

ONE FACE - THE EVERCHANGING USE

Analysis of King's Cross area in London



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Fig.1 The construction of the King's Cross area (front cover)

Gwilliam-Parkes M. n.d. N1C. [photo] Accessed April 9, 2022 <https://www.mirgwilliam-parkes.com/n1c-pictures.html>

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Introduction

Cities grow and change together with our civilisation. We construct and adapt the buildings to our requirements. Some think it would be easier to demolish and build from scratch. However, History of the cities fabric continues to create multiple layers of meaning and beauty to our cities. The combination of old and new showcases “the beauty of a picturesque past, the strength of the imperial present, and the modernity of a prosperous future could all be embraced at the same time.” (Forgan, 2010)

London is a city with extremely rich history, where old and new are heavily intertwined. A prime example of this is the King’s Cross area, which has continued to be an integral area of the city for many Londoners. However, throughout centuries its meaning has changed. People have worked there, started journeys there, had their craziest Saturday nights and now they can enjoy a walk in a park and a meal in a Michelin starred restaurant.

There are many areas in London that have undergone extreme transformations, but none have attracted as much public attention. One of the largest contributing factors is the King’s Cross’s central location. However, back in the 18th century, it was on the border of London surrounded by peaceful fields. (Darley, 2018) But even then, the district sat on the main road connecting London to the north of England. In the mid-19th century, due to industrial expansion, it became one of the most important transportation links and industrial zones in England. (Haslam & Thompson, 2016) King’s Cross hosted both the passenger station and goods depot. Due to the decrease of the demand for the rail system and the destructive results of World War II, the site became derelict. Global de-industrialisation during the middle of the 20th century halted all of the previous activities. (Skidelsky, 2014) Forgotten by the municipality, the area started living its own life. It might have been run down, but never abandoned. A couple of buildings were transformed into warehouses and were occupied by small businesses, as artists’ studios and even a go-kart track. (Darley, 2018) Soon King’s Cross became known for its nightlife, its empty warehouses were filled every weekend with thousands of people arriving for the biggest rave parties in London. (Whitehead, 2018) Once the municipality realized the potential of this central area, discussions on its redevelopment started. However, it took years before the city, developers, architects and community activists came to a consensus. (Bertolini and Tejo, 1998) Only in 2007, the last of the clubs went silent and the works on the King’s Cross, as we know it today, had fully started. (Darley, 2018)

Today’s King’s Cross area has one of the highest footfalls in the city. Every day, thousands of local and international travellers pass through the two stations (King’s Cross and St Pancras). Additionally, in light of recent developments, the area has a lot more to offer than just a good rail link. The old warehouses, stores and offices have been filled with numerous shops and restaurants. The vast number of little parks and squares make it a popular location for a weekend stroll amongst the historical industrial heritage.

Even though the site has performed multiple functions throughout the centuries, most of the building's layout and appearances have remained from the 19th century, when they were originally built. However, the actions and users behind the skin of the buildings were changing dynamically.

This paper will explore how the frequent changes of King's Cross' use and function were expressed through architecture. The chapters chronologically describe the site's transformation. The focus is put on the four periods of time which define the biggest changes:

1. Kings' Cross in its industrial glory: when the goods depot was built, 1850 -1914.
2. De-industrialization period: the slow decay of the area, including the world wars, 1914-1980.
3. The interim period: appropriation of the abandoned depot, 1980-2007.
4. Regeneration: start of the reconstruction works, 2007-now.

The analysis is conducted considering various aspects. Firstly, each chapter discusses the direct relation between architecture and the function behind it. Secondly, it focuses on the changes of social dynamic of the site. It explores who was attracted to the area during different periods and how the district was perceived by society. Lastly, it analyses the influence of the development of King's Cross's area on the urban fabric.

The research is conducted through the literature review of various primary and secondary sources. Historical maps have been utilised to grasp the changes in the area's urban fabric. For the analysis of the interim period recordings of interviews, that were conducted to understand local people's backgrounds and their connection to the King's Cross area, have been used as the main source of information. They were collected between 2004 and 2008 and were part of "King's Cross Voices" initiative. All of the sources used have helped to build a coherent image of the site in different periods and analyse the changes between them.

Chapter 1: The Industrial Glory

1.1 Development of King's Cross Area

The first half of the 19th century was a thriving time for the railway industry in the United Kingdom. "In the 1850s, Britain's position was supreme." (Chapman, Chambers & Sharpe, 1970) The quickly progressive industrialization was spreading throughout the country. The increased demand for fuel and what follows dependence on coal led to the rapid growth of industries and amount of rail lines. (Darley, 2018)

The King's Cross area quickly became one of the most influential zones in England. Before the Industrial Revolution in the mid-18th century, it was just an open field. However, the two main roads leading to the north London were passing through it. (Fig. 1.1) The completion of Regent's Canal in 1820 was crucial for the decision to develop the area. (Darley, 2018) It gained the potential to become a point of interchange between roads, rail and water networks. Following, in 1824, the Imperial Gas Light and Coke Company opened the biggest gasworks seen so far, which gave the area immense importance and accelerated other developments. (King's Cross Central Limited Partnership, 2021) (Fig. 1.2)

1.2 Innovative architecture

The process of industrialization was reflected in the new type of architecture that started showing on the horizon. The newly constructed buildings for industrial zones had to be innovative to make all of the ongoing processes as efficient as possible. (Darley, 2018) King's Cross, for a long time being the biggest one of such zones in England, showcases a wide range of architecture. The shape of the canal naturally divided the King's Cross into two zones: the Passenger Stations in the south and the Goods Depot in the north. (The King's-Cross Terminus, 1853) The complex consisted of goods yards, mineral yards, locomotive sheds, stables and fodder stores and some offices. (Fig. 1.3) Most of it has been completed in 1852. (Darley, 2018) It soon became one of the major servicing points for London. Coal, fish, grain, fruit, vegetables, and all sorts of commodities were pouring through the depot at all times. (Haslam & Thompson 2016)

The whole complex including the passenger station, as well as the goods depot was designed by Lewis Cubitt (1799-1883). (Darley, 2018) He was the younger brother of Thomas Cubitt who was involved in many projects and "have altered the face of London." (Hanson, 1967) When the complex was build, the *Illustrated Magazine of Art* published text complementing the buildings for "the determination manifested of availing themselves of all the experience which their predecessors have had, at heavy sacrifice, to purchase." (The King's-Cross Terminus, 1853) The buildings were simple, yet beautiful and far and foremost effective.



Fig. 1.1 Map of London in 1822

Cary, J. Cary's New Plan Of London And Its Vicinity. London: Cary, 1822. Accessed March 10, 2022. http://tudigit.ulb-tu-darmstadt.de/show/Sp_London1822/0001



Fig. 1.2 Map of London in 1853

Whitbread, J. Whitbread's new plan of London, 1853. Accessed March 10, 2022. <https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/ids:7066371>

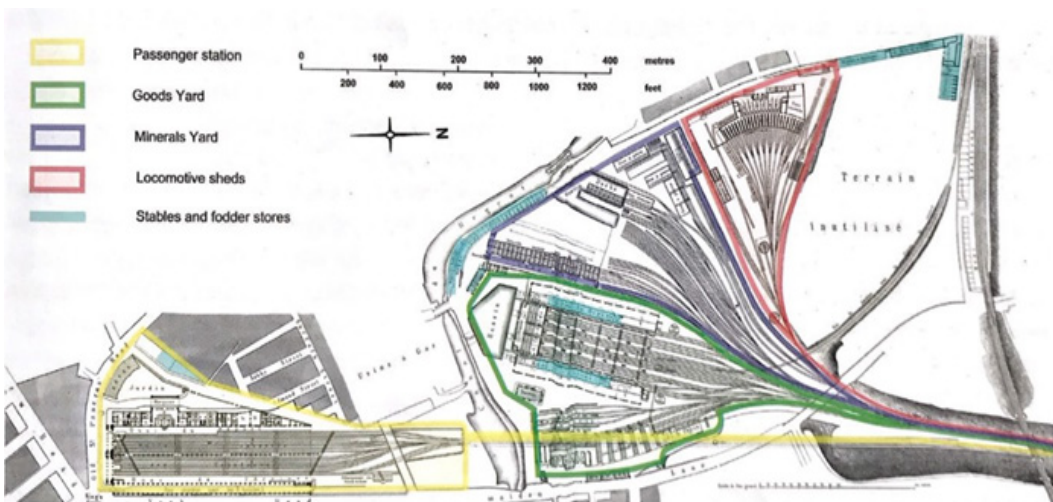


Fig. 1.3 The plan of King's Cross Area in 1858

Lacroix, 1866. Reproduced in Darley, P. 2018. The King's Cross Story. (p.31)

1.2.1 Passenger Stations

Temporary Passenger Station

For the development to work efficiently, it was essential to increase not only the goods flow, but also the passenger flow. The Great Exhibition that took place in Crystal Palace in 1851, attracted thousands of people daily. The GNR (Great Northern Railway), one of the main railway companies at the time, decided to use this event as an opportunity to promote its services. (Simmons, 1984) King's Cross, where several main roads converged, was an obvious choice to create their new base. The Temporary Passenger Station opened its doors in 1850. (Darley, 2018) The design was made by Lewis Cubitt, who proposed the departure shed with space for two tracks and the arrival shed with space for one. (Fig 1.4) The success of the station encouraged the decision to open the main, permanent station on the other side of the canal. After the Temporary Station became redundant it was converted into the Potato Market in 1858 for which an additional warehouse has been built. (Darley, 2018)

King's Cross Station

The main passenger station of the King's Cross was built in 1852 by GNR. (King's Cross Central Limited Partnership, 2021) The strength of the Lewis Cubitt design was its simplicity. There were just two sheds, one for arrival (east) and one for departures (west). (Fig. 1.5) The semi-circular arches 32m wide and 22m high spanned over both of them. (The King's-Cross Terminus, 1853) Initially, the supporting ribs were timber, but as they deteriorated over time, they were replaced with steel. Despite the minimal number of platforms, King's Cross was the biggest station in England when it opened. (King's Cross Central Limited Partnership, 2021) Additionally, due to the increase in the station demand, it has been expanding ever since. The second platform for arrival was added in 1862 and two more departure platforms were built in 1893. (Darley, 2018)

St Pancras Station

The railway companies in England are privately owned, which means there is ongoing competition between them. The biggest rival to GNR was Midland Railway (MR). (Fitzgerald, 2016) For a couple of years, the trains from both companies were going through the King's Cross station, however, as soon as MR obtained some land St Pancras Station was built. (Fig. 1.6 & 1.7) The new terminus, constructed in 1868, (Darley, 2018) was in very close proximity to the older station. What is more, when five years later the Midland Grand Hotel, which was a frontispiece to the station, opened, it became obvious that the design by George Gilbert Scott was supposed to outshine its precursor. (Fitzgerald, 2016) Public opinion was divided. While some people considered it a masterpiece, others found it quite obsolete or exurban. (Hanson, 1967)

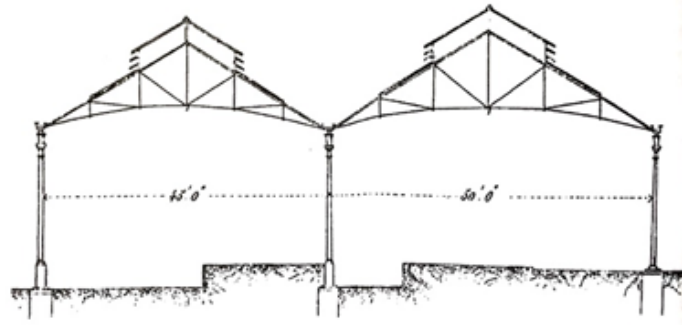
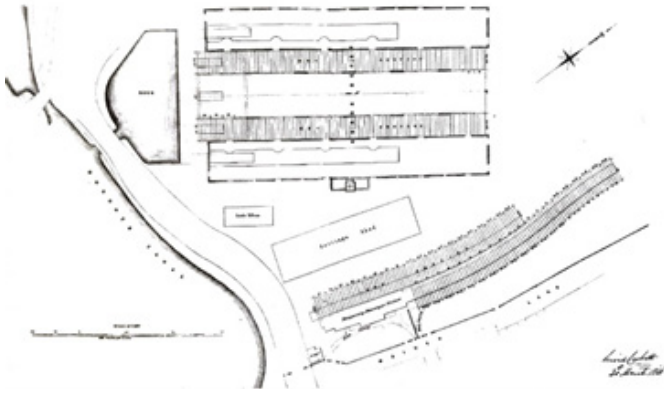


Fig. 1.4 Plan and section of Temporary Passenger Station

Cubitt, L. 1850. Institution of Civil Engineers. In Darley, P. 2018. The King's Cross Story. (p.27)

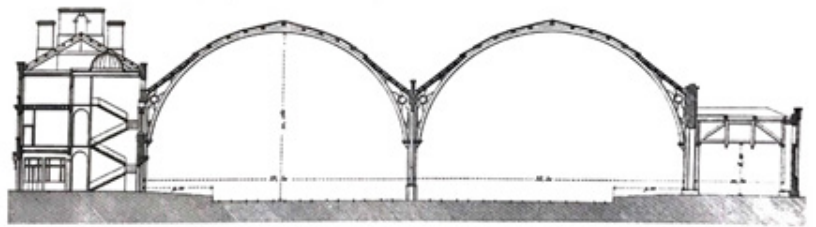
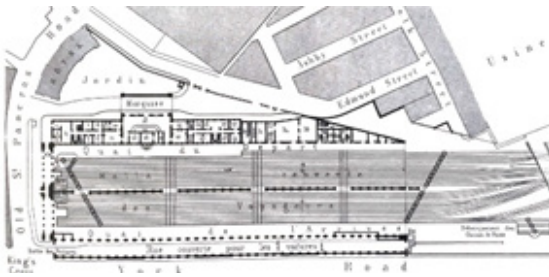


Fig. 1.5 Plan and Section of the King's Cross Station

Lacroix. 1866. In Darley, P. 2018. The King's Cross Story. (p.39)

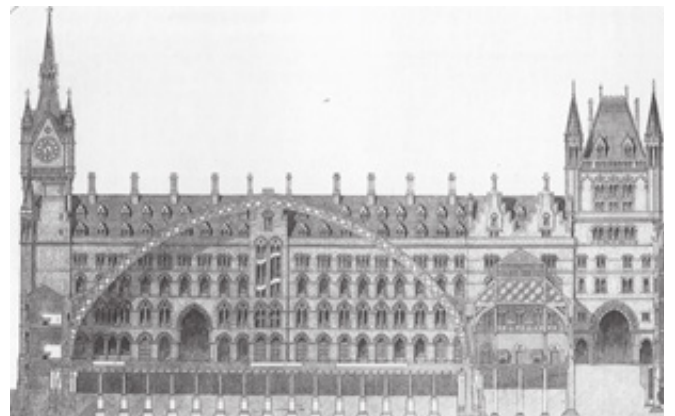
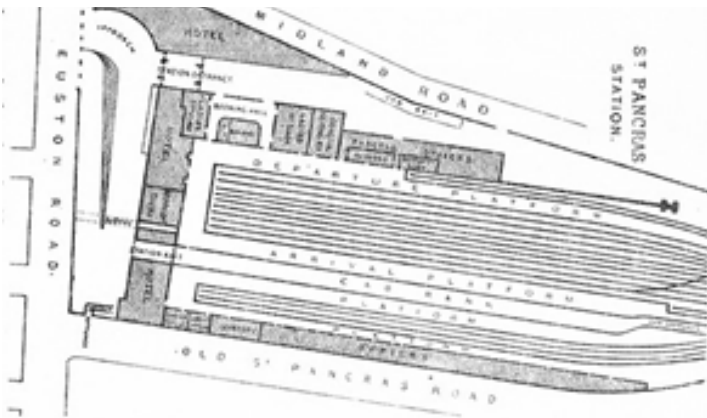


Fig. 1.6 Plan of St Pancras Station 1888

Fig. 1.7 Section of the St Pancras Station

Boot and Sons. 1888. Plan of St Pancras Station. The District Railway Guide to London, with coloured maps, plans. Accessed April 10, 2022. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:DISTRICT\(1888\)_p137_-_St_Pancras_Station_\(plan\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:DISTRICT(1888)_p137_-_St_Pancras_Station_(plan).jpg)

W.H. 1868. St. Pancras Station, Cross-section. Accessed April 10, 2022. https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Figura-4-St-Pancras-Station-Londres-William-H-Barlow-1868-Seccion-transversal_fig2_283846538

1.2.2 Goods Depot

Coal Drops

To provide Londoners with a sufficient amount of energy from coal, the process had to be efficient. The system was simple: bring coal by trains from the north, store it and redistribute it to other parts of the city. (Darley, 2018) To make the process more effective the innovative type of architecture followed. The Coal Drops were the coal stores in the area. (King's Cross Central Limited Partnership, 2021) This interesting name derived from the innovative way of moving the coal within them. The train arrived and stopped at one of the four railway tracks. The coal was dropped into storage hoppers underneath. (Fig. 1.9) Afterwards, the coal was bagged up, placed on the horse-drawn carts and circulated around the city. (The King's-Cross Terminus, 1853) Despite the purely functional design, it was a beautiful space. "The need for carriages to have access, and for air to circulate to clear the dust and fumes, meant large spaces and generous open arches". (Darley, 2018) The Eastern Coal Drop opened in 1851. (King's Cross Central Limited Partnership, 2021) Even though it could hold up to 14,000 tons of coal (The King's-Cross Terminus, 1853) it was expanded nine years later with the neighbouring Western Coal Drop. (Darley, 2018)

Coal and Fish Offices & Coal Stables

Another intriguing building in the area is the Coal and Fish Offices. It was built in 1851 according to the design of Lewis Cubitt. (King's Cross Central Limited Partnership, 2021) It is located by the canal and curves slightly to follow its shape. (Fig. 1.10) Horses were used to power the depot. That created a requirement for the construction of large number of stables. The change in level allowed for extending the offices with arched stables below the road in 1897. (Darley, 2018)

Granary Building

The use of innovative technology in the Goods Depot is clear in the example of the Granary Building, another extraordinary design. (Fig. 1.11) Its purpose was to store grain and flour. Built in 1852 it was one of the first buildings to make use of hydraulic power. (Haslam & Thompson, 2016) The sacks were lifted to higher levels, where they would be stored and segregated. Then the grain would go down on gravity-driven shoots directed right on top of the barge or horse wagon that would redistribute it further. (Darley, 2018)

Gasholders

In 1824 the Imperial Gas Light and Coke Company decided to open their main gasworks facility next to the Regent's Canal. Since then, gasholders became quite a popular piece on London's panorama. (King's Cross Central Limited Partnership, 2021) In the King's Cross Area they appeared for the first time in 1860. (Darley, 2018) (Fig. 1.12) After 20 years, they had been reconstructed and enlarged. During gas's peak, there were 23 of those magnificent frames in the area. However, the most significant of all were: gasholder number 8, which was the largest, as well as gasholders 10,11 and 12 often called "Siamese Triple" as their frames were connected. (Kihl, 2018)

Fig. 1.8 Location map

Krzysztofowicz, M. 2022. Location of the coal drops. (Based on Chas. E. Insurance plan of London. 1886-99. Accessed March 17, 2022. <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/maps/uk/004879742uxiu400u1891.html>)

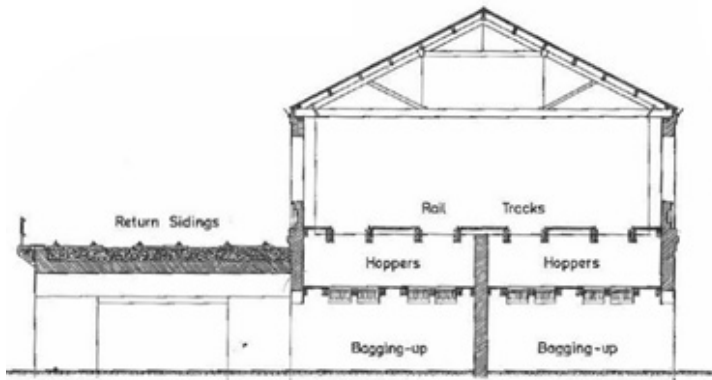


Fig. 1.9 Section of the coal drops

Section of Coal Drops. n.d. Accessed March 17, 2022. <http://www.heatherwick.com/project/coal-drops-yard/>



Fig. 1.10 Coal and Fish Offices

King's Cross Central Limited Partnership. The Coal and Fish Offices. 2021. Accessed March 17, 2022. <https://www.kingscross.co.uk/>



Fig. 1.11 The granary and the basin

Camden Local Studies and Archive Centre. 1851. The Granary. Accessed March 17, 2022. <https://www.behance.net/gallery/3741105/Architectural-Communication-The-Granary-Old-New>



Fig. 1.12 The Gasholders seen from the goods station

Heseltine, J. 1985. The canal behind King's Cross station. Accessed March 17, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2013/sep/27/kings-cross-then-now-pictures-redevelopment>



1.3 The social aspect

With the development of the goods depot, a significant amount of new jobs had been created. King's Cross goods yard was to become the biggest industrial area in England. According to Rebeca Haslam, (2016) the archaeologist involved in the excavation of the site, no one has ever built such a huge set of tracks before, not to mention all the other buildings: passenger station, goods and coal yards, locomotive shed, potatoes markets, stables and others. (Haslam & Thompson, 2016) The investment's aim was to generate a huge cash flow. So, it does not come as a surprise that the construction was meant to be finished as quickly as possible. "A thousand men were employed upon the works at the same time for a considerable period." (The King's-Cross Terminus, 1853) What is more, the buildings are made from local bricks, (Darley, 2018) which indicates that local businesses were thriving and could increase the number of employees. The area was busy as never before. (Fig. 1.13)

Even after the construction have been finalised the need for workmen was growing. (Darley, 2018) People were required at the railway to control traffic, office workers to administer the movement of goods. There was even a need for a man to take care of the cats which were used to get rid of the noxious mice. (Haslam & Thompson, 2016) However, the greatest demand of labour was required to unload all the goods arriving from the North and redistribute them all around London. The place was buzzing with life and people constantly moving around. However, at the time, almost no machinery was involved. Everything had to be done either by human or horsepower. (Chapman, Chambers & Sharpe, 1970) The depot had to be operated twenty-four hours a day, which meant the hours of work were long and the job was very hard, dirty and dangerous. (Darley, 2018)

1.4 The inflow of people

A sudden increase in the availability of jobs in London together with the beginning of the agricultural depression, that started in Britain in 1846, (Chapman, Chambers & Sharpe, 1970) attracted a lot of people from outside the city. They were coming here with the promise of a better-paid job and a more prosperous life. The most significant migration is visible from Suffolk. (Haslam & Thompson, 2016) However, instead of creating new residential buildings in the local area, they were being knocked down to make room for the new train lines. By 1866, St Pancras had become the most densely populated part of London. (Darley, 2018) A big part of the responsibility lies in the clearances that forced evicted groups into even more tightly packed accommodations. Only in 1894, the demolished houses have been replaced with new estates: Stanley and Culross Buildings. (Darley, 2018)

Fig. 1.13 Busy King's Cross in 1899 (right)

1899. King's Cross 1899. Accessed April 13, 2022 <https://af.masterschamps.org/15410-the-extraordinary-daddy-long-legs-railway-of-brighton.html>



TO THE
GREAT NORTHERN
RAILWAY STATION

GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY
GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY

N BROAD STREET
GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY. 280

EXECUTION
OF MARY
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TEST MATCH

Chapter 2: De-industrialization [1914 – 1980s]

2.1 The slow decay of King's Cross Area

The first half of the 20th century was dictated by wars. The First World War (1914-1918) intensified the importance of railway and industrial areas. There was strong growth in supply during those years. (Darley, 2018) However, the war was followed by global economy decline and collapse of world economy in 1929-30. (Skidelsky, 2014) It also affected Britain, which started losing market share of its oldest trades including coal. (Skidelsky, 2014) The malfunctioning economy mainly affected the people. The Interwar period was dominated by social unrest, which was expressed by a series of strikes. (Forgan, 2010) The second World War (1939-1945) was way more devastating for the central area of London. King's Cross and surrounding areas suffered big destructions from a major air raid in 1940 and a couple of smaller ones. (Darley, 2018)

After the wars, Britain managed to regain its economic power, until the process of de-industrialisation began in around 1960s. (Skidelsky, 2014) It hugely affected a lot of cities, one of them being London. According to Hall (2001) there were three principal factors. A key one being the closure of factories often due to inadequate sites. The global competition led to "the UK losing between one quarter to one half of employment between 1960 to 1982." (Hall, 2001) What is more, a lot of companies were transferred due to urban regeneration or lack of profitability. (Tallon, 2010)

King's Cross's goods depot, being one of the biggest industrial zones in London, was hugely affected by the ongoing changes in the 19th and 20th century. The decline in the supply of coal is visible from 1890. (Kiernan, 1986) In the following years some of the buildings were converted into warehouses or offices. Despite the occurring changes, the goods yard "continued much as before until the mid-1930s." (Darley, 2018) Unfortunately, the destruction from the war combined with a drastic reduction of commercial traffic on canals during the 1960s and the ongoing process of de-industrialisation led to the major decline of the area. (Darley, 2018) In the 1960s the steam trains were replaced by either diesel or electric locomotives. With the appearance of express freightliner trains, it became apparent that the wagon loading system was outdated. (Darley, 2018) In the 1980s, most of the rail lines were lifted and only the passenger stations remained working.

2.2 Architecture: the destruction

2.2.1 Destruction

From the second half of the 20th century, the architecture of the King's Cross goods depot suffered a huge decline. The brutality of the Second World War had a huge effect on the area. The multiple air raids happening over the years left a lot of the buildings in a poor state. (Darley, 2018) Furthermore, the decline of the importance of industrial areas and an enormous financial deficit meant that the government did not invest in reconstruction or even protection. (Haslam & Thompson, 2016) As Rebecca Haslam (2016), an archaeologist, found out during the excavation of the site, most of the damage was on the buildings' roofs. Lack of financial help meant that some of them were replaced with cheap material, which often weren't fully waterproof and led to further destruction. (Fig. 2.1) To maintain the goods yard, some of the buildings were converted into warehouses, however, many of the historic buildings stood empty and unused, "not only subject to neglect but increasingly vulnerable to accident, vandalism and arson." (Darley, 2018) From the 1980s the area was almost abandoned. The area became derelict and by many perceived as wasteland.

Fig. 2.1 The destructed Eastern Coal Drop (below)

Tucker, M.T. 1976. Eastern coal drops. Accessed April 8, 2022. <https://www.gasholder.london/2021/02/25/coal-drops-yard-the-early-history/>



2.2.2 Threat to Passenger Stations

Similarly, to the goods depot, both of the passenger stations also faced a lot of difficulties. The destruction caused by air raids during the war forced King's Cross to close for a couple of years. (Darley, 2018) (Fig. 2.2) Later on, it also faced multiple fires. The worst of them happened underground in 1987. (Baker, 2021) Despite not being greatly damaged, St Pancras station and its connecting hotel, were also in decline. After work was completed in 1876, the hotel's architect modestly said, "his masterpiece was almost too good for its purpose." (Baker, 2021) Unfortunately, this view wasn't shared among people, many found it obsolete and exurban or even, as Robert Thorne (2003), an architectural historian, said in his interview, "an embodiment of all that was absurd about the Victorian period." (Fig. 2.3) This led to its transformation into railway offices in 1935. (Hanson, 1967)

The 1960s was a time of big changes within the railway industry. Following the popularization of diesel and electric locomotives, the steam trains stopped running in 1963. (Darley, 2018) It was the end of "dirt, grime and smoke associated with steam traction." (Townend, 1989) In the 1960s an idea emerged to merge the two stations, perhaps demolishing both. (Fitzgerald, 2016) These plans did not go forward, however, it became apparent that changes had to occur for stations to function better. The discussion regarding the merger would go on for years until 2001 when the regeneration works were agreed and commenced. (Bertolini & Tejo 1998)

2.3 Social: Social Unrest

The coal industry started experiencing decline from 1890s because of falling of productivity and growth of more affordable imports. (Kiernan, 1986) The situation temporarily improved during the First World War when the need for local supplies grew. (Darley, 2018) However, the war was followed by global economic decline and the group affected the most was the working class. One of the jobs afflicted the most were the miners, whose wages declined by 26% between 1920 and 1924 and by "1925, they formed the largest single group within the unemployed." (Kiernan, 1986) The social unrest was expressed in series of strikes, which culminated in a General Strike in 1926. (Forgan, 2010)

After the Second World War, the UK started to slowly rebuild its economy. In the 1950s the coal and rail industry was still strong and "rising real wages and expanded job opportunities enabled an increasing number of workers to break through to middle-class levels." (Skidelsky, 2014) The general number of employment significantly increased between 1951-1961. (Crampton & Evans, 1992) However, it also signified the growing gap between rich and poor society. Despite the economic growth, poverty was increasing. (Tallon, 2010) The divide was worsened by "the long period of decline between 1962 and 1982." (Crampton & Evans, 1992) The explanations behind the increased poverty are varied. However, the main one was de-industrialisation of the country. In addition, the mechanization of many processes and



Fig. 2.2 King's Cross Station

King's Cross, between 1923 and 1930. Courtesy of Transport for London at the London Transport Museum. Accessed April 8, 2022 <https://londonist.com/2016/07/why-are-king-s-cross-and-st-pancras-stations-so-close-to-one-another>

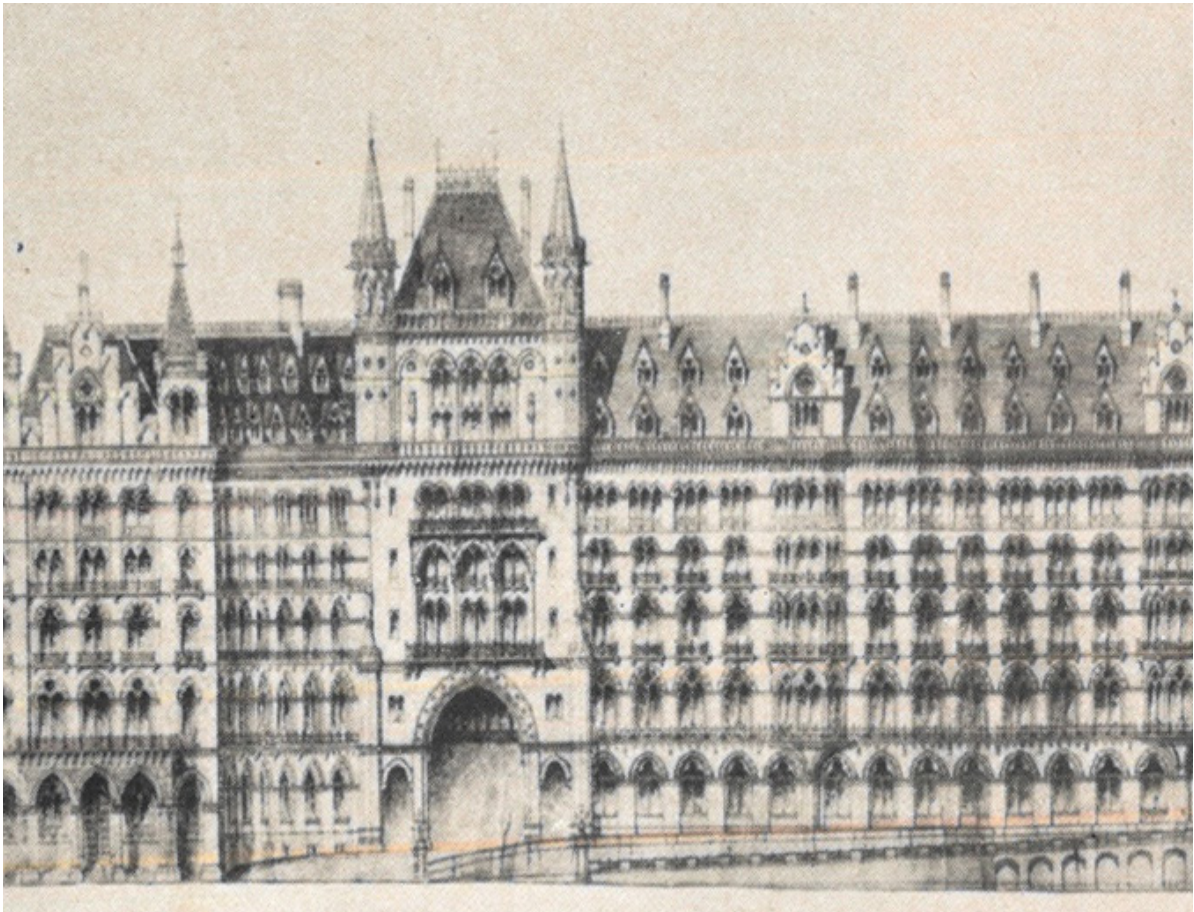


Fig. 2.3 St Pancras Station with its rich detail

Scott, G.G. n.d. The entrance front of the St Pancras Station hotel. RIBA Drawing Collection. In Hanson, M. (1967). 2000 Years of London : an illustrated survey. Country Life (p. 202)

the increased rate of imports led to a reduced supply of works for low-income workers. Hall (1985) observed that “it took over 100 years from 1851 to 1951 for technology and foreign competition to halve the numbers employed in agriculture, but it took only 13 years from 1971 to 1983 to cut manufacturing jobs by a third.”

2.4 Urban: de-centralisation

The ongoing economic changes in the 20th century had a great impact on the urban organization of London. Together with the de-industrialization, the decline of city centre started occurring. From the early 1960s London started experiencing the decentralisation of people and goods. (Tallon, 2010) Many factors contributed towards the change, however the main one was the changing nature and requirements of manufacturing industries. (Tallon, 2010) The sites in the centres were not sufficient and no longer affordable. The more flexible transport system allowed companies to expand their businesses beyond the city. Additionally, in 1964 the newly elected Labour government implemented a “policy of discouraging employment in central London.” (Crampton & Evans, 1992) There was a strict control of the new construction works. The decline of the inner city was magnified by the amount of accommodation occupied by poor immigrants from the former empire. (Tallon, 2010) (Fig. 2.4)



Fig. 2.4 Poorer society housing directly next to station

Srenitz, K. 1977 Milk Depot north platform. [pen and wash] Accessed April 9, 2022 <https://docplayer.net/162511191-The-king-s-cross-story.html>

Chapter 3: Interim Period [1980s -2007]

3.1 The forgotten King's Cross Area

The end of 20th century was a time of big political changes. Margaret Thatcher governments from 1979 to 1990 brought an end to Britain's relative economic decline. (Skidelsky, 2014) However, like most political changes, it encountered scepticism and opposition. It also increased the gap between the rich and the poor. "In the period 1979 – 1995 incomes for the richest group in the society increased by 65 per cent, whereas the incomes of the poorest group fell in real terms." (Tallon, 2010) The unemployment rose to over 10 per cent till 1986, however, "between 1982-1987 the British economy grew by 4 per cent a year." (Skidelsky, 2014) The main aims of the Thatcher politics were deregulation, trade union reform, privatisation and cutting benefits. (Skidelsky, 2014)

For the King's Cross area, it was also a significant time. Even though the area had become derelict following the British de-industrialisation. The period might had led to the area's largest changes. The literal transformation of architecture was not occurring, but the shift in perception did. During the 1980s, most of the rail lines were lifted and the depot became derelict. (Bertolini & Tejo 1998) However, this meant that the areas that were previously hidden to the public opened. Most of the goods stations in the UK were very centrally located, hence most of them were demolished to make way for new developments. (Darley, 2018) Robert Thorne (2003), an architectural historian who worked for the Greater London Council (the GLC), claims that it quickly became apparent that the King's Cross depot, that survived, is a special place, which will have to be redeveloped. In 1985 the GLC recognized the importance of the goods depot and turned it into a conservation area. (Thorne for King's Cross Voices, 2003) This prevented the demolition and started the planning of the redevelopment.

3.2 Architecture: the unexpected use

For a long time, the outer shell of buildings in the Goods Depot stayed the same, but what was happening behind the walls kept on changing. All of the buildings in the depot were designed for a very specific purpose, that in time became obsolete. Once the requirement of the buildings reduced, another group utilized the forgotten memorabilia of the industrial period and adjusted them to their needs. (Fig. 3.1) It attracted a lot of interesting characters: photographers, who had their exhibitions there, woodworkers, violin makers, one even housed the UK's longest indoor go-karting circuit. (Darley, 2018) A few famous people also felt attracted or even inspired by this derelict heritage site. Alexander McQueen held his fashion show of "the birds" collection in 1995 (Thomas, 2015) (Fig. 3.4) and Madonna recorded the music video for one of her most known songs "Sorry." (Bychowski, 2014)

However, what the King's Cross area was mainly known for, especially amongst the younger Londoners, was its rich club scene. There were three known clubs: Bagley's, The Cross and The Key. (Bychowski, 2014) Bagley's, which opened in 1991, was the biggest one in the area. (Whitehead, 2018) As it grew, "a licence was secured to admit 2,500 people, although as many as 3-4,000 might have been in there at its peak." (Furseth, 2020) It was held in the former Eastern Coal Drops. The building maintained the original layout. (Fig. 3.2) On the ground floor were the foyer and DJ. The second floor previously used for the arrival of trains was now a comparably loud dance floor. That wasn't the only memory of building past. "If you rubbed a wall, or if you squeezed past someone, your clothes would be black." (Whitehead, 2018)

Fig. 3.1 Rave Is Best Graffiti in Kings Cross in 1990s (below)

1990s. Rave Is Best Graffiti in Kings Cross. Accessed April 9, 2022 <https://www.kingscross.co.uk/meet-mr-coal-drops>





Fig. 3.2 Bagley's club

n.d. Bagley's club. Accessed April 8, 2022 <https://www.curiouslondon.net/extract-raving-at-bagleys.html>



Fig. 3.3 Saturday night in Bagley's club

Ward, A. 1994. Bagley's. Accessed April 9, 2022 <https://www.curiouslondon.net/extract-raving-at-bagleys.html>



Fig. 3.4 McQuenn show at the Coal Drops

2013. Menswear show at the Coal Drops, King's Cross in London. Accessed April 13, 2022 http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/fashion/2013-06/18/content_16634196_4.htm

3.3 Social: In people's eyes

Wasteland, a party destination, beautiful memorabilia of the industrial period, everyone saw something different. The lack of any specific purpose or overview of the area together with abandoned buildings attracted squatters, drug addicts and prostitutes. (Darley, 2018) Especially, considering that in the 20th century unemployment and poverty were still very high. (Skidelsky, 2014) Many of the travellers arriving at King's Cross, tried to leave the place as soon as possible. (Inglis for King's Cross Vocies, 2004) Despite all that, some citizens still tried to improve the image of this very central area. In 1985, on the south side of the Regent's Canal, volunteers created Camley Street Natural Park, which is a local nature reserve to this day. (Darley, 2018)

Artists saw beyond the disreputable side of the goods depot, and they appreciated its unique beauty. However, it seemed that they were all attracted for different reasons. Kathe Strenitz claims it was her arrival in 1939 and the large, very black and gloomy station that left a lasting impression on her consciousness. (Darley, 2018) (Fig. 3.5) However, the photographer Angela Inglis truly appreciated the architecture, as well as the quality and care which was necessary to build it. So many handmade elements, all the colours and textures, "no one builds like that anymore." (Inglis for King's Cross Vocies, 2004) The painter's, Wanda Gerald, favourite subject was the regeneration of King's Cross. (Fig. 3.6 & 3.7) She felt the power of all the ongoing processes and discovered the beauty of engineering. (Gerald, 2005) Despite, the differences they all felt inspired by this rich landscape. It is the ability to see the beauty and heritage beyond the derelict land that saved it from full demolition.



Fig. 3.5 Kathe Strenitz watercolour of the Goods Depot

Strenitz, K. 1976. View SW from St Pancras Locks to Coal Office and Gasholder 8 [watercolour] Accessed April 9, 2022 <https://docplayer.net/162511191-The-king-s-cross-story.html>



Fig. 3.6 W. Gerland's vision of the construction on King's Cross Area

Gerland, W. n.d. Level the site [watercolour] Accessed April 9, 2022 http://www.thecnj.com/review/020906/features020906_02.html



Fig. 3.7 W. Gerland's colourful perception

Gerland, W. 2006. Cranes. [oil on canvas] Accessed April 13, 2022 <https://angelacobbinah.wordpress.com/2018/12/31/st-pancras-excerpts-from-publication-marking-150-year-history/>

3.4 Urban: The Redevelopment Plan

It is important to understand that even though for a long time the King's Cross area seemed to be forgotten by authorities, during all those years, there has been a heated discussion undergoing about the future of this central area. The planning started in the 1980s when British Rail was faced to bring the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) into London. (Darley, 2018) This "high-speed rail connection" would be very beneficial for the entire city. (Crampton & Evans 1992) The negotiations, which concerned both land and transport issues, were complex and involved local and central governments, the local community, transport operators, and property developers. (Bertolini and Tejo, 1998) For a long time consideration was to build the new rail line underground and only in 1993 it became apparent that it would be easier and cheaper to use the existing terminals. (Bertolini and Tejo, 1998) The proposal for stations redevelopment was granted permission in 1996. (Darley, 2018)

There were many reasons behind the extended time of the planning. One of them was the imprecision of urban policy. The official Urban Programme emerged only in 1968. (Tallon, 2010) In the beginning, it was not very restricting, nor successful due to its "experimental, short-term nature, with limited evaluation and constantly changing priorities." (Tallon, 2010) In addition since 1986, the Greater London Council was abolished, "London had, unlike almost any other world city, no overall political authority and planning and control was devolved to 32 Boroughs and the City of London." (Crampton & Evans 1992) All of those circumstances made it difficult to reach a consensus.

During the intense discussions regarding the railway connection in King's Cross, there were separate discussions in progress relating to the redevelopment of the goods depot. Again, the borough's plan was very vague, "stating wishes and conditions, but leaving the initiative to the developer," (Bertolini and Tejo, 1998) which meant a lot of disputes regarding the future of King's Cross. British Rail chose the London Regeneration Consortium (LRC) as developers in 1988. One year later the Foster Associates, employed by LRC, proposed a masterplan. (Darley, 2018) The proposal included two 44-storey high towers and devoted a lot of space for offices. (Bertolini and Tejo, 1998) Dissatisfied local community got involved and formed King's Cross Railway Lands Group (KXRLG). (Darley, 2018) The KXRLG was seeking for "affordable housing, community facilities, parks, jobs and a more cohesive, more balanced development between residential and offices." (Darley, 2018) In 2001 a new developer was appointed – the Argent. Their proposition included 33 per cent of space for residential uses and community facilities. The permission was granted in 2006 and the works started one year later. (King's Cross Central Limited Partnership, 2021) (Fig. 3.8 & 3.9)



Fig. 3.8 The construction of the King's Cross area (above)

Gwilliam-Parkes M. n.d. NTC. [photo] Accessed April 9, 2022 <https://www.mirgwilliam-parkes.com/n1c-pictures.html>

Fig. 3.9 Cranes in the King's Cross area (right)

Gwilliam-Parkes M. n.d. NTC. [photo] Accessed April 9, 2022 <https://www.mirgwilliam-parkes.com/n1c-pictures.html>



Chapter 4: Gentrification [2007 – Present day]

4.1 New Life of King's Cross

At the beginning of the 21st century, after a long regeneration process, the King's Cross area has gained a new life. Discussions regarding the transformation of the depot and the transportation hub had been ongoing in parallel, however, the developers (the Argent) were only chosen in 2001. They prepared a masterplan together with Allies and Morrison, Porphyrios Associates and Townshend Landscape Architects and were granted planning permission in 2006. (King's Cross Central Limited Partnership, 2021) Works started in 2008 and the development was fully completed in 2018.

The site that in the past few decades had stirred mixed feelings amongst people, who often wanted to get away from it, as fast as possible, had now become a destination. According to the developer, the Argent, more than 20 historic buildings and structures were restored and 30 new built. (Argent Services LLP, 2022) All of them intertwine with a network of new streets, squares, parks and public spaces. (Darley, 2018) The development was designed on a mixed-use basis with a majority of retail spaces, but also cultural facilities, offices and residential blocks. (Fig. 4.1) Located right next to one of the biggest transportation hubs in the UK, it attracts lots of people every day. (King's Cross Central Limited Partnership, 2021) "If you look around, you'll see every generation enjoying the space," as commented C. Spreadbury from Press

4.2 Architecture: Adaptive re-use

4.2.1 Architecture

The Coal Drops

The Eastern and Western Coal Drops Yard were transformed by Heatherwick Studio. The challenge facing architects was how to transform two linear buildings into one coherent space with an engaging public area between them. (Fig. 4.2) "The design extends the gabled roofs of the existing warehouses to connect the two viaducts, which rise up and stretch until they touch" right above the new central space. (Arquitectura Viva SL, 2020) What makes the building so special are its carefully restored aged brick walls and cast-iron balustrades. The 19th-century structure has been filled with multiple restaurants, cafes and shops.

However, Darley (2018) mentions in his book that the one of a few sections that remained relatively unaltered from its original function is the fire-damaged north end, making it archaeologically the most interesting part of Coal Drops Yard, yet it has not been restored.

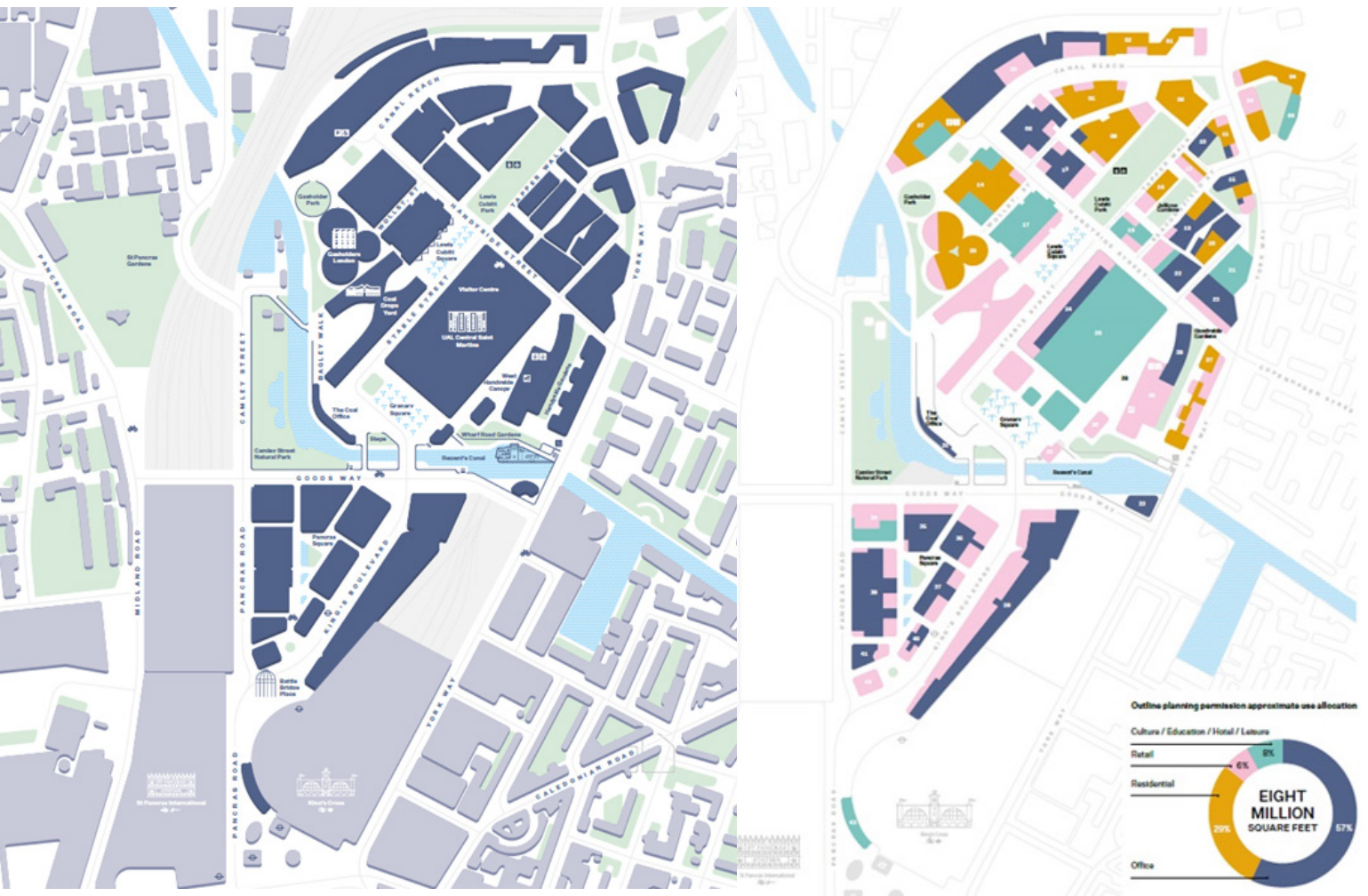


Fig. 4.1 Plans of the new development (above)

King's Cross Central Limited Partnership. 2021. Development Plans. In King's Cross. (2021) King's Cross Overview 2022.

Fig. 4.2 Coal Drops Yard. The renovated Coal Drops (below)

King's Cross Central Limited Partnership. n.d. The Coal Drops Yard. Accessed April 9, 2022 <https://www.kingscross.co.uk/>



Coal and Fish Offices & Coal Stables

Connected with Coal Drops Yard by Bagley's Walk, is the Coal Office, previously known under the name of the Coal and the Fish Offices. Redesigned by David Morley Architects, it gained new life after remaining empty since the fire of 1983. (Darley, 2018) The architects maintained most of the existing fabric and combined it with some light touches, like the metal extension. (Fig. 4.3) The careful adaptation of the internal space made it possible to be occupied by office space and retail units. (David Morley Architects, 2022)

The Granary Building

The Granary building became a new location for the University of the Arts London (UAL) in 2011. At the time when the renovation works started, it has already been transformed into a warehouse complex. (Darley, 2018) It was one of the first buildings to open in the newly developed King's Cross. The design combines the "Granary building and transit sheds – with a 200-metre-long new building that uses industrial materials and creates robust spaces for the students." (Stanton Williams Architects, 2022) (Fig. 4.4) In the yearly overview of the King's Cross site, the developers stated they are proud that the arts and cultural landscape, which "have been woven into the fabric of the site since 80s" (King's Cross Overview, 2022) continues to thrive through graduation shows and other organized art performances. (Fig. 4.5)

The Granary Square in front of it is one of the most vibrant spaces in the area. It displays a couple of remaining train lines, however, the original granite setts in the yard were replaced, which contributes to another historical loss. (Darley, 2018)

The Gasholders

As stated in chapter one, the most significant gasholders in the area were gasholder 8 and connected "Siamese Triple" gasholders 10, 11 and 12. These were the structures that were moved and refurbished from the south side of the Regent's Canal to the heart of the new development. Gasholder 8 was turned into an open park, designed by Bell Phillips Architects, utilising the magnificent 26-meter-high masterpiece from the Victorian era. (King's Cross Central Limited Partnership, 2021) The triplet was transformed by Wilkinson Eyre, into a residential block. (Fig. 4.6) The scheme provides 145 apartments accessed through central courtyards. (Wilkinson Eyre Architects, 2021) (Fig. 4.7)

It is favourable that the developer decided to maintain the gasholders' structures, which have been a key element of London's history. However, the choice can be questioned when considering the reduction of the importance of the structure when filled with a secondary structure to provide apartment spaces.

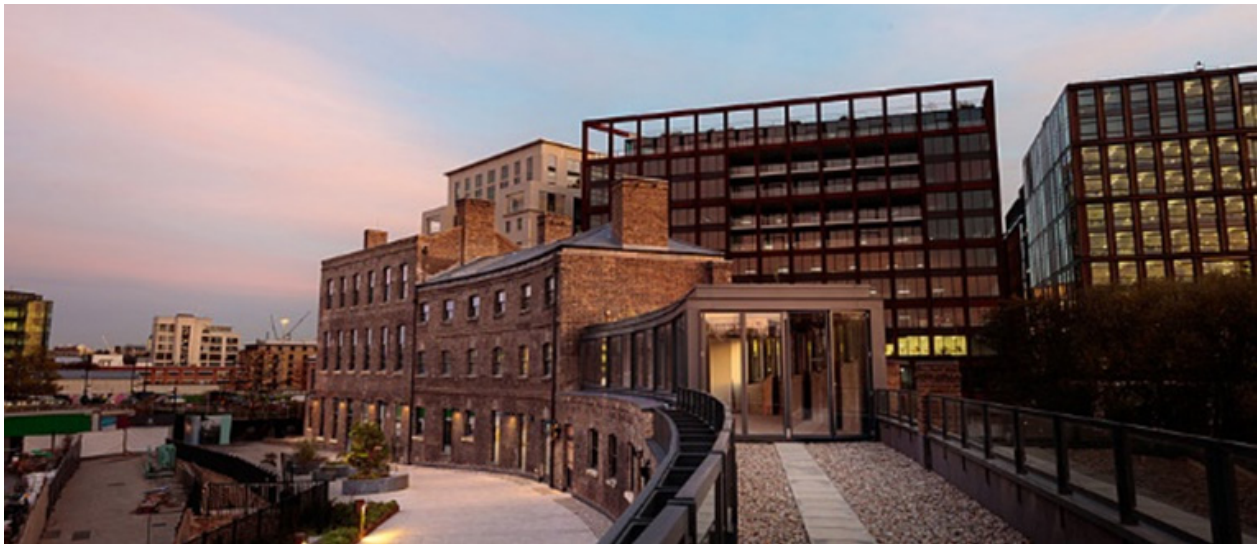


Fig. 4.3 New extension to the Coal Office.

David Morley Architect. n.d. Roof terrace extension and restaurant. Accessed April 8, 2022 <https://davidmorleyarchitects.co.uk/#!projects>



Fig. 4.4 The new campus for the University of the Arts London. (left)

Stanton Williams Architects. 2011. UAL Campus for Central Saint Martins. Accessed April 8, 2022 <https://www.stantonwilliams.com/projects/ual-campus-for-central-saint-martins-at-kings-cross/>



Fig. 4.5 Central Saint Martins Undergraduate Fashion Show, held at King's Cross. (right)

Stanton Williams Architects. 2011. UAL Campus for Central Saint Martins. Accessed April 8, 2022 <https://www.stantonwilliams.com/projects/ual-campus-for-central-saint-martins-at-kings-cross/>



Fig. 4.6 The gasholders transformed into apartments. (left)

Wilkinson Eyre Architects. 2018. Gasholders London. Accessed April 9, 2022 <https://www.wilkinsoneyre.com/projects/gasholders-london>

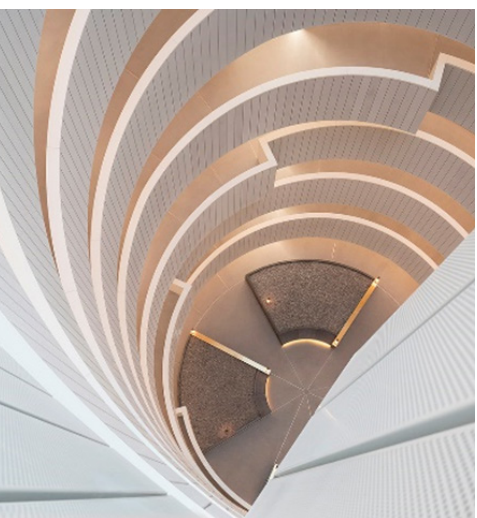


Fig. 4.7 The inside of gasholders. (right)

Wilkinson Eyre Architects. 2018. Gasholders London. Accessed April 9, 2022 <https://www.wilkinsoneyre.com/projects/gasholders-london>

4.2.2 The critique of regeneration projects

The development of the King's Cross brought new life to the site, however, the question that arises is if it has preserved the past of the area in the best possible way. What is the acceptable extent of intervention into the original structure or purpose? And who has the right to decide? (Fig. 4.8)

The discussion regarding the ways of preserving historic monuments has been debated for centuries. One of the options: adaptive re-use, was firstly discussed in the 19th century. The debate arose from two opposing views: the restoration movement by Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc and the conservation movement by John Ruskin and his pupil William Morris. (Plevoets & Van Cleempoel, 2013) In short, the first one believed in restoration and adding-onto the buildings, whereas the latter, considered it destruction and saw the beauty in the signs of age on the structures.

Industrial heritage is an important group of historic monuments. "Industrial heritage consists of the remains of industrial culture which are of historical, technological, social, architectural or scientific value," as states the definition from the charter of The International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage. (TICCIH, 2003) Many cities were founded on the industrial capital. (Tallon, 2010) The industrial zones such as King's Cross, were growing, and the number of buildings designed with specific purposes was increasing. Unfortunately, with the de-industrialization, they were abandoned and most of them were demolished to make room for new developments. The sparse amount that survived is more commonly under protection and a subject of regeneration. (Darley, 2018) "In reuse, architecture is a re-entry, transformation into the cycle of something that has lost value, interest in use or functionality." (Latina, 2019) A transformed building is gaining a new layer of meaning. It is up to the architect to give it a new life and regain popularity within the community.

The restrictions on the restoration or adaptive re-use are still quite vague. One of the points the charter of TICCIH (2003) states is that: "new uses should respect the significant material and maintain original patterns of circulation and activity, and should be compatible as much as possible with the original or principal use." As long as the King's Cross redevelopment met the requirements of the first part, the latter one is dismissed completely. However, the other point the charter brings attention to is that: "public interest and affection for the industrial heritage and appreciation of its values are the surest ways to conserve it." (TICCIH, 2003) The Coal Drops Yard is a successful example where the developer found it economically sustainable to refurbish 19th-century structures and by the change of function attract enough people to be profitable. (Madelin, 2008) People are drawn by unique places that provide both heritage and retail variety. Rebecca Haslam (2016), the archaeologist involved in King's Cross excavation, also believes it is a successful example of preserving the heritage. Visitors are coming here to admire the railway history of London and it's possible because the site is not sterile, but "wears its history on its sleeve." (Haslam & Thompson, 2016)



Fig. 4.8 the changing landscape of London

4.3 Social: The changing social fabric

4.3.1 The (not)public space

The role and perception of the King's Cross Area has changed on numerous occasions throughout the years. Bychawski's (2014) striking comment aptly describes the recent transformation: "last decade's desolate wastelands are this year's playgrounds for the super-rich." What once was the dirty workplace, storage and stables, transformed into the red districts with clubbers gathering on weekends and drug addicts laying on corners, has now become the home of expensive shops and fancy restaurants.

Nowadays, the site is thriving with people. Surprisingly, it is not the buildings and their renewed function, but rather the open spaces between them, which adds up to 40 per cent of the whole development, that seems to be a more attractive prospect. (Furseth, 2020) Vast greenery and genuine architecture add authenticity and wilderness to the area. Children play in the fountains on Granary Square, which in the evenings become a dancefloor for free salsa lessons. On sunny days, it is nearly impossible to find a space on the stairs leading towards the canal, which are crowded with people. (Fig. 4.9) To attract even more crowd there are multiple art installations, performances and even the screening of the Wimbledon. (King's Cross Central Limited Partnership, 2021)

However, even though the public space should be free for everyone, everything that lies on the land of the development is a Privately Owned Public Space (POPS). These are the "publicly accessible spaces which are provided and maintained by private developers, offices or residential building owners." (GiGL, 2017) Whilst at first glance the spaces seem free, there can be certain regulations imposed on their use. Disturbingly, those rules are not known to the users. "Be they taking photos, holding a political protest or even simply sitting down and having a nap," (Shenker, 2017) any of those actions can result in their removal by security guards. The increasing number of POPS is widespread around London. (Furseth, 2020) By making the public spaces a part of developers' obligation, the municipality is lifted from the financial burden of maintaining them. Nonetheless, those spaces lose their "publicness". As a homeless man stated in the Guardian article: "To the ordinary person, there's no distinction. To me, it's everything - I'm not the sort of person they want." (Shenker, 2017) The majority of society might not recognize the problem, but they are also deprived of their basic demographic rights - knowing what one can do – in the spaces supposedly free.



Fig. 4.9 Busy Public Space next to Granary Square

4.3.2 Disrupted communities

One of the common concerns regarding regeneration projects is the loss of the community. Over the years the King's Cross Area has been changing and expanding constantly. As a result, a lot of houses have been destroyed and people relocated. (Darley, 2018) "With all the developments happening in London we're losing the communities," as Angela Inglis (2004), who photographed the changes undergoing in the area, stated. What used to be social housing for workers during industrial times and a punk's hub in the interim period, has now become a land with one of the highest rental rates in London. "King's Cross homes rent for between £48-£67 per sq ft per year, while other new-builds go for £46." (Rowlinson, 2020) However, it is not only about the changing demographics of the district, but rather about the organization of the space. The functions seem to be targeted more towards the tourists rather than the residents.

Members of the community have been speaking of their doubts about the development from the very beginning. During the planning phase, the KXRLG (King's Cross Railway Lands Group) opposed the initial masterplan submitted by Foster Associates back in 1989. They sought "a more cohesive, more balanced development." (Darley, 2018) This vision coincides with the current perspective. Albert Beale is one of the trustees of the Housman, a radical non-profit bookseller that has been in the King's Cross Area since 1945. (King's Cross Central Limited Partnership, 2021) Being one of the citizens of the district he commented on the new development: "we [wanted to have] a secondary school there, parks, social housing, a health centre, and all those things that are needed in a grotty inner-city area." (Furseth, 2020) The plan that was realized tries to be more considerable for the community and 40 per cent of housing is affordable. (Rowlinson, 2020) However, there is a big spectrum of variants that fits under this term, and it is still not meeting the former mayor Ken Livingstone's desire for 50 per cent of affordable housing in new developments. (Madelin, 2008) Not to mention the fact, that if you manage to get a flat having a lower income, you cannot even afford to go grocery shopping in your district as the only shop available happens to be one of the most expensive British supermarket retailers.

The dissimilarity between the council plans and what is actually produced derives from the fact, that developers in the UK still have a lot of freedom. The only obligation they have to meet is to fit within the vague planning guidance from a regional and national level. (Madelin, 2008) The main aim of any company is to make a profit. The developer of the King's Cross site, Roger Madelin (2008), stated himself that there is "no point in doing something if it is not economically sustainable." Many believe that if the city council imposed more strict regulations with a focus on social aspects of the city, it could benefit the wider community.

4.4 Urban: Industrial heritage in the city fabric

Urban regeneration is a process undergoing in a lot of cities. The mix of old and new by which a "thread of historical continuity" (Porphyrrios, 2008) is maintained is precisely what makes a lot of traditional cities so beautiful. As marvellous as they may seem at the first glance, gentrified areas often encounter a lot of problems. According to Tallon (2010), "if urban regeneration is ultimately going to achieve its ambitious and laudable aims, problems of spatial extensive and deeply entrenched poverty and exclusion need to be resolved." Unfortunately, a lot of these forgotten areas are transformed into commercial hubs filled with known companies, expensive shops and restaurants, forcing the poorer part of society further to the outskirts of the city. (Tallon, 2010) King's Cross in London is an example of such a process. A lot of start-ups, artistic endeavours and other small enterprises often need a lot of space and cheap rent in order to make their business thrive. However, in London, most of the post-industrial areas are privately owned by Network Rail which is currently one of the UK's biggest landlords. (Bychowski, 2014) Like any company they are profit-oriented, which suggests they would sell the land for gentrification purposes not giving too much thought to the future of their current tenants.

Conclusion

The King's Cross area in London, has a very rich history reaching back to the 19th century. By the means of thorough analysis, the study details its transformation over time, describing how the activities happening behind the walls were constantly changing, even though the skin of the buildings have remained nearly untouched since the 1850s when they were built. The dynamic changes of the buildings' and districts' functions is hugely related to the political and economical situation in Britain, in addition to the global economy.

During the centuries, the four main transitions can be determined as: the time of industrial glory, the decay and abandonment caused by wars and de-industrialisation, the interim use that enhanced artistic expression and the newly regenerated commercial district. Each one of them is equally important. The changes have created multiple layers of meaning to both local residents and the general British public resulting in the uniqueness of the site nowadays.

The site's favourable location on the interchange of the roads and canal, just outside the city made it a perfect location for a new development. In the 1850s, the new passenger station and goods depot were designed by Lewis Cubitt. (Darley, 2018) The architecture was simple and effective as it was meant to serve a certain purpose. (The King's-Cross Terminus, 1853) Yet, the precision with which the buildings were built and the richness of detailing astonish till this day. (Haslam & Thompson, 2016) This industrial hub was thriving with life. The 20th century marked the darker times for the area. The decline in coal supply, (Kiernan, 1986) followed by de-industrialisation and global economic decline in Britain's economy (Skidelsky, 2014) led to a decay of the depot. Not to mention the wars, which brought partial destruction to the buildings. (Darley, 2018) In the 1960s steam was replaced by diesel and electric power, and coal became obsolete. The Depot continued to work for a bit longer, but in the 1980s area was left abandoned. (Darley, 2018) Developers noticed the profit-generating potential of the location. Only the recognition of the space as a conservation area in 1985 by GLC prevented a full demolition. (Thorne for King's Cross Voices, 2003) After long discussions held by the municipality, a consensus was reached and the area, including all the industrial heritage, was transformed into a commercial district – the function not so distant from its initial use, to provide people with power and products like fruits, vegetables, grain etc. as now it hosts clothing and other goods stores, as well as, restaurants.

“What is the city but the people?”

William Shakespeare, 1607

Shakespeare quote from the 17th century remains true to this day. In the end, it is the people that truly create the atmosphere of a city. Its architecture helps to accommodate their requirements. At the beginning of industrial glory, people were attracted to the King's Cross area with the opportunity for a better job and a more prosperous life. (Haslam & Thompson, 2016) With the economic decline, came social unrest, increasing poverty and poor conditions led to a series of strikes. (Forgan, 2010) In the 1960s, decentralisation caused a deterioration of the inner city. (Tallon, 2010) Consequently, King's Cross and its surroundings became run down. Abandoned, huge warehouses gave an opportunity for a rise in prostitution and squatting. (Darley, 2018) However, a few managed to see the intriguing face of King's Cross hidden within the dirty wasteland that it was at the time. Artists appreciated the beauty of its architecture and were inspired by it. (Bychowski, 2014) The club scene that emerged in the meantime gave freedom of expression to both the musicians that were performing and the youth that frequented. Now, after a regeneration, it is a vibrant commercial district with a lot of public spaces to enjoy. (King's Cross Central Limited Partnership, 2021) However, can everyone equally enjoy this unique environment? Unfortunately, to generate profit, the redevelopment is focused on the richer part of the society, excluding and pushing further out of the city the poorer groups that appropriated the space in the 1980s. However, it were the private investors assets that allowed the area to thrive once again. Just like these of the private railway companies that started the first development back in the 1850s.

King's Cross area is one of a kind. It is a vibrant space which fabric intertwines old with new, public with private and greenery with the city. Its history is visible on every step through the unique architecture back from the 1850s and its rich cultural programme continuing the legacy from the 1980s, when it was a land of artistic expression. For a careless observer it might be yet another shopping district, however, the curious few might look for the story behind these old facades and discover the plethora of functions they hosted.

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