

IDEOLOGY, PLANNING THEORY AND THE GERMAN CITY IN THE INTER-WAR YEARS

PART II

by

JOHN ROBERT MULLIN

In the last issue of the *Town Planning Review*,* the key influences on town planning practice during the years of the Weimar Republic were presented and explained. This issue examines the ideologies and theories that influenced the practice of planning during the pre-war years of the Third Reich (1933–1939). It also compares and contrasts the influences of the Weimar and National Socialist periods.

SECTION II: THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST EXPERIENCE†

Inherited Conditions

Any discussion of town planning under the rule of the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP) must begin with an examination of the perceived role of the city within the context of the nation-state. The collapse of the city's financial integrity during the Depression provided the 'cause' for a usurpation of municipal powers by the National Socialist government shortly after it attained power. Many of the Stein reforms and tenets of the Prussian Free Cities Act were abrogated. Perhaps more importantly, approximately 99 per cent of all local public officials and fifty-one of fifty-five Oberbürgermeisters were replaced.¹ Centralisation, the 'party line', national control and national goals superseded local autonomy, initiative, experimentation and innovation. The key theoretical governmental construct was the *Führerprinzip*. Under this coordinated approach (*Gleichschaltung*), critical decisions passed from the local level through the states to the national government where they were under the control of the *Deutscher Gemeintag*, a subsection of the Ministry of the Interior. The municipalities, in effect, became 'trustees of the national government.'² The national government perceived that local communities were not being managed well and that there was a need to bring a sense of order to their policies which would reflect national goals. More succinctly, the national government thought that local communities had been taking a 'political and financial flight from reality.'³

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†This section should be read in association with the author's article 'The Impact of National Socialist Policies on Local City Planning in Pre-War Germany (1933–1939): The Rhetoric and the Reality', *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (January 1981), pp. 35–47, to which due acknowledgement is made.

Ideology

The state of the German city was regularly subjected to NSDAP sponsored diatribes. In fact, beginning in 1930, both the key party newspaper, the *Völkische Beobachter*, and the Party's chief unofficial architectural spokesman, Paul Schultze-Naumberg, regularly criticised the role of the city in German life.⁴ The behaviour of the urban 'democratic mob', the ineffectiveness of the 'city based' Weimar government, the art of the urban-oriented avant garde, the modernist architecture and urban design of the Bauhaus, and the international (*Weltanschauung*) character of the city were all condemned. The writings of the romantic folk ideologists of the nineteenth century provided the antecedents for much of the anti-urban stance of the National Socialists. Wilhelm Riehl's noble peasant, Langbehn's *Rembrandt as Teacher* (*Rembrandt als Erzieher*) and LaGarde's anti-semitic diatribes were all evoked. From the twentieth century, Spengler's *Decline of the West*, Fritsch's racist community writings, Ratzel's concept of geographic politics (*Geopolitik*) and Grimm's concept of living space (*Lebensraum*) were also cited.⁵

The writings of these idealogues were strongly reflected in the thoughts, speeches and writings of Gottfried Feder and Walther Darré, the two leading 'settlement' ideologists of the Third Reich.⁶ Both men advocated the dissolution of the industrial city and the promotion of the rural *Volk* as being key steps in the creation of a truly 'National-Socialist' state. Feder was quite influential in the development of the NSDAP platform on economic, spatial and settlement questions prior to the party's assumption of power. And later, shortly after the NSDAP came to power in 1933, he became director of the *Reichsheimstättenamt*, the organisation responsible for redirecting settlement development. Through this office he proposed concepts that were to guide the de-urbanisation of the nation. More specifically, Feder advocated: the halting of urban growth; the dispersion of industry away from the cities; the reduction in population of urban areas; and the subjugation of all local, regional and state planning to national needs. Cities were to be reduced to a population of no more than 100 000 people. The overflow population was to be resettled in small communities in rural settings. Even the right of the individual to build where he desired was to be highly restricted.

His ideas provoked extensive controversy. On the negative side, large farm operators, militarists and industrialists argued that urban dispersal would significantly lower production. More positively, the idea was praised by Erich Koch, Gauleiter of East Prussia, who saw the concept as a means of shifting economic development and growth from 'the capitalist West to the Prussian East.'⁷ Further, planners saw the dispersal scheme as a potential means for the creation of garden villages on the urban fringe, the lowering of urban densities, the lessening of the need to continue relying on the use of the *Mietskaserne* and enabling the cities to attack urban blight. Party ideologists also supported his policies, for they saw them contributing toward the reinforcement of a strong peasant class (*Bauern*). Ultimately, the citizens who were to be resettled objected vehemently and Feder's policies were dropped within a short time after their enactment.

Feder was removed from his position in less than twelve months. His ideas were considered to be so mediaevalist, so economically disruptive, and so unpopular with the military, industrialists and policy makers that Economic Minister Hjalmar Schacht removed him from office. His replacement was Wilhelm Ludovici, who continued to develop the new settlement ideas but without the strident call for the elimination of the urban system and infrastructure.

Feder's position as the leading settlement ideologist and 'critic of cities' was assumed by Walther Darré. Equally as anti-urban as Feder, he argued for the strengthening of the rural peasant at the expense of the city. Unlike Feder, however, he continued to be a powerful party and governmental official throughout the 1930s. From such positions as Director of the *Siedlungsamt* (1931) and Minister of Agriculture (1933), and through an additional assignment as *Reichsbauernführer* (1934), he wielded considerable influence on both agricultural settlement and anti-city policies.

Neither Feder nor Darré were able to slow the growth and expansion of the cities. However, it should be pointed out that anti-urbanism still remained as a critical ideological consideration in government policy. In fact, anti-urbanism was a significant ideological input in the intent of the development programmes applied during the Recovery Years (1933–1936). This input can be particularly noted in settlement, agricultural expansion and regionalisation policies.

National Planning

Government actions in National Socialist Germany can be divided into the Period of National Recovery (1933–1936) and the First Four Year Plan (1936–1940).⁸ During the Recovery Years the national government focused upon such critical issues as job creation and housing production. Particular planning emphasis was devoted to the objectives of ruralisation, the creation of a permanent peasant class and the creation of new forms of community. All three objectives resounded with strong ideological overtones. At the same time, urban renewal, expansion of urban infrastructures and urban land re-parcelisation received relatively little emphasis. Yet it would be misleading to conclude that the Folkish ideology was so strong that it took precedence over all factors influencing the various planning objectives. A review of the ideological inputs leads to the conclusion that there was not just one ideology at work but many, and that they were often in conflict.⁹ This becomes clear when the ideas of Feder and Darré are contrasted with those of Hitler. Feder and Darré, as spokesmen for ruralisation, argued for the dissolution of the city and for the decentralisation of industry. Their ideas contributed to the development of the *Erbhofsgesetz* (Hereditary Farm Law)¹⁰ and the *Siedlungsgesetz* (Settlement Act).¹¹ While Hitler as Chancellor supported these programmes, he was also promoting ideas which were designed to improve the majority of Germany's largest cities. These cities were to enhance the image of the state through the development of new plazas, sports arenas, party buildings and cultural edifices. Berlin, Nuremberg and Munich, in particular, were chosen to receive attention.¹² Thus, it is clear that, as extensive as the rhetoric of anti-urbanism was, it did not result in the total rejection of the city as a community form.

By the mid 1930s, the economic revival, the rising spectre of militarism and the need to expand industrial technology, all led to a de-emphasis of ruralisation as a high priority of the national government. In fact, if the Recovery Years can be considered the 'era of the country', then the First Four Year Plan must be considered the 'era of the city.' The *Völkische Beobachter* noted this shift when it wrote: 'We have left the stage of worker settlements, suburban developments and rural communities for comprehensive industrial development with the consequent need for industrial settlements. Today this phase is almost becoming obsolete due to the expansion of our newer middle-sized and big cities.'¹³ This shift took several routes. First, there was the need to expand production for military needs, and the centres of production were primarily in urban areas. Secondly, urban housing was becoming increasingly scarce. Thirdly, there was a strong desire to remake the cities in the image of the new order. While the influence of ideology could still be found in the site planning and architectural concepts that were applied to key projects, considerations of mechanisation, rationalisation, production and efficiency took primacy.

Above all, it was the need for the production of military materials that stimulated a renewed interest in urban areas. As early as 1935, the rising importance of military concerns could be seen in terms of domestic policies. In that year an act was passed giving the military the right to expropriate any land that it needed. At the same time, an increasingly large share of the Gross National Product (GNP) was shifted to military needs. The British economist Guillebaud labelled the shift as being 'guns instead of houses.'¹⁴ The results of this shift were felt in virtually all aspects of German life including city planning.

Community Types: Theory and Practice

The search for ideal types of community form encompassed alternatives that ranged from the small *Burg*-type Folkish communities of the early 1930s to the grandiose reconstruction cities of Berlin and Nuremberg and finally to the creation of the new industrial cities at Salzgitter and Wolfsburg.¹⁵

THE EARLY 1930S

Escapist principles similar to those used during the Weimar era were emphasised as theoretical ideas of the early 1930s. The primary goal was to find an alternative to the centralised city. Three alternatives were regularly applied: the house with farm, the privately owned home with a few acres to grow produce for personal consumption (*Kilensiedlung*) and the privately owned home on the urban fringe (*Heimstätte*). Conceptually, these communities were designed to meet several goals. First they were designed to be self sustaining and to create a sense of *Heimat*.¹⁶ By so doing, the Folkish spirit would be enhanced. Further, they were designed to reduce pressure on the over-crowded city while providing much needed employment and increasing food production. As the Frankfurt city planner W. Nosbisch noted, there was a distinct fear that the Depression would not be overcome and that industrial production would not match the record of earlier times. For this reason, an autarchic system was required.¹⁷

The decentralisation movement to small settlements, while reflecting a National Socialist solution to the problem of the city, was neither a new idea nor one that met complete national acceptance. Theorists such as LaGarde, Langbehn and Toennies had all previously espoused this approach, and their ideas had, in turn, influenced Theodor Fritsch, one of the developers of the German idea of the Garden City around the turn of the century. Fritsch's new town concept was important for several reasons. It represented one of the first theoretical schemes which addressed the need to develop alternatives to the evils of industrialisation. (Fritsch's concept, as developed in a book entitled *Stadt der Zukunft*¹⁷ (1896) predates the publication of Ebenezer Howard's *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (1898).¹⁸) Secondly, his idea showed how new settlements could be grafted on to existing settlements.¹⁹ Such an approach found popularity among planners and ideologists because land was at a premium and it helped to contribute to the expansion of community character. Finally, Fritsch stated that his new community would also contribute toward 'culture building' and the development of higher aesthetic standards. His concepts, in time, were well received by National Socialist communitarian theorists. In fact, his blend of technology and the advocacy of agrarian society is highly reflective of the communitarian ideas which emerged in the early 1930s.

The Hereditary Farm Law met stiff resistance from many who felt their rights were being infringed. Further, within two years of its passage, the Settlement Law became so restrictive that the government was forced virtually to eliminate it. The locations of these settlements, the forms of community that were developed and the laws used to implement the ideas under this programme were part of a national planning effort (a *Bevölkerungspolitik*) to change the communitarian character of the nation. Robert Koehl has labelled these efforts as being 'Imperialism by Demography.'²¹ The *Lebensraum* idea, the autarchic farm policies, the resettlement of German speaking peoples to newly occupied lands and improving land for settlement were all part of this approach. Ultimately, these approaches met resistance and the programmes were less than successful.

Both the Hereditary Farm Law and the Settlement Act were implemented within a strong ideological framework. In fact, Minister Hans Kerll, the head of the *Reichsstelle*, the agency responsible for the two programmes, included the 'increase of the biological folkish-strength' (*Volkskraft*) as being one of the *Reichsstelle's* aims.²² Inherent in the mandate of the organisation were the concepts of *Lebensraum* and *Geopolitik*. Fritz Schumacher, former city planning director of Hamburg, saw these ideas as being the result of a new conceptualisation of space that had been stimulated by both technological advances (communications, transportation) as well as a result of national border constrictions imposed upon the nation by the Treaty of Versailles. Space had become a weapon in the struggle for national existence. It was interpreted in terms of spirituality, nature, land, settlement and community. Space determination was to be the over-riding means to create a sense of national unity and community.²³

THE LATE 1930S

In the First Four Year Plan (1936–40) period, town planning theorists focused

upon several new ideas. These included concepts on the redesign of existing large cities, the creation of a national hierarchy of city-types and the development of principles for ideal towns.

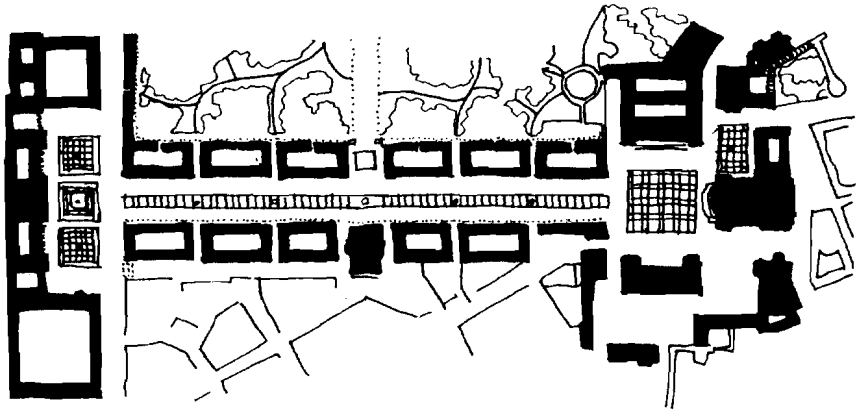
The theories embodied in the Plan in relation to the larger cities focused on the creation of structures, spaces and settings that would further the goal of enhancing the state. Party and government structures were to be centrally located to reflect both permanence and strength, and to be located along main axis roads or upon ceremonial squares. Several examples of this idea can be noted. In Berlin, for instance, the Great Hall was to be so large that St. Peter's Cathedral would have fitted into it several times; the German Arch of Triumph was to have been forty-nine times larger than the Arc de Triomphe in Paris; and the Soldiers Hall and the North and South Railroad stations were to be among the most massive structures built to that time.²⁴ In Nuremberg, the 'City of the Party Rallies', the March Field, the Kongresshalle, the Zeppelin Field and the Stadium were to be built such that the magnanimity of the party events could emerge.²⁵ In Hamburg, Hitler directed that a high rise structure, equal to that of any in America, be developed with a neon Swastika on the top so that new arrivals would be suitably impressed with the new Germany. In Munich, plans called for the development of a railroad station that was to be more than a third taller than the Frauenkirche—the symbol of the city.

Ironically, one of the fundamental bases for this concept was the *Stadtkrone* idea of Bruno Taut, developed during the Weimar years. Taut, one of the most anti-urban members of the avant-garde, saw his ideas as reflecting a new, decentralised order. Yet the NSDAP theorists used it to support the opposite.²⁶ They also intended the *Stadtkrone* to be a startling announcement that both a new government and a new culture were being developed. Each community, according to its size, was to receive funds to construct appropriate buildings and spaces that would reflect this announcement. These ranged from large structures in urban areas to village crowns (the *Dorfkrone*) in the smallest of communities. The ultimate *Stadtkrone* concepts were to be applied in Berlin, Nuremberg, Hamburg, Munich and the formerly Austrian city of Linz.²⁷

The proposed changes to the larger cities were radical. Indeed, given the enormous respect for the past, it is ironic that so little attention was paid to preservation. For example, the proposed developments in Hamburg required the demolition of the entire Othmarschen section and the relocation of the city centre from the banks of the Alster River to those of the Elbe River. As Jochen Theis has written: 'Had the plans ever come to fruition, many of the old centres of these towns, slowly evolved over centuries, would have been destroyed and the projected relocation of some centres would in turn have led to almost irreparable damage'.²⁸ In sum, at least in the case of the five *Führerstädte* (Berlin, Munich, Nuremberg, Hamburg, and Linz: see Fig. 1), the glorification of the future took precedence over the preservation of the past.

One can also note the *Führerprinzip* at work in the larger cities. In many cases, the national government simply took charge of local planning as can be noted in the following three examples. In the case of Nuremberg, in 1935 Hitler expressed grave concern for the people of the city; particularly because the plan for the Party

Fig. 1 The formal layout of the 'Europäische Kunstzentrum' in Linz. Linz was one of the *Führerstädte* (source: Brenner, Hildegard, *Die Kunstpolitik des Nationalsozialismus*, Hamburg, Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1963, p. 128)



Rally Area called for the relocation of the famous city zoo. He therefore asked Mayor Willi Liebel for his support and volunteered to pay all relocation costs. Speer analysed Hitler's approach as follows:

'Two years later Hitler would have come directly to the point in dealing with a mayor: Here is the Party Rally Area; this is how we're going to do it. But at that time, in 1935, he did not yet feel so completely in command and so spent almost an hour on prefatory explanations before he placed any sketch on the table'.³⁰

By 1936 Hitler had begun to take action independently of the local city's position. Such was the case with the planning of Berlin. Throughout most of the First Four Year Plan, the planning of the city was controlled by the city administration. During that same period Hitler presented several ideas to Mayor Julius Libbert concerning the remaking of the city into the *Reichshauptstadt*. Libbert was not enthusiastic about his plans. Hitler first threatened to relocate the capital and then simply decided to bypass all government agencies and turn the planning over to Albert Speer, his new General Building Inspector. In essence, whenever the city was not supportive of national needs or policies, its freedom to act or react on planning matters was simply removed. In this case, the national government stripped the Mayor of Berlin, the Berlin City Council, the Gauleiter of Berlin and the national Ministry of the Interior of all planning powers and turned the power over to the General Building Inspection Office.

In Hamburg, the redevelopment programme was the direct responsibility of Karl Kaufmann, the local Reich Representative. Kaufmann was directly appointed by Hitler as Chancellor and was given personal responsibility to carry out the programme. The results are explained as follows: '... both planning and decision making were thrown into unbelievable chaos, since Hamburg, like other cities affected by the redevelopment directives now had two planning authorities, the old city council department and a new "unbureaucratic" body'.³¹

While rootedness in the soil (Fig. 2), antiquity, mythology, tradition and *Heimat* were important ideological considerations among many National Socialist ideologues, there were also efforts to create new towns (Fig. 3). Much of this thinking stemmed from the work of Gottfried Feder who, after leaving

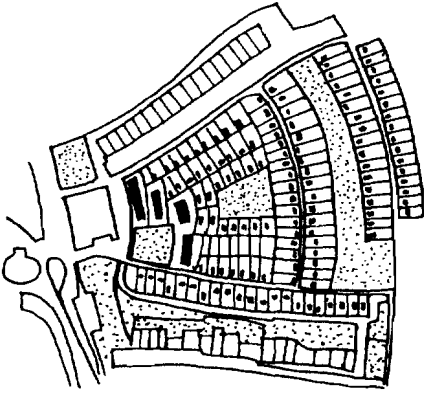


Fig. 2 Sketch of the Ramersdorf Siedlung, showing the site planning of a model National Socialist settlement. Developed in Munich as part of a permanent exhibit on housing, the Ramersdorf settlement was intended to show how the German people would be 'led back to the soil' (source: based on a map in Lane, Barbara Miller, *Architecture and Politics In Germany, 1918-1945*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1968, p. 211)

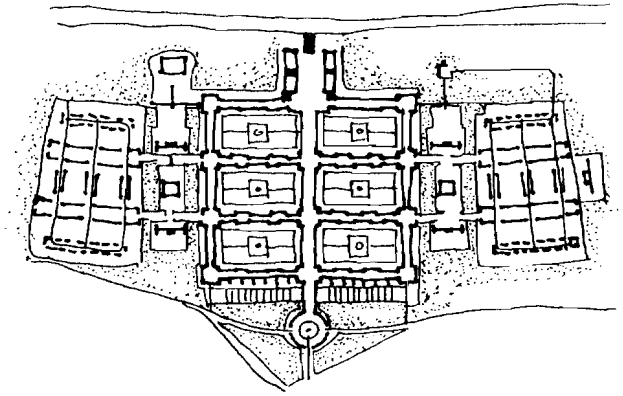


Fig. 3 Sketch illustrating the conceptualisation of a model National Socialist City with a population of 20 000 people. The black structure (the 'city crown') at the top was to be the key government building. The large open spaces in the centre were to be surrounded by government buildings and commercial activities. The residential quarters were to the far left and right (source: Teut, Anna, *Architektur im Dritten Reich, 1933-1945*, Frankfurt, Ullstein, 1967, p. 308)

government, had become the director of the nationally sponsored *Institut für Städtebau und Landesplanung*. Primarily through a competition sponsored by the Institute, extensive thought was generated about idealised community forms.³²

Above all else, the principles developed in the competition reflect the importance of forms which stimulate the 'organic' character of communities as opposed to a rational, systematic approach. For example, the circle-constituting principle (*Kreisbildendesprinzip*) appeared to take on critical theoretical importance. Only through such an organically-derived shape, it was felt, could a sense of community be achieved. The intent was to 'unite people in a readiness to help and participate in community life' (Figs. 4 and 5) (i.e. *Die Neue Stadt auf Sozialer Grundlage* or *Soziale Grundfigur*).³³ It would also stimulate the feeling of the organic character of 'man in nature'. This concept seemed a direct repudiation of the row-on-row (*Zeilenbau*) designs of the Weimar era planners.³⁴ Indeed, the National Socialist theorists perceived that the *Zeilenbau* treatment oriented man toward himself, while circular designs helped to create communities.

In essence, the circle was designed to reflect the *Burg* rather than the *Castrum*-like *Civitas*. These concepts can be observed in the proposals developed for the Eastern European regions that were scheduled to be resettled with Ethnic Germans. These communities were to be developed along the line of such mediaeval cities as Augsburg, Regensburg, Heidelberg and Weimar. A distinct correlation between the design of these villages and those established by Unwin for the English Garden Cities can also be noticed. These correlations included the village as animated symbol, the need to understand the past, the use of the middle ages as the historical standard, the indispensability of beauty, twelve houses to the acre and the cottage as symbol of healthy family life.³⁵ With the exception of the

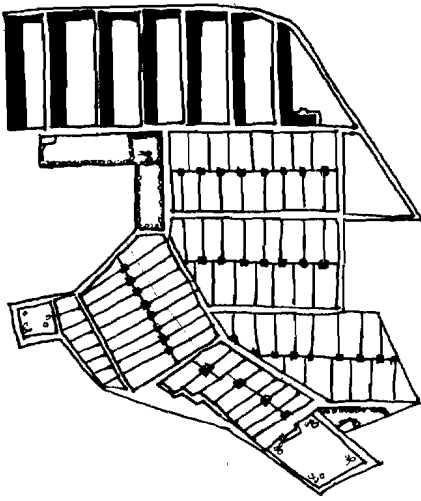


Fig. 4 Sketch depicting one of the common differences between the site planning concepts used during the Weimar and National Socialist periods. The solid black squares depict the National Socialist desire to provide single family homes in small agricultural settings.

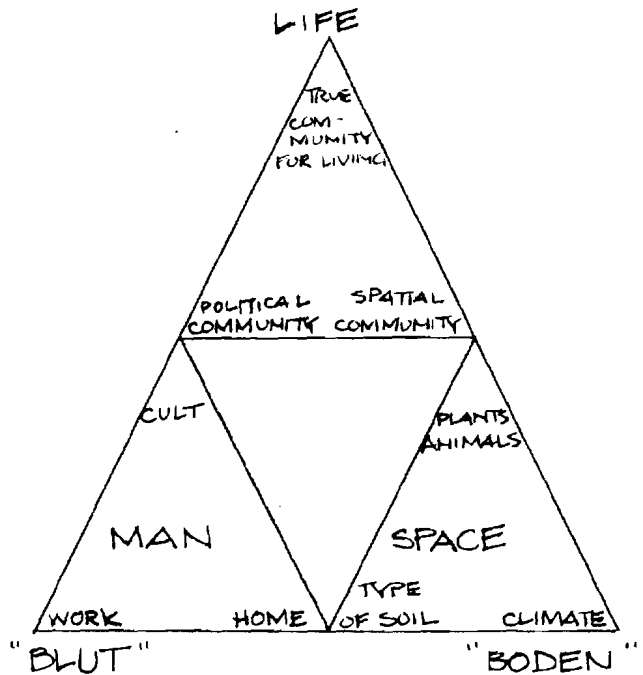


Fig. 5 (right) Diagram showing the critical elements perceived as necessary to create strong National Socialist communities (source: Otto, Christian F., 'City Planning Theory in National-Socialist Germany', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (March 1965), p. 72)

density standard, all of the other principles formed a part of the theoretical basis for the development of NSDAP-sponsored settlements. It would be a mistake to assume that the settlement patterns were exactly similar; in fact they often contained significant differences. However, at least superficially, they shared a degree of commonality. Perhaps the greatest difference was that the NSDAP-influenced city planning theorists saw these villages as being easily controllable and thus more responsive to national goals.

In summary, the ideological emphasis upon the new community settlement design patterns stressed neo-classicism; the need for unity through building (*Einigung*), romanticism, mediaeval settlement patterns and the community as an arm of the state. Elements of these principles could be found across the nation in most of the rural settlement programmes and in the two new towns (the 'Town of the Herman Goering Werke' at Salzgitter and 'Strength Through Joy Automobile Town' at Wolfsburg; see Fig. 6).³⁷ However, one should note that these principles were not absolute and that many others were also applied at the same time.

National Socialist Theories in Summary

A great distance separated the theory and the application of city planning during the pre-war years of the Third Reich. The NSDAP ideologists initially called for the dissolution of the city, the creation of new forms of rural settlements, and the decentralisation of industry. These ideas proved ineffective. With the rising

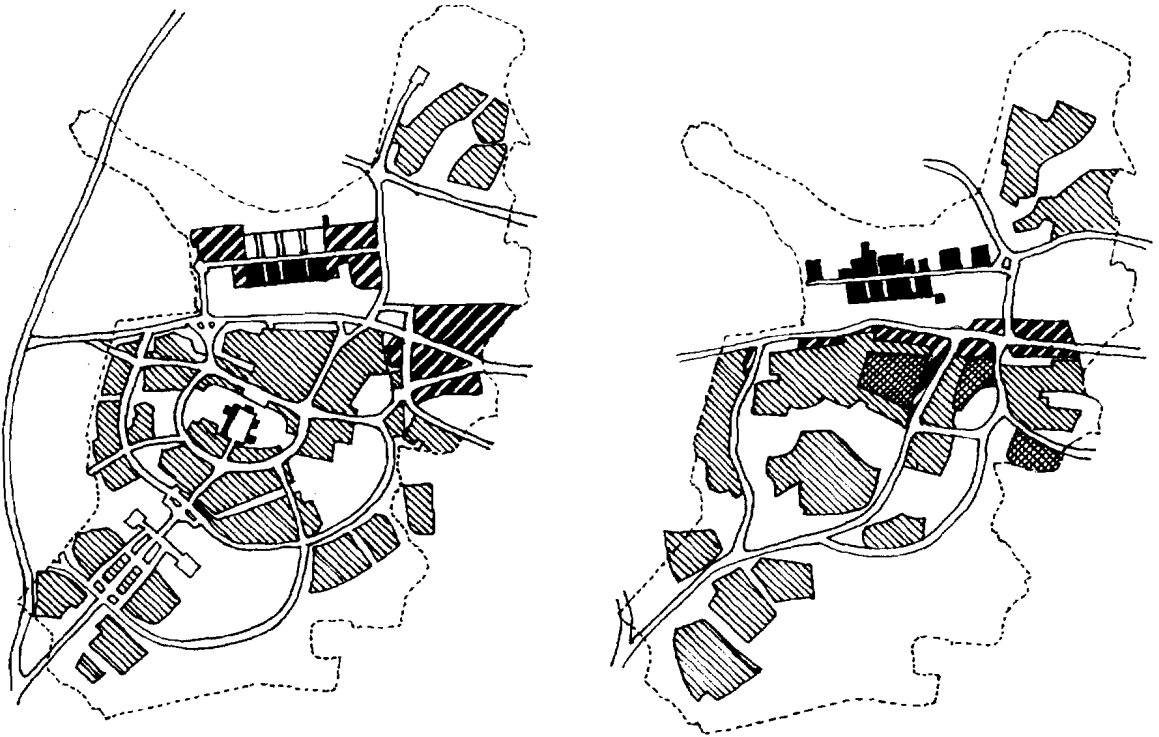


Fig. 6 Wolfsburg: the Volkswagen town. The left hand sketch shows the formal grand avenues and the city crown ideas used by the Nazis. These were removed in the post-war plan for the city, shown in sketch form on the right (source: Rowan, Jan. C., 'New German Town', *Progressive Architecture*, Vol. 42, No. 12 (1961), pp. 131–137)

spectre of militarism, concern shifted away from the country and back to the large city where theorists focused upon reshaping it into a direct appendage of the nation-state. The *Stadtkrone* concept and the neo-classical ideas of Albert Speer, chief planner for Berlin and other key cities, were particularly representative of this shift. But again, the theories were not fully implemented. Finally attempts were made to create model concepts for new towns. While only two new towns were actually built these ideas were, at least in part, applied across the nation to existing cities. However, neither the totality of the application nor the intensity of effort matched the rhetoric associated with the ideals.

The NSDAP approach to cities was inherently negative. Almost from the Party's very beginning, a belief persisted that the city was not conducive to the creation of a strong *Völkische* community. The romantic and anti-urban theorists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had laid the groundwork for this sentiment. These theories were initially and partially applied but, as the need for cities expanded, were utterly rejected.

With the spectre of rising militarism at the start of the First Four Year Plan, the place of the city within the nation-state changed significantly. The economies of scale that occurred in urban areas, the large numbers of trained urban workers available for skilled labour and the existence of factories with excess capacity in the urban centres all helped to cause the city to be at least 'tolerated'. Key theoretical questions at this time focused upon the role of the city within the

nation-state. In fact, urban design and iconographic support for the state became critical planning considerations.

Clearly, the theories and theorists contributed to form a mosaic of old and new ideas, concepts and designs. Mixed in a soup-like cauldron they seemed unique but, over time, proved not much different from those of the Weimar era.

SECTION III: THE WEIMAR AND NATIONAL SOCIALIST ERAS COMPARED

From the description of the city planning theories influential during the Weimar and National Socialist years, great similarities as well as great differences can at once be perceived.

In each case, the key theories used to guide practice appear rooted in the years prior to the ascent to power of the respective governments. In the case of the Weimar era, the roots were formed during the pre-war years of the late Wilhelmian era (1880–1914). This is particularly evident in terms of anti-urbanism, concern for social justice, and escapist design principles. In the case of the National Socialist experience, the key theories were rooted in the same anti-urban writings as the Weimar years and in the pre-Third Reich writings of Spengler, Feder, Hitler and the NSDAP party platform. One primary difference between the two was that the National Socialist theorists focused upon a different set of considerations: The subservience of the city to the nation-state; the ideological desire to replicate past cultures; and the intent to ‘dismantle’ the metropolis.

On The Role of Government—A Comparison

The town planning theories developed in Germany in the inter-war years were not conceptualised in a vacuum but were influenced by the role and response of government, the existing state of the cities, the state of the national economy and the desire to create cultural ideals. In both the Weimar and the National Socialist experiences, the coming to power was chaotic and culturally disruptive. Each represented major breaks with the government that preceded them. Yet the responses of these different national governments to the state of the cities were fundamentally different. The national governments of the Weimar era provided little direct control, little policy guidance and little ideological input to the cities. With the exception of key town planning ‘enabling’ legislation and enactments related to housing and ‘regionalisation’, the national governments of the Weimar era cannot be considered as having a major role in the conceptualisation of city planning theory.

It is also clear that there was little *overt* anti-urbanism attached to national government policies toward cities in this era. If a label had to be affixed to their approaches, it would be democratic social pragmatism. Ideological and theoretical concepts were left to those who were essentially external to the government process. The absence of an overt ideological thrust or of preconceived policies on the part of the Weimar governments contributed extensively to the intellectual and cultural ferment during the first years of their assumption of power.

Furthermore, the governments responded to a broad spectrum of ideas and approaches to the problems of the city. Ideas related to urban renewal, regionalisation, population resettlement, dissolution of cities and modern design concepts were all discussed within the broadest possible context. Given that the Constitution of the Weimar Republic was considered to be the best 'ever written'³⁸ and that it maximised democracy, this sense of freedom—and the inherent pluralism and splintering into self-interest groups—may have been a key factor in the national government's assumption of an essentially 'value neutral' approach toward city problems.

The NSDAP, on the other hand, through the writings and speeches of such spokesmen as Hitler, Feder, Darré and Rosenberg, made it quite clear that they regarded the rise of the city as antithetical to national ends. While there were many reasons for this stance—among which were political, sociological and economic factors—it was reasoned that the application of Teutonic ideals, Nordic mythology and mediaeval cultural values could only be achieved in community forms that were small scale and rurally based.

The NSDAP participated actively in city matters almost from the moment of its assumption of power. The coordinative structure (*Gleichschaltung*) and the *Führerprinzip* resulted in the subservience of cities to the national community. The city governments were severely restricted in city planning matters and were forced to follow national guidelines.

It is difficult to assess whether one era was more effective than the other in relating theories and practice. The Weimar period, in terms of town planning, was marked by experimentation, innovation and an orientation toward the working class. At the same time, its performance was not successful enough to overcome the chaos of the post World War One era. In fact, it was only during 1927 and 1928 that national prosperity and relative tranquility existed simultaneously. Throughout the rest of the Weimar era the almost constant social, political and economic chaos of the nation required planners to focus on short term issues. Furthermore, town planners were forced to maintain a strong welfare orientation due to the inability of large numbers of people to feed or house themselves. In the light of all of these problems and given little revenue, little national direction and a nation in political, social and economic chaos, the fact that so much was accomplished is quite remarkable.

With more power, a streamlined governmental approach and little internal chaos, the National Socialist Government, on the other hand, made great strides toward overcoming the problems that it inherited. Upon the NSDAP's assumption of power, immediate measures designed to counteract the problems of the Depression were implemented. And, at the same time government planners began to apply measures that had been conceptualised during the 1920s. Among these were policies relating to settlement location, community design, colonisation and 'culture' building.

Thus, important differences between the responses of the official government positions during the two periods can be noted. The governments of the Weimar era took no overt position on cities while the NSDAP developed strong concepts related to the future of cities.

On Anti-Urbanism

Comparisons of the Weimar Republic era with the National Socialist times often characterise the former as being urban oriented and the latter as rural oriented. Although, as noted above, there was an overt anti-urban stance taken by the National Socialist theorists, the stances of planning theorists during Weimar times are less clear. Sibyl Moholy-Nagy has labelled the theorists as focusing upon a *Weichbild* or 'grey area' which was neither urban nor rural.³⁹ The historian Manfredo Tafuri, on the other hand, considers the Weimar theorists as being anti-urban.⁴⁰ The National Socialists took on extremely anti-urban stances in the period of National Recovery. They argued in this period for the rejection of urban life and the creation of the balanced city of the middle ages. And yet, once the rhetoric is removed, the approaches advocated by NSDAP anti-urban theorists do not differ strongly from those of the Weimar theorists. Both called for small settlements, alternatives to urban living, settlements that offered 'field and factory', the creation of new communication standards and the use of designs and site plans as symbols for the new era. The key differences lay in the fact that the National Socialists advocated these changes as part of a nationally controlled programme designed to further the objectives of the nation-state. Local autonomy, innovation, experimentation and cultural views were not tolerated as much as they were during the Weimar period.

The Older Centres

The central areas of Germany's cities were of secondary importance to both the Weimar Governments and to the National Socialist government during the Recovery Years. In each case, the emphasis was upon developing the urban fringe. Only after the housing shortages were overcome was attention to be focused upon the inner areas. Since neither the Weimar nor NSDAP governments could meet this goal, existing urban areas remained largely ignored except for some transportation changes, some efforts to protect the mediaeval character of existing cities and some selected 'model' urban renewal projects. The military and employment requirements that surfaced in the First Four Year Plan brought a refocusing of objectives on the part of the NSDAP to an urban orientation. Once this happened, extensive plans were developed for selected cities. However, few of these were ever implemented.

On Design

As mentioned previously, German city planning has always had a strong commitment toward implementation. A critical dimension of implementation rests in architecture and urban design. The National Socialists directed an extensive propaganda effort against the modern design ethos of the avant-garde architects and planners who were active in the Weimar period.

The community design principles of the Weimar modernists were both a response to the time—a rejection of past values and the development of new techniques—and a support for the spirit of the Weimar Republic. These modern design concepts can be interpreted as having both a political and a creative basis.

The political basis helped the creative basis to be realised. Their unique design features commanded significant attention: flat roofs, lack of ornamentation, vivid colours, prefabricated components, standardised construction elements, built in kitchens and uniquely designed furniture.

Many of these features were anathematised by the National Socialists. Above all, two aspects were denounced. Their first objection was that the structures did not require craftsmen for construction. Instead, they were designed to be built in assembly line fashion. This meant that the skilled craftsmen, formerly part of the middle class, no longer had a marketable skill. This, in turn, contributed to a strong sense of worker frustration upon which the National Socialists capitalised. The second critical objection centred upon the question of the Germanic character of the designs. The National Socialists took advantage of the rising sense of nationalism to preach that the modernist designs were international, Jewish or Bolshevik in character. One area of almost constant criticism was the lack of pitched roofs in the new *Siedlungen*. The size of the rooms, the colours, the site planning and the lack of ornamentation were also regularly condemned. The net result was that an effective stigma was placed on these structures.

Given the rejection of the modernists' designs, what design principles replaced them? No single pattern emerged. In fact, one could point to the 'Gingerbread House' type, the half timbered *Fachwerk* house, the Tyrolean house and the thatched-roof cottage as examples.⁴¹ In a certain sense, these house designs were similar to those utilised during the years of the Weimar Republic. The Weimar-era houses were primarily designed for the minimal existence, settings that allowed for personal agricultural production, construction by semi-skilled and/or unskilled labourers and the ideological purpose of supporting the cultural ideals of the new government.

While these two intents shared common characteristics, the end products also reflected differences. The Weimar structures generally stressed modern designs, were partially built by unskilled labourers and were intended to be supportive of a community *Wohnkultur*. On the other hand, the National Socialist settlements generally reflected past design concepts, were primarily self-built and were designed with the intent of providing a means of family self-sufficiency.

Were these differences significant? In terms of providing cheap housing for the lower income worker, they were not. In terms of providing a cultural ideal for the 'spirit of the time', they were not. Both were designed to meet the ideological, cultural and housing needs of their respective times. The differences are primarily of style and approach, rather than in terms of substantive ends.

On Success

Both the Weimar and NSDAP governments came to power during periods when German cities were suffering from lack of funds, over-crowding and poor housing. Each endeavoured during the first years of power to formulate plans to resolve these problems. In the middle years, each progressed markedly in meeting these needs. In the last years, both failed miserably. The importance of ideology in each period decreased over time. During the Weimar years, meeting the problems of the 1929–1932 Depression was of primary importance while, during the pre-war

National Socialist years, the problems of re-tooling for 'defence' took precedence. Each contained a promise, an attempted plan of implementation and a failure due to shifting priorities. In summary, despite differences in ideology, the two experiences had more in common than they were different.

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