The Housing Question in the District of Ancoats

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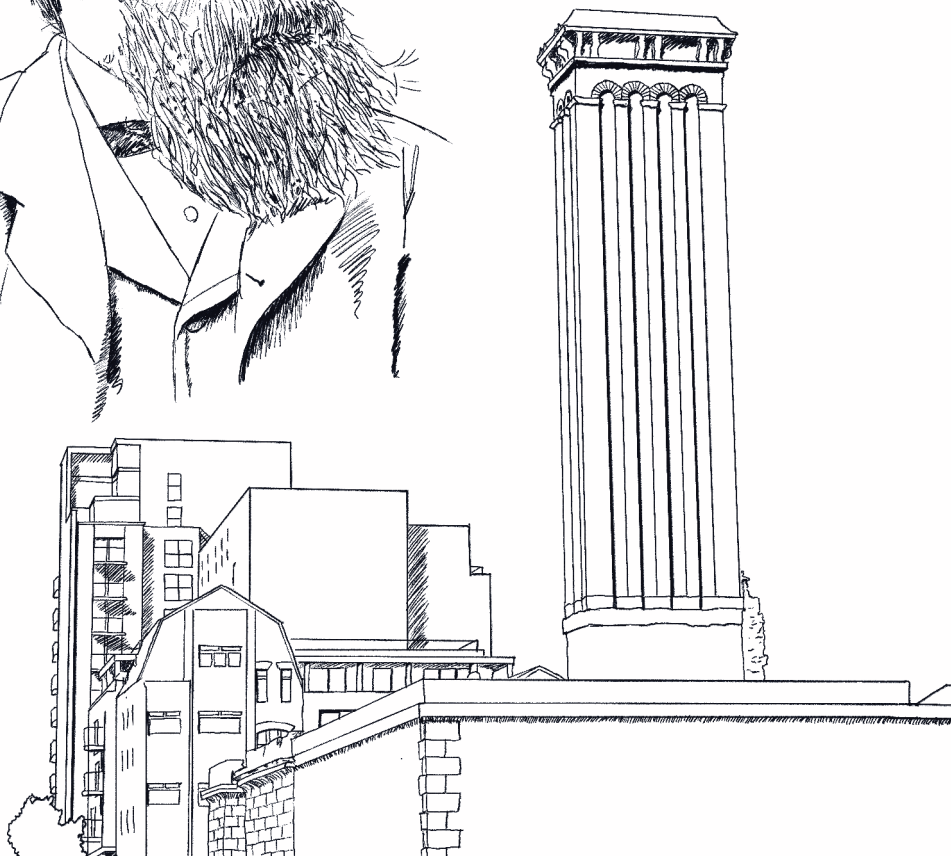


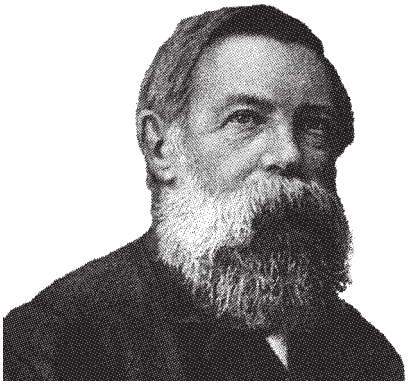
1. Introduction

The fortunes of the poor are intimately shaped by the fortunes of the rich. This leaflet examines the shifting historical-geographical relations that have shaped housing in the district of Ancoats, Manchester. Studies of inequality have long highlighted the ways that elites have structured the often-segregated experience of housing for rich and poor alike, through both the location of people's homes and the type, condition and cost of their residence. This scholarship spans from the Victorian reformers (Rowntree, 1899; Booth, 1903; Stedman Jones, 2013); to slum clearance in the 1930s (MUS, 1945); to displacement and race in the 1960s (Ward, 1975; Rex and Moore, 1967); and on to gentrification (Smith, 1979) and the contemporary era of neoliberal capitalism (Hodkinson, 2019: Madden and Marcuse, 2016: Minton, 2017).

Many of these accounts have drawn inspiration from *The Housing Question* posed by Friedrich Engels in 1872, which outlined a political economy of housing in capitalist society. Here, we return to *The Housing Question* and subsequent scholarship of the Marxist tradition to reflect on how one particular urban space has experienced intense transformation over the last two centuries. In doing so we highlight the continuing relevance of Engel's ideas for researching the making of urban and housing inequality in the built environment.

Ancoats, a centrally located post-industrial space, is now considered to be a desirable area, regularly featuring in global list of 'cool' neighbourhoods[1]. Amid old cotton mills, new apartments are being constructed at a rapid pace as the population of the area surges. It has become a neighbourhood in which townhouses are offered for sale at

1 *Source:* https://ilovemanchester.com/ancoats-is-manchester-coolest-neighbourhood-mana/



£750,000[2] and rent for a two-bedroom apartment, in a block strangely named '*Engels House*', begin at over £1,100 per month[3]. According to lifestyle website, Manchester Confidential:

> *Ancoats is now the epicentre of all that is new and hip in the city's food and drink scene. The coming of shiny new apartment blocks and amenities has initiated a rush to feed all of these young, trendy incomers, with their empty bellies, disposable incomes and penchant for artisanal anything. The last few years have seen a number of the region's most exciting food and drink businesses open new sites in the area[4].*

This transformation of the neighbourhood, from a heavily stigmatised district in which the urban poor were housed from the late 18th century onwards to toil in "dark, satanic mills" (Blake 1808), has been dramatic. Who amongst the new visitors and residents, enjoying £165 per head Michelin starred tasting menus, would know that the streets around them once had the highest cholera and mortality rates in the UK? As Engels (1845) famously wrote on the housing conditions in the district:

> *Hence it comes that Ancoats, built chiefly since the sudden growth of manufacture, chiefly within the present century, contains a vast number of ruinous houses, most of them being in fact, in the last stages of inhabitableness … The working-man is constrained to occupy such ruinous dwellings because he cannot pay for others, and because there are not others in the vicinity of his mill; perhaps too, because they belong to the employer, who employs him only on condition of taking such a cottage.*

If Ancoats was paradigmatic of the many newly built districts that accommodated mass urbanisation and the Industrial Revolution, it is also a site in which various interventions into housing, by both state and capital, have proceeded over the last 200 years. As such, it provides a vantage point on the restructuring of the English housing system and the changing relations between state and capital, enabling a broader consideration around the way in which inequalities are produced, embedded and maintained from above. We examine the formation of Ancoats as a site of working-class housing segregated from nearby elite neighbourhoods, such as Ardwick Green or Victoria Park, into the contemporary period in which segregation now divides the district itself. This is a socio-spatial division between new market-rent or owner-occupied apartments of middle-class residents and older social housing estates that reflects the role of contemporary state/capital relations in the making of housing geographies. These dynamics also show the continuing relevance of *The Housing Question* in how we interpret these transformations.

2 *Source:* https://www.rightmove.co.uk/property-for-sale/property-72383138.html
3 *Source:* https://www.bridgfords.co.uk/properties/17471434/lettings/000692622
4 *Source:* https://confidentials.com/manchester/an-insiders-guide-to-eating-and-drinking-in-ancoats-manchester

Our aim is to better understand the changing geography of housing in England through a focus on Ancoats, a district that has experienced important transformations over the last two centuries. To do so we historicise relations between state, capital and housing into five distinct eras. First, we look at the period between the 1800s and 1890s, when the district was a site of rapid urbanisation, slum landlords, a new urban poor and little state involvement in housing. We then consider the period between the 1890s and 1940s and the onset of municipal intervention into housing, slum clearance, the rise of the Council home and a period where marginalised residents were understood as requiring various types of intervention and 'improvement'. We bring the story into the contemporary era through the post-industrial decline and withdrawal of state and capital, leading to the (re)stigmatisation of the district and population, and the subsequent financialisation of housing that has transformed Ancoats yet again. In developing this historical analysis of what is now a post-industrial urban space, we respond to Engels' ideas to consider the underlying dynamics of class and race in structuring planning logics, and the shifting role of the state and capital in housing provision. We draw from and expand the argument that, inequalities are historical, geographical and social structures which implicate the past in the present and the actions of the rich in the situation of the poor (Burgum and Higgins, 2022). We attempt to broaden the focus on class inequality to consider the relevance of race and migration to this story. We conclude the chapters by reflecting on what lessons the history of this district generates concerning *The Housing Question* in regard to urban inequality.

2. The Housing Question

Before we turn to the history of Ancoats, we will set out the ideas Engels contributed to our understanding of housing. Engels is one of the key thinkers in Marxist political economy, and specifically in questions of urban inequality. He moved to work for his father's company based in Manchester in 1842. As a young man he spent the subsequent years researching the emerging slums of industrial capitalism, and in 1845 he published 'Conditions of the English Working Class'. Engels also addressed 'The Housing Question' in a series of three articles published in 1872, in a radical left critique of the housing crisis in industrial cities across Western Europe. If the polemical nature of the articles and the specific debates are clearly rooted in the socio-economic conditions of nineteenth century continental Europe, the arguments developed by Engels are of continuing relevance to housing in England. In the first two pieces he addressed the anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. the bourgeois social reformer Emil Sax, and their respective cases for working-class ownership of homes (Larsen et al., 2016). Engel's third article built on this critique through responding to a supporter of Proudhon with a caustic demolition of the argument for home ownership as reflecting the interests of the petty bourgeoisie. For Engels (1872a):

> *The housing shortage from which the workers and part of the petty bourgeoisie suffer in our modern cities is one of the numerous, smaller, secondary evils which result from the present-day capitalist mode of production.*

Engels (1872a) explained how the increasing value of land, caused by mass urbanisation and the Industrial Revolution, contributed to the excessive cost of housing for workers already exploited by capital:

> *The growth of the big cities gives the land in certain areas, particularly those*

which are centrally situated, an artificial and often colossally increasing value; the buildings erected on these areas depress this value, instead of increasing it, because they no longer correspond to the changed circumstances. They are pulled down and replaced by others.

This increasing value of land precipitated demolition of working-class districts and displacement of the residents out of the towns and towards the outskirts. Landlords built "workers' dwellings only by way of exception" (Engels, 1872a). Engels criticises the nostalgic approach Proudhon took to the importance of ownership. Whilst Proudhon (1840:1) is remembered for his claim that "property is theft", his argument was based on the premise that owning your home was a right that all should enjoy. Engels (1872a) believed that the move from the land was part of the historical development of the proletariat:

In order to create the modern revolutionary class of the proletariat it was absolutely necessary to cut the umbilical cord which still bound the worker of the past to the land ... [it is] the very first condition for their intellectual emancipation.

In responding to Sax's support for home ownership, Engels argued this was simply a reflection of the concerns of the petty bourgeoisie. Capital investment in housing for the proletariat was irrational. Capital was bound by its accumulative logic to seek the greatest return. Investment in working-class housing would inevitably lead to a corresponding reduction in the workers' wage. Engels argued the idea the capitalist should invest in adequate housing for the working-classes was an irrational moral argument as capital is economically bound by its very accumulative logics to seek the greatest return, even if they were

to provide housing for working-class ownership. Furthermore, reduction in living costs would lead to a corresponding reduction of the workers' wage. Sax also blamed the behaviour of the working classes for their conditions, in a discourse which is echoed over the timeline of our story (Sax in Engels, 1872b; Murray, 1990; CSJ, 2007);

> *That if they can only save something on the rent they will move into dark, damp and inadequate dwellings, which in short are a mockery of all the demands of hygiene ... in order to spend as little as possible for rent, while on the other hand they squander their income in a really sinful fashion on drink and all sorts of idle pleasures.*

It was through this developing political economy of housing that Engels concluded the housing crisis was intimately tied to the logic of capitalism. He argued, 'There are already in existence sufficient buildings for dwellings in the big towns to remedy any real ''housing shortage'', given rational utilisation of them' (1872a). And it is this analysis that remains central to how the political economy of housing has been elaborated over subsequent decades. It exposed the need for state intervention against the rapacious effects of capital. However, Engels was also critical of the state and how it enabled accumulation as rent. He criticised the effectiveness of regulatory measures, describing the state as, "nothing but the organised collective power of the possessing classes, the landowners and the capitalists" (Engels, 1872b).

In the second intervention Engels identifies the self-interest of capitalist concerns about the conditions of slum housing and health. He engaged specifically with the way that liberal reform had been mobilised to protect the class interests of the reformers and address their fears of contamination and pandemic, rather than the working class slum dwellers. He argued that (1872b):

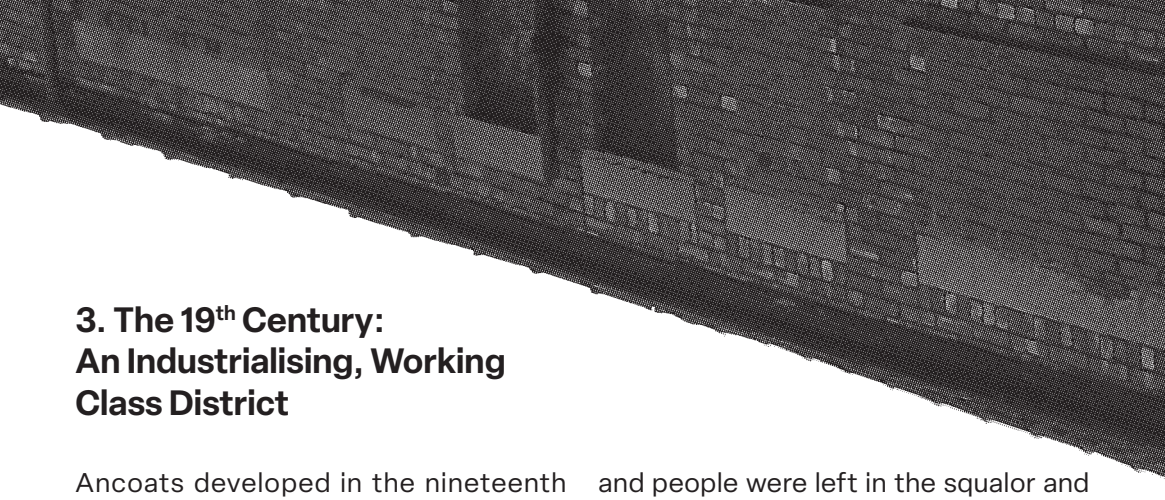
> *cholera, typhus, typhoid fever, smallpox and other ravaging diseases spread their germs in the pestilential air and the poisoned water of these working-class quarters ... as soon as circumstances permit it they develop into epidemics and then spread beyond their breeding places into the more airy and healthy parts of the town inhabited by the capitalists.*

The third intervention provides a prescient analysis of contemporary gentrification, the "Haussmann" process that structured the violent remaking of Paris (see also Harvey, 2004). Engels (1872c) argues that;

> *[by] making breaches in the working class quarters of our big towns, and particularly in those which are centrally situated ...: the scandalous alleys and lanes disappear to the accompaniment of lavish self-praise from the bourgeoisie ... but they appear again immediately somewhere else and often in the immediate neighbourhood.*

Engels (1872c) described how the development of railways, new streets and prestigious buildings since 1845 had led to displacement as the city expanded (a process that, as we show in the next chapter - is ongoing in the district).

In *The Housing Question*, Engels demonstrated how capitalism produces housing crises, that liberal reform was driven by self-interest and that displacement of working class housing enabled gentrification. Engels articulated a political economic theory that illustrated how capitalism comes to structure and shape housing inequality, which became particularly acute in areas such as Ancoats.



3. The 19th Century: An Industrialising, Working Class District

Ancoats developed in the nineteenth century to accommodate new textile mills, factories and railway yards. Capital required workers to run these industries, and they were housed in appalling conditions in central districts around the mills and factories. Many were migrants from rural areas in England, Ireland and Italy seeking work in the mills and factories of the growing industrial city (Rose et al., 2011). A small number of wealthy families, such as the Mosley family in Ancoats, owned large tracts of previously agricultural land which were leased in small plots to builders to create housing for factory workers. The builders typically paid ground rent for the land for a fixed period of forty years and any investments to buildings or infrastructure on the plots were returned to the owner at the end of the lease. There was little incentive for builders to maintain or improve the housing conditions of these back-to-back dwellings, and the labour for the mills and factories of the early Industrial Revolution were largely regarded as disposable, with little consideration for the overcrowded and dangerous conditions labourers lived and worked in. The capital invested in the land provided a guaranteed return to the owner through the leasehold paid to them whilst the landlords collected rents as a return on their investment. When a young Engels walked through Ancoats in the 1840s, the government had no role in housing, planning or building regulations, and people were left in the squalor and poverty created by the demands of industrial capitalism.

Engels quoted the Medical Officer for Manchester, Dr Kay, in describing the housing conditions in the working-class districts (Engels, 1845) that remain haunting to this day:

> *But when I went through their habitations in Irish Town, and Ancoats, and Little Ireland, my only wonder was that tolerable health could be maintained by the inmates of such houses. ... Not a house in this street escaped cholera. And generally speaking, throughout these suburbs the streets are unpaved, with a dung-hill or a pond in the middle; the houses built back-to-back, without ventilation or drainage; and whole families occupy a corner of a cellar or of a garret.*

Fear of cholera through bad housing and sanitation conditions was well founded. The Manchester Board of Health conducted a survey in 1831 which recorded over 55 percent of homes in Ancoats without plumbing (Niven, 1923). By 1851 with a population of 55,983 in the district (Newell, 2014) the disposability of the working class for capital was clearly visible in the lives of those living in the cellars and back-to-back housing across Ancoats. As Engels had predicted,

illness caused reduced productivity and, for some, concern at these living conditions, inspired political and moral interventions (Platt, 2005).

Marx and Engels believed that revolution was the only answer to these conditions. Meanwhile liberal reformers in the city drove the Manchester Corporation to invest in sanitation and other public health measures in districts such as Ancoats, later extended nationally through legislation such as the Local Government Act of 1871 and the Public Health Act of 1872. In Manchester, liberal reformers funded institutions like the Ragged Schools and the Bennett Street Sunday School, which provided religious and moral instruction alongside education (Rylands Archive, 1888).

The state had little explicit role in housing in the rapidly growing urban spaces of 19th century England but, with political power held by men of property, there were state interventions to address major public health concerns through investment in sanitation. This was achieved through new regulatory powers for local government. Towards the end of the century the property-owning elite also became concerned about the housing conditions of their managers and clerks. Thus, as Manchester's industrial quarters developed, mill owners, merchants, other members of the propertied classes and the growing middle classes moved away from the disease and pollution to the suburbs that were developing around the city. The new suburbs were supported by the developing railway infrastructure whilst exposure to the risk of infectious diseases was addressed by new sanitation measures including municipally run sewage and water infrastructure. As the end of the nineteenth century approached, the argument for homeownership expressed by Proudhon was realised for the petit bourgeoisie (as Engels had predicted). The new suburbs were located far away from the streets of Ancoats for the growing middle classes in Manchester, as elsewhere (Cooper, 2002). In the suburb of Chorlton, this development was delivered through the provision of packages of land on a 99-year lease from Lord Egerton. This

land was subjected to an annual ground rent and provided to builders to construct semi-detached houses with access to clean air, improved housing conditions and transport links to their work in the city (for those who could afford it). The suburb became the space of the middle class, many seeking finance from the emerging building society movement (Samy, 2008).

Meanwhile the city council began to intervene in Ancoats itself using new and growing powers, such as the 1867 Manchester Water Works Improvement Act and public calls for solutions to the housing crisis. The first social housing in Manchester was delivered through tenements in Victoria Square in 1894. This building, designed by Henry Spalding, was constructed on some of the worst slum housing in the district, however the rents were too high for most Ancoats residents. State intervention and investment proceeded in Ancoats for the next few years (Boughton, 2020) including the aptly named Sanitation Street, that contained the first toilets for each individual household in the district, built in 1897. Both the tenements and terraced housing remain to this day as a living reminder of the capacity of the state to improve housing conditions.

However, while Ancoats briefly became a space of state intervention, the cost of land made these investments prohibitive. As John Boughton (2020) explains,

> *Land in inner Manchester was expensive – with a consequent impact on rents in schemes intended as self-supporting. At Oldham Road, the Council had paid over £5 a square yard; in the city's newly-acquired suburbs, it could be bought for a little over 3p a square yard.*

The next investment created two hundred houses on the boundaries of the city, most with bathrooms, together with 50 acres of land for allotments (Boughton, 2020).

Overall, new housing, alongside other small-scale charitable investments had little impact on the masses housed in the working-class districts of Manchester. Like Ancoats, nearly all the working-class housing in Manchester remained owned by private landlords whose main concern was generating the largest possible rent at the expense of the tenants, who often lived in terrible conditions. As Engels had recognised, capital would always seek return on investment, whilst the state (which, at the time, was run by the propertied classes) would struggle to compete with rising land values.

In the late nineteenth century, the racialisation of housing also became a political tool for the ruling class in order to divert attention from the profit-driven causes of poor housing conditions in districts such as Ancoats. Engels' analysis foregrounded the salience of race in housing inequality. In the Conditions of the Working Class in England (1845), he describes Irish immigrants as essential labour to service the Industrial Revolution, because of their willingness to work for less, resulting in reduction of wages. At a national level, discourses of race and immigration provided an easy scapegoat for politicians and elites failing to address housing shortages, overcrowding and poor conditions. A 1902 Parliamentary debate on housing argued about the negative effect of immigration on the conditions of the working class and proposed an amendment to recognise "the urgent necessity of introducing legislation to regulate and restrict the immigration of destitute aliens into London and other cities in the United Kingdom" (Hansard, 1902). In moving the amendment, Major Evans-Gordon MP for Stepney said:

Not a day passes but English families are ruthlessly turned out to make room for the foreign invaders. Many of these have been occupying their houses for years. … Out they have to go to make room for Romanians, Russians, or Poles. Rents are raised 50% to 100% and a house which formerly contained a couple of families … is made to hold four or five families (Hansard, 1902).

In seconding the motion, Mr Forde Ridley MP for Bethnal Green argued:

The British workman is thus squeezed out of his home, and what happens? The house is immediately taken by five, six, eight, or ten of these aliens, who herd together under conditions which are at once degrading and insanitary. I know it has been said by some people that this is a racial question … This is not a question of Jew or Gentile. We are speaking of foreign paupers and aliens as a whole. (Hansard, 1902).

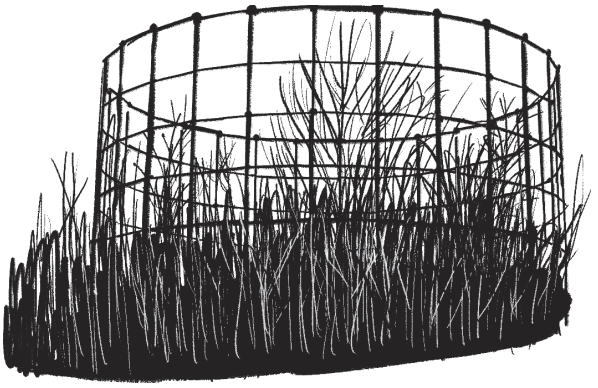
This integration of racism into the housing question informed the introduction of the Aliens Act 1905, which restricted immigration from countries outside the empire, while the racialisation of immigrants created the conditions that justified attacks and harassment on those deemed foreign (Holmes, 1988). However, the extent of hostility by the working-class in Ancoats towards the new arrivals is less clear. In the nineteenth century Irish, Italians and eastern European Jews settled in Manchester, and Ancoats was known as 'Little Italy' from the 1870s with migrants from southern Italy (Holmes, 1988).

Ancoats at the end of the nineteenth century reflected embryonic state intervention to address disease and protect the health of the wealthier inhabitants of the city, whilst the wealthy were increasingly moving to suburban housing and separate lives from the urban poor. Capital investment by small builders provided the growing middle-class with well-built suburban family housing, whilst ensuring a return on the value of the land to its owners. Most working-class housing remained in poor condition, owned by private landlords and insecure. Any financial shocks, whether through ill-health, unemployment or decisions to clear parts of the city, could lead to eviction. Increasingly segregated from the rest of the city, the working class in Ancoats saw little benefit from early state interventions.

4. The Early Twentieth Century: Municipal Led Reform and Slum Clearance

By the end of the nineteenth century, successive crises of capitalism and the threat of revolution provided the impetus for housing reform in the age of imperialism. The arch-imperialist Cecil Rhodes, (1895 in Lenin, 1917) wrote about these twin concerns and his own colonial solution;

> *I was in the East End of London (a working-class quarter) yesterday and attended a meeting of the unemployed. … My cherished idea is a solution for the social problem, i.e., in order to save the 40,000,000 inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, we colonial statesmen must acquire new lands to settle the surplus population.*



Poor living conditions, insecure employment and punitive conditions for those who fell on hard times contributed to the development of mass movements of trade unions and socialist parties to represent the working class (Stedman Jones, 1971; Booth, 1890). Ancoats had for many decades been a hotbed of radical politics, print presses and working-class action against substandard housing conditions. If the contradictions of industrial capitalism were temporarily resolved by imperialist expansion, it still left a growing working-class movement demanding intervention into housing, work and social support. As Engels has suggested, the elite did engage in self-congratulatory social reform, but these interventions were driven by the necessity to maintain the current order in light of working-class mobilisations through tactics such as rent strikes (Hansard, 1903; Gray, 2018). Manchester had already begun to address these conditions with selective demolition to remove back-to-back housing and provision of improved sanitation (Simon and Inman, 1933) that targeted Ancoats' worst housing.

After the First World War, the government promised to deliver 'homes fit for heroes' supported by slum clearance programmes and a combination of state and private investment into housing designed for 'the respectable' working classes (Simon and Inman, 1933; Howard, 1899). The Housing Acts of 1919 and 1924 accelerated state investment through grants to housebuilders, accompanied by restrictions on the rents they could charge – in effect a rent cap. The shifting of responsibility for the implementation of these provisions to local councils, combined with difficulty in securing suitable land, meant progress was slow. The Housing Act of 1930 responded to these constraints. It combined a duty to clear slum housing with the finance needed to do so (Henderson and Maddocks, 1930). The process required a house-by-house inspection to justify declaration of the area to be cleared, a demolition order and finally a notice for households to move. Manchester Council constructed garden estates away from the city centre, reflecting the earlier development of middle-class suburbs on agricultural land at the edge of the city. In Ancoats, the clearance program took around four years, but the financial requirements for

repaying the loans meant that rents in the new council houses were too high for many working-class residents still living in single rooms in the slums. With the likelihood that slum housing would be cleared, there was little investment in existing provision, and neighbourhoods such as Ancoats deteriorated significantly.

We can get a better idea of the housing conditions through the Manchester University Settlement (MUS), established in Ancoats in 1895 to engage residents through leisure, advice, cultural, and welfare activities, whilst allowing liberal reformers to study the lives of the urban poor. Students involved in the study engaged in the practical development of social work practices and carried out investigations into living conditions. The Settlement developed a plan to survey residents before the clearance and then again once they had moved to the new garden estates. The approach was interdisciplinary with the first Chair of Geography at Manchester, Professor Fleur, acting as an academic advisor, fieldwork and commentary conducted by social workers and tabulation by statisticians. The resulting portrait of a clearance area provides a comprehensive view of the district. It paints a rich picture of how working-class residents of Ancoats felt threatened by moving out of a cohesive community and the loss of strong kinship and social networks that allowed for mutual aid.

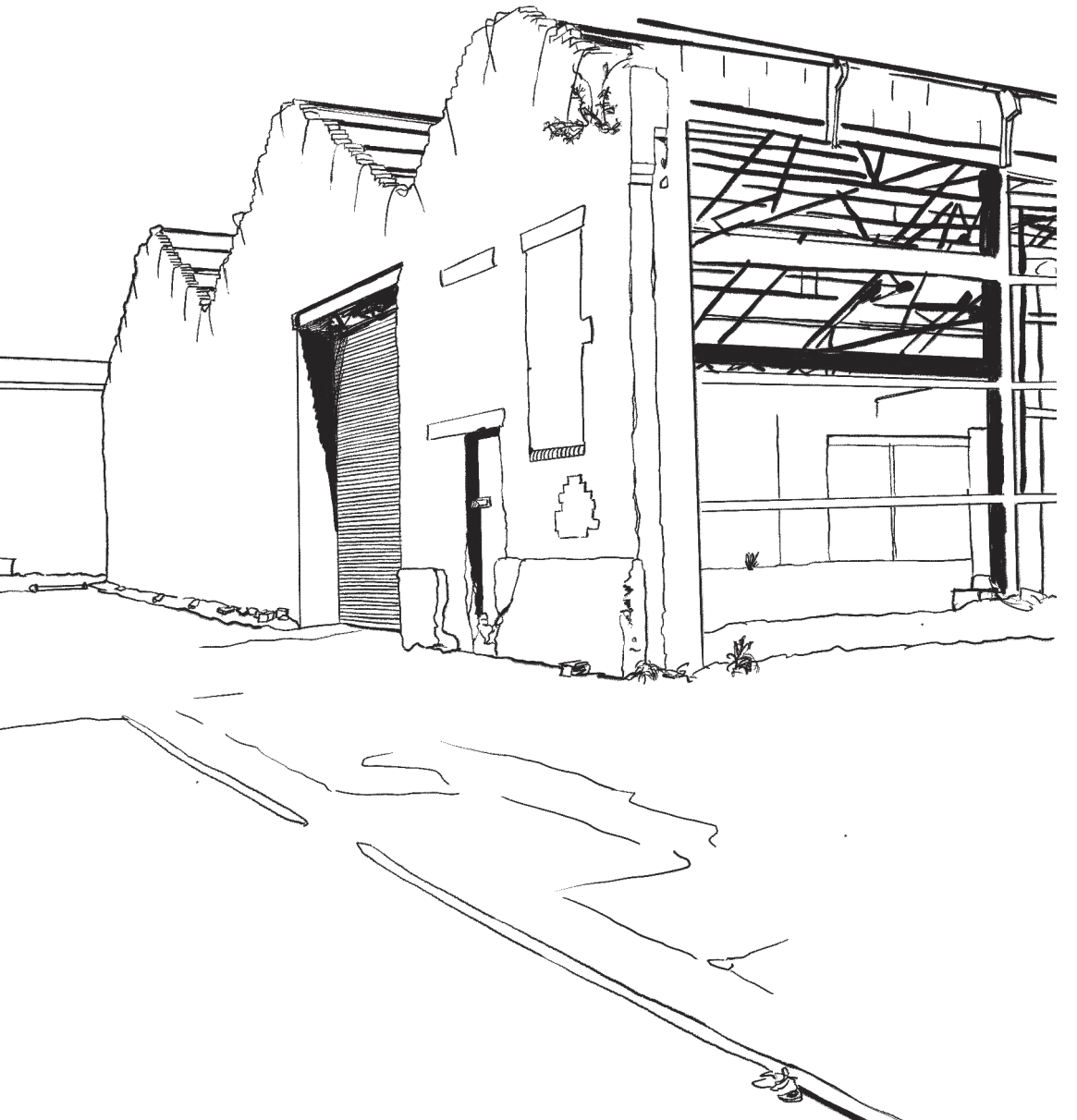
Two objective measures were central to the assessment of the housing conditions of the families living in Ancoats. First, the poverty line was based on a paper from the Royal Statistical Society (George, 1937) and, second, a local standard was used to assess the extent to which a household was overcrowded (MUS, 1945). The survey used household income (after rent) to measure poverty, and captured details of actual expenditure, the use of credit, the effect of having children, being ill or unemployed, social life and attitudes to the clearance.

The report addressed commonly held assumptions that poverty was self-inflicted because of large families, poor eating habits, drinking and poor hygiene. This discourse of seeking to blame poverty on individual - rather than structural - failings, remains a powerful underlying narrative in UK society. The survey results showed that most households were relatively small, household expenditure was appropriate, most families had a balanced diet and they took pride in their homes. The main reasons for poverty were what Engels had identified – the disposability of the working class to capital leading to inadequate pay, the challenge of supporting young children and ill-health[5].

There were different opinions about the clearance of Ancoats with 60 percent welcoming the prospect of a better house and amenities, and 20 percent the prospects of better health for them and their children. Most (94 percent) were concerned about higher rents and fares to get to work, and some were concerned about their social life or opposed to living in flats. These findings were used by the Settlement in discussions with Manchester's Chief Housing Officer to argue for the residents' interests to be central to the planned clearance. The second survey showed that 70 percent of the families had been displaced from Ancoats. Whilst households welcomed the extra living space the majority were paying more rent (93 percent) and were further from the workplace. During this era the state invested significantly in improving working-class housing, at first through

5 The original survey papers were found whilst this chapter was being written and offer the potential of exploring the lives of the men and women of Ancoats in the 1930s

direct grants to builders, then through slum clearance and the provision of council housing. The responsibility for implementing the programme was at local state level which led to significant variation (Boughton, 2018; Harloe, 1995; Simon and Inman, 1933). In Manchester the new garden estates welcomed council tenants from central districts like Ancoats, Chorlton-On-Medlock and Spinningfields. However, with the advent of the Second World War, the programme was halted. Capital investment in suburban parts of the city continued throughout the period increasingly swallowing the remaining agricultural land.



5. 1950s to 1980s: From Welfare State to Deindustrialisation

The election of Attlee's Labour Government after the Second World War heralded the creation of the welfare state in the UK. To address squalor and wartime destruction, the government implemented a programme to build one million homes, 80 percent of which were delivered by local councils (Harloe, 1995). Alongside state investment, the Town and Country Planning Act (1947) gave councils the responsibility to plan urban development and created the green belt to prevent urban sprawl. This period highlighted the potential of state investment to improve the housing conditions of the working-class. However, migrants from the new Commonwealth, encouraged to travel to England to support the reconstruction and new investments in social welfare, were often excluded from the benefits through residential qualification periods for council housing, redlining districts that they could not settle in, as well as the direct racism of private landlords (Rex and Moore, 1967; Ward, 1975; Lukes et al., 2018). As a result, new migrants were concentrated in: Longsight, Rusholme, Hulme, Moss Side and Whalley Range, whilst the Ancoats population continued to move out of the remaining slum housing.

The subsequent Conservative Government in the 1950s sought to shift back to a marketised governance of housing. They argued that the continuation of the rent freeze from the war was deterring landlords from investing in housing improvement. However, by this stage, Ancoats was dominated by council housing, and by the 1960s the ever-operating slum clearance programmes removed the remaining private housing in Ancoats and other inner-urban neighbourhoods. New estates used technological advances (such as system building) to speed up construction time and reduce costs. The City Council built tower blocks and other multi-occupancy structures in areas which had been cleared, including the Cardroom estate in Ancoats. Mr Alfred Morris, Wythenshawe MP and former Ancoats resident, explained the reasons for such transformations:

> *In Manchester, in a vast belt immediately outside the central area of the city, there still exist all too many remnants of a planless, knotted chaos of dark, dismal and crumbling homes. Many of these crossed the verge of uninhabited-ableness long before their most elderly inhabitants were born*[6].

Morris went on to highlight the scale of challenge and sheer amount of intervention perceived as required, explaining;

> *In 1961, the City Council adopted a target of 4,000 houses to be demolished and 4,000 new houses to be erected each year. Of a total of 201,627 present dwellings in Manchester, some 54,700, or 27.1 per cent, are estimated to be unfit.*

Ancoats continued as a space of intense housing intervention by the local state. The (re)making of a part of the district called New Islington being perhaps the most notable intervention by the municipality. It was renamed as the Cardroom estate and incorporated over 350 properties that provided much needed council housing for the city. The estate stood on the site of former terraced housing, industrial buildings, and community spaces, such as the beautiful New Islington baths, spanning the land between the Ashton and Rochdale canals. This whole area was cleared in the 1960s and subsequently rebuilt in the 1970s

6 *Source:* https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1965/nov/22/slum-clearance-manchester

in what would be considered in hindsight as a mistake of town planning. The continuing clearance programs were systemic and often brutal, displacing whole streets of Ancoats residents, as the street photography of Shirley Baker (1989) evocatively captured. Furthermore, restrictions on access to the new council homes increasingly made them a residual provision for those with significant needs.

As the 1970s progressed, the final decline of the British Empire's global trade networks left Ancoats all but abandoned by capital. The shock of both the 1973 oil and 1976 International Monetary Fund crises left a nation facing what seemed irreversible, post-colonial decline (Dintenfass, 2006; Gamble, 1994). Manchester, like many northern cities, was entering the final stages of deindustrialisation, a seeming death spiral which neither capital nor state intervention could or would reverse (Tomlinson, 2016). The industrial infrastructures in districts such as Ancoats had become obsolete, with an uncertain future for those still living there, as employment opportunities disappeared.

From 1979, the Thatcher government set out to transform the economy through a growth in finance services and deregulation, opening up industry to global competition, as the ideology of neoliberalism began to take root. These policies accelerated the decline of manufacturing whilst simultaneously blaming the resulting unemployment on the 'underclass' who became victims of structural unemployment (Gamble, 1994; Murray, 1990) in Ancoats as elsewhere. The commitment to private ownership and a smaller state was also reflected in the sale of council housing at discounted rates, the privatisation of the nationalised infrastructure, and reduced funding to public services. The proceeds of council house sales were returned to the central government and as a result the stock of social housing fell from 5.5 million in 1981 to 4 million in 2015 (NAO, 2017). Cuts to public expenditure also meant that the estates built as part of the earlier slum clearance programmes were not maintained, signalling the beginning of a period of neglect and decline.

In the 1979 election campaign, the Conservatives adopted the racist, anti-migrant rhetoric of the far-right political party the National Front, and in 1981 they introduced the British Nationality Act which removed the right of children born in the UK to automatic citizenship from its enactment in 1984 (Sivanandan, 1992). In 1981, race riots focussed government action on structural inequalities facing black communities (Scarman, 1983). In Manchester, this has been seen as the nadir of the decline of the city. It led to significant investment in Moss Side even as Ancoats and other neighbourhoods continued to be neglected, a political concern for the council which was reflected in their focus on East Manchester when the opportunities arose in later years. The lack of jobs meant working-class communities in districts like Ancoats were remade into a surplus population, sustained by limited welfare and the informal economy on the margins, awaiting displacement. Once again, as it had with the first generation of migrant workers in the 19th Century, the racialisation of different groups and neighbourhoods fragmented potential resistance to these attacks by the working class of the city.

6. 1980s: Municipal Entrepreneurialism to New Labour

Primarily since the riots of 1981, the imaginary of the ghetto has repeatedly been adopted in UK policy discourse to describe racialised social problems of the inner city, and has more recently incorporated social housing estates (Hancock and Mooney, 2013; MacDonald et al., 2014). The Housing Act 1988 replaced rent control and security of tenure with the current private rental regime, which allows landlords to set their rents as they choose, reduces security of tenure to six months or a year and, under Section 21, provides a mechanism for eviction within eight weeks even when a tenant fully complies with the conditions of their tenancy. The conditions for the emergence of the private landlord were enabled after years of state ownership of the housing stock.

This stigmatisation of place, together with weakening housing regulation, created the eventual conditions for capital to flow into housing in Ancoats. This making of 'problem places' has fed UK policy discourses and informed Area Based Interventions (ABIs).

Regeneration of Ancoats was premised on an ideological commitment to the market and mixed tenure development. Deas (2013: 2302) argued that a 'post-political consensus' framed regeneration programmes as a technical, managerial challenge that was "characterised by the colonisation of decision-making by policy elites." Through the regeneration of 'problem' places, this restricted the space for democratic dissent. The commitment to social housing was further undermined by the development of the image of the 'scrounger' through media and political reporting, creating an imaginary of the undeserving poor (an echo of Emil Sax's arguments that were addressed in *The Housing Question* by Engels).

The combination of regeneration based on a pathology of problem places with the allocation of blame for social disintegration on the undeserving poor created a toxic environment. It led to growing 'welfare reform' targeted at residents, the emerging power of property developers, and the conditions for the remaking of urban space in the interests of capital. From the 1980s, Manchester City Council undertook another shift in the state approach to housing. The council moved away from the municipal socialism that had built estates such as the Cardroom, towards municipal entrepreneurialism (Peck and Ward, 2002). This ideology would later find resonance in New Labour's 'Third Way' political programme and a shift towards a logic of marketisation restructured the ways the local state approached housing in the city. Districts such as Hulme became sites of new state/capital interventions that transformed so called stigmatised estates into mixed tenure neighbourhoods. Hulme's nineteenth century terraced housing was cleared in the early 1970's and replaced by system-built maisonettes, tower blocks and crescents but, before the end of the decade, such housing was deemed unfit for families

with children, and provided shelter instead for single people and squatters[7]. New Labour's solution promised to reduce the proportion of social housing from 85 percent to 40 percent by building housing for sale on the open market. Whilst the target to reduce social housing was achieved, most of the properties built for ownership were rented privately. Ancoats, however, remained outside of these new municipal interventions, experiments and market-led approaches as its spiral of decline intensified.

The shift in focus by the Town Hall to East Manchester started with the use of Education and Action Zones in 1998 and was consolidated after the New Labour government had developed a comprehensive, nationwide urban regeneration program. The New East Manchester Urban Regeneration Company was set up in 1999 to work across a series of districts including Ancoats. It was boosted by the Commonwealth Games in 2002 and became the governance structure through which a plethora of other housing interventions across this deprived part of the city were implemented. This intense state-led, market driven restructuring of the area led to Ward (2003: 123) describing East Manchester as the most 'policy thick' urban space in the UK. Evaluation of the New Deal for Communities programme suggests that the investment had secured more place-based rather than individual benefits (DCLG, 2010), whilst a reduction of crime, improvement in housing, and environmental quality increased the attractiveness of one of the 'most deprived' areas in England for private housing investment.

In Ancoats the Cardroom Estate's design meant various social problems emerged. Furthermore, the proximity of the Cardroom to the city-centre positioned it as a potential future space for private sector housing investment. This can be partly explained by the idea of a 'rent gap' outlined by Marxist geographer Neil Smith (1984: 1986) where, over time, a gap emerges between the potential and actual return on investment in capital held in housing, incentivising redevelopment at higher density or for a more profitable market. The Cardroom had become known as a 'sink estate' in which the Council was dumping its 'problem tenants'. This territorial stigmatisation established the conditions through which the eviction and demolition of social tenants would proceed as a New Labour regeneration initiative (Rolnik, 2015; Wacquant, 2008). In 2001, the Council were successful in securing national-state funding to develop the Cardroom estate in 'New Islington' as a Millennium Community that would be used to represent the best of the new mixed community approach guiding housing policy in the UK. The public land was given to private developer Urban Splash, a company that had established a reputation for converting historic buildings in the city, but had no experience of undertaking neighbourhood regeneration. Luke and Kaika (2019: 584) described what this market-driven Urban Splash vision would entail:

> *Total demolition was deemed necessary to rebrand the area, erase the stigma associated with the Cardroom, and open space for new apartments without attention to the spatialised patterns, paths, and practices residents constructed or tended on the neglected Estate.*

The plans, concocted by 'starchitect' Will Alsop, were designed to attract the middle class back into Manchester, and had little concern with improving the housing conditions for Ancoats' existing residents.

7 *Source:* https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/manchesters-lost-council-estates-history-14585553

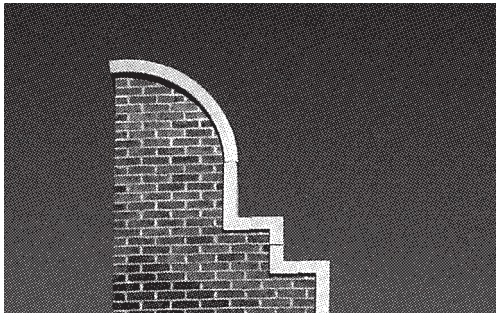
Instead, pushed on by Urban Splash, the focus was on how New Islington might create new typologies of marketised housing across the inner-city, with the aim to bring wealthy people into the district for the first time in its history. No longer would Ancoats be a heavily stigmatized area of the city. Achieving this aim meant expulsion for the urban poor (106 households remained living in the area at this time) in order to create spaces for these new developments. Luke and Kaika (2019) highlighted that, even a decade after demolition of the Cardroom, only 55 new, low income housing units had been built, compared, meaning a net loss of 250 council homes). The example established through the Cardroom Estate highlighted the way that the state was now focused on enabling capital to invest in housing in the district. Estates such as the Cardroom, that had lasted barely 30 years, were now being demolished as part of an explicit gentrification strategy (Lees, 2008) in Ancoats undertaken by the local state in collaboration with the market. We can again turn back to Engels through his work on the "Haussmann" remaking of Paris to see how urban renewal is predicated on displacement. Capital was now switching from the primary (i.e. production) to secondary circuit (i.e. not used in the production process but 'sunk' into fixed assets) in Ancoats. This meant that formerly industrial buildings as sites of production or manufacturing were now transforming into housing and accumulation was enabled through the rent generated from them.

Owen Hatherley (2010: 146), writing about the area during its economic crisis induced stasis, offered a withering appraisal:

> *The farcical attempt on the part of Urban Splash and their state sponsors to build a 'Millennium Community' on the ruins of the Cardroom estate is a pop-public private partnership farrago which has levelled an area of social housing in one of those gentrification frontiers on the edge of Manchester's ring-road.*

Blakeley and Evans (2015: 196), reflecting on the impact of the regeneration in Ancoats and its surrounding neighbourhoods, argued that "East Manchester was successful in addressing some of the symptoms of poverty, if not the fundamental underlying inequalities which lacerate a multiply deprived area." Such a view does little to convey the ways in which the regeneration reinforced inequality across the district, nor the ways in which state-capital relations to housing were transforming the lives of the poor in significant ways.

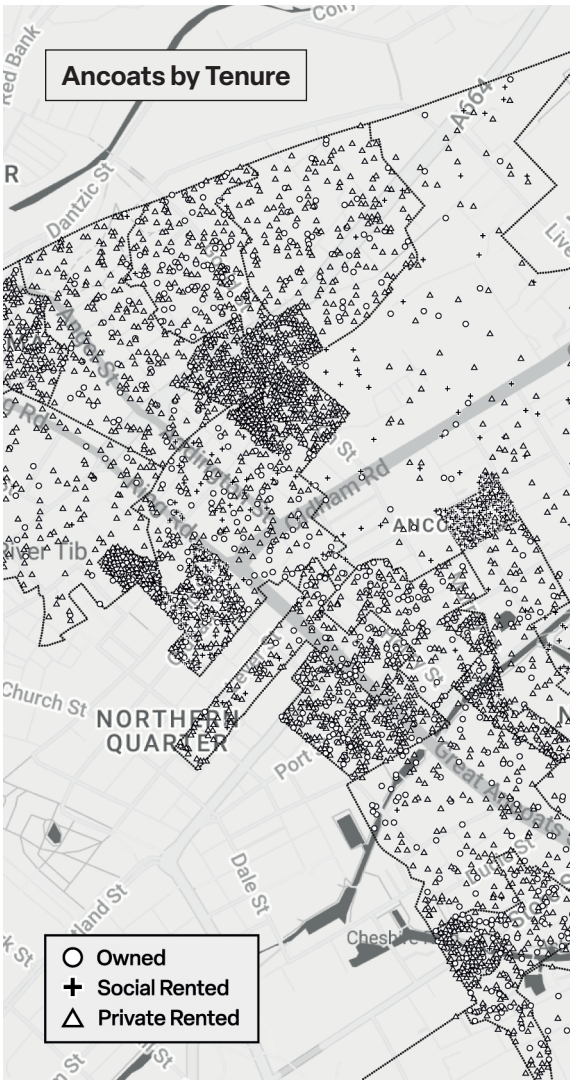
The New Labour market-led approach to housing came to an end with the shock of the 2008 economic crisis and the subsequent brutal waves of the austerity program of the Conservative-Liberal government. These years saw the further withdrawal of the national state from regeneration programs, housing intervention and anti-poverty initiatives, leaving municipalities such as Manchester with less powers, finance and capacity to intervene. Attempts to transform the relations between state and capital in the area would now move towards a new wave of market-based housing, which would leave Ancoats a segregated and fragmented district, with stark divisions between incoming gentrifiers and preexisting stigmatised communities.



7. 2008 onwards: Financialised Municipal Entrepreneurialism

The economic crisis of 2008-09 brought the market-led 'regeneration' of Ancoats, as well as other parts of Manchester and the UK's provincial cities, to a shuddering halt. Investors withdrew from the secondary circuit of capital (Harvey, 1978) as prices dropped, potential buyers struggled to secure mortgage loans from banks facing collapse, and financial returns on new developments evaporated (Van der Heijde, 2011). It left the neighbourhood in a stasis, with the first wave of apartment blocks visible amongst the few industrial buildings left standing, and large areas of cleared land, particularly the Cardroom Estate, facing an uncertain future. The first wave of new residents had made a home in the district and Ancoats would no longer be a space for the economically excluded. In the years of the Conservative-Liberal coalition government, many low-income households faced an unprecedented assault on social welfare programs. Waves of austerity and measures such as the Bedroom Tax, which left those with a 'spare room' facing lower housing benefit from the government, meant further impoverishment for people already living on the margins (Gray and Barford, 2018). Ancoats was beginning to develop a housing geography in which wealth and poverty lived proximate but segregated (see figure to right).

Since the post-crisis recovery, beginning around 2014, Manchester has become a city in which large amounts of capital investment from the UK, and increasingly internationally, has been encouraged by a finance-led regeneration model (see for instance Imrie and Thomas, 1993). The pace and scale of the urban development boom has been dramatic. The consultancy firm Deloitte reported[8] a 133 percent increase in the number of residential units under construction between 2016 and 2017 in the city-centre. And in 2018, 79 development sites were identified with over 25,000 new apartment units on site or with planning permission for the city-regional centre that now included



8 *Source:* Deloitte (2017) Transforming the skyline Manchester Crane Survey https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/uk/Documents/real-estate/deloitte-uk-manchester-crane-survey-17.pdf

parts of Ancoats and was estimated to be worth billions of pounds (Silver, 2018). Much of this growth has emerged from the local and national government focus on remaking the private rented market, with a shift in emphasis from the 'Buy to Let' sector to the larger scale, institutionally friendly, 'Build to Rent sector (BtR). These changes in the way in which housing is constructed, operated, and owned have been understood through the term financialisation, which conveys how financial actors such as pension funds, sovereign wealth funds, billionaires, private equity and other institutions have been able to take ownership of new housing development as an asset to be speculated on, traded and profited from.

Financialisation has become increasingly important in thinking about housing since the 2008 economic crisis (Aalbers, 2017: Fields and Uffer, 2016). David Harvey (1978), picking up on foundational work by Marx and Engels, explained how housing should be

understood as a financial asset that could be held for rent or traded as a commodity. The United Nations defines financialisation as;

> *structural changes in housing and financial markets and global investment whereby housing is treated as a commodity, a means of accumulating wealth and often as security for financial instruments that are traded and sold on [the] global market.*

The financialisation of housing has been more noticeable in larger economically powerful cities such as London, San Francisco and Sydney. However, in recent years these dynamics are now becoming visible in post-industrial regions of the UK such as Manchester (Rose, 20243). This trend can be explained through the surge of surplus capital into the secondary circuit (global real estate investment was estimated at $1.39 trillion in 2017)[9], and the new opportunities being generated through the restructuring of rental markets (Fields and Uffer, 2016). In the case of the UK, housing developments are increasingly built for rental purposes by or for institutional investors. This process can include developers holding onto the housing units or selling them on to various financial institutions and actors, aimed at the rental sector. This new financial 'product' is the key means through which housing financialisation has taken place and allows institutional investors to purchase property, often at scale (for instance, a whole building or urban development site), creating both ongoing rental income and a capital asset. Encouraged by new national guidance and favourable fiscal conditions, thousands of BtR apartments are now operational or in development across Ancoats and Manchester more widely. These new housing spaces are intended to capitalise on rising rents but had the effect of reinforcing the housing crisis that has become increasingly acute during the years of austerity – including through pushing up wider rent levels. The opportunities to profit from housing have therefore differed considerably from the past because it is now straight-forward for large financial actors to invest in the PRS in the city.

IIn Ancoats, this financialisation of housing took on a particularly accelerated form through the establishment of the 'Manchester Life' development vehicle. Over the course of a few years, this scheme has built more than 1,200 new housing units, with no social or affordable housing provision included. Manchester Life has also been the partnership through which Manchester City Council have taken the city into a purported £1 billion housing partnership with Abu Dhabi United Group (ADUG). The Group is a United Arab Emirates based private equity company, owned by Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, member of the Abu Dhabi Royal Family and owner of Manchester City Football Club. The construction of hundreds of new apartments, through a rumoured initial £100 million investment from ADUG and over £50 million of state loans from national government, represents a new phase in the relations between state and capital across the housing of the district. Most visible is the ways in which the financial arrangements underpinning housing development in Ancoats have become increasingly complex, internationalised and financialised, as the local municipality and ADUG established a series of companies based in the secretive tax jurisdiction of Jersey, through which 999 year leases of the land have been transferred and all rental income is sent.

9 *Source:* Cushman Wakefield (2017) Atlas Report http://www.cushmanwakefield.com/en/research-and- insight/2017/investment-atlas-2017/

If Ancoats' built environment was once broadly connected to the financial life of the primary circuit of capital through production and connection to the global networks of 'cotton capitalism' (Beckert, 2015), during which the purpose of housing was to sustain the social reproductive needs of workers for capital, it has now been transformed. Ancoats has become a space in which the secondary circuit of capital has arguably become the dominant economic activity through investment into housing, supplanting the primary circuit of cotton manufacturing in the 19th century. The housing partnership between an English local authority and a vehicle connected to Abu Dhabi royalty is perhaps the most extreme example of what Beswick and Penny (2018) term 'financialized municipal entrepreneurialism.' They argue (p612):

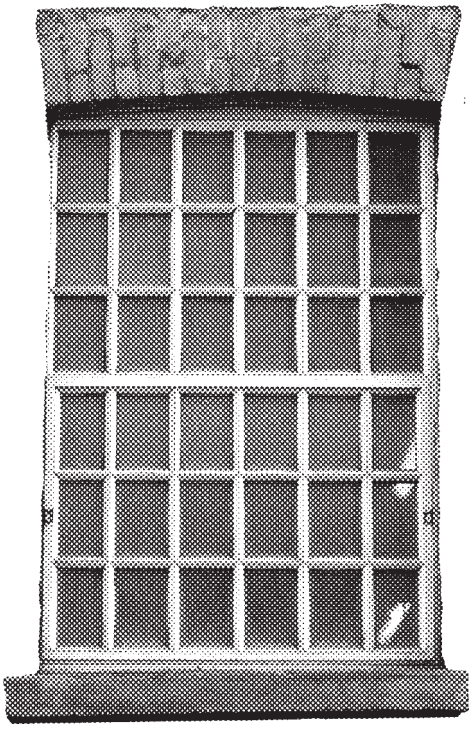
> *The local state is no longer merely the enabler—limited to providing strategic oversight of the private sector—but financializes its practice in a reimagined commercialized interventionism, as property speculator.*

Even since the 1990s, the role of the state in people's lives has fundamentally shifted. It has moved from an enabling function to facilitate private investment into housing in Ancoats during the New Labour era toward an active role as a speculative capitalist actor in the housing market. And it has done this through connecting new flows of petro-wealth into the city and transforming previously public land for marketised housing. In Ancoats, the New Labour focus on creating 'mixed, sustainable communities' has disappeared (Lees, 2008), as the current phase of urban development in the neighbourhood shows little concern with such inclusive, if problematic, discourses. Manchester Life has built housing on the empty land of the old Cardroom Estate with the underlying aim of transforming the demographic composition of the district and creating a dramatic shift in the type and cost of housing in the district. It has arguably created a new segregation dynamic in which rich and poor live not in separate districts, but within the district itself: visibly divided by type of housing. Ancoats has become a space in which council housing and former council housing for the working class sits adjacent to new high-density developments for new middle-class residents as an extension of the city-centre. This shift provides a powerful illustration of how we can visualise the operations of capitalism through housing, reminiscent of the photographic work of Johnny Miller (2018) and his portrayal of urban inequality across the globe.

Furthermore, despite the clear demographic change in the socio-economic status of residents that has been instigated over the last two decades, the experience of new tenants in Ancoats might not have changed so much after all. In August 2019, Section 21 (6A) Eviction Notices were sent to Manchester Life tenants in 'Smith's Yard' (named as a twisted homage to a pub built in 1775 and demolished for the development). The Notice gave tenants two months to leave before the landlord would apply for a court order to retake possession of the property unless they agreed to rent increases of five percent. Again, we see how Engels (1872) understanding of increasing land values pushing up the price of housing for workers operates as critical in the operating of capitalist accumulation across urban land. That this mechanism was being used by a company part-owned by the council highlights the contradictions that lie at the heart of the model of 'financialized municipal entrepreneurialism'. As Engels understood back in 1872, capital is bound to seek the greatest return in the built environment, whatever the consequences for the tenant.

8. Conclusion

In this leaflet we have sought to understand the role of housing in shaping how the other half lives. To do so we have drawn inspiration from the work of Friedrich Engels, and subsequent thinkers within the Marxist political economy tradition. In particular, we focused on his emphasis on thinking through the way housing is shaped by shifting relations between state and capital. We used a case study of the district of Ancoats in Manchester, the world's first industrial suburb and frequented by Engels in developing many of his pivotal, long-lasting ideas. Through historical analysis of the housing geographies of the district and the shifting state/capital relations across two hundred years of life in the neighbourhood we explored the experiences of residents, and the way in which they are intimately tied to the interventions and decisions of the elite.



The actions of the elite - first the 'capital' of factory-owners and land-holders, then the political interventions of the state (even if well-intentioned or driven by the fear of revolution) - shaped the early history and materiality of Ancoats. This was a district frequented by Engels in developing his pivotal ideas on the *Housing Question*. Through historical analysis of the housing geographies and the shifting state/capital relations across decades of life in the neighbourhood we have argued that the changing conditions can be grouped into two eras. We explored the rapid growth of Ancoats as representative of the experience of urban housing during the early stages of industrial capitalism, in which workers lived in unsanitary conditions and the state played little role. These conditions were the direct result of a disregard for the urban workforce by both industrial and land-owning elites, who saw workers as disposable through a lens of class, race and nationality. We showed the ways that the state was compelled to act and intervene in these housing conditions through municipal investment and later on slum clearance programmes. Once again, even well-intentioned interventions by the elite had deleterious effects, including displacement, the destruction of communities, and the redirection of resources from improving existing housing (occasionally producing new housing which still remained unaffordable for residents in Ancoats). In reflecting on these transforming housing geographies in Ancoats, shaped by the shifting relations, logics and actions of the state and capital we emphasised the structural character of inequality, including ways in which race and migration might have shaped the lives of the working classes in Ancoats in the post-war period clearances and abandonment, as well as the impact of stigma and exclusion for those left living on 'sink estates'. We then highlighted the growth of municipal entrepreneurialism and the role of the state

in enabling private sector investment (and the re-introduction of capitalist logics) in housing, with the intention of creating so-called 'mixed communities'. Finally, we showed how housing in Ancoats has now been financialized, particularly through a new partnership between the Council and the ADUG that has accelerated the changing demographic composition of the district.

Today capital and the state continue to remake cities and create new forms of socio-spatial segregation, as well as accumulation opportunities through rent extractions that flow to the elite. Our exploration highlighted some of the ways that these actions have contributed to changing housing geographies in Ancoats. In thinking about the potential future of housing in the district, and more widely in England, the actions of the local state have enabled finance capital to be unleashed in ways that have yet to be fully understood. Through stigmatisation of the neighbourhood and the people who lived there, new opportunities for capital accumulation for an essential form of social reproduction have been created. The next stage of relations between the state and capital in the shaping of housing in the district of Ancoats remains to be written. Whatever happens we are certain that the work of Engels will continue to guide interpretations, providing a Marxist foundation to critically explore ways housing and wider inequality is continually and differentially (re) produced across the built environment.

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