The Origins of Urban Planning: Theory & Practice

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Lecture Outline

- Planning Before the Industrial Revolution
- The Impact of Urbanism
- The Seers
Modern town planning has arisen in response to specific problems triggered off by the 18\textsuperscript{th} C Industrial Revolution.

These problems came at different times and forms.

The problems of the 1930s were different from the 1840s.
Planning before the Industrial Revolution

- Important Cities before the Industrial Revolution:
  - Ancient Rome: 800,000 – 1,200,000 ppl (3rd C AD)
  - Elizabethan London: 225,000

Rome
- Water supplied from aqueducts over considerable distances
- Crowded streets
Planning before the Industrial Revolution

London

- Had to draw on coalfields by 14\textsuperscript{th} C for fuel (River Tyne, 270 miles away)
- Depended on distant countries for specialized provisions e.g. spices
- Had to draw water by aqueduct from 35 miles away by 17\textsuperscript{th} C

- Problems brought forth a host of regulations
  - Rome banned chariots at night
  - A man was hang for burning ‘sea coal’ in 14\textsuperscript{th} C London!!!!!!
The Impact of Industrialism

- No striking effect on urban growth initially
- Textiles and Cotton production brought industries into the open countryside

E.g.
- S. Lancashire or S. Derbyshire (cotton)
- Colne and Calder valleys (wool)
Coal mining changed everything

- Became Principal Raw Material for Industry
- Replaced water power in textiles after 1780

- Industries tended to concentrate where supplies were available
- Emergence of new industrial towns e.g. Lancashire, Yorkshire and Staffordshire

- Port Towns were just as important (e.g. Liverpool, Hull, Glasgow and London were among the fastest-growing from 1780 onwards.)
Impact of Industrialism cont’d

- Emerging social and economic problems
  - Rapid growth of new and established towns
  - Lancashire: 15,000 (1801); 44,000 (1851); 83,000 (1901)
  - London: 1 mil (1801); 2 mil (1851); 4 mil (1881); 6.5 mil (1911)
  - Massive rural-urban migration
  - (Irish flooded Manchester after the failure of the Potato Harvest in 1845-46)
  - Problems in terms of shelter, water and waste disposal or for health treatment.
THE ORIGINS: 1800-1940

Maps showing the growth of London from 1800 to 1980, with a scale of 50 miles (top) and 50 km (bottom).
Impact of Industrialism cont’d

- Towns had only the most elementary arrangements
- Overwhelmed by the influx
- Polluted wells from sewage
- Improper waste disposal
- High Pop. Densities
- Poor personal hygiene
- Lack of public health system
- Cholera epidemics that swept Britain (1832, 1848, and 1866)
Reactions to the problems

- Royal Commission on the State of Large Towns (1844) recommended the creation of a single public health authority in each local area and standardization of building regulations

- Public Health Act of 1848
- The Nuisance Removal Act of 1855
- The Sanitary Act of 1866
The Impact of Industrialism cont’d

- Torrens Acts (from 1868): allowed local authorities to compel owners of insanitary dwellings to demolish or repair them.

- Cross Acts (from 1875): allowed local authorities to prepare improvement schemes for slum areas.
The Impact of Industrialism cont’d

- Public Health Act (1875)
  - Most comprehensive
  - Fundamental reform of local government in England & Wales
  - Country was divided into urban and rural sanitary districts
  - Supervised by a central government department (The Local Government Board)

- Responsibilities were broadened after
The Impact of Industrialism cont’d

- Emergence of ‘by-law’ housing (1830-70s)
  - High density homes
  - Uniform terraces or rows of two-storey housing
  - Mostly bricks
  - Streets have a uniform minimum width (guarantee a modicum of air and light)
  - Each house had a separate external lavatory w/t access to back alley; necessary for the emptying of earth closets

- Most of these houses have been upgraded since the 1970s
The Seers

- Trace the evolution of Britain’s urban problems from the dawn of the Industrial Revolution to the start of WWII

- Many attempts at solving real and practical problems often by central and local admin.

- No less important was the writings of thinkers
The Seers cont’d

- Town planning as physical planning and design
  - Town planning as physical planning
  - Design as central to town planning
  - The production of master plans/blueprints
The Seers cont’d

- Pioneer Thinkers in urban planning (1880-1945)
  - The Anglo-American tradition
    - Ebenezer Howard
    - Unwin and Parker
    - Perry, Stein and Tripp
    - Geddes and Abercrombie
    - Frank Lloyd Wright
  - The European Tradition
    - Le Corbusier
    - Soria y Mata
The Anglo-American Tradition

- Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928)
  - Garden Cities of Tomorrow (1902)
  - The new-town movement emerged from this
  - Wasn’t a professional planner; short-hand writer in the law courts

- Used to travel to the US as a young man during its period of rapid urban growth
Ebenezer Howard

- Influenced by the work of several pioneer industrialists:
  
  The two earliest examples:
  
  - Robert Owen's celebrated experimental settlement at New Lanark in Scotland (1800-10)
  - Titus Salt’s towns built around his textile mill at Saltaire near Bradford (1853-63)

Late 19th C:

- Bournville outside Birmingham (1879-95), built by the chocolate manufacturer George Cadbury
Ebenezer Howard

- Industry was decentralized away from the city in all examples

- A new town was built around a decentralized plant

- Howard broadened the idea and applied to a more general and planned movement of people and industry away from cities
THE THREE MAGNETS.

TOWN
- Social Opportunity
- Social Amusement
- High Wages
- Plenty of Employment
- Cleanliness
- Crowded
- Pure Air
- Bright Homes & Gardens
- Co-operation
- Freedom

COUNTRY
- Beauty of Nature
- Abundance of Water
- Fresh Air
- Low Rents
- Plenty to Do
- Flow of Capital
- Good Drainage
- No Smoke
- No Mosquitoes
- Freedom

THE PEOPLE
Where will they go?

TOWN - COUNTRY
Ebenezer Howard

- The Garden City/Town-Country:
  - Combined with the advantages of Town and Country but none of their disadvantages
  - Outside the normal commuter range of the old city
  - Fairly small (30,000) and surrounded by a large green belt
  - Accessible by everyone

*Town and country must be married, and out of this joyous union will spring a new hope, a new life, a new civilization* (Howard 1898)
Unwin and Parker

- Raymond Unwin (1863-1940) and Barry Parker (1867-1947)
- Two Architects
- Developed some of Howard’s Ideas
- Designed the first Garden City (Letchworth)
Letchworth Garden City
Unwin and Parker

- Together the two architects developed some interesting modifications

- ‘Nothing Gained by Overcrowding’ Unwin (1912)

- Argued for the construction of lower density homes

- Pointed out how high density homes still detracted from the use of public open spaces
Frank Lloyd Wright

- Wright (1869-1959)
  - Aimed at preserving independent rural life

  - Influenced by the early spread of the motor car among NA farmers

  - Cities could now spread widely

  - Dispersion not only of homes but jobs would be the future
Frank Lloyd Wright

- Broadacre City
  - Completely dispersed but planned low density urban spread
  - Each home surrounded by an acre of land to grow crops

- Homes connected by super highways

- The emergence and spread of roadside civilizations; growing importance of petrol stations
Frank Lloyd Wright’s Broadacre City (1930’s)
Le Corbusier

- Charles Eduoard Jeanneret (1887-1965)
  - Swiss-born architect

- Authored ‘The City of Tomorrow’ and ‘The Radiant City’ (*La Ville Radieuse*)

- Emerged out of a concern for overcrowding and congestion characteristic of the traditional city
Le Corbusier

Made 4 propositions:

1. As population increase more and more pressure was placed on the inner sections of the city
2. Paradox: congestion could be curved by increasing density
3. The city density gradient should be even out to avoid congestion
4. A new and highly efficient transport system
Assessment of the Seers

- Mostly concerned with the production of blueprints or statements of the future end-state of the city
- Less concerned with planning as a continuous process
- The Planner as the omniscient ruler; unquestionable
- Ignored the influence of private capitalists and other stakeholder groups
Assessment of the Seers cont’d

- Their blueprints seldom admitted of alternatives

- Understandable since they were all essentially visionaries
Assessment of the Seers

- They were all physical planners

- They saw problems of society and of the economy in physical terms
  - A physical or spatial solution; bricks and stones

- Some problems can’t just be solved by physical and spatial planning:
  - Racism and segregation; Inadequate education; Juvenile Delinquency etc.

- Ignored the possibility of non-physical solutions
Criticisms

- **Social blindness**: planners viewed towns and their problems only in physical (and aesthetic) terms.

- **Physical determinism**: assumption that the layout and form of the physical environment would determine the quality of social life.

- **Lack of consultation**