

Heim and *Heimat*–Poznań during the Second World War as a Starting Point for Possible Paths of Interpretation

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ABSTRACT

The building construction and design activity in Poznań, which was annexed to the Third Reich during the Second World War as the capital of Gau Wartheland, largely encompassed residential and landscape architecture. This begs the question about the ideological significance of the private space created for the Germans settling in the region of Greater Poland. The starting point for the discussion of this issue are the terms *Heim* and *Heimat*, which highlight the interwoven relationship of home and the surrounding spaces. The consideration of these terms provides the basis for analyzing the forms and scale of residential construction and how it was related to transformed landscape of Poznań, as well as for reflecting on how apartment layouts and their typical furnishings defined the roles and places of women and men within the system.

The titular relationship between *Heim* and *Heimat* introduces the problem of the landscape and everyday lives of “ordinary” Germans serving the regime into the sphere of architectural studies and leads to the conclusion that ideology influenced everyday architecture just as much as official spaces. It also shows that the concept of *Neugestaltung* (redesigning) pertained both to urban planning and landscape, which together were intended to create a model landscape on the occupied lands. Scholars in search of answers to the questions outlined here would be well advised to consider various interpretative tropes that might enable a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between architecture, landscape, and ideology.

KEYWORDS: Poznań, architecture, Second World War, housing, furniture

Declaration on Possible Conflicts of Interest

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The terms *Heim* and *Heimat*, with all the semantic wealth they carry, were further instrumentalized during the Nazi era in reference to such notions as *Rasse* (race) or the *Lebensraum* (living space). It ought to be noted that these terms indicate a close connection between home and its natural surrounding. This allows for a consideration of the biological and racist foundations of Nazism which defined the models of managing the conquered territories through the notion of a home as an origin for the framework for everyday life. Using the architecture of Poznań (Posen), the capital of Reichsgau Wartheland, which was annexed to the Third Reich, as an example to illustrate these issues constitutes a starting point for expanding the existing studies aimed at outlining shared fundamental worldviews as well as the relationships between architecture and landscape, forming a coherent, indivisible whole.¹

This article acts as a preview of a research program that is underway, and hence, it states basic discoveries and initial propositions for the direction of research as well as interpretative options. Therefore, its conclusion is secondary to the identification of new interpretative and methodological paths.

My hypothesis is that the correlation between the two mentioned elements “home” and “landscape” lies at the heart of the Third Reich’s “biopolitics”² and stems from that ideology’s biological components. This goes beyond the observation that—in the words of Peter Fritzsche—the Nazis intended to “violently remake ‘lands and peoples’ into ‘spaces and races.’”³ Nature and biology, perceived through the categories of racial determinism, were acquiring new significance, to the point of deciding the survival odds of entire social bodies.⁴ These concepts pertained to the condition of an individual and the nation, but also the relationship between a human “home” and a model “landscape,” all of which were to create a sense of belonging to the *Heimat*.

¹ I am basing my study on my personal research, archival materials, and selected sources from the era and their analyses. Cf. HANNA GRZESZCZUK-BRENDEL: Zwischen Gauforum und Ehebett: Das öffentliche und private Leben unter NSDAP-Kontrolle. Das Beispiel Posen 1939–1945, in: ARNOLD BARTETZKY, MARINA DMITRIEVA et al. (eds.): Neue Staaten—neue Bilder? Visuelle Kultur im Dienst staatlicher Selbstdarstellung in Zentral- und Osteuropa seit 1918, Köln et al. 2005, pp. 147–157; EADEM: Eine Stadt zum Leben: Städtebau und Wohnungsreform in Posen in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts, Berlin 2018; archival materials mainly from Archiwum Państwowe Poznań (APP) [State Archives Poznań] and Bundesarchiv in Berlin-Lichterfelde.

² PETER FRITZSCHE: *Life and Death in the Third Reich*, Cambridge/MA 2009, p. 220.

³ VEJAS GABRIEL LIULEVICIUS: *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War II*, Cambridge 2000, p. 8, cited by FRITZSCHE, p. 5.

⁴ On racist foundations of Nazi ideology and the nineteenth century theories preceding it, see NORBERT FREI: *1945 und wir: Das Dritte Reich im Bewusstsein der Deutschen*, München 2005; LUDOLF HERBST: *Das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945*, Frankfurt am Main 1996.

The essentially untranslatable term *Heimat*⁵ contains within itself the notion of *Heim*—the safe haven of home, which carries incredibly strong emotional and semantic connotations and identifies the place of a human as being the privacy of home, followed by the courtyard, residential estate, city or village, province, and finally, by the entire country. An important role was played by the *völkisch* tradition, which was fundamental for Nazism's perception of a home and green spaces as the core of a native landscape.

My research thus far has shown that many publications on Third Reich architecture feature relatively few writings dedicated to the relationship between the privacy of home and the architectural forms of residential housing during the Nazi period.⁶ The same applies to publications on the correlation between forms of residential architecture and the concepts of landscape planning, understood as shaping nature in accordance with the new policy.⁷ Given this lack, there are notions with their accompanying connotations that ought yet to be considered. *Lebensraum* gains key importance, as being “biologically essential” for the survival of the nation while having emerged from the “natural” world-order, rooted in racial determinism. Together with the “blood and soil” (*Blut und Boden*) slogan and the idea of *Heimat*, *Lebensraum* defined the place of man and the functions and forms of architecture, and it also introduced the latter's new connotations, based on “tribal” connections and affinity with the land as well as the specific understanding of nature in the Third Reich.

After the outbreak of the Second World War, which expanded the desired living space, the concept of the so-called “Eastern Territories” resurged. During the same period, given the necessity to develop areas such as Greater Poland / Reichsgau Wartheland, which had been annexed to the “indigenous Germany,” there was an emphasis on turning it into a *Mustergau* (a model

⁵ ROBERT TRABA: *Wschodniopruskość: Tożsamość regionalna i narodowa w kulturze politycznej Niemiec* [East Prussianess: Regional and National Identity in the Political Culture of Germany], Olsztyn 2007, p. 130, explains the untranslatability of this term.

⁶ My perspective seems to be most akin to Marcus Termeer's approach: MARCUS TERMEER: *Gartenstadt als Disziplinar-Raum: Zur politischen Wirkmacht von „Heimatschutz“-Siedlungen*, in: *Kunst und Politik* 11 (2009), pp. 71–85.

⁷ The notion of “landscape norms” (*Landschaftsnormen*) appears in publications concerning, for instance, housing estates in reference to *Deutscher Bund Heimatschutz* with Julius Schulte-Frohlinde. See, for example: GERHARD FEHL: *Typisierter Wohnungsbau im Dritten Reich*, in: WERNER DURTH, WINFRIED NERDINGER (eds.): *Architektur und Städtebau der 30er/40er Jahre: Ergebnisse der Fachtagung in München*, 26.–28. November 1993, des Deutschen Nationalkomitees für Denkmalschutz, Bonn 1994, pp. 74–83. In architecture studies, not much attention is paid to landscape design issues, and the relationship with architecture is even more overlooked in publications on landscape. On this topic, significant studies have been published, exploring the ideological bases for the shaping of nature. See, for example: GERT GRÖNING, UWE SCHNEIDER (eds.): *Gartenkunst und nationale Identität: Strategien nationaler und regionaler Identitätsstiftung in der deutschen Gartenkultur*, Worms 2001.

province).⁸ This expression, as used by the Gauleiter Arthur Greiser, revealed the latter's aspirations, but the intention behind it was also to elevate the prestige and the economic and cultural potential of the annexed territories, for instance through including Poznań in the *Neugestaltung* (redesign) resolution.⁹ The occupied lands were supposed to be formed according to a projected image of an ancient, Germanic landscape, encompassing the settlement structure, types of farming economy, and architecture. The idea was to foster German settlement on those lands, accelerate the adaptation of migrants, and lay out a framework for their lives. The early plans envisioned that these migrants would be drawn from overpopulated regions, such as the Ruhr area; however, pursuant to the October 1939 resolution between the USSR and the Third Reich, the vast majority of settlers were Germans from the Baltic states (the *Baltendeutsche*, as they were called back then), Volhynia, and, following the attack on the USSR, also from Romania and Bessarabia.¹⁰ The majority of them were sent to rural regions; however, my interest oscillates more around the question of how the postulate of constructing a future *Heimat* identity was adopted in urban conditions, especially in Poznań.

The architectural and spatial structures that already existed in this urbanized space and which were to a varying extent treated as foreign, needed to be taken into consideration. The heritage of this nineteenth century Prussian city was not fully embraced, although there was an appreciation for its Germanic character. At the same time, any and all traces of Polish construction from the interwar period were frowned upon, deemed valueless, and seen as a display of negligence and culturelessness.¹¹ Such devaluation supported the plans to

⁸ This was the basis for cleansing the territories of racially lower "subhumans," with Jews and Poles at the forefront, which led to displacements, camps, and radical forms of extermination. The majority of Poles from the intelligentsia were deported to the General Government (GG), where Jews were confined in Ghettos and later sent to extermination camps. In Poznań, the concentration and transit camp was located in Fort VII (1939–1944), and from 1943 onwards, the prison and camp in Żabikowo acted as its extension (Polizeigefängnis der Sicherheitspolizei und Arbeitserziehungslager Posen-Lenzingen). Jews condemned to extermination were the group most targeted by persecutions, while Poles were reduced to the role of workforce, and with time, there was a presumption of a complete dislocation of Polish demographic from the "German land."

⁹ The resolution previously covered cities such as Nuremberg, Linz, Weimar, and Munich, whereas Poznań fell under its scope on the basis of a decree from 1940-06-12, in: APP, Reichsstathalter Posen, sign. 3276.

¹⁰ FRITZSCHE, pp. 172–173. "By the end of 1940, 71,000 ethnic German colonists had been resettled in the Warthegau" (p. 172), mainly in the countryside in farmsteads seized from Polish peasants. ELIZABETH HARVEY: *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization*, New Haven—London 2003, p. 90, states that the "aim was not [...] to Germanize or assimilate the Poles, but to eradicate 'Polishness' and ultimately eliminate the Polish population from 'German soil'."

¹¹ The artifacts of Polish culture and economy were considered worthless: *Unkultur, polnische Wirtschaft, tabula rasa*. See NIELS GUTSCHOW: *Eindeutschung, Verdeutschung*,

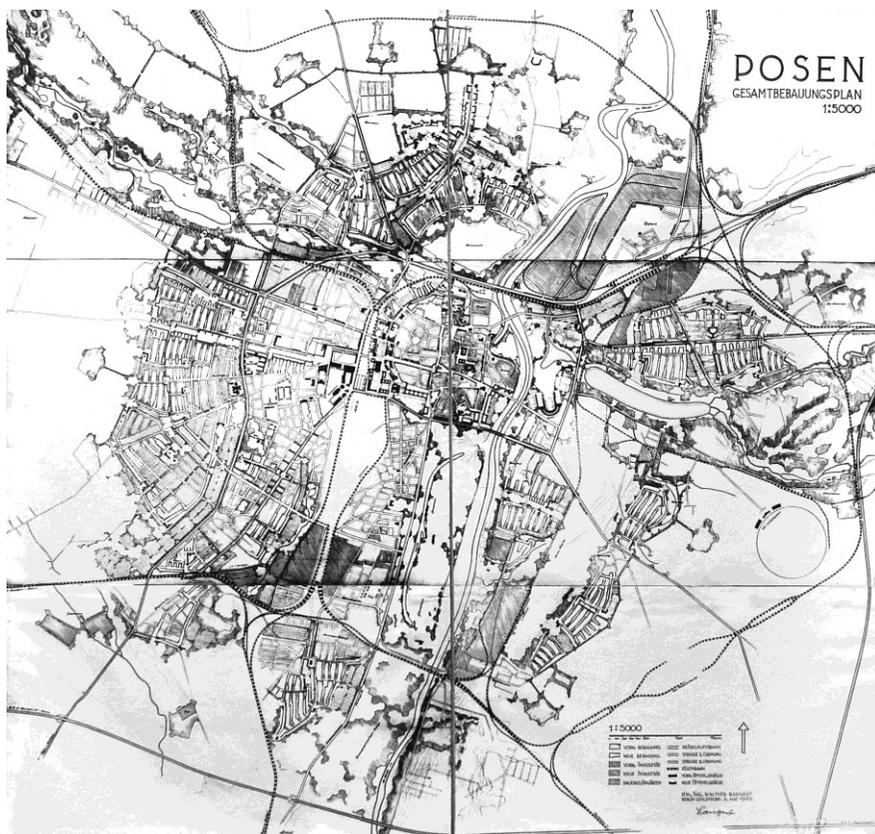


Fig. 1: Walther Bangert: Poznań's spatial development plan (1940), author's collection

transform entire territories, and also supported an appropriation of Polish accomplishments, especially in urban planning.

Even the first plan of remodeling Poznań as presented by Walther Bangert¹² in early 1940, so once Poland was already occupied, already featur-

Rückdeutschung: Deutsche Architekten 1939–45 im Dienste von Ethnokraten in Polen, in: KLAUS M. SCHMALS (ed.): *Vor 50 Jahren ... auch die Raumplanung hat eine Geschichte*, Dortmund 1997, pp. 33–42, here p. 33; DIETER MÜNK: *Die Organisation des Raumes im Nationalsozialismus: Eine soziologische Untersuchung ideologisch fundierter Leitbilder in Architektur, Städtebau und Raumplanung des Dritten Reiches*, Bonn 1993, p. 394. This did not pose an obstacle to displacing Poles and appropriating their houses.

¹² Walther Bangert (1905–1945) studied at Technische Hochschule (TH) Charlottenburg, worked in Frankfurt am Main, at TH in Braunschweig and Berlin; he worked with Hermann Jansen on the plans of Ankara; during the Second World War, he was commissioned by Albert Speer to prepare growth plans for cities in Reichsgau Wartheland:

ed a vast majority of the area annexed to the city that was dedicated for residential neighborhoods (Fig. 1). Since these neighborhoods were closely connected to the landscape forms, they were intended to create a model *Heimat* for incomers, whose task was to “permanently secure that space for Germans.”¹³ The holistic approach to architecture and landscape was also apparent in the subsequent plan for the transformation of Poznań, proposed by Hans Bernhard Reichow in 1942/43, and based on the *Stadtlandschaft* (city landscape) principles.¹⁴ According to this concept, the city and its surrounding landscape were to form an interwoven system, which would in turn be connected to the administrative and spatial structure that would gradually cover the entire country. Heinrich Wiepking-Jürgensmann’s work as Heinrich Himmler’s emissary in the field of landscape development in eastern lands annexed to the Reich is yet another example of the aspiration to completely transform them. As part of Bangert’s plan, Wiepking-Jürgensmann designed a green axis oriented from east to west that was based on the watercourse system and complemented with artificial reservoirs (Fig. 2).¹⁵ He also designed urban recreational and sports grounds, as well as sections of greenery separating numerous housing estates on the outer edges of Poznań. Included in those plans was a green wedge-ring system conceived by the urban architect Władysław Czarnecki in the 1930s. The plan took into consideration the historical (Prussian fortification rings) and topographical (watercourses) determinants of Poznań’s growth.¹⁶

Poznań, Łódź (Litzmannstadt), Inowrocław (Hohensalza), Malbork (Marienburg), as well as in Reichsgau Sudetenland, mainly for Liberec (Reichenberg). After entering a conflict with Speer, he was sent to the front.

¹³ ALBERT DERICHSWEILER: Die Deutsche Arbeitsfront und ihre soziale Aufgabe im Osten, in: Der soziale Wohnungsbau in Deutschland 2 (1942), pp. 174–175, here p. 175: “den von der Wehrmacht eroberten Raum durch den deutschen Menschen für immer sichern.”

¹⁴ Hans Bernhard Reichow (1899–1974) studied in Gdańsk and Munich and worked in Berlin (in 1926, with the renowned architect Erich Mendelsohn), and later in Dresden, Brunswick, and Szczecin, where he conceived the city’s growth plan based on the Oder riverbank. He co-authored General Plan East (Generalplan Ost) and cooperated with Konstanty Gutschow on the organic growth plan for Hamburg. During the Second World War, he devised a growth plan for Poznań as a *Stadtlandschaft*, presented after the war as an “organic urban planning” (organische Stadtbaukunst) concept: HANS BERNHARD REICHOW: Organische Stadtbaukunst: Von der Großstadt zur Stadtlandschaft, Braunschweig 1948.

¹⁵ He sourced water from Poznań’s nearby lakes and towns, Kiekrz and Swarzędz. The Warta watercourses which constitute the basis of this concept, together with the Cybina and Bogdanka tributaries are a clear reference to the wedge-ring system, which Władysław Czarnecki and Adam Wodziczko had been designing since 1930. They formed a foundation for the creation of the Rusalka lake, the construction of which took many Jewish, as well as Polish, lives.

¹⁶ WŁADYSŁAW CZARNECKI: Wspomnienia architekta [Memoirs of an Architect], ed. by HANNA GRZESZCZUK-BRENDEL and GRAŻYNA KODYM-KOZACZKO, Poznań 2015.

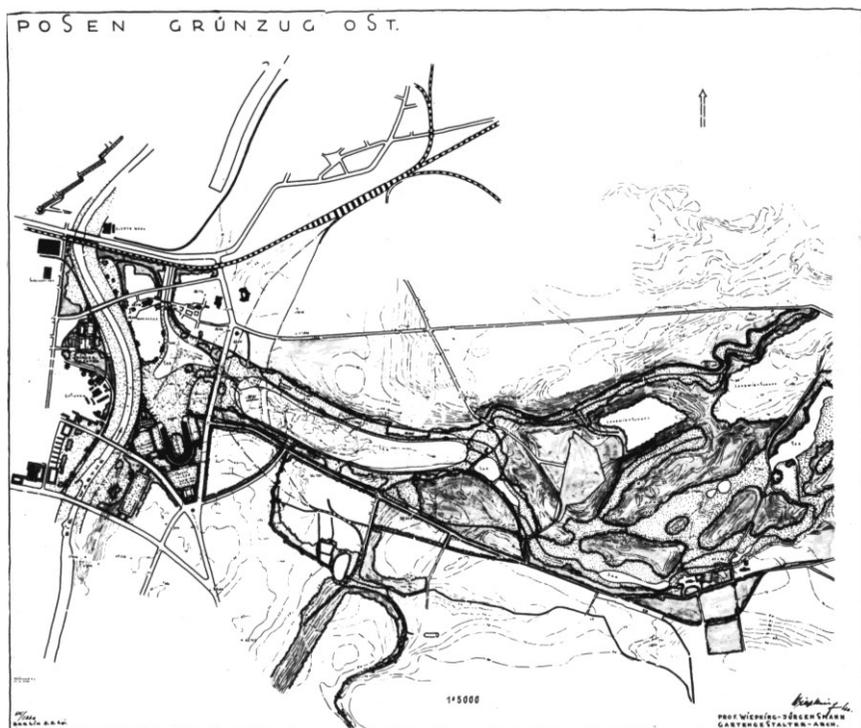


Fig. 2: Heinrich Friedrich Wiepking-Jürgensmann: Eastern green areas (1940), from the author's collection

Poznań's neighborhoods were built according to the idea of *Ortsgruppe als Siedlungszelle* (local party group as a settlement cell).¹⁷ Its premiss was that the settlement and party structures would align, which produced a clearly defined hierarchy of urban spatial systems. Beginning with households and neighborhood units concentrated around the planned administrative and party centers within the estates, its culmination was the city's dominant point, constituted by the *Gauforum* structure. Meanwhile, the city, through its relationship with the landscape, represented yet another level of connection with the landscape as well as the nationwide administrative and political order; thus home as the elementary cell formed part of a *Volksgemeinschaft* (complete national community).

¹⁷ "Die Untergliederung der städtischen Wohngebiete wird daher mit der Gliederung der politischen Organisation der Volksgemeinschaft in Zellen, Ortsgruppen und Kreise möglichst weitgehend in Übereinstimmung zu bringen sein." HEINRICH HIMMLER: Richtlinien für die Planung und Gestaltung der Städte in den eingegliederten deutschen Ostgebieten, 30.01.1942, in: Auflockerung der Stadt: Richtlinien für die Stadtplanung in den neuen Ostgebieten, in: Ostdeutscher Beobachter from 1942-12-26.

A system of segments with blocks of three-story buildings surrounding expansive courtyards (Fig. 3, Fig. 4) was implemented in the partially completed section of Poznań's Weststadt estate.¹⁸ The scale and spatial arrangement of these plans may bring to mind connotations of barracks, which, in the context of the *Ortsgruppe als Siedlungszelle* concept that was being realized, unequivocally hints at the aspects of discipline and control underlying this type of planning. This role was also played by the size of the neighborhoods and the monotony of the architecture, manifested not so much in singular edifices, but in their general repetitiveness and uniformity,¹⁹ which simultaneously referenced the Third Reich's style of a "marching column."²⁰ All these references clearly indicate that the settlers on the seized territories that were to be developed, especially those annexed to the Third Reich, were treated as conquerors who followed the soldiers—as is, for instance, demonstrated in the dedication "to the German peasants and soldiers" in Wiepking-Jürgensmann's *Landschaftsfibel* (landscape primer) from 1942.²¹

This explains why the construction of apartments in Poznań, the capital of Reichsgau Wartheland, was treated as an important warfare task (*kriegswichtig*), while at the same time, Poznań constituted a testing ground for programs of mass construction planned for after the war. In order to expedite the construction of houses, categorization and standardization guidelines were introduced, outlining apartment plans, roof inclination angles, and building proportions. The plan included extensive participation of forced laborers from the General Government, which "according to the Führer's will, in the future was to serve as a human reservoir."²² There were also traditional construction elements introduced during the design phase, such as wattle and daub details or window shutters. The significance of architectural forms and apartment surroundings was expressed by Gustav Wolf, who in fact claimed that forsaking the native style would be a crime on the body and soul of the *Heimat*,

¹⁸ It is located between the current Przybyszewski, Dąbrowski, Szamarzewski, and Polna Streets.

¹⁹ TERMEER, p. 80. In this context, the author also brings up the statement of Klaus Thewleit about creating an enclosed whole as a "Ganzheitsmaschine;" however, neither associates these propositions with a barrack structure. Cf. KLAUS THEWELEIT: *Männerphantasien*, vol. 2, Frankfurt am Main 1978, p. 178.

²⁰ "Es ist der Stil einer marschierenden Kolonne, ganz gleich, wo und zu welchem Zweck diese marschierende Kolonne auch eingesetzt sein mag." ALFRED ROSENBERG: *Gestaltung der Idee*, München 1936, p. 303.

²¹ HEINRICH FRIEDRICH WIEPKING-JÜRGENSMANN: *Die Landschaftsfibel*, Berlin 1942.

²² "... das nach dem Wille des Führers in Zukunft als Menschenreservoir für alle diejenigen Aufgaben des Deutschen Reiches dienen muß." HEINRICH SIMON: *Der deutsche Wohnungsbau nach dem Kriege*, in: *Der soziale Wohnungsbau in Deutschland 1* (1941), pp. 2–15, here p. 5.

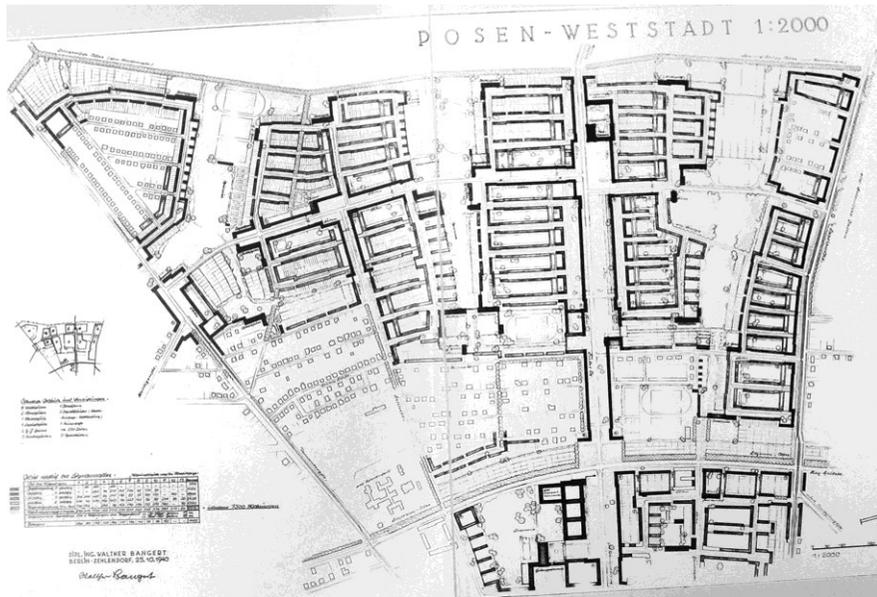


Fig. 3: Walther Bangert: The Poznań-Weststadt neighborhood (1940), author’s collection



Fig. 4: Rudolf Voltenauer: The Weststadt building layout, 1940–1945, photograph by Krzysztof Ślachciak (2019)

equivalent to that inflicted by *Rassenschande* (racial defilement) on the body and soul of the nation.²³

In Poznań, the intention was not to imitate a specific style or region, but to situate the residents in the present and direct them towards the future, by means of referencing forms of recognizable, familiar past. The “artisanal” details, the large surfaces of the sloping roofs, and a reduced number of floors all created an impression of familiarity in comparison to the neighboring taller nineteenth-century and interwar buildings. Meanwhile, the thickness of the walls, which to a certain extent resulted from the requirements of anti-aircraft protection, accentuated a sense of thoroughness. It was particularly apparent in the entrance sections’ embrasured frames, the projecting parts of the *faux avant-corps* which amplified the wall’s massiveness, the sloping arcade buttresses (Fig. 4), and setbacks exposing blind walls.

It is worth noting that such strong emphasis on a house’s solidity was somewhat contradictory to the advocated plan to increase construction efficiency or reduce costs through normalization and standardization, allowing for a lighter construction and form. Nonetheless, the intention was to create architecture that visually came across as indestructible and rooted in its surrounding “since forever” and “for the rest of time,” thus boosting the morale of the new settlers. This also matched the model of a stable house as the archetypical hearth and home championed by the Nazi propaganda.

This notion is expressed, for instance, in Paul Matthias Padua’s painting *Der Führer spricht* from 1939 (Fig. 5). The dominant figure among the family gathered listening to the radio broadcast of Hitler’s speech is the woman depicted as a mother and wife, if not in fact the “woman-as-home,” bringing all the family members together. Included in the family circle is also the Führer himself, whose presence is conveyed through the words emitted from the radio receiver, and is additionally highlighted by his picture on the wall. This multifold presence compromises the privacy of a domestic refuge and one’s individuality, thus reaffirming the political character of privacy in a totalitarian regime.²⁴ Such prominent presence of the Führer embeds the family in a system of obedience and control and weaves it into the party and state organism.

While it was the man’s task to expand the *Lebensraum*, the woman, as the guardian of the home, was in charge of protecting the purity of blood and the Aryan *Heimat*. Her role was to be proud of the heroism of her fallen husband and at the same time to desire her “son to become like his father, who gladly

²³ TERMEER, p. 80. Gustav Wolf was a representative of the Deutscher Bund Heimat-schutz in Warmia and Masuria in the interwar period.

²⁴ More precisely: “the personal is political.” CAROL HANISCH: The Personal Is Political: The Women’s Liberation Movement Classic with a New Explanatory Introduction, in: Women of the World, Unite! Writings by Carol Hanisch, <http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html> (2020-15-02).



Fig. 5:
Paul Mathias Padua: *Der Führer spricht* (1939), oil on canvas, 225 x 180 cm, in: *Die Kunst im Deutschen Reich 4* (1940), 8/9, p. 238

gave up his life for the Führer and the Fatherland. As for myself, I also want to carry my fate with pride, knowing that I gave my nation [...] what is most precious to me.”²⁵ While the man was becoming a body at the disposal of the military society, if not “cannon fodder,” the woman was turned into a reproductive body within the process of reinforcing Aryanism. In Nazism, the conviction surrounding the “interdependency of home, identity, heritage and women,”²⁶ which was appropriated from romantic nationalism, corresponded with radical antisemitism and the practice of social and ethnic exterminations. The practice of separating out apartments for inhabitants with hereditarily “healthy” German blood, as implemented in 1937, was of significance here.²⁷ This housing policy was aimed at “attaining and growing a powerful nation”²⁸ and “returning to the nation’s natural reproductive goals.”²⁹ This policy also involved providing support to married couples, genetic and mental health screenings, or programs such as “Fount of Life” (*Lebensborn*) or “Mother and

²⁵ Letter of Luise N. from Eichwalde, cited in: GUDRUN SCHWARZ: *Żony SS-manów: Kobiety w elitarnych kręgach III Rzeszy* [Wives of SS-men: Women in Elitist Circles of the Third Reich], Warszawa 2016, p. 83.

²⁶ “In a similar vein, Marina Warner claims that ‘at the heart of romantic nationalism lies the interdependency of home, identity, heritage and women’,” in: DAVID MORLEY: *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity*, London 2000, p. 65.

²⁷ UTE PELTZ-DRECKMANN: *Nationalsozialistischer Siedlungsbau: Versuch einer Analyse der die Siedlungspolitik bestimmenden Faktoren am Beispiel des Nationalsozialismus*, München 1978, p. 186.

²⁸ “[...] Erreichung und Mehrung einer kraftvollen Nation.” *Ibidem*, p. 322.

²⁹ “die Rückkehr zu den natürlichen Zuchtzielen des Volkes.” KARL MARK: *Zusammenballung und Auflockerung: Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Sozial- und Bevölkerungspolitik*, Oberveichtach 1936, p. 50.

Child Aid Agency” (Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind),³⁰ as well as “Honorary Cross for the German Mother” (Ehrenkreuz der deutschen Mutter) awards.³¹

For these reasons, the protection of women’s reproductive capacity gained particular significance. It was enforced through orders, restrictions, regulations, and models of privacy shaped according to the Führer’s will, but also through spatial order within the domestic space, thus applying new meanings to the *Ortsgruppe als Siedlungszelle* idea. This form of neighborhood structure was conducive to constant supervision and disciplining in the name of community, the hierarchy of which it also clearly defined.

For the women in the Third Reich who remained at home during the absence of men performing their military duty, home became the battlefield, with their primary duty and life obligation being to make sacrifice to the *Führer* in the form of future army men who were prepared to die. The mass housing programs, especially “Vorbereitung des deutschen Wohnungsbaues nach dem Kriege,”³² were crucial for “making up for the warfare losses on the body of the people [Volkskörper]” and inhabiting new areas. The program predicted construction of 300,000 apartments in the first year after the war and 600,000 over each subsequent year, with the intention of reaching 6 million units within ten years. They were supposed to “provide conditions for a healthy life of a large German family.”³³ The uniformness and repetitiveness of buildings and details, together with their simplicity and references to tradition were to serve in building a sense of belonging to *Volksgemeinschaft*, and hence become a means of disciplining residents ingrained in familiar architectural forms.

Works overseen by Robert Ley, head of German Labor Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront, DAF) led to a nationwide presentation in 1941, which showed 6 prototypes of 4-room, 74 square meters apartments, designed for “a regular family with four children.”³⁴ In Poznań’s Weststadt, the model apartment was considered to be 75 square meters and consist of a kitchen, living room, master bedroom, and two children’s rooms (Fig. 6). That is, in fact, where a 1942 presentation of prototypical furnishing designed by DAF was held, as part of the program “The Beauty of Labor—The Beauty of Home” (Schönheit der Arbeit—Schönheit des Wohnens).

³⁰ *Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind* organized the National Socialist People’s Welfare (Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt, NSV), while *Lebensborn* was founded by the SS in 1935.

³¹ They were annually granted to mothers of multiple children on the birthday of Hitler’s mother (18 February).

³² Führererlaß “Wohnungsbau nach dem Kriege,” 15.11.1940, in: SIMON, p. 2.

³³ “Deshalb muß der ‘neue deutsche Wohnungsbau’ in der Zukunft den Voraussetzungen für ein gesundes Leben kinderreicher Familien entsprechen.” Analysis of the terms of Führererlaß “Wohnungsbau nach dem Kriege,” 1940-11-15, *ibidem*.

³⁴ “Wir werden unsere Zukunftsaufgaben nur dann mit Gewißheit erfüllen, wenn in der deutschen Familie im Normalfall wieder mindestens 4 Kinder geboren werden.” *Ibidem*.

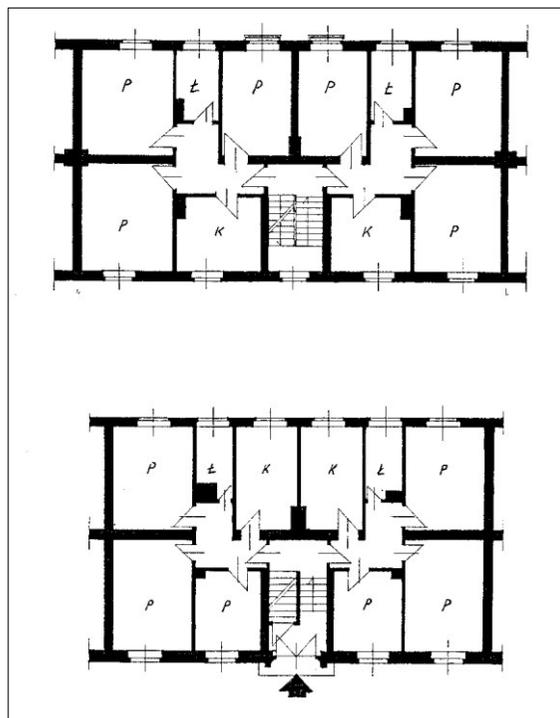


Fig. 6:
Apartment layout of units at
Długosza Street (1940–
1945), in: Poznań University
of Technology, Faculty of
Architecture, Department of
History, Theory, and Protec-
tion of Monuments, no sign.

The kitchen deserves special attention as the woman’s workplace and the heart of the home, in which “the entire family gathers in the morning and at night.”³⁵ If a kitchen was on the smaller side, this role would be played by the living room. Larger apartments also included a pantry and a storage room. An enfilade layout could also be used for some of the rooms, with the exception of the master bedroom, which needed room for a crib (Fig. 7). Combining different functions supported family bonding and potentially expanded children’s play space. The solid corridor walls, which exceeded the construction requirements of low-rise houses, emphasized the durability of the interior, especially given the connecting function of the room. While the boys’ rooms tended to have rawness to them, the girls’ rooms were able to feature a softer décor which included more fabrics and decorations.

“The furniture ought to be simple, functional, and by the same token beautiful and lasting for generations,”³⁶ built out of native materials, homely while

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 9.

³⁶ “Die Möbel sollen schlicht, zweckentsprechend und dadurch schön sein, und sie sollen Generationen überdauern.” AUGUST GROSSKINSKY: *Schönheit des Wohnens: Ein Bildwerk über deutsche Wohnmöbel*, ed. by KARL KOPP, Freiburg im Breisgau [1941].

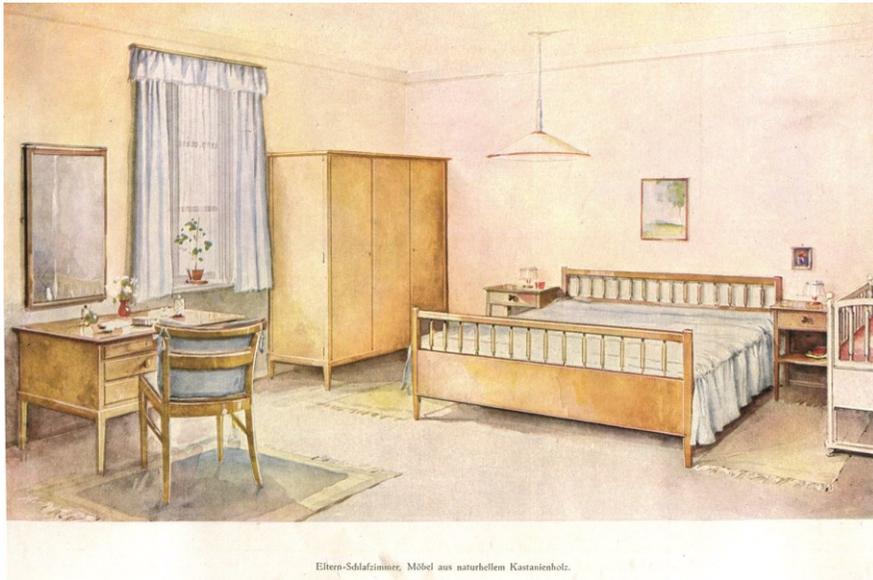


Fig. 7: Karl Orth for DAF, Master bedroom design, in: GROSSKINSKY

but also more comfortable upholstered chairs and armchairs, as well as light window curtains and drapes letting through plenty of light. These DAF-endorsed designs were not promoted as objects of fashion, but rather through an emphasis on their functionality, the responsibility to preserve traditions, and the appeal of a timeless and future-oriented durability.

As the architect of *Heim*, “the woman bestows an inner vitality on a home, adding beauty to the rawest quotidian life and joyfully counteracting its dullness.”³⁷ The modest simplicity of apartments was also intended to discipline the residents, whereas the “textbook” logic was to educate families about their responsibilities towards the *Führer*, including steering the woman towards making the sacrifice of sending her sons to death “as a gift to the Fatherland.” The role of this woman-as-home was, “through leading a seemingly normal family life on post, [to] create a pretense of a regular profession for the crimes committed [...] by their husbands.”³⁸ Thanks to this, writes Hannah Arendt, the culprits, instead of saying: “What horrible things I did to people!” could say: “What horrific things I had to watch in the pursuance of my duties.”³⁹

³⁷ “[...] nur so schafft die Frau für ihr Haus die innere Lebendigkeit, die auch den trockensten Alltag schön macht und seiner Langeweile fröhlich begegnet.” Ibidem.

³⁸ SCHWARZ, p. 129.

³⁹ HANNAH ARENDT: *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, New York 2006, p. 106.

The model of a woman occupying the discussed spaces of Nazi residential neighborhoods and apartments also embodies an attempt at reversing emancipatory tendencies that were arising in the Weimar Republic and restoring the strict separation of private and public spheres. This is clearly reflected in the juxtaposition of the painting by Paul Matthias Padua described above with photographs advertising modernist Werkbund estates, such as Weißenhof or “Werkbundsiedlung Breslau” (originally Wohnung- und Werkraumausstellung, WuWA). Modern women—elegant, young, free, physically active, and liberated—are sunbathing on a terrace or boarding a car, thus representing the same idea of modernity as the *Neues Bauen* buildings visible in the background. Even if they belong in the kitchen, it is Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky’s Frankfurt kitchen, whose functional interior design and technical amenities aim to minimize the time spent in it. As an emancipated working person who is also entertaining herself outside of the home, she is a (theoretically) fully empowered user of public space. Modern apartments and the local recreational areas surrounding them support rest and leisure instead of simply creating a connection with the soil.

In the Third Reich, the surroundings of the home, with the local tree-studded streets and multifunctional courtyards, played an important role in accepting the murderous everyday reality of war. In Poznań’s Weststadt, most of the courtyards were divided up into vegetable gardens, whose role increased as the food crisis intensified. Larger yards contained sports courts and other facilities, but some also served as a backstage for marches passing through Weststadt. In either of these uses, the courtyard space would become a panopticon, predominantly for women, who acted both as the observers and the observed, watching over each other and evaluating each other’s usefulness for the system based on their care for their children, home and garden, as well as faithfulness to the husband. The unity of home and landscape is poignantly expressed in the words of Wiepking-Jürgensmann, who likens the soldiers’ longing for the homeland to a longing for home: “With each step, in the battlefield, the image of Heimat is in their hearts. The longing for a German river and a German forest, for home, the countryside, and a clean city is ever omnipresent, and is the most powerful yearning of all. [...] This thought never leaves the soldiers’ minds.”⁴⁰ The transition from *Heim* to *Heimat* began at home, with a significant contribution from women.

⁴⁰ “Auf allen ihren Zügen, mitten im Kampf, ist das Bild der Heimat in ihren Herzen. [...] es bleibt die Sehnsucht nach deutscher Flur und deutschem Wald, nach Heim und Dorf und sauberer Stadt das Allgegenwärtige, der heißeste aller Wünsche. [...] Die Soldaten denken immerfort daran.” WIEPKING-JÜRGENSMANN, p. 9.

Conclusion

The titular relationship between *Heim* and *Heimat* introduces to the field of architectural studies the question of the daily life of an ordinary German devoted to the regime. In areas such as Reichsgau Wartheland, this everyday reality required some level of contemplation and lacked clarity and predictability. Common architecture (and not only the state and party buildings) ended up being as ideologized as the official edifices. Just like the latter, common architecture was designed to exist in a space unscathed by the damaging impact of the metropolis and above all, a space that was racially cleansed, universal and permanent, as well as constructed in accordance with the “archetypical” forms of indigenous German landscape.⁴¹ Another important factor is that, just like nature, both the apartments and the city were supposed to adhere to the idea of *Neugestaltung*, especially on the conquered territories, and enforce the imposed vision of both *Heim* and *Heimat*.⁴²

Considering the fact that everyday life runs inside and around the home, its forms and the ideas underlying those forms inspire to seek out new or alternative research areas relating to residential architecture and landscape planning applied right outside homes.⁴³ While taking various contexts into account is standard practice in art history, the ideological and moral entanglement of the Third Reich’s architecture and extermination policies give rise to additional questions.

One possible way to address them is by juxtaposing the stylistic decisions with the conscious and subconscious worldviews and their effects. The way architects worked in the Third Reich meant that formal choices were not so much a matter of craft, but an expression of a vision of the world, guided by devotion to the Nazi program and the assumed Hitler’s will. The impact of architecture was not, however, just a result of the commissioning parties’ ideas and “of its forms, but was also possibly equally dependent on the expectations of users.”⁴⁴ The category of semiophore, coined by Krzysztof Pomian to describe objects of significance, might serve as a possible interpretative

⁴¹ Cf. TERMEER, p. 77.

⁴² To paraphrase Gerhard Fehl’s opinion: “An Stelle von Heimat musste das manipulierbare ‘Bild von Heimat’ treten.” FEHL, p. 81.

⁴³ I reference this theme in: HANNA GRZESZCZUK-BRENDEL: Wzorcowy krajobraz—architektura i zielen w Poznaniu w czasie II wojny światowej. Problemy interpretacyjne [A Model Landscape—Architecture and Greenery in Poznań during the Second World War. Interpretative Aspects], in: ELŻBIETA BŁOTNICKA-MAZUR, ANNA DZIERŻYC-HORNIAK et al. (eds.): Paragone: Pasaże sztuki. Studia ofiarowane profesorowi Lechosławowi Lameńskiemu, Lublin 2020, pp. 197–213.

⁴⁴ FRANK-BERTHOLD RATH: Der heroische Stil: Studien zur Architektur am Ende der Weimarer Republik, Berlin 1997, p. 13; WINFRIED NERDINGER: Bauen in Nationalsozialismus: Zwischen Klassizismus und Regionalismus, in: DURTH/IDEM, pp. 8–19, here p. 11.

trope.⁴⁵ The meaning of such objects emerges through a relationship with a person, as well as through a context shift. Another important aspect of their existence is the intention⁴⁶ and, in my opinion—the purpose. Modern studies in sociology—and psychoanalysis—that reach beyond individual traumas may be applicable here. What deserves special mention, however, is the concept of the Other, as expressed by both Jacques Lacan and Zygmunt Bauman, as well as the reflections of Klaus Theweleit or Klaus Wolbert, which are less common still. Yet another trope can be found in the feminist perspective and studies focusing on how women functioned and held each other accountable in the Third Reich.⁴⁷ It would mainly facilitate a correlation between the form and function of a “model” home and a woman’s designated role of mother and wife, as well as a nuanced perspective on the relationship between the patriarchally defined “private” and public spaces. Such a comprehensive set of considerations could be promising for understanding “the unthinkable” and the depravity of the system permeating all areas of life. It is also possible that basing these questions on the concreteness of architecture, viewed as an element of a person’s natural, everyday surrounding, will also enable the discovery of new explanations for the specifics and meanings of the Third Reich’s style.

Translated from the Polish by Anna Micińska

⁴⁵ KRZYSZTOF POMIAN: *Historia—nauka wobec pamięci* [History—Science versus Memory], Lublin 2006, pp. 100–101.

⁴⁶ EWA DOMAŃSKA: *Semiofory i pneumatofory w perspektywie biohumanistycznej: Przypadek korzeni oddechowych Cypryśnika Błotnego* [Semiofores and Pneumatophores from a Biohumanist Perspective: The Case of the Bald Cypress’s Breathing Roots], in: ANDRZEJ KOŁAKOWSKI, ANDRZEJ MENCWEL et al. (eds.): *Wśród ludzi, rzeczy i znaków: Krzysztofowi Pomianowi w darze*, Warszawa 2016, pp. 347–363, here p. 354.

⁴⁷ SCHWARZ, p. 23, points out that studies on the place and role of women were initiated with a significant delay compared to research on mens’ activity in the Third Reich.

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