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Landscapes of Loss: responses to altered landscape in an ex-industrial textile community

Abstract

Geographically located at the heart of Carpetvillage in West Yorkshire, Carpetmakers had once been a thriving manufacturer of fine woven carpets since the late 1880s. From my own experience of growing up there in the 1970s, its inhabitants had held a sense of 'communal being-ness' (Walkerdine, 2010; 2012) through the shared experience of living there and of making carpets. After the factory closed, Carpet Mill was demolished in 2002, leaving a void where there had once been a handsome Victorian building. Interested in responses to architectural, spatial and sensuous change in an ex-industrial landscape this article asks: what were the subjective consequences for the affective ties that hold together an ex-industrial community? Using sensuous ethnographic mobile methods, the study draws on ex-Carpetmakers employees and local residents. The research found nostalgic memories of Carpetmakers as a paternalistic employer operating in a thriving and largely self-sufficient community. Photographs were collected from respondents which chart a vast number of social clubs and events which offered an important dimension to the 'way of life' offered to workers in this 'company village'. It found that while the material and symbolic importance of demolished buildings is acknowledged by writers on de-industrialisation, missing from their accounts is an embodied analysis of how people interact *in situ* with landscapes of ruin and demolition. Respondents told of the emotional trauma of the demolition process, the effects of spatial change through the erasure of the village's architectural past and the almost total decline of a community which, for them, no longer holds a sense of place. The decline in the social structures of an industrial community meant that ageing ex-workers and residents found it difficult to generate communal ties with new-comers to the village.

Keywords: ex-industrial landscape, spatial change, textiles, affective bonds, demolition, divided community.

Introduction

This article is about what happened to a community of ex-workers and local residents when a firm called Carpetmakersⁱ, in a semi-industrial village in West Yorkshire went through the process of dereliction, demolition and re-building. Located right at the heart of the central cross-roads of the village, Carpetmakers was well known as a manufacturer of fine quality carpets from the late 1800s. In the twentieth century, it was known for its production of woven carpets such as Axminster and Wilton and had a reputation for carpeting domestic homes and internationally prestigious contracts. From the mid-1980s however, the company fell in to a slow decline. Local press archives describe dwindling sales and falling work force numbers. In the 1990s the firm was taken over by another Yorkshire firm and by the late 1990s went into receivership by a US company. By 2000 the company faced closure. Then in December 2002 the large iconic works at the central junction, Carpet Mill, was finally demolished - razed to the ground - leaving a vast empty space where there had once been a handsome Victorian building.ⁱⁱ My mother, who worked in the 'setting' in the late 1960s recalls the deafening clatter of the looms in the weaving sheds (Figure 1). By contrast today new housing brings the relatively mundane sounds of residential living to a space once replete with the rhythmical noises of industrial production.



Figure 1: my mother (left) in the setting, 1962 (source: author)

A visitor to the village today will discover that in place of Carpet Mill lies a large tract of fenced-off undeveloped land left over from the demolition of Carpetmakers. Living in an adjacent village, I often pass through Carpetvillage. I have watched the shifting ecology of this space: weeds and plant life surge and die back with the seasons and advertising hoardings have sometimes faced out to the passing public (Figure 2). It stands as a contested space, open to be read differently depending on one's interests. For me it is emotionally charged: it feels like an empty hole and it brings emotions associated with loss and grieving. I am personally invested in this research. I was brought up in the village. I

was a pupil at Carpetvillage Junior and Infants School and like many of those children, most of my family worked at Carpetmakers. My grandmother and maternal aunts had also worked there and my father was made quality control manager in the mid-1980s. I too have witnessed the decline and eventual removal of a thriving manufacturing village. Concerned with the social, practical and affective consequences for those living alongside altered landscape, this article asks: what happens to peoples' sense of belonging when the narrative of industrial heritage woven in to a place is erased? How do people navigate through a village so spatially altered? How is a sense of locality held together? How do they live and cope when life in the village, centred as it once was around making carpets, is swept aside? And how are affective bonds once sited and contained within buildings of work maintained?



Figure 2: where Carpet mill once stood, 2016 (source: author)

Buildings and Community

The idea for this research came after an uphill drive with dad in the winter of 2003, past the demolished Carpet Mill with the vast space of rubble and weeds to my left and dad driving on the right. No words were exchanged, but the air was charged with affect: I could feel dad silently bristling. As a passenger on that route it forced my thinking to widen out to the experience of other ex-workers who witnessed the demolition of buildings their bodies once dwelt in. Did other workers feel this type of affective pain as they physically passed the once-mill? In this section, I examine research about the importance buildings held for industrial

communities and the coping strategies people use to ease their experience of loss.

In her work on trauma Walkerdine (2010) uses psychoanalytic theories of affect and the idea of a 'containing skin' to explain the shift from a working steelworks in South Wales which felt alive to an ex-industrial community where the skin is broken to symbolise insecurity and death.

Drawing on Bick (1968), she argues for the importance of psychic holding in parent/child relations and suggests the idea of containing skin can be extended for thinking about wider group community relations after the Steelworks are shut down. If psychic holding fails, the child feels a sense of falling apart and to deal with the anxiety tries to seek an object that enables it to feel held. Given that community groups don't have a body, thus they must imagine one. The fantasy of a body provides a structure and a nostalgic dream of symbiosis between its members. The steelworks community provided the dream of such a community, with 'the works as a central object', (2010: 97). Historically small communities which form around a workplace, often through migration, form what she terms 'communal being-ness' (Studdert, 2006). Local histories of these types of communities reveal living with adversity - poor working conditions, fluctuations in the global demand - held people in tight containment. Once ruptured it brought anxieties about destruction to the fore.

Critiquing previous sociological work on communities, Walkerdine asserts that affective ties make them 'tight-knit'. In the analysis of her psycho-social interviews Walkerdine

combines ‘communal-beingness’ with Studdert’s (2006) notion of ‘interrelationality’ – which thought of phenomenologically are, ‘actions, movements, feelings, objects, places and inter-subjective bonds’ which tie people within communities (2010: 95). Of especial interest to the focus of my work are the arguments about space and affective ‘patterns in process’ (Wetherall, 2012: 23). Steeltown’s planning, which consisted of small terraced houses facilitated, ‘affective relations between inhabitants’ (2010: 99). Close houses, gardens and low fences meant people could ‘natter’, so that the ‘community of affect’ was held together which, ‘made possible particular ways of being together’ (2010: 100). The physical geography of the town contributed to the ‘ongoingness’ of affective practices of being ‘held’ together through shared spaces and the emotional sharing of talking over the fences. The corollary of this work suggests that when the spatial contours of a village disappear, people no longer feel ‘held together’. Later I examine how the open spaces produced by demolition in Carpetvillage produced a sense of spatial unease.

Other work examines how the shift to de-industrialised space produces difficulties for those who have lived through it. Drawing on a tradition of writers (for example, Thompson 1963) who insist on valuing the experience of those who have lived through industrialization, Strangleman (2017) argues that researchers must engage in ‘social industrial archeology’ (2017: 479) to record the social experience of the epochal change wrought by de-industrialisation. The phrase, drawn from Linkon (2014): ‘the half-life of de-

industrialisation'ⁱⁱⁱ expresses how memories, histories and working practices continue to be carried by people in the struggle to new spatial and social relations after buildings are torn down and new jobs are acquired. Such an approach enables an historically informed way of approaching the reach and inter-generational impact of closure. The shift to de-industrial society has meant that the social, cultural norms of industrial life become 'disembedded' (2017: 476) such that adaptation to new societal orderings is experienced as problematic. Walkerdine and Jiminez (2012) show that sons of steelworkers found adaptation to service sector jobs such as call-centre work impossible; such work was considered feminine in contrast with the 'masculine' heavy manual labour of steel-making. In like manner, the people of this study were habituated to making social and affective communal ties through the physical contact of working with others in designated work spaces or through the paternalistic programme of social activities laid on by Carpetmakers. As shown later, when the practices and spaces where these happened previously disappeared they struggled to adapt to new virtual practices of sociality such as Facebook.com to connect with new comers to the village.

Ruins and Legacies

Some writers and photographers celebrate ruins by aestheticizing them through photographic art. These publications have varied purposes and it is important to distinguish between them (Strangleman, 2013). Some are

considered 'dereliction tourism' (Mah, 2014), for example, there are websites such as 'Abandoned' by 'Uryevich' which attend to the 'spiritual and cultural' significance of industrial sites, unfinished buildings and abandoned plants from the former Soviet Union: 'Each has its own story,' writes Uryevich, '(in which I, to be honest, do not have much interest)'. In the UK, Edensor's *Industrial Ruins* (2005) is illustrated with personal photographs from visits to the Midlands and the North of England. Edensor criticizes the idea that they are wasted spaces, for him ruins counter the regimented order of modernity; their 'uselessness' rebukes capitalist productivity making them non-entrepreneurial, radical spaces. Like Uryevich, Edensor is uninterested in the 'superfluous' geographical context of the factories in question, nor does he attend to the oral testimony from workers or the social and economic relations of production. Speaking on behalf of the people of my study, geographical location is anything but 'superfluous' given that their affective ties were bound by the now defunct buildings of Carpetmakers which once gave emotional structure to the community. The photographs are devoid of human presence, underscoring the lack of interest in the human consequences of ruination. Because Edensor has no empirical evidence of ex-worker response to ruined buildings he can only imagine through his evocation of ghosts, what those buildings were like to work within: 'rampantly haunted by a horde of absent presences ... the spirits of those previous inhabitants in a sense possess us, guiding and accompanying us in our journey through the ruin' (2005: 154). These studies have

attracted further criticism: Mah (2014) for example finds a cruel lack of care for those who have no choice but to live alongside ruins (2014: 10).

Strangleman (2013) however, posits a more generous critical reading of the varied collection of works which document 'crumbling cultures' (2013: 25). Using critical nostalgia (Bonnett, 2013) in which aspects of the past are brought into creative dialogue with what matters in the present, he argues that these works draw attention to the need to engage with remembrance of the past. To castigate them would be to ignore the role they play in mourning for the industrial past. In this way, they can be read as a type of collective obituary. But just as obituaries are selective, so too these photographic accounts use middle-class cultural capital to select the strange beauty and exploration ruins evoke, while committing violence by ignoring the class struggle and sense of loss still experienced in post-industrial communities (2013: 29). He makes a similar case about the urge ex-workers have to retrieve mementos and objects such as bricks from industrial buildings; these act as tangible physical symbols of a life-world that no longer exists (2013: 32). I return later to Strangleman's approach to offer a reading of the need felt by several respondents to document the legacy of Carpetmakers as it crumbled.

An international perspective of how people live alongside ruined textile mills is offered by Mah (2012) in her study of the Soviet city of Ivanovo. Mah conducted three comparative international cases studies in Industrial Ruination: Community, and Place. Using ethnographic and mobile

methods she interviewed a wide range of local people and community stakeholders to capture a sense of how people coped, noting that few people physically interacted with abandoned sites. The case of Ivanovo is complex – while its operations virtually closed in the early 1990s, at the time Mah was writing its factories were struggling to continue production, ‘to reverse the process of ruination’ (2012: 98). Once the proud centre of Russia’s textile production, Ivanovo’s economic woes were a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Forced into the global market economy, Ivanovo failed to successfully compete and its domestic production went in to decline. Mah draws on Burowoy et. al.’s (1999) concept of ‘involution’ to capture the ‘economic primitivization’ in post-Soviet transition in which the market caused the dissolution of manufacturing – while driving its people back to their own resources. In her interview with three retired female textile workers in a room filled with relics from the factory’s ‘former palace of culture’ (2012: 112), Mah found that they were very proud of its massive role in Ivanovo, but that its history stopped at the end of the Soviet Union. Her interviewees wanted to associate their pride with the former era when production thrived. Mah noted tremendous tenacity among workers in their determination to carry on in, ‘a striking landscape of deindustrialization as abandoned textile factories lined both sides of the River Uvod throughout the city and across the region’ (2012: 98). She observed ‘pragmatism’ and ‘functionalism’ in a city marked by objects which celebrated textiles and a museum in which the narrative of textile

production stops at the end of the Soviet period without reference to the collapse of the industry. What Mah found were testimonies of pain, 'It hurts me to see that practically all the production there no longer exists' (Tanya quoted in Mah, 2012: 115) and regret that in the rush to sweep aside the Soviet era, many good things were thrown out with the bad. What remains are stark generational differences, the older generation struggling to come to terms with the closure of two pasts: the Soviet and the industrial past and the younger generation looking to leave an Ivanovo which they believed offered no opportunities (2012: 11). Drug and alcohol abuse are rife in the city and the ruins suggest, 'depression, decline, and blight' (2012: 123). There are no plans for re-generation or aesthetic commodification of the city's ruins. To be sure, Mah's work is at pains to underscore the nihilism of the legacy of de-industrial damage in Ivanovo, while insisting that it remains 'home' for residents. Out of respect for a people who survived incredibly harsh circumstances, Mah argues that such a cultural enterprise would romanticize and obscure all that the city has been through.

These studies demonstrate that frozen photographs and fragments of buildings are sometimes the only things people have to assuage their feelings of loss. Later, I show how these feelings can act as a block for making connections with Carpetvillage new-comers who are perceived to lack historical knowledge of the once-proud purpose of the village.

Method

The research began in October 2015 with a call out for respondents on facebook.com and the local press. To ensure ethical scrutiny I made an application to my host institution's ethics committee and was given clearance. Twenty-five came forward. The sample was white. There were fourteen men and eleven women, aged between 56-100. The sample was predominantly working-class; 6 respondents were white collar workers, with none of the sample occupying management roles. Levels of service were long. Working in the mills was dangerous work and it had health consequences. ^{iv} Table 1 gives further details about the respondents. The study is small-scale and makes no claims to represent the views of all ex-workers and local residents.

Focus groups

I conducted four focus groups in the first phase of the research. These took place at Carpetvillage community centre. Focus groups consisted of 5-7 people and consisted of two halves. I asked: what was working life like at Carpetvillage and what are your memories of the village? In the second I asked them to reflect on life in the village post-2002 with the demolition of Carpet Mill.

Walk-and-talktours

Out of the findings from these groups, individuals were then asked to lead me on individual walk-and-talk or 'go-along' tours (Carpiano, 2009) in the second phase of the research. Mobile methodology in the form of 'walk and talk' was selected because the research aimed to capture peoples' responses to spatial, architectural and sensory change from February to June 2016. Eighteen people took part in the walk-and-talk tours. The tours were designed to elicit memories of the village which captured the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial village. Edensor argues that ruins prompt 'involuntary memories' (2005; 145) unpredictably in situ. Often re-ignited by the seasons, smells, sounds or atmosphere they can hurtle people back to a powerful recollection. Walk-and-talk tours with their emphasis on embodied recall may re-kindle memories previously etched into the body by habituated practices (Connerton, 2005).

Static interviews require the respondent to re-experience or recount everyday doings retrieved in the past tense from other contexts; mobile methodologies enable a sense of the present, of 'being there'. Being 'in place' with the people of the study enabled an immediacy of response. It allows, as Murray argues, people to produce their mobile space, 'a space that would not emerge from a static interview but is the product of mobile methods adopted' (2010: 15). Walk and talk, participant-led 'go-along' (Carpiano, 2009) tours offered a crucial method because I wanted to observe what Fincham et. al. (2010) call the 'phenomenal experience of the journeys – what they saw and felt' as well as embodied

‘phenomenal reactions’ (2010: 6) to altered aspects of the village. Carpiano (2009) argue that allowing respondents to lead the researcher along their own route is empowering and enables the respondent to narrate and unfold their (memories of) everyday movements and behaviours. In my ‘walk and talk’ tours respondents were asked to lead me and to talk about their sensory memories of work and the village and to reflect as we toured on their views about the village at the time of the tour. Tours typically took 25-30 minutes. I recorded them with an audio hand-held digital device and took photographs along the way as a means of matching respondent’s verbal responses with the precise spatial context of the encounter. For as Jones et. al. (2008) argue, walking interviews are ideal, ‘for exploring issues around people’s relationship with space’ (2008: 5)

Photography

Respondents were also asked to bring along photographs featuring their time as Carpetvillage employees or their memories of the village as a means of capturing the micro changes of temporality in the processes of spatial change. These were discussed over a post-tour cup of tea in a local cafe. Impossible in many cases to date precisely, they came from a range of contexts: some were personal – snaps of workers at looms or in the offices; some looked ‘professional’ as though they were commissioned as marketing tools by Carpetmakers. Strangleman (2008) in his writing on the visual sociology of work, argues that

photography offers access to, 'subjective meaning, of questions of identity, attachment, and loss' (2008: 1501). Taking photographs in the workplace is an unusual practice, which explains why I was struck by the curious intimacy of Beynon and Hedges' photographs of workers using machinery, socializing with one another and standing at highly personalized work stations in their photographic essays in Born To Work (1982). This project produced a rich cache of around 500 photographs (circa. 1880 to 2005) which offer an extraordinary visual record of the varied types of working practices performed by men and women. Several respondents felt compelled to photograph the dereliction, demolition and re-building which took place post-2002 when Carpet Mill was pulled down. The photographs document the management strategy of paternalism, a powerful tool for making community.^v

Analysis

The study generated transcript data of the focus groups and the walk-and-talk tours. I also wrote fieldnotes after each research encounter. Before analysing the data, I returned to my research questions to establish three broad themes: what life was like in the working community pre-dereliction and demolition; sensuous responses to spatial change as a result of torn down buildings and re-building; and legacies of losing the company village for continued living in the

village. While common clusters within these three categories emerged, for example, in situ emotional and affective responses to demolished sites, there were examples which contradicted neatly fitting categories which I have also included. I was able to develop three themes: work and community; witnessing the fall of the mill; and living with legacies of demolition. The photographs are not analysed for their internal meanings here; rather they are used to offer a sense of the life-world described in this article – some belong personally to the respondents and were lent to the project, some were taken on walk-and-talk tours to show the space people were responding to. Permissions were sought to include the photographs in this article.

In the discussion section which follows the data sections I return to discuss my findings in relation to the efficacy of concepts discussed by other writers on de-industrialisation.

Notes on Method

I acknowledge my own personal involvement in wanting to document the detailed local experience of living in a landscape progressively changed by the process of de-industrialisation. I am of these people, I am comfortable in the field and Carpetvillage is my place of early belonging. I am safe, comfortable, in place. My location in the research offers insight: an understanding of the people, their use of

language and cultural mores, an insider's long-standing observation of working life at Carpetmakers and a keen sense of the geography of the village. I am also an outsider – one who has returned the community. In these ways I adopt an auto-ethnographic approach, I am both the author and a subject in the story: I too have experienced some of the events my respondents referred to and chose which events to speak of. I am an observer of others and I am observed. Situated at the intersection of the cultural and personal I have viewed and felt as an ethnographer and I re-count here as an interpretive story-teller (Denzin, 2014). I recognize that emotions form the subject matter of this auto-ethnographic account: the project is swathed with sadness, regret and a certain type of mourning, about the loss of Carpetvillage.

1: Work and Community

'The village felt more alive when Carpetmakers was here'
(Jerry, local resident)

To glean a sense of how spatial change affected the people of Carpetvillage, it is necessary to sketch out what respondents told me about life in the village before closure and dereliction. These memories are nostalgic, but what is apparent in these accounts is the sense in which people felt

closely bound together by shared activities, shared spaces and forms of emotional sharing.

Most walk-and-talk tours elicited stories of working life, sometimes in spaces where working buildings had once been: weavers told of pranking or 'worker games' (Terry, ex-weaver) at the looms which built camaraderie amongst male workers. People had shared narratives about Carpetvillage that came up over and over again: the flood of 1968 and the Carpet Lane lorry crash in 1973. These mutually experienced stories, understood only if you held a knowledge of the specificity of place, acted as binding agents for the community and people became animated in recognition in the act of telling and listening in the focus groups. People recalled sensuous memories of life in the village which served to animate it as an alive and thriving community of productive workers. People told of the 5.15 pm alarm when workers 'flooded' out of the mills with tremendous energy so they could get on buses taking them home. There were highly distinctive smells of wool and 'foul' smells from the dye-house. The village was tremendously noisy with what local resident Sherry called the, 'clack, clack, clacking of the looms'. There were 'hotspots', places of significance which held particular resonance for recalling everyday lived practices and shared social rituals. One of the weavers wanted to show me a place at the stone bridge over

the beck where ‘a group of blokes’ took their break to, ‘look at the water, and watch the world go by.’ People recalled particular atmospheres, such as the shift in class register in ‘the awe when you walked through Clifton House’ (Tony, ex-weaver) to get to the directors’ suite of offices.

The village held a close sense of community. Some of this was maintained through a feeling of self-sufficiency: the factory, set in the village and its amenities could support family life without having to travel beyond it. The shops, school, pub and local housing meant that the community could be contained near to the factory.

Many respondents told me they felt that Carpetmakers was a paternalistic employer with a ‘family feel’ (Tony); workers felt well-paid and ‘looked after’. Carpetvillage also provided a host of sports, social and leisure activities for its workers and their families. Perhaps not surprisingly, people held more photographs of workers at leisure than they did of people at work. Their photographs documented sport, trips to the seaside and dinner dances – such as the well-documented 1968 Hawaiian evening (see Figure 3). It was much more than just a workplace; it had a large social dimension that doubly bound people to one another in ways that made a ‘way of life’ in the full sense of the word. As Maureen, ex-wages clerk told me: ‘to me it was a smashing way of life - we had a good life with Carpetmakers, a really

good life.’ In this way, people told me accounts of love and play that had been conducted in Carpetmaker’s work premises. Terry came to Carpetvillage ‘for a girl’; and Gerald, local shop owner told me that his mother and father met while looking for a fellow worker’s glass eye under the quality inspection table.



Figure 3: Hawaiian evening, 1960s (source: Gerald).

2: Witnessing the Fall of the Mill

A Strand of photographs document temporary processes of spatial change enacted by dereliction. Four of the male respondents documented the dereliction the works and surrounding village had been subjected to. One respondent

had a large collection of photographs dating from the early 1990s (see Figure 4)



Figure 4: wide open spaces post-demolition (source: Chris)

Some chose to make time to witness particular aspects of demolition. During one walk-and-talk tour Tony stopped on the causeway and turned, pointing to look across the existing expanse of derelict space:

Tony: I remember standing here, this is where I stood and watched them with the big wrecking ball strike – I came up here just on my own ...I turned round and there was six other people that I knew behind me [laughs] so I was saying – all was saying ‘what a sad day’. We all said ‘isn’t this a sad affair’ and nobody else, nobody said another word. They just stood with me for about three-quarters of an hour and then one after the other they just drifted off. And I thought well this is the end of an era. Will it be good or bad for Carpetvillage I don’t know ...



Figure 5: Tony points to where the wrecking ball struck Carpet Mill (source: author).

By standing in the same spot Tony told me of the atmosphere of embodied collective silent witnessing of the erasure of once meaningful spaces.

Some were corporeally affected as we encountered the empty space where Carpet Mill had been:

LT: We're just outside the Co-op aren't we?

Francis: Oh this is just horrendous. I know the first time I came down here – my stomach churned. I thought 'Deary me. Gone' ... when I was walking around with Barbara I brought her here and the dam's gone. I said 'look it's a car park'. Oh I felt – well they filled it in, it's gone. History gone.

As I walked around the village with Francis (ex-marketing assistant) she kept saying, 'history gone'. It became her mantra. Some offered their thoughts and feelings about Carpet Mill as we toured the village, 'It was the heart and soul of the village' Terry told me.

The site of Carpet Mill was important to Gerald. He had been born in a house across the road, adjacent to a haberdashery shop his family owned. His parents had worked at Carpetmakers. He had been in the shop at the time when the Mill was demolished, but he, 'couldn't look'. As we started to cross he suddenly turned the conversation to his dealings with the men who were going to work on the demolition:

LT: So we're crossing Jute Road. So yeah – so you said all this to him – this man who was doing the demolition.

Gerald: Yeah and I said 'can I have some of that' and he said 'Oh I'll try and save you some' and I said, 'Can you save me Carpet Mills'

LT: Carpet Mills, the whole thing?

Gerald: The whole thing, the guy who sent it down and it all crashed into pieces, the Carpet Mills which is sad really because I'd have had that.

LT: Sent it down? The title you mean?

Gerald: Well – yeah the Carpet Mills was up at the – in this potwork this like orangey rust coloured potwork and all that came down.

Gerald has preserved these bricks by placing them into his own garden wall. This instance is indicative of Gerald's class location. University educated, a property and business owner, an ex-teacher, Gerald had worked at Carpetmakers as a student in the summer holidays. Class confident, he had dared to ask about the retrieval of remnants of industrial history. It also shows the coping mechanisms people adopt for dealing with the loss of industrial buildings as sites of meaning. Gerald literally and metaphorically imbricated Carpet Mill into his post-Carpetmaker's life such that his memories accompany his life into the future.



Figure 6: retrieved bricks from Carpet Mill (source: author)

But not all respondents were in mourning. Two members of the sample were sanguine. 'It wasn't exactly pretty,' Keith, ex-weaver told me. Some understood the factory as a business and they were able to look coldly at the idea of Carpetmakers as an entity that must die if it no longer yielded profit. William, sales executive told me that driving past the once-mill evoked no difficult feelings:

To be absolutely honest, I have no pangs when I go past Carpetmakers. I don't feel any, think you know – 'oh what if, what if'. It was a business! It wasn't for the benefit of the employees, it made money for its share holders.

3: Legacies of Demolition

At the time of the research, there were few works buildings left. In this section I present what respondents felt were the legacies of pulled down buildings.

Dereliction opened out previously concealed ways of apprehending space which felt discomfiting, bringing new views which felt out of place, as Frank, ex-creeler told me: 'When you come down Carpet Lane you can see Gerald's shop; it doesn't look right'. Others mentioned a changed sense of the dimensions of the village. The absence of Carpetmakers brought a 'hugeness' of open space revealed by demolition:

Maureen: It was huge. And that was a shock when it all came down, how big the place was.

For others it seemed bigger because of the large sites of new housing. For Jerry housing had replaced manufacturing: 'it used to be a place of production, now it's just a dormitory.' But this was not a view shared by all the respondents: some liked the housing because it gave 'use' to the sites and spaces (Stacey, ex-export manager).

Ex-industrial sites generate immobility, or enforced passivity, for those who once navigated their movement using the pathways provided by works buildings. In the exchange below I encourage Maureen to lead me on the walk:

LT: Where shall we go now Maureen?

Maureen: Well I don't really know where to go because the places I went to they've all been knocked down haven't they? That used to be the pattern room and now it just looks sad.

LT: Is it easier to imagine when there's a gap or when there are new buildings?

Maureen: Well I don't really know because my working life really was from the offices to the canteen to the mill.

Here Maureen is literally unable to move. As we stood in the village looking at open spaces where buildings had once stood or at houses which had replaced works buildings, - 'all this was big sheds,' she told me as we looked along Carpet Road - 'gone' was term she used frequently. The village for her was, 'a big lump of nothing'. The loss of Carpetmakers, 'has killed Capertvillage, hasn't it?' she said.

Jerry: This, Carpetvillage, was Carpetmakers. Carpetmakers not here anymore, there's nothing here.

Today the quotidian sound of traffic dominates. As Jerry said, 'It's noisy, people are just driving through, they don't

even know they're driving through a specific place'. Alongside the fragmentary memories that ruins afford (Edensor, 2005), people juxtaposed their present views of the village community. There were, respondents told me, fewer physical opportunities to meet people 'I knew practically everybody in the village and they all knew me, but now I know very few people' (Sherry, local resident). Three or four people of the sample mentioned social media, 'computers and 'phones' as modes of communication they observed others using, but the connective possibilities of digital and social media are rejected, seen as poor substitutes compared to face-to-face physical encounters with other warm bodies these respondents once experienced in the works or in the pub: 'people are far more in their own homes now and they're on the computers with their little 'phones. My grandchildren are like this, they keep in touch with hundreds of people but they're not *there*' (Sherry).

Perhaps most worryingly a section of the sample ruminated about 'these people' or 'in-commers', the anonymous people who are living in new housing. Where were they from? how did they make their money? did they have any idea about the place that Carpetvillage had once been? As Jerry told me: - 'the people who come into all these new houses and flats aren't Carpetvillagers.' Note this

dialogue from one of the focus groups with Jerry, Sue (ex-wages clerk) and Colin (local resident):

Sue: Because Carpetvillage without Carpetmakers doesn't seem like a place really [laughs]...

Jerry: Well it's nowhere now is it?

Sue: It's nothing is it? It's just somewhere you drive through if you're going up that road.

Colin: It's all new houses now.

Sue: It's just where people live.

Colin: what sort of jobs are all these people doing who live in all these new houses?

Sue: Yeah I know. Well they're probably going to the motorway to go wherever.

[pause]

Jerry: It's like a person without a personality isn't it?

Fear of 'outsiders' who do not share a history of mutual support in the community presides. Worryingly people living in Carpetvillage find bridging the gaps with new 'others' very difficult, as these comments show, such that these communities have the potential to be riven with division in the future.

Discussion

Theme 1 'work and community' showed how modes of 'interrelationality' bound the community together through shared practices: worker camaraderie, the shared sensory

experiences of a textile village, the social events through Carpetworker's investment in paternalism, the descriptors of the firm as a 'family' co-mingled to produce powerfully close-knit affective ties. Walkerdine's work on communal-beingness has explanatory power: shared ways of building inter-subjective bonds made it feel operational and alive. When these forms of bonding fell apart, people missed communal closeness and felt acute loss in its absence.

Theme 2 'witnessing the fall' shows that Strangleman's sense that being compelled to document, bear witness or produce 'creative tangibility' (2013: 32) aspects of retrieval are important acts of mourning. In the situations where people were physically near to demolished sites, silence filled the air – as dad drove up Carpet Lane, as Jerry notes the collective quiet as the wrecking ball took down Carpet Mill and as I noted when people showed me their photographs of demolition in action. The notion of collective obituary holds credence in understanding these acts. Creative nostalgia is at play in Gerald's move to make the ornate bricks from carpet mill live on in his garden wall.

Theme 3 looks at 'legacies of demolition'. Spatial and sensory unease characterised some peoples' responses: the 'company village' no longer feels 'held' by the contours of the spatial organisation of the buildings; sensory characteristics which promote belonging to place have disappeared; the

narrative of industrial heritage is experienced as 'history gone'; and navigating the village has become impossible for some respondents - one woman was physically immobilized by demolition. The huge apparatus of corporate social activity has been erased; all that remains are visual motifs frozen in dearly held photographs. The spatial nexus through which embodied affective ties can stay held in place to continue an, 'ongoingness of being' (Walkerdine) have dissipated in to air. In this way, Walkerdine's psychoanalytic theories of affect (2010) hold efficacy for this study: losing industrial buildings which acted as a 'containing skin' surrounding peoples' working and leisure lives was experienced emotionally as a wounding loss which will continue to resonate for years.

Before the closure Carpetvillage was a socially homogeneous group with a shared purpose of making carpet which built collective strength and reciprocity. Self-sufficiency of the company village made it feel safe and less open to threat from outsiders. Carrying these memories of the 'half-life' of deindustrialisation produces what Strangleman terms 'disembedding' (Strangleman); in this study ageing people said they struggled to relate to outsiders in the more heterogeneous contemporary village. Mah found inter-generational division in her study of coping in post-industrial Ivanovo. Worryingly, Carpetvillage was

described as a 'dormitory' rather than a 'place that makes carpets' and new housing has brought people who lack an understanding of a village once proud to have produced fine woven carpets. Threatened by 'outsiders', these ageing respondents are not using 'bridging capital' (Puttnam, 2000) to broker relationships with newcomers. Bemoaning the loss of a physical village, digital technologies and social media were viewed as a lack of investment in village areas where social relationships might develop. Now post-industrial, like countless villages and towns in Britain, USA, Russia and beyond, Carpetvillage harbours a festering real-life problem: social divisions which are not being addressed.

Conclusion

It is important to engage with material sites of memory including portable objects and the landscapes in which the events occurred. How are such sites regarded? How are their stories told? Are they maintained or protected in some way? Are they visited? Do they form part of explicit commemorative practices? How do they live on in the minds and everyday activities of people? (Basu, 2013: 129)

While the material and symbolic importance of demolished works buildings is acknowledged by writers on de-industrialisation, missing from their accounts is an embodied analysis of how people inter-act *in situ* with landscapes of ruin and demolition. This study uses sensuous,

embodied, multi-sited methods to access the actions, senses and emotions contained in the 'memoryscapes' (Basu, 2013: 116) of a community. It holds particular efficacy for accessing visceral emotional and affective responses to the erosion of place. The study found the loss of industrial heritage in the identity of the village, erasure of pride in manufacturing carpets and the severing of affective ties which the structures of works buildings held in place. The need to record the embodied and oral testimonies of this community is prescient given the age range of a community that will die and disappear by century's turn.

While the moment at which this data was gathered pre-dates the Brexit referendum, it is possible to see the contribution economic disadvantage (as well as age and educational profile) had on the vote to leave the European Union. Several of my respondents alluded to the fact that globalization - 'carpet production in China' - was to blame for the closure of Carpetvillage. However, Tomlinson (2017) argues there is clear evidence to show that the long-term impact of de-industrialisation is the key to understanding the economic reasons for the Brexit vote. Globalisation is a contributing factor, but decline in the share of employment in industry in the 1950s in Britain fell as a result of 'shifts in the patterns of demand and technological change' which generated a striking growth in productivity and a stark

lowering in the relative price of manufactured goods. Unemployment hit clothing and textiles in the mid-1960s; 123,000 jobs were lost between 1964-69 (ibid.). This statistic fits within a broader picture of the fall in workers in industrial employment from 48% in 1957 to 15% in 2016. This steady decline, he argues, would have continued despite the consequences of globalization. While I cannot say if my individual respondents voted leave, the council in which the village resides voted 55.7% to leave.^{vi} Worryingly, if the community I researched did vote leave to take back economic and cultural control, the turn inward to their own communities in the wake of Brexit holds a set of real-life problems. How do those traumatized by the loss of de-industrialisation connect socially and communally with new layers of people, who lack an understanding of the meaning of a manufacturing village. Here I wish to argue for care and healing through cultural events which might offer the opportunities for the growth of bridging capital (Puttnam, 2000). I respect Mah's (2012) argument that aesthetic forms of regeneration can mask the bitter realities of living alongside ruination. However, I believe that a creative community project about the lost skills of making woven carpet using art, music or performance could begin to bridge the community divide. It would commemorate the lost labour that once gave identity and meaning to the people of

this village and give back history and place to a village of placelessness.

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ⁱ For ethical reasons, pseudonyms are used throughout to disguise the company, people and places of this research.

ⁱⁱ For local reaction to the demolition see 'Goodbye to a Landmark', *Evening Courier*, 30th December 2002.

ⁱⁱⁱ Linkon, S. (2014) *The Half-Life of Deindustrialisation: Twenty-First Century Narratives of Work, Place and Identity*. Paper presented at 'Deindustrialisation and Its Aftermath' conference, Montreal, Quebec.

^{iv} There is a documented history of the ill effects of work in the textiles industry. Workers described the physical impact on their bodies and health in evidence given to the Royal Commissions/Select Committees in the C19th.

^v In her US study of the Reo Motor Car Co. Fine (1993) argues that when automation replaced the control and autonomy of masculine worker roles in the 1920s, the management technique of paternalism appeared. The new working-class man was invited to join the 'big factory family' through participation in sports and social clubs to secure their loyalty and 'pre-empt unionization' (1993: 275).

^{vi} This result was found at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-36616028>.