

# **Seventh International Conference on The Constructed Environment**

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# REMOTENESS

Video shot in April by Cidália Silva, 2014 ©

(noun)

- 1. The state of being situated far from the main centers of population;**
- 2. Lack of connection with or relationship to something.**



# Remote ness :

Robin Hood Gardens

## **I . in-between *Here* and *There*:**

Why do we (not) approach?

*Here* and *There* discloses the relationship between one's body and place. It focuses on becoming closer to or distant from Robin Hood Gardens; asking underlies our feelings of remoteness.

## **II . in-between *Now* and *Then*:**

Why do we (not) traverse?

*Now* and *Then* presents the relationship between one's body and time-space. It focuses on the feeling of remoteness in travelling across the space and moving back and forth in time.

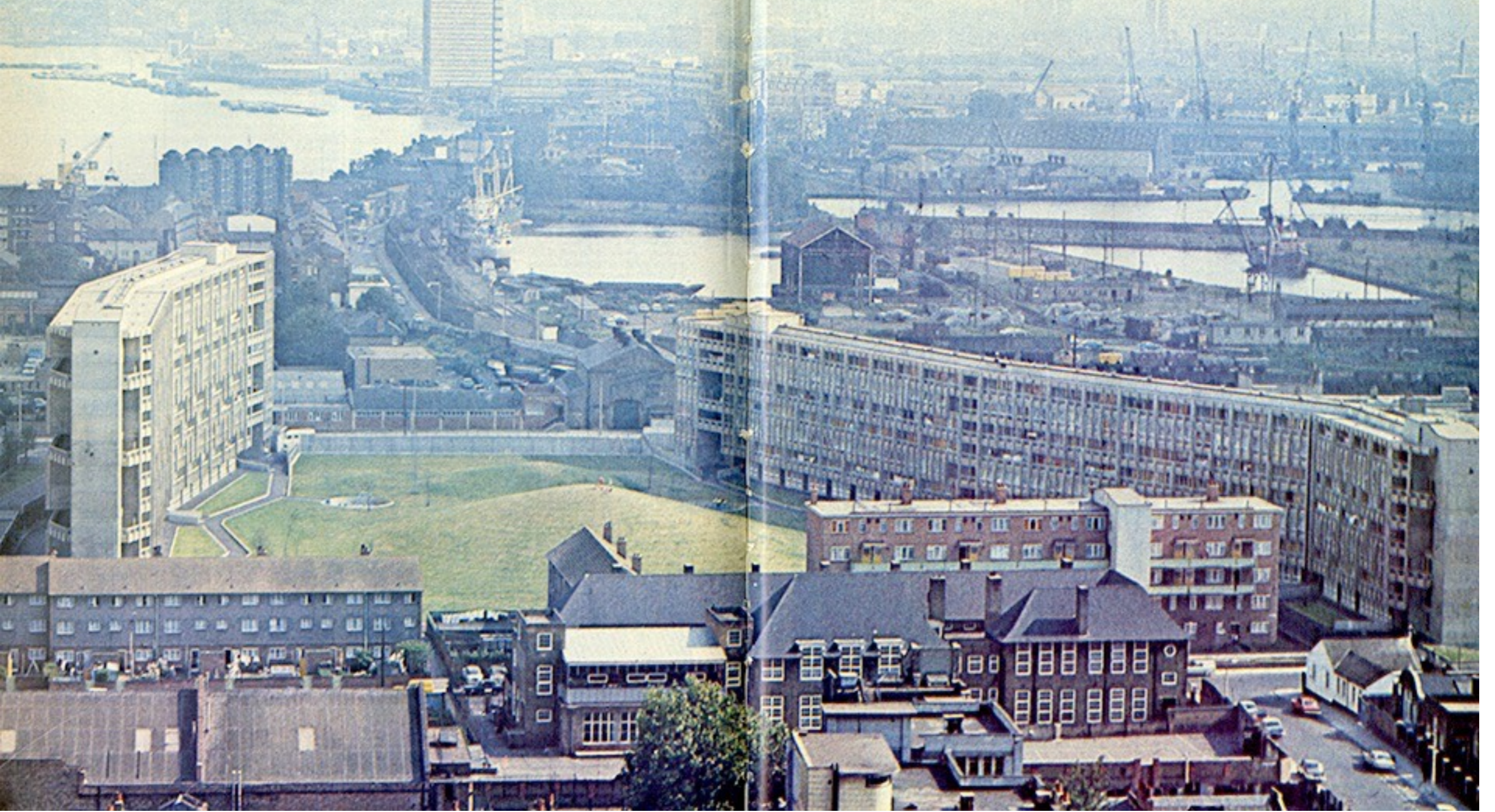
## **III . Remoteness is...**



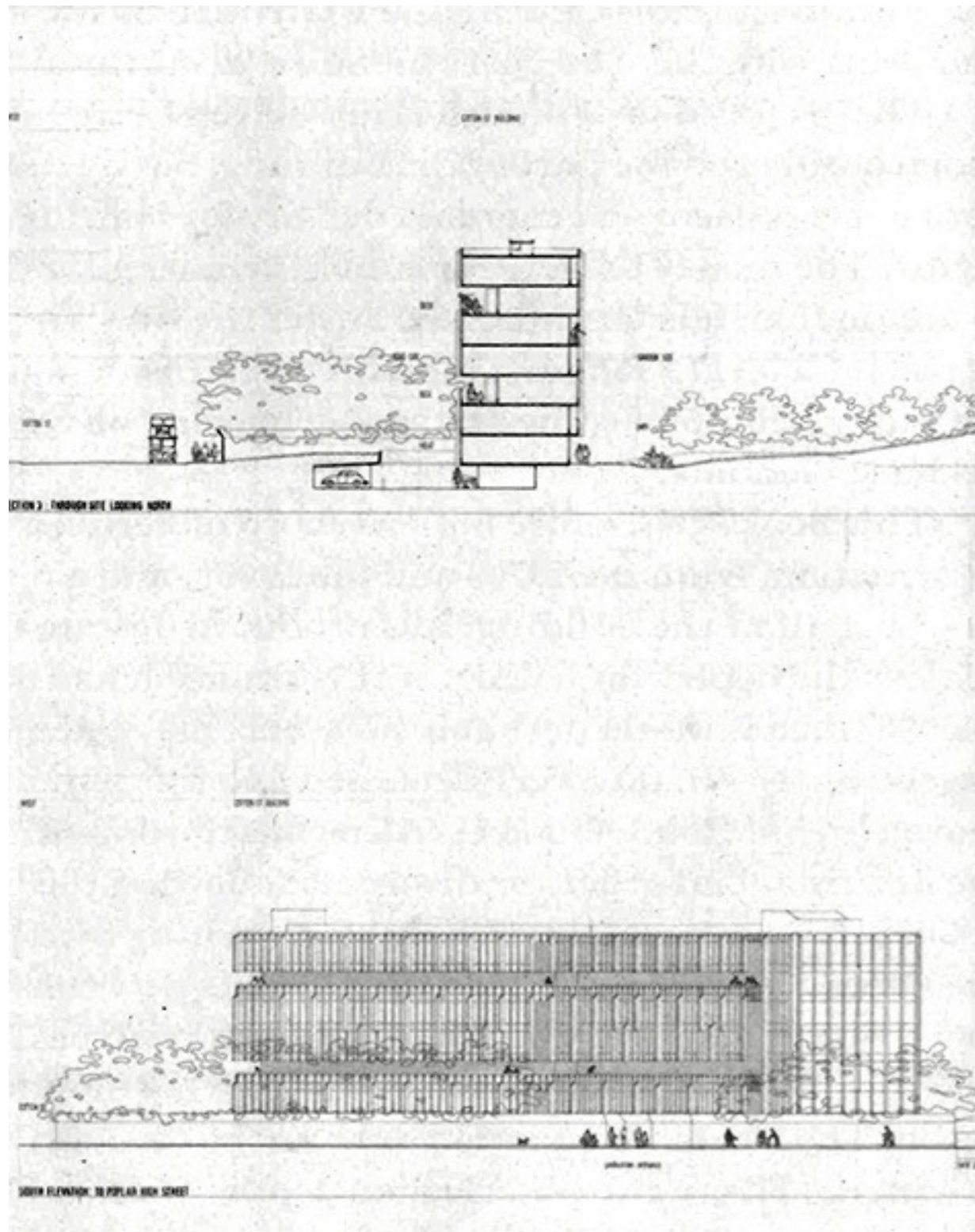
# I. in-between *Here* and *There*:

Why do we (not) approach?

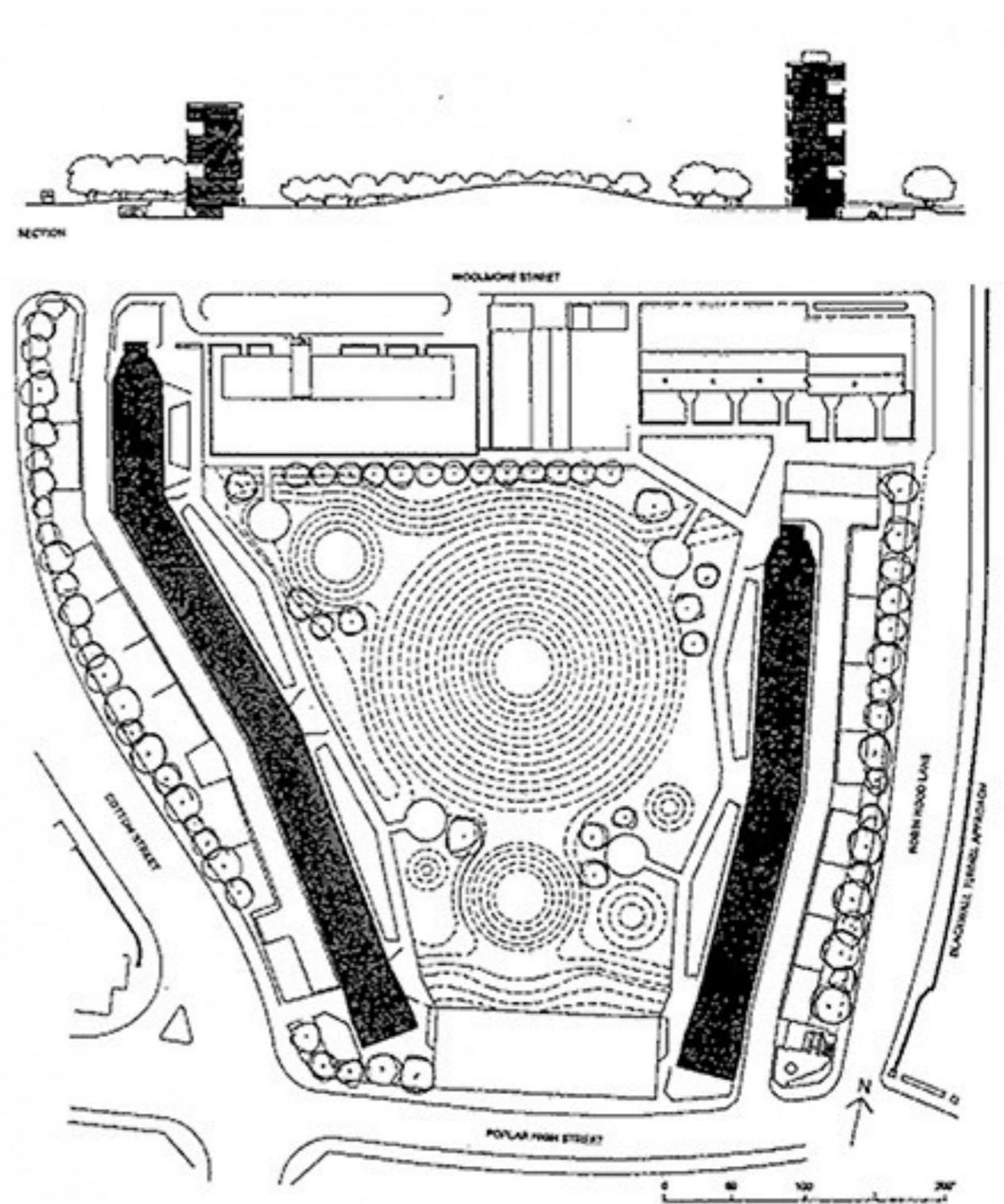




Robin Hood Gardens\_Social Housing Project by Alison and Peter Smithson, built in 1972.



Robin Hood Gardens\_Section and Facade.



Robin Hood Gardens\_General Plan.

Sandra Lousada, 1972 © The Smithson Family Collection.





Regeneration Projects for Poplar in London (UK). Photo by Cidália Silva, 2014 ©

[www.blackwallreach.co.uk](http://www.blackwallreach.co.uk)

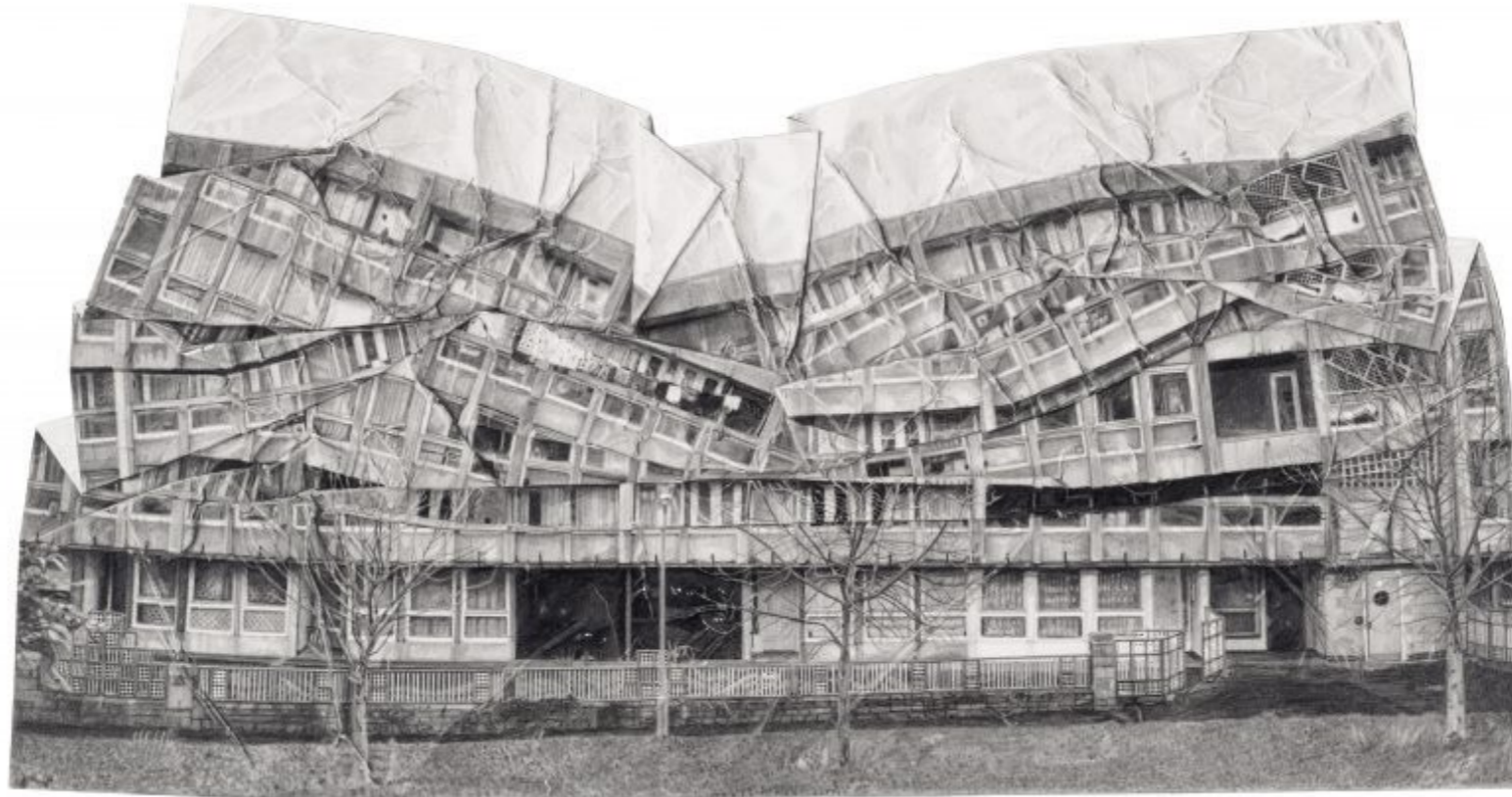
The Blackwall Reach Regeneration Programme will transform the local area by providing 1,575 new homes, better open space and a range of community facilities, delivered over five phases.

This first phase, 1A, will deliver 98 new homes and new community facilities.



“NOT ONLY WERE ROBIN HOOD GARDENS’ ‘STREETS’ NARROW, THEIR LOW CEILINGS PROJECTING ON CANTILEVERS OVER THEM MADE FOR A CLAUSTROPHOBIC ATMOSPHERE AND HELPED TO ACT AS WIND FUNNELS. TO NARROW TO PERFORM THE FUNCTIONS OF A REAL STREET THEY FAILED TO CREATE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND A SAFE, LET ALONE APPEALING, PLACE FOR CHILDREN TO PLAY.”“ROBIN HOOD GARDENS SCORED 14 OUT OF THE POSSIBLE MAXIMUM SCORE OF 16 ON PROFESSOR COLEMAN’S REGISTER OF BUILDING FEATURES THAT ENCOURAGE CRIME.”“THE STAIRWELLS WERE CONSTRUCTED IN SUCH A CRAMPED AND CONFINED MANNER THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SEE ROUND THE CORNER, ‘SO YOU WORRY’ AS ONE CRITIC PUT IT, ‘THAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO GET MUGGED EACH TIME YOU REACH A LANDING.’“THE ARCHITECT COULD BE FORGIVEN FOR NOT BEING ABLE TO SEE A WAY OF SOLVING THIS PROBLEM SINCE IT WAS INTRINSIC TO THE ENTIRE DESIGN. IT COULD ONLY BE SOLVED BY DEMOLISHING THE ESTATE AND STARTING AGAIN WITH SOMETHING RADICALLY DIFFERENT”” MOST TELLINGLY OF ALL, A SURVEY OF ROBIN HOOD GARDENS’ RESIDENTS CARRIED OUT BY TOWER HAMLETS COUNCIL (IN WHICH RESIDENTS IN 110 OF THE 214 APARTMENTS TOOK PART) FOUND THAT MORE THAN 80 PERCENT OF THE TENANTS FAVOURED DEMOLITION AND REPLACEMENT WITH A NEW DEVELOPMENT OFFERING BETTER FACILITIES.”“SIMON JENKINS TEASED ‘I DOUBT IF ITS DEFENDERS HAVE GONE NEAR IT. ARCHITECTURE’S LOVE FOR ROBIN HOOD GARDENS IS STRICTLY PLATONIC.’“THE JUDGMENT OF THE PEVSNER GUIDE TO THE BUILDINGS OF ENGLAND WAS PARTICULARLY DAMNING: ‘THOUGH IMPRESSIVELY MONUMENTAL, THE SCHEME IS ILL-PLANNED TO THE POINT OF BEING INHUMANE.’“OR ALL ‘THE INTELLECTUAL SOPHISTICATION OF THE INTENTIONS,’ ROBIN HOOD GARDENS WAS IN PART ‘MERETRICIOUS’”“ROBIN

“The Judgmental Self-feeding Language Applied to Robin Hood Gardens” by Fernando Ferreira, 2014 ©



“A Fall of Ordinariness and Light” by Jessie Brennan, 2014 ©

**“Resentment becomes a lengthening pole between them and us; the have consumer and the have not consumer. Resentment calls up mass movements, more systems take command... pressure groups thrive in unidentified resentment...gangs form in the void where the community ought to be and is wanting.”**

Alison Smithson, “The Violent Consumer, Or Waiting for the Goodies,”  
Architectural Design 5 (1974): 277.

## II. in-between *Now* and *Then*: Why do we (not) traverse?



“Sky Streets” of Robin Hood Gardens. Photo by Fernando Ferreira, 2014 ©





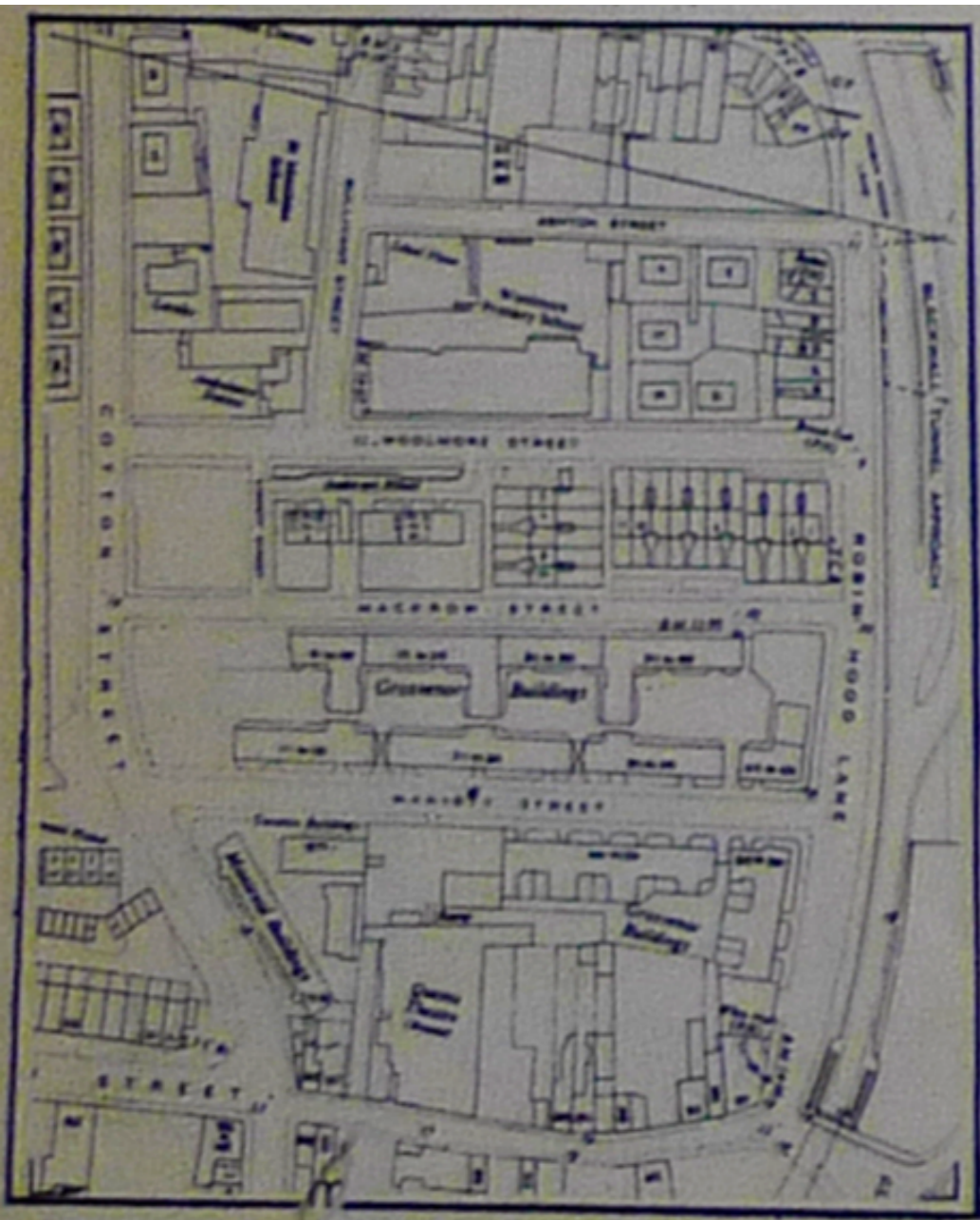
Vertical accesses in Robin Hood Gardens. Photo by Fernando Ferreira, 2014 ©



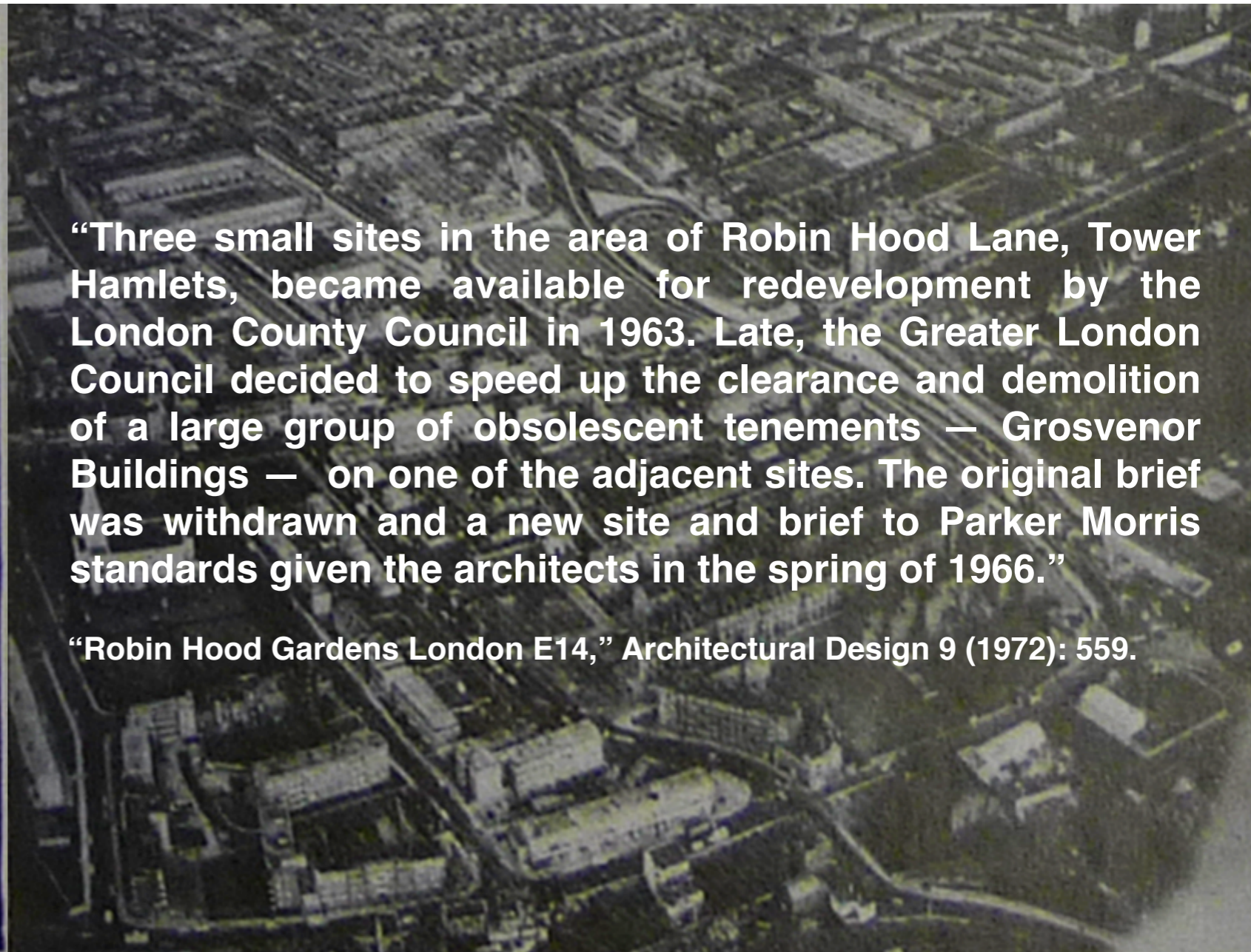
The Central Open Space with Its Artificial Mounds Invites Each Being to Be with Oneself and with the Other. Photo by Fernando Ferreira, 2014 ©



Site of Robin Hood Gardens, from Poplar High street, to the south, photographed in 1963 (AD/9/72,p. 559)



Ordinance Survey of the site before building. (AD/9/72,p. 559)



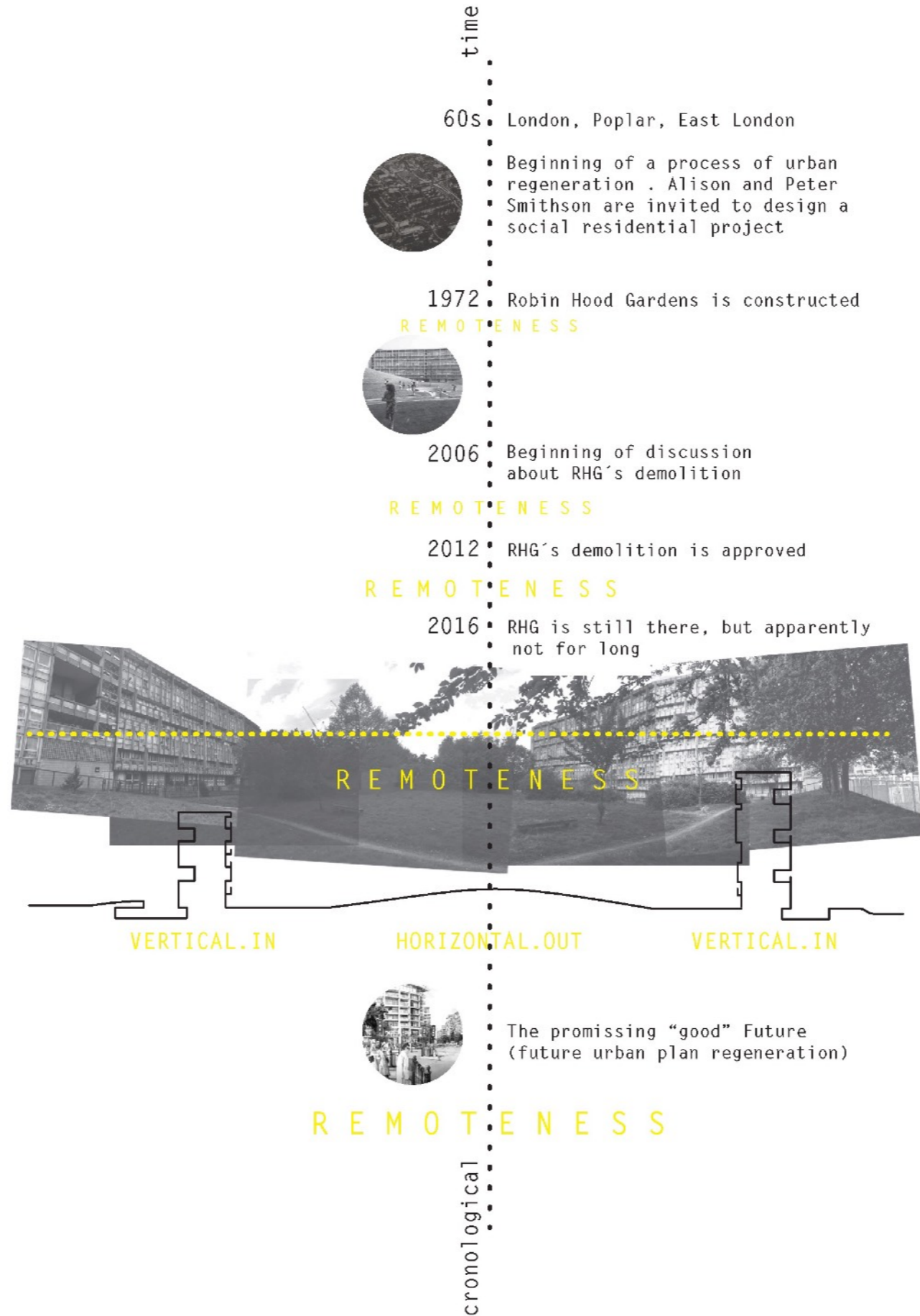
“Three small sites in the area of Robin Hood Lane, Tower Hamlets, became available for redevelopment by the London County Council in 1963. Late, the Greater London Council decided to speed up the clearance and demolition of a large group of obsolescent tenements — Grosvenor Buildings — on one of the adjacent sites. The original brief was withdrawn and a new site and brief to Parker Morris standards given the architects in the spring of 1966.”

“Robin Hood Gardens London E14,” Architectural Design 9 (1972): 559.

Air view of site from the south. (AD/9/72,p. 560)

**The site prior to the RHG project**





Timeline of Robin Hood Gardens' Remoteness by Fernando Ferreira, 2014 ©

### III. Remoteness is...



R E M O T E N E S S  
i N - B E T W E E N

Here ..... D I S C O U R S E ..... There

Now ..... R U P T U R E ..... Then

Me ..... D E T A C H M E N T ..... You



Robin Hood Gardens. Photo by Fernando Ferreira, 2014 ©





**CS: Do you like to live here?**

**R: Yes, I like.**

**CS: Do you feel save here?**

**R: Yes, I feel.**