



Scientific Cloak / Romantic Heart: Gordon Stephenson and the Redevelopment Study of Halifax, 1957

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In the mid-1950s British planner Gordon Stephenson, a professor at the University of Toronto, contracted with several Canadian cities to diagnose their problems and offer redevelopment options. The City of Halifax, a port city on Canada's Atlantic coast, hired Stephenson to produce what he called "probably the most effective job I ever did". In the decades since, Stephenson's redevelopment study significantly affected the shape of the downtown and the fate of an African-Nova Scotian community on the shore of the harbor.

The paper will seek to explain the context within which Halifax decided to employ Stephenson's services and adopt his advice. It will provide a situated example of how communities utilize planning expertise for political, economic, and cultural ends. We will identify the people and organizations advocating and opposing the interventions to understand the social context of planning activities in this pivotal period of urban transformation.

The paper will draw largely on archival sources and other documentation of planning activities in Halifax and Canada. Stephenson's biography will provide insight into his priorities and activities. Books on the planning philosophies and practices of the 1950s will offer useful background.

KEY WORDS: Gordon Stephenson, Halifax, redevelopment.