THE BLITZ AND ITS LEGACY

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ABSTRACTS

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(Re)planning the Metropolis: Process and Product in the Post-War London

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London, by far the UK’s largest city, was both its worst-damaged city during the Second World War and also was clearly suffering from significant pre-war social, economic and physical problems. As in many places, the wartime damage was seized upon as the opportunity to replan, sometimes radically, at all scales from the City core to the county and region. The hierarchy of plans thus produced, especially those by Abercrombie, is often celebrated as ‘models’, cited as being highly influential in shaping post-war planning thought and practice, and innovative. But much critical attention has also focused on the proposed physical product, especially the seductively-illustrated but flawed beaux-arts street layouts of the Royal Academy plans.

Reconstruction-era replanning has been the focus of much attention over the past two decades, and it is appropriate now to re-consider the London experience in the light of our more detailed knowledge of processes and plans elsewhere in the UK. This paper therefore evaluates the London plan hierarchy in terms of process, using new biographical work on some of the authors together with archival research; product, examining exactly what was proposed, and the extent to which the different plans and different levels in the spatial planning hierarchy were integrated; and impact, particularly in terms of how concepts developed (or perhaps more accurately promoted) in the London plans influenced subsequent plans and planning in the UK.
Replanning London: Town, Architecture and Traffic from the First to the Second World War

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After the outbreak of the Second World War, "The question of the Future of London" – as it was defined, on April 10th, 1941 in a letter written by Sir Edwin L. Lutyens to George Wilkinson, Mayor of London – is not only an open matter, but it is also a renewed topic. However, Lutyens introduced it as a subject of study of a special committee he had just appointed at the Royal Academy. The challenge launched during the First World War, when some members of the London Society worked to realize a plan for London of the Future taking into account the imperial metropolis scale, remained without answer. At the beginning of the 1940s, the relationship between Central and Greater London, the attempt to coordinate the control of the city skyline and the overseeing of increasing road and railway traffic are all subjects still requiring a plan for the metropolis. The widespread destructions caused by the new war are a singular opportunity to reopen the debates.

The paper will focus on the continuities between the aims of the London Highway Development Survey (1934-38), committed by the Minister of Transport, Isaac L. Hore-Belisha, to Sir Charles H. Bressey, engineer, and Sir Edwin L. Lutyens, architect, and some initiatives, during the war, taken in reshaping Central London after the bombing raids in 1940-41. Therefore, we will examine the proposals of the Royal Academy Planning Committee, appointed in 1940 and chaired by Lutyens, academic since 1938, with Bressey as a vice-chairman.

The Committee’s projects shown in 1942 aimed to give rise to the debate on the reconstruction of the central areas of London. Combining the study of architectural solutions with the improvement of traffic networks and open spaces, these projects do not represent either a mere heritage of Beaux-Arts architectural precepts widespread in the interwar period in Britain, or a simple resumption of the Haussmann’s urban model. They also express a wider thought on the role of the civic design as it evolves in the cultural and material context resulting from the Blitz.

The paper will point out the way the Royal Academy Planning Committee addressed its action, at least up to 1945. On one side, the first Committee Report (1942), emphasizes the link between the functional reorganization of the core of the metropolis and its architectural design; on the other hand, the changes from the first to the second (1944) Committee Report show the decisive role of the traffic regulation as a topic balancing the monumental effect of architectural shapes: roads, rails and Thames river become the main targets of proposed London improvements. In this way, the Committee tried to attain a wider debate in which Patrick Abercrombie also intervened, already Committee’s member and now engaged in the fulfilment of County of London Plan (1943) and Greater London Plan (1944). Discussing with the Corporation of the City of London in the years 1943-45, the Royal Academy Planning Committee, led by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, claimed its specific interest and contribution in the replanning of the town centre bounded by the Ring Road planned by Bressey and Lutyens since 1935.
The Blitz and the ‘Break-up’ of Working Class London, 1939-1960

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The Blitz impacted on all classes in London, but working class East London and the areas around the docks both north and south of the river suffered particularly badly. Death, disruption, destruction and evacuation were experienced more acutely by the working classes than by other sections of London’s population.

Evacuation affected over 3.5 million people in Britain, and over 1 million Londoners. This paper will examine in particular how enforced evacuation affected working-class London. It will also assess some immediate but also some key longer-term consequences of evacuation: through both experience and expediency, the planned dispersal of wartime working-class Londoners was related to the deliberate post-war ‘decanting’ of Londoners to the new towns and the council estates beyond the London County Council’s administrative area.

The paper offers an assessment of the impact of destruction on working-class London, particularly the East End, and an examination of postwar readings of the alleged fragmentation of the dispersed working classes following what was supposed to have been a time of heightened solidarity among the wartime population. The ‘new’ postwar working class in and around London will be compared with the images of a suffering but stoic proletariat during wartime, while the longer-term legacy of the role of the Blitz in expediting the ‘break-up’ of working-class London will also be assessed. Some wider implications of this state-led dispersal will also be evaluated for their relevance to other processes of officially sanctioned relocation projects.
Destruction, Revival and Reconstruction in Alsace-Lorraine, 1939-1960

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Using archival material and later reports, this paper explores wartime destruction, emergency revival, and definitive reconstruction in Bas-Rhin, Haut-Rhin and Moselle, which had been lost to France following the Franco-Prussian War. After the First World War they were returned to French control. In the interwar years a formidable array of defensive features – the Maginot Line – was installed across northern Lorraine and northern Alsace. In 1939, the German invasion took a route north of the Maginot Line. Subsequently, German troops attacked Lorraine from the west and entered Alsace from the east. Three lines of defences in villages near the Rhine were reduced to ruins, and strategic points in northern Alsace and Moselle were bombed by German planes. When the armistice was signed in 1940, the three départements were (re-)incorporated into the Reich. For much of the war, they were relatively ‘safe’; however, Allied bombing raids on Alsace-Lorraine intensified in 1943 and especially 1944. In late 1944, sustained ground fighting and aerial bombardment gave rise to a third wave of devastation in Moselle, around Mulhouse, and in the ‘Colmar pocket’. By the time that Liberation was achieved in Spring 1945, material destruction was widespread; Bas-Rhin, Haut-Rhin and Moselle were among the nation’s ten most devastated départements.

Clearing mines and shells, effecting rudimentary repairs, providing temporary shelters and other undertaking emergency tasks proved very difficult throughout Alsace-Lorraine where fighting had continued until 1945. The French administrative system had to be restored. Building materials, vehicles, petrol, coal and equipment were in desperately short supply. Local delegations of the Ministère de la Reconstruction et de l’Urbanisme had to record damage and assemble labour to clear debris and mines, and to provide shelter. German prisoners of war were commandeered to assist civilian workers. Architects, planners and surveyors were in short supply; few professionals from the ‘interior’ of France could understand German or local dialects. Despite such problems, mines and shells were removed, damaged houses made weather-proof, and thousands of wooden huts erected to replace lost homes. Whole landscapes of temporary settlement have now disappeared without trace.

The complex task of reconstruction required accurate statements of material loss and claims for compensation. For seriously damaged settlements, reconstruction plans had to be prepared and given official approval. New building materials, especially pre-stressed concrete, and mechanized construction techniques offered possibilities for innovation, however these had to be used cautiously in settlements whose timber-framed houses and tightly-packed morphology had encouraged tourism. Such concerns were acute in the historic vineyard villages of the ‘Colmar pocket’. Gustave Stoskopf and other ‘regionalist’ architects took great pains to create an illusion of authenticity in the external appearance of reconstruction. This illusion is so effective that visitors may be forgiven for assuming that they are seeing authentic, traditional settlements. By contrast, central Mulhouse, Neudorf and reconstructed settlements in Moselle display uncompromisingly modern styles. Using prefabricated components and mechanized building techniques, apartment blocks of the Cité Rotterdam were constructed at Strasbourg in the early 1950s to provide permanent accommodation for bombed-out Strasbourgeois who had been placed in huts in the German settlement of Kehl across the Rhine.
The People’s Peace: The Myth of Wartime Unity and Public Consent for Town Planning

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Most historians rightly see the Blitz as a catalyst for British town planning because it violently opened up the physical space of many cities for large-scale interventions. However, the ways in which the Blitz also created a unique social space for planning is less well known. Nostalgic representations of the Blitz depicted the experience as a brief moment in which the shared hardship of war had promoted unity and cooperation. This ‘myth of the Blitz’ became a powerful social force harnessed by public officials to imagine a new vision of democratic governance that could cultivate political participation across class and geographical divides. Building on this myth of social cohesion, planners argued that the Blitz had fostered the necessary political climate for obtaining public consent for new land-use planning legislation.

During the 1940s, as planners tried to encourage public interest and support for town planning, they began to worry that public consent was waning with the fading memory of the Blitz experience. They expressed concern that once the war ended, the spirit of individualism common before the war would resurface, again restraining the ability of planners to shape urban growth. In their propaganda and publicity, planners expressed nostalgia for the unity for the Blitz, and tried to revive that experience by directing collective action into planning for peace. For this reason, planners sought to create a forum for a diverse range of citizens to actively engage in the process of town planning. However, the tensions between the ideal view of class relations and political engagement propagated in the myth, and the complex political reality in which planners had to operate led to discrepancies between the rhetoric and the practice of public participation.

This paper will look at how planners represented the Blitz experience in their rhetoric from 1940 until 1947 when they passed new town planning legislation. Examining how the public was imagined, represented, and called into action highlights the way in which planners internalized and harnessed the ‘myth of the Blitz.’ This paper argues that these wartime ideas about democracy greatly influenced the methods employed by planners to consult citizens about town planning issues. Unpacking the mythical unity and consent on which these methods were founded shows the potent role that the ‘myth of the Blitz’ played in shaping both the successes and failures of public participation strategies in the 1940s.
This paper examines the complex relationship between war, architecture, and modernity by considering the transformation of the London Underground into a mass shelter during World War II. If war always entails a violent subversion of everyday life, the advent of aerial warfare took this issue to a whole new dimension. The Zeppelin raids over London, in World War I, drove thousands of people to seek refuge in underground stations, leaving an indelible mark in the collective memory of Londoners which was going to haunt the city years later. In the inter-war period, the London Underground was established as a modern, progressive, and visually coherent transportation system, providing a subterranean order to a notoriously scattered city. Meanwhile, the rapid development of airpower, epitomised by the wholesale bombing of towns during the Spanish Civil War, became a cause of great concern in Britain. Various measures of civil defence were investigated as part of the official policy of Air Raid Precautions (ARP). Far from being merely a technical problem, the issue of mass shelter became a heated ideological battleground in the run-up to World War II. While a strong case for the need of bombproof structures was made by a group of progressive architects and scientists (including Berthold Lubetkin, Serge Chermayeff and J.B.S. Haldane), the Conservative Government adopted a firm stance against the provision of communal shelters. Hence, when the Blitz over London started, many Londoners sought shelter once again in the Tube. In a well-documented twist, the Underground was first spontaneously occupied, then reluctantly organised by the authorities into a vast subterranean refuge without disrupting the transportation system. During the Blitz, the Tube provided a makeshift habitat for thousand of shelterers whose everyday life took place in the public gaze: the relationship between body and space was radically redefined while conventional barriers between private and public broke down. The orderly and sanitised image of the Underground was forever altered as the Tube became the theatre of an unprecedented type of communal life, which was to become central to the iconography of the Blitz. Artists’ impressions of the Tube shelters ranged from buoyant portrayals of everyday life (Joseph Batò) to subtler depictions that drew out the surreal conditions of the ‘underground people’ (Bill Brandt), as well as timeless images of human suffering (Henry Moore). Interestingly, the cave-like environment of the Tube provided not only the subject of numerous literary and visual represenations of urban life during the Blitz, but also the model for the construction of new ‘deep tunnel’ shelters either side of the Thames. By connecting these various historical threads, the paper revisits the episode of the Tube shelters in terms of its distinctive spatiality, and discusses material and symbolic aspects of the underground tunnel as a feature of the metropolis in the age of total war.
The Bethnal Green Tube Shelter Disaster: A Wartime Cover-up?

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On March 3, 1943, Britain suffered its greatest wartime civilian loss of life, when 173 people perished at the Bethnal Green tube shelter during an air raid. At 8:17 p.m. on 3 March, the air-raid warning sounded and a large number of people in the Bethnal Green area started to make their way towards the shelter. According to most accounts, people were entering the shelter in an orderly fashion and without haste, when, without warning, a salvo of anti-aircraft rockets were discharged from nearby Victoria Park. The loud swooshing sound given off by these new A.A. guns had never been heard before by the people of Bethnal Green and was immediately mistaken for German bombs. Compounded with frightened people screaming, the large crowd flew into a panic and surged ahead, desperate to gain shelter. A woman fell, either as a result of this surge or as an “unlucky coincidence”, on the third step from the bottom while holding or leading a child, creating a domino effect and within 90 seconds some 300 people were entangled in a mass pile-up.

Shelter wardens and civilians immediately tried to free people from the entanglement, but with little success. The lack of light due to the blackout along with the adverse weather conditions made the task even more difficult. The first ambulance arrived at 8:50 and by 11.30 all of the casualties had been removed from the stairway and taken to various hospitals and churches throughout Bethnal Green and the East End. In total 173 people were killed, 60 were treated for serious injuries and 10 were released with only bumps and bruises.

But why did it take over two days for the news of the disaster to reach the public? My paper will examine how the details of the incident were immediately censored by the British Government and why the findings of the subsequent inquest were withheld from the public for almost two years. It also explains how the Home Secretary and other members of the War Cabinet came to this conclusion and why they chose this course of action.
Reconstructing Civic Authority in Postwar Germany

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For centuries, many of the most notable buildings in German cities were those that housed political authority. In Berlin, Stuttgart, Dresden and Munich, one found both large royal palaces and prominent town halls. In cities such as Cologne and Hamburg, it was the city halls that enjoyed pride of place. Many cities also featured large court houses and police headquarters. These buildings helped shape the identity of the cities, and when the bombing of the Second World War obliterated the buildings, local identity was threatened as well. As a consequence, when it came to reconstruction, public authorities and architects faced significant choices. They could seek to repair or recreate historic structures in their original styles, or they could erect new buildings in a modern style. These choices were caught up in long-standing debates about modernism and debates about the relationship between form and politics. Was it in fact true that new political forms required new forms of architecture? Should one reject not only historical and historicist architecture but also the monumental neoclassicism favoured by National Socialism? In choosing modern architecture, was one in some way rejecting German national values in favour of internationalism? This paper will explore these debates and examine some of the choices made in a number of German cities.
La Ville Éventrée; or, How Bombing Turned the City Inside Out

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France was bombed by the Germans during the summer of 1940, and thereafter by the Allies. Around 60,000 French civilians were killed by Allied bombing during a campaign which absorbed nearly a quarter of the Allies’ European bombing effort. While some towns were ‘blitzed’ in one-off raids, others experienced steady bombing over four years; air raids and the consequent damage became part of daily life, their impact still visible in reconstructed cities, and their legacy alive in memory. While the source material in this paper is French, the ideas are universally applicable to bombed cities, concerning survival and destruction in the aftermath of aerial attack.

This paper takes as a starting point a word used in French to describe bomb-damaged structures: éventré (translated as ‘disembowelled’). Drawing on a series of oral history interviews with childhood eyewitnesses of the Allied bombing conducted by the author, it examines the way in which bombing vividly and viscerally turned the city inside out. It will travel through the city, moving from larger ‘structures’ to smaller ones: from streets, to homes, to inhabitants.

A child’s world is small, limited to home, school and local streets. For the eyewitnesses, reassuring local landscapes were destroyed by bombing. The contours of the city changed as exteriors crumbled and obstacles appeared; familiar spots, streets and parks, became menacing, forbidden places. A conflict existed between street and building: was safety to be found in open spaces, away from the horror of collapsing buildings? Or was safety still present inside four walls, sheltered from falling missiles? This conflict appears in the narratives, as adults shepherded children to perceived safe places, in cities where bombs had upended normal ideas of security.

Children should feel safest at home. Yet the eyewitnesses saw bombs that had penetrated the secure interior of the home – the outside inside. The effect was to make public the most private parts of a home. Bombs laid bare for all to see the intimacy of family life – the inside outside – demonstrating the reach of total war as it forced its way into the domestic world. Home was no longer a place of safety.

Finally, the paper moves on to the city’s inhabitants, providing the most literal link to the image of disembowelment: the impact of bombing on the human body. Like streets, like homes, the human body was turned inside out, opened up and scattered, by bombing, in deaths witnessed by the children, narrated by the adults.

The concept of inside-outside arose from the interviews unprompted. Its basis is in the interviewees’ own words and descriptions. The concept takes several forms. Yet these forms correspond and collide within the stories: the idea of a weapon that turns streets, homes and bodies inside out emerges as part of a collective imagery of the impact of bombs on lives and their legacy in memory.
The Post-war Battle to Replan Plymouth: Insights from the Correspondence between Key Actors

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Previous research on the reconstruction of many British cities, including Plymouth, has presented a relatively simple version of redevelopment as being swift, harmonious and heroic. Using a rich but neglected archive of original correspondence between key actors involved in the reconstruction of Plymouth, namely those of the city’s wartime Lord Mayor (Lord Astor), the Town Clerk (Colin Campbell), the City Engineer and Surveyor (James Paton Watson) and the consultant planner (Sir Patrick Abercrombie), a much more complex and dynamic story is revealed (Essex and Brayshay, 2007, 2008). The formulation, modification and implementation of the Plan for Plymouth (1943) is shown to be filled with tensions and less than satisfactory compromises amongst the groups involved. While the formulation of the plan itself, with its radical and ambitious proposals, was the work of a relatively small elite network, its implementation drew in other much larger groups of actors and interests. It will be demonstrated that the interactions and tensions amongst the players in these bigger networks led to significant compromises and, ultimately, there was a mismatch between the original vision and the reality that was delivered. This paper provides new insights into the process of reconstruction by utilising the theory of actor-networks to evaluate the mismatch between the intentions set out in post-war urban reconstruction plans and their actual implementation.

References

From James Braidwood to Jim Braidy: How Britain Got Its National Fire Service

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Fire-fighters and the British fire service have been noticeably absent from the historiography on the wartime experience of the home front during the Blitz. Our view of the fire-fighters’ experience is generally epitomised in Humphrey Jennings’ homogenising treatment of Blitz fire-fighting in *Fires Were Started* (1943), a mythical narrative of one night’s action in London. Meanwhile, historians of the fire service tend to interpret the Blitz as playing a formative role in fostering social solidarity and camaraderie between regular firemen and the hordes of wartime auxiliaries drafted in to help defend Britain against incendiary attack. In much the same way as it pulled together men and women of different social classes and creed, the Blitz is conventionally described as uniting hitherto disparate fire-fighting services into a unified ‘Fire Service’, completed with the establishment of the National Fire Service in the summer of 1941.

Taking its cue from Helen Jones’ compelling argument that people’s contributions to the war effort were borne out by complex *local* social and cultural identities, rather than any uniform identity, this paper explores the presence of diverse and heterogeneous characters within British wartime fire-fighting. By focusing on the multitudinous voices involved in combating Blitz fires, but equally in shaping the wartime and post-war reforms, I contend that the notion of a universal fire-fighting identity was one that was constructed by senior fire-fighters and policy-makers alike to meet the immediate challenge of building a National Fire Service. I will examine some of the cultural modes in which the ideal – and idealized – fire-fighter (based upon a fictional fireman called ‘Jim Braidy’) was constructed, appropriated and resisted by regular and auxiliary fire-fighters alike.
Reconstruction Constraints: Political and Economic Realities

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The rebuilt city centres of the 1950s and 1960s are probably the last places that come to mind when England’s “green and pleasant land” is evoked. Indeed, the popular rhetoric of the 1980s and 90s condemned both “planners” and “architects” of these urban landscapes. But this view is short-sighted and relatively ahistorical. The reality was that rebuilding involved numerous factors that had little to do with the planning profession per se, not least the economic situation in post-war Britain, and both the Labour government and its Conservative successor found this was among the most difficult tasks they faced.

The push and pull between desires and priorities, between what the voting public wanted and needed, was and remains a constant battle. British planners and as well as city councils, and eventually developers, had to work within the context of political and economic factors they could not control. These factors both delayed rebuilding and dictated what could be built, as well as when and how. Beyond the obvious constraints of legislation, supplies and coordination, there is also plentiful evidence that neither postwar government considered rebuilding the city centres a priority in any way other than rhetorically.

In the past twenty years scholars have devoted increased attention to the reconstruction and rebuilding of Britain after the Second World War. Much research has focused on the planning histories of individual cities, while considerable work has also been undertaken on the post-war governments and the economic situation in Britain. But more work remains to be done to synthesize those two approaches, and to look at the realities faced by the blitzed provincial cities who retained empty core areas into the mid 1950s and beyond. Historians of physical planning and those who study political and economic history have worked separately for the most part, where collaboration could greatly enhance their findings.

This paper therefore examines the post-war situation and the subsequent planning apparatus – physical and economic – that determined the shapes of the rebuilt cities. The discussion considers the 1944 and 1947 planning legislation as well as the implementation and follow-up by the subsequent Conservative government of 1951. Changes in government ministries and the functions and influence of various planning bodies such as the Investment Programmes Committee are considered, as well as local machinery for planning and rebuilding.

In the end a surprisingly low level of Government priority given to the blitzed cities - by both Labour and Conservative governments – and the lack of investment due to the low political prioritization – meant that the slow and costly process of reconstruction was mainly left to local councils. Much lip service was given to the blitzed cities, to their heroics and their needs, yet this seldom led to actual assistance from the Government. Additionally the city councils faced huge new hurdles from the implementation of the 1947 legislation. In conclusion, the paper appraises the realities faced by city councils and the oft-ignored constraints they faced in getting any building work started.
‘He Really Misses that White Helmet of His’: The Role of the Blitz and Civil Defence in Ealing’s Postwar Social Vision

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This paper will analyse two key aspects of the influence of the Blitz and the Second World War as a whole on the representation of society in Ealing Studio's post-war output. Firstly, I will discuss how Ealing films used the model provided by wartime institutions for their vision and interpretation of post-war society, tracing this development from Ealing's keynote Blitz film, *The Bells Go Down* (1943) through to films such as *Passport to Pimlico* (1949) and *The Blue Lamp* (1950). This continuous championing of the importance of the institution reflected growing concern about the survival prospects of the traditional 'small community' and the desire to formalise it in more concrete forms.

Secondly, I will also trace Ealing's representation of the Blitz and its impact, from wartime through to the peace. Ealing's war-era films depicted the bombing as having a purging and purifying impact on British society, as well as literally creating space for the redevelopment of Britain's cities. Yet as I will indicate, the bombsite increasingly lost its positive connotations in post-war Ealing's productions, becoming instead associated with the disillusionment over the slow pace of reconstruction and with worsening urban decay.
The Public, Nuclear War, and the Legacy of the Blitz in Cold War Britain

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The dropping of the atomic bomb in 1945 is often presented as a revolutionary break in world history, the moment when the nature of war changed forever. Reactions to the atomic bomb were typified by fear, with the belief often expressed that war needed to ‘abolished’ in order to save mankind. This paper argues that although nuclear weapons were often discussed as a revolutionary political and military development, cultural ways of envisaging war, destruction and survival remained firmly rooted in the past. The experience of war and destruction in the Second World War provided the frameworks of understanding for the public in cold war Britain, borrowing the language of survival and the rhetoric of active citizenship and voluntarism from the discourse of ‘the People’s War’. By drawing on this imagery, equating the potential destruction of a future war with the story of the blitz, British culture downplayed the destructive power of the atomic bomb in the first decade after 1945. Only when the enormous power of the hydrogen bomb became known in 1954 did it become impossible to contain ideas of nuclear destruction within this previous ‘blitz’ framework. The paper, therefore, will conclude that the legacy of the blitz and the persistence of a Second World War-era idea of enemy attack throughout the atomic age meant that the real ‘revolutionary break’ in the understanding of nuclear war occurred not in 1945 with the advent of atomic bombs, but in 1954 when the hydrogen bomb destroyed the ability to elide ideas of nuclear destruction with the story of the blitz.
American air-raids during the Second World War devastated a number of cities in Japan; effects were particularly severe in the large areas of traditional wooden housing. About a year after the end of the hostilities, the government designated 115 cities as war-damaged. But by that time substantial progress had already been made on the reconstruction planning of these cities, based on the planning principles for reconstruction formulated by the ministry responsible for war-damage reconstruction.

In recent years a significant increase in interest in the war-damage reconstruction planning in Japan has resulted in a few important works in English on this topic, dealing with a small number of important cases such as Tokyo, Osaka and Hiroshima. But there still remains much room for further examination into many other blitzed cities. In particular, surprisingly little is known in regard of how the public reacted to reconstruction planning and what consequences their reaction brought about; and this paper aims to shed new insight on these under-explores aspects.

Particular attention will be given to the case of Sendai, the capital of Miyagi Prefecture in Tohoku Region, northern part of Japan. In Sendai, the proposed principal road from the main railway station caused contention involving local politicians as well as inhabitants, which led to a serious political scandal.
Although the Second World War in Europe had left many cities, such as Coventry, Dresden and Berlin, devastated, their ruins were, to some extent, inhabitable. In Japan the situation was rather different. The timber construction which characterised the domestic housing stock laid the cities open to total conflagration by incendiary and, ultimately, atomic bombing. Nagaoka was razed in less than three hours on the night of 1 August 1945; Hiroshima in less than three minutes barely five days later. Indeed, the Ministry of Construction estimated that, nationwide, 2.1 million dwellings had been lost and a further 55,000 pulled down to create firebreaks.

Through the use of a few prime examples, this paper will investigate the rebuilding of Japan during and immediately following the American occupation (which continued until 1952) and the extent to which traditional Japanese forms survived within an apparently new architectural vocabulary. The occupation led to the reorganisation of the government and, in turn, to the building of a great number of new civic buildings. As public buildings they needed to be symbolic and it was around these buildings, and the architects who built them, that, in the 1950s, the debate on Tradition and Modernity developed. For these buildings could not, on the one hand, reflect the imagery of Imperial Japan yet they could not, on the other, fully adopt the architectural language of the occupying power.

The competition for the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum was won in 1949 by Kenzo Tange. Born in 1913, Tange had trained as an architect in Imperial Japan but, through his association with Kunio Maekawa, who in the 1930s had worked in Paris for Le Corbusier, Tange was familiar with European modernism. It is in this light that the Peace Memorial Museum is usually seen — a concrete pavilion raised on piloti recalling, perhaps, Le Corbusier’s Unité d’habitation at Marseilles (1946-52). Yet it was not until 1951 that Tange, on the occasion of the eighth CIAM (Congrès internationaux d’architecture moderne) meeting, which he attended with Maekawa, visited Le Corbusier in Paris and travelled to Marseilles to see the Unité. Despite its entirely modern appearance, the Peace Memorial Museum evokes what Tange’s first biographer, Robin Boyd, called ‘a curiously evocative Japanese touch’ (Boyd, 1962, p. 9).

There is something equally Japanese while, at the same time, clearly modernist about the government offices which Tange built at Takamatsu (1955-58) and Kurashiki (1958-60), and which Junzo Sakakura, another pupil of Le Corbusier’s, built at Hashima (1958). Whether this is in the evocation of Japanese features, such as fusuma and shoji screens or namako walls, the reflection of Japanese building types, such as tenshu structures or the Shinto arch, or in the adoption of Japanese building traditions, such as the azejura or sukiya styles, the past, and thus the continuation of tradition, was never totally expunged from post-war Japanese architecture.

Reference

Max Lock and ‘Democratic Planning’ in Bedford, c.1945-60

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In recent years, there has been considerable argument about why the ‘planners’ moon’ of the immediate post-war years apparently waned so quickly and left so little trace. Much of this debate has focused on the bombed cities and new towns. This paper breaks fresh ground by considering developments in a type of location that is less well known but equally illuminating — a shire town, a quintessential centre of ‘Englishness’.

The Borough of Bedford had an area of 4,972 acres and a population of about 50,000. It was a county town and market centre, standing on an important river (the Ouse), with many old streets, dilapidated houses, and poor traffic flows. In 1950, pressed with the need to comply with the Labour Government’s planning legislation, the local council, Conservative-dominated, appointed Max Lock as planning consultant, in order to prepare Bedford for the Festival of Britain.

Lock had already worked on plans for Hull (1942), Middlesbrough (1946), Hartlepool (1948), and Portsmouth (1949), as well as having been a councilor in neighbouring Watford. Lock’s final plan, Bedford by the River, was published in 1952. He recommended an enlarged shopping centre with adequate car parks; better traffic lay-out, encompassing two relief roads and a new bridge; eight neighborhood units, with shops, pubs, and welfare facilities; and the re-location of local industries in the urban core to a dedicated 119-acre site on the periphery. Most adventurously, Lock proposed opening up the banks of the River Ouse to the public, turning them into a sort of cultural and leisure centre, featuring a cinema, theatre, indoor swimming pool, restaurant, and café. His intention, he explained, was to work in a new way, planning with the inhabitants rather than for them, thus transforming what had previously been a largely technical discipline into ‘a democratic process’.

This paper examines how Lock proceeded in Bedford, and comments on various aspects of his final recommendations. My object is to explain why Bedford opted for planning; analyse what Lock suggested; and trace how his ideas fared during the following ten years. To what extent was the plan implemented, and why? How did the local political parties handle the issue? Was the pace of rebuilding shaped solely by economic concerns? Or was popular prejudice the key factor? Finally, I will comment on 1950s planning process as a whole, and analyse what ‘democracy’ and ‘modernism’ meant in a provincial setting.
Incorporating “Authentic Substance” in the Post-war Rebuilding of the City of London’s Livery Halls

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Of the 36 extant halls belonging to the City of London’s ‘old’ livery companies, those incorporated between the 14th and 18th centuries, at least 20 are replacements for buildings damaged or destroyed in the Blitz (and one, the Ironmongers’, is a 1920s reconstruction of a hall bombed by German planes in July 1917). In the course of rebuilding in the 1950s and even later, many companies favoured neo-Georgian exteriors and, inside, neo-Jacobean plaster- and woodwork. This mostly uninspired revivalism (along with what Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner have called the companies’ urge ‘constantly to redecorate, polish, and burnish every visible surface’) has not tended to attract architectural historians, let alone students of what Mark B. Pohlad has in the context of the Blitz called the ‘visual registration’ of architectural loss. Even so, these halls incorporate fragments of their predecessors, often painted glass and carved coats of arms: relatively detachable, memorializing ornaments equivalent to the items of historic plate, for example, which liverymen always tried to save when disaster threatened. Yet we also find other items – keystones, doors and gates (such as those at the Innholders’ and Salters’ halls), panelling – which had not been made as memorials. The practice is obviously attributable to the antiquarian impulse; it is also economical, and increases the marketability of premises available for temporary hire. The halls are, however, the homes of fraternities whose corporate self-fashioning turns on their keen sense of their own long and distinctive histories. For this reason their use of ‘authentic substance’, architectural spoils valued for their status as material and recognizable fragments of previous halls, offers a good opportunity to begin studying the practice within the general context of post-war reconstruction.

Not all of the halls destroyed in 1940–41 dated from the previous mass construction programme, the result of the Great Fire of 1666: 13 of the post-War halls, the Clothworkers’ for example, replaced 18th- or 19th-century buildings. Yet as a widespread catastrophe the Fire occupies a place in company histories comparable to that of the Blitz, and the wider historical comparisons between the two have been drawn ever since 1940, when the urban historian T. F. Reddaway wrote that ‘catastrophe and reconstruction never age’. This paper seeks in its own way to incorporate the fragment, as described above, into this wider impulse to universalize disasters and the opportunities they offer.
The Barbican estate is a vast housing complex, with a full-fledged arts centre (opened in 1982), right in the heart of the financial and business district of London. It is a unique example of high-density middle-income residential development, comprising 13 slab blocks over a podium and three towers arranged around a lake and communal gardens, and stands on a site largely obliterated by the Blitz in 1940-41. In common with much of the City, it was first assumed that private developers would come along and carry out the rebuilding. Then in the course of the 1950s a radical plan of residential development for the Barbican area was proposed as a public alternative to the rapid expansion of private office development in the City of London and was pushed through by the City Corporation acting as its own developer. The construction took the best part of next two decades and it eventually became the biggest single inner-city reconstruction project undertaken by a public authority in post-war Britain.

The Barbican, however, has since had a mixed reception. By the time the residential estate was completed in the 1970s the tide of conservation had turned and the enormous concrete development with its uncompromising look instantly became a period piece, gaining the reputation as one of the last examples of the Brutalist 'megastructure' in Britain. A 'Model for a Short-lived Future' was how the *Architectural Review* prefaced its extended review in 1973. Subsequently, the fact that it was seen as a rather exclusive, middle-class development gave rise to a good deal of adverse comment about the social composition of the estate. Phrases such as 'Britain's largest voluntary ghetto', ‘a cosmopolitan business club with extensive residential accommodation’ or ‘a council estate for the rich’ became commonplace. In more recent years, with a global trend towards urban regeneration and a renaissance of urban living in British cities, renewed interest has been shown in the Barbican estate. Today it is regarded as an ambitious example of post-war urban renewal which succeeds in reconciling high density with privacy and spaciousness to create an attractive urban environment.

This paper explores the genesis of the Barbican estate, looking at the impact of the Blitz on the City of London with special reference to the Barbican area, the origins of the residential scheme, some of the problems encountered in the implementation of the plan and its changing critical reception. The estate complex was listed grade II in September 2001. As far as the Barbican is concerned, it could be said that the legacy of the Blitz, in more than one sense, has come full circle.
The majority of disabled children in England spent their war years in residential special schools, most of which had been set up specifically to accommodate the many special day schools evacuated from areas deemed vulnerable to air attack. As a result, new communities of children and teachers were established. This paper examines the conditions within those residential special schools and the ways in which the children and teachers reacted to their new surroundings. Some comparisons are made with able-bodied evacuees, both in evacuation experiences and in the reaction to them by the general public.

The paper begins by examining aspects of the children’s safety, both within the schools and in regards to issues of location. In doing this, the paper discusses the attitudes and actions of the ‘unseen’ decision makers such as government officials and property owners. Premises included hotels, holiday camps, stately homes and even a castle. Many of these were adapted, some more successfully than others, and some had less than adequate air raid precautions. They differed in levels of clothing and equipment, and in degrees of accessibility for the more physically challenged. Perhaps more importantly, they differed in quality of staff. With children away from their parents, often for the first time, they relied heavily on the teaching and management staff for their safety and general welfare. Some teachers rose to the occasion, others could not, or would not, deal with their new responsibilities.

The paper then examines the end of the evacuation and the ways in which the children were returned to their homes and peace-time schools. This was not always a straightforward process and for some children it took place several years after the end of the war. Finally, the paper assesses the effects of the war on post-war social policy in relation to the expansion of special schools, both residential and day schools.
The Warren Fisher Debris Clearance Organisation and the London Repair Executive 1940-1945

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Just three weeks after the beginning of the blitz, a backlog of three million tons of debris had built up across the London Region blocking some 1,300 roads and covering hundreds of damaged water and gas mains. Although casualties were far less than predicted, the physical damage to the metropolis exceeded the abilities of the local authority debris clearance and public utility repair teams. On 29 September 1940 the Government appointed the former head of the Civil Service, Sir Warren Fisher, as Special Commissioner to coordinate the exceptional measures needed to demolish unsafe structures, clear debris, repair roads and utility services and salvage useful materials.

Warren Fisher encouraged the setting up of the London County Council (LCC) War Debris Survey (WDS) to coordinate local authority and contractors’ work forces. Within days, Fisher supplemented these with the services of 13,000 soldiers, including many specialist troops, on the condition that they would be replaced as his civilian labour force built up. Another Special Commissioner (H U Willink KC MP) was appointed to coordinate the relief of the homeless, meanwhile the new and necessary system of war damage compensation was entrusted to Mr Malcolm Trustram Eve heading the new War Damage Commission.

By May 1941 most of Fisher’s soldiers had been returned to their military duties but the task of repairs, debris clearance and disposal and salvage continued to occupy tens of thousands of men and much transport until the end of, and beyond, the end of the war. Early in 1942 Fisher was sacked over a totally unrelated matter by Herbert Morrison, the Minister of Home Security, and the War Debris Survey was continued under the LCC Architect (J H Forshaw) and its Chief Engineer (Sir Peirson Frank).

The WDS moved much debris out of London for building the new British and American airfields and by 1944, both the repair and debris clearance tasks were well in hand. But when the V-weapon weapon offensives on London opened in the summer of 1944, the massive damage again required the repair and debris clearance organisation. Each missile destroyed and damaged hundreds of houses across the London Region and their repair required the style of coordination of labour and material supply that had been pioneered by Fisher’s organisation. Consequently, in September 1944, the Ministry of Works established the London Repair Executive, under the now Sir Malcolm Trustram Eve, to better coordinate the work of local authorities, their contractors, the use of a massive labour force and the best use of limited materials to meet the growing housing crisis.

A legacy of the blitz, the concept of using successful regional organisations to coordinate work across local authority boundaries was firmly established by 1945.
Reconstruction and Conservation Movements outside a Comprehensive Planning Framework in Kurashiki, Japan, after the Second World War

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After the Second World War, no reconstruction plans were produced in Japan in the form of “comprehensive master plans”. In almost all of the war-damaged cities, land readjustment programmes were put into practice under the leadership of the central government.

In some cases immediately after the War there was pressure for cities to draw up their own reconstruction plans. For example Okayama produced a draft reconstruction plan but the new mayor was purged and land readjustment projects were instead progressed. Kurashiki, an industrial city close to Okayama, had little war damage. However, there was some movement for reconstruction around the city area. One element was the designation of a scenic area in Sakazu; another was a movement to conserve a traditional residential area in the city centre. The former area was developed to facilitate good irrigation and flood control through restructuring the Takahashi-gawa river. The huge fields surrounding the Takahashi-gawa often suffered from floods. After the restructuring works, huge areas were improved for industrial and residential uses. Sakazu was shaped as a scenic area by planting cherry, maple and pine trees before the War. The latter movement aimed to reevaluate, conserve and improve the traditional city centre area. This had many traditional Japanese houses built in the Edo, Meiji and Taisho periods (before c. 1930). Modern spinning mills and dormitories for mill workers also built adjoining this area.

The designation of the Sakazu scenic area and the planning and construction movements of the Mizushima industrial areas were facilitated by the leadership of the prefectural and central governments around the mouth of Takahashi-gawa. The latter rebuilding movement led to the ordinance for the Preservation of Traditional Scenic Beauty by the city. This was another reconstruction movement in Kurashiki.

This is the first study of these popular movements, the beginnings of conservation planning in post-war Japan, which took place outside the more common large-scale replanning and land readjustment processes.