

Cities and their Spaces. Concepts and their Use in Europe. Edited by Michel Pauly and Martin Scheutz. Cologne–Weimar–Vienna: Böhlau, 2014. 324 pp.

Urban settlement has always had a strong and complex spatial dimension. According to some definitions, one of the main distinctive criteria between towns and villages is precisely the more sophisticated topography of the former. Every town or city develops its unique structure and built form, which undergoes changes over time, providing ample food for thought for many branches of historical research. One might think that the spatial turn in history writing, which has been acknowledged now for a long time, would have been particularly welcome among urban historians. Indeed, as noted in the introduction to the present volume (which was written by its two editors), the localization of various features in urban space has always been on the agenda of scholars of a city's past. The identification of particular buildings or neighborhoods and the ties they had to families or social groups have been familiar themes in praises of towns, city chronicles, and academic works alike. From the perspective of methodology, however, urban history can strongly benefit from the sociologically and theoretically inspired new wave of modern and post-modern spatial studies, which are presented in the volume in Keith Lilley's essay on "Conceptualizing the City." After having been engaged for centuries with the questions of "who, what and where," urban historians have now been prompted by these new impulses to engage more systematically with the issue of "how?" and—no less important—"why?"

The book reviewed here does a great service by extending the scope of up-to-date spatial inquiries, or at least providing good raw material for them, concerning cities in regions that are often neglected in this context or studied within the boundaries of national paradigms (and languages). The reason for this greater openness is that the present collection of 19 articles (14 in English, 4 in German, and an introduction in both—one gratefully acknowledges the efforts of the editors to have the articles translated) is based on two conferences of the International Commission for the History of Towns (ICHT) organized in Sibiu (Hermannstadt) and Prague, both of which welcomed a good number of local speakers and participants. These two cities at the same time are home to institutions that have been active in editing and publishing the *Historic Towns Atlas* series of their respective countries. Knowledge of primary sources and recent

research on the spatial development of a good number of towns is therefore readily available.

It follows logically from these premises that the great flagship enterprise of the ICHT, the towns' atlases, are utilized as reference works in many of the articles here. Ferdinand Oppl, the editor-in-chief of the already completed Austrian atlas series, shows new ways of using the toponyms on the maps and in the topographical gazetteers (mainly in the Irish atlas series) for comparative research. Regarding the example of the names of gates and suburbs that lay beyond them, he offers a typology of naming patterns as reflections of spatial thinking and awareness of the hinterland and its main contact points. His study demonstrates that it is well worth pursuing comparisons in the cases of other kinds of urban toponyms on a European scale.

The four studies connected to the territory of modern-day Romania also draw on many examples from towns that have been included in the atlas series. Paul Niedermaier, the initiator of the Romanian atlas project and author of multiple volumes on urban development in Transylvania, follows his own hypothetical-deductive method, suggesting previous phases of development by studying the plot-patterns on cadastral maps. While one may express some skepticism concerning the accuracy of the reconstructions and their dating, the processes of the “genesis of closed spaces” and market infill that he describes with reference to the example of Sebeş (Szászsebes, Mühlbach), Sibiu, Sighișoara (Segesvár, Schäßburg) and other settlements have parallels in many towns of Europe. His disciple, Maria Crîngaci Țiplic, examines the relationship between trade privileges and the evolution of urban space in the same three towns. It is indeed worthwhile looking at these two phenomena in parallel, but it is difficult to distinguish cause and effect, especially knowing that the pace at which the kings “followed up” on the development of commercial contacts with administrative measures depended a great deal on royal policy. It is also important to distinguish which kinds of privileges actually had local impact. Liberation from paying customs at faraway places could have at best indirect consequences, whereas, for instance, staple right resulting in increased need for storage could indeed influence the structure of the merchants' houses and the use of public space, as has also been demonstrated in the case of Hanseatic towns.

Urban development in the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia is discussed in the articles by Laurențiu Rădvan, the author of a comprehensive monograph on the subject, and Dan Dumitru Iacob. Rădvan's well-balanced

analysis follows long-term processes in the shaping of streets and plot structure and the roles of monasteries between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries. He clearly distinguishes between the first period, when the influx of German and Hungarian settlers via Poland and Transylvania brought along a “systematic topographical outline of inhabited space,” whereas from the sixteenth century onwards colonists arriving from the Balkans and the Levant spread other models of organizing space, such as the wide areas of bazaars and the encroachment of orthodox monasteries, which in the long run contributed to reductions in urban autonomy. Jacob’s study takes up the story from this point and describes the modernization of the markets of Iași in the nineteenth century. He considers commercial streets and zones both in the center and the suburbs and explains how the carefully crafted projects of creating civic or parade squares were carried out by local authorities.

Similar sets of questions concerning the centers and central marketplaces are taken up by Roman Czaja in his discussion of cities in the territory of modern-day Poland, taking Elbląg (Elbing) as the central example. Czaja observes a strong conservative tendency in retaining the medieval main square as a commercial and community center and even keeping the fortifications intact. It was partly due to major town fires or to the unavoidable need for modernization in the nineteenth century that the medieval inner city lost its exclusive role as the most important urban space, although it still retained its role as a platform for public rituals and a social meeting place. The phenomenon of incremental growth is demonstrated by the maps of Görlitz, Auma (in Thuringia), Bruneck (in Tirol) and Ljubljana in Karlheinz Blaschke’s contribution. The German historian has dedicated the work of a lifetime and several monographs to plot the churches dedicated to St. Nicholas and the adjoining merchants’ settlements as catalysts of “spontaneous development” of urban spatial structure.

Abandoning the order of the volume, I complete my look at the range of contributions on Central Europe with two studies on medieval and Early Modern Bohemia. Martin Musilek’s investigation of property transactions in the Old Town of Prague in a relatively short period between 1351 and 1367 seems to imply a micro-historical approach, but as the author points out, these seventeen years capture an important moment of transformation of the urban elite from an old stock of merchants to a new, more craftsmen-dominated group of house-owners and council members. One may wonder if the Black Death of 1347–49 had any impact on this shift, although there is no reference to this in the article. However, the similarity of this process to the changes in Buda’s leading

elite a few decades later makes it seem likely that such a change would have taken place in any case. In Robert Šimůnek's study on towns as "theatres" of sacral representation Prague plays rather a supporting role, while the center stage is taken by Český Krumlov, from where an exceptionally detailed fourteenth-century description of the local Corpus Christi procession has survived. The author explains the importance of such an exercise in the visualization of social hierarchies and also touches on some of the changes at the turn of the fifteenth century.

On the western periphery of Europe, Ireland has set a new trend in topographical research with its high quality town atlases, which include detailed and informative gazetteers. This series is the basis for the articles by Anngret Simms and Howard B. Clarke, two of the great movers and shakers of the atlas project on a European scale. Simms provides a masterly example of the comparative use of three atlases, those of Tuam, Armagh and Limerick, highlighting the impact of the Reformation on the uses of urban space. She points out that due to the political circumstances, i.e. the close association of Reformation and colonization in Ireland, resisting the new movement and reestablishing the Catholic Church in particular quarters of the towns in question can be considered a form of ethnic survival. Her study can be instructive for scholars investigating the topographical impact of the dissolution of monasteries in any other part of Europe, too. Clarke's insightful analysis of the hinterlands of medieval Dublin offers an overview of the main directions of contacts and their changes over time in five periods from the eighth century to 1500. His study also points out the importance of assembling the evidence from the broadest possible spectrum of sources for periods when no administrative records are available, from place-names to church dedications or the distribution of church prebends or special types of pottery produced in Dublin.

Remaining with the topic of hinterlands, Jean-Pierre Poussou discusses this issue in the case of the four largest French port cities, Bordeaux, Nantes, Rouen/Le Havre and Marseille. He examines whether there was a relationship of dominance or relative interdependence between the big ports that were (with the exception of Marseille) by estuaries of rivers 50-120 kilometers away from the open sea, the smaller outer harbors and the settlements along the same rivers or beyond, on the mainland. He also examines the change caused by the increasing volume of colonial trade, especially with the West Indies in the eighteenth century, which reinforced "the primacy of the large ports." Hinterlands are also the subject of inquiry in Caroline Le Mao's contribution on the provisioning

of French maritime arsenals with the most essential raw materials, particularly wood, in the late seventeenth century. Although these large military-industrial complexes were established and run not by towns but by the absolutist state, according to Le Mao, “a town and its arsenal were inextricably linked,” thus their well-researched system of transport infrastructure has relevance for the civilian aspects of urban life as well. The fourth article concerning hinterlands, by Máximo Diago Hernando, offers a broad overview of the territorial politics of Spanish towns from the eleventh to the nineteenth centuries. His concept of hinterland is more legal than economic, unlike the two French contributions presented above. He shows that towns in the kingdoms of León-Castile and Aragon received by royal decree large territories to control in order to foster the colonization of areas reconquered from Muslim rule. Later, the controlled estates were often reduced due to the crown’s actions to donate or sell some villages, while the towns, especially in Aragon, managed to purchase more land for their lordships. In any case, strong royal supervision remained the defining factor.

Rosemary Sweet’s analysis stands out because of her decision to focus on the “conceptualization and cultural production of historic urban space rather than its purely physical manifestation,” connecting closely to the postmodern agenda outlined by Keith Lilley’s introductory essay. She eloquently demonstrates how, through the combined effect of a growing body of knowledge on the architectural heritage of cities and towns and the increasing modernization in a time of rapid urban change (“uncovering Roman sewers while digging their own”), views and value judgments on urban space have changed. Her examples refer to Rome and Britain, but similar inquiries can and should be profitably extended to other parts of the continent, including the Kingdom of Hungary in the nineteenth century.

Finally, two articles discuss urban space in modern and post-modern times. Lars Nilsson describes processes in Stockholm between 1860 and 2010 to show changes in the town planning strategies in certain neighborhoods of the inner and the outer city. Two of the most instructive questions raised here are the recovery and restructuring of the Inner City in the face of deindustrialization and the impact of spatial transformations on social inequalities and segregation. Peter Clark traces the emergence and typology of green spaces in cities, from promenades and parks to recreation grounds, allotment gardens and private gardens. His focus, however, is more social than spatial, looking for agents of change and the interest groups benefitting from them.

The essays in this volume, which were written by prominent urban historians from all over Europe, clearly demonstrate that the study of cities and their spaces is rewarding. As Anngret Simms emphasizes, cities and settlements “reflect historical processes” and long-term changes over time. She adds that “large-scale topographical maps ... communicate cultural meaning and as such, we should learn how to read these maps as the expression of cultural shifts.” The validity of her statement goes beyond Irish towns and should be a helpful reminder to all readers, and some of the authors too. Many of the articles use maps skillfully to demonstrate their point, while others unfortunately are not supported with visual materials, although their authors definitely used them in their research. Another minor shortcoming is the lack of mention of historic place names and the failure to provide a proper gazetteer of these names, especially in the case of Transylvania. In sum, the main value of the book lies, in addition to the practical information it contains, in the relevant and thought-provoking questions that may be, *mutatis mutandis*, posed across regions and over time, questions that will increase our understanding not only of urban space, but also of those who created, inhabited and perceived them.

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