

Those “Other Sociologists”: Social Analysis Before Sociology

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Abstract

How did commentators conceive of sociological concerns before university sociology was established in New Zealand? Most of us have heard of Somerset's *Littledene* from 1938, and there has been some publicity given to the short-lived Social Science Research Bureau which existed at the same time, but what else was there? Here I argue that social analysis took form in a range of other interesting and under-appreciated locations. When we trawl through the repositories of New Zealand's cultural production, we notice that some of the key themes of sociology – social order, social change, the state, gender relations, demography and citizenship – turn up in unexpected places. Social workers, psychologists, educationalists and literary commentators had plenty to say, as did those involved in architectural criticism and the wartime Army Education and Welfare Service. This article surveys the field, and concentrates on these last two elements in particular. It argues that New Zealand was not without its “other sociologists”; those who theorized society from a diverse range of locations in our country's intellectual life.

Introduction: Sociology's Others

“Those ‘Other Sociologists’” is a somewhat self-conscious allusion to the first chapter of the first volume of Foucault's *History of sexuality*. Foucault, of course, was especially interested in the production of sexual knowledges (Foucault, 1990/1976). In this article I borrow and modify his title in order to suggest knowledge of a rather different register. I am interested in considering how variously accredited knowers understood New Zealand society in the period before sociology was established in New Zealand's universities. How, I ask, was knowledge about our own society expressed and systematised up until the late 1950s?

The work that most readily comes to mind is probably Crawford Somerset's *Littledene* from 1938, a description of life in the small Canterbury town of Oxford. There has been some discussion, too, of the Social Science Research Bureau which had a brief existence at around the same time. These two moments, though, represent but two of the nodes on a network where numerous forms of social analysis abutted and overlapped. When we dig a little deeper we notice that some of the key themes of sociology – social order, social change, the state, gender relations, demography and citizenship – turn up in some unexpected places. Social workers, psychologists and literary commentators had plenty to say. Other efforts were overtly educational, that is, they took social analysis to the citizenry in the name of social and individual improvement. The likes of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), for instance, and the Army Education Welfare Service, offered up something of a "popular sociology". Meanwhile, critical essays, student projects and research reports were destined for smaller audiences.

This piece is something of an initial survey, a preliminary attempt at recording the richness of social research in New Zealand over many decades. It suggests that *Littledene* and the Social Science Research Bureau occupied a much more extensive and interdisciplinary history of proto-sociological work. I sketch out the field, and then move on to examine in a little more detail two hitherto unexplored sites of social analysis. The Army Education Welfare Service (AEWS) raised many sociological concerns in the materials it provided for men and women in the services, and facilitated discussions in which personnel debated matters of society and citizenship. Ernst Plischke was involved in the AEWS, and along with Frederick Newman, another Austrian immigrant architect, he theorized society while planning the future spaces of antipodean modernity. I suggest, then, that the ripples of this "other sociology" spread far. Their pebble-throwers were connected to one another in various and significant ways, too, and I highlight some of these linkages along the way.

Analyzing Society: From Settler Initiatives to Systematic Surveys

Sociological matters – as we might now conceive of them – were no strangers to the early European settlers. Social knowledge was both a popular and an official concern. From 1840 the government collected statistics on population, trade and agriculture. Neil Lunt suggests that such practices served two important functions. They allowed the state to understand its citizenry, but also to portray New Zealand life in ways that would lure potential immigrants to southern shores (Lunt, 2004, p. 8). Public debate was important too. By the 1860s many colonists attended meetings at the Mechanics Institutes, where they discussed matters of political economy and political science, along with Darwin's theory of evolution (Somerset, 1938, p. 44).

Advocates and researchers also addressed aspects of contemporary society. During the 1860s and '70s, under the pen name "Polly Plum", Mary Ann Colclough argued for the rights of working women. Her newspaper columns supported women's involvement in medicine and other exclusively male professions; they were widely-read and attracted much debate (Macdonald, 1993; McLintock, 1966). The suffragists and other first wave feminist writers produced a rich material on the relations between men and women in colonial society. Those involved with *The Polynesian society*, from 1892, recorded the lives and customs of Maori (Lunt, 2004, p. 14; Craig, 1964). Around the turn of the century, Edward Tregear, the Secretary of Labour, made it his job to study housing and local labour markets (Howe, 1991). Lunt (2004, p. 10) suggests that Tregear set the stage for substantial sociological research and debate in these areas during the years that followed.

Some of these issues were grouped under the term "sociology". August Comte coined that appellation in 1839, and it made an early appearance here in 1887. James Pope's book *The state: Rudiments of New Zealand sociology* surveyed various matters of governance. Labour and capital, wages and rents, crime and punishment all received attention, as did the legal aspects of marital relationships and the social provision sons, hospitals and asylums. Pope even suggested that scholars of such issues were engaged in "the study of sociology" (Pope, 1887).

From the early years social analysis was closely linked to education in general, and adult education in particular. Local branches of the WEA were in place by 1915. That year the Auckland group's first three lectures covered the history of trade unionism, the industrial revolution and the old English village: class, as we would call it now, and community studies (Shuker, 1984, p. 34). As the WEA developed so did its reach. Tutors traipsed through mud and bumped their way along rutted dirt roads in order to reach forestry, road and railway construction workers. Among the audiences some showed little interest, while others greeted the visitors and their lectures with enthusiasm (Shuker, 1984, p. 130).

Church groups addressed social issues, too. The Methodists established their "Committee on Temperance and Public Morals" in 1902, and members' concerns included industrial workers' living standards, unemployment, marriage and sexuality (Dawson, 1998). The Assembly of the Presbyterian Church set up a Public Questions Committee in 1917, and over the years this would examine matters relating to wars, films, gambling, alcohol, housing, consumerism and a range of other social issues (Davidson and Lineham, 1987; Presbyterian Church, 1995).

During the 1920s, Otago University students completed the first dissertations in Preventive Medicine. Many of the topics were epidemiological, but some dovetailed with obviously sociological concerns. Tregear's interests in labour and housing were well represented. One student investigated working conditions in Dunedin's public laundries (Will, 1924), and several examined the state of Dunedin's marginal urban housing stock and the lives of those who lived in it (Fregley, 1925; Hay, 1925; Mullock, 1927). Two students conducted an industrial survey of the Hudson's chocolate factory and examined aspects of the production process, health and safety management, and gendered divisions of labour within the plant (Orchard and Porterfield, 1928). From the 1930s on, issues concerning Maori found their way onto the Otago students' research agendas too (Lunt, 2004, p. 15).

Sociology made its first academic appearance in 1921, when the University of New Zealand listed “Outlines of Sociology” as a single stage subject for Diploma of Social Science. Oddly the subject was never taught, even though it was added to the BA degree in 1934 and remained there until 1941 (Robb, 1966, p. 3; Thompson, 1967, p. 505). A few students took the examination every year despite the lack of formal instruction. Some accepted informal assistance from teachers in other disciplines, among them Ernest Beaglehole in Psychology at Victoria University and Richard Lawson in Education at Otago (Robb, 1966, p. 4).

Littledene appeared on the booksellers’ shelves in 1938. The study’s author, Crawford Somerset, was the headmaster of the local school, and the project was supported by two eminent personalities: Clarence Beeby at the recently established New Zealand Council for Educational Research and James Shelley, Canterbury University’s Professor of Education (Carter, 2004, p. 201). *Littledene* was inspired by Robert and Helen Lynd’s American study *Middletown*, a description of social life in the Indiana town of Muncie (Lynd, 1956/1929). Somerset investigated Oxford’s farms and farm livelihoods, family and home life, work and leisure, childhood and adult education.¹ Oxford’s connections with the outside world came under scrutiny, too, as did the sexual mores of the inhabitants. Somerset deemed the most intimate spaces of family life worthy of comment:

The kitchen, long and narrow, with walls of painted wood, its windows heavily curtained, its floor covered with pattern-worn linoleum, is furnished with a large table scrubbed white and chairs mostly rickety and awry [...] The kitchen is the farmer’s retreat from the battle with forces over which he has no control. It is his little haven of security. Here are food and warmth, the memory of the last meal and the smell of the next one cooking. Here in the evening father reads the paper, mother makes and mends, the children pore over their lesson books. (Somerset, 1938, p. 21)

This interest in the spaces of domestic life would be taken up by several

1 Somerset’s foci echo some of the Lynds’: labour, making a home, leisure, community activities, and religion (on this point see Carter, 2004, p.200).

“other sociologists” in the decades ahead. Home and family, after all, were among the most intimate domains of sociability; the points at which the public and private aspects of social life intersected most intensely. Somerset concluded that Oxford’s community spirit and its inhabitants’ desire for education were strong, their work ethic unimpeachable, and their lodges and church clubs plentiful. On the other hand, he considered that locals greeted change with suspicion and that many villagers led inhibited emotional lives. Men and women were usually awkward in each others’ company, Somerset noted, and “[p]eople in the country do not expect much from marriage” (Somerset, 1938, pp. 53, 59).

The WEA ran a summer school in Oxford for a time, and the organization went from strength to strength on the national stage too. During the depression and the war years WEA staff lectured on the “Crisis of Capitalism”, and its classes on economics and contemporary social issues proved popular. In 1938 some 824 students studied courses aggregated under the heading of “sociology” (Shuker, 1984, p. 10). WEA tutors had to balance the tensions between attempting to know the world “objectively” and promoting a critical attitude. This conundrum vexed their future academic sociologist counterparts, too (Robb, 1966, p. 7). Like the sociology departments in universities later on, the WEA was not infrequently accused of a leftist bias (Shuker, 1984, *passim*).

Matters of politics raised their heads again in 1937, when the Labour government established the Social Science Research Bureau. D. G. Sullivan, the minister with overall responsibility, was enthusiastic. “The work of the new Bureau will include the co-ordinating of the activities of research bodies or individuals working in the fields of social sciences so that the utmost benefit will be realized for their efforts”, he proclaimed (cited Thompson, 1967, p. 504). Sullivan perceived a benefit for government too: the Bureau would provide Ministers with “the necessary factual basis for policy measures of a social nature” (p. 504). There was another connection between the government and the Bureau: several of the unit’s staff were active in the Labour Party.²

2 For instance, E. H. Langford, a member of the Bureau’s General Committee, and D. A. Martin, a staffer (Robb, 1987, pp. vi-vi).

Three studies were begun under the aegis of the Bureau. The first of these enquired into the standards of living of dairy farmers and their families (Doig, 1940), while a second and a third examined the work and spending habits of boot and shoe operatives and tramway employees respectively. The dairy farmer survey was completed and published, to the disquiet of a government unwilling to admit that its policies had not addressed all of the farmers' difficulties (Robb, 1987). By the time the government closed the Bureau in 1940, the urban studies had not progressed past draft stage (Robb, 1987, ch.7). Other projects were not even begun. These included one on population trends, another on Maori wellbeing, and an investigation of the "decay of organised religion and the abandonment of conventional moral standards" (Robb, 1987, p. 31).

While the government allowed the Bureau to fall apart (for reasons of indifference and/or hostility, in an indeterminable proportion), another, related arm of the DSIR survived. During the 1940s the Industrial Psychology Division investigated labour shortages and the persistence of "class divisions" (Congalton, 1952, pp. 99-102). This was not an isolated interest in class. Athol Congalton, an educational psychologist and a graduate of the "Outlines of Sociology" paper, also investigated the issue.³ In 1946 he researched the "social class consciousness" of male secondary school pupils, and explored the meanings boys gave to such variables as occupation, property ownership, speech habits, family sizes and entertainment preferences (Congalton, 1952). Congalton concluded from his analysis that New Zealanders did indeed perceive and express class differences, but his investigation was not uncontroversial. *Truth* attacked the research, declaring that it was "improper" to enquire into such matters. Such research, *Truth* insisted, heralded "a new snooping level in its pernicious probe into the private affairs of the people" (cited Congalton, 1952, p. 13).

3 Jim Robb recalls that Athol Congalton was the only graduate of this paper known to him: Robb to author, email, 25 November 2006.

Other forms of analytical engagement were less contentious. During the 1940s, for instance, the Department of Agriculture employed a number of “rural sociologists”, many of whom were trained in Home Science at Otago University (Carter, 2004, p. 203). Dorothy Johnson, Edith McNab and others wrote numerous columns for the *New Zealand Journal of Agriculture*. These mostly addressed household concerns, among them matters of nutrition and childhood development, interior decoration, sewing tips, and notes on scientific housework and savvy consumer practices (see, for instance, Johnson, 1949; McNab, 1949; Topping, 1949). These topics echoed the domestic sections of *Littledene*, where Somerset explored matters of education, nutrition and household organization (Somerset, 1941; for more on dietetics in particular see Carter, 2004).

Across the country, and in many different cultural sites, the patterns of social life were analyzed. There were various attempts to describe New Zealand’s national “character” and the popular attitudes, demographic and labour patterns that went along with it. An early example was Jim Robb’s (1946) MA thesis titled “The Concept of National Character and Some Tentative Applications of this Concept to New Zealand”. In 1952 the literary magazine *Landfall* published Bill Pearson’s essay “Fretful Sleepers”. This painted an unflattering picture of an authoritarian, anti-intellectual and conformist society. New Zealanders’ “private lives and loves develop best in shared suffering – illness, loss of job, eviction, death of a child”, Pearson wrote. “[S]o far as they have private joys they live them with a faint sense of guilt, of disloyalty to friends and neighbours. The New Zealander more often grins than he smiles. His most common facial expression is a sneer” (Pearson, 1952/2005, p. 72).

Pearson was primarily a literary figure rather than a social scientist, but his observations on the emotional state of New Zealanders reflected Somerset’s to a degree, and also those of Leslie Lipson. Lipson was Victoria University’s professor of political science, and a familiar figure in Wellington’s social science circles (Robb, 1987, p. 2). In his 1948 treatise on equality and the state, Lipson noted that the downside of New Zealand’s economic egalitarianism was a homogeneity and

conformity of attitude and an intolerance of difference (Lipson, 1948, ch.15). Nobody was exploited in the land of milk and honey, he added wryly, “unless it be the housewife and mother” (p. 489). Robert Chapman’s “Fiction and the Social Pattern”, published in 1953, was hardly less maudlin than the earlier efforts; the political scientist Chapman observed that “[t]he New Zealand pattern is of a piece” (Chapman, 1953/1999, p. 25). The visiting American commentator David Ausubel joined in at the end of the decade. His book *The fern and the tiki* criticized the authoritarianism of antipodean adults who, among other things, judged young New Zealanders to be hedonistic and amoral (Ausubel, 1960, pp. 114, 131-6).

If indeed there was such a strand to the New Zealand character, though, it provided opportunities for researchers. An interesting analytical literature engaged with ideas about the conservatism of adults and the hedonism of youth, at a time when consumer culture constituted the teenager and various commentators thought adolescents were the harbingers of post-war change and a new moral laxity (Brickell, 2006; Hall *et al*, pp. 159, 234). Dorothy Crowther’s *Street society in Christchurch*, from 1956, followed hard on the heels of the government’s infamous Mazengarb Report which exposed “juvenile immorality” in the Hutt Valley.⁴ If *Littledene* was New Zealand’s answer to the Lynds’ *Middletown*, then here was our very own *Street corner society* (Whyte, 1955). Crowther’s is a delightful and absorbing study in which nothing much happens. She and her students posed as curious onlookers in inner city Christchurch, watched the goings on, and asked “teddy boys”, “bodgies” and “widgies” about their lives:

One Teddy Boy (that is one youth dressed in Edwardian style clothing) was reported. Between 7.45 and 9.00pm on Friday 20th, accompanied by a youth dressed in check jacket and slacks, he wandered round the central shopping area, covering the same area several times. He twice stopped to talk for a moment to two youths, and once had several minutes conversation with a young, heavily made up girl. Finally he and his friend rode away on

4 On the “Mazengarb Report” of 1954 see Molloy (1993).

bicycles. [...] A group of three youths are lounging outside a Milk Bar. They are dressed fairly quietly, but wearing "soft" shoes and long hair styles. A man and his wife are walking by when one youth flicks a cigarette on to the woman and it falls to the footpath. The man tells his wife to walk on; he stops and says to the boy, "I could twist your nose." The boy looks a bit sick. The man says "you know what I mean?" He lectures the boy on manners, then drags him to his wife several chains down the street and makes him apologise. Other boys from the group follow excitedly .(Crowther, 1956, pp. 5, 7)

A. E. Manning took up the delinquency theme too, in his 1958 book *The bodgie: A study in psychological abnormality*. Both Crowther and Manning evinced a degree of sympathy in their examinations of young people's experiences in a rapidly urbanising society. Manning, for instance, concluded that "[m]ischief has been mischief through all ages, and though the style changes, the impulses remain the same. There is no more immorality today than at the time of [Admiral] Nelson" (Manning, 1958, p. 89).

A School of Social Sciences was established at Victoria University in 1950.⁵ This was primarily a social work department but, as Merv Hancock (1996) remembers, the courses "were full of sociological material" even though they "were not necessarily identified as sociological" (p. 318). It would be some time before the most expressly sociologically-oriented of the papers – "Contemporary Social Problems" – would be amended to include "sociology" in the title (Robb, 1966, p. 4). The school's staff and students produced a rich body of social research. "A Study of the Incidence of Accidents in a Soap Factory" and "Old People in Auckland City: A Survey" continued the older interests in labour and social welfare (Ogilvie, 1954; Marsh, 1952). In line with somewhat more recent preoccupations, however, others researched young people and deviance. Among the titles were "The Young Incurrigible" (Bardwell, 1953) and "Catholics and Delinquency" (O'Neill, 1950). The first was primarily a literature review, while the second

5 Barrowman (1999, ch.10) offers a good overview of the development of the social sciences at Victoria University. See also Robb (1966, p. 4); Robb and Crothers (1985, p. 464).

conducted a statistical analysis of the variables said to contribute to “delinquency”: family size, home conditions and poverty. Ralf Unger’s “Some Aspects of Criminal Homosexuals in New Zealand” used other methods: interviews and the inspection of official files (Unger, 1955).

Two further areas of study developed during the 1950s. The lives of urban and rural Maori were explored in ways that moved beyond the curious bystander approach of the nineteenth century (Metge, 1958; McCreary and Rangihau, 1958; Ritchie, 1956). New Zealand’s smaller towns, too, were the subject of a type of urban study that would remain popular into the 1970s. Researchers placed sawmilling and hydroelectric settlements under the microscope (Allpress, 1952; Campbell, 1957; Smith, 1953; for a brief discussion of these, see Lunt, 2004, pp. 17-18). Congalton and others, meanwhile, explored the social life of the Taranaki town of Hawera (Congalton, 1954). This particular study examined matters of child development, education, civic pride and leisure activities. It included an introductory essay by Somerset which defined sociology for the curious bystander. (The discipline involved the scientific study of the “web or tissue of human relationships”, Somerset (1954) told his readers, and the sociologist was interested in how “people get along with each other in the complex process of living”, (pp. 31-2).)

On the Fringes: The AEWS and the Immigrant Architects

A proportion of the initiatives discussed so far have made it onto the sociological radar. Some of them, *Littledene* especially, have been acknowledged as the forerunners of modern New Zealand sociology. The remainder of my discussion focuses on two sites of social analysis that have not previously been addressed in this context. These are, first, the Army Education Welfare Service, established during the early years of the Second World War, and, second, the written work of two immigrant architects, Ernst Plischke and Frederick Newman. By examining these spaces of social analysis, I demonstrate how sociological preoccupations have turned up in surprising places. Sociology’s history, then, is more diverse than we might think.

The AEWS was established in 1943 as a joint venture between the Education Department and the New Zealand Army. Similar

organizations had already been established in Great Britain, Canada, Australia and South Africa. Clarence Beeby developed the initial proposal for the New Zealand version (*Korero*, 1945, p. 7).⁶ AEWS was first set up among the forces based in New Zealand, and soon a school began operation at the army headquarters in Wellington. In time, the organization spread to the Pacific and to prisoners of war, the Middle East and Italy (Taylor, 1986, p. 1147).

In many ways the AEWS was a distance taught version of the WEA. Service men and women studied vocational courses by correspondence: motor mechanics, carpentry, beekeeping, electrical engineering and needlework were just some examples. Military units received a range of other reading and discussion materials, too, and these encouraged debate on current affairs and contemporary social issues. Some of the AEWS's facilitators were schoolteachers who found themselves serving abroad, and a number of eminent figures made appearances too. Athol Congalton was a Brigade Education Officer, and as such he co-ordinated a phalanx of more junior education personnel and ran his own discussion groups (Anonymous, 1945, p. 8). Horace Belshaw, a key player in the Social Science Research Bureau, and Ian Gordon, Victoria University's English Professor, travelled to New Caledonia to lecture troops during their demobilisation (Anonymous, 1945, p. 15).

Congalton and his colleagues exhorted military personnel to think about the shape and pattern of the social world they would return to after the war, and the lectures and discussion courses covered a whole range of sociologically relevant topics: rehabilitation and the return to civilian life, housing provision, work, the future shape of towns, Maori life and aspirations, international affairs, democracy and social welfare, economic problems in a changing world, and the role of science (Anonymous, 1945, p. 15).⁷ One unit was titled simply "understanding

6 Beeby was a student of James Shelley, a committee member of the Social Science Research Bureau. In 1940 Beeby became Director of Education.

7 See also the various issues of *Korero* magazine for this period.

society". "Current Affairs Bulletins" offered articles and discussion questions on social change, population, and the implications of women's war work for the years ahead. An appreciation for such matters, it was considered, would help military personnel readjust to civilian life and the demands of postwar citizenship. The AEWS's own magazine *Korero* published at least one attempt to define the unique character of New Zealand society. Like the later civilian versions it was not flattering; it suggested New Zealand was a closed, defensive society lacking in cordiality (*Korero*, 1944b). A range of ideological perspectives found expression. "Women and the War" was reasonably neutral in its tone. Its readers were encouraged to consider whether women "should retain the right to compete with men for these jobs" after the war, and to debate the merits of equal pay (NZAEWS, 1943b, p. 2). Readers of the magazine *Cue* were invited to discuss whether New Zealanders should be granted state aid for educational travel, whether "social offenders" should be sterilised, and whether juries in criminal trials might be replaced by "panels of experts" (*Cue*, 1945c, p. 20). Some questions were rather more idiosyncratic. *Cue* asked, for instance, whether there might be a "jitter-bug ban for public dance halls?" (*Cue*, 1944, p. 12).

As these examples demonstrate, moral questions were part and parcel of the discussion. Debate was always encouraged, though, even when the analysis was rather more polemic. A bulletin titled "Our Population Problem" offered some statistical analysis before expressing the view that "there are many reasons for limiting the size of the family which are called social": increasing consumerist possibilities for the childless, fewer religious exhortations to reproduce, and a growing individualism (NZAEWS, 1943a). One *Cue* author went further, expressing the view that contraception had "revolutionised the sex relations of men and women both outside marriage and within it", that the church's "moral influence" had "waned", and that "standards of sexual behaviour have deteriorated disastrously, with the result that marriage has become a more and more unstable institution" (*Cue*, 1945b, pp. 13-14). As we have seen, such comments echoed those passed between staff at the now-defunct Social Science Research Bureau.

The AEWS's adult education mode of social analysis overlapped with the activities of the architectural critics. One of the army discussion pamphlets, for instance, was titled "On Houses" and was written by Ernst Plischke who had studied and worked with the new guard of modernist architects in Vienna.⁸ Plischke's writing focused on housing and community design. These issues had occupied the minds of social scientists since the 1920s. Not only had some of Otago's Preventive Medicine students conducted small-scale surveys of Otago's housing stock, but in 1935 the incoming Labour government undertook its own survey which revealed that twelve percent of New Zealand's houses fell below minimum acceptable standards of occupancy, sanitation and general robustness (Ferguson, 1994, p. 119; Firth, 1949, p. 5). The likes of the Hawera study, with its authors' interest in community planning, would in turn follow Plischke's lead.

Peter Fraser, the Labour Prime Minister, had been ambivalent towards the Social Science Research Bureau and its potentially compromising findings, and on another occasion he blocked W. B. Sutch from publishing his long (and critical) essay on social services in a government booklet series (Sinclair, 1976, pp. 208-9).⁹ Fraser was more willing to sponsor a certain kind of public intellectual and social commentator, however, one whose views were more sympathetic to the government's goals. Architects were perfect in symbolic terms. Sometime recipients of government contracts, they were both implementors of, and salespeople for, government policy on housing and community development (Brickell, 2003). Their projects, especially those that were government funded, shaped family and community life and played a role in the structuring of a new social order. For those reasons, their writings dovetailed with social scientific concerns.

8 Plischke, a modernist with socialist sympathies and a Jewish wife, was an escapee from Nazi occupied Austria. For a discussion of his life and work see Shaw (1997, pp. 141-3) and Tyler (1986); for more on his connections with the Labour government see Brickell (2003).

9 This was eventually published by a commercial publisher – Penguin – as *The quest for security in New Zealand* (Sutch, 1942).

Plischke's lively lectures on architecture and society so impressed Fraser that the Prime Minister directed the Department of Internal Affairs to publish the architect's book *Design and living* (Heenan, 1947). This was a much expanded version of the study course pamphlet Plischke had produced for the AEWS. The revised treatise on the place of modern architecture and town planning in postwar society appeared in two editions, the first for general release, and the second to be used in an AEWS-led scheme to rehabilitate returned servicemen.

Design and living was a wide-ranging text, a manifesto for a well-ordered and socially-connected modern life. Architecture, its author insisted, was a window into the social organization of any society; houses and public buildings influenced and reflected wider patterns of social life and social change. "[T]he way we live and its realisation and expression in works of architecture", Plischke (1947) wrote, 'is an integral part of the social and economic structure of our time' (p. 70). In making these arguments Plischke reflected Somerset's (1938) observation that "it is in the homes rather than the fields" that the "tapestry of life" (p. 19) is woven. Conversely, a nation's architecture would tell visitors about its essential nature. Plischke asked "What sort of opinion of us [New Zealanders] could be formed by looking at our shop windows, our houses, our public buildings?" (p. viii). Quite simply, he thought, social enhancement depended upon sound architectural practice (p. 31).¹⁰ Good town planning, like good architecture, required the meeting of innovative design and high-minded community principles.¹¹

Plischke was as much a practitioner as a theorist. His plans for community centres in Auckland and the Hutt Valley included co-operative shops, shared recreational facilities, and rooms for lectures and adult education classes (Plischke, 1947, p. 84). While the future of communities occupied much of Plischke's attention, *Design and living* also explored the social structures and urban forms that underpinned the development of towns and cities over a period of two thousand

10 Some of Plischke's contemporaries shared this view. See, for example, Firth (1949).

11 Schrader (1996) offers a discussion.

years (Plischke, 1947, pp. 48-90). This was a rather less structured account than the work of Chicago sociologists Robert Park and Ernest Burgess, and it focused more on the continuities of good architecture than on processes of organic change in urban areas (Park, Burgess and McKenzie, 1967/1925). Nevertheless, Plischke did gesture towards this body of sociological scholarship. The AEWS edition of *Design and living* invited students to discuss the architectural and aesthetic aspects of community centre design as well as the social ramifications. Should social and recreational activities be coordinated, Plischke asked, or would careful planning result in regimentation? What sorts of activities should be accommodated? "Should people be free to build and live as they please? To what extent is an inartistic building infringing the rights of one's neighbours?" (p. viii).¹²

Plischke framed his interest in social order in a Durkheimian rhetoric, and he alluded strongly to Durkheim's "homo duplex" without naming the concept. On the one hand, he thought, individual and social fulfillment could truly be attained only through cultural advancement. This was exemplified by community cohesiveness and a true appreciation of rational and ordered architectural beauty (Plischke, 1947, p. 70). On the other hand, people were liable to be carried away by their inherently insatiable desires for mass production and consumption, sham architectural styles (such as art deco) and needless fripperies. From the end of the nineteenth century, Plischke complained, urbanites had been provided with various "cheap and easy means of gratifying their uninformed wants" (p. 34). The homo duplex was exemplified in spaces for living, where the need for material and aesthetic satisfaction, as well as communitarian order, jostled against a longing for excess.

Such classical sociological echoes reappeared among the writings of Frederick Newman, the other Viennese immigrant architect.¹³ Newman dedicated his 1944 essay "A Moral Approach to Social Order"

12 These types of questions were addressed, too, in the AEWS's discussion literature on this topic. For example see Korero (1944a); Cue (1945a).

13 On Newman's background see Leach (2003).

to his close friend Leslie Lipson, the political scientist. Although it had a somewhat Durkheimian title, the piece was undeniably Marxist in tone. Newman (2003) spoke out against the accumulation of capital, and expressed a desire to “eliminate the morally unjustified discrepancies of wealth which loom like a curse on humanity” (p. 30). He argued that the true social value of workers’ activities were rarely acknowledged, and proposed that “consideration of one’s fellow members in a community will be one of the most important issues in the times to come” (pp. 30-31).

In other essays Newman expanded on the relationship between design and social life. Like Plischke, Newman (2003, pp. 111-112) argued that forms of housing both expressed and precipitated social change. An “expanding society”, he thought, required such new solutions as high density living. These, in turn, suggested revised family forms and more socialized types of leisure and recreation. The weekend lawn-mowing ritual would be no more, for “high blocks of flats” would “lead to a more dynamic interpretation of the new society” (p. 116). While pre-1940s housing surveys had mostly addressed the condition of existing dwellings and the lives of their inhabitants, Newman and Plischke laid out the prescriptions for an egalitarian modernist future. The architect had an important role as a socially- and politically-engaged theorist as well as a practitioner.

Newman proposed a two way relationship between architects and their compatriots. On the one hand, designers should learn about social structures from social scientists and philosophers, lest “we struggle to give [society] unsuitable buildings and spaces” (Newman, 2003, p. 150; see also pp.34; 154). Conversely, architects and planners would exert their influence on the lives of others by designing places that reflected and allowed new forms of living. Society would be transformed in the process. After all, Newman wrote, domestic design “is one of the dominant architectural expressions of social achievement” (p. 111). The architect and the sociologist, then, were involved in analysing, and intervening in, some of the same terrain.

Conclusion: These and Other Sociologies

Sociology has a rich history in New Zealand, one that transcends the use of such terms as “sociology” and “sociologist”. In turn, sociological thought has transcended the officially sanctioned locations where sociology’s teaching or research takes place. Our own society has long been theorized, in one way or another, from a diverse range of locations in its intellectual life. Here I have argued that the field of sociological endeavour has been somewhat fluid and multifaceted, but also that such key concerns as the state, population, community, gender, ethnicity, and citizenship have a long history of continuity as well as change. These processes have been strongly informed by an interdisciplinary interweaving of social research, political science, education and social psychology, as well as town planning and architectural criticism.

It is not always easy to trace epistemological or methodological influences with any degree of meticulousness, unfortunately, as most New Zealand social analysts and commentators did not cite their inspirations directly. Many of their books pass through page after page with nary a reference, and we can deduce their intellectual influences only by reading similarities into the texts. Congalton and Newman, for instance, did not cite Marx or Marxist writers, even though they were clearly influenced by them.

It is somewhat easier, though, to trace personnel. If New Zealand was a small society, then social science circles were even smaller. The “other sociologists”, as I have suggested we call them, may not have trained in sociology, but they did help to constitute the field of forces out of which sociology eventually emerged. Education, of one sort or another, features prominently. James Shelley, *Littledene’s* instigator, had a background in community education before he took up a career in a university education department (Carter, 2004, p. 201). W. T. Doig moved in the opposite direction: he resigned from his prominent role at the Social Science Research Bureau in 1940 to take up a position at the Christchurch WEA (Robb, 1987, p. 83). *Littledene* complete, Somerset followed Shelley’s lead into Education at Victoria University, although he was content to call himself a sociologist (Congalton, 1954, pp. 31-32; Robb, 1966, p. 4). Ernest Beaglehole was a psychologist, although an

ardent early supporter of sociology and a mentor to those sitting the “Outlines of Sociology” paper. The interchangeabilities go on. Horace Belshaw was employed as a WEA tutor in 1922, became a key player in the Social Science Research Bureau, moved to Victoria University’s economics department, and appeared on the AEWS stage (Holmes, 2006). Athol Congalton, too, worked for the AEWS before embarking on a sociologically informed research and teaching career.

We ought not to underestimate the international influences. The Carnegie Foundation supported a number of initiatives, while immigrants – and returning graduate students – brought in new ideas. The Department of Agriculture employed E. G. Jacoby, a demographer who had trained under Ferdinand Tonnies and who wrote about rural sociology (Carter, 2004, p. 204; Jacoby, 1947), and Lipson, Ausubel, Plischke and Newman had their own contributions to make. Some New Zealand-based scholars, among them Horace Belshaw and Jim Robb, enrolled in PhDs overseas and returned afterwards.

Areas of interest overlapped, as did personnel. Questions of youth and of “delinquency” occupied the minds and the research time of psychologists, educationalists and others; nutrition interested home scientists and the rural sociologists; while the WEA, Somerset, Plischke and Newman all had something to say about taste, culture and refinement.¹⁴ Other topics, notably political economy, community, labour and housing standards, had been surveyed and debated since the nineteenth century. Occasionally – as the title and content of James Pope’s *The state: The rudiments of New Zealand sociology* from 1887 illustrates – the term “sociology” even appeared in the discussions.

In recent years sociologists have reflected on the perceived conflicts between “academic purity” on the one hand, and political engagements on the other (e.g. Wood, 2003). There is nothing especially new in this dilemma. The state has long been a sometime enabler and disabler, and a frequent target, of social analysis. During the 1930s and ‘40s the actions of the Labour government made this abundantly clear.

14 For further information on the W. E. A. and Somerset on taste refer to Shuker (1984, p. 76) and Somerset (1938, p. 24).

Ministers established the Social Science Research Bureau in 1937 but they lost interest over time, and Sutch's critical polemic suffered in the hands of Peter Fraser. In contrast, Ernst Plischke and the AEWS writers offered forms of intellectualising about social order and the restraint of materialistic appetites, and these fitted the government's agenda perfectly. To an image-conscious centre-left government striving to sell its vision to an increasingly sceptical public, these "other sociologists" proved rather more reassuring.¹⁵ They looked not at the gritty realities of contemporary social life, but toward a future of benign, state-led social reform.

From 1957 New Zealand's universities began to teach courses in sociology, and with the exception of Otago the majors were in place by 1971.¹⁶ The university sociologists, though, did not invent the New Zealand side of their discipline anew. Instead, it had a fascinating, multifaceted and complex history. A not inconsiderable amount of sociological water had passed under the bridge by the time the first student came to enrol in a sociology degree.

Acknowledgements

The research for this article was funded by a University of Otago Research Grant. An early draft was presented at the SAANZ annual conference, Hamilton, 2006. I would like to thank those in the audience for their feedback, and also Jim Robb for the helpful leads he provided as the research progressed.

15 Brickell (2006) and Schrader (1996) explore these questions of government policy and public scepticism.

16 Undergraduate sociology courses were introduced as follows: Victoria University (1957); Canterbury (1958), Waikato (1966), Auckland (1970), Massey (1971) (Robb and Crothers, 1985, p. 465). Otago did not introduce sociology classes until 2002.

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