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Matthew Hollow

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Rethinking the role of planning and materiality in the Americanization of management education: The case of London Business School

Matthew Hollow

Management School, University of York, York, UK

ABSTRACT

In recent years, much has been written about the so-called 'Americanisation' of management education in Europe in the post-1945 era. One area that has relatively little attention in this literature, however, is the impact that material and spatial factors had on efforts to import US models of management education overseas. This study begins to redress this issue by focussing in-depth on the challenges involved in the design, planning, and construction of the physical spaces of the London Business School—one of the most prominent advocates of the US model of management education in this period. In the process, it contributes to the literature on Americanisation, as well as our understanding of the history of business schools, by illustrating how the historical trajectories of such institutions can be influenced and shaped by external actors, material constraints, and other contingent factors related to the planning and building of a business school.

KEYWORDS

Business schools; Americanisation; management education; university architecture; London Business School (LBS); London; Sussex Place; Lord Plowden; University Grants Committee (UGC)

> It was especially necessary, in a professional management school, to plan with great care an environment which would seem businesslike and efficient. (LBS, 1970, p. 6)

Introduction

One area in which historical research and insights have made notable contributions to the wider management literature has been in relation to the impact that American ideas, norms, and practices have had on the development of management education systems around the world (Hommel & Thomas, 2014; McLaren et al., 2021). Notable research in this respect has included studies on the efforts and tactics used by NGOs and philanthropic organisations, such as the Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Foundation, and the Agency for International Development (Cooke & Kumar, 2020; McLaren, 2020), to spread and promote American models of management education around the world. In addition, considerable research has also been done on the extent to which American ideas about management education influenced pedagogical practices in different areas of the world, including India (Kumar, 2019), France (Passant, 2021), Central America (Amdam & Dávila, 2021), Germany (Kieser, 2004),

CONTACT Matthew Hollow matthew.hollow@york.ac.uk

Switzerland (David & Schaufelbuehl, 2015), the UK (Tiratsoo, 2004), Brazil (Cooke & Alcadipani, 2015), and Finland (Seppälä at al., 2021).

Thanks to this burgeoning body of research, we now have a much clearer understanding of the mechanisms and channels through which American ideas about management education were promoted around the world (Amdam, 2007; Üsdiken, 2004). Likewise, we also now have a much stronger sense of how specific cultural differences, local variations, and contextual limits have influenced the way that these American-inspired norms have been interpreted and applied in different areas of the world (Djelic & Amdam, 2007; Kipping et al., 2004). One area that has yet to be explored in any depth, however, is the impact that material and spatial factors have had on efforts to import US models of management education overseas. This study begins to redress this issue by focussing in-depth on the challenges and negotiations involved in the design, planning, and construction of the physical spaces of the London Business School (LBS)—one of the most prominent advocates of the US model of management education in Britain in the post-WWII period (Wilson, 1992). In the process, it demonstrates how material and other factors associated with the actual construction of a new business school have the capacity to complicate and shape the ways in which American-inspired ideas about management education are implemented in different national contexts.

In terms of its structure, the remainder of this article will unfold in the following way. In the next section, an expanded discussion of the analytical and methodological foundations of the approach adopted in this article will be provided. This is then followed by a brief background of the evolution of management education in the UK and the impact that American ideas had on the UK business schools. The following sections will then move on to look at three key phases in the planning, design, and construction of LBS, beginning with their move into temporary premises at Northumberland Avenue and continuing through to their more recent expansions in London. Finally, the article will conclude by discussing what the theoretical and methodological implications of these findings are for the literature on the Americanisation of management education and the historical development of business schools more generally.

Research framework

Americanisation

Though widely used, the term 'Americanisation' remains somewhat vague and ill-defined. Typically, it is used to refer to the increasing influence of American capitalism—both as a powerful actor on the world economic scene and as a striking exemplar or model (Djelic & Amdam, 2007)—in the aftermath of World War II.[1] In political and economic terms, the most prominent example of the increased reach of the American state in this period is probably the Marshall Plan initiative, which was designed to aid the recovery of Western European economies so as to create stable democratic institutions that would be resilient against the perceived threat of socialism and communism (Berghahn, 2010). At the same time, considerable research has also been done on the increasing influence and popularity of American cultural outputs during this period, as well as the impact they had on indirectly promoting American social and cultural norms around the world (Gassert, 2012).

In relation to the field of management education, researchers have also identified a number of key channels through which American ideas and models were actively promoted around the world in the post-World War II period. As mentioned previously, philanthropic institutions like the Ford Foundation were particularly influential in this respect, financing the training of future European professors of business administration and sponsoring the transfer of American business professors to teach in overseas business schools (Cooke & Kumar, 2020; Gemelli, 1998). Similarly, governmental initiatives like the US–UK Fulbright Commission (established in 1948), which facilitated the exchange of students and staff between US and UK universities, was also influential in helping to spread American models of management education (Smith et al., 2002). Finally, it has also been suggested that the international expansion of US multinational corporations—alongside the rise to prominence of the multidivisional corporation—further helped to promote the spread of American ideas about management education as it led to an increased demand in the post-World War II period for managers with more formalised administrative skills of the sort that were typically taught at American business schools (Amdam, 2007; David & Schaufelbuehl, 2015).

At the same time, however, numerous studies have also shown that despite the efforts of bodies like the Ford Foundation or the Agency for International Development, it was both rare and difficult for American models of management education to be transferred in wholesale fashion. For instance, it has been shown that factors such as the structure of the existing higher-education system (Kipping et al., 2004), the aspirations and ideologies of local political groups (Cooke & Alcadipani, 2015), and economic instability or financial constraints (Amdam & Dávila, 2021; Zeitlin & Herrigel, 2000) all had the capacity to influence and shape the degree to which American management education models were adopted in different parts of the world. Put another way, therefore, rather than treating the idea of Americanisation as a one-way relationship—in which ideas and models are sent by a dominant actor and then passively received by submissive actors (Juusola et al., 2015)—these studies all point to the need to view the process of transferring practices or models from America to other countries as an 'open-ended' process with different stages (Djelic & Amdam, 2007), which necessarily involves 'processes of translation, selection, adaption, and/or hybridisation in different national contexts' (Amdam & Dávila, 2021, p. 4).

This study contributes to this literature by looking at the impact that material and spatial factors (specifically those linked to the planning and construction of a new business school) had on efforts to import US models of management education overseas. That such factors have not yet been explored in any real depth in previous studies on the Americanisation of management education is somewhat surprising given the extent to which perceptions of the American higher education system in this period were so visibly 'reinforced by the emergence of new spatial and visual identities (such as the college campus)' (Smith et al., 2002, p. 447). Moreover, as Juusola et al. (2015, p. 349) note, the acceptance of the American educational model and ethos also necessarily 'implies the acceptance of certain ideas regarding business practices, business education, [and] the necessary facilities of an academic institution'. Studying the extent to which these spatial and material elements of the American approach to management education were able to be replicated overseas—along with the barriers and obstacles that affected these attempts—therefore has the potential to further enhance our understanding of the processes through which American-inspired norms have been interpreted and applied in different areas of the world.

Planning and designing organizational spaces

In terms of its analytical approach, this study has been both inspired and informed by the burgeoning literature on 'space' in management and organisation studies. Sometimes referred to as the 'spatial turn' (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012),[2] this broad strand of research is fundamentally motivated by the recognition that organisation not only takes place in specific material spaces, but also that these spaces shape and give meaning to organisational practices (Beyes & Holt, 2020; Dale & Burrell, 2007; Taylor & Spicer, 2007). Building upon these foundations, management and organisation scholars have produced numerous innovative studies that have helped advance and problematise our understanding of the interrelations between power, identity, and materiality in organisational settings (Beyes & Holt, 2020; Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; De Vaujany & Vaast, 2014; Hernes, 2004; Taylor & Spicer, 2007; Watkins, 2005).

Nevertheless, despite this recent proliferation of studies, the literature on space still remains relatively fragmented, with limited cross-referencing and a lack of agreement over how to conceptualise or define the concept of 'space' (Weinfurtner & Seidl, 2019). Recent efforts to synthesise this literature have resulted in two useful, and broadly similar, frameworks that help to navigate and make sense of the diverse research in this field. In the first, Beyes and Holt (2020) outline what they refer to as four distinct yet interrelated 'twists' in the literature on organisational space: (1) the placing or 'siting' of organisations; (2) the contestation of organisational spaces; (3) the multiplicity of spaces; and (4) the poetics of space. In the second, Weinfurtner and Seidl (2019) identify four major interconnected themes: (1) the distribution of positions in space; (2) the isolation of space; (3) the differentiation of spaces; and (4) the intersection of distinct spaces.

Building on the recommendations outlined by Weinfurtner and Seidl (2019, p. 26), this study engages in a process of 'methodological bracketing' (Giddens, 1979, p. 81) whereby it focuses in on and fully engages with just a select few of the aforementioned aspects of the literature on organisational space—specifically, those studies that deal with the planning, design, and construction of material spaces. In this sense, it can be seen to relate most directly to the first strand mentioned in the Beyes and Holt (2020) framework (i.e. the placing or 'siting' of organisations) and the second from the Weinfurtner and Seidl (2019) framework (i.e. the isolation of space). Though this slightly narrower and more 'material' analysis of organisational space invariably, and unavoidably, provides less insight into the various ways that individual actors make sense of and give meaning to the spaces they occupy—a key strand of inquiry in the management and organisation literature (Beyes & Holt, 2020; Wapshott & Mallett, 2012)—it does still have the potential to offer a variety of rich contributions. In particular, and as previous studies have shown (Dale & Burrell, 2007; Kerr & Robinson, 2021; Kingma, 2008), studying the built forms of organisational spaces allows us to develop a fuller understanding of the different socio-cultural forces that exist in the localities in which organisations are situated. Likewise, the choices that planners and organisations make in terms of the layout of different spaces has the potential to tell us much about the way that they view the intended users of those spaces (Markus, 2006; Peltonen, 2011; Whyte, 2015). Finally, previous research has also shown that building designs and aesthetics can be used as powerful tools in the creation and projection of distinct narratives about that organisation (Johnson et al., 2019; Kornberger & Clegg, 2004; Van Marrewijk, 2009; Yanow, 1995).

Methodological approach

Based upon the research framework outlined by Rowlinson et al. (2014) for conducting studies in the field of organisational history, this article employs an 'analytically structured' approach as its main research strategy. Differing from more conventional corporate histories, analytically structured organisational history works by using pre-existing analytic constructs or frameworks to inform both the evidence-collecting process and the narrative framework(s) used to present those findings (Rowlinson et al., 2014, p. 264). In this respect, it can be viewed as a broadly 'constructivist' approach (Munslow, 2006) to historical inquiry in that it acknowledges that history does not stand separate from theory and that historical knowledge is inexorably dependent on the kind of questions the researcher is able to pose to the sources (Coraiola et al., 2015).

For the purposes of this paper, the key analytical constructs that informed the choice of archival sources, and the questions asked of them, all relate back to the previously discussed academic literature on organisational space (especially its material forms). In practical terms, this meant that, during the research process, prioritisation was given to those archival sources in which issues associated with the layout or design of space, the siting of buildings, and the representation of space came most clearly to the fore. The upshot of this approach is that this paper utilises and incorporates a wide range of archival sources that have typically been overlooked by previous historical accounts of business schools. In particular, it makes extensive use of architectural blueprints and other internal documents relating to the planning, design and construction of material spaces, as well as surviving correspondence and written exchanges between the various actors involved in these processes.

As is the case with almost all organisational history research (Decker, 2014, pp. 520–521), locating the sorts of sources necessary to produce this study required not only a considerable degree of contextual historical knowledge, but also a more general understanding of the way that historical archives are organised (Decker, 2013; Lipartito, 2014). For this study, one of the main archival collections that was consulted was the papers of the University Grants Committee (UGC), held in the UK National Archives. Originally established in 1919, the UGC essentially acted as the intermediary between the British government and the UK universities and was responsible for deciding on both the recurrent annual grants that individual institutions received, and the amounts awarded to one-off projects such as new building works (Carswell, 1985; Shattock & Berdahl, 1984). Contained within their records, therefore, are voluminous letters, planning documents, and other official correspondence related to the planning, financing, and construction of the physical premises of numerous British universities.

Alongside these files contained in the National Archives, this paper also made much use of the corporate archival records held in the LBS Library. In contrast to the files held in the National Archive, these archives were more difficult to navigate owing to the lack of any formal cataloguing system. Instead, the researcher had to rely much more on the tacit knowledge of the Library staff and their insights into the sorts of material that had been retained (Yakel, 2000). Initial conversations with the staff in the LBS Library indicated that there was likely going to be some material of relevance to this project (notably, minutes of planning committees, internal strategic documents, and other relevant publicity material); however, it was not until the first actual visit that the true extent of the relevant archival material became apparent. Quite literally hidden away in the back corner of one of the LBS Library archival repositories were bundles of unsorted (and uncatalogued) notes, plans, and sketches from the different architectural firms appointed to design the LBS premises. For the purposes of this study, this somewhat serendipitous discovery proved invaluable as it not only allowed for a more detailed picture to emerge of the design and planning processes, but also helped to further facilitate the process of triangulation between the different sources (Kipping et al., 2014; Wadhwani & Decker, 2017).[3]

Background: the development of management education in Britain

By comparison with the US (and much of mainland Europe), university-based business education was relatively late in developing in Britain (O'Connor, 2016). Indeed, aside from a handful of commerce programs at institutions like the University of Birmingham and the London School of Economics (Williams, 2010), there was no real academic provision of business or management education in Britain prior to outbreak of World War II (Keeble, 1992; Locke & Spender, 2011; Thomas, 2009). In large part, this reluctance to offer business or management programs was reflective of a widespread sentiment that 'academic qualifications were too abstract for the realities of business life' (Wilson, 1992, p. 7). Consequently, during the first half of the twentieth century, the delivery of management education and training in the UK was mainly left in the hands of large employers, which provided in-house training to select employees (Tiratsoo, 2004; Williams, 2010).

Following the cessation of hostilities in 1945, however, attitudes towards business education slowly began to change as concerns grew about Britain's poor productivity levels and general economic decline (Tiratsoo, 1998; Tomlinson, 2000). In response, both the incoming Atlee government and subsequent Conservative administrations made boosting Britain's pool of professionally trained managers a priority (Larson, 2020). Early moves in this respect included the establishment of the Administrative Staff College at Henley in 1945, which offered a new diploma in management (Williams, 2010), as well as creating the British Institute of Management (BIM) in 1947 to provide a centre of excellence for management training (Tiratsoo, 1998).

Despite such initiatives, however, the general consensus amongst politicians and industry leaders in this period was that more needed to be done to improve management education in Britain (Larson, 2020). In light of these perceived deficiencies, numerous trips and study visits to the US were organised—by groups such as the BIM and the Anglo-American Council on Productivity—so as to allow interested vice-chancellors, academics, and politicians to witness first-hand the way that management was taught in American higher-education institutions (Smith et al., 2002; Tiratsoo, 2004). At the same time, American methods of management education were also being heavily promoted by philanthropic groups like the Ford Foundation (Tiratsoo & Tomlinson, 1998), whilst in negotiations related to the financial aid being sent to Britain, high-ranking US officials also put pressure on their British counterparts to devote more funding to management education and to 'at least consider creating a British Harvard' (Tiratsoo, 1998, p. 112).

Partly as a result of these initiatives and pressures, an increasing consensus began to emerge amongst politicians, academics, and business leaders that what Britain required was a management education framework based along similar lines to the American model (Barnes, 1989; Wilson & Thomson, 2006). Key in this regard was the work of the Robbins Committee on Higher Education, which was established in 1960. Not only did it help lay the groundwork for the huge expansion of the British university sector during the 60s and 70s, it also recommended the creation of a new postgraduate school for business education (Barr, 2014; Larson, 2020). These proposals were subsequently elaborated upon in the 1963 Franks Report on British Business Schools, which recommended that these two new proposed business schools should—in line with the American model—offer a combination of relatively short postgraduate courses for university leavers alongside longer post-experience MBA-style course for prospective managers (Mutch, 2021; Perriton & Singh, 2016). In addition, the report also recommended that the two new business schools should be situated within major commercial hubs, with one school associated with the University of Manchester and one with the University of London (Barnes, 1989; Wilson, 1992).

Planning and constructing a new business school

Initial ambitions and temporary premises

To oversee the planning and construction of the proposed new London-based business school (initially known as the London Graduate School of Business), the University of London established a nine-man Academic Planning Board, chaired by Lord Plowden.[4] At their first official meeting on 8 June 1964, it was agreed that, because it would likely take some time to find a permanent home, the Planning Board should focus their initial efforts on finding temporary premises for the new school (Barnes, 1965a). The Board also decided that a principal for the proposed new school should be quickly appointed, so that that individual would also be able to have some input into the design and siting of the school (Barnes, 1989). This subsequently led to the appointment of Dr Arthur F. Earle, a former executive officer of Hoover Ltd., as the school's first principal in 1965.

Though he himself had been educated in Britain,[5] Earle was very much a proponent of the American model of management education. In particular, he was a strong advocate of adopting the longer US-style MBA, rather than the shorter diploma that some British businesses were advocating at this time (Mutch, 2021).[6] Likewise, he was convinced that if the new school was to succeed, it needed to be able to compete with the major business schools in the US, stating that 'it was essential that a degree from the London Business School should rank equally with a degree from a comparable institution in the United States' (UGC, 1965, p. 2). Indeed, so convinced was Earle that the new school needed to take inspiration from the US that, upon his appointment, he set about organising a series of visits with the rest of the Planning Board to a number of key US institutions – including Carnegie, the University of Chicago, Columbia University, MIT, Stanford, and Harvard – bringing back ideas not only about how to structure their academic programs, but also visual templates for how the new school should look (Barnes, 1965a).

Given the challenges of finding a suitable permanent location for the new school, the Planning Board was granted permission to rent out the fourth-to-tenth floors of a fairly nondescript office building at 28 Northumberland Avenue (see Figure 1). Geographic factors played a big role in the decision to pick this site as the temporary premises for LBS. In particular, the fact that the building was so centrally located (it was within a few yards of Trafalgar Square) was considered a real benefit in the sense that it would allow staff and students to be close to the city's key business districts (Skidmore, 1964). This, it was hoped, would not only encourage closer links with industry, but would also make it easier for academic

Figure 1. Photo of 28 Northumberland Avenue (LBS, 1965).

members of staff to engage in consultancy work—a practice that Earle was particularly keen to promote (Barnes, 1989). Finally, its size (over 9000 square metres of usable space) was also considered an advantage, as it was big enough to allow for the teaching of up to 200 students at any one time.

In line with his ambition to establish the new school as an 'institution of comparable academic and intellectual calibre to the best American schools' (LBS, 1965), Earle wanted to ensure that the facilities offered at LBS were of the highest possible standard. In this respect, Earle also had the backing of both the school's private financial backers (Larson, 2020) and the Advisory Board, who similarly felt that a 'shoestring attitude' was inappropriate as the school was trying to build a reputation against competitors in American that had already had a 50-year head start (Barnes, 1989, p. 27). Amongst Earle's major demands for the Northumberland Avenue building were air conditioning units for every office and seminar room, manned security doors at the entrance of the building, high illumination lighting and soundproof tiling throughout the building (Barnes, 1965c). In addition, he also was keen to transform the upper floor of the building into a luxury penthouse so that distinguished visiting overseas academics and industry figures could be accommodated (Rogers, 1965).

Frustratingly for Earle and the LBS Planning Board, these initial proposals for the Northumberland Avenue faced serious opposition from the UGC—the department responsible for managing the distribution of government funds to British universities and from whom approval was needed for expenditure on any item costing over £1,000 (Carswell, 1985).[7] In a series of communications, the UGC challenged the Planning Board over whether its plans for the refurbishment of the building were simply too ambitious—questioning the Board whether things such as expensive wall finishes, a £500 coffee-making machine, or costly metal coatings for the electric sockets were really necessary (Rogers, 1965).[8] In addition, they also offered an alternative aesthetic counterpoint by contrasting Earle's American-inspired design proposals against the (lower) level of internal fittings provided in other UK universities at this time, emphasising the importance of not being seen to be treating the proposed new business school more favourably than any other British higher education institutions (Shattock & Berdahl, 1984).

Further conflicts over expenditure and the standard of facilities required also occurred between Earle and the UGC in relation to finding a permanent location for LBS. After receiving numerous expressions of interest from various local politicians and authorities (Barnes, 1965a), Earle and the Planning Board eventually decided on a site between Bayswater and Edgware Road, close to Marble Arch. Again, geographic factors (particularly proximity to the key business districts of the city) played a major role in this decision, with the Planning Board considering it to be an ideal site, arguing that it would allow 'industrialists (and perhaps some civil servants and politicians) to drop in on it as easily as possible' (Coldstream, 1965). In addition, it was also a site that was large enough to allow for the construction of a major campus that could combine both teaching and residential amenities—something that Earle felt was needed if the new school was to compete against its American rivals (LBS, 1965).

Obtaining planning permission to build a business school on this proposed site proved challenging, however, as the London County Council (LCC) had previously designated the area a residential zone. As a result, the Planning Board had to devote a considerable amount of time trying to appeal the LCC's decision, even going so far as to lobby Harold Wilson, the British Prime Minister, to intervene on its behalf (Plowden, 1965). Further complications also arose owing to the fact that the site contained a former burial ground, which had suffered bomb damage during World War II and was in a state of disrepair. This meant that, were LBS to purchase the site, they would have to pay for the moving and reburying of the estimated 2000 bodies (Barnes, 1965b). Given these complications, and the likely costs involved, the Planning Board was ultimately forced to scrap their initial plans and look for an alternative site instead.

With few viable alternative sites available, the Planning Board decided to turn their attentions to an alternative site owned by the Crown Estate Commission at 1–26 Sussex Place, near Regents Park, that had recently become vacant (see Figure 2). Architecturally, the site was dominated by a long (600 ft.) row of grand terraced houses adorned with Corinthian columns and dome-capped canted bay-turrets that had been built in 1822 by John Nash, a prominent British architect responsible for the designs of Marble Arch and Buckingham Palace (Summerson, 1980). Though not as centrally located or as large as Earle or the Planning Board would have ideally liked, the site was still considered acceptable as it offered a 'happy compromise between those who had argued for a site in the heart of the city, close to other academic institutions as well as to the world of business, and those who had pressed for a move out of central London, so that the students could enjoy a degree of seclusion' (Owen,

Figure 2. Photo of 1-26 Sussex Place (LBS, 1977a).

1966). In addition, the Planning Board also noted that, because the building was situated in a desirable residential area on the edge of Regents Park, it would also have the potential to generate income through the letting of accommodation for academic conferences, executive courses, and other events during vacation periods—another idea that Earle had picked up from his visits to the US (UGC, 1967c).

Constructing a permanent home

Despite some initial resistance from the UGC, whose members argued that 'something a good deal more economical might well be possible if the Governors could bring themselves to consider less classy areas' (Parnis, 1966), planning permission for the new Sussex Place development was eventually obtained in September 1966 (UGC, 1967a). The task of designing the new school, meanwhile, was given to the British architectural firm of B. and N. Westwood Piet and Partners, who had previous experience in designing the arts sub-precinct at the University of Liverpool as well as other commercial buildings across the UK (Barnes, 1989). From a stylistic perspective, the preliminary blueprint for the Sussex Place site that they produced in 1967 can be seen to reflect both the ambitions and the tensions at the heart of the LBS project. Externally, the design sought to retain and renovate the exterior façade of Nash's original nineteenth-century neoclassical structure, projecting an outward image of tradition and authority whilst also ensuring that the new school 'fitted in' with the existing character of the local area (Bryan & Norman Westwood & Piet & Partners, 1967). Behind this classical frontage, however, the architects proposed to construct a strikingly modernist structure—intended to signify the progressive ethos of the school—subdivided by bold concrete octagonal splays and arched forms and set around a secluded internal courtyard (see Figure 3) to and try and foster the kind of 'collegiate character' and 'campus-like atmosphere' that existed at American institutions (Coldstream, 1966, p. 11).

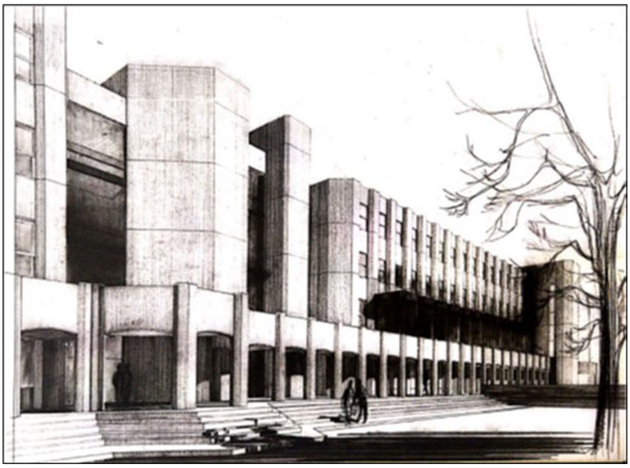

Figure 3. Architect drawing of planned new internal courtyard at Sussex Place (Westwood Piet & Partners, 1967).

In part, this somewhat convoluted and Janus-faced exterior was the result of external pressures and regulations. As a listed building, protected under the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947, the exterior of the Nash building necessarily had to either be preserved or rebuilt in exactly the same neoclassical style. Likewise, the terms of LBS's lease from the Crown Estate Commission also dictated that the 'domestic character' of the building had to be preserved when viewed from Regents Park (Bryan & Norman Westwood & Piet & Partners, 1967). By contrast, because the south-facing aspect of the building was not visible to passers-by, the architects were far less restricted in their design choices, thereby allowing for greater experimentation with bold modernist concrete forms and aesthetics.[9] Lastly, financial considerations also played a hand in influencing the design of the Sussex Place building, with the architects having to scale back their initial plans so as to get the UGC's approval for the project (UGC, 1967a).[10]

Further disputes, compromises, and concessions also took place in relation to plans for the interior design of the Sussex Place Building. For Earle and the Planning Board, one of the main priorities was on ensuring that the student accommodation provided in the school was of as high a standard as possible. Indeed, right from the outset, they believed 'the standard for study bedrooms should be taken as similar to a first-class hotel, complete with private bathrooms' (Bryan & Norman Westwood & Piet & Partners, 1967). Such standards were necessary, they argued, as the students they hoped to attract to the post-experience MBA courses would likely be 'men of considerable maturity and standing in their firms' and would therefore 'already be accustomed to having a private bathroom whenever they stayed away from home' (UGC, 1967b). Moreover, they also pointed out that study rooms with private bathrooms were the norm in all the US business schools that they had visited and, if they wanted to stand on an equal footing to these institutions, then they would need to provide comparable residential facilities (UGC, 1967b).

By contrast, the UGC felt that the accommodation standards drawn up by the architects for Sussex Place were too luxurious—especially in comparison with the provisions offered by other UK universities—and was wary of supporting these proposals for fear of being criticised for 'wasting' public money, suggesting that 'it was bound to lead to a suspicion that the UGC were encouraging an atmosphere of "expense account living" in the business schools' (UGC, 1967a, p. 7). Instead, they suggested that, as a school specialising in the teaching of business, LBS ought to 'give a demonstration of good management and efficiency and [not] make living conditions too soft' (UGC, 1967a, p. 7).[11] In addition, the UGC was also critical of the architects' original proposal to segregate the residential facilities for the post-graduate students from the post-experience students, arguing that 'the school must be conceived primarily as an academic building in which all are…equally concerned in the pursuit of knowledge and capable of learning from one another as in academic buildings elsewhere' (UGC, 1967b, p. 8).

Despite all these compromises, however, it is worth noting that there were nonetheless still elements of the new building in which Earle and the Planning Board were able to freely implement their own ideas. For instance, all seven of the lecture theatres in Sussex Place were designed to be relatively small (accommodating a maximum of 50 students) and—in imitation of the classrooms at Harvard Business School (LBS, 1966)—were laid out in a semi-circular fashion with rotating chairs (see Figure 4). Likewise, the 20 seminar rooms in the new building were also designed to be small and compact (accommodating a maximum of 10 students) to promote and enable for the sort of case-based teaching pioneered in US business schools (Earle, 1967). Similar motivations also appear to have influenced the decisions made in relation to the furnishing of the school dining rooms, with the Planning Board rejecting the long refectory tables typically found in British university dining halls at this time in favour of small round tables that would, they hoped, allow 'small groups of six to ten to meet and exchange ideas' (Barnes, 1970, p. 20). This emphasis on encouraging the informal exchange of ideas amongst men of comparable backgrounds was also evident in the furnishing of the lounges and common rooms within the new school, which featured comfortable sofas, commissioned artworks, and even billiard tables—further confirming the extent to which Earle and the Planning Board aimed to create a space that would feel both familiar and comfortable to the aspiring executives they wanted to attract (LBS, 1970).

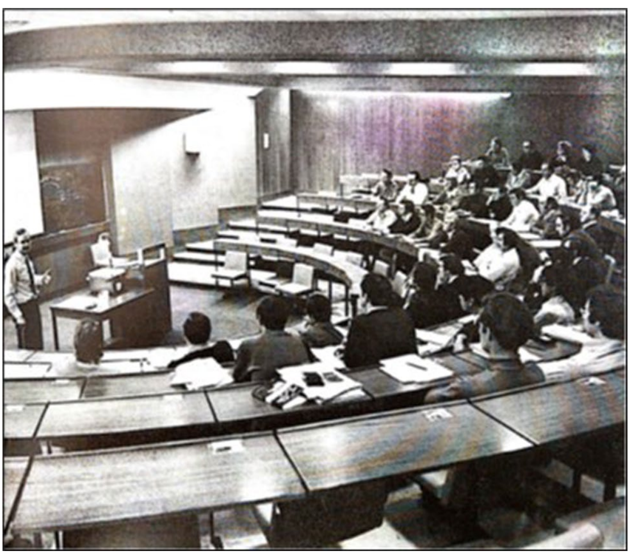

Figure 4. Image of lecture theatre at Sussex Place (LBS, 1970).

Expansion and constructing an identity

Domestic expansion

Construction of the Sussex Place building was completed in August 1970, and the new building was officially opened by the Queen in a grand opening ceremony in November (Barnes, 1989). From an instrumental perspective, the move into the new building was pivotal in facilitating the growth of LBS as it provided significant additional space (12,727 square metres in total), enabling the school to both take on more staff and accept more students (LBS, 1977a). In addition, the provision of on-site residential facilities meant that LBS could also start providing residential executive courses of the sort that were so common in the US. Nevertheless, despite the large sums of money invested in the new building, concerns soon emerged over its long-term suitability, especially in regard to teaching and accommodation space. By 1977, the faculty of the school had grown to 90 and the total number of students attending courses each year had risen to over 1400 (LBS, 1977a). This growth in numbers not only put a strain on the existing facilities of the school, it also prevented further development of new programs. Indeed, by 1977, it was widely acknowledged within the school that 'physical space has become equally as important as financial support in limiting our capacity for new initiatives, both in teaching and in research' (LBS, 1977a, p. 4). Moreover, in LBS's internal strategic documents, it was also acknowledged that the initial ambition of competing against the top American business schools could only be reached if the school was able to expand further (LBS, 1977b).

In response to these challenges, the governing board of LBS turned their attention to developing the remainder of the Sussex Place site. In their initial deal to lease the site from the Crown Estate Commission, there had been a tacit agreement with the UGC that the school would be able to further expand their facilities at a later date. However, when LBS approached the UGC about this possibility they were informed that because substantial sums were being spent on expanding management education in other UK institutions, there would likely be little financial assistance available (Barnes, 1989). Likewise, the financial support that had previously been provided by the Foundation for Management Education—the body representing those British businesses that had provided financial support for the establishment of the new business schools in Manchester and London—had also largely ceased by this point. As a result, LBS was forced to draw from its own trust fund and retained earnings to help pay for the new development (LBS, 1977a). In addition, LBS also launched an intensive funding campaign to attract further donations from industry and alumni.

Through these fundraising efforts, LBS was able to raise sufficient capital to develop and regenerate the Park Road side of the Sussex Place site. Once again, and in a concerted effort to ensure a degree of design continuity, LBS turned to the architectural firm of B. and N. Westwood Piet and Partners to design the new building. Initially, they planned to demolish the existing terrace (comprising 27 houses, a handful of small shops, and a pub) and build an entirely new modernist concrete structure. However, objections from the local authority meant that these initial plans had to be altered to preserve large sections of the existing external nineteenth-century façade (LBS, 1977a). The upshot of these requirements was that the architects were necessarily forced to produce another Janus-faced design, with the external-facing side of the building having a completely different appearance to the inward-facing aspect (see Figure 5).

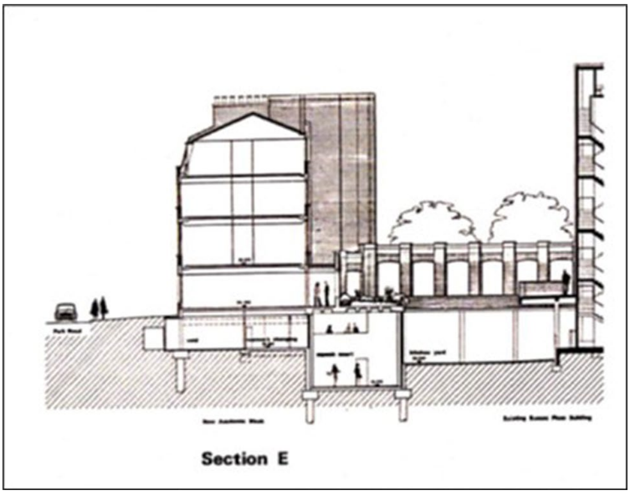

Figure 5. Initial draft sketch showing the side profile of the design for the Park Road building and how it would link with the original Sussex Place building (Westwood Piet & Partners, 1980).

Construction on the new Park Road building (subsequently renamed the Plowden Building, in honour of the school's first chairman) began in February 1981 and the new building was eventually opened in 1982, at an estimated cost of close to £4 million. Internally, the new buildings did provide further teaching space, including a 60-seat tiered horse-shoe lecture theatre, a 30-seat seminar room, and eight additional small 'Harvard-style' seminar rooms (Bryan & Norman Westwood & Piet & Partners, 1980). In addition, the renovation of the building also finally provided the school with 28 study bedrooms with ensuite facilities (LBS, 1981). Nevertheless, despite the increased teaching provisions afforded by the development of the Plowden Building, the school continued to find itself short of teaching and administrative space. Likewise, ongoing internal consultations with students also revealed further issues in relation to the school's facilities, including a lack of social space and insufficient private study areas (LBS, 1990b).

In response to these concerns, the governing board of LBS decided to look at how they could expand and improve their premises further. In this respect, their location in the heart of one London's more expensive (and densely built-up) residential districts proved to be highly problematic as it severely limited options for further expansion. As a result, serious consideration was given to the idea of expanding the physical presence of the School by building an additional campus outside of London; however, the conclusion that was ultimately reached was that this was not a feasible option 'on the grounds that the right place for the country's leading business school is in its capital city' (Quincey, 1990). Likewise, the governing board of LBS also seriously looked into purchasing the nearby Regent's College building (now occupied by Regent's University London) during the late 1980s, but complications over leasing arrangements meant that these plans also failed to materialise.

In the end, it was only really by chance that LBS was able to extend their physical footprint in the Regents Park area when, in 1995, a small block of recently vacated houses just off nearby Taunton Place happened to come onto the market (see Figure 6). In the absence of any financial support from the British government, however, the governing board of LBS again had to embark on another intensive fundraising campaign to secure the money necessary to

Figure 6. Map showing location of different LBS buildings (LBS, 2020).

redevelop the site, eventually acquiring close to £8 million in donations from industry and alumni. With this money, LBS was able to renovate and transform the existing residential structure into a multistory complex containing several new seminar rooms, a new library spread out over two floors, and extra office space. In addition, and in a bid to ensure that their facilities matched those of the top business schools in the US, they also constructed a new underground recreation complex featuring a swimming pool, aerobics room, weights area, and sauna (LBS, 1996).[12]

London experience: world impact

Despite the additional teaching and communal spaces afforded by the new developments at Park Road and Taunton Place, the physical footprint of LBS continued to be relatively small in comparison with many other business schools—especially those in America. Indeed, in the internal strategic reviews conducted during the 1980s and 1990s, it was noted by the governing board of LBS that whilst the range of courses they offered and the number of outputs in *FT50* journals produced by the staff stacked up well against most of the top US business schools, their financial income and annual operating budget still lagged far behind institutions like Wharton, Harvard, Stanford, and Chicago (LBS, 1999). Whilst lower levels of endowments were identified as being a contributory factor in this disparity, the main issue pinpointed by LBS's leadership in explaining this comparatively weaker financial position was the restrictions that the school's size placed on its ability to recruit (and charge) greater numbers of students (LBS, 1990a).

In terms of the development of LBS, these spatial obstacles—and the impact they had on the school's ability to compete with the top business schools in the US—both directly and indirectly contributed to the strategic choices made by the school during the 1990s and early 2000s. To give one example, huge sums were invested during the early 90s in new digital technologies, such as online conferencing equipment and distance learning programs, in an effort to help the school 'transcend the limits of [its] physical space' (LBS, 2003b, p. 13). In a similar vein, the governing board of LBS also put a lot of emphasis on expanding and extending their presence into a range of overseas locations. For instance, in 2001 LBS launched the EMBA-Global degree program in partnership with Columbia Business School, giving students the opportunity to take classes in both New York and London (LBS, 2002).[13] In addition to these overseas partnerships, the school also sought to attract more students through the opening its own LBS Dubai Campus in 2007, offering both Executive Education programs and a Dubai-London Executive MBA program (Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), 2007).

At the same time, however, whilst it was clear that the comparatively small size of LBS's facilities impacted upon its ability to compete financially against the 'top tier' US business schools, there was nonetheless also a growing recognition amongst the governing board that the school's geographic location in the heart of London did actually bring a number of strategic benefits. Most notably, the fact that its main buildings were located relatively close to London's key business and financial districts—thereby giving staff and students greater scope to network and collaborate with some of the biggest corporations in the world—was viewed as something that gave LBS a distinct advantage over its American rivals (LBS, 1990b). Moreover, as the school started to put more emphasis on attracting overseas students during the 1980s, so the diversity of London's population also began to be increasingly highlighted, with promotional material stressing how 'in London today, Europe, Asia and the Americas come together, and we as a business school have our own role to play in that fusion' (LBS, 1991, p. 4).

These moves to symbiotically tie the identity of the school with that of the city of London were further formalised in 2003 with the launch of a new strategic plan to compete against the top US business schools that was based around eight key themes, including the goal of 'leveraging our London advantage' (LBS, 2003a, p. 5). To achieve this goal, LBS established a new task force to work on strengthening links to the city. This subsequently led to the introduction of the 'London Promise' framework in 2003, which sought to actively foster greater connectivity between business, culture, and education within London (LBS, 2003a, p. 11). In addition, they also became actively involved in the 'City of London—City of Learning' campaign, launched in 2006 by the then Lord Mayor, John Studdard, to promote the city as an international destination for financial education (Hall & Appleyard, 2009). In addition to these strategic partnerships, the governing board of LBS also undertook various corporate branding initiatives during the 1990s and 2000s to further highlight and exploit its geographic location. In 1999, for instance, they took the decision to redesign their logo so that the 'London' element of their name became highlighted in bold text, whilst in 2008 they introduced a new corporate slogan that read 'London experience: world impact' (LBS, 2008).

From a spatial perspective, the school's embeddedness within London was further cemented through the opening of the new Sammy Ofer Centre in 2017. Located close to the school's existing buildings, the new facility in the former Old Marylebone Town Hall afforded additional teaching and social space, as well as providing the school with a central reception hub.[14] As was the case with LBS's other premises, the design options for the new site were heavily dictated by the fact that the original building was Grade II listed (Shepard Robson, 2009). As a result, the architects were required to preserve the original Graeco-Roman frontage of the structure, as well as restoring many of the building's original eighteenth-century features. Set against these preserved Edwardian features, however, the architects installed an overtly modernist, glass and steel linking structure that sat in between

Figure 7. Architect's photo of the entrance to the Sammy Ofer Centre (Sheppard Robson, 2017).

the original Town Hall and its annexe buildings, creating a jarring contrast between old and new (see Figure 7).[15]

In line with LBS's more recent policy of trying to promote their geographic location as a unique selling point to prospective students from around the world, the Janus-faced design of the Sammy Ofer Centre was boldly presented as being entirely consistent with the school's identity. At the opening ceremony in 2017, the Dean of LBS characterised the design for the new building as one that 'intelligently marries the Grade II-listed 1920s structure designed in the Classical manner with the latest in architectural design and facilities, successfully creating beauty from dissonance' (Slessor, 2018). Similarly, in their promotional material the Sammy Ofer Centre is presented as 'a state-of-the-art learning environment that is rooted within London's historic fabric' (LBS, 2017). Indeed, so keen were the building's designers to promote its geographic credentials that they even placed full-length wall murals of iconic London cityscapes in the social areas, meeting rooms, and toilets in a bid to further reinforce the school's association with, and embeddedness in, the city of London (Graphic Image, 2017).

Discussion

As research on the global influence of US ideas on management education has matured, so there has been an increasing recognition that the process of Americanisation was rarely straightforward and seldom resulted in the 'wholesale transfer' of American models of management education (Djelic & Amdam, 2007; Zeitlin & Herrigel, 2000). Instead, what the research in this field has shown is that the spread of American ideas about management education typically occurred through processes of adaption, hybridisation, and synthesis, in which particular elements of American models of management education were applied in specific national contexts (Amdam & Dávila, 2021; Smith et al., 2002). As numerous recent studies have shown, one of the chief factors in this somewhat fragmented spread of American ideas about management education was the role played by influential policy actors and existing institutional structures in deciding which aspects of the American approach were to be copied and how they were to be applied to different local contexts (Cooke & Alcadipani, 2015; Kipping et al., 2004; Üsdiken, 2004).

This paper builds upon this literature by looking at a previously overlooked contextual factor in the Americanisation process—namely, the challenges and negotiations involved in the design, planning, and construction of the physical spaces of a new business school. In the process, it makes several important contributions to the historical literature on management education. First, it suggests that in addition to politicians, philanthropic organisations, and educational leaders (Cooke & Kumar, 2019; Larson, 2020), historians of management education ought to also consider the role that planners, regulators, and other associated bureaucrats involved in planning decisions can have over the historical trajectories of individual business schools. In the case of LBS, these external inputs were particularly evident during the planning process for both the Northumberland Avenue and Sussex Place buildings, when the school was forced to make numerous compromises to their original design proposals to satisfy the demands of the UGC. Likewise, it is also possible to see the impact of external actors in the case of the Park Road extension, where the original design proposal had to be entirely scrapped because of pressure from the local authority. Acknowledging the role played by these different actors in the production of organisational space is important in the sense that it offers further evidence of how the direction of management education is not solely influenced by those in key leadership roles (Cummings et al., 2017). Indeed, as the analysis in this paper shows, even if those individuals in key leadership roles have quite clear ideas about how they want their business school to look and function, the process of actually transforming these aspirations into any kind of concrete reality is rarely straightforward (Boys, 2015). In this respect, therefore, the case presented in this paper adds further weight to those who have called for greater recognition to be given to the ways in which both the Americanisation process and the historical trajectories of individual business schools can potentially be influenced and shaped by actors and groups external to the organisation (Cooke & Alcadipani, 2015; Djelic & Amdam, 2007).

In addition to acknowledging the role played by these external actors, the analysis in this article also points to the need for historians of management education to pay more attention to the role that material and topographical factors can play in facilitating, constraining, or challenging the importation of American models of management education around the world. Indeed, as the analysis in this article highlights, business schools do not, and cannot, exist in isolation from their material and topographical environments. Instead, they are unavoidably all physically embedded in particular geographic locations, each of which has its own unique physical constraints, planning regulations, architectural styles, and construction practices (Campbell, 2016). In the case of LBS, these factors were particularly evident during the planning and development of the school's permanent home, when strict planning regulations, high land prices, and a general lack of development space all directly impacted on the building's eventual location and design. As a result, and despite their initial ambitions, the institution's founders were ultimately compelled to construct a business school that, whilst featuring some clear influences from the US (such as the Harvard-style lecture rooms), was nonetheless quite different—both in terms of facilities and aesthetics—from the American institutions that they originally sought to emulate.

At the same time, however, what the analysis in this paper has shown is that more than just influencing the planning and design choices of the school's founders, these material and topographical factors have also had long-lasting impacts upon the strategic direction and institutional identity of LBS. Most obviously, the fact that its facilities are located relatively close to the financial and business districts of London—one of the pre-eminent commercial cities in the world—has meant that LBS has been able to promote itself as an institution with unrivalled connections to the flows of today's global marketplace. Indeed, in their current promotional material, they depict themselves as being symbiotically linked to the city: 'Confident, captivating, global—London is a cultural and financial capital…Every leading institution on the planet is here, as are a third of the world's largest companies…Our MBA reflects the strength and dynamism of this extraordinary city' (LBS, 2021). Similarly, whereas the need to preserve and retain certain historic features of their premises (such as the Nash façade on the Ratcliffe Building) may once have acted as an impediment to their ambitions of creating an American style business school, today these historic frontages and classical design features are proudly displayed in LBS's promotional material to emphasise the unique grandeur of the school and to help sell their campus as a 'state-of-the-art learning environment that is rooted within London's historic fabric' (LBS, 2017, 2020).

In other words, despite being slightly unplanned and despite causing some initial frustrations, the geographic location of the school has remained one of LBS's key strategic assets in its ongoing battle to compete against the top US business schools.[16] From a wider perspective, the way LBS has sought to exploit and integrate their location in one of London's more historic districts as a key strategic asset is important for wider understandings of how business schools try to craft distinct identities in the sense that it clearly illustrates how the 'description, definition, and identification of a place is always inevitably an intervention not only into geography but also, at least implicitly, into the (re)telling of the historical constitution of the present' (Massey, 1995, p. 192). In addition, it also suggests that if we want to fully understand the longer-term consequences and 'open-ended' nature of Americanisation in different national contexts (Djelic & Amdam, 2007), then we need to also pay more attention to the role that material and topographical factors have played and continue to play in shaping the historical trajectories of individual business schools.

Finally, and by way of a caveat, it should of course be noted that as with many other studies in this particular field this paper has primarily been centred around the historical trajectory of one specific business school. Whilst few would dispute that the emergence of LBS, along with the University of Manchester Business School (MBS), carries particular significance for the history of management education in the UK—in the sense that 'they helped to crystallise a national structure that enabled the vast multiplicity of other management education and training programs to slot into place beneath them' (Larson, 2020, p. 161)—it is not necessarily an institution that is representative of a typical British business school (Mutch, 2021). In particular, whereas as most other business schools in the UK (including MBS) now offer a range of undergraduate, postgraduate, and executive courses, LBS continues to be principally focussed on American-style executive education programs.

Various factors such as market demand, educational traditions, or institutional pressures can of course be put forward to explain this distinctiveness; however, it is perhaps also worth considering the extent to which material constraints and other contingent factors related to the planning and building of a business school have contributed to the unique path taken by LBS in comparison with other UK business schools. For instance, it has been suggested that one of the reasons why the MBS executive education programs of the 1970s did not achieve the same success as those put on by LBS was down to the fact that the MBS courses were held in an 'inner-city building that could not compare aesthetically with the Regents Park residence of LBS' (Wilson, 1992, p. 81). Likewise, it has also been suggested that both American faculty and American students were more willing to travel and spend time at LBS owing to the locational advantage it held over MBS (Barnes, 1989; Wilson, 1992). To what extent physical and geographic factors such as these directly contributed to the different historical trajectories taken by MBS (and other UK business schools) is a question that is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is hoped that future studies will further explore how the spread of American ideas about management education, both in the UK and elsewhere, have been influenced and shaped by these sorts of external actors, material constraints, and other contingent factors related to the planning and building of a business school.

Notes

1. Though it is worth noting that the term itself pre-dates this period quite considerably, with common consensus being that it was first used in 1902 by British journalist William Stead in his book *The Americanization of the World* (Berghahn, 2010).
2. A comparable 'spatial turn' is also sometimes argued to have happened in the discipline of history (Usborne & Kümin, 2013).
3. The process of triangulation was further facilitated by comparing, contrasting, and evaluating the evidence found in the archives with other contemporary sources (such as newspaper articles and building records) and other relevant historical accounts.
4. A prominent British industrialist who had also served as Chief Planning Officer within the Treasury.
5. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of London and obtained a PhD from LSE in 1958.
6. Additional impetus in this respect was provided by Harold Rose and James Ball, the first two professors hired at LBS, who refused to sign their contracts unless a two-year MBA programme was adopted (Barnes, 1989).
7. In total, the UGC was responsible for providing approximately half the funding for the development of the proposed new business schools in London and Manchester, with remaining funds to be raised from private sources.
8. Privately, this was also the opinion of W. Barnes, the Secretary for the Academic Planning Board, who noted that Earle had 'very grand ideas' but was 'quite inexperienced' in such planning matters (Parnis, 1965).
9. Indeed, one could even speculate that, had LBS's home ended up being built on an alternative site (with less strict planning regulations), it is possible that it would have ended up looking far more like the brutalist concrete-clad structures of the many other university buildings that the UGC was happy to approve (owing to their durability and cheap construction costs) during this expansion phase in the British higher education sector (Edwards, 2000).
10. In their initial draft proposal, the anticipated cost of renovating and extending the building was put at £1,126,500. This was rejected out of hand by the UGC, with subsequent negotiations eventually resulting in an expenditure limit of £885,500 being agreed.
11. In the end the compromise that was eventually agreed on was to allow for one toilet to every two bedrooms in the post-experience wing and one toilet to every five bedrooms provided in the postgraduate wing.
12. Concurrent with the construction of the new Taunton Centre, the school also spent close to £1 million on refurbishing and modernizing the original Sussex Place building (now rebranded as the Ratcliffe Building).

13. This program was then further expanded in 2009 when LBS introduced the EMBA-Global Asia degree in partnership with Columbia Business School and the University of Hong Kong.
14. To fund this project LBS launched a major fundraising campaign, eventually securing close to £125 million in donations, including a gift of £25 million from Israeli billionaire Idan Ofer, who had studied at LBS during the 1980s and after whose father the new building was named.
15. Planning restrictions again played a role here, with the local planning officers insisting that the new elements of the building should not be seen to 'imitate' the style of the original building (Shepard Robson, 2009).
16. Indeed, today on internet forums prospective MBA students weighing up whether to study in the US or at LBS often refer to the geographic location of LBS as one of its key selling points (Byrne, 2010).

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Notes on contributors

Matthew Hollow is a Senior Lecturer in Strategy at the York Management School. He holds a PhD from Oxford University. His work covers a broad range of topics related to the evolution of management and business practices in contemporary Britain.

ORCID

Matthew Hollow http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5207-5192

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