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# Thinking Forward through the Past: Prospecting for Urban Order in (Victorian) Public Parks

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## Abstract

Supplementing familiar linear and chronological accounts of history, we delineate a novel approach that explores connections between past, present and future. Drawing on Koselleck, we outline a framework for analysing the interconnected categories of 'spaces of experience' and 'horizons of expectation' across times. We consider the visions and anxieties of *futures past* and *futures present*; how these are constituted by, and inform, experiences that have happened and are yet to come. This conceptual frame is developed through the study of the heritage and lived experiences of a specific Victorian park within an English city. We analyse the formation of urban order as a lens to interrogate both the immediate and long-term linkages between past, present and possible futures. This approach enables us to ground analysis of prospects for urban relations in historical perspective and to pose fundamental questions about the social role of urban parks.

## Keywords

Urban social order - Victorian parks - futures past, futures present - historical criminology

Criminology has been concerned predominantly with describing the present, often with the intent of influencing the future. This 'reformist impulse' (Loader and Sparks 2011: 6), whilst an enduring strength, also evinces a preoccupation with the here-and-now. Historical research plays an indispensable role in helping to overcome this myopic fixation on the recent. In the face of this 'chronocentrism' (Rock 2005) within much criminology - variously manifested as 'presentism' (Flaatten and Ystenhede 2014: 138) or 'epochalism' (Crawford and Hutchinson 2016: 1188) - this paper explores ways in which historical insights can be

imaginatively harnessed to understand the present and inform visions of the future. It contributes to a wider effort to stimulate engagement between criminology and history (Dubber and Valverde 2006; Lawrence 2012). While historians are not devoid of ambitions to understand the present and shape the future, these often remain implicit – given the conventional focus on studying specific sections of the past. But claims concerning the contemporary ‘relevance’ of historical perspectives depend not on a deep understanding of a particular period but, as Luhmann (1976: 137) argued, on ‘the capacity to mediate relations between past and future in a present’. We outline a novel approach, combining analysis of pasts and futures across times, to enrich criminological understandings of present conditions and future prospects.

Besides the long-term, explanatory survey, which analyses development **through** time, Lawrence (2015) highlights two established modes of historical exposition within criminology, both of which juxtapose past and present, to analyse criminological problems **across** times. These are the ‘jarring counterpoint’ – in which historical research calls into question the seeming fixity of present arrangements - and the ‘surprising continuity’ – in which historical analysis interrogates the assumed novelty of contemporary events or processes. The first challenges entrenched assumptions about particular topics, often by suggesting an alternative chronology. For example, Bosworth’s (2001) history of women’s imprisonment – which likens the past to a ‘foreign country’ – deploys an alternative chronology of confinement to challenge assumed connections between criminological knowledge and practices of incarceration, prompting revised understandings of contemporary penalty. Contrastingly, the ‘surprising continuity’ can serve to highlight either long-running connections between past and present or the ‘antecedents’ of contemporary developments. The former is well illustrated by Pearson’s (1983) majestic *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears*, which debunks comforting myths of a ‘golden age’ of social consensus. The latter is reflected in Zedner’s (2006: 83) ‘historical juxtaposition’ of Georgian policing and its contemporary counterpart. Such contributions compare and contrast the present with particular moments in history, to identify similarities and differences which problematise dominant criminological assumptions about the present, and signal the historical contingency of contemporary criminal justice.

Our purpose is to add to the variety and richness of historical criminology, by suggesting a new mode of historical enquiry, which ranges across times to explore the interconnections between pasts, presents and futures. At this juncture, we deem it valuable to go beyond recent work which reflects critically on existing modes of historical research (e.g. Knepper and Scicluna 2010; Garland 2014), to explore innovative means of pursuing criminology in an historically-informed way. To do this, we enquire more deeply than previous studies into the nature of historical time. Specifically, we find it instructive to think of historical time as constituted of multiple forms, speeds or planes of movement – which ‘flow’ in different ways, along different trajectories and at different rates – rather than as a single thread running through chronological time (Koselleck 2002; 2004). The inherent interconnectedness of these different forms of time obviates the need to choose between *either* continuity *or* change in historical interpretation. Yet, it also demands that an holistic interpretation of a given problem accommodates diverse movements in historical time. Following Corfield (2007: 252), we consider it a key challenge of historical research – historical criminology included – ‘to find multidimensional ways of interpreting the combination of persistence, accumulation and transformation that between them shape the past and present and, prospectively, the future too’.

Drawing on the work of Reinhart Koselleck, this paper assembles a conceptual framework for analysing the relationship between past, present and future premised upon two interconnected temporal categories: ‘spaces of experience’ and ‘horizons of expectation’. We seek to use this conceptual framework to elucidate *futures past* and *futures present* – namely the expectations and visions of the future held by past and present generations - and to illustrate how these are constituted by and inform accumulated, everyday experience. The framework highlights the ways in which each present (across time) was once an imagined future or, at least, influenced by expectations that ultimately were not realised. We are not concerned simply with comparing or contrasting past and present to reveal continuities and changes between ‘then’ and ‘now’. Rather, we transcend such unitary understandings of the passage of historical time, and proffer a different approach, which affords opportunities to think forward through the past in ways that cut across disciplinary conventions. The aim is to arrive at a more experimental ensemble of past and

present, which – in the context of our specific study<sup>1</sup> – will allow us to analyse how the future prospects of public parks and their place within cities are informed by their history, and to gain a deeper insight into the social life of these particular urban spaces across times. Following Bosworth (2001) and others, we see the value of grounding conceptual enquiry in the specificities of rich empirical research, and in particular social locales; indeed, we suggest that the particular conceptual framework elaborated here lends itself best to analysis of concrete institutions, social situations, spaces and contexts. Consequently, we focus on one Victorian park in particular – Woodhouse Moor, in Leeds – as a case study through which to interrogate linkages and lineages between past, present and possible futures.

At first blush, public parks might seem a rather eccentric object of criminological attention; nonetheless, a rich seam of enquiries within contemporary policing and the governance of public space revolves around the contested nature of such places and aspirations for them held by municipal authorities and city residents (Herbert and Beckett 2017). This is particularly evident in studies of the nature of local social order (Sampson 2009), styles of governance (Valverde 2014) and conflicts as outcomes of everyday interactions (Collins 2004). While criminologists have largely investigated issues of crime and disorder occurring *in* parks, what *of* parks themselves are of criminological interest? Historical studies demonstrate that eighteenth-century ideas of ‘police’ were much more encompassing than our own, including almost all aspects of maintaining good order and orderliness in the evolving city (Dubber and Valverde 2006; Dodsworth 2008). In the nineteenth century, the meaning of ‘police’ narrowed onto police institutions, yet its broad purpose was perpetuated under the label of ‘improvement’. The mission of urban improvement, like ‘police’, was encompassing: it included sanitation, drainage, lighting, inspection of ‘nuisances’, regulation of traffic, facilitation of ‘circulation’, and the surveillance of disorderly houses, street traders and the destitute (Joyce 2003; Otter 2008). The object of this governmental programme was to avert the ills of the under-governed early Victorian city – the dirt, disease, ignorance, irreligion, political subversion, pauperism and crime

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<sup>1</sup> What follows is informed by a research project supported by Arts and Humanities Research Council exploring the historic and contemporary experiences and expectations of Victorian parks in the city of Leeds. Woodhouse Moor is one of three case studies for which the project has collected a wealth of archival and contemporary data.

(Wilson 2007). The new police represented but one facet – albeit a highly important one, functionally and symbolically – of a much wider, long-standing framework of moral and social regulation. Hence, delving into the early Victorian era means a return to a time before the ‘problems’ of the city were disaggregated and differentiated from each other, and apportioned to separate academic disciplines and discrete policy domains. Police and parks were concerned equally (though in fundamentally different ways) with combatting urban dysfunction, and with aspirations to order and community. In this historical context, enquiry into green spaces, fresh air and social mixing – as much as crime and policing – illuminates how urban governors sought to regulate problems of social and moral order. Hence, in what follows, we transpose the concerns of contemporary criminology onto an age when health, morals, crime and deviance were intimately connected.

This paper provides an historical analysis of prospects for urban (dis)order within Woodhouse Moor in both the period of its acquisition as a municipal public park (the 1850s) and in the contemporary era. Such a contained and spatially-bounded case study allows us to examine the micro-interactions of everyday life alongside longer-term trends, continuities and transformations. In many cases, Victorian public parks have remained comparatively similar in appearance, shape and aesthetic across time, often defying changes wrought to the surrounding urban landscape. Parks are both enduring and precarious places in and on which wider forces of change are played out. They embody and express many of the deep ambiguities and contradictions within cities. They are, to a considerable degree, liminal spaces that are simultaneously liberating yet ordered; communal yet solitary. They are also public assets where municipal authorities have sought to address or ease wider urban problems – of public health, food production, crime, disorder and community cohesion.

Specifically, we seek to analyse the interconnections, across times, between expectations of urban futures – how historical subjects variously imagined the future of their city, and their visions of the park therein – and the realities and lived experiences of park-life. By linking experience and expectation, past and future, we aim to illuminate key moments of possibility in the past as well as prospects for order in urban parks of the future. The paper is organised in four parts. First, we set out the parameters of our conceptual framework, drawing upon Koselleck’s insights. Deploying this frame, in the second part, we explore the

acquisition and early days of Woodhouse Moor to interrogate futures past; the-hopes, fears and desires for a specific Victorian park at its inception. The third part reflects on the present-day expectations and experiences of public parks in the UK, before drawing out thematic resonances and dissonances with debates evidenced in the historical discussion. Finally, we address what insights this analysis offers into the 'uses of the past', in understanding both the present condition and future prospects of urban public spaces. We conclude by engaging with wider debates about the relationship between history and criminology and how we might take seriously the challenge of thinking forward through the past.

### **Experience and Expectation**

Following Koselleck (2004: 255-74), our analytic frame aims to illuminate and investigate the interconnectedness of 'spaces of experience' and 'horizons of expectation'; between the accumulated, everyday uses of and relations to parks, on the one hand, and the visions of what parks might become, on the other hand. Both categories have decidedly collective qualities, highlighting how meanings of historical passage arise inter-subjectively at the level of communities and social groups (Olsen 2012: 225-6). For Koselleck (2004: 157; Bouton 2016: 177-9), both are 'anthropological' or metahistorical categories, fundamental to a theory of history. Koselleck elaborates the inter-relation between experience and expectation by clarifying how the temporal dimensions of past and future figure in any particular present: 'experience is present past, whose events have been incorporated and can be remembered... expectation also takes place in the today; it is the future made present; it directs itself to the not-yet, to the non-experienced, to that which is to be revealed' (2004: 259). For Koselleck, there is an important spatial/temporal contrast between these two categories. The 'space of experience' is contained, contextualised and rendered concrete in particular places. Experience is not simply the here-and-now, but is constituted by heritage, custom and tradition. By contrast, the 'horizon of expectation' imbues a more decidedly temporal dimension. Expectations are not grounded and tangible like experiences, and hence they are free to wash across spatial parameters. There is also a rich internal diversity to expectation: 'Hope and fear, wishes and desires, cares and rational analysis, receptive display and curiosity: all enter into expectation and constitute it'. Hence,

expectation and experience 'resemble, as historical categories, those of time and space' (2004: 257). Things can be (and often are) experienced differently from what was expected; equally, time can change the stock of experience, both as new experiences are collected, and as shifting temporal horizons provide new vantage points for reflection. Expectation and experience are fundamentally different: 'past and future never collide, or just as little as an expectation in its entirety can be deduced from experience... the presence of the past is distinct from the presence of the future' (2004: 260). Nevertheless, they are intrinsically interconnected and mutually conditioned, and their interaction is central to their utility for Koselleck's theory of history: 'It is the tension between experience and expectation which, in ever-changing patterns, brings about new resolutions and through this generates historical time' (2004: 260). In fundamental ways, therefore, our sense of historical time is generated through the tensions between everyday experience and expectation (Pickering 2004).

Adapting these analytic categories, we can explore and make sense of the connections between the past, present and future of public parks within cities. In so doing, our purpose differs somewhat from that of Koselleck. For us, 'experience' and 'expectation' are not generalised, but always related specifically to the park. Hence, we are concerned with the accumulated past and envisioned future *of* something in particular. Nonetheless, Koselleck's conceptual framework appears well-suited to our enquiry, focused as it is on a specific location which evinces relative spatial stability over time. By directly linking temporal change within specified spatial relations, we are attentive to the fact that time is irrecoverably bound up with the spatial constitution of society and *vice versa*. Thus relations to time and space can be more readily captured in ways that alert us to how changes in our relations to either one impact upon our relations to the other.

The broad spatial continuity provided by Woodhouse Moor produces an apt measure of equivalence regarding past and present observations of and reflections upon the park itself. This allows us to juxtapose experiences and expectations of the Moor across times, and to discern connections between them. Unsurprisingly, the Moor has been modified and redesigned over time, and its relation to the surrounding city has altered. Nevertheless, there is sufficient continuity in terms of the size and shape of the park, as well as in its ownership, governance, accessibility and use, to serve as the foundation for folding insights



drawn from one historical context (the Victorian era) onto those gleaned from another (the present-day). The conceptual frame prompts us to ask the following inter-related questions: how have urban inhabitants, across times, used and related to a particular urban space in their everyday lives? How have they envisioned the future of this space? Have stabilities in accumulated everyday experience constrained or frustrated more mutable designs and aspirations for re-imagining this urban space? Or conversely, have shifting expectations been realised, and themselves transformed everyday experience?

This frame draws into consideration future hopes and aspirations as well as fears and doubts that prevail at a given time and place. It acknowledges the importance of emotions as well as rational calculation in prospective visions. Given that, throughout history, concerns about security and order fluctuate between concrete harms and various (utopian or dystopian) societal prophecies that pervade politics, literature and the media, this frame promises to enrich the study of 'everyday' security in its affective, spatial and temporal dimensions (Crawford and Hutchinson 2016). It foregrounds the ways in which the temporal facets of past and future are related in any particular present, and thus facilitates the ambition of 'thinking forward through the past'. Consequently, it provides an opening for histories of the future that expand our knowledge of past and present hopes, dreams, fears and nightmares, and the experiences that constitute and inform them.

### **Victorian Perspectives**

In this section, we use the conceptual frame elaborated above to analyse Woodhouse Moor and perceived problems of urban order in the mid-nineteenth century. We illustrate the spaces of experience and horizons of expectation that structured relations to the Moor at this time, as evidenced in municipal archives and local newspapers.<sup>2</sup> The period examined comprises the years surrounding the acquisition of the Moor, as a public park, by the Leeds Corporation in 1857. These years were selected in a deliberate attempt to glean contemporary comment which directly illuminated (usually implicit) horizons of expectation.

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<sup>2</sup> Digitised newspaper articles were selected by searching for the (exact) phrase 'Woodhouse Moor' in newspapers published in Leeds from January 1854 to December 1859 (inclusive). This was conducted via the British Newspaper Archive (<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>), which contains digitised versions of all major newspapers published in Leeds at this time.

This assumes that the acquisition of the park prompts explicit claims regarding prospects for its future and that of the surrounding city.

The 'park movement' took hold in England in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, as contemporaries came increasingly to advocate and experiment with open-access parks (provided by a variety of means) as an antidote to the menacing social problems of the expanding city (Conway 1991). In Leeds, the acquisition of Woodhouse Moor occurred against the backdrop of rapid urbanisation, as the borough population more than doubled from 83,943 in 1821 to 207,165 in 1861 (Morgan 1980: 48). The pace of urban development forced upon the public conscience a raft of social problems – disease, pauperism, ignorance, irreligion, crime – which collectively constituted the 'condition of England question' (Briggs 1965; Engels 2009). Against this backdrop, early Victorian urban elites were centrally preoccupied with civilising the urban environment and reconnecting social ties with the labouring classes. Specifically, positive visions of the future city at this time disclosed a yearning for **order** and **community**. Anxieties about disorder loomed large in contemporary understandings of the crime 'problem' (Gatrell 1990: 254-7); they also informed the mission of the 'new' police to bring discipline and decorum to urban popular culture (Storch 1976). Yet, as detailed above, this search for order extended far beyond the police to the broader agenda of urban 'improvement'. In parallel, contemporaries hoped to establish 'community' in the city, not in the sense of intimate, face-to-face urban villages, but of a single, unified community of values, norms and interests (see Harrison 1961; Dennis and Daniels 1981). While the transition to more favourable social conditions in the 1850s allowed greater space for more contented, appreciative discourses of the city (as an engine of civilisation and commercial advancement), order and community remained core components of the idealised Victorian city of the future. In this context, municipal corporations across England started to acquire green spaces and lay them out as public parks, with town councillors hopeful that parks would provide a means of bettering the physical and moral condition of city-dwellers.

By the point of acquisition, the space of experience which informed how inhabitants related to Woodhouse Moor was marked by two features. Firstly, the Moor was understood as a freely accessible green space: accumulated experience of using the Moor – for recreation, public meetings and other purposes – was complemented by a sense of customary right of

access, entrenched in popular memory, which the public was said to have enjoyed since 'time immemorial'.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, relations to the Moor were marked by the experience of encroachment upon the space itself. Over time, several small pieces of land had been approved for development by the lords of the manor (the principal proprietors of the Moor). This process, alongside more opportunistic encroachments, had led to the appearance on the Moor of rubbish dumps, walls, clothes lines, pig sties, cow houses, and even dwellings, such that, by the 1850s, the people of Leeds could testify to the loss of a small but notable portion of green space.<sup>4</sup> Hence, by mid-century, the people's relation to the Moor was conflicted, caught between a cherished customary right of access and a sense of gradual erosion of the space itself. Indeed, the immediate spur to acquire the Moor as a public park came in response to encroachments upon it. Acquisition was first mooted in 1854,<sup>5</sup> yet the movement gathered pace the following year, after it emerged that the lords of the manor were considering giving over a large section of the land to a military encampment.<sup>6</sup> Some months later, the Town Council resolved to purchase the Moor. Following intricate debates about how the purchase should be funded, the Council ultimately completed the purchase agreement in April 1857, and thereafter took control of its first public park.

### ***Horizons of Expectation: Vitality and Community***

Those advocating purchase of the Moor stressed its expected public health benefits as their principal theme. The official discourse of public health at this time was dominated by a water-borne theory of disease - championed in the 1840s by Edwin Chadwick and exemplified in the pioneering work of John Snow – which prescribed a pipes-and-drains approach to vitalisation (Hamlin 1998). Yet, outside of central government, the air-borne theory of disease – which advocated ventilation – obtained much purchase on the Victorian imagination. It was via this model that parks would serve as an instrument of public health (Hickman 2013). At the first meeting to discuss acquisition, Edward Baines (a leading liberal figure in the city) referred to the Woodhouse Moor as 'the lungs of the town', and it soon

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<sup>3</sup> *Leeds Times* (hereafter LT) 28 October 1854, p.3.

<sup>4</sup> *Leeds Intelligencer* (hereafter LI) 19 April 1856, p.8; LT 28 October 1854, p.3.

<sup>5</sup> LT 28 Oct 1854, p.3; LI 28 Oct 1854, pp.9-10.

<sup>6</sup> LI 16 Jun 1855, p.5; *Leeds Mercury* (hereafter LM) 23 June 1855, p.5.

became known as ‘the lungs of Leeds’.<sup>7</sup> Witnessing the great pace of urbanisation, and without any other major green spaces near the city centre, contemporaries hoped that acquiring the Moor would preserve vital channels of fresh air through the developed city of the future. An editorial in the *Leeds Mercury* explained how the Moor ‘acts as a ventilator of the town, and should it be covered with buildings, it would be entirely lost for this purpose’.<sup>8</sup> Given the powerful moral connotations of health and vitality, some commentators elaborated striking expectations of how the health-giving function of the public park would transform the urban populace. This was best illustrated by an editorial published in the radical *Leeds Times*. Setting acquisition of the Moor in terms of public health (‘sanitary reform’), the newspaper noted:

‘Thoughtful men believe... that the best and most effective method of bringing about a moral and intellectual millennium is to improve and ameliorate in every possible respect the material interests of the people. Provide them means of rational recreation, such as public gardens and promenades, where they may be able, after ten or more hours’ work in a stifling atmosphere, to breathe Heaven’s genial, bracing, unadulterated air... and there would be little doubt as to the result upon their higher faculties.’<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the Moor’s health-giving potential promised not only to counter disease, but even to elevate the minds and morals of the urban working classes.

Besides supplying pure air, contemporaries hoped the Moor would contribute to civilising the urban populace through social mixing. By providing a normatively ordered space in which the different social classes could congregate, the park was accorded a key place in contemporary aspirations to ‘community’. It offered the prospect of supposedly estranged groups in urban society observing each other, becoming familiar once again, and thereby allowing the better example of the respectable middle class to become instilled in those of lesser social standing. Though less prominent than health benefits, the expected gains of social mixing were clearly articulated, particularly in discussion of Sunday afternoon

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<sup>7</sup> LI 28 October 1854, p.9.

<sup>8</sup> LM 18 August 1855, p.4.

<sup>9</sup> LT 28 October 1854, p.5.

concerts on the Moor. Again, the radical *Leeds Times* was most enthusiastic about the expected harmonisation of social relations through social mixing on the Moor:

‘By this intercommunion and intermingling of classes, much mutual benefit and advantage to all parties will be attained; the rich and the very poor will begin to understand each other, and a great stride in the political civilisation will be the result.’<sup>10</sup>

Others feared that restrictive governance might turn the park into a socially exclusive enclave of the urban elite. Thus, in 1858, one of those claiming common rights on the Moor<sup>11</sup> expressed the fear that, if the Council obtained unencumbered rights over the park, it would become the playground of the city’s well-to-do inhabitants:

‘the probability is that it will eventually become a grand park for the members of the Corporation, their families, and friends; and tickets will be issued by them to such of their constituents as may deserve their favour. But some will say they are bound to keep open the Moor. Yes, they are, ***but under such regulations as they may determine.***’<sup>12</sup>

Whether imagined hopefully or fearfully, future expectations of Woodhouse Moor in the 1850s were intimately connected with its potential to promote social mixing, and thus to reforge a lost sense of ‘community’ in urban society.

### ***Unlocking the Future: The Temporality of Improvement***

While the benefits to public health and social order were widely recognised in local civic discourse, they were inflected temporally in subtly different ways, with implications for how the park was to be governed. For the most vocal commentators, the park had first to be improved in order fully to realise its public benefits: the park’s function in vitalising and stabilising urban society would not emerge organically, but had to be unlocked through purposeful action. In 1857, Joseph Major argued that poor upkeep of the Moor was

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<sup>10</sup> LT 14 June 1856, p.2.

<sup>11</sup> Some inhabitants claiming rights of pasture sought upon acquisition to obtain compensation from the Council for loss of their rights. They received stinging criticism in the press, which was generally supportive of making the Moor into a public park: see LM 1 April 1858, p.3; LM 3 April 1858, p.4.

<sup>12</sup> LT 10 April 1858, p.5, original emphasis.

detering visitors, and thus limiting its potential benefit. He proposed dividing the Moor into three distinct zones, each tailored to suit different leisure activities (sports, walks and physical exercise), as well as draining and improving the land itself. In this way, he suggested, the Moor could be made 'generally useful and inviting to all classes', thus maximising its potential as a site of 'healthful recreations'.<sup>13</sup> His liberal-utilitarian scheme was geared towards maximising the efficiency and amenity of urban public space through deliberate design and regulation. His was a vision of an improved park – that is, a park drained, crafted, landscaped, (partly) built upon, zoned, regulated and superintended – which would itself serve as a means of improving the urban populace.

Set against this was an alternative, more marginal view of the park and its future – a broadly tory-preservationist view, which held that the Moor was essentially a public good, and needed no improvement to realise its benefits. The *Leeds Intelligencer* was the principal outlet for this sentiment. A leader article branded Major's plan 'very undesirable', defending the facility the Moor afforded 'town-pent inhabitants' to enjoy 'a free and unmolested range at will'. Major's proposed partition of the Moor, it argued, would replace the 'present freedom' of the place with a strict regime of regulation: 'a policeman or a park-keeper must meet one at every turn, to say "You must not go here", or "You must not go there"; "You must not do this", or "You must not do that"'.<sup>14</sup> According to this preservationist view, the Council should not design, regulate or otherwise improve the Moor, but simply keep it open, rugged and unadorned, as a loosely-regulated playground of the people. Such contributors shared with the liberal improvers a sense of the importance of parks to urban futures, in terms of public health and urban community, yet they advanced a temporally distinct vision of the park and its future. From their perspective, the future city did not have to be unlocked, for it did not sit on a distant 'horizon of expectation'. Rather, it was seamlessly connected to past and present in the continuous stream of time, much like the temporal imagination which Koselleck (2004: 264-7) discerned in the pre-modern era.

The governance of the park in practice betrays the triumph of the liberal-utilitarian agenda. Before long, use of the Moor was subject to bespoke regulation. Firstly, shortly after acquisition, the Watch Committee resolved to site a new police station on its north-eastern

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<sup>13</sup> LT 13 June 1857, p.6; LI 13 June 1857, p.9.

<sup>14</sup> LI 13 June 1857, p.5.

corner (see Image 1). The Repairs Committee (then responsible for parks governance) gave the station sergeant broad instructions, 'to inspect and take care of Woodhouse Moor, reporting all nuisances to this Committee.'<sup>15</sup> As the *Leeds Intelligencer* had predicted, the desire to improve the Moor led directly to heightened surveillance over park users. Secondly, there was a drive to regulate and even suppress particular, problematic uses of the Moor. After several pedestrians complained of sustaining injury when passing by games of 'knor and spell',<sup>16</sup> the Repairs Committee restricted play to a small section of the Moor, and called upon the police to enforce this regulation.<sup>17</sup> The restriction was written into the town's byelaws in 1863, and by 1867 the game was prohibited entirely.<sup>18</sup> Finally, by 1859, work was underway to drain the Moor, and the following year the Borough Surveyor was instructed 'to level and otherwise put Woodhouse Moor into good order'.<sup>19</sup> These initiatives reflected the ascendancy of the liberal-utilitarian commitment to purposeful regulation – at least in civic discourse and municipal government – over the tory-preservationist programme of permitting the people to roam at liberty through their historic urban commons.<sup>20</sup> Inevitably, the triumph of improvement was a much more protracted process than this, and one repeatedly frustrated by the recurrence of old impediments to good order: more than twenty years after acquisition, interested observers still complained of encroachments on the park (one complained it had become, 'a mere depot for road sweepings'), and of insufficient Council investment in improving the landscape.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, the view gradually took hold that the Moor had to be regulated and improved to unlock its own reforming potential, and to draw the mid-Victorian city into a healthful and cohesive future of its own choosing.

[IMAGE 1 HERE]

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<sup>15</sup> WYAS, LLC16/1/2, 11 December 1857.

<sup>16</sup> A popular bat-and-ball game, played in the West Riding of Yorkshire, the object was to hit the 'knor' (a small ball) as far as possible with a stick (the 'spell'); see: <http://woodhousemooronline.com/?p=1352>

<sup>17</sup> West Yorkshire Archives Service (hereafter WYAS), LLC16/1/2, 26 May 1859; LM 28 May 1859, p.5. See also LM 11 August 1859, p.3

<sup>18</sup> Leeds Central Library, L35L L517, 1867, p.4

<sup>19</sup> WYAS, LLC16/1/2, 26 August 1859; 29 April 1860.

<sup>20</sup> The *Leeds Mercury* supported what it saw as a judicious regulation of public space, 'in the protection of the Moor for the general good': 11 August 1859, p.3.

<sup>21</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 23 July 1881, p.7.

This survey of the origins of Woodhouse Moor reveals its significance to contemporary hopes and fears for the future of the city. This horizon of expectation informed the early governance of the park – its regulation, policing, drainage and broader improvement – to the detriment of alternative, preservationist visions of the future park and city. And yet, despite attempts to regulate park-life, there are continuities in the space of experience, particularly in the recurrent problem of encroachment upon the Moor. The twin concepts of experience and expectation thus provide a valuable frame for understanding the genesis of a particular project of social ordering and urban governance at a specific historical moment. By extending the analysis into the contemporary era, the next section demonstrates the value of this conceptual frame for understanding such projects *across* times, revealing how the social life and governance of public parks today both reproduces and diverges from this history. We search not simply for the ‘continuity’ and ‘change’ of more familiar historical studies through time, but additionally for resonances and dissonances between two distinct times, united by a common form of urban space.

### **Contemporary Expectations and Experiences of Urban Parks**

This section places analysis of the contemporary urban park alongside that of its Victorian origins outlined above. Firstly, we sketch the changed context of public parks today. Thereafter, we reflect upon contemporary *expectations* for the future of urban parks, before turning to how these expectations fare against accumulated *experience*, with a particular focus on Woodhouse Moor.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, the future prospects for public parks were bleak. Greenhalgh and Worpole describe the 1970s onwards as a period when local authorities were ‘managing the decline of the Victorian park model’ (1995: 65), including the demise of the park keeper (Lambert 2005) and loss of historic park features. Victorian parks became less attractive, less safe and less fit for purpose, such that many were seen as ‘icons of urban decay’ (Lambert 2015: 2); an image far removed from their former status as emblems of Victorian ‘civic pride’ (Conway and Lambert 1993). By the millennium, the condition of urban parks had reached its nadir (Urban Parks Forum 2001), as low visitor numbers, closed



facilities and problems of crime and anti-social behaviour put in question their rationale and future prospects. However, the ensuing decade saw a renaissance in (historic) urban parks, underpinned in part by the introduction of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). For some, this offered a hopeful vision of the future of parks in the twenty-first century city, as places that 'will become central to the whole urban planning process' constituting a core part of the city's 'metabolism'; as vital as it's 'roads, rail lines or water pipes' (Worpole 2012: 7).

Since the global banking crisis and the subsequent fiscal austerity programme, however, the future prospects of public parks have again been jeopardised. The Local Government Association's 'graph of doom', first published in 2012 by Barnet Council, graphically demonstrated that, if spending projections are accurate and if councils statutory responsibilities remain the same, by 2020 'statutory services and social care costs will swallow up most local council spending leaving very little for other services to the community such as libraries, parks and leisure centres'.<sup>22</sup> These fears were crystallised in two reports into the *State of UK Public Parks* by the HLF published in 2014 and 2016. The 2016 report found that 92% of park managers have experienced reductions in park budgets in the past three years or more and 95% expect their budgets will continue to fall over the next three years. Lambert writes, 'managers can see ... that it is only a matter of time before the toilets are closed, the swimming pool drained, the flower beds grassed over... they know what the future holds' (2016: 2). In an attempt to manage this crisis, over half of local authorities are considering either selling parks or transferring their management to others (HLF 2016: 7, 14).

Woodhouse Moor, while subject to the same broad national pressures, has also experienced its own changing place within the wider urban frame. It is the second most visited park in Leeds (Leeds City Council 2009: 59).<sup>23</sup> To its southern borders sit two large universities and a number of further education and sixth-form colleges (with a total student population of over 65,000). Consequently, park-life on the Moor is now strongly influenced by fluctuations across the student calendar. According to the 2011 Census, students account for over half of the residential population of the surrounding areas. These comprise varied neighbourhoods, including Burley and Hyde Park, bristling with an eclectic mixture of

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.gmcvo.org.uk/graph-doom-and-changing-role-local-government>

<sup>23</sup> There are 69 parks in Leeds.

Victorian town houses, back-to-back terraces and modern public housing. The vicinity has a traditionally high burglary rate, drug-dealing and pockets of acute deprivation. To the north, a line of Victorian villas stretches up to the relatively affluent area of Headingley. Hence, as a site of social interaction, the park reflects the hyper-diversity of contemporary cities and evokes the differing demands and claims that constitute contested social order in and through everyday encounters and events.

### ***Horizons of Expectation: Variegation and Narrowing***

The optimistic, Victorian vision of the improved and improving public park has lost much of its lustre, while the park's social purpose is now articulated more hesitantly. The Victorian confidence of acquiring parks in perpetuity contrasts with today's future prospect of parks as 'assets' - or under-exploited commodities, in the vernacular of the market - that might be sold off or leased for commercial use. Greenhalgh and Worpole note: 'In the Victorian era, parks were at the forefront of urban development; today they are often an after-thought, at the bottom of the political agenda' (1995: 3). For some, the legacy of public parks as 'Arcadias for all' (Lasdun 1991: 158) has waned almost to the point of ruin (Lambert 2016). Nevertheless, parks are now likely to be tasked to do more for their surrounding populations and visitors with fewer resources, as councils consider and experiment with diverse modes of management which may include income generation plans. A host of contemporary issues coalesce to highlight uncertainty about how the park confronts the present-day challenges of constituting a genuinely public space, which is welcoming of people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, and which enables them to co-mingle confidently in a harmoniously organised, safe and convivial environment.

In place of the confident and broadly singular vision of the park as a crucible for shaping the city's future through public improvement, a more variegated yet narrower set of expectations now abound. Expectations tend to be framed in the negative as a fear of loss: loss of specific (traditional) features due to poor upkeep and ill-repair; loss of sociability due to crime and fear of crime; loss of accessibility due to competing demands; or even a loss of the park altogether (or at least parts of it). While wholesale loss is unlikely in the short-term, privatisation and 'commercialisation' of public space remain ever-present threats to the

spatial integrity of parks (Minton 2009). On Woodhouse Moor, local residents articulate concerns over the fragmentation of the park which has seen one slice of the park - Cinder Moor – turned periodically into an over-flow car park and recreation ground site for funfairs and circuses.

A recurring fear is that as poorly kept, unloved and little used public spaces, parks can become ‘bleak vacuums between buildings’ (Jacobs 1961: 90) that imply waste and missed opportunities - casting unwelcoming shadows that people find uninviting. Hence, local expectations largely focus on recapturing a ‘sense of community’ in the face of countervailing forces of encroachment and a desire to rekindle a perceived Victorian ‘golden age’. This sense of community is deeply rooted in the past and implicated with the weight of history. Vocal members of the influential local ‘Friends of Woodhouse Moor’ group, for instance, at times articulate a selective interpretation of the park’s heritage in which certain proposals for change are countered as offending its Victorian essence and design.

Nonetheless, there are also a host of other prospective expectations for the park as an environmental asset that fosters health and well-being; via, for example, the weekly parkrun which attracts an average of over 270 runners per week.<sup>24</sup> The public health benefits of the Moor remain a principal theme of the *Leeds Parks and Green Space Strategy*, which recognises that: ‘Parks and green space help counter pollution that make cities unbearable and unsustainable’ and ‘serve as the green “lungs” for our city’ (Leeds City Council 2009: 36). This echoes the Victorian rationale of the Moor as an urban ‘ventilator’. Yet, today’s health benefits are largely understood and articulated in relation to the problems of obesity, sedentary lifestyles and mental ill-health. There are also less grandiose expectations that the Moor might foster social cohesion through convivial comingling of the diverse local populations. To this end, a ‘Unity Day’ was established in the park in the immediate aftermath of rioting in the mid-1990s,<sup>25</sup> as an annual event to bring together the diverse communities in celebration. The event is organised by local volunteers as an expression of voluntary association.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.parkrun.org.uk/woodhousemoor/>

<sup>25</sup> In 1995, a local pub was burnt down by disaffected youths after an evening of disorder.

<sup>26</sup> Hyde Park Unity Day is a ‘not for profit’ voluntary association – see <http://www.unityday.org.uk/>.

Expectations have narrowed to the extent that the future is frequently framed in terms of the next five to ten years rather than generations to come and largely in terms of preserving the past rather than reimagining the future. This preservationist perspective – most vocally articulated by the ‘Friends of Woodhouse Moor’ - is principally oriented to preventing certain forms of new development from occurring. In this though, the locus of preservation has shifted from an immemorial past of open and free usage to an idealised image of the Victorian manicured, designed and orderly park; one that is circumspectly challenged by the lived realities of the time. Here, there is an apparent shift in the temporality of preservation, from a sense of unbroken continuity from past to present that was articulated by the Victorian preservationists – who simply wanted things left as they (supposedly) always had been – to the projected future horizon preferred by today’s preservationists, that is forged in an imagined past and funded as a ‘heritage project’.

### ***Spaces of Experience***

These expectations are in large part shaped by experiences of ‘decline’ and perceived ‘encroachment’, facilitated or permitted by the city council, in which it is believed that local interests have been superseded by city-wide needs. Yet these tensions are not in fact new. The location of Woodhouse Moor, as the closest major park to the city centre, presents a number of opportunities for its wider utilisation within urban government. Often, these inform local anxieties concerning various proposed encroachments on the space. Indeed, the ‘Friends’ group was established in part as a response to a proposal to introduce a pay-and-display car park on part of the Moor intended to serve users of the city centre and the universities.<sup>27</sup> There are also fears that the Moor is being used inappropriately by the authorities as a ‘magnet’ to attract people and activities that are deemed problematic in the city centre, including street drinkers, rough sleepers, BMX-freestylers and skate-boarders. Debates surrounding the location of a skatepark on the Moor highlight one such example of the contemporary local versus city strains over ‘residual dumping’ and disorder. In 2003, the council spent £240,000 upgrading the skatepark, which according to a newspaper article was intended to ‘coax skaters away from the city centre’,<sup>28</sup> given the problems they were

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<sup>27</sup> Meeting with Friends of Woodhouse Moor, 29 January 2016.

<sup>28</sup> <http://woodhousemooronline.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/BBC-skatepark-article-May-2003.pdf>

perceived to be creating by skating beside and over major central landmarks and tourist attractions, such as the Civic Hall in Millennium Square, where there is a (little enforced) byelaw forbidding this activity.<sup>29</sup> The Moor subsequently attracted BMX bikers and skateboarders nationwide, especially as the site for an annual memorial to a biker who had died in a work-related accident. For several years, most notably between 2011 and 2013, the annual 'King for a Day' memorial Jam in July<sup>30</sup> attracted hundreds of revellers and resulted in fires on the park providing a spectacle for the bikers to jump (see Image 2). The ensuing disorderliness and damage, largely tolerated by the authorities, were much lamented and resented by many local residents.

[IMAGE 2 HERE]

A further prominent example of the recurrent experience of encroachment relates to debates over how the city authorities have sought to manage street drinking. In 2006, a Designated Public Places Order (DPPO) between the city centre and Headingley was implemented in an effort to reduce street drinking and related anti-social behaviour. Woodhouse Moor, however, was proposed as a 'wet' space to contain the fallout from this strategy. At the council's Inner North West Area Committee meeting on 21 September 2006, it was reported that:

'Once the proposed DPPO is in place, the Moor may well attract street drinkers who have been displaced. The view of the Neighbourhood Policing Team is that the Moor is large enough for street drinkers to not cause a nuisance and regular patrols to the area would keep an eye on the situation.' (Leeds City Council 2006: 26)

The preference for 'a tolerance zone in a park or other location' was welcomed by street drinkers, according to a consultation carried out by a local charity at the time. However, following strong opposition by local interests, the DPPO was extended in 2009 to include the Moor. Fears of the park as disorderly and unsafe resonated throughout these deliberations, as they have done with regard to long-running debates about whether the Moor should

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/ban-the-boards-1-2091614>

<sup>30</sup> See: <http://bmxunion.com/daily/king-for-a-day-2012/>

remain unlit after dark. Whereas some residents groups are strongly opposed to electric lighting as offending the Victorian ambience of the park – despite the fact that the park had been gas lit at times in the past – there have been periodic calls for park lighting given its unsafe reputation, particularly from students.

The volume of student use of the park has generated, among long-term residents, fears of dominance as well as debates about appropriate use, behaviour and decorum. This has been expressed most clearly in conflicts over barbequing, drinking and late-night parties. In the summers of 2008 and 2009, the use of the park for barbeques became a particular topic of dispute. Responding to the popularity of barbequing, yet noting some of its negative side effects, the council proposed to trial operation of a designated barbeque area. This proposal was strongly opposed by numerous different local residents' groups on the grounds that existing byelaws forbade fires and the extensive use of barbeques by students would impact negatively on local residents' enjoyment of the park.<sup>31</sup> Local councillors took differing positions. Councillor Brett, for instance, countering the preservationist perspective, argued openly through a letter to the *Yorkshire Evening Post* that: 'A park must be for all who live nearby to use and that sometimes means dealing with change including new leisure activities'.<sup>32</sup> Conversely, at a public scrutiny meeting in 2009, Councillor Lyons evoked fears of contamination to other Victorian and Edwardian parks in the city:

'Why should students stop other people from using the park? If we're talking about putting a designated area in one park, the fear is that one will also be put at Roundhay, Morley and Temple Newsam [other historic parks in Leeds]. They'll say what's good enough at Woodhouse is good enough for the rest of the city.'

Like other everyday debates about the prospects for order on the park, this highlights the interconnected nature of contemporary horizons of expectations and spaces of experience about what the park constitutes, appropriate uses of the park and who parks are for. Moreover, recurrent debates about zoning the Moor to accommodate mutually incompatible leisure activities suggest resonances across times, which connect past, present and future.

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/your-say/why-council-chief-got-it-wrong-on-barbecues-1-2229065>

<sup>32</sup> <http://woodhousemooronline.com/category/barbeque-consultation/>

## **Koselleck Revisited**

The above explorations invite reflection on our use and partial repurposing of the analytic frame provided by Koselleck to afford innovative means of structuring historical analyses of a particular urban space across times. Our study demonstrates the utility of Koselleck's conceptual formulation of experience and expectation. In particular, the close correspondence of historic and contemporary incidents of 'encroachment' upon Woodhouse Moor accords with the deep, spatial and structural character of experience. The physical location of the Moor on the periphery of the city centre tends to reproduce the same sorts of conflicts over use across times, from the erection of pig sties in the early Victorian years, to the 'dumping' of urban social problems on the park today. Such persistent threats to the integrity of the space – tallied with its significance in popular memory, past and present, as a freely accessible recreation ground – have produced characteristically defensive movements to preserve the 'traditional' character of the Moor, however differently that is conceived in each case and in quite different circumstances. The sedimented, cumulative composition of experience through time, suggested by Koselleck, helps to explain the endurance of particular forms of relation to Woodhouse Moor across much-changed temporal contexts. Furthermore, the terms of Koselleck's framework help us to elicit subtle, yet profound, shifts in thinking about the park's future; the emergent unification of horizons of expectation in the triumph of mid-Victorian improvement, as contrasted with the fragmentation of expectations in contemporary parks policy and governance.

Equally though, our study suggests some refinements to aspects of Koselleck's framing, particularly the contrast between the solidity of experience and the malleability of expectation. The correspondence of particular expectations of Woodhouse Moor between the mid-Victorian and the contemporary era – related to health, social mixing, civility and urban order – suggest a stronger logic to the formation of expectations than Koselleck's formulation implies. The resonance between past and present expectations suggests the possibility that future visions may be 'built in' to the design of a specific social space or setting. The improvement of Woodhouse Moor from the 1850s – the drainage of land, laying of footpaths, planting of trees, etc., in pursuit of its vitalising potential – fashioned a

space which thereafter presented itself as a space of social well-being to successive generations of park governors. The intimate connection between past and present futures indicates that expectation is not the purely temporal aspect of cognition which Koselleck suggests, but rather that it too (like experience) can become 'spatialised' – in this case through the engineering of urban space and through its incorporation into processes of local government. This inscription of expectation in the fabric of the park – combined with the apparent tendency of park governors to play upon its Victorian heritage – goes some way toward explaining the stubbornness with which a specific, prospective vision of the public park, formulated in the mid-Victorian years, continues to resonate and hold sway in a much-altered contemporary context. Thus, future visions of the park remain intimately bound to its past, in ways which depart from Koselleck's broader, historical argument that expectation was cut adrift from experience in the passage to modernity.

Thus modified, Koselleck's conceptualisation of experience-expectation affords a useful means of structuring analysis of particular social spaces and settings across times. Its particular, perhaps unique, value resides in providing a theoretical basis upon which to ground thinking about the differential tendencies in social life to continuity, persistence and preservation as well as to change, transformation and adaptation. By highlighting how particular ways of imagining the future can be encoded into the social landscape, we have sought to expose a potentially productive avenue for research into the temporality of a wide range of social phenomena. Beyond research on public parks, such a conceptual frame might equally be applied to other fields of enquiry which evince similar degrees of structural or physical continuity - be they spatial, institutional or demographic - over time, including possibly other types of contested urban space, persistent neighbourhoods or institutions of criminal justice organised in characteristic ways. Such enquiry has the potential to enrich the historical imagination and enable scholars to 'think forward through the past' in nuanced ways.

## **Conclusion**

While historians work to understand the past retrospectively and criminologists (as well as social scientists in general) seek to interpret the present to shape the future, all tend to privilege experience over expectation. As such, they risk obscuring the rich and plural



temporal dynamics of social life. As Carr (1987: 198) contends; 'the subject-matter of history is in an important sense not fact but possibility, not past but future; or more precisely past possibilities and prospects, past conceptions of the future: futures past'. An historically-informed criminology might productively study those present-day prospects which draw upon the past as they project to the future. For, as we have sought to show, past experiences and visions can 'impose themselves on the present, restricting choices and options' (Adam 2010: 368). They may permeate and shape future expectations, such that we fail to see beyond them in any present moment. This 'weight' of dead generations 'transmitted from the past' - to paraphrase Marx (2008) - is acutely heavy with regard to the legacy of past expectations that attend to Victorian parks. As Balmori notes: 'Part of the current problem lies with the power of the image invoked by the park of the past: that of the nineteenth century picturesque park... it is difficult to imagine any other images but these for a park' (1993: 39).

The pairing of spaces of experience with horizons of expectation provides a promising framework for 'situated histories', where the object is to straddle past, present and future in the study of specific spaces, institutions or communities, which evince structural continuity and/or persistence through time. The framework harnessed here presents an opportunity to tack between familiar modes of historical enquiry - of juxtaposition and linear explanation - where history figures variously as a capricious dance of possibility or as an iron cage of path-dependence. It reaches beyond a simple dialogue or comparison of 'past' and 'present/future', as discrete realms. Instead, working from a single continuity running through time, this paper and our wider research project from which it has sprung, collectively aim to assemble aspects of the social life of a particular urban public space across times and interrogate them both (historically) on their own terms and (trans-historically) alongside one another. By folding past experiences and expectations in with present experiences and future expectations, we hope to provide a domain for a more involved (and involving) criminological engagement with past, present and future in and through particular local contexts. This framework offers a mode of analysis across times with sufficient theoretical underpinning to advance more powerful historical claims than the similarities and differences typically elicited by juxtaposition of past and present. This situated histories approach enables us to think about the relationship between futures past

and futures present and the extent to which a Victorian heritage ‘continue[s] to dominate modern approaches to city life some two hundred years on’ (Hunt 2004: 6). Our park case study suggests a nuanced picture of temporal relations: some futures past are deeply encoded, yet profound shifts in our future horizons remain in process. The past does indeed bear heavily upon the present in ways that prospectively shape futures, yet without excluding the immanent potential for transformation, change and differing prospects.

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<http://gtr.rcuk.ac.uk/projects?ref=AH/N001788/1> and the project’s own website:

<https://leedsparksproject.wordpress.com/>

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