Stories in the Sky VR: Immersive storytelling, heritage-led stakeholder engagement, and community fatigue

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Abstract

Stories in the Sky VR was a prototype immersive storytelling experience focusing on Park Hill, Sheffield. The project explored the way that immersive technologies can be used as part of heritage-led community engagement, as a means to articulate intangible heritage. Park Hill represents one of the most divisive buildings in the country; it was regarded as a success in the 1960s, saw a period of dramatic decline in the 1980s and 1990s, and is currently being regenerated by Urban Splash, following the estate's Grade II* listing in 1998. Through its redevelopment, Park Hill has not only seen an overhaul in its design, but also in the community that now calls the estate home, having transitioned from council estate to gentrified flats.

Park Hill represented an ideal testing ground to investigate the potential of immersive technologies, with storytelling embedded in these "flats of the future" since their inception. While the listing details the estate's value derives from its innovative design, Park Hill also has strong roots in the intangible, through its sense of enduring community, identities, and experiences. Stories in the Sky VR attempted to implement a "bottom-up" approach, giving the stakeholders more control over the narrative and nature of the immersive experience. Ultimately, this proved difficult to achieve, with the fatigue of interviews and tourism having soured large-scale interest in these types of projects. In place of new interviews, previously recorded oral testimonies were utilised to shape the focus of the immersive experience. The feedback for Stories in the Sky VR demonstrated that immersive experiences represent valuable tools to spark discussion on experience, and to successfully articulate intangible heritage, but for the case of Park Hill, it is concluded that the control of community-driven heritage might be better served developing from within.

Authors Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 : Aims of the project

Stories in the Sky VR was a prototype immersive storytelling experience focusing upon Park Hill, Sheffield. The project explored the way that immersive technologies could be used to facilitate community place-making for heritage sites, and whether they could represent a format to capture and present intangible heritage. Within this context, Stories in the Sky VR aimed to understand how community groups engaged with digital heritage projects, and the appetite for community participation for this kind of work. For heritage-led community engagement projects, there has been a tendency to implement "top-down" approaches, with little involvement from the community stakeholders. Stories in the Sky VR aimed, in contrast, to implement a "bottom-up" approach, which would work closely with a diverse range of stakeholders, and give them more control over the narrative and nature of the immersive experience. With a "bottom-up" approach, the project aimed to create something that would be of use to the community stakeholders, and articulates their ideas, and their understanding of heritage.

The main aims at the start of Stories in the Sky VR were as follows:

- To implement a "bottom-up" approach, which works closely with community stakeholders on the content and focus of the project's output
- To determine whether a diverse range of community stakeholders would be interested in engaging with these kinds of digital heritage projects
- To create a prototype immersive experience which captures intangible heritage, through a diverse range of identities and experiences

1.2 : Park Hill

Park Hill represents one of the most divisive buildings in the country. The estate is a complex and contested place, with a diverse range of community stakeholders, all with their own varying experience of the site. Completed in 1961 by Jack Lynn and Ivor Smith, under the supervision of city architect J. Lewis Womersley, this modernist icon was designed to re-house those living in Victorian slums, with the aim of placing them next to each other in the multi-storey "streets in the sky." Park Hill has had a notable and contradictory reputation; it was regarded as a success in the 1960s but saw a period of dramatic decline in the 1980s and 1990s. The estate was saved from demolition by its Grade II* listing in 1998, which detailed the international importance of the place as Sheffield's flagship for public housing, and the significance of its innovative design features (Appendix 1).

While the estate's Grade II* listing argues Park Hill's main value derives from its tangible features, such as its 10'0" street decks and its concrete 'H' frame, the site also has heritage value in the intangible. Park Hill has strong significance related to its storytelling, experience, and identities, that are rooted in the estate though its past and present residents. While this intangible heritage is diverse, owing to the transition of the estate from council housing to gentrified flats, these experiences are a common factor which unite together those who have called the estate home.

For over 50 years, Park Hill has been re-imagined in visual narratives delivered through a range of screen and other media. This has included promotional films from Sheffield Council's Housing Development team in the 1960s, through to its appearance in BBC's *Doctor Who* in 2018, and the estate was the focus of a musical by Chris Bush and Richard Hawley entitled *Standing at the Sky's Edge* in 2019. Storytelling has been embedded within these "flats of the future" since their inception, and these experiences are ripe for the new era of interactive storytelling. Stories in the Sky VR has benefitted from an initial AHRC Immersive Experiences Follow-on Funding project, undertaken by Dawn Hadley and Catriona Cooper. This investigated the ways that immersive experiences can give communities a voice in urban regeneration initiatives. The four current residents that were interviewed were enthusiastic about the potential for an immersive storytelling experience based around Park Hill flats. The AHRC-funded project concluded that the residents had been inspired by the storytelling potential of Bush and Hawley's recent musical, and were enthusiastic to share their stories, which included challenging narratives of unemployment, depression, crime and loss.

1.3 : Structure of the research

The thesis begins with Chapter 2's literature review, focusing upon digital heritage visualisation and community engagement, as well as the ways that intangible heritage has been articulated within the UK heritage sector. The synthesis of literature relating to these topics will offer a valuable basis from which to conduct a successful immersive storytelling project at Park Hill. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology for the thesis, considering best-practice for community engagement, as well as the methods used to create VR content. The thesis will then consider the context of Park Hill as a complex and contested estate in Chapter 4, focussing upon its history as a place with an overarching sense of both success and failure. Park Hill's history and reputation will be framed within its value as a heritage site in Chapter 5, exploring the way that the estate is being regenerated by Urban Splash, and the implications of the gentrification of heritage. Chapters 4 and 5 present the documentary and background research on Park Hill, which is invaluable for placing the discussion Chapters of 6 & 7 within their wider context. Chapter 6 will present the findings of the community engagement, which aimed to gather stories on Park Hill experience, as well as to collaborate on ways to co-create. These findings were used to frame the decision-making process for Stories in the Sky VR in Chapter 7. After discussing the content of the immersive experience, Chapter

7 will explore the user feedback that was gathered on Stories in the Sky VR, discussing the effectiveness of the software from the original aims of the thesis, and reflecting upon the overall achievements of the research. Finally, Chapter 8 will consider the main conclusions for the thesis, and the opportunities for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Stories in the Sky VR aimed to create a prototype immersive storytelling experience for Park Hill. Within this thesis, there are three main strands which encapsulate the research: digital heritage visualisations, intangible heritage, and heritage-led community engagement. The review will explore the foremost literature on these areas, which influenced the way that Stories in the Sky VR was approached. To begin, the literature review will explore issues surrounding visualisation, relating to photorealism and accuracy. Prominent literature on the topic is presented, exploring attempts to formulate best-practice from the London Charter (Denard 2009, 1-13), and developing reflexive practice, by researchers such as Watterson (2015, 119-130). Next, the literature review will investigate the way that intangible heritage is regarded within the UK heritage system, where the intangible is often overlooked in place of historic fabric. However, the significance of modernist and brutalist heritage assets is often more closely related to their intangible heritage, relating to the philosophy behind their design (Thurley 2016). Unlocking the intangible features of Park Hill through digital storytelling is of central importance to the project. Lastly, the literature review will explore the issues related to engaging with communities in a cultural heritage context. This will address the implications of "top-down" projects, stakeholder participation, and the ways that community heritage practice can marginalize certain demographics as the 'other' (Waterton and Smith 2010, 13). This will conclude by exploring the VR documentary *Common Ground*, based upon the Aylesbury Estate in London, which will draw together a number of the strands of discussion within the literature review.

2.1 : Visualisation

Visualisation has been of central importance to the archaeological and heritage fields since their inception. Illustrative techniques have been an essential tool for practitioners, as a means to increase the interpretation and understanding of cultural heritage (Lewuillon 2002, 223-233). However, visualisations are problematic given their subjectivity. Photography, for example, records a snapshot in-time, but still must be regarded as subjective, given the technical decisions needed when taking the photograph (Watterson 2015, 120). With the advancement of computer technologies, digital visualisations have provided the sector with 3D documentation of tangible heritage, such as buildings, excavations, artifacts, and towns. These advancements have also seen the developing use of immersive software, such as Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, and Mixed Reality (Rahaman *et al*., 2019 1).

Archaeologists have been utilising digital visualisations since the 1980s, and this can be seen to have begun with a reconstruction of the Temple Precinct from Roman Bath (Miller and Richards 1994,

19). It wasn't until 1997, when Frischer established the Cultural Visualisation Lab at UCLA, that digital modelling and archaeology began to be taught together (Morgan 2009, 472). The earliest examples of digital reconstructions had primarily been commissioned to be completed by artists and computer scientists (Watterson 2015, 120). This led to projects like the reconstruction of Pompeii in 1996 (Figure 1). A scathing review of this noted, 'the effect is disturbing and uncanny, sometimes cheesy and slick . . . a number of scholars observed that the design team had fashioned their temple complex out of mural vignettes excised from several different archaeological sites and contexts' (Frischer *et al.* 2002, 50).

Figure 1: Virtual reconstruction of the Temple of Isis, Pompeii, 1996 (Jacobson and Vadnal 2005, 1).

Issues surrounding accuracy and realism have been of central importance within the digital heritage field since its inception. There is a responsibility for heritage visualizers to produce work that is as accurate and evidence-based as possible. However, the aesthetic qualities of visualisations are important, and something that many artists strive for, and are expected to produce (Watterson 2012). Heritage visualisations are often utilised to present research to the public, and can be understood by the public as the "historical truth", despite their creative interpretations (Frankland 2012, 24). Watterson (2015, 128) contrasts this with the use of visual film effects and theatre stage props, in that audiences are able to accept their use while not believing in their legitimacy. The same cannot be applied to digital heritage visualisations, where there is an apparent expectation of truth. It is this balance between historical accuracy and creative interpretation which has been problematic for digital heritage visualizers.

Frankland's (2012, 24-39) work explored the issues of accuracy and photorealism further, investigating audience perception of both photorealistic and non-realistic rendering techniques (Figure 2). This focussed upon Crannog I at Milton Loch, Scotland, a later Bronze Age settlement. A survey was conducted of heritage specialists and members of the public, examining whether visualisation concerns relating to accuracy and photorealism were justifiable, and whether non-photorealistic visualisations are of use to archaeologists (Frankland 2012, 37). The results indicated that reconstructions present uncertainty for the public, and they are unsure of the interpretations being made; whereas heritage specialists were 'overly sceptical' of the photorealistic models. Despite this scepticism and uncertainty, the survey highlighted a general 'enthusiasm' for photorealistic visualisations, stating that 'it would be counter-productive to present reconstructions aimed at a public audience in a different style.' However, Frankland (2012, 37) concludes that the non-photorealistic illustrations would be useful for interpretation, if the primary audience comprised archaeologists.
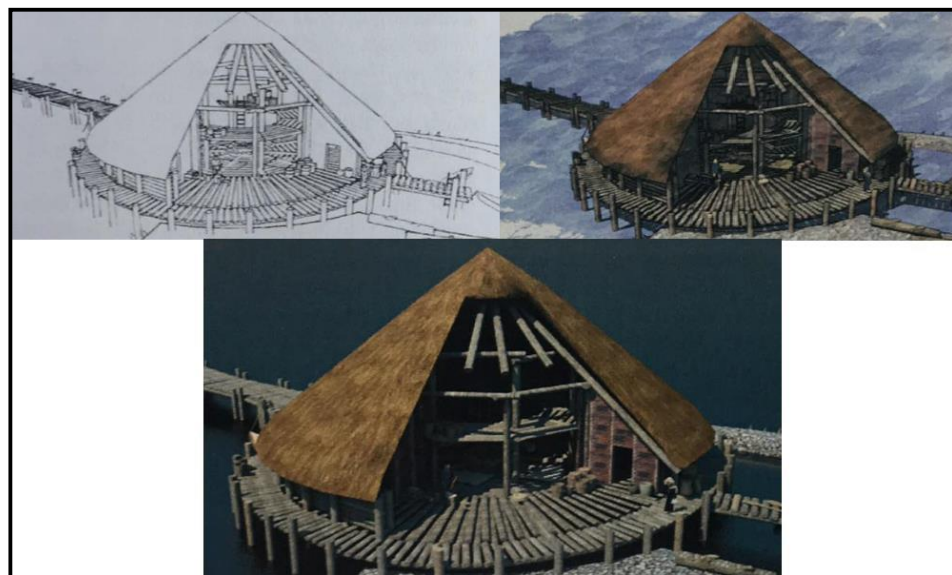
Figure 2: Illustrations 7, 8, & 9 from Frankland's study, highlighting the survey illustrations of non-photorealistic and photorealistic visualisation techniques (Frankland 2012, 29).

The inherent challenges of visualisations within digital heritage have led to attempts to formulate best practice, and this was first presented in the London Charter in 2009. The London Charter was developed from ideas generated at the 2006 symposium on "Making 3D Visual Research Outcomes Transparent", centring upon intellectual transparency within archaeology visualisations. Denard (2012, 57), who produced the document, argued it was compiled, 'as a means of ensuring the methodological rigour of computer based visualisation as a means of researching and communicating cultural heritage.' The main principles of the Charter relate to the importance of intellectual integrity,

reliability, documentation, sustainability and access (Denard 2009, 1). Its objectives in securing best-practice are to (Denard 2009, 4):

- Provide a benchmark having widespread recognition among stakeholders
- Promote intellectual and technical rigour in digital heritage visualisation
- Ensure that computer-based visualisation processes and outcomes can be properly understood and evaluated by users
- Enable computer-based visualisation authoritatively to contribute to the study, interpretation and management of cultural heritage assets
- Ensure access and sustainability strategies are determined and applied
- Offer a robust foundation upon which communities of practice can build detailed London Charter Implementation Guidelines

While the London Charter offers a useful basis from which to build best-practice, its aims and objectives are broad. This allows digital heritage projects to tailor their approach to the specific context they are working with. However, Hermon *et al*. (2007, 13) have argued that there remain issues relating to the changing nature of digital heritage projects and the managing of aims and expectations from multi-disciplinary teams. In the main, nonetheless, the London Charter does provide an important foundation to stimulate an intellectually rigorous framework for digital heritage visualisations. For this reason, it was used as a framework for the methodology of Stories in the Sky VR. More recently, Rahaman *et al*. (2019, 1-12) presented the use of a workflow, which comprised a step-by-step guide to create and produce a Mixed Reality Visualisation. This was compiled to assist non-specialists in the use of visualisation technology, and the user feedback that they received on the workflow highlighted that it was 'easy to learn, workable and effective.'

While these methodologies are useful, they also undercut the creative process which is an integral component of visualisation. As Watterson (2015, 122-3) has argued, these methodologies aim to quantify the creative elements of a project through a scientific process, which is problematic, as they 'conceal the artistic craft and interpretive ingenuity of the practitioner.' Watterson (2015, 124-7) advocates for digital heritage visualizers to be more reflexive in their practice, by actively embracing the expressive and creative elements of their work, and placing more value on what the individual as a creator brings to visualisations. To combat the issues of audience assumption within digital heritage visualisations, Watterson (2015, 123) argues that practitioners must develop their own visual literacy, and go beyond merely stating what is interpretation, to indicate what informed the interpretation and why.

Watterson's (2015, 124) project *Digital Dwelling*, aimed to present the archaeological interpretation of the Neolithic settlement of Skara Brae, Orkney, through an experimental film. The team utilised mixed-media, which involved aerial photograph, laser scanning, 3D modelling and traditional painting, and combined the archaeological evidence with their own sensory experience (Figure 3). This was 'fused together in a single interpretive narrative' (Watterson 2015, 125). For the general audience of *Digital Dwelling*, the results were mixed. Watterson (2015, 127) concluded that despite some participants demonstrating critical awareness, others already had a 'fixed' view of Skara Brae, with some declaring the film to be 'wrong.' Some participants, in contrast, understood the film to reflect the complete 'truth' about the site. Watterson (2015, 127) argues that these latter perceptions are likely a consequence of the more traditional forms of archaeological visualisations, in which there is an expectation that 'visualisation can and should present a singular truth about the past.' These traditional methods of dissemination hang over digital heritage visualisations, and affect the way that the public responds to them.

Figure 3: Footage from Watterson's Digital Dwelling project (Watterson 2013).

Morgan's (2009, 468-487) work has also explored the benefits of reflexive practice. This considered the use of the online game *Second Life*, where players can create characters, objects, and places, within a virtual world environment. The game was used to create a virtual model of the Neolithic settlement of Çatalhöyük. As part of the modelling process, Morgan had to make decisions about debated elements of the settlement, including that of the presence of an oven. However, Morgan (2009, 478) argues 'that accuracy is not especially important', and that archaeologists 'should be not only interested in the end product, but in the process that leads to that product.' In modelling the oven, Morgan (2009, 478) was able to engage much more closely with the interpretive process, and create visualisations 'made to be engaged with, to be improved, to be disproved.' This process allows the supporting documentary evidence to be negotiated with in an innovative and creative way, and is an essential tool for heritage visualizers.

The debate surrounding accuracy and creativity within visualisations has focussed primarily upon archaeological sites. Within this there is a strong relationship with the associated material culture, and it is this that visualizers draw upon when considering their interpretations. Stories in the Sky VR is aiming to capture the intangible heritage of Park Hill, through its stories and experiences. While the tangible elements of the estate have changed, these are well-understood and well-documented. As a comparison to the interpretation undertaken by practitioners such as Watterson (2015) and Morgan (2009), this thesis will question whether there is a greater opportunity to express creativity when working with the recent past. This will investigate the scope to be purposefully imaginative and manipulative with the material culture, as a way of using the creative process to explore critical questions about the estate.

An important element of the project at Park Hill is the integration of sound within the visualisation. This is in the form of oral testimonies, which, for the purpose of this project, might be seen as more important than the visual elements. Within the discipline of archaeology, there has been much discussion of the ocularcentrism of practitioner methods (Hamilakis *et al.* 2002; Thomas 2007). Thomas (2007, 10) has argued that ocularcentrism represents 'the valorisation of one of the senses over the other . . . taking one of the ways that we have of relating to the world, and identifying it as the paradigm of all sensory experience.' Furthermore, Frieman and Gillings (2007, 4-16) have considered the way that space has been understood within archaeology, arguing that 'rather than analyse how space is viewed, we should fold vision back into the mix of the sensorium and focus instead on how space is perceived.'

Within the discipline of digital heritage there has been an increase in practitioners undertaking multi-sensory approaches in their work. Eve (2017) explored the varying use of vision, sound and smell within digital archaeological practice, 'allowing a multi-sensorial experience of archaeological data in situ.' For sound, Eve (2017) focused upon the York Municipal Cemetery, by providing soundscapes for the grave markers as well as other visible features of the site. This utilised GPS located Wikipedia entries within a mobile application, where the soundscapes were played through the user's headphones as they walked around the site. Eve (2017) hoped that this would cause 'the user to think very differently about the spaces they are moving through and challenges the user to re-examine their preconceptions about the cemetery itself.' Cooper (2019, 60-73) has also explored broader sensory experiences through the investigation of acoustic techniques. Her study examined the way that debates and speeches would have sounded in St Stephen's, Westminster, which functioned as the House of Commons until destroyed by fire in 1834. The study concluded that the space was not actually well-suited for public speech, and Cooper was able to draw conclusions about the experience of the listeners, depending upon their position in the church. Cooper (2019, 73) makes the point that

the 'exploration of places in the past largely struggles to associate with the less tangible parts of experience.' These examples reflect the benefits of utilising multi-sensory approaches within digital heritage practice, in place of valorising vision over the other senses.

<u>2.2 : Intangible Heritage in the UK</u>

Park Hill is significant for its brutalist architecture, but there are also important elements of intangible heritage rooted in the estate, such as regional identity, community, and storytelling. Accordingly, the literature review will now focus upon intangible heritage, and how this is viewed within the UK heritage sector. It will consider definitions of intangible heritage, and explore UNESCO's (2003) *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Importantly, the UK, along with seventeen other countries, did not ratify the Convention, meaning there is no official acknowledgement of intangible cultural heritage in the UK (Harrison 2019, 1). The section will finish by considering how twentieth-century buildings are viewed within the heritage sector, exploring Thurley's (2016) work on the way that these buildings are valued. For many twentieth-century buildings, the philosophy and ideas behind their design and construction is fundamental to their significance, and protecting that intangible heritage is arguably of more importance than historic fabric.

Defining the term heritage has been considered as problematic (Herbert 1995, 8), but Harrison (2019, 44) has argued that the 'continuum between the past, present and the future' has been viewed as its core component. This centres upon the notion of heritage as an inheritance from the past, which should be protected to bequeath to generations of the future. Heritage practice in the UK originated in the nineteenth century, with the foundation of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) in 1877. Conservation legislation was first implemented in 1882 with the Ancient Monuments Protection Act, which selected 50 prehistoric sites, including Stonehenge near Amesbury, Wiltshire, and the Castle Rigg stone circle near Keswick, Cumbria (HM Government 1882). It wasn't until the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 that the Secretary of State was required to compile a list for 'buildings of special architectural or historic interest' (Mays 2017). This was extended in the Planning Act of 1968, due to the lack of monitoring of listed buildings being demolished in the countryside (Harrison 2019, 78).

Historic England (2020b), formerly English Heritage which was established with the National Heritage Act in 1983, are 'the public body that helps people care for, enjoy and celebrate England's spectacular historic environment.' Their definition of heritage follows the conventional notion of 'All inherited resources which people value for reasons beyond mere utility.' Historic England's (2008) main guidance document, *Conservation Principles*, offers advice on managing and understanding the

historic environment, connected to its significant features. This categorises significance between four main heritage values, and is connected to the idea of place, which is described as 'a building, an archaeological site or a larger historic area such as a whole village or landscape.' The heritage values are as follows:

- **Evidential value**: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity
- **Historical value**: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present
- **Aesthetic value**: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place
- **Communal value**: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory

While there is a connection to intangible heritage in the communal value of the historic environment, Historic England does not provide a definition of intangible heritage. In contrast, and now ratified by 178 nation states, UNESCO's (2003) *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* defines intangible heritage as:

> the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills. . . that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

The Convention states that intangible heritage stems from the following, but does concern other things:

- oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
- performing arts;
- social practices, rituals and festive events;
- knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- traditional craftsmanship

Harrison (2019, 39) has shown that some of the concepts behind intangible heritage in the UK mirrored the origins of historic conservation practice. This began with William Thoms coining the term "folklore" in a letter in the Athenaeum in 1846, stating that it is 'what we in England designate as

Popular Antiquities, or Popular Literature (though by-the-bye it is more a Lore than a Literature . . . Folk-Lore – the Lore of the People' (Harrison 2019, 39-40). This was followed by the formation of the Folklore Society in 1878. While the principles behind tangible and intangible heritage may have developed around the same time in the UK, there is a gulf in how they are managed within the conservation system. This is signified by the decision of the UK government not to ratify the UNESCO Convention on intangible heritage. Policy for heritage protection in the UK has centred specifically upon tangible heritage, in the form of buildings, monuments and archaeological sites. Smith and Waterton (2009, 298) argue that this can be seen in the way that Historic England use the term 'historic environment', which they argue is 'emphatically material.' While Historic England asserts that places can have communal value, which has connections to intangible ideas of memory, identity, and community, it is commonly understood that the evidential and aesthetic value, which are the most closely associated with building fabric, are the values that attract the most attention when managing change.

Smith and Waterson (2009) have argued that all heritage is intangible, in that all heritage is representative of cultural meanings and values. However, the UK conservation management system has been structured primarily upon the material. Smith (2006, 299) has described this as the Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD), which relates to the 'grand narratives of Western national and elite class experiences, and reinforces the idea of innate cultural value tied to time depth, monumentality, expert knowledge and aesthetics.' The AHD within conservation practice is a fundamental reason why the UK has found it difficult to 'accommodate the realities of intangible heritage, nor, indeed, acknowledge that it is a concept that operates at the core of what heritage is' (Smith and Waterton 2009, 300). This is highlighted further in Smith and Waterton's interview with a UNESCO representative:

> We have intangible heritage and Indigenous heritage existing all over the world. It is the way they [England] see their own heritage which is the problem, because they don't consider rituals and traditions, for example with the mining industry in the UK, as being both tangible and intangible heritage – then it is a problem in their own view (taken from Smith and Waterton 2006, 299).

While conservation management has not centred upon the protection of intangible heritage, there is still an awareness of its importance. An example of this emerges from a feature on Historic England's (2020c) webpage, as part of Easter weekend 2020. This feature included a quiz entitled 'What Easter Folk Tradition Are You?', and the description was as follows:

This Easter we're celebrating our eccentric, incredible, outlandish and extraordinary traditions from afar, passed down through time from our ancestors. We take for granted many of our holidays, rituals and traditions as life goes by at speed. But England's Easter traditions go back hundreds of years and many are thought to be of pre-Christian origin.

Within this statement there is a clear indication that tradition and ritual are a fundamental part of British heritage. Yet there is no formal legislation which protects intangible heritage within the UK. While Smith and Waterton (2009) have argued that all heritage is intangible, there is certainly a 'symbiotic relationship' between intangible and tangible heritage, as put by UNESCO's Assistant Director General for Culture, Bouchenaki (2003, 2). Stories in the Sky VR aimed to explore the intangible heritage rooted in the significance of Park Hill, which has an intrinsic connection to the estate's sense of place. However, in line with conventional heritage management policy within the UK, it was the fabric that was protected in Park Hill's 1998 Grade II* listing, with little weight afforded to the estate's intangible heritage. At the core of this thesis is the aim of capturing this intangible heritage, and understanding whether immersive storytelling software is ideally suited to articulating and disseminating it.

Following this line of thinking, the discussion in this chapter will now move on to considering how late twentieth-century buildings are viewed and managed as heritage within the UK. As discussed above, the core of conservation practice within the UK has centred upon the retention of historic fabric since the formation of the SPAB, but these principles cannot be so easily applied to buildings of the late twentieth century. Thurley (2016), former Chief Executive of English Heritage, stated that 'the listing criteria for Modernist buildings are infinitely tougher than for any building built before 1800 . . . they have to demonstrate that their significance is unusually high.' Thurley explores a number of case studies where late twentieth-century heritage has differing conservation principles applied to them, and this is rooted in how they are valued. For example, West Pier in Brighton, Sussex, constructed in the 1960s, is a Grade 1 listed building, and much of its fabric is mass produced and replaceable. In categorising the building's evidential value, Thurley (2016) argues that this 'must have a lesser significance than an individually carved stone roof boss on the nave of a medieval cathedral.' Another example is the High Level Bridge in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Northumberland, constructed in 1849, where the eroding steel has been almost completely replaced. Yet these changes to the fabric have little impact upon the main way this structure is valued: in its communal value as a prominent structure closely associated with the area (Thurley 2016).

Thurley (2016) argues that late twentieth-century architecture differs not only in age, but in that they can be functionally inflexible, they may have been intended to have a fixed or temporary life

span, and they may have design flaws which have yet to be resolved. One particular strand of this argument that this thesis would like to unpick further, relates to modernist and brutalist architecture and philosophy. For important late twentieth-century buildings, it is commonplace for there to be a general understanding of the philosophy behind the design, and this philosophy is often considered as important as the building. On this point, Thurley (2016) argues 'this is a complete reversal of the nineteenth century notion of conservation, for here people are arguing that it is not the structure that is important it is the ideas behind it.'

An example of where building philosophy can be regarded as more important than fabric, can be seen in my previous work (Empsall 2019) on the Feilden building, York. This was built in 1963, within the medieval complex of King's Manor, the origins of which date back to the thirteenth century. My study explored the way that it could improve its energy efficiency, given that it was not necessary to retain all elements of its fabric to maintain its value. Within the King's Manor complex, there is a significant juxtaposition of materials, with historic fabric from the medieval elements, and modernist materials of concrete and brick in the Feilden building. While the King's Manor has substantial evidential value, from its medieval fabric, the significance of the Feilden building derives from the philosophy and ideas upon which it was built. The building was constructed in connection with the origins of the University of York, and the design is representative of a new wave of education for the historic city, with the concrete reflecting a separation from the historic fabric. As J B Morrell (1955, 146), one of the prominent figures who advocated for the foundation of the university, stated, 'A city's life cannot be built on historical ruins alone . . . respect for the past, thought for the present and provision for the future' were also required.

While not explicitly stated by Thurley, the importance of philosophy for late twentieth-century buildings relates to their intangible qualities. In this way, modernist and brutalist buildings represent a useful starting point for integrating intangible heritage into the UK's conservation principles. In concluding his argument on the value of twentieth-century heritage assets, Thurley turns to Park Hill and his role in its controversial listing. About the redevelopment of the estate, Thurley (2016) states, 'On one hand there was a huge loss of fabric, but on the other I think a visit there today shows that there is very little loss of meaning.' As this thesis will show, like the Feilden building, Park Hill's significance has strong roots in the intangible, and this project aims to showcase this important value through immersive storytelling.

2.3 : Community Engagement and Digital Heritage

In attempting to draw out Park Hill's intangible heritage, Stories in the Sky VR aimed to engage with those associated with the estate's community, past and present. However, there are a number of

issues related to community engagement within the cultural heritage context that need to be addressed. The final section of the literature review will, therefore, consider the implications of working with communities within what Smith (2006) calls the Authorised Heritage Discourse. This involves issues concerning "top-down" heritage, stakeholder involvement, and to whom community heritage gives a voice. Chapter 2 will conclude by discussing the award winning VR documentary *Common Ground*, based upon the Aylesbury Estate in Walworth, South East London (East City Film 2019). This project has strong similarities to that of Stories in the Sky VR, but represents the other side of the coin; not a regenerated community, but one on the brink of collapse.

Initiatives based around community engagement are used within many countries of the world, which Perkin (2010, 107) has argued has prompted 'the development of strategies and mission statements that emphasise the importance of community consultation and involvement.' Crooke (2010, 16), lead academic of Museum and Heritage Studies at Ulster University, states, 'the community and heritage connection is one that is almost considered so natural an affinity it hardly needs justification or explanation.' However, Waterton and Smith (2010, 4), Australian academics specialising in heritage and community, argue the word "community" has been 'continually used, abused and reused.' While projects can be effective, there are a number of recurring issues related to community engagement within the heritage sector. Waterton and Smith (2010, 12) claimed that the combination of the 'cuddly nature' of community work, as well as the role of heritage to be doing 'good', work to ensure 'the problematics of this are hardly articulated.'

A prominent issue with community-based heritage work relates to the "top-down" control often found within community initiatives. The term 'community engagement' suggests a grass-roots nature, however within the UK the policy for engagement has largely proven to be "top-down" in implementation (Crooke 2010, 18). Typically, there are a number of stakeholders at play within these types of projects: heritage professionals, councils, academics, heritage and museum organisations, local heritage groups, and members of the public. For these stakeholders, the idea of community, and the way that heritage is articulated and understood, can be very different (Crooke 2010, 16). This can create complications in the project management process, in relation to who controls the aims, objectives, and shape of the work. These projects are often funded with a clear agenda in place, but this might not conform to the aims of the community stakeholders, who are unlikely to have played a part in developing that agenda. Perkin (2010, 118-9) has discussed the role of the project manager in these scenarios, whose funding, professional background, expertise, and authority, provide them with more power and control within the project. As Perkin (2010, 119) argues, it is their responsibility to 'address and counter the inherent power imbalances between partner organisations.' The greatest assets of community groups are their passion, enthusiasm and knowledge, which gives them valuable

expertise. If the process is not inclusive, and decisions are made without the input of these groups, the community-driven elements of the project could be undermined (Perkin 2010, 119).

In relation to this, Waterton and Smith (2010, 4-15) have discussed the way that academic and political practice misrecognise community stakeholders. They (2010, 5) identify the 'reified and unreflexive' way that community has been constructed within the heritage sector, which divides the public into 'seemingly homogenous collectives defined by ethnicity, class, education or religion.' This way of viewing community groups places power within the white middle-class way of understanding heritage, and excludes other voices from the process. Here there are assumptions about the requirements necessary to participate and understand what constitutes heritage, because, as Waterton and Smith (2010, 10) state, 'they do not hold the title "heritage expert."' This way of viewing community groups relates to the AHD, and how heritage is articulated within the sector. The expert-centric focus has 'rendered communities, as much as their heritage, as subject to management and preservation' (Waterton and Smith 2010, 11). Instead, Waterton and Smith (2010, 10) propose the adoption of Fraser's (2001, 21-42) status model, which looks at individuals within a group, rather than focussing upon the collective identity of a broader community. The status model allows for more people to be heard, and can 'challenge institutionalised patterns of cultural value.' This attempts to recognise when individual views are given less priority over the more conventional understandings of what constitutes heritage (Waterton and Smith 2010, 10).

The issues surrounding community engagement and heritage appear to be especially apparent when thinking about the case of Park Hill. As the thesis will discuss, the concept of community at Park Hill is rooted in the estate, but is also complex. The estate has undergone huge changes throughout its history: from the Victorian slums to the building's inception, to its decline and diminished reputation, to its regeneration. The redevelopment by Urban Splash has not only seen an overhaul in the estate's design, but also in the community that now calls the estate home. Within Stories in the Sky VR, it was important to be aware of Park Hill's transition from social housing to gentrified flats, with the estate now fitting more conventionally into the 'nostalgic' paradigm of community, as found more typically within the AHD and community-driven practice (Waterton and Smith 2010, 8).

As digital heritage usually relates to the development of tools or resources, a significant element of community-driven work can involve co-creation. For Stories in the Sky VR, the original aim was to work closely and collaborate with the diverse stakeholder groups of Park Hill. Hadley *et al*. (forthcoming) explored the issues that can arise in the co-creation process. This discussed the work of organisations like Calvium, a mobile app developing agency based in Bristol, who create software for heritage sites, including Tower Bridge, London, and The Lost Palace, Whitehall (Calvium 2020). Hadley

et al. state that heritage-based immersive experiences are popular, and communities are keen to use them. However, they argue that true co-production is rare. Decisions are often made in advance, meaning that ideas from the community groups are downplayed. This could relate to time and funding, or the constraints imposed by the client. Moreover, community participants rarely have the skillsets to manage digital heritage software, and the emergence of new technologies means they soon become unusable. For organisations like Calvium, who produce valuable tools for digital heritage, their focus will always favour that of their client, leaving less scope for input within community-driven co-production.

In a recent paper on their Memoryscapes project, Swords *et al.* (2020) discussed the way that digital technologies can provide the tools to make 'useable' pasts of heritage. The core output of Memoryscapes was to create a methodology for immersive experiences within the heritage sector, and this involved extensive stakeholder engagement, including interviews and workshops. Using Brown and Knopp's (2008) approach on productive tensions, they (2020, 6) explored the epistemological and ontological tensions that arose between the various actors within their project, which included different backgrounds such as heritage professionals, creative practitioners, retired people, and digital technology experts. A tension from the digital technology specialists resulted from their need to just want the data to create software, but this 'betrayed a lack of understanding of the complexities involved in understanding and using heritage' (Swords *et al*. 2020, 8). However, Swords *et al.* (2020, 6) stated, 'In some cases the collisions led to the end of ideas, in others they were crucial to help seeds of ideas germinate and bloom.' They (2020, 11) argue, that rather than attempt to solve the epistemological differences of the project's actors, it would be more beneficial to 'appreciate the knowledge and experience that different groups of stakeholders can bring to a project.'

While community engagement has been given a strong emphasis within the cultural heritage context, there has been a tendency to valorise this type of work. For Park Hill, however, there has been the discussion of the 'Park Hill fatigue', whereby those associated with the estate are no longer interested in participating in research projects (Bell 2011). There have been a multitude of such projects related to Park Hill deriving from a number of disciplines. For community-driven heritage work, there is an underlying expectation that community stakeholders will be enthusiastic to participate, however this is not always the case. For this reason, it is important to be aware that community-driven work might not secure the level of engagement that was originally intended.

The literature review will conclude by discussing the award winning VR documentary *Common Ground*, which draws together a number of the strands that have been investigated. *Common Ground* is based upon the Aylesbury estate, South East London, which was built between 1967 and 1977, and

has been regarded as a 'symbol of the failure of British social housing' (Beckett 2016). Like Park Hill, the estate has undergone a dramatic decline, and as part of a regeneration initiative the original estate will be demolished. Common Ground utilised 3D modelling, real-time environments, 360 video, and photogrammetry, alongside archival footage and resident testimonies, to create a VR documentary. This included powerful scenes where the participants hold up the architect's idealised vision of what the estate would be like, juxtaposed with the deprivation deriving from the Aylesbury Estate's current condition (Figure 4). The documentary is overlaid with stories from the current residents of the estate, who are desperate to protect their home. This includes comments such as, 'I don't think you'll ever find a stronger community', and 'the whole community is going to be wiped out from here and our voice will never be heard.'
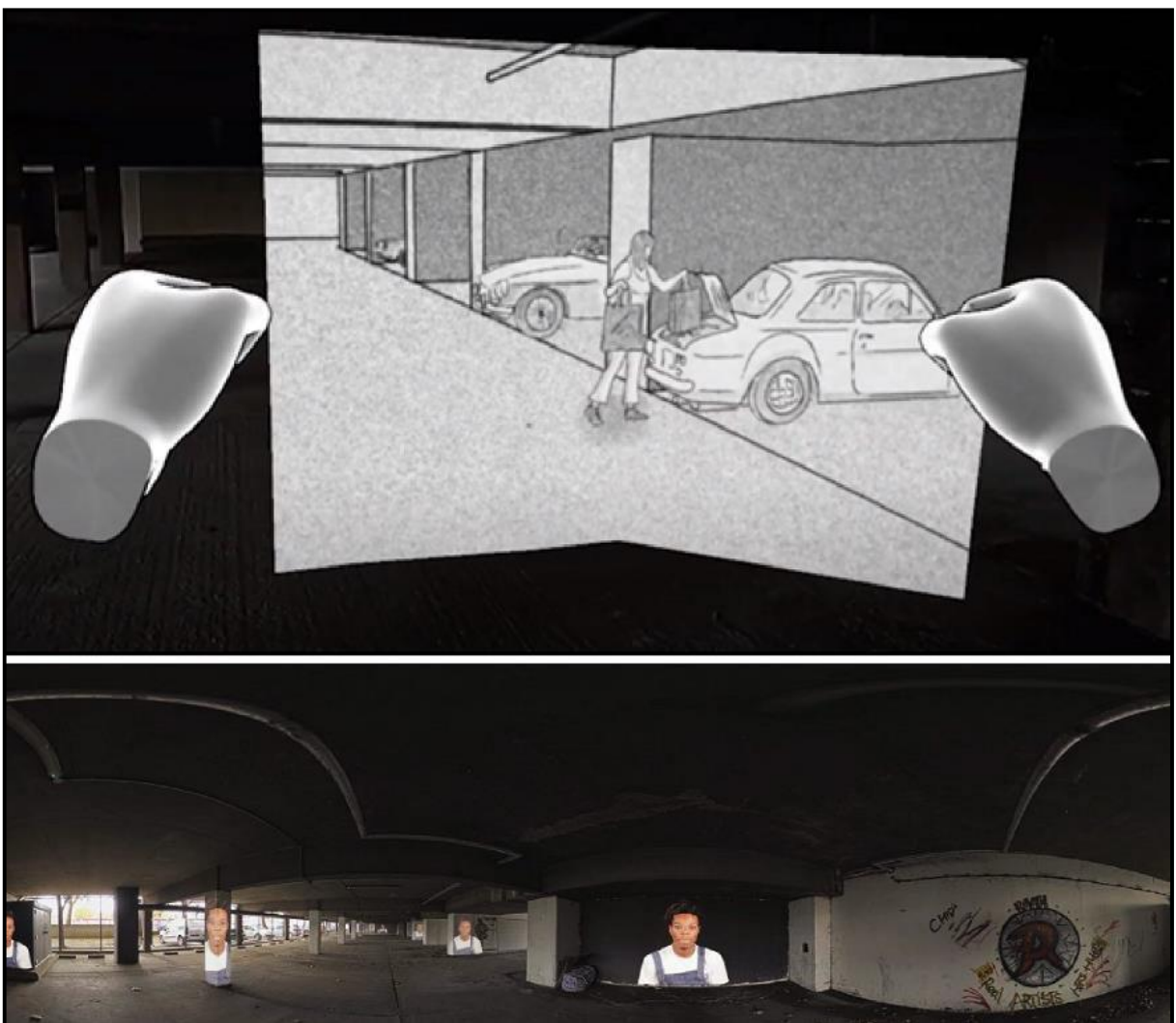
Figure 4: Footage from Common Ground VR (East City Films 2019).

Common Ground investigates the issues bound together with the idea of community, current housing policy, and social cleansing (East City Films 2019). These issues are at the core of what is

happening to the estate, and residents have been vocal about regeneration decisions. Darren Emerson, creator of *Common Ground*, hopes that the documentary can bring about deeper discussions into the regeneration of housing estates and the demonization of the working-classes (as cited in Grandon 2019). Having lived close to the estate growing up, Emerson wanted to explore his own anxiety that derived from the environment, and 'demystify the image and rhetoric that often profiles places like the Aylesbury in the public consciousness.'

The documentary was showcased at the Sheffield Doc/Fest in 2019, and was reported to be the topic of 'intense discussion and debate' (Grandon 2019). While not explicitly stated, this is arguably because of Sheffield's own history with social housing and regeneration, in relation to the redevelopment of Park Hill. As an estate that has passed further into the regeneration process, and is nearing completion, Park Hill represents an ideal place to test the effectiveness of immersive storytelling, and what affective power this can have.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The thesis will now explore the methodology for Stories in the Sky VR, considering the process of community engagement, creation of VR, and attempts to follow best-practice guidance. This will begin by discussing the community engagement with Park Hill's stakeholders. Stories in the Sky VR aimed to implement a "bottom-up" approach, where the connected community of Park Hill were instrumental in the decision-making behind the content. Next, the thesis will discuss the creation of Stories in the Sky VR, considering the use of 3DS Max for 3D modelling, and Adobe Premiere Pro for video editing. As discussed in the literature review, this creative process aimed to follow the best-practice guidance of the London Charter, as well as reflecting upon the importance of reflexivity within the content.

3.1 : Community Engagement

As the literature review highlighted, there are issues of control to confront within heritage-based community engagement projects. There have been problems related to "top-down" research, the integration of expert-centric focusses, and the exclusion of different voices within community stakeholder groups. Stories in the Sky VR aimed to facilitate a "bottom-up" approach, which collaborated with the varying stakeholder groups, and provided a balanced perspective. These groups are represented within current residents, former residents, developers, and the wider Park Hill community. Ultimately, however, despite an initial enthusiasm for the work, a "bottom-up" approach for Stories in the Sky VR proved difficult to achieve, and the thesis addresses the possible reasons for this and how an alternative method was developed.

The methods for community engagement initially focused upon gaining face-to-face interviews. These were undertaken from December 2019 to February 2020, with a total of four participants. It was originally hoped to secure interviews with 20-30 participants, and while Stories in the Sky VR was met with barriers to interviews, the developing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that any possibilities for extending the interview period were curtailed. The interviews aimed to collect stories of life and experience at Park Hill, as well as collaborating on the decision-making process for the content of the VR. To undertake this research, standard ethics approval was acquired through the University of York, with the information sheet available in Appendix 2. The data collected will be stored for 10 years, in an encrypted Google folder and a locked cabinet in paper form, and destroyed thereafter. These interviews followed the best-practice guidance provided by the Oral History Society (2020), in preparation of the set questions, finding participants for the study, undertaking the interviews and gaining the most information whilst being respectful. The interviews were transcribed in note form, and have been presented within Appendix 2. Additional oral testimonies were also

sourced through Sheffield City Archives and from Urban Splash, with full approval acquired for their usage. These testimonies helped to supplement the interviews that I had undertaken.

To gain feedback on Stories in the Sky VR, after the completion of the immersive experience, two online questionnaires were created. These were similar in the questions they posed, but one was shaped for the general public who have an interest in Park Hill, and the other for the Park Hill community stakeholders. This was undertaken with the standard ethics approval secured through the University of York, following their regulations and guidance for collecting data ethically. The full results of the questionnaires can be found within Appendixes 3 & 4.

Before moving on to the methodology behind the creation of the VR content, it would be useful to reflect upon my role as the researcher within Stories in the Sky VR. The project's aims were reliant upon a stronger engagement from the community stakeholders of Park Hill, however, this engagement encountered a number of barriers. This meant that I had a much greater sense of responsibility and control in terms of decision-making. When placed within the context of the Park Hill estate, from successful council estate, to decline and degradation, through to regeneration and gentrification, there is an added pressure relating to control and perspective. It should be noted that I certainly felt this pressure, along with the ethical implications of articulating the heritage of a place with a contested history, and changing demographic.

3.2 : 3D Modelling

The main content output for the project was a prototype Virtual Reality immersive storytelling experience, entitled Stories in the Sky VR. This utilised 3D modelling software to create full virtual environments which could be used alongside oral testimonies of Park Hill life and experience. Stories in the Sky VR used 3D modelling software 3DS Max to create models of different elements of the Park Hill estate. The VR combined 3D modelling, with oral testimonies and documentary evidence to create the project output. The project benefitted from a two-week placement with industry partner and co-supervisors Human VR. This began the week commencing 16th May 2020, when the UK government recommended to work from home where possible, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, only one day was spent in the office of Human VR and the remainder of the placement was completed remotely.

There were a number of limitations and technical constraints while creating the prototype VR experience for Park Hill. The project had hoped to utilise one of Human VR's or the University of York's high-specification computers, reducing the render times within 3DS Max. However, due to the COVID-19 situation this was no longer possible. To ameliorate this issue, the Masters by Research funders, XR Stories, were able to send out a laptop to work from home with. While this did see improvements, the

rendering times were still substantial, meaning that creative compromises had to be made. If the project had been able to utilise a higher-specification computer, it would have been possible to create a wider variety of models, with a greater degree of detail. Furthermore, it was not within the scope of this project to include human avatars, which meant that the uncanny valley effect could be successfully avoided. While human avatars were not included, the 3D models are overlain with "voices" of those connected to the estate and evidence of the material culture. Once the models had been rendered, the project was able to undertake video editing within Adobe Premiere Pro. This pieced the 3D models and oral testimonies together, and converted them into a VR video.

3.3 : The London Charter

In creating digital heritage, Stories in the Sky VR aimed to follow the guidance from the London Charter. While the Charter has limitations, it offers a useful starting point from which to integrate an intellectually rigorous work process for the creation of digital visualisations for cultural heritage. The main principles within the London Charter will be taken in turn, to highlight how they have been considered within the project as a means to incorporate best-practice (Denard 2009, 5-11).

• Implementation: The principles of the London Charter are valid wherever computer-based visualisation is applied to the research or dissemination of cultural heritage

Stories in the Sky VR integrated the main principles of the Charter into the work from the beginning of the project. There was an awareness of the need to have clear aims and methods, to undertake work with intellectual integrity, to document the decision-making process, to find options for the longer term sustainability of the visualisation, and to provide a wide-degree of access.

• Aims and Methods: A computer-based visualisation method should normally be used only when it is the most appropriate available method for that purpose

Stories in the Sky VR stems from an initial scoping exercise undertaken by Hadley and Cooper, which investigated the potential for a research project to explore immersive technologies at Park Hill. This was met with enthusiasm. Furthermore, the estate has been reimagined in visual narratives delivered through a range of screen and other media for over 50 years. The site seemed ripe for a new era of interactive storytelling, through an immersive experience. As *Common Ground* highlighted, immersive projects can be beneficial to engage in discussion surrounding important themes for regeneration schemes, as well as the exploration of their heritage.

• Research Sources: In order to ensure the intellectual integrity of computer-based visualisation methods and outcomes, relevant research sources should be identified and evaluated in a structured and documented way

The documentary research for Stories in the Sky VR was extensive. Archival research was undertaken at Sheffield City Archives, drawing upon documents, architectural plans, photographs, and newspapers. Industry partner Human VR also provided access to their archive, which housed documentation on Urban Splash's regeneration. This documentary research also included a synthesis of the secondary commentary on the estate, which has played an important role in shaping the estate's reputation. An integral element of Stories in the Sky VR focused upon understanding the personal experiences of Park Hill life. While the project hoped to gain this perspective through interviews, it also utilised a number of recorded oral testimonies. These were sourced and approved for use from Sheffield City Archives, and from developers Urban Splash.

• Documentation: Sufficient information should be documented and disseminated to allow computer-based visualisation methods and outcomes to be understood and evaluated in relation to the contexts and purposes for which they deployed

The decision-making process behind the visualisations created for Stories in the Sky VR have been well-documented, in relation to the research sources which they make reference to. In addition, the decision-making aimed to reflect upon the benefits of reflexivity, embracing the creative elements of the work. These decisions are discussed at length within Chapter 6.

• Sustainability: Strategies should be planned and implemented to ensure the long-term sustainability of cultural heritage-related computer-based visualisation outcomes and documentation

Funding for Stories in the Sky VR will be used to publish the digital heritage visualisation on the open access, online journal *Internet Archaeology*. The journal (2020) exists to explore, 'the potential of digital publication through the inclusion of video, audio, searchable data sets, full-colour images, visualisations, animations and interactive mapping.' The funding for this publication will allow Stories in the Sky VR to exist in perpetuity, and therefore the long-term sustainability of the visualisation has been secured.

• Access: The creation and dissemination of computer-based visualisation should be planned in such a way as to ensure that maximum possible benefits are achieved for the study, understanding, interpretation, preservation and management of cultural heritage

Stories in the Sky VR aimed to emphasise the intangible heritage of Park Hill through immersive storytelling. The content within the VR was implemented to increase the user understanding of the estate, and make users think critically about how it has been interpreted in the past. The project planned to work closely with Park Hill's stakeholders, co-creating the content. While this proved challenging, the project also undertook extensive documentary research to supplement the barriers

to co-production. While it proved difficult to achieve the maximum benefits within the creation

process, Stories in the Sky VR should be viewed as a feasibility project.

Chapter 4: Park Hill: Success and Failure

Park Hill represents one of the most divisive buildings in the country. This modernist building of utopian design was completed in 1961 by architects Jack Lynn and Ivor Smith, under the supervision of city architect J. Lewis Womersley. Their vision was to re-house an existing community from the Victorian slums in the Park area of the city, and house them next to each other in the multi-storey "streets in the sky". It is often regarded as a "marmite" building, and its reputation has been heavily influenced by the media and political developments. As Harman and Minnis (2004, 207) stated, 'it has had more written about it than any other British public housing scheme.'

Chapter 4 represents part of the essential documentary research on Park Hill, which helped to frame the context for the community engagement, and contributed to the decision-making process for Stories in the Sky VR. The chapter will begin by charting the origins of the architectural movement of modernism, to understand why Park Hill was designed in such a way, and what this represented for Sheffield. Next, the need for housing in post-war Britain will be discussed, exploring how Victorian terrace slum clearances evolved into the utopian design found at Park Hill. The history of the building's legacy will then be considered, tracking its reputation as a story of success and failure. Lastly, in order to fully understand this legacy, the section will consider the wider political developments which had a significant impact upon Park Hill's history. There is an overwhelming discourse of success and failure for Park Hill, and this commentary has plagued the estate since its inception.

4.1 : The Origins of Modernism and Brutalism

Before the case study of Park Hill is presented, the origins of modernism and brutalism will be discussed. The architectural developments in the twentieth century paved the way for young and optimistic architects, such as Jack Lynn and Ivor Smith, to design innovative buildings which have a strong legacy today (Clement 2011, 18). Modernist and brutalist architecture is divisive, and presents a contentious topic of discussion. This section will consider the prominent architects and buildings which influenced British brutalist architects, and inspired the Park Hill development. Following this, the housing developments which evolved in the twentieth century will be investigated.

Modernism, as defined by Kuiper (2019), relates to 'a break with the past and the concurrent search for new forms of expression.' One of the most impactful developments within this line of thinking was the Industrial Revolution, and this saw an influx of materials and new construction techniques, ripe to be experimented with at the close of the nineteenth century (Clement 2011, 9). This included the innovative use of materials such as concrete, glass and steel. Modernist philosophy centres upon the philosophy that form follows function, and this can be seen as early as 1909, with

the work of architect Peter Behrens on the AEG Turbine Factory, Berlin (Figure 5). For Behrens, the design of the Turbine Factory exemplified modern life, and was, as Frampton (1985, 111) stated, 'a conscious work of art, a temple to industrial power.' Up to the Victorian period, much of the building stock had followed a continued practice of historic ornamentation. The modernist movement heralded an age where the structure of the building was an integral element, and by the 1920s, this was a prominent theme of European architects (Clement 2011, 9).

Figure 5: Behrens' AEG Turbine Factory, Berlin, 1908-9 (from Frampton 1985, 113).

This theme came to be known as the International Style, and the renowned European architects of the 1920s included that of Le Corbusier in France, J.J. Oud in Holland, and Gropius in Germany (Clement 2011, 11). Often regarded as the father of modernism, Le Corbusier would go on to provide inspiration to architects throughout the twentieth century. Among Le Corbusier's earliest and most influential buildings was his Villa Savoye at Poissy in France, in 1931 (Figure 6). As Clement (2011, 11) argues, this was the 'archetypal International Style', and represented the 'first phase of truly modern architecture.' Le Corbusier published *The Radiant City* in 1933, which discussed the urgent need for changes within the urban environment. These ideas represented the theoretical foundations for high-rise urban buildings, and Le Corbusier's vision of a Green City, in which humanity can live prosperously in the age of the machine (Le Corbusier 1964, 163) (Figure 7).

Figure 6: Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye, 1928-1931 (Gudkova and Gudkov 2017, 3).
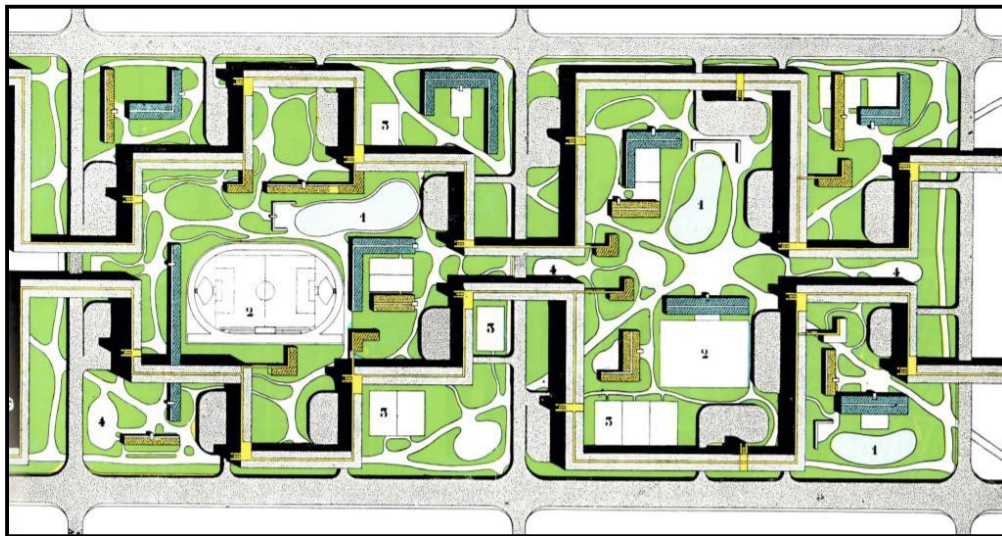
Figure 7: Le Corbusier's plan for a Green City, 1933 (Le Corbusier 1964).

During the Second World War cities had been devastated by bomb damage in the conflict, and the need for urban regeneration was vital. In the post-war period, Le Corbusier introduced the design concept of Unité d'habitation. The Unité in Marseille, completed in 1952, is one of the most influential modernist buildings, and its architecture represented a core inspiration for the Park Hill architects (Clement 2011, 114). The building heralded a turn towards a more monumental and brutalist design, with the béton brut façade in place of a rendered finish (Figure 8). At eighteen-storey's tall, the building comprised 330 dwellings in twenty-three varieties, a shopping street, hotel, nursery and sporting facilities (Figure 9). The Unité represented what Le Corbusier thought of as a 'fine grain', meaning the blending of civic, domestic, commercial and recreational buildings, within a short travelling distance (Clement 2011, 113). As Saint (1996, 23) stated, the Unité offered 'a complete life in the sky.' The ideas introduced here can be seen as fundamental to the philosophy and vision found

at Park Hill. Le Corbusier's Unité stands today as a much-loved and celebrated exemplar of brutalist design.

Figure 8: (LEFT) Le Corbusier's Unité (Arch Daily 2020).

Figure 9: (RIGHT) Children playing on the rooftop of the Unité, 1958 (Architectuul 2020).

There were examples of modernism in Britain prior to the Second World War, such as Connell's High and Over, Amersham, in 1929, but it wasn't until the post-war period that the seeds of modernism began to fully take root (Clement 2011, 13-14). One of the most prominent of the post-war architects was Denys Lasdun, who designed a number of London housing schemes, including the Grade II listed Hallfield Estate, London, in 1955. This high-density housing was built to accommodate light industry workers, for a vastly growing urban population (Clement 2011, 115-117).

The Park Hill development emerged shortly after, with construction beginning in 1957. Architects Peter and Alison Smithson can be seen as a central inspiration for the scheme. The Smithsons are known for developing the wave of New Brutalism in Britain, and are notable for their use of form and materials, which as Higgott (2004, 88) states were 'direct and unaestheticized'. Their 1952 designs for Golden Lane in central London showed a long and unbroken high-rise development, situated within an area subjected to war-time bomb damage. While the project was unrealised, it was the first to conceptualise the idea of "streets in the sky" (Figure 10), which would go on to be a fundamental feature in the Park Hill development (Borges and Marat-Mendes 2019, 1). The Smithsons (1970, 52) wrote of the importance of the street for community, stating 'It is the idea of street not the reality of street that is important – the creation of effective group-spaces fulfilling the vital function of identification and enclosure, making the socially vital life-of-the-streets possible.'
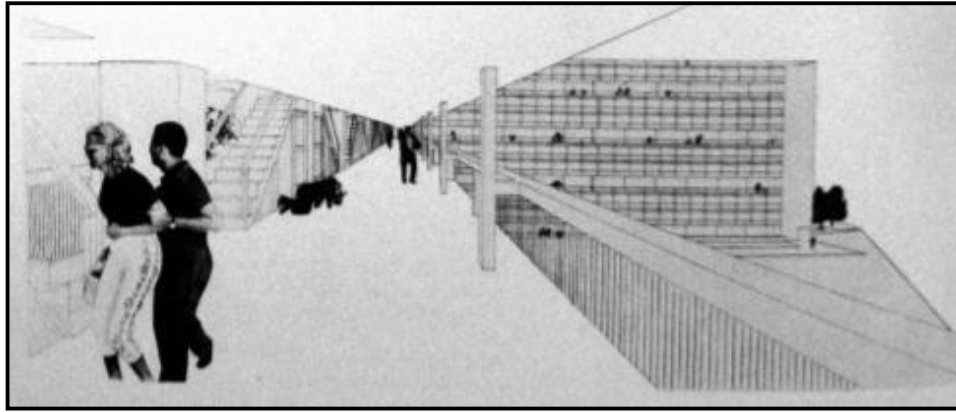
Figure 10: Design of a street deck for the Golden Lane project, by Peter Smithson, 1953 (from Borges and Marat-Mendes 2019, 4).

4.2 : From Victorian Slums to Streets in the Sky

Following the evolution of Sheffield as a heavy industry and steel powerhouse in the nineteenth century, there was a growing demand for housing, with the population seeing a dramatic increase. This led to the construction of Victorian back-to-back terraces, with over 16,000 of these present by the early 1920s (Sheffield City Council 2018, 6). By this time, the properties were experiencing deterioration, which was leading to health concerns (Figure 11). At the time, the Parks area was dubbed 'Little Chicago', following its notoriety for crime and gangs (Harwood 2003, 52). The Sheffield town planner Abercrombie published the Sheffield Civic Survey and Development Plan in 1924, and this identified concerns about the lower Park area, with a population density of 100-400 people per acre. For the Park area, the plan stated that death rates were between 20-26 people per 1000, and for infants under one year, it was 153-169 per 1000 (Abercrombie 1924). These findings led to Abercrombie's recommendation for extensive demolition in the area.

Following these recommendations, Alderman Harold Jackson (1930) addressed a number of concerns in a City Council meeting in January 1930, including issues relating to accommodation, overcrowding and rent. The response to this came in September 1930, when the Estates Committee pledged to introduce 1250 new-build dwellings per year, as well as removing 500 deteriorated houses, and building 500 for those displaced (Sheffield City Archives 2018, 7). On the Park area, John Rennie (1935), Medical Officer of Health, stated, 'the dwelling houses in the area are by reason of disrepair or sanitary defects unfit for human habitation . . . the most satisfactory method of dealing with the conditions in the area is the demolition of all the buildings in the area.'

In April 1949, the Council held a special Housing Committee meeting, which began to consider the possibilities of using multi-storey housing in response to the slum clearance (Housing Committee 1949, 899). The Committee agreed to undertake research into the effectiveness of multi-storey developments in London and Scandinavia. According to the Council Planning Officer Overspill report (1950), the city of Sheffield would require over 79,000 houses. This resulted in a need, as the Planning Officer (1950) stated, for 'a departure from the standard and type of development provided in Sheffield just prior to and since the war, which has been almost entirely by semi-detached houses.' Sheffield Council's research into multi-story developments continued throughout Western Europe with a Housing Committee Deputation (1954), which inspected 'post-war developments in the erection of multi-storey flats and studying the design and methods of construction employed.' Among these inspections included a visit to Le Corbusier's Unité d'habitation in Marseille. From these investigations, the Housing Committee approved the Deputation's report in March 1955, and proposals for the Park Hill area redevelopment (Sheffield City Council 2010, 11). This development scheme became known as Park Hill 1 & 2, which later became separated into Park Hill and Hyde Park (Banham 1961, 403).

Park Hill was constructed between 1957-1961, and designed by architects Jack Lynn and Ivor Smith under Sheffield city architect J. Lewis Womersley (Harwood and Davies 2015, 84). Womersley recruited these young and ambitious architects following their entry into the Golden Lane estate competition. Lynn and Smith were educated at the Architectural Association under the Smithsons, and while they were a key influence, Smith (1996 67) stated, 'we certainly never thought of ourselves as "brutalists."' Bell argues (2011, 152) that their written work, including *Ordinariness and Light*, was very 'un-brutalist', and had a 'strongly picturesque element to their thinking.' A key philosophy for the architects at Park Hill was to foster a sense of community from the previous Victorian slums, and this is evident from the architectural reports on the Park Hill development. In the City Architect's report,

Womersley (1955, 7) had stated, 'In designing these dwellings an attempt has been made to provide accommodation and amenities which will be comparable with houses on the ground and which will form satisfactory homes for a wide range of families, for small children and for aged persons.'

The design of Park Hill had a significant connection to the Sheffield landscape. The height of the roofline matches the topography of the area, ranging from 13 storeys at Anson Street, to 4 storeys at Talbot street (Womersley 1955, 5) (Figure 12). Park Hill had a total of 995 flats, with the building covering 17 acres, and the whole site covering 32 acres (Historic England 1998). It is unsurprising that it is often regarded as Europe's largest listed building, despite the Barbican Estate in London claiming this accolade at 35-acres (Historic England 2001). Its formation, which Saint (1996, 13) described as 'canting round endlessly and obliquely like a scorpion's tail', ensured the greatest quantity of air, sunshine and light in connection to the building's height (Womersley 1955, 5). Park Hill was built with a recurring concrete 'H' frame, which is unadorned following the adoption of the béton brut style. The external walls are faced of glazing and brick infill panels, where the latter gradually ascends to a lighter tone every three storeys to provide identity to the sections (Housing Management Committee 1962, 1) (Figure 13).
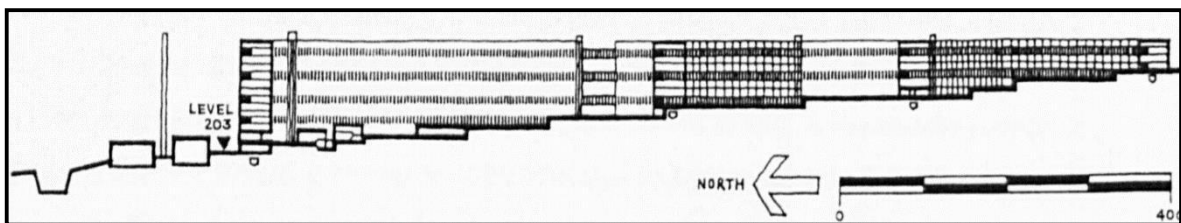
Figure 12: North to south section of Park Hill, highlighting the continuous roofline (Crooke 1961 as cited in Bell 2011, 154).

Figure 13: Park Hill flats on South Street in 1961, highlighting the gradient change in the brick infill panels (from Sheffield History 2020).

A major component of the design for Park Hill was to ensure the social integration from Victorian street terrace to multi-storey housing, and this is evident from Womersley's 1955 report. Access to the dwellings is provided via street decks, which are included on every third floor from the main mass of buildings (Figure 14). Bridges joined these streets to each building, allowing connection from one side of Park Hill to the other (Glendinning and Muthesius, 127). Each continuous deck was named after the previous streets in the Park area: Gilbert Row, Hague Row, Long Henry Row and Norwich Row. The decks are 10'00" wide, and intended to 'fulfil the function of the "streets"', where they 'form ideal places for daily social intercourse' (Womersley 1955, 5-6). For the architects, the purpose of the decks was to allow children to play, adults to make conversation, and milk floats to pass.

Figure 14: The street decks at Park Hill, 1962 (Picture Sheffield 2020).

The dwellings themselves varied from single-person flats, to six-bed maisonettes, all of which had their own private and sheltered balcony (Figure 15). Only flats for three or more residents had a kitchen-diner as well as a living room, but each dwelling had a compact bathroom designed into the space. Further to this, each dwelling had central heating and a Garchey disposal system, the latter of which was installed within the kitchen sink. The design of the different dwellings utilised a 'standard repetitive structure', within which all varieties could fit (Womersley 1955, 7). In the attempt to provide further provisions for the community, public facilities were also integrated into the formation of Park Hill. This included a shopping district called The Pavement, laundry, garages, workshops, pubs, playgrounds, a community centre and more (Figure 16). The public facilities were located near the pedestrian routes, and were installed for the daily functions of modern life (Housing Committee 1962, 1). While these communal spaces were installed on the ground, Le Corbusier's Unité was a clear influence, with the vision of a city's functions all within one complex.

Figure 15: Section of Park Hill flats/maisonettes (Housing Committee 1960).

Figure 16: The Pavement at Park Hill, 1985 (as cited in Picture Sheffield 2020).

4.3 : Park Hill: A Story of Success

Park Hill has been afflicted by commentary surrounding its success and failure since its inception. The building's history and legacy is complex, and still unfolding, with notions of success and failure still present today, as the regeneration of the estate continues. It has been regarded by some as an icon of British Brutalism (Cruickshank 1995), but as early as 1967 was thought set to soon become a 'slum', by Pevsner (1967, 466) no less. Throughout the site's history it has mirrored changing developments within Sheffield, and much of its legacy can be attributed to these wider contexts. Park Hill is thought to have been relatively successful from its inception, up until the late 1970s. From this time, political developments, media portrayals, and criminal activity plagued Park Hill into a period of decline. However, notions of success and failure are complex for Park Hill; its legacy as a divisive building is widely known. The section will consider this history and legacy up to the listing of the site in 1998. This will begin by considering the 1962 report of social worker Joan Demers, highlighting the initial social success of the site, and contrast this with the early architectural commentary surrounding the advocacy of its design.

The anticipation of both success and failure appears evident from the beginning of the Park Hill development. The architects were attempting to achieve something innovative and experimental by recreating the dense Victorian street. With 995 dwellings over 32 acres, there was tremendous pressure for the design to succeed in creating a sense of community. Reyner Banham, critic for the *Architectural Review* (as cited in Bell 2011, 163) made the point that the residents 'were probably the most carefully "briefed" tenants ever to move into anything anywhere.' Social worker Joan Demers was the first person to move onto Park Hill in October 1959. Demers was tasked with writing a report on the social cohesion of the residents, working with one in every five dwellings, with 197 in total. As

Demers (1962, 1-10) stated, 'it seems that unless a strong community spirit is engendered from the start in densely built-up areas, there is a strong possibility of social apathy.' Demers' report found that 144 of the families were clearance cases, with the majority from the areas of Netherthorpe and the Park district. A total of 179 were interested in Residents' Association activities, and only 7% were severely critical of the design, although this criticism did not affect their living satisfaction. There was some cause for concern surrounding the publicity of the site, and with the notion of 'living in a glass house with the world looking on.' However, Demers stated that the community cohesion had dispelled these fears. In all, the report promotes the success of the project:

> There remains the undeniable fact that here . . . not merely has a quality, high density housing development taken place, but its occupants live a life equally as rich as in a long settled area, with amenities which do promote their feelings of being worthwhile and which also help in developing a strong community spirit. This report seems to be clear proof of this, but the real proof can be even more clearly felt in the hearts and minds of the people who live here, simply by mingling amongst them (Demers 1962, 9-10).

Early media coverage of Park Hill was also strikingly positive. In December 1953 Harold Macmillan, the then Housing Minister, visited the model of Park Hill and professed to the media that the site would draw global admiration (Saint 1996, 13). The *Sheffield Telegraph* (1955) wrote of the 'City's "Super" Flats of the Future', and the *Star* (1955) made similar comments about the 'Continental Touch' of the development, which would 'probably set a standard for flat development for the whole country.' The site was also photographed and filmed extensively in the 1960s, with notable commissions by Roger Mayne (1961). These photographs have become iconic and synonymous with the early Park Hill leitmotif, featuring housewives chatting and kids playing (Bell 2010, 163) (Figure 17 & 18). Hughes (2000, 14) has argued these had a significant impact on early attitudes to Park Hill. The BBC (as cited in BBC 2009) also filmed a documentary about the site in the early 1960s, which interviewed residents. The feedback from the residents within the footage is overwhelmingly positive, with one being found to say, 'It's like being in heaven up here.' Moreover, Park Hill was featured in Sheffield City Council's promotional film, *Sheffield: City on the Move* (1971). This boasted about the modernity of Park Hill, calling it 'the biggest single development of its kind in western Europe.' The film aimed to redefine Sheffield's image, and this recent innovation in housing was an important component.

Figure 17: (LEFT) Footballers, Park Hill, Sheffield 1961 (Roger Mayne 1961).

Figure 18: (RIGHT) The Deck, Park Hill, 1961 (Roger Mayne 1961).

The early architectural commentary mirrored this positive drive. As Pevsner (1967, 466) stated, Park Hill 'has been hailed universally in the technical press as a visually as well as a socially satisfactory conception.' Reyner Banham (as cited in Saint 1996, 35) wrote multiple pieces in 1961, one of which showcased Park Hill as 'the building by which 1961 will be remembered'; another in the *Architectural Review* gave an approving presentation of the architectural details (Banham 1961). Much of this commentary placed its primary focus upon the relationship between the deck and social cohesion. As Banham (as cited in Bell 2010, 163) stated in 1962, the decks 'become the real social backbone of social communication and grouping as well – at corners and other natural points of human aggregation, kids play, mums natter, teenagers smooch and squabble, dads hash over union affairs and the pools.' This overarching focus on whether the decks could achieve social cohesion, made a significant contribution to the legacy of success and failure for Park Hill, and one which was critiqued from the building's inception.

4.4 : Park Hill: A Story of Failure

As early as 1961 beliefs of Park Hill as a failure, or the inevitability of its failure, were being articulated. These discussions were certainly in the minority during this period, and conflicted with the enthusiasm and positivity shown by the residents, media, City Council, and architects. While the *Star* was hailing Park Hill's success, with headlines such as 'The verdict: It's smashing living right up in the sky', letters were being sent to the same paper describing the 'whole dismal, slab-like mass' of 'the city's newest eyesore' (as cited in Kynaston 2015, 442). This section will track Park Hill's period of decline, and how it came to possess its reputation for failure. This will begin by considering early criticisms of the design, the notable architectural onslaught it suffered in 1967, and the knock-on effect this had for its reputation.

Much of the criticism for the design centred upon the philosophy of the decks, and whether it could act as an internal street for community building. Writing in *Architectural Design* in 1961, Crooke (as cited in Bell 2010, 154) questioned the decks and community motif, stating 'this ambivalent, neutral, harsh-framework of routes connecting thresholds – while it gives a strong visual sense of location . . . provides no functional location whatever.' The Town and Country Planning Association in August 1961 (as cited in Moran 2012, 175) argued this was a 'bogus sociology', and that the dense design represented an 'unwarranted assumption' that a community could be fostered. Lynn and Smith had aimed to house existing neighbours in the Park area next to one another within Park Hill, keeping the same community on the decks as the Victorian Street. When the project was split between Park Hill and Hyde Park, this was no longer fully achievable. Saint (1996, 32) has argued that this reflected 'how tenuous the social side of the endeavour truly was.'

While there was criticism of Park Hill in the early 1960s, the turning point for the estate's reputation appears to have come in 1967, with the change in opinion about deck-access housing. This year saw Pevsner (1967, 466) make favourable comments about the design, describing the decks as 'the most interesting innovation', which 'make for easy contacts', although he went on to claim with absolute certainty that it would be a 'slum in half a century or less', owing to the density of the scheme. Taylor's arguments in 1967 within the journal *Architectural Review*, which had previously been an advocate for the design of Park Hill, were particularly negative. He stated:

> Only 9 per cent mentioned the value of being able to stand on the decks and look at the view . . . only 4 per cent remembered that the decks made it possible to stand out and talk to people. This discounts a good deal of romantic nonsense about the decks being a hive of activity; as any visitor knows, they are not (as cited in Saint 1996, 37).

Taylor claimed that this information was gathered from the report made by social worker Joan Demers. However, these statements had been based upon evidence which did not exist. Bacon's (1985, 155) doctoral thesis revealed the falsification of the statistics, but following the publication of Taylor's claims, the damage to Park Hill's reputation, and indeed council housing more generally, had already been done. According to Bacon (1985, 298) Taylor's tirade against Park Hill was the first time criticism was 'seriously levelled' against the site. Saint (1996, 37) argued, 'Hence it is a slippery slope to the relentlessly negative statistics and conclusions about all public housing in flats marshalled by Alice Coleman in *Utopia On Trial* (1985).' Coleman's (1985) work placed the blame for social problems on the design of council estates, with much less emphasis on the impact of poverty and lack of resources (Spicker 1987, 283). Following Taylor's piece in *Architectural Review*, the City Council (as cited in 1985, 298) responded stating, 'as a social experiment these estates are a resounding success

and the sudden denigration of them for obscure reasons wants nipping in the bud.' However, the negativity towards Park Hill continued to grow. The statistics utilised by Taylor were then used in a damaging piece by Pawley entitled *Architecture versus Housing* in 1972 (as cited in Saint 1996, 37). In 1979 a damning letter was sent to the *Star* (as cited in Bacon 1985, 302) entitled *A cry of despair from a prisoner of Park Hill* (Figure 19). This stated:

> I have suffered a life sentence of 20 years, without remission . . . Young mothers and their babies, old people and invalids, become virtual prisoners trapped in their flats . . . Teenagers often become members of gangs of vandals and hooligans . . . The whole area exudes an atmosphere of resigned, apathetic and utter hopelessness . . . Not a single item of property is safe . . . Graffiti adorns most surfaces . . . There is a festering and sometimes hidden prejudice, racism, drug addiction, theft, violence, obscenity, prostitution and corruption . . . There seems to be only one logical conclusion, difficult and costly as it may be, and that is to demolish the whole thing quickly before it gets worse and make room for decent housing.
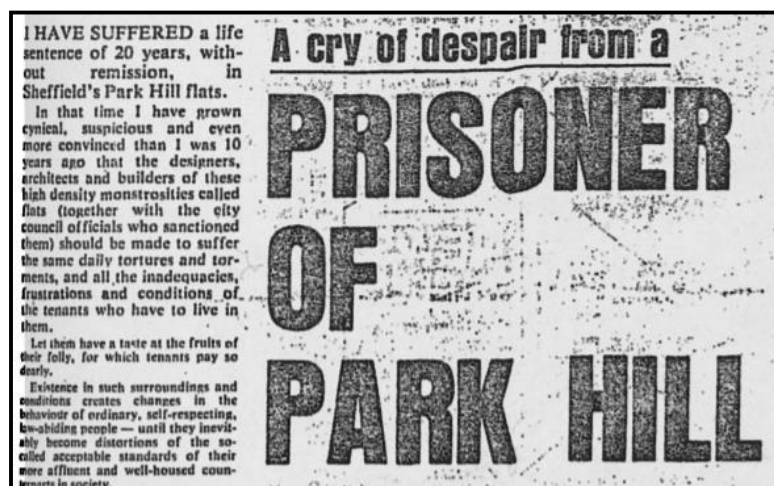
Figure 19: A cry of despair from a prisoner of Park Hill, The Star, 1979 (as cited in Bacon 1985, 302).

The damning letter published in *the Star* was met with very little opposition. Media biases continued to occur, such as an article in *The Times* (as cited in Campbell 2016, 22) in 1996, stating 'it is ravaged by graffiti, deliverymen often have to dodge milk bottles and other missiles thrown from high-level walkways and some residents throw their rubbish, including furniture, over the edge.' In this same vein, the reputation of the decks evolved into seeing them as hives of criminal activity. That they were spacious, continuous, and with considerable access, gave muggers easy escape routes (Hanley 2017, 117). According to Hanley, in the 1980s drug related activity became prevalent on 'neglected sites . . . where support and maintenance was most needed and least provided by local

councils.' Unfortunately for Park Hill, as Bacon (1985, 298) states, 'local opinion has tended to mirror national opinion and vice versa.' Bacon (1985, 301), who was a former resident of Park Hill, argued that while some of these problems happened occasionally, they were not as widespread as the letter attempted to make the public believe.

While there were issues, the exaggerated and venomous discourse of negativity surrounding Park Hill was widely believed, and therefore its 'spiral of decline' was inevitable (Bacon 1985, 303). This discourse contributed significantly to Park Hill's "problem estate" reputation, which, like many other places around the world, were accepted as being part of 'leprous badlands at the heart of the post-industrial metropolis where only the refuse of society would accept to dwell' (Wacquant 2007, 67). This myth of negativity and failure continues to plague Park Hill to the present day, with scholars writing inaccurately of its reputation. For example, Moran (2012, 175) wrote of the 'complimentary tones' on Park Hill occurring 'as late as 1968', suggesting positivity towards the site all but ceased to exist in the late 1960s. Statements like these contribute to Park Hill's overarching and erroneous myth of failure. While the site certainly fell into a dire state of decline, its early years saw a thriving community and thus a story of success.

4.5: Wider Political Developments

The commentary on Park Hill's legacy of failure has placed much of the blame for decline on the design and philosophy of the site. However, to fully understand this legacy, one must also look to the political developments within Britain more widely. It is often considered that Park Hill's success and failure has mirrored that of Sheffield itself; Park Hill was part of Sheffield's modernizing campaign in the 1960s and early 1970s, but with Sheffield it also felt the brunt of Thatcherism. This section will consider the impact of the Right to Buy scheme in the early 1980s, and the decline of the steel industry in Sheffield. These political developments played an important role in the shaping of Park Hill's management and reputation, in a period which saw drastic decline for the site.

While the idea of the Right to Buy scheme was actually first presented by Harold Macmillan in the 1950s, it was Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government that introduced the policy in 1980 (Hanley 2017, 135). Thatcher (as cited in Beckett, 2015) announced the scheme in a television broadcast, stating 'if you have been a council tenant for at least three years . . . you will have the right, by law, to buy your housing. And that's that.' This policy provided council tenants with home-ownership at a discounted rate of up to 50 per cent, and therefore moved the responsibility of maintaining the property from the council to the homeowner. The scheme was hugely popular, and within fifteen years of the scheme's inception, 1.6 million homes had been bought from the council,

providing an enormous opportunity for people to own assets for the first time in their lives, and pass something on to their children (Hanley 2017, 135-142).

On the surface this seems hugely beneficial, but a particular problem emerges from another Conservative housing policy, which aimed to dismantle the council housing stock (Hanley 2017, 135). The policy prohibited local authorities from building new properties to be used as council houses, in the place of those which had been purchased through the Right to Buy scheme. This put pressure on the councils which had lost revenue from the policy, resulting in the raising of rent for council-owned homes (Hanley 2017, 135). This comes from a period which saw a lack of maintenance of neglected estates, at places like Park Hill which were in need of greater support. Furthermore, it was widely known that specific homes sold better than others, with semi-detached houses in high demand, whereas high-rise flats were the most unpopular. According to Beckett (2015), in the early stages of the scheme, houses outsold flats fifty to one.

These issues were exacerbated by the divide the scheme created between the poorest in society. Hanley (2017, 136) has argued the scheme allocated people into 'deserving and underserving poor as though they were different species, and not merely the lucky and unlucky sides of the same coin.' This was particularly impactful in areas of high unemployment, which led to depopulation in search of work and better prospects. The Right to Buy scheme significantly affected Sheffield, when one takes into account the decline of the steel industry. In the post-War period Britain's steel industry had seen nationalisation in 1951, privatisation in 1953, and part-renationalisation in 1967 (Deans 2016). Despite these continuous rearrangements, "Steel City" had been mostly prosperous in the post-War period. It wasn't until the later 1970s that major problems began to occur. The newly founded British Steel Corporation (BSC) of 1967, along with the surviving private firms in Sheffield, began to face substantial competition from overseas (Hey 2005, 288), as well as dealing with a falling demand for steel from multiple oil crises (Tweedale 1995, 341). In the 1970s, the BSC saw significant losses, with its workforce reducing from 252,400 to 166,400, and its production of steel falling from 24.2 million to 14.1 million tonnes per annum. This resulted in the need for Sheffield's private firms to provide a higher quality product, and reduce their labour costs (Hey 2005, 288). Thatcher's Conservative government had begun to cut the nationalised portion of the steel industry in a time of recession (Deans 2016). These cuts were met with a national steel worker strike in 1981. However, the strikes were unsuccessful, and the 1980s saw substantial job losses in the steel industry. As a city which represented a significant portion of the industry, Sheffield saw a period of dramatic decline. According to Hanley (2017, 117), between 1979 and 1989, 40,000 jobs were lost from a city population of 200,000 people. The decline of the steel industry was felt in every area of Sheffield, with a notably sharp rise in unemployment found in 1980 (Figure 20).
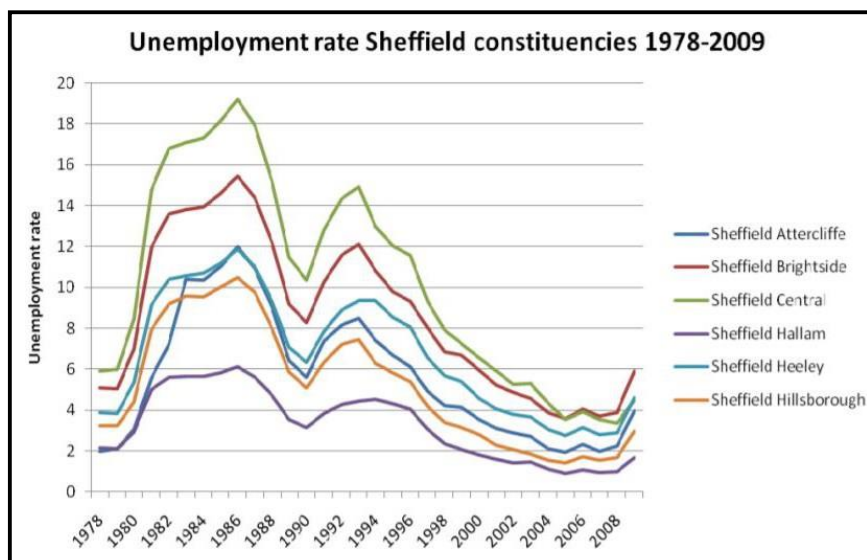
Figure 20: Unemployment rate in Sheffield constituencies, 1978-2009 (Thomas et al. *2009, 47).*
Park Hill is situated within Sheffield Central.

When taking the Right to Buy scheme and unemployment from the steel industry together, one can understand the inevitability of the 'spiral of decline' for Park Hill that Bacon (1985, 303) writes of. Within the Right to Buy scheme, it was ten times less likely for buyers to be unemployed than employed (Beckett 2015). Just as Sheffield would feel this impact, so too would Park Hill. The depopulation of areas of high unemployment, and lack of maintenance from a powerless local authority, left council estates to fend for themselves. As Hanley (2017, 137) stated, this depopulation 'caused the least popular estates to empty out completely, except to those who were statutorily homeless: the mentally ill, hard-drug addicts, ex-cons and those who had never worked and could never expect to work.' The Right to Buy scheme resulted in a vicious cycle, in which there was a high demand for council housing, yet fewer and fewer available to those who needed it the most.

In this context, Park Hill was destined to become the very thing that people accused it of being. The site has been subject to a lack of support from the local authority, the bias of the media, the changing negative outlook of architectural commentators, and the political developments of the 1980s. While all of these things had a substantial harmful impact on Park Hill's reputation, somehow, inexplicably, there remains a sense of an enduring community spirit. The chapter has explored the notions of success and failure, which have plagued Park Hill's reputation since its inception. This overarching legacy of failure has been attributed to the design and density of the site, and little consideration has been given to the impact the wider political developments would have had on this sense of failure. Pevsner's prediction that the site would become a 'slum in half a century or less' may have been accurate, but to attribute this to the design of the site is inexcusable. Furthermore, in

considering who has been writing about Park Hill, the area has been dominated by male authors, who have focused primarily upon the architecture of the estate. Very little has been explored with regards to the domesticity of Park Hill, and what it was actually like to live there. Multi-storey council housing was plagued with notions of failure from 1967 onwards, and the wider political developments resulted in their drastic decline. Their design may have exacerbated problems, as discussed with respect to the street decks and criminal activity, but this should be correctly attributed to the failings of government and policy to maintain these sites. Park Hill was a success story, in a society that failed multi-storey council housing.

Chapter 5: Heritage, Value, and Regeneration

The overarching emphasis on success and failure for Park Hill culminated in its 1998 listing by English Heritage. This magnified many of the debates surrounding the site, and brought them into the wider public domain. The listing of the site represented an important turning point for Park Hill, and one that saw the building come to be regarded as heritage. Chapter 5 will discuss the issues surrounding heritage, value and regeneration within the context of Park Hill. The research from this chapter was instrumental in shaping the approach to Stories in the Sky VR, in wanting to articulate as wide and diverse a range of identities as possible, and in understanding the issues of heritage and control for Park Hill.

The chapter will begin by exploring the discourse surrounding the listing of the site, introducing the UK's listing and heritage system, and considering the background to English Heritage's decision to list the building. Next, the chapter will discuss the list description of Park Hill, and what was deemed as significant. This will consider the connection with other twentieth-century buildings, and introduce the debate around the Smithsons' Robin Hood Gardens, London, which has been in the process of demolition since 2017. The site will be compared with that of Park Hill, discussing the work Urban Splash, who were appointed as developers for Park Hill in 2004, and who are in the process of delivering a regeneration project. This will investigate the way that they have rebranded Park Hill as a success. Finally, Chapter 5 will consider the implications of the regeneration, and the issues created from the gentrification and commodification of heritage.

5.1 : National Heritage List for England

The National Heritage List for England (NHLE) was first implemented in 1882, and is utilised for the protection of British heritage (Historic England 2020a). As Historic England states, 'Listing marks and celebrates a building's special architectural and historic interest, and also brings it under the consideration of the planning system, so that it can be protected for future generations.' Buildings are categorised as Grade II, II*, and I, depending on their significance. These are defined as follows:

- Grade II buildings are of special interest; 91.7% of all listed buildings are in this class
- Grade II* buildings are particularly important buildings of more than special interest; 5.8% of listed buildings are Grade II*
- Grade I buildings are of exceptional interest, only 2.5% of listed buildings are Grade I (Historic England 2020a).

Historic England's (2020a) guidance on listing states that 'particular careful selection is required for buildings from the period after 1945. Buildings less than 30 years old are not normally considered to

be of special architectural or historic interest because they have yet to stand the test of time.' Historic England's ethos for managing change centres upon decisions that retain or reinforce heritage values, as discussed in the literature review (Historic England 2008, 43). Historic England's *Conservation Principles* is utilised in connection with the National Planning Policy Framework, first published in 2012, which offers additional guidance on the best-practice of managing changes to the historic environment (HM Government 2019, 54-57). To make changes to a listed structure, Listed Building Consent applications must be submitted to the relevant local planning authority for evaluation. The applications can vary depending on the overall scale of the proposed changes, and the significance of the building. For large scale buildings like Park Hill, this would be a substantial undertaking, which is heavily negotiated to secure the optimum solution for the benefit of the building.

Park Hill was given a Grade II* listing, which places it within the category of 'particularly important buildings of more than special interest.' English Heritage first proposed the listing of Park Hill on August 29th 1996, in an entry of the *Architects Journal*. This was part of a series of listing proposals for modern architecture, which had begun in 1992, when the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) and English Heritage (1992) hosted an exhibition entitled "A Change of heart: English architecture since the War". This aimed to change public perception of post-War architecture. At the point of the exhibition, only twenty-nine post-War buildings had been listed. Three of the listed buildings were housing, but none reflected the multi-storey utopian modernism found in estates like Park Hill. Of note within these designations was the Smithsons' Economist building, London, built between 1960-64. Grade II* listed in 1988, the description categorises the Economist building as a 'masterpiece of two of post-war Britain's most radical and influential architects' (Historic England 1988). However, this decision presents certain conflicts, in light of the decisions made to demolish the Smithsons' Robin Hood Gardens, as the thesis will discuss.

5.2 : Park Hill: Grade II* Listed

The listing of post-War architecture has proven particularly controversial. At the time of the 1992 exhibition, Stevens (as cited in RCHME and English Heritage 1992, iv), who was Chairman of English Heritage at the time, noted, 'People still react passionately to post-War architecture. Many are hostile because of the failures that stick in the mind.' As we have seen with Park Hill, there has been an overwhelming sense of failure, and it has been felt within the public eye. Cherry (1996, 12-13), former head of listing at English Heritage, has argued that 'public support must be secured through debate and education', and that 'public confidence can only be assured if the full facts are known.' In light of these issues, English Heritage decided to change their protocols in 1995 for post-war listings, and opened discussion with the general public. Formerly, the process had centred upon area-specific surveys, with decisions kept from the public eye. Bell (2011, 169) has shown that the previous 'spot-

listing' policy provided additional protection for the building, 'assuming a culture of owners potentially preferring to demolish a property.' This protocol change reflected English Heritage's anticipation of opposition to post-war listings (Bell 2011, 169).

As the protocols changed, and with English Heritage's consolidated protection efforts, by 1996, 154 post-war buildings had been listed (Cherry 1996, 6). This included notable housing projects such as Neave Brown's Alexandra Road Estate, London, built between 1972-78 (Historic England 1993). Park Hill was highlighted within the next wave of post-war listing, which was presented within an exhibition entitled *Something worth keeping?* in 1996 (Cherry 1996, 13). The reception to this announcement was mixed, with some substantial opposition to the listing in favour of demolition. Roy Hattersley, the chairman of Sheffield's housing committee when Park Hill was built, had argued for its demolition. For Hattersley, then a Labour MP for Birmingham Sparkbrook, much had changed since the 1960s, and Britain was a much more middle-class nation by 1996. Hattersley (1996) argued, 'Park Hill must not be preserved as a monument either to brilliant architects or to councillors who believed that they were doing their best for Sheffield. Park Hill was built to meet the needs of the people. If it no longer achieves that aim, it should be demolished.'

In a similar vein, David Morton, from the Royal Town Planning institute, argued for its demolition over listing. Morton (1996) stated, 'For most of its life it has been considered a failure both professionally and, more importantly, as a place to live. While the criteria for listing modern buildings should include follies designed as such, it should not include failures.' A resident (as cited in BBC 1998) at Park Hill was also found to say 'It's an eyesore and the best thing they can do is blow up the lot.' The argument that Park Hill has been a blemish on the Sheffield landscape has been particularly prominent among those that sought its demolition. The public had been critical of how Park Hill looked from early in the estate's history, and Hattersley (1996) argued that 'the first complaint against Park Hill was that it looked dirty.' Modernist and brutalist architecture has always been known to draw visual criticism. Hanley (2017, 118) argued that this is because they 'are emphatically seen as enemies of the people's will, of their desire not to be dictated to by aloof architects and their hideous buildings.'

Despite the calls for Park Hill's demolition, there was substantial support for protecting the estate. According to a resident interview, the decision to list was met with general approval by residents, with only one negative response citing major opposition (Bell 2011, 169). In 1996, the Architectural Association released a book of essays titled, *Park Hill: What next?* (Saint 1996). This provided a number of architectural commentaries on what decisions could be made about the estate's future. Allan (1996, 47), an expert in the conservation of modernist architecture, argued that a portion of Park Hill could be demolished, but to keep 'the main spine along South Street that now seems such an inalienable

part of Sheffield's horizon' (Figure 21). Prominent architectural historian Dan Cruikshank (1996, 50-51) was in favour of restoration, but argued the need for improvements in the form of usage, planting, maintenance, concrete repair and security.' Ivor Smith (1996, 67), one of Park Hill's architects, argued that there was potential for adaptations to the dwellings and the decks, but that the 'work should respect the essence of the scheme as it exists today.' He also claimed that 'Cities adapt and change, and if Park Hill can be regenerated it could perhaps help to give an impetus in these more cynical and uncaring times towards a greater sense of hope and social concern.'
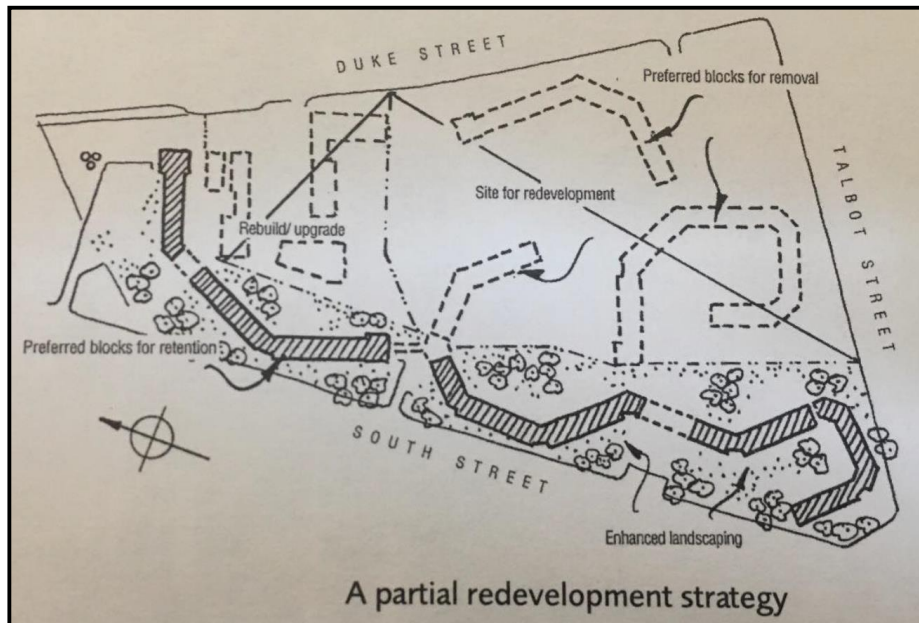
Figure 21: Allan's proposed strategy for partial demolition (1996, 47).

Park Hill was officially listed as a Grade II* building on the 22nd December 1998 (Appendix 1). The list entry details the important surviving fabric, as well as an assessment section, which recognises the estate's overall significance (Historic England 1998). The description considers the main architectural design features, including the concrete 'H' frame, the brick infill panels, the street decks, and the continuous roof-line. Recognition is also given to the varying flats and maisonettes, but the listing notes: 'interiors not of special interest.' Attention is given to the community spaces within the estate, with reference to the '31 shops, 4 pubs, a laundry boiler house, Garchey refuse station and garages.' Considerable detail is provided for the retention of important fabric associated with the shops and pubs. This provides special reference to The Pavement shopping area, the social centre, and the four public houses of the estate: The Link, The Earl George, The Parkway, and The Scottish Queen. The assessment section has been produced in full below, as it provides a useful summary for the significance of the estate:

Park Hill is of international importance. It is the first built manifestation of a widespread theoretical interest in external access decks as a way of building high without the problems of isolation and expense encountered with point blocks. Sheffield and the London County Council had the only major local authority departments designing imaginative and successful public housing in the 1950s, and this is Sheffield's flagship. The decks were conceived as a way of recreating the community spirit of traditional slum streets, with the benefit of vehicular segregation; Park Hill has been regularly studied by sociologists ever since it opened, and is one of the most successful of its type. The deck system was uniquely appropriate here because the steeply sloping site allowed all but the uppermost deck to reach ground level, and the impact of the long, flat-topped structure rising above the city centre makes for one of Sheffield's most impressive landmarks. The result was Britain's first completed scheme of post-war slum clearance and the most ambitious inner-city development of its time.

5.3 : Brutalist Council Housing: Politically Motivated Protection?

The assessment section of the listing entry showcases Park Hill as an iconic and influential piece of post-War architecture. The majority of the prominent British brutalist housing schemes came after the Park Hill development, including that of Ernő Goldfinger's Trellick Tower and Neave Brown's Alexandra Road Estate, both Grade II* listed (Harwood and Davies 2015, 482-488). While Park Hill was saved from demolition by its listing, this was not the case for other housing schemes. The Smithsons, who had inspired Park Hill's architects with their Golden Lane submission, designed the Robin Hood Gardens estate, which was completed in 1972. The dense, multi-storey estate is of brutalist design, and adhered to the concept of "streets in the sky." It comprised 213 flats, and was constructed of two concrete slab blocks, between which featured a large communal garden area (Twentieth Century Society 2015). This site had striking similarities to that of Park Hill, not only in design but in historical context. Robin Hood Gardens was first categorised as at-risk in 2008, and the process of demolition began in August 2017 (Figure 22).

Figure 22: Demolition at Robin Hood Gardens begins, 2017 (Frearson 2017).

To many commentators, Robin Hood Gardens represents a highly significant piece of post-war heritage. The decision to demolish the estate came after nearly a decade of campaigning to have the site listed. Croft (2015), director of the Twentieth Century Society, argued that 'This historic development, designed by two of the most influential and important twentieth century architects in Britain, should be kept for future generations and imaginatively refurbished – not demolished.' Simon (as cited in Frearson 2017), the son of Peter and Alison Smithson, regarded the demolition as an 'act of vandalism.' In his view (2019), Robin Hood Gardens was 'the most significant building' completed by his parents. The Smithsons Economist building (Historic England 1988) and Smithdon School (Historic England 1993) were both Grade II* listed, and their Garden Building at St Hilda's College (Historic England 1999) was Grade II listed.

A tenant (as cited in Brooke 2019) of Robin Hood Gardens described 'the whole propaganda machine', in the attempt to convince people of its demolition. The tenant stated that the council poll of residents had revealed that 80% were in favour of demolition, but the poll was only taken from 94 out of 250 households. The tenant claimed that a more accurate poll was calculated amongst the residents, and this was closer to 30% in favour of demolition. Secretary of State Andy Burnham rejected the listing proposal on the basis of extensive vandalism, and that the estate was not structurally sound, with a noticeable "bow" in the buildings. Harwood, the barrister of the Twentieth Century Society, argued 'There is no evidence to justify the Secretary of State's description' (as cited in Twentieth Century Society 2019). In place of Robin Hood Gardens, will be 1,575 homes from the ongoing Blackwall Reach development programme (Figure 23). In this case, one must consider the

reasons for its demolition over listing, and why Park Hill was an estate which was, in contrast, deemed worth saving. English Heritage, who had been strong advocates in protecting Park Hill, argued that Robin Hood Gardens 'fails as a place for human beings to live' (as cited in Thoburn 2018, 620).

Figure 23: Masterplan for Robin Hood Gardens re-development programme (Blackwall Reach 2020).

Sociologist Nicholas Thoburn explored the relationship between Robin Hood Gardens, brutalism, and class. Thoburn (2018, 619) argues that Brutalism has been transformed into two distinct images, one of 'concrete monstrosity', the other of 'modernist masterpiece.' The first is used in a smear campaign against the image of brutalism, in an effort to disconnect those working-class communities from their homes. This image has been synonymous with council housing, and was a prevalent feature of Park Hill's reputation. Despite the residents of Robin Hood Gardens being in favour of listing, Heritage Minister Margaret Hodge, who rejected the proposal, stated, 'Anyone who wants to list that place should try living there. It is simply not fit for purpose and I cannot believe that anyone is trying to list it' (as cited in Thoburn 2018, 619). Thoburn (2018, 619) argues, 'the vehemence by which the condemnation of "monstrosity" is made, one might reasonably infer that "concrete" in this image serves to disguise and disavow what is the real object of hostility, the social form and visibility of the working-class estate.'

The second form of imagery, 'modernist masterpiece', seeks to disconnect Brutalism as a form of "beauty" from its social form (Thoburn 2018, 620). For Robin Hood Gardens, this was seen with the 2018 exhibition at the Venice Architecture Biennale. A section of the estate was reconstructed, which featured two maisonettes with fittings, and deck-access, and installed as an exhibition (Figure 24). The exhibit highlighted an appreciation for the aesthetics and design, but also represented a total disconnection from its association with social housing. This second form of imagery, Thoburn (2018, 620) argues, 'is what I will call "middle-class brutalism", where architecture is separated from its social form and its newfound "beauty" weaponised for regeneration.'

Figure 24: The Robin Hood Garden's reconstruction exhibition at the Venice Architecture Biennale (Singh 2018).

Thoburn's (2018, 612-632) study provides a useful basis for understanding the decision-making process for the heritage protection of Brutalist architecture, pointing towards politically motivated decisions. Robin Hood Gardens is a highly significant piece of twentieth-century architecture, and many commentators have called for its protection. Yet, different agents within the protection process (English Heritage, a Heritage Minister, a Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport), had shaped the inaccurate imagery of its uninhabitable state. In its place, will feature the Blackwall Reach development, a £300 million project, creating 1,500 properties. Of these, 679 have been allocated as affordable housing, but none for social housing. With Thoburn's study in mind, the following section will explore the regeneration of Park Hill. While Robin Hood Gardens is being demolished, and Park Hill protected, Urban Splash's regeneration strategy has certainly attempted to reinvigorate its image.

The previous chapter highlighted the legacy of failure for Park Hill, which mirrors Thoburn's imagery of 'concrete monstrosity.' The following section will present Park Hill's reimaging as a 'modernist masterpiece'; its regeneration as a driving force of 'middle-class brutalism.'

5.4 : Regeneration: Phase 1

Regeneration agency English Partnerships, Sheffield City Council, and social housing landlords Manchester Methodist Housing Group, selected Urban Splash as the developing partners in 2004. From this, Hawkins/Brown and Studio Egret West were chosen as the principal architects (Bell 2011, 173). On the 21st August 2006, planning permission was granted by the city council, which detailed the 'comprehensive refurbishment and regeneration of the estate' (as cited in Bell 2011, 172-3). The listed building consent was acquired separately, which is unusual for a listed development, and advised against in the planning guidance (Bell 2011, 173). Bell (2011, 173) has argued this reflected the confidence the local authority had in the scheme, and in the relationship between Urban Splash and English Heritage, who had been in discussions for some time. Park Hill has been split into four main phases, with the 2006 planning applications reflecting the first stage of the development. This centred upon the North Block, which is the section most visible from Sheffield city centre. The thesis will detail the changes made within the first phase of development, and contrast this with what was protected within the list description.

Bell (2011, 171) has argued that the regeneration of Park Hill received more attention than the original developments in the 1950s. This is not hard to believe given Park Hill's controversial reputation, and its legacy as a common feature within the media and public eye. English Heritage (2009) produced a BBC documentary on the first phase of development, entitled *Romancing the Stone*. This might be seen as an attempt to justify the decisions made about Park Hill, and showcase the potential for its successful future. The first phase was due to begin in 2007, but the documentary highlighted the impact felt from the recession, with the main work being undertaken from 2009 onwards. The development has seen substantial changes to the estate, and these will be taken in-turn to assess their impact in the context of the list description.

Firstly, substantial alterations were undertaken to the design of the North Block. This saw a complete removal of everything but the concrete 'H' frame, including the brick infill panels, the concrete balconies, and all glazing. The concrete frame has undergone significant repairs, following years of degradation and spalling. In place of the brick infill panels, the exterior features coloured anodised aluminium, which follows the design of changing colour gradient. Further to this, the ratio of glazing to panel on the windows has also been increased. The development also installed new concrete balconies, which feature a timber handle (Figure 25). While the concrete frame is the only

design feature not to see substantial alterations, it was not given special attention over the other features within the list entry.
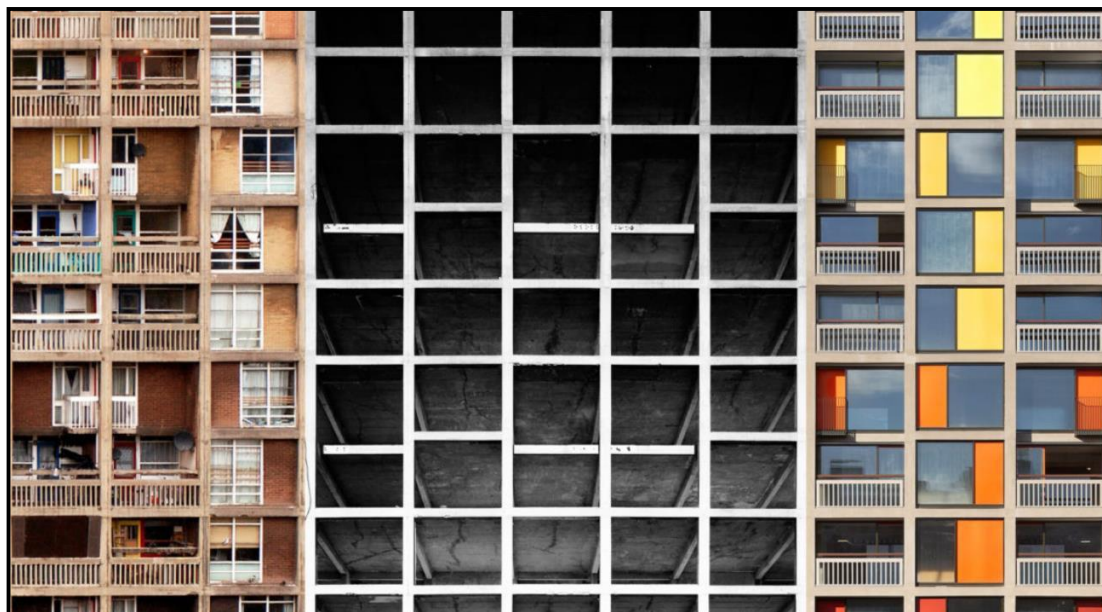
Figure 25: Comparison of the work completed in Phase 1 of Park Hill's new development (Hawkins Brown 2020).

The architectural element that receives the most recognition in the listing is the street decks. This is explicitly acknowledged as an innovative feature, and is an important element of the assessment section of the listing. Access to the street decks is now gated, with secure entrance points. For the North Block, the residential units have been extended, reducing the width of the street decks, with the units now featuring a small window facing out on the street (Figure 26 & 27). The residential units themselves have been reconfigured, with 260 units available for residency, and 10,000 ft^2 available for workspaces (formerly 312 units). These are a mixture of social, private and leaseholder properties. As the list description (1998) noted, the interiors of the residential units were not of 'special interest.' The substantial change to these units relates to the occupiers. The original function of the estate was for social housing, with many properties bought-up from the Right-to-Buy scheme. Park Hill's list description notes that the estate was 'Sheffield's flagship' in terms of public housing, but there is no detail into the need to protect and retain this original function.

Figure 26: Park Hill flats – a view along one of the balconies, c.1965 (from Picture Sheffield s32951 2020).

Figure 27: Modified street decks from Park Hill Phase 1 (Empsall 2020).

Further space has been reconfigured for businesses, which feature a number of different office-based companies. The first business to move onto the estate in February 2013 was Human, a digital creative agency, with whom Stories in the Sky VR has worked in collaboration (Urban Splash 2020b, 46). The North Block also features the South Street Kitchen café, the Grace Owen nursery school, and an Urban Splash exhibition space. The latter has taken the place of The Scottish Queen pub, and the nursery has taken the place of The Earl George pub, both of which have been demolished. The Pavement shopping district has also been removed, as well as a playground. These have been replaced with green spaces and parking facilities (Figures 28 & 29). In place of the original garages, a temporary building has been constructed which features the S1 Artspace and the Urban Splash estate offices. Detail is provided for the original communal spaces within the listing entry, noting their retention of existing fabric. However, their specific importance to the site is given little weight, and is not included within the assessment section of the entry.

Figure 28: Plans of the North Block (Housing Committee 1960).

5.5 : Park Hill Revitalised

Within Phase 1 of the Park Hill redevelopment, substantial change has been undertaken. Urban Splash have attempted to showcase the estate as a success story, and a place with a deep connection, and benefit, to Sheffield itself (Bell 2010, 177-195). Here one could argue that this connection with Sheffield was given a top priority in the negotiations for the estate's regeneration; with less focus on existing fabric and more on rebranding. This section will consider Urban Splash's campaign to revitalise Park Hill, which was explored in the work of Bell (2011, 177-195). The section will then explore the other three phases of the Park Hill redevelopment, which are nearing completion.

As Urban Splash (2020a) have recently stated, '50 years ago the building heralded a brave new world expectant of change, 50 years on, it's about to do it all again . . . but this time it's different.' An important point here, is that Sheffield of the 2000s is a far different place to that of the 1960s. Park Hill's list entry heralded the estate as 'Sheffield's flagship' for public housing, and fulfilling an important function for the city. Sheffield itself had seen important developments in recent years, with the Heart of the City project in the 1990s, and Sheffield One in the 2000s. The former created more public areas and buildings, and the latter focussed on seven key areas within the city centre, as a regeneration strategy for Sheffield's economy (Booth 2010, 92) (Figure 30). Booth (2010, 97) has highlighted that Park Hill was included within a later revision of the Sheffield One masterplan, suggesting that the estate was regarded as an important element to the urban regeneration of Sheffield as a whole.
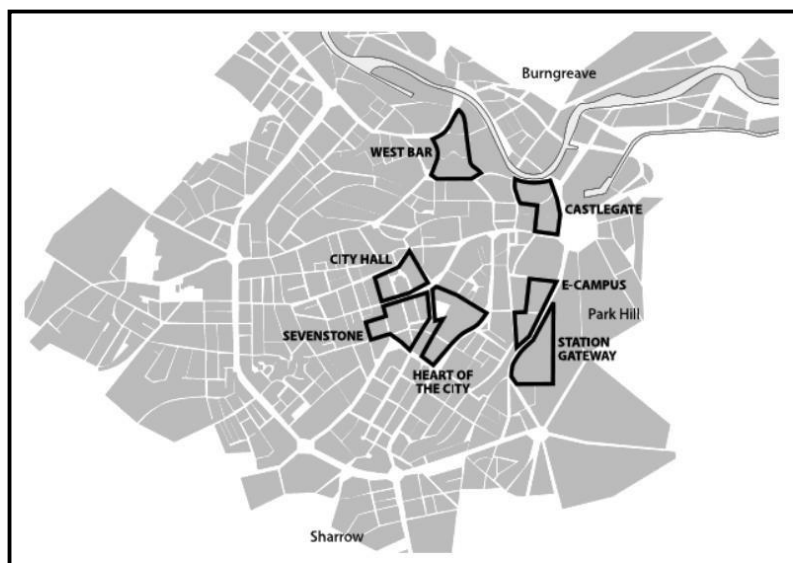
Figure 30: Sheffield One Masterplan, highlighting the seven key areas and Park Hill (as cited in Booth 2010, 92).

When Urban Splash were appointed as developers to Park Hill, it wasn't just the deteriorated fabric of the estate that they acquired, but also a debilitating legacy. Bell (2011, 176) has shown 'how a particular narrative of a "failed" Sheffield . . . is deconstructed and displaced by a new rhetoric of "success", constructed in terms of reference to the estate.' Urban Splash's marketing campaign has been cognisant of these issues, and their vision, as stated by Waite (2005), has been 'based on knitting the estate into the rest of Sheffield.' Urban Splash have regenerated a number of properties for residency, including Saxton Gardens, Leeds, which regenerated two council blocks from the 1960s, and Port Loop, Birmingham, built on a historic canal (Urban Splash 2020c). While the branding for these schemes has similarities in connecting their sense of place to their respective city centres, it is clear that their legacy had not been as controversial as that of Park Hill.

A core component in the way that Urban Splash re-branded Park Hill related to the estate's connection with the topography and landscape of the area, and the cultural environment of Sheffield (Bell 2011, 180). The notion of Park Hill as an ugly structure that looms over the landscape is a theme that Urban Splash have attempted to dispel (Bell 2011, 180). Their marketing campaign has discussed the views out of Park Hill, with descriptions such as: 'The best views across the city and beyond to the Peak District and Derbyshire Hills', and that the apartments will feature 'floor to ceiling glazing allowing the best city views Sheffield has to offer' (as cited in Bell 2011, 181-2). This vision of an estate connected to Sheffield had also been showcased within the developer's early photographic recreations. These highlighted the use of boulders connecting the estate to the Peak District (Figure 31), and also showcased the vision of a vibrant estate which can be seen from the city centre (Figure 32).

Figure 31: Early vision photograph of Park Hill Phase 1, Urban Splash 2005 (as cited in Bell 2011, 183).

Figure 32: A vibrant Park Hill from the city centre (Urban Splash 2005).

Bell (2011, 184-185) has also identified the way that pop music had been utilised within Urban Splash's rebranding campaign. This focussed upon references to popular bands from Sheffield, such as the Human League, ABC, and Pulp. A prominent theme within these references related to the way that Sheffield had fallen out of favour with Park Hill, and 'needed a level of romance' (Abrahams 2010, 20). Here Urban Splash used lyrics such as Human League's "Don't you want me baby?", as a way of linking Sheffield's cultural music history with the estate (Figure 33).

Figure 33: "Don't you want me baby?" Urban Splash marketing (Thomond 2013).

Urban Splash's narrative of success prevailing over failure for the redevelopment is aiming for Sheffield to accept and embrace Park Hill as part of its sense of place. The Sheffield One scheme has included the estate within the city masterplan, however, there are three distinct groups who Urban Splash have to successfully communicate this narrative to: the returning residents, the prospective new residents, and the general public. Urban Splash have attempted to create a mixed community,

with private, social and shared ownership possibilities within the first phase of development (Bell 2011, 186).

The changing function of the estate was not welcomed by all previous residents, with early notions that it would be turned into 'yuppie flats' (as cited in Bell 2011, 186). The original sense of community at Park Hill was certainly regarded as a success, and members of this community still herald this as the case, as seen on the private Facebook page of the former residents. While this might be the case, and while blame for its decline might be better assigned to wider political developments, the reputation of Park Hill as a dangerous place had to be dispelled for the redevelopment to be successful. From interviews conducted by Bell (2011, 186), there has been a general consensus that trouble on Park Hill related to 'the fault of a mono-culture existing on the estate.' By closing off public access to the decks, and introducing the mixed community, Urban Splash have attempted to dispel these fears. This greater sense of safety and mixed inclusion is apparent in the developer's marketing campaign, where the visualisations have showcased the decks as a vibrant and clean space, where social interactions still feature heavily (Figure 34).
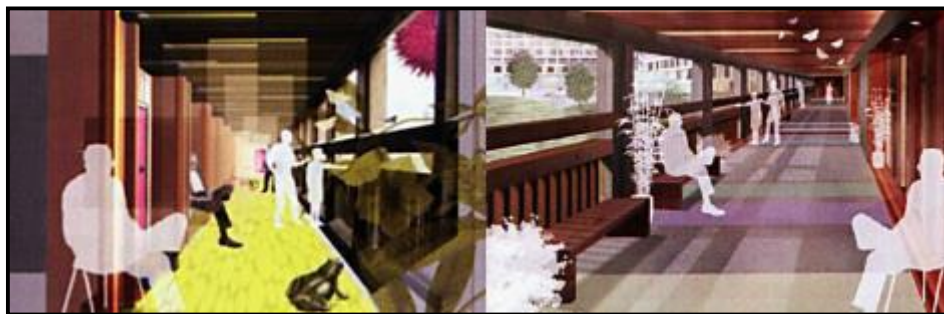
Figure 34: Vibrant life on the decks, Urban Splash (from Bell 2011, 187-189).

In total there are four stages in the regeneration strategy. Phase Two will see 200 additional homes and 20,000ft^2 of workspace completed by June 2021. These properties are now on sale. The design scheme of these flats will vary from Phase One, with the brick infill panels having been repaired and repurposed (Figure 35). Phase Three of the estate will be used as student accommodation, offering 350 student bedrooms. The fourth stage will work in collaboration with the S1 Artspace, and feature a 600m^2 gallery, with educational facilities and studio space, and additional residential properties (Blackledge 2019) (Figure 36). According to Urban Splash (2020), when the regeneration is complete there will be a 'revitalised community,' with the ambition to bring in 'a "high street" of local services – butchers, newsagents, greengrocers, chippy, a doctor's and dentist's, a new home for the fantastic Grace Own children's nursery, some great bars, pubs and cafes to make the most of the views over the city, a village hall and a village green.' However, there has been a consensus among residents that the spaces available have deterred business because of their pricing. For Urban Splash, the estate will

'thrive rather than just survive', but whether external businesses invest in the development remains to be seen.

Figure 35: Phase 2 of the Park Hill regeneration (Urban Splash 2020a).

Figure 36: Phase 4 of the Park Hill regeneration – S1 Artspace (as reproduced in Blackledge 2019).

5.6 : Park Hill: Gentrified and Commodified Heritage?

The previous section highlighted the way that Urban Splash has rebranded Park Hill as a mixed-community estate, with a deep connection to Sheffield's landscape and culture. For Urban Splash, the estate had to be revitalised as something appealing, and something that would be commercially profitable. This section will investigate the issues of rebranding Park Hill in this way, as both a social housing and heritage asset. This will begin by considering the impact of gentrification for Park Hill, and what this means in relation to the people who have lived there. From this, Urban Splash's use of the

graffiti "I Love You Will You Marry Me?" will be deliberated. This provokes discussion surrounding the problems of commodifying heritage, and links closely to the work of Thoburn (2018) and Robin Hood Gardens.

Bell (2011, 185) has highlighted the positive way that Urban Splash communicated in Phase One of the development. One interviewee stated, 'You can't fault them [Urban Splash] on the way they deal with the community. You can see that some [one] in a suit from London could easily have alienated them, but they didn't.' Gregory (as cited in Bell 2011, 185) argued of the effective ways Urban Splash consulted local communities as a 'well-proven tactic to govern and help ensure a successful and commercially viable solution.' While this is positive, here one must consider the balance of profit, housing and heritage.

Phase One of the estate has seen 260 homes created, and the general consensus online is that less than a third has been allocated for social housing, although the accuracy of this information is unclear (Hatherley 2011; Dobraszczyk 2015). As part of the research for this project, Great Places, social landlords for the estate, were consulted for exact figures in March 2020. The breakdowns were as follows: under Great Places there are 26 properties available for social rent, 66 for affordable housing, and 2 for shared ownership, while Urban Splash has 13 properties for private rent, and there are 153 general leaseholder/private rents. Great Places were unable to provide information on the later phases, and therefore information was requested from Urban Splash. They did not specify that any further allocations would be social housing. These figures put the social housing at 10% of Phase 1, and affordable housing at just over 25%. While the former decanted residents have been given the right to return to the estate, there has been a greater number of residents registering an interest to re-house within the estate, than social housing allocations available (Hatherley 2011). As a consequence, Hatherley (2011) has stated that the redevelopment at Park Hill should be regarded as 'class cleansing', arguing that the 'unpicturesque' residents at Park Hill were being displaced with the space to be 'claimed by the affluent.' In comparing this to the Barbican, London, Hatherley (2011) claims that the main difference is that the Barbican has been well-maintained throughout its history as private housing, where 'Park Hill has been left to rot.'

At the time of Hatherley's (2011) article, there were at least 60,000 people on Sheffield Council's waiting list for social housing. Urban Splash have advertised the estate as connected, and of benefit, to Sheffielders, but only those who can afford to live there will reap this benefit. The original dream and vision behind Park Hill's construction was to re-house those from the dense Victorian slums, but this 'socially progressive vision' has not been fully realised within the regeneration scheme (Dobraszczyk 2015). An important impact of these measures relates to the loss of identity connected

to the estate, and the graffiti found on the estate explores these issues. One, borrowing a line made famous by the band The Smiths and originally from the 1939 comedy play *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, stated, "All those people, all those lives. Where are they now?", with a response of "They got rid of us" (Figure 37). Another argues, "Everything of value has been removed from this property" (Figure 38). The latter's reference to value is poignant from a heritage perspective, questioning the decision-making of the regeneration, and what has been protected within the listing. Hatherley (2011) argued that the new Park Hill will represent 'an embarrassing reminder of a time when it was thought that the best way to repair a listed building that served a much-needed social purpose was the expulsion of its unpicturesque inhabitants.'

Figure 37: (LEFT) Graffiti – "All those people, all those lives. Where are they now?" (Pike 2016).

Figure 38: (RIGHT) Graffiti – "Everything of value has been removed from this property" (Sillitoe 2014).

The chapter has explored the way that Urban Splash have attempted to dispel the notions of failure connected with the estate. A particular element of this relates to graffiti, and the way that this represents identity. One of the most famous pieces of graffiti on the estate reads "Claire Middleton. I Love You Will U Marry Me?". This features on a street deck bridge, facing onto South Street and the city centre. When Urban Splash were chosen as the developers for regeneration, they utilised the graffiti as part of their marketing campaign. In a similar manner to their use of pop music, this was used as a way to showcase that Park Hill was in need of romance. The graffiti had also featured on a t-shirt worn by Alex Turner, of Sheffield band Arctic Monkeys, as well as appearing as part of an exhibition at the Venice Biennale. In 2011, Urban Splash made the decision to enhance their marketing of the graffiti further, by installing neon lights over the statement, but leaving the name "Clare Middleton" out (Figure 39). They have also used the words on cushions, on glass panes around the

estate, and named a beer after it. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the graffiti had been a fundamental element of their marketing campaign.
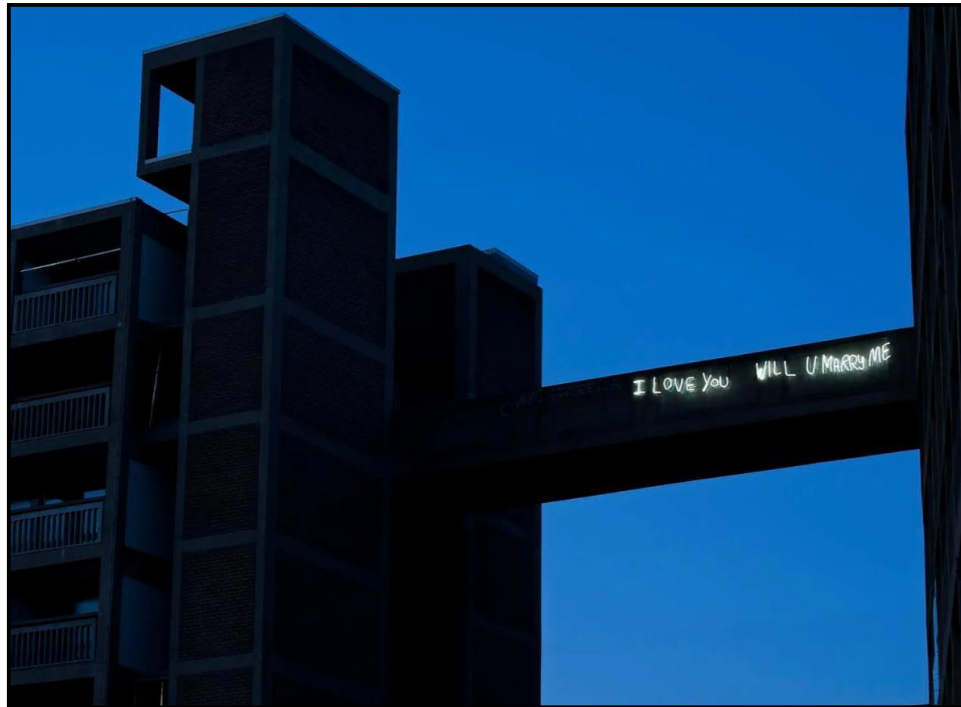
Figure 39: "I Love You Will U Marry Me?" graffiti in neon – Urban Splash (as cited in Byrne 2016).

The story behind the graffiti has been oft discussed in Sheffield, and had become something of an urban legend. However, filmmaker Penny Woolcock, and producer Frances Byrnes, were able to uncover the true origins of the story nine years ago (BBC Radio 4 2011). The declaration of love was written by Jason, for his then girlfriend Clare. While Clare had accepted the proposal, their relationship had deteriorated following guidance from social services to focus more upon her children than Jason (Byrne 2016). When Byrne (2016) had interviewed Clare's family, they had also spoken about her issues with drugs and relationships with Byrne, and that she had later died of cancer. Jason had grown up in social care, and described his experiences with the system, stating 'I was lobbed into my own flat when I was 15 . . . and left to fend.' According to Byrnes (2016), Jason had been physically and sexually abused while in social care. When asked how he would behave around children, his response was to 'treat them the exact opposite of how I was treated.' Jason had said his reasoning for writing the proposal graffiti was because 'even though she was a loving person, she was not one for accepting love.'

When Byrnes (2016) had interviewed Jason in 2016, he had described his personal difficulties of homelessness, the recent rejection by his biological father, and that one of his sons had been sent to prison for murder. Jason had written to Urban Splash in 2014 asking for a flat, arguing that the

developers were profiting from his graffiti, and yet he was homeless. Jackie, the sister of Clare Middleton, had discussed the grief and anguish she feels when reading the graffiti, of a sister she has lost (Byrnes 2016). When asked about the graffiti Urban Splash had stated, 'We think that Clare Middleton's name was added after . . . We found out about her. She's just got divorced.' As the true story was uncovered, however, it became clear that this was not the case.

On the surface, Urban Splash's decision to use the graffiti might be seen to promote the identities and stories of the estate, and highlight their importance. However, when combined with the minimal allocations for social housing, it could be argued that using Jason's graffiti as a central marketing tool represents a serious disregard for the identities of people within the estate. The human stories that have been forged throughout the estate's history represent important aspects of intangible heritage. These are identities which are integral to what makes Park Hill significant, but have not been included within the Park Hill list entry. Furthermore, Urban Splash's use of graffiti has commodified and appropriated this heritage. The work of Thoburn (2018) is apt here, in commenting on practices 'where the social form and identity is usurped for middle-class pleasure.'

Chapter 6: Community Engagement and Park Hill Fatigue

The previous two chapters have highlighted the complex history of Park Hill, considering the reputation of the estate and the discourse of success and failure, as well as the implications of viewing the estate as heritage. Chapter 6 will discuss the results of the community engagement, which shaped the decision-making process for Stories in the Sky VR. To begin, the work will deliberate previous re-imagining's of Park Hill, concluding with the 2019 musical, *Standing at the Sky's Edge,* by Chris Bush and Richard Hawley. The musical represents a key inspiration for Stories in the Sky VR, indicating that Park Hill, though complex and politically charged, can be the focus of an effective setting for exploring storytelling, identity and the power of place. Next, the thesis will present the results of the community engagement for Stories in the Sky VR, discussing the issues related to the complex microcosm of stakeholders within the community of Park Hill, including former residents, current residents, developers, and the wider area. Despite the positive feedback from Hadley and Cooper's initial scoping exercise, Stories in the Sky VR was met with little engagement from Park Hill's community stakeholders. The thesis will explore the notion of "Park Hill fatigue", which has been discussed by Bell (2011, 145) and Chiles *et al.* (2019, 122). This fatigue appears to have been a major barrier to community engagement at Park Hill for several projects.

6.1 : Representations of Park Hill

While Park Hill has been the subject of extensive commentary surrounding its perceived success and failure, for over 50 years it has also been re-imagined in visual narratives delivered through a range of screen and other media. Chapter 2 explored some of the early uses of Park Hill in TV, as seen in Sheffield City Council's promotional film *Sheffield: City on the Move* (1971). This section will reflect upon more recent reimagining's of Park Hill, considering their different themes and focuses, and what stories they attempted to showcase. Exploring these different representations of the estate will offer a useful context for what the Stories in the Sky VR project hoped to achieve, in representing the voices of the community stakeholders, and providing the wider political context and commentary which led to the estate's 'spiral of decline' (Bacon 1985, 303).

Just as Park Hill was used to promote Sheffield's newfound success in the 1960s and 1970s, so too was the estate represented as indicative of Sheffield's failure and decline. *The Full Monty* (Cattaneo 1997), starring Robert Carlisle and Mark Addy, tells the story of six unemployed Sheffielders who form a striptease act. The film begins by showcasing a clip of *Sheffield: City on the Move* (1971), which presents Sheffield as a vibrant and modern city, and Park Hill is highlighted as part of the city's innovation in housing. This scene was used to juxtapose the deprivation felt in Sheffield, following the massive decline of the steel industry. The film explores the struggles ensuing from unemployment, at

a time of significant economic hardship. Park Hill is also featured in Shane Meadows' *This is England '86* and *This is England '90* (Meadows 2010; 2015). In the former, Park Hill is the setting for a fight scene, which highlights the decay of the estate, with boarded-up windows and concrete degradation (Figure 40). This also matches the rhetoric of Park Hill that was present in Sheffield at the time, as a dangerous place to visit.

Figure 40: Park Hill in the background of a scene in This is England '86 *(Meadows 2010).*

Park Hill has also been a focus within the local music industry. For example, Sheffield band Pulp (1993) featured the estate in a song entitled 'Sheffield Sex City', while the music video for Arctic Monkey's (2006) song 'The View from the Afternoon' was filmed near Park Hill. The estate also features on Leeds band the Eagulls' (2014) self-titled debut album (Figure 41), with the cover portraying the estate as a place of deprivation and neglect. Furthermore, Yorkshire born singer YUNGBLUD (2017) released a song entitled 'I Love You, Will You Marry Me', discussing the issues surrounding the use of graffiti by Urban Splash. This included lyrics such as, 'When they wrote on the t-shirts, cool merch and postcards; And lighting it up like a piece of art; They kicked him to the side and left him to starve; The memory that's re-breaking his broken heart.'

Figure 41: Eagulls' self-titled debut album, featuring Park Hill (Eagulls 2014).

In 2019, Park Hill was the setting for an award winning musical entitled *Standing at the Sky's Edge* (Bush 2019). The musical features songs from Richard Hawley's album of the same name, and premiered at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield. *Standing at the Sky's Edge* explores three interwoven timelines in the estate's history, all bound together by the power of place (Figure 42). This explores the experiences of Park Hill life from the arrival of the idealistic first residents in the post-war period, to decline and degradation in the 1980s, through to regeneration and gentrification (Love 2019). Past and present residents of the estate spoke positively of the production. One resident stated, 'Richard Hawley gets it. Park Hill is a really complex place and there are still deep-seated ideas about it, but this musical will heal those divisions' (Kalia 2019). The musical indicates that interwoven narratives can be implemented successfully, even at a place as contested as Park Hill. Prior to the musical, Park Hill was represented within visual narratives as a mirror to that of Sheffield itself, indicative of the city's decline. However, Bush's *Standing at the Sky's Edge* represents the first time that the lives and stories behind the fabric of the building have been explored in a visual narrative, providing a context for the rise, fall and re-birth of the estate. For Stories in the Sky VR, the musical was a key inspiration, highlighting that the site is ripe for the media of a new era of interactive storytelling.

Figure 42: Standing at the Sky's Edge (Persson 2019).

<u>6.2 : Community Stakeholder Groups</u>

Much like *Standing at the Sky's Edge*, Stories in the Sky VR aimed to showcase the identities and stories that have been forged throughout the estate's complex history. To capture these narratives, the project hoped to work with the Park Hill Residents' Association's (PHRA) Creative Writing Group, and undertake interviews with past and present residents, as well as other community stakeholders. The section will discuss the stakeholder groups of Park Hill, which will feed into the results of the community engagement presented in the next section.

There are four main stakeholder groups within the Park Hill community: current residents; former residents; developers; and those in the area around Park Hill. The section will take each of the stakeholder groups in turn, discussing their motivations and how they operate.

- Current Residents

The first residents of phase 1 of Urban Splash's redevelopment moved into their new homes in late 2012. There are currently 260 habited homes, business spaces, a nursery and a café within this phase of the development. The subsequent phases will see more homes and student accommodation, as well as a 600m^2 art gallery. Urban Splash have argued they are 'creating a real mixed community' on the estate. As the previous section highlighted, 10% of the homes are allocated for social housing, and 25% for affordable housing.

The PHRA operates within this stakeholder group, and has organised community events, such as creative writing and yoga. These activities have been based upon having funds gained through organising tours and from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which have proven limited for the group. The community stakeholders predominantly operate within a private Facebook group entitled, Park Hill Residents' Group, which I was not allowed access to. As of May 2020, the group has a total of 358 members, and was formed 'as a way of encouraging more neighbourly interaction.' The group has been functioning on Facebook since 2014, and appears to be used to share information about the estate, photographs, and upcoming events.

- Former Residents

While these individuals no longer live within geographic proximity to the estate, a large number of former residents operate within a private Facebook group entitled, Park Hill Flats (Sheffield), which I was granted access to. In May 2020, this had a total of 502 members, and is predominantly used to share and discuss photographs and stories connected to Park Hill and the wider area. The main motivation for this stakeholder group is to stay connected outside of the proximity of the estate itself. The content for the page is mainly positive, and is used to reminisce fondly on their time at Park Hill. While there are sometimes comments regarding the issues that stem from the regenerated estate, there is also a sense of acceptance that the redevelopment is positive.

- Developers

Urban Splash's main motivation as a stakeholder group is to promote the estate as a vibrant and prosperous place to live. They have two prominent voices within the community: David Lewus, a residential consultant based at the site, and Surriya Falconer, a dedicated public relations consultant. Great Places Housing Group also operates within this stakeholder group, working closely with Urban Splash. They are responsible for the social and affordable housing on the estate, as well as repairs and maintenance. Their role is much more involved with the day-to-day running of the estate, ensuring all of its facilities and components are working effectively.

- The wider Park Hill community

This community stakeholder group relates to those individuals who are within geographic proximity to the estate, but are not residents. From conversations with former and current residents of the estate, it was highlighted that the Park Centre library, situated on Duke Street to the south-east of the estate, is regarded as a hub for the local community. The library is run by around 50 volunteers under the group Park Community Action, which was established in 1996 to support the community in the area (Volunteer Libraries 2020). The vision behind Park Community Action is to transform 'the

Park Centre into a vibrant landmark of learning and service that will unify and re-invigorate the community it serves, especially for young people.'

6.3 : Community Engagement

The results of the stakeholder engagement for Stories in the Sky VR will now be discussed, as well as the barriers to securing interviews. To begin, the section will consider the initial scoping exercise into community engagement by Hadley and Cooper, which led to this Masters by Research project. While there was an enthusiastic response from this initial engagement, Stories in the Sky VR was met with little engagement. However, four interviews were secured with individuals among the different community groups.

Hadley and Cooper's scoping exercise was part of an AHRC-funded project entitled: 'Heritage-led urban regeneration: a scalable model for community engagement using immersive technologies.' This reached out to the PHRA and set up four interviews to investigate the potential for a further project related to digital immersive storytelling at Park Hill. The interviewees, all current residents of the estate, were presented with VR technology, which included Hadley's previous work on Sheffield Castle. They all agreed on the potential for immersive technologies to help engage closer to the history and heritage of Park Hill, discussing what could be showcased within the software, including: the history of the development and wider area, the politics of the time, the steel industry, and the architecture. All four of the interviewees were impressed by the technology, and enthusiastic that an immersive experience would be of benefit to Park Hill and its community.

From this initial scoping exercise, Hadley and Cooper, in collaboration with industry partner Human VR, applied for XR Stories funding to research the potential for an immersive storytelling experience at Park Hill, resulting in Stories in the Sky VR. This aimed to work in conjunction with the PHRA's Creative Writing Group, with an aim to subvert the traditional notions of community engagement, as dictated by the Authorised Heritage Discourse. Stories in the Sky VR attempted to take a "bottom-up" approach, and while I was responsible for the creation of the software, the aim was for the stakeholders to participate in co-creation on the themes, ideas and stories of the immersive experience.

An initial barrier to co-creation emerged from the fact that the Creative Writing Group was no longer functioning by the time the research commenced. The group had been funded as part of a £10,000 National Lottery Project for the PHRA, for the improvement of health and wellbeing at Park Hill, to fund activities including yoga, creative writing, local history walks, and a board games club. However, these funds had been exhausted by the start of Stories in the Sky VR, meaning there needed to be a greater reliance upon securing interviews with community stakeholders. In December 2019,

ethics approval was secured to undertake interviews to gather stories of Park Hill life and experience, and discuss ideas for the content of the project. It was hoped that between 20-30 interviews could be secured, from a wide demographic of individuals.

For the engagement with the current residents, two interviews were secured from individuals with prominent voices within the community (Interviewee's 1 & 2). These offered perspectives on their experience of Park Hill as new residents, and the neighbourliness felt within the estate. They also discussed ideas as to what shape Stories in the Sky VR could take. Further corresponding emails were sent requesting interviews with other new residents, but these proved to be unsuccessful. At this stage, I attempted to work closely with the "gatekeepers" of the stakeholder group, who could influence individuals to participate. Due to the activity on the private Facebook group, a post requesting participants for interviews was submitted by one of the page's prominent voices. However, this again proved to be unsuccessful.

There were added challenges encountered when working with this stakeholder group, when considering the problems with community engagement within the AHD. Community-based initiatives can often prioritise an expert-centric and middle-class understanding of heritage over others, and researchers have an added responsibility to ensure that all voices are heard. These issues are magnified within the context of Park Hill itself, which has transitioned from council housing to gentrified estate. The intangible heritage for Park Hill is fluid and constantly in transit, with the past and present residents both making up what the heritage of Park Hill is, was, and will be. The two current residents that had been interviewed both had a good understanding of what constituted their heritage. As the estate has undergone a process of gentrification, and caters to a more middle-class demographic, it is important to ensure that the heritage that is articulated at the estate is not purely controlled by a middle-class perspective. This is because the heritage value of Park Hill is closely associated with the intangible, in its stories and experience. Therefore, this intangible heritage is shared with those that have lived there previously, who do not represent this demographic. For the current residents, this is not to say that their perspective is not important or that it is invalid, but because the estate has undergone a transformation in the demographics that live there, the immersive experience should aim to present as wide a perspective as possible. Because of this, I reached out to Great Places, the housing association responsible for the social and affording housing on site. In their correspondence, Great Places had identified three current residents that they believed might be interested in participating in interviews. However, when Great Places reached out to these residents, they had stated they did not wish to participate.

While Stories in the Sky VR hoped to work closely with the PHRA, it was also imperative that stories of Park Hill life could be secured from former residents. Park Hill's regeneration represents a relatively short period in the estate's history. Again, an added pressure for engaging with this stakeholder group related to the current demographic within the estate. If the work is aiming to capture Park Hill life throughout its history, this cannot be solely articulated from the perspective of current residents, it must also come from the former residents. A recent project on Park Hill explored the lived experiences of current residents (Chiles *et al*. 2019). While this was effective in its goals, Chiles *et al.* (2019, 131) argued that the main criticism they received related to 'the lack of span of voices, that is, more social residents and ex residents, and particularly the presence of children and the views of the nursery staff.' Due to the context of the Park Hill estate, there are issues of who controls this heritage.

To engage with the former residents, I reached out to the administrator of the private Facebook group in December 2019, to see if it would be possible to request interviews. The administrator explained that the group had been recently inundated with interview requests, and that it would be better to wait until January 2020. However, they agreed to a short telephone interview, where they discussed life at Park Hill, and its changing reputation over time, as well as their views on the current redevelopment (Interviewee 3). In attempting to secure more interviews, a current resident with a strong relationship with the former residents, posted the request on the project's behalf in January 2020. This was done in the hope that a recognised member of the community could help the project gain more traction. While this received 5 "likes" from former residents, no individuals came forward for interviews.

The third stakeholder group that I attempted to engage with was the wider Park Hill community. As the hub of the local area, the Park Centre library was identified to make connections in securing interviews. This engagement began with a telephone conversation with a member of staff, attempting to organise a meeting to discuss the project further in person. However, this was met with some hostility. From this point, the project aimed to regroup, and made two visits to the library, on the advice of a resident who had established a rapport with the staff. On these visits, it was clear that the Park library is indeed a valued part of the local community, with groups coming in for lunch, children playing, and a general vibrancy about the place. On the second visit, while the staff kindly listened to the aims of Stories in the Sky VR, they agreed that the best place to secure interviews would be Facebook. There was also a sense that there have been a multitude of requests for interviews in the past, and the Park Centre library and its wider community see no benefit from these types of projects.

<u>6.4 : Park Hill Fatigue</u>

As the previous section has highlighted, while the initial scoping exercise by Hadley and Cooper suggested that there would be enthusiasm for engaging with Stories in the Sky VR, the attempts to engage with the stakeholder groups were met with little interest. A major obstacle to securing interviews appeared to relate to the volume of recent interview requests. The section will, therefore, explore the "Park Hill fatigue" phenomenon, and the barriers this posed to securing these interviews. This will consider the different academic research projects that have been undertaken on Park Hill, and the role of the heritage sector in contributing to this fatigue.

The term 'Park Hill fatigue' was coined by Bell (2011, 145) as part of her thesis on conservation, regeneration and the value of post-War listed public housing schemes. Bell had originally intended to undertake resident interviews, but decided against this, stating:

> It very soon became apparent from my meetings with professionals that the residents had, as one regeneration professional put it, been "consulted to death" . . . It was even implied by some participants that as an academic researcher, rather than a representative of a body involved in the regeneration or even the press, I would be felt to have little to offer in return to residents.

Interviewing Park Hill residents has been part of the estate's history since its inception. Social worker Joan Demers interviewed 197 homes to explore the social cohesion of the estate. Furthermore, Banham (as cited in Bell 2011, 163) argued that the residents 'were probably the most carefully "briefed" tenants ever to move into anything anywhere.' There have been a multitude of radio broadcasts and interviews throughout the building's history, which have explored the perspectives of the residents, as the reputation of the estate has been wrestled with in the public domain. Chiles *et al.* (2019, 122), on their recent lived experiences project at Park Hill, stated, 'Park Hill is a very over-consulted and researched development . . . residents had already been approached and had been involved in a number of research and media projects, and the research team faced issues with access to residents as well as interview fatigue.'

While Stories in the Sky VR was working to request interviews, in December 2019 and January 2020, four other university projects were attempting the same thing. Three of these were from universities based outside of Sheffield, and were met with the same lack of response as this project. The fourth was for a dissertation project at Sheffield Hallam University, and this apparently received a much stronger response. The Park Hill Re-imagined project by Chiles *et al.* (2019, 115-134) worked closely with Museums Sheffield, and was successful in securing 12 in-depth interviews from current residents.

This might suggest that there is a preference to Sheffield-based research, over external universities, although Chiles *et al*. (2019) did state that they had difficulties in securing these interviews.

For Stories in the Sky VR, a fourth interview was arranged with a senior staff member at Great Places Housing Association. As an individual who had been involved in Park Hill from the start of the redevelopment, they were able to provide further insight into some of the reasoning behind the "Park Hill fatigue" phenomenon. Interviewee 4 discussed the way that Park Hill has been treated with interest as a heritage site, and a tourist destination. They explained that there have been occasions where over 30 students from secondary schools and from universities have arrived at the estate unannounced, sometimes then showing a level of disrespect, by attempting to gain access to the gated decks, or by littering. The majority of the residents are responsible for paying a service charge, which covers the day-to-day maintenance of the building, and while the PHRA is able to make money from pre-organised tours, those that turn up unannounced and are disrespectful will have a negative impact, and bring no income. For these reasons, the interviewee argued that 'successive visits have turned residents against wanting to be hospitable.'

Interviewee 4 went on to discuss the way that Urban Splash have promoted the estate, explaining that there have been occasions where the developers have organised cultural events, but had not made the maintenance teams aware in advance. This resulted in the accumulation of large amounts of litter, and the residents are the ones who have to pay for the cleaning. The interviewee argued that Urban Splash can be seen to have 'more interest in the public profile than there is in the people who live there.' It is the function of the building which is integral in this context. Park Hill is a place where people live, yet it is often treated the same as a normal heritage site or public building. Interviewee 4 went on to discuss the redesign of the front door windows in phase 1 of the redevelopment. These are often decorated with objects personal to the individual, to showcase their identity. The interviewee argued that there is an irony in the resident's promoting themselves in this way, presenting their identities as museum exhibitions, while at the same time complaining about being seen as a heritage site. This also mirrors the concerns from the original residents in Demer's 1962 report, of 'living in a glass house with the world looking on.'

From the discussion with Interviewee 4, the "Park Hill fatigue" phenomenon appears to relate to the multitude of interview requests throughout the estate's history, and the way that the building has been viewed as heritage. This also connects to the way that community is controlled within the estate. Urban Splash are endeavouring to promote its success and potential as a mixed-community, and researchers are attempting to work with this community on a number of multi-disciplinary projects. For Park Hill, people have targeted residents as researchers or heritage professionals. However, Park

Hill is their home, and this must take precedence over viewing the estate as heritage. These findings would suggest a need to step-back from researching Park Hill as intimately, and treat the estate with more respect as a place of residency. The sense of community at Park Hill should be allowed to develop on its own, through the work of the residents themselves, without the external input of developers like Urban Splash, and from academic research.

The aim of Stories in the Sky VR was to capture identities and stories of Park Hill life throughout its history through an immersive storytelling experience. While it would have been beneficial to co-produce with those connected to the estate, their influence is still present from the previous projects that have been undertaken. In understanding more about the community fatigue at Park Hill, Stories in the Sky VR shifted its emphasis to previously recorded oral testimonies, which represent a significant resource which has been undervalued in favour of new interviews. The testimonies, in relation to the complex and contested history of Park Hill discussed in Chapters 4 & 5, were the driving force behind the content within Stories in the Sky VR.

Chapter 7: Stories in the Sky VR

While the community stakeholders of the estate appeared enthusiastic to share their stories of Park Hill life, the fatigue of interviews and tourism appears to have soured large-scale interest for these types of projects. This chapter will discuss the ensuing decision-making process behind Stories in the Sky VR, in light of these developments, and the results of its user-feedback from online questionnaires. Stories in the Sky VR utilised archived oral materials to shape the content for the immersive experience. This chapter will begin by exploring the testimonies available, their limitations, and my responsibility in shaping the project's content. Next, the thesis will discuss the creation of Stories in the Sky VR, linking 3D modelling, video editing, oral testimonies, and the context of the estate explored in Chapters 4 and 5. The original intention for the Stories in the Sky VR project was to host an exhibition for the immersive experience at Park Hill, to secure user-testing feedback. However, due to the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, feedback had to be gathered online through questionnaires, with the immersive experience presented online as a 360-degree video on YouTube. The chapter will conclude by discussing the results of the questionnaires, exploring the effectiveness of the software in capturing Park Hill life.

7.1 : Archived Oral Testimonies

In place of new interview recordings, Stories in the Sky VR was able to utilise previously recorded oral testimonies. These were sourced from Urban Splash and Sheffield City Archives, and while they were useful to the project, they also had limitations in their motivations and scope. This section will discuss these limitations, as well as my role in using the sources to shape content.

While Stories in the Sky VR was hesitant to work closely with Urban Splash, it was essential that more oral testimonies could be sourced. This hesitancy derived from the way that they had previously articulated the heritage at Park Hill, and that the initial scoping exercise by Hadley and Cooper suggested that the PHRA had not been keen to work with them. Urban Splash's PR consultant for the estate was able to provide oral testimonies recorded for an exhibit as part of the *Standing at the Sky's Edge* theatre production. These were evenly divided between former and current residents of the estate, and discussed stories of Park Hill life. It appears that Urban Splash were successful in securing these interviews because of anticipation from the musical, their strong existing relationship with the current residents, and their position as developers of the estate. While access to these was provided, it was made clear that the permission to use these sources would be dependent upon how they would be used. From conversations with the PR consultant, Urban Splash did not want the work to focus upon issues surrounding gentrification.

Furthermore, while the testimonies provided were beneficial to exploring a variety of Park Hill experience, they also represented a sanitized version of the estate's history. These discussed positive experiences of life on the estate in its early history and its regeneration. However, there was a significant period of decline in this history, and the testimonies provide little exploration or discussion on this period. It is difficult to determine why this was not explored, with the recording not showing the questions asked by Urban Splash. However, the lack of perspective on the period of decline mirrors Urban Splash's marketing for the estate, in attempting to dispel Park Hill's reputation of failure. While there has been a lot of opinion written on the period of decline in the media and on online forums, it has proven difficult to source oral testimonies of residents' experience in this period. However, Sheffield City Archives were able to bridge this gap somewhat, as their testimonies contained wider commentaries from the estate's history, which can be used to provide the context for the period of decline.

At this stage, with potential constraints in testimony use from Urban Splash, and a lack of resident perspective on a significant period in the estate's history, it is useful to reflect on my role in articulating this heritage. Stories in the Sky VR aimed to capture Park Hill life and experience throughout the estate's history. Yet, the "Park Hill fatigue" phenomenon has resulted in minimal interest from community stakeholders, placing the control of the full content of the VR within my responsibility. While digital assets cannot be value neutral, the aim of the immersive experience was to offer a broad perspective on Park Hill life, covering all elements and themes that have been made available through oral testimonies. The 3D modelling has been utilised alongside these oral recordings to visually capture Park Hill life and encourage the viewer to think critically about the estate. As Morgan (2009, 478) has stated, visualisations should be created 'to be engaged with, to be improved, to be disproved.' While it was not possible to cover all aspects of Park Hill's heritage and history, the 3D modelling can be used to stimulate dialogue from different perspectives and experience within the estate's wide community.

7.2 : Stories in the Sky VR: Content

Stories in the Sky VR was divided into three main elements, exploring the success of the early Park Hill community, the changing reputation of the estate, and the redevelopment. These will be taken in turn, discussing the justifications for their stylistic choices. The creation of the immersive experience followed the best-practice guidance of the London Charter, taking into account the issues surrounding visualisation and accuracy that had been explored within Chapter 2 of the thesis. Stories in the Sky VR aimed to weave together the context from Chapters 4 and 5, the results of the community engagement, the available oral testimonies, and the need to portray the stories and identities within the iconic estate. Stories in the Sky VR can be accessed through the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_SykcLhZxA&t.

The decision to create VR software related to the benefits of control it could provide the PHRA, to utilise as part of tours of the building and future events. It represents an educational resource, and one which can be used to spark discussion on the estate's history and heritage. For the public, it appears that there is an increasing expectation within heritage tourism for the use of digital technologies. In relation to Park Hill's community fatigue, it may provide the Residents' Association with a greater degree of control for the tourism of the estate. Rather than receiving more disrespectful arrivals, it is hoped that the presence of digital technologies will increase the amount of visitors liaising with the PHRA for their visits, to take advantage of the digitally accompanied Park Hill experience.

Before discussing the content of Stories in the Sky VR, the thesis will acknowledge elements that the project would have liked to have included, but could not due to timing and technical limitations. While there are "voices" within the VR, there are no physical representations of residents. This was a result of time constraints and to avoid the uncanny effect. Furthermore, while it would have been useful to include a wider variety of features of Park Hill, such as the interior of a flat, time constraints meant that it was not possible to develop these further. The VR was originally intended to be a "fly-through", where the user feels as if they are walking along Park Hill's street decks. However, due to the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 situation, and the need to move to home working at short notice, the computer used to render these scenes was not powerful enough. Instead, the VR fades between different areas of interest. This meant that only one frame was needed to render per scene, and significantly reduced the rendering time. This was beneficial to emphasise points of interest within the VR, with the forward facing view focusing upon key design elements.

The core theme within Stories in the Sky VR centred upon the evolution of Park Hill's "streets in the sky." Prior to the decision-making stage on the content of the VR, a current resident of the estate had stated that they did not think the street decks should feature, as they had already been focused upon extensively in the past. However, the decision to focus upon the street decks was a result of the lack of creative input from the stakeholders. The barriers to interviews meant that I was solely responsible for the decisions made within the VR content, and the street decks represented an ideal design feature which could showcase the timeline of the building, and could encapsulate the complex issues connected to the estate. There are three different models of the street decks, highlighting the early success of the estate, its changing reputation, and its regeneration. This utilised 3D modelling software, 3DS Max, to create full virtual environments. Each model of the street deck is accompanied by an image of the sky. This was used to emphasise the streets in the sky as an innovative design feature, and also as a form of pathetic fallacy, where the weather and sky reflect the vibrancy of the new estate, but become darker as Park Hill's reputation declines. It was not within the scope of this

research to create a more realistic background image, but the VR would have benefitted from the implementation of a Sheffield skyline.

Stories in the Sky VR begins by exploring the estate's early years, presenting the voices and experiences of former residents of the Park Hill community. This considers Park Hill as an iconic building, the sense of community on the estate, and how the decks were often busy with people chatting. Both the recordings sourced from Sheffield City Archives and Urban Splash were used within the first scene. To provide the context of Park Hill in its full form, a 360-degree image was utilised of the estate to highlight its design prior to regeneration. This was acquired from Park Hill based creative agency Content OD, who published the image on Google Maps. The VR then introduces the first of three models of Park Hill's decks, which showcases a clean and polished, early morning view (Figure 43). This includes a notice board featuring real newspaper articles about Park Hill's construction sourced from Sheffield City Archives, linking the archived material culture to the visualisation. The street deck also features a milk float, which was a prominent feature in the way Park Hill was presented in its early years, in newspapers, photographs and television footage. This model was created in reference to documentary footage of the estate in the early 1960s, sourced from a BBC feature in 2009 (Figure 45).


Figure 43: 3D model visualisation of Park Hill's street decks in the 1960s (Empsall 2020).

Figure 44: (LEFT) 3D model visualisation of a Park Hill milk float (Empsall 2020).

Figure 45: (RIGHT) Park Hill milk float, c.1960s (as featured in BBC 2009).

As part of the section on the early period of Park Hill's history, a 3D model was also included of The Link pub. Access was provided to the derelict pub by Urban Splash, to take photographs to use as a reference for creating the 3D model. The VR showcases a polished view of The Link, as if the viewer is sat at one of the tables (Figure 46). The oral testimonies describe the use of the pubs in this early period, as well as the rest of the facilities. This included a statement from a former resident within the Urban Splash recordings: 'They say it's a cliché that it's a village in the sky, down here you had absolutely everything you could want. It was all self-sufficient.' A prominent opinion expressed in the interviews I had undertaken, and in those conducted by Hadley and Cooper in the initial scoping exercise, was that the regenerated estate would benefit from more communal spaces. The inclusion of The Link pub as a prominent communal space within the estate aimed to highlight this benefit, by looking back on the positive experiences of the former residents, and how much they valued these spaces.
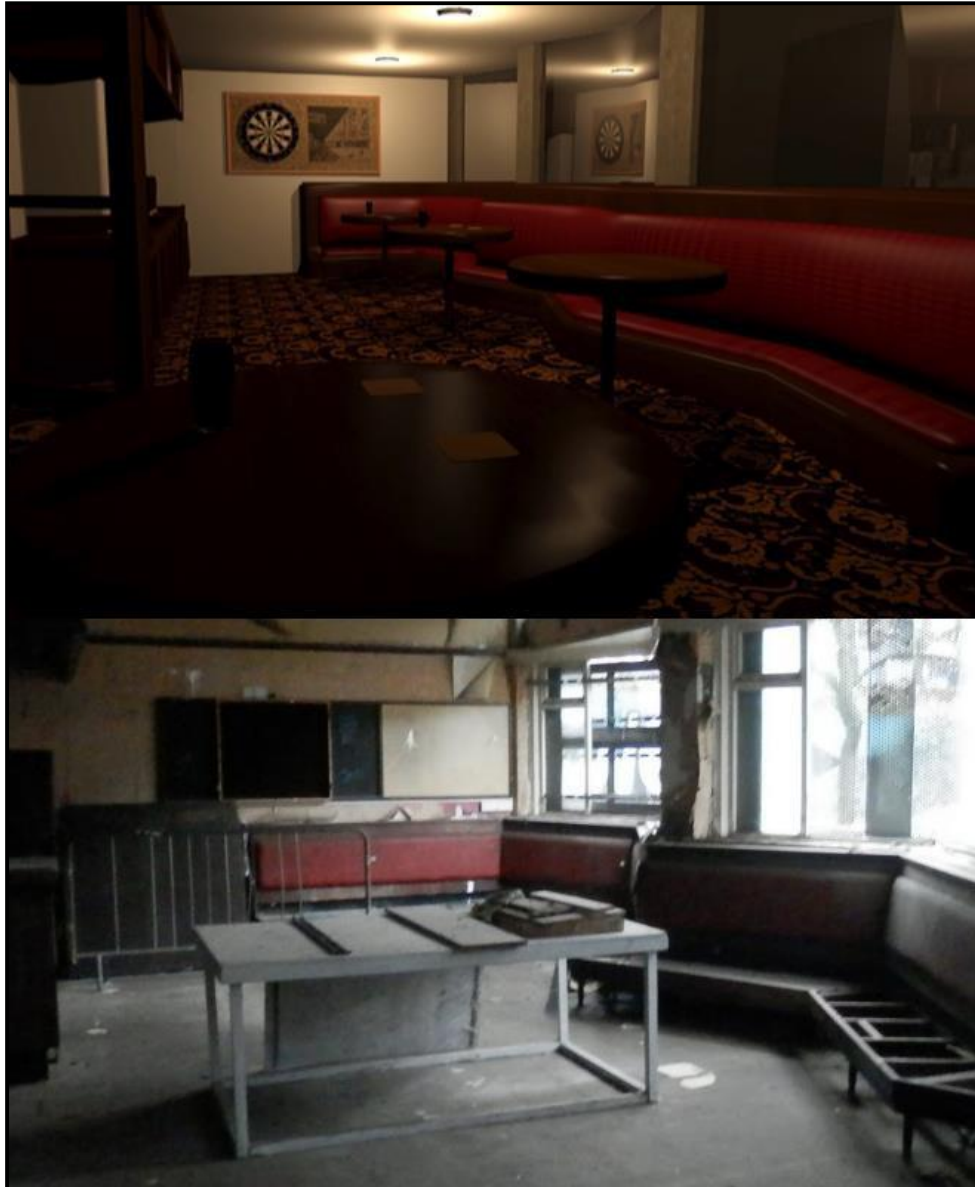
Figure 46: (TOP) 3D model recreation of The Link pub. (BOTTOM) The Link pub in its current derelict state (Empsall 2020).

Stories in the Sky VR then transitions to the second street deck model, which explores Park Hill's reputation, the period of decline, and the wider political events which shaped the estate's history. The model has been created as purposefully dark, with a night's sky, to mirror the increased deterioration of Park Hill's reputation. This uses quotes from radio and television broadcasts, as well as former residents' testimonies, which were all sourced within the Sheffield City Archives recordings. The second deck is introduced with a quote arguing that the estate has been seen to represent 'a glaring example of what went wrong with post-War housing.' This then changes to the voice of a former resident, stating 'I have often seen videos where Park Hill is described as a slum . . . all I can remember were the great people that were around.' The testimony is connected to a statement made by Pevsner

in 1967, but has been visualised as graffiti within the immersive experience: 'slum in half a century or less – Pevsner 1967' (Figure 47). Graffiti has been seen as damaging to the estate's fabric, adding to the perceived decline in the estate's reputation. However, as explored in Chapter 4, the negative commentary on the failure of Park Hill as post-War housing, had a significant impact upon its changing reputation. This visualisation aimed to reflect this damage, and encourage the viewer to think critically about the implications of the architectural commentary.
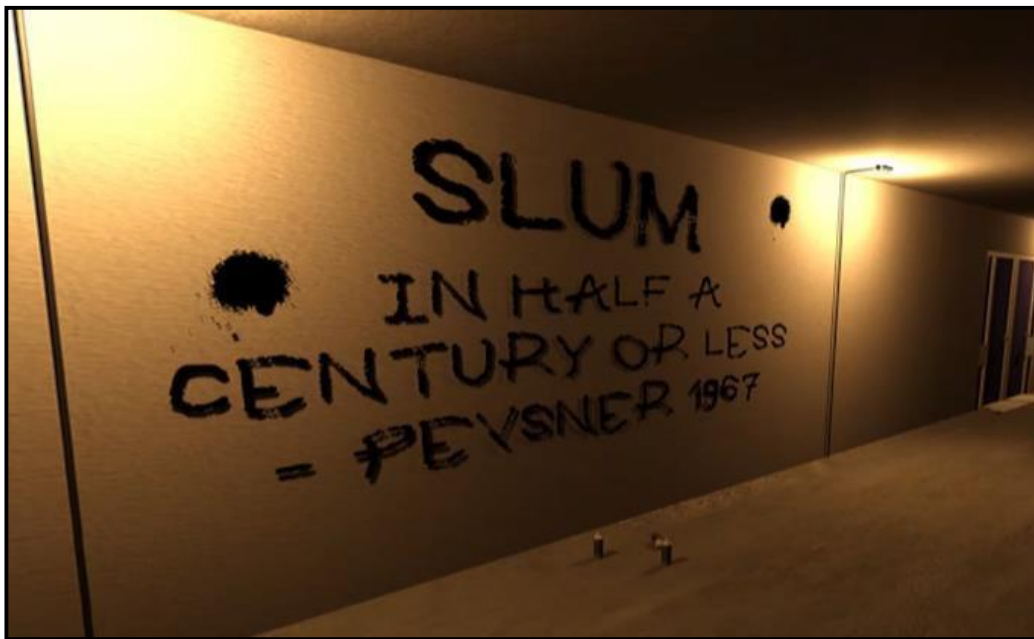
Figure 47: 3D visualisations of graffiti, slum in half a century or less – Pevsner 1967 (Empsall 2020).

The VR then considers other developments that had a substantial impact upon the estate's reputation, such as the role of the media. In particular, the 1979 newspaper article 'A Prisoner of Park Hill' is placed under a spotlight, with multiple copies strewn on the floor of the decks (Figure 48). The section is overlain with testimony from Chris Bacon, the author of a thesis who debunked Nicholas Taylor's scathing remarks about Park Hill. Of the article Bacon states, 'You couldn't justify that when you went around and talked to people . . . the decks can be used for anti-social behaviour, they have got disadvantages but they have got definite advantages, and you could meet your neighbours quite easily and talk to them' (Sheffield City Archives 1986).
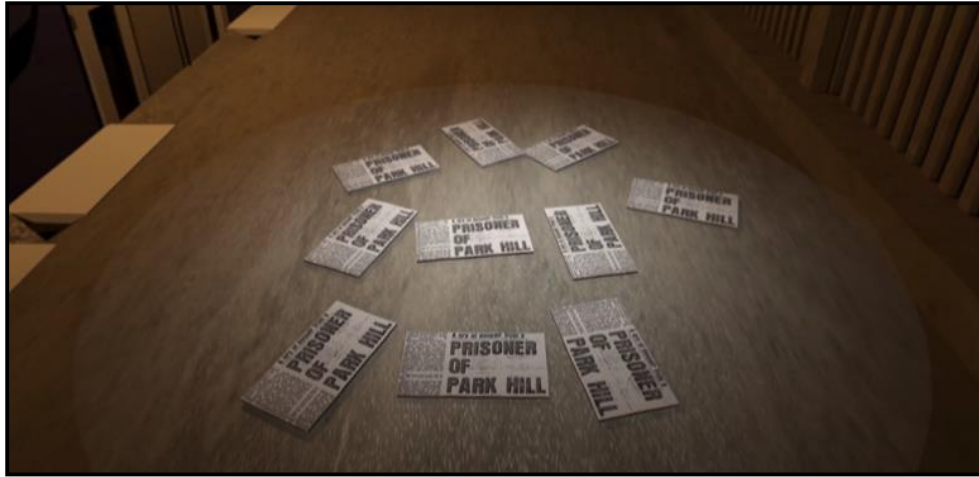
Figure 48: 3D visualisation of the Prisoner of Park Hill newspaper article (Empsall 2020).

From this, the wider political developments that affected Sheffield were considered. The immersive experience firstly looks at the impact of the decline of Sheffield's steel industry, with 3D models of picket signs from the steel industry strikes of the 1980s. The VR then explores the impact of the Right to Buy scheme, introduced by Thatcher's conservative government in 1980. This discusses the way that the Right to Buy became a vicious cycle for estates like Park Hill, creating high demand for council housing, but with fewer available for those who actually needed it. The VR features boarded-up doors on the deck, with a flickering light (Figure 49). The dark scene aimed to reflect the impact that the Right to Buy scheme had on the decline of the estate.

Figure 49: 3D model visualisation of boarded-up flats within the Park Hill estate (Empsall 2020).

The last element of Stories in the Sky VR focuses upon the regeneration. This begins with a 360-degree image of phase 1 of the redevelopment, provided by Human VR. Stories in the Sky VR then transitions to a 3D visualisation of the street decks within phase 1 (Figure 50). The model is overlain

with Urban Splash's testimonies from current residents, which describe the neighbourliness of the estate. One resident states, 'one of my favourite things to do is to lay on my back and look out to the clouds . . . they say streets in the sky, it does actually kind of feel like that sometimes.' From the interviews undertaken, one of the elements that connected the stories of experience was the sense of looking out from the street decks. This was also a key theme in *Standing at the Sky's Edge*. Whether an individual's experience of the estate was from the 1960s, the period of decline, or the regeneration, this was one element that united the stories.
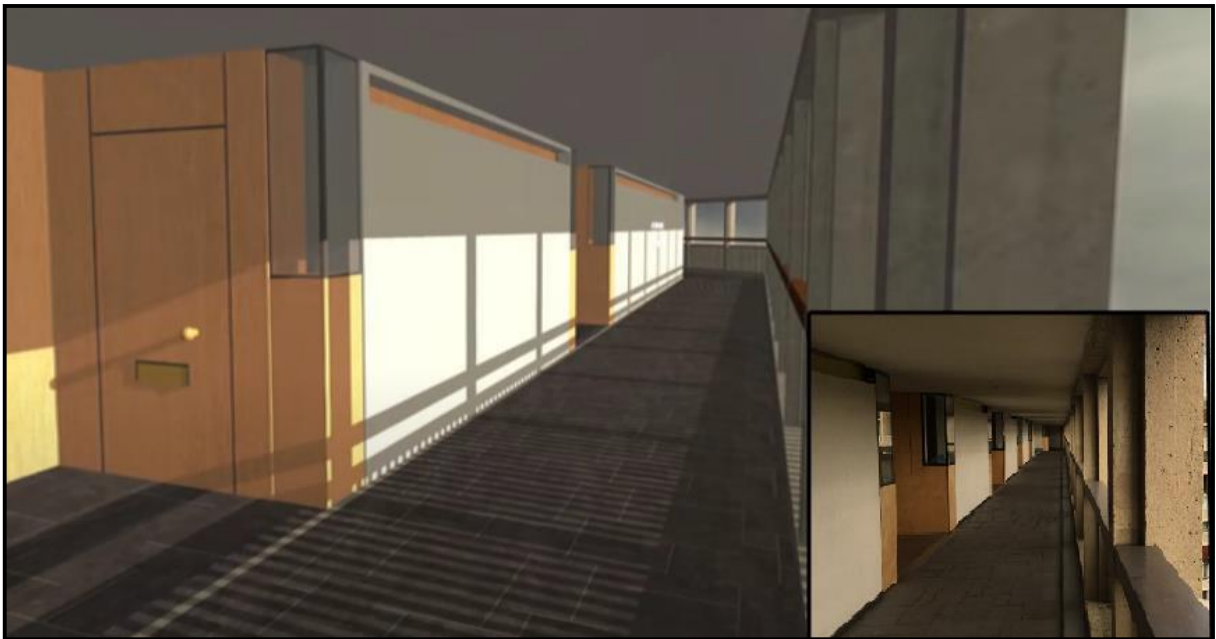
Figure 50: 3D model visualisation of Park Hill's street decks within phase 1 of the redevelopment, with photograph for reference (Empsall 2020).

Stories in the Sky VR concludes by considering Park Hill's status as a regenerated estate, and its connection with the wider community. Park Hill has not only seen an overhaul in its design, but also in the community that now calls the estate home. An oral testimony of a current resident sourced from Urban Splash, discusses the Creative Writing Group, which was functioning at the time. The recording states, 'the best thing about it is we all got to meet people off the flats . . . people off Norfolk Park, Manor, and from Park Library . . . we are all integrating, and it's about the whole community, not just us.' The model of the street deck transitions to the night sky, and centres upon neon signage. The VR concludes by considering a line made famous by the band The Smiths, which was written in graffiti at Park Hill prior to regeneration. The signage states, 'All those people, all those lives, where are they now?' (Figure 51). This neon aims to make the viewer think critically about gentrification and the issues of commercialising heritage. While it has been clear that Urban Splash would probably not have wished these issues to be included, it is important to include the issues that are bound to

regenerated heritage. For example, *Standing at the Sky's Edge* touches upon the issues of gentrification. In Love's (2019) review of the musical in *The Guardian*, she writes, 'Bush gently questions Park Hill's complex history and controversial present, celebrating Poppy's new life while wondering at whose expense she can start over in a plush new flat.' The neon signage within Stories in the Sky VR aimed to reflect upon the way that Urban Splash had commercialised the 'I Love You, Will You Marry Me?' graffiti, and the importance of the story and identity behind this. Furthermore, combined with the oral testimony, this was intended to highlight the far-reaching and connected heritage of the estate, outside the bounds of geographic proximity.
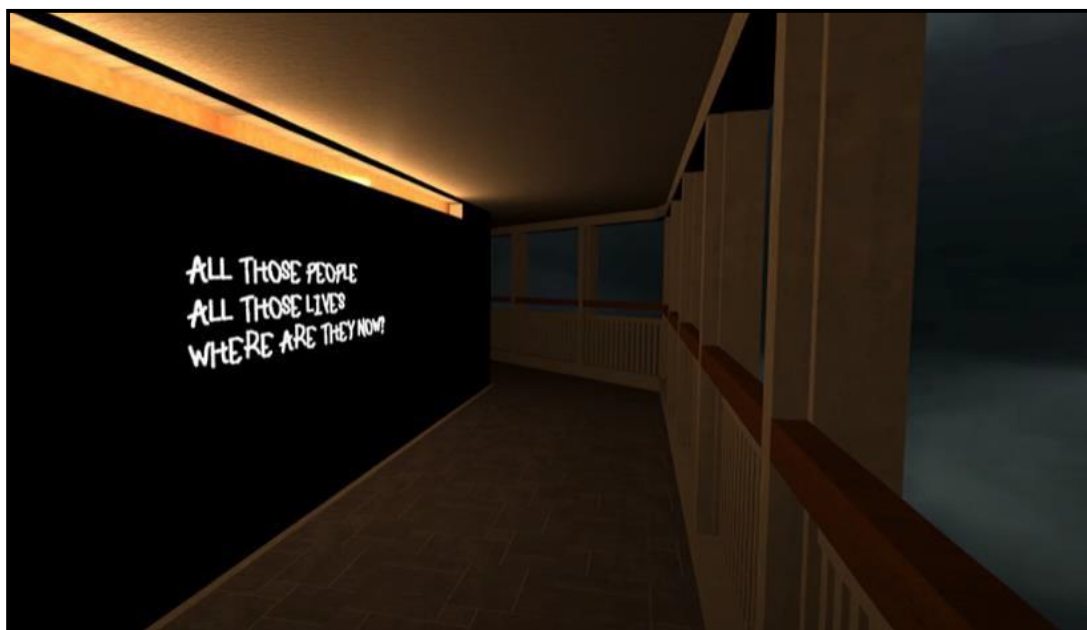
Figure 51: 3D model visualisation of neon signage, 'All those people, all those lives, where are they now?' (Empsall 2020).

7.3 : Stories in the Sky VR: User Feedback

This section will discuss the results of the user feedback, exploring the effectiveness of Stories in the Sky VR against the original aims of the project. This will begin by exploring the difficulties imposed upon the project by COVID-19, and the need to present the VR as a 360-degree video. Next, the choice of using online questionnaires to secure feedback will be deliberated, and the variation in the two that were used. Given the lack of engagement with the early stages of the project, gaining feedback for the Stories in the Sky VR project output was going to be challenging. This section will discuss this feedback, with the full results available in Appendix 3 and 4. A total of fourteen people responded to the questionnaires, with five of those from the Park Hill community.

The original intention for Stories in the Sky VR was to host an exhibition to showcase the immersive experience at Park Hill. Invitations would have been disseminated to community stakeholders

connected to the estate, to view the project output and provide feedback. However, due to the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 situation, the project had to present the work online as a 360-degree video. While this was not as immersive as VR, it did provide an effective means to demonstrate the content of the project, and what it hoped to achieve. For 360 video, the range of immersion can vary depending upon what platform it is viewed upon. If the video is viewed on a laptop, the mouse is used to move around the scene. However, if viewed on mobile phone or tablet, the user can move their device itself, thus providing a greater sense of immersion. It may be possible to host an exhibition for Stories in the Sky VR following the easing of lockdown measures, however, this will not fall within the scope of this one-year project.

Following the results of the early community engagement in securing stakeholder interviews, there was a level of scepticism regarding the scale of feedback on the immersive experience. For the user-feedback, two online questionnaires were created: the first was for those connected to the Park Hill community, and the second looked to gain feedback from the wider public, from individuals with an interest in, or knowledge of, Park Hill. For the former, it was hoped that an online questionnaire would yield greater results, following a previous online questionnaire submitted to the former Park Hill residents' Facebook page. This was undertaken by an undergraduate student at Sheffield Hallam University, and the comments detailed that at least twenty individuals participated in the questionnaire. Given the previous lack of engagement, and the sense of interview fatigue, it was imperative that the video and questionnaire would not take up much of the participant's time. The 360 video was three minutes and twenty seconds in total, and the questionnaires were designed to take no longer than five minutes.

The questionnaire for the Park Hill community contained two additional questions, which were specific to their background. This was distributed to Park Hill Facebook pages, and in total, five individuals responded to this questionnaire, with three participants representing current residents, and two from former residents. An administrator for the current residents' page was able to post on the project's behalf on their private Facebook page, therefore it is unclear as to how this was received. However, for the former residents' Facebook page, the post received a total of eleven "likes", but only two people responded to the questionnaire. While only five individuals responded from the Park Hill stakeholders, the feedback revealed that they all believed that these types of projects are useful to Park Hill and its wider community. This would suggest that the Park Hill community appreciates public interest and research into the estate, but are no longer as interested in engaging with the projects themselves. In this way, there appears to be a disconnection between the way the estate is viewed as heritage and the sense that the residents, past and present, are stewards of this heritage.

As there were difficulties in engaging with a diverse range of community stakeholders, the first questionnaire aimed to consider whether participants believed their experience of the estate was represented within the video. The results of this question found that 60% of participants believed it did not represent their experience, from one current resident and two former, while 40% believed it did, from two current residents. Those that believed it did not reflect their experience of the estate argued, 'there is far more info that could be added by present and former residents', as well as, 'there are so many things that could be said.' There is an irony in these comments, in that much more could be said, but the community appears no longer interested in engaging with these projects, to share their input and experience. While there have been a multitude of projects that have requested recorded interviews, there is not a consolidated archive of oral testimonies. A useful future project could synthesise the work of previous projects, making an accessible resource of oral histories of the estate. In this way, the recording of resident experience would not be duplicated, and community stakeholders may be more interested in collaborating with research projects.

For the second questionnaire, the project utilised the network of the University of York's Archaeology department. The video and questionnaire was posted within the department's online news page (Department of Archaeology 2020), as well as their Facebook and Twitter pages. The 360 video and the second questionnaire were also distributed to heritage and conservation modules within the department, who have included Park Hill within their syllabus. Emails were also sent to creative agencies based at Park Hill, as well as organisations like the Twentieth Century Society. In total, nine individuals responded to the questionnaire, from a variety of occupations (Figure 52). One question which was only included within this questionnaire, stated 'Do you feel like your knowledge of Park Hill has increased due to this video?' This aimed to question whether the VR represents a useful educational tool. Of the nine participants, six responded that their knowledge had increased, whilst three did not. Of the three, one participant argued that they had worked on Park Hill for ten years, and therefore their knowledge was already extensive. Participant comments noted that they 'didn't realise there was so much debate about Park Hill', and that 'it gave a sense of the change through time, the consistencies and the setting of the "streets"'.
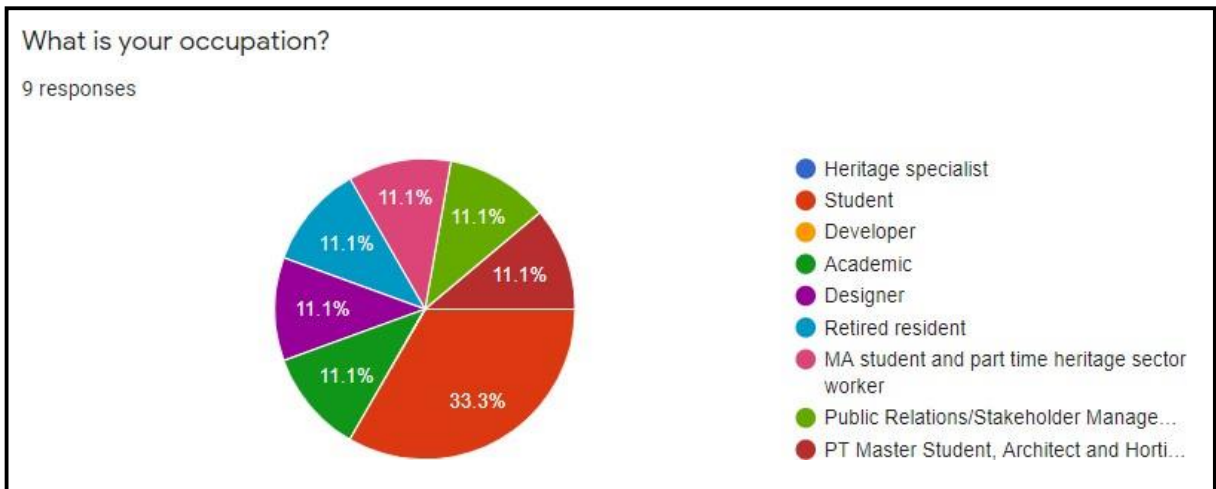
Figure 52: Results from the question: 'What is your occupation?', from the second questionnaire
(Empsall 2020).

The remainder of the questions within the survey applied to both sets of participants. Of the fourteen participants in the survey, nine had used 360 video before. The video was mainly viewed on a laptop for the questionnaire distributed to those interested in Park Hill, while those connected to the estate had mainly watched on their phones. Of the fourteen participants, twelve believed the video was effective in showcasing the stories and history of Park Hill. The positive comments from those interested in Park Hill, argued that the video was 'short but quite powerful', and that 'the mix of clips from news/media and real people is effective and interesting.' Those connected to the estate argued that 'it gave you a feel of it all', and that it was 'very good and clear.' Within the positive comments, there is also a sense that it would have been more effective if the video was longer. This argument is also made by a current resident who did not agree that the video was effective in showcasing the stories of the estate. This participant argued, 'It was too short. Would have been good to see the people who were speaking. Fascinating subject. Would have loved much more.' As previously stated, the project was constrained by the amount of oral testimonies available. However, the video was also meant to be viewed as a prototype, to test whether the estate would be ripe for this kind of work.

Furthermore, the feedback also aimed to understand whether participants believed the video challenged their perception of Park Hill. As expected, the majority of those connected to the Park Hill community argued that it did not. However, a current resident, who answered the wrong survey, argued it did challenge their perception, and that it 'always freaks me out a bit when someone takes a different perspective on the place I live.' For those with an interest in Park Hill, 75% also believed it did not challenge their perception, but there is a sense that they already had a good understanding of the estate. One of the participants argued that while it did not challenge their perception, 'a group did

a presentation at university on Park Hill, but this brings it alive and makes it more relatable.' Of those that argued it did challenge their perception, one participant stated this was due to 'the positivity about the site from people who live there.'

When asked what the participants liked about the video, the consensus seemed to be the implementation of resident voices. One participant commented, 'The most effective item was having multiple recorded testimonies linked to the "timeline" of the building through the decades', as well as another saying they liked 'the different voices and intertwining with social history.' A former resident appreciated the format, stating 'the video with its 360 appearance was good to watch, if only this was available at the time of my youth', with another liking that it felt 'modern.' Two participants noted that they liked The Link pub scene, as it represented something they have not seen before. However, one respondent argued that 'it could have been any pub anywhere' and that it was 'comic-booklike.'

The participants were also asked what they disliked about the 360 video. Among response to the questionnaire for those connected to Park Hill, one commented that they had 'no dislikes', while others argued that it was 'too short' and 'too simple.' For those with an interest in Park Hill, there were a few comments regarding the length of time on the street decks, with one participant stating, 'it could benefit from more variety of shots, not just the decks.' There were also some comments on the setting and atmosphere of the video, with one stating, 'the sky looked a bit odd.' A PR consultant working on Park Hill for Urban Splash argued that 'the CGI visuals are very dark as the sky from the balconies is dark so makes it look really dingy – can these be lightened.' This view is consistent with the way that Urban Splash have marketed the site as housing and as heritage. Urban Splash's vision has centred upon dispelling the history of failure for the estate. However, Park Hill's period of decline represents a significant part of its history, and I believed that this period should not be overshadowed by the developer's need to promote Park Hill's positive image. Only one other participant argued this point, stating 'the corridor is really dark for no discernible reason with nothing much to view or fixate upon.' Park Hill's period of decline and neglect is representative of a large amount of its history: beginning in 1967, up to the listing in 1998. Very little resident oral testimony could be sourced that commented upon this period of declining reputation. The stylistic choice to portray this period as 'dark' aimed to not only reflect the sense of decline, but also the lack of resident voice, juxtaposed with the wider commentary on the estate.

The questionnaires concluded by asking how the participants believed the video could have been improved, with an option for additional comments. Multiple respondents argued that the video would have benefitted from a visualisation or 360 image of inside the flats, past and present. One participant commented, 'that way maybe the flat can have other items showing the time transition/periods . . .

to get the more human side associated with the testimonials.' This is an excellent point, and represents an element that would have been beneficial to include. In connection to this, another respondent argued that the video could have been improved with the inclusion of people.

To conclude the feedback, the thesis will reflect upon a comment made by a current resident. This argued that the 360 video 'is perpetuating the myth that the "community spirit" of Park Hill has survived.' Within the option to provide additional comments, this participant noted:

> Park Hill does not have a great community spirit. It has a Facebook group and a few individuals who have tried to develop something that is about slightly more than geographic proximity. But the majority of residents are, for the vast majority of the time, indifferent.

These comments reflect the findings from the initial community engagement. The indifference that the participant describes is indicative of the barriers to securing interviews, which are a result of the "Park Hill fatigue" phenomenon. Within Stories in the Sky VR's research, there has been an awareness of the indifference described by the current resident, however the actual oral testimonies that were used were overwhelmingly positive when describing the current Park Hill community. A resident within the video, from Urban Splash's testimonies, states, 'I know all my neighbours, it's a really, really good community here.' There is an irony in the comments from the questionnaire, as this perspective would have been useful to include within the video, had they come forward when interviews were requested. This could have been juxtaposed with the symbol of Park Hill as a real mixed-community, which has been argued by Urban Splash, as well as prominent voices within the current community.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The final chapter of the thesis will consider the main conclusions and findings of Stories in the Sky VR, as well as discussing the possibilities for future research. One of the main aims for the project was to investigate the potential of digital interventions to articulate intangible heritage. The literature review explored the problems associated with photorealism and accuracy within digital heritage, and that visualisations have focused more upon archaeological sites and the importance of material culture. Stories in the Sky VR was more interested in the way that a digital intervention could showcase intangible heritage, at a place where the tangible elements of the site are well-known. For Park Hill, the voices within the VR were the driving force behind the content, while the tangible "streets in the sky", represented a well-understood area that could be manipulated to further highlight the stories of experience. Within Stories in the Sky VR, the primary aim was not photorealism or accuracy, but rather to spark conversation on varied experience.

However, for some, a greater sense of accuracy was expected within the visualisation. An architect from the user feedback questionnaire for those with an interest in Park Hill, argued that the 360 video 'lacked architectural detail and texture, which is really important for this building.' As Chapter 4 explored, much and more has been argued about the architecture of Park Hill. Throughout Park Hill's history, architectural commentary has been dominated by male authors discussing the design of the estate, with little discussion on the lives of people who have lived there. Capturing a high level of accuracy for the architectural features within Stories in the Sky VR would not have benefitted the exploration of the intangible. As Morgan (2009 478) stated 'accuracy is not especially important', and visualisations are 'made to be engaged with, to be improved, to be disproved.' The models within Stories in the Sky VR were intended to act as vehicles through which to disseminate the estate's stories, and place them within the wider context of Park Hill's reputation and history. By being purposefully manipulative with the tangible elements of the estate, I was able to engage much more closely with the interpretative process, and connect the tangible and intangible elements of the estate in a much deeper way. In this way, Stories in the Sky VR has highlighted that immersive technologies represent a significant tool through which to articulate intangible heritage. Moreover, it has shown that for well-known heritage sites, there is a greater opportunity to exhibit creativity when dealing with tangible elements, where the obligation to create accurate and photorealistic models is less imposing.

A major focus of Stories in the Sky VR was the attempt to integrate a "bottom-up" approach, which worked closely with a diverse range of community stakeholders. This focus was a result of Chapter 2's synthesis of literature on community engagement and the issues of "top-down" heritage work, as well

as from the context of Park Hill itself, as a complex place with a wide variety of stakeholders. Chapter 6 discussed the ways that requests for interviews were met with barriers, and the impact of what Bell (2011, 145) had coined 'Park Hill fatigue.' Despite an initial enthusiasm from Hadley and Cooper's initial scoping exercise, the inspiration from Bush and Hawley's 2019 musical, and my own extensive efforts to engage with the stakeholders, a "bottom-up" approach proved difficult to achieve.

Waterson and Smith (2010, 12) have discussed the 'cuddly nature' of community work, as well as the role of heritage to be doing 'good.' They argue this works to ensure that the problems within community engagement are little discussed. For heritage work, community engagement often sounds like a great thing to do, however, it does not always go as planned. The integration of "bottom-up" work is seen as a laudable way to approach heritage-led community projects, yet it is not always possible. For this to work, there has to be a strong response from the community stakeholders, and a willingness to contribute and participate. The inclusion of a "bottom-up" approach would be valuable to other heritage-led community projects, but the context of Park Hill made this difficult to achieve. The findings of the community engagement within Stories in the Sky VR suggest a need to step-back from researching Park Hill as intimately, and allow their stakeholders to develop their sense of community on their own. Waterson and Smith (2010, 11) have argued that an expert-centric focus has 'rendered communities, as much as their heritage, as subject to management and preservation.' The expert-centric influence of academic projects like Stories in the Sky VR, and developers like Urban Splash, has turned Park Hill's stakeholders against wanting to engage with these kinds of projects. This is not to say that the stakeholders should not be supported by external organisations, but that the diverse communities of Park Hill have a strong understanding of their heritage, and for them, the control of community-driven heritage work should develop from within.

While efforts should be made to integrate "bottom-up" approaches, this is not always possible. For Stories in the Sky VR, a "top-down" approach had to be implemented. This centred upon the expert-centric way of viewing Park Hill as a heritage site, through its history, context and reputation, which were explored through Chapters 4 & 5. However, Stories in the Sky VR benefitted from previously recorded oral testimonies, which represented a valuable resource. These exhibited the influence of community stakeholders without their active input, and heavily shaped the direction of Stories in the Sky VR. My role as the project leader was key in this area, to understand the shortcomings of these recordings, and to present as wide and diverse a range of experience as available. From the limitations of the oral testimonies, and from the lack of stakeholder input, capturing the changing reputation of the estate and its wider political context within the immersive experience, was felt to be essential to balance against the stories of experience. While this reflected an expert-centric approach, it was one that highlighted the complexity of the estate, and placed the testimonies within their wider context.

Despite the fact that Stories in the Sky VR was met with barriers, including COVID-19, it was successful in demonstrating the potential for an immersive experience to capture and present intangible heritage. Without the constraints imposed by COVID-19, the original intention was to host an exhibition at Park Hill, inviting individuals from the various stakeholder groups to user test Stories in the Sky VR and provide feedback. This may have drawn different conclusions, but it does seem clear that the stakeholders were more inclined to engage with something that was already made, with a greater response exhibited from the user feedback questionnaires than the initial interview requests. From the user feedback, twelve out of fourteen respondents believed that the video was effective in showcasing the stories and history of Park Hill, and the comments highlighted an enthusiasm for a more in-depth immersive storytelling experience. A future project would benefit from the synthesis of previously recorded oral testimonies. Within Stories in the Sky VR, testimonies were utilised from Sheffield City Archives and Urban Splash, however there are many other academic projects which have undertaken recorded interviews, including that of Chiles *et al.* (2019). The creation of an accessible online archive for these testimonies would benefit future projects, without the need to replicate testimonies and increase the level of fatigue.

Stories in the Sky VR has demonstrated the possibilities for communities to articulate their intangible heritage in an innovative and creative way, through immersive technologies. While the project at Park Hill was successful, the lack of engagement meant that I was solely responsible for the articulation of the estate's heritage within the immersive experience. From the context of Park Hill, having transitioned from council flats to gentrified estate, there were times where I felt uncomfortable to be in complete control of articulating these heritages, with an awareness that I did not want to make the same mistakes exhibited by Urban Splash, and the "I Love You, Will You Marry Me?" graffiti. While the project leader has a key responsibility within community-driven heritage work, their role should be to balance perspective and give all stakeholders a voice. The findings from Stories in the Sky VR would suggest that when working with places with as diverse and contested a history as Park Hill, communities might be better served leading the projects themselves, with a guiding influence from academic partnerships. However, while a greater sense of engagement from stakeholders would be beneficial, this research has shown that it is not absolutely necessary. Stories in the Sky VR has demonstrated that immersive experiences can provide excellent tools to spark discussion on experience, to better understand the heritages of a place, and to successfully articulate intangible heritage.

Appendix 1: Park Hill Listing (Historic England 1998)

Historic England

PARK HILL

Overview

Heritage Category:
Listed Building

Grade:
II*

List Entry Number:
1246881

Date first listed:
22-Dec-1998

Statutory Address:
PARK HILL, DUKE STREET

Statutory Address:
PARK HILL, SOUTH STREET

Statutory Address:
PARK HILL, TALBOT STREET

1/4

Map

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The above map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale. For a copy of the full scale map, please see the attached PDF - **1246881.pdf**

The PDF will be generated from our live systems and may take a few minutes to download depending on how busy our servers are. We apologise for this delay.

This copy shows the entry on 03-Jun-2020 at 19:51:13.

Location

Statutory Address:
PARK HILL, DUKE STREET

Statutory Address:
PARK HILL, SOUTH STREET

Statutory Address:
PARK HILL, TALBOT STREET

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

District:
Sheffield (Metropolitan Authority)

National Grid Reference:
SK 36064 87093

Details

SK 38 NE SHEFFIELD TALBOT STREET (North side) 794-1/6/10016 Park Hill

II*

Includes: Park Hill, SOUTH STREET Includes: Park Hill, DUKE STREET

Flats and maisonettes. 1957-60 by Sheffield Corporation City Architect's Department under J L Womersley, designed by Jack Lynn and Ivor Smith with F E Nicklin and John Forrester (artist); Ronald Jenkins of Ove Arup and Partners, engineer. Formally opened in 1961 by Hugh Gaitskell. Reinforced concrete frame, partly board marked, with concrete balcony fronts and brick infill in four shades - a progression of purple, terracotta, light red and cream. Continuous flat roof of even height throughout the estate. 995 flats on 17 acres (total site 32 acres) at density of 192 ppa and a unit cost of £2,800 each (total cost £2,158,591). The scheme includes 31 shops, 4 pubs, a laundry boiler house, Garchey refuse station and garages. The flats and maisonettes were designed on a steeply sloping site (gradient 1 in 10) keeping a constant roof level, so that the height of the blocks range from four to thirteen storeys. A standard three-bay unit with central staircases set in pairs in H-shaped frame is the main unit of construction and design, each containing a one-bedroom and a two-bedroom flat, a two-bedroom and a three-bedroom maisonette, all with balconies. Access decks at every third floor serve maisonettes on and above the deck and one-storey flats set below. The innovatory width of these four 'street decks' was a key feature of the architects' concept; all save the uppermost (Norwich Row) debouches on to ground level at some part of the scheme, and are served by 13 lifts and two large goods' lifts which gave milk floats and other services direct access to the decks, enhancing the image of 'streets in the sky'. Park Hill is formed of four ranges linked by bridges across the upper decks, all cranked at obtuse angles (between 112 and 135 degrees) to maximise the site aspect and panoramic views. Lifts (mainly in pairs), stairs, pubs and laundry are set at nodal points. Shops, boiler house and former garchey station set on lowest point of site to north west. Elevations treated as a regular exposed grid of the board-marked concrete frame. Balconies on those elevations not served by decks give to a rhythmic 2:1 pattern in both directions across facades, varied only at corners. Balconies and decks with vertical concrete balustrading, similar pattern to slender steel balustrading to bedrooms. Timber windows with aluminium horizontal opening sections. Flush timber doors. Interiors. The rigid grid of flats and maisonettes ensures that kitchens and bathrooms are stacked in pairs to facilitate servicing. Interiors not of special interest. The Pavement area of shops. Most shops retain original varnished timber shutters and glazed shopfronts in timber surrounds over concrete plinth with weathering. Many shopfronts - including Neils News and the grocery opposite - have timber panelled dado. These original shopfronts survive behind later security shutters. Linked two-storey block with open stairwell and columns clad in gold mosaic. Housing Area Office later and not of special interest. Public Houses. There are four on the estate, all of which retain most of their original features. All are four-bay units in the ground floor of the block, mostly close to the shopping centre. All have common plan: they face in two directions, with a lounge on one side and public bar on the other, linked by central bar and glazed screen. The Earl George Public House, The Pavement, retains original fenestration of single lights (with applied later latticework) over inset timber panels, with set-back clerestorey glazing. Original bar with later facing panels, and timber boarded surround, set under lowered ceiling with inset lighting. Marble tiled flooring round bar and main entrance. The Link, Gilbert Row. Four-bay canted front, formed of timber panels in concrete bays with mosaic spandrels, with painted mosaic fronts. Public bar entrance on internal court has three projecting canted bays and entrance with original doors. Public bar retains bar and fixed bench surrounds. The lounge has been remodelled. Scottish Queen, Gilbert Row. Brick faced. Tripartite windows set forward, only the large upper lights glazed, the others infilled with timber panels. Clerestorey glazing above level with building line. Original bar counter. Timber columns with bevelled and varnished timber boarding, marble tiled floors. Original doors, screen between bars with glazed tiles and later coloured glass. Fixed bench seating in both bars. Adjacent are public lavatories, clad in grey and gold mosaic, disused in 1996. The Parkway, Hague Row. Fenestration with projecting four bays of timber windows over timber dado and set back clerestorey, the surrounds clad in slate hanging, with two-bay mosaic mural. Original interior with central bar and bevelled timber panelling; fixed seating to both bars. Park Hill Social Centre on two levels with ramp to upper entrance. Brick with concrete cornice, roof and sills; timber windows. Interior with sprung timber floor. ASSESSMENT Park Hill is of international importance. It is the first built manifestation of a widespread

theoretical interest in external access decks as a way of building high without the problems of isolation and expense encountered with point blocks. Sheffield and the London County Council had the only major local authority departments designing imaginative and successful public housing in the 1950s, and this is Sheffield's flagship. The decks were conceived as a way of recreating the community spirit of traditional slum streets, with the benefit of vehicular segregation; Park Hill has been regularly studied by sociologists ever since it opened, and is one of the most successful of its type. The deck system was uniquely appropriate here because the steeply sloping site allowed all but the uppermost deck to reach ground level, and the impact of the long, flat-topped structure rising above the city centre makes for one of Sheffield's most impressive landmarks. The result was Britain's first completed scheme of post-war slum clearance and the most ambitious inner-city development of its time.

Listing NGR: SK3606487093

Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.
Legacy System number:
471963

Legacy System:
LBS

Sources

Books and journals
Architects Year Book, (1965)
'RIBA Journal' in July, (1964), 271-280
'Architects Journal' in 31 March, (1955), 428-9
'Architects Journal' in 21 July, (1965), 157-70
'RIBA Journal' in October, (1995), 53-61
'RIBA Journal' in December, (1962), 447-61
'Architects Journal' in 23 August, (1961), 271-86
'New Statesman' in 30 June, (1961)

Legal

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

End of official listing

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Stories in the Sky – Park Hill Sheffield – Information Sheet

What is the study about?

This study will aim to gather information which will be used to structure a broader project relating to Park Hill, storytelling and place-making. The project will aim to create an augmented reality or virtual reality application which can be used for tours of the building. The study for the project will be split into five main areas: demographic information, life at Park Hill, representations of Park Hill in the media, digital heritage, and stories of experience. The final element will cover a discussion of ideas for the project.

How will the research be carried out?

The information and data will be collected via individual face-to-face interviews and discussions. This will be recorded using a Dictaphone, and subsequently transcribed for the project. The demographic questions will be collected as part of the consent form below. The participation for this study is voluntary, and participants are free to leave the study at any point. The interviews should take around 45 minutes. This will cover around 30 minutes of interviews, with 15 minutes allotted to present digital heritage and associated feedback.

Who is carrying out the research?

The primary researcher for the project is Joseph Empsall, a Masters by Research student at the University of York. This student is working under the supervision of Professor Dawn Hadley and Dr Catriona Cooper. The interviews for the study will be undertaken with assistance from a paid research helper. All the practical aspects of the study will be undertaken by Joseph Empsall, who will supervise the work of the research helper. Joseph is funded by XR Stories, who are partner to the project.

How will the research findings be used?

The results of the study will help to shape the main focus of the project, which is to create an augmented reality or virtual reality immersive storytelling experience. The aim of this to create something that can be utilised as part of ongoing tours of the building. The results will also be utilised as part of a thesis for the Masters by Research, and it is possible that the information will be used in presentations or articles following submission. The findings will be transcribed from the audio recordings. As per the University's regulations, these will be saved in an encrypted Google folder, and a locked cabinet in paper form. The data will be stored for a minimum of 10 years, and destroyed thereafter.

Will my contribution be confidential?

All information and data gathered will be stored securely, and any references utilised in the digital heritage software, thesis or publications will be anonymised. The collected information will only be accessible by the primary researcher and his supervisors. However, the participants should be made aware that in rare situations confidentiality cannot be

guaranteed. This would only be breached in situations where there is a legal obligation for information to be disclosed to other parties, such as for child protection reasons.

How can I access the results of the study?

The findings of the study will be communicated to the participants via distribution of the thesis, and an invitation to test the digital heritage software when this is made available.

If you have any questions, please contact Joseph Empsall (jte508@york.ac.uk; 07449912853).

The research has been subject to ethical review by the Arts and Humanities Ethics Committee (AHEC). If you have any concerns regarding the ethics process, please contact archaeology Departmental Ethics Representative James Taylor (james.s.taylor@york.ac.uk).

Park Hill Interviewee 1

Date: 06.12.2019

Age: 66-75

Gender: Female

Ethnicity: British

Would you consider yourself an active member of the Park Hill community? Yes

When did you first hear about PH and what was your first impression?

- Through her sister. She used to look up at the abandoned building on the skyline. Her sister had to go there to vote and was scared to go there. Later she looked up to see the vibrancy it is today, and that notion of vibrant is still prevalent now for her. Wanted to move to an exciting new phase. Wanted to move somewhere with a variety of ages.

How long have you been a resident?

- Since 2013

What is important to you about PH?

- Range of ages, but also a range of cultures which is present. Not as much as the whole of Sheffield, but there are certainly different people from different cultures. Whatever you get engaged in that is present.
- Regeneration, and likes the ethos of this place. Made an effort to regenerate a complex building with a difficult history.
- Like to have open space, didn't have that in her last flat. Has a double-sized balcony, and can grow a variety of things on.
- Thinks the contact with people will grow, e.g. the community. You might say hello to everyone but don't see people that often otherwise. It has grown since 2013 when she moved in. South Street Café has been of great benefit, and activities e.g. Yoga, knitting, gardening where people meet at the café – anything community takes time

What activities would you like to see?

- Already a lot of activities happening that she likes. Will welcome the inception of the arts hub. More art studios and exhibitions – she would definitely do them and potentially volunteer, she hasn't done it in Sheffield yet but been on the edge of them

What was your perception of the poor reputation?

- Admits subjective of course. Talked about Park Hill Facebook group, "Park Hill facts maybe" – got some of the old stories on there.
- Her impression was from her sister's impression that she was scared to come here – probably quite accurate reputation of crime, drugs and murder, TV's over the balcony.
- Didn't know when she came whether she would be safe – would she be safe on her own – never felt uneasy at all

Do you use South Street kitchen often?

- Came to the Creative Writing Group
- Very friendly people here and nice food

What do you know about the previous communal spaces?

- Had lots, and they would benefit from much more. It was like a village before. Everyone would like a shop, and they did a survey and majority revealed a convenience store would be very helpful
- It can be quite a long walk to get essentials if you need them. Things like that help with the community feelings as well. If they had a fruit and veg place that would be great, and she would volunteer there as well

Would you like a visitor centre?

- Not everyone's taste, not everyone will go to exhibitions
- Need some casual space, where not committed to an activity, and you can hang out if you wanted to. Unless you go to the Christmas drinks, never been able to go there

Do you find that people use the green spaces?

- Might be going to lose the green spaces, but people do use them. Might lose them to the new block. People who told her are not happy
- She wouldn't say it is used to capacity. People with children use it, but they want an actual play area. She would use it more now, with the trees creating a more sheltered and private area. Not been out very much before, and that is down to the privacy

Do you mind people coming to see the building? And what about tourism?

- She feels proud of the building and it's about sharing the good feeling. Don't know whether tourism is important or not. Sheffield not a big tourist spot.

- With reference to Mary Queen of Scots, very interested in the history of it behind the building. More interested in the connection with that period of history.

Which representations have you liked and didn't like?

- The musical "standing at the sky's edge", reduced the stories to impactful statements and picked the three important periods. Very impressed with that, have to simplify it but picked powerful stories. Sad, but that is correct because there were sad
- I love you will you marry me story – she likes the neon, and when she first got here they sold things with that on. She just thinks it's fun. But when it came to light it was sadder than that. More stories of alcoholism and death. When she wants to focus upon where she lives she wants to think about the positives not the negatives.
- Photographers contrasted old and new. It is a brutalist building, and not everyone likes brutalist buildings.
- Sheffielders perception can be negative even about this new phase. Now it's turned into look at those privileged people who have taken the building over. Would have to ask other people about perceptions

Can you tell me about your own stories of experience?

- The story of coming here as completely new to Sheffield, from York. Didn't know anyone except her sister. Moved in and on the first night absolutely loved looking out at her view from her window. Twinkling lights, out towards the hills. Happy from the outset. But didn't know anyone. Joined a writing group in a church hall nearby
- Quiet early on she let in the photographers and wrote a poem.
- All positive experiences

What about your poem?

- It refers to Dylan Thomas, who could see out of his window a boat shed. And the competition was to write about what you see out of your window. – She wrote from Park Hill
- Wrote about Mary Queen of Scots' experience. They were almost seeing the same views. Both newcomers who didn't know the area. Wasn't a prisoner here but the building is quite barracks-like

Common Ground VR

- Liked it, could see the similarity with the PH situation
- Moves fairly fast – but is a video example

Prototype app for PH

- Impressed with the idea. Looks really good. Plenty of scope with it. Storytelling element has potential. Functionality is simple, and easy to get around. Like this idea so far. Got back to the home page easily, striking
- Do you like the history elements? There are a lot of people very interested in the history, that don't want to read a whole tome. Bringing them together would be useful.

VR example

- Really likes it but seen it and commented on this before

Park Hill Interviewee 2

Date: 22.01.2020

Age: 56-65

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: White British

This interview was shared with another Park Hill related project funded by UKRI, and was focused upon how tours of the building operate, the reputation of the building and what he would like to see in the software we create, and how the current community operates.

Would you consider yourself an active member of the Park Hill community? Yes

Can you tell me more about the tours of Park Hill?

- RA didn't start with any money, first thing they did was start some tours and gave the RA a cut. It was advertised on social media. Had quite a few people turn up. One Saturday they did three tours. If someone showed there flat they were compensated. Anyone who was involved in the tour they were given part of the profits. RA always got a share. Could run tours on a regular basis, once per month.
- RA may do more tours, but he argues that people need to be paid for their time. Since then Urban Splash organise some tours and RA got things passed on to them for architecture tours about regeneration. Started getting interest and doing tours. Surriya Falconer got involved from Urban Splash and was able to arrange a good amount of money. For an architecture school, they could get £300 per tour for those. Warwick University, University of York, Denmark, Portland University.
- Tours are able to raise money for good causes. Developers looking for a vibrant place, and wanting a thriving resident's association. Talked about the sales manager for Urban Splash.
- Modernist tours – have permission to go around the old part of the building. Likes that you can see all aspects of the place, phase 1, new development and older parts of the building. Interest has come from all over Sheffield
- Facebook page of older residents, they would like to come and see what it was like, but they can't as there are fobs now. Sheffielders in general are interested. Heritage open days should happen more frequently
- Controversial and interesting topic for Sheffield. Don't think it's quite as marmite anymore. 'I don't think it's true any longer that half of Sheffield want to knock the flats down.' – 'People

have these stereotypical views of the bad old days, very interesting inside as this would have been a dodgy area not too long ago.' Still see drug deals to this day but not as much anymore

- They also do tours for geography students, school kids in Year 10. Looking at regeneration. Part of the curriculum for them. He started doing free tours for these kids. Lots of schools ended up coming from word of mouth, without letting the RA know beforehand.

There are lots of different groups that come on tours, but for the purpose of VR/an app, is there a particular theme that you think links these together?

- Lots interested in architecture. Talked about reputation, and that he tries to be careful in what he says as it is complex. Had lots of people saying that it wasn't as bad as the reputation would make out.

- The contrasting views is particularly interesting. 'The voices of people that have been listened to who lived here, those are the ones that need to be heard, not our voices . . . as well as ours.' He thinks that current residents don't particularly need to be the focus.

- Thinking about the reputation, there was a bunch of negative stuff going on. 'Needs to be the voices against the stereotype'. The interviewee argues that he would like to portray the whole truth about the negative reputation of the estate – talks about how he engages currently with street violence, drugs and crime. And he makes a point of confronting stereotypes. Urban Splash's narrative that their regeneration has improved the area. Argues that there is a legitimate argument that people have lost elements in the regeneration. He also talks about the diversity of the community, and that he challenges people that ask him if the flats are full of posh people. He says that he himself is not posh, and that while there are posh people who live there, they have a diverse community.

- He also talks about how the community engages, and that there is only a section of this community that gets involved. He talks about our own perspectives of renting, and that it doesn't make you want to put down roots. But the people who own their properties are more outgoing in this way

- Used to be lots of people on long term council rents, they all moved in together, and they already had a good community because they were already invested. Asked how he thinks the current community could engage more, and he thinks it is doing more activities to interact further. He argued that the yoga did draw a wide range of people, new and old. But did say he only attended one of these events.

- Transient nature of modern housing, difficult for the RA.

- Great Places section is more long term, but it has been more leaseholder driven in the engagement because these people are invested in their flats

Park Hill Interviewee 3

Date: 27.01.2020

Participant didn't have much time, and wasn't happy to share demographic information. Interview focused upon his experience of the flats

Background

- Moved onto the estate in 1962, but his family moved in in 1961. Prior to this lived at an open air school as they had breathing problems. Sheffield air was poor in the '50s and '60s. Park Hill so different from what they were used to: underfloor heating, fitted kitchen, big picture windows, had three pubs and soon to become four. The Garchey refuse system was revolutionary, worked on suction, large cans could be put down the sink.

Went on to talk about its reputation

- The estate had a strong reputation, and often TV cameras were around. But has been regarded as a marmite place, and as a prison, but most people on the Facebook group loved living there. In its early years it was looked after quite well. As time went on kids began weeing in the lift, nuisance really not vandalism, in the late '60s. In the '60s and well into the '70s it was very clean by the porters, and although it was a concrete jungle, there was lots of places for kids to play and very child friendly. The pavement, café, dentist, doctors, village within a city, Park Hill basically in the city centre, effectively could manage as a little village. The Scottish Queen was the first pub he ever went into, but the Parkway was the place to go. Later is was known as the roughest pub in Britain.
- The place was a success in the '60s and '70s, didn't have to lock your doors, relied on each other, everybody knew everybody. He left in the mid '80s as the council had lost interest, didn't spend money on maintenance and started being a dumping ground for problem families or families with issues. It was a vicious cycle: good family out, bad family in which resulted in a downward spiral. Became a place which was not very nice to live in, but still had friends until the very end that loved it. People had bought flats in the Right to Buy scheme but were then stuck there.

Facebook page

- Still has strong connections to Park Hill. Had taken a lot of photographs of the place in his youth, and shares these frequently on the Facebook page, of which he has a strong presence.

From the photographs that he is publishing, he is hoping to organise a re-union soon for the former residents, and there are 60+ people interested in attending.

Urban Splash

- Thinks Urban Splash have done a good job. Doesn't understand how it works in terms of private housing and social housing. Thinks that people who rent don't look after their homes as much anymore. Thinks the communal spaces are important and that there should be more. Suspects everything will work out okay with the inclusion of students. Flats are quite expensive, and so is the café on site. Security is a lot tighter. Anybody could have gotten onto the streets before.

Park Hill Interviewee 4

Date: 22.01.2020

On the lack of engagement:

- People at Park Hill have got a lot of fatigue. Frequently students come asking for information for dissertation. People who participated a couple of years ago, they believe they have now done their bit
- When managing the building, they've had 30/40 students who just turned up with a tutor. There are people who are very disrespectful that these are residences. They have turned people away. They have shown a lack of respect. A class full of students trying to piggy back on the security of the building
- 'Successive visits have turned residents off from wanting to be hospitable, they just feel like they are in a goldfish bowl'.
- May not get the response they want

Is there any way to mitigate the issues that arise from people turning up unannounced?

- The outdoor space is publicly accessible but it is paid for by residents. All the damage that occurs and littering is paid for by the people who live there. Should be more controlled by the residents. That can feel like an intrusion
- Great Places have spoken to Urban Splash about the arts company making a contribution. Park Hill itself is a brand which Urban Splash have tried to develop. Seen merchandise, mugs for £11. Bought expensive prints, from artists who have exploited the brand. There is a benefit of people coming on to site and using the café, but that doesn't benefit the people who pay for the maintenance. The residents are the ones that are losing out in these situations. Any other situation you don't have the public coming through your apartment building in the same way. There is a lack of respect.
- GCSE geography students doing surveys there, but had no call upfront about this.
- Urban Splash will give consent for things to happen but Great Places haven't been told. An event once where hay bales were used, with loads of rubbish. But nobody knew about it. They then get complaints about the mess of the site. Having spoken to them and their PR, they want more dialogue with these events. Can't just assume that this clean-up will come out of the resident's pockets.
- 'More interest in the public profile of Park hill, than the people who live there'
- Great Places are expected to be accountable for things they don't control

- He is not a fan of the way that the way the estate is exploited
- Thinks digital interventions are great, and that it makes Park Hill a great destination. But it is intrusive for the residents. The right thing to do is to stay close to the residents, and they would want some form of stewardship. Complete control of the digital intervention by the PHRA
- It would be helpful to have a terms of engagement, and this would help to control the groups in their level of respect. Signing to say you will be respectful, no littering etc.
- The outdoor space is publicly accessible but the building isn't
- Resident's rights outweigh the need to use the building for education etc. First and foremost, the residents need to be respected, and once that has happened they might be more amiable

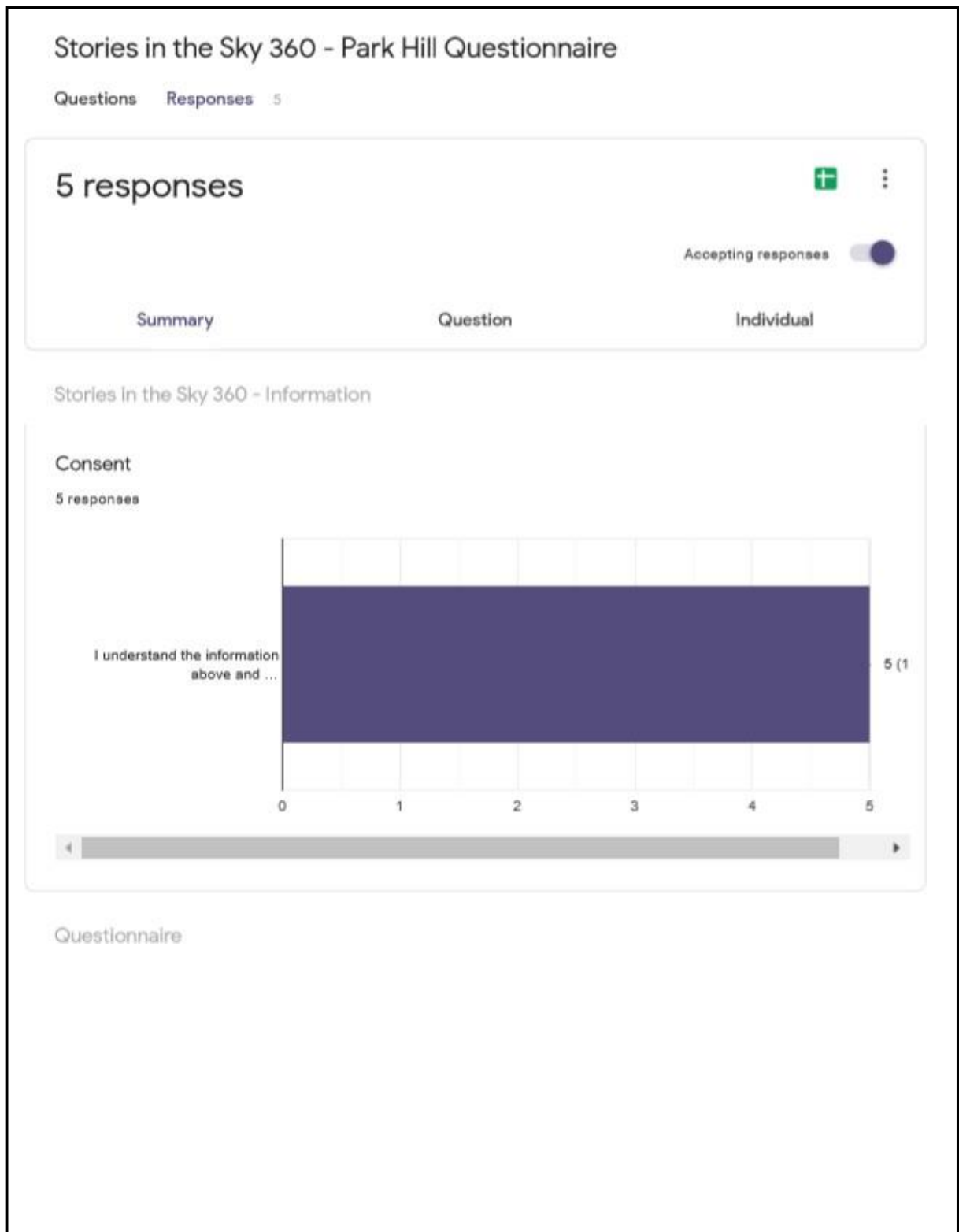Can you tell me about the social housing on site?

- Great Places was involved in 2004, what was Manchester Methodist Housing, chosen to be the social housing regenerators for Park Hill. That meant they would rehouse those who were displaced from the old Park hill to the new one. It was their first venture in Sheffield
- Became landlords for two other sites in Sheffield. When residents were decanted out the building, they came across to great places in these sites. Nice authenticator for Great Places to come back around
- Currently 263 apartments, 94 of those are affordable and social rent, 2 are shared ownership, the remainder which is 170+ are leaseholders who have bought their property, some are investor landlords, some are subletting to other students. And a small portfolio is managed by Urban Splash. A lot of interest at the moment
- Great Places managed social housing, and named in the lease to manage the services, and all of these services are paid for by tenants. They restructured in sept 2018, and Plum Life were then involved. Service charge and facilities management went across to them. GP just manage the rented and social, Plum Life manage the services
- When they were appointed in 2004, they would engage with residents, the local community and champion the green agenda. In reality, the latter was taken on by Urban Splash.
- Great Places established the residents' association.
- They build mixed developments, not just for social or rent. Wouldn't know the difference between them. That is called tenure blind.
- Bit of a status issue, they will never say they are a leaseholder. But they will be very quick to say they are one of their tenants. Some labelling and stigma. But generally it works well
- People will complain to us, but they will be reluctant to take things to the police. That is often where people want to treat. They want GP to take enforcement action, for that to happen

they need to give evidence. – On anti-social behaviour (noise nuisance, defecation etc.) – don't happen often but would be a big thing for the site now

Respect/heritage

- There is this grey area over public/semi-public space
- Once at Sheffield University and heard a speaker say the university building was a public building. That means that anybody can walk into it. A museum is very much a public building, for learning and experience. But a building like Park Hill has got huge public interest, but it is not a public building. Almost being treated as a public building but that is not what it is.
- Perhaps Park Hill needs a visitor centre, for people to be curated around the building. Because it shouldn't just be open access. That would mean that that should potentially be a charged service, which is profitable for the residents.
- Thinks Park Hill has evolved into this place where educators and the public that it is just there for anybody to wander
- Be interesting to get feedback from those that moved out, was it because of the services? Or was it because they are sick of people walking around the building
- With the windows in the corridor, you see peeking in. Some people have put in character into the windows. Can be a beautiful display, of your own identity. He loves that character about Park Hill.
- There is an irony in that, because they are making exhibits for people to view. Or are they just doing that because it is interesting, are they doing that for their public, or for people to who are legitimately visiting the building.
- Heritage/archaeological argument in their – how do you portray yourself
- 'Whatever people think about Park Hill, you've heard all those arguments about love hate, you cannot deny that it is in interesting place.'

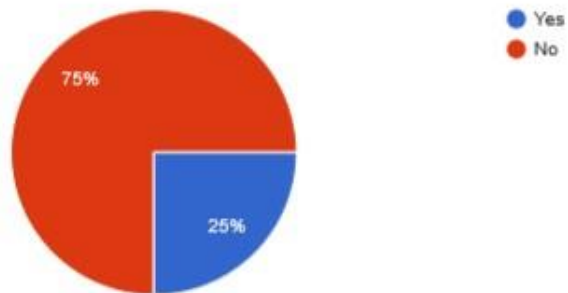## Appendix 3: Feedback from Stories in the Sky VR: 360 video – Park Hill community

Stories in the Sky 360 - Park Hill Questionnaire

Questions   Responses   5

5 responses

Accepting responses

Summary   Question   Individual

Stories in the Sky 360 - Information

Consent

5 responses

I understand the information above and ...   5 (1

0   1   2   3   4   5

Questionnaire

What is your connection to Park Hill?

5 responses

- ● Former Resident
- ● Current Resident

60%

40%

Have you used 360 video before?

4 responses

- ● Yes
- ● No

75%

25%

What platform did you view the video on?

4 responses

- ● Phone
- ● Laptop
- ● Tablet
- ● iMac

25%   25%

50%
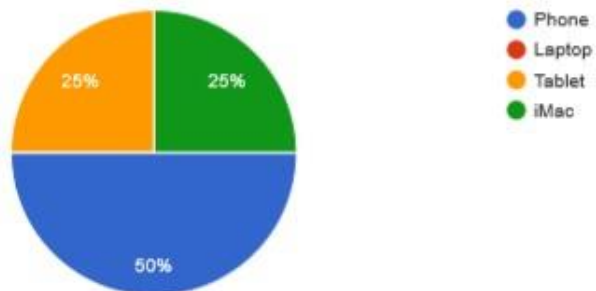
Do you think the video was effective in showcasing the stories and history of Park Hill?

5 responses

- Yes
- No

20%

80%
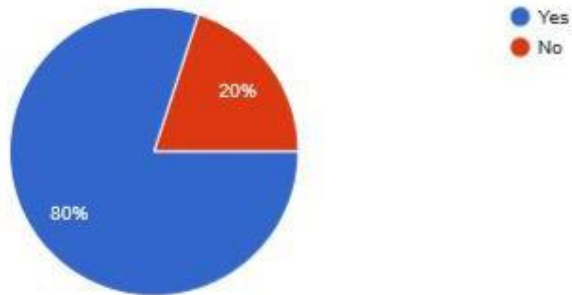
Comment

4 responses

It was too short. Would have been good to see the people who were speaking. Fascinating subject. Would have loved much more.

It gave you a feel of it all

Somewhat.
There are so many tales that could be told by former residents, from the 60s upwards.

Very good and clear

Do you feel that your experience of Park Hill has been represented within the video?

5 responses

- Yes
- No

60%

40%
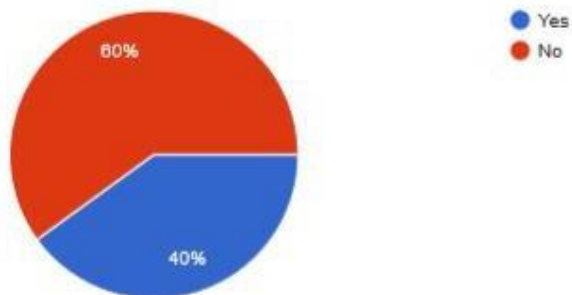
Comment

4 responses

There is far more info that could be added by present and former residents.

I didn't agree with the bad comments

Not quite, as a kid growing up in the 60s 70s 80s, life on Parkhill was a great experience and as said before there are so many things that could be said.

Yes fine

Did the video challenge your perception of Park Hill?
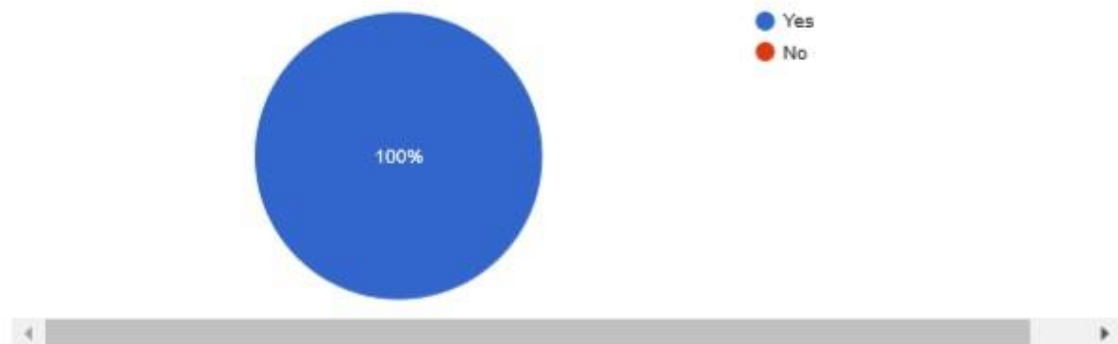
5 responses

- Yes
- No

100%
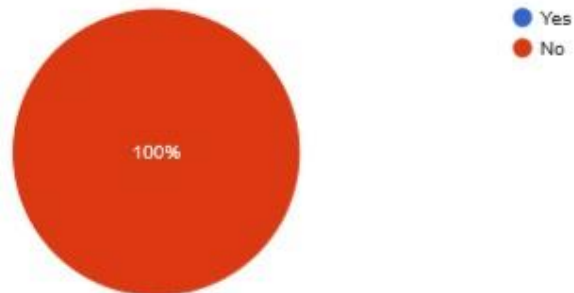
Comment

1 response

My memories of my life on Parkhill will never fade, the refurbishment of the flats changes nothing.

Do you think these types of projects are useful to Park Hill and its wider connected community?

5 responses

- Yes
- No

100%

Comment

2 responses

if it gives people an insight

Anything that brings life to Parkhill in my opinion, is a good thing and each day I look at them from my workplace brings back the memories I have.

What did you like about the video?

5 responses

It was a good introduction but much too short.

The commentary

The video with its 360 appearance was good to watch, if only this was available at the time of my youth.

Modern

Previous residents' comments.

What did you dislike about the video?

4 responses

Too short

too simple

No dislikes

It is perpetuating the myth that the 'community spirit' of Park Hill has survived.
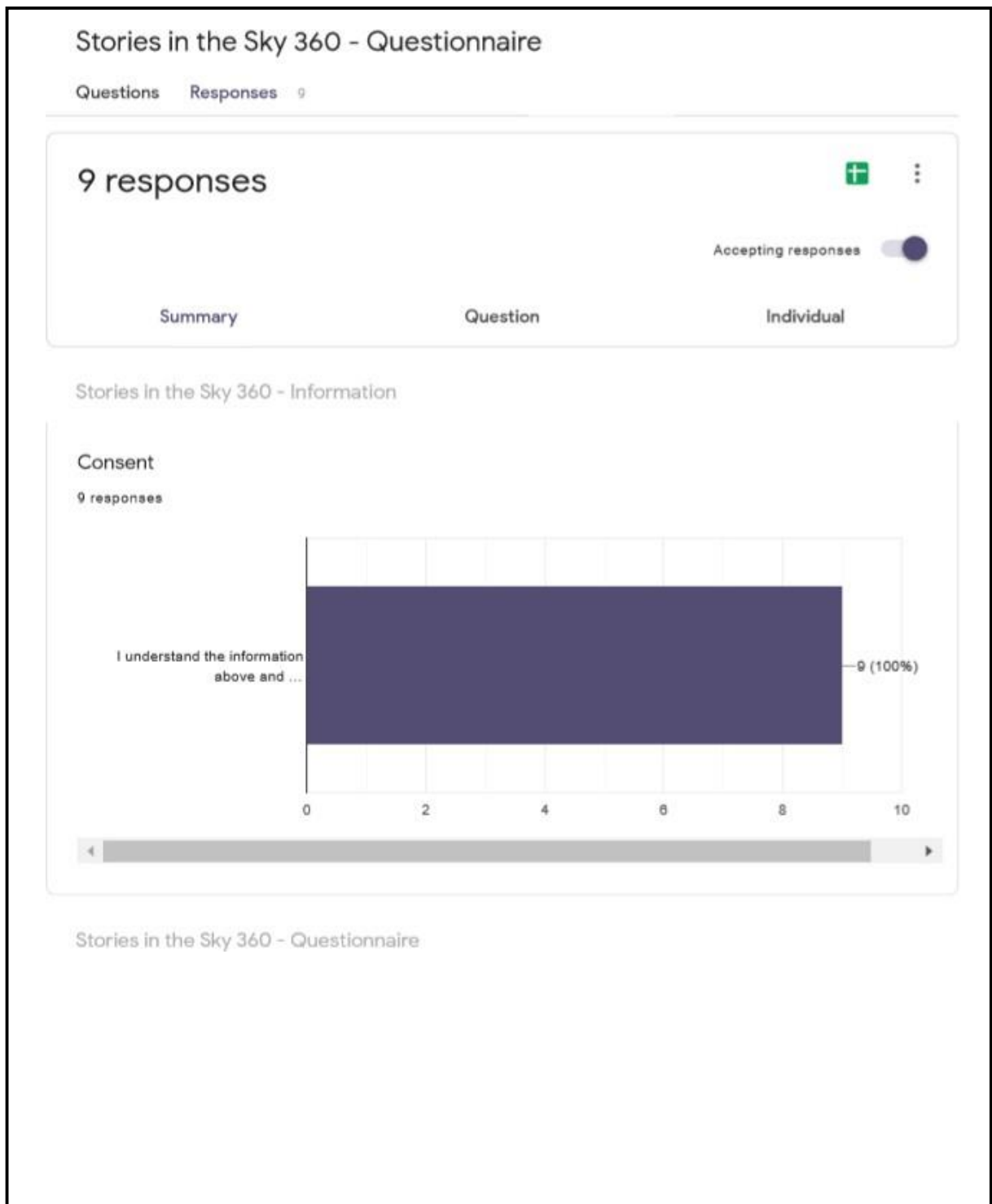
Further Comments

2 responses

Was good to see the video, well done.

Park Hill does not have a great community spirit. It has a Facebook group and few individuals who have tried to develop something that is about slightly more than geographic proximity. But the majority of residents are, for the vast majority of the time, indifferent.

Thank you!

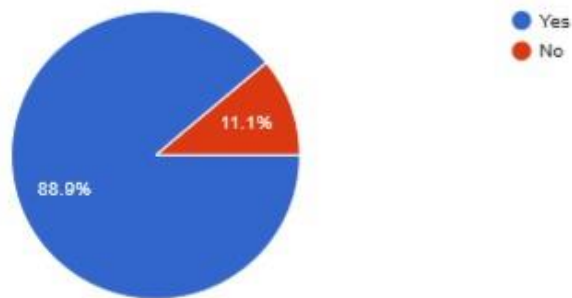## Appendix 4: Feedback from Stories in the Sky VR: 360 video – Those interested in Park Hill

Stories in the Sky 360 - Questionnaire

Questions   Responses   9

9 responses

Accepting responses

Summary   Question   Individual

Stories in the Sky 360 - Information

Consent

9 responses

I understand the information above and ...   9 (100%)

Stories in the Sky 360 - Questionnaire

What is your occupation?

9 responses

- Heritage specialist
- Student
- Developer
- Academic
- Designer
- Retired resident
- MA student and part time heritage secto worker
- Public Relations/Stakeholder Manage...
- PT Master Student, Architect and Horti..

33.3%, 11.1%, 11.1%, 11.1%, 11.1%, 11.1%, 11.1%

Have you used 360 degrees' video before?

9 responses

- Yes
- No

88.9%, 11.1%

What platform did you view the video on?

9 responses

- Phone
- Laptop
- Tablet
- Desktop PC

55.6%, 33.3%, 11.1%
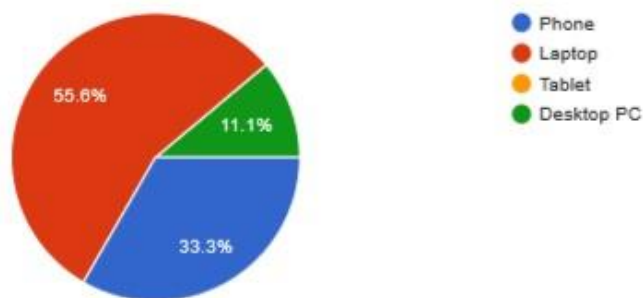
Do you feel like your knowledge of Park Hill has increased due to this video? If so, please comment below

9 responses

Legend:
- Yes (blue)
- No (red)

33.3%

66.7%
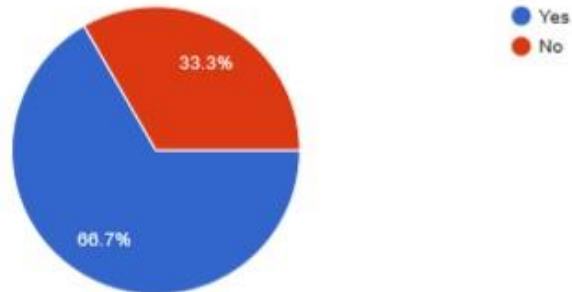
Comment:

6 responses

Nice to hear Pat Midgely one last time r.i.p.

It gave a sense of the change through time, the consistencies and the setting of the 'streets'

Didn't realise there was so much debate about Park Hill

Having worked on Park Hill for nearly 10 years I am aware of all the background and current stats and feeling

I had no knowledge of Park Hill prior.

Park Hill is an icon, one discussed during studies of Architecture many years ago! It ideologies and shortfalls again well discussed. I have not learnt anything new, but nice to hear the voices of the past residents.

Do you think the video was effective in showcasing the stories and history of Park Hill?

9 responses

- Yes
- No

11.1%

88.9%
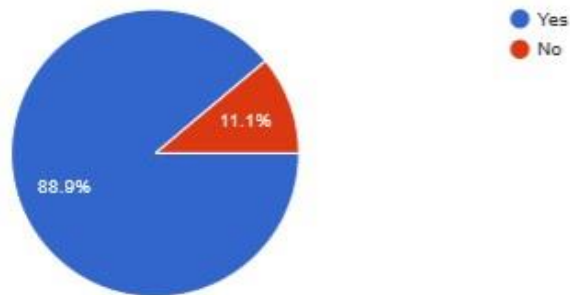
Comment:

8 responses

I think the mix of clips from news/media and real people is effective and interesting

Short but quite powerful

It gave different voices which adds character and context. It could have had more interior scenes as a lot was on the 'streets'

Engaging - the commentary perhaps more so than the images

I felt like this was effective in showing small snippets of Park Hill's history, though I would have liked more information on its current state
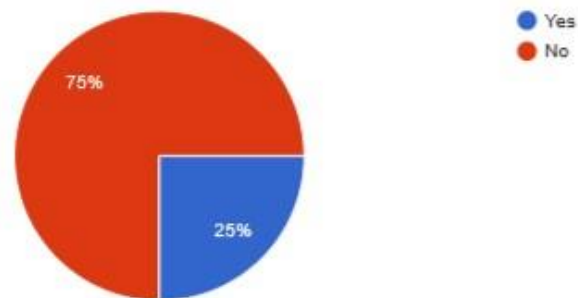
The soundtrack is good to tell the story

Having the 3d portion of the public house was helpful. Are there other amenities or areas of Park Hill that could be showcased the same?

I felt that there was a disconnection between the story teller and the images, it would've been nice

Did the video challenge your perception of Park Hill?

8 responses

- Yes
- No

75%

25%

Comment:

6 responses

Always freaks me out a bit when someone takes a different perspective on the place I live

A group did a presentation at university on Park Hill but this brings it alive and makes it relatable.

Positivity about the site from people who live there

Having learnt about Park Hill mostly via a conservation lens, I feel I already had a more positive view of Park Hill than perhaps someone who knows it just as council flats

Not applicable as I did not have prior knowledge/opinon on Park Hill

Stories I had heard before from Park Hill and other high-rise projects.

What did you like about the video?

9 responses

It was good to hear all the positive comments from people who lived there opposed to the negative ones. I liked the scene in the pub, I've seen the corridoors and other things a lot but that scene felt like it was showing me something new.

Ge finely surprised half way through when I realised what was happening

Different voices and intertwining with social history

The building seems to stay the same while the people and the politics change

It showed changes over time well. Also liked the use of text for more information

I examined the environment while the story is listened

The soundtrack and some of the visuals. Really like Link Pub 360

The most effective item was having multiple recorded testimonies linked to the "timeline" of the building through the decades.

What did you dislike about the video?

7 responses

Too much time on the streets,

The sky looked a bit odd - like looking out of a plane

It could benefit from more variety of shots, not just the decks

I tried to zoom but I realized that I cannot

The CGI visuals are very dark as the sky from the balconies is dark so makes it look really dingy - can the these lightened

Sometimes the transitions between images or views opened up jarringly. Examples are a "seam" where a 360 photo is stitched together that was the first thing seen. Or a slightly random/disorienting view in the "corridor portion" where the corridor is really dark for no discernable reason with nothing much to view or fixate on.

See above.

How do you think the video could have been better?

9 responses

It ends quite suddenly. Maybe a long fade to black after the last person has spoken would feel less abrubt.

Maybe a 360 view from front of flats too

More time inside the flats, then and now.

People?

Would have liked more interior images

Can the texture of the walls be smoother

I think the visuals of the current status should include real pictures of a street in the same way you have a real picture of Phase 1

With the corridor 3d portion if its possible to show a skyline outside (or trees like i can see in some photos) that would be good as far as giving the "in the sky" feel, orientation. Maybe also have a

Further comments:

3 responses

Interesting

I wonder if old pictures of the streets can be added into the 360 views - probably technically not possible. Also think more pictures of current status would be good.

I'm sorry to be negative, I know there is a vast amount of visual information on Park Hill as it was and how it changed thought its 'first' life that I think could be drawn upon and used more effectively to add life and texture to the video. Linking the memories to flats to the socio-economic period of the time and how that changed over the buildings life is interesting - also looking to its future and how SHED's scheme will work/be evaluated in years to come - is it the building design/material that creates problems or is it the residents (if so why?), is it the management...discussion of community etc etc etc

Thank you!

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