politics of sexuality demonstrates very well, in its focus on homosexuality, how the everyday spaces of mundane heterosexuality remain hidden, whereas the spaces of homosexuality are more evident because of stringent law, regulation and spatial planning. Finally, a chapter on urban planning chronicles various efforts across the Continent to effect logical, rational and apparently neutral management of urban spaces and populations. The latter is perhaps the weakest chapter because much of the rest of the book is focused on the spaces left for resistance by legislative authorities, the establishment and capital – spaces in which alternative practices and ideas could establish themselves and evolve – whereas this chapter concerns restriction and control.

Streetlife's chapters are not structured by the spatial foci of the book and instead are set out thematically and chronologically. This is not then a book about geography, but it might be frustrating to some geographers and maybe historians too that the spaces that are the subject of the book are not systematically explored. Do for instance the everyday spaces of work (the canteen, the workshop) play different transformative political roles to the everyday spaces of leisure (the cinema, the living room, the dance hall)? The answer to this question is in the book but it is not drawn out explicitly. Similarly, there tends to be a slippage in the account between the meaning of key geographical terms, especially space and place. And, again in terms of geographical sensibilities, despite some explicit recognition that the 'urban' is not the same everywhere, that for instance the layout of the standard British city with its narrow streets, alleyways and meagre squares is somewhat different from the cities of central and eastern Europe, there is a tendency to deal with urban space as a universal in the book: similar social formations and movements emerge from similar urban spaces regardless of nation and region.

However, what *Streetlife* might lack in terms of geographical nuance it more than makes up for in its impressive scope and in the power of its narrative. It makes a compelling argument for both historians and geographers that the events that occur in everyday spaces have significant political outcomes that have changed and continue to affect the course of history.

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Michael Ryckewaert, *Building the Economic Backbone of the Belgian Welfare State. Infrastructure, Planning and Architecture 1945–1973*. Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2011. 368pp. €29.50.
doi:10.1017/S0963926811000927

This richly illustrated book is the commercial edition of a dissertation which was defended in December 2007 at the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Leuven. The author, Michael Ryckewaert, works for the Department of Architecture, Urban Planning and Design, an appropriate location for historical research on urban planning. The theme of the book originated from a scholarly discussion on how we should conceptualize patterns of urbanization in the second half of the twentieth century, and the influence of politics and planning on the evolution of these patterns. Traditional categories such as the urban–rural continuum have lost their explanatory power because on many occasions the

distinction between city and countryside has become blurred. An interesting case in point is Belgium, a country where it is said that there is no point from which there is no visible trace of urbanization within a 360° radius. Geographers, planners and politicians have asserted that the dispersed pattern of Belgian urbanization is due to the lack of guiding planning principles. Ryckewaert however challenges this view by identifying the hidden concepts of spatial planning which gives it a 'minimal rationality' which should replace the idea of the 'chaotic, disorderly or misguided nature of the post-war urbanization process' (p. 9) in Belgium.

Ryckewaert's argument is presented in four parts. The first part analyses the years after World War II up to 1954, a decade characterized by the phrase of 'modernization within existing structures'. These existing structures refer to a physical as well as an organizational aspect, for the continuity of a decentralized planning system resulted in the absence of central plans. Maritime construction works in Leuven and Antwerp serve as examples of these reconstructions carried out by local governments and through private initiatives. The second part describes the period after 1954 in which elements of the *ad hoc* implicit planning system amalgamated into a more or less national model for spatial development. On the basis of existing patterns of urbanization and infrastructure, the concept of linear industrial development occurred. Civil employees at the level of national administration, but also experts such as scientists and architects, visualized the desired spatial order as a strip. Urban settlement, economic development and industrial employment could be formed together into a physical shape and this new layer would not compromise the existing landscape of Belgium. Planning projects concentrated upon the industrial concentrations of Zeebrugge/Brugge, Ghent and Antwerp in the north-west of the country, Hasselt, Genk and Liège in the east and the Borinage region in the south of Belgium. Waterways and later on also motorways linked these economic centres and stimulated the construction of industrial corridors. Regional economic policies were an important instrument too: they gave economically vulnerable regions the possibility of attracting industry with the help of state subsidies.

Part three is dedicated to the city of Brussels which is seen metaphorically as a centre in a spider's web. It addresses the construction of the ringroad and the significance of Expo 1958. However, this part does not provide an answer to the question of why Belgian planners and politicians wanted to expand the capital. The author correctly refers to France and the Netherlands as countries with a more central planning tradition where spatial policies in the 1950s and 1960s were concentrated on limiting the expansion of the national centres. Solving the problems of congestion and economic underdevelopment on the peripheries were the rationale of both Dutch and French policies. But although deprivation and congestion were present in Belgium too, the growth of Brussels was not perceived in a similar way. It would have been interesting if the author had explained more explicitly the reasons for this Belgian case. Was the concept of national corridors of industrial development more important than regional economic policy, or were there other forces at play? However, the fourth part digs further into aspects of economic underdevelopment. It shows how regional economic policy focused on the construction of industry parks in vulnerable regions. The source of inspiration for Belgian planners was what they saw taking place in Britain. The architectural qualities of these industrial parks are, just as in the other parts of the book, highlighted with precise descriptions of the buildings and of the entire sites. These

passages are richly illustrated with photographs and drawings which testify to the creative foundation present in architectural and planning faculties. Historians can learn from this physical sensitivity, because it offers an extra dimension to our modern history.

Ryckewaert has written an original and challenging dissertation, which effectively attacks the idea of a missing planning tradition in Belgium. Instead, Belgian spatial order was guided by implicit models based on the linear, industrial corridor. The author's thesis is full of many asides which slightly distract from the strong position he takes in the debate about the conceptualization of modern settlement patterns in Belgium. Nevertheless, the book is certainly worth reading, and its stimulates further comparison and investigation into the parallels that can be seen in the European traditions of urban and industrial planning.

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Eugene McCann and Kevin Ward (eds.), *Mobile Urbanism: Cities and Policymaking in the Global Age*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011. xxxv + 213pp. Bibliography. $75.00/£56.00 hbk; $25.00/£18.50 pbk.
doi:10.1017/S0963926811000939

I remember studying the geography of urban influence by tracking the locations of people who purchased the metropolitan newspaper. Electronic information network availability has greatly diminished the relevance of print media distribution as a measure of spatial reach. The quest remains, however, to keep track of how information flows bind us or release us from the confines of location. The essays in this edited book describe how we might conceive, criticize and in a few cases promote how ideas take shape and travel as policies or strategies for civic improvement across continents, nations, regions and cities.

The editors claim that the essays go well beyond the narrow and ballistic conception of policy transfer as diffusion. They recognize that interactive relationships provide the proper focus for inquiry, rather than dualistic conceptions of territory and mobility. However, varieties of systems theory grasped the wisdom of this approach long ago, even if these were not politically savvy or progressive. The essays mostly offer a distinctly socialist- and Marxist-inspired approach, laying rhetorical waste to the neo-liberal nostrums that have come to dominate many urban policy arenas. The shop talk vocabulary at times proves a bit off-putting and sometimes incomprehensible to those not keeping tabs on what left-leaning geographers argue about. I am not convinced that using 'assemblages', 'relationalities' or 'mobilities' to describe how policy ideas travel and settle adds enough understanding to make the vocabulary worth it.

Doreen Massey wants me to believe that when Ken Livingstone swapped oil for technical experience with the Chavez government in Caracas the effect was 'counterhegemonic'. The relational rhetoric seems to me to masquerade the political weakness of socialist politics and perversely strengthen the grip of neo-liberal ideas as accessible and popular. The institutional roles of city government – even one as powerful as London – cannot engage in unilateral political agreements that ignore or violate national policies and regulations without inviting political retribution. For Jennifer Robinson, cities now prepare strategies that attend to