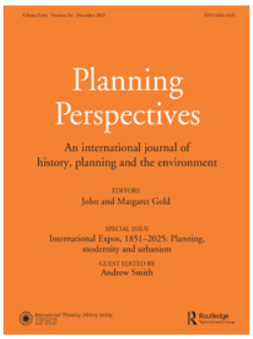

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Decolonizing planning perspectives: opportunities for the future*

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ABSTRACT

The concept of decolonization has received significant critical attention across academic disciplines, including planning history, leading some scholars to caution against its conceptual stretching. Within *Planning Perspectives*, a leading journal in Planning History however, the term is relatively absent, signalling opportunities for future content, such as special issues, wider geographical scope, and engagement with multilingualism. Although multiple contributions critically address the colonial origins and legacies of spatial planning models in circulation worldwide, areas that remain under-explored include the impacts of political decolonization on urban settlements in ex-colonial territories, and challenges to colonial epistemologies in research and institutional cultures. We begin this paper by acknowledging our positionalities in relation to colonial legacies before reviewing the journal's engagement with the intertwined histories of planning, colonialism and decolonization to date. Drawing on our research, we suggest there is scope for greater critical focus on decolonizing agendas in planning history, in the context of wider interdisciplinary debates on the meanings and politics of decolonization, Reparatory Justice, and the legacies of colonialism in spatial planning, development and urban studies worldwide. The paper concludes by proposing five potential avenues for 'decolonizing' *Planning Perspectives* in the future.

KEYWORDS

Decolonization; colonialism; planning history; urban studies; interdisciplinarity

Introduction

Under the title Politics of Repair, the 48th conference of the Society for Caribbean Studies in Bristol (July 2nd – 4th 2025), provided a platform for renewed academic attention to the subject of reparatory justice for the Caribbean and African nations and peoples subjected to historic European colonization. David Gosse, from the University of the West Indies (Mona campus), presented the updated 10 Point Action Plan from CARICOM (Caribbean Community)'s Reparations Commission which starts with the assertion that: 'Only a full and formal apology can allow for the healing of wounds and the destruction of cultures caused by colonialism (enslavement and other forms of oppression of peoples)'. Professor Verene Shepherd, also from UWI Mona, referred to the 'indecency of independence without reparations' in her keynote presentation, emphasizing the importance of universities in decolonizing the language and addressing the under-development caused by colonialism.

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Calls for reparations have fuelled a discourse of decolonization within and beyond academia. This can be defined as the need for recognition and undoing of the ongoing damage caused by the legacies of colonialism's structures and epistemologies on ex-colonial territories around the world, following on from political decolonization; and persisting at the heart of the ex-colonizing metropoles in ongoing forms of hegemonic thought coloured by racism, religious prejudice, and discrimination.[1] From our respective positions in prominent centres of built environment research and teaching in the UK, we have witnessed and actively engaged in initiatives to strengthen awareness of and action on arguments for decolonization (see section 3.v), informed by our professional research experience of working in a number of different ex-colonial and post-colonial urban settings over a number of years, including London: a city whose role in internal, external and settler colonialism drastically re-shaped both the city itself and extensive parts of the world, socially, spatially and economically.

We are fully aware that we owe our positions directly or indirectly to colonial legacies and entanglements which underpin privileged lives in the global north, as well as glaring inequalities, and this awareness informs this paper. However we also acknowledge the complexification of the decolonization debate including stinging criticism of decolonization as an over-used concept. This is apparent both where it is deployed in a 'metaphorical' sense within White-dominated academic institutions and public debate, to assuage 'settler guilt and complicity' without reference to indigenous peoples or land repatriation;[2] and where it becomes a 'catch-all' trope ('decolonization$_2$' in Táíwò's terms[3]) in ex-colonial contexts to excuse administrations and institutions from exercising full agency in forging 'modern' futures following political independence.[4] This latter criticism has been levelled by Táíwò at leading figures in the decolonization debate, such as Mbembe and Thiong'o, who have cogently argued the need for decolonization as an epistemic and structural challenge to Western hegemonies, both in the ex-colonies and the ex-metropoles (self-decolonization).[5]

There is a considerable body of work in the field of planning history, alongside related disciplines of architecture, urbanism, geography and anthropology, which explores and critically analyses the implication of theory and practice in the implementation of colonial settlement, development and governance structures, focusing on the period of European colonial expansion since the fifteenth Century, and its acceleration during the nineteenth, culminating in the First World War. Important figures such as Anthony King (a 90th birthday tribute for whom was published in Planning Perspectives in 2022)[6] have made major contributions to this field, which is well represented in the journal. But although decolonization is emerging in this wider field of work as a significant conceptual framework and call to action, so far, as this paper discusses, it is relatively unrepresented in Planning Perspectives.

The close entanglement of planning policies and practices with processes and infrastructures of colonial expansion, extraction, governance and settlement, is manifested throughout the world in the form of towns and cities, housing and civic buildings, industrial and agricultural structures, railways, canals, and airports, and hospitals, clinics and resorts designed to restore and replenish the health and energies of exhausted colonial workers and their families, as well as monuments to prominent figures in these processes. Some of these material legacies have now been preserved

[1]Umoren, *Empire without End*; Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*; Mbembe, *Out of the Dark Night*; Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind.*
[2]Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization is not a Metaphor".
[3]Táíwò, *Against Decolonisation.* In this book, Táíwò identifies two key phases of decolonization with decolonization$_1$ denoting the initial phase in which former colonized lands gain independence and decolonization$_2$ denoting the aftermath of this process as described here.
[4]Táíwò, *Against Decolonisation*.
[5]Mbembe, *Out of the Dark Night*; Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind.*
[6]Kusno, "A 90th Birthday Tribute. Anthony D. King: an Appreciation."

under national and international heritage programmes, while others have fallen into disrepair, been re-purposed, or removed in recognition of their controversial status (such as the Mona plantation site in Kingston, Jamaica, site of the present-day UWI campus, or the removal of the statue of King George V near the Gateway of India in Mumbai). They constitute evidence or traces of racialised and inequitable governance structures which they were constructed to enforce, and which have profoundly structured global models of development and urbanization since.

In this paper and writing from the adjacent disciplines of architectural and urban history and theory and of the social sciences (anthropology, human geography), we engage with the need to interrogate this evidence, acknowledging the influence of a wider field of decolonial studies which we do not have the scope to explore in detail here. Frameworks and principles originating in colonial governance systems continue to influence the shape and implementation of hegemonic planning policies and practices today, both abroad and 'at home' in ex-colonial powers such as the UK. Therefore any recovery of a radical planning tradition focused on 'ongoing emancipatory projects and progressive urban coalitions striving to produce more equitable cities'[7] must critically engage with the problematic histories of colonial planning, from an explicitly decolonial perspective: one which foregrounds the contributions of Indigenous intellectuals and activists to theories and frameworks of decolonization, re-centres the needs and aspirations of marginalized communities, and, crucially, addresses racial hierarchies, inequities and racism fuelled by colonialism[8] and complexified by religion.[9] Where better to begin reviewing such an engagement than in the pages of Planning Perspectives: an international journal of history, planning and the environment, on its 40th anniversary.

The absence/ presence of decolonization in Planning Perspectives

Keyword search

To start our investigation, we undertook a rudimentary search online of articles published over the past forty years in the journal, including the IPHS section, under the terms 'decolonization' or 'decolonize', 'colonialism', 'colonial', and 'postcolonial'. Despite the proliferation of public and academic cross-disciplinary discourse around decolonization, which has also strongly coloured our work in our respective institutions, we found just four articles with this word in the title (two of which were book reviews), and another four papers (including one book review) in which it appeared in keywords or abstracts. In 72 other papers, the term appears somewhere – sometimes as the title of a section though more often just as a word within the body of the text or in the references. By comparison, the search for 'colonialism' produced 185 results, including book reviews and conference reports, of which 69 overlapped with the results of a search for 'postcolonial', under which 112 titles appeared in total. Meanwhile, the term 'colonial' produced 658 results, which we did not review in detail.

From these results, we can see that colonialism and its legacies in planning history are well represented in 40 years of publishing Planning Perspectives (approximately 76 issues), and from a cursory review of abstracts it would appear that the vast majority of articles assume a critical positionality in relation to the evidence of colonial planning histories. Yet in the vast majority of articles and reviews in which the term decolonization and related term decolonize is present, the

[7]Sevilla-Buitrago, "What is Radical Planning History?," 840.
[8]Umoren, *Empire Without End*.
[9]McClymont, "Race, Faith and Planning in Britain".

use of the term is either not explicitly defined or conceptually explained. Often it appears to refer simply to the colonial withdrawal of power as an historical event.

Papers addressing 'colonialism' in planning history within the journal: themes and regional focus

Delving somewhat more deeply into the papers engaging with colonial planning histories in the journal, we make a few general observations about their scope and limitations before addressing under-represented themes or gaps in this literature which can be linked to concerns central to arguments for decolonization – for example, the far-reaching global effects of racialised capitalism, anthropogenic climate breakdown, and reparations. In general, the papers can be divided into two categories, those that examine the historical characteristics or effects of colonial planning under different colonial regimes, and those that engage with their subsequent legacies.

In the former category (characterization), themes appear such as segregation, often linked to public health planning, land reforms, housing planning and design, the diffused dissemination of masterplanning and the garden city model, modernization and urban growth, policy circulation between colonies, and informality in contrast to regulated colonial space. The latter category (legacies) links to the post-colonial literature which develops a focus on evolving strategies of appropriation, adaptation, and processes of two-way exchange and hybridization of colonial/local models in colonized and ex-colonized territories. Identified themes include links between coloniality and globalization, neo-colonialism, dependency, pollution, struggles for space, the representation and participation of indigenous peoples, heritage, conservation, development and informality (including improvisation and illegal urbanism).

In terms of regional focus, the largest numbers of papers appearing in a search for 'colonialism', at 10 each, deal either with global perspectives across contexts, or Africa as a whole, including some cross-colonial (largely French–British) comparative studies. These are followed by nine papers on the South-West Asia and North Africa (SWANA) region, mostly Israel, and nine on British colonial legacies in India and Bangladesh. Seven papers deal with British or Japanese imperial legacies in East Asia, and seven each on East Africa and West Africa, mostly focused on British colonial planning legacies. Seven papers engage with Spanish, British and US colonial, 'semi-colonial' or corporate planning interests in South America. Dutch, British, US and Chinese interests in South-east Asia form the topic of six papers, with another six focusing on North Africa (mainly French, one Spanish). Southern and Central Africa feature in four papers each, while the Caribbean (French only) is startlingly under-represented with one paper, as are the White settler-colonies, Ireland and the Arctic. The implications of colonial or neocolonial planning 'at home', with a specific focus on its racialised characteristics which is elsewhere almost entirely missing, are examined in three articles on the USA, and one on Britain, which is a book review.

Within this range of papers, there appears to be a fairly strong representation of authors whose names are suggestive of a localized positionality, although it would be rash to rush to conclusions on this; yet the lack of attention to the racialised and class or caste-based inequalities embedded in colonial planning systems and their legacies is perhaps also reflected in the significant absence of 'decolonization' as a concept from the discussions represented in these papers. In this respect, the themes that prevail in the journal seem somewhat behind in relation to the wider literature on European colonial planning history, although there is clear overlap in the research acknowledging the key role of planning policies and practices within the strategies and power structures of

colonial rule,[10] and documenting the professionals and the ideas that shaped colonial urban fabrics.[11] Within this field, the relationship between spatial and racial segregation as a planning principle,[12] and the racial ideologies disseminated through colonial governance structures and their after-lives (notably apartheid in South Africa) has received attention. However, the reciprocal influence of colonial settlement strategies on the shaping and professionalization of 'town and country planning' practice in the colonising metropoles, particularly with regard to racialised migrant and settled communities in post-colonial European cities, appears relatively under-researched.

From colonialism to decolonization in planning histories: gaps in Planning Perspectives

Some of the themes which appear in the wider literature on histories of colonial planning represent long-standing preoccupations within the field, while significant areas of engagement with decolonization discourses and decolonial research methodologies are more emergent (see Section 'From absence to opportunity'). Postcolonial studies of planning and the built environment, which can also be found in Planning Perspectives,[13] have paved the way in questioning previous assumptions related to the one-way power of European planning ideas in place-shaping, and attending to the diverse ways in which both immersion in local contents and local agency led to diverse adaptations, incomplete translations and/or creative exchanges between colonial ideas and local social cultural practices, leading to hybridized models and environments which can no longer be classified as 'colonial'.[14]

There has been a parallel conceptual shift towards 'understanding the development of the 'indigenous city',[15] unsettling established binary categories such as traditional/ modern, colonized/ colonizer, formal/informal and European/ other, which links to decolonizing discourses. This has been supported by the rise of interdisciplinary approaches integrating perspectives from other fields including geography, political economy, law, medicine, sociology and anthropology to inform the selection of research questions and methodologies, and theoretical innovations; for example, the application of concepts of governmentality and genealogy to document unequal power relations (especially those embedded in racialised ideologies and hierarchies) and cultural hegemony (drawing on Foucault, Said, Bhabha, Hartman), the interrogation of spatial production from varied standpoints of agency and practice (drawing on Lefebvre, for example),[16] and the incorporation of concepts from Critical Race Studies, cosmopolitics, posthumanities and more-than-human thinking.[17]

Yet these moves highlight gaps in the literature on colonial planning in Planning Perspectives, as well as the paucity of papers explicitly referencing decolonization or decoloniality as a conceptual framework for re-evaluating planning histories and future practices. Our rudimentary survey reveals not only a significant absence of material relating to the impact of post-war planning in

[10]With research such as that contained in: Home, *Of Planting and Planning*.
[11]With research such as that contained in: Hein, *The Routledge Handbook of Planning History*: Chapter 8, Home, "Global Systems Foundations of the Discipline"; Kusno, "Southeast Asia: Colonial Discourses"; Massey "Key Planning Histories of the Developing Western Tradition from the Mid-19th Century to the Early 20th century.
[12]Echoing Home, *Of Planting and Planning*, specifically in Chapter 5.
[13]For example, Sengupta, "Unlearning the City", 138-140.
[14]Perera, "Contesting Visions."; Melhuish, "Aesthetics of Social Identity"
[15]Kusno, "Southeast Asia: Colonial Discourses," 223.
[16]Kusno, "Southeast Asia: Colonial Discourses;' Home, "Global Systems Foundations of the Discipline"; Olajide, "Coloniality and Racialization of Informality."
[17]For example, Barad, "Troubling Time/s and Ecologies of Nothingness"; Blok and Farias, *Urban Cosmopolitics;* Haraway, *When Species Meet;* Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care;* Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None.*

the former colonising states on the settlement of migrants from the former colonies in multi-racial European cities,[18] but also a lack of comparative research into planning and its legacies across former colonial settlements, whether between settlements under the same colonial rule or between settlements developed by different European colonizers.[19] As Beekmans indicates, the value of this kind of research lies in its capacity to reveal not just the 'diffusion of planning models to the colonies' but the subtle variety of forms of 'actual implementation of these planning models on the colonial terrain,' and their continuing influence in the ex-metropoles.[20]

Other areas of colonial planning legacy that have been highlighted by wider discourses of decolonization, but appear to receive little attention in the pages of Planning Perspectives, include the environmental impacts of planning and development approaches on colonized landscapes and the impacts of colonial extractivism and development on nature,[21] with the potential to draw on more-than-human, environmental justice and/or ecological perspectives. Gaps that stand out in light of some of our own interests and positionalities include a focus on the aesthetic values of planned and materializing colonial and postcolonial architectural and urban fabrics;[22] the planning history of settlements linked explicitly to capitalist colonial modes of extraction and production such as stone quarrying or mining, and sugar, cotton, coffee, and rice in rural hinterlands; the changing intersections of land law, property, real estate and planning; and scholarship from less researched regional contexts reflecting diverse positionalities. Finally, discussion of the racial and religious ideologies and attitudes that shaped and were perpetuated by unequal colonial and postcolonial planning systems is hardly present, other than in a handful of papers addressing segregation policies.

The presence of decolonization in Planning Perspectives

Among the few papers that engage with decolonization significantly, it is noticeable that use of the term or its derivatives is both inconsistent and, on balance, relatively undeveloped theoretically. The geographical focus of these papers is limited to north Africa, India and Indonesia, with nothing from former Spanish, Belgian or Italian colonies. Mostly, 'decolonization' is used in its original and more neutral sense to refer to the process of colonial withdrawal, as a finite historic political and economic event, rather than as a vehicle of critical engagement with its aftermaths in order to consider deeper implications for the trajectories of ongoing institutional and cultural change (to 'decolonise decolonisation').[23]

Authors that consider decolonization largely in the former, more neutral sense of the term include Salah-Salah in a paper on the need for a re-evaluation of the heritage of the 'inauthentic' Algerian medinas degraded by colonial intervention and post-colonial informal settlement.[24] Here, decolonization is only used to describe the starting point of 'the period of post-colonial nationalism' ushered in by the creation of the new nation states (in this case Algeria), even though the case she makes could be framed by an argument for epistemological decolonization similar

[18]McClymont, book review: "Race Faith and Planning in Britain."
[19]Exceptions are Talocci, Brown and Yacobi, "The Biogeopolitics of Cities"; Beeckmans, "Editing the African City"; Home, "From Cantonments to Townships."
[20]Beeckmans, "Editing the African City", 615.
[21]Exceptions are Hatton-Proulx, "Colonial Toxicity"; Njoh, "Colonial Development Policies as Tools of Ecological Imperialism in Southeast Asia."
[22]One exception being Melhuish, "Aesthetics of Social Identity".
[23]Such understandings broadly align, in other words with the Decolonization$_1$ definition referred to above. Umoren End of Empire p 9
[24]Salah-Salah, "The Manufacture of Heritage in the Face of the Diktats of Authenticity."

to Rahmouni and Saizen's paper on a comparable north African context, discussed below. Salah-Salah's paper highlights the significance and controversies of heritage discourse and management approaches as a dimension of spatial planning practice within planning regimes, especially in relation to the internationalization of heritage conventions led by former colonial powers (for example, in the formation of UNESCO), but the topic is not explicitly discussed in terms of decolonization in the journal.

In a handful of papers, decolonization is used to refer both to the political moments marking the end of colonial rule and the subsequent progressive dismantling of symbols and spaces, touching on the topic of heritage. In this vein, He, Yuan and Chen, for example, present the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 as a decisive 'break with the past' and go on to chart decolonization in terms of ways of remaking and reinscribing meaning and symbolism through the built environment in former colonial international settlements in Chinese cities.[25] These include the 'diminishment' of legacies through the renaming of places, repurposing of buildings, selective heritage preservation, and widespread redevelopment and commercialization. Górny and Górna describe a comparable phenomenon of street re-naming in the context of Dakar-Plateau, Senegal, following political decolonization – one that they define as 'symbolic' and 'unorganised' decolonization, in counterpoint to 'authentic decolonization', which they attribute to a transition from a colonial state to independence that was ostensibly smooth and peaceful but also entailed the repression of more radical forces 'that would have pushed for more far-reaching decolonization' in urban terms.[26] In Mand's review of Sen Siddhartha's 2017 book 'Colonizing, Decolonizing and Globalizing Kolkata', decolonization is also defined as the political event marking the independence of a partitioned India in 1947 which the city came to embody in distinct and unfolding ways, albeit in the context of neocolonialism reflected in a continuing dependence on foreign experts and conceptual frameworks in the post-colonial period.[27] Across these studies, processes of dismantling, toppling, vanishing, painting over, replacement and repurposing emerge as a catalogue of notions related to decolonization, as well as evidencing the political and affective contexts through which it has been articulated.

The only two full papers to feature the term in their titles are also the only two that view decolonization in this wider sense while also distinctively viewing it as a future yet to be realized beyond persistent urban issues bequeathed by colonial systems, which they trace.[28] Writing about spatial planning in post-colonial Morocco, Rahmouni and Saizen argue for the 'unsettling' of hegemonic Western knowledge systems to form a contemporary and future planning system in which indigenous informal social uses and relationships with space are recognized and validated: 'Moroccan urban reality' as opposed to merely the perpetuation of legal and administrative structures rooted in French colonial frameworks.[29] Their call for decolonization in contemporary planning to be understood as 'a critical personal journey of unlearning colonial understandings of space and recovering [one's own] indigenous experiences and perspectives' recalls Thiong'o's now canonical analysis of the development of African languages within emergent art forms as ways of 'decolonising the mind', and, though it does not refer to such literature from other disciplines, speaks to the same sorts of questions of how to recover culture and traditions in a post-colonial context, albeit alongside legacies of the colonial past.[30]

[25]He, Yuan and Chen, "The planning of the Beijing Legation Quarter and the multiple identities of post-colonial heritage (1950s–2010s)," 1350.
[26]Górny and Górna, "Street names in Dakar-Plateau".
[27]Mand, "Colonizing, Decolonizing, and Globalizing Kolkata".
[28]Rahmouni and Saizen, "Spatial Planning in Post-colonial Morocco"; Putri, "Sanitizing Jakarta".
[29]Rahmouni and Saizen, 1393.
[30]Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind.*

Putri's paper uncovers the colonial roots of contemporary planning in Jakarta, demonstrating the persistence of 'the imaginaries of colonial modernity' within contemporary planning practices, as knowledge systems that concretize through development and infrastructure.[31] These imaginaries, she argues, can be seen to explain persistent tendencies to stigmatize traditional, non-European 'kampung' settlements and related failures to improve sanitary conditions in the post-colonial context. Drawing from this, she explores the potential to see urban kampungs otherwise as a basis for recognizing community resilience, potentials for self-management and developing new planning approaches. Building on their critiques of colonial planning regimes, both this paper by Putri and that by Rahmouni and Saizen put forward a radical agenda for planning history in terms of contribution to ongoing epistemological decolonization.

Just one paper goes a further step to approach decolonization not just as a process to be studied in relation to emerging cityscapes, but as a concept also relevant to value systems and research processes in planning history itself: Tang and d'Auria's study of public spaces in Dharavi, Mumbai.[32] These authors consider new ways of researching informal urbanization practices drawing on approaches within 'Southern urban history' stressing the need for studies that move away from merely studying or critiquing colonial framings of the 'slum' to foregrounding how local people in settlements such as Mumbai's Dharavi shaped their environments otherwise, such as through everyday practices of 'building, inhabiting, using, performing, occupying and consolidating space'.[33] Though a single paper can only provide a partial basis for interpretation, the approach here is in line with developments in wider global as well as alternative and radical planning history, pointing toward the potential of a decolonial historiography of planning which has at its heart the decentring of the expert planner's view and imagination and concurrent foregrounding of local people's city making practices and social realities.

From absence to opportunity

Section 'The absence/ presence of decolonization in Planning Perspectives' above suggests there is scope for expanded critical engagement in *Planning Perspectives* with decolonial approaches to research on global and differentiated histories of colonial planning and its complex aftermaths, in response both to agendas formed within the field of radical planning history and to wider interdisciplinary discourses of decolonization which are having a significant impact on the academic curricular of European and American universities, including our own (see section 3.v). Five key absences as lines of speculative thought towards the decolonization of Planning Perspectives are identified in the discussion below.

Decolonial methodologies and interdisciplinarity

Simone and others, including Goodwin and Oduroe, and Tang and d'Auria, referenced above, have highlighted the need for a greater focus on the 'unplanned' and improvised alongside the planned built environment, and a broadened recognition of planning expertise and spatial knowledge beyond the figure of the colonial town planner.[34] Conceptions of 'black urbanism' explicitly challenge forms of 'white urbanism' taught in universities,[35] draw attention to the primacy of white

[31]Putri, "Sanitizing Jakarta."
[32]Tang and d'Auria, "Stabilization and Change under Planning and Everyday Practices", 1309.
[33]Tang and d'Auria, 1310.
[34]Simone, *Improvised Lives;* Goodwin and Oduroe, "Re-visioning Black Urbanism and the Production of Space".
[35]Goodwin and Oduroe, 27.

western male subjectivities in spatial development norms, and validate alternative modes of urban dwelling in post-colonial cities of the ex-colonies and ex-metropoles. Historical and contemporary accounts of adaptation and improvisation by informal settlement dwellers subjected to eviction and redevelopment processes build on community-based, bottom-up and participatory research methodologies which have been framed as 'dirty research', from an explicitly decolonial perspective: 'dirty research seeks to incorporate diverse conceptions of knowledge (epistemology) and ways of knowing (methodology) to move beyond a singular understanding of urban research as merely 'knowledge production.' Shafique goes on to suggest that the 'core tenets of such a decolonial urban knowledge production perhaps can be thought of in terms of reciprocity with parity, just co-production and fostering allyship'.[36]

The arguments made by Shafique and others[37] make the case for moving beyond an 'extractivist' approach to knowledge production which perpetuates 'the colonial-capitalist matrix of power',[38] and highlight the methodological implications of a decolonizing or decolonial approach to planning history which has the capacity to shape the evolution of a radical planning tradition in the future.[39] This connects to the shift towards engagement with interdisciplinary approaches which problematize the historic solution-orientated approach of colonial and post-colonial planning models and their legacies. Research in other disciplines such as those referenced above, foregrounds other ways of seeing and relating to the world within different cultural and religious knowledge systems and cosmologies, which open very different insights into approaches to public health, housing design, use of public space and models of property ownership and land management, amongst other areas of planning history and practice. These are critical to shaping the implementation of decoloniality as a methodological approach, especially in relation to more-than-human, environmental justice and/or ecological perspectives.

Sites and circulations

At the same time, engagement with a bottom-up, and interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary approach, brings other sites and cultural and political subjectivities into view, beyond the well-trodden routes and areas of interest bequeathed by relatively benign colonial infrastructures and local influence. These in turn can shape more vivid understandings of the place of decolonization in planning history, from the ground up, particularly where the memories and legacies of the violence exerted by colonial regimes of excess labour and production have driven calls for reparations. These contexts include the racialised enslavement of the 'New World' plantations (and more papers perhaps on Caribbean planning history), but also the experiences of famine, military oppression and genocidal population displacements which characterized much of colonial history in diverse geographical locations near and far (including Ireland, Wales and Scotland, in the case of Britain), implicating a wide range of colonial actors.

It also includes attending to the circulation of ideas, practices and materials between colonial sites, via mobile professionals educated in institutions and ideological systems located in the metropoles,[40] and the firms that have conducted business in planning and construction on a global scale over an extended historical period, both during and after colonial rule. 'Reconstruction' after

[36]Shafique, "Dirty Research".
[37]Mbembe, Out of the Dark Night; Shafique, "Dirty Research", Musmar, Awan and Agha, "Infidelities".
[38]Shafique, 2.
[39]Sevilla-Buitrago "What is Radical Planning History?"
[40]Melhuish, "Heritage in Urban Development".

destructive conflicts, often resulting from exogenous political and military interventions, along with 'regeneration' and 'development' of urban and non-urban sites deemed not to conform to global standards of modernity, order, and financial investment potential, have long been lucrative areas of productivity for multinational firms with roots in colonial spheres of influence, paving the way in establishing markets for more recent Chinese expansion and influence globally.

Speaking from our own experience, we have researched such processes influencing planning history and its contemporary manifestations in a number of cities. Doha, capital of a former British protectorate, was masterplanned for improved traffic circulation by Llewelyn Davies in the early 1970s, with a new downtown area designed by Allies and Morrison in 2012–2016 as part of the city's economic diversification plan. In Martinique, Fort de France's post-war mayor Aimée Césaire supported the development of infrastructure for 'improvised' self-built neighbourhoods in parallel with French state investment in new housing schemes designed on French lines, while Kingston, Jamaica, was site of the first British urban grid plan in the Caribbean, laid out by surveyor John Goffe and developed by military engineer Christian Lilly, who had previously served in Ulster, and is currently the subject of substantial Chinese investment in waterfront and downtown regeneration. Indore, a state capital in India, urbanized rapidly following development patterns in cities across India in the decades post-independence, and in 1983-1989 the architect Balkrishna Doshi (who had worked for le Corbusier) adapted the model of 'sites-and-services' development endorsed and globalized by the World Bank at the time, while drawing on morphologies and construction practices characterizing informal settlement for his Aranya low-cost housing scheme. In Bengaluru, India, the water crisis has been exacerbated by the development and expansion of a centralized water system stemming from colonial engineering and planning practices involving the ecologically unsustainable exploitation of distant rivers.

Together we have also investigated the meaning and localized imposition on the super-diverse neighbourhoods of post-colonial, post-industrial east London of planned regeneration supported by public-private finance initiatives and hegemonic planning models following the London Olympics 2012.[41] Here, heterogenous local knowledge and relationships with space and heritage, as well as livelihoods, were marginalized with the removal of their material traces and the treatment of the site and its surroundings as a tabula rasa or wasteland ripe for redevelopment after the Games. Currently, we are exploring place-based perceptions of economic well-being in South-East Wales, through mechanisms of participation in strategic planning processes generated from urban centres, focusing on sites of historic English colonial domination and subsequent extraction of materials to drive the wider colonial enterprise. These examples raise important questions about the validity of local knowledge, language and experience in multi-ethnic and 'off-centre' communities shaped by colonialism and disadvantaged by post-industrial and post-agricultural development.

These projects 'at home' point to the inequities enshrined in formal planning and development systems that effectively perpetuate racial, faith- and class-based socio-spatial hierarchies and inequities, particularly in neighbourhoods shaped by patterns of post-colonial migration from Britain's ex-colonies and areas of intervention in the Caribbean, Asia and Africa, as well as across the different nations and regions of the UK. Yet the connections between the experience of under-represented communities in the UK at the hands of the 'town and country planning' system, and its historic roots in colonial planning models of settlement and oversight, originating close to home in the English occupation of Ulster, are relatively under-researched, as our survey shows (with one exception).[42] We suggest

[41]Bernstock et al, *State of the Legacy*.
[42]McClymont, "Race, Faith and Planning in Britain."

that there is more work to be done here, drawing on decolonial modes of research engagement and methodologies, that address the need for more comparative studies across differentiated sites and colonial legacies, and the circulations of ideas and technological professionalism that connect them together across different historical periods.

Decolonized planning processes

Potential case studies and approaches are offered by research into new and alternative planning processes elsewhere including indigenous planning practices and decolonized approaches to informality.[43] Decoupled from decolonization, indigenous agency in citymaking is clearly explored within the corpus of Planning Perspectives, reflected, for example, in Ross and Bigon's paper on entanglements of western and indigenous traditions in Senegalese cityscapes,[44] and in Chokor's on the clash of British colonial and indigenous approaches to land use control in colonial Ibadan, Nigeria.[45] However, there is potential for more research on indigenous agency in planning beyond colonial contexts.

In settler states (sovereign countries established by European settlers) such as Australia, New Zealand, and the Americas, indigenous planning processes have emerged as part of efforts to reverse and overturn foundational injustices associated with persistent colonial legacies in land-use allocation, land management, development, and land/ property law.[46] In Aotearoa (New Zealand), for example, indigenous planning practice has been associated with the recognition of Māori communities' claims to land ownership and stewardship rights in the context of the long-running Waitangi Tribunal, linking notions of planning to questions of how to repatriate and integrate different cultural approaches to land.[47] In postcolonial nation-states such as India, indigenous planning and development practices have also surfaced as part of efforts to chart pathways to urban and regional resilience in the context of climate change and ecological breakdown. In Bengaluru, India for example, in 2015, the water crisis prompted the multidisciplinary firm Biome to instigate a campaign for sustainable rainwater harvesting and ground water storage practices drawing on the traditional skills of indigenous well-digging communities locally.[48]

Indigenous planning is often seen to begin by foregrounding indigenous knowledge – which may be established and affirmed through origin stories, myths, cosmologies and everyday lived experience and place attachment. It involves the formulation of strategies to address the impacts of dispossession from land within complex contemporary social contexts and to challenge the colonial mindsets still rooted in ways of seeing, reasoning, judging, measuring and bureaucratically acting within the planning profession. It also, crucially, enables those affected by such mindsets historically to vision and shape their futures for themselves. Whether aimed at addressing health and wellbeing, longstanding social inequalities, or the potential to revive suppressed cultural practices and/or impending challenges such as water security, indigenous planning deals with the intertwined legacies of colonial exploitation and extractivism while seeking to bring about better (decolonized) futures. But, as well as describing and theorizing indigenous planning processes in ex-colonial contexts worldwide, scholarship within the journal could productively also address how tensions between understandings of 'indigeneity' versus 'migrancy' have surfaced in planning

[43]Pojani, Alternative Planning History and Theory; Andres, Beebeejaun and Rydin, *New Planning Histories*.
[44]Ross and Bigon, "The Urban Grid and Entangled Planning Cultures in Senegal;"
[45]Chokor, "External European Influences and Indigenous Social Values."
[46]Wensing and Porter, "Unsettling Planning's Paradigms"; Sandercock, "Commentary."
[47]Thompson-Fawcett, "Indigenous Futurities"; Parsons, "Indigenous People."
[48]Davis, *The Caring City*.

contexts within the multicultural centres of ex-colonialist powers such as Paris, London or Cardiff making an explicit link to discourses of decolonization in the process.[49]

Similarly, a decolonized perspective on the planning histories of informal settlements could focus on concrete efforts to dismantle colonial/ neo-colonial urban planning approaches, such as by avoiding stigmatization on the basis of race and class/caste, recognising the needs of informal settlement communities as they experience them, valuing bottom-up forms of place-shaping and local specificities, and promoting inclusive planning processes and outcomes.

The inclusion of more of this kind of research, informed by different interpretations of, and critical perspectives on decolonization[50] could also serve to increase the contributions of Indigenous intellectuals and activists to theories of decolonization and the sorts of empathetic methodologies suggested by Shafique.[51]

Material histories

As planning history is not only a history of ideas but also a history of encounters with existing materialities and the imposition of new ones, there is a clear opportunity to explore decolonization through a material culture lens. Colonialists imported industrially produced building materials that were previously unknown in colonized lands such as steel, glass and prefabricated concrete, propping up internal markets and profits in the process. These materialities have persisted within the context of neo-colonial planning and capitalist development and trading practices while industrially produced materials including cardboard, plastic sheeting, recycled materials and tin have also proliferated in the context of rapid urbanization and informal settlement. Decolonization in material terms might be interpreted through developments involving the rediscovery of, and innovations in, traditions of vernacular architecture using natural materials such as earth, wood and straw, along with the local, sustainable sourcing and manufacture of such materials.[52] A series of social infrastructure projects in Burkina Faso built using local construction methods and materials including laterite blocks and bamboo by the Burkinabé-German architect Diébédo Francis Kéré offers one example, if on a small scale.[53]

New research might also explore and conceptualize decolonization through emergent material traditions – those that hybridize colonial and indigenous materialities and practices, that learn from and build on the lightweight materialities and aesthetics of informality, and that arise through the informal adaptation, incremental overlay or even dematerialization. Dematerialization may result from either the deliberate, often symbolic processes of dismantling, toppling, vanishing, painting over, and replacement described above, or the entropic dilapidation of neglected fabrics, giving way to new spaces, ecologies and materialities. Such an approach to decolonizing materiality and aesthetics would also fundamentally connect to current controversies around the value and (il)legitimacy of material and tangible heritage in ex-colonial and postcolonial built environments (cf Salah-Salah 2022 above).

Histories of history in education

Since the prominent 'Rhodes must Fall' student campaign in Oxford in 2016, following the campaign for removal of the infamous Cecil Rhodes statue at the University of Cape Town, many

[49]Building, for example, on the edited collection of chapters in: Sandercock, *Making the Invisible Visible.*
[50]Such as Táíwò, *Against Decolonisation;* Tuck and Yang; *"Decolonization is not a Metaphor;"* Mbembe, *Out of the Dark Night.*
[51]Shafique, "Dirty Research."
[52]See, for example, Lewis, "National Identity and Traditional Building"; Lewis, "The Persistence of Vernacular Forms in the Near East."
[53]Davis, "Education and Global Urbanisation."

UK-based universities including schools of architecture and planning have sought to demonstrate action towards decolonizing their programmes and curricula. Pedagogic strategies often include the inclusion of global majority writers in reading lists, the broadening of concepts, vocabularies and cultural perspectives to learn from other bodies of global knowledge beyond the established 'western canon', the recognition of colonialist mindsets and racist bias in and in excess of historical movements such as modernism in the wider conceptual context of modernity[54], and critical reflection on the role of the designer as author and maker. The recognition of diverse identities and bodies through design studios has been at last supplanting engrained tendencies amongst spatial practitioners to plan for universalized identities and standardized human dimensions, as exemplified by Le Corbusier's 'modular man'.

These are strategies we are both familiar with in the contexts of our UK-based institutions and recognize as incomplete and ongoing. At the Welsh School of Architecture, the inclusion of social research methodologies and an emphasis on sustained engagement with local urban and rural communities has been key. A 'decolonization toolkit' was developed in 2024 alongside a major review of undergraduate teaching to support module leaders and lectures across architectural and urban design, history and theory, technology and ethics of practice in updating their courses. Concurrently, the school has developed a partnership with the School of Planning and Architecture in New Delhi. At UCL, the Bartlett's 'Race' and Space Curriculum, as one example, was first published in January 2020 as a resource for staff and students to consider the myriad 'experiences and embodiments of 'race' in (urban) spaces', diverse relationships between city-making and racial capitalism, and to speculatively imagine different futures.[55] UCL Urban Laboratory's cross-disciplinary MASc in Global Urbanism was developed specifically to foreground and learn from scholarship and knowledge originating in regional contexts, structured around an initial co-teaching partnership with University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg which will move to other institutions and contexts outside the global north in future.

But our engagements with international scholars in the UK and elsewhere, such as India, Pakistan, Jamaica, South Africa, China and countries within the SWANA region suggest that the scope for exploring different histories of planning pedagogy world-wide may also involve navigating entanglements of decolonization discourses with conservative, nationalistic and/or neo-colonial agendas. They further highlight what may well be 'the irreconcilable epistemological tensions between secular and religious modes of thinking'[56] which underlie different modes of inhabiting the world, ordering and relating to space and society, and continue to complexify and problematize global dynamics in the post-colonial era, demanding greater progress in inter-cultural understanding.[57]

Conclusions

While not claiming to be definitive or comprehensive in the identification of absences and related opportunities, this paper outlines the potential for a more assertive and far-reaching engagement in Planning Perspectives with decolonization as an approach to the making and remaking of cities, and the conduct of 'dirty research' in the university context. As we have suggested throughout, this can be achieved in the context of an extensive existing scholarship on decolonization which

[54]Musmar, Awan, and Agha, "Infidelities."
[55]Zewolde et al., *'Race' and Space*.
[56]Musmar, Awan and Agha, "Infidelities."
[57]Hall, "Whose Heritage?"; Clifford, *Works and Lives*.

has introduced a range of different concepts, vocabularies, and practices of decolonization available to built environment and related studies - whether understood finitely as the process of acquiring independence, or substantially rejecting ongoing cultural, intellectual, and social elements of colonial pasts; and engaging both with material evidence, or with critiques of the use of the term decolonization either as a 'metaphor' for other processes, or to describe a 'historical distortion' which denies the agency and cultural integrity of ex-colonized peoples.[58]

However decolonizing Planning Perspectives is not just a matter of ensuring an increasing presence of decolonization debates and case studies. It is also about recognising the importance, in Shafique's terms, of the 'politics of presence' in decolonial urban research, meaning where a researcher speaks from and comes to stand in relation to the topic. The value of presenting diverse voices or 'speaking places' through an expanding presence of studies of decolonization has been emphasized in this paper. In promoting the topic through future special issues, book reviews or other commissions, the journal's editorial board might actively seek out authors as yet unrepresented or from underrepresented places in the world including those where English is little spoken. This seems especially important given that planning history is often used to illuminate active, structural processes in the present and/or, in the manner of spatial planning itself, to develop speculative lines of thought regarding urban futures and, to evoke Mbembe, futurity.[59]

We finish here therefore not with further examples of 'where' or who', but with an anecdote that speaks to the challenge. Throughout the writing of the paper, we spoke to colleagues, friends and others about decolonization. And in one of the final conversations over lunch in Cardiff's Bute Park (a striking town planning legacy named in reference to British colonial power and wealth), a visiting scholar to WSA from India explained some of the barriers to submitting publications from his perspective. This included not only issues of confidence and the lack of a sense of entitlement to 'say', despite constantly 'seeing and thinking', but also significant structural barriers such as a lack of access to non-open access publications to help position work, and the cost of translation and editorial services demanded by an Anglophone publishing hegemony; another legacy of the historical expansion of colonial governance. Responding to such lived experience, shaped by historical legacies, is clearly part of the task of decolonizing Planning Perspectives.

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[58]Táíwò, *Against Decolonisation;* Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor."
[59]Mbembe, *Out of the Dark Night*.

Data availability statement

The literature review data was generated through online searches on the Planning Perspectives journal website over the 40-year span of its existence since 1986 https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/rppe20.

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