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Elbert Peets: Town Planning, Pragmatism and Ecology, 1915-1968

Royce Michael Earnest
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

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ELBERT PEETS:
TOWN PLANNING AND ECOLOGY, 1915-1968

by

Royce M. Earnest

A Dissertation Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in Architecture

at

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May 2017

ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF THE WORK AND WRITING OF ELBERT PEETS; A CASE STUDY IN URBAN PLANNING, ECOLOGY AND THE ADVENT OF MODERNISM AT THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY

by

Royce M. Earnest

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2017
Under the Supervision of Bob Greenstreet, PhD

Elbert Peets (1886-1968) designed some significant town plans in the early to mid-twentieth century. His design work was successful and well regarded at the time, and his plans for Greendale, Wisconsin and Park Forest, Illinois were influential for post-World War II suburban developments. These town plans, and others such as Wyomissing, Pennsylvania and Washington Highlands, Wisconsin have continued to be vibrant and successful neighborhoods. Peets also wrote widely, and most notably was the co-author of *The American Vitruvius; An Architect's Handbook of Urban Design*. However, though these contributions were notable, Peets has been largely neglected in the historiography of twentieth century urban and landscape studies. Histories of the period have tended to focus on a few heroic figures and major movements like the advent of International Style modernism. This study adds to the history of the period by showing that the appearance of a monolithic narrative of the time is incomplete and that including alternative points of view like Peets's provides both a more accurate and more interesting history.

There are three primary arguments for this study. The first is that the quality of the work itself merits recognition. Beyond noting that there was interesting work being done, the qualities that made Peets's work notable, emphasis on user-centered humanistic designs, inclusion of site-specific ecological features, and concentration on the primacy of social streets as the centerpiece of neighborhood plans,

were distinctly at odds with the dominant narrative of the modernist agenda. The second argument, and the one that has not received attention, is that the plans incorporate sensitivity to ecological concerns that grew from the growth of scientific forestry, the rise of ecological science, and the growing conservation movement at the beginning of the twentieth century. Peets was exposed to these trends from his education at Harvard's Landscape Program, and to a greater degree than his contemporaries, he incorporated those concepts into his town plans in the form of riparian protection zones and greenways. Finally, this study will interrogate the reasons that Peets has been overlooked. His association with the Garden City movement and with a precedent-based design approach at the time that European modernism as advocated by Le Corbusier, Gropius, and Hilberseimer resulted in his being associated with a traditionalism and historicism that was falling out of fashion. This study will recognize Peets's contributions, and more broadly will investigate how the vagaries of fashion in design trends result in a significant figure being overlooked.

This study will challenge the dominant narrative of the rise of modernism by recognizing an alternative and competing path for urban design. Peets's work, along with other critiques of the modernist agenda that noted the anti-urbanist implications of modernist urban renewal and its devaluing of social streets, illustrates an overlooked and valuable episode in the trajectory of mid-century urban planning practice and urban theory.

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I will just start with the most immediate circle of individuals who deserve thanks and acknowledgements for helping to shape and shepherd this dissertation to this point. The obvious and common case is that there are way too many people to thank, but the people on my committee are the ones who have had to read drafts that were not ready and try to find suggestions for how to improve this dissertation.

Bob Greenstreet, the chair of my committee, once noted that the topic of my dissertation was not his area of expertise. This is true in the sense that the narrow slice of landscape history is not his specialty, which is more about the professional practice of architecture and legal issues. However, in broader sense, his skill in building a coherent and logical case and his critical insight in constructing a narrative arc for a scholarly study was critical, and the very thing that I most needed. I am lucky to have had his help. His patience, his editorial advice, and his generosity with his time, even when I dropped in without a scheduled meeting, not only improved this document, it made the process seem reasonable and kept the focus on how to keep refining the narrative and the arguments, and in general, kept what can seem overwhelming when one is in the middle of it, moving toward the goal. But it was not just about the process and logistics; Bob was an interested and perceptive reader and greatly improved the content of this dissertation. I never left a meeting with Bob without feeling better about the progress of the dissertation and the chances for getting to a successful end.

Joe Stagg also pointed out that qualitative historical studies are not his usual area of focus. However, Joe had great skills and expertise in research methods which helped to move this process along. There were numerous times that we talked through the process when he

helped to refine the direction, whether it was in specific advice or even in pointing me towards other resources that could help. Joe was generous with his time and always had thoughtful and insightful comments. Some of his suggestions on how to use quantitative methods illustrate points in this paper show up, some will be especially helpful as I try to move beyond the dissertation and get this material into a publishable form.

Anna Andrzejewski, an art and architectural historian based at University of Wisconsin-Madison, brought a much-needed and much-appreciated critical rigor to this process. She was incredibly generous with her time; she read, reviewed and offered suggestions to drafts that I wish had been less rough before I shared them. She was especially helpful at bringing clarity to a loose narrative arc and of honing in on key elements, and of separating trivial observations from substantive points. She also has a skill for summarizing her points clearly and memorably; her summary of the content-thesis-significance was a turning point; her reminders to not fall into bland generalities (she reminded me that groups and movements don't "say" or "do" things: individual actors who are part of those groups do, and it is always more complicated than the summary) were helpful here and will continue to be crucial to me. I knew when I started this that it needed the expertise of an art-historical perspective and Anna's help and input has more than demonstrated the necessity and value of that perspective.

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Being a part of a larger community of scholars who share at least some overlapping interests is perhaps the most rewarding part of the PhD process. That is not just faculty, but my

fellow PhD students. Our informal and sporadic *kaffeeklatsch* meetings, which were intended to discuss our progress, but more often were social conversations about the program, were welcome breaks and part of a community support system. Especially in the last semester, when Layla Qarout and I were both completing our dissertations, her conversation and commiseration were great helps.

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It is the very specific help and suggestions of a few people, mostly my committee, that has brought this dissertation together and molded my rough ideas into a presentable form, and it is the diffuse support of multiple communities that has made all the difference.

Thank you all.

Chapter One: Introduction

“The tension between the particular and the general leads me to believe a large-scale architectural history...should be grounded in the new world historians’ portrait of human history as a story of ebbs and flows....The challenge to a world history of architecture is to avoid confining traditions, cultures, or regions with discrete cubbyholes by acknowledging such webs of connections.”

Dell Upton, 2009¹

Elbert Peets had a long and productive career in town planning in the twentieth century. His experience could be better seen as multiple careers, rather than one continuous path. He first worked in partnership with Werner Hegemann, then in private practice, then as a consultant for Roosevelt’s Resettlement Administration working on one of Rexford Tugwell’s Greenbelt cities, then again in private practice.

While the subject of this study is the work and writing of Elbert Peets, it is not meant to be primarily a biographical study, and not one that tries to add yet another minor character to the mid-century urban histories. Instead, it focuses on Peets as a case study to show his particular approach to town planning practice; one that has received less attention in the historiography of the period. His approach was one that positioned modern urban planning practice as a continuation of developments in the early twentieth century, at a time when

¹ Dell Upton: “Starting from Baalbek: Noah, Solomon, Saladin, and the Fluidity of Architectural History,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 68, 4, (December 2009): 465.

most modern architects sought a clean break from the past. Subsequently, most historians have focused on some heroic figures and on the rise of modernism, thus relegating Peets and other characters to the margins. This study offers a richer and more complex view of the period. The thesis is that Peets's work is significant because he incorporated a humanistic approach to design and incorporated ecological planning concepts at a time when those two elements were not central to the dominant discourse which surrounded the advent of modernism.² The significance of this argument is that subsequent critiques of the lack of social, humanistic and phenomenological concerns have demonstrated the importance of those issues. Also, subsequent concerns for environmental problems have demonstrated the need include ecological concerns in responsible urban planning.

In this chapter, I will summarize the central points of this study of the work and writing of Elbert Peets, and the significance of his work to the historiography of twentieth century urban and landscape studies. Studies of the period have tended to focus on the contributions of the major, or heroic figures like Le Corbusier³, or major movements like the CIAM.⁴ This work has also tended to focus on the development of the variety of modernism associated with Le Corbusier, Gropius and International Style architecture.⁵ This focus

² "Modernism" is problematic term, and I use "modernist" to refer to International Style modernism as advocated by Le Corbusier (and others) and the CIAM even though that was never unified or monolithic; when I use "modern" I mean more generally what was being done at the time.

³ Therese O'Malley, "Introduction," *Modernism and Landscape Architecture, 1890-1940*, in Therese O'Malley and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, editors, (Washington, National Gallery of Art, 2015), 1.

⁴ The *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne*; a group of modernist architects and planners that met from 1928 to 1959 to advance the cause of modern architecture and urbanism, the group was led by Le Corbusier and Sigfried Giedion; see Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928 – 1960* (MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 2000).

⁵ See: O'Malley and Wolschke-Bulmahn: *Modernism and Landscape Architecture*, and Peter Walker and Melanie Simo: *Invisible Gardens, The Search for Modernism in the American Landscape*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, M.I.T. Press, 1996).

suggests that the period and the development of modern landscape practice was more unified than it was, and minimizes alternative approaches and practices. A study of Peets's work is significant to the historiography of the period because it challenges the monolithic view of the rise of modernism at mid-century. Because he never embraced the modernist paradigm for urban planning that was advocated by Le Corbusier and Gropius in Europe, and others in the United States, Peets demonstrates the complexity of the discourse and practice at the time; an example of what Dell Upton describes as a "broader stream of historical, cultural and phenomenological processes by which architecture is created and used."⁶ This account of Peets as an alternative voice in mid-century discourse addresses what Upton describes as creating a narrative from "a so-called periphery of architectural history rather than from a traditional center."⁷

In Upton's article, the view from Rome is the traditional center which represents a stylistic orthodoxy and the view from Baalbek is one that represents contingency and multiple cultural and developmental strands. In this analogy, the discourse around modernism and the CIAM represents the center, while Peets, in his continued use of garden city traditions and his explicit calls for the relevance of historic models in town planning is a dissenting and alternative view. Wolschke-Bulmahn points out that modern artists and architects at mid-century looked for designs that would represent a rational world of universal laws, one that banished nature, emotion and a sanctioning of history.⁸ Peets emphasized a close study of the topographical and ecological characteristics of the specific

⁶ Upton, "Starting from Baalbek," 465.

⁷ *ibid*, page 457.

⁸ O'Malley and Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Modernism and Landscape Architecture*, ix.

site rather than a universal design that could be applied in every case, emphasis on the social space of the street as the center of neighborhood clusters, and attention to the preferences and living patterns of the occupants. The modernist approach argued that the modern city required a new conception of space, as well as spatial and social organization, while Peets continued to argue that traditional models like Williamsburg were relevant to contemporary design. Subsequent interest in the importance of walkable neighborhoods and social community space suggest that Peets's work is relevant to contemporary urban planning.

Because his career came at the intersection of the traditional design paradigm of the City Beautiful movement and the beginning of the international style modernism, it is tempting to see Peets as a tentative step towards modernist design in landscape. But this reduces his work, and the trends of the time, to simple dichotomies of tradition versus modernism. Instead, what Peets represents is not so much of one versus the other, but of an approach that combines contemporary concerns for neighborhood clusters⁹ with an emphasis on ceremonial or social space. If the two extremes are the neoclassical, Beaux-Arts and City Beautiful tradition (which Peets had criticized), or the advent of International Style modernism (which Peets never embraced), then Peets's approach is one which assumed that the contemporary urban design was part of an ongoing tradition (as opposed to the modernist stance that the post-WWI world was fundamentally changed and therefore needed a new paradigm for architecture and urban planning); that towns should be planned for convenience, economy, and enjoyment. Peets's approach to town planning was that sites

⁹ The "neighborhood unit" was a concept articulated by Clarence Perry (1872-1944), an early twentieth century planner and sociologist; his work was included in the Regional Survey of New York and its Environs, 1929; see Donald Leslie Johnson, "Origin of the Neighbourhood Unit," (*Planning Perspectives* 17, 2002; downloaded from <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals>, March 20, 2017).

should be planned by careful study of their existing characteristics, topography and ecology; and that the style of the buildings was less important than the form of the streets and public spaces. He argued that the important criteria for a design were the local conditions and the experience of the user, rather than adherence to a style of a design theory. The concerns that he expressed in his descriptions of his own work are largely about pragmatic issues such as budgetary constraints and what design elements were appropriate for the proposed residents of the towns.¹⁰ When he wrote about urban design in general or urban design theory, it was most often addressing specific historic examples,¹¹ rather than formulating a theoretical manifesto or guide to practice. This was in contrast to much of the discourse surrounding the beginning of modernism in Europe and in the United States. For instance, a significant portion of the work of planners involved with CIAM was to articulate a method or program for modernist urbanism that could be communicated to government planning agencies and to corporate clients.¹² They did this with example projects to illustrate their principles. Though some of their projects were real proposals, many of these projects were hypothetical, and therefore did not have to address practical issues like a specific program or concerns of how they could be implemented. Peets's work was primarily for specific town building projects and was more focused on problem solving than on articulating a larger theoretical agenda.

¹⁰ For instance, in *America's Original GI Town*, author Gregory Randall includes letters from Peets to an official at the American Society of Planning Officials that address cost savings from narrow streets and other issues of negotiating program requirements and budgets.

¹¹ Peets wrote essays on historic figures in urban planning for *The Town Planning Review*; including Camillo Sitte (1843-1903, an Austrian urban planner/theorist), he wrote extensively on L'Enfant's plan for Washington, he rarely wrote on contemporary issues (other than describing his own work), and did not write on "modernism".

¹² Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928 – 1960* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, The M.I.T. Press, 2000).

I believe one reason that Peets is of interest to the historiography of the period of mid-century because he is an alternative view, different from narratives that focus on key events or “heroic” figures.¹³ Second, he is significant because he is an important addition to the growing scholarship recognizing the importance of ecology and environmentalism in mid-century.¹⁴ Finally, I believe that Peets merits study on a more general level; looking at Peets’s career accomplishes what Dell Upton recommends: looking at architectural and landscape histories as a more complicated, contingent, and fluid trajectory, avoiding the tendency to impose a simple narrative on a complex web.¹⁵

Elbert Peets (1886-1968) began his career as an urban designer after graduating from Harvard’s Master of Landscape Architecture program in 1915. During his career, he produced some notable town plans, mostly for suburban developments like Kohler, Wisconsin, Washington Highlands (a suburban development in Milwaukee), Wyomissing Park in Pennsylvania, Greendale, Wisconsin, and Park Forest, Illinois. In the early part of his career, he worked in partnership with Werner Hegemann, the noted German urban planner and theorist. With Hegemann, Peets co-authored *The American Vitruvius: An Architect’s Handbook of Civic Art*, the work for which Peets is most remembered.¹⁶ During the Depression, Peets worked as an urban planner for the Farm Settlement Agency, Roosevelt’s New Deal agency that designed and built three greenbelt towns. He later

¹³ Therese O’Malley, “Introduction,” *Modernism and Landscape Architecture*: 1.

¹⁴ Thaïsa Way, “American Landscape Architecture at Mid-century: Modernism, science, and art,” in *Women, Modernity, and Landscape Architecture*, Duempelmann, Sonja, editor (Routledge, 2015): 145-146.

¹⁵ Upton, “Starting from Baalbek”: 464-465.

¹⁶ *The American Vitruvius* was first published in 1922, and was re-issued in 1988 by Princeton Architectural Press, with a forward by Leon Krier; and in a Dover edition in 2010 with a forward by Christiane Crasemann Collins. Ms. Collins was the author of a biography of Hegemann: *Werner Hegemann and the Search for Universal Urbanism* (Norton, 2005).

worked in independent practice as a planning consultant and landscape designer. At the end of his professional career, Peets lived in Washington and served on the Fine Arts Commission. Though the quality of his work is a testament to Peets's facility as a designer, and *The American Vitruvius* is an important text, his work has been largely neglected in the historiography twentieth century urban and landscape design.

The (greatly) abbreviated arc of urban planning in the twentieth century is that the City Beautiful movement led by Frederick Law Olmsted and Daniel Burnham was eventually replaced by the International Style Modernism pioneered by Le Corbusier and Ludwig Hilberseimer. Peets's example is a case study that illustrates a more complicated trajectory of someone who did not easily fit into, or identify himself with, either camp. His career illustrates an alternative to the linear narrative of the advent of International Style Modernism, and the suggestion that there was a clear watershed sometime between 1922 (when Le Corbusier's *Towards an Architecture* was published) and 1937 (when Gropius arrived at Harvard) and when International Style Modernism became the dominant paradigm for American architecture.

Literature review and influences for my approach

Elbert Peets has a limited exposure in the historical literature of mid-century landscape architecture. Henry-Russell Hitchcock's *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (first published in 1958), for the Pelican History of Art Series, does not mention Peets or his work with Hegemann. Since Hitchcock's book concentrates on architecture rather than town planning, this is not surprising. He does mention Ebenezer Howard and the garden

city movement, but mostly as the setting for some of Lutyens's work at Hampstead Gardens.¹⁷ Sigfried Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture* (based on lectures given at Harvard in 1938-1939) has a chapter specifically devoted to town planning, but does not mention the early work of Hegemann and Peets (the lectures were given as the greenbelt towns were being constructed), and only mentions the garden city movement to describe it as a "failure."¹⁸

The most thorough assessment of Elbert Peets's work is a chapter-length treatment by Arnold Alanen that appeared in the William Tishler's *Midwestern Landscape Architecture*.¹⁹ This article summarizes some of Peets's design work, such as Washington Highlands and Greendale. It mentions but does not go into detail about Peets's writing, and does not contextualize his work in the context of other movements such as the CIAM that Giedion was involved with. Besides having written about Peets, Arne Alanen was instrumental formulating and setting the agenda for this present study.²⁰ I first discussed this project with Arne before deciding to focus on Peets. I noted that I was looking for someone to use as an example of the continued relevance of ecological thought that could be seen in early twentieth century landscape work. Arne was a wonderful resource for this, having written on Peets, being familiar with other early twentieth century designers, and having supervised

¹⁷ Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Baltimore, Maryland, Penguin Books, Inc., 1975, first published in 1958): 549.

¹⁸ Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: the growth of a new tradition*, Fourth ed., (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1963): 689. Giedion at the time was the secretary general of the *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM)* at the time, which was in part an alternative to and a repudiation of the garden city, so his assessment of the garden city movement is not surprising.

¹⁹ Arnold Alanen, "Elbert Peets", in *Midwestern Landscape Architecture*, William Tishler, editor (University of Illinois Press, 2000): 193-214.

²⁰ Arnold Alanen was originally a part of the committee for this study and helped to identify Peets as a suitable subject, and to establish the direction of the study

Eric MacDonald's dissertation on the discourse, which included ecology, of *Garden and Forest Magazine*.²¹ At the time, I was concerned that Peets might be too well known to be a suitable subject, though Arne assured me that, even among landscape historians, Peets is not that well known. Arne was enthusiastic about this project and felt that, because there are no book-length or dissertation-length studies of Peets, it was one that should be done.²² This study will extend Alanen's work by addressing the full scope of Peets's work, by recognizing the importance of ecology in the work, and by more fully contextualizing Peets in the discourse of mid-century.

In her introduction to *The American Vitruvius* and in her biography of Werner Hegemann,²³ Christiane Crasemann Collins offers very useful, but brief biographical sketches of Elbert Peets, and some anecdotes and observations on his personality, though that was not the focus of her comments in either book. This study is not primarily a biographical account of Peets's life; instead, it is a topical one focusing on the elements of ecological design and humanistic elements in the designs.

There are incidental mentions of Peets in other studies, usually a specific example. For instance, in Pregill and Volkman's survey, *Landscapes in History*, Peets is mentioned both for his work at Greendale, especially the compact housing clusters.²⁴ Peter Walker and

²¹ Eric MacDonald, "The Art which Mends Nature: The Discourse of American Environmental Design in Garden and Forest, 1888-1897." PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 2006.

²² In addition to reviewing the literature on Peets, I have discussed this study with other historians who specialize in landscape studies; this includes Thaïsa Way, Sonja Dümpelmann, Christiane Crasemann Collins, all of whom endorsed the viability of this project.

²³ Christiane Crasemann Collins, *Werner Hegemann and the Search for Universal Urbanism* (W. W. Norton and Sons, 2005).

²⁴ Philip Pregill and Nancy Volkman, *Landscapes in History: Design and Planning in the Eastern and Western Traditions* (Second Edition, New York, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1999): 474 and 682-684.

Melanie Simo mention Peets's essay on "The Landscape Priesthood," though their focus is not on Peets, but on James Rose, Dan Kiley and Garrett Eckbo, and the influence that Peets's essay had as a critique of the generation before Peets.²⁵

There are several studies of individual projects by Peets or by the Hegemann and Peets partnership. Arnold Alanen and Thomas Peltin collaborated on an article on "Kohler, Wisconsin, planning and paternalism in a model industrial village"²⁶ which described the earliest of the projects from the Hegemann and Peets partnership. Thomas Hubka and Judith Kinney presented a paper on Washington Highlands,²⁷ a suburban development in Milwaukee at the Society for American City and Regional Planning History.

There is a book length treatment of Greendale, Peets's best-known design, by Arnold Alanen, in collaboration with Joseph Eden. This book has useful information about the construction of Greendale, and is especially useful in situating the design of Greendale in the context of New Deal planning.²⁸ The book also offers information on the development of the design through its development iterations. Greendale has received more attention

²⁵ Walker and Simo, *Invisible Gardens, The Search for Modernism in the American Landscape*: 182.

²⁶ Arnold Alanen, "Kohler, Wisconsin, planning and paternalism in a model industrial village" *Journal of the American Institute of Planning*, (1978).

²⁷ Thomas Hubka and Judith Kenney, "Situating the "American" Garden Suburb: Hegemann's and Peets' Washington Highlands, 1916," presented at *Society for American City and Regional Planning History* conference in St. Louis, Missouri (November 8, 2003).

²⁸ New Deal planning is distinct from urban planning, and relates not to the physical and visual design, but to the public policy aspect of planning. This aspect is treated in more detail in *Designing a New America: The Origins of New Deal Planning, 1890-1943*, by Patrick Reagan; University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1999. Alanen and Eden's book is *Main Street Ready-Made: The New Deal Community of Greendale, Wisconsin* (Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2012).

because of its association with Rexford Tugwell and the greenbelt program that was a part of Resettlement Administration in Roosevelt's New Deal agencies.²⁹

I have located two dissertations on the greenbelt town program; one by Molly Timmins MacKean at Northwestern University in 2013³⁰, and one by Julie Turner at Miami University in 2010: *To Make America Over, The Greenbelt Towns of the New Deal*.³¹

A book length study of Park Forest, Illinois, Peets's last major design competition is Gregory Randall's *America's Original GI Town*.³² This study addresses Peets's role in the design and interesting anecdotes about his design method and his close attention to the topographical qualities of the site.

In part of this study I will try to situate Peets in his own intellectual and cultural context, and in the context of our understanding of the period. For this study, there are a number of studies that have been influential, either because they offered an admirable methodology, because they have covered similar issues or addressed similar themes, or simply because they offered models of what a successful study should look like (or how it reads). One study that is very similar to mine is David Haney's study of Lebrecht Migge: *When Modern was Green*.³³ In Migge, Haney identifies and elucidates a character from the

²⁹ John Drier, "Greenbelt Planning: Resettlement Administration goes to town," in *Pencil Points Reader: A Journal for the Drafting Room, 1920-1943* (Princeton Architectural Press, New York 2004, selected reprints from *Pencil Points*): 441-460.

³⁰ Molly Timmins MacKean, *Greenbelt America: A New Deal Vision for Suburban Public Housing*, (dissertation at Northwestern University, 2013).

³¹ Julie D. Turner, *To Make America Over, The Greenbelt Towns of the New Deal*, dissertation at Miami University, (2010).

³² Gregory C. Randall, *America's Original GI Town: Park Forest, Illinois* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

³³ David Haney, *When Modern was Green: The life and work of landscape architect Leberecht Migge*, (Routledge Press, 2010).

early twentieth century, also like Peets, a landscape architect, and one who had connections to the early ecology field and to the critical time at the junction between the Arts and Crafts period and the beginning of International Style Modernism. In landscape design, this transitional period was between the English Garden style and the advent of the modernist garden. Migge also happened to be a friend of Peets's first partner, Werner Hegemann, and several of Migge's designs were featured in Hegemann and Peets's book, *An American Vitruvius*. However, it is not clear if Peets ever personally met Migge. It is likely that they did meet. Peets was awarded a traveling fellowship when he graduated from Harvard in 1915 (though he did not take advantage of the fellowship until 1917), and he modified his travel agenda to include visits to German cities, over the objection of James Sturgis Pray, the chair of the Landscape Architecture program.³⁴ The original purpose of the fellowship was to study examples for a Master's thesis, but Peets also used the trip to collect information for Hegemann and Peets's book, *The American Vitruvius*. They included examples of Migge's work, and they were contemporaries and faced many of the same issues. Also, while both Migge and Peets produced significant work, their work does not feature prominently in histories of twentieth century urbanism.

Unlike Peets, Migge was more explicit in not only incorporating ecological ideas but in advocating an ecological agenda. For Migge, this related to concerns for soils productivity and for providing productive gardens for homes. What Haney manages to do in his study is to convince us not simply that Migge is an overlooked figure who deserves some attention, but to demonstrate why Migge is important and how some of his concerns

³⁴ Christiane Crasemann Collins, "Introduction," in Hegemann and Peets, *The American Vitruvius* (Dover edition, Dover Publications, Mineola, New York, 2010): vii.

presaged sensitivities to ecological design that would become prevalent later in the twentieth century. One of the most fascinating details that Haney relates is Migge's interest in Francis Hiram King's book *Farmers of Forty Centuries*.³⁵ King was a soils scientist at the University of Wisconsin who was active in the late 1800's; he died in 1911. He was concerned with the loss of soils productivity, a pressing concern for American agriculture before the advent of manufactured fertilizers. Haney notes that Migge (who was German) was reported to always carry a copy of King's book with him. Thus, Migge was overt in demonstrating the importance of ecological science to his work as a landscape designer.

Since Peets's designs indicate the importance of ecological concepts (such as designing based on topography and natural ecosystems) and because he had connections both to Migge and to American designers who worked with professional ecologists (as Jens Jensen did), I had hoped that he would be similarly explicit in describing those concepts. Unfortunately (for this study), Peets was never explicit in advocating ideas from scientific forestry or ecology. Haney's book was published in 2010, and I became aware of it after I had begun this dissertation, though *When Modern was Green* was based on Haney's own dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania, completed in 2000. Haney's study is, in some ways for me, the model dissertation. It examines a not-well-remembered character, it convinces us that the Migge, and Migge's concerns, were important and resonates with contemporary concerns, and it is well written.

While Haney's subject is particularly relevant, there are other studies that served as important models for this study. Another is Alan Michelson's dissertation on William

³⁵ Haney, *When Modern was Green: The life and work of landscape architect Leberecht Migge*: 108.

Wurster.³⁶ Wurster (1895-1973) was also a contemporary of Peets, and a figure who was well known in his time but is not well known now, in spite of his considerable accomplishments. He was a long time dean for the architecture department at the University of California-Berkeley and received the AIA Gold Medal. Like Haney's study, Michelson's doesn't just revisit an overlooked career, but demonstrates an alternative, less didactic and more humanistic approach to the advent of modernism. Similarly, Larry Anderson's biography of Benton MacKaye³⁷ demonstrates how the concepts of scientific forestry were formative in his later work as a regional planner.

Both Migge and MacKaye were not only working professionals, but ones who were more explicit than Peets in articulating a theoretical agenda. In contrast, Peets was interested in analytical and historical studies, but not in providing a manifesto or a program for future work. This is not to say that he did not have a theory, but that his approach was one that emphasized pragmatism, the experience of the user, and the specific qualities of each site over a general theory. He described his hope for civic design as something that "come[s] from the site as well as from the things that people do and feel;" and that planners "will not be too deeply indoctrinated in any style."³⁸

The studies of Migge and MacKaye both had immediate relevance to Peets, and other studies that are biographically based that are relevant in their topics and in the arguments

³⁶ Alan R. Michelson, *Towards a regional synthesis, the suburban and country residences of William Wilson Wurster, 1922-1964* (Dissertation at Stanford University, 1993). Wurster was also the subject of a retrospective at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1995: catalog edited by Marc Treib: *An Everyday Modernism*.

³⁷ MacKaye, like Peets, graduated from Harvard. MacKaye graduated ten years before Peets, in 1905, from the forestry program. At Harvard, Peets taught courses in horticulture to both forestry and landscape majors.

³⁸ Elbert Peets, "The Golden Horses and Civic Art," Spreiregen, *On the Art of Designing Cities*, 112.

that they make. David Schuyler's book, *Apostle of Taste: Andrew Jackson Downing 1815-1852* argues that Downing was important in the "democratization of culture"³⁹ at the middle of the nineteenth century, and that therefore he is important to the wider culture beyond that of the gardening and landscape professions. Others include Judith Major's study of Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer, who was one of the writers recommended for students of Peets's era at Harvard. Mariana van Rensselaer wrote of landscape architecture as "outdoor art;"⁴⁰ Peets would later argue for the value of "civic art."⁴¹ Others include studies of O. C. Simonds⁴² (1855-1931), a landscape designer in the generation preceding Peets, and Cornelia Hahn Oberlander⁴³ (born 1921), for a modernist landscape designer a generation younger than Peets.

Other studies have dealt more generally with issues of environmentalism, ecology and horticultural science in the middle decades of the twentieth century. These include Anne Whiston Spirn's study of Frederick Law Olmsted (Senior),⁴⁴ Christine O'Hara's study of

³⁹ David Schuyler, *Apostle of Taste: Andrew Jackson Downing, 1815-1852* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1996), the current quote is from page 4; Downing is also noted for being a champion of what he called the "modern or natural style" (page 1) of landscape design, or the informal style that Peets would be so derisive of in "The Landscape Priesthood".

⁴⁰ Judith Major, *Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer: A Landscape Critic in a Gilded Age* (University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville and London, 2013).

⁴¹ Elbert Peets, "The Golden Horses and Civic Art," in Spreiregen, Paul D.: *On the Art of Designing Cities*: 112. Peets shared this emphasis on civic beauty with Christopher Tunnard, who invited Peets to contribute this essay; this essay and Tunnard are discussed in more detail later in this study.

⁴² Barbara Geiger, *Low-Key Genius: The Life and Work of Landscape-Gardener O. C. Simonds* (United States, Ferme Ornée Press, 2011).

⁴³ Susan Herrington, *Cornelia Hahn Oberlander: Making the Modern Landscape* (Charlottesville and London, University of Virginia Press, 2013).

⁴⁴ Anne Whiston Spirn, "Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, Cronon, William, editor (New York and London, W. W. Norton & Company, 1996): 91-113.

ecological planning for the Pan-Pacific Exposition,⁴⁵ the collection from a symposium at Dumbarton Oaks on Environmentalism in Landscape Architecture,⁴⁶ and O'Malley and Wolschke-Bulmahn's *Modernism and Landscape Architecture: 1890-1940*.⁴⁷

For the issues of modernist discourse, I rely especially on Eric Mumford's study of the CIAM and its discourse on town planning.⁴⁸ Also, the studies by O'Malley and Wolschke-Bulmahn and the Peter Walker and Melanie Simo are helpful.

The significance of Peets's work

Peets's design work is noteworthy by objective standards of being popular with the residents, having sold well and remained popular, held their value and aged well. Beyond those basic criteria, I also argue that the component of his work that has not been recognized is the importance of, and incorporation of ecological concerns. These are derived from the then new fields of biological ecology and scientific forestry. Peets was exposed to these fields during his education at Harvard's Master of Landscape program. While all students in the landscape program had some exposure to the forestry program, Peets was unusual in both having a background in horticulture and in teaching courses on horticulture and the use of plants in urban design.⁴⁹ Elbert Peets's first publication was *Practical Tree Repair*, published in 1913. In this, Peets identifies himself as an arboriculturist, and discusses

⁴⁵ Christine Edstrom O'Hara, "The Panama-Pacific Exposition, San Diego, 1915: The Olmsted Brothers' Ecological Park Typology," in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 70, 1, (March, 2011).

⁴⁶ Michel Conan, editor, *Environmentalism in Landscape Architecture* (Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2000).

⁴⁷ O'Malley and Wolschke-Bulmahn: *Modernism and Landscape Architecture*.

⁴⁸ Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*.

⁴⁹ *Harvard University Catalog 1913-14*; (Cambridge; Harvard University Press; 1913): 654-655. Peets taught, or assisted in teaching Principles of Landscape Architecture (assisting James Sturgis Pray), Elements of Horticulture (assisting Benjamin Marston Watson); Plants in relation to planting design, and Planting design.

specialized issues on the care and repair of trees that have been injured by “wind and ice-storm, the ignorance or carelessness of men, the attacks of boring insects, and of that silent destroying host, the rot-producing fungi.”⁵⁰ The combination of academic concerns (Peets was a life-long enthusiast for Renaissance and colonial American planning ideas) with very detailed and closely-observed phenomena was a defining characteristic of Peets’s approach to both design and to his commentaries on design. This also reflects his essentially pragmatic approach to urban planning.

One result of his pragmatist approach was that Peets was interested in an analytical process of discussing urban planning ideas in their context; he did not exhibit interest in formulating a theoretical position as a guide for action. Unlike some of his contemporaries, like Joseph Hudnut,⁵¹ Peets was not interested in what Alofsin describes as “*The Struggle for Modernism*”, nor was he interested in resisting modernism. Hudnut worked for Hegemann and Peets before entering academia. Hudnut later taught at Virginia and Columbia, before becoming the dean at Harvard, famed for bringing Gropius to Harvard.

As with Hudnut, Peets had interesting, if tangential, connections to important people and movements in twentieth century design and planning. He interacted with Jens Jensen, who famously criticized Peets for what Jensen considered an insufficient commitment to using native planting. The planning for the greenbelt program included Catherine Bauer, the

⁵⁰ Elbert Peets, *Practical Tree Repair* (New York, McBride, Nast and Company, 1913): i. Though Peets had just entered the Harvard Landscape program, the book is dedicated to his “fellow students in the School of Landscape Architecture at Harvard”.

⁵¹ Joseph Hudnut was, for most of his career, an academic; before beginning his academic career, he worked in private practice, and worked for Hegemann and Peets during the time that they were working on *The American Vitruvius*; he contributed sketches to the *Vitruvius*, and worked with Peets on the Wyomissing development; Hudnut will be addressed later in this study in his connection to Gropius and to his connection to the acceptance and advancement of modernism in the United States.

important housing expert who was also associated with the Regional Planning Association of America.

A study of Peets's work adds to histories of twentieth century urban studies in several ways; the first is that the work itself was successful with its residents at the time and received critical recognition. Towns like Greendale, Wisconsin and Park Forest, Illinois were not only successful, but served as models for post-World War II suburban developments, and have continued to be successful neighborhoods. The second, and the one that has received less attention, is that Peets incorporated a sensitivity to ecological concepts such as riparian protection zones that was unusual at the time. His inclusion of greenbelts and riparian protection zones had origins both in the legacy of the Garden City Movement, and in the growing recognition of scientific ecology and its adoption as a metaphor for urban design professionals. Finally, I will argue that Peets's omission itself, and the reasons that he was overlooked are of interest themselves. Peets's career spanned the time that could be considered a paradigm shift in planning (an in twentieth century architectural history) from the tradition-based mode of the Garden City/City Beautiful movement to the advent of modernism in architecture and urban histories.

During his lifetime, the work was well regarded. Clarence Stein, a contemporary of Peets and the most prominent Garden City design advocate in the United States, visited Greendale, Wisconsin shortly after its completion in 1938, and considered it "about the best example of garden city planning that he had seen."⁵² When the *American Vitruvius* was

⁵² Letter from Clarence Stein to Elbert Peets, Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection no. 2772, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

published in 1922, the reviewer for the *Town Planning Review* suggested that the book would become “an indispensable part of every planner’s library.”⁵³

The work of Elbert Peets was not only considered noteworthy at the time, his designs have aged well. Both Greendale, Wisconsin (1935-38) and Forest Park, Illinois (1946) were considered important models for post-World War II suburban developments.⁵⁴ The *American Vitruvius* did not become an “indispensable” text. Instead, its argument for the study of historical precedents at a time when others were arguing for the study of science and engineering as a more appropriate model quickly became dated. In character and in style, it was similar to Sir Banister Fletcher’s *History of Architecture based on the Comparative Method*.⁵⁵ Its premise of the validity of the comparative method was at odds with more polemic texts and movements of the 1920’s and 1930’s. It was published within a year of Le Corbusier’s *Towards an Architecture*, which was published (in the United States) in 1923. Le Corbusier’s book was one of the most influential texts (in the field of architecture) of the twentieth century. Coming out of the carnage and devastation of World War I, and facing the pressing need for new construction and the rebuilding of cities and housing, Le Corbusier argued that an entirely new paradigm was needed. This insistence that a completely new paradigm was needed, as opposed to an evolution of historical trends was a hallmark of International Style Modernism, and one that Peets never embraced. An emphasis on the new was important to Le Corbusier, and it was also seen in the arguments

⁵³ *Town Planning Review* (1923): 56-57, reviewer not noted.

⁵⁴ Alanen: “Elbert Peets”: 211.

⁵⁵ Sir Banister Fletcher, *A History of Architecture*, Eighteenth Ed., revised by J. C. Palmer (New York, Charles Scribner and Sons, 1975). Fletcher’s book was a standard of architectural education and its format of reproducing numerous examples on the same page is one followed by Hegemann and Peets; also, in graphic style of hand-drawn pen-and-ink sketches, the *Vitruvius* is similar to Banister Fletcher.

of James Rose, Dan Kiley, and Garrett Eckbo,⁵⁶ the first group of landscape architects to fully embrace modernism. Not only practicing designers, but mid-twentieth century historians and academics like Sir John Summerson emphasized the “revolution” taking place (and needed) in twentieth century architecture and urbanism.

Hegemann’s and Peets’s book has seen resurgence in contemporary urban design and has been embraced by the New Urbanist movement as a model for livable communities. This can be seen in the inclusion of a Preface by Leon Krier in the 1988 reprint of *The Vitruvius* by Princeton Architectural Press, and by the more recent book: *The New Civic Art*, by Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Alminana. In title, in format, and in explicit references, Duany’s book is patterned on *The American Vitruvius*.⁵⁷

Histories of the twentieth century tend to favor pioneering examples, like Letchworth or Radburn as early exemplars of garden city theory, or Le Corbusier’s *Ville Radieuse*, the German *Siedlungen*, and CIAM⁵⁸ as exemplars of the advent of modernism in city planning. The convenient narrative arc for twentieth century planning is that the garden city principles combined with the rise of the City Beautiful Movement after the Columbian Exposition of 1893 to produce a resurgence of neoclassicism in architecture and urbanism, and that this movement was displaced by the advent of European modernist style in both urban planning

⁵⁶ Rose, Kiley and Eckbo were all graduate students in Harvard’s Master of Landscape Architecture program in the 1930’s (as Peets had been in the 1910’s) who notably rebelled against the dominant Beaux-Arts approach of the school. They wrote a series of articles embracing modernism for landscape architecture, to parallel that of architecture; they will be discussed later in this study.

⁵⁷ Andres Duany, et al, *The New Civic Art: Elements of Town Planning*, (New York, Rizzoli, 2003): 7. The authors note the similarities and differences between their work and that of Hegemann and Peets.

⁵⁸ CIAM is the *Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne*, a group of architects who lobbied for the acceptance of modernist architecture from 1928 to 1953; most notably organized by Le Corbusier and Gropius (and others).

and in architecture. The competition between the civic art tradition and modernism was not only about style but about whether designers should look only to tradition or should find an entirely new metaphor for civic design: one that could be found in engineering and science. The reality was more contingent and nuanced than the reductionist narrative.

More importantly, this reductionist narrative overlooks some other key elements in the development of urban planning, especially the legacy of ecological thought in late nineteenth century landscape practice.⁵⁹ This can be seen in the overlap between landscape design and the growing conservation movement, and in parallels between the growth of scientific forestry and land planning practice. As Jennifer Light has documented, urban design professionals and planners adopted the analogies of science in general, and biology and ecological science in particular, to argue that the urban condition constituted an ecological community like that of a plant community, and that urban studies would be able to become an accurate and predictive science.⁶⁰ This trend in urban studies accompanied the legacy of scientific management and scientific forestry that saw an increase in scientism, or the adoption of metaphors of science, in the twentieth century.⁶¹ In Peets's work, this can be seen in his provision for riparian protection zones in plans like Kohler, Greendale, and Wyomissing.

⁵⁹ There are a number of studies that have begun to address this; for instance Eric MacDonald's dissertation, *The Art which Mends Nature: The Discourse of American Environmental Design in "Garden and Forest", 1888-1897*; PhD Dissertation, University of Wisconsin; Shen Hou's *The City Natural*, 2013; Thaisa Way's *"American Landscape Architecture at Mid-century"*.

⁶⁰ Jennifer Light, *The Nature of Cities* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009): 43.

⁶¹ Richard G. Olson, *Scientism and Technocracy in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Scientific Management* (Lexington Books, 2016): 43; Also, Mauro F. Guillén, *The Taylorized Beauty of the Mechanical* (Princeton University Press, 2006): 59.

Peets does not readily fit into the narrative of an inexorable shift to modernism. Like other landscape architects in the mid-twentieth century (like Dan Kiley, James Rose and Garrett Eckbo, who all also attended Harvard's Landscape program), Peets was critical of the romantic and aesthetics-based mode of the City Beautiful movement (which was dominant when Peets began his work). However, while Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo became vocal proponents of the modern movement, writing a series of seminal essays to advance the cause of modernism in landscape architecture,⁶² Peets was ambivalent about modernism. While he never fully embraced the modernist agenda, he also did not articulate a theoretical agenda of his own. Others, like Le Corbusier or Leberecht Migge, wrote in the form of a manifesto, or a call to a new mode of design.⁶³ Peets wrote extensively, but his writing was more commentary and criticism rather than a theoretical program. Instead, he is a transitional figure between the historicism of the City Beautiful movement and mid-century modernism.

To describe his approach as "transitional" is not exactly accurate, because it suggests he was somehow between those idioms. Chronologically he did span the time of that transition, but Peets more represents an alternative approach to urban design, one which argues for a rational approach to civic art, without adopting the engineering metaphor that was more common in the modernist approach. While an idiosyncratic or contrarian approach would be of some historical interest, it is of more interest in Peets's case because designs like Greendale have aged so well and so successfully. Because of this, they have

⁶² Several of these essays are reprinted in Marc Treib, *Modern Landscape Architecture: A Critical Review*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 1992.

⁶³ For Le Corbusier, see *Towards an Architecture*; Migge's writings are discussed in more detail in David Haney's *When Modern was Green: the life and work of landscape architect Leberecht Migge*.

been somewhat rediscovered by advocates of walkable cities, particularly in the New Urbanist community. Greendale is partly successful because of Peets's realist approach to understanding and accepting the desires and the social realities of the occupants, and how to balance economy, practicality and formal planning principles. In contrast, there were some notable shortcomings in urban planning that were the direct result of applying the principles that had been advocated by CIAM, in the 1950's and 1960's. While the failure of projects like Pruitt-Igoe, Cabrini Green, or Robin Hood Gardens,⁶⁴ or other incidences of urban renewal and slum clearance, cannot be blamed on the architecture, they were consistent with the rhetoric and the stated goals of the mid-century modernists. In contrast, the much smaller scale projects of Peets were initially popular and have continued to be occupied, and to be attractive places to live. This suggests that there may be something efficacious in Peets's approach that merits attention.

One question for this study is why Peets's work has been overlooked in the historiography. There are others who were contemporaries of Peets who have received attention and some amount of reappraisal. For instance, John Nolen (1869-1937) was also an urban planner and graduate of Harvard's Master of Landscape Architecture. Though he was seventeen years older than Peets, his first degree was in business, and he graduated from Harvard ten years before Elbert Peets. Nolen was one of the most prolific of twentieth century designers, producing hundreds of projects during his career and lecturing

⁶⁴ Pruitt-Igoe was an urban renewal project built in St. Louis in the 1950's and Cabrini Green was a similar project in Chicago, built in the 1950's and 1960's, these were not CIAM projects, but were built in accordance with CIAM principles and were examples of "towers in open park" planning; Robin Hood Gardens was council housing built in London in the 1960's, designed by Alison and Peter Smithson, who were prominent in the CIAM meetings and were founding members of Team X, and offshoot or development of CIAM. Robin Hood Gardens was noted as an example of the Smithson's concept of "streets in the air".

extensively to advocate for the value of comprehensive urban planning.⁶⁵ His work was largely in the idiom of the City Beautiful movement. As was the case with Peets, after World War II, with the ascendancy of mid-century modernism, his work fell out of favor in academic and critical historiographies. In recent times, Nolen's work has received greater attention with the interest in walkable and traditional communities, and in the New Urbanist movement.

Similarly, Leberecht Migge (1881-1935), the German landscape architect was a near contemporary of Peets, with a similar career trajectory. He is relevant because his work combined the ecological emphasis of soils conservation and allotment gardens with his embrace of modernism in the German Siedlungen developments. Migge was also a close friend of Peets's partner, Werner Hegemann. Migge's work was featured in the *American Vitruvius*, and Peets was familiar with his work. Like Peets's work, Migge's shares an emphasis on rational planning. Unlike Peets, Migge was more explicit and vocal about the ecological foundation of his work.

In the cases of Nolen and Migge, we see figures who were prominent and well regarded by their contemporaries, but who were largely overlooked as the concerns and emphasis of critics and historians shifted. Like them, Peets's work merits attention and reexamination. However, the point of this study is not simply to add another figure to the canon of twentieth century urban history, but to suggest that a narrative that included more complicated figures like Peets would be a more useful history.

⁶⁵ R. Bruce Stephenson, *John Nolen: Landscape Architect and City Planner* (University of Massachusetts Press and the Library of American Landscape History, 2015): 4.

Peets began his work as the profession of urban planning was gaining prominence, following the first generation of professional urban planners like Warren Manning, George Kessler, and most prominent of all, Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. These designers had established landscape architecture and town planning as a vital practice that offered solutions to the challenges of urbanization and industrialization in the Progressive Era. At the time, urban planning was a sub-specialty of landscape architecture, which was mostly concerned with garden design. One of the dynamics that occurred as landscape architecture and especially urban design shifted away from a focus on “outdoor art”⁶⁶ was that professionals emphasized a rational, science-based approach rather than an emphasis on beauty. Professionals tried to position their work as a field that could solve the problems of urban crowding and poor sanitation by emphasizing efficiency and practicality. John Nolen, an urban planner seventeen years older than Elbert Peets, would describe his work as designing the “City Practical” rather than the City Beautiful. At a city planning conference in 1912, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. would assert that, in the coming century, city planning would be seen as “more of a science than an art.”⁶⁷ This dichotomy between appealing to a science based rationale rather than one based on aesthetics or the fine arts prefigures a key component of the advent of modernism.

Besides his professional design work, Peets is probably most remembered for his major book, *An American Vitruvius*, co-authored with Werner Hegemann. This book was published in 1922. It is described as a thesaurus of town planning and landscape design

⁶⁶ “outdoor art” was the term used by Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer in her book: *Art Out of Doors* (1893), a text used in the Harvard Landscape program. See also Judith Major’s book: *Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer; A Landscape Critic in the Gilded Age* (Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 2013).

⁶⁷ In *The American City* (1912).

examples. When it was published, it was well regarded, and the *Town Planning Review* suggested that it would become an essential reference that “would never go out of date.”⁶⁸ However, the book was published at almost the same time as Le Corbusier’s *Towards an Architecture* (originally published in 1923, translated to English in 1927), a more polemical argument for a new architecture and urbanism for the contemporary age. As a result, the *American Vitruvius* did appear dated almost immediately, though the book has had a recent resurgence as a part of the New Urbanist movement. When the *American Vitruvius* was reissued in 1988 by Princeton Architectural Press, the new edition had a preface by Leon Krier. In his prefatory remarks, Krier positions the *Vitruvius* as a critique and challenge to modernist orthodoxy, which he disparages as “the empty babble of futuristic and modernist manifestos of that time.”⁶⁹ In reviewing this edition for the *Winterthur Portfolio*, Gordon Simmons notes that “the utopian manifestos and practice of modern architecture in American and Europe were to produce results aggressively antagonistic to those envisaged in the pages of Werner Hegemann and Elbert Peets’s *Civic Art*.”⁷⁰

There are more detailed studies on Hegemann, on Camillo Sitte, and on the milieu of planning ideas that contributed to his approach to urban and land design, but Peets and the cluster of ideas that were his context have not received the same attention. Because Peets’ early work was in collaboration with Hegemann, and his later work was under the auspices of the Farm Resettlement Administration, it is difficult to determine his individual

⁶⁸ *Town Planning Review*, (1922) the author of the review is not identified.

⁶⁹ Leon Krier, “Preface,” to *The American Vitruvius* (New York, N.Y., Princeton Architectural Press, 1988) v.

⁷⁰ Gordon Simmons, Review of *The American Vitruvius*, in *Winterthur Portfolio* (Volume 26, No. 1, Spring, 1991, Published by University of Chicago Press; downloaded March 8, 2016).

contribution to those efforts. While Peets was opinionated, he was also committed to collaborative practice, which further clouds the task of attribution.

Town plans such as Greendale, a plan that Clarence Stein described as the best example of garden city principles that he had seen in the United States,⁷¹ are valuable examples of mid-twentieth century town design. I will outline the background and some of the interconnected lines of influence on Peets and on the growing field of urban and land planning. I also suggest that Peets's importance as the designer for the work of Hegemann and Peets has not been sufficiently appreciated, and his background as a designer and illustrator suggests that he had a key role in the design process.

I will also place his work in the context of mid-twentieth century debates over the rise of the new modernist ideology as seen in the International Style and the work of the architects involved in CIAM. This will place Peets in the context of debates specifically within the discourse of architecture, and in the larger debate of scientific and rational planning.

To support my case, I will review some of the background of urban planning and landscape design at the turn of the century, and look at some of the more broad cultural/intellectual trends that influenced the field. I will concentrate on Peets's plans for town and neighborhood developments, his writing, and the archival material from his papers that are collected at Cornell University. The plans will illustrate specific examples where he incorporated ecological planning and humanistic concerns for social space. His writing and his archival material will help to illustrate how he conceptualized his own work and the

⁷¹ Letter to Peets, Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection no. 2772, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

issues that he felt were important to urban design. Some of the connections that I suggest, like the early landscape profession's aim to make the field more "scientific," can be demonstrated directly. Some, such as the influence of new developments in scientific ecology, is less direct. Peets did not write about the importance of ecological design, yet it can still be seen in his plans as well as in his emphasis on careful topographical study of the sites for his plans. There is a growing body of scholarship on the persistence of ecological concerns in the early to mid-century landscape practitioners; a concern that had been overlooked by previous histories of the period.

I will concentrate on the designs and the discourse that was contemporary to Peets's practice, looking at some of the narratives that were produced by CIAM (which functioned as an advocacy group for modernist architecture and urbanism), as well as some of the historians who began to comment on the new developments in architecture in the 1930's. It was these historians who shaped the narrative of mid-century as one that was an inexorable arc from towards modernism. In this narrative, Peets's view of the continuity of the tradition of civic art had become an anachronism. By the end of Peets's career, there were others who began to challenge the dominance of modernism, and its anti-urbanist implications. This will show that Peets was a rather singular voice for his time, and that his humanistic concerns for social space and his attention to ecological and topographical conditions are relevant both to the historiography of the period and to contemporary concerns for urban design issues.

Chapter Two: Notes on methodology

This study of Elbert Peets began with a research question on the influence of ideas about ecology that were prominent in the discourse of late nineteenth century landscape design practice but appeared to be absent in mid-twentieth century discussions of landscape and especially urban design. The methodology for this has been to focus on an individual designer who could demonstrate that those concerns continued to be relevant, even though the discussion of ecology became less prominent during the period of International Style modernism. This research agenda is also a critique of what seemed to be the dominant narrative of the time, one which suggested that modern environmentalism began broadly with Rachel Carson⁷² and with Ian McHarg⁷³ in landscape design. While it may be true that the modern environmental movement began, or at least was catalyzed by, Rachel Carson's publication of *Silent Spring*, I hope to investigate some of the antecedents, and the continuity with earlier discourse, rather than a rupture, or distinct break. For instance, we know that Carson was influenced by the experience of the "Fire Ant Wars"⁷⁴ in the

⁷² Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* in 1962, it was a study of the environmental impact of the widespread use of DDT, and the book is credited with spurring the modern environmental movement and the formation of the Environmental Protection Agency.

⁷³ McHarg (1920-2001) was a land planner and academic at the University of Pennsylvania; his 1969 book, *Design with Nature*, was a seminal text on regional and environmental planning.

⁷⁴ The "Fire Ant Wars" preceded Carson's work on DDT; it was a controversy over the widespread use of various insecticides that were used in a campaign to eradicate fire ants (a non-native species imported from South America) in the American southeast; the program had serious negative effects on birds and small mammals; the episode is documented in *The Fire Ants*, by Walter R. Tschinkel, (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006).

American southeast; a controversy over the ecological damage from indiscriminate use of chemical formicides to try to eradicate fire ants. For Ian McHarg, there were similarities between his innovative mapping studies and the analytical methods that Patrick Geddes used. In this, I challenge the notion of a series of “heroic” individuals, and add to discussions that recognize a more complex picture that includes lesser known characters and examples.

My research questions were derived from a few observations. First, there was the observation that there were people in the nineteenth century who were discussing ecological concerns, like George Perkins Marsh, whose book *Man and Nature* (1864) described problems of deforestation in the American northeast. Those concerns were explicitly addressed in *Garden and Forest* magazine, published between 1888 and 1897, as documented in Eric MacDonald’s dissertation at the University of Wisconsin, Madison; and those concerns can be seen in the work of Jens Jensen and others.

The use of archives, the sources for plans, summary of the process

The process of this study has not been linear. It did not start with Peets, though it did start with questions about the antecedents of contemporary ecological and environmental design. Having noticed what contemporary designers would call greenways or riparian zones in some of Peets’s designs,⁷⁵ he was a candidate among others that I considered. I then discussed these possible subjects and directions for the dissertation with Thomas

⁷⁵ Alanen, “Elbert Peets: History as precedent in Midwestern Landscape Architecture”: 202. Alanen notes the “extensive areas of open space” (202), what is of interest in this study is that the open space is combined with a stream bed as a riparian protection zone and public parkway.

Hubka,⁷⁶ and as a result of those conversations, began to gather more information and refine the direction. Arnold Alanen has written more about Peets⁷⁷ than any other scholar, and I met with him to discuss possible subjects. Based on several generations of these discussions, I focused on Peets. By choosing Peets (and there were other candidates considered), I wanted to explore how one individual interacted with and contributed to larger cultural concerns about environmental issues and what modern urban planning should be. I had hoped to explore those issues and still maintain a sense of the agency and individuality of my subject. I began with a literature review of Peets, what others wrote about him and what he wrote, and then began to document his design work.

Most of the information on the design plans that I have used in this study comes from secondary sources; plans that were reproduced in articles either about Peets or about the period. Peets's archives, which are discussed below, contain some of the promotional material printed about his town plans, like those of Washington Highlands and Wyomissing Park. However, his archives do not contain original drawings. The plan for Kohler, Wisconsin, the first project of the Hegemann and Peets partnership is reproduced in Robert A. M. Stern's *Paradise Planned*,⁷⁸ and this plan has been redrawn based on that small reproduction to better show the accommodation for riparian zones. Plans for Washington Highlands and Greendale were reproduced in Alanen's study⁷⁹ of Peets; several generations

⁷⁶ Thomas Hubka was previously my advisor before he became an emeritus professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He has also written about Peets's plan for Washington Highlands.

⁷⁷ Arnold Alanen, *Main Street Ready-Made* (about Greendale), "Kohler," in the *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, and "Elbert Peets" in *Tishler, Midwestern Landscape Architecture*. Dr. Alanen, who is now an emeritus professor at University of Wisconsin-Madison, was also on my dissertation committee.

⁷⁸ Robert A. M. Stern, David Fishman, and Jacob Tilove, *Paradise Planned: The Garden Suburb and the Modern City* (United States, The Monacelli Press, 2013): 836.

⁷⁹ Alanen, "Elbert Peets": 201, 205.

of plan development for Park Forest were reproduced in Randall's book⁸⁰ on Park Forest, Illinois.

Some of Hegemann's and Peets's designs were reproduced in their book, *The American Vitruvius*. This book was intended to be a "thesaurus"⁸¹ of urban design illustrating principles they advocated, not a summary of their own work. The book also contains many sketches produced by Peets to illustrate civic groupings and public spaces. He was an accomplished delineator, and he produced a number of sketches for the *Vitruvius*. These, often aerial views of historic European plazas, offer some insight into the issues that he and Hegemann thought were important in explaining civic art.

I have not been able to locate any archival sources for the original drawings of the early work of Peets in his partnership with Hegemann. It may be that none have survived. Their professional partnership ended when Hegemann returned to Berlin in 1921, and since he was the senior partner, he may have had control of the office archives, and they may not have survived either his return to Berlin or his return to the United States in 1933.⁸² Because these drawings are presentation versions meant for publication, they represent one layer of filtering: they show the design intent rather than the working plans, preliminary sketches, or as-built conditions.

While the plans represent one layer of filtering for presentation purposes, I have not approached the plans as a neutral observer; instead I was looking for evidence of specific concerns. One trait that I was looking for was riparian protection zones, which I took as

⁸⁰ Gregory C. Randall, *America's Original GI Town: Park Forest, Illinois* (Walnut Creek, California, Windsor Hill Publishing, 2010).

⁸¹ Christiane Crasemann Collins, "Introduction" for *The American Vitruvius* (Dover edition, 2010): v.

⁸² Notes on Hegemann's travels is also taken from Collins's "Introduction".

evidence of designing for local ecological conditions. Before focusing on Peets, while studying greenways and riparian protection zones, I had noticed this as a recurring characteristic of Peets's plans. I looked for places where the neighborhood street grid appeared to be adjusted to accommodate a stream protection area and where park or public space was formed around an existing stream, as it is in Washington Highlands, Greendale, and Park Forest.

These occurrences indicate that Peets was designing town plans to accommodate existing hydrologic and physiographic conditions, as Frederick Law Olmsted had for the Back Bay Fens in Boston in the 1880's and 1890's.⁸³ Since Olmsted was a generation older than Peets, I then looked at contemporaneous work to see if this was typical practice or whether it was distinctive to Peets. I focused on the work of John Nolen, one of the most prolific town planners of the first half of the twentieth century,⁸⁴ and the work of the CIAM.⁸⁵ These confirmed that Peets was more explicit in providing riparian zones and making them a prominent design feature than did his contemporaries.

In addition to evidence of ecological influences, I was also looking for stylistic or formal characteristics. The emphasis on groupings of buildings, and the defined space created by those groupings, was already important to Peets during his work with Hegemann.⁸⁶ Alanen⁸⁷ has commented on Peets's use of classical models in his town plans, and Peets own writing reinforces the importance of the precedent of monumental, especially

⁸³ Spirn, "Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted": 91-113.

⁸⁴ R. Bruce Stephenson, *John Nolen: Landscape Architect and City Planner* (University of Massachusetts Press/Library of American Landscape History, 2015).

⁸⁵ Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*.

⁸⁶ Hegemann and Peets, *The American Vitruvius* (Dover edition): 1.

⁸⁷ Alanen, "Elbert Peets": 211.

Renaissance, spaces. His work was not monumental on the scale of the Columbian Exposition or large urban spaces; his was for suburban neighborhoods. Though these designs are on a more modest scale than the urban centers for some City Beautiful plans, they illustrate Peets's use of "Renaissance cities and American colonial villages that he had studied" as a precedent.⁸⁸ I looked for suggestions of formal ordering in the plans: axial arrangements and clearly defined figural space. This is in contrast to the work of his contemporaries, particularly the work of the CIAM and of the first generation of modernist landscape designers in the United States.

Peets's archives are located at Cornell University. The archives consist of five letter boxes of material, and one large portfolio of larger drawings. It is not clear how Cornell obtained the archives, or with whom they negotiated to receive them. Peets never married and did not have children. His immediate family at the time of his death was his older brother, Orville, and his two sisters, Blossom and Rumah. We do not know how much editorial discretion they had over what was transferred to Cornell.

The archival material that I could review was subject to several layers of editing and filtering. The first was Peets's own filtering, what he chose to save and what he discarded. Paul Spreiregen notes that before Peets moved back to Ohio due to failing health, he lived in a small apartment in Washington, D. C. As a result, he would not have been able to save a large amount of large drawings. During his life, Peets moved a number of times, and each time he would have had to choose to save and ship material. The second layer is that of Peets's brother Orville, who expressed his wish to review the material before it was donated. The third layer is that of Paul Spreiregen, who assisted in collecting the material. The final

⁸⁸ Alanen, "Elbert Peets": 206.

layer of filtering is my own. I spent a week going through the archives, and looked at each piece of the contents of the archives.

However, I did this with a loose idea of my research agenda, and I was looking for material that would help in that agenda. I was looking for material that would support or challenge my hypotheses that physiographic features and ecological concerns were important to Peets's design process. Beyond this directed search, I was also looking for clues to Peets's thought process, his personality, what he thought of other work, and how he saw his work in relation to his contemporaries. I made notes of material that I thought would be useful. If I were to return to the archives again, there may be material that I overlooked or things relating to people whose names I did not recognize at the time.

The five boxes of letter sized material contain letters, some notes, sketches, and miscellaneous material, like copies of some of the Christmas cards that Peets hand-printed, and the linoleum block master for one of the cards. Most of the personal letters are ones written to Peets; only in a few cases are there copies of letters that he sent out. As a result, when there are conversations alluded to, the archives only represent one side of that conversation. Peets also saved some of the printed advertising and promotional material for Washington Highlands and Wyomissing Park.

Of course, what I had most hoped to find in Peets's archives was direct evidence of a concern for ecological design, and more to describe his approach to design or his influences. If such things exist, they may be in the half of the correspondence that is not represented in the archives. What I also looked for was a general sense of Peets as an individual; things that helped to understand his tastes, motivations and interests. My impression is that Peets was rather guarded in his correspondence. There are few areas where a personal voice

comes through, though this may be because it is mostly professional correspondence that made it into the archives. Of interest was a comment in one of his letters praising John Dewey, which supported the view of Peets's pragmatism.⁸⁹ Items that indicated this included a patent application for temporary, earthquake-resistant housing and one piece of fiction, called "Mithradates the King," which Peets describes as "A Heroic and Romantic Story from Ancient History, more Melodramatic than Modern Fiction."⁹⁰

Some of the later entries in the archives include correspondence between Paul Spreiregen and his editors (he was working on the collection of Peets's essays at the time) and with Peets's sister, who was caring for Peets as his health declined and he suffered from dementia. Spreiregen comments that "it is somewhat depressing to have all of Elbert's stuff because to read it all over one gets the picture of brilliant and talented man who never got all that he deserved."⁹¹ This, and anecdotes about Peets singing in the kitchen with the staff at the nursing home, do not add information to his design work, but gave me a better connection to Peets as an individual.

In addition to the graphic material for his plans that does not show up in the archives, there are other archives that would have been useful. These include the archives at Harvard for Peets's correspondence with James Sturgis Pray during his fellowship travel, or correspondence with Joseph Hudnut when he was at Harvard. Some of the Harvard catalog

⁸⁹ Elbert Peets archives, box 1, Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection no. 2772, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

⁹¹ Letter from Spreiregen to editor, Elbert Peets archives, box 2, Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection no. 2772 archives, box 1, Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection no. 2772, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹¹ Letter from Spreiregen to editor, Elbert Peets archives, box 2, Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection no., Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

material is available online, and from this I was able to see what courses Peets taught during his time at Harvard, and with whom he taught. There is some correspondence of Peets with Christopher Tunnard when Tunnard was at Yale, and there is material in the United States National Archives on the greenbelt program.

I contacted Christiane Crasemann Collins, who wrote a biography of Hegemann in which she references her personal archives of the Hegemann and Peets work. Unfortunately, she had already donated all of her archives relating to Hegemann to a university in Berlin. I was not able to visit these additional archives for this study.

Establishing and confirming the methodology

My methodology was most influenced by my early discussions with Thomas Hubka⁹², drawing on his expertise in vernacular studies. His advice was to begin with a question that I was interested in (in my case this was to focus on Elbert Peets and the question of ecology) and to follow the data. To do this, I began by looking at the designs that Peets produced, what he said about them, what he wrote about other topics (since he wrote a substantial number of commentaries on urban design), and what other writers of the time were writing about. My primary sources are the town plans that Peets produced, his writing about his own work, his published writing about urban design issues, and his archival material at Cornell University.⁹³ From this, I began to construct a narrative that made sense of the phenomena. This model continues to be compelling to me. This could be called grounded theory, but the way that Tom describes the process, and the part of it that is compelling to

⁹² Thomas Hubka is an emeritus professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee who has written extensively on vernacular architecture; he was also the chair of my committee before he retired from UWM, and was involved in formulating this dissertation.

⁹³ Peets did not have a connection to Cornell, but in the 1960's and 1970's the Cornell archive librarian was making a concerted effort to collect material on the history of urban design, and acquired Peets's papers after his death in 1968.

me is that the “theory” is secondary and the important result is a narrative that preserves the agency of the subjects and their actions, rather than how they fit into a schema. What Tom’s work shows, especially in *Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn*, is that focusing on individuals and how they negotiate their goals and their limitations of resources, opportunities, and economic restraints can produce a rich and interesting story.

This study draws on the concept of microhistories, in that it focuses on a single individual and his particular and idiosyncratic approach to urban design. This would suggest, as Georg Iggers notes, that one “sees history no longer as a unified process, a grand narrative in which the many individuals are submerged, but as a multifaceted flow with many individual centers. Not history, but histories.”⁹⁴ The phenomenological emphasis of microhistories seems relevant to Peets, and his assertion that his concern is that urban design and civic art respond to “the things people do and feel.”⁹⁵ However, this study also includes some of the macrohistory approach in addressing the larger theoretical discourse. In Peets’s case, this is the discourse on modernism. While focusing on Peets, it assumes that the “individual can only be understood as part of a larger cultural whole.”⁹⁶

A model of the approach that I adopted for my methodology is in Peter Walker and Melanie Simo’s book on *Invisible Gardens: The search of modernism in the American landscape*. Walker, the practitioner-educator and Simo, the academic historian collaborated on this study of mid-century modernism in landscape architecture. Describing Simo’s contribution to the research project, Walker says that “it is individuality, more that

⁹⁴ Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut, 1997): 103.

⁹⁵ Peets: “The Golden Horses and Civic Art”: 112.

⁹⁶ Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*: 105.

similarities that interest Melanie as a historian. Her preferred method of dealing with history is to view a subject through the lens of an individual, rather than through the lenses of ideology, morphology, topology, iconography, or any of a number of abstractions ending in “ism”... she would rather approach a subject through close examining of pieces – one being’s actions, thoughts, relations, and their consequences – than try to fashion some unified, all-encompassing whole... Our method, in short, has been to have no method, but to look, listen, travel, and seek out facts and insights needed to tell a story.”⁹⁷

Similarly, I began with an individual, a period, and some questions about how ideas are transmitted and about how parts of the larger context and discourse affect individual actors. Then I began to research Elbert Peets’s work and to see if there was a larger story that could be inferred and an interesting narrative that could be communicated about his exposure to ecological ideas and his practice in the mid-twentieth century. While this seemed to be a promising line of inquiry, my concern was that at the end of my research that this might turn out to be too small a topic, or rest on minor observations. Conversations with several mentors and advisors like Tom Hubka, Arnold Alanen and Thäisa Way confirmed that this was a plausible topic and one that would add to the historiography of the period. Other conversations with colleagues in the landscape history group of the Society of Architectural Historians reassured me that this topic, and Peets in general, merited a dissertation level study. The methodological implication was more pedestrian than the anecdotes, but the conclusion (for the methodology, as well as the subject) was to propose a direction, test it by getting feedback, then refine the direction, and continue with the research. It is an iterative process more than a theory-driven one.

⁹⁷ Walker and Simo, *Invisible Gardens*: xii.

This tentative propose-test-refine is also an effort to avoid totalizing or teleological approaches, and reflects a general postmodern tendency to avoid grand narratives and to resist focusing on heroic characters. In my case, I do this by focusing on Peets, a character at the periphery of larger debates over the nature and ascendancy of modernism. One problem with characters at the periphery is that it may be difficult to determine what ideas were influential. In some cases, for Peets, I can show exposure to ideas, but I recognize that exposure does not equal influence. There are approaches to literary and cultural theory that partly address this problem. Thaïsa Way mentions the concept of constellations (as developed by Gwendolyn Wright and Martin Jay) or clusters ideas and influences that form patterns of discourse, yet avoid an “inherent or totalizing essence.”⁹⁸ Others, like Mikhail Bakhtin’s “dialogic” suggest that influences are not direct, and that influence develops as an evolving conversation. This suggests, with reference to my study of Peets, that it is possible and valuable to discuss the constellation of ideas in which he operated even if the conclusions about what he meant and the degree he was actually influenced by those ideas is tentative and conjectural.

What also resonates with my approach to methodology is that Thaïsa mentions Wright and Jay’s theory of constellations as a note in passing in her introduction to *Unbounded Practice*. She doesn’t say that she sat down at the kitchen table to write an example of constellation theory or semiotic-materialistic theory; she sat down at the kitchen table of Donna Caldwell to talk about reminiscences. This again illustrates that it is the story, not the schema that is important.

⁹⁸ Thaïsa Way: *Unbounded Practice: Women and Landscape Architecture in the early Twentieth Century*; (University of Virginia Press, 2009): 5.

As William Cronon points out, the historian's activity (he is writing about environmental historians) is to create stories or narratives that find meaning in "an overwhelmingly crowded and disordered chronological reality,"⁹⁹ and by doing that the historian suggests a unity that the data do not support. Peets is an example of the complicated strands of thought in mid-century urban design and this study adds his idiosyncratic voice to the narrative of twentieth century design history.

Perhaps more than being guided by theoretical constructs, I have followed models that seemed to yield good results. Dell Upton's article "The View from Baalbek"¹⁰⁰ is one model. This essay articulates the idea that viewing architectural history (and by extension, landscape history) might be better and more interestingly done if we look beyond a simple narrative that favors a major player. In Upton's case, the dominant player is Rome, or the idea that architecture in the provinces had to be seen in comparison to Rome's model. In my case, the narrative to be challenged is the disappearance of ecological concerns in mid-century. A more directly applicable is David Haney's book on Leberecht Migge, *When Modern was Green*, which developed from Haney's dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania. This book is an excellent example of finding a largely forgotten character who was explicitly concerned with ecology in landscape design in the first decades of the twentieth century in Germany, and building a case for why he is relevant to histories of the period. There are other biographical based studies that support my approach to Peets, like the study of Andrew Jackson Downing by David Schuyler, or the study of Benton MacKaye, by Larry Anderson. The relevance to my study is that these manage to lift their subjects

⁹⁹ William Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," *The Journal of American History*, (Volume 78, Number 4 March 1992): 1347-1376.

¹⁰⁰ Upton, "Starting from Baalbek": 457-465.

beyond an interesting footnote of their time and show how they were important to their contemporary discourse, and why they should be of interest and concern to historians.

There are other studies that are conceptually relevant, if their topic is much different from my study. In addition to Upton's essay on Baalbek, I would note Martin Bressani's essay "The Paestum Controversy" in the catalog to the retrospective of Henri Labrouste's work.¹⁰¹ This controversy this essay alludes to is the conflict between the preconceived narrative of Labrouste's advisors in Paris about what Paestum *should* look like and what Labrouste found by close measurement and documentation of the site. Another is Sir John Summerson's essay in *Heavenly Mansions*, "William Butterfield, or the Glory of Ugliness."¹⁰² In this essay, Summerson relates a forgotten character from a forgettable period, and makes a case for how this episode is still of interest to contemporary historians.

In terms of methodology, I would also like to acknowledge another mentor from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, though he is not a part of my committee. Arijit Sen's work with students draws on vernacular studies (and other topics). The essential thrust is to look around at the ordinary landscapes and buildings that we encounter daily, and to dig into their history and find the intriguing stories. In my case, working with Arijit, it was to start from a relatively nice but not very distinguished building for the Gallun Tannery in Milwaukee. What started as a mundane preservationist description of a vaguely neoclassical industrial building became a study of how a company working in an essentially craft process of leather tanning facing a shortage of natural resources (tamarack and oak bark) used cutting edge chemistry research and organizational techniques to make themselves into an

¹⁰¹ Martin Bressani, "The Paestum Controversy," in Corinne Béliet, Barry Bergdoll and Marc Le Cœur, *Henri Labrouste: Structure Brought to Light* (New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 2012): 89-93.

¹⁰² Summerson, *Heavenly Mansions*: 159-176.

internationally competitive modern corporation. Other students of Arijit have found rather interesting houses in an ordinary residential block and found their connection to interesting if not famous local architects. The implication of this work is that there are interesting stories all around, and the suggestion from vernacular studies is that we should pay attention to them as well as to the heroic figures.

The importance of these stories also relates to my final methodological model – the work of Bill Cronon. I suppose that it is redundant to say that one is from Wisconsin and that one is influenced by Bill Cronon, especially if one is an academic in a field related to environmental history (though I should not restrict that to Wisconsin). The essay that Bill Cronon wrote on “A Place for Stories: Nature, History and Narrative,”¹⁰³ addressed the historian’s task as partly about creating narratives, along with the need for readers and historians to question the motives of the narratives they encounter.

In this study, I use one character, Elbert Peets, who practiced from the 1910’s to the 1950’s, thus spanning major changes in how landscape architecture, especially urban design, was practiced and how it was theorized. My hope is that this adds to the received view of the period, and makes it both more complicated and more interesting.

The process has been to refine my research program iteratively, first by discussion with mentors and colleagues, then by comparing it to models of scholarship that I wanted to emulate. It is a mix of a-la-carte theory and pragmatism, best summed up by Tom Hubka: follow the data, respect the individuals, and find the narrative.

¹⁰³ Cronon, “A Place for Stories”: 1347-1376.

Chapter Two: Biographical overview

The purpose of this chapter is to situate Peets in his time period and to establish his relation to the major developments and debates on urban design during his career. This study is not primarily a biography of Peets, but one that uses Peets as a case study to examine how practitioners away from the center of those debates negotiated those issues. Providing a biographical context does not explain which particular issues that Peets chose to emphasize or not emphasize, but it establishes his context.

Two of the central parts of this study are the ways that Peets incorporated ecological planning into his town plans and how he continued to use elements of garden city planning after many modernist designers had embraced a different view of regional planning.¹⁰⁴ Ecological planning had been a more prominent part of the discourse on landscape design in the early twentieth century,¹⁰⁵ and it continued to be important in the practice of landscape design, even as modernist designers adopted a more rationalist and scientific approach to describing their work.¹⁰⁶ Because Peets continued to incorporate strategies that the modernist movement had rejected, he might appear, as Arnold Alanen noted, “a man out of

¹⁰⁴ Garden city principles and the modernist approach to planning are discussed later, in the chapter on “Contextualizing Peets”.

¹⁰⁵ For instance, Christine Edstrom O’Hara describes the Olmsted’s inclusion of ecological planning in “The Panama-Pacific Exposition, San Diego, 1915: The Olmsted Brothers’ Ecological Park Typology,” in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol 70, No. 1, March, 2011; Thaisa Way notes other examples of ecological and horticultural concerns in “American Landscape Architecture at Mid-century: Modernism, science, and art,” in *Women, Modernity, and Landscape Architecture*.

¹⁰⁶ O’Malley and Wolschke-Bulmahn, editors, *Modernism and Landscape Architecture*: ix.

step with his time.”¹⁰⁷ However, if he was out of step with his time, it is not because he was a part of the older generation; Peets was roughly the same age as the major figures in the advent of modernism. He was born within a couple of years of Le Corbusier, Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and Joseph Hudnut.¹⁰⁸ The first three were all influential members of CIAM¹⁰⁹ in Europe, and Hudnut had worked with Hegemann and Peets before becoming the dean at Harvard and working to advance modernism in the United States. This biographical overview will establish the temporal context for Peets and show the range of his professional career.

Early life

Elbert Peets was born in Hudson, Ohio in 1886. At the time, his family lived in Cleveland, Ohio, and his mother had gone to visit her brother who lived in southern Ohio. It seems rather odd that she would have undertaken such a trip late in her pregnancy, but in any case, Elbert’s older brother, related that Elbert was born while she was making the return trip back to Cleveland. He was the third of four children born to Edward Orville Peets and Mary Eureka (nee Houghton) Peets. The oldest was Elbert’s older sister was Rumah (born 1883), his older brother, Orville Houghton was born in 1884, and his younger sister, Blossom, was born three years after Elbert, in 1889.

It seems to have been a socially engaged, artistic, and intellectually stimulating family. Edward was sometimes described as a prominent local businessman and sometimes as an

¹⁰⁷ Alanen, “Elbert Peets”: 211.

¹⁰⁸ Peets was born in 1886; Le Corbusier: born 1887; Gropius born 1883; Mies born 1886; Hudnut born 1886.

¹⁰⁹ The *Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne*, an international group of architects and planners; the group is discussed in more detail in the chapter “Contextualizing Peets”.

artist.¹¹⁰ He was active in the local Odd Fellows Society, a fraternal order concerned with the social welfare of its members. Edward served as [Grandmaster] of the Cleveland Odd Fellows lodge. He composed poems for the lodge programs.

Elbert's mother, Mary, was active in the local Theosophical Society. Elbert's older brother, Orville, was an artist of some note. He had works displayed at the Delaware Art Museum, and had an etching displayed at the First International Exhibition of Etching and Engraving at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1932. Both of his sisters became schoolteachers.

Peets had a long and varied working career of almost forty-five years, and even by today's standards, he changed jobs often. He took a new job approximately every four years, and there would be periods of private practice interspersed with different government positions. Other than his partnership with Hegemann at the beginning of his career, he never formed other professional partnerships, and never started an office under his name. Instead, he either worked for government agencies; he was a civilian engineer for the Army, he worked for the Cleveland Planning Commission, for the U. S. Department of Agriculture, the Resettlement Administration of Roosevelt's administration, and for the U. S. Housing Authority. He also produced work for private clients as a sole practitioner; he never seemed to have had any employees, which is unusual for a town planner due to the scale of the projects and the amount of technical work and drafting that is required. At agencies like the Resettlement Administration or the Housing Authority, he had a staff of draftspeople

¹¹⁰ In the 1910 census, he lists "artist" as his occupation, in the letters in Peets's archives, he is described as a prominent local businessman¹¹⁰.

¹¹¹ Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection no. 2772, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

working under him, but he did not build up his private practice to be able to complete large projects without associate firms. Peets's iconoclasm¹¹² may have made him disinclined to join or to form larger social groups, and Peets did not display any inclination to promote himself or to propagandize for his ideas.

While attending Central High School in Cleveland, Elbert was active in school. He was the editor-in-chief of the *Central High School Monthly* newsletter, and wrote a memorial for Andrew Freese, a teacher who was retiring from the school, which showed that he was an accomplished writer even then.¹¹³ Elbert Peets was introduced to his career while still in high school, when he worked for H. U. Horvath, a landscape architect and forestry consultant.¹¹⁴ He worked for Horvath during his summers at Cleveland's Western Reserve University, and for a year after graduating. He graduated from Western Reserve in 1912, receiving academic honors, including magna cum laude, First Scholarship Honors, and Phi Beta Kappa.¹¹⁵ This experience served him well in two ways. First, he published his first book on *Practical Tree Repair* in 1913 just after he entered Harvard's landscape architecture program. He dedicated the book "To my fellow students in the School of Landscape Architecture at Harvard University."¹¹⁶ Because he had already demonstrated expertise in horticulture and arboriculture, he taught numerous courses in the Harvard program. The

¹¹² Alanen, "Elbert Peets": 211. Though his iconoclasm is evident in his criticism of the American Society of Landscape Architects (of which he was a member) and especially in his criticism of Frederick Law Olmsted.

¹¹³ Peets, archives at Cornell University, box 1, folder 54, Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection no. 2772, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

¹¹⁴ Alanen, "Elbert Peets": 193.

¹¹⁵ Crasemann Collins, "Introduction," *The American Vitruvius*, (Dover edition): vi.

¹¹⁶ Elbert Peets, *Practical Tree Repair: The Physical Repair of Trees – Bracing and the Treatment of Wounds and Cavities*, (McBride, Nast and Co., New York, 1913, dedication page; accessed on Archive.org: <https://archive.org/details/cu31924002891343>).

catalog from 1915 lists him as teaching “Principles of Landscape Design,” assisting James Sturgis Pray, and “Plants (trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants) – a horticulture course, “Plants in Relation to Planting Design,” and “Planting Design,” all along with Mr. Watson.¹¹⁷ Upon graduating, he received the Charles Eliot Travelling Fellowship, and honor that was conferred as a result of a seniors competition. His original plan was to study street trees in urban design, a fellowship that he deferred until 1917. During 1916, he met and began working with Werner Hegemann, the German urban planner. It is not clear how they met, although Hegemann had been in Boston numerous times in the previous years while working on the Boston 1915 Exposition (which took place in 1909), and was in contact with Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and others at Harvard. After his graduation, Peets began working for James Sturgis Pray, the chair of the department of landscape architecture, and with whom Peets had been teaching. When Hegemann was contacted by Walter Kohler about designing a company town for the Kohler Company, Hegemann needed the design and drafting expertise that Peets possessed.¹¹⁸ They had a working collaboration that lasted six years, and remained friends until Hegemann’s death in 1936. Hegemann was an internationally recognized expert and theorist on city planning from economic and sociological perspectives. Peets was more the pragmatist with expertise in the skills needed to produce projects, as well as his strength in design history and planting. When Peets finally took advantage of his travelling fellowship, he revised his plans and used the trip to prepare material for the book that he and Hegemann were working on, *The American Vitruvius*.

¹¹⁷ *Harvard University Course Catalog 1914 – 1915* (Harvard University, 1915): 655-656; Accessed on <http://books.google.com>, accessed on February 3, 2017.

¹¹⁸ Crasemann Collins, “Introduction,” *The American Vitruvius* (Dover Publications, Inc.), vi.

The first project for the team of Hegemann and Peets was the town of Kohler, Wisconsin. They also worked on suburban plans for Wyomissing Park, near Reading, Pennsylvania, Lake Forest in Madison, Wisconsin and others. While working at the Hegemann and Peets partnership, he also worked with some other significant figures. Most notably was Joseph Hudnut, who worked for Hegemann and Peets from 1919 to 1921. Hudnut (1886-1968, the same year of birth and year of death as Peets) was working in private practice at the time, but would later return to academia. He first went to Columbia, and then to Harvard. In the 1930's, Hudnut would become a supporter of European modernism, and would bring Gropius to Harvard. Henry Vincent Hubbard, who had a long career at Harvard, also worked with Hegemann and Peets on the Wyomissing plan. Hubbard would be noted for authoring, along with Theodora Kimball, an early textbook on landscape design; *Introduction to the Study of Landscape Design*, a book that had just come out in 1917¹¹⁹ when Hubbard began working with Peets.

Perhaps most importantly for their legacy, they collaborated on the volume *An American Vitruvius*, published in 1922. Hudnut, along with Peets, did a number of the illustrations for *The American Vitruvius*.

By 1923, work on *Vitruvius* was complete, and Hegemann returned to Europe, and Peets returned to Cleveland to open an independent practice. He operated this practice from 1923 until 1933 designing parks and home gardens. In 1933, he joined the Cleveland Planning Commission, where he designed civic parks, playgrounds, and other civic

¹¹⁹ Henry Vincent Hubbard and Theodora Kimball, *Introduction to the Study of Landscape Design*, (Hubbard Educational Trust, 1967, reprint of 1917 edition).

improvements.¹²⁰ Also, at the time he was in Cleveland, he began writing essays that were widely published, including a series in the magazine founded by H. L. Mencken, *The American Mercury*.

In 1933, Peets began working for the U. S. Department of Agriculture to do site planning for their facility in Beltsville, Maryland. In 1935, he was named principal designer for the Resettlement Administration's community of Greendale, Wisconsin. The Resettlement Administration (RA) was a part of a New Deal program in the Roosevelt administration to build communities for rural families suffering from the Depression. The effort was an idea of Rexford Tugwell, a Columbia University academic who believed that the government should take aggressive action to pull the country out of the Depression. The Administration technically only existed from 1935 to 1937 when it was cancelled due to political pressure, though at that time it was folded into the Farm Security Administration. The most notable efforts of the RA were the three greenbelt towns: Greenbelt, Maryland, Greenhills, Ohio, and Greendale, Wisconsin, with Peets as the principal planner for Greendale. Planning the greenbelt town brought together experts on planning, housing and regional planning. The RA worked on many developments, including Arthurdale, West Virginia, which was a project championed by Eleanor Roosevelt; and the Jersey Homestead, a community just south of New York City. At the same time that Peets was working on the designs for Greendale, Louis Kahn was working on the design for the Jersey Homestead, in the Division of Subsistence Homesteads.

In 1938, Peets was hired by the Wrigley family to work on master planning Santa Catalina Island, off the coast of Los Angeles, and the town of Avalon on the island. Later

¹²⁰ Paul Spreiregen, editor, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*, (The M.I.T. Press, 1968): 227.

that year, he joined the U. S. Housing Authority and became the Chief of the Site Planning Division. During a trip to Omaha to survey a site, he met Philip Klutznick. After World War II, Klutznick would join the American Community Builders and hire Peets as the town planning consult for Park Forest, Illinois.¹²¹ During World War II, Peets lectured at the Museum of Natural History in New York on aerial urban reconnaissance and site recognition.¹²² After the war, Peets worked on extensions to the Greendale plan and then began working for Klutznick's company on Park Forest in 1946.

During the 1950's, Peets worked on the Fine Arts Commission in Washington. Also during that time, he lectured at Yale at the invitation of Christopher Tunnard. Tunnard had been one of the important figures in the advent of modernism in landscape architecture, writing *Gardens in the Modern Landscape* in 1938. However, Tunnard, like Peets, continued to be interested in the aesthetics of city form. Like Joseph Hudnut, Tunnard became disenchanted with some of the shortcomings of the modern movement and the implications that the ideas of Le Corbusier and CIAM had on urban form and on the social space of cities. The book by David Jacques and Jan Woudstra describes this as "renouncing" modernism in landscape design.¹²³ Tunnard invited Peets to lecture at Yale, and also invited him to submit an essay to City Planning at Yale. Peets's contribution is "The Golden Horses and Civic Art," an essay on civic art in Washington, D. C., and it is the last of Peets's major essays.

¹²¹ Randall, *America's Original GI Town*: 56.

¹²² Spreiregen, *On the Art of Designing Cities*: 227.

¹²³ David Jacques and Jan Woudstra, *Landscape Modernism Renounced, The Career of Christopher Tunnard (1910-1979)* (Routledge, 2009).

The overview of the facts and the timeline of Peets's activities offers a summary of his professional life, but it offers little insight into his personality, or what motivated him. The letters that are in his archives are mostly professional correspondence. His tone in his letters is very conversational and friendly, but still fairly reserved; a kind of business casual tone. The correspondence that Peter Walker and Melanie Simo relate from Frederick Law Olmsted offers some introspection of Olmsted on his own work, his legacy, and his personal doubts. Olmsted notes, in a letter to a friend: "I need all the esteem I have earned from you to sustain my self-esteem."¹²⁴ Peets does not offer a reflection about his own view of his work, or an expression of what he thought his legacy might be.

There are only a few moments when part of his personality comes through; even then, he is terse and offers no personal insights. In 1946, when he had to give a short autobiographical sketch of himself (probably in relation to the new work for Park Forest), he said: "I'm not married, I like open cars, my hobbies include tree pruning, drawing, swimming, writing poetry, and mending broken gadgets. But what I enjoy most of all is planning towns."¹²⁵

Some sense of his personal habits comes through in what we can tell about his work habits. In his designs for Washington Highlands and Greendale, Peets relocated streets to save specimen trees, which hints at his concern for the natural character of the site, and his view of the components of site design not as abstract design elements, but as vital pieces that contribute to people's engagement with the site. It also shows an attention for detail, and his concern for the existing features of the site. Richard Bennett, who worked with Peets on the

¹²⁴ Walker and Simo, *Invisible Garden*: 12.

¹²⁵ Elbert Peets, Cornell archives, box 5, folder 11, Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection no. 2772, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

planning of Park Forest, described Peets as “a quiet, lovely genius, because he loved the land and he didn’t think people should destroy it.”¹²⁶ In the study of Beatrix Farrand, Diane McGuire notes that to recognize that “the land itself must dictate the form of the design” is commonplace in landscape design, few practitioners grasped and actually employed this as thoroughly as did Farrand.¹²⁷ Peets similarly showed his attention to the natural features and to the importance of his close study of the site to an unusual degree.

When Peets was studying the site for Park Forest along with the architect Richard Bennett they found a low marshy pond that Peets thought could be dredged to make a pond for the proposed park area. The surveys noted the pond, but did not note its depth. Bennett says that Peets, because it was a nice day and he couldn’t wait for the survey to be done, said “if I would excuse him, he took his clothes off and went wading over all over the thing [the pond] with a tall stick to check the depth.”¹²⁸ It is an amazing anecdote that illustrates an extreme attention to the site, as well as a disregard for decorum. It is unusual even for Peets, who most often seems guarded and reserved.

Toward the end of his life, Peets began to suffer from health problems and some form of dementia. Around 1964, when he was 82, he had to abandon his apartment in Washington and move back to live with his sister, Blossom, in Austinburg, Ohio, a town about thirty miles east of Cleveland. He stayed with her for about a year, before needing more care and moving into a nursing care facility. Paul Spreiregen, who was compiling and

¹²⁶ Randall, *America’s Original GI Town*: 55.

¹²⁷ Diane McGuire, “Contribution to Landscape Architecture,” in Diane Kostial McGuire and Lois Fern, editors, *Beatrix Jones Farrand (1872-1959): Fifty Years of American Landscape Architecture* (Dumbarton Oaks, 1982): 34.

¹²⁸ Randall, *America’s Original GI Town*: 69.

editing some of Peets's essays, notes that, by 1965, Peets's memory was beginning to fail and he (Peets) would occasionally become petulant or gleefully contrary.¹²⁹ When Spreiregen began working on the edition of Peets's writing, Peets was still living in Washington. Spreiregen exchanged a series of letters with Peets's sister Blossom and her son, living in Austinburg, Ohio. Spreiregen noted that "Mr. Peets' condition has steadily declined" and that his mental condition "sometimes causes his mind to cloud, at other times he is completely lucid."¹³⁰ Spreiregen wrote to Elisabeth Coit, an editor at *Architectural Record* that "it is somewhat depressing to have all of Elbert's stuff because to read it all over one gets the picture of a brilliant and talented man who never got all that he deserved."¹³¹ Blossom (van Bergen), wrote to Spreiregen after Elbert had moved into a nursing home, noting that she could no longer manage him, and that at the nursing home, Elbert would sing at the top of his lungs and go into the kitchen to dance with the staff.¹³² It is an odd and touching story because it seems so out of character.

When I was travelling to the Cornell archives, knowing that Peets's gravesite was in Austinburg, I decided to make the short detour to see if I could locate the grave. Austinburg is a small crossroads town, and the cemetery is neither large nor prominent. For some reason, it was again oddly moving to see his simple gravestone, next to his sister Rumah's gravestone. It gave me a sense of Peets not as an abstract figure of study, but as a unique

¹²⁹ Letter from Paul Spreiregen, in Peets's archives, Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection no. 2772, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

¹³⁰ *ibid*, box 2, folder 77.

¹³¹ *ibid*, letter to Elisabeth Coit, June 21, 1965, box 2, folder 77.

¹³² *ibid*, letter from Blossom van Bergen to Paul Spreiregen, Feb 29, 1968.

individual. He was a particular, single person and not simply the result of larger forces about modernism and design vocabularies.

Arnold Alanen described Peets as “[t]alented, philosophical, opinionated and iconoclastic,”¹³³ someone who looked for “universal design principles.” The universal principles he considered important were the lessons of great civic spaces of the past, particularly the Renaissance. Even more than the universal principles, what comes through in studying Peets are concerns for local character and the experience and concerns of the people who inhabit the spaces he designed. I began this study thinking that Peets was somewhat of an unheralded link between the City Beautiful/Beaux-Arts period and the rise of modernism. Instead, and I think more interestingly, Peets is not a transition point, but an offshoot. He appears to be not a part of a linear narrative, but a third path, one that maintains the tradition of urban design while trying to find new and appropriate patterns for neighborhoods.

¹³³ Alanen, “Elbert Peets”: 211.

Chapter Three: Contextualizing Peets

This chapter will examine the context in which Peets worked. It will address the discourse over design language, some of the elements of ecological thought at the turn of the century that were relevant to landscape designers, as well as other social and cultural currents that influenced all practitioners at the time.

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate some of the intellectual currents that coalesced to give relevance to the town planning discipline that formed the context for the beginning of Peets's professional career. The standard narrative of the progress of twentieth century design is one of the advent of European modernism replacing the Beaux Arts tradition of the neo-classicism that was the hallmark of the City Beautiful movement. Peets does not readily fit that narrative: he was critical of the "old guard" of landscape style design, yet he never fully embraced modernism. The standard narrative also overlooks another tradition of the Garden City movement; the importance of ecological concepts to the landscape designers, regional planners and foresters who were active at the time. Like the connections between the forestry and landscape departments at Harvard, there was considerable interaction between these fields.

Part of the larger goal of this study is to accommodate and understand Elbert Peets, a character who was away from the center of debates over modernism versus traditionalism, yet was prominent enough to participate. A second goal is to reintroduce and recognize the

sources for ecological aspects of Peets's designs (like riparian protection zones). For Peets, it appears that the visual expression of style was not a primary concern; he was more concerned with the grouping of buildings. This chapter will investigate some of the strands of intellectual discourse that informed Peets's work and set the stage for his practice.

Elbert Peets both practiced town planning and wrote extensively on the history of urban design and the relevance of civic art to contemporary times. But he does not fit easily into the time, as Arnold Alanen notes, Peets could be seen as "a man out of step with his time."¹³⁴ He was critical of the previous generation, mostly for its association with the romantic style of English gardening, but he never fully embraced the current generation's enthusiasm for modernist planning and landscape design. His writing praises the models he admires; he considered the Michelangelo's Piazza del Popolo and the Campidoglio to be the "finest creations of Italian Baroque plaza designs,"¹³⁵ and he thought that "the fine flowering of architectural city planning was the second half of the eighteenth century."¹³⁶ He also wrote admiringly about the plan of Williamsburg and L'Enfant's plan for Washington. These illustrate what he considers to be models of achievement, but how those lessons influenced his own designs is less clear. Peets does note that "it is not quite an accident that in its skeleton organization the plan of Greendale is much like the plan of Williamsburg."¹³⁷ Other than that passing reference, when he discusses his own designs, he does it in primarily pragmatic terms; the choice of narrow pavements for economy at Park Forest, or whether a small town like Greendale or Park Forest can justify the cost of civic buildings. In his

¹³⁴ Alanen, "Elbert Peets": 211.

¹³⁵ Peets: "Camillo Sitte," in Spreiregen, *On the Art of Designing Cities*: 147.

¹³⁶ *ibid*, page 143.

¹³⁷ *ibid*, page 222.

letters, he also says that the overriding purpose of town planning is to provide adequate housing for the residents.¹³⁸ These comments indicate that Peets was concerned with his task as a town planner, or as a land planner, as he described himself,¹³⁹ at multiple levels: as a part of a historical tradition, as a pragmatic and technical activity, and as an art with a distinct social responsibility.

Pragmatic concerns in urban planning

The complex network of influences and requirements in which urban designers and town planners work includes both information that can be said to be inherent in the project and the site, and it also includes outside factors such as visual character and the social goals of the project. The factors inherent in the site itself include technical information in the form of grading surveys and soils reports; factors inherent in the project (the project's brief) include the programmatic goals of the client and economic constraints like budget and cost-benefit trade-offs. In all of these potentially quantifiable topics, there is room for judgement and uncertainty.

The grading plan will explain the existing topography, but one might choose to do more grading to make road slopes more gentle, or one may accept steeper roads or tighter curves to save on grading costs. One might suggest additional grading and dredging of marshy areas to produce a pleasant lake (as Peets did at Forest Park), and find that it cannot be accomplished due to costs. Even costs, profits and the pro-forma projections of developers are flexible. Developers may have a projection of many units need to be included for them to achieve a reasonable profit. But what is meant by "reasonable" is

¹³⁸ Elbert Peets, Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection no. 2772, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

¹³⁹ Crasemann Collins, "Introduction," in *The American Vitruvius*, (Dover Publications): page vi.

subject to negotiation. The developer may choose to delete a few units or home sites to gain some amenity like more green space; or they may choose to sacrifice some amenity to gain more units to sell. Beyond the things can at least potentially be quantified, there are subjective factors of aesthetic judgement and professional responsibility. A designer first has a fiduciary responsibility to their client, but they also have some responsibility to their profession's code of ethics, or to their own interpretation of what is responsible practice. They may also either feel some responsibility to their peers, or may question how a given design will position them for future work or future recognition.

Then, finally when a town plan is built, all of those constraints become invisible and the project is either successful and remembered or unsuccessful and forgotten (or underused and demolished¹⁴⁰). Researchers who study the social constructions of science would say that it is this network that is the object of study, and that the network of relations, ideas and influences is fragile, continuously produced, and prone to falling apart.¹⁴¹ The particular analogy that I want to make to a material semiotic construction is that the form that a design takes, and whether it is well-received and remembered (in my case, whether it is recalled in the historiography) is the result of many factors. When Peets produced his designs he was acting within a specific tradition, not only of the profession, but of his own previous projects and experiences with owners and clients, and that he had influences and exposures in his training and education that influenced his work.

¹⁴⁰ Or perhaps underused, vandalized, demolished and remembered very well. Pruitt-Igoe is the extreme example. Pruitt Igoe was built in St. Louis in 1954, so it is temporally just at the edge of this study of Peets, coming just a few years after his last project. Pruitt-Igoe was famously demolished by dynamite in 1972.

¹⁴¹ John Law, "Actor Network Theory and Material Semiotics," (version of 25th April, 2007, available at <http://www.heterogeneities.net/publications/Law2007ANTandMaterialSemiotics.pdf> ; accessed January 31, 2017). This is a brief reference to material-semiotic theory (the more general term that encompasses Actor-Network Theory, and this description comes from Law's essay.

For this chapter, I will address some of the topics that formed the context in which Peets worked. I will begin with the status of the urban design profession early in the twentieth century, and then address some history of the predominant design language, the City Beautiful movement in the United States, and how that language was challenged by developments within the United States and then challenged more forcefully by the growth and development of European modernism. I will address the legacy of ecological thought from the late nineteenth century. Then I will address some other factors that are peripheral to the design field, but still have an influence.

There are strands of discourse and practice on twentieth century urban design that occur and then wane and then return later in a different form. As an example, the emphasis on environmentalism that was prominent in the early twentieth century, and was related to larger social and cultural discussions on the land conservation and preservation movements. By mid-century, the discussion, in town planning conferences and in the writing of people practicing, had shifted to efficiency and a more science-based rationalism,¹⁴² which was, not coincidentally, more in line with business interests and the rise of Fordism and Taylorism.¹⁴³

Earlier historical studies have tended to focus on some of the key events and personalities, like Le Corbusier's impact on modernist urbanism. More recent scholarship has addressed this, recognizing that this creates "a narrow view of modernism, devoid of real understanding of the teams and collaborations involved."¹⁴⁴ As a result, more attention has been given to lesser known figures like Alfred Caldwell, who worked with Jens Jensen

¹⁴² O'Malley and Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Modernism and Landscape Architecture*: 1.

¹⁴³ Mauro F. Guillén, *The Taylorized Beauty of the Mechanical*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2006): 28.

¹⁴⁴ O'Malley and Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Modernism and Landscape Architecture*: 1.

early in his career, and later worked with Mies van der Rohe at Lafayette Park in Detroit, or with Marjorie Sewell Cautley who worked with Clarence Stein, or with Leberecht Migge, the German landscape architect who worked on some of the German Siedlungen projects.¹⁴⁵ This study expands that discourse by discussing Peets, someone who had a productive practice, has not been prominent in the historiography, and who does not fit easily into the narrative arc of the rise of modernism. One of the things that I find interesting about Peets is that he was not a previously unrecognized intermediate step between the neoclassical Beaux-Arts tradition at the beginning of the twentieth century and the fully formed mainstream modernism of the 1950's, but a different direction, one that was fully modern while still embracing historic models and the tradition of urban design. In part, this is significant because the elements of modernism that he resisted, the minimizing of the importance of the traditional street and the emphasis on individual buildings over the groupings they create, are some of the elements that late experience have shown to be not conducive to successful neighborhoods. This is most evident in the extreme examples of failures of modernist ideology. For instance, Pruitt-Igoe and Robin Hood Gardens were both more noted for their failure and their demolition than they were for their success in expressing contemporary design language. This chapter, or this part of the study, looks at influences that are both within the field of urban design and ones that are tangential or come from other areas.

¹⁴⁵ O'Malley and Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Modernism and Landscape Architecture*: 1. O'Malley mentions Caldwell and Cautley; Migge is the subject of David Haney's book: *When Modern was Green*, Routledge, 2010.

Status of the profession of town planning in the early 1900's

Though the field of urban planning was new as a recognized professional specialty, it was experiencing an auspicious period of growing prestige, relevance and promise. Writers and professionals were trying to promote and publicize individual projects, as well as make the argument for why city planning by professionals was necessary. Because of the success of comprehensive planning efforts like George Kessler's work in Kansas City, and Frederick Law Olmsted's work in Boston and Buffalo, New York, the concept of comprehensive planning held great promise. The field also seemed promising because of the scale of problems that needed to be addressed. The late nineteenth century had seen large growth both in the urban population, and in industrialization. With that growth there were problems of overcrowding, poor sanitation, and social unrest, and intelligent planning for communities and urban centers became a focus of urbanism in the Progressive Era.

When Elbert Peets graduated from Harvard's Landscape Architecture program in 1915, and began his career as a town planner, there was no education program dedicated to city planning in North America. Harvard had established a Master's of Landscape Architecture in 1900 and a Master's in Forestry in 1905. The two programs shared some courses, and urban planning was a part of the landscape program. Harvard began offering courses in city planning in 1909, and would establish the first major in city and regional planning in 1923 (Pray, p. 39).¹⁴⁶ The field was relatively new as a professional discipline, and was a subset of the landscape design profession. Landscape architecture itself was relatively new as a professional discipline, if not as a practice. The American Society of Landscape Architecture had been established in 1899 as the primary professional society for

¹⁴⁶ James Sturgis Pray, in his description of Harvard's landscape program, in Robinette, *Landscape Architectural Education* (1973): 39.

landscape designers, with eleven founding members. This organization largely grew out of other groups like the American Park and Outdoor Art Association (established in 1897), a group that included some of the founding members of the ASLA, but had a more narrow focus. In comparison, architects had formed a professional association in 1857.

In the United States, the profession was dominated by the legacy and stature of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. Though the elder Olmsted had died in 1903, his firm continued under the leadership of his sons, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and John Charles Olmsted. The success of large scale planning for the White City of Chicago's World Fair in 1893¹⁴⁷ led to the rise of the City Beautiful movement and to application of City Beautiful principles in plans from major urban centers like Buffalo to suburban developments like Roland Park in Baltimore to well-regarded company towns like Fairfield in Birmingham, Alabama (designed by George H. Miller, dedicated in 1910). The two generations of Olmsteds, and other prominent practitioners like John Nolen, advocated comprehensive planning as a way to address responsible growth to promote efficiency and utility of cities.

As the field expanded, practitioners worked to legitimize the activity of landscape and urban design as a distinct and legitimate profession. Describing the process that landscape designers faced in the early twentieth century, Dorothee Imbert notes that the "definition of a modern profession rests on...a specialized education, a title, a professional organization, a code of ethics and what the sociologist Magali Sarfatti Larson defines as 'cognitive otherness,' or the public recognition of expertise."¹⁴⁸ In some cases, this professional differentiation meant establishing a clear distinction between what they did and

¹⁴⁷ Bluestone, "Detroit's City Beautiful," (1988): 245.

¹⁴⁸ Dorothee Imbert, "Theorizing Modernity in the Garden, 1920-1939," in O'Malley and Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Modernism and Landscape Architecture, 1890 – 1940* (National Gallery of Art, 2015): 11.

what other related fields did. For landscape designers, this meant drawing a distinction between their services and those of nursery operators. The landscape architects argued that what set them apart from salespeople was their specialized education which included not just plant varieties, but horticultural science, and above all their design training and artistic sensibility.¹⁴⁹ Imbert is writing mostly about the experience of designers in Denmark and Belgium, but the case was similar in the United States. The Society of Landscape Architects had denied membership to George Kessler, on the grounds that his “duties are principally those of superintending park work as an executive and not as a designer.”¹⁵⁰ This comment (besides being wrong) showed the extent to which the young profession was trying to draw a distinction between the services that its members provided and those work was more strictly mercantile. In contrast, Peets would later accuse the Society of quite the opposite in his essay “The Landscape Priesthood.” In this 1927 essay, he would suggest that to become professionally recognized, “all one needs is a slight competence in drafting and facility with the established clichés.”¹⁵¹

James Sturgis Pray, the head of the landscape architecture at Harvard, described the profession as one of the fine arts. He distanced their work from trade work, and noted that they trained men (they did not admit women at the time) to become competent professionals to work in the offices of other professionals and to be eventually able to open their own office.¹⁵² Pray’s comments were to differentiate the professional work of Harvard men

¹⁴⁹ Imbert, “Theorizing Modernity in the Garden, 1920-1939,” 11.

¹⁵⁰ Kurt Culbertson, “George Edward Kessler: Landscape Architect of the American Renaissance,” in Tishler, *Midwestern Landscape Architecture* (University of Illinois Press 2000): 106.

¹⁵¹ Peets; “The Landscape Priesthood,” in Spreiregen: 190.

¹⁵² Gary O. Robinette, *Landscape Architectural Education, Vol. 1* (Dubuque, Iowa, Kendal/Hunt Publishing Co., 1973): 39-44.

from mere plant breeders and home gardeners. It also was a way to align the work of landscape designers with the more established field of architecture. All three professions, architecture, landscape architecture, and town planning sought to achieve a similar level of respect, legitimacy and status as the medical and judicial professions.¹⁵³

Pray was writing to defend the education program as a fine art, but people in professional practice were already beginning to distance themselves from the “fine art” association and its emphasis on purely aesthetic effects. In contrast, they argued that the work should be seen as a scientifically based technical endeavor. Already in 1912, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. would declare, at a national conference on town planning, that the practice of town planning “will be more of a science than an art.”¹⁵⁴ Olmsted’s remarks reflect an attempt to distance the contemporary work of the early 1910’s from the work of the 1890’s which was characterized by what Mariana von Griswold Rennsalaer called “outdoor art.”¹⁵⁵ Olmsted’s comments were made at a town planning conference, and indicated the shift from promoting urban design as an aesthetic issue to one that was more focused on rational and quantifiable criteria. Frederick Winslow Taylor’s book on *The Principles of Scientific Management* in 1911 suggested that quantifiable efficiency and scientific principles were the crucial components of a modern corporation. For landscape architects who hoped to be hired by these corporations, it suggested that emphasizing efficiency and practicality were more important than relying on beauty alone.

¹⁵³ Imbert, in O’Malley and Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Modernism and Landscape Architecture*: 11.

¹⁵⁴ Frederick Law, Olmsted, Jr.: Presentation at Town Planning Conference, reported in *American City*, 1912.

¹⁵⁵ Mariana van Griswold Rennsalaer, *Art Out-of-Doors*, (New York, Scribner's Sons, 1911, c1893).

Peets began his career as the profession was working to establish its credibility and professional standing. The profession was negotiating how to incorporate the various strands its history. These ranged from the garden art that would have been familiar to Andrew Jackson Downing, to the urban park movement (exemplified by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.), to the growth of city planning in the City Beautiful era. In the early twentieth century, the profession faced the growing emphasis on rational, data based planning and, increasingly (even more so in Europe) the impact of the advent of modernism after the First World War.

Influences from the field of ecology

In contemporary use, the term “ecological” is more broadly associated with environmentalism. In land planning, it is associated with the land ethic of Aldo Leopold¹⁵⁶ or with the more developed ecological planning that Ian McHarg proposed in *Design with Nature*. In the early decades of the twentieth century, it was a much less commonly understood term. In its narrowest sense, it was associated with the work of plant biologists and ecologists like Henry Chandler Cowles and Frederic Clements.¹⁵⁷ As Cowles’s work on the Indiana Dunes shows (Jens Jensen worked with Cowles on this preservation effort), there was interaction between the scientists who were studying plant communities and the larger community of people who were interested in the preservation of scenic areas. The interest in understanding plant communities is more specifically “ecological.” However,

¹⁵⁶ Forster Ndubisi, “Landscape Ecological Planning” in George F. Thompson and Frederick R. Steiner, *Ecological Design and Planning* (1997): 19.

¹⁵⁷ Donald Worster, *Nature’s Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1977); Cowles and Clements both researched plant communities and plant succession; Cowles, at the University of Chicago, studied the Indiana Dunes, and was instrumental in the preservation of the dunes.

those interests are related to other more general concerns like the preservation of scenic areas, as can be seen in Olmsted's efforts to design the Niagara Falls surroundings, in the debates over the Hetch-Hetchy dam, and in debates over scientific forestry practices.

For Peets and other designers at the time, debates over how to balance development with land, stream, and habitat preservation were the context in which they worked. Recognizing that he would not have used the terms "ecological design" or "environmental design," I use evidence of planning to preserve natural areas as examples that Peets was designing in an ecologically sensitive manner. Peets did specifically mention protecting native plant areas in both Greendale, and later in his report for Catalina Island.¹⁵⁸ Though he did not talk specifically about ecology, we can infer his awareness of the issues in the design artifacts of stream preservation zones.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, there was a remarkable publication on landscape: *Garden and Forest* magazine (1888-1897).¹⁵⁹ The magazine was established by Charles Sprague Sargent, the director of Harvard's Arnold Arboretum. It was a weekly journal devoted to landscape art, horticulture, scientific forestry, and landscape preservation. The magazine included practical tips for home gardeners, literary essays and scientific articles. The breadth of articles illustrates the various strands of discourse that formed the basis of urban and landscape planning. These strands included the technical aspects of horticulture (the magazine included descriptions of both common and exotic species of

¹⁵⁸ Elbert Peets archives, Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection no. 2772, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

¹⁵⁹ Eric MacDonald, *The Art which Mends Nature: The Discourse of American Environmental Design in "Garden and Forest", 1888-1897*; PhD Diss., University of Wisconsin, 2006; and Shen Hou, *The City Natural: Garden and Forest Magazine and the Rise of American Environmentalism*, (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013).

plants) mixed with aesthetic appreciations of landscape design along with broader issues like the nature preservation/nature conservation movements.

Garden and Forest emphasized a spectrum of concerns from horticulture to regional planning, and argued that they all contributed to the health of society. An editorial in 1892 asserted that “there is no longer any need of argument to prove that ample and convenient spaces ... are essential not only to the pleasure and comfort, but to the physical health and mental and moral growth of the people.”¹⁶⁰

The emphasis on forestry and horticulture that *Garden and Forest* illustrates is especially pertinent to Peets. He had worked as a horticulturist/garden designer between his undergraduate studies at Western Reserve University (what has now become Case Western Reserve University) and entering Harvard’s Landscape Architecture program. By the time he entered Harvard he had experience as a forestry consultant and had “a keen interest in urban forestry.”¹⁶¹ Because of this experience, Peets taught courses in horticulture to both the landscape and the forestry students. The two programs shared courses during the first year of studies. While the landscape program emphasized landscape design as an “outdoor art”, the forestry program had a greater emphasis on ecologically based planning. Of particular note is the emphasis in forestry studies of planning based on natural features such as waterways. Planning based on watersheds was a part of George Perkins Marsh’s 1864 book, *Man and Nature*, and was advocated by John Wesley Powell in his work for the U. S.

¹⁶⁰ Shen Hou, *The City Natural: Garden and Forest Magazine and the Rise of American Environmentalism*, (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013): 131.

¹⁶¹ Alanen, “Elbert Peets”: 194.

Geological Society in the 1870's.¹⁶² The forestry program thus had a closer relationship to some of the controversies that were prominent in the first decades of the twentieth century.

These controversies addressed the conflict between the economic benefits of forestry and the value of the preservation of natural landscapes, or over the “wise use” of natural resources. Benton MacKaye had graduated from Harvard’s forestry in 1905, ten years before Elbert Peets graduated from the landscape program, participated in those debates first as an employee of the Forestry Service, and later in the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA). MacKaye worked for the U.S. Forestry Department under Gifford Pinchot assessing the impact of clear cut logging in Wisconsin’s “cutover” district. MacKaye would later work with the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA), whose members included Clarence Stein and Catherine Bauer. The controversy in forestry was how to balance the impacts of logging with nature conservation and sustained harvesting. The concern for comprehensive regional planning to address problems was not limited to forestry, and was a part of the RPAA effort (the most notable urban planning efforts of the RPAA were Sunnyside Gardens in Queens, New York, and Radburn, New Jersey). What this shows in general is then intentional interaction and (presumably) cross-fertilization between fields of landscape, urban design, regional planning, and ecology.

Along with debates over “wise use,” there were significant controversies in the conservation and national parks movements. Peets was entering Harvard just as the controversy over the Hetch Hetchy dam had occurred.¹⁶³ This controversy pitted John Muir against Gifford Pinchot and his view of utilitarianism. Though Pinchot is cast as the pro-development voice in this battle, he was also a voice for protecting the health of ecosystems.

¹⁶² Larry Anderson, *Benton MacKaye* (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 2002), 71.

¹⁶³ The controversy occurred between 1906 and 1908; construction of the dam began in 1914.

He noted that the value of forests is not only in their production of timber, but in their protection of ecosystem health, particularly in insuring soils health and productivity.

Before the widespread use of chemical fertilizers, soils productivity was a critical concern. In Wisconsin, Franklin Hiram King was a soils scientist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He left Madison in 1902 to work for the USDA Bureau of Soils in Washington, D.C. While there, he studied soils physics and also studied (what is now called) sustainable agriculture. After a study trip to Japan, China and Korea in 1909, he wrote his most known book, *Farmers of Forty Centuries* (which was published in 1911, the year after King died), describing ways of maintaining soils productivity.

Most interestingly, King's book was known not only to soils scientists and agriculturalists, but more widely in the landscape profession. David Haney notes in his study of Lebrecht Migge that Migge kept a copy of King's book with him and referred to it in his lectures.¹⁶⁴ Migge was a German landscape architect whose work Peets had studied and included in *The American Vitruvius*, and Migge was also a close friend of Werner Hegemann. Migge was directly influenced by F. H. King's book and ideas (particularly in Migge's emphasis on composting and home gardens), but he did not work directly with King. There were other cases of landscape designers having more direct interaction with professional ecologists.

Ecology as a distinct discipline or as a separate sub-specialty in biology emerged in the late nineteenth century. The view of nature as a stable and divinely ordered construction began to change with new research and new knowledge developed, particularly with the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. The primary effort in the mid-

¹⁶⁴ Haney, *When Modern was Green*: 108.

nineteenth century had been to describe and classify plant species and to produce taxonomies of how species were related. By the late nineteenth century, botanists had begun to describe how communities of plants developed. The intellectual parents of ecological studies in the United States were Frederick E. Clements and Henry Chandler Cowles. Both received their PhD's in botany in 1898, Clements at the University of Nebraska, and Cowles at the University of Chicago. Clements was a prolific writer, and in his career he not only influenced the next generation of ecologists, but helped to establish a new view, one of a plant community as a superorganism.¹⁶⁵ Cowles did his research on the plant succession in the Indiana Dunes on Lake Michigan.¹⁶⁶ The work of Clements and Cowles helped to establish a new paradigm in ecological studies that emphasized groups and their physical setting as an "ecosystem," where all are interconnected. This paradigm suggested that how pioneer species colonize an environment and how succession occurs to arrive at a "climax" or mature state would follow predictable patterns.¹⁶⁷ Cowles is particularly interesting because on his work to preserve the Indiana Dunes, he worked with Jens Jensen. Cowles's scientific knowledge of plants and the mechanics of their development resonated with Jensen's love of plants, especially native species, for their aesthetic and emotional potential.

Jensen, who was a long-time advocate of using native plants in contemporary design, was concerned with horticultural issues, but he also exemplified the artistic and even

¹⁶⁵ Robert Cook, "Do Landscapes Learn? Ecology's "New Paradigm" and Design in Landscape Architecture," in *Environmentalism in Landscape Architecture*, Conan, Michael, editor (Dumbarton Oaks, 2000): 118.

¹⁶⁶ Betsy Anderson, "Ecological Design as a Landscape Practice in the Early 20th century: A Shifting Paradigm," paper presented at Dumbarton Oaks, Colloquium on Beatrix Farrand (March 2013): 3.

¹⁶⁷ Cook, "Do Landscapes Learn?" Cook also notes that this is no longer the case, and that more recent research that compares the actual colonization and succession with the model has shown that the process is much more unpredictable and random.

spiritual aspect of landscape design, noting that there was “nothing finer, nothing better on this earth, than our own native landscape to which we are tied from childhood, and within it lies the possibility of a great art; when I now look out of the windows into this Autumn coloring that covers our hillsides and meadows, who will doubt the grandeur and the exquisite beauty of our native land?”¹⁶⁸ Jensen would also later disagree with Peets on his plant selections for Greendale; Jensen objected to the use of non-native plants,¹⁶⁹ as well as objecting to the architecture.

Jensen demonstrates a major trend of the discourse in the late nineteenth century; that of emphasizing the “art” of landscape design. This can be seen in some of the texts of the time, such as Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer’s book on *Art Out of Doors* (of 1893), or Charles Mulford Robinson’s *Modern Civic Art, or the City Made Beautiful* (1903). When James Sturgis Pray wrote the description of the educational aims for Harvard’s landscape architecture program, he emphasized the practice of landscape architecture as a “fine art.”¹⁷⁰ The emphasis of Pray and of Van Rensselaer had been to position landscape design as something distinct from (and superior to) craftspeople like nurserymen, florists and gardeners. The historical narrative of the period has also tended to emphasize the visual and stylistic issues that arose with the advent of modernism in landscape design.¹⁷¹

The concerns for environmentalism that had been demonstrated earlier in *Garden and Forest* did not disappear from the discourse. Recent scholarship has recognized the

¹⁶⁸ Anderson, “Ecological Design as a Landscape Practice in the Early 20th century: A Shifting Paradigm”: 4. Anderson notes that this quote was from a publication on *Beauty in the Garden*, by the Cyclone Fence Company, 1928, in the private collection of Catherine Brown.

¹⁶⁹ See the section of this dissertation on Greendale.

¹⁷⁰ Robinette, *Landscape Architectural Education, Volume I*: 39-44.

¹⁷¹ Way, “American Landscape Architecture at Mid-century: Modernism, science, and art”: 145.

continuing relevance of ecological concerns to the practice of landscape architecture.

Examples include articles in *Landscape Architecture Magazine* by Catherine Koch and Elma Loines on horticulture in 1916, and an essay on “Ecology of the Roadside” by Frank Waugh in 1931.¹⁷² Landscape architects worked to establish their professional standing, and one way of doing this was to emphasize their specialized education, which included knowledge of horticultural science.¹⁷³ Along with their specialized knowledge, they still emphasized their artistic training and aesthetic sensibility. The justification of landscape design on the basis of aesthetics would increasingly be challenged in the early twentieth century.

The development of modernism in landscape architecture was in the context of a shift towards greater emphasis on engineering and technical expertise.¹⁷⁴ This development was not an orderly process; as Thäisa Way notes: “Modernism in landscape architecture was, in fact, a messy practice, aimed both at disrupting historic assumptions of style and reshaping design for a modern world.”¹⁷⁵ One strand of this messy practice was a changing view of nature, a change that emphasized the control and management of natural systems over the aesthetic and spiritual concerns of the late nineteenth century, as could be seen in major regional planning efforts of New Deal programs like the Tennessee Valley Authority. As debates over modernism progressed, though perhaps more so in architecture than in landscape design, there was an antipathy towards nature. As Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn notes, for those architects, nature “was inconsistent with their utopian project for a world

¹⁷² *ibid*, page 145.

¹⁷³ Imbert, “Theorizing Modernity in the Garden, 1920-1939”: 11.

¹⁷⁴ Andrew Shanken, “Between brotherhood and bureaucracy: Joseph Hudnut, Louis I. Kahn and the American Society of Planners and Architects,” *Planning Perspectives* 20 (April 2005): 166.

¹⁷⁵ Way, “American Landscape Architecture at Mid-century: Modernism, science, and art”: 146.

founded on universal laws. For them, nature was guilty of promoting arbitrariness, encouraging emotion, and sanctioning history. They promoted a focus on man, rather than nature, as the necessary approach for the future.”¹⁷⁶ Yet, as Thäisa Way argues, modernism was not “anti or pre-ecological.”¹⁷⁷ There were many people practicing at mid-century, particularly an influential group of female practitioners, for whom ecology, horticultural expertise, and environmental science continued to be important. Along with Thäisa Way’s study, there is a growing body of scholarship that recognizes the continued relevance of ecological thought. The impression is that those concerns did not disappear from either the practice or the discourse at the time, but that they were not emphasized by the next generation of scholars and historians who discussed the period.

¹⁷⁶ O’Malley and Wolschke-Bulmahn, editors, *Modernism and Landscape Architecture*,: ix.

¹⁷⁷ Way: “American Landscape Architecture at Mid-century: Modernism, science, and art”: 146.

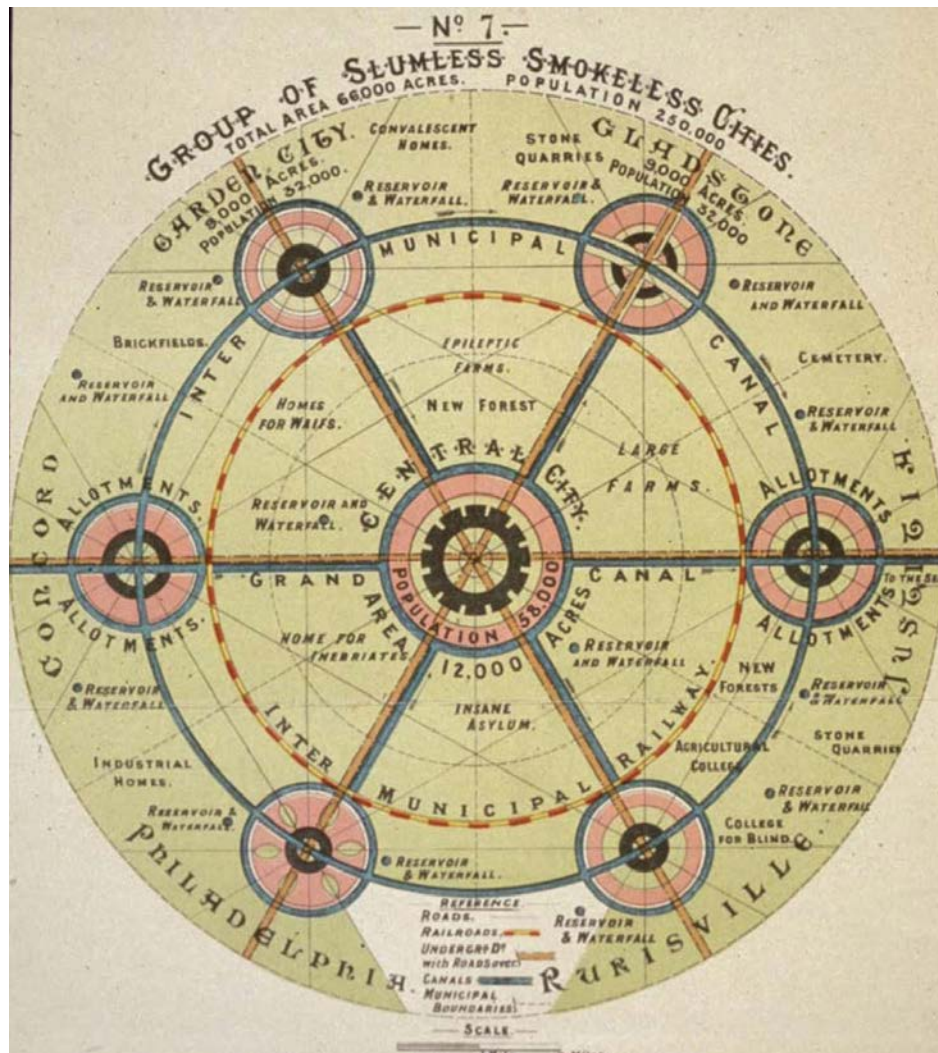


Figure 1: Ebenezer Howard, diagram for a Garden City organization, from *To-morrow, A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, 1898;
 image from <http://urbandesign-guanyi.blogspot.com/>

The City Beautiful Movement and the Garden City Movement

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the urban planning field in the United States was dominated by the combined movements of the City Beautiful Movement and the Garden City movement. The City Beautiful Movement is most associated with Frederick Law Olmsted and the legacy of the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. These two

strands of discourse had antecedents in European theories of urban design. The City Beautiful movement is associated with the ideas of Camillo Sitte, the Viennese architect and urban planner who had written *City Planning According to Artistic Principles* (1889, reissued in 1902 as *Garden Cities of To-morrow*). The Garden City Movement was an outgrowth of the ideas of Ebenezer Howard. Howard was an English theoretician, and his major work, *To-Morrow, A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (1898).

Even to be able to give titles to the movements tends to reify them and have them appear as more monolithic and unified than is appropriate for a complicated congeries of responses to rapidly expanding urbanization at the turn of the century, and the problems associated with it. While the City Beautiful Movement advocated a unified aesthetic approach to urban conditions based on neoclassical forms, it did so under the assumption that improving the physical character of cities would necessarily improve the conditions and the character of the residents. This was also in response to the recognized problems of dismal conditions in tenement housing and the problems of pollution and the lack of sanitary sewer facilities in urban centers.

The legacy of the Columbian Exposition and the City Beautiful movement seemed most interested in the aesthetic development of city form, but that was only one aspect of the effort. The City Beautiful movement coincided with other Progressive Era reform efforts. Like Ebenezer Howard, Olmsted had been concerned with the possibility of land planning to contribute to public health. The explosive urban growth of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had been accompanied with social problems like urban crowding, the dismal state of tenement housing, and general challenges to public health in the problems associated with poor sanitation.

At the same time as problems in the quality of urban life, there were wider problems that seemed tractable to landscape planning. The challenge of declining soils productivity and adverse effects of deforestation were problems that seemed amenable to improvement by landscape and regional planning. This is somewhat recognized in the foundation of the city and regional planning major in Harvard. The program had antecedents in both the physical design of cities (which grew from Harvard's emphasis on landscape design as an "outdoor art") and from connections to Harvard's forestry major, which emphasized geomorphic based planning.

Peets wrote about Camillo Sitte, as well as about L'Enfant and Washington, and offered his critique of the state of urban and landscape design. The American Vitruvius was a way of articulating his and Hegemann's ideas on a process of urban design, one that suggested that the study of precedents was a model for practice. This tactic suggests an evolutionary approach to city planning, one that built on previous practice. This differed from the approach of Le Corbusier as expressed in his *Radiant City* (1930) or *Towards an Architecture* (1923). These emphasized that a new approach and a distinct break from the past were needed for contemporary urban design.

In response to the challenges of the growth of the urban population in the United States, with its accompanying problems of urban crowding, inadequate housing, pollution and poor sanitary conditions, the City Beautiful Movement represented an effort not only to ameliorate those problems, but to reformulate the organization of the civic landscape. It would do this by providing dignified and beautiful spaces for public ceremonial life. The movement largely drew on renaissance and neo-classical forms for monumental civic

buildings, grand boulevards and urban plazas.¹⁷⁸ The City Beautiful Movement was concerned not only with the design of individual structures like city halls and post offices, but more importantly with the grouping of those structures into harmonious ensembles that were coordinated by a comprehensive master plan. These plans would be designed by a relatively new type of professional, the urban planner.

The “looming spectacle”¹⁷⁹ of the 1898 World’s Columbian Exposition provided the aesthetic model for a harmonious grouping of neo-classical buildings around a ceremonial and monumental civic space. The exposition, and the ideas about urban beauty and civic space influenced the next two decades of urban planning in cities across the United States, including New York, Washington D.C., Kansas City, Detroit, and Chicago. In perhaps the “most notable expression of City Beautiful ideas”¹⁸⁰, the 1909 Plan of Chicago, by Daniel Burnham, the authors of the plan noted that “The origin of the plan of Chicago can be traced directly to the World’s Columbian Exposition. The World’s Fair of 1893 was the beginning, in our day and in this country of the orderly arrangement of extensive public grounds and buildings.”¹⁸¹ In his study of the application of the application of the City Beautiful concept to Detroit, Daniel Bluestone notes that the emphasis on the aesthetic component of the Exposition’s White City encourages and “overly formalistic” reading of the origins and aims of the movement.

¹⁷⁸ Daniel Bluestone, “Detroit’s City Beautiful and the Problem of Commerce,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, XL, (volume 2, September, 1988): 245.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid*

¹⁸⁰ *ibid*

¹⁸¹ *ibid*

The “narrowly formalistic” emphasis that Bluestone notes minimizes the influence of other factors, such as the political and economic interests of civic leaders. Not only was the movement about beauty and the formal qualities of urban space, it was an expression of civic obligation and social duty on the part of the business and governmental figures. In addition to the supposed moral value of dignified spaces, it was an effort to preserve “the traditional order and a preferred building hierarchy in the face of unprecedented growth and change.”¹⁸²

The City Beautiful movement was the result of other trends in the late nineteenth century, including the growing park planning movement, the nature and park preservation/conservation movement, and movements to alleviate urban problems like tenement housing, air pollution from the growing scale of industrialization, and public health concerns due to the lack of sanitary sewers.

The scale of urban problems and the models of successful large-scale planning suggested the need for and the efficacy of comprehensive planning. The 1909 Plan of Chicago was one example, and it was one that emphasized a visual image of the future city made more uniform, and presumably more satisfactory, as the solution to current problems. But other plans and proposals relied less on aesthetic qualities than on systematic studies of economic conditions and sociological data. In Boston, a comprehensive effort was largely instigated and organized by Edward Filene, the philanthropist and businessman who built the Filene’s department store chain. Filene was an advocate of Frederick Winslow Taylor’s ideas of scientific management, and he brought the same emphasis on study and analysis to his planning effort for Boston. The effort was Boston 1915, and it was a comprehensive

¹⁸² Bluestone, “Detroit’s City Beautiful and the Problem of Commerce”: 246.

study of urban conditions and housing done in 1909-1910 as a way to envision what the city could be in five years.

Though the City Beautiful/Garden City movement was the dominant paradigm for city planning, by the first decades of the twentieth century it was being challenged on practical grounds and on stylistic and aesthetic grounds. The emphasis on civic beauty and aesthetics in urbanism and on romantic associations of nature as a transcendent value were being replaced by an emphasis on rationalism, efficiency and scientific rigor as the criteria for assessing planning and architecture. Urban design that emphasized an aesthetics-based civic art, particularly that based on Beaux Arts monumentalism, was increasingly challenged. The most prominent professionals (such as Olmsted and Nolen) repeatedly argued that urban planning was not solely or even primarily concerned with aesthetics and beauty. The profession increasingly sought to reframe their work, not as an expensive and superficial extravagance, but as a scientifically based rational process that improved the function of the city. This tension between landscape and urban design as an “outdoor art” and as matter of technical problem-solving (a dichotomy that would come to be called the City Beautiful versus the City Practical) would become even more pointed in the next two decades as international-style modernism came to challenge the dominance of the classical foundations of the City Beautiful movement.

The City Beautiful movement in the United States was part of a broader movement of neoclassicism and widespread enthusiasm for the *École des Beaux Arts*, the architecture school in Paris that was based on the study of ancient Greek and Roman monuments. It is also associated with the American Renaissance from the turn of the century, the peak of

Beaux Arts neoclassicism in this country.¹⁸³ Many of the prominent architects from the turn of the century studied at the École, including Richard Morris Hunt, Henry Hobson Richardson, Julia Morgan, Charles McKim, Bernard Maybeck, and Louis Sullivan. Though the American Renaissance is most closely associated with Greek and Roman monumental architecture, this list shows that the people who studied at the École and practiced in the United States did not display a unified visual design language. H. H. Richardson developed his own personal style of Romanesque interpretation, Julia Morgan also produced Arts and Crafts designs, Maybeck developed a unique and personal style, and Sullivan would be noted for being a critic of the Beaux Arts style. Sullivan's critique was part of a long ongoing debate in architectural discourse about finding the appropriate architectural language for contemporary times.¹⁸⁴ The two key implications of this debate that are relevant to my study are: that there existed a design language that somehow reflected the current culture and society, and second, that it might be possible to find the "right" one. The inference from this debate was that for many modern architects in the first half of the twentieth century, finding an appropriate language and style for contemporary practice meant finding a new mode of design that was not based on the recent past. Peets's work implies and approach that could incorporate the lessons of history into a modern practice of urban design.

¹⁸³ Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, Elizabeth S. Eustis, and John Bidwell, *Romantic Gardens: Nature, Art, and Landscape Design*, (The Morgan Library and Museum, New York): 69.

¹⁸⁴ J. Mordaunt Crook, "Architecture and History," in *Architectural History 27: Design and Practice in British Architecture: Studies in Architectural History Presented to Howard Colvin* (1984, accessed 01-02-2017): 555-578. Crook's article gives a good overview of some of the debate, particularly in the mid-nineteenth century in Great Britain, but it is relevant to the background and long-standing nature of the debate, it is one of many that cover this. Also, see Crook, *The Dilemma of Style*, on the legacy of the search for an appropriate style, page 15.

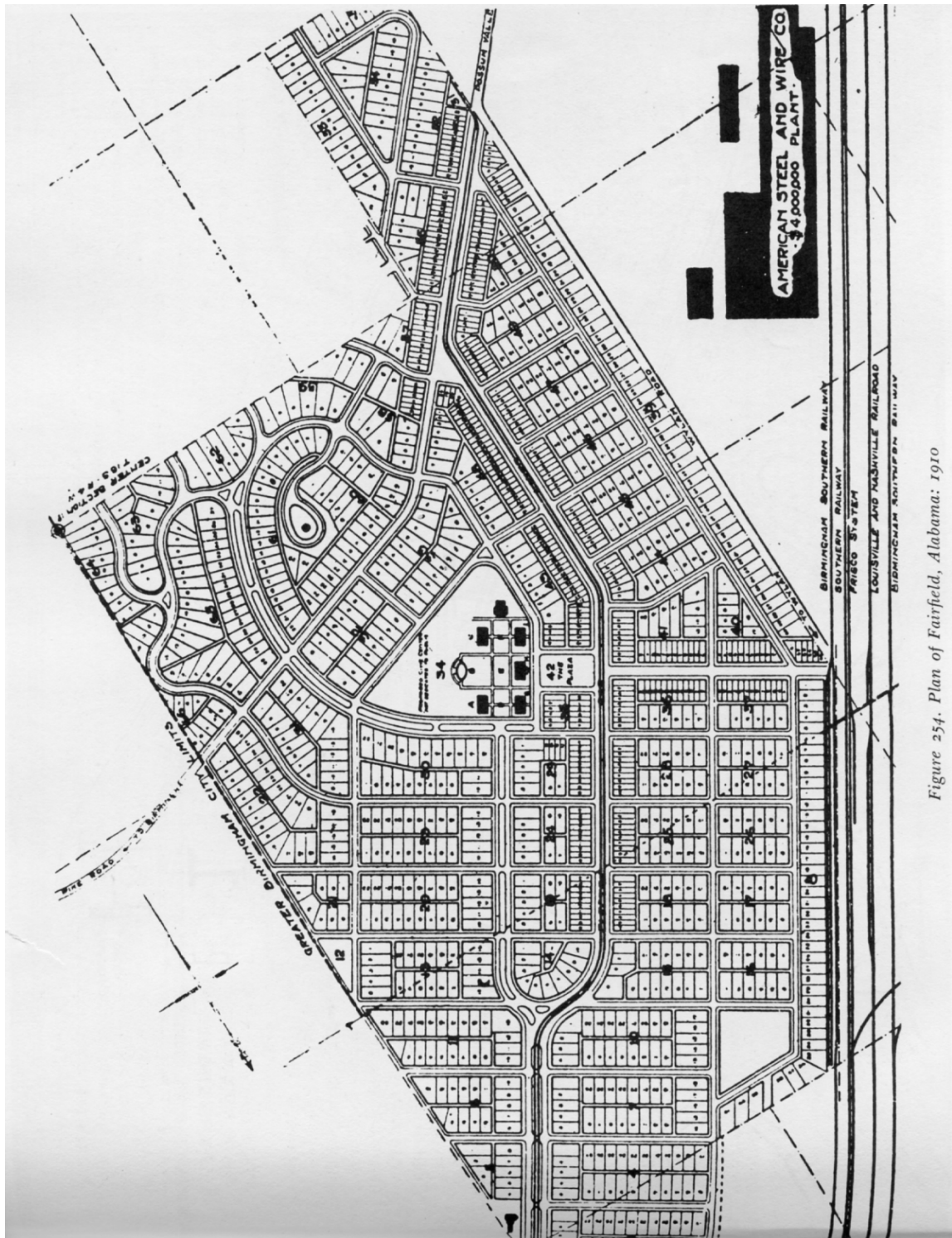


Figure 254. Plan of Fairfield, Alabama: 1910

Figure 2: Fairfield, Alabama, (originally called Corey), a company town designed by George H. Miller for the U.S. Steel Corp, 1912. The plan for Fairfield was published widely and praised as a model satellite town

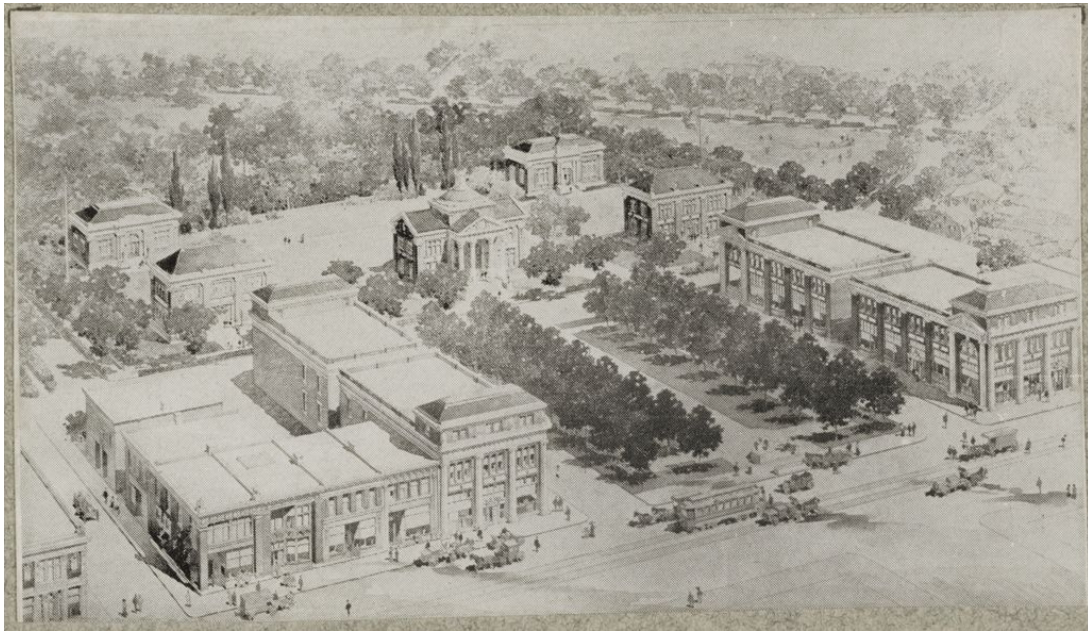


Figure 3: Fairfield, Alabama civic center, an example of City Beautiful emphasis on the monumental grouping of civic buildings

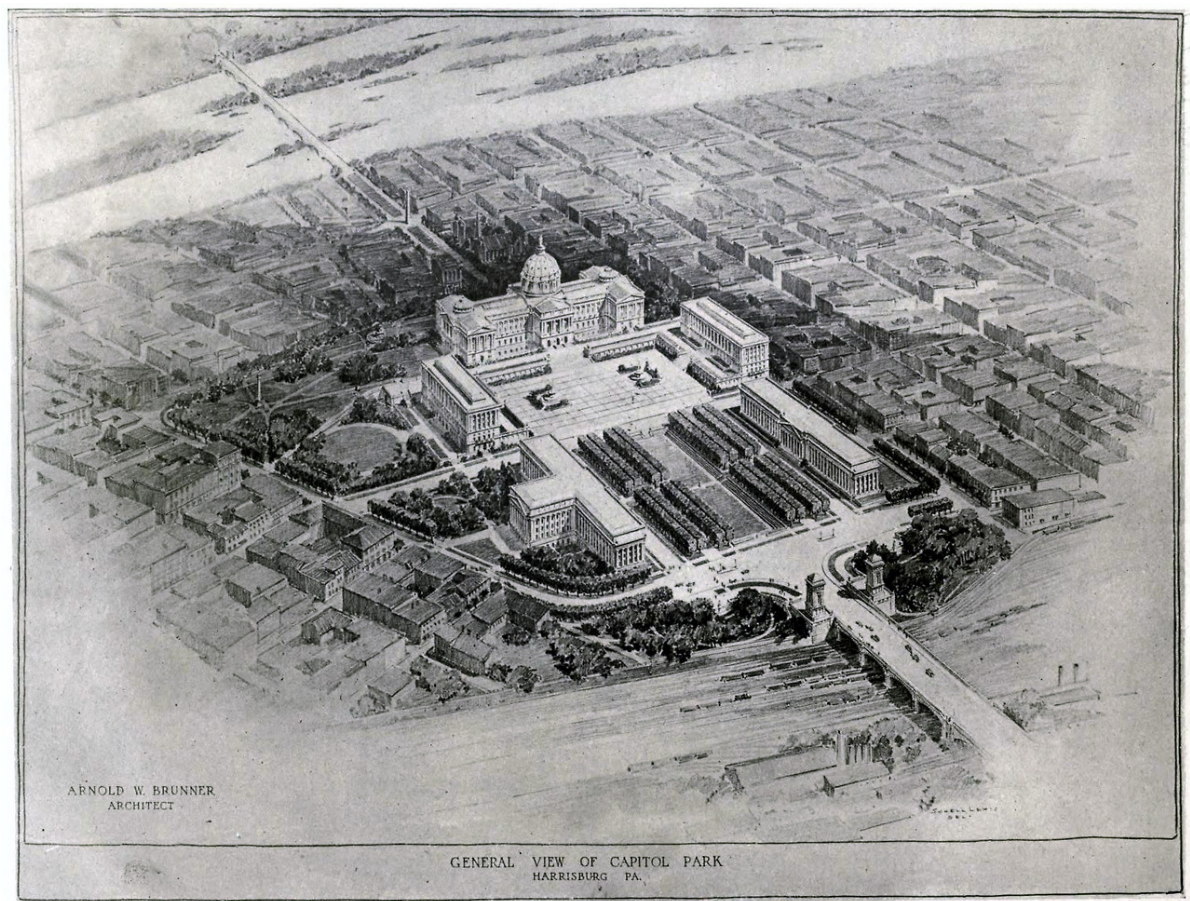


Figure 4: Harrisburg, City Beautiful development of the government center

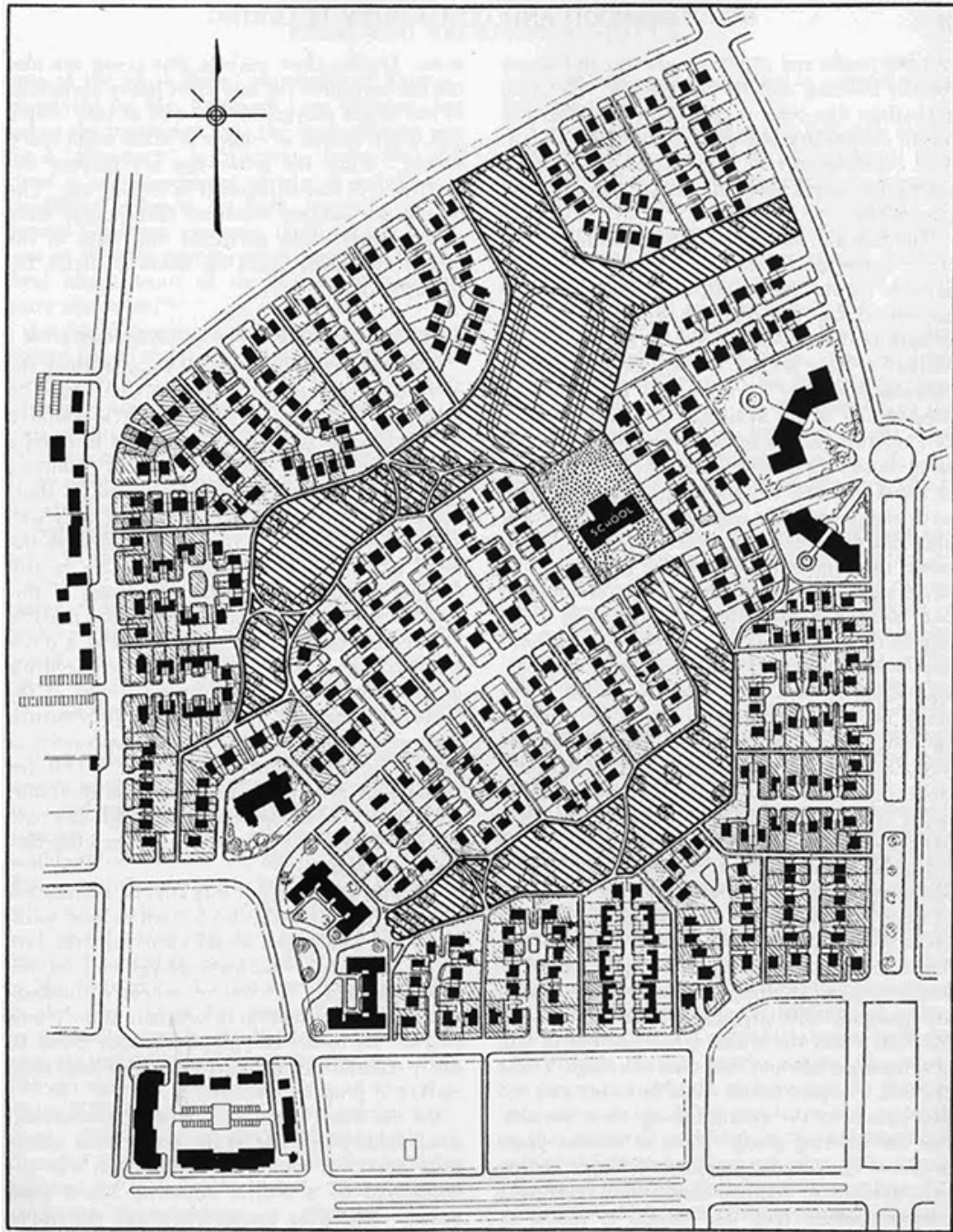


Figure 7: Clarence Stein and Henry Wright; Marjorie Sewell Cautley, landscape architect, Radburn, New Jersey, 1929

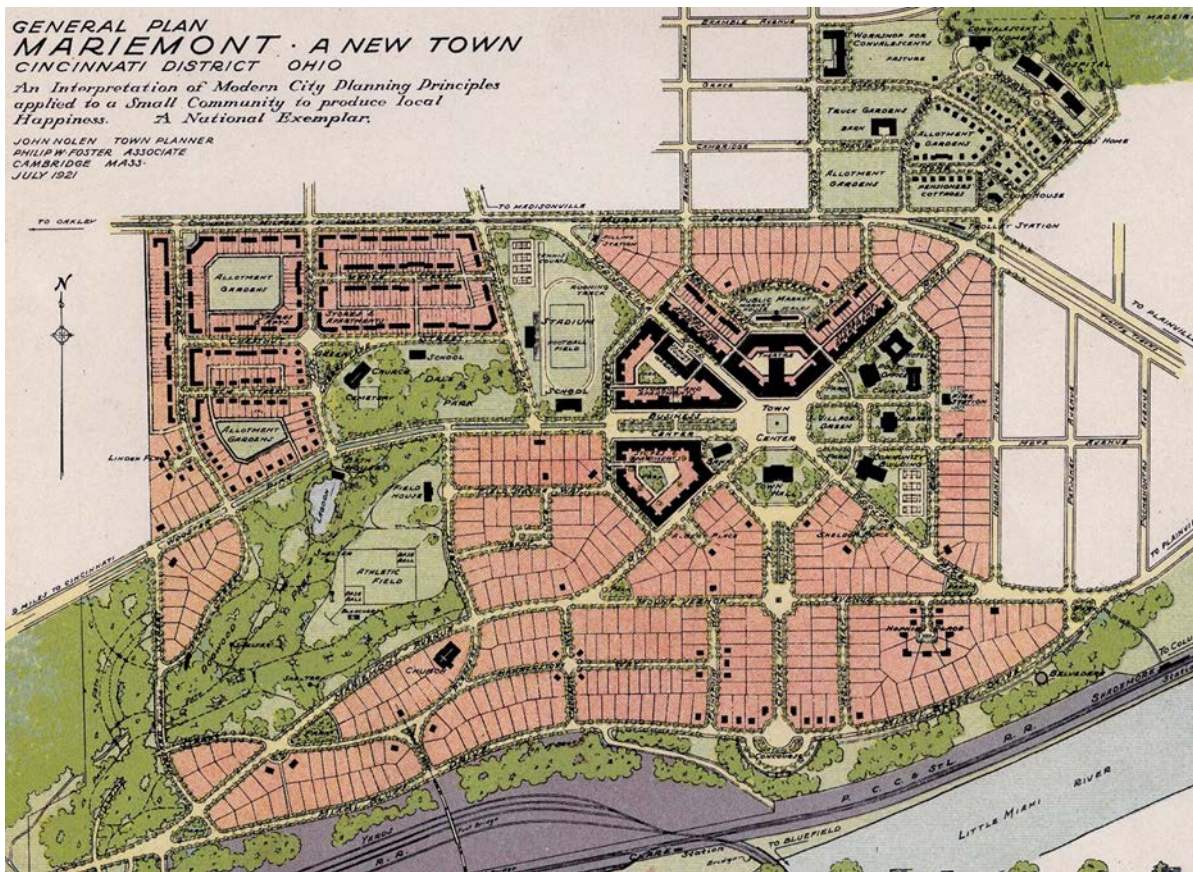


Figure 8: Mariemont, Ohio: John Nolan, 1921

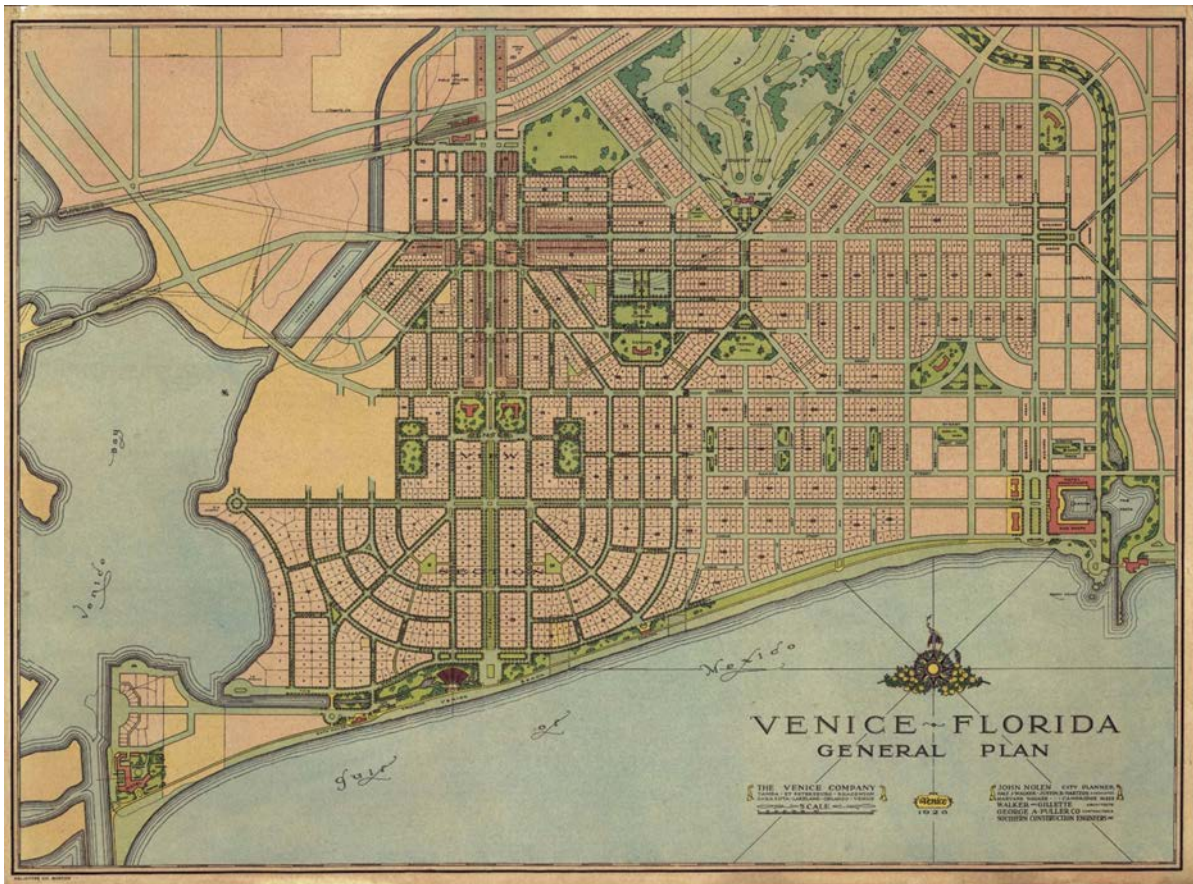


Figure 9: Venice, Florida, John Nolan

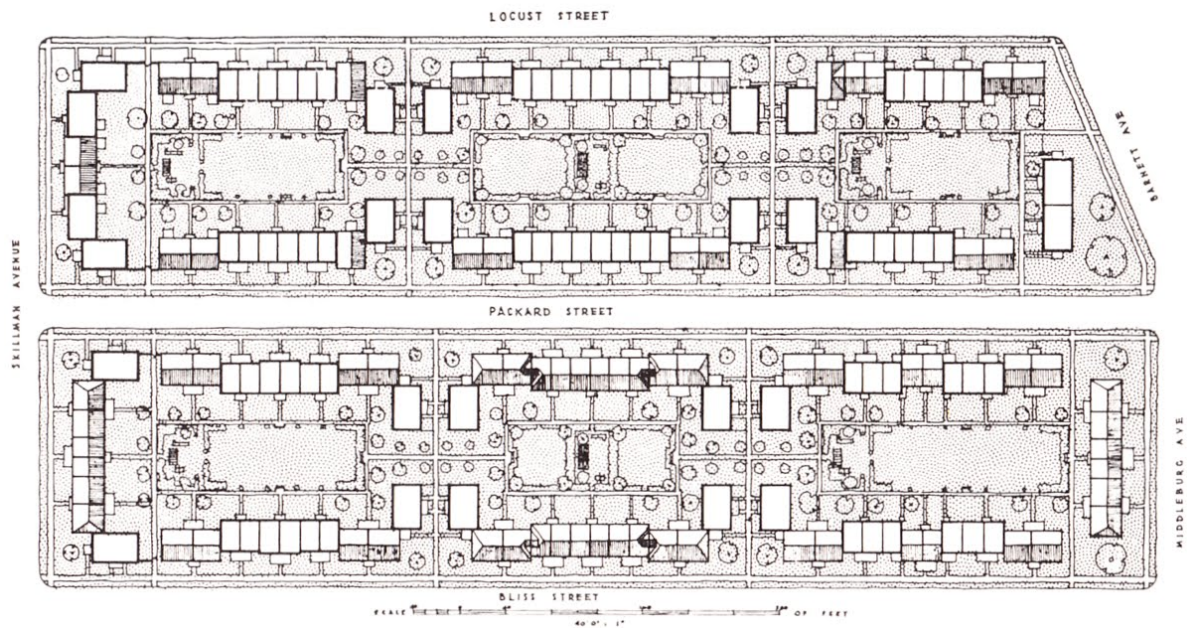


Figure 10: Sunnyside Gardens, by Clarence Stein, Henry Wright, Marjorie Sewell Cautley; 1924. In Queens, New York

CIAM: the beginnings of modernism

The critique of the City Beautiful movement that Daniel Bluestone described as “narrowly formalistic”¹⁸⁵ had been advanced by planners in the United States such as John Nolen and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. in their shift from the “City Beautiful” to the “City Practical” in the 1910’s.¹⁸⁶ While this represented a shift to emphasize rational and practical concerns and to de-emphasize aesthetics, as Robert Freestone notes, they did not abandon concerns on civic beauty. Instead, they suggested that beauty would be one component, and possibly a secondary one, of rational municipal planning that positioned city planning as a scientific form of expertise.¹⁸⁷ This effort to reformulate design as an objective process could be seen both in city planning and in architecture, and was a part of a search for appropriate models for architecture that reflected current technology and current mass production practices.¹⁸⁸

Increasingly, and especially in Europe by the 1920’s, this meant not just searching for new forms, but rejecting the historicist forms of the past. To see Peets in this context,

¹⁸⁵ Bluestone, “Detroit’s City Beautiful and the Problem of Commerce”: 245. Bluestone is specifically referring to Daniel Burnham’s description of the origins of 1909 *Plan of Chicago*. More broadly, he also challenges the view that aesthetics were the primary aim of Detroit’s civic leaders in adopting their City Beautiful proposals.

¹⁸⁶ Robert Freestone, “Reconciling Beauty and Utility in Early City Planning: The Contribution of John Nolen,” *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 37, No. 2, (Sage Publications, 2011, downloaded from juh.sagepub.com, March 4, 2016): 256.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid*: 257. Freestone notes that the supposed dichotomy between utility and beauty was “overstated,” and that the work of Nolen demonstrates that the two concerns could be combined.

¹⁸⁸ Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*: 33. One of the agenda items for the first congress was “standardization” using mass-production techniques (page 14); in Gropius’ lecture at the second CIAM, he displayed images of his design for a housing settlement, specifically noting its use of “Taylorized production methods”.

and to argue that his approach and concerns were significantly at odds with the dominant discourse of modernism, it is necessary to examine that discourse. The most significant forum for that discourse was the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne, or CIAM. I will review some of the history of the CIAM, and the concerns that the group and some of its key members advanced.

The CIAM formed in 1928 and it shared concerns and members with earlier movements that advanced an agenda of social responsibility in architecture and a search for new forms of architecture that were appropriate to the spirit of the age, like the Deutscher Werkbund and the Bauhaus, both in Germany. The Deutscher Werkbund was formed in 1907, largely due to the efforts of Hermann Muthesius to promote Arts and Crafts principles imported from England. The Werkbund, with its emphasis on the production of high quality mass produced consumer goods, and for advocating the highest standards of design for all scales of objects (their motto was “From sofa cushions to city building”), were influential on individuals like Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and Gropius, and the Werkbund was also influential on the development of the Bauhaus, which was founded in 1919. The Bauhaus, and Gropius in particular, sought ways to incorporate mass production techniques and Frederick Winslow Taylor’s ideas of scientific management into the building process.¹⁸⁹

One goal of the CIAM to provide a forum where an international group of architects and planners could come together to discuss and debate current developments in the design field, and a larger goal was to advance their ideas and promote those ideas to government and corporate groups that would be able to implement the design strategies advocated by the congress; as Sigfried Giedion noted for the 1928 meeting: “To forcefully introduce this idea

¹⁸⁹ Guillén, *The Taylorized Beauty of the Mechanical*: 28.

[of modern architecture] into technical, economic and social circles.”¹⁹⁰ The most prominent members of CIAM were Le Corbusier and Sigfried Giedion, the Swiss architectural historian, and the group included prominent figures such as Gropius and Mies van der Rohe.¹⁹¹ The first meeting, held in Switzerland in 1928, included twenty-four architects from eight countries.¹⁹² The congress provided a forum for creating and supporting an avant-garde in architecture and urbanism. They saw their task in broad terms, and included social as well as architectural topics. The proposed agenda for the first meeting, suggested by Le Corbusier, included:

1. Modern architectural expression
2. Standardization
3. Hygiene
4. Urbanism
5. Primary School Education
6. Governments and the modern architecture debate¹⁹³

Members of the congress were explicitly political, and believed that existing structures of land ownership and urban development had to be reformulated:

“The idea of modern architecture includes the link between the phenomenon of architecture and that of the general economic system...Town planning is the organization of the functions of collective life; it extends over both the urban agglomerations and the countryside...The chaotic division of land, resulting from

¹⁹⁰ Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*: 10.

¹⁹¹ Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*.

¹⁹² *ibid*, page 9

¹⁹³ *ibid*, page 14

sales, speculations, inheritances, must be abolished by a collective and methodical land policy. This redistribution of land, the indispensable preliminary basis for any town planning, must include the just division between the owners and the community of the unearned increment resulting from works of joint interest.”¹⁹⁴

Crucial to this is that the architects of CIAM believed that a new order for architecture and urbanism was needed, that it was at hand, and that it was architects who would be the “international elite”¹⁹⁵ who could provide the physical form for that order. They argued that new materials and technologies will bring about that urban reformation. Giedion noted that “Today, steel and reinforced concrete provide us with the most efficient means to produce an urbanism consistent with the profound economic and social revolution which is the result of the machine.”¹⁹⁶ To achieve their aims and their goals for the city, they also assumed that new laws and authorities would be needed. Le Corbusier argued that an urban redevelopment authority was needed, one that would “unrestricted eminent domain” power, and could operate independent of “parliamentary politics.”¹⁹⁷

Like the City Beautiful movement, CIAM was motivated by urban problems of crowding and sub-standard housing, at least partly the result of poorly regulated building and zoning legislation. In the view of CIAM, in the then current situation, “confusion is general, chaos reigns, danger is everywhere.”¹⁹⁸ For Le Corbusier particularly, the problem

¹⁹⁴ Kenneth Frampton, “Foreword” to Mumford, *CIAM Discourse* (The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 2000): xi

¹⁹⁵ Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*: 15.

¹⁹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁹⁷ *ibid*, page 14

¹⁹⁸ *ibid*, page 15

was in the existing patterns of traditional streets. He stated his opposition to and distaste of traditional streets in an article in 1929:

“The definition of the street which has held good up the present day is ‘a roadway that is usually bordered by pavements, narrow or wide as the case may be.’ Rising straight up from it are walls of houses, which when seen against the sky-line present a grotesquely jagged silhouette of gables, attics, and zinc chimneys. At the very bottom of this scenic railway lies the street, plunged in eternal twilight. The sky is a remote hope far, far above it. The street is no more than a trench, a deep cleft, a narrow passage. And although we have been accustomed to it for more than a thousand years, our hearts are always oppressed by the constriction of its enclosing walls....It is the well-trodden path of the eternal pedestrian, a relic of the centuries, a dislocated organ that can no longer function. The street wears us out. And when all is said and done we have to admit it disgusts us. Then why does it still exist?”¹⁹⁹

For Le Corbusier, and the architects of CIAM, the assumption was that piecemeal interventions could not repair the city fabric and that only broad removal of the dense city fabric with its tenements, slums, and traditional crowded streets could produce a livable city. The new pattern would be based on high-rise residential towers widely spaced in broad green spaces.²⁰⁰ A small scale example of this can be seen in a proposal by Gropius and Fry for a development at St. Leonard’s Hill in Windsor, England.²⁰¹ But most of the proposals were not for single sites, but for city wide reconstruction. To address the physical chaos of

¹⁹⁹ Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*: 56.

²⁰⁰ *ibid*, page 57.

²⁰¹ *ibid*, page 117.

the existing city, district wide areas would be razed and replaced with high-rise and mid-rise buildings in a uniform pattern of row buildings, called the *Zeilenbau* pattern.²⁰² While Gropius and Fry's proposal for Windsor comprised two high rises in a thirty acre site, Le Corbusier's earlier theoretical rebuilding of Paris in his Plan Voisin, as well as his plans for Barcelona (1932), for Nemours, Morocco (1935), Mart Stam's plan for Orsk, USSR, or Albin's plan for Green Milan, all assumed that large swaths of the existing city could be removed and replaced with uniform and uniformly spaced high rises.²⁰³

It is notable that many of the projects presented at the CIAM meetings were hypothetical demonstration projects, not actual commissions. As a result, they were not encumbered by programmatic requirements, budgets, or implementation strategies. In this, they were more like Ebenezer Howard's diagrams for his ideal garden city; they presented an ideal and utopian pattern rather than a realizable plan. In the CIAM meetings of 1930 (held in Belgium, with the theme "Rational Lot Development") and 1933 (ultimately held aboard the SS *Patris* as it sailed from Marseilles to Piraeus, on the theme "The Functional City"), delegates to the congress presented analytical plans for several cities. These plans identified the historic cores, which would be preserved. However, the more substantial portions of the designs assumed that the city fabric should be treated as a blank slate, and that not only the buildings, but the existing streets should be removed and rebuilt in a more rational manner.

The CIAM discourse and model projects promoted a view that approaching a site or a city as a *tabula rasa* was an appropriate design strategy. Their agenda was to determine

²⁰² Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*, 30.

²⁰³ Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*: 72, 100, 101.

rational principles for design that could be applied in any city. Their “utopian project for a world founded on universal laws”²⁰⁴ emphasized broad principles over local aberrations. It also emphasized the expertise of the “enlightened elite,” or the architects, over the experiential qualities that affected the individual urban occupant. This seems to be a different view of the role and status of the urban designer than Peets’s approach. In *Dreaming the Rational City*, Christine Boyer discusses the patterns of discourse and habits of mind that led planners to be able to conceptualize their work as scientific and objectively valid, and thus gave confidence and authority to the proposals of planners.²⁰⁵ The proposals and discourse of the CIAM implied that successful urban plans could be achieved through the design recommendations of expert professionals through rational analysis, and not insignificantly, through the forms and materials of modernist architecture. Peets represents an alternative view, one that suggests that successful urban plans would be arrived at by close study of the existing site, which suggests that solutions are site specific rather than universal. He also suggests that, in addition to close study and accommodation of existing conditions, designs should be based on concern for the way public spaces are used by the occupants.

The CIAM represented the most coherent advocacy group for the ideas of modernist architecture and urbanism at mid-century. The group produced a well-documented legacy in both its ten meetings between 1928 and 1959 and in the numerous publications that they created. They benefitted from having an articulate and charismatic leadership in figures like Le Corbusier, Sigfried Giedion, and Jose Luis Sert. Beyond the personalities, they also had

²⁰⁴ O’Malley and Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Modernism and Landscape Architecture*: ix.

²⁰⁵ M. Christine Boyer, *Dreaming the Rational City, The Myth of American City Planning* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1983).

an identifiable and compelling goal: to design a more rational and functional city. The proposals illustrated at the CIAM meetings showed plans for urban renewal in specific locations (such as Barcelona or Milan, as noted earlier), but they can be seen not so much as specific local recommendations but as proposals of diagrams and patterns for development that could be applied in any location. The scope and scale of urban demolition and rebuilding emphasized the pattern without having to address the practicalities of implementation. For some, this made the proposals seem utopian, idealistic, and impractical; though, as Eric Mumford notes, Le Corbusier, “in his usual megalomaniacal way, was undaunted by these criticisms.”²⁰⁶ For some, the value of Le Corbusier’s vision (and by extension, that of CIAM) was specifically because it was grand, visionary and impractical. This can be seen explicitly in a presentation made at the first United States meeting of the new professional group proposed by Joseph Hudnut, the American Society of Planners and Architects, or ASPA in 1945.²⁰⁷ At this meeting, the architect George Howe, who was then working with the Public Buildings Administration in Washington, praised the urban planning visions of Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright because “Their chief claim to fame is their splendid disregard for all practical impediments to their execution. They transcend the momentary limits of social, political, economic and legal possibility.”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*: 47. Mumford notes this in Le Corbusier’s 1930 comments on Moscow’s Green City competition, and it refers only partly to physical practicality, and more to political impracticality.

²⁰⁷ The ASPA was proposed by Hudnut, then the dean at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design, as an alternative to the American Institute of Architects (AIA) to provide a forum for modernist architects in the United States. The history of this group is covered in more detail in Andrew Shanken’s article: “Between brotherhood and bureaucracy: Joseph Hudnut, Louis I. Kahn and the American Society of Planners and Architects.”

²⁰⁸ Andrew Shanken, “Between brotherhood and bureaucracy: Joseph Hudnut, Louis I. Kahn and the American Society of Planners and Architects,” in *Planning Perspectives*, Volume 20 (April, 2005): 159. It is also worthwhile to note that members of CIAM had also sought to enlist George Howe to create an American

CIAM, in its publications and presentations, presented the appearance of a unified body. Though the leadership was stable, and the group was active for thirty years, the membership was not stable, from the twenty-four attendees at the first meeting in 1928, to the more than seventy at the meetings in 1939 and 1945.²⁰⁹ Also, the group was not unified in opinions and approaches, as can be seen in details like the debates over whether the group should take a stand on political matters, and even more in the group's eventual dissolution in 1959 when dissenting members, including Alison Smithson, Peter Smithson, and Aldo van Eyck, broke with CIAM to form Team Ten.²¹⁰ While those show that there were significant differences of opinion even within the CIAM, Peets shows that there were other approaches, ones that did not assume that a set of universal patterns and a *tabula rasa* approach were a viable or positive strategy.

In his introduction to Eric Mumford's book on CIAM, Kenneth Frampton concludes that there is "little basis for denying the validity of the Marxist prognosis of CIAM in the twenties"²¹¹ because the experience of urban planning since 1960 has failed to satisfactorily deal with ecological concerns, to address "spontaneous urbanization," or solve "sociocultural problems."²¹² If subsequent practice has failed to solve problems that the CIAM also failed to address or solve, that does not suggest that the CIAM approach would have been able to solve those problems. Subsequent projects that embodied the CIAM

component of CIAM, but that, due apparently to disagreements between Giedion and Howe, they were not able to enlist enough support to form an American chapter

²⁰⁹ Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*.

²¹⁰ Mumford; *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*.

²¹¹ Frampton, "Foreword" to Mumford; *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*: xv.

²¹² *ibid*

strategies suggest that specific parts of the CIAM program, especially the devaluing of urban streets as social spaces, were also problematic. Examples such as Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis, Cabrini Green in Chicago, and Robin Hood Gardens in London imply that devaluing the public space of the traditional street led to, or exacerbated social problems. When Frampton notes that CIAM's "cause was lost,"²¹³ it might suggest there were inherent problems with the strategy. The much smaller scale of Peets's work in neighborhoods that had greater employment and other economic advantages might not be directly comparable to large scale urban renewal projects like Cabrini Green and Pruitt-Igoe, but their success over time suggest that the strategy of attention to walkable neighborhoods, better defined social space, and attention to occupant preferences may be a more productive strategy.

CIAM represented the orthodoxy of modernist dialogue, but its goal of identifying a universal pattern of urban reconfiguration was not successful. There were some successes of modernist neighborhood development. Lafayette Gardens in Detroit, by Mies van der Rohe, Ludwig Hilberseimer and Alfred Caldwell was successful, though it too was on a much smaller scale than the CIAM urban renewal projects. Though CIAM represented the orthodoxy, debates within the group, such as the debate that led to founding of Team Ten and the dissolution of CIAM, and dissenting opinions outside the group, such as Peets, as well as Joseph Hudnut and Christopher Tunnard, show that the discourse of the time was not unified. I suggest that recognizing the diversity of opinions, with Peets as an example, provides a better and more interesting history of the period. Recognizing the success of Peets's town plans, as defined by their continued attractiveness as places to live, suggest a more structural reason for attention to his work; it is of value not just because it is a

²¹³ Frampton, "Foreword" to Mumford; *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*: xv.

dissenting voice, but because it suggests that success may come more from attention to the details of development than from imposing an ideal pattern.

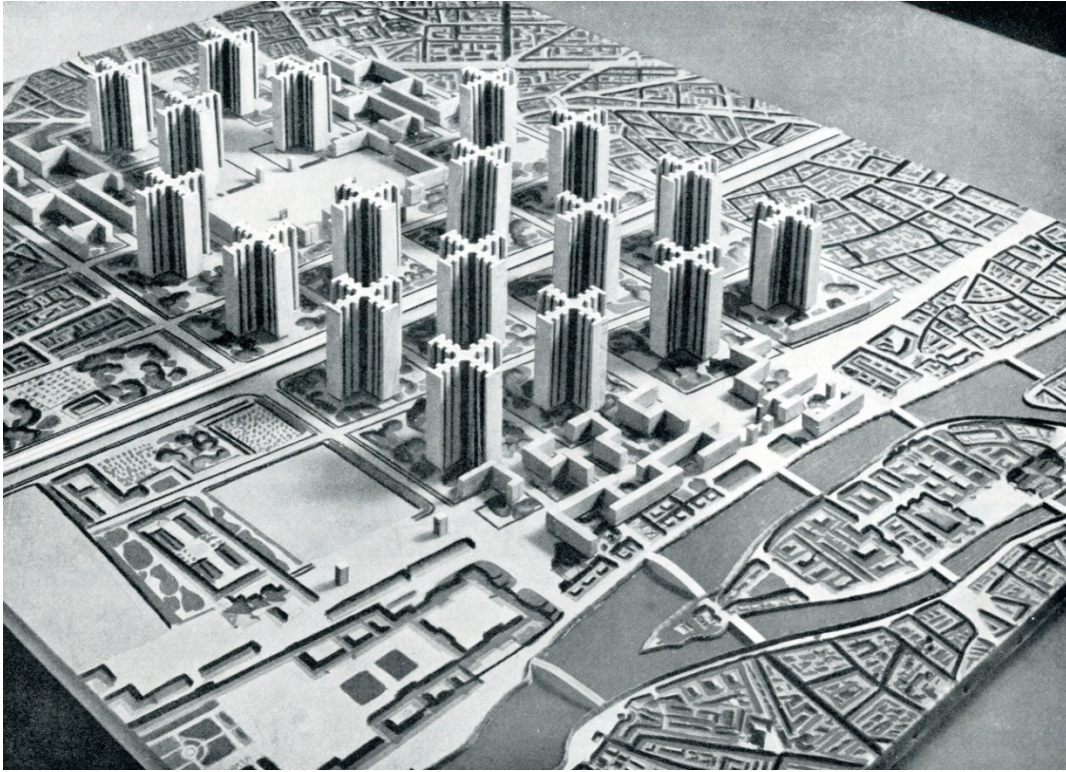
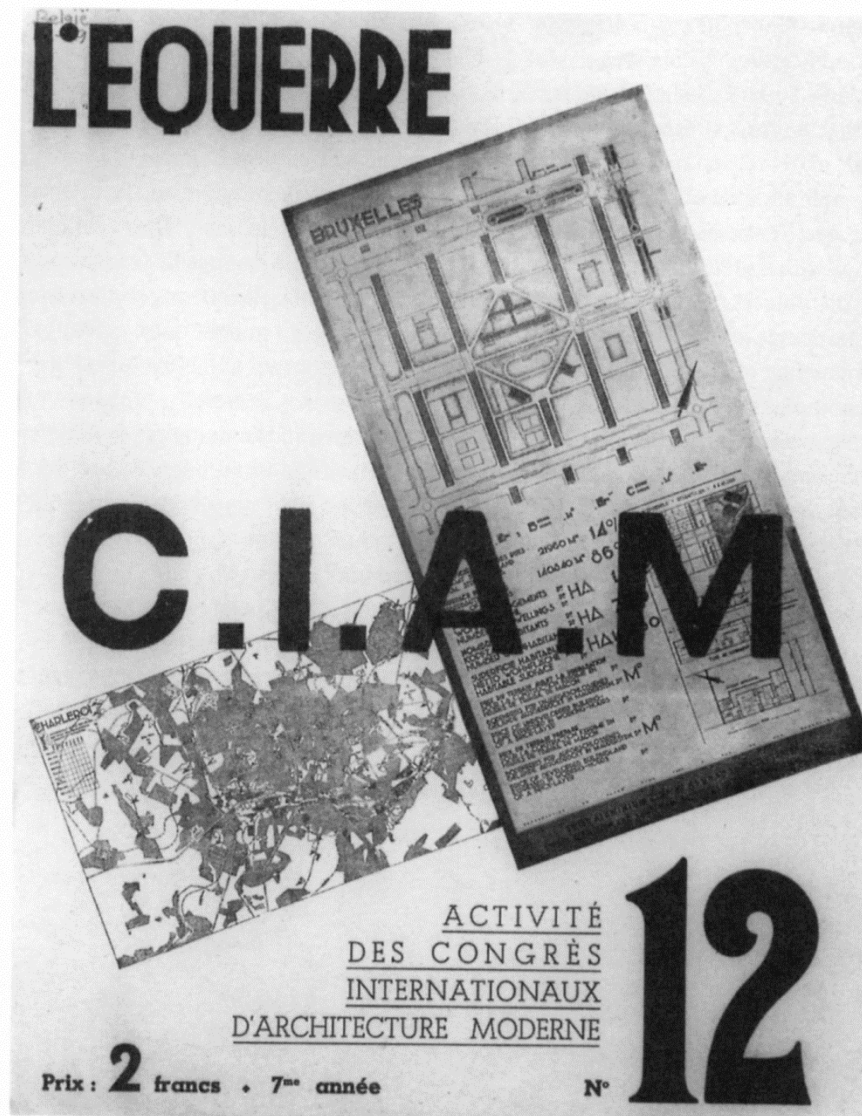
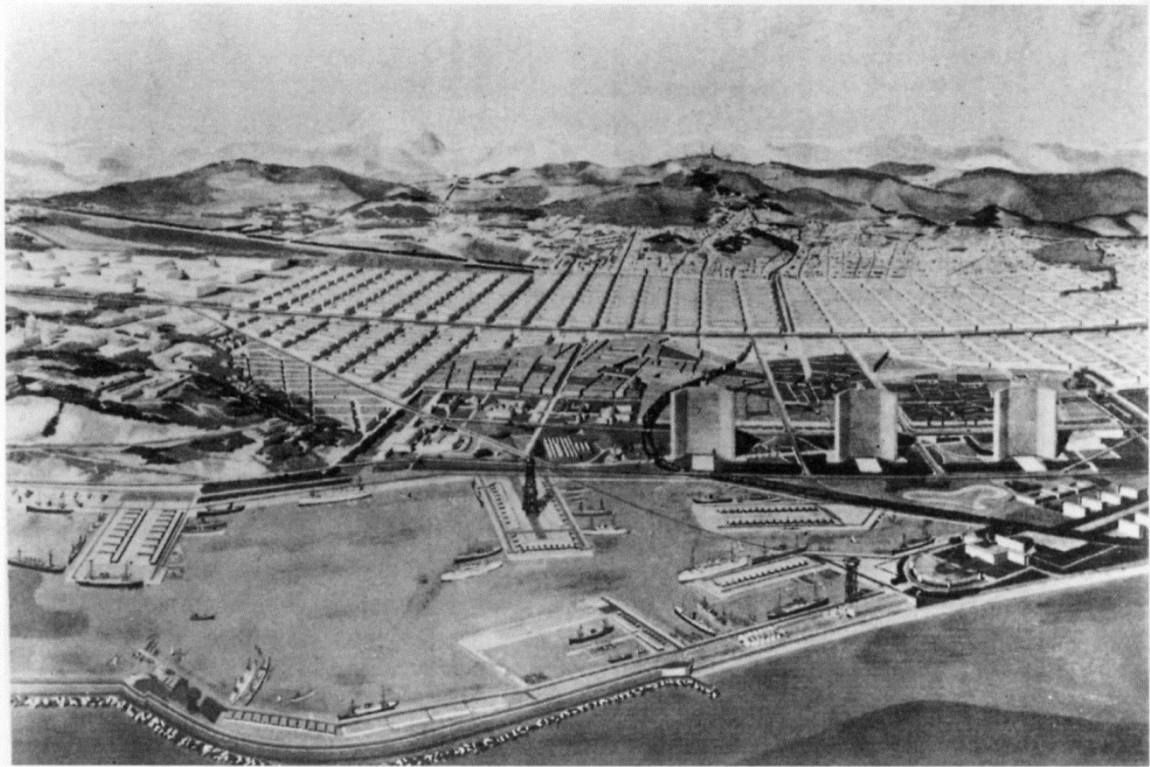


Figure 11: Le Corbusier, Ville Contemporaine, 1922



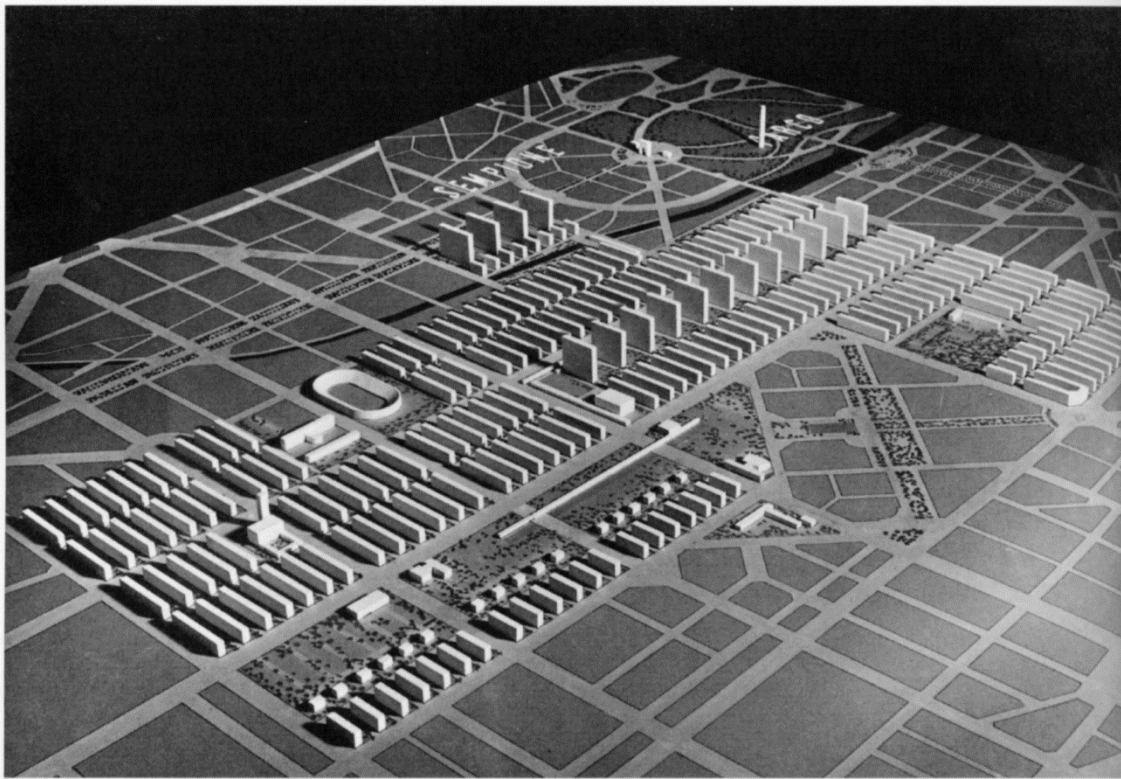
2.17 Cover of *L'Equerre* (The Square), a publication of the Belgian CIAM group, ca. 1935, illustrating Belgian contributions to CIAM 3 and 4.

Figure 12: Cover of CIAM publication; this shows the images of the the regional plan and typical urban block plan, from 1935, from Eric Mumford, *CIAM Discourse*



2.8 Le Corbusier and GATCPAC, Macià plan for Barcelona, 1932.

Figure 13: Le Corbusier, plan for redevelopment of Barcelona, from Mumford, CIAM Discourse



2.29 F. Albini, I. Gardella, G. Minoletti, G. Pagano, G. Palanti, G. Predaval, G. Romano, "Milano

Figure 14: CIAM, plan for Milan, 1937, from Eric Mumford, *CIAM Discourse*

Significant examples and precedents

The Columbian Exposition of 1893 is widely recognized by historians as a watershed moment in American city planning (Bluestone, 245). The design of the grounds, primarily by Daniel Burnham and Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. was based on Beaux Arts classicism. The fair was attended by over 27 million people in its six month installation. The neoclassical architecture, and even more importantly, the grouping of the buildings around the Court of Honor provided an aesthetic model for what a city should look like. Burnham explicitly credited the Exposition as the origin for his 1909 Plan of Chicago.²¹⁴

Yet, the monumental and grandiose aspects of the Court of Honor were only a part of the theoretical foundation of the City Beautiful movement. For its advocates, beauty was not an end in itself, but a natural result of comprehensive and intelligent planning. Writing in 1901, Jessie Good, an advocate of the City Beautiful, noted that “beauty” is not merely superficial, but “is founded on the soundest economic laws. It is the framework on which is founded the science of government.”²¹⁵

The impetus for comprehensive planning had arisen from the success of park planning in the late nineteenth century. Olmsted’s Emerald Necklace (the series of linear parks around Boston), and his (and Vaux’s) park planning for Buffalo, New York had demonstrated the possibility and promise of comprehensive plans. In addition to urban groups for metropolitan centers, comprehensive planning was applied to suburban

²¹⁴ Bluestone, “Detroit’s City Beautiful”: 245.

²¹⁵ John Reys, *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1965): 169.

developments (like Roland Park, 1912, a residential suburb in Baltimore, largely designed by George Kessler, with later input from the Olmsted Brothers, and Roland Park was one of the few contemporary examples that Peets specifically complimented in his writing) and to company towns and satellite towns like Fairfield, Alabama, a 1912 company town for what was then the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company, designed by George Miller and called by *American City* magazine one of the best examples of satellite city plans. What these plans shared and demonstrated was a growing emphasis on comprehensive planning in general; an idea that Olmsted had advocated since the late nineteenth century.

Discourse in conferences, publications, and associations

Along with the physical projects and examples of city planning that were being published in journals like *The American City* (established 1909), the theoretical foundations of the practice and its discourse were being established in conferences and books on city planning. One of the first texts dedicated to a theoretical foundation for urban planning was Camillo Sitte's (1843-1903) book of 1889: *City Planning According to Artistic Principles*. Sitte was an Austrian architect and city planner. His treatise was illustrated with examples giving an historical overview of urban planning. Though he drew heavily on Renaissance examples, he is most remembered for advocating the qualities of medieval urban typologies as an alternative to the increased rationalism of Otto Wagner's more rationalist and modernist conception of urbanism, or Olmsted's more monumental perspective. Sitte advocated an appreciation of medieval forms, especially the typology of the urban square. Sitte's work resonated with the City Beautiful in its emphasis on an artistic approach to city

planning, though his specific focus on medieval precedents was at odds with the Beaux Arts orientation of the City Beautiful movement. More important than the specific precedent, basing urban planning on any type of artistic grounds was being challenged within the movement by a growing emphasis on scientific and economic justifications, efforts that reframed the activity as the City Practical or the City Efficient. Outside the movement (especially in Europe), both Sitte's work and the City Beautiful were being challenged by the advent of modernism (most notably by Le Corbusier) and a reliance on metaphors of engineering, science and scientific management.²¹⁶

In early twentieth century urban planning, there was significant overlap between the City Beautiful and the Garden City. The City Beautiful movement was most concerned with and applied to the monumental grouping of civic structures in metropolitan centers. The Garden City movement was more concerned with the planning of satellite towns and ex-urban residential developments. The Garden City movement grew from the work of Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928), whose book: *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* was published in 1898, and then revised in 1902 and reissued as *Garden Cities of To-morrow*. Howard's work was not so much a physical planning effort (in that it did not advocate an actual plan) as it was a diagram for how urban growth should be organized. One of the key elements of Howard's recommendations had been to establish greenways as perimeters for clusters (his clusters were intended to combine residential and industrial uses so that each cluster could be a self-contained community that provided all essential functions). This element shows up in garden city developments in the United States, and recurs in the work of Peets, in both greenbelts and in riparian protection zones.

²¹⁶ Richard G. Olson, *Scientism and Technocracy in the Twentieth Century*, (Lanham, Maryland, Lexington Books, 2016): 41-44.

The impetus for Camillo Sitte had been how to beautify the city and how encourage an artistic approach that was a counter to an overemphasis on rational planning. Ebenezer Howard similarly was concerned with ameliorating the problems that contemporary cities were experiencing, though he was more concerned with social problems associated with urban growth: the unhealthy mixing of industry and housing, and the problems of rapid growth and overcrowding.

The first text on city planning in the United States was Charles Mulford Robinson's book of 1901, *The Improvement of Towns and Cities*, followed in 1903 by *Modern Civic Art, or The City Made Beautiful*. Robinson's book assumed that the primary rationale for city planning was an aesthetics-based formula for promoting civic beauty. He opened his 1903 book in florid, Victorian prose by stating that "There is a promise in the sky of a new day. The darkness rolls away, the buildings, that had been shadows stand forth distinctly."²¹⁷ Though he goes on to discuss the importance of comprehensive planning, his emphasis is "...to build statelier cities than ever before. So modern civic art appears."²¹⁸

There were significant international conferences addressing the state of urban planning. Werner Hegemann had organized an international conference in Berlin in 1910, and helped to plan a Boston exposition on civic design for the Boston region, called *Boston 1915*. (Hegemann, just five years older than Peets, was a Berlin planner and general intellectual. He would later form an urban planning partnership with Peets, and they would co-author their most known book, *The American Vitruvius; An Architect's Handbook of Civic Art*.) Hegemann's exhibitions emphasized the importance of collecting sociologic and

²¹⁷ Charles Mulford Robinson, *Modern Civic Art, or the City Made Beautiful*, (New York, Putnam and Sons, 1903): 3.

²¹⁸ *ibid*: 6.

economic data as the basis for urban planning. Patrick Geddes had organized a conference on town planning in London in 1910, which emphasized regional analysis and consideration of social as well as geologic considerations. Geddes's work on the valley section and on soils and geology analysis presages the work that later would be developed by Ian McHarg. In the United States, there were noted developments like the Boston 1915 Movement, as well as conferences on city planning, such as one organized by John Nolen in 1916, which also emphasized comprehensive physical and economic study.

Working with Hegemann, Peets also contributed to the theoretical discourse with *The American Vitruvius*; published in 1922 (the name refers to Colen Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus*, which, like Hegemann and Peets's book was not so much a design instruction manual as a collection of precedents). The book is a compendium of urban design plans, gardens and campus plans (many with illustrations by Peets's hand). In format, the book is much like Sir Banister Fletcher's *History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*. When the book was reviewed in 1923 by *Town Planning Review* (by an unnamed reviewer), it was aptly noted that the book should have been called a "Thesaurus of Artistic Town Planning." The review went on to say that it was a "great volume," and one that will never go out of date."²¹⁹

This view was both optimistic and mistaken. The *Vitruvius* was published the same year that Le Corbusier presented his designs for the Ville Contemporaine, a city for three million people. The following year, he published *Towards an Architecture*; which argued that architects and urban designers should look, not to the past, but to contemporary engineering and industrial models. While the *Vitruvius* had similarities to Camillo Sitte, Le

²¹⁹ Review of *The American Vitruvius*, in *Town Planning Review*, Vol. 10, No. 1, (Jan, 1923): 56-57.

Corbusier took a radically opposing position. Interestingly, early in his career, Le Corbusier had been an advocate of Sitte's urban planning; a position he rejected as he positioned himself firmly in the avant garde (of course, interestingly, this was also the time when he was consciously reinventing his identity, changing his name from Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris to Le Corbusier). Le Corbusier's writing was both more polemical and more effective at establishing a critical stance (while Hegemann and Peets's work was more a catalogue of examples). As a result, the *Vitruvius* quickly appeared dated and retrograde.

Le Corbusier's writing, along with the development of the Bauhaus (founded 1919) initiated a new paradigm for architecture and urban planning, one that proposed a vision of planning as a modern scientific enterprise that would shake off the romantic tradition-bound practice of the Beaux-Arts. Like Nolen's recasting of the City Beautiful as the City Practical, this new model proposed efficiency and rationalism as the new standard. Its model was not the lessons of history, but the lessons of Frederick Winslow Taylor's view of efficiency and scientific management. For designers, this was a way of "disrupting historic assumptions of style and reshaping design for a modern world."²²⁰ It was an exciting, compelling, and utopian polemic. In place of a romantic view of nature, modernism "installed rationalism in the place of emotionalism" to imagine "a man-made world of pure, rational, and transparent relationships."²²¹

Le Corbusier organized the *Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM) in 1928 to bring together artists to discuss and advance the cause of modern architecture. In the United States, particularly during the Depression years, designers who had been trained

²²⁰ Way, "American Landscape Architecture at Mid-century: Modernism, science, and art": 146.

²²¹ O'Malley and Wolschke-Bulmahn, editors, *Modernism and Landscape Architecture*: ix.

in the Beaux-Arts tradition engaged with these ideas, and people like Joseph Hudnut, who had worked with Peets in 1919-1921, and Louis Kahn (born 1901) began to reformulate themselves as modernists.²²²

Louis Kahn was fifteen years younger than Elbert Peets, though his education and early trajectory was somewhat similar. Kahn studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania under the Beaux-Arts master Paul Cret, graduating in 1924. He then spent most of the next decade at firms in Philadelphia. In 1932, Kahn formed the Architectural Resources Group (ARG). Andrew Shanken describes this as sort of a *Kaffeeklatsch* for underemployed architects to discuss architectural issues. The group was instigated by Kahn, who was the “charismatic center.”²²³ Shanken describes this group as “a crucible for modernism, and a way for architects, mostly trained in the Beaux-Arts tradition to analyze, debate, and come to terms with new developments. Buckminster Fuller’s ideas were becoming known, and the new exhibition on The International Style had just opened at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (in February of 1932). These developments represented a “shifting context [that] necessitated a broad reeducation for Kahn and his contemporaries.”²²⁴ The Depression had also made the demand for affordable housing more critical, as new housing construction had dropped dramatically. The pressing need for new housing added a social agenda and additional urgency to the search for a new vocabulary and activism. The social agenda also aligned the ARG with the aims of the Roosevelt administration’s Resettlement Administration. Kahn, like Peets, worked for the

²²² Shanken, “The Uncharted Kahn: The Visuality of Planning”: 310.

²²³ Shanken: “The Uncharted Kahn: The Visuality of Planning”: 310.

²²⁴ *ibid*

Resettlement Administration. While Peets was working on the plan for Greendale, Kahn was working on the Jersey Homestead development, a site in northern New Jersey to provide a community for unemployed Jewish garment workers from New York.

Kahn was charismatic and could attract followers and like-minded intellectuals to debate contemporary topics. Peets, in contrast, seems to be much more solitary; he neither attracted acolytes nor joined in the debates over contemporary issues. It could be that Cleveland, where Peets was living at the time that Kahn was forming the ARG, did not support a design community that was as lively as that in Philadelphia. The population of Philadelphia in 1930 was approximately 1.9 million, while Cleveland was about half of that, around 900,000 (which, at the time, was the sixth largest city in the country).²²⁵ It could also be that Peets was simply busy with work on the Cleveland Planning Commission. But it also appears that Peets was more interested in the pragmatic concerns of town planning than in broad theory. He expressed admiration for the pragmatic philosophy of John Dewey's *Art as Experience*,²²⁶ and most of his discussion of his designs focuses on utilitarian concerns and concerns for the residents, rather than a utopian vision.

Scientism and growing emphasis on scientific/rational planning

Even to recognize explicit references and precedents only tells a part of the story of how urban planners understood their task. Scholars such as Jennifer Light and Richard

²²⁵ U.S. Census data (<https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab16.txt>, accessed April 21, 2017).

²²⁶ Elbert Peets, personal letter to Werner Hegemann, Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection number 2772, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

Olson have investigated the ways that the emerging science of ecological studies influenced urban professionals, and the ways that those professionals adopted the metaphors of science as an appropriate model for their work.²²⁷ Mauro Guillén has written about the ways that the ideas of Frederick Winslow Taylor's work on scientific management informed and influenced architectural modernism in the early twentieth century.²²⁸

The most obvious models and precedents for architectural and urban studies are other examples from the design field. Other fields and social movements that have wide cultural impact also have a bearing on design. In the early twentieth century, "scientism" and the emphasis both on rational planning and on data gathering influenced architects and urban designers. In the late nineteenth century, success in science and technology engendered not only confidence in the scientific method, but the urge to apply the method to non-science fields. In *Design in the Age of Darwin*, Stephen Eisenman notes the influence of anthropologists and evolutionary biologists on William Morris's thought.²²⁹ He notes that these scientists "argued, roughly, that the development of human society was a consequence of material and historical, rather than supernatural, factors."²³⁰ This was then evidenced by intellectuals like Morris or historians like Gottfried Semper and Alois Riegl in searches for types and origins, as well as origin narratives, for artistic form.

²²⁷ Jennifer Light: *The Nature of Cities, Ecological Visions and the American Urban Professions, 1920-1960*, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), and Richard G. Olson: *Scientism and Technocracy in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Scientific Management*, (Lexington Books, 2016).

²²⁸ Mauro F. Guillén: *The Taylorized Beauty of the Mechanical: Scientific Management and the Rise of Modern Architecture*, (Princeton University Press, 2006).

²²⁹ Stephen Eisenman, *Design in the Age of Darwin: From William Morris to Frank Lloyd Wright*, (Northwestern University Press, 2008): 15.

²³⁰ *ibid*

Designers made a conscious effort to position their work as science-based and data-based. By 1912, speaking at a city planning conference, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. would say that city planning in the modern world would be “more of a science than an art.”²³¹ The immediate precedent for this is the rise in prominence of Frederick Winslow Taylor’s formulation of Scientific Management. The origin of Taylor’s system was a narrowly imagined process for improving efficiency in manufacturing. The concept of Taylorism proved popular and provided a compelling narrative of productivity. Taylorism elevated a technocratic view of production, one reliant on scientific measurement and rationalism.

Taylor’s system furthered the concept of Darwinism, with its emphasis on taxonomy, classification and measurement as a system of explaining biological phenomena without recourse to a higher (and subjective) power.

Commerce

Much of the impetus for civic reform in the early twentieth century was driven either by economic concerns or led by major figures of finance and commerce. The Boston 1915 Movement (the exposition for which was in 1910, partly organized by Hegemann) was led by Edward Filene, and the movement was to provide a comprehensive master planning effort whose purposes were both to plan for the needs of making Boston’s transition to the automobile age of the twentieth century and to improve housing conditions. Civic-minded philanthropists like Filene funded some efforts (like the Exposition), and just as importantly,

²³¹ Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., reported in *The American City Magazine* (1912).

civic improvements were necessarily expensive propositions which were funded by metropolitan governments that needed the support of commercial and industrial leaders.

Professionals began to recast the City Beautiful as the City Practical (sometimes as the City Efficient), and to argue, as John Nolen repeatedly did, that urban planning was fundamentally not about aesthetics, but about intelligent planning. Transitional figures like Nolen argued that beauty was an important byproduct of wise planning, while the avant garde argued that planning for efficiency (as well as for light, air, and transportation) was the primary criterion for city planning.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the twentieth century the dominant paradigm (at that time it was the City Beautiful movement) was being challenged by alternate approaches that stressed economic and practical utility as the measures of a plan's value, and stressed reliance on rational scientific data rather than on historical precedent and authority. As the century progressed, the professional discourse centered on the growing influence of European modernism and the fading influence of the Beaux Arts and City Beautiful paradigms. At the same time, the connections and interactions with the ecology and the landscape segment of the regional planning movement faded.

Elbert Peets incorporated and represented various and sometimes conflicting strands of the discourse. He rejected what he considered the romantic and contrived picturesqueness of the landscape tradition, though he was more interested in historical continuities than in a rupture with the past. He advocated rigor and geometric ordering systems, but they owed more to the Renaissance associations of L'Enfant than to rational

plans of Hilberseimer or the Radiant City of Le Corbusier. In doing this, Peets demonstrated a more practical and pragmatic approach that incorporated humanistic concerns. He also incorporated land conservation ideas that had more connection to the garden city tradition and the influence of the ecological planning from the discipline of forestry. The ideas promoted by the CIAM represented one variety of modernist practice, one that emphasized Taylorism and scientific rationalism as the basis for urban planning. Peets represented another approach, one that emphasized practical concerns and a humanistic focus on how urban planning could enhance the experience of the residents of his town plans.

Chapter Four: The town plans

“Greendale is without a doubt one of the most attractive towns in America... [It has a] sense of the ground that in my experience was equaled only by Henry Wright and by Raymond Unwin.”

Clarence Stein, letter to Elbert Peets, November 10, 1947²³²

The design career of Elbert Peets, from 1917 when he began his partnership with Werner Hegemann until his last major design commission for Park Forest, Illinois, spanned a time of tremendous change in the urban design profession. This period included changes in the spatial and technical requirements for housing brought on by ubiquitous automobile ownership and the advent of commuter suburbs. It also included a shift in how professionals conceived, theorized, and situated their work in relation to the rise of modernism in architecture and landscape architecture. The dilemma of situating Peets’s designs within this shift is that they do not easily fit into either the previous paradigm of the City Beautiful and he never embraced the modernist mode.

More properly, the dilemma may not be with Peets’s designs as much as with the conception of a linear narrative from the Beaux-Arts traditionalism to modernist urbanism,

²³² Clarence Stein to Elbert Peets, box 1, folder 24 (Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection number 2772, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library).

as if there was only one path or one aim. What Peets demonstrates is an example of a third path, one that recognizes the value of the street and the neighborhood cluster as the physical components of a town plan, and concern for the preferences and quality of life for the residents. In his writing on the history of civic design, he praises Renaissance plazas. But his designs are not of monumental civic spaces, and seem to be most influenced by examples like Sunnyside Gardens, Radburn, and the “neighborhood unit” of Clarence Perry.

If Peets’s differences with modernism were superficial, like the difference between the vaguely neocolonial architecture of Greendale, Wisconsin compared to the more Art Deco character of Greenbelt, Maryland or the more purely modernist housing of the Weissenhof Siedlungen, then it would be moderately interesting as an alternative voice against the mainstream. But it appears to be more substantial than the superficial effects. Peets himself was ambivalent about the style or character of the buildings. In his letters, he says that colonial character is merely a convenience until something new comes along.²³³ More important than visual character, Peets shows that it the grouping of houses more than the character of the individual house that matters. Perhaps even more importantly and more generally, Peets is insistent on pragmatic concerns like producing towns economically and paying close attention to the topographic and ecological conditions of the site to form the basis of the design. Peets seems to be concerned with solving the problems of a design brief much more than with producing a theory or manifesto.

During his career, Peets produced a number of high quality and interesting designs for neighborhood developments. He called these “town plans,” because they typically included provisions for shopping, schools and some civic buildings. They were more than housing

²³³ Elbert Peets to Werner Hegemann, Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection number 2772, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

subdivisions, though they were not fully “urban” plans. Though they were not the monumental civic spaces of the City Beautiful, they included groupings of small civic buildings to create public space. Looking at his designs is interesting in itself because it enriches the narrative of the time and expands the conversation beyond the icons and well-known examples of the period. In addition, his neighborhood plans demonstrate an ecologically sensitive approach that was remarkable for the time. In this, they show the continuity of a legacy for ecological planning that began in the late nineteenth century which was minimized in the discourse of mid-century. This discussion, by focusing on an individual practicing during a time of change, also provides a case study of how designers engaged with, or in Peets’s case, did not engage with, the debates over modernism.

The arc of this change in discourse, which is a slightly larger arc than Peets’s career; is from the City Beautiful movement (roughly 1900 to 1920) to the rise of post-World War II suburbs. Peets’s design for Park Forest (planned in 1946-1948) was the first of the large scale, fully planned post-WWII suburbs, and pioneered the use of mass production techniques. The near contemporaries, and better known examples, are the Levittowns of New York (1947) and Pennsylvania (1952). In ecology, this is the period from the conservation/preservation movement at the turn of the century to Ian McHarg’s *Design with Nature* in 1969.

Peets’s work represents a skillful adaptation of the garden city planning principles that were articulated by Ebenezer Howard, and seen in the early examples of garden city planning done by Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker for Letchworth and Hampstead, both in Great Britain. The early work of Peets represents some of the earliest implementations of garden city planning in the United States, and predates Sunnyside Gardens and Radburn,

New Jersey. The work is therefore noteworthy as embodying the latest thinking on suburban developments that addressed social problems of the need for adequate housing patterns for all income ranges. While Unwin and Parker are most noted as Arts and Crafts designers, Peets's work applies the lessons of renaissance planning, the result of his study of Camillo Sitte and of his study of the urban qualities of European cities, to more suburban neighborhoods. In this, Peets was bringing his affinity for formal planning and abstract design principles, elements that had previously been applied mostly to civic centers and monumental groups of buildings to ordinary housing communities.

The plans also combine these formal and abstract ideas with a closely observed sensitivity to local conditions and topography. In this, the plans incorporate the influence of other fields like scientific forestry on planning that is based on close observation of watersheds and natural boundaries.

The partnership of Peets and Hegemann

In 1911, Werner Hegemann organized the Berlin Exhibition on urban housing. Hegemann was educated as an economist, specializing in social housing. He was not the most likely candidate for urban planning. However, the central concern for the time was the housing problem, and his expertise and organizational bent were propitious. One of the key lessons of the Berlin Exhibition of 1911, and the following exhibition in [Hamburg?] in 1913, was the need for interdisciplinary teams to approach design and planning problems. For Hegemann, including the latest science meant, not ecology, but sociology and economics. With the success of the Berlin Exhibition, Hegemann cemented an international

reputation as an expert in urban design. Following the exhibitions, he came to the United States, crossing the country giving lectures and attending other conferences.

In 1915, he was in Milwaukee, where he produced a report on “*Urban Planning in Milwaukee, and why it matters.*” About this time, Hegemann was retained by Walter Kohler to design a new subdivision for Kohler, Wisconsin. Hegemann contacted Peets and asked that he (Peets) join the design team for the Kohler commission. To this partnership, Hegemann first brought his international reputation. His recognition as an expert on city planning was what brought commissions. He also brought the lesson of Berlin that teams of differing specialties, and an approach that included perspectives from economics and sociology, and the importance of housing, were important to the success of a design.

Peets was five years younger than Hegemann, and had just finished his master of landscape in 1915. He had a foundation in botany and in the history of urban planning, he knew about urban arboriculture and he was familiar with Camillo Sitte. He was also a talented draftsman, as can be seen from the renderings he did for Washington Highlands, Wyomissing Park, and other designs of the Hegemann & Peets collaboration.

Kohler

The town of Kohler was the first project for the Hegemann and Peets collaboration. At this time, Hegemann was a recognized authority on urban planning and housing. He was a prolific author and lecturer and had helped organize an international exhibition on urban planning in Berlin, and he had worked on the Boston 1915 exhibition. Peets, who was 29 in 1915 had graduated from Harvard’s Master of Landscape Architecture program, and had been working on town plans for the office of James Sturgis Pray, one of his professors from

Harvard. Peets had not yet submitted his master's thesis, which would not occur until after he had taken advantage of the fellowship he had been awarded for a European study trip that he would take in 1917.

In 1915, Walter Kohler hired Werner Hegemann to design a model town for Kohler, Wisconsin. The Kohler Company began in 1873 when John Kohler purchased his father's iron and steel foundry in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. John Kohler expanded the company and in the 1880's began to specialize in the production of plumbing fixtures and enamel ware. By the time of his death in 1900, the company had begun building a new production facility on previously agricultural land about four miles west of town.

By 1905, the new manufacturing facility was operating, and some housing had begun to spring up around the new factory. Also in 1905, John Kohler's son Walter had taken over as head of the company. Between 1905 and 1912, more housing was being built near the factory and near the Sheboygan River, in a disorganized and undistinguished manner that prompted Walter to consider planning a model company village. Kohler displayed what historian W. J. Uphoff described as "a strong streak of European aristocratic and paternalistic notions."²³⁴ The Kohlers were benevolently paternalistic, supporting education and insurance for their workers, though they remained staunchly opposed to unionization.²³⁵

By creating a model village, the Kohler company was providing the housing for the workers on whom the factory depended, and they also hoped to "showcase the Kohler name, product, and philosophy."²³⁶ Walter Kohler was interested in the latest developments of

²³⁴ Alanen, "Kohler": 146.

²³⁵ *ibid*

²³⁶ *ibid*

company town housing. He visited several model developments in the United States and in Europe to become familiar with current trends. In Europe, he visited Port Sunlight in Liverpool, a town planned for the Lever Brothers soap company, begun in 1888. He also visited Letchworth, the first garden city modelled on the principles of Ebenezer Howard. He also visited Hampton Garden Suburb. Both Letchworth and Hampstead Gardens had been designed by Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker. Kohler was especially impressed with Letchworth and corresponded with Howard. Kohler also visited German examples of company town planning, such as the town for the Krupp works. He was also aware of the negative example of the Pullman company town, a more overtly paternalistic case where the company owned the houses, and had been the site of the Pullman strike of 1894. Hegemann was chosen based on his international reputation, and his familiarity with the Garden City principles that Walter Kohler hoped to implement.

Kohler's goals combined corporate altruism and paternalism with the pragmatic aims of attracting housing employees in a development that would foster improved worker morale, productivity, and morals while discouraging vices like gambling and alcohol. He also wanted to avoid the overt paternalism of Pullman and the German example of the Krupp steel works at Essen where the company owned the houses. Instead he wanted his employees to be able to "purchase their own homes in the 'true American way'."²³⁷

Walter Kohler met Werner Hegemann in Milwaukee in 1915 while Hegemann was working on a planning study for Milwaukee. While Hegemann had a considerable reputation as an analyst and an expert on housing, his expertise was as a theorist rather than as a designer. He was especially lacking in the design and drafting skills to produce town

²³⁷ Alanen, "Kohler": 146.

plans. Hegemann, perhaps realizing that his design team needed more technical expertise, asked Peets to join the team. They formed the office of Hegemann and Peets, City Planners, and would collaborate on numerous town plans and on the *American Vitruvius*.

After visiting the site, Hegemann declared that it was “an ideal location for a garden city” (Alanen, 2000). The project did not go smoothly. Walter Kohler complained that Hegemann and Peets were spending too much time on other projects and not enough on Kohler (a claim that may have been justified), and that the planting plan (Peets’ work) was too elaborate and expensive. While the early work was admirable, after a year Kohler terminated the contract with Hegemann and Peets. Subsequent work was completed by the Olmsted firm.

The site consisted of over 3,000 acres and the planned community incorporated a green belt to encompass the entire area; a feature that was in keeping with Ebenezer Howard’s diagram for satellite towns. Hegemann praised the natural features of the site, with its “rolling land, fine trees, a most surprisingly winding stream, high ravine [and] perfectly formed views.”²³⁸ These natural features suggested organizing the housing lots into clusters separated by the two ravines that led to the Sheboygan River, which meandered along the southern edge of the property.

Other garden city designers, like Parker and Unwin, the architects for Letchworth, were more interested in the Arts and Crafts movement. Peets was atypical in his emphasis on neo-classical traditions of Renaissance and colonial American planning precedents.²³⁹ The central civic space of Kohler is along High Street (as it was called on the original plans,

²³⁸ Alanen, “Kohler”: 146.

²³⁹ Alanen, “Elbert Peets”: 195.

it is now Highland Drive), the area that includes the American Club and the Kohler Design Center. The building that currently houses the Design Center was originally dedicated to shops and markets. This area most closely reflects Peets's emphasis on a ceremonial civic space, a motif that would occur in future plans like Washington Highlands and Greendale. In contrast to those, and in contrast to other City Beautiful plans, the central area a Kohler is less monumental than the center of a company town like Fairfield, Alabama.

What distinguishes Kohler is the attention to local topography, to utilizing the natural features that Hegemann had mentioned, as well as attention to saving and featuring individual specimen trees.

Washington Highlands

At the same time that they were working on the Kohler plans, Hegemann and Peets also began work on Washington Highlands, a subdivision of Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, in 1916. The subdivision is approximately 130 acres of land about four miles west of downtown Milwaukee. The subdivision was originally called the Pabst Farm, because the land had once been owned by Gustav Pabst, of Pabst Beer fame. This plan combined the low density, picturesque, garden suburb of the type that George Kessler designed at Roland Park in Baltimore (from 1912), with a "comprehensive metropolitan vision" that offered harmony and civic monumentality. It combined the social values of the Garden City Movement with the formal emphasis of the City Beautiful Movement (Hubka and Kinney, 2009). The plan, with its formal central boulevard that culminates in a group of civic

buildings, its curvilinear secondary street, and its meandering stream parkway, illustrates the synthesis of social values with environmental design.²⁴⁰

The central formal feature is a long straight boulevard that runs from east to west and is an extension of Washington Boulevard. This connects the development to Washington Park, a substantial urban park (of approximately 140 acres) about a half mile to the east of Washington Highlands. The original plans of Hegemann and Peets had this street named “Mount Vernon Avenue” inside the subdivision. On the design plans, most streets have more generic names, such as “Upper Parkway” and “Mountain Avenue”, some of the names have been modified to evoke the legacy of George Washington, such as “Betsy Ross Place”, “Revere Avenue” or “Martha Washington Drive.”

The visual terminus of the axial boulevard ends in a group of larger homes situated around a small park that is rectangular but mostly informally planted, called on the plan the Apple Croft. Where the boulevard enters the site on its eastern edge, it is framed by a pair of more-or-less colonial stone gateposts that were designed by Peets.²⁴¹ A ravine crosses the site roughly from north to south, and where it crosses the boulevard, it is crossed by a stone arch bridge, also designed by Peets.

To accommodate the hilly terrain, most other roads are curved and follow the topography for more convenient road gradients. As in other garden city era developments, the use of curved streets was not only a practical, but an aesthetic choice. In this case, Hegemann noted that having the streets follow the topography would not only save costs,

²⁴⁰ Thomas Hubka and Judith Kinney: “Situating the “American” Garden Suburb: Hegemann’s and Peets’ Washington Highlands, 1916,” presented at *Society for American City and Regional Planning History* conference in St. Louis, Missouri, (November 8, 2003).

²⁴¹ Alanen, “Elbert Peets”: 203.

but would provide relief from “the monotonous checkerboard”²⁴² of more conventional gridiron subdivision planning. The stream bed meanders through site, and the stream edges are stabilized with the same uncoursed stone that is used for the stone arch bridge. There are a few house lots that front directly on the stream, but for most of the site, a buffer area along the stream is reserved as public park land. The central ecological feature of the site thus becomes a public amenity. Even more interesting and significant than the planning around large-scale features is that in several cases, the plan was modified to preserve individual specimen trees.

Greendale

Werner Hegemann returned to Germany in [1921], which ended the Hegemann and Peets partnership. After this, Elbert Peets returned to his home town of Cleveland and began working in private practice. His practice included landscape plans for private homes and park design work for Cleveland. During the 1920's was also when most of his writing for H. L. Mencken's magazine, *The American Mercury*, was produced. By 1930, and the beginning of the Depression, work for Peets, and for many in the landscape professions, had evaporated.

In 1935, Peets began working for one of the Roosevelt administration's New Deal agencies, the Farm Resettlement Administration. The Resettlement Administration was formed by Rexford Tugwell, one of the key members of Roosevelt's "Brain Trust." It was a program intended to provide affordable housing for families from rural areas who had either lost their farms or were on farms that were no longer productive and viable, or for providing housing to move families out of sub-standard inner city slum housing. The program was

²⁴²Alanen, "Elbert Peets": 199.

based on the concept of building new satellite communities near existing urban centers where inexpensive land could be purchased and industrial employment was available. Because the land in those areas was inexpensive, the government agency could purchase a sufficient amount of property to build a comprehensive neighborhood which would include homes, community services and shopping, following the principles of Ebenezer Howard's garden city. There were originally four greenbelt developments planned: one for Greenbelt, Maryland, outside of Washington, D.C.; Greenhills, Ohio, near Cincinnati; Greendale, Wisconsin, near Milwaukee; and Greenbrook, New Jersey. The first three were realized, but the New Jersey plan was blocked due to court challenges. Elbert Peets was the principal town planner for the Greendale plan.

The greenbelt towns were loosely based on Ebenezer Howard's diagrams for a garden city, and their common characteristic was to include a surrounding buffer zone of an undeveloped green zone. The site for Greendale, unlike the other cases, included a significant amount of existing farms, including "seventeen dairy farms and twenty-three small truck and poultry farms."²⁴³ For Greendale, Peets planned for the greenbelt to include a continuation of the existing farms, as well as provision for active recreation activities and undeveloped land.²⁴⁴ Ebenezer Howard had imagined his proposal as an alternative to what we would call sprawl. Rather than urban growth occurring by increasing density in the city center, new growth would be in a series of satellite clusters around the existing city, and these clusters would be connected by public highway and rail connections. Unlike Howard's concept, the satellite communities for the greenbelt program would not include

²⁴³ Alanen, "Elbert Peets": 205.

²⁴⁴ *ibid*

industry for employment, and the communities were intended to be bedroom communities or commuter neighborhoods assuming car ownership. Other previous satellite towns, such as Port Sunlight, near Liverpool, or Fairfield, Alabama, or the Kohler plan that Peets had worked on, were associated with specific individual industrial employers. Port Sunlight was associated with the Lever Brothers' soap factory, Fairfield was a company town for United States Steel (it was originally planned for the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company, which was purchased by U.S. Steel).

The goal of the Resettlement Administration was to enable “a better adjustment of land and population as a means of achieving better economic and social conditions.”²⁴⁵ The Resettlement Administration took its name from one of its aims – to relocate rural families from non-productive farms to areas where employment was available. Tugwell was an advocate not only of the physical form and planning of Howard's proposals, but by his emphasis on communal ownership of public land. In addition to the surrounding landscape buffer area, the communities would include commonly owned pedestrian pathways to connect homes and allow convenient walking paths separated from vehicular traffic. The communal land would be owned and managed by a corporation formed of the residents.

The official charge to Peets and his staff was “to create a community protected by an encircling green belt; the community to be designed for families of predominately modest income, and arranged and administered so as to encourage that kind of family and community life which will be better than they now enjoy.”²⁴⁶ Also distinctive was that the

²⁴⁵ John Dreier, in *Pencil Points*, “Greenbelt Planning: Resettlement Administration goes to town,” in *Pencil Points Reader: A Journal for the Drafting Room, 1920-1943*, (Princeton Architectural Press, New York 2004): 441.

²⁴⁶ Dreier, in *Pencil Points*, “Greenbelt Planning”: 443-444.

greenbelt towns were designed specifically for an automobile age. For Greendale, typical houses included an attached and enclosed garage.

One of the models for Greendale was Radburn, New Jersey, which had been built in 1928-29. Radburn included superblocks, or large clusters of homes that were connected not only by traditional streets and sidewalks, but by commonly owned walking paths that further isolated pedestrians from automobiles.

The first portion of Greendale was designed in 1936 by Peets and his staff of designers. It was later expanded by Peets in 1946, just after World War II. As had been the case at Kohler and Washington Highlands, Greendale was crossed by a waterway. In this case, it was the Root River, which meanders through the site before heading south to its outflow into Lake Michigan in Racine.

The central portion of Greendale is the public space arranged around Broad Street, a long straight south-to-north street that end in the Village Hall. Peets described his plan as one that is “built around a line instead of a point”.²⁴⁷ While there are several curved streets, the primary organizing element is the more central civic space of Broad Street. Most of the other streets are short straight ones where front yards are minimized and the houses placed close to the street. This accomplishes two things – first, it emphasizes the spatial enclosure of the street as public space, and second, it allows for most of the individual lots to be devoted to private backyard space. More so than in other designs by Peets, the planning for Greendale includes provision for productive family gardens. These can be clearly seen in some of his aerial view sketches for the housing clusters.

²⁴⁷ Alanen, “Elbert Peets”: 206.

This town was originally intended, as the greenbelt program suggested, for families of modest income. Peets described it as “a workingman’s town... in actuality and in appearance it must be direct, simple, and practical, free of snobbishness, not afraid of standardization.”²⁴⁸ This plan represents probably the best distillation of the ideas and approaches to civic planning that Peets advocated. He was especially fond of Williamsburg, which was being renovated with the support of the Rockefeller family. It was from Williamsburg that Greendale draws much of its architectural character. As he indicated by his comment on simplicity and practicality, Peets was a pragmatist who felt that the most pressing need was to provide adequate housing.²⁴⁹ The particular style of form of the houses and public buildings was secondary to any theoretical agenda. This inclusive view of style, or its importance, distinguishes Peets from his European counterparts who advocated the necessity of a new style for new work. Even in his support for Williamsburg as a model, he was more interested in the overall form of the composition than the details of the individual structures. In his study of Williamsburg, he emphasized the spatial enclosure of the street as the organizing principle, even criticizing the places where shops were situated with varying setbacks, instead of with a common street façade.²⁵⁰ Again reflecting his emphasis on close attention to local topography, Peets noted how the gentle rise in the main street in Williamsburg contributed to the visual and experiential effect. Though the Village Hall at Greendale (designed by Walter Thomas) is designed in a colonial style, Peets was ambivalent about the issue of style and felt that the choice of style was merely an expedient

²⁴⁸ Alanen, “Elbert Peets”: 206.

²⁴⁹ Elbert Peets, Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection number 2772, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library

²⁵⁰ Elbert Peets, “Williamsburg,” in Spreiregen, *On the Art of Designing Cities*: 161.

one.²⁵¹ In contrast, most of the public and commercial buildings at Greenbelt, Maryland were designed in an Art Deco style, a more contemporary language.

Peets efforts to be practical and accommodating extended to his planting plans and choices of plant species for Greendale. Some of his contemporaries, most notably Jens Jensen, were advocates of using local and native plant species in their landscape designs. Peets, on the other hand, was both more pragmatic and inclusive in recommending plantings based on their familiarity and on their emotional connections to the residents. Jens Jensen objected to the designs for Greendale on two fronts. First, he objected to the adoption of colonial style for the architecture of the public buildings. Jensen, writing from his home in Door County where he had retired, noted that, rather than choosing Williamsburg as a model, the architectural character of the town should have drawn on Frank Lloyd Wright, “a true son of Wisconsin.”²⁵² Even more than the architectural style, he objected to the use of non-native plants, and considered their inclusion as a “tragedy.” Arnold Alanen notes that James Drought, a member of the Greendale planning staff, and a recent graduate of the University of Wisconsin, considered the use of non-native species as a choice that represented “departures from natural grace” that reflected “the eclectic nature of the plan-the result of compromise.”²⁵³

For Peets, this compromise was not a tragedy, but the natural and desirable approach of placing a satisfying and user-friendly result above a didactic or polemical approach.

Jensen had expressed his objections in a letter to Henry Wallace, the secretary of

²⁵¹ Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection number 2772, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

²⁵² Alanen, “Elbert Peets”: 206.

²⁵³ *ibid*: 207.

agriculture, in 1937, hoping to influence the design “before it was too late.”²⁵⁴ Peets responded to Jensen’s criticisms graciously, first by acknowledging Jensen’s “mastery of garden art.”²⁵⁵ He then defended the choices by noting that the residents “will want to see the trees and shrubs that have been made familiar to them by familiarity. The golden-twist willows that were planted by the pioneers to cheer the winter landscape, apple and cherry trees, lilacs and hollyhocks – all of these came from other continents, but we want the people who come out to their new homes in Greendale to find these old friends.”²⁵⁶

Even to mention Jensen’s expertise in “garden art” is, for Peets, a veiled critique. “Garden art” or “outdoor art” were terms used by the generation of landscape designers associated with the City Beautiful movement like Mariana von Rennsalaer associated with Peets’s time at Harvard. This associated Jensen with the tradition of landscape-design-as-a-fine-art that Peets had criticized. His defense of non-native plants and his attention to calling out specific species as “old friends” again reflects his attention to detail and his preference for simplicity and the legibility of familiar associations. This is evident in what specific species were chosen, and it is also evident in the larger scale physical plan. While he had a preference for the simplicity and convenience of a gridiron plan and the legible, well-defined public space of the street, the overall grid was adjusted and varied with streets of different lengths; some ending in cul-de-sacs, and some (especially in the 1940’s extension of the plan) connected with loop streets.

²⁵⁴ Alanen, “Elbert Peets”: 207.

²⁵⁵ *ibid*

²⁵⁶ *ibid*

As he was with Jensen, Peets was typically gracious when dealing with individuals. This is in contrast to some of the acerbic and biting prose of his writings (most obvious in his essay on *The Landscape Priesthood*, which perhaps reflects the influence of H. L. Mencken and the readership of *The American Mercury*). It is frustrating (for the purpose of this study) that so little of Peets's personality comes through, or that it is so guarded. However, the repeated impression is that Peets was always more interested in a pragmatic and accommodating approach than in a polemical agenda. So, when Peets described the design of Greendale as being centered on a line instead of a point, this recognizes critiques of modernist urban theory and specifically refutes the approach advocated by Le Corbusier in the Radiant City or the urban proposals of Ludwig Hilberseimer. These approaches posited a more dispersed form of urbanism where the traditional enclosure of the street as figural space and the basic unit of urban and suburban design were minimized. The urban proposals of Le Corbusier and Hilberseimer were, analogous to Ebenezer Howard's proposals, an alternative to problems of sub-standard slum housing in traditional urban centers. Their alternative was to create high-rise towers that were widely dispersed, a different type of "garden city."

For Greendale, where economy and practicality were key issues, Peets emphasized concerns for budget and affordability; his theoretical agenda was for a lack of snobbishness and familiarity, not for re-imaging city form. Though he was in favor of avoiding pretension, it is not that he was a populist, and he was still insistent on recalling Renaissance and colonial planning. When Peets had designed Kohler and Washington Highlands in the early decades of the twentieth century, the historical continuity of urban planning as advocated by Camillo Sitte in Germany, or by von Rennsalaer and by Hubbard and Kimball

at Harvard, was still the current mode. By 1936, when he was designing Greendale, the current conceptual framework of architectural and urban thinking had changed considerably. Peets's contemporaries like Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, as well as the younger generation of landscape designers like James Rose, Dan Kiley and Garret Eckbo, were adamant that a new paradigm was necessary. Rose, Kiley and Eckbo, generally considered to be the first generation of landscape modernists in the United States, wrote a series of essays for *Pencil Points* magazine, outlining their approach. They suggested that Beaux Arts and axial planning were of no use, that instead the guiding influences should be the overlapping volumes and multiple, simultaneous viewpoints suggested by modern art (Rose referred to constructivist art and to the breakthroughs in science of Einstein and Milliken as better analogies than axial planning). Rose believed that "Contemporary design represents a change in kind, a change in conception, the expression of new mentality we have derived from the effects of the industrial and economic revolutions. These revolutions have put a transparent but impenetrable screen between us and the past."²⁵⁷ Peets was out of step with these trends by continuing to insist on the continuity of tradition instead of an "impenetrable screen" separating contemporary design from the past. While Peets continued to support the value of axes and straight streets, his emphasis on things like detailed knowledge of horticulture and specific plants correspond with some of Rose's suggestions.

The major theoretical conceptions that form the context in which Greendale was designed were Radburn as a successful example of garden city planning applied to a commuter suburb, C.I.A.M., the urbanist group of architectural modernists headed by Le

²⁵⁷ James Rose, "Freedom in the Garden," in Marc Treib, *Modern Landscape Architecture: A Critical Review*, (The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 1992): 69.

Corbusier, as well as Werner Hegemann's legacy of the importance of sociological and economic analysis as the basis of urban design. When planning for Greendale began, Peets was fifty years old. Was it that his approach had been so influenced by Hegemann's advocacy of Sitte's ideas had so influenced him that Le Corbusier's and C.I.A.M.'s view of a dispersed form of point towers in an open landscape were not convincing? Was it that his interest in the pragmatism of John Dewey reinforced his focus on the experiential qualities of the individual residents and their preferences?

Park Forest, Illinois

Park Forest, Illinois is a fully planned community that was designed and built to address the critical shortage of housing for veterans returning home and beginning families and stateside careers after World War II. It was designed in 1946 by Elbert Peets and construction began in 1948. It was planned and developed by American Community Builders, a company formed by the partnership of Philip Klutznick, Carroll Sweet and Nathan Manilow. Klutznick had previously been an administrator for Roosevelt's new deal program that built the greenbelt towns, and he was familiar with Peets, as well as with the tradition of planned communities and the garden city principles that underlay Peets's planning of Greendale.

Manilow was an enterprising and energetic developer who had success both as a builder and as a lender to other builders before World War II. As a result of the Great Depression, between 1930 and the outbreak of World War II, the amount of new housing built was far below the demand. The Truman administration had recognized the scale of the housing shortage and begun programs to address the coming crisis. Manilow, also

recognizing the shortage, and the opportunity it offered to developers, purchased land on the south side of Chicago with the intention of developing GI housing. In 1945, soon after the victory in Japan, Manilow sent his associate, Carroll Sweet, to visit Philip Klutznick at his office in Washington. His goal for this meeting was to inquire about purchasing military buildings and materials for peacetime use. Manilow's idea was to use surplus temporary housing from the war effort to assemble a neighborhood for returning veterans.²⁵⁸ Klutznick objected on two grounds: his first objection was procedural; the existing regulations did not allow selling war surplus to private individuals. More importantly, his objection was that the temporary housing was of low quality and not adequate for veterans and their families. Klutznick approved of the idea of building GI towns, but was adamant that the quality of the development be commensurate with the contributions the GIs had already made. To Sweet, he said "if you and Nathan Manilow want to build a GI town, make it one worthy of the men who served the country so well."²⁵⁹ Sweet felt similarly, that beyond the business opportunity, that they had an obligation to the servicemen. He was quoted as saying "Here I am, an old man who has never done anything for anyone but me – nothing at all for the boys of those three wars whose victories have made my whole life possible." He imagined that affordable housing for veterans could at least approximate the more expensive park suburbs for the wealthy: "Can't anything be done to give those veterans something approaching that kind of living on a scale they can afford?"²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ Randall, Gregory: *America's Original GI Town*: 16.

²⁵⁹ *ibid*, 17.

²⁶⁰ *ibid*, 16-17.

Manilow and Sweet then began to consider their development as a completely new town, built of quality materials. They also recognized that Klutznick, with his experience in the greenbelt town program and his experience in organization and material acquisition would be a great asset to their effort. Sweet's meeting with Klutznick had taken place in the fall of 1945, and soon after that meeting, Manilow and Sweet asked Klutznick to join them in a partnership.²⁶¹ Klutznick was adamant about what he considered some essential criteria: that the town be well built, that the town be comprehensively planned using the best expertise, and that the community be incorporated and self-governing.²⁶²

The plan was to develop a community for approximately 25,000 residents on approximately 10,000 acres south of Chicago, and convenient to rail transportation. Klutznick explicitly thought of Park Forest as a continuation of the Garden City development from the first half of the twentieth century. Gregory Randall, in his history of Park Forest, says that "Five great planners would be the grandfathers for Park Forest...They were Frederick Law Olmsted, Ebenezer Howard, Henry Wright, Clarence B. Stein, and Elbert Peets. All five, through their visions for new towns, would build on one another's work in an effort to create better and more successful places for people to live."²⁶³ Randall describes the town as the last of the greenbelt towns, because it embodies the same ideals about civic amenities, with the key difference being that Park Forest was funded and built entirely through private enterprise, rather than as a government project.

²⁶¹ Randall, Gregory: *America's Original GI Town* 18

²⁶² *ibid*, 18

²⁶³ *ibid*, 19

The Park Forest Historical Society notes that Park Forest was the “first fully planned, post-World War II suburb, with schools, churches, shopping and homes incorporated into the original plan. It was not a sub-division like the Levittowns in New York and Pennsylvania.”²⁶⁴ They also note that the town was innovative in a number of ways. The developers were pioneers in developing efficiencies in mass production techniques for housing, and that their techniques were widely adopted by other postwar builders across the country. The development was one of the first in the country, and the largest at the time, to use natural gas. It was also one of the first communities to put electrical and telephone service underground, avoiding the use of unsightly power poles.²⁶⁵

The plan was developed during an intense period of design and revision in 1946 and 1947. Peets was the town planner, and the architect for the project was Loeb, Schlossman and Bennett, a Chicago based firm. Klutznick had worked with Loeb and Schlossman during the war, when Loeb was a part of the advisory board for the housing commission under Klutznick’s supervision. Loeb and Schlossman had formed an architecture office in 1925, and had worked on military housing during the war. Shortly after the war, they added Richard Bennett to the firm, who became the chief design principal.²⁶⁶ Bennett worked closely with Peets, walking the site, identifying issues of topography and revising plans. The site is adjacent to a forest preserve which offered an intrinsic component of the garden city concept of a greenbelt. Peets felt that the existence of green buffers and substantial

²⁶⁴ Park Forest Historical Society website: <http://www.parkforesthistor.org/park-forest-is-special.html>, “What makes Park Forest Special,” accessed January 24, 2017; Park Forest and Levittown, New York both claim to be the “first”, and Levittown, NY does have more than just home sites. Park Forest was announced in 1946, Levittown was announced in 1947; construction on both began at almost the same time, there were residents moving into homes at both developments in 1948.

²⁶⁵ *ibid*

²⁶⁶ Randall, Gregory: *America’s Original GI Town*: 55.

green space within the development justified more dense clustering of the houses themselves. The early plans for the development included a lake in a portion of the park area; a proposal that was abandoned for cost savings.²⁶⁷ As the plan developed, in what Peets described as “infinite discussion,”²⁶⁸ the location of key sites was moved and the amount of space dedicated to shopping, to schools, and to other services was revised.

Between the first plan of 1946 and the final plan that Peets produced in 1950, the development had become more dense and the amount of the site dedicated to public green space had been considerably reduced. The plan still shows some of Peets’s recurring design elements, such as the broad main street, which here is Western Boulevard. The space that would be an analogy to the “grand” space of Greendale, the main street ending its axis on the Village Hall, is a shorter boulevard off of Western. Here, instead of ending in a civic building, it ends in the town’s shopping center.

The tone of Peets’s description is striking. He discussed the project in a series of letters exchanged with Walter Blucher, who was at the time the executive director of the American Society of Planning Officials after Blucher had inquired about the project. Peets’s description is almost entirely about pragmatic issues that had arisen during the planning and in discussions with Klutznick and Bennett. Some of these were over the size of community facilities and the shopping center (items that would have been under the direction and not a part of Peets’s expertise), and some were more purely design questions. Some, as Peets acknowledges, were about how to use the prime development sites more profitably.²⁶⁹ In this discussion, some of Peets’s grasp of and consideration come through. Though Bennett

²⁶⁷ Randall, Gregory: *America’s Original GI Town*: 69.

²⁶⁸ *ibid*: 224.

²⁶⁹ *ibid*: 223-227.

notes how carefully they surveyed the site, Peets notes that the scale of the project and the shortness of the schedule did not allow things like identifying and saving individual specimen trees (as he had done at Washington Highlands and at Greendale). Though that may be the case, Peets's attention to detail and his concern for the specific character of the site and its topographical conditions comes through.

Conclusions about Peets's town plans

Urban designers are often reminded of Daniel Burnham's quote: "make no little plans, they have no magic to stir men's blood." Yet after World War I, the emphasis on monumentality and urban grandeur with which Burnham is associated became suspect, and the grand neoclassical groupings became associated with an antidemocratic or at least anti-populist approach. Ironically, the plans like Le Corbusier's *Ville Radieuse* or *Plan Voisin* for Paris, which imagined removing large swaths of the urban fabric with widely spaced towers set in park like areas where streets were minimized, were even more imposing in scope than those of the City Beautiful. Peets, in contrast to Burnham's dictum, and in contrast to the modernist penchant for urban renewal, seems to be able to make small plans that still have a sense of appropriate communal space.

Peets also had the rare quality to internally balance the broad goals of a clear design conception with a myriad of technical details. His ability to think pragmatically about pavement widths and economy, topography and the fate of individual trees, while also thinking of the main street of Greendale, a smallish shopping street that ends in a neo-colonial Village Hall, as somehow analogous to the Piazza del Popolo or to Williamsburg is rather remarkable.

For the researcher, it would have been helpful if Peets had produced his equivalent to Wright's Broadacre City or to Le Corbusier's *Ville Radieuse*; a manifesto of his vision of what an ideal city should be. Instead, and perhaps more interestingly, the conclusion is that for Peets, there is no ideal city; every plan is unique and it is always based on the local conditions, it is a response to the topography and ecology of the site, and it always is based on quality of the space it provides for the people who live and enjoy their time at the site.

Figure 15: Kohler, Wisconsin, 1915-1916 (Hegemann and Peets involvement, redrawn by the author to illustrate riparian zone connecting to Sheboygan River



Figure 16: Peets, plan of Washington Highlands, near Milwaukee, Wisconsin; with Werner Hegemann; 1917, (greenway highlighted by the author)

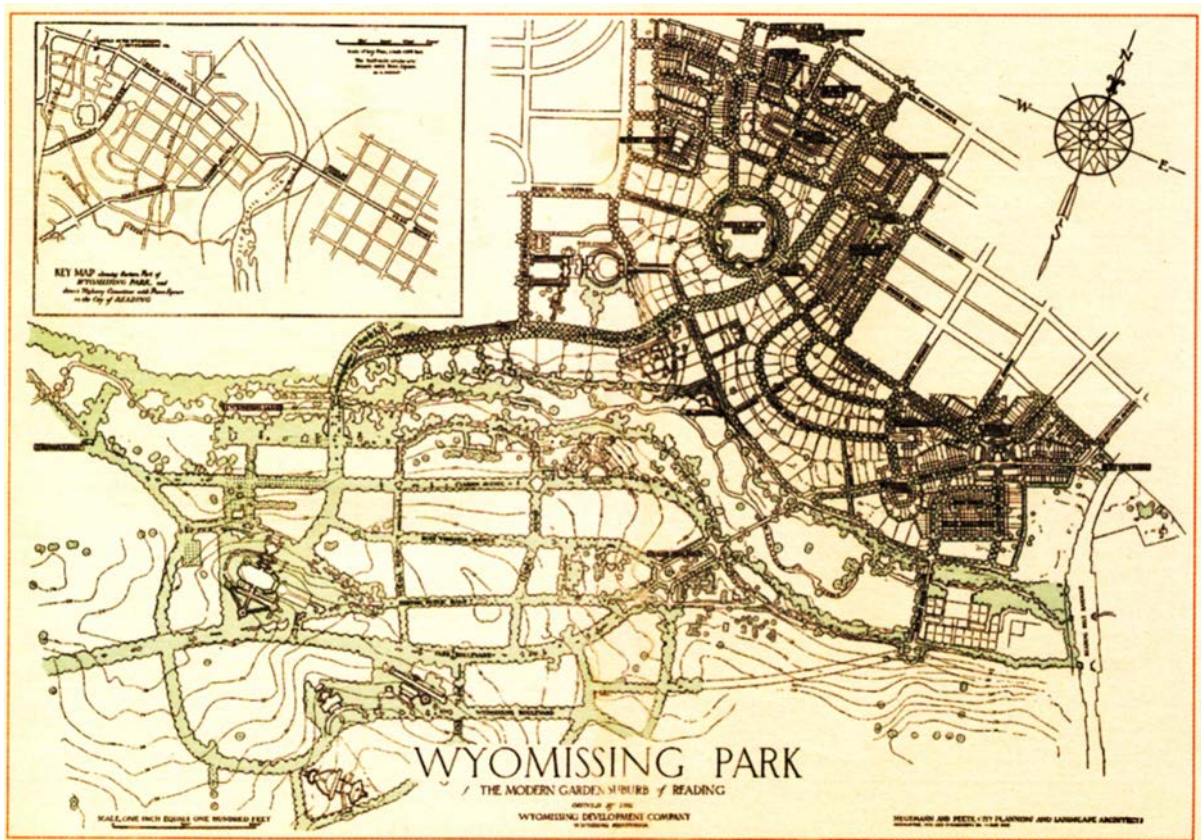


Figure 17: Hegemann and Peets, plan for Wyomissing Park, Reading, Pennsylvania, 1917

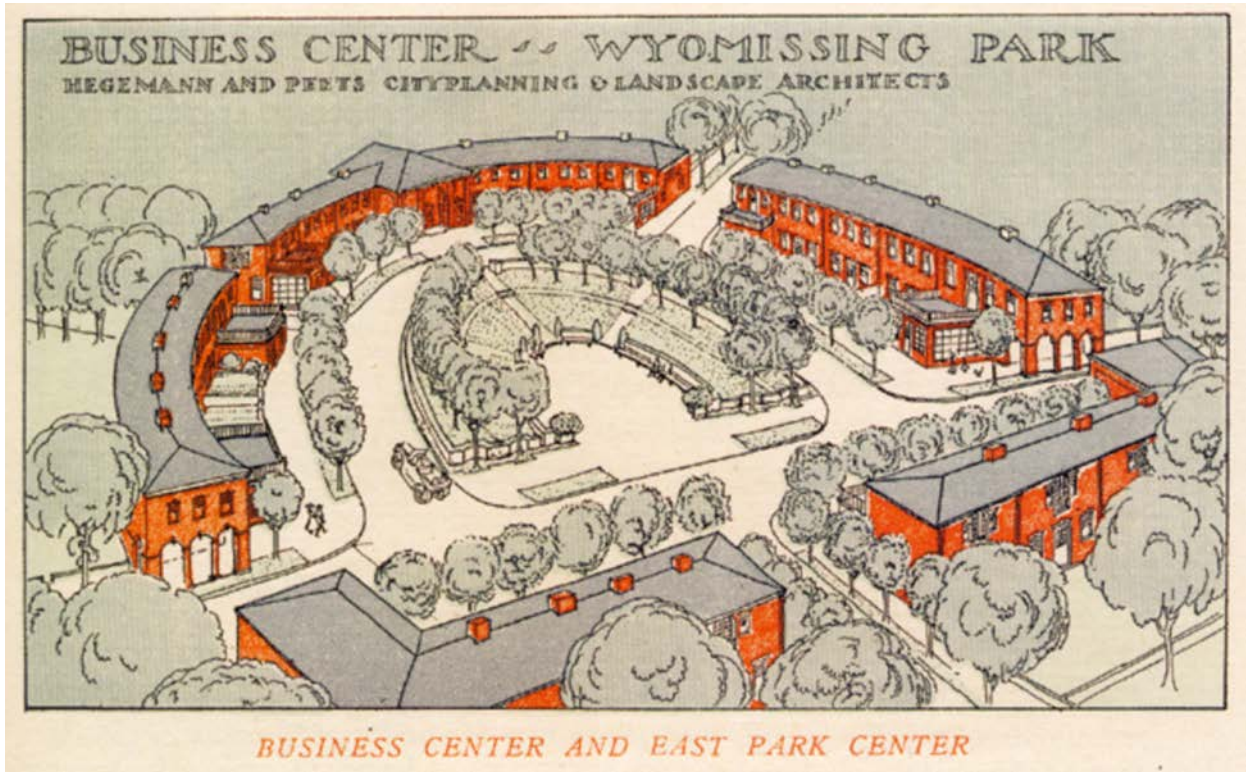


Figure 18: Hegemann and Peets, Wyomissing Park business center, aerial view by Peets, 1917

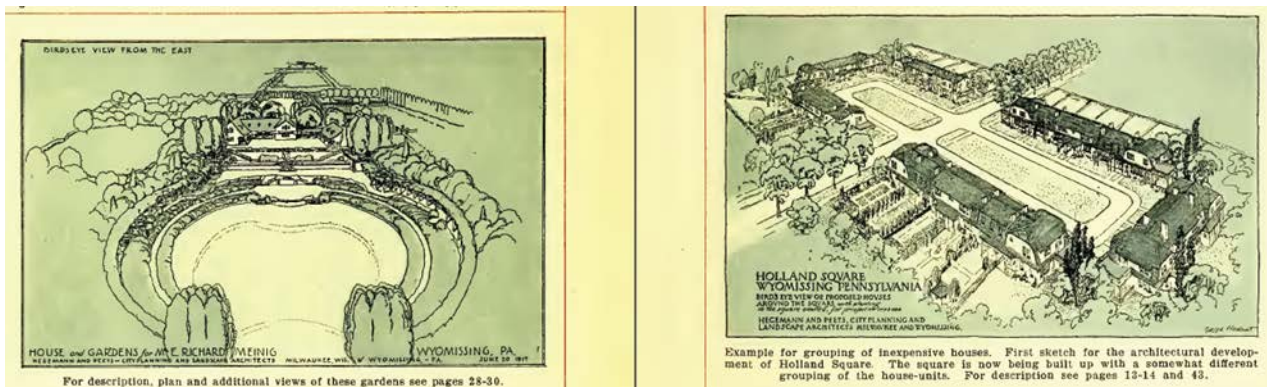


Figure 19: Hegemann and Peets, Wyomissing Park, illustrations from the brochure by Elbert Peets, 1917

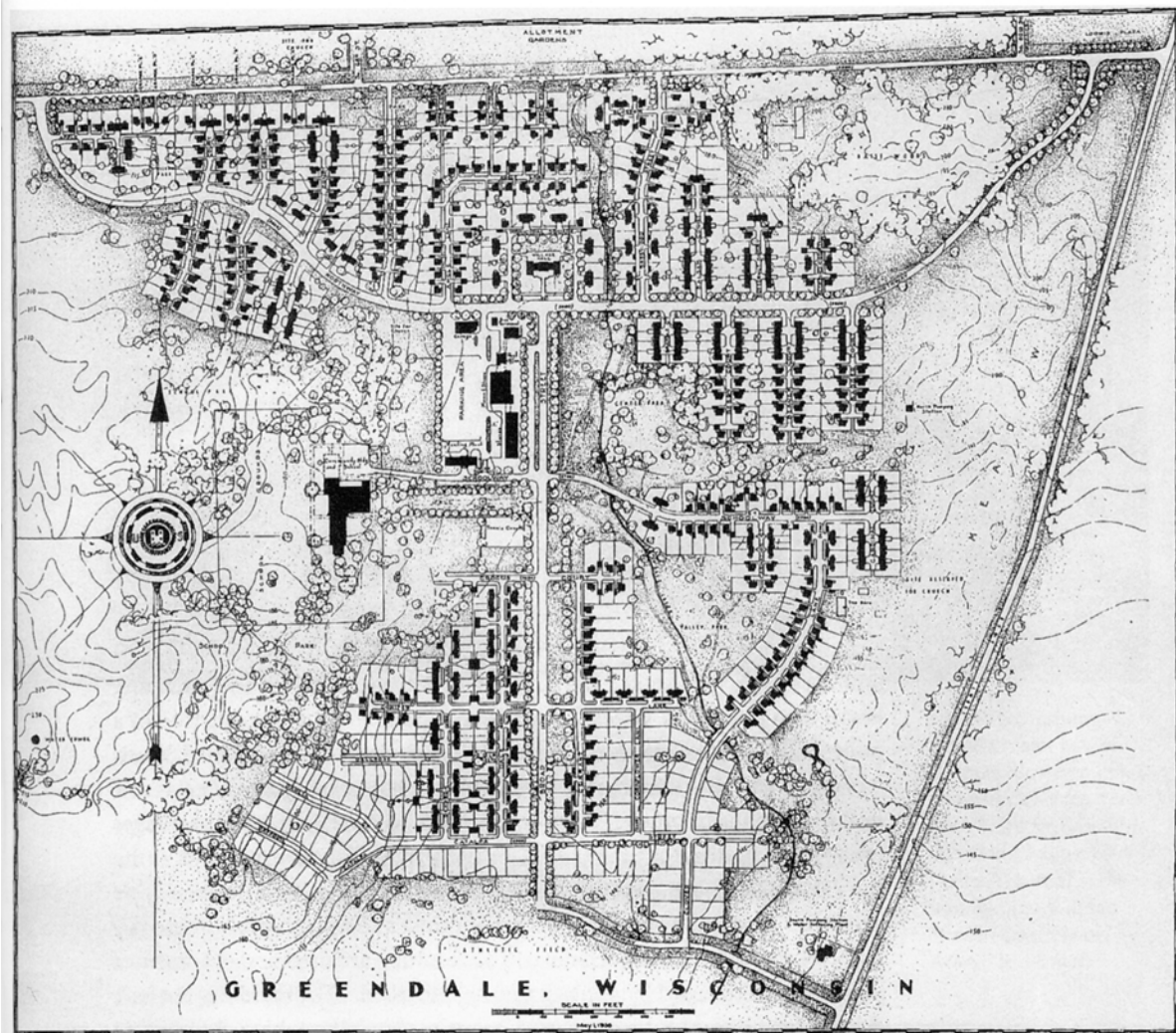


Figure 20: Elbert Peets, principal designer: plan of Greendale, Wisconsin (near Milwaukee), 1935, for the Resettlement Administration



Figure 21: Elbert Peets, plan of Greendale, color added by the author

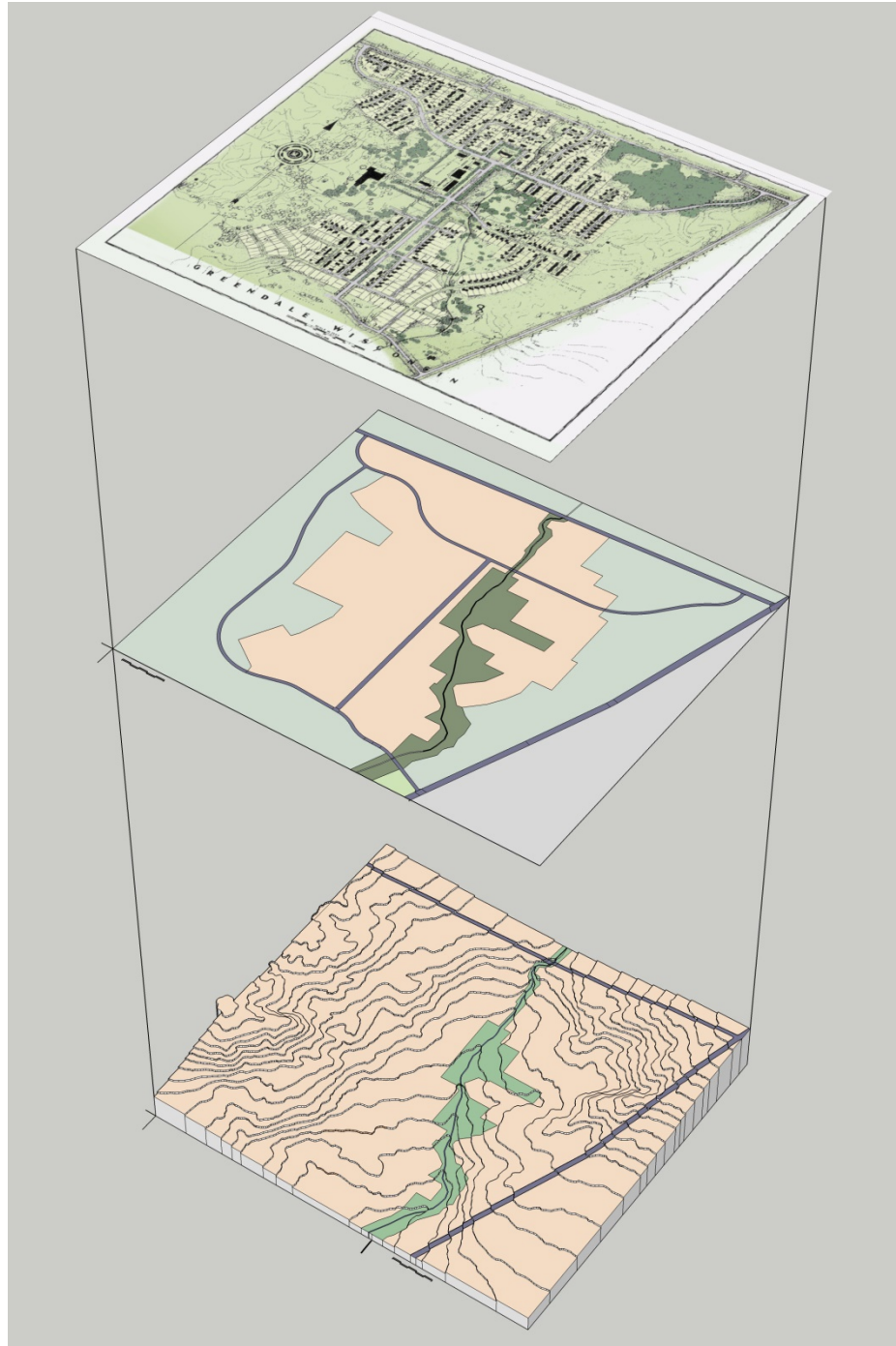


Figure 22: Greendale, Wisconsin: exploded view showing topography, riparian protection zone and plan (illustration by the author)

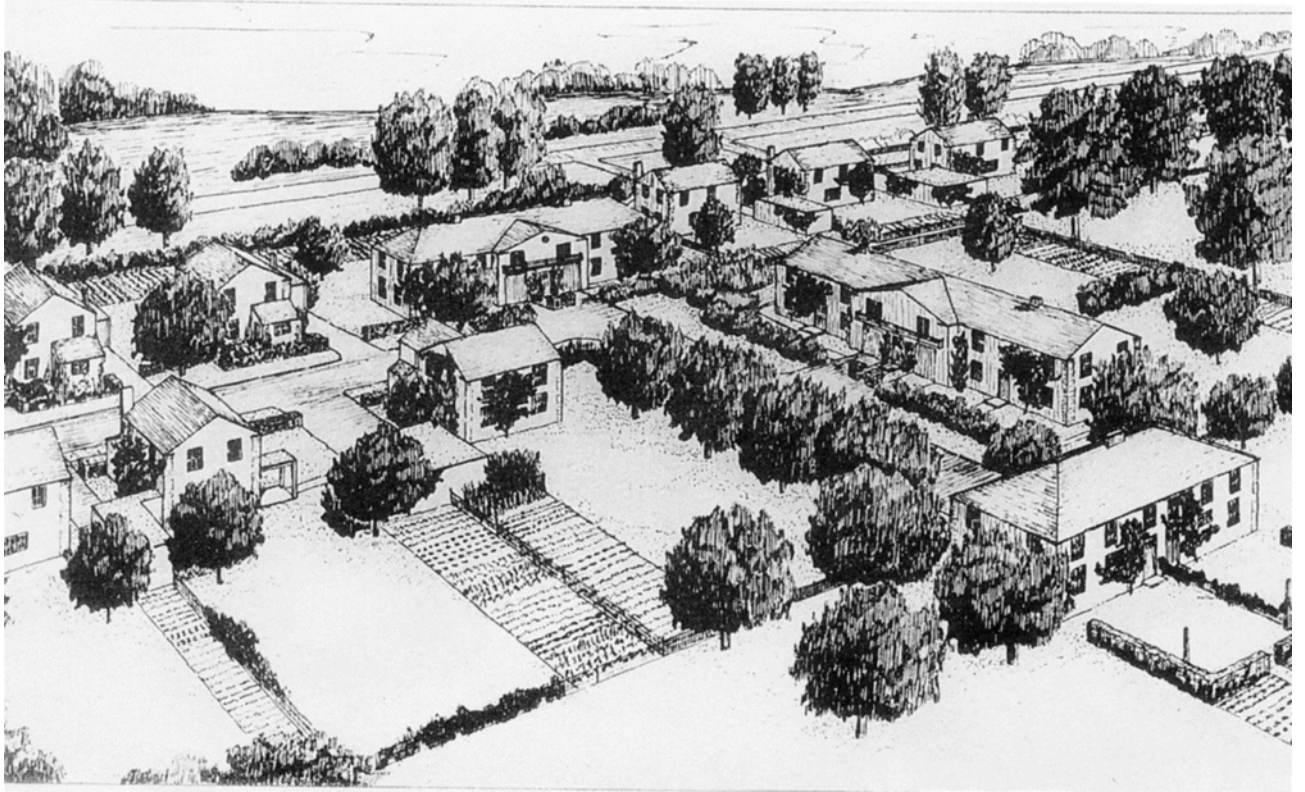


Figure 23: Aerial view of gardens and housing groups at Greendale, Wisconsin



Figure 24: Houses at Greendale, ca. 1936



Figure 25: Early view of Greendale, Wisconsin, ca. 1937



Figure 26: Greenbelt, Maryland

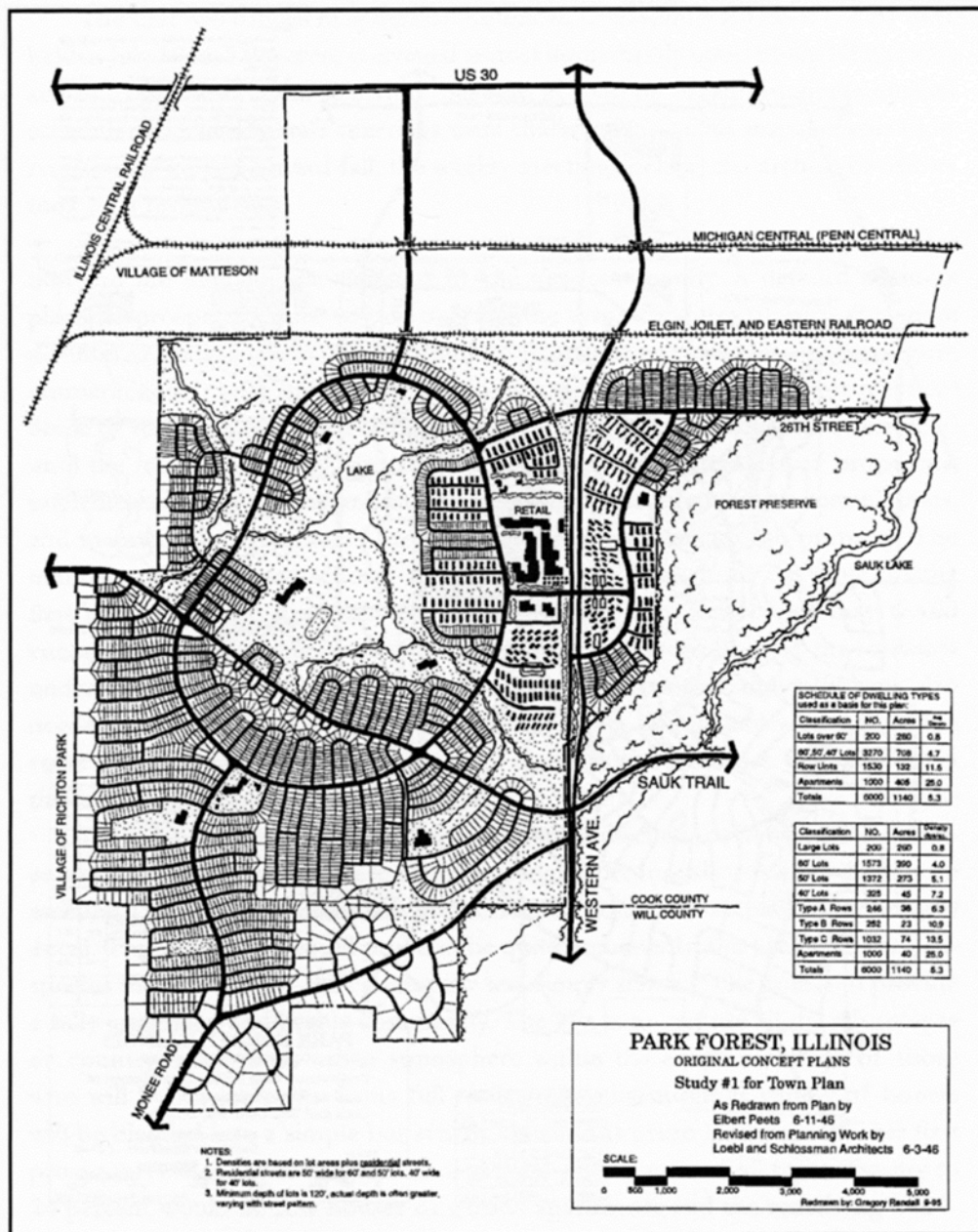


Fig. 20. The original study plan drawn by Elbert Peets on June 11, 1946, for the new town of Park Forest. This is the revised plan based on work by Loeb and Schlossman, architects, on June 3, 1946.

Figure 27: Design plan for Park Forest

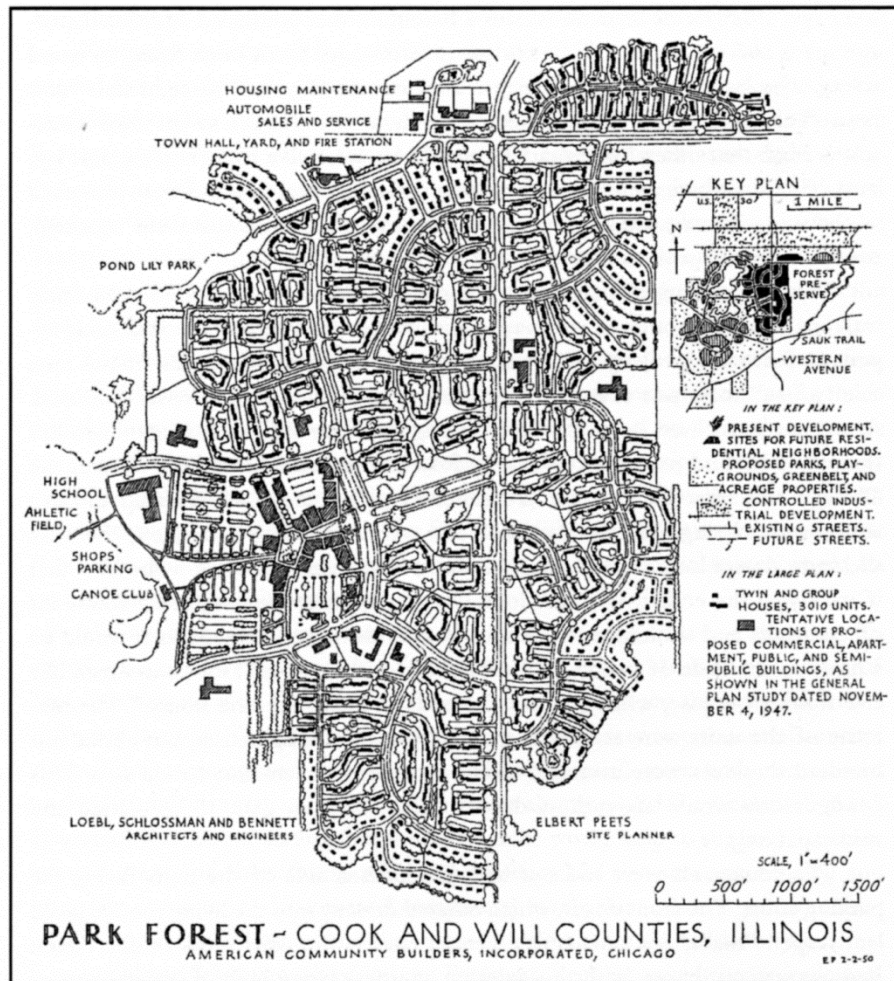


Fig. 28. Apartment plan as redesigned by Loeb, Schlossman, and Bennett, with Peets - a reflection of the "superblock" concept of Sunnyside. *Source:* Cornell University Archives.

Figure 28: Elbert Peets, Final Plan for Park Forest, near Chicago, 1950



Fig. 30. The "superblock" concept of apartment development is obvious in this view of the community under construction in the early 1950s. *Source:* courtesy of Park Forest Historical Society.

Figure 29: Elbert Peets, aerial view of Park Forest under construction



Figure 30: Levittown, New York

Peets's writing on history and theory

*“...I hope that the civic art of the future will not neglect the people's need for emotions and for stimulating optical experiences, that its planners will not be too deeply indoctrinated in any style, and that their plans will come from the site as well as from the things people do and feel.”*²⁷⁰

In addition to his career designing some notable town plans and neighborhood developments, Elbert Peets wrote extensively on the history of urban design and civic art. This section will address the general thrust of Peets's writing on urban design issues and on urban design history. It will first address some of the common themes and character of the writing, and then will examine some of his work in more detail. It will look at *The American Vitruvius*, the book that he co-wrote with Werner Hegemann, and three of his essays. These essays, “The Landscape Priesthood,” “Camillo Sitte,” and “The Golden Horses and Civic Art” are representative of his work and illustrate (respectively) his view of the profession, his approach to history, and his view of contemporary design issues. This will also examine how his writing relates to his professional work, and more importantly, how it relates to or contrasts from other writing and other concerns of his contemporaries.

²⁷⁰ Peets: “The Golden Horses and Civic Art”: 112. This essay was originally published in Tunnard and Pearce: *City Planning at Yale*, 1954.

Only a few of Peets's contributions are moderately well-known. These include his contributions to *The American Vitruvius*, and perhaps his essay "The Landscape Priesthood." The rest of his substantial body of writing is not well known, and it offers a valuable addition to the historiography of mid-century discourse. Looking at his writing offers some insight into the issues that he considered important in the design of civic spaces, and the qualities that he believed were important for urban form. Most of his articles were vignettes from urban design history, and some were for scholarly audiences like the Society of Architectural Historians or for city planning students. Some other articles were for professional journals like the *Town Planning Review* or *Architectural Record*, whose audience was other professional designers. But his emphasis and his tone were not primarily academic. Instead, his tone and his emphasis were to explain the relevance of civic design and its history to "make the cities more agreeable places to be outdoors in."²⁷¹ Some of his early articles were for H. L. Mencken's magazine, *The American Mercury*, an intellectually oriented magazine of current affairs for a sophisticated and skeptical audience. The tone and the intended audience for that magazine exemplify Peets's approach to writing: sometimes arcane, often irreverent and sarcastic; and intended for a knowledgeable readership who is interested in the social and experiential qualities of public space.

Like his designs for town plans, Peets's essays went against the grain of other contemporary writing. Le Corbusier, writing in the 1920's, argued that the modern age was fundamentally different from the past and therefore required a new sensibility for design. This new sensibility would be based on principles of engineering rather than on the outdated historicism of the Beaux-Arts. Other writers on the modern landscape in the 1930's, like

²⁷¹ Peets: "The Golden Horses and Civic Art": 107.

Christopher Tunnard, James Rose and Garrett Eckbo, emphasized ways that new developments in modern art could be applied to landscape design. While these others emphasized a modernist paradigm that required completely new forms to reflect a new age of technology and rationalism, Peets's writing constitute a sustained argument for the continued relevance of historic, especially Renaissance, planning principles. In contrast to the emphasis on a new sensibility, or a "spirit of the age," Peets argued for the continuity of the tradition of urban design. While others who had been educated and trained in the Beaux-Arts tradition, like Joseph Hudnut and Louis Kahn, re-formed themselves in the 1930s as modernists, and others a generation younger than Peets, like James Rose and Garrett Eckbo rejected the Beaux-Arts tradition during their education, Peets continued a tradition that reflected the comparative method of historical studies. His writing is of interest because he was an alternative voice away from the mainstream.

In the context of Peets's time, this voice challenges the view that the period was monolithic in its embrace of the modernist approach of Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus. It is primarily a voice of pragmatism over a totalizing theory. The pragmatic bent of his writing is evident when he describes decisions made in his own work based on economy and convenience. It also comes through in his discussion of L'Enfant's plan for Washington when he describes inconvenient traffic intersections that result from the diagonal streets.

Beyond the historical interest in presenting a view that was at odds with the dominant theoretical position, there is some interest in looking at Peets's writing because some of the results of the urbanist position of Le Corbusier and CIAM were less successful. For instance, the much-maligned Pruitt-Igoe project in St. Louis embodied the tenets of CIAM's Athens Charter, and it was a notable failure, and it was demolished in 1972. The Robin

Hood Gardens project by Alison and Peter Smithson (completed in 1972) was an example of the Team X theories (which were an offshoot of CIAM), and it too is scheduled for demolition in 2017. Peets's town plans, like Washington Highlands, Greendale, and Park Forest, were successful and popular when built, and remain vibrant and successful neighborhoods.

Though he wrote about historic examples, Peets always wrote from the point of view of a practicing professional designer. The more memorable narrative of the time is the utopian project that sought to imagine a new order of urban form and society itself, one based on "rationalism in the place of emotionalism....[a] man-made world of pure, rational, and transparent relationships."²⁷² Peets was not "emotional," he advocated rationalism based on historic precedents. He was not interested in imaging an ideal city, and his writing reflects practical concerns for economy and efficiency as much as it does his interest in civic art. So, in addition to some historical interest as an alternative voice, Peets's writing has some practical interest as an advocate for some basic concerns like providing effective and enjoyable social space in town plans.

Compared to other designers, Peets published a substantial number of articles on urban design, many of them short sketches on significant characters and issues in urban design history. He had twenty-eight articles published and contributed additional writing to describe the design proposals both for his work with Hegemann and his own work at Greendale. He wrote about the appropriate solar orientation for suburban housing, he experimented with design work for temporary war time housing, and he even experimented with fiction. He wrote for numerous publications such as the *Town Planning Review*,

²⁷² O'Malley and Wolschke-Bulmahn, editors, *Modernism and Landscape Architecture*: ix.

Architectural Record, the *Baltimore Sun Sunday Magazine*, and perhaps found his most appropriate outlet in H. L. Mencken's magazine, *The American Mercury*. The largest number of his essays relate to his work with Werner Hegemann. The next largest number was for *The American Mercury*, then a series for the *Town Planning Review*.

Peets's writing is varied and difficult to classify. He could sometimes be acerbic and other times more straightforwardly informative. He did not develop a systematic theory on urban design in his essays. To the extent that he had, or articulated, a theoretical stance on design, it was to appreciate the rational and artistic approach of Renaissance planning. Unlike the manifestoes of Le Corbusier, or of Leberecht Migge, his work was not so much to propose a method as it was to explicate the plans that he admired (or to criticize the ones that he did not admire). Instead he wrote for an urbane and curious general audience, instead of for designers and practitioners. His goal of writing was not to explain how to design or to propose his own goal, but to explain what has been done and why it matters. His essays were not directed towards professionals, but to explain to non-professionals what designers did, and why urban design was a civic value.

When Le Corbusier wrote *Toward an Architecture*, the prevailing tone of his work, and of the avant-garde, was that the contemporary world had changed so much that a new paradigm for architecture and urban design was needed. Coming out of World War I and the growth of industrialization and urbanization from the Industrial Revolution, the perception was that society had changed fundamentally, that previous forms and attitudes were no longer valid and that new forms were needed. This was not itself a new view, and it was an extension of nineteenth century debates over what style was appropriate to the current time. However, in contrast to those debates, the argument that Le Corbusier made

for architecture and urban planning, and that the first wave of modernists in landscape design like Christopher Tunnard, James Rose and Garrett Eckbo would make was that what was needed was not a new style, but a new conception of building and design.

What is perhaps most striking about Peets's approach and opinion, as expressed in his writing, is that he never accepted or adopted the assumption that a new conception was needed or that successful examples of past designs were no longer valid. Unlike James Rose's assertion that we can appreciate past designs in a historical sense but not emulate them, Peets repeatedly argued for the validity of historical models, from the Renaissance to the example of Williamsburg.

It is not surprising that Peets would hold that view in the 1920's when the *Vitruvius* was first published, when the modernist position was not widely known or accepted, when the Bauhaus was just beginning, before Le Corbusier was well known and before the CIAM had formed or the Athens Charter had been proposed. By the 1930's, not only was the concept of the "new" the dominant polemical stance, the use of the past and historicism in general were specifically devalued. Rose, in his essay of 1938, had noted lessons of the past were no longer valid because "we have been cut off from their source of inspiration."²⁷³ At the time that Rose was writing this, Peets was working on the construction of Greendale, Wisconsin and working on additional chapters for Hegemann's book *City Planning, Housing* (1938). Christiane Crasemann Collins notes that during the crucial time of the beginning of the Bauhaus and the ascendancy of modernism in Germany, Hegemann was on lecture tours in the United States, and beginning his practice with Peets. The implication is that because of this timing he was less affected by the debates over modernism. Peets was

²⁷³ Rose: "Freedom in the Garden": 69.

an almost exact contemporary of Ludwig Hilberseimer and Mies van der Rohe, two key figures in the advocacy of the modern movement. In contrast, while Peets was critical of the status quo (which for him meant the romantic associations of the informal landscape style), he never accepted the necessity of modernism.

The issue of timing that Collins suggests is pertinent. Peets began his career at the beginning of the 1920's when the economy was robust and there was a broad consensus that city planning could be effective in addressing social problems of urban crowding and that improving the physical character of cities was a valuable social goal in itself. This time followed the success and fame of Burnham's plan for Chicago, the City Beautiful interventions into Detroit's downtown, the international conferences on city planning by Hegemann and by Patrick Geddes, and the long-range planning study of Boston 1915. By the late twenties, even the advocates of the City Beautiful movement had begun to call it, as John Nolen did, the City Practical. Part of the emphasis of the Boston 1915 plan had been to call for a greater emphasis on sociological and economic study, with less emphasis on "beauty" as an end in itself. Even Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr, a figure associated with beautifying cities would say, as early as 1912, that the city planning of the future would be more of a science than an art.²⁷⁴

Also, significantly, during the 1920's, the European modernist movement would challenge a reliance on historic styles and beauty, instead arguing that science and engineering were the appropriate models. While those debates were advancing, Peets was in his busiest period. Most of his writing came in the late 1920's and he was more influenced by the pragmatist philosophy of John Dewey than by the more dogmatic approach of Le

²⁷⁴ Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., address to the conference on city planning; in *The American City*, (1912).

Corbusier.²⁷⁵ The impression from Peets's writing is that he was always more concerned with pragmatic utility than with articulating a coherent theory. Some of that concern was anachronistic: he was an advocate of civic art and civic beauty and repeatedly argued for the relevance of the historic models of Renaissance planning and the appropriateness of American colonial planning like that of Williamsburg. His interest was always more on the experience of immediate user and what contributes to the enjoyment of civic space. He also had a strong interest in communicating those lessons to an interested citizenry rather than providing a manifesto to other designers.

It is interesting that Peets's first published work had nothing to do with urban history, civic art or design theory. His first work was *Practical Tree Repair: the Physical Repair of Trees* (1913). As the title suggests, this was a manual for how to care for urban trees and how to remedy injuries to trees that arose either from pruning or from accidental damage.

What makes things influential?

There were a number of texts and manifestoes in Peets's life and career, the late nineteenth till the second half of the twentieth century, ones that had large circulation and were influential to the practice of urban design. These include Camillo Sitte's *City Planning According to Artistic Principles* (1889), Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (1902, originally published as *To-morrow, A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* in 1898), Le Corbusier's *Toward an Architecture* (published in book form in 1924, it was a collection of shorter pieces previously published in *L'Esprit Nouveau*), and Ian McHarg's *Design with Nature* (1969). These books all managed to respond to a clear need in a way that

²⁷⁵ Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection number 2772, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

demonstrated how a social problem could be addressed by the tools of urban and landscape design. They summarized or organized a groundswell of important contemporary issues, and they provided a cogent, actionable plan. Finally, they positioned that plan of action as an almost moral or ethical imperative. These major works were successful and influential because they addressed a real societal problem, one that was at least partially tractable with the tools and activities of the designers to whom they were addressed. For Camillo Sitte in Austria and for Ebenezer Howard in London, the pressing problem was rapid industrialization and urbanization in the late nineteenth century which resulted in crowded and unsanitary urban centers. For Le Corbusier, it was the pressing need for housing and urban reconstruction following World War I, along with the desire to find how developments in the avant-garde of modernist art could be applied to architecture and urban design. For Le Corbusier, it was also a critique of the elitism and other perceived failures of the historicist program of the École des Beaux Arts to address social and urban concerns. For Ian McHarg, it was recognition of an environmental crisis. The crisis was most eloquently summarized by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962). McHarg, with his beautiful overlay maps, proposed an analytical method that broadened the scope of landscape planning to a regional geotechnical study that gave the result an aura of objectivity and scientific certainty.

The characteristics of why those texts became influential also illustrate some of the reasons that Peets's writings did not have the same resonance for practice or as much impact on the historiography of twentieth century urbanism. James Rose's and Garrett Eckbo's essays were also influential, and thus were anthologized in Marc Treib's *Modern Landscape Architecture, A Critical Review*, because they announced and heralded a new paradigm for

practice, one that tried to apply the debates and new ideas on modernism from art, music, and literature to the field of landscape architecture.

These texts and essays were manifestoes and calls to action. They expressed confidence that the status quo was mistaken and irretrievably flawed, and that they contained a better course of action. Peets's essays did not propose a manifesto or a program for action. Instead, their main focus was to educate an informed, non-professional audience.

Though his writings are historical in nature, they are also written from the point of view of a practicing professional. His studies of L'Enfant's plan of Washington is not only a review, but a sort of a design critique, where he not only discusses the elements of L'Enfant's plan, but redraws a "corrected" version.

The Landscape Priesthood

In 1927, Elbert Peets published an essay for *The American Mercury Magazine* titled "The Landscape Priesthood." *The American Mercury* was a magazine founded by H. L. Mencken in 1924, and was intended to be an irreverent review of contemporary cultural trends for an educated but skeptical readership. Peets noted in his correspondence with the editorial staff at the Mercury that he had been a subscriber since the first issue of the magazine.²⁷⁶ This comment, along with the engagement of his family in social issues, suggests that Peets, like Mencken, was politically and socially progressive. His essay was, like some of Mencken's, was sarcastic, intelligent, and peppered with arcane references. The general tone of the essay is sardonic, a scathing indictment of the state of the landscape

²⁷⁶ Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection number 2772, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

architecture profession in the 1910's and 1920's. In it, Peets opined that the state of landscape architecture was moribund, "...as a vital, evolving art it is dead."²⁷⁷ He laid the blame for this condition partly on the legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted, but mostly on the influence of the informal style of English landscape gardening. While most of the essay was directed at the practice of landscape architecture and civic planning, a significant amount of it was directed at the educational system for landscape architects. This system was dominated by Harvard University, the curriculum of which was also dominated by Olmsted. Peets of course was a product of that system, having graduated from Harvard with a Master of Landscape Architecture in 1915. Not only was he a graduate, but he had taught horticulture there, working with some of the faculty that his essay criticized. His view of the educational program at Harvard and of the Olmsted legacy was harsh - not only was the program mired in tradition (and in Peets's view, an outdated tradition) but it inculcated in its students an approach to landscape design that could only be remedied by "pedagogical dynamite."²⁷⁸

When Peets criticizes the school and the profession for being tradition-bound and for holding onto an outdated and moribund tradition, he sounds much like the series of essays that James Rose, Dan Kiley and Garrett Eckbo would make in *Pencil Points* magazine in 1937. Rose, Eckbo and Kiley were students in the landscape architecture program at Harvard. They were at Harvard when Gropius arrived in 1937. Gropius had been brought to Harvard by Joseph Hudnut, who had worked Hegemann and Peets between 1917 and 1921. At the time, before Hudnut began to bring modernism into the Harvard curriculum by

²⁷⁷ Peets; "The Landscape Priesthood": 187.

²⁷⁸ Peets; "The Landscape Priesthood": 189.

reorganizing the program into the Graduate School of Design and bringing in Gropius and Breuer, the architecture and landscape architecture programs were firmly based on the École des Beaux Arts model.

Rose, Eckbo and Kiley are considered to be the first wave of modernism in United States landscape architecture, and their series of essays in *Pencil Points* are among the earliest concerted arguments to explicitly advocate modernism in American landscape architecture. In their essays, they criticize the historicism of both landscape architecture practice and education as being outdated and in need of a new outlook and paradigm. Peter Walker and Melanie Simo also argue that Peets's essay on the "Landscape Priesthood" was influential, at least for Garrett Eckbo, in formulating a critique of the status quo.²⁷⁹ The similarity of the arguments suggests that Peets and the opinions expressed in his writing were prescient in anticipating the more widespread critique of the traditional stance of the then contemporary practice and education of landscape architecture. In this reading, Peets appears to be a harbinger of a call for reform in the profession and its educational curriculum. It is tempting to see Peets in that light, but there are also some significant differences in Peets's argument and that of James Rose, Garrett Eckbo and Dan Kiley. There are differences both in what they are criticizing, and even more importantly in what they suggest to be a better direction.

When Peets criticized the landscape profession as being too attached to a tradition, he meant specifically the naturalistic or informal style of English landscape gardening that had been prominent since the mid-nineteenth century. As he says in "The Landscape Priesthood," "the introduction of the English landscape style of gardening was a calamity of

²⁷⁹ Walker and Simo, *Invisible Gardens*: 124.

the first magnitude,” and the widespread application of this style “has made the visible face of this continent somewhat less beautiful than it would otherwise have been.”²⁸⁰ It is not tradition, historicism, or the use of historic precedents in contemporary design that Peets objects to, but use of the specific style of landscape gardening associated with Capability Brown and Humphrey Repton.

Peets’s claim that the informal landscape style associated with Olmsted was a “calamity” seems to be an outrageous example of hyperbole, as it is attacking one of the most universally respected figures in landscape history. Peets did not fully explain why he found it “obnoxious.”²⁸¹ However, there are some parallels and suggestions that explain why he took such a strong stand.

First, it should be recognized where this article appeared. “The Landscape Priesthood” was published in H. L. Mencken’s magazine, *The American Mercury*. Mencken is perhaps most remembered for his satirical reporting on the Scopes Monkey Trial.²⁸² His tone was arch, erudite and biting sarcasm, and Peets seems to have adopted that mode for his article. This was the second article that Peets published in *The American Mercury*, and it seems that he adopted the literary trope of hyperbole to appeal to the educated and skeptical reader of the *Mercury*.

Second, in addition to the tone adopted, the opposition to the informal landscape style that Peets voiced has a parallel in a similar controversy in Leberecht Migge. Migge (1881-1935) was a German landscape designer, a close friend of Peets’s professional partner,

²⁸⁰ Peets “The Landscape Priesthood”: 186-187.

²⁸¹ *ibid*, page 187

²⁸² The trial over teaching evolution in Tennessee schools, the trial was in 1925.

Werner Hegemann, and someone with whom Peets had been familiar at least since around 1920. Several of Migge's garden designs appeared in *The American Vitruvius*. Migge, and others of his generation, were critical of the tradition of informal garden that was associated with the picturesque school that David Haney calls the Lenné-Meyer school.²⁸³ This approach emphasized informal arrangements and curving paths, which were derided as "pretzel paths."²⁸⁴ The design method was also derided as being a facile approach that could be easily reproduced. Migge's proposed alternative was the "garden-architectonic,"²⁸⁵ which was characterized by more rational and orthogonal arrangements of outdoor rooms defined by hedges and pergolas. That Peets uses the term "architectural garden" and that he criticizes the landscape style (and in urban design, the curving streets of Camillo Sitte's work) as being too easy to reproduce, suggest the correspondence with the German debates.

Finally, Peets's objection seems to be a more general one against sentimentality. In discussing the use of a colonial style houses (as he would later use at Greendale), Peets notes that the potential criticism is that historic styles can easily fall into sentimentality, and that it "has the great fault of being susceptible to attacks of quaintness, than which there is no greater architectural vice."²⁸⁶

Peets's attack on informal gardening reflects the particular readership of Mencken's magazine, other current and similar debates in the landscape field at the time, and Peets's own personal approach to advocate a more rational method that avoided sentimentality.

²⁸³ Haney, *When Modern was Green*: 20.

²⁸⁴ *ibid*

²⁸⁵ *ibid*, 4

²⁸⁶ Elbert Peets to Werner Hegemann, August 10, 1924, Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection number 2772, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

The critique that James Rose had with contemporary design was more general. His was directed against the basic relevance of history for contemporary design. Rose, in the essay “Freedom in the Garden”, argues that an insistence on the forms and ideas of the past means that “We have found our final resting place. Our grave is on axis in a Beaux Arts cemetery....we can have no modern landscape design.”²⁸⁷ He writes that “Contemporary design represents a change in kind, a change in conception.” and that “to learn the Renaissance alphabet in design has about the same value as to learn the Greek alphabet if wish to speak English.”²⁸⁸ Peets was clearly not opposed to use of the past in general; in his essay on Camillo Sitte, he argues that the “fine flower of architectural city planning was the second half of the eighteenth century.”²⁸⁹ Even in the “Landscape Priesthood” essay, he criticizes contemporary landscape designers for not meeting the standards of “Raphael, Le Notre, and Wren.”²⁹⁰ The prime examples of civic art that Peets recommends are Renaissance plazas and boulevards. For Rose, it was the use of history in general that was no longer valid for contemporary design issues. “We can appreciate Gothic cathedrals and Renaissance palaces, but we can no longer produce them because we have been cut off from their source of inspiration. History has no value for us unless we learn this first.”²⁹¹ Peets, along with Hegemann, felt that the tradition of civic design was ongoing and vital; that current designers could not only appreciate the past and historic precedents, but could learn valuable and applicable lessons.

²⁸⁷ Rose, “Freedom in the Garden”: 68-69.

²⁸⁸ *ibid*; page 69

²⁸⁹ Peets, “Camillo Sitte,” in Spreiregen, ed., *On the Art of Designing*: 143.

²⁹⁰ Peets; “The Landscape Priesthood” in Spreiregen, ed., *On the Art of Designing Cities*: 189.

²⁹¹ Rose, “Freedom in the Garden”: 69.

Rose was echoing a point of view that was common among early twentieth century avant-garde designers and artists. This point of view suggested that contemporary design was not an evolutionary step of refining or adapting the forms of the past, but was the result of a new conception. This argument had been most forcefully and successfully advanced in Le Corbusier's book, *Towards an Architecture*. Le Corbusier's book had been published in 1924, just a year after Hegemann and Peets's *The American Vitruvius*. While *The American Vitruvius* was a gentle manifesto that was not so much an instruction volume on civic planning as it was a "thesaurus" for exploring successful examples of civic spaces and groupings of buildings (it included urban plans, neighborhood plans, gardens and campus designs). In contrast, Le Corbusier's book was a polemical text that used examples from history, but argued that there now exists "a new spirit" and that this new spirit is best embodied in works of engineering and the methods of mass production. It was a view to the future, not a review of the past. Le Corbusier states that "the styles are a lie."²⁹²

The interesting coincidence of the publication of *The American Vitruvius* and *Toward an Architecture* illustrates how different was the conception of Hegemann and Peets from the avant-garde. It also illustrates why Peets's work and his writing have been overlooked or neglected in the twentieth century historiography. While Le Corbusier's book captured the spirit of the avant-garde, Peets's historicist approach and attachment to the Renaissance at the high point of civic planning represented a dated and retrograde view. While they appeared "retrograde" at the time, they could (in a more generous reading, as that of Leon

²⁹² Le Corbusier: *Toward an Architecture*; (Getty Research Institute, 2008): 87. *Toward an Architecture* was originally published in 1924, this edition is a translation of the 1928 second edition; earlier editions in English had been published as *Towards a New Architecture*; the French title was *Vers Une Architecture*).

Krier in his Preface to the reprint of *The American Vitruvius*)²⁹³ be seen as either prescient of the renewed interest in urbanism, or at least as a view that continued to endorse qualities that some of the modernist work neglected. The work was rediscovered by the new urbanist movement and the neo-traditionalist movement in the light of perceived shortcomings of the modernist city.

The interesting synchronicity of the influential *Toward an Architecture* and the relative obscurity of *The American Vitruvius* and Peets's other writings raises questions that are pertinent for this study. The first question is about the characteristics that contribute to a text becoming influential in its professional field. The second is about what can be gained for the historiography of twentieth century urbanism to look at essays and opinions that did not become influential or gain much traction. Also, in Peets's case, the thrust of his writing was not to produce a manifesto.

The American Vitruvius

When *The American Vitruvius* was published in 1922, the *Town Planning Review* called it "a great volume" that was "the finest collection of town planning views, plans, elevations and sketches that has yet been got together."²⁹⁴ The review praised the collection of images (particularly noting the quality of Peets's illustrations), noting that they were more of a thesaurus than a logical system. They further noted that "With so many and such well-reproduced illustrations, this volume can never go out of date."²⁹⁵ The text of the *Vitruvius*

²⁹³ Leon Krier, "Preface," *The American Vitruvius*, (Princeton Architectural Press, 1988): v.

²⁹⁴: "Review of Civic Art: by Werner Hegemann and Elbert Peets," *Town Planning Review* volume 10, number 1 (January 1923): 56-57 (author of review not given).

²⁹⁵ *ibid*; page 57

was largely the work of Hegemann, and only the last chapter on L'Enfant's plan of Washington, D.C. was primarily the work of Peets, though he contributed many of the books illustrations. In spite of the very positive view of the *Town Planning Review*, the book otherwise received a lukewarm reception, and it did, rather quickly, seem to be out of date. This appears to be largely a result of its timing: the *Vitruvius* was published at the junction of the time between the peak of interest in garden cities and the City Beautiful movement and the ascendancy of modernism. It was published two years before Le Corbusier's *Toward an Architecture*. While Hegemann and Peets's work suffered and languished because of this context, looking at Peets's writing and design work shows that the shift to modernism was not a unified transition; it complicates and makes more interesting the arc of changing views on urbanism during the first half of the twentieth century.

Other than the *Vitruvius*, Peets's best known or most memorable article was "The Landscape Priesthood", published in *The American Mercury* in 1927. In this article, Peets sardonically attacks the landscape architecture establishment. He criticizes the tradition-bound practice and education of landscape architects, and decries the hegemony of the Harvard program, of which he was a product. It is tempting to see the essay as an attack on traditionalism in general; one that would presage the similar sounding critique that James Rose when he states that we cannot assume that "a foundation of classic design will better equip us to do modern."²⁹⁶

However, it becomes clear that Peets's argument and thesis is very different from the critique of Rose. What Peets says is needed in landscape design and especially in landscape education, is more experimentation and more risk taking. "Students of garden design,

²⁹⁶ Rose, "Freedom in the Garden": 69.

instead of being held down by traditional tastes and conceptions of practicality, ought to be encouraged to commit every sort of imaginative indiscretion.”²⁹⁷ Peets describes the character of the design opinions of the traditional faculty and practicing landscape architects as “lovely but sterile ideas.”²⁹⁸ He argues that the effect of this traditional-bound education in landscape architecture is a widespread proliferation of bland designs. He claims that there is an orthodoxy of practice and education based around the legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.²⁹⁹ Students of landscape design were educated in this tradition and thereby limited in their view of design possibilities (Peets suggests that they are not so much “educated” as indoctrinated”³⁰⁰). Peets notes that the chairman of the landscape program at Harvard proudly notes that the average age of landscape architecture students is twenty-eight. While the chairman considers this as evidence of the maturity of the students, Peets considers it to be a “catastrophe”. The brain of such a student is a terminal moraine pushed into his skull by the academic and professional glaciers that have moved over it. Only pedagogical dynamite, not abstention from repression, can open up these minds and start them reworking the treasures of aesthetic form.”³⁰¹ Peets notes that he “quite seriously

²⁹⁷ Peets; “The Landscape Priesthood”: 189.

²⁹⁸ Peets; “The Landscape Priesthood”: 189.

²⁹⁹ Olmsted Sr. had died in 1903; Olmsted Jr. was still active, led the Olmsted design firm and taught at Harvard’s landscape architecture program.

³⁰⁰ Peets; “The Landscape Priesthood”: 188.

³⁰¹ *ibid*, page 189. The chairman at the time was James Sturgis Pray, under whom Peets had studied. After graduation, before joining Hegemann in their partnership, Peets worked for Pray as a designer/drafter. When Peets graduated, he was awarded a traveling fellowship that he deferred until 1920; during that trip he had a contentious correspondence with Pray about the nature and progress of his Master’s Thesis.

believe[s] that the sacred art of all these busybodies has made the visible face of this continent somewhat less beautiful than it would otherwise have been.”³⁰²

What Peets is specifically criticizing is not tradition in general, but the specific tradition of English landscape gardening, or the informal, naturalistic style of design that emphasized irregularity and avoiding obvious formal artifice. This was a common critique of the prevailing style of design popular from the mid-nineteenth century into the early decades of the twentieth century. As David Haney notes in the introduction to his translation of Leberecht Migge’s manifesto, *Garden Culture of the Twentieth Century*, the garden reform movement in Germany had already argued that the naturalistic garden of the nineteenth century “was wholly outmoded and should be replaced with a new, more functional design approach based on geometric planning.”³⁰³ Migge’s book had been published in 1913 in Germany and was a philosophical as well as stylistic critique of the English naturalistic garden style. The philosophical and pragmatic aims of the garden reform movement were related not only to a critique of the forms of the naturalistic garden, but to the need for soils reform in the face of declining soils productivity, and to the need and desirability for productive gardens for homes and allotment gardens for neighborhoods.

Peets’s critiques were more narrowly directed against the clichés of curving paths and informal plantings of naturalistic gardens. His critique is both formal and social. He criticized the implicit argument for curving paths and natural borders as a mode that suggests that designs that are less formal and more imitative of nature were “either the

³⁰² Peets, “The Landscape Priesthood”: 186.

³⁰³ David Haney, translator and introduction, *Garden Culture of the Twentieth Century*, by Leberecht Migge; (Dumbarton Oaks Texts in Garden and Landscape Studies, Washington, D.C. 2013): 3. Migge’s book was originally published in Germany in 1913.

principal proof of divinity” or at least more in keeping with God’s preference.³⁰⁴ He suggests that the argument that the natural garden was God’s preference was really a preference for the tastes and interests of “carriage-owning Protestants of English ancestry.”³⁰⁵

Though Peets clearly prefers a more geometric and rational style, his objection is not against the study of history or historic styles, but a rejection of a specific and hackneyed stylistic tradition. Later, when Rose is making a similar sounding argument, he is more broadly attacking the Beaux Arts system of education in general, and its reliance on historical precedent as the basis of design. Instead, Rose suggests that designers should look to other contemporary arts for inspiration; he suggests Russian constructivist painters and their concern with pictorial space as a more useful model. In his critique, Rose is also recalling Le Corbusier’s criticisms of the Beaux Arts system.

While the aim of Peets’s argument was very different from that of Rose, Eckbo and Kiley, in form they share more in common. Particularly the designs of Dan Kiley with their emphasis on more formal planting arrangements seem to have much in common both with Migge’s recommendations for an architectonic garden and with Peets’s preference for rational and formal designs.

In addition to the substance of the arguments, it is worth noting the style of Peets’s writing. His prose is arch and often sarcastic, and has the rather smug character of H. L. Mencken’s style.

³⁰⁴ Peets; “The Landscape Priesthood”: 187.

³⁰⁵ *ibid*, page 187

Peets makes it clear that, while rejecting the Olmsted tradition, he is not rejecting historicism. In his criticism of the “lovely but sterile” ideas, he derides those ideas not because they rely on the past, but because they are such a pallid effort in the “art practiced by Raphael, Le Notre, and Wren.”³⁰⁶ While Rose suggests that there is no use for the contemporary designer to learn the lessons of the Renaissance, Peets suggests that it is particularly to Le Notre and Michelangelo that contemporary designers should be looking. “Camillo Sitte”

In “The Landscape Priesthood” Peets proposes arguments that seem to presage ideas for a new type of modernism. At least in the case of Garrett Eckbo, Peets did have some influence, at least in articulating a critique of the status quo.³⁰⁷ Peets, however, frustrates that view. More than being prescient of new ideas that would follow; he seems to be resolutely and profoundly not following the zeitgeist, a voice for the continuing validity of Renaissance planning ideas. Instead of conforming to a more linear progression of twentieth century landscape history, Peets is also of interest because he offers an alternative view of the progression of ideas and forms.

Camillo Sitte

Peets’s review of Camillo Sitte was a part of a series of essays for the Town Planning Review journal done in 1927 on topics from Christopher Wren’s plans for rebuilding London in 1666 to Mussolini’s contemporary plans for Rome. They are a mix of opinion, such as his assessment of Sitte, and brief history lesson. Peets’s article on Sitte starts from a

³⁰⁶ Peets; “The Landscape Priesthood”: 189.

³⁰⁷ Walker and Simo, *Invisible Gardens*: 124.

critique of what Sitte is most known for: advocating medieval urban models and irregular streets and plazas as a way to return an artistic sensibility to urban planning. Camillo Sitte had died in 1903, but his book, *City Planning According to Artistic Principles*, had been popular and influential. Peets, with his preference for Renaissance models, axial plans, and for legible and formal spatial arrangements, begins by criticizing the ways that the application of Sitte's lessons has led to unsatisfactory and trite urban plans. His criticism is accompanied by his suggestion that high point of urban planning was earlier, that "the fine flower of architectural city planning was the second half of the eighteenth century. That was the time of the Nancy plazas, the French squares in honor of Louis XV...and L'Enfant's Washington."³⁰⁸ In his view, the primary positive attribute of Camillo Sitte's work was that he "took city planning out of the field of engineering and placed it among the arts."³⁰⁹ Peets opines that the Sitte-esque method is one that is easy to learn, suggesting that it is not a rigorous system. Peets dismissively criticizes the legacy of willfully irregular streets and plazas with their awkward intersections. Peets, in this article, as well as in other writings, strongly favors axuality, straight streets with a prominent terminus, and regularity in plans.

Peets emphasizes the portions of Camillo Sitte's book that also address Renaissance and Baroque design. However, Peets does criticize Sitte for not paying enough attention to iconic examples like the Campidoglio (which enjoys, at Peets mentions in the essay, the advantage of having been designed by Michelangelo) and the Piazza del Popolo. These two,

³⁰⁸ Peets, "Camillo Sitte": 143.

³⁰⁹ *ibid*, page 150; Peets says that this is a quote from Paul Wolf's book: *Städtebau, das Formproblem der Stadt*.

along with Saint Peter's square in Rome, are what Peets feels are "the three finest creations of Italian Baroque plaza design."³¹⁰

Hegemann had been a supporter of Camillo Sitte's work and had advanced his ideas. When *The American Vitruvius* was published in 1922, Sitte's book had not been published in an English translation, and in the first chapter, Hegemann gives a synopsis of Sitte's ideas and some examples from his book, so that "the American architect can gather how much is still to be learned from Camillo Sitte and to what extent he must be judged as a son of his period."³¹¹ Sitte's work resonated well with the garden city movement and with the late nineteenth century arts and crafts movement and with the early work of Hegemann and Peets at Kohler and Washington Highlands. While Hegemann had already been an advocate of Sitte's work, Peets was skeptical, likely because of the association of Sitte with the informal school that Peets had blasted in "The Landscape Priesthood."³¹²

Peets's article on Sitte for the *Town Planning Review* was written after Hegemann had returned to Berlin.

The Golden Horses and Civic Art

Elbert Peets's essay on "The Golden Horses and Civic Art" was a contribution to a collection of essays on city planning at Yale. The volume was published in 1954, and the collection was edited by Christopher Tunnard and John Pearce. Most of the essays were based on lectures delivered at Yale, and were "intended as a sample of the range of interests

³¹⁰ *ibid*, page 147

³¹¹ Hegemann and Peets: *The American Vitruvius: An Architects' Handbook of Urban Design*; (Dover Edition): 9.

³¹² Peets was originally (or early in his relationship with Hegemann) more critical of Sitte, but was convinced of Sitte's value by Hegemann, as noted by Christiane Crasemann Collins.

and subjects” that had been presented to the students in the Graduate Program of City Planning.³¹³ Peets’s essay focuses on the sculpture installation of two pairs of monumental equestrian statues near the Lincoln Memorial in Washington. The two sets of horses are just west of the Memorial (the rear of the Memorial), one set at the eastern end of the Arlington Memorial Bridge, and the other set at the beginning of the Rock Creek Parkway. Both sets are axially aligned with the Lincoln Memorial and are roughly symmetrical about the centerline axis of the building. The sculpture installation had just been placed in 1951, so it was a relatively new intervention, and Peets uses this example to discuss some minor issues of how urban designers work, and some more significant issues about the importance of visual experience of civic space and civic art in general.

This essay was the last of Peets’s major essays on urban design. When it was published in 1954, Peets was 68 years old and had also completed his last major design work, that for the post-war suburban development of Park Forest, Illinois. Coming at the end of his professional career, this essay summarizes some of Peets’s views on urban design. His choice of topics and his discussion of the horses near the Lincoln Memorial show that he is decidedly concentrated on small scale interventions and the experience of civic places by urban occupants and visitors. Rather than addressing the Mall, or the Lincoln Memorial itself, he discusses approaches to the rear of the Memorial. To introduce his discussion of civic art, he says that “naïvely defined, civic art is community action to make the cities more

³¹³ “City Planning at Yale,” reviewed in *Town Planning Review* (reviewer not noted), Volume 26, No. 1, (April, 1955): 65.

agreeable places to be outdoors in. It is a drama in which structures and open spaces are both stage and theater, the people are both actors and audience.”³¹⁴

The article is a sort of breezy but knowledgeable tour-guide presentation of this set of sculptures off the beaten path of the major tourist sites and grand spaces of Washington. This is typical of the tone of some of his other writing, whether discussing Camillo Sitte, Williamsburg, or the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago (1933-4), but it is rather unusual in the context of an academic presentation to a group of city planning students at Yale.

In his discussion of the two sets of monumental equestrian sculptures, the qualities that Peets mentions are a mix of formalist principles like axial relationships and visual qualities like the different surface modeling of the two sets of horses. The two horses by the sculptor Leo Friedlander (the more southern group, at the beginning of the Arlington Bridge, or at its end, since the horses are facing the Lincoln Memorial) are “ordinary earthbound steeds, quite smoothly modeled. Fraser’s pair [the northern pair at the Rock Creek Parkway entrance] are descendants of Pegasus, almost immersed in feathery wings; the handling of surfaces is more broken, more reminiscent of the wet clay.”³¹⁵ (Currently, the two sets of sculptures are called “The Arts of War: Valor and Sacrifice,” (Friedlander’s horses) and “The Arts of Peace: Music and Harvest; Aspiration and Literature”). The tone of the discussion is not academic, as one would expect for a discussion of planning theory. Describing the directionality inherent in equestrian sculpture, Peets says that “a horse’s ends are so strongly differentiated that the horse is effectively directional. It seems to be headed

³¹⁴ Peets: “The Golden Horses and Civic Art”: 107.

³¹⁵ Peets: “The Golden Horses and Civic Art”: 110.

somewhere.”³¹⁶ The tone (“Take for example, our four golden horses”³¹⁷) seems more appropriate for a tour guide than for a scholarly presentation.

The general argument that Peets makes is that the placement of the horse sculptures is an awkwardly handled instance of relying on formal principles over the particular circumstances of the site. He notes that “at the east bank [of the Potomac River, just west of the Lincoln Memorial] our golden horses are caught in another confusion of axes.”³¹⁸ Peets compares the roads radiating from the Lincoln Memorial to the Roman example of the Piazza del Popolo, but notes the differences. At the Piazza del Popolo, there are three axes radiating from the plaza that are all roughly equal. On the west side of the Lincoln Memorial, the axes are not only unequal, all three are different. The central axis is not a road, but a grassy terrace leading to an arc along the river; the southwesterly axis leads across the Arlington Memorial Bridge; the northern axis extends only to the group of horses, at which point it curves sharply toward the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the Watergate Hotel complex (of course, those were not there when Peets was writing this). Peets concludes that the formal ordering system is a contrived one that tries to impose a highly formal system on a context that does not merit or support such a device. His general lesson is that relying on “accepted ideas rather than observed conditions”³¹⁹ produces awkward solutions. He suggests that this arose because the designers had “certain rules” in mind (the device of radial and symmetric streets centered on the Memorial), and

³¹⁶ Peets, “The Golden Horses and Civic Art”: 108

³¹⁷ *ibid.*, 108

³¹⁸ *ibid.*, 111

³¹⁹ *ibid.*, 112.

that they “followed them to the bitter end.”³²⁰ What is peculiar is that by the time that Peets is writing this, the neoclassicism in urban planning that he references was not the norm.

His suggestion is that the lesson of this minor example of civic design is that “the civic art of the future will not neglect the people’s need for emotions and for stimulating optical experiences, that its planners will not be too deeply indoctrinated in any style, and that their plans will come from the site as well as from the things people do and feel.”³²¹ Peets concludes his essay with discussion of taking friends to visit the Lincoln Memorial: “...the Mall is glorious. So are the Lincoln Memorial and the Arlington Memorial Bridge. If you haven’t done so, you should experience the crowds that come from all over the world to see these things. Last Saturday morning I took some friends to the Lincoln Memorial; the place was like Times Square. These crowds are not necessarily evidence of high quality in the designing, but I believe that they do prove that civic art is worth studying – and worth doing.”³²² These comments on “the need for emotions” and “the things people do and feel” and on the crowds enjoying the Lincoln Memorial on a Saturday morning show that Peets was concerned with “Art as Experience,” to use Dewey’s phrase.³²³ They show that, while Peets discusses formal ordering systems, his primary concern is for the experience of the individual participant in the drama of urban space. He does not dismiss or denigrate the physical components of urban design, he suggests that they are necessary and useful because “the audience-actors need guideposts, measuring points, indicators of level and vertical

³²⁰ Peets, “The Golden Horses and Civic Art”: 112.

³²¹ *ibid*

³²² *ibid*

³²³ Dewey’s *Art as Experience* was published in 1933, based on lectures on esthetics given at Harvard; it was a book that Peets admired and one of the few that he mentions in his personal letters in the archives at Cornell University.

direction and relative size.”³²⁴ Peets wrote this at roughly the same time that CIAM was holding their eighth international congress in Hoddesdon, England on *The Heart of the City*, and about the time that Team X was also challenging the shortcomings of the rationalist/functionalist approach of CIAM, though possibly with an equally utopian program. In contrast to functionalist and regional scale of some of these major movements, Peets argued for looking at “a small and difficult corner of civic art in the capital” and emphasizing detail and circumstance over broad theory.

If the Golden Horses essay seems to be a slight case study of small moves (the orientation of the horses and the treatment of axial relationships) that have an impact on the experience of an urban space, the essay is also notable for its timing and for its connection to Christopher Tunnard, who was then teaching in the city planning program at Yale. The essay was included in a collection that Tunnard and John Pearce assembled from lectures that had been given at Yale. Before coming to Yale, Tunnard had been involved in CIAM and in the MARS group (the British architectural group advocating modernist principles) in Great Britain. In 1938, he had published *Gardens in the Modern Landscape*. This book was an argument for incorporating modernism into landscape architecture, and a break from the Arts and Crafts tradition of Tunnard’s early training and professional practice. The publication of this book was influential for Garrett Eckbo, Dan Kiley, and James Rose, who were then students at Harvard’s Master of Landscape Architecture program. They lobbied the dean, Joseph Hudnut, to bring Tunnard to Harvard.

Though Tunnard’s early renown had been as an eloquent advocate for modernism, by 1950 he had diverged from mainstream modernism. His concern was that the functionalist

³²⁴ Peets: “The Golden Horses and Civic Art”: 107.

concern of the Corbusian tradition denigrated the need for people to appreciate cities aesthetically, as well as efficiently. In 1950 and 1951, Tunnard published two notable essays: “A City Called Beautiful,” in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, and “Creative Urbanism,” an article for *Town Planning Review* originally given as a lecture at the University of Houston in Texas. “A City Called Beautiful” was an argument to restore some of the reputation of the City Beautiful movement by demonstrating that its concerns were not superficially cosmetic, but social as well. The two articles together were an argument for the importance of visual qualities, i.e. beauty, in cities, and to suggest that some of the tenets of Camillo Sitte, who had written *City Planning According to Artistic Principles*, were still important.

Arguing for the importance of beauty just as the modern movement had already become accepted and was becoming the dominant mode of corporate architecture and urban renewal was atypical. It also suggests how Tunnard’s concerns coincided with those of Peets. Tunnard mentions, in “Creative Urbanism,” having heard Peets speak on “The Genealogy of L’Enfant’s Washington” at the Society of Architectural Historians in 1951, and they had a mutual friend in Joseph Hudnut. Peets, Hudnut, and Tunnard all represented an alternative direction for mid-century discourse. Hudnut and Tunnard had enthusiastically embraced modernism, and then later differed with its approach to urban issues; Peets had never embraced modernism. Peets’s lectures at Yale at Tunnard’s invitation, and his contribution of an essay on Washington’s Golden Horseshoe illustrate a different and an interesting offshoot of the arc of modernist discourse shortly after World War II.

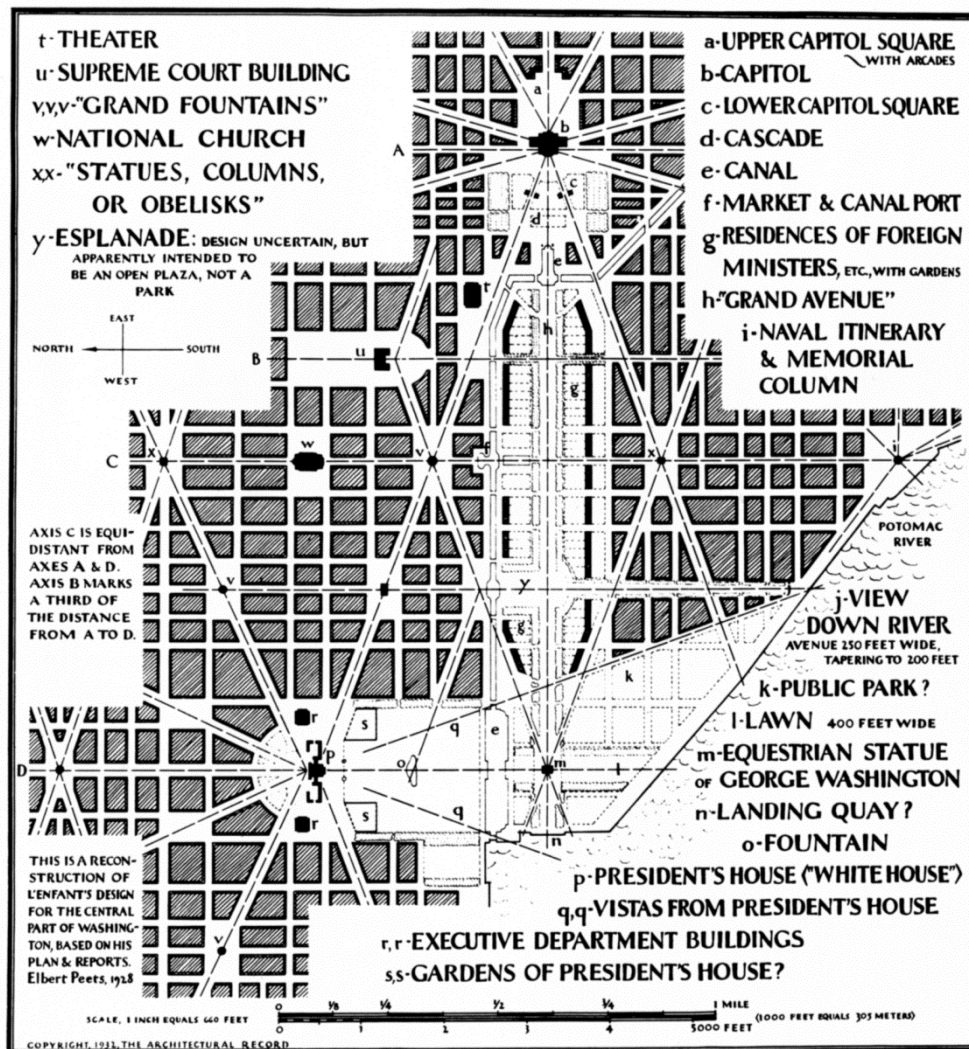


FIGURE 39. A study by Elbert Peets, in which the central part of Washington is refined and corrected. It deserves very careful examination in the mind and in the mind's eye. This drawing accompanied an article in the September 1932 issue of *Architectural Record* (pp. 158-160).

Figure 31: Peets's illustration for L'Enfant's plan of Washington, D.C.

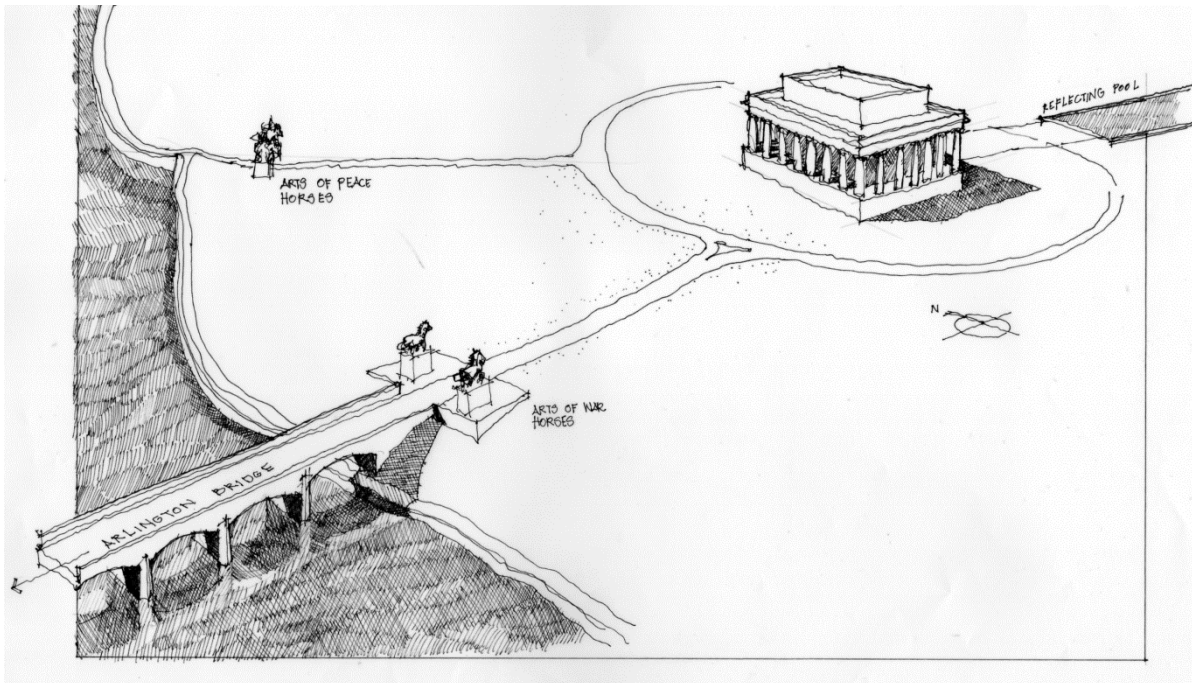


Figure 32: Illustration for The Golden Horses showing relation of horses and axes to the Lincoln Memorial; illustration by the author

Conclusion to the writing

One of the most influential texts of the early twentieth century for American architecture was Hitchcock and Johnson's catalog for the International Style exhibition for the Museum of Modern Art (1932). Their book was an effort to define and characterize a new direction in architecture. It did this by establishing a broad theoretical framework, supported by examples (mostly European) of how the new approach could be understood. Peets's writing took a very different approach; rather than establishing a conceptual framework, he focused on specific incidents and examples of urban design, choosing subjects like Williamsburg or a set of golden horses in "a small and difficult corner" of Washington. His "theory" of urban design is implied rather than explicit, and it is based on close reading of the site and concern for how spaces are used and enjoyed by people that he called actors in the urban drama. Even when he discusses more broad themes like Le Notre

and Michelangelo, he does so by concentrating on the experience of the place for the general user. His writing has interest for this study because it sheds light on Peets's approach to civic design, because it represents a minority voice in the contemporary discourse of his time, and because it suggests an approach that leads to successful designs.

Conclusion

This dissertation has shown that, in designs from the 1910's to the 1940's, Elbert Peets included ecological planning concepts in the form of stream corridors. This is an aspect of his work that has not been recognized in previous studies, and it was found more prominently and consistently in Peets's work than in that of his contemporaries. The concept of planning based on watersheds is associated more with regional planning³²⁵ and scientific forestry than with landscape architecture. This dissertation has also shown the ways in which Peets's designs promoted humanistic qualities of pedestrian focused neighborhoods at a time when architectural modernism minimized the importance of the street and the neighborhood.

This study of Elbert Peets and his work focuses on the qualities of his designs that set them apart from other work during his time. His emphasis on site-sensitive design based on study of the existing topography and local conditions shows that those concerns continued to be relevant in mid-century design, and it is an aspect that has not been recognized in previous studies of Peets. This concern, which had antecedents in the work of Frederick Law Olmsted³²⁶ and others at the turn of the century, was especially notable as “many

³²⁵ Larry Anderson, *Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner and Creator of the Appalachian Trail* (Johns Hopkins, 2002): 71.

³²⁶ Spirn, “Constructing Nature”: 102-107.

‘modern’ artists and architects banished nature from their ‘new society,’”³²⁷ and as those designers sought to replace the arbitrariness and emotionalism associated with nature with a “pure, rational” world based on “universal laws.”³²⁸ Peets’s work shows that concerns over designing with local conditions and natural processes were not banished so much as they were minimized by historians who suggested that the concerns of Olmsted only reappeared with the work of Ian McHarg and the environmental movements of the 1960s.³²⁹ However, since Peets did not comment on this; instead we see it evidenced in the physical features of his designs which combine stream protection zones with public park amenities for his town plans.

Also in contrast to the search for a new set of rational and universal principles by some of Peets’s contemporaries, he emphasized the continuity of the historic tradition of urban planning. His approach was one that emphasized the value of social space and civic beauty as ways to make cities pleasant places to inhabit.³³⁰

It is because of these qualities: locally and ecologically sensitive design and design based on phenomenological and experiential qualities for the users, and because those qualities were minimized by the modernist orthodoxy represented by the CIAM, that Peets is an important addition to the historiography of twentieth century landscape and urban studies. He is notable for having designed a series of suburban neighborhood developments, spanning a time from his early work in partnership with Werner Hegemann in the 1920’s until his last major planning work in the just after World War II. These plans include

³²⁷ O’Malley and Wolschke-Bulmahn, “Foreword,” *Modernism and Landscape Architecture*: ix.

³²⁸ *ibid*

³²⁹ Ndubisi, “Landscape Ecological Planning”: 12-15.

³³⁰ Peets, “The Golden Horses and Civic Art”: 107.

Washington Highlands and Greendale, both in Milwaukee, Wyomissing Park, a suburb of Reading, Pennsylvania, and Park Forest, Illinois, a development described by Gregory Randall as “America’s Original GI Town.”³³¹ These neighborhood developments merit attention because they were well received critically when they first appeared, and they have continued to be successful, vibrant, and have maintained their value as attractive places to live. Also, crucially for this study, from the first design effort of the Hegemann and Peets at Kohler, Wisconsin, to Peets’s later work, the plans demonstrate sensitivity to ecological concerns in the inclusion of riparian protection zones that is more pronounced than other contemporaneous town and suburban plans being done. Though the concern for ecological planning has become the standard in current times, it was not the norm in Peets’s time. While it was not the norm, there were antecedents for it, going back to the time of *Garden and Forest* magazine, which was published from 1888 to 1897.³³² A part of this study is to look for those antecedents and to ask why, if there was such a discourse about ecological planning, that those issues fell out of favor in mid-twentieth century design.

While this study is centered on Elbert Peets, it is not intended to be a biography of Peets, and it did not start from the observation that he was overlooked in the historiography or that he should be added to the canon of significant twentieth century designers. Instead, it started with a set of criteria and questions that Peets seems to satisfy. My study began by looking for figures at the periphery of the larger discourse and debates over the development of modern landscape design. Some of that discourse was over the advent and ascendancy of *modernism*, and the question was how those larger debates affected designers away from the

³³¹ Randall, *America’s Original GI Town*.

³³² Eric MacDonald, “The Art that Mends Nature: The Discourse of American Environmental Design in *Garden and Forest*, 1888-1897”, PhD Diss., University of Wisconsin, 2006.

centers. The goal of this is simply to enlarge the conversation beyond the heroic figures of mid-twentieth century design. One of the best examples of this is William Tischler's collection, *Midwestern Landscape Architecture*, which collects essays on a number of well-known and lesser-known figures who did notable work around the turn of the twentieth century. Recognizing the work of people like Warren Manning, George Kessler, and Genevieve Gillette along with the work of the Olmstedes, Jens Jensen, and others acknowledges the amount of significant work that is always being produced. The designers who are not well known are trying to obtain commissions and produce their work, but they are also trying to position themselves professionally and theoretically. It is that question of how the designers who were not writing manifestoes, and possibly were not interested in manifestoes, interacted with the larger movements and discourse that I wanted to investigate.

In addition to the question of how individual designers and individual projects intersected with larger theoretical discourse, this study began by looking for antecedents to contemporary concerns for ecological design. Or, more than "antecedents," it looks for a continuity of ideas. The studies of *Garden and Forest*, and other studies illustrate a concern for ecological processes, and how those concerns had an impact on landscape designers that began in the late nineteenth century. These concerns were the confluence of ideas in several fields. In 1864, George Perkins Marsh published *Man and Nature; or, Physical Geography as modified by human action*, which described ecological damage as a result of deforestation. By the late 1800's, scientific ecology was growing as a separate sub-discipline in biology, and there were examples of landscape designers and town planners working with and aware of the work of ecologists. Before he became a town planner,

Patrick Geddes worked with a marine ecologist; Jens Jensen worked with the ecologist Henry Chandler Cowles on the preservation of the Indiana Dunes. More directly applicable to Peets, the German landscape architect Leberecht Migge was influenced by and conversant with the work of the American agricultural scientist, Franklin Hiram King. King was a soils scientist at the University of Wisconsin, and his book, *Farmers of Forty Centuries*, was a study of how farming practices in China, Korea and Japan managed to maintain soils productivity over generations, a topic that was important to the German garden reform movement. In the United States, the study of ecology and the writing of George Perkins Marsh had a major impact on the development of scientific forestry. Concerns about the ecological and social costs of clear-cut forestry were crucial to Benton Mackaye, who studied the cut-over district in Wisconsin when working for the Forestry Service.

Peets, whose career began when he graduated from Harvard's landscape architecture program in 1915, satisfied those criteria. He had been at Harvard about ten years after Benton Mackaye. The landscape architecture program and the forestry program had some overlap. Students from both programs shared some classes in their first year, and Peets taught courses in horticulture, so he would have had students and compatriots in both programs. Peets's career spanned the time from the peak of the garden city and city beautiful movements to the waning of those and the rise of the influence of modernism in landscape architecture. As a result, Peets had to negotiate a shift in the ways that urban planners defined their activity. The reference to historic models and to icons of Renaissance planning that he admired were increasingly called into question and disparaged as being no longer applicable to current urban problems.

Peets, therefore, is both the subject of this study, and a case study in how designers in professional practice negotiated a changing foundation for the conceptual and theoretical basis of their work. He had intersections and interactions with some important characters. Hegemann, his professional practice partner, was a significant theorist and analyst on contemporary urban issues. Hegemann was also close friends with Leberecht Migge, and Peets was certainly familiar with Migge and his work. Joseph Hudnut worked with Hegemann and Peets during some of their busiest years. Hudnut would later become dean at Harvard's Graduate School of Design in 1936, and would bring Gropius and Marcel Breuer to Harvard. Catherine Bauer, the housing expert who worked with the Regional Planning Association of America, was also a part of the planning effort for Rexford Tugwell's greenbelt cities program.

Peets's connections are interesting, but the major reason that he should be remembered is that he designed some notable plans. They were successful in that they received positive notice at the time and they were popular with the people who moved into them. Greendale was successful enough that Peets designed an extension of the original plan two years after the first phase was completed. From a current perspective, they also accomplished some goals that we recognize as successful urban and suburban plans: they were based on compact, walkable neighborhoods, they emphasized neighborhood streets as social space, and they integrated community services like shopping, post offices, schools and administrative functions into communal, social space. These things are not unique to Peets, though they are somewhat in contrast to the general emphasis of modernist civic design. The fact that Peets's designs have aged well suggests that there might be valuable lessons in studying his work. These characteristics, which contributed to making his work seem dated

or retrograde, were at odds with the ideas of his modernist contemporaries, which advocated more dispersed, rather than compact, developments. Peets's work, to a greater degree than other contemporary plans, uses local topographical conditions and riparian conservation areas as central elements of the design.

Because his work demonstrates those qualities, and because Peets wrote a substantial body of essays to describe urban design issues, one looks to his writing to articulate those issues. Though his work reflects a sensitivity to ecological concerns and it appears to demonstrate a user-focused theory of community space, Peets, in his writing and his descriptions of his work, does not address them. In fact, to the degree that one can infer his theory of work, it is primarily a visual and formal approach that values civic art as a societal goal. His writing, as in "The Landscape Priesthood", is critical of the visual approach he associates with the legacy of Olmsted, but it is a criticism of a specific style of a visual approach. In one of his last essays on Washington, D. C., he still writes of his commitment that civic art is important. While I had approached Peets as an alternative approach to modernism that maintained concerns with the experiential qualities of civic space and also exhibited a concern for ecological land planning, and while I also believe that those qualities are evident in his work, those are not the issues that he chooses to record in his writing. This does not mean that he was not thinking of them, and it may be that he chose not to write about them because they were associated with trends from which he wanted to distance himself. It may also be that what I perceive to be a concern for ecology is what Peets would consider the baseline of good design based on the analysis of local topography and conditions. It might also be that he associated those concerns with the landscape school of

Jens Jensen or with the legacy of *Garden and Forest* (which was closely tied to Olmsted), and therefore he did not want to emphasize that connection.

To choose to minimize concerns for nature and especially any associations with the romantic view of nature was a part of the rise of modernism. As Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn notes “In the early twentieth century many “modern” artists and architects banished nature from their “new society.” Nature, they claimed, was inconsistent with their utopian project...nature was guilty of promoting arbitrariness, encouraging emotion, and sanctioning history.”³³³ This was not just the advent of modernism; professionals in urban design were trying to establish their work as relevant to modern, technological society and to distance their work from the subjective, “fine arts” legacy that associated with a purely visual approach only concerned with aesthetics. Figures that were associated with the city beautiful movement also adopted a new tone for their discourse. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. suggested that the new foundation of city planning would be “a science rather than an art;” and John Nolen had begun to rebrand his work as “The City Practical” rather than the “The City Beautiful.”³³⁴ What Peets’s work demonstrates is that, while the characterization of the work as ecological and the overt discussion of the importance of the lessons of ecosystems were not emphasized, the components of planning around topographical features like waterways did not disappear.

Looking at figures like Peets and Nolen shows that, while the struggle for modernism in landscape and urban design was one of the strands of discourse, it was not the only one. The broader struggle was to find an appropriate mode of practice that solved the immediate

³³³ O’Malley and Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Modernism and Landscape Architecture*: ix.

³³⁴ Olmsted’s comments are from an address at the Town Planning Conference of 1912; reported in *American City Magazine*, (1912).

needs of their projects and produced satisfactory design solutions that met the needs of both their clients and the needs of the occupants and users of the designs. As Michael Baxandall points out in *Patterns of Intention*, what is meant by a design brief or the goals of a project is more extensive than the immediate goal of the project; it includes what the designer wants to accomplish professionally, how they see their work in relation to past work and contemporary work. Some of the recent scholarship, like that in *Modernism and Landscape Architecture: 1890-1940*, has been to establish how the discourse of architectural modernism affected the practice of landscape designers. In her introduction to that volume, Therese O'Malley quotes Marc Treib (from his collection of primary sources in *Modern Landscape Architecture*, 1991) in saying that the “story of modern landscape architecture has yet to be told.”³³⁵ *Modernism and Landscape Architecture* brings together a collection of essays that address a gap in the historiography of twentieth century studies. O'Malley says that “[f]or years historians had studied a few master designers and architects, creating a narrow picture of modernism, devoid of real understanding of the teams and collaborations involved and leaving many aspects of modernism neglected.”³³⁶ This volume addresses that neglect, and brings together essays that deal with how modernism in garden studies was theorized, how different designers addressed issues of rationalism versus subjectivity, and how some alternative voices, like those of Jože Plečnik fit into the historiography. What this study of Peets adds to that discussion is yet another voice. He is someone who, like Plečnik, practiced a variety of modernity that included, rather than rejected, historicism.

³³⁵ O'Malley and Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Modernism and Landscape Architecture*: 1.

³³⁶ *ibid*: 1.

The historiography of twentieth century urbanism and landscape studies has favored major characters like Le Corbusier and Hilberseimer; it has also emphasized a linear narrative of the progress of modernism. The rather reductive narrative is that the influence of the Columbian Exposition in 1893 led to the resurgence of neo-classicism which replaced the picturesque movements that characterized late nineteenth century design. This led to the hegemony of the Beaux Arts in architecture and the city beautiful movement in urban planning. The dominance of neo-classicism undermined by skepticism of the value of monumentalism and large-scale planning after World War I, and was then challenged by the rise of the Werkbund and the Bauhaus in Germany. With some key watershed events such as the publication of Le Corbusier's *Toward an Architecture* in 1923, his publication of *Ville Radieuse* and the *Athens Charter* in 1930, and the Museum of Modern Art exhibition on International Style architecture in 1932, modernism became the dominant paradigm. However, to suggest that there was a linear narrative and that Peets represents an alternative to that oversimplification is somewhat of a "straw man" argument. As Christiane Crasemann Collins notes, "it would simplistic to trace city planning as a distinct field of knowledge to the influence of [a] single individual"³³⁷ or implicitly of a small set of influences. Though I have suggested that there was a convenient narrative that favored distinct ruptures or watershed moments, as Alan Powers has noted, "In landscape, nothing so obvious can be assumed. The continuity between modernism in landscape and its precursors is greater than any sense of contrast."³³⁸ Peets, like some other figures in

³³⁷ Crasemann Collins, *Werner Hegemann and the search for Universal Urbanism*: 16.

³³⁸ Alan Powers, "Modernism and Romantic Regeneration in the English Landscape, 1920-1940," in O'Malley and Wolschke-Bulmahn, editors, *Modernism and Landscape Architecture*, (2015): 73. Powers is specifically discussing the contrast between landscape and architecture, where clear stylistic markers can be more easily identified.

Modernism and Landscape Architecture, helps to illustrate the complexity of the narrative. Rather than a single narrative arc, there were many strands of actors who participated in negotiating the competing influences of landscape practice. He further shows that some strands like the influence of ecology did not disappear, even though it was minimized in the discussion of the projects.

Even in this complex braid of trends and influences, Peets is an unusual strand. He produced a substantial body of highly successful designs and wrote extensively on the state of urban design. However, in his writing, he does not articulate a theory of how to practice or a manifesto of how urban design should be done. Instead, his writing is mostly on the history of urban design and civic art. Also, almost all of his writing is directed not towards other practitioners or towards an academic audience interested in landscape history, but toward a general readership. He demonstrates a commitment that civic design is a pragmatically important social act, rather than one that is confined to studies of modern art or art history.

Since most of his published writing came in the 1920's and 1930's and was a critique or commentary on the state of urban planning, it is surprising that he never addressed the issue of modernism or of contemporary issues like the Siedlungen estates of the 1920's planned by Bruno Taut, or the Weissenhof Estate of 1927. He was certainly aware of these, and was aware of the work of Le Corbusier. He had visited some of Le Corbusier's houses, and had a lukewarm reaction to them. He thought they were interesting, but that they were more effective as sculpture than as architecture.³³⁹ He was not alone in this; William

³³⁹ Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection number 2772, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

Wurster had much the same response to Le Corbusier's architecture.³⁴⁰ Peets's colleague, Werner Hegemann, was also diffident towards Le Corbusier, and more of a vocal critic. Another colleague, Joseph Hudnut, was more enthusiastic about the potential of modernism in the 1920's when working with Peets. Significantly, Hudnut brought Gropius to Harvard in 1937, and only later disagreements about the role of history in architecture and urban planning education, and on the shortcomings of the modern movement's approach to urban space. He makes an oblique reference to this debate when he notes that the planning of Greendale is "built around a line rather than a point."³⁴¹ This recalls critiques of the Le Corbusier's proposals of tall buildings (points) widely dispersed without consideration of defined public space. What seems important to Peets is the grouping of buildings to define space rather than the style of the buildings that form the enclosure. At Greendale, he describes the unified façades set close together and close to the street as the important spatial element. He was criticized for the architectural idiom of colonial architecture used for the village hall at Greendale, and for the mildly colonial character of the houses. But to Peets, the style was secondary, and he described it as a convenient choice.³⁴²

Also notable in Peets's descriptions of his work is the extent to which he relies on the experiential qualities of the space and on the ways that the residents and occupants use civic space. If the study of Peets is valuable in expanding the historiography beyond a narrow and linear narrative, the qualities of the town plans that he designed also offer practical lessons.

³⁴⁰ Michelson, "Towards a Regional Synthesis, the Suburban and Country Residences of William Wurster", PhD. Diss., Stanford, 1993.

³⁴¹ Alanen, "Elbert Peets": 206.

³⁴² Elbert Peets Papers, 1883-1983, 1904-1974 (bulk), Collection number 2772, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

He continued to design in a sensitive response to local ecological or topographical conditions even when that concern was absent from most modernist discourse, and he was emphatic about the importance of the way civic space was used and experienced by its residents.

Peets's design work at mid-century exhibited humanistic concerns for the preferences of the residents of his town plans and for the qualities of spatial arrangements that contribute to successful social streets, neighborhoods, and walkable communities. His designs were based on careful, close study of existing physical features of the site, and that study determined the final design. Roads were sometimes planned to preserve specimen trees and existing streams were protected with riparian conservation zones. Both of these elements, a humanistic design approach and ecologically sensitive design, were elements that were notably absent from the dominant discourse on town planning during Peets's time. Not only were they absent from the discourse of the time, they were elements that later developments in urban and landscape design have deemed important. Recent interest in the value for occupant satisfaction as well as occupant health have brought attention to the importance of walkable neighborhoods, and concern over sustainable design have brought that attention to incorporating ecology into urban designs. Because he advocated ideas that were away from the mainstream of modernist discourse, this study of Peets is important in challenging a historical narrative arc from the garden city to modernist urban design, showing the complexity and diversity of discourse at the time. Not only was he away from the mainstream, the ideas that he supported proved to be ones that are still valuable and address criticisms of modernist orthodoxy. The study of Peets is valuable because it adds valuable

diversity and complexity to the historiography of the period and because the designs and the ideas that they embody have proved themselves to be of lasting value.



Figure 33: Elbert Peets's grave marker, Austinburg, Ohio (photograph by the author)

Articles published by Elbert Peets

(in chronological order)

The Plan of Washington (1922): a chapter in *The American Vitruvius: An Architects'*

Handbook of Civic Art; by Werner Hegemann and Elbert Peets; New York

Architectural Book Publishing Company, 1922, pages 285-293

Central Park (1925): *The American Mercury*, March 1925, pages 339-341

The Interior of the Lincoln Memorial (1925): *The American Mercury*, June 1925, pages 194-196

On the Concentration and Design of Federal Buildings (1926): published in *The American Mercury*, August 1926, pages 449-452

Mussolini, Haussmann, and Company (1926): published in *The New Republic*, pages 295-296

The Genealogy of L'Enfant's Washington (1927): in three parts, *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*; Part I, April 1927, pages 115-119; Part II, May 1927, pages 151-154; Part III, June 1927, pages 187-191

The Landscape Priesthood (1927): *The American Mercury*, January 1927, pages 94-100

The Restoration of Rome (1927): *Catholic World*, January 1927, pages 451-456

The Reign of the Masonry Dome (1927): *The Nation*, June 8, pages 632-633

The Cleveland Reservoir (1927): *The Nation*, February 9, 1927, page 145

Haussmann and the Rebuilding of Paris (1927): published in *Town Planning Review*, June 1927, pages 180-190

Camillo Sitte (1927): published in *Town Planning Review*, December 1927, pages 249-259

The Background of L'Enfant's Plan (1928): published in *Town Planning Review*, July 1928, pages 30-49, published as part of a series of "Famous Town Planners."

The Genealogy of L'Enfant's Washington (1929): published in *The Sunday Sun Magazine*, Baltimore; February 10, 1929, pages 2-3

On the Mutilations of L'Enfant's Plan (1930): *The Sunday Sun Magazine*, Baltimore; January 26, 1930, pages 1-2

Plans for Rebuilding London in 1666 (1930): published in *Town Planning Review*, May 1930, pages 12-30

Current Town Planning in Washington (1931): *Town Planning Review*, December 1931, pages 219-237

An Accurate Re-Drawing of the Central Part of L'Enfant's "Autograph Plan," (1932): *Architectural Record*, September 1932, pages 158-160

Washington as L'Enfant Intended It (1932): *The Sunday Sun Magazine*, Baltimore; April 24, 1932, pages 4-5

L'Enfant's Washington (1933): *Town Planning Review*, May 1933, pages 154-164

On the Rebuilding of the Mall in the 1930's (1935): *The Sunday Sun Magazine*, Baltimore, March 3, 1935, pages 1-2

On the Plans for Washington (1937): published in *City Planning and Housing*, by Werner Hegemann, et al, New York: Architectural Book Publishing Company, Chapter 27, pages 382-394

Williamsburg (1937): *City Planning and Housing*, by Werner Hegemann, et al, New York: Architectural Book Publishing Company, Chapter 27, pages 395-400

The Century of Progress (1937): *City Planning and Housing*, by Werner Hegemann, et al,
New York: Architectural Book Publishing Company, Chapter 27, pages 401-406

Greendale (1937): *City Planning and Housing*, by Werner Hegemann, et al, New York:
Architectural Book Publishing Company, Chapter 27, pages 407-414

A Concluding Thought (1937): *City Planning and Housing*, by Werner Hegemann, et al,
New York: Architectural Book Publishing Company, Chapter 27, pages 414-416

The Jefferson Memorial and Blocked Vistas (1937): *Washington Daily News*, April 7, 1937,
page 10

The Original Plan for Washington (1940): *House and Garden Magazine*, July 1940, Section
I, pages 16-18, 57, 61

Post-War Use of Temporary Sites (1943): *American City*, November 1943, pages 49-50

The Neighborhood Concept (1948): in *The Journal of Housing*, December 1948, pages 300-
301

Studies in Planning Texture – for Housing in a Greenbelt Town (1949): *Architectural
Record*, September 1949, pages 131-137

The Geneology of the Plan for Washington (1951): *Journal of the Society of Architectural
Historians*, May 1951, Volume 2, pages 3-4

The Golden Horses and Civic Art (1954): published in *City Planning at Yale*, edited by
Christopher Tunnard and John N. Pearce, Yale University Press, New Haven, pages
44-48

The Orientation of Row Houses (1968): previously unpublished, this manuscript is in the
archives at Cornell University, and was included in Paul Spreiregan's volume, *On
the Art of Designing Cities, Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*.

Some contemporaries of Peets, arranged in order of birth

	<i>birth</i>	<i>death</i>
Gottfried Semper	1803	1879
Frederick Law Olmsted (Sr.)	1822	1903
Camillo Sitte	1843	1903
Patrick Geddes	1854	1932
Hermann Muthesius	1861	1927
George Kessler	1862	1923
Raymond Unwin	1863	1940
Heinrich Wölfflin	1864	1945
John Nolen	1869	1937
Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr	1870	1957
Beatrix Farrand	1872	1959
Benton MacKaye	1879	1975
Werner Hegemann	1881	1936
Leberecht Migge	1881	1935
Walter Gropius	1883	1969
Elbert Peets	1886	1968
Joseph Hudnut	1886	1968
Mies van der Rohe	1886	1969
Le Corbusier	1887	1965
Sigfried Giedion	1888	1968
Marjorie Sewell Cautley	1891	1954

Rexford Tugwell.....	1891	1979
William Wurster	1895	1973
Louis Kahn	1901	1974
Sir John Summerson.....	1904	1992
Catherine Bauer	1905	1964
Garrett Eckbo.....	1910	2000
Christopher Tunnard.....	1910	1979
Daniel U. Kiley.....	1912	2004
James Rose	1913	1991

Elbert Peets Timeline

Elbert Peets received his B.A. from Western Reserve University and his M.L.A. from the Harvard University School of Landscape Architecture and City Planning. He worked for Pray, Hubbard and White, Boston landscape architects, for a year before joining with Werner Hegemann to plan Kohler, a company town founded by Walter S. Kohler, near Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Peets and Hegemann also collaborated in the planning of Washington Highlands, a subdivision in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; of Wyomissing Park, a subdivision in Reading, Pennsylvania; and in the writing of *The American Vitruvius: An Architect's Handbook of Civic Art* (1922). From 1923-1935 Peets worked in private practice in Cleveland, Ohio. He also worked on the planning for Greendale (near Milwaukee), one of three greenbelt towns built by the U.S. Farm Resettlement Administration headed by Rexford Guy Tugwell under Franklin D. Roosevelt. From 1938-1944 he was Chief of the Site Planning Section of the U.S. Housing Authority. With the firm of Loeb, Schlossman & Bennett, he participated in the planning for the town of Park Forest (near Chicago, Illinois), a project initiated by Nathan Manilow, Treasurer of American Community Builders, Inc., and Philip Klutznick, President. In the 1950s, Peets was a member of the Fine Arts Commission and served as consultant to the National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

Peets did site planning in Washington, D.C., lectured at Harvard and Yale, and served as consultant to several private planning firms. He also wrote numerous articles on planning and landscape architecture.

May 5, 1886 .. Born Cleveland Ohio to Edward Orville Peets and Mary Curetta Houghton Peets
 Graduated from Central High School in Cleveland, Ohio

1912..... B.A. magna cum laude, Western Reserve University; First Scholarship Honors, Phi Beta Kappa
 Foreman for H.U. Horvath, landscape architect and nurseryman while in college

1915..... M.L.A., Harvard University, School of Landscape Architecture and City Planning; instructed in horticulture at Harvard, 1914-1915

June 1915-June 1916 Worked for Pray, Hubbard and White, Landscape Architects, making plans for land subdivisions

June 1916-Jan. 1917 Worked with Werner Hegemann on Kohler, Wisconsin, a "company" town, in Sheboygan; Milwaukee, Wisconsin--subdivisions, parks, playground, cemeteries

Jan. 1917-Dec. 1918 Civilian Planning Engineer with the U.S. Army, Camp Planning Section, Construction Division. Made plans for: Hospitals (Staten Island, Colonia, Otisville, etc.); Remount Stations

Jan. 1919-Apr. 1920 In practice with Werner Hegemann on: Washington Highlands, large subdivision in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Apr. 1920-Mar. 1921 Charles Eliot Traveling Fellowship: London, Paris, Rome, Vienna, Berlin, Amsterdam

Apr. 1921-May 1922 Continued practice with Werner Hegemann; collaborated with Hegemann in writing Civic Art: The American Vitruvius

June 1922-June 1923 Wyomissing Park, large subdivision including areas for working people, Reading, Pennsylvania

July 1923-July 1933 Private practice in Cleveland, Ohio; work included gardens, parks, land subdivisions; also wrote articles

July 1933-Nov. 1933 Cleveland City Planning Commission; parks, playgrounds, civic improvements

Nov. 1933-Apr. 1934 U.S. Department of Agriculture; layout of roads and other site planning work at Beltsville, Maryland; representative of A.D. Taylor, President of ASLA

May 1934-Nov. 1935 Private practice in Cleveland; writing

Nov. 1935-Feb. 1938 U.S. Farm Resettlement Administration in Washington; principal town planner for Greendale, Wisconsin

Feb. 1938-Apr. 1939 Catalina Island, California; plans and report on the future development of the Wrigley Estate and the town of Avalon

Apr. 1938-1944 Chief of Site Planning Section, U.S. Housing Authority, and Federal Public Housing Authority

1939..... Report on City Planning and Housing for San Juan, Puerto

- 1941..... Report for the National Resources Planning Board (NRPB): "An Interior Program of Planning Studies for the Physical Development of Puerto Rico" (with Hale Walker and Tracy Augur)
- 1944..... Lectured at the New York Museum of National History on Aerial Urban Reconnaissance and Site Recognition
- 1945..... Consultant in Town Planning for FPHA and USHA
- 1945-1948 Prepared plans for the extension of Greendale; drafted a zoning ordinance for Greendale
- 1945-1951 Housing consultant and site planner for the Municipal Housing Authority of San Juan, Puerto Rico
- 1946-1947 Site and City Planner for Phillip Klutznick, American Community Builders, Park Forest, Illinois
- 1950-1954 Member of the Fine Arts Commission, Washington
- 1951-1953 Consultant to the National Capital Park and Planning Commission
- 1950-1960 Lecturer at Yale and Harvard; consultant to several private planning firms; Harland Bartholomew; McGaughan and Johnson; plan for the S.W. Washington Redevelopment with Louis Justement
- 1951-1962 Worked with sculptor Felix de Weldon on site planning for memorials: Plaza Bolivar, Washington, D.C.; monument to General Calixto Garcia, Havana, Cuba; Pershing Memorial, Washington, D.C.; Stone Mountain Memorial, Atlanta, Georgia; National War Memorial, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 1963..... Site plan for U.S. National Arboretum, Washington, D.C.
- 1964-1968 Health problems prevented further work
- Mar. 26, 1968 Died in Austinburg, Ohio

This sketch was largely done by Paul Spreiregen, editor of On the Art of Designing Cities (1968), a collection of Elbert Peets' writings. Several additions and corrections have been made since the arranging of the Elbert Peets Papers.

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Curriculum vitae

Royce M. Earnest

5020 Wind Point Road

Racine, Wisconsin 53402

Education:

PhD program in architecture at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee (area of study: origins of ecological consciousness in early twentieth century urbanism; the work of Elbert Peets). Graduation in May, 2017.

Master of Architecture: North Carolina State University 1985

Minor: Architectural History

Thesis: *The Dialectic of the Circumstantial and Ideal*, the thesis was an investigation of campus planning, and its adjustment over time to accommodate changes. The thesis included a research paper on the topic, and two design projects to investigate incorporating a campus building into campuses whose master plans had not been fully realized.

Bachelor of Science, Architecture: University of Virginia 1979

(one semester studying at Polytechnic of Southbank, London)

Experience:

I have worked as an architect for twenty years. From 2002 until 2009, I was an assistant professor at Judson University, in Elgin, Illinois. For the previous fifteen years I have worked as a Project Architect with primary responsibility for leading projects from inception to completion. I have been the primary interface between my offices and their clients, working to analyze options, build consensus and implement solutions.

Teaching, professional juries:

UWM, adjunct professor:

Undergraduate studio, Arch 310 & 320 (second year studios)

Undergraduate Arch 301, Building systems, codes & structures

Graduate Arch 516: Building construction, details & documentation

Associate professor, Judson University, Elgin, Illinois

Studios: Second-year undergraduate, fourth year undergraduate, graduate capstone studio

Readings in landscape history: a course I developed for an upper level seminar

Architectural history survey, part II, Renaissance to the present

Teaching assistant for undergraduate structures course while at North Carolina State University.

Guest critic on undergraduate reviews at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

AIA jury for awards program for Central Pennsylvania AIA.

AIA jury for awards program for Kansas AIA.

2009-present: PhD student at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. In addition to classes, I have Teaching Assistantship. In the fall of 2009, and in the spring of 2010, I have been teaching in the second year design studio sequence, and teaching the graduate course in construction and detailing, and the second-year construction course.

2001-2009: Associate Professor in Architecture at Judson University, Elgin, Illinois

Courses: design studios (second-year, fourth-year, and graduate); Readings in the History of Landscape Architecture (graduate seminar), currently serving as Graduate Coordinator (three year position, elected by faculty): responsible for coordinating graduate program, coordinating preceptorship (internship) year for fifth year students, coordinating applications for thesis projects. I

have also taught part of the undergraduate history sequence (while the usual professor is on sabbatical)

2000-2002 Began RE.Architects: Small projects, including public and residential commissions.

1996-1999 Project Architect at Architectural Associates Ltd in Racine

Responsible for developing and leading projects. I managed the projects from planning and development through construction observation. I worked on the office's marketing efforts.

1990-1995 Project Architect at Cho, Wilks & Benn Architects, Baltimore, Maryland

Responsible for leading projects through all phases, including developing proposals for the job, proposing and analyzing schedule and staffing requirements, coordinating space and budget requirements with the client, managing project delivery and construction administration.

Design: My primary responsibility was as a project designer/manager. One of my projects, the Carroll County Library and Senior Center, was featured in Architecture in June of 1995.

CAD and computer manager: I was responsible for reviewing and recommending a CAD system for our office, then for coordinating the installation (both hardware and software). As a result of my efforts, our office expanded our CAD capabilities. We achieved efficiencies, such as exchanging information with other systems, and entered new areas, such as 3D modeling.

Project analysis and quality management: I developed a database of information to analyze our performance on past projects in terms of hours spent related to the size and complexity of the project. With this information, we were able to make better staffing projections, tighter and more defensible

fee projections, and to find areas to make our production more efficient. As a follow-up to this, I organized in-house seminars (quarterly) on improving efficiency.

1986-1990 Project Manager at Bohlin, Cywinski Jackson, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

I was a team leader and team member for all phases of projects, including proposals, planning, production and contract administration. I was our office's client representative on projects, and assisted clients with planning and fund-raising. One project, the Klein Residence at Lake George, New York, was featured in Progressive Architecture in April of 1992. I also wrote marketing and public relations information for our office.

1985-1986 RTKL in Baltimore, Maryland

At this very large international firm, I was a team member on large projects such as a mixed-use skyscraper in Seattle.

1979-1983 Kidd/Plosser/Sprague, Birmingham, Alabama

Areas of Interest and Expertise:

Landscape studies and landscape ecology:

For the past four years, I have taught a course in Readings in Landscape History. The goal of the course is to give students an overview of the theoretical approach to land and garden design. This focuses on historical writings, some primary sources, and some secondary sources, such as articles and analysis by respected historians and critics. The secondary goal of this is to give architecture students exposure to an important related field, and awareness of a body of critical work that would not normally be covered in the architecture curriculum. My interest is in advocating a holistic and

ecologically sound approach to architecture that includes concerns for habitat and other impacts of the building process.

History and criticism:

Minor in Architectural History for my graduate degree. I have a strong interest in history and historiography. I have maintained involvement in journalistic and history-related areas, writing articles and book reviews. The study of history is intrinsically interesting to me, it is also important to encourage and raise the level of public discourse about the built environment.

Structures:

Teaching assistant for the undergraduate structures course at North Carolina State University. I have a strong foundation in structural design: in the ability to grasp and use the concepts, and the ability to explain them.

Awards, Professional Activities, Publications

Saarinens War Memorial: Structural Expression: Paper presented at the Construction History Society of America annual meeting, Austin, Texas, April 2016

Chapter from dissertation; presented at the American Society of Environmental Historians annual meeting, graduate student writing workshop, spring 2016

The Fire Ant Wars: It seemed like a good idea at the time: Paper presented at the convention of the American Society of Environmental Historians; April, 2012, Madison, Wisconsin

June 2011: *The Gallun Tannery in Milwaukee,* for the Society of Industrial Archeology, Seattle, WA.

November, 2011: *Patrick Geddes, Ecology & Urbanism*; Society of American City and Regional Planning History, Baltimore, MD, annual meeting.

Science in the Beam House, paper presented at UWM Graduate Student Forum, March, 2011.

A Landscape Perspective on Ethics, paper presented at McGill University's History and Theory conference in Montreal, September, 2007. The paper explored parallels between early twentieth century conservationists and contemporary practice, primarily in sustainability and landscape practice.

Chair of Session: Society of Architectural Historians, 2007, in Pittsburgh. The session was "*Creative Misreadings and Fruitful Analogies*", an interdisciplinary session exploring the analogies and explanations used by designers to communicate their work.

Construction Issues in Palladio's Villa Rotonda, paper presented at the Society of Architectural Historians, Spring 2005, Vancouver

Session moderator, ACSA regional meeting, Fall 2004

Rigorous Intuition, paper presented at ACSA conference on beginning design studies, Spring 2003

Shedding new light on solar shadows: Article on computer rendering, in *MicroStation Manager*, Vol. 6, No. 8, August 1996, pages 52-54.

Carroll County Library and Senior Center: Featured in *Architecture*: June 1995, pages 84-87.

Baltimore AIA award: Carroll County Library

Baltimore AIA award: Bryn Mawr School Library and Administration Building

The Klein Residence, featured in *Progressive Architecture*: April 1992, pages 106-113.

Wood Council Award: The Klein Residence

Planning and Elaboration, an article I wrote for the Oz Journal (architecture journal for Kansas State University) Vol. 11, 1989

Baltimore Chapter AIA Newsletter: various book reviews

Member of the Society of Architectural Historians

Baltimore Architecture Foundation: Member of committee to catalog and exhibit drawings in the Foundation archives.

Editorial Board: Pennsylvania Architect, The Journal of the Pennsylvania Society of Architects, 1989-1990

Board Member, Northeastern Pennsylvania Chapter of the AIA

AIA School Medal for Excellence at North Carolina State University

Teaching assistant in Structures at North Carolina State University

Royce M. Earnest

5020 Wind Point Road

Racine, Wisconsin 53402