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## Book Review

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**The Peaceful Path: Building Garden Cities and New Towns**  
**by: Stephen V. Ward**  
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**by University of Hertfordshire Press,**  
**College Ln, Hatfield AL10 9AB,**  
**UK, 391pp**  
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Howard (1898) proposed a new way of providing cheap and healthy homes, workplaces and green spaces in balance in interconnected new communities. The author describes how the new towns program was created by the post-war British Government as a different way of realising Howard's vision.

In Chapter 1, the author tells the tale of the late Ebenezer Howard, the man behind the erection of garden cities. The chapter begins discussing the very end of Howard's life then follows with the very beginning with how Howard grew up in London. Howard's ideas started to conceptualise around the 'city of health' and 'how to build it' and his ideas were brought to paper when he published his first real documentation known as 'To-Morrow'. With the help of a hefty donation from a colleague, a managing director of Kodak at the time, Howard's plans for garden cities were brought to life where he explains his very much methodical mapping of consolidated cities with shapes, measurements, and an extremely succinct understanding of where everything should be. However detailed his ideas seemingly were, it came with little design code or manual to achieve such success with the cities. Many of his socialist followers initially did not react as he would have wished, either claiming he 'missed the point' and others claiming his utopian beliefs are ideas with little likelihood of coming to fruition. After reevaluation, Howard decided that there were amendments to be made and he did so by revising his document and renaming it, *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*.

Chapter 2 recalls the creation of the very first garden city, also known as Letchworth Garden City. They have devised a whole association filled with believers in the movement, tasked to create the very first garden city, in hopes to expand out further in the world. Letchworth Manor, in Hertfordshire was the land they had settled on, with a total of 1,014 acres. This was thousands of acres away from the number they were looking for, but they found themselves in a great spot in which they eventually expanded to 3,818 acres after purchases of land, in which they now planned to sell 42 pounds per acre. Farmers and other rural neighbours were a bit enraged at the thought of this city coming to their area. After early issues with funding, the association decided to host a competition between architectural pairs to design the garden city in the most efficient manner and decided on the Parker-Unwin plan, which was the most 'carefully thought

out'. Letchworth soon became a desirable destination for industrialists. The facilities were brand new and the use of utilities was cheap and the company started to market their city as such. Letchworth seemed to be hitting all the right notes, and there was not enough houses to go around, reaching a quota of about 12 persons per acre, which was an even lower number than what Howard had originally envisioned. With a shift in more density, came a more commercialised area, with the emergence of shops, as well as more communities. The garden city was coming along and 'To-Morrow' was becoming more of a reality.

Chapter 3 discusses how the Letchworth formula came to pump out another garden city, recognised as Welwyn Garden City. The association had an understanding that their first garden city was a success however it was not as planned and as organised as they would have liked it to be, so they sought out to make this one a more planned exercise. Even so, they ran into financial problems early, and eventually resorted to selling land on 999-year leases. Louis De Soissons, a young architect put together the plans for the new garden city, which was designed to contain a bigger population than its predecessor. The successor however, began to fall into issues with actually populating itself, knowing that there needed to be enough working-class housing to attract factory employment. It became evident without the legacy of other companies around, industrialists found it much easier to bring their business into the garden city and led to a much stronger financial position for the Welwyn. Although there is success in these two cities, there were many alterations to the original plan made by Howard.

Chapter 4 shares how many new cities came after the two garden cities, which were more attainable but it is easy to wonder what they could have achieved if they continued to push the envelope on the ideology of what Howard was trying to accomplish. With doubt emerging upon more cities, the more the suburbs had adjusted. It was determined that putting the poor in areas where they would be surrounded by we-to-do beings that they would be inspired and become more successful themselves. Then came the ideas of incorporating garden city ideas and concepts and applying them into cities that were already established, which soon assimilated into 'garden suburbs'. People began to get sick of living in close quarters with one another or living in back-to-back houses, giving the garden city ideas life. The desire for a garden city became replaced with 'satellite cities', which held true to the guidelines to an extent but had much more achievable goals and affordable plans and they found success in the creation of Wythenshawe.

The author introduces the Stevenage new town and even fresher path to the garden city in Chapter 5. Work beginning on Stevenage started as early as 1947 but saw little to no growth or success until the early 1950's. They had an extremely rough time captivating the minds of those around them to believe what they had here was prosperous city in the works, especially dealing with the dollar crisis at the time. There became a huge problem with a lack of labour, with plans to build more than they can even occupy at the time. Being that, most of the work began as construction, the population of the new town became predominantly, manual workers and left a little amount of unskilled workers around. These new towns set a standard for uniform amongst neighbours in a neighbourhood. Everything began to look monotone due to the consistency. Stevenage became known for its town centre and it led to a more communal area that once seemed like an oddity to many, but is now adopted in every city ever and Stevenage became the face of the new town.

Chapter 6 displays the other new towns that were being built. He discusses Hemel Hempstead and how the influence of Stevenage is great. It became a priority to focus on

the town centre to duplicate the success of Stevenage. With the typical delays that follow the erection of each of these new towns, it seems as if there is no obstacle too big to conquer the legacy of Howard. Being that Hemel Hempstead reached a total 86,000 people in 2011, which surpassed its future goal when it was initially designed, it is for sure a success. With these developments, people began to believe that the new town was far too much a stretch from the ideas of a garden city, so naturally there was an effort to find somewhere in the middle for the two to meet. With little profits and lack of promise in prosperity, these new towns were still very desirable.

It is investigated in Chapter 7 how even though the perfect garden city may not been constructed. Hertfordshire was home to some valiant efforts in achieving that goal and for that it is been so beneficial to the search for a better living. This chapter is more of a look back at the overall impacts the search for the garden city has achieved. Each of the followers of Howard contributed their hand in the construction of the garden city and they have set a standard for tenacity. Their goal was an achievable utopia. This chapter also shares the influence that these pioneers had on other places in the world. There were efforts in Stockholm Sweden to achieve new town success as well as Copenhagen's 'finger plan', which plan mapped out like a hand. Howard has become an engineer for thinking in most ways. He began with an idea and so many others have made their own tweaks to try and conquer this conundrum that has stumped so many before them.

In Chapter 8, the author demonstrates the current state of new towns around the world. He discusses how the creation of new towns surrounding by weaker economies led to some success due to the fact that some were promised work, as well as being accommodated with a place to live. Even though the manufacturers that helped build these new towns, are long gone, the new towns are still thriving, even years later. It is discussed how the living standards have not decreased in these new towns, meaning, even though these homes are getting old, the standards of maintaining them remains high. It would be a disservice to all of the people that these new towns employed and housed for a considerate value, to say that the new towns were not a success. These places gave people their livelihood and they still remain today so it is easy to say that Howard's legacy is unscathed and remains in the minds of many.

This book is the accumulation of research done by Stephen V. Ward amongst some done by his colleagues. Ward's interest for the history of urban planning and the development of the 'Garden City' is linked to his time at the University of Birmingham, in which he studied under both Gordon Cherry and Tony Sutcliffe. The international planning history network that was cemented by these two has devoted a lot of energy to discovering the origins of the garden city. Having faced with an austere housing shortfall and skyrocketing property prices in London and other cities, today's decision makers are again turning back to the ideal of the Garden City.

## References

- Howard, E. (1898) *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Ltd., Paternoster Square, London, UK.
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