



BOOK REVIEWS

Geschichte der Planung des öffentlichen Raums edited by *Christoph Bernhardt, Gerhard Fehl, Gerd Kuh* and *Ürsula von Petz*, Dortmund, Germany, 2005, 244 pp. ISBN 3-88211-154-2.

In 2003 the Working Group for the History of Planning was founded in order to keep research in this field alive by convening conferences and publishing results. The papers published in this book were presented in 2003 at the Working Group conference on the planning history of public spaces, mostly in German cities. Present discussions about public spaces are influenced by contrasting views on increasing privatization, loss of functions, actions of brutality and vandalism, and deprivation and decay, but also by processes and projects of revitalization.

In the introduction, the editors discuss *inter alia* public spaces, public representation, the behaviour in public of different social classes, everyday life in public spaces and last, but not least, the adequate design of urban spaces. The various papers that follow open a wide variety of discussions on this topic as well as on the social aims, political intentions, historical background, reform movements, innovations and planning strategies involved.

Three main themes become apparent: first, the planned construction of public urban spaces in the course of both nineteenth-century urban development and the early-twentieth-century reform movements; secondly, the forms and functions of public spaces that were both the means and sites of totalitarian representation in the twentieth century; and thirdly, the planned disaggregation of public urban spaces in twentieth-century Fordist society.

The series of papers begins with Fehl's discussion of the relations between public space and the public and the transformation of free open spaces into shaped and designed urban spaces as

they became integrated within nineteenth-century planned suburbs in Berlin, Munich, Cologne and elsewhere in Germany. Bernhardt deals with the banning of uncontrolled water out of nineteenth-century Berlin in order to improve the sanitary conditions of urban open spaces.

In contrast, in the Ruhr area industrialization did not create an urban structure suitable for the citizens, but produced a dichotomy of bourgeois public and proletarian public. To 'cultivate' these industrial towns and improve their sanitary and leisure conditions there was, in the period between 1890 and 1930, the laying-out of new parks and green belts that helped, as Kastorff-Viehmann shows, to structure the urban and suburban industrial fabric.

Camillo Sitte and Theodor Fischer developed the theory of arts and urban design, which led to the laying out of urban spaces of high quality: Munich is taken as an example in von Petz's presentation. In Walter Schwagenscheidt's pamphlet on the 'Raumstadt', urban spaces and their configurations became the spinal cords of new urban designs, re-animating the 1930s ideal of the socialistic city. They correspond to Yona Friedman's *Ville Spatiale* of 1959 and became reality in Nordweststadt (Frankfurt/Main) and Lijnbaan (Rotterdam) in the form of multi-storey blocks of flats around shaped open spaces.

Wolf begins the series of papers dealing with public open spaces in totalitarian systems by presenting the Nazi plans to transform the classical city of Weimar into an exemplary *Gau* capital. This idea, which was also promoted in cities such as Dresden, arose out of transformations completed in Munich and planned in Berlin. The *Gau* capital was centred on a wide forum, itself dominated by a hotel with its Führer balcony.

Like the Third Reich, the German Democratic Republic followed the totalitarian approach to squares and urban open spaces. According to the

principles of urban design in 1950, their main task was to allow political demonstrations to take place. However, as Betker and Bemke show in their papers, planning new central places was confined to only certain towns and a few city centres. But, despite the theories, socialist urban development in practice was largely confined to centralized procedures and forms of organization. Its urban designs did not differ strikingly from those common in much of Western Europe. May uses Eisen-hüttenstadt, formerly Stalinstadt and once named 'Germany's first socialistic city', to explain the principles and forms of socialist urban development.

Pedestrianized areas have been invented in the post-war years and created new types of public spaces. Schubert presents a Coventry case study with some comparisons with Lijnbaan (Rotterdam), Kassel, Kiel, the Barbican (London) and others to assess the changes, adjustments, potential, disadvantages and risks of pedestrianized areas in both central and peripheral urban districts.

Returning to the ideas of the introduction, Harlander and Kuhn conclude that urban open spaces fulfil transit functions (traffic, transport), economic functions (trade, markets, fairs) and political functions (representation, assembly, demonstration) but also more vague and changing communicative, recreational and societal ones. After their long nineteenth- and twentieth-century histories the question remains as to whether public spaces will experience a decay or a renaissance. There is a rediscovery of the 'historical city' that may camouflage the economic crisis of city centres and central urban spaces. New patterns of privatization come into being, and the loss of old uses and functions is sometimes eased by the arrival of new ones.

This collection of papers is well illustrated and worth reading, even if it is unduly confined to German planning history of public spaces and the German social and political background. To illustrate what could have been or what were the alternatives, both in terms of urban design and public attitudes towards open urban spaces, some more glances across the German border would have been appreciated.

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Urbanismo e morfologia urbana no Norte de Portugal by *Mário Fernandes*, FAUP Publicações, Porto, Portugal, 2005, 497 pp. ISBN 972-9483-69-8.

In this book, Mário Fernandes provides an analysis of the evolution of the urban forms of six cities in the North of Portugal – Viana do Castelo, Póvoa do Varzim, Guimarães, Vila Real, Chaves and Bragança. The period covered is principally from 1852 (the date of the creation of the Public Works Ministry) to 1926 (the date of the coup d'état that led to a 50-year dictatorship). The book builds on a PhD thesis in urban geography presented in the University of Oporto in 2002, and was preceded by the author's first book, focusing solely on one of these cities, Viana do Castelo (Fernandes, 1995).

There are three main chapters. The first focuses on the history of urban cartography in Portugal, analysing the specificities of this particular data source, identifying its origins and main developments, and evaluating the rigour of the existing documents and the quality of the information they provide. The second builds a framework for the study of the main transformations of the town plan (streets, plots, and buildings). It moves from a general view of European cities and planning to the description of the main public works at national and regional scales promoted by the Portuguese central government and, finally, to the description of the evolution of the town plans of the selected cities since the medieval period. Grounded on the empirical work of these six case studies, the third chapter provides a number of key arguments to explain the different stages of the process of town-plan transformation in the north of Portugal. It highlights the influence of local governments in this process based on the analysis of the main available instruments – the legal framework, the plans and projects prepared in this period, and the existing financial resources – and carefully assesses the main outcomes, largely urban facilities and municipal services.

Throughout these three chapters the author builds his main argument – that urban cartography is a key data source in the study of the city, and a fundamental instrument to understand other information, such as municipal budgets and the development decisions described in the minutes of Council meetings. One of the main purposes of the book is to offer a solid contribution to the history of Portuguese urban cartography that is able to support a more systematic study of other, particularly medium-sized, cities.