prelude to the last two, and aim to support a 'thought through' approach to design. The section called "HISTORY" starts with stating: "The very site which provided power for two generations now empowers yet another. It once created the energy that enabled people to live, work and entertain in the city, supplying a fifth of London's demand. Now, it will provide the venue for them to do the same". Other slogans follow: "A symbol of an age of industry, ingenuity and progress", "Power to drive London forward". To prove the role of history, a number of pictures portraying the silhouette, the workers, the architect and the interiors are paired with small texts reconstructing all its story. When after 1980 BPS was granted the status of Grade II listed building, SAVE was worried to preserve as much as possible the buildings, including "features of interest in terms of industrial archaeology" such as coal crane and jetty, the huge cranes and gantries in the turbine hall (Watts, 2016: 106). What can be spotted on the billboards of the building site of the power station at the time of writing is exactly the same proposal. Cranes would be recovered; the industrial past will be a witness of the progress. But not only. The current project as presented is surrounded by an aura of eternity, as if it had always been there. This is typical advertisement style for many regeneration projects happening in London. They go as far as naming that "the heart of The Power Station, its turbine hall, had giant walls of polished terracotta and was likened to a Greek temple devoted to energy". Activating an imaginary linked to past glories is part of a strategy that aims to render the building an icon. "Icon seeks icon", screamed a giant banner around the construction site in 2016, and while we are cajoled by the fact that this could be addressed to us, other images show the rising importance of the site in relation to Chelsea. Traditionally one of the richest boroughs in town, Chelsea is now associated with the rising borough of Battersea. The geographical proximity is not only a good reason to reflect and rival the neighbour's richness, but also to compete on the symbolic value of the place. Battersea can welcome the new riches and equip them with one of the most loved monuments available.

The section called "CULTURE – A powerful Urban Canvas", pays tribute to the extremely rich series of events which contributed to the shaping of Battersea Power station as a popular location. "Ever since opening, the iconic backdrop of Battersea Power Station has formed a versatile cultural canvas. From Pink Floyd to Batman, fashion catwalks to art from the Serpentine Gallery, the venue was, is, and always will be a focus for music, film, fashion and art". And again "For the 31 years since its closure, the unmistakable silhouette of Battersea Power Station has lured the cream of global culture into its mighty and powerful frame". Based on this CV, other slogans are put forward: "A venue for everything and everyone", "A new venue for a new era of performing arts", "A source of much inspiration" and promises are made explicit: "The recent cultural history of Battersea power station will be embodied in the new development and the biggest impact will be made with the turbine project space".

We should notice, at this point, that English culture is the only one involved in the project. It is sure that the Malaysian presence had been a big impact on the financial feasibility of the scheme up to now, and also on the architectonic outputs, showing how the two matters are intimately related. Malaysian Square, the main open space at the end of Electric boulevard, is named after the investor's origin. But the tribute to culture involves architecture besides than naming. BIG's initial scheme, a sort of two level canyon, was 'inspired by Malaysian landscape and geology' (Watts, 2016: 211). This reveals how much the global financial exchange brings along with it transnational tributes to culture, and especially the culture of those sponsoring the redevelopment. It is not the exchange of favours that happened in the form of typical goods and objects of marvel between reigns, and it is not an exchange of expertise that instructs architecture. That is a tribute designed by a European company for its employer, an interpretation of a distant land through shapes – which disguise the geographical inspiration behind an all too obvious computer-generated landscape. Quite ironically, a very common means of visualization, the globally abused CGI, becomes the vehicle to inform and communicate place specificity. This is a key aspect to consider when looking at contemporary projects, all exploiting the exactness of virtual representation to describe generic landscapes.

Lessons Learned

The dystopian movie *The Children of Men* by Alfonso Cuarón (2006) offers a good example of how preservation becomes a symbol of power, at the condition that there's someone able to recognize the privilege. In the movie, the protagonist Theo visits a friend inside Battersea Power Station, a building that mixes state functions with private collections. Artistic treasures and cultural objects are preserved inside here: Michelangelo's David, Picasso's Guernica hanged behind the large dining table, and Algie, the Pink Floyd's pig flying between the chimneys, while the same power station is preserved as a heritage artifact (Fisher, 2009). The two men, clearly belonging to an élite, distance from a world fated to end: because of some catastrophe that caused mass sterility, human kind will disappear. When Theo asks his friend: "A hundred years from now there won't be one sad fuck to look at any of this. What keeps you going?", the other one answers: "You know what it is, Theo? I just don't think about it". He knows, "no cultural object retains its power when there are no eyes to see it" (*ivi*: 4). Without recognition, without a future, the past will disappear and will lose its significance. What does thi mean? On the one hand, every past reference is reduced to an eternal present: opportunities are here and now, and references to history are used to validate the present due to their recognized authority. On the other hand, this produces a culture which is excessively nostalgic, and unable to truly generate any novelty but just re-composed pre-packaged meanings.

The observation of Battersea Power Station story proves how the notions of culture and memory are increasingly used as redevelopment drivers to support operations which are financial in nature. We need to remember, however, that heritage is a very selective process, and that it refers to the ways chosen objects from the past are rearranged in new narratives (Harvey, 2008). Cultural, history, memory, traditions, are nonchalantly mixed under the overarching rhetoric of heritage, even if we know that they are very different things. What makes the reference to the past so intriguing is the contrast between the constant changes and innovations that characterize the present world and the attempt to attribute some eternal character to it (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). This is because history lends a sense of everlasting legitimation and therefore the past is appropriated in order to construct the future as required. Overarching projects involving heritage, carefully select a series of values able to build on this promise. Lowenthal (1985), identifies the principles that make past meaningful in four groups. Firstly, the past underpins the idea of continuity, progress and development. Secondly, the iconic status acquired by artefacts or landscapes helps to connect the present with the past alluding to evolution. Thirdly, the past provides a sense of termination: what happened in there has ended and we can continue our trajectory towards the future. Lastly, the past provides a "point of validation, a legitimation for the present in which actions and policies are justified by continuing references to" narratives of the past (Graham and Howard, 2008: 6). By extension, we can imagine the same traits to be applicable to heritage. Picking up from these reflections we could observe how legitimation was built by creating a sense of continuity with the past, and offering a sense of stability. Another technique exploited to build the sense of legitimation is the fostering of recognizable elements at global and local levels. The global dimension is deemed to attract national and international attentions, well-off and up-market investors; while the local one is deemed to involve inhabitants on the appreciation of on-site qualities and to nurture a sense of belonging. Examples at the global scale include the promotion of projects through the advertisement of 'unique qualities' liked to an historic English legacy. What can be noticed, overall, is that notions of heritage, memory and identity are often used to build and promote a number of redevelopment projects: pictures of monuments, parks, recognizable architectural and design features are frequently included in the brochures, and

accompanied by key historical facts. "A cultural Icon", "A British Icon", "A design Icon", "Your home in a Global Icon" is the sequence of titles that appears in the LIVE brochure of Battersea Power Station. This strategy addresses a more general growth in aesthetic reflexivity (Kearns and Philo, 1993) that brought important consequences in the appreciation of the notion of authenticity. More and more, authenticity counts on visual taste and atmospheric appreciation, generic references and well-known symbols that can be easily circulated and understood, as the red phone boxes, the dome of St. Paul, and some images from the archives of the area. Their inclusion means instant recognition by external buyers, and therefore involvement. At the same time, the rhetoric linked to heritage involves the local scale. Newham Council's website titles one of its pages "Heritage and Place-making. By exploring and discovery what's on your doorstep, and rediscovering the past, we can gain a new appreciation of our localities by connecting people and place". This reveals how heritage is also central to the inner promotion of the area and counts on local apporvation beyond national attention.

The projects showed how a number of factors helped to build the significance of the place, the iconic status of a building or the affection of the population towards it. The value of the project was informed by a layered processes that combined solid and more ephemeral proves of legacy until becoming not architectonically and culturally significant. But what is cultural significance? This is not simply a question of the composition of lime, it comes before the sourcing of the correct bricks or establishing the ingredients of original paint. Cultural significance is as relevant to the urban working class as it is to the discovery of Roman antiquities, and forces us to become aware of how we prioritise one set of cultural values over another. Here value quickly becomes both social and financial, and the interplay between these two antagonistic understandings of value is at the heart of the heritage debate. Once the 'value' of a culture is officially established through expert recognition, conservation then engages historical and physical analysis to elaborate the evidence of cultural value, preserve that evidence, sometimes restore it, adapt it and as is frequently the case, make it into a financial as well as a cultural asset.

The Burra Charter[10] attempted to rebalance the archaeological or materialist bias of heritage definition through a focus on the cultural value of heritage and monuments, however social meaning is far harder to define than the historically correct combination of lime and sand or method for evaluating a decayed piece of wood, so the tendency is still for heritage to be managed through science and image rather than socio-political criteria. Society is factional, what one street means to one group of people, another group may think the opposite. A single building in a bucolic setting presents fewer issues of contested social connection than a district in a metropolitan city centre, which is perhaps the immediate image of a heritage building may be a castle rather than a street market or a tenement building. Our inherent attitudes to heritage require forensic examination because the overlooking of cultural heritage is part of the mechanism for supporting, even justifying physical redevelopment. The issue with image and science in combination is precisely the appearance of social neutrality, making them very user friendly tools for authorities in power. The strategic financial advantages to undervaluing working class neighbourhoods while lauding palaces were clearly recognised by John Ruskin as early as the 1830's, who in writing for J.C. Loudon's *Architecture Magazine* developed an argument for valuing ordinary vernacular buildings such as cottages and farmhouses for the contribution they made to the identity and legacy of a place (Burman, 2018: 34). The social value of local practice fundamentally informed Morris and Webb in their definition of conservation, and dovetailed directly into Morris's developing socialism.

A capitalist society operates on the stimulation of consumption, with an unrestricted understanding of heritage becoming a potential impediment to such economic drivers. Heritage is a culturally loaded aspect of society, it has importance and creates identity. This is a threat therefore to economic opportunism and the need to utilise power structures to aid the accumulation of surplus capital. What was of interest in the narrative of Covent Garden was the role the historic buildings initially didn't play in the contest between the community and the planning authorities of the Greater London Council. Their role was developed within an unfolding narrative of redevelopment, social resistance and political expediency that saw, for a short historical moment, social heritage becoming fused with built heritage. Ultimately the balance was not to be sustainable and heritage was eventually used to support the regeneration and soften the political resistance.

The projects for Battersea Power Station absorbed the lessons, and heritage was eventually used as a pacifying element supporting both local character and national prestige. Here, the narrative linked to real estate promotion engulfed the complex process of patrimonialization that layered in time. If up to a certain moment

the different voices that contributed to the relevance of the object intertwined, after 2010 the process started to bend rapidly and to become something else. Something that surpassed the city and national ambition of representation to become a heritage product, distinctive of English taste and design, iconic of a lifestyle, and ultimately a safe investment.

However, recognizing that heritage is a highly political process gives also the opportunity to reconsider the narrative that supports it. We should take into consideration the flexible nature of the rhetoric that generate around heritage and the possibility to be adopted by different subjects to support private or collective interests. On the one hand, heritage promotes "consensus vision of history by state-sanctioned cultural institutions and élites to regulate cultural and social tensions in the present. On the other hand, heritage may also be a resource that is used to challenge and redefine received values and identities by a range of subaltern groups" (Smith, 2006: 4). In the book *Tokyo Vernacular*, Jordan Sands (2013) explains how the rapid modernization of the city paired with the will to preserve and promote heritage. In particular, the rediscovery of the past focuses on small and interstitial places that embody the vernacular language of the city and "seek what could be claimed as common property outside the spaces of corporate capitalism and the state" (*ivi*: 11). The neighborhood scale and the space of daily appropriation become opportunities of adoption, and the antidote to a more cynical commodification of heritage by the market. These observations include the notion of change, they welcome mutability and recognize diversity.

It is urgent, therefore, to explore the language of heritage in order to understand how the concepts associated with it can be used in a productive way by different actors. Their malleability, despite being often exploited by ruling powers, can also be appropriated by other subjects. Language is not neutral, as we know. Language codifies cultural and political intentions and informs our understanding of place. The fabrication of visual languages associated to regeneration projects, as much as the fabrication of the built environment, always entail the making of shared meanings. We should distinguish the role of representation *per se* and narratives as tools able to shape urban understanding beyond marketing. When freed of distortion, urban imaginaries have a positive value and are essential to nurture the political dimension beyond technical and negotiating matters (Olmo, 2018: 22). Positive imaginaries help to inform an idea of city counting on knowledge, diversity and specificity as opposed to a city counting on the spectacularization of procedures, the rapidity of change and the primacy of scientific answer to complexity.

It seems necessary to open up the tactics of development that adopts the inheritance of others for the purposes of real estate development and optimising investment return. By understanding the tools of 'regeneration', communities can advocate better, and professionals can become aware of the processes that their work either challenges or enables. Also, by recognizing the different voices that contributed to the shaping of spatial significance, it would be possible to start inclusive processes that interlace the inputs of private and public subjects.