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But this attractive approach is both a strength and weakness of the book. Lemon might argue that the initial two chapters provide ample context on cities in general, covering as they do the social, economic, and political background that is essential for examining the individual cities at particular points in time. He might also claim that the structural outline followed in each chapter (*e.g.*, social relations, politics and government, land development and planning, and internal spatial structure) also allows for making comparisons among cities and for considering patterns of change over time.

True enough, but as the argument moves from place to place and from one development phase to another, or put another way, as the discussion shifts from one particular great city to another at a different point in capitalist development, students are left very much to their own wits when attempting to tie together the threads of Lemon's general argument. Quite simply, students might understand well enough how liberal democracy works in mid-nineteenth-century New York, but New York in 1910, in 1950, or in 1975 is not Chicago in 1910, Los Angeles in 1950, or Toronto in 1975. Does this deny that the case of either liberal democracy or nature's limits is irrelevant to each place across all phases of time? Of course, not. But because the book is intended as a text, more guidance, *i.e.*, more teaching, is required to show students how the central thesis — the fall of liberal democracy and the failure to overcome nature's limits — does indeed apply to all great North American cities at all points in capitalist time.

For students who encounter this text, keeping track of how this central thesis is integrated across all chapters, *i.e.*, just how it is applied to different cities over time, will prove a real challenge. This was the experience that my students encountered when I used the book as a text in a third-year course in urban historical geography. When considering the thesis on liberal democracy, it was genuinely difficult for these students to take the particular experience of one great city and reformulate it into general terms and then apply it, effectively and accurately, to the experience of another city, either earlier or later in that other city's development. Most students wished for additional discussion of this transcending experience, suggesting that they had lost sight of the book's main thesis during the course of interpreting its unifying argument,

Despite this situation, these same students nevertheless quite easily followed, and readily accepted, most of Lemon's arguments of the ways in which different structural elements of the representative cities formed a recognizable pattern through time. For example, when asked, after reading the book, to devise a model of the changing internal structure of cities over time, they took material from the discussion of different cities at different points in time and quite effectively produced a stage model of changing spatial structure. They were less effective in doing this for social and economic change. Did this occur because the line of reasoning about changing spaces offered a more familiar, *i.e.*, geographic, approach to interpreting the city? As a teacher, had I failed to demonstrate the value and intricacy of Lemon's overarching, inter-disciplinary arguments? Had I failed to fully demonstrate the structure of his approach? On reflection, I think that I did let my students down, even though Lemon's inter-disciplinary approach is what attracted me to the book in the first place. I had certainly wanted to excite students about the possibilities of the inter-disciplinary approach to urban historical research.

Yes, Jim Lemon's *Liberal Dreams and Nature's Limits* is informed, provocative, and challenging. Its synthetic qualities are informed by an outstanding and wide canvass of the literature; its thesis offers the opportunity for provocative classroom discussion; and its inter-disciplinary approach challenges teachers to teach better. Quite obviously, on further consideration, I should no longer straddle the fence, offering, instead, my own version of "two thumbs up."

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Snowdon, Frank M. *Naples in the Time of Cholera, 1884–1911.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Pp. xvi, 478. Bibliography, index.

Historians have seen the Giolittian period as representing a decisive change in the economic life of Italy. A. Gershenkon (1962) called the years 1896–1908 Italy's "big push" towards industrialization and Paul Kennedy (1988) noted that during those years Italian industrial growth rose faster than anywhere else in Europe. But it was as uneven as it was rapid. Although the *risorgimento* had much southern support, the Piedmont benefitted most from it. Southern Italy, especially the Neopolitan south and Naples itself, were marginalized, left almost entirely in their agricultural backwater of small holdings, poor soil, niggardly investment, sharecropping and inadequate transport. No wonder the south became increasingly an irritant and a challenge in Italian politics, ultimately bringing into question no less the liberal, even moral, basis of the revolution. Crude and savage, southern politics had always been barely manageable and, notwithstanding the liberal revolution, they remained so.

In the generation or so before the Great War, two cholera epidemics (1884–5, and 1910–11) highlighted both the deadly complexity of southern politics and the chasm between North and South. The first epidemic challenged the political authority of the *risorgimento* when it became a metaphor for all the discontents of southerners under a political order dominated by the Piedmont. The second illustrated how precarious was the authority of the state itself.

Frank Snowden's *Naples in the Time of Cholera, 1884–1911*, is a particularly useful insight into the late 19th- and early 20th-century Italian politics, political culture and public policy issues. It is also a useful introduction to an interesting historiographical discussion. It's not just that few cholera studies had been made

relating to Italy, but there seems to have been considerable disagreement on the importance of these frequent European visitations of Asian cholera. Some have suggested that the cholera epidemics, while tragic in their immediate effects, were essentially episodic or "one off" affairs which left little trace of their passing. Others, including Asa Briggs, suggested the epidemics were much more important, "revealing a shaft of light by means of which one can explore the structure and workings of modern European society." Naples, Snowden believes, is an ideal case study which would throw as much light on the scholarly debate as on post-*risorgimento* Italy.

His work succeeds wonderfully on many counts. Along with descriptions of the gruesome effects of cholera on the grotesquely overpopulated harbour *sezioni*, or lower Naples, an area particularly receptive (a "gracious host", as Snowden says) to all forms of infectious diseases, Snowden shows how inexorably the tragedy of 1884 led to the crisis of 1910–11. After 1885 the slums were to have been cleared away, a great avenue built to clear out the place, new aqueducts, new sewer systems, indeed a new lower town were to have been built on the insalubrious, stinking muck that had been the old Naples. It was not to be. Community, class, and crime were not as easily eliminated as were the *fonaci* or "pits of hell", the squatting places of, as Snowden calls them, the "urban troglodytes". Local politics, greed and corruption defied national expectations so much that when the next (and last) cholera epidemic struck in 1910–11, Naples was scarcely better able to contain the menace than it had been in 1885. Except that with so much money spent, so many reputations on the line, including that of the national government, once Rome realized the full horror of the cholera threat to Naples, its only response was to deny and then to hide it. Incredibly, not only did the Government embark on an enormous "cover-up", it got away with it. Snowden's account of this crime is perhaps the most engrossing part of the book.

If Briggs's suggestion was that the cholera epidemics be used to throw a "shaft of light" on the structure of European society, nowhere was it better or more fully realized than in Snowden's *Naples*. Not a stone is unturned. He examines everything with a fascination which might easily, but never does, become morbid. Especially interesting is his discussion of organized crime, of the history and the biology of the disease, and, of course, of the politics of financing urban renewal. Snowden's book is an indispensable guide to the 19th- and early 20th-century Italian history. It is also a model of historical analysis which deserves emulation.

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Colton, Timothy J. *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995. Pp. xvi, 937. 75 figures, 41 maps, 15 tables, appendices, notes, index.

Despite its subtitle, there is much more to be found in this book than simply the manner in which Moscow has been governed — important as that topic might be. Chronologically organized, it begins in the twelfth century, with the first days of the town that was most probably named for the *Moskva* river that meandered past it; it ends almost a millennium later, in the 1990s. By far the largest portion of this imposing book, however, is devoted to those years between 1917 and 1991, when Moscow served as the capital of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. In any case, given the vast scope of this project in terms of both time and topics, it is hardly surprising that its completion took more than a decade.

Timothy J. Colton is a Harvard sovietologist and director of that university's Russian Research Centre. The research which resulted in this publication began at the University of Toronto a few years before the break-up of the USSR. During the Gorbachev '80s he was able to refer to archival materials that previously had been unavailable to Western scholars; then, in the post-Soviet 1990s, many more avenues of research were opened. This book is truly indicative of the diversity of those avenues, and of Colton's journey through them.

From personal interviews to published memoirs, from newspapers to statistical surveys, from official documents to literature, Colton has made good use of them all. Furthermore, he openly admits having received invaluable input from some of the finest minds in academia, and his acknowledgments section reads like a "who's who" of international sovietology. The list includes scholars who have also produced urban histories, but what is most significant about the roster is that it includes representatives from many different disciplines. This point not only highlights the inter-disciplinary nature of Colton's work, but also the fact that his book should be of great interest to people outside the history departments of the world.

To put it most simply, this "city biography" contains something for almost everyone. For the social historian, to cite but one example, Colton not only paints a vivid verbal picture of the lives of Moscow's residents, but also provides a number of interesting visual representations and useful demographic tables. For the political scientist, meanwhile, there is the discussion of the "disjointed monism" of Soviet government, which lies at the heart of his anti-centrist, anti-monolithic thesis. Last, but certainly not least for the urban studies specialist, Colton provides extensive details of one city's construction, destruction and reconstruction across the years, and under the guidance of a number of leaders.

Particularly noteworthy is Colton's analysis of the Stalinist "hyperurbanization" campaign which, as part of the crusade to construct "socialism in one country," included a search for a style of architecture that would be truly "socialist" in both nature and