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# URBAN PARKS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

ALAN TATE

## INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the planning and design of parks in the twentieth century. It looks at their intended purposes and their physical form, and at the way that these evolved through to the twenty-first century. Inevitably, as Karen Jones notes in her paper in this collection, this evolution reflects changing attitudes to cities. We see a corresponding transition in the perceived purpose of parks, evolving from pastoral antidotes to infernal industrial settlements to recreational components of the City Beautiful and then the city functional, and on to recognition of the economic and ecological services that parks are now expected to provide. During this transition the role of urban parks has included contributions to human physical and psychological health, to preparedness through active recreation for war, to the value of neighbouring real estate, to the structuring of urban form, to the restoration of derelict land, to city marketing, and, latterly to ecological services. The physical form of urban parks has synthesized these designated roles with the ambient design *zeitgeist*.

## ERAS OF PARK DEVELOPMENT

In terms of park evolution, sociologist Galen Cranz in her comparative study of park planning, design and management in San Francisco, Chicago and New York from the 1850s to the 1980s, identified the Pleasure Ground (1850-1900), the Reform Park (1900-30), the Recreation Facility (1930-65) and the Open-Space System (after 1965). Cranz and her student Michael Boland subsequently identified a fifth era, the Sustainable Park – running from 1990. The dates are, of course, rounded-off. But they do provide a credible breakdown based, primarily, on the social intentions and moral messages of park providers.[1]

Geographer Terence Young, in his study of San Francisco parks, identified only two eras of park development – the romantic era up to the 1920s, after which 'urban parks were no longer *the* promoters of moral order' and 'changed little', and the rationalistic era whose 'vision continues to dominate it.' There are, however, grounds for an interpretation of Western and American park development that falls somewhere between these two. Such an interpretation might comprise:

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- the industrial city before 1940, including, first, a romantic element until around 1900, typified by pastoral parks for passive recreation; and second, the post-Nietzschean, modernist / functionalist part until World War II, typified by axial, neo-Baroque / City Beautiful parks designed for primarily active recreation.
- an era of rapid suburbanization, and de-centred expansion of cities, including new town development and Green Belts, from World War II to 1980. During this period, urban parks in North America and in Europe were often allowed to deteriorate.
- the post-industrial era, after about 1980, comprising the reversal of 'white flight' with lower income groups being pushed to the edges of cities. This coincides with the establishment of public-private partnerships for restoration of ageing US pastoral parks (like Central and Prospect Parks in New York, and Forest Park in St Louis), and of new parks like Paris' Parc de la Villette, the Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord in Germany, Amsterdam's Westergasfabriek, and London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park – all on former industrial land and all with significant national government funding.[2]

Similarly, in the twenty-first century, New York's High Line, also funded through a public-private partnership, demonstrates the adaptation of disused industrial sites for recreational purposes. As Cranz and Boland indicated, this most recent period has displayed greater ecological awareness in park design and management than any before it. But it has also seen the sub-division of new parks into smaller garden areas – as in Paris' Parc de Bercy and Parc André-Citroën and Village of Yorkville Park in Toronto, Canada – and, as on the High Line and in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, it has witnessed a strong revival in high-maintenance herbaceous perennials as part of planting strategies.

It is also instructive to consider the role of twentieth-century parks relative to major socio-political events, including two World Wars, the Great Depression, and the collapse of communism. Furthermore, urban parks should be considered in the context of developments like growth in motorised travel, the creation of garden cities and new towns, burgeoning suburbs, industrial decline in western cities and, latterly, rapid urbanisation globally, and re-gentrification of western cities. Equally, the history of park provision cannot be divorced from the wider history of design for human habitation.

In the twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries, the history of park provision extends from the Beaux-Arts and City Beautiful movement through modernism and post-modernism to minimalism, and latterly (at the same time as being in an age of computer-generated parametrics) to the growing appreciation of ecological services provided by green infrastructure in urban settings. For most of their history, arguably, the provision of urban parks resulted from a critique of – and as an antidote to – the perceived ills or shortcomings of urban areas. They have also been instruments of 'city marketing'.

It can be further observed that while the generative forces for urban parks arose in industrial cities in Europe and North America, colonial settlement led to export in the nineteenth century of the concept of both botanic gardens and urban parks. Early examples include the botanic gardens in Bogor, Indonesia (1817), Melbourne, Australia (1846), Singapore (1859), followed by Lake Gardens, Kuala Lumpur (1888). Somewhat later, colonially-inspired parks such as Parque Prado, Montevideo (1873) and Centennial Park, Sydney (1888) were established in the southern hemisphere. Similarly, and particularly in the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, examples of post-industrial parks are becoming more common outside Europe and North America. This paper will address two such examples in China.

## FROM BEAUX-ARTS TO CITY BEAUTIFUL

The *École des Beaux-Arts* was founded in Paris in 1795 and amalgamated in 1819 with the schools of the royal academies of painting and sculpture. It was based on the idea that 'the origin, laws, principles, theory and practice of architecture went back to the Greeks, were then spread by the Romans and became the property of the civilised world'. The work of Baron (Georges-Eugène) Haussmann (1809-91) in re-shaping Paris for Napoléon III followed Beaux-Arts principles, creating new avenues with enormous junctions, squares and street planting, potable water supply and drainage systems, and major buildings as focal points within the restructured city. Parks with apparently pastoral scenery included the re-vamped Bois de Boulogne and Bois de Vincennes, and the completely new Parc des Buttes-Chaumont (opened in 1867), which, despite its organic form, 'was never conceived or perceived as a *replica of nature*; its transformation from a scarred remnant into a verdant, undulating panorama … required massive technological ingenuity. That effort was not concealed … rather, it was exaggerated in the precise streamlined engineered topography and road alignment.' Equally, Alphand's plans for the earthworks were 'the first documented example of the use of contours as the basis for

developing a new design leading to construction through re-grading and cut and fill' and cost more than 70 per cent of the construction budget – a clear reflection of Haussmann and Alphand's pre-occupation with health and *circulation*, in its many forms.[3]

Meanwhile, Richard Morris Hunt (1827-95), admitted to the *École des Beaux-Arts* in 1846, became the first American to study architecture there. Two more Americans were admitted in the 1850s, ten in the 1860s, thirty-three in the 1870s and twenty-nine in the 1880s. These included Henry Hobson Richardson (1838–86), Charles Follen McKim (1847–1909) of architects McKim, Mead, & White in New York, Louis Henry Sullivan (1856–1924), and (somewhat later) the British-born Edward H. Bennett (1874–1954). Such a long – and often prominent – line of trained architects ensured the influence of the rectilinear, neo-classical Beaux-Arts style in the United States – particularly at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago and in subsequent expressions of the City Beautiful Movement. Sullivan, it should be noted, was author of the statement 'form ever follows function' – which became a mantra of the Modern Movement, although he was far too attentive to local detail to be considered a Modernist.[4]

The focus of city design and architecture in the United States moved to Chicago after the 'Great Fire' in October 1871 killed more than 300 people, left 90,000 homeless and destroyed more than 17,000 buildings. This led to rapid, lower-density redevelopment of the city, including extensive parks and boulevards, and 'in the first 20 years after the fire, the three park commissions [Lincoln, South and West – which had been established in the 1860s] spent $24 million on a system of eight big parks, twenty-nine little ones and 35 miles [56 kilometres] of broad boulevards.' The wide boulevards were also conceived as fire-breaks and were subsequently adopted by landscape architect H. W. S. Cleveland (1814–1900) in his plan for then emerging city of Minneapolis (1883). The plans for both cities were clearly influenced by the work of Haussmann and Alphand in Paris.[5]

The fire also led to further extension of Lake Park – the site of what is now the emphatically Beaux-Arts Bennett-designed Grant Park – through disposal of post-fire rubble. Lake Park was designated as a park in 1847 because it had been shown in a Canal Commissioners' map from 1836 as being *'Public Ground – A Common to remain forever Open, Clear and free of any buildings, or other Obstructions Whatever.'* This contributed to it becoming the centrepiece of

the Plan of Chicago (1909). But before that, there was the World's Columbian Exposition. The Exposition, staged in 1893 to celebrate the quarter centenary of Columbus's voyage to the Americas, was originally scheduled for 1892. It mimicked the Paris Universal Exposition of 1889 in 'combining naturalistic and formal landscape elements with neo-classical designs.' Led by the non-*École des Beaux-Arts* educated Daniel Burnham (1846-1912) – a kind of American Haussmann – the Exposition showcased Beaux-Arts architecture. Its centrepiece, the White City, involved work by Hunt, by McKim, Mead & White, and by Dankmar Adler and Sullivan. This was all set in a contrastingly pastoral landscape designed by the ageing Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-93) and the Olmsted Firm. The Exposition was 'an expression of civic pride, cooperation, and patronage of the arts,' attracting 27 million visitors over its six-month duration. The Exposition was also a vehicle for Chicago to demonstrate many features that became central tenets of the City Beautiful movement – sanitation, rational design, and artistic collaboration – effectively, the tenets of the *École des Beaux-Arts*. Burnham, author of the invocation to '*Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood and probably will not themselves be realized. Make big plans: aim high in hope and work'* was a leading figure in promotion of the movement.[6]

The City Beautiful approach – employing powerful symmetrical axes and classical motifs – is clearly reflected in the McMillan Plan for Washington (1901), prepared by Burnham and his new partner Edward Bennett, with Frederick Law Olmsted Jr, Charles McKim and sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Quite apart from reinforcing and extending The Mall (created by L'Enfant's Le Nôtre-inspired plan of 1792), this involved a city-wide landscape plan prescient of the more-extensive network proposed for Chicago. It was also prescient of the axial form of the proposals by Fritz Schumacher (1869-1947 – Hamburg City Architect 1909-33) for the Stadtpark (presented in 1910) and the extent of his proposals for Hamburg's open space system (drawn up in 1925).

The privately funded *Plan of Chicago* was the apotheosis of the City Beautiful. It was grandiose. But in some respects it embellished what was already happening in the city and simply set it in a broader and more emphatically Beaux-Arts context. Chapter IV of the *Plan* – on the park system – proposed a target equivalent to 40 square metres of park area for each citizen, compared with (according to German landscape architect Leberecht Migge – 1881-1935) the 1.61 square metres per person available in Hamburg in 1913. It noted, as did Cranz in

her documentation of what she termed the Reform Park, the emergence of multi-purpose Field Houses providing gymnasia, baths, eating places, club rooms and reading rooms – comparable to the former Stadthalle in the Stadtpark – and of bathing in Lake Michigan and in neighborhood parks. The plan cited numerous European examples including the park system and forest reserves in Berlin and in Vienna; the park system from the McMillan Plan for Washington, and examples from London, Paris, Versailles, Stockholm and Boston. It asked a critical question for a commercially-funded document – 'After it is finished will the people of means be so ready to run away and spend their money in other cities?' A similar undertone occurred in Kansas City (see below) and is central to the *Structural Vision: Amsterdam 2040* adopted in 2011, promoting the public realm as a marketing attraction to footloose, technology-based industries.[7]

The Plan of Chicago lived up to Burnham's call to 'Make no little plans … .' It called for the entire waterfront to be publicly accessible parkland. It proposed an axial civic centre perhaps comparable only to Speer's plans for *Germania*. And it called for a series of major parks, including the promotion of Grant Park as a waterfront centrepiece replete with major civic buildings. Those buildings were prevented by three lawsuits brought by businessman Aaron Montgomery Ward between 1890 and 1911 to maintain the site 'Open, Clear Free of any Buildings.' The eventual design by Bennett, adopted in 1924, really was a continuation of the city grid. It provided, and still provides, a park that can be retrofitted one section at a time – like Millennium Park, completed in 2004 and Maggie Daley Park, designed by Michael Van Valkenburgh, opened in December 2014. The Plan of Chicago and the design of Grant Park are beacons of the later, function-driven modernist part of the industrial city era.

The City of Boston (and neighbouring Brookline) in Massachusetts is significant both for Olmsted's work on the six outer parks of the Emerald Necklace and because the Necklace was conceived as part of a longer term, more extensive open-space network in much the same way that Schumacher proposed in 1924 a series of 'green rings' for Hamburg. The Emerald Necklace and the Cleveland-designed Grand Rounds in Minneapolis remain quintessential precedents of integrated park systems from the late nineteenth-century. And in Kansas City it was a case of German descendants – particularly August Robert Meyer (1851-1905), President of the Municipal Improvement Association – and emigrants, including Frankhausen-born George Edward Kessler (1862-1923), designer of the city's park system, inspiring a city-wide

network of parks. Both Meyer and William Nelson (1841-1915) – founder and editor of the *Kansas City Star* – saw parks as a vehicle for marketing the city.

Kessler went on to re-design Forest Park in St Louis for it to host both the Louisiana Purchase Exposition and the 1904 Olympic Games. Kessler's work in Kansas City was heavily influenced by the pastoral precedents of the (Humphry Repton-inspired) Prince Pückler-Muskau, while his 'image of the City Beautiful combined European influences with the American landscape in a unique blend of Old and New World qualities.' The masterplan for the Exposition – 'one of his greatest works' – was heavily influenced by City Beautiful precedents, demonstrating the difficulties inherent in treating design influences as being one-directional. Indeed, it suggests that *zeitgeist* is more potent than geography in determining the design of the human environment.[8]

Nevertheless, the design by Paris-based Jean-Claude-Nicolas Forestier (1861-1930) for Parque María Luisa in Seville, prepared in 1911 as the centrepiece for the Ibero-American Exposition (that eventually took place in 1929), demonstrated both adoption of the strong axial geometry of the era and showed respect for nuances of regional design, history and climate. The outcome was an essay in Moorish-inspired design for a Mediterranean public park. Its rectilinear layout is punctuated with tile-studded *glorietas* – arbours dedicated to local cultural figures, shaded from the intensity of the Andalusian sun by a canopy of deciduous trees. Forestier went on from Seville to prepare a landscape-based urban plan for Havana, Cuba.

Further north, the nearly contemporaneous design for the Hamburg Stadtpark, prepared in 1910 by Schumacher and City Engineer Fritz Sperber, synthesized two favoured entries in a design competition for that park. The layout comprises a more-than-1500-metres-long axis on the park's longest diagonal, incorporating a 12-hectare open lawn (*Festwiese*) and an 8-hectare oval lake (*Stadtparksee*) – subtending a rectangle divided off for swimming. The lake originally formed the focus for a major 'people's café' located on the axis, above this rectangle. The park's outer edges display a more organic system of footpaths through woodland. Some scholars suggested that the Stadtpark's layout expresses a (neo-Baroque) 'world view whose religious, philosophical and political content is outdated.' But modernist commentator George Chadwick argued that the axis arose 'from essentially practical, rather than purely visual considerations.' As such, it reflected the call by Leberecht Migge, in a pamphlet published in 1909, for a

function-driven approach to design of the Stadtpark – matching the values of the *Deutscher Werkbund* on 'standards of mass production and mass consumption.'[9]

Schumacher was a founding member of the *Deutscher Werkbund*, established in 1907 to promote German artists and craftspeople but becoming, after World War I, more closely aligned with modernism. The metamorphosis of the *Werkbund* parallels Schumacher's own progression from promoter of vernacular design to early modernist. And, of course, it reflects the transition from urban pastoral parks to an ethos of machine-inspired modernism. Indeed, the Hamburg Stadtpark can be read as one of the first modernist parks in the world. The idea behind its creation was to prioritise active recreation over the passive enjoyment of romantic, generally pastoral, scenery – a radical departure from precedents in Europe and North America. It demonstrates the emergence of the park in Germany as an urban utility, a place where 'the identification of physical and sporting activities with the spiritual rebirth of the German *Volk* led to a heightening of the cathartic function of park amenities.' The *Volkspark* also acted as a precedent for another uniquely German model for the public park, the *Jugendpark* (Youth Park), promoted by Migge and others during the period of the Weimar Republic (1918-1933) – an approach where 'function now began to create form, instead of being accommodated within a form that was preconceived.'[10]

This, then, was equivalent to what Cranz identified as the Reform Park, for which the 'keynote approach … was to organise activity, since urban park planners now considered the masses incapable of undertaking their own recreation.' It was 'a moral defense against the potential for chaos … in this new abundance of free time, just as the pleasure ground had been the antidote to the old lack of free space.' The concept prioritized activities, such as athletics, swimming, vegetable gardening, music, entertainment of the troops, on mostly flat sites. In short, 'utility, not beauty, was the goal of the reform park.' This was also the era of the Field House, particularly in Chicago – a development that was studied closely by Migge and Werner Hegemann (1881-1936) in their *Amerikanische Parkanlangen* (1911), which included an examination of 'the Chicago Plan and the older Chicago park systems, along with the Boston metropolitan park system and the older inner parks by Frederick Law Olmsted Sr.'[11]

## MODERNISM, OPEN SPACE SYSTEMS AND BEYOND

Parallel with development of the Reform Park in the United States and of the *Volkspark* in Germany came recognition in Britain, in the wake of the Second Boer War (1889-1902), of the unfitness of many of its young men for war. The subsequent report of the *Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration* (1904), highlighted urban working classes' poor diet, contributed to growing concern for the provision of facilities for sports and recreation – a concern that continued over the next decade as the prospects of war with Germany increased. This concern materialized in urban parks produced by municipal gardeners, providing a combination of sports fields and carpet bedding. This model predated the emergence of professional landscape architects in Britain (the Institute of Landscape Architects was formed in 1929), although Thomas Hayton (T. H.) Mawson (1861-1933) had already begun to express concern about the design of public parks in his *The Art and Craft of Garden Making* (1900).[12]

Describing Mawson as 'probably the most successful designer of parks' (in Britain) in the first quarter of the twentieth century, Chadwick noted that he 'seems to have accepted completely the combination of formal and informal in the same design, or what he referred to as the composite style, and his later work was to exhibit even more strongly marked architectural tendencies.' In much the way that utility trumped beauty in the Reform Park in the United States, the work of Schumacher and Migge in Germany and of Mawson reflected the fact that the park had become 'a landscape arising from certain use requirements, to which any "style" is afterwards applied.' In short, function became a more significant factor than form in the design of urban parks.[13]

Parks were beginning to be seen as an integral part of the planning of expanding settlements, exemplified by Mawson's *Civic Art: Studies in Town Planning, Parks, Boulevards and Open Spaces* (1911). Planning was mandated in Britain by the *Housing and Town Planning Act* of 1909 and reinforced by establishment in 1914 of the Town Planning Institute, of which Mawson was a founder member and president in 1923 (as well as being a founder member and first president of the Institute of Landscape Architects).

The Planning Act of 1909 was lobbied for by the Garden City Association, founded by Ebenezer Howard in 1899 to promote his vision for 'a rationally planned network of settlements' based on 'his concept of a "joyous union" of town and country.' And while the garden city movement was a cogent response to living conditions in polluted industrial cities, it provoked Migge to further calls for a functional approach to the use of urban land – in this case, the garden

component of garden cities, arguing that gardens 'should by no means be subordinated or treated as an aside; rather garden and house must be provided *at the same level of quality*. Accordingly, the gardens of a garden city can only be good if they are *technically perfect* from the beginning.' And in terms of public space, Migge argued that Berlin, with '*2.2 square metres* of green space per head' and Hamburg with 'no more than *1.61 square metres* of public gardens' lagged far behind London which, in 1902 had '5.3 square metres of green space … for every inhabitant.'[14]

Cranz recounted similar statistical exercises in the United States. She noted, however, that during the Reform Park era (1900-30) some 'felt that population growth was going to be so enormous, or at least so unpredictable, that the percentage of acreage, rather than population ratios, should be the basis for distributing parks.' Meanwhile, in Europe in 1924, Schumacher proposed a standard of 3 square metres per inhabitant, whereas ambient standards in The Netherlands and Britain equated to around 20 square metres each. And the National Playing Fields Association in Britain, a charity founded in 1926 (now called *Fields in Trust*), also adopted a minimum standard equivalent to 20 square metres per person. Four-fifths of this allocation was suggested for team games, tennis, bowls and children's playgrounds while the other fifth would be for less active purposes – yet another manifestation of an instrumental approach to park provision. *Fields in Trust* currently promotes a standard equivalent to 24 square metres per inhabitant.[15]

Cranz noted that by 1930 – the start of what she termed the era of the Recreation Facility – the provision of parks and recreation opportunities had become an accepted municipal function. She also noted the coincidence of that period with the tenure by Robert Moses (1888-1981) of numerous unelected appointments with the state and the city of New York, including Commissioner of the unified New York City Department of Parks covering the five boroughs of Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island and The Bronx – a position that he held from 1934 to 1960. Moses has been described as a 'genius urban impresario and civic fascist,' drawing inevitable comparison with Haussmann. The congruency between his appointment and Cranz's identification of the era of the Recreation Facility is supported by the fact that he regarded all parks, even the seminal Central Park and Prospect Park, Brooklyn, as simply recreation facilities – unlike the 'genteel' Olmsted, 'progressive reformers like Moses claimed a new kind of authority as professionally trained experts who would manage the public according to abstract principles of efficiency and rationality.'[16]

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Moses oversaw construction of a state-wide parkway system and expressways into the heart of the city. He directed the development of major beach parks and a proliferation of smaller parks, and promoted the staging of the New York World's Fairs in 1939 and 1964. Moses excelled at accessing federal funds made available under Franklin Delano Roosevelt's *New Deal,* including early projects like the reconstruction of Bryant Park in midtown Manhattan, initiated in 1934, and the gigantic McCarren Pool in Brooklyn, opened in 1936. His use of work-creation programs in the wake of the Great Depression for provision of public parks was not unique in New York or the United States. Other significant examples include construction by humans and horses of the (then 895-hectare) Amsterdamse Bos, commenced in 1934, and construction of the causeway through Stanley Park, Vancouver to the Lions Gate Bridge, opened in 1938.

Moses's hard-nosed practicality in the management and maintenance of parks contributed to a widespread trend of decreased investment and increased standardization of facilities in most New York parks. The pattern of suburbanisation promoted by Moses's highway building programs was followed by a downward spiral of neglect, danger and deterioration in the city's parks, including its two headline parks – Central and Prospect. This continued until the formation in 1980 of public-private partnerships – Central Park Conservancy and Prospect Park Alliance – for their protection and improvement. The decline in investment in existing cities in the United States (and in Europe) is reflected in the comment by Joel Garreau in his seminal book *Edge City* (1991) that 'we [the United States] have not built a single old-style downtown from raw dirt in seventy-five years' – effectively since the beginning of what Cranz called the era of the Recreation Facility (1930-65).[17]

At this time, modernism also began to have a significant impact in architecture and in pronouncing principles for urbanism, including parks and open spaces. German designer Peter Behrens (1868–1940) began work as a painter before becoming an architect. Along with Fritz Schumacher, he was a founder member in 1907 of the *Deutscher Werkbund*. Behrens was appointed by the German electrical company AEG, also in 1907, to design a range of their products, their graphics and their retail outlets and then, in 1908, to design a turbine factory for them in Berlin. This was based on a form of stripped-down classical architecture. And, significantly, in 1910-11, Behrens employed a number of modernist luminaries, including Le Corbusier (1887-1965), Walter Gropius (1883-1969) and Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) – the

last two having been directors of the Bauhaus until they were chased out by the National Socialists and emigrated to the United States, where they completely changed the face of post-World War II architectural education and practice.

Gropius was appointed Professor in 1937, and then Chair of Architecture at Harvard from 1938. In the latter position, he 'expunge[d] all Beaux-Arts traditions, an event followed at architectural schools throughout the USA.' Mies, for his part, has been credited with pioneering terraces of flat-roofed housing at the *Weissenhofsiedlung* exhibition at Stuttgart in 1927, followed by the free plan layout, also under a flat roof, of the German pavilion for the Barcelona International Exhibition of 1929. Along with Gropius, he was a leading figure in the development in the United States of highly rational, Bauhaus-inspired glass and steel buildings. The third of Behrens's influential apprentices, Le Corbusier, was thrust into the architectural limelight through publication in 1923 of his *Vers une architecture*, published in English in 1927 as *Towards a New Architecture*. Culminating in a chapter titled 'Architecture or Revolution,' scholars have described it as polemic intermingled 'with apodictic [beyond contradiction] proclamations while subjective architectural aesthetics are interpreted as the sum of anthropological constants.'[18]

Le Corbusier's urbanism was as uncompromising as his pronouncements about architecture. His non-place-specific *Ville contemporaine pour trois millions d'habitants*, first proposed in 1922, comprised 24 skyscrapers at the centre, laid out in a grid of six by four buildings around a traffic hub. He eventually proposed the application of the principles of the *Ville contemporaine* to Paris in his *Plan Voisin* of 1929. This was not adopted. But his perspective on urbanism was adopted by the International Congress for Modern Architecture (CIAM) and promoted by them through the Charter of Athens – a document instigated at the 1933 meeting of the Congress and published by Le Corbusier in 1943. The Charter was divided into three sections – *Generalities; The Prevailing Condition of the Cities – Critical Examination and Remedial Measures; Conclusions – Main Points of Doctrine*. The Prevailing Condition section addressed, in turn, *Habitation, Leisure, Work, Traffic* and *The Historic Heritage of Cities*.

The subsection on *Leisure* addressed the CIAM's position on urban open space (not simply parks). It opened by lamenting that reserves of urban open space, 'the authentic lungs of the city' (that trope again), had been 'greedily cut into' over the preceding two centuries, and noted

that the aims of the Charter included assuring 'city-dwellers of living conditions that will safeguard not only their physical health but also their moral health and the joy of life that results from these' – the role of parks in urban health, again. In terms of leisure requirements, the Charter proclaimed that 'every residential district must include the green area necessary for the rational disposition of games and athletic sports' and that '[c]ontrary to what takes place in the "garden cities", the verdant areas will not be divided into small unit lots for private use but, instead, dedicated to the launching of the various communal activities that form the extensions of the dwelling' – similar, then, to Migge's views. It also proclaimed that unsanitary blocks of housing 'must be demolished' and replaced 'with parks which … will be the first step toward improved health conditions.' And in terms of 'Parks, playing fields, stadiums, beaches etc. …', the Charter called for a 'program that will comprise every kind of relaxation activity.'[19]

Le Corbusier's ideas are clearly prescient of post-war planning – reflected in Britain's *Town and Country Planning Act* of 1947 – with the priority that it afforded to traffic and its dogmatic approach to single-use zoning. But the idea 'that the problems of the city – particularly its housing – could be resolved by the grouping of slab blocks in parkland to provide high-rise but relatively low density dwellings' … 'has turned out to be disappointing, an enemy of urbanity and of social cohesion, provoking the most destructive criticism of modern architecture.'[20]

**POST WAR + POST INDUSTRIAL PARKS / URBAN GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

British government concerns about concentrations of urban population and industry preceded World War II, but could not be fully addressed until later. The 1938 Barlow Commission into distribution of the industrial population delivered its report in 1940, calling for planned decentralisation of population from 'conurbations,' particularly through the establishment of new towns. A regional plan for the London area, the principal focus of these concerns, had already existed from 1929. This included a fully costed section on open space prepared by Raymond Unwin, designer of Letchworth Garden City (from 1903), on the basis of NPFA standards. Unwin also advised London County Council on the establishment of a 'green girdle' presaging the *Green Belt (London and Home Counties) Act* of 1938. Despite World War II and in part because of the destruction it wrought on London, the *County of London Plan* of 1943 (covering the twelve current-day boroughs of inner London plus the City of London) and the *Greater London Plan* of 1944 (covering the wider London region) were prepared by

architect/planner/landscape architect Patrick Abercrombie (1879-1957), with LCC architect John Henry Forshaw (1895-1973).[21]

The *County of London Plan* included a combined chapter on open spaces and parks. This set an overall standard of 4 acres per thousand inhabitants (1.62 square metres each), supplemented by regional open space to provide an overall figure of 7 acres per thousand inhabitants (2.83 square metres each). This was an early example of what Cranz termed the Open Space System. The principal initiatives in this respect were the Lee Valley Regional Park, established in 1966 as a 42-kilometre-long, 4,000-hectare recreational area in northeast London (subsequently extended in 2012 by the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park), and designation of the currently 56-hectare (slowly acquired, still-not-complete) Burgess Park in the Borough of Southwark. The principal outcomes of the Abercrombie Plan, however, were eight new towns beyond the Green Belt – offspring of the garden cities – and the M25 circular motorway, completed in 1986 – offspring of Abercrombie's proposed series of encircling roads.

British new towns show a different pattern from Garreau's observation about new downtowns in the United States. As we saw with Moses's New York, post-war suburbanisation in both countries (and/or new town construction) left cities with decreasing populations and shrinking tax bases. Many parks faced a downward spiral of declining visitor numbers, increasing vandalism, perceived (if not actually) high crime levels, and a growing backlog of deferred maintenance. This persisted until the early 1980s across the United States and somewhat later in Britain. As their condition deteriorated, their purpose and form remained much as before World War II.

By contrast, post-war reconstruction in Germany adopted urban parks as symbols of urban renaissance and garden shows as opportunities to demonstrate recovery from the traumas of war. German garden shows originated from adjudicated exhibitions of rare and exotic plants. The first one was staged in 1833. After the success of the international horticulture show in London in 1866, they become more substantial, encouraging the staging of Germany's first international garden show in 1869, at Hamburg. That site remained largely unchanged until 1953 and is generally regarded as the starting point of current biennial *Bundesgartenschauen*. Garden shows were also staged under the Third Reich at Dresden (1936), Essen (1938) and – until cut short by war –Stuttgart (1939). But it was not until after World War II that the *Zentral Verband*

*Gartenbau* (ZVG – Central Horticulture Organization) started to commission different cities to present a show every two years, starting at Hannover in 1951. In addition to being horticulture exhibitions, the shows provided an opportunity for cities to redesign and rebuild parks as part of post-war reconstruction. They continue biennially. Equally, the Festival of Britain, also staged in 1951, was intended to bring a sense of recovery from World War II. It included development of London's South Bank (of the River Thames) as an arts and entertainment centre and the redevelopment of Battersea Park as The Festival Pleasure Gardens – a makeover from which it has still not been fully restored. That event, however, was driven by a sense of the potency of design as a symbol of physical and spiritual renaissance.[22]

Quite apart from parks' function in preparing soldiers for war and for post-war recovery, it is worth noting their 'traditional role, as an urban safety valve.' Parks in San Francisco and particularly Golden Gate Park were used as refugee camps after the earthquake and fire of 1906; Regent's Park, London served as a dumping ground for building rubble resulting from The Blitz (and Victory Gardens were established on London bomb sites); Hamburg's Stadtpark from 1945 until 1953 provided emergency accommodation for 2,000-3,000 people; in the unusually cold winter of 1945-46 nearly all the remaining mature trees in Berlin's Tiergarten were cut down for firewood and cleared areas were used for growing vegetables until 1949, when restoration of the park began. In Boston, Massachusetts' Victory Gardens established in the Back Bay Fens in 1942 to supplement food supplies in World War II continued to operate, and after the Boston Marathon bombing in April 2013 the Arnold Arboretum received 'huge numbers of visitors seeking solace.'[23]

Few new urban parks of any significant size were created in the wake of World War II. One notable exception is the 82-hectare Parque del Este in Caracas, Venezuela, opened in 1961 and still subject to extremely intensive use. Roberto Burle Marx (1909-1994), a Brazilian landscape architect with a flair for the use of free-flowing forms and exuberant native vegetation, led the design team. By contrast, one of the first new parks to be built in an existing city in the United States after World War II was the privately-financed Paley Park, a 'vest pocket park' in midtown Manhattan, completed in 1967 and donated to the people of New York by CBS chairman William S. Paley (1901-90). Park Commissioner Robert Moses argued that open spaces of less than three acres (1.2 hectares) would be 'very expensive and impossible to administer.' Nevertheless, Paley Park was completed around the beginning of what Cranz

called the era of the Open Space System (from 1965). But in many ways, it was no more (or less) than an isolated project that signalled a flickering return of faith in the livability of western cities.[24]

Institutional neglect of public parks in the United States (and to a lesser extent in Europe) continued through the 1960s and 1970s, and crime – or fear of crime – contributed to their decline. Rosenzweig and Blackmar noted, for instance, that crime levels in Central Park in the 1960s and 1970s were certainly higher than before or since – but that media reporting of them was disproportionate. In 1973 the *New York Times* – 'not normally noted for crime reporting, covered 3 of the 4 murders' in Central Park, but only 20 per cent of 'the 1,676 murders in the rest of the city,' suggesting that the story of crime 'was as much the story of perceptions as of realities.' The same was true of other New York parks – particularly Bryant Park (known as 'Needle Park', with a murder more-or-less every other year in the 1960s and 1970s) and Prospect Park – and of parks across North America, including Grant Park, Chicago (where four murders were committed in or around the park between 1970 and 1972) and, latterly, Freeway Park, Seattle. A combination of rapid-response policing, higher visitor numbers – on the principle that 'a busy park is a safe park,' improved maintenance and regular garbage collection – on the principle that 'clean places are safe places,' helped to reduce the perception of danger in many North American parks. And, of course, the actual decline in reported crimes in parks has had a major impact on perceptions of crime in them.[25]

The start of the revival of United States urban parks can be pinpointed to 1980 – the year that Central Park Conservancy and Bryant Park Restoration Corporation were established, and that a Prospect Park Administrator was appointed. These moves reflect the beginning of an era of return to central-city living and returning prosperity for many traditional city parks – largely through public-private partnerships in the United States and through significant state-sponsored public investment in Europe. London's Royal Parks continued to receive national government funding. For the last twenty years in Britain, the Heritage Lottery Fund has been the only major source of funds for restoration of (primarily historic) urban parks, providing in the order of £700 million. This reflects the fact that in most western countries, parks are a non-statutory service that has to compete for funds with health and social services that, with ageing populations, are under increasing pressure.

Nevertheless, since the 1990s a number of new parks have been created on former industrial sites in Europe, North America and, latterly, China. Leading examples include the Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord (designed in 1991 and a radical progression from Richard Haag's 1970s design for Gas Works Park in Seattle), including some that were created or re-designed as catalysts for adjacent real estate developments: Parc André-Citroën (1987), on a former automobile factory site, and Parc de Bercy (1992), on the former site of wine warehouses, both in Paris; and London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Parksite of the 2012 Summer Olympic Games. The re-use of damaged sites, like the Westergasfabriek (designed in 1998) and industrial remnants, like the High Line (designed in 2004) and the taking of opportunities to create what are, in effect roof gardens – like Village of Yorkville Park, Toronto (1992), Freeway Park, Seattle (1972), Bryant Park (1988), and the northern sections of Grant Park (from 1997) – are becoming increasingly common. Just as common is the operation of newer parks as centres of cultural activity, notably Paris' Parc de la Villette, Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord and the Westergasfabriek, privately operated as an event venue under a management system termed 'cultural entrepreneurship.'

Two comparable examples in China are the 11-hectare Zhongshan Shipyard Park in Guangdong province (2001) and the 7-hectare Xujiahui Park in Shanghai (2002). The shipyard park, designed by Turenscape, retains and represents numerous references to the site's former use, and is dedicated to former shipyard workers. Equally, the focal point of the design by Williams-Asselin-Ackaoui for Xujiahui Park is the retained chimney from a brickworks that formerly occupied the site. What we are seeing, then, even in still-heavily-industrialised China, is the emergence of new parks that are designed to demonstrate their industrial past.

Over the last fifteen or so years, many major city parks have become (not always welcome) targets of the tourist industry – like Barcelona's Park Güell, New York's High Line and Central Park (primarily the southern end), Berlin's Tiergarten (particularly the eastern end), and Vancouver's Stanley Park – now formally defined a 'destination park'. This has led to complaints about excessive numbers of tourists, often encouraged by web sites like TripAdvisor (Central Park is the #1 attraction and The High Line is the #9 attraction of 1,086 'things to do' in New York City as of August 2017). But this level of interest is not altogether surprising given the long-established practice of using parks as instruments of city marketing. It has been one of the justifications for the establishment of parks since the 1850s, when Robert Brown Minturn

(1805-1866), a merchant who had travelled widely in Europe, called for the establishment of a park (the eventual Central Park) in New York, with support from William Cullen Bryant, editor of the *New York Evening Post* and landscape designer Andrew Jackson Downing. Similarly, as noted earlier, the Plan of Chicago cited numerous European examples as well as the park system from the McMillan Plan for Washington. And the city-wide network of parks in Kansas City, designed by George Edward Kessler (1862-1923), was seen as a vehicle for marketing the city in much the same way as the current *Structural Vision: Amsterdam 2040*.[26]

Two other early justifications for large urban parks – improvement of mental and physical health (promoted by Olmsted and upheld by Rachel and Stephen Kaplan and many others) and impact on real estate values (again, promoted by Olmsted and upheld by Crompton 2007) – have also retained their currency. And in the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries they have been supplemented by growing imperatives to convert despoiled land and other relics of a profligate human past into sites of recreational and ecological value. This is now as apparent in Chinese examples as it is in Europe and North America.[27]

## CONCLUSION

This paper argues that changing attitudes to cities impacted on the planning and design of urban parks, largely in the western world, since 1900. This has been an evolutionary process determined as much by synchronous political and economic circumstances as by specific events. Whereas nineteenth-century parks upheld a bucolic, pastoral model, politicians, park administrators and designers adopted a more programme-driven approach to park provision and programming after 1900. This is demonstrated by a pattern of funding and management of urban parks underpinned by a belief that they could address the ill effects of industrialised urbanization, particularly in terms of young men's fitness for war.

As the twentieth century progressed, parks were increasingly regarded as integral, symbiotic components of cities, rather than simply as places of escape from them. At its most extreme, this is reflected in their role as safety-valves after traumatic events – illustrated by Golden Gate Park becoming a refuge after the San Francisco earthquake in 1906 or the Hamburg Stadtpark becoming a base for the homeless after World War II. Sites allocated for use as urban parks continued to be land that was not ideal for real estate development – particularly post-industrial

sites – and the physical form, programming and facilities within urban parks continue to reflect the social, political and design *zeitgeist*.

Park usage has grown significantly in the twenty-first century, and parks continue to be valued for the economic, ecological and health benefits that they bring to increasingly urbanized populations globally. These include promotion of urban renewal and raising the value of neighbouring real estate. Public urban parks continue to contribute to climate amelioration by lowering ambient temperatures, by filtering-out air-borne pollutants, and by supporting sustainable drainage strategies. They also make a major contribution to physical and psychological health – through physical exercise and through the calming effect of green plants – roles that they have performed since their inception in the nineteenth century.

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The essay also draws extensively on previous publications by the author, particularly:

- *Typology and Built Environment*, (PhD Thesis, Edinburgh College of Art / Heriot Watt University, 2010)
- *Great City Parks*, (Routledge: Abingdon, Oxon and New York – Second Edition, 2015).