

Aspiration, agency and the production of new selves in a Scottish new town, c.1947- c.2016

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Introduction

The postwar decades in Britain witnessed the mass relocation of people from inner cities and substandard housing to new homes on urban estates and in new towns.¹ The story of this major demographic shift has been interpreted very differently in the south and north of the country. In narratives of the south relocation, and new towns in particular, feature as constituents of a restructured and prosperous postwar economy and modernising social structure as well as manifestations of the promise of new lifestyles divorced from traditions and practices shaped by gender and class.² Histories of Scotland and the north, however, tend

¹ Between 1954 and 1969 more than 2.5 million new homes had been built by local authorities and another 2.7 million by private builders. More than half a million of these were in Scotland. By 1967 there were almost 175,000 new houses and flats in new towns across the UK. *Annual Abstract of Statistics*, 107 (1970), p.64; F. J. Osborn and A. Whittick (eds), *The New Towns; the Answer to Megalopolis* (London, 1969), p.418.

² Mark Clapson, *Invincible Green Suburbs, Brave New Towns: Social Change and Urban Dispersal in Postwar England* (Manchester, 1998); Clapson, *Suburban Century. Social Change and Urban Growth in England and the USA* (Oxford, 2003); Judy Attfield, 'Inside pram town: a case study of Harlow interiors, 1951-61' in Judy Attfield and Pat Kirkham (eds), *A View from the Interior* (London, 1989); Ben Jones, *The Working Class in Mid Twentieth-Century England: Community, Identity and Social Memory* (Manchester, 2012);

to reinforce underlying assumptions and long-established discursive conventions of the north-south divide with Scotland, and west-central Scotland in particular, featuring as the chief loci of de-industrialisation and economic decline.³ More broadly, Scotland has been under-represented within the wider historiography of post-war Britain.⁴ This reflects the enduring influence of an Anglo-centric pull within British studies, but it also betrays an underlying assumption about Scottish exceptionalism; that experiences north of the border were qualitatively different from those in the south. These narratives centre on trade union militancy and the collapse of industrial communities, but they also address the ‘failure’ of other aspects of the post-war settlement, in particular Scotland’s public housing drive. Popular narratives of Scottish industrial ‘decline’ structure and assimilate a powerful mythology of urban decay wherein overarching themes of ‘failure’ and ‘decline’ are condensed within a stark iconography of inner-city tower blocks and abandoned ‘peripheral’ housing ‘schemes’.⁵ Within these accounts working people, if they appear at all, tend to be

Peter Scott, *The Making of the Modern British Home: The Suburban Semi and Family Life Between the Wars*, (Oxford, 2013).

³ For example, Alan R. H. Baker and Mark Billinge, (eds), *Geographies of England: the North-South Divide, Material and Imagined* (Cambridge, 2004); and taking an economic perspective over the last 40 years, Robert Rowthorn, ‘Combined and uneven development: reflections on the North–South divide’, *Spatial Economic Analysis* 5 (2010), 364-88.

⁴ For example, Peter Cattrall and James Obelkevich (eds), *Understanding Postwar British Society* (London, 1994).

⁵ For instance, Patrick Wright, *A Journey Through Ruins: A Keyhole Portrait of British Postwar Life and Culture*, (London, 1991), p. 117-133; Alice Coleman, *Utopia on Trial*.

represented as victims of powerful and long-term external forces – economic change, central government policy, planning decisions – and suffering sustained and ongoing deleterious vulnerabilities in terms of employment, health and housing.⁶ The focus on state-led regional development and its consequences routinely obscures social agencies emerging from below. Housing histories in particular tend to privilege the primacy of policy and macro-economic processes and design decisions in shaping post-war modernisation and housing mobility and the long-run negative economic and social consequences of these.⁷ In the West of Scotland

Vision and Reality in Planned Housing (London, 1990). On housing see Sean Damer, *From Moorepark to "Wine Alley": Rise and Fall of a Glasgow Housing Scheme* (Edinburgh, 1989).

⁶ A.Gibb, *Glasgow, the Making of City* (Routledge, 1983); Michael Keating, *The City that Refused to Die: Glasgow: the Politics of Urban Regeneration* (Aberdeen, 1988); Ian Levitt, 'New towns new Scotland, new ideology, 1937-57', *Scottish Historical Review* 76 (1997), 222-38; Douglas Robertson, 'Scotland's "New Towns" a Corporatism Experiment' in J. Beech, O. Hand M. Mulhern, J. Weston (eds). *Scottish Life and Society Volume 9: The Individual and Community Life - A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology* (Edinburgh, 2009), 372-402. For a more recent account see J.Tomlinson and E.Gibbs, 'Planning the new industrial nation: Scotland 1931-1979', *Contemporary British History* 30 (2016), 584-606.

⁷ Patrick Dunleavy, *The Politics of Mass Housing in Britain, 1945-1975: a study of corporate power and professional influence in the welfare state*, Oxford, 1981; Andrew Gibb, 'Policy and politics in Scottish housing since 1945' in Richard Rodger (ed), *Scottish Housing in the Twentieth Century* (Leicester, 1989); Miles Glendinning and Stefan Muthesius, *Tower Block: Modern Public Housing in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland*, New Haven, 1994.

these consequences are manifested in the ‘Glasgow effect’, shorthand for the longstanding excess mortality rates to be found in the Glasgow conurbation.⁸

This article challenges the idea of Scottish exceptionalism in relation to narratives of postwar Britain and makes space for northern aspiration and new models of the self manifested in new lifestyles and social relations through a case study of the first Scottish new town: East Kilbride (designated 1947).⁹ It questions the association of urban Scotland with themes of economic and social degeneration and in turn contributes to the deconstruction of the ‘myth of decline’, in this case by focusing on housing and individual responses to public policy.¹⁰ New towns in the Scottish context have long been regarded by critics of postwar central government economic and social policy as, at best, a distraction from the very real problems afflicting the urban parts of west central Scotland (and particularly Glasgow) and at worst as

⁸ The ‘Glasgow effect’ refers to the greater vulnerability of greater Glasgow’s population - owing to historical processes and political decisions - to a range of influences on health including poverty, deindustrialisation and deprivation. For the view that considers housing policy in this mix see C.Collins and I.Levitt, ‘The modernisation of Scotland and its impact on Glasgow, 1955-1979: unwanted side effects and vulnerabilities’, *Scottish Affairs* 25:3 (2016), 294-316.

⁹ On the phenomenon of suburban aspiration as it originated in the 19th century as an anti-urban, anti-industrial impetus see Mark Clapson, *Suburban Century: Social Change and Urban Growth in England and the USA* (Oxford, 2003), pp.51-78.

¹⁰ On the challenge to ‘declinism’ from the perspective of economic history see J.Tomlinson, ‘Thrice denied: “Declinism” as a recurrent theme in British history in the Twentieth Century’, *Twentieth Century British History* (2009) 20 (2): 227-251.

‘parasites’ draining the life-blood from the city, thereby sacrificing Glasgow’s regeneration by diverting economic resources elsewhere.¹¹ Moreover, the idea of suburban living has too seldom been identified as a feature of the Scottish housing landscape, more often associated with the south of England and a particular (predominantly middle-class) lifestyle with its supposed obsessions with owner occupation and the preference for a private family life behind the net curtains or the privet hedge.¹²

In what follows we argue that new towns in Scotland, as in the south, were an important arena for the production and performance of postwar individualism, offering a space where individualist aspirations were shaped.¹³ Through analysis of people’s everyday interactions with new housing and the effects of those interactions on understandings of the self, we question crude assessments of the role of the postwar state in shaping the everyday lives of citizens within the context of public housing. In those parts of the UK with a legacy of heavy

¹¹ Collins and Levitt, ‘The “Modernisation” of Scotland’, 299. The criticism that new towns attracted Glasgow’s skilled workforce leaving the city with a population possessing less economic and social capital ignores the self-selecting character of the first people to move to the new town.

¹² In one of the seminal sociological examinations of suburbs in the UK and USA, Scotland received a one-line mention: “Their development in Scotland has been much slower and more recent” in D.C.Thorns, *Suburbia* (St Albans, 1973), p.82. See Clapson. ‘The suburban aspiration’, 151-3.

¹³ Emily Robinson, Camilla Schofield, Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, Natalie Thomlinson, ‘Telling stories about post-war Britain: popular individualism and the ‘crisis’ of the 1970s’, *Twentieth Century British History* 28:2 (2017), 268-304.

industry and appalling housing conditions for working people, the historian needs to recognise that the desires, fantasies and strategies of the first new town generations or ‘pioneers’ represent a source of agency in accounts of post-war modernisation. These were people with strong aspirations and domestic idealism, and in their success they form part of an emerging story about change and social identity in postwar Britain which increasingly recognises the salience of demands for personal autonomy and self-determination, overlaying and cutting across structural narratives determined by economic and political change.¹⁴

Firstly, we revisit the limited data produced on social and economic outcomes for East Kilbride residents following the first decades of its development which largely offered a positive appraisal of the first Scottish new town in terms of material and subjective measures. Second, we analyse the findings of our own qualitative research conducted almost 70 years after the town's designation. Life history interviews with 20 residents of East Kilbride, some of whom moved there in the first two decades, others who were second generation, offer deep retrospective and long-term insights into the resonance and longevity of the results of the early research, enabling us to identify how elective relocation fostered and enabled new forms of identity predicated upon housing, social relations and lifestyle opportunities.¹⁵

¹⁴ Robinson et al, ‘Telling stories’, 302-4.

¹⁵ Interviews were conducted in two tranches: the first 15 were carried out by Linda Fleming in 2011 in collaboration with East Kilbride and District Housing Association (project funded by a Scottish Enterprise First Step Award) and all respondents are identified by pseudonyms. The final 5 were conducted by the Leverhulme project team in 2016 and respondents identified by their real names. The digital sound files and summaries and transcripts can be consulted at South Lanarkshire Council Archives.

Two key factors underpinned this transformation from city dwellers with aspirations to contented new towners. These are, principally: the embrace of a newly-fashioned family and home-centred lifestyle and the development of new elective social networks, both of which encompassed changes in gender and class identities and social relations. While retrospective memory narratives might be expected to elicit nostalgic memories of life in the new town when everything was ‘brand spanking new’ and newcomers shared experiences, instead residents’ critical, self-reflexive accounts enable us to understand how the new town created new spaces and opportunities for the refashioning of individual, family and social life in the postwar decades. As Clapson argues, drawing mainly on examples around the London zone and the south of England, new towns (and by extension other suburban developments) allowed people to ‘achieve a meaningful balance between home, wider family and social and material opportunities offered by the new context’.¹⁶ In the case of East Kilbride, we detect little short of an alternative lifestyle in production in the early years of the peopling of a new town, and this permits a new form of intervention in the historical debates of British postwar housing which go beyond the material experience to explore deeper and affective dimensions of the new town self.¹⁷ In the context of ongoing housing regeneration in the city of Glasgow, the widespread rejection of some alternative social housing solutions (notably high flats) and the revival of the new town concept in the twenty-first century, it also seems to us that assessing the degree to which East Kilbride delivered housing experiences which produced

¹⁶ Clapson, *Invincible Suburbs*, p.197

¹⁷ For studies of England which do take on board the subjective experience of housing see Clapson, *Invincible Suburbs*; Jones, *Working Class*; Ben Rogaly and Becky Taylor, *Moving Histories of Class and Community: Identity, Place and Belonging in Contemporary England* (Basingstoke, 2009).

positive outcomes for residents is both timely and urgent.¹⁸ The value of an historical perspective to the conversation about modernisation, economic change, community cohesion and housing design resides in the ability to identify what factors contributed to people's satisfaction with their residential environment in the past and in the decades since.

Focusing on housing design, employment opportunities, social composition and social networks and broader environmental factors in the context of strong discursive imperatives regarding family life, this study makes two key contributions to understandings of postwar social change. First, it demonstrates that elective resettlement generated new social practices and identities which are at odds with the dominant narratives of postwar modernisation which, especially in the Scottish context, emphasise the efficacy of central planning and impersonal forces. Secondly, by interrogating individual memory narratives the case is made for the new town as the fulcrum of a transformation of the self in the case of the elective 'pioneers'. These were men and women of the skilled working class for whom moving to the new town facilitated the achievement of a lifestyle they hankered after but felt they could not attain without relocating. Living and working in the new town enabled this group to practice the social identities to which they aspired encompassing a range of possibilities that would not have been available in their former communities.

The East Kilbride Offer and the Desire for a Better Life

¹⁸ Tornagrain in Moray is under construction and there are plans for Owenstown in Lanarkshire.

East Kilbride was widely rated an economic, planning and social success in absorbing overspill population from a large industrial city with Britain's most intense problems of overcrowding, ill-health, crime and 'delinquency'. Situated on an elevated site in the lower Clyde valley just 8 miles south of the city of Glasgow, this planned community of 45,000 people was one component of a policy of modernisation of the Scottish economy, promoting economic diversification in the wake of the decline of Scotland's traditional heavy industries.¹⁹ More broadly, East Kilbride, was a constituent part of the Scottish Office's Clyde Valley Regional Plan which proposed the dispersal of more than half a million of Glasgow's inhabitants to peripheral estates around the city and to new towns to relieve the congestion and chronically substandard housing in the city.²⁰ Envisaged as a self contained settlement, East Kilbride was conceived by its planners and architects to offer a modern way of life encompassing modern homes, modern jobs and modern leisure in a purpose-built, planned setting. It was imagined as an alternative to the industrial city not just in environmental terms but also in respect of new forms of social identity and thus could be interpreted as an explicit rejection of the class relations redolent of Glasgow's industrial heritage.²¹ East Kilbride was one of the earliest steps in the massive planned movement of

¹⁹ On post-war economic planning in Scotland and attempts at regional and sectoral diversification see Tomlinson and Gibbs, 'Planning the new industrial nation'.

²⁰ P. Abercrombie and R. H. Matthew, *Clyde Valley Regional Plan 1946* (Edinburgh, 1949). Five new towns had been built in Scotland by 1966: East Kilbride, Cumbernauld, Glenrothes, Livingston, Irvine.

²¹ Elizabeth B. Mitchell, *The Plan that Pleased*, (Welwyn Garden City, 1967); Robertson, 'Scotland's New Towns'; Collins and Levitt, 'The "Modernisation" of Scotland' 296.

people in the mid twentieth century that was to transform the nature of urban life. It marked the propulsion of not merely middle-class but also working-class people to suburban forms of living.

At the heart of the planners' vision for East Kilbride was the belief that high quality, low-density housing in a planned environment would promote a sense of health and wellbeing amongst residents. This was allied to a determination that the town should not be a dormitory for commuters working in Glasgow but a place for living and working in, expressed not merely by the provision of superior housing and amenities but also by strenuous attempts in the early years to bind the newcomers to the town and discourage them from moving back to Glasgow by means of education, information and direct support to local organisations.²² At the core of this vision were single family homes for rent organised in a residential neighbourhood system, arranged in relation to a civic centre and interspersed with parks and community facilities such as schools and churches with the industrial area sited to allow easy access for workers.²³ The result resembled a suburban residential environment. In the early

²² Mitchell, *The Plan that Pleased*, 22. The Development Corporation and its Chief Executive Patrick Dollan were energetic in their efforts to establish a distinct new town identity. Their activities were extensively reported in the local press. See South Lanarkshire Archives (SLA), East Kilbride Development Corporation 9/1/5: Press Cuttings Books.

²³ National Library of Scotland (NLS): G.Davies, 'East Kilbride Past and Future' in *New Towns in Scotland. Proceedings of Conference No.7*, 18 June 1980, p.10. On the centrality of the neighbourhood to new town planning generally see Andrew Homer, 'Creating new communities: The role of the neighbourhood unit in post-war British planning', *Contemporary British History*, 14:1 (2000), 63-80; Mark Llewellyn, 'Producing and

waves of construction in the 1950s, 3-4 roomed cottage-style houses were prioritised in response to Scots' – like their English counterparts – unequivocal preference for suburban living over city life and for bungalow or cottage-style housing over the flatted tenement coupled with a strong desire for a garden and not to share entrances or garden paths with neighbours.²⁴ This fact is often occluded in accounts of Scottish housing which tend to emphasise an affinity with flat dwelling. In later phases in the 1960s, however, the proportion of mostly low-rise flats increased dramatically (nine 15-storey blocks were also constructed) as well as the provision of a small number of 'better type houses' for higher earners with a few sites set aside for private owner-occupation in order to achieve tenure mix and social balance.²⁵ Overall, though, and in contrast with Glasgow, houses in the new town were more numerous than flats, more spacious and were far better equipped in respect of internal facilities than the older housing stock from which most tenants had moved.²⁶

experiencing Harlow: neighbourhood units and narratives of New Town life 1947–53', *Planning Perspectives* 19:2 (2004), 155-74.

²⁴ *Housing in 20th Century Glasgow: Documents 1914-1990s* (Glasgow, 1996), 16-18, pp.123-5. 95 per cent of Scotland's housewives, proclaimed the *Sunday Mail* in 1954, preferred a house with a garden.

²⁵ F.J.Osborn and A.Whittick, *The New Towns: the Answer to Megalopolis* (London, 1969), 357.

²⁶ R. Smith, *East Kilbride: the Biography of a Scottish New Town, 1947-1973* (London, 1979), p.69. After the war the quality of housing stock in the greater Glasgow area was extremely poor with a significant proportion of homes still not possessing basic facilities: exclusive use of cold and hot water, fixed bath and WC. In 1956 30 per cent of all Glasgow

The 'pioneer' residents were a largely self-selecting group who, by virtue of their earning power and their mobility, were able and willing to relocate to a place where they could achieve their aspirations for family life. In contrast, those who were relocated by the clearance and demolition of inner-city tenements had comparatively less agency, offered a 'choice' between moving to one of Glasgow's four big peripheral estates or remaining in the inner city in a high density high-rise estate. Both were favoured by Glasgow Corporation in its comprehensive redevelopment of the city.²⁷ This voluntary nature of the first movers to East Kilbride is often ignored in debates about the draining effect of new towns on Glasgow's fortunes. Prospective residents who had to apply to the Development Corporation for a house were then assessed for suitability as Helena, one of our respondents, recalled: 'we were actually interviewed before we were given a house, so I reckon were other people, so they actually selected the people they took on ... I remember them coming to see us ... perhaps on the basis to see how you were, perhaps even to see if you were clean.'²⁸ The first residents were on average younger and more highly skilled than those who remained in older

families still shared a lavatory. Tom Begg, *50 Special Years: a Study in Scottish Housing*, (London: 1987) p.27. On slum clearance and relocation in Glasgow see Ade Kearns, Valerie Wright, Lynn Abrams, Barry Hazley, 'Slum clearance and relocation: a reassessment of social outcomes combining short- term and long-term perspectives', *Housing Studies* (2017).

²⁷ Valerie.A. Karn, *East Kilbride Housing Survey: A Study of Housing in a New Town* (University of Birmingham, 1970), p.13. Just over 2000 families were housed in East Kilbride (from a total of around 9000 by 1967) under an overspill agreement with Glasgow Corporation.

²⁸ Interview with Helena, 2011.

urban communities. In 1960 almost two-thirds of adult inhabitants of East Kilbride were under the age of 40 and 60 per cent of in-migrants between the ages of 15 and 44. Those aged over 55 were in the minority creating a skewed population profile until, as its promoters had anticipated, the town's development and growth allowed for the population to settle and resemble that of other towns.²⁹

The 'pioneers' also tended to have a guaranteed job with one of the new employers which were concentrated in the electrical and mechanical engineering, vehicle manufacture, scientific and professional services and public administration sectors with Rolls Royce the most high profile.³⁰ As a result average earnings for male householders were higher than the Scottish average. Moreover, female employment and particularly married women's work was more common here than in Glasgow (in 1961 82% of women workers in East Kilbride were married, only 47% in Glasgow), as a consequence of the availability of jobs in the manufacturing, service and clerical sectors. Whilst the limited childcare provision in new towns was ostensibly an obstacle to married women's employment (relocation often severed family networks, at least initially), the possibility of part-time employment (as high as 45% in retail) and evening and night shift work in light manufacturing went some way to

²⁹ Smith, *East Kilbride*, p.115.

³⁰ East Kilbride had disproportionately more skilled and clerical workers than was the case for the county of Lanarkshire as a whole and a low proportion of unskilled workers – just 3.2 per cent in 1966 compared with more than 10 per cent in Scotland and higher in Lanarkshire. Smith, *East Kilbride*, p.120.

ameliorating the problem.³¹ In our sample women tended to wait until their children were school age before they re-entered the labour market though those who worked for one of the large clothing manufacturers, Laird Portch, benefited from that company's innovative provision of a workplace creche.³²

The combination of skilled worker wage rates and high female employment enabled families to afford the relatively higher rents in the new town (on average rents were 25% higher than in Glasgow).³³ In a survey of more than 800 residents in 1970, 40 per cent identified the attraction of a house as their main reason for moving to the town with a further 23 per cent citing the availability of a job.³⁴ James, who moved to the town with his wife and young children from the Glasgow peripheral estate of Drumchapel, having applied for a transfer to East Kilbride with his work in the post office, said of the new town: 'East Kilbride was the place to be ... You could see the future for them [children] being better than Drumchapel,

³¹ *Census for Scotland, 1961*. On women's work in new towns see J. Foord, 'Conflicting Lives: Women's Work in Planned Communities', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Kent, 1990 and Jane Lewis and Jo Foord, 'New Towns and New Gender Relations in Old Industrial Regions: Women's Employment in Peterlee and East Kilbride', *Built Environment* 10:1 (1984), pp. 42-52.

³² *East Kilbride: the People's Story* (East Kilbride, 2015) mentions the nursery at Laird Portch.

³³ Smith *East Kilbride*, p.72.

³⁴ J.M.Livingstone and A.J.M.Sykes, *East Kilbride 70: An Economic and Social History* (University of Strathclyde, 1971), p.5.

which was fine, but East Kilbride was better for that... It was a vibrant wee town and out in the country ... and the attraction of a brand new house was a big draw...³⁵ Fifty-seven per cent of those surveyed in 1970 had moved from a flat – tenement or otherwise.³⁶ Dreams for one's own front and back door and a garden could be realised here. For Shirley, whose husband worked for a clothing manufacturer in the town and who moved to Greenhills in 1964 from a flat on a peripheral estate in Glasgow, this was a chance not to be missed:

We got word that we could get a house up here, back and front door, they were just getting built out in Greenhills...and I thought back and front door how lucky am I!? We never really thought about moving... but, there was really a lot of flats in Castlemilk, there really wasn't a back and front door as such ... so I never would have thought of moving out of this high-rise flat except we'd heard you could get a house in East Kilbride, and at that time East Kilbride was the place to live. I mean as my mother used to describe it, 'you'd need to wear a hat when you were going to East Kilbride'.³⁷

James and Shirley's testimony alerts us to the important and often unacknowledged point that social mobility or aspiration for oneself and one's children was a major factor in moving to the new town. It was a chance to 'move up as well as away'.³⁸ In Glasgow it was difficult to

³⁵ Interview with James, 2011.

³⁶ Livingstone and Sykes, *East Kilbride 70*, p.6.

³⁷ Interview with Shirley, 2011.

³⁸ This 'spatial stretching' of the working class was identified by J.M.Mogey in his study of a new housing estate in Oxford in the 1950s cited in Clapson, 'Suburban aspiration', p.159.

cement social mobility through residential movement within the city on account of the sheer lack of housing. Neither the high-rise flats being built by Glasgow Corporation, nor the small private developments of owner occupied villas and bungalows, were either desirable or affordable. If one wanted a house which met with people's aspirations and means for the new model of postwar family life centred on the home, moving just eight miles out of the city to East Kilbride was a way to achieving that.

Narratives of settlement

It is against this background that we argue that new town relocation and settlement was generative of new practices of social identity in post-war Scotland in common with similar changes occurring elsewhere in the UK. It builds on debates about shifts in working-class identity in the inter and postwar years resulting from rising living standards or 'affluence' for some and more recent interpretations of class identity in which that identity is seen as being complex and shifting in relation to the changing meanings and perceptions of place examined in a range of housing contexts from council housing estates to new towns.³⁹ Here we suggest a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between social and economic change and social identity in post-war Scotland in a context in which identity could be reworked and reimagined. And we argue that in this particular setting of a new town adjacent to a city – Glasgow – which was still characterised by longstanding social, gender and religious

³⁹ M.McKenna, 'The suburbanisation of the working-class population of Liverpool between the wars', *Social History* 16:2 (1991), 173-189; Stephen Brooke, 'Gender and working-class identity in 1950s Britain', *Journal of Social History* 34:4 (2001), pp.773-95; and for the recent interpretive trend Jones, *Working Class*; Rogaly and Taylor, *Moving Histories*.

divisions as well as an extremely poor housing infrastructure – people actively sought the opportunity for self-transformation through work, leisure and family life.

When urban sociologists and geographers came to assess the progress of Scotland's first new town in the 1960s and 70s they primarily judged the extent to which East Kilbride had delivered on the original justification for the new town policy: that is the dispersal of population and economic regeneration. At the same time they were interested in people's responses to this planning experiment. The findings of the Scottish studies were not dissimilar to patterns revealed in England: dispersal policies had been broadly welcomed by those who had moved to new accommodation in suburban areas on account of both the much improved housing conditions and the opportunity for aspirational families to move away and up from traditional working-class communities.⁴⁰ In East Kilbride, studies of people's perceptions of their community, their housing and the wider environment, found widespread satisfaction across a range of indicators. Livingstone and Sykes' survey, conducted in 1970 on behalf of the Development Corporation, questioned a 5 per cent sample of households on a range of indicators from reasons for moving to the town to their views on employment, mobility, shopping, housing and social provision. They discovered that the suburban home and lifestyle was appealing to migrants to East Kilbride, like their counterparts elsewhere in the UK. Although the majority (62 per cent) had moved from Glasgow there was little evidence of a desire to return to the city.⁴¹ Livingstone and Sykes were reaffirming what the sociologist Peter Wilmott had discovered just a few years' previously in his 1964 study of East Kilbride and Stevenage. In both of these new towns the quality of the housing and

⁴⁰ See Clapson, 'Suburban aspiration' pp. 157-60 for discussion of the English examples.

⁴¹ Livingstone and Sykes, *East Kilbride* 70, 6 and 22.

beyond this, the centrality of the home in people's lives reflected in household consumption practices, indicated a desire for a home and family-centred lifestyle.⁴² A higher proportion of East Kilbride households in Wilmott's survey, than in the British population as a whole, possessed a range of consumer items from washing machines to televisions and by 1970 almost 60 per cent of households in the new town owned a car which was interpreted by Wilmott as not merely a reflection of the rise in importance attached to material goods but as an extension of the privacy of the home, particularly for men, given men's greater access to car use.⁴³

For Wilmott the findings on home-centredness and material possessions pointed to 'working class people in new towns becoming more middle class' in the sense that they were embracing lifestyles and the accoutrements of those lifestyles formerly only enjoyed by their better off compatriots.⁴⁴ Livingstone and Sykes approached this in a different way, by asking respondents if they felt they had 'bettered themselves' by moving to East Kilbride but notwithstanding the question which may well have skewed the responses, 75 per cent agreed with the premise with 61 per cent identifying the house as the primary reason, followed by better living conditions (12 per cent) and 'better chance for the children' (9 per cent).⁴⁵ Clearly the new town met the aspirations of those whose desires and needs were frustrated in

⁴² Wilmott 'East Kilbride and Stevenage', 310, 311.

⁴³ Livingstone and Sykes, *East Kilbride* 70, 14

⁴⁴ Wilmott, 'East Kilbride and Stevenage', 312.

⁴⁵ Livingstone and Sykes, *East Kilbride* 70, 22.

respect of housing in particular. New town residents were now able to experience the suburban lifestyle that had hitherto been reserved for owner occupiers.

Indeed, a reversion from owning to renting might even be considered in order to achieve the desired improvement in residential circumstances. In 1975 Graham's parents left their owner-occupied two-bedroom tenement flat in Ibrox in the south-west of Glasgow and moved into a brand new rented house in the Greenhills neighbourhood in East Kilbride. This seems like an unusual trajectory from owner to rental occupancy but Graham surmised that his parents were willing to rent again because:

moving to East Kilbride ... offered them a house and a location that would have been out of their budget ordinarily. So I don't think they could have just picked anywhere with a house with three bedrooms and a front and back garden in a nice area and elected to buy it. The opportunity to rent it was probably within their means.

Graham's father, an engineer, subsequently did purchase the house and his parents still live there. Graham stayed in the town until, at the age of 37, he finally left to live with his partner who, he averred, does not share 'the affinity I have' (with East Kilbride). One of his two brothers stayed in East Kilbride and Graham still visits regularly, to see his parents, to take his daughter to the Dollan swimming baths, and to use the shops. Graham looks back on his childhood and youth in East Kilbride with fondness and interprets his own father's decision to move there from his own perspective today as a father of young children himself.

I feel an affinity with it because I grew up there, and I have a lot of good experiences...I think I can appreciate growing up in a place that my Dad moved our family to that was open, new, clean, had fresh air in it. Didn't have any big factories and jobs all over the place all of the time. Many amenities. A sort of feeling of – this

might sound a bit corny – but when you move out to a place like that, your sort of approach to life ... it felt aspirational, it really did. I don't mean that in a corny way. That's what I felt. We could do things. There was opportunities.⁴⁶

There is no doubt that moving to the new town in the first three decades of its life expressed a desire for a better future amongst a demographic who saw few opportunities for improving their quality and way of life if they stayed where they were; those who Livingstone and Sykes identified as 'bettering themselves'. And this desire for a new kind of family life was predicated on smaller families. The demographic shift to the two-child norm, universal marriage in the postwar decades coupled with the revival of a pre-war working-class aspiration for some elements of middle-class domesticity had, according to Langhamer, 'significant implications for the nature and meaning of home and offered the possibility of a more intimate home life'⁴⁷ So, whilst people expressed their desires in often quite prosaic ways such as wanting a garden to hang the washing out or as a safe place for the children to play, these were aligned with wider postwar discourses on home-focused family life and rising standards of living by which middle-class suburban living is understood.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Interview with Graham, 2016.

⁴⁷ Clare Langhamer, 'The meanings of home in post war Britain', *Journal of Contemporary History* 40:2 (2005), 341-62, here 351. See also Judy Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb: Domestic Identities, Class, Femininity and Modernity* (Berg, 2004).

⁴⁸ See Clapson, 'suburban aspiration', 159. Also Graham Crow and Graham Allan, 'Constructing the domestic sphere: the emergence of the modern home in post-war Britain', in Helen Corr and Lynn Jamieson (eds), *Politics of Everyday Life* (Basingstoke, 1990), 11-35.

Renting a state-subsidised home was a means to social improvement in a material and cultural sense. This was not new; there is clear evidence that the early council houses of the 1920s were extremely attractive to middle class, professional and skilled worker families seeking escape from crammed tenements.⁴⁹ Likewise in the postwar decades, East Kilbride met the expectations of a postwar generation who were no longer prepared to tolerate the cramped and unmodernised accommodation in the private rental sector or the modern flats available to those on the lengthy Corporation housing list which were often perceived as child-unfriendly, lacking amenities and – though rarely admitted - accommodating former ‘slum dwellers’. There was, reported the *Sunday Times* in 1956, ‘a subtle distinction made by present tenants and [Development] Corporation alike between Glasgow people who show the enterprise to get employment in [East Kilbride] in order to qualify for a house there, and the passive Glasgow citizens who merely wait with their names on housing lists.’⁵⁰ Whether or not one agrees with the perjorative use of the term ‘passive’ for most Glaswegians, it is clear that new towners were constructed then, and certainly see themselves now, as go-getters, choosing their own destiny. Graham’s father Ronnie summed this up. Living in Glasgow but commuting to East Kilbride to work at Rolls Royce he became aware of the opportunities the town offered. ‘Every house I went to ... walking about and by the front door a wee bit of grass, lovely smell and fresh air, quite high up. I said to myself, if I ever get married, I’m gonna come down here to live. A lot cleaner and a lot fresher. A brand new start for people

⁴⁹ On the design of interwar council housing in Scotland see Louise Christie, ‘Gender, design and ideology in council housing: urban Scotland 1917-1944’. *Planning History* 15 (1993), 6-13.

⁵⁰ SLA: EK9/1/5 Press Cuttings Book, Vol IV Oct 1954-Nov 56: *Sunday Times*, ‘New society IV - Scotland’s New Towns’, 8 July 1956.

coming out here'.⁵¹ In practical terms this meant that young families could inhabit homes at much lower densities than was the case in comparable older communities thus enabling what has been dubbed the rise of 'domestic privacy'.⁵² For Scots with an ambition (and the resources) for a better standard of living, moving to East Kilbride signified a fresh start in a place that met their aspirations for economic security combined with a modern infrastructure. In short, it offered a new lifestyle, one which also allowed the pioneers the opportunity to reconstruct themselves outwith the social relations based on class and gender that had defined them in their former communities.

We identify here two factors accounting for people's contentment with the town in addition to the satisfaction with housing and employment prospects that were identified in the earlier studies. Firstly, the early waves of residents quickly adapted their lifestyles to the suburban environment, privileging family and home-centredness. Second, they developed elective social networks within East Kilbride which provided an anchor for adaptation and aided positive identification with the town. Both of these developments were actively supported by the Development Corporation in the early years which actively nurtured the town as a self-contained, family-focused environment. And both encompassed a restructuring of gender roles with the home as the prime focus.

Suburban lifestyles

⁵¹ Interview with Ronnie, 2016.

⁵² In 1966 almost 90% of households in East Kilbride lived at densities of 1 person a room or below compared with much higher densities in the older settlements of Lanarkshire (Smith, *East Kilbride*, 123). On 'domestic privacy' see Langhamer, 'Meanings of Home', 351.

It is of course unsurprising that so many of the first residents still recall their relief and joy at moving into a brand new, modern home given the accommodation many had left. Glasgow's tenements may be desirable today but in the postwar decades many flats were damp, unmodernised and overcrowded. Young married couples often started their life together sharing a cramped flat with in-laws or paying high rents for substandard accommodation to private landlords. And while some architects turned up their noses at the conventional housing designs adopted in East Kilbride, the rows of mainly terraced homes with front and back doors and gardens, separated from traffic and situated within a green environment were just what many people wanted. For women in particular, who had been wooed by the Development Corporation with the offer of a house (it was accepted that men would only move to work there if their wives were happy), the new home still features prominently in recollections of moving. When a Portobello engineering company planned to relocate it bussed 90 workers and their 'sweethearts' to the town, the women were reported to have been impressed with the houses and 'quite a number of younger employees had decided to marry on the strength of the new houses promised them.'⁵³

Those who were rehoused to Glasgow Corporation tenancies in modern city-centre high rises recall the structural and material advantages of their new home (indoor lavatories, hot water and so on).⁵⁴ In contrast those who relocated to East Kilbride, although commenting on the solidity of the houses and their fixtures and fittings, tend to situate the house in a wider narrative about opportunity, aspiration, wellbeing and sociability. For a good number of our

⁵³ SLA, EK 9/1/5 Press Cuttings Book Vol III: *The Bulletin*, 22 August 1953.

⁵⁴ See the high satisfaction rates for high rise flats in the early years recorded by Pearl Jephcott, *Homes in High Flats* (Edinburgh, 1971).

respondents, a series of subsequent house moves within the town established them as suburbanites, having embraced the lifestyle on offer, and eventually owner-occupiers following right-to-buy legislation in 1980.⁵⁵ The house symbolised the agency of those who moved; it was a material sign of their determination to make a better life for themselves but also the springboard for a new way of life for men and women. Grace, who moved to East Kilbride in 1960 from a cockroach-infested room and kitchen in Glasgow, encapsulated the pioneering attitude of the early new towners who regarded their move as the beginning of a new lifestyle:

[I]t was as if you'd been given a chance. You all had lovely homes... [T]o have your own back and front door was so different because they all came from tenements in Glasgow and I just liked it... East Kilbride was just like a holiday village. It was so beautiful... Everybody took a pride... I thought it was a great place for children... Glasgow's a beautiful city but at that time it was kind of smoggy whereas up here there's fresh air... they [children] thought everybody lived with a back and front door with a garden. They were always out playing... It became a way of life, like I could never have went back to a room and kitchen – we became East Kilbride people, new towners I think they called us!⁵⁶

The physical environment looms large in many studies of suburbanisation; people were delighted to be able to breathe fresh air, to live in streets lined with gardens and with few

⁵⁵ See Lynn Abrams and Linda Fleming, *Long term experiences of tenants in social housing in East Kilbride: an oral history study* (University of Glasgow, 2011)

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/58439/>

⁵⁶ Interview with Grace, 2011.

cars, to be able to see and access the countryside. Glasgow was dirty and polluted, the buildings were black with soot and still carrying the scars of wartime damage and decades of neglect whereas East Kilbride was like being in the countryside – Dorothy described it as a ‘town in the country’ - and was perceived as having health benefits particularly for children.⁵⁷ For Shirley, who moved to the community of Greenhills, designed as a Glasgow overspill area, the benefits for children were marked: I think the kids would be healthier moving up here all those years ago. Really away from the city. ... They looked different fae city kids...it was a nicer environment to be brought up in I think.⁵⁸

For Grace it is clear that the move to East Kilbride not only signified a lifestyle change for herself and her children; it also facilitated a shift in the way she positioned herself in class terms. Grace’s experience encompassed what was beginning to emerge as a new pattern of living for married women: part-time work and a neighbourly sociability centred on the town and the work and social networks that had developed there.

We all went out to work, we all worked the twilight shifts 5 to 9, you had to, to get on. Your husband came in from work, you had the dinner ready – it’s changed days! Then we all went out to work, everybody worked... We had big houses to furnish, it wasn’t that anybody was snobs or wanted to get on... I’d never worked in a factory in my life... it was all women that worked at night...[and] women didn’t get as much as men... You saved for holidays, everybody always went on a caravan holiday down the coast... The majority of women worked who lived in East Kilbride and we always

⁵⁷ Interview with Dorothy, 2011.

⁵⁸ Interview with Shirley, 2011.

said we built this town...we worked for this town, we built this town.⁵⁹

Grace's account highlights a key change in women's lives (and by extension family lifestyles) that was not anticipated by the Development Corporation which, in the early days, courted 'housewives' as key players in the town's civic identity and future success. Here as was common in other new towns, a high proportion of married women were soon employed in the electrical engineering, textiles and clothing businesses that quickly capitalised on women's need and desire to work part time and in shift patterns to deliver the dream lifestyle. Graham's mother was probably typical in this respect. While his father was employed at Rolls Royce and took care of the utility bills and rent, his mother took a number of part-time jobs in catering and cleaning which paid the household food bills:

She has always had part-time jobs, but I think at that point because we were all still quite young ... She was quite flexible and took jobs ad hoc. When we'd reached an age when I was starting school and my brother could go in a nursery ... she did various things around East Kilbride. So various semi-skilled things ... there was lots of companies doing electronics work, assembly. That kind of thing... So I think she went out to work as and when the opportunity arose.⁶⁰

Similarly, Ian's wife who had been desperate to move to East Kilbride from Glasgow's east end for the opportunity of a garden for the children, quickly found work as a machinist in a

⁵⁹ Interview with Grace, 2011.

⁶⁰ Interview with Graham, 2016.

clothing company in the town, aided by the fact that it had its own nursery.⁶¹

Women worked for their own self-fulfillment but also to be able to furnish and improve their homes and to afford the kind of family lifestyle to which they aspired. The single-family home which had so attracted the newcomers became the fulcrum of that lifestyle and the pivot around which the family thrived. The home was a source of satisfaction, pride and pleasure. Housework could be undertaken within the confines of the house unlike in some of the tenements where some tasks such as doing the laundry and cleaning the common areas were still organised collectively according to a rota. There were concerns raised here, as in other new towns in the 1960s, about the mental health of ‘housewives’ who, it was suggested, were having difficulty adjusting and suffering from a variety of psychoneurotic illnesses on account of boredom, isolation and entrapment in the home. However a survey conducted by a local GP concluded that there was little evidence in East Kilbride of the so-called ‘new town blues’, a modern version of the ‘suburban neurosis’ which had been diagnosed amongst women in the interwar years. What was apparent in some women were symptoms of adjustment or what he described as ‘transitional neurosis’ contingent upon moving to a new social environment and the temporary dislocation resulting from that.⁶² Retrospectively our

⁶¹ Interview with Ian, 2016.

⁶² S.D.Coleman, *Mental Health and Social Adjustment in a New Town: an Exploratory Study in East Kilbride* (University of Glasgow, 1965). More generally see Ali Haggett, *Desperate Housewives: Neuroses and the Domestic Environment 1945-1970* (London, 2012); Mark Clapson, ‘Working-class women’s experiences of moving to new housing estates in England since 1919’, *Twentieth Century British History* 10:3 (1999), 345-65. The original term

respondents recalled the home as a source of joy and a means of self-expression rather than a trap. Sylvia recalled furnishing hers with second-hand furniture and spending time painting and decorating and likewise Shirley commented on her and her husband having to learn how ‘to do things like decorate and stuff like that.’⁶³ Indeed for couples home-making became a joint enterprise. As June pointed out, ‘if you wanted anything done then you did it on your own ... I would do all the painting and papering but [my husband] could make anything in wood, he actually put in plumbing, he put in central heating himself, not much he couldn’t do...’⁶⁴ Only one of our respondents, Sylvia, a single parent, mentioned her loneliness upon moving to East Kilbride. The lack of child care and the dominance of family-focused leisure could be isolating but even Sylvia did eventually find her place through her daughter’s school and her own work with Rolls Royce.⁶⁵

The home, garden and family became, after work, central preoccupations of many men too. With few pubs or social facilities designed to be frequented by men, at least in the early years, many developed their DIY and gardening skills, cultivating a domestic masculinity. Nicky’s father, who moved with his wife and young son to East Kilbride in 1971 from a flat in Castlemilk, took full advantage of the large garden attached to their three bedroomed

‘suburban neurosis’ was coined in 1938 by Dr Stephen Taylor in *The Lancet*, 26 March 1938, 759-61.

⁶³ Interview with Shirley, 2011.

⁶⁴ Interview with June, 2011.

⁶⁵ Interview with Sylvia, 2011.

house in Greenhills: 'straight away he was building walls in the garden and paving stuff.'⁶⁶

And Graham's father Ronnie 'took control' of the home improvements – 'it was like a Forth Rail Bridge job. A continuous cycle of improvement' - and the garden, possibly helped by the detailed guidance - 95 pages - on everything from manure to pruning and garden competitions contained in the *Residents' Handbook* provided to all new householders.⁶⁷

'Yeah, [he] took total ownership of it... Yeah, front and back kept immaculate. Grew specialist plants that he liked. Planted conifers. He built his own fence, between... And they planted trees I think to segregate each house's garden ... But he also built a short small fence on each side as well. Not to keep anybody out, it was only about this high. Probably to keep us in as kids and affirm a boundary, so he knew we'd stay there. But he built it, so he has always been very good hands-on, but he maintained the garden as well. Decided what went in it, planted rockeries.'⁶⁸

In 1956 the *Sunday Times*, in a four-part series titled 'The New Society', commented on this home-focused lifestyle to be found in East Kilbride, seemingly a little surprised that Scots were no different from southern new towners. 'Most Scottish New Town families are, like their English counterparts, delighted with their new home, contented with and absorbed in their domestic lives. In Scotland too, television is the chief leisure time interest, combined

⁶⁶ Interview with Nicky, 2016.

⁶⁷ SLA: *Residents' Handbook* (East Kilbride Development Corporation, 1970).

⁶⁸ Interview with Graham, 2016.

with sewing and knitting for the women.⁶⁹ Whilst this might be interpreted as a passive response to the planners and architects' visions, in fact new towners' home-centred activity was a new phenomenon and has been interpreted in English new towns as an active reproduction of space, an assertion of taste; the home was becoming a stage for the expression and presentation of self, aided by opportunities for consumption.⁷⁰

Home-centredness was also manifested in family time. These were houses explicitly designed for spending time together indoors and out. All our respondents comment on the house as a focus of family life with sufficient private space for adults and children. Children could be allowed to play in the garden watched by their parents from the house or in the streets that were rarely bothered by vehicles. Graham recalled the benefit to his parents of 'having a back garden, we could go out and play in it and the parents could feel they were safe. Whereas [in Glasgow] I remember we had rats and all that', and he could walk to school without having to cross a main road on account of the underpasses (elements of the Radburn planning layout were employed to separate pedestrians from vehicles). Houses were sufficiently spacious to be able to separate functions – sleeping, cooking, eating and relaxing - for all members of the

⁶⁹ SLA: EK 9/1/5: Press Cuttings Book: *Sunday Times*, 'New Society IV: Scotland's New Towns', 8 July 1956.

⁷⁰ See Attfield, 'Inside pram town'; Judith Attfield, 'Moving home: changing attitudes to residence and identity', *The Journal of Architecture*, 7:3 (2002), 249-262; Llewellyn, 'Producing and experiencing Harlow'; Daniel Miller, 'Appropriating the state on the council estate', *Man*, New Series, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Jun., 1988), 353-372; Clive Edwards, *Turning Houses into Homes: A History of the Retailing and Consumption of Domestic Furnishings* (Aldershot, 2005).

family, including men. Here men had tacit permission to identify with the family. Graham drew the contrast nicely in recalling the change in his father when he moved to the new town from a city flat near Ibrox (Glasgow Rangers) football stadium:

Particularly, going to the football [in Glasgow] wasn't just getting into the game. It was all the pre- and post activity. Having a few drinks, going out, getting something to eat... A whole day. By the time he moved to East Kilbride he wasn't doing that as much...he spent a lot of time with us kids...We did a lot of family-oriented things...once he had organised his family, he was very much bound to it. So we did a lot of things together.⁷¹

And because they worked shifts, Nicky recalled the necessity for his parents of making their own entertainment at home as well as the close neighbourhood of his youth:

What did your parents do for leisure, for fun?

N: I don't know, I don't think they had time for any of that. Yeah, you know, I mean, my mum... I can't actually remember my mum doing anything. You know, family would come round, maybe we'd go and visit my gran. You know. My dad [slater and plasterer] played the classical guitar, that was his release. He played, he studied sheet music and he sat with his guitar....I don't know if it was just my parents, but they weren't ones for going out and partying. They had me and they had a wee kid on the way, or just been born. Plus they're doing night shift and day shift jobs, trying to make as much money as they can, paying for this three-bedroom house and trying to bring up two little ones. I do remember us going out to events and stuff. But it was work-

⁷¹ Interview with Graham, 2016.

related dos and stuff, with my mum. But I remember... people often talk about community spirit of places and stuff like that. And I just remember it was a really strong feeling. And where I came from...And all the neighbours were talking to each other and going into each other's houses and all that. I can totally remember that. And it's a really strong feeling that everybody knew everybody...

Privacy and sociability

East Kilbride offered a desirable suburban lifestyle, a combination of home-centred family life and a degree of elective neighbourliness that respected privacy and permitted individuals to reconstitute the self through a variety of vectors: work but also leisure and social activities such as Nicky's father playing the classical guitar. It was a way of life that seemed to offer women and men a balance between home and work, family life and social life with men becoming more involved in home-making and family activities and women finding satisfaction in paid work as well as family. East Kilbride dissolved some of the more rigid gendered role divisions that had pertained in the city context and permitted more fluid identities with the family and the home becoming a common source of pleasure.

Nicky's recollections of the 'community spirit' of the Greenhills neighbourhood echoes studies of large scale relocation to inter-war and postwar housing estates and new towns in England which make much of the intense social interaction and neighbourliness that characterised the early phases of moving in.⁷² The relatively open design of the East Kilbride streets with few fences between houses, encouraged social connections amongst neighbours, especially those who moved in to brand new houses on unfinished estates. Almost without

⁷² Clapson, *Invincible Suburbs*, .108. Llewellyn, 'Producing and experiencing Harlow', 167.

exception former residents recall neighbourly sociability from chatting while pegging out the washing to women's coffee mornings and baby sitting. For Graham, patterns of sociability and mutuality had been transferred from the tenements to the streets of the new town – the 'wee community in the tenement' 'came out with the first generation of people in East Kilbride'.⁷³

But we would argue that for some the move to the new town was an opportunity to develop new models of neighbourly relations which were perhaps less open and more discriminating and private. Helena, who moved to the town in the 1970s recalled the community spirit in the Murray neighbourhood – 'we actually had outings to the seaside together, to have a picnic, yes that's what I treasure most' – but at the same time 'We weren't in the habit of running in and out of each other's homes'.⁷⁴ And Cathy, who sent her daughter to make contact with her new neighbour because 'somebody's got to make the first move', admitted that 'people were wary of who you were, where you come from....'⁷⁵ Stories of new residents like Graham's father, erecting fences between open plan gardens and regretting some of the more modern design elements of their new homes which made them more porous and less defensible than traditional houses, lend weight to the view that for some at least, one element of the suburban vision – greater privacy albeit with the opportunity for sociability but on one's own terms –

⁷³ Interview with Graham.

⁷⁴ Interview with Helena, 2011.

⁷⁵ Interview with Cathy, 2011.

was a salient factor in people's decision to move and to stay.⁷⁶ The enforced sociability of the urban tenement was what many women at least were desperate to leave behind and new housing styles in the city such as high flats, although enabling privacy once one was behind the front door, still required a degree of compromise and cooperation to maintain standards inside and out. June summed up the attitude of the new towners: 'everybody's very friendly here without being nosy.'⁷⁷ The new town facilitated an elective sociability where one chose one's social relationships and the degrees of familiarity, firstly oriented around the family and especially the children and secondly oriented around the workplace and the neighbourhood, practiced intermittently or occasionally rather than as part and parcel of everyday life. Our respondents universally comment on the family-centredness of their early years in the new town. 'Basically, we used to do everything with our kids' recalled Ian. 'In a weekend, for instance ... The Saturday, we would take the kids and we would go away for the day... We'd go away camping, to the beach, something like that. We always did that type of thing.'⁷⁸

As everywhere else in the UK in the 1950s and 60s, the television began to dominate home-based leisure. While some initially felt stranded miles from their usual social connections and the entertainment venues of Glasgow, others were content to nest-build. 'I like it here and I wouldn't shift to Glasgow for anything' Mrs Brown told the *Glasgow Evening Citizen* in 1957; 'I haven't thought about entertainment because both my husband and I are working and

⁷⁶ See Clapson, *Invincible Suburbs*, p.103 on open plan gardens in Milton Keynes and Attfield, 'Inside pram-town' on open plan interiors in Harlow..

⁷⁷ Interview with June, 2011.

⁷⁸ Interview with Ian, 2016.

when we get home in the evening we settle down to the TV.'⁷⁹ Works-parties and outings, trips to the seaside or just the local tea rooms by stay-at-home mothers were crucially voluntary rather than a non-negotiable part of daily interaction. With little spare cash or access to private transport, especially amongst women, local groups and clubs were crucial vectors of sociability. Grace described a rather typical pattern of social activity all centred on the town:

We used to go to lunch on a Friday down in the Willow Cafe, I mean that was the in thing every week...everybody went to the Willow Cafe ... it was packed...

Occasionally we went to the cinema ...you didn't feel like you had to have social activity, you know the kids went swimming, you stayed in the house but you never felt as if you were put on to. It was just a good way of living...Maybe once a month we would all go to the social club [connected to husband's work] on a Saturday night.⁸⁰

In contrast with city social facilities such as pubs and clubs which were still, even in the 1960s and 70s, predominantly male spaces, the new town's social clubs had a family orientation.⁸¹ Graham, recalling the Royal Air Force Association Social Club with its bar and entertainment catering to children as well as their parents, summed up the contrast with the pattern of segregated leisure in Glasgow: 'Absolutely. We were welcome. We didn't feel that

⁷⁹ SLA: EK9/1/6: Press Cuttings book Vol.V: *Glasgow Evening Citizen*, 'Are they unhappy in East Kilbride?', 8 February 1957.

⁸⁰ Interview with Grace, 2011.

⁸¹ Many Scottish pubs still barred women until the 1970s.

we were in their way. And you didn't see what you see now in bits of Glasgow, which is some kid standing outside holding his dad's jacket.'⁸² Graham's contrasting of the gendered and generational social patterns of East Kilbride and Glasgow, here relating to drinking culture and earlier in respect of football, is an acute observation which points up the possibilities in the new town for productions of new affective and relational selves divorced from exclusive patterns of sociability constrained by traditional allegiances and gender roles.

Some felt that commercial entertainment and sports facilities were a little slow to arrive in the new town, but more important for the first generations of inhabitants were the informal and formal social networks established around need (such as baby-sitting), hobbies and interests or commonalities of work, gender, religion and so on. In the case of Milton Keynes Clapson argues for a new 'associative culture' forged out of choice rather than necessity and no longer necessarily focused on the neighbourhood.⁸³ In East Kilbride the Development Corporation's policy was to encourage self-organisation and mutual aid rather than making concrete provision although it was ever alert to the pull of city attractions and thus endeavoured to make provision of public halls and sports facilities conducive to grass-roots community organisations such as youth groups, sports clubs and hobby enthusiasts.⁸⁴ 'The need to meet neighbours, to create a community atmosphere and to belong, propelled people towards these clubs' reported the *Glasgow Herald* in 1968, listing everything from amateur dramatics and light opera to evening classes in carpentry (for ladies), Glasgow University extra-mural

⁸² Interview with Graham, 2016.

⁸³ Clapson, *Invincible Suburbs*, p.185.

⁸⁴ SLA: EK 9/1/5 Press Cuttings book Vol.IV, *The Scotsman*, 11 May 1955.

lectures organised for the afternoons and with a creche, and the usual range of sports clubs.⁸⁵ And residents enthusiastically engaged in this kind of non-kin and largely non-neighbourhood based sociability. In 1970 in 57 per cent of households surveyed there was at least one member of a club (the *Residents' Handbook* helpfully provided a list) with youth and sports' clubs the most popular.⁸⁶ For Graham the tapestry of social provision was part of what defined the success of the town and his own positive identification with it:

Have you ever been to a new town? It's great! I couldn't... I didn't really understand the negatives that they were putting on it. Like, oh, they're faceless. Hard to navigate because of the roundabouts. They're a dump full of people they can't house anywhere else. You know, that kind of thing, that you may end up there rather than elect to live there. But as a child growing up, you don't see any of that. It just felt... I've got sheep and cows out of my window, the air is clear, all these amenities, leisure, sport, culture. There's libraries there, they're always promoting things, each district, as well as all the other stuff I've mentioned, had a community hall. A community centre. The planners had clearly thought about how to build not just... not just put people in houses but how to create something that ends up being more cohesive than simply a bunch of people that live next to one another. So they were trying to create small districts within the bigger town as it grew. We used all of that, it wasn't just there for decoration.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ SLA, EK 9/1/10 Press Cuttings Book Vol XI: *The Herald*, 'Clubs foster community spirit', 28 August 1968.

⁸⁶ Livingstone and Sykes, *East Kilbride* 70, p.7.

Graham might be accused of nostalgia but there is no doubt that for those who stayed (and those who were born there), a positive identification with the town developed which in turn informs and shapes the ways in which people narrate their memories. One of the key reasons for that positive identification was that people felt they had taken control of their destinies. And retrospectively they seek to protect and preserve those positive associations as personal evidence of the achievements of the life lived. They had distinguished themselves from those who they saw as reliant on local authority social housing. They had embraced a new lifestyle albeit aided by the Development Corporation which, until it was wound up in 1996, sought to deliberately fashion the town as a place for aspirational families, modern amenities and technocratic industry. And epitomising people's identification as aspirational, modern and forward looking was the architect-designed, award-winning Dollan Baths (now the Dollan Aqua Centre) which captured people's imagination when it was opened in 1968 and still functions as a symbol of people's identity with the town. Jobs continued to grow in the 1960s and 70s – Motorola arrived in 1969, Metal Box in 1974 – and crucially in 1967 the Development Corporation invested in community-building by constructing homes for the children of existing tenants thereby seeking to ensure the longevity of an inter-generational town.⁸⁸ This attitude to social housing provision was in stark contrast to the allocation of

council housing outwith the new town whereby the requests for transfers by sitting tenants gave way to allocations to those with priority needs from the late 1970s onwards.⁸⁹

In the light of the above, it is perhaps not surprising that in interviews with residents they expressed a strong sense of identification with the place, whether they regard the town as it is today in positive or negative terms. Aspiration for something better required investment of energy and commitment to a new lifestyle which centred on home and family. East Kilbride with its combination of good quality housing, open spaces, clean and safe environment and amenity provision supported those aspirations, aided by the policies of the Development Corporation which, in the first three decades, made concerted and sustained attempts to cement people's identification with the town, initially through education and propaganda (meetings to welcome new residents, adult education courses exploring new town living, frequent place-making insertions in the local press), investment in amenities and the promotion of civic events. These two agendas coalesced, prising people away from the 'prescribed belonging' associated with their former communities and creating a new kind of identification with this place. This was an 'elective belonging' undertaken by the working-class population of East Kilbride which incorporated rational decision making about the benefits of the new town for the family and an accommodation with what it came to offer as well as what had been left behind in former places of residence.⁹⁰

Conclusions

⁸⁹ Keith Kintrea, 'Having it all? Housing reform under devolution', *Housing Studies* 21.2 (2006), p.198.

The narrative of the postwar industrial north of Britain, including Scotland, which has a tendency to emphasise de-industrialisation and its social consequences as well as the malign impact of central planning, has had little to say about the suburban context or the intentionality of those who seized the opportunity for change. As this analysis of the first Scottish new town indicates, the experiences of those who aspired to a different kind of lifestyle outside the major cities, albeit still in the rented sector, evidence a parallel story to what has been documented for England and an alternative to the narrative of failure prevalent in Scotland centred on the inner city and its environs forcing a rethinking of the dominant paradigms – north-south, urban-suburban – and a challenge to Scottish exceptionalism narratives. The dispersal of populations from the inner cities to peripheral and suburban settlements facilitated people's desire for a new way of living focused on home and family, domestic consumption and elective sociability. It marked a shift from old style urban communities on many levels: the quality of housing, the employment security, expanded and shifting gender roles and the quality of the environment. More fundamentally it facilitated the production of new selves and new social relations, a development that has not been fully appreciated in previous studies and which only now is beginning to be considered through the prism of the rise of individualism.⁹¹

Oral histories gathered from those who were amongst the 'pioneers' may be perceived as being tinged with nostalgia, with positive memories outweighing the negative. This is to be expected from a group who invested much in moving from the relative security of familiar environments and whose memories of the newness of the town and their new lifestyle pushed aside any misgivings. Even Ian, who left the East End of Glasgow for East Kilbride because his wife 'was desperate to move' and who returned repeatedly to his old haunts in the city for

⁹¹ Robinson et al, 'Telling stories'.

18 years before settling down and enjoying life in the new town, admitted that the town had changed him for the good.

Despite my initial resentment, yes. Yes, I'm glad [I moved]. I was very fortunate, made good friends. Wouldn't have met them in Glasgow. More opportunities for socialising here. ... Without a shadow of a doubt. I think I developed as a person... Totally changed. Much less cynical, easier going. Seriously, much less cynical... So yes. As a person. It changed not only myself, but also my wife. I think we both changed quite dramatically.⁹²

For people like Ian the move to East Kilbride was a risk and a transition – a ‘pioneering venture’ into the unknown. Narrating this experience retrospectively as a story of mobility, betterment and new-found friendship resolves the story of that transition in a self-validating way, enabling settlement to be reflected upon as a positive aspect of the life lived, and in Ian’s case casting off the cynicism he associated with city living. The formative years of this cohort as young married couples or as children coincided with decades of investment and the coalescence between their aspirations and the growth of the town. A series of quite fundamental changes: the right to buy legislation in 1980, the economic slowdown and the beginning of major private housebuilding as well as the winding up of the Development Corporation in 1996 have all had a major impact on the appearance, distinctiveness and sustainability of East Kilbride.⁹³ Already in the mid 1970s press reporting significantly shifted in tone with stories about job losses, underage drinking, graffiti and domestic

⁹² Interview with Ian, 2016.

⁹³ Although right-to-buy was already being trialled in East Kilbride in the 1970s

violence; and by the early 1980s factory closures and poverty dominated the headlines.⁹⁴

These elements are not absent from respondents' narratives. Nicky, for instance, identified the change in the appearance and character of the town as coinciding with the cessation of the Development Corporation:

All I remember was the place always looked good. It always looked good until the mid-90s. The Council were always around digging up gardens, putting new plants in. Maintaining the grass. Cleaning the place up. It always looked good, the place never looked shabby. It's like night and day now. It's just... some of it is so... it's kinda hard going back and seeing that, you know what I mean? Because it's like your childhood's been wiped out in front of your eyes. You've got this idyllic image of it and then it's like... it looks really small and dottery and run-down and... you never had junkies and you never had jakeys (homeless people) and all these things that you associate with inner-city Glasgow. You never had that in East Kilbride, until it started to happen towards like the late 90s.⁹⁵

Yet the more fundamental reasons for moving to the town – the quality of the housing, the environment and the better start it offered for children – retrospectively trumped everything else precisely because it was these factors that allowed people to have the lives they desired at a formative moment. And it is these positive memories of a place that nurtured the home-based family lifestyle that sustain identification with the town today. As Graham put it: 'I feel an affinity with it because I grew up there, and I have a lot of good experiences. I've worked and lived in other places, yeah... I think I can appreciate growing up in a place that my dad

⁹⁴ SLA, EK 9/1/36 (Jan-Dec 1974) and 9/1/44 (Oct-Dec 1981).

⁹⁵ Interview with Nicky, 2016.

moved our family to that was open, new, clean, had fresh air in it.’⁹⁶ Part of what Graham appreciated was his parents’ desire for betterment which, we would argue, was a response to the opportunity to have some of what the middle classes had in respect of housing and lifestyle.⁹⁷

The distinctive nature of the new town experience, particularly for the pioneers and their children, suggests we need to consider formulating new ways of conceptualising belonging as a constituent element of identity for the working classes. Whilst many new town residents retained familial, social and emotional links to Glasgow (and indeed other former places of settlement), at the same time our respondents mostly embraced the identity of the new towners in ways akin to the ‘elective belonging’ of the middle classes who Savage describes as becoming highly vested in their location.⁹⁸ This distinguished them from the so-called unambitious masses reliant on corporation housing. But it did more than that: it chimed with postwar discourses on the new technical industries and the promise of a lifestyle conducive to

⁹⁶ Interview with Graham.

⁹⁷ See Clive Allen, ‘Housing research, housing policy and the politics of dwelling’, *Housing, Theory and Society* 27:2 (2010), 136-61.

⁹⁸ Mike Savage, ‘The politics of elective belonging’, *Housing Theory and Society* 27:2 (2010), 115-35.

family life.⁹⁹ Graham's 'affinity' with East Kilbride encapsulates this attachment, not just to a physical space but to an idea or an aspiration.

The modernisation of postwar Britain contains many parallel stories. The story of relocation and settlement in a new town offers an alternative view of the impact of central government policy on economic and social development. Whilst there is no denying the vulnerability of Glasgow in this period, it is important to acknowledge the positive consequences of the decision to invest in regional economic and residential development. Resettling in East Kilbride offered some the opportunity to live a different kind of lifestyle which in turn fashioned different narratives of identity which are at odds with the grand narratives of de-industrialisation, urban decline and associated social consequences that characterise many interpretations of economic and social change in postwar Scotland. By attending to everyday social and affective practices amongst new town dwellers we uncover a hitherto untold story of postwar aspiration and social identity in post war Scotland which in many ways parallels that of the rest of the UK, centred on the desire for good housing, domestic comfort, a safe environment, and the promise of opportunity for the next generation. But we have also revealed how relocation and the opportunity to live a different lifestyle shaped a new form of selfhood amongst the pioneers which had been unable to flourish in Glasgow on account of the severely inadequate housing and the continued existence of traditional models of gender and class.

⁹⁹ Bob Jeffery, "I probably would never move, but ideally like I'd love to move this week.": Class and residential experience beyond elective belonging', *Sociology* (2016), 1-17.