

CHAPTER 1

Green Belts: A Twentieth-century Planning Experiment

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The general public creates an outcry if any attempt is made to invade this green belt and that is something we want to get into planning – the creation of public interest. We want to get them to know something of our work and support us in our activities (Abercrombie, 1948, 13)

The implementation of green belts in many countries can be regarded as one of the most internationally famous attempts to control urban growth. Green belts have ringed major cities to prevent them sprawling. Planners have used them to separate satellite ‘new towns’ from the urban core, safeguarding land for recreation, agriculture and forestry. Green belts have also provided sites for more utilitarian uses such as salvage yards, incinerators and quarries. In some places, areas of the green belt have suffered through illegal dumping or through neglect.

The popularity of green belts among planners during the twentieth century is due to the alignment of their attributes with some of the assumptions that underpinned modernist planning. These assumptions were that strict divisions between different land-uses could be unproblematically drawn, and that planners’ actions could be justified by normative conventions and a search for universal truths.

As planners began to grapple with the messy realities of urban growth during the twentieth century, green belts gave them a tool to realise a normative geography that a city has natural limits, that urban and rural areas should be separated and that settlements should be balanced and evenly-spaced. Green belts were used as part of a project to construct a universal planning canon, being employed regardless of the contingencies that affect urban growth in different cities around the world. They also contributed to the construction of planning as a discipline, as the open space they preserved could be linked directly to a who’s who of famous UK planners such as Patrick Abercrombie and Raymond Unwin (Gault, 1981).

Planning has changed considerably since the early post-WWII period when practitioners attempted to physically realise the ideas of high modernism (Taylor, 1998). As planners seek to direct the growth of cities towards sustainable patterns of land-use, how likely is it that they will continue to see a green belt policy as a useful tool for managing urban growth? Planners are no longer the all-powerful experts that they once were, nor can they rely on a consensus politics that will support such bold measures. The impact that green belts have on market processes sits uncomfortably

with the neo-liberal strategies to deregulate government invoked in many countries during the latter part of the twentieth century (Evans, 2003; Healey, 1997, 15). Furthermore, a number of well-known alternatives to a green belt exist allowing planners to opt, for example for a green wedge, a greenway or a greenweb.

Despite these forces of change, green belts can be found next to fourteen cities in the UK, where they have remained a central plank of national planning policy for more than fifty years. Planners have successfully enforced green belts despite sustained periods of high development pressure particularly in the South-East of England. Green belts have garnered broad political support throughout successive changes of government, including the Thatcherite deregulation of the 1980s. Yet, as contributions to a recent special issue of *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* and an article by Sir Peter Hall have discussed, the UK's green belts are by no means sacrosanct and a debate currently rages on their future in relation to housing and the urban fringe (Amati, 2007; Gunn, 2007; Gallent, 2007; Lloyd, 2007; Hall, 2007).

This book is concerned with attempts to reform the green belt as a reflection of the shifts away from modernist planning thought. Although it may contribute to the UK's green belt debate, the book's focus steers deliberately away from the large body of research that already exists on the UK, and towards work by international scholars and practitioners. The aim of bringing these works together is to use green belts as a lens through which to view the changes in planning during the twentieth century. At the same time, each of the following chapters contributes to the question of whether green belts remain a relevant or useful concept for the twenty-first century.

Any book that makes the green belt its central theme but fails to mention how the concept was developed and disseminated would be remiss and leave the reader unaware of its importance. Therefore, the aim of the present chapter is to unpack the reasons for the widespread implementation and popularity of the green belt among planners. Central to this history is that of UK planning and how it influenced other countries. It is argued that the popularity of green belts among planners internationally peaked from the early 1950s to the 1970s when the ideas of high modernism seemed practicable. At the same time, the green belt concept was transmitted to, or borrowed by, other countries. In some cases diffusion occurred along colonial channels, where attempts were being made to integrate elements of UK planning into indigenous systems. In New Zealand for example, Abercrombie's *Greater London Plan 1944* was widely read and it was common for planners to train in the UK or at least take Town Planning Institute (later Royal Town Planning Institute) exams until 1958.

In the following a brief sketch of the historical development of the green belt in the UK is provided, describing how pre-WWII planners invoked the green belt as a way of achieving the normative goals associated with preserving the landscape. A great deal of research already exists in this area (for example, Thomas, 1963; Sheail, 1981; Elson, 1986; Cherry, 1996; Matless, 1998), and the intention is not to repeat this work but to use it to unpack how Raymond Unwin and Patrick Abercrombie, two of the most internationally reknown planners, used the green belt to entrench preservationist values into the planning system. Secondly, it is shown how the

success of the green belt was deliberately associated with the growing discipline of Planning. Thirdly, I focus on two aspects of modernist planning, the concealment of normative goals behind rational justifications and the search for a universal planning discipline, and discuss the extent to which the implementation of the green belt mapped onto these. Finally, I introduce the book's structure as a reflection of the changes that have taken place in planning since the early post-WWII period and summarise how each of the contributions fit into this.

The Pre-WWII Green Belt

The simple idea of surrounding an urban area with a band of undeveloped land has a variety of nineteenth century origins but first gained prominence through its association with the Garden Cities concept. To think of green belts is to think inescapably of Ebenezer Howard and his work *To-morrow: a peaceful path to real reform* (1898).

Despite the importance of the green belt in the UK's planning history, the origins of the term and its application have been diverse (Freestone, 2002). A number of similar schemes, such as parklands, parkways and greenways, flourished during the early twentieth century, spreading internationally via conferences, exhibitions and international lecture tours (Ward, 2002, 79). Each of these schemes have their individual histories and have shaped the development of different cities at various times.

While the green belt was one of several policies that planners in different countries could choose from, it was strongly supported in the UK by an active group of 'preservationists'. Preservationists sought to impose a normative model of settlement on the landscape, what Matless (1998) terms a 'morality of settlement', and to use the landscape to constitute citizens (Parker, 2006; Reeder, 2006, 60). Preservationists normatively asserted that a town should be clearly a town, and a village a village. They saw the adoption of green belts as a way of imposing an urban-rural polarity on an in-between landscape of urban fringe suburbs and ribbon development (Matless, 1998, 32).

The ideas of preservationists were woven into the UK's planning system during the pre-WWII period by a broad array of actors. The highly distinguished planner Patrick Abercrombie, writing about the *Council for the Preservation of Rural England* (CPRE), one of the most active preservationist groups that he co-founded in 1926, mentions:

the local authorities, the owners, the farmers, the inhabitants; the users of the country, the ramblers, the campers, the motorists; the preservationists of the commons and footpaths, wild flowers, fauna, ancient buildings, trees, etc.; the National Trust; the women's institutes, the rural community councils, the architects, surveyors, engineers and town planners; the garden cities, housing and town-planning propaganda associations (Abercrombie, 1959, 228)

These were all to be coordinated, from however divergent angles, to achieve the

common goal of preserving the countryside's existing beauty. Although these groups would have had disparate concerns, their support for the work of the CPRE is a reflection of the broad appeal of the preservationist cause.

Preservationist concerns also constituted the discourse of the influential *London Society* (Beaufoy, 1997), and were voiced by prominent politicians such as William Bull, Lord Meath, Neville Chamberlain and Herbert Morrison (Reeder, 2006, 58). They included the geographer, Lawrence Dudley Stamp, whose pioneering land-use survey of Britain contributed to the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. Preservationists were able to count among their ranks, not only Patrick Abercrombie, but also planners such as Raymond Unwin and F. J. Osborn who all had enormous influence on the development of the UK's planning system.

Unwin, in particular, was a keen advocate for separating town and country deriding, in his widely read *Town Planning in Practice* 'that irregular fringe of half-developed suburb, and half-spoiled country which forms such a hideous and depressing girdle around modern growing towns ...' (Unwin, 1909, 156). The irony is that this could be used to describe London's present-day green belt.

As Unwin and Abercrombie's career and influence developed they were able to project their preservationist ideals onto the planning system through the implementation of a green belt. In 1929 Unwin became the chief planner of the Greater London Regional Planning Committee and published his *First report* proposing a 'green girdle' for the enjoyment of Londoners to compensate for the deficiency of open spaces. The implementation of his plan was prevented by a government financial crisis in 1931 (Miller, 1991, 189–209), and it was only in 1935 that the green belt could be finally implemented with the help of a London County Council scheme to buy land and the cooperation of an array of actors that shared preservationist concerns (Amati and Yokohari, 2007; Reeder, 2006, 64–5). Abercrombie wrote the enormously influential *County of London Plan 1943* and the *Greater London Plan 1944* which were published to national and international acclaim (Forshaw and Abercrombie, 1943; Abercrombie, 1945). Both of these contained sections on the green belt and directly influenced central government thinking at a time when UK planning legislation was undergoing momentous changes as development rights were being nationalised through the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act (Garside, 2006).

The popularity of the green belt in the UK is demonstrated by its eventual integration into central government planning policy. Abercrombie's work in the 1940s influenced Duncan Sandys the Minister with responsibility for planning. He issued a Circular calling on all local planning authorities, county councils in England and Wales to consider submitting plans for a green belt in 1955 (Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 1955).

The implementation of the green belt in the UK can be seen as a fifty year struggle during which the popularity and fame of the concept steadily increased in line with its proponents' careers. Once the popularity of the green belt peaked it remained high for the first 20 years of the post-WWII period. The following explores the reasons for this popularity in greater depth.

Connecting the Success of the Green Belt to Planning

The incorporation of the green belt into the UK's central government policy as well as the support it gained from well-known planners inspired what Ward (2000) terms as the 'undiluted' borrowing of the concept by a number of cities during the post-WWII period. The following sections describe why the borrowing of the green belt was so wholesale. Firstly, UK planners trumpeted the success of the green belt to further the planning project. Secondly, the normative values articulated during the pre-WWII period and certain aspects of modernist, early post-WWII planning aided the implementation of the green belt.

By the mid-1950s the green belt could justifiably be called part of an international planning language. The ideas behind the green belt would have been recognisable from the pre-WWII attempts to preserve the existing greenery around other European cities such as Frankfurt, Berlin and Vienna (Ward, 2002, 84; Kühn and Gailing; Breiling and Ruland, this volume). The US federal government had employed a variant of the concept to build its three 'greenbelt towns' during the 1930s depression (Arnold, 1971). The use of green belts to separate satellite towns was a part of Communist Party policy for St Petersburg during the early 1930s (Anan'ich and Kobak, 2006). But it was through the propagandising work of British planners in the post-WWII period that the green belt concept was deliberately and rapidly spread.

During the 1940s to 1970s, UK planning was being held up as an example and UK planners were in demand. For example, Patrick Abercrombie toured Australia in 1948 on a month long visit sponsored by the British Council which also sponsored a *Town Planning in Britain Exhibition* that travelled to both Australia and New Zealand. Abercrombie also travelled to Hong Kong in 1947 advising on the planning of the city (Tang et al., 2007). F. J. Osborn travelled extensively acting as an international propagandist for the Garden Cities movement during the 1950s, 60s and 70s (Whittick, 1987).

In many cities green belts were attempted at this time. The New Zealand and Australian cities of Wellington, Christchurch, Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney drew their inspiration for their green belts from the UK but also from earlier schemes such as Colonel Light's Adelaide Parklands (Amati, 2006; Low Choy and Gleeson, 1998; Freestone, 1992; Miller and Amati; Buxton and Goodman; Garnaut, this volume). Cities in East Asia such as Hong Kong and Tokyo both implemented their own versions of the green belt drawing on Abercrombie's work (Tang, 2007; Amati and Parker, 2007; Watanabe et al., this volume). Ottawa's green belt while being based originally on the work of F. L. Olmsted, also drew on Abercrombie's *Greater London Plan 1944* (Gordon and Scott, this volume).

The green belt was seen by planners as an achievement to be assiduously promoted – as the quotation from Patrick Abercrombie's 1948 speech at the University of Melbourne shows at the beginning of this chapter. The planning theorist Lewis Keeble, whose *Principles and practice of town and country planning* was standard reading throughout the English-speaking world during the 1950s and 1960s (Taylor,

1998), also saw the green belt as a way of furthering the aims of planning as a discipline:

It is therefore desirable that great and persistent efforts should be made to publicise the achievements of Planning. These include the following: –

The establishment and maintenance of Green Belts around the great cities; the overall success of these is far greater than the detailed local failures which have sometimes occurred (Keeble, 1961a, 90–91)

In other words, Keeble hoped that the green belts would carry the cause of planning forward, being, as Desmond Heap stated in his 1955 presidential address to the Town Planning Institute, its ‘very *raison d’être*’. The Town and Country Planning Association, celebrating the UK government’s incorporation of the green belt into national policy, were able to pronounce that ‘one great nation has officially adopted one of the major principles of the garden city idea formulated by Sir Ebenezer Howard in 1898’ (Elson, 1986, 14–15). F. J. Osborn was similarly delighted by the popularity of the green belt among the public: ‘The sudden almost universal acceptance of the policy of dispersal, green belts and new towns is the most heartening thing that has happened in the history of planning’ (quoted in Whittick, 1987, 91). In the late 1950s, B. J. Collins writing in the *Town Planning Review* could note a number of ‘healthy signs’: ‘The salutary cry goes up in tones of horror, ‘‘This is Green Belt.’’ It is a cause in which each authority and numberless individuals have made sacrifices for the sake of the future, and many of them now feel deeply opposed to any compromise’ (Collins, 1957).

The satisfaction that these planners derived from succeeding to get green belts designated was linked to their concerns to further the planning project. The green belt provided a useful example, for planners to show what their discipline could achieve nationally and internationally

Green Belt as a Modernist Planning Policy

The early post-WWII period also saw the green belt being employed alongside modernist planning tools. This period can be characterised as one of ‘middle modernism’ because planners were forced to reach compromises with both the practicalities of implementing modernist ideals and the grounding of their subject in concepts that had been inherited from the pre-WWII era (Donald, 1992).

The green belt epitomised the normative goals that had seen it heralded as a solution to London’s growth during the pre-WWII period. These were mixed with elements of modernist planning, such as the application of scientific analysis and the assumption that planning was based on universal truths, to produce a policy that was ideally suited to the planning *zeitgeist* of middle modernism. The pre-WWII normative aspirations that justified the green belt and modernist planning reinforced one another. The normative goals were based on the pre-WWII ideas of the preservationists and therefore vulnerable to attack, for that reason planners found it necessary to reinforce them with ‘scientific’ analysis. Such analysis was also

employed because it was assumed that planners would eventually be able to uncover the logic of social systems (Beauregard, 1989; Sandercock, 1998). If planning was based on universal truths then it was reasonable to assume that the green belt could be just as effectively implemented around London as any other city. Drawing in particular on Lewis Keeble's widely read work these assumptions are unpacked.

A normative policy The preservationist norms that had been associated with the implementation of the green belt during the pre-WWII period were perpetuated through Keeble's work but also through Ian Nairn and Thomas Sharp's scathing critiques of urban growth (Nairn, 1955a,b; Bruegmann, 2000). At the time, the green belt intersected with preservationist norms in three ways. Firstly the rigorous separation of 'town' and 'country' in the green belt reflected the preservationist aversion towards hybrid landscapes but also overlapped with the modernist predilection for order. The binary separation was unquestioningly reapplied not only through the green belt alone, but also through other tools such as zoning policies. Secondly, the blanket prohibition on development imposed by the green belt fitted with master plans and comprehensive planning espoused by modernist planners (Taylor, 1998, 14–17). This also overlapped with the preservationist assumption that without restraint the countryside would be overrun with development. Thirdly the green belt was meant to keep settlements small. Since the foundation of planning as a discipline a rich body of knowledge had linked the size of cities to its inhabitants' health (Donald, 1992, 427–9). This assumption led planners to justify a maximum size for cities as they thought that there was a point beyond which cities would be unmanageable or uneconomic.

In Keeble's work the role of three norms is clearly evident (Keeble, 1961b, 71–5). To justify the preservation of open countryside for example, he assumes that residents should be able to access the countryside on foot in towns but use transport in cities. For a town therefore the maximum reasonable size would be a radius of two miles (3.2 km) which at a density of 20 person per acre (0.4 hectares) would give a population of 160,000. For cities where transport is available he calculated that the maximum size should be a 16 km radius, giving a city with a maximum population of 4 million (Keeble, 1961b, 72).

Although Keeble is ready to admit that these calculations are 'naïve' and that the facts are not 'scientifically ascertainable' this does not stop him from making an argument to impose this geography of towns and cities against a background of green spaces. He does not consider the alternative that inner urban green spaces may be an adequate substitute for the open country, that a city of more than 4 million could be manageable or that cities could be polycentric and have several large centres (Bogart, 2006).

A rationally determined policy The modernist planning project entailed an assumption that planners would be able to uncover the internal logic of social systems through the application of rational analysis. In other words, a rational planning decision could be reached unproblematically through the application of a scientific

method and increasingly sophisticated technology for processing and gathering data.

Lewis Keeble recognised some of the political challenges that confronted green belt planners but it was simply assumed that with enough of the right kind of rational analysis these would be overcome. In his work *Town planning at the crossroads* Keeble displays a clear awareness of the politics of establishing a green belt. He notes, that among other difficulties, planners were faced with considerable uncertainty in drawing the boundary of the green belt. On the one hand a green belt was meant to be permanent, but on the other hand planners were expected to draw it on a development plan that would guide development over a 20 year period. This left planners with the responsibility for deciding a permanent boundary for the town when it was possible that after 20 years the needs of the town would have changed (Keeble, 1961b, 68).

Despite the obvious difficulty of gathering knowledge to make a decision on the location of the green belt boundary beyond a 20-year horizon Keeble was confident that with the application of technology these problems could be solved:

If a survey of office mobility is urgently required, so too is a survey of the suitability of every town to receive increases of population, together with an estimate of how much it could receive ... I feel confident that in this, and in other parts of the planning field, the employment of electronic computers [*sic*] suitably programmed offers a completely new opportunity for determining planning problems susceptible of specific factual solution ... (Keeble, 1961b, 69)

Keeble's confidence about the role of rational analysis makes the political invisible in the complex process of establishing a green belt. Recent historical studies have shown the importance of politics during the establishment of the green belt in the 1930s. In particular, planners struck secret bargains with landowners or opportunistically changed the function of the green belt to gain politicians' support while publicly espousing the green belt as a solution for the chronic lack of open in London's East End (Amati and Yokohari, 2004, 2007).

In the case of the green belt 'scientific', knowledge and expert judgement were used to strengthen the legitimacy of urban growth restraint and the normative assumptions that underpinned it. Planners such as Keeble expressed confidence that the complex problem of determining a city's needs well into the future would be solved through the suitable application of rationally derived knowledge. The use of this analysis also considerably hid the complex web of normative assumptions that supported the implementation of the green belt as well as the political strategies that planners and other actors used to implement it.

A universal policy The tendency to employ rational analysis led planners to assume that the results of their work could be universally and un-problematically applied regardless of the context that determines the success of any planning policy. The green belt was particularly susceptible to this assumption because it had been held up as a successful example of planning. For example, the apparent success of the green

belt around London led Japanese planners to assume that it would work as well around Tokyo, regardless of the land reform that was re-shaping Japanese society during the 1950s and 60s (Amati and Parker, 2007). Furthermore, a green belt usually affected a large number of people, so appeals to its universality would have made implementation easier.

The appeal to the advantages of the green belt facilitated its dissemination beyond the UK. Planners variously invoked the long history, and therefore, the appeal of an urban form modelled on a medieval walled city. Collins (1957) commented that the green belt was to reflect 'the universal sentiment for a country setting for a town' (see also Unwin, 1909). Patrick Abercrombie also extolled the virtues of the British way of planning. In his lecture given at the University of Melbourne he spoke of an encircling green belt as being something that 'interests all planners'. He then continued, gently admonishing Melbourne's planners for allowing 'these houses dotted about on the urban fringe of the city. I think there should be some planning powers to prevent that sort of thing from happening. We say that you should determine a certain area beyond which the town should not spread' (Abercrombie, 1948).

The green belt was invoked as a universal solution to urban growth. This was a two-way process; while British planners extolled the virtues of the green belt, planners in other countries, inspired by Abercrombie's work, implemented the green belt expecting it to be as effective as it had been for London. A famous case of this occurred in 1956 when Tokyo's City Planning Committee borrowed the UK green belt concept to contain Tokyo's urban growth (Watanabe et al., this volume; Yokohari et al., 2000; Amati and Parker, 2007). The weakness of assuming that the green belt would be a universal solution was brought into sharp focus by the widespread landowner protests that the green belt policy caused. Tsubaki (2003) describes the visit to Tokyo of William A. Robson, Professor of public administration at the London School of Economics and a leading expert on London and its governance. He was invited by Minobe Ryokichi, the left-wing Tokyo governor in 1969, to review the planning of Tama new town and was highly critical calling it 'a fundamentally misconceived project'. Robson's ideal was that of an independent new town separated by a green belt. The reality in Japan however was considerably different because of the recent land reforms, uncontrolled development and the high post-WWII demand for urban housing (Amati and Parker, 2007).¹

Overall, therefore, while the concept was deliberately spread by British planners keen to use the green belt as a 'poster-boy' for their nascent discipline, it was also copied wholesale by some cities. The green belt also fitted with the planning philosophy of 'middle modernism' during the early post-WWII period. The period

1 Indeed the attempted green belt implementation in Japan may well have undermined planning as a whole by making it seem overly focused on ideals. As one senior planning officer in the Tokyo Metropolitan government remarked: 'The choice is, do you leave the families in Tokyo to rot, whilst you build an ideal new town, or do you find them somewhere reasonable to live and solve what you can at the end' (quoted in Tsubaki, 2003).

from the early 1950s to the 1970s was one in which planners were confident that political problems would be eventually overcome by the application of enough 'scientific' analysis. It was also one in which planners could assume that universal planning-related 'scientific' laws existed, they simply needed to be discovered and articulated. Other aspects of modernist planning such as master planning, which provided a blueprint for the whole city, were also suited to the green belt (Taylor, 1998, 14–17). All of these factors during the 1950s helped to reinforce the green belt concept and ensure its application internationally.

Is a 'Post-modern' Green Belt Possible?

The UK-based Critiques of the Green Belt

Despite the boost that the implementation of the green belt received from the proponents of modernism, and they received from it, from the 1960s an increasing number of, mostly British studies, have questioned the usefulness of the policy. Just as the vigorous promoters of the green belt were British figures such as F.J. Osborn, Raymond Unwin and Patrick Abercrombie, the most comprehensive critiques have also been British (see Freestone, 2002, for a review of these).

A number of well-known studies can be cited, starting with Sir Peter Hall's allusion to the problems of the green belt at the end of his book *London 2000* (Hall, 1963), followed up in a comprehensive study that showed that despite the government's containment strategies development had leap-frogged the green belt and had encroached on the surrounding countryside (Hall et al., 1973). More recent works include John Herington's review of the green belt policy and a vision for its future (Herington, 1991) and the study by Sir Peter Hall and Michael Breheny pointing out the future deficit of the South-East's housing (Breheny and Hall, 1996).

The irony of planners' enthusiasm to capitalise on the popularity of the green belt during the 1950s is that currently the misguided popularity of the green belt impedes its reform. Although green belts remain popular, widespread misunderstanding prevails over their purpose. Elson (1993, 137) reporting on a survey notes that although four out of five people agree that the green belts should be protected at all costs, people gave priority to preserving the special character of the green belt and providing green space for people to enjoy over the official aims of the green belt. Such is the popularity of the green belt in England that it is impossible to have a rational debate on its reform (Kliman, 2007).

One of the most active critiques of the green belt has been the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), which has tirelessly campaigned to achieve a rational and humane system of town and country planning since its foundation in 1899 (Hardy, 1999). The TCPA was established as the Garden City Association with the sole aim of bringing Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities vision to life. Since the late 1960s the TCPA has been highly active in supporting or publishing studies that have sought to reform the green belt. A motivating theme of these studies has been a

concern with the societal effects of the green belt. In the TCPA publication *London under stress* Thorburn (1970, 74) proposed ‘breaking the green belt’ as part of a range of strategies to improve the housing conditions of people living in inner areas of London. More recently, the TCPA has focused on the issue of housing affordability in the South-East and the effect that the green belt has had on house prices (Holmans, 2001; Holmans and Whitehead, 2006). These studies culminated in 2002 with the call by the TCPA for a green belt reform (Town and Country Planning Association, 2002).

The most recent and forceful criticism of the green belt has come from the UK government’s ‘Barker reviews’. This independent review was instigated jointly by the Treasury and the Office for the Deputy Prime Minister. The Barker reviews are significant because of the depth of their analysis and because they indicate the interest that the Treasury is taking on the impact of urban restraint on South-East’s competitiveness and housing affordability (see Amati, 2007, for a review).

Broader Shifts and the Structure of this Book

As this book will show, green belts, their critics and their reform are by no means confined to the UK. Four reasons for reform can be identified, which form the themes of the book. Underlying the four themes are broader changes in planning that have occurred since the early post-WWII period when the green belt was a part of the modernist planning project. A green belt reform is a necessarily complex task that can be prompted for a large number of reasons, so many of the chapters within this book could arguably fit into other parts. For similar reasons, the structure of the book does not aim to be a comprehensive review of all the reasons for reform but is there to signpost readers towards the authors’ emphasis.

Part I – The coalition of the un-willing: landowners and the green belt Although planners in the 1950s such as Lewis Keeble relied on their position as ‘experts’, as the previous section has shown they were keenly aware of the need for popular support to implement their plans. There is a tension between the position of planners as ‘experts’, removed from the political process and able to arbitrarily make decisions, and the need for policies to attract political support. Part I explores this tension by focusing on two cases where the green belt was imposed by experts and was then fiercely resisted.

Watanabe, Amati, Endo and Yokohari first detail the various green belt schemes that were employed to control Tokyo’s growth between the 1920s until the 1960s. They highlight the role that landowners played in effectively resisting the green belt and the reasons for this. The authors go on to show that the story of greenspace planning around Tokyo does not end with the demise of the green belt. They describe the nascent urban agriculture movement in Tokyo’s eastern suburbs, showing how central and local governments promoted this.

Kim and Kim also highlight the role of landowners in their history of the reform of the Korean green belt. They trace the history of the policy, from its inception during

the Park dictatorship of the 1970s to the various attempts by successive democratic governments to implement an effective green belt reform after 1986. They show how the green belt distorted the land market and the rights of citizens under the Park dictatorship. They show how these distortions plague current reform attempts and describe the government's reliance on environmental evaluation as a way of 'de-politicising' the reform process.

Both chapters detail resistance to the green belt and eventual reform that has been driven by a recognition of the need to appease landowners. In both cases, the constitutional guarantee of landowners' rights gave them a powerful political voice to argue for green belt abandonment.

Part II – Falling out of favour: deregulation and green belts The emphasis on master plans and expert planners during the early post-WWII era saw a significant role for the state in planning the green belt. The shift in public attitudes towards the role of planners has dovetailed with the neo-liberal inspired strategy to deregulate planning and its apparent interference with market processes. In this part the focus of the book is on the deregulation of the planning system to describe how this affects the implementation of the green belt. In both of the following chapters the authors point to how the green belt no longer becomes viable when the planning system is deregulated and the power of regional planners is stripped away.

In their chapter on Christchurch, Miller and Amati describe how the green belt was abandoned when the Resource Management Act (RMA) was passed at the end of a wave of government deregulation in 1991. The authors also point to the role that the reorganisation of local government activity and the redefinition of regional planning played in the abandonment of the green belt. Regional planning ceased to be an attempt to manage a core urban area with its surrounding hinterland and instead came to encompass a radically wider area and remit.

In their chapter about Melbourne, Buxton and Goodman point to the influence that changes in Victoria's State government has brought to the green belt/green wedge system. They trace the historical development of the system, showing how it remained an established part of planning until the shift to a neo-liberal government in the early 1990s. While they concede that the Labor governments were as ready to re-zone areas of Melbourne's green wedges as the government of the neo-liberal premier Jeff Kennett, the authors argue that the shift in government towards the right prompted planners to view the metropolitan strategy as irrelevant, considerably undermining the green belt/green wedge system.

Both chapters show that while a shift towards a deregulated planning regime does not necessarily entail an abandonment of green belt planning, it may undermine the green belt because it prompts a redistribution of power. The main organisation which supports the green belt can be removed or altered. Deregulation may also entail a considerable reorganisation of regional planning which can substantially weaken a green belt. Power can be taken from regional planning authorities and redistributed to district or city authorities but may also end up with national or state government, or in committees.

Part III – Re-forming greenery: from green belts to green nets As Freestone (2002) describes, planners have had a variety of different greenspace policies at their disposal throughout the twentieth century. While these planning strategies have a long history in themselves, their popularity may be due to a questioning of the importance of strictly dividing urban and rural areas. This questioning has also prompted a re-evaluation of the functions of urban fringe areas, giving rise to such concepts as Continuous Productive Urban Landscapes (Viljoen et al., 2003; Gallent et al., 2006). Linear greenspaces can be more flexibly positioned than green belts and can be used as much for enhancing an ecological network as for preventing urban development. In this part, the book's focus is on the attempts that planners' have made to complement green belts with a system of greenways, green wedges, urban growth corridors and other linear planning tools.

In her chapter on Adelaide, Garnaut describes the history of the Parklands, one of the earliest and most influential attempts to implement a green belt. She introduces the themes and issues that have affected the progress of the Parklands and refers to their various functions. She then examines schemes that attempted to reserve an unbuilt-upon zone of open space and how these shifted towards a recognition of the importance of linear greenspaces such as river corridors.

Gordon and Scott, focus on Canada's national capital, Ottawa, and how its planning evolved over the first half of the twentieth century. They describe the diverse influences on Ottawa's planning including that of Abercrombie's *Greater London Plan 1944*. They then describe how the Ottawa green belt evolved from an urban containment measure to an open space and ecological feature of a regional plan. Finally, they present some lessons from Canada's half century of experience with green belt proposals for its national capital.

Bassok examines the growth policies around Washington State's Puget Sound area arguing that collectively they represent an alternative to a green belt. He describes the different policies whose overall aim is to preserve farmland that include the transfer of development rights, land trusts and urban growth boundaries that work together, forming a green belt overall. He then shows how the *Mountains to Sound Greenway* complements and intersects with these policies, arguing that the greenway prevents sprawl along the I-90 corridor but also has a heritage function by linking and preserving the identity of small towns.

Part IV — Works in progress: patching together a flexible green belt Although the London green belt was held up as a paragon of modernist planning during the post-WWII period, its 1930s variant was far from ideal. It was patched together in a series of deals through the commitment of a broad range of activists, planners, landowners and councillors to the green belt as a cause. The first green belt was an assembly of former aristocratic estates, farms, airfields, commons and golf courses; a policy that was directed more through opportunity than grand-designs (Amati and Yokohari, 2007). Today's London green belt can also be seen as a patchwork of different policies (Amati and Yokohari, 2006). It is possible to imagine that the modernist 'blanket' green belt was a brief interlude in history. If a green belt were imposed

today planners would not expect it to be the uniform or blanket restriction that their modernist predecessors favoured. Even Abercrombie never saw the green belt to be as permanent or inflexible as it has been during the last fifty years (Hall, 1995). In this part the authors present other examples of green belts that control urban growth flexibly and using a variety of policies.

Each chapter describes several cases of urban growth management where the green belt has been conceived as a patchwork of different spaces and may be softened in the face of changing demands for development. This approach may not concur with the ideal of a blanket control over development, but instead reflects the shifting political compromises that planners must reach in a world where bottom-up, rather than top-down policies are more likely to succeed.

Breiling and Ruland examine the case of the green belt around Vienna. They detail its implementation at the end of the nineteenth century and how it was based around the battle to preserve a nearby area of woodland. They show how the core area of green belt was gradually added to, with the green belt currently comprising a variety of different elements that range from the urban *kleingärten* to outlying areas of wetlands, woodland and meadows. This varied landscape is also reflected in the variety of, often overlapping, uses of Vienna's green belt. These include organic and small-scale to industrial-scale agriculture, areas for leisure, landscape preservation, tourism and ecology, which all enjoy different levels of protection. Finally, the authors introduce the role of international links in protecting the green belt, either through organisations such as UNESCO or through EU-level cooperation.

Like Vienna, Berlin's green belt also traces its origins to the end of the nineteenth century and currently consists of a patchwork of different spaces. In their chapter, Kühn and Gailing describe how planners who supported either the green belt or the radial models of development vied to have their plans implemented during the twentieth century. Berlin's urban growth was effectively restrained from 1961 to 1990 by the Berlin wall in the West and by a highly regulatory socialist planning regime in the East. The city therefore has a large amount of open space and a compact urban centre. To maintain this form, the State of Brandenburg has opted for a green belt but, as Kühn and Gailing note, this will consist of a mosaic of regional parks which do not have statutory force and rely on the local government to implement them. The results are by no means uniform but the regional parks have achieved some success in including citizens in a variety of tourism, recreational and ecological projects.

Senes, Toccolini, Ferrario, Laforteza and Dal Sasso also pick up on the theme of regional parks in their chapter on Italy. They first trace the development of greenspace ideas in Italy and then describe the results of a study to show the effect of the *South Milan Agricultural Park*. The Park is as they describe an indirect measure and the municipalities have a certain amount of discretion to ignore it when defining planning schemes. Their study evaluates the effectiveness of a discretionary or flexible green belt which is promoted under the general discourse of agricultural protection. Despite this flexibility the authors argue that the Park is currently an effective instrument for growth control although several decades have to pass before its effects can be properly evaluated.

Finally, Laruelle and Legenne pick up on the theme of patches and a discretionary or flexible green belt in their study of the Ile-de-France green belt around Paris. They highlight the variety of landscapes that constitute the green belt, the long history of the project and the variety of tools that the regional council has to control growth. They conclude by describing the variety of linear and circular elements that currently make up the green belt around Paris.

The book shows that green belt reforms are occurring globally. It also shows that planners will continue to seek ways to control urban growth and preserve greenspaces, and displays the rich variety of tools and methods that they are developing to achieve their aims.

Overall, the chapters show that green belt concept has adapted despite the changes that have taken place in planning since the policy's hey-day of the 1950s. The chapters make it possible to argue that the green belt is still a relevant planning policy for the twenty first century, albeit as a drastically different flexible growth management tool that recognises a variety of interests.

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