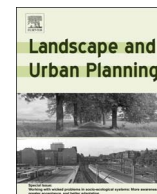




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Research paper

An integral lens on Patrick Geddes

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ABSTRACT

Patrick Geddes is a significant figure in the landscape and urban planning canon. In addition to situating cities within a regional context and advancing a socioecological understanding of urbanization, he viewed cities as the principal artifact of, and theater wherein, human culture evolves. This expansive view of cities may be one of the more challenging aspects of Geddes' legacy to assimilate. Working during a late 19th and early 20th century period when the limitations of modernity were becoming increasingly apparent, much of Geddes' aspirational thinking can be seen as an effort to create what he described as a "larger modernism." In this regard, Geddes can be counted amongst those whom we portray as integrative holistic thinkers, people whose worldview draws them toward meaning-making narratives and frameworks that include the many dimensions of the human condition. Today, a new generation of holistic approaches called "metatheories" – and "integral theory" in particular – provides an orienting lens through which to review, assess, and potentially extend the work of Geddes in the 21st century. Towards that goal, this article first provides an introductory primer to some of Geddes' noteworthy "thinking machines" as well as integral theory. We then assess correspondence between the two, focusing on Interdisciplinary Holism; Evolution, Development and Complex Systems; Human Agency and Ethics; and Spirituality. A closing discussion addresses prospects for future research, and suggests that the holistic, evolutionary, and generative orientation of our principal subjects may have particular relevance in an anthropogenic biosphere characterized, in part, by significant environmental challenges and the concentration of humans in cities.

1. Introduction

"...does it not seem that the city, in its being and becoming, is, as it were, the very incarnation of the evolutionary process?" (Branford & Geddes, 1917, p. 155)

Sir Patrick Geddes (1854–1932) occupies a rarified position in the landscape and urban planning canon. Living amidst a pivotal historical period that witnessed an unprecedented concentration of human beings in industrializing cities, Geddes emerged as one of the late 19th and early 20th century's noteworthy urban thinkers. As a founding father of the modern town planning movement, Geddes recognized the city and region as a cohesive whole (Ward Thompson, 2006). Yet, the Scottish polymath contributed more than a geospatial conception of urban settlements. He is also credited with pioneering a sociological approach to the study of urbanization and the environment (Branford, 1930; Meller, 2005; Scott & Bromley, 2013; Studholme, 2007); and for Geddes, cities represented nothing less than "the form that human life in its highest evolutionary development (which he took to be communal and cooperative) could and should take" (Welter, 2002, p. 3).

This grand view of cities is particularly relevant today, as 75–80 percent of the human population is projected to live in urban areas by 2100 (Angel, 2012), leading some to describe this early phase of the new millennium as "the first urban century" (Hall & Pfeiffer, 2000) and a dawning "age of cities" (Young, 2017). Yet, Geddes' expansive view of urbanism may be one of the more complex aspects of his legacy to assimilate (Rubin, 2009b), and there are several potential reasons for this. He wrote in an idiosyncratic style that could be difficult to penetrate. He routinely referenced such ineffable topics as spirituality and mysticism. Trained as a biologist, he was attracted to interdisciplinary work that defied easy categorization. This synthetic streak found expression through graphic "thinking machines" – abstract diagrams where Geddes explored theories on cities and civilization and the interrelatedness of human knowledge. He also held a sociological and quasi-developmental view of evolution that was at odds with the bio-mechanistic perspective that was dominant through much of the 20th century (e.g. Batty & Marshall, 2009).

Importantly, Geddes lived and worked during a period when the limitations and hazards of modernity were becoming increasingly

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apparent. During his lifetime and in the ensuing decades, intellectuals have directed critiques at the more troubling characteristics of the modernist worldview, including disciplinary fragmentation, extractive industrialism, environmental degradation, Western hegemony, and a disenchantment of the world predicated on scientific materialism (Bhaskar, 1986; Klein, 2005; Latour, 1993; Whitehead, 1925). Some took a path toward Romanticism and rejection of the rationalist agenda. Others, including Geddes, envisioned more integrative approaches that attempted to maintain the dignities and strengths of modernity – which bequeathed an unprecedented expansion of human health and prosperity (Rosling, 2010) – while transcending its limitations. But he also emphasized the need for “a larger modernism,” predicated on a belief that the materialist and scientific principles upon which the order of modern societies increasingly rested would only fully benefit humanity if they were complemented by “metaphysical” dimensions including ethics, aesthetics, and spirituality (Welter, 2002, p. 23).

This perspective essay suggests that Geddes can be counted amongst those whom we might describe as *integrative holistic thinkers* – people whose worldview draws them toward meaning-making narratives and frameworks that unite the many dimensions of the human condition. More specifically, we point to a new generation of holistic frameworks called “metatheories” – and “integral theory” or “integral metatheory” in particular – as an orienting lens through which to review and assess the work of Geddes.

Metatheories are widely interdisciplinary and have been applied across almost every discipline and sub-discipline (Bhaskar, Esbjörn-Hargens, Hedlund, & Hartwig, 2016). Integral theory, for example, has been applied to over 35 fields including but not limited to art, healthcare, organizational management, ecology, congregational ministry, education, economics, psychotherapy, law, and feminism (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2009). Closer to Geddes and urban planning, integral theory has also been applied to architecture and sustainable design (Buchanan, 2012a; DeKay, 2011; Fleming, 2013, 2015; Roberts, 2013), municipal management (Hamilton, 2008), and sustainable development (Brown, 2005, 2006, 2007). Some have even described integral philosophy as a “Second Enlightenment, wherein we can anticipate an opening up of the internal universe of consciousness and culture to a period of exploration and discovery” similar to that which occurred for the external universe during the Western Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (McIntosh, 2007, p. 23). But to the best of our knowledge, an integral lens has not been employed to review the work of an important historical figure in landscape and urban planning. This may, in turn, shed new light that updates and reframes Geddes’ work for the 21st century.

Towards that goal, this paper is structured in five parts. Following this introduction, Section two introduces some of Geddes’ noteworthy thinking machines. Section three provides an overview of integral theory and contextualizes this framework as a prominent expression of metatheoretical scholarship. Section four provides an assessment – structured around four themes – of correspondence between integral theory and noteworthy expressions of Geddes’ illustrated and written work. Section five offers a concluding discussion and prospects for landscape and urban planning research and practice.

2. Geddes’ “thinking machines”

Geddes had a lifelong passion for interdisciplinary meaning-making. This was exemplified during a botanical expedition to Mexico City in 1879, when the 25-year-old Geddes lost his eyesight due to an unidentified illness and he was sentenced for an indefinite term to a darkened room with bandages over his eyes. But this crisis of threatened blindness and enforced meditation yielded an insight. One day while feeling the objects in the room around him with his hands, he encountered the window and ran his fingers along the raised panes between the smooth glass rectangles. This tactile relationship between each equal area – a connection that could be made horizontally, vertically, or diagonally – made Geddes think of the connections that exist

			SOCIOLOGY
		BIOLOGY	ANTHROPOLOGY
	PHYSICS & CHEMISTRY	BIOCHEMISTRY	ECOLOGY
MATHEMATICS & LOGIC	MATHEMATICS (applied to physics)	BIOMETRICS	STATISTICS

Fig. 1. Geddes’ classification of science and an early example of “thinking machine.” Based upon Boardman (1978) and Mairet (1957).



Fig. 2. Arbor Saeculorum, from Geddes, Patrick (1895) 'Arbor Saeculorum' The Evergreen: A Northern Seasonal (Edinburgh, Patrick Geddes and colleagues), [p.143]. Courtesy of University of Strathclyde Library, Department of Archives and Special Collections. Reference code GB 249 T-GED 24/357.

between different but equally important fields of human knowledge (Boardman, 1978; Kitchen, 1975).

He was soon folding pieces of paper into rectangles and mentally allotting subjects to each box. One of the first depicted the diagonal ascendancy of four hierarchies of the sciences provided by French sociologist Auguste Comte (1798–1857): Mathematics and Logic, Physics and Chemistry, Biology, and Sociology (see Fig. 1). The squares to the right of this diagonal hierarchy show how disciplines relate to each other and Comte’s principal four, while the empty squares to the left were to be filled with the “philosophical and metaphysical sciences (those of knowing as distinct from what is known)” (Mairet, 1957, p. 33).

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