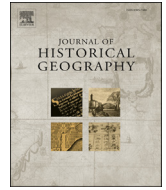


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The two edged sword: capital cities and the limits to state centralization in mid nineteenth-century Germany

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the role of capital cities in the construction of nineteenth-century German states. It describes the significant efforts that were put into strengthening new capital cities, such as Munich, Dresden, Stuttgart and Hanover, especially due to the polycentric nature of German society, and making them more central in citizens' lives. This was done through symbolic and institutional measures. As a result, they were transformed into demographic, political, economic, administrative and iconic centres. However, demographic, geographic and historical constraints determined state infrastructural shape and form, just as much as political centrality. Consequently, existing circumstances limited the options and possibilities of the states, and prevented the creation of a German equivalent of London or Paris. This paper explores the role the capital cities of independent states such as Bavaria, Saxony, Hanover and Württemberg played in spatial infrastructure and spatial imagination, and shows contradictory processes of capital city development.

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The development of capital cities was largely the product of the era of nation-states.¹ Although social theorists have not fully explained the role capital cities played in the formation of the idea of the nation or the nation-state, it is commonly understood that they are significant in the process of state centralization. 'The capital city became a true centre of national unity and a visual laboratory of national imagination', claims Vadim Rossman.² However, the relationship between capital and nation, or capital and state, is not so simple. Existing urban landscapes, institutions and commercial ties limit the ability of governments to predominantly focus the national imagination on a specific urban centre. This article examines the attempts made by nineteenth-century state officials in four German states – Bavaria, Saxony, Hanover and Württemberg – to form a single symbolic centre in each of their states and discusses the relationship between state-making and different kinds of centralization: cultural, iconographic, institutional and infrastructural.

These four kinds of centralization reflect different ways of drawing people into seeing the capital city as their centre. Cultural

centralization relates to the view of the capital city as a spectacle and the planning issues associated with the growth of visitors to newly opened museums, galleries and festivals. Iconographic centralization refers to the changing representation of capital cities in visual discourse and their prominent role in the imagined geography of the state. Institutional centralization is the establishment of central civil institutes, which are not merely administrative centres, in the capital cities. Infrastructural centralization relates to the role of capital cities in transportation and communication networks, such as railway and postal systems. All four kinds of centralization were used by officials to bring the people of the state to the capital city, and to turn their capital cities into something more than just administrative-functional centres.

This paper will use these different forms of centralization to illuminate the complex relations between state-making and the power of capital cities through the history of the four medium sized German states of Bavaria, Saxony, Württemberg and Hanover, and their capital cities – Munich, Dresden, Stuttgart and Hanover – between the fall of Napoleon in 1815 and the end of the Austrian-Prussian war in 1866. These four states were not superpowers, such as Prussia or Austria, nor were they miniature entities, such as the Thuringian principalities. They were large enough to develop individual territorial cohesion, in which their capital cities were key components, but this feat was a process and a struggle. Empowering their capital cities was a central theme in the agenda of the four governments but, as this

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¹ A. King, Cultural hegemony and capital cities, in: J. Taylor, J.G. Lengellé and C. Andrew (Eds), *Capital Cities/Les Capitales: Perspectives Internationales/International Perspectives*, Ottawa, 1993, 251–270.

² V. Rossman, *Capital Cities: Varieties and Patterns of Development and Relocation*, New York, 2016, 36.

article shows, it met significant social, geographic and economic limitations. Furthermore, state officials who overemphasized their capital city could cause a backlash, alienating the state's population.

During the nineteenth century state capitals became reflections of their states and were designed as political symbols.³ In many ways they represented or symbolized state power without the use of violence. Medieval polities usually lacked a capital city, having itinerant emperors, kings and princes, of variable mobility.⁴ From the Renaissance onwards, capital cities gradually became the norm, but in Germany they were mostly monarchic *Haupt-* and *Residenzstädte* (capital and residence cities), representing princely power and glory rather than being state symbols. The creation of extravagant royal courts symbolized royal separation, rather than becoming a matter for public identification.⁵ This role changed as a result of the emergence of centralized bourgeois territorial states. The 'embourgeoisement' of their cities transformed them into institutional, cultural, economic, political and innovational centres.⁶ Bourgeois institutions such as banks, clubs and large commercial companies were constructed alongside centralized religious and academic facilities.⁷ As a result, capital cities were no longer seen as simply the location of the palace, but as binding centres for nations and the focal point of states. This transformation in character was, in many ways, part of conscious policies of state integration by the monarchs, and not against their will. Capital cities no longer merely represented the royal court, but rather the nation-state as a whole. Such cities were seen as manifestations of their particular state cultures.⁸

³ P.J. Taylor, World cities and territorial states: the rise and fall of their mutuality, in: P. Knox and P.J. Taylor (Eds), *World Cities in a World-System*, Cambridge, 1995, 55.

⁴ E. Ennen, Funktions und Bedienungswandel der 'hauptstadt' vom Mittelalter zur Moderne, in: T. Schieder and G. Brunn (Eds), *Hauptstädte in europäischen Nationalstaaten*, München, 1983, 154; G. Therborn, Monumental Europe: the national years. On the iconography of European capital cities, *Housing, Theory and Society* 19 (2002) 28.

⁵ W. Sonne, *Representing the State: Capital City Planning in the Early Twentieth Century*, London, 2003, 34; Rossman, *Capital Cities*.

⁶ T. Nipperdey, *Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck 1800–1866*, Princeton, 1996, 475.

⁷ A. Sagvari, Studien der europäischen Hauptstadtentwicklung und die Rolle der Hauptstädte als Nationalrepräsentanten, in: Schieder and Brunn (Eds), *Hauptstädte*, 179.

⁸ Capital Cities have been studied especially with regards to the relationship between architecture, urban planning and political authority. See C.S. Tauxe, mystics, modernists, and the constructions of Brasilia, *Ecumene* 3 (1996) 43–61; T. Hall, *Planning Europe's Capital Cities: Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Urban Development*, London, 1997; D. Atkinson and D. Cosgrove, Urban rhetoric and embodied identities: city, nation, and empire at the Vittorio Emanuele II monument in Rome, 1870–1945, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88 (1998) 28–49; H. Leitner and P. Kang, Contested urban landscapes of nationalism: the case of Taipei, *Ecumene* 6 (1999) 214–233; J. Bell, Redefining national identity in Uzbekistan: symbolic tensions in Tashkent's official public landscape, *Ecumene* 6 (1999) 183–213; F. Driver and D. Gilbert (Eds), *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity*, Manchester, 1999; H. van der Wusten, Dictators and their capital cities: Moscow and Berlin in the 1930s, *GeoJournal* 52 (2000) 339–344; Therborn, *Monumental Europe*; A. Almondoz, *Planning Latin American Capital Cities*, London, 2002; Y. Whelan, *Reinventing Modern Dublin: Streetscape, Iconography and the Politics of Identity*, Dublin, 2003; D. Gordon and B. Osborne, Constructing national identity in Canada's capital, 1900–2000: Confederation Square and the National War Memorial, *Journal of Historical Geography* 30 (2004) 618–642; W. Siemann, Parlaments-architektur als politische Konfession, in: M. Schalenberg and P. Walther (Eds), "... Immer im Forschen bleiben," Stuttgart, 2004, 101–133; H. van der Wusten, Public authority in European capitals: a map of governance, an album with symbols, *European Review* 12 (2004) 143–158; A. Lagopoulos, Monumental urban space and national identity: the early twentieth century new plan of Thessaloniki, *Journal of Historical Geography* 31 (2005) 61–77; D. Keene, Cities and empires, *Journal of Urban History* 23 (2005) 8–21; A. Nitzan-Shiftan, Capital city or spiritual centre? The politics of architecture in post-1967 Jerusalem, *Cities* 22 (2005) 229–240; R. Williams, Modernist civic space and the case of Brasilia, *Journal of Urban History* 32 (2005) 120–137; D.L.A. Gordon, *Planning Twentieth Century Capital Cities*, London, 2006.

German capital cities

The lack of overall political centralization posed a particular problem for capital city formation in German states. This has been referred to as 'das Hauptstadtproblem' or 'Hauptstadtfrage', and can be dated back to the founding of the medieval Holy Roman Empire.⁹ Although princes of small German states during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries imitated Versailles by constructing castles and royal courts in German capitals, this only led to the establishment of many palace towns (*Residenzstädte*), ranging from Zweibrücken in the west to Breslau in the east, most of which could not be seen as state centres.¹⁰ Stein Rokkan, the Norwegian sociologist, called the territory stretching from central Italy to the North and Baltic seas the 'City Belt', due to the existence of a large number of strong and autonomous cities that prevented the establishment of centralized territorial states earlier than the nineteenth century.¹¹ Although some of the larger member states of the Holy Roman Empire began to resemble centralized territorial states during the eighteenth century, they were still fragmented polities.¹² Furthermore, this political and cultural variety and multiplicity was perceived as the essence of German uniqueness by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schiller and Justus Möser.

The 1806 dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire and the Napoleonic establishment of German states reduced the number of capital cities and gave each of those that remained a more centralized role. However, the construction of each state from dozens of small principalities caused many of the previous *Residenzstädte* to become peripheral cities in much larger states, such as Würzburg or Regensburg in Bavaria, Lüneburg in Hanover and Mergentheim in Württemberg.¹³ Annexed into the new polities, these cities, and other politically powerful German localities, such as ecclesiastical principalities and free imperial cities, were threats to the integration of the newly emerging states. Although many of these cities had begun losing ground in the previous centuries, the Napoleonic wars erased their remaining political power and placed them geographically as far from the bureaucratic centres of the new states as one could imagine.¹⁴

Mid nineteenth-century urban growth also widened the gap between Munich, Dresden, Hanover and Stuttgart and the other cities and towns in their states. Between 1850 and 1870 the population of Munich grew from 107,000 to 169,000, that of Dresden from 97,000 to 177,000, that of Stuttgart from 47,000 to 92,000 and that of Hanover

⁹ A. Wendehorst, Das Hauptstadtproblem in der deutschen Geschichte, in: A. Wendehorst and J. Schneider (Eds), *Hauptstädte: Entstehung, Struktur Und Funktion: Referate Des 3. Interdisziplinären Colloquiums Des Zentralinstituts, Neustadt/Aisch*, 1979, 83–90; W. Siemann, Die deutsche Hauptstadtproblematik im 19. Jahrhundert, in: H.M. Körner and K. Weigand (Eds), *Hauptstadt: Historische Perspektiven eines deutschen Themas*, München, 1995, 249–260; W. Schmidt, Die deutsche Hauptstadt-Diskussion in der Revolution von 1848/9, *Sitzungsberichte der Leibniz-Sozietät* 6 (1995) 5–30; O. Dann, Die Hauptstadtfrage in Deutschland nach dem 2. Weltkrieg, in: Shieder and Brunn (Eds), *Hauptstädte*, 35–60; U. Schultz, *Die Hauptstädte der Deutschen: von der Kaiserpfalz in Aachen zum Regierungssitz Berlin*, Munich, 1993.

¹⁰ B.M. Baumunk, Residenzen: Von Arolsen und anderen Hauptstädten, in: B.M. Baumunk and G. Brunn (Eds), *Hauptstadt: Zentren, Residenzen, Metropolen in der deutschen Geschichte*, Köln, 1989, 216–217; J. Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*, Oxford, 2012, 224–225; G. Brunn, Die deutsche Einigungsbewegung und der Aufstieg Berlins zur deutscher Hauptstadt, in: Shieder and Brunn (Eds), *Hauptstädte*, 16.

¹¹ S. Rokkan and D. Urwin, *Economy, Territory, Identity: Politics of West European Peripheries*, London, 1980, chapter 2.

¹² D. Blackburn, *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780–1918*, Oxford, 1998, 13–26.

¹³ K. Fehn, Hauptstadt in Prozenten: Hauptstadtfunktion in der Mitte Europas. Politische, kulturelle und wirtschaftliche Standortveränderungen zwischen 1250 und der Gegenwart, in: Baumunk and Brunn (Eds), *Hauptstadt*, 477.

¹⁴ Y. Mintzker, *The Defortification of the German City, 1689–1866*, Cambridge, 2013, 202.

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