White Rose Research Online

eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk
Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York

Deposited via The University of Sheffield.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:
https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/186346/

Version: Published Version

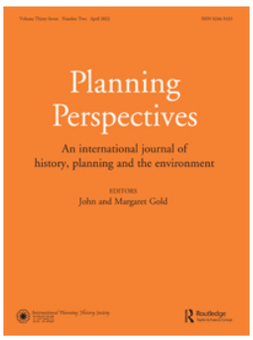
Article:
Inch, A., Wargent, M. and Tait, M. (2022) Serving the public interest? Towards a history of private sector planning expertise in England. Planning Perspectives, 38 (2). pp. 231-251. ISSN: 0266-5433

https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2022.2063165

Reuse
This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) licence. This licence allows you to distribute, remix, tweak, and build upon the work, even commercially, as long as you credit the authors for the original work. More information and the full terms of the licence here:
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/

Takedown
If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS
University of Sheffield
UNIVERSITY of York



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Planning Perspectives

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rppe20

Serving the public interest? Towards a history of private sector planning expertise in England

Andy Inch, Matthew Wargent & Malcolm Tait

To cite this article: Andy Inch, Matthew Wargent & Malcolm Tait (2022): Serving the public interest? Towards a history of private sector planning expertise in England, Planning Perspectives, DOI: 10.1080/02665433.2022.2063165

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2022.2063165

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

Published online: 15 Apr 2022.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 429

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=rppe20

PLANNING PERSPECTIVES
https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2022.2063165

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

Serving the public interest? Towards a history of private sector planning expertise in England

Andy Inch [a], Matthew Wargent [b] and Malcolm Tait [a]

[a]University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK; [b]Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK

ABSTRACT

Until recently there has been little critical consideration of the privatization of urban planning expertise. In this paper we draw on archival research in England to present an historical analysis of the role of private sector planners over the post-war period. In so doing, the paper provides one of the first considerations of changing historical perceptions of the roles of private sector professionals in the delivery of public planning, assessing the claims through which markets in urban planning expertise have been both problematized and justified over time. Tracing the reorganization of planning expertise allows us to view public and private sector roles not as fixed and immutable categories but instead as historically contingent outcomes of struggles over how the contested public interest purposes of planning have been defined and realized.

KEYWORDS

Urban planning; privatization; private sector; public interest; professions; expertise; neoliberalism

Uncovering the histories of private sector planning

Writing more than thirty years ago, Michael Dear noted how the privatization of urban planning had been 'absorbed without comment into planning practice'.[1] Despite significant subsequent growth in private sector planning, it has recently been argued that academic literature is still preoccupied with 'the primacy of public planners and/or definitions of a public interest'.[2] In response, a body of scholarship has begun to address the contemporary expansion of private sector professional employment in planning, centring important questions about the impacts of a private sector ethos, anchored in the profit motive, on planning cultures traditionally justified through claims to serve the public interest.[3]

As yet, however, there has been little detailed analysis that positions recent periods of expansion in relation to longer-run histories of private sector planning. This paper seeks to address this deficit by developing one of the first historical accounts of how private sector planning has been perceived over the post-war period in England. By analysing changing conceptions of the value of private sector work in national debates on planning, we aim to unsettle prevailing understandings of public and private sector roles in producing the built environment and to examine the changing ways in which private sector planners have been understood to contribute to the 'public interest'. In doing

CONTACT Andy Inch a.inch@sheffield.ac.uk

[1]Dear, "Privatization and the Rhetoric of Planning Practice", 449.

[2]Raco, "Private Consultants", 124.

[3]See, for example: Moore, "Re-evaluating 'Public' and 'Private'"; Parker et al., "The Rise of the Private Sector"; Linovski, "Shifting Agendas". Wargent et al., "Public-Private Entanglements"; Wargent et al., "Private Expertise"; Zanotto, "Detachment".

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

so, we seek to understand how such debates about professional expertise and the public interest are framed in relation to changing notions of the role of the state and its logics of governance of the private sector.

We start by setting out the wider context of debates about professional expertise and claims that it serves the public interest, drawing on the work of Foucault and Geuss to conceptualise how historically changing configurations of public and private might be understood. We then set out the methodology. The core of the paper examines two historic moments when the role of planning expertise was fundamentally changing. We begin by discussing the sustained growth in private sector planning during the early 2000s, before examining the professionalization of planning and its institutionalization within the public sector in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Our focus on the Schuster Committee report of 1950 develops one of the first sustained academic analyses of how this critical moment conceptualized both public and private sector planning expertise in England. The paper concludes by discussing the significance of these episodes for debates on the privatization of planning expertise and its implications for the public interest justification of professionalism.

Planning reform and the planning profession in England

The scope and role of planning has been a source of concern for many decades in England, leading to numerous programmes of reform by national governments. The instability of the field evinces recurring concerns about the societal purposes of intervention in land and property markets and the nature of the expertise it requires. These have raised varying anxieties over time, from questions about the 'maturity' of the profession's claims to expertise[4] to right-wing concerns that planning hinders the self-organizing capacity of markets to balance and weigh interests.[5] Despite these challenges, debate still circulates around contested claims to define (and delimit) a wider public interest justification for planning.[6] In this sense, although the current paper focuses on the particular configurations of planning found in England, it explores questions that have much wider resonance for understanding the contested legitimacy of planning expertise.

Governmental attempts to reform and manage professional expertise might seem at odds with traditional views in Anglo-American societies of autonomous professions determining the content of their work and relationship with the state.[7] This reflects the particular state-professional relationship that has developed around planning in the UK, where, as a result of the dominance of public sector employment throughout the post-war period, planning expertise has been regularly redefined as shifting political priorities have adjusted the focus of planning activity. The state-professional compact in UK planning has therefore been presented as a Faustian pact, enabling professionals to secure their status while being subject to shifting articulations of state control.[8] It is this relationship, we argue, that has been of critical importance in understanding how planning expertise has been deployed notionally in 'the public interest'[9]

The ideological nature of governmental approaches to planning in England is well recognized,[10] and has tended to be conceived in quite blunt terms. This commonly ties the development of

[4]Glass, "The Evaluation of Planning".
[5]Pennington, "Hayekian Political Economy".
[6]Tait, "Planning and the Public Interest".
[7]Etzioni, *The Semi-Professions and their Organization*.
[8]Reade, *British Town and Country Planning*.
[9]This relates more widely to work of the Working in the Public Interest research project that has sought to interrogate the role of the private sector in delivery of public planning. See: Slade et al., *Working in the Public Interest*.

planning to the consolidation of the welfare state in the mid-twentieth century, and in particular to technocratic forms of professional expertise deployed directly in the 'public interest' through public-sector employment. The received narrative argues that such forms of expertise have been widely criticized for being elitist and unprogressive but also for hindering economic growth and market freedoms. Whilst accurate in certain respects, this narrative does not capture the complexity of the relationship between an increasingly politically contested planning system and the changing ways professional expertise is defined and deployed. A significant blind spot relates to the role of private sector planners who now make up nearly half of chartered planners and have a more attenuated and ambiguous relationship to public interest justifications for planning. Narratives that view privatization and the involvement of private sector planning as simply an outworking of neoliberal state restructuring and deregulation, however, fail to longer histories of public-private working.[11]

Moving beyond these simplifying narratives, reveals see a more complex landscape in which increasingly intricate regulatory frameworks and attendant requirements for ever more specialist forms of evidence have contributed significantly towards increasing private sector involvement.[12] In keeping with theories of regulatory capitalism,[13] re-regulation has created new market opportunities in professional planning services.[14] The fragmentation and increasing complexity of governmental systems has generated requirements for planning advice, leading to the emergence of markets for professional services to manage the complex relations between state and private sector. The emergence of this more complex picture reflects wider tensions between the state and capital. This might be optimistically understood to entail a shift from a public sector to a public *service* ethos, with professionals increasingly employed outside the state but continuing to work in the public interest.[15] However, the reconfiguration of regulatory and professional cultures to enable profit-seeking property development raises critical questions about the extent to which any claims to work in the public interest can be sustained.[16]

In the rest of the paper, we go on to examine the historical construction of private sector planning expertise within national level debates on the role and purposes of planning. The role of the state in configuring the legitimate role of planning, and by extension planners, is thus viewed as key to understanding the respective roles of planners in the private and public sectors. This enables a longer-run analysis that helps explain why the growth of private sector planning in England has attracted so little apparent concern. To unfold this argument, we move next to understand how the state and its relationships with professions can be understood as emergent problematisations, structured in shifting discourses of public and private.

Towards a history of private sector planning expertise

To understand the contested nature of planning expertise and how it is organized requires an approach open to the mutable construction of professional identities, their disciplinary boundaries, what constitutes expertise and the societal purposes it serves. Professional projects are often configured around recognition of particular problems, laying claim to the knowledge required to govern

[10]Marshall, *The Politics and Ideology of Planning*.
[11]Shapely, "Historical Reflections on Public–Private Partnerships in the UK".
[12]Wargent et al, "Private Expertise".
[13]Levi-Faur, "The Global Diffusion of Regulatory Capitalism".
[14]Raco, "Private Consultants".
[15]Clifford, "Planning in an Age of Customers".
[16]See Moore, "Re-evaluating 'Public' and 'Private'; Zanotto, "Detachment".

them. The state and professions can be considered, at least partially, as emergent effects of the interplay between government policies, expertise, and occupational strategies.[17] Programmes of planning reform exemplify this, frequently seeking to redefine the objects and purposes of planning activity, what counts as valid planning knowledge, and who is authorised to speak on planning issues.[18]

To examine these processes, we draw on Geuss, who seeks an 'historical dissolution of self-evident identities'[19] and Foucault in his eschewal of the idealist and normative 'search for "origins"',[20] to develop an historically situated account of the ways discourses like the public interest, planning, and expertise have been attributed specific meanings at different times. Following Huxley, our purpose is to unsettle the underlying assumptions and conditions of possibility that enable 'the acceptance and reception of city knowledges and urban policies in the present',[21] disturbing the 'very ground-work of our present, to make the given once more strange, and to cause us to wonder at how it came to appear so natural'.[22]

Whilst not seeking to conduct a 'pure' genealogy, we are concerned with 'how and why certain things (behaviour, phenomena, processes) became a problem'.[23] We, therefore, seek to analyse the construction of disciplinary formations of planning, conceptions of the public interest they serve, and the forms of expertise required as products of ongoing, situated processes of contestation. In doing this, we reject 'traditional' models of autonomous professions or 'functional' models of professionalization, in favour of Foucault's disciplinary approach that emphasizes the conditions in which expert knowledge is produced.[24] In particular we aim to explore how planning expertise has been problematized, and what this means for its status as a public or private activity. Simultaneously, we also consider the politics of justification,[25] examining the discourses through which planners and the state have sought to legitimise their practices at different times in response to prevailing problematisations. Both justificatory appeals to the public interest and various problematisations of planning's public interest claims have significant implications for definitions of planning and the roles of public and private sector expertise. In particular, they might be understood through the lens of 'governmentality':

> which is at once internal and external to the state, since it is the tactics of government which make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not, the public versus the private, and so on; thus the state can only be understood in its survival and its limits on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality.[26]

Thus attempts to govern through planning systems 'depended on expertize in its professionalized form and the development of expert jurisdictions and systems of notation, documentation, evaluation, calculation and assessment'.[27] That planning has been seen by some as a 'semi-profession', closely tied to and dependent on state systems raises the significance of these relationships between state and expertise, whether sited in the public, private or third sector.[28] We, therefore, seek to

[17]Johnson, "Expertise and the State", 144.
[18]Inch, "Culture and the Remaking of Planning's Apparatus of Truth".
[19]Geuss, *Outside Ethics*, 157.
[20]Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy and History", 140.
[21]Huxley, " Historicizing Planning, Problematizing Participation".
[22]Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 58.
[23]Foucault, "Fearless Speech", 171.
[24]Goldstein, "The "Disciplines" and the History of the Professions".
[25]Forst, "The Right to Justification", 8.
[26]Foucault, " Governmentality", 103.
[27]Evetts and Dingwall, "Professional Occupations in the UK and Europe", 163.
[28]Genovese, "Advocacy Planning".

analyse changing definitions of planning and professional expertise as situated arguments in and around the state, rooted in particular conceptions of the purposes of planning and the forms of disciplinary expertise required to identify and serve them.[29]

As noted above by Foucault, the broad categories of public and private have no fixed or stable referents and are instead used in protean ways to set up distinctions between different social activities, knowledges, actors, and interests across diverse social fields and in different historical periods.[30] As Geuss argues, the ways public and private are constituted therefore requires historically informed analysis, with significant implications for prevailing conceptions of 'the good' (or public interest):

> … there is no single clear distinction between public and private but rather a series of overlapping contrasts, and thus that the distinction between the public and the private should not be taken to have the significance often attributed to it. One result of this, I think, should be a change in the way we think about the good in various public and private contexts.[31]

By enquiring into the historical construction of arguments for and against private sector planning we therefore seek to explore how distinctions between categories of public and private expertise have been drawn and redrawn and, in turn, how this relates to the ways in which the discipline's contested public interest purposes have been justified and problematized.[32] Our analytical aim is twofold: first, to illustrate (dis)continuities in the discourses through which private planning expertise has been both justified and problematized; and second, to disturb 'presuppositions that are often taken for granted in the scholarly and policy "ether"'[33] about both the nature and meanings of planning as a public interest activity and the nature and implications of ongoing projects of privatization.

The role of the private sector has often been an ancillary or secondary question within wider debates on planning reform, considered in relation to challenges and changes to planning as a professional activity. As a result, there is no single, recognizable historical archive available to consult. Whilst silences can themselves be deeply significant elements of any given disciplinary formation,[34] they nonetheless pose distinct methodological challenges, requiring an initially speculative method and a creative approach to both reconstruction and analysis of historical materials.[35]

In the absence of established sources through which to trace changing discourses concerning private sector planning expertise, we draw predominantly on two principal forms of evidence, supplemented by academic and grey literature:

(1) National government publications, policy literature and archives pertaining to two key junctures in the historical development of planning and debates about the role of professional expertise in the UK:
   (i) A period of rapid growth in private sector employment in the 2000s; and
   (ii) The deliberations of the Schuster Committee on the Qualifications of Planners from 1948-50, a period of nationalization that threatened the livelihoods of private sector consultants

[29]Lennon, "Planning as Justification".
[30]Weintraub, "The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction".
[31]Geuss, *Public Goods, Private Goods*, 6.
[32]Moore, "Re-evaluating 'Public' and 'Private';
[33]Huxley, " Historicizing Planning, Problematizing Participation".
[34]Foucault, "Two Lectures".
[35]Jenkins, "The Difference Genealogy Makes".

(2) A review of the Royal Town Planning Institute's archives, including periodicals published since the 1940s, to gauge the reaction of the profession's representative body to these changes, the debates that accompanied reform and any specific discussions pertaining to the role of the private sector

The two moments were selected as key junctures where particular problematisations were articulated to make the case for change in prevailing conceptions of planning, in turn provoking justifications on the part of public and private sector actors. The above sources cannot provide a complete picture and so our analysis remains a partial and exploratory 'first cut' at examining the historical role of private sector expertise in public interest planning. Throughout we highlight methodological challenges and gaps in reconstructing a significant sub-history that has been hitherto overlooked. In particular, our focus is largely restricted to the views of national governments and the profession's representative elites. This can be justified due to their centrality in defining the disciplinary field in England,[36] however, further work to probe histories of particular planning episodes, specific firms, or the development of key urban techniques or innovations could usefully deepen the analysis presented here.[37]

Expansion and normalization of private sector planning, 1997–2007

In 2016, the UK Government introduced legislation to enable a system of 'alternative providers' in planning – private companies who would compete with local councils to make recommendations and decisions on planning applications. Whilst not implemented, it raised a wider debate on the role and function of private sector planners. This idea was not new, however. A decade earlier, a review of the land-use planning system conducted by the economist Kate Barker had advocated, 'increased use of alternative service providers for whole service (i.e. partnership working, competitive tendering and contracting out)'.[38] Whilst academic research suggests piecemeal outsourcing of public planning work was commonplace in the 1980s and 1990s,[39] examples of the *wholesale* outsourcing of planning services remained rare, perhaps due to local political sensitivities generated by development. The Barker Review argued that drawing private sector expertise into the public sector offered 'a useful mechanism to enhance customer service and improve value for money'.[40] Managerial discourses concerning the potential for private sector values to drive performance improvements in public services were presented as a pragmatic rather than ideological response to perceived inefficiencies in the planning system. This logic fitted the broader thrust of the review, commissioned by the UK Treasury, to address persistent concerns about the efficiency of the planning system and its negative impacts on enterprise and economic growth.[41]

The Barker Review was a significant part of New Labour's wider planning reforms. These sought to reconcile a powerful neoliberal problematisation of regulation as a bureaucratic barrier to growth with a parallel set of concerns about the inability of a narrowly conceived land-use planning to integrate sectoral policy agendas and create 'sustainable communities'.[42] The former critique led to a

[36]Campbell and Marshall, "Professionalism and Planning in Britain".
[37]Shapely, "Historical Reflections on Public–Private Partnerships in the UK".
[38]Barker, *Barker Review of Land Use Planning*, 128.
[39]For example: Davoudi and Healey, *Using Planning Consultants*; Higgins and Allmendinger, "The Changing Nature of Public Planning Practice".
[40]Barker, *Barker Review of Land Use Planning*, 128.
[41]Ibid., 3.
[42]Allmendinger, *New Labour and Planning*.

regime of performance targets focused on speed of decision-making; the latter, broadly supported by the profession's representative body, the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), as part of its own search for a 'New Vision', generated calls to adopt a more positive 'spatial planning' approach.[43] The tensions between these drivers reflected wider inconsistencies in New Labour's approach to government.[44] The RTPI were amongst those to argue that the 'culture change' required by the shift towards spatial planning was 'severely undercut by the target regime … which puts all the emphasis on being able to tick boxes'.[45]

Barker's call to embrace outsourcing responded to anxieties concerning the supply of planners and the skills required by a significantly changed planning system. A series of reviews highlighted both an absolute shortage of planners and the presence of significant skills gaps within the profession.[46] In evidence to a Communities and Local Government (CLG) Select Committee investigating skills gaps and labour shortages the government attributed this problem to historic under investment in the 1980s and 1990s having created a missing generation of planners.[47] The Committee's report also identified significant, cyclical increases in demand for planners due to the sustained construction boom of the 2000s and an associated rise in planning applications, exacerbated by the increasing complexity of regulatory requirements generated by new legislation.

Despite increases in the numbers of qualified planners in the workforce, there remained a significant shortfall, particularly in the public sector.[48] Although empirical data was limited, oral evidence to the Committee attributed this public/private differential to diverging pay and conditions between the sectors, alongside a broader sense that the private sector now offered better career prospects:

> It has got into something of a downward spiral. I would have to concede that a lot of planners do leave local authorities to work in the private sector but then you have to look at why they are doing that. One of the things … is the status of planning in the private sector … you really need to do something to raise the status of a planning officer's lot in the public sector so that once you have them in there they are not all stampeding for the door at the earliest opportunity.[49]

The focus on the supply of planners as a particular problem for the public sector was mirrored by parallel concerns about skills, with the discourse of 'culture change' placing particular emphasis on deficits in local authorities. The move towards spatial planning was presented as a major change, potentially 'writing off thirty years of planning skills'[50] by rendering established approaches redundant, leading to questions about whether the scope of the new planning and its demands, were simply too broad:

> Are the terms "planning" and "planners" trying to cover too much? On one level you have skills about the visual environment, almost akin to architectural type skills; and at the other end, on complicated projects say in the city centre like regeneration schemes, you need skills that are more financial, project-management related or even legal. Can individuals encompass that enormous range of skills that would make a planner capable of delivering?[51]

[43]RTPI, *A New Vision for Planning*.
[44]Newman, *Modernising Governance*.
[45]Upton, "Evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee".
[46]For example: Durning and Glasson, "Delivering the Planning System"; Egan, *The Egan Review*; Audit Commission, *The Planning System*.
[47]House of Commons, *Planning Matters*.
[48]ACS, *Mind the Skills Gap*.
[49]Peace, "Evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee", Q74.
[50]George, "Evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee", Q53.
[51]Betts, "Evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee", Q5.

Although by no means a new concern, questioning of the profession's ability to cover such a range of activities reflected a significant growth in specialization.[52] Such concerns were also linked to anxieties about the quality of planners in the public sector. Attention was focused on a range of measures, including increasing the quality of new entrants through government-funded bursaries at university planning schools; calls to increase the status of chief planning officers within local government; and suggestions that more routine, administrative tasks could be separated out from more valuable, 'professional' planning work.

The sense that skills gaps were a particular problem for the public sector was reinforced by the way another influential review, overseen by a senior business figure, defined the 'generic skills' required to create sustainable communities as accepted properties of the private sector[53]:

> To be honest with you, these are skills that every business person should have. They are the same skills that make businesses successful: communication skills and project-management skills are all generic skills to all successful businesses, and there is no reason why our planners should not have these skills as well.[54]

Somewhat to their dismay, the government commissioned Egan Review had cut across the RTPIs own parallel attempts to review and revise the education of planners.[55] The idea of generic skills as a common-sense currency of business reflects the normalization of neoliberal assumptions about the forms of expertise and competencies society at large should value. These were perceived as products of market competition that, despite years of managerial reforms, remained in short supply in the public sector.

Elsewhere key technical skills deficits were discussed, such as urban design which Conservative governments had downplayed in the 1980s only for New Labour governments to reemphasise in the 2000s. The Barker Review also emphasized a need to increase understanding of development economics within the public sector workforce, identifying a lack of financial literacy as a major impediment to more market-sensitive planning. Though studies suggested planners continued to identify with a public *service* ethos,[56] this was not necessarily tied to work in the public *sector* and there was little evidence of official governmental or professional concern that anything of value might be lost through the managerial embrace of a private sector culture.

Echoing Barker's recommendation about the potential contribution of outsourcing, an independent public body, the Audit Commission, argued that there was considerable scope for growth to meet the need for specialist expertise and to contract out 'delivery' of core planning services,[57] mirroring longer-standing moves in other public services such as health and education. In a supplementary publication aimed at councillors, the Audit Commission targeted a series of 'myths' limiting the extent of public outsourcing, suggesting that local authorities remained organizationally resistant to making full use of the private sector in planning.[58]

The whole service outsourcing model then being developed in Salford, Greater Manchester was held up by the Audit Commission as evidence that new forms of public-private partnership working could improve the delivery of planning services. However, there was little concern to interrogate private sector capacity and skills before advocating this solution to public sector recruitment

[52]For a discussion see Parker et al., "The Rise of the Private Sector".
[53]Egan Review (2004), *op. cit.* [42].
[54]Egan, "Evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee" Q5.
[55]RTPI "*Consultation Response by RTPI*".
[56]Clifford, "Planning in an Age of Customers".
[57]Audit Commission, *The Planning System*.
[58]Audit Commission, *Planning Services and the Private Sector.*

challenges. The assumption seemed to be that private supply of both capacity and expertise could expand to meet growing public sector demand as a natural function of market forces, despite some consultants highlighting that capacity limitations affected both sectors:

> I am from the consultancy sector—the consultants have, by and large, the same problems as the public sector; in other words there is a shortage of people with the skills, so it is not necessarily a solution to use the private sector because we have not got the skills and it is robbing Peter to pay Paul quite often, with people swapping around, and there is a gross shortage.[59]

This perception was reinforced by persistent coverage in an annual survey of private sector consultancies conducted by the trade publication *Planning* of 'chronic difficulties in recruiting staff of the right calibre' as a key barrier to business growth.[60] The survey provides some insight into the significant expansion of the consultancy market at this time. Headline results suggest the sector saw double digit, year-on-year growth from 1997, with fee income of the ten highest earning firms rising from £30,300,000 to £250,167,000 before the onset of global financial crisis in 2007. The picture presented is one of an increasingly diversified market in professional planning services with growth occurring through both 'organic' expansion of firms and consolidation through acquisitions and mergers.[61]

Rather than a straightforward process of neoliberal privatization or outsourcing of erstwhile public planning work, the rise of private planning firms during these years seems better understood through the lens of 'regulatory capitalism'.[62] If some in the 1970s had found it highly unlikely planners would ever work directly for private clients,[63] by the 2000s this represented by some distance the largest share of the market. The £75,297,000 worth of public contracts reported by the ten leaders in this area in 2007 represented a relatively small share of the total fee income reported by leading firms overall. As reported in *Planning*, this generated doubts about whether firms would even bid for public work that might generate conflicts of interest that could jeopardize more lucrative opportunities advising private clients.[64] This market expansion arguably reflects the remaking of the planning profession from a public service profession into a service sector profession, responding to the requirements of private clients for expert advice in navigating increasingly complex administrative processes.

The huge expansion of private sector planning services was driving a significant shift of planners into the private sector, with growing evidence that graduates saw the sector as offering more desirable career opportunities.[65] Although accurate figures were not available, the CLG Committee drew on data which suggested more than 40% of planning professionals were employed in the private sector by 2007, probably a near doubling of numbers from the early 1990s.[66] The nature of this expansion highlights a significant diversion of expertise away from either working in the public sector or directly serving public clients (the main concern of the Select Committee, Barker Review and Audit Commission). However, growing private-private contracting of planning expertise was apparently not considered as a driver of public service labour shortages in any of these inquiries or reports.

[59]Addison, "Evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee", Q42.
[60]Johnston, "Optimism Thrives in Sectors", 13.
[61]Raco, "Private Consultants", 128–32.
[62]Raco, "Private Consultants".
[63]McLaughlin, "The Future of the Planning Profession".
[64]Planning Magazine, "Planning Consultancy Survey 2007".
[65]Durning and Glasson, "Delivering the Planning System".
[66]Nadin and Jones, "A Profile of the Profession".

That neither the government nor the profession questioned this redistribution of planning expertise during discussion of widely acknowledged shortages in the supply of qualified planners bears testament to the normalization of a growing market in private planning services. Amidst pervasive problematisation of public sector planning expertise and staff shortages, there is also little direct evidence of private sector planners being required to justify their roles or expertise in debates at this time (though some studies noted the persistence of long-standing concerns about the quality of work some delivered[67]) Instead, the legitimacy of private practice seems to have drawn largely from broader managerial and neoliberal valorization of the presumed efficiency and effectiveness of practices, knowledge and skills honed in the private sector.

The nature of the state-professional relationship thus shifted as planners gradually became a skilled occupation delivering services to both the public and private sector. The unmaking of planning as a predominantly public sector, or even public service, profession during these years seems less the direct product of any intentional efforts to open up new markets in professional planning services than of wider, 'ambient' processes of neoliberalisation. Private-sector demand for professional advice grew steadily, partly as a perverse product of government reforms motivated by persistent critique of organizational cultures across the public sector.

Nationalization and marginalization of private-sector planning, 1947–1951

If the 1990s and 2000s saw a significant expansion of private sector planning employment, the introduction of a comprehensive planning system through the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act might be considered to mark its inverse, a period of rapid expansion of public sector employment. Alongside associated legislation creating new towns and national parks, the Act meant the post-war period began on 'a note of professional confidence and planning was swept along in a vigorous stream of new-found importance'.[68] However, it was also felt this expansion of planning powers presented 'a challenge to our national genius' as local authorities were charged 'with the greatest task of their existence'.[69] A small number of private sector consultants had to this point been considered 'very largely the creators of the conception of town planning'[70] and doubts about the capacity of local government to operate the new system led government to drastically reduce the number of planning authorities from 1441 to 145. At a time when membership of the Town Planning Institute (TPI) stood at around 1700, there were significant concerns about the supply of qualified planners and the nature of the expertise required to successfully realize the extended conception of planning promised by the new system.

During Parliament's second reading of the Town and Country Planning Bill, the government minister responsible, Lewis Silkin, highlighted that a 'new type of planner will have to be trained to carry out this broader conception of planning'.[71] In July 1947 he elaborated further on these concerns:

> We have changed the character of planning: we have changed our whole outlook on planning. Is there not a change due in the type of person who carries out planning functions? What are the right kinds of

[67]Gunn and Vigar, "Reform Processes and Discretionary Acting Space".
[68]Cherry, *The Evolution of British Town Planning*, 139.
[69]Fred Marshall, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Town and Country Planning, addressing the Town Planning Institute's Annual General Meeting in 1947.
[70]The National Archives, Memorandum by the Ministry of Town and Country Planning provided to the Schuster Committee. HLG 87/2: Agenda, minutes of meetings and Committee papers.
[71]Silkin, L (1947). House of Commons, vol. 432, col. 962. Available: https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1947/jan/29/town-and-country-planning-bill (accessed: 28 December 2020).

> education, qualifications, experience, that are warranted? Can a plan really be prepared by one person and what sort of person should he [*sic*] be? A superman some people say - well that is not very helpful[72]

For Silkin, the breadth of the new planning required a diverse team of experts, potentially led by 'administrators' rather than being the task of an individual 'designer' as argued by the TPI.[73] Silkin went on to suggest an independent commission to consider the issue. Having sought out 'open minded' people who did not represent the 'vested interests' of the technical professions, a Committee of Inquiry into the Qualifications of Planners was established led by Sir George Schuster. The Committee's terms of reference were deliberately broad and considered to be 'of the first importance in the public interest'[74]:

> To take account of the present and prospective scope of town and country planning and to consider and report what qualifications are necessary or desirable for persons engaged in it and to make any recommendations affecting those persons which appear to the committee to be relevant.[75]

By expanding previous, piecemeal and largely negative powers to 'prevent evils' into an obligation to comprehensively plan for 'a positive conception of what is desirable'[76] the Committee considered the conception of planning in the country to have been significantly expanded to affect 'the whole pattern of national life'.[77] This increasing influence was viewed with some caution, however, having been imposed by necessity in response to war-damage and the 'mess resulting from unplanned development' on a 'reluctant' and to some extent unwitting public.[78]

Following Silkin, the Committee was clear that comprehensive planning of land-use needed to be considered in relation to broader questions of social and economic policy. This contrasted with the prevailing, design-based conception promoted by the TPI or the rival thinking 'in terms of houses, roads and drains rather than sociology and economics'[79] promoted by the parent professions of engineering, surveying and architecture who then dominated planning work in local authorities and had been vying for influence over post-war reconstruction. For Schuster this required either that planning operated within the confines of policy set by others or, preferably, that the land-use implications of a wide range of policy areas should be integrated in the planning function. The latter prevailed in the Committee's report, suggesting a more social scientific basis for planning within local government.

A core part of the Committee's work involved assessing both the expertise and supply of labour required to operate this expanded conception of planning, arising out of concern about the quality of the available pool of planners and doubts about the role of the TPI as an independent professional body. For Sir Thomas Sheepshanks, the permanent secretary at the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, the establishment of the Schuster Committee was a response to the fact that the TPI was a 'pretty poor body'.[80] The Association of Municipal Corporations (AMC), the main local government interest group, argued that the TPI's name was 'bigger than its accomplishments',[81] and that it had allowed poor quality candidates to enter the profession in anticipation of

[72]Silkin, "Seventy-Five Years of Schooling", 268.
[73]At the time unsuccessfully petitioning for a Royal Charter that would not be granted until 1959.
[74]The National Archives, Draft letter from Minister, HLG87:1
[75]MTCP, *Report of the Committee on Qualification of Planners*, vi.
[76]MTCP, *Report of the Committee on Qualification of Planners*, paragraph 44.
[77]MTCP, *Report of the Committee on Qualification of Planners*, paragraph 47.
[78]MTCP, *Report of the Committee on Qualification of Planners*, paragraph 44.
[79]The National Archives, Memo from Department for Health for Scotland, 21 January 1948, HLG87:1
[80]The National Archives, Letter from T. Sheepshanks to Alan Barlow, 21st January 1948, HLG87:1.
[81]The National Archives, Oral evidence from Alderman Mason for AMC to 8th Meeting, 2–3 Dec. 1948, HLG87:1

the opportunities opened up by the 1947 Act. A confidential memorandum produced by the Ministry summarized the problem:

> Are there people available to do this work while, at the same time, keeping pace with all the normal flow of development applications, and if not where are they to be found, or how produced? … there is considerable deficiency, notably in regard to people of the higher calibre required to discharge adequately the tasks falling on new Planning Authorities.[82]

Making sense of this challenge, the Committee sought to distinguish between more routine tasks and more skilled, creative, and analytic forms of planning work. An article in *The Economist*, echoing Silkin, summed up the challenge they were seen to face:

> The ideal town planner, considered as an individual would need to be a superman [*sic*] … Considered as an individual, in fact, he is impossible to find ready made and very nearly impossible to produce by training[83]

Time was spent discussing the best form of university training for prospective planners, with the Committee concluding that the overriding priority lay in attracting 'a few first class minds'. As Hague later suggested, the 'administrator' they had in mind was steeped in 'the traditions of the administrative civil service and the aura of Oxbridge'.[84] Whilst not ruling out the possible role of technical professionals, one Committee member cautioned that 'we cannot rely on technical education throwing up the qualities of mind and personality required'.[85]

The AMC in their evidence, questioned the desirability of employing 'pure planners' who they dismissed as 'theorists' and 'dreamers' whose thinking was 'up in the air'.[86] Whilst not accepting the claims of the rival technical professions, members of the Committee had sympathy with these concerns with Dame Evelyn Sharp suggesting planners were 'apt to be financially irresponsible' and therefore impractical.[87] However, the AMC's evidence also suggested it would be a 'thousand pities, indeed it might be disastrous' if the expertise of the consultant planners who had been instrumental in establishing contemporary planning was lost in the rapid expansion of government employment. At the same time, Thomas Sharp made representations as honorary secretary of an informal committee of consultant members of the TPI concerned about the loss of their livelihoods as a result of the 1947 Act.

In his evidence, Sharp suggested there were perhaps 30–40 consultancies listed with the TPI at the time, though only perhaps 6–10 that were purely focused on planning work and with considerable variation in experience.[88] Sharp presented various justifications for the continued value of a corps of private consultants. Whilst acknowledging a degree of material self-interest, he framed it as a wider 'matter of some public importance' that the experience of many of the best-qualified planners in the country was going to waste during a period when their skills were urgently needed. He also maintained that the main barrier to the use of consultants was 'professional jealousy' on the part of less well-qualified county planning officers who feared being undermined in their new roles. Local authorities, he argued, were likely to rediscover the value of consultants when limitations in

[82]The National Archives, Ministry of Town and Country Planning Memorandum produced for the Schuster Committee. HLG/87/2.
[83]The Economist, "Who Should Plan?" 10.
[84]Hague, *The Development of Planning Thought*, 105.
[85]The National Archives, Minutes of the 15th Meeting, 26th September 1949, HL87:1.
[86]The National Archives, Oral evidence from Alderman Mason for AMC to 8th Meeting 2–3 December 1948, HL87:1.
[87]The National Archives, Minutes of the 16th Meeting, 17th October 1949, HL87:1.
[88]The National Archives, Oral evidence from Thomas Sharp to 7th meeting, 25th November 1948. HL87:1; TNA, Written submissions from Thomas Sharp, HLG87:5

the capacity of their planning staff became apparent in the near future. The danger in the meantime was that consultants would either 'starve' or get tied up in opportunities abroad.[89]

Sharp viewed the planner as designer, in the mould of the architect, and was concerned that a public sector profession would become subject to 'major faults ascribed to bureaucratic activities – the drying up of the imaginative approach to problems, the conservative continuation of accepted formulae'.[90] He also argued that consultants were important for establishing professional standing and autonomy:

> And further, we believe that it is desirable that a corps of consultants should be kept in being, since no profession that is without independent practitioners, and the whole of whose members is engaged in official capacities, can be professionally healthy[91]

His appeal met with some sympathy. The government actively encouraged the continued use of consultants by planning authorities[92] and the Committee's final report argued, 'that consultants still have a useful contribution to make to the work of the local planning authorities, both in the preparation of their plans and in the handling of special problems'.[93] However, it was also made clear that the 'old conception of the consultant who was brought in to prepare a complete planning scheme was dead, and that the new place for the consultant was as a specialist called in to deal with a particular problem.'[94]

The enhanced status of chief planning officers and growing capacity of local authority planning teams, coupled with the expense involved, meant that planning would become a primarily public *sector* activity. Whilst the potential of consultants was recognized and their plans frequently drew on quite detailed 'survey' data, the Committee's view was that their work was rooted in an out-dated conception of planning as creative design and produced plans that were too 'visionary' and impractical to meet the evidence-based requirements of the new planning system. Correspondence from Sir Patrick Abercrombie, a leading consultant, in which he cited his work on a new campus for the University of Ceylon (later the University of Sri Lanka) was seen to illustrate the failure of the consultants to grasp the expanded scope of town planning:

> In choosing his work for the University of Ceylon as a simile, I think [Abercrombie] points exactly to the weakness of his own case. The layout and general plan of buildings for the University is, in effect, a scheme of monumental architecture and cannot properly be compared with town planning work[95]

The emerging conception of planning required continuous and ongoing engagement with a local area, which the 'here today, gone tomorrow' model of consultancy made very difficult. Examples such as that of Max Lock's 'camping' in Middlesbrough were cited as evidence of the challenges consultants faced in developing local knowledge and of the preference for plans to be produced 'by the staff who are going to live with it and handle its development'.[96] In an exchange with Silkin, Abercrombie challenged this criticism, highlighting the breadth of knowledge consultants could bring to enhance the work local authorities:

[89]On the intimate relations between colonialism and markets in planning expertise see: Beebeejaun, "Provincializing planning".
[90]The National Archives, Oral evidence from Thomas Sharp to 7th meeting, 25th November 1948. HL87:1; TNA, Written submissions from Thomas Sharp, HLG87:5.
[91]The National Archives, Letter from Thomas Sharp to Lewis Silkin, Minister of Town and Country Planning, 12th November, 1948. HLG/87:5.
[92]Ministry of Town and Country Planning Circular No. 34, 8th September 1947.
[93]MTCP, *Report of the Committee on Qualification of Planners*, paragraph 179.
[94]The National Archives, Minutes of the Schuster Committee 17th Meeting, 2 March 1950, HLG/87:2.
[95]The National Archives, Memorandum from S.I.G Beaufoy to Deputy Secretary, 19th January 1949: HLG87:5.
[96]MTCP, *Report of the Committee on Qualification of Planners*, paragraph 178.

> The object of calling in an outside consultant is to have someone to collaborate with the Local Officer: the first brings experience gained from a wide and varied practice, the second brings profound local information.[97]

This point was recognized in the Committee's final report which suggested a reduced role for a self-selecting group of consultants who would continue to find public *service* work based on their breadth of experience and independence. This would entail the provision of technical specialist knowledge to fill gaps in local authorities; producing design-based masterplans for small areas or even plans for entire local authority areas where smaller authorities lacked the capacity to maintain an in-house staff. Finally, it was suggested they may continue to offer a second opinion to local authorities. Although not mentioned in the final report, the Committee also considered the possibility that consultants might in future be employed by private clients 'litigating' against local authority plans.

The Committee's deliberations on the role and position of consultants were an important part of the wider problematisation of planning expertise at this time, with the previously elite status of consultants challenged by governmental concerns to prioritize new knowledge and skills for an expanded conception of planning. The government's pragmatic disposition towards retaining the services of consultants does not suggest any ideological aversion to private practice *per se*, or the effects of market forces on professional or public work, but the view that local authority planning teams were best placed to understand and plan for their communities. Whilst consultants were respected as senior figures with considerable status within the emerging profession, criticism of their idealism and lack of concern for the economic realities of implementation illustrates a very different construction of private sector expertise than that which would hold sway by the late 2000s.

Discussion and conclusion

The two historical moments explored in this paper marked significant transformations in understandings of planning and its attendant forms of expertise. This section draws the moments together, considering how each reveals distinctive problematisations and justifications of planning's private and public sectors and reflecting on the changing ways in which expertise has been configured to serve prevailing conceptions of the public interest. In so doing, we reflect back on our framing of professional expertise by exploring the discontinuities in discourses surrounding the profession of planning and disturbing presuppositions about the value and meaning of public and private. The relationship between the state and the discipline of planning emerges as critical to understanding both how planning is framed and the changing relationships between public and private. We, therefore, foreground the mutable and contingent nature of received assumptions concerning planning expertise, exploring the overlapping contrasts that make up distinctions between the public and private sectors in planning and their contributions to shifting historical definitions of 'the good'.[98] Since space constraints prevent a full genealogical tracing of discursive transformations across epochs, we aim instead to reflect on these two moments to open lines of enquiry with critical purchase on the neoliberal present, considering particularly why privatization seems to have been uncritically accepted in the 2000s.

Unsurprisingly there are significant differences and discontinuities between the two eras. If the problematisations and justifications of the 1940s revolved around competing substantive

[97]The National Archives, Letter from Sir Patrick Abercrombie to Dame Evelyn Sharp, 11th January, 1949. HLG/87/2.
[98]Geuss, *Public Goods, Private Goods*.

conceptions of the 'superhuman' levels of expertise required to plan for comprehensive post-war reconstruction (e.g. design skills vs. social scientific knowledge), by the 2000s this had given way to a dominant concern for the efficiency of planning processes, understood in neoliberal terms as a potentially restrictive regulatory constraint. Whilst spatial planning was advocated as a return to a more substantive conception of planning – unlike the 1940s when planning was seen as fundamental to wider societal goals – it suggested a narrower vision of planners' expertise as the mediation of different interests, drawing increasingly on 'private sector skills' to facilitate development through the market.

The obvious disjuncture between the two historical moments confirms distinctions between a post-war settlement that prioritized public planning and its gradual roll-back under neoliberalism. This also evinces significant transformations in the relationship between professional planning expertise and the state, from the emergence of a public sector-orientated profession to the contemporary growth and normalization of planning expertise as a service, sold to both the public and private sectors. The latter process has been intensified by the complexity and subsequent fragmentation of planning regulation.[99] As the discipline's scope has been reworked and epistemological boundaries have shifted as part of prevailing governmentalities, specialist markets have emerged, often enabling the siphoning-off of profitable areas to the private sector whilst leaving messy coordination and political work to local authorities.

The 2000s was a period marked by significant year-on-year growth of private sector planning, with the profession gradually moving away from its public service base towards a broader professional services outlook, frequently advising private clients on how to navigate the complexities of the planning system. In effect a version of the 'litigation' role rejected by the Schuster Committee' and which still appeared improbable in the 1970s.[100] It seems notable how little evidence we found of this significant change being seen as a problem that required justification by either the profession or government in the 2000s. Indeed, governmental analysis of labour and skills supply seems to have assumed private sector capacity could unproblematically expand to serve the needs of public clients, despite the private sector noting significant recruitment challenges and the fact that public contracts were no longer central to many consultancy business models.

A key challenge, therefore, remains explaining the relative silence surrounding the expansion of private sector planning activity that emerged through the genealogical perspective adopted here. When contrasted with the debates of the 1940s, its roots in a broader neoliberal atmosphere or 'capitalist realism'[101] are revealed. If professional self-interest was likely also a key factor, the longer run involvement of private consultancy expertise in planning perhaps inured the sector to the scale and significance of the transformations under way in the early twenty-first century. Governmental mindsets certainly seemed fixated on an increasingly anachronistic conception of a private sector providing services to resolve problems in the public sector, illustrating shifting notions of appropriate expertise emerging in the relationship between state and the discipline of planning. The ways in which the managerialisation of public sector planning have shifted the focus of planning work from the public to 'customer'[102] have probably also aligned local authority cultures more closely with the private sector, disrupting previously clearer distinctions between public and private planning work.

[99]Parker et al., "The Rise of the Private Sector".
[100]McLaughlin, "The Future of the Planning Profession".
[101]Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*.
[102]Slade et al., "Commercialisation and the Reshaping of Public-Sector Planning".

Amid significant disagreements between conceptions of planning, government was clear in the 1950s that planning expertise should be rooted in local authorities so that it could be connected to their broader policy agendas and maintain an ongoing connection to the needs of a locality. Although the Committee's deliberations betrayed doubts about the expanded scope of planning powers, the backdrop to their deliberations was a growing commitment to town and country planning as a state function that was understood to be becoming a near monopoly employer of planning expertise. This was justified by the imperatives of post-war reconstruction and the 'mess resulting from unplanned development' identified by Schuster. Within this context, the committee's deliberations revealed concerns about the ability of consultants to align themselves with the expanded conception of the public interest required by the new planning system, amidst complaints of their having 'axes to grind'.[103] The need to develop evidence-based approaches within a more 'rational' system was seen to militate against the creative and 'visionary' plans produced by 'monumental architects' like Sharp and Abercrombie. Responding to this threat, consultants justified their inputs not through claims to the virtues of competitive markets but on the basis that their experience and expertise would secure the status, creativity and independence of the fledgling planning profession and make an important contribution to a technocratic and expert-led form of planning in the public interest.

Despite misgivings, there remained a pragmatic commitment on the part of government to retain a corps of private sector consultants, representing acceptance of their status and experience and its potential to assist with the significant challenges of implementing the new planning system. Whilst periodically expressing concern about the quality of work offered by consultants, government seems to have retained this pragmatic orientation towards a private sector that continued to employ 15–20% of RTPI members until the early 1980s and which retained a status for thought leadership in the field. For example, in an echo of exchanges between Sharp and Silkin, the appeals of as prominent a figure as Colin Buchanan about shortages of work met a sympathetic but impassive response in 1967. The Permanent Under-Secretary Matthew Stevenson simply pointed to forthcoming public contracts and the possibility of facilitating some minor international networking.[104]

From the vantage of the neoliberal present, it is striking to see *private* sector expertise described by the government in the 1950s as lacking pragmatic grounding in the economic realities of development and contrasted negatively with the perceived efficiency of the public sector. This contrasts with the association in the 2000s of the private sector with ideas of efficiency, firmly rooted in wider discourses reflecting the perceived virtues of competitive markets.[105] The idea that the public sector was more effective in the 1940s was linked to concepts of planning that valued local rootedness and comprehensive knowledge – both systematically devalued in moves to commodify planning under neoliberal forms of managerialism.

By the 2000s, dominant governmental problematisations focused firmly on perceived deficiencies in the culture and skills of the public sector workforce, to which the private sector was seen as a solution, bringing not substantive planning expertise but the generic 'business' values, skills and efficiency required to improve the performance of a sclerotic bureaucracy. Unlike the 1940s, when their role was questioned and they were seen to represent an outdated conception

[103]The National Archives, HLG 131/660. Use of Consultants for local authority schemes.
[104]The National Archives, Note for the record in response to Letter from Colin Buchannan Sir Matthew Stevenson, Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 25 August 1967. HLG 131:660.
[105]Raco and Savini, *Planning and Knowledge*.

of planning, advocates of increasing private sector planning at the turn of the millennium were apparently not required to justify the substantive value of consultants' work in national debates.

Despite significant differences, both the post-war period and the 2000s were moments of expansion in the scope of planning, instigated by governmental reform programmes that sought to deal with perceived problems in prevailing approaches. In both eras, broadening the scope of intervention to realize wider policy goals gave rise to significant confusion about the role of the planner,[106] the expertise they required, and the supply of those qualities in the public sector. Following Silkin, when the governmental outlook on planning changes, the 'type of person' who carries out planning functions comes into question, generating strikingly similar anxieties across both periods about the supply of planners, the need to attract the brightest and best into the profession, separating 'expert' from 'routine' work and securing the status of planners within local government.

Such recurrent concerns are best understood not as straightforward repetitions but as a 'changing same'[107] of related problematisations, emerging in reconfigured forms over more than half a century. These are, however, more than superficial parallels. Through the genealogical and governmentality lens, they reveal ongoing processes of contestation over the disciplinary scope of planning as a field of governmental activity, and attendant debates about professional expertise. The Schuster Committee's formulation of this as a question of the ways physical design intersects with wider economic and social policy goals proved prescient. Although resisted at the time by a planning profession wedded to a design-based conception of planning, by the 1960s the requirement for wider social scientific knowledge was in the ascendency, leading to an eventual transformation of the profession's membership.[108] Debates on specialist versus generalist expertise have resurfaced periodically since, suggesting persistent fault lines and tensions.

These tensions suggest a disjuncture between planners' own assumptions concerning the primacy of professional autonomy grounded in technocratic expertise,[109] and the ability of the planning profession to marshal its own multi-disciplinarity. Tellingly, both the Schuster Committee and the Select Committees' deliberations 50 years later reveal that such problematisations have often not been controlled by the planning profession,[110] highlighting the limited autonomy of an occupational group which, even when less directly dependent on public employment, remains intrinsically bound to state regulatory frameworks.

Whilst grounded in the ways planning expertise has been (re)organized over time in England, our argument speaks to wider concerns around the impacts of privatized professional expertise on the changing roles and purposes of planning and state regulation of the built environment. The longer historical perspective and the governmentality approach explored in this paper both help illustrate how the planning project has proven persistently problematic to conceptions of liberal democracy under capitalism, generating ongoing problematisations of the figure of the planner, the proper roles of public and private organizations, and ultimately their claims to expertise. The genealogical approach to continuities and discontinuities, allied to an understanding of the preconceptions that shaped debates across different historical periods, has revealed the shifting nature of planning as a discipline. This changing role and purpose has in turn reworked understandings of the proper roles of the public and private sectors in deploying the expertise necessary to 'serve the public interest'. Thus, the Schuster Committee illustrates how, from the inception of

[106]Healey and Underwood, "Professional Ideals and Planning Practice".
[107]Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*.
[108]Cherry, *The Evolution of British Town Planning*.
[109]Campbell and Marshall, "Dilemmas in Planning Practice".
[110]Reade, *British Town and Country Planning*; Campbell and Marshall, "Professionalism and Planning in Britain".

comprehensive public planning, the governmentality of planning has sought to continually problematize and reinvent the planner by reference to their education, skills and even disposition. Rather than exercising autonomous control over the substance of its work, the planning profession has frequently been a subordinate voice in these transformations to its field of expertise. With around 44% of UK chartered planners now working in the private sector,[111] this position of relative weakness is now compounded by the conflicting positions and interests of the professions' membership in relation to development and the pursuit of profit in the built environment. As a result, they find it increasingly difficult to openly and robustly debate normative issues around the role and public interest purposes of planning, even in the face of ongoing governmental and wider societal critique. In this context, planning expertise seems likely to be subject to further projects of reform in England, potentially opening new market opportunities but generating little critical reflection about who will benefit and who planning should serve.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank colleagues on the Working in the Public Interest project (Ben Clifford, Zan Gunn, Claire Horton, Imogen Johnson, Abigail Schoneboom, Jason Slade and Geoff Vigar) for their support and comments that helped shape this paper. All responsibility for the final version though lies with the authors.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by the ESRC under [grant number ES/P011713/1].

Notes on contributors

Andy Inch is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, University of Sheffield.

Matthew Wargent is Lecturer in Urban Planning and Development in the School of Geography and Planning, Cardiff University.

Malcolm Tait is Professor of Planning in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, University of Sheffield.

ORCID

Andy Inch http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3349-687X
Matthew Wargent http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1448-9383
Malcolm Tait http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2107-6349

References

ACS [Academy for Sustainable Communities]. *Mind the Skills Gap: the skills we need for sustainable communities*. Leeds, ACS, 2007.

[111] RTPI, *The UK Planning Profession in 2019*.

Addison, L. Evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee, Q42, Monday 28 April 2008. Accessed December 23, 2020. https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcomloc/517/8042805.htm, 2008.
Allmendinger, P. *New Labour and Planning: From new Right to new Left*. London: Routledge, 2011.
Audit Commission. *The Planning System: Matching Expectations and Capacity*. London: Audit Commission, 2006a.
Audit Commission. *Planning Services and the Private Sector: Myths Explored*. London: Audit Commission, 2006b.
Barker, K. *Barker Review of Land Use Planning Final Report – Recommendations*. London: HMSO, 2006.
Beebeejaun, Y. "Provincializing Planning: Reflections on Spatial Ordering and Imperial Power." *Planning Theory* (2021). published online August 25, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1177/14730952211026697.
Betts, C. Evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee, Q5, Monday 28 April 2008. Accessed December 23, 2020 https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcomloc/517/8042802.htm, 2008.
Campbell, H., and R. Marshall. "Acting on Principle: Dilemmas in Planning Practice." *Planning Practice and Research* 13, no. 2 (1998): 117–128.
Campbell, H., and R. Marshall. "Professionalism and Planning in Britain." *Town Planning Review* 76, no. 2 (2005): 191–214.
Cherry, G. *The Evolution of British Town Planning*. Leighton Buzzard: Leonard Hill Books, 1974.
Clifford, B. "Planning in an age of Customers: British Local Authority Practitioners,: Identity and Reactions to Public Sector Reform." *Town Planning Review* 83, no. 5 (2012): 553–574.
Davoudi, S., and P. Healey. *Using Planning Consultants: The Experience of Tyne and Wear Development Corporation*. Newcastle: University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1990.
Dear, M. "Privatization and the Rhetoric of Planning Practice." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 7, no. 4 (1989): 449–462.
Durning, B., and J. Glasson. "Delivering the Planning System in England: Skills' Capacity Constraints." *Town Planning Review* 77, no. 4 (2006): 457–484.
Egan, J. *The Egan Review: Skills for Sustainable Communities*. London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004.
Egan, J. Evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee, Q5, Monday 28 April 2008. Accessed December 23, 2020 https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcomloc/517/8042802.htm, 2008.
Etzioni, A. *The Semi-Professions and Their Organization*. New York: Free Press, 1969.
Evetts, J., and R. Dingwall. "Professional Occupations in the UK and Europe: Legitimation and Governmentality." *International Review of Sociology/Revue Internationale de Sociologie* 12, no. 2 (2002): 159–171.
Fisher, M. *Capitalist Realism: Is There no Alternative?* London: Zero Books, 2009.
Forst, R. *The Right to Justification: Elements of a Constructivist Theory of Justice*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.
Foucault, M. "Nietzsche, Genealogy and History." In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, edited by D. F Bouchard, 139–164. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977a.
Foucault, M. "Two Lectures." In *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, edited by C Gordon, 78–108. New York: Pantheon, 1977b.
Foucault, M. "Governmentality." In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, edited by G. Burchell, C Gordon, and P Miller, 87–104. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
Foucault, M. In *Fearless Speech*, edited by J. Pearson. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2001.
Genovese, R. G. *Advocacy Planning: An Attempt to Develop a Social Action Segment in a Semi-Profession*. New York: New York University Press, 1976.
George, A. (Committee Member), Evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee, Q53, Monday 28 April 2008. Accessed December 23, 2020. https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcomloc/517/8042805.htm, 2008.
Geuss, R. *Public Goods, Private Goods*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
Geuss, R. *Outside Ethics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
Gilroy, P. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London: Verso, 1994.

Glass, R. "The Evaluation of Planning: Some Sociological Considerations." In *A Reader in Planning Theory*, edited by A Faludi, 45–67. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1959.
Goldstein, J. "Foucault among the Sociologists: The" Disciplines" and the History of the Professions." *History and Theory* 23, no. 2 (1984): 170–192.
Gunn, S., and G. Vigar. "Reform Processes and Discretionary Acting Space in English Planning Practice, 1997–2010." *Town Planning Review* 83, no. 5 (2012): 533–551.
Hague, C. *The Development of Planning Thought: A Critical Interpretation*. London: Hutchinson, 1984.
Healey, P., and J. Underwood. "Professional Ideals and Planning Practice." *Progress in Planning* 9 (1978): 73–127.
Higgins, M., and P. Allmendinger. "The Changing Nature of Public Planning Practice Under the New Right: The Legacies and Implications of Privatisation." *Planning Practice and Research* 14, no. 1 (1999): 39–67.
House of Commons. *Planning Matters– labour shortages and skills gaps*. Communities and Local Government Committee - Eleventh Report of Session 2007–08, Volume 1, HC 517–I, London, HSMO, 2008.
Huxley, M. "Historicizing Planning,: Problematizing Participation." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37, no. 5 (2013): 1527–1541.
Inch, A. "Culture and the Remaking of Planning's Apparatus of Truth". In *The Routledge Handbook of Planning Theory*, edited by M. Gunder, A. Mandanipour, and V. Watson, 194–206. Abingdon: Routledge, 2018.
Jenkins, L. "The Difference Genealogy Makes: Strategies for Politicisation or how to Extend Capacities for Autonomy." *Political Studies* 59, no. 1 (2011): 156–174.
Johnson, T. "Expertise and the State." In *Foucault's New Domains. London, Routledge*, edited by M. Gane, and T Johnson, 139–152. London: Routledge, 1993.
Johnston, T. Optimism Thrives in Sectors, *Planning*, 11 November. p13; 2005.
Lennon, M. "Planning as Justification." *Planning Theory & Practice* 21, no. 5 (2020): 803–807.
Levi-Faur, D. "The Global Diffusion of Regulatory Capitalism." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 598, no. 1 (2005): 12–32.
Linovski, O. "Shifting Agendas: Private Consultants and Public Planning Policy." *Urban Affairs Review* 55, no. 6 (2019): 1666–1701.
Marshall, T. *The Politics and Ideology of Planning*. Bristol: Policy Press, 2020.
McLaughlin, J. B. "The Future of the Planning Profession." In *The Future of Planning, London, Heinemann*, edited by P Cowan, 69–92. London: Heinemann, 1973.
Moore, S. "Re-evaluating 'Public' and 'Private' in Local Development Cultures: Converging Vocabularies of Public Good and Market Success in Toronto's New Urbanism." *Town Planning Review* 83, no. 5 (2012): 575–594.
MTCP [Ministry of Town and Country Planning]. *Report of the Committee on Qualification of Planners*. London, HMSO, Cmd. 8059, 1950.
Nadin, V., and S. Jones. "A Profile of the Profession." *The Planner* 76, no. 3 (1990): 13–34.
Newman, J. *Modernising Governance: New Labour, Policy and Society*. London: Sage, 2001.
Parker, G., E. Street, and M. Wargent. "The Rise of the Private Sector in Fragmentary Planning in England." *Planning Theory & Practice* 19, no. 5 (2018): 734–750.
Peace, L. Evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee, Q74. Tuesday 6 May 2008. Accessed December 23, 2020; 2008. https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcomloc/517/8050602.htm.
Peel, D. "Seventy-five Years of Schooling." *Town and Country Planning* 77, no. 6 (2008): 265–268.
Pennington, M. "Hayekian Political Economy and the Limits of Deliberative Democracy." *Political Studies* 51, no. 4 (2003): 722–739.
Planning Magazine. Planning Consultancy Survey 2007. *Planning*, 30 November 2007, 27-29, 2007.
Raco, M. "Private Consultants, Planning Reform, and the Marketisation of Local Government Finance." In *Planning Practice: Critical Perspectives from the UK*, edited by J. Ferm, and J Tomaney, 123–137. London: Routledge, 2018.
Raco, M., and F. Savini, eds. *Planning and Knowledge: How New Forms of Technocracy Are Shaping Contemporary Cities*. Bristol: Policy Press, 2019.
Reade, E. *British Town and Country Planning*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987.
Rose, N. *Powers of Freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

RTPI [Royal Town Planning Institute]. *A new Vision for Planning: Delivering Sustainable Communities, Settlements and Places*. London: Royal Town Planning Institute, 2001.
RTPI [Royal Town Planning Institute]. *Egan Review of Skills: Consultation Response by RTPI*. London: Royal Town Planning Institute, 2003.
RTPI [Royal Town Planning Institute]. *The UK Planning Profession in 2019*. London: Royal Town Planning Institute, 2019.
Shapely, P. "Governance in the Post-War City: Historical Reflections on Public–Private Partnerships in the UK." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37, no. 4 (2013): 1288–1304.
Slade, D., S. Gunn, and A. Schoneboom. *Serving in the Public Interest?* London: Royal Town Planning Institute, 2019.
Slade, J., Tait, M. and Inch, A. "'We need to put what we do in my dad's language, in pounds, shillings and pence': Commercialisation and the reshaping of public-sector planning in England." *Urban Studies* 55, no. 2 (2022): 397–413.
Tait, M. "Planning and the Public Interest: Still a Relevant Concept for Planners?" *Planning Theory* 15, no. 4 (2016): 335–343.
The Economist. Who Should Plan?. *The Economist*, 14 August. p10, 1948.
Upton, R. Evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee, Q126. Monday 12 May 2008. Accessed December 2, 2020. https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcomloc/517/8051203.htm.
Wargent, M., G. Parker, and E. Street. "Public-private Entanglements: Consultant use in the English Planning System." *European Planning Studies* 28, no. 1 (2020): 192–210.
Wargent, M., G. Parker, and E. Street. "Private Expertise and the Spatial Reorganization of Planning in England." In *Handbook on the Changing Geographies of the State: New Spaces of Geopolitics*, edited by S Moisio, N Koch, AEG Jonas, C Lizotte, and J Luukkonen, 416–427. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2020.
Weintraub, J. "The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction." In *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, edited by J. Weintraub, and K Kumar, 1–42. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.
Zanotto, J. "Detachment in Planning Practice." *Planning Theory and Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019): 37–52.