



BOOK REVIEWS

Planning twentieth century capital cities by David L. A. Gordon (ed.) Routledge, New York, NY, USA, 2006, 318 pp. ISBN 0-415-28061-3.

David Gordon asserts in the introduction to *Planning twentieth century capital cities* that there are over 200 capital cities today whereas there were only about 40 nation states with capital cities in 1900 – and that this burgeoning number alone justifies the existence of a volume on the ‘planning and development of capital cities in the twentieth century’. Gordon as well as Peter Hall and Lawrence J. Vale, who each contribute essays that frame the fifteen case studies of capital cities, argue that the twenty-first century is unlikely to see major changes in the number and character of capital cities given that most large entities have already split into their component parts and the dominance of globalization and ‘informationalization’ will compel national governments to protect the viability of their major cities in the face of intense global competition – and thereby reduce the likelihood that countries would consider moving a capital city and jeopardize its prospects.

Peter Hall’s analytical framework, a reprint of an essay first published in 1983, distinguishes seven types of capital cities – multi-function, global, political, former, ex-imperial, provincial, and super capitals. These types often overlap in individual cities and the process of change that they undergo differs depending on their particular characteristics and contexts – thereby justifying an analysis based on these types. Hall’s analytic perspective is followed by Lawrence J. Vale’s essay on the urban design of capital cities – with a focus on those that emerged from the ‘dismemberment of empires, the emergence of new federal systems, and the growing importance of super-national groupings’. His essay is richly illustrated and annotated (see especially the plans, pp. 34-5, comparing the fifteen cities discussed in the essays) and presents a broad foundation illustrating the relationship between

ideology and power in urban design schemes.

After these three framing chapters, there are fifteen essays on capital cities by authors who have first-hand and long-term experience working in and studying their particular city. Consequently the essays are well crafted and concise. Although shifts in political and economic ideology have had an impact on the form and appearance of cities, the essays in this volume make it clear that the shape of cities and their design are much more enduring than the politics that shaped them. Only under the most drastic conditions (war, revolution, natural disaster) can significant change be made to a city’s form. To implement change those in power need to have not only a strong vision but also resources and control over land and property. Many of the case studies demonstrate the futility of preparing plans for cities when a planning entity has no power to appropriate land, preserve or demolish structures, or raise funds. As is also evident from the case studies, national and international economic and political crises have also often undermined the realization of urban plans.

The planning history of some of the cities in the collection has been amply studied, yet the authors are able to illustrate concisely the historic challenges for planners and, most interestingly, the present-day ramifications. Paul White argues that Paris changed little from the time of Haussmann through to the early post-war years. In France, the powerful presidency enabled de Gaulle from 1958 and his planner Paul Delouvrier, followed by Presidents Pompidou, Giscard, and Mitterand, to create major projects scattered throughout Paris that enhanced the city’s cultural profile while mitigating the long-term imbalance between the capital and the rest of the country. Dennis Hardy finds that although London is no longer the seat of imperial power, and is still unclear of its role in Europe, it has survived and grown because people simply want to live there. He situates the emergence of London as a major global city as starting in the 1980s with financial deregulation under Margaret Thatcher, but argues that it received little other political support or

positive planning to achieve this status beyond the Festival of Britain held in 1951. According to Shunichi Watanabe, Tokyo started its modern development after the 1923 earthquake. However, the form of the capital city resulted more from private enterprise and economic necessity than from planning principles. Isabelle Gournay's essay traces the well-known history of Washington, DC and considers the longer-term impact of the McMillan plan and the negative impact on the neglected areas of the city outside of the ceremonial core. She further develops the changes that so-called home rule brought to the city although does not consider the more recent attempts by Mayor Williams and his planner Andrew Altman to enhance the capital by developing areas such as the Anaconda riverfront and efforts to remove the barriers between the eastern and western sides of the city. Michael Lang's essay considers the roles of the imperially-created capital St Petersburg and the historic capital Moscow that was transformed under Stalinism into the Soviet capital – and briefly situates them in the post-Soviet era. The impact of privatization and shifting demographics on these two cities as well as the resistance to public engagement under Putin's leadership need to be considered further to understand how these cities will function as part of a global economy in the twenty-first century. New York is a 'former capital', a super-national capital by virtue of the United Nations headquarters, and a global capital. Eugenie L. Birch focuses on three major projects and the multiple official and private partnerships that promoted them and argues that these contributed more to New York's position as a major capital than any particular planning programmes.

Although the general outline and details of the founding of Canberra, Brasilia, Chandigarh, and New Delhi, four of the new capitals created in the twentieth century, are well known to many planners and architects, the authors each bring a new perspective to the material. Christopher Vernon argues that Canberra's design and development is squarely rooted in a distinctive landscape – both native and recollected – that transformed the 'bush' lands into a picturesque setting for the capital. He also briefly but not very explicitly discusses the conflict between the representation of indigenous and non-indigenous peoples that surrounds the unofficial Tent Embassy that first emerged in 1972 and the official Reconciliation Place created in 2002. Geraldo Nogueira Batista, Sylvia Ficher, Francisco Leitão and Dionísio Alves de França trace Brasilia's planning history with more attention to the various agencies involved than usually encountered. They

emphasize the institutional changes introduced at the end of the military dictatorship in 1985 and the problems since the listing of the area of Brasilia, that is the Pilot Plan, as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987. This planning focus on the Pilot Plan that includes fewer than 9 per cent of the population of what is known as the Integrated Region (RIDE) has left the area outside the core unplanned, creating unmanageable sprawl without forming a strong urban fabric. Souro D. Joardar acknowledges the complexity of maintaining Lutyens's low-density bungalow neighbourhood in the face of extreme population pressures around New Delhi. Nihal Perera interestingly discusses the financial costs of developing Chandigarh and the process through which the inhabitants have been participating in its 'urbanization, familiarization, and Indianization'.

In addition to essays on the re-established capital cities of Berlin and Rome, three essays include cities not often considered: Brussels, Helsinki and Ottawa. In his essay on the rebuilding of Berlin, Wolfgang Sonne explains that through the reuse of existing buildings and careful integration of new structures, planners have managed to re-establish connections between east and west Berlin as well as to transcend their Hitlerian and Socialist past. He attributes the successful implementation of the plans for Berlin to strong administrative authority and political stability. Giorgio Piccinato describes Rome's re-establishment as the capital in 1870, its fascist development and post-1945 planning, and highlights the weakness of planning in resolving the complex modern problems of this ancient city. Events such as the 1960 Olympic Games and the World Cup in 1990, among others, did more to improve Roman infrastructure than overt planning. Laura Kolbe traces the multiple international influences on the early planning of Helsinki and the local planning emphasis on its water and harbour resources in the later-twentieth century. The challenge for Finland was to establish an identity for the capital that recognized its long association with Sweden and separated it from the 'Russian and imperial' Senate Square. Carola Hein has published a number of valuable books and edited volumes on the challenges of housing European Union facilities and distills them in her chapter on Brussels. She describes the transformation of the Quartier Léopold into a 'faceless bureaucracy' because of the European Union's inability to unanimously agree on a capital city and plan with global and local constituents in mind. David Gordon uses the conflict among Canadian politicians, who finally had to ask Queen Victoria to select the location of Ottawa-Hull as the site of Canada's national capital, to set the stage for the

interesting evolution of Canada's capital city. Gordon's illustrations are well annotated and enhance the text.

Elaborating the ramification of early planning decisions on the recent planning of fifteen major cities is the strength of *Planning twentieth century capital cities*. The short chapters give enough background in a concise way to make them useful for anyone interested in planning history as well as current issues. The order of the fifteen chapters and the rationale for the particular cities chosen is not explicitly presented and I did not review the chapters in the same order as the book. Some of the cities chosen have been already considered numerous times in such a context but the 'local' authors are able to bring some new perspective to the research. However, a broader geographic perspective would have been valuable – why two chapters on India but not Ankara? Why six European cities and only Tokyo in Asia? The essays presented clearly show that although capital cities have common characteristics, the way planning issues play out in a particular place is tied to the city's context as well as to the local, regional, national and even international governing structures. The major weakness of the work is the poor quality of the images and maps, and in some chapters the inadequacy of the image notes, as well as the cost of the volume (\$125 or £85). Several other books on major cities complement this work. Wolfgang Sonne's *Representing the state: capital city planning in the early twentieth century* (2003) and Lawrence J. Vale's 2nd edition of *Architecture power, and national identity* (2008) both review many of the same cities from a longer historical perspective – although not into the present. Vale's illustrations (black and white) and Sonne's (some in colour) are also much more legible than those of Gordon.

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Mapping London: making sense of the city by Simon Foxell, Black Dog Publishing, London, England, 2007, 278 pp. ISBN 978-1-9061-55070.

Upon browsing through Simon Foxell's *Mapping London: making sense of the city* those with an interest in the evolution of the urban form might

well ask if any other tomes have recently been produced that make a richer attempt to plot the changing terrain of a European metropolis, or for that matter endeavour to make such a grand impression upon the reader's eye? Yet irrespective of the use of about 150 maps derived from Medieval, Georgian, and Victorian documents, board and video games, transport maps, satellite imagery, space syntax diagrams, insurance graphics, utilities and services pictures, and grandiose proposals such as Rem Koolhaas' London Strip (1972) and Terry Farrell's Nash Rambblas (2002), this book offers more than a vivid anthology of images of Britain's largest, and historically most important city. Indeed the manuscript ventures to investigate through means of a cartographic lens how London has been considered, recorded, and understood in the past.

Arranged into four contrasting yet corresponding sections, these being 'London: change and growth', 'Serving the city', 'Living in the city', and 'Imagining London', *Mapping London: making sense of the city* explores the evolution of the metropolis's spatial configuration, and how it has been documented over the past 400 or so years. Inspired by Stephen Hall's dictum that 'out of one territory, one map can bloom a thousand geographies',¹ it covers in impressive fashion a range of subjects that have fundamentally shaped the urban fabric, and likewise yielded grounds to plot incessantly the city's spatial disposition: climate and environment, advancements in urban planning, the desire for military protection, government expansion, commercial growth, transport technologies, shifting work and living arrangements, and community-based emotions (such as apprehension, a feeling associated with intermittent outbreaks of crime, disease, and fire). However, as Foxell notes, the affiliation between sentiments such as fear and the mapping of London has at times been heightened by agents such as the media, who from the mid-1800s have printed maps within newspaper stories so as to make stories about crime recognizable: 'as a result, the fantasy of the fog-laden, dirty and violent city, and its horrific streets, became much more real, and no doubt helped to sell more papers and news-sheets' (p. 213).

Much attention is given to contextual affairs that have helped forge the narrative of London's history in maps, and the history of maps in London. As a case in point, Foxell emphasizes London's ability from as early as the seventeenth century to attract migrants from mainland Europe, including Huguenots like John Rocque from France. Not only did such migration lead to demographic growth, and