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Thomas Hall. *Planning Europe's Capital Cities: Aspects of Nineteenth Century Urban Development.* London: E & FN Spon, 1997. x + 398 pp. $90.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-419-17290-1.

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The nineteenth century in Europe was marked by the tremendous growth of cities, in terms of both population and area. The forces behind this growth are familiar to urban historians of Europe: the industrial revolution, population growth, and the expansion of the market economy. In the face of these demographic pressures upon urban infrastructure, city officials attempted to manage and regulate the growth of their cities so as to maintain political, social, and aesthetic order. The state or empire often took a keen interest in the case of capital cities, given their prominent position on the national and international stage. The planning that developed during the nineteenth century led to a transformation of many European cities, extending the boundaries of their territories, eliminating walls and fortifications, and providing more open space for urban dwellers. It is perhaps reasonable to believe that the transformation of these cities varied from city to city, but relatively little work has been done comparing the planning projects that took place in these cities during the nineteenth century, and certainly little to the breadth that Thomas Hall undertakes in his book *Planning Europe's Capital Cities: Aspects of Nineteenth Century Urban Development.* Hall, a professor of Art History at the University of Stockholm, Sweden, takes a selective look at a number of nineteenth-century European capital cities in order to compare the nature of the "major planning projects" in these cities, primarily in the period from 1850 to 1875.

The aim of Hall's book, in his own words, is to "focus...on major planning projects; the aim is not to address planning developments as a whole in the studied cities" (p. 3). For Hall, this means comparing major planning projects in fourteen European capital cities: Paris, London, Helsinki, Athens, Christiania (Oslo), Madrid, Copenhagen, Vienna, Berlin, Stockholm, Brussels, Amsterdam, Budapest, and Rome. In addition, Hall discusses the planning project undertaken in Barcelona because of the "status of Ildefonso Cerda's remarkable extension plan for the town" (p. 2). The book is organized into three main sections: an introduction to the book and a chapter on a brief history of town planning "From Hippodamus to Haussmann"; a second section that discusses the major planning projects in each capital city; and a third section which provides thematic comparisons of the planning projects. Hall argues, through these comparisons, that what we consider as modern city planning was a continuous process that developed throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and not a development that came about at the turn of the century and marked a departure from previous traditional city administrative functions. As such, the comparative section of the book shows that city officials faced similar challenges in the course of the nineteenth century, and thus they began to see the need for an organized municipal response in terms of reshaping the urban environment. The responses by city and state officials depended greatly upon the local–and in some cases, national–circumstances in each case.

The breadth of coverage is such that there will be something new for nearly every urban historian of this period. It is a rare work of any comparative history in which one will find–in addition to the traditional topics of Paris, Berlin, Vienna and London–sections on Budapest, Athens, Barcelona, and the Nordic capitals. Some areas are, of course, handled in more depth than others. It will come as no surprise that the chapter on Paris is first and longest, given Paris's importance in the history of nineteenth century city planning, and here Hall draws both on secondary sources as well as Haussmann's published memoirs. There is also a good amount here on the transformation of Vienna's fortifications into the *Ringstrasse.* One will also find, however, chapters on Stockholm, Brussels, and Athens–cities that have not received a great deal of attention in continental comparative urban studies in the nineteenth century.

The narratives reveal that certain issues were common to all of the projects. Two issues in particular presented recurring problems to municipal officials involved in the planning projects that Hall discusses: the acquisition or appropriation of private land for replanning and the financing of these planning projects. That these two issues were intimately related is evident in each of Hall's narratives. In the case of Paris, Haussmann used loans and the controversial *bons de delegation* to finance both the construction of streets as well as the acquisition of private land (p.74). In the case of Christiania, planning took place in a piecemeal fashion, and not a great deal of this planning was implemented in the nineteenth century, given that, as Hall writes, "neither the *reguleringskommision* nor the municipality wanted to accept the costs to the public purse or the intervention in the rights of landowners regarding their own property, which any overall plan worthy of its name would have involved" (p.124). Vienna was perhaps in the best situation overall in terms of its urban development–it owned the land beneath and surrounding the fortifications that was to be used for the planned urban expansion, and therefore, it did not face the same problems of appropriation as other cities. In the case of Vienna, the *Ringstrasse* project was financed partially by the state, partially by the sale of plots of land to private investors, and by an exchange of tax breaks for extensive investment (pp. 176, 335). Not all of the cities presented by Hall were able to surmount the financial and legal barriers to implementing the planned major projects, and some of the plans discussed in his book never reached the implementation phase. Hall writes, "generally speaking the authorities were restrained in Europe's capital cities during the second half of the nineteenth century, when it came to active public implementation of plans. One of the main reasons for this was certainly the expropriation legislation which disadvantaged the towns; another was the weak legal force of the plans" (p. 337). In the case of Paris and Vienna, the officials in charge of planning were given broad authority, and planning was never far removed from implementation. In other cities, planning officials did not possess the same authority. In Copenhagen, for example, "royal absolutism had disappeared in 1849, and the position of the recently established municipal administration was comparatively weak" (p. 165). Thus, capital cities were often contested sites where national authority and municipal authority overlapped, and the predominant political climate of a given area often determined the policies enacted in each phase of urban planning.

Hall's main argument in the book is that the major capital city planning projects he examines represent a continuation of the development of previous planning traditions. In some cases (even in the case of Paris), many of the ideas expressed in the planning projects for these capital cities were actually refinements or realizations of plans that had their genesis in the eighteenth century. The planning itself (and, where possible, the implementation of those plans) took place within a context of urban growth that was going to proceed, plan or no plan. It was in the city officials' best interests to at least attempt to have control over their cities' growth and to organize that growth as much as possible. Finally, Hall states that in the concern for health, hygiene, and traffic flow, we can see the development of modern city planning. In this, he sees not a break at the end of the nineteenth century with such planning theorists as Camillo Sitte, Ebenezer Howard, Joseph Stuebben and Raymond Unwin; rather, he sees these theorists attempting to systematize the processes which cities had been following throughout the nineteenth century–particularly capital cities. Hall writes, "[N]one of [their] works mentioned here would have been written, or at any rate, would not have been organized or focused as they were, without experience of the capital cities–of their planning or of the consequences of the absence of planning" (p. 365). For Hall, the capital city planning projects are an important precursor to the works of planning theorists at the turn of the century, and furthermore, the major planning projects should be seen as part of a larger, continuous history of city planning.

Hall's primary argument about the continuity of city planning is borne out by his evidence. Hall makes extensive use of secondary literature and published primary sources. Much of the archival work that Hall has done involves the reproduction of city plans, and the book is worth the number of reproductions of these plans alone. In large part, it is here were Hall's argument lies, in plan after plan. The plans are, for the most part, illustrative of the challenges facing architects and engineers who sought to improve these capital cities–they were the source of both praise and invective. They are a tangible illustration of the ideas informing people such as Holbrecht, Cerda, and Haussmann, and they are remarkable not for their attempts to establish an imposing or noteworthy capital city (as one might first expect from a book on capital cities in the nineteenth century), but rather for the attempts to place some sort of social and urban order on the expansion of the city. This is most graphically apparent in Cerda's plan for Barcelona, in which the old city is surrounded by block after block of recti-

linear street layout (p. 136). This same search for order is seen in many of the city plans: for Helsinki (p. 95), Copenhagen (p. 161), Stockholm (p. 209) and Madrid (p. 149). Most city plans in Hall's book are reproductions of originals–reproductions that are remarkably clear. Hall makes use of published primary sources where possible, and the observations borne out by the breadth of coverage will provide urban historians with many avenues of further inquiry. Overall, Hall displays a commanding knowledge of the variety of planning across Europe in the nineteenth century.

The underlying assumption of Hall's selection of capital cities is that capital cities are *generally* the largest cities in a nation, and as such, they are representative of the developing tradition of city planning both within their respective nations and throughout Europe as a whole. Hall writes, "It might be argued that the capital city function is not necessarily the best selection criterion for inclusion in a study of this kind…But if one city from every country is to be chosen for a comparative study, the capital city nonetheless seems to be an apt choice. It is also reasonable to suppose that the capitals do have some conditions and features in common in the way they have developed, which justify their being treated as a single group. Nor is the comparison concerned primarily with the towns as such; the emphasis is on the planning activities in the most important cities politically speaking in their respective countries, cities which in most cases were also the largest in the country as well as the leading centre for trade and industry" (p. 2). It appears that what Hall is seeking in terms of comparison and the method of choosing cities does cause some problems. Hall does not address the issue of the role of the capital city in terms of its representation of the nation. He states, "the capital cities did occupy a prominent position in the urban development debate, though mainly, perhaps, in their role as large towns. It was in capitals that the negative consequences of unrestrained big-city growth were more brutally evident than elsewhere, since the capital cities were generally much larger than the next biggest city in the respective countries. It was there that the wretched conditions were noticed and discussed not only at the local level, but also in many cases in a national context" (p. 366).

Hall states in his introduction that he has included cities that "were, or became, national capitals during the later nineteenth century," and that "the capitals of countries which later came to be part of the Italian or German states have been excluded" (p. 1). His rationale for his choices is that these cities were important because they were large and because that they were capital cities by the end of the nineteenth century. It us under this rationale that Hall chooses to include the city of Berlin in his analysis. Hall focuses primarily on Holbrecht's work on the planning of Berlin, noting that Holbrecht's direct involvement with the project ended by 1862. Given that the German nation did not exist in 1862, Hall has essentially devoted a chapter to the capital of Prussia. If the capital of Prussia is warranted a chapter, the question that comes to mind–especially in the minds of those of us who study the south–why is not the redevelopment of Munich addressed? Munich was far more important than Berlin for planning issues in Bavaria, especially given that, as a state in the federal system of the German Reich, Bavaria maintained control over planning aspects in its own territory. Hall freely admits that Munich underwent an important and extensive planning project in the 1850s, but the absence of a more serious treatment of the Bavarian capital does limit his overall argument (p. 356). Hall clearly makes the point that Berlin did *not* serve as a model for other German cities, and that these cities proceeded with planning guided primarily by their own local necessities. In many cities older than Berlin, historic preservation played a major role in planning projects. This important factor of German urban planning is lost by focusing simply on Berlin, as many historians of urban Europe do. Hall goes as far as to admit as much, citing the variations in planning projects even within each nation, and the fact that many of the capital cities were so singular in plan that they *did not* serve as models. He continues to defend his overall point of the influence of the capital city projects, writing, "that said, however, the capital city projects … at least do appear to have had a certain impact as models" (p. 360). The strongest example provided to support this position is Athens, and yet he also points out that the reason Athens was influential for Greek urban planning as a whole was that the same team of German architects that were involved in the planning of Athens were also involved in the planning of many other Greek cities (p. 358-59).

This leads to another issue: given the importance of the nineteenth century in the development of the European nation-state, one would expect a more fully nuanced discussion on this topic in a book about major planning projects in nineteenth-century European capital cities. Indeed, Hall's desire is to focus on the developing field of city planning, on decisions that are made about acquisition of private land for public projects, on improvements in communication between cities, on traffic improvements, and on improvements in hygiene. This

is all familiar territory for many urban historians, and Hall's comparison of these cities is important in understanding the overall picture of planning history throughout the nineteenth century, in particular, the comparisons of city ordinances and attitudes that often acted as impediments to the more ambitious of planners (such as Cerda and even on occasion Haussmann). What is lacking, however, is any extensive analysis of why capital cities are any more deserving of comparison than other major cities, and this is rather unfortunate. Much has been written on nationalism in the nineteenth century, and here is a unique opportunity for an urban historian to add something new to the discussion in terms of the role that the planning of the capital cities–in some cases the perceived heart of the nation–played in the development of the nation state. This is especially true in a book with such unique breadth.

In sum, *Planning Europe's Capital Cities* provides a convincing argument for the emergence of systematic planning theory at the turn of the century as a continuity of the capital city planning projects in Europe in the nineteenth century. The book attempts a great deal, and certainly there will be those (including this reviewer) who will raise questions with regard to the selection criteria for the cities under study, as well as Hall's restrictive approach to the theme of "major planning projects"; one would certainly like to see more in the comparative section of the book on the role of the capital city in the emergence of the nation-state in the nineteenth century. Indeed, Hall mentions this in a number of his individual narratives–especially for Paris and Helsinki; yet this factor seems to fade into the background in the comparative section of the book. Overall, however, these issues do not detract from Hall's convincing argument regarding the continuity of urban planning history from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. Hall's book is a useful resource for understanding the challenges faced by urban planners of large cities in the nineteenth century, and it is valuable as a starting point for scholars wishing to pursue further study of urban planning in nineteenth century Europe.

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