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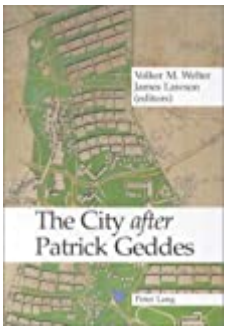

Volker M Welter, James Lawson, eds. *The City after Patrick Geddes.* Oxford and New York: Peter Lang, 2000. 294 pp. $58.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8204-4642-4.

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As its title suggests, this excellent book is not so much about Patrick Geddes as about urban and regional planning in the 1920s and 1930s ("the modernist debate about the City"). Geddes's influence is emphasized, but it remains as opaque as ever, especially as his impressive work in India is not discussed here. However, the reader is made well aware of the continuity of internationalism from the early 1900s to the post-war years, with Geddes playing a major part. Geddes's foundation of the Indian College at Montpellier in 1929 was symbolic of his commitment, even though it was not eventually a success.

By the 1920s, most European countries had national town planning legislation. Much of the USA had zoning. The development of planning practice encouraged planning theorists and training programs. The post-war city did not look greatly different from its immediate predecessor, but two innovations had a growing effect. These were public housing and motor transport, both present before 1914 but peripheral to the functioning of the city. Public housing encouraged architects to develop new building forms and building methods and to join in the debates on town planning. Modernism (the International Style) was the main result, but Art Deco, expressionism, Socialist Realism, national styles (as in the Nordic countries), neo-classicism, the National Socialist styles, and (Streamline) Moderne also came on the scene in various places and at various times. The single-family house became the dominant ideal in the USA, Britain, and much of northern Europe, while elsewhere architects wrestled with the problems of high-density housing in tenements and apartments.

Outstanding among the new planning concepts was regionalism, which linked town and country. Ecological and cultural studies now joined in. Regionalism had been one of Geddes's main interests since before the war, and it was one of his biggest–though not always acknowledged–contributions to the post-war planning debate. As for his childlike "thinking machines"–folded paper divided into segments–no one but Geddes seems to have been able to make them work. So often, Geddes seems to have been an inspiring presence rather than a convincing theorist. Iain Boyd Whyte's essay relates Geddes to Nietzsche and other great visionary philosophers of the turn of the century, but clinching evidence is often lacking. Whyte's interest in religion, folklore, and geomancy in the interpretation of architecture stretches well beyond Geddes and reflects some of the more adventurous thinking of our "post-modern" era. In a comparable essay, David Matless, one of the growing breed

of cultural geographers, writes on Geddes's regional and local surveys, moving from Geddes to his own rather advanced ideas on what we may call "the subjectification of space," for the want of a better term. Readers are likely to conclude from Matless that the regional survey is as dead as a dodo, except as an excuse for opaque scholarly articles.

Murdo Macdonald brings us down to earth with his claim that Geddes, the great generalist, was a predictable product of Scottish education. Many of Geddes's distinguished contemporaries, we learn, were also generalists. Macdonald will help many of us with his explanations of the Outlook Tower, thinking machines, and the Notation of Life (a complex thinking machine).

Sofia Leonard provides a very helpful review of Geddes's overseas contacts, mostly in Europe. Though Mumford's failure to create a personal bond with Geddes is well known, his presence at international exhibitions helped numerous contemporaries to get to know him personally. He seems to have been most at home with French people; his influence on Germany in the 1920s passed mainly through Raymond Unwin. Curiously, his command of languages remains a little obscure. Later in the essay, Leonard does a good job on Geddes's British contacts and on his influence on British town planning, education, and research.

The "after Geddes" contributions shed much light on the inter-war years. Christiane Collins pursues her interest in Werner Hegemann, her cumulative research method generating fresh information and mature conclusions at a number of points. She adds to our knowledge of Hegemann's involvement in the Berlin exhibition of 1910 and in his contemporary exhibition planning in the USA. She uncovers a Catalan Geddesian, Cebri Montoliu, who established a civic museum in Barcelona. Edward K. Spann studies the Regional Planning Association of America from 1923 to 1938, including the Geddes-Mumford connection. This important organisation is often confused, even by Americans, with the Regional Planning Association that was active in the New York region. Although the TVA fell short of RPAA ideals, the albeit tenuous link between New Deal planning and Patrick Geddes is one of the many revelations in this book. Lewis Mumford is the subject of an attractive and informative article by Robert Wojtowicz, stressing his links with Geddes. Volker Welter introduces Artur Glikson, an influential planner in Palestine between the wars, who owed much to Geddes. Catherine Bruant discusses Alfred Agache, one of France's most distinguished architect-planners in the early twentieth century.

The remaining essays move beyond Geddes and into a more architectural realm. Rosa Tamborrino deals with the work of Saverio Muratori in planning the Venice lagoon in the 1950s. This is a purely architectural piece, a fragmentary episode in Italian urban history. Mary Ashton's study of "Tomorrow town," an Architectural Association School of Architecture project in 1937-8, reveals the interesting struggles over modernism at the School, but the influence of Gropius and Le Corbusier was, as one would expect in this environment, clearly much greater than that of Geddes. In fact, the idebt of the Unit Master, Eric Rowse, to Patrick Geddes is never more than asserted.

Two essays look boldly to the future. Miles Glendinning, an architect, tries to summon up the posthumous support of Patrick Geddes for his own concept of "Clone City." American devotees of the equally vague concept of "Edge City" will wonder how many city types there are and how many more will be created in the next few years. He claims that the influence of Geddes passed through Robert Matthew, "the dominant figure in the Scottish Modernist architectural and planning movement during the years from 1945 to 1975… He was in many respects the main heir of Geddes's philosophy in Scotland, and also in England." If you say so, Miles! But the implied link between Geddes and Glasgow's high-rise public housing is no more credible than a link between Geddes and scampi and fries. Erik Wirn's "Planning for an uncertain future" contains rather more uncertainties than the future does. It is based on a collection of "icons" (of the computer screen variety), some of which we can consult in the appendix. The "icons" are defined in the text. I shall not describe the "icons" in case readers of this review think I am making this up. But the ying-and-yang icon is just the start. This reviewer has been informed that writings of this type, which recall the outer fringes of cultural studies, are par-for-the-course in planning and geography these days. The trouble is that using Geddes to justify self-indulgent and boring whimsy will devalue the Geddes tradition.

A wide-ranging collection like this can tolerate a few lemons. The absence of an index is more serious, and it is surprising that the publisher has tolerated it. However, the fifty-three plates are a big asset. Overall, this has been a valuable enterprise, and it has definitely enlarged our understanding of Patrick Geddes and his influence on modern planning.

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