CHAPTER 3

Re-examining the International Diffusion of Planning

Stephen V. Ward

An intriguing footnote in the life of Ildefons Cerdà, author of the 1859 plan for Barcelona's Eixample (Extension), is that Georges-Eugène Haussmann, simultaneously engaged on the remodelling of Paris, is reported to have offered to buy Cerdà's plans and studies (Estapé, 1996, p. 55). Cerdà apparently refused, saying that he had drawn them up for Catalonia. If true, and the evidence rests on family recollection rather than a documentary source, this episode suggests that there was some degree of international linkage at a very early stage in the development of modern planning. In turn, Cerdà's refusal to sell may also partially explain why his remarkable innovatory work, including, in 1867, the Teoria General de la Urbanización (General Theory of Urbanization), effectively the first modern theoretical work on urban planning, had a negligible international impact.

Within a few decades, however, there was abundant evidence that much more effective international flows of ideas and practices were becoming well established (Albers, 1997; Collins and Collins, 1965; Sutch, 1981). Many cities in Europe and beyond, sought to replicate the great new boulevards which Haussmann had driven through the old Paris at the behest of his Emperor. The emerging practices of Städteweiterungen (town extension) in Germany, associated particularly with Reinhard Baumeister and Joseph Stübben, were also beginning to attract interest in Britain and the United States. So too was the notion of a more organic approach to town design, developed by Camillo Sitte and, to a lesser extent, Charles Buls from Austria and Belgium respectively. In England, Ebenezer Howard contributed a conceptually rich vision of the garden city in 1898, soon to be given a tangible form at Letchworth. Other seminal works followed in the new century, from Eugène Hénard and Tony Garnier in France, Charles Mulford Robinson and Daniel Burnham in the United States, Raymond Unwin in England, and Patrick Geddes in Scotland. Reflecting the
nationalities of the authors of most of these works, four main innovatory planning traditions – Germany (Städtebau), Britain (town planning), France (urbanisme) and the United States (city planning) – were clearly apparent by 1914.

The key point, however, is that virtually all these works and the ideas they contained were also part of an emergent international discourse of planning. Written in German, French or English, many were translated within a few years of their publication into at least one other of the three languages. Some also appeared in other languages as well. The ideas they contained were interpreted, albeit selectively, into specific national contexts by a host of intermediaries throughout the world. Individual planners began to work in other countries, taking with them their own national planning conceptions and, in some cases, receiving others.

These early years set a pattern for the twentieth century. Despite the disruptive effects of major wars, internationalism has remained a powerful theme in urban planning. The dominant centres of innovation and patterns of emulation have not remained static, however. The balance of exchange between the main innovatory nations has shifted. Everywhere the influence of American ideas and practices has strengthened, paralleling the United States’ rise to world dominance (Cody, 1998). The creation of the Soviet Union in 1917 unleashed a periodically innovative planning tradition, influential to some extent in Western Europe in the 1930s and 1940s and more directly so in Eastern Europe in the third quarter of the century.

Yet planning innovation has not been the exclusive prerogative of world powers. New innovators such as the Netherlands and Scandinavia emerged, to some extent replacing Germany as its influence waned in the Nazi years and their aftermath (e.g. Hall, 1991). Moreover, the decline of formal colonialism since 1945 has been paralleled by a weakening of the direct influence of British and French planning. A neo-colonialism built around foreign aid and international institutions such as the United Nations or the World Bank has, however, perpetuated a mainly (but not entirely) one way flow of planning ideas and practices from the developed to the developing world (e.g. Armstrong, 1987; Okpala, 1990; Sanyal, 1990). The European Union has also tried to play an important role in producing convergence in the planning repertoires of its member states (Williams, 1996).

INTERNATIONAL DIFFUSION AS A HISTORICAL THEME

Not surprisingly, the international character of the twentieth century planning movement has been a strong theme in historical writing. In particular, historians have been obliged to consider how and why planning ideas and practices came to spread between different countries. The best known works in English dealing with this theme are Anthony Sutecliffe’s Towards the Planned City (1981) and Peter Hall’s Cities of Tomorrow (1988, revised 1996). In fact, there is a
significant volume of other work from many countries dealing to some extent with diffusion. The main concern has been to show how their principal subjects, usually a particular city, country or group of countries, encountered key planning ideas or practices from elsewhere. This is apparent, for example, in Freestone (1989), Home (1997), King (1976, 1990), Smets (1977), Watanabe (1980, 1992), Wynn (1984), Yeoh (1996) and Yerolympos (1996).

Another approach to diffusion is that found in Buder (1991), Gold (1997) and Hardy (1991). These works have explored how the ideas and practices of particular planning traditions (namely the garden city and modern movements) have spread to different countries. In other cases the emphasis has been more on the exchange of planning ideas and practices, implying more complex diffusional flows between particular places. We can find this expressed in Alberti (1997), Bosma and Hellinga (1997), Hall, P. (1996), Hall, T. (1997), Schubert (1997) and Stuchte (1981). It has also been the subject of a major international conference on planning history held in Tokyo in 1988 (IPRE, 1988).

But, whatever the exact treatment of diffusion, we can identify three major concerns recurring throughout all these studies:

1. The mechanisms of diffusion. For example: key personalities, reformist or professional milieus, intergovernmental actions.

2. The extent to which ideas and practices are changed in their diffusion. How are they applied in specific national settings and why are differences apparent?

3. The fundamental causation of diffusion. For example, how much does it mirror the larger economic, political or cultural contexts of international relations? How far is the ‘text’ of planning’s international diffusion more autonomous or reliant on chance actions?

No universal answers to these questions have emerged from historical studies and planning historians have adopted a variety of perspectives. We can illustrate this by reference to three planning historians whose work has been particularly influential. Thus Peter Hall’s narrative, though acknowledging the role of structure and context, is largely one of great men with big ideas that spread because of the potency of message and the charisma and energy of those who carried it. By contrast, Anthony King’s explanation rests much more on the global hegemony of Western imperialism, exporting its conception of planning in both the colonial and post-colonial eras. Between these two, Stuchte’s account of the emergence of urban planning in the great powers of the late nineteenth century acknowledges both the larger impersonal forces and charismatic visionaries. Yet he stresses the critical intermediary role of the reformist and expert milieus, where imported ideas were distilled into locally relevant practices.

It will be immediately clear, however, that these different perspectives are not merely products of the interpretative stances of the historians concerned. They
reflect real differences in the experiences of different countries. India’s encounters with external planning models, the basis of King’s work, were objectively different to those of Western Europe or the United States. In contrast to the pattern of promiscuous borrowing of external models that was typical amongst the latter group, planning in imperial India was externally imposed from one source. Significantly, when he deals with New Delhi, Nairobi or Lusaka, Hall readily acknowledges the central importance of this imperial domination. Here, at least, the ideas of the great men were triumphant because they were imposed by colonial power.

A wider review of writing about countries that were neither the major Western world powers nor their colonies increases this sense of real variety in experiences of diffusion. Thus the planning histories of southern European countries or the smaller countries of north western Europe, of Japan or the self-governing white Dominions of the British Empire typically show a high dependence on externally developed planning models. Yet such models were certainly not imposed in the classic imperial manner, without opportunity for indigenous political discretion. We can go further and note a growing awareness of the many subtleties of colonial planning, between imperial powers, between different parts of their Empires, and over time (e.g. Homer, 1993; Weight, 1992). Also, it is clear that post-colonial experiences of planning — imported as part of foreign aid, though replicating many features of the colonial era, have differed in some important respects.

These cases underline the general point that diffusion needs to be understood as highly variable, rather than as a single, uniform process. All the major dimensions of diffusion — the agencies and mechanisms by which it occurs, the extent to which ideas and practices are changed and, though it is more a matter of interpretation, its fundamental causation — have shown great diversity. Without denying that there will always be unique features in every episode of diffusion, it is possible (and indeed valuable) to generalize the different varieties.

A Typology of Diffusion

The remainder of the chapter elaborates on this general point, drawing widely on relevant historical writing to develop a typology for the diffusion of planning. It consists of a series of ‘ideal types’ of episodes of diffusion, highlighting salient features and giving some examples that reflect these features. Table 3.1 summarizes the different types. They fall into two distinct groups — ‘borrowing’ and ‘imposition’ — each having three types. This grouping thus marks a fundamental distinction between those episodes of diffusion where the ‘importing’ country has the greater role in shaping and controlling the diffusion process (borrowing) and those where the ‘exporting’ country is the main determining force (imposition).

As this rather implies, the essential basis of the typology is that of context,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Indigenous Role</th>
<th>External Role</th>
<th>Typical Mechanisms</th>
<th>Level of Diffusion</th>
<th>Key Actors</th>
<th>Potential for Distinctiveness</th>
<th>Characteristic Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Synthetic borrowing</td>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>Very low</td>
<td>Indigenous planning movements plus wide external contacts</td>
<td>Theory and practice</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>Major countries of Western Europe &amp; USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selective borrowing</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>External contact with innovative planning traditions</td>
<td>Practice and some theory</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Smaller countries of Western Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undiluted borrowing</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Indigenous deference to innovative external planning traditions</td>
<td>Practice with little or no theory</td>
<td>External with some indigenous</td>
<td>Fairly Low</td>
<td>Dominions of British Empire, Japan, &amp; some European examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiated imposition</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Dependence on external planning tradition(s)</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>External with some indigenous</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Aid-dependent countries (e.g., Africa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contested imposition</td>
<td>Very low</td>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>High dependence on one external planning tradition</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>‘Enlightened’ colonial planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian imposition</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total dependence on one external planning tradition</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Newly subjugated territories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
specifically, the power relationship between the countries originating-and-receiving planning models, is always of critical importance. By power relationship, I mean simply the degree of domination, however expressed, of the one by the other. The individual types are, of course, rather generalized and certain nuances escape the subtleties of actual diffusion episodes. They merely represent the principal gradations of borrowing and imposition during the twentieth century. Thus, the great Western powers, equivalents and rivals rather than deferential to each other, borrowed in creative rather than slavish fashion. Where the sense of deference was greater, then the borrowing became progressively less selective.

As deference graded into dependence, in colonial or post-colonial situations, then the power balance and the diffusional type shifted to imposition. Yet there are degrees of dependence and thus of imposition. In most cases receiving countries have been able to negotiate or contest the process of external imposition, thereby moderating its nature. However, in extreme cases, few in number in this century, dominance has been so complete as to eliminate any sense of indigenous modification. In all such situations the power balance, whether measured in governmental, economic or cultural terms, was very uneven as between the dominated colony and dominant imperial power. Among the rival great Western powers in the early twentieth century, however, the power relationship was more nearly equal.

**Diffusion by Borrowing**

**Synthetic Borrowing**

Most familiar is the type of diffusion which has occurred between the main innovative planning traditions. As we have already noted, in the early years, the patterns have typically been very open. Each of these innovatory countries drew on several external planning models, while the other innovators for their part borrowed back from them. To a greater extent than in other types of diffusion, the trade in ideas was closer to a state of balance. Before 1914, for example, Britain borrowed heavily from Germany—town extension, zoning, and organic approaches to urban design. In turn, the Germans (having already borrowed British public health innovations) looked admiringly on British housing design and, above all, the garden city. The United States, for its part, borrowed German zoning, the British garden city, and the French approach to grand-urban design.

It gave back to Europe the notion of the city-wide master plan and the grand approach to urban landscape design.

One of the key points about this form of diffusion is that the borrowed external models have typically been filtered through highly developed indigenous reformist movements and professional expertise. This filtering process has tended to deconstruct the models, breaking them down into component elements, and integrating them with planning ideas and practices that
are already present. This deconstruction has occurred both consciously and unconsciously, through misunderstanding or partial understanding. In either case, though, the outcome has been that the diffused models were almost never transferred unaltered. Indigenous ideas and ideas already received from other sources were combined with newly-received models to create something distinctive and new. The overall effect was a process of syncretic innovation, with the further possibility that the resultant innovations might themselves be diffused elsewhere.

The history of the neighbourhood unit provides a classic example of how this process operated. The starting point was Britain, with Ebenezer Howard's indicative but barely elaborated concept of the 5000 population ward and his larger formulation of the garden city. It was, however, Clarence Perry in the United States who fashioned it into a workable physical model, sticking to Howard's 5000 population, in the 1920s. These ideas were further elaborated to reflect the growing importance of automobile traffic by Henry Wright and Clarence Stein. Their efforts culminated in the Radburn layout in the late 1920s.

Both ideas then spread back to Western Europe, where they were further overlain with new aspects and meanings. For the moment, Radburn principles were not applied, although there were signs of some German interest, especially in Hermann Jansen's road safety residential plans of the late 1920s (Hass-Kuu, 1992). In Britain, however, planners were becoming more concerned with the neighbourhood as a device to promote social cohesion. Increasingly more ambitious objectives, involving a social class mix, were gradually added. Particularly influential was Barry Parker's plan for the Wythenshawe satellite town in Manchester, part of the garden city mainstream. Meanwhile in the Soviet Union there were some innovations that echoed Perry's ideas, though without apparent knowledge of Western developments (Tetlow, 1959). British modernists, in the shape of the MARS (Modern Architectural Research) group, began to experiment with Soviet-influenced neighbourhood ideas in the late 1930s (Gold, 1997). These two strands came together in the 1940s. Neighbourhoods, now with a notional population of up to 10,000, occupied a central place in Britain's wartime and early postwar plans, particularly in the first new towns.

American and British thinking had by then begun to influence planners in Sweden during the early 1940s. As a neutral country, Sweden suffered less wartime privation than other parts of Europe. This allowed it to assume an especially important role in the empirical elaboration of neighbourhood ideas in the immediate postwar years. Accordingly, Swedish experience became extremely important in the physical design of neighbourhoods. By 1947, variants of Radburn layouts were being planned, a few years before their first British use (Parsons, 1992). By 1950, Swedish experiences had also shown that 10,000 was far too low a population for an effective social unit in an affluent society (Stenbladh, 1964).
Meanwhile, Dutch planners—secretly replanning the devastated city of Rotterdam during the Nazi occupation—had already come to similar conclusions, but for quite different reasons (Lock, 1947). Aware of the extent of pre-war thinking on neighbourhood units, without knowledge of the Anglo-American developments of the 1940s, the Rotterdam planners had already by 1945 proposed a socially mixed neighbourhood unit of 20,000. This reflected some very specific features of Dutch society, relating to the church’s extensive role in social provision. Although planners from other countries were fascinated by Rotterdam’s reconstruction, soon became aware of this variant of the neighbourhood, it did not seem as generalizable as the Swedish experience.

The most extraordinary aspect of the diffusion of the neighbourhood unit at this time involved its deployment in wartime Nazi Germany. Thus planners in Hamburg particularly made extensive use of a concept called the ‘local group as a neighbourhood cell’ (Schubert, 1995). This reflected the idiosyncrasies of Nazi ideology, yet it also leaned on the Anglo-American concept of the neighbourhood. In part, this connection reflected pre-war links. Yet there was also a keen awareness of wartime developments in London and other cities. Via neutral Stockholm, the German intelligence services had secured copies of Patrick Abercrombie’s plans for London, making them available to Hamburg’s chief planner. The similarities ensured that, stripped of their Nazi overtones, they could therefore be perpetuated into the postwar years.

After 1945 all versions of the idea became the subject of even more international cross-fertilization, with Kauburn principles being widely adopted and adapted. However enough has been said to show how this synthetic process gave a creative dimension to diffusion, in circumstances where planning models came into countries which already had highly developed planning traditions.

Selecting Borrowing

Where innovative synthesis of imported—and existing—ideas and practices has been lacking, diffusion has often taken the form of a rather simpler process of borrowing. A characteristic feature of this non-innovative borrowing has been a relatively shallow engagement within the importing country with the theoretical and conceptual bases of the borrowed model. This has limited the possibilities of deconstructing the ideas and reassembling them, with other ideas, to make something different. Instead planners in the receiving country have tended, rather atheoretically, to emulate specific aspects of external planning practice in a simple and direct manner.

This is not to say, however, that the borrowing has necessarily been slavish or uncritical. There has often been some degree of selection. Parts of the borrowed model may be discarded if they seem less appropriate. The main point, though, is that the importing country has added nothing significant to what is imported. In turn this offers little that is sufficiently distinctive for other countries to
borrow. Yet countries which habitually borrow selectively may sometimes play an important intermediary role, facilitating the movement of innovations between more distinctive (and possibly competitive) planning traditions.

In fact, this type of diffusion episode can be found throughout the century in many different countries. It is, perhaps, most characteristic of the development of planning in the smaller and less powerful Western and Central European countries. These countries would have enjoyed fairly good access to more than one of the major innovative planning traditions. Typically they would also have had reformist movements pressing for planning and substantial indigenous professional expertise. Together these were capable of exercising some discretion over what was borrowed from external planning models. Yet the critical mass needed to innovate in more thoroughgoing fashion was absent.

A good example is Belgium. This small country was not entirely devoid of genuine innovation of international significance. Yet its planning tradition depended heavily on external sources of theory and practice, mainly French, German and British (Smets, 1977). Thus Parisian Haussmannism was emulated in the later nineteenth century (Hall, 1997). The early twentieth century brought growing awareness of the British garden city tradition, implemented through a combination of French-style social housing organizations and the British co-partnership model. More generally, Belgium (along with Switzerland) apparently played significant parts in moving British and German urban reformist ideas into the Francophone world (Claude, 1989). Another case is Norway, where traditional dependence on Swedish design in the early twentieth century was leavened, though not supplanted, by other influences, especially from Britain, the United States, France and the Netherlands (Lorange and Myhre, 1991). Again, however, no significant innovations arose from these borrowings.

Yet it would be incorrect to imply that selective borrowing has occurred only in smaller countries. Although there has always been a strong tendency in the major innovative planning traditions to use imported models in a more adaptive fashion, episodes of selective borrowing can be found everywhere. A recent example would be the rapid adoption throughout the developed world of the American approach to waterfront redevelopment. Pioneered in cities such as Baltimore and Boston in the 1970s, the model had by the 1990s appeared throughout Europe and beyond, with varying (but often very close) correspondence to the originals (Breen and Rieghy, 1996).

Overall, however, examples of this type do not negate the main point: if synthetic innovation has been the dominant means of receiving externally generated ideas and practices, the cumulative result will be a national planning tradition that soon becomes distinct. If selective borrowing has been usual, particularly from more than one source, then differences will certainly arise, but more slowly. The cumulative result will also appear as an altogether more derivative planning tradition.
**Undiluted Borrowing**

This derivative quality has been even more marked—where external ideas and practices have been received without conscious selectivity—where the borrowing, in other words, is undiluted. In such cases, the tendency has been to receive not just individual ideas or innovations but substantial packages of planning practice. As this implies, such borrowing has been rather unilateral and frequently with only very limited awareness of the full range of alternative external planning models that are available. In turn, this reflects a rather underdeveloped indigenous planning movement and, quite often, a high reliance on foreign planners to supply leadership. There is a real difference here from previous types, where imported ideas and practices were filtered through indigenous planning movements (and in some cases, intermediate countries).

This diffusional type has been characteristic of countries which exhibit a more general deference to ideas arising in those countries from which they borrow. The relationship between the two parties is therefore markedly more unequal than in the previous two types. Yet we should not exaggerate the aspect of external dependence. This type should be still understood; very definitely, as borrowing, clearly implying that the power to make decisions remains in the importing country.

The clearest examples of undiluted borrowing have undoubtedly been the white settled Dominions of the British Empire, whose early encounters with twentieth century planning came largely through the prism of British experience (Ward, 1997). These were self-governing by the time modern planning thought and practice developed. Yet they had relatively small populations, underdeveloped reform movements, and limited professional resources. When combined with more general ethnic and cultural affinities, these factors created a strong initial dependence on planning models from the imperial homeland. At varying rates, this was then overlaid with what, initially at least, was an equally uncritical admiration for ideas and practices from the United States.

Canada borrowed uncritically from British planning in the first two decades of the century, to the extent of adopting planning legislation and founding a British-style professional body for planning (Shimpson, 1989). Then, in the 1920s, American influences, often copied in an equally direct way, became dominant, coinciding exactly with the Americanization of Canada as the main foreign investor in Canada (Ward, 1999). After 1945, there was a resurgence of British planning (though not economic) influences. Yet, external ideas were by 1968 being received in a more critical and selective fashion. Canadian awareness of other European planning traditions, particularly the French, also increased.

There were many similarities between Canada and Australia. In the latter, however, British connections were dominant for much longer (Freestone, 1989, 1997). In part, this reflected the persistence of Australia's economic and cultural ties with Britain. Nor was the American model as conventional imported for there...
for Canadian planners, who often found it easier to consult American planners than fellow Canadians. Thus the Australian planning system developed very much in the British image, with extensive British professional leadership. Although there was early awareness of American planning models (most strongly apparent in the chosen plan for the new federal capital at Canberra), it was not until the 1960s that they even began to match the extent of British influence.

Yet we should not see unflattering borrowing as a manifestation only of late imperialism. It could also arise in quite different circumstances, sometimes even in countries with relatively advanced planning traditions. Thus the replanning of the historic French city of Reims, devastated in World War One, became an exercise in scientific American city planning. United States' wartime relief had brought a leading American planner, George B. Ford, on the scene who quickly assumed technical dominance in the reconstruction debate (Bédarida, 1990; Wright, 1991). Ironically, very similar circumstances at almost exactly the same time allowed the French urbaniste Ernest Hébrard to assume an even more dominant role in the replanning of Thessaloniki in Greece, following its destruction by fire in 1917 (Yerolympos, 1996). The resultant plan was a grand exercise in French urban design. Such uncritical absorption of external models was not usual in either country, however, especially France.

An example of a more habitual uncritical borrowing that did not depend on imperial ties or emergency situations, was early twenty century Japan. Here Western, especially German, British and American, planning practices were borrowed and applied with a surprising lack of adaptation to Japanese conditions (Hein and Ishida, 1998; Watanabe, 1988, 1992). The context was the rapid modernization of Japan from the later nineteenth century, which encouraged a fairly systematic trawling of the advanced Western countries for progressive practices which could be adopted.

What was particularly striking, however, was the rather imperfect conceptual grasp of the models that were being received. Having only a weakly developed reformist movement and professional skills in planning, the possibilities of conscious selection or synthesis were quite limited. Initially, at least, Western planning was copied quite slavishly, the only adaptations arising unconsciously from misunderstanding. In some aspects, what was borrowed was an even purer version of Western ideas than was actually adopted in the West. The land readjustment proposals incorporated in the first Japanese planning legislation of 1919, for example, were a more radical version of the widely admired German Lex Adickes than the German parliament had been prepared to adopt (Ishida, 1988).

Over time Japanese planning began to assume a more distinctive character, not least because Japanese planners, unlike those in Australia, had always looked to the West as a whole. Even so, as late as the 1950s, Tokyo's planners were still directly mimicking a planning model drawn directly from another country.
(TMG, 1994). This was the archetypal British metropolitan-planning solution, with encircling green-belt-and-planned decentralization. Ironically, the Tokyo plan was very similar to proposals for Sydney adopted a decade earlier and on the point of being substantially abandoned (Winston, 1952). The Japanese plan proved even more short-lived. In both cases the failures reveal the weakness of over-reliance on imported models. They failed entirely to grasp political and growth realities that were quite different to those of British cities.

**Diffusion by Imposition**

The dangers of inappropriate transfers were (and are) much higher when the balance of power is such that the exporting country can exert more control than the importing country over the diffusion process. Thus, instead of authorities in the importing countries deciding themselves what they wish to borrow from foreign planning repertoires, relevant agencies in the exporting countries made the key decisions. This inherently limits the opportunities for local participation in the planning process within the countries receiving planning. Even more in cases of undiluted borrowing, the importing countries will typically have severely underdeveloped planning and reform movements. They will also be heavily, often almost totally, reliant on imported planning expertise. In most cases, of course, imposition is symptomatic of colonial or neo-colonial relationships. Beyond these underlying characteristics, there have been several distinct varieties of diffusion through imposition.

**Negotiated Imposition**

The post-colonial period for many former colonies in some cases encouraged greater scepticism about external planning ideas. The more affluent and determined former colonies were quickly able to cross that critical divide between imposition and borrowing. In Singapore, for example, the post-independence State constructed a distinctive form of planning that borrowed freely from Western planning practice (Perry, Kong and Yeoh, 1997). The original base was British, yet ideas and practices were seemingly drawn from a variety of sources. They were applied, however, with a relentless discipline rarely matched in the West, inspired by distinctively Asian social and political ideologies.

Yet Singapore was exceptional, not least because of an extraordinary material progress that no other recent ex-colonies have matched. Many other ex-colonies in Asia and, above all, in Africa experienced a mode of diffusion that can be called negotiated imposition. It was characterized by continued dependence on external technical expertise and, often more importantly, material aid. Normally the independent governments actually took the decisions about the acceptance of external aid and assistance. Yet such was the extent of dependence that the
process went beyond borrowing. If these countries wanted the aid, the technical assistance went along with it. The offer could scarcely be refused.

It was a diffusional relationship that perpetuated some aspects of colonialism. At the outset, at least, there were slightly more options. In cases where the transition to independence had been peaceful and without active resentment, planning and aid flowed smoothly from former colonial masters. Thus from the late 1940s many British and French consultants began to find work in former colonies in this way, funded substantially by their own governments or United Nations agencies (e.g. MLCERG, 1997). Independence could also mean seeking aid and expertise from sources other than (or at least, in addition to) former colonial masters. Indonesia, for example, turned sharply away from the Netherlands for fifteen years after independence (van der Heiden, 1988). While maintaining fairly strong connections with Britain, India began to develop other linkages (Evenson, 1989). Its great size and economic and strategic potential gave it a negotiating power in external dealings that few other underdeveloped ex-colonies possessed. Yet smaller countries such as Tanzania also avoided some of the worst features of neo-colonialism by seeking aid and expertise from several countries (Armstrong, 1987).

These developments had implications for the international planning influence of Western countries which had not been formal colonial powers. Here was one of the principal ways in which the international planning influence of the United States grew (Cody, 1998). Yet less dominant affluent countries such as Canada, Australia, the Scandinavian countries and Western Germany, not lately major colonial powers, similarly exported their own conceptions of planning from the 1960s. Countries from the communist bloc sometimes used comparable methods to increase their influence in parts of Africa and Asia.

More recently there has been a growing tendency for international bodies such as the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and the World Bank to play important roles (Okpala, 1990). These have purveyed generalized Western-determined planning and development solutions, premised increasingly on economic liberalization. The disappearance in the 1980s of a communist alternative and the wider effects of global economic change have strengthened this latest variant of imposition. Although at the technical level, the export of foreign planning aid is now being undertaken more sensitively than ever before, with growing emphasis on indigenous expertise, the wider sense of imposition remains very strong. The scope for negotiation, apparently so great in the bright confident morning of independence, has narrowed.

Contested Imposition

Countries where planning has been externally imposed often, though not invariably, have underdeveloped civil societies. This, with the absence of both elective democratic government and indigenous reformist movements, has been
a key part of the colonial experience. Yet such formidable obstacles, although they seriously weakened the possibilities of any formal negotiation of what was proposed by colonial powers, did not condemn the recipient population to absolute passivity. A more typical situation within long-established colonial empires was indigenous obstruction of externally imposed planning projects. Measures that were particularly repugnant to local interests and sensitivities might well provoke rioting or other forms of protest. More typically, indigenous populations might simply resist or superimpose their own meanings of customary uses on external planning forms.

The case of colonial Singapore, which has been meticulously documented (Yeoh, 1996), provides a particularly good example of this. A British colony, its highly urbanized character made it an early target for British sanitary— and planning—ideas. From 1913, when municipal elections were abolished, authority was vested in a nominated body which proved more amenable to the ‘progressive’ principles of British-style municipal management (undertaken by British professionals). Yet this apparent authoritarianism was actually rather more subtle in operation. Nominations included a growing number of the indigenous population. This approach gave influence to those Europeanized Singaporeans who could be expected broadly to support the British—town planning—model. At the same time they also had to mediate between the indigenous population as a whole and colonial authority. In effect, this usually meant trying to contain opposition.

Reality, however, was more complex. Wholesale zoning powers sought for the Singapore Improvement Trust founded in 1927 were compromised by property interests of all races. However, there was strong and persistent Asian opposition by both owners and occupiers to the more modest proposals to open up what to British eyes were congested districts. Similarly, attempts effectively to anglicize public space by limiting street trade proved practically impossible to enforce. Conflicts were particularly strong where planning proposals affected indigenous sacred spaces.

The pattern in French colonies, at least showpieces such as Morocco or Indo-China, was supposed to be different (Wright, 1991). By the time of World War One, the official imperial ideology had become an enlightened approach called ‘associationism’. In planning terms, this involved modern colonial built-forms yet planned in styles that were supposed to defer to indigenous culture. Moreover, they were developed as new settlements alongside indigenous traditional communities, without any direct intention to replace them. The rigid racial segregation that was typical of British imperial planning was also rejected. The intention was that the indigenous population would gradually realize the superiority of the new settlements, planned by leading French urbanistes, and increasingly use and occupy these spaces themselves. It promised, at least, a different social geography to that of the British colonial city, which rested on the separatist concept of the ‘dual mandate’ (Home, 1997).
Yet the French strategy also acknowledged the potential tensions with the colonized peoples and sought to avoid them, though without actually involving indigenous viewpoints. Despite physical results that were often impressive, the overall outcomes scarcely lived up to the ideals. Invariably the financial benefits of these planned urban developments went overwhelmingly to French interests. Only small numbers of the indigenous elite were able to embrace fully the spirit of 'associationism'. And, though it took different forms, colonial planning was challenged, actively and passively, by the majority of indigenous people. Thus in Indo-China, enlightened urbanisme could not tame the rising indigenous challenge to the colonizers in major cities such as Saigon and Hanoi. Around Moroccan cities such as Casablanca, burgeoning indigenous bidonvilles (shack communities) were soon challenging the colonial planning process.

As the case of Indo-China shows, the contesting of externally imposed planning was an integral part of a much wider process of challenging imperial dependence. This link with struggles for national self-determination confers a wider resonance on the planning history of these countries. It contains, too, some faint glimmerings of that conscious exercise of critical selectivity that was the hallmark of diffusion in the Western heartlands of planning innovation and their immediate neighbours.

**Authoritarian Imposition**

The most acute type of imposition has occurred in situations of extreme repression. Characteristic of this type of diffusion would be externally imposed planning proposals and methods of enforcement which grant few, if any, concessions to established indigenous interests. This can sometimes lead to a curious phenomenon whereby 'purist' expressions of one country's planning approach may appear elsewhere, in lands appropriated as colonies. Invariably, conquering powers are far less compromised in overriding indigenous democratic or property rights than in the imperial homeland.

Perhaps the most extreme example of this phenomenon was the short-lived Nazi replanning of the provinces of Poland incorporated into the German Reich in the early 1940s (Fehl, 1992). Seeking to impose a new regional order, the planners of the SS (amongst them the geographer Walter Christaller) adopted a version of Ebenezer Howard's social city that had been entirely stripped of its original social reformist meanings. In this form it became the basis for a new Germanic ethnic template, to be implemented by seizure of indigenous property, forced depopulation, slave labour, and extermination. Jews alone suffered such wholesale dispossession within Germany proper, where most existing property rights were treated more respectfully.

Another example was the imposition of Japanese notions of planning (in effect, the rather imperfectly assimilated pastiche of Western planning ideas) on its colonies, Taiwan, Korea and Manchuria (Hein, 1998). Again, such planning
efforts were frequently far more interventionist than anything undertaken in the imperial homeland. Thus Taiwan had building controls from 1895 and housing laws from 1900, well in advance of comparable developments in Japan. By the 1930s, land readjustment in the Japanese colonies was also being undertaken on a far more draconian fashion, without compensation, than would have been tolerated in Japan itself.

There were comparable episodes of planning in other colonial settings. Thus the early planning of Algeria, though strictly undertaken by French military engineers, was a heavy handed exercise of imperial power, without concession to indigenous society or culture (Malvot and Heard, 1980). Similar charges have been laid against the British, especially in the most grandiose exercises in imperial planning such as New Delhi (Irving, 1981). Yet extreme authoritarianism, without reference to indigenous sentiments, has actually been quite rare in twentieth century colonial planning. As we have seen, indigenous populations were not usually meekly accepting of these alien forms of planning, imposed through imperial power.

CONCLUSIONS AND SPECULATIONS

Amongst the impositionist forms of diffusion, context - the power relationship between the 'exporter' and the 'importer' of planning - has clearly assumed the central role in shaping the diffusion experience. The relationship was absolute in authoritarian imposition but increasingly modified by other factors as we ascend the categories in Table 3.1. Effectively, the influence of context would tend to increase as the power relationship between the originating and receiving countries became more uneven. Where the power relationship was more even or favoured the receiving country, however, indigenous reformist means could be expected to play a more important and autonomous role, often adapting what was imported. Further down Table 3.1, however, the likelihood of adaptation was much lower. There was instead a stronger likelihood that purer versions of the exported model might appear than had been found in its country of origin.

The role of individuals as independent variables in the diffusion process remains less amenable to generalization; however, key individuals could become significant if not primary determinants in all diffusion types. Clearly, though, the way they could exert influence would vary according to context. The more authoritarian nature of colonial power probably gave the individual more scope in that power was vested the greatest scope to shape outcomes. Where indigenous reformism was more established, the extent of the individual's role would depend on the persuasive appeal of his/her proposals, particularly within reformist and professional milieux.

A more human way of expressing this explanatory problem is to go back to the story in the introduction. If Cerda had sold his work to Hausmann, or at least made greater efforts to promote his pioneering teoría outside Spain,
perhaps the course of international planning history might have been different. Barcelona might have become a mecca of late nineteenth century planning, alongside Paris, Frankfurt, Birmingham and Chicago. Or the other hand, it is doubtful whether one individual can ever surmount the limits imposed by context. Spain’s terminal decline as a world power in the late nineteenth century would almost certainly have prejudiced reformers in other countries against adopting any Spanish ideas, whatever their intrinsic merits. It certainly ruled out colonial demonstrations of the kind that played such a key part in the international spread of British and French planning during the twentieth century.

Today, paradoxically, Barcelona’s planning and other lessons are being widely studied, borrowed and, to varying degrees, adapted in both the post-industrial and Hispanic developing worlds (Borja, 1996). The context has now shifted to remarkable global economic success, underpinned by progressive reformism and dazzling professional expertise. Cerda’s modern equivalent has been the city’s charismatic and visionary recent Mayor, Pasqual Maragall. Unlike Cerda, however, Maragall has played on the world stage, importing and adapting external planning models (for example, from Baltimore) and, even more, promoting the international spread of the Barcelona model.

Now, of course, we accept globalization as a reality of everyday life. The jet airliner, satellite telecommunications, and the internet have accelerated an internationalization of information that was originally made possible by the steamship, the railway, the mechanized printing press, the postal service, and the telegraph. Throughout the world the lessons of Barcelona (or indeed any other admired planning model) can today be examined more conveniently than ever before. Even past, unrecognized lessons can finally be diffused – Cerda would doubtless be astonished to learn that it is now possible to buy video cassettes with commentaries in several languages, explaining his great plan for the city.

Despite all this, the likelihood is that, in most respects, the diffusion of planning will continue as before. Modern communications certainly allow borrowing to be more rapid, more comprehensive, and less spatially bounded. Yet the process is being driven (as it always was to some extent) by economic imperatives. Throughout the world, cities are now exposed to the full rigours of global market forces. Their leaders seek planning models from successful cities everywhere in the continual battle to win or retain highly mobile international capital. In Beirut, for example, now rebuilding itself after a destructive civil war to regain its role as the Middle East’s main international centre, planners have quite deliberately drawn on the widest possible range of Western planning expertise and models (Gavin and Maluf, 1996). Despite occasional echoes of French colonial links, this borrowing process is, however, largely orchestrated by Lebanese interests.

More generally, the effective ending of all but the final vestiges of formal colonialism in the last years of the century may perhaps reduce the extent of
impositional diffusion. We may, at least, see a shift to more negotiative forms than have been typical for much of the twentieth century. Yet, colonialism continues to cast a long shadow of dependence over the poorest parts of the world, especially in Africa. For many countries, saddled with huge external debt burdens and lacking sufficient indigenous reformist and professional resources, diffusion will necessarily continue to be an externally-determined process. Nor is it certain that the more authoritarian forms of imposition have entirely gone. Thus the chronic instability of post-imperial or post-communist nationalism in disputed regions of the Balkans and Middle East may relegate a reordering of settlement, enforced by military power.

Yet, while such trends are regrettable, there is also an emergent type of impositional diffusion—by consent that can be welcomed. The European Union is the clearest example, where powerful affluent countries have lately begun to defer (rhetorically, at least) to mutually agreed models for environmental management and planning that transcend the nation state. Such initiatives reflect the spirit of internationalism that characterized many European planning movements at the beginning of the twentieth century. There are much weaker signs that the same spirit has also found global expression in the recent Earth Summits. If (and this is a very big “if”) tangible achievement follows, then one of the promises of twentieth century planning may finally be fulfilled. Whether or not this occurs, however, there is much about how planning diffusion occurs that will not change—Fundamentally, it will continue to be shaped by the endlessly fascinating mix of context, reformist and professional milieux, and individual action that largely determined its course during the twentieth century.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My thanks to my colleague Roger Zetter for advice on literature on aid-related planning.

REFERENCES


Watanabe, S.I. (1988) Japanese vs Western urban images: Western influence on the
Environment in Colonial Singapore - Oxford: Oxford University Press
Studio Press