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Guy Ortolano, *Thatcher's Progress. From Social Democracy to Market Liberalism through an English New Town*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2019; xvi + 301 pp.; £29.99; ISBN 9781108482660

The visit of the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to the 'New Town' of Milton Keynes in September 1979 offers the starting point of Guy Ortolano's new book about changing views of how to build a city, from the social democratic perspective of postwar Britain to the market liberal approach of Thatcherism and New Labour.

This book follows the idea of Thatcher's progress through the New Town of Milton Keynes. The idea of New Towns was an international political movement from the Second World War onwards where New Towns were used to resettle refugees, to militarize and populate frontier territory, to tap unexploited natural resources and develop national infrastructure, to redistribute population, to tackle housing shortages and provide employment opportunities, and to offer a better life. Within this history of planning New Towns, Ortolano focuses on the history of Milton Keynes and its creation in the 1960s onwards to examine larger issues in British and urban history from a historical perspective. From this approach, the author seeks to go beyond traditional narratives of how the crises of 1973 exhausted the social democratic project toward the rise of market liberalism. He integrates both dynamism and contingency into a non-deterministic account of ideological change. He summarizes his findings in four interesting ideas: first, that New Towns programme attested to the ambition and the depth of the social democratic project. Second, contrary to the view that social democracy was an exhausted and discredited force by the 1970s, it was in fact dynamic in response to the economic, social and political challenges of the 1970s. Third, that market liberalism succeeded when indifferent actors internalized its priorities. And finally, how the British planners of the New Towns continually located themselves within transitional networks of planning that encouraged them to look for new ideas.

Divided into six main chapters, the first two chapters, 'Horizons' and 'Planning' follow the trajectory of urban planning from the 1940s to the 1960s. Inherited experiences, transnational influence, and new expectations of affluence, leisure, and mobility all transformed urban horizons. Rather than undermine a social democratic worldview, these underpinned its development. The following two chapters, 'Architecture', and 'Community' reveal the rejuvenation, rather than the exhaustion, of modernist architecture and community development during the 1970s. But these renewed practices met opposition, as rivals challenged not only these particular initiatives, but also the broader ideology they served. The final two chapters, 'Consulting' and 'Housing', show public sector actors

determined to secure their survival in a shifting political context, laying claim to seemingly conservative shibboleths.

These six chapters allow Ortolano to analyse broader topics in British urban history, such as the promise of spectacular urban futures to manage unsettling urban presents (Chapter 1); the remaking of global networks in a world after empire (Chapter 2); the translation of political convictions into aesthetic styles, and the consequent vulnerability of both (Chapter 3); the contest between rival approaches to building community (Chapter 4); the development of an entrepreneurial and property-owning social democracy (Chapters 5 and 6); and, ultimately, the dynamism of social democracy, the triumph of market liberalism, and the meaning of Thatcherism and New Labour in light of both. It is precisely in this broader perspective – in particular the reconstruction of post-empire networks – where the book is most compelling. Ortolano deploys an interesting approach showing how ideas are dynamic, how they are constantly changed, and the impact that global or national trends can have in local contexts such as Milton Keynes. Nonetheless, the weakest point of his book is his main argument on the change from social democracy to market liberalism. His account of this shift from the early 1970s to the consolidation of Thatcherism in the 1980s is convincing. Less so is his case that New Labour also affected the planning of New Towns by erasing the memory of alternatives before Thatcherism, in favour of a reading of postwar history as dominated by equally discredited extremes of statism and the market. While some of the argument is true, the author does not expend much time proving his argument. He also focuses mainly on New Labour's first term (1997–2001), without much to say on New Labour governments down to 2010. Expanding this last point would have strengthened the main argument.

In conclusion, Ortolano's new book is an insightful approach for those interested not only in British and urban history, but also in terms of revealing the dynamic and shifting nature of ideologies from a historical perspective. This book focuses not upon the experience of living in the city, but of building it. By doing so, it presents the opportunity to reflect on how the spatial reality of the city shaped ideologies and how they change the city in turn.

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