

### disP 2017 Kolumne 3

This year's columns celebrate the history of planning. Historical research is a vigorous field in its own right. Historical awareness is an essential ingredient of education, policy and professional practice. That's the lesson I take from the career of the late Sir Peter Hall as planner and historian of planning. Peter was my PhD supervisor at the University of Reading in 1970-73 and I became his colleague at the Bartlett School of Planning at UCL for the final two years of his life, 2012-14. Writing obituaries and commemorative essays since his death has made me very aware of the intimate connection between these two aspects of his work, planning for the future and learning from the past <sup>1</sup>.

In 1970 Peter was very much a man of the future, with his yellow Audi in the fast lane of the newly-built M4 motorway. In 1963 his book *London 2000* had set out a famously bold vision for the future of the capital in the coming era of universal automobility. His department at Reading pioneered the latest scientific techniques for numerical modelling of population, land use and transport, together with the cybernetic control methods for rational systems planning. At our first doctoral supervision meeting he encouraged me to read *The Year 2000* by the thermonuclear war strategist and futurologist Herman Kahn of the Rand Corporation. Planning was about looking ahead.

Coming from a humanities background as an Oxford historian who had specialised in the later Roman Empire, I hated Herman Kahn and took some time to recognise that my supervisor wasn't just another techno-positivist 'rational

man'. In fact he was profoundly interested in the discipline of history. His first book, based on his Cambridge doctoral thesis and published in 1962, had been *The Industries of London*, a historical geography of manufacturing in the city since 1851. Besides its analysis of sectoral and spatial change the book contained a large dose of planning history, excessive concentration of industry in the London region having become a national policy issue in the 1930s and a key factor in setting up the postwar system of urban growth management and planned industrial location. So *Industries of London* provided the germ of Hall's massive two-volume evaluation of *The Containment of Urban England* published in 1973, with its excellent narratives of the emergence of planning policy, nationally and within specific city-regions. After that his historical work branched in two directions, following the evolution of thinking about urban reform on the one hand, and the spatial impact of technological innovation on the other. The first route led to *Cities of Tomorrow: an Intellectual History of Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century* (1988), a classic of the reading lists in multiple translations and four successive editions. The second led through various strands of work on the history of transport, telecommunications, information technology, manufacturing sectors and media industries which became knitted together in the most ambitious of all his books, *Cities in Civilization* (1998), a hefty comparative study of the role of cities as innovative milieux through two and a half millennia of human history. Active as a founder member of the Planning History Group in 1974 and the International Planning History Society in 1993, Peter Hall continued to contribute prolifically as a public lecturer and conference speaker on historical topics. Just a week before his death

he contributed an editorial piece to the history journal *Planning Perspectives*, on whose editorial board he had served since its launch thirty years previously.

Peter's interest in history was never just antiquarian. He studied the past to make sense of the present and discern the future, hence the fascination with Joseph Schumpeter's and Nikolai Kondratieff's theories of long-run economic cycles which can be seen in *The Carrier Wave*, the study of waves of technological innovation that he coauthored with Paschal Preston and published in 1988, with its diachronic time-frame of 1846 to 2003. In his last decades he turned to Ebenezer Howard and the late nineteenth century Garden City movement to provide inspiration for twenty-first century dilemmas of sustainable development. This was the message of *Sociable Cities: the 21st-century reinvention of the Garden City*, a book originally co-authored with Colin Ward in 1998 which he revised and reissued in the year of his death, 2014.

Another book published in 2014 was *Good Cities, Better Lives: how Europe discovered the lost art of urbanism*. Three years on, in the dismal context of Brexit, it's good to reopen this fresh account of best practice in Germany, Netherlands, France, Denmark and Sweden, with its powerful conclusion on Britain's need to learn lessons from Europe. Like his friend Klaus Kunzmann, Peter Hall was a great European. Forty years ago his book *Europe 2000* (1977) won the Bentinck Prize as an outstanding contribution to European integration. Analysis. It marked the start of a continuous thread of work, stretching through *Growth Centres in the European Urban System* (with Dennis Hay, 1980), *Urban 21: der Expertbericht zur Zukunft der Städte* [with Ulrich Pfeiffer, 2000] and *The*

*Polycentric Metropolis: Learning from Mega-City Regions in Europe* (with Kathryn Pain, 2006) to his final research project, SINTROPER, a €24.4 million study of rail and tram infrastructure across five regions of northern Europe.

Just as Peter saw historical research as a window on times to come, so his rich geographical knowledge was always a means of discerning emergent trends. As a Cambridge undergraduate his interest in planning had first been aroused by seeing the planned suburbs of Copenhagen and Stockholm during summer vacation trips to Scandinavia. In the middle part of his career, when he was teaching at Berkeley with Silicon Valley on the doorstep, he wrote extensively about California's information technology revolution and its lessons for the rest of the world. His *Technopoles of the World: the Making of 21st-Century Industrial Complexes* (with Manuel Castells, 1994) included extensive research on South East Asian science parks. But from the time of Peter Hall's return to England in 1992, Europe became his principal focus. Nobody better expressed the distinctiveness of social and environmental values in European cities, and their tangible outcome in terms of high-quality transport infrastructure, equitable lifestyle, cultural achievement and low carbon footprints.

*Good Cities, Better Lives: how Europe discovered the lost art of urbanism: not bad, is it, as the title for your fifty-second book, published at the age of 82? Peter, hats off to you, you are sorely missed today.*

*[c. 7,300 characters with spaces]*

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<sup>1</sup> For details of Peter Hall's life-work, including references to all the books mentioned in this column, see Michael Hebbert (2017) 'Professor Sir Peter Hall 1932-2014' *Geographers' Biobibliographical Studies*, eds E. Baigent and A. Novas Reyes, Vol 36; Michael Batty (2016), 'Peter Geoffrey Hall, 1932–2014', *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the British Academy* 15, 413–42; Richard Knowles & Céline Rozenblat (2016), *Sir Peter Hall: Pioneer in Regional Planning, Transport and Urban Geography* UK: Springer.