A springtime visit to the Soviet Union

Post-war planning and policy tourism through the Iron Curtain

AAG New York City 2012
Policy mobilities

- “How and why certain ideas become ‘mobile’ and what channels are used to diffuse them.” González (2011: 7)

- Informational infrastructures

- How policies mutate as they move
Rise of policy tourism

The Junketeers

BY THE CHANGE.

FROM LEYLA LINTON

EURO-MPs are travelling the world and visiting some of the sunniest resorts at a cost to the taxpayer of more than £3.5 million a year.

Their globe-trotting has taken them to destinations ranging from the Ivory Coast to Togo, Istanbul to Havana and New York to Tokyo, to name just a few. Fine for more than 70 MEPs to a MEPs’ £500,000 sunshine trips are branded a waste of money
Where next?

- Reports and the media in policy tourism
- Beyond UK-US completed transfers
- Beyond neo-liberal and economic development policies
UK/USSR planning

- ‘Interventionist planning’ vs ‘development planning’ (White, 1980)

- Planning being a rational activity (USSR: scientific)

- Restricting growth of the cities (USSR: industrialising the countryside)
Coventry’s City Engineer’s Christmas card, 1954

Family’ terraced housing in Stevenage, 1956
Anglo-Russian relations

- **1920s to 1939:** some individual trips to USSR; growth of pro-Communism/Soviet planning groups

- **1945-1950s:** development of ‘official’ channels – British Council Soviet Relations Committee (1955-59)
Russians in Manchester, Sept 1957

Frederic Osborn in Sweden, 1947
Russian Town Planners

Edinburgh Visit

Six Russian town-planning experts visiting Edinburgh yesterday had coffee with the Lord Provost at the City Chambers and a talk with Mr. R. Griese, a regional planning officer of the Department of Health, at St. Andrew’s House. Their leader, Mr. S. Kolesnikov, director of the Institute of City Construction and Design in Moscow, spoke enthusiastically of “the beautiful setting of Edinburgh” and said that the delegation had been most impressed by the way in which monuments had become focal points in street planning in the city.

The Lord Provost, Mr. Ian Johnson-Gilbert, welcomed the visitors in the room in which Mr. Bulgarin and Mr. Kruschev were received in the spring of last year. He recalled the presence of a Russian delegation at the recent Edinburgh Film Festival, and expressed the hope that in the course of time Russia would make a contribution to the festival.

The Russian visitors later travelled to Fife to see the Glenrothes new town, and are to visit East Kilbride today.

Royalty Return

Princess Alexandra and Prince Michael of Kent returned to London by air last night after a holiday in Florence as the guests of Prince Paul of Yugoslavia. The Duchess of Kent is continuing her holiday in Florence.

Mr. Peter Tinto, chief architect and planning officer of the new Fife town of Glenrothes (nearest camera), explaining features of the town on a drawing to a party of Russian town planners who visited it yesterday.
Return visit

14 May 1958 to 5 June 1958
Delegation

- FJO (TCPA)
- Richard Edmonds (London County Council)
- Henry Wells (Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation)
- H. Myles Wright (University of Liverpool)
- E.G.S. Elliot (Ministry of Housing and Local Government)
- Dennis W. Riley (Staffordshire County Council)
LtR: Wright, Elliot, Edmonds, Riley, Wells and Dr. H. Rigby (British Embassy). Osborn is taking the photograph.
VIP travel
‘Work’ sights

- Planning offices
- City centres
- Existing housing stock
- Construction sites
- Sights of ‘historic interest’/‘natural beauty’
- Collective farms
- Factories
Stalin collective farm, near Kiev
Pre-fab housing, Kiev
Pre-fab plant, Leningrad
Restrictions and limitations

- Conversations
  - “Our mission being technical, we did not discuss political issues” Osborn (1958: 8)
- Language
- Unrestricted mobilities?
- Time
Taking home?

“In general, the Russians have nothing to teach us in principles of town planning” Wells (1959: 378)

Stories, knowledge, status?
Conclusions

1. Limited USSR influence on UK planning
2. Policies are not always on the move
3. Alternative rationales for policy tourism?
4. Situated and constrained learning