German City Planning History: 1871-1945

John Mullin
CPL Bibliography No. 17

GERMAN CITY PLANNING HISTORY
1871 - 1945

by

John Robert Mullin
Assistant Professor of Regional Planning
Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts

November - 1979

CPL Bibliographies
1313 East 60th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637
Introduction

This bibliography is intended to serve city planners, city planning students and city planning scholars as a research tool in their quest for information concerning German city planning history. The reference works were reviewed and used in several professional assignments and research activities undertaken by the author between 1970 and 1979. They were primarily referenced in the following publications and papers written by the author:


Scope

The bibliography focuses upon city planning activities in the years 1871-1945 and covers the Wilhelmian Years (1871-1918), the Weimar Republic (1918-1933) and the Third Reich (1933-1945). It is divided into three sub-sections. The first is an alphabetical listing of books written in English. It should be noted that some of these books may only have a small section on the German experience. They are included because, in the author's opinion, they are significant. The second section is an alphabetical list of periodicals written in English. They too, were selected because they are significant regardless of extent of content. Finally, section three is a listing of key books and articles written in German on city planning history. They were selected on the grounds of significance and accessibility. All references can be found in North American libraries.

The Research

Research for this bibliography was carried out in many places. They are listed alphabetically.

1. Bauhaus Archiv, West Berlin
2. Boston Public Library
3. Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University
4. Frankfurt Stadt Archiv
5. Frankfurt Stadt Bibliotek
6. Frankfurt Stadt Historische Museum
7. Germanischen Museum, Nuremberg
8. Goethe Institute Library, Toronto
9. Goethe University Library, Frankfurt
10. Harvard University Graduate School of Design Library
11. Michigan State University Library
12. University of Massachusetts Library
13. University of Toronto Library
14. University of Waterloo Library
15. Widener Library, Harvard University

Key Bibliographies

Four English language sources stand out as being particularly valuable for researchers dealing with German city planning history. Concerning the birth of modern German city planning, the George R. Collins and Christianne C. Collins text entitled Camillo Sitte and the Birth of Modern City Planning (London: Phaidon Press,
German city planning, as a topic of study for an American scholar, is, at once, frustrating and fascinating. It is frustrating because it is virtually impossible to define the parameters of the topic area. It is fascinating because many of the crucial elements of American planning are rooted in the German past and because the Germans have been more successful than the Americans in maintaining healthy and vibrant cities.

It is also fascinating due to the great differences between American and German planning. For this reason it is important for us to define what city planning actually is in each of the two countries. In the United States, city planning is the process in which society's resources are distributed throughout the community as equitably as possible. The key point in this definition is process. American city planning is inordinately process oriented. This is not the case in Germany. A translation of the term city planning into German would be Stadtplanung. Stadtplanung, however, is not the generic term used to describe the traditional German planning of cities. Rather, it is Städtebau.

This term, translated into English, means city building. It means that the city planner has an extensive interest in the actual physical form that exists and that will be developed in the future. Perhaps the key difference between the United States and German experience is that the Germans implement more plans with far less concern with process than the Americans.

German city planning history, as a research topic area, is still in embryo. Perhaps the key reason for this state is that city planning as a municipal activity has almost entirely been viewed by historians as an integral part of architecture, art or political studies. Thus, it is extremely difficult to find research efforts that have focused on city planning as a topic unto itself. This deficiency also extends to studies that emphasize demographic analysis of cities and the comparison of city planning efforts in different cities.
Given the nature of German cities, with their strong sense of political independence and "separateness," the opportunities for comparative studies appear to be quite extensive. For example, in the 1920's three cities stand out as having exemplary results: Hamburg, Berlin and Frankfurt. Further, all three experiences were led by men who became key figures in German planning over the first half of the century. And yet, no comprehensive studies have been undertaken that compare the city planning experiences of the three cities or that have compared the ideas and approaches of the three planners.

On the other hand, the local community study with an emphasis on culture, society, and political life is quite common. Within these studies we find reference to the city planning that occurred. While there are many of these studies that could be considered as methodological models in their own right, there is also little effort in them to tie into a regional or national scheme. It is as if each city were an island surrounded by the Hinterland.

Given the nature of German historiographic approaches, where can information on German city planning be found? Before answering this question, one must first ask, what was German city planning? That is, from where did the roots of the models for modern practice spring? For the answer to this, we must first turn to the Bismarckian-Wilhelmian Reich. During that period city planning was being practiced and furthered by engineers, public health advocates, urban designers, policy makers and political conservatives. However, neither the local department of city planning nor the bureaucratic city planner was in existence.

OVERVIEW OF MODERN GERMAN CITY PLANNING HISTORY

The Bismarckian-Wilhelmian Era

City planning during this time frame can be subdivided into two periods. The first period, approximately 1871-1890, can be considered the formative years. The second period, approximately 1891-1914, can be labelled as the period of creative tension.
During the formative years, Germany as a nation experienced large-scale urbanization and industrialization. The formerly balanced **Mittelalterliche Stadt** virtually ceased to exist. The population shift to the city resulted in several planning problems related to the response of the municipality to urban needs, the shortage of housing, the regular cycles of communicable diseases and epidemics, and the need to expand beyond the ancient city walls.

In terms of the ability of the municipality to meet the needs of the constantly increasing population, there was little that could be done. The cooperative housing movement that occurred in the late 1860s had failed. Municipal enabling legislation did not allow for an activist municipal involvement in housing matters and the city councils were populated by persons who had much to gain from the status quo. In essence, housing was perceived as being a commercial commodity. While attempts were undertaken to correct these shortcomings, effective administrative procedures did not become a reality until the late 1890s.

The supply, quality and location of housing were also critical problems. Supply in urban areas did not keep up with demand. The typical worker housing was the **Mietskaserne**. Normally designed in a highrise, hollow square configuration, these structures offered little in terms of sanitation. The lack of sanitary facilities and the high density living that occurred in these structures were key stimuli to what appears to have been the most crucial city planning activity of the period: health reform. Mainly through the work of the Association for the Preservation of Public Health and the hygienist Max Pettenkoffer, the problems of unsanitary living conditions became highlighted. City after city acted upon this problem with extensive success. The success of these health reformers contributed to a rigidity of urban form; water and sewer lines were determined to be most efficient when a geometric form was followed. This rationalistic approach was also accompanied by an aesthetic desire to lay out streets in a more formal manner. Thus, many cities began to modify the medieval character of their central cores to reflect modern transportation
and aesthetic requirements.9

The problems of overcrowding, unsanitary living and lack of building space also led to the expansion of the cities into the Hinterland. Interestingly enough, most German writers of the period consider this activity as being the key focus of city planning. In fact, the term Städtebau was not commonly used to describe the activities of city planning. Most often, it was Städterweiterung (city expansion).10 The ancient walls of the city no longer served as barriers to the city. In essence, the development of the first suburban rings became a reality.

Thus, in summary of this period, city planning as a coordinated municipal activity did not exist. However, elements of planning functions began to emerge through the health reforms, traffic and infrastructural improvements and civic expansion. The key failure of the period centers upon the inability of the municipality to develop administrative processes and tools to meet the needs of the ever expanding populace. This problem began to be resolved in the period of creative turbulence.

The period of creative turbulence in German city planning corresponds with a similar turbulence in the United States. In fact, the City Beautiful Movement, Garden City Movement, and Social Reform Movement that occurred in the United States all had counterpart movements in Germany.

A growing concern among many designers over the quality of the civic design occurred as a result of the engineering solutions undertaken in the previous period. The destruction of the balanced city, the regimentation of urban form and the loss of civic uniqueness were considered to be unnecessary. Led by the Austrian Camillo Sitte, large scale efforts to overcome these problems were undertaken. Sitte, author of a text entitled Der Städtebau nach seinen Künstlerischen Grundsätzen, was hailed across Germany and Europe as the key figure in these efforts. In virtually every major city in Germany, aesthetics in urban form became a key component of city planning activities.12

The pressure to create aesthetically pleasing central cities was matched by the desire of the populace to live in less dense
living arrangements. This contributed to the suburbanization of the German city and the creation of the German Garden City Movement. The movement was greatly stimulated by the writings of the Englishman Ebenezer Howard and his German counterpart, Theodor Fritsch, and had both pragmatic (i.e., the need for greenery) and ideological (i.e., the desire to communicate with nature and be "one with the land") overtones. Model communities that exemplified the new settlement patterns were the Krupp worker settlements at Essen and the experimental village at Hellerau. Perhaps the one designer who best represented the movement was the Munich city planner and architect Theodor Fischer.

The German garden city is most significant in the context of the evolution of modern German city planning. From the period of the first city expansion efforts, through the crest of the formal "Garden City Movement" before World War I, through the modern Siedlungen of the Weimar Years and the resettlement communities of National Socialist times to the present, it has remained a consistently popular concept with both German planners and the German people.

Above all else during the era of creative tension, the response of the municipal administrations across the country represented the most significant city planning advancement. Through legislative efforts at national, state and local levels, enlightened civic leaders were finally able to gain power to effectively react to urban needs. This is the period when zoning, comprehensive master planning, land reparcelization (the Lex Adickes), and public assistance for housing became a reality. It is also the period when the German municipalities became extremely interventionary in private enterprise when they believed that the public interest was being threatened. The net result of their success was that American planners and British planners regularly looked to Germany as a model for their own efforts. By the beginning of World War I, the German cities had the powers, the trained personnel and the support of the populace in city planning matters. These factors were of critical importance in the chaos of the post World War I era.
The Weimar Years and Beyond

While the "period of creative tension" in Germany had similar planning characteristics to the American experience, the city planning experiences of the two nations in the 1920s were quite different.

The small town America of Babbit, Main Street USA, conservatism, efficiency, prohibition and a "return to normalcy" was quite different from a defeated, hungry, revolutionized Germany. City planning in the United States lost its reform image while in Germany it became radicalized. The role of the "city planner as crusader for social change" was not uncommon in Germany during this period. A new society, with new ideals and extreme shortages of basic needs, provided the setting for the new experimental practice. Spearheaded by architects, planning takes on the appearances of a social cause leading towards a new Gesamtkultur or Wohnkultur. It is a period of revolution, manifestoes, demands, radical programs and extensive professional dialogue. The leading planners and designers of this period, following the German Diaspora, brought many of their ideas to the United States where they were, at least partially, applied across the country.

The end of Weimar was more than the cessation of a republic. It marked a death of spirit in design and planning. Rationalism, local initiative, individuality and freedom were replaced by romanticism, order, the national collective and control. City planning ceased to be a locally controlled activity. And yet, the city planning record is not as "backward" as the rhetoric would have us believe. While megalomania, anti-urban ideologies and the Städtkrone were elements of official National Socialist government programs, the main thrust of the city planning efforts was not, on the whole, dissimilar to Weimar.

Nor, for that matter, is there a major break in the evolution of city planning practice from the time of the thirties through to the present.


The three planners were Fritz Schumacher (Hamburg), Martin Wagner (Berlin) and Ernst May (Frankfurt).

The ideological reaction to the destruction of the organic, balanced city was quite severe. See, for example, Carl E. Schorske, "The Idea of the City in European Thought: Voltaire to Spengler," Oscar Handlin and John Burchard, editors, The Historian and the City. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1963), pp. 95-114.

While it is difficult to pinpoint the exact cause for this failure, the national financial collapse of 1873, the lack of guaranteed financing, the lack of direct participation by municipalities, and the lack of limited liability protection appear to be crucial. Once these problems were solved, the cooperative housing movement experienced great success. See Leonardo Benevolo, History of Modern Architecture, Vol. 1. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971), p. 346.

For example, fifty percent of the seats in the Frankfurt city council were held for property owners. Revisions in enabling legislation or increased participation of the municipality in housing matters were regularly defeated. These landowners feared that their property values and influence would decrease if the city became an active participant in low income housing. See William Foulke, "A German City Worthy of Emulation," American City, Vol. 6, No. 1. (January, 1912), pp. 412-519. Also see Thomas Horsfall, "Dwellings in Berlin: The King of Prussia's Great Refusal," Town Planning Review, Vol. 2, No. 4 (January, 1912), pp. 281-302.

The Bauhaus city planner Ludwig Hilberseimer summarized the conditions as follows: "... during the nineteenth century housing has been considered solely as a great and profitable enterprise. Investment in it paid high dividends though it often did so at the cost of the health of the people." See Ludwig Hilberseimer, Contemporary Architecture: Its Roots and Trends. (Chicago: Paul Theobold, 1964), p. 147.

George R. Collins and Christiane C. Collins maintain that the Association was the precursor to planning organizations in Germany. Pettenkoffer, a German chemist, was one of the earliest active advocates of organized public health concerns. Through

xii

9 Francois Choay has labelled these planners as regularists. They were advocates of the approach taken by Georges Haussmann in the transformation of Paris. The major exponent of this approach in Germany was the architect Joseph Stubben. See Francois Choay, The Modern City: Planning in the Nineteenth Century. (New York: Braziller, 1969), pp. 15-26.

10 Peter Breitling maintains that the term Stadterweiterung was used until after the turn of the century. At that time it was replaced by Camillo Sitte’s term Stadtebau. Peter Breitling, The First City-Extension Competitions in Nineteenth Century German and Austria. A paper presented at the First International Conference on the History of Urban and Regional Planning, London, September 14-18, 1977.


12 In particular see the city plans for Munich, Stuttgart, Aachen, Danzig, Darmstadt, Dresden and Karlsruhe. Breitling’s paper describes the conflict between the regularists (as represented by Joseph Stubben and Reinhard Baumeister) and the design proponents (as represented by Sitte) in the competition for the urban extension of Munich in 1893. See Breitling, The First City-Extension Competitions, p. 10.


14 Ebenezer Howard, Garden Cities of Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1965), originally published as Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform (1898).


16 A comprehensive study of these settlements and their impact upon modern city planning has yet to be undertaken. For a brief description of the most highly praised settlement, the

17 The architects of this settlement were Heinrich Tessenow and Richard Reimerschmid. They were, at once, conservative and modernist. For this reason, their works and ideas represent important links between the eclecticism of the turn of the century and the Neue Sachlichkeit of the 1920s.

18 See Brietling, The First City-Extension Competitions, op. cit. Also see Theodor Fischer, Sechs Vorträge über Stadtbaukunst. (Munich: Oldenberg, 1922) and Rudolf Pfister, Theodor Fischer, Leben und Wirken eines deutschen Baumeisters. (Munich: Callweg, 1968). Four of the more unique garden village plans created by Fischer were Limbergerhof (Ludwigshafen), Siedlung Alte Heide (Munich) and Siedlung Bauverin (Schweinfurt) and an industrial village at Gmindersdorf.


24 This was particularly evident in terms of housing. A comparison of the experiences has been created for an exhibit at the Frankfurt Stadt Historisches Museum entitled "Frankfurter Wohnungsbaus in der Weimarer Republic." Also see R. Diehl, A. Junker and P. Schirmbeck, Historische Dokumentation 20. Jahrhundert. (Frankfurt Stadt Historisches Museum, 1976), pp. 53.01-53.05.
Books


Adshead, S. D. Town Planning and Town Development: A Study in Economic and Social History of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. London: Methuen, 1923.


Blumenfeld, Hans. Notes Submitted to the United States Department of State on the German Housing Problem. (October 6, 1949), a xerox copy.


Margold, Stella K. Housing Abroad Up to World War II. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Architecture, 1942.


-10-


Periodicals


Hale, William H. "From the Heart of Germany." The Nation, November 18, 1931, p. 555.


Wildeman, F. "Parks Replace the Ramparts of Cologne." American City, vol. 45, no. 6 (December, 1931), pp. 86-90.


German Language Sources


-25-


-27-


Der Städtebau. Darmstadt: Bergstrasser, 1890.


CPL Bibliography No. 17

GERMAN CITY PLANNING HISTORY
1871 - 1945

by

John Robert Mullin
Assistant Professor of Regional Planning
Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts

Price: $7.00

Additional copies may be ordered from:

CPL Bibliographies
1313 East 60th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637