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Retail occupancy and vacancy in King Street, Manchester: applying microhistorical principles to retailing

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on contemporary retail history, analysing trends in ground floor retail occupancy within King Street, Manchester, UK, from 1967 onwards, through an analysis of Goad shopping centre plan data over this period. The paper also considers the development of recent narratives relating to occupancy and vacancy within this street via documentary analysis of local media coverage. Over the period in question, analysis of occupancy of individual premises reveals a contrasting pattern of continuity and flux, with varying degrees of retail vacancy and the mix of retailers over the period changing from a heterogenous mix to one where fashion retailers predominate. The paper concludes by addressing the utility of a microhistorical approach in terms of explaining the developments in King Street over this period.

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Introduction

There has been much commentary about the recent travails of traditional UK urban shopping destinations, arising from shifting customer requirements and retail industry structural change¹ and the current impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.² Consequently, the future for many retailers – and the high streets in which they are located – is shrouded in uncertainty. In such circumstances, we should perhaps be mindful of Hollander's call for more retail-oriented historical research that could possibly help inform future industry development.³ Here, *contemporary* history is arguably more relevant to facilitate the development of such insights. Consequently, in this paper, by taking a longitudinal approach to analysing occupancy in one street in Manchester, UK, since the mid-1960s, we seek to analyse changes in the patterns of retail activity therein, which could potentially shed light on future developments. In taking this approach, we are mindful of the principles of microhistory, whereby focusing on a specific case in great detail can exemplify general concepts.⁴

We begin by discussing the concept of microhistory to provide historiographical contextualisation, and then review relevant literature on the concept of 'the street' and approaches to 'writing and thinking'⁵ about such places. Here we focus in particular

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on the street's commercial spatial dimensions. The final element of our contextualisation describes the particular street in question, namely King Street, Manchester, before outlining the sources that informed our analysis of its retail occupancy from 1967. Our focus then turns to the changing retail mix of this street, the length of time individual premises were occupied by specific retailers, and the related issue of retail vacancy, with discussion of some underlying recent causes in the light of broader changes in retailing in Manchester city centre over the last forty years. In so doing, we build on and extend the work of Warnaby and Medway in this journal⁶ (in particular through an analysis of occupancy of individual outlets over time), thereby identifying general lessons consistent with the precepts of microhistory.

Taking a microhistorical perspective

Magnússon and Szi­jártó posit three particular factors that characterise a microhistoric approach.⁷ The first involves the intensive historical investigation of a well-defined smaller object. Reducing the scale of observation⁸ to the 'microscopic'⁹ – accomplished through an intensive analysis of documentary material that hopefully reveals factors previously unobserved¹⁰ – enables the intensive historical investigation of a relatively well-defined smaller 'object' – often in the form of a singular place.¹¹ The second characteristic relates to the fact that the objective of such investigation is 'much more far reaching than that of a case study: microhistorians always look for the answers for "great historical questions"'¹²; and proponents of microhistory suggest that it can exemplify general concepts.¹³ A further characteristic identified by Magnússon and Szi­jártó is the stress on agency, whereby actors at the micro-level 'are not merely puppets on the hands of great underlying forces of history' but are 'active individuals' and 'conscious actors'.¹⁴

Magnússon and Szi­jártó also state that an important microhistorical decision relates to the choice of 'relevant and significant cases' that form the objects of such microscopic investigation, suggesting that this choice is bound up in the concept of the 'exceptional normal' or 'normal exceptions'.¹⁵ Identifying and selecting the 'exceptional normal' is, according to them a 'decisive moment', and is, at least in part, informed by the experience of the microhistorian who 'imagines a general picture, and suddenly recognizes its pattern when meeting a particular case'.¹⁶ It is acknowledged that these terms are somewhat opaque, but in the following sections, we discuss the decision to focus on retail location from a micro-scale perspective,¹⁷ and more specifically a particular street. Here, we would argue that King Street could be regarded as an exceptional normal/normal exception due to it being long regarded – and described as – one of Manchester city centre's most important retail locations. Kidd describes King Street, Market Street and St Ann's Square in the early-Victorian period as constituting Manchester's 'respectable business and retail quarter'¹⁸; and from a more contemporary perspective the *Manchester City Centre Strategic Plan 2015–2018* notes that King Street is 'still considered to be one of the city's most aspirational retail areas',¹⁹ notwithstanding its recent problems (which we discuss in greater detail below).

'Writing' the street: Taking a retail perspective

Twenty years ago, Hankins stated that the street has been somewhat neglected as a specific site for *retail* research in comparison with other spatial contexts,²⁰

notwithstanding Hubbard and Lyon's contention that 'the street has long been a key laboratory for studies of social life', especially at the local level.²¹ Since then, in his extensive analysis of Maxwell Street, Chicago – in which he discusses 'writing and thinking place' more generally – geographer Tim Cresswell describes what he terms 'local theory' as 'both a way of engaging with place and a way of doing theory', going on to state, that 'it is different from ways of engaging place that focus on uniqueness and particularity – separating one place from all the others. It is also different from constructing theory that universalizes and generalizes'.²² This interplay between different spatial scales – and the counterpoint of the particular and the universal – arguably resonates, in a spatial context, with the relationship between the micro-level investigation and the macro-level conclusion that characterises microhistory (and particularly Italian microhistory), as described by Magnússon and Szijártó.²³

Georges Perec states that 'the parallel alignment of two series of buildings defines what is known as a street',²⁴ and suggests that the account of places such as streets should be through the construction of lists of their attributes, including the shops located therein – an approach we adopt in this paper. From a sociological standpoint, Hubbard and Lyon define the street in terms of both *form* and *function*.²⁵ They state most streets are, intrinsically, linear forms that are conduits for various types of flows, which serve to 'connect people in a variety of significant ways', and moreover, connect elements of the built environment, 'providing some form of interaction and relationality', which may occur at a variety of spatial scales.²⁶ This is evident in previous work that has discussed the importance of the street to both retail *location* and *operations*. Bennison et al., for example, note that retail locations can be examined at various interlinked scales of analysis,²⁷ from *macro*-level decisions (e.g. the proposed geographical coverage of a store network), through to the *meso*-level (e.g. decisions relating to issues such as the delineation of store catchment areas etc.), and even the *micro*-level of the individual store²⁸ – which is of particular relevance to our discussion.

Regarding retail *operations*, the globalising trends within many supply chains and the internationalisation of retail formats²⁹ lead Crewe and Lowe to discuss the emergence of new spatial configurations:

On the one hand the globalisation of retailing continues to weave complex interdependencies between geographically distant locations and tends towards global interconnection and dedifferentiation. On the other hand new patterns of regional specialisation are emphasising the importance of place and reinforcing local uniqueness.³⁰

Crewe and Lowe reiterate the importance of place, arguing that the links between retailing, consumption and the locales that facilitate the occurrence of (inter)relations can lead to the emergence of 'distinctive *micro-geographies* of consumption and identity'.³¹ They explore such inter-scalar relationships in terms of the location decisions made by 'pioneering clothing retailers' in the specific spatial context of the Lace Market area of Nottingham. However, the interplay of different scalar retail forces is also evident at the level of the individual street. Fernie et al., for example, analyse the internationalisation of high fashion brands and how these are spatially realised in Central London through the concentration of their flagship stores in certain locations such as Bond Street and Sloane Street,³² thereby developing a specific character for what Moore³³ terms 'streets of style'.

Research context: King Street, Manchester

Hubbard and Lyon contend that, 'if the researcher goes into the field without a clear definition of the street in question, the study may spiral and become one that potentially becomes too socially decontextualized'.³⁴ Thus, we now provide a spatial contextualisation of the street in question, which fits Moore's 'streets of style' epithet. Recalling the name of a street in Central London mentioned above, and long regarded as one of the pre-eminent locations of luxury shops,³⁵ King Street has been described as 'the Bond Street of the North'.³⁶

King Street is now part of the St Ann's Square Conservation area,³⁷ and has 13 listed buildings interspersed along its route.³⁸ The earliest part of modern Manchester dates to the early twelfth century and was situated on an area of raised land between the rivers Irwell and Irk, in a location that is now occupied by Manchester Cathedral. However, in the early eighteenth century, the centre of the town moved from this medieval area to what became known as St Ann's Square. In 1708, parliament granted leave to enclose the open pasture land of Acres Field for the building of St Ann's Church on the condition that the new square should be 30 yards wide to allow the holding of the 'Acres Fair', which had been held there since 1229.

Parkinson-Bailey states that St Ann's Square quickly became a fashionable part of town, and by 1735 the south side of the square, parts of King Street (immediately to the south of St Ann's Square) and Ridgefield were being built upon with elegant brick houses.³⁹ In 1747, in the first subsequent major development of the town, leases were granted for buildings to be erected on the ground now bordered by Market Street, Cross Street, King Street and Moseley Street – and in 1753 the lower part of King Street started to be built.

King Street has been described as essentially not one but two streets,⁴⁰ located either side of Cross Street. King Street to the east of Cross Street ('Upper King Street') became the epicentre of the banking industry in the North West of England, with many notable financial institutions located there in buildings that are now listed as being of architectural significance.⁴¹ Today this area predominantly houses commercial office space in the old bank buildings, along with a handful of retailers (mainly food and beverage operators and some premium fashion brands) and a luxury hotel.

However, our analysis is focused on the western part of King Street, between Cross Street and Deansgate. This 'other' King Street is described by Reilly as 'narrow, intimate and devoted to the retail trade'⁴² and dates from the 1840s, when the Corporation of Manchester decided to extend King Street through to Deansgate.⁴³ This part of King Street ('lower King Street') was, as mentioned above, well-established as a shopping street by the Victorian period, characterised by upmarket/luxury retailers. Kidd describes the retail geography of this area of Manchester of the period as follows:

The more discerning, because wealthy, shoppers could be found frequenting the most fashionable retailers around St Ann's Square, and Exchange Street or along lower King Street. These were places of elegant promenade and exclusive shops selling jewellery, fine dresses, millinery, books and pictures. Laden with purchases the weary shopper might seek refreshment in one of the city's numerous cafes, tea shops and restaurants. Some might come to rest at Parker's in St Ann's Square or Meng and Ecker in St Ann's Passage [linking St Ann's Square to King Street]. Whilst many more would search out the nearest Lyons.⁴⁴

This heyday continued through the early twentieth century: in 1924, Reilly describes that, when moving along Deansgate:

... one rather stumbles into King Street without realising its character. It is not until one has walked along it a little way that one realises its air of leisured civilisation, so different from the other streets in the town. It is certainly not due to the buildings, which throughout are very ordinary. But so they are in Bond Street, London or Bold Street, Liverpool. The fact of course is that good shops in a narrow street have in themselves a very inviting appearance. You are tempted to cross and recross the street and treat it as a form of the Eastern bazaar, which it really is.⁴⁵

Taylor et al. state that in Manchester the opening of the Arndale Centre in the late 1970s shifted the centre of retail gravity further towards the area within which King Street is situated.⁴⁶ This locale, they suggest, was subject to gentrification processes, pushing up retail values on the back of a surge in development. Prior to the 1970s, lower King Street was a thoroughfare, but in the mid-1970s was designated as access only for vehicular traffic, and by the late 1970s there was an experimental pedestrianisation scheme in force, which became permanent in the early 1980s.

However, in recent years there has been a general perception that King Street's position as a premier retail location was threatened. The changing pattern of retail development in the city centre – catalysed by the 1996 IRA bombing⁴⁷ and the opening of the Trafford Centre⁴⁸ out-of-town shopping mall in 1998 – created more locational options for retailers who would have usually gravitated towards King Street. These alternative locations include the redeveloped New Cathedral Street, The Avenue in Spinningfields – an office-led, mixed-use development covering a 22-acre site within the city centre, which is 0.3 miles away to the south of King Street. Established in 2010, The Avenue was described by its developers as 'Manchester's first centralised destination for international luxury brands'.⁴⁹ Another very attractive location is the extended Arndale Centre, the separate phases of this development opening in October 2005 and April 2006. The characteristics of retail premises in this part of the Arndale Centre were now more in keeping with the locational requirements and customer footfall flows sought by the types of retailers located in King Street – and were made even more attractive to potential tenants when coupled with capital inducements to incentivise relocation there. Figure 1 indicates King Street's positioning relative to these other retail areas within Manchester city centre.

The 2008–2009 economic crisis saw a significant increase in the number of vacant premises on King Street, which have remained stubbornly high. Unsurprisingly, therefore, '[i]mproving the performance of King Street' was a 'key priority' in Manchester's *City Centre Strategic Plan 2015–2018*.⁵⁰

Research design

The main source of data informing our analysis was Goad shopping centre plans for Manchester, which enabled the tracing of retail occupancy in King Street since their inception in 1967. Goad shopping centre plans of approximately 1000 retail centres of towns and cities throughout the British Isles, (generally with populations over 7500) are regularly updated; larger centres being revised annually and the others biennially.⁵¹

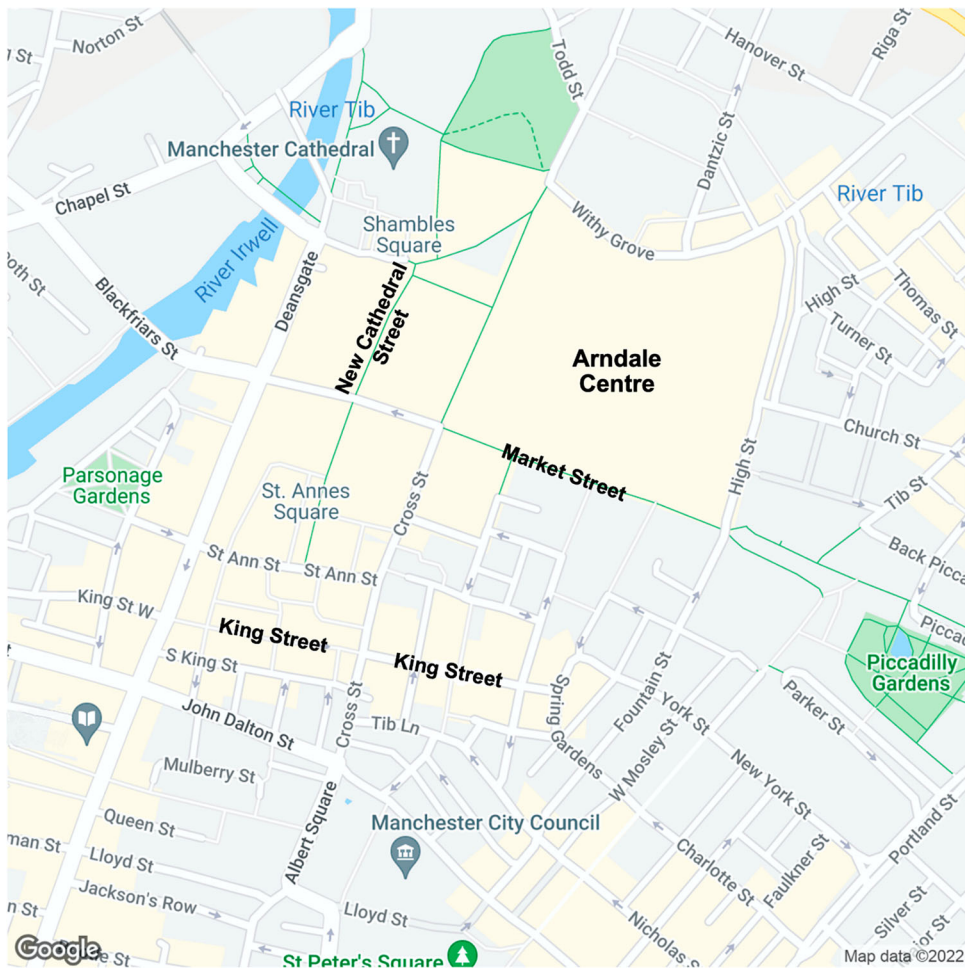


Figure 1. Map of Manchester.

Each Goad shopping centre plan is produced to a uniform scale of 88 feet to one inch (1:1056) and provides a bird's eye view of the main and subsidiary shopping streets of an urban centre, showing retail fascia names, product/service categories, and the exact location of all retail outlets/vacant premises in terms of their ground floor spatial 'foot-print' (i.e. frontage and site depths). Other features included relate to the locations of bus stops, subways, pedestrian crossings, one-way traffic flows and pedestrianised areas.⁵² Reflecting the limitations of this dataset (Rowley and Shepherd note that Goad plans only record ground floor occupancy⁵³), we did not analyse the occupancy of the upper storeys of buildings, although observation indicates only one or two of the premises in King Street had retail activity above ground floor level.

The Goad shopping centre plans essentially offer a 'snapshot' picture of retail provision in King Street at various times. Plans were analysed at approximately two to three-year intervals from 1967 onwards. Data are reported for the following years: 1967, 1969, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1980, 1983, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1993, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2018 and 2021. The choice of years was guided by

the fact that until the 1980s Goad plans were produced biennially, and thereafter, in relation to Manchester specifically, there are periodic gaps in historic map availability. Their use as a source of spatial data is discussed by Rowley and Shepherd, who note that they ‘provide an excellent opportunity for cross-time comparisons’⁵⁴ of retail activity within town and city centres, although Rowley notes that they are ‘by no means perfect’.⁵⁵ Indeed, in some of the earlier handwritten maps, details for smaller outlets were illegible⁵⁶ (a drawback rectified in later maps where information is in typescript). Furthermore, Rowley and Shepherd, quoting Berry, note that these plans are essentially descriptive,⁵⁷ and that ‘static pattern analysis is incapable of indicating which of a variety of equally plausible but fundamentally different causal processes have given rise to the patterns’.⁵⁸

Using Goad shopping centre plans in conjunction with other information sources is also discussed extensively,⁵⁹ and following this approach we supplemented our map-based data with documentary analysis of local narratives of the street in the *Manchester Evening News* and other media forms. This was an attempt to partially overcome the problem of assessing issues of possible causality mentioned above, by seeking to understand the rationale(s) underpinning some of the changes identified from the analysis of Goad plans. Such an approach is particularly apposite when examining data from the early-2000s onwards, when the varying levels of retail vacancy in King Street (arising from more general economic cycles) have resulted in alternating narratives of decline and revival. Quotations from relevant retailers, property industry professionals, place managers and elected officials with an interest in King Street who are mentioned in these media are included below. These insights provide contemporaneous ‘stakeholder’ perspectives on King Street and help to explain, at least in part, some of the trends identified in the analysis of occupancy.

Retail mix

King Street has approximately 40 retail outlets⁶⁰ which are represented in schematic form in Figure 2. In this figure, numbers refer to the street number of each individual retail outlet.

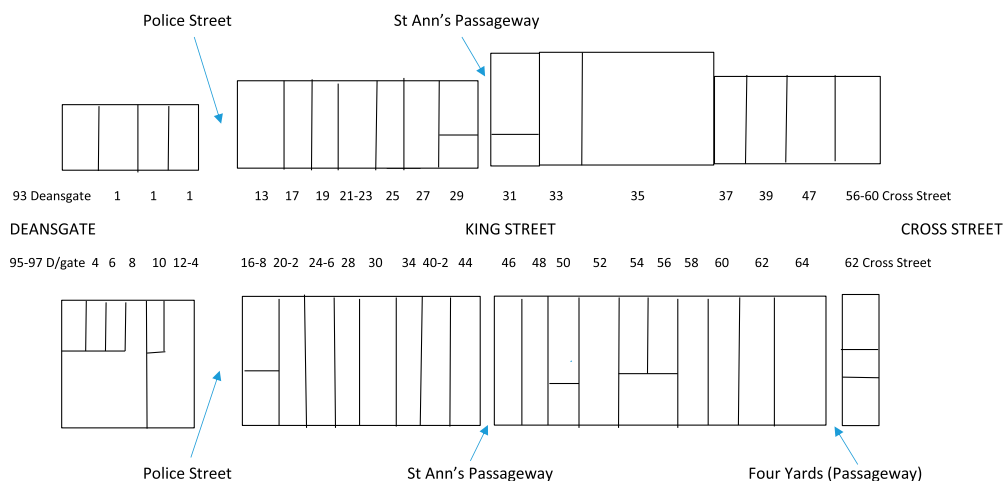


Figure 2. King Street schematic (showing retail premises – numbering from 2013 Goad plan).

The mix of retailers within King Street has changed over the period of analysis, as shown in Tables 1 and 2. Product category descriptors are taken from the Goad shopping centre plans – although, where appropriate, some aggregation has occurred (for example, where there are minor inconsistencies in how products sold by the same retailer are described in successive Goad plans).

In the late-1960s and through the 1970s, King Street had a quite heterogenous retail mix, consisting of stores covering 18 different product categories. No one product category was predominant, although fashion, footwear, watches/jewellery, financial services, and fur shops were popular. The fur shops had all disappeared by the time of the 1990 Goad plan, undoubtedly reflecting increasing societal concerns about animal rights and cruelty. However, beginning in the mid-1980s (and continuing to its zenith in 2000, with 24 of 39 outlets), fashion retailing became the dominant activity in King Street, reflecting a point made by one property agent in the *Manchester Evening News* that the Street ‘has been ever changing, and is continuously being re-defined as new tenants come in’.⁶¹ However more recently, whilst still the dominant product category, the number of fashion retailers in King Street has reduced significantly.

Typical of the fashion businesses locating in King Street during the 1990s were those contemporaneously described by Crewe and Lowe as ‘design-oriented, quality women’s fashion retailers who have all successfully positioned themselves between designer stores

Table 1. Number of retail outlets by product type in King Street 1967–1993.

Product type	1967	1969	1971	1973	1975	1977	1980	1983	1986	1988	1990	1993
Fashion	6	6	5	6	6	5	8	10	16	19	20	19
Footwear	6	6	6	5	4	4	4	2	2	2	2	3
Watches/Jewellery	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	4
Financial Services	4	4	5	5	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	3
Employment Agency	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Department Store	1	1	1	1	1	1	1					
Kitchenware	1							1	1	1	1	
Furs	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	2	2		
Furniture	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2				
Opticians	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	
Food/ Cafe	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	1	1
Photography	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
NW Arts Assoc				1	1	1	1					
Hairdressing			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Philately				1	1	1	1					
Art						1	1		1	1	1	1
Hearing Aids	1	1	1	1	1	1						
Interior Design						1						
China					1	1						
Electrical Goods								1	1			
Books								1			1	
Florist	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	
Stationery												1
Music/Phones											1	
Sports	1	1										
Fabrics/Soft Furnishings	1	1	2	1	1	1						
Travel Agent	2	2										
Vacant		2	3		2	3	3	5	1	1	2	5
Unknown ^a		1	2	2	2	1	1	2	3	1		1
Total ^b	39	40	41	41	41	41	41	43	43	43	43	41

^aText illegible on handwritten Goad plans.

^bNumber of outlets varies because of division/amalgamation of premises over time.

Table 2. Number of retail outlets by product type in King Street 1996–2021.

Product type	1996	1998	2000	2003	2006	2008	2010	2013	2015	2017	2018	2021
Fashion	22	23	24	20	19	19	16	17	17	14	14	8
Footwear	3	3	2	3	4	2	2	1	1	1	1	2
Watches/Jewellery	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4
Financial Services	2	1	1	1	1							
Employment Agency	1	1	1	1	1	1						
Kitchenware	1	1	1	1	1	1		1				
Furniture										1	1	1
Food/ Cafe		1	1	2	2		1	1	1	2	3	2
Photography	1											
Hairdressing	1	1	1									
Art								1	1	2	2	2
Stationery	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Health & Beauty	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	4	6	3	1
Music/Phones				1	1							
Soft Furnishings					1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1
Travel Agent							1	1	1	1	1	1
Education											1	
Vacant	1	2	2	4	2	6	9	6	6	4	5	16
Total ^a	38	39	39	40	39	39	39	39	39	39	38	38

^aNumber of outlets varies because of division/amalgamation of premises over time.

and the middle market, [and] who retail through a limited number of outlets in a person-alised way'.⁶² Examples of such retailers cited by Crewe and Lowe include Hobbs Ltd, Monsoon Ltd, Oasis Stores Ltd, Jigsaw and Boules Ltd, all of which have been located on King Street. An important part of the attraction of King Street for these businesses was its upmarket 'street of style' reputation. Another important influencing factor was the rising rental levels on the Street. Schofield, in a report in *Manchester Confidential*, cites one property agent as saying that it has only been national fashion retail businesses that have previously been able to afford – and were prepared to pay – the rents required to have a presence on King Street: and consequently, the Street 'has never been a seeding ground for smart independent boutiques'.⁶³

Retail outlet occupation

Occupancy data for ground floor occupancy of individual retail outlets from 1967 is shown in Tables 3–6,⁶⁴ which reveal a contrasting pattern of continuity and flux. Some retailers have occupied the same premises for extended periods, notably Hancock's jewellers which has occupied No. 29 King Street throughout the period of analysis. In addition, there are various examples of retailers expanding and moving premises within King Street. For example, Jaeger occupied No. 14 on Goad plans from 1973, which shows a premises relocation and expansion across the street from Nos. 13–15. After 2017, however, this retailer disappears from plans (Jaeger fell into administration in April 2017). Furthermore, some retailers have relocated from King Street and subsequently returned. Hobbs, for example, is located at No. 27 from the 1986 Goad plan up to 2013, when it relocated to New Cathedral Street (which was part of the post-IRA bomb redevelopment of the city centre). Yet, on the 2017 plan this retailer has returned to the corner of King Street and Deansgate (No. 93 Deansgate). Similarly, Jigsaw is located at Nos. 41–43 King Street in the Goad plans from 1996 to 2000, it then relocated to the redeveloped Triangle facility (i.e. the historic Corn Exchange

building in Exchange Square at the top of New Cathedral Street, and again part of the post-IRA bomb city centre redevelopment), only to return to No. 19 King Street by the time of the 2015 Goad plan. However, by the time of the 2021 Goad plan No 19 was again vacant.

As mentioned previously, the early/mid-2000s were a time of significant retail change in Manchester, reflecting the development of new retail space targeted at premium retailers in the city centre following property damage sustained in the 1996 IRA bombing. Some previous retail occupants of King Street (e.g. Reiss, Ted Baker) relocated to units opening on New Cathedral Street, near to the new Selfridges and Harvey Nichols department stores. Moreover, by the late 2000s, other locations were also attracting the upmarket retailers formerly located on King Street. One news story in the *Manchester Evening News* quotes the Chief Executive of CityCo (Manchester's city centre management organisation) as saying 'It's unfortunate that King Street has suffered with the expansion of retail in the city centre'.⁶⁵ Relating to this issue, one property letting agent is quoted by Schofield in the media blog *Manchester Confidential* as follows:

Many shops are finding times tough and those who have the opportunity to do so are looking round for better deals ... Existing shopping centres and new retail developments, for example Manchester Arndale and Spinningfields, have been wooing existing retailers with rent-free periods and numerous incentives.⁶⁶

This has had implications for how King Street has been perceived, with media reports describing it as having been 'damaged' as a retail location, and one Manchester retail property specialist quoted as saying: 'The trouble is that King Street rents just got too expensive'.⁶⁷ These high rental levels (perhaps indicative of the street's former heyday) were linked to the long leasehold periods that some retailers had previously agreed to in more favourable economic times. There appears to have been some recognition of the impact of this – with one property agent quoted in 2009 as saying:

Rents were a problem but we are moving on this ... reducing them significantly or at least keeping them at the same level. Many places have had the same rental rates for eight or nine years. We realise that rents have to be sustainable for the retailer, and in some cases rental rates have dipped substantially. For example, there is one unit on the street which has fallen from £165,000 per year to £120,000.⁶⁸

For some, another factor militating against King Street in comparison to these newer locational alternatives, is the Street's architectural character. Schofield goes on to quote a property letting agent on this subject:

... listed buildings have been subject to not only preservation but restoration clauses. In this way national agencies are trying to hang building restoration on tenants moving into properties. Preservation is one thing but should the tenants be asked to actively restore buildings? We have lost lettings on King Street because of this tactic and its cost implications.⁶⁹

Whilst there has been a downward movement on rental levels in many cases, the issue of high business rates remains problematic. This has meant that some stores, whilst attracting good volumes of trade, have struggled to achieve profitability. One store manager in King Street is quoted in the *Manchester Evening News* on this subject, noting: 'This is without a doubt the best street in Manchester but the high rents and

Table 3. King Street occupancy by premises 1967–1977.

Shop	1967	1969	1971	1973 (Access only)	1975 (Access only)	1977 (Pedestrian experimental)
93^a	Kendal Milne Department store					
1						
1						
1						
13–15	Jaeger Fashion (L)			Elle Fashion (L)		
17	Watches of Switzerland Watches/ Jewellery					
19	Samuels Fashion (L)	D Davies Fashion (L)	Vidal Sassoon Hairdresser			
21		Suede Craft Not Stated	R Goodman Fashion (L)		Incognito (R Goodman) Fashion (L)	VACANT (due to fire)
23	Buss Cutlery Kitchenware	VACANT	G Richard Jewellery		Wiskemann China & Glass Housewares	
25	W Batty Watches/ Jewellery					
27	Peter Lord Footwear			Hames Bakers & Restaurant		
29	Hancocks Watches/ Jewellery					
31	Joan's Fashion (L)					
33	Parker Knoll Furniture		Woodland Furniture			
35	District Bank Financial Services		County Bank Financial Services		National Westminster Bank Financial Services	VACANT (under alteration)
37			National Westminster Bank Financial Services			
39–41	City Employment Agency Employment Agency					
43	Offices entrance Commercial					
47	Leicester Temperance BS Financial Services				VACANT	Clarendon Galleries Art

Shop	1967	1969	1971	1973 (Access only)	1975 (Access only)	1977 (Pedestrian experimental)
56–60^a	Caledonian Insurance Co. Financial Services		Provincial Building Society Financial Services			
95–97^a	Dollonds Photography					
5	Dollond & Aitcheson Optician					
6	Horizon Travel Travel agent		Occupant Unknown^b			VACANT
8	Offices entrance Commercial					
10	Pan Am World Airways Travel agent		Occupant Unknown^b			
14	Alec Watson & Mitchells Ltd & Marsh's Ltd Sports goods & Saddlers		VACANT	Jaeger Fashion (L)		
16–18	Liberty Fabrics					
20–22	C Turner Footwear					
24	J Whippell Fashion (M)					
26	E Glyn Fashion (L)				Riva Fashion (L)	
28–30	Lotus Cresta Footwear					
34	A Jones Footwear					
36	Offices entrance Commercial					
38	Fabian Florist					
40–42	Hames Bakers & Restaurant	VACANT	Lafayette Fabrics Fabrics	Lafayette Furs Furs		
44	Blaiwais Furs					
46	Bally Footwear					
48	Leicester Permanent Building Society Financial Services					
50	Cowan & Sutherland Opticians					
52	Lincoln, Bennett & Co Ladieswear		VACANT	NW Arts Association Centre Commercial		

(Continued)

Continued.

Shop	1967	1969	1971	1973 (Access only)	1975 (Access only)	1977 (Pedestrian experimental)
54	F Martin Furs					
56	Ardente Hearing aids					
58	Raimond Furs Furs					
60	Duncan Foster Baker & Confectioner					
62	Chapmans Photography		VACANT	J E Lea Philately		
64	T Hinde Footwear				VACANT	Bernas Klein Interior Design
62^a	Terry & Co Jewellery					

^aCorner premises: 93 & 95–97 Corner of King St and Deansgate; 56–60 & 62 Corner of King St and Cross Street.^bOccupancy unknown – GOAD plan illegible.

business rates are putting it in real danger'⁷⁰; whilst another states, 'I blame the rents and rates [for the Street's situation], they are just too high'.⁷¹ Indeed, the extended period between recent rate revaluations has left some retailers facing business rate bills that do not reflect the current trading position and, arguably, the value of the premises they trade from. That said, as mentioned above, landlords have, perforce, had to accept lower rents and shorter tenancy periods in order to get their properties occupied. Consequently, rental levels on King Street are now perceived as more comparable with other areas of the city centre, which perhaps explains the reduction in vacant properties from a peak of nine in the 2010 Goad plan to four in the 2017 plan. We now move to discuss the issue of retail vacancy on King Street in more detail.

Retail vacancy

The level of retail vacancy has been an issue throughout the period of analysis, but has assumed more importance in recent years. Indeed, there were no retail vacancies on King Street for only three of the 22 Goad plans studied, and in most years, there were between one and three empty premises (notwithstanding the six vacancies noted in 1983 and the five empty units in 1993, with both cases marking periods of UK economic recession). Findlay and Sparks suggest that some degree of retail vacancy within urban locales is inevitable, and indeed desirable.⁷² Wrigley and Dolega go further, suggesting that retail 'churn' is 'in stable economic conditions ... essential to accommodate and facilitate often rapidly changing retailer/service-provider requirements' as they adjust to changing levels of market demand.⁷³

It has only been in the last 12–14 years that retail vacancy has been a significant perceived issue in King Street, with an increase in the number of empty premises after the 2008–2009 financial crisis and associated recession. Resonating with Findlay and Sparks' contention that retail vacancy arises from a combination of reasons (comprising both

national and local factors, as well as market weakness/readjustment), our documentary analysis identified contributory factors emanating from wider economic conditions (indicated by the frequency and chronology of mentions of increased vacancies being consistent with UK financial downturns), as well as some more specific to the Street's situation, which those responsible for the management of the Street (and its locale) have had to address.

Such factors include maintaining the physical streetscape and ensuring that the aesthetics of vacant premises were appropriate to the Street's high-end positioning – as one store manager stated: 'It doesn't help that some of the empty shops aren't properly looked after. They could perhaps put pictures up or allow galleries to use them to improve the look of the street'.⁷⁴ Another factor perceived to be militating against any initiative(s) to improve such perceptions was the fragmentation of property ownership on King Street, which meant that developing more 'strategic' initiatives to improve the situation – for example, managing the retail mix to ensure an appropriate range of retailers aligned with the Street's desired market position – was problematic. As one property agent identified in 2013: 'I believe King Street will come back round soon. I think the key is to bring the retailers together to look after the look of the street and the government needs to lower rates to realistic levels'.⁷⁵ However, a more pessimistic note is sounded by Schofield in his analysis of King Street's woes in *Manchester Confidential*, which is gloomily entitled 'The Death of King Street':

What all parties – the City Council, Cityco, MIDAS⁷⁶, the landlords – agree is that the King has lost its crown, and that something needs to be done. Unfortunately there seems to be no timeframe for banging heads together and coming up with ideas.⁷⁷

Such downbeat assessments – and concern about the fortunes of King Street – have somewhat dominated media narratives in recent years, with Cox's article in the *Manchester Evening News*, entitled 'Crisis in shopping mecca King Street as jewel in shops crown loses its shine', indicative of the general tone adopted. This story reported how concerns regarding the Street's ongoing commercial viability have motivated action, citing Manchester City Council's city centre spokesman, Councillor Pat Karney, as saying:

Maybe King Street has to have a big rethink and reinvent itself and work out where it is in the market place, look at what it is offering. Perhaps it needs more cafés ... to give people the full experience.

We don't want to see any empty shops and I will arrange to meet people with legitimate trading concerns in the town hall to go through the issues. One thing for sure is that we will not let King Street have a slow long-term decline.⁷⁸

Similar to the above, in 2013 one store manager in King Street is quoted as saying 'perhaps its time for a change, maybe we need to get more of a café culture, give it a European feel along King Street'.⁷⁹ Since then, there have been attempts to attract a more extensive food and beverage offer to the area. However, such efforts have arguably had only limited success, with some restaurant operations being short-lived.⁸⁰

In 2015, the closure in quick succession of the Tommy Hilfiger, Crombie and (long-standing) Jaeger stores prompted the *Manchester Evening News* to print an online gallery

Table 4. King Street occupancy by premises 1980–1990.

Shop	1980 (Pedestrian experimental)	1983 (Pedestrianised)	1986	1988	1990
93	Kendals Dept Store	VACANT	Max Speilmann Photoprocessing		
1		VACANT	Alexon Fashion (L)		
1		Offices entrance Commercial			
1		Boodle & Dunthorne Jewellery			
13–15	Elle Fashion (L)		Monsoon Fashion (L)		
17	Watches of Switzerland Watches/Jewellery				
19	Vidal Sassoon Hairdresser				
21	Incognito Fashion (L)		Next Fashion (L)		
23	A Boomers Watches/ Jewellery		Next Fashion (M)		
25	W Batty Watches/ Jewellery	L'Homme Fashion (M)	Next Footwear		
27	Occupant Unknown^a Baker/ Restaurant	Godiva Confectionery/ Restaurant	Hobbs Fashion (L)		
29	Hancocks Watches/ Jewellery				
31	Joan's Fashion (L)		French Window Bakery		
33	Woodland Furniture	Booksave Books	Athena Art/Stationery		
35–37	National Westminster Bank Financial Services				
39–41	Job Centre Public sector		Sabre Fashion (L & M)		
43	Offices entrance Commercial				
47	Clarendon Galleries Art	Nixons Kitchen Furniture	La Virma Fashion (L & Ch)	Boules Fashion (M)	
56–60	Provincial Building Society Financial Services		National & Provincial Building Society Financial Services		
95–97	Dollonds Photography		Dollond & Aitcheson Optician		
5	Dollond & Aitcheson Optician		Midas Jewellery		
6	St Moritz Furs Furs				Martin Dawes Phones
8	Offices entrance Commercial				
10	Occupant Unknown^a			Aspecto Footwear	
14	Jaeger Fashion (L & M)				

Shop	1980 (Pedestrian experimental)	1983 (Pedestrianised)	1986	1988	1990
16–18	Liberty Fashion (L) & Fabrics				
20–22	Midas Footwear		Richards Fashion (L)		
24	J Whippell Fashion (M)				
26	Riva Fashion (M)				
28	VACANT	Laura Ashley Fashion (L)			
30	Lotus Footwear	VACANT	Warehouse Fashion (L)		
34	A Jones Footwear			Hornes Fashion (M)	
36	Offices entrance Commercial				
38	Fabian Florist				Principles Fashion (L)
40–42	Zip Fashion (M)		Principles Fashion (L)		
44	Blaiwais Furs				Next Jewellery
46	Bally Footwear	VACANT	Reiss Fashion (M)		
48	Leicester Permanent Building Society Financial Services		Alliance Leicester Building Society Financial Services		
50	Cowan & Sutherland Opticians				Dash Fashion (L)
52	NW Arts Association Commercial	Casa Mir Furniture	Holland & Barrett Health Foods	Ted Baker Fashion (M)	
54	F Martin Furs		Occupant Unknown^a	Bellhop Fashion (M)	VACANT
56	VACANT	Occupant Unknown^a	Reed Employment Agency		
58	Raimond Furs Furs	VACANT		James Coates Florist	
60	Duncan Foster Baker/Confectioner		Wimbush Restaurant & Bakery Baker/Restaurant		VACANT
62	J E Lea Philately	Technics TV Audio	Cleartone TV/Audio	VACANT	Hatchards Books
64	VACANT	David Mellor Kitchenware			
62	Terry & Co Jewellery		Occupant Unknown^a		Leeds & Holbeck B S Financial Services

^aOccupancy unknown – GOAD plan illegible.

of King Street's vacant shops.⁸¹ However, this dynamic can work both ways, in that if a few new lettings occur then a narrative of the Street 'bouncing back' can be articulated, which may then develop its own momentum. For example, an article in 2011 describing

Table 5. King Street occupancy by premises 1993–2003.

	1993	1996	1998	2000	2003
93	Max Spielmann Photoprocessing		Seattle Coffee Co Coffee Shop	Starbucks Coffee Shop	
1	Alexon Fashion (L)	Kaliko Fashion (L)			Ernest Jones Jewellery
1	Offices entrance Commercial				
1	Boodle & Dunthorne Jewellery				
13	Monsoon Fashion (L)				
17	Watches of Switzerland Watches/Jewellery				
19	Vidal Sassoon Hairdresser				VACANT
21	Next Fashion (L & M)				Next Fashion (L)
23					Next Fashion (M)
25	Next Footwear	Next Fashion (Ch)			Next Footwear
27	Hobbs Fashion (L)				
29	Hancocks Watches/ Jewellery				
31	French Window Bakery	Neals Yard Cosmetics	VACANT	Hermes Fashion (L)	
33	Athena Art/Stationery	Racing Green Fashion (M)		Dorothy Perkins Fashion (L)	
35	Nat Westminster Bank Financial Services	VACANT	Capolito Roma/ Red or Dead Fashion	VACANT/Red or Dead Fashion	Virgin/Mumbo café Phones
37			Offices entrance Commercial		
41	VACANT Proposed conversion to retail	Jigsaw Fashion (L & M)	Jigsaw Fashion (L & Ch)		VACANT
43	VACANT Proposed conversion to retail				
47	VACANT	Jones Footwear Footwear	Jones the Bootmaker Footwear		
56– 60	National & Provincial Building Society Financial Services		VACANT		Tommy Hilfiger Fashion (L & M)
95– 97	Ryan Merch unknown	Whittards Tablewear			
5	Midas Jewellery				Midas Jewellery
6					VACANT
8	Offices entrance Commercial				
10	Aspecto Footwear & Fashion (M)				
14	Jaeger Fashion (L & M))				
16– 18	Liberty Fashion (L)		Hugo Boss Fashion (M)		
20– 22	Richards Fashion (L)			Surgery Fashion (M)	Wallis Fashion (L)

	1993	1996	1998	2000	2003
24	J Whippell Fashion (M)	Vyella Fashion (L)	Body Shop Toiletries & Cosmetics		
26	Riva Fashion (M)				
28	Laura Ashley Fashion (L)				Jake Footwear
30	Warehouse Fashion (L)				
34	Hornes Fashion (M)	Ciro Citterio Fashion (M)	Country Casuals Fashion (L)	Planet Fashion (L)	
36	Offices entrance Commercial				
38	Principles Fashion (L)				Timberland Fashion (M & L)
40–42					
44	McKenzie Fashion		Morgan Fashion (L)		VACANT
46	Reiss Fashion (M)				
48	VACANT	Karen Millen Fashion (L)			
50	Oasis Fashion (L)				
52	Ted Baker Fashion (M & L)				
54	Pen Shop Stationery				
56	Reed Employment Agency				
58	Pied a Terre Footwear			Pink Fashion (M & L)	
60	Blazer Fashion (M)				Cecil Gee Fashion (M)
62	Miss Selfridge Fashion (L)		Mulberry Accessories		
64	Kookai Fashion (L)				
62	Leeds & Holbeck Building Society Financial Services				

the fashion retailer Aubin & Wills opening a store on King Street ends by quoting one property agent as saying:

This is another great brand for King Street and continues the progress made during the last 12 months. This letting, along with the French brand The Kooples, who are currently fitting out 50 King Street, will further improve the street and enable us to attract further top names to ensure King Street gets back to its best!⁸²

And, in a 2013 *Manchester Evening News* report, the same property agent comments:

We have reduced our rents considerably – in many cases by £60,000 a year because this is about supply and demand. Retailers like Jack Wills, Kath Kidston and Dalvey have moved in recently and we are currently in discussions with seven or eight retailers about five very good units which I [am] confident we will fill this year.⁸³

Such positive narratives have been helped by the fact that, from 2016, there has been an annual King Street Festival over a weekend in early June.⁸⁴ This has created a focus of attention on the Street, consistently bringing around 20,000 extra people to the area, which CityCo states is a 65% uplift on a standard, non-event weekend. In fact,

Table 6. King Street occupancy by premises 2006–2021.

	2006	2008	2010	2013	2015	2017	2018 (Nov)	2021 (Jan)
93	Starbucks Coffee shop	VACANT		Dalvey Fashion (M)	VACANT	Hobbs Fashion (L)		
1	Ernest Jones Jewellery			Suttons Pawnbrokers Jewellery	Sutton & Robertson Jewellery			
1	Offices entrance Commercial							
1	Boodles Jewellery						Harrington & Hallworth Jewellery	
13	Monsoon (Fashion (L))				VACANT		Boodles Jewellery	
17	Watches of Switzerland Watches/Jewellery						Austen & Blake Jewellery	
19	Crombie Fashion (L & M)		VACANT	Aubyn & Wills Fashion (L & M)	Jigsaw Fashion (L & M)			VACANT
21	The White Company Soft furnishings							
23								
25	Phase Eight Fashion (L)							VACANT
27	Hobbs Fashion (L)				VACANT	Neals Yard Remedies Toiletries		
29	Hancocks Watches/Jewellery							
31	Hermes Fashion (L)					VACANT	Loake Footwear	
33	Dorothy Perkins Fashion (L)		Crombie Fashion (M & L)			VACANT		
35	Virgin Phones/ Lotus Chinese rest	VACANT		Jack Wills Fashion (L & M)				VACANT

37	Offices entrance Commercial							
39	Boots the Chemist Pharmacy/cosmetics						Educational establishment	VACANT
41								
43								
47	Jones the Bootmaker Footwear							
56–60	Tommy Hilfiger Fashion (M & L)					VACANT	Patagonia Fashion (M & L)	
95–97	Whittard Tablewear		VACANT	Whitewall Art Gallery				
5	Midas Jewellery							VACANT
6	VACANT			Laundry Boutique Fashion (L)	Kedem Cosmetics Cosmetics			VACANT
8	Offices entrance Commercial							
10	Aspecto Footwear	L'Occitane Toiletries						VACANT
14	Jaeger Fashion (L & M)					Castle Fine Art Art Gallery		
16–18	Hugo Boss Fashion (M)			Savoy Tailors Guild Fashion (M)	White Stuff Fashion (L & M)			
20–22	Shoes by TopShop Footwear	Duo Footwear		VACANT			Tast Bar & restaurant	
24	Body Shop Toiletries & Cosmetics						VACANT	
26								
28	Jake Footwear	VACANT		VACANT		Mint Velvet Fashion (L)		
30	Warehouse Fashion (L)		VACANT	Charles Tyrwhitt Fashion (M)				
34	Planet Fashion (L)					Jacques Vert Fashion (L)	VACANT	

(Continued)

Table 6. Continued.

36	Offices entrance Commercial							
38	Timberland Fashion (L & M)			VACANT	Bravissimo / Pepperberry Lingerie			
40– 42								
44	T M Lewin Fashion (M)							VACANT
46	Gant Fashion (L & M)			VACANT		Hawes & Curtis Fashion (M)		Jack Wills Fashion (M & L)
48	Karen Millen Fashion (L)							Hurlingham Polo Fashion (M & L)
50	Oasis Fashion (L)		VACANT	The Kooples Fashion (L & M)		Sharps Furniture		
52	All Saints Fashion (L & M)			VACANT		El Gato Negro Restaurant		
54	Pen Shop Stationery							VACANT
56	Reed Employment Agency		VACANT	Peter Maturi Kitchenware	Dress2Kill Menswear	Diverso Fashion (M)		VACANT
58	Pink Fashion (L & M)						VACANT	
60	Cecil Gee Fashion (M)	Simon Carter Fashion (M)	Cecil Gee Fashion (M)	VACANT	Karl Milton Menswear	Kiehl's Cosmetics		VACANT
62	Mulberry Accessories			Cath Kidston Fashion/Homeware				VACANT
64	VACANT		Kuoni Travel agent					
62	Cheshire B S Financial Services	VACANT	Eat Sandwich shop					VACANT

towards the end of the period under study (but prior to the Covid-19 pandemic) the number of vacant retail outlets had fallen, with an attendant narrative of ‘resurgence’ starting to become apparent.⁸⁵ Such an example is evident in an article from the *Manchester Evening News* in May 2017 describing various new store openings over the previous 12 months, entitled ‘King Street is reclaiming its crown in retail royalty’.⁸⁶

At the time of writing, the difficulties faced by traditional urban shopping destinations mentioned in the introduction have become more evident in relation to King Street. The last Goad plan analysed (dated January 2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic) indicated that 16 outlets were vacant, with some of the previously occupying retailers (e.g. Cath Kidston) being high-profile casualties of this more hostile trading environment. Moreover, these vacancies include two premises with the most extensive spatial footprints – No. 39, and No. 35 (originally dating from 1736). Perhaps indicative of the changing nature of retail occupancy, this latter building has been used as a pop-up store by Klarna, a Swedish bank providing online financial services.⁸⁷ Other vacant premises on the Street are promoted in a way which gives similar emphasis to the availability of their space for short-term, ‘pop-up’ retail use, as well as the more usual, long-term retail occupancy. As a response to the perceived narrative of decline, the King Street Partnership has been created ‘to support communication between stakeholders and promote a clear sense of unity within the multi-ownership street’⁸⁸ and property company DTZI has been investing in various premises as part of a long-term strategy of creating a retail-led experiential destination on King Street⁸⁹ – such a strategy could, in part, be seen as a means of overcoming some of the negative implications of the fragmentation of property ownership in the Street mentioned previously.

Concluding comments

Our analysis of King Street reveals a complex picture. On the one hand, a significant degree of *fixity* is evident, with some premises occupied by a single retailer for many years, and in the case of Hancock’s jewellers, throughout the whole of our period of study. On the other hand, there is also evidence of *flux*, with other premises occupied by a succession of separate, more short-lived tenants. Moreover, we acknowledge that we may have understated the extent of this flux; in that the periods between our ‘snapshots’ of the retail activity on King Street might have witnessed uncaptured instances of very short-lived retail occupancy within certain premises – a trend that may be more pronounced in the future, with the increased use of ‘pop-up’ activities by retailers, not least as an adaptive response to the impacts of Covid-19 on the high street. The analysis of occupancy data in the Goad plans also indicates a move towards increased homogeneity in terms of the product categories sold by retailers on the Street, and a growing predominance of certain product categories over time.

Roth and Klein suggest that the retail environment should be regarded as an ‘open system’,⁹⁰ and this notion arguably has some utility in the spatial micro-context of King Street. For example, we have noted how some retailers have moved away from King Street over the period of study, only to later return. These locational trajectories of individual retailers have been influenced by issues within the wider environment. Taking Bennison et al.’s conceptualisation of retail location decisions occurring at macro-, meso- and micro-levels, we can see evidence of retail change in King Street

explained by all three of these scales of resolution. In terms of the macro-level, the increasing preponderance in the 1990s of what Crewe and Lowe term 'design-oriented, quality women's fashion retailers'⁹¹ saw them making decisions regarding their country-wide locational network across towns and cities to meet the needs of their perceived target market. At the meso-level, within Manchester city centre there is evidence of the ebb and flow of specific districts in terms of their perceived retail attractiveness, with King Street losing out to newer locational alternatives. At the micro-level, we have noted evidence of retailer relocation *within* King Street, perhaps arising from expiry of leaseholds on premises and/or other considerations (such as a desire for larger premises).

Clearly, and resonating with Rowley's critique of the essentially descriptive nature of Goad plans, a key issue here is to understand what *motivated* these locational changes at the different scalar levels. Unfortunately, without an interrogation of those responsible for decisions made at the time (even in this relatively contemporary context), few explanatory rationales are available, and we are left to tease out the possible motivations from what might be called circumstantial evidence. This has been done above through our examination of contemporaneous media narratives, with particular emphasis on retail vacancies and the more recent travails of the street. To investigate this in relation to individual retailers would require a piecing together of historic reports and documentation. Alexander highlights the importance of such archival sources to retail historians, but also notes that, notwithstanding efforts to enhance their accessibility to researchers (for example, through digitisation), such information is not available for all companies⁹² – so in the particular spatial context of a street, such investigations would inevitably be incomplete.

Our analysis also suggests the existence of what could be termed a 'momentum effect', where there are evident trends underpinning the retail activity in King Street. An example of this can be seen in the product categories sold, with [Tables 1 and 2](#) showing that between 1983 and 2000 the number of fashion retailers increased from nine to 24, with a subsequent decline in numbers thereafter (partly explained by an increase in the number of health and beauty retailers, and more recently, vacant properties). Evident here also is a trend towards agglomeration, defined in terms of the tendency for competing retailers to locate close to one another, or in a proximate geographical area,⁹³ thereby establishing clusters of retailers selling similar merchandise. Agglomeration is especially evident with higher order comparison goods, such as fashion⁹⁴; in other words, the type of goods sold on King Street. Teller and Elms suggest that agglomerations can evolve (e.g. in traditional urban shopping areas) or be created (e.g. as an explicit part of the planning and design of shopping centres).⁹⁵ Indeed, some of the media insights used in our analysis revealed an explicit desire on the part of those managing King Street, and property agents responsible for retail lettings in the area, to create an agglomeration of food and beverage retailers to improve the Street's consumer 'draw' – a more overtly strategic approach, which is consistent with principles of place management exemplified in town centre management schemes and, more recently, business improvement districts.⁹⁶ More detailed analysis of the efficacy of deliberate attempts by relevant stakeholders to manage the Street's retail mix over time is an area for further research.

The 'momentum effect' is also evident in the past media narratives about King Street, where, for example, both positive and negative trajectories occur depending on the extent

to which stores open or close in quick succession. This has led to the articulation of narratives of areal ‘recovery’ or ‘decline’ for different periods in the past. In terms of future research, it suggests that an analysis of past narratives in local news media archives could reveal additional insights into what management initiatives have been used previously on the Street and which of these may have worked well.

In conclusion, our approach – focusing on recent retailing trends in one particular street in Manchester, consistent with the defining factors of microhistory outlined by Magnússon and Szijártó, and resonating with the prosopographical approach characterising much research into retail history,⁹⁷ with its focus on a detailed examination of one street – has enabled a more detailed discussion of the interplay between different spatial scales; not only in terms of the micro-scale impact of more macro-level retail industry changes and broader environmental forces, but also how actors at the localised micro-scale exhibit agency in an attempt to influence their situation in the face of these macro-level changes and forces. Such detailed analysis, consistent with, and informed by, the principles of microhistory, seeks to demonstrate Hollander’s contention that retail-oriented historical research could help inform future industry development. Indeed, we believe that similar research in the future – analysing the ebb and flow of the fortunes of specific micro-locations over time (and potentially going back in time further than our relatively contemporary analysis) – could help identify strategies for urban recovery and development going forward.

Notes

1. For useful summaries of these impacts, see: Parker et al., “Improving the Vitality and Viability”; and Wrigley and Brookes, *Evolving High Streets*.
2. See Roggeveen and Sethuraman, “How the COVID-19 Pandemic.”
3. Hollander, “A Rearview Mirror Might Help.”
4. For discussions of the tenets of microhistory, see: Ginzberg, “Microhistory: Two or Three Things”; Levi, “On Microhistory”; Magnússon, “The Singularization of History”; and Magnússon and Szijártó, *What is Microhistory: Theory and Practice*.
5. See Cresswell, *Maxwell Street: Writing and Thinking Place*.
6. Warnaby and Medway, “Telling the Story of a Street.”
7. Magnússon and Szijártó, *What is Microhistory*.
8. Ginzberg, “Microhistory: Two or Three Things.”
9. Levi, “On Microhistory.”
10. Ginzberg, “Microhistory: Two or Three Things”; Levi, “On Microhistory.”
11. Brewer, “Microhistory and the Histories.”
12. Magnússon and Szijártó, *What is Microhistory*, 5.
13. See Levi, “On Microhistory”; Magnússon, “The Singularization of History.”
14. Magnússon and Szijártó, *What Is Microhistory*, 5.
15. *Ibid.*, 64.
16. *Ibid.*, 64.
17. For extensive discussions on retail location at the micro-scale, see: Brown, *Retail Location*; and Brown, “Retail Location at the Micro-Scale.”
18. Kidd, *Manchester; A History*, 54.
19. Manchester City Council, *City Centre Strategic Plan*, 71.
20. Hankins, “The Restructuring of Retail Capital and the Street.”
21. Hubbard and Lyon, “Introduction: Streetlife – the Shifting Sociologies of the Street,” 937.
22. Cresswell, *Maxwell Street: Writing and Thinking Place*, 2.
23. Magnússon and Szijártó, *What Is Microhistory*.

24. Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, 46.
25. Hubbard and Lyon, "Introduction: Streetlife – the Shifting Sociologies of the Street," 940.
26. Ibid., 940.
27. Bennison, Clarke, and Pal, "Location Decision Making."
28. See Brown, *Retail Location: A Micro-Scale Perspective*.
29. See Dawson, Findlay and Sparks, *The Retailing Reader*.
30. Crewe and Lowe, "Gap on the Map? Towards a Geography," 1879.
31. Ibid., 1881 – original emphasis.
32. Fernie et al., "The Internationalization of the High Fashion Brand."
33. Moore, *Streets of Style: Fashion Designer Retailing*.
34. Hubbard and Lyon, "Introduction: Streetlife – the Shifting Sociologies of the Street," 940.
35. See: Glennie, "Consumption, Consumerism and Urban Form."
36. See: Cox, "Crisis at Shopping Mecca King Street."
37. See: https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/file/12687/st_anns_square_conservation_area_map.
38. Described in detail by Clare Hartwell in *Pevsner Architectural Guides – Manchester*.
39. Parkinson-Bailey, *Manchester: An Architectural History*.
40. Reilly, *Some Manchester Streets and Their Buildings*.
41. For further details, see: Hartwell, *Pevsner Architectural Guides – Manchester*.
42. Reilly, *Some Manchester Streets and Their Buildings*, 24.
43. Bertramsen, "Rethinking the Victorian Department Store."
44. Kidd, *Manchester; A History*, 139.
45. Reilly, *Some Manchester Streets and Their Buildings*, 24–5.
46. Taylor, Evans, and Fraser, *A Tale of Two Cities: Global Changes*.
47. On Saturday 15 June 1996 the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) detonated a 1500-kilogram lorry bomb on Corporation Street. This caused significant damage to Manchester city centre which took several years to repair and redevelop.
48. The Trafford Centre is a large (over 180,000 m²) indoor shopping centre and leisure complex five miles west of Manchester city centre.
49. Spinningfields, *Spinningfields Manchester Media Information*.
50. Manchester City Council, *City Centre Strategic Plan*, 71.
51. Rowley, "Data Bases and Their Integration."
52. Ibid.
53. Rowley and Shepherd, "A Source of Elementary Spatial Data."
54. Ibid., 207.
55. Rowley, "Data Bases and Their Integration," 476.
56. Our attempts to find the missing information from other sources were fruitless, as local archival services did not hold retail directories (such as Slater's/Kelly's Retail Directories) after the late 1960s, in part we assume, because of the availability of Goad shopping centre plans.
57. Rowley and Shepherd, "A Source of Elementary Spatial Data," 207.
58. Berry, "A Paradigm for Modern Geography," 3.
59. See: Rowley and Shepherd, "A Source of Elementary Spatial Data"; and Rowley, "Data Bases and Their Integration."
60. The number of retail outlets in King Street varies over the period of analysis due to amalgamations/ partitions of individual premises. This has implications for the street number of individual premises over time, and in the occupancy data by outlet reported in [Tables 3–6](#), we have tried to reflect, as best we can, the number of the outlet given on the specific Goad plan relating to that year.
61. Manchester Evening News (MEN), "Jake quits King Street."
62. Crewe and Lowe, "Gap on the Map? Towards a Geography," 1881.
63. Schofield, "The Death of King Street."
64. In [Tables 3–6](#), the term 'Offices entrance' against a street number refers to access points for the commercial premises on the upper storeys.

65. Cox, "Crisis at Shopping Mecca King Street."
66. Schofield, "The Death of King Street."
67. Manchester Evening News (MEN), "Is It Full Circle for Square?"
68. Schofield, "The Death of King Street."
69. Ibid.
70. It should be noted, however, that there has been an expanded retail discount on business rates during the Covid-19 pandemic for eligible retail properties, hospitality and leisure properties in England – see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/business-rates-expanded-retail-discount-2021-to-2022-local-authority-guidance>.
71. Cox, "Struggling Street Needs a Spanish-Style Makeover."
72. Findlay and Sparks, *The Retail Planning Knowledge Base*.
73. Wrigley and Dolega, "Resilience, Fragility and Adaptation," 2347.
74. Cox, "Struggling Street Needs a Spanish-Style makeover."
75. Cox, "Crisis at Shopping Mecca King Street."
76. CityCo is Manchester's city centre management company. MIDAS is the Manchester Investment and Development Agency Service, the city's inward investment agency.
77. Schofield, "The Death of King Street."
78. Cox, "Crisis at Shopping Mecca King Street."
79. Cox, "Struggling Street Needs a Spanish-Style Makeover."
80. Heward, "Manchester Restaurant Suri."
81. Stuart, "Shops on King Street."
82. Manchester Evening News (MEN), "Aubin & Wills Sign Up."
83. Cox, "Crisis at Shopping Mecca King Street."
84. See <https://cityco.com/event/king-street-festival/>.
85. Heward, "Kiehl's Opens First Stand-Alone Manchester Shop."
86. Begum, "King Street Is Reclaiming Its Crown."
87. See <https://www.klarna.com/uk/house-of-klarna/>.
88. King Street Partnership, *Join King Street*.
89. Whelan, "DTZI 'to Play the Long Game' on King Street."
90. Roth and Klein, "A Theory of Retail Change."
91. Crewe and Lowe, "Gap on the Map? Towards a GEOGRAPHY," 1881.
92. Alexander, "The Study of British Retail History."
93. Teller, "Shopping Streets Versus Shopping Malls."
94. Brown, "A Perceptual Approach to Retail Agglomeration."
95. Teller and Elms, "Urban Place Marketing."
96. For a discussion of the concept of town centre management, see: Warnaby, Alexander, and Medway, "Town Centre Management in the UK"; and for business improvement districts, see: Grail et al., "Business Improvement Districts in the UK."
97. A prosopographical approach to retail research focuses on *individual* companies/institutions – see Alexander, "Objects in the Rearview Mirror." However, in this paper, we focus on an individual *street*.

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