



<http://www.ucalgary.ca/hic> • ISSN 1492-7810  
2014-16 • Vol. 11, No. 1

## **Richard Congreve's Eutopian Spaces: An Intellectual History of Applied Sociology in Britain**

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### **Abstract**

Historians of political thought, social science, and environmental design have articulated different interpretations of the system of thought called Positivism, which was the creation of the French philosopher Auguste Comte. Few studies have presented the chief proponents of British Positivism as a cogent intellectual and ethical force seeking a comprehensive social reorganization. Using an intellectual history method, this article draws on scarcely used source material to provide a contextualized account of the praxis of three generations of citizen-sociologists affiliated to organized Positivism. This paper will argue that owing to the efforts of Comte's first complete and most ardent follower, the ex-Anglican minister and Oxford don Richard Congreve, this movement had a large impact on modern British life. Without Congreve there would have been no such school of organized British Positivism, and the lives he touched would have assumed a different character. Rarely today is Congreve acknowledged as one of Britain's first sociologists. During the 1850s he developed a historical-geographical type of sociological survey of the British Empire, and over the next seventy years his followers employed national, rustic, and civic types of surveys to explore the effects of imperialism, industrialization, unemployment and overcrowding on physical and mental degradation. This article contends that on this basis, the British Positivists' praxis of "applied sociology" entailed establishing urban "spiritual interventions," and issuing programmes and manifestos for structured social change, with the intention to realize Comte's eutopian city-states of the "Positive Era." As such, we will see that the Victorian meanings of the words "Positivism" and "sociology" are far different from our own.

### **Introduction**

By the early twentieth century, the British Empire comprised some fifty-seven million people within a territory of ninety-five million square kilometres.<sup>1</sup> Relatively few accounts of British political thought have

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the editors and reviewers of *History of Intellectual Culture* for their constructive comments and patience during the making of this article. All references to manuscript sources have been abbreviated:

BIL-GHP, Bishopsgate Institute Library, George Howell Papers  
BL-PP, British Library, Positivist Papers  
BLPES-HP, British Library of Political & Economic Science, Frederic Harrison Papers  
BLPES-LPS, British Library of Political & Economic Science, London Positivist Society Papers  
HALS-EH, Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, Ebenezer Howard Papers  
LMU-LTC, London Metropolitan University, London Trades Council  
OUBL-CP, Oxford University Bodleian Library, Richard Congreve Papers  
KU-LP, Keele University, Le Play House Papers

shed light on socialist critiques of imperialism, which first appeared from a nationalist standpoint during the 1880s.<sup>2</sup> Fewer still have argued that from the mid-1850s and into the interwar period, a little-known group of citizen-sociologists sought to break up the British Empire with the goal of regional autonomy. For these citizen-sociologists, the Empire connoted a kind of external despotism — a remote, monstrous rule by caprice — as opposed to the democratic ruling-in-turn that is conceivable within the spatial scale of the small city-state or republic. They believed that the autonomous region satisfied the complete conditions of intellectual, cultural, political, and economic life — the life virtuous — of modern times. Now gone and forgotten, these actors found unity in Positivism,<sup>3</sup> which was the creation of the French philosopher and “father” of regionalism<sup>4</sup> Auguste Comte (1798–1857).

Comte introduced the modern science of sociology and the godless “Religion of Humanity.” Together this science and religion were central to the creation of his utopia called the Occidental Republic (also known as “The Republic of the West” in English translations of Comte’s works). Arguably this vision was akin to a global network of garden city-states.<sup>5</sup> This article will contend that this was the aspect of Comte’s work — the potential to use applied sociology to realize eutopias or real idyllic regions — which captured the imagination of the Aristotelian scholar Richard Congreve (1818–99). On Congreve’s watch Positivism<sup>6</sup> became a controversial system of social action in Britain; one of his closest followers described it as becoming “at once a scheme of Education, a form of Religion, a school of Philosophy, a method of Government, and a phase of Socialism” based on sociology.<sup>7</sup> Congreve’s life mission as a Positivist sociologist was preparing Britons for life within “small independent states — the republics of the future,”<sup>8</sup> this interest in community-making, it seems, shares affinities with environmental design discourse.

Whereas scholars of different disciplines have provided a range of interpretations of “Positivism,” Congreve almost always appears as a footnote; he is presented as a dull pontificating crank, a second-tier philosopher, a demanding and divisive cult leader, an ethical extremist, and a barking madman. This article instead positions him as one of Britain’s first sociologists. To situate Congreve’s efforts in a broader context, the first order of this article is to trace the outlines of the impact of Positivism on modern culture. It will begin with a critical analysis of Positivism in republican political thought, which percolated into the applied science of sociology and, thereafter, town planning and city design. Although the notion that radical and socialist thought played a significant role in the emergence of modern sociology and town planning is

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SHL-BP, Senate House Library, Charles Booth Papers  
US.T-GED, University of Strathclyde, Patrick Geddes Papers

<sup>2</sup> Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire* (London: Macmillan, 1968); Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain* (Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2007); *Victorian Visions of Global Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> In this paper, the use of the word “Positivism,” written with a capital “P,” refers to Comte’s scientific and humanist thought as a whole.

<sup>4</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1970), 351; Clyde Weaver, *Regional Development and the Local Community* (New York: John Wiley, 1984), 31; Victor Branford and Patrick Geddes, *The Coming Polity* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1917), xv–53; Patrick Abercrombie, *Town and Country Planning* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 103.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew Wilson, *Moralising Space* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> “Organised Positivism” refers to the work of those affiliated to the British Positivist Society, which was active from the 1850s through to the post–Second World War period.

<sup>7</sup> Frederic Harrison, *The Philosophy of Common Sense* (London: Macmillan, 1907), 44–45; *National Social Problems* (London: Macmillan, 1908), 428.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Congreve, *Essays*, 3 vols. (London: Church of Humanity, 1900), 3:108.

axiomatic,<sup>9</sup> only cursory references are made to organized Positivism and its key protagonists.<sup>10</sup> As such, using an intellectual history method this paper draws on scarcely used source material to argue that three generations of Positivist sociologists built on each other's works, with the intention to provide the underpinnings for the utopias of the Positive Era.

Along these lines, from the 1850s Congreve developed a historical-geographical type of sociological survey that exposed the links between foreign intervention, militancy, and contrived imperial unions; on this basis he proposed a systematic community-planning policy to facilitate pacific international relations for realizing utopias. Congreve and his followers organized urban interventions — Positivist halls, churches, schools, sociological institutes, and civic societies. Here they deliberated on schemes for transforming chaotic conurbations into such independent communities. Following Congreve's demand for social action, his Oxford student Frederic Harrison (1831–1923) set out on sociological surveys of national industrial problems. By the 1870s Harrison promoted a social programme in which trade unions, guided by Positivist “spiritual institutions,” were vital to moralizing capital and creating humane living, learning, and working environments with a regional sense of place.

Surrounded by the influential members of Congreve's British Positivist Society, Charles Booth (1840–1916) thereafter employed social surveys of national and regional growth, which focussed on the evils of overcrowding, poverty, and unemployment. To foster life compatible with the “gospel of industry” of a modern republic, Booth used sociological “facts” to substantiate a series of interconnected socialistic reforms. From the 1890s Congreve's pupil Patrick Geddes (1854–1932) synthesized his seniors' sociological methods and conducted regional surveys as a preparatory stage for town planning. He established sociological institutes with the aim to enable locals to produce “Policies of Culture” in which the coordination of work, place, and folk intended to create vibrant, cohesive, and self-determining regions. Geddes' colleague Victor Branford (1863–1930) subsequently carried applied sociology in the direction of “City Design.” He considered this participatory survey practice, which was based on coupling science and faith for community-building, an “art of polity-making.” Branford's work aimed to empower and emancipate the citizenry from the oppressive fetters of political economy, Empire, nation, and Parliament. He led sociological surveys as the basis for a “Third Alternative” to capitalism and communism — cooperative economics for life in idyllic garden city-states.

Effectively, the British Positivists understood the region as a unit nested between and affected by the global level through to the household realm. Through their use of “applied sociology,” the argument of this article is that they were taking a systematic, coordinated, and multi-scalar approach to facilitating social reorganization. Thus, in their tumultuous age of revolution, capital, and Empire Congreve's British followers thought that Positivism could reconcile global and local conflicts and realize an approximation of the Occidental Republic. By linking together the praxis of Comte, Congreve, and their followers Positivism is presented here as an “early modern movement” of environmental design and planning. This treatment follows the evolutionary, movement-based historiography established by the architecture and

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<sup>9</sup> John Scott and Ray Bromley, *Envisioning Sociology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013); Duncan Bowie, *The Radical and Socialist Tradition in British Planning* (London: Routledge, 2017); “Planning Living Cities: Patrick Geddes' Legacy in the New Millennium,” ed. Robert Young and Pierre Clavel, special issue, *Landscape and Urban Planning* 166 (October 2017). These studies make only peripheral references to Congrevean impact on Positivist sociology and planning.

<sup>10</sup> Iñaki Ábalos, *The Good Life* (Barcelona: Gili, 2001), 69–70; Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3:10; Thomas Dixon, *The Invention of Altruism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); T.R. Wright, *The Religion of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 55, 66, 110, 219; Edward R. Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society* (New York: Dutton, 1916), 18.

planning historians Reyner Banham, Ulrich Conrads, Clyde Weaver, and Charles Jencks.<sup>11</sup> As indicated above, we will see that the Positivists developed different types of sociological surveys to address distinct but interrelated social and spatial problems. They in turn established urban interventions and issued programmes and manifestos that were imbued with Comte's utopian principles. As will be seen, one defining feature of the Positivists was that they were driven by religious-humanist principles. Owing to Congreve's influence, they came to believe that their sociological surveys were a "sacred way" — an enduring approach to implementing structured social change.

### Interpretations of Positivism

It would be well to begin with a discussion of Positivism within the history of political thought, sociology, and environmental design. Scholars have defined "republic" and "republicanism" in a multiplicity of ways. To root republicanism into different contexts they conjugate the words with a qualifying expression — such as "Platonic republicanism," "Florentine republicanism," "Painite republicanism," and "Positivist republicanism." This practice began with the theory of "Atlantic republicanism" set out by the political historian J.G.A. Pocock.<sup>12</sup> For Pocock, Machiavelli's treatises employ a language of "fortune" and "corruption" that is pitted against republican "civic virtue" — a political independence provided by arms or property. Pocock argued that the language of civic virtue percolated from the small Italian Renaissance states into a wide range of political texts all the way down to the eighteenth century, and not limited to those produced during the English and American Revolutions.

Following Pocock's study, historians of political thought have connected together a patchwork of movements with compatible sentiments. They hold, however, that the language of civic virtue becomes unrecognizable around the eighteenth century owing to the rise of "polite" or "commercial society."<sup>13</sup> Yet, through to the early nineteenth century, its likeness can be found in the polemics of radicals and Chartists who demanded "rights" and social and political improvements on behalf of the common good. When from the mid-1850s to the mid-1880s Positivism became the predominant language of Victorian politics, it too is said to have injected "republican sentiments" into discussions of Empire, domestic labour conditions, and social reform. (Curiously, however, the British Positivists rarely appear within the historiography of Victorian republicanism.<sup>14</sup>) The Positivists' discourse of the "moralisation of capital" then passed into the works of such socialists and social democrats as H.M. Hyndman, E. Belfort Bax, and Edward Bernstein.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (London: Architectural Press, 1960); Ulrich Conrads, ed., *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971); Charles Jencks, *Modern Movements in Architecture* (London: Penguin Books, 1985); Clyde Weaver, *Regional Development and the Local Community* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1984), 31.

<sup>12</sup> J.G.A. Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); J.G.A. Pocock, ed., *Three British Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

<sup>13</sup> J.W. Burrow, *Whigs and Liberals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); David Wootton, "The Republican Tradition," in *Republicanism, Liberty and Commercial Society, 1649–1776*, ed. David Wootton (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 1–44.

<sup>14</sup> Gaby Mahlberg and Dirk Wiemann eds., *European Contexts for English Republicanism* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013); David Nash and Antony Taylor, *Republicanism in Victorian Society* (Stroud: Sutton, 2000); Edward Royle, *Radicals, Secularists, and Republicans* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980); Christopher Rumsey, *The Rise and Fall of British Republican Clubs, 1871–1874* (Shropshire: Quinta, 2000); Richard Williams, *The Contentious Crown* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997); Antony Taylor, *Down with the Crown* (London: Reaktion, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> Mark Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 3–9; Royden Harrison, *Before the Socialists* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), 3–4, 210–339; Jose Harris, "French Revolution to fin de siècle

Edward Pease of the Fabian Society, for instance, praised Comte's works for rendering a complete image of a "new earth, free from all the inequalities of wealth, the preventable suffering, the reckless waste of effort, which we saw around us."<sup>16</sup> Along the same vein, Geddes and Branford believed, owing to Congreve's influence, that Comte's works offered "spatial formulae" for a "realisable eutopia."<sup>17</sup> In regard to the Pocockian republican tradition, however, the Positivists thought of themselves as civic actors or even an incorruptible elite worthy of acting for the liberty of the common good not due to "arms or real property" but rather a republican morality built from the assumptions of having acquired a scientific and intellectual authority derived from sociological knowledge.

Such suggestions about eutopia-making seem to mesh with recent accounts of Victorian sociology. Although paying little heed to Geddes and Branford's "Comtism," scholars have argued 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.<sup>18</sup> The aim of organized Positivism was, this paper argues, to realize utopias by seeking to link together and mediate these fragmented socio-spatial levels via applied sociology. (The Occidental Republic was the Positivists' lens for evaluating the world.) Notwithstanding, this phrase "applied sociology" is typically associated with Geddes alone. The argument here is that "applied sociology" is Edwardian whitewash for what was truly an extension of "Comtist sociology" or "Positivist sociology." Hence, this article ends rather than begins with Geddes and Branford. They were among the founding members of the first intellectual institution in Britain with "sociology" in its name, the Sociological Society, which entertained different sociological perspectives.<sup>19</sup>

Founded in 1904, five years after Congreve's death, the Sociological Society furthered the science as a modern academic discipline in association with the University of London, which was offering the first-ever sociology seminars in Britain. The society, in fact, was underwritten by the Positivist Society among other groups, and it served as the meeting ground for economists, geographers, politicians, philosophers, and historians. The three-volume *Sociological Papers* (1905–7) is graced by the writings of such thinkers as Émile Durkheim, L.T. Hobhouse, Bertrand Russell, William Beveridge, and H.G. Wells. Here parties of eugenicists, town planners, and ethical evolutionaries debated the meanings and methods of sociology. Scholars have attributed the immediate origins of the eugenicists to the sociological works of Charles Darwin and Francis Galton, of the town planners to Booth and Geddes, and of the evolutionaries to Herbert Spencer and Hobhouse.<sup>20</sup>

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Political Thought in Retrospect and Prospect, 1800–1914," in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Gareth Stedman Jones and Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 896.

<sup>16</sup> Edward R. Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society* (New York: Dutton, 1916), 18.

<sup>17</sup> Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics*, 3, 102–17, 273–84.

<sup>18</sup> Scott and Bromley, *Envisioning Sociology*, 90–91.

<sup>19</sup> National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, *Transactions, 1861* (London: Parker, 1862), 3; *Journal of the Dublin Statistical Society* (Dublin: McGlashan and Gill, 1856), 1:322–3; *Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society, Session 1858–9* (Manchester: Harrison, 1859), 70–71; Victor Branford, *Interpretations & Forecasts* (New York: Kennerley, 1914), 373. The various "social science" groups in existence during the nineteenth century, from the 1830s Statistical Societies to the 1860s Social Science Association, generally refrained from considerations of sociology. Branford later explained in *Interpretations & Forecasts* that unlike true sociologists, the Association's work remained "unilluminated by reference to the constructive and directive formulae of the main founders of sociology . . . they put to sea without a compass."

<sup>20</sup> A.H. Halsey, *A History of Sociology in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 9–11, 248; Chris Renwick, *British Sociology's Lost Biological Roots* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 3–8; Philip Abrams, *The Origins of British Sociology, 1834–1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 101–43; R.A. Kent, *A History of Empirical Sociology* (Aldershot: Gower, 1981), 91–98; Noel Annan, *The Curious Strength of Positivism in English Political Thought* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

Traditionally scholars of sociology have sought to divorce organized Positivism from their discipline, and most likely this is a result of Congreve's influence on Victorian ethical culture. They treat Positivism as nothing more than a synonym for the ritualistic worship of the Religion of Humanity.<sup>21</sup> The argument here, as indicated, is that the Religion of Humanity and applied sociology both fell under the umbrella of Positivism and were of equal import to Congreve and his followers' eutopia-making praxis. With the rise of historicism during the nineteenth century, science was often wrapped up in religious connotations.<sup>22</sup> Branford, for instance, proclaimed that the "art of constructing idealistic Utopias," was "based no longer on poetic dreams and personal aspirations, but on a systematic study of immediate possibilities disclosed by scientific and historical investigation."<sup>23</sup> Along these lines, one of Congreve's Oxford students, the physician J.H. Bridges, recalled Comte's popular statement at one of the Sociological Society's first meetings: 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."<sup>24</sup> On the work of Geddes and Branford, the American critic Lewis Mumford later added that Comte's "great formula is implicit in the method of the regional survey: See to foresee: foresee to provide."<sup>25</sup>

The argument that significant connections link Positivism, sociology, regionalism, and design for the common good has not always been well received. The political historian Julian Wright, for instance, has argued that Comte's mark on regionalist thought was both forgettable and negligible.<sup>26</sup> Similarly in their famous polemic *Collage City* (1978), the architects Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter quipped that the Positivists' work amounts to little more than a "historical cul-de-sac."<sup>27</sup> Yet in reference to Theodor Adorno's negative dialectics, the architect Iñaki Ábalos wrote that Comte's "progressive" and "ahistorical" ideology is culpable for the "most atrocious" events of the twentieth century.<sup>28</sup> To the postmodern eye, Positivism was indeed woefully inadequate, but among many such ardent modernists who upheld Positivism,<sup>29</sup> Sigfried Giedion hailed Comte as "the prophet of the scientific era."<sup>30</sup>

While exploring the emergence of the modern metropolis, the urbanist Edward Soja argued that its creation was the result of the coordinated contributions of groups of sociologists, designers, engineers,

<sup>21</sup> The religion is the best-documented aspect of the movement. See T.R. Wright, *The Religion of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Frederic Harrison, "The Religion of Humanity," *Positivist Review* no. 234 (1912): 121–30; Dr. Munro and J. Carey Hall, "Rationalists and the Religion of Humanity," *Positivist Review* no. 236 (1912): 187; Gladys Bryson, "Early English Positivists and the Religion of Humanity," *American Sociological Review* 1, no. 3 (June 1936): 343–62; James H. Billington, "The Intelligentsia and the Religion of Humanity," *American Historical Review* 65, no. 4 (July 1960): 807–21; Martha S. Vogeler, "Frederic Harrison and the Religion of Humanity," 83, no. 10 *Ethical Record* (1978): 3–6; Andrew Wernick, *Auguste Comte and the Religion of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Linda C. Raeder, *John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002); F.J. Gould, "Positivism as a Religion of Hope," *Positivist Review* no. 280 (1916): 76–83; John Edwin McGee, *A Crusade for Humanity* (London: Watts, 1931); Jane M. Style, *Auguste Comte, Thinker and Lover* (London: Kegan Paul, 1928); R. Paula Lopes, *Auguste Comte* (Paris: 10, Rue Monsieur-le-Prince, 1946); Warren Sylvester Smith, *London Heretics* (London: Constable, 1967).

<sup>22</sup> Frank M. Turner, *European Intellectual History from Rousseau to Nietzsche* (London: Yale University Press, 2014), 94.

<sup>23</sup> Victor V. Branford, "A Sociological Approach Towards Unity," in *Ideals of Science and Faith*, ed. James Edward Hand (London: Allen, 1904), 104–56.

<sup>24</sup> Sociological Society, *Sociological Papers*, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1905), 1:142.

<sup>25</sup> Lewis Mumford, *Values for Survival* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1946), 153.

<sup>26</sup> Julian Wright, *The Regionalist Movement in France, 1890–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2003), 141.

<sup>27</sup> Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge: MIT, 1983), 21.

<sup>28</sup> Iñaki Ábalos, *The Good Life* (Barcelona: Gili, 2001), 69–70.

<sup>29</sup> Matthew Wilson, "The Utopian Moment: The Language of Positivism in Modern Architecture and Urbanism," in *Utopia(s) — Worlds and Frontiers of the Imaginary*, eds. Maria do Rosário Monteiro, Mário S. Ming Kong, and Maria João Pereira Neto (London: CRC Press, 2016), 77–83.

<sup>30</sup> Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 233.

physicians, artists, public officials, and concerned citizens. Soja contended that Comte's now long-forgotten "manifesto" — the Occidental Republic — was the impetus of this activity. This manifesto, claimed Soja, accurately forecast how the ostensibly altruistic co-operation of such groups led to the realization of a vast number of "metropolises," which were "elaborated, diffused and reinvented all over the world" during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>31</sup> One can imagine that the garden city concept may have provided a basic template here, as town planner F.J. Osborn suggested during the 1940s.<sup>32</sup> Along these lines the planning historian Stanley Buder has indicated that the garden city idea was rooted in "Comtean thought." It called for a "cadre of selfless, enlightened businessmen to direct social change by reconciling social inequities."<sup>33</sup> Indeed, archival research shows that Ebenezer Howard, the garden city inventor and sociologist, held an inclination for Positivism.<sup>34</sup>

In myriad works, however, the word "positivism," written with a lower-case "p," has been used to evoke a kind of soulless indifference to the senses, the emotions, altruism, and empathy. But this usage appears to run counter to Comte's collectivist ideas. In fact, Comte coined the word "altruism" as an antonym of "egotism," and to define the purpose of his religion and its veneration of space, earth, and humanity. This was a response to what he perceived as the more revolting effects of patriotic chauvinism and bald materialism associated with the burgeoning "crisis of faith" and the "survival of the fittest" mentality of political economy of his era, which has much more to do with Spencer and Thomas Malthus than Darwin and Comte.<sup>35</sup> Otherwise, Positivism, as promoted by Congreve and his followers, would have been unlikely to inspire so many Victorians, and not merely Florence Nightingale, Annie Besant, George Eliot, Beatrice Webb, William Morris, and John Ruskin.<sup>36</sup>

The architectural theorist David Smith Capon has offered one reason why such individuals may have found Positivism so attractive. In the context of Victorian life, Positivism helped intellectuals, social reformers, designers, and activists understand the shifting and evolving links among humanity, nature, and the machine. As a "doctrine of relationships," explains Smith Capon, Comte's "new humanism" aimed to "counteract the dehumanizing influence of industrial society."<sup>37</sup> Similarly the architect Peter Eisenman suggested in his formalist polemic "Post-Functionalism" (1979) that "ethical positivism" produced the "functionalist" approach. Positivism and functionalism were linked together by an "idealist view of reality" associated with the "idealisation of technology" and "simulation of efficiency." Functionalism continued the "idealist ambition of creating architecture as a kind of ethically constituted form-giving," wrote Eisenman. Functionalism as such was essentially a "phase of humanism."<sup>38</sup>

According to the architectural historian Joseph Rykwert, this phase of modern humanism opens with the founding father of social democracy, Henri de Saint-Simon. This "positive philosopher" envisioned

<sup>31</sup> Edward Soja, *Postmetropolis* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), xii–94.

<sup>32</sup> F.J. Osborn, *Green-Belt Cities* (London: Faber and Faber, 1946), 39; KU-LP/11/8/7, ff. 186–207. Geddes warned in 1907 that, worldwide, speculative builders and architects could potentially bastardize the garden city idea. Osborn seemed to be confirming this as the state of play in 1946.

<sup>33</sup> Stanley Buder, *Visionaries and Planners* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 34, 170.

<sup>34</sup> HALS-EH, DE/Ho/F3/10, ff. 11–12.

<sup>35</sup> Oscar A. Haac ed., *The Correspondence of John Stuart Mill and Auguste Comte* (London: Transaction, 1995), 5.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Dixon, *The Invention of Altruism*; Wright, *Religion of Humanity*; Michael D. Calabria and Janet A. Macrae eds., *Suggestions for Thought by Florence Nightingale* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994); Gill G. Cockram, *Ruskin and Social Reform* (London: Tauris, 2007), 45, 94–104. The historian Gill Cockram has demonstrated that Comte's critiques of political economy, support for hierarchical forms of social relations, and architectural vision of the city-region are arrestingly similar to those later popularised by Ruskin.

<sup>37</sup> David Smith Capon, *Architectural Theory*, 2 vols. (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1999), 2:285–6; *ibid.*, 1: 140.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Eisenman, "Post-Functionalism," in *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture*, ed. Kate Nesbitt (Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 78–83.

several transnational infrastructural projects<sup>39</sup> while at the same time imagining that science and industry would bequeath a “meritocratic, managerial, free-market society.”<sup>40</sup> Saint-Simon and the Positivists thus believed that science wielded the capacity to mend social relations, and ethical scientists could assume a role similar to the medieval church. On this basis the Positivists were concerned with establishing, between capital and labour, meaningful and fulfilling modes of production. Like Ruskin and Morris, they were fascinated with the authentic lifestyle of Gothic artisans. Although they embraced the machine, only if used with all requisite ethical responsibility, Congreve and his followers continually referred to the merits of medieval life — its architecture, its social relations, and the spatial scale and qualities of its urban and country realms.<sup>41</sup>

Along similar lines Positivism in architectural discourse has been presented as the critical link between the eighteenth-century neo-Gothic rationalism of Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, the primitivist theories of Gottfried Semper, and twentieth-century design.<sup>42</sup> The cultural historian Donald Drew Egbert, for instance, has explored the similarities between the works of Viollet-le-Duc and those of Congreve. Viollet-le-Duc expounded one of the first significant theories of modern architecture rooted in the Gothic characteristics of honesty, organicism, and authenticity. And Congreve, Egbert wrote, “sought to form a priesthood which in positivistic fashion would see to it that science and technology were used for 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.”<sup>43</sup> Indeed, Saint-Simon’s ideas spread from Comte’s sociology and the Religion of Humanity and into Congreve’s British Positivist Societies. These Congrevean “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.<sup>44</sup> These “missions” took on various architectural types and aesthetics.

Regarding architecture, the Positivists wrote that the “imitation of the ancients must come to an end, and some new form be assumed.”<sup>45</sup> The lightness and openness characteristic of metal and glass were readily associated with the authenticity and transparency of an emergent society led by modern science and industry. 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.”<sup>46</sup> Setting out the framework for “counter modernism,” critical regionalism, and also perhaps for landscape urbanism, Comte claimed that architecture and urban spaces should emerge in each locality as a result of design processes suited to climate, topography, light, material resources, machinery, workforces, and public consensus; one might call this the Comte-Geddes-McHarg connection.<sup>47</sup> Along these lines, Comte

<sup>39</sup> Saint-Simon proposed a Panamanian link between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and to connect Madrid to the Guadalquivir river and the Atlantic Ocean. Saint-Simonians such as Chevalier, de Lessups, and Enfantin helped realise the Suez Canal and Aswan High Dam in Egypt as well as various European developments.

<sup>40</sup> Joseph Rykwert, *The Seduction of Place* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 62.

<sup>41</sup> Auguste Comte, *General View of Positivism* (Routledge, 1908), 326–86; *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, ed. Harriet Martineau, 3 vols. (London: Bell & Sons, 1896), 3:42; Frederic Harrison, *Autobiographic Memoirs*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1911), 1:53.

<sup>42</sup> Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Architectural Theory*, 2 vols. (London: Blackwell, 2006), 1: 90–94, 353–9, 506–15; Alan Colquhoun, *Collected Essays in Architectural Criticism* (London: Blackdog, 2009), 167–8; Smith Capon, *Architectural Theory*, 2:285–6; Martin Bressani, *Architecture and the Historical Imagination* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 270.

<sup>43</sup> Donald Drew Egbert, *Social Radicalism and the Arts* (New York: Knopf, 1970), 417.

<sup>44</sup> Rykwert, *The Seduction of Place*, 62.

<sup>45</sup> Comte, *Positive Philosophy*, 3:244; Harrison, *Autobiographic Memoirs*, 1:391.

<sup>46</sup> Auguste Comte, *Catechism of Positive Religion* (London: Chapman, 1858), 140.

<sup>47</sup> Kelly Shannon, “From Theory to Resistance: Landscape Urbanism in Europe,” in *The Landscape Urbanism Reader*, ed. Charles Waldheim (London: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006), 141–62.



told his American follower Henry Edger, who helped plan and build the anarcho-Positivist commune Modern Times, New York, that he should tailor structures to suit the topography and available resources, and to “vary the layout of streets and houses following the winds that dominate in each place.”<sup>48</sup> It would thus appear that design in the Positive Era would become a communal act — a lifestyle fostering local and universal pride in human achievement.<sup>49</sup> After all, the Positivists considered architecture the premier art; it was capable of “bringing all the arts together into a common centre.”<sup>50</sup> Architecture depended on “much larger cooperation” to see through its creation than the other arts, and was capable of stimulating “universal sympathy.”<sup>51</sup> Comte referred to the Occidental Republic as a “sociocracy” — a government by sociology — and he considered sociologists capable of binding the community together through the planning and implementation of architectural interventions.<sup>52</sup>

The following sections outline how three generations of intellectuals and activists affiliated with organized Positivism contributed to the development of modern spatial practice. Their intention, it is argued, was to realize “eutopia,” an idyllic real region, first by conducting different types of sociological surveys (historical-geographical, industrial, social, etc.) issuing programmes or manifestos that respond to different levels of human relations (international, national, regional, etc.), and creating urban interventions to prepare the culture of the Positive Era.

### Historical-Geographical Surveys and Foreign Policy

In their own time, Congreve and his followers believed that modern civilisation was on the cusp of radical change; this was a viewpoint framed by their predecessors. While he was secretary to the “positive philosopher” Henri de Saint-Simon, Comte developed scientific-historical surveys of Western society which pointed to the rise of a new modernity. Following Saint-Simon, Comte traced the withering away of the powers of monotheism and monarchy since the medieval period.<sup>53</sup> He controversially forecast that science and industry were emerging as new modern “spiritual and temporal” power structures, and openly questioned the relevance of the existing church and state. A “Newtonian elite” of scientists, imagined Saint-Simon, could harmonize international, national, and local levels of human relations.<sup>54</sup> As Comte systematized Saint-Simon’s hazy theorizations, he put special emphasis on the “sciences of observation,” which in his mind would supersede the otherworldly, metaphysical abstractions of “papal and theological” powers.<sup>55</sup> Saint-Simon’s closest and much more religious acolytes, the Saint-Simonians, contested Comte’s hierarchical, heretical, and radical social views.<sup>56</sup> Despite Comte’s ensuing schism from Saint-Simon and

<sup>48</sup> Auguste Comte, *Correspondance inédite d’Auguste*, 4 vols. (Paris: Société Positiviste, 1904), 3:327–8. On American Positivism, see Roger Wunderlich, *Low Living and High Thinking at Modern Times, New York* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992); Gillis J. Harp, *Positivist Republic* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

<sup>49</sup> Henry Edger and M. John Metcalf, *Lettres d’Auguste Comte à Henry Edger et à M. John Metcalf* (Paris: Apostolat Positiviste, 1889), 13–14; Auguste Comte, *Correspondance*, 3:327–8; *General View*, 326–86; Patrick Geddes and Gilbert Slater, *Ideas at War* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1917), 221.

<sup>50</sup> Comte, *General View*, 326–86.

<sup>51</sup> Comte, *Positive Philosophy*, 3:237.

<sup>52</sup> Auguste Comte, *System of Positive Polity*, trans. J.H. Bridges, 4 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1875), 1:123–4.

<sup>53</sup> Richard Vernon, “Auguste Comte and the Withering-Away of the State,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45, no. 4 (1984): 549–66.

<sup>54</sup> Claude Henri de Saint-Simon, *Oeuvres de Saint-Simon*, 6 vols. (Paris: Dentu, 1868), 1:53, 210–14.

<sup>55</sup> Auguste Comte, *System*, trans. Richard Congreve, 4:ii, 500–502; Claude Henri de Saint-Simon, *Catéchisme des industriels* (Paris: Sétier, 1823), 59; *Du système industriel* (Paris: Renouard, 1821), iii–x, 22–62; *Du système industriel, 2e partie* (Paris: l’auteur, 1821), 8–10.

<sup>56</sup> Saint-Amand Bazard and Prosper Enfantin, *The Doctrine of Saint-Simon* (New York: Schocken, 1958), 1–25, 228–43.

his followers in 1824, the young philosopher continued to refine his master's ideas, which served as the basis for Positivism.

From the mid-1820s into the 1850s, Comte's writings about modern life increasingly stressed the importance of creating a "deliberate planning and policy" for creating "separate communities."<sup>57</sup> Communitarian escapism was popular during the Bourbon Restoration, as seen not merely in the work of Etienne Cabet. But Comte, like Karl Marx, insisted on the necessity of engaging with the realities of "enormous cities"; this thinking served as the rationale for Comte's urban interventions, which is discussed below.<sup>58</sup> Instead of violent revolution, the development of Saint-Simon's "social physiology," (the "positive" social science that Comte later called "sociology"), could, in Comte's mind, provide answers to social unrest and warfare.<sup>59</sup> During the July Revolution of 1830 Comte issued the *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (1830–6), which introduced modern sociology. This "complementary part of natural philosophy which relates to the positive study of all fundamental laws of social phenomena," Comte dryly explained, aims at "discovering or perfecting the exact coordination of all observed facts." This process, he asserted, could open to the "human imagination the largest and most fertile field" of existence, life on earth.<sup>60</sup> This new master-discipline, he claimed, was founded on the positive sciences of biology *and* history, the latter of which would become Congreve's first link to Positivism.

By the 1848 Revolution, Comte had established the "Positivist Society" and had begun to write his magnum opus, *The System of Positive Polity* (1851–4). This four-volume treatise on sociology was central to shaping the path of Congreve, at that time an Anglican minister, toward Positivism. It offered details on the Religion of Humanity, which was arguably an extension of Saint-Simon's *New Christianity* (1925). Here Saint-Simon railed against the wastefulness and indifference of the Vatican and the "bad dogma" and "inferior worship" of Protestantism. He proclaimed the need to create "a social state in which science will again assume a religious character" and pursue "the great end" of the amelioration of humankind.<sup>61</sup> Following this stance, Comte's *System* considered science a latent, incontrovertible stimulus for an emergent "moral revolution" in which the "master-science" of sociology would answer the "question of modern times," the "incorporation of Woman and the Proletariate into Modern Culture."<sup>62</sup>

Of greatest import for Congreve, it seems, was that Comte's *System* also outlined the eutopia-planning programme called the Occidental Republic, and as suggested it proposed to use sociology and the Religion of Humanity to devolve Western empires.<sup>63</sup> The programme included a calendar, cultural festivals, regional currencies, banking system, ethical codes and, among other items, a new global flag system. Most importantly, Comte's programme called on citizen-sociologists to organize a network of new types of architecture for Positivist "spiritual and temporal" urban interventions in town and country. These institutions would serve as the critical spatial agency for opening the Positive Era. The principal "spiritual institution" was known as a Positivist Society hall, Church of Humanity or, later, Civic Society. It would coordinate the organization of public life in the modern city-region. As the hub of the local community and catalyst for social reorganization, each place would act as a centre for regional sociology, an institute of

<sup>57</sup> Comte, *System*, 4:538; Ronald Fletcher, ed. *The Crisis of Industrial Civilization* (London: Heinemann, 1974), 29–40.

<sup>58</sup> Frederick Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1943), 53; Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Penguin, 2002).

<sup>59</sup> Emile Durkheim, *Socialism* (New York: Collier, 1962), 134; Saint-Simon, *Oeuvres*, IV: 11–96.

<sup>60</sup> Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive*, 6 vols. (Paris: Bachelier, 1839), 4:294.

<sup>61</sup> Claude Henri de Saint-Simon, *New Christianity*, trans. J.E. Smith (London: Wilson, 1834), 7, 9–48.

<sup>62</sup> *System*, trans. E.S. Beesly, 3:523; Victor Branford, "Outlines of the Sociology of London" (University of London, 1908), 14; C.G. Higginson, "The Incorporation of the Proletariate into Modern Society," *Positivist Review* 5, no. 51 (1897): 68–72.

<sup>63</sup> Henri Gouhier, *La jeunesse d'Auguste Comte et la formation dur positivisme*, 3 vols. (Paris: Vrin, 1970), 2:58–61; *ibid.*, 3:407. Here Comte was following the footsteps of the revolutionaries of the 1790s.

humanist scholarship, and a republican hall of social activism. Part of the activities here would include outdoor studies for regional place-making, in which the people would determine the look, feel, and function of their environment. Comte, wildly optimistic, believed that 500 modern, peaceful, greenbelt city-communities would emerge across the world by the 1960s as a result of such culture-shifting activities. The Positivist city-region would have the character of a small, clean, functionalist city with clear distinction but tight interrelationships between urban and rural.<sup>64</sup> Each city-state, with a land area comparable to Belgium, would contain around two million people.<sup>65</sup>

As indicated, the Aristotelian scholar Richard Congreve was the first to establish organized Positivism in Britain and to promote Comte's urban-regional vision. He discovered Positivism during the 1840s while under the influence of Oxford cohorts including Arthur Clough and John Blackett, who were reading the works of such Positivist sympathizers as Thomas Carlyle, J.S. Mill, G.H. Lewes, and Émile Littré. Congreve read Littré's articles in *Le National* and Mill's *A System of Logic* (1843), which claimed that Comte's *Cours* was "the greatest yet produced study on the Philosophy of the Sciences." Here Mill championed sociology as a science of direct deduction, which meant that it could not be a "science of positive predictions, but only tendencies."<sup>66</sup> Perhaps most importantly for Congreve, Mill recommended the "study of social phenomena on the true principles of the Historical Method," and the establishment of a scientific "sociological system" to "accelerate . . . natural progress."<sup>67</sup>

Meanwhile, Lewes' *Biographical History of Philosophy* (1846) traced the history of twelve philosophical epochs leading up to the conclusion that the "final crisis" of philosophy would be resolved with the "definitive establishment of Positivism," being an extension of the work of Bacon. Lewes nonetheless praised the uniqueness of Comte's thought, stating "no one before him ever dreamed of treating social problems otherwise than upon theological or metaphysical methods."<sup>68</sup> Lewes aligned himself with Comte and Mill by writing that morals and politics could have the same methods as physics and other natural sciences.<sup>69</sup> He also suggested that Europe faced a "great want of *unity*," and only Positivism could bring together philosophers and "Catholics, Protestants, Mahometans, and the subdivisions"; it could harmonize the philosophical "dogmas" of Germany, England, and Scotland; and, moreover, with its classification of the sciences, it could coordinate natural and human activity.<sup>70</sup> Like Mill, Lewes proclaimed that an "élite of humanity" should thus begin to develop and apply Comte's sociological laws.<sup>71</sup> Nonetheless the work of Comte himself, namely the *Catechism of Positive Religion* (1852), was what moved Congreve, who was a highly influential figure at Oxford, to "abandon prospects, everything, for the sake of the truth."<sup>72</sup>

Congreve renounced his holy orders and left Oxford for London, and soon enough he would be surrounded by such former students as Frederic Harrison, E.S. Beesly, and J.H. Bridges, who helped him establish the Positivist movement. More immediately, Congreve began to produce sociological surveys rooted in historical-geographical analyses that tested Comte's sociological laws about the rise and fall of empires and the "spiritual powers" of Europe. (He promoted the use of a "map without names" to diagnose

<sup>64</sup> Konstanze Sylva Domhardt, "The Garden City Idea in the CIAM discourse on Urbanism," *Planning Perspectives* (2012): 173–97; Eric Paul Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928–1960* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

<sup>65</sup> Comte, *System*, 4:267.

<sup>66</sup> John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic*, 2 vols. (London: John W. Parker, 1843), 2:421–2.

<sup>67</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (London: Longmans, Green Reader and Dyer, 1873), 60–61, 163–6; Mill, *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte* (New York: Holt, 1887), 3–5; Mill, *A System of Logic*, 1:611; *ibid.*, 2:565, 610.

<sup>68</sup> G.H. Lewes, *A Biographical History of Philosophy*, 4 vols. (London: Charles Knight, 1846), 4:231, 245.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 245–9.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 249, 256.

<sup>72</sup> OUBL-CP, MS.Eng.misc.c.349, ff. 52–53.

and treat international relations, and he balked at the study of “English History from a purely national point of view.”<sup>73</sup>) The results made for his first critiques of Empire.

Along these lines, Congreve’s *General Western History* (1853) examined the correlation between spiritual unity and the co-existence of independent small states across Europe. Like Saint-Simon, he recalled the “admirable utopias” of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, namely the French King 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.”<sup>74</sup> Congreve put particular emphasis on Henry IV’s plan because it captured the sympathy of Elizabeth, the Queen of England. In Congreve’s interpretation the plan aimed at “ordering the states of Europe in one great federal system, *the Republic of the West*, a modification of the policy of Charlemagne, but essentially a continuation of it.”<sup>75</sup>

During the Crimean War, Congreve recalled Comte’s sociological law that all empires fall and proposed a pact between France and England.<sup>76</sup> Each nation would return their colonial exploits and refrain from forging contrived imperial unions; this was Comte’s idea, and Congreve would later present it as the first step to resolving all Britain’s foreign and domestic problems.<sup>77</sup> More immediately, Congreve issued a study on Aristotelian politics and “social science” that meshed with these thoughts. He described Aristotle’s *The Politics* as 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-organisation of society.” It was not “sociology” — an applied ethical science for urban social planning.<sup>78</sup> Sociology, he wrote, was of “direct political interest” to Victorian life, for the reorganization of the Empire into “complete” regions.<sup>79</sup>

Congreve established the British Positivist Society in London in 1859, just two years after he gained instant infamy by publishing a succession of polemics against British affairs, beginning with *Gibraltar* (1857) and *India* (1857), both of which demanded independence from British rule. By establishing Chapel Street Hall as the society’s first home, he was following Comte’s vision for creating idyllic communities via urban intervention. From here he went on to defend the Paris commune, the Boers, the Afghans, the Jamaicans, and the Ugandans against foreign aggression. As Britain continued to annex various territories, he published a programme called “Systematic Policy.”<sup>80</sup> Based on his historical-geographical surveys, the policy proposed a guardianship of nations to facilitate pan-European devolution.<sup>81</sup> By the late 1870s Positivist Societies had begun to sprout up across Britain; they too issued political polemics and offered free secular education, civic rites associated with the Religion of Humanity, art lessons, outdoor studies, crafts guild meetings, concerts, and festivals.<sup>82</sup> Congreve’s Systematic Policy sought to moderate the

<sup>73</sup> Congreve, *Essays*, 3:529–769.

<sup>74</sup> Saint-Simon, *Oeuvres*, 1:176–7; Francis Harry Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 102–4.

<sup>75</sup> Congreve, *Essays*, 3:651.

<sup>76</sup> Such a union between Europe’s two great rivals, France and England, for the purpose of warfare could also stand for a grand peaceful European social reorganisation.

<sup>77</sup> Comte, *Catechism*, 337, 57; Congreve, *Essays*, 3:529–769.

<sup>78</sup> Richard Congreve, *The Politics of Aristotle with English Notes* (London: Parker, 1855), x–xviii; *Essays*, 3:701–4.

<sup>79</sup> Congreve, *Essays*, 2:356; *ibid.*, 3:488–9; Congreve, *The Politics*, x–xviii; Harriet Martineau, “The Religion of Positivism,” *Westminster Review* (April 1858): 305–50.

<sup>80</sup> Richard Congreve, *Essays*, 1:107, 201–8; *ibid.*, 3:107–18.

<sup>81</sup> *Essays*, 1:74–80; *ibid.*, 2:453; OUBL-CP, MS.Eng.Misc.a.10, f. 32; *Bee-Hive*, 7 January 1871; *Daily News*, 7 January 1871; *Daily News*, 23 February 1882; *Saturday Review*, 25 February 1882; *Daily News*, 12 January 1886. As noted, the suggestion to establish a “guardianship of nations” to break up empires peacefully became a Positivist trope, particularly with regard to Gibraltar, India, Ireland, and Egypt.

<sup>82</sup> Congreve, *Essays*, 3:521–4, 771–83; *ibid.*, 1:375–83; *The Reasoner*, 5 May 1861; Comte, *System*, 1:262; S.H. Swinny, “The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Positivist School,” *Positivist Review*, no. 178 (1920): 273–80; BL-PP, Add.MSS, 43, 844 ff. 3–

powerful individualistic forces driving imperialism while establishing a collective sense of regional identity.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, his Positivist urban interventions intended to unify and empower workers. After all, Comte considered trade unionism as the “systematic connection with the socialist movement towards internal regeneration.”<sup>84</sup>

### Industrial and Social Surveys of National Social Life

From the 1860s to the 1900s the barrister and sociologist Frederic Harrison (1831–1923) continually rallied for workers under the banner of Comte’s industrial system.<sup>85</sup> 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 teacher, with *The Politics of Aristotle with English Notes* (1855). He previously had followed in the footsteps of John Ruskin, who prized the guild lifestyle which produced the sublime aesthetics of the medieval landscape.<sup>86</sup> In Comte’s eutopia trade unions were the “temporal power” –the modern equivalent of guilds.<sup>87</sup> Harrison praised the 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.”<sup>88</sup> Yet during Victorian times trade unions were considered a menace to society.

During the 1860s “social war” between capital and labour, Harrison, heeding Congreve’s call for “social action,” set out on national industrial surveys.<sup>89</sup> Publishing his findings in scientific journals and parliamentary proceedings, he aimed to legitimize, systematize, and strengthen the institution of trade unionism.<sup>90</sup> In 1867 he was appointed to the Royal Commission on Trades Unionism, which questioned their legality, alleged misuse of funds, and association with the Sheffield and Manchester Outrages (militancy in response to poor working conditions). Harrison contributed to the Minority Report of the 1867 Royal Commission on Trade Unions, which exonerated trade unions from criminal activities and substantiated them as independently functioning and legally binding entities.<sup>91</sup> His recommendations, although with some modification, served as the basis for trade union law from 1868 to 1906. For at least the next forty years trade union leaders, notably George Potter, George Howell, and George Shipton, were known to seek out the Positivists’ counsel.<sup>92</sup> As in the relationship between the medieval clergy and guilds, Congreve and his followers were positioning themselves as independent intellectuals.<sup>93</sup> Congreve, of course, was the only one to declare himself a “priest.”

34; TG, March 1869; Frederic Harrison, *The Creed of a Layman* (London: Macmillan, 1907), 293–4; E.G.W. Bill, *University Reform in Nineteenth-Century Oxford* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 118–23.

<sup>83</sup> Richard Congreve, *Two Addresses* (London: Trübner, 1870); BL-PP, Add.MSS, 45,243 ff. 3–9.

<sup>84</sup> Auguste Comte, *Passages from the Letters of Auguste Comte* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1901), 163.

<sup>85</sup> Harrison, *National Social Problems*, 262.

<sup>86</sup> Harrison, *Autobiographic Memoirs*, 1:53; Geddes, *John Ruskin* (Edinburgh: William Brown, 1884), 61–62.

<sup>87</sup> Comte, *System*, 1:134.

<sup>88</sup> Harrison, *The Meaning of History* (London: Macmillan, 1894), ii–iii, 54–58, 236.

<sup>89</sup> *National Review*, October 1860; National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, *Transactions, 1860* (London: Parker, 1860), 54. This war centred on the scuffles between the Master Builders’ Society and trade union operatives working on architecture and urbanism projects for industrial exhibitions and festivities.

<sup>90</sup> *Times*, 15 July 1861; *Times*, 22 July 1861; BLPES-HP, 1/8 ff. 17–20; National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, *Transactions, 186* (London: Parker, 1862) 717–21, 95–96; Frederic Harrison, “Lancashire,” *Westminster Review* (July 1863): 191–219.

<sup>91</sup> Harrison, *Autobiographic Memoirs*, 1:323.

<sup>92</sup> George Howell, *Labour Legislation, Labour Movements and Labour Leaders* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1902), 128.

<sup>93</sup> Frederic Harrison, “The Trades-Union Bill,” *Fortnightly Review* (1 July 1869): 30–45; LMU-LTC, 2/2 f. 174; *Times*, 14 March 1874; *Bradford Observer*, 20 March 1874; BIL-GHP 1/11 f. 20.

During their efforts to defend the working classes, the London Trades' Council 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.<sup>94</sup> In response to the "New Social Movement" of the 1870s, in which George Potter urged workers to seek out "improved dwellings for the people" to "rescue" working-class families,<sup>95</sup> Harrison published a planning framework entitled "Our Social Programme." He recommended devolving England into a network of regional industrial republics.

Based on Congreve's suggestions,<sup>96</sup> Harrison's remedy for national social problems was regional sociological investigations, the municipalization of industry, a secular-humanist public education system, and cultural programmes.<sup>97</sup> Unless they were founded on an "organised moral power," however, Harrison declared "all social movements to be baseless." Only a comprehensive plan "sufficiently inspired with moral aims" and in the interest of the greater good was worthwhile, and it might include the nationwide municipalization of industry — factories, post office, railways, roads, bridges, harbours, piers, docks, and lighthouses. The operations of the city-region, conducted by a unionized workforce, would furnish the capital to expedite urban renovations. Strike funds would finance mid-rise, mixed-use housing units; transport links; neighbourhood educational facilities; playgrounds; and civic spaces.<sup>98</sup> Harrison's Social Programme equally promoted "Home Rule All Around," and he accordingly celebrated the Local Government Act of 1888 by producing writings that envisioned "Ideal London."<sup>99</sup> The London County Council soon thereafter appointed Harrison to design the Kingsway Boulevard, which permitted trade unionists to begin rebuilding the 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.<sup>100</sup>

The urban cartography of the Positivist sociologist Charles Booth (1840–1916) proved indispensable to various London improvement schemes, including Kingsway, which recast the stagnant St Giles district by creating a French 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 momentous extension of the Positivists' sociological studies of spiritual and temporal powers. Under the influence of such Positivists as Congreve, Harrison, Vernon Lushington, and his own cousins Albert and Henry Crompton, Booth first encountered Positivism.<sup>101</sup> By the 1870s, he was infatuated with Comte's scientific system of "benevolent intervention."<sup>102</sup> He first published articles in defence of Comte's ideas in *The Colony*, his family's home

<sup>94</sup> BLPES-HP, 2/2 ff. 16–17; Harrison, *Order & Progress* (London: Longmans, Green, 1875), 152–237.

<sup>95</sup> George Potter, "The First Point of the New Charter," *Contemporary Review* 18 (November 1871): 547–58.

<sup>96</sup> Harrison, *Autobiographic Memoirs*, 1:251.

<sup>97</sup> Frederic Harrison, "Our Social Programme," *Positivist Review* 2, no. 13 (January 1894): 1–5.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*; Frederic Harrison, "Ideal London," *Contemporary Review* 74 (July 1898): 139–52; Comte, *System*, 4:380; Frederic Harrison, *Memories and Thoughts* (London: Macmillan, 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." Unlike model dwellings, those "cheerless, huge, monotonous barracks," he imagined detached six-storey blocks accommodating thirty families. While containing spaces for communal cooking, washing, bathing, and disporting to supplement those of each flat, each block would also contain spaces for education, healthcare, craft, and worship. These blocks would plug into transport links but nonetheless be within walking distance of libraries, museums, parks, schools, hospitals, and cemeteries. Everyone would enjoy such "sacred" living conditions, wrote Harrison.

<sup>100</sup> London County Council, *Opening of Kingsway and Aldwych* (London: Southwood, Smith, 1905), 3–5.

<sup>101</sup> Mary Booth, *Charles Booth, a Memoir* (London: Macmillan, 1918), 8–9.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

journal. He wrote a little-known confession of adherence to the Religion of Humanity and “Positivist Prayer” dated “5/83.”<sup>103</sup>

During the calamities of the 1880s, the captain of industry Booth 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.”<sup>104</sup> A 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 the idle. His urban-regional social survey of London drew on the ideas of Comte as well as the empirical methods of the Saint-Simonian social scientist Frédéric Le Play.<sup>105</sup> From the 1880s to the 1900s, Booth and his team compiled regional studies on industrial development in relation to “urbanisms in embryo.” They also collected “facts” on housing conditions, redundancy, and old age in attempts to form a complete picture of the urban-regional condition.<sup>106</sup> Few acknowledge that Booth claimed in *Life and Labour of the People in London* that overcrowding is the “evil” — “the great cause of degeneracy” — in British centres, with little 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.”<sup>107</sup>

From the 1890s Booth’s findings in *Life and Labour of the People in London* sought to shape public consensus on a comprehensive combination of proposals called “Limited Socialism.” First, Booth proposed a system of labour colonies to reduce congestion in towns, to train workers, and to encourage family life (as opposed to life apart in the poorhouse).<sup>108</sup> Next, he promoted new unionism for unifying skilled and unskilled labour; the Positivists celebrated this “new unionism” or “socialist unionism” as a step in the direction of the true industrial “temporal power” of Positivism.<sup>109</sup> Like Comte and Le Play, Booth proposed a system of old-age pensions as a social safety net, which his colleagues at the Royal Statistical Society lambasted as “utopian” and “an abuse of statistics.”<sup>110</sup> Lastly, he proposed a new policy of infrastructural urbanism, to be managed by a land development authority, with the goal of tempering speculative slum-building.<sup>111</sup> Effectively, Limited Socialism aimed to address the ethics of poor industrial, financial, and

<sup>103</sup> SHL-BP, MS.797/II/26/15, ff. vii, ix; SHL-BP, MS.797/II/24/6, ff. 7, 15–19.

<sup>104</sup> SHL-BP, MS.797/II/26/15, ff. xi–xiv.

<sup>105</sup> Charles Booth, “Life and Labour of the People in London: First Results,” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 56, no. 4 (December 1893): 557–93; Charles Booth, Ernest Aves, and Henry Higgs, *Family Budgets* (London: King & Son, 1896), 5–11; Michael Z. Brooke, *Le Play* (London: Longman Group, 1970), 9–12, 55–58, 166–7.

<sup>106</sup> Charles Booth, “Occupations of the People of the United Kingdom, 1801–81,” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 49, no. 2 (June 1886): 314–444; Booth, *Labour and Life of the People*, 2 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1891), 2:262–96; Booth, *Pauperism* (London: Macmillan, 1892), 166–7, 200.

<sup>107</sup> Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*, 17 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1904), 11:234–80, 309.

<sup>108</sup> Booth, *Labour and Life*, 1:163–70.

<sup>109</sup> *Northern Echo*, 26 Aug. 1889, 169; Booth, *Labour and Life*, 1:169; Frederic Harrison, “The New Trades-Unionism,” *Nineteenth Century* 26, no. 153 (November 1889): 721–32; Congreve, *Essays*, 2:594.

<sup>110</sup> “Abuse of Statistics,” *Quarterly Review* 179, no. 358 (1894): 463–85; “Discussion on Mr. Booth’s Paper,” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 55, no. 1 (1892): 56–79; Charles Booth, *Old Age Pensions and the Aged Poor* (London: Macmillan, 1899), 36–42, 67–68; Booth, *Pauperism*, 166–7, 200; Comte, *System*, 1:130. An old-age pension, Booth claimed, would shield the elderly from association with the “questionable companions,” “tyranny,” and stigma of that “dreary residence,” the workhouse. He desired to see the workhouse abolished as did Comte, who wrote that it should be “strongly and rightly condemned”; the workhouse, added Comte, was “incompatible with that healthy growth of home affection which should be common to all ranks.” With a pension the elderly “would be a possible and welcome guest in the younger home” as “social authorities,” suggested Booth, or in the least “the mutual relations would be better and happier than they now are.”

<sup>111</sup> Charles Booth, *Improved Means of Locomotion as a First Step towards the Cure of the Housing Difficulties of London* (London: Macmillan, 1901), 1–23; *Times*, 15 Feb. 1901.

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."<sup>112</sup>

### Civic and Rustic Surveys for Regional Reconstruction

The Scottish polymath Patrick Geddes (1854–1932) developed a regional survey method that addressed the severed links between town and country life. While a student of the evolutionary biologist Thomas Huxley he sought out Congreve at Chapel Street Hall in London.<sup>113</sup> He recalled Congreve's impact on him as a "revelation"; and Congreve, in fact, regarded Geddes as "my prospect" — the potential leader of a Scottish Positivist Society.<sup>114</sup> Under Congreve's direction, Geddes' early essays discussed the links among biology, community, and economics.<sup>115</sup> Following the agrarian ideas of the Physiocrats, as presented by Ruskin, he suggested that the laws of biology provided the basis for establishing ethical regional communities. Collecting biological and social facts about the environment, he maintained, would enable one to index "natural wealth" and set out planning forecasts.<sup>116</sup>

Along these lines during the 1880s Geddes led an "almost Positivist" Summer School in Edinburgh. It offered the "sociologic teaching" of outdoor education by way of regional surveys.<sup>117</sup> His pupils documented the lives of civic and rustic types of people, as outlined in Comte's and Le Play's works.<sup>118</sup> Following Comte and Congreve, Geddes held that Spiritual types — Emotionals and Intellectuals — presided over education and culture in such spaces as universities, schools, salons, markets, and homes. Temporal types — Chiefs and People — maintained obligations to business and politics in such spaces as banks, factories, fields, workshops, and union halls.<sup>119</sup> 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. In terms of Comte's Occidental Republic, these Spiritual and Temporal types would rule-in-turn in relation to their respective spaces within the city-region.

<sup>112</sup> Mary Booth, *Charles Booth*, 95–98; S.H. Swinny, "Two Faithful Lives — Charles Booth and Alasdair Geddes," *Positivist Review*, no. 315 (1919): 286–7. Also compare Comte, *System*, 1:128–9; Booth, *Life and Labour*, 11:165–71.

<sup>113</sup> Congreve, *Essays*, 2:225; Thomas Henry Huxley, *Lay Sermons* (London: Macmillan, 1870), 88, 153–91; Susan Liveing and Patrick Geddes, *A Nineteenth-Century Teacher* (London: Paul, 1926), 11; BLPEs-LPS, 1/1, ff. 1–4; Mary Pickering, *August Comte*, 3:571; Patrick Geddes, "A Current Criticism of the Positivist School," *Positivist Review*, no. 343 (1921): 145–9. While Huxley had been a student of Comte's works for over sixteen years, he mocked the scientific merit of sociology and the Positivists' "demonstrable faith"; he quipped that Positivism was "Catholicism *minus* Christianity." While Congreve defended Comte's *System* as the "definitive construction" of sociological science, Geddes commented that he regarded Huxley's *Lay Sermons* as "the most fascinating book on science." But he too was sceptical of the book's "onslaught on Comte." Scholars of Geddes' work have not fully recognized his membership to the London Positivist Society, nor that he raised his children to worship "Humanity"; later he would criticize his colleagues for not more fully advancing the complete system of Positivism.

<sup>114</sup> OUBL-CP, MSS.Eng.lett.c.186, ff. 98–146; OUBL-CP, MSS.Eng.lett.e.57, ff. 136–9.

<sup>115</sup> Patrick Geddes, *The Classification of Statistics* (Edinburgh: Black, 1881), 12, 23–29; US.T-GED 9/18, f. 176; US.T-GED, 2/5/19; US.T-GED 2/5/20.

<sup>116</sup> Geddes, *John Ruskin*, 14, 26–27.

<sup>117</sup> Victor Branford, "The Edinburgh Summer Meeting," *Positivist Review*, no. 12 (1893): 215–20.

<sup>118</sup> Victor Branford and Patrick Geddes, *Our Social Inheritance* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1919), 35.

<sup>119</sup> These types were the basis of Comte's theory of republicanism. Thus, to encourage participatory forms of spatial production and "ruling-in-turn" in the Occidental Republic, different architectural types signalled social power for different users. "Intellectuals" and "Emotionals" were philosophers, teachers, artists, designers, and so on; "Chiefs" and "People" were bankers, industrialists, politicians, tradespeople, unionists, and so on.



By the 1900s Geddes would add a third type of investigation to his umbrella term “the regional survey.” The regional survey now comprised civic (Comte), rustic (Le Play), and social (Booth) types of surveys, thus forming the “Comte–Le Play–Booth” method. By this time, Geddes had opened his Outlook Tower in Edinburgh. Here he exhibited the “sociological facts” his followers had collected during 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.<sup>120</sup> He would soon write that a network of civic societies like the Outlook Tower could plan regional wholes, foster inclusive public government, and initiate imperial devolution; this was an idea introduced by Comte, and it was later absorbed by Geddes’ protégés, Lewis Mumford and Patrick Abercrombie.<sup>121</sup> Geddes employed this sociology-before-planning approach in response to the dilapidated dens of the Edinburgh Old Town and in response to such events as the refugee crisis in Cyprus.<sup>122</sup> He also used the method to develop a scheme to transform the Scottish town of Dunfermline into a garden city-state.<sup>123</sup> Such projects rallied support for the Town Planning Act of 1909.<sup>124</sup>

Central to this discussion was Geddes’ idea of a sociological centre for “concrete politics,” with a concern for re-creating the city-region.<sup>125</sup> The primary purpose and significance of the Outlook Tower, Geddes reiterated at the first Town Planning conference of the Royal Institute of British Architects, was to operate as an *urban intervention* — a “civic observatory.”<sup>126</sup> A global network of such civic societies, or “Civicentre(s) for sociologist and citizen,” would energize and engage the public. It would exhibit the efforts of Howard as well as international planning innovators such as Josef Stübben, Camillo Sitte, and Daniel Burnham; organize transnational tours of urban redevelopment projects; and praise foreign planning advances in the local press. These centres would lead regional surveys, publish investigations on human-ecological alienation and exploitation, and implement “town planning” programmes.<sup>127</sup>

From the late 1890s, Geddes’ partner Victor Branford (1863–1930) aimed to disseminate applied sociology for planning regional city-states throughout Britain’s colonies and the Americas. He had a background in finance, 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, in which young idealists used sociology as the core for consensus-based place-making.<sup>128</sup> Having been influenced by the works of Comte, Congreve, Ernest Mach, and James Ward, Branford thus set out to link science, faith, and citizenship. The regional survey method was *the link* — a “sacred way,” a process of self-actualization for living the good life.<sup>129</sup> 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, he surveyed life in various South American

<sup>120</sup> Patrick Geddes, “The Influence of Geographical Conditions on Social Development,” *Geographical Journal* 12, no. 6 (December 1898): 580–6; Geddes, *Education for Economics and Citizenship* (Manchester: Co-operative Printing Society, 1895).

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 1–28, 47; Lewis Mumford, *The Story of Utopias* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922), 233; Comte, *System*, trans. Frederic Harrison, 2:302–6; *ibid.* 4:257–95; Patrick Abercrombie, “A Civic Society,” *Town Planning Review* 8, no. 2 (1920): 79–92.

<sup>122</sup> Patrick Geddes, “Cyprus, Actual and Possible,” *Contemporary Review* 71 (1897): 892–908.

<sup>123</sup> Patrick Geddes, *City Development* (Edinburgh: Geddes, 1904).

<sup>124</sup> Royal Institute of British Architects, *Transactions: Town Planning Conference London, 10–15 October 1910* (London: RIBA, 1911), 66–71.

<sup>125</sup> Patrick Geddes, *Cities in Evolution* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1915), 96, 207–10, 52.

<sup>126</sup> Patrick Geddes, *The Civic Survey of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Outlook Tower, 1911), 537–57.

<sup>127</sup> Sociological Society, *Sociological Papers*, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1906), 2:92–93; Patrick Geddes, “Two Steps in Civics,” *Town Planning Review* 4, no. 2 (1913): 78–94.

<sup>128</sup> Victor V. Branford, “A Craft University,” *Athenaeum* 1, no. 4626 (1918): 79–82.

<sup>129</sup> Victor Branford, “Survivals and Tendencies in the University,” *Sociological Review* a7, no. 1 (1914): 1–8.

outposts. Following the ideas of Horace Plunkett, Branford argued that, for instance, a West Indian mutual credit scheme would facilitate equipment sharing, promote agronomic diversification, moderate soil depletion, and minimize dependency on British trade.<sup>130</sup> Fixated on creating small states with the character of the Positive Era, his business ventures in Paraguay and Cuba connected telephone, rail, road, waterway hubs, housing, and industries to cultural centres.<sup>131</sup> Such cooperatively financed projects underpinned his budding theory of City Design.

Based on the works of Comte, Geddes, Thorstein Veblen, and William MacDonald,<sup>132</sup> Branford's theory of City Design addressed the two competing psychologies of formalism and idealism. Branford claimed that the Sociological Society was the home 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 co-operative economics schemes, to finance new place-making projects associated with the garden cities movement.<sup>133</sup> Branford and Geddes incorporated these ideas into their post-First World War reconstruction programme 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 — as a "Policy of Culture" — for such problems as housing deficiencies, industrial gridlock, rural decline, and despondency.<sup>134</sup> The Bank of England and co-operative societies would finance the total reconstruction of the nation as the "moral equivalent of war" in which case moralized "banker-statesmen" would facilitate the "central concept of realisable ideals as regional Utopias."<sup>135</sup> As Comte envisioned, they also imagined that the post-war neotechnic era would comprise a government led by women, where science and industry operate on the basis of decentralized self-reliance and civic

<sup>130</sup> Horace Plunkett, *Ireland in the New Century* (London: John Murray, 1904), 226–52; Victor V. Branford, *An Undeveloped Estate of the Empire* (London: West Indian Co-operative Union, c. 1899), 3–14.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*; US.T-GED 9/882, f. 4. Branford organised sociological surveys for planning local industries and infrastructure. Involved with managing the Paraguay Central Railway Company, Havana Telephone Company, and various agricultural and forestry firms, Branford coordinated the logistics of local politicians, investors, engineers, surveyors, property owners, and labour forces. In his work on transport infrastructure in Paraguay, for instance, he went so far as to devise solutions to the challenges of the design process, such as linking rail, road, and waterway hubs. By 1909 Branford's electrical franchise held a monopoly over Havana. That summer the company extended 700 miles of telephone line to connect sixty Cuban cities and some 410,000 people with communications infrastructure.

<sup>132</sup> Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Modern Library, 1934); Victor Branford, "The Founders of Sociology," *American Journal of Sociology* 10, no. 1 (1904): 94–126; Victor Branford, "A Sociological Approach," in *Ideals of Science and Faith*, ed. J.E. Hand (London: G. Allen, 1904), 104–56. These thinkers portrayed idealists as those who put the collective self before the individual; formalists, on the other hand, put self-interest before the common good. The idealist and formalist types of citizen-sociologists shared seven common "priestcrafts" or occupational groupings: scientists, industrialists, artists, literary savants, politicians, historians, and philosophers. United across occupations, idealists formed an institution called the "Religion of Idealism" and sought to convert the adherents of the "Religion of Formalism and Ceremonialism" to their perspective on science, faith, and citizenship. By working with applied sociologists, idealists could found a "practical social Art of regeneration" and harmonise liberty and community.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*; Branford, "Founders"; V.V. Branford, *Science and Citizenship* (London: George Allen, 1906).

<sup>134</sup> Branford, *Interpretations & Forecasts*, 301–56.

<sup>135</sup> Victor Branford, "The Mobilisation of National Credit," *Sociological Review* 7, no. 4 (1914): 307–14; Sociological Society Cities Committee, *Papers for the Present, no 2: The Banker's Part in Reconstruction* (London: Headley Bros., 1917–19), 1–33. The Bank of England would consolidate disparate cooperative initiatives, notably the Co-partnership Tenants Limited, Agricultural Organisation Society, and Urban Banks Association. Shopkeepers, artisans, and craftspeople could receive loan disbursements, which were previously available only to industrial chiefs. Here 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."

responsibility.<sup>136</sup> Following Congreve, Branford, and Geddes, the “father of applied geography” C.B. Fawcett soon thereafter proposed England’s devolution into twelve garden city-states.<sup>137</sup>

According to Branford’s Third Alternative, each region’s Policy of Culture might entail the construction of new universities, schools, and cultural institutions; urban and rural working-class houses alongside shops, entertainment venues, and workplaces; parks, railways, canals, harbours, 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 locale.<sup>138</sup> Branford was proposing the devolution of the British Empire into garden city-states, as an Occidental network linked through a world university system. With the regional survey as their educational method, the Spiritual university elite would provide practical education to craft guilds, thus making City Design initiatives possible. Yet these intellectuals would also arbitrate international and domestic affairs relating to industry and public life.<sup>139</sup> Altogether, this approach to post-war reconstruction, Branford and Geddes openly acknowledged, drew on Comte’s “practical treatise,” *The System of Positive Polity*.<sup>140</sup> Arguably, Congreve’s influence was what set them on this path.

## Conclusion

For some forty years the British Positivists, under Congreve’s direction, promoted the dissolution of standing armies, advocated for free secular education, and called for the devolution of global empires. In terms of international relations, Congreve’s followers considered his pamphlet *Gibraltar* (1857) as laying the groundwork for such groups as the Anti-Aggression League and the League of Nations. After his death in 1899, journalists announced that, owing to his criticisms of British foreign policy, the colonies had never seen a more courageous and generous friend than Congreve. And at the national level, his followers defended trade unionists’ demands for shortened working hours, higher wages, and better living conditions. The Positivists’ activities helped to legitimize the advocacy of the London Trades Council, the Social Democratic Federation, the Fellowship of the New Life, and the Fabian Society.

As indicated, Congreve was Comte’s first complete follower and the founder of the Church of Humanity in Britain. His promotion of humanist ethics was furthered by the creation of various Positivist Societies that formed with Congreve’s help across Britain, Asia, and the Americas. Congreve’s promotion of moral secular education was externalized by F.J. Gould, Patrick Geddes, and Victor Branford, who introduced Positivist ideas to the International Moral Education Congress and the Conference of Living Religions. The British Positivists efforts also paved the way for Stanton Coit’s Ethical Societies, the terminus of which is, perhaps, the British Humanist Association.

Apart from these strands of influence, this article has argued that Congreve should be considered one of the earliest sociologists in Britain. His historical-geographical survey method was incorporated into the activities of the Sociological Society and the Le Play House, which joined together such town planners as Sybella Gurney, Patrick Abercrombie, and H.V. Lanchester during Britain’s post-First World War

<sup>136</sup> Frederick J. Gould, *Auguste Comte and Positivism* (London: Watts, 1916), 9; Victor Branford, *Whitherward? Hell or Eutopia* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1921), 1–59; Sociological Society Cities Committee, *Papers for the Present, no 9: The Drift to Revolution* (London: Headley Bros., 1917–19), 42.

<sup>137</sup> Charles Bungay Fawcett, *Provinces of England* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1919).

<sup>138</sup> Sociological Society Cities Committee, *Papers for the Present, no 2*.

<sup>139</sup> *New Age*, 7 December 1916; *New Age*, 12 October 1916; *Times*, 11 August 1920.

<sup>140</sup> V. Branford, “Towards the Third Alternative,” *Sociological Review* a11 (March 1919): 62–65; Sociological Society Cities Committee, *Papers for the Present, no 7: The Third Alternative* (London: Headley Bros., 1917–19); *Papers for the Present, no 14: Earth, Hell, and the Third Alternative* (London: Headley Bros., 1917–19); Fawcett, *Provinces of England*; Victor Branford and Patrick Geddes, *The Coming Polity* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1917).

reconstruction effort. Along these lines, in promoting the notion of creating small self-sufficient republics, Congreve's British followers 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 school 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 surveys for place-making, they introduced the notion of design-research as a form of activism in the creation of caring and socially responsible citizens. Thus, seeking an alternative form of regional life, Comte and Congreve's followers used applied sociology to examine nested social problems, from the international level to the local. Although in many instances they could not see the individual in humanity, their work stands as an example of planning politics, where citizen-groups acted as an intellectual and practical alternative to imperialism, corporate hegemony, and uricide.