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Modern Intellectual History, 17, 4 (2020), pp. 1009–1040 © Cambridge University Press 2018
doi:10.1017/S1479244318000434

BRITISH COMTISM AND MODERNIST DESIGN*

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Scholars of political thought, sociology, and the arts have yet to fully explore the impact of positivism on modernist design theory and practice. This paper offers an intellectual history of the works of three generations of positivist sociologists who built on each other's works. They are Auguste Comte and Richard Congreve, Frederic Harrison and Charles Booth, and Patrick Geddes and Victor Branford. These actors developed different types of sociological survey, established a network of urban interventions, and proposed a series of planning programs and manifestos. It will be argued that their intention was to systematically reconcile international and domestic issues to realize a modern eutopia. Following this analysis, it will be shown that a similar language and practice appeared in the work of a diverse range of such modernist designers as Patrick Abercrombie, Sybella Gurney Branford, Louis Sullivan, H. P. Berlage, and Le Corbusier, among others.

The word "positivism" is often associated with the excesses of modernity. It immediately evokes notions of unbending logic, coldhearted statistics, and a soulless indifference to the senses and the emotions. The word is sometimes identified with intellectual elitism, scientistic types, and rigid classifications that relay a dispassionate cruelty towards otherness. The negative consequences of positivism on the world are not limited to callous stereotypes regarding race and gender; they surely extend to the technological progress enabling mass surveillance and war in the age of intelligent machines.[1] The word is also linked to the creation of a corporate international style of architecture that was bland,

* Many thanks to the various reviewers who contributed to this piece, especially those affiliated to this journal and the Utopian Studies Society Europe.

1 Iñaki Ábalos, *The Good Life* (Barcelona, 2001); Arturo Ardao, "Assimilation and Transformation of Positivism in Latin America," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24/4 (1963), 515–22; Allen L. Woll, "Positivism and History in Nineteenth-Century Chile," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37/3 (1976), 493–506; Ralph Lee Woodward, ed., *Positivism in Latin America, 1850–1900* (Lexington, 1971); Leopoldo Zea, *Positivism in Mexico* (Austin, 1974).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244318000434 Published online by Cambridge University Press

disorienting, and alienating.[2] (Think, for instance, of Monsieur Hulot's world in Jacques Tati's film *Playtime*.) Along these lines, the architectural theorist Iñaki Ábalos has argued that the "progressive" and "ahistorical" ideology of the positivist philosopher Auguste Comte (1798–1857) is culpable for the "most atrocious" forms of twentieth-century thought.[3]

This study explores the spatial design ideas and practices that connect Comte's British followers. They preceded and perhaps prepared the groundwork for the events of the twentieth century. But their worldview and daily experiences of Victorian life were very different to our own, and they anticipated a very different experience of tomorrow than we do today. In its own time, Comtean positivism was not without its critics, curiosities, and crudities.[4] Positivism nonetheless served as an inspiration for such well-regarded Victorians as Annie Besant, George Eliot, William Morris, Harriet Martineau, Florence Nightingale, John Ruskin, and Beatrice Webb.[5]

The most thorough study on organized positivism is T. R. Wright's *The Religion of Humanity* (1986). Exploring the reasons why such Victorians may have found Comte's work so alluring, Wright explained that positivism represented a "belief in universal regeneration to be brought about by the new 'master-science' of sociology." This belief was expressed in terms of "an international level opposition to imperialism, and on a national scale raising the dignity of labour."[6] Along these lines, Comte introduced the word "altruism" in association with his "Religion of Humanity" and its veneration of space, earth, and humankind. The architectural theorist David Smith Capon has similarly argued that as a "doctrine of relationships," Comte's "new humanism" aimed to "counteract the dehumanizing influence of industrial society." Positivism aimed to help Victorians understand the shifting and evolving relationships between humanity, nature, and the machine.[7]

2 See, for instance, Eric Paul Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928–1960* (Cambridge, 2000).

3 Ábalos, *The Good Life*, at 69.

4 See, for instance, J. M. Ludlow, "No. VII. Two Lay Dialogues," in *Tracts for Priests and People* (London, 1861), 50; Thomas Henry Huxley, *Lay Sermons* (London, 1870), 88, 153–91; John Stuart Mill, *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte* (New York, 1887).

5 Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, 2009), 10; Thomas Dixon, *The Invention of Altruism* (Oxford, 2008); T. R. Wright, *The Religion of Humanity* (Cambridge, 1986); Michael D. Calabria and Janet A. Macrae, eds., *Suggestions for Thought by Florence Nightingale* (Philadelphia, 1994). None of these figures came close to becoming "complete" and steadfast adherents of organized positivism.

6 Wright, *The Religion of Humanity*, 66, 110, 219, 255.

7 David Smith Capon, *Architectural Theory*, 2 vols. (New York, 1999), 2: 285–6, 1: 140.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244318000434 Published online by Cambridge University Press

It seems, then, that Comte was attempting to introduce a sociological humanism that could provide an alternative to the more revolting effects of his era. It was a response to the patriotic chauvinism, bald materialism, and waste and suffering associated with the crisis of faith and the survival of the fittest mode of political economy that permeated the globe.[8] Comte deemed a comprehensive vision for social reorganization to be the only worthy and meaningful response to such crises. He accordingly provided an immense amount of detail about the "withering away of the state" and the inner workings of his utopia, the Occidental Republic.[9] As with Marx's critique of "utopian socialism," Comte offered this complete vision of a new earth for the purposes of pulling at the purse strings of the bourgeoisie.[10]

For such reasons, Comte's comprehensive approach to creating the positivist "city of the future"[11] shares affinities with the grand designs proposed by various early twentieth-century modernist architects and planners.[12] As the architectural theorist Mark Wigley has explained, the moderns aimed to deliver a "total design."[13] Along these lines Comte's follower the polymath Frederic Harrison wrote that positivism was at once a pedagogy, a religion, a philosophy, a system of government, and a phase of socialism based on sociology.[14] Indeed, while the Religion of Humanity is often treated as synonymous with the word "positivism,"[15]

8 Oscar A. Haac, ed., *The Correspondence of John Stuart Mill and Auguste Comte* (Oxon., 1995), 5; Edward R. Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society* (New York, 1916), 18.

9 Richard Vernon, "Auguste Comte and the Withering-Away of the State," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45/4 (1984), 549–66.

10 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London, 2002); Auguste Comte, *Appel aux conservateurs* (Paris, 1855).

11 Franck Alengry, *Essai historique et critique sur la sociologie chez Auguste Comte* (Paris, 1900), 261.

12 The modernist period in architecture and urbanism typically dates between the 1890s and the 1970s.

13 Mark Wigley, "Whatever Happened to Total Design?", *Harvard Design Magazine* 5 (1998), 1–8.

14 Frederic Harrison, *The Philosophy of Common Sense* (London, 1907), 44–5; Harrison, *National Social Problems* (London, 1908), 428.

15 The religion is the best-documented aspect of the movement. See Frederic Harrison, "The Religion of Humanity," *Positivist Review* 234 (1912), 120–30; Dr Munro and J. Carey Hall, "Rationalists and the Religion of Humanity," *Positivist Review* 236 (1912), 184–7; Gladys Bryson, "Early English Positivists and the Religion of Humanity," *American Sociological Review* 1/3 (1936), 343–62; James H. Billington, "The Intelligentsia and the Religion of Humanity," *American Historical Review* 65/4 (1960), 807–21; T. R. Wright, "George Eliot and the Religion of Humanity" (unpublished D.Phil., University of Oxford, 1977); Martha S. Vogeler, "Frederic Harrison and the Religion of Humanity," *Ethical Record* 83/10 (1978), 3–6; Andrew Wernick, *Auguste Comte and the Religion of Humanity* (Cambridge, 2001); Linda C. Raeder, *John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity* (Columbia, 2002);

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this essay argues that along with sociology it was integral to realizing Comte's utopia. Thus, with their applied sociology and republican creed,[16] Comte's British followers believed they could reconcile global and local conflicts by creating a worldwide network of city-states called the Occidental Republic. Comte set out this utopian vision in his four-volume *Système de politique positive* (1851–4).[17] Here the philosopher claimed that his global scheme was firm in its principles but flexible in detail, and, as we will see, it seemed to involve a participatory practice of place making (or perhaps particularized world making).[18]

The impetus for this essay was Wright's suggestion that positivist ideas percolated from Comte's works and into those of such "pioneers" of regional planning as Patrick Geddes, Charles Booth, and Ebenezer Howard. This perspective appears to be at odds with the interpretations of some scholars of regionalism, sociology, and design history who often trivialize or neglect the impact of positivism on such thinkers.[19] The late planning historian Sir Peter Hall, for instance, has situated Howard, Booth, and Geddes under

F. J. Gould, "Positivism as a Religion of Hope," *Positivist Review* 280 (1916), 76–83; John Edwin McGee, *A Crusade for Humanity* (London, 1931); Jane M. Style, *Auguste Comte, Thinker and Lover* (London, 1928); R. Paula Lopes, *Auguste Comte* (Paris, 1946); Warren Sylvester Smith, *London Heretics* (London, 1967).

16 Auguste Comte, *System of Positive Polity*, 4 vols. (London, 1875–7), 1: 123–4; Henri Gouhier, *La jeunesse d'Auguste Comte et la formation dur positivisme*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1970), 2: 58–61, 3: 407. Comte called the "true principle of republicanism" a state where "all forces ... work together for the common good." The proclamation of a republic, he maintained, meant that each citizen devotes "all his faculties" to "the public welfare." He aimed to achieve this mode of republicanism chiefly through the cultural celebrations of the Religion of Humanity. Henri Gouiher argues that the Religion of Humanity was based on the secular religions of the French Revolution, which aimed to establish a new republican culture.

17 The "Occidental Republic" is referred to as the "Republic of the West" in English translations of Comte's *Système de politique positive*, a work that that I will refer to as *System*. The first volume of *System* was published as *A General View of Positivism* in 1848.

18 Comte, *System*, 4: 7; Duncan Bell, "Marking and Taking Worlds," in Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, eds., *Global Intellectual History* (New York, 2009), 254–79. Comte wrote, "When succeeding generations come to need more detailed rules, they will draw them from moral science," the Religion of Humanity, "by the aid of an advance in sociological science."

19 Julian Wright, *The Regionalist Movement in France, 1890–1914* (Oxford, 2003), 141; Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge, 1983), 21. Also see Johannes Feichtinger, Franz L. Fillafer, and Jan Surman, eds. *The Worlds of Positivism* (Cham, 2018), 5; Volker M. Welter, *Biopolis* (Cambridge, 2002); Helen Meller, *Patrick Geddes* (London, 1990); Noah Hysler-Rubin, *Patrick Geddes and Town Planning* (London, 2011).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244318000434 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the rubric of the "anarchist roots" of the "planning movement."[20] On the other hand, while exploring the emergence of the modern metropolis, the late urbanist Edward Soja has suggested that its creation was the result of the coordinated contributions of sociologists, designers, engineers, physicians, artists, public officials, and concerned citizens. Soja claimed that it was Comte's now long-forgotten "manifesto"—the Occidental Republic—that forecast how the cooperation of such practitioners led to the realization of a vast number of modern "metropolises." This mode of urbanization was "elaborated, diffused and reinvented all over the world" during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[21] Arguably, the basic template here was the garden city,[22] which had its roots in the medieval system of community-making. The positivists were central to reviving this discourse. In a similar vein the planning historian Stanley Buder has written that the garden city eutopia was rooted in "Comtean thought"; it called for a "cadre of selfless, enlightened businessmen to direct social change by reconciling social inequities."[23] The garden city concept percolated into the work of the Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne (CIAM),[24] and its figurehead Sigfried Giedion hailed Comte as "the prophet of the scientific era."[25] Accordingly, this study will extend the research of Wright, Soja, and the late planning historian Clyde Weaver, who argued that the efforts of Comte, Le Play, and Geddes constituted a "sociology strand" of the "precursors of regional planning."[26]

Using an intellectual-history method, this study draws on scarcely used source material to provide a contextualized account of the motivations and intentions of

20 Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow* (Oxford, 1988), 3. Indeed, Geddes held links to anarchists, like other positivists, who considered Kropotkin's works a valuable introduction to Comte's utopian thinking. See Mary Alice Bridges, *Recollections of John Henry Bridges* (privately published, 1908) 256; Prince Kropotkin, *Ethics*, trans. Louis S. Friedland and Joseph R. Piroshnikoff (New York, 1924), 249–51; Ernest Belfort Bax, *A Handbook of the History of Philosophy* (London, 1886), 368.

21 Edward W. Soja, *Postmetropolis* (London, 2000), 67, 75.

22 F. J. Osborn, *Green-Belt Cities* (London, 1946), 39; Keele University, Le Play House Papers (KU-LP/11/8/7), ff. 186–207. Geddes warned in 1907 that speculative builders and architects could bastardize the garden city idea worldwide by promoting their work as a "garden city" without it having been set out on a sociological foundation. Osborn seemed to be confirming that this had become the state of play in 1946.

23 Stanley Buder, *Visionaries and Planners* (Oxford, 1990), 33, 170; Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, Ebenezer Howard Papers, DE/Ho/F3/10, ff. 11–12. Gustav Spiller, *The Ethical Movement in Great Britain* (London, 1934) 164. Howard expressed his keenness for positivism at the Letchworth ethical society.

24 Konstanze Sylva Domhardt, "The Garden City Idea in the CIAM Discourse on Urbanism," *Planning Perspectives* 27/2 (2012), 173–97.

25 Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture* (Cambridge, 2002), 233.

26 Clyde Weaver, *Regional Development and the Local Community* (New York, 1984), 31.

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six citizen sociologists affiliated to organized positivism. They are Auguste Comte and Richard Congreve, Frederic Harrison and Charles Booth, and Patrick Geddes and Victor Branford. It will be shown that these positivists were building on each other's works, beginning with questions of international conflict, then national social problems, and thereafter the contradictions of regional and civic life. These actors sought to realize positivist eutopias by linking together and mediating such fragmented socio-spatial levels. Thus it will be argued that by developing different methods of "applied sociology," they were determined to "republicanize" all levels of life, from the international level down to the household unit. A similar approach is relayed in John Scott and Ray Bromley's brilliant study *Envisioning Sociology*. Although they pay little heed to Comtism, the authors show that Geddes and Branford examined life as a "series of nested structural levels," layered from international and national relations down to civic and household interactions.[27]

As suggested, however, the aim of this study is not to silo disciplines but to connect Comtist sociology and political thought to modernist spatial design. It will thus present positivism as an early "modern movement" of sociology, architecture, and planning. This treatment follows the evolutionary, movement-based historiography of modernism set out by such design historians as Reyner Banham, Ulrich Conrads, and Charles Jencks.[28] We will see that the positivists, inspired by a vision of the future, developed different types of sociological survey to address interrelated social and spatial problems. They established urban spiritual interventions—positivist schools, churches, and halls. Here they fleshed out programs and manifestos for social reorganization that were imbued with Comte's utopian principles. We will then turn to explore the ways in which the language and practice of positivism seem to have informed the works of those sometimes called the "masters of modernism."

COMTE AND CONGREVE: REPUBLICAN INTERNATIONAL POLICY

In their age of revolution, empire, and capital the positivists believed that modern civilization was on the cusp of radical change. According to the late architectural historian Joseph Rykwert, modern humanism opens with the founding father of social democracy and positivism, Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825). The philosopher envisioned several transnational urban infrastructural

27 John Scott and Ray Bromley, *Envisioning Sociology* (Albany, 2013), 90–1.

28 Charles Jencks, *Modern Movements in Architecture* (London, 1985); Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (London, 1960); Ulrich Conrads, ed., *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture* (Cambridge, 1971). Refer to Jencks's "evolutionary tree" of the "modern movements."

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projects,[29] in association with the emergence of a "meritocratic, managerial, free-market society."[30] It was while he was the secretary to Saint-Simon that Comte developed a historical type of sociological survey of Western society, which pointed to the rise of such a "positive era."

Comte and Saint-Simon traced the withering away of monotheistic and monarchic powers since the medieval period; science and industry, they proclaimed, were the new modern "spiritual and temporal" power structures of modernity. A "Newtonian elite" of scientists could assume the role of the "papal and theological" power. What was required, however, was a "positive doctrine" based on a hierarchical classification of the "sciences of observation," which linked the natural and human worlds.[31] With such a doctrine, this scientific elite could coordinate the activities of moral, social, and political affairs, and would thus supersede the "papal and theological" powers. Saint-Simon outlined how the positive science of "social physiology"—what Comte later called "sociology"—would play a central role to this process.[32]

In the wake of the July Revolution, Comte introduced this science in his famous six-volume *Cours de philosophe positive* (1830–36).[33] Sociology would constitute the first of two premier human disciplines within his classification of the sciences.[34] By the 1848 Revolution, Comte had turned more fully to the second premier science: morality. Indeed, with the rise of historicism during the nineteenth century, it was not uncommon to treat science, ethical questions, and even religion as compatible.[35] Comte established the "Positivist Society" and the "Religion of Humanity," the latter of which built on the reasonings within Saint-Simon's *Nouveau christianisme* (1825). Here Saint-Simon proclaimed that it was necessary to create a "social state in which science will again assume a religious character" and to pursue "the great end" of the amelioration of the "poorest classes."[36]

29 Saint-Simon proposed a Panamanian link between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and to connect Madrid to the Guadalquivir river and the Atlantic Ocean.

30 Joseph Rykwert, *The Seduction of Place* (Oxford, 2000), 62.

31 Claude Henri de Saint-Simon, *Oeuvres*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1868), 53, 210–4; Comte, *System*, 4: 500–2, General Appendix, ii; Claude Henri de Saint-Simon, *Catéchisme des industriels* (Paris, 1823), 59; Saint-Simon, *Du système industriel* (Paris, 1821), iii–x, 22–62; Saint-Simon, *Du système industriel, 2e partie* (Paris, 1821), 8–10.

32 Émile Durkheim, *Socialism* (New York, 1962), 134; Claude Henri de Saint-Simon, *Oeuvres*, vol. 4 (Paris, 1868), 11–96.

33 Auguste Comte, *Cours de philsophie positive*, vol. 4 (Paris, 1839), 294.

34 The sequence of the classification, from simplest to complex natural sciences, is astronomy and mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology.

35 Frank M. Turner, *European Intellectual History from Rousseau to Nietzsche* (London, 2014), 94.

36 Claude Henri de Saint-Simon, *New Christianity* (London, 1834), 7.

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Similarly, Comte and his followers declared that the positivist sciences could spur a "moral revolution" that would answer the "question of modern times," the "incorporation of Woman and the Proletariate [*sic*] into Modern Culture."[37]

As suggested, Comte's subsequent works, especially the *System*, elaborated on a utopia-planning manifesto called the Occidental Republic. It offered a new thirteen-month calendar associated with a range of cultural festivals celebrating "great men" not limited to Aristotle, St Paul, Muhammad, Dante, Descartes, and Newton. It also included a scheme for new regional currencies, a global banking system, ethical codes, new types of architecture, and, among other items, a flag system. This global utopia would come to fruition beginning with an international pact in which all nations agree to return their colonial possessions and refrain from warfare. Like Marx, Comte thought that social reorganization was to begin not out in the clear as utopian experiments, but in urban centers.[38] Comte's planning programme called on citizen sociologists to organize a network of spiritual interventions in town and country. These positivist societies, led by a sociological clergy of intellectuals, would serve as the critical spatial agency for preparing the mind-set for the Positive Era. This perspective reflects the young Marx's comment that only a "fully developed humanism" would enable all to coexist as social beings, in association with his famous line, "As the revolution began in the brain of the monk, so now it begins in the brain of the philosopher."[39] As the hub of the local community and catalyst for structured social change, each positivist society was to act as a centre for regional sociology, institute of humanist scholarship, and republican hall of social activism.[40] The next part of Comte's programme was like the proposals of the French communist Étienne Cabet in that each nation would then install a dictatorship of the proletariat.[41] In Comte's programme, this Cromwellian figure would be counselled by the positivist society.

37 Comte, *System*, 3: 523; C. G. Higginson, "The Incorporation of the Proletariate into Modern Society," *Positivist Review* 51 (1897), 68–72; Victor Branford, *Outlines of the Sociology of London* (London, 1908), 14.

38 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. Gareth Stedman Jones (London, 2002).

39 Karl Marx, *Early Writings* (London, 1992), 348.

40 Auguste Comte, *Correspondance inédite d'Auguste Comte*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1904), 326–8; Henry Edger and M. John Metcalf, *Lettres d'Auguste Comte à Henry Edger et à M. John Metcalf* (Paris, 1889), 13–14; Roger Wunderlich, *Low Living and High Thinking at Modern Times, New York* (Syracuse, 1992), 164–71; Gillis J. Harp, *Positivist Republic* (University Park, 1995), 23–30. The activities here ultimately would include festivals, lectures, lessons in the arts, craft guild training, and women's clubs. The societies would serve as social investigation centres for regional place-making, in which the positivists fleshed out programs and manifestos for social reorganization that were imbued with Comte's utopian principles.

41 H. A. C. Collingham, *The July Monarchy* (London, 1988), 67–8, 345–75.

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The dictatorship would dissolve after the rearing of a new generation of "moral capitalists," trained in connection with the positivist society and its offshoots. From this generation, the newly formed city-states or republics would elect their commerce, manufacturing, and agriculture chiefs. Comte wildly believed that as a result of these activities, the Occidental Republic would consist of five hundred peaceful city-states within a century's time. Each city-community would have the character of a small salubrious state with a clear distinction but tight interrelationships between *polis* and *khôra*. Each republic, with a land area comparable to Belgium, would contain around two million people.[42]

For Comte, the utopian "spirit of devotion to the public welfare" could only be kindled in republics of a limited spatial scale. The positivist republic would facilitate a particular type of private and public life with places that, in the Aristotelian sense, enable all to fulfil their human potential. Their spatial scale and social contract promised that the individual could participate in determining "precisely what it is that the common good requires" via historical, geographical, and social investigation. The body politic would play a pivotal role in the republic, providing "facts" to establish a "recognized Code of principles, an adequate Education, and a healthy direction of Public Opinion."[43] To encourage participatory forms of spatial production, Comte prepared an architectural typology—a study of building types—in which different architectural forms signaled social power for different users. "Spiritual types" such as intellectuals, artists, and physicians would hold social power within universities, schools, hospitals, and homes, and from here they would contribute to governing aspects of spiritual life within the city-region.[44] Here, all citizens would hold functionally differentiated power roles in the cooperative process of producing the urban social fabric of the republic,[45] as a form of "positivist

42 Comte, *System*, 4: 267.

43 Comte, *System*, 1: 123–4.

44 Victor Branford and Patrick Geddes, *Our Social Inheritance* (London, 1919), 35–7.

45 J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge, 2002), 42. Auguste Comte, *Catechism of Positive Religion* (London, 1858), 349; Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1993–2009), 2: 10. Scholars of republicanism note that the public thing, the "*res publica* or the *polis*," operated according to a functional mode of *partecipazione* where "public authority" was a matter of "public right." The life of the *zoon politikon* involved "participation, equality, and *ruling and being ruled in turn*." The global confederation of republics or city-states would be linked through the "spiritual" power of intellectuals, as a "sociocracy," or rule by sociology. Comte's biographer, Mary Pickering, has demonstrated that the philosopher was a misogynist, but aspects of his work attempted obscure his views. He suggested that mothers should occupy the "first rank in [the] Sociocracy" of his eutopia. The mother's role as "Priestess of Humanity," alongside the elders of the

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republicanism."[46] Along these lines the British positivists treated Comte's ideas as "spatial formulae" for a "realisable eutopia."[47]

The key British protagonist who presented positivism in this light was the Aristotelian scholar Richard Congreve (1818–99). Congreve established organized positivism in Britain, was the first to promote Comte's utopian ideas to critique British foreign policy, and was one of Britain's first sociologists. Congreve first encountered positivism at Oxford during the 1840s. Together with the poet Arthur Clough and the future Member of Parliament John Blackett he explored the implications of the works of such fleeting positivist sympathizers as Thomas Carlyle, J. S. Mill, George Grote, George Henry Lewes, and Émile Littré.[48] Mill's celebrated *A System of Logic* (1843) championed the "study of social phenomena on the true principles of the Historical Method," the same method on which sociology was founded. And in reference to Comte's *Cours*, Mill recommended the establishment of a scientific "sociological system" to "accelerate … natural progress."[49] Lewes's *Biographical History of Philosophy*, also in Congreve's purview, discussed how an "élite of humanity" would soon emerge to develop and apply Comte's sociological laws, and create a sense of unity between philosophy, science, and religion.[50] On seeing Comte's *Catéchisme*

home, "is to breathe into [men and children] the dispositions most in harmony with their public duties"; husband and children would act as the mother's "theoretical and practical servants."

46 Mark Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism* (Princeton, 2011), 17; J. G. A. Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton, 1975); Pocock, *Three British Revolutions* (Princeton, 1980); Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*; Royden Harrison, *Before the Socialists* (London, 1965), 3–4, 210–339; Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire* (London, 1968); Jose Harris, "Epilogue: French Revolution to Fin de Siècle: Political Thought in Retrospect and Prospect, 1800–1914," in Gareth Stedman Jones and Gregory Claeys, eds., *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge, 2010), 893–933, at 896. Tracing the discourse of "civic virtue" set out by J. G. A. Pocock, historians have shown that the language of "Atlantic republicanism" percolated from the works of Machiavelli through to the American revolutionists and the creation of a large "commercial republic," and on down to the nineteenth century, where it can be found driving the efforts of British radicals and Chartists. From the mid-1850s to the mid-1880s positivism became the predominant language of Victorian politics by way of injecting "republican sentiments" into discussions of domestic labor conditions and social reform. This discourse of the "moralisation of capital" and empire then passed from the positivists and into the works of such thinkers as H. M. Hyndman, E. Belfort Bax, and Edward Bernstein.

47 Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics* (Cambridge, 2010), 3, 102–17, 273–84.

48 Oxford University, Bodleian Library, Richard Congreve Papers (OUBL-CP), MS.Eng.lett.c.185, ff. 130–44.

49 John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic*, vol. 1 (New York, 1856), 586–7.

50 George Henry Lewes, *The Biographical History of Philosophy*, vol. 4 (London, 1846), 256.

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positiviste (1852) Congreve, then an Oxford don and Anglican minister, resigned his post, renounced his holy orders, and moved to Wandsworth, London. From the mid-1850s he produced a succession of works resonating with "the truth": positivism.[51] His sociological surveys were rooted in historical–geographical analyses that tested Comte's "sociological law" about the rise and fall of ancient empires. Here he promoted the use of a "map without names" to diagnose and treat international relations, and he accordingly baulked at the study of "English History from a purely national point of view."[52]

Congreve's *General Western History* (1853), for instance, examined the correlation between spiritual unity and the coexistence of independent small states across Europe. Like Saint-Simon he praised the "admirable utopias" of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, namely Henry IV's plan for a Christian republic and the Abbé de Saint-Pierre's project for perpetual peace, or "confederation of all the sovereigns of Europe."[53] Congreve put particular emphasis on the plan composed by the king of France, Henry IV, because it captured the sympathy of Elizabeth, the queen of England. In the interpretation of Congreve, the plan aimed at "ordering the states of Europe in one great federal system, *the Republic of the West* [the Occidental Republic], a modification of the policy of Charlemagne, but essentially a continuation of it."[54] A pact between France and England would initiate a greater European alliance including Italy, Spain, and Germany.[55] Together these states would return their colonial assets, refrain from warfare, and implement Comte's internal framework for social reorganization.[56]

Congreve subsequently issued a study that situated Comte's work as an extension of Aristotle's *Politics*. Aristotle, wrote Congreve, had provided the "foundation and ancient master-work" of "social science," a discipline that "exercises its legitimate control over all subordinate studies." Yet Aristotle's analysis of the ideal *polis* did not serve as a "guide or type for the re-organization of society." It was not "sociology"—an applied ethical science for urban social planning.[57] Sociology, claimed Congreve, was of "direct political interest" to

51 OUBL-CP, MS.Eng.misc.c.349, f. 52.

52 Richard Congreve, *Essays, Political, Social, Religious*, 3 vols. (London, 1874–1900), 3: 529–769.

53 Saint-Simon, *Oeuvres*, 1: 176–7; Francis Harry Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace* (Cambridge, 1980), 102–4.

54 Congreve, *Essays*, 3: 651.

55 Congreve made these suggestions during the Crimean War. He thought that a union between Europe's two great rivals– France and England– in warfare could commit to a peaceful European social reorganization.

56 Comte, *Catechism*, 337, 57; Congreve, *Essays*, 3: 529–769.

57 Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle with English Notes* (London, 1855), x–xviii.

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Victorian life for the reorganization of empires into "complete" regions that would operate in a manner similar to the Aristotelian polity.[58]

To prepare the intellectual and cultural groundwork for life in the independent regional city-states of the future, Congreve thereafter established the first Church of Humanity in London. He simultaneously founded the British Positivist Society the same year, in 1859—just two years after he had gained instant infamy by publishing a succession of polemics against British affairs in Gibraltar and India. He went on to defend the Irish, the Paris commune, the Egyptians, the Jamaicans, the Boers, the Afghans, and the Ugandans against foreign aggression. While Britain continued to annex various territories during the 1860s and 1870s, Congreve published a programme that came to be known as "systematic policy."[59] Based on his historical–geographical surveys, the policy proposed that positivist societies could organize a guardianship of nations to facilitate pan-European devolution.[60] The societies would also lead surveys for town and country improvements in the direction of home rule. They would offer free public education, civic rites of passage following the Religion of Humanity, art lessons, concerts, and festivals.[61] Congreve's policy sought to moderate the powerful individualistic forces driving imperialism while establishing a collective sense of regional identity.[62] From the 1860s through to the late 1890s, Congreve helped found positivist urban interventions in Birmingham, Cambridge, Leicester, Manchester, north London, Newcastle, Dublin, and Edinburgh.

Along these lines, the cultural historian Donald Drew Egbert has explored the similarities between the works of Congreve and the nineteenth-century architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, who expounded one of the first significant theories of modern architecture rooted in the Gothic characteristics of honesty, organicism, and authenticity. Egbert writes that Congreve "sought to form a priesthood which in positivistic fashion would see to it that science and technology were used for

58 Ibid., xxiv. Also see Congreve, *Essays*, 2: 356, 3: 488–9, 701–4; Harriet Martineau, "The Religion of Positivism," *Westminster Review* 69/136 (1858), 305–50.

59 Congreve, *Essays*, 1: 107, 201–8, 3: 107–18.

60 The suggestion to establish a "guardianship of nations" to break up empires peacefully became a positivist trope. *Bee-Hive*, 7 Jan. 1871; *Daily News*, 7 Jan. 1971; OUBL-CP, MS.Eng.Misc.a.10, f. 32; Congreve, *Essays*, 1: 74–80; *Daily News*, 23 Feb. 1882; N.A., "An Anti-Aggression League," *Saturday Review* 53/1374 (1882), 224–5; Congreve, *Essays*, 2: 453; *Daily News*, 12 Jan. 1886.

61 *The Reasoner*, 5 May 1861; Congreve, *Essays*, 3: 521–4, 771–83, 1: 375–83; Comte, *System*, 1: 262; S. H. Swinny, "The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Positivist School," *Positivist Review* 178 (1920), 273–80; BL-PP, Add.MSS, 43,844, ff. 3–34; *TG*, March 1869; Frederic Harrison, *The Creed of a Layman* (London, 1907), 293–4; E. G. W. Bill, *University Reform in Nineteenth-Century Oxford* (Oxford, 1973), 118–23.

62 Richard Congreve, *Two Addresses* (London, 1870); BL-PP, Add.MSS, 45,243 ff. 3–9.

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the good of all, for in his highly clerical thought, medievalism and technology were interrelated in a manner not unlike that of the anti-clerical French architect-archaeologist Viollet-le-Duc."[63]

Congreve's positivist "missions" sought to encourage a view of society in which "the social peace essential to progress" depended on an altruistic "acceptance by the body politic of a socioeconomic hierarchy," rather than the arbitrary rules and nepotism of ancient regimes.[64] These "missions" took on various forms of architecture. As indicated they emerged with the intention to establish sociologists as the "intellectual" or "spiritual" authorities for organizing independent communities. Congreve's anti-imperialism was thus part of a wider agenda; uniting national industrial "temporal" institutions was proportionately important to the positivists' social project. During the late 1850s, after all, Comte had urged his acolytes to implement his utopian vision by way of uniting workers under the banner of trade unionism, to form a "systematic connection with the socialist movement towards internal regeneration."[65]

HARRISON AND BOOTH: SURVEYING NATIONAL AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS

From the 1860s to the 1900s the barrister and sociologist Frederic Harrison (1831–1923) continually sought to unite, vindicate and coordinate workers by promoting Comte's utopian industrial system.[66] Harrison was introduced to the positivist view of trade unions and the reconstruction of the city-region while he assisted Congreve, who was his former Oxford tutor, with his study *The Politics of Aristotle with English Notes* (1855).

Harrison previously followed in the footsteps of John Ruskin, who appreciated the Gothic lifestyle that produced the medieval landscape.[67] As suggested, Saint-Simon and the positivists held that science wielded the capacity to mend social relations, and would take on the role once held by the medieval church. Harrison continually referred to the merits of medieval life, its quality architecture, its social relations, and the spatial scale of its urban and country realms.[68] On this

63 Donald Drew Egbert, *Social Radicalism and the Arts* (New York, 1970), 417.

64 Rykwert, *The Seduction of Place*, 62.

65 John K. Ingram, ed., *Passages from the Letters of Auguste Comte* (London, 1901), 163.

66 Harrison, *National Social Problems*, 262.

67 Frederic Harrison, *Autobiographic Memoirs*, vol. 1 (London, 1911), 53; Harrison, *John Ruskin* (London, 1902), 61–2.

68 Auguste Comte, *A General View of Positivism* (London, 1908), 326–86; Harriet Martineau, ed., *Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, vol. 3 (London, 1896), 42; Harrison, *Autobiographic Memoirs*, 53.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244318000434 Published online by Cambridge University Press

basis the positivists were concerned with establishing meaningful and fulfilling modes of social production. In Comte's utopia, trade unions were the "temporal power"—the modern equivalent of medieval guilds.[69] Harrison praised Comte's idea of renewing this connection since, under the medieval clergy, guilds offered the "constant sense of each citizen having his place in a complex whole," and the city was replete with "centres of moral and spiritual education."[70] Yet in the mid-nineteenth century, trade unions were considered a menace to society.

During the 1860s' "social war" between capital and labor, Harrison set out on national industrial surveys to document working conditions, hours and wages, education, pastimes, beliefs, and living conditions.[71] Publishing his findings in scientific journals and Parliamentary proceedings, he aimed to legitimize, systematize, and strengthen the institution of trade unionism.[72] In 1867, he was appointed to the Royal Commission on Trades Unionism, which questioned the legality of unions, their misuse of funds, and alleged links to the Sheffield and Manchester Outrages.[73] Harrison contributed to the minority report which redeemed trade unions from criminal activities and substantiated them as independently functioning and legally binding entities.[74] His recommendations, though not without modification, served as the basis for trade union law from 1868 to 1906. Throughout this thirty-eight-year period, trade union leaders, notably George Potter, George Howell, and George Shipton, were known to seek out the positivists' counsel.[75] Like the relationship between the medieval clergy and

69 Comte, *System*, 1: 134.

70 Frederic Harrison, *The Meaning of History* (London, 1894), ii–iii, 54–8, 236.

71 *National Review*, Oct. 1860; National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, *Transactions, 1860* (London, 1860), 54. This war centred on the scuffles between the Master Builders' Society and trade union operatives working on architecture and urbanism projects for the 1862 international exhibition.

72 National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, *Transactions, 1861* (London, 1862), 717–21, 95–6; *The Times*, 15 July 1861, 22 July 1861; BLPES-HP 1/8, ff. 17–20; Frederic Harrison, "Lancashire," *Westminster Review* 24/1 (1863), 191–219; Harrison, *Autobiographic Memoirs*, 323.

73 E. S. Beesly, "The Trades' Union Commission," *Fortnightly Review* 2/7 (1867), 1–18, at 1; Beesly, *The Sheffield Outrages* (London, 1867); Richard Congreve, *Mr. Broadhead and the Anonymous Press* (London, 1867). The inquiry was a "symptom of the enormous social revolution" of modern times, according to Beesly, who stirred immense controversy and nearly lost his post at University College London by suggesting that the Sheffield murders were no less immoral than the Jamaican Mutinies.

74 Harrison, *Autobiographic Memoirs*, 323.

75 George Howell, *Labour Legislation, Labour Movements and Labour Leaders* (London, 1902), 128.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244318000434 Published online by Cambridge University Press

guilds, the positivists' were positioning themselves as a socioeconomic arbiter. But not always did union leaders heed their advice.[76]

During the late 1860s and early 1870s, the London Trades' Council nonetheless invited Harrison, Congreve, and Beesly to deliver lectures at their meetings. Following Congreve's lead, Harrison took the opportunity to prompt trade unionists to reorient the focus of the aristocracy away from offshore exploits to a civilizing mission at home.[77] In response to the "New Social Movement" of the 1870s, where George Potter urged workers to seek out "improved dwellings for the people" to "rescue" working-class families, Harrison published a planning framework entitled "Our Social Programme."[78] He recommended devolving England into a network of regional industrial republics. Based on Congreve's suggestions, Harrison's remedy for national social problems was regional sociological investigations, the municipalization of industry, a secular humanist public education system, and cultural programs.[79] Here, the national municipalization of industry—of factories, the post office, rail, roads, bridges, harbors, piers, docks, and lighthouses—was of paramount importance. The operations of the city-region, conducted by a unionized workforce and by a moral authority, would furnish the capital to expedite urban renovations. Strike funds would finance mid-rise, mixed-use housing units, transport links, neighborhood educational facilities, playgrounds, and civic spaces.[80] Harrison's social programme equally promoted "Home Rule All Around," and he celebrated the Local Government Act of 1888 by producing writings that envisioned "Ideal London."[81] The London County Council soon thereafter appointed Harrison

76 Frederic Harrison, "The Trades-Union Bill," *Fortnighly Review* 6/31 (1869), 30–45; London Metropolitan University, London Trades Council, 2/2, f. 174; *The Times*, 14 March 1874; *Bradford Observer*, 20 March 1874; Bishopsgate Institute Library, George Howell Papers, 1/11, f. 20.

77 British Library of Political and Economic Science, Frederic Harrison Papers (BLPES-HP) 2/2, ff. 16–17; Frederic Harrison, *Order and Progress* (London, 1875), 152–237.

78 George Potter, "The First Point of the New Charter," *Contemporary Review* 18/1 (1871), 547–58, at 547.

79 Harrison, *Autobiographic Memoirs*, 251; Frederic Harrison, "Our Social Programme," *Positivist Review* 13 (1894), 1–5.

80 Harrison, "Our Social Programme."

81 Frederic Harrison, "Ideal London," *Contemporary Review* 74 (1898): 139–52; Comte, *System*, 4: 380; Frederic Harrison, *Memories and Thoughts* (London, 1906), 284; Harrison, *The Meaning of History*, 247–51, 414–31. Like Comte, who outlined a "collective system" of mixed-use, multi-family housing blocks, Harrison described "the future working homes of our great cities" as "a scientific system of tenements." He imagined detached six-story blocks accommodating thirty families, with spaces for communal cooking, washing, bathing and disporting to supplement those of each flat. Each block would also contain

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to design the Kingsway Boulevard, which permitted trade unionists to begin rebuilding their city. This was the "largest scheme of town improvement that had ever been placed before Parliament, and [involving] the principle of "recoupment" to a larger extent than in any previous case"; it was the first major urban intervention in London since Regent Street in 1820.[82]

The urban cartography of the positivist sociologist Charles Booth (1840–1916) proved indispensable to various London "improvement schemes," including Kingsway, which recast the "black and blue" areas of the St Giles district by creating a Haussmann-esque boulevard that offered improved communications, attractions, and housing between Holborn and the Strand. Booth's social survey called *Life and Labour of the People in London* (1889–97)—covering poverty, industry, and religion—was a monumental extension of the positivists' sociological studies of "spiritual and temporal powers." As early as the 1870s, Booth was infatuated with Comte's scientific system of "benevolent intervention."[83] He wrote a little-known confession of adherence to the Religion of Humanity and a "Positivist Prayer," but more broadly he also published articles in defense of Comte's ideas in *The Colony*, his family's home journal.[84] Under the influence of his own cousins Albert and Henry Crompton, as well as Congreve, Harrison, and Vernon Lushington, Booth became a positivist.[85]

During the economic calamities of the 1880s, the captains of industry accepted Harrison's invitation to contribute to the social investigations of the Mansion House Committee. Witnessing severe distress, he felt the urge to repay his "debt to humanity."[86] The successful steamship company owner turned "scientific sociologist." Booth was determined to use his resources to diagnose and treat the conditions of the "bitter outcast," the sick, elderly, and idle. His urban regional social survey of London drew on the ideas of Comte and the empirical methods of the Saint-Simonian social scientist Frédéric Le Play.[87] From the 1880s

spaces for education, health care, craft, and worship. Transport links, libraries, museums, parks, schools, hospitals, and cemeteries would all remain within walking distance.

82 London County Council, *Opening of Kingsway and Aldwych* (London, 1905), 3–5. Harrison complained of the greed and collusion of the county council, speculative builders, and architects who cut housing to an over-crowded minimum. Also against Harrison's advice, they built Bush House instead of creating a plaza along the north-northwest side of the St Mary-le-Strand Church. Harrison angrily resigned.

83 Mary Booth, *Charles Booth: A Memoir* (London, 1918), 8–9.

84 Senate House Library, Charles Booth Papers (SHL-BP), MS.797/II/26/15, ff. vii, ix; SHL-BP, MS.797/II/24/6, ff. 7, 15–19.

85 Booth, *Charles Booth*, 8–9, 95–8.

86 SHL-BP, MS.797/II/26/15, ff. xi–xiv.

87 Charles Booth, "Life and Labour of the People in London: First Results of an Inquiry Based on the 1891 Census," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 56 (1893), 557–93; Charles

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to the 1900s, Booth and his team compiled studies on "urbanisms in embryo" and figures on housing conditions, redundancy, and old age, in attempts to form a complete picture of the urban regional condition.[88] Although it is rarely acknowledged, Booth's survey findings in *Life and Labour of the People in London* claimed that overcrowding was *the* "evil"—"the great cause of degeneracy," in British centers. And there were few means of escape. Overcrowding was the "source for demoralization" within the body politic. This "moral weakness" in the urban fabric, wrote Booth, "is the prolific, if not the main source of unemployment."[89]

From the 1890s, Booth's survey findings sought to shape public consensus on a comprehensive combination of proposals called limited socialism. First, Booth proposed a system of "labour colonies" to decongest towns, to train workers, and to encourage family life.[90] Next, he promoted "new unionism" for unifying skilled and unskilled labor; his positivist colleagues celebrated this new unionism or "socialist unionism" as a step in the direction of workers forming the true industrial "temporal power" of Comte's utopia.[91] Also similar to the ideas of Comte and Le Play, Booth thereafter proposed a system of old-age pensions as a social safety net.[92] Lastly he advocated a new policy of infrastructural urbanism—managed by a land-development authority—to temper speculative slum building.[93] Effectively, limited socialism aimed to address the ethics of poor industrial, financial, and urban land management. If his wife Mary is to be believed, Booth's recommendations in *Life and Labour of the People in London* were influenced by Comte's works, which seems to confirm the position of the *Positivist Review*—that he led a "faithful life."[94]

Booth, Ernest Aves, and Henry Higgs, *Family Budgets* (London, 1896), 5–11; Michael Z. Brooke, *Le Play* (London, 1970), 9–12, 55–8, 166–7.

88 Charles Booth, "Occupations of the People of the United Kingdom, 1801–81," *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* 49 (1886), 314–444; Booth, *Labour and Life of the People*, vol. 2 (London, 1891), 262–96; Booth, *Pauperism* (London, 1892), 166–7, 200.

89 Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*, vol. 9 (London, 1904), 234–80, 309.

90 Charles Booth, *Labour and Life of the People*, vol. 1 (London, 1889), 163–70.

91 *Northern Echo*, 26 Aug. 1889, 169; Booth, *Labour and Life of the People*, 1: 169; Frederic Harrison, "The New Trades-Unionism," *Nineteenth Century* 26 (1889), 721–32; Congreve, *Essays*, 2: 594.

92 Booth, *Pauperism*, 166–7, 200; Comte, *System*, 1: 130; Charles Booth, *Old Age Pensions and the Aged Poor* (London, 1899), 36–42, 67–8.

93 Charles Booth, *Improved Means of Locomotion as a First Step towards the Cure of the Housing Difficulties of London* (London, 1901), 1–23; *The Times*, 15 Feb. 1901.

94 Mary Booth, *Charles Booth*, 95–98; S. H. Swinny, "Two Faithful Lives: Charles Booth and Alasdair Geddes," *Positivist Review* 315 (1919), 286–7. Also compare Comte, *System*, 1: 128–9; Booth, *Life and Labour*, 9: 165–71.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244318000434 Published online by Cambridge University Press

GEDDES AND BRANFORD: REGIONAL AND CIVIC RESUSCITATION

The dapper Scottish polymath Patrick Geddes (1854–1932) developed a regional survey based on a synthesis of the sociological methods of Comte, Le Play, and Booth, which addressed the severed links between town and country life. Before becoming a positivist sociologist, he had begun studies of biology under the evolutionary thinker and critic of positivism Thomas Huxley. Unconvinced of Huxley's "onslaught on Comte" in *Lay Sermons* (1870), Geddes sought out Congreve at the Church of Humanity in London.[95] And, under Congreve's direction,[96] his early essays discussed the links between biology, community, and economics.[97] Following the agrarian ideas of the Physiocrats, as presented by Ruskin, Geddes suggested that the laws of biology provided the basis for establishing ethical regional communities. Collecting biological and social facts about the environment would enable one to index "natural wealth" and set out planning forecasts.[98] Geddes was not only elected a member of the London Positivist Society during the 1880s, but he also raised his children to worship "Humanity."[99]

Along these lines, during the 1890s Geddes led an "almost Positivist" summer school in Edinburgh. It offered the "sociologic teaching" of outdoor education by way of regional surveys.[100] Students documented the lives of "civic and rustic types of people"[101] based on his interpretation of Comte's and Le Play's works.[102]

95 Susan Liveing and Patrick Geddes, *A Nineteenth-Century Teacher* (London, 1926), 11; Congreve, *Essays*, 2: 225; Patrick Geddes, "A Current Criticism of the Positivist School," *Positivist Review* 343 (1921), 145–9. In response to Huxley's *Lay Sermons* (1870), Congreve described Comte's *System* as the "definitive construction" of sociological science. Geddes later criticized his colleagues for not more fully advancing the complete system of positivism.

96 OUBL-CP, MSS.Eng.lett.c.186, ff. 98–146; OUBL-CP, MSS.Eng.lett.e.57, ff. 136–9. Geddes recalled that Congreve's intellectual impact on him was a "revelation." Congreve, in fact, regarded Geddes as "my prospect"—the leader of a Scottish positivist society.

97 Patrick Geddes, *The Classification of Statistics* (Edinburgh, 1881), 12, 23–9; University of Strathclyde, Patrick Geddes Papers (US.T-GED) 9/18, f. 176; US.T-GED 2/5/19; US.T-GED 2/5/20.

98 Patrick Geddes, *John Ruskin* (Edinburgh, 1884), 14, 26–7.

99 British Library of Political and Economic Science, London Positivist Society Papers, 1/1, ff. 1–4; Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 3: 571; Swinny, "Two Faithful Lives."

100 Victor Branford, "The Edinburgh Summer Meeting," *Positivist Review* 12 (1893), 215–20.

101 As suggested, Comte's "civic types" were those who lived in cities. They consisted of the "Spiritual power" of intellectuals and emotionals, and "Temporal power" of industrial chiefs and trade unionists. Le Play's "rustic types" were those who lived outside the city proper.

102 Victor Branford and Patrick Geddes, *Our Social Inheritence* (London, 1919), 35.

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Following Comte, Geddes held that civic "spiritual types"—called Emotionals and Intellectuals—would oversee education and culture in such spaces as universities, schools, salons, markets, and homes. Temporal types—called Chiefs and People—would maintain obligations to business and politics in such spaces as banks, factories, fields, workshops, and union halls. The positivists depicted Comte's civic types of the city as complementary to Le Play's rustic types of the countryside: miners, woodsmen, hunters, shepherds, peasants, farmers, and fishermen.[103] These spiritual and temporal types would rule in turn in relation to their respective spaces within the city-region. Moreover, Geddes's regional survey also built on Booth's "great example," his monumental investigation of London, which formulated "civic policy through city survey" by way of the "interpretation of the conditions of the city of the present."[104] For Geddes, the first order of the regional survey, as such, was to deal with social "evils"—to "face and cope" with the "poverties and diseases, ignorance and follies, vices and apathies, crimes and indolences" of modern urbanism.

By the mid-1890s, Geddes had opened his Outlook Tower in Edinburgh and it became a living archive of "sociological facts" collected during his regional surveys. He called this exhibit an "Encyclopedia Civica," and it explained the past and present of the people and their region. Its purpose was to inform planning schemes for harmonizing individuals, institutions, and the environment.[105] He held that a national and international network of civic societies like the Outlook Tower could plan regional wholes, foster inclusive public government, and initiate imperial devolution.[106] (This idea was introduced by Comte and, as we will see, later absorbed by Geddes's protégés, Lewis Mumford and Patrick Abercrombie.) Geddes employed his sociology-before-planning approach in response to the dilapidated dens of the Edinburgh Old Town and as a response to the refugee crisis in Cyprus.[107]

103 S. H. Swinny, "Comte and Le Play," *Positivist Review* 298 (1917), 223–31.

104 NLS, MS.10556, ff. 109–125, at 109. Also see Patrick Geddes, *The Civic Survey of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1911), 537; Geddes, "The City Survey," *Garden Cities and Town Planning* 1 (1911), 276–85; Patrick Geddes and Gilbert Slater, *Ideas at War*, (London, 1917), 208; Patrick Geddes, *City Development* (Edinburgh, 1904), 35, 213.

105 Patrick Geddes, "The Influence of Geographical Conditions on Social Development," *Geographical Journal* 12/6 (1898), 580–6; Geddes, *Education for Economics* (Manchester, 1895).

106 Geddes, *Education for Economics*, 1–28, 47; Lewis Mumford, *The Story of Utopias* (New York, 1922), 233; Comte, *System*, 2: 302–6, 4: 257–95; Patrick Abercrombie, "A Civic Society," *Town Planning Review* 8/2 (1920), 79–92.

107 Patrick Geddes, "Cyprus, Actual and Possible," *Contemporary Review* (June 1897), 3–19.

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Positivist sociology also served as the basis for Geddes's comprehensive scheme to transform the Scottish town of Dunfermline into a garden city-state.[108] Celebrating the ideals of humanity and nature, Geddes's scheme proposed an ecological strategy that promised to remediate the length of the polluted Tower Burn stream, which ran through the park and off into the river Forth and the North Sea. Offering new planting and habitat zones, this revitalized natural waterway corridor would string together what would soon become, in Geddes's mind, a chain of new "garden towns and villages" throughout the coastal region. This idea was similar to Frederick Law Olmsted's "emerald necklace" plan in Boston. As a Garden Cities Association member, and later its vice president, Geddes insisted that the group organize the region's development in full detail. It was a matter of "transcendent importance not only to local but to general progress."[109] Such projects rallied support for the Town Planning Act of 1909.[110]

By 1907 and into the 1910s Geddes made it clear that he believed that architects were by no means prepared for a "world-wide" town-planning movement. Many architects, he claimed, had "never heard and certainly never thought of town planning at all." He feared that in their hands "town planning" would amount to further ecological devastation: landscapes of repetitious enclaves lacking uniqueness and culture, surrounding "decaying or anemic" urban cores.[111] Central to this discussion was Geddes's idea of the "civic observatory," a center concerned with creating the city-region anew.[112] The primary purpose and significance of the Outlook Tower, Geddes reiterated at the 1910 Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) town-planning conference, was to operate as a "civic observatory" for this kind of "concrete politics."[113] A global network of such civic societies, or "Civicentre(s) for sociologist and citizen," would exhibit the efforts of Howard as well as such international planning innovators as Josef Stübben,

108 Geddes, *City Development*, 1–3, 21–35, 166, 221; NLS, MS.10612 ff. 2, 18, 22, 25; Comte, *System*, 4: 274–5. Assuming the role of an "urban hygienist" and offering a synoptic view of Dunfermline life, he stepped beyond the boundaries of the park experiment. He articulated positivist ideas through an array of illustrative media: a topographic model, photographs, and architectural drawings. Geddes aimed to "spiritualise" the body politic by making Dunfermline a "pioneer in education" and "social betterment," which included a new version of Comte's "Temple of Humanity." Altogether "park and gardens and culture institutes" would serve as a "Cathedral of the People," enabling Dunfermlinians to more fully participate in the making of their modern town anew, as the capital of a garden city-state.

109 Geddes, *City Development*, 3, 20, 98, 210.

110 Royal Institute of British Architects, *Transactions: Town Planning Conference London, 10–15 October 1910* (London, 1911), 66–71.

111 KU-LP/11/8/7 ff. 186–207.

112 Patrick Geddes, *Cities in Evolution* (London, 1915), 96, 207–10, 52.

113 Patrick Geddes, *The Civic Survey of Edinburgh* (Outlook Tower, 1911), 537–57.

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Camillo Sitte, and Daniel Burnham; organize transnational tours of urban redevelopment projects; and praise foreign planning advances in the local press. These centers would prepare regional surveys, publish investigations on human–ecological alienation and exploitation, and implement planning programmes to ring in the Positive Era.[114]

From the late 1890s, Geddes's partner Victor Branford (1863–1930) disseminated applied sociology for planning regional city-states throughout Britain's colonies and the Americas. He was a founding member of the Sociological Society and developed an "art of polity-making" called "city design." This art put ultimate emphasis on the self as the sociological agent for social transformation; it called for something of a religious conversion, where young idealists would employ applied sociology as the footing of consensus-based place making.[115]

Branford was essential to the institutionalization of "applied sociology." He was among the founding members of the first intellectual institution in Britain to have in its name a word related to "sociology," the Sociological Society.[116] Founded in 1904, the organization furthered sociology as a modern academic discipline in association with the University of London, which was offering the first-ever sociology seminars in Britain. The society was in fact underwritten by the Positivist Society, among other groups, and it served as the meeting ground for economists, geographers, politicians, philosophers, and writers. The three-volume *Sociological Papers* (1905–7) is graced by the commentary of such celebrity intellectuals as Ebenezer Howard, Émile Durkheim, L. T. Hobhouse, Bertrand Russell, William Beveridge, and H. G. Wells. Here three distinct parties of eugenicists, applied sociologists or town planners, and ethical evolutionaries debated the meanings and methods of sociology. Scholars have attributed the immediate origins of the first party (eugenicists) to the sociological works of Charles Darwin and Francis Galton, the second party (planners) to Booth and Geddes, and the third party (evolutionaries) to Herbert Spencer and Hobhouse.[117]

114 Sociological Society, *Sociological Papers*, vol. 2 (London, 1906), 92–3; Patrick Geddes, "Two Steps in Civics," *Town Planning Review* 4/3 (1913), 78–94.

115 Victor V. Branford, "A Craft University," *Athenaeum* 1/4626 (1918), 79–82.

116 NAPSS, *Transactions, 1861*, 3; N.A., *Journal of the Dublin Statistical Society*, vol. 1 (Dublin, 1856), 322–23; N.A., *Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society, Session 1858–9* (Manchester, 1859), 70–71; Victor Branford, *Interpretations & Forecasts* (New York, 1914), 373. There were various social-science and statistical groups but they generally refrained from considerations of sociology. Branford explained that unlike true sociologists, they remained "unilluminated by reference to the constructive and directive formulae of the main founders of sociology . . . they put to sea without a compass."

117 A. H. Halsey, *A History of Sociology in Britain* (Oxford, 2004), 9–11, 248; Chris Renwick, *British Sociology's Lost Biological Roots* (New York, 2012), 3–8; Philip Abrams, *The Origins*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244318000434 Published online by Cambridge University Press

In 1907, the Sociological Society Cities Committee was formed by Branford and Geddes to promote the sociological survey as preparatory to transforming industrial towns into proper, self-sufficient regional garden city units. For Branford, the method of applied sociology was equivalent to a new religious faith that generated a "new civic spirit." It transformed demoralized denizens into caring and socially responsible citizens by way of their participation in the survey process. And the result, he believed, would become the creation of eutopias, or real idyllic regions. The "art of constructing idealistic Utopias," Branford similarly explained, was "based no longer on poetic dreams and personal aspirations, but on a systematic study of immediate possibilities disclosed by scientific and historical investigation."[118] Similarly, the positivist sociologist J. H. Bridges recalled Comte's popular statement at the Sociological Society: "the Systematic formation of Utopias will become habitual; on the distinct understanding that as in every other branch of art, the ideal shall be kept in subordination to the real."[119] On the work of Geddes and Branford, Lewis Mumford similarly added that Comte's "great formula is implicit in the method of the regional survey: See to foresee: foresee to provide."[120]

Having been influenced by the works of Comte, Ernest Mach, and James Ward, Branford had set out to link science, faith, and citizenship. As indicated, the regional survey method was *the link*—a "sacred way"—a process of self-actualization for living the good life.[121] As an ethical entrepreneur, Branford also saw the survey as the basis for planning agricultural and industrial processes leading to regional autonomy. From the late 1890s and into the 1900s he surveyed life in various South American outposts. Fixated on creating small states with the character of the Positive Era, his business ventures connected telephone, rail, road, and waterway hubs; housing; and industries to cultural centers.[122] Along similar lines, Branford, following the ideas of the agricultural cooperator Horace Plunkett, argued that a West Indian mutual credit scheme would facilitate the sharing of equipment, promote agronomic diversification,

of British Sociology, 1834–1914 (Chicago, 1968), 101–43; R. A. Kent, *A History of Empirical Sociology* (Aldershot, 1981), 91–98; Noel Annan, *The Curious Strength of Positivism in English Political Thought* (London, 1959).

118 Victor V. Branford, "A Sociological Approach towards Unity," in James Edward Hand, ed., *Ideals of Science and Faith* (London, 1904), 103–56, at 136–7.

119 Sociological Society, *Sociological Papers*, vol. 1 (London, 1905), 142.

120 Lewis Mumford, *Values for Survival* (New York, 1946), 153.

121 Victor Branford, "Survivals and Tendencies in the University," *Sociological Review* 7/1 (1914), 1–8.

122 Ibid.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244318000434 Published online by Cambridge University Press

moderate soil depletion, and minimize dependency on British trade.[123] Such projects underpinned Branford's budding theory of city design.

Based on the works of Comte, Congreve, Geddes, the socialist Thorstein Veblen, and the historian William MacDonald,[124] Branford's theory of city design addressed the two competing psychologies of formalism and idealism. He controversially claimed that the Sociological Society was the heart of idealism and applied sociology. During the great industrial unrest of the 1910s, Branford encouraged idealists of different vocations to unite and to contribute to cooperative-economics schemes, to finance new place-making projects associated with the garden cities movement. Branford incorporated these thoughts into his post-World War I reconstruction program called the "Third Alternative." Here citizen groups led by "university militants," as envisioned by the American activist Charles Ferguson, would participate in regional surveys and propose solutions for such problems as housing deficiencies, industrial gridlock, rural decline, and despondency.[125] The Bank of England and cooperative societies would finance the total reconstruction of the nation as the "moral equivalent of war," in which case moralized "banker-statesmen" could facilitate the "central concept of realisable ideals as regional Utopias."[126] Like other positivists, Branford claimed that the postwar "neotechnic era" would comprise the government of women, where science and industry operate on the basis of a spirit of decentralized self-reliance and civic responsibility.[127]

According to Branford's Third Alternative, each region would produce a "policy of culture" that might entail the construction of new universities, schools, and cultural institutions; urban and rural working-class houses alongside shops,

123 Horace Plunkett, *Ireland in the New Century* (London, 1904), 226–52; Victor V. Branford, *An Undeveloped Estate of the Empire* (London, *c.*1899), 3–14.

124 Branford, "A Sociological Approach"; Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York, 1934); Victor Branford, "The Founders of Sociology," *American Journal of Sociology* 10/1 (1904), 94–126.

125 Branford, *Interpretations and Forecasts*, 301–56.

126 Victor Branford, "The Mobilisation of National Credit," *Sociological Review* 7/4 (1914), 307–14, at 312; Sociological Society Cities Committee, *Papers for the Present, No. 2: The Banker's Part in Reconstruction* (London, 1917–19), 1–33, at 4. The Bank of England would consolidate the activities of the Co-partnership Tenants Limited, Agricultural Organisation Society and Urban Banks Association to enable shopkeepers, artisans, and craftspeople to receive credit. Branford claimed that the unification of the nation's financial system mirrored Comte's vision. Idealist financiers, Branford imagined, could act as civic functionaries – a "hieratic craft" of "social selection," "directing and controlling communitary life and welfare."

127 Frederick J. Gould, *Auguste Comte and Positivism* (London, 1916), 9; Victor Branford, *Whitherward? Hell or Eutopia* (London, 1921), 1–59; Sociological Society Cities Committee, *Papers for the Present, No. 9: The Drift to Revolution* (London, 1919), 42.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244318000434 Published online by Cambridge University Press

entertainment venues, and workplaces; parks, railways, canals, harbors, docks, and warehouses; and forestation, drainage, and land-reclamation improvements. Each region would also create its own architectural language, currency, and festivals, and thus provide an enhanced individual and social life suited to each locality.[128] Branford was proposing the devolution of the British empire into garden city-states linked through a world university system. With the regional survey as their educational method, the university elite would provide practical education to craft guilds, thus making city-design initiatives possible. Yet they would also arbitrate international and domestic affairs relating to industry and public life.[129] This approach to postwar reconstruction, Branford and Geddes acknowledged, drew on Comte's "practical treatise," the Occidental Republic.[130]

During the postwar period, British town planners and geographers maintained that "the real wealth of nations resides now, as ever, in the self-sufficient region, in its people and in their power to achieve a right distribution of functions."[131] Along these lines Geddes and Branford's follower, the regional planner C. B. Fawcett, proposed to devolve England into twelve provinces, each with its own metropolis or regional capital. Using applied sociology and geography Fawcett aimed to "reverse the disastrous separation of town and country" and the "delusional nature" of financial imperialism.[132] The town planner H. V. Lanchester, meanwhile, explained that sociology had at least two central functions in the spatial design process. Sociology guided "those in charge of municipal improvement and development" and informed the design of a civic museum created for, and by, the townspeople.[133]

Sybella Gurney Branford (Victor Branford's wife) and Alexander Farquharson conducted geographical, economical, and anthropological surveys during the postwar period, alongside other representatives of the Le Play House in London,

128 Sociological Society Cities Committee, *Papers for the Present, No. 2*, 1–17.

129 Sybella Branford, "An Industrial Symposium," *New Age*, 7 Dec. 1916; W. Anderson, "Regionalism and an Educational Guild," *New Age*, 12 Oct. 1916; Victor V. Branford, "Ora Labora," *The Times*, 11 Aug. 1920.

130 V. Branford, "Towards the Third Alternative," *Sociological Review* 11 (1919), 62–5; Sociological Society Cities Committee, *Papers for the Present, No. 7: The Third Alternative* (London 1917–9); Sociological Society Cities Committee, *Papers for the Present, No. 14: Earth, Hell, and the Third Alternative* (London, 1919); Victor Branford and Patrick Geddes, *The Coming Polity* (London, 1917), 52.

131 E. W. Gilbert, "Practical Regionalism," *Geographical Journal* 94/1 (1939), 29–44; C. B. Fawcett, "Natural Divisions of England," *Geographical Journal* 49/2 (1917), 124–35; Le Play Society, *The Tradition of Le Play* (London, n.d.), 1–4, at 4.

132 Charles Bungay Fawcett, *Provinces of England* (London, 1919), 27.

133 H. V. Lanchester, *Town Planning in Madras* (London, 1918), 18.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244318000434 Published online by Cambridge University Press

which was an offshoot of the Outlook Tower.[134] The three-part anthropological survey (demographic, sociographical, and psychological) reflected the positivist tradition. Here, the sociographical survey was used to investigate "Spiritual Associations," "Temporal Associations," "Undifferentiated Associations," and "Integrated Associations of Communities."[135] Along these lines, Geddes and Branford's followers Lanchester and the "pioneer of British town planning" Patrick Abercrombie acknowledged Comte and Le Play as founding the "French school" of regional sociology. Following positivist ideas, they advocated the careful coordination of town and country units into coherent communities. Here such intellectual and cultural infrastructure as schools, colleges, civic associations, sociological institutes, and universities would serve as the center of each contemporary neighborhood community.[136]

As members of the Sociological Society Cities Committee, Abercrombie, Lanchester, and the Branfords organized conferences with a network of local "civic societies" during the mid-1920s. Abercrombie maintained that the chief purpose of these societies was to help "co-ordinate the whole field" of historical, geographical, and civic survey work in town and country. These volunteer citizen groups would "increase civic consciousness and help forward the progress of decentralisation which is the foundation of local advancement" and "local patriotism." They would "carry on a campaign of reconstruction propaganda" and offer "constructive criticism" on local planning affairs. Their aim would be to keep authorities informed of "public opinion" on "everything that concerned the welfare of the citizen" and to help establish a "comprehensive plan of development" for their city-region.[137] This intellectual and cultural infrastructure, originating with the Positivist Hall, intended to unite and mobilize groups of university-led citizen sociologists. As Abercrombie explained, such civic societies would "project a curve into the future" to inform postwar reconstruction initiatives, which entailed the democratic creation of new communities with integrated transport links, work, housing, and public spaces.[138]

134 See Matthew Wilson, "A New Civic Spirit for Garden City-States: On the Lifework of Sybella Gurney," *Journal of Planning History* 20/10 (2018), 1–25.

135 Sybella Branford and Alexander Farquharson, *An Introduction to Regional Surveys* (London, 1924), 1–17, 32–46.

136 Victor Verasis Branford and Patrick Abercrombie, *The Coal Crisis and the Future* (London, 1926); Patrick Abercrombie, *Town and Country Planning* (London, 1959), 9–130; Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (London, 1940), 351.

137 Abercrombie, "A Civic Society," 82.

138 Patrick Abercrombie, "The Basis of Reconstruction," *Town Planning Review* 7/3–4 (1918), 203–10, at 210.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244318000434 Published online by Cambridge University Press

A MODERN MOVEMENT AND ITS IMPACT

One fundamental problem in terms of situating Comte and his British followers as a modern movement of spatial design is that their mode of practice was ultimately not that of the T square, but chiefly that of the written word and the sociological survey.[139] Some historians have nonetheless presented positivism in architectural discourse as the critical link between the eighteenth-century neo-Gothic rationalism of Viollet-le-Duc, the primitivist theories of Gottfried Semper, and twentieth-century architectural design.[140] The evidence provided below is not in support of positivism as *the stimulus* to modernism, but a contributing factor among others in how modernists thought about their work.

Positivism appears to have made a lasting impact on the language used by modern designers. The architect Louis Sullivan, for instance, expressed a positivist view of history, politics, and science. Science, claimed Sullivan, was the "power to put forth our WILL—in place of Destiny. This is the spiritual dawning power of Democracy."[141] Following Comte, he asserted that sociology should become the "gravitational center of all the sciences; and a philosophy or gospel of democracy, the motive power of the world." Sociology offered a "salvation of man and society." Like the positivists, he believed sociology could make democracy a "living thing"; it would transform architecture, which had been "made a plaything for long enough," into a "living force"—an art for and by the people.[142]

Like the positivists, Sullivan's protégé Frank Lloyd Wright claimed that the machine is "here to serve Humanity," as a "means to more life, and greater life, for the Commonwealth." The machine would "conquer human drudgery"; it was a symbol of "spiritual liberation" and collectivism, and a tool of democracy.[143] In the positivist tradition, Wright announced that the home was an essential unit for internalizing in children modern civic manners and values. His Broadacre City project reflects many ideas compatible with the positivists' rustic domain of the city-region. Here, life in small self-sufficient communities blurs the distinction between politics, work, and recreation. Wright aimed to achieve

139 Matthew Wilson, "On the Material and Immaterial Architecture of Organised Positivism in Britain," *Architectural Histories* 3/1 (2015), 1–21.

140 Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Architectural Theory: an Anthology from Vitruvius to 1870*, vol. 1 (London, 2006), 353–9, 90–94, 506–15; Alan Colquhoun, *Collected Essays in Architectural Criticism* (London, 2009), 167–8; Capon, *Architectural Theory*, 2: 285–6; Martin Bressani, *Architecture and the Historical Imagination* (Farnham, 2014), 270.

141 Louis Sullivan, *Democracy* (Detroit, 1961), 136; David S. Andrew, *Louis Sullivan and the Polemics of Modern Architecture* (Chicago, 1985).

142 Louis Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats and Other Writings* (New York, 1978), 65–102; Paul Sherman, *Louis Sullivan, an Architect in American Thought* (Englewood Cliffs, 1962), 93.

143 Frank Lloyd Wright, *Modern Architecture* (Princeton, 2008), xi, 23, 97.

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these interconnections through landscape-centered activities associated with a nontheological "unhistorical cathedral" and "design centers" emphasizing the virtues of the agrarian good life.[144]

Meanwhile, the "father of Dutch modernism" Hendrik Petrus Berlage aired positivist political and spatial ideas from the 1890s to the 1920s. He wrote about the establishment of an "ethical settlement" founded on the spiritual concept of scientific progress. Such a settlement would produce a "new age of culture, focused on socialist principles of fraternity." Berlage's support of positivism also appears in the artwork in the vestibule of his most famous project, the Beurs van Berlage stock exchange in Amsterdam. Here Berlage commissioned the artist Jan Toorop to produce *opera sectilia* panels that depict, in a positivist fashion, "the feudal order succeeded by the class society of nineteenth-century capitalism, which itself would be succeeded by a new age of harmony and religiosity." After World War I, Berlage promoted the "religion of the new humanity" and designed a Pantheon der Menschheid, or "Pantheon of Humanity."[145] Such institutions formed part of greater discussions about how university intellectuals, guilds, and civic groups would usher in the social infrastructure of positivism.

It also appears that the "communal spaces" of Henri Labrouste's Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève were inspired by the positivists' fascination with scientific research, which, as noted above, they considered the public modern equivalent to medieval religion. Several aspects of Labrouste's design were seemingly inspired by Comte's famed "Temple of Humanity" and calendar designs for the Occidental Republic. Labrouste directed his artisans to carve into the façade panels under the reading room windows the names of the "heroes of humanity" in chronological order. This treatment illustrated the "progress of humanity" from ancient Greece and China, to Renaissance-era designers, to nineteenth-century scientists—from Plato and Buddha, to Machiavelli and Alberti, and on to Berzelius and Balzac.[146] The interior also includes busts of such "great thinkers" as La Fontaine, Molière and Pascal. A similar treatment later appeared inside Labrouste's Bibliothèque nationale de France.

In the footsteps of the positivists and John Ruskin, the German Deutscher Werkbund polemicized against laissez-faire capitalism. They believed that the national organization of guild communities could connect ethics and aesthetics. True architecture was beautiful through and through if it produced a virtuous, memorable, and meaningful way of life. The architect Herman Muthesius

144 Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Disappearing City* (New York, 1932), 76.

145 Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design*, 144; Hendrik Petrus Berlage, *Thoughts on Style, 1886–1909* (Santa Monica, 1996), 37–63, 313.

146 Berry Bergdoll, *European Architecture 1750–1890* (Oxford, 2000), 179–82; Sherry Piland, "A Positivist Reading of Labrouste Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève," *Athanor* 10 (1991), 45–51.

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accordingly aimed to make the Deutscher Werkbund the "sole arbiters of taste" in Germany.[147] Not unlike the suggestions of Harrison and other Victorian socialists in Britain, it was suggested that trade unions should mass produce modern objects of a high moral and cultural value. Along these lines Peter Behrens, the Werkbund "master of the moderns,"[148] designed the AEG's industrial identity and Turbine Factory, which represented a "factory-temple," an "endorsement of industrial civilisation."[149]

The Dutch de Stijl group upheld the idea of harmonizing love, "social order and social progress." The impetus for this desire was also informed by Helena Blavatsky's theosophy, the principles of which appeared in Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911). De Stijl's art as such represented "dynamic equilibrium," or the balancing of opposing forces in nature and society, which might be compared to the positivist motto of harmonizing "order and progress." De Stijl aimed to establish an "objective universal means of creation," a new visual environment for modern life via the device of nonfigurative abstraction.[150] Like Comte, de Stijl supporters imagined that mechanized and automated processes would decrease drudgery and stoke the emotional and intellectual identity. These processes would thus obliterate the "old consciousness" associated with individualism, ancient absolutism, and empire. Modern art, science, and machinery, as such, provided the grounds for a "new consciousness"—a universal utopian collectivism.[151] Theo van Doesburg, de Stijl figurehead, postulated in 1924 that "new architecture develops out of the exact determination of practical demands." And it was to be "anti-decorative" and "anti-formalist," which was a position forecast by Comte during the 1840s.[152]

Owing to Van Doesburg's efforts, de Stijl's universalist outlook had infiltrated the Bauhaus by the mid-1920s, and transformed it into the first true school of modernist architecture in the world. The links here are a bit more tenuous, but it seems that Bauhaus leaders used a language similar to that of Comte and his followers. Prior to de Stijl influence, the first Bauhaus director, Walter

147 Alan Colquhoun, *Modern Architecture* (Oxford, 2002), 68. Hermann Muthesius, *The English House* (London, 2007). Muthesius's celebrated study *The English House* (1904) helped to introduce positivist ideas and the English Arts and Crafts movement to German designers.

148 Behrens's firm employed Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

149 Stanford Anderson, *Peter Behrens and a New Architecture for the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 2000), 145.

150 Theo van Doesburg, "Creative Demands," in Ulrich Conrads, ed., *Programs* (Cambridge, 1971), 64–5.

151 Theo van Doesburg, Robert van't Hoff, Vilmos Huszar, *et al.*, "Manifesto I," in Conrads, *Programs*, 39–40.

152 Theo van Doesburg, "Towards a Plastic Architecture," in Conrads, *Programs*, 78–80.

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Gropius, synthesized Arts and Crafts ideas with the Marxist expressionism of the early post-World War I Arbeitsrat für Kunst (AFK) group. Led by Gropius, Bruno Taut, Eric Mendelsohn, and Hans Poelzig, this "work council for the arts" aimed to produce art and architecture for the multitudes. Like the visions of Comte, Taut, and the AFK, the latter of which promoted the architecture of an apolitical socialism, Gropius's 1919 Bauhaus manifesto exclaimed that architecture was the "crystalline expression of man's noblest thoughts, his ardour, his humanity, his faith, his religion!" Like Comte and Branford, Gropius imagined that Bauhaus guilds would build such secular spiritual spaces as a "Cathedral of Socialism." Here the Bauhaus was not concerned with the "decorative, mystical and metaphysical," wrote Gropius.[153] Instead their aim was to create a new "anti-aesthetic aesthetic that would prize functionality." Like the positivists, the Bauhaus levelled to coordinate the technical processes for unifying architecture, painting, and sculpture—to create airy and hygienic working and living spaces to avert "mankind's enslavement by machine."[154]

Comte and his followers certainly believed in the power of architecture for social reorganization. They considered it the premier art, an art capable of "bringing all the arts together into a common centre."[155] Architecture depended on "much larger cooperation" to see through its creation than the other arts, and it could stimulate the "universal sympathy" of Europe.[156] It was the means to bind the community together.[157] Along these lines Gropius claimed that architects had been "put into this world to remake humanity."[158] He maintained that the architect's work should be based on sociological knowledge, and one should strive to create a democratic "comprehensive unity" spanning from the domestic and regional domains through to national and international planning. Moreover, town planning was to "grow from the ground up, not from the top down by force," wrote Gropius.[159]

On architecture the positivists, like the Bauhaus, held that the "imitation of the ancients must come to an end, and some new form be assumed."[160] The characteristic lightness of metal and glass were readily associated with the authenticity and transparency of an emergent society led by science and industry.

153 Walter Gropius, "Programme of the Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar," in Conrads, *Programs*, 49.

154 Walter Gropius, *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus* (Cambridge, 1965), 54; Peter Galison, "Aufbau/Bauhaus," *Critical Inquiry* 16/4 (1990), 709–52.

155 Comte, *A General View of Positivism*, 327.

156 Martineau, *Positive Philosophy*, 237.

157 August Comte, *System*, 1: 123–4.

158 Walter Gropius, *Apollo in the Democracy* (New York, 1968), 61.

159 Walter Gropius, *Scope of Total Architecture* (New York, 1970), 145.

160 Martineau, *Positive Philosophy*, 244; Harrison, *Autobiographic Memoirs*, 391.

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Far less doctrinaire about form and style than many, however, Comte held that positivism must be "widely spread" before "*public wants* can show what shape edifices required must take."[161]

From 1928 the Congrès internationaux d'architecture modern (CIAM) met to develop a modern design language in association with the creation of left-leaning social programs. Giedion and other members of the congress, such as the "neo-Saint-Simonian" Le Corbusier, declared that architects and planners must fulfil their "obligations towards society."[162] The congress aimed to integrate global and local design languages through the practice of "comprehensive planning" based on Howard's and Le Corbusier's garden city visions.[163] The latter was derived from the "idealized images of the tall building" of the 1922 Ville contemporaine and the 1925 Ville voisin, which according to the historian William Curtis were "conceived not only as emblems of technological power (they were to contain the Saint-Simonian elite of his city)."[164]

Like the positivists, CIAM "believed that developments in industry and in the scientific understanding of human history and society were making possible a new social system based on universal human association."[165] CIAM sought to place architecture and town planning "morally and materially" on its "true plane," its "sociological plane." They wrote that this was necessary to plan the "organization of the functions of collective life" across town and country.[166] Their aspirations included the "rationalization and standardization" of architecture to achieve reduced working hours and higher wages as well as to shape public opinion on education, housing, and "domestic science." The congress also supported the transformation of social life, not limited to legislation to attenuate overcrowding, the control of infrastructural development, and the redistribution of the land to enable the community as a whole to benefit from "unearned increment."[167] Along neo-positivist lines, the Le Corbusier-led CIAM thought that together trade unions and international-style modern architecture could temper warfare and violence. They would harmonize "individual liberty and collective action" beginning with the study of the "initial nucleus of town planning," the home.

161 Comte, *Catechism*, 140, added emphasis.

162 Robert Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1977), 194–5, 258; CIAM, "La Sarraz Declaration," in Conrads, *Programs*, 109–13, at 109.

163 Domhardt, "The Garden City Idea."

164 William J. R. Curtis, *Le Corbusier* (New York, 1986), 63; Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900* (London, 2013), 225.

165 Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse*, 2.

166 CIAM, "La Sarraz Declaration," 110.

167 Ibid., 167.

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CIAM remained concerned with the city as a social grouping situated "within the totality of its region."[168]

A dogmatic and formulaic air of technocratic elitism, which was bent on whitewashing regional identities and cultures, while ignoring the interests of the people, became the credo of post-World War II international-style modernists and their imitators in the academy.[169] This period represented a new phase in which the avant-garde social aspirations of CIAM evaporated. The international style was coopted by global corporations harboring an obsession with the economically efficient, acontextual aesthetics of the glass box. After the CIAM Congress IX of 1953, however, the British architects Alison and Peter Smithson broke from the CIAM's new Athens Charter. These young Team X leaders advocated the "Comte–Le Play–Geddes valley section" as a template for regional field studies. Like the Branfords, they aimed to focus on appreciating "human associations" in "communities of varying degrees of complexity." Their work highlighted how analyses of "atmospheres" facilitated the creation of unique design experiences for the "isolate, village, town and city."[170]

Along these lines, Comte claimed that architecture and public spaces would emerge differently and delicately in each locality as a result of inclusive design processes suited to climate, topography, light, material resources, machinery, workforces, and public consensus.[171] Perhaps, then, it was intended as a critical collectivist and particularized act—a lifestyle fostering local and universal pride in human achievement and exhibiting a certain resistance to exploitation and corruption. With such principles in mind, one thinks of the countermodernist works of Alvar Aalto, Carlo Scarpa, Aldo van Eyck, and Ralph Erskine. In this way, positivism might be understood as a theoretical and practical impetus to an "ethical functionalism" concerned with using the machine to craft locally sensitive and meaningful responses that tend to the creature comforts.[172] But with the rapidity of scientific progress, technological production, and specialization, it is better-known today for the opposite side of the coin.

168 "Charter of Athens," in Conrads, *Programs*, 137–45, at 138, 141.

169 Lewis Mumford, *Culture of Cities*, 351.

170 Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse*, 238.

171 Edger and Metcalf, *Lettres D'Auguste Comte*, 13–14; Comte, *Correspondance inédite*, 327–8; Comte, *A General View*, 326–86; Patrick Geddes and Gilbert Slater, *Ideas at War* (London, 1917), 221.

172 Peter Eisenman, "Post-functionalism," in Kate Nesbitt, ed., *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture* (Princeton, 1996), 78–83. Stephen Moore, "Technology, Place, and Nonmodern Regionalism," in Vincent B. Canizaro, ed., *Architectural Regionalism* (New York, 2007), 432–445.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244318000434 Published online by Cambridge University Press

CONCLUSION

This essay has linked positivist political thought to modern sociology and environmental design. It has argued that the British positivists developed different types of sociological survey, established a network of urban interventions, and proposed a series of planning programs and manifestos with the aim to realize a modern eutopia. Along these lines, in promoting the notion of creating small self-sufficient republics, the positivists offered support for the concept of the town and country as a planned regional unit. Through their intellectual and cultural interventions, they upheld the notion of the learned institute as the nucleus of community life and the means for broader social transformation. As such they held that the city-community is defined by its public spaces and civic institutes; and by promoting social action and civic duty via different types of sociological survey for place-making they introduced the notion of design research as a form of activism in the fashioning of socially responsible citizens. As suggested, these aspects of positivism shaped the work of various twentieth-century designers.

In the closing section of this essay, we saw a series of primary and secondary references to the impact of the positivist movement within the historiography of modern architecture and urbanism. The sources seem to relay a pattern of positivist language related to the partially lived and partially aspired-to world of modernity: the significance of a sociologically driven design process involving the coordination of trade unions, machinery, progressive intellectual culture, and enlightened entrepreneurs. This ostensibly democratic mode of spatial production intended to bind community groups together to establish safe and wholesome living, learning, and working environments. Such references were rooted in the notion that the coordination of intellectual, cultural, political, and economic forces would improve the lives of the masses. During the 1920s Patrick Geddes nevertheless wondered how it was possible that "the man on the street is far more a positivist than he knows."[173] To suggest "we are all positivists now" was not his intention. Instead, it is likely that this was Geddes's way of suggesting that while positivist mental constructs created a commonplace language for interpreting and describing the modern world, the greater synthetic vision had been lost to the details.

173 Liveing and Geddes, *A Nineteenth-Century Teacher*, 9.

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