

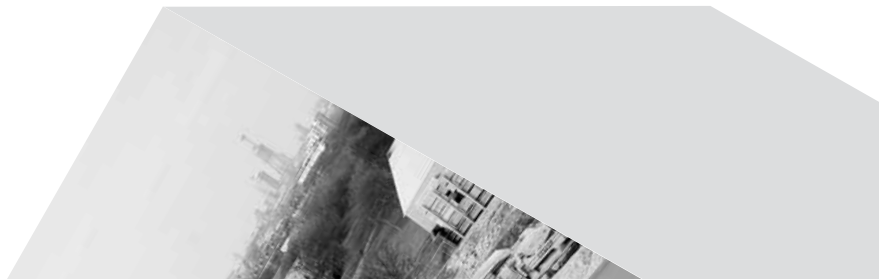
SLIPSTREAM

David
Cotterrell

24 May
– 30 July
2011



Peckham
Space



Introduction

by David Cotterrell

In mapping and planning cities, the physical environment dominates our perception. We explore the landscape via satellite photography and stylised road maps. Decisions made about an area's architectural needs and whether building schemes can be considered to have failed or succeeded are usually informed by statistical analyses and articulated through 'area-wide strategies'.

Cities are complex. The reasons for loyalty, affection, anxiety and alienation are personal and individual; and while maps and aerial photographs can offer a representation of the landscape, these alone cannot allow a person to truly experience what it is like to live within it. The challenge is imagining the experience of others: whether considering how you might feel walking past a flat if your friend and not a stranger was living there or what different views you once would have been able to access from a platform seven metres higher than the pavement on which you now stand.

The alternative to the 'God's Eye View' perspective of masterplans is not obvious or simple. For example, if you attempt to document the first person view, any pretence at objectivity is lost. The choice of whose view we represent defines the selected view as significant, implying that those not represented are less important. Yet if you were to attempt to document all possible perceptions of space, the archive would become near-infinite, impenetrable and, therefore, unusable.

This project does not solve the problems outlined above. Instead it represents a labour-intensive journey to recapture lost views, which might at one point have been easy to attain. The views represented by this project of a landscape defined by an architectural experiment in 'platform living', such as the North Peckham Estate, have not been chosen because they are the most important or most common. Rather, they have been chosen to remind us that each resident, visitor and stranger composes their who experience of a place through combinations of their views – real, imagined, remembered and abstracted.

The idea that some walking amongst us may remember living in and travelling through spaces which are now simply

volumes of air, offers us a gentle reminder of the need to look beyond maps and plans when describing the places we call home and to consider why they mean something to us.

Slipstream a proposal for North Peckham

by David Cotterrell

In London, social change, economic shifts and wars have mandated a continual process of architectural reinvention. Attempts to improve upon the assumptions and solutions of previous generations have resulted in an unending process of repair, modification, demolition and rebuilding of the homes that are symbolic of our aspiration for a more fulfilled life. While indoor plumbing, privacy, access to gardens, shared space and higher quality structures have resulted from some of these changes, with each new solution there are structures, which are rendered redundant; experiences, which become inaccessible and memories, which become fantasies. I am interested in the relationship between navigable, virtual and amenity space.

I have been fascinated by the way visions of the future are sold to us. Frequently huge developments have employed 3D rendered images and 'fly-throughs' to capture the imagination of their clients and possible residents. I intermittently worked in China between 2004 and 2007 and became mesmerised by these airbrushed views of future cities and their popularity. The Olympics, the expo and every major city seemed to have commissioned a version of a fly-through. The typical format included the camera swooping from ground-level to lofty heights as if borne by a stunt helicopter. As the camera circles buildings and returns to earth, balloons and flocks of birds could be seen ascending in the distance.

These promotional architectural videos were compelling for many reasons, the utopian ambition, the confident belief in future transformation and the adoption of a point of view which would be nearly impossible to replicate in reality. The free movement within air and space, carving elegant curves through the sky and around buildings could never relate to the journeys or views that would be experienced by the individual gravity-enslaved inhabitants of the realised landscape (not least because civilian flights over most Chinese

cities are banned for safety reasons). The buildings themselves might obstruct and deny the possibility of this airborne journey across the landscape. Yet even with our linear movements perhaps the success of these animated films was because it related to a mental desire to connect the momentary views from ground-level complexity and high-rise vantage points by seamlessly weaving these perspectives together as territory that our imaginations might freely explore.

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North Peckham Estate: Key Dates

1968 Planning application – 1400 Dwellings
Architect: Southwark Borough Architects,
lead by H P Trenton RIBA with Bill Salnan
(Team Leader) Developer: Bovis Homes

1970 First Phase Building completed

1973 N Peckham Estate initial
build completed

1977 Renewal project to address
problems with the estate

1987 Major Structural Alterations
to remove walkways and address
'Disadvantage by Design'



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Southwark Local History Library
and Archives.

Resident John McGrath

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“Actually the North Peckham Estate was well built. I don’t remember the first contractors, but the second lot I do remember they were called Bovis. They took over and they made a good job of it. We then came back in 1970 to (to live in) North Peckham, we came away from Wood Dene. The only reason we went back to the (North Peckham) estate was because I asked to move back to where we always used to live. In them days [sic] they wanted to keep families together, not now they don’t do that. They loved to see families together and we moved to North Peckham estate for 12 years. The North Peckham was the biggest (estate) there at that time. It was lovely; it had shops on it, everything on it. In 12 years it went downhill.”

Photography John Clare.



“We had fantastic views from the 9th floor balcony at the back of our flat. You could see children playing, those were the days. We used to have this green field downstairs on the ground floor which you could see from the balcony. And all the parents from different areas could just look down and see their children. So when you’re cooking in the kitchen you could just go to the veranda and look at your children playing. And if you want them up you just shout ‘come up food is ready’ and then they will hear and they would come up the stairs.”

Photography by John Clare



“The first place I lived in England was the North Peckham Estate. I lived there from 1984–2000 and then they demolished my block. They re-housed me in a ‘town house’ style house. We used to live on the second floor. We were short of space but there was more green then, which I can’t see now. But we also had more people using the green space. A lot of people have moved from the area now as there aren’t any tower blocks.”

Photography by John Clare

Peckham Space has worked in partnership with residents from North Peckham to commission David Cotterrell to produce new artwork 'Slipstream' for exhibition 24 May–30 July 2011.

Peckham Space launched in June 2010, and is London's newest purpose-built public gallery dedicated to commissioning artworks made in partnership with community groups. Located on Peckham Square, London SE15 and part of Camberwell College of Arts, University of the Arts London, this new organisation seeks to increase access to and participation in contemporary art.

Please see our Slipstream public programme available online or from our venue 89 Peckham High Street, London SE15 5RS.

For further information about Slipstream, please email info@peckhamspace.com or call 0207 358 9645 or go to www.peckhamspace.com.

