

Visions of False Creek:
Urban Development and Industrial Decline in Vancouver, 1960-1980

by

Jacopo Miro
B.A., University of Victoria, 2009

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS

in the Department of History

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ABSTRACT

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False Creek has been both the poster child and the ground zero of Vancouver's acclaimed 'urban renaissance' – the transformation of the city from resource town to world-class metropolis. This study explores the interplay between urban redevelopment and the loss of industrial land and blue-collar work in False Creek in the 1970s. I investigate how city officials, urban experts, local workers and business owners viewed and made sense of the transformation of False Creek from an industrial site to a commercial, recreational and residential district. An examination of the testimony of local workers and businessmen as well as of the visions of municipal authorities is necessary to demystify the loss of inner-city industrial land as a natural and inevitable process. I demonstrate how the demise of the industrial sector in False Creek resulted in part from state policy, and from changing understandings about the place of industry in the socio-economic life of the city. Finally, I make the case that while the redevelopment project incorporated innovative planning practices, and brought countless benefits to many Vancouverites, the transformation of the area is inextricably linked to a story of displacement.

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I am forever indebted to my family and friends for all the tremendous support over the years. My loving parents have showered me with unremitting kindness. My brothers and my sister helped keep me grounded and on my feet. I could not have done this without all of you.

DEDICATION

To Duff, the butter to my bread and the breath to my life.

INTRODUCTION

On a perfectly unremarkable spring day in 1985, Fred Whitcroft, owner of *Gulf of Georgia Tug & Barge*, sat down for an interview in his office overlooking the Fraser River. Speaking to Nadine Asante, a young free-lance writer working on behalf of the Vancouver Historical Society, Whitcroft recalled the events that led his small, but lively business outfit to relocate from the city centre to the outlying periphery:

We were in False Creek up until 1973, and then we were forced to move out. The city came along, they said they wanted to build a seawall past our place, and told us we had to move and told us when to move. So we came up the Fraser River and built a big new shop up here at 2151 Kent's Street ... The city came along with dozens of hired young people which, when was that, a winter no a summer program, the government had sponsored, and they didn't gave us any grace at all ... They came in to start knocking the building down, while we were still in it, and still working and they had the ball hammers in there actually knocking the place down around our ears, literally. So we struggled through that one. That was just, I thought it was quite cruel really what they were doing to us.¹

Whitcroft's recollection evoked the frustration of many workers and business owners with municipal plans to redevelop False Creek into a non-industrial site. In the early 1970s, the City of Vancouver embarked on a sweeping and ambitious project to redevelop much of the industrial land of the inner city into a residential, recreational and commercial district. In contrast to prevailing and dominant narratives that have celebrated False Creek as a model for urban planning and community development, Whitcroft's remarks found expression in a discourse that framed False Creek as a site of dislocation and displacement.² As a local company owner who had worked in False Creek for almost twenty years, Whitcroft perceived and made sense of the

¹ University of British Columbia Special Collections, Frederick J. Whitcroft, interviewed by Nadine Asante, 25 March 1985, 54 Cassette, Vancouver Historical Society.

² We do not know whether City crews ripped industrial buildings apart as occupants made preparations to leave. Anger and resentment can all too easily lead to exaggerations or bending of truth. What is pertinent to our discussion is the way that Whitcroft understood and responded to the redevelopment of False Creek.

changes associated with the area in a distinctively different, yet equally compelling, way than that articulated by urban professionals and city officials at the time.

Many scholars have examined the history of the redevelopment of False Creek as told from the perspective and experiences of urban professionals and city officials. Both popular and academic writers have spilled a great deal of ink arguing the merits of False Creek's status as a paragon of urban-style living – and this for many good reasons. The most recent additions to this body of work include Mike Harcourt and Ken Cameron's semi-autobiographical *City Making in Paradise*, Lance Berelowitz's award-winning *Dream City*, John Punter's *The Vancouver Achievement*, and James Eidse et al.'s edited collection of essays *Vancouver Matters*.³ Collectively, these works examine various aspects of the city's approach to urban planning and design, including the innovative practices and values incorporated in the redevelopment of False Creek such as ecological harmony, social diversity, participatory democracy, mixed urban forms and human-scale design.⁴

These narratives situate False Creek in a unique place within a wider historiography of post-World War II urban renewal. If the history of urban renewal shares a notoriously troubled and unsettling past, False Creek is viewed as a rare embodiment of what has gone right with large-scale urban redevelopment projects.⁵ But conspicuously absent from these narratives are

³ Mike Harcourt and Ken Cameron (with Sean Rossiter), *City Making in Paradise: Nine Decisions that Saved Vancouver* (Douglas & McIntyre, 2007); Lance Berelowitz, *Dream City: Vancouver and the Global Imagination* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2005); John Punter, *The Vancouver Achievement: Urban Planning and Design* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003); and James Eidse et al. (eds), *Vancouver Matters* (Vancouver: Blueimprint, 2008).

⁴ The celebratory tone of these works is partly given away by their titles which refer to Vancouver as a 'paradise,' a 'dream city,' and as an 'achievement.' The practices and values were adopted from such luminary thinkers as Herbert Gans, Jane Jacobs, Ian McHarg, Kevin Lynch and Christopher Alexander. For the philosophies and ideas of these thinkers see: Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992); Ian L. McHarg, *Design with Nature* (Garden City, NY: Natural History Press, 1969); Christopher Alexander, Ishikawa Sara and Murray Silverstein, *A Pattern Language: Town, Buildings, Construction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960); and Herbert Gans, *Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans* (New York: Free Press, 1962).

⁵ The ill-effects of postwar urban renewal on community life have been well documented, especially in the United States, and to a lesser extent in Canada. From 'slum' clearance, to road building, to the failures of large-scale public

the voices of individuals like Whitcroft most directly affected by the redevelopment: local

housing, urban renewal policies in 1940s, 50s and 60s contributed to social dislocation, community displacement and urban poverty. Examples are too many to list. Herbert Gans' *Urban Villagers*, and his collection of essays "People and Plans" have become classic texts in the history of urban renewal. Gans most poignant work compellingly evokes the devastation brought about by slum clearance in Boston's West End during the 1950s. Herbert Gans, *Urban Villagers*. See also Marc Fried, "Grieving for a Lost Home," in *Urban Renewal: The Record and the Controversy*, edited by James Q. Wilson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1966): 359-379. Samuel Zipp's *Manhattan Projects*, and Hilary Ballon and Kenneth T. Jackson's edited collection of essays *Robert Moses and the Modern City* are the most recent analyses of Robert Moses' legacy on New York City and beyond. While these publications destabilize key assumptions about New York City's preeminent master builder, they do not negate the devastating impact of Moses' large-scale demolition and road building policies. Samuel Zipp, *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York* (New York: Oxford University, 2010); and Hilary Ballon and Kenneth T. Jackson (eds.), *Robert Moses and the Modern City: The Transformation of New York* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2008). For a popular account of Moses' legacy, see Robert Caro's 1972 Pulitzer Prize-winning biography, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Knopf, 1974). High-rise public housing has become one of the most recognizable symbols of the failures and excesses of postwar urban renewal, and this no more so than in St. Louis' short-lived Pruitt-Igoe housing development, and Chicago's infamous, and now defunct, Robert Taylor Homes and Cabrini-Green housing projects. Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Bradford D. Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); and William G. Ramroth Jr., *Planning for Disaster: How Natural and Man-Made Disasters Shape the Built Environment* (Chicago: Kaplan, 2007). Some of the best known studies on urban renewal in the United States include: James Q. Wilson (ed.) *Urban Renewal: The Record and the Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1966); Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); John H. Mollenkopf, *The Contested City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); John Bauman, *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal: Urban Planning in Philadelphia, 1920-1974* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Jon C. Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in America, 1940-1985* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); James R. Saunders and Renae N. Shackelford, *Urban Renewal and the End of Black Culture in Charlottesville, Virginia: An Oral History of Vinegar Hill* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1998); David Schuyler, *A City Transformed: Redevelopment, Race, and Suburbanization in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1940-1980* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002); Gregory J. Crowley, *The Politics of Place: Contentious Urban Redevelopment in Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005); Colin Gordon, *Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). A similar, but much smaller body of scholarship has also examined the politics and mistakes of urban renewal in the context of Canadian cities. Jennifer Nelson's *Razing Africville* is the latest in a series of studies that have examined the historic relocation and dislocation of one Canada's best known black communities. Jennifer Nelson, *Razing Africville: A Geography of Racism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2008); Donald H. Clairmont and Dennis W. Magill, *Africville: The Life and Death of a Black Community* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1999); and Donald H. Clairmont and Dennis W. Magill, *Africville Relocation Report* (Halifax: Institute of Public Affairs, Dalhousie University, 1971). Considerable attention has similarly been devoted to urban renewal programs in the city of Toronto. Popular and academic writers have examined the history and controversy surrounding the intense redevelopment of the neighbourhoods of South Parkdale, Corktown, St. James Town and Regent Park. Most notable among these works are Jon Caulfield's *City Form and Everyday Life*, and John Sewell's personal account *Up Against City Hall*. Jon Caulfield, *City Form and Everyday Life: Toronto's Gentrification and Critical Social Practice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); and John Sewell, *Up Against City Hall* (Toronto: James Lewis & Samuel, 1972); also see Kevin T. Brushett, "Blots on the Face of the City: The Politics of Slum Housing and Urban Renewal in Toronto, 1940—1970," (Ph.D. diss, Department of History, Queen's University, 2001). In contrast, Vancouver has been largely spared from the tragic effects of urban renewal. In one of the city's most celebrated cases of community activism, local residents and business leaders in Strathcona and Chinatown successfully blocked plans to build an interurban freeway through the historic centre of the city. Setty Pendakur, *Cities, Citizens and Freeways* (Vancouver: Transportation Development Agency, 1972). The efforts of community organizers, however, did not prevent the destruction of Hogan's Alley, one of the city's first and last neighbourhoods with a concentrated black community. *Hogan's Alley*, Video Recording, Directed by Andrea Fatona and Cornelia Wyngaarden (Video Out Distribution, 1994).

workers and business owners engaged in the area's industrial sector, and residents displaced as a result of the redevelopment of the adjacent neighbourhood of Fairview Slopes.⁶

Whitcroft's testimony is part of a broader discourse that destabilizes the image of False Creek as a shining beacon in an otherwise dark history of postwar urban renewal.

While many scholars and writers have focused on the merits of the redevelopment of False Creek, a lesser-known body of literature has discussed this event in the context of displacement and dislocation.⁷ Authors interested in this approach have examined the redevelopment of the area through the lens of gentrification, seeking to assess the project's broader social and economic repercussions. This research is confined to a handful of peer-reviewed journal articles and graduate theses, and while not extensive it has shed critical light on residential displacement and cultural hegemony. Notable among these studies is David Ley's "Liberal Ideology and the Postindustrial City," which recounts how the "unintended elitism" of municipal policies resulted in the removal of low and middle income housing in Fairview Slopes. Ley notes that old houses were demolished and replaced with luxury townhouses and apartment complexes.⁸ Caroline Mills' study on gentrification in Fairview Slopes illuminates the adverse effects of urban redevelopment from yet another angle. Mills is interested in how the built environment reflects and reproduces cultural meaning. She argues that the construction and marketing of a unique postmodern architecture in Fairview Slopes helped affirm the identity of

⁶ As I explain further in my introduction, my thesis focuses on local workers and business owners engaged in the industrial sector in False Creek. I do *not* make the residents of Fairview Slopes a focus of my analysis.

⁷ I use 'False Creek redevelopment' and 'False Creek project' as synonyms.

⁸ David Ley, "Liberal Ideology and the Postindustrial City," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 70 (1980): 256. Sophia Lum and George Fujii raise similar points in their respective theses on the redevelopment of Fairview Slopes. Lum's analysis of real estate prices and of the razing of the neighbourhood's housing stock gives flesh to Ley's argument about the displacement of low and middle-income households. While Fujii's case study of Fairview Slopes argues that despite progressive municipal policies, efforts to transform False Creek into a model of urban style living contributed to social inequity in the neighbourhood. Sophia Lum, "Residential Redevelopment in the Inner City of Vancouver: A Case Study of Fairview Slopes," (MA thesis, Queen's University, 1984), 39; George Fujii, "The Revitalization of the Inner City: A Case Study of the Fairview Slopes Neighbourhood, B.C." (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1981).

gentrifiers as a distinct social group defined by its liberal individualism and cultural sophistication. Mills shows how this process contributed to a “postmodern landscape of gentrification” characterized more by cultural and social homogeneity than by cultural and social diversity.⁹

These studies make an indispensable contribution to the history of neighbourhood displacement and urban renewal in Vancouver. But by looking at gentrification processes strictly through the lens of residential sites, the authors overlook the broader process of industrial displacement occurring in False Creek at the time. It is only very recently that scholars have started to view False Creek as a site where redevelopment pressures resulted in the displacement of industry and blue-collar work. In “Post-industrialism, Post-modernism and the Reproduction of Vancouver’s Central Area,” Thomas Hutton hints at the dislocation and erosion of working-class neighbourhoods engendered by urban redevelopment in False Creek. He notes that despite being well intentioned, city officials at the time gave little concern for the detrimental effects of industrial removal on local community life.¹⁰

My thesis builds and expands upon these studies to explore the interplay between urban redevelopment and the loss of industrial land and blue-collar work in False Creek in the 1970s. More precisely, I examine how different groups viewed industrial presence in the basin, and how they made sense of the redevelopment of the area into a commercial, residential and recreational district. I make the case that revisiting False Creek as a site of dislocation and displacement,

⁹ Caroline Mills, “‘Life on the Upslope’: The Postmodern Landscape of Gentrification,” *Environment and Planning D*, vol. 6 (1988): 174; Caroline Mills, “Fairview Slopes, Vancouver: Gentrification in the Inner City,” *The Canadian Geographer*, vol. 35, no. 3 (1991): 309.

¹⁰ While Hutton raises the issue of industrial displacement, he does not make it a central part of his analysis, which is ultimately concerned with reformulating a theoretical framework for understanding the changing role of Vancouver’s inner city. Thomas A. Hutton, “Post-industrialism, Post-modernism and the Reproduction of Vancouver’s Central Area: Retheorising the 21st-century City,” *Urban Studies*, vol. 41, no.10 (September 2004): 1960.

rather than as a paragon of urban design and community development, is essential for developing a fuller understanding of processes of urban change in Vancouver.

My argument is informed by contemporary debates about the economic restructuring and redevelopment of cities in Canada and the United States. Scholars of gentrification have been particularly interested in examining the nature and implications of urban change, and have identified central urban areas as key sites of dislocation and displacement.¹¹ At the same time, recent studies have called attention to a lack of critical perspective on the issue of displacement. Lance Freeman argues that there is still little understanding as to the exact relationship between gentrification and displacement. Does one cause the other? If so, to what extent and how? And he asks what are some of the ulterior motives that might lead residents to leave gentrified areas. Key to Freeman's critique is the observation that scholars often draw conclusions about the experience of displacement without considering the opinions and point of views of local residents.¹² On a different but related note, Winifred Curran points out that studies have almost exclusively focused on "the competition of space in residential landscapes" at the expense of research on the effects of gentrification on industrial displacement, particularly with regard to the perspectives of workers and business owners. While I do not make gentrification a focal point of

¹¹ Ley has explained the marginalization of low-income households as a result of the rise of a 'new middle class' of professional and managerial workers attracted to the centrality and culture of the inner city. He explains how the growth of this population of white-collar workers has put pressures on the supply of low to medium-income housing. David Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). Zukin has explored the displacement of industrial businesses through the lens of culture and municipal policies. Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982). Most recently, Betancour has documented the endemic displacing effects of gentrification on Latinos in Chicago, a process that has led to 'community disintegration.' John Betancour, "Gentrification and Community Fabric in Chicago," *Urban Studies* 48 no.2 (February 2011): 399. In the context of Vancouver, Blomley has interpreted the displacement of low-income residents in the Downtown Eastside as a fundamental struggle over competing notions of property rights. Nicholas Blomley, *Unsettling the City: Urban Land and the Politics of Property* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

¹² Freeman rightly points out that "without knowing how much displacement would occur in the absence of gentrification, one cannot assume that any observed displacement is due to gentrification." Lance Freeman, *There Goes the 'hood: Views of Gentrification From the Ground Up* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 7.

my analysis, I draw from this voluminous body of scholarship to ask similar questions about the meaning and experience of displacement in light of the redevelopment of False Creek.¹³

Just as important to my research is an extensive literature that has looked specifically at the history of industrial decline and the loss of blue-collar work in Canadian and American cities. Many historians have documented and examined the dislocating effects of plant closings and mass layoffs in industrial urban centres, especially in the north-east and Midwest of the United States, and in Southern Ontario. Critical to this literature is a debate over the meaning and interpretation of industrial decline. Sociologist Daniel Bell famously explained the sweeping postwar changes affecting industrialized societies as indication of a transition to a ‘post-industrial’ world centred on the “exchange of information and knowledge.”¹⁴ Others, most notably Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, understood these changes as evidence of a vast pattern of ‘deindustrialization’ characterized by a “widespread, systematic disinvestment in the nation’s basic productive capacity.”¹⁵

Recent studies suggest that deindustrialization is better understood as an economic or industrial transformation within the capitalist world. Some scholars point out that the industrial age is alive and well: so-called ‘post-industrial’ economies are invariably linked to industrial growth in other regions of the globe. In Canada and the United States investment has shifted to technologically advanced manufacturing industries (pharmaceuticals, chemicals and electronics), and even traditional production sectors – while overshadowed by the growth of service jobs –

¹³ As Ley’s and Mill’s analyses suggest the redevelopment of False Creek has resulted in a gentrified space. David Ley, “Alternative Explanations for Inner-City Gentrification: A Canadian Assessment,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 76, no.4 (1986): 521-535; and Caroline Mills, “Interpreting Gentrification: Postindustrial, Postpatriarchal, Postmodern?” (PhD Dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1989).

¹⁴ Daniel Bell, *The Coming of the Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), xii.

¹⁵ Bluestone and Harrison were careful to single out corporate managers and their practices to relocate capital – whether by redirecting profits, selling equipment or shutting down plants – as the engine behind deindustrialization. Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York: Basic Books: 1982), 6.

continue to employ a substantial segment of the working population.¹⁶ These issues are particularly relevant when discussing the redevelopment of False Creek. How is one to interpret industrial displacement in the area? What does it mean to say that the local industrial sector was in decline? Did industries leave on their own accord, or were they pushed out by municipal intervention as Whitcroft seems to suggest?

There is still much to be known about the process of industrial restructuring in False Creek. Ley and Hutton use the post-industrial thesis as a key interpretative framework within which to understand the changes associated with the area. Their analyses are especially compelling in describing the forces and currents (economic, political and cultural) that have given rise to the reordering of Vancouver's inner-city space. Other writers have referred to industrial decline and the deindustrialization thesis to depict False Creek's old industrial sector. But the precise state, profile or nature of the companies operating in the basin is seldom ever made clear, let alone the process by which these companies disappeared from False Creek. Industries are said to have "left" the area and "resettled" away from their traditional inner-city base, leaving in their wake "abandoned" buildings and decrepit "empty" lots.¹⁷ Scholars talk about an "exodus", "migration", "phase-out" or "contraction" of industrial activity. "Fickle markets," "obsolescence," and the expansion of international manufacturing sectors are presented as quick explanations for the demise of local industries. Claims about industrial False Creek tend to be assumed rather than explained.

By overlooking the circumstances in which industry left False Creek, writers run the risk of naturalizing the process of industrial decline making it seem inevitable, unequivocal and

¹⁶ For instance, Curran notes that in 2001 manufacturing still employed 250,000 people in New York City, almost 10 percent of the city's total workforce. Curran, Winifred, and Susan Hanson, "Getting Globalized: Urban Policy and Industrial Displacement in Williamsburg, Brooklyn," *Urban Geography* 26, no.6: 466.

¹⁷ Carol Berens, *Redeveloping Industrial Sites: A Guide for Architects, Planners, and Developers* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2011), 18-19; Punter, *The Vancouver Achievement*, 8; and Harcourt and Cameron, *City Making in Paradise*, 98.

necessary. As Steven High reminds us in *Industrial Sunset*, “deindustrialization did not just happen.” Behind the anonymous and impersonal veil of market forces lies human agency and power. In False Creek, policies were enacted and mechanisms put in place to claim and clear the land for redevelopment. Decisions were taken to discontinue industrial production in the area. Local business owners resolved to shut down or relocate their industries.

To be sure, industrial displacement does not explain everything about the loss of industrial production from the inner city of Vancouver. The redevelopment of False Creek is one episode in a much longer and complex history of urban transformation. Nonetheless, displacement and dislocation are critical components of this history. For instance, if it were not for testimonies like Whitcroft’s we would not be propelled to question Carol Berens’s interpretation that ‘empty’ buildings and ‘vacant’ lots in False Creek were in need of ‘rescuing’ and the land ‘ripe’ for redevelopment.¹⁸ Whitcroft’s testimony, like that of others, highlights important shortcomings in current understandings about the loss of False Creek’s industrial sector. Revisiting this long-overlooked episode in Vancouver’s history reveals some of the social complexities and political struggles associated with urban development.

Approach and Plan of the Thesis

My research on industrial displacement draws extensively from a variety of archival sources. Combined, the City of Vancouver Archives and the Special Collections Library at the University of British Columbia (UBC) house a wealth of records pertaining to the redevelopment of False Creek. The Fonds of the City Corporate Services, the False Creek Development Group, and the City Clerks and Councillors Office have been of particular importance to this project.

¹⁸ Berens, *Redeveloping Industrial Sites*, xi. Similar remarks are made in Catherine Gourley, *Island in the Creek: The Granville Island Story* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 1988), preface, 93.

While certainly welcomed, the abundance of material on False Creek has been a mixed blessing. Unearthing the voices of single individuals among the vast archival documentation has been particularly challenging. Records on the redevelopment of False Creek consist primarily of technical studies and reports covering such topics as architectural designs, traffic and parking, noise control, water and soil contamination, and economic surveys. I conducted a systematic search of the correspondences of city officials finding the occasional relevant piece of evidence. But such correspondences were often fragmented and difficult to situate. As a result I decided to pursue a comprehensive search of local newspapers using the British Columbia Archives and Records Service Newspaper Index as well as the B.C. Legislative Library Index. Records between 1955 and 1975 were consulted. This body of sources has informed much of my discussion on the viewpoints of city officials.

Newspapers and records preserved at the City of Vancouver Archives were not particularly useful for shedding light on the experiences of local workers and business owners who operated in False Creek. I instead relied on a collection of oral interviews housed at UBC Library to complete this component of my research. In 1983 the Vancouver Historical Society decided to undertake an oral history project for the 1986 centennial of the incorporation of the City of Vancouver. As part of the project, the society hired two professional journalists to conduct twenty-four interviews with local workers and business owners who had been or were still involved with the industrial sector in False Creek. Elizabeth Walker, one of the organizers of the project, described the rationale behind the collection, to preserve the “great many memories of the social and cultural life of the various areas of Vancouver [which] were being lost.” False Creek was chosen along with the Fairview Slopes in light of their rich histories, and the fact that they had experienced dramatic changes and were slated for transformation with the development

of the Expo '86 site. I was able to listen to seventeen of these interviews.¹⁹ In this set thirteen of the respondents were business owners and four were workers. The interviews cover a range of topics. Respondents were asked questions about, among other topics, their childhoods, their involvement in the local industrial sector, the nature of the work being done, their opinions on how the basin had changed over the years and what they thought about it, and their responses to the redevelopment of the area. The quality of the audio was at times poor making some of the conversations difficult to understand, and discussions did not always provide me with information pertinent to my research.

This thesis is organized around three substantive chapters. Chapter 1 outlines the historical context within which my analysis is situated. I describe the development of False Creek's industrial sector from its early beginnings in the 1890s to its near demise in the 1960s. The aim of this chapter is to sketch a profile of the local industrial sector and of the redevelopment project as a way to familiarize the reader with key aspects of my research. Chapter 2 examines the changing and competing visions of city officials and urban experts concerning the role of False Creek in the city's social and economic life. It calls attention to how these visions were steeped in understandings of land tenure, progress and urban life. I go on to argue that early proponents of redevelopment espoused a narrative of 'obsolescence' and 'blight' that helped naturalize the changes happening in the area. Chapter 3 explores how local business owners and workers made sense of the redevelopment of False Creek into a residential, commercial and recreational site. These individual voices contribute to a narrative that both

¹⁹ Listening to recorded interviews is a time-consuming process. As I approached this component of the research I underestimated how quickly it would take me to listen to the whole collection. I spent, on average, three and half hours listening to every one hour interview. This pace allowed me to carefully listen and accurately transcribe each interview. The remaining interviews are available for anyone wanting to pursue further research.

confirms and destabilizes the viewpoints of city officials and urban experts. In particular, the chapter reveals testimony that frames False Creek as a site of dislocation and displacement.

In Brief

An examination of the testimony of local workers and businessmen as well as of the visions of municipal authorities is necessary to demystify the loss of inner-city industrial land as a natural and inevitable process. I argue that the demise of the industrial sector in False Creek resulted in part from state policy, and from changing understandings about the place of industry in the socio-economic life of the city. Finally, I demonstrate that while the redevelopment project incorporated innovative planning practices, and brought countless benefits to many Vancouverites, the transformation of the area is inextricably linked to a story of displacement.

CHAPTER ONE:

The Evolution of Industrial False Creek

False Creek experienced remarkable change over the course of the twentieth-century. From a polluted industrial area, it has evolved into one of Vancouver's prime cosmopolitan districts. To understand the breadth and scope of this transformation requires a wider perspective on the city and its region. In the decades leading to its redevelopment, False Creek had developed an image as a particular type of urban environment: the industrial urban 'slum.' Starting with a brief sketch of the area's early industrial history, I examine how changes in the postwar period allowed for the transformation of False Creek from an industrial site to a model of urban-style living.

Development of False Creek as an Industrial Site, 1890-1950

False Creek is a small inlet situated in the centre of the city of Vancouver. The area has been the site of extensive urban development since the beginning of the 1900s. Both the size and shape of False Creek have been altered over the course of the last century giving the area somewhat amorphous boundaries.²⁰ A decision, in 1885, to make Coal Harbour and English Bay the western terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) paved the way for the development of False Creek as an industrial district.²¹ As the area developed, the city grew around it. With

²⁰ As Oke et al. explain "now [in the early 1990s], there is no semblance of a natural shore anywhere in the basin, and its total area has been reduced to barely 25 per cent of its pre-development size." Oke et al., "Primordial to Prim Order: A Century of Environmental Change," in *Vancouver and Its Region* ed. by Graeme Wynn and Timothy Oke (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 162-165.

²¹ For the early history of Vancouver's city-building process see Norbert MacDonald, "'C.P.R. Town': The City-Building Process in Vancouver, 1860-1914," in *Shaping the Urban Landscape: Aspects of the Canadian City-Building Process*, ed. G. A. Stelter and A. F. J. Artibise (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1982): 382-412. Wood-related industries were particularly prominent in the 1890s. At the time, over 30 percent of Vancouver's labour force was involved in manufacturing, and another 15 percent worked in the construction industry. Newly established

Coal Harbour, False Creek functioned as the city's first and main transportation and distribution centre. The area provided the rapidly expanding town with critical cargo such as coal, farm produce, bricks, sand and lime.²² The coming of the CPR brought much needed roads and railway access to the area. With this early infrastructure, the first industrial plants started settling in False Creek. These included among many others, George Black's slaughter house, a number of sawmills, a cooperage, a shipyard, a foundry and iron works, as well as a brickyard, a sash and door factory and a prefabricated home plant.²³ As historian Robert Burkinshaw explains, within a few years the area "was densely lined with industrial and commercial wharves, industrial shops, gas works and the B.C. Electric Light and Railway Power House."²⁴ By 1910, Vancouver accounted for three quarters of all industrial output in British Columbia most of which related to the forest industry.²⁵

The changes associated with False Creek in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century set the character of the area for the next fifty-years. Wood processing companies dominated the basin, spurred both by a thriving local construction industry and by an export demand for timber products. The expansion of the fishing industry and a growing need for water transportation services contributed to the establishment of shipbuilding industries along the

sawmills catered to the domestic economy. As historian Robert McDonald notes "the new mills were a product rather than a cause of Vancouver's population explosion." See, Robert A. J. McDonald, *Making Vancouver: Class, Status, and Social Boundaries, 1863-1913* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996), 35, 37-38, 43-44. For a detailed study of British Columbia's early industrial economy see John S. Lutz, "Losing Steam, Structural Change in the Manufacturing Economy of British Columbia 1860-1915" (MA Thesis, Department of History, University of Victoria, 1998).

²² Robert K. Burkinshaw, *False Creek: History, Images, and Research Sources* (Vancouver: City of Vancouver Archives, Occasional Paper no. 2, 1984), 20.

²³ Burkinshaw, *False Creek*, 22.

²⁴ Oke et al. also note the presence of planning mills, shingle mills, cement works, building suppliers, breweries, tanning works, foundries, metal works, and a crematorium. Oke et al., "Primordial to Prim Order," 162. See also Burkinshaw, *False Creek*, 22.

²⁵ Graeme Wynn, "The Rise of Vancouver," in *Vancouver and Its Region* ed. by Graeme Wynn and Timothy Oke (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 107.

channel.²⁶ Over time, a large contingent of iron works, metal shops and manufacturing plants also opened in False Creek making the area a centre for industrial production.

The industrial presence in the area was further entrenched by the 1910 decision to reclaim over 200 acres of tidal flats to be developed as a shipping centre by the Great Northern Railway and the Canadian Northern Railway (later to become part of the Canadian National Railway in 1918).²⁷ Prior to the reclamation project, False Creek extended east well beyond what is today Main Street, and was about twice as big as it is today. Although large, the eastern part of the basin was too shallow to provide useful water access, and with the ebb of the tide the area turned into a vast mud flat. By dredging the western side of False Creek, the two railway companies were able to fill in the tidal flats, and develop the land for further industrial use. A second major reclamation project was launched by the Harbour Commission in 1915 to turn a permanent sandbar located close to the mouth of the inlet into a 34 acre industrial area. The result was the creation of Granville Island which became False Creek's most intensely used industrial site. All vacant lots were occupied within five years after the end of construction.²⁸ By the end of World War I, False Creek had been firmly established as an industrial zone in the centre of the city.

It was at this time that the land tenure system in False Creek was developed. Much of the land on the southern and northern shore of False Creek was granted to the CPR by the provincial government in return for the extension of the transcontinental line from Port Moody to the Granville Townsite (later the City of Vancouver). But disagreement over riparian rights was not

²⁶ For a personal account of the early history of shipbuilding in False Creek see UBC-SP, Arthur McLaren of West Coast Shipbuilding Co., interviewed by Mary Burns, 24 July 1984, 43 Cassette, Vancouver Historical Society.

²⁷ J. C. Oliver and E. L. Cousins, *Report on False Creek: A Report to the Mayor and City Council* (Vancouver: City Engineering Department, 1955), 1.

²⁸ Burkinshaw, *False Creek*, 35. For a detailed examination of the early development of False Creek see Dennis M. Churchill, "False Creek Development: A Study of the Actions and Interactions of the Three levels of Government as they Affected Public and Private Development on the Waterway and its Land Basin," (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1953): 90-94.

resolved until 1924.²⁹ Both the provincial and dominion authorities laid claim to the foreshore of False Creek, forcing leases in the area to be approved by both levels of government. Following intensive deliberations, the Province was finally vested with riparian rights over the area – with the exception of Granville Island which remained under the tenure of the Dominion government. A series of parallel negotiations between the CPR and provincial authorities resulted in an agreement that gave the railway company control of foreshore rights until 1970.³⁰ The CPR was thus responsible for selecting tenants and administering leases in the area for much of the twentieth century.

By the 1920s, False Creek manifested many of the problems associated with industrial sites. Air and water pollution was especially prevalent in the basin. It was common practice for wood processing plants to burn excess wood waste into beehive burners. From the 1920s to the 1950s, the smoke generated by sawmills and other businesses created a thick mantle of fog that hung above the basin and surrounding residential areas. Local company owners recall wearing white collar shirts that would turn grey by the end of the day's work because of the soot in the air.³¹ Industrial refuse like ash, manure, scrap metal, scrap wood, abandoned boat hulls and rusting machinery littered the local landscape.³² The discharge of oil contaminants and heavy log-boom traffic made the water toxic and saturated with rotting wood.

²⁹ Oliver and Cousins, *Report on False Creek*, 3, 25-27. See also Burkinshaw, *False Creek*, 38. And Churchill, "False Creek Development," 29-43.

³⁰ Burkinshaw, *False Creek*, 38.

³¹ University of British Columbia Special Collections, Ted Dubberly of British Ropes Ltd., interviewed by Nadine Asante, 9 February 1985, 47 Cassette, Vancouver Historical Society.

³² Oke et al. explain that the shores of False Creek were "contaminated with heavy metals, wood wastes, tannins, lignins, tars, wood preservatives, paints, solvents, ash, slag, manure, and rubble." While the basin's bottom sediments were polluted by "high concentrations of toxic substances, including mercury, lead, cadmium, arsenic, petroleum hydrocarbons, PCB's, and organic debris." Oke et al., "Primordial to Prim Order," 162-164.

Problems in False Creek were further exacerbated by the presence of sixteen outfalls that dumped residential raw sewage directly into the inlet.³³ Adding to the area's woes was the city garbage dump located on the reclaimed eastern flatlands of the basin, and a garbage incinerator situated beneath the Granville Bridge. Combined, these features helped solidify the image of industrial False Creek as an unsightly industrial urban environment.

The growth of False Creek as an industrial site was accompanied by the development of residential housing. The 1890s saw the emergence of the neighbourhood of Mount Pleasant, located at the south-west end of the basin, and the district of Fairview, situated on the south shore of False Creek between Granville and Cambie streets. Initially these areas housed "clerks, small businessmen, artisans or others of 'everyday means' unable to afford the West End."³⁴ But as industrial presence in False Creek intensified, these areas became increasingly dominated by blue collar workers employed in the local industries dotting the inlet.³⁵ Industrial presence in the basin contributed to drive down property prices in neighbouring commercial and residential areas, turning these into enclaves for ethnic minorities and the poor.³⁶ Small communities of squatters settled along the inlet from the Burrard Bridge to the eastern False Creek flats. Individuals built various dwellings from simple shacks made of metal sheeting and wooden pallets to sturdy, timber-framed, waterborne structures.³⁷

³³ Also see Wynn, "The Rise of Vancouver," 117-118.

³⁴ Jean Barman, "Neighbourhood and Community in Interwar Vancouver: Residential Differentiation and Civic Voting Behaviour" *BC Studies* 69-70 (Spring-Summer 1986): 99.

³⁵ Donna McCririck, "Opportunity and the Workingman: A Study of Land Accessibility and the Growth of Blue Collar Suburbs in Early Vancouver, 1886-1914" (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1981). See also Graeme Wynn, "The Rise of Vancouver," 89-90. Also see Burkinshaw, *False Creek*, 25, 28; and Barman, "Neighbourhood and Community in Interwar Vancouver," 97-141.

³⁶ By the early 1900s, wood-related industries in Vancouver were hiring increasing numbers of Asian labourers. As historian Robert McDonald explains, "Japanese and East Indian workers concentrated in sawmills, the Chinese in shingle mills." In some sawmills, Japanese and East Indian accounted for almost all the labour force. McDonald, *Making Vancouver*, 210-211. See also Burkinshaw, *False Creek*, 41.

³⁷ Informal housing had been part of Vancouver's landscape since at least the 1890s. As historian Robert McDonald explains, the shack was a "potent symbol of social marginalization." McDonald describes a shack as "a flimsy,

To make matters worse, industrial False Creek was plagued by work-related hazards and by a local boom and bust economy. Fires were especially prevalent, and often resulted in severe personal injury, death and the physical destruction of entire worksites.³⁸ Seasonal and cyclical economic downturn contributed to precarious working conditions. Economic instability reached a peak with the Great Depression, which wreaked havoc on the local industrial sector. An unprecedented number of industries were driven out of business, and thousands of workers lost their jobs.³⁹ Collectively, poor and clandestine housing, pollution, unemployment, fires, homelessness, and economic hardship reinforced the reputation of industrial False Creek as an economically depressed area and as an incubator of urban ills.⁴⁰

As it did in much of the country, the advent of World War II marked a period of transformation and revival in False Creek. The war brought new and much needed investment in the area.⁴¹ Employment figures and profits reached all time highs for many local businesses. Industries associated with war-time production were met with particularly great success. Renewed industrial activity led to a reaffirmation of False Creek as an important engine in the

usually one-room, and often jerry-built dwelling that was to be found located illegally along the shorelines of Burrard Inlet or False Creek.” McDonald, *Making Vancouver*, 86.

³⁸ The destruction of J. Coughlan & Sons Shipyards in the spring of 1918 served as a powerful reminder of the devastating potential of fire. For an example of the everyday challenges that local businesses faced in False Creek see UBC-SP, Sansarpuri Harmohan Singh, interviewed by Nadine Asante, 9 May 1985, 63 Cassette, Vancouver Historical Society.

³⁹ Patricia Roy, “Vancouver: ‘The Mecca of the Unemployed,’ 1907-1929,” in *Town and City: Aspects of Western Canadian Urban Development* ed. by A.F.J. Artibise (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, University of Regina, 1981), 393-413. Also Wynn, “The Rise of Vancouver,” 115.

⁴⁰ As a result of the Great Depression, the homeless population increased to the point of creating three shanty towns, or ‘hobo jungles’ as they were called at the time, along the False Creek flats. People continued to live clandestinely in the Creek for another twenty years. By 1952, a survey conducted by the Department of Health recorded 112 illegal bathhouses and shacks in the area home to 85 men, 26 women and 28 children. Most of the squatter communities were dismantled in the late 1950s. Wynn, “The Rise of Vancouver,” 115. Jill Wade, “Home or homelessness? Marginal housing in Vancouver, 1886-1950,” *Urban History Review* 25 no.2 (1997): 19-29. Oliver and Cousins, *Report on False Creek*, 24. Burkinshaw, *False Creek*, 51. See also *The Vancouver Sun*, 12 June 1959. For a specific study on the topic of homelessness and during the Great Depression see Todd McCallum, “The Great Depression’s First History? The Vancouver Archives of Major J.S. Matthews and the Writing of Hobo History,” *Canadian Historical Review* 87, no.1 (March 2006): 79-107.

⁴¹ World War II brought new investment into the basin, most notably to the shipbuilding industry. Before World War II, the shipbuilding industry was mainly involved in building tugs, barges and fishing vessels.

regional economy, and a critical asset for the nation's industrial output.⁴² The inner-city manufacturing sector continued to play a significant role in the city's economy in the immediate aftermath of the war.⁴³ However, the revived energy of this period proved to be temporary. It was not long before industrial False Creek fell yet again into a slump.⁴⁴

A Changing Local and Regional Economy, 1950-1970

Despite the brief war-time boom, False Creek was not able to shed its image as a declining, run-down industrial area. The postwar period marked the start of a steady but significant decline in the city's manufacturing sector.⁴⁵ The absolute levels of urban industrial employment remained important but nonetheless stagnant, overshadowed by the relentless rise of the service sector.⁴⁶ The postwar period ushered an era of economic transformation that set the stage for the redevelopment of False Creek in the 1970s.

In the 1950s manufacturing was diversifying. Between 1951 and 1956, seventy-five percent of employment growth within Greater Vancouver's manufacturing sector was experienced in the more advanced types of manufacturing: transportation equipment, printing

⁴² Granville Island became such an important site for the war effort that the federal government strictly limited its access for fear that saboteurs might damage or destroy its industries.

⁴³ Traffic in the inlet was high with over 300 scows and barges arriving and departing every week. In 1951, 81 firms operated within the immediate ring of the waterway. Another 375 firms operated in the outer core of the basin. These businesses employed over 10,000 employees and provided approximately \$30 million in wages. As a result, industry in False Creek accounted for about 12 percent of the city's total business and industrial payroll (\$250 million), and provided about 8 percent of the total employment in Vancouver (\$125 million). Oliver and Cousins, *Report on False Creek*, 6, 60-61, 82; and Churchill, "False Creek Development," 174-176. These figures are based on an industrial survey conducted by Dennis M. Churchill for the City of Vancouver.

⁴⁴ Except for Granville Island, industrial land use in the basin was not found to be intensive in the late 1940s. Oliver and Cousins, *Report on False Creek*, 40. Manufacturing activity in False Creek stagnated after the end of the war. In the early 1950s, sawmills processed approximately 600,000 board feet of lumber every day compared to 1 million board feet of lumber cut daily in the 1920s. Shultz and Company, "Preliminary Appreciation of the Development of the Wood Converting Industries in False Creek, Aug. 1952" in J. C. Oliver and E. L. Cousins, *Report on False Creek: A Report to the Mayor and City Council* (Vancouver: City Engineering Department, 1955), 105-106. Also see Burkinshaw, *False Creek*, 48.

⁴⁵ By 'decline' I mean 'relative decline'.

⁴⁶ As I will discuss further in the essay, metropolitan manufacturing employment increased with suburban growth.

and publishing, iron and steel products, non-metallic mineral products, and chemical products.⁴⁷ Growth was also experienced in industries that served local consumer and construction markets, such as breweries, dairies, cement and concrete plants, plaster board manufacturing, petroleum refineries and steel pipe mills.⁴⁸ Ambitious infrastructural projects launched under the administration of W.A.C. Bennett, and urban renewal grants administered by the federal government injected vast sums of money into urban and provincial construction industries.⁴⁹ Local companies seized the opportunities offered by the changing economy. Many businesses redirected their operations to the sale, distribution and repair of specialized equipment for such services as road paving, cement mixing, excavating, sandblasting, and truck hauling.

Urban manufacturing continued to employ an important segment of the local and regional labour force while it also experienced decline. For instance, manufacturing still accounted for one quarter of the entire metropolitan workforce (see **Table 1 and Figure 1**).⁵⁰ At the same time, while the number of sawmills in False Creek had been stagnant since the Great Depression, it quickly declined in the 1950s.⁵¹ Despite this trend, sawmills remained the top industrial

⁴⁷ To be clear, manufacturing growth is occurring at the metropolitan level. McGovern, "Industrial Development in the Vancouver Area," 202.

⁴⁸ McGovern, "Industrial Development in the Vancouver Area," 199-200; and Guy P. F. Steed, "Intrametropolitan Manufacturing: Spatial Distribution and Locational Dynamics in Greater Vancouver," *Canadian Geographer* XVII, no.3 (1973): 238.

⁴⁹ The Social Credit government of W.A.C. Bennett (1952-1972) invested in large-scale projects to further develop natural resource extraction in BC. These included among others, the construction of roads and highways, the creation of an extensive hydro-electric system along the Columbia and Peace rivers, the development of rail lines such as the Pacific Great Eastern Railway. Other key projects involved the construction of the Roberts Bank deep sea terminal and the expansion of Vancouver International Airport. Trevor Barnes et al., "Vancouver, the Province, and the Pacific Rim," in *Vancouver and Its Region* ed. by Graeme Wynn and Timothy Oke (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 177, 180. Also see, Robert North and Walter Hardwick, "Vancouver Since the Second World War: An Economic Geography," in *Vancouver and Its Region* ed. by Graeme Wynn and Timothy Oke (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 216.

⁵⁰ P. D. McGovern, "Industrial Development in the Vancouver Area," *Economic Geography* 37, no.3 (July 1961): 197.

⁵¹ The following is the recorded number of sawmills in False Creek from 1930 to 1963: 9 in 1930; 8 in 1940; 9 in 1945; 9 in 1950; 7 in 1952; and 3 in 1963. Shultz and Company, "Preliminary Appreciation of the Development of the Wood Converting Industries in False Creek," 112-114. See also Burkinshaw, *False Creek*, 51; and City of Vancouver Archives (hereafter CVA), City of Vancouver, Planning Department, pd 814, *Report on the Rehabilitation of False Creek*, Planning Department, October 1963.

employer with a metropolitan labour force of nearly 10,000 people in 1956. Similarly, over a third of all manufacturing jobs in Greater Vancouver involved the processing of raw natural resources. This trend explained the strong presence of sawmills, meat packers, plywood mills, fish canning facilities, dairy plants, and fruit and vegetable operations.⁵² These industries in turn relied on a host of auxiliary businesses. For instance, sheet metal plants produced metal cans essential to the fish industry and to fruit and vegetable processing plants. Local machine shops built, serviced and distributed equipment for smelters, pulp mills and sawmills scattered throughout British Columbia.⁵³ So, while the industrial sector was diversifying away from primary processing activities, it still retained close links to the coastal and interior resource economy; an unusual fact for a North American city of its size at the time.⁵⁴

Table 1

Vancouver Metropolitan Labour Force by Major Industry Group, 1941-1961

	1941		1951		1961	
	(000s)	%	(000s)	%	(000s)	%
Primary	9.9	6.8	7.9	3.8	9.7	3.4
Manufacturing	39.0	26.7	53.8	25.7	57.5	20.1
Construction	11.0	7.6	15.0	7.2	19.9	7.0
Transportation	15.7	10.8	23.6	11.3	34.9	12.2
Trade	28.3	19.4	44.4	21.3	59.9	20.9
FIRE	6.1	4.2	10.1	4.8	15.9	5.6
Service	35.8	24.6	54.2	25.9	88.4	30.9
Total	145.8	100.0	209.0	100.0	286.2	100.0

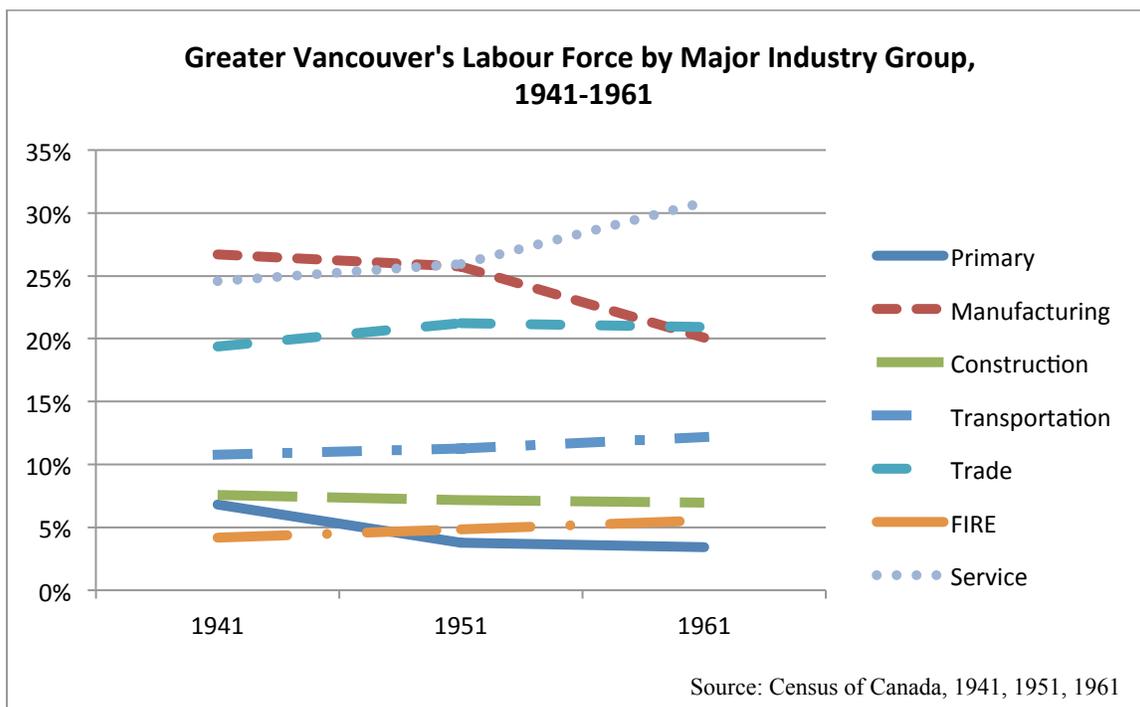
Source: Census of Canada, 1941, 1951, 1961,

⁵² Steed, "Intrametropolitan Manufacturing," 237. Also see McGover, "Industrial Development in the Vancouver Area," 200-201.

⁵³ Other industries related to the provincial resource economy included sash and door planing mills and paper product plants. But also the truck and trailer industry which supplied and assembled logging trucks, the ship-building industry which built log, newsprint and chip barges and tugs, as well as the metal and iron works which furnished wire ropes, bolts, and chains, and chemical plants which catered pulp and paper mills. Steed, "Intrametropolitan Manufacturing," 238; and McGover, "Industrial Development in the Vancouver Area," 199.

⁵⁴ Steed, "Intrametropolitan Manufacturing," 237; and Thomas Hutton, "The Innisian Core-Periphery Revisited: Vancouver's Changing Relationship with British Columbia's Staple Economy," *BC Studies* 113 (Spring 1997): 69-100. For more on the staples theory see Harold Innis, *Problems of Staple Production in Canada* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1933) and Angus Gunn and Larry McCann (Eds.), *Heartland and Hinterland: A Regional Geography of Canada* (Toronto: Prentice Hall, 1998).

Figure 1



Changes associated with the character of the urban industrial sector continued through the 1960s. Suburban expansion made the establishment and relocation of industry from the inner-city to the outlying periphery an attractive alternative. As this was happening, the metropolitan industry as a whole was increasingly moving away from manufacturing to wholesaling activities. The limited space available in the urban core, and the expansion of industrial land in the suburban fringe helped shape the character of the city's industrial sector, which increasingly attracted smaller businesses.⁵⁵

By the 1960s, manufacturing industries were getting smaller in size, and wholesaling activities were expanding. The proportion of firms involved in manufacturing remained relatively stable in Greater Vancouver from 1960 to 1966. However, the proportion of industrial

⁵⁵ From 1961 to 1991, industrial land in surrounding municipalities increased threefold to 13,500 acres. In contrast, within the City of Vancouver industrial land was reduced by about 700 acres in the same period. City of Vancouver, *Industrial Lands Review, Part 2*, 11.

space used by manufacturing declined in the same period from 76 percent to 63 percent.

Wholesaling and storage facilities were taking an increasing share of the regional industrial land. The total acreage of wholesaling activities almost doubled from 9 percent to 18 percent. First, the trend suggests a reduction in the size of manufacturing plants, likely as a result of downsizing and a shift away from processing activities. Second, it shows that wholesaling and storage facilities had a need for and were able to get access to larger spaces; a likely outcome of the expansion in industrial suburban land, and of technological changes that made it easier and preferable to operate in single storey buildings.⁵⁶

Suburban growth had an important impact on inner-city industry. While the expansion in suburban industrial production did not lead to the deindustrialization of the urban core, it did help alter the city's industrial sector. In 1961, manufacturing employment was almost evenly split between the city of Vancouver and the metropolitan area. Vancouver accounted for 49 percent (28,269) of metropolitan manufacturing jobs. But with increasing suburban expansion, the city's share of the manufacturing sector steadily declined. By 1971, Vancouver retained 39 percent (30,775) of the regional manufacturing workforce (see **Table 2**).⁵⁷ Peripheral areas provided large spaces at relatively low costs. Industrial land in the inner city could be three times as expensive as land in the outskirts of Vancouver, and sometime eight times as expensive as

⁵⁶ As North and Walter explain, "the introduction of fork-lift and straddle trucks made it more economical to handle general and packaged freight on one level. Old-style, compact multi-storey warehouses fell out of favour. They were replaced by single-storey buildings or simply open areas for weatherproof freight." North and Hardwick, "Vancouver Since the Second World War," 213. Between 1960 and 1966, the share of manufacturing firms declined from 56.7 percent to 52.8 percent, while that of wholesaling firms increased from 24.6 percent to 27.7 percent. Greater Vancouver Regional District, *Space for Industry: A Summary Report* (Vancouver: Greater Vancouver Regional District Planning Department, 1966), 13. For a detailed study on Vancouver's wholesaling industry see Hugh Begg, "Factors in the Location of Wholesale Grocery Industry in Metropolitan Vancouver" (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1968).

⁵⁷ In the period after the redevelopment of False Creek the expansion of the suburban industrial sector continued to play an important role in the metropolitan economy. The trends experienced in the 1950s and 1960s prevailed in the 1970s and 1980s extending the steady change of Vancouver's industrial sector. While Vancouver's industrial sector experienced little absolute growth, suburban industrial employment continued to increase from 1971 to 1981 (see **Table 5**). Between 1971 and 1981, the metropolitan manufacturing workforce expanded by 26 percent, from (78,765 to 99,460) (see **Table 6**). City of Vancouver, *Industrial Lands Review, Part 2*,

land in neighbouring municipalities.⁵⁸ As Steed explains, suburban jobs were concentrated “in a few large-scale sawmills, shingle mills, veneer and plywood mills, or paper plants in North Vancouver, Burnaby, New Westminster, Fraser Mills, Surrey, and Richmond.”⁵⁹ Metal works in central Burnaby, oil refineries on the eastern end of Burrard inlet, fish canneries in Richmond and the shipyards in North Vancouver also contributed to the decentralization of large industries from the inner city of Vancouver.⁶⁰ Growth in the peripheral areas was especially strong through the 1960s. For instance, between 1961 and 1971, suburban municipalities expanded their manufacturing, construction and transportation workforce by 64 percent (18,774), 99 percent (10,230) and 82 percent (12,928) respectively. During the same period, in the city of Vancouver, manufacturing increased by only 9 percent (2,506), construction by 20 percent (1,913), and transportation by 11 percent (2,118) (see **Table 3** and **Table 4**). Despite these trends, Vancouver remained by far the single, top industrial employer in the metropolitan region.⁶¹

Table 2

City of Vancouver Labour Force as a Percentage of the Entire Metropolitan Labour Force, 1951-1971

	1951 (%)	1961 (%)	1971 (%)
Primary	54.2	38.5	30.1
Manufacturing	62.1	49.2	39.1
Construction	66.3	48.3	35.9
Transportation	72.2	54.7	42.5
Trade	73.9	53.8	40.8
FIRE	75.8	60.0	48.2
Service	73.3	58.2	47.2
Total	69.3	53.8	42.6

Where the total metropolitan labour force is,

1951: 208,996

1961: 286,257

1971: 438,515

Source: Census of Canada, 1951, 1961, 1971,

⁵⁸ Greater Vancouver Regional District, *Space for Industry*, Appendix 2.4.

⁵⁹ Steed, “Intrametropolitan Manufacturing,” 239.

⁶⁰ Steed, “Intrametropolitan Manufacturing,” 239.

⁶¹ City of Vancouver, *Industrial Lands Review, Part 2* (Vancouver: Planning Department, 1993): 9, 25.

Table 3
Suburban Labour force by Major Industry Group, 1961-1971

	1961 (000s)	1971 (000s)	1961-71 % Change
Primary	5.9	9.6	60.4
Manufacturing	29.2	47.9	64.3
Construction	10.3	20.5	99.4
Transportation	15.8	28.8	81.7
Trade	27.7	50.8	83.3
FIRE	6.4	14.6	129.2
Service	36.9	79.3	114.5
Total	132.3	251.5	90.0

Source: Census of Canada, 1961, 1971

Table 4
City of Vancouver Labour Force by Major Industry Group, 1961-1971

	1961 (000s)	1971 (000s)	1961-71 % Change
Primary	3.7	4.1	10.1
Manufacturing	28.2	30.8	8.9
Construction	9.6	11.5	19.9
Transportation	19.1	21.2	11.1
Trade	32.2	34.9	8.5
FIRE	9.5	13.6	42.2
Service	51.4	70.8	37.7
Total	153.9	186.9	21.5

Source: Census of Canada, 1961, 1971,

A survey of 1,100 major firms taken in 1959 revealed a small degree of interurban relocation from the central core of the City of Vancouver to the city's outskirts and the surrounding municipalities. Industries were especially likely to relocate in Burnaby within a 21 to 30 minute driving zone from downtown Vancouver.⁶² However, the growth in suburban industrial production resulted mainly from the establishment of new firms, not the relocation of industries from Vancouver's inner core. Not only that, but large plants usually located in the urban periphery were found to operate also in the city's original industrial centre. Firms involved in extensive distribution activities and several large wood processing plants were situated in

⁶² Greater Vancouver Regional District, *Space for Industry*, 14.

False Creek and along the mouth of Burrard inlet.⁶³ These companies, however, had become less concentrated by the mid-1960s. The inner core was especially attractive to small businesses involved in “clothing, knitting, electrical products, printing, publishing, and textiles.”⁶⁴ These trends did not equate with industrial decline per se. The city’s economy was increasingly shifting away from traditional space consuming industries to firms capable of operating in smaller premises and capable of absorbing higher ground rents.⁶⁵

The Redevelopment of False Creek, 1960-1980

By the 1960s, False Creek had evolved into a low-density use industrial site. Suburban expansion, high-priced inner-city land, and a limited industrial land base had contributed to the decline of Vancouver as the favoured spot for industrial development. In 1963, only three sawmills were still operating in False Creek. Much of the space previously occupied by mills was used for open storage, especially for machinery and automobiles. Overgrown lots and empty buildings were scattered throughout the area. Many local owners had delayed or had not been able to conduct upgrades to their properties, equipment and businesses. Investment in False Creek had been hindered by a number of factors including insecurity over tenure. The lease agreement struck between the CPR and the Province in the 1920s ended in 1970. As the date approached, little was known about how the new leases were going to be administered and by whom.

⁶³ Steed, “Intrametropolitan Manufacturing,” 239.

⁶⁴ Steed, “Intrametropolitan Manufacturing,” 239. These trends continued after the redevelopment of False Creek. For instance, from 1986 to 1991 Vancouver attracted the largest number of new manufacturing firms in the metropolitan region. The city still played a key function as an incubator of manufacturing industry. In 1981, the top two industrial employers in Vancouver included: food and beverages industries and wood producing industries respectively. By 1991, printing and the garments industry far outstripped these two. For instance, jobs in warehousing and distribution activities fell from 18,100 in 1971 to 15,200 in 1991; a sixteen percent decline. Conversely, outside of the City of Vancouver the same industry recorded a seventy-five percent job growth from 26,300 to 46,000 employees from 1971 to 1991. City of Vancouver, *Industrial Lands Review, Part 2*, 13.

⁶⁵ City of Vancouver, *Industrial Lands Review, Part 2*, 13.

False Creek, however, was not to remain industrial for much longer. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, two key developments occurred that set off the redevelopment of the site: the land ownership of the area was greatly simplified, and a new reformist municipal party came to power determined to transform False Creek into a non-industrial district.

In 1967 and 1968, land exchanges between the City, the Province and the CPR greatly altered the management of False Creek. These three institutions had been in negotiations since 1965 seeking to simplify the administration of the area and to facilitate its development. In 1967, the Province and the CPR agreed on a land exchange of about twelve acres that gave control of the north shore to the CPR and the south shore to the Province. A further agreement, finalized in 1968, saw the transfer of the Province's 85 acres in False Creek to the City of Vancouver in exchange for \$424,000 and 200 acres of municipal land at Burnaby Mountain – a site that provincial authorities needed for the expansion of Simon Fraser University.⁶⁶ The transfer provided the City with virtually entire ownership of the south shore of False Creek. Having acquired ownership of the land, city officials set out to end industrial presence in the basin and redevelop the site to mixed-use. Industrial leases in the area were not renewed beyond 1970.⁶⁷

At the same time, a group of city officials and urban experts led a concerted effort to promote the redevelopment of False Creek into a residential, commercial and recreational site. The efforts were led by Parks Board commissioners, people affiliated with the municipal party The Elector's Action Movement (TEAM), and urban professionals. Collectively, these three groups emphasised the need to expand the city's housing stock, to beautify the inner city, and to develop a commercially and recreational vibrant area that could contribute to the cosmopolitan

⁶⁶ Ruth Rodger, *Creating a Livable Inner City Community: Vancouver's Experience* (Ottawa: Ministry of Urban Affairs, 1976), 3.

⁶⁷ A few businesses had leases that expired in the late 1970s and early 1980s (these businesses were found on Granville Island).

character of Vancouver. Founded in 1968, TEAM represented the voice of a growing liberal, professional middle class (university professors, teachers, architects, lawyers and investment consultants).⁶⁸ Its key members included: Walter Hardwick, a distinguished professor of geography at the University of British Columbia; Arthur Phillips, a successful investment consultant; Jack Volrich, a lawyer; May Brown, a UBC varsity coach and physical education faculty; Marguerite Ford, a medical librarian; and Michael Harcourt, a community activist and lawyer. TEAM elected two of its members to City Council in 1968, and by 1972 it secured a majority of seats under the mayoralty of Arthur Phillips.⁶⁹

TEAM made the redevelopment of False Creek a critical issue in its electoral platform. Among its key concerns were quality of life, a participatory decision-making process (especially as related to city planning), environmental improvement and affordable housing.⁷⁰ TEAM's candidates distanced themselves from the business oriented Non-Partisan Association (NPA) which had been in power for a remarkable thirty years. The NPA was dominated by local prominent business owners who stressed the need for economic growth, and who approached city planning in much the same way as they approached the managing of a corporation.⁷¹ The election of a TEAM majority signalled a major break from the way the City would approach municipal governance.

⁶⁸ David Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); North and Hardwick, "Vancouver Since the Second World War", 208-209; and David Ley et al., "Time to Grow Up? From Urban Village to World City, 1966-91," in *Vancouver and Its Region* ed. by Graeme Wynn and Timothy Oke (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 234-266.

⁶⁹ The Council elected in 1972 included four university professors, an architect and a social planner – all members of TEAM. Rodger, *Creating a Livable Inner City Community*, 6.

⁷⁰ David Ley et al., "Time to Grow Up?" 238-239 and 261-262; David Ley, "Styles of the Times: Liberal and Neo-Conservative Landscapes in Inner Vancouver, 1968-1986," *Journal of Historical Geography* 13, no.1 (1987): 40-56; and David Ley, "Liberal Ideology and the Postindustrial City," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 70 (1980): 238-258.

⁷¹ One of the NPA's most controversial plans was a 1967 proposal for development of a freeway network through the historic neighbourhoods of Strathcona and Chinatown. Particularly upsetting to citizens was the city's complete lack of consultation with local residents. The proposal incited a public outcry and served as a political rallying point for a rising middle class of educated professionals. See David Ley et al., "Time to Grow Up?" 260-262.

Described by some as a city planner's dream, the redevelopment of False Creek was a massive project. Over 460 acres of inner city land were scheduled for redevelopment. The federal government, under the leadership of Liberal federal minister Ron Basford, spearheaded the redevelopment of Granville Island. Marathon Realty, a subsidiary of the CPR, managed the development of the north shore of False Creek – sold to the Hong Kong-based developer Li Ka-Shing after Expo 86.⁷² The City of Vancouver oversaw the direct redevelopment of the south shore of the basin, and worked in close partnership with the other two owners to influence and shape the style of redevelopment.

Not only did the City spearhead the project, it played a highly interventionist role in the redevelopment of False Creek. In spite of the vast scope of the project, City Hall maintained a remarkably tight oversight over and involvement in all aspects of the planning, management and execution of the redevelopment. The first properties to be redeveloped were zones 2, 3, 6, 9 and 10. These zones included Granville Island, the south shore of the basin between the Burrard and the Cambie street bridges, and the northern shore of the Creek between the Granville Bridge and Carrall Street (for a total of 335 acres). The City took the role as manager and coordinator of all redevelopment occurring on its lands (zones 6 and 10). This position allowed the City to play a major role in the redevelopment process. For instance, the City established the managing, organizational and consultative structure for the project. It provided detailed policies and guidelines for how the redevelopment was to take place, and how the design of the built environment should look.⁷³ The City was also in charge of appointing the developers, architects and consultants responsible for carrying out the construction and design of the site.⁷⁴

⁷² Ley, "Styles of the Times," 59-63.

⁷³ These policies and guidelines also applied to lands that the City did not own.

⁷⁴ Also see, Rodger, *Creating a Livable Inner City Community*, 16-17. For the guidelines and requirements created by the City see, City of Vancouver, *Official Development Plan for False Creek*, By-Law No.4812 (1974).

City hall took great care and effort in planning the redevelopment and in ensuring that the redevelopment accurately met the public expectations. This was done by setting up an elaborate system of panels consisting of both experts and laypeople who were put in charge of assessing development options for the area, and by delegating the task to execute the project to a small team of qualified professionals. It took city authorities six years, from 1968 to 1973, to agree upon and develop a concise set of land-use concepts and policies for the redevelopment of False Creek. In that time, the City hired a number of consultants and created a sophisticated network of planning groups to investigate development ideas for the area. These included the False Creek Study Group (created in 1970), the Planning Department False Creek Team (created in 1972), the Special Council Committee for False Creek (created in 1971), a development consultant (appointed in 1973), and various citizens' review panels.⁷⁵ Collectively, these groups worked with other city departments such as Planning and Engineering and drafted design proposals, commissioned development area studies, investigated financing strategies, and deliberated over policy guidelines.⁷⁶ In 1974, once the City had approved a comprehensive plan for the redevelopment, it created the False Creek Development Group.⁷⁷ Headed by E. D. Sutcliffe, who had been acting as the project's primary development consultant since 1973, the False Creek

⁷⁵ The False Creek Study Group consisted of architectural firm Thompson, Berwick, Pratt & Partners, H. W. Pickstone, Assistant Director of Planning, and three consultants: R. B. Walkey, G. W. Brown, K. H. Gillespie, Hans Blumenfeld. Between 1970 and 1972, the False Creek Study Group produced five proposals for the area which provided the basis the layout, financing, building and zoning of the redeveloped site. See CVA, City Council and Office of the City Clerk Fonds, 120-E-5, File 315, "False Creek Proposals: Reports 1 to 3," 1971; CVA, City Council and Office of the City Clerk Fonds, 120-E-6, File 315, "False Creek Proposals: Reports 4 to 5," 1971. See also Rodger, *Creating a Livable Inner City Community*, 4-5, 13.

⁷⁶ CVA, City Council and Office of the City Clerk Fonds, False Creek Correspondence, 18-G-1, File 5, Vancouver City Planning Commission, "Report on False Creek Development," 1973. Also see City of Vancouver, *False Creek Progress Report* (Vancouver: Department of Planning and Civic Development, 1973). And CVA, City Council and Office of the City Clerk Fonds, Special Committee Correspondence, False Creek Land Use, 18-G-1, File 6, Vancouver City Planning Department, "False Creek: Policies and Actions," June 1973. And CVA, City Publications Collection False Creek Study Group, PD 332, "Progress Report, 2" Many 1971. For an example of a citizens' review panel see CVA, City Corporate Services Fonds, City Planning Department Reports, 927-D-1, File 6, City of Vancouver, "Briefs and Other Written Documents Submitted in Response to the Three Design Schemes for Area 6, False Creek," June 1974.

⁷⁷ CVA, City Publication Collection, PD 969, City of Vancouver, "Official Development Plan for False Creek," June 1974. See also Rodger, *Creating a Livable Inner City Community*, 15-16, 21-22.

Development Group's main task was to guide the development of the land in accordance with City policy. Sutcliffe reported directly to City Council, and with a small staff of three professionals, was responsible for advising, evaluating and recommending to elected officials on all proposed developments of City-owned lands in the basin.⁷⁸ The project management team was expanded in 1975 to include Frank Stanzl Construction Ltd. as the coordinating developer for market housing and commercial space, and Thompson, Berwick, Pratt & Partners as the coordinating architect.⁷⁹

The redevelopment of False Creek included a series of unique and innovative planning practice that helped make the project a success. False Creek was developed as a mixed-use, medium density area with an extensive system of open and public spaces. Redevelopment took place over three periods: Phase I from 1975 to 1976, Phase II from 1979 to 1982 and Phase III from 1982 to 1986. Key policy guidelines for the redevelopment included: the retention and clean up of the water area in the basin, the protection of view corridors, the creation of parkland, the development of low and medium income housing, the accommodation of different lifestyles and household types, the establishment of a pedestrian-friendly environment, and the creation of high-amenity community.⁸⁰ The redevelopment created 1800 dwellings (including rental, cooperative, and condominium) a third of which were developed as low income housing.⁸¹ The accommodation scheme allowed for a mix of 25% families with children, 25% young and mature

⁷⁸ CVA, Mayor's Office Fonds, False Creek, 46-A-7, File 32, The False Creek Development Group, "False Creek News: Special Summer Issue," June 1976.

⁷⁹ City of Vancouver, *False Creek Progress Report*, 1973.

⁸⁰ For a detailed example of the design guidelines see CVA, City Corporate Services Fonds, 927-D-1 File 9 "Thompson, Berwick, Pratt & Partners Reports," 1974; and CVA, The False Creek Development Group, *False Creek News*, June 1976.

⁸¹ City of Vancouver, City Manager, RTS No. 2262, CC File No. 8206, *Policy Report: Development and Building*, September, 2001. For a detailed account of the financing scheme by which the City was able to provide non-market housing see Rodger, *Creating a Livable Inner City Community*, 26.

couples, 15% elderly and 35% singles.⁸² It also incorporated a community centre, an elementary school and two civic marinas, and liveboard moorage. In addition, city-owned land in False Creek was not sold to developers or other independent parties. Rather, the City adopted a leasing policy. This strategy allowed the city to retain control of the land as a single parcel for future redevelopment. Leases were provided for sixty years with ground rents to be renegotiated every ten years.⁸³

As many industries in False Creek struggled to adapt to changing economic conditions, two events unfolded that triggered the redevelopment of the area into a non-industrial site. The land ownership in the basin was greatly simplified, and a municipal party came to power determined to transform False Creek. The redevelopment proved to be a vast and transformative project. The City took a strong interventionist role and established a sophisticated management structure and a network of panels to achieve its goals. Officials implemented innovative planning and design practices that contributed to make the redevelopment a success.

False Creek's Social and Economic Landscape in the Wake of Redevelopment, 1970-1990

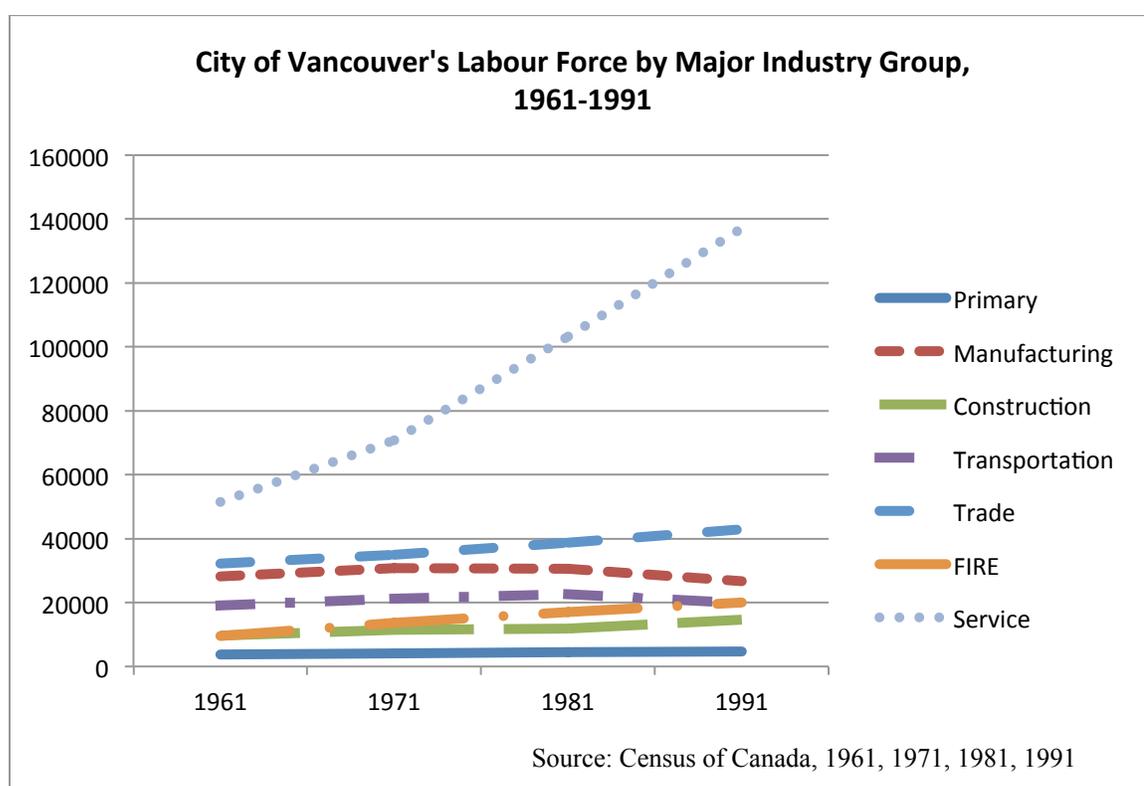
False Creek was redeveloped at a time of important economic changes. Growth in the service industries was unprecedented and helped create pressures for the redevelopment of inner city industrial land (see **Figure 2**). In the twenty years after the end of World War II, the service industry was by far the fastest growing sector in the city's economy. From 1961 to 1971, Vancouver's finance, insurance and real estate industry (FIRE) expanded its workforce by 42

⁸² CVA, The False Creek Development Group, *False Creek News*, June 1976. See also Rodger, *Creating a Livable Inner City Community*, 12, 16.

⁸³ Financing the project proved to be especially difficult. The City relied on a complex capital scheme that relied, in part, on a 10.8 million dollar loan from the Bank of Montreal, and a 18.3 million dollar loan from the Central Mortgage Housing Corporation (changed to the Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation in 1979). Costs were to be recovered through grounds rents over a period of twenty-eight years Rodger, *Creating a Livable Inner City Community*, 26-27.

percent (see **Table 5**). Community, business and personal services experienced a similar growth (46 percent). In the same period, manufacturing only increased by 9 percent. Service sector growth in the metropolitan area was even more dramatic. The FIRE industries expanded by 77 percent, while business, community and personal services by 82 percent.⁸⁴

Figure 2



⁸⁴ Trevor Barnes et al., "Vancouver, the Province, and the Pacific Rim," 180-181.

Table 5
City of Vancouver Labour Force by Major Industry Group, 1961-1991

	1961 (000s)	1971 (000s)	1981 (000s)	1991 (000s)	1961-71 % Change	1971-81 %Change	1981-91 %Change
Primary	3.7	4.1	4.4	4.6	10.1	6.4	5.1
Manufacturing	28.2	30.8	30.6	26.7	8.9	-0.6	-12.7
Construction	9.6	11.5	11.8	14.7	19.9	2.6	24.2
Transportation	19.1	21.2	22.7	19.8	11.1	7.0	-12.9
Trade	32.2	34.9	38.7	42.8	8.5	10.9	10.5
FIRE	9.5	13.6	17.0	20.0	42.2	25.3	17.8
Service	51.4	70.8	103.2	137	37.7	45.6	32.8
Total	153.9	186.9	228.4	265.6	21.5	22.2	16.3

Source: Census of Canada, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991

The growth experienced in the 1950s and 1960s continued as the redevelopment of False Creek unfolded.⁸⁵ Between 1961 and 1981, community, business and personal services expanded by 196 percent (from 88,383 to 261,400). In the same period, finances, insurance and real estate (FIRE) industries experienced an even bigger growth of 207 percent (from 15,918 to 48,796). With public administration these sectors accounted for over 85 percent of the city's total job growth for the 1970s (see **Table 6**).⁸⁶ Service sector job growth (especially in managerial and professional occupations) occurred throughout British Columbia, but was disproportionately concentrated in Greater Vancouver, and even more so in the downtown of the city of Vancouver.⁸⁷ Job creation in the inner city was accompanied by a corresponding expansion in

⁸⁵ Between 1981 and 1984, 40,000 new jobs were created in the province-wide service sector. In contrast, every other occupational sector experienced combined provincial job losses 90,000. Thomas Hutton and David Ley, "Location, Linkages and Labour: The Downtown Complex of Corporate Activities in a Medium Size City, Vancouver, British Columbia," *Economic Geography* 63 (1987): 129. Also see Hutton, "The Innisian Core-Periphery Revisited," 77. For more detailed information on Vancouver's labour sector in the 1970s and early 1980s see Peter Daniel, "A Geography of Unemployment in Vancouver C.M.A.," (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1985).

⁸⁶ These figures are also discussed in Thomas Hutton and David Ley, "Location, Linkages, and Labour," 129.

⁸⁷ Between 1971 and 1981, four-fifths, and one quarter, and of all new managerial and professional positions in the city and in Greater Vancouver respectively were situated within its urban core. Hutton and Ley, "Location, Linkages, and Labour," 129.

Table 6
Vancouver Metropolitan Labour Force, 1961-1991

	1961 (000s)	1971 (000s)	1981 (000s)	1991 (000s)	1961-71 % Change	1971-81 % Change	1981-91 % Change
Primary	9.7	13.7	18	21.4	41.0	31.7	18.2
Manufacturing	57.5	78.8	99.4	98.7	37.0	26.3	-0.8
Construction	19.9	32.0	46.0	64.3	61.0	43.5	39.9
Transportation	34.9	50.0	71.9	79.9	43.1	43.9	11.1
Trade	59.9	85.7	130.3	165.9	43.1	52.0	27.3
FIRE	15.9	28.2	48.8	66.4	77.1	73.1	36.1
Service	88.4	150.1	261.4	386.5	69.8	74.1	47.9
Total	286.2	438.5	675.9	883.1	53.2	54.1	30.6

Source: Census of Canada, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991

downtown office space. Between 1957 and 1980, office space in Vancouver almost tripled to reach 15.7million square feet, or about 360 acres.⁸⁸

Intense growth in the service sector created critical pressures for the redevelopment of inner-city industrial land. In a 1985 study on the topic, urban geographer David Ley showed that development of inner-city office space was a stronger determinant of middle or upper-class resettlement of Canadian city centres, than housing prices, family structure or the entry of the baby boom generation into the housing market.⁸⁹ Changes associated with the orientation of the labour market toward advanced services were reflected in changes in urban spatial structures. Growth in the service sector produced a large class of professionals and managers working downtown which in turn provided “a demand base for housing reinvestment in the inner city.”⁹⁰

The redevelopment of False Creek serves as a case in point. No other neighbourhood in

⁸⁸ Office space development was highest in the 1970s. Between 1972 and 1985, Vancouver’s office space doubled. Trevor Barnes et al., “Vancouver, the Province, and the Pacific Rim,” 181. For a closer look at office space growth in the 1960s and 1970s see Walter Hardwick, *Vancouver* (New York: Collier-Macmillan, 1974), 61.

⁸⁹ David Ley, “Alternative Explanations for Inner-City Gentrification: A Canadian Assessment,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 76, no. 4 (1986): 521-535.

⁹⁰ Ley frames his analysis on an understanding of gentrification as a change in household social status. He constructs an index of gentrification based “on the mean value of (1) the percentage of the work force employed in the quaternary sector (professional, managerial, technical, and administrative jobs) plus (2) the percentage of the population with university education.” His study is conducted for twenty-two Canadian urban centres. The index of gentrification is held as a dependent variable. Through regression analysis, Ley tests the relationship between the gentrification index a set of indicators that serve as independent variables. His independent variables are drawn from four main sources: demographic data, housing market data, urban amenity data and labour market data. Interestingly income and unemployment variables had only a weak correlation with the gentrification index. Ley, “Alternative Explanations for Inner-City Gentrification,” 522, 526, 528-530, 532.

Vancouver experienced as much of a change in social status (as defined by Ley, see previous footnote) over the period 1971 and 1981 as did False Creek South. The redevelopment of the area as a medium density residential and commercial site paralleled the rapid growth in the quaternary sector experienced in the neighbouring central business district.⁹¹

The transformation of False Creek as a post-industrial site occurred within a social and economic context. Examining the social development of the basin since the 1970s is beyond the scope of this study. In an attempt to provide an illustration of some of the changes associated with the social landscape of the area I direct my analysis to the neighbourhood of Fairview Slopes. Fairview serves as an especially good example because it was the residential area most immediately affected by the redevelopment.⁹² Extensive research has been done in the neighbourhood, most notably by Caroline Mills from whom I draw much of my discussion on the topic.

As a result of its vicinity to False Creek, Fairview Slopes shared many of the problems associated with industrial activity in the basin. In the years leading to the redevelopment, the neighbourhood was economically depressed and its housing stock in decline.⁹³ The encroachment of light industry in the area added to its unappealing residential character.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Fairview Slopes experienced a transformation that was consistent with the broader changes affecting False Creek at the time. The neighbourhood had been a long-standing and economically depressed working-class district. In the years leading to the redevelopment it had transitioned to a haven for students and “young households adopting non-

⁹¹ David Ley, “Social Upgrading in Six Canadian Inner Cities,” *Canadian Geographer*, vol. 32, no. 1 (1988): 40.

⁹² Caroline Mills’ ethnographic study of Vancouver’s Fairview neighbourhood is an indispensable source to the topic. Mills builds from Ley’s regression analysis of gentrification indices in Canadian urban centres to give a more detailed evaluation of patterns of gentrification in the city. Caroline Mills, “Interpreting Gentrification: Postindustrial, Postpatriarchal, Postmodern?” (PhD diss, University of British Columbia, 1989).

⁹³ John Zacharias, “The Redevelopment of Fairview Slopes in Vancouver, 1975-1995,” *Urban History Review* 26, no.1 (October 1997): 32-24. See also Mills, “‘Life on the Upslope’: The Postmodern Landscape of Gentrification,” *Environment and Planning D*, vol. 6 (1988):172.

familistic lifestyles.” The area’s main attraction was the availability of centrally located cheap housing. As the redevelopment unfolded, Fairview evolved into a neighbourhood populated by more older people with more conservative and affluent lifestyles.⁹⁴

The redevelopment of Fairview Slopes was accompanied by clear changes in its demographic composition. In the early 1970s it was populated by a mixed of young students, blue collar workers, artists and the occasional professional.⁹⁵ As the years passed, its student and youth population declined.⁹⁶ By 1986, the neighbourhood was dominated by an older young adult population.⁹⁷ The neighbourhood also experienced a dramatic shift in family composition, with the percentage of childless families consistently increasing in the period 1971-1986.⁹⁸ By the end of the 1980s, local residents had high levels of education and were overrepresented in the professional and managerial sectors.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Lum’s study on Fairview Slopes shows that by 1981 most households in the area had above-average educational attainments and household income levels. Lum, “Residential Development in the Inner City of Vancouver,” 21. Mills, “Interpreting Gentrification,” 225.

⁹⁵ Population numbers in Fairview Slopes initially declined from 1435 in 1971 to 835 in 1976. But rebounded to 1085 by 1981. Mills, “Interpreting Gentrification,” 201, 219. Also see Sophia Lum, “Residential Development in the Inner City of Vancouver: A Case Study of Fairview Slopes,” (MA thesis, Queen’s University, 1984), 16, 19.

⁹⁶ In 1971, 15 to 24 year olds made up almost a quarter of all inhabitants in the neighbourhood, compared to 18 percent for the rest of city. But this number fell to 14 percent by 1986 putting Fairview Slopes more in par with the whole city (15 percent). The population of children under fifteen years old experienced even sharper declines. As Mill notes the trend suggest the “loss of young transient and student population,” but also possibly the aging of the original cohort not replaced by an influx of new students. Mills, “Interpreting Gentrification,” 219.

⁹⁷ In 1986, Fairview had a more mature population than in 1971: 35 percent in the 25-34 age group, and 23 percent in the 35-44 age group. Mills, “Interpreting Gentrification,” 219.

⁹⁸ In 1971, 43.4 percent of families in Fairview Slopes had no children. This figure was virtually the same for the rest of city at the time (43.2 percent). By 1986, however, as many as 65.3 percent of families in Fairview Slopes had no children compared to 40.0 percent for the rest of the city. In 1981, the neighbourhood also accounted for an overrepresentation of lone-parent families (23 percent) in contrast to 14 percent for the city. Lone-parent families headed by males were even more overrepresented in Fairview Slopes (29 percent) compared to (16 percent) in the city. Mills attributes this to the high costs of living in the area which would have been more easily met by male heads. Figures on household structure are equally distinct. In 1981, only about a third of households were family households. Over half of the population in 1981 was defined as non-family persons. Most households (55 percent) comprised only one person, and 33 percent comprised two people. By 1986 these figures were changing. Single-person households were in decline, while two persons households were growing. The number of families was also increasing. Mills, “Interpreting Gentrification,” 222-225.

⁹⁹ With the exception of the Downtown Eastside, labour force participation for men in 1971 in Fairview was the lowest in the entire city. By 1981, rates were considerably higher. Almost 70 percent of two-parent households had both spouses in the labour force, compared to 50 percent for the city. In 1971, blue-collar occupations (particularly the construction trades, transport equipment operating and materials handling) were overrepresented, while senior

Demographic changes in Fairview Slopes were paralleled by rising property rents and real estate prices. Mean monthly rental costs in 1971 were among the lowest in the city.¹⁰⁰ By 1981, the neighbourhood's mean monthly rent had risen dramatically greatly surpassing that of the city.¹⁰¹ Development pressures in the area also led to a rapid increase of property prices and speculation. Between 1969 and 1973, a particular property on West 7th Avenue was sold four times in as many years. In that short period its value had risen a remarkable 478 percent.¹⁰² Housing sales were particularly active after 1976 when the neighbourhood was officially rezoned to medium density residential and commercial.¹⁰³

By the early 1990s, Fairview had become “a fashionable district of middle-class residents and distinctive architecture.”¹⁰⁴ The neighbourhood was increasingly attractive to single, educated professionals who wanted to live in proximity to the downtown core. About half of the housing stock that existed before 1976 had been torn down. Old, wood-frame houses had been redeveloped into medium density townhouses and luxury condominiums.¹⁰⁵ What had traditionally been a mixed, light industrial, working class neighbourhood evolved into one of

white collar, clerical and sales occupations were underrepresented. By 1981, the labour force profile of the neighbourhood was changing. Blue collar positions were comparatively underrepresented, whereas senior white collar occupations greatly exceeded city averages. Mills, “Interpreting Gentrification,” 226-232. Also see, George Fujii, “The Revitalization of the Inner City: A Case Study of the Fairview Slopes Neighbourhood, B.C.” (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1981), 124-128.

¹⁰⁰ In 1971, the mean monthly rent in Fairview Slopes was \$95/month, compared to \$127/month for the city.

¹⁰¹ In 1981, the mean monthly rent in Fairview Slopes had increased to \$517/month, greatly surpassing that of the city which stood at \$393/month. Mills, “Interpreting Gentrification,” 226-227.

¹⁰² The property was bought for \$14,000 in 1969 and sold two years later for \$28,000. The property was sold within six months for \$55,000. And seven months later, it was sold again for \$75,000. Fujii, “The Revitalization of the Inner City,” 98.

¹⁰³ Lum, “Residential Development in the Inner City of Vancouver,” 32-37 and 46-57.

¹⁰⁴ Mills, “Fairview Slopes, Vancouver: Gentrification in the Inner City,” *Canadian Geographer*, vol. 35, no. 3 (1991): 306.

¹⁰⁵ Lum, “Residential Development in the Inner City of Vancouver,” 25, 31.

Vancouver's prime residential hotspots. Marketed for its urbane and cosmopolitan atmosphere, Fairview Slopes developed a reputation for its award winning postmodernist architecture.¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

The changes associated with Fairview Slopes in the 1970s and 1980s are indicative of the wider transformation of False Creek as a postindustrial site. Established as the western terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885, the inlet quickly developed as Vancouver's industrial centre. In the first two decades of the twentieth-century, leading municipal and federal officials embarked on an intensive reclamation scheme that saw the creation of Granville Island, and an expansion of over 200 acres of inner-city industrial land. Industries proliferated in the area: sawmills, iron works, shipyards, machine shops, metal products, chemical plants, warehouses, and cement works. As industry intensified, neighbouring residential areas became increasingly populated by local workers and their families. The high incidence of fires, pollution and economic instability helped reinforce the image of industrial False Creek as a particularly inhospitable urban environment. World War II brought a short-lived boom to the area which was followed by an accelerated decline of local processing industries. Manufacturing continued to play a significant role in the city's economy but was increasingly overshadowed by the growth of the service sector. In the postwar period, Vancouver's industrial sector was further decentralized by the steady expansion of suburban municipalities. While the city did not witness a high level of relocation of its industry to peripheral areas, neighbouring municipalities were successful in attracting new industrial production. The greater availability of space and lower land costs played a critical role in this regard.

¹⁰⁶ In the 1980s, Fairview Slopes had the highest density of award-winning architecture of any area in Vancouver. Mills, "Life on the Upslope," 172.

In the mid-1960s, negotiations between the City of Vancouver, the provincial government and the CPR greatly simplified the ownership and management of parcels in False Creek. These events, coupled by the coming to power of The Elector's Action Movement paved the way for the redevelopment of the area as a postindustrial site. TEAM members, many of them university educated professionals, brought new values to city planning. Emphasising the importance of democratic governance and the need for more livable communities, City Hall set out to transform False Creek into a medium density, mixed-use development. Continued growth in the service sector resulted in the expansion of downtown office space, and put pressure on the city to invest in inner-city housing and recreational amenities. A growing class of single, professional and managerial workers started settling in redeveloped neighbourhoods. Fairview Slopes was one of the first and most popular of such neighbourhoods. Its transformation from an economically stagnant, working class area to a trendy cosmopolitan hub illustrates the broader changes affecting False Creek in the wake of redevelopment.

CHAPTER TWO:

Visions of False Creek

In its assessment of Vancouver's industrial sector, the 1928 Harland Bartholomew Plan for the City of Vancouver opened its description of False Creek with the heading: "The False Creek industrial district has been permitted to become an eyesore and a menace to health. Its regeneration is essential to normal civic development."¹⁰⁷ Thin on details, the Vancouver City Plan called for the general need for "adequate sanitary sewers" and for a "more systematic location" of the industries dotting the basin. Concerns over the poor physical state of False Creek were widespread at the time, and continued to be voiced in the decades that followed. As newspaper articles, correspondences and planning reports demonstrate, the problems associated with industrial activity in False Creek were many: water, noise and air pollution, rail, truck and barge traffic, and the presence of structurally unsound and dilapidated buildings. But if the Vancouver Plan advocated for regeneration, it did not call for the elimination of industrial activity in the area. Somewhat paradoxically, the city plan emphasised "the importance of not only retaining the present industries along the channel, but of encouraging others to locate there."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ The Commission's decision to provide such a statement as an opening remark on False Creek is telling. It reflects the extent to which False Creek was perceived as a site of urban decay in need of redevelopment as early as the 1920s. Harland Bartholomew and Associates, *A Plan for the City of Vancouver, British Columbia, Including Point Grey, South Vancouver and a General Plan for the Region* (Vancouver: Town Planning Commission, 1928), 147. See also, Ruth Rodger, *Creating a Livable Inner City Community: Vancouver's Experience* (Vancouver: False Creek Development Group, 1976), 1.

¹⁰⁸ The authors of the plan promoted continued industrial presence in False Creek, on the premise that industrial removal would deprive Vancouver of important capital, and spell serious consequences for a host of auxiliary enterprises. In advocating for further industrial development, Bartholomew and his associates were speaking to basic tenets of city planning and urban progress of the time Bartholomew and Associates, *A Plan for the City of Vancouver*, 147; Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002); and Robert K. Burkinshaw, *False Creek: History, Images, and Research Sources* (Vancouver: City of Vancouver Archives, Occasional Paper no. 2, 1984), 53-55.

The vision of False Creek as an industrial site dominated municipal politics for much of the twentieth-century. By the 1960s, however, this vision was increasingly coming under attack. The coming to power of the Electors' Action Movement (TEAM) effectively marked the end of industrial False Creek, closing a long chapter in the city's history. An examination of the changing and competing visions of local residents and municipal officials concerning the role of False Creek in the city's life illuminates the extent to which the deindustrialization of the area was the result of political deliberation. The loss of False Creek's industrial sector was not inevitable let alone natural. Local authorities made deliberate policy decisions and embraced a vision for False Creek that contributed to the eradication of industry from the area. The vision guiding the redevelopment efforts was intimately enmeshed within particular understandings of progress and urban life. In describing industrial enterprise and its corresponding workforce as obsolete, early proponents of redevelopment spoke to the increasingly popular idea that industrial activity had little place in the global cosmopolitan city.

The Vision of False Creek as an Industrial Site

Historical narratives tend to trivialize the shift from industrial to mixed-use development and frame it as a smooth and unambiguous process. However, the question of how to deal with industrial presence in False Creek remained open right until the very end of the 1960s. Up to that point, if anything, support in favour of industrial presence suggested that the site would continue to remain industrial. To be sure, the redevelopment of False Creek into a commercial and residential site gained over the years far-flung public support, but in the years leading to the start of redevelopment, disagreement over the fate of local industries was far from being resolved. The view that revitalization could be achieved by intensifying and expanding industrial

operations in False Creek dominated municipal policy in the 1960s.¹⁰⁹ In the decades leading to 1968, every single major study on the state and future of industry in False Creek reaffirmed the commitment to see industrial activity in the basin continue.¹¹⁰ By January 1962, the False Creek Development Committee – headed by Ald. Halford Wilson – had submitted a comprehensive multi-million dollar, twenty-year plan to redevelop the area into a “modern industrial park.” The plan was lauded by the press as the “first constructive step to clean up the polluted, chaotic mess in False Creek.”¹¹¹ If local newspapers had voiced criticism of the state of decay in the basin, many journalists continued to reaffirm the idea that False Creek was nonetheless a “prime industrial site.”¹¹² Surprisingly, municipal commitment to industrial production remained strong despite mounting concerns over the area’s physical and social decline. A 1957 editorial in the

¹⁰⁹ The favourable view held by the Vancouver Town Planning Commission in regards to industrial activity in False Creek is reflected in such statements as: “Vancouver is fortunate in having both a commercial and an industrial harbour;” “the False Creek channel is too valuable an asset to the city to consider its complete filling and obliteration. Rather, it should be encouraged as an industrial entity of extreme usefulness to Vancouver” and “we see False Creek devoted to the many lighter industries which require railway and water communication and which would turn these tidal flats, at one time considered a detriment to the growth of Vancouver, into one of the city’s most valuable and productive assets.” Bartholomew and Associates, *A Plan for the City of Vancouver*, 25, 149.

¹¹⁰ The extent to which False Creek was viewed as an industrial area was notably reflected in the decision to officially rezone the whole of Fairview Slopes as an industrial site in the “early 1960s” Mills, “Interpreting Gentrification,” 196. Some of the most notable studies on False Creek’s economic development include (in chronological order): Alexander Gibb, *National Ports Survey, 1931-1932* (Ottawa, F.A. Acland, Printer to the King Most Excellent Majesty, 1932); Harland Bartholomew and Associates, *A Preliminary Report Upon Transportation, Harbours and Railways* (Vancouver: Town Planning Commission 1947); City of Vancouver Archives (hereafter CVA), City Engineering Services Fonds, 805-A-2 file 2D, G. Kilburn, “False Creek Development Survey: Interim Report on Railway Services,” 1951; CVA, City Engineering Services Fonds, 805-A-2 file 3-4, False Creek Planning and Development Committee, “False Creek Development Survey: Industrial Survey of False Creek,” 1952; CVA, City Engineering Services Fonds, 805-A-2 file 8, D. M. Churchill, “False Creek Development Survey: The Economic Study of the False Creek Industrial Area,” 1953; J. C. Oliver and E. L. Cousins, “Report on False Creek, Vancouver, B.C. A report to His Worship the Mayor and Members of the City Council” (Vancouver: City Engineering Department, 1955); CVA, City Planning Department Fonds, 925-F-2 file 1, Technical Sub-Committee, “False Creek Development Study: A Progress Report of the Technical Sub-Committee,” 1960; CVA, City Publications Collection, PD 815, G. F. Fountain, “The Technical Committee on the False Creek Development,” 1962; CVA, City Publications Collection, PD 2517, Vancouver City Planning Department, “Report on the Rehabilitation of False Creek,” 1963; CVA, City Publications Collection, PD 814, W. E. Graham, “False Creek Rehabilitation Report,” 1964; CVA, City Council and Office of the City Clerk Fonds, 18-G-2 file 2, Vancouver Planning Department, “Columbia-Quebec Connector and False Creek Rehabilitation,” 1963; and June Fukui, *A Background Report on False Creek For the Vancouver Board of Trade* (Vancouver: Vancouver Board of Trade, 1968).

¹¹¹ *Vancouver Sun*, 30 December 1961, 1.

¹¹² *Vancouver Sun*, 3 April 1964, 3; and *Province*, 17 December 1960, 19.

Vancouver Province evocatively captured the discontent that vented itself against industrial production at the time:

False Creek means industry ... It also means smog, a thousand smells, all bad, float houses, railways, boats and mud ... It is a monstrous thing of oily, wood-clogged waters, evil smelling homes. [It] is 'home' for the homeless, the down-and-outers who sleep in alcoholic stupor on the railway-ribbed flats at the head of the creek. And it is a garbage dump, a sewer outlet, for the city of Vancouver.¹¹³

The article rearticulated what were at the time prominent ideas about the link between industrial production and urban decline. Cultural critics and social commentators had long blamed industrial capitalism for the ills of modern urban society. From liberal reformers to union leaders, individuals raised concerns over the real and perceived threat of industry on spiritual and physical health. Adding to the sense of indignation was the idea that industrial activity had decimated a once pristine natural ecosystem. "False Creek was once a clean arm of the sea fed by fresh creeks," wrote the *Province*.¹¹⁴ Ideally located as a prime spot for swimming and fishing, the area had been ravaged by unbridled industrial development, its fresh-water creeks "choked" by the excessive and reckless dumping of "logs, boulders, mud and garbage."¹¹⁵ Just as critical was the editorial's censure of municipal inaction regarding industrial decay in the basin. Reality on the ground was exacerbated by a long-history of political impasse and an endemic lack of political will, which as the editorial suggested, spelled a grim and uncertain future for False Creek. But for all the outburst against industrial presence in the channel, there was little to suggest that development in the area would be taken to a new direction. If anything, the editorial was clear in its suggestion that "False Creek as an industrial centre [was] here to stay."¹¹⁶

Anxiety and resentment against existing industries in the basin was affected by a general sense of

¹¹³ *Province*, 28 September 1957.

¹¹⁴ *Province*, 28 September 1957.

¹¹⁵ *Province*, 28 September 1957.

¹¹⁶ *Province*, 28 September 1957.

resignation with the status quo. Far from being forgotten, the industrial presence in the basin was seen as a lasting and dominant fixture of the local inner-city landscape.

Despite increasing discontent about pollution in False Creek, the City's proposed solution for revitalizing the area had not changed.¹¹⁷ An unprecedented influx of City-commissioned planning reports continued to promote competitive industrial development as the key to the regeneration of the area. Much like the 1928 Plan for the City of Vancouver, city officials emphasised the need to attract successful industries and to expand (not eradicate) industrial production in Vancouver's inner city. Addressing the Civic Bureau of the Vancouver Board of Trade on January 1963, the then Director of Planning, G. F. Fountain expressed this very sentiment:

We appear to have ample land already zoned for industrial use to cover an expected increase of 50% in the amount of industrial acreage. An accelerated program of redevelopment in the blighted areas around False Creek would make available considerably *more* land for industrial use at a depreciated price sufficient to attract *more* industry. The development of public industrial estates also appears to be an attractive field for civic enterprise.¹¹⁸

While acknowledging that industrial production had problems, G. F. Fountain spoke to the view that industry was ultimately a good fit for the local economy. Well into the 1960s, the City's position on False Creek was to stimulate further industrial investment in the area. This position was reiterated by a number of prominent officials. As argued by Planning Board chairman, Harry Pickstone, and by then acting Mayor, Bill Rathie, road maintenance and favourable leasing terms were to be key measures for ensuring the rehabilitation of the basin.¹¹⁹ Reliable road access to the Creek and long term leases, they argued, would encourage increased

¹¹⁷ Burkinshaw, *False Creek*, 45-46 and 55-56.

¹¹⁸ My emphasis. G. F. Fountain, *The Changing Face of the City: An Address Given Before the Civic Bureau of the Vancouver Board of Trade, January 10, 1963* (Vancouver: Vancouver Board of Trade, 1963), 23.

¹¹⁹ *Vancouver Sun*, 3 April 1964, 1. See also, *Vancouver Sun*, 18 August 1964, 43.

capital investment on the part of existing local industries. Officials calling for the transformation of False Creek into a “modern industrial site” were doing so, aware that most of the leases in the area were only a few years away from being expired. No consideration was given to the possibility of discontinuing the leases and opening the area to non-industrial redevelopment. In fact, by December 1964, the CPR, the provincial government and the City of Vancouver were actively seeking to prolong leases to industries from twenty-one to *sixty* years. City officials were planning to both renew *and* extend the leasing terms, a position that became untenable within a matter of years. The clean-up of False Creek was envisioned as a process whereby, through a system of incentives, local and new industries would play a more active and responsible role in tending to their properties and to the area's general infrastructure. Not only was the City not calling for the phase-out or relocation of industry, but it saw further industrial development and industrial revitalization as the solution to the area's many problems. Far from considering industrial activity obsolete, many municipal officials regarded industry as an integral part of Vancouver's status as a modern city. And while contemporary examinations of the redevelopment efforts tend to naturalize the demise of local industries in the basin, few observers at the time would have guessed that False Creek would be transformed into a mixed-use residential and commercial development.

The City's pro-industry position endured until the end of the 1960s and figured prominently in debates over the future of the area. Growing doubts about the economic viability of Vancouver's local industrial sector did little to persuade the NPA-dominated Council to abandon its commitment to industrial presence in the basin. Alderman Marianne Linnell's position on the matter exemplifies the equivocal nature of municipal policy on False Creek in the 1960s. In October 1965, appalled by the decrepit state of the area, Linnell proposed the

relocation of all rundown industries from the basin. But while she was upset about the Creek's conditions, she did not however call for a shift to non-industrial use. As a way to revitalize False Creek and turn it into "a pleasant and attractive showpiece," the Alderman proposed to launch an urban renewal project that would assist struggling enterprises while helping "Canadian businessmen develop new job producing industries and buy existing ones."¹²⁰ Like Rathie and Pickstone, Linnell reiterated the idea that while rundown, False Creek would best be developed as a high-end industrial park.¹²¹

Politicians spoke emphatically about their support for industry even when pressed to take a different course of action in False Creek. Disagreement over the future of the site was particularly strong between parks board commissioners and NPA officials.¹²² The parks board emerged as one of the most outspoken critics of industrial presence in the basin. Among its plans for the area was the establishment of a network of landscaped parks. Council finance committee chairman Alderman Earl Adams charged that the parks board's proposal was a "beautiful pipe dream."¹²³ Echoing Adams, fellow Alderman Ed Sweeney described the board's plan for the area as a "crackpot idea." Fellow aldermen Ernie Broome and Hugh Bird voiced similar concerns.¹²⁴ Commitment to industrial presence in False Creek was strong across the NPA dominated council. The level of political dedication to blue-collar industry underscores the degree to which the local industrial sector was regarded as an important part of Vancouver's inner-city economy. Although in decline, it was recognized by civic authorities as worthy of safe keeping and expansion.

¹²⁰ *Province*, 14 October 1965, 6.

¹²¹ The Aldermen who publicly supported industrial presence in the Creek include: Bill Rathie, Marianne Linnell, Earle Adams, Ed Sweeney, Hugh Bird, Tom Campbell and Ernie Broome.

¹²² *Vancouver Sun*, 14 October 1967, 15; *Vancouver Sun*, 18 October 1967, 35; and *Vancouver Sun*, 19 October 1967, 22.

¹²³ *Vancouver Sun*, 18 October 1967, 35.

¹²⁴ *Vancouver Sun*, 18 October, 1967, 35.

Support to local industries culminated in October 1967 with a motion passed by Council that officially reasserted the City's commitment to long-term industrial use in False Creek.¹²⁵ The decision sought to assure local industries and more precisely the CPR that the basin would be allowed to remain under industrial zoning. Council had been pushed to dispel uncertainty over the fate of the Creek as a result of the CPR's refusal to extend industrial leases on the North side of False Creek without knowing the City's plans for the area.¹²⁶ Like his fellow NPA Aldermen before him, Ald. Earle Adams explained Council's decision by saying "commitment is necessary so longer leases can be given to industries on both sides of the creek so they will be prepared to put money into redevelopment and modernization of their plants."¹²⁷ Efforts to see the channel transformed into a modern industrial centre were also supported by then acting Planning Director Bill Graham. Guided by a vast body of planning literature that upheld the suitability of industrial presence in the basin, Graham actively laid out plans to turn False Creek into Vancouver's second major harbour.¹²⁸ The strong and long-standing political support for the vision of False Creek as an industrial hub reflects the extent to which, by the end of the 1960s, the fate of the local industrial sector was still far from being a settled issue. Support of industrial False Creek remained the dominant vision espoused by the governing council. The future of False Creek's industries was still uncertain, their long term viability questioned but not dismissed. And if many of the industries operating in the basin had experienced serious financial stress and decline over the years, their role in the local economy was clearly acknowledged by local politicians.

Throughout this period, Vancouver had to grapple with the question of what to do with its industrial inner-city land. The vision of False Creek as a prime industrial area had dominated

¹²⁵ *Vancouver Sun*, 20 October 1967, 13; *Vancouver Sun*, 21 October 1967, 36; and *Province*, 25 October 1967, 8.

¹²⁶ *Vancouver Sun*, 24 October 1967, 25; *Province*, 25 October 1967, 8; and *Vancouver Sun*, 20 October 1967, 13.

¹²⁷ *Vancouver Sun*, 21 March 1968, 4; and *Vancouver Sun*, 24 October 1967, 25.

¹²⁸ The idea of transforming False Creek into Vancouver's second major harbour was not new. Similar proposals were made by NPA Alderman Aeneas Bell-Irving in 1965. See, *Province*, October 21, 1967, 36; and *Province*, April 30, 1965, 8.

municipal policy for much of the twentieth century. In their support for blue-collar oriented work, city officials drew from prevailing urban planning doctrine which viewed industrial production as the driving engine of growth and job creation. Decades of environmental degradation and infrastructural neglect had put the vision of the city as a centre of industry increasingly under attack. But far from having vanished of its own, industry retained an important presence in both the city's physical and political landscape. The extent to which industrial production remained central to debates about the fate of Vancouver's inner city is suggestive. Municipal policy weighed heavily in favour of expanding the basin into an upgraded industrial zone. Civic authorities showed support for industrial activity well into the postwar period; the transition to a mixed-use development did not occur as a natural, seamless, and apolitical process.

Vision of False Creek as a Post-Industrial Site

The vision of False Creek as centre of industry, however, did not last. By 1967, opposition to industrial presence in the Creek had gained strong momentum. Critics were more and more vocal about the slow pace of progress in improving the area. And within less than a year, as the City rescinded its decision to reserve the basin for industrial use, officials called for a re-examination of plans for False Creek.¹²⁹ The years that followed witnessed a swift and remarkable reversal of municipal policy towards industrial activity in the basin. Much of the discontent expressed by Vancouver's citizens and officials at the time spoke to the idea that industry was no longer an important or even desirable part of the social and economic fabric of the inner-city landscape. Changing ideas about urban life and the traits of a 'good' city helped redefine the role and suitability of industrial production in Vancouver. As cities were

¹²⁹ *Vancouver Sun*, 26 March 1968, 8; and *Vancouver Sun*, 27 March 1967, 27.

increasingly being portrayed as places to live and as sites for leisure and consumption, the notion of the industrial metropolis fell out of favour with both the public and city authorities.

Misgivings about the real and perceived problems associated with industrial activity in the basin were part of a broader articulation of False Creek as a post-industrial site. In their calls for the eradication of industry, early proponents of redevelopment called into question prevailing ideas of progress and municipal planning strategies of the time. At its core, this emerging post-industrial vision centred on a reconsideration of the role and function of the inner city in the social and economic lives of its citizens. As such, the ultimate transformation of False Creek from an industrial port to a mixed-use commercial, residential and recreational area resulted in more than the simple revitalization of a neighbourhood. Like in other North-American cities at the time, the initiative entailed a profound restructuring of local urban life away from blue-collar style production and its culture toward a middle-class oriented service-based economy.

Early articulations of the post-industrial vision for False Creek first emerged in the 1950s, and coexisted alongside competing views that stressed the primacy of industrial production in the basin. City Hall's enthusiasm for industrial development in False Creek had not been shared by all. Reservation towards the existing industries was felt both outside and within governmental circles. As early as 1957, the Parks Board was petitioning to introduce a pleasure boat marina in False Creek and members of the public sought to introduce cafés at Fisherman's Wharf.¹³⁰ Writing in 1958, a commentator for the *Province* expressed his desire to see False Creek evolve into "something like San Francisco's classic Fisherman's Wharf – a place for watching the fishboats [*sic*] coming and going ... while eating the salmon and the crab and the shrimp and all the bounty of the sea with which providence has blessed this town."¹³¹ Local professional

¹³⁰ *Province*, 29 January 1957, 15; *Vancouver Daily Herald*, 12 February 1957, 3; *Province*, 2 January 1958, 4.

¹³¹ *Province*, 2 January 1958, 4.

planners and politicians gradually amplified calls for a creation of a park and recreational system. Speaking to the *Vancouver Sun* in 1966, Alderman Bob Williams described False Creek as a "rundown ... underdeveloped industrial area" and expressed his hopes to see the channel "devoted to boating and parkland".¹³² Among those voicing concerns about the state of False Creek, were local university professors who proved to be particularly outspoken critics of industrial presence in the basin.

In light of their expertise, UBC professors from the Planning, Geography and Architecture departments were especially well situated for promoting and framing an alternate vision of False Creek as a post-industrial site. Wolfgang Gerson (Architecture), Walter Hardwick (Geography), Robert Collier (Planning) and E. R. Higbee (Planning) spoke publicly about the need to relocate industries from the basin.¹³³ Together with their students, they played a decisive role in influencing municipal policy initiatives for False Creek.¹³⁴ The gulf that separated competing visions for the area was demonstrated by the ambitiousness of the proposals being put forward at the time. A 1966 proposal submitted by Gerson's architecture students completed with the consultation of Alderman Bob Williams and municipal election hopeful Franklin Wiles (both professional town planners) called for the establishment of parks, recreational facilities and a housing development capable of accommodating up to 30,000 people.¹³⁵ In line with its visionary spirit, the proposed plan also included the construction of a large heliport, a marina and the relocation of city hall.¹³⁶

¹³² *Vancouver Sun*, 4 March 1966, 62.

¹³³ *Province*, 7 December 1966, 8, 19; *Vancouver Sun*, 8 December 1966, 3; and *Vancouver Sun*, 15 September 1967, 37.

¹³⁴ *Province*, 7 December 1966, 8; *Vancouver Sun*, 15 September, 1967, 37; and *Vancouver Sun*, 28 October 1967, 61.

¹³⁵ *Province*, 8 December 1966, 19.

¹³⁶ *Vancouver Sun*, 15 September 1967, 37.

Critics presented a vision of False Creek that stood in sharp contrast to the one promoted by the NPA-dominated Council. Emphasis was put on transforming the channel into a shopping, recreational and residential centre, with industries confined to the east end of the Creek or moved altogether from the area. Proposals calling for the redevelopment of False Creek as a post-industrial site signalled a shift in the discourse of urban decline. As explained by David Ley in his landmark study on gentrification and the rise of an urban liberal middle class, debates over the redevelopment of False Creek evolved “from an emphasis on growth to a concern with quality of life.”¹³⁷ The newfound emphasis on lifestyle was part of a broader repudiation of older ideas of progress and of the importance of industrial production to the city’s social and economic welfare. The creation of The Electors’ Action Movement (TEAM) in 1968, and the subsequent election of Arthur Phillips and Walter Hardwick to City Council helped redefine municipal policy on False Creek.¹³⁸ The widespread and successful election of TEAM candidates provided liberal, middle class professionals with a powerful voice at City Hall. In the wake of the events of 1968, the City effectively adopted a vision of False Creek in which industry was no longer seen as a solution to urban decline, but rather as a manifestation of it. The redirection of municipal policy away from industrial production to what was increasingly understood as ‘livability’ was made clear in a speech delivered by Phillips in the run-up to the elections of

¹³⁷ Ley accounts for the gentrification of inner-city neighbourhoods as a direct result of the resurgence of a “new middle class” comprised of liberal, educated professionals. This new middle class becomes thus the driving force in the consumption of gentrified landscapes. David Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); and Ley, “Liberal Ideology and the Postindustrial City,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 70 (1980): 239. Livability is a complex term prone to a multiplicity of meanings. Some of the key features of a ‘livable community’ – as outlined by the City Planning Department – include: “a quality residential, commercial and open space environment;” “a socially viable mix of all incomes and lifestyles while maintaining concern for economics and the practical marketability of the project.” CVA, City Corporate Services Fonds, 927-D-1 file 7, False Creek Development Group, Brochures, “False Creek: Three Design Concepts for the South Shore of Vancouver’s False Creek,” 1974.

¹³⁸ An urban geographer by training, Hardwick like many other UBC professors believed that False Creek needed to be developed into a mixed-use, large amenity area with only little to no industrial presence. *Vancouver Sun*, 14 November 1967, 20. In a similar vein, Arthur Phillips proposed the area to be redeveloped in favour apartment units, marinas and parks. *Province*, 9 October 1968, 36.

1972. As the soon-to-be elected mayor declared to a crowd of church-goers: “Nothing is more important in our future planning than preserving and improving the quality of life in our neighbourhoods.”¹³⁹ TEAM’s emphasis on quality of life spelled a radically different future for False Creek. “False Creek should become an example of inner-city living at its best,” Phillips said. He continued:

The waterfront should be a continuous system of parks and marinas for all the people to enjoy. False Creek will also provide housing for many people in an attractive setting. Young people and old people, families and singles and senior citizens should all be able to live in harmony with nature close to the downtown area.¹⁴⁰

As outlined by Phillips, cities needed to shift away from serving the interests of industry and become attractive and inclusive places to live. Critically important to TEAM’s philosophy was an emphasis on human-scale planning and a focus on housing and recreation. But while proponents of redevelopment were quick to sing the praise of ‘livable’ communities, as a concept livability was only tenuously defined. The change in vision was accompanied by shifting understandings about land-use planning and the functionality of the city in the social and economic life of its residents. In questioning the logic of letting industries operate in False Creek, UBC professor and urban expert E. R. Higbee spoke to what were at the time prevailing tenets of urban planning. The city core, Higbee explained, was no longer an appropriate site for industrial production. To maximize the use of scarce urban space, cities needed to reserve prime inner-city land to white-collar enterprises.¹⁴¹

The landscape of billowing smokestacks that had once characterized the area was to give way to the orderly and discreet topography of town houses, office buildings and parks. In the race to modernization, industrial production was considered an impediment to innovation. Ley

¹³⁹ CVA, Mayor’s Office Fonds, 84-B-2, file 86, Arthur Phillips, “Speeches – as alderman,” 1972.

¹⁴⁰ CVA, Mayor’s Office Fonds, 84-B-2, file 86, Arthur Phillips, “Speeches – as alderman,” 1972.

¹⁴¹ *Vancouver Sun*, 27 October 1967, 6.

argues that previous tenets of growth and efficiency were swiftly replaced by concerns about the environment and lifestyle.¹⁴² And while ample evidence demonstrates that many local politicians shared these concerns, the extent to which municipal policy contributed in mitigating dependence on urban growth is questionable.¹⁴³ Civic authorities broke away from the dictates of productivity and efficiency in name but not in practice. After all, under the leadership of TEAM, the City undertook a massive redevelopment program aimed at maximizing land-use in False Creek by creating a vast network of residential, commercial and recreational infrastructure. TEAM made the expansion of Vancouver's public transportation system and the development of higher density housing in the inner-city a key platform issue.¹⁴⁴ If only under a different model and scale, the City's urban development strategy continued to be undergirded by a preoccupation with the tenets of efficiency, productivity and growth. As maintained by many proponents of redevelopment, False Creek needed to be turned from an economically depressed and underutilized site of industrial production, into a socially thriving and investment-rich area.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² The ongoing pollution of False Creek was a source of concerns for many residents as well as local politicians. TEAM candidates took a particularly pro-environment position. Art Phillips and Walter Hardwick wanted to see a stop being put to the illegal dumping of toxic waste in the basin. Their fight to see a cleaner and greener Vancouver were not limited to False Creek, however. Phillips and Hardwick pushed to preserve old trees in the West End, and launched a campaign to plant more trees in the city. They also sought to reduce dependency on the use of automobiles – at a time before the widespread use of catalytic converters and non leaded gasoline – by pushing for the expansion of public transportation. CVA, Mayor's Office Fonds, 84-B-2, file 88, Arthur Phillips, "Speeches – as Mayor," 1973.

¹⁴³ A notable example is found in a letter to the editor sent by TEAM Alderman Brian Calder. In the piece, Calder delivers a scathing critique of the "terrible pollution" plaguing the area. His defense of the environment is framed as a criticism of older tenets of growth and economic development. He writes, "Let me point out that growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell, and to my way of thinking, pollution is growing like a cancer through our universe." *Vancouver Sun*, 16 January 1970, 5.

¹⁴⁴ CVA, 84-B-2, Mayor's Office Fonds, File 86, Arthur Phillips "Speeches –as alderman," 1972.

¹⁴⁵ Critics of industrial presence in False Creek stressed the inefficient and uneconomical use of the land in the area. Particular attention was given to the underutilization of what was otherwise considered prime inner-city land. For some examples see, *Vancouver Sun*, 27 October 1967, 6. Critics argued that by maximizing land-use in False Creek, the City would not only create vital space for housing and recreation, but that it would also help tap into a profitable tax base. The productivity of the land as measured by increased tax revenues and infrastructural investment was a key factor in driving the redevelopment forward. Writing for the *Vancouver Sun* in 1964, reporter John Taylor described land-use in False Creek as "a combination of good use, ill-use, little use and no use." See *Province*, December 17, 1960, 19. Alderman and future NDP MLA Bob Williams noted the importance of redevelopment for ensuring the "proper growth of downtown and False Creek." *Vancouver Sun*, 9 December 1968, 33. Likewise, in calling for the redevelopment of the area, long-standing Vancouver MLA and tourism promoter Harold Merilees

This expressed pro-development logic, reaffirmed commitment to efficiency and growth as applied in the context of a service and consumption-based economy.¹⁴⁶

For early proponents of the redevelopment of False Creek, progress did not mean turning the area into a modern industrial park, but rather, as a commentator put it, to see Vancouver become the “Venice of the West”.¹⁴⁷ The future envisioned by advocates of redevelopment was one dominated by office towers, parks, recreational facilities, and high to middle density housing. Following in the steps of his colleague, Wolfgang Gerson, professor F. R. Higbee called for the transformation of False Creek into a high end white collar business district coupled by a network of recreational amenities.¹⁴⁸ Higbee’s ideas were articulated by Park Board chairman George Puil and by fellow commissioner Joseph Malkin. The two voiced their support for redeveloping the areas into a long-term recreational centre equipped with swimming pools,

noted the “boost” that “tax revenues” would bring to the City. *Province*, 12 August 1969, 6. Walter Hardwick, Art Phillips and Brian Calder – all key figures in the redevelopment project and all keen exponents of the idea of the ‘livable city’ – turned attention to issues of economic growth, tax revenues, efficient land-use and productivity. In a notable instance in Hardwick’s fight to convince City Council to proceed with redevelopment plans, the three aldermen criticized standing Mayor Tom Campbell for undermining the confidence of investors in Vancouver. Calling the proposal to extend Vancouver Iron and Engineering Work’s lease an “absolute folly,” Hardwick charged that Campbell was shaking the “confidence that Vancouver [was] a good place for investment.” Lucrative tax returns were of particular interest to the three politicians. Art Phillips made the point to inform the media of the potential tax benefits accrued from developing the land: \$48,000 per acre of annual tax returns for mixed apartment and commercial high density, and \$27,300 for medium density apartments compared to \$4,500 per acre of annual tax revenues for existing industrial sites. Investment opportunities provided a powerful impetus for redeveloping the land, as Phillips expressed to reporters, “People are dying to go in there and build apartments.” *Vancouver Sun*, 7 November 1969, 17. *Province*, 3 November 1969, 17, *Vancouver Sun*, 7 November 1969, 17. See also *Vancouver Sun*, 3 April 1964, 3; *Vancouver Sun*, 8 December 1966, 3.

¹⁴⁶ TEAM’s stance on growth as expressed by Art Phillips and Walter Hardwick is somewhat contradictory. For example, on the one hand Phillips opposed immigration to Vancouver and advocated for low levels of growth, at the same time he expressed concern over urban decline – especially inner-city depopulation – and pushed for policies like the redevelopment of False Creek as a way to establish the future economic and social viability of the city. Even TEAM’s fight against the construction of an elevated freeway through Strathcona was in part justified by a fear that by providing unrestricted and timely access to the downtown core, the freeway would contribute to the growth of the surrounding suburbs, and thus deprive the City of Vancouver of much needed population growth (and its corresponding tax revenues). CVA, Mayor's Office Fonds, 84-B-2, file 86, Arthur Phillips, “Speeches – as alderman,” 1972; and Mayor's Office Fonds, 84-B-2, file 88, Arthur Phillips, “Speeches – as Mayor,” 1973.

¹⁴⁷ *Province*, 8 December 1966, 19.

¹⁴⁸ *Vancouver Sun*, 18 October 1967, 35; *Vancouver Sun*, 27 October 1967, 6; and *Vancouver Sun*, 14 November, 1967, 20.

sandy beaches, rowing club facilities and an aquarium.¹⁴⁹ The proposed plans for the area reflected prevailing trends in urban development strategies in the postwar era. The decline of inner-city industrial districts sparked an unprecedented effort by government to revitalize and reinvent urban living. Time and again, municipal authorities adopted ambitious plans for maintaining and attracting an economically viable workforce and prosperous residents.

Park board commissioners, dissenting city councillors, university professors, and local journalists were all tapping into a broad feeling of dissatisfaction about the state of decay in the Creek.¹⁵⁰ Their vision of the area as a recreational, commercial and recreational hub had little place for industry. If progress had only a few years earlier been represented by metal and machine shops, mills, iron works, and petrochemical factories it was now epitomized by public marinas, schools, dwellings, community centres and office buildings. The extent and speed to which ideas about urban progress changed is revealing. A mere two years after having pledged commitment to industrial presence in False Creek, director of Planning Bill Graham envisioned the area in vastly different terms. Touring the basin with *Vancouver Sun* reporter Dave Ablett, Graham imagined “people strolling through the walkways under the trees, thumbing, through magazines in the bookstalls, dining al fresco in the outdoor restaurants, gazing dreamily across

¹⁴⁹ *Vancouver Sun*, 14 October 1967, 15; *Vancouver Sun*, 17 October 1967, 2; *Province*, 25 October, 1967, 8; and *Vancouver Sun*, 25 October, 1967, 37.

¹⁵⁰ Parks board commissioners had been some of the earliest and most vocal proponents of redevelopment. By the late 1960s, the parks board – driven by George Puil and Joseph Malkin – adopted the construction of recreational facilities and the provision of a network of parks as its official, long-term strategy for the area. *Vancouver Sun*, 17 October 1967, 2. From the board’s perspective, the plan meshed well with the already redeveloped site west of the Granville Bridge, which by that time included Vanier Park and the Museum of the City of Vancouver. As documented by Jordan Stanger-Ross, parks commissioners had been willing and eager participants in the city’s troubled history of urban redevelopment. Stanger-Ross’ exploration of municipal colonialism in Vancouver, illuminates the entangled relationship between the parks board and colonial dispossession practices. The board had played a decisive role in the appropriation and redevelopment of the Kitsilano reserve, a First Nations reserve lying at the mouth of False Creek. Jordan Stanger-Ross, “Municipal Colonialism in Vancouver: City Planning and the Conflict over Indian Reserves, 1928–1950s,” *Canadian Historical Review* 89, no.4 (2008): 558-564. Curiously, the honed rationales for redeveloping the Kitsilano reserve bear striking similarity to the ones advanced by city officials twenty years later. Parks board commissioners in the 1930s and 1940s stressed what they saw as the reserve’s wasteful use of land, its decayed state and its unsanitary conditions as justifications for redevelopment. Stanger-Ross, “Municipal Colonialism in Vancouver,” 558-564.

the water at fish boats moored throws against the floats.”¹⁵¹ Graham’s vision of “high-rises and town houses, green spaces and waterside walkways” spoke to increasingly dominant middle class interests.¹⁵²

Naturalizing this dramatic shift in municipal policy, proponents of redevelopment referred to industrial presence as a part of a distant bygone past. A 1974 report by the City Planning Department opened with the words:

A hundred years ago when men dreamed of making Vancouver the western terminus for the railroads, they dreamed of railway tracks lining False Creek. When men dreamed of cities as centres of industry and economic growth, they dreamed of lumber mills and foundries surrounding False Creek. But today our dreams have changed. We see cities not as economic machines, not as terminals of growth, but as places to live.¹⁵³

The statement reinforced the crude dichotomy between False Creek as a place to live versus as a place to work. In so doing, civic authorities ignored the role that the area had played as a site for informal housing for poor people, or the role that alternative and innovative modes

¹⁵¹ Much of the promotional and informational literature on the redevelopment project emphasizes the importance of leisure-related activities for creating a livable community. One of the final three design concepts for the area stresses the need for transforming False Creek into a recreational destination place. The plan reads, “For those of us who will not live in the Settlement, it will draw us into a unique waterfront experience. Places for events attracting many people, bordered by sheltered green spaces, form a destination park that extends along the entire foreshore. More than that, the Settlement offers the visitors happenings around the work and play events that are part of the daily lives of the people who live there. The Settlement will be an enriching place to live, work, play, shop and learn. Enriching because we can work and play together and because learning will be a continuous part of settlement life.” CVA, City Corporate Services Fonds, 927-D-1 file 7, False Creek Development Group, Brochures, “False Creek: Three Design Concepts for the South Shore of Vancouver’s False Creek,” 1974. *Vancouver Sun*, 15 November 1969, 21.

¹⁵² The shift to tourism and leisure was part of a broader project of social and economic restructuring aimed at attracting a middle class citizenry to the inner city. No longer envisioned as a site suited for industrial production, False Creek was to be redeveloped as a space that would conform to middle class demands for housing and recreation. In the lead to the elections of 1968, Citizens for the Improvement of Vancouver candidates Norman Levi, Reg Walker and Jean Mohart laid out plans to turn False Creek into a “residential and recreational Stanley Park.” *Vancouver Sun*, 8 December 1966, 3; and CVA, City Corporate Services Fonds, 927-D-1 file 7, False Creek Development Group, Brochures, “False Creek: Three Design Concepts for the South Shore of Vancouver’s False Creek,” 1974. Park Board Chairman Andy Livingstone’s vision for the area included bird sanctuaries, specialties restaurants, swimming pools, boat rentals, scenic boat rides and other recreational facilities. *Province*, 12 February 1969, 6.

¹⁵² *Province*, 15 November 1968, 35.

¹⁵³ City of Vancouver Planning Department, *Inner City Living: The False Creek Redevelopment Program* (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 1974), 1.

of production could play in the city's economic future.¹⁵⁴ The creation of the livable city entailed the restructuring of a stagnating inner-city district into a vibrant commercial, recreational and residential centre. The vision of Vancouver as a cosmopolitan city stressed the importance of tourism, leisure and the service industry. In the minds of leading city administrators and urban planners at the time, blue-collar styled industrial production did not comply with the notion of a livable city.¹⁵⁵

Support for the expansion and development of Vancouver's tourist and recreational industries was strong among diverse segments of the local population. For politicians like TEAM Alderman Arthur Phillips, tourism provided much-needed economic benefits to the city. The idea of the livable community was intimately enmeshed with the expansion of the local tourist industry and a creative class of workers.¹⁵⁶ As Phillips noted in a speech delivered at a national conference on community planning in 1972:

The emphasis on livability has an economic impact ... When local universities or the B.C. Lions or others try to recruit people they emphasize the livable character of the city and its surroundings ... Creative and enterprising people can be attracted in this way ... If you accept the proposition that they are desirable people to attract, you must recognize that you are in a world-wide competition for them. It would make sense to adopt a deliberate strategy of attracting enterprising people by concentrating on your area's livability.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ In fact, evidence suggests that the area's reputation as having "the lowest percentage of owner occupancy and the lowest social and economic index in Vancouver" served as a justification for redevelopment. See, *Province*, 7 December 1966, 8. Jill Wade, "Home or homelessness? Marginal housing in Vancouver, 1886-1950," *Urban History Review* 25 no.2 (1997): 19-29.

¹⁵⁵ Recreation, tourism and housing gained particular importance as critical sectors in need of expansion. Collectively, they were considered essential for ensuring the transition of Vancouver to a global cosmopolitan centre. Redeveloping False Creek into a mixed-use zone brought new opportunity where industrial development strategies had failed. "False Creek is a paradox" proclaimed the architectural consulting firm Thompson, Berwick, Pratt and Partners, "On one hand, it is an unparalleled opportunity to conceive, design and bring into being a better place for people to grow, to live, to work and to play ... But False Creek is also a classic example of how an opportunity can be overlooked and development can go wrong." Thompson, Berwick, Pratt & Partners, *False Creek Proposals: Working Papers*, vol. 2, "New City Townsite: Growth Economic Concept" (Vancouver: Thompson, Berwick, Pratt & Partners, 1971), 7.

¹⁵⁶ CVA, Mayor's Office Fonds, 84-B-2, file 88, Arthur Phillips, "Speeches – as Mayor," 1973.

¹⁵⁷ CVA, Mayor's Office Fonds, 84-B-2, file 88, Arthur Phillips, "Speeches – as Mayor," 1973.

Marketing Vancouver as a livable city served the dual task of making the city attractive to talented workers and innovative private enterprise.¹⁵⁸ After all, as Phillips saw it, tourists and “talented, creative and enterprising people” shared a similar taste for recreation, entertainment, and beautiful natural settings. It was thus in the interests of city officials to invest in or promote such things as “sailing, fishing and waterfront activities,” golf courses, ski resorts, trendy restaurants, and shopping venues. The redevelopment of False Creek provided TEAM with the opportunity to orchestrate and formalize the “great shift from the factory to the office.”¹⁵⁹

Tourism and recreational amenities were on the minds of not only civic authorities, but also on those of many Vancouverites. Advocates for the establishment of private and public marinas were an especially mobilized group. At the top of their priorities was the eradication of the industries dotting the channel which not only contributed to traffic in the inlet but whose appearances and toxic waste made sailing in the False Creek a problem. Boating enthusiasts hoped to see the channel cleared of all industry and turned into a clean and accessible water park. Countless letters were written to local politicians demanding that the interests of the contributing middle-class be represented. Calls for change were strong and clear. Writing to City Council, a concerned citizen pleaded, “if you could only try and visualize what False Creek would be like as a Yacht Harbour, instead of what we have there now, then I can’t see how you can delay the start on a new face for this area a moment longer.”¹⁶⁰ Civic activist and future MLA Harold Merilees made the expansion of Vancouver’s tourist industry and the clean up of the basin for recreational sailing a top priority in his run-up to elections in 1968.¹⁶¹ The vision of False Creek as a yacht harbour cleansed of its pollution and of its decrepit buildings was attractive to many

¹⁵⁸ There are countless examples that illuminate the close relationship between ideas of beauty and the vision of False Creek as a post-industrial site. For instance, E. R. Higbee saw the construction of high-rise office towers in the area as promoting a more beautiful Vancouver. *Vancouver Sun*, 27 October 1967, 6.

¹⁵⁹ CVA, Mayor’s Office Fonds, 84-B-2, file 88, Arthur Phillips, “Speeches – as Mayor,” 1973.

¹⁶⁰ CVA, City Councillors’ Office Fonds, 44-D-1, file 11, Records of Alderman Brian Calder, *False Creek*, 1970.

¹⁶¹ *Province*, 12 August 1969, 6.

people. It was a vision that challenged continued industrial activity in the basin, and that underscored the connection between middle-class recreational interests and tourism, two different but closely related sectors of the service-based economy.

The Narratives of ‘Obsolescence’ and ‘Blight’

It is difficult to overstate the extent to which discourses about the redevelopment of False Creek took place within political and moral spaces. As noted by David Ley, “like all theory, the post-industrial thesis is not politically mute. Though it may develop as a description of societal change, it may subsequently become an instrument in the promotion of that change.”¹⁶² Descriptions of the industrial landscape relied on implicit judgements about the place and desirability of industrial enterprise, its work force, and the lifestyle that it sustained. Urban experts and city officials created a narrative of obsolescence that helped to rationalize the redevelopment project. TEAM Alderman and Vancouver Mayor Art Phillips was one of its most emphatic exponents. He strongly believed that industrial production was “obsolete,” at best a stagnating sector and at worst a declining one.¹⁶³ Alderman Bob Williams echoed a similar idea when referring to the CPR rail yards in the area as obsolete.¹⁶⁴ In a similar vein, professor of Urban Planning, E. R. Higbee declared that “False Creek [was] no place for a barrel works in this day and age.”¹⁶⁵ Likewise, UBC professor of community planning Robert Collier called industrial presence in False Creek an “anachronism.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Ley, “Liberal Ideology and the Postindustrial City,” 245.

¹⁶³ The views promoted by proponents of redevelopment were grounded in important truths about the state of existing local industries in False Creek specifically, and about the state of North America’s industrial sector more generally. Most industries in the area had not experienced significant growth since the wartime boom of the early 1940s. Some had been in steady decline since before the Great Depression. Falling profits, layoffs and rising levels of debt manifested themselves most clearly in the dilapidated buildings and overgrown lots dotting the channel.

¹⁶⁴ *Vancouver Sun*, 9 December, 1968, 33.

¹⁶⁵ *Vancouver Sun*, 27 October, 1967, 6.

¹⁶⁶ *Province*, 6 December 1969, 12.

The apparent and appealing simplicity of the obsolescence thesis, however, belies a complex reality. As noted by Rachel Weber, obsolescence is an ambiguous term. It is also a concept that has figured prominently in the history of American cities.¹⁶⁷ In its strongest sense, Weber argues that obsolescence has been (and continues to be) used as a rhetorical tool or an alibi for the destruction and ensuing redevelopment of urban space. Weber writes, “co-constructing obsolescence allows the state and private developers to both write down property values and speed the turnover of capital in the built environment.”¹⁶⁸ Critics of industrial False Creek certainly used the narrative of obsolescence as a powerful rationalization for driving the redevelopment project forward.¹⁶⁹

More pertinent for our discussion is the idea, articulated by Weber, that such justifications often seek to “stabilize inherently ambiguous concepts like blight and obsolescence and create the appearance of certitude out of the cacophony of claims about value.”¹⁷⁰ While obsolescence might appear on the surface to be politically neutral and objectively quantifiable, it is not. Phillips, Hardwick and Collier deemed industries in False Creek obsolete in large part because of their own social and economic position. In couching the justification for redevelopment in the language of obsolescence, critics of industrial False Creek helped mask the ambiguity of the concept and provided a deceptively appealing justification in favour of redevelopment.

¹⁶⁷ Robert Beauregard’s sweeping and evocative analysis on the discourses of urban decline documents the intimate connection between obsolescence and urban blight. Robert Beauregard, *Voices of Decline: The Postwar Fate of US Cities* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

¹⁶⁸ Rachel Weber, “Extracting Value from the City: Neoliberalism and Urban Redevelopment,” *Antipode* 34, no.3 (2002): 535.

¹⁶⁹ To be sure, though, concerns over the state of affairs in the channel were in many ways based on an accurate reading of the issues besetting the area. While it is reasonable to suspect that critics of industrial False Creek adopted the narrative of obsolescence as a way to rally support in favour of redevelopment, I have not encountered evidence suggesting that critics deliberately distorted the truth about the decline experienced in the area. Rather, proponents of redevelopment were strategic in stigmatizing particular aspects of industrial False Creek, in dismissing the partiality of their own social and economic positions, and in ignoring the community’s multiplicity and heterogeneity of voices.

¹⁷⁰ Weber, “Extracting Value from the City,” 532.

Ideas about urban ‘blight’ were similarly used. Like obsolescence, blight is a highly ambiguous term.¹⁷¹ Derived from the field of plant pathology, the discourse of urban blight helped bring quasi-scientific authority to the analysis of urban problems. The very idea of blight, as applied to the urban realm, implied that cities were prone to the same type of diseases afflicting plant organisms. If civic authorities and urban professionals were often eager to warn communities against the potentially devastating effects of unchecked urban decline, the definition of blight was curiously seldom ever made clear. As Weber notes, it was common at the time to frame blight “as both a cause of physical deterioration and a state of being in which the built environment is deteriorated or physically impaired beyond normal use.”¹⁷² But, if the meaning of blight was vague, the implications it spelled for cities were clear. Perceived as a highly contagious disease, blight had the power to destroy whole swaths of city land. Social commentators and urban professionals contended that blight, as both a manifestation of and a cause of poverty, would in time choke the city of its social and economic life. Stretching the metaphor further, TEAM Alderman Brian Calder charged that industrial False Creek was a “cancer.”¹⁷³ Proper and decisive action was needed to prevent surrounding areas from being infected. In equating local industries a life-threatening cancer cells, Calder rearticulated the argument in favour of redevelopment. Like a patient afflicted by a debilitating illness, False Creek needed to be cleared of its industrial sector to ensure the city’s long-term social and economic health.

¹⁷¹ Colin Gordon, *Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 188-190.

¹⁷² Weber, “Extracting Value from the City,” 526.

¹⁷³ *Vancouver Sun*, 16 January 1970, 5.

Local politicians and urban professionals alike showed great confidence in their ability to identify blighted areas in Vancouver.¹⁷⁴ The process by which civic authorities assessed urban decline, however, betrayed greater complexity than it was explicitly acknowledged at the time. As with obsolescence, urban blight was defined by a tenuous mix of socio-economic indicators. Some of these indicators relied heavily on the observer's own sense of aesthetic beauty, respectability and utility. As such, in their efforts to track urban blight, city officials inevitably ran the risk of projecting their own cultural and class bias onto their subjects of study.¹⁷⁵ If empirically ambiguous, however, the discourse of urban blight provided critics of industrial False Creek with an effective tool for mobilizing support in favour of redevelopment. The language adopted by proponents of redevelopment was particularly appealing for it presented the eradication of industry as a matter of necessity, not ideology. The propensity to cast urban decline as a natural calamity made municipal intervention seem only 'natural.'

Journalists, politicians and city planners did not hesitate to express their resolute opposition to industrial False Creek. Using evocative imagery, they described the basin by such titles as a "dump," a "wasteland," an "eyesore," a "slum," and a "jungle."¹⁷⁶ Their blunt and forceful description of the industrial landscape contrasted with the optimistic tone of their depictions of False Creek as a post-industrial site. If industrial production was "old" and "outmoded," officials described the rising service-based economy as "innovative," "creative"

¹⁷⁴ A 1974 report by the Planning Department stated, "our has been an ambitious program aimed at nothing less than turning an old industrial wasteland into an exciting community." City of Vancouver, Planning Department, *Inner City Living*, 2-5, 7. Another such example is given by long-standing Vancouver enthusiast and Social Credit MLA Harold Merilees who in the run-up for elections in 1969 declared that "False Creek [was] a stinking waterfront slum, [that] could be turned into the Venice of Canada." *Province*, 12 August, 1969, 6. The architectural firm Thompson, Berwick, Pratt and Partners voiced that "False Creek should be a place of superior design and an exciting, desirable and vital place." Thompson, Berwick, Pratt & Partners, *False Creek Proposals: Working Papers*, vol. 2, "New City Townsite: Growth Economic Concept" (Vancouver: Thompson, Berwick, Pratt & Partners, 1971), 22.

¹⁷⁵ Weber explains that "finding value or a lack thereof in the built environment is an arbitrary and inconsistent process." And that – citing Beauregard – "states discursively constitute, code, and order the meaning of place through policies and practices that are often advantageous to capital." Weber, "Extracting Value from the City," 524.

¹⁷⁶ *Province*, 8 December 1960, 19.

and “attractive.” Particular emphasis was put on the potential for redevelopment to transform the area into an “exciting” community, heralding a bright future for both False Creek and the city as a whole.¹⁷⁷ For critics of industrial False Creek, redevelopment held out the promise of a rationally planned community in the face of an otherwise chaotic and decaying status quo.¹⁷⁸ But while enthusiastic about the prospects of industrial relocation, politicians and urban professionals seldom elaborated on the benefits of redevelopment. Rather, efforts to redevelop the area were tacitly justified by alluding to such practices as, “innovative management,” “innovative forms of tenure,” “innovative approaches,” “innovative methods,” “innovative forms of public transit,” “innovative policies,” and “innovation in planning.”¹⁷⁹ Arguments in favour of redevelopment often depended on value laden-categories and in large part assumed as a premise what they set out to prove.

Conclusion

Changing understandings of city life and urban progress played a decisive role in shaping the future of False Creek. The decision to redevelop the area into a post-industrial site was as much driven by economic concerns over the long term viability of the local industries, as it was driven by the city’s evolving cultural and political landscape. Initially conceived as an important hub for industrial production, False Creek was transformed into what many have come to call a shining example of mixed-use development. The change in vision from an industrial to a post-industrial site was steeped in competing demands for the use of the area. In the eyes of city

¹⁷⁷ City of Vancouver, Planning Department, *Inner City Living*, 2-5, 7.

¹⁷⁸ Notable instances of the comparison between industrial False Creek and the promise that redevelopment held for the future include: Art Phillips’ pronouncement for the need to turn False Creek from an “eyesore to a jewel.” Not that the adjective “jewel” evokes both an object of beauty as well as a valuable one – that is, one with a particular commercial value. CVA, Mayor's Office Fonds, 84-B-2, file 86, Arthur Phillips, “Speeches – as alderman,” 1972. Hardwick could not have been the only to think that redevelopment was the only opportunity for turning False Creek “from an ugly duckling into a beautiful swan.” *Province*, 3 November, 1969, 17.

¹⁷⁹ City of Vancouver, Planning Department, *Inner City Living*, 2-5, 7.

officials, the land needed to serve the changing social and economic needs of modern cosmopolitan cities. These needs were as much a reflection of the challenges posed by a growing metropolis, as they were of the tenuous conviction that industrial activity had little place in the socio-economic life of a global city.

Once a bastion and a hallmark of progress, industrial production was replaced by recreation, tourism, and office work as the new engines of economic growth and prosperity. Efforts to redevelop the area resulted in a profound restructuring away from blue-collar work to a service-based economy. The rhetoric of city officials and urban professionals was not politically mute. Inherent in the discourse itself were particular assumptions about the obsolescence of working-class culture and the natural course of urban development. While often perceived as only descriptive, the language employed by critics of industrial False Creek preserved important normative and empirical ambiguity. Civic authorities articulated a case against industrial presence that helped frame the project as a seemingly inevitable and unequivocal process of urban change, and in so doing provided the impetus for redeveloping the basin as a post-industrial site.

CHAPTER THREE:

Voices of False Creek

THE DARK AGES: After World War Two, [Granville] Island's decline was swift and unequivocal. It became a dark and lifeless place with rusted, abandoned warehouses. The Island had become a hazard to the environment and an eyesore to the people. The fate of False Creek was put on the back burner while the city around it progressed. When heavy industry became unfashionable and obsolete in a centralized urban context, still echoing in the empty tin-clad buildings remained the spirit of friendship and traditional pride in craftsmanship. Just like the ocean tides of old, the changing tides of humanity would wipe clean the dirtied face of the Island and refresh it with a renewed vision of its purpose as a gathering place for people.

“The People that Make Granville Island,”

A Granville Island Business and Community Association Olympic Committee initiative, (2010):

www.granvilleislandworks.com

This chapter is about forgotten people and their worksites. Many popular and academic writings that mention industrial False Creek tend to erase local workers and business owners from historical narratives in which they belong.¹⁸⁰ As a much-neglected collection of oral interviews reveals, False Creek was not a vacant and abandoned site at the time of the

¹⁸⁰ Many examples can be found of writers who portray the industrial sector in False Creek in the years leading up to its redevelopment as an abandoned and forsaken place. Industries or the people who worked in them are often not mentioned, and when mentioned they tend to be referred to in passing as ‘obsolete’. Timothy Oke, M. North and O. Slaymaker describe the evolution of False Creek as such: “from an almost pristine forested coastal inlet, rich with wildlife, to a disgusting industrial mess, almost devoid of nature and posing a risk to human health; then, within twenty years, its fortunes has swung around and it has emerged, after a period of stagnation and indecision, as a sought-after residential, recreation, and exhibition area.” The authors summarize their description of False Creek in the 1930s as a “civic horror.” T. R. Oke, M. North and O. Slaymaker, “Primordial to Prim Order: A Century of Environmental Change,” in *Vancouver and Its Region* ed. by Graeme Wynn and Timothy Oke (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 161, 165. A report commissioned by the Caledon Institute of Social Policy describes industrial False Creek as such: “After the Second World War, Southeast False Creek’s industries gradually faded away, leaving behind contaminated water and soil and dilapidated structures. This last stretch of vacant Vancouver waterfront is now a focal point for the debate over sustainable development within an urban environment.” Anne Makhoul, *Southeast False Creek: The Struggle for Sustainability* (Vancouver: Caledon Institute of Social Policy, 2003). A classroom project produced at the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, notes that “By the 1960s, industry began to move out of the area [False Creek], leaving Vancouver with a large area of uninhabited and unused land.” Mollie Freilicher, “South East False Creek,” *Green Urbanism and Ecological Infrastructure*, <http://courses.umass.edu/greenurb/2007/freilicher/index.htm> (accessed 4 May 2011). Robert North and Walter Hardwick describe how “blight marred the fringes of the urban core, and Vancouver City Council was haunted by the spectre of American-style decay.” Robert North and Walter Hardwick, “Vancouver Since the Second World War: An Economic Geography,” in *Vancouver and Its Region* ed. by Graeme Wynn and Timothy Oke (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 208.

redevelopment of the area. While many of False Creek's industries had undergone economic hardship, and although the basin suffered significant disinvestment, industries were still present in the area, some were struggling others were successful.

Although much has been written about the redevelopment of False Creek from the perspective of urban professionals and city officials, little research has documented the project from the point of view of local workers and owners. How did local workers and owners make sense of the changes happening in the area? What did they think of the transformation of False Creek into a residential, commercial and recreational district? Did labourers and businessmen share similar views on industrial presence in False Creek as urban experts and civic authorities? Answering these questions is essential to developing a fuller understanding of the history of False Creek.

Workers and business owners offered compelling statements that both confirmed and challenged key narratives and claims made by local bureaucrats and politicians regarding the demise of the industrial sector in False Creek. Some of the interviews present testimony that calls attention to the importance of state actors in shaping the development of False Creek. Others provide testimony that supports a favourable view of the redevelopment. The interviews also show how the views of workers and owners found expression in a discourse that was often at odds with the one espoused by urban experts and city officials.

Rethinking industrial change

While the loss of False Creek's industrial sector is often interpreted as part of a broader process of deindustrialization, the precise mechanisms that led to the demise and departure of industry from the area are seldom made clear. Both contemporary writers and early proponents

of redevelopment have described industrial False Creek in the 1960s as a “wasteland,” an “anachronism,” and a “derelict” and “obsolete” place populated by “outdated” industries and their “iron-age jobs.”¹⁸¹ But the details and reasons for “why” or “how” industrial False Creek developed as it did remain vastly unstated. Surely, there must be more to this story. As historian Stephen High points out in his award-winning book *Industrial Sunset*, “deindustrialization did not just happen.”¹⁸²

The reasons behind industrial decline are more layered and complex than initially imagined. For instance, in the context of High’s analysis, business executives in Canada and the United States made the concrete decisions to relocate profits away from particular plants to new product development, facilities were closed-down and their equipment sold for a profit, capital was squeezed out of infrastructural upgrades and injected into plant expansion elsewhere.¹⁸³ Managers of automotive, rubber and steel industries adopted a strategy of *planned obsolescence*. Management took a conscious decision not to modernize plants in favour of reinvesting capital in more profitable ventures knowing that the decision would eventually lead to plant shut down. In so doing “companies shifted the blame for job loss onto aging equipment, unproductive workers, and the apparent unprofitability of the plant.”¹⁸⁴ What in fact results from a set of human-made decisions, is made to appear an outcome of a seemingly natural and inevitable process.

¹⁸¹ Walter Hardwick, *Vancouver* (Toronto: Collier-Macmillan, 1974), 13; Mike Harcourt and Ken Cameron (with Sean Rossiter), *City Making in Paradise: Nine Decisions that Saved Vancouver* (Douglas & McIntyre, 2007), 98; John Punter, *The Vancouver Achievement: Urban Planning and Design* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 8 and 34; Aynsley Vogel and Dana Wyse, *Vancouver: A History in Photographs* (Surrey, BC: Heritage House Publishing 2009), 111.

¹⁸² Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America’s Rust Belt, 1969-1984* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 8.

¹⁸³ High, *Industrial Sunset*, 92-130. See also Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York: Basic Books: 1982), 6-19.

¹⁸⁴ High, *Industrial Sunset*, 110. Bluestone and Harrison make a similar point. They note that industrial disinvestment is not about corporate executives stopping investing, but rather about the relocation of capital from one activity or place to another. Bluestone and Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America*, 6-7.

Debate over the demise of the industrial sector in False Creek is fundamentally about the meaning of industrial transformation. Prevailing narratives that interpret the redevelopment of False Creek as the reawakening and rescuing of a decayed and lifeless area are reminiscent of Joseph Schumpeter's theory of *creative destruction*: the idea that economic development can only evolve by the creation of the new from the destruction of the old.¹⁸⁵ As Bluestone and Harrison so eloquently suggest, "The old industrial order, like a forest with its cycle of decay and renewal, must undergo constant transformation to provide the material sustenance for fresh enterprise."¹⁸⁶ Likewise, the transformation in False Creek is depicted as a process where the eradication of the old and 'decaying' industries of False Creek provided the necessary impetus and fuel for the creation of a new and revitalized community.

Other writers have examined the industrial transformation of Vancouver's inner city from yet a different light. David Ley and to a lesser extent Thomas Hutton have drawn considerably from Daniel Bell's *post-industrial* thesis. In *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, Bell famously interpreted the changes affecting industrialized countries as the result of the accession of a service-based economy centred on the "exchange of information and knowledge." Ley and Hutton provide compelling arguments for how the rise of post-industrial principles contributed to the reordering of Vancouver's inner-city.¹⁸⁷ The authors call attention to key aspects of Bell's theory - the spread of a class of professional and managerial workers, the change in the character

¹⁸⁵ Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 83-90.

¹⁸⁶ Bluestone and Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America*, 9.

¹⁸⁷ Hutton understands post-industrialism in the following terms, he writes: "post-industrialism is interpreted here not only as a phase of urban development characterized by the contraction of basic manufacturing and the supplanting of traditional industry and labour by service industries and the centrality of theoretical knowledge ... but also as an expression denoting political acceptance of the implications of industrial restructuring." Thomas A. Hutton, "Post-industrialism, Post-modernism and the Reproduction of Vancouver's Central Area: Rethorising the 21st-century City," *Urban Studies*, vol. 41, no.10 (September 2004): 1955.

of work, and the change from goods to services - to explain the pressures that led to the redevelopment of False Creek into a mixed-use development.¹⁸⁸

These interpretations take industrial decline and the obsolescence of industries in False Creek as a premise when in fact it is a phenomenon that is yet to be explained. In so doing, they run the risk of naturalizing the process of urban change making it seem impersonal, natural and inevitable. What contributed to the obsolescence of some industries in False Creek? What were the causes and the context that led industries to shut down? Why did some owners not modernize their plants? How many industries were present in False Creek as plans for the redevelopment unfolded? How do we make sense of businesses that were successful and that wanted to remain in the area? These are some of the questions that need to be answered to understand the process of industrial transformation in False Creek.

State Actors, the Development of False Creek, and Industrial Displacement

In *The Deindustrialization of America*, Bluestone and Harris point to a curious fact about the unique perspectives of workers and owners gained by virtue of their involvement in the functioning of a business:

Because so much disinvestment is invisible to all but those who work on the shop floor or to the managers who actually plan it, there has been a tendency by academic researchers and journalists to recognize deindustrialization only when the plywood goes up over the windows and the "Out of Business" sign is posted, or when a plant is actually relocated physically to another community elsewhere in the country or abroad.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), xii-xvii; David Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); and Hutton, "Post-industrialism, Post-modernism and the Reproduction of Vancouver's Central Area," 1960.

¹⁸⁹ Bluestone and Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America*, 8.

Bluestone and Harris' comments call attention to the idea that workers and owners occupy a privileged position from which to understand industrial decline. What may be apparent to managers and workers may be invisible (or less visible) to such outsiders as journalists, scholars, city officials, and urban experts. A similar perspective is offered by workers and owners who had operated in False Creek.

Testimony found in the oral collection provides suggestive insights about the basis and nature of industrial decline. Unlike writers who have portrayed industrial hardship in False Creek as the workings of intangible and inexorable forces, some company owners traced the decline of their industries directly to state intervention. Such instances demonstrated a level of insight that countered the loose explanations proffered by urban professionals at the time.

Sawmill operators in False Creek directed particular attention to the role of provincial forestry policy in shaping the development of their businesses. Born in Vancouver in 1914, Dan Giroday had operated a sawmill in False Creek from the early 1940s until 1970 when the city terminated his lease. His recollections of industrial False Creek were informed by a lifelong experience with the area's industrial sector.¹⁹⁰ Both his father and grandfather had been involved in the 'fuel business' providing coal and wood, and then later sawdust, for home heating. Giroday worked in the family's business through his teens and early twenties until, in search of more stable and lucrative work, he opened his own sawmill with the help of a cousin. In the interview, he conveys the financial difficulties of running his company. Giroday takes particular issue with changes associated with provincial forest policy in the late 1940s:

Lumber business in BC became very integrated ... When we first started we always went to the logging company and bought our logs from them. We never thought about producing logs, it was a waste of time, it was their end of the business. Our

¹⁹⁰ Giroday was seventy-years old at the time of the interview, and had worked in False Creek for at least thirty years of his life. University of British Columbia Special Collections (hereafter UBC-SP), Dan Giroday of Giroday's Mill, interviewed by Mary Burns, 9 July 1984, 27 Cassette, Vancouver Historical Society.

business was to cut lumber. But as it went along, to maximize the control of the forest industry the government brought in certain things, and that was what you called ‘sustained yield’, that is that they [the provincial government] would allow to cut only what the area of land would grow. So in the name of sustained yield they forced out the saw mills, because if they [the sawmills] lost the supply of logs then the plants was [sic] in no more use ... The evolution was that the sawmill industry as a whole started to go into logging and buy out the timber. And so today if you want to start into the lumber business it’s almost a hopeless situation, because all of the timber holdings are controlled.¹⁹¹

Giroday explained the decline of its business and that of other mills in False Creek in part as a result of a conscious decision by provincial authorities to alter resource management practices.

Similar concerns were voiced by Eric Sonner a manager of *Bay Forest Products Ltd.*

Born in 1916 in Czechoslovakia, Sonner had immigrated to Canada in 1949. He arrived in Vancouver in the same year hoping to find work at the University of British Columbia. As he explains, “things didn’t work out” and he landed a job working as a labourer in False Creek.¹⁹²

He quickly rose through the ranks of *Bay Forest Products* and by the mid-1970s he was a manager in the company. Asked about the changes associated with the forest industry in the 1950s, Sonner remarks (in a somewhat fractured English):

You are quite correct that the lumber industry on the coast went through radical changes. The changes were that in the beginning there were saw mills and logging operations. It became obvious that to be a successful sawmill or wood processing [plant] you had not only to have control of your manufacturing facilities but you also had to control the logging. It was a process where the ... logging companies disappeared and the wood processing plants became logging companies and processing companies ... The same process which happened on the coast also happened in False Creek where the number of mills decreased for the reasons that some mills became obsolete, and others were unable to continue operating because they had no lumber supply.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ UBC-SP, Dan Giroday, interviewed by Mary Burns, 9 July 1984.

¹⁹² UBC-SP, Eric Sonner of Bay Forest Products Ltd., interviewed by Mary Burns, 17 July 1984, 36 Cassette, Vancouver Historical Society.

¹⁹³ UBC-SP, Eric Sonner, interviewed by Mary Burns, 17 July 1984.

While Sonner does not refer to provincial forest policy in the same explicit way as Giroday, it is clear that the two are speaking to the same events. The Sloan Commission of 1943-1945 paved the way for the establishment of a tenure system based on the concept of sustained yield.¹⁹⁴ Many of the recommendations made in the commission were enacted into law in the Forest Act of 1947. As Gordon Hak explains in *Capital and Labour in the British Columbia Forest Industry* government efforts to amend forestry legislation had garnered province-wide attention, and considerable public outcry.¹⁹⁵ The Sloan Commission and sustained-yield legislation were topics of lively discussion in the 1940s and 1950s. Given his long-standing and managerial role in the timber industry, Sonner must have been cognizant of these very issues.

It is difficult to assess how changes in the forest tenure system shaped BC's forest industry. A detailed study of this topic is beyond the scope of this research. Scholarly opinion on the issue is divided. Some writers like Ken Drushka and Roger Hayter see the 1947 legislation as a critical step in the consolidation of the forest industry into the hands of a few large corporations.¹⁹⁶ Others like Hak argue that corporate concentration predated the 1940s, and that the policy changes in 1947 do not in themselves explain corporate growth. A certain degree of consensus, however, does exist regarding the gradual marginalization of small operators. The introduction of Forest Management Licences (FMLs), later called Tree Farm Licences (TFLs) favoured large businesses. Mary McRoberts explains that "only very large companies could handle the vast tracts of land necessary to support the forest management and [new] protection

¹⁹⁴ The concept of sustained yield calls for a harvesting system that extracts from the ecosystem only that which can be regenerated. As Hak explains, "Sustained-yield thinking was part of a broader conservation movement ... based on the belief that scientifically based, rational forestry was possible, that the power of science applied to the forest resource would generate higher yields, perpetual growth, and increased company profits." Gordon Hak, *Capital and Labour in the British Columbia Forest Industry* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 45.

¹⁹⁵ Hak, *Capital and Labour in the British Columbia Forest Industry*, 51-52 and 55-56.

¹⁹⁶ Ken Drushka, *HR: A Biography of H. R. MacMillan* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 1995) and Roger Hayter, *Flexible Crossroads: The Restructuring of British Columbia's Forest Economy* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000).

responsibilities that an FML required.”¹⁹⁷ FMLs were also granted in perpetuity (until 1956) which exacerbated monopolistic tendencies. The licensee system was such that the only way for mills to have a guaranteed supply of logs was for them to take on the task of harvesting the timber.¹⁹⁸

Particularly important in this context is the way that both Sonner and Giroday made sense of some of the financial hardships facing False Creek’s sawmills. In contrast to city officials who dismissed the decline of the local industrial sector as the natural development of a capitalist economy, Sonner and Giroday placed the blame on the shoulder of the state. Amendments in the structure of forest tenure made it harder for small local outfits to secure a ready supply of timber.¹⁹⁹ Corporate consolidation made it increasingly difficult to operate in a sector dominated by larger and wealthier competitors.²⁰⁰ It is possible that Sonner and Giroday exaggerated the extent to which the Forest Act of 1947 impacted local mills.²⁰¹ Hak suggests that while small operators were not “completely unwarranted” for blaming the provincial government for their plight, many continued to do well financially.²⁰² At a minimum, Giroday’s and Sonner’s concerns about the marginalization of small operators are consistent with accepted scholarly

¹⁹⁷ Mary McRoberts, “When Good Intentions Fail: A Case of Forest Policy in the British Columbia Interior, 1945-56,” *Journal of Forest History* 32, no.3 (1988), 144.

¹⁹⁸ Hak explains that big companies began acquiring FMLs for fear of being left empty handed. Hak, *Capital and Labour*, 51. McRoberts, “When Good Intentions Fail,” 144-145. Also see Paul Mitchell-Banks, “The Impact of Five Forest Commissions on the History and Practice of Forestry in British Columbia, Canada,” in Anderson Agnoletti, *Forest History: International Studies on Socio-economic and Forest Ecosystem Change Report Number 2 of the IUFRO Task Force on Environmental Change* (Wallingford, UK: CABI Publishing, 2000), 343-344.

¹⁹⁹ Trevor Barnes et al., “Vancouver, the Province, and the Pacific Rim,” in *Vancouver and Its Region* ed. by Graeme Wynn and Timothy Oke (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 175-176.

²⁰⁰ As a case in point, in 1940 the largest fifty-eight logging industries operating in BC held fifty-two percent of all available timber rights in the province. By 1974, eighty-two percent of all harvesting rights were in the hand of only eight firms. Trevor Barnes et al., “Vancouver, the Province, and the Pacific Rim,” in *Vancouver and Its Region* ed. by Graeme Wynn and Timothy Oke (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 176.

²⁰¹ As already noted, it is difficult to establish the causality between government policy and the fate of small timber companies. Great caution must be taken when considering the veracity of the claims presented in the interviews. It is easy to see how the state could be made a convenient target for attack by disgruntled citizens

²⁰² Furthermore, Hak contends that framing the state as an enemy of the ‘little guy’ and a friend of big capital served as a rallying point for small operators who sought to increase their profits just as much as the large corporations. Hak writes, “Small operators were indeed anxious, but when many of them left the industry, especially if they held timber rights, they did so with a big bank account.” See Hak, *Capital and Labour*, 65-66.

analyses on the topic. It is partly understood that changes in forest tenure regulations exacerbated the ability of local mills to operate in the regional forest economy.

As two sawmill operators who had been working in False Creek for many years, Giroday and Sonner were uniquely placed to understand urban change as an unintended consequence of a much wider state policy, one that was concerned with resource management rather than urban development. Their testimony makes intangible change tangible. What many people writing on the history of False Creek understand as the workings of invisible and intractable forces are made visible. Decline and obsolescence are given precise meanings and causes. Mills became obsolete and closed down because “they had no more lumber supply.”²⁰³

Owners linked both provincial *and* municipal policies to the infrastructural decay observed in industrial False Creek. Giroday provided a suggestive argument about the role of zoning bylaws in contributing to the dilapidated appearance of the site. “The City,” he charged, “didn’t change the zoning to allow these people [local industries] or the CPR to do anything with these pieces of property [the real estate in False Creek].”²⁰⁴ For Giroday, zoning restrictions provided a disincentive to investment in the area. Companies that wanted to diversify their operations as a way to minimize or mitigate financial losses could not do so by turning to non-industrial activities. The City did eventually rezone the area, in 1972, to residential and commercial use.²⁰⁵ But from Giroday’s perspective, the move occurred strategically only after City Hall secured tenure over the land:

The City got hold of this [False Creek South] and rezoned it housing. Well of course, then they said: ‘Look what we’ve done to False Creek.’ But that’s not true because if

²⁰³ UBC-SP, Eric Sonner, interviewed by Mary Burns, 17 July 1984.

²⁰⁴ UBC-SP, Dan Giroday, interviewed by Mary Burns, 9 July 1984.

²⁰⁵ Caroline Mills, “Interpreting Gentrification: Postindustrial, Postpatriarchal, Postmodern?” (PhD Dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1989), 205.

they had zoned it back in the old days to multiple dwellings, hm . . . , and this is what they did but only after they got the rest of the guys out of there.²⁰⁶

Giroday raised a curious proposition. Would local industries have been better equipped to contend with economic challenges had the City allowed for more flexible zoning in False Creek? The history and legacy of zoning ordinances in North-American urban centres is part of an extensive and established body of literature.²⁰⁷ Municipalities have enacted zoning bylaws to accomplish a number of tasks. As instruments of state power they have been used to protect property values, to maintain an efficient use of the land, to safeguard production sites and agricultural fields, and to segregate communities along racial, class and ethnic lines. Giroday is right to point out that zoning regulation in False Creek prevented local owners from engaging in residential development. Both zoning and leasing frameworks imposed limits on what local owners could do with their properties. Whether the City was right to restrict the area for industrial use is a matter for another debate. What is relevant to the present discussion is the way that Giroday makes sense of the physical decline associated with industrial False Creek. Once again, infrastructural decay in the area is traced to a concrete government policy. City officials took the decision to maintain and enforce the industrial zoning, but in so doing also prevented (whether intentionally or not) owners such as Giroday to potentially move the area towards a more sustainable mixed-use.

²⁰⁶ UBC-SP, Dan Giroday, interviewed by Mary Burns, 9 July 1984.

²⁰⁷ Christopher Silver, "The Racial Origins of Zoning: Southern Cities from 1910-1940," *Planning Perspectives* 6 (1991): 189-205; June Thomas, "Planning History and the Black Urban Experience: Linkages and Contemporary Implications," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 14, no.1 (1994): 1-11; Stuart Meck, "Zoning and Anti-Semitism in the 1920s: The Case of *Cleveland Jewish Orphan Home v. Village of University Heights* and Its Aftermath," *Journal of Planning History* 4, no.2 (May 2005): 91-128; Robert Fairbanks, "Rethinking Urban Problems: Planning, Zoning, and City," *Journal of Urban History* 25, no.6 (September 1999): 809-837; June M. Thomas and Marsha R. Ritzdorf (eds.), *Urban Planning and the African American Community: In the Shadows* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997); Patricia Burgess, *Planning for the Private Interest: Land Use Controls and Residential Patterns in Columbus, Ohio, 1900-1970* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1994); and Jonathan Rothwell and Douglas Massey, "The Effects of Density Zoning on Racial Segregation in U.S. Urban Areas," *Urban Affairs Review* 44, no.6 (July 2009): 779-806.

By isolating individual state policies, Giroday's and Sonner's accounts, help to demystify the process of urban change. Their testimonies reveal a more layered history of industrial decline in False Creek than is otherwise obtained from the narratives of many contemporary writers and city officials at the time.

Municipal actors also played a decisive role in actively displacing industries from False Creek. When the redevelopment of False Creek got underway the basin still maintained an industrial presence. While many industries had closed down or relocated prior to the redevelopment, many others had not. The decision to redevelop False Creek as a commercial, recreational and residential district led to the removal of those remaining industries.

The City's role in the eradication of local industries is a theme that shines through many of the interviews. Fred Whitcroft's recollection of the events that led his lively business outfit to relocate away from False Creek is particularly evocative. Whitcroft took over the management of *Gulf of Georgia Tug & Barge* in 1954. Prior to joining the company, he had been involved as an independent contractor buying and fixing tug boats for a number of years. He describes the events leading to the company's move from False Creek:

We were in False Creek up until 1973, and then we were forced to move out. The City came along, they said they wanted to build a seawall past our place, and told us we had to move and told us when to move ... The City came with dozens of hired young people which had been part of a, when was that? Winter, no, a summer program that the government had sponsored. And they didn't gave us any grace at all ... They gave us about three months to get out. In the first month they ... came in to start knocking the building down, while we were still in it, and we were still working and they had the ball hammers in there actually knocking the place down around our ears, literally. So we struggled through that one. That was just, I thought it was quite cruel really what they were doing to us.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ UBC-SP, Frederick Whitcroft of Gulf of Georgia Tug and Barge Ltd., interviewed by Nadine Asante, 25 March 1985, 54 Cassette, Vancouver Historical Society.

Whitcroft clearly remembered the relocation of his business as an act of displacement performed by the City.

Fraser Croker of *BC Equipment Co* recalled a similar experience. Born in 1913, Fraser Croker took over the management of *BC Equipment* in 1949. The company was founded by Croker's father in 1911, and was one of the first plants established on Granville Island. The business sold and serviced heavy machinery for road construction, the mining industry and agricultural activities. Asked about the circumstances that led his business to leave False Creek, Croker replied:

Our company particularly needed rail access [this was to be able to continue receiving their heavy equipment] there was no question that we would be denied rail access. And that eventually happened with the development of the Granville Island project. Rail access was cut off, and then we had to use trucks, which was difficult. But with the development of the Granville Island project it was actually an issue. There was nothing left for us to do than surrendering our lease.²⁰⁹

Croker's experience was not as dramatic as Whitcroft's, but it was just as critical. As the City prepared the grounds for development, it shut down rail traffic in the area, effectively preventing the company to continue to operate in False Creek. *BC Equipment* had to surrender its lease, and relocate its operations elsewhere.²¹⁰ As Croker explains, business continued to be steady as the company provided machinery for a thriving regional construction industry.²¹¹

Both Whitcroft and Croker made sense of the redevelopment of False Creek as a case of industrial displacement. The City had adopted a concrete policy that sought to eradicate industry

²⁰⁹ UBC-SP, Fraser Croker of BC Equipment Co., interviewed by Mary Burns, 18 July 1984, 38 Cassette, Vancouver Historical Society. See also City Council and Office of the City Clerk Fonds, Special Committee Correspondence, False Creek Land Use, 18-G-1, File 6, Vancouver Planning Department, "False Creek: Policies and Actions," June 1973.

²¹⁰ It is not clear the precise year that *BC Equipment* left the area. Since Granville Island was under the ownership of the federal government its leases were subject to somewhat different terms than the one controlled by the City. Evidence that for instance Bay Lumber was given until 1978 to remove log boom (but the log boom sits on the water and would not interfere with prep ground work). See CVA, City Council and Office of the City Clerk Fonds, Special Committee Correspondence, False Creek Land Use, 18-G-1, File 6, Vancouver Planning Department, "False Creek: Progress Report," June 1973.

²¹¹ Croker explains that by the time the company had left False Creek it had opened branches in Prince George, Terrace, Williams Lake and Vernon. UBC-SP, Fraser Croker, interviewed by Mary Burns, 18 July 1984.

from the basin as a way to redevelop the area into a mixed-use non-industrial site. By revealing the role of the City in the active removal of local industries, Whitcroft's and Crocker's testimonies illuminated the importance of state actors in shaping the local urban environment.

Others experienced industrial displacement in a more subtle way. The redevelopment was both a threat and a source of business for some companies operating in False Creek. Gary Keaman was the manager of *False Creek Tug and Barge Ltd.*, a three-generation family business first started by Keaman's grandfather in the early twentieth-century. The company had been operating in False Creek since its inception, and was still in operation at the time of the interview in 1985. Keaman described the challenges of running the business as development got underway in False Creek. He explained that once the development started the company had to move from its location on the west side of Granville Island to the east side of the island. After four or five years, when the development of the island was near completion, the company moved to the far end of False Creek by Main Street. Keaman remarked:

You know it [Granville Island] is set up for yachts and why not, it's not set up for boat-towing companies. So we moved down to the far side of the creek up by Main Street and were there until they [the City] started to work on the Expo thing. So we kind of moved around. Our actual office and shop have been on the barge for the last four years just because of the moving around amongst the development of BC Place, and Expo and Granville Island. And now we are basically running out of time even for that because of the development is going to be so complete in the creek that there will be no room for [us], so we're actually ourselves now just trying to find a place to even put our tug boats. You know, the City, they don't give a damn whether we're here or not, sort of thing, and our work is still here but it's just trying to find a place to put our boats.²¹²

The development of False Creek brought some benefits to Keaman's company in the form of work.²¹³ At the same time, the intense redevelopment was effectively squeezing the company out

²¹² UBC-SP, Gary Keaman of False Creek Tug and Barge Ltd., interviewed by Mary Burns, 19 July 1984, 39 Cassette, Vancouver Historical Society.

²¹³ It is likely that these benefits were only temporary. The redevelopment of the area necessitated the heavy use of barges for transporting sand and gravel, and construction equipment. *False Creek Tug and Barge* also provided key

of False Creek.

The testimony of Crocker, Whitcroft and Keaman reveal that the deindustrialization of the inner city was not a distant historical affair that had predated the redevelopment of the area, but rather an ongoing process. Many workers and owners lived through the events as they witnessed their former worksites being razed to the ground by city crews. The active displacement of industries in False Creek needs to be viewed as one critical moment in a long process of industrial transformation.

Support for Claims about the Redevelopment

The testimony found in the oral records both challenge *and* support claims made by city officials and urban experts about the redevelopment project and the demise of the local industrial sector. Owners provided support to the view that the redevelopment of False Creek accounted only in part for the loss of industry in the basin. In other instances, the interviews also lent support to the claim that the redevelopment was positive for the city.

The redevelopment of False Creek was but one aspect that contributed to the demise of the industrial sector in the inner city of Vancouver. Drawing from prevailing understandings of urban development, City officials and urban experts posited that larger spaces and cheaper land in the periphery were bound to attract industries away from the inner city. While this model of urban change was not as inevitable and as unequivocal as suggested at the time, it did contain grains of truth. This view was further supported by the testimony of some business owners who had operated in False Creek.

As revealed in the testimony of company owners, some businesses had, in fact, left False Creek prior to its redevelopment in search of more advantageous locations. Charles Flavelle explained his company decision to relocate from False Creek as one of necessity: the expanding company needed bigger premises. Charles Flavelle served as principal owner and president of *Purdy's Chocolate Ltd.* When he took over the management of the company in 1963, *Purdy's Chocolate* was operating a small manufacturing plant at West 7th Avenue and Spruce Street in the Fairview Slopes. From Flavelle's perspective, the decision to move from the area was *not* a decision that had been imposed by the City. Flavelle explained the situation:

Three years before we moved [from Fairview Slopes] we had taken over a warehouse across the street which we were renting so that we were now in two locations, two years before we moved we had to rent another little building two miles away in which we made some of our product, so it was a typical industrial growth where things were beginning to get spread around too much ... It [business] had grown a great deal, so that we had to get into other kind of buildings that would allow our continuing incremental growth year by year. That's when we moved to Kingsway and Earles Street and in a much, much larger facility.²¹⁴

In this instance management decided to relocate away from False Creek in search of a bigger facility that could accommodate for the growth of the company. Flavelle's experiences show that not all local companies were displaced by the redevelopment. Some chose to relocate as a way to exploit more favourable business environments.

Fraser Crocker voiced a similar concern about the lack of space in the area. Asked about why some of the firms were not investing in their properties, he replied: "it would cost so much to change the appearance of [Granville] island that very few people were interested in investing a lot of money. The feeling was that you couldn't expand down there, it was an island."²¹⁵ Crocker

²¹⁴ UBC-SP, Charles Flavelle of Purdy's Chocolates Ltd., interviewed by Nadine Asante, 16 February 1985, 48 Cassette, Vancouver Historical Society.

²¹⁵ UBC-SP, Fraser Crocker, interviewed by Mary Burns, 18 July 1984.

presented a business rationale for why some industries decide to leave False Creek: the limited space made expansion a problem.²¹⁶

The testimonies also lent support to the idea that the redevelopment was a positive fit for the city. While the redevelopment was for many workers and owners a symbol of displacement, it was also viewed by some as a positive project if not a success. Owners and workers expressed approval of and appreciation for the project's results. Asked about what he thought of the transformation from industrial to mixed-use, Bob Wong, a former worker for *Sigurdson's Millwork*, replied: "I think it's the best thing that's ever happened." When pressed about his answer, he briefly explained: "Well, it [industry] belonged down there at the time, but certainly not today, it was too much in the heart of the city."²¹⁷ Robert Conkey, the owner of *Canada Forge and Chain*, took issue with the increased traffic, but was otherwise approving: "Oh, I know my kids all use it [Granville Island], we go there all the time. I go down there as well, I think it's very good, especially with Expo coming up." Fraser Crocker shared a similar outlook. As he recalled, he had "objected strenuously" to the displacement of industry from the area. Nonetheless, he believed that city authorities had ultimately "done a good job" with the redevelopment of the site.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Here is how Oke et al. understand the process of change in the basin, "But in the long term the economic difficulties of False Creek industries, the inadequacies of the site, and competition from new facilities elsewhere were more effective agents of change." Oke et al. are painting with broad strokes. They fail to provide evidence or examples supporting their claims and do not elaborate on this process of change. But they do suggest that the site was inadequate for industrial production which is a theme raised by some respondents such as Crocker. Oke et al., "Primordial to Prim Order: A Century of Environmental Change," in *Vancouver and Its Region* ed. by Graeme Wynn and Timothy Oke (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 146-170. Another such example is found in Robert North and Walter Hardwick, "Vancouver Since the Second World War: An Economic Geography," in *Vancouver and Its Region* ed. by Graeme Wynn and Timothy Oke (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992): 212. The two authors explain the growth of industrial presence in the municipalities south of the Fraser River: "with growth in the scale of traditional processing, manufacturing, and freight-handling activities, these functions needed more space than they could afford and, in many cases, more than was physically available at most locations near the city centre."

²¹⁷ UBC-SP, Bob Wong of Sigurdson's Millwork Ltd., interviewed by Mary Burns, 12 July 1984, 33 Cassette, Vancouver Historical Society.

²¹⁸ UBC-SP, Fraser Crocker, interviewed by Mary Burns, 18 July 1984.

The experiences of Charles Flavelle support the view, held by many officials and contemporary writers, that the loss of industrial production within the inner city was not fully connected to the redevelopment of False Creek. City officials and urban experts at the time were right to suggest that a limited supply of suitable space and higher land values made industrial development in the urban core a challenge. As revealed Flavelle and Crocker, the limited availability of space did create problems for businesses that wanted to expand their operations.

In pointing to both the benefits and the pitfalls of the False Creek project, the testimonies of workers and owners help reveal the complexities and contradictions of urban development. The redevelopment negatively impacted many of the local industries, but in turn created a site that was enjoyed by the very same workers and owners who had operated in the area. Borrowing from Lance Freeman's depiction of gentrification, if urban redevelopment "were a movie character, he would be both villain and knight in shining armor, welcome by some and feared and loathed by others and even dreaded and welcomed at the same time by the same people."²¹⁹

The Discourse of Local Workers and Businessmen

The views of owners and workers found expression in a discourse that was often at odds with the one espoused by city officials. By virtue of their position as individuals who had spent much of their everyday lives in the basin, workers and owners described and made sense of the redevelopment of False Creek in a language distinct from that of outsiders such as politicians, urban planners and scholars.

²¹⁹ Lance Freeman, *There Goes the 'hood: Views of Gentrification From the Ground Up* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 60.

Descriptions of the social and physical environment figured prominently in many of the interviews. Robert Conkey, owner of *Canada Chain and Forge Ltd.*, remembered False Creek as a busy industrial area. Born in Vancouver in 1923, Conkey took over the family's business in 1957. His father had founded the company with five other partners in 1919. On his return from World War II, Conkey took up farming in Langley, British Columbia, only later deciding to follow in his father's footsteps. Asked about his transition from working on the farm to working on Granville Island, where his father's company was located, Conkey replied: "No, no I don't think it was [dirty]. Of course, I guess it might have been seen dirty, but some people think a lot of stuff is dirty. But a lot of it was pretty clean too."²²⁰ A few minutes later, the interviewer pressed the issue:

MARY BURNS: So unlike that man who told me the other day that Granville Island was really dirty you never had that sense, you always ...?

CONKEY: I thought it was busy. I thought it was really busy, yeah there's two ways of looking at it.²²¹

Conkey explained the point: "To me to walk through a park it's nice and relaxing but to walk through an industrial area and see people working is interesting too."²²² What is intriguing about this brief exchange is the way that Conkey saw and described industrial presence in the basin. Civic authorities often looked upon the industrial landscape with concern, calling industrial False Creek a "menace," a "wasteland," a "jungle," and a "civic horror." Conkey perceived it as a source of interest. Conkey saw a busy and active worksite where others saw filth and disorder. What the unfamiliar visitor was likely to consider a 'messy' worksite, was for an everyday worker of False Creek a productive and bustling plant. By noting the "two ways of looking" at

²²⁰ UBC-SP, Robert Conkey of Canada Chain and Forge, interviewed by Mary Burns, 10 July 1984, 32 Cassette, Vancouver Historical Society.

²²¹ UBC-SP, Robert Conkey, interviewed by Mary Burns, 10 July 1984.

²²² UBC-SP, Robert Conkey, interviewed by Mary Burns, 10 July 1984.

the issue, Conkey pointed to the ambiguity of perception, the tendency to project our own prejudices onto the very people and things that we perceive.

Distance and location are key factors that shaped peoples' perceptions of False Creek. Many urban professionals and civic authorities had opinionated views about the economic and physical state of affairs in the basin. But how many people had actually toured the area and visited the local industries? To what extent were impressions of False Creek based on hearsay or on misunderstandings? When, after sharply criticizing *Sweeney's Cooperage* as the "biggest anachronism on the creek," UBC professor Robert Collier finally took the opportunity to tour the company, he expressed pleasant surprise at the level of activity and craft found at the plant.²²³ Florence Dunsmuir, who had worked as a secretary at *Arrow Transfer Ltd.*, raised a similar issue. In her interview she alludes to the view of False Creek from the Granville Bridge:

You know, when we were there it was considered to be an industry in the centre of the city. And I think a lot of people who saw that from the [Granville] bridge thought it was a kind of, I don't know, an untidy looking area, because of where it was located and because of the types of buildings.²²⁴

The Granville Bridge offered a particularly good vantage point from which to see Granville Island and False Creek. Dunsmuir's own opinion on the physical state of False Creek is not clear. She does not say whether she considered the area 'untidy' or not. But she does hint at the fact that many people formed a view of industrial False Creek from the distance of the Granville Bridge. For these individuals, impressions of False Creek were not likely to extend much further. The panoramic view afforded by the bridge shaped people's thoughts about the city's local industrial sector. The idea was also shared by Robert Conkey. Commenting on the changes experienced in the basin, Conkey remarked:

²²³ *Province*, 9 December 1969, 19.

²²⁴ UBC-SP, Florence Dunsmuir of Arrow Transfer Ltd., interviewed by Mary Burns, 16 August 1984, 46 Cassette, Vancouver Historical Society.

In fact one person told me never to have an industry under a bridge. Because if people drive over the bridge and look down at the puffs of smoke, they say: ‘we have got to get rid of that pollution.’²²⁵

The pollution caused by local industries was one of the few visible features of industrial False Creek observable from a distance. This is not to deny the vast, damaging impact that industries had on the environment. It is clear that the basin was polluted. Conkey speaks to the idea that for drivers on the Granville Bridge the image of industrial False Creek was reduced to that of a destructive polluter and not much else. Dunsmuir’s and Conkey’s illuminate the role of location and distance in shaping a person’s impressions of False Creek.

Some respondents described False Creek in language similar to that of city officials and urban experts at the time. Some clearly remembered the site as dirty and unkempt. Frank Maynard worked as a sale manager for *National Machinery Co.* Located on Granville Island since the late 1920s, the company focused on the sale and servicing of heavy equipment such as lift trucks, graders, asphalt rollers and snowploughs. Maynard arrived in Vancouver in the 1930s as a teenager. After he was discharged from the army in 1945 he held a series of jobs until he was hired in the parts department of *National Machinery*. Within a few years he was promoted to administrative work, and in 1955 was appointed manager of the sales division. He remembers the physical aspect of the basin:

MAYNARD: It wasn’t exactly a beautiful spot, you know. All those industrial places were rough and ready set ups, and there weren’t any trees or boulevards, or anything like that. It was just strictly an industrial site.

MARY BURNS: Yeah, I heard people say it was a pretty dirty place.

MAYNARD: It was not only dirty. The water itself was dirty too, because all the effluents from all these places would be just dumped into the water there, as well as from other parts of False

²²⁵ UBC-SP, Robert Conkey, interviewed by Mary Burns, 10 July 1984.

Creek. False Creek itself was, the water was you know, you could almost walk across it because the water was so polluted.²²⁶

Williams Jenkins, vice-president of *Columbia Bitulithic Co*, shared a similar view. Jenkins was born in 1918 and joined his father's road construction company permanently after returning from World War II. Asked about his impressions of False Creek in the 1950s, he replies:

It was an industrial area. Of course I focus on my father's business location. It had an asphalt plant there, big piles of gravel and sand, a tunnel below ground level, which conveyered these piles of materials into the plant. There was an office there. It was, I don't know if I thought of it as a dirty place then, but I did in the later years. It was quite a dirty industrial area, that's what it was.²²⁷

Other respondents simply conveyed a plain picture of the basin without commenting on the cleanliness or messiness of the area. Bob Wong who had worked for *Sigurdson's Millwork Co*, a firm that specialized in architectural woodwork, simply stated: "It was strictly an industrial area, there's no other way that I can explain it."

While opinions about the physical state of False Creek varied, none of the interviewees described the site in quite the same disparaging tone as that of city officials and urban professionals. According to the respondents, industrial False Creek was at worst a very polluted area. For many it was simply an industrial site. Even William Jenkins, who perceived False Creek as having fallen into decay, gave an immediate impression of the area that stressed the banality of industrial production: "an asphalt plant there, big piles of gravel and sand, a tunnel below ground ... an office there."

Owners and workers used much more evocative metaphors when describing the circumstances that led them to move from False Creek. Their language stood in sharp contrast to

²²⁶ UBC-SP, Frank Maynard of National Machinery Co., interviewed by Mary Burns, 17 July 1984, 37 Cassette, Vancouver Historical Society.

²²⁷ UBC-SP, Andrew Jenkins of Columbia Bitulithic Co., interviewed by Mary Burns, 9 July 1984, 29 Cassette, Vancouver Historical Society.

that espoused by contemporary writers and by officials at the time who tended to portray the process of displacement as a smooth and natural event. Harold Clay was a fixture of False Creek's industrial life. He had built a wharf beneath the Granville Bridge in the early 1930s which he operated until it was demolished in 1974 by city crews. Clay described being "pushed right out" of False Creek. His recollection of the events is simple enough: "They [they City] were building that [the Heather Street Wharf] and finally they told us all to get out of there, and they put a big sign there and we had to get out."²²⁸ Ed Comarck of *Sigurdson's Millwork* was just as blunt: "The City, you know, they were trying to clean the place up and it was basically emptied out."²²⁹ As previously seen, Frederick Whitcroft recalled a similar experience: "we were forced to move out ... the City came along, they said they wanted to build a seawall past our place, and told us we had to move and told us when to move."²³⁰ Gary Keaman described the city's lack of consideration for industry in the basin, "the City, they don't give a damn whether we're here or not, sort of thing."²³¹

The accounts of worker and company owners frame the redevelopment of False Creek as a coercive and dislocating process. Companies were 'forced to move out,' people were 'told to get out of there,' and the area was 'emptied out.' Whitcroft remembered the events as "a cruel" experience. For Harold Clay, the loss of his wharf was enough of a traumatic experience that he was "hardly being able to go by there" anymore.²³² Florence Dunsmuir described the redevelopment as a "terrible outcome."²³³ Worker and owners saw different agents undertake different kinds of actions. From the point of view of the many individuals who had worked in

²²⁸ UBC-SP, Harold Clay of Clay's Wharf, interviewed by Mary Burns, 5 July 1984, 26 Cassette, Vancouver Historical Society.

²²⁹ UBC-SP, Ed Cormack of Sigurdson's Millwork Ltd., interviewed by Mary Burns, 12 July 1984, 33 Cassette, Vancouver Historical Society.

²³⁰ UBC-SP, Frederick Whitcroft, interviewed by Nadine Asante, 25 March 1985.

²³¹ UBC-SP, Gary Keaman, interviewed by Mary Burns, 19 July 1984.

²³² UBC-SP, Harold Clay of Clay's Wharf, interviewed by Mary Burns, 5 July 1984.

²³³ UBC-SP, Florence Dunsmuir, interviewed by Mary Burns, 16 August 1984.

False Creek, the City was far from being a distant spectator to the ravages of industrial decline. Municipal officials were active collaborators in eradicating industry from the inner city of Vancouver.²³⁴

Conclusion

Accounts by local workers and company owners suggest a more nuanced view of the redevelopment of False Creek. They provide us with a different perspective from which to explore some of the implications and rationales behind the plans to transform the site into a residential and recreational centre. In this way, the interviews are critical for creating a more complete picture of the process of urban change. Workers and company owners made sense of the changes around them in ways that sometimes challenged the dominant interpretations put forth by city officials and urban professionals. Responses by local workers and owners provide different understandings for how and why industries declined or left the area. They help us reconsider the extent and nature of municipal intervention in the inner-city economy. At times, respondents challenge essentialist interpretations that view the redevelopment of False Creek as inevitable and positive. At other times, they seem to confirm these. Ultimately, while occasionally counterintuitive the thoughts and opinions of people working in False Creek make an indispensable contribution to the history of the area.

²³⁴ It is not clear what exact measures (other than refusing to renew the lease agreements) the City took to compel existing businesses to leave the area. It is also possible that respondents exaggerated the actions taken by municipal authorities towards local industries. While some respondents might have vilified City Hall for their failing businesses, many of the owners who criticized municipal policy had successful businesses.

CONCLUSION

Vancouver is a city that has strived to reinvent itself. Nowhere has this been more evident than in False Creek. The salt-water basin has been both the poster child and the ground zero of Vancouver's acclaimed 'urban renaissance' – the transformation of the city from resource town to world-class metropolis. Once called a black spot on Vancouver's image, False Creek has become one of the city's most favoured and praised public areas. The luxury glass towers that today dot the northern shore of False Creek stand in sharp contrast to the grimy and smoky industries that inhabited the site for much of the twentieth century. Over the past forty years, the southern shores of the basin have experienced equally dramatic changes. The completion of the Olympic Village marks a significant milestone in the redevelopment of the area.²³⁵ This recent residential project is the latest in a series of developments that has seen False Creek emerge as one of Vancouver's prime cosmopolitan districts. Today, the area boasts a world-class recreational seawall, numerous parks, fine restaurants, a hotel, a popular public market, professional sports venues, and an eclectic mix of artisanal boutiques and arts theatres.

There is little today to suggest that the basin once stood as a centre of industrial activity. If not for a handful of converted warehouse buildings, rusted railway tracks and the occasional commemorative plaque, the area's industrial past would most assuredly disappear from view. Behind the basin's crisp shimmering waters and its vibrant streets are the echoes of a different, but not-so-distant time.

Like a wistful ghost, False Creek's industrial past has come to haunt present-day regional policy. Debate over the loss of industrial land has attracted growing attention in recent years.

²³⁵ Robert Ransford, "Government Key to City-Shaping, History Tells Us; False Creek Re-Purposing Unimaginable Without Provincial, City Hall Leadership," *Vancouver Sun*, 13 December 2008.

Officials and urban experts of all ilk have urged to preserve and enhance industry throughout the Vancouver metropolitan area.²³⁶ Proponents of industrial sites have made compelling arguments about the role of industry for local job creation and for a strong diversified economy. Fears have been raised about encroaching residential development and the worry that Vancouver will develop into a luxury resort city filled with condos and wine bars but few jobs.²³⁷

Revisiting the redevelopment of False Creek in light of these debates could not be more fitting. To be sure, False Creek has been a prominent and popular topic of discussion among many writers. Particular attention has been given to the redevelopment project in the context of its status as a model of contemporary city-making and urban design. But both popular and academic authors have been slow to assess False Creek as a site where pressures for residential and commercial development led to the displacement of local industries, and to a radical contraction of available inner-city industrial land. The issues and events that were being played out as the redevelopment of False Creek took place in the 1970s and 1980s are relevant to contemporary discussions about the future of industry and blue-collar work.

It is clear today that the story of False Creek as a categorical success of urban-style living is both myth and fact. The redevelopment of the basin brought unimaginable benefits to countless Vancouverites. Its parks, public areas, shops, restaurants and arts venues are enjoyed by millions of people annually. False Creek is also one of Vancouver's most sought-after residential communities. But the transition from industrial to mixed-use also resulted in the loss of centrally-located industrial land. More important, the redevelopment did not occur on a vacant and abandoned site as many prevailing narratives continue to suggest. As the testimonies of

²³⁶ Jeff Lee and Kelly Sinosky, "Metro Vancouver Battles to Preserve Dwindling Supply of Industrial Land," *Vancouver Sun*, 17 May 2011; and Brian Morton, "Seaspan Steps Up Campaign for Part of \$35-billion Federal Contract," *Vancouver Sun*, 8 June 2011.

²³⁷ Kerry Gold, "Vancouver's Development is Relentlessly Residential," *Globe and Mail*, 27 May 2011.

former business owners and local workers reveal, the success of False Creek is inextricably linked to a story of dislocation and displacement.

To say that urban redevelopment contributed to industrial displacement is to make a claim about the larger process of industrial restructuring affecting other North American cities. Current interpretations of the redevelopment of False Creek interpret the loss of the local inner-city industrial sector as a consequence of decline and deindustrialization, often pointing to these processes as having happened in a distant past well before the redevelopment project. However, the precise meanings of “decline” or “deindustrialization” are seldom made clear. One premise of my argument is that these terms need to be explained and investigated, rather than assumed. This is particularly evident when confronted by the presence of successful industries that opposed the rezoning of False Creek to non-industrial use. What does it mean to say that the ravages of deindustrialization caused industries to close down or relocate when businesses still operated in the area? How should one understand the meaning of “industrial decline”? The mechanisms and dynamics of plant shut-downs, relocation and displacement need to be illuminated. Industrial displacement in False Creek does not fully explain the steady loss of urban industrial production in Vancouver, but it does highlight an integral aspect of the broader process of industrial restructuring occurring in the city at the time.

The decision to redevelop False Creek as a residential, commercial and recreational area is situated within political, social and economic climate of the time. By the 1960s, manufacturing activities played a significant role in the local economy employing almost one in every five workers in Vancouver. But the manufacturing sector was increasingly overshadowed by the service sector. Growth in service industries led to a remarkable expansion in downtown office space which put pressures for redevelopment of inner city industrial land. A growing class of

managerial and professional workers created a strong demand for centrally located housing, and recreational and service amenities. All the while, suburban municipalities were expanding their industrial land base making industrial development and relocation in the periphery an attractive alternative. In 1972, the coming to power of The Electors' Action Movement (TEAM) provided the necessary political impetus to transform False Creek. Collectively, these trends and developments contribute to a critical perspective from which to examine and understand how False Creek was redeveloped into a commercial, residential and recreational site.

Drawing attention to how municipal visions about False Creek changed over the course of the twentieth-century helps us to demystify the process of urban change. It helps reveal how what emerged as the dominant vision for False Creek was at an earlier time contested. The decision to rezone the basin from industrial to mixed-use resulted from political deliberation and debate, and relied on particular assumptions about what constituted a successful and thriving community. The normative ambiguity and elusiveness inherent in the vision of early proponents of redevelopment is most notably reflected in the imagery evoked when describing industrial False Creek. Narratives about the "obsolescence" of industrial activity and urban "blight" provided compelling rationalizations for the redevelopment of the area, and naturalized the process of urban change making it seem inevitable and necessary.

Local workers and business owners made sense of the changes happening around in them in ways that confirmed but also challenged the assumptions and narratives presented by city officials and urban experts. Unlike proponents of redevelopment, local workers and owners did not refer to the basin by such terms as "wasteland," "jungle," or "dump." People involved in the local industrial sector saw False Creek primarily as a worksite. Some remembered the area as dirty and polluted, but others described it as clean. Robert Conkey, owner of *Canada Chain and*

Forge, viewed False Creek as a “busy” workplace. The testimonies of local workers and owners reveal how peoples’ perspectives on the local industrial sector were shaped by their relationship with the area. Some owners confirmed the notion that lack of space rather than the redevelopment was the main motivation for relocating away from the inner city. Others called attention to the detrimental role of zoning by-laws and provincial forestry policy in the economic development of the industrial sector. The experiences of individuals affiliated with local industries amplified an understanding of False Creek as a site of displacement, a viewpoint that has not been examined in detailed and only recently recognized.

There is still much to be learned about the redevelopment of False Creek and the mechanisms by which the land was claimed and cleared for redevelopment. I have only scratched the surface of what is a much larger story. Further research is required to provide a comprehensive picture of the process and legacy of urban change in Vancouver’s inner city. Many questions are still left unanswered. What was the exact profile of the displaced labour force? How many companies closed down? How many relocated? Were people successful in finding employment elsewhere? What have, if any, been the wider social repercussions of the loss of industrial land in Vancouver? Is there a link between urban inequity and poverty, and the redevelopment of the inner city?

In Brief

Despite claims to the contrary, as City officials unveiled plans for the redevelopment of False Creek, the land was far from being abandoned and deserted. Examining the testimony of local workers and business owners as well as the visions of city officials and urban experts shows that the loss of industrial land and blue collar work in False Creek was not a natural and

inevitable process. The demise of the industrial sector in False Creek resulted in part from state policy, and from changing understandings about the place of industry in the socio-economic life of the city. While the redevelopment brought many public benefits, the transformation of the area is inextricably linked to a story of displacement.

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