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## City profile

## A City Profile of Liverpool

Olivier Sykes<sup>a,\*</sup>, Jonathan Brown<sup>c</sup>, Matthew Cocks<sup>b</sup>, David Shaw<sup>a</sup>, Chris Couch<sup>a</sup><sup>a</sup> University of Liverpool, 74, Bedford Street South, Liverpool, United Kingdom<sup>b</sup> Xi'an Jiaotong–Liverpool University, Suzhou, People's Republic of China<sup>c</sup> Fairfield, Liverpool, United Kingdom<sup>1</sup>

## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 18 July 2012

Received in revised form 22 December 2012

Accepted 28 March 2013

Available online xxxx

## Keywords:

Port-related urban development

Economic restructuring

Urban shrinkage

Regeneration

Cultural heritage

Urban governance

World Heritage Site

Spatial planning

## ABSTRACT

This Profile focuses on patterns of growth, decline and renewal in Liverpool (UK) over the past 200 years. In this period, the city has seen extremes of both prosperity and decline. It pioneered many of the elements of the modern industrial metropolis, only to deurbanise during a ruinous late 20th century decline, halving its population. The centre has now been successfully re-urbanised and the city population is growing, but spatial inequalities remain intense. As a focus for policy remedies from across the ideological spectrum, Liverpool offers an instructive archive of approaches of continued relevance and interest.

Liverpool emerged as a modern global city, based around new systems of international trade and capital during the 18th and 19th centuries. Growth and wealth were manifested physically in grand architectural landscapes and the planned development of often pioneering modern urban infrastructure such as railways, parks, docklands and public housing. Liverpool was among the earliest places to face acute social challenges characteristic of the industrial city. Its universal importance is reflected in UNESCO World Heritage Site status for significant portions of its docklands and downtown area.

The city's population peaked in the 1930s with much of the subsequent century witnessing an accelerating reversal of the city's fortunes, as a result of unfavourable economic restructuring, war damage and key planning decisions. Throughout the 20th century Liverpool has been an early test bed for urban policies, sometimes applied from opposing poles of the ideological spectrum. In the switch from planned growth to managing and reversing decline, there have been numerous efforts to 'regenerate' the city's economic, physical and social fabric, many have been successful, whilst others have been seen as deeply damaging, making Liverpool something of an 'urban laboratory' worthy of careful consideration and reflection.

Informed by the historical trajectory outlined above, this Profile firstly discusses Liverpool's rise to prominence as a global trade centre in the 18th and 19th centuries. Secondly, challenges faced during the 20th century are considered. Finally, the recent history of redevelopment and regeneration is reviewed and followed by reflections on the present city and its future prospects.

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*"a territory is constituted through the sum of the ways in which its inhabitants mythologize it"*

Verena Andermatt Conley (2012)

## Introduction

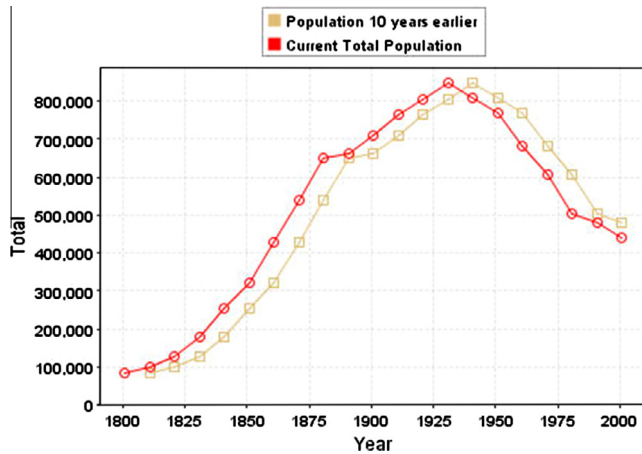
Over two centuries Liverpool has seen extremes of both prosperity and decline. The city emerged as a global port based around international trade in salt, slaves, raw material and manufactures during the 18th and 19th centuries (Wilks-Heeg, 2003), eventually beginning to vie with London in terms of global connections and

presence (Brown, 2009). In 1886 the Illustrated London News described Liverpool as "a wonder of the world. . . the New York of Europe, a world-city rather than merely British provincial" (cited in Belchem (2006a)). By the early 20th century, Liverpool's merchant fleet was more modern and larger in tonnage than that of London, its streets held more foreign consulates and embassies (Muir, 1907: 305 cited in Belchem, 2000: 23), and its cargo handling exceeded New York – and every port on mainland Europe (Port Cities Liverpool, n.d.). As late as 1970 Liverpool was still the largest exporting port in the British Commonwealth, putting it ahead of Hong Kong, Sydney and Singapore. Its wealth was manifested physically in a plethora of grand architectural landscapes and the early development of the characteristic urban infrastructure of the modern city, most notably the world's first inter-city railway (George Stephenson's Liverpool and Manchester, opened 1830), but also public parks, mass housing, planning and sanitation. The

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +44 151 7943766; fax: +44 151 7943125.

E-mail addresses: [ollys@liv.ac.uk](mailto:ollys@liv.ac.uk) (O. Sykes), [jonathan.jrbrown@gmail.com](mailto:jonathan.jrbrown@gmail.com) (J. Brown), [daveshaw@liv.ac.uk](mailto:daveshaw@liv.ac.uk) (D. Shaw), [c.couch@liv.ac.uk](mailto:c.couch@liv.ac.uk) (C. Couch).

<sup>1</sup> [www.sharethecity.org](http://www.sharethecity.org)



**Graph 1.** Liverpool population growth and decline in the 18th and 20th centuries. Source: Peter Brown, University of Liverpool, Department of Civic Design.

legacy of this era is reflected in UNESCO World Heritage Site status, and the city's contemporary claim to have the most architecturally 'listed' (protected) buildings in the UK outside London.

Liverpool's core population growth during the 19th century mirrored its strategic and economic prominence, rising from 78,000 in 1801 to 870,000 in the mid-1930s (Graph 1), with over a million people living in its immediate urban area by 1900. From this peak, much of the 20th century by contrast witnessed an accelerating reversal of fortunes, with the core population sinking to 430,000 by 2001.

As a result of external economic circumstances (changes in the terms of trade to favour Britain's south and east coast ports, air transport and maritime containerisation), exacerbated by key planning decisions (the planned 'overspill' clearance of some 160,000 people, and catastrophic failures of costly comprehensive area redevelopment projects), by the 1980s the core population fell below 500,000 and unemployment rates reached almost 40% in certain neighbourhoods (Census, 1981). Liverpool was seen by some as a 'beaten city' – the 'shock city' of the post-industrial age (Belchem, 2006b).

Liverpool's vivid socio-economic and environmental degradation, alongside its rich cultural capital and architectural legacies (often seen as being at risk), has given momentum to intensive processes of 'regeneration', latterly drawing upon large sums of national and European Union monies. Ahead of many other urban localities, processes of regeneration have led to the formation of new semi-permanent governance frameworks, involving multi-level 'collaborative milieus' of local, regional and national institutions. 'Regeneration' has become the city's dominant, if seldom quantified or questioned, objective.

The past 30 years have seen a transformation of the city centre: the leisure-based revitalisation of large sections of the vast derelict dock system, a boom in city centre living and associated apartment development, new public spaces and environmental improvements, a major expansion of hotel 'bed spaces', £1.2bn of city centre retail development, a new waterfront arena and conference centre, and large areas of new and improved office space across a modernised business quarter.

In parallel to improvements in central business district infrastructure, recent decades have seen an increasing emphasis on 'cultural capital' as a regeneration driver, adding a new Tate Gallery, International Slavery Museum, privately financed Beatles museum and expanded programmes of events such as the visual arts 'Biennial' to Liverpool's noted legacy of Victorian philanthropic institutions. Liverpool marked a revival of its cultural

self-confidence with a year as European Capital of Culture in 2008, generally considered a success (though not without its critics), and the development of the largest newly-built national museum in Britain for a century, immodestly dedicated to the city itself.

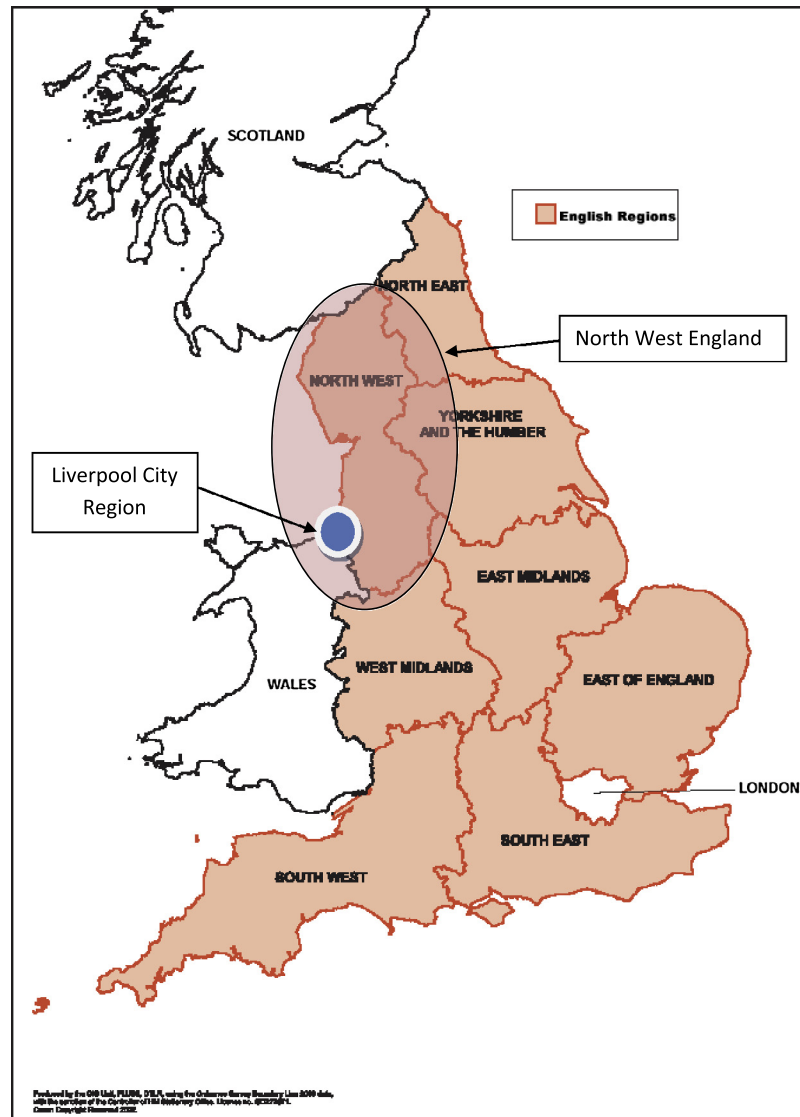
Beyond the city centre, regeneration initiatives encompass numerous training and business enterprise support programmes, worklessness-alleviation schemes, area-based physical regeneration programmes, housing renewal projects, a (hitherto) rapidly expanding airport and business/science park developments. Taken as a whole, such activity is seen by commentators to have had a positive effect upon the city, its economy, internal psychology and external image (Boland, 2008). The city's economic growth rate over the 15 years preceeding the 2007/2008 global economic crisis was higher than that of other UK 'peripheral' cities (LCC, 2011). Growth in average earnings out-performed the Great Britain average between 2002 and 2009, as did the rate of employment growth between 1998 and 2009 (LCC, 2011). The trend towards vertiginous population decline of the latter decades of the 20th century stabilised, with the latest (2011) census showing a 5.5% population increase since 2001, to 466,400 (ONS, 2012) – psychologically powerful as the first rise since the 1930s, and the largest (proportionally) since the 19th century. In 2010 the Merseyside metropolitan county population stood at 1,353,400, and that of the slightly wider 'Liverpool City Region' 1,472,700 (LCC, 2011).

Yet despite such encouraging trends, challenges remain substantial. Whilst economic growth rates have been positive, the city's Gross Value Added per capita in 2009 remained below both the Core Cities<sup>2</sup> and national average (£19,647 in Liverpool, compared with £21,103 for the UK and £21,889 for the Core Cities) (LCC, 2011). Moreover, in a 2012 study comparing the UK's 64 primary urban areas, 'think tank' Centre for Cities ranked Liverpool amongst the lowest for a number of key economic, demographic and social indicators (Centre for Cities, 2012). Liverpool is the most deprived borough in England. Spatially concentrated deprivation is among the most acute in the UK in Liverpool's central, northern and peripheral residential districts, with some 70% of the city's 33 electoral wards within the 10% most deprived in England and Wales. 'Healthy life expectancy' differentials between the city region's wealthiest and poorest wards vary by up to 30 years. Liverpool and its wider conurbation therefore remain a place of contrast and social and spatial disparities.

In keeping with other *City Profiles* (see for example Ellis & Kim, 2001) the goal here is not to comprehensively rehearse the historical evolution of Liverpool in fine empirical detail, but rather to provide a synoptic treatment of key trends, themes and narratives, reflecting the city's ongoing 'story'. An overview of the city's evolution is presented as context for a discussion of the recent past and future prospects.

The approach adopted is influenced by work which has drawn attention to the role of stories and storytelling in the context of planning, community development and urban policy (see Marris, 1997; McMordie, Stein, & Harper, 2007; Sandercock, 2003a, 2003b; Throgmorton, 1996; Throgmorton & Eckstein, 2003). Sandercock (2003a, 2003b), for example, identifies core plots that are characteristic of human stories including, 'rags to riches', 'fall from grace', 'growth to maturity' and 'Golden Age lost', and argues that stories in, and about, places often embody such familiar plots. Urban development and transformation often involves the telling of 'core' or 'foundational' stories about people and places, the articulation of

<sup>2</sup> The Core Cities are England's economically most important cities outside of London. They are: Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield. See: <http://www.corecities.com/>.



**Map 1.** The North West of England and Liverpool in their wider context. *Source adapted from:* Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) (2002), *Your Region Your Choice*, The Stationary Office, London.

'future stories', and, the use of stories as catalysts for change (Sandercoc, 2003a, 2003b).

Liverpool is a place whose 'foundational story' – past, present and future – has been told and re-told numerous times and represented through multiple and highly-contrasting narrations (Belchem, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c; Muir, 1907). The account here deals largely with 'the city' and cannot in the space available provide a comprehensive cultural or social history (for more detail see works by: Aughton, 2012; Belchem, 2006a, 2006b; Boland, 2008; Cornelius, 2001; Howell Williams, 1971; Lane, 1997; Lees, 2011; McIntyre-Brown & Woodland, 2001; Munck, 2003). The focus here is on patterns of growth, decline and renewal in Liverpool over the past 200 years.

The following section discusses the city's rise to prominence as a global trade centre in the 18th and 19th centuries. Liverpool's subsequent 'fall from grace' during the 20th century, and how this impacted upon its economic, physical and cultural characteristics, is addressed. The more recent history of 'renaissance' is then considered, followed by conclusions reflecting upon the present city and its future prospects.

### **"Liverpool's Story is the World's Glory" – from humble beginnings to 'golden age' (Belchem, 2006a)**

Liverpool is the core city of the 'Merseyside' conurbation in the North West of England region, the latter encompassing the historic counties of Lancashire, Cheshire and Cumberland/Cumbria. The North West borders Wales, Scotland, the Irish Sea and the English regions of the West Midlands, North East, and Yorkshire and the Humber (Maps 1 and 2). In 2007 the city celebrated the eighth centenary of King John's grant of its founding charter, and thus has credentials as a mediaeval town. This is reflected in a central grid-iron of 'seven streets' which preserve the memory of a mediaeval settlement – Castle Street, Chapel Street, Dale Street, High Street, Old Hall Street, Tithebarn Street and Water Street. Despite this ancient pedigree, the most rapid and dramatic economic, demographic and physical changes, for which the city is most known, occurred between the 18th and 20th centuries (Graph 1), from its role as an eminent seaport (LCC, 2006: 15–14) (Fig. 1). Liverpool's urban structure and physical fabric derive from a combination of its geographical position on the River Mersey, and a



**Map 2.** Liverpool in context – Liverpool, Merseyside and the Liverpool City Region. Source: Authors and Sandra Mather, Liverpool University Cartography Department.

legacy of successive stages of economic growth and decline – sometimes the result of large scale planned interventions. The economic, social, cultural, and physical contours of contemporary Liverpool are largely defined by the development of the city as an ‘outsider’ of mercantile, industrial, post-industrial and ‘urban renaissance’ eras of Western global capitalism.

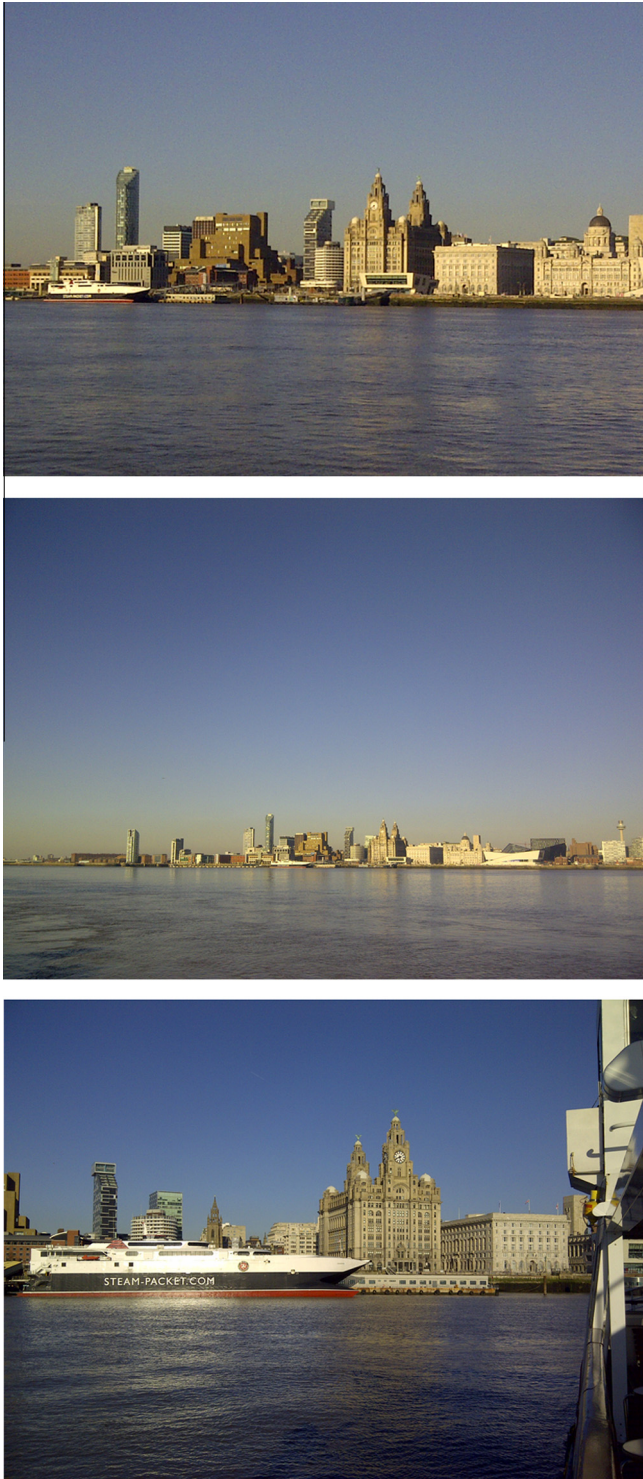
At the end of the 16th century the main port in the region since Roman times, Chester, on the nearby Dee estuary, began to suffer from the effects of silting. At first larger ships transferred further downstream, but eventually Chester’s trade moved to Liverpool, hitherto a small fishing and farming community with a fortified embarkation point for troops to Ireland on the north bank of the deeper waters of the Mersey estuary. Although the 9 m tidal reach meant that expensive docks rather than riverside wharfs were soon needed to accommodate larger ships, civil engineer Thomas Steer’s conversion of a muddy tidal creek (the original ‘Liver Pool’) to the modern world’s first enclosed stone dock in 1715 began the port’s exponential growth into a latter-day trading city-state, on a scale to eclipse any in Europe.

Facing the Irish Sea, with easy access to Dublin, Glasgow and New World colonies across the Atlantic Ocean, and a hinterland

encompassing the rapidly industrialising English north and midlands with its emergent networks of canals and then railways, the population of the port and city grew twenty-fold from 20,000 in 1750 to 376,000 in 1851, and 685,000 in 1901, attracting immigrants from across the British isles and beyond. Between 1801 and 1901 the population of the wider urban area of Merseyside increased from 100,000 to 1,023,000 (Belchem, 2006a: 4). During this period the city largely built its wealth on the burgeoning Lancashire cotton industry (Wilks-Heeg, 2003, p. 40), initially sustained by plantation slave labour abroad and exploitative industrial conditions at home. By 1850 Liverpool handled some 85% of Britain’s total annual import of 1.75 million cotton bales (Victorian Society, 1967, p. 4, cited in Wilks-Heeg (2003)). The variety of goods handled by the port became ever more diverse, with increasing volumes of cotton, sugar, grain, tobacco, coal and manufactured goods.

The expanding wealth and population of the city were reflected in its evolving urban development. Liverpool’s estuarine local topography shaped her wider urban growth and form (Map 2). As land around the ‘old dock’ was filled with warehousing, rope-makers and ships suppliers, the wealthier gravitated uphill to the





**Fig. 1.** The Mersey River and Waterfront (Brown, 2012: [www.sharethecity.org/gallery/#all](http://www.sharethecity.org/gallery/#all)).

long ridge overlooking the river, above and away from the traditional haunts of seamen and dockers. A classically ordered grid of streets and squares, punctuated by fine churches and refined public buildings, was laid out for regulated private development in the decades either side of 1800 by corporation surveyors John Foster Senior and his son, giving Liverpool's core its elegant Georgian character.

Across the mile-wide river, the advent of steam ferries around 1815 connected Liverpool more directly to the Wirral peninsula,

on the west bank of the Mersey, where wealthy merchants established first residences and then the planned town of Birkenhead, hailed as 'the city of the future' for its grid-iron layout, pioneering park and modern ship yards.

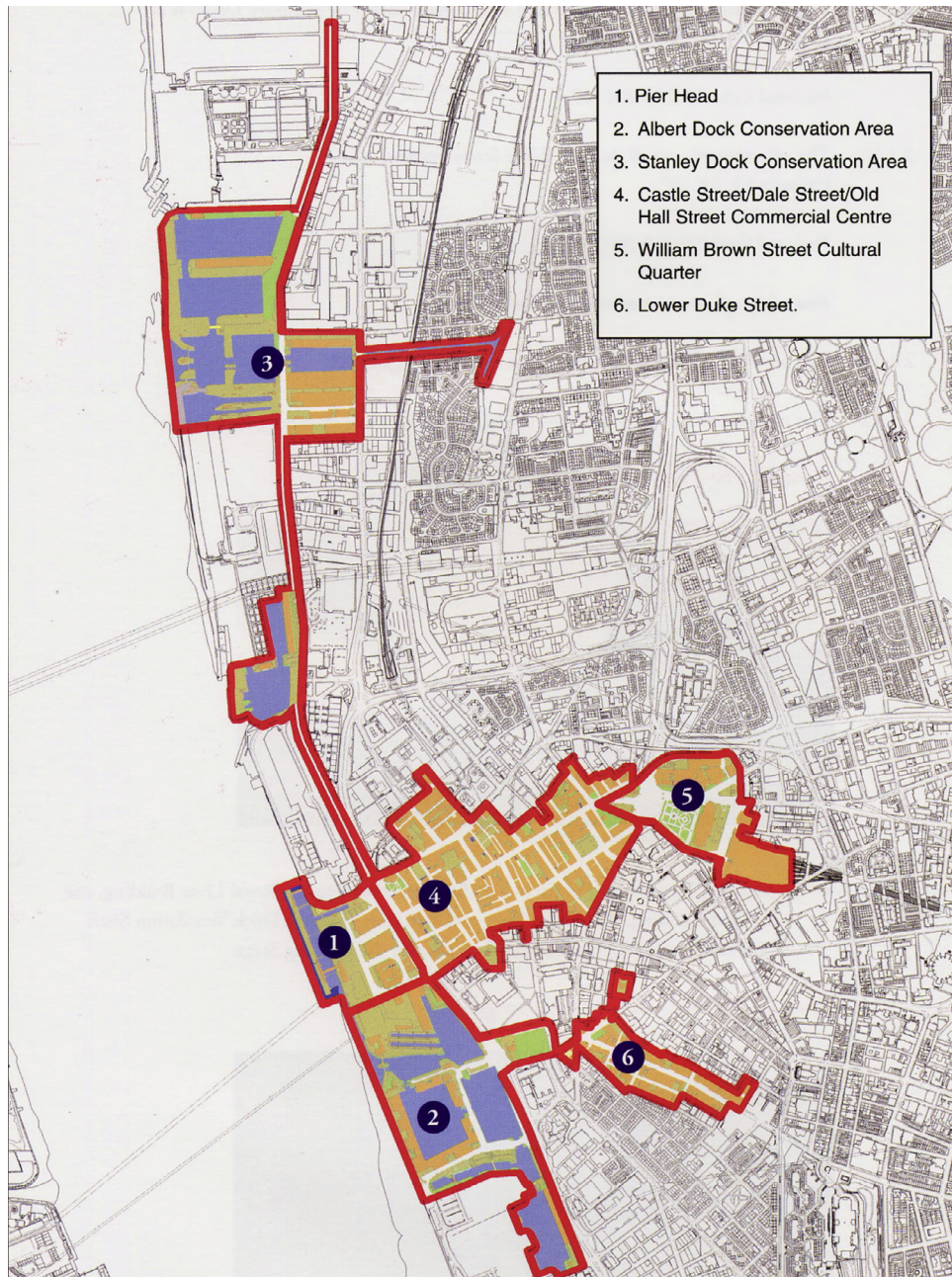
To Liverpool's north and south, further large dockland settlements were developed at Bootle and Garston. As the conurbation grew out along radial routes, working classes tended to be housed along the river within easy reach of the docks, whilst the middle classes continued to push outwards and uphill, building townhouses and villas on a series of sandstone ridges overlooking the river that step up parallel with the shoreline, a mile inland. Thus, middle class housing became to some degree topographically separated from working class neighbourhoods. Furthermore, the effect of the estuary passing through the middle of the conurbation was to separate the central city from many of its most prosperous suburbs 'over the water'.

That Liverpool's expansive 'golden age' had its dark side too is not in doubt. The 18th century had seen Liverpool increase participation in the slave trade to the extent that the city earned the inglorious distinction of being "Britain's leading slave port", one apex of the notorious 'triangular trade' between Europe, Africa and the Americas (Longmore, 2006, p. 132). Between 1699 and abolition in 1807, British and British colonial ports mounted 12,103 slaving voyages: 3351 from London, 2105 from Bristol and 5199 from Liverpool, trading 3.4 m people – part of the largest forced migration in human history (Port Cities, n.d.). Slavery was only finally abolished in the British Empire in the 1830s, and in the American plantations later still. Profits derived from the practice therefore continued to enrich British merchants and manufacturers for some time following 1807 (Thomas, 1997).

As the port grew in the 19th century, attracting migrants from other parts of the British Isles, her colonies and the Continent, it mixed rich linguistic and cultural diversity with festering religious sectarianism, racial segregation and systemic discrimination (Belchem, 2006a; Lees, 2011). Between 1830 and 1930 some 9 million people emigrated through Liverpool. Some who arrived were already successful men of means, but the 'huddled masses' who stayed on had to start at the bottom and work up, literally in Liverpool's case, where poor families were crammed into fetid dockland cellars, ravaged by outbreaks of diseases like cholera and typhus.

The city was fundamentally changed during the Irish potato famines of the mid 1840s, being the first port of call for refugees fleeing crop failure and starvation conditions. The scale of their emigration was epic – 2 million Irish people came to and through Liverpool in a decade, a quarter of the island's population. Within just 3 months in 1847, 90,000 people arrived from Ireland (Irish Historian, n.d.), and a further 300,000 in the 12 months after new crop failures in July 1847. Many used Liverpool as a mere transit point for gruelling onward sailings to North America (35 days until steamships reduced the passage in the 1860s to 7–10 days) and Australia (10–17 weeks by sail), but a large proportion of this 'diaspora' remained in the city, shaping its character (including through the introduction of sectarianism to the city – Belchem, 2006a), and eventually building resilient communities. As it grew, the city also acquired the moniker of 'The Capital of North Wales'. By around 1860 there were 40,000 Welsh inhabitants of Liverpool (many of whom had no English) and 80,000 by 1900. The Welsh made a major contribution to the building trade and growth of the city as "Thousands of small homes, usually cheap and well-constructed, in street after street, were built by Welshmen to relieve an appalling housing plight" (Howell Williams, 1971: 20). The Merseyside Welsh also played a role in the revival of Welsh culture and language with a total of five National Eisteddfodau being held in Liverpool and Birkenhead during the 19th century. Chinese, African, Scottish, Italian, Jewish and many other ethnic groups also shaped





**Map 3.** Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City UNESCO World Heritage Site. Source: Liverpool City Council.

the character of the city. The first Mosque in England was opened by the Liverpool solicitor and convert to Islam, William Abdullah Quilliam, in 1889 (BBC News, 2009).

In the early 19th century Liverpool already had one of the highest mortality rates in Britain, and after the 1840s was labelled the 'Black Spot on the Mersey' (Pooley, 2006, p. 173), with life expectancy at birth just 19 years. High rates of poverty and an economic culture of casualised dock labour contributed to problems with alcohol, with arrests for drunkenness (both men and women) comprising by far the largest category of crime in the city during the second half of the 19th century (Pooley, 2006, p. 241). Nevertheless, the people of Liverpool and their leaders were driven by a powerful sense of 'improvement' – of themselves, their fellows, their public environment and Liverpool's place in the world. Enlightened progress was sometimes faltering, but often radical.

St. George's Hall and the Albert Dock, Liverpool's greatest Victorian buildings, date from this period.

Outrage at insanitary mid 19th century social conditions led to the Liverpool Corporation's<sup>3</sup> appointment in 1847 of the first Medical Officer of Health, William Henry Duncan (1805–1863), popularly known as Doctor Duncan, and the first Borough Engineer, James Newland (1813–1871). Both became heroes of the city for their oversight of improved sanitation – and by extension, town planning. Theirs was the modern world's first integrated sewerage system, necessitating wide, well-paved streets, carefully spaced 'by-law' housing, orderly cemeteries and publicly provided supplies of clean

<sup>3</sup> Liverpool Corporation was the local governing body for Liverpool established prior to the 19th century. Following the 1972 Local Government Act the organisation was abolished and reconstituted as Liverpool City Council.





Sykes (2009)



Cocks (2012)



Sykes (2009)



Cocks (2012)

**Fig. 2.** The Business District – Maritime Mercantile City World Heritage Site.

water. Their partnership was effective – life expectancy during Duncan and Newland's tenure doubled.

Also in the 1840s, across the Mersey in Birkenhead, Joseph Paxton (1803–1865), the landscape architect at Chatsworth House, developer of the successful private 'Princes Park' estate in Toxteth and later the designer of London's Crystal Palace, laid out the world's first municipal public park – famously the inspiration for Olmsted's Central Park masterpiece in New York City. Paxton and his apprentice Edward Kemp inspired a ring of great parks and open spaces encircling the city, with Newsham Park (1868) fol-

lowed within 4 years by Stanley and Sefton Parks. All are now registered historic landscapes (Layton Jones & Lee, 2008).

The latter half of the 19th century also witnessed a further development of the economy with the growth of commercial activities; shipping lines; commodity exchanges; banking and insurance. Many of these firms constructed elegant office buildings around the Pier Head and Castle Street – the historic core of the city (McMullin & Brown, 2012; Sharples & Stonard, 2008). Much of this commercial ensemble and the city's waterfront and cultural heart were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004 (Map 3,





**Fig. 3.** Port Sunlight (Sykes, 2012).

**Figs. 2 and 4.** The Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City World Heritage Site (WHS) was inscribed on the list as an “exceptional testimony to mercantile culture” and the “supreme example of a commercial port at the time of Britain’s greatest global influence” (Liverpool City Council, 2009: 6).

During this period, mayors, architects and engineers from round the world looked to Liverpool and its urban area for inspiration. Many of the characteristic infrastructural and engineering elements that define the modern city were pioneered, or found early expression, in Liverpool – inter-city railways, underground, overhead and underwater metro systems, electric tram networks, modern sewers, technical schools and fresh water supplies. Irish-born Alderman Richard Sheil (1791–1851) presided over the ambitious

plan for a circular boulevard and ring of parks round the congested town, foreshadowing the greenbelts and ring-roads of Sir Patrick Abercrombie’s (1879–1957) historic London plan a century later. The civil engineer John Alexander Brodie (1858–1934) laid out orbital and arterial ‘parkway’ dual carriageways to extend the city’s suburbs and promoted the installation of electric trams. In the 1900s, Brodie was also a pioneer in the use of pre-fabricated housing technology to construct social housing tenements, and oversaw building of the Queensway Mersey tunnel, opened in 1934, which at 2 miles retained the record as longest underwater road tunnel in the world for some 25 years (Howell Williams, 1971).

In architecture, cast iron was being used from the 18th century, and Thomas Rickman was building entire churches from iron



frames by 1813. The glass curtain-walling of contemporary skyscraper cities could be found in Liverpool's 1864 Oriel Chambers, ahead of America. Classical tastes disguised technological innovation – for example, the mid 19th-century St George's Hall is air-conditioned, and the entire 7.5 mile dock system was power-assisted by complex hydraulics. In the 20th century, the Bund waterfront in Shanghai emerged as a mirror image of the Pier Head in Liverpool, suggesting the Mersey skyline was perceived as being worthy of emulation into the 1920s.

Equally influential on a domestic scale, the Garden City movement that seeded the ubiquitous leafy suburb has its spiritual home in Port Sunlight, soap manufacturing entrepreneur William Hesketh Lever's (1851–1925) picturesque model village. Workers from the adjacent factory, still operated by Unilever today, were housed in dwellings designed by leading architects of the time such as Edwin Lutyens and could enjoy a range of facilities and benefits, notably an art gallery containing works by pre-Raphaelite masters, interspersed with regular communal train trips to the seaside (Darley, 1978) (Fig. 3). Viscount Leverhulme (as Lever became) was to sustain his interest in matters of town planning and architecture, later gifting a sum to the University of Liverpool to allow the establishment of a Department of Civic Design, the world's first school dedicated to town planning, which celebrated its centenary in 2009 (Batey & Jackson, 2009; Wright, 1982).

Between 1925 and 1948 City Architect Sir Lancelot Keay (1883–1974) worked with Brodie and his successors on an extraordinary programme of urban expansion and housing improvements, to alleviate overcrowding in the teeming central core. During Keay's tenure 35,000 new houses and flats were built, and proto 'new town' garden city estates like Speke, Dovecot and Norris Green were developed, linked by extensions to the tram network. Around the centre, Keay developed a series of tenement projects – "brick blocks of flats, taking after the more unambiguously municipal socialist precedents of the cities with which Liverpool is rightly compared – Hamburg, Vienna, Berlin" (Hatherley, 2010: 335).

### **The changing face of Liverpool in the 20th century – from 'golden age' to 'fall from grace'?**

The early 20th century saw the peak of the city's population and prosperity. In the years preceding World War I, Liverpool, especially if considered in combination with its industrial neighbour Manchester, vied with London, hosting more embassies and consulates of foreign governments, and controlling comparable proportions of world trade, finance and shipping. The confidence which flowed from this position encouraged the city corporation to pursue zealous works programmes for health, housing and transport.

Yet signs of change in the fortunes of the city became evident from the beginning of the 20th century, as ports in the south of England and other parts of Europe increased their share of cargo and passenger trade. It is of more than symbolic significance that the Titanic, registered in Liverpool and financed through Cunard's rival White Star line, embarked on its maiden voyage from Southampton. For Howell Williams (1971: 12) "during the three decades which followed the end of the 19th century, both the worst of Liverpool's social conditions and peak of its commercial power" were over. Liverpool's population peaked in the 1930s with 855,688 people recorded in the 1931 census (Belchem, 2006a). From that time until the turn of the 21st century the population virtually halved to 445,200 (ONS, 2012). There were two principal underlying causes: increasingly unfavourable external economic conditions following WWII, compounded by major self-inflicted public policy mistakes. These combined in the second half of the 20th century to create a 'perfect storm' of declining employment opportunities, worsening

social and environmental conditions, and a weakened civic governance structure dependent on outside resources.

The external conditions faced by Liverpool in the aftermath of WWII took decades to play through. Several major processes can be identified including a decline in the cotton industry in the city's Lancashire hinterland from the 1930s onwards, which was accelerated by Indian independence in 1947, as the sub-continent regained control of its own markets. Air travel and a shift in Britain's trading focus (away from exports and the Commonwealth, towards imports, London-based financial services and the rest of Europe) steadily accrued threats to her premier Atlantic port.

These 'macro' level forces were for some time mitigated or masked. The depression years of the 'hungry thirties' had been alleviated by immense public works. Between the Second World War and the early 1970s, Liverpool's response to industrial restructuring had benefited from national redistributive economic policies such as Development Area (1949) and Development District (1960) status, which incentivised growth industries like car manufacture to locate in less prosperous areas of the country (McCrone, 1969). The Royal Navy had its flagship HMS Ark Royal constructed on the Mersey at Cammell Laird in 1937, as was her replacement in 1950. In concert with the general prosperity of the post-war period (Harvey, 1989), in the mid-1960s unemployment fell to about 5% in the city (Meegan, 1989). The ship yard remained busy. Britain was the world's biggest exporter of cars until 1972 – as the UK's largest export port, Liverpool remained strategically important.

This was a period of considerable civic and cultural activity and energy. The Beatles and beat poets were just the most prominent representatives of the city's cast of 'war babies' and 'baby boomers' who energised and revolutionised the nascent popular culture of the 1960s. The phenomenon of 'Merseybeat' in music, poetry and other diverse art forms was influential and recognised far beyond the city and region's boundaries (Du Noyer, 2002). Although its impact has been somewhat lessened by repetition and its originator's description of other cities in the same terms, Allen Ginsberg's statement that Liverpool in the 1960s was "at the present moment, the centre of consciousness of the human universe" (Hickling, 2007) captures this confident spirit.

But the period of economic respite in the 1960s was followed by increasingly severe difficulties during subsequent decades. Britain's retreat from Empire and the growing importance of European trade, meant that Liverpool found itself "marooned on the wrong side of the country" (Lane, 1987, p. 45), and increasingly uncompetitive (Belchem, 2006b; Wilks-Heeg 2003). Technological change also had a major impact. Containerisation, combined with the trend towards larger vessels, increased the speed of cargo handling, and rendered obsolete the wharves and warehouses of older upstream docks. The prestigious international passenger trade switched from ocean liners to jet airliners, and Manchester's airport was favoured over Liverpool as the northern English hub.

The southern half of Liverpool's 7.5 mile dock system closed in 1971, and the last Canadian Pacific liner sailed a year later. Demand for dock labour declined rapidly, unemployment rose and vast areas of dockland became redundant (Couch, 2003). Britain's de-industrialisation accelerated over the precipice into the 1980s, eliminating much of the secure employment and associated social stability that existed in the sixties. Liverpool's Lancashire hinterland became a rust-belt of vacant cotton mills, declining coal fields and stagnant canals.

To some extent, the city had anticipated and attempted to prepare for these changes. As early as the 1930s Liverpool constructed a three runway airport at Speke, with the most impressive terminal complex in the country, acknowledged as the equal of Berlin's Tempelhof and Le Bourget in Paris (Smith, Bowdler, & Touliver, 2000). This was an explicit effort to develop an alternative airport to hedge against decline in the seaport. A further runway able to

handle the largest jet airliners (and Cold War transport planes) was opened in 1966. In the docklands, the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board attempted to retain trade by opening the UK's largest container dock at Seaforth in 1972, keeping the port alive. The 1970s also saw investment in the modernisation of the shipyards on the Wirral side of the Mersey. Post war plans showed a grid of urban motorways connecting to a second Mersey Road tunnel, the latter completed in 1971.

Liverpool's boldly modernist 1965 City Centre Plan was designed to "re-shape and redevelop what was perceived to be an obsolete and inefficient city centre" (Couch, 2003, p. 51) with an underground electric rail loop, office towers and a series of enclosed shopping precincts connected by networks of overhead walkways. The University of Liverpool had appointed star architects including Denys Lasdun, Basil Spence and Lord Holford to plan and develop a modern central campus and teaching hospital. While Keay's replacement as City Architect, Ronald Bradbury, embraced high-rise housing, developing 70 tower blocks. A city regional Merseyside County Council was set up in 1973 to handle strategic planning across the metropolitan area.

Yet less than 10 years after the swinging sixties, the image of the city was no longer that of a thriving cosmopolitan port but of an 'imperial mausoleum' (Lane, 1978), a place humbled by widespread dereliction and acute poverty. The unemployment rate for Liverpool rose from 10.6% in 1971 to 21.6% in 1991 (Census, 1991). Redundancy rates peaked in 1971 at 12,750 per year, and by 1977 a further 66,000 people had lost their jobs (Murden, 2006). Citing significant under-reporting, Liverpool City Council estimated that the true number of unemployed persons by the late 1970s was over 150,000 (20–30% of the working aged population), treble the official figures (Merseyside Socialist Research Group, 1980). The decline of Liverpool's economy and that of the wider Merseyside sub-region contributed to rapid out-migration (particularly of the young and skilled), underutilisation of key resources such as labour, higher than average unemployment and a low economic activity rate. Such trends contributed to a perceived long-term lack of competitiveness as measured by conventional economic indicators, and serious issues in relation to labour relations, social exclusion and polarisation in both the core city and wider conurbation (Batey, 1998). Murden (2006: 428) provides a stark summary of the economic situation of the city at this time:

*Between 1966 and 1977 no less than 350 factories in Liverpool closed or moved elsewhere, 40,000 jobs were lost and between 1971 and 1985 employment in the city fell by 33 per cent. . . Between 1979 and 1981 the rate of job losses accelerated to a frightening level, employment in the city falling by a further 18 per cent. By early 1981, 20 per cent of the city's labour force were unemployed and it was reported that there were just 49 jobs on offer for the 13,505 youngsters registered unemployed.*

It is worth focusing on how Liverpool's extraordinary switch-back occurred. How did a municipality famed for building ambitious modern infrastructure copied from Shanghai to New York, collapse within a generation or so into a by-word for urban failure, derided in the national media as a 'self pity city'?

The answers are rooted in a complex interaction of the macro level technological and trading changes cited above, with a series of locally driven planning policy decisions, rooted in the city's admirable traditions of confidence and improvement, but jettisoning their essentially human focus for grandiose abstractions of modernity, change and transformation as ends in themselves.

Totemic post-war harbingers were the lamentable demolition of John Foster's domed Customs House, removal in 1954 of the city's tram network and closure of the Overhead Railway in 1956. By far the most significant and long lasting mistake was the energetic

adoption of comprehensive area clearance and redevelopment policies, based in what proved to be hugely over-optimistic projections of continued population growth.

The aftermath of WW2 bombing, combined with a 'booming' birth rate, scarcity of construction materials and skilled labour, and the residue of a long-standing overcrowding and slum problem, meant housing was a key issue on the local political agenda after 1945 (Murden, 2006). Keay had shown slum clearance and innovative architecture could improve conditions. All political parties were committed to addressing the situation aggressively, and a large multi-decade programme of housing demolition and construction resumed. The difference was that Keay's inner city interventions were essentially surgical, while the post war clearance was truly comprehensive.

The city's 1966 Housing Plan proposed demolition of 36% of all its homes, and 70% of those in the mainly Victorian 'inner areas' (Couch, Fowles, & Karecha, 2009). Furthermore, the 'decanting' of displaced inner city 'slum' residents was not to be within the local district, but to new 'overspill' estates and expanded towns, to be developed on or well beyond the periphery of the city (Meegan, 1989). This was strategically combined with the development of industrial sites in close proximity to the new settlements. In the inner areas, "slums" were to be replaced by a series of radical high-rise tower block developments, subsidised by national government (Andrews, 2012; Murden, 2006). By the mid-1970s some 160,000 people had been moved out of the city as part of this plan, and many others 'decanted' (displaced) within it.

The high rise and new town overspill residential developments during this period were combined with the Shankland Plan for city centre renewal, itself coupled with a planned grid of major urban motorways serving a second road tunnel and the container port.

As with Robert Moses Cross Bronx Highway in New York, the method and outcomes of such grand scale demolition soon proved catastrophic. Slum-clearances temporarily raised housing standards but dissipated established family, community and small business networks, and many of inner Liverpool's highly connected streetscapes and buildings were demolished. Folk histories continue to lament the loss of entire districts such as Scotland Road, home of the city's Irish community (Rogers, 2010). Conservationists see removal of landmarks, of which Foster's Custom House, St. John's Market and ornate Sailors Home were merely the most prominent, as the epitome of the era's egregious municipal vandalism (Stamp, 2007).

Liverpool may perhaps have adapted to either macro level economic changes outlined above, or absorbed localised disruption through a period of comprehensive clearance and redevelopment, had they not arrived simultaneously. The traumatic combination of both proved disastrous. The economy could not adapt and the clearance areas often did not redevelop successfully. Indeed, the new high rise towers and peripheral estates proved socially devastating, degenerating into 'Piggeries' – places unfit for human habitation within few years of completion, and well before their building loans were repaid (Lord Denning, Irwin vs. Liverpool, 1978).

Just at the point when Western economies were shifting towards higher technology and service based activities, Liverpool was shipping tens of thousands of its active workforce to new towns, beyond the reach of its local tax base. And the rapid failure of its system-built high rise blocks, and the long term blight imposed by abortive city centre walkway and urban motorway plans, left it with a degraded environment and more residual population, a deterrent to residents and investors, with city finances becoming ever more dependent on central government grants.

Yet, though Liverpool may in places have looked and felt like the beaten city, its remaining citizenry were not ready to abandon ship without a fight. The seventies into the eighties were the stage

for a whole series of set piece confrontations between the Liverpool citizenry and their authorities. At street level, many of these involved housing issues, notably the Kirby Rent Strike and a growing resistance to clearance proposals around the proposed inner motorway (Botham and Herson, 1980). Some communities, such as the Eldonians in north Liverpool (Leeming, 2000; McBane, 2008) and Granby residents in the south, resisted redevelopment after seeing its baleful outcomes, and staked their claim to stay in historic core neighbourhoods. Some wrested ownership or promises of funds from central government to form new housing associations and co-operatives, which began as a kaleidoscope of small community-led bodies, but have since merged and grown into dominant social housing providers.

Conservationist sentiment gained momentum as Liverpool's architectural jewels seemed to be squandered casually, with Professor Quentin Hughes's 'Seaport' (1969) having as profound an influence for Liverpool as the campaigns for Venice. Groups such as the Merseyside Civic Society, SAVE Britain's Heritage (Powell, 1984) and Royal Fine Arts Commission criticised some of the new developments in the city, as did some of the authority's own most senior planning officers. Such public feeling subsequently helped to save the now Grade 1 listed Albert Dock, later to become a symbol of Liverpool's renaissance (Fig. 4).

Industrial relations became notoriously militant as demand for labour in the docks declined and national politics were played out in 'branch plant' car factories and city council union meetings. The local authority's benevolent attempts to soak up surplus labour placed heavy demands on a dwindling number of 'rate payers', leading to political tensions between socialists and Liberals in the Town Hall. With the 1970s oil shocks culminating in Britain's IMF bail-out, the party was truly over. Liverpool's status as northern England's only true metropolis faced competition from other regional centres and development of 'out-of-town' shopping and leisure facilities reducing the relative importance of Liverpool City Centre in the retail and cultural life of its hinterland.

The frustrations felt by the city's residents as a result of these destructive economic trends were widespread. In Liverpool's

long-established Black community they were magnified at this time by official ostracisation and systematically racist policing (Frost & Phillips, 2011). Provoked too far, tensions exploded in July 1981 through a series of widely publicised riots in the inner city Toxteth area, known locally as the 'uprising' (Cornelius, 2001; Frost & Phillips, 2011; Vulliamy, 2011). Strained relations between the police and local black youths provided the initial catalyst for their outbreak, but subsequently rioters also came from a variety of the city's communities and districts to join in (Vulliamy, 2011). The violence was a stark communication to national government of how severe things had become, and during a subsequent visit to the affected area by Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, local leaders led by the city's Anglican and Roman Catholic clerics, made a request that the Government appoint a specific 'Minister for Merseyside' (Sheppard, 2002; Sheppard & Worlock, 1988).

The national Minister for the Environment at the time, Michael Heseltine, was given this role shortly afterwards with support from a newly established Merseyside Task Force (MTF) (Heseltine, 2000). The MTF had a remit to "devise innovative strategies and projects to turn around Liverpool's long-term problems and encourage private-sector investment" (Murden, 2006; 445). A few months before the riots, the government had also created the Merseyside Development Corporation (MDC) – one of the first two Urban Development Corporation's (UDC) in the country (Meegan, 1999). The MDC was primarily concerned with physical regeneration. It was provided with a large zone of redundant and derelict docklands to redevelop and funds and complete planning powers for the area (thus bypassing local government control). It was a 'pump-priming organization that would encourage private-sector investment and jobs while bringing land and buildings back into effective use' (Murden, 2006; 439). The MTF and MDC were a major element of Liverpool's regeneration and development governance during this period and initiated, or were involved with, much of the physical regeneration of the city during the 1980s, including the regeneration of the central docks (Fig. 4), the International Garden Festival of 1984, and the creation of industrial space (Meegan, 1999; Murden, 2006).



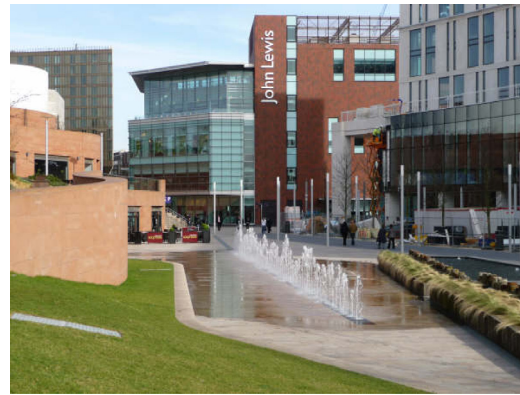
Cocks (2012)

Fig. 4. The restored Albert Dock.





Cocks (2012)



Sykes (2009)



Cocks (2012)

Fig. 5. Liverpool one shopping centre.

A city facing distressing economic circumstances might hope for a strong alignment of local and national political and financial capacity to act in addressing the resulting challenges. Relationships between local government in Liverpool and national government, however, became very strained during the early 1980s. As a result of the severe problems the city was facing, and an increasing sense that the blame for many of these could be laid at the door of national government and the callous, impersonal forces of global capitalism personified by the Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (Brookfield, 2002; Crick, 1986), a hard left 'Militant' tendency of the local Labour party gained control of the council in 1983, and set about its own urban regeneration strategy based largely around building new municipal housing and clearing the 'slum' tenements (Lees, 2011). In order to fund its ambitious programme the City Council set an illegal budget which almost bankrupted the city (Parkinson, 1985) and, when combined with widely differing ideological views, this brought the 'Militants' into direct and vociferous conflict, not only with Margaret Thatcher's national government, but with their own Labour party's national leadership. In 1985 forty-seven Liverpool councillors were 'surcharged' and

disqualified from office as a result of having voted for the illegal budget (Crick, 1986).

The late 1980s and the 1990s was a period of tentative recovery for the Council, which under new leadership sought to repair damaged external relationships. Meegan suggests that a situation of relative political inertia in the Council chamber during this time provided the context for a new mode of governance and "an era of 'partnership'" (2003, p. 62). The MDC increased its spatial remit beyond the docklands, and began to develop its communication with other bodies. The first half of the 1990s also saw the Council win substantial direct regeneration funds from the national government, including the City Challenge programme, overseen by Liverpool's political champion Michael Heseltine. City Challenge encouraged the Local Authority to work in partnership with the private, community and voluntary sectors, and undertook the physical revitalisation of a large area to the east of the city centre (Couch, 2003).

Perhaps most significantly, Merseyside and Liverpool City Council also acquired substantial European Union support, gaining Objective One structural fund status between 1994 and 2006 (Bo-



land, 2000; Evans, 2002). This resulted in over £1.3 billion of public sector money (European and national) being allocated and spent on economic development funds in the conurbation during this period. There were two key components of the European Objective One programme which was targeted at lagging regions that had less than 75% of the European average GDP per capita. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) helped to rebuild the physical infrastructure of the city, and the European Social Fund (ESF) was designed to improve 'human capital'. These two elements in combination were to make the city more attractive for private investment. The institutional structures formed to administer these funds and deliver projects also became important components of the emerging governance framework, which was critical in helping to rebuild the fractured governance capacity of the city itself, but also trust with central government. The Mersey Partnership (TMP) was established during the early 1990s to promote Merseyside – and later, the 'Liverpool City Region' – to potential inward investors and later also took on the role of tourism management for the conurbation.

Following the election of a 'New' Labour government in 1997, the relationship between the city and national government became increasingly cooperative. In 1998 a Liberal Democrat administration was elected to lead Liverpool City Council, replacing the sitting Labour group. The new leaders were proactive in promoting partnership working, civic boosterism and entrepreneurship, driving forward the city centre's regeneration (Cocks, 2013). The establishment by central government of the regional level North West Development Agency (NWDA) increased the focus on urban development in the core cities of Liverpool and Manchester (Williams & Baker, 2007). A number of other area-based regeneration initiatives channelled further funding into the city, including New Deal for Communities<sup>4</sup> in the Kensington neighbourhood, and the continuation of Single Regeneration Budget<sup>5</sup> funds – initially established under the Conservatives in the mid-1990s. Both of these programmes included a strong partnership element. Liverpool Vision, the UK's first Urban Regeneration Company (URC), was founded in 1999, as an independent company "responsible for the redevelopment of Liverpool city centre" (Meegan, 2003; 65). This brought together key public and private sector agencies. The introduction by national government of Local Strategic Partnership's (LSP)<sup>6</sup> (Geddes, Davies, & Fuller, 2007) also resulted in the establishment of high level 'stakeholder' groups bringing together service providers to co-ordinate activity and public spending.

<sup>4</sup> The New Deal for Communities (NDC) initiative was "Announced in 1998 as part of the Government's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (NSNR), its primary purpose was to reduce the gaps between the poorest neighbourhoods and the rest of the country. The 'NDC model' is based on some key underlying principles: 10-year strategic transformation of neighbourhoods, dedicated neighbourhood agencies, community engagement, a partnership approach, and learning and innovation. Thirty-nine partnerships were established, each receiving about £50m over 10 years" (2010, <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1487031.pdf>).

<sup>5</sup> "The Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) was introduced in April 1994. It combined twenty previously separate programmes designed to bring about economic, physical and social regeneration in local areas and its main purpose was to act as a catalyst for regeneration in the sense that it would work to attract other resources from the private, public and voluntary sectors in order to bring about improvements in local areas to the quality of life of local people. It was designed to do this by addressing local need, stimulating wealth creation and enhancing the local competitiveness of the area as a place in which business wished to invest and people wanted to live" (Cambridge Land Economy, <http://www.landecon.cam.ac.uk/research/reuag/uars/projects/urgsrb.htm> – Accessed 04/04/12).

<sup>6</sup> A Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) is a "non-statutory body that brings together the different parts of the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, working at a local level. The lead player in the LSP is the local council" (Planning Advisory Service, n.d.).

## Capital and culture – signs of a renaissance?

Whilst Liverpool's international image has generally remained positive over recent decades – primarily as a result of its 20th century sporting and cultural heritage – its economic and social decline throughout the century led to many negative stereotypes nationally (Boland, 2008). The 2000s began to see the city make headway in overturning these (frequently false) perceptions (Garcia, 2006). This effort was helped by the extensive physical change in the city centre and Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture in 2008.

Liverpool was the first UK city to announce that it intended to bid for the title of European Capital of Culture (ECOC) for 2008. The bid was promoted around the theme of 'The World in One City' which was centred on celebrating and reconnecting Liverpool with its historical global links based on trade and transport. The project was intended to deliver three key dimensions: improving the cultural infrastructure of the city, promoting an inclusive approach to culture, thereby facilitating community cohesion, and helping, through renewal, to create a premier European city (Griffiths, 2006). Internally this could be seen as a strong indication of the renewed sense of purpose and strengthened capacity in the city's governance structures. The announcement of the bid's success in June 2003 was greeted with a mixture of excitement, enthusiasm and surprise; Liverpool had not been the favourite but had beaten 11 other UK cities for the nomination.

On 8th January 2008 Liverpool formally launched its ECOC celebrations with 50,000 people gathering for a giant street party outside St. Georges' Hall, overseen by Beatles drummer Ringo Starr. This marked the start of a year-long series of events taking place throughout the city. It is reported that 830 events were listed on the 'Liverpool 08' website and that in total over 7000 cultural activities<sup>7</sup> occurred (Garcia et al., 2010: 14). For many commentators the event proved to be a huge success, increasing number of tourists and visitors, and helping to re-image the city, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally (Garcia et al., 2010). Others have been more critical, questioning the level of local artistic engagement, and the ability of cultural events to fundamentally address longstanding problems of social exclusion faced by some areas and groups in the city, which were hardly ameliorated and perhaps overshadowed by the ECOC year (Boland, 2010; Jones & Wilks-Heeg, 2004). Others criticised the ability of the city to organise the celebrations (O'Brien, 2010, 2011).

The success of winning the UK's nomination to become ECOC for 2008, and the City's 800th birthday celebrations in 2007, provided a tight and focused time frame galvanising key actors into making important decisions to ensure major regeneration projects were under construction on time. Various policies and programmes became mutually reinforcing, with culture being seen as an important driver of change, engendering a renewed self-confidence in the city's ability to adapt and change. For some observers Liverpool emerged from being the 'self-pity city' to the 'renaissance city' (Murden, 2006).

Whilst there has undoubtedly been a substantial amount of European and UK funding supporting regeneration, one of the notable features of the decade to 2010 was the private sector's renewed confidence in the city, with a particular but not exclusive focus on the city centre. This return of private developer interest is best exemplified by a major city centre retail development that opened in 2008. The 'Liverpool One' scheme was constructed within the historic street pattern on a 17 ha site adjacent to the existing retail core, around the resonant site of the city's lost Customs

<sup>7</sup> These include not only full events, but also "total performance days, exhibition days, training and educational workshops either delivered by the Liverpool Culture Company or arising from direct grants or procurement" (Garcia, Melville, & Cox, 2010: 14).

House, itself built on the infilled 1715 'Old Dock'. The Duke of Westminster's Grosvenor Group delivered a total investment value of £920 million, and the symbolic return of serious money.

Liverpool One has transformed the retail environment of the city centre, and has generally been well-received and patronised (Littlefield, 2009) (Fig. 5). Design commentators have hailed the project as a 'benchmark' for a city centre mixed use, largely retail led development, which although privately-managed space, is open and accessible throughout the day reconnects the waterfront with the rest of the city (Biddulph, 2010). Nearby, the Kings Dock Development is a new conference centre and indoor arena valued at £400 million, and was the single largest recipient of Objective One funds (£50 million). The controversial Mann Island office and residential

scheme further north along the docks in the centre of the UNESCO World Heritage Site is worth a further £112 million and sits adjacent to the new Museum of Liverpool (Fig. 6). Many other individual investments also contributed to changing the city centre during the 2000s, with a particular focus on the renovation and re-use of the city's remaining historic warehouse and commercial buildings for new residential and leisure accommodation.

Over the last 20 years Liverpool's city centre population has quadrupled, rising to 36,000 in 2012 (Bartlett, 2012) from a low of 3 – 5000 in the early 1990s. The vitality and charisma of the central area has tended to distract academic and professional observers from the reality that some 95% of the city's core area and populace lie somewhat further away, in the thirty or so local and



Cocks (2012)



Cocks (2012)

**Fig. 6.** Museum of Liverpool (above) and Mann Island Scheme (below).





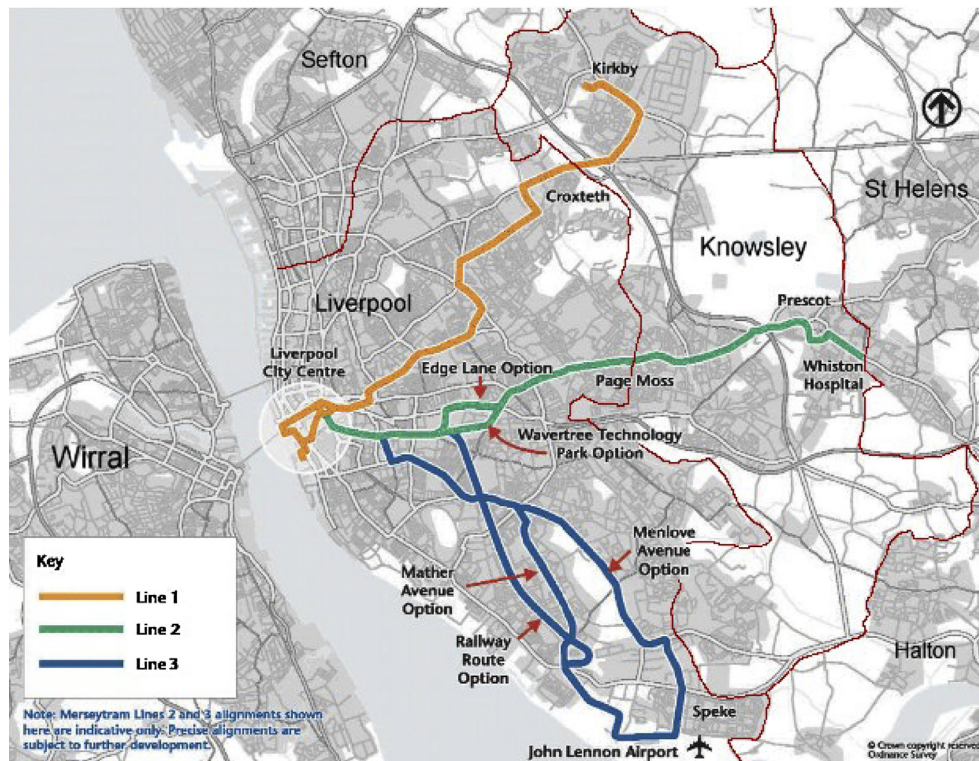
**Fig. 7.** Delay and decay in the inner suburbs. Photo Credit: Sykes (2009).

district centres that make up the core local authority area. At least twice as many again live in the adjacent metropolitan boroughs and towns – large towns such as Bootle, Birkenhead, Crosby, Kirby Southport, St. Helens and Huyton. Liverpool may be a true metropolis, but it does not always think like one.

On a wider front, there have also been losses and controversies in the city's recent regeneration. Plans for a three line Light Rapid Transit network called 'Merseytram', which was to have served the north, east and south of the urban area were scuppered by a combination of insufficiently cohesive local leadership and national government parsimony (Smith, 2012; Wray, 2012) (Map 4). The abandonment of the scheme denied the city not only extended fixed-rail transport coverage, but the opportunity to enhance the

urban scene in the city centre and key radial corridors with associated urban design improvements and the presence of a modern tram fleet; both epitomising sustainable urbanism and a commitment to the areas traversed.

Proposals for a road-widening scheme on the eastern approach to the city encountered no such parsimony but proved even more expensive and controversial than the failure of the tram scheme. The Edge Lane project was seen as a throwback to the old urban motorway clearances and delayed by opposition from local home owners and pressure groups objecting to unlawful use of land assembly powers. The £70m scheme finally progressed after two public inquiries and high court hearings, resulting in the demolition of over 500 homes including large Victorian villas along the



Map 4. The proposed Merseytram network (2003). Source: Merseytravel (2003).

street frontage. Subsequent redevelopment has been slow and dependent on further subsidy.

The 2000s saw major intervention designed to address contested issues with allegedly low demand housing in parts of the city. As a result of studies in Liverpool and its surrounding areas (Nevin & Lee, 2003), in 2003 the national government established a generously funded 'Housing Market Renewal' (HMR) programme particularly focused in the English North and Midlands. HMR was designed to regenerate what were deemed to be 'failing' housing markets, largely in inner urban areas, through a programme focused on demolition and rebuilding at lower densities, combined with renovation of existing properties.

In Merseyside, although the programme predominantly focused on Liverpool, it also extended into the neighbouring local authority areas of Wirral and Sefton. Between the start of the programme and 2011, £333 million of national government funds had been spent across the conurbation through a programme of intervention in targeted local housing markets. The emptying and demolition of properties as part of this proved controversial and in some parts of the city there was strong resistance to clearance proposals from local residents and heritage groups (Allen, 2008; Brown, 2005). In 2011 the programme was terminated half way through by a new national government. This left large areas of cleared land with no immediate prospects for redevelopment; something which campaigners against demolition had feared. A 'transition fund' was provided for the worst affected areas, but in Liverpool this was earmarked to fund further demolition, a decision challenged in Court by SAVE Britain's Heritage (Waddington, 2012).

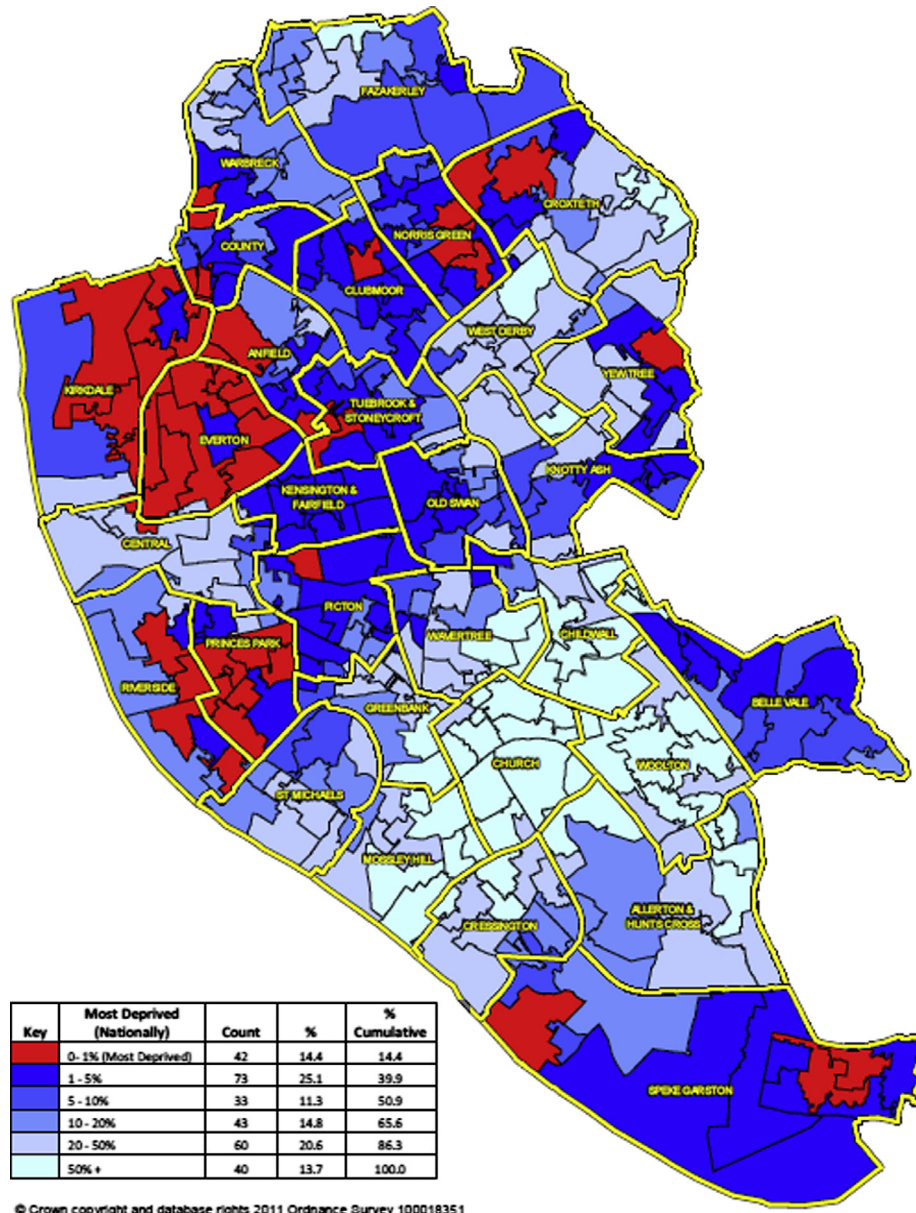
In built environment terms, an irony of Liverpool's recent regeneration narrative is that, whilst official literature and place-marketing vaunt the distinctiveness of Liverpool's built heritage, many of the city's well designed inner suburbs continued to be subject to decay and removal in the name of regeneration (Brown, 2009) (Fig. 7).

Looking ahead, proposals by the property-led regional developer Peel Holdings, for a project called Ocean Gateway, aspire to deliver £50 billion of investment in the North West region over the next few decades (<http://www.peel.co.uk/projects/oceangateway>). In 2004 Peel, owners of the Manchester Ship Canal estate, acquired the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, which brought with it large areas of derelict and underused land on both sides of the river.

The company is proposing two major schemes to develop this land. Across the Mersey from Liverpool a £4.5 billion programme of investment known as 'Wirral Waters', was granted planning permission in August 2010 (<http://www.wirralwaters.co.uk>). On the Liverpool side of the river, outline planning consent was given in March 2012 to the £5.5 billion 'Liverpool Waters' dockland redevelopment scheme ([www.liverpoolwaters.co.uk](http://www.liverpoolwaters.co.uk)). In March 2013 the UK government confirmed that it would not 'call-in' the application for this scheme but leave the decision on whether or not to grant planning permission to the local planning authority (Liverpool City Council) (Lewis, 2013). The developer Peel Holdings envisages that the two schemes will be 30–40 year mixed use developments providing some 25,000 new homes and over 40,000 new jobs. Many of these aspirations will be dependent on attracting inward investment, with global capital being key. It is within this context that Liverpool as a city, is seeking to re-ignite its links with the Far East, notably China. Liverpool has the oldest Shanghaiese population in the UK and was the only UK city to be represented at the World EXPO in Shanghai in 2010 (Taylor & Caswell, 2011). Whether such investment in place marketing brings dividends only time will tell, not just for 'Liverpool Waters' but wider city regeneration.

The 'Liverpool Waters' scheme has proved contentious with objections to the application from English Heritage, the national government's architectural conservation agency, and concerns being expressed by UNESCO that, unless modified, the scheme will result in "a serious loss of historic authenticity" for the city's WHS





**Map 5.** Index of multiple deprivation rankings of Liverpool Neighbourhoods. Source: Liverpool City Council (2010). <http://liverpool.gov.uk/Images/1%20IMD%202010%20exec%20summary%20%282%29.pdf>.

(Nugent, 2012). In June 2012 UNESCO added Liverpool's "Maritime Mercantile City" to the list of endangered World Heritage Sites arguing that the Liverpool Waters development "will extend the city centre significantly and alter the skyline and profile of the site inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2004" and "that the redevelopment scheme will fragment and isolate the different dock areas visually" (Johnson, 2012; UNESCO, 2012).

Juxtaposed against the recent and future investment described above, concentrated in the core of the Merseyside conurbation, significant parts of Liverpool's population continue to experience multiple deprivation and social exclusion. In terms of social disadvantage, around 50% of Liverpool's lower level super output areas<sup>8</sup> are classified as being in the bottom 10% nationally for multiple deprivation, according to the 2010 English Indices of Deprivation

(Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010; Liverpool City Council, 2010). The most deprived areas are to be found in an inner ring around the city centre and large areas of 20th century social housing to the north, east and extreme south of the city (Map 5). Less-deprived and more affluent areas are to be found in the city centre, the north east, a large area in the south of the city, and across the wider conurbation.

### Some conclusions

The history of Liverpool makes for a distinctive and tumultuous urban story, and one which is far from over. Over three centuries the fortunes of the city can be seen to be emblematic of changing spatial patterns and flows of global capital, and latterly the oscillating priorities of national government and European Union policy.

It was the city's proximity to the revolutionary industrial growth in the north of England during the 18th and 19th century,

<sup>8</sup> Super output areas are localised areas of around 1500 people and are the statistical boundaries used in the development of multiple deprivation statistics in England. The 50% figure is based upon the authors' calculations from IMD 2010 data (Communities and Local Government, 2010).

and the River Mersey's ability to act as a portal to Atlantic trade routes, fuelled by extraordinary technological innovation in transport and architectural infrastructure, which saw its rise to economic and strategic pre-eminence. In the 20th century, changing modes and sites of global capitalism, in parallel with a catastrophic over-reach of comprehensive planning policies, led to a seemingly irrevocable change in fortunes. Public works and redistribution of industry played a part in stemming tides of decline, but also encouraged the overspill and high rise housing experiments that hollowed out the urban core. The collapse of Britain's manufacturing base during the 1970s and 1980s and a changed focus of national economic management towards financial services and the state's strategic privileging of south east England removed the safety net. Liverpool was left without sufficient wealth creating residents and enterprises within its territory to repair the damage wrought by external circumstance and self-inflicted wounds. The difficult conditions and political turbulence experienced by Liverpool and Merseyside were extensively reported, often unsympathetically and the area's image and reputation were detrimentally affected as a result. By the 1980s, Liverpudlians were sometimes viewed with contempt and "their once grand, increasingly gaunt city was associated with riots, insubordinate leftwing councillors and unstoppable economic decline" (Beckett, 2012).

Yet since the city's nadir during the Thatcher era, a substantial supply-side endeavour to reverse its fortunes has taken place, certainly driven by local energy, if facilitated for much of the period almost entirely by externally sourced public money. There has also been a gradual realisation that Liverpool's multiple identities are perhaps its greatest asset. Its economic and cultural histories, its architectural splendour, its sporting prominence and its people still make this a great city. The renovation of the city centre during recent decades and buoyant higher education and cultural sectors have undoubtedly served to strengthen its offer as a location to live, visit and invest in. The European Capital of Culture year in 2008 played an important role in focusing the minds of those outside and, perhaps more significantly, inside the city on these assets, reconnecting public consciousness with the intrinsic value of the city and its region. However, as indicated above, significant challenges remain, and are now primarily twofold: firstly, to maintain the momentum of the past decade; secondly, and crucially, to ensure that future prosperity is accessible to the whole population. Despite the progress made, the socio-economic challenges and spatial injustices faced by Liverpool are severe, and the pattern and distribution of these remains stubbornly entrenched. In addressing these problems, governance and communication will be important.

The national 'coalition' government that emerged from the 2010 UK general election has advocated, and has begun to implement a programme of 'localism' across the country. Large state interventions in less prosperous areas remain for the moment a thing of the past. Localities in England are more than ever reliant upon their own entrepreneurial capacity to foster economic development and social equity. There are also some powerful advocates of devolved power and control of public money who are associated with the current (2013) UK Government (Heseltine, 2012). There are some who argue that Liverpool and its wider city region still lag behind in terms of their local government efficacy when compared to certain other major English conurbations (Manchester and Leeds being frequently cited as examples of more cohesive and coherent city regional governance).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> As an instance, the first wave of the latest national government initiative to promote local economic development the 'Local Enterprise Partnership' (LEP) (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, n.d.) was introduced in 2010, but the Liverpool City Region LEP, covering Liverpool and the neighbouring local government areas of Halton, Sefton, Knowsley, St. Helens and Wirral was only officially established in March 2012. The Liverpool City Region LEP has a population of approximately 1.5 million and has set the target of creating an additional 100,000 jobs in the city-region over the next decade (Map 2, inset).

In light of this, it is worth noting the vote by Liverpool City Council in 2012 to establish the office of elected mayor for Liverpool. Some local commentators and groups feel that an elected mayor for the whole Liverpool City Region should be the ultimate goal, allowing administrative fragmentation between the conurbation's local governments to be overcome, and a scale of metropolitan representation that more closely resembles that enjoyed by London (Opinion, 2012: 52). Meanwhile there are some hopes, despite a very low turnout of 31.7% in the first mayoral elections in 2012 (Topping, 2012), that the new office may herald a different era of governance for the city, with the potential to provide more visible and accountable leadership, both within and outside the area, including internationally. The appropriate incumbent might also be able to use the office to unify the city's development policy (a new Mayoral Development Corporation [MDC] was established in 2012 – Liverpool City Council, 2012). This may help overcome what some have seen as a lack of a unified approach in the past when development sometimes disintegrated "into a series of localised projects that were lacking in strategic context and focused only on short-term goals" (Couch, 2003, p. 9). Overall, it is undeniable that a period of sustained decline is now being replaced with one of modest, but significant growth. Important work remains to be done to address underlying physical and social issues and to manage the impacts of current budgetary 'austerity' on areas, city services and people. However, the city is beginning to emerge from its experience as a 'shrinking city' of the post industrial era (Couch & Cocks, 2012). As such its story is one which may bring hope and offer lessons to others. Whichever forms future governance takes, and whatever challenges and prospects providence sends her way, Liverpool seems set to remain a city of 'change and challenge' whose story goes on – something which only a few decades ago seemed far from assured.

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