

Exhibitions and town planning culture: An Australian perspective

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Abstract:

This paper provides a preliminary foray into the historical role of planning exhibitions in the development of modern town planning culture drawing on the Australian experience. While the catalytic role of major expositions on urban society has been acknowledged in the literature, the staging, evolution and meanings attached to purpose-built planning exhibitions at a global scale have made only modest incursions into planning history. Such events provide a useful aesthetic and historical lens through which to understand how the objectives of planning have evolved through communication to the wider community. Our objective is to frame the role of exhibitions in different time periods through the first half of the twentieth century with reference to the Australian planning. Exhibitions in the 1910s were often attached to conferences and helped codify the aims, icons and progress of the planning movement as an eclectic, largely spatial discipline. The 1940s were arguably the golden era for planning exhibitions used to communicate and crystallize a mature and universal canon of modernist planning ideals and values as part of the post-war reconstruction effort. We conclude with reflections on a research agenda for the historiographical role of the planning exhibition.

Keywords: *Planning exhibitions, planning culture, twentieth century, Australia.*

Introduction

The 'exhibitionary complex' in history has been a critical visual and public instrument in codifying both professional ideologies and community understanding of new social phenomena (Bennett, 1988). Exhibitions were also an integral vehicle for the development of town planning culture through the twentieth century. The planning literature is sprinkled with references to international, national, and local events in many countries. Some celebrated events have helped to define the historical narrative of the modern planning movement in western culture. Witness, for example, the impact of icon events such as the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago in advancing the cause of civic design and the Conference and Exhibition of

the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in London in 1910 in internationalising the planning cause.

While there are numerous passing mentions in the planning history literature to exhibitions from the late nineteenth century onwards, and the role of international expositions has been well covered (Gold and Gold, 2005; Monclus, 2008), there have been relatively few studies dedicated to either individual events (Chabard 2009; Collins, 2000; Gold, 1993; Lilley and Larkham 2007; Meller, 1995). This is perhaps surprising since it could be argued that the discipline of planning has been marketed and propelled forward at key moments by exhibitions.

Exhibitions are a necessarily ephemeral but useful lens for understanding planning history. What little remains of the display material, usually in the form of books, booklets and photographs, constitutes a key and often vibrant resource for understanding the visions of planners at different times. Knowing what was exhibited, by whom, where, and how much interest was attracted, helps to record planning's evolving aspirations and priorities. But by their very nature exhibitions also constituted a medium to educate and inform the public. An awareness that exhibitions could be interactive and useful in gathering community feedback developed across the planning profession much more slowly.

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

There are two main parts to the paper, revised from that presented at the IPHS2010 conference (Amati and Freestone, 2010). First, we sketch an international context for planning exhibitions. Second, come accounts of two notable Australian exhibitions. One comes from the first surge of planning idealism in the 1910s in which we convey the wide-ranging nature of the material assembled in the name of town planning at that time. The second comes from the 1940s - a world weary but nonetheless optimistic period with more focused planning aspirations. What emerges from these case studies is an indication of the value in examining the historical role of exhibitions in communicating the nature and evolution of planning ideas and ideologies over time. Not only were these events intrinsically interesting, they raise issues and theoretical possibilities for further research.

The planning exhibition in the early twentieth century

There was no one standard exhibition mode. Exhibitions assumed different forms and evolved over time. Table 1 provides an historic typology of twentieth century planning exhibitions and each of these types (not always as mutually exclusive as presented here) is discussed briefly below.

Table 1. A typology of historic planning exhibitions

Category	Definition	Examples
City, national and international exhibitions	Holistic planned environments; life size physical exemplars (e.g. new housing); planning displays	World expos; Worlds Columbian Exposition 1893; Dresden 1903; New York World's Fair, 1939; Festival of Britain 1951
Planning conference with exhibition	Adjunct exhibition on planning themes and initiatives	RIBA London 1910; International Garden Cities and Town Planning Association
Travelling exhibition	General and problem-specific propaganda; possibly touring to support lecture program	Patrick Geddes' Cities and Town Planning Exhibition 1910s
Event exhibition	Ephemeral events marking events (e.g. release of major plan)	'Boston 1915'; City reconstruction exhibits in 1940s Britain
Design, architecture and housing exhibitions	Collateral content on planning	Ideal and new homes exhibitions
City exhibitions & museums	Permanent but changing displays of city planning and design	Geddes' Outlook Tower in Edinburgh

The primary purpose of city, national and international expositions has been to showcase the creativity, productivity and economic and social progress of host nations and cities. World peace and global citizenship were major early themes (Meller, 1995). The most memorable events incorporated working models of progressive planning on the grounds (e.g., parks, promenades and public spaces) or indeed were conceived as holistic planned environments themselves (Greenhalgh, 1988). Large scale events have been conceived as vehicles promoting urban regeneration (Monclus, 2009) although seldom unproblematically (Gold and Gold, 2005). Futuristic visions often had a dramatic impact on the community imagination, if less so in reality (Bokovoy, 2002). More modest exhibitions grounded in incremental change such as the Festival of Britain's 'Live Architecture' exhibition in 1951 were better signposts to the future (Conekin, 1951; Gibberd, 1947-49). The development of a complete neighbourhood in London's East End as a demonstration project sent a powerful message on the desired direction of community design and rebuilding (Figure 1).

The planning conference with exhibition was tightly scripted by planning advocates. The prototypical event was the 1910 London Conference (Miller, 1993). 'Without the Exhibition the Conference would have been rather a

tame affair', pronounced the RIBA President in opening the multi-national display of images at the Royal Academy's rooms in Burlington House, Piccadilly (RIBA, 1911, 733). The ulterior agenda here was less the free interplay of innovative design ideas than furthering the interests of the British architectural profession in implementing planning reforms (Whyte, 2011). The same dialogue between national and international concerns might be read into later events; virtually all the congresses of the International Garden Cities Association founded in 1913 and transitioning into the later International Federation for Housing and Town Planning had exhibitions running in parallel. The RIBA Conference also spawned smaller events across Britain as the workings of the pioneering *Housing, Town Planning Etc Act 1910* were debated and imagined (e.g. Adshead and Abercrombie, 1914).



Figure 1. Neighbourhood court in Lansbury, East London, planned and constructed for the 1951 Festival of Britain. Source: R. Freestone

The intention of the travelling exhibition was to diffuse and evolve the message of planning as widely and strategically as possible. The most famous example was Patrick Geddes' Cities and Town Planning Exhibition, a spin-off from the 1910 RIBA Conference. This was a heterogeneous assemblage tracing 'cities in evolution' from the ancient world through the medieval and renaissance eras to the problems and possibilities of the contemporary industrial city. The flavour was less programmatic than educational; the aim was to make 'question their living environment' (Welter, 1999, 8). It travelled 'more or less everywhere Geddes went' (Meller, 1990, 175) but plans to take the Exhibition to the United States foundered because American city planners were preoccupied by more technical issues of policy implementation. There were other travelling exhibitions there to fill the gap, notably one organised by the American City Bureau touring 22 cities in 1913-16 (Chabard, 2009). During the 1940s British and American planning and housing innovations were showcased for international audiences by organisations such as the British Council and the Museum of Modern Art

(MOMA), usually with the input from government organisations. Key planning figures were often involved in these events behind the scenes. Catherine Bauer was a key player in major exhibitions entwining MOMA and the US Office of War Information in the 1940s (Oberlander and Newbrun, 1999).

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

A fifth category of planning exhibition (Table 1) were the design, architecture and housing exhibitions with coverage of broader planning implications if not an actual town planning section. Such events crossing over related design professions evidenced the strong 'culture of display' from the 1940s (Lilley and Larkham, 2007). Rethinking housing design was an international mission with obvious planning implications at the end of the war, but there were precedents. The Modern Architectural Research Society's 'New Architecture' exhibition in London in 1938 was a bellwether capturing the 'flux of ideas' in progressive built environment circles towards the middle of the twentieth century (Gold, 1993).

A final category blurs our focus on ephemera but nonetheless captures the significance which planning advocates and authorities attached to exhibitions. These were the 'permanent' or rather longstanding exhibitions which were usually targeted a single city and its problems. The outstanding example is Geddes' Outlook Tower in Edinburgh. Geddes promulgated such city museums less as repositories of the past but more as inspirations for nurturing future 'active citizenship' (Jarrott, 2006). In the later twentieth century civic authorities have staged urban planning exhibitions as a showcase for urban development initiatives. The centres in Shanghai and Beijing are notable examples where the older-style promotion of planning segues into a more sophisticated place promotion (Wu, 2000).

Two Australian planning exhibitions

Against this backdrop of international interest in exhibitions as communicative and educational devices for planning ideas and values, we turn to explore two particular exhibitions and what they reveal about the development and representation of planning culture in Australia in the twentieth century. The first of these is the Town Planning Conference and Exhibition held in Brisbane in mid-1918, an example of an exhibition

attached to a national conference. The second is a 1940s travelling exhibition on post-war design and housing needs which first opened in Sydney in 1944.

Brisbane 1918

Following an inaugural event in Adelaide in 1917, the second Australian Town Planning Conference and Exhibition was held in Brisbane from 30 July to 6 August 1918. Sponsored by the Queensland State Government, it drew strongly on themes of repatriation and soldier settlement. There were nearly 600 delegates, twice that of Adelaide. The same elaborate organisational model was followed, based on Charles Reade's adaptation of the official patronage and executive structure used in British conferences.

The chairman was Alderman John McMaster, Mayor of Brisbane supported by eight executive positions and a nearly 200 other members organised into 11 specialist committees. The Honorary Organising Director of the Conference and Exhibition was Charles Chuter, a senior public servant in the Home Secretary's Department. The Honorary Director of the Exhibition proper was Henry Mobsby, Government Artist and Photographer attached to the state Department of Agriculture. Mobsby had already made his reputation from scenic photography and exhibition design. He had worked at several high profile events including the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco. He was later involved with the 1924-25 Australian Exhibition Commission at the British Empire Exhibition, Wembley. His work was supported by the Exhibition Committee, the largest of all the conference committees with nearly 80 members.

The exhibition was held in a different location to the main conference sessions. The Conference was staged in the Examination Hall of the Central Technical College in George Street next to Parliament House in the city centre. The exhibition was held in the Exhibition Building in Bowen Hills on the northern city fringe. The Exhibition Building had been home to the Queensland Museum from 1899 but also doubled as a venue for concerts and art exhibitions. The exhibits also spilled into an adjacent building and into other parts of the Brisbane Showground (Catalogue 1918; Proceedings 1918). The Exhibition was officially opened in the Exhibition Building's Concert Hall by the Governor of Queensland, Sir Hamilton Goold-Adams. The National Anthem was played on the great organ to accent the occasion. Hardly gushing with enthusiasm, Sir Hamilton remarked in his speech that what was on show was done 'to the very best advantage in the limited time offering'.

State displays predominated. New South Wales (NSW) boasted the largest quantitative representation with over 400 separate items displayed by 16 different state government departments and instrumentalities. The biggest show came from the Sydney Harbour Trust illustrating its work through images of berths, wharves and jetties, sheds, light houses, waterside workers flats and children's playgrounds. Complementing the state displays were six main thematic areas: a 'Special Town Planning and Housing Exhibition' emphasising precedents and parallels overseas; an international section with material from New Zealand and Canada; a display dedicated to soldier settlements; a child welfare section featuring actual health and play facilities (Figure 2); an historic Australian section, also supplemented by the various historic plans and photographs featured in the state exhibitions; and

a local government, health and water and sewerage section, the most miscellaneous display of the event.

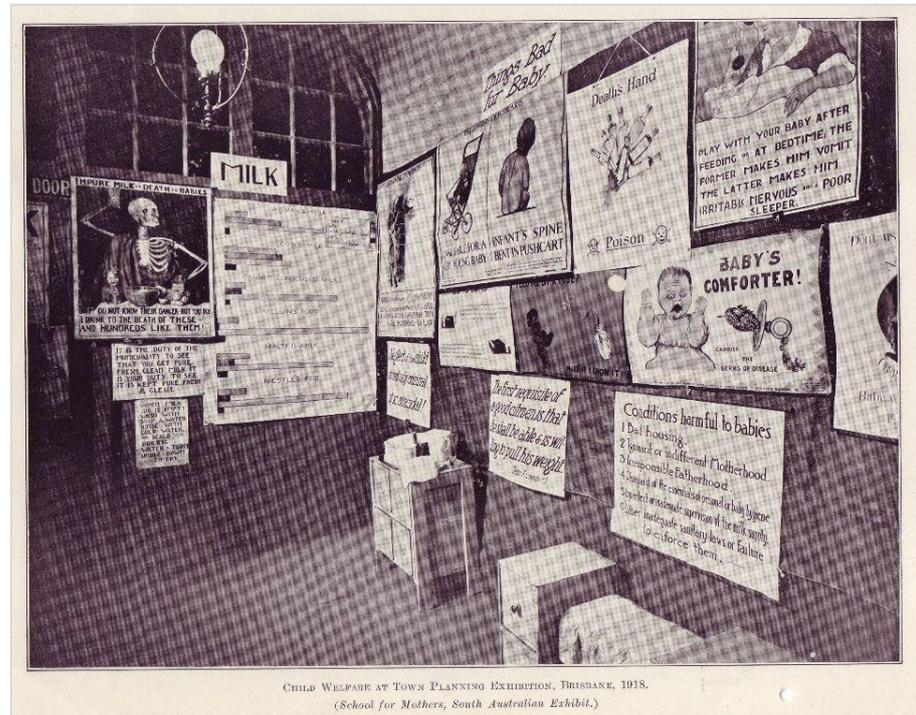


Figure 2. Child welfare display at the 1918 national town planning conference. Source: *Proceedings* (1918)

Three individuals contributed significantly to the exhibits on display apart from Mobsby. Charles Reade, Government Town Planner of South Australia, again contributed from the extensive collection of plans, drawings and photographs assembled for his national town planning lecture tour in 1914 and developed for exhibition at the 1917 Conference. The engineer J.J.C. Bradfield facilitated a display relating primarily to the expansion of the city and suburban railway system in Sydney. The NSW politician J.D. Fitzgerald arranged an extensive display covering world cities, parks and playgrounds. Fitzgerald also contributed his personal collection of continental advertising posters to the modern art posters display. This display in the annex to the main building had been organised in Sydney and the centrepiece was the extensive collection of retailer Charles Lloyd Jones. The rationale for this latter display came in terms of Fitzgerald's promotion of 'artistic town-planning' and the concern of the planning movement with 'unnecessary sightliness in our cities', in particular 'advertising hoardings'.

The core of the images displayed in the Exhibition comprised site and technical plans, maps, diagrams, bird's eye views, and photographs. There was extensive coverage of public works and infrastructure, doubly coded as signifiers of economic advancement and engineering innovation. Representations of actual planning projects were fewer but spanned the major concerns of the day: projected civic centres for Sydney and Brisbane; proposed road schemes to relieve traffic congestion; childrens playgrounds and park layouts; plans of garden cities, garden suburbs, speculative new communities and country towns; designs for war memorials; and various workers cottages, soldier settlement and model housing schemes, all

intended to convey the superiority of the Australian detached bungalow. The artistic locus was undoubtedly a display of the original designs and working plans of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin for two new towns commissioned by the NSW Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission. The images supplied by local councils dwelt upon parks, public gardens, recreational facilities, general panoramas, and street and civic improvements. Environmental content was notably absent apart from reafforestation and street plantings. The special area resonating most with the present day was the emphasis on public and child health.

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

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

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

The Brisbane Exhibition also featured several novel displays outside the dutiful diet of plans, photographs and posters. The child welfare section featured three 'model' facilities: a health clinic, a crèche, and a children's

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

Although descending into miscellany, the Exhibition was an impressive achievement and the most notable planning exhibition held in Australia before the Second World War. Many of the images on display were iconic and the unstinting efforts of propagandists like Charles Reade convey his crucial role in shaping both the history and historiography of Australian planning. The major criticism of the Exhibition was its fragmented nature. The display juxtaposed sometimes quite disparate items – such as the art posters alongside specimen road surfaces. The model homes on display at the Showground were sited almost a kilometre from the main building. But the main problem (though mainly for delegates) was that the Exhibition Building was located nearly six kilometres from the city building hosting the paper sessions. Despite a frequent tram service between the two main venues, it was an inconvenience and for New Zealand architect S. Hurst Seager underlined a major mistake in having 'the whole of the time of the delegates ... mapped out without reference to the Exhibition' (Seager, 1919, 2).

At a larger scale, the 1918 Brisbane conference sustained the national profile for the town planning cause secured by the Adelaide event the previous year but the generalised idealism of 1918 gave way to more pragmatic concerns with 'practical planning'. This event was the peak of the early propagandist movement but staged some three months before the Armistice its loftier ambitions remained overshadowed by the First World War. Some of its themes did roll unevenly into post-war initiatives such as spatial planning for repatriation. The local town planning association in Brisbane actually lost momentum (McConville, 2009) but the relevance of town planning had at least been lodged in government circles. Chuter would be an influential figure for many years and in the mid 1920s Brisbane's balkanised local council structure was revolutionised into a 'greater city' structure to create Australia's largest urban local government area – and the nation's first planning council planning department (Freestone, 1989).

The expectation at the end of the Brisbane conference was for a third national event in Sydney in 1920 with Mobsby, Reade and Chuter to play key advisory roles. While New Zealand hosted a major conference in May 1919 and Victoria organised a state later the same year, the Sydney event

never eventuated and planning's claim to the national consciousness accordingly tailed off with advocates in various cities struggling with their own reform ideas (Freestone, 2010). Various city and educational planning exhibitions were held around Australia in the 1920s and 1930s, but the next major national effort would not be until 1944 at the height of a second fervour for post-war reconstruction.

Sydney 1944

The 1944 Housing Exhibition took place at a time of momentous change in Australian planning as the decades of voluntary reformism and isolated initiatives gave way to a new era of statutory planning (Freestone, 2010). Considerable interest in town planning had been noted in the Federal Cabinet and while ultimate legal responsibility for local and metropolitan planning was entrusted to state governments the national government became involved in broader propaganda and educational efforts (Amati and Freestone, 2009). The Commonwealth Housing Commission had identified a drastic post-war housing shortage and also demonstrated the relevance of orderly planning as a framework for housing development (Troy and Lloyd, 1981). Its seminal report released in 1944 codified the scale and complexity of policy and industry needs while the exhibition organised under the auspices of the Commonwealth Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction the same year provided a more populist interpretation of needs and challenges.

The Ministry had convened a Sydney-based committee representing an array of government, professional and educational stakeholders concerned with reconstruction and housing issues. These included the NSW Housing Commission, Royal Australian Institute of Architects, Institution of Engineers, NSW Town and Country Planning Institute, Modern Architectural Research Society, National Fitness Council, Workers Education Association, the Building Trades Group of the NSW Labour Council and the Local Government Association. Three sub-committees were constituted for design and construction, finance, and propaganda and education. The involvement of committee members who had a clear involvement in planning, the origin of the exhibition as an exercise in preparing-for-peace-time propaganda, the urgency of the looming post-war housing shortage, and the constraints of a travelling exhibition combined to produce a focused exhibition.

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

The main message of the 1944 exhibition was to promote the need for action to improve the entire urban environment. This was also the message of 1918, but now it was communicated in a more sophisticated and less motley

way focused on the important nexus between housing, neighbourhood amenity and planning reform in post-war reconstruction. The target here was government and private industry as much as the ordinary citizen. The indebtedness to those who had fought in the war and who would have to be accommodated in new healthy, efficient and attractive communities is manifested by the prominence of a returned serviceman with his children in a special short newsreel made on the exhibition (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Image from the newsreel 'Design for Living Post-war', Cinesound Productions, 1944. Source: UNSW.

The 1944 Sydney Exhibition was held in the showrooms of the Sydney County Council in the Queen Victoria Building and opened by J.B. Chifley, the Minister for Post-War Reconstruction. Its main elements are distilled into Table 2. The contents contextualise the priority of more and better housing linked to a wider concern for both neighbourhood and city planning. The Exhibition incorporated a special section on 'U.S. Housing in War and Peace', a display organised by the U.S. Office of War Information which had also been shown in the U.K.. The supply of information was tightly controlled by the use of footsteps on the floor to direct the public and a sequential increase in the scale of exhibits from household to city-region (Ministry, 1944). This 'footsteps' technique had been used for design exhibitions at MOMA and indicates awareness of progressive techniques of visitor engagement in line with the modern development of artistic installations (Staniszewski, 1998). The information was given in a rhythmic sequence of problem and solution orchestrated around the dilemma of the three 'ds' of congestion: disease, drudgery and delinquency. A special feature was lunchtime screenings of the classic documentary film 'The City' made for the 1939 New York World's Fair with narration written by Lewis Mumford.

Table 2. The contents of the 1944 Sydney Housing Exhibition

Stage	Content of the exhibition	The intended message for the audience as explained in the program
1	The first exhibit consisted of a series of 11 display panels on which the general story of housing and town planning was told in photographic and diagram form.	A series of rousing statements about each of the panels, highlighting a problem and then a solution. Panel examples: No. 2. With 300,000 homes to be built in Australia we could become builders of slums without planning No. 6. New neighbourhood planners should have a community health and recreation centre 'first on the necessity list'. No. 9. 'See how our cities grow-from bullock trail to conglomerations of factories and dwellings and roads criss-crossing dangerously.' No. 10. 'Failure to PLAN our cities has resulted in parks and playgrounds being forgotten-this is one of the reasons for our slums.'
2	Immediately following these panels was a large mural map of Sydney indicating the bad housing areas, transport congestion and other shortcomings derived from Sydney having developed without a plan.	
3	Immediately beneath it was a model town plan based on a scheme prepared by Melbourne architect-town planner Frank Heath of the Commonwealth Housing Commission's Town Planning Sub-Committee.	
4	One neighbourhood unit from the model town plan was blown up to a much larger scale and on this physical model sensible street arrangements, green belts, schools and community centre were included.	
5	The units were enlarged in the next five displays by ¼ scale so 'that the public shall have an opportunity of seeing just what their homes are likely to look like in real life.' Three of these were selected from the winning designs in a recent NSW Housing Commission competition.	'Mass housing sounds as intimate as tons of coal or gross weight in flour, but mass housing as far as YOU are concerned means YOUR home amongst many, and we have brought five different house units for your inspection (across the floor - following the red foot marks) ... tell us if you like them or which ones you think suitable for your needs. Fill in the questionnaire.'
6	Opposite these models was a full size section illustrating some phase of the modern home layout.	
7	Finally, the visitor was directed from this full scale exhibit to a small theatre in which the documentary film "The City" was shown along with the U.S. Housing in War and Peace exhibit.	'TWO THINGS BEFORE YOU GO': <i>The City</i> - an outstanding film on town and regional planning is shown daily from 12 until 2 p.m. Tickets are available at the counter free of charge. <i>U.S. Housing in War and Peace</i> demonstrates all the steps leading up to to-day's ideas. This exhibit presents all the advances that have been made in large scale public housing as an indication of what the future holds.

Sources: Ministry (1944); Oldham (1944).

The architect John Oldham who played a key organisational role in the 1944 exhibition stressed that the event was 'of an educational nature only and at all times care has been taken to eliminate policy and politics' (Oldham, 1944). The use of portentous language in the exhibition nonetheless reflected the confidence of town planning with a rising a tide of public

concern with reconstruction and urban blight. The mid 1940s was a genuine watershed in Australian society. The coming end of the war created a remarkable if short-lived political consensus for action which represented an important window of opportunity for the advancement and in particular institutionalisation of town planning (Freestone, 2010). Between 1944 and 1945, three states - New South Wales, Victoria, and Tasmania - all enacted town planning legislation to launch a new era for planning in Australia.

Conclusion

While both these Australian exhibitions had a clear aim to spread the word about town planning alongside other modes of propaganda including books and lectures, both did so in different ways that are instructive of the times. In 1918 the aim was to interest people in planning in the broadest sense and entrust the mission to a new breed of experts. The impression left with the public would have been of a broadly progressive movement in the amelioration of the urban environment. In 1944 the message was more nuanced and the public was conceived differently. It was expected that people coming to the exhibition would have particular concerns which had already been communicated through the popular media. The exhibition was designed to crystallise these concerns and, as Henning (2007, 36) notes in her essay on modernist exhibitions, to jolt the public out of 'numb passivity'. Visitors to the Exhibition in Sydney numbered in the thousands and a questionnaire sought to tap their views.

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

The interest in the deeper past also calls forth an inquisitiveness about more recent events and current trends – placing the idea of the exhibition into a more dynamic post-modern societal context. Through the second half of the century, with planning systems progressively institutionalised globally, more generalist and often utopian aspirations were supplemented by ever more targeted objectives, e.g. selling particular plans and places. Inevitably, the foundational and didactic exhibitionary complex inherited from an imperial museum culture has been leavened by more iterative aims and interactive

mechanisms within a more consultative professional and institutional context. But the need to decode the true purpose, visual techniques and reception involved in public communication strategies remains a vital critical task for apprehending an enduring public element of planning worldwide.

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