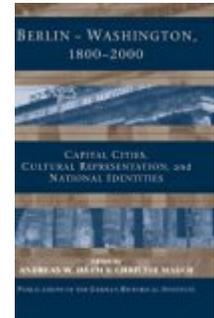


**Andreas W. Daum, Christof Mauch.** *Berlin - Washington, 1800-2000: Capital Cities, Cultural Representation, and National Identities.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 318 S. \$88.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-521-84117-7.



**Reviewed by** Daniela Sandler

**Published on** H-German (July, 2008)

This volume collects twelve essays on the functions, meanings, and spaces of Berlin and Washington as capital cities. The book, which originated in a conference, spans a wide array of themes, from literary representations of the two cities to discussions of public space, memorials, and geopolitics. The range of topics makes for a multivocal dialogue about Berlin and Washington. The essays vary in approach; some focus on facts and data, often culled from primary source documents, while others are more interpretive and synthetic. The book is broad in scope and richly nuanced, but it is neither a comprehensive account nor an introductory text. It is a collection of very focused investigations that will resonate with anyone familiar with the historical debates about these cities.

The editors announce two main threads that define the book's broader intellectual project. At the beginning of his essay, "Capital Gardens: The Mall and the Tiergarten in Comparative Perspective," Mauch asserts that by collating different case studies it is possible to "present the individual case in clearer outline" and to "identify issues

and questions that would otherwise not be recognized or asked" (p. 202). Mauch thus highlights the value of comparative studies, justifying both the thematic focus and the methodology of the book. Does the comparison between Berlin and Washington produce new understandings about each of these cities, which single-case investigations were until now unable to provide? The other editorial goal, as Andreas Daum states in his introductory essay, is to draw scholarly attention to capital cities as a field of research (p. 4). Daum implies that Washington and Berlin are significant beyond their specificities, and that their study can yield insights for theoretical formulations as well as for other case studies, comparisons, and global analyses.

These two goals pervade the chapters to varying degrees. Given the variety of approaches, the book would have benefited from a detailed discussion of how each chapter addresses the overarching themes outlined above. Although Daum briefly addresses the book as a whole in his introduction, he offers no editorial analysis of each chapter, or explanation of how the articles con-

nect to each other and fit into the book as a whole. Such an overview would have been helpful as an introduction to the reader, which is why I provide a short summary of each chapter here. More importantly, it would have been interesting to know how the editors see each contribution with relation to the whole project. The sum of the essays suggests rich thematic, conceptual, and methodological connections, but they remain unexplored in the book.

Daum develops his essay, "Capitals in Modern History: Inventing Urban Spaces for the Nation," as an overview of the roles and meanings of national capitals. Despite his attention to Washington and Berlin, the author makes an effort to include capitals from around the world, balancing examples from all continents. Daum's chapter sets an international, broad scope for the book. He suggests "typological reflections that may provide categories for a comparative and transnational study of capitals in the modern era" (p. 4). The attempt to formulate a critical framework specific to the study of modern capitals is undoubtedly relevant, as the changing nature of urbanism, culture, economics, and geopolitics periodically demands a revisiting of urban theory and history. In this sense, Daum's chapter and the whole volume provide interesting criteria and examples for the development of a field of "capital studies." However, it is debatable whether this is "a field of research that is still in an incubation phase" as Daum suggests (p. 4). Daum's own judicious literature review, abundantly cited in the footnotes and commented throughout his text, shows the wealth of critical and historical reflections on the nature of capitals in specific, comparative, and general studies. Perhaps the "incubation phase" refers to the fact that reflection on capital cities is scattered across works belonging to different disciplines, or in single-city studies that include themes besides the nature of capitals. The need seems to be for a synergistic field to coalesce out of existing lines of inquiry and contributions.

Daum also notes that globalization, while shifting "political authority from the nation-state to a supranational level" (p. 10), has not made "capital cities dispensable" in their political, symbolic, and spatial functions (p. 28). Daum's argument is persuasive, but the tension between global and national can be nuanced by the consideration of other challenges associated with globalization--for instance, the formation of regional blocs that look for spatial representation. Studies on these new formations might offer a more complex understanding of the meaning of capital cities today, and arguably merit consideration in conjunction with traditional national capitals.[1]

Each chapter relates to Daum's invocation in a different way. In "Siting Federal Capitals: The American and German Debates," Kenneth R. Bowling and Ulrike Gerhard examine the decision-making process and discussions on the location of the capital of the United States in the eighteenth century and the capital of Germany two hundred years later. The essay also spans debates from the time of the German Confederation in the nineteenth century to the postwar era under Allied occupation. Bowling and Gerhard analyze the meanings attributed to each city's specific urban circumstances ("persona"), the relationship between geographic position and national politics, and the expectations of federalist regimes. Although the authors identify these as common issues between Berlin and Washington, the three themes (persona, geopolitics, and federalism--or more generally "political regime") could arguably serve as criteria to illuminate other national capitals. Their chapter is not only a helpful overview of the siting debates, but also a fitting opener to the book as a whole, as the discussion of location introduces political, regional, and urban issues.

Martin Geyer's contribution, "Prime Meridians, National Time, and the Symbolic Authority of Capitals in the Nineteenth Century," also explores the political implications of a geographical issue: the definition of national time with relation to na-

tional and international meridians, and the keeping of time within a nation's borders. Geyer teases out the ideological overtones entangled in scientific debates about standardized time, examining for example North American resistance to the adoption of a British meridian, seen as a threat to independence, or the German enforcement of national time through a Master Clock in Berlin, which also served to affirm the authority of the Prussian city as national capital. Geyer's argument about the role of bureaucracy in nation-building and his attention to time as a locus of political and ideological authority illuminates not only the inner workings of modern nation states, but also the connections among them. Thus Geyer touches on the question of globalization and relations among national capitals in an international context. Although his essay focuses on the nineteenth century, the argument has relevant overtones for the present.[2]

This international dimension is also present in the other two chapters that make up the first section of the book, grouped under the title "The Capital in the Nation." Carl Abbott addresses globalization directly, in "Washington and Berlin: National Capitals in a Networked World," while Walter Erhart brings in foreign perspectives through the reports of travelers, in "Written Capitals and Capital Topography: Berlin and Washington in Travel Literature." Erhart's attentive account reveals a multiplicity of representations of Washington and Berlin. The diverse meanings visitors ascribed to these cities come alive in the abundant quotes woven into the text. Erhart argues that representations of Berlin and Washington followed converse trajectories over time: Berlin was initially represented as an "all too well-structured" city in the mid-nineteenth century, and as chaotic and unreadable fifty years later, while Washington was first perceived as unmanageable and lacking cohesion, and later as a site of order and tradition (p. 71). Erhart's readings of Berlin and Washington through travel literature and his consideration of what it means to read a city like

a book underscore the symbolic dimension of the built environment. His argument reinforces the value of cultural interpretation as a methodological approach. After all, as all of the essays in the book suggest, meanings and representations are as decisive in the making of a national capital as a material process.

Abbott's chapter approaches the international perspective directly through his discussion of Berlin and Washington with relation to globalization and the "network" or "information" society. Abbott provides a helpful summary of the main theories of globalization and global cities, and goes on to discuss whether Berlin and Washington fit the bill. Although neither city "makes a full run at global city status"--such as serving as a "control center of global capitalism" through corporate and financial headquarters or communication networks--Abbott insists on their international roles and significance. Avoiding the dichotomy between local and global, Abbott brings to the fore the political, cultural, and commercial importance of Berlin and Washington throughout history: for example, Berlin's cosmopolitanism in the 1920s or Washington's concentration of computer and information businesses in the present. His analysis of Berlin and Washington prompts a broader reflection on urban theory, offering a more complex account of globalization and cities, and suggesting the different ways in which a city participates in international or global activities.[3]

The essays in the second part of the book focus on "Architecture, Memory, Space." Dietmar Schirmer's "State, Volk, and Monumental Architecture in Nazi-Era Berlin" is a fresh, provocative account of civic architecture in the interwar period. Schirmer notes the prevalence of "Stripped Classicism," an "ornamentally restrained interpretation of the classical order" with a "preference for clear geometric forms" and marked by "austerity and solemnity" (p. 128). However, Stripped Classicism was marred by its use in National Socialist buildings. As Schirmer posits, art historians

have resisted acknowledging that Stripped Classicism "extended beyond the variants of authoritarianism and constituted a style" that was international and used by democracies such as the United States (p. 130). Schirmer's close analysis and description of Nazi architecture and urban planning bears this international context in mind, including examples from Washington and other cities. Despite his focus on Berlin, he contributes a broader argument to architectural history and theory, filling an important gap in scholarship.[4]

Janet Ward's "Monuments of Catastrophe: Holocaust Architecture in Washington and Berlin" provides a compact overview of the main issues and examples of Holocaust memorials and museums in the two cities. Ward connects her critique to theories of memory and representation and puts forth her own analysis of three central works of Holocaust-related architecture: Washington's United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Berlin's Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and Jewish Museum. The enormous number of publications and debates on the topic make this a challenging discussion. Ward accounts for these debates and offers an especially engaging contribution through her close reading of the architectural design, curatorial choices, and urban insertion of the three structures.

Mauch's "Capital Gardens" follows the development of two central green areas: the Mall in Washington and the Tiergarten in Berlin. Mauch's essay considers both spatial transformations and symbolic resonances, affiliating his methodological approach with Henri Lefebvre's theories. Mauch highlights the defining characteristics of each space--the changing layout and meanings ascribed to the Tiergarten, which "never reflected a consistent or authoritative reading of German history" (p. 216), in contrast with the symbolic and spatial permanence of the Mall, corresponding to continuities "peculiar to American history" (p. 216). His comparison between Washington and Berlin is not presented sequentially in separate

sections as in most of the other chapters, but intertwined carefully within the structure of the text. For example, the nineteenth-century description of the Tiergarten as a combination of lively urban park, pleasure garden, site of historical memory, and political arena sets off all the more starkly earlier incarnations of the Mall as "an unpleasant, swampy waste" (p. 207) and then as a reverential "grassy carpet" (pp. 208-209, 212-213). And his portrait of the Tiergarten as a city and neighborhood park throws light on his consideration that "the Mall has grown into Washington" and that city residents "have grown fond of" it (p. 215), suggesting that the Mall, like the Tiergarten, is also developing into a space of everyday use and recreation besides national reverence. Through this interwoven analysis, Mauch lays bare a deeper dialogical relation between the case studies than side-by-side presentations usually allow for.

Brian Ladd's "Socialism on Display: East Berlin as a Capital," the final essay in the section, provides what is in many ways an additional term to the the book's predominating binomial, and thus is an important complement and counterpoint. In this text, which combines cultural analysis and historical account, the planning of East Berlin as the capital of the GDR emerges as a complex, often contradictory endeavor. Ladd foregrounds changing practices and directives in governmental architecture, memorials, housing, and heritage, which shifted according to political turns in East Germany and in the Soviet bloc more generally. While the text underscores the impact of politics and ideology on urban planning, it also shows that it is impossible to establish a univocal, reductive correspondence between aesthetic expression and political meaning, a point also made by Schirmer. It would have been interesting to extend the investigation and explore similar issues with relation to Washington either in the same essay or in a separate chapter, especially since the history of Washington--just as

the history of Berlin--is ingrained in the cultural and political landscape of the Cold War.

The last section, "Political Power and Capital Functions," starts with "Washington under Federal Rule, 1871-1945," in which Alan H. Lessoff maps out the urban development of Washington with relation to its governance system and the division of power and functions between federal and local agencies. Strong federal control over funding and personnel created problems of local democratic representation and made the city vulnerable to political tensions that arose between the House of Representatives and the Senate. However, Lessoff also highlights the advantages of centralized federal control. Bent on constructing a representative national capital, the federal government allotted the large expenditures of time and resources needed to build the civic spaces of Washington--for instance, the early-twentieth-century expansion and revision of the original urban plan, which polished the city according to City Beautiful tenets. Lessoff ponders these issues against the backdrop of Berlin, where overlapping or warring bureaucracies also created challenges for urban planning and administration. One of the most interesting aspects of Lessoff's article is his attention to race. Noting the high percentage of African-American residents in Washington and the division within the urban elite on the issue of segregation, the author argues that federal control over the city (as opposed to self-governance and elected officials) was partly a way to prevent African Americans from voting. As a result, this city--with embattled levels of administration and lingering tensions about funding and representation--developed as a capital of contrasts, plagued by inner-city destitution surrounded by a belt of white suburban wealth. Lessoff's attention to race touches on a fulcrum point of politics, culture, and space in Washington and in Berlin. In the case of Washington, the exacerbated contrasts between racial tensions, suburban wealth, and a magnificent civic central area seem not so much

failures as inadvertent representations of contrasts that pervade the whole country.

The second essay in the section is Belinda Davis's "'Everyday' Protest and the Culture of Conflict in Berlin, 1830-1980." Davis provides an attentive history of street confrontations among different social groups, and between these groups and the police. Davis focuses on informal, localized, and small-scale clashes--the "everyday" of the title, as opposed to planned or major demonstrations. In doing so, she makes a convincing case for the "culture of conflict" as part of a collective trait in the identity of Berliners, which is as much a product of social practices and circumstances as it is a self-constructed "fiction" or "invented tradition" (p. 267). Whether associated with Prussian authoritarianism, socioeconomic demands, Nazi repression, or postwar countercultures, the myriad street outbursts in Berlin point to a persistent attitude towards urban space and political, social, or cultural conflicts. Davis argues that the readiness to take to the streets has been at least partly a way to express demands or agendas and exercise rights when no other means were available. Citizens literally pushed out of their cramped living quarters transformed the streets into a public sphere. Although Davis does not explicitly assert this, her argument seems to imply that citizens were also pushed out of other possible arenas for political discussion--representative democratic structures, for example--and hence hashed out their differences in the street. While decrying the violence of these clashes (especially repressive police violence) as a "less constructive" element (p. 284), Davis appears sympathetic to the participatory and potentially emancipating character of everyday protests.

Lucy Barber's "Marches on Washington and the Creation of National Public Spaces, 1894 to the Present" is a fitting complement to the previous essay. Not only does it focus on Washington, but it also looks at more organized and central demonstrations. Barber maps out the appropriation of

urban spaces by social groups for marches, demonstrations, and protests from the end of the nineteenth century to the present. She reveals initial government plans for protecting the capital from the distractions and disruptions of popular manifestations through controlled spaces devoted to official ceremonies and displays of power. In tension with these plans, key demonstrations such as the march of Coxe's Army in 1894, the women's suffrage parade in 1913, and the civil rights march of 1963 claimed a material and symbolic realm for political demands, dissent, and representation. Barber identifies this realm as a "national public space"--a refinement of what she calls the "amorphous concept of the 'public sphere'" (p. 286). Her distinction between sphere and space is pertinent, especially given her focus on actual places such as Pennsylvania Avenue, the Mall, and the Capitol grounds. Barber deftly integrates her account of social interactions and political goals with a consideration of physical space, avoiding a common pitfall of studies on the topic, which tend to focus on only one of these dimensions. Her essay presents a compelling analysis of the production and transformation of spaces through the interplay of design, policy, social practice, and symbolic representation.[5] While Barber suggests that the success of citizens in ensuring governmental approval for public marches paradoxically works against their spontaneity and critical virulence, her careful account of these demonstrations offers hope that democratic public spaces might be continually engendered elsewhere despite official co-optation or repression. At the same time, Barber offers a less optimistic note when considering that recent concerns about security and terrorist threats, as well as tourist development, are encroaching upon national public spaces. Yet the essay also offers a hopeful insight. The Mall, Barber argues, "has become a popular forum for demonstrations that often have more to do with changing public opinion than specific federal policies," and it is now "a place for citizens to draw attention to their place in the na-

tion" (p. 300). This expanded view of public space and social action, coupled with the emergence of interactive media such as the Internet, might provide new possibilities for participation--and new avenues for research.

As a whole, the volume is a valuable contribution that complements the extensive literature on Berlin and Washington, rounding off existing debates. While readers familiar with the scholarship on either city will not necessarily be surprised by most of the ideas and information in the book (not least due to the extensive work of the contributors, whose books and articles are well established in the field), the comparison between Berlin and Washington does indeed highlight certain issues that do not always take central stage in single-case investigations. The articles also raise questions about the relationship between Berlin and Washington--although most of these questions are outlined rather than fully developed or answered, certainly due to the limited space of an essay collection. More interestingly, the unique angle provided by these comparisons hints at their theoretical and critical repercussions for other cities. For instance, Mauch's insights on the Tiergarten and the Mall could create an interesting background for a critique of the Monumental Axis in Brasilia; Barber's and Davis's studies on popular demonstrations could be complemented by the case of the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires; and the travel literature on Washington and Berlin that Erhart examines could be compared with travelers' accounts of colonial or peripheral capitals outside of Europe and North America. As Daum's introduction makes clear, the comparison between Washington and Berlin holds interest not solely (or even mainly) in itself, but also for the possibilities it harbors for the study of all capital cities in an international context--and for the conceptual redefinition of "capital cities" in the first place.

Notes

[1]. See Carola Hein's *The Capital of Europe: Architecture and Urban Planning for the European Union* (Westport: Praeger, 2004), which reflects on the unique roles and meanings of capitals with relation to the "new polity" represented by the European Union.

[2]. Last December, for example, President Hugo Chavez changed the time zone of Venezuela, ostensibly to allow for a "more fair distribution of sunlight," but presumably as a political statement of independence from the United States. "Country to Change Time Zone by Thirty Minutes," in *Reuters*, August 24, 2007, <http://www.reuters.com/article/oddlyEnoughNews/idUS-N2328980320070824> ; "Venezuela Creates Its Own Time Zone," in *BBC News*, December 9, 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7134927.stm> , last accessed June 22, 2008.

[3]. Allan Cochrane and Adrian Passmore make a similar argument for a more nuanced account of global hierarchies based on their analysis of Berlin as a city in the process of "worlding," although not quite global. Cochrane and Passmore also address the issue of national capitals, touching on many themes relevant to this volume. See Cochrane and Passmore, "Building a National Capital in an Age of Globalization: The Case of Berlin," *Area* 33 (2001): 341-352. See also Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy* (Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 2000); and Peter Newman and Andy Thornley, *Planning World Cities: Globalization and Urban Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

[4]. The theme of "Stripped Classicism" as an international style in the interwar years makes only a brief appearance in just a few critical surveys, such as Leonardo Benevolo's *History of Modern Architecture* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), Kenneth Frampton's *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), and Spiro Kostoff's *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). Wolfgang Schivel-

busch's *The Three New Deals: Reflections of Roosevelt's America, Mussolini's Italy, and Hitler's Germany, 1933-1939* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006) offers a more direct and in-depth comparison, but focuses on public works and policies rather than architecture and urban design.

[5]. Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991) would have been an illuminating reference, as his theory of the social production of space would have enriched Barber's approach and conclusions. In this regard, and also with relation to subject matter, Barber's article has the potential to create an interesting dialogue with Mauch's chapter on the Mall and the Tiergarten. This is an example of how an editorial essay could have deepened the interconnections among chapters, making thematic threads explicit and pushing the book beyond the sum of its parts.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <https://networks.h-net.org/h-german>

**Citation:** Daniela Sandler. Review of Daum, Andreas W.; Mauch, Christof. *Berlin - Washington, 1800-2000: Capital Cities, Cultural Representation, and National Identities*. H-German, H-Net Reviews. July, 2008.

**URL:** <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=14731>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.