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**London's Global Office Economy: from Clerical Factory to Digital Hub**

**Presentation to:  
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**By  
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## London's Global Office Economy: from Clerical Factory to Digital Hub

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**Recording** the office economy: emerging white collar factories

**Explaining** the office economy: a facet of the city

**Planning** the office economy: a tale of indifference and ineptitude

**Building** the office economy: a triumph of hope over experience

**Mediating** the office economy: from advice to service

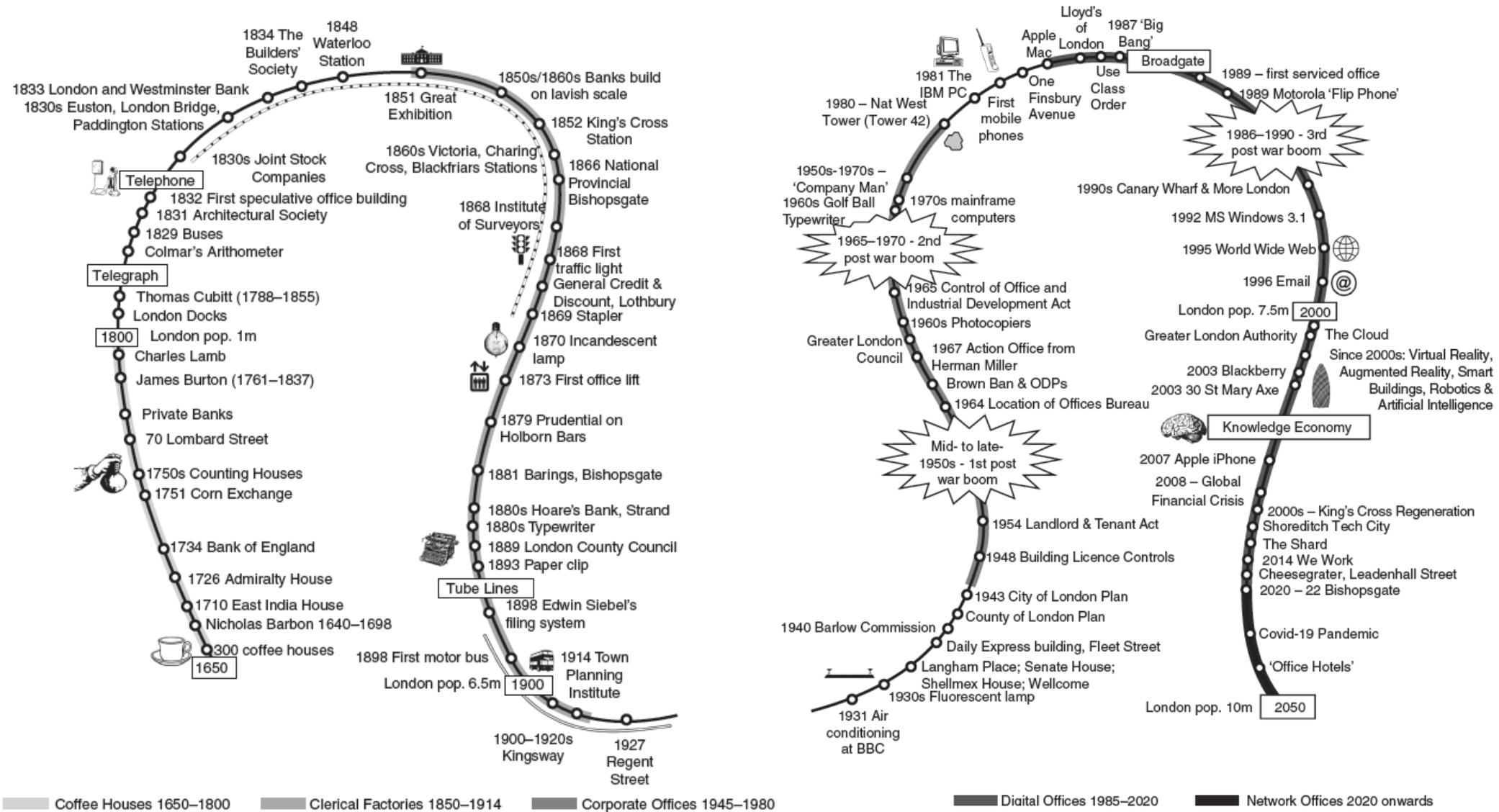
**Working** in the office economy: from corporatism to individualism

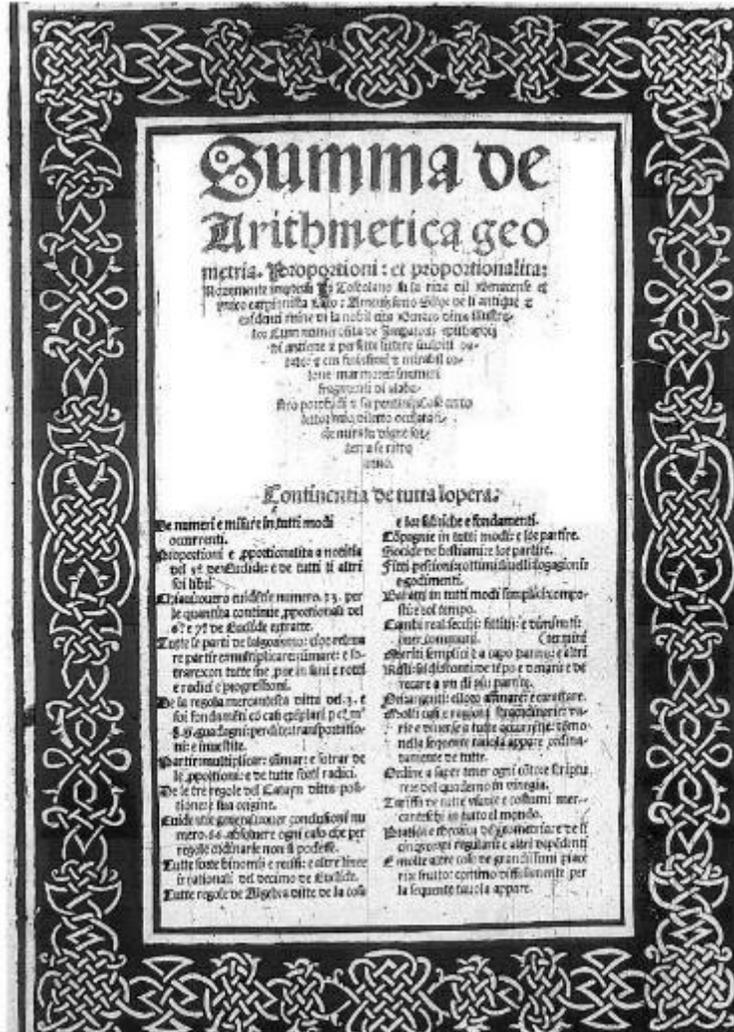
**Managing** the office economy: from liability to corporate resource

**Divining** the office economy: from castles to condominiums



# The five ages of the office: 1650-2050





The people of ancient Egypt. Scribes employed to record everything from court proceedings, legal matters, medical procedures to stores.

14C, Renaissance Europe. Exchanges and banks emerging. EG: in Bologna, the Loggia dei Mercanti (dating from 1382) and in Barcelona, the Taula de Canvi (1383).

15C, Italian merchants and bankers practicing modern office techniques.

1494, Luca Pacioli (c1445-1517) published *Summa de Arithmetica, Geometria, Proportioni et Proportionalita*. Codified double entry bookkeeping; known as the 'Venice system'.



## Office pre-history – before 1600

The oldest bank still in existence is Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena, operating continuously since 1472.

Giovanni Medici founded the Medici Bank in 1397. With a counting room, or office, to oversee the affairs of the bank, which sought to introduce a financial system based on bills of exchange.

Uffizi Gallery in Florence, commissioned in 1560 by Cosimo de Medici, to accommodate the offices ('uffizi') of the Florentine magistrates.

A crude banking system in place by the sixteenth century.

Banco della Piazza di Rialto (Venice, 1587); Banco di Santo Spirito (Rome, 1591) and Banco di Santo Ambrogio (Milan, 1593).



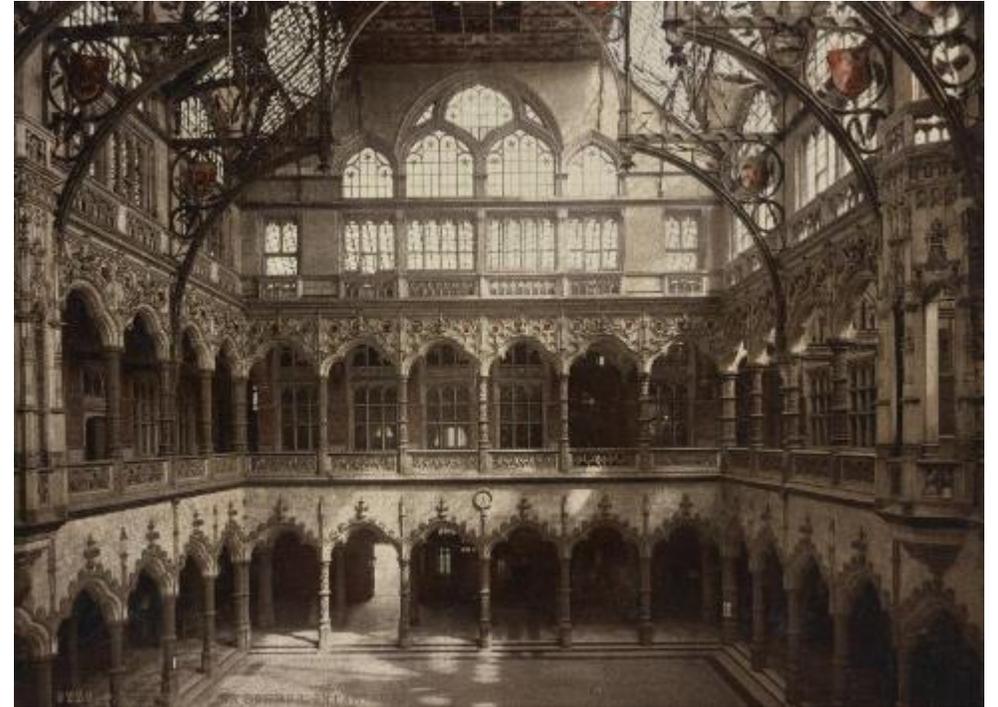
## Office pre-history – before 1600

16C: Antwerp's growing role in European trade, providing accommodation for merchants and bankers.

The world's first purpose-built financial and commodity exchange. Built in 1531, the new Antwerp bourse was a voluminous, rectangular space with covered galleries on all four sides. The focal point for European trade.

London Stock Exchange opened in 1565.

Other stock exchanges: Rotterdam (1599), Amsterdam (1609), Middelburg (1616), Hamburg (1616) Delft (1621) and Nuremburg (1621).



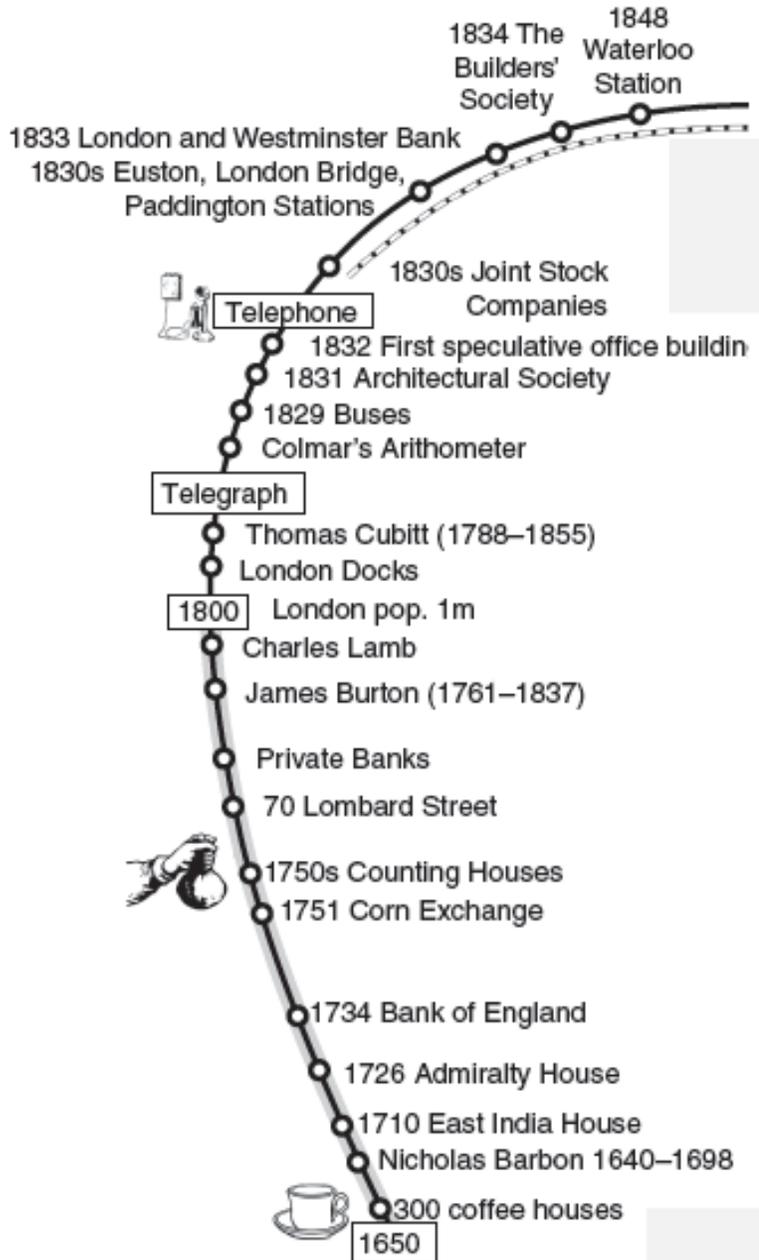
**Anvers La Bourse**



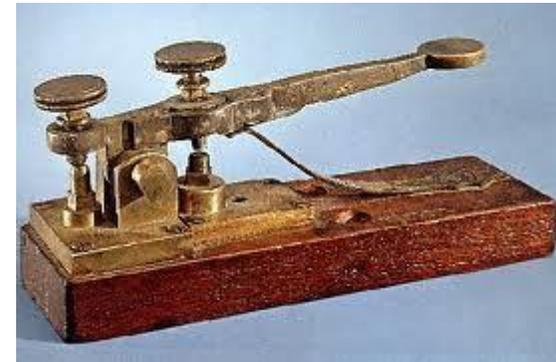
# Coffee Houses and Counting Houses, 1650-1850

London population: 575,000 in 1700 to 1m by 1800.

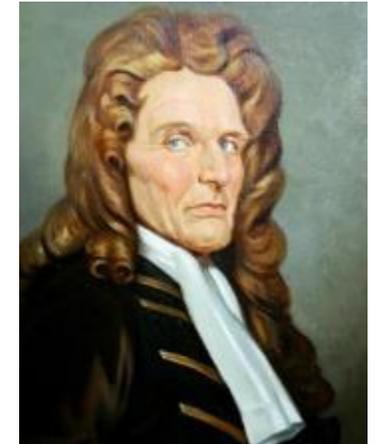
Pasqua Roseé: selling coffee in 1652: over 600 dishes a day. By 1663 there were 82 outlets; by 1700, well in excess of 500.



**AG Bell demonstrating the telephone, Jan 1878**



**1840 Morse telegraph transmitter**



**Nicholas Barbon 1640-1698**



## Coffee Houses and Counting Houses, 1650-1850

### The earliest office building

No expense was spared on the interior decorations. Palladian architectural features, including Corinthian pilasters and heavy moulding. Lavish Georgian furnishing including ornately carved boardroom tables and velvet upholstered chairs.

But behind the palatial was the grim reality of the clerk's travails .....

*I grow ominously tired ... Thirty years I have served the Philistines ... You don't know how wearisome it is to breathe the air of four pent walls, without relief, day after day, all the golden hours of the day between ten and four, without ease or interposition. Oh for a few years between the grave and the desk!*

*Charles Lamb, 1822*



East India House and Charles Lamb



## Coffee Houses and Counting Houses, 1650-1850

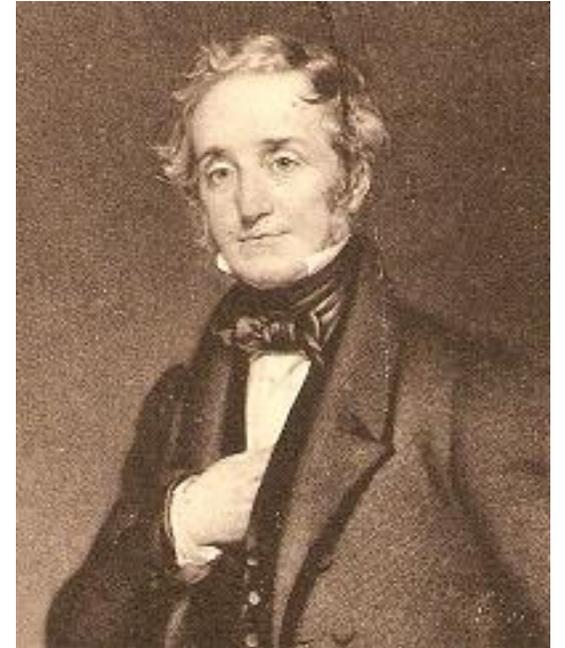
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Son of a Norfolk carpenter. Learnt his trade as a ship's carpenter, before setting up business in Gray's Inn Road in 1810.

In 1815 he employed a full range of skilled building craftsmen directly. The first general contractor and developer.

Within four years of setting up in business, Cubitt was laying out the Calthorpe Estate, near Gray's Inn Road. Skilled developer and urban designer. One of the earliest and most successful and influential developer-builders.

1826-1835 – Belgrave, Eaton, Chester and Lowndes Squares. Bringing in earth excavated from the new St Katherine's Dock (also a Cubitt family scheme) to raise the land level above its marshy surroundings.



**Thomas Cubitt  
(1788-1855).**



## Coffee Houses and Counting Houses, 1650-1850

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### The start of **speculative building**

Up to 19C, offices were accommodated on the lower level of a building with living quarters above. Such buildings were primarily built for the occupier.

This began to change in the 1830s.

Edward l'Anson (1812-1888), designed spec offices, including the Royal Exchange Buildings. He was president of both the RIBA and the Surveyors' Institution. In a 1864 he mentioned:

*'merchants dwelt in the City over their counting houses and next to their warehouses', but that thirty years ago, ie, in the 1830s, 'certain houses [were] let out in separate floors and used as offices .... 'The first building which I remember to have been erected for that special purpose was a stack of office buildings in Clement's Lane at the end nearest to Lombard Street.' This dated from about 1823 and was by an architect called Voysey'.*

Thus the first speculative office building in London (world?) was built in the City of London in 1823.



## Coffee Houses and Counting Houses, 1650-1850

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During the first half of the nineteenth century London was established as the **financial capital of Europe and the centre of world trade**, shaped – physically and economically – by a generation of international financiers.

Nathan **Rothschild**, a young German immigrant who, following a run on gold and an economic crisis in London in 1825, saved the Bank of England by organising a £10 million shipment of gold to shore up its reserves. Rothschild was followed by Hambro, Kleinwort, Lazard, Schroder and Seligman.

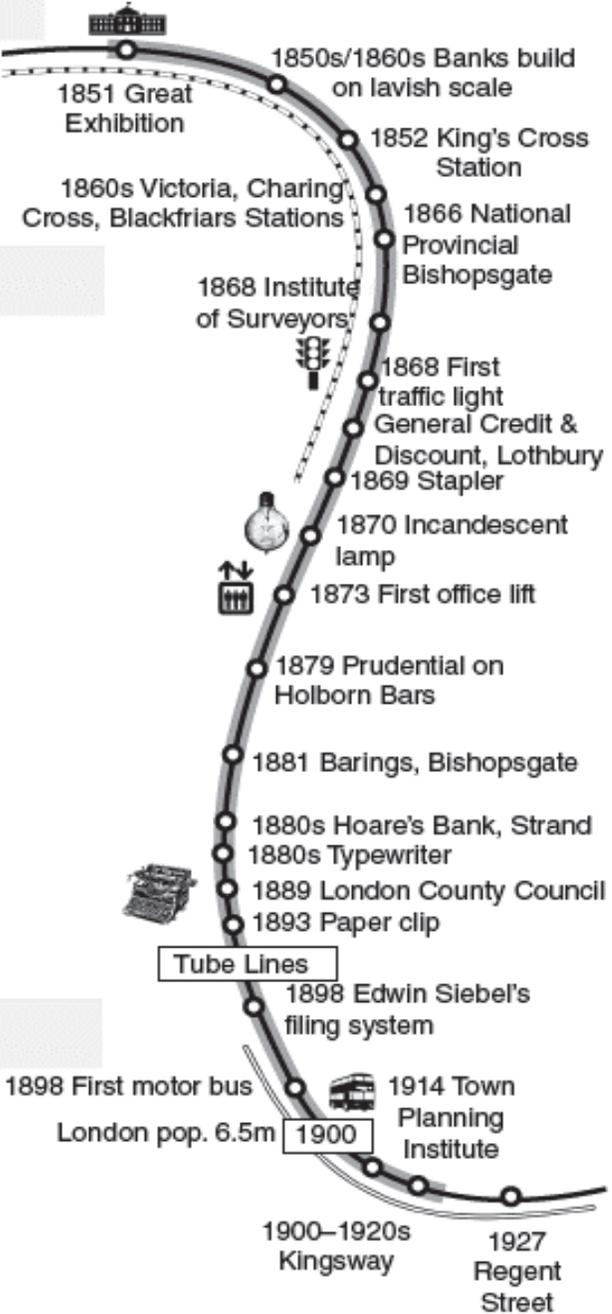
The first **joint stock company bank in London**: London and Westminster Bank, March 10th March 1834, with a City office at 38 Throgmorton Street and a West End branch at 9 Waterloo Place.

The Joint Stock Companies Act 1844: the registration and incorporation of companies.

The Joint Stock Companies Act 1856 provided for limited liability for all joint-stock companies.



# Clerical Factories, 1850-1914



Remington Standard 1890



Seibels' filing cabinet, 1898

**GEM PAPER CLIP.**  
 Only satisfactory device for temporary attachment of all kinds of papers. Better than pins or clamps. No mutilation of papers. Quickly applied and removed.  
 Price, 25 cents a box.  
**CUSHMAN & DENISON,**  
 172 9th Avenue, N. Y.

The Paper Clip, 1893



## Clerical Factories, 1850-1914

Bank buildings increasingly lavish, grandiose scale. Buildings were far more complex than their predecessors and new skills were evolving to deal with increasingly complex physical infrastructure.

National Provincial (Nat West)

*Gibson's design was for a single-storey building, bolder and grander than the Bank of England itself ... with Corinthian columns running the full height to the cornice.*

*Gibson broke with the established pattern of multi-storey building with an ornate single-storey structure to convey the wealth of the institution.*



**National Provincial, Bishopsgate, 1867**



## Clerical Factories, 1850-1914

In 1877 the **Royal Bank of Scotland** replaced its first London branch of 1874 with a new building, at 3-5 Bishopsgate. The building was elegant with the lower two floors having Ionic columns, arches and spandrels, and much carved detail. A balustrade introduces the upper two storeys which have more carvings and figureheads”.



**Royal Bank of Scotland,  
Bishopsgate, 1877**



**Prudential, Holborn Bars, 1879.  
9m life policies in 1891**



## Clerical Factories, 1850-1914



General Credit and Finance Company's "*stunning effort*" at 7 Lothbury in 1868.

Not everyone was in favour of the grandeur now common in financial houses. In 1863, the *Bankers' Magazine* suggested that banks were

*"succumbing to a love of show, leading eventually to excessive expenditure and sometimes to embarrassment."*

General Credit & Finance Company, Lothbury, 1868

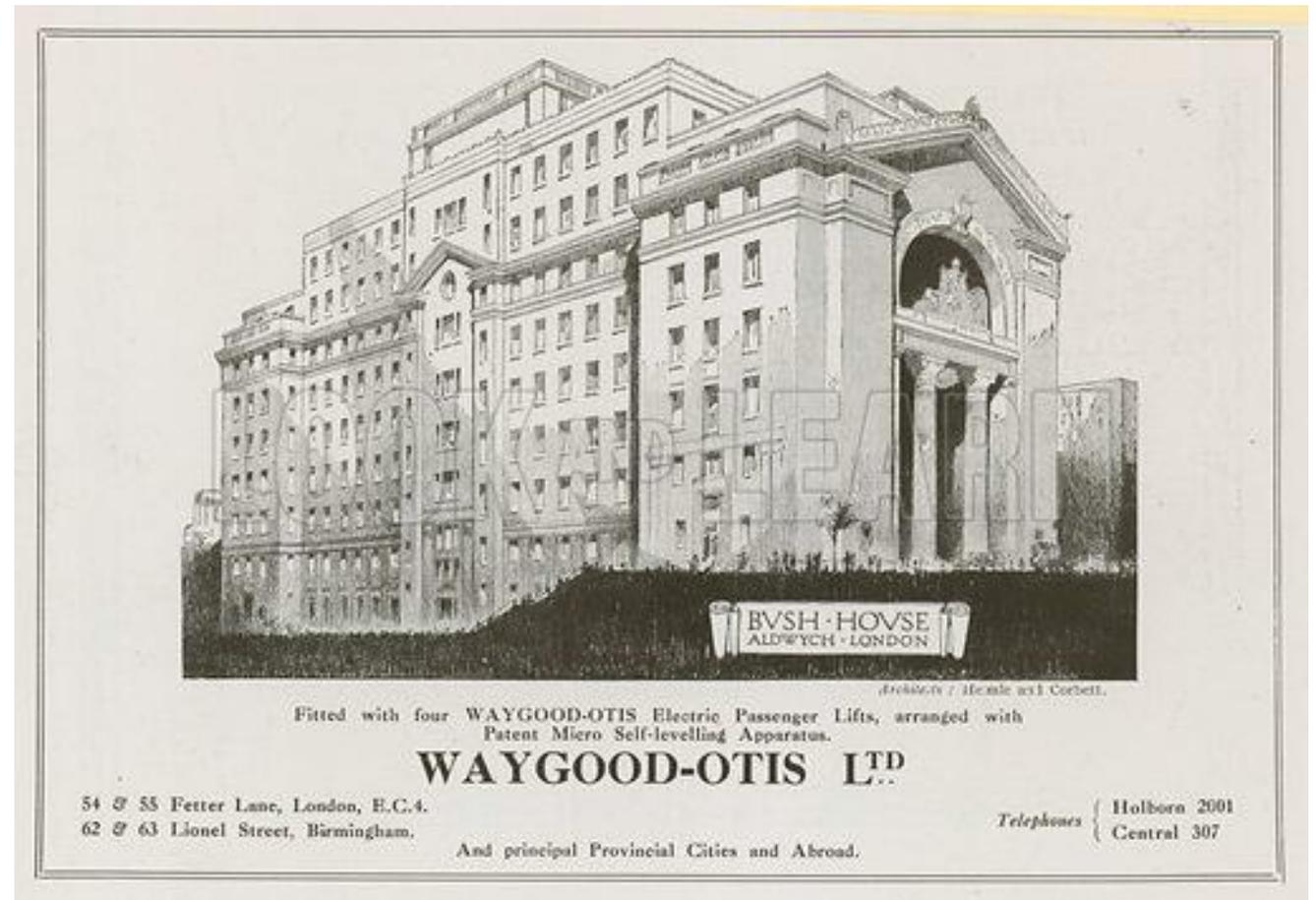


## Clerical Factories, 1850-1914

Period of innovation for the office building.

One of the most important innovations being **the lift, or elevator**. Lifts were operating in London hotels from the 1850s, but the first office lifts were later. In 1873 a hydraulic lift was installed in the Palmerston Buildings between Old Broad Street and Bishopsgate at a cost of £750. It enabled the letting of offices on upper floors that had never before been tenanted.

Further early lift installations in the Foreign Office (1875); Maw & Thompsons's Aldersgate Street offices (1877) and at Leadenhall House in Leadenhall Street (1879).



**Waygood-Otis lifts in Bush House, Aldwych 1930**





**The Creation of  
Kingsway/Aldwych**

### **An Edwardian Broadgate**

A rare early example of comprehensive planning in London  
30 metre wide boulevard from High Holborn the Strand/Fleet Street.

Opened by Edward VII in 1905, amidst much pomp.  
Complete reconfiguration of roads; 3,700 residents lost their homes.

Incorporated an underground tramway to link north and south London.



## Clerical Factories, 1850-1914



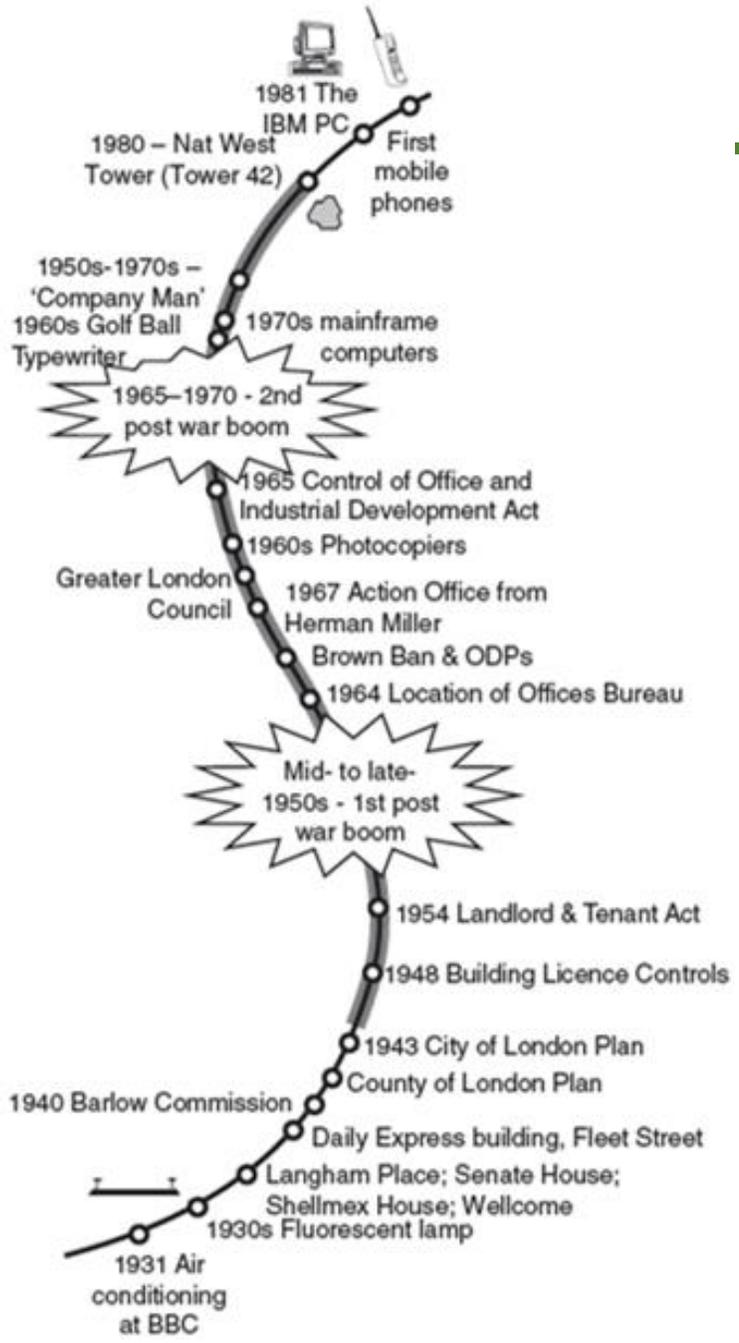
**GEC's Magnet House  
(demolished)**



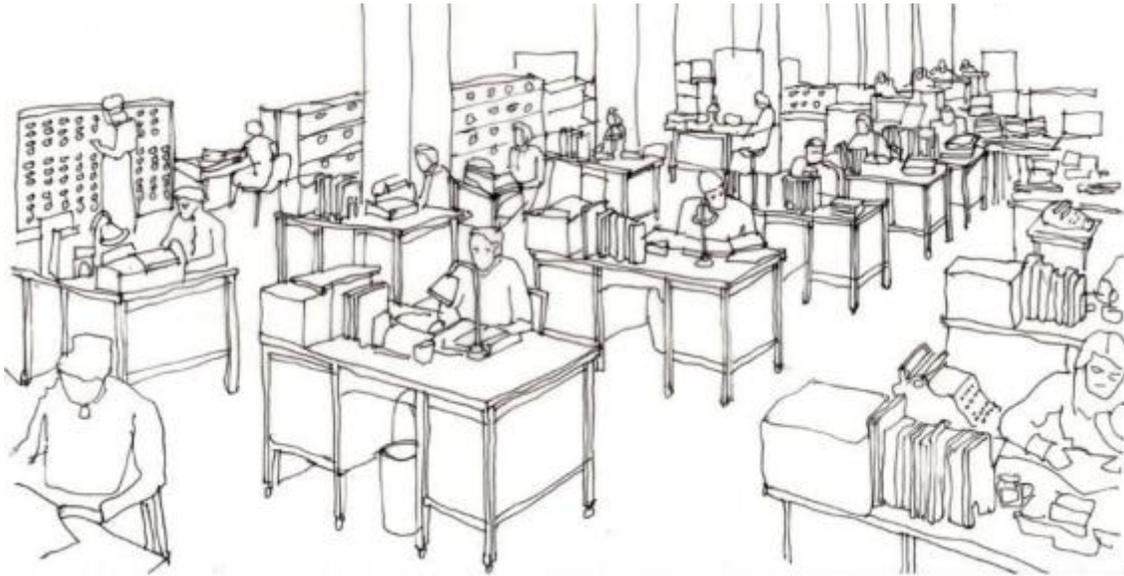
**Empire House, Adastral House (Air  
Ministry), Television House (Associated  
Rediffusion), St Catherine's House (OPCS)  
and Centrium (Herman Miller)**



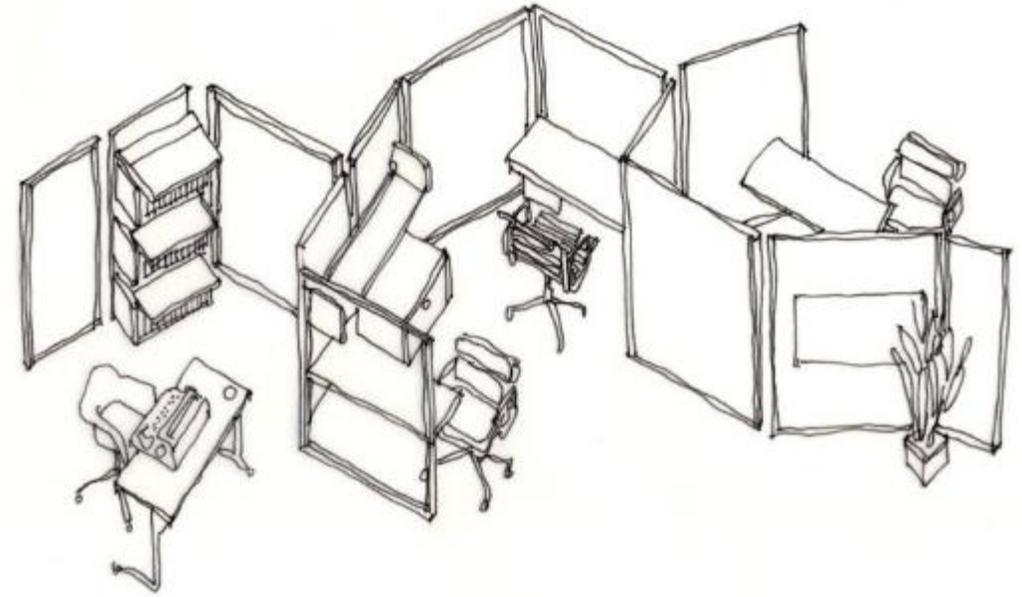
# Corporate Offices, 1945-1980



## Corporate Offices, 1945-1980

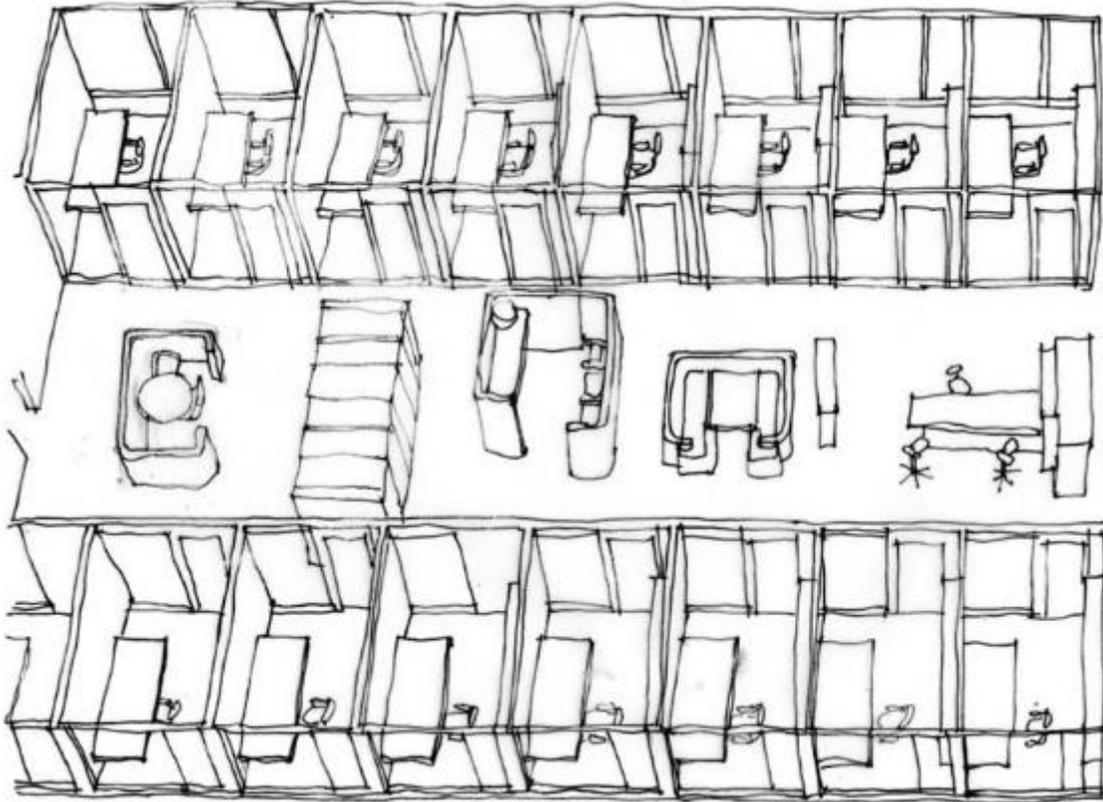


**The production line**

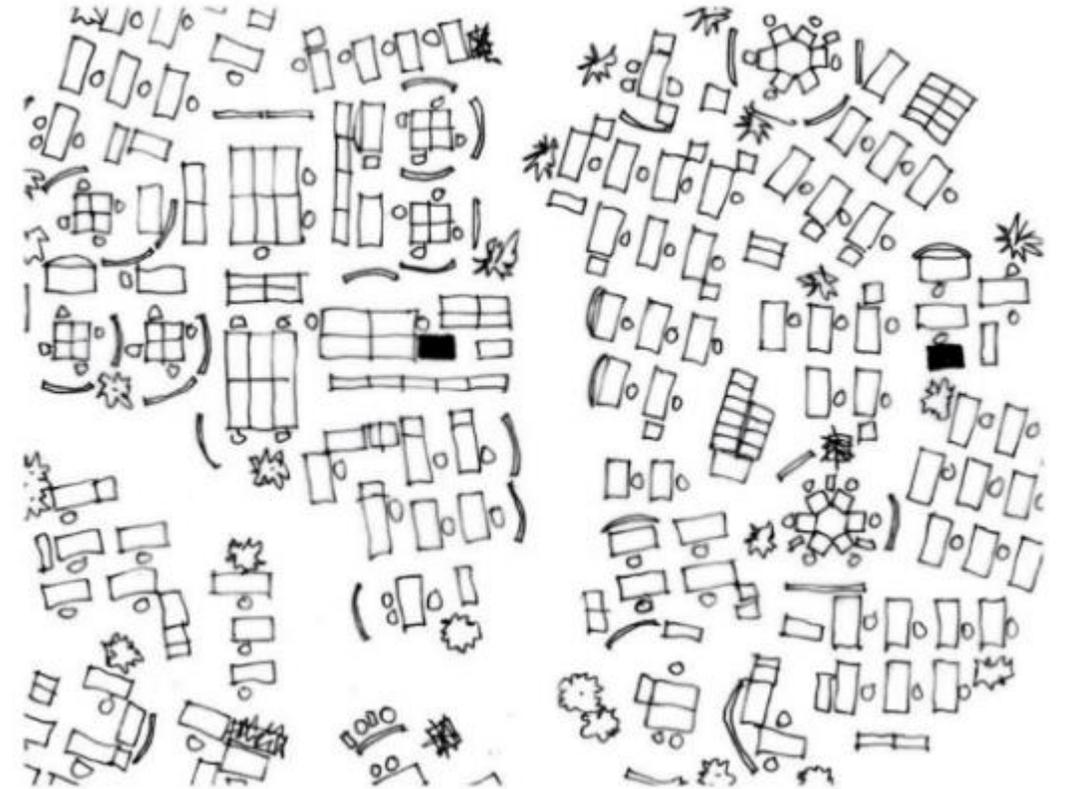


**The Action Office**





The combi-office



Burolandschaft

### **Robert Propst (1964)**

*Today's office is a wasteland. It saps vitality, blocks talent, frustrates accomplishment. It is the daily scene of unfulfilled intentions and failed efforts. A place of fantasy and conjecture rather than accomplishment. It fosters physical and mental decline and depresses capacity to perform.*

### **Studs Terkel (1972)**

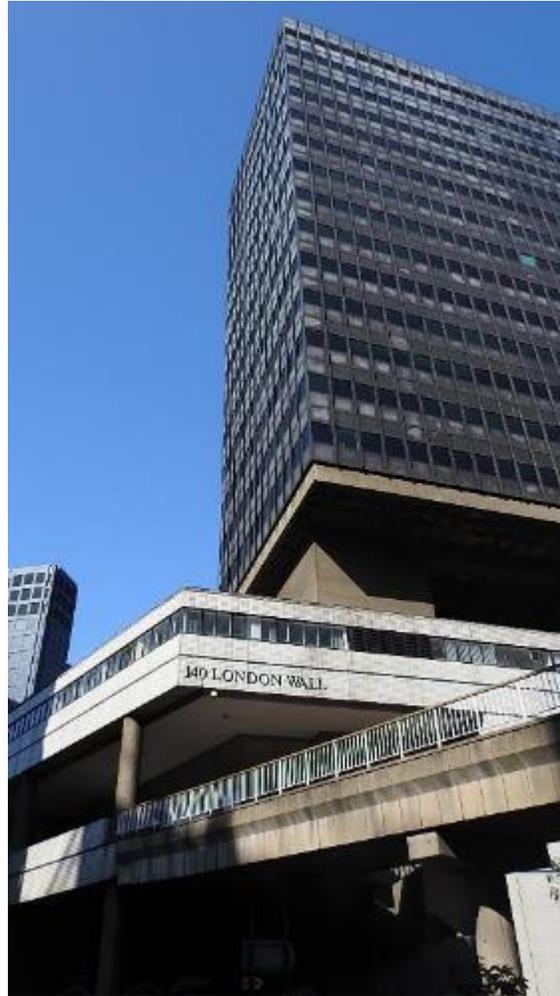
*Work should be about a search for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor, in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying.*



## Corporate Offices, 1945-1980



**Daily Express**  
1932, Ellis & Clark



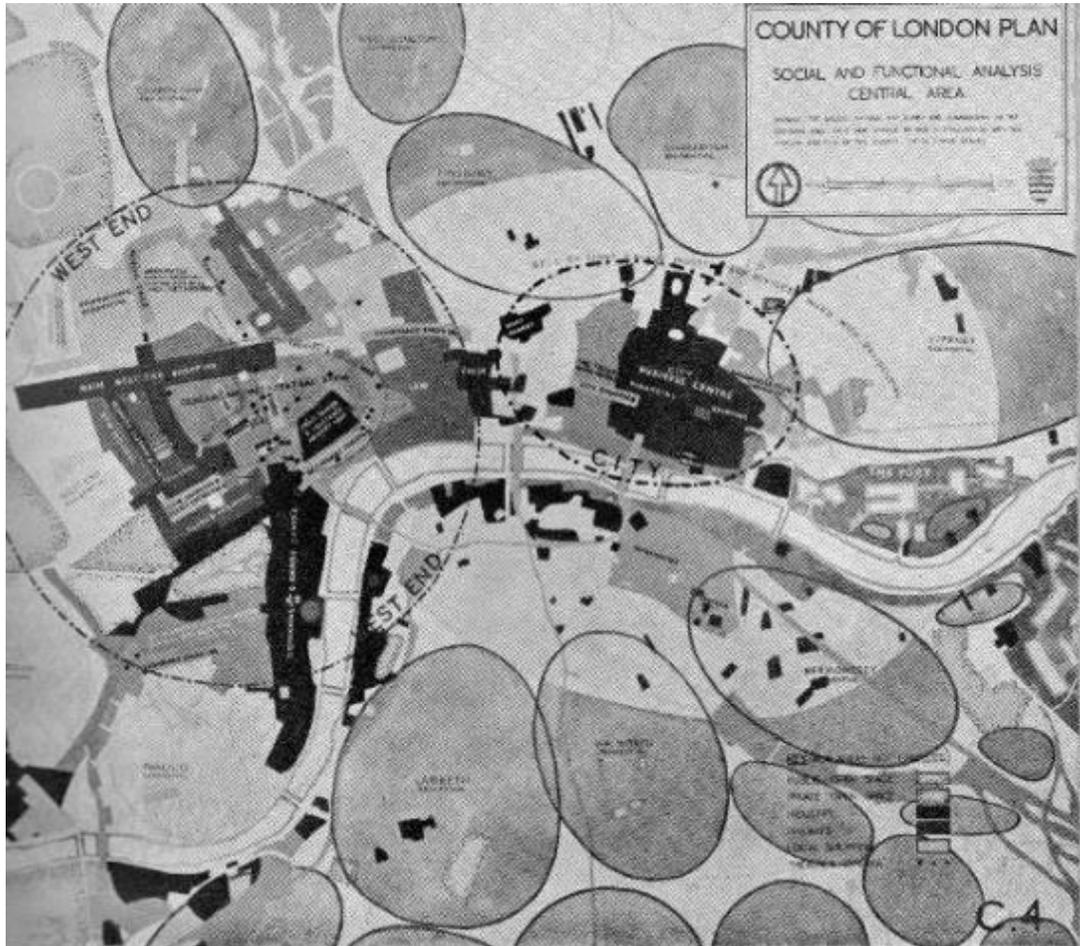
**140 London Wall/Bastion House**  
1977, Powell & Moya



**NatWest Tower/Tower 42**  
1980, Richard Seifert



## Corporate Offices, 1945-1980



The LCC's *Draft Development Plan* of 1951 (approved in 1955) focused on the decentralisation of industry and commerce.

As soon as license controls were abolished in 1954 development accelerated. 1954-1958, annual completions rose from 700,000 sq ft to 5.9m sq ft in central London.

Government took direct action in 1964:

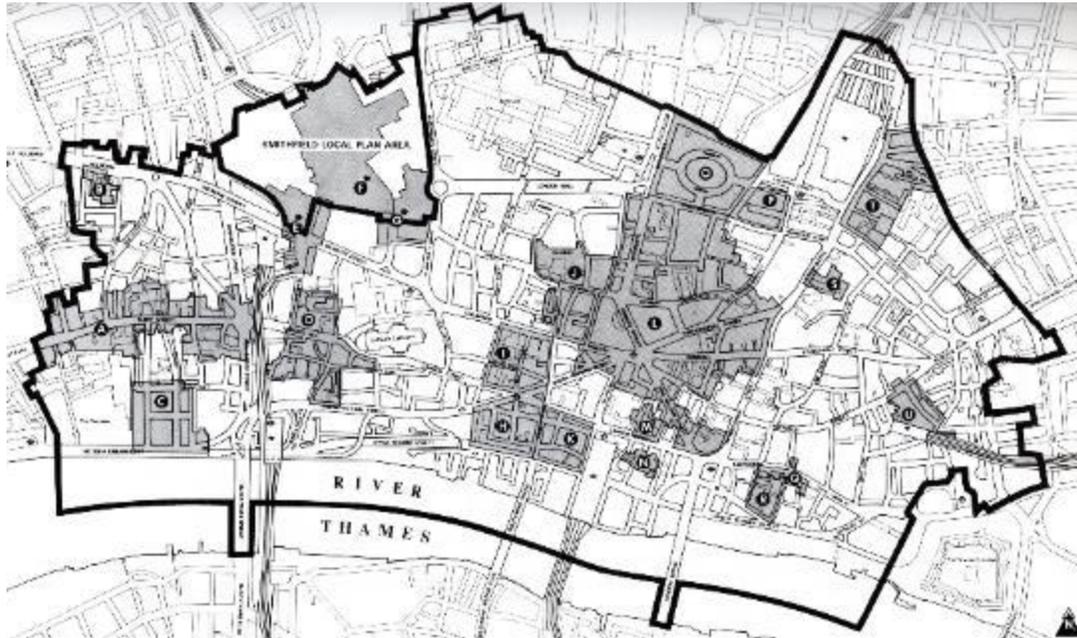
- Location of Offices Bureau
- The Brown Ban (ODPs)

No attempt, at all, to understand the office economy.  
Crass dereliction of duty. Two colossal errors in 1984:

GLA: *"No need for the quarter million square foot monsters so beloved of developers"*

City Corporation: *"cover 70% of the City Core in Conservation Areas"*.





**1984: Contrasting approaches**  
The City corporation cover 70% of the City core in Conservation Areas  
Rosehaugh Greycoat complete 1 Finsbury Avenue

**Who was prepared?**



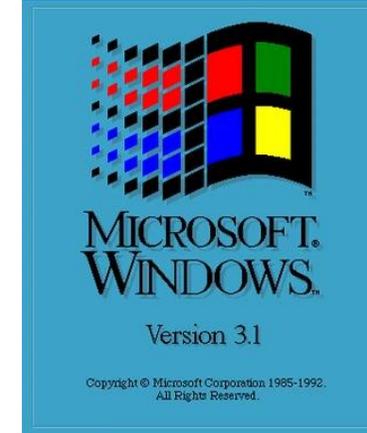
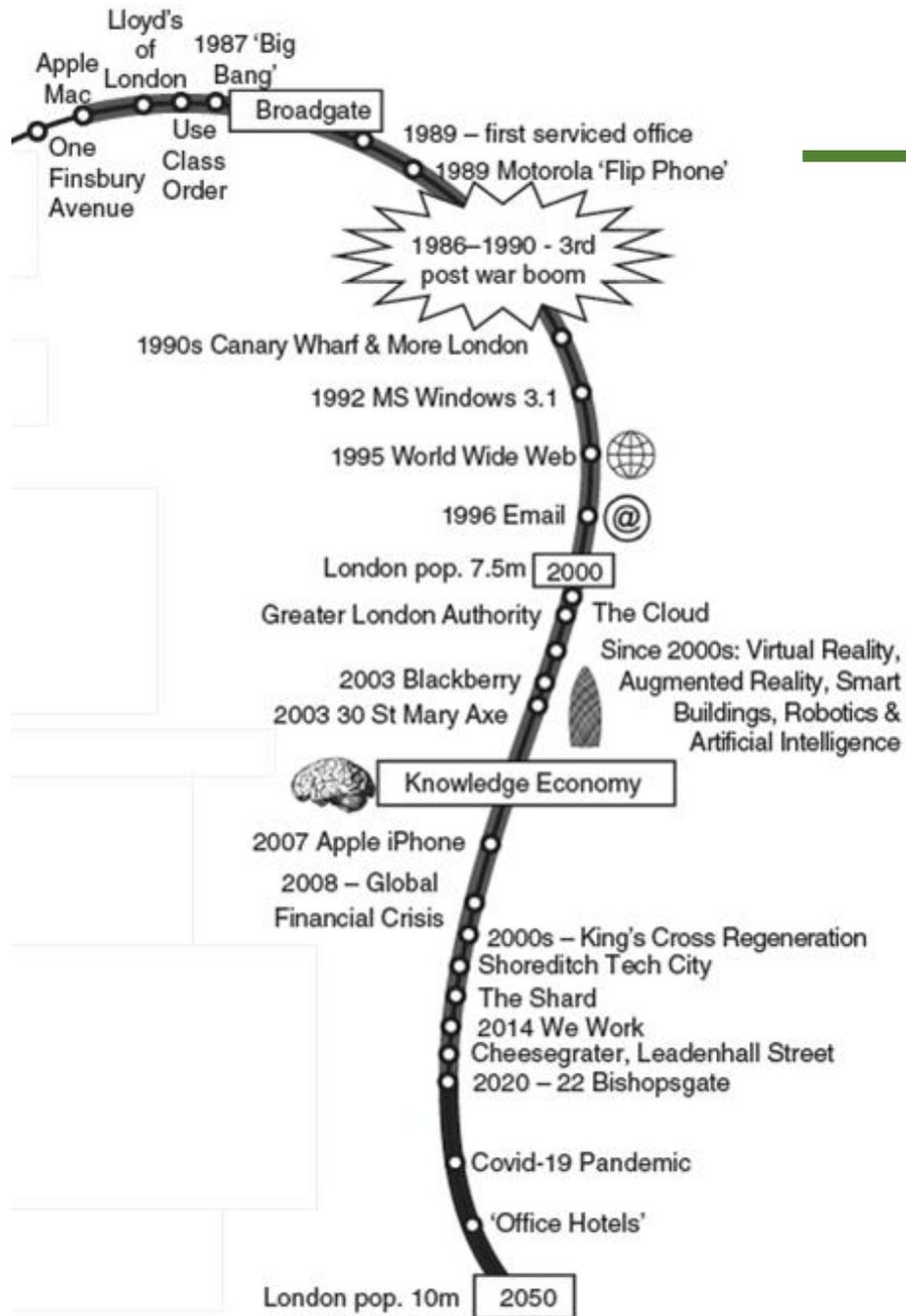
### Up to 1985 ..... Prior to Big Bang

Economy still largely manufacturing-based.  
Many offices associated with industrial activity.  
In 1985:

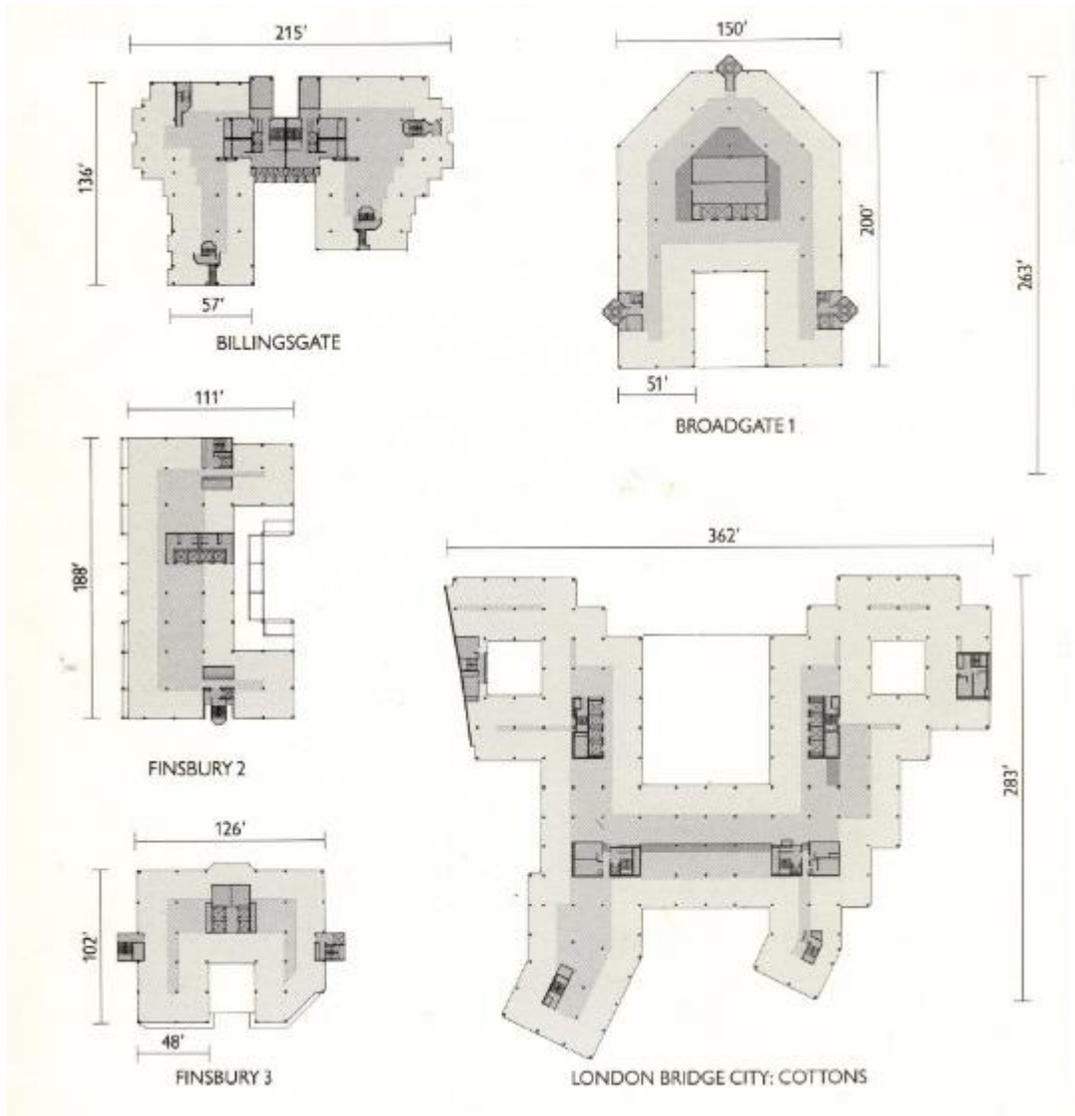
- Fax machine and golf ball typewriter were leading edge technologies.
- Personal computers were not widely available
- No internet, email, mobile phones, social media, and digital media technology.
- No Canary Wharf, Channel Tunnel, Jubilee Line, M25 or Terminal Five
- Big Bang was a cosmological theory
- The best London cuisine was mediocre
- Coffee culture was a quaint French custom.



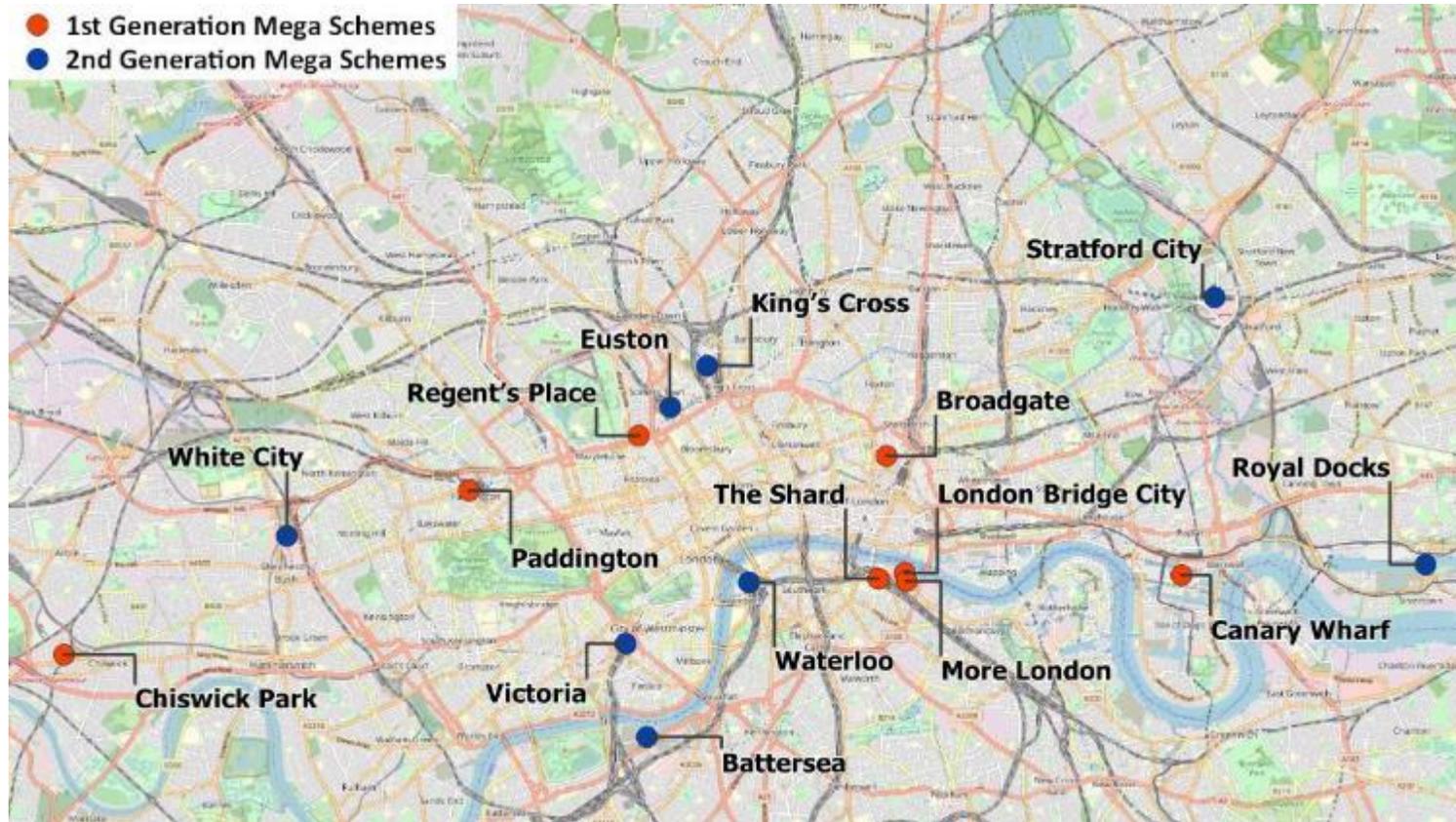
# Digital Offices, 1980-2020



# Digital Offices, 1980-2020



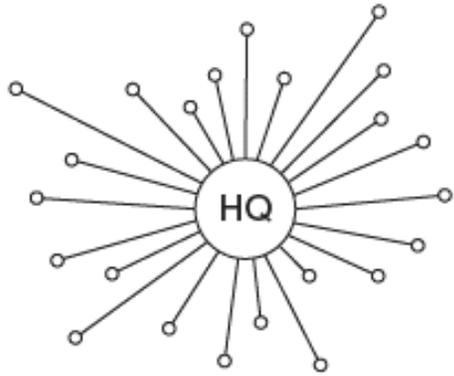
## The post-1980s mega schemes



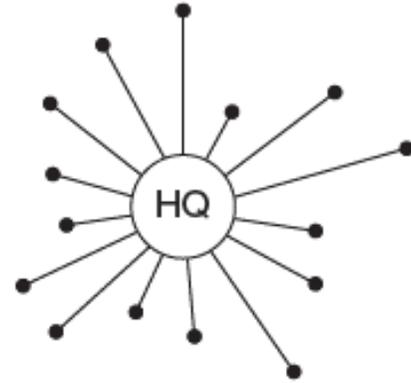
Focus	Approx. era	Work & Place themes	Technology	Brands
<b>Counting Houses</b>	1700 – 1830	<b>Knowledge.</b> Coffee Houses. Counting Houses. Exchange. News. Social.	Adding machines. Copying. Ink pen. Ledgers. Paper. Stenography.	Electric Telegraph Company. Gestetner.
<b>Factory</b>	1830 – 1920	<b>Production.</b> Fixed. Manual. Mechanical. Production line. Repetitive.	Carbon paper. Electricity. Filing. Lifts. Paper clip. Telegraph. Telephone. Typewriter.	Burroughs. Edison. Marconi. Remington. Waterman.
<b>Corporate</b>	1920s – 1970s	<b>Process.</b> Scale. Departments. Layers. Command & Control. Predictable. Processes. System furniture.	Action Office. Air conditioning. Biro. Calculator. Fax. Fluorescent lamp. Golf Ball typewriter. Mainframe. Photocopier. System furniture.	3M. Bic. General Electric. Herman Miller. IBM. Xerox.
<b>Digital</b>	1980s – 2020	<b>Power.</b> Agile. Changing. Connectivity. Data. Flexible. Power. Processing. Speed. PC left the building.	Cloud. Email. Internet. Mobile. Laptop. PC. PDF. Social media.	Amazon. Apple. Blackberry. Facebook. Google. Microsoft. Motorola. Twitter.
<b>Network</b>	2020 – onwards	<b>Knowledge.</b> Commodity. Distributed. Exchange. Hubs. On demand. Service. Social. Weightless.	Artificial intelligence. Augmented reality. Automation. Robotics. Smart cities/buildings. Virtual reality.	Watch this space!

..... From castles to condominiums .....

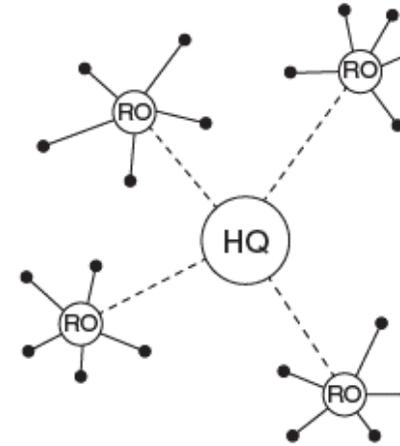




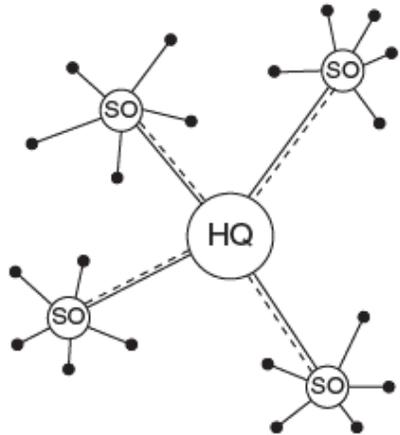
A. Traditional, Concentrated - HQ only



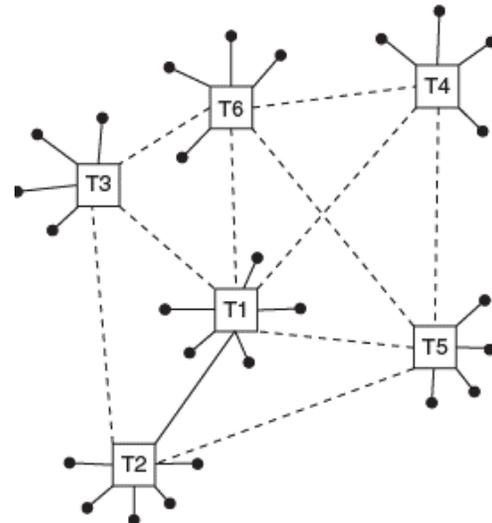
B. Split Mode - WFH & HQ



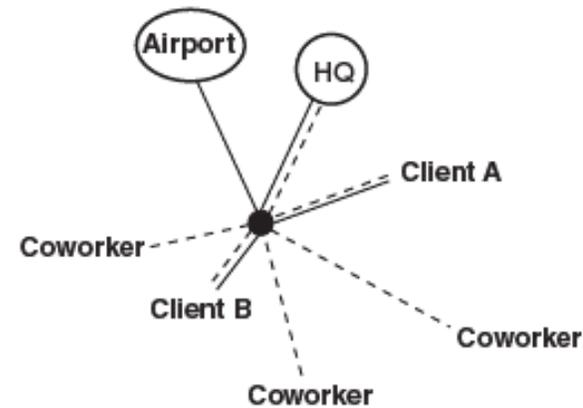
C. Hub & Spoke - Regional Office + WFH



D. Hub & Serviced - HQ + Serviced Office + WFH



E. Dispersed & Fixed - Serviced/coworking + WFH



F. Dispersed & Agile - Anywhere



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**Thank you**

**Dr Rob Harris  
Ramidus Consulting Limited**

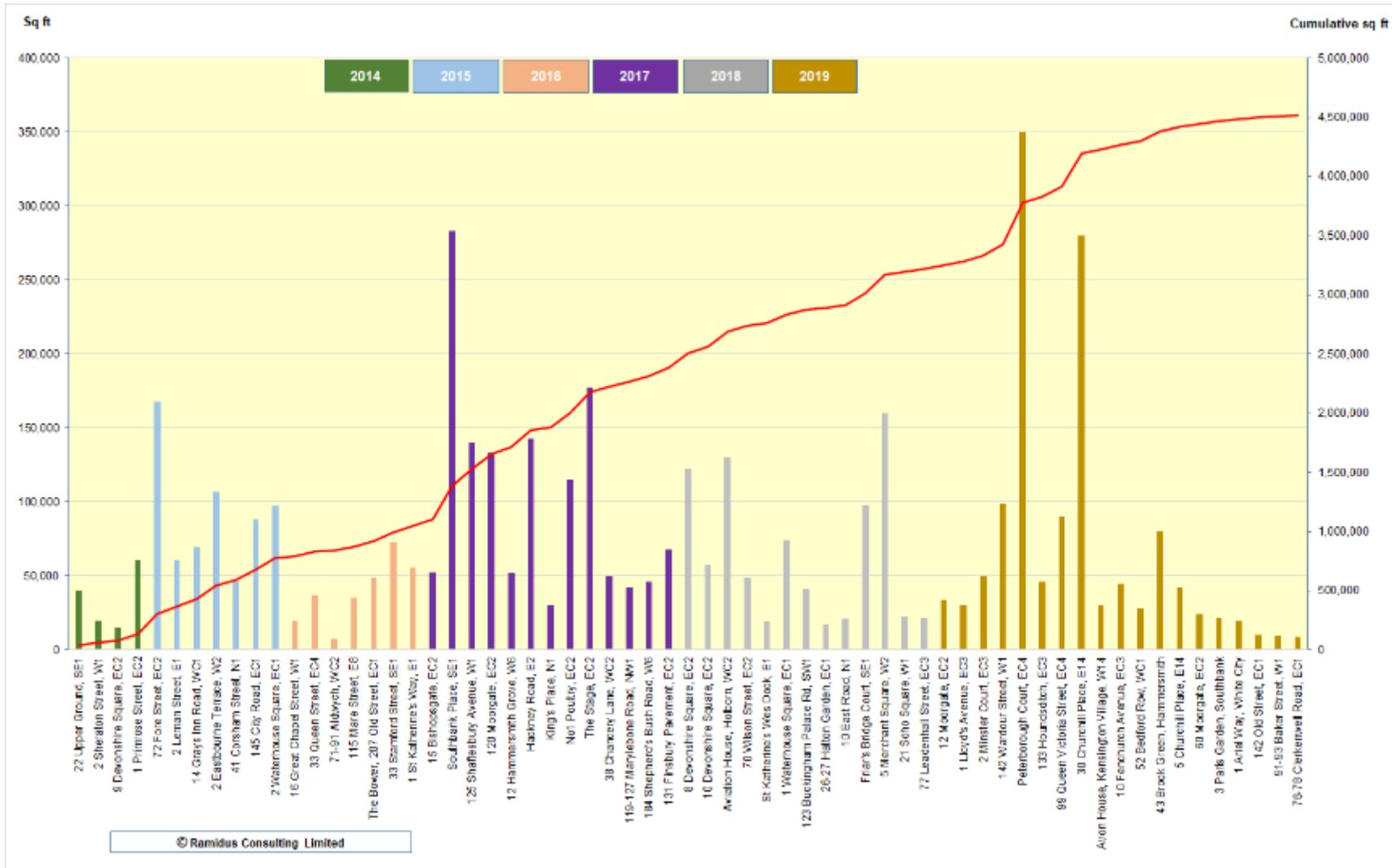
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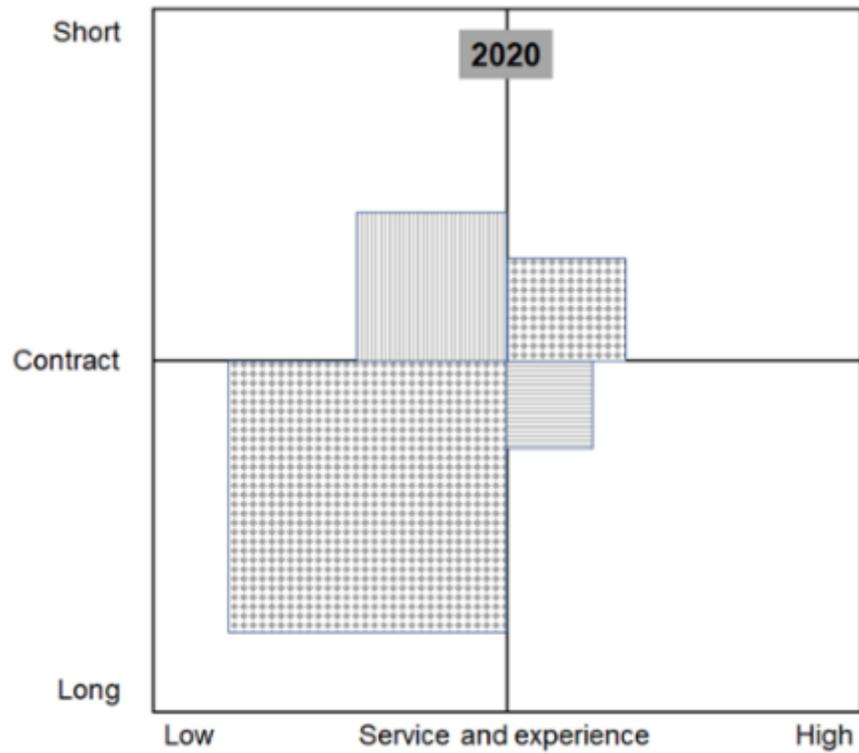
**W: [ramidus.co.uk](http://ramidus.co.uk)**



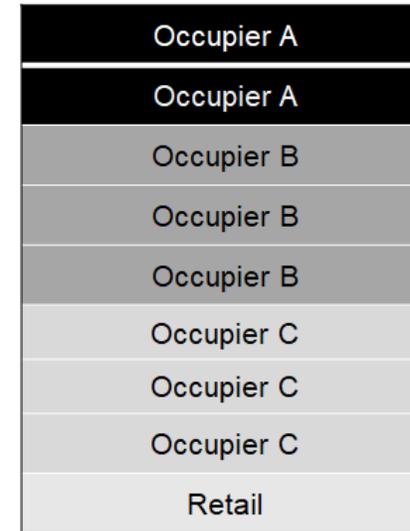
# Digital Offices, 1980-2020



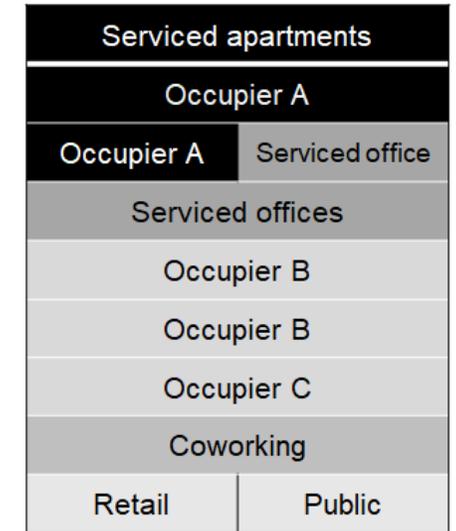
## From castles to condominiums



# Digital Offices, 1980-2020



Multi-tenant



Multi-use

From castles to condominiums



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Ahead of this evening's talk, please find your Participants Links. Each of your names below is hyperlinked, so all you need to do is click on your name, enter your email (the one that I'm sending this to you on) and enter the **Passcode: 045347**

[Rob Harris - Participant Link](#)

[Darryl Chen - Participant Link](#)

Any questions, just give me a shout either by return email or on my mobile - 078337 905656.

See you both at 6:15.

Rob, don't forget to send me your presentation :)

All the best,

