



Hewitt, L. E. (2016) Ordering the urban body: professional planning in early twentieth-century Britain. *Social History*, 41(3), pp. 304-318.

There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/116092/>

Deposited on: 06 July 2016

Enlighten – Research publications by members of the University of Glasgow
<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk>

**Ordering the urban body:
professional planning in early twentieth-century Britain**

Lucy E. Hewitt
School of Social and Political Sciences
University of Glasgow
25-29 Bute Gardens
Glasgow
G12 8RS
lucy.hewitt@glasgow.ac.uk

The early twentieth century has been regarded as a crucial period in the development of planning in Britain during which the key elements of the modern profession were put in place. At the time, planners represented their practice as a progressive answer to the environmental legacies of the Victorian era, capable of contributing decisively to the social and political reform of British society. Existing histories dealing with the subject uniformly locate planning within a historical trajectory that emphasizes its links with philanthropic experiment, reformism and the growth of the welfare state. This paper scrutinizes such key propositions in order to show some of the ways that planning can be located within an alternative historical trajectory in which questions of orderliness, expert knowledge and government emerge to take priority. It examines the presence of rivalry among early professionals, the methodological commitment to civic surveying and the way planners sought to make use of the interconnections between space and social life to wield power over the environment and the private lives of urban dwellers.

Key words: professional planning; mapping; expert knowledge; order; urban body.

Ordering the urban body: professional planning in early twentieth-century Britain

Introduction

The planning of towns and cities has a history that extends well beyond the twentieth century, however at the start of the twentieth century there was a shift in the way planning was viewed and organized that was seen at the time, and has been accepted since, as constituting a decisive moment in the urban history of Britain. There are good reasons to concur with such a conclusion. The term ‘town planning’ was coined in Birmingham in 1905 and appeared just four years later in legislation for the first time.¹ The first university department for the study of planning was established in 1909 at Liverpool and in 1910 the first journals dedicated to planning – the ‘Town Planning and Housing Supplement’ that accompanied *The Architectural Review* from January 1910 and the *Town Planning Review* which appeared in April – were published.² By 1914 sufficient momentum had gathered to support the formation of the first dedicated professional body, the Town Planning Institute.³ This early period saw a shift in the locus of planning away from ad hoc philanthropic and voluntary initiatives to become accepted among, if not successfully implemented through, the routine activities of the state.⁴ These years were, historians have established, a crucial period in the development of planning during which ‘the building blocks’ of the modern profession were put in place.⁵

Planning was presented at the time as a landmark innovation in efforts to shape the urban environment, one that coincided with and cemented the start of a new era in British society and marked a decisive break from the immediate past,

specifically from the environmental conditions and the associated deprivations of the Victorian city.⁶ Stanley Adshead referred to ‘a newly discovered method...which in the past has only been partially recognized in a very unconscious way.’⁷ According to Frederic James Marquis, the early years of the century were ‘the threshold of the period when the science of civics will direct the development of towns.’⁸ Planning was, and has since been, closely associated with an increasing momentum toward political and social reform, and those leading the early movement theorized the planned environment as a route to societal transformation. Raymond Unwin, for example, argued that town planning would

for the first time make possible an adequate expression of such corporate life as exists...action and reaction will take place; the more adequate expression of corporate life in the outward forms of the town will both stimulate and give fresh scope to the co-operative spirit from which it has sprung.⁹

To its visionaries and its advocates, therefore, planning seemed to be a panacea, a progressive answer to the social and political challenges of the moment which would lead directly to a vastly improved environment and, through that environmental improvement, contribute decisively to the reform of British society.¹⁰

These propositions – that planning was a new route to social and political, as well as environmental reform, and that planning represented a decisive shift away from the spatial and social organization of the Victorian city – held an important position in early discussions and have maintained that position in the subsequent historical record.¹¹ Their acceptance has located planning within an historical framework that emphasizes enlightened philanthropic experiment and voluntary

action, the growth of reformism and the co-operative movement, and, by the early twentieth century, the expansion of the welfare state, labour and radical party politics. The purpose of this article is not to deny that the early professional planning movement can be located within such a framework, or to present a thorough-going critique of existing histories that deal with the emergence of professional planning within that framework. However, the article does aim to establish that the emergence of professional planning can be located within an alternative historical trajectory and to suggest the importance of opening up historical analysis in order to encompass such an alternative.

The article begins by examining early debates about the professional status of planning and the specialist background of planners. With the exception of recent work by William Whyte, the professionalization of planning has received little, if any, sustained attention.¹² Yet the presence of rivalry, primarily between architects and engineers, shaped the way the profession organized and developed. The first section of the article examines claims about the novelty of planning in particular and argues that these should be viewed as strategic, made within the context of competition for professional territory. The discussion also examines the manner in which the methodological commitment to civic surveys was used to support arguments about the expert nature of the planning process and the unique perspective of the professional planner. The second section considers that, while planners expressed strong views about the need for political and social reform, there were also highly ambiguous currents in early planning thought. The explicit recognition of close and mutually affecting interconnections between environment and social life are usually taken as evidence of an enlightened attitude to urban transformation. However, such a recognition also presented early planners with a mechanism that offered the potential

to wield greater social control. This section examines a range of arguments made by early planners as they articulated their vision for the role of the profession and the power of planning practice. The third section locates the preceding observations in the context of wider historical scholarship concerned with the Victorian city. This section argues that early professional planning exhibited a number of continuities with earlier traditions of expertise and explores the continued use of biological metaphors to conceptualize the city. In conclusion, I suggest that there is value in an analysis of planning that encompasses a stronger emphasis on questions of power by placing the profession that developed in the early twentieth century in closer historical dialogue with a longer tradition of modern urban governance.

A new profession and method

Although the early twentieth century was an important period in the development of the British planning profession, no great degree of coherence regarding planning as a practice or a body of ideas was achieved during these years. In the ferment of discussion, even the vocabulary used to refer to planning was far from settled. The first university department for planning was actually a department of civic design; the first chair – held by Stanley Adshead – a professorship in civic design and, when Adshead wrote the opening essay for the first issue of the *Town Planning Review*, the title he choose referred not to planning, but to civic design.¹³ There were also discussions about the use of the term ‘landscape architect’ rather than planner, while for those interested in Geddesian sociology ‘town planning’ could be used interchangeably with ‘civics’.¹⁴ For others ‘civic art’ sometimes appeared to be

synonymous.¹⁵ This linguistic ambiguity was indicative of how unsettled planning was as a field in early twentieth-century Britain, but also reinforces how much attention was being drawn to the subject during the period.

Since there was no established route for planners through education and training, Britain's first generation of planners came from a range of different specialisms. Many were architects and architectural draftsman. Others were engineers, surveyors and sociologists. Further, while the work of high-profile figures who tended to share a background in architecture has often dominated the historical record,¹⁶ at the time engineers had an arguably equal claim over planning as an activity. It was engineers, after all, who were more routinely engaged in planning as part of their work for local authorities. Indeed, as Stephen Ward has pointed out, after the passing of the 1909 Housing, Town Planning, Etc., Act, with planning only on the cusp of forming a distinct profession, responsibility for developing plans and controlling their implementation moved firmly into the hands of borough engineers and surveyors.¹⁷ The *Municipal Yearbook*, the annually published record of local government employees, bears this out: planners do not appear among the employees of local government before the late 1940s.¹⁸ Although it has been little discussed in existing literature, Whyte has recently identified these as ideal conditions for a scramble over professional territory.¹⁹

As the legislative framework for planning took shape, the architectural profession made sustained but unsuccessful attempts to place itself in centre ground, seeking recognition as a statutory body for consultation on all planning decisions.²⁰ Whyte has argued that the decision of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) to organize and host the landmark 1910 international town planning conference should be interpreted as a move to consolidate and promote the position

of the architectural profession in planning.²¹ He has pointed, also, to the decision not to include other interested professionals, particularly sociologists and engineers, in the conference: ‘this was about emphasizing the centrality of British architects – and about influencing the British government.’²² Perhaps unsurprisingly, leading figures among the early architect-planners argued the opposite. According to Stanley Adshead, the 1910 conference reflected a full diversity of views and professional origins where, in contrast, the meetings of engineers were narrow and limited.²³ Indeed, in reviewing a 1911 conference on planning organized by the Institution of Municipal and County Engineers, Adshead suggested that the chief value of the papers read before that conference lay in their ‘exposition of technicalities’ and that, where they strayed into ‘the aesthetic field’ – where architects held sway – engineers betrayed a tendency towards the ‘crude, and possibly immature’.²⁴

It was in this context of grudging professional respect that the proposal for a body of professional planners emerged,²⁵ and in the following years there remained a discrepancy between those who claimed the mantle and those who felt they did the work. That discrepancy lay behind the opening remarks of J. W. Cockrill, President of the ‘Housing and Town Planning Conference’ held in 1913 under the auspices of the Institution of Municipal and Country Engineers:

My pleasure at meeting you to-day is enhanced by my belief that there are gathered together here the largest number of practical British Town Planners which have yet met. Men with actually schemes in progress, who can give us details of their work, the result of which in a short time will be to give us roads which lead somewhere, open spaces placed where they are wanted, and acres of vegetation sweetening the air and providing refreshment to tired eyes.²⁶

Coming just three years after RIBA's conference these remarks point directly to the professional claims and counter-claims that Whyte has highlighted in his discussion of planning. They underline the presence of rivalry among different groups of experts who shared an ambition to claim planning within their field of professional competence.

The *Town Planning Review*, which was edited by Adshead and Patrick Abercrombie from Liverpool's new department within the wider School of Architecture, provided a key mouth-piece for the early architect-planners through which they sought to distinguish the new profession. One of the arguments which supported such claims to distinction was that professional planners dealt in all the facets of knowledge that concerned other disciplines, but had the means of developing a particular kind of oversight. For example, responding to a suggestion that the term 'landscape architect' might be the best title for those undertaking planning, an editorial in the *Town Planning Review* made clear that the planner achieves a perspective unavailable to others:

The engineer, surveyor, sociologist, housing reformer, landscape designer, and architect all meet in the personality of the complete city planner; he naturally has leanings towards one or the other of these special aspects of the science, but his work touches them all, and we feel that the somewhat vague and misleading term landscape architect hardly expresses this comprehensive attitude...²⁷

Furthermore, although it has received little attention in histories of planning, the use of surveys to examine urban life grew markedly in the early twentieth century through the work of planning professionals and such surveys were viewed by many planners, particularly those sharing a background in architecture, as an essential prerequisite for the work of planning. Aligning with the notion that the planner could attain a privileged perspective, the civic survey was theorized as a technique that enabled the complete comprehension of the city thereby distinguishing the gaze of the planner and the authority of his expertise.

The survey method found an initial focus through the influence of Patrick Geddes. In his early accounts, Geddes argued that the value of what he then variously called the city, civic or social survey method lay in its potential to raise ‘civic consciousness’ by involving citizens in the process of studying their city and providing the material focus for a ‘civic museum.’²⁸ This followed the example of the Outlook Tower in Edinburgh, which Geddes has bought and developed during the 1890s to demonstrate the potential of engaging residents in planning through exhibition and education.²⁹ Early planners took up the method with enthusiasm. Raymond Unwin, for example, argued that the civic survey provided a particular and distinct view of the city which made it ‘easy for [the planner] at a glance to see the conditions of the whole town.’³⁰ Like Unwin, Abercrombie argued that ‘the preparation of a general schematic diagram of a town will frequently help to grasp [the city] as a whole’, resulting in a ‘comprehensive treatment’.³¹ While Marquis argued that the civic survey produced a ‘full visualization’ of the city: ‘town planning postulates town comprehension: survey and conscious direction of forces must precede civic design.’³² Among architect-planners in particular, therefore, the method appeared to offer a special vantage point, constructed from the synthesis of

existing fields of knowledge and capitalizing on the strengths of statistical science, from which to 'see' the city as a whole and forecast its future.

The earliest significant use of this form of mapping by planners was a group of projects undertaken during the First World War. The work followed RIBA planning conference in further cementing the position of architects: the primary centre of activity was RIBA and the project received funding from the Local Government Board.³³ The work drew on census data and on statistics gathered by local authorities, private transport and utilities companies and demonstrated an extensive and sustained application of statistical knowledge to the cartographic space of the city. However, the wrangle over professional territory rumbled on. In late 1915 Abercrombie, who was leading one of the secondary centres of collection in the North West, wrote to the London-based Civic Survey Joint Committee to report that, in the course of making requests for information to the local authority, the Lancashire branch had been told it would be preferable if they had formal approval from the Institution of the Municipal and County Engineers (IMCE).³⁴ A request for support was made by the Civic Survey Joint Committee, but the response, from the secretary of the IMCE, was not warm:

I have to inform you that the Council of the Institution view with concern the possibility of such surveys causing a considerable amount of extra work to be thrust upon municipal and county engineers at a time when they have lost nearly the whole of their staffs and are also frequently engaged on important Government work themselves...Although the Council have the greatest sympathy with the philanthropic object of the civic surveys they are of the opinion that the funds collected for the purpose and the energies of

the professional men [involved] might well be directed to carrying out work of more immediate utility than civic surveys.³⁵

The substantial collection of maps that nevertheless resulted from the project attest its ambition.³⁶ They were exhibited in the galleries of RIBA during the autumn of 1920 and debated at small conferences held to mark the opening and the closing of the exhibition. At these meetings those architects involved in steering the work reiterated the privileged view provided through the technique. Aston Webb, for example, pointed to the importance of the maps which made London visible ‘at a glance’ to the planner and available for intervention:

the vastness of London made it impossible to understand it unless one saw it brought to some such scale as those diagrams, so that one might take in the whole at a glance. And then it was wonderful how simple and how easy it was to see what was most wanted in the districts represented.³⁷

This project was the first of multiple surveying exercises conducted by planners that led to the ‘survey before plan’ formula achieving the status of orthodoxy in professional planning during the following decades.³⁸ Later applications of the method continued to argue that the perspectival mode of the survey provided the planner with the comprehensive knowledge necessary to ‘forecast’ the future development of Britain’s towns and cities.³⁹

[Figures 1, 2 and 3]

Planning space, ordering life

Architect-planners sometimes also distinguished their approach to planning from that of engineers by emphasizing the importance of aesthetics. Planning thus conceived involved consideration of both technical and artistic aspects and figures like Adshead argued engineers were poorly equipped to grasp the latter.⁴⁰ However, a subject that interested planners regardless of their professional background was the influence that planning could exert over social life. The recognition that poor environmental conditions impacted negatively on those ensnared in them and the connected desire to improve housing and neighbourhoods has been rightly viewed as a positive and progressive element of the modern planning movement. William Ashworth's classic account of the subject argued that the recognition that planning could contribute to 'happiness, welfare and prosperity' was a prerequisite for any movement to form.⁴¹ More recently Helen Meller has pointed to the interest of the early pioneers in 'the relationship between social processes and spatial form' and linked this interest to ideas about what makes good communities, to social harmony and 'a myriad of other such Utopian ideals'.⁴² Yet this aspect of the early planning movement has received little sustained scrutiny to date and closer examination suggests a more complex and ambiguous series of convictions.

At its simplest, planners argued that the organization and quality of the built environment was connected to social life and to individual 'character'. Such a recognition was in continuity with the ideas that had underpinned various elements of reformism during the previous half century.⁴³ It postulated that poor housing conditions, inadequate access to basic amenities and neighbourhoods in which the qualitative elements of the urban environment were degraded contributed to social and

personal deprivation. Thus, the MP and president of the Local Government Board, a position which gave him oversight of planning at the start of the twentieth century, John Burns argued in the inaugural speech to the Town Planning Institute that ‘a squalid quarter deteriorates a lot of people just as much as a squalid home degenerates a family.’⁴⁴ Similarly, J. E. Wilkes, the ‘town planning engineer’ of Dunfermline, anticipated the change promised by the growing number of town planning schemes with the comment ‘How different the place would be to live in, and how different might be the character of the people with the new environment!’⁴⁵

The relationship between space and social life was also theorized explicitly as offering great potential at a time when British society was changing radically. Early planners saw the planned city as having a political function, as working, Unwin suggested, in dialogue with ‘corporate life’. In arguing for the relocation of working-class communities from increasingly congested city centres to the growing suburbs, for example, Marquis noted the importance of such relocations for physical health but also suggested that working-class children ‘should be reared under such conditions as would surely tend to the production of citizens of a better type.’⁴⁶ Adshead also saw a role for planning in developing citizenship and a related ‘sense of respect’, which would be, in his view, engendered by architectural formalism and civic art.⁴⁷ Among early professionals, therefore, planning was ascribed an important role in shaping British society at a time when profound reform was altering the social and political landscape of the country.

Furthermore, while this interest can be seen as motivated by an enlightened recognition of the unacceptability of slum conditions and the modes of life forced upon those who found themselves condemned to live in such circumstances, it also appeared to be linked to a class-based rhetoric about the behaviour, habits, orderliness

and moral deficiencies of the working classes. In describing the impact of rehousing inner city working-class tenants, F. T. Turton pointed directly to ‘improvement in the habits of the people’. Where rehousing had taken place there was, he argued, ‘a higher moral tone, a stronger regard for self-respect and, above all, a greater love of home.’⁴⁸ Percy Runton, architect of Hull Garden Suburb, similarly argued that slum clearance and rehousing could, under the right circumstances, be of significant benefit. Those circumstances were not, however, the removal of communities ‘*en bloc*’, a strategy that resulted, he suggested, in an unfortunate deterioration of neighbourhoods, but dispersal of slum dwellers:

If you keep them [slum dwellers] dispersed with good class people, there is no doubt the environment and different surroundings will improve them...so far as the housing of this class of people is concerned, it is our municipal duty to look after them, but under suitable supervision.⁴⁹

Certain early planners theorized this aspect of planning quite explicitly. Adshead, for example, advocated for the necessity to look beyond the built environment and convenience to understand the ‘moral influence’ of planning.⁵⁰ ‘Direct planning, convenient groups, and excellence of effect’, he argued, would impact upon the ‘moral and intellectual’ as well as the physical growth of urban residents.⁵¹ Furthermore, he offered a precise definition of the nature of the moral influence that he believed the planner possessed: he used ‘the word moral in its strictest sense, as meaning the regulation of conduct.’⁵² This emphasis was echoed through other discussions and speeches as those considering the potentials of planning articulated their aims of creating a more ‘satisfactory population’.⁵³

In addition, in conferences during the 1910s, the argument that environment has a formative influence on character and that planning could, therefore, regulate the character and conduct of urban dwellers was extended through discussions about types of working-class housing.⁵⁴ In these discussions planners clearly expressed their interest in influencing private as well as public and communal life. 'Its [town planning's] interests', Adshead suggested, 'penetrate the very interior of the home'.⁵⁵ Percy Runtun made the case for a 'three-bedroom minimum' in a speech to the Liverpool Town Planning and Housing Exhibition in 1914:

...if you have three bedrooms you must necessarily improve the morals of the people. When I say morals I mean every moral quality that the human frame possesses. You must also inspire respect for sex...This sex question is, of course, an exceedingly difficult thing to legislate for, both as to where people shall live and how to get them to go into places with three bedrooms. We ought to have legislation requiring a three-bedroom minimum for families. Even the very savages have a kind of separation.⁵⁶

It is notable, too, that the concern to regulate conduct and the use of private spaces featured in discussions of planning even in connection to those examples of planning that had clear roots in utopian and visionary ideas and seemed at the time and since to embody progressive social ideals. For example, in relation to the use of space in the new garden cities, planners expressed strong views about how spaces should be used and discussed measures taken to regulate the uses of space:

Mr F. W. Platt (Engineer, Salford): “One difficulty occurred to me when I went to Letchworth: the owners of many houses with a considerable amount of land about them have at the back of their houses built a number of unsightly erections; now, if that takes place in Letchworth, where circumstances are favourable for successful cultivation of gardens, what about other places? [...]

Mr Shawcross (Chairman of the National Housing and Town Planning Council): “In a small scheme recently put through we have made provision to prevent these back gardens being spoiled, because we do not allow any buildings there without the permission of the Local Authority. We can have gardens paved to our satisfaction in case they are not properly cultivated”.⁵⁷

In this extract from a discussion following a speech made by Raymond Unwin it seems clear that in some instances the surveillance and management of private space was undertaken with the explicit intention of ensuring residents conform with prescriptive ideas about lifestyle and about the ‘proper’ use of space. Britain’s early professional planners, therefore, planned space, including homes, with a particular kind of conduct in mind and sought additional measures to secure compliance with those expectations.

Knowledge, order and the urban body

In existing histories of the early planning profession these threads - the morally engaged encounter between experts, the city and its inhabitants, the use of surveying techniques to bolster claims of a comprehensive perspective, the claim to professional

authority – are little examined. Yet, they are themes that can be readily found in historical research focusing on the government of the late Victorian city.

As Britain's cities grew, the minutiae of urban life, particularly the neighbourhoods, homes and conduct of those living in poverty, attracted increasing scrutiny. Local government officials, commissioners, inspectors and administrators with overlapping areas of responsibility and varying levels of authority, were appointed to the task of managing urban life and policing the use of urban space. Asa Briggs found that in London alone the numbers of officials had reached 10,000 by the 1850s.⁵⁸ Yet, according to Anthony Wohl, a step change occurred in the 1880s. Beginning with the inflammatory claims about incest and the 'moral hazards' of slum housing that appeared in *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* and the 'hysterical reaction' that followed, pamphlets, journalism and reports revealed the private lives of poor city dwellers in unpalatably detail.⁵⁹ The rationale for what was often an intrusive gaze was improved health and sanitation, better housing and working practices, but there were also consistent and strong moral overtones that connoted a desire to influence the character of individuals, to civilize the social body. The danger of the streets, questions of promiscuity, the failure to separate men and women, girls and boys, and lack of clarity surrounding the space and location of the family unit produced condemnation animated by fear of a moral breakdown in a rapidly changing urban society. Among the response there was, without doubt, sympathy, compassion and indignation at the failure of modern urbanity to provide for basic human dignity. But there was also an impulse to scrutinize, police and control. 'The vicious immanence of the city', Osborne and Rose wrote, 'is a never-ending incitement to projects of government [and] such projects seek to capture the forces immanent to the city, to identify them, order them....'⁶⁰

In the Victorian city, such projects of government often involved groups of experts interested in the task of managing an unruly and opaque urban body. Sanitary, housing and social reformers allied with the liberal state and its swelling coterie of administrators and officials. So, too, did the professionals who could engineer light and vision, cleanliness and health, mobility and stasis, and with them, seemingly, patterns of life and standards of civility.⁶¹ Such expert knowledge was essential to a reordering of urban life sought through both physical transformation of the city and the extension of the regulatory functions of the state. Expertise conferred authority since, as Michel Foucault famously pointed out, knowledge was too closely allied to power for the separation to be meaningful.⁶² Furthermore, knowledge was not inert, not simply collected and settled. It was a way of looking, categorizing and intervening that was recursive, vigilant and powerful. Thus, Pamela Gilbert describes the use of early disease maps by sanitary reformers as being

like a surgical diagram, the map shows illness as a dark sepia obscurity on the otherwise healthy body of the city, preparatory to a surgical excision...[medical mapping] dramatizes the need to continually remap its terrain, in order to arrest decadence and record or invoke progress. Sanitary writers urged a continual vigilance – to look, and document, and look and look again, as to lose sight of, or fail to oversee, a problematic district is precisely to lose control of it...⁶³

Mapping exercises of this kind, conducted from the 1830s, had a clear familial relationship with the later surveying techniques of planners. Both used selections of statistical data, translated into gradations of colour and tone, casting shadows of

illness, congestion or inactivity over streets and homes. The civic survey was not, then, new, and Geddes's presentation of the method in his lectures to the Sociological Society has been, in this respect, a distraction, given disproportionate weight within planning historiography.⁶⁴ Furthermore, the emphasis Geddes placed in those early lectures on the collaborative potentials of the survey and its use as a tool for engaging in a specific locality did not remain consistently at the fore of even his own comments on the method. Over time, in later accounts, he emphasized not its ability to raise civic consciousness through collaboration and education, but its scientific status and rationality. Already by 1907 he had argued that the purpose of the survey method was to develop a 'positive and definite science' of the city characterized by 'orderly description and rational interpretation'.⁶⁵ In the early 1910s he was active in promoting the survey method as a comprehensive preliminary to planning and as a 'rational geography of cities'.⁶⁶ Affirming the claim made more broadly among planners at the time that the view point of a planner represented a higher vantage point than that of other professionals, he also argued that the method would draw together the skills of a wide range of existing specialisms, but avoid the 'limitations of their cultivators, by uniting all these various partial concepts of the city into a single living whole' resulting in a new and 'synoptic' view.⁶⁷

Osborne and Rose have drawn on the Geddesian survey, counter-posed to Charles Booth's poverty maps, to distinguish between the manner in which urban space was conceived and actualized in the late nineteenth-century and the contrasting 'forms of spatialization' that were visible in the early twentieth century. Put 'crudely', they argued, 'Booth stands for a kind of moral space – a fixed public order of conduct – while Geddes stands for a kind of ethical space – a self-regulating life of civic existence.'⁶⁸ Their reading of Geddes thus emphasizes the 'ethics of outlook'

rather than any continuities that might link Geddes and Booth, but there was greater continuity than this distinction allows. Among the sanitary reformers about whom Gilbert writes, maps were deployed to establish the distinctiveness of a way of looking at the city which legitimized the position of the medical expert, supported the advancement of the associated body of knowledge, and gave a rationale to interventions that changed the shape of the city and the way it was governed.⁶⁹ The mapping exercise undertaken by Charles Booth during the 1880s and 90s has received significantly more attention than either earlier or later examples, and again there are continuities.⁷⁰ Booth's use of mapping cut through the debate that was raging at the time about levels of poverty in London, presenting statistical data in graphic form using the same types of coding to mark the space of the map and claiming the status of science in contrast to the textual accounts that dominated other sources.⁷¹ The result was powerful in late Victorian society, supporting the extension of the social reform movement just as mapping concentrations of illness had helped to secure the position of the sanitary reform movement half a century earlier.⁷²

Yet, if mapping could provide a way to construct and perceive the city that lent the authority of expertise, it was also just one of a sequence of tactics used to pursue the goal of greater visual acuity at a time when cities, by their complexity and density, seemed increasingly opaque. Christopher Otter has argued that '*who* could see *what*, *whom*, *when*, *where*, and *how* was, and remains, an integral dimension of the everyday operation and experience of power.'⁷³ Otter's study of vision links developments in scientific knowledge about sight, the increasing capabilities of engineers and evolving regimes of inspection directly to the manner in which urban life was managed and administered. Further, by making linkages between the scientific investigation of the eye and the technical capabilities used to improve

oversight of urban space, Otter's approach transverses the ground between the individual urban dweller and the social body. The tendency to move from individual to social body and to deploy the language of biological health to characterize the state of the city was a marked feature of nineteenth-century expert discourse.⁷⁴ To speak of the health of the city as one might of an individual became an accepted manner in which to address its functionality. Thus, 'healthy' towns and cities became associated with green spaces that corresponded to lungs and with the removal of blockages that impeded free circulation, conceived as comparable to the flow of blood in arteries and veins.⁷⁵

There were, therefore, various linguistic twists at work that shifted associations and cast shadows over the city and its inhabitants. Early uses of statistical information resulted in diagnoses of health, poverty and morality being conflated as the boundaries between individuals and the localities in which they lived were blurred; experts appeared in the role of the physician offering treatment to malady.⁷⁶ Furthermore, this vocabulary endured. At the start of the twentieth century, the corporeal lexicon was also well used by early planners who continued to make the kinds of arguments seen in previous decades regarding 'sick' areas of towns and cities and the necessity for interventions or 'treatment' to ensure the health of the whole. For example, Patrick Abercrombie, argued that

No scheme for the planning of...a town should be undertaken without a study of the whole town. It is of no use trying to put a piece of sticking plaster over a sore place which may be the result of a general blood poisoning, without first examining the health of the patient...We need to understand the inter-relation between the workings of the different parts and organs of the body, so that

when a falling away from perfect health takes place we are able to trace the cause.⁷⁷

This passage shows clearly that a way of conceiving the city as a body which had developed over the nineteenth-century was still fully utilized by early twentieth-century planners. Further, this vocabulary offered planners an opportunity to borrow the associated status of physician. At the first International Town Planning conference held in London, for example, American planner Charles Mulford Robinson spoke of the ‘great duty’ that ‘we city doctors have...to develop these half grown child-cities into man-cities’.⁷⁸ Such associations were used to specifically address the importance of the planning expert, consolidating the role of the planner in relation to knowing and understanding urban space by warning about the dangers of the incomplete knowledge of the amateur:

it must be clearly borne in mind that every aspect of town life is closely related to the other, and often the most unexpected and surprising results follow from a little amateur doctoring of obscure corners of the town’s anatomy or from hastily conceived regulations.⁷⁹

Conclusion

The novelty claimed for professional planning in the early twentieth century was part of a desire to break with the impoverished environments that had loomed over the Victorian period and a desire to ensure that the social life associated with such

environmental conditions would not longer be fostered and sustained. Early twentieth-century British planning was, therefore, both a reaction to and a condemnation of the ‘evils’ of ‘rapid and disorderly’ growth that had been a deeply troubling characteristic of the previous century.⁸⁰ It was a contrast awkwardly epitomized in the Geddesian distinction between ‘paleotechnic’ and ‘neotechnic’ eras: the earlier phase was associated with slum cities and ‘the corresponding development of the various types of human deterioration congruent with such environments’, while the latter, shaped by house building and town planning, would offer improvements in the conditions of ‘the working man’ and ‘productive citizen’.⁸¹ Planning was politically and socially ambitious, tethered to an attempt to establish a new era for urbanized societies. The contrast with the immediate past was undoubtedly firm in the minds of early planners. Already in 1914 Adshead could write that

Town Planning and Housing have captured the imagination of administrators, hundreds and thousands of the wretched inhabitants of slums, crowded like vermin amidst the dustheaps of an insenate industrialism, are now transported into healthy and attractive surroundings.⁸²

Existing histories of planning in Britain point to the historical debt the profession paid to reformism and co-operative ideals, to the sensibilities of the Arts and Crafts movement and to some exemplars of planning, such as Edinburgh’s New Town. It is these points that have provided the historical framework for the emergence of professional planning. Yet, there has also been a tendency to accept the claims of early twentieth-century planners and concur that, as it professionalized in the early twentieth century, planning was a relative novelty.

Important contributions to the field of British planning history, beginning with those of Ashworth and Cherry, have provided the foundation for a body of work that has grown, establishing in due course its own sub-discipline.⁸³ However, in Britain this body of work has also remained largely consistent over a period of some fifty years, lacking significant debate regarding historiographical approach or concern with the philosophical currents that have been so productively unsettling in shaping other fields of historical scholarship.⁸⁴

Histories of the nineteenth-century city now show the value of examining inconsistency, pursuing argument and making space for revision. Furthermore, by grounding historical research on more theoretically informed foundations, nineteenth-century urban historians have developed analyses that are both challenging and far-reaching. In particular, taking seriously the call to shift the study of power away from the figure of the sovereign, historians have shown the diffuseness of governance through social and spatial relations.⁸⁵ Christopher Otter's subject was not town planning, but he nevertheless made reference to planning (or at least one planner) in his characterization of modern governance:

The physical and moral characteristics of [the] population...were perceived as being institutionally amenable to technical adjustment, a basic premise uniting projects as diverse as those of Edwin Chadwick and Ebenezer Howard.⁸⁶

Otter is right to make this inclusion. The proposition that a population can be 'adjusted' by expert knowledge and technical means, pervasive in the modern period, was shared by Britain's early professional planners. In support of their project, they

made arguments that were sometimes progressive, but they also shared with the experts of the previous century an interest in the conduct of individuals as they sought to reorder the urban body. As its first professor argued, planning offered a mechanism through which individuals might be ‘habituated...to an orderly existence’ and such a project was inevitably ambiguous in intent and practice.⁸⁷

¹ S. V. Ward, *Planning and Urban Change* (London, 2004), 25.

² M. Wright, *Lord Leverhulme’s Unknown Venture: the Lever Chair and the beginnings of town and regional planning 1908-1948* (London, 1982).

³ See G. Cherry, *The Evolution of British Town Planning: a history of town planning in the United Kingdom during the twentieth century and of the Royal Town Planning Institute* (Leighton Buzzard, 1974).

⁴ Ward, *op. cit.*, 9; H. Meller, *Towns, Plans and Society in Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1997) 45-6.

⁵ G. Cherry *Town Planning in Britain since 1900* (Oxford, 1996) 17; see also A. Sutcliffe (ed.) *The Rise of Modern Urban Planning, 1890-1914* (London, 1980); Ward, *op.cit.*

⁶ For example, see R. Unwin, *Town Planning in Practice: an introduction to the art of designing cities and suburbs* (London, 1938 [1909]), 2; P. Geddes, ‘The twofold aspect of the industrial age: paleotechnic and neotechnic’, *Town Planning Review*, 3, 3 (Oct. 1912) 176-187 and *Cities in Evolution* (London, 1915); S. D. Adshead, ‘The

Democratic View of Town Planning’, *Town Planning Review*, 5, 3 (Oct. 1914), esp. 190.

⁷ Adshead, *ibid.*, 183.

⁸ F. J. Marquis, ‘The Sociological Aspect of Town Planning’, *Town Planning Review*, 1, 1 (Ap. 1910) 66 & 71.

⁹ Unwin, *op. cit.*; also Adshead, *op. cit.*, 188.

¹⁰ Geddes was fond of distinguishing between the utopias (no place) of the past and the eutopias (perfect places) potentially realized through planning, see, e.g. ‘The twofold aspect of the industrial age’, *op. cit.*, 181-2.

¹¹ For example, see Cherry, *op. cit.*, 17; Ward, *op. cit.*, 17-19 and 24-25.

¹² W. Whyte, ‘Introduction’, in *Transactions of the Royal Institute of British Architects Town Planning Conference, London 10-15 October 1910* (London, 2011); W. Whyte, ‘The 1910 Royal Institute of British Architects’ Conference: a focus for international town planning?’ *Urban History*, 39, 1 (Feb, 2012) 149-165.

¹³ S. Adshead, ‘An introduction to civic design’, *Town Planning Review*, 1, 1 (Ap. 1910), 3-17. On the founding of the department at Liverpool, see Wright, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ T. H. Mawson, ‘The Position and Prospects of Landscape Architecture in England’, *Town Planning Review*, 2, 3 (Oct. 1911) 225-229; C. R. Ashbee, *Where the Great City Stands: a study in the new civics* (London, 1917); Marquis, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Unwin, *Town Planning in Practice*.

¹⁶ See, for example, G. E. Cherry (ed.) *Pioneers in British Planning*, (London, 1981).

¹⁷ Ward, *op. cit.*, 9 and 32.

¹⁸ *The Municipal Year Book of the United Kingdom*, was published annually from 1897-1924, although suspended between 1915 and 1919. It was followed by *The Municipal Yearbook* (issued 1925-1934) and *The Municipal Year Book and*

Encyclopedia of Local Government (issued 1935-1948). These volumes provide a detailed record of the legislation effecting local government activity and list employees for each authority.

¹⁹ Whyte, 'Introduction', *op. cit.*, and 'The 1910 Royal Institute of British Architects' Conference, *op. cit.*

²⁰ Whyte, 'The 1910 Royal Institute of British Architects' Conference', *op. cit.*

²¹ Whyte, *ibid.*, 158.

²² Whyte, *ibid.*, 158.

²³ S. D. Adshead, 'Town planning conference at West Bromwich: with some notes on the profession of engineering in its relation to town planning', *Town Planning Review*, 2, 3 (Oct. 1911), 175.

²⁴ Adshead, *ibid.*, 177.

²⁵ Adshead, *ibid.*, 176.

²⁶ 'President's Address,' in T. Cole (ed.) *Housing and Town Planning Conference. Institution of Municipal and County Engineers. Held at the Town Hall, Great Yarmouth, July 16 & 17, 1913*, (London, 1914) 2.

²⁷ Editorial, 'Landscape Architect or City Planner?' *Town Planning Review*, 2, 3 (Oct. 1911) 173.

²⁸ See papers given at the annual meetings of the Sociological Society: P. Geddes, 'Civics : As Applied Sociology', *Sociological Papers, vol. I* (London, 1905); P. Geddes, 'Civics : As Applied Sociology, part II', *Sociological Papers, vol. II* (London, 1906); P. Geddes, 'A suggested plan for a civic museum (or civic exhibition) and its associated studies', *Sociological Papers, vol. II* (London, 1907). Geddes's use of terms was often inconsistent and in these lectures he used terms civic, regional and social survey apparently interchangeably.

²⁹ For further information about the Outlook Tower, see V. M. Welter, 'History, Biology and City Design – Patrick Geddes in Edinburgh,' *Architectural Heritage*, 6, 1 (Nov 1995), 60-82.

³⁰ Unwin quoted in *The Builder*, 'Civic Survey and Town Planning', 24 December 1920, 726; see also Unwin, *op. cit.*

³¹ P. Abercrombie, 'Study Before Town Planning', *Town Planning Review*, 6, 3 (Oct. 1916), 186 and 188.

³² Marquis, *op. cit.*, 66 and 71.

³³ There were additional centres of activity in Lancashire (lead by Patrick Abercrombie) and in South Yorkshire (lead by the architect H. S. Chorley). Royal Institute of British Architects Archives, Minutes of the Civic Survey Joint Committee, RIBA/Env, 29 July 1915 – 21 January 1921, hereafter Minutes CSJC.

³⁴ Minutes of the CSJC, 11 November, 1915.

³⁵ Letter from J. W. Dudley Robinson, secretary of the Institution of Municipal and County Engineers, reported in the Minutes of the CSJC, 25 November 1915.

³⁶ See L.E. Hewitt 'The Civic Survey of Greater London: social mapping, planners and urban space', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 38, 3 (2012) 247-262.

³⁷ Quoted in *The Builder*, 'The Civic Survey Exhibition', 12 November 1920, 539.

³⁸ P. Hall, *Urban and Regional Planning* (London and New York, 1992) 7.

³⁹ For example, P. Ford, (ed.), *Southampton: a civic survey* (London, 1931), ix; L. Mumford, 'Foreword,' in *Conurbation: a planning survey of Birmingham and the Black Country by the West Midlands Group* (London, 1948), 3 and P. Abercrombie and D. Plumstead, *A Civic Survey and Plan for the City and Royal Burgh of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh and London, 1949), vii.

-
- ⁴⁰ Adshead, 'Town planning conference at West Bromwich', *op. cit.*; also J. Burns, 'Town planning and the new institute', *Town Planning Review*, 5, 1 (Ap.1914) 3-4.
- ⁴¹ W. Ashworth, *The Genesis of Modern British Town Planning: a study in economic and social history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (London, 1954), 2.
- ⁴² H. Meller, 'Planning theory and women's role in the city', *Urban History*, 17 (May. 1990) 85.
- ⁴³ For example, there were clear overlaps with ideas expressed earlier by the Hill sisters, see A. Anderson and E. Darling, 'The Hill Sisters: Cultural Philanthropy and the Embellishment of Lives in Late Nineteenth Century England', in E. Darling and L. Whitworth (eds), *Women and the Making of Built Space in England, 1870-1950*, (Aldershot, 2007); I. Fletcher, 'Some Aspects of Aestheticism', in O. M. Brack (ed.), *Twilight of Dawn: studies of English literature in transition*, (Tuscon, 1987).
- ⁴⁴ Burns, *op. cit.*, 7.
- ⁴⁵ J. E. Wilkes, 'A Note on the Preparation of Town Planning Schemes', in T. Cole (ed.) *Housing and Town Planning Conference. Institution of Municipal and County Engineers. Held at the Town Hall, Great Yarmouth, July 16 & 17, 1913* (London, 1914), 6.
- ⁴⁶ Marquis, *op. cit.*, 71.
- ⁴⁷ Adshead, 'An introduction to civic design', *op. cit.*, 15.
- ⁴⁸ F. T. Turton 'Urban Housing', in S. D. Adshead and P. Abercrombie (eds), *Liverpool Town Planning and Housing Exhibition, March 1914. Transactions of Conference Held March 9-13, 1914 at Liberty Building Liverpool*, (Liverpool, 1914) 116.
- ⁴⁹ P. Runton, 'The Impossibility of Removing Slum Dwellers into the Outskirts', in S. D. Adshead and P. Abercrombie (eds), *Liverpool Town Planning and Housing*

Exhibition, March 1914. Transactions of Conference Held March 9-13, 1914 at Liberty Building Liverpool, (Liverpool, 1914), 121.

⁵⁰ Adshead, *An Introduction to Civic Design*, *op. cit.*, 14.

⁵¹ Adshead, *ibid.*, 14.

⁵² Adshead, *ibid.*, 14.

⁵³ H. Rathbone, 'Speech by Lord Mayor of Liverpool', in S. D. Adshead and P. Abercrombie (eds), *Liverpool Town Planning and Housing Exhibition, March 1914. Transactions of Conference Held March 9-13, 1914 at Liberty Building Liverpool*, (Liverpool, 1914), 28; also J. E. Wilkes 'A Note on the Preparation of Town Planning Schemes', in T. Cole (ed.), *Housing and Town Planning Conference. Institution of Municipal and County Engineers*, (London, 1913), 6.

⁵⁴ Turton, 'Urban Housing', *op. cit.*, 116; see also discussion following P. Runton, 'Suburban and Rural Housing,' in S. D. Adshead and P. Abercrombie (eds), *Liverpool Town Planning and Housing Exhibition, March 1914. Transactions of Conference Held March 9-13, 1914 at Liberty Building Liverpool*, (Liverpool, 1914), 44.

⁵⁵ Adshead, 'The Democratic View of Town Planning', *op. cit.*, 194.

⁵⁶ Runton, 'Suburban and Rural Housing', *op. cit.*, 135.

⁵⁷ Comments made in discussion following Raymond Unwin 'Town Planning Under the Act and discussion', in S. D. Adshead and P. Abercrombie (eds), *Liverpool Town Planning and Housing Exhibition, March 1914. Transactions of Conference Held March 9-13, 1914 at Liberty Building Liverpool*, (Liverpool, 1914), 94.

⁵⁸ A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London, 1968), 321.

⁵⁹ A. Wohl, 'Introduction', in A. Wohl (ed.), *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London by Andrew Mearns, with leading articles from the 'Pall Mall Gazette' of October 1883*

and articles by Lord Salisbury, Joseph Chamberlain and Forster Crozier (Leicester, 1970). Note, though, that Wohl argues a least a portion of the hysteria was prompted by the fear that agitation for housing reform would result in an unwanted increase in governmental intervention.

⁶⁰ T. Osborne and N. Rose, 'Governing cities: notes on the spatialisation of virtue', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 17 (Dec.1999), 745; see also P. Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: liberalism and the modern city* (London and New York, 2003) 177.

⁶¹ C. Otter, 'Making liberalism durable: vision and civility in the late Victorian city', *Social History*, 27, 1 (2002) 1-15; P. Joyce, *ibid.*; Osborne and Rose, *ibid.*

⁶² The 'problematic of *pouvoir-savoir*' was fundamental to much of Foucault's work, reflected in the construction 'power/knowledge,' the title given to the English collection of work, *Power/Knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*, (ed.) C. Gordon (Harlow, 1980). For discussion, see M. Foucault, 'The Meshes of Power', in J. W. Crampton and S. Elden (eds), *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and geography*, (Surrey, 2007), 161.

⁶³ P. Gilbert 'The Victorian Social Body and Urban Cartography', in P. Gilbert (ed.) *Imagined Londons*, (Albany, 2002),18.

⁶⁴ For discussion of social mapping, see A. H. Robinson, *Early Thematic Mapping in the History of Cartography* (Chicago and London, 1982) and M. Friendly, 'A brief history of data visualisation', in C. Chen, W. Hardle and A. Unwin (eds) *Handbook of Data Visualisation* (Berlin, 2008).

⁶⁵ Geddes, 'A suggested plan for a civic museum', *op. cit*, 203.

⁶⁶ Geddes was involved with the promotion of the survey method as an essential preliminary to planning immediately after the passing of the Housing and Town

Planning Act, 1909. He convened the Cities Committee of the Sociological Society, which issued guidance on the preparation and scope of surveys and contributed material from his civic survey of Edinburgh to the touring exhibition which promoted the method over the course of 1911 and 1912. His views are therefore represented in Cities Committee, *City Survey Preparatory to Town Planning. Memorandum on the Need of City Survey Preparatory to Town Planning* (London, Sociological Society: 1911) and Corporation of Edinburgh, *Cities and Town Planning Exhibition* (Edinburgh, 1911). For later comment on the survey method, see P. Geddes, 'Town Planning in Kapurthala. A Report to H. H. The Maharaja of Kapurthala, 1917', in J. Tyrwhitt (ed.) *Patrick Geddes in India*, (London, 1947).

⁶⁷ Geddes, 'A suggested plan for a civic museum', *op. cit*, 204.

⁶⁸ T. Osborne and N. Rose, 'Spatial phenomenotechnics: making space with Charles Booth and Patrick Geddes', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 22 (Ap. 2004), 214. See also Joyce, *op. cit*, 171-177.

⁶⁹ Gilbert *op. cit*.

⁷⁰ See, for example, K. Bales, 'Charles Booth's survey of *Life and Labour of the People in London, 1889-1903*', in M. Bulmer, K. Bales, K. Kish Sklar (eds) *The Social Survey in Historical Perspective, 1880-1940* (Cambridge: 1991).

⁷¹ S. Koven, 'The dangers of castle building – surveying the social survey', in M. Bulmer, K. Bales, K. Kish Sklar (eds) *The Social Survey in Historical Perspective, 1880-1940* (Cambridge: 1991); Wohl, *op. cit*.

⁷² O. Söderström, 'Paper cities: visual thinking in urban planning', *Cultural Geographies*, 3, 3 (Jul. 1996) 249-281; C. Topolov, 'The city as *terra incognita*: Charles Booth's poverty survey and the people of London, 1886-1891', *Planning Perspectives*, 8, 4 (1993) 395-425

-
- ⁷³ C. Otter, *The Victorian Eye: a political history of light and vision in Britain, 1800-1910* (Chicago and London, 2008), 1.
- ⁷⁴ M. Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British cultural formation 1830-1864* (Chicago and London, 1995), 37.
- ⁷⁵ See R. Sennett, *Flesh and Stone: the body and the city in Western civilization* (New York and London, 1994), especially chapter 8.
- ⁷⁶ Poovey, *op. cit*; Osborne and Rose, 'Governing cities', *op. cit*, 742.
- ⁷⁷ P. Abercrombie, *op. cit*, 183; see also Civic Institute of Ireland, 1925, *The Dublin Civic Survey prepared by H T O'Rourke and the Dublin Civic Survey Committee* (Liverpool and London, 1925), xv; H. Ricardo, *The Perfect Citizen* (London, 1920), 11.
- ⁷⁸ C. M. Robinson, 'Cities of the present as representative of a transition period in urban development', in *The Transactions of the Royal Institute of British Architects Town Planning Conference, London, 10-15 October 1910* (London and New York, 2011), 200.
- ⁷⁹ Abercrombie, *op. cit*, 183; Ricardo, *op. cit*.
- ⁸⁰ Unwin's language, *op. cit*, 2.
- ⁸¹ Geddes gave an explanation of this terminology in 'The twofold aspect of the industrial age', *op. cit*, esp 177 and 182.
- ⁸² S. D. Adshead, 'The democratic view of town planning', *op. cit*, 190.
- ⁸³ Ashworth, *op. cit*; Cherry, *The Evolution of British Town Planning*, *op. cit*, and Cherry 'The town planning movement and the late Victorian city', *op. cit*.
- ⁸⁴ In North America planning history has been subject to much greater debate. See for example D. A. Krueckeberg 'Planning history's mistakes', *Planning*

Perspectives, 12, 3 (1997) 269-279; L. Sandercock, *Making the Invisible Visible: a multicultural planning history* (Los Angeles and London, 1998).

⁸⁵ Foucault argued that ‘what we need...is a political philosophy that isn’t erected around the problem of sovereignty, nor therefore around the problems of law and prohibition. We need to cut off the King’s head...’ ‘Truth and Power’, *Power/Knowledge*, *op. cit.*, 121.

⁸⁶ C. Otter, ‘Cleansing and clarifying: technology and perception in nineteenth-century London’, *Journal of British Studies*. 43, 1 (2004) 41.

⁸⁷ Adshead, ‘Democratic view of planning’, *op. cit.*, 190.