

*Preface / Formative Experience*

I have a memory of breaking into an old building in Laurieston with my father in the 1970's when I was eight or nine years of age. We had been visiting my aunt in Rutherglen and were heading home in a Westerly direction along Caledonia Road. We passed through the Gorbals' neighbourhoods of Oatlands, Hutchieston when my father decided to stop outside an abandoned church.

Gorbals at this time was a sight to behold. At the centre of a tenement clearance programme, it was a playground of destruction from a child's perspective, with Laurieston's historic structure being bulldozed to make way for residential towers and slabs. The church we had stopped at, for some reason, remained; a temporary reprieve until title was resolved, no doubt. My father instructed me to stay in the car without proper explanation, stating that he would only be a few minutes. Squeezing through a gap in the fence he surveyed the building at close quarters, finding a doorway which he could access. Pop disappeared into the building. Five minutes passed, ten minutes passed, and he hadn't returned. I decided I needed to go look for him.

Not far into the building I found him between floors. Stopped only by his armpits, he had fallen through the floorboards and gotten wedged between joists. Poor dad managed to wriggle free badly bruised but safe, all worth it for 'treasure,' namely some beautiful painted square sandwich plates and an old bible. This is my first memory of scavenging and scrapping activities, which I continue to enjoy.

On reflection it is clear that my formative years spent breaking and entering old buildings, midge raking (rummaging in the bins), den building, and setting fires perfectly primed me for a career in architecture. The freedom I enjoyed as a boy, to explore my boundaries, was liberating. I didn't see a poor city growing up, only the ludic possibilities.

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To truly, deeply understand how we can deliver transformative regeneration for a city, we require a fundamental appreciation of its cultural context. Certainly, my own lived experience has helped me gain an insight into my city, Glasgow, and better appreciate the forces that have shaped its form (or not). The following three assertions detail different social, political and economic factors that have, since the 1960's, brutalised Glasgow's fortunes and its citizens' health and wellbeing. I have been personally driven to fully understand these factors, which have compromised my city's recent history, with a naïve sense that I might be able to help change it through my own limited architectural practice. The phenomena which burdened Glasgow in recent times are clear in my mind: the modernist programme, Thatcherism and our more recent political & economic cannibalism.

Such has been the societal impact of recent historic events on the people of Glasgow, a 'cultural condition' has been named after it, what some health professionals refer to as 'The Glasgow Effect.'<sup>1</sup> The term refers to how inequalities in health are caused by inequalities in the social and economic conditions which people experience through their life. Research by the eminent Professor Sir Michael Marmot, former chair of the World Health Organisation, previously profiled Glasgow's challenges, raising questions around why equally deprived cities in the U.K. experienced different health outcomes. Marmot, in his book *The Health Gap: The Challenge of an Unequal World*, coins the phrase "The Organisation of Misery" to describe the social determinants of health as the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age.<sup>2</sup>

A deeper understanding of how Glasgow's less attractive 'social determinants' came to be, is essential if we are to deliver successful community regeneration and resilience going forward. My reflections on our current condition is a preface to speculative ideas that might help Glasgow flourish. Boldly I propose a 'generative and evolutionary plan' for Glasgow centred around healing our disconnected urban neighbourhoods. My proposal is radical in its absolute common sense and compassion.

## *I. A Glasgow Kiss*

*Modernism was a 'Trojan Horse' wheeled into Glasgow in the 1960's & 1970's with the express purpose of breaking up the City region. Post-war, post-industrial Glasgow was a social and economic challenge not just for Scotland, but for the entire UK given the scale of deprivation that needed to be addressed; Britain's 'Second City' was a furnace of working-class unrest, unemployment, and extreme poverty that threatened political stability. A timely solution to these societal challenges was proffered in the guise of modernism, a collective vision fuelled by the optimism of a new future. Both the Westminster Government and the Scottish Office of the day saw the idea of progress as the perfect opiate for the populace, and high on expectation, our city was taken from beneath us.*

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When I first entered practice in the late 1980's the public vilified architects. The architectural profession in the U.K. was blamed for the wholesale destruction of community, nothing less. The profession was in crisis. Architects were hate-figures, blamed for an abhorrent arrogance and disregard for the human condition, politically complicit and immoral. Glasgow, more than any other UK city, experienced a level of destruction that saw entire communities vacated, dismantled, and dispersed through acts of planning. To this day we continue to suffer the consequences of this widescale violation born of the modern programme, amounting to the same 'Glasgow Effect' phenomena.<sup>3</sup>

If we rewind, the 1960's saw Glasgow's evolutionary urban form interrupted by a modern, revolutionary thinking. The city was first neutered and then burdened by new instructions, its entire diagram redirected and forced to conform to a plan that favoured new road systems, which were different from streets. Complete neighbourhoods were deconstructed, sifted and separated by land use. Consequently, Glasgow's population halved in ten years; in the 1960's the city was home to over one million people, and by the late 1970's it was roughly five hundred thousand. The impact of this politically designed social cleansing on our health and wellbeing was, and remains, enormous.

Glasgow was turned inside out, the poorer communities flipped from the centre to the periphery of the city or beyond – out of sight out of mind.

Sir Harry Burns, a respected Glasgow Doctor who served as both Chief Surgeon at the Glasgow Royal Infirmary and Scotland's Chief Medical Officer, and an expert in the complex inter-relationships between socioeconomic status and illness, gave a recent TED Talk titled 'What Causes Wellness.' He describes the compelling link between wellbeing and the built environment, validating the link between Glasgow's social dislocation and the health of its citizens, and concludes that those who identify their lives and environments as being "comprehensible, manageable and meaningful develop strong coping mechanisms; those who do not are liable to experience chronic stress."<sup>4</sup> In short, low levels of control point to a risk of death brought on by hopelessness.

Jimmy Reid's seminal Glasgow University Rectorial Address of 1972, opens notably with the statement, "alienation is the precise and correctly applied word for describing the major social problem in Britain today." Alienation, he describes, as the "cry of men [sic] who feel themselves the victims of blind economic forces beyond their control."<sup>5</sup> It's Glasgow and the West of Scotland's poor health which is the defining factor in Scotland being labelled the 'Sick Man of Europe.' Government sponsored studies undertaken by the NHS and University of Glasgow confirm a direct causal link between resettlement planning policies of the 1960's and 1970's, and the generational 'tsunami effect' on the population's wellbeing and lack of resilience. Of interest, academic Juliana Maantay in 2013 published research specific to Glasgow, titled 'The Collapse of Place,' which correlated the relationship between derelict land, deprivation and health inequality.<sup>6</sup>

It has been said that what the German Luftwaffe missed in their bombing runs over the city during the Second World War, Glasgow City Council's post-war architects and planners did not. Certainly, it would be easy to mistake historic photographs of Glasgow's slum clearance programme with images of war zones.

## *II. Tramp the Dirt Down*<sup>7</sup>

*Modernist-planning initiatives physically dismantled Greater Glasgow in the 1970's in readiness for Margaret Thatcher, who enjoyed destroying it fiscally. Thatcher served as Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990 with a mandate to reposition the United Kingdom as a nation of entrepreneurs. She embarked on an unforgiving programme that would unbridle the tax paying public from the dead weight of national industry, unionism and labour practice.*<sup>8</sup>

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The Greater Glasgow area was at this time served by Strathclyde Regional Council, which took in most of the West of Scotland's central belt population and covered over nineteen districts. At this time, the Strathclyde authority had significant political influence at a national level simply as a result of its scale. The council, which was in charge of education, social work, police, fire, sewage, strategic planning, roads and transport, employed almost 100,000 public servants.

The politics of Strathclyde Region were most certainly Labour centred and as such poised a challenge to the Conservative government of the day. To address the challenge, the Tories surgically sliced and diced Scotland's centre, breaking the 'region' into twelve smaller local authorities in a classic divide and rule attack designed to disempower. Journalist Neal Ascherson, writing for *The Independent*, at the time commented that the Tories "destroyed a visible centre of rival political power, and brought Britain closer to a one-party state."<sup>9</sup>

The Glasgow middle-class dormitory town of Helensburgh was, for example, taken out of Dumbarton and added to Argyll and Bute providing the Tories a chance of recapturing Argyll from the Liberal Democrats. Eastwood, a Tory stronghold, was taken out of Labour-dominated Glasgow; Kyle and Carrick, another Tory safe haven removed from the rest of Ayrshire, and so on: a huge, unnecessary and expensive dislocation.

The dividing of Greater Glasgow aimed to achieve two outcomes: the first to bankrupt Glasgow; and secondly, to increase the potential for conservative representation born from the city's more affluent suburbs such as Bearsden, Milngavie and Newton Mearns. Both outcomes were achieved.

Glasgow and Glasgow City Council's demise remains to this day; ring-fenced and ineffective with a restricted tax base it is unable to address the major social and physical infrastructure required of a modern city of scale. Glasgow's suburbs make no financial contribution to Glasgow. Political divisions separate the rich from the poor along voting lines, monopolise employment opportunity and good schools, and intentionally isolate and brutalise communities. Thatcher's legacy diagram remains reprehensible, destabilising and absurd in what is essentially a very small country.

The last fifty years have therefore seen political manoeuvring, at a regional and national scale, condemn large parts of Glasgow to an economic wilderness and complete stasis. There has been no recognition that Glasgow is a Scottish project, and that nationally there is a responsibility to systematically address its disparities in health, education and employment in a cohesive and generous basis.

### *III. Political Cannibalism*

*Further to the blighting of Glasgow and its dissection over the last half century, in 2007 the city, like the rest of the world, fell into the abyss created by the most significant international economic crisis seen until that date. Market free fall wiped billions off the stock exchange, collapsing countries, banks, and corporations.*

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Financial recovery since 2007 has been slow. When markets did begin to recover they gravitated toward safe investment in London and the Southeast. Manchester and cities like Bristol, Leeds, and Liverpool quickly followed suit. Obviously, money can't stand still, or it stops working; unless you are in Glasgow. It was to be another tough gig for the city.

With Scottish nationalism in ascendency and financial institutions already bruised and nervous about over exposure as a result of the crisis, Scotland, and especially Glasgow, was placed on the investment 'naughty step' for almost a decade. Poor Glasgow was again unpopular politically, seen as a Labour stronghold not just through the lens of Westminster, but by its own opposing Nationalist Government.

With limited options, Glasgow essentially hunkered down over this period, trying its best to look after its citizens and refusing to play with the Scottish Government. In major matters they can control, Glasgow City Council go at it alone, especially in public spending and procurement. Where possible, they attempt to address the city's own destiny without deference to national bodies such as Scottish Futures Trust or Scottish Enterprise. Recent investment around the 2014 Commonwealth Games, and City Deal bribes from Westminster to stay in union with the United Kingdom, are unfortunately not of a significant scale or long-term effect to drive the deep rooted cultural and social transformation that the city needs.<sup>10</sup> Generational changes require long-term goals and national policies to be implemented in a unified and intelligent basis.

Peace seems to have broken out between Scottish Government and Glasgow City Council, now that they are one and the same. Glasgow Labour, who were in power within the City's Chambers for near on sixty years, were displaced in 2017 by a Nationalist and Green Party coalition majority. From a U.K. Government perspective, the nationalist referendum threat has also waned for the time being. Could it be a long overdue 'stars aligned moment' for Glasgow, on the eve of Brexit and the UK's planned decoupling from Europe?

My advice is to leave it all behind, to appreciate our past but put it in a drawer; let's understand the moment, but without distraction. I propose that the following vision could set the City of Glasgow free and will inspire.



#### *IV. Generation in Regeneration*

*A singular focus and radical overhaul of our attitudes to education and wellbeing would transform Glasgow's socioeconomic fortunes and drive a new urban regeneration initiative.*

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We want our architecture to save people's lives. In my own practice born from Glasgow, a city with the lowest life expectancy in Europe and unacceptable levels of deprivation and poverty, we have come to understand the critical roles of urban planning and architecture in our wellbeing. We see our work on education projects across the whole of Scotland as central to addressing a legacy of community disconnection, and the key to 'regeneration' being our younger 'generation' and understanding the challenges that they face.

The clue to successful regeneration is in the name: it's about generation, the 'genesis' being people. If people are better enlightened, they become in themselves the agents of change and the means by which we can transform our economy, culture and communities. If the city of Glasgow is to control its own destiny and not be perpetually facing 'determinants' not of its own making, it has to promote a new offer to the world.

I have a vision of a Glasgow transformed through learning. I would propose that we place learning at the very centre of our world. From our commitment to nurture in early years through higher education leading to employment, the learners' journey needs to be reimaged ensuring people are better equipped, healthier, more productive and engaged. A new approach to learning would reimagine not only Glasgow's future but also Scotland's. I believe that a paradigm shift in how we value and deliver learning within our communities would deliver a new Scottish Enlightenment.

If we are to radically challenge Glasgow's problems and reinvent our social and economic position as progressive, we require putting the 'generation' into the regeneration initiative; we require investing in our young people and the wider learning communities. Glasgow's 'currency of the future' is in ideas, intellectual capital and supporting the design economy born from an education system that encourages learning through play, promotes wellbeing over attainment, and builds confidence and resilience in our children.

For the urban regeneration sector, the initiative must go beyond simple housing provision; and similarly, in the education community, education should not be limited to working within schools. It is short sighted for regeneration agencies to leave education to education (and vice versa) and not appreciate what greater value a new school or college can bring beyond helping to sell houses. A greater appreciation of the deeper learning eco-system is required by regeneration agents to ensure exciting new learning is culturally and economically integrated. If regeneration efforts are out of sync with local education, as is often the case, then it is self-defeating and damaging. Closer working between sectors could deliver radical transformation in our communities, especially in areas of deprivation.

A progressive education model exists that can deliver deep-rooted social and cultural change within our communities.<sup>11</sup> The model in Scotland has had many authors and is the result of considerable research and practice ranging from activities in our early years and infant learning, through to further and higher education, then leading to employment. Clearly there are a myriad of education agencies and institutions which combine to complete Scotland's learning landscape, encompassing our schools' provision, teacher education, complex learning needs, educational psychology services, third sector inputs, our colleges and universities, and even prison education.<sup>12</sup> Yet, a better meeting of minds between the different public service sectors across Scotland is not always easy; there is much specialism and language which unfortunately seems to keep agendas separate. The Government is trying to champion what they term 'Public Service Reform':

*In order to achieve the outcomes which, matter most to the people of Scotland, we urgently need to reform our public services. Public, third sector and private organisations must work more effectively in partnership with communities and with each other to design and deliver excellent public services which meet the needs of local people. Whether our aim is to give children the best start in life, to reduce the inequalities which people face, to develop our economy and create jobs, or to ensure we manage the environment sustainably we face an unprecedented challenge to deliver improved outcomes whilst making optimal use of increasingly limited resources. Our approach to meeting this challenge requires all public services to drive reform at a pace across mainstream services.<sup>13</sup>*

A number of local authorities have embraced a more holistic approach to combining regeneration with education, understanding that the education continuum can be a critical change agent in a local economy's prospects. There is scope for much more initiative in this area if we are to substantiate our First Minister's political claims that "learners in Scotland will progress in one of the most effective education systems in the world."<sup>14</sup> I would claim this could only be achieved if the learner's whole life experience is also world class.

In an attempt to put theory into practice, our studio has posited, within a number of large-scale urban and rural projects, that when coupled with an ambitious place-making vision, new lifelong learning ideas can ultimately deliver more enterprising and confident communities. Interestingly, we have learned that urbanists in the U.S.A., dealing with collapsing metropolitan areas like Detroit, are claiming that their city will never come back until they improve their schools, radically. In the United States, there is a growing movement that appreciates that after housing, educational facilities are the linchpins of urban renaissance. Critics claim that over the last 40 years, the urban school has been one the most neglected civic building types in America. The urban school must go beyond its traditional concept, and even concepts put forth in the 1980s of 'a community centre' to embrace a concept for the 21st century: a 'campus for the communal life of the neighbourhood.'<sup>15</sup>

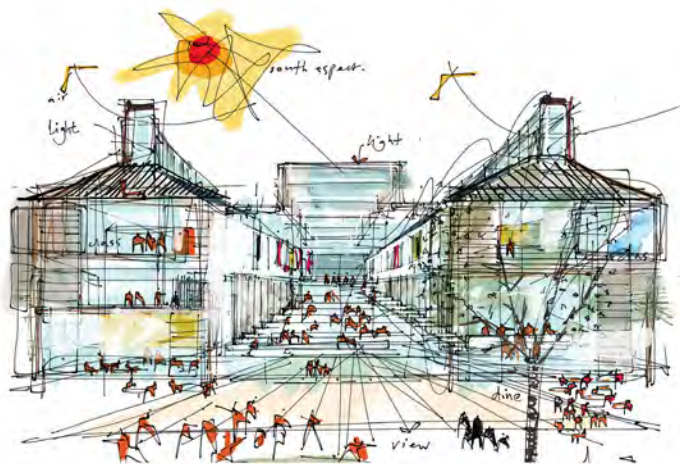
In urban areas with acute social problems, schools are being seen as ‘urban generators’ aiding in the re-establishment of communities within blighted post-industrial city landscapes. The focus of this U.S. strategy is to create a ‘learning campus’ where the school has a critical civic function but also a place-making role.

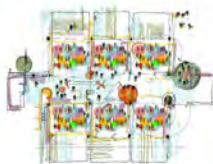
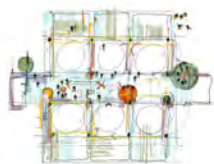
Closer to home in Scotland there are many small towns and urban locations where a ‘campus for the communal life of the neighbourhood’ might work. In 2017 the Scottish Borders Council commissioned *Stallan-Brand* to develop a new learning and civic facility in Jedburgh. The project’s aim is to strengthen Jedburgh as a learning town; the ritual of intergenerational education is embedded in the character and quality of the place and where community togetherness is reinforced.

The town aims to promote social cohesion and learning across ages by providing extensive access to shared facilities along with facilities for enterprise and further education; including gym halls, fitness suites, assembly spaces, dining areas, library, art studios, music rooms, workshops, labs, meeting spaces, workspace, and social space. Spatially the design is arranged around a major common space that extends the life of Jedburgh’s characterful High Street into the heart of the building. Importantly the architectural form has a striking and inclusive signature that avoids being institutional, and where Jedburgh’s natural landscape and playful topography plays as much a role. Critically, the design is a step change for the education estate in Scotland: this is not a school that is open to the public after hours, it’s a civic building, open at all times to the public, that includes a school. For the avoidance of doubt, the early and primary year education spaces are secured locally, other than that all facilities are public facing. Now complete, the building will be curated and programmed to strike a balance between educational and community needs, recognising that the overlap of each is part of the magic that will reinforce positive culture and citizenship.

The Jedburgh model has application across Scotland, however its take-up is dependent on having the enlightened leadership within the Local Authority to unite officers across planning, social work, health, housing, and education in improving community connectedness.

The subsequence to such is a location's resilience, wellbeing and joyfulness. I believe that by combining contemporary learning with our place-making ambitions in Scotland we can radically improve people's lives. Through a different kind of partnership working we can deliver a '1 + 1 = 3 opportunity,' which can put the essential 'generation' into re-generation.









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3. Michael Reid, "Behind the 'Glasgow Effect'," *Bulletin of the World Health Organisation* 89, no.10 (2011): 701-776.
4. Sir Harry Burns, "What causes wellness," filmed 2014, TEDx Glasgow video, 16:40, <https://tedxglasgow.com/talks-database/what-causes-wellness>
5. Jimmy Reid, "Rectorial Address," Glasgow University, Glasgow, 1972.
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