




RESEARCH ARTICLE

Poor Relief as ‘Improvement’: Moral and Spatial Economies of Care in Scotland, c.1720s–1790s

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Abstract

This article takes as a point of departure the paucity of scholarship on Scottish poor relief, which has been predominantly depicted as an inferior and underdeveloped version of its southern counterpart. We adopt a case study approach looking at two examples of Lowland and Highland urban infrastructures of poor relief to illustrate the application of the ideology of ‘improvement’ philosophy onto the treatment of the poor between c.1720 and 1790. Situating the study within the context of Scottish ‘improvement’, we explore the ways theoretical and practical approaches towards the poor were shaped by the combination of commercial and evangelical attitudes to human capital investment and long-term reform, echoing similar developments across Europe. At the close of the eighteenth century, the Scottish system transitioned from a community based, localised system of reciprocal hierarchy operated by the parish and kirk structures to a system increasingly rooted in legalism and the concept of rights based social provision.

In this article we take as a point of departure the paucity of scholarship on Scottish Poor relief, which has been predominantly depicted as an inferior and underdeveloped version of its southern counterpart. We adopt a case study approach looking at two examples of Lowland and Highland urban infrastructures of poor relief to illustrate the application of improvement philosophy onto the treatment of the poor. Rosalind Mitchison’s work on the Old Poor Law has served as the last word on the subject for the past two decades, though recent scholarship by cultural and intellectual historians has demonstrated the great potential to reignite the poor law debates.¹ In joining these emerging discussions, our focus is not on Scottish exceptionalism, or Anglo-Scottish comparisons, but rather we aim to contextualise the present study in recent scholarship on welfare regimes and provisions for the poor across Europe. The first case study explores the Edinburgh Orphan Hospital and the writing of its founder Andrew Gairdner in order to shed light

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on the imagining of child maintenance and instruction as part of the post-Union national project. The second case study focuses on a spinning school for poor women and girls set up in Inverness by the Board of Annexed Estates to simultaneously develop the Scottish linen industry and solve the so-called Highland 'problem' by transforming its poor into 'civilised' and productive members of society. We seek to move away from studies of poor relief focused on networks of the kirk and the parish, or that of landed patronage, instead exploring the newly emerging institutional structures.² We examine the ways the Scottish ideology of 'improvement' shaped much of the discourse and practice of poor relief in the period between the 1720s and 1790s, through debates on land and labour deployment, moral transformation and religious virtue.

The periodisation of this paper reflects the socio-economic and cultural effects of the Union of 1707, alongside the establishment of a number of learned societies and the many reformist projects launched by Scottish 'improvers'. Our research concludes prior to what we identify as a paradigm shift in terms of approaches to welfare caused by the late eighteenth-century onset of legalism and increasing challenges to populationism, which previously linked economic prosperity with population increase and thus focused on strategies promoting demographic growth and population retention. Whilst acknowledging the heterogeneity of 'improvement' discourse, we explore its common strands in attitudes to welfare, poor relief and human capital investment as they coexisted in this period. Whilst we commence our study in the period of the aftermath of the Union, we recognise that the roots of the discourse of labour and land deployment in mid-seventeenth-century thought centred on property and labour theories of Locke and his contemporaries.³ Likewise, the formulation of practice-oriented economic theory cannot be disassociated from the severe crisis of the 1690s and the resulting economic thought.⁴ Our case study approach thus zooms in on the practical manifestations in the Scottish post-Union context of a more continuous phenomenon not confined to the Scottish intellectual and physical space, but notable across the shared European culture of the Enlightenment.

The concept of 'improvement' brought together an array of discourses and practices, which sought to transform the entirety of the Scottish landscape, in spatial, cultural, social and economic terms. 'Improvement' here refers to eighteenth-century attitudes to national economic growth and development as well as socio-cultural reform. As others have argued, 'improvement' better captures the distinctiveness of what has been termed the 'Scottish Enlightenment' and its top-down, hands-on and active implementation through spatial and institutional developments both in the rural and urban contexts.⁵ The provision for the poor combined efforts to spur economic growth with alternative ways of relief to traditional welfarism. The Scottish climate of 'improvement' became manifest in the provision of poor relief. Its focus was long-term reform, of the individual, as well as the nation, through human capital investment. Its anti-welfarist approach relied on providing the poor with 'tools' to better themselves whilst stressing their collective potential of fuelling the nation's economic growth. The rhetoric of progress was blended with narratives of Christian charity and social responsibility. The Scottish system was a mixed economy of welfare, combining localised community and familial networks and parish oversight and support with customary practices of patronage

and overlordship.⁶ Rather than replacing traditional structures of familial, community, parish and/or kirk support networks, the increased institutionalisation and centralisation of care provision and maintenance of the poor was modelled upon, and integrated into the structures already in place.⁷ Interestingly, therefore, the eighteenth century was not the first instance of direct and ideologically driven involvement of authorities with welfare provision, but rather saw the development of a regime that incorporated traditional parochial and kirk-based forms of provision and management of the poor with entrepreneurship and growth-oriented human capital investment.

Human capital investment based approaches to poor relief were by no means confined to the Scottish landscape, as shown by John Marshall's work on the political economy shaped by the 1690s' crisis and Donna Andrew's study of eighteenth-century London philanthropy.⁸ Paul Slack has described 'improvement' as a seventeenth-century English phenomenon based on the common drive for public welfare, yet he overlooks its Scottish counterpart.⁹ In mainland Europe, Otto Ulbricht's research on German founding hospitals and their role in populationism and social reformism offers a useful comparison.¹⁰ Equally, the work of Louis Greenbaum on the hospital system of the French Ancien Régime demonstrates the rooting of emerging care infrastructures in the 'humanitarian-utilitarian ideals of the eighteenth century', highlighting the populationist, socio-scientific and religious strands of philanthropy.¹¹ Greenbaum suggested philanthropy arose from the simultaneous development of the centralising state and civil society of the 'improving' elites.¹² Similar arguments linking 'improvement', Enlightenment thought, and charity have been made in relation to Ireland yet parallels with Scotland have been impeded by immediate comparisons with its southern neighbour.¹³ In the Scottish context, ties between welfare strategies, Christian charity and the ideal of commercial society remain underexplored.¹⁴ Historians have long debated the impact of 'improvement' thought and practice on the Scottish Highland landscape and its inhabitants, but discussion on the relationship between commercialism and poor relief, such as Annie Tindley's on Sutherland, has focused on the period after the Poor Law Reform of 1845.¹⁵ An exception is Karly Kehoe's study of the establishment of the Highlands' first hospital, the Northern Infirmary at Inverness, which highlighted the ways imperial expansion abroad further enabled Highlanders to participate in charitable enterprise at home.¹⁶ This piece thus speaks to historiographies of both national and European cultures of care, highlighting the Scottish form of a broader European phenomenon.

The main ambition of this paper is to introduce a new approach that understands Scottish poor relief as constituted by the spatial and moral context within which it was set, here demonstrated through two localised case studies. We propose a broader reading of these examples as manifestations of a national system of a mixed moral economy of care as practised in the period between the 1720s and 1790s. Drawing on the Lowland-Highland comparison allows for a greater focus on their commonalities in terms of approaches motivated by contemporary political economy, moral philosophy and Presbyterian ethics, which placed an emphasis on good works rather than doctrinal adherence as the basis of the Christian faith.¹⁷ 'Improvement' was a process which helped realise the nation 'yet to be' from the nation as it was, and cities and burghs in the Lowlands as well as the Highlands

were part of this nation-wide desire to generate rapid and radical change. In the Highlands, ‘improvement’ discourse generally reflected negative perceptions of the region and was associated with calls for forcefully ‘civilising’ its inhabitants. Yet in Inverness reforming the poor was to help the burgh assert its position as the regional capital of the Highlands and involved Highlanders themselves, sometimes cutting across social divides.¹⁸ Edinburgh was the locus of nation-wide debates, maintaining its cultural centrality in the post-Union period. At the same time, the very origins of the New Town as well as the myriad voluntary institutions, friendly societies and learned guilds all stemmed from the emphasis on renewal, transformation and its spatial imagining.¹⁹ The combined national-local study, we argue, thus enables us to gain a better understanding of Scottish ‘improvement’ in the specific context of proto-welfare provision and socio-spatial engineering. Before turning to the manifestations of the ‘improvement’ discourse explored through these case studies, we first outline its theoretical underpinning.

1. Combined Virtue of Religion, Reason and Commerce

Whilst practices of relief found distinct local and regional expressions, we argue that the combination of moral, spatial and economic ‘improvement’ was the common denominator between Scottish landscapes of relief. The choice of the national scale is thus a deliberate one. Thinking geographically about both ‘improvement’ and relief allows us to focus on the specific context within which relief operated in Scotland, as well as the ways in which care for the poor was shaped by the practice-oriented eighteenth-century ‘improvement’ discourse. ‘Improvement’ encompassed the peculiarly Scottish anxieties as to the nation’s own relative ‘primitiveness’ in relation to their more ‘advanced’ southern neighbour with the aim to take up a more prominent place in the Empire.²⁰ Additionally, it captured the Scottish response to the intellectual exchange of the European context, within which Scottish thought was being shaped. To date, studies of ‘improvement’ have mostly focused on agrarian development, and thus missed the multiple expressions of ‘improvement’ discourse and practice and the ways it permeated Scottish thought as well as cultural and socio-economic initiatives in this period.²¹

Institutions discussed here such as the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) (1709), the Board of Trustees for Fisheries, Manufactures and Improvements in Scotland (1727) or the Board of Annexed Estates (1752–1784), were particular embodiments of a Scottish brand of ‘civic cameralism’.²² Despite the loss of parliament and political sovereignty in many aspects as a result of the Treaty of Union of 1707, Scottish ‘improvement’ found administrative and public outlets, especially in the form of voluntary societies established to promote economic development.²³ MPs, literati, lawyers and country gentlemen assumed a position of civic leadership in post-1707 Scotland, and their interest in local policy was arguably strengthened by the thinned avenues for shaping the national political arena.²⁴ While based in Edinburgh, these institutions adopted a distinctive national outlook, allying public and private interest through funding local relief schemes with the patriotic aim of ‘improving’ the nation. Both the Board of Trustees and Annexed Estates were funded by the Treasury, while the SSPCK relied on donations from the elite, however, all were

run by the Scottish landed elite and mercantilist classes and focused on social engineering schemes which aimed to rapidly increase the country's economic standing. The SSPCK was a charitable institution with the primary aim to set up schools throughout the Highlands and Islands to promote English literacy and Presbyterian unification, all the while promoting the 'civilising mission' through the commercialisation of the Highlands.²⁵ Many of its members came from the Edinburgh elite and resided in the capital, leading the society to also fund charitable institutions in the city, such as Edinburgh's Orphan Hospital. After the 1745 Jacobite rising, the Highlands were seen both as a space for economic opportunism and untapped potential and a problem to be solved, its poor and barbarous inhabitants to be 'civilised' through a series of schemes. The Board of Annexed Estates was set up in 1752, when thirteen landed estates, all situated in the Highlands and belonging to Jacobites, were forcefully annexed by the British state.²⁶ Taking over from the SSPCK due to the society's lack of funding, the Board continued to support charity schools and encouraged the creation of spinning schools as a way to further practical learning for women and girls. The Board was run by Commissioners, many of whom belonged to the Board of Trustees, and attempted to radically transform the estates' socio-economic as well as cultural landscapes from their office in Edinburgh.

The drive for a 'commercial society' was not without its ambiguities and Scottish 'improvers' worried about the moral and social costs of economic progress, leaving behind a myriad of discourses on social cohesion and order, moral philosophy and ethics as well as spatial engineering. The Union of 1707 witnessed the emergence of a Scottish brand of civic leadership, which saw politicians, literati, lawyers, merchants, and landowners combine public and private interest for the development of the nation.²⁷ These men came together in 'improving' societies, forming a series of inter-connected networks, which shaped much of the public debate on the poor.²⁸ While agrarian 'improvement', urban planning and legal reform formed particular concerns, these societies equally worried about the social and moral cost of progress and social dislocation. In 1755, the Select Society, an elite debating club based in Edinburgh, discussed 'Whether the Common practice in Scotland of distributing money to the poor in their own houses, or the receiving the poor into Workhouses and hospitals be most advantageous?' whilst also pondering the very idea of compatibility between morality and commerce.²⁹ The SSPCK were of the opinion that it was the combined virtues of religion and reason that would ensure both economic and moral reform in an approach that wedded patriotic and Christian zeal with the notion of progress and social order. Crucially, the two societies featured amongst many associations whose learned discussions had very practical application, owing to the positions of power held individually and collectively by their members. It is this intertwining of reformist discourse and practice that shaped social and economic reform of the eighteenth century, characteristic of the close-knit networks of political, socio-economic cultural and religious power.

The distinctiveness of the Scottish case, we argue, lies not in the application of labour theory onto the management of the poor, but instead in the specific incorporation of practical 'improvements' and a Scottish brand of Presbyterianism that placed a greater emphasis on religious virtue as practiced through good works as opposed to doctrinal rigour. As highlighted by Thomas Ahnert, Scottish

Presbyterianism was steeped in an emphasis on practical religion, ethics and materiality, aimed at creating a godly community, as opposed to an individualised practice of faith and reflection.³⁰ Such was the belief of Andrew Gairdner, the founder of the Orphan Hospital in Edinburgh, suggesting that ‘negative Holiness will not bring any Man to Heaven, it will not be enough to be able to say, I did not such and such evil thing, if we do no Good with the Talents we have been intrusted with’.³¹ Christian reformers thus not only aimed to relieve the poor, but instead improve the state of the polity, motivated by the love of God and thy neighbour alike. As recently shown by Katie Barclay, the ethics of charity that proved the foundation of eighteenth-century emotional welfare networks stemmed directly from the devotion to God and the godly community that was so critical in the workings of the Scottish Kirk.³² Barclay’s *Caritas* is defined as an emotional regime and a principle guiding relations of loving reciprocity, discipline as well as social control.³³ Whilst taking a slightly less optimistic view of the eighteenth century Scottish polity than implied by Barclay’s emphasis on the *mentalité* of kindness and neighbourly love, we concede to the centrality of Christian ethics to the imaginings of charity, relief and reform practiced both horizontally and vertically. Stemming from the Presbyterian emphasis on reform was also the idea of a commercial society, despite its secularising tendencies with thinkers such as Adam Smith. Rooted in principles of sympathy as well as self-interest, the ideal of the commercial society promoted social cohesion through direct and reciprocal relations across strata. Both religious and civil perceptions of society were thus linked through a principle of mutual obligation, ordered by God or the market’s invisible hand. It is this complex imagining of society in the midst of economic and demographic change that our case studies of poor management aim to speak to.

Despite the great variedness of the ‘improvement’ discourse on questions of interventionism, divine origins of social order or the utility of poverty and necessity, Scottish literati were united in their distrust of compulsory assessment-based poor law systems, considered an impediment to progress, liberty and the virtue of charity. Henry Home, Lord Kames, an Enlightenment thinker and a member of both Boards of Trustees and Annexed Estates, and others wrote extensively on the topic. While England introduced rights-based compulsory assessments in the immediate aftermath of the Reformation following the total disruption of Catholic care infrastructure, Scotland’s system remained less formalised and more entrenched in localised networks of patronage and gratitude, both seen as strong social bonds. As Barclay suggests, compulsory taxation also prevented the spiritual gain afforded to voluntary benefactors, highlighting the overlapping ethics of Christian virtue and civic justice.³⁴ Kames criticised the English system for preventing population growth which was seen as a driver of economic growth, fostering idleness and being ‘oppressive’ as well as ‘grossly unjust’.³⁵ In his *Sketch* dedicated to the topic, Kames directly contrasted two opposed geographies, that of the poorhouse, and that of the home. The poorhouse,

tends to corrupt the body no less than the mind. It is a nursery of diseases, fostered by dirtiness and crouding (...) To this scene let us oppose the condition of those who are supported in their own houses. They are laid under the necessity of working with as much assiduity as ever; and as the sum given

them in charity is at their own disposal, they are careful to lay it out in the most frugal manner. If by parsimony they can save any small part, it is their own; and the hope of encreasing this little stock, supports their spirits and redoubles their industry. They live innocently and comfortably, because they live industriously; and industry, as every one knows, is the chief pleasure of life to those who have acquired the habit of being constantly employ'd.³⁶

Whilst broadly opposed to settlement laws and limitations on mobility, and inclined to associate a self-regulatory function to the labour market and wages, Scottish 'improvement' thought on poor relief was more interventionist than it may appear. Lord Kames, amongst others, subscribed to the notion of the utility of poverty and necessity amongst the labouring classes as a motivation for progress and hard work.³⁷ While the commercial age in stadia theory was thought to naturally raise the poor out of their misfortune, 'improvement' thinking for many was equally driven by utilitarian poverty politics and saw relief schemes as an opportunity for economic growth. Crucially, this demanded intervention. Even for more liberal thinkers such as Adam Smith, social security, understood as assistance to the poor, was always a condition of commercial development and Smith entertained the idea of dividing up large landed estates into small farms, a scheme which would influence Scottish landowner the Duke of Buccleugh on his estate.³⁸ Ultimately, however, Smith, unlike Kames, believed in the motivation by plenty and the natural inclination of humankind to better themselves, representing an even stronger opposition to the assessment-based welfarism of the English Poor Laws. Finally, more religiously inclined thinkers such as Andrew Gairdner, who will be introduced in due course, believed in the place of poverty in the divine plan, as an incentive to charity and humanity, rooted precisely in its voluntarism as opposed to legalism.

Population retention was also a key driver behind land and labour initiatives envisioned and enacted by Scottish elites, notably so in the Highlands. Contemporary population discourses were complex and at times contradictory. Despite, or perhaps owing to its complexity, Scotland's demography remains a crucial factor to be considered to understand the persistence of populationism in local approaches to labour discipline, poor relief and social engineering and its distinct manifestation in Scotland in the eighteenth century.³⁹ Up to the 1790s, 'improvers' were keen to encourage population increase in order to generate economic growth, believed to be directly driven by the size of the population. However, though concerned with demographic growth, contemporaries tended to rely on demographic experiences as opposed to quantitative evidence of demographic realities. The natural, cultural and social landscapes of Scotland are characterised by the high degree of regional and temporal differences, which is also true of the country's demographic developments, though these were not always taken into account by contemporaries as well as historians.⁴⁰

The graph below (see [Figure 1](#)) shows nine counties to represent the demographic trends in the Scottish Highlands (low growth), border area (stagnation/population decrease) and the central area of Scotland (rapid growth) in order to illustrate the varied effects of population change across Scotland. Levels of population growth were particularly different in the two areas studied here, and yet both

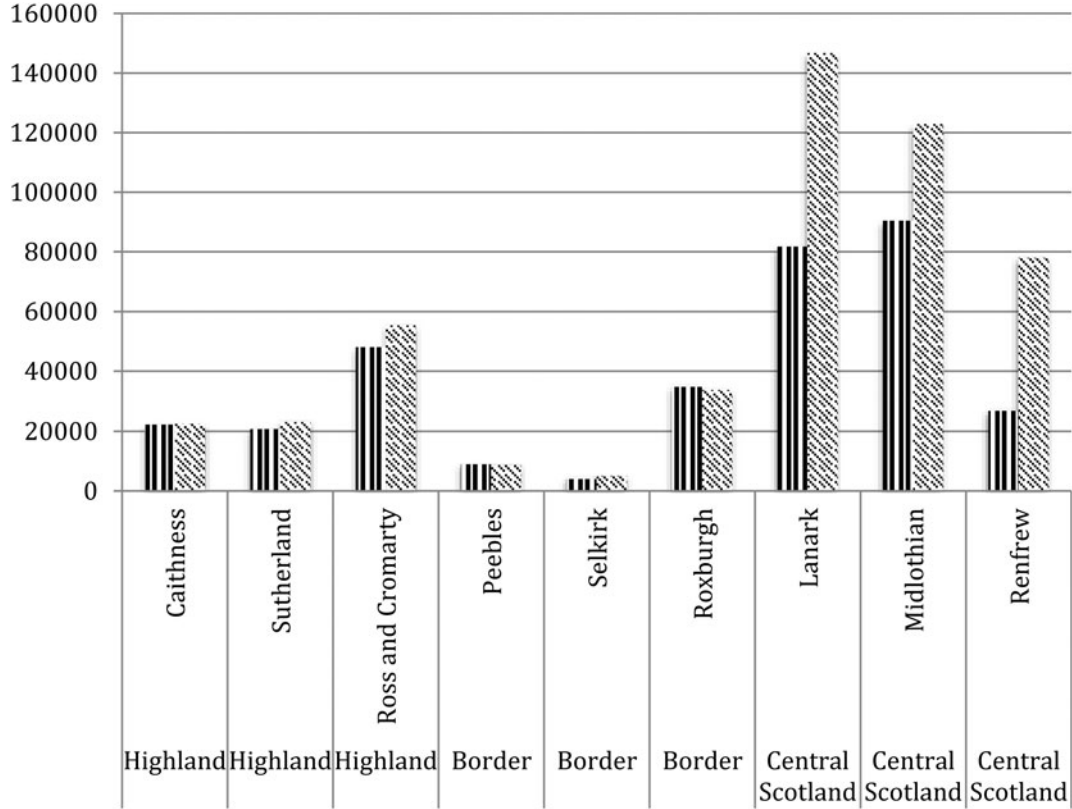


Figure 1. Population change between 1755 and 1801 in nine sample counties based on the 1755 and 1801 censuses.
 Source: James Gray, ed., *Scottish Population Statistics* (Edinburgh, 1952); Parliamentary Papers, 1801, VI, Enumeration.

Andrew Gairdner and the Board of Annexed Estates saw in their relief scheme an opportunity to preserve population at the local level in order to generate national prosperity. The population of the burgh of Edinburgh and its adjacent parishes grew by nearly 140 per cent from 35,500 in the 1680s to nearly 85,000 in the 1790s.⁴¹ Rural areas on the other hand saw a stagnation or depopulation caused by a variety of factors. In the Highlands, population rose in the order of 54 per cent between 1755 and 1831 exclusive of emigration, though this growth can appear misleading as it varied greatly between different parishes and regions, resulting in demographic and economic disparity within an already vast and heterogeneous region.⁴² In the Western Isles, population rose as high as 75 per cent, while on the mainland some parishes experienced a net loss of population due to high levels of emigration.⁴³ Despite some early concerns about the limits of growth, Scottish literati mostly believed in the need to keep increasing population, particularly as a way of fuelling agricultural production.⁴⁴ In the words of Lord Kames, a nation 'cannot easily become too populous for husbandry'.⁴⁵

These attitudes towards demography were to radically change after the 1790s, generating different attitudes towards relief. Whilst population theory in its explicit formulations by Malthus emerged after our period of analysis, Smithian theory implied an analysis of population and economic growth in conjunction, pre-empting Malthusian scepticism about the benefits of economic growth to the labouring classes as a whole. Read qualitatively, Smith's perceptions of population regulations by 'natural' forces shows evidence of the many 'checks' on population growth such as fluctuating mortality, fertility and life expectancy related primarily to harvest and weather cycles he observed in his time. From the 1820s onwards, 'improvement' discourse provided landowners with a justification for population removal in the Scottish Highlands in order to prioritise commercial farming that promised profit entirely divorced from the human population. While historians have long debated the supposed 'inevitability' of the Highland Clearances, the heterogeneity of population rise in the region as a whole points to 'the subjective nature of managerial decisions to remove and relocate'.⁴⁶

In spite of the lack of consensus on utility, poverty and equality, Scottish literati of the period before the 1790s agreed on the centrality of populationism, economic progress and a vague notion of common good that tied the collective and the individual together, and was reached through voluntary forms of social provision as opposed to reliance on legal checks. The poor were generally valued as human capital and a labour force that would fuel Scotland's economic growth as well as the national 'improvement' project, highlighting the long-term dimension of approaches to relief. The case studies that follow drill down on the establishments envisioned to function as transient spaces of reform, the purpose of which was both relieving the poor and building a national labour capital through practical instruction and Christian virtue, providing the poor with the tools to better themselves, fuelling the economy, and building a unified and homogenous commercial society.

2. The Orphan Hospital of Edinburgh

The first case study focuses on the Edinburgh Orphan Hospital, later known as the Dean's Orphanage, an Edinburgh institution founded in 1733 by Andrew Gairdner,

an Edinburgh merchant and treasurer of the Trinity Hospital, with significant support from the public and the SSPCK. It draws primarily on the writings of Gairdner who became the hospital's treasurer, and his successor in this post, Thomas Tod, to outline the Scottish manifestations of broader notions of reforming and transforming the poor, here studied in the context of the urban Lowlands.

The story of Andrew Gairdner was one of upward social mobility through the textile trade symptomatic of many Scottish merchant elites. Son of an Edinburgh tailor, Gairdner gained considerable property and status through his entrepreneurial ventures, which in turn enabled him to dedicate his efforts to charitable pursuits.⁴⁷ A prominent member of the SSPCK, Society of Improvers and a prolific writer, he was also an active social reformer, albeit lesser known than his more affluent counterparts such as Lord Kames.⁴⁸ His characteristic anti-welfarism resonated with the intellectual milieu he inhabited. His motivations appeared manifold. First, he was dedicated to 'giving back' in order to repay the divine favours bestowed upon him, and his notion of charity and success remained rooted in the Presbyterian emphasis on practical religion and 'good works'.⁴⁹ Second, he was a firm believer in the potential of the textile industry to bring Scotland on an equal footing with England as well as further national economic growth through building an export economy. Third, like most of his eighteenth-century contemporaries, he saw the greatest asset in population, when 'virtuously educated, and industriously employed' as an instrument of his economic and patriotic goals.⁵⁰ Through the combination of these factors, he established a practical outlet to give way to his ideas in the form of the Orphan Hospital. The Hospital 'would be of great advantage to the Country', he proposed, 'because the Orphans might be employed in spinning, and other useful Parts of the Linen and Woollen Manufactures, that 4d. rightly employed towards their Support, if under good management, would go a greater Length than 16d. employed in Charity'.⁵¹

Highlighting the absence of institutional provision in Scotland in the aftermath of the Reformation, Gairdner recognised the growing inadequacy of welfare provision in the urban space, which required a reconsideration of traditional familialism and parochial provision of poor relief. His writing revealed a clear trajectory linking economic growth to questions around population growth and management, connected to a broader project of human capital formation. His project was directly modelled upon an orphan house in Saxony, demonstrating the rootedness of the Scottish institution in the broader European context. Similarly, Gairdner's writing and translation work reflected his European connections, as evident in his English translation of Augustus Herman Frank's *Pietas Hallensis*.⁵² As shown by Ulbricht in the case of foundling hospitals in Germany and the rich scholarship on the London Foundling Hospital, the use of orphan provision and education as a tool of economic patriotism was not unique to Scotland. Gairdner's hospital instead demonstrates the blending of European populationism, British voluntarism and Scottish 'improvement' shaped by the specific political, economic and religious context of post-Union Scotland.⁵³

Whilst directed at children, habitually counted amongst the 'deserving poor', institutions such as the Orphan Hospital were established to prevent the perpetuation of poverty through individuals' lack of education and means of self-subsistence seen as leading to their becoming a 'Burden to the Country, and entirely

useless to the Commonwealth', emphasising the long-term effects of human capital investment as implemented by the orphanage.⁵⁴ The poor were to be transformed into a labour force, which transformation was to benefit the nation, the poor themselves, as well as their benefactors whose charity was understood as a principal Christian virtue. Institutions such as the Orphan Hospital represented the practical and spatial deployment of a long-term project of reform, which was rooted in eighteenth century evangelism as well as the notion of 'improvement', progress and national growth.⁵⁵ In his plea for support of the proposed orphan hospital published in 1727, Gairdner wrote,

as these hospitals are for the advantage, so likewise they are for the Honour, and an Ornament to the City; and for this Orphan Hospital, it is evident it will be the most profitable Hospital that has yet been erected, considering it is for Children cast on the Care of Providence, and the Way proposed how it will be managed will be Means to introduce Trade and Business, not only about the City, but also through the Nation.⁵⁶

Gairdner's writing on Christian charity was preoccupied with the rootedness of generosity, compassion and benevolence in religion and virtue. His plea for support of the Orphan Hospital's establishing was, however, more focused on the long-term utility of investment in the education and upbringing of poor children in a climate of post-Union structural, political, and economic change accompanied by anxiety concerning inadequate population increase. The commercial aspect of the institution was thus rooted in its connectedness to the national discourse and economic development schemes put in place by the founders of institutions such as the Orphan Hospital. The connectivity between the space of the hospital, the city of Edinburgh and Scotland as a country and a nation is palpable, demonstrating the imagined trickle-down effect of reform as extending from the institution to its wider contexts.⁵⁷ Whilst the Scottish case placed a greater emphasis on the patriotic dimension of human capital investment, the imagining of social benefits of the institutionalised care of poor children was widespread across the long eighteenth-century beyond Scotland, as voiced by Locke's proposal for working schools in 1690s or the reforms encompassed by the 1834 poor law amendment.⁵⁸

Gairdner's Orphanage was envisioned as a coeducational space intended for children of 'respectable' parents fallen upon misfortune from across the country. As such it differed from the more common practice of societies and companies across Edinburgh providing similar care arrangements for orphaned children of their members, or the Charitable Workhouse established in 1743 and intended for the most destitute. Upon its first opening, the orphanage received 30 children, and until the 1770s struggled to secure adequate funds to allow admitting more than 80 at one time. This changed with the proceeds from the newly established chapel by Lady Glenorchy in 1772, allowing the admission of up to 130 children as well as significant expansions of the hospital itself. Children between 7 and 12 were accepted upon petitions from relatives or patrons presented to the admitting committee constituting of the hospital's patrons or on the basis of direct recommendations from more significant donors. Through Gairdner's connections, the hospital gained significant renown. Kames, traditionally opposed to

institutionalised childcare and provision, highlighted the need for natural affection in childcare as well as anxiety around paid carers in which Scottish familialism was rooted. He suggested that ‘children require the tenderness of a mother, during the period of infantine diseases; and are far from being safe in the hands of mercenaries, who study nothing but their own ease and interest’. He nonetheless endorsed Gairdner’s establishment, which he deemed ‘the best-regulated orphan-hospital I am acquainted with’, applauding the children’s education in reading and writing as well as ‘some art, that may afford them comfortable subsistence’.⁵⁹ The general consensus amongst the ‘improvers’ on how institutionalised care was to operate as well as its long-term implications reflected the broader sentiment around poor relief and provision as a temporary solution supplementing organic welfare strategies devised by families and communities. Despite their roles in overseeing and promoting interventionist and institutional care systems, Gairdner and Kames’ visions of welfare remained traditionalist, pointing to the rootedness of eighteenth-century institutional developments in the traditional notions of care and the primacy of the family in social reproduction.

From its inception, the Hospital’s structure closely mirrored the idea of a household-family, with the master and mistress fulfilling the didactic, corrective, and affective roles of parents. Like other charitable institutions, the hospital’s staff were required to reside on the premises, ensuring their greatest dedication of time and efforts and emphasising the bonds of cohabitation.⁶⁰ Unlike the boys’ and girls’ schools established prior to the Orphan Hospital, the coeducational nature of this institution lent itself well to a much closer emulation of domestic organisation in terms of residential arrangements, education as well as division of labour.⁶¹ A prime example of combining traditional values with contemporary institutional developments, the Hospital’s running upon the principles of the household economy demonstrates the ways in which familial and institutional care structures overlapped.

Patrons’ petitions and correspondence between resident children’s relations and the institution demonstrate the incorporation of the Orphanage into networks and strategies of care and welfare devised by individuals and communities. Whilst built as an enactment of top-down strategies of reform, the hospital’s communications demonstrate the entanglement of the institution and bottom up welfare structures constructed by families. Not uncommonly, children admitted upon proof of destitution and parental loss were removed from the hospital by relatives when their fortunes turned, or when distant relatives in a position to provide for the children were found. The managers never objected to the children’s return to familial care, though they maintained a sense of duty to ensure that their relations were to be relied upon, receiving children in yearly inspections after leaving the Hospital or occasionally providing payments to secure their bed and board whilst in apprenticeship.⁶² Returning to the notion of institutional provisions as supplementing ‘organic’ structures, the hospital’s transient nature was thus reinforced by the ways in which it was drawn upon in times of familial breakdown, emphasising the regulatory role of institutions such as the Orphan Hospital, in upholding long term community and familial structures already in place through processes of social and spatial control and engineering.

Whilst the ‘natural’ family remained the preferred locus of care for most contemporary thinkers, the increasingly theorised notion of corruption through

environmental and moral pollutants posed a challenge to the way in which family was regarded. Gairdner's successor between 1781 and 1796, also a merchant and a fellow member of the SSPCK, Thomas Tod, wrote extensively on the subjects of charity and Christian devotion, revealing his increasingly class-based notion of relief and reform. Like Gairdner, Tod was a linen manufacturer and an Edinburgh burgher after his father, William Tod. His maternal grandfather was a tailor, with Tod's familial line much resembling Gairdner's.⁶³ Tod and Gairdner may have been related through Tod's mother and Gairdner's wife, who were likely sisters.⁶⁴ Taking up the treasury soon after Gairdner's son, also named Thomas, Tod was perhaps chosen for the role through more than a professional acquaintance with the founder of the Hospital. Tod's entanglements in linen manufacturing as well as pre-existing relations with other members of his chosen charitable venture were typical of mid-century reformers, whose intention was to directly oversee the outcomes of their charitable exploits.⁶⁵ Tod aimed to impart his vision onto the institution's everyday running and was heavily involved in the children's admissions process as well as staffing. He wrote in his 1785 account of the institution's progress, 'To every hour there is assigned some employment, and not a child but has some post or place, from which, it is their greatest correction to be degraded, though the meanest office in that little republic'.⁶⁶ Tod's notion of virtue was gained through work, social order and an imposed sense of belonging, which served a didactic purpose through which society could be remodelled from within its smallest units, such as the biological or institutional family. The clear spatial and temporal designation demonstrates the various ways in which order was to be installed and embodied. Increasingly, the space of the hospital became less permeable, creating a division between its residents and outsiders, including the resident children's family and friends, who were largely considered a corrupting presence on the children's education and comportment.

Tod continued in the spirit of Gairdner's populationism, believing that 'the prosperity and happiness of a state greatly depend on the number of its inhabitants, if properly educated and employed' and maintained a strong notion of strictly hierarchised social order with mutually beneficial and co-dependent relations across the strata.⁶⁷ He, however, exercised a much stricter admissions policy, only allowing the healthiest and most capable children from one family to be admitted in order to maximise their chances of success, in turn securing the maintenance of their biological family, in spite of his repeated efforts to limit contact between the children and their relatives whilst at the hospital. During their stay in the hospital, children were largely prevented from contact with their families and friends, with an emphasis placed on the corrupting influence of their unrefined morals and inhospitable abodes, demonstrating the belief in strong determinism of nurture and environment on children's characters. They were increasingly prohibited from leaving the premises, although the records reveal just how many children attempted to break away from the tightening confinement.⁶⁸ In line with Zucca's findings regarding orphanages in the Savoy-Piedmont State, children often attempted to flee in spite of the notable prospects the hospital could offer them in terms of education, employment and skilled training, highlighting the harsh and strict conditions of such establishments.⁶⁹ Tod's management, including increased limitations on mobility, demonstrate the complex relationship between the various forms of

care provision that shaped the mixed economy of welfare. For admitted children, education at the hospital meant greater stability and provision in childhood, but also an education that afforded them a greater chance at gainful employment than they would have ever received through the means of their poor parents. At the same time, however, they were thus removed from their 'families and friends', losing contact whilst at the hospital and being removed from their families' ways of life through the social mobility they experienced. Such trade-offs were made for the hopes of better futures, but as the attempts of many parents to remove their children show, not without the great pressures of poverty, death and disease faced by poor families. Whilst the primary aim of this article is to explore the intellectual histories of the top-down mechanisms of relief and reform, the pragmatic ways in which the poor themselves navigated these structures are indispensable parts of the story we aim to convey.

The writings of Gairdner and Tod and the increasingly systematic approach to the management of the Orphan Hospital elucidate the broader context of poor relief, 'improvement' and management of the poor in eighteenth-century Scotland. The example of the Orphanage and its role in childcare provision and management serves to illustrate the urban approach to long-term treatment of poverty through investment in human capital formation with the envisioned outcomes of reducing the poor's idleness and indigence resulting in dependency, whilst also fuelling the industrialising economy with skilled labour. In this particular case, institutionalised childcare and provision can be regarded as an effective form of both providing for the resident children in their infancy as well as furnishing them with long term prospects. More broadly, it thus aimed at preventing such children from becoming dependents whilst utilising their labouring potential to fuel the economy through the production of textiles. The Edinburgh Orphan Hospital amongst the many institutions dedicated to maintaining and educating orphaned or destitute children serves as an example of a transient space intended for the long-term voluntary project of building the Scottish nation in the decades following the Union, and its changing economic, political and social climate that restructured poor relief as an element of the broader project of national 'improvement'. At the same time however, these institutions became entrenched in the mixed economy of welfare that combined various forms of care provision through survival strategies devised by the poor themselves, within and without the very structures built to control them.

3. The Inverness Spinning School

This next section turns to the Inverness spinning school, an institution set up by the Board of Trustees for Fisheries, Manufactures and Improvements in 1755 and eventually managed by the Commissioners of the Annexed Estates after 1763. The school was part of a larger linen station based in Glenmoriston operating across the Inverness region and managed by the manufacturer Alex Shaw. Contrary to the Orphan Hospital, the station blended residential and putting out approaches in order to maximise the number of spinners. Its intellectual underpinnings, however, were very much the same and the school was symptomatic of the ways Scottish relief relied on human capital investment in order to transform the poor into

productive members of society. The spinning school acted as a transient space of 'improvement', providing both short-term relief and long-term transformation of its pupils' morals and attitudes.

Historiography to-date has mostly focused on landowner-led agrarian 'improvement' in the Highlands and has missed the ways manufacturers and merchants shaped much of 'improvement' discourse and practice.⁷⁰ The efforts put forth by manufacturers such as Shaw shared the emphasis on the 'civilising mission' of charitable institutions as instruments to tackle the so-called 'Highland problem'. The Highlands were undoubtedly considered a 'problem region' plagued with poverty and idleness and, by the mid-eighteenth century, were turned into a 'laboratory' for 'improvement'. Spinning schools attempted to tackle poverty at the root by transforming the morals and habits of the region's inhabitants. Yet, the Highlands also provided opportunities for regional, national and imperial growth. The burgh of Inverness, in particular, had become a focus for Lowland 'improvers' and Highlanders alike, who sought to rapidly commercialise and modernise the town in line with 'improvement' principles. As Kehoe has demonstrated, Inverness and its surroundings benefitted from the injection of capital gained by Highlanders in imperial ventures, who then invested into charitable institutions such as the Northern Infirmary of Inverness.⁷¹ Poor Highland women were explicitly targeted as untapped labour pools who held the key to the success of the growing Scottish linen industry, which would in turn limit Scottish imports and generate a new export economy drawing on newly gained access to colonial markets.

The Inverness spinning school reflects merchants like Andrew Gairdner and Thomas Tod's enthusiasm for the economic possibilities offered by the linen trade. The school was the creation of the Board of Trustees for Fisheries, Manufactures and Improvements, established in 1727. The Trustees' main purpose was to create industries, which would complement rather than compete with England's, such as the linen trade.⁷² In 1755, duty on coarse linen was discontinued and replaced by a £3,000 grant for nine years encouraging the manufacture of linen in the Highlands.⁷³ The Trustees, who were in charge of managing these funds, set up three linen stations in the Western Highlands in Lochcarron, Lochbroom, and Glenmoriston as well as a further manufacture operating around Badenoch, Strathspey and Braemurray. Linen manufacturer Alex Shaw was appointed director of Glenmoriston in Invernessshire in 1756.⁷⁴ In 1763, the Board of Commissioners of the Annexed Estates, set up after the 1745 Jacobite rising to manage landed estates forfeited by their Jacobite owners, took over the management of the stations from the Trustees. It was commonly understood that 'a good many of them [members of each board] are members for both, and it may be said, that both Boards are ruled by the same Party & the same Members', and so the Commissioners' takeover was essentially a continuation of the status quo.⁷⁵

Both Commissioners and Trustees were part of the Scottish elite and included politicians, literati and landowners who shared explicit concerns about the so-called backwardness of the Highlands and sought to commercialise it. Both Boards shared demographic anxieties centred on the cost of progress resulting in the increase of poverty, depopulation and emigration. The linen industry presented an opportunity to counter the threat of population decrease by providing the poor with employment, while furthering the nation's economic growth. Henry Home, Lord

Kames, was a member of both Boards and, alongside Andrew Fletcher, Lord Milton, shaped most of the Boards' linen policies. For Kames, the linen trade was a patriotic project, which aligned commercial and charitable interest. He looked to the Osnabrück manufacture in Germany as a template and believed flax seed should be distributed for free to the Highland poor under the condition they would dress and spin the flax themselves.⁷⁶ Other comparatively poorer countries such as Ireland encouraged similar ventures. A pamphlet by Richard Cox, landowner in County Cork, in 1749 proved particularly influential amongst the Scottish landowning class.⁷⁷ Cox's pamphlet encouraged estate owners to invest and reclaim uncultivated grounds to convert them to linen manufacture. For Cox, the wool industry was the trade of rich countries such as England, whereas 'the poorest Country, with proper Culture, will produce good Flax; and the poor Man, who is not worth a sheep in the World, may rise enough of this commodity in his own Ground, to afford his Family constant Employment'.⁷⁸ In Scotland, similar pamphlets circulated in the 1750s recommending flax husbandry as the solution to end poverty in the Highlands and Islands, a policy followed by the Board of Annexed Estates through the creation of colonies where poor tenants and disbanded soldiers were encouraged to reclaim bogs and peatlands in order to sow flax seeds.⁷⁹

The creation of spinning schools was embedded in similar rhetoric and echoed earlier efforts to associate commercialism, Christian education and populationism in ways to radically transform the Highlands. In 1727, proponent of agrarian patriotism Robert Maxwell had hoped to run a farm for Highland children in combination with the SSPCK, 'to promote Industry, which is an Ornament to Christianity ... to supplant and undermine Idleness, the Parent of Vice, the Mother of Mischief, the Bane of Society and the Destruction of every country where it prevails'.⁸⁰ In 1738, the SSPCK was granted a second patent to encourage manufactures, including the creation of spinning schools based on the estimation that 40,320 women could be put to work in the Highlands.⁸¹ The SSPCK had been in charge of education provision on the Annexed estates up to 1752, after which it had fallen under the responsibility of the Commissioners. Touring the estates in 1756, the Board's Inspector General Francis Grant dismissed English relief as a 'grievance' and reported that as a well-governed Christian nation, it was the Board's duty to provide hospitals for the sick and workhouses for the young and out of business.⁸² In the words of John Walker, a disciple of Lord Kames and a natural historian, there should be in the Highlands 'Charity Schools supported in the North by the publick, Seminaries, not only of Education, but of Industry and especially in the Linen Branch'.⁸³ Rather than turning to England for inspiration, the Board of Commissioners looked to the Irish charter school movement and the Board's secretary wrote to the Society in Dublin with a list of queries 'for promoting English protestant working schools'.⁸⁴ The Dublin Charter school replied recommending 'a strong, simple & plain building, for children brought up of those kind of palaces will hardly submit to return to & live in poor Cabbins'. It explained that children as young as five years old were employed in spinning flax as well as cotton and silk and that they also gardened and knitted stockings.⁸⁵

Manufacturer Alex Shaw had first appealed to the SSPCK for funds, though unsuccessfully, due to the Society's own limited funding.⁸⁶ Once the Parliament's bounty had run out in 1763, Shaw wrote to the Commissioners of the Annexed

Estates, another publicly funded body set up to provide employment and bread to 'poor destitute creatures (...) that would otherways been starving or begging through the country'.⁸⁷ The creation of spinning schools fitted well with the Board's mostly interventionist economic policy that sought to preserve, and indeed increase, population. While some believed the Highlands were most suited for sheep farming and called for limited state intervention, many landowners and institutions such as the Board of Annexed Estates sought to combine economic productivity with the preservation of the tenantry through the implementation of explicitly gendered schemes, soldiering for men and spinning for women.⁸⁸ Many landowners feared the depopulation of their estates and sought to capitalise on their estate's human capital to fuel the landed economy. The re-arrangement of agricultural holdings in the Highlands through small-scale clearance in the second half of the eighteenth century created an ever-increasing number of tenantry reliant on by-employment to survive and modified the traditional agrarian wage economy.⁸⁹ Writing to landowner James Grant of Grant, Shaw suggested the erection of a linen station on his estate to forestall depopulation, 'I consider it bad policy to part with people; and therefore would use every mean, to make them Industrious & continue on the Estate'.⁹⁰ The labour-intensive textile industry thus provided the ideal solution to solve poverty and increase economic growth, further fuelling Scottish wider imperial ambitions. Flax seed, mostly imported from the Baltic, and spun at low-cost by poor Highland women, was then turned into yarn exported to the colonies.⁹¹ Shaw's long-term ambition was to produce coarse linen suited for the West Indies, which was supported by the Magistrates of Inverness who saw in the school an opportunity for the burgh to benefit from the lucrative colonial market.⁹² More research is needed on the connections between imperial ventures abroad and commercial and charitable enterprise at home.

Alex Shaw's manufacture sought to overcome the inaccessibility and supposed 'backwardness' of the Highland landscape by radically transforming the region's physical and moral geography. While based in the city of Inverness, Shaw controlled a huge tract of the region through his linen station which housed a flax raiser, dresser and weaver in Glenmoriston and three further spinning schools in Inverness, Moy and Kilmorack.⁹³ The Inverness school reportedly held one hundred pupils in 1764, with many more waiting to be admitted.⁹⁴ For Shaw, one school in Inverness was simply not enough to cover the region and he argued with the Board that 'for it being in the mouth of the Highlands, numbers of beggars resort from all quarter; so that we have many destitute orphans, & cripple & blind to maintain, for none that can either maintain themselves by spinning, or live in the town, and procure subsistence from their parents, or friends, share in this allowance'.⁹⁵ Shaw hired three itinerant spinning mistresses, Elspet Syme operating in and around Fort Augustus, Katherine Fraser in Stratherrick, and Elisabeth Mackrae in Glen Urqhart.⁹⁶ The spinning mistresses worked as in-takers of yarn and circulated throughout the area collecting the spun linen.⁹⁷ In co-partnership with merchants in London, Shaw also created a hemp manufacture in Cromwell's Fort in Inverness where he made 'corn and flower sacken, wool and hopp baggin' as well as sail cloth and cordage. While his hemp manufacture received no funding from the Board of Annexed Estates, Shaw was convinced there was 'no undertaking in the North [...] so well calculate for employing the

poor'.⁹⁸ Shaw planned to set up another hemp manufacture and gradually spread over the country, employing both boys and girls as young as eight years old as well as older women.⁹⁹ Contrary to the linen stations which primarily employed young women, Shaw's hemp manufacture was aimed at children and he reported in 1766 that he employed forty boys and girls and that the scheme would soon 'give bread to numbers'.¹⁰⁰

These schools were transient spaces of 'improvement' that aimed to rapidly transform the poor by teaching them the value of hard work and industry. The women who could not maintain themselves would receive full board at the school for a period of about a month. Schools focused on poor, usually unmarried young women and girls between the ages of 12 and 20, the majority ranging between 15 and 18. School entries appear to have no particular patterns but broadly respected the agricultural calendar, with most women entering the school in the summer or between October and December.¹⁰¹ The women worked at the school for about six weeks, which ensured Shaw increased the number of out-workers by teaching more women to spin and provided an incentive for young women to come to school with the prospect of not being away from agricultural duties for too long. The school of Inverness operated from late May to December with the exception of the month of September, during harvest.¹⁰²

The operation thus premised on targeting women across their life cycles by teaching them both at school and at home. Only one woman per family was to be admitted in the hope that they would in turn go home after six weeks to teach others, a measure replicated in other schools.¹⁰³ Upon leaving the school, the women were to continue as spinners and work from home as wage workers for Shaw, thus remodelling the family unit according to these new commercial and moral principles. While Shaw based much of his rhetoric on employing the poor and destitute, many women who could afford to maintain themselves worked at the school and received a daily wage.¹⁰⁴ Itinerant spinning mistresses targeted married women, usually less able to leave their house due to the demands of childcare, and distributed wheel and reels. Jean Ross, a spinning mistress in Moy, reported in 1764 that after leaving the school the women continued to spin yarn for Shaw and that some 'poor women' came to take out lint to spin at home.¹⁰⁵ We know little about the spinning mistresses. In the Annexed Estates, they were always married women, usually the wives of flax raisers, weavers or schoolmasters working in the area, some of them employed by Shaw himself. Though these women were fully responsible for the running of the schools, their salaries were low. Elisabeth Darling, spinning mistresses in Inverness, received £15 a year, while the two itinerant spinning mistresses received £5.50 each, probably due to the seasonal nature of their work.¹⁰⁶ Despite their subordination to the merchant, the feminisation of textile work made women essential facilitators and operational managers of the schools. Shaw suggested the mistresses had a great influence over the spinners and could persuade them to work better than anyone else.¹⁰⁷

Through constant work the workers were to rise out of poverty through the means of their own labour. Spinners were regularly subjected to quality control and a number of prizes and premiums awaited the most productive spinner. These prizes, such as straw hats, silk napkins, caps and ribbons, were to gradually reform the appearance of the spinners according to 'civilised' fashion, all the while

encouraging emulation amongst the spinners by introducing a degree of luxury in dress.¹⁰⁸ While at school, it was suggested scholars should wear a uniform made of wool and linen they made themselves.¹⁰⁹ The presence of a large clock, one of the first-ever in the Highlands at Cromwell's Fort, points to meticulous time-management.¹¹⁰ In the longer term, the introduction of the linen manufacture aimed to alter women's temporal realities. Customary women's work such as dairying at the shieling, upland pastures used in the summer, was gradually eradicated with shielings reclaimed and turned into arable land. What were considered 'idle' times of the agricultural calendar, winter and evenings, were to be spent spinning and dressing flax by candlelight, a time, which, according to Lord Kames, was 'entirely lost to Scotland'.¹¹¹ While productivity was exceedingly important, technological innovation was largely kept out of the schools. Many on the Board subscribed to romanticised and racialised ideals surrounding the preservation of 'traditional' Gaelic socio-cultural norms and sentimental population politics. The preservation of the Highland population was tied in with colonial attitudes that saw Highlanders as 'noble savages' that needed guiding towards progress all the while being safeguarded from the evils of commerce. Lord Kames specified flax raisers and dressers were not allowed to use machines and should do the work by stock and hand only. This rule was designed to maximise labour and provide work for the maximum number of people but also reflected Kames' belief in the supposedly noble primitiveness of Highland workers, as men employed as agricultural wage workers were only allowed to use the traditional Gaelic spade, the *caschcrom*.¹¹²

The Annexed Estates' spinning schools were always considered a temporary project, calculated to simultaneously reform and train a new labour force in a very short amount of time. Nevertheless, a lack of planning and the general failure of the linen industry in Scotland put an end to Shaw's ventures by the early 1790s.¹¹³ For a couple of decades, the linen manufacture had reflected the belief of Scottish 'improvers' that the Highlands could single-handedly become a hybrid space of moral preservation and commercial modernity.¹¹⁴ Spinning schools offered the chance both to eradicate poverty by offering employment and to preserve a crucial workforce, educated in Christian principles and morals. While the Inverness school was one of many other institutions effectively blending commercialism and relief, its example encapsulated the Scottish approach to the long-term eradication of poverty through human capital formation.

4. Conclusion

Overall, Highland spinning schools and charitable hospitals were just some of the ways in which Scottish 'improvers' sought to combine Christian morality and commercialism with the expressed aim of avoiding broad-brush assessment-based relief schemes. Charity hospitals and spinning schools represented variations of the same spatial imagining for the nation, based on the moral preservation and the economic transformation of the poor. They embedded traditional forms of Scottish thinking about maintaining the poor through vertical networks of patronage and gratitude, upon which formalised and institutionalised forms of relief came to rest. Combining the strands of Presbyterian charity and work ethics, commercialism and cameralism, eighteenth-century 'improvers' devised new ways of approaching

the questions of welfare and social provision amidst the political change of the post-Union period, and the turbulent economic transformation of early industrialisation. The period between the 1720s and 1790s is distinctive, we argue, in combining traditional perceptions of society, morality and obligation with emerging ideas of progress and economic growth, brought on by the changes in the global economy and articulated by Scottish political economists. At the end of this period, traditional anti-welfarism and populationism started to give way to legalism linked to the anxieties around overcrowding, contamination and contagion. The poor were no longer to be reformed, but rather managed, and this is where this article ends. Through adopting a focus on moral and spatial forms of reform, we have linked the ways in which Scottish ‘improvers’ imbued the inhabited space with a potential for reform. Focusing on institutions established to enable the long-term human capital investment seen as integral to the socio-spatial transformation of the Scottish physical and human landscape, this paper has highlighted the transient nature of these institutions, as well as their envisioned long-term effects. Drawing on the thought of merchants such as Gairdner and Shaw as well as landowners and literati such as Lord Kames, we have demonstrated that despite the overall heterogeneity of the ‘improvement’ discourse, there existed a consensus on poor management and relief that is worth revisiting. Bringing together the seemingly distinct urban landscapes of Lowlands and Highlands points towards a greater connectivity of ideas, practices and institutions, constituting a broader landscape of moral and spatial economies of care in eighteenth-century Scotland.

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French Abstract

Cet article reconnaît, comme point de départ, la pénurie d'études sur l'aide aux pauvres en Ecosse, dépeinte essentiellement comme version inférieure et sous-développée de son homologue méridional. Nous avons choisi ici une approche par étude de cas, examinant deux modèles urbains de secours aux pauvres, en Lowlands et Highlands, afin d'illustrer comment l'idéologie et la philosophie de "l'amélioration" se sont appliquées en matière de secours aux démunis, de 1720 à 1790 environ. Situait notre démarche dans ce contexte de progrès, prôné par les penseurs écossais, nous recherchons comment les approches théoriques et pratiques à l'égard des pauvres ont été modelées, les politiques économiques se combinant aux préceptes évangéliques en matière d'investissement dans le capital humain et d'optique de réforme à long terme, faisant écho à diverses évolutions similaires à travers l'Europe du temps. À la fin du XVIII^e siècle, le modèle écossais passa ainsi d'un système reposant sur la communauté locale, avec un système de hiérarchie réciproque, ancré sur des structures paroissiales obéissant aux règles de l'Eglise presbytérienne d'Ecosse, à un système de plus en plus légaliste, avec un concept de prestations sociales fondées sur des droits.

German Abstract

Den Ausgangspunkt für diesen Beitrag bildet die Dürftigkeit der Forschung zur schottischen Armenpflege, die fast durchweg als minderwertige und unterentwickelte Version ihres südlichen Pendant dargestellt worden ist. Wir wählen eine Fallstudie und sehen uns zwei Beispiele städtischer Infrastrukturen der Armenpflege in den Highlands und den Lowlands an, um zu zeigen, wie im Zeitraum von etwa 1720 bis 1790 die Ideologie der 'Verbesserungsphilosophie' auf den Umgang mit den Armen angewandt wurde. Indem wir unsere Studie in den Kontext der schottischen 'Verbesserung' stellen, können wir untersuchen, inwiefern theoretische und praktische Zugangsweisen zu den Armen durch eine Kombination von ökonomischen und religiösen Haltungen zu Investitionen in Humankapital und zu langfristigen Reformen geprägt wurden, die an ähnliche Entwicklungen überall in Europa anschlossen. Gegen Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts wandelte sich das schottische System von einem gemeindebasierten, örtlich begrenzten System der reziproken Hierarchie, die durch kirchliche Strukturen gewährleistet wurde, zu einem System, das zunehmend gesetzlich verankert war und vom Begriff eines Rechtsanspruchs auf soziale Vorsorge getragen wurde.