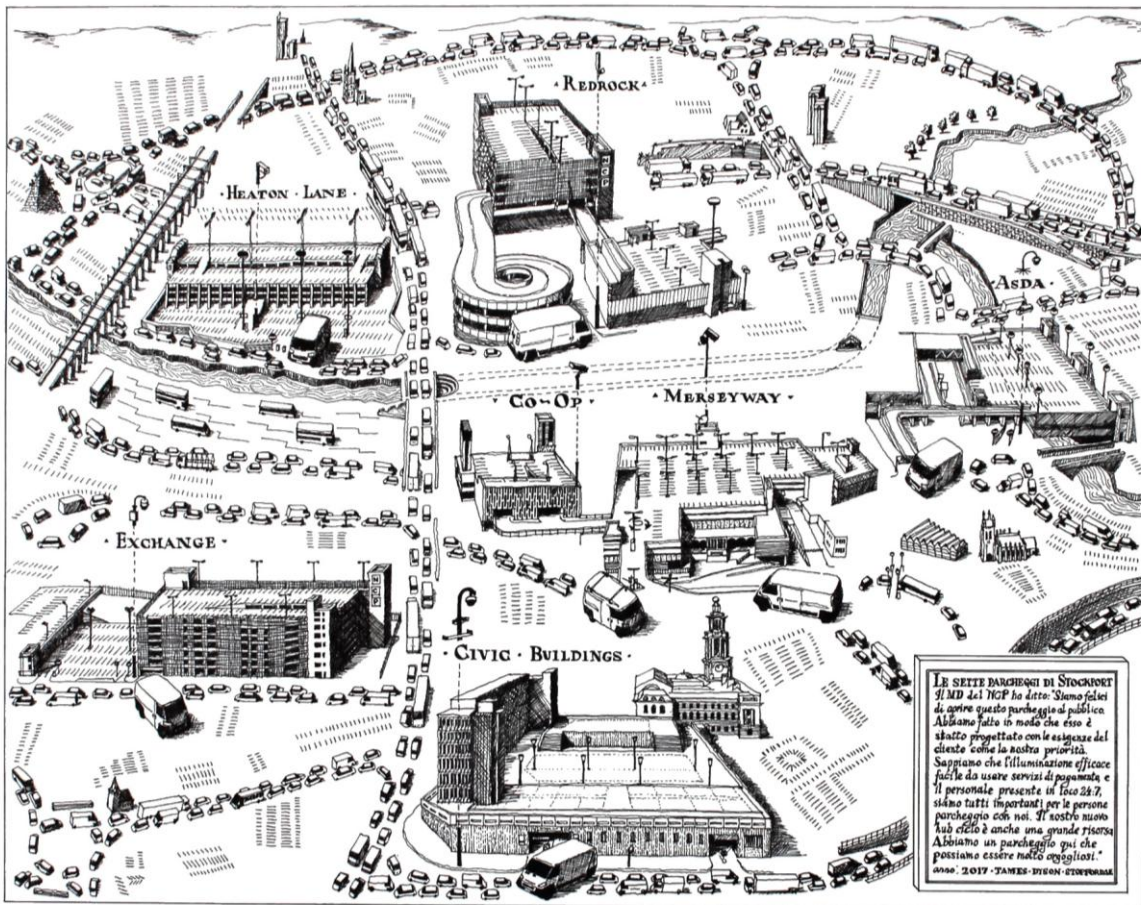


## Le Sette Parcheggi di Stockport

Celebrating completion of the 7<sup>th</sup> multi-storey car park in Stockport



### Background; a contemporary pilgrimage

With completion of the Redrock project expected in 2017, Stockport will have 7 multi-storey car parks in its town centre. These are:

- Redrock
- Exchange
- Merseyway
- Co-op (until recently re-badged as Primark)
- Civic Buildings (below Stopford House plaza)
- Heaton Lane
- Asda

Exchange also has a large surface car park and the private Millennium House multi-storey adjacent. These megastructures complement the large expanses of parking at Tesco, Decathlon, B&Q, The Peel Centre, Newbridge Lane, Matalan, the rooftops of Merseyway, Debenhams, and the subterranean Sainsbury's, as well as numerous parking lots both out of and in conservation areas.

Significant public investment in tarmac continues to satisfy the highways lobby with its lazy preference for the privacy, isolation and immediacy offered by the car. Its cathedrals are the multi-storeys, to which supplicant drivers are daily drawn from their suburban residences. These acts of ritual experience turn multi-storeys into machines for urban decline, accelerating the processes of planning blight, suburban sprawl and climate change. Any town building highway infrastructure on this scale has given up on the environment. In the town which aspires to be little more than a vehicle gyratory, the multi-storey becomes destination, a civic landmark with monumental status.

In 1575 Antonio Lafreri published a map depicting the 7 pilgrimage churches of Rome, "*Le Sette Chiese di Roma*", with a drawing attributed to Giovanni Ambrogio Brambilla. The map was published under the umbrella title "*Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae*" (The Mirror of Roman Magnificence). It would have been distributed at religious festivals to assist pilgrims arriving in the city with their orientation and itineraries.

This drawing re-imagines *Le Sette Chiese* as *Le Sette Parcheggi*: the 7 multi-storeys of Stockport.



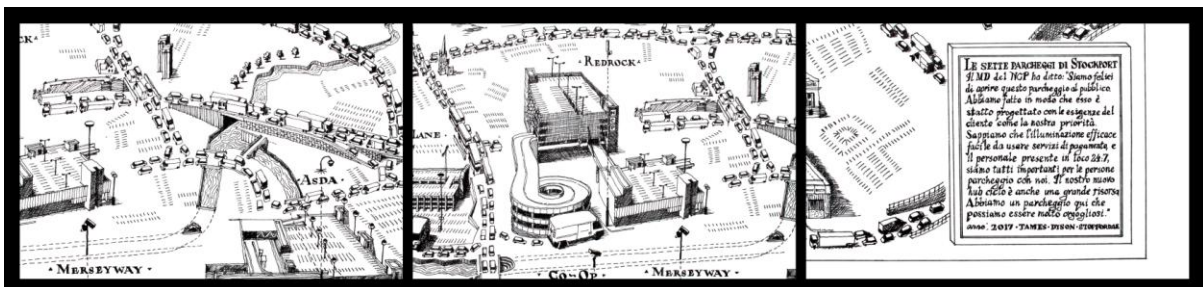
## Representation

In Lafreri's original, each church is depicted in its own perspective rather than a common vanishing point for all. The entrance facade is drawn orthographic to the viewer, with one side in a skewed perspective. The churches are reoriented spatially so that this primary facade faces the viewer, who is standing notionally West of the map with St Peter's foreground. Each has a common light source from the left (geographical North!) with minimal throw of shadow on the ground. Shading is



single, double or triple line. Materiality is suggested on orthographic facades. Hovering above the apex of 4 of the churches is an oversized figurative cross and the church dedication text. St. Peter's, chief of all churches, stands in centre foreground. There are some secondary churches in view, bridges and gateways, and the Aurelian city wall, all of which are drawn to a smaller scale and with no orthographic facade; a few antiquities are depicted in ruinous overgrown state. Scale is clearly used to define hierarchies rather than taken literally. Parts of two churches and the Vatican City wall are cut by the picture frame. Routes are defined by lines of pious figures, scaled according to proximity to standing saints at four of the churches. Rather than buildings as a context, the pious stand on sketchy open ground; the streets and squares of physical fabric are not delineated, monuments exist on abstracted turf. A handful of trees stand top right, and an indistinct horizon line completes the top of the view. The overall effect is of controlled organisation, with intensely detailed highlights set in a neutral field.

In "Sette Parcheggi", the pilgrims remain in their vehicles, queued along town centre access routes in procession to the places of pilgrimage, the multi-storeys, with their floodlights, cctv rigs and NCP logos. Their principal facades are predominantly south facing, but where necessary reoriented to enable the entrance facade to be best appreciated. Stopford House occupies centre foreground as the nerve centre of this quotidian highway-led planning. Car parks are unoccupied; blocking the entrance to each is an overscaled white transit, the "molto importante" of the town; there perhaps for vital maintenance work, or perhaps just parked up. The urban fabric around is omitted, a tiresome obstacle of no interest to the highway engineer who measures and experiences space in mph. As open ground is normally tarmac around Stockport's *Sette Parcheggi*, a suggestion of parking bays become the ground plane. The Tiber has become the Mersey, dotted as it passes through culverts under Merseyway and Asda. The Aurelian Wall meanwhile has become a synthesis of the viaduct (no picture of Stockport would be complete without this), the M60 and St Mary's Way, each under-scaled and rather than enclosing and protecting space dividing it. Stockport's pyramid is drawn in the same manner as Lafreri's Pyramid of Cestius, sprouting vegetation from its sides, and there are other antiquities in view. The combination of overscaled structures, direction-less traffic queues and random infrastructure gives a chaotic general impression appropriate to the increasingly dystopian town. The dimensions of the drawing, 51cm x 40cm, correspond to Lafreri's original.



## Inscription

The original inscription reads:

*LE SETTE CHIESE DI ROMA. Per esser venuto l'anno del Santo Jubileo concesso da Nostro Signore Gregorio XIII second l'anticho consueto e fatto questo disegno, con il circuito de Roma, dove si vedeno dette chiese cavate dal naturale et se non sono poste nel suo l'uogo, ogni persona iuditiosa conoscerà depender la causa per non haver piu spatio. Di queste sette chiese quattro*

*sono le pivile: giate segnate con li Santi á chi sono dedicate, et con una [cross] et in esse si piglia il Santo Jubileo, ilquale i Dio cidia sua Santa pace per poterlo acquistare nel presente. anno 1575. ANT LAFRERII ROMAE.*

This reinforces the purpose of the map in terms of its title, a defined pilgrimage route, Pope Gregory XIII and the Papal Jubilee of 1575, and concludes by crediting the publisher Antonio Lafreri. It's a 16<sup>th</sup> century sound-bite, with abundant contemporary newsworthy equivalents. This one is taken from the press release celebrating the official opening of Exchange NCP:

*The MD of NCP, added: "We're delighted to open this car park to the public. We have made sure that it is designed with the customer's needs as our priority. We know that effective lighting, easy to use payment facilities, and staff present on site 24:7, are all important for people parking with us. Our new cycle hub is also a great asset. We have a car park here that we can be very proud of."*

Which is translated and titled thus:

*LE SETTE PARCHEGGI DI STOCKPORT. Il MD del NCP ha detto: "Siamo felici di aprire questo parcheggio al pubblico. Abbiamo fatto in modo che esso è stato progettato con le esigenze del cliente come la nostra priorità. Sappiamo che l'illuminazione efficace, facile da usare servizi di pagamento, e il personale presente in loco 24: 7, siamo tutti importanti per le persone parcheggio con noi. Il nostro nuovo hub ciclo è anche una grande risorsa. Abbiamo un parcheggio qui che possiamo essere molto orgogliosi." anno 2017. JAMES DYSON.*

### **Speculum Stopfordae Magnificentiae!**

James Dyson, July 2017