



Garden Cities of To-Morrow

Ebenezer Howard

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The classic work that introduced the concept of the Garden City.

Originally published in 1898 as *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* and reissued in 1902 under its present title, *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* holds a unique place in town planning literature. The book led directly to two experiments in town-founding that have had a profound influence on practical urban development around the world. The book was also responsible for the introduction of the term Garden City, and set into motion ideas that helped transform town planning.

Garden Cities of To-Morrow Details

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From Reader Review Garden Cities of To-Morrow for online ebook

Carol Spears says

This book was mostly about finances and a little about how it falls nicely between capitalism and socialism.

Only a little Utopian.

Nicole Schrag says

This book was much more philosophical/political on urban planning and less practical than I envisioned. Although he addresses the materialities of the garden city with charts, budgets, and sketches, Howard spends a lot of time explaining how he's come up with the perfect balance between socialism and capitalism and why it's the best. He also thinks he's figured out how to solve intemperate drinking (just get everyone out of depressing London smog) and unemployment, among other social ills. Remarkably ambitious for such a slim book.

Brad Cramer says

A classic in city planning history. Howard's ideas began the "garden city" movement in England and led to the "new towns" movement here in the United States. The book itself is interesting and yet tediously boring at the same time. It gave me a better appreciation of why socialism may have seemed to appealing to those in industrialized cities following the industrial revolution.

Andrea says

Ebenezer Howard's vision of garden cities has had an enormous impact upon urban planning and the development of cities around the world. Arguably, a rather disastrous one being used as a validation of endless expansion into suburbs of cul-de-sacs and meanders and the resulting sprawl. Rarely is Howard's actual vision for garden cities remembered:

The whole of the experiment which this book describes...represents pioneer work, which will be carried out by those who have not a merely pious opinion, but an effective belief in the economic, sanitary, and social advantages of common ownership of land, and who, therefore, are not satisfied merely to advocate that those advantages should be secured on the largest scale at the national expense, but are impelled to give their views shape and form as soon as they can see their way to join with a sufficient number of kindred spirits. (58)

This is a reaction to the terrible conditions of the city, and the crisis there provoked by people streaming in from the countryside:

There is, however, a question in regard to which one can scarcely find any difference of

opinion. It is wellnigh universally agreed by men of all parties, not only in England, but all over Europe and America and our colonies, that it is deeply to be deplored that the people should continue to stream into the already over-crowded cities, and should thus further deplete the country districts.

The results of this are in fact widely agreed -- Howard quotes Lord Roseberry as chairman of the London County Council (ah, the old LCC):

'There is no thought of pride associated in my mind with the idea of London. I am always haunted by the awfulness of London: by the great appalling fact of these millions cast down, as it would appear by hazard, on the banks of this noble stream, working each in their own groove and their own cell, without regard or knowledge of each other, without heeding each other, without having the slightest idea how the other lives--the heedless casualty of unnumbered thousands of men.'

Dean Farrar says:

'We are becoming a land of great cities. Villages are stationary or receding; cities are enormously increasing. And if it be true that great cities tend more and more to become the graves of the physique of our race, can we wonder at it when we see the houses so foul, so squalid, so ill-drained, so vitiated by neglect and dirt?'

He quotes labour leaders Ben Tillet and Tom Mann as well, which is nice to see.

Howard argues that to keep people from moving to the city, country towns have to provide three things -- wages that allow people a certain standard of comfort, equal possibilities of social intercourse, and opportunities for advancement...and I love this diagram and it's central question 'THE PEOPLE: where will they go?':

If we no longer wish for THE PEOPLE to come to London, what is to be done? The building of garden cities, capturing the best of all possible worlds:

a third alternative...the magnet which will produce the effect for which we are all striving--the spontaneous movement of the people from our crowded cities to the bosom of our kindly mother earth, at once the source of life, of happiness, of wealth, and of power.

But neither the Town magnet nor the Country magnet represents the full plan and purpose of nature. Human society and the beauty of nature are meant to be enjoyed together. The two magnets must be made one. As man and woman by their varied gifts and faculties supplement each other, so should town and country. The town is symbol of society--of mutual help and friendly 'co-operation, of fatherhood, motherhood, brotherhood, sisterhood, of wide relations between man and man--of broad, expanding sympathies--of science, art, culture, religion. And the country! The country is the symbol of God's love and care for man.

Thus the Garden City must be brought to birth. He has worked out just what it should look like:

[caption id="attachment_4043" align="aligncenter" width="659"] "A ground plan of the whole municipal area, showing the town in the centre..."[/caption]

My favourite part of this plan, I think, is this:

Running all round the Central Park (except where it is intersected by the boulevards) is a wide glass arcade called the 'Crystal Palace', opening on to the park. This building is in wet weather one of the favourite resorts of the people, whilst the knowledge that its bright shelter is ever close at hand tempts people into Central Park, even in the most doubtful of weathers. (4)

It does sound rather nice, I love arcades though I don't much care for shopping. What a beautiful structure that could be though. I also love the elements of sustainability built in, as this was written in a time of nowhere near so much plenty as today -- a time to which we are soon returning:

the smoke fiend is kept well within bounds in Garden City; for all machinery is driven by electric energy, with the result that the cost of electricity for lighting and other purposes is greatly reduced.

The refuse of the town is utilized on the agricultural portions of the estate, which are held by various individuals in large farms, small holdings, allotments, cow pastures, etc.... (6)

So the question arises, how are the garden cities to be built, how financed? He embarks on rents, working hard to show that building this city is a viable investment -- from a Marxist perspective it is interesting that he notes:

Perhaps no difference between town and country is more noticeable than the difference in the rent charged for the use of the soil. (9)

He mentions that this is often called the 'unearned increment' (which it is), as that is the rent increase due to the existence of more people and more amenity in its surroundings rather than anything to do with the actual land itself or what is built upon it. Howard prefers to call it the 'collectively earned increment' which I quite love and think might be a useful concept to bring back again. It reflects the fact that higher city rents are due to all of us. This collectively generated income on land is what is captured and used to the benefit of all who move to garden cities as a way to finance them.

So who shall live there? He quotes Professor Marshall's study on the "Housing of the London Poor" from *Contemporary Review*, 1884:

Whatever reforms be introduced into the dwellings of the London poor, it will still remain true that the whole area of London is insufficient to supply its population with fresh air and the free space that is wanted for whole some recreation. A remedy for the overcrowding of London will still be wanted....There are large classes of the population of London whose removal into the country would be in the long run economically advantageous; it would benefit alike those who

moved and those who remained behind...Of the 150,000 or more hired workers in the clothes-making trades, by far the greater part are very poorly paid, and do work which it is against all economic reason to have done where ground-rent is high.' (17)

Howard follows up this insight -- if these workers ought not to be in London at all given the low value of their labour on very high-rent land, then of course these factories should move and the workers paying exorbitant rents for slum houses should move with them, along with all those who exist to support their existence such as shopkeepers, schools and etc. But key to this move to the new garden cities is that:

it is essential, as we have said, that there should be unity of design and purpose--that the town should be planned as a whole, and not left to grow up in a chaotic manner as has been the case with all English towns, and more or less so with the towns of all countries. A town, like a flower, or a tree, or an animal, should, at each stage of its growth, possess unity, symmetry, completeness, and the effect of growth should never be to destroy that unity, but to give it greater purpose, nor to mar that symmetry, but to make it more symmetrical; while the completeness of the early structure should be merged in the yet greater completeness of the later development (27)

Howard was not alone in believing all of this possible. Another quote heading chapter six is of Albert Shaw, from *Municipal Government in Great Britain*, 1895:

The present evils of city life are temporary and remediable. The abolition of the slums, and the destruction of their virus, are as feasible as the drainage of a swamp, and the total dissipation of its miasmas. The conditions and circumstances that surround the lives of the masses of the people in modern cities can be so adjusted to their needs as to result in the highest development of the race, in body, in mind and in moral character. The so-called problems of the modern city are but the various phases of the one main question: How can the environment be most perfectly adapted to the welfare of urban populations? And science can meet and answer every one of these problems. The science of the modern city--of the ordering and the common concerns in dense population groups--draws upon many branches of theoretical and practical knowledge... (42)

So this is the vision -- I almost have nostalgia for such ability to believe in such grand sweeping solutions.

for more...

Jonathan says

The garden city suburb. Another attempt at imposing an order to the way people congregate in cities. The goal always being to create a Utopian world.

This one is less of a socialist slant, more of a capitalist try at things, no more successful.

Raina says

Interesting to read this 114 year old treatise on city planning which was the original inspiration and influence on English and American suburbs. About 5 pages on architecture/city planning, the rest on economics and politics--clearly Howard wasn't an architect or planner!

Adam Weber says

Ahead of it's time, influential.

Yona Yurwit says

Howard waxes idealistic and is a bit repetitive, but considering how many of his ideas still exist in planning today in some form or another this little book is still worth the read for anyone interested in planning.
