Public authority in European capitals: a map of governance, an album with symbols

HERMAN VAN DER WUSTEN

Department of Geography & Planning, University of Amsterdam, J.M. Molenaerplein 6, 2102 CE Heemstede, the Netherlands. E-mail: H.H. vanderWusten@uva.nl

This paper deals with the residences of public authority across Europe from the emergence of the state system to the present. It is concerned with the addresses, the buildings, their surroundings and the symbolic significance from the point of view of builders and the public. The building styles have been heavily influenced by the examples of imperial and papal Rome, and a dominant model of a European capital city building has evolved. There are also some systematic differences, particularly for those countries with a dramatic history of constitutional change and for those with a decentralized process of state-building in the early stages of the process. In the second half of the 19th century, and probably again currently, the residences of public authority should be read in conjunction with the positioning of a series of civic institutions. The display of state authority has been increasingly accompanied by the representation of national identity. More recently, however, a touch of cosmopolitanism has been added in many capitals. The reading of these capitals is therefore now more ambiguous. This will probably intensify under the impact of the emerging European multilevel governance system. At the same time, this governance system has become increasingly based in Brussels. For this city to symbolically represent Europe is a very difficult ambition in the context of its multiple capital roles. However, Brussels has a long history of dealing successfully with such urban challenges in spite of major conflicts and drawbacks.

Capitals and capitols

Where the Boulevard Saint Germain tangentially reaches the Seine, one passes the Palais Bourbon, the seat of the French Parliament. Across the bridge and after

Concorde to the left is the Elysée Palace, the residence of the French president, and behind the Palais Bourbon is the office of the prime minister, in the Hôtel Matignon (see its website[1]). In London, the Parliament buildings at Westminster, along the Thames, are within walking distance of Buckingham Palace and Downing Street. In Berlin the renewed Reichstag nearly faces the new Chancellery and the Bundespräsident resides in Schloss Bellevue, further along the edge of Tiergarten. These are not the only politically relevant addresses, but they give an impression of where public authority is situated.

Ever since the emergence of the state system as the dominant element of Europe's political order, public authority has usually been located in specific places within capital cities. The Versailles palace is the major exception rather than the rule. And even the move of the French king and his court out of Paris was not by a great distance and did not mean that all parts of political authority actually left the city. Amsterdam is the best current example in Europe of a capital city without most of the normal functions that go with it. Constitutionally, the coronation of a new king has to take place here. Dam Square with the adjoining Royal Palace (the former local town hall) and the adjacent New Church (Dutch Reformed Protestant) play their traditional roles in this connection.[2] But that is all. Even the Royal Palace is only used very occasionally for royal purposes and by far the largest part of public authority resides in The Hague. The distribution of roles between Amsterdam and the Hague dates from the early years of the Republic and has been put in its modern shape as the Kingdom was constituted in 1813–1815. However, the Dutch case does not stand entirely on its own. In several European countries some functions that are important parts of the state apparatus are situated in cities different from the capital city. In the meantime, the close connection between capital cities and the place where public authority resides is indicated by the use of capital for the city and capitol for the seat of the state legislature in American parlance, and their casual intermixing in daily use. It should be stressed that in the Washington Capitol example in Boston, not only state senate and house but also the Governor's office were under the same domed roof indicating that it was public authority that counted more than the legislative branch of government.[3] In Switzerland's emulation of the Washington Capitol building in Bern the original, Bostonian set of functions has been preserved.

The question is how such places, where public authority is concentrated within capital cities, have developed within the European state system with a view to their functionality as residences of political and administrative institutions and as focal points for the display and experience of authority and identity. We must look at this question in terms of the geography and morphology of the various elements that make up these places (i.e. the map and the volumes of palaces, parliaments, ministries, statues and monuments within their public spaces, etc), and the

meaning of the symbols and the aesthetic vocabularies used in the constructions at these places. Geography, morphology, symbolism and aesthetic vocabularies cannot be strictly separated. Morphology and geography often have symbolic significance. Variations in the appearance of these places are partly produced by local singularities, but they also partly result from systematic differences across countries and over time in local context (e.g. already existing townscape features, local government), the outcomes of state- and nation-building efforts, and the sequence of dominant aesthetic vocabularies. Some are produced by the necessities of the day-to-day practical functioning of public authority, the requirements of the display and experience of authority and identity, and the emulation of revered examples.

Although the state system has for a long time been the predominant mould of the political order in Europe, it has not been completely unopposed during its lifetime, has changed significantly and may change more. Papal authority, urban leagues and empires competed with the territorial states that finally reigned supreme, but the aftermath of these earlier struggles continued to crop up. Over the course of its history, system-wide forces like those forming the Concert of Europe occasionally imposed an overarching order on the territorially fragmented multitude of sovereign states. Contemporary European cooperation, initially limited to a few West European countries but ever more encompassing, is now competing with, or even transforming, the state system and therefore possibly the places where state public authority is concentrated. The development of new focal points of differently constituted public authority (at least one in Brussels but also elsewhere) and its consequences for the existing set of such places linked to the state system, contributes to the dynamics of public authority manifestations.

Public space, authority display, representation of identity

Public authority needs room for a throne or to exemplify authority, a bench to administer justice, a store room for weapons, a coffer for the treasury, a prison, an assembly hall for debate, rooms for consultation and lobbying, for the clerks to write, place for archives, galleries and open spaces for the public. Over time, the functions that the public authority performs change in importance, the labels change, the whole apparatus expands, more room is needed. Therefore, the geography and morphology change. The townscape changes as a consequence of new buildings, new ideas about the nature of authority and identity and their reflection in symbols, but there are also many continuities and constants.

In The Hague, home to the most important Dutch political functions, there has always been a concentration of political space on and around Binnenhof. The complex was heavily restored in the 19th century after discussions in which finance and symbolism played their roles. It is still, mainly in its original, late

medieval/early renaissance arrangement, and still functions as the heart of Dutch politics.[4] But it is now partly surrounded by a series of high-rise buildings, mostly for ministries, in the postmodern style that visually dwarfs the traditional core area. These changes have largely been driven by functional considerations and preferences of the city government rather than by central government ambitions to produce a new imagery.

In other cases, the symbols have changed as the history of state- and nation-building provided a new stock of events that could be manipulated for the purposes of collective memory and new vistas for the future. A good example is the statue near the Parliament in Budapest of Imre Nagy, the Hungarian leader of 1956 erected soon after 1989, in which he is portrayed on a bridge that is part of the monument.[5] Consider also the opportunities, confusions and dilemmas created by the change of address of important German government functions from Bonn to Berlin and the various ways in which they were solved.[6] One of the most significant is the reconstruction of the Reichstag building in a prominent public position that surrounds the core parliamentary business in all dimensions through access to the huge cupola. This reconfigured relation of public and authority can be read in all sorts of ways compared to the tumultuous past of the building that is masterly represented once one has entered the cupola, e.g. it recalls that the central sign on the building 'Dem deutschen Volke' underlining its significance for the representation of national identity, was only placed there in the midst of the First World War after it had been resisted for decades by the Emperor. The aesthetic vocabularies to express symbols change with the times under the impact of new artists, new patrons and new technologies. A graphic example is the huge variation of styles of buildings along the stretched Royal axis in Paris between the recent government buildings at La Défense and the new Ministry of Finance at Bercy.[7]

Public authority needs visibility and attention and needs to inspire respect to survive. And it needs the acceptance of those over whom authority is exercised that they belong to the entity embodied by that authority. There may be competitors, a system of European governance and a feeling of belongingness to that European unit, the aspirations of a region or even within the capital itself the struggle between state and imperial power (colonial or otherwise) and between national identity and allegiance to the imperial unit. All these aims need to be expressed in public, in some instances in public ceremonies for which the buildings may act as a stage.

Public buildings, monuments, open spaces and landscapes can carry symbolic content: they speak as icons. However, the reading of these icons, the understanding of their message, is not easy. 'In contrast to book-reading, the power of icon-reading consists in letting us "re-know" something in a new, perhaps more profound, way. The point, though, is that the re-knowledge does

not come easily to us, like words off a page. It requires work and speculative imagination.'[8] Hubbard says that the language of icons has four different stages of complexity and added value. In the first stage the building or other unit simply denotes its function. This function can, in the second stage, also be expressed by imagery of different sorts (e.g. sculptures). At the third stage, the narrative becomes more complex by demonstrating the function in relation to society at large. In the final stage the aspiration of the initiator with respect to this function and society at large is expressed. This is particularly the case in monuments but not in those parts of the built environment that mainly function for public action: open spaces and landscapes. In their own way, however, these elements contribute to the ensembles in which public buildings and monuments are situated (e.g. the open space now connecting the Reichstag and German Chancellery that contributes to the unexpected impression of the self-conscious, restrained, respectful power of these two individual buildings). One may quarrel with the steps on Hubbard's scale but the nature of the scale is right: one should be able to assess elements of the public built environment (individual units and ensembles) in terms of the wealth of overtones in their symbolic expressiveness. Compare in this respect an isolated high rise modernist office building with nondescript glass walls and the name of the ministry over the door and Von Hansens neo-Greek temple to be the Austrian Parliament along the Ringstrasse in Vienna, expressing a utopian hope for a parliament in an idealized state.

The spaces where public authority resides are drowned in symbolic significance. The patrons who required the buildings and monuments, and the architects and artists responsible for the designs cannot avoid the question of symbolism. An important question, however, is how the symbols that carry these messages are read at the receiving end. Buildings and monuments are there to stay and are situated in a changing townscape. As they wear, the composition of the receiving population changes and may read the messages differently. Memorial places are partly made, but grow and develop a life of their own in the eyes of successive generations. Since the publication of Nora's *Lieux de mémoire*[9] we have begun to observe places with a better eye for the history they embody and the memories that they evoke.

Apart from visibility and attention, public authority needs enclosed spaces where the business of government can be conducted in relative tranquillity. The amalgam of open and closed parts of the spaces, has always been unstable, but perhaps never to the same extent as currently. The intrusiveness of the media invites efforts from authorities to carefully choreograph movement in and out of the visible part of the public sphere and ever higher stakes for the media to peep in. The distinctions between open and closed parts of the public domain have become sharper. The fear of violent incidents has transformed the closed domains of public authority plus their adjacent public spaces into modern versions of

ancient fortifications (some of the outer perimeter of the House of Commons is now permanently blocked by barbed wire). Public access has become increasingly limited and controlled. The consequences in terms of the traditional modes of exchange between the open and closed parts of the public authority domain have not been analysed. How will this affect the respect of the public for public authority?

Town and throne

Those cities that host larger scale public authorities have significant and often sensitive relations with their guests. Public authority and the people that are part of its institutions have all sorts of needs and requirements: there is a demand for space and housing, for the provision of luxury items, for what Gottmann has called 'a hosting environment' of hotels, restaurants, clubs, brothels, cultural festivities.[10] The general impression is that cities benefit from the presence of public authority, including a more than average population growth.[11] Even former capital cities generally do well.[12] On the other hand, public authorities would hardly settle in depressed cities, but sometimes they do for political, primarily symbolic, reasons, as in the case of Rome some time after Italian independence, and of Berlin some time after German re-unification. In those two cases the new capitals have unmistakably benefited.

Politically speaking, public authorities wish to maintain their autonomy or to have an important voice in the matters of local government. The London solution with a separation between Westminster and the City could not be maintained as the city grew. The repeated difficulties between a city and central government instituted since the 1850s came spectacularly to a head during Mrs Thatcher's tenure.[13] In France, the local government of Paris was, for over a century until 1977, a matter of the French government, particularly the inner part of the agglomeration. French presidents have repeatedly interfered in the townscape of central Paris.[14] In Germany and Austria, the local governments of Berlin and Vienna were frequently at loggerheads with the central government over the town planning of the capital city. The red brick Town hall of Berlin in close vicinity to the Royal palace was a constant irritant in the age of the Hohenzollern. In the Bonn Republic, the local government was amazingly strong but this was to a large extent due to the hesitation of central government to commit itself to its Bonn location.[15] The modest, pleasant atmosphere of the Bonn public authority complex may have been partly due to the provisional character of the location of its apparatus. The change to Berlin was accompanied by long consultations with the two local administrations that were most involved. The depressed state of Berlin after the demise of communism and the withdrawal of the subsidies from the

Western part of the city was only partly compensated by the arrival of public authority and all it entails.

In order to be spared the noise of the mob, the improprieties of city life, or the lobby of large urban interests, public authority has occasionally withdrawn from larger cities to the purity of a new beginning. In fact, the selection of the Hague as the political centre of the United Republic was to some extent a comparable case. While cities were available in the areas liberated from Spanish domination, the Hague lacked even the legal status of a town and efforts to construct a properly fortified city failed. Louis XIV's departure to Versailles and Peter I's to Saint Petersburg were attempts to leave the commotion of a big city. In all these cases and others, mainly outside Europe, the move of public authority has been accompanied by the move of other institutions and people thus resulting in new aggregates of human activity – in short, a new city. In France, the public authority ultimately returned to the city (to be resettled temporarily in Versailles at the time of the Commune in 1871). In the Russian case, power returned to Moscow after two centuries.[16]

The attraction of new institutions representing international public authority is an important boost for city governments and national governments. This was the case at the peace congresses held in European cities during the 17th–19th centuries, like those in Münster, Osnabrück, Nijmegen, Utrecht, Aachen, Vienna and Paris. These were occasions for local governments to improve the local infrastructure and put their towns in the spotlight.[17] Geneva emerged as a more permanent international city since the late 19th century and Brussels was the main victor in the 20th century. Both cities have been transformed by the experience. Particularly in Brussels, the conflicts between the spatial requirements of the institutions of European cooperation, the preservation of the townscape of the traditional city and the personal interests of groups of local citizens have at times been fierce. Since the 1970s, Vienna's urban plan has been significantly transformed by the construction of UNO-City across the Danube.[18] The Hague has renewed its international ambitions from the turn of the century and has established a series of international functions along a boulevard that had lain idle not far from the Peace Palace, home of the International Court of Justice. The city is clearly aiming at the role of international legal capital with, again, a lot of UN-input. This is largely a local government ambition.

The different ages of construction and reconstruction

The standard repertory to represent systems of rule in the built environment was derived from imperial and papal Rome and has remained strong.[19] Over time, public authority has changed in shape, become ever more differentiated and more massive and consequently it needed more space. Modern bureaucracy brought

visions and the reality of huge office complexes to the capitals of Europe; Jules Verne painted a terrifying portrait of a completely bureaucratized Paris in 1960, in a novel that his publisher rejected and that turned up a few years ago.[20] See also the actual huge blocks in Whitehall and along the Ringstrasse and in pre-war Berlin Mitte – only the start of a later sprawl of modernist high rise offices over a much wider area.

The nature of public authority's relationship with the outside world has altered. Initially, the state was a thin layer of rule over a certain territory aiming at protection against outside interference and providing a minimum of internal order financed from involuntary contributions. Defence (and attack) were by far the most important items in the budget and the inhabitants were mostly spectators.[21] If the residences of public authority had to convey any message it was the demand of attention and respect by outsiders and also of the population. Since the time of the French Revolution and the liberal breakthrough of 1848, the government of European national states has involved the populace more and has become more bureaucratized.[22] Ever larger public participation in politics required ever more elaborate mechanisms for the public authorities to respond.

Apart from the need to inculcate respect by the display of state power, the importance of shared national identity came to the fore. This resulted in a more prominent place for the parliamentary buildings representing the participatory side of public authority[23] and in relatively less emphasis on the residence of the head of state. However, public authority was also surrounded with the attributes of civic life – a whole series of institutions became part of the standard apparatus of a capital city in the second half of the 19th century, e.g. a museum of national heritage, national library, opera and theatre, university, zoo and botanical garden, streets, squares and plazas designed for civic entertainment and the display of self, concentration of the mass circulation and national quality press, opulent railway stations to mark the central position of the city and to provide a festive entry. In cities where there was an opportunity to do this, or where power relations allowed large scale planning, some or all of these institutions were put together in a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Such a mix of functions along the Viennese Ringstrasse was preceded by Parisian Haussmannisation.[24]

In the 20th century, participation extended formally to the entire adult population, accompanied by the display of state power in order to ensure the respect of the citizenry. This was particularly so in the plans for Moscow and Berlin. In both cases there was also a highly organized and controlled idea of participation expressed in the gigantic plans for a Palace of the Soviets and a Dome plus squares for marches, by the architects Iofan and Speer. There was hesitation about the emblem to be put on top. In Stalin's case the first idea was a worker, but later versions had Lenin; Hitler could never make up his mind if it should be a swastika or a globe with an eagle.[25] Mussolini was the initiator of such plans

and put an emphasis on the Roman imperial past. Fascism had its own mix of classicism and modernism in Futurism.[26] European mass democracies did not develop many large scale plans for the housing of public authority during these years. Exceptions were the buildings of Commonwealth and Colonial representations in London (notably India House[27]) symbolically underlining the renovation of the British Empire, and the reconstruction of the Bank of England building.[28] All these buildings were done in versions of the classicist repertory of forms.

After 1945, expanding public authority required huge building activities. Modernism shaped, in particular, the fully developed bureaucratic apparatuses of the welfare state without much regard for the function of its buildings as icons or the consequences of sprawl for its overall appearance.[29] The international style of modernism was an effort to do away with conscious references to particular attributes of specific national states. State power and respect was inculcated from the major complexes where public authority had been established in the period 1848–1914. Only outside Europe were some capital cities and seats of public authority designed by modernist architects.

Since the last part of the 20th century, doubts have been raised about the sustainability of the European national states. How relevant others consider the state is no longer evident, nor who the relevant others are. Under these circumstances there is a renewed interest in the symbolic codes to be used in those parts of the townscapes of capital cities dedicated to public authority and a basic uncertainty about the way to go (see for example the continuous discussion in Berlin about individual buildings, open spaces and monuments), together with concern about neglect, excessive commercialization, over-regulation and the intrusion of the private sphere into what was traditionally considered as public.[30]

It may well be that capital city formation will now further evolve into a new model. On the one hand there is a greater interest in the way ministries are located and shaped. Consequently, the display of state authority is stressed in novel ways. On the other hand, the civic ensemble is extended by museums that have often put a different twist to their collections and exhibitions by tapping into international, more universal notions of quality and reputation and are trying to play a part in addressing an international audience. Media complexes reflect a similar development as they increasingly mirror international trends and, in some cases, try to reach a global audience (TV5, BBCworld). Lush airports are now the most fancy points of entry and exit. Convention centres are necessary for a capital city. In short the civic ensemble is decreasingly connected to representations of national identity, rather to a cosmopolitanism that considers state authority from a detached point of view.[31]

The European governance system has its own set of locations currently in Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg. This is the outcome of a long drawn out process of competition and selection that is difficult to change fundamentally as

more and more (built) facts on the ground are created.[32] The locations in Strasbourg and Luxembourg are now situated at the outskirts of these cities in newly developed environments, which is highly unusual against the background of the central government functions concentrated in capital cities. In Brussels, this has traditionally been the case with respect to European institutions. The infamous Berlaymont building that, for a long time, represented the system of European governance was centrally placed not too distant from the core of the Belgian government institutions, and the Leopold quarter that has been the core of European building activity is close by. The new extensions are at a more peripheral location at an abandoned railroad site, not unlike the position of the UN headquarters in New York. Berlaymont was a modernist building in the midst of a 19th century neighbourhood, the new quarters look like the typical postmodernist development project. Subsequently consultations have occurred on how Brussels would have to develop.[33] We are still far from a new 'grand project' in the Haussmann style, although there is a similar emphasis on the civic institutions and public spaces surrounding the public authority, but hardly a residential ambition that was the nerve of Haussmann's reconstruction. At the end of the 19th century the Mayor of Brussels and his local government reconstructed the Grand Place in Renaissance style, thus articulating a different ambition based on a local heritage with a different aesthetic vocabulary. The resulting ambiguity has never been solved completely: Brussels has become a very eclectic mix of classicist ambitions, the jealously guarded remnants of a rich local urban past and large scale implantations of modernist and postmodern elements.[34]

Capital cities: general features, types and unique features

Capital cities in Europe have some features in common, but hardly any feature is universally present.

The residences of public authority can be spatially concentrated within capital cities to different degrees.[35] For 12 countries in the different parts of Europe, I put the addresses of 10 important parts of public authority on a map. Most of these addresses were situated in tight clusters at prestigious locations in the traditional core areas of capital cities. There is always the seat of the prime minister and – with a single exception in each case – it also applies to parliament, the ministry of internal affairs and the justice department. With two exceptions each, it applies to the defence and finance ministries; with three exceptions for foreign affairs and the head of state, with four exceptions for the highest law court and with seven exceptions (that is in less than half of the cases) for the central bank which, with the highest law court, is located in a different city altogether. For the relatively tightly clustered functions, the average distances to a central point are less than 580 m in Switzerland, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands and the

UK; 720–860 m in Austria, Hungary and the Czech Republic and 1510–1660 m in France, Italy and Germany. Politics thrives on face-to-face contacts. If public authority has to be perceived as one and undivided it should better sit in one place. But there are good reasons why not all functions of public authority invariably end up in one cluster. Some parts of public authority are less dependent on day-to-day political activity. State-making may have been instigated from different corners simultaneously, and this has left traces in the location patterns. This is perhaps most applicable to the pattern of the highest law courts. Parts of public authority, such as central banks, are also dependent on external links.

City size may have something to do with the differences in cluster width but it seems not to provide a sufficient explanation, consider the deviating case of London, and one has to look at the repeated constitutional shifts in Italy, Germany and France. Even in these cases there was a considerable continuity from regime to regime. The Balkans provide good examples of wholesale change in morphology and aesthetics, e.g. in Belgrade and Sofia, where all earlier signs of Ottoman administrative dominance were destroyed to be replaced by Haussmannian new inner cities including public authority complexes, supposedly not only expressing newly won state power but also distinctive national identities.[36] The intermediate position stemming from the Austro-Hungarian empire perhaps reflects the continuing dominant position of the palaces in the three cities as self-evident core locations of public authority. The more spatially concentrated the locations of public authority functions, the more strongly the symbolic effect of the arrangement will underline the continuity and therefore strength of state power. At the same time, where all the essential functions are merged into one complex, this complex more emphatically symbolizes state power than national identity. For a stronger emphasis on national identity one would at least need the most prominent place for parliament within this complex. This, one could argue, is the case in the United Kingdom.

The great majority of European capital cities have been provided with the civic apparatus that became the norm during the second part of the 19th century, as exemplified by Haussmannian Paris. The most salient case is perhaps Christiana/Oslo, the second capital of the double monarchy with Sweden in the 19th century and only a capital city in its own right since 1905. For this capital-in-waiting a pure complex of public authority surrounded by all the civic functions was put together during the 19th century, at the edge of the built-up area of the traditional city. A boulevard between a new station on the city side and a palace with grounds on the other provided the ultimate points of an axis that also accommodated the parliament building, residence of the Head of State, and the civic ensemble along the axis consisted of the national theatre next to parliament and the university and two museums across the boulevard.[37] There are two

residential cities of public authority where such provisions are at least partly lacking, namely the Hague and Bern. They provided the residences for national public authority in countries that were united in an unusual, more bottom-up, way. They were not, and never became, the apex of the national urban hierarchy, neither in terms of size nor in terms of connectedness and they clearly remained in the shadow of Amsterdam and Geneva and Zurich. Amsterdam was clearly more than the mere symbol of a capital city. It represented national identity, e.g. in its national museum of paintings, the Rijksmuseum and in the majestic view of its central station. The Concert Hall and the University were both strictly municipal initiatives.[38] The central bank has always been located in Amsterdam. Zürich and Geneva developed as the poles of German-speaking and French-speaking Switzerland and home to various instances of national and international public authority, thus providing some sort of counterpoint to Bern's vocation as the capital of a thoroughly decentralized country.

All these different clusters, where public authority has been concentrated, have their own unique atmosphere. In Luxembourg, a single soldier defends the entrance of the modest Archducal Palace and the adjoining house that is the parliament in an urban street that hardly widens. In Helsinki, the seat of public authority, surrounded by a range of elements of the civic ensemble dating from the time that Finland had a degree of autonomy within Tsarist Russia, is overlooked by a large Russian church, thus setting the stage. In Copenhagen, Christiansborg – the 19th century baroque castle – serves as the seat of Danish public authority, including parliament and the office of the Prime Minister, thus suggesting the continuity with earlier absolutist rule. In the Moscow Kremlin, President Putin sits in a complex inherited from Bolshevik rule which demolished some parts and reconstructed other parts of the old fort,[39] long abandoned by princely rule but kept alive by church authority. In Dublin, the Irish Republic chose to put the seat of public authority in Leinster House, the former urban palace of one of the largest English landlords in Ireland. This was because the building had been surrounded during the 19th century by a national picture gallery, a national museum and a national library (immortalized by James Joyce in *Dubliners*), a civic ensemble in the making. The old parliament building in the middle of a 18th century monumental axis was left aside.[40]

There will be a common effort of the European Commission and the Belgian government to develop a set of civic institutions and public spaces that overstep the bounds of Belgium to express a European ambition to make Brussels the European capital par excellence. In the context of the existing administrative situation as the Flemish capital, the Belgian French-speakers capital, and the Brussels region capital – roles that the city already performs – this is a very complex ambition.[41] Brussels might benefit from looking carefully at the diverse experience of the existing European capital cities.

Conclusions

In Europe, state public authority is still for the most part situated in highly respected areas in the midst of capital cities. These areas have grown from small beginnings as the state apparatus has extended. The degree of dispersal of these concentrations of functions differs; the core clusters vary in spatial size. They are, on average, larger in larger cities, but they are also larger where repeated regime change has enabled and invited repeated new efforts to display state authority anew. In the 19th century, the 'civilianization' of the state underlined the importance not only to represent state power but also national identity in the arrangement of public authority. To this end, parliament buildings appeared and have become relatively more prominent among the buildings in which the different functions of public authority reside. A civic ensemble was added. In a few European countries with a more bottom-up process of state formation, that remained without a predominant city in their urban hierarchy, this civic ensemble was less prominent or complete in the cities where public authority was situated.

There is a dominant evolutionary pattern of public authority establishment in national states, with some partial exceptions in states that have undergone repeated regime shocks and in states with an uncommonly decentralized process of state-formation. The reading of these spatial complexes increasingly links the display of state power and the representation of national identity. The emerging European system of multilevel governance has resulted in a series of efforts to exemplify this cooperation in concrete buildings and sets of buildings in various cities. The most important case, still under construction, is Brussels. The increasing consequences of European governance will probably also force the re-emergence of a debate on the nature of capital city status and its preferred symbolic expression in individual countries. Such debates and their outcomes have, in the past, tended to be contagious.

References and notes

1. www.premier-ministre.gouv.fr (histoire, histoire de l'hôtel Matignon).
2. *Constitution of the Netherlands* section 32. The text mentions 'the capital city of Amsterdam' as if this role had already been attributed in earlier sections, but this is the only reference in the entire text.
3. D. Lyndon (1987) Public buildings: symbols qualified by experience, in N. Glazer and M. Lilla (eds) *The Public Face of Architecture* (New York: The Free Press), pp. 155–176.
4. E. M. Agricola (2000) The Hague as the disputed showcase of the Dutch state and Dutch national identity 1814–1917. *GeoJournal*, **51**(1–2), 47–56; R. J. van Pelt and M. E. Tiethoff-Spliethoff (1984) *Het*

Binnenhof. Van grafelijke residentie tot regeringscentrum (Dieren: De Bataafse Leeuw).

5. www.talkingcities.co.uk/budapest_pages/sights_alpha8.htm.

6. For a running local comment on the reshaping of urban form in Berlin, see W. J Siedler (2000) *Phoenix im Sand. Glanz und Elend der Hauptstadt* (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag).

7. See for a discussion of the recent elongations, changes and additions to the royal axis: L. Vale (1992) *Architecture, Power and National Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press).

8. W. Hubbard (1987) A meaning for monuments, in N. Glazer and M. Lilla (eds) *The Public Face of Architecture* (New York: The Free Press), p. 128.

9. P. Nora (1984) *Les lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard).

10. J. Gottmann (1990) Capital cities, in J. Gottmann and R. Harper (eds) *Since Megalopolis. The Urban Writings of Jean Gottmann* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press) pp. 63–81.

11. J. de Vries (1984) *European Urbanization 1500–1800* (London: Methuen), pp. 141–142, 149–150; P. M. Hohenberg and L. H. Lees (1985) *The Making of Urban Europe 1000–1950* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press), pp. 117–118, 228–229.

12. J. Gottmann (1990) The study of former capitals, in J. Gottmann and R. Harper (eds) *Since Megalopolis. The Urban Writings of Jean Gottmann* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press) pp. 82–94.

13. I. M. Barlow (1991) *Metropolitan Government* (London: Routledge).

14. G. Kearns (1993) The city as spectacle: Paris and the bicentenary of the French Revolution, in G. Kearns and Chr. Philo (eds) *Selling Places. The City as Cultural Capital, Past and Present* (Oxford: Pergamon Press).

15. K. Borchard (1997) Bonn – von Provisorium über die Bundeshauptstadt zur Bundesstadt oder: Von der Schwierigkeiten der baulichen und städtebaulichen Sebstdarstellung unseres Staates; and J. Wékel (1997) Berlin auf dem Weg zur Bundeshauptstadt. Aufgaben, Ziele und Projekte der städtebauliche Entwicklung einer Metropole im Wandel, in E. Ehlers (ed.) *Deutschland und Europa. Historische, politische und geographische Aspekte* (Bonn: Ferd. Dümmlers Verlag), pp. 11–34, 35–57.

16. S. Volkov (1995) *St. Petersburg. A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press).

17. H. Duchhardt (ed.) (1999) *Städte und Friedenskongresse* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag).

18. E. Lichtenberger (1993) *Vienna. Bridge between Cultures* (London: Belhaven).

19. For an emphasis on the continuity of the aesthetics and their background in social taste: D. J. Olsen (1988) The rules of the game: the city as palace, theatre and temple, in L. Deben, W. F. Heinemeijer, D. van der Vaart (eds) *Capital Cities as Achievement. Essays* (Amsterdam: Centrum voor Grootstedelijk Onderzoek), pp. 12–19.

20. Jules Verne (1994) *Paris au XXe siècle* (Paris: Hachette).
21. This is derived from Michael Mann's work see: M. Mann (1988) *States, War and Capitalism* (Oxford: Blackwell), in particular chapters 1 and 3, pp. 1–32, 73–123.
22. Ch. Tilly (1990) *Coercion, Capital and European States AD 990–1990* (Oxford: Blackwell).
23. Recent exhibitions on the construction of parliament buildings (initiated by the building of a new Scottish parliament and the 10th anniversary of the new Dutch parliament building) demonstrate the importance of this period plus the more recent decades for construction activity to accommodate this function. M. van der Riet (2002) *Catalogue Architectuur en democratie. The Hague 14 0ctober 2002 – 14 February 2003.* Earlier version in Glasgow 1999.
24. Evocative studies of such processes in various cities are D. J. Olsen (1986) *The City as a Work of Art. London, Paris, Vienna* (New Haven: Yale University Press) and M. Wagenaar (1998) *Stedebouw en burgerlijke vrijheid. De contrasterende carrières van zes Europese hoofdsteden* (Bussum: Thoth).
25. H. van der Wusten (2000) Dictators and their capital cities: Moscow and Berlin in the 1930s, *GeoJournal*, **52**(4), 339–344.
26. C. Tisdall and A. Bozzolla (1977) *Futurism* (London: Thames & Hudson), in particular chapters 6 and 11, pp. 121–136, 200–209; A. Notaro (2000) Exhibiting the new Mussolinian City: memories of empire in the World Exhibition of Rome (EUR). *GeoJournal*, **51**(1–2), 15–22.
27. www.hcilondon.net/aboutus/history-indiahouse.
28. I. Black (1999) Imperial visions: rebuilding the Bank of England, in F. Driver and D. Gilbert (eds) *Imperial Cities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp. 96–113; D. Gilbert and F. Driver (2000) Capital and empire: geographies of imperial London, *GeoJournal*, **51**(1–2), 23–32.
29. A study that deals with the locations of departments from a functional perspective is M.-J. Bertrand (1974) *Géographie de l'administration. L'impact du pouvoir exécutif dans les capitales nationales* (Paris: Génin).
30. For American worries in that direction and an effort to re-establish an internationally acceptable canon see N. Glazer and M. Lilla (eds) (1987) *The Public Face of Architecture* (New York: The Free Press).
31. For an anthropological version of this argument and its implications see Z. Bauman (1998) *Globalization. The Human Consequences* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
32. For part of the history see C. Hein (2000) Choosing a site for the capital of Europe. *GeoJournal*, **51**(1–2), 83–97.
33. *Brussels, Capital of Europe* (2001) Final report. Issued by European Commission and Belgian Presidency. Prepared by GOPA, Group of Policy Advisers European Commission.
34. For two different assessments of Brussels' long-term development based on historical and political economy considerations see M. Wagenaar

(1998) *Stedebouw en burgerlijke vrijheid. De contrasterende carrières van zes Europese hoofdsteden* (Bussum: Thoth), pp. 54–69; P. J. F. Terhorst and J. C. L. van de Ven (1997) *Fragmented Brussels and Consolidated Amsterdam. A Comparative Study of the Spatial Organization of Property Rights* (Amsterdam: KNAG) Netherlands Geographical Studies 223.

35. The following discussion is based on H. van der Wusten (2003) De adressen van het nationaal bestuur. Keuze en effect van vestigingsplaatsen ten behoeve van de politieke functie, C. Cortie, J. Droogleever Fortuijn, M. Wagenaar (eds) *Stad en land. Over bewoners en woonmilieus* (Amsterdam: Aksant), pp. 160–173.

36. A. Yerolympos (1993) A new city for a state. City planning and the formation of national identity in the Balkans (1820s–1920s), *Planning Perspectives*, **8**, 233–257.

37. M. Wagenaar and H. van der Wusten (1997) L'empreinte de l'Etat. A la recherche de la spécificité des villes-capitales en Europe. P. Claval and A.-L. Sanguin (eds) *Métropolisation et politique* (Paris: L'Harmattan), pp. 53–68, in particular pp. 63–64.

38. J. Bank (2000) De culturele stad. Kunstlievende burgers, kunst en filharmonie, in M. Bakker, R. Kistemaker, H. van Nierop, W. Vroom, P. Witteman (eds), *Amsterdam in de tweede gouden eeuw* (Bussum: Thoth) pp. 237–262; P. de Rooy (1992) De ontdekking van een oud bestoven familieportret, in J. C. H. Blom, P. H. D. Leupen, P. de Rooy, T. J. Veen, L. Kooijmans (eds) *Een brandpunt van geleerdheid in de hoofdstad. De Universiteit van Amsterdam rond 1900 in vijftien portretten* (Hilversum/Amsterdam: Verloren/Amsterdam University Press), pp. 9–28.

39. Th. J. Colton (1995) *Moscow. Governing the Socialist Metropolis* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press).

40. J. Brady and A. Simms (eds) (2001) *Dublin through Space and Time (c. 900–1900)* (Dublin: Four Courts Press).

41. E. Lagrou (2000) Five capitals in search of a place. The citizens, the planners and the functions. *GeoJournal*, **51**(1–2), 99–112.

About the Author

Herman van der Wusten is Professor emeritus of political geography and former Dean of the faculty of social and behavioural sciences at the University of Amsterdam. His publications include *The New Political Geography of Eastern Europe* (1993 with John O'Loughlin) and *The Urban University and its Identity* (1998).