Rohe may officially be the Cary C. Boshamer Distinguished Professor of City and Regional Planning and Director of the Center for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, but at heart he is a historian. His new non-fiction work, *The Research Triangle: From Tobacco Road to Global Prominence* is part of the University of Pennsylvania Press’s Metropolitan Portraits series in which “each volume describes a North American urban region in terms of historical experience, spatial configuration, culture, and contemporary issues.”

Rohe startled this reader by his choice of where to begin. Rather than starting with the actual development of the Research Triangle in the mid-twentieth century, he commences 450 million years ago. This seeming digression becomes a delightful pattern that calls to mind Russian nesting dolls. By the time the reader has traipsed through the geographic land formation, touched on Native American influences, discussed the history of colonial times, and understood the creation on North Carolina cities and counties, business ebbs and flows, the rise of formal academia, and the color of politics, Rohe has more than met one of his goal to provide “a broad understanding of the area.” Indeed his story of this place through time is so detailed and critical to any understanding of the region and its current challenges that the notion of reading a similar work missing these historical nuances is frightening.

In six chapters, Rohe consistently demonstrates that the Research Triangle area while vital, necessary, and well done is now the victim of its own success and in danger of serious decline if action is not taken soon. The governmental, business, and academic founders who joined in a non-traditional public/private alliance chose an atypical park space of low density, large footprint, and thick foliage, which met business concerns, weathered industry evolution, gave some protection to economic recession, and in general improved the health and wealth of North Carolina. Now, the torch carriers find themselves faced with a myriad of challenges. Enormous population growth, waning water resources, strict covenants, outdated zoning laws, “jurisdictional fragmentation,” and a lack of overarching “community leadership” stifle growth and innovation. The area also needs to embrace the newer business model of collaboration and fend off poaching by national and global recruiters. Rohe doesn’t blithely leave the reader hanging after reaching the current situation, rather he continues with a professional analysis of the challenges and the best options to choose in order to retain the flavor of the unique entity known as the Research Triangle.

Statistics and illustrations are artfully interspersed and provide additional foundations for Rohe’s analysis. End notes provide suitable backdrop to the discussion as well as excellent beacons for further serious erudition as well as simple enjoyment. The multitude of personal names included could make the argument for a separate name index.

Rohe’s work would be a welcome addition to any library, particularly to those of the home, public, and academic persuasions.

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