

Sir Peter Hall - Reflections On A Lifetime Of Town Planning



Late planning guru and geographer Sir Peter Hall. Photograph: Graham Turner

theguardian.com. October 2014. At the beginning of the first world war, town planning was very much in its infancy. Indeed, one hundred years on, it is hard to appreciate how modest were the beginnings of planning as a profession, and as a subject for university education. Very few local authorities had the resources to secure the services of a professional, even had they desired to do so.

Later, during the government's post-war reconstruction, when priority was given to the preparation of local authority housing schemes to meet a national need for some 40,000 additional homes, planning was left behind again. It was only in the 1960s, when the relationship between the sciences and architecture was realised, that academic research became at all significant in the field of planning.

The late '60s saw a planning boom. There was a national plan, and a second wave of new towns including Milton Keynes, Northampton and Peterborough came into being. Every region had a Regional Economic Planning Council; the south-east strategy proposed to link London to these new towns, and to other major developments at the edge of the region, by discontinuous growth corridors along main railway lines and the motorway network, then in mid-construction. In 1967, the peak year for housing completions in the UK, local planning departments were being reorganised to take on the challenges, staffed by multiskilled young planners who were emerging from fast-expanding planning schools - including

new and unconventional ones - with radical new curriculums.

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