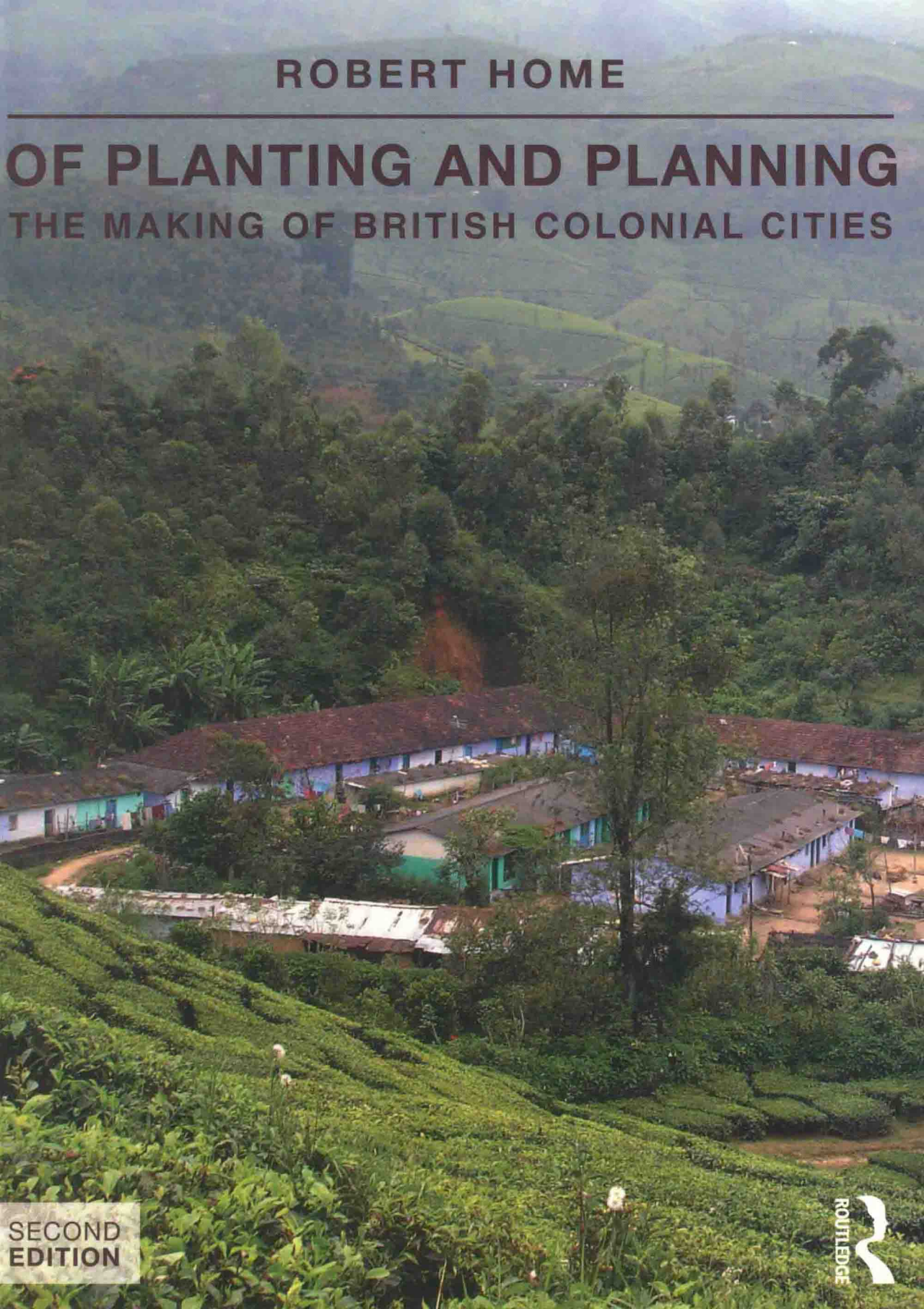
ROBERT HOME

OF PLANTING AND PLANNING

THE MAKING OF BRITISH COLONIAL CITIES



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Of Planting and Planning

The Making of British Colonial Cities

Second Edition

Robert Home

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Of Planting and Planning

At the centre of the world-economy, one always finds an exceptional state, strong, aggressive and privileged, dynamic, simultaneously feared and admired.

Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Centuries*

This, surely, is an apt description of the British Empire at its zenith.

Of Planting and Planning explores how Britain used the formation of towns and cities as an instrument of colonial expansion and control throughout the Empire. Beginning with the seventeenth-century plantation of Ulster and ending with decolonization after the Second World War, Robert Home reveals how the British Empire gave rise to many of the biggest cities in the world and how colonial policy and planning had a profound impact on the form and functioning of those cities.

This second edition retains the thematic, chronological and interdisciplinary approach of the first, each chapter identifying a key element of colonial town planning. New material and illustrations have been added, incorporating the author's further research since the first edition. Most importantly, *Of Planting and Planning* remains the only book to cover the whole sweep of British colonial urbanism.

Robert Home is Professor of Land Management, Anglia Law School, Anglia Ruskin University.

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Preface to the First Edition

The history of towns and town planning in the most rapidly urbanizing parts of the world is still a relatively neglected topic. The growing body of academic work on planning history, nourished by networks such as the International Planning History Society, still deals mostly with Europe and North America. This book is an attempt to widen the area of inquiry, and explore the role of colonialism in forming Third World cities.

One's personal history often influences the choice of a research topic. In my case, I was brought up in the then British colonies of the Gold Coast, Nigeria and Cyprus around the time that they became independent, in the 1950s and 1960s. I trained as a town planner and my doctorate was on the influence of colonial government on Nigerian urbanization, with fieldwork undertaken soon after the Nigerian civil war. Since then I have taught planning and land management to many students from the so-called 'New Commonwealth', as well as British students with backgrounds in the multi-cultural societies created by colonialism in the Caribbean and elsewhere. The growing internationalism of the planning history academic network has encouraged me to persevere with the research in spite of the daunting scale of the enterprise, and I was fortunate to make short study visits to some of the countries in the story, particularly Trinidad, Malaysia and South Australia.

London was a good place to carry out the research. While not much related research (regrettably) is currently being undertaken in Britain, a wealth of source material is available. Among the libraries that I used (and whose library staff were unfailingly helpful, especially Ted Maloney and the late John Barrick) were my own University of East London, the University of London (Senate House, London School of Economics, School of Oriental and African Studies), the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, professional institutes such as the Royal Institute of British Architects, Royal Town Planning Institute, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, and Institute of Civil Engineers, and the Development Planning Unit. I also used the Public Record Office at Kew.

It is perhaps also appropriate to state my attitude to the material. Much British writing on the subject of the British Empire has been frankly celebratory and self-congratulatory, portraying it as, for example, 'Rosebery's great and secular force for good, which left memorials behind of which everyone could be proud, and for which everyone could be thankful' (Winchester, 1985, p. 126). An opposing view,

with which I identify more, was that expressed by Samuel Johnson, who in 1744 censured:

> ... those Crimes which have been generally committed by the Discoverers of new Regions, and to expose the enormous Wickedness of making War upon barbarous Nations because they cannot resist, and of invading Countries because they are fruitful. (Quoted in Holmes, 1993, p. 46)

My view is that British colonialism inflicted much suffering on millions of people. It was an important episode in world history, and especially in the processes of world urbanization. Its effects were both good and bad, or good for some and bad for others.

Many people have helped and encouraged, particularly those met through the International Planning History Society, with whom I have spent many happy hours of discussion. The faults and errors of the final product are mine. My especial thanks are due to the following (in alphabetical order): Linda and Tony Buckley, the late Gordon Cherry, Michael Hebbert, Alan Hutchings, Ben Hyman, Tony King, Goh Ban Lee, Jonathan Lim, Alan Mabin, Michael Mattingly, John Muller, Tony Sutcliffe, John Tregenza, Steve Ward and Brenda Yeoh. I wish to thank Hilda Matthews, who as my research assistant assembled much useful material, Ann Rudkin, my commissioning editor, and Simon Pattle, who helped with the illustrations. Finally I acknowledge the stimulus given by my students over the years.

Preface to the Second Edition

In preparing this second edition, I have made little change to the overall structure. Some cuts have been made to allow space for new material, and the illustrations and bibliography have been updated and reorganized. I have incorporated some of my research since the first edition, particularly on Zambia, Palestine and Kenya, and on surveying and regulatory aspects. I have also incorporated new scholarship, particularly in postcolonial theory and cultural geography, and drawn on contributions to the International Planning History Society and the recent European Union COST Action ('European Architecture Beyond Europe'). More is included on Africa, because in my view it is still under-represented in planning history research. Also the galloping development of information technologies (such as Google and Wikipedia) since the first edition has made my task easier.

Since the first edition, I now owe additional thanks to Bob Awuor (who gave me the chance to visit Uganda and Kenya), Serges Kamga, Emmanuel Mutale, Ambe Njoh, Fred Omolo-Okalebo, and Andre van der Walt.

London, November 2012

Glossary

Charpoy	Traditional bed of the Indian subcontinent consisting of woven ropes stretched over a wooden frame on four legs
Chawl	Found in Indian cities, a large building divided into separate tenements, offering cheap, basic accommodation
Feng shui	Historically, feng shui was widely used in China to orient buildings – often spiritually significant structures such as tombs, but also dwellings and other structures – in an auspicious manner
Godown	From Malay, a warehouse or storeroom in India and East Asia
Kampong	Malaysian and Indonesian word for a village or hamlet
Maidan	Urdu word taken from Arabic meaning an open space for meetings and sports
Nabob	Originally a provincial governor in the Mogul Empire in India, the word came to mean a British official who gained great wealth in the country
Padang	A Malaysian parade ground or playing field
Plat	A flat piece of ground surveyed on a cadastre. The word comes from Middle English

Year of Independence and Population of the Main British Colonies

Country	*Independence Year*	*Population*
Australia	1931	21,508,000
Bangladesh (East Pakistan)	1972	150,494,000
Botswana (Bechuanaland)	1966	2,031,000
Canada	1931	33,477,000
Cyprus	1960	1,117,000
Fiji	1970	868,000
The Gambia	1965	1,776,000
Ghana (Gold Coast)	1957	24,966,000
Guyana (British Guiana)	1966	756,000
Hong Kong	1997	7,072,000
India	1947	1,241,492,000
Israel	1948	7,766,000
Jamaica	1962	2,709,000
Kenya	1963	41,610,000
Lesotho (Basutoland)	1966	2,194,000
Malawi (Nyasaland)	1964	15,381,000
Malaysia (Malaya)	1957	28,859,000
Mauritius	1968	1,286,000
New Zealand	1931	4,405,000
Nigeria	1975	162,471,000
Pakistan	1947	176,745,000
Papua New Guinea	1975	7,014,000
Sierra Leone	1961	5,998,000
Singapore	1965	5,184,000
Sri Lanka (Ceylon)	1948	20,869,000
Tanzania (Tanganyika/Zanzibar)	1961	46,218,000
Trinidad and Tobago	1962	1,346,000
Uganda	1962	34,509,000
Zambia (Northern Rhodesia)	1964	13,475,000
Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia)	1979	12,754,000

Note: Population figures are those of the World Bank for 2011 rounded to the nearest 1,000.

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Introduction

'The Chief Exporter of Municipalities'

Among history's imperialists the British were certainly not the greatest builders, but they were the greatest creators of towns. Conquerors since Alexander the Great had seen the strategic and cultural advantages of establishing their own cities across the world, but as the first modern industrial power, Britain was the chief exporter of municipalities, and through the agency of her empire broadcast them everywhere. Half the cities of the American East owe their genesis to the British Empire, most of the cities of Canada, many of the cities of Africa, all the cities of Australasia and the tremendous city-states of Singapore and Hong Kong. Sporting pastimes apart, and the English language, urbanism was the most lasting of the British imperial legacies.

Morris, 1983 p. 196

World population has more than doubled in the past fifty years, and is increasingly concentrated in the towns and cities of what is still called the Third World. Many of these were created in the process of British colonial expansion over the past four hundred years. There is a growing literature in cultural geography and history on Britain's imperial past, and the colonial city. This book aims to contribute to that study, with its main focus upon the 'South', exploring some of the ideas and policies applied to the creation of colonial towns and cities, and the 'power–knowledge relationships' at work (to use a Foucaultian term).

This book approaches the colonial city in the context of the rise of world economies (Braudel, 1984, p. 51):

> At the centre of the world-economy, one always finds an exceptional state, strong, aggressive and privileged, dynamic, simultaneously feared and admired. In the fifteenth century it was Venice; in the seventeenth, Holland; in the eighteenth and still in the nineteenth, it was Britain; today it is the United States ... it is to these governments, who never hesitated to employ violence, that we can readily apply, at a very early date and without fear of anachronism, the words colonialism and imperialism.

The formation of cities was a key part of this process. While the concept of the colonial city is still useful for the development of theory, all cities are in a way colonial, in that they are created through the exercise of dominance by some groups over others, to extract agricultural surplus, provide services, and exercise political control. Transport improvements then allow one society or state to incorporate

other territory and peoples overseas. The city thus becomes an instrument of colonization and (in the case of the European overseas empires) racial dominance.

Recent years have seen a continued development of academic scholarship on imperial and colonial attitudes, such as Anderson (2007), Cooper and Stoler (1997), Driver and Gilbert (1999), Hall (2002), Lambert and Lester (2006), and Mantena (2010). Work on colonial urban history has included Bigon (2010), Demissie (2009), Legg (2007) and Njoh (2007). This book now seeks to show how the British colonial enterprise has shaped contemporary urban landscapes.

Planting and Planning Defined

Why 'planting' and 'planning'? For two centuries British overseas expansion was achieved through the 'planting' of colonies. Indeed the predecessor of the Colonial Office was called the Board of Plantations. The Oxford English Dictionary records the first use of the word 'plantation', with the meaning of settling people, from the year 1586. The word later acquired its more accepted modern meaning, referring to a mode of production – the plantation system. This evolved in the New World, particularly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to organize the various forms of imported labour, whether slaves, convicts or indentured labourers. It contained elements of both feudal and capitalist modes of production. To a leading historian of the American South, E.T. Thompson, the plantation existed:

> (1) as a way of settling and concentrating a population of mixed origins on a frontier, a broad and moving area in transition from a lower to, presumably, a higher form of civilization; (2) as a way of producing an agricultural staple for a metropolitan market within geographical limits fixed by the means of transport; (3) as a way of disciplining a population for labor under the authority of a planter; and (4) as an institution which develops in time through collective activity a distinctive style of life or culture. (Thompson, 1975, p. 39)

The planters on their private estates were businessmen, intolerant of state intervention, and spent much of their energy feuding with colonial governors. From the ordering of a private estate evolved the concept of a regulatory role for the state. So in the late nineteenth century a Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, could speak of a policy of 'developing the tropical estates'. Much of this book is concerned, therefore, with the conscious planning of colonial built environments and urban forms by public authority.

Moving from planting to planning, the latter has become a familiar modern term, defined by Sutcliffe (1981) as 'the deliberate ordering by public authority of the physical arrangements of towns or parts of towns in order to promote their efficient and equitable functioning as economic and social units, and to create an aesthetically pleasing environment'.[1] For most of the period covered by this book, however, the term town planning was unknown. Until the early twentieth century, one might talk of laying out a town, but not of planning one. When the term

arrived it was in a colonial context. Its first use in Britain has been attributed to the year 1906, and to the Birmingham politician and industrialist, J.S. Nettlefold, supposedly in a direct translation from the German. Significantly for this book, however, an earlier use of the term has been traced to Australia.

It was in Melbourne in 1890, and the occasion was a meeting of the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science. A British-born architect, John Sulman, gave a paper entitled 'The Laying Out of Towns', which the *Australian Encyclopaedia* claims as 'the first lecture on town planning'. Sulman criticized the grid system used in most Australian cities, and argued for a more rational, efficient and aesthetic approach, for which he used the term town-planning (with a hyphen). He was afterwards to become a father figure of Australian planning, and an influential figure in the early planning of Canberra.[2]

Ideological Projects

Over the first two centuries of British overseas expansion one can trace three co-existing (and sometimes competing) ideological projects which exercised a continuing influence over the colonial urban landscape.

The first, which one might call the ideology of state control, saw colonies as an initiative by the state, or more particularly the crown, operating through its governors and other agents. After each successive violent upheaval – the English Civil War, the American War of Independence and the French Revolutionary Wars – the Crown sought to exercise tighter control over its colonies. The Restoration period after 1660, when Shaftesbury and Locke were active in colonial projects, was such a time, with the Crown determined to bring the plantations under a 'uniforme inspeccion and conduct' (quoted in Sosin, 1980, p. 13). After the disastrous experience of the American War of Independence, more than a century later, the pattern was repeated, with the creation of the Colonial Office and new approaches to Crown colony government controlled from London. Colonial governors and ruling elites often sought to express their political authority by shaping the physical form of ports and towns, using the civic design language of baroque avenues, esplanades and public buildings. The crowded mediaeval streets of Dublin, for instance, were extensively replanned by the aptly-named Wide Streets Commissioners, created under an Act of 1757, and comprising the Lord Mayor and Irish Members of Parliament, who undertook various redevelopments and sent the hefty bill to a less than pleased Treasury in London (McParland, 1972). At the turn of the nineteenth century the Governor-General of India, Wellesley (brother of the future Lord Wellington), asserted his authority by remaking the capital, Calcutta, as a seat of European Empire.

The second ideology was capitalist, applied in the colonies to accumulate wealth from trade, extraction and production. Planters and the chartered companies (of which the East India Company was the greatest) wanted public expenditure kept down, and that included municipal planning and administration. When Wellesley

was recalled from India in 1805, the main reason was that the costs of his vice-regal pretensions were reducing East India Company profits, and other governors who came into conflict with local business interests could expect the same fate. Thus colonialism was a mixed venture, combining private enterprise with state or Crown control. In the words of Braudel (1984, p. 54), central government was 'more or less dependent on a precocious form of capitalism already sharp in tooth and claw. Power was shared between the two', thus the plantation of Ulster was undertaken by private companies formed by the City of London in partnership with the King. Private capitalism was little concerned with the physical shaping of colonial ports and towns, other than through private displays of wealth (such as the grand houses which gave Calcutta its name as a 'city of palaces'), and indeed the colonists of Ulster complained bitterly at the neglect and parsimony of City investors.

A third ideology, which one might call utopian, saw colonial settlement as an opportunity to experiment with new forms of social organisation (such as communal control of land) that were less achievable at home. A colonist was escaping to a new society. In the words of William Penn, the proprietor of Pennsylvania, in the 1670s,

> A plantation seems a fit place for Ingenious Spirits that being low in the world, are much Clogg'd and oppress'd about a Livelyhood, for the means of subsisting being easie there, they may have time and opportunity to gratify their inclinations. (Quoted in Thompson, 1975, p. 229)

In the Restoration period political theorists were exploring new philosophies and the ruling elite was exploring new forms of physical planning based upon ordered, harmonious principles. The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina, devised by Lord Shaftesbury and John Locke in 1669, advocated a plan of land settlement which would balance the interest of the proprietors with those of freeholders and create a colonial hereditary aristocracy.

Such alternative societies usually had a religious basis. The Pilgrim Fathers were fleeing religious persecution. The Quakers had a continuing influence on colonial settlement, and on the town planning movement in Britain, from William Penn through Granville Sharp to the South Australian colony (a veritable 'paradise of dissent', to use the title of one of its histories – Pike, 1957) and the garden city movement. The eighteenth-century colonies in Georgia, Canada and Sierra Leone were intended as havens for either debtors or those displaced by the American Revolution.

After two centuries of war the British Empire emerged unchallenged in 1815, and then expanded into India and Africa. During the next century and a half methods of colonial management were developed, and there was the emergence of a 'civilizing mission' and of the trusteeship principle, especially after the First World War, with the indirect rule or dual mandate policy associated with Frederick Lugard.[3]

Boundaries of Space and Time

The geographical coverage of this book is the British Empire, which at its zenith (for Christopher (1988) the year 1931) extended to a quarter of the land area of the globe (excluding Antarctica) and a quarter of world population, some five hundred million people (of which India alone accounted for three-quarters).

During the nineteenth century twenty million emigrants left the British Isles (including Ireland), of whom about 40 per cent went to the colonies. This book, however, is not primarily concerned with White settlement in Canada, Australia and New Zealand, because they have already been relatively well served by planning historians. The focus is more upon British colonies in the tropics, particularly India, Africa and the Far East.

Chronologically the book covers the whole period of British overseas expansion. It starts at the beginning of the sixteenth century with the plantation of Ulster under James I. The majority of the book relates to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, after the battle of Waterloo, during which time the British Empire acquired its greatest extent.

It ends when the various colonies became independent nations. For the United States of America this was the eighteenth century. For the White settler dominions of Canada, Australia and New Zealand it was the beginning of the twentieth century, apart from the special situation of South Africa. For most of the tropical colonies it was the mid twentieth century, starting with the independence and partition of India in 1947.

Inevitably, with such an ambitious coverage of space and time, there are omissions and variations in emphasis. Being more concerned with the 'official mind', or the role of political authority in urban growth, I have included relatively little on unplanned or *laissez faire* urban growth and individualism.[4] The approach is interdisciplinary, and draws on different academic disciplines and areas where necessary. What started as a historical investigation into how Third World cities were planned by the British 'colonial masters', led into other areas, such as sociological work on professionals and bureaucracies, new insights from history and cultural geography on contested urban landscapes, and the legal and political development of governmental institutions. I am less concerned with the designed capital cities such as New Delhi or the great public buildings that were symbolic representations of Empire, than with the practical impact of colonialism on urban form and the urban masses.

Some episodes in colonial town planning have already been well covered, and so are dealt with only briefly. Among these are the planning of New Delhi, Patrick Geddes's work in India, and the founding of probably the two most famous planned cities of the British Empire, Adelaide and Singapore. The book does, however, draw on the rich new material which is emerging. Interest in planning history has widened from Europe and North America to embrace the extension of European planning concepts into their colonial empires. In the White dominions one can

refer to the work of Freestone (1983, 2008) and Hamer (1990), while Oldenburg (1984) on Lucknow and Yeoh (2003) on Singapore are important studies of the clash of cultures in the shaping and control of urban space. Sociological work, particularly by Anthony King (1976, 1984, 1990), explores the social origins of building forms and urban landscapes. The emergence of South Africa from *apartheid* has prompted a small explosion of good planning history on the origins of that unfortunate application of land-use planning. The Australian bicentennial in 1988 (together with the 150th anniversary of the creation of South Australia in 1986) generated some important new research.

I have sometimes emphasized the contribution of individuals to the shaping of urban landscapes, but located within the context of structures and networks of professional knowledge and political authority. If the emphasis is overwhelmingly on White individuals, I hope that this is not from any White supremacist leanings on my part, but rather reflects the reality of the one-sided political structures which created colonial cities. I give brief supporting biographical information on individuals in the footnotes, while some of them (such as Light, Simpson, Reade and Thompson) are given fuller treatment within the text.

Sequence of Chapters

The structure of the book is thematic but also broadly chronological, each chapter seeking to identify a major theme, which is traced through time, usually overlapping with the next.

Chapter 1 examines, for the period between 1600 and 1850, the formulation and application of a model of town planning centrally directed from London. Intended mainly for settler colonies in the New World and the Antipodes, its final flowering was Light's Adelaide.

Chapter 2 explores the British context within which approaches to colonial settlement planning were developed. It concentrates on the emergence of new professions during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which influenced the ordering of urban landscapes.

Chapter 3 charts the rise of colonial port cities, particularly in the tropics, from the seventeenth century. It concentrates on the response of colonial government, in the period 1850–1900, to growing urbanization pressures. Municipal improvement measures culminated in the last years of the nineteenth century in an assault on other urban traditions, justified on health grounds.

Chapter 4 deals with the influence of colonialism on a particular built form, housing. It explores the neglected history of housing, which was planned by the colonial authorities and business interests to accommodate migrant workers.

Chapter 5 investigates what has been for many the central aspect of colonial urbanism, racial segregation. It tracks the development of residential segregation, starting with Raffles's designs for Singapore, and concentrates particularly on the period from about 1880 to 1930. Segregation was justified at the time on health

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