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David L. A. Gordon. *Planning Twentieth-Century Capital Cities.* London: Routledge, 2006. xvi + 302 pp. $140.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-415-28061-7.

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A History of the Planning of Capital Cities

Any book that focuses on the concept of "capital cities" is taking on a difficult challenge. What exactly is a capital city? The popular conception is of a city that hosts the seat of national government. However, there are around two hundred nations today, and some of these even have multiple capitals, with a seat of government in a city that is not the official capital–for example, the Netherlands or South Africa. Although sharing the characteristic of being the seat of government there is very little else that such capital cities have in common–for example, they vary in size from a city region of about twenty-eight million people (Tokyo) to the forty-six people that live in the capital of the Pitcairn Islands (Adamstown). So immediately an edited collection on capital cities faces the dual problem of how to make a selection and how to make meaningful comparisons.

To help with this process this collection includes an introductory chapter by Peter Hall setting out seven types of capital city based upon the function or role of the city (some cities can combine more than one role). There are multifunctional capitals combining most of the national higher-level functions; global capitals that also have functions beyond their national boundary; political capitals specifically focusing on being the national seat of government; former capitals that have lost their role as the seat of government but retain other historical functions; ex-imperial capitals that had past status as centers of empires; provincial capitals that once functioned as *de facto* capitals and still have importance in their territory; and super-capitals that are centers for international organizations. This typology is very useful and interesting as a basis for exploring the relationship between cities and their surrounding economic and political structures, and allows the discussion to escape from the narrow definition of a capital city as the seat of national government. However, it does nothing to narrow down the problem of selection–in fact it allows many additional cities to be considered. In this volume there are fifteen city chapters and although, in some of these, reference is made to Hall's typology this has not been used specifically to frame the city selection. The cities covered are: Paris, Moscow and St. Petersburg, Helsinki, London, Tokyo, Washington, Canberra, Ottawa-Hull, Brasilia, New Delhi, Berlin, Rome, Chandigarh, Brussels, and New York City. So the emphasis is on cities in Europe, the United States, and the old British colonies. It is a pity that China and Africa were not covered.

Although the reason for the choice of cities is unclear, the focus of attention within each city is very specifically and convincingly set out. All authors focus on the way that planning in their city has evolved and how this has been affected by its status as a capital. Another introductory chapter by Lawrence Vale sets the scene for this with a comparative exploration of the role that twentieth-century urban design has played in making capital cities appear as a distinctive type of place. This is a very erudite, comprehensive, and well-illustrated account of the relationship between city image and urban design. However, as with the Peter Hall chapter, this is unevenly pursued in the city chapters–perhaps not unreasonably given the very different planning histories involved. The chapters devoted to capitals that are planned creations obviously have a lot of material to discuss on planning ideas, debates, and design approaches. These cities include Washington, Canberra, Brasilia, New Delhi, and

Chandigarh. The authors of these chapters give very illuminating and detailed accounts of how the sites of these cities were selected and the political and design debates that surrounded their designation and evolution. They provide a lot of detailed and useful material and generate a thirst for an analysis across these particular "designed" cities. For example, in the New Delhi chapter by Souro Joardar there is a fascinating review of how the city is coping with the pressures and politics of modern India–it would be interesting to specifically compare this issue of adaptability with that of the other planned cities. For other cities that have a longer history, such as London and Tokyo, the message is that their designation as a capital is a small aspect of their overall story. The chapters on these cities, by Dennis Hardy and Shunichi Watanabe, provide the same message–that planning is a peripheral influence in shaping their development. Then at the extreme is New York, which can only justify its inclusion as a capital because it is the location of the UN Headquarters and hence a super-capital in Hall's terms. It also seems to have little to offer in the study of planning as there is a clear absence of such coordinated activity. The chapter, by Eugenie Birch, consists of describing four individual projects–the UN Headquarters, Rockefeller Center, the World Trade Center, and the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Thus, overall, these city chapters demonstrate that the planning history of capital cities is enormously varied, with a particular disjuncture between capitals that are long-standing locations of trade and economic development and those that have been specifically designed as capitals, and are therefore dominated by their symbolism as a political center.

There have been previous books devoted to the planning history of capital cities. These have usually focused on a few selected cities or explored capitals in a particular region such as Europe. However, this volume has a wider geographical scope and so the editor, David Gordon, is to be congratulated in drawing together such a wide group of distinguished planning historians. The book is a valuable resource in providing a summary of the planning history of the selected cities. It is also very stimulating in generating many thoughts about similarities and differences across the cities, and these can be taken up and developed by readers. One of the areas for further research is flagged by Peter Hall in his short epilogue to the book. In this he juxtaposes the debates on capital cities with the substantial body of literature that has arisen since the 1980s on the impact of globalization on cities. This literature identifies the rise of "world cities" and the way that city politicians have been oriented towards ensuring the economic future of their city in an increasingly competitive global economy. City marketing has become a major preoccupation, indicating that these cities are more interested in their image on the global stage than in projecting the symbolism of national power. Hall notes that very few of these leading world cities are also national capitals. This literature on globalization raises questions about whether the nation-state is becoming less important. Many authors identify a restructuring process whereby the nation decentralizes some of its functions and powers to regions and cities and concedes other powers to supra-national bodies such as the EU. In so doing nations may take on new and reconfigured roles.

The role of being a national capital with the seat of national government may also therefore change and take on a different kind of symbolism. The chapter in this book on Brussels, by Carola Hein, is indicative of such changes. Belgium as a nation-state has delegated most of its powers to the country's three regional bodies and so Brussels has become more important as the location of many EU organizations than as the national capital. Looking into the future one also cannot ignore the development of Beijing as the capital of China, with its huge population and potential economic might. The use of the Olympic Games to re-plan the city, and demonstrate to the world the prowess of China and Beijing, demonstrates the merging of a capital city symbolizing national power and a rising world city capable of competing in the global economy.

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