

Sir Peter Hall

He did so much to influence our planning and our city.

Professor Sir Peter Hall died at the end of July after a short illness. As befits one of the heroes and popularisers of planning at a global scale, obituaries have been appearing in a steady stream and more are surely to come. This memorial note does not seek to run over the ground so ably covered in the best of these, some of which are noted at the end.

These words are simply an appreciation of Peter Hall's contribution to the planning of London – and probably an incomplete one. Those who can add to the narrative are urged to do so.

Peter Hall contributed to London partly through his research. His PhD on London's industry was published as *The City: The Industries of London Since 1861* (1962) That book remains the foundation for our understanding of the enduring importance of the interlocking and dynamic clusters of production activities – now under unprecedented threat from the housing bubble and from de-regulated planning. He went on to write *London 2000* (1963), a unique adventure in visioning alternative futures for the city, a book which inspired subsequent generations to think of the city as something which we collectively make and which could be managed to meet human needs and exploit technical possibilities – albeit with the motor car then the dominant technology.

One of his abiding commitments was to forensic studies of what went wrong: of the unintended consequences of past plans. The most important of these was *The Containment of Urban England* (1969) which identified in detail the negative as well as the positive consequences of the Abercrombie-inspired post-war planning of South East England, foreseeing some of the crippling problems we now experience.

Throughout the 60s, 70s and later years Peter Hall was active in writing on planning issues and influencing policy, partly at the regional scale through various South East studies and projects (his advocacy of the M25 headlined the *FT* obituary) but also in terms of regeneration and detailed planning.

In particular his work with Cedric Price, Paul Barker and Reyner Banham on Non-Plan (which appeared as a special issue of *New Society* in 1969) gave birth to what became the idea of the Enterprise Zone, modeled on his understanding of Hong Kong's success, and which was picked up by Michael Heseltine, albeit in a form Peter criticized. So he has some role in enabling Canary Wharf.

Equally influential was the vast POLYNET research project he completed for the EU with Cathy Paine on polycentric metropolitan mega-regions, helping us to understand the complex inter-dependence of networked towns and to compare our-



selves with the Ruhr, Randstadt and Nord Pas de Calais as much as with New York and Tokyo.

More recently, in the late 90s, Peter returned to his long-standing commitment to improve the functioning of non-central parts of London, undertaking a commission from the London Development Partnership and the RTPI London Branch to advise on the city's polycentric economy outside the centre – a project in which he worked with Drummond Robson and myself. In the report, designed to be on the desk of whoever was elected as London's first Mayor, he prioritized the creation of orbital public transport routes including what later came to be the London Overground outer circle. The scheme gained strong support from Nicky Gavron, a long-standing heroine of London planning, who became the first Deputy Mayor and helped the idea come to fruition in Ken Livingstone's TfL plans. (The idea had earlier been floated in a memorable talk to the London Planning and Development Forum in the mid-90s.)

This project, low in cost and successful beyond anyone's wildest dreams, must surely be Peter Hall's most tangible and positive legacy for his home city. The fact that it is accelerating gentrification at most of its new stations points up a weakness of the whole London planning system: our collective failure to ensure the equitable distribution of benefits from almost every instance of good planning.

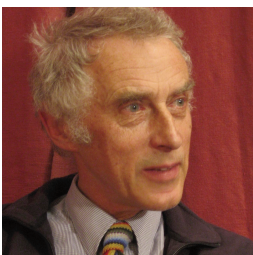
Peter Hall was passionate for implementation and was willing to advise governments of any political hue if he saw scope for getting adventurous projects adopted and completed. Thus his last major public appearance was sharing a platform with Michael Heseltine, Andrew Adonis and Ben Rogers this February to re-launch the Thames Gateway – another of his grand designs.

He will be sorely missed by students—whose needs he stoutly defended within the University—as well as by professionals and active Londoners. He did so much to influence our planning and our city.

Above all I value him as someone who welcomed argument, even with those, like me, who often disagreed with him.

Note: David Lock wrote in *the Guardian* and at greater length in *Town and Country Planning* – an issue of the TCPA journal which also reprinted the nearest thing to an autobiography Peter Hall ever wrote.

Mark Tewdwr-Jones and Nick Phelps have speedily constructed a detailed appreciation of his work in *Regional Studies* 2014. ■



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