

CHAPTER 1

Aspects of Change

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I

London can never be taken for granted. The city is too vast, too complex, too contrary and too moody to become entirely familiar. And there are moments when well-known features of her townscape stand out surprisingly, as they might to a foreign tourist or to the expatriate who at last comes home.

From Kensington to King's Cross early on a June morning the sights and sounds of London just awakening have a novel clarity. The roads of Georgian and Victorian houses converted into flats are still packed with parked cars; the Espresso bars are still locked up; the new under-pass (or rather bottleneck) at Hyde Park Corner is still empty; the tall Hilton Hotel at Park Lane, recently finished, stands out clumsily; Marble Arch and Grosvenor Square, now deserted, where the American eagle is so conspicuous, are a reminder of days of international crisis, of protest demonstrations, of bewilderment and fear. In this region of 'high rise' office blocks, apartment houses, genteel shop windows and an occasional supermarket, prosperity is freshly painted on: there is an air of expectancy. But all that is left far behind already ten minutes later in the peeling plaster zone of Euston, where the monotony of narrow back streets, grimy and dreary, is only rarely interrupted by a once-Italian café or a more recent Indian restaurant; and then again by glimpses of a remarkable 'vertical feature'—the Post Office tower off Tottenham Court Road. Nor has King's Cross acquired a look very different from that it had twenty or thirty years ago. And yet it works differently. The armies of commuters who arrive every morning to work in Central London have grown steadily. And nowadays most of the porters are black or brown men from the West Indies.

At any hour, London in 1963 shows the juxtaposition of new and old, both in the fabric and in the structure of society. The innovations, just because they are unequally distributed and often apparently incongruous, are more visible than the old patches. Even so, they might well be deceptive. And for those of us whose own personal history is entangled with London's post-war history, it may be rather difficult to recognize all the signs of ageing, as well as of rejuvenation, in the face of the city. But some of these changes are unmistakable.

There is a gleam of affluence in most of Central London and in many of the suburbs—of a much more widespread affluence than has ever been there before. At least so it seems at first sight. It shows itself in an abundance of goods and gadgets, of cars and new buildings—in an apparently mounting flow of consumption. There are far more soft and hard drinking and eating places than there used to be (and they are open for longer hours). The shops are crammed with personal and household paraphernalia which

had previously been neither in mass production nor for mass use. The wrapping and labelling of commodities—small or large, practical or ornamental, frozen or fresh, dehydrated or puffed up—have a new gloss. The luxuries of yesterday, or the imitations of yesterday's luxuries, have become the necessities of today for large sections of the population.

Together with—or rather because of—this new diversity of consumption, there is also, apparently, a new uniformity. Superficially, class distinctions in looks, clothes and in domestic equipment have narrowed considerably: differences in many of these respects are now more noticeably determined by age than by social status. Conventional terms of social categorization, such as 'black-coated worker' or 'white-collar worker', no longer have a straightforward descriptive value.

It is often said—by anyone who sees contemporary London after a considerable absence—that the city is in the process of being 'Americanized'. Indeed, judging from general impressions of the city's looks and standards of living, the contrast between Central London and mid-town Manhattan, for example, is no longer as striking as it used to be before, and immediately after, World War II. London is now decidedly a representative of the affluent Western world, with fewer individual characteristics than she had in a previous period. But in being just that, London is also experiencing, increasingly, the hardships inherent in that affluent world. And—typical again—it seems that she is not making a good job of coping with them.

As a place in which to settle, to work, to move about in, London has become acutely harassing and highly inefficient. This is largely the result of a long history of trial and error in urban development. The various notions or measures which have been adopted at different stages to make London smaller, and which in some respects have succeeded in doing so, have also made London larger. Just because the population size of the County has steadily declined—both through a voluntary and a planned dispersal—the size of the metropolitan area has been steadily expanded. People have been sent, or have wanted to go, farther and farther outwards, though many of them are still dependent, directly or indirectly, upon the employment and services located in Central London. All sorts of factors have contributed to this process of suburbanization—the increasing mobility of labour resulting from improvements in employment conditions and in transport; the general rise in standards of living; social aspirations (in particular, the frequent association of the idea of suburbia with that of 'respectability'); as well as general policies and schemes. But the total effect upon London has hardly been a satisfactory one. The problems of 'bigness' have not been solved; they have been shifted and changed.

Even now, the County is still losing population, while the number of jobs in Central London is still growing; and thus also the number of commuters who work in the centre. Their daily journeys are still becoming longer, more awkward, and more expensive in terms of individual and social costs. And these long journeys every morning and evening—whether of people or goods, by rail or road—impede short-distance traffic in the central area. In fact, though communications have become faster, more convenient and more varied, they have also become slower and more cumbersome. All day long, Central London is a zone of bottlenecks, of stand-stills, of almost frozen traffic. Any of the special occasions, special and yet part of the metropolitan routine—a Buckingham Palace garden party, a fall of snow, a State visit, the Chelsea flower show—can produce utter chaos. There is no room for manoeuvre.

But the traffic problem—the Number One problem at first sight—is only the most overt symptom of new incongruities in the habitat and society of London. Socially and ideologically, too, communications

are strained: they have been both speeded up and obstructed. People travel about more; they see and hear more of events at home and abroad. And yet, driving in their cars, sitting in front of their television screens, they are more on their own than they used to be. While knowledge of science and technology is expanding rapidly, though at an unequal rate in different fields, it does so within the framework of a society which is remarkably slow in developing its capacities for self-recognition and rational organization. The acquisition of knowledge, moreover, in advancing as in stationary disciplines, is arranged so as to put a premium on departmentalization. Already, before his career has started, the sixth-form schoolboy or the student finds it difficult to leave his cell. On balance, have our horizons been widened or narrowed?

Social distances have become simultaneously both shorter and longer. There is a good deal of movement—pedestrian, vehicular, occupational. With the advance of technology, with the increase in the division of labour and of consumer expenditure, new occupations have developed, especially middle-class occupations. (Look at the advertisements in the ‘quality’ newspapers. Wanted: project engineer, production executive, system analyst, computer shift leader, sales promotion specialist, attitude tester, beauty operator, public relations manager, window-dresser, and many more of many different kinds.) Some of the old menial occupations are becoming extinct, or are likely to disappear. There has been some re-shuffling of social groups, mainly again among the middle classes. New minority groups have appeared. But none of this movement is matched by an increase in genuine social mobility. The old class alignments are being maintained—or copied. And they may even at times be more noticeable, and be less taken for granted, than before, just because some of the conventional status distinctions have become blurred. Altogether, is there more or less social claustrophobia than there was in a previous period?

II

Although such questions have become commonplace, they cannot be avoided. We meet them wherever we go, certainly in London. All around us, we see so many contradictory tendencies; and the same phenomena are subject to contradictory interpretations. Perhaps this was always so, and it is the sharpened awareness of history in the making—on a scale, with a speed and complexity visibly greater than ever before—which directs the attention of some contemporary ‘participant-observers’ so strongly to the equivocal aspects of the current situation. But, be that as it may, if one does look at society as one finds it, here and now, as closely and widely as possible, one cannot help being preoccupied with the ambiguities in its conditions and prospects.

It could be said, for example, that Britain, in general—or London, in particular—has more social homogeneity than in the interwar and immediate post-war periods. Millions of people from different social classes and localities consume the same diet of radio and television programmes, advertisements and films; they are subject to a national network of retail outlets, newspapers, public services, institutions and organizations; they uphold the same national symbols. Differences between modes of life in city, suburb and village have become fainter. There are not only daily, but also weekly and seasonal journeys to and fro—as a result of the increasing use of private transport and of holidays with pay. There is also more sameness in the physical environment both between and within areas of the

country than there used to be. Urban diffusion—in economic and cultural terms—was preceded, and is still accompanied, by the vast spread of suburbia, some of whose characteristics have been introduced in or near urban centers, as well as in the countryside. It had been the dream of nineteenth century British reformers—a dream revived and translated into concrete plans during the inter-war and immediate post-war years—to re-make cities in the image of idealized rustic settlements, and to introduce urban amenities into rural areas. This dream has not been an idle one. Urban, suburban and rural areas have thus been encouraged to merge into one another; and they have lost some of their differentiating features.

Similar effects have, moreover, been brought about by a combination of deliberate and incidental developments. The large programme of urban reconstruction and re-building since World War II has had the result of reducing the contrasts between rich and poor districts within the boundary of the present County. Indeed, some of the conventional distinctions have been reversed; the new homes of working class and lower middle class people, who are municipal tenants, are frequently superior in design and appearance to the older ‘luxury flats’ and expensive houses of private tenants or owner-occupiers. Local authority housing and ancillary schemes have so much improved the looks and amenities of several districts—in sections of Paddington, Kensington, Westminster and elsewhere—that private developers have been prompted to renovate adjacent streets. The days when the building of a municipal estate in a ‘respectable’ area was bitterly resented, and when such an estate was ostracized by its better-off neighbours, are now past—at least in and around Central London.

When the *New Survey of London Life and Labour* was carried out in the late twenties, it was found in its review of ‘forty years of change’—the forty years which had gone by since Charles Booth’s voluminous first survey was begun—that the reduction of poverty had been greater in the western than in the eastern area.¹ In general, the distinction between east and west had been accentuated. But since then, this process has, apparently, not continued. Large areas of the East End have been transformed—in a manner which contributes a good deal to the prestige of municipal architecture, even if it is not invariably of a high standard. And while planning and public enterprise have played a positive part in diminishing the outward differences between London’s residential districts, *laissez faire* has played a part also, though in the long run a negative one.

One by one, many of the working class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle classes—upper and lower. Shabby, modest mews and cottages—two rooms up and two down—have been taken over, when their leases have expired, and have become elegant, expensive residences. Larger Victorian houses, downgraded in an earlier or recent period—which were used as lodging houses or were otherwise in multiple occupation—have been upgraded once again. Nowadays, many of these houses are being sub-divided into costly flats or ‘houselets’ (in terms of the new real estate snob jargon). The current social status and value of such dwellings are frequently in inverse relation to their size, and in any case enormously inflated by comparison with previous levels in their neighbourhoods. Once this process of ‘gentrification’ starts in a district, it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working class occupiers are displaced, and the whole social character of the district is changed. There is very little left of the poorer enclaves of Hampstead and Chelsea: in those boroughs, the upper-middle class take-over was consolidated some time ago. The invasion has since spread to Islington, Paddington, North Kensington—even to the ‘shady’ parts of Notting Hill—to Battersea, and to several other districts, north

and south of the river. (The East End has so far been exempt.) And this is an inevitable development, in view of the demographic, economic and political pressures to which London, and especially Central London, has been subjected.

Competition for space has become more and more intense in London. Various factors combine to sharpen this competition—the ‘natural increase’ of commerce and related economic activities; the emergence of new occupations and pursuits; the demands for travelling and parking space made by the rapidly growing motorcar population;² the improvements and consequent spatial expansion of social, educational and ancillary services. The upward swing in standards of living, moreover, not only contributes to all the other space requirements, but also increases those of individual households, and helps to create more households. As real incomes and aspirations rise, as people get married earlier and live longer, existing households split up, and there is a higher ratio of households to population, with a consequent increased demand for separate dwellings.³ Last but not least, the competition for space thus produced is bound to get out of hand, and lead to a spiral of land values, if it is neither anticipated nor controlled. And this is precisely what has happened.

The *Greater London Plan* of 1944⁴ was prepared in a restrictionist mood—on premises inherited from a period of economic depression, when there were fears of, and also neo-malthusian hopes for, a population decline; and when it was thought that the metropolitan area could be rigidly contained. The plan did not take either the demographic or economic facts of life into account: it was based on the assumption that there would be a stationary population, economy and culture. It has hardly been a suitable framework for the guidance of development in a period of expansion. And while it has been (and is still) used as such, with various qualifications, its cardinal positive concept—that of genuine ‘planning’ in the public interest—has been increasingly abandoned. Since the fifties, town and country planning legislation has, in essence, been anti-planning legislation: the 1947 Act has been drastically amended; development rights have been de-nationalized; development values have been unfrozen; real estate speculation has thus been ‘liberated’. These measures, together with the relaxation of rent control, have given the green light to the continuing inflation of property prices with which London, even more than other large cities, is afflicted.⁵ In such circumstances, any district in or near London, however dingy or unfashionable before, is likely to become expensive; and London may quite soon be a city which illustrates the principle of the survival of the fittest—the financially fittest, who can still afford to work and live there.⁶ (Not long ago, the then Housing Minister advised those who cannot pay the price to move out.) Thus London, always a ‘unique city’, may acquire a rare complaint. While the cores of other large cities in the world, especially of those in the United States, are decaying, and are becoming ghettos of the ‘underprivileged’, London may soon be faced with an *embarras de richesse* in her central area—and this will prove to be a problem, too.

But whatever the consequences of such a surfeit of honey, the fact remains that the social geography of London shows some signs of a drawing together—the broad divisions are less striking than they were twenty or even ten years ago. And yet there are also contrary signs of a moving apart—of a new kind of diversification, which may well be equally, if not more, significant.

As standards of living rise and land values even more so, as old working class districts are reconstructed, and others are increasingly hemmed in, the remaining pockets of blight become denser. Some of these quarters, off the beaten track—which are low on the list of municipal development and not ‘ripe’ for private investment—are left to decay. They have been neglected for so long that they are taken for granted. Others, nearer the main routes, adjacent to expanding middle class areas, become lodging-house districts, where all sorts of people who have to keep, or who want to obtain, a foothold in Central London are crammed together—and frequently have to pay exorbitant rents for the privilege. Such districts cannot be so easily by-passed: they are quite often in the news; they figure in crime statistics; they are the places where the most notorious shark landlords operate; their mobile population, and especially the owners of their ‘widowers’ houses’, have connexions with social groups at all levels, from the top to the bottom of the social scale. Not all the inhabitants of these ‘zones of transition’ are in fact poor. Here are people who must stay near their work in the centre, or who cannot afford to move to the suburbs. Here are families who are at the tail end of the municipal housing queue; and also those who are not eligible for such housing, or who cannot pay local authority rents. Here are immigrants from other parts of Britain or overseas who nowadays can find hardly any open doors—especially if their skin is coloured—and who have to take the left-overs of accommodation, however dingy, however expensive. They go to houses which are already crowded; several of them share a room to meet the cost. It is a motley collection of people who are pushed into these ‘twilight’ zones—long established Londoners and newcomers; Europeans and Asians; the Irish, the West Indians, the Poles; families of ‘respectable’ manual and clerical workers; students; delinquents and prostitutes. All of them have one thing in common: their housing needs are being exploited; and the very frictions which their crowded, insecure situation creates tend to be exploited, too. It is in such districts that the many sub-cultures of London come together and yet remain estranged.

But the anachronistic slums and the tense zones of transition are not the only places in which the pluralism of London society is visible. Wherever we go, we can get glimpses of the many unfamiliar worlds in this one metropolitan constellation. We can see them in the mean streets, in luxury flats, along the roads of suburban ribbon development; in places like Eel Pie Island, where various cliques of teenagers congregate; in jazz clubs, coffee bars, Soho joints, and expense account restaurants; in the withdrawing rooms of earnest religious or political sects; at Speakers’ Corner in Hyde Park or the Earls Court Road; at meetings in Trafalgar Square; in public libraries, senior common rooms, and at soirées of the Royal Society. We get an inkling of the existence of other remote and yet nearby worlds through migration statistics; through fascist news-sheets and ‘nigger-baiting’ scrawls on the walls of back alleys; through unsavoury court cases or complaints before rent tribunals; in reading Press items about witch rites, ghost hunts, visits from Martians, and take-over bids. And then again, we may hear of the ‘hidden’ societies through reports of hospital almoners, N.S.P.C.C. inspectors, or social workers who bring ‘meals on wheels’ to lonely old people. It is an amazing, still largely obscured, panorama that thus begins to be visible—a conglomeration of groups who move, so to speak, on separate tracks, even if they do meet occasionally at a station. And in this assembly, it is not only the marginal men who appear to be segregated—the atavistic, the cranky, the lunatic fringes, the various ‘security risks’, the backroom boys

of business tycoons—but also the many inbred intellectual and artistic circles; the fraternities of the young; and large sections of the population whose mode of life is unknown because they live, anonymously, in secluded domesticity. They are not represented in the popular or highbrow serials.

*‘There are those who are in darkness
And there are others in the light
And sure one sees those in brightness
Those in darkness are out of sight.’⁷*

What is this new pattern, and is it in fact new? There is some interlocking of social groups. Even so, the impression remains—and often it is the dominant one—that there is increasing segmentation. It seems that what is happening is neither an obliteration nor an accentuation of long established class cleavages, but the superimposition of a criss-cross web of social divisions, which has as yet been hardly recognized.

Indeed, it is difficult to trace this pattern just because it is so ambiguous and incoherent, neither tied together nor sharply divided. It is the pattern of a society which lacks both deliberate concord and straightforward conflict: it seems to consist of a tangle of sub-groups and sub-cultures which, however dissimilar, manage to co-exist, without much mutual awareness, in fairly self-contained compartments. Apparently, they can do so, at least at present, because they are lodged in a setting which is by and large sufficiently spacious to accommodate disparate elements, with partitions solid enough to muffle dissonant noises; which is sufficiently well provided with standardized supplies—of commodities, newsprint and verbiage—to camouflage differences among the consumers; and which is believed to be sufficiently hygienic to prevent epidemics of physical or social pathology. Such are the comforts of society in an ‘advanced’ industrial economy, as seen nowadays in the largest city of the Commonwealth.

This society has been characterized by various adjectives—affluent, open, irresponsible. There is inertia and complacency; there is also a good deal of talk about social malaise, decline of morals, lack of purpose, disintegration of ‘community’. Dichotomous terms are fashionable once again—the ‘two nations’ (used nowadays in referring to the South and North of Britain); the ‘two cultures’. Even the alien word *Angst* has been introduced into the vocabulary of editorials. No doubt, it is a confused society, or rather a series of societies—both anxious and self-satisfied; and the various epithets applied to it do not make confusion less confounded. They have quickly gained currency as clichés and even as *idées fixes*, which can be dismissed, or which can be accepted as substitutes for more thorough, perhaps more unpalatable, analyses. Anyhow, the need for such analyses is only intermittently evident: in general, confusion is more real than is apparent. It tends to be concealed by the whole apparatus of communications that gives the impression of clarity, candour and close-ups. The apparent mobility of passengers, goods and news; the weighty comments and tactful gossip in some sections of the Press; the intimate ‘revelations’ in others; the presence of faces and places from near and far at the domestic fireside—all this has promoted illusions of ‘togetherness’; of ‘mingling with the mighty’ (without having to go to Madame Tussaud’s); of watching a full display of the social scene.⁸ And as the image of the

frank and free society is so assiduously promoted, there is bound to be severe disappointment whenever it is manifestly fictitious. But it is only on rare critical occasions that more than a few even begin to know what they do not know.

The major influences to which we are nowadays subjected can have, and do have, both integrating and divisive effects. And it seems that it is the latter, however disguised, which are predominant. [...]

All these tendencies, and their manifold ramifications, are reflected in London—more plainly and thus also more confusingly here than elsewhere in Britain. London's physical structure has been influenced by the ups and downs of post-war history—by the earlier spurts of planning in the public interest, and by the later phases of *laissez-faire*, profitable for particular private interests. Large-scale municipal development remains as the testimony of the late forties and early fifties, and is here and there still being rounded off. The growing array of commercial and residential showpieces—of imitation 'towers' which are generally more imposing in price than in height or design—represents the latter period. And so do the forgotten slums, the 'half-way houses' for homeless people, and the sordid 'zones of transition' which are wedged in between the expanding well-to-do districts.

Change and stagnation exist side by side. Despite war-time destruction and the shifts in post-war direction, the general land-use map of the County and its fringes has been a remarkably persistent one. The residential quarters and open spaces, the various kinds of offices, retail trade, entertainment, of professional and social services—all these have largely remained, or have been re-established, in the same locations in which they were long ago. It is the manufacturing industries which have moved; their expansion has taken place in the outer areas; the small workshops have tended to disappear. There has thus been some sorting-out of land use in areas where homes, commercial and industrial establishments were crowded together. And the more detailed maps show other revisions as well—changes within each of the broad 'land-use classes', as well as changes in the occupancy and appearance of the buildings which represent the various categories of land use. Independent retailers have given way to chain stores; the sites of small food shops have been taken by supermarkets, and those of shabby Italian restaurants by Espresso bars. The social status of many residential areas is being uplifted. Offices are increasingly housed in 'prestige' buildings; and there is a tendency to reserve the scarce costly space available for people in 'prestige' occupations, while the more menial clerical workers are replaced by machines, or are 'decentralized'. (This tendency, characteristic of central areas of high land values, is already far more advanced in American cities, especially in Manhattan.) In general, moreover, the process of differentiation in land use has continued. The districts of Harley Street, Fleet Street and Bloomsbury, for example, have become even more specialized: they are now definite enclaves of the particular functions with which their names have long been synonymous. (Similarly, antique dealers have taken over most of the shops in streets, as in parts of Kensington, in which there were a few well known antique shops before.) Altogether there has thus been a great deal of displacement. All those who cannot hold their own in the sharp competition for space—the small enterprises, the lower ranks of people, the odd men out—are being pushed away. And although the squeeze is becoming tighter still, only sporadic efforts have been made so far to counteract it. Not much has been done to utilize the existing space more economically, and to provide more space—to dig down (for car parks and tunnels); to build upwards; to reconstruct whole districts and roads, like layer cakes, on several levels. [...]

Despite the considerable shifts of population, of fortunes and policies, the socio-geographical pattern of Greater London has, therefore, been a rather stubborn one. It still presents the divisions inherent in a society with an acknowledged class structure—and in a society, moreover, whose inherent conflicts have been averted or softened because upper class modes of living were regarded less with enmity than with curiosity; they were taken as models to be imitated, and handed down from the middle to the lower groups of the social hierarchy. London's suburban sprawl is indicative of such imitations. Already, during the nineteenth century, the main status symbol of the aspiring middle classes was some version of the aristocratic country house (or better still the acquisition of the genuine article); later on, white-collar and manual workers in steady employment asserted their position in a suburban villa—or, like Mr Pooter, in a substitute for a suburban villa. It was mainly the poorer sections of the metropolitan working class—especially the people of the East End and of the southern riverside boroughs—who wanted to stay behind in 'good old London', and who have throughout retained their loyalties to their own districts. But even they have had to participate increasingly in the suburban exodus.

So London has grown in a conservative fashion, by a process of aggregation, producing more of the same. In the course of expansion, the old social boundaries have been perpetuated and extended. Indeed—as described by W. Ashworth in the case of suburban development in Essex—in general, both the scale and nature of London's expansion have had the effect of inhibiting, rather than of encouraging, radical changes in socio-geographical alignments.

Recently, however, there have been signs of new tendencies, and thus of new combinations and of new splits in the established pattern. Upper class standards are seen to be more ambiguous, and are no longer so widely accepted as models as they were before. There are, moreover, shifts in the orientation of the upper and middle classes themselves: their antiurban bias, in particular, has been substantially modified. Similarly, the higher ranks of the working class, whose ambitions were previously focused upon suburbia, have begun to change their minds. The alterations in the domestic economy of all these groups; the earlier establishment of households as a result of younger marriages; the growing proportion of married women in employment; the difficulties and rising cost of journeys to work—all these factors contribute to a switch from suburban to urban aspirations.⁹ Especially among the vast contingent of commuters who arrive every morning in Central London, there are many who would now much prefer to live nearer to the core of the London labour market. Thus although the drift to the suburbs is continuing, it has become to a considerable extent an involuntary one—dictated by the increasingly acute shortage of reasonably priced accommodation in or around the County of London.¹⁰ In current circumstances this new demand for homes near the metropolitan centre is bound to remain largely unsatisfied. For it has arisen, and it is growing, at a time when the de-control of property values and rents has made private enterprise predominant in urban development;¹¹ and when the resulting new spurt in real estate speculation has greatly intensified the competition for, and the pressure on, space. [...]

NOTES

1. [Hubert Llewellyn Smith](#), ed., *The New Survey of London Life and Labour*, 9 vols., 1930–35. See Vol. VI, *Survey of Social Conditions, the Western area*, pp. 1–28.
2. [During the past twelve years](#), the number of motor car licences issued by the London County Council has more than trebled: from 128, 575 licences (one per 8.7 households) in 1950 to 408,830 (one per 2.7 households in the L.C.C. area) in 1962.
3. [From 1931 to 1961](#), average household size declined from 3.69 to 2.89 persons per household in the County of London, and similarly in Greater London (the Conurbation). Thus while there was a decrease of 27 per cent in the total population of the County during that period, there was only a decrease of 7 per cent in the number of actual separate households—quite apart from that of ‘concealed’ households who could not establish themselves as separate units because they could not find separate dwellings of their own. (If most of the latter had in fact split off, the total number of households in the County would have remained stable, or would even have slightly increased.) During that period of thirty years, the population of the London Conurbation has remained almost stationary (there was a drop of one per cent only); but the number of actual separate households (excluding ‘concealed’ households) has increased by 25 per cent.
4. [Patrick Abercrombie](#), *Greater London Plan*, 1944.
5. [The Town and Country Planning Act](#), 1947, nationalized both development rights and post-1947 development values; through various devices, it stabilized land values at the 1947 level; it stipulated that a ‘development charge’ had to be paid into the public purse for the ‘betterment’ of land values accruing from post-1947 ‘development’ in the statutory sense. These measures helped to create a coherent planning system: they were essential counterparts of the provisions for development control laid down in the Act. Without them, such control is bound to defeat its purpose: in particular, the permissions for ‘development’ (given by local planning authorities) would be bound to lead to land speculation; to a rise in the value of any land whose development has been sanctioned, and can be profitably carried out; and thus also, of course, to the build-up of considerable pressures to modify the operations of development control so that they yield, generally, the maximum private profits in the use of land. Subsequent legislation amending the 1947 Act has had the very effect, first, of inviting such pressures; and then of giving way to them. Following a White Paper issued by the first post-war Conservative Government (in November 1952), the Town and Country Planning Act of 1953 abolished the development charge (and also certain compensation provisions of the 1947 Act). The amending Act of 1954 provided (with a number of exceptions) that compensation would be payable for the prevention or severe restriction of development imposed through planning control. This legislation was the first step in the denationalization of development rights and values; and in the restoration of a free market in land. The Town and Country Planning Act, 1959, completed the process. While previously the principle of stabilizing land values at the 1947 level was still maintained—though with significant modifications—the 1959 Act abolished the principle. In essence, the Act stipulated that land

bought by public authorities through compulsory acquisition—or by agreement instead of compulsory acquisition—should be paid for on the basis of the full current market value of the land, including its full development value at the time of acquisition. This was not (as it seemed to many people at the time) a highly technical, rather innocuous measure. It has had, predictably, far-reaching consequences. Since then, the free market in land has been generally restored. Similarly, a free market in rents has been largely restored, mainly through the Rent Act, 1957. The weakening of public control in all matters of urban development (in the broadest sense) brought about by this legislation has been accelerated, moreover, by a variety of other statutory and administrative measures—such as reductions in the real value of Exchequer contributions to housing subsidies (for municipal housing); by the increasing stringency in local authority finance; and by the growing tendency to delegate various functions, including planning functions, to the smaller local authorities. (The Town and Country Planning Acts here mentioned, together with other relevant statutes or sections of statutes, have been consolidated in the Town and Country Planning Act, 1962. The provisions concerning compulsory acquisition are also consolidated in the Land Compensation Act, 1961.)

6. [This kind of trend has cumulative effects](#). As land values rise, the scarce expensive commercial space has to be allocated increasingly to the higher levels of managerial and executive staffs. Thus already in 1951, Central London had a disproportionate share of jobs for men in occupations classified in the Census as belonging to social classes I and II. These were the people who at that time still lived predominantly in the suburbs, and had to travel daily to their places of work in the centre. Consequently, the proportion of these ‘upper’ social classes was then considerably higher among the daytime male occupied population of the central, East End and South Bank employment zones than among the nighttime resident male population of these areas. But as journeys to work become more harassing, it is such upper and middle class people, especially, who think of acquiring—and who indeed need and can afford to acquire—some sort of a home, if only a *pied à terre*, near their places of work. Hence there is a mounting spiral: the competition for both commercial and residential space is bound to grow; and land values and rents are bound to rise still further—so long as they remain decontrolled.
7. [Bertold Brecht’s *Threepenny Opera*](#), the final verse of the Moritat.
8. [In some circles—well beyond Fleet Street](#), Soho, Bloomsbury and Hampstead—the revival of political satire, a by-product of the current period of transition as it has been of similar periods elsewhere, also contributes to such illusions. Satire, though by no means the same as political critique, can so easily be regarded as evidence of uninhibited critique—by and for ‘insiders’.
9. [This change from suburban to urban aspirations is](#), moreover, both reflected and accentuated by a corresponding (though not unanimous) trend in the attitudes of architects and town planners. (This latter trend gained strength mainly through the Festival of Britain in 1951—through its exhibitions at the South Bank and in Lansbury, ...) And the varied examples of genuinely ‘urban design’, which have accordingly been provided by architects—especially by those working for public authorities—have in turn encouraged pro-urban orientations among groups of potential ‘clients’.
10. [The steady decline in the population of the County of London has continued in the decade 1951 to 1961](#); and it is apparently still continuing. During this last decade, the out-county rings of the

Conurbation (and the Conurbation as a whole) have also begun to show a population decline—for the first time in this century. The Conurbation itself has become an ‘inner’ area. The frontiers of the still-expanding ‘Greater London’ are being pushed even further outwards.

11. **Private enterprise is certainly predominant in non-residential development**, and increasingly also, once again, in the provision of housing. In 1951, 12 per cent of all new permanent dwellings built during that year were provided by private enterprise; in 1961, the comparable figure had risen to 64 per cent. (Thus conversely, the share of public authorities in the provision of new housing had dropped from 88 per cent to 36 per cent.) So far, the increase in the share of private enterprise housing has not been quite so steep in the London Conurbation as in the country as a whole; nor has it been equally distributed throughout the Conurbation.