

## THE EXHIBITIONARY COMPLEX AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY TOWN PLANNING

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### ABSTRACT

*In this paper our aim is to examine the historical role that planning exhibitions have had in communicating ideas. While the catalytic role in urban change of major expos is acknowledged, the staging, evolution and meanings attached to purpose-built planning exhibitions have made only modest incursions into planning history, despite the importance attached to displays by pioneers like Patrick Geddes. Such events provide a useful aesthetic and historical lens through which to understand how the objectives of planning are marketed to planners and the wider community. Here, the objective is to frame the role of exhibitions in different time periods throughout the first half of the 20th century with special reference to the Australian experience. Exhibitions in the 1910s were often attached to conferences and helped codify the aims, icons and progress of the planning movement as an eclectic, albeit largely spatial discipline. The 1940s were arguably the golden era for planning exhibitions used to communicate and crystallize a universal canon of modernist planning ideals and values as a part of the post-war reconstruction effort. We conclude with reflections on a research agenda for the historiographical role of the planning exhibition and the shifting meanings of planning that they convey.*

### INTRODUCTION

Exhibitions have been an integral instrument for the development of town planning culture through the twentieth century. The planning literature is sprinkled with references to international, national, and local events in many countries. A number of celebrated events in the eurocentric world (main focus of this paper) have helped define the whole conventional historiography of the planning movement. Students of planning will be familiar with the role that the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago had in making the City Beautiful an icon of early twentieth century planning along with other major events such as the International Conference and Exhibition of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in London in October 1910.

While there are numerous passing mentions in the planning history literature to exhibitions from the late nineteenth century onwards, and the role of international expositions has been well covered (Gold and Gold, 2005; Monclus, 2008), there have been relatively few studies dedicated to either individual events or the planning adaptation of what Bennett (1988) calls 'the exhibitionary complex' (but see Chabard 2009; Lilley and Larkham 2007). This is perhaps surprising since it could be argued that the discipline of planning has been marketed and propelled forward at key moments by exhibitions.

Exhibitions are necessarily ephemeral but are useful for understand planning history. What little remains of the display material, usually in the form of books, booklets and photographs constitutes a key resource for understanding the visions of planners at different times. The aim of exhibitions to focus public attention on a particular issue calls for that issue to be examined as an historical artefact. What was exhibited, by whom, where, and how much interest these attracted all indicate what was expected of planning and how important it was at different times. From the early post world war two period, exhibitions also represent a generalised attempt to educate and inform the public in planning.

Our focus here is on planning exhibitions through the first half of the twentieth century which were primarily conceived as mechanisms to propagandise the cause of planning. Their common intent was usually intended to make a visual case for state controls and incentives as a means for producing a better built environment. In the Anglophone world the major clustering of exhibitions appears to be the 1910s and 1940s. The former reflects the early enthusiastic days of the modern town planning movement when exhibitions were staged to sell the very idea of the kinds of public and private initiatives needed to secure the health, efficiency and beauty of cities. The latter mirrors the impact of reconstructionist ideology and the modernist heyday though the final years of World War 2 and into the late 1940s, with the central rationale being the need to rebuild cities and communities in peacetime after the damage or at least neglect of wartime. The ideas and matching ideologies on show during this latter period provided the inspiration for the institutionalisation of planning globally through the second half the twentieth century (Hall, 2002; Ward, 2002).

There are three main sections to the paper. In what follows we attempt to sketch an international context for planning exhibitions. Then come brief accounts of two notable Australian exhibitions, one from the first surge of planning idealism in the 1910s, the other from a more world weary but nonetheless optimistic period in the 1940s. What emerges is an indication of the value in examining the historical role of exhibitions in communicating the nature and evolution of planning ideas and ideologies over time. Not only were these events intrinsically interesting, they raise issues and theoretical possibilities for further research.

### THE PLANNING EXHIBITION IN THE EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

There is no one exhibition model. Exhibitions assume different forms and have evolved over time. Our initial historic typology of twentieth century planning exhibitions looks something like the matrix in Table 1.

**Table 1: A typology of historic planning exhibitions**

Category	Definition	Examples
CITY, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITIONS	Holistic planned environments; life size physical exemplars (e.g. new housing); planning displays	World expos; Worlds Columbian Exposition 1893; Dresden 1903; New York World's Fair, 1939; Festival of Britain 1951
PLANNING CONFERENCE WITH EXHIBITION	Adjunct exhibition on planning themes and initiatives	RIBA London 1910; International Garden Cities and Town Planning Association
TRAVELLING EXHIBITION	General and problem-specific propaganda; possibly touring to support lecture program	Patrick Geddes' Cities and Town Planning Exhibition 1910s
EVENT EXHIBITION	Ephemeral events marking events (e.g. release of major plan)	'Boston 1915'; City reconstruction exhibits in Britain, 1940s
DESIGN, ARCHITECTURE AND HOUSING EXHIBITIONS	Collateral content on planning	Ideal and new homes exhibitions

The primary purpose of city, national and international expos has been to showcase the creativity, productivity and economic and social progress of host nations and cities. World peace and global citizenship were major early themes of world expos (Meller, 1995). The most memorable events were those that incorporated working models of progressive planning on the grounds (e.g., parks, promenades and public spaces) or indeed were conceived as holistic planned environments themselves (Greenhalgh, 1988). Large scale events have been conceived as vehicles promoting urban regeneration (Monclus, 2009) although seldom unproblematically (Gold and Gold, 2005). Futuristic visions often had a dramatic impact on the community imagination, if less so in reality (Bokovoy, 2002). More modest exhibitions grounded in incremental change such as the Festival of Britain's 'Live Architecture' exhibition in 1951 were better signposts to the future (Conekin, 1951). Here, Frederick Gibberd foresaw an exhibition of 'intriguing and pretty things' that communicated an appreciation of the possibilities of community space rather than a didactic blueprint for reform (Gibberd, 1947-49).

The planning conference exhibition was tightly scripted by planning advocates. The prototypical event was the 1910 London Conference (Miller, 1993). 'Without the Exhibition the Conference would have been rather a tame affair', pronounced the RIBA President in opening the multi-national display of images at the Royal Academy (RIBA, 1911, 733). The ulterior agenda here was less the free interplay of

innovative design ideas than furthering the interests of the British architectural profession in implementing planning reforms (Whyte, 2010). The same dialogue between national and international concerns might be read into later events; virtually all the congresses of the International Garden Cities Association founded in 1913 and transitioning into the later International Federation for Housing and Town Planning had exhibitions running in parallel. The RIBA Conference also spawned smaller events across Britain as the workings of the pioneering *Housing, Town Planning Etc Act 1910* were debated and imagined (e.g. Adshead and Abercrombie, 1914).

The intention of the travelling exhibition was to diffuse and evolve the message of planning as widely and strategically as possible. The most famous example was Patrick Geddes' Cities and Town Planning Exhibition, a spin-off from the 1910 RIBA Conference. This was a heterogeneous assemblage tracing 'cities in evolution' from the ancient world through the medieval and renaissance eras to the problems and possibilities of the contemporary industrial city. The flavour was less programmatic than educational; the aim was to make 'question their living environment' (Welter, 1999, 8). It travelled 'more or less everywhere Geddes went' (Meller, 1990, 175) but plans to take the Exhibition to the United States foundered because American city planners were preoccupied by more technical issues of policy implementation. There were other travelling exhibitions there to fill the gap, notably one organised by the American City Bureau touring 22 cities in 1913-16 (Chabard, 2009).

Event exhibitions marked special events such as the initiation and completion of studies, comprehensive plans, and major proposals, or were events in their own right. Benjamin Marsh's didactic 'Congestion Show' depicting the economic and social costs of overcrowding at the American Museum of Natural History in New York in March 1908 is regarded as the first major city planning exhibition in the United States (Scott, 1969). One visitor inspired by Marsh's exhibition was German urbanist Werner Hegemann, later involved in organisation of the 'Boston 1915' exhibition, the Greater Berlin design competition Exhibition in Berlin in mid-1910, and a life-long crusade for planning and civic engagement (Collins, 2005). Planning exhibitions in the 1940s could be both generic events promoting the needs and challenges involved in the post-war reconstruction of cities and regions or more town-specific applications of these same ideals. Lilley and Larkham (2007) have catalogued an extraordinary 90 such exhibitions of the latter kind in British cities. Their putative commitment to community engagement could not disguise the 'emerging professional technocentrism of planning'.

Finally, came broader design, architecture and housing exhibitions with either implicit planning content or an actual town planning section. These crossed over into planning and in the 1940s evidenced a strong 'culture of display' (Lilley and Larkham, 2007). Rethinking housing design was an international mission with obvious planning implications at the end of the war, but there were precedents. The Modern Architectural Research Society's 'New Architecture' exhibition in London in 1938 was a bellwether of other events capturing the 'flux of ideas' in progressive built environment circles towards the middle of the twentieth century (Gold, 1993).

### **MAYBE TOWN PLANNING IS ABOUT EVERYTHING? THE 1918 BRISBANE TOWN PLANNING CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION**

Following an inaugural event in Adelaide in 1917, the second Australian Town Planning Conference and Exhibition was held in Brisbane from 30 July to 6 August 1918 some three months before the Armistice and drew strongly on themes of repatriation and soldier settlement. The at-times generalised idealism of the Adelaide conference gave way to a range of more pragmatic concerns with 'practical planning'. There were nearly 600 delegates, twice that of Adelaide. The same elaborate organisational model was followed, based on Charles Reade's adaptation of the official patronage and executive structure used in British conferences from London 1910. The chairman was Alderman John McMaster, Mayor of Brisbane supported by eight executive positions and a whopping 194 other members organised into 11 specialist committees. The Honorary Organising Director of the Conference and Exhibition was Charles Chuter, a senior public servant in the Home Secretary's Department.

The Honorary Director of the Exhibition was Henry Mobsby, Government Artist and Photographer attached to the state Department of Agriculture. Mobsby had already made his reputation from scenic photography and exhibition design. He had already worked at several high profile events including the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco. He was later involved with the 1924-25 Australian Exhibition Commission at the British Empire Exhibition, Wembley. His work was supported by the Exhibition Committee, the largest of all the conference committees with nearly 80 members.

The formal conference sessions and the exhibition proper were held at separate locations. The Conference was staged in the Examination Hall of the Central Technical College in George Street in the city centre. The exhibition was held in the Exhibition Building in Bowen Hills immediately to the north. The Exhibition Building had been home to the Queensland Museum from 1899 but also doubled as a venue for concerts and art exhibitions. The exhibits also spilled into an adjacent building and into other parts of the Brisbane Showground (Catalogue 1918; Proceedings 1918).

The Exhibition was officially opened in the Exhibition Building's Concert Hall by the Governor of Queensland, Sir Hamilton Goold-Adams. The National Anthem was played on the great organ to accent the occasion. Hardly gushing with enthusiasm, Sir Hamilton remarked in his speech that what was on show was done 'to the very best advantage in the limited time offering'. An impressive 80 separate exhibitors were involved.

State displays predominated. New South Wales boasted the largest quantitative representation with over 400 separate items displayed by 16 different state government departments and instrumentalities. The biggest show came from the Sydney Harbour Trust illustrating its work through images of berths, wharves and jetties, sheds, light houses, waterside workers flats and children's playgrounds. Complementing the state displays were six main thematic areas: a 'Special Town Planning and Housing Exhibition' emphasising precedents and parallels overseas; an international section with material from New Zealand and Canada; a display dedicated to soldier settlements; a child welfare section featuring actual health and play facilities; an historic Australian section, also supplemented by the various historic plans and photographs featured in the state exhibitions; and a local government, health and water and sewerage section, the most miscellaneous display of the event. Three individuals contributed significantly to the exhibition: Reade, Government Town Planner of South Australia whose materials reprised but built on the exhibition at Adelaide and his collection assembled for a national town planning lecture tour in 1914; the engineer JJC Bradfield who facilitated a display relating primarily to the expansion of the city and suburban railway system in Sydney; and the NSW politician JD Fitzgerald, who made possible an extensive display covering world cities, parks and playgrounds. Fitzgerald also contributed his personal collection of continental advertising posters to the modern art posters display. This display in the annex to the main building had been organised in Sydney and the centrepiece was the extensive collection of retailer Charles Lloyd Jones. Bertram Stevens explained the rationale of the latter display in terms of Fitzgerald's promotion of 'artistic town-planning' and the concern of the planning movement with 'unnecessary unsightliness in our cities', in particular 'advertising hoardings'.

The core of the images displayed in the Exhibition comprised site and technical plans, maps, diagrams, bird's eye views, and photographs. There was extensive coverage of public works and infrastructure, doubly coded as signifiers of economic advancement and engineering innovation. Representations of actual planning projects were fewer but spanned the major concerns of the day: projected civic centres for Sydney and Brisbane; proposed road schemes to relieve traffic congestion; children's playgrounds and park layouts; plans of garden cities, garden suburbs, speculative new communities and country towns; proposed memorials; and various workers cottages, soldier settlement and model housing schemes, all intended to convey the superiority of the Australian detached bungalow. The artistic locus was undoubtedly a display of the original designs and working plans of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin for two new towns projected by the NSW Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission. The images supplied by local councils dwelt upon parks, public gardens, recreational facilities, general panoramas, and street and civic improvements. Environmental content was notably

absent apart from reforestation and street plantings. The special area resonating most with the present day was the emphasis on public and child health.

A recurrent device across the visual display was the juxtaposition of historic and contemporary views of buildings, street and park scenes. The intention was clearly to capture progress over time and the progressive aspirations of the modern town planning movement. Unavoidably, this device, which was a mark of planning propaganda of the day, ventured into unflattering representations of modern environments. Lest too much be read into these problematic scenes, theoretical and actual solutions were prominently juxtaposed. In the case of the host city, the relativity of the crises was also made clear in the Brisbane City Council's treatment of slum areas. The Exhibition Catalogue conveys an obligatory qualification: 'Brisbane has no Slums in the true sense of the word. "Brisbane Slums are Ugly, Untidy, Lopsided, and Inconvenient, but they are not Sunless or Over-crowded, nor are they Specially Dirty or Unhealthy"'.

Charles Reade's two main contributions to the Exhibition are inventoried in some detail in the Catalogue. His 'Australian Historic' section was a collection of 34 mainly capital city plans and photographs intended to convey to visitors three main things: (1) the foundational role of state surveyor-generals in early colonial city plans, (2) the eclipsing of this role by speculators, and (3) the 'urgent need ... for the resuscitation of the earlier practices in town planning, adapted and applied to the needs of our modern and growing towns and cities'. His 'Special Town Planning and Housing Exhibition' was the more ambitious display, the outcome of 'several years of travel and investigation in different countries' and directly in the tradition of the travelling exhibition of Patrick Geddes, albeit more up-to-date in its range of examples.

Reade's kaleidoscope of foreign exemplars was supplemented by a sprinkle of international images elsewhere. Curiously bobbing up in the Victorian section was a range of North American places including Denver, Pasadena, Kansas City and 'Los Angliers' [sic] and several rather exotic projects such as Shinnecock Hills, Long Island, New York and La Siguanea in Cuba. Probably arising from the connection between Charles Reade and Thomas Adams in Ottawa, the Canadian Commission of Conservation exhibit featured images of rural planning and development, open spaces, the Toronto harbourfront, Ottawa, and several Thomas Mawson plans. Also of note was a display of English 'housing and settlement schemes 1900 to 1910' lent by CH Spark from the NSW Government Architects Branch and a 'comparison in roads and residences' featuring St Francis Wood in San Francisco prepared by Mobsby from photographs taken during a visit three years earlier.

The Brisbane Exhibition also featured several novel displays outside the dutiful diet of plans, photographs and posters. The child welfare section featured three 'model' facilities: a health clinic, a crèche, and a children's playground, with children in regular attendance for performances. On Machinery Hill in the wider Exhibition Grounds two ideal houses had been erected to convey the desired standard of middle class Australian housing. Nearby were various machinery exhibits in connection with the Local Government, Health, Water and Sewerage Section. The British Australian Machinery Company displayed grading machines, concrete mixers, and drag scoops. Local government engineering conveying the more utilitarian aspects of modern city development was also captured through plans, photographs, models and actual examples of road making and maintenance equipment, refuse destructors, drainage pipes, and water tanks. The Queensland Department of Mines had a special exhibit of industrial minerals and products while the Queensland Professional Officers' Association display included 'carded samples of Queensland timbers'. Adding to the diversity was a display of Spring flowers, pot plants, vegetables and floral work organised by the Horticultural Society of Queensland. There were also evening organ recitals by Victor Galway, a young musician who went on to become Professor of Music at the University of Otago in the late 1930s. A selection of mainly touristic 'moving pictures' was also shown.

Although descending into miscellany, the Exhibition was an impressive achievement and the most notable planning exhibition held in Australia before the Second World War. Many of the images on display were iconic and the unstinting efforts of propagandists like Charles Reade convey his crucial role in shaping both the history and historiography of Australian planning. The major criticism of the Exhibition was that its fragmented nature. Not only was the Exhibition Building located nearly 6 kilometres from the venue for the paper sessions, the arrangements occasionally juxtaposed disparate displays - such as the art posters alongside specimen road

surfaces - while the model homes were sited almost a kilometre from the main building in a far corner of the Show Ground. Despite a frequent tram service between the two main venues, it was an inconvenience and for New Zealand architect S Hurst Seager underlined a major mistake in having 'the whole of the time of the delegates ... mapped out without reference to the Exhibition' (Seager, 1919, 2).

The expectation at the end of the Brisbane conference was for a third national event in Sydney in 1920 with Mobsby, Reade and Chuter to play key advisory roles. While New Zealand hosted a major conference in May 1919 and Victoria organised a state even the following November, the Sydney event never eventuated. Various city and educational planning exhibitions were held around Australia in the 1920s and 1930s, but the next major national effort would not be until 1944 at the height of a second fervour for post-war reconstruction.

### **PLANNING WITH PURPOSE: THE 1944 SYDNEY HOUSING EXHIBITION**

The 1944 Sydney Housing Exhibition took place at a time of momentous change in Australian planning. The Commonwealth Housing Commission had identified a drastic post-War housing shortage in a seminal report in 1944 (Troy and Lloyd 1981). Considerable interest in town planning had been noted in the Federal Cabinet. It was felt that legislation be provided to support this interest, and discussions were held on the need for the Federal government to step in and lend technical assistance to local authorities. In the end, responsibility for planning stayed with the States. Between 1944 and 1945, New South Wales, Tasmania and Victoria all enacted town planning legislation.

Unlike the 1918 Brisbane exhibition, the 1944 exhibition was designed to be portable so that it could be shown throughout the country. Its form was also flexible so that it could be accommodated in a variety of display spaces. Whereas the strategy for spreading the message of town planning in 1918 was based on a single major event, in the 1940s multiple exhibitions of different kinds - place-specific displays, more broadly-based travelling exhibitions, international exhibits, and hybrid forms are notable. A Melbourne Town and Country Planning Exhibition, sponsored by the Victorian Housing commission was shown initially at the State Electricity Showrooms in 1943 and then taken to various country centres and in 1948 the British Council sponsored an exhibition which partly accompanied Sir Patrick Abercrombie on his whistlestop tour of Australia (Amati and Freestone, 2009).

The main elements of the 1944 Sydney Exhibition are distilled into Table 2. The contents contextualise the main priority of more and better housing into a wider concern for both neighbourhood and city planning. The Exhibition incorporated a special section on 'US Housing in War and Peace', a display organised by the US Office of War Information which had also been shown in the UK. The architect John Oldham who played a key organisational role stressed that the event was 'of an educational nature only and at all times care has been taken to eliminate policy and politics'.

Table 2: The contents of the 1944 Sydney Housing Exhibition

Stage	Content of the exhibition	The intended message for the audience as explained in the program
1	The first actual exhibit consisted of a series of 11 display panels on which the general story of housing and town planning was told in photographic and diagram form.	A series of rousing statements about each of the panels, highlighting a problem and then a solution - e.g. panel: 2. 300,000 homes have to be built in Australia we could become builders of slums without planning 3. If we plan together New houses and neighbourhoods can become model neighbourhoods and 9. 'See how our cities grow-from bullock trail to conglomerations of factories and dwellings and roads criss-crossing dangerously.' 10. 'Failure to PLAN our cities has resulted in parks and playgrounds being forgotten-this is one of the reasons for our slums.'
2	Immediately following this display was a large mural map of Sydney indicating the bad housing areas, transport congestion and other shortcomings derived from the fact that Sydney developed without a plan.	
3	Immediately beneath it was a model town plan based on a scheme prepared by Frank Heath of the Town Planning Sub-Committee which indicated how the problems could be solved through planning.	
4	One neighbourhood unit from the town plan model was blown up to a much larger scale and on this model street arrangement, green belts, access to school and community centre, elimination of traffic hazard were illustrated. Also on this model five residential units were spotted in high colour.	
5	The units were enlarged in the next five displays to ¼ scale so 'that the public shall have an opportunity of seeing just what their homes are likely to look like in real life.' Three of these were selected from the winning designs in the Housing Commission of NSW recent competition.	'Mass housing sounds as intimate as tons of coal or gross weight in flour, but mass housing as far as YOU are concerned means YOUR home amongst many, and we have brought five different house units for your inspection (across the floor - following the red foot marks) ... tell us if you like them or which ones you think suitable for your needs. Fill in the questionnaire.'
6	Opposite these models was a full size section illustrating some phase of the modern home layout.	
7	Finally, the spectator was directed from this full scale exhibit to a small theatre in which the documentary film "The City" was shown and the US Housing in War and Peace exhibit.	TWO THINGS BEFORE YOU GO "The City" --an outstanding film on town and regional planning is shown daily from 12 until 2 p.m. Tickets are available at the counter free of charge. "U.S. Housing in War and Peace" demonstrates all the steps leading up to to-day's ideas. This exhibit presents all the advances that have been made in large scale public housing as an indication of what the future holds. Cross the Hall for US Housing in War and Peace."

Sources: National Archives of Australia, A11676/1 HC 1944/2 - Housing Commission - Housing & Town Planning Exhibition Minute by John Oldham; *Follow the red footprints: Souvenir of the Sydney Housing Exhibition*, 8-28 August 1944. Ministry of Post War Reconstruction.

The organisation of the 1944 Sydney exhibition under the auspices of the Commonwealth Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction was placed under the direction of three committees reflective of the concern with reconstruction and housing at the time amongst government, professional and educational stakeholders. The involvement of committee members who had a clear involvement in planning, the origin of the exhibition as an exercise in War propaganda, the urgency of the looming postwar housing shortage, and the constraints of travel exhibition combined to produce a focused exhibition. The supply of information was tightly controlled by the use of footsteps on the floor to direct the public and a sequential increase in the scale of exhibits from city-region to household. The information was given in a rhythmic sequence of problem and solution orchestrated around the dilemma of the three 'ds' of congestion: disease, drudgery and delinquency. The use of sweeping language in the program reflects the confidence of planners at the time riding a tide of public concern with reconstruction and urban blight.

## CONCLUSION

While both these Australian exhibitions had a clear aim to spread the word about town planning alongside other modes of propaganda including books and lectures, both did so in different ways that are instructive of the times. In 1918 the aim was to pull in as many people as possible and interest them in planning in the broadest sense. The impression left with the public would have been of a broadly progressive movement in the amelioration of the urban environment. In 1944 the message was more nuanced and the public was conceived differently. It was expected that people coming to the exhibition would have particular concerns which had already been communicated through the popular media. The exhibition was designed to crystallise these concerns and, as Henning (2007, 36) notes in her essay on modernist exhibitions of the 1920s and 30s, jolt the public out of 'the numb passivity which resulted from the social and technical arrangements of modernity'.

These vignettes also raise broader issues for planning history. Most immediately, they spark an interest in discovering more about city, national and international exhibitions and their intersection with narratives of evolving planning theory and practice, along with some of the leading and most charismatic practitioners of the day. The ephemerality of exhibitions underscores the timeliness of this research, although much has already been irrevocably lost (Lilley and Larkham, 2007). They constitute a fertile field for deconstructing the techniques by which they sought 'to render cities knowable' (Bennett, 1988, 79). They raise questions not only about the planning objectives and projects which they showcased but broader shifts in the cultural logic of exhibitions as well as more specific exhibition trends. The contrast in the two Australian exhibitions reflected an increasing sophistication of technique influenced by pioneering modernists like Otto Neurath (Henning, 2007). More fundamentally, was a shifting rationale by the 1940s to re-forming public opinion around a particular concern or *res publica* (Latour, 2005). The planning exhibition had moved from a broadly undifferentiated propagandist message to a more nuanced mediation of the relationship between planners and the planned using images to sell a particular project or idea that recalls the theoretical frame of Debord's *Spectacle*, which uses the image to convey what people need and must have (Debord, 1994).

The interest in the deeper past also calls forth an inquisitiveness about more recent events and current trends - placing the idea of the exhibition into a more dynamic post-modern societal context. Through the second half of the century, with planning systems progressively institutionalised globally, more generalist and often utopian aspirations were supplemented (because they have never been fully supplanted) by ever more targeted objectives, e.g. selling particular plans and places. Inevitably, the foundational and didactic exhibitionary complex inherited from an imperial museum culture has been leavened by more iterative aims and interactive mechanisms within a more consultative professional and institutional context, but the need to decode the true purpose, visual techniques and reception involved in public communication strategies remains a vital critical task for apprehending an enduring public element of planning worldwide.



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