Title
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Author
Tewdwr-Jones, Mark

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By Mark Tewdwr-Jones

Introduction

For those of us actively involved in the analysis, interpretation, and design of places, and in the understanding of people who use them, I believe it is fair to say that, as experts or professionals, we often look at places as others see them, but neglect to study their meaning and representation. We can say that cities are physical constructs, but as Lefebvre (1974) remarks, the social construction of cities and places is a vital element in how people see the environments that surround them. Representations of places evoke the imagined as well as the real; Calvino (1974) in his *Invisible Cities* states, "The eye does not see things, but images of things that mean other things." The city and its representations in film and photography provide unique perspectives from which we can interpret urban places in ways that the approaches of the traditional social sciences often do not permit (Tormey, 2013).

As a child of the 1960s, it should be no surprise that, as I grew, television and film played an increasingly prominent role in my leisure time. My fascination with real places was often mirrored by a fascination for the places I saw on screen, some of which I recognized, or thought I recognized, while others were somehow different. Television and film offered a unique laboratory for learning, one which, admittedly, I did not fully appreciate as such at the time, which provided insights into how people lived and co-existed in places and how they coped with change, or even opposed it. Above all, film provided a unique lens through which to analyze contemporary change or urban histories in ways that were not at the time used in formal academic discourses. Some of these depictions were fictional, narrative story lines involving crime capers, car chases, and the noir side of urban life; others, set in suburbia, were gentle family comedies, involving on-going light-hearted tensions between the different values of members of a family or a circle of friends; while others, documentary or realist in tone, demonstrated in a much more graphic way, perhaps, the consequences of change, the inadequacy of the state, or the exclusion of societies in particular settings.

Building on my recent work (Tewdwr-Jones, 2005, 2007, 2011), I contend that planning, place, and people's perceptions of both planning and place

Figure 1: Budapest. Evoking film scenes from 1950s and 1960s cold war spy thrillers from behind the Iron Curtain, Budapest and the River Danube have been used as a location in many films and also often doubles as part of Paris and London in some features. All photos by Mark Tewdwr-Jones.

are indecorously bound together. Drawing upon the insight of Sandercock (2003), I believe that utilizing images, stories, and film from cultural sources offers a highly effective way to reflect upon different perceptions of place and urban change as well as upon the role and status of urban planning itself. We all have prior perceptions of places, even when we have never set foot in them. These perceptions have been formed from the media, from literature and film, from historical developments, from chance encounters, and from a suspicion that people from other places *are not like us*. These depictions are both objective representations of the place, and are fictional

characterizations of actual places. But the important point is that they communicate ideas about places that can sit heavily on people's emotions and sense of attachment to the represented locations and, additionally, to people's own ideas about the identity and meaning of the place. Like maps, films are one more way of looking at the world, but they are more likely to evoke matters concerning power and contestation.

The study continues with a discussion of the relationship between space, place, and film before turning to a brief account of the use of film in depictions of urban change and planning over the last century, with particular reference to the UK. Subsequently, I argue that the depiction of planning during these "formative years" has had a demonstrable effect on more recent public perceptions of planning, politically and otherwise. A final section presents several conceptual observations regarding perceptions and attitudes towards planning, more generally.

Space, Place and Cinema

A greater sensitivity to place is helpful in the interpretation of notions of space within particular cultures and geographies, and cinema is an ideal format through which such interpretations can be developed (AlSayyad, 2006; Barber, 2002; Clarke, 1997; Mennell, 2008; Shiel, 2001; Shiel and Fitzmaurice, 2003). Film often provides a unique sense of place unavailable through other media. Film can be highly personal; it observes and captures emotion, personality, motivation, reactions, and conflicts, while permitting these emotions and other subjective aspects of experience to be transmitted to an observer in a more immediate and personal way, providing more focus on events as well as closer insights into these events. Film can also capture changing environments over time and changes in human behavior, and it provides time for analysis and interpretation by the viewer. We may consider how evocative filming of physical places grants a perspective for the interpretation and representation of places, allows for reflection, and deepens audiences' impressions of subjective experience, while at the same time providing a good spatial sense of environmental change and development.

Like urban planning, cinematic film is a product of modernity and, interestingly, film is about the same age as urban planning in its modern guise. The urban has long been a feature of motion pictures and the use of urban landscapes for the setting of films has taken varied forms since the dawn of the cinema more than 100 years ago. The Lumière Brothers' short 50-second silent film of 1895, generally regarded as one of the first moving pictures, is urban in focus and shows workers in Lyon leaving a factory at the end of their shift. The urban has been present in film since this time and has taken on varied forms. There are the studio urban landscapes popular

in film noir, employing special effects, which serve to represent everything dark and dangerous about city living. There are also location urban landscapes in which places are recognizable either by setting, by name, or both. This typology may be oversimplified, however, because one can also think of the use of specific places to falsely represent other geographies, and the use of specific places to represent more anonymous urban industrial or post-industrial landscapes symbiotic of wider socio-political issues. The urban landscapes form part of the narrative text of these films since they serve to represent and promote a discourse on particular social conditions of urban existence that appear to be unified. This (selective) construction of the city, in turn, leads to discourses concerning the lives and portrayal of personal identities and interpersonal communication within families, between friends, work colleagues, as well as fellow urban habitants, and the social relations between them.

The camera lens is well positioned to provide a holistic interpretation of materially substantial interventions in the urban. The eclecticism of planning is associated with a growing body of theory on place identity, or placeness, and spatial awareness, on the interrelated linkages between place, space, people and politics, with a long-standing interest in urban form and city life, and with an understanding of the use of urban space and arrangement. And this same eclecticism provides an opportunity for an alternative critical perspective, gleaned from celluloid representations, that might explain the prevalence and significance of people's perceptions of places from which planners often feel remote and are unable to discern.

When considering perceptions of the urban—how it is planned and designed and how it has evolved historically—it is necessary to acknowledge that a considerable amount of the best work has been undertaken in disciplines other than planning. Although there are conceptual and methodological challenges, I call upon planners to take a fuller interest in place image and representation, through three principal domains: first, the literature on cultural geography, which opens up a number of perspectives on place identity and place emotion; second, the relationship between the "city" as an identifiable place with its own identities, histories, myths, and collective place narratives; and, finally, a discussion of the real and imagined worlds associated with place, or what Donald McNeill terms, "the plasticity and multidimensionality of the urban experience" (McNeill, 2005). Film may be viewed as a technique or tool within these domains which can assist those in urban planning to reinterpret places and to understand emotional attachments to places. Much of the work discussed in the present study originates from disciplines outside planning, including history, architecture, urban studies, film studies, and—of course—geography. Many of these fields have strong interdisciplinary relationships to urban planning, and further attempts to bring together the paradigms of these parallel disciplines could enrich planning writing by allowing a greater

sensitivity to place. Sandercock (2003) has been one of the few academic planners, lately, to identify a need for such a heightened sensitivity: "In the postwar rush to turn planning into an applied science much was ignored—the city of memory, of desire, of spirit; the importance of place and the art of place-making; the local knowledges written into stones and memories of communities" (Sandercock, 2003, 2-3). Contemporary cities are sites of spatial struggles, people coping with the dilemmas of identity, and difference (Sandercock, 2003; Massey, 2005).

Shiel (2001) states that cinema is the ideal means through which to understand increasing spatialization organized both culturally and territorially, since it deals with the organization of space (cf. Soja, 1989; Scott and Soja, 1996). This entails the need for an analysis of the treatment, interpretation, and portrayal of space in film as well as how film is treated in space. The space within which a film is shot, the place and landscape of a narrative setting, and the differing geographies between different sequences within a film are no less important than the spatial setting of film production with its unique production, distribution and screening. My contention is that the public often possesses attitudes towards notions of place, difference, and distinctiveness, particularly when the forces of globalization appear to contribute to the uniformity of the streetscape (the repetition of the same chain stores and coffee shops, for example, city to city), as the public clings to real or imagined perceptions about the stories, memories, traditions, and cultures of individual places. Cinema and photography can be useful media to record and represent these distinctive places and to locate and position narratives within built environments.

Figure 2: Gateshead. The Trinity Square car park in Gateshead, UK, viewed from Newcastle upon Tyne. The brutal designed structure from the late 1960s was a listed (protected) building, and featured in the original *Get Carter* film of 1971. Gateshead Council sought its' demolition but prominent local campaigns sought to save it due, primarily, to its filmic role. It was demolished in 2010.

Planning as Filmic Subject Matter

Today, in an era of television, when the highest audience ratings are possessed by game shows, soap operas, and light entertainment, we may be forgiven for wondering about the appeal of planning and development subject matter as entertaining topics for peak time television viewing. However, during the modernist era in the UK between the 1930s and 1970s (Ward, 2002), and also, perhaps, because of the early days of broadcasting, when topics for films were not as sophisticated as they are currently, there was an excitement apparent on the part of the public who were eager to witness the process of change in a new, technologically advanced way (Attenborough, 2002). Television provided a useful medium to represent the rapid changes of the period, socially, politically, and architecturally, and—simultaneously—to reflect the concern of the British people (Burns, 1986). But television was not the only medium concerned with this process of change. Cinematic film also focused on changing societal and economic conditions. Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* of 1936—although a comedy—depicted industrialization, Fordism, and the effects of economic depression in the United States in the 1930s. Likewise, the output of the Ealing Film Studios between the 1930s and the 1950s depicted changing communities in Britain, a deliberate policy on the part of its producer, Sir Michael Balcon (Barr, 1993). In a similar vein, "kitchen sink" neo-realism films of the late 1950s and early 1960s attempted to provide a more social
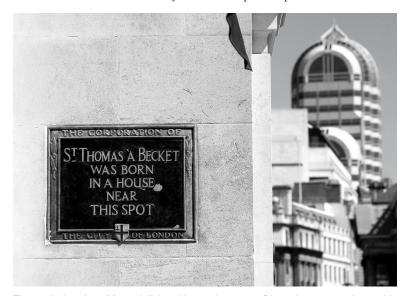

Figure 3: London. Memorializing history in stone. Blue plaques, such as this commemorating Thomas Becket near St Paul's in London, are littered liberally through London and other UK cities. The architecture of the 12th century has vanished as have all traces to Becket's former home. But the site attracts tourists and photographers.

realistic dimension to film output, through the depiction of working class characters, social problem narratives, and industrial landscapes (Higson, 1984).

The depiction of changes in the landscape became a subject for film early on. In Britain by the early 1930s, the documentary movement in film— founded by John Grierson (Aitken, 1990)—had started to make realist public information films centered on working class urban conditions (Garside, 1988), and these included *Housing Problems* (1935), *The Smoke Menace* (1937), and *Housing Progress* (1938). This trend continued during the war years with features that examined planning and reconstruction, including *The City* (directed by Alberto Cavalcanti in 1939), *New Towns for Old* (1942), and *Proud City* (1945) (Gold and Ward, 1994). Many of these features were commissioned by official agencies, such as the General Post Office, The Ministry of Information, and the Oil and Gas Company. Most of the films are authoritative in style, with factual information, commentaries, and lectures to camera by experts and officials (Gold and Ward, 1997). Professor Sir Patrick Abercrombie's prominent role[1] in several of the documentary films of the 1940s certainly extended to the public the image of the planner, who was frequently portrayed as a visionary or scientist with a plan to make things better. There is no greater illustration of this than Abercrombie's starring role in Jill Craigie's 1946 film, *The Way We Live*, an 80-minute feature length, Rank-distributed film about the planning and reconstruction of Plymouth (Tewdwr-Jones, 2013). At the commencement of the film, accompanying the images of a gentleman walking amidst Plymouth's few remaining historic buildings, the narrator informs the audience that: "The heroes or villains [of this film], according to your point of view, are two men with a plan: James Paton Watson, the City Engineer, and Professor Patrick Abercrombie. What they have to say is something of a challenge to the way we live." And later in the film, as if to emphasize the mystique surrounding the original thinking of the professional expert, the narrator states: "No one knew what the professor was up to."

Gold and Ward (1997) comment on this depiction of the rational man of science, the expert, and they suggest that the portrayal in films of a central hero—"a planning wizard"—was related to a desire to make features about planning, development, and reconstruction entertaining, informative, and forward-looking within film. It was not so much stories about how planners and architects engaged with members of the public in rebuilding towns, but rather about the way planners were transforming landscapes to provide new rational visions of the future. During the 1950s, the portrayal of the planner as expert was relegated to second place to make way for a primary emphasis upon building and renewal. But this was in stark contrast to the realist approach of many of the British documentary movement

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1.   More about Abercrombie can be found on the BPJ website: ced.berkeley.edu/ bpj.

of the 1930s, whose productions often included members of the public speaking directly to the camera about their experiences. Nevertheless, by the late 1940s, thanks to the wartime films of the Ministry of Information, the depiction of planners as rational, professional experts had already been lodged within the mindsets of audiences. Efforts to raise the planner to the status of visionary genius in film would always be hostage to fortune, leading to serious consequences when modernism started to be questioned more prominently during the latter half of the twentieth century.

Within narrative film, some of the celebrated British Ealing Studios' productions of the 1940s and 1950s evince a desire to look backwards for comfort during the period's immense socio-economic change. In 1955 when the studios were sold to the BBC, the studios' producer, Sir Michael Balcon, installed a plaque on the building, which read, "Here during a quarter of a century were made many films projecting Britain and the British character." Many of the most successful Ealing comedy films possess one particular common characteristic: a story of one small community's desire to break free from overt bureaucratic control (Chapman, 2006).

The 1949 film, *Passport to Pimlico,* bases its entire plot on the desire of people within a small London residential area to escape post-war restrictions, while coping with physical change and the loss of community. Within the film, the people are divided when it comes to decisions about what sort of development to allow at a derelict bomb site in the heart of their community: a commercial center (progressive, economic, and necessary, but portrayed as "harsh") and a swimming pool "for the local kids" (social, community-centered and "nice"). The dilemmas of choosing a type of development for the area represent two nations; both are intended to be pro-community and to represent the people's attempt to get on with their lives through the creation of something new. But the swimming pool dream is portrayed as the more heartfelt response, because it is something in which the whole community can become involved.

Ealing's 1953 film, *The Titfield Thunderbolt,* employs a similar theme for the story of a rural community's protest at the closure of their local railway line (the community's lifeline) and the community's attempt to take over the railway to avert its replacement with a bus service (the operators, "Pearce and Crump," are portrayed in the film as shifty, corrupt, greedy, and anti-community, eager to turn the village of "Titfield" into "Pearcetown"). In one interesting scene—a public inquiry into the community's application to run the local rail service—the lead character turns to the assembled public gallery and pleas with the audience for support against Pearce and Crump: "Don't you realize you're condemning our village to death! Open it up to buses and lorries and what's it going to be like in five years time?! Our lanes will be concrete roads, our houses will have numbers instead of

Figure 4: Norwich. The old part of the city of Norwich, England, although could be a location for Harry Potter films or Charles Dickens features The area has conservation and heritage status and is protected from development pressures. Britain suffers from a disease called nostalgia. These areas often serve in part to perpetuate a public belief that all new development is bad.

names, there'll be traffic lights and zebra crossings. And that will be twice as dangerous!"

Charles Barr's (1993) authoritative work on the Ealing films excellently portrays this almost pro-community/anti-change sentiment in the film-scripts of T.E.B. Clarke, by referring to the "polarisation" displayed in the films "between recreated past and threatening future, between the dynamism of acquisitiveness and the static nature of community," and a tendency to increasingly portray, "Something nice and wholesome and harmless, quaint and static and timeless" in the films as change unfolded at the time.

These discussions are useful because they place the birth of statutory town and country planning in an historical context. As with US commentators (Jacobs, 1961; Gans, 1972; Goodman, 1972), it is possible to identify the alienation some of the people of Britain felt at the onset of the radical changes promoted through the new town planning process, while they simultaneously recognized the need to organize such a process in post-war restructuring. But the debate is also necessary to understand the persistence of the British desire to continually lambaste, or at least remain suspicious of town planning, and such unease has been evident in the film medium for many decades. This suspicion emerged during the austerity

years of the 1940s, and the people's agitation at the loss of their pre-war communities (more directly through the ravages of war than planning) continued into the 1950s and 1960s as the public continually lamented at the loss of their pre-war existence. The public frustration was vented on the professionals who were charged with physical rebuilding, and this frustration was reemphasized, perhaps, by narrative cinematic features that looked constantly backwards. The dream of improved housing, economic prosperity and planned communities was realized, but not in the way people had imagined (Hopkins, 1964). In cinematic representations, the British film industry eagerly portrayed the changing conditions of the country, but these efforts were tarnished by a desire for nostalgia and for a continuation of the wartime machinery of reasserting the pre-war spirit and community of Britain (Murphy, 1989; Higson, 1997; Richards, 1997).

Reactions to Bulldozers and Bureaucrats

The tendency to cope with physical change by recreating, through film, a golden age image of pre-war Britain only served to fuel the public's dismay at the developments of post-war urban planning. One doubts whether the sort of romanticized images of communities and one-nation Britain portrayed in the films of the 1940s and 1950s ever existed. The literary works of George Orwell and J.B. Priestley, for example, suggest that they

Figure 5: Paris. The iconic designs to the Paris metro. Specific designs unique to specific cities feature prominently in feature films to create a sense of location. In addition to the Paris metro, iconic transport designs are also used in film locations for London (the red double decker bus), Manhattan (yellow cabs) among others.

certainly did not reflect northern British urban life. They are, rather, scenes of a middle-class Britain put forth as visions of English identity (Easthope, 1999), which the public found more reassuring than the visionary / Modern realities of the new developments emerging in rebuilt towns and cities across the country.

Certainly the spirit of much media appeared to change in the late 1950s and 1960s. First, in film, a number of projects remained very much in the tradition of the "David" of the individual or community against the monolithic planning system "Goliath." This trope, depicted least subtly in the Ealing comedies, exposed the conflicts arising from community redevelopment (Barr, 1993). Subsequently, the social realism 'Kitchen sink' dramas of the late 1950s and early 1960s, such as *Room at the Top* (1959), *Saturday Night Sunday Morning* (1960), *A Taste of Honey* (1961), and *This Sporting Life* (1963), reflected a more realistic sense in a "documentary style" (Higson, 1986) of what living in England meant for the vast majority of the urbanized population. While cinema went the way of gritty urban realism, in literature and television the preconceived image of urban planning as a threat to community and heritage was further expressed.

Thanks to film and other media that captured, framed, and, perhaps, led, the public imagination, planners were increasingly criticized for their perceived utopian visions. The criticisms only reinforced a belief that urban planners were more interested in physical rebuilding rather than in the people who used the buildings (Dennis, 1970; Gans, 1972). Such worries about a perceived lack of concern for people and for the community among planning professionals can be understood as part of a decline in the post-war consensus which supposed that "the values of society could be safeguarded by the judgments of professional planners and democratically elected politicians" (Davies, 2001, 194) and prompted the government to commission a committee to investigate "Public Participation in Planning." The committee, chaired by A.M. Skeffington, reported in 1969 and suggested planners should consult with the public much more actively (Skeffington, 1969); as a consequence, the public was given legislative rights of involvement in planning in the UK for the first time in 60 years.

And yet, despite such remedial measures, the era of the unchallenged planning professional was over. The pronouncements of the literati regarding urban planning during the modern era had captured the public's imagination and stuck. Such attitudes were picked up by a number of travel writers and prominent individuals during the period and presented as subject matter for television, including Lucinda Lambton's BBC television series, The *Alphabet of Britain*, and the accompanying book, *A-Z of Britain*, as well as the BBC current affairs program devoted to conservation issues, *One Foot in the Past*.

Likewise, the Prince of Wales in several speeches and in his *Vision of Britain* television documentary and book for the BBC (The Prince of Wales, 1989), pointed out examples of perceived poor and good architecture and planning in the mid-1980s. In a speech marking the 150th Anniversary of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1984, Prince Charles criticized architect Sir James Stirling's proposed extension to the National Gallery in London: "What is proposed [for Trafalgar Square] is like a monstrous carbuncle on the face of a much-loved and elegant friend." Three years later, he made a more profound attack on the Modern movement in planning and development in a speech at the Mansion House:

> At least when the Luftwaffe knocked down our buildings, it didn't replace them with anything more offensive than rubble. We did that... planning turned out to be the continuation of war by other means... large numbers of us in this country are fed up with being talked down to and dictated to by an existing planning, architectural and development establishment.… This is the age of the computer and the word-processor, but we don't have to be surrounded by buildings that look like such machines (The Prince of Wales, 1987).

In the ensuing outcry in the media over the Prince's remarks, criticisms were all framed with respect to the architectural profession. Planners escaped the attention of the media and the public (possibly because both did not obviously recognize a difference between the professions), although it is noticeable that the Prince had pinned blame on both disciplines for the onset of the modern movement in cities and that he deliberately used film to convey his message. The Prince, no stranger in creating controversy on planning and city building issues, has more recently become embroiled in a dispute and accused of high intervention concerning the redevelopment of Chelsea Barracks in London to a design by the international architect Richard Rogers, whose project was subsequently refused permission. In response, the planners themselves have tried to reclaim the argumentative high ground through their own use of media, but frequently this only served to further their image as remote technocrats or bureaucrats (Gold and Ward, 1997; cf. British Channel 4 television programs *Cream Teas and Concrete* [1991] and *An Inspector Calls* [1996]). Indeed, since the late 1970s, television representations of planning or the planner have been predominantly technocratic and bureaucratic—useful themes for television comedies; see, for example, how the planner is portrayed in David Nobb's *Reggie Perrin*, and Tom Sharpe's *Blott on the Landscape and Restoration* for the BBC, and *The Secret World of Michael Fry* and *Demolition* for Channel 4. In 2013, we have witnessed a somewhat noticeable change in the depiction of planning and planners. To much acclaim both from the public and from reviewers, the BBC broadcast *The Planners*, an eight part documentary series depicting the efforts of planners working in local government; and those inside the planning profession began to hope that

some of the frequently asserted media myths about planning might finally be debunked.

It is also possible to identify a shift in the representation of town and country planning away from the threats to community portrayed during the period between 1945 and the 1980s, to a more complex recent narrative. In this new narrative, which has been prevalent over the past 25 years, the town planners have metamorphosed from their former status as simple threats to the community to overtly bureaucratic threats, who strictly follow laws and policies with little regard for places or for the people who inhabit them.

There is much debate as to whether or not the public image and identities of planners presented in popular media exert a powerful influence on public trust in planning. Indeed, the understanding of the current public image and professional identities associated with UK planning is of critical importance to both the practice and theoretical underpinning of spatial planning (Tewdwr-Jones, 2012). The type of planning undertaken during the post war period, particularly the new towns and associated redevelopments of the 1950s and 1960s, has left a legacy for the planning profession which may also contribute to the public's discontentment. For many, the only other work planners do is giving out, refusing, or putting "unnecessary" conditions on planning permissions for householders to build garages or houses in the countryside (Tewdwr-Jones, 1999). As

Figure 6: San Francisco. Lombard Street, San Francisco, with Coit Tower in the distance. The street and this particular perspective were immortalized in Hitchcock's Vertigo. James Stewart's character, Scotty, lived at No. 900 on the left hand side.

catalysts for more reactionary responses from a right wing press, town planners are continually lambasted for their overt bureaucracy, for their "toy town" outlook, and for their destruction of Britain's heritage (Clifford, 2006). During times of rapid change and urbanization, these views may be understandable as people cope with rapidly changing landscapes. But what is interesting is that these negative sentiments have continued in the UK from the post war era right through into the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Take, for example, Peter Hall's book *Great Planning Disasters* (Hall, 1980), which cataloged some of the biggest failures of the modern movement. More recently, we have witnessed the publication of the popular and populist book *Crap Towns: The 50 Worst Places to Live in the UK* (Jordison and Kieran, 2003), followed by *Crap Towns II: The Nation Decides* (Jordison and Kieran, 2004) that reported the public's vote on their own candidates for the most poorly reconstructed towns and cities. Or *Demolition*, the 2006 television series that encouraged the public to vote on the buildings and developments across the UK they considered the ugliest and most warranting demolition. This may seem bewildering to an international audience and to scholars in other countries where urban planning may be accepted, established, and viewed as a necessary governmental activity. A key issue here is that outside of planning circles, the successes and achievements of planning in the UK have not been promoted both positively and loudly at one and the same time. The reactions in the UK reveal an on-going love-hate relationship between
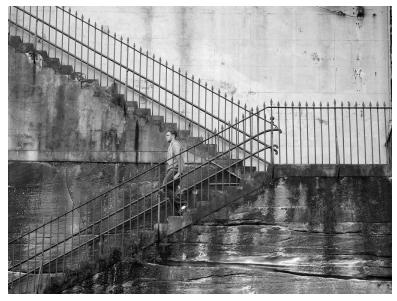

Figure 7: Sydney. The routine, take-it-for-granted paths through a city can serve as important sites of community identity and belonging even though they may not comprise important heritage sites. Sydney, Australia. Steps at The Rocks.

planners and politicians, businesses and communities. Furthermore, these reactions mask a range of contradictions between values and actions on the part of the public and others (Clifford and Tewdwr-Jones, 2013). Regardless of these contradictions, the subject itself has become, to all intents and purposes, something of a national pastime, even if these dualisms in perceptions towards planning have rarely gone reported or received treatment in academic discussion.

Conclusions: Planning, Modernity and Film

What can we say, then, about the treatment of planning by and through film and the impact this treatment has on public perceptions? Turning to conceptual thoughts, Berman (1982) suggests that modernity may be considered from two perspectives: as a project that develops over time and influences and explains the development of modern society; and as an experience of living within, and sometimes against, the modernization project. Jervis (1998, 6) also defines modernity as "the experience of a world constantly changing, constantly engendering a past out of the death of the here and now, and constantly reproducing 'here and now' as the present, the contemporary, the fashionable. But he also states that the project of modernity is associated with an orientation and rational control of the environment, to understand it but also to transform it. Time and space are separated, and there is an emphasis on technology, the industrialization of production, demographic upheavals, rapid urban growth, and mass communications.

Giddens (1990, 27) refers to these processes as the development of both social relations that are not location specific and of "disembedding mechanisms" that lift out social relations to give rise to new mechanisms across large time-space distances. One of these mechanisms, and a feature of modernity, is the rise of experts and technical and professional expertise. For Giddens, a mark of modernity is the way in which knowledge is continually gathered, examined and reformed in the light of new evidence. This allows for rational control but also suggests continual change or upheaval (Giddens, 1990, 53). The nation state is preeminent in controlling and supporting citizens through bureaucratic arrangements, and relies on and trusts technical and professional knowledge and the experts that propagate the knowledge (Clarke, 1997).

Planning has been for the most part a project of modernity. But enthusiasm for modernity is often double-edged: in the post-war period after 1945, Britain celebrated reconstruction and renewal through new architecture, improved housing conditions, faster transport, and economic growth (Hennessey, 1994). But simultaneously, Britain was also agitated by the onset of change and the effect this would have on traditional ways of life,

including threats to the countryside by urbaniation, and by a reliance on technology and professional expertise. Such a division of values and sentiments is often a feature of modernity and society (O'Shea, 1996). Berman sums up this duality well, suggesting that it is possible "to make oneself somehow at home in the maelstrom" (Berman, 1982, 344), and "to relish that the process of modernization, even as it exploits and torments us, brings our energies and imaginations to life, drives us to grasp and confront the world that modernization makes, and to strive to make it our own" (Berman, 1982, 348). For others, anxiety about the modern world leads to "the desire to preserve and retain" (Light, 1991, 145), which has its focus in a concern with the past, described by Wright as "the backward glance which is taken from the edge of a vividly imagined abyss" (Wright, 1985, 70).

Depending on your point of view, film and television in Britain has either reflected these dual societal feelings or else helped to create them. Planners are no longer the only public service professionals in the UK that have been subject to scrutiny and even ridicule. Ongoing political ideological stances towards bureaucratization, the public sector, professional elites and impediments to delivery have all reshaped the public services. Tellingly, stories about planning failure and the inadequacy of the public sector remain prevalent and even today are communicated to the wider public through the media and news channel reports. But the British public at large remain concerned about housing affordability, the efficiency of transport, the availability of energy, the creation of jobs, and the protection

Figure 8: The Bay. A segway tour at Aquatic Park, San Francisco, opposite Alcatraz. The island has featured as a location in scores of film and television features.

of the urban fringe. Although the public may be continually bombarded by negative stereotypical news stories and political sound bites concerning planning, they are equally fiercely protective of the planning system since it affords them, in their view, democratic rights.

As with Calvino's eye on the city, the camera lens may well be used to depict the multiple meanings of places, to represent both difference and distinctiveness, and to challenge not only our existing perceptions of the urban, but also those manipulated and furthered by others. How we, as urban planners, perceive of a place and what, in turn, people try to cling to in their perceptions of a place, are issues that need to be considered fully within the urban planning realm. Planning has to become more sensitive to notions of both place and meaning as well as its portrayal by media, if it is to play a significant role in shaping the distinctive places of the future that communities are calling for.

Ed. note: Links to video clips from many of the films described in this article can be found on our website: http://ced.berkeley.edu/bpj/?p=1443

Mark Tewdwr-Jones is Professor of Town Planning and a member of the Global Urban Research Unit at Newcastle University. He is one of the UK's leading authorities on planning, land use, and urban development.

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