Chapter Title: Tradition and Modernity: Urban Planning in Breslau

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Tradition and Modernity: Urban Planning in Breslau

> "*Nothing harms the essence of housing more than the exaggerated single-minded fanatics who find satisfying form for housing only in the village idyll or palace-like large city residence.*"
> —Fritz Behrendt, "Städtebauliche Entwicklung, Wohnwesen, u. Bodenpolitik"

While it can be difficult to distinguish traditional and modern tropes in visual art or architecture, the economic, political and social dimensions of 1920s urban design make it easy to recognize them in Breslau's large-scale Weimar-era planning projects. Unlike private houses, these developments were funded through municipal housing authorities or semi-private housing cooperatives. With public funds at stake—and often severely limited—project designers had to consider economics at every level, including spatial, material, and construction-related. Wherever public institutions have a hand, politics play a role: in Silesia, the borderline nature of the province, its political instability, and the dynamics of postwar German/European relations all affected development and aesthetic decisions. After the First World War, Breslau and Silesia suffered from the combined effect of prewar under-construction and a postwar population influx that accelerated when Germans fled eastern regions awarded to Poland in 1921.[1] As a result, urban designers had many opportunities, but they were also pulled in different directions, toward innovation, modern aesthetics, and new construction methods on the one hand and traditional expression, typically inspired by regional building types, on the other. Weimar debates over the roles of traditional and modern aesthetics in large-scale public works put additional ideological pressure on their work.

A number of important urban designers worked for the Breslau municipality between 1918 and 1933, among them Max Berg, Theo Effenberger, Paul Heim, Albert Kempter, Richard Konwiarz, Ludwig Moshamer, and Hermann

Wahlich, who were employed by the Breslau *Siedlungsgesellschaft A.G.* (Breslau Municipal Planning Office), and Ernst May, who worked for the *Schlesische Heimstätte* (Silesian Homesteads), one of the housing cooperatives founded after the war. This group of planners utilized a pragmatic mix of traditional and modern aesthetics and planning strategies as they negotiated the imperatives of public funding and taste, tempered by economic realities. Their projects reflect a split between a romantic worldview that revered local and regional culture and realistic responses to contemporary challenges.

Housing: A Need and a Challenge

Germany in the 1920s needed at least a million units of additional housing, while Breslau and Silesia were short tens if not hundreds of thousands of units.[2] Breslau's need predated the war, for the city, in part due to poor planning, simply could not build quickly enough to absorb the exceptionally rapid population growth between 1871 and 1910.[3] The housing problem was furthered by the city not expanding geographically, but instead absorbing the extra population into the same 4,917-hectare area it occupied in 1871. Yet another blow occurred after 1918, when approximately three million Germans were displaced from eastern territories. Although it is difficult to know how many emigrated to Breslau, the welfare rolls increased 422 percent between 1913 and 1927, from 7,441 people to 44,275, suggesting that the vast majority of newcomers were poor and in dire need.[4] In 1926, Breslau was the densest city per hectare in Germany, with 114 people per hectare and 381 per constructed hectare. Berlin was second, with 46 and 308 respectively.[5] Existing housing in Breslau was substandard, with more single room apartments than any other city in Germany by a factor of 1.5 compared to Berlin, 2.4 in comparison with Bremen, and 3 compared to Dresden.[6] Few apartments had kitchens with daylight or proper sanitary accommodations, which probably accounts for Breslau leading the country in tuberculosis deaths in 1912.[7]

Economic and social dislocations caused by the war compounded the housing stock issues. From 1918 onward, Breslau and Silesia had unusually high unemployment rates.[8] At the same time, changes in the political structure of Germany affected all aspects of the social structure. As the old moneyed classes lost some of their power, wealthy industrialists and upwardly mobile members of the new white collar class vied for social status, political power, and control. As political unrest shook other foundations of the German world, Silesia made the initial transition to democratic government quite

peacefully, but in 1919 suffered Spartacist rioting and succumbed to the Kapp Putsch in 1920.

The partition of Silesia was a particularly provocative event. Silesia had two parts: Upper Silesia, which was rich in coal, and Lower Silesia, where Breslau was located. After the war, Germany and Poland haggled over Upper Silesia, large portions of which were populated by ethnic Poles. Germany did not want to cede the resource-rich territory, especially in the face of the draconian reparations set out in the Treaty of Versailles. In an attempt to mediate between the two countries, the League of Nations mandated a plebiscite two years after the signing of the Treaty, to decide which country should control Upper Silesia. In 1919, the Prussian government mounted a Campaign to Resettle Silesia, initially as an effort to shift the population distribution in Silesia toward ethnic Germans for the coming plebiscite, but also to help alleviate the housing crisis elsewhere.[9] Although 60 percent voted for Germany in the 1921 vote, after the Third Silesian Uprising later that year, the northernmost portion of Upper Silesia was awarded to Poland, at which point huge numbers of ethnic Germans fled the region, exacerbating the existing housing crisis in Lower Silesia and Breslau.[10]

Seen against this backdrop, many of the interwar resettlement and housing efforts were aimed at forestalling popular rebellion, maintaining civil order, and consolidating support for the state in an unstable political climate. As Michael Harloe points out, the private market collapse in the aftermath of the war, coupled with social unrest and heightened demand, prompted state and municipal action.[11] Adequate, affordable, hygienic housing was deemed a human right, without which the people would become restless and perhaps dangerous, and Breslau adopted a series of policies to alleviate these social and political problems, including targeted housing developments for displaced persons, returning soldiers, low-income residents, and homeless rural residents who emigrated to the city.

To ease demand as quickly as possible, Breslau initially renovated basements, cellars, storage structures, and attics, creating close to 9,000 units of emergency housing.[12] The long-term goal was to add 3,500 units per year for the foreseeable future. Although these numbers were not realized, they speak to the gravity of the housing shortage. In 1922, Breslau sponsored an urban design competition to address planning and housing needs by rethinking the outline of the city limits. The city intended to absorb neighboring small villages to add land for development, but a history of poor planning in and around the periphery made this even more challenging than it otherwise would have been. According to city architect Fritz Behrendt, Breslau had no true close-in

suburbs, no streetcar network connecting outlying villages with downtown, and no water or gas service beyond the city limits.[13] In short, the urban infrastructure did not penetrate beyond the city border, which hindered economic and geographic growth. Recognizing that better infrastructure was as important as new housing, officials set out to improve both as they expanded the city's territory to make space for development.

In 1919, the city established a Housing Commissariat to manage the housing commissions it needed. Before 1919, development was privately financed and managed, but by the end of the First World War it became clear that the situation was too dire and the economic circumstances too complicated to leave development in private hands. However, the city quickly discovered the advantages of partnering with private companies, and eleven stakeholders, including heavy industry, trade, trade unions, and interested citizens, united to form the Municipal Housing Authority, with the city retaining half of the company's shares.[14] The Authority was part of the city bureaucracy and, like the provincial authority, *Schlesische Heimstätte*, was linked to the housing welfare societies established by the Prussian Housing Law of 1918.

As instruments were developed to facilitate the financing and construction of mass housing, reformers and architects struggled with questions of design. What were the goals of mass housing and what models best served the new needs? At the end of the nineteenth century, a series of housing schemes had been published and disseminated throughout Europe. Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* had a wide popular readership in Germany. Although his specific ideas did not become policy, his emphasis on healthy communities, access to green space, limiting growth and sprawl, and pedestrian-friendly city planning, as well as his belief in the importance of small cottage or low-rise development, were very popular. In Germany, plans submitted to the 1910 urban design competition "*Gross-Berlin*" were particularly influential models. Proposals were initially exhibited at the General Town Planning Exhibition at the Royal Arts Academy in Berlin, which was visited by over 65,000 people, attesting to its impact.[15] The show then traveled to Düsseldorf and London. The plans in the exhibition addressed a host of urban challenges. Hermann Jansen examined spatial planning, including the expansion of city limits, parklands, other open spaces, and rail networks, while Bruno Schmitz imagined improvements to the city center's cultural and civic amenities. Others looked at housing and green space.

Max Berg assessed the competition's importance to urban planning in a 1910 article, and it clearly influenced his work in Breslau. In his own competition entry, Berg envisioned a tripartite division for the city: a work district di-

vided into areas for commerce and industry, a monumental district comprising cultural and governmental functions, and a residential area.[16] In Breslau, Berg advocated for the city's design and expansion to be planned according to these basic zoning principles. Rudolf Eberstadt's radial city proposition was particularly influential in Breslau, where the *Magistrat* approved a similar approach in 1921.[17] Eberstadt's model organized new housing developments outside the existing historic core in green areas laid out in a radial pattern, connected to the center by public transit networks. Many of the housing projects planned in the 1920s were on the outskirts of Breslau where, as in Eberstadt's scheme, newly built public transit would make them easily accessible to the urban core.

Along with the Garden City ideals, architects designing mass housing had to consider economy of means. The fiscal crises most European governments faced after the war ranged from mild to severe, and many countries suffered material scarcities and deficiencies in production that lasted at least until 1920–21, if not beyond. Furthermore, mass housing of the scale needed demanded new, cheaper building techniques. Prefabrication and mass production methods, standardization of parts and even sections of buildings, and the development of easy-to-reproduce models were becoming common across Europe.[18] Architects responded to these pressures and developments by exploring two basic approaches, what the Germans called the *Kleinwohnung*, or small home, and the *Existenzminimum*, or minimum for existence. The *Kleinwohnung* was a rationalized series of spaces small enough to be economical but spacious enough to feel comfortable. In contrast, the purpose of the *Existenzminimum* was to discover the absolute minimal spatial requirements for different combinations of occupants—a single adult, a couple, a couple with one child, and so on—in order to minimize construction costs while maximizing efficiency in the dwelling.

Architectural Debates

Between 1919 and 1933, architects grappled with the outward expression of these projects, as well as their inward organization, that is, with "form." Throughout the nineteeth century, European architects searching for appropriate ways to accommodate contemporary habits in house design had experimented with historic styles, but the results were unsatisfactory. These styles seemed like superficial dressing rather than true reflections of new modes of living. The struggle over style continued into the twentieth century, where it coalesced over interwar housing developments, lining up traditionalists against

progressives. Sometimes they fought over individual architectural elements: pitched roofs or flat; small windows or large surfaces of transparent glass; brick, stone, and colored stucco versus white stucco; wood against steel; small, differentiated rooms versus the open plan, to name just a few. Richard Pommer has written about the famous War of the Roofs or Flat Roof Controversy, which began before the First World War but increased in vehemence in the 1920s.[19] The conflict occurred at the Onkel Tom's Hütte and Am Fischtal Colony housing developments in Berlin, where the Hütte architects constructed flat roofed units directly across from the pitched roofs of Am Fischtal. A famous contemporary photograph shows the two developments juxtaposed in an aesthetic face-off. The controversy was important enough to engage most of the significant German architects of the day, including Walter Gropius, Ludwig Hilberseimer, Heinrich Tessenow, and Mies van der Rohe, all of whom weighed in at one time or another.[20]

Roofs were only one of many contentious aesthetic issues that divided architects. A related debate focused on the outward expression of the new architecture and its mass housing projects. Positions ran the gamut: some supported vernacular architecture, others proposed a combination of vernacular and modern, and still others wanted totally modern buildings, free of historic references. As Barbara Miller Lane demonstrates, the battles were aesthetic but carried political stakes that increased over the 1920s.[21] Urban designers in Breslau and Silesia had to contend with both local and national funding politics. By visibly mixing vernacular and modern design elements, they could appeal to parochial local and regional tastes, while also engaging national priorities to design housing appealing to a broad constituency. Members of Breslau's *Heimatschutzbewegun*g, like Theo Effenberger, along with designers working for the Municipal Housing Authority, like Heim, Kempter, and Moshamer, and on large-scale developments for housing associations, like Ernst May, initially advocated an aesthetic mix for public housing projects, reflecting local and regional architectural heritage. What this mix meant in practice in and around Breslau varied, but more often than not it meant buildings whose appearance referenced local or regional vernacular architecture. Some projects used pitched roofs inspired by Silesian farmhouses and barns, or traditional building materials like thatch and exposed wooden supports. Others added modern adaptations of traditional ornamentation like the hex.

The question of space was practical as well as ideological. Aesthetic debates were concerned not only with how buildings looked but with their spatial organization and use. Urbanization altered where people lived, but it also changed how they conducted their daily lives and thus how they needed to orga-

nize their homes. For instance, it was more and more common for people to purchase goods like food as they needed them, rather than to store them for long periods, so the need for large storage areas and attics diminished. As May later wrote, "one didn't need the steep roofs to dry onions or plums anymore."[22] These lifestyle changes did not necessarily do away with steep roofs; rather, they allowed architects to rethink the space under the roof for different functions, such as bedrooms and smaller living units. With more women entering the workforce, less time was available to prepare food, which led to interest in more efficiently organized kitchens, timesaving machines, and easy-to-prepare foods. Life before the twentieth century had been formal, with social groups separated and spaces compartmentalized, but the twentieth century introduced the open plan and free-flowing spaces to complement the new social mobility.[23]

By the interwar period, a consensus had developed among most German social reformers that the mass housing ideal was detached single-family houses, though that model was often economically infeasible.[24] Still, the single-family home seemed to have many more benefits than the hated nineteenth-century German *Mietskaserne* (tenement house), including the opportunity for ownership; improved hygiene; contact with fresh air, light, and green space; and privacy that supported family life. Given the difficulty of constructing inexpensive freestanding homes, architects developed models that combined the economies of scale found in multistory housing with elements of the detached home. Two to five story row houses of varying lengths were the most typical solution, although architects like Effenberger and May experimented with two-, three-, and four-family buildings, among other variations. Across Germany, architects designed small, multifamily developments in parks and tree-lined neighborhoods, like those in and around Breslau. Although not precisely Garden City designs, the new neighborhoods certainly borrowed ideas from the Garden City.

Ernst May

Ernst May had first-hand experience with the Garden City. After studying at University College London, he apprenticed in Garden City designer Raymond Unwin's office in 1910. As a young architect, he also worked on Hellerau, the first Garden City built in Germany. Born in Frankfurt in 1886 to an industrialist who owned a local leather factory, May enjoyed a privileged childhood. Besides University College London, he studied at the Technical Universities in Darmstadt and Munich, where his most influential teachers were Friedrich von

Thiersch and Theodor Fischer, from whom he likely learned to appreciate modern town planning.[25] In Munich he also became lifelong friends with several young architects who would later become key players in Germany, including Paul Bonatz, Hugo Häring, Erich Mendelsohn, J. J. P. Oud, and Wilhelm Riphahn. May came to Breslau in 1919 to direct the *Schlesische Heimstätte*. His primary responsibility was to oversee housing construction in unincorporated suburbs and towns, homesteads, and rural settlements.

The scholarship on May's work has focused primarily on his later *Neues Frankfurt* projects, paying little attention to Breslau. When Breslau is mentioned, it is usually in the context of the facts behind his employment there, rather than critical assessment of his work and its aesthetics.[26] One exception is Susan Henderson, who sees May's work in Breslau as "a missing link between pre-war reform efforts in housing and the heroic Modernism of the later 1920s."[27] However, May's work can just as easily be understood as typical of Weimar urban design practice, with its juxtaposition of conflicting ideas.

In Breslau's strained economic climate, new housing had to be as inexpensive as possible, so May focused his attention on design and construction strategies that would reduce costs, like building smaller, more efficient units. At the same time, May strongly objected to the hated *Mietskaserne*, which typified nineteenth-century urban low-income housing; he intended his designs to be an antidote to their cramped, unhygienic conditions.[28] Sometimes his designs included structures that could easily be built by a layperson, a strategy that aligned with the growing self-help construction movement in Europe. May also combined his rational economic reasoning with an appeal to nostalgia and the romance of *Heimatgefühl* (feeling of home), which had a powerful hold on many Silesians. *Heimatgefühl* is difficult to translate into English, which has no word that captures the deep emotional ties to place implicit in the German concept of *Heimat*. *Heimat* architecture tended to capitalize on attachment to local traditions by using aesthetic elements common to the local and regional vernacular.

May's interest in vernacular types dates to his student years at University College London, where his early sketches and watercolors capture the ornate detail of the architecture around him.[29] His sketchbooks from the period in Unwin's office include views of quaint English country cottages and romantic landscapes. During the First World War, he preferred drawing studies of the historic buildings in France to scenes of battle.[30] In 1921, May published a series of pencil impressions of vernacular Romanian architecture that included earthen huts in Caracal, farmhouses in Stroani, a cloister in Sinaia, and a corn shed in Stroani. The images show simple but elegant gabled wooden roof struc-

tures, with exposed beams and imaginatively shaped columns, topped by thatch. The corn shed, composed of alternating horizontally stacked wooden members that cross at the outer corners, has a wonderful visual texture. These sketchbooks reveal a deep and longstanding fascination with traditional building types, construction materials, and methods, which suggest that his use of traditional architecture in his Silesian projects was more than opportunistic.

May seems to have disliked skyscrapers as much as he loved vernacular buildings. He felt the skyscraper was an excellent building for commerce, but he argued that people needed their "own home and garden . . . where the family circle could find peace and relaxation," so he advocated for cottages and other low-rise public housing solutions.[31] May took his responsibilities seriously and enthusiastically, convinced that he was charged with accomplishing an important social good: "The first condition underlying housing reform of every kind is the acknowledgment of social and economic efficiency, that is, of an economic policy that recognizes its limits at the point where the well-being of human beings is threatened."[32] His beliefs and approach were a tidy fit for the settlement push to populate the countryside.

May laid the groundwork for his design approach in a series of articles published in *Schlesisches Heim*, the journal he founded, edited, and wrote for, beginning in 1919.[33] The articles were primarily directed at clients, not architects, an important factor to consider when examining his language and arguments.[34] The housing projects May was working on in and around Breslau were predominantly for the poor and working class, not the architect's usual educated bourgeois clientele. Because the projects required government support, both political and financial, May's aesthetic had to appeal to the average German or they ran the risk of not being built.[35] May chose to use the *Kleinwohnung* as a foundation for his projects because it was a "primary form" developed from the "living requirements and habits of the segment of our folk that live in such dwellings."[36]

The *Kleinwohnung* was a type of architecture that, true to its name, was small and economical, but had a broad range of aesthetic expressions in buildings as varied as traditional farmhouse, village dwelling, and urban apartment. In a series of design experiments, May pushed the limits of the *Kleinwohnung* by trying to discover "how far the living area of the small house can be shrunk."[37] Many of May's contemporaries developed modern versions of the *Kleinwohnung*, as did May himself later in Frankfurt. But in Silesia, he chose to base his aesthetic on the traditional Silesian vernacular farmhouse, an iconic building type, centuries old and familiar to most Silesians, that provided a "primary form" with enough variety to make it a good source of design tropes. The
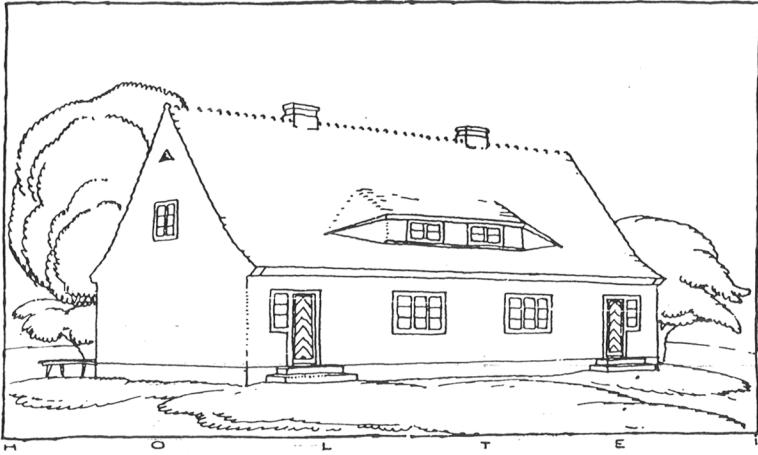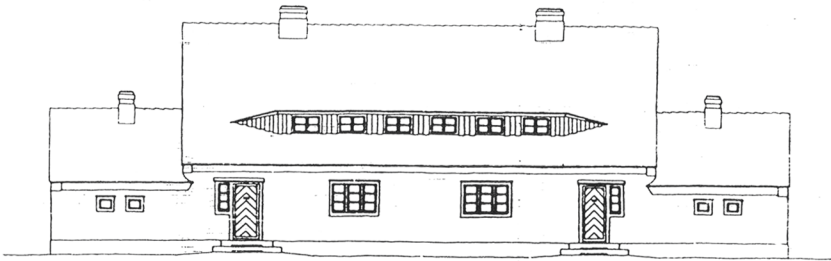
Abb. 12 Typ **Holtei** Schaubild.

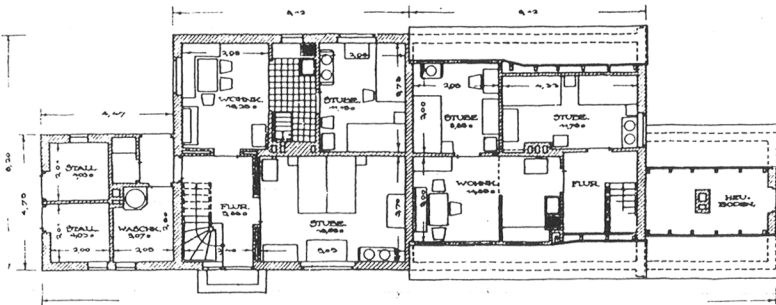Abb. 13. Typ **Ulitz** Vorderansicht M. 1 : 200.

Abb. 14. Typ **Ulitz** Erd- und Obergeschoß M. 1 : 200.

Fig. 8. Ernst May plans and elevations for typical house, *Schlesisches Heim***.**

use of vernacular forms also supported the nationalist rhetoric of the resettlement campaign, although May's devotion to the aesthetic seemed to go well beyond political exigencies.

May summarized his design philosophy in a 1924 essay in *Schlesisches Heim*:

1. The path to the New Man
2. The path to an essential floor plan
3. The path to straightforward household effects
4. The path to honest form and with it a new style
5. The path to joyful cladding for the small house
6. The path to modern building technology
7. The path to scientific business operation
8. The path to unity of small house and garden
9. The path to a federal law for comprehensive regional planning[38]

By "path to the New Man," May meant that architecture should reflect the new ways people were living in the twentieth century, provide better living conditions, and be educational. May's ideas fit squarely into the reform-minded 1920s, and points 2 through 8 read like a list of the period's progressive tactics. "Essential floor plan" meant efficient spatial planning, but also the adoption of *Typisierung* (type forms), reusable design patterns. Related to this, and key to developing scientific modern building techniques, was *Normierung* (building design and construction standards). In Germany, the *Deutsche Institut für Normung* (DIN) (Institute for Standardization) was founded in 1917 to create standards for manufacturing in order to rationalize production, improve industrial quality, and enhance interchangeability between parts and systems fabricated by different companies.

Today, the DIN is still the European production standard. "Modern building technology" referred to new materials and construction systems as well as *Typisierung* and *Normierung*. The eighth point on May's list reflects the interest in finding new ways to bridge interior and exterior spaces and connect architecture to landscape, a common concern throughout Europe in the 1920s. The final item reflects the increasing awareness among urban planners and architects of the necessity for better planning legislation if they were going to provide improved living conditions for more people.

The adoption of *Typisierung* and *Normierung* was a linchpin of May's design strategy for the *Schlesische Heimstätte* projects because together these approaches could ensure speedier, more economical construction. *Normierung*
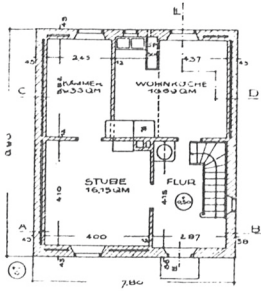
Abb. 1.
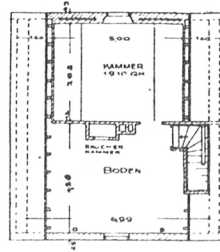Erdgeſchoßgrundriß des Types Gruppe I,
Typ 1, Maßſtab 1:200.

Abb. 2.
Dachgeſchoßgrundriß des Types
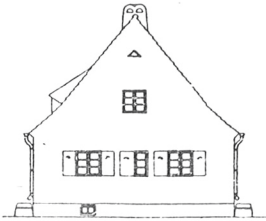Gruppe I, Typ 1, Maßſtab 1:200.

Abb. 3.
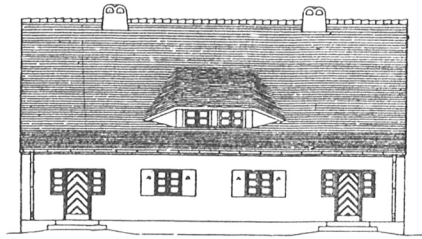Giebelanſicht des Types Gruppe I, Typ 1,
Maßſtab 1:200.

Abb. 4.
Straßenanſicht des Types Gruppe II, Typ 1, Maßſtab 1:200.

zwiſchen dem direkt nach außen ent-
lüfteten Rabißſpeiſeſchrank und der
Schornſteinwand ſchürzenartig um
$1/2$ Meter heruntergezogen wird. Die
ſo entſtehende Kochniſche wird mit einer
Ziegelflachſchicht ausgelegt. Unter
einem beſonderen Entlüftungsfenſter
iſt der Spülſtein ſo angebracht, daß
er von dem Wohnteil der Küche aus
durch den Speiſeſchrank verdeckt wird.
Der Kachelherd beheizt gleichzeitig durch
die Wand hindurch den Kachelausbau
in der kleinen Kammer. Die Koch-
niſche, die bei ſämtlichen Typen des
„Schleſiſchen Heimes" in dieſer oder
einer ähnlichen Weiſe angeordnet
wurde, hat den erheblichen Vorteil, die
beim Kochen entſtehenden Dämpfe und
Dünſte am Eindringen in den Wohn-
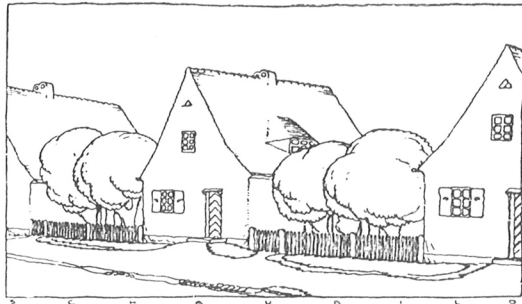teil der Küche zu verhindern, da

Abb. 5.
Schaubild einer Häuſergruppe, gebildet durch Aneinanderreihung mehrerer Bauten
von Gruppe I, Typ 1. Der Trennzaun iſt zwiſchen die Häuſer geſeßt. Vor dem-
ſelben iſt ein $1\frac{1}{2}$ m breiter Raſenſtreifen liegen geblieben.

Fig. 9. Ernst May plans and elevations of a typical house, *Schlesisches Heim*.

allows construction companies to prefabricate many components, which, in turn, dramatically reduces costs, as site work is more expensive than factory work and repetitive standard components are easier to assemble than unique elements. Similarly, having construction companies repeat a design by using a type was economical since it saved money on engineering and prefabricated elements by reusing already existing plans. Debates over *Typisierung* and *Normierung* raged in the architecture press during the interwar period. Proponents argued for the economic benefits of standardizing design and construction as well as the historic importance of architectural types. May himself wrote, "it is significant for today's compromised architectural culture that we have to struggle for such evident things [as type and norms], whereas in the times of elevated building art there was never a building without a type."[39] Opponents railed against the loss of individuality, the destruction of German building heritage, and the heartlessness of a technology-dominated society. May's strategy, which combined traditional German architecture tropes into types while normalizing construction, successfully undermined much of the critique. People seemed to accept standardization if it applied to the "invisible" aspects of architecture.

May developed his arguments for design in articles such as "Ersatzbauwesen" and "Typen für Landarbeiterwohnungen*,*" which charted the design methods as well.[40] To begin with, he scrutinized the traditional Silesian vernacular farmhouse inside and out, dissecting it into discrete design elements for reuse and adaptation. A large part of the exercise involved abstracting and simplifying vernacular architecture to distill its design essentials, like the steeply sloped roof, thatch roofing material, stucco façades, vertically clad wooden gable ends, painted gable ornaments, longhouse plan, and eyebrow windows. May believed that type should "crystallize the origin's most essential, [qualities]."[41] In "Typ und Stil," he articulates his basic principles of good design: "integrative," "refusing ornamentation," and "the archetypal, essential form," which together will create a style. In "Wohnungsfürsorgegesellschaften und Baukultur," he points to "truth in the plan and outer design of the building envelope, conformation to the particular surroundings" as essential, by which he means that architecture should be responsive to the geography and cultural character of its site.[42] In another set of articles, May describes the new building technologies, materials, and spatial arrangements that *Schlesische Heimstätte* would employ. "Ersatzbauwesen" delineates several new building systems, including the 30-centimeter brick cavity wall, loam rendering, and sand/lime brick. These were all variations on the masonry block construction that was far

cheaper in the 1920s than wood, concrete, or steel because of postwar short-
ages and attendant price escalation.

   As well as embracing new building materials and systems, May worked
assiduously to rationalize the construction process so he could reduce costs,
speed up building time, and make construction sufficiently easy that inexperi-
enced builders could erect their own homes. In "Die bewegliche Bodentreppe
im Kleinhaus," May explains the surprising "wasted space" typical of prewar
"*Kleinwohnungen*," which of course defies the logic of the small dwelling. In
this and other articles, he sets forth new design strategies such as: reducing the
number of rooms and spatial needs to a minimum; eliminating corridors; using
every space in the house including those that would otherwise be wasted, like
under the stairs; moveable stairs; double functioning kitchens and living rooms;
and so on.[43] In yet another group of articles, May proposes a series of new build-
ing types based on combining vernacular design tropes with new spatial strate-
gies and building technologies. May introduces the new "types" with a seem-
ingly scientific classification system that groups the variants into *Gruppen* and
Typen with accompanying subdivisions. He hopes that by using this design sys-
tem, he can avoid "superficial" styles.[44] He writes, the building design is "sim-
ple," "using primary forms," and "like the old farmhouses there is supposed to
be a harmonious effect, not through motives of some kind or through un-
'*sachlich*' additions but through the relationship of the building volume, size
and position, with windows and door openings, as well as material colors."[45]
Ultimately, the new model would be a modern, scientifically determined adap-
tation of the best traditional and contemporary architectural elements. By 1924,
May and his team had developed a catalog of sixteen building types ranging in
scale from a modest fifty-two square meters to as large as 144 square meters,
although most of the constructed projects were in the middle range, with about
seventy square meters.[46] May initially identified the types by number, but even-
tually he named them after Silesian cultural figures like poet Gerhart Haupt-
mann, painter Adolf Menzel, and architect Carl Langhans, once again using
regional culture to appeal to romantic *Heimat* sentiments.

   May tested his ideas in numerous drawings but also in realized projects.
Between 1919 and 1928, *Schlesische Heimstätte* constructed over 11,000 units
of rural settlement housing, expanded even more existing settlements, and cre-
ated emergency housing in the cities. Goldschmied (1919–20) and Oltaschin
(1921) were two of May's first large-scale urban planning and design projects,
and they are representative of his planning and architectural strategies. Gold-
schmied was May's very first project, designed for a group of self-help farmers

on a site just south of Breslau. The site on a former estate comprised 3.5 square kilometers and was meant to accommodate about 750 homes, although in the end only a small portion of the original plan was executed.[47] As in many of May's subsequent projects, the houses were two-family cottages with steeply pitched saddle-backed roofs and stucco siding, arranged in large swathes of green space. May developed three variations of this double house, all constructed on slab-on-grade, which is cheaper than building a basement, with a single main floor and habitable attic space. The settlement began with a group of houses situated around an oval public space from which the main street extended. The lots were long and narrow to accommodate individual farm plots for each family. Each house had a small private front garden area that acted as a buffer between the street and sidewalk and the home. Although the homes were modest in scale, May created a sense of private ownership. The built area was to connect to a network of gently curving streets that terminated in public squares, and at the heart of the development May planned to construct a large civic area with three connected public spaces in a deliberate nod to the traditional village layout with its centrally located square or green. With the exception of the public squares, which were ringed with buildings, houses lined the streets and were parallel to them, in another typical village layout.

Located seven kilometers outside of Breslau, Oltaschin was a typical small medieval village constructed around a public commons. At the beginning of the twentieth century, most of its residents were herb farmers. Its proximity to Breslau and ample open space made Oltaschin an excellent site for a satellite community, and in 1920 it became the location for a new affordable housing project when Baron Richthofen-Boguslavitz donated a 12-hectare plot for development. The clients were not urban commuters, however, but local farmers. In Oltaschin, May opted for the traditional farmhouse type with a steeply pitched saddle gable with a large eyebrow window in the roof and small, square windows on the stucco façades. The gable end sported a modern adaptation of the traditional farmhouse hex decoration designed by Lotte Hartmann, May's sister-in-law, who designed similar decorations for the homes in Goldschmied. But in a departure from the historic farmhouse and May's Goldschmied designs, the roof covered a two-family house, with rental units under the eaves. May experimented with the layout of the individual units, discarding the traditional four-room model separated by a corridor and joining spaces together in a more modern corridor-free, spatially efficient plan. His professed goal was to create a more "*sachlich* and functional" dwelling.[48] He did so by rationalizing the spatial organization to minimize the building footprint while maximizing usable space and increasing spatial efficiency, through such strategies as placing the kitchen

Fig. 10. Ernst May, Oltaschin Housing Project (1921).

in the under-utilized space under the stairs. The construction system at Oltaschin was the new mud-block wall system May wrote about in *Schlesisches Heim*, which could easily be assembled by nonprofessional builders. Outer walls were covered with stucco, which was readily available, cheap, and relatively easy to apply. Like Goldschmied, Oltaschin was planned to engage nature as much as possible. The houses were laid out in u-shaped configurations around a north-south oriented courtyard, with green space between and around the units. The site planning helped provide good lighting for the units as well as outside spatial variation.

At least one contemporary, the critic Werner Hegemann, was highly critical of May, though he appreciated the traditional elements in his Breslau-era projects.[49] Although Hegemann was not trained as an architect, he was at the center of Weimar debates over urban design and regionalism. He argued for the reinstatement of the nineteenth-century master of bourgeois villa design, Alfred Messel, as a fundamental inspiration for contemporary design, citing his work as the backbone of German architectural heritage. Hegemann vehemently dismisses architects who wish to ignore or bury their heritage: "He
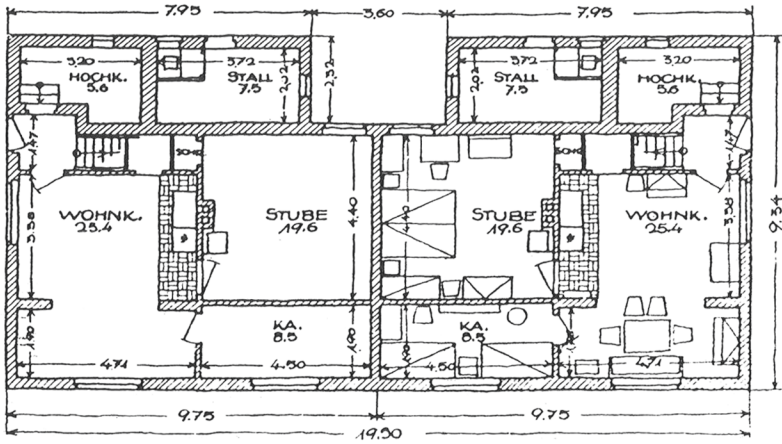
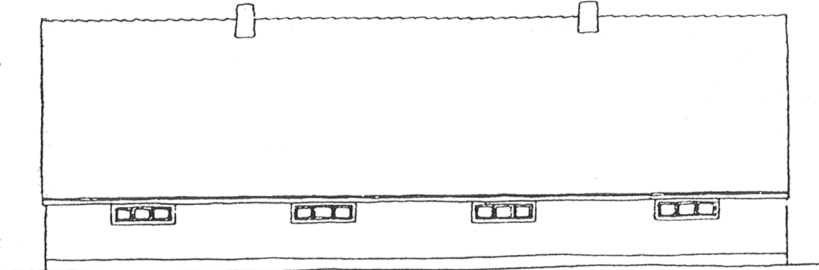Abb. 12: Erdgeſchoßgrundriß des Doppelhauſes Gr. II, Form 14ᵇ, M. 1 : 200.

Abb. 13: Straßenanſicht zu Abbildung 12, M. 1 : 200.

Fig. 11. Ernst May, plan for a house at Oltaschin (1921).

who consciously wants to give up our proven construction methods . . . is like a man who wants to invent a new language . . . because he has discovered that our language is spoken badly by most, and because important modern terms like vacuum cleaner, telephone, water closet, radio, cinema or airplane are missing."[50] For Hegemann, architecture cannot turn its back on the past or present but must incorporate or fuse the two. Hegemann found May's Frankfurt work—and the rhetoric he uses to defend it—hypocritical, accusing him of "turning his back on the past" and "inconsistency" in his aesthetics, since at the time Hegemann was writing May had relocated to Frankfurt and was designing work quite different from what he had done in Breslau. Dismantling May's explanations of his Frankfurt work, Hegemann shows that despite his

claims otherwise, May is unable to escape the legacy of traditional design. He bemoans the fact that in 1927 critics were already overlooking May's "dignified" work in Silesia in favor of the "modern experiments of great style" in Frankfurt. For Hegemann, May's Silesian projects were not anomalies but mainstream, and the combination of traditional regional tropes with new design elements created rich results that were as modern as anything designed during Weimar.

Theo Effenberger

In contrast to May who worked all over Silesia, most of Theo Effenberger's work with the Municipal Housing Authority was inside or very close to the Breslau city limits. Unlike May, Effenberger was a native Breslauer. He studied architecture first at Breslau's technically oriented *Baugewerkschule* (Building Crafts School), where he was introduced to the *Heimat* movement, and then at the more aesthetically oriented Technical High School in Darmstadt, under Karl Hofmann, Friedrich Pützer, and Georg Wickop. Pützer was interested in historical work, and his projects draw on traditional Germanic tropes like the stepped gable and use regional materials like brick. Effenberger credited his education in Darmstadt with wide-reaching influence on his work, especially his close collaborations with artists, applied arts masters, and other architects.[51] He returned to Breslau in 1907 to join the Breslau City Building Department, then under the direction of Richard Plüddemann, where he helped design a number of hospitals and schools. In 1910, Effenberger left the city to establish a private practice, but he had a change of heart in 1919, when he joined the Municipal Housing Authority as one of its principal architects.[52] In 1919, Effenberger also became head of the *Hochbaunormung Schlesien*, the department responsible for construction standards in the province.[53] There is almost no scholarship on Effenberger, probably because, although he was an important figure in Breslau and Silesia, he did not play a national role, though he was well known across Germany during his lifetime. Christine Nielsen's 1998 dissertation and a 1926 monograph published by Gebrüder Mann are the only publications to date. Nielsen rightly focuses on recovering the history of Effenberger's achievements, situating him within German efforts to mitigate regional cultural impulses and politics with national and international ones.[54] From the start, Effenberger was very involved in Breslau cultural politics, partly because Breslau was his home but also because of an abiding interest in improving its cultural milieu. In 1907 and 1908, he was a founding member of

the *Künstlerbund Schlesien* (Artists' Association) and the *Schlesische Bund für Heimatschutz* (Silesian Alliance for Protection of the Homeland), for which he served as business director for many years.

Effenberger's active membership in both the *Künstlerbund* and the *Schlesische Bund für Heimatschutz* is revealing, for between them they supported the most progressive and most traditional regional art and architecture. Effenberger was particularly involved with the *Bund*, for which he kept copious records that can still be found in the archives. If May's work in Silesia responded to local and regional building culture as well as regional cultures of domesticity, Effenberger's work was even more consumed with these issues. His education at both the *Baugewerkschule,* with its tradition-oriented curriculum, and the Technical High School, under the historicist Pülzer, contributed to his interest in tradition. Whereas May brought an outsider's perspective to Breslau, Effenberger was the consummate insider with a passionate commitment to Silesia and a strong interest in all aspects of its culture. Breslau was a stage in May's professional career from which he moved on to his home city, Frankfurt, where his most famous housing projects would be built. Effenberger was heavily invested in his home city, Breslau, where he spent most of his professional years.

Before the First World War, Effenberger's architecture already engaged with both local and regional types, on the one hand, and simple, rational planning and new technology, on the other. In a 1914 article, the eminent critic Walter Curt Behrendt cites Effenberger, alongside Tessenow and Schmitthenner, as one of a small group of German architects pursuing new aesthetics that are rooted in the past without imitating historic styles.[55] That group was actually much larger and included Erwin Gutkind, Bruno Taut, and Martin Wagner, to name its best-known members. Behrendt illustrates his article with three projects by Effenberger: rural cottages in Schreiberau im Riesengebirge and in an unnamed location and an addition to a school in Schmidtsdorf. From the images and Behrendt's text, it is possible to see how Effenberger's architecture combines traditional elements, like steeply gabled roofs and wooden siding, with modern streamlined volumes, simple unadorned surfaces, and rational spatial organization. This earlier work seems to prefigure his interwar housing projects, but more importantly it situates his work between tradition and modernity.

Effenberger clearly articulates his regional concerns, which he believes should be central to national cultural policy. In an undated note to Mr. Ulitska at the Ministry of Culture in Berlin, he emphasizes the "reputation of the 'German cultural achievements'" in contrast to those of the eastern border neighbors," but also points out that "local, competent building arts" are necessary to preserving German culture, even in technical structures like railroad terminals

or factories.[56] In his letters to Berlin during the 1920s, Effenberger repeatedly stresses the tactical and cultural significance of the "borderlands" as bastions of German values, not just remote edges of the country.[57]

The Municipal Housing Authority had extensive design and construction responsibilities, despite its complicated financial and legal status. Although not quite as productive as *Schlesische Heimstätte*, it completed 7,300 units between 1919 and 1931, a formidable contribution to the local housing stock.[58] Although the Authority was part of the municipality, it hired private architects to design its projects and direct their construction; the initial group was Effenberger, Paul Heim, and Hermann Wahlich. In this capacity, Effenberger oversaw one of the two largest housing developments the Authority constructed, Breslau Pöpelwitz (1919–20).

In public housing projects like Breslau Pöpelwitz, Effenberger united traditional and modern design tropes and tested some of the *Bund*'s ideas. Dr. Konrad Hahm, writing about Effenberger in 1929, described him as an architect who combined modernity with tradition. He writes, "The loudly proclaimed push towards the so-called objectivity is the unpunished force behind an impoverishment of ideas," the "dilettantism," the "cliché individualism," and the "misunderstood rationalization" of contemporary architecture.[59] With these and other epithets, Hahm criticizes 1920s architecture for irrationally and seemingly willfully dismissing a centuries-old design tradition in favor of new ideas. His condemnation rests on his belief that it is unnecessary to reject tradition in order to adopt modern approaches. In contrast, Hahm hails Effenberger, whose "buildings show themselves as quite organically developed from a solid, indigenous, traditional building art into a modern formal language, in whose clarity and decisiveness something elemental from the present is apparent."[60] He notes Effenberger's commitment to housing reform, construction, and the development of construction norms and architectural types. In other words, Hahm underscores Effenberger's modern approach. He also makes connections between Effenberger's work at the SBH and at the *Siedlungsgesellschaft* Breslau. But most importantly, Hahm recognizes the interrelation between traditional and modern architecture in Effenberger's work: "Theo Effenberger appears today in the ranks of modern architects who did not mature on the back of a (ideological) program but on the ground of a land and its tradition."[61] In other words, Hahm finds Effenberger's marriage of traditional and modern architecture to be highly successful.

Effenberger published his views about Silesian architecture as early as 1910, when he analyzed the historic strengths and weaknesses of building practice in his home province in "On Silesian Building Art." Revealingly, al-

though Effenberger points to vernacular architecture as an example of Silesian design excellence, he acknowledges the dearth of good buildings, both in classical masterpieces in general and after 1870, ascribing the more recent absence to the rapid growth Silesian cities experienced after 1870 and the government failure to enact adequate building codes to regulate it. He admonishes the professional and lay audience alike for the lack of sophisticated discourse on architecture, which he feels contributes to the weak building culture. In the end, though, Effenberger cites grounds for hope: he believes the younger generation has begun to construct buildings of merit. He concludes the article with the promise that, "in further issues we will show the reader what we can learn from the old buildings," making it clear that he saw vernacular architecture as a precedent for contemporary work, much as May did, and implying a direct relationship between old and new, traditional and contemporary design.[62]

In 1919, Effenberger outlined his approach to large development and *Kleinwohnung* house design in an article on Garden City planning. The article reveals additional similarities to May's work, but also some distinct differences, especially in the boldness of the designs. Effenberger begins by asserting that "before we discuss building, we need to be clear for whom we are going to build." That is, design requirements differ according to the client or user. Effenberger mentions profession, income, social status, and age as factors the architect needs to consider, along with the site, whether the property will be owned or rented, and who is funding the project. Implicit in his list of considerations is an understanding of the client's cultural orientation, lifestyle, and aesthetic preferences. Pragmatic thinking permeates every aspect of Effenberger's argument. He feels that form should express function in a simple and straightforward manner and advocates a no-nonsense approach to design in which, he asserts, "art has nothing direct to do."[63] He does admit, however, that "it would certainly not be an artwork when it was obviously planned as one." In other words, art in architecture arises from good, functional design, not the architect's purposeful efforts to turn a building into a piece of art.

Effenberger extols simple, basic form-making that is free of ornament and has economical construction and minimal spatial planning without being oppressively reduced. He points out that if a plan is reduced too drastically, as in the fashionable *Existenzminimum*, the resulting space will be uncomfortable and undesirable. The house types he mentions are almost identical to those May wrote about over the years, including single family detached, double family, row, and group houses. Even more interesting, the drawings in the article look remarkably like those May published. For instance, Effenberger's *Haustyp II*, "a double house after the Dutch system," strongly resembles May's
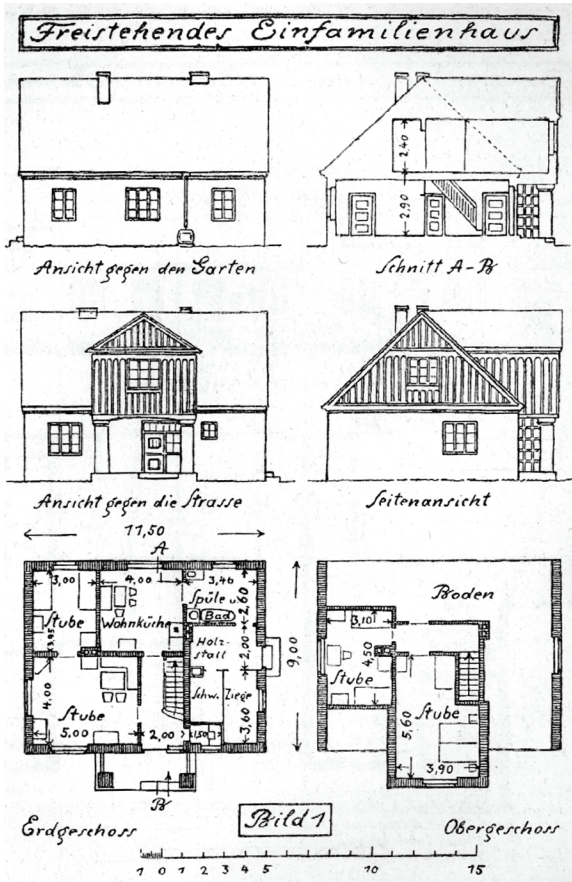
Fig. 12. Theo Effenberger, design for a small house (1919).

"Gerhart Hauptmann" *Haustyp*. Like May, Effenberger uses traditional motifs like the steeply pitched roof, eyebrow windows, accentuated entries, and stucco and wood siding. However, they are often less streamlined than May's work, with more volumetric and planimetric play and a bit more ornamentation, so that they appear less rationalized and more conservative. Effenberger's intentions clearly aligned with May's, even if, as his biographer Christine Nielsen suggests, he was a progressive, but not a member of the avant-garde. As a local and regional leader, he was interested in combining the best of new building with the best of tradition.

Planning for the *Siedlung* Pöpelwitz began in 1919. The site was in the western part of Breslau, on land the Municipal Building Authority acquired from private owners. The Authority chose this site because the housing short-

Fig. 13. Theo Effenberger, Breslau Pöpelwitz.

age was particularly acute in the West, where many industrial plants were lo-
cated, including the Linke-Hofmann Works, a steel fabricator. Linke-Hofmann
had close to 7,000 employees, in part due to wartime expansion. Nearby hous-
ing was bursting at the seams, as typified by the Nikolai City Quarter just to the
north of Pöpelwitz with its badly overcrowded five-story *Mietskaserne*. The
density demanded relief.

The initial 1919 sketches for the project show a low-rise settlement in a
Garden City, but by 1920 Effenberger had revised his proposal, increasing
building height and density as well as proposed amenities. The development
plans arranged different scales of housing in different relationships to street
and garden in order to avoid monotony.

All the small and mid-size units had private garden space, while the large

blocks had balconies and shared parks. Some sections, like the units along Polsnitzstrasse, feature closed perimeter blocks parallel to the street. Others, like the area on Hellerstrasse, have smaller multifamily buildings separated by green space. Although divided into a grid, the blocks vary in size, offering spatial relief from the potentially oppressive uniformity of the grid planning favored by modern architects. Effenberger also allows the streets to bend gently in some places and alters planning patterns throughout to create visual interest. At the center of the development are public services like shops, schools, a bakery, a bank, and a library. Thus, from the start, Effenberger envisioned the development as a miniature village within the larger city, an approach similar to many of May's developments although at a larger scale (Effenberger planned for 2,000 units, while most of May's projects were several hundred).

Like May, Effenberger also worked to rationalize planning in spatial organization, finish choices, and construction techniques. The Municipal Building Authority developed a list of minimum requirements for all its projects that specified room sizes according to function and required direct access to light and air, which Effenberger addressed by orienting units east/west and providing for natural cross ventilation. All the types included a separate bathroom in almost every unit, an indicator of the importance of hygiene to the Municipal Building Authority, since separate and interior bathrooms were still not standard. Effenberger kept the building size at a minimum for the sake of economy but also to make the building function more efficiently. Large repetitive blocks of housing kept costs down, attached row construction facilitated shared utilities and services (which also contributed to affordability), and the absence of ornament and use of stucco façades kept construction relatively cheap. Effenberger worked with a series of type models similar to those May used at the *Schlesische Heimstätte* to speed construction and economize on labor and material costs, but he stuck to more traditional building materials like brick. The project was also an example of *Kleinwohnung* planning: over 60 percent of the units had only two rooms, most of the others had one or three, and only a handful had four. The only exceptions were sixty-six single family homes planned for larger nuclear families. The floor plans were as rational and simple as possible. Typically, rooms opened onto a small service corridor minimized to avoid wasted space. The spatial planning was not radical, just functional and economical. In some instances, adjacent rooms opened onto a corridor and each other, a first gesture toward open spatial arrangements, but Effenberger, like May, kept the rooms in a more traditional individuated relationship.

The initial perspective drawings for Pöpelwitz display an idyllic vision that is hardly compatible with the intended clientele or the dire need for housing, though it does present a traditional notion of domesticity. The drawings

show pristine tree-lined streets with traffic-free roads, lawns, and open spaces. One depicts two immaculately dressed young ladies with shopping baskets slung over their arms deep in conversation. Both wear bonnets and floor-length dresses that harken back to nineteenth-century peasant dress and have little to do with current fashions. A lone male figure sporting a hat and cane walks in the distance. The three figures suggest a traditional, even romantic, village scene, although the height and scale of the buildings is urban. The architecture has a pitched roof, no surface ornament, the divided light windows and dormers of traditional Silesian architecture, and façades that appear to be stucco.

Photographs of Pöpelwitz reveal Effenberger's design strategies at work. Each housing type had distinctive features: some roofs were pitched and others flat, entryways varied in location and treatment, windows of differing sizes were arranged in facade patterns that changed from block to block but also on each façade in single blocks, some had unique eyebrow window and dormer forms, and there were different colors and textures of stucco. The blocks also had varying relationships to the sidewalk and street, with some aligning perpendicular to the sidewalk and others parallel, a changing orientation that creates a pattern of public outdoor spaces in unexpected locations that act as relief to the flush façades.

Unfortunately, the surviving photographs were taken early on, when the planting was young, so the full effect of the landscape design is not visible. Nonetheless, the sheer variety of architectonic elements from traditional and modern architecture is fully evident. Writing about the combination of pitched and flat roofs, Konrad Hahm says Effenberger "attains in his row houses an understated unity between the two forms without discrepancy."[64] But Hahm recognizes that Effenberger's achievement extends well beyond the Battle of the Roofs to his overall design solutions. He praises Effenberger for avoiding "the stale modern individualism or un-modern." Another writer praises the success of Pöpelwitz where, instead of "modern at all costs," the *Siedlung* is "purposeful and pleasant."[65] In other words, Effenberger's pragmatic combination of design elements is in logical harmony rather than at aesthetic odds, a fine statement of his principal achievement: successfully combining tradition and modernity.

Breslau Zimpel

While Pöpelwitz did not survive the Second World War, Breslau Zimpel, another great Breslau housing development of the 1920s, still stands.

Fig. 14. Theo Effenberger, Breslau Pöpelwitz.

Although designers Paul Heim and Hermann Wahlich did not leave a wealth of documentation like Effenberger and May, it is possible to visit Zimpel. Located in the east of the city, in the "triangle between the Oder, old Oder, and the Ship Canal," not far from Scheitniger Park, the project is a masterpiece of planning ingenuity.[66] The site is approximately one hundred hectares of which, according to the architects, 7.8 percent is covered with roads and pathways, 79.5 percent is built, and 12.7 percent is green space, though the 79.5 percent includes constructed green spaces such as front and rear gardens. Zimpel houses about 10,000 residents in 2,600 units of varying sizes.[67]

The architects combined garden city planning ideas with traditional and modern aesthetics in an extremely comfortable manner. The overall site plan is asymmetrical, though some of the blocks have local symmetries. Rather than impose an abstract geometry on the site, the architects let its outer boundaries dictate circulation and plot geometries, in much the same way that traditional villages developed. The roads they designed run almost parallel or almost perpendicular to older streets, with embellishments here and there to create spatial interest. Heim and Wahlich describe the street arrangement as "crooked."[68] A large play area lies more or less at the center of the plan, with public buildings flanking it on both sides, including a community house, church, schools, child-

care facility, swimming pool, stores, and office space. Even today, large expanses of green surround the development, giving the sense that Zimpel is situated in a gigantic park. Heim and Wahlich's design choices make Zimpel feel like an isolated and special place, a kind of urban oasis, and create a lively center that recalls typical German villages. As in the traditional village, this center is the administrative, cultural, and public heart of Zimpel—Heim and Wahlich referred to it as the "cultural center" and expected it to be a place for people to congregate and cultivate "spiritual culture."[69] Yet despite their age-old origins, Heim and Wahlich chose a modern design language for most of the public buildings, then further shook up the mix by using traditional Silesian brick for the façades. The brick community house typifies this design strategy, with its simple, unadorned volumes, flat roofs, and thin, cantilevered entry canopy.

The school, however, was not such a success. Heim and Wahlich planned it to be relatively low-lying and to relate to the surrounding green space. They were extremely upset when the city decided against their design proposal, instead opting for a compact "four-story, school bunker," likely for cost savings.[70] Heim bitterly writes, "For the family: out of the tenement house and for the child: into the school barracks."[71] It makes no sense to him to improve living conditions without addressing the state of all the buildings in the community, and he points to advances in education research that categorically reject the old-fashioned, multistory school as a model for effective education. Heim and Wahlich approached the block arrangement by combining more traditional German planning schemas with Garden City principles. The blocks vary in size, as does their orientation to the street and garden; on principal avenues, blocks run parallel to the street with a minimal front garden; on secondary avenues, they are set back from the street; and in the interior of the development, every other block turns perpendicular to the street to create lovely outdoor spaces and an incredible spatial dynamism. To further animate the outside spaces, Heim and Wahlich alternated the scale of front and rear gardens, small in the front and generous in the rear.

The main housing styles are quite traditional. Every block has a rectangular footprint, and the architects resisted "protruding bays and porches," noting, "This is the most minimal, cheapest form, allows light and sun freely in, and leads to lasting solutions."[72] There are several basic types in the development, with standardized plans and construction systems, as in May and Effenberger's projects. The blocks range from semi-detached row houses to multifamily dwellings. They have pitched roofs, occasionally punctuated by eyebrow windows, small multipane windows in stucco façades, and symmetrically arranged

elevations. Thus, the planning is rational and modern, even if the appearance is not. Like Effenberger in Pöpelwitz, Heim and Wahlich employed a number of design strategies to create visual excitement in what is otherwise an inexpensive mass housing project. Corner treatments vary and dormer window designs are sometimes the traditional eyebrow, other times triangular forms, other times square. Walls and picket fences alternate along the street, flanked by trees, to vary both the view and the spatial enclosure.

Although Zimpel has a similar approach to many of May's housing estates, May cannot be credited with directly influencing Heim and Wahlich, for they began designing Zimpel in 1919, when May had just started to work in Breslau. Instead, Zimpel demonstrates the prevalence of certain ideas at the time. Writing about Zimpel in 1927, Heim says, "Our times are riven, nevertheless though the disruptive, something is there, and when there is a will it is possible to lead a simple, healthy, natural life, in spite of the stone confusion of the large city. The transformation of the dwelling and placement outside the city in green alters the context."[73] Erich Landsberg calls Zimpel the "ideal, of the possible [architectural] connection with nature."[74] Zimpel succeeds because it is a pragmatic mix of aesthetics and planning principles that respond to the functional imperatives, social needs, and site restrictions. Heim and Wahlich did well to heed Fritz Behrendt's warning about the pitfalls of housing design by avoiding "single-minded fanaticism" in any part of their design. Their willingness to combine the comforts and familiarity of the village with the efficacy of *Neues Bauen* planning and construction makes Zimpel epitomize the best of Weimar-era housing design in and around Breslau. Zimpel's success, though, should not be measured by claims made in the 1920s by its architects and contemporary critics, but rather by how it has fared over the decades. Today, Breslauers proudly take visitors to visit Zimpel, telling them that it is the most desirable neighborhood in the entire city, because the green space makes it a wonderful area to live in, despite the relatively small units.[75]

The social and architectural aims of Breslau's housing developments resembled other 1920s housing projects across Germany, like Hellerau in Dresden, Milkmädschen in Poll, and Onkel Toms Hütte and Staaken in Berlin. The interest in providing low-cost, efficient solutions to housing the masses was central to the reform movement. German architects and urban designers grappled with combining green space with better site planning, integrating public amenities into large-scale projects, and improving transit infrastructure and access to the urban core.[76] May's attempts to standardize construction systems, floor plans, and building types were also in keeping with his contemporaries. The "Taylorist" hope of creating more functional architecture at every level is

evident in projects like Dammerstock in Karlsruhe, while the pages of German architectural journals such as *Bauwelt* and *Schlesisches Heim* were full of schemes to rationalize architectural design and construction. The struggles with traditional and modern planning and aesthetics were equally common, as the Flat Roof Controversy and varied aesthetics at developments like Onkel Toms Hütte demonstrate. Seen in the broader German context, Breslau's housing developments in the 1920s were well-designed local inflections of national trends.