

# MILESTONES AND SIGNPOSTS IN TWENTIETH CENTURY PLANNING<sup>1</sup>

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My credentials for speaking to you on my chosen theme are that I describe myself as a planning historian. This might invite a certain derision; after all, in some quarters history has a low reputation (did not Henry Ford dismiss history as 'bunk', describing it as 'just one damned thing after another?') and as for planning, some would see it merely as a fickle and arbitrary discipline where the laws of chance are substituted by those of error. Putting the two together - history and planning - may be tempting fate, the subject readily dismissed as an indulgence.

But I make a spirited rebuttal. Surely we can affirm that, surging like a breaker on both a professional and an academic beach, planning history is now secure as a specialism within the discipline and practice of town planning. It offers insights from the past, sheds light on the present and projects a guide to the future, and so takes its place amongst the social sciences as a distinct brand of scholarship.

The fact is that planning history can be as exciting and rewarding as an archaeological dig. We strip away the circumstances attending a particular plan, policy or strategy; we expose the influence of key actors; we reveal the pressure of competing sectional interests; and we dust away the preconceptions and the biases which override rationality. We account for why things happen (or do not happen). We demythologise; instead of ignorance we have understanding. New truths emerge: crucial is the recognition that the practice of planning - our professional concern - is fundamentally a matter of transaction and negotiation between competing interests, and that therefore the outcome of executive action relies not so much on the merits of a particular plan or scheme, but on the force, or power of persuasion, of the various actors concerned with its success or failure.

This should make planners humble about their technical skills and not claim too much for themselves.

The real importance of planning history is that it provides a timetable and a breadth of understanding for our discipline. All problems have origins; all policies have consequences. Important indicators - the milestones and signposts of my title - emerge over time, in context with the various social, economic, technological, political and institutional determinants of the day. This makes planning culturally based, its precepts changing over time.

However, planning is placed not only in a temporal context, but also a spatial one. Planning is different over time, and also between countries and cultures. Planning even varies between cities in the same country: in Britain wartime plans for bomb damaged cities, prepared at much the same time, could differ considerably because of the divergent outlooks of the authors concerned, their briefs or their political masters.

## INTRODUCING THE INTELLECTUAL MAP

These words of introduction allow me to turn now and consider the major paths town planning has followed this century, and the points at which critical junctions have been encountered.

### Chronology

To begin with, however, let us be reminded of the incremental stages through which the activity known ultimately as town planning, and other derivative terminology, actually passed. I am obliged to adopt a Eurocentric view of things in this regard, because although 'town building' has been a process as long as human history, 'town planning' was a response to the urban and industrial phenomena of the 19th century, witnessed initially in Britain and Western Europe.

The chronology, extending over 150 years, has embraced perhaps five stages, during which state powers have been pitted against the workings of the market. These have been:

1. Social planning, by which we mean the meeting of social needs through programmes of social welfare: health (a critical development in 19th century Britain), education, parks and provision for old age.
2. Town planning, a term first used in 1906, commencing with matters of design and layout (with a bridge via housing to social planning) but ultimately extending to land use and land management, aesthetics and civic art, community development (neighbourhoods), roads and transport, conservation, redevelopment and renewal.
3. Regional development planning, originating between the wars, first with a concern for the management of natural resources and river basin development, as evidenced in the Tennessee Valley Authority, and second with matters such as regional economic development, location of industry and settlement policy.
4. More or less contemporaneously, economic planning: tackling issues as varied as employment and unemployment, economic policy, monetary policy, trade, energy and sectoral policies including agriculture and industry.
5. Finally, over the last 30 years, environmental planning (the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962 perhaps seminal) taking us into concerns of waste, pollution, water resources, ecology and habitat conservation.

It is no part of this paper to chart the changes in all these stages, rather to

concentrate on the traditional core - urban (town or city) planning. But it is instructive to note at the outset of this examination the extent to which the activity has changed: in town planning, what began as a question of the appearance and layout of towns, slipped easily into the broader remit of welfarism and land use management.

### Internationalism

The justification for a Euro-centric analysis is that western concepts and practices have proved particularly influential world wide. Yet there was no single point of origin for the activity of city planning, diffusion from a multiplicity of national experiences seeming more likely during a period of explosive urban growth from around the turn of the last century. At that time, big cities the world over were finding the need to take measures to construct, rebuild or reshape their urban infrastructure. The big-bang theory, with diffusion from one point, will not suffice; rather planning radiated from a number of different centres.

Consider the evidence. In Britain the late Victorian urban crises, perceived particularly in terms of housing, gave rise to the garden suburb and Garden City. In the United States a flourishing business sector proved keen to harness entrepreneurial money to civic boosterism in a City Beautiful movement. In South America burgeoning cities learned from urban practices common in Spain and Southern Europe.

Emulation from the west was commonplace. In China Shanghai developed a medical infrastructure, a public health system, forms of local government and a programme for port development during the second half of the 19th century on western lines. Elsewhere, indeed worldwide, the colonial imprint was manifest, the African continent in particular today demonstrating the legacies of the rival powers: Holland, Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Spain and Portugal. Meanwhile, in the Indian subcontinent the trading cities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were managed on western lines with Sanitary Commissioners, Improvement Trusts and the provision of water supply and sewerage systems.

In some other countries the origins of planning were of a more independent

nature. Consider Japan: in 1868 Edo became Tokyo at the time of the Restoration, and the Shogunate which had effectively kept the country in isolation for three centuries was swept away. Tokyo was soon a sprawling industrial city and it found the need for a City Improvement Ordinance as early as 1888. Another example of independence came in the new Balkan states, consequent upon the break up of the Ottoman Empire; nation states required capital cities and in their planning the style of continental European cities, with their boulevards and avenues, proved irresistible.

To recapitulate, we are trying to make sense of a century-long activity, city planning, the practice of which has changed over time, and which has developed its own characteristics in different parts of the world. In considering the evidence of milestones and signposts we are looking at not one map, but many. However, it is possible to sketch one dominant map, which most of the world would recognize, with three critical features: the legacy of the industrial city and our reaction to it, the mid-century move towards state planning, and our experiences and reflections over the last 40 years. Let us look at each one of these in turn.

### THE LATE 19TH CENTURY CITY

By the close of the 19th century radical voices were highly critical of the urban product of industrial capitalism, and the advocates of the reformed 20th century city were making it clear that in one form or other there would have to be a break with the past.

Throughout the century, but culminating with vigour in the years from the mid-1880s to the mid-1890s, the unsatisfactory features of the 19th century city were progressively demonstrated. The spokesmen included a succession of novelists and men of letters (who can read Dickens in mid-century or Zola 20 or 30 years on without being disturbed by the harrowing accounts of London's slums or the tenements of Paris?). Clergymen and moralists, imbued with the social message of Christianity, protested against the evils of insanitary housing and overcrowding, and condemned drunkenness and the shame of prostitution, while newspaper reporters exposed the sordid world of poverty (investigative journal-

ism we would call it today) at a time of imperial wealth and ostentation. Victorian morality remained focused not on the causes of poverty (as we would today in terms of low wages, irregular employment and so on), but the consequences manifest in deviant personal behaviour.

There were also the doctors, who from the 1830s had pioneered the field of public health in their fight against unacceptably high urban mortality rates; they sought the regular supply of fresh water, the efficient removal of waste and the ready availability of fresh air. Then there were the political agitators who, from the time of Engels and his book *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, published in 1845, battled against the social consequences of the unfettered capitalist order that then prevailed, made manifest in towns or squalor for the proletariat. Moderate political observers resorted to pragmatism in their search for solutions, but the Victorian city was undeniably a potential hot bed of unrest, making reform imperative. The intellectual aesthete protested at the ugliness and industrial philistinism of the age; nothing less than the rediscovery of beauty in cities would redeem civilisation. Some architects rallied to their cause, particularly those in Britain who experimented with forms of low density housing, espousing vernacular cottage traditions. Particularly on the continent, a more general point was made by Charles Buls of Brussels and especially Camillo Sitte, whose 'artistic principles' for city design were advanced in objection to the building of the Ringstrasse and the subsequent clumsy handling of space in the rebuilding of Vienna. Finally, the economist pointed to the waste entailed in overcrowded cities; from Cambridge, England, Alfred Marshall argued that it made more sense to house the poor elsewhere, and land reformers such as the American, Henry George, were attracted to the notion of new forms of taxation to relieve poverty and to redistribute wealth.

This catalogue of pressure points is impressive. It confirms the view that in the minds of a large cross section of informed opinion at that time the late 19th century city had little to commend it. We can obviously challenge this view today: after all, by the turn of the

century the majority of the urban population was better housed and better fed than ever before; the great industrial cities, in spite of trade cycles, were economically buoyant, and commercial enterprise flourished; the democratic governance of cities had taken root through measures of political reform and they were effectively administered. Nineteenth century building had produced cities of architectural style and quality, the European city rising to pinnacles of elegance and prosperity. But today we have to discount these contrary impressions. The reality must be that a hundred years ago reformist opinion prevailed that the major industrial cities (particularly those which were themselves 19th century creations, rather than those which added industrial functions to medieval origins) were environmentally unpleasant, socially unacceptable, economically inefficient and a tinder box for the conflagration of political unrest. The industrial and working class quarters of the capital cities including London, Paris and Berlin, and the burgeoning sprawl of lesser centres such as Budapest and Warsaw, attracted the same hostility. The signposts for our century were erected on that terrain of anti-industrial and anti-urban sentiment. The circumstances were conducive to change.

Amongst this diverse groundswell there were perhaps four broadly common targets out of which town planning derived a singular identity. The most enduring related to health. It soon became apparent that the growing industrial cities were unhealthy. Plague had not visited Britain, at least in any serious way, for many years and it came as a shock when mortality rates rose in the larger towns. The arrival of cholera in 1832 and periodic revisits over the next half century caused panic, and it took some time before the cause was ascribed accurately to impure drinking water. Another killer disease, typhus, was generally associated with squalor, filth and low resistance to disease, while tuberculosis and other respiratory diseases were linked to impurities in the air. Urban death rates remained high. By the end of the century yet another factor emerged: it was alleged that London and the larger cities were the homes of a puny, urban people: race degeneration was held to

be the cause of a poor military performance in the South African Boer War. Likewise in Germany, the Prussian army would be ill-served by recruits from Berlin.

Another target related to the innate congestion of cities expressed in terms of high densities (the number of people crowded together per unit area of land) and overcrowding (the number of people per dwelling). The impenetrable courts and alleys of old London (the so-called 'rookeries'), the mietskasernen of Berlin, the wooden doss-houses of Moscow and the tenements of Paris, all gave evidence of the high incidence of ill-health, sustained on abject poverty - the characteristic of the 'submerged tenth' amongst the urban populations of Europe and the New World. Here, housing reform went hand in hand with social reform, such was the assumed correlation between the quality of the housing environment and the social and behavioural mores of the inhabitants.

The third target concerned the impact of industrialisation. The 19th century was widely held to have been a period of ugliness, and this in spite of the exciting and often dramatic new forms of building technology, the imposing civic buildings such as town halls, opera houses and theatres, and the solid qualities of much Victorian commercial building. But the popular image conjured up a plethora of smoky chimneys, the philistinism of industrial workshops and pollution of water and air. Anti-industrialism fed the search for beauty in handcraft and stimulated the growth of the Arts and Crafts movement. In Britain John Ruskin supplied the intellectual force and William Morris the practical application.

The fourth target related to seemingly inexorable urban growth. The feeling was that the expansion of the largest cities (none larger than London with four and a half million people) had become uncontrollable. Where would the urban urge end? What were the prospects for the rural areas beyond, steadily drained of their population? The future was regarded with apprehension. Was it not time to call a halt or devise other ways of urban living?

#### **Signposts for the future**

Institutions and arrangements fashioned well before the end of the centu-

ry already suggested that the burgeoning city could in fact be adequately regulated and the worst excesses ameliorated. In some German cities suburban extensions were carefully planned; Paris was re-structured by Haussmann and throughout continental Europe big cities were given imposing public buildings and widened thoroughfares (nowhere more impressively than in Vienna); and in Barcelona, Ildefonso Cerda had long since pioneered a comprehensive scheme for planned development. In Britain, London's drainage and sanitary improvements were technological marvels of the age; urban renewal schemes had been undertaken in a number of cities notably London, Glasgow and Birmingham; and nationally by law regulations covering new building promised the gradual upgrading of housing standards. Meanwhile, through dynamic adjustments in the land and housing markets, high densities and overcrowding levels in the centre of cities, notably London, were beginning to fall as suburbia beckoned expanding numbers of middle class aspirants.

But it was a slow pace of change which, through frustration, only served to increase disenchantment with the product of 19th century town growth. Incrementalism was not enough. As a reaction, a lively optimism grew about the benefits to be derived from new forms of city environments and alternative forms of community living. Bolstered by the natural confidence of the age expressed in other spheres of life, especially science, this new conviction encouraged active speculation about, and practical experiments towards, cities of the future. Most extreme in this regard were the Futurists, whose Manifesto in 1909 spoke of a violent break with the past and the conscious destruction of an industrial civilisation. New possibilities in architecture encouraged a technological mania about future cities: in Milan, in 1914, Antonio Sant'Elia exhibited a visionary project for a city of towering buildings and elevated roads. In Paris, Eugène Hénard drew up plans for the transformation of the street network of the city, and the reconstruction of street intersections, which included for the first time the fly-over.

In Britain, pragmatism prevailed and

the signpost to the future lay in new ways of arranging housing, essentially at rents the working classes could afford, while subscribing to design principles that would meet the environmental targets of the day: the provision of fresh air, sun and natural light in everyday living conditions. This meant an attack on unacceptably high density levels and rates of overcrowding. A quarter of a century of bye-law improvement had only suggested a future city of mean, dull, regimented streets and standardized houses. Instead, a veritable revolution in approach sought an informality in street layout, greater provision of open space, and a return to a vernacular in housing through the adoption of cottage designs. William Lever's Port Sunlight near Liverpool and George Cadbury's Bournville in Birmingham provided new models to follow for progressive estate development, but it was Raymond Unwin and his cousin-in-law Barry Parker who both created and sustained the most enduring, practical solutions in residential architecture, estate layouts and forms of planned development. Work at New Earswick (York), Letchworth and Hampstead were beacons for the future, popularising the low density garden suburb.

An equally significant break with the past came with Ebenezer Howard's Garden City. The publication of *Tomorrow: a peaceful path to real reform* in 1898, and its revision under the better known title *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* in 1902, proved seminal, giving an implicit encouragement to the planned dispersal of cities. Perhaps initially Howard only had in mind the building of a cooperative enterprise as a satellite, as indicated by his early preference of Unionville as a name for his new settlement. But the strategic model of Social City, as a cluster of Garden Cities, was seized upon by his followers and welded into a movement for the ultimate transformation of metropolitan cities. Dispersal became the keynote, and a worldwide mood was captured. The International Garden City Association was founded in 1913, followed by initiatives in numerous countries, though the model was capable of many interpretations and satisfied many different needs. Later, in the 1920s, new forms of building construction permitted a new break from the

past. It was bolstered by an ideology which sought to give architecture a social purpose. The modern movement's apostle was the Swiss architect, naturalised Frenchman, le Corbusier. His solution for Paris as exhibited in 1925 told all: the old city would be swept away leaving only a few historic monuments and the new would be in the form of towering structures of glass and concrete. Mass housing in such cities as Rotterdam and Zurich, and a number of German cities including Karlsruhe, Frankfurt on Main and Berlin announced the arrival of the modern movement.

The two great models of the century were therefore seen in total contradiction: Howard, embellished by the design intimacy of Unwin, versus le Corbusier and his disciples proclaiming massiveness and impersonality. In between, Frank Lloyd Wright's dream of dispersed homesteads, perhaps suitable for the American situation, failed to have wider appeal. Broadacre City never really had a chance against Garden City or Radiant City. Professionals concerned with urban futures became more confident. They were experts, certain that their particular model was the answer. They were sure that through rational planning 20th century society would be given a new future. Comprehensive plans proclaimed the message: man could create an environment which would eradicate the ills of the past, and he could fashion a new art of civic design which would apply a fresh touch of humanity to urban living. Models of dispersal set the strategic scene (for example Unwin's Plan for Greater London, the New York Regional Plan and that for Greater Moscow, all around 1930). Architects and planners set out the metropolitan agenda, CIAM's declaration, the Athens Charter of 1933 which first found functional expression in Warsaw in 1936, establishing conventional wisdom in planning practice for a generation and more. Meanwhile geographers and sociologists were providing their own understanding of urban form and spatial organisation, emphasizing the neighbourhood as the desirable unit of city building at the local scale.

## THE MOVE TOWARDS STATE PLANNING

Meanwhile another intellectual thrust was developing: the notion of planning as a State activity in social and economic affairs. Town planning, perhaps unwittingly, became an important beneficiary of this wider current in human affairs, and when a full flowering took place in the 1940s, town planning was firmly established in a supportive political context. The notion that society might be comprehensively planned signalled the arrival of the age of Planning, a feature which came to dominate much of the mid-20th century. Enthusiasm for planning first gathered pace as an international phenomenon between the world wars, in the 1920s and 1930s, as a reaction to the apparent failure of the capitalist economies. Britain experienced a severe economic depression in 1921 and a more modest but more prolonged one between 1929 and 1932. The US stock market crash in October 1929, followed by the international financial crisis in 1931, sent shock waves of economic instability and social hardship throughout the industrialised countries. The political initiative towards central planning the USSR, Italy, Germany and Japan suggested that there were alternatives to international capitalism, albeit communist, fascist or militarist inspired. The notion of centrally managed economies gained in attraction. Planning as an article of faith gathered its adherents: order rather than chaos, reason as opposed to chance, both seemed preferable. These after all were formative years of meritocracy and the professional ideal, when professionals replaced the landlords of pre-industrial society and the capitalists of industrial society. Assumptions ran ahead of proof: the arguments were that technical experts were surely more competent than politicians to run society, and that research and conscious choice were preferable to the manipulations of financiers and the invisible hand of the market. A rational, comprehensive approach and an intelligent organization of effort to the affairs of nations was a compelling view, and it was further assumed that, while business men might be involved, the activity of planning would essentially be a matter for public authorities. Drift and chance

would be replaced by guidance and control in a way that would offer the possibilities of a fairer society.

The theoretical and administrative challenge of planning was tackled first in the Soviet Union. A national electrification plan was adopted in 1920, five-year sectoral plans were drawn up and the first official national Five Year Plan was adopted in 1929. The Soviet model of a planned economy appealed to many - not necessarily so much as a political creed (socialism) but as a modern industrial technique where experts were in control. It was argued that democratic institutions simply were not able to engage in long term planning, because technical efficiency was beyond them.

Western attitudes moved sharply in the 1930s. The increased threat of militarism and nationalism world wide (we recall Manchuria, China, Abyssinia and the Rhineland), the sluggish recovery from economic depression, the example of the New Deal in Roosevelt's America and the comprehensive planning scheme of the Tennessee Valley Authority, all, for various reasons, encouraged moves towards the adoption of central control over economic and related social matters. In Britain, the Report of the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Industrial Population (the Barlow Report, 1940) favoured the planned decentralisation of economic activity in the interests of regional equality.

And so informed opinion was increasingly persuaded. But the article of faith had its other side; if the very complexity of modern economic organization was a reason why planning was essential, it was also a reason why it might be impossible. Some recognized that the operations were too various, numerous and complicated to permit planned control; the sheer weight of central administration would choke enterprise. These contrary arguments to planning (to which we shall return later) were powerfully articulated by, among others, Friedrich Hayek, an Austrian economist living in England. *The Road to Serfdom* (1944) issued the seminal warning that full employment, social security and freedom from want could not be had unless they came as by-products of a system that released the free energies of individuals, and

that planning created not certainty, but uncertainty.

Advocacy for central planning won the day convincingly in the arrangements for post-war reconstruction. Only later were we to be disillusioned by its claims. Programmes for economic and social reform were quickly established and far-reaching town planning legislation followed suit. In Britain the town planning profession assumed a mantle of authority it could scarcely have expected. Plans and strategies for town and country were confirmed: they were reasonable, they represented a common sense view of things, regional economic fortunes would recover, the countryside would be protected, and cities would be transformed into economically efficient, socially desirable and environmentally attractive places. Visionary plans for city rebuilding, as by the likes of Patrick Abercrombie and his contemporaries, received broad acclaim.

#### **EXPERIENCES AND REFLECTIONS**

Because of the central role of the State in the social democracies of the west, for at least 30 years, master planning became solidly established. Planning systems were fashioned to permit considerable central control over the operation of private markets in land, housing and development. Pervading both philosophy and practice, the goal of comprehensive planning held sway, evoking the spirit of that ill-understood prophet Patrick Geddes. The State was a self-proclaimed steersman to a nobler future; the State would be the benevolent shaper of the post-war world.

In this context town planning embraced the models current, though hardly dominant, between the wars. The form and function of the future city was decided, following both the strategic model of dispersal and the design model of modernism. Variations on these themes proliferated, often incompatible, but with consequences evident across the western world seen both in the far-flung city and a prevailing form of high-rise architecture for mass housing.

But the confidence of the late 1940s can be contrasted sharply with the uncertainty of our planning arrangements today. Let us look at the results in our urban environments of pursuing

the models which seemed to hold out so much promise half a century ago.

The appeal of individual forms of housing, typically low density and offering variations on the theme of detached or semi-detached dwelling in suburban peripheries, has been a recurrent one. Perhaps best illustrated in Britain, this style of housing has proved infinitely flexible and adaptive. Much has been achieved and the British suburban tradition has many admirers. But the romantic informality sought by Unwin was soon plagiarised and downgraded by a combination of mass production, poor imitation and cost constraints. The motif became standardized in both the private and public sectors, not only inter-war but also post-war housing estates in their time being ridiculed or stigmatised. We have to ask: with rare exceptions, have these new suburban environments become residential areas of enduring quality?

The same verdict can be applied to the results of the garden city movement. In spite of many flirtations throughout Europe, its practical impact has been slender. In Britain only two were built (Letchworth and Welwyn) and we have to turn to the post-war new towns for the full flowering of centrally planned programmes of population redistribution and town building. Twenty eight new towns, all financially successful, attending to the problems of population dispersal, regional regeneration and strategic growth, were no mean feat. But the programme effectively came to an end in 1976 with the termination of Stonehouse (for central Scotland) and the redirection of effort to secure the revival of inner cities. The early new towns reflected all the high hopes of State-directed planning: they were the jewels in the crown for advanced layout, quality of design and novelty of architecture. But in the end they achieved no more than was being accomplished elsewhere, through different agencies in the private sector.

The planned dispersal of population may have got off to a good start, but the limitations of the policy and its consequences are now plain. Where now is the city? In the process of dispersal, have we lost a treasure house of concentration? The function of centrality has been severely weakened,

peripheral nodes now vying for supremacy. And if the centre has lost much of its identity, the edges blur imperceptibly into the rural fringe. The British at least have tried to have the best of both worlds - dispersal *and* containment - and the severely restrictive Green Belt has become a feature of the British planning system. But in a market economy long-term metropolitan planning is extremely difficult; public sector guidance can do little more than steer a course between competing interests in the development of land.

What do we say of the tradition of the grand master plans? Certain European countries have a tradition of greater dirigisme than Britain in these matters. Wren's plan for London after the Great Fire was never put into effect and Britain never had grand Renaissance cities. In the 19th century Paris had its Haussmann and Vienna was transformed after the removal of its old fortifications, but London's improvement at the same time was quite piecemeal. Britain rather distrusts giving power to single-minded town builders. The technocratic solution of the linear city therefore had no appeal; the Modern Architectural Research Group's (MARS) plan for a radically redeveloped London at the outbreak of the Second World War found no echo in later plans for reconstruction. Indeed, since the days of Patrick Abercrombie and Thomas Sharp, British planning has had no coherent vision of town and country, such as might sustain the magisterial overview of a comprehensive plan.

It is with housing, however, that there has been the greatest sense of disillusionment. Popular opinion today would aver that the modern movement in its impact on residential architecture has created unlovable cities. Britain suffered badly when its vernacular tradition was overturned; in other countries where apartment block living was more customary, the building of high rise and tower block settlements has still been sharply criticised. From Oscar Newman's concern over 'defensible space' in New York, to allegations of poor construction standards, inadequate maintenance, and environments of squalor across Europe, hostile rejection of an imposed urban form has been a feature of at least the last two decades. Architecture, professional

competence and the insensitivity of the building industry, it is argued, has simply let us down.

The vision of humane cities now looks very tarnished against the high hopes earlier raised. Vision became self-delusion. There is a feeling that the very professionals in whom so much confidence resided, now cannot be trusted. Their convictions were misplaced; they were creating ideal worlds for themselves, not for a client society. An Athens Charter of guiding principles, 60 years on, would be unthinkable; monopoly of wisdom is no longer seen to reside in professional groups, nor in their views of the future and how to attain it.

Even a cherished dream such as the sanctity of the neighbourhood - its farsighted design as at Radburn, New Jersey, and its later elevation to a sociological as well as a geographical expression through careful layout and land use control - even this has been diluted. Jane Jacobs criticised planners for an obsessive, and ultimately stultifying regard for the single-use concept of neighbourhood planning. Against the American standardized suburban estate, typified in Levittown, her model of Greenwich Village may have been a too-radical alternative to follow, but mixed use is now definitely back in fashion.

So from all sides, cherished models of urban form, the 1940s signposts to the future, currently prove unreliable. Compared with the past, there is now no consensus as to what cities should look like, nor how their internal functions should be arranged. Cities were formerly regarded as artefacts or phenomena which could be guided, shaped and given coherence; they were definitive and could be given boundaries; their historic centres were focal points for tradition and identity. The operation of private markets could not secure their future; capitalism needed a helping hand and the conviction grew that the application of rational forethought and the insights of professional idealism would provide the key. Hence, Western countries developed their particular varieties of control and development systems, but if there is one overall conclusion, it is that these systems have proved effective on things that do not terribly matter, but

much less effective on the really important. Moreover these systems have demonstrated a poor capacity to anticipate and respond to change. Finally in the last quarter of the century, in a dramatic reversal of attitude towards central planning, we have cast off many previous suspicions of the market and turned again to the vigour of private investment as the key structural determinant in city growth. But this is no panacea either, because the operation of post-industrial capitalism, harnessed to modernism, is capable of creating restless, self-destructive cities in which social, economic and environmental extremes lead to a greater degree of polarisation between community groups than we would ever wish. Our post-war experiences, therefore, lead us to disappointment, disillusionment and uncertainty.

### A CONCLUDING VIEW

What has gone wrong? Where do we now turn for models for the future? What signposts to the 21st century city do we follow?

First of all, the nature of our uncertainties: the late 20th century has lost confidence in any notion of one, certain, definitive goal for the city. We are no longer guided by consensual views as to what cities should look like nor how life in big cities might best be organised; rather lamely we conclude that it all depends. We cannot be certain either about our available means of achievement. Emperors, Popes and Princes, fashioning the noble cities of Europe in the grand manner style, were once the great patrons of artistic achievement. Twentieth century exemplars of State enterprise have been much less impressive, as contemporary evidence suggests, nor can we repose much confidence in the power of corporate capital to create buildings or environments of lasting quality.

What remains? It is impossible to think again of private patronage. Can we rely instead on values which more reflect community interests? This would take us into community architecture and stress a respect for vernacular traditions of scale and function. In Britain this is an area where Prince Charles has articulated popular concern and he has usefully exposed a raw nerve in both the architectural profession and the construction industry. The search for

guidance has also opened up possibilities for those who would repose confidence in the virtues of a green environment. Certainly there is much to applaud in the concept of sustainability and the restoration of a balance of nature to our everyday lives, but it is too early yet to say how far a green perspective to town planning will either transform the movement or provide a trusty bed rock in the place of shifting sands in our various environmental dilemmas. In fact I fear that planning may well be marginalised in environmental affairs. Land, after all, is a finite resource and the profession should heed Mark Twain's advice, 'invest in land, my boy, they ain't making it any more'.

These uncertainties oblige us to seek out a set of principles for guidance. My cultural 'mindset' suggests that we should behave differently towards our natural environment: instead of ravaging and wasting it, we should seek out and enhance its richness and variety. We should respect life and we should respect culture; inner significance will always be preferable to outer form. Were we to adopt these perspectives, there would be a consequential bias towards conservation and against unnecessary destruction. We can go on: we should seek social and technological systems where the human identity can be preserved, entailing a presumption against the massive and the depersonalised. Such approaches do not define ideal cities, but at least they provide parameters, in which infinite variety might be expressed.

One signpost for the future then is a very modest one: neither to dream impossible dreams for the future, nor to prepare unachievable plans. Instead the job for the planner is pragmatic and incremental: to closely scrutinise our changing world (a research function), to be an agent, a negotiator and a consultant for desirable developments (an entrepreneurial function in the task of getting things done), and to respect both people and the natural world (a moral function interceding between competing interests). The planner is therefore guided by an enabling philosophy, not a deterministic one. Such a general stance perhaps suits an age in which our cities are bearing the impact of a dynamic, capitalist order and our urban environments seem to be losing

their permanence. Old certainties have gone; at a time of very considerable change, we look again at the principles which should fashion a new planning style.

Let me draw my thoughts together. This survey of 20th century milestones and signposts has served to sketch an unfolding map of the intellectual drives which have powered the planning movement. For much of the century planners (and fellow professionals of the built environment) presented a product model for the future city, the target defined in terms of built form; design, visual qualities, spatial structure and function were all important. The authors were visionaries, technical experts and self-appointed guardians of the public interest; they sought to dictate the future.

In the early years of the century this model was confined to the fringes of informed opinion, though within particular professions conviction increasingly took hold, as with the modern movement in architecture and decentralism in planning. However, the advocacy was swept into higher levels of practicality when, by mid-century, systems of centralist planning in economic and social affairs formed a welcome bosom for the widespread application of planning method, with its matrix of goals and objectives for cities, regions and countryside.

But during the last quarter of a century, and arguably for longer, the product model of planning has given way to a process model, and coincidentally the institutional frameworks of centralist planning have weakened, or indeed fractured, at the same time. The shift in outlook between the two models is profound. Planning is informed less from the disciplines of the built environment, and more from the disciplines of the social sciences. The process model is supported by a recognition that planning is an activity which is as much concerned with the management of change, over time, as with the finite preparation of plans and schemes for development. Moreover, the model recognises a greater role for 'bottom up' as opposed to 'top down' planning. As a consequence the new planning style is one of negotiation, transaction and consultation between practitioner, client and interest groups.

The challenge for the immediate future is to present planning as a marriage of the two models, both product and process. For either to be dominant, or to seek to be independent, will simply court disaster.

In conclusion, let me admit that my canvas has been uncompromisingly broad. But professional planners who neither look at the past nor peer ahead on a world scale will make poor guides for the forward journey. The 19th century lasted until 1914; our present world began in 1945; we are shortly to step into the 21st century, if we have not already done so. The pace of change, already fast, may accelerate. The urban future is unlikely to repeat itself and our past solutions to urban form will be increasingly irrelevant. But in a multi-disciplinary field the planner should hold some important cards: a deep humanity, good judgement and no little dash of vision will help him to reflect on the milestones of the past and the signposts to the future.

#### NOTES

- 1 Public Lecture given at the University of the Witwatersrand on 19 August 1992.
- 2 Emeritus Professor of Urban & Regional Planning, University of Birmingham. Past President. The Royal Town Planning Institute.

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