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Gordon C. Cameron, 1937–1990

Members will be sorry to learn of the death, on 14th March 1990, of Gordon Cameron (Master of Fitzwilliam College and Professor of Land Economy, the University of Cambridge). Gordon took a prominent part in the formation of the Regional Studies Association, and was on the first Editorial Board of the journal *Regional Studies*.

He subsequently took a strong interest in the Association, and participated in many of its activities. A graduate of the University of Durham, Gordon came to the University of Glasgow in 1962, and held posts in the Departments of Political Economy, Social and Economic Research, and Town and Regional Planning. Before taking the Chair of Land Economy at Cambridge, he ended a distinguished career at the University of Glasgow as Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences. His contributions to the literature on urban and regional economics were numerous, and he enjoyed an international reputation in this area.

Gordon held various academic and advisory positions overseas and within the UK was appointed to a number of official bodies, including the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Scotland and the Committee of Enquiry into Local Government Finance (Layfield). In addition, he was a Governor of the Centre for Environmental Studies (1977–82) and of Wye College, University of London (1981–1986), and was a Vice-Chairman of the Economics Committee, Social Science Research Council (1977–1981). Gordon, who was known personally to many members of the Association, will be remembered for his willingness to give generously of himself, for his ability to offer thoughtful and helpful advice and, above all, for his support and encouragement of those with whom he worked.

A Memorial Service was held on 26th May 1990 at Great Mary's Church, Cambridge.

John B. Parr
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Letter from America

Lewis Mumford and the Living City

Speaking clearly, intelligently and truthfully about cities is now virtually a lost art. Contemporary urbanists seem self-absorbed in the imagery of analytic methodism. Living, breathing, actual cities too often arrive as the afterthought in urban planning and policy texts where concerns for geometric/algebraic relations tend to outweigh and crowd out thinking about the realities and possibilities of city life.

The situation is as bad, perhaps worse, in the urban policy community. To a growing number of urban policy-makers, the value of cities is mysterious; to many, technology and economics have rendered cities obsolete. This declining status is confirmed by the fall from usage of the word *city* itself. In the new

language of urban life and urban policy, the terms in good currency are downtown redevelopment, command-and-control centres, urban satellites, niche economies (restaurant districts, theatre districts, warehouse districts, industrial districts), urban development districts, enterprise zones, industrial parks, technology development centres, business incubators, urban fields, regional labour pools, metropolitan districts, service districts, urban airwaves, and communications nodes. These terms share a common function; together they have linguistically appropriated the three-dimensional space of the urban milieu. Indeed, the only *distinctively* city territory left is the slum.

Lewis Mumford knew it was coming

Letter from America (Cont.)

to this. Without consulting geometry or algebra, he knew the truth about our technology and economics: that they were turning 'every part of the city... into a negotiable commodity', reducing the living space of most of us to 'a formless urban exudation' ruled by the laws of commercial *movement* instead of principles of human *settlement* (1961: 446, 505 and 474). Paraphrasing his mentor, Patrick Geddes, Mumford summed up our urban contribution thusly: 'slum, semi-slum, and super-slum – to this has come the evolution of cities'.

The values of community, place, and citizenship, Mumford recognised, were being systematically routed by the quantitative ideologies of profit, property and progress. 'Bigger was simply another way of saying better' (1934: 162). As technological society sped ahead with no sense of direction, only a sense of quantity remained. Mumford warned:

Quantitative production has become, for our mass-minded contemporaries, the only imperative goal: they value quantification without qualification. In physical energy, in industrial productivity, in invention, in knowledge, in population, the same vacuous expansions and explosions prevail. As these activities increase in volume and in tempo, they move further and further away from any humanly desirable objectives (1961: 570).

In the race for more, nature lost all meaning and the dependence of human posterity on a living environment was forgotten. A special 20th century idea, that of economic externality, was substituted in which society weighs the costs and benefits of its primary obligation of making money against the ecological 'side effects' and 'spillovers' of carrying out this economic obligation. In the calculation, nature and the environment are abstractions, while prices, capital and profits are the reality. As Mumford

observed: 'Air and sunlight, because of their deplorable lack of value in exchange, [have] no reality at all in the new order' (1934: 168). Industrial cities, with their machine complexes and 'built environments' pointed the way toward a society beyond the rules of nature. Urban waterways were transformed into 'liquid manure' and urban air into 'atmospheric sewage' (1961: 460); and 1934: 169). Such apparent violations of the principle of survival were and are unthinkingly rationalised by a gospel of growth in which 'life [is] judged by the extent to which it minister[s] to progress, progress [is] not judged by the extent to which it minister[s] to life' (1934: 185).

While the gospel of growth and the seductions of economic and technological progress are global in scope and consequence, Mumford recognised that the US was a special category of true believer. Entrepreneurialism for its own sake and technocratic infatuation have meant in the American context that cities, or what passes for cities, increasingly are regarded as disposable commodities in the global competition for power and wealth. Mumford understood that American cities are characterised by a sense of impermanence and an indifference to environmental despoliation. To use one writer's phrase, American cities are basically 'money mining camps'. When entrepreneurship succeeds, urban growth explodes and local economies boom. When the economic engine changes direction, local economies stagnate. In periods of prosperity and depression alike, there is little evidence of any commitment to cities as important social institutions. Rather, the logic of technics and economics dictates that an area's value is largely transient and determined by speculative potential. When such potential is exhausted, America's version of cowboy capitalism concludes that it is prudent to move on to new opportunities at a more advantageous site. When technology and markets bypass a city, the

Letter from America (Cont.)

void is filled, more often than not, solely by the slum. Yet, in case after case, the gospel of growth pronounces that this persistent outcome is the rational price of progress.

Mumford would have none of this rationality. If the requirements of modern technology and economics are perishable cities and 'ghost towns', then, he demanded, we've got the wrong technology and economics. It was not a matter requiring debate: '[This] is not in fact a new sort of city, but an anti-city. As in the concept of anti-matter, the anti-city annihilates the city whenever it collides with it' (1961: 505). The challenge was clear:

An orgy of uncontrolled production and equally uncontrolled reproduction; machine-fodder and cannon-fodder; surplus values and surplus populations... The dirty crowded houses, the dank airless courts and alleys, the bleak pavements, the sulphurous atmosphere, the over-routinised and dehumanised factory, the drill schools, the second-hand experiences, the starvation of the senses, the remoteness from nature and animal activity - here are the enemies. The living organism demands a life-sustaining environment (1961: 263, 248).

For much of the twentieth century, Lewis Mumford tried to help us realise what we had done and to instruct us on what we must now do. When Mumford died in January 1990, we lost our most eloquent and prophetic advocate of the living city. If we learned from his prodigious work, then the challenges posed by the decline and disgrace of urban civilization would need no further documentation. As Mumford's warning was clear, so was his plea for the creation of cities that both expressed and enriched the

human spirit. Reflecting on his experience of New York City as a young man, he wrote:

Here was my city, immense, overpowering, flooded with energy and light... And there was I, breasting the March wind, drinking in the city and the sky, both vast, yet both contained in me, transmitting through me the great mysterious will that had made them and the promise of the new day that was still to come.

The world at that moment, opened before me, challenging me, beckoning me, demanding of me something that it would take more than a lifetime to give, but raising all my energies by its own vivid promise to a higher pitch. In that sudden revelation of power and beauty all the confusions of adolescence dropped from me, and I trod the narrow, resilient boards of the footway with a new confidence that came, not from my isolated self alone, but from the collective energies I had confronted and risen to. (1982: 130).

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European Regional Policy News

Since our last update on the Commission's activities (RSA Newsletter No.165), many of the important formal decisions concerning Objective 1 and Objective 2 support under the reformed Structural Funds have been taken by the Commission, and the implementation phase is well under way. Unfortunately, progress has been less than encouraging with respect to the implementation of Objectives 3, 4 and 5(b), all of which have come up against severe budgetary constraints relative to the allocation made available for the UK.

Apart from setting the Community Support Frameworks in motion, the Commission has designated areas eligible for the special RECHAR initiative, has agreed under Article 10 of the ERDF Regulation to fund two pilot urban projects, and has set aside funding to explore regional energy planning.

Community Support Frameworks

Objective 1 Regions

As already reported in our previous update on the Commission's activities, seven Community Support Frameworks (CSFs) relating to each of the Objective 1 regions were adopted in 1989. Together, these seven CSFs accounted for 36.2 billion ECU in Community funding up to the end of 1993.

Each Objective 1 CSF consists of a statement of specific priorities for joint action (including measures covered by Objectives 3 and 4), followed by an outline of the forms of assistance to be provided, primarily through operational programmes and an indicative financing plan to cover the whole period of the CSF. In the case of the Northern Ireland CSF (the only Objective 1 region in the UK), the specific priorities fall into the following five categories:

- improvement of the physical and social environments;
- reducing the effects of the peripherality;

- diversification and strengthening of the industrial and tradeable services sectors of the economy;
- the development of agriculture and the rural economy and tourism; and
- human resource development.

Within each of the priority areas, the CSF proposes the establishment of an operational programme to be jointly funded with the Community or indicates where some other existing measure (e.g. VALOREN for exploiting endogenous energy potential, RENAVAL assistance for shipbuilding closure areas, agricultural assistance available from the EAGGF, etc.) is already addressing the areas of concern. Among the types of operational programmes proposed for Northern Ireland, two programmes relating to Objectives 3 and 4 have so far been approved. One programme, designed for the long-term unemployed will receive nearly 30 million ECU; a second, for the 'occupational integration of young people' will receive over 138 million ECU. Discussions about two further operational programmes, one specifically for tourism, are also at an advanced stage and were expected to receive approval in April.

The total indicative cost of the Northern Ireland CSF financing plan is 1,764 million ECU, comprising a Structural Fund contribution of 793 million ECU, a national public sector contribution of 572 million ECU and 399 million ECU from the private sector (although the latter two contributions may be partially covered by Community loans from the European Investment Bank and the other lending instruments).

Objective 2 Regions

With respect to Objective 2 regions, the Commission adopted the nine draft CSFs for each of the UK regions on 20 December 1989. The Commission funding allocated for each of the UK Objective 2 regions is as follows: