

PLANNING FOR RECONSTRUCTION AFTER THE DISASTER OF WAR: LESSONS FROM ENGLAND IN THE 1940S

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Cities are constantly changing, either in a slow, gradualist manner, or through catastrophe such as war. This paper examines the mechanisms for reconstructing British towns after the bombing of the Second World War. The emerging national planning system, and examples of individual local responses, are discussed. This example of post-catastrophe reconstruction planning proved to be a slow and difficult process, with many disagreements between the national and local planners. It does not easily conform to standard models of post-disaster planning.

EI URBANISMO DE LA RECONSTRUCCIÓN DESPUÉS DEL DESASTRE DE LA GUERRA.

Lecciones de Inglaterra en la década de 1940

Las ciudades cambian constantemente, bien de forma lenta y gradual, o con catástrofes como ocurre con las guerras. El artículo analiza los mecanismos para la reconstrucción de las ciudades británicas después de los bombardeos de la segunda Guerra Mundial. Se discute el sistema nacional de planeamiento que entonces emerge, así como ejemplos de respuestas locales. Este ejemplo de urbanismo de reconstrucción post-catástrofe se mostró como un proceso lento y dificultoso, con varios desacuerdos entre los urbanistas nacionales y locales. No se corresponde fácilmente con los modelos estándar del urbanismo aplicado después de los desastres.

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Introduction

CITIES ARE NOT STATIC. CHANGE, OF ONE FORM OR another, is inevitable. Numerous studies of the nature, extent and mechanisms of urban change (eg Whitehand, 1987, 1992) have shown how these processes fluctuate over time and space. There can be periods of intensive change, involving outward growth and internal intensification; but there can also be periods of quiescence. Causes are usually linked to large-scale (national and even international) economic fluctuations. Disaster, whether natural or human-induced, interrupts this 'natural' process of urban change.

The nature of catastrophe is very variable, as is the nature of the planning response. Much has been written on responses to natural disaster, from volcanoes to earthquakes (Tobriner, 1992; Nakabayashi, 1986). Fire, too, is commonly studied (Reddaway, 1940; Bowden, 1970). This broad body of research has suggested a simple sequential model for disaster recovery, which can be divided into four phases. During the first, the 'emergency' period immediately following the catastrophe, the built form (termed the "capital stock") is damaged or destroyed, and normal urban activities cease or are substantially changed. During the second 'restoration' phase, buildings, streets and services are patched, the displaced population returns, and functions are becoming restored. In the first of two 'reconstruction' phases, which may occur 50-100 weeks from the disaster, patched fabric is being replaced, and activity is at pre-disaster levels. In the final phase, major construction is occurring to improve the physical layout and structures, while activities are improved and developed over their pre-catastrophe levels (Kates and Pijawka, 1977).

The aftermath of war is much less well studied at the scale of physical urban reconstruction (Nasr, 1997, being a rare example). Instead, the reconstruction discourse, both contemporary and in subsequent scholarly study, tends to cover economic, social and cultural issues amongst others. The Kates/Pijawka model can be applied to post-war urban reconstruction, albeit with a much revised time-line since, historically, the recovery process is lengthy for such war damage (as Chandler and Fox, 1974, demon-

strate). This paper examines the experiences of England during and immediately after the Second World War to explore both process and product of post-catastrophe replanning where plans were detailed and large-scale; radical and ineffectual; immediate and long-term.

The nature and extent of disaster

The damage to British cities was both uneven and, in comparison to many on the European mainland, relatively light (cf Hewitt, 1983; Table 1). In general it can hardly be compared to the Allies' 'thousand bomber raids' on Germany, particularly where incendiaries caused firestorms (Hamburg, Dresden) nor to the atomic strikes on Japan (Hewitt, 1983). Yet the lessons of the English bombing response might provide parallels for other, more limited, damage situations including terrorist attack.

Table 1
The result of bombing in the UK

Civilian deaths:	60,595
Civilian injuries:	c. 236,000
Persons made homeless:	c. 500,000
Cities significantly damaged:	45
Area destroyed:	15 sq km
Proportion of built-up area:	3%

Source: extracted from secondary sources by Hewitt (1983), includes some data for Wales and Northern Ireland.

Many English industrial centres and some southern ports suffered badly. The 'blitzes' of London, Coventry and Plymouth are particularly well-known and resulted in areas where the majority of buildings, and much infrastructure, were destroyed or at least badly damaged. Such places are as close as England came to a *tabula rasa* clearance. Another series of raids, the so-called "Baedeker raids", deliberately targeted the historic cities of Bath, Canterbury, Exeter, Norwich and York (Rothnie, 1992). They caused a certain amount of physical damage, particu-

larly to historic quarters of densely-built and often timber-framed buildings; but their main effect was on civilian morale. During 1944/45 further damage was inflicted by the V1 and V2 weapons in south-east England, but this was random, relatively limited and, once more, mainly a morale issue.

Other towns, even some in major industrially-productive areas such as the West Midlands, suffered surprisingly little. Most of the damage recorded in Wolverhampton, for example, was “slight damage” or “no damage other than broken windows” at the height of the air raids in 1940-42 (Wolverhampton Borough Council, 1940-2). Many places suffered the inconvenience of air raid alarms but virtually no physical damage. It is still not easy to gather meaningful comparative statistics for damage to all types of urban land-use, but Table 2 indicates, for some key towns, the extent of destruction to the housing stock. Ward (1994, p. 82) suggests that, in total, some 475,000 dwellings were destroyed.

Table 2
Extent of destruction of houses

London	47,314
	(in the 18 boroughs of the LCC area)	
Merseyside	10,542
	(Liverpool, Birkenhead, Bootle, Wallasey)	
Birmingham	5,065
Portsmouth	4,393
Coventry	4,185
Hull	4,184
Plymouth	3,593
Bristol	2,909
Sheffield	2,906
Manchester	1,951
Yarmouth	1,636

Source: extracted from National Archives files by Marmaras (1992).

The planning response

The planning response must be understood first in the context of what had been happening in the immediate pre-war period (Stevenson, 1986). Key concerns were for the control of urban outward expansion and replacement of the significant amount of high-density slum housing in inner urban areas. Of course the two went hand-in-hand, as when Birmingham celebrated construction of its 50,000th municipal house in 1939 at then-standard densities of around 12 per acre (30/ha). Some individual municipalities were beginning to produce significant plans for future development, and others were being commissioned on a much wider spatial basis. At an even wider scale, the problem of over-development in south-east England led to the setting-up of a Royal Commission in 1937, and its report (the Barlow Report, 1940) spurred wider considerations of town planning. It is suggested that this report underpinned “a keen realisation of the need for comprehensive and radical town planning” early in the war (Hasegawa, 1999, p. 139).

At the national scale, however, planning was unstructured and uncontrolled. There was no specific relevant Ministry. Building regulations controlled the details of development, but owed their origins to concerns for public health (Ley, 2002), and therefore much planning came under the remit of the Ministry of Health.

Central government had, however, begun consideration of mechanisms for planning early in the war. A Consultative Panel on Physical Reconstruction, chaired by Lord Reith (Minister of Works and Buildings from October 1940), was established. An Interdepartmental Committee of Officials on Reconstruction had surveyed four sample blitzed areas by February 1941. *Inter alia* it reported that the local authorities concerned should be allowed to exercise more planning controls, and should prepare outline plans as soon as possible (National Archives [NA] HLG 71/1570). Reith’s Panel had virtually completed a draft manual for local authorities on the technique of redevelopment in central urban areas as early as October 1941 (NA HLG 86/8). Although Reith was working towards a Town and Country Planning (Reconstruction) Bill, which had been discussed at the Cabinet Committee on Reconstruction Problems, and

the Government had agreed that the planning functions of the Ministry of Health should be transferred to a dedicated Ministry, Reith was replaced in February 1942 and his Consultative Panel ceased to meet (Hasegawa, 1992, p. 8). The central impetus for considering reconstruction issues seemed to diminish, and it was not until 1943 that a new Ministry of Works and Planning was set up. However, one civil servant's view of this move was that "the prime justification for the existence of a Ministry of Planning during the war is one of morale. Its success or failure must be largely measured by whether it is making people more hopeful of the future" (Hasegawa, 1992, pp. 9-10, quoting NA HLG 71/1253).

The Town and Country Planning (Interim Development) Act 1943 and Town and Country Planning Act 1944 began to develop mechanisms for large scale replanning, particularly in terms of the state's powers for acquiring or otherwise controlling land; but these were interim, contentious and not wholly satisfactory. It was not until the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act that a comprehensive, new planning system was set up. Amidst much controversy, this Act 'nationalised' development rights, and henceforth specific permission was required for all but the most minor development. New-style 'development plans' were required. Delays seem to have been caused by personality clashes between senior politicians, between politicians and civil servants, and between civil servants; and the issue of reconstruction *per se* had been lost amidst larger considerations of the practical, political and financial difficulties of designing and implementing the radical new planning system introduced in 1947.

At the local level, however, many individual municipalities responded to the actual or threatened damage with some speed. They were led by the badly-damaged Plymouth, Coventry and London, and by the incitement of Lord Reith when he visited Plymouth in July 1941 to "go ahead, planning boldly and comprehensively, go on with good planning and bank on getting financial help" (ie from central government) (Watson and Abercrombie, 1943, p. vii). This incitement, together with programmes broadcast by the BBC and exhibitions and publications produced by the Royal Institute of British Architects and other organisations, led to planning being viewed

as a morale issue, as the civil servant quoted above suggested. Reconstruction planning in particular took on a symbolic role.

The nature and extent of the local replanning

The circumstances of war — but not necessarily of extensive physical damage — were incentives to large-scale replanning. But, in many cases, the opportunity was taken to address pre-war concerns: this was hardly a 'new paradigm' of planning (cf Larkham, 2002, pp. 403-6). The direction was clearly stated by a 1943 textbook for schoolchildren: "when we build again, we must not repeat our old mistakes — but create a city of which our grandchildren will be proud" (Cadbury Brothers, 1943, pp. 48-9).

Evidence of about 200 plans has been traced (Larkham and Lilley, 2001). The little — and undamaged towns and cities followed the badly — damaged in preparing plans, often with considerable speed. Many plans were begun, and some were even published during the war, even in full colour, despite paper and ink rationing. The peak period for reconstruction plan publication was 1945-6.

It seems often to be felt that these reconstruction plans were the result of high-profile professional planners. Much of the published literature explores only the plans authored by these people, and for the major cities. These consultants were usually expensive to employ and were in high demand. One individual, Thomas Sharp (President of the Town Planning Institute in 1945-6) produced at least 10 plans, mainly for major historic cities including Oxford, Exeter, Durham and Salisbury. His charges ranged from 1,000 guineas for the heavily-damaged city of Exeter (1946) to 2,500 guineas for Oxford (1948) (Sharp papers, University of Newcastle upon Tyne). Most of Sharp's reports were widely circulated, well reviewed in the professional press, and published for the public — in full colour — by the Architectural Press. Even the small, and relatively little-damaged, industrial Midlands borough of Dudley engaged T. Alwyn Lloyd OBE (again a Past President of the TPI, in 1933-4) to replan the Borough at a cost of 450 guineas in 1944.

Yet at least half of the known plans were

produced by professional officers employed by individual municipalities, and there seems to be little qualitative difference between the reconstruction concepts employed by these officers and the expensive consultants. Indeed, some municipal plans were far more detailed than the brief pamphlets produced by consultants such as Alwyn Lloyd for Dudley or Dobson Chapman for Macclesfield. A few plans were even produced by amenity groups, local newspapers or even by private individuals. This was an unparalleled outpouring of plans, representing a tremendous investment of time, effort and resources at a crucial time in the course of the war and immediately afterwards. Being produced in such a short space of time, these plans together represent a virtual textbook of contemporary planning and urban design ideas. This was “a remarkable decade of innovation and advance” in British planning (Cherry, 1988, p. 108). Plan production soon declined, however, because the new ‘development plans’ specified by the 1947 Act were rather different in their function, structure and preparation. They were more technocentric in their reliance on substantial survey data collection, tabulation and analysis, and they no longer illustrated the planners’ images of future townscapes.

It has been suggested that the early reconstruction plans were radical in their proposals. Official correspondence suggests that, by about 1946,

An exemplary plan would envisage a reconstructed town centre, encircled by ring roads ... the centre was then divided by main roads into ‘precincts’, each of which was given a specific function ... emphasis was also placed on the creation of spaciousness ... by ample provision of open spaces and wide roads in general, and in particular, of a central square, a civic centre and/or a shopping centre (Hasegawa, 1999, p. 145, from reports in NA HLG 71/597).

These were sweeping proposals, “unfettered by the existing road and land use patterns” (Hasegawa, 1999, p. 144). This is the epitome of the *tabula rasa* approach. Yet, despite producing such proposals, a few local authorities and planners protested that they were neither interested nor involved in working from a *tabula rasa*. The City Engineer of the City of London, for example, wrote that “the City is not, and

never can be, whatever the destruction by enemy action of its buildings, in any sense regarded as a virgin building estate” (Forty, 1942, p. xxv).

Such large-scale plans can be typified by that drawn up for the industrial city of Newcastle upon Tyne by Percy Parr OBE, its City Engineer and Planning Officer, and published by the city in October 1945 as a 131-page small-format booklet priced at a reasonably-affordable two shillings and sixpence (Parr, 1945). The historic, but relatively unstructured, pre-war street pattern, with its medieval core, Georgian rebuilding and Victorian extensions (Figure 1) was to be transformed to a much less-dense, highly-structured hierarchical network, bounded by a dual-carriageway ring road (Figure 2). The iconic, early plan for the badly-bombed naval port of Plymouth, part authored by the eminent consultant planner and academic Professor Sir Patrick Abercrombie, proposed a completely restructured town centre equally as radical as Parr’s Newcastle (Watson and Abercrombie, 1943). Abercrombie felt that the devastation would allow “a plan which would embody drastic proposals” (quoted in Chalkley and Goodridge, 1991, p. 66). The plan proposed a rather *beaux-arts*-styled axial road over 1,000 yards (914m) long, from railway station to waterfront, orthogonal to a series of parallel shopping streets, largely surrounded by a ring road. Architectural style was to be uniform and of high quality, with Regent Street as the inspiration. Land uses were strictly zoned.

Roads were often the major structural feature, reflecting concern over traffic densities and flows. It was not uncommon for schemes to propose multi-level highways, grade-separated interchanges, large-scale roundabouts and ‘precinct’ subdivisions, and other American-inspired ideas promoted by the senior police officer H. Alker Tripp (1942). Even ‘third party’ proposals, ie not drawn up by planning professionals, employed some of these concepts, as when the Bristol Retail Traders’ Association produced a retail proposal with complete pedestrian/vehicle segregation, two levels of ramped access to stores, etc. These plans were described as “wildly futuristic and unrealistic” (Punter, 1990, p. 31). This fascination for what Diefendorf (1989) termed “technocentric” replanning is clearly shown by the



Figure 1
The street layout of Newcastle upon Tyne, UK,
before the Second World War
(adapted from Parr, 1945)

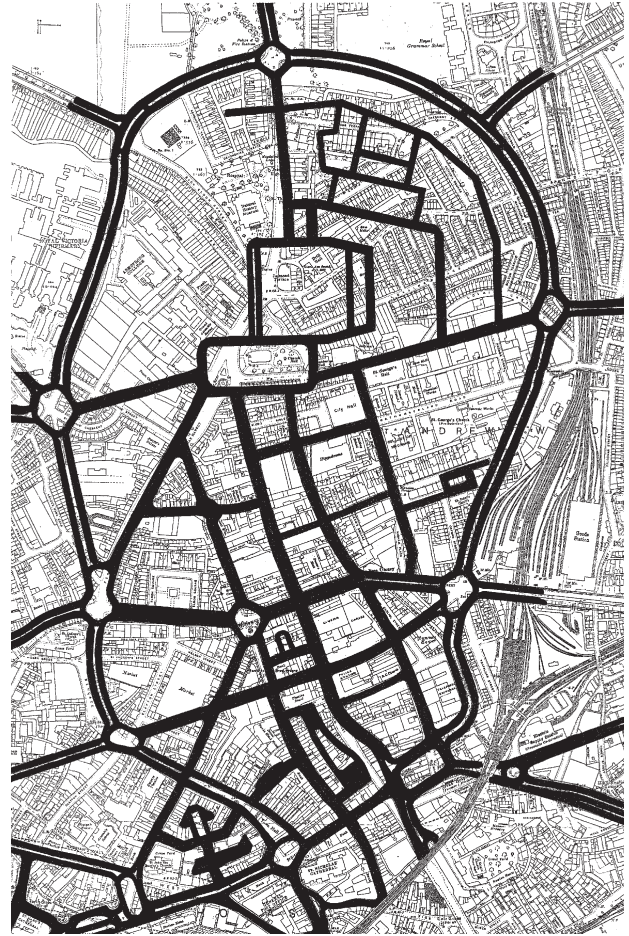


Figure 2
The street layout of Newcastle upon Tyne, UK,
as proposed in the 1945 reconstruction plan
(adapted from Parr, 1945)

proposed new river crossing at Norwich: a large-scale bridge carried on the roofs of a series of new factory/warehouse structures (James, Pierce and Rowley, 1945; Figure 3).

A second common feature was land-use zoning, which sought to resolve historic juxtapositions of ‘non-conforming’ land uses, a process made simpler by the compulsory purchase and large-scale redevelopment of urban central areas. Although widely used, this ‘precinct’ model “meant that much of the mixture and diversity of central city land uses was doomed” (Punter, 1990, p. 27, writing of Bristol).

Thirdly, many plans contained some explicit reference to retaining old buildings; even if, as in

Coventry, they were moved to new sites. The Plymouth plan even developed ideas of area-based preservation (nearly a quarter-century before this became embedded in planning law) (Larkham, 2003a). A related point, seen in the implemented redevelopment but rarely in the plans themselves, was the creation of memorials to the bomb disaster, often in the form of retaining bomb-damaged churches or other ‘special buildings’ (eg Birmingham, Coventry, Exeter, Plymouth, York: Nasr and Larkham, 2004). This memorialisation seems to have become a public desire particularly after the end of hostilities, rather than something explicitly provided for in the plans.

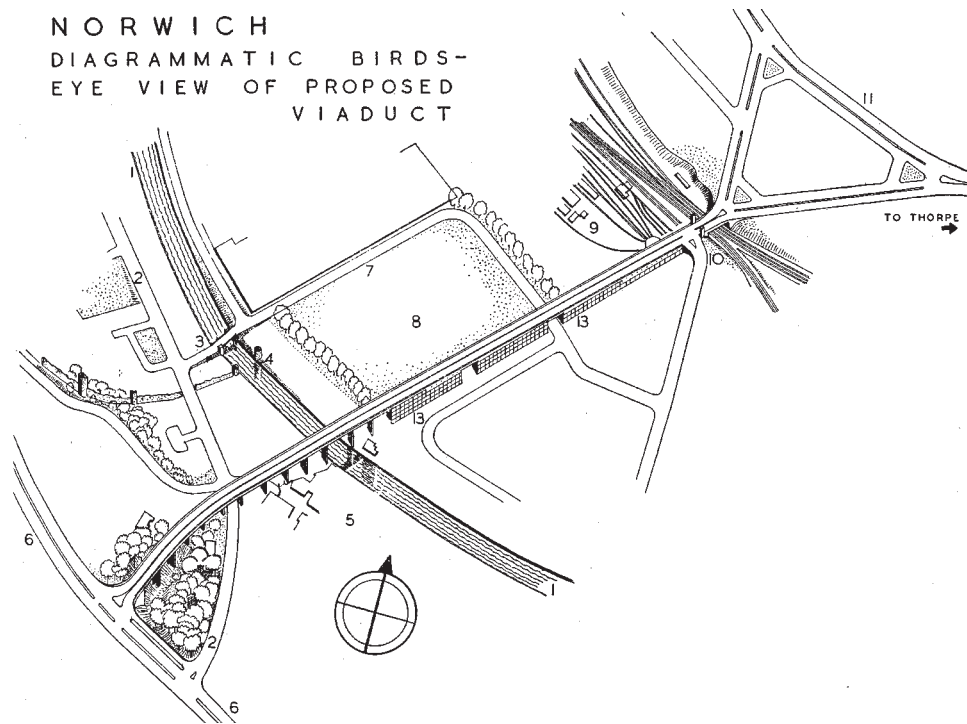


Figure 3
The proposed roof-top viaduct across the River Wensum, Norwich, UK,
reproduced from the plan by James *et al.* (1945).

Problems with implementation

Very few of these reconstruction plans were implemented. The proposals for radical change met with considerable inertia at best, and often outright opposition. Of those recognisably implemented, the built form differs – often quite substantially – from the plan. As Hasegawa (1999) argued, for a broad range of political, economic and practical reasons, the first generation of plans were overtaken by much less radical plans from the mid and late 1940s. Even these were changed by the time of their implementation. Construction material was rationed until the mid 1950s, and this imposed a significant practical burden on reconstruction. Finding the finance for these schemes, even if planned for phased implementation over several decades, proved extremely difficult.

In Plymouth, for example, a number of changes were made to the plan in the course of implementation, often for reasons of economy (Chalkley, 1983,

Figures 2 and 3; Chalkley and Goodridge, 1991, p. 74). Political expediency in this heavily-damaged area led to speedy implementation. Since completion of this plan, changing retailing fashions and patterns, increasing car ownership and other trends have significantly affected this flagship reconstruction, although there have been (muted) suggestions that its importance in English planning should merit some recognition or protection (Chalkley, 1998, pp. 207-211).

One major implementation problem is that, historically, patterns of landownership in most city centres have become fragmented. This hampered large-scale reconstruction, as diverse landowners may have had very different aspirations for their property, particularly if it remained undamaged. This issue is highlighted by the Town Clerk’s evidence to a public inquiry on the Portsmouth reconstruction scheme: “It was imperative ... that redevelopment should be undertaken as a whole, and the only way to accomplish this was by vesting the ownership of the land in

the Council” (*Estates Gazette*, 1947). However, traders were generally very reluctant to lose their established freeholds, possibly in exchange for leased sites in redeveloped areas, with unknown trading potentials and uncertainty over the costs of leases.

Furthermore, compulsory purchase implied heavy cost, with the burden of borrowing and subsequent repayments to fall heavily on local taxation. The scale of costs of these reconstruction plans was a perennial complaint. Lewis Silkin (then the Minister of Town Planning) commented in 1949 that

I believe what the public is looking for to-day is the translation of those attractively illustrated two-guinea volumes into concrete or brick ... [many planners] have prepared their beautiful documents without bothering to ascertain what their plans are going to cost to implement ... Sometimes they have acted almost as if they expected that the plan would never materialise at all (speech at the Annual Dinner of the Town Planning Institute, reported in *Estates Gazette* 1949a).

In Wolverhampton, for example, the detailed proposals for a new Civic Centre exhibited in the 1945 plan and exhibition attracted substantial criticism from members of the public, largely on its high cost and irrelevance to public perceptions of the urgent issues of reconstruction. As this reconstruction envisaged the destruction of much undamaged urban fabric, “where is the money coming from for this too ambitious scheme – the destroying of whole blocks of good buildings such as banks, business premises, wholesale and retail markets ...” (letter in the *Wolverhampton Express and Star*, 30 January 1945: Larkham, 2002). In Bristol, the 1946 proposals covered 771 acres (312 ha) and the cost of compulsory land purchase was put at £26 million, and thought likely to double (Punter, 1990, p. 29).

A further technical implementation problem came in the provisions for compensating landowners for war damage. The pages of the *Estates Gazette* throughout the 1940s show numerous examples and court cases where owners sought higher compensation and, in Plymouth, and other badly bomb-damaged areas, higher payments would be made if the pre-war street and property pattern was adhered to. Radical new street patterns, albeit involving

compulsory purchase, also involved significantly lower damage compensation payments (as discussed for Plymouth by Chalkley, 1983, p. 28).

No one can be blamed for this idealistic planning. It was commenced during the time of the heavy bombing, and planners living in the towns affected were under the impression that their particular town would suffer very heavy damage even if it were not obliterated altogether. A planner can, therefore, be forgiven if he “let himself go” a little in his early designs. The financial side did not worry him, for was not everyone talking about expenditures of millions per day on the war? (Hough, 1944, p. 10).

Lastly, speed of reconstruction was a major demand, for reasons of both practicality and morale. “Traders formerly occupying premises in the principal shopping area are ... insistent in their request that they should be given facilities ... so that they can resume business with the least possible delay, while industrial undertakings expect the same consideration and assistance” (Cook, 1943, p. 62, writing of Southampton). The conflict had relatively little medium- or long-term urban impact: some evacuees returned, even to London, within weeks or months, services were speedily repaired, and industrial production was usually impaired for weeks at most. But complying with the demand for speedy replanning was not easy, for the reasons outlined above; the quickly-produced, earlier, plans were the more radical and difficult to implement.

Lessons and conclusions

The English post-war experience suggests some important lessons. First, the relationship of planning systems and structures at national, regional and local levels is vital. England was only just beginning to develop a national system, had no regional government, and planning at the local level was then voluntary. Building control existed, but remained focused on public health concerns. Personality clashes between politicians and civil servants delayed the development and implementation of more robust systems, and there were also tensions between

national and local government. Reconstruction had to deal with fragmented landownership; diverse aspirations of landowners, traders and the public; changing standards of living and working; changing materials and construction technology; and competing ideologies of existing and emerging professions (particularly architecture and town planning respectively). Such a weak system could hardly cope with implementing so many large-scale plans. Catastrophe will highlight the weakness of any system, including that of planning itself.

In such a weak system, however, short-term solutions, blinkered vision and subordination to established interests will rule, as Bowden (1970, p. 25) found in a different reconstruction context: “In a laissez-faire situation in a democratic system the business community is unlikely to implement a rebuilding plan that promises to hurt individual and collective commercial interests”. This may, in part, explain the inertia and the tendency observed by Hasegawa (1999) for later plans to be far less radical in nature.

Secondly, immediate bomb damage and a concerted media campaign (organised for the most part by architects) led to public demands for immediate reconstruction. It was difficult to manage the production of suitable plans at speed; several of the key consultants were rapidly booked up and had to decline further commissions; and collecting what increasingly became viewed as the necessary knowledge-base for replanning took considerable time (cf Lock’s ‘civic survey’ of Hull, 1943) especially where bomb damage had destroyed local records (Watson and Abercrombie, 1943, p. vii). But not all plans were able to be produced so quickly. Some, such as York, took five years or more. Delays in producing plans, even for good reason, and particularly in publishing them for the wider public to read, led quickly to public disaffection.

Thirdly, the English example clearly shows that undamaged cities produced wide-ranging reconstruction plans at least as swiftly as the badly-damaged cities. Adopting the ‘fashion’ of reconstruction planning, and employing its terminology and its key concerns, was a result of numerous factors including, at the civic level, competition and place promotion as cities sought to re-position themselves in the post-war

urban hierarchy and economy (Larkham and Lilley, 2003). The concepts and solutions of reconstruction planning thus became embedded in the mainstream of British post-war planning and urbanism.

Fourthly, once produced, the plans varied between templates for action (a ‘top-down’ approach, following the then-dominant paradigm where the expert planner’s task was to produce a masterplan of future urban form and structure: cf Taylor, 1998) or consultative documents put forward to promote public participation. Several, such as that for Walsall, made much of their requests for public “criticism” (Walsall County Borough Council, 1943; Larkham, 2003b). Both approaches, however, generated public antipathy as, for example, to Wolverhampton’s detailed proposals for a civic centre, where the public complained both at the cost and at the inappropriate prioritising of office development for municipal staff instead of housing and city-centre development (Larkham, 2002). At best, apathy resulted. It was rare for consultations or exhibitions to attract more than a tiny percentage of the city’s population. Exeter was an exception: the *Western Morning News* reported on 15 January 1946 that 20,438 people – nearly one-third of the city’s population – had attended the exhibition of Sharp’s proposals.

This leads to the fifth issue. The scale and nature of proposals failed, in general terms, to catch public attention. This appears as true for the earlier, more radical schemes such as Coventry and Plymouth as for the later, seemingly more conservative, proposals. The professional praise usually found in contemporary reviews was not generally mirrored by the public, and a number of plans – such as that for Walsall (Larkham, 2003b) – fell very quickly from public gaze despite the cheapness and availability of publications and the mounting of public exhibitions.

Sixthly, there were issues of access to the large-scale funding necessary for these schemes – even where proposals were spread over a significant timespan. This, and the fact that building material was rationed until the mid-1950s, led again to public and political complaints that replanning was proceeding far too slowly.

For a broad range of reasons, therefore, it is often held that this period of unparalleled planning activity was, in fact, a failure. As early as 1944, one critic

suggested that an appropriate comment on this period would be “Never has so much been said on one subject, by so many, with so little effect” (Hough, 1944, p. 9). Few plans were implemented in anything like their original form. Any implementation proceeded slowly, and a public apathy developed. Early radicalism quickly became diluted (Hasegawa, 1999). Planning “failed to dislodge the established administrative systems or to overcome the temptation to make do with *ad hoc* measures” (Stevenson, 1986, p. 75). Even Plymouth moved, in the course of a decade, from the idealism of “plan boldly” to “plan modestly” and finally to “plan for essentials” (from a reviewer of the city’s 1950s Development Plan, in Tiratsoo, 2000, p. 30). In short, and as Popkin writes of other post-disaster reconstructions, “despite the best efforts to shape the character of the reconstructed city, fundamental change is unlikely. Past trends will be accelerated in most cases” (Popkin, 1977, p. xxxiii).

Nevertheless, these cities *were* resilient and *did* recover. The immediate post-war circumstances changed markedly during the boom years of the 1960s and 1970s, when urban redevelopment occurred at tremendous scale and speed, using the ‘comprehensive clearance’ approach. Some, including Prince Charles (1987), have suggested that more damage was done at this time than by the wartime bombing. A significant public, and then professional, reaction against this scale of change (Aldous, 1975; Esher, 1980) developed into a set of generally-accepted planning and urban design principles including “do not develop at too large a scale at one time” (Tibbalds, 1988, p. 1). Nevertheless, many of these reconstruction plans did have an effect: the “persistence of the plan” affected actual and proposed urban form, particularly in the case of large-scale infrastructure such as ring roads, for decades after the 1940s.

The English experience can readily be compared to the general post-disaster model developed by Kates and Pijawka (1977). First, in the ‘emergency’ period, the damage to the built stock was much lighter than in many other countries. Normal urban activities, as many social histories suggest, actually continued in the majority of places with relatively minor interruption. During the second ‘restoration’ period, services

and buildings were patched, and temporary structures erected in many of the worst-damaged areas. But some temporary structures were still being built in the late 1940s. On the other hand, some municipalities did not permit temporary structures because they might adversely affect proposed redevelopments (eg Southampton: Cook, 1943, and Bristol: *Estates Gazette*, 1949b). Over fifty years after their construction, some temporary structures still remain and have been protected for their architectural and historic interest. Replanning to improve structures and conditions occurs very early in many English cases, but implementation was delayed owing to the ongoing war, material rationing, and funding issues. Therefore the final two stages in the Kates/Pijawka model are confused and may be significantly delayed. The replacement of patched and temporary structures may not occur until realisable large-scale plans are agreed: in some towns this was not until the 1960s. Although influenced by the idealistic wartime reconstruction plans, the implementation of even the 1960s plans took decades. In central Birmingham a small number of cleared sites still remain, and in Hull one bombsite remains as a surface car-park.

Planning for reconstruction following wartime destruction is not, therefore, a clear-cut procedure, and is certainly not necessarily speedy; irrespective of whether the country concerned was the victor or loser in the conflict (compare, for example, Nasr, 1997). In the case discussed here the changing nature of planning at the time, and the input from party politics, and public consultation and criticism, further complicated the issue (see, for example, Tiratsoo, 2000). Yet the theories, philosophies and techniques of town planning are constantly changing (Taylor, 1998). The values and attitudes of professionals and public likewise change. Towns and cities are constantly changing, albeit at different rates. Perhaps we should conceive of post-disaster reconstruction more as one element of a continuum of urban process and procedure, rather than as a specific and distinct issue.

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