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Taking Stock: Perspectives on British Urban History

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Article abstract

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*Taking Stock: Perspectives on British Urban History**

Richard Rodger

Abstract

Drawing on an unprecedented volume of recent scholarship on the urban history of Britain, this paper seeks to identify areas for future academic research. These include a closer alignment of intellectual disciplines to cross-fertilise approaches to the historical study of towns and cities; a more resolute engagement by urban historians with audio and visual sources and a generally more coherent archival policy for the contemporary period; further integration of Irish perspectives into the study of British urban history; and a more imaginative analytical framework than town typologies by which to understand the process of urban change. In addition, a number of other areas are suggested, and the article concludes on a positivist note by reflecting on the extent to which the field of British urban history has been consolidated and rendered accessible to specialist historians and general public alike.

Résumé

En s'appuyant sur une quantité imposante de travaux récents portant sur l'histoire urbaine britannique, l'article s'attarde à cerner des sujets potentiels de recherche universitaire. Parmi ceux-ci, l'auteur suggère : un recoupement des disciplines intellectuelles en vue d'enrichir les approches de l'étude historique des villes; un recours assidu de la part des historiens aux sources visuelles et sonores, et une politique d'archivage vraiment cohérente pour la période contemporaine; une intégration poussée des perspectives irlandaises dans l'étude de l'histoire urbaine britannique; et un cadre analytique plus imaginatif que les typologies des villes pour comprendre le processus des transformations urbaines. L'article aborde un grand nombre d'autres thématiques et se termine sur une note factuelle en mentionnant dans quelle mesure le domaine de l'histoire urbaine britannique a gagné en solidité et en accessibilité, tant à l'égard des spécialistes de l'histoire que du public en général.

Stock-taking can be both practical and therapeutic. The process allows for calm reflection and forward planning, while its more routine features permit a degree of order to be established.[1] For Britain, uniquely, the publication of the *Cambridge Urban History of Britain* (CUHB) in 2000 provides such a stock-taking opportunity.[2] Weighing in at ten kilograms, reviewers have begun to have their say about the 75 individual chapters of a work that extends to 2800 pages written by over 90 of the most active and widely published urban historians of British towns and cities. What follows is not a review of this milestone in British urban history, although inevitably some comments do contain something of retrospective character.[3] The tone intended is more a succession of reflections or musings about the directions of British urban history, prompted not only by the publication of the CUHB but also by the 30th anniversary of *Urban History*.[4] In "Taking Stock" here, the focus is on areas of British urban scholarship that offer scope to advance the field and already seems to be commanding further attention.

Where does the recent publication of almost ten kilos of urban history, thirty years of journal articles in *Urban History*, and over 35,000 citations[5] leave the subject matter? What does the future hold for the historical analysis of British towns and cities? It is worth stating, first, that since the publication of Dyos' "agenda" and what he described as a "ragged field"[6] forty years ago, an extraordinary volume of analysis and synthesis in urban history has taken place and the CUHB is testimony to the leadership and scholarly stimuli generated since the 1960s. Secondly, given the exponential volume of output of towns and cities since 1968, it is invidious, even mischievous, for one person to suggest research agendas for others, especially when these now extend far beyond the fields of competence of a single individual. Pressed by the editors to do so, however, advice has been sought from a number of individuals in the field and from surveying the archive files of *Urban History*[7] as well as by trawling book reviews and the annual review of periodical literature in *Urban History*.[8]

Developing agendas for British urban history

For the Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods, a number of future threads for research and publication suggest themselves. Since for these periods archaeological evidence is very extensive, further synthesis of field reports and finds lists remains a high priority. These documents contain extensive and detailed research, even though they are often compiled under immense time pressure since many sites are excavated only when threatened by modern development. For this practical, if regrettable, reason, archaeology and medieval history were once intellectually separated, a divorce all too often reinforced by organisational structures in most British universities. More recently, the intellectual divide has been bridged through research initiatives such as the Whittlewood project where finds, field analysis, maps, and medieval documents have brought complementary skills and methodologies to bear on the nature and continuity of settlement, among other issues.[9] More than most, Palliser has been convinced of the merits of studying landscape and medieval urban topography, and his use of the term "built environment" as a title to a chapter on medieval towns between 1300 and 1540 demonstrates how far and how confidently such approaches have gone in recent years. Whereas attention initially focussed on ecclesiastical centres and those of strategic importance – for example, on York, Winchester, Canterbury, and Durham – it is becoming clear that the proto-urban coastal and river settlements also offer rich potential for further study and will round out a grasp of settlement patterns and early relations with hinterlands.[10]

Since the publication of CUHB(I) Chris Dyer's contribution to the study of making a living in medieval England has appeared.[11] This has fleshed out the economic and occupational character of medieval life in a very accessible way and in the 1990s, together with Britnell's work on the medieval commercial economy, a more convincing account of employ-

ment, work, trading, and workshop activities is now available.[12] Scope exists for further regional and local perspectives so as to reveal the nuances of the patterns Dyer and Britnell, among others, have expounded and in particular the social and economic position of women and children will certainly continue to merit an increasing amount of research effort. And where urban culture and sociability provided access to understanding processes of change in pre-modern towns and Victorian cities[13] so, too, medieval urban culture promises to do likewise, prompted by stimulating work from Rosser.[14] As was recently observed, "the dinner-table, the ale-butt, and the wine barrel were essential to civic life"[15] and studies of material life and medieval urban culture add a human face to life in urban settlements, much as they have done to stimulate scholarly interest in later time periods.

Academic interest in medieval material culture has been a force for inter-disciplinarity, and archaeological evidence from cemetery sites offers considerable potential in terms of anthropological research into skeletal features and diseases of medieval populations. Collectively, physiology, forensic pathology, and anthropology as well as archaeology and medieval urban history have much to offer in this arena. Going further in this direction, genetic "finger-printing" offers real, if expensive, prospects in relation to debates about family sizes, intermarriage, and the extent of migrant influences on early urban populations. Of course such analyses are not confined to the medieval period but, given the paucity of documents for this period, they are likely to contribute most significantly to it. The origins of invaders and the extent of intermarriage are just two areas where genetics have already been shown to have a contribution to make to medieval urban demography and household structures.

Perhaps most impressive is the progress that has been made in British urban history in keeping up with the pace, or perhaps more accurately, the pulse, of growth of urban settlement populations in medieval Britain. Never a matter of linear expansion, Alan Dyer's admirable account of the changing urban hierarchy of medieval towns should be the spur to a more extensive analysis of smaller towns throughout Britain, and in different time periods.[16] Only then will we have a thorough grasp of the relative importance of the larger urban centres, and a sense of the continuities in the early modern period spliced to Clark's interest in small towns. Urban hierarchies seem likely to get an extended run, therefore, and probably not just of the medieval period, since Langton's analysis in CUHB (II) of early modern hierarchies and urban networks has been described as "exhilarating" and will surely stimulate further research.[17] Despite this, as Phythian-Adams makes clear in his clinical dissection of the tissues of medieval urban growth, exactly which layers of the urban hierarchy contributed to the expanding population nationally is a matter for future elaboration. More specifically, scope exists to test the hypothesis that current estimates of population derived from Domesday may be too low, and that population pressures as conventionally ascribed to the post-Conquest period may have been building up for some time beforehand, in both England and Scotland.

For the early modern period, some of the research agenda items inevitably are linked both backwards and forwards to the adjacent periods of urban history. For example, if as has been claimed, the English Reformation of the 1530s and 1540s represents a distinct rift and not a continuum in the urban history of England, how does that affect the interpretation of early modern towns, where, from example in the 1590s have previously been advanced as marking a discontinuity?[18] And as the accumulation of published or web-based datasets becomes more common, is there not scope for a consolidated inventory of Hearth Tax data, much as Alan Dyer's medieval taxation assessments in the CUHB (I) have provided instructive rankings for medieval towns? Such resources, electronically delivered, would stimulate a new generation of urban historical research and would transport the subject to levels beyond those of conventional, and increasingly questionable, typologies of small towns, port towns, "great and good towns", health resorts and industrial towns, and so on, that form a large proportion of CUHB (II).

In fact new agendas are already well-formed for the early modern urban historian. Emotion, imagery, ritual, morality, sentiment, and sociability, to name a few, have attracted considerable attention already.[19] Recently, the role of music, as both a form of production and consumption, has produced considerable interest, and has informed our understanding of sixteenth- to eighteenth-century urban culture at all levels.[20] Estrangement and belonging, two elements in an intriguing and suggestive chapter of the CUHB (II), offers insights as to identity and membership. Indeed anxiety, fear, and the language of the uncertain is something that has often been associated with Victorian Britain, but which is shown to have had a much longer pedigree. Harding's recent comparative work on death and burial points the way not only to comparative studies, in her case of London and Paris, but also to the treatment of ritual and attitudes, social order, and urban management in early modern towns and cities.[21] Perhaps the sociological language of the dominant ideology, and of marginality are still the basis of anxiety for urban historians, but as vehicles of historical analysis such concepts have much to offer in terms of a social-science-based synthesis on topics connected with human behaviour. More generally, the behavioural sciences have much more to offer than urban historians at least allow. Household, family, and community, for example, have attracted interest from demographic and family historians, but as agencies in the construction of social capital and under conditions of considerable dislocation, these arenas offer rewarding and penetrating insights. Here is an area where theory and empiricism prove fertile bedfellows. Nor are household, family, and neighbourhood necessarily unifying or harmonious; they could be discordant and this, too, is attracting interest among younger researchers of early modern towns. Challenges to the presumed anonymity in urban life have been mounted[22] but the urban history agenda for the early modern period provides ample opportu-

nity to incorporate neighbourhood, youth culture, systems of authority, and mechanisms of secrecy in the management of urban society.

Early modern urban historians, like those of the medieval period and the nineteenth century too, must address the United Kingdom and preferably the British Isles within their reference frameworks. The imperial dimension is increasingly accepted as a reflexive relationship, as it is in the history of Spain, the Netherlands, and other colonial powers. Not to acknowledge this in British towns and cities is a serious blind spot. Not to recognise the Irish Sea as a facilitator rather than a barrier is to reject the realities of sea transport for centuries before the steam age and jet engine and to consign towns in western Britain and eastern Ireland to oblivion. Worse still, to deny the existence of Ireland is to distort important English urban networks, as historians of migration, for example, have shown.[23] The symbiotic relationship between Britain and Ireland – in terms of landownership and political power of the nobility, transport and commerce, military power and recruitment – is evident in the non-urban literature of British history. And there are studies enough of new towns, garrisons towns, and market towns in Ireland to merit serious inclusion in all British urban history.[24] The imperial dimension, Irish and European perspectives need to be infiltrated more thoroughly into the scholarship of British urban history.[25] Without doing so, that history is and will remain partial and blind to important dimensions. When will the British/English learn about Ireland?

Across the chronological range from medieval to contemporary urban history, another area regularly overlooked is the legal and administrative apparatus that affected development. Jurisdictional relationships, within and between towns and cities, based on boundaries, territoriality, and spheres of influence consistently demand attention no matter the historical period. Institutional jurisdictions, religious and charitable, have also been powerful forces in this respect. Central-local relations between municipalities and the tentacles of the modern state have been an endemic source of friction, and a powerful justification locally for autonomy. Intro-muros, medieval lords of towns, and aristocratic and institutional landowners in the modern period have exercised power and authority in ways that have fundamentally influenced urban development. In one sense these are more obvious points of power-based relations founded on jurisdictions. Less explicitly, but not unimportant, was the raft of bylaws, regulations, customs, and practices that developed from specific jurisdictions – those of guilds, charities, and bequests, as well as the later formal authorities of town councils and municipal activities, for example in relation to public health, fire, structural conditions of buildings, slaughterhouses, and cemeteries. The individualism of town identities that the Municipal Reform Act 1835 addressed, Campbell speculates, owed much to the jurisdictional patterns already established by 1300.[26] The spatial, social, and cultural geographies of towns and cities were affected by legal and jurisdictional matters and all too rarely do urban historians deal with such topics as part of a system of control and urban management, except where specifically they are interested in the police or housing or vagrants, for example. In addition, regulations and bylaws, as a codification of a set of urban values, have much to commend themselves as an arena for study, just as the language of officialdom provides insights into the mentalité of city managers.

If administrative and legal perspectives are perceived to have little appeal this probably derives from the antiquarian nature of many early municipal histories. Conceived differently, as boundaries and territorialities, the subject matter has great depth and urban significance and should form an important element in the construction of urban history in decades to come. There are at least two reasons for this. First, the nature of boundaries defines "insiders" and by implication "aliens" or "outsiders." Such definitional boundaries offer a potentially rewarding framework of reference for many areas of urban historical study: migration, identities, and elites constantly renegotiate territoriality, but the use of jurisdictions inherently addresses membership and dominant ideas, and by implication, marginals, deviants, and "aliens." This also forges potentially rich linkages with the sociological theories of Gramsci and Elias, to name but two giants. Secondly, administrative and fiscal boundaries defined agencies of urban control, legitimating their authority and geographical coverage. Guilds, corporations, and town councils successively assigned authority to their agents – charities, vestries, pavement and improvement commissioners, watch committees, and in the post-1835 period of municipal reform, to police forces and fire brigades, to building and sanitary inspectors.[27] In fact, a multitude of municipal sub-committees drew their power and legitimacy from the authority of the town council. A pecking order of ceremonial precedence and seniority existed in these organs of local governance. If that was not enough to engage jealousy and friction, relations between the council as a whole and the tentacles of central government would. Such jurisdictional feuds were enshrined within the apparatus of local and central government and in relations between them. Rhodes's analysis of central-local relations in the context of the legitimate power and authority of government is based on their jurisdictions and resources, and though under-acknowledged in the urban historiography, provides a powerful framework for the analysis of urban politics.[28]

An environmental perspective is another theme that cuts across all temporal strands of urban history. Originally developed out of research interests in water management and public health, wider environmental issues concerned with all aspects of pollution and urban public policy are currently gaining momentum, though paradoxically given their national political stances, Britain is adrift of the United States in this area of scholarship.[29] Disciplinary alliances between geography and environmental sciences offer some prospect here as historical aspects of bio-diversity gain a hold. Smout's recent work on the environmental consequences for plant and animal life of climate change over several centuries is a fine model for urban historians to adopt, bedded as it is in the cultural and social contexts of the period.[30] This work, with its

heavy reliance on a scientific literature concerned with changing plant, animal, and insect populations, focuses firmly on the implications of the natural world for human behaviour. This points the way to an interest that urban historians would do well to pursue – the "greening" of the city over the long period.[31] Parks and enclosed commons have appealed as topics to urban historians of the nineteenth-century city, though mainly as an element in the public health strategies and the "lungs" of the city.[32] However, the relationship of open space to the built environment is a matter of perception, of crowding, of scale and mass within the city. In short, urban topography, a topic of considerable importance in the early years of British urban history, could adapt to embrace the psychological relations between open spaces and buildings. The term "urban jungle"[33] conveys something of the congestion, crowded streets, noise pollution, and the oppression of numbers in public places and it is to these topics that urban historians should be alert in reinterpreting changes in urban lifestyles across the centuries. Related urban planning and policy issues and the provision of public utilities are gradually gaining attention in Britain, though there is much scope here for further research, particularly in the period post-1950.[34]

Medieval urban historians are accustomed to thinking about the proximity of the agricultural community and produce markets, and as Thomson's *Nineteenth Century Horse Sense* made plain, the prevalence of "animal city" into modern times should not be overlooked.[35] In an appendix to his "Report on Public Health" in 1862, the Edinburgh Medical Officer, Henry Duncan Littlejohn produced a census of urban dairies, recognising as he did how common these were.[36] The sheer numbers of horses, cows, chickens, and pigs in the nineteenth-century city, and of wild birds in continental European cities, together with the growth of veterinary science, are topics that urban historians have so far neglected.[37] In modern times, this phenomenon and the psychological dimensions of pets in cities has not been explored, far less the commercial aspect of the processing of pet food and the modern paraphernalia of pet-keeping.[38]

If natural habitats provide a rich arena for future urban research so, too, do man-made ones. In recent years much research has been directed to housing and the built environment generally. Some of this languishes in site reports and would benefit from a more systematic analysis, certainly for the early modern period. Internal domestic arrangements are gradually being revealed by these means.[39] However, the way space was used, gendered, and how domestic practices changed over time remains obscure.[40] How skills were learned and passed on, for example, in preserving food and mending clothes, remains mysterious. Diaries and autobiographies provide insights here, and oral histories offer further scope for the contemporary period. Thus, as Foucault states, "a whole history remains to be written of spaces ... from the great strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of habitat."[41] The habitat of the house is one locus that has been under-researched, despite a great deal of attention to the exterior, and to housing policy and provision. Turning to the interior, design and fashion historians' interest in the furnishing and fabrics of the middle-class home remain outside the mainstream of urban history. Like archaeological field reports relating to material culture, these more modern "finds" could be more fully integrated into an analysis of the culture of domesticity. As windows on custom and practice, values and meanings, an alliance between urban historians and design historians would produce dividends in re-focusing attention on the home, with the external features of the house relegated from its present prominence.

What about the twentieth-century British city? Chronologically, the CUHB (III) ends in 1950. From the perspective of 2003, this is as distant to current undergraduates and newly appointed lecturers as the Great War and the 1920s were to many of the academics appointed during the era of British university expansion in the 1960s. In fairness, this does not mean to say that the urban historians who have contributed to the CUHB were universally appointed in this era, nor that they are trapped in the academic debates of that period, nor that the contemporary period has greater importance than others. However, 1950 is a long time ago.

To seize the attention of a current generation of students and lecturers and to maintain the momentum of urban history in Britain, it is imperative that analyses of towns and cities in the contemporary period figure prominently. This can be achieved through several strategies designed to promote the historical study of towns and cities generally, but which have particular resonance for the post-1950 decades. First, this can be achieved by publishing accessible urban history textbooks so that broad reference frameworks are available to all who wish to connect an urban dimension to political, social, and other developments.[42] A second strategy relates to what have been termed "modern urban biographies" and the importance of comparative urban studies.[43] Whereas antiquarians previously produced a history of the town or city from earliest times to the present day written by a single author, Reeder claims that the multi-authored survey of the town is now the common form of producing a history of a town or city.[44] However practical this might be, given that many settlements in Britain have a history of well over 1000 years and that scholarly command of such a range is a major undertaking, the dangers of such an approach, Reeder notes, include fragmentation, partial coverage, and tensions between academic and general readerships. He concludes that "it is arguable whether the multi-authored volume is necessarily the best way forward in developing the city biography" and laments the fact that of recent examples,

> none presents or discusses their cities as members of a historical family or genre of industrial city and it is in consequence very difficult to deduce anything substantive by way of general comment on common problems or features.[45]

In short, the comparative approach, whether by theme, country, or issue, necessarily engages with the processes of urban change, and seeks to develop general statements about

such change, alert always to the particularities of place. In so doing, such studies provide a depth of understanding about how towns and cities function that appeals to the interested general reader, and informs policy, if only indirectly. International comparative urban history, thus, is perhaps the most difficult arena, though arguably the most rewarding, for urban historians since it offers rich perspectives on understanding urban processes. By putting similar issues, for example, overcrowded housing, congested transport systems, epidemic plague, suburbanisation, public ownership, and political power under scrutiny in different conditions, it is possible to identify common characteristics in the problems that developed and solutions adopted. For *Urban History,* published by Cambridge University Press, submissions on non-British topics represent a majority (52 per cent) and for subscriptions to this journal, again a majority (68 per cent) were from non-British sources.[46] At least, therefore, British urban historians are interested in, and exposed to, a plurality of explanations of urban phenomena from all over the world and in the longer run, this will encourage further comparative studies. In the spirit of the "age of enlightenment," knowledge of different cultural practices produces tolerance and is an antidote to turbulence in a contemporary world.

While these publishing trends, together with the production of accessible textbooks, will contribute to raising the profile of urban history, in a digital age, digital resources will assist that process among a younger generation perhaps more than anything else. This is a third strategy that should be actively pursued in British urban history. By bringing different visual, audio, and textual materials to bear on issues, towns and cities will receive greater attention as an analytical construct.[47] Such resources as the Old Bailey Proceedings, Charles Booth's London Life and Labour, the Statistical Account of Scotland, Charting the Nation, Historical Digitisation of Directories, Edina's various mapping templates, and electronic census materials for 1881 and 1901 have provided rich opportunities to underpin academic research and undergraduate course development, and to stimulate the historical interests of the general public so evident in various TV history series.[48] Never have such possibilities been greater. The New Opportunities Fund (NOF) has stimulated dozens of local, often urban, history projects to digitise photographic images and maps, forging a potential link between local historians and academic historians, and the government sponsored "People's Network" has resulted in internet connections in all public libraries. In such a climate of public interest, for urban historians, the production of digital resources is a proselytising opportunity not to be missed in bringing local historical interest more fully into the orbit of urban analysis.

The United Nations announced in 2002 that a majority of the planet's population lived in cities. In Britain, first Leicester and then Birmingham, cities of 300,000 and 500,000 approximately, are predicted to be majority non-white cities in the 2021 census. So one urgent matter that must be addressed is the production of an urban history of Britain spanning 1940 to 2000 that explores the reorientations in urban society during this period. New themes have emerged; earlier ones have been revised. Such topics as citizenship and civil society, gendered space, environmental sustainability, cities of consumption, the sociable city, and urban regeneration are ones that can be found in the school and university curriculum, as well as in lifelong learning classes, but often are presented in terms of public policy. By providing an accessible historical frame of reference for current students and staff, urban historians through this fourth strategy stimulate a deeper knowledge and understanding of the social, economic, and political processes that affect the way contemporary cities and urban communities operate. Refugees, asylum seekers, and economic migrants, to take a group of current policy concerns, are not new problems. Nor, arguably, is globalisation as new a topic as is often supposed. No less important, a determined attempt to bring contemporary studies of towns and cities into the classroom, for example as part of General Studies A level or within the context of citizenship classes currently making headway, would offer a counter-offensive to the "nazification" of the school and university curriculum and invasion of the A level by business studies, media studies, law and psychology. This is what Sam Bass Warner once described as his "fantasy" university curriculum where, irrespective of whether students specialised in the liberal arts, science, technology, or medicine, they would find that the historical study of the city was at the "center of the curriculum."[49]

One of the explanations for the relative scarcity of research and publication on towns and cities in the second half of the twentieth century is related to sources. Of course, this is official policy. The British government's insistence on a 100-year closure rule for census materials and certain other record categories has designated many areas of research as off limits. Accordingly, historians of the twentieth century have been hamstrung by this and similar rulings enforcing closure periods. The absence of a freedom of information act in Britain has many impacts on civil liberties but an overlooked one is that the historical trail has often gone cold before historians have been able to read relevant documents. But the government is culpable in other respects, too. For an age that has created more words and printed pages than ever before, relatively few written records have been preserved and, when faced after 1960 by the exponential increase in computer files of a personal nature, governments, both central and local, as well as other organisations, failed to develop systematic record conservation policies.[50] Departments of State and their municipal counterparts had no realistic policy by which to preserve for posterity those personal and official communications that form the basis of historical writing. In addition, the electronic and digital revolutions with their phones, faxes, text messaging, and computer files have cut a swathe through the conventional raw materials of history, the written record. Of course, this development has not been limited to Britain, and the permanence of the ledgers, letters and accounts of medieval monks, Victorian clerks, and solicitors' apprentices was itself only ever partial. We know only what was not lost. After various technical stages, however, the digital

revolution has produced an ally by way of compensation – the mini disk. Cheap and portable, with excellent sound quality, this weapon is an important addition to the urban historians' armoury.[51] Oral history will provide an increasingly important dimension to our understanding of the late-twentieth-century city. In fact, there really is no alternative. Sterile arguments about the nature of the oral source, its presumed subjectivity and streamed consciousness, will be shown to be vacuous. After all, what are House of Commons Debates, court proceedings and a multitude of minute books but a partial transcription of what seemed to be important to one scribe? Given its immediacy, and its everyday use by students (for other reasons, of course) the mini-disk recorder is a technology waiting to be exploited by new generations of historians willing to welcome oral history as a means to explore the history of towns and cities after 1950.

Here, then, is a fifth strand in the strategy to develop contemporary urban history. Oral, and soon video recordings, will foreground the urban experiences of all social categories, races, and orientations. The historical record will be less heavily grounded in the elitist and gendered perspectives that have previously dominated the written record. As such, the mini-disk recorder returns to the community ownership of its history. Multiple identities, parallel streams of urban experience can and will be recaptured, and this will add materially to urban historians' understanding of mid- and late-twentieth-century city life. There are many regional and local oral history societies and excellent examples of just how such developments can contribute to historical interpretation are beginning to emerge, as for example, from the East Midlands Oral History Archive (EMOHA).[52]

So oral urban history offers a more socially inclusive dimension to the recent history of British towns and cities. The plurality of historical sources increasingly available to British urban historians is part of a technical dividend associated with the electronic revolution. As this audio medium becomes allied increasingly with other digitising, imaging, and mapping projects, such as Charting the Nation (Edinburgh), the National Library of Scotland's Town Maps, Media Archive for Central England (MACE) and A Sense of Place Consortium (HEMSoP: Lincoln) and East Midlands Broad Consortium (EMBC: Nottingham), British Universities Film and Video Council, and *Re*:source, from the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries, to name very few, so gradually the scope of urban history is likely to be redefined.[53] This is the case not just for academic history, but also for community history. At national, regional, and local levels the scope for researching and re-presenting urban history stands at an important threshold. Combined with ever more gigabytes of memory on personal computers, the lay interest in combining audio, video, and photographic files seems insatiable. Many communities collate their histories in digital form. Indeed, among many of the municipally funded projects mentioned above there is an educational awareness and technical competence often in advance of that in university history departments. Urban historians must not get left behind.

A Positivist Postscript

Stock-taking is only satisfying where the result of the arithmetic (original stock + new stock – sales = new stock levels) corresponds with a physical count. Historians rarely write off old stock, rarely agree about the volume of new stock, and always depart from different stock levels, given their age and subject specialism. So it is doubtful if any will agree with this stock-taking.

Despite structural factors, such as the consolidation of university departments, the distorting effects of measuring the published output of university scholars (Research Assessment Exercise or RAE) on the culture of long-run research, the optional nature of History in the English school curriculum after the age of 15, and the continuing organisational split between Pre-Modern Towns and Urban History Group, recent publications have shown urban history in Britain to be vigorous and of high quality.[54] It is also "sexy" as the continuing public interest in radio and TV programmes continues to show.[55] And it is "relevant" in terms of contemporary political issues, as Meller and Daunton claim and, in combination with oral history, it can be socially inclusive.[56]

Perhaps in terms of "relevance" urban history has an even more important and under-acknowledged role to play in the exploration of the self and in our quest for a system of values by which we administer our society. Governance, citizenship, and public participation have been discussed at length by urban historians of all periods as they have elaborated notions of civil society.[57] This is not unconnected to contemporary British interests in a "third way" or a "stakeholder" society, as proposed by Tony Blair in 1997.[58] More recently, the Archbishop of Canterbury, newly installed, asked in a televised lecture, "What are the risks and benefits of a consumerist or 'market state' and what losses accrue from the decline of the nation state?"[59] Collective interests, he argued, are at risk in a state committed to "push-button" responses and short-termism. Environmental concerns, for example, and the welfare of the most vulnerable members of society are the casualties of a "marketised" state. So, too, is the individual's and society's awareness of history if the immediate is all we know. "Do we know where we come from?" was the Archibishop's question, and if we "hollow out" the state, to use Rhodes's phrase, by dismantling its institutional fabric and replacing it with an "elective dictatorship" with limited accountability, we will reverse the process that culminated in the twentieth century in a rich, pluralist combination of public bodies, institutions, and private organisations. It was these that acted as a historical counterweight both to the over-weaning power of the central state and the over-zealous power of the market by means of a rich municipal culture and a defence of collective interests.[60] If ever urban historians required a *credo* and a justification to present to students for the historical study of towns and cities, this is it. Well, it is mine.

History as a continuum, as a constantly reconfigured and negotiated set of interests and leverages has certainly been an emerging feature of recent British urban historiography as it

moved away from overtly class-based and conflictual interpretations based on Marxist perspectives of the 1970s.[61] In this regard, urban historians since the 1980s have embraced research on voluntary societies and clubs, on leisure and consumption, work and prayer, as a middle way in the polarisation between private enterprise and state intervention that characterised much of the theoretically and ideologically inclined publications of earlier decades.[61] British provincial cities and county towns experienced transition as an endemic condition. Multiple identities have become characteristic of writing on British urbanism in recent years.[63] In this sense, then, cultural studies have reminded urban historians, if they needed it, that multiple identities were, and are, an omnipresent feature of British towns and cities. Studies of identity, symbol and ritual, therefore, have added considerably to a discourse about the nature of the "urban." The informal urban economy has been rediscovered with the formal structures of work and finance; the underworld has been reunited with the world of officialdom; regulation with urban disorder, and so on. In the process, the aesthetic city has been rediscovered; real and imagined cities are intertwined.[64] As Cosgrove exhorted some years ago: "the subjective and artistic resonances are to be actively embraced."[65] Adornment and urban myth offer illuminating and alternative perspectives on the city and this promises to be a rich seam of as yet unexploited research that crosses over into various disciplines – anthropology, ethnography, and visual knowledge more generally – and is equally relevant to medieval, early modern, and contemporary urban history.

Urban historians have embraced more culturally based interpretations of social and political activity, and an infusion of cultural theory, as in other historical specialisms. Structural explanations of urban phenomena have conceded primacy to culturally determined ones. Whether the strong empirical traditions of British urban history should or will continue to be as embedded as in recent decades is a matter of personal judgment and individual preference. In some respects, any answer to this question is also, in part at least, institutionally determined. Where amalgamations of historical studies have taken place in many British universities then generally this has involved a consolidation within a humanities rather than the former social science-based organisational umbrella.[66] Where historical research on towns and cities was located in geography departments, then here, too, the redesignation of the subject as a science has affected the way it is resourced and staffed. Physical and environmental geography has gained sway at the expense of historical and human geography. This organisational change may have little effect on current scholars but the audit culture and "transparency" already extends to the nature and content of graduate education. How far a humanities-based doctoral candidate will be able to jump tracks to explore social science theory remains to be seen but there is a danger that the catholicity of approaches so beneficial to urban history in the past may be under threat.

In short, the predisposition to deploy social science theory seems weaker than for some time. This seems a potentially dangerous development for two reasons. First, because, in an increasingly specialist environment researchers need some common ground. Concept and theory provide this as researchers drive toward solutions to broader problems and approach historical issues from different historical directions and periods. Not to do so is to risk innumerable specialist historical ghettoes. Fragmentation also lessens the broader appeal of history to both the public and to academics. Inbreeding risks sterility or, biologically, at least, deformity if not insanity. The breadth of urban historical interests, however, should offer some insurance against this process.[67] Second, there is a conceptual nimbleness and analytical focus associated with abstraction and generalisation. The alternative is descriptive history and there is only so much to describe. Revisionism, therefore, keeps urban historians (and others) intellectually lean, healthy, and active.[68]

This brings into focus two questions that British urban historians have studiously avoided in recent years: "what constitutes 'urban'" and, "what is urban history"? Exceptionally, for medieval towns and cities, Palliser (CUHB I) engaged this theme, drawing heavily on "studiedly neutral' definitions provided by Reynolds. Functionally, the (medieval) town is "a permanent and concentrated human settlement in which a significant proportion of the population is engaged in non-agricultural occupations"; this is complemented with social characteristics as "the inhabitants of towns normally regard themselves, and are regarded by (others) as a different sort of people."[69] This is indeed vague, and Clark (CUHB II) avoided the "what is urban?" issue altogether by listing many facets of writing on early modern towns to produce a view of "what is urban history." Daunton (CUHB III), after identifying circulation, governance, construction, "getting and spending", and images as the five features that define the "urban", concludes that these contributed to the autonomy of towns and cities and defined unique urban identities. Moreover, Daunton makes a powerful claim for the continuation of an urban "variable" in the second half of the century.[70] Few authors since Dyos have dared to enter this debate, yet it remains a central issue, figures in the classroom whenever towns and cities are discussed, and has occupied entire conferences in Europe and provoked philosophical discussion there.[71] Some signs that the community of urban historians wishes to re-engage with the "what is urban history?" issue are apparent in the calls by British organisers of a conference panel in 2004.[72]

As represented in the footnotes and bibliographies in the CUHB vols. I, II, and III and in the annual bibliography published in *Urban History* each December, the study of towns and cities in all periods is flourishing. The "ragged field"[73] that was urban history forty years ago has been consolidated and reformatted. Graduate students in urban history, if less numerous than formerly, have a command of diverse and complicated literatures on towns and cities, and present it skilfully as a result of an audit culture that has done much to

advance training in research methods and design. Routinely, doctoral theses are completed in three to four years and, if less empirically driven than formerly, are mostly more conceptually sophisticated.[74] For the undergraduate student, as for the researcher, the CUHB chapters provide a splendid, rationalised overview of the subject matter and where the principal unit of historical analysis has been the town or city, an abundance of scholarship informs other historical specialisms too – business, social, economic, feminist, architectural, and other adjectival histories.

Like all accounting practice, stock-taking has its dangers. It fixes the balance sheet at a moment in time. Like a balance sheet, stock levels are outmoded the moment the census is taken. And like a business with a strong trading account, an element of complacency or even smugness can ensue. But if British urban historians know anything it is that the towns and cities constantly reinvent themselves and it is already evident that, despite the consolidation and imagination that has suffused the literature in recent years, it is time to move on to new agendas. That there are already signs of new topics, different emphases, and alternative approaches has been noted here. These are just some of the emerging perspectives; others will appear. That is in the nature of the historical study of towns and cities.

Notes

* "British" urban history is defined as publications about towns and cities of the British Isles, irrespective of the location of the author. Excluded are those publications on the towns and cities of the British Empire/Commonwealth.

1. For earlier variants of the academic genre see H. J. Dyos, "An agenda for urban historians" in H. J. Dyos, ed., *The Study of Urban History* (London 1966); R. Rodger, "Prospect and retrospect" in *Urban History*, 19 (1), 1992, 1–10.
2. D. M. Palliser, ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain,* vol. I, 600–1540; P. A. Clark, ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain* vol. II, 1540–1840; M. J. Daunton, ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain,* vol. III, 1840–1950 (all published by Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000). Each volume contains an excellent bibliography. In addition, P. A. Clark provides a historiographical essay (vol. II, 16–22). Citations below relate to specific points, or include items not generally mentioned in the CUHB.
3. For readers of *Urban History Review* who wish to know more about the scope of the CUHB see the extended reviews essays by C. Phythian-Adams, "Small Scale Toy Towns and Trumptons? Urbanizations in Britain and the New Cambridge Urban History"; and H. Meller, "From Dyos to Daunton: the Cambridge Urban History Vol. III", both in *Urban History*, 28, 2001, 256–68 and 269–77. Shorter book reviews have also appeared including: P. L. Garside, *London Journal* 26 (2) 2001; H. Eiden, *London Journal,* 26 (2), 2001; P. Coss, *Annual Bulletin of Historical Literature, 86,* 2001; A. Thorpe, *History,* 87: 288, 2002; N. Hayes, *Journal of Contemporary History,* 37 (4) 2002; B. Ayers, *Society for Landscape Studies*, 23, 2001, K. Lilley, *Society for Landscape Studies,* 23, 2001; B. Harvey, *Kantian Review*, 5, 2001; W. J. Sheils, *Journal Ecclesiastical History*, 53 (2) 2002, A. Saint, *Times Literary Supplement* 5111, Mon 16 Aug 2001; R. Paddison, *Urban Studies*, 39 (8) 2001; A. Schmidt, *Journal of Social History*, 36 (3) 2003.
4. *Urban History Yearbook 1974–1991* (Leicester University Press); Urban History, 1992– (Cambridge University Press).
5. This figure is based on R. Rodger, *A Consolidated Bibliography of Urban History* (Aldershot 1996), and some 15,000 items produced since the publication of this work.
6. H. J. Dyos, "Agenda for urban historians", in H. J. Dyos, ed., *The Study of Urban History* (London 1968), 46.
7. In particular I am grateful to the Reviews section of Cambridge University Press, and Evelyn Cornell, University of Leicester reference librarian. Numerous colleagues in the British Urban History Group and the Pre-Modern Towns Group are also warmly acknowledged collectively here.
8. The annual review of periodical articles in *Urban History*, written in the 1990s principally by Bill Luckin, Joyce Ellis, Mark Jenner, and Gervase Rosser provides an excellent overview of the topics that appealed to British urban historians, mainly.
9. Under the direction of C. D. Dyer, University of Leicester.
10. H. S. A. Fox, *The Evolution of the Fishing Village: Landscape and Society along the South Devon Coast, 1086–1550* (Leicester 2000).
11. C. Dyer, *Everyday Life in Medieval England* (London 2000).
12. R. Britnell, *The Commercialisation of English Society 1000–1300* (Manchester 1996).
13. See for example, P. Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580–1800: the Origins of an Associational World 1580–1800* (Oxford 200); R. J. Morris, *Class, Sect and Party: the Making of the British Middle Class 1820–50* (Manchester 1990).
14. G. Rosser, "Urban culture and the church 1300–1540, in *CUHB* (I), 335–69.
15. J. Campbell, "Power and authority 600–1300" in *CUHB* (I), 64.
16. A. Dyer, "Ranking list of English medieval towns", CUHB (I), Appendix, 747–70. For a another approach using cluster analysis to identify different typologies of urban trajectory in the modern period see R. Rodger, "Urbanisation in twentieth century Scotland", in T. Devine and R. J. Finlay, eds., *Scotland in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh 1996), 122–52.
17. C. Phythian-Adams, "Small scale Toy-towns", 259.
18. P. A. Clark, ed., *The European Crisis of the 1590s: Essays in Comparative History* (London 1985).
19. For a references to this body of work see M. Jenner's splendid surveys, *Urban History,* (May issue) 1995–2001 and V. Harding, "Early modern London 1550–1700", *London Journal,* 20, 1995, 22–33. See also, J. Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London 1997); P. Borsay, "The London connection: cultural diffusion and the eighteenth century provincial town", *London Journal,* 19, 1994, 21–35.
20. "Music and urban history", *Urban History,* Special Issue, 29, 2002, 5–102.
21. V. Harding, *The Dead and the Living in Paris and London 1500–1670* (Cambridge 2002).
22. K. Wrightson, *English Society 1580–1680* (London 1982); J. Boulton, *Neighourhood and Society* (Cambridge 1987); I. W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability* (Cambridge 1991); R. Houston, *Social Change in the Age of Enlightenment Edinburgh 1660–1760* (Oxford 1994).
23. L. H. Lees, *Exiles of Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian London* (Manchester 1979).
24. B. J. Graham, "The process of urban improvement in provincial Ireland" and S. Hood, "Through the gates: power and profit in an Irish estate town", both in F.-E. Eliassen and G.-A. Ersland, eds., *Power, Profit and Urban Land: Land Ownership in Medieval and Early Modern Northern European Towns* (Aldershot

1996) 218–69; B. J. Graham and G. J. Ashworth, ed., *A Geography of Heritage. Power, Culture, and Economy* (London 2000); L. Proudfoot, *Urban Patronage and Social Authority: the Management of the Duke of Devonshire's Towns in Ireland, 1764–1891* (Washington D.C. 1995).

25. Ân exception is P. Borsay and L. Proudfoot, ed., *Provincial Towns in Early Modern England and Ireland. Change, Convergence and Divergence* (Oxford 2002).
26. J. Campbell, "Power and authority 600–1300" in *CUHB* (I), 78.
27. M. J. Daunton, *Trusting Leviathan: the Politics of Taxation in Britain 1799–1914* (Cambridge 2001) and S. D. Ewen, "Power and administration in two Midland towns: Birmingham and Leicester 1870–1940" Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester (in preparation) are exceptional in that they both attach importance to administrative boundaries and the fiscal autonomy of urban authorities.
28. R. A. W. Rhodes, *Control and Power in Central-Local Relations* (Aldershot 1986); *The National World of Local Government* (London 1986); and "The State of Public Administration: A Professional History", *Public Adminiatration*, 73, 1995, 1–16.
29. See for example, B. Luckin, *Pollution and Control: A Social History of the Thames in the Nineteenth Century* (Bristol 1986); J. Sheail, "Town wastes, agricultural sustainability and Victorian sewage", *Urban History,* 23, 1996, 189–210; J. Adams, "A paradigm of inaction? The politics and un-politics of smoke abatement legislation in Stockport, 1844–56" in R. J. Morris and R. Trainor, ed., *Urban Governance: Britain and Beyond since 1750* (Aldershot 2000), 165–81.
30. T. C. Smout, *Nature Contested. Environmental History in Scotland and Northern England since 1600* (Edinburgh 2000); N. J. G. Pounds and N. J. Greville, *The Culture of the English People. Iron Age to the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge 1994).
31. See essays in C. Bernhardt, ed., *Environmental Problems in European Cities in the 19th and 20th Century* (Berlin 2001); C. Bernhardt and G. Massard-Guilbaud, *The Modern Demon: Pollution in Urban and Industrial European Societies* (Clermont-Ferrand 2002) for recent published work on the topic of urban environmental history.
32. H. Conway, *People's Parks: the Design and Development of Victorian Parks in Britain* (Cambridge 1991).
33. The term is borrowed from Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (New York 1906).
34. B. Luckin, *Questions of Power: Electricity and Environment in Inter-war Britain* (Manchester 1990); J. Sheail, "Planning, water supplies and ministerial power in inter-war Britain", *Public Administration,* 61, 1983, 386–95; R. Millward and S. Sheard, "The urban fiscal problem 1870–1914: government expenditure and finance in England and Wales", *Economic History Review*, 48, 1995, 501–35; A. Ravetz, *The Government of Space. Town Planning in Modern Society* (London 1986) for a more recent period.
35. F. M. L. Thomson, ed., *Horses in European Economic History. A Preliminary Canter* (Reading 1983).
36. H. D. Littlejohn, *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the City of Edinburgh, with Relative Appendices* (Edinburgh 1865).
37. An exception is A. Hardy, "Veterinarians, public health and the urban animal economy" *Urban History*, 29, 2002, 372–81.
38. Since writing this "The cat and the city" has been suggested as a topic for the 7th International Conference in Urban History, in Athens, 2004: <http://www.le.ac.uk/urbanhist/urbanconf/athens.html>.
39. A. Ravetz (with Richard Turkington) *The Place of Home. English Domestic Environments, 1914–2000* (London 2000) provides an initial approach to this issue.
40. L. J. Faire, "Making home: Working class perceptions of space, time and material culture in family life 1900–1955", unpublished University of Leicester Ph.D. thesis, 2000.
41. M. Foucault, "The eye of power" in C. Gordon, ed., *Power and Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–77,* (New York 1977), 149.
42. In addition to the CUHB, see P. J. Waller, ed., *The English Urban Landscape* (Oxford 2000) for a splendid overview of the physical changes in the townscape. For a textbook with a European rather than purely British perspective, see D. Goodman and C. Chant, ed, *European Cities and Technology* 2 vols., (London 1999). See other syntheses of urban history by R. Sweet, *The English Town 1680–1840* (Harlow 1999); J. M. Ellis, *The Georgian Town* (London 2001); P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance* (Oxford 1989); R. Tittler, *Architecture and Power: the Urban Town Hall and the English Urban Community c.1500–1640* (Oxford 1991); and J. S. Wacher, *The Towns of Roman Britain* (London 1995). Earlier general works of urban history still very serviceable as textbooks are R. J. Dennis, *The English Industrial Cities of the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge 1984); P. J. Waller, *Town, City and Nation: England 1850–1914* (Oxford 1983); P. Clark and P. Slack, ed., *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500–1700* (London 1972); P. Clark, *English Towns in Transition 1500–1700* (London 1976); and P. J. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns* (Oxford 1982).
43. D. A. Reeder, "The industrial city in Britain: urban biography in the modern style", *Urban History,* 25, 1998, 368–78; R. J. Morris, "Urban biography: Scotland 1700–2000", *Urban History*, 29, 2002, 276–83. For a new perspective on antiquarians, see R. Sweet, *Antiquaries* (forthcoming 2003).
44. This pattern is also true of continental European cities, as the various multi-authored, multi-volume histories of several Nordic towns and cities exemplify.
45. Reeder, "The industrial city in Britain", 378.
46. The data relating to submissions to *Urban History* refers to the period 1992–2002 and for subscriptions 1998–2002. Apparently, the comparable figure for subscriptions to the *Journal of Urban History* (*JUH*) from outside the United States of America is 3.3 per cent. See also R. Rodger, "Taking stock: a comment on two decades of urban history", *JUH*, 21, 1995, 677–79 and S. Blumin, "City limits: two decades of urban history in *JUH*, 21, 1994, 7–30.
47. The electronic teaching "tutorials" produced by the TLTP on "The Eighteenth Century Town" and the "Nineteenth Century City" were cases in point. More recently, P. Wardley *et al.*, compiled a splendid teaching tool entitled "Bristol Historical Databases". Not all of these resources are available commercially.
48. See http://<www.oldbaileyonline.org>; <http://booth.lse.ac.uk>; <http://edina.ac.uk/statacc/>; <http://www.charthenation.lib.ac.uk>; <http://www.historicaldiredtories.org/> <http://www.collectbritain.co.uk/tours/eastenders>.
49. The debates, prevalent in the British press and in educational circles, focus on the erosion of student interest in mathematics, languages, sciences, and history among school attenders, and the dominance within the history curriculum at school and university of the study of Hitler, Stalin, and war. This is not such a different view to that of S. B. Warner's urban history fantasy in "When urban history is at the "center of the curriculum", *JUH*, 18, 1991, 3–9.
50. E. Higgs, ed., *History and Electronic Artefacts* (Oxford 1998); E. Higgs, "Particular instance paers: the historical and archival dimensions", *Social History*, 10, 1985, 89–94. See also Report of the Wilson Committee on Modern Public Records, Cmnd 8204, para. 110, 118; F. Hull, *The Use of Sampling Techniques in the Retention of Records: a RAMP Study with Guidelines* (Paris 1981).

51. This approach to oral history is very different from the "fireside" interviews undertake by Bruce Stave and published in the *JUH*, 1, (1), 1974, 85–110 to 14, (4), 1985, 455–91.
52. For further information on the East Midlands Oral History Archive, see <http://www.le.ac.uk/emoha/>. Emphasis has been initially directed toward the acquisition and cataloguing of interviews with the historian left to decide on the interpretation of the spoken record.
53. Charting the Nation: <http://www.chartingthenation.lib.ed.ac.uk/collab.html>; National Library of Scotland (Town Maps): <http://www.nls.uk/digitallibrary/map/early/index.html>; MACE <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/film/mace/dbpilot.shtm>; EMBC <http://www.embc.org.uk/ie.htm>; *Re:*Source <http://www.resource.gov.uk/>.
54. In over 50 pages of reviews of the CUHB consulted for the purposes of this article, few adverse comments about the nature of the field or the worth of the endeavour were expressed.
55. As demonstrated, for example by S. Schama's TV series "A History of Britain" and other populist magazines and productions, including *History, History Today, Teaching History,* regional magazines such as *East Midland Historian,* and *BBC* Radio's "Mapping the Town" and the archaeology series "Time Team."
56. M. Daunton, "Epilogue", *CUHB*, vol. III, 839–40; H. Meller, "From Dyos to Daunton", 270.
57. For a review of the literature see R. J. Morris, "Governance: two centuries of urban growth", in R. J. Morris and R. Trainor, eds., *Urban Governance,* 1–14.
58. A. Giddens, *The Third Way and its Critics* (London 2000), 1–54.
59. R. Williams, The Richard Dimbleby lecture, 19 December 2002. For the text see <http://www.wfn.org/2002/12/msg00172. html>.
60. R. A. W. Rhodes, 'Hollowing out the state: the changing nature of public service in Britain", *Political Quarterly,* 65, 1994, 138–51. For an extended version of this point see R. Rodger, *The Transformation of Edinburgh in the Nineteenth Century: Land, Property and Trust in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge 2001), 2–7.
61. For a historiographical account see R. J. Morris and R. Rodger, "Introduction" in R. J. Morris and R. Rodger, ed., *The Victorian City: A Reader in British Urban History 1820–1914* (London 1993) 21–28; J. Garrard, *Democratisation in Britain: Elites, Civil Society and Reform since 1900* (Basingstoke 2001); M. Hewitt, *The Emergence of Stability in the Industrial City: Manchester 1832–67* (Manchester 1996).
62. R. J. Morris, *Class, Party and Sect: The Making of the British Middle Class, Leeds 1820–50* (Manchester 1990).
63. See for example the essays and bibliographies in J. Wolff and J. Seed, ed., *The Culture of Capital* (Manchester 1988); S. Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority and the English Industrial City 1840–1914* (Manchester 2000); D. Cosgrove and S. Daniels, ed., *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge 1988); S. Gunn and R. J. Morris, ed., *Identities in Space: Contested Terrains in the Western City since 1850* (Aldershot 2000); R. Rodger, *The Transformation of Edinburgh,* 459–86.
64. See C. Shaw and M. Chase, ed., *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia* (Manchester 1989); S. Nenadic, "English towns in the creative imagination" in P. J. Waller, *The English Urban Landscape* (Oxford 2000), 316–41; S. Daniels, *Fields of Vision* (Cambridge 1993).
65. D. Cosgrove, "Prospect, perspective and the evolution of the landscape idea", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 10, 1985, 45–46. These subjective resonances should also include oral ones, as noted previously.
66. For example at Liverpool, Exeter, Edinburgh, Leicester, Birmingham, Hull, East Anglia, Nottingham, Bristol, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and Cardiff to name just a few.
67. There is also a risk here since finance to attend conferences outside the immediate disciplinary specialism is severely limited.
68. Two paragraphs have been excised here from an earlier version of this paper. I sought to advance a more extended argument about the relationship between theory and urban history. On reviewing this, it seemed self-indulgent. For an earlier statement see R. Rodger, "*Urban History*: prospect and retrospect", *Urban History,* 19, 1992, 1–22.
69. C. Phythian-Adams, "Small-scale Toy-towns", 260; D. Palliser, *Cambridge Urban History of Britain,* vol I, 4–7; S. Reynolds, "The writing of medieval urban history in England", *Theoretische Geschiedenis,* 19, 1992, 49–50. See also C. Dyer, "How urbanized was medieval England" in J.-M. Duvosquel and E. Thoen, ed., *Peasants and Townsmen in Medieval Europe* (Ghent 1995), 169–83.
70. M. J. Daunton, ed., *CUHB*, vol. III, 55.
71. See S. Mandelbaum, "Thinking about cities as systems: reflections on the history of an idea", *Journal of Urban History,* 11, 1985, 139–50; H. S. J. Jansen, "Wrestling with the angel: problems of definition in urban historiography", *Urban History*, 23, 1996, 277–99; R. Rodger, "In pursuit of the indefinable? The urban variable reconsidered" and "The urban frontier and Norwegian identity" both in S. Suppellen, ed., *Urban History: The Norwegian Tradition in a European Context* (Trondheim 1998), 47–56, 147–50; N. Goose, "In search of the urban variable: towns and the English economy 1500–1650", *Economic History Review*, 39, 1986, 165–85.
72. See S. J. Gunn and A. Owens, Fifth European Social Science History Conference, Berlin 2004: <www.iisg.nl/esshc>.
73. H. J. Dyos, "Agenda for urban historians", in Dyos, ed., *The Study of Urban History,* 46.
74. For an annual review of doctoral theses see the August issue of *Urban History* each year.