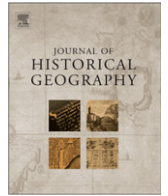


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Class cities: Classics, utopianism and urban planning in early twentieth-century Britain

Richard Alston

Department of Classics, Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX, UK

Abstract

This article examines the intellectual background to debates in the town planning movement in early twentieth-century Britain. The movement drew heavily on two traditions, that of the anarchists, who provided much of the theory, and that of the philanthropists. The reception of the Classical city influenced these debates through the provision of key paradigms. These paradigms were predominantly sociological rather than architectural and related to the 'ideal' societies to be generated by the new cities. The article argues that urban planning followed a path parallel to British sociology in adopting Classical ideas and forming itself around particular Classicising imaginings of society. Whereas the anarchist tradition exploited the Classical cautiously, differentiating the cities of Rome from the Classical *poleis* of Greece and finding in those Greek traditions the possibility of radical associative democracy, town planners in the British tradition came to engage with the Classical in a very different way. Through figures such as Patrick Geddes, the influence of Classicism served to divest British urban planning of its political radicalism and the Classical *polis* was used to offer a utopianism which was hierarchical and conservative.

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In 1910, the year after town planning became a statutory duty in Britain, the Camden Professor of Ancient History, Francis Haverfield, delivered a lecture to the inaugural meeting of the Town Planning Association.¹ Haverfield's contribution was such a success that an extended version, *Ancient Town Planning*, was published 3 years later, a book which is notable for its numerous plans and which is part of a recognisable genre of ancient topographical studies. The emphasis on plans represents the city as a work of art and as an expression of a particular form of culture, though Haverfield does not acknowledge the complexity of the link between sociology and built form.² While there is little in Haverfield's account that explicitly recognises contemporary concerns, his emphasis on formal architectural elements, especially monumental architecture, and his lack of concern with housing has much in common with the city-improvement movements of the nineteenth century, such as the City Beautiful movement of Chicago,

and the work of influential German urban thinkers, such as Wagner and Sitte.³

Town planning from the chair: the Camden professor and the city

The very presence of the Camden professor at this inaugural meeting suggests a link between Classical urban thought and the nascent town planning movement. Haverfield was defending the relevance of his discipline in the early twentieth century, just as the town planners were acknowledging a prestigious historical pedigree to their art. In retrospect an alliance between a Roman historian and the planning profession might seem uncontroversial, especially as Roman archaeology provided the largest repertoire of known planned cities available for study. Yet the relationship between Classical urban models and the designs of the town

E-mail address: r.alston@rhul.ac.uk

¹ F. Haverfield, Town planning in the Roman world, *Town Planning Review* (1910) 123–132.

² F. Haverfield, *Ancient Town Planning*, Oxford, 1913. The concept of urban morphology is first fully expressed in R. Maunier, *L'Origine et la Fonction économique des Villes (Étude de morphologie sociale)*, Paris, 1910, especially, 9–10, in which Maunier argues that material (*choses*) and environment (*habitat*) determine society, though there was clearly an earlier assumption of such a link. Haverfield's approach remains influential in Classical studies, see for example E.J. Owens, *The City in the Greek and Roman World*, London, 1991; A. Segal, *From Function to Monument: Urban Landscapes of Roman Palestine, Syria and Provincial Arabia*, Oxford, 1997, and C. Gates, *The Archaeology of Urban Life in the Ancient Near East and Egypt, Greece and Rome*, London and New York, 2003.

³ See C. Smith, *The Plan of Chicago: Daniel Burnham and the Remaking of the American City*, Chicago and London, 2006; J. Gilbert, *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893*, Chicago and London, 1991. The city as work of art was central to the conceptions of the city in O. Wagner, *Modern Architecture* (trans by H.T. Mallgrave), Santa Monica, 1988, 1st Edition 1896], and C. Sitte, *Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen*, Wien, 1889.

planners was far from straightforward. Haverfield's contribution was, in fact, contentious, though his sententiousness was, typically, buried under the weight of evidence he presented. His championing of the Classical form, and in particular Roman urbanism, was in marked contrast with the explicit anti-Classicism of the early British town planning movement.

That tension was reflected in architecture. Whereas some of the most prominent examples of nineteenth-century planning, as in St Petersburg, New Delhi, and Washington or the grand urban remodelling of the Haussmann tradition, referenced Classical precursors within a Baroque or a neo-Classical style, British urban planners of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were drawn to different architectural traditions. In particular, they looked to the legacy of model villages, ranging from Milton Abbas in 1780 through experimental settlements such as Robert Owen's socialistic settlement at New Lanark (1799 and later), and industrial villages such as Titus Salt's Saltaire (c.1860) and the Cadbury village at Bournville (c.1900). All these settlements adopted different versions of the contemporary vernacular or, as in the development of Port Sunlight (1899 and later), referenced Morris' Arts and Crafts movement and English neo-Medievalism.⁴ This preferred architectural style was, I shall argue, a positive ideological statement which distanced the town planners from both Victorian civic improvers (with their neo-Classical obsessions) and imperial urban forms, contemporary and ancient.

Raymond Unwin's influential *Town Planning in Practice* (1909) offered the 'German model' as the paradigm for British town planning, building particularly on Horsfall's *The Improvement of the Dwellings and Surroundings of the People: The Example of Germany* (1904).⁵ Observing a fundamental division between what he described as 'formalism' and 'informalism' (by which he meant Classicism and Medievalism) and conscious as he was of the history of urban development and the Classical roots of town planning, Unwin made very little use of Classical forms, preferring 'informalism' in his urban environments.⁶

Paradoxically, the German works on which Unwin and others drew, notably Camillo Sitte's *Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen* of 1889 and Otto Wagner's *Modern Architecture* of 1896 were far from hostile to Classical models in and of themselves (though both called for architectures appropriate to the particular Modern environment). Otto Wagner took a somewhat more architectural perspective, railing against mismatched appropriations of previous architectural styles unsuited to the spirit of the modern age.⁷ The *zeitgeist* was to be manifest in architecture as in other aspects of cultural life and architectural conservatism and the reinvention of architectural forms from a previous age (as in neo-Classicism) was to be avoided. There was, thus, an explicit link between the age (modernity) and the most appropriate architectural forms (modern) which carried within it an assumed sociology. Sitte meanwhile focused his ire on 'modern systems', by which he

meant building in blocks, high degrees of symmetry, and monumental gigantism, calling for an architecture that emerged in nature and a monumentality that honoured an urban morphology that developed through a 'natural' use of space by the community. Sitte looked for monuments and spaces being created through an evolutionary process and he in fact praised the ancient city since it emerged *in natura* and not from drawing boards.

The active anti-Classicism of some of the British town planners was thus distinctive. As Lilley has shown, the favoured neo-medievalism of the planners looked rather to Ruskin and the Victorian neo-Medievalists. Neo-medievalism had a particular aesthetic value which was in considerable contrast to the visions of the city offered by Haussmann and his ilk, which were surely the primary targets of Wagner and Sitte. It was also a view that was in marked contrast to the approach taken by many on the continent and which was to find its most powerful spokesman in the modernism of Le Corbusier.⁸ Yet, the debate was not just aesthetic, but political. The architecture carried within it a related vision of society, one in which the new cities were to generate different social forms from those which had grown up in the industrial cities of the nineteenth century. The adoption of neo-Medieval forms further differentiated these putative new societies from the Classical: the societies to be reinvented were not the imperial societies of the Roman world.

Speaking at the inaugural meeting of the Town Planning Association in 1910, Haverfield threw considerable academic weight into this discussion of social forms, favouring a Classical model over the Medieval. He asserted that 'the square and the straight lines are indeed the simplest marks which divide man civilised from the barbarian. It has remained for the Teutonic spirit in these last days to connect civilisation with a curve'.⁹ Haverfield's ironic reference to the 'Teutonic spirit' points to the Germanic bent of Unwin's and Sitte's plans, but also to the utopian curves of Ebenezer Howard's Garden City and perhaps to the hexagons of Inigo Triggs.¹⁰ This oppositional stance is also reflected in Haverfield's insistence that no Roman city could have been a garden city, in spite of contemporary evidence from archaeological excavations that cities such as Silchester were far from densely occupied.¹¹ Haverfield's image of the city was ideologically loaded. For Haverfield, in a traditional view that can be traced back at least to Tacitus' *Agricola* in the early first-century AD, cities were at the beneficent heart of Roman imperialism.¹² He thus writes of the value of Roman town planning:

It increased the comfort of the common man; it made the towns stronger and more coherent units to resist the barbarian invasions. When, after 250 years of conflict, the barbarians triumphed, its work was done.¹³

In the light of the generally pacific history of Roman Britain, which would have been well known to Haverfield as the foremost contemporary expert in the history and archaeology of Roman Britain, we must understand the barbarians at the gate not as those

⁴ See I. Donnachie, Utopian designs: the Owenite communities, *Spaces of Utopia* 6 (2007) 19–34, and the hagiography of Salt in R. Baggott, *Sir Titus Salt: His Life and Lessons*, London, 1877.

⁵ R. Unwin, *Town Planning in Practice: An Introduction to the Art of Designing Cities and Suburbs*, London, Leipsic, 1909, 3–10; 110–114.

⁶ Unwin, *Town Planning in Practice* (note 5), 110–14; 27–72.

⁷ C. Sitte, *The Art of Building Cities: City Building according to its Artistic Fundamentals* (trans by C.T. Stewart), New York, 1945, 1–68; Wagner, *Modern Architecture* (note 3).

⁸ K.D. Lilley, Modern visions of the Medieval city: Competing conceptions of urbanism in European civic design, *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design* 26 (1999) 427–466.

⁹ Haverfield, *Town planning in the Roman world* (note 1), 124.

¹⁰ H. Inigo Triggs, *Town Planning: Past, Present and Possible*, London, 1909, 112–118.

¹¹ Haverfield, *Town planning in the Roman world* (note 1), 127–129.

¹² P.W.M. Freeman, *The Best Training Ground for Archaeologists: Francis Haverfield and the Invention of Romano-British Archaeology*, Oxford, 2007, 334–370, dismisses attempts to uncover the ideological context of Haverfield's work, such as R. Laurence, Modern ideology and the creation of ancient town planning, *European Review of History* 1 (1994) 9–18. See R. Alston, Conquest by text: Juvenal and Plutarch on Egypt, in: N. Cooper, J. Webster (Eds), *Roman Imperialism: Post-colonial Perspectives* (Leicester University Archaeology Monographs, 3), Leicester, 1996, 99–109, for an attempt to establish a political context for Haverfield's views of imperial culture.

¹³ Haverfield, *Ancient Town Planning* (note 2), 140.

from across the wall or sea, but as internal barbarians, the uncivilised masses of Roman Britain. Civilisation advanced in 'slow and painful steps' and the enemy who threatened to overwhelm Roman and British civilisation could only be held off by ordered, Roman-style cities.¹⁴ It was this fight that, in Haverfield's view, had been lost in contemporary *metropoleis*. We can recognise in such laments a prevalent cultural pessimism which, as John Carey has shown, is closely associated with cultural and political elitism.¹⁵ Haverfield's advocacy of Roman urbanism in defence of civilisation was an elitist position, differentiating the Classical city as a centre of culture from the (barbarian, British) villages that occupied the hinterlands of cities.

This elevation of the cities (a move common to Classical historians) was combined with a reductionist rhetoric that associated Classicism with the right-angle. Such reductionism was echoed, probably unconsciously in Le Corbusier's characteristically forthright contribution to the debate between medievalism and Classicism in which he described the medieval path as the way of the pack donkey and opposed it to the way of man.¹⁶ Naturalism, Medievalism or informalism was opposed to formalism and Classicism, the latter made to represent 'civilization'. Such reductionism references a sociological argument which had much wider implications and associations, concerning both the notion of the ideal society and a historical argument about the location of cultural values. Roman planned urbanism, represented by the order of the right-angle, was contrasted with Teutonic evolved villages, represented by the flow of the curve. In this artificial dichotomy, the city was (broadly) hierarchical and associated with Classical values while the village was (broadly) egalitarian and associated with Germanic virtues.¹⁷

At one level, there can be little doubt that Haverfield lost the debate, certainly in the Anglo-American tradition of town planning. In 1938, Lewis Mumford dismissed *Ancient Town Planning* as having a 'limited notion of plan; now superseded' in the annotated bibliography to his *Culture of Cities* and in that book Mumford passes over Classical cities and starts his analysis proper with medieval cities.¹⁸ Yet, the relationship between the modern planning movement and the Classical city was not straightforward. In Mumford's influential *The City in History* ample space is given to the Classical city, but for Mumford it was the Greek city, the *polis*, not the Roman city (the necropolis) that represented an ideal, and even that Greek ideal was flawed.¹⁹

If Haverfield appears to have lost the intellectual argument and to have been marginalised in subsequent debates, it should also be acknowledged that the radicalism of the British town planning movement also dissipated in the early decades of the twentieth century. The intellectual origins of the British town planning movement, as is frequently noted, lay in nineteenth-century, anarchist-influenced, utopianism.²⁰ Although the intellectual

archaeology of the town planning movement is both diverse and complex, and some of that diversity will be traced below, many of the participants in the debate were dedicated not just to the building of better cities, but to the development of a new society. The failure to deliver such a new society alongside the new cities has been attributed to the reduction of the original conception of the Garden City in the hands of practical men, such as Raymond Unwin and Ralph Neville; Howard's idealism was in tension with the prevalent limitations imposed by the requirements for capital. Further, there was always a division in the movement between utopians who desired a 'Cooperative Commonwealth' and the more pragmatic improvers. This division was fundamental, and it could be argued that the improvers won out, partly because they were better placed to work within the system.²¹ Nevertheless, the Classical city and its legacy was also to play a fundamental part in this story. In spite of the intellectual disjuncture between the new urbanists and the historians of Classical culture, the cities of Greece and Rome continued to exercise considerable influence on urban theorists of the first decades of the twentieth century. This influence was felt especially through the work of Patrick Geddes and those who were influenced by him, not only such luminaries as Mumford, but also those who passed through Le Play house, the central institution in early British sociology and urban analysis. The influence of Classicism was not felt, however, through the adoption of Classical urban plans or architectural forms, or through a renewed neo-Classicism (though as the century progressed more Classicising forms were used in new towns), but as a sociological form.²² The Greek city, and to a lesser extent the city of Rome, retained its traditional role in urban idealism as a utopia, but its utopian form was transformed and indeed transformative, bringing with it a hierarchy and nascent authoritarianism very different from its role in nineteenth-century utopian thought.

In this article, I argue that the assimilation of town planning to the conventional norms of contemporary political society, its paternalism and its rejection of radicalism, both socialist and anarchist, relates to a reappraisal of the Classical tradition and in particular the development of a distinctive social theory embedded in Classical theories of the city. Regarding the relationship between Classicism and urban theory as dialectical, I suggest that the shifts in hegemonic social theory in the early twentieth century were formulated in a complex and changing dialogue with the Classical tradition. Furthermore, the move to a more conservative urban theory was already and always an inherent potential development in the early town planning movement; conservatism was latent within the sociology of the urban planners and in the Classical parallels to which they were drawn. The anarchist traditions of the nineteenth century had looked to the Classical city and especially the *polis* cautiously, seeing in it an ideal form which was in marked

¹⁴ Haverfield, *Ancient Town Planning* (note 2), 146.

¹⁵ J. Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880–1939*, London, 1992; R. Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain and the Crisis of Civilization, 1919–1939*, London, 2009, sees the prevailing pessimism as a largely post-war phenomenon.

¹⁶ Le Corbusier, *The City of Tomorrow and its Planning*, London, 1929, 5–12.

¹⁷ Focus was given to this debate by the encounter with village India, see H. Sumner Maine, *Village Communities in the East and West*, London, 1887. See the discussion in R. Alston, *Dialogues in imperialism: Rome, Britain, and India*, in: E. Hall, P. Vasunia (Eds), *India, Greece and Rome: 1757–2007* (Suppl. *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*), London, 2010, 51–77.

¹⁸ L. Mumford, *The Culture of Cities*, San Diego, New York, London, 1970, [1st Edition 1938], 526.

¹⁹ L. Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, Its Prospects*, San Diego, New York, London, 1961.

²⁰ P. Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford and Cambridge, Mass., 1988; S. Buder, *Visionaries and Planners: The Garden City Movement and the Modern Community*, New York, Oxford, 1990; R. Beevers, *The Garden City Utopia: A Critical Biography of Ebenezer Howard*, Basingstoke, 1988.

²¹ Buder, *Visionaries and Planners* (note 20), viii; 100–108, argues that the manner in which Unwin, who was far more effective in influencing the political establishment than Howard, became involved in the housing issue as a separate though related problem to the city issue and developed suburbs rather than towns effectively diluted Howard's vision. See also Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow* (note 20), 1988, especially 70–73.

²² See Lilley, *Modern visions of the Medieval city* (note 8).

contrast with contemporary industrial *megalopoleis* and finding in the *polis* a democratic potential that could escape the nation state. In contrast, twentieth-century British urban theorists came enthusiastically to embrace the Classical city, finding in the *polis* a city of order and hierarchy in which social relations could be controlled, surveyed and managed, and a city which was anything but democratic. Classical influences allowed the development of a new orthodoxy so that the ideological debates that had added piquancy to Haverfield's contribution to the inaugural meeting of the Town Planning Association were obscured as the century progressed.

In the next section of this essay, I examine briefly the roots of the urban planning movement and how that movement was deeply embedded in anarchist and socialist utopian thinking, seeking the traces of the Classical in the radical thought of the period.²³ In the third section, I trace the parallel development of British sociology in the first years of the twentieth century. I explore the interconnections of early British sociologists and show their debt to French anarchist geographical thinking and how that tradition came to assimilate and adopt a very different vision of the Greek city. In the concluding fourth section, I explore this departure from radical French theory and assess the shifting influence of the idea of the *polis* in urban theory.

From Howard's anarchist communities to Patrick Geddes and British sociology

In 1898, Ebenezer Howard published what was to become one of the most important books of the twentieth century, *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*.²⁴ The book was effectively a private publication and was not received with enormous interest. The following year, the Garden City Association was founded, but the movement was hardly a great success, reaching a membership of 325 by 1890 and seemed destined for the obscurity that had enveloped various of the other utopian and communal movements with which Howard had been involved.²⁵ Yet, under the leadership of Ralph Neville and Thomas Adams the movement took off. Neville was a prominent barrister and he used his influence to establish philanthropic connections. In 1902, Howard's treatise was republished as *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* and in 1905, after a successful conference at Bournville, membership of the movement had topped 2500 and luminaries such as Bernard Shaw were becoming involved.²⁶ Within a decade there were 25 schemes being planned.²⁷

In itself, Howard's plan was not that unusual, building on a long-established utopian tradition. Howard was influenced by Edward Bellamy's national socialism and personally sponsored

the publication of Bellamy's work in England.²⁸ The most obvious precursor to Howard's Garden City was B.W. Richardson's *Hygeia: City of Health*, 1876, and Howard had corresponded with Richardson over *Hygeia*.²⁹ Yet, Howard's utopia was distinguished by its seeming practicality. The primary settlement was for 32,000 people, more modest than *Hygeia* and capable of being developed in a piecemeal fashion. Howard's analysis focuses on how a community could come into being, modelling its finances, designing its administration and estimating returns from investment. Such 'realism' was characteristic of Howard and his focus on technicalities left the sociology of his envisaged city obscure.

There is very little reference to the Classical world, or, indeed, any other historical period, in *Garden Cities*: Howard states that the problem, a division between village and city and between agriculture and industry, was particularly modern (p. 15). Where there are cultural references, such as when Howard proclaims that returning the people to the land is a quasi-religious duty (p. 13) and his epigram for the second chapter from Blake's *Jerusalem* (p. 20), the link is with English religious radicals. Howard's architecture and his envisioned urban morphology were also decidedly unclassical and the cover-design for his book, drawn by Walter Crane, featured a medieval princess holding a model of a turreted city, recalling the neo-Medievalism of Morris.³⁰

The social vision behind the Garden City is referenced in the work of one of the very few authorities, other than Blake, cited in *Garden Cities*: Pyotr Kropotkin. In 1888, Kropotkin published a short article in *Nineteenth Century* in which he observed the number of petty trades clustered around factories and argued that these trades should be relocated to villages, which would benefit from the influx of population and money, and where the workers could live in better conditions and supplement their incomes with agriculture or gardening.³¹ The work Howard referenced, *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (1899), was an essay on the economic geography of the industrialised landscape.³² There was, he suggested, an economic and moral case for land reform, the break-up of estates, and a return to a world of small-holding. Kropotkin envisaged a world of decentralised factories in small cities or industrial villages. Kropotkin's political sociology received more extended elucidation in *Le Conquête du Pain* (1892), published in English in 1906.³³ Kropotkin began his analysis with the 1871 commune, arguing that radicalism stems from cities and regions operating in concert.³⁴ In a reductionist movement, Kropotkin dismissed the posturing of ideologues in favour of the revolutionary requirement for bread. He argued that the unification of city and region offered an opportunity for 'what biology calls "the integration of functions"', the development of new forms of

²³ The writings of the nineteenth-century anarchists are voluminous, and anarchism was a broad label that incorporated many, often radically opposed views. For a general introduction, see P.H. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*, London, 1992, and the essays in L. Davis, R. Kinna (Eds), *Anarchism and Utopianism*, Manchester and New York, 2009.

²⁴ E. Howard, *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, London, 1898. See also P. Hall and C. Ward, *Sociable Cities: The Legacy of Ebenezer Howard*, Chichester, 1988.

²⁵ See Hall and Ward, *Sociable Cities* (note 24), 1998, for somewhat disparaging contemporary personal recollections of Howard, even from his 'allies'. There is a strong sense of social snobbery in some of the reactions to Howard.

²⁶ E. Howard, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, London, 1902. Buder, *Visionaries and Planners* (note 20), 1990, 79–84. Beevers, *The Garden City Utopia* (note 20), 1988, 63–71.

²⁷ The figure comes from P. Geddes, *Cities in Evolution: An Introduction to Town Planning and the Study of Civics*, London, 1915, 225, citing the Town Planning Conference of 1913.

²⁸ Howard, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (note 26), 1902, 71; 127.

²⁹ B.W. Richardson, *Hygeia: City of Health*, London, 1876. For the communications between Richardson and Howard, see Beevers, *The Garden City Utopia* (note 20), 1988, 30. See G.E. Cherry, Influences on the development of town planning in Britain, *Journal of Contemporary History* 4:3 (1969) 43–58, for a survey of precursors to Howard.

³⁰ Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow* (note 20), 1988, 94, argues that Howard's vision was both American and notable modern.

³¹ P. Kropotkin, The industrial village of tomorrow, *The Nineteenth Century* 24:140 (1888) 513–530.

³² P. Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, London, 1899.

³³ P. Kropotkin, *Le Conquête du Pain*, Paris, 1892; P. Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*, London, 1906.

³⁴ Kropotkin, *Conquest of Bread* (note 33), xiv.

associative democracy and a primitive communism.³⁵ For Kropotkin, revolution can only happen when the peasantry and the proletariat work together to create a new organic community.

Throughout these fundamental texts, one struggles to find anything other than passing references to the Classical tradition or indeed any other historical period. Like Howard, Kropotkin rarely made use of Classical or historical allusion. Whereas Morris's utopianism in *News from Nowhere* (1890) rejected technological development in favour of a new medievalism in which there was a jumble of historical references (though the Saracenic, the Gothic and the Byzantine are preferred over the Classical), Kropotkin offered a future in which the technologies of the nineteenth century are fully employed in generating local prosperity, and a future which (especially in *Fields, Factories and Workshops*) is economically necessary.³⁶ Kropotkin's discourses lack obvious historical depth, presenting us with a systemic geography rather than a historical geography.

The Classical does emerge, briefly and clearly, in a pamphlet on anarchism. Kropotkin argues that nation states were the main drag factors on economic development and technical innovation. These large political structures

[which] have always been, both in ancient and modern history (Macedonian empire, Roman empire, modern European states grown up in the ruin of autonomous cities), the instrument for establishing monopolies in favour of the ruling minorities, cannot be made to work for the destruction of those monopolies... True progress lies in the direction of decentralisation.³⁷

While Kropotkin sharply differentiates the eras of Classical and modern history. Macedonian and Roman imperialism are aligned with the modern imperial state as social and political systems that should be deplored. Thus, the industrial megalopolis of the nineteenth century to which Kropotkin seeks an alternative comes to be associated with the great centres of Classical power. Kropotkin's analysis differentiates the period of Macedonian empire (more conventionally known as the Hellenistic period) and the Roman empire from what came before, the age of the Classical *poleis* (the ruined 'autonomous cities' of the quotation). Conventionally, the Macedonian and Roman conquests were seen as marking an end of this Greek Classicism and its cultural excellence. By implication then, although the Roman imperial city may have formed an anti-type to Kropotkin's new model communities, the Classical Greek *polis* was seen as reflecting a more desirable integration of region and city. Kropotkin thus offered the prospect of a revival of the glory that was Greece for his new anarchist communities.

Although this may seem somewhat of a thin thread on which to base an argument, this is a thread which, as I shall argue, leads directly into the writings of Reclus and Geddes and the intellectual traditions of twentieth-century urban planning. Furthermore, detecting Classical influences in the political and social thought of the nineteenth century depends on perceiving the Classical in a virtual absence of extended or explicit discussions of Classical

themes. In common with all educated individuals of the nineteenth century, the Classical will have lurked deep in the intellectual infrastructure of Kropotkin's thought. Positivist and practical approaches to social and political issues tended against the deployment of comparative history, but when theory was developed, it was often imbued with Classical historical parallels. The contemporary debate on British imperialism, for instance, made virtually no explicit use of the Roman experience, certainly within the radical and anti-imperialist writings, but if one reads that debate alongside the contemporary historiography of the Roman empire, the shared themes of these two parallel discourses become obvious.³⁸ A shared and common understanding of Classical history lay behind much nineteenth-century social thought, even if there was often an absence of explicit allusion. Indeed that absence may be seen as a rhetorical trope, differentiating the practicalities of much social reform (and we may think of the reductionist practicality of a focus on bread in Kropotkin) from the intellectualism of the 'ideologues', as critiqued by Kropotkin.

One element that tied together the Classical and the modern was 'civilisation'. As Haverfield makes explicit in the quotation above, the oppositional concepts of civilisation and barbarism encircled the ideals of the city and Classicism. To this connected string of conceptions, we may add imperialism and the rather more complex idea of the 'organic' city that we see emergent in Kropotkin and was to be such a feature of the writings of Reclus and Geddes. If the great cities of the nineteenth century asserted their civilisation through reference to Classicism (and imperialism) within their architectural environments, especially in the grandiose planned centres of many of the industrial cities of Northern England, a turning away from the industrial city carried with it the implications of rejecting Classicism, the imperial city, and, indeed, civilisation itself.

It is this connected rejection of Classicism, imperialism, and civilisation that we find in a strand of radical thought that led from Morris to Edward Carpenter to Raymond Unwin. Educated in Oxford, Unwin was apprenticed as an engineer in Chesterfield in 1883, where he came into contact with Edward Carpenter and his community at Millthorpe. In his short book, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, 1889, Carpenter represents civilisation as a disease by which man is abstracted from nature, and both calls for and regards as inevitable (since civilisations have a life expectancy of about 1000 years) a return to a natural state of simple spiritualism and primitive communism.³⁹ The opposition of civilisation to the organicist community and the association of industrialism with the great city and imperialism as well as the prevailing sense of decline are central to Carpenter's thesis and link obviously to Morris' vision of a post-industrial, post-revolutionary, and post-urban epoch popularised in *News from Nowhere*. Unwin went from Chesterfield to Manchester in 1885 and there became secretary of the Socialist League, which proselytised for the ideas of Morris.⁴⁰

The radical anti-urbanism of this tradition and, indeed, its radical anti-modern stance was not in keeping with the ideas of

³⁵ Kropotkin, *Conquest of Bread* (note 33), 83–100.

³⁶ W. Morris, *News from Nowhere or an Epoch of Rest*, London, 1970. For the diversity of the nineteenth-century utopian tradition, see K.M. Roemer, *Paradise transformed: varieties of nineteenth-century utopias*, in: G. Claeys (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, Cambridge, 2010, 79–106. According to K. Kumar, *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times*, Oxford, Cambridge, MA, 1987, 27–28, most early modern utopias were worlds of work. Morris's vision is Arcadian rather than utopic, with a ruralised 'nation' grounded in an idealised village past. Morris imagines his Outopia (p. 19) in Gothic or Saracenic or Byzantine styles.

³⁷ P. Kropotkin, *Anarchism*, London, n.d., 3.

³⁸ Alston, *Dialogues in imperialism* (note 17), 51–77.

³⁹ E. Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, London, 1889.

⁴⁰ For the biography of Unwin see the *Dictionary of Scottish Architects 1840–1980* (<http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/>) as accessed 28.01.2011. See also Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow* (note 20), 70–84.

Kropotkin. Kropotkin's systemic geography was given a greater historical and theoretical depth by Elisée Reclus whose influence on British urban theory came mainly through his close working relationship with the young Patrick Geddes.⁴¹ The programmatic claim of Reclus's major work, *L'homme et la terre* (1905–1908) was that 'Man is nature taking consciousness of itself' and he postulated a complex, multi-faceted relationship between Man and the soil in which local environments generate a moral grounding.⁴² Reclus thus continued Kropotkin's quest for an organicist city in which the human being is embedded within a larger whole. Although Reclus admired the Medieval city, it was in the *polis* that the anarchist found his ideal community. Reclus claimed that 'L'ensemble politique [of the *polis*] was as simple, as undivided and as well defined as the unity of the individual himself' and translated Aristotle's famous description of Man as *zoon politikon* as an 'urban animal'.⁴³

Reclus' urban politics idealised the city as the highest form of communal life, continuing a familiar Aristotelian trope of associating the most natural form of life with the best form and employing a crucial distinction between 'wild' or 'savage' or 'barbarian' (meaning not Greek in Aristotle's ethnographics) and 'natural'. The urban animal and the urban community (especially in the form of the *polis*) were thus idealisations and Reclus saw the city as the manifestation of the best of human civilisation.⁴⁴ Reclus's sociology connected urban form and the individual. Yet, Reclus was too good a geographer to be blinded by the ideal types and recognised the individuality and historical nature of each urban form:

Each city has its unique individuality, its own life, its own countenance, tragic and sorrowful in some cases, joyful and lively in others. Successive generations have left each with its distinctive character. And each constitutes a collective personality... But the city is also a very complex individual.⁴⁵

Reclus saw these complex urban individuals as growing out of their environments, but modernity had led to a perversion of this natural relationship between Man and the soil, with the great cities acting as 'monsters, gigantic vampires, sucking the life from men'.⁴⁶ The emergence of great cities tore the individual from his natal soil.⁴⁷ For Reclus the answer to the urban question was a reintegration of Man with nature and a return to a regionalism. Such a return would entail a reclamation or reinvention of Greek democratic culture.⁴⁸ For Reclus, the ending of the spatial frameworks of the capitalist system would generate a new space of democratic revival. Reclus offers a radical politics, with clear links

to Kropotkin's thought, which shows similarities with French leftist thinking of the twenty-first century.⁴⁹

These radical intellectual traditions of urban reform may be contrasted with a strand of authoritarian and paternalistic Victorian philanthropy which remained an important element in the social thinking of the period.⁵⁰ Reformers such as Octavia Hill pioneered social and housing work and Hill trained Henrietta Barnett and, indeed, a young Patrick Geddes.⁵¹ Hill was funded by Ruskin and sought a return to the hierarchies of the (imagined) English village, wondering, when entering the court over which she was to exercise authority, 'on what principles was I to rule these people'.⁵² Similarly, Arnold Toynbee's university settlements influenced Barnett and Charles Booth and these ideas were later to be adopted by Geddes in Edinburgh.⁵³

Utopia lost: Patrick Geddes and the Classical city

These varying intellectual strands can be seen as coming together at the end of the nineteenth century. Although many figures were intimately involved in the intellectual debates on the city in this period, we can detect a coalescing of these traditions around Patrick Geddes and his circle and the emergence of a distinctive and somewhat particular British sociology. Whereas the radicalism of Reclus feeds into contemporary leftist thinking, especially in France, Geddes marks a break with some of the traditions of radicalism that I have been tracing so far. Geddes offered a distinctive body of urban theory and that theory both re-evaluated and returned to the Classical tradition. Geddes made much more explicit use of the Greek *polis* as an ideal type, emphasising the utopianism inherent in the use of the *polis* by Reclus. Yet, this was a very different Greek *polis* than that of the French radical tradition: the *polis* of Plato rather than the *polis* of Athenian democracy.

Alongside and intimately related with his pioneering and controversial work on sexuality, Geddes developed the new science of Civics, as outlined in a series of papers and lectures given mostly between 1900 and 1915 and collected in revised form in *Cities in Evolution: An introduction to the town planning movement and to the study of civics*, 1915. These papers drew heavily on the work of Kropotkin, Reclus, and Le Play. A number of the original papers were published in two new journals, *Sociological Papers* which started in 1904, and *The Sociological Review* starting in 1908. The former recorded meetings held mostly in London of a sociological society. Attendees of and contributors to the meetings included such luminaries of the contemporary

⁴¹ Geddes wrote a hagiographic obituary for Reclus, see P. Geddes, A great geographer: Elisée Reclus, in: J. Ishill (Ed.), *Elisée and Elie Reclus: In memoriam*, Berkeley Height, NJ, 1927. They had worked at the Paris exhibition of 1900 in a project for constructing an enormous and interactive world globe. For critical biographies of Geddes, see V.M. Welter, *Biopolis: Patrick Geddes and the City of Life*, Cambridge, MA, 2002, and H. Meller, *Patrick Geddes: Social Evolutionist and City Planner*, London and New York, 1990. For Geddes in Paris in 1900, see S. Reynolds, *Paris–Edinburgh: Cultural Connections in the Belle-Epoque*, Aldershot, Burlington, 2007, 115–142 and Meller, *Patrick Geddes*, 1990, 74–75.

⁴² E. Reclus, *L'homme et la terre*, Paris, 1905–1908.

⁴³ Reclus, *L'homme et la terre* (note 42), 1905–1908, II, 321, reprinted in J.P. Clark and C. Martin, *Anarchy, Geography, Modernity: The Radical Social Thought of Elisée Reclus*, Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Oxford, 2004, 69–70.

⁴⁴ Reclus, *L'homme et la terre: histoire contemporaine*, 1990, [1st Edition 1905], 67–70.

⁴⁵ Reclus, *L'homme et la terre* (note 43), 1905–1908, V, 335–376, reprinted in Clark and Martin, *Anarchy, Geography, Modernity* (note 43), 2004, 188.

⁴⁶ Reclus, *L'homme et la terre* (note 44), 70–71.

⁴⁷ Reclus, *L'homme et la terre* (note 44), 56–60.

⁴⁸ Clark and Martin, *Anarchy, Geography, Modernity* (note 43), 2004, 20; 73.

⁴⁹ See M. Augé, *Non-places: Introduction to An Anthropology of Supermodernity*, London and New York, 1995 and J. Rancière, *The Names of History: On the Poetics of Knowledge*, Minneapolis, 2004, for spaces of democracy.

⁵⁰ G. Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion: The Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians*, New York, 1991.

⁵¹ Meller, *Patrick Geddes* (note 41), 1990, 71–72.

⁵² O. Hill, *Homes of the London Poor*, London, 1875, 69–70; 75.

⁵³ H.O. Barnett and S. A. Barnett, *Practical Socialism*, London 1894.

intellectual scene as H.G. Wells, Bernard Shaw, L.T. Hobhouse, Frances Galton, James Bryce, and Ebenezer Howard.⁵⁴

Anarchist thought provided the link between the key causes of the British Sociologists – urban reform, co-operatives, and the garden city. Sybella Gurney, in a paper published in *The Sociological Review* of 1910, connected Kropotkin to both the ‘Women Movement’ and the ‘Garden City Movement’.⁵⁵ Gurney was a graduate of Classics at Royal Holloway and later became involved in the co-operative movement through Charlotte Toynbee, widow of Arnold Toynbee, writing a history of co-operatives in 1898.⁵⁶ She married the businessman Victor Branford, who was a pupil of Patrick Geddes and the main funder of the Sociological Society and *The Sociological Review*. Together Gurney and Branford were the intellectual and financial force behind the development of British sociology and urban studies.⁵⁷

In 1917 Victor Branford and Patrick Geddes published what was almost a manifesto for the movement, *The Coming Polity: A Study in Reconstruction*. They called for a new politics based on regionalism that would break with the nationalist structures of the state and escape the capitalist competitiveness that they saw as dominating sociological thought.⁵⁸ Such regionalism and anti-state localism was derived from Kropotkin: they thus argued that Kropotkin’s *Mutual Aid* was as important and revolutionary a volume as Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* (pp. 6–9). Kropotkin, however, hardly gets a mention after the introduction, and their real heroes are Frédéric Le Play and, to a lesser extent, Auguste Comte. It is on Le Play’s conception of the formative function of *lieu* that the main chapters of the book concentrate, as illustrated by the famous study of the settlements of a Thames valley divided between the ‘natural’ environment of the upper valley and the monstrous imperial megalopolis of London. Their solution to London was a spiritual revival in which there was a re-engagement with the region and nature: young urban degenerates were put under the charge of boy scouts and led from a life of crime to forestry (pp. 100–108). The University (or the University Militant as they put it, recalling Toynbee and Barnett) would lead a spiritual reawakening (pp. 210–242).⁵⁹

The Coming Polity shares with Carpenter’s socialist spiritualism a sense that the old way of doing things was at an end, and a renewal of civilisation was inevitable. It also has much in common with Spencerian sociology and the social ethics of L.T. Hobhouse, which were dominated by evolutionary theory.⁶⁰ This recognition of the possibility of renewal was also manifested in Unwin’s town planning. Unwin argued that ‘there is growing up a new sense of the rights and duties of the community as distinct from those of the individual. It is becoming more and more widely realised that a new order and relationship in society are required to take the place of the old’.⁶¹ That new order was evolving and was in

harmony with a natural environment. This was a sociology that centred on places and places (reconstructed, new places) were to generate a new order in which the rights and duties of the citizen were to be central.

While the nature of these new places is not fully developed in this volume, *The Coming Polity* was not lightly entitled. It was not just a programme for a new built environment, a radical architectural intervention. Geddes and Branford were alluding to a new citizenship and a new regionally-based political structure that was actually evolving. There was after the Great War to be a renaissance of the Greek *polis* with a promise of associated cultural and political excellence. While Geddes never produced the large, theoretical volume that would allow an easy critical analysis, it is clear that the Greek city remained a powerful influence on his thinking. Yet, in contrast to Reclus (who retained his radicalism, as shown by his alignment with the democratic *polis*), Geddes was to turn towards the oligarchic *polis* and a Platonic anti-democracy.

Geddes’s sociology first appears in a series of lectures given in Edinburgh by social reformers, which were published as *The Claims of Labour* (1886).⁶² The volume had a strong anarchist and anti-socialist bent, with Burnett arguing for trade unions as institutions of associative democracy which could improve production and lead workers away from socialism, and Jones providing a brief history of the co-operative movement.⁶³ Patrick Geddes, then in his early thirties, contributed ‘On the conditions of progress of the capitalist and the labourer’. Geddes argued that class divisions pose a threat to society that cannot be resolved by radical theorists (socialists) and that the abolition of capital would make little difference to the poverty of the working classes. Geddes’s solution was ‘a natural history’ (p. 76). Geddes suggests that a new society needed a new idea that would animate society once more, and represent an evolution of community and economics. The goal of economics should not be the accumulation of wealth, but the ascent of Man (p. 105). As an example of the possible shape of this new community, Geddes offers the medieval city and the Greek *polis*.

Geddes’s rejection of economics and class-based socialist analyses in 1886 was maintained throughout his career and led to his development of an approach to society that gradually shed its radical credentials. In 1904, in the first volume of *Sociological Papers*, Geddes published ‘Civics: as applied sociology’.⁶⁴ He attempted to construe a natural history, or an evolutionary sequence for the city in which cities shared certain evolutionary features but the particularity of each urban centre as a representation of a distinctive regional ecology (p. 106). In ‘Civics: As concrete and applied Sociology’ in 1905, Geddes continued to work with Le Play’s tripartite division of social zones into *lieu*, *travail*, *famille*, arguing that: ‘Given the region, its character determines the nature

⁵⁴ Although there were contributions to *The Sociological Review* from important continental sociologists and anthropologists, British sociology departed rapidly from continental and especially Weberian sociology and distinctively and peculiarly failed to establish itself as an academic discipline. See J. Harris, ‘Platonism, positivism and progressivism: aspects of British sociological thought in the early twentieth century’, in: Eugenio F. Biagini (Ed.), *Liberals, Radicals and Collective Identities in the British Isles, 1865–1931*, Cambridge, 1996, 343–360; R. Soffer, ‘Why do disciplines fail? The strange case of British sociology’, *English Historical Review* 101 (1982) 95–134.

⁵⁵ S. Gurney, ‘Civic Reconstruction and the garden city movement’, *The Sociological Review* 3 (1910) 35–53.

⁵⁶ S. Gurney, *Sixty Years of Co-operation*, London, 1898.

⁵⁷ See J. Scott and C.T. Husbands, Victor Branford and the building of British sociology, *The Sociological Review* 55:3 (2007) 460–484.

⁵⁸ V. Branford and P. Geddes, *The Coming Polity: A Study in Reconstruction*, London, 1917.

⁵⁹ The tool for bringing about this revolution was regional survey and 1924 saw the publication of S. Branford and A. Farquharson, *An Introduction to Regional Survey*, London, 1924.

⁶⁰ H. Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology I (A System of Synthetic Philosophy VI)*, London and Edinburgh, 1876; H. Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology II (A System of Synthetic Philosophy VII)*, London and Edinburgh, 1882; L.T. Hobhouse, *Morals in Evolution: A Study in Comparative Ethics*, London, 1906.

⁶¹ Unwin, *Town Planning in Practice* (note 5), 375.

⁶² P. Geddes, On the conditions of progress of the capitalist and the labourer, in: J. Oliphant, (Ed.), *The Claims of Labour*, Edinburgh, 1886, 74–111.

⁶³ J. Burnett, Trade Unions as a means of improving the conditions of labour, in: J. Oliphant, (Ed.), *The Claims of Labour*, Edinburgh, 1886, 7–40; B. Jones, What is meant by co-operation, in: J. Oliphant, (Ed.), *The Claims of Labour*, Edinburgh, 1886, 41–73.

⁶⁴ P. Geddes, Civics: as applied sociology, *Sociological Papers* 1 (1904) 103–138.

of the fundamental occupation, and this in turn essentially determines the type of family' (p. 64).⁶⁵ Regional determinism worked against any form of class or economic determinism.

Like Galton's Eugenics, to which he compares his work, Civics was a natural technology that could be harnessed to produce the better society. Civics required social engineers. In a foreshadowing of the idea of the University Militant of *The Coming Polity*, Geddes claimed that the key skills and ideas will emerge from the work of city improvers. These city improvers must be trained and training was to be performed in a 'cloister' such as the 'Academe of Plato and Lyceum of Aristotle [which]... have been so fertile, so creative in their influence upon the city's life, from which they seem to be retired' (p. 85). The city is thus to be led by its withdrawn technocratic intellectuals, and is to be a realisation of their ideals.

In 1906, Geddes envisaged a Eutopia, rejecting modernity in favour of Medieval and Ancient Civics. This new city will generate a new individual, the greater citizen:

I am suggesting a heightened individualism not a lower. The 'Superman' of whom we hear so much and see so little, will thus not be, as so many appear to think, a mere bigger egotist, but a greater citizen.⁶⁶

In place of the very weak contemporary notion of citizenship, Geddes restored an original Classical notion of the citizen, suggesting that citizenship could be the optimum state of the individual. There was an obvious Aristotelian influence, also reflected in his use of 'natural' that we saw also in Reclus:

Harmony of individual and social claims, of citizen and citizenship... and above all that sociological conception of the City as, in a very real sense, a natural, i.e. an evolutionary growth,... makes each civic Eutopia a rational forecast, and its realisation, however partial in our time, a worthy and immediate aim.⁶⁷

Such a devotion to 'nature' blends the regionalism of Reclus with an Aristotelianism that renders the city and its political structures rationalist and predetermined. The coming polity poses as the only rational political form, having an ideological monopoly that denies itself (it is not an ideology, but a technology).

But this coming polity is not the democratic utopia envisaged by Reclus and Kropotkin, but rather a utopia to be controlled and understood by a master-class of civic engineers. Geddes associates Aristotle's supposed invention of Civics to the beauty and intelligibility of the Greek city, and of Athens in particular. Athens can be captured and understood in the synoptic glance of the philosopher-urbanist. In 1910, Geddes argued that architects needed to be trained in the history of cities.

For if they (architects) have lost sight of the city for its public buildings, and of the town for its houses, it is only because we who pass along the streets so easily fail to notice them in general aspect and effect for their shop windows or their offices, for their domestic interiors at most. Now, however, we seem all awakening together, each from his individual

dream, and towards a larger, a more communal, a civic consciousness. We are, in truth, at the opening of one of those phases of human as of simpler evolution, when individuals casually crowded, loosely grouped, begin to enter a new phase of existence -more social, more orderly, and in general more beautiful.⁶⁸

Only once the city is understood as a whole can we build the new order. For Geddes, urban morphology is an aesthetic issue in which order and beauty are synonymous, but it is also a form of political psychology. In *Cities in Evolution* (1915), Geddes makes clear that this viewing of the city is not metaphorical, imagining Aristotle's inspiration being the view of Athens from the Acropolis or Lycabettos. And in a pamphlet of 1913, he argued that the city should be seen as if from an aeroplane, and rejected the confusion and heterogeneity of the megalopolis of Rome in favour of the supposed order of Athens.⁶⁹

For Geddes, Eutopia needed to be unitary and disciplined. To allow the city to be managed, it needs to have a clear morphology, comprehensible to the philosopher-administrators. Such transparency renders the city more open to political power. It is also a city viewed from afar, from the cloister, from the hill-top, or from the aeroplane, with no street life to break up the clean, clear perceptions of the modern Aristotle. This high evaluation of Greek *polis* society was characteristic of the intellectual circle in which Geddes moved. Yet this utopian *polis* was imbued with aristocratic rather than democratic values. In a paper of February 1906, at which Geddes was in the chair, H.G. Wells argued that social philosophy should begin and end with the Greeks, dismissing continental sociology in favour of 'the Social Idea' and Utopian endeavours to create this model society.⁷⁰ In *A Modern Utopia* (1905), Wells portrays a Darwinian utopia in which the utopian city was an enormous university-town (243) in which the university trained the oligarchic governing class, the samurai (281).

Wells' admiration for the Greeks may derive in part from Warde Fowler's *The City State of the Greeks and Romans* (1893) which had reached its eighth edition by 1913. Warde Fowler professed that 'The *polis* was in fact... a more perfect form of social union than the modern State.'⁷¹ He further claimed that

It may be doubted... whether any modern State has realised the force of the various ties [of social cohesion] in the same degree as did the City-States of ancient Greece and Italy. The city... could exert over the citizens a more powerful influence than a modern country, for it was capable of being taken in at a glance both by eye and mind.⁷²

With the *polis* 'A new species of community had been developed, with the germs lying hidden within it of such bloom and fruit as man had never yet dreamed of.'⁷³

This old, new Eutopia was the origin of the idea of beauty, of citizenship, and of duty beyond that to the family. The city was to be captured in the synoptic glance, ordered and disciplined and this visibility of social structure was central to the success of the *polis*. The core values of the *polis* were, according to Warde Fowler,

⁶⁵ P. Geddes, Civics: as concrete and applied Sociology, Part II, *Sociological Papers* 2 (1905) 57–119.

⁶⁶ P. Geddes, A suggested plan for a civic museum (or civic exhibition) and its associated studies, *Sociological Papers* 3 (1906) 197–240; 201.

⁶⁷ Geddes, A suggested plan for a civic museum (or civic exhibition) and its associated studies (note 66), 1906, 229.

⁶⁸ P. Geddes, Town planning and city design, *The Sociological Review* 3 (1910) 56–60; 59.

⁶⁹ Geddes, *Cities in Evolution* (note 27), 13; P. Geddes, *Two Steps in Civics: Cities and Town Planning Exhibition and the International Congress of Cities*, Liverpool, 1913.

⁷⁰ H.G. Wells, The so-called science of Sociology, *Sociological Papers* 3 (1906) 357–377.

⁷¹ W. Warde Fowler, *The City State of the Greeks and Romans: A Survey Introduction to the Study of Ancient History*, London, 1913, 9.

⁷² Warde Fowler, *The City State of the Greeks and Romans* (note 71), 13.

⁷³ Warde Fowler, *The City State of the Greeks and Romans* (note 71), 57.

aristocratic and society functioned with the necessary aim of sustaining an elite capable of such cultural and moral excellence.⁷⁴ Social inequalities, such as slavery, were the unfortunate consequences of excellence.

Alfred Zimmern's *The Greek Commonwealth* (1911) produced a similarly eutopic vision of the Greek city.⁷⁵ Zimmern understood the Greek *poleis* as having developed within sealed geographical regions, and as products of those regions (pp. 66–76). Aristocratic values were maintained within democratic cultures because the unitary *polis* overrode class divisions (pp. 91–92) and in the face of the economic problems of the seventh century, the community triumphed through the inculcation of self-control and moderation (pp. 122–124). The Greek cities may have been poor, but their economies were stable, and their people happy (pp. 215–324) within a firm hierarchy.

The retreat from the capitalist city towards communitarian settlement had an appeal for writers of the political right. H.C.M. Watson's justly neglected *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire or the Witch's Cavern* (1890), the title of which is clearly an allusion to a Classical past, describes an Australian utopia, Eyreton, which is paternalistic, with obvious class structures, but without class (or any other) conflict:

Individual rights are, in all cases, subordinated to the welfare of the whole community, whose political, commercial, intellectual and moral sanity is necessary to the very existence of the individual, except in a state of savagery.⁷⁶

In such communitarianism, utopia was rediscovered. It did not, as Morris might have envisaged, lie in Arcadian villages in which the economies were simplified and de-industrialised, but in the Greek city in harmony with the region and in an autonomous separation from the state. In their desire to escape the class city, and indeed the limitations of class analysis and class politics, British sociologists found the 'coming polity' in a long past *polis*. But this was a very different *polis* from the city of associative democracy imagined by the anarchists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The anarchist vision of a world without a state became an aristocratic, technocratic, and hierarchical utopia, under surveillance by philosopher-aristocrats.

The New Classical City

The process by which Geddes and his group annexed the Greek city to their ideal society can hardly have been innocent of the aristocratic values displayed by Warde Fowler. The *polis* of Reclus was always in tension with alternative and authoritarian imaginings of the Greek and Roman city. The Classical city may have given the world democracy, but it also bequeathed imperialism to future generations and Haverfield's Classical cities (Greek and Roman) embedded within them notions of the imperial hierarchical civilisation. The explicit distancing of Kropotkin's new cities from the legacy of Rome and the contrast between the *polis* and the imperial city was maintained in Geddes's association of the coming polity

with Athens. Nonetheless, there was an observable shift in the Classical paradigm between Kropotkin and Geddes.

The key to this shift is, I suggest, the concept of civilisation. In the sets of polarities outlined above, the rejection of the industrial city could by association become a rejection of civilisation. The Classical city as envisaged by Warde Fowler and Haverfield was a defender of the values of civilisation in an age when the masses, either external to or within the city, threatened to overwhelm that culture. Civilisation was both threatened and could only be preserved by the intervention of the knowledgeable and the aristocratic.

The reassessment of the Classical legacy goes to the heart of the politics of Geddes and his group. From Geddes' intervention in 1886, he had been opposed to socialist politics and the political vision of socialist groups. Whereas Kropotkin had experienced revolutionary turmoil and sought a more effective revolutionary process, most British social reformers were committed to ways of avoiding revolution. Their interventions in the city were prompted by more than a philanthropic concern about the morals and welfare of the urban population, but a more fundamental concern with disorder and the preservation of some form of social hierarchy. The utopian vision offered by Geddes and, indeed, Wells and others was Platonic and hierarchic, a vision of a unified community in which there may have been class differences, but those differences were rendered apolitical, normative and natural. Indeed, the class system was designed into the new settlements. Far from the communal ideal and the primitive communism of earlier utopian visions, Letchworth built for class differences: the wealthier were located to the South and East of the city, while the poorer houses were to the North.⁷⁷ Two decades later, Burgess, McKenzie, and Park argued that zoning by social class and, indeed, by race were 'natural' features of the city, constructed from simple economic laws; correspondingly, such natural class divisions became a feature of urban planning.⁷⁸

Geddes made the decision not to see detail in his cities, but to view the streets from above; to see the streets, but not the people. The view from Lycabettos turns people into masses subsuming them within the urban form rendering invisible the practices of everyday life, including the class oppressions and struggles, the very practices which generate urban morphology in the first instance. In the Geddes model, authority stems from above: society is an elite creation, imposed on the passive lower orders. Society, like the city, becomes a work of art. As Peter Hall writes of locational theory, 'The result was a view of the city as a piece of optimizing economic machinery... Absent from the picture, almost entirely, was a great deal of the day-to-day reality of the city'.⁷⁹ Meanwhile Fishman sees the new cities of Howard, Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright as utopian 'total environments' that worked by creating a vision of the city as a machine in which elite control would be maintained and the revolution avoided.⁸⁰

The utopianism of the radical movement (anarchist and socialist) was predicated on a revolutionary tearing down of the boundaries of the current society, spatial and cultural, what Mannheim describes as the revolutionary coming into being of the

⁷⁴ Warde Fowler, *The City State of the Greeks and Romans* (note 71), 94; 178–179.

⁷⁵ A. Zimmern, *The Greek Commonwealth*, Oxford, 1924. For Zimmern's career, see P. Rich, 'Reinventing Peace: David Davies, Alfred Zimmern and Liberal Internationalism in Interwar Britain', *International Relations* 16 (2002) 117–133.

⁷⁶ H.C.M. Watson, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire or the Witch's Cavern*, London, 1890, 68, reprinted in: G. Claeys, (Ed.), *Late Victorian Utopias: A Prospectus*, London, 2008, III, 59–217; 68.

⁷⁷ Inigo Triggs, *Town Planning* (note 10), 201–202.

⁷⁸ E.W. Burgess, R.D. McKenzie and R.E. Park, *The City*, Chicago, 1925.

⁷⁹ P. Hall, 'Geography: descriptive, scientific, subjective and radical images of the city', in: L. Rodwin, R.M. Hollister (Eds), *Cities of the Mind: Images and Themes of the City in the Social Sciences*, New York and London, 1984, 21–36; 29.

⁸⁰ R. Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier*, New York, 1977.

utopia.⁸¹ Such a tearing down creates a non-place, an atopia.⁸² These are locales of opportunity, but also of fear in which uncontrolled encounters with others will have unpredictable results. Geddes, in common with many of his contemporaries, constructed the industrial city as a non-place, a place without order and with the potential for random encounters in which order could only be maintained by meticulous planning and great effort; chaos always loomed.⁸³ The city was already revolutionary and, as Carpenter and many others believed, doomed to inevitable destruction. Geddes envisaged an evolutionary escape from revolution to a new communitarian society.

The *polis*, therefore, was an attractive model for urban reformers. It rejected the industrial megalopolis with its poverty and frictions, and offered an alternate system of social and political organisation in which class was normalised and social hierarchy defended. This new communitarianism was, and is, a retreat from politics and in the context of thinking about the city became an issue of technical skills and architectural forms, of place, rather than ideology and economics.⁸⁴ Although the Greeks invented politics in its modern form, the *polis* became not the engine of associative democracy imagined by Kropotkin and Reclus, but a non-democratic, hierarchic and ordered utopia in which the political was suspended in favour of the communal and in which the collective dominated the individual. The new citizenship envisaged by Unwin and postulated by Branford and Geddes was nothing more than a subsuming of the individualistic and competitive tendencies of urban capitalism within a new disciplined ideal. There is a move from the real city of Athens with its messy and often tempestuous politics to the philosophers' cities of Aristotle, with his ordered categories, and Plato's utopia which was in itself an attempt to envisage a city with politics suspended.

The Classical legacy was an unstable and complex bequest to the urban theorists of the twentieth century. The Classicism of

eighteenth- and nineteenth-century urban designers and the gigantism of the imperial cities of the period created an association between Rome and certain structures of contemporary political and urban life, including imperialism and the megalopolis. As it seemed increasingly unlikely in the turbulent years at the end of the nineteenth century that the current forms of political life would be sustained, reformers and radicals sought different urban forms for the coming society, and one of those potential other forms was the Greek *polis*. Yet, the coming polity sparked uncertainty. For Reclus and Kropotkin that uncertainty was alive with new egalitarian possibilities. For Geddes, Wells and their circles, the coming polity needed to guarantee order since order assured the continuity of civilisation. The vision of the Classical historians of communitarian, aristocratic and civilising cities was more attractive than the radicalism and uncertainty of the anarchist future.

The work performed by the Classical paradigm in the thinking of the urbanists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries shifted radically. With Reclus and Kropotkin, the Greek city, the *polis*, provided a historical model of a potential democratic urban society as an alternative political and social structure. The Roman city was rejected in its association with a culture of imperialism and industrial order. But with Geddes and Wells there was a reappraisal of the Classical tradition and the legacy of the *polis*, shifting from a paradigm of the democratic state to the ordered aristocratic and oligarchic *polis*. The conservatism latent in much of the Classical tradition, whether Greek or Roman, was given greater play in the discourses of the politics and the result was the loss of much of the radical content of the anarchist ideal. Of course, this was not a result inherent to the Classical tradition itself; no intellectual tradition is interpreted neutrally and the neutralisation of the radical tradition emerged from a particular conjunction of political circumstance and historical perspective. Yet, the Classics played a central role in this story.

⁸¹ K. Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, New York, 1936, 192.

⁸² See Augé, *Non-places* (note 49), 1995, for a discussion of atopia.

⁸³ See D. Frisby, *Cityscapes of Modernity*, Cambridge, Oxford, Malden, MA, 2001, 9, for nineteenth-century views of the city as a bombardment of the senses and immanent chaos.

⁸⁴ Communitarianism has long been in vogue as an 'escape' from ideology, see D. Bell, *The End of Ideology*, Glencoe, IL, 1960; D. Bell, *Communitarianism and Its Critics*, Oxford, 1993; H. Tam, *Communitarianism: A New Agenda for Politics and Citizenship*, Basingstoke, 1998; E. Frazer, *The Problems of Communitarian Politics: Unity and Conflict*, Oxford, 1999; and A. Etzioni, *The Essential Communitarian Reader*, Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford, 1998, 1.