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Housing after World War II

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The Situation at War's End

The end of World War II and the division and occupation of Germany brought about changes on many fronts. Some were forced, some occurred at a grass-roots level. Many of the changes in the western sectors, the Federal Republic, led to what has broadly been termed West Germany's Americanization. What consequences did this have for German homes? Did German living become more "American"?

Both countries experienced a flurry of building activity after World War II. In the United States it was the returning GI who precipitated the rush for new housing. The economic uncertainty of the depression years, followed by the war years with its shortages of labor and materials, forced many couples to postpone having children and buying their own home - the latter being an aspect of upward mobility which only a generation before had been within reach of even parts of the working class. Wartime sacrifice was made less harsh by the dreams of a better beyond, with the new house central to postwar material comfort. The perfect home took on many forms: from the houses in the Case Study House Program, initiated in 1945 by Los Angeles based Arts & Architecture magazine in an attempt to provide cost-efficient, architect-designed housing to "turn the tide against the Anne Hathaway cottage and the salt box,"¹ to the huge suburban Levittowns, the first of which was begun on Long Island in 1946, to make stereotyped Cape Cod and ranch houses available to the white, middle-class masses.²

In post-war West Germany there was also a great need for new housing, but for different reasons. Major cities had been hard hit by the war and their housing stock decimated. In the area comprising the Federal Republic and West Berlin, 22.1% of all housing or, in

actual numbers, 1,162,600 buildings, had been hit by allied bombs. In West Berlin, one of the most devastated cities, close to 70% of all housing had been damaged. In Bremen this figure was 48.5%, in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia 40.8% and in Hamburg 31.9%. On the whole, large cities with populations of over 100,000 were the most affected, with around half of their housing stock damaged to some degree.³

Not only were there less buildings to house the population at the end of World War II, West Germany had to deal with a population surge due to an influx of evacuees, displaced persons, and refugees from East Germany and former German territories which were now parts of other countries. More than eight million refugees fled to the West German zones, many of them to Schleswig-Holstein, Lower Saxony, and Bavaria, where conditions were considered most favorable.⁴ When all the births, deaths and refugees are taken into account, West Germany (minus West Berlin) observed a net gain in population of 8.2 million from 1939-50, almost half of which occurred from 1946-50. From 1950-60 there was an additional net gain of 5.5 million inhabitants in the Federal Republic,⁵ making a total gain of 13.7 million new residents to house.

West Germany had to build. What housing aims were followed? In the following paper I will attempt to show that, while after the war urban aspects of housing were widely considered, new spatial and architectural transparency within the buildings themselves was programmatically sought only for official structures, where Germany's "new democracy" was to be put on display. Despite the American aim of influencing West Germany structurally and culturally, and despite a certain grass-roots fascination with US culture, a spatial opening of the West German house along American lines was very slow in coming.

Traditional House Forms

Superficially, housing in the US and Germany has many similarities. The predominant American house form is the detached, single-family residency,⁶ a dwelling form which is

also common in Germany. In 1950, 69.4% of all American housing units were single-family houses, of which almost 92% were detached.⁷ In Germany, 41.7% of all units were in single-family houses.⁸ In both countries the single-family dwelling was an ideal. Although almost twice as many American as German families were actually experiencing life in such houses, when considering each country's topography, the single-family house was a dominant element in both cases: the percentage of such houses when considering all buildings used for housing was over 85% in the US,⁹ a commanding 67.9% in West Germany and 33.9% even in West Berlin. Farmhouses were considered important enough that they were listed separately in the German statistics, although most were found in towns with less than 2000 inhabitants. In towns with 2000-20,000 inhabitants the single-family residency predominated (over 50% of all houses) and even in large cities with more than half a million inhabitants the single-family residency made up 39.6% of all buildings used for housing.¹⁰

Despite the high incidence of "das Eigenheim im Grünen" in both the US and West Germany, the differences in traditional single-family house forms in the two countries are striking and merit closer consideration.

The United States experienced a fast and drastic change in house fashions around the turn of the century. The prevailing form in the mid-to-late nineteenth century had been the Victorian house, by today's standards a rather fussy affair, with a representative entrance hall, front and back parlors, formal dining room and a kitchen which was the domain of the servants. Bedrooms, or "chambers" were located on the private upper floors. [Illustration 1: Harriet Beecher Stowe's house in Hartford, Connecticut, built in 1871. Source: Clifford Edward Clark, Jr., The American Family Home 1880-1960 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press), 68]

The turn of the century brought the advent of the bungalow, a new, smaller, informal, and efficient type of house which quickly replaced the larger Victorian homes as the middle-class ideal. Bungalows, touted as being progressive and inexpensive, spread rapidly

throughout the US.¹¹ Bungalows had a front porch and a stoop, where children could play while their elders greeted neighbors passing by. Inside, a living room which faced the street replaced the formal hallway and parlors of Victorian times, taking over the functions of receiving and entertaining guests as well as providing a place for the family to gather. The front door either led directly into the living room or into a small, open hallway. In either case it was usually possible to immediately see into the main living space when the front door was opened.

The kitchen was at the back of the house and had a door leading to the back yard. By the late 1920s, a garage was often found behind the house,¹² making the back door the logical entrance for family members arriving in the family car. The kitchen was closed off to the living area and became an area reserved for family and close friends. The presence of both a breakfast nook in the kitchen and a dining room by the living room underlined the difference between the two areas. Whereas the family and close friends used the whole house, more formal visitors remained in the living and dining rooms.

Bedrooms were located on the upper floor if there was one. Otherwise they were usually reached via a hallway which shielded them from the more public areas of the house. Bathrooms were located by the bedrooms, which meant a de-facto opening of this most private area of the house to any visitor who stayed more than a short while.

With the bungalow's advent, the spatial qualities of the American home were set. An area in front of the house allowed for ready interaction with people passing by. The interior was divided into a living and dining area, a more private kitchen area, and the most private zone containing the bedrooms. Transparency between the outside and the living room zone was high, despite the fact that the living area was intensively used by the family. In pre-war houses, the kitchen, an area more prone to mess and disorder, was spatially and visually removed from the living area. With the bathroom in the most private zone, this area became accessible to visitors as well. On the whole, American houses after the turn of the century were characterized by multifunctional spaces and a high

degree of interior openness. [Illustration 2: Bungalow of Mr. and Mrs. Aitken, Maywood, Illinois, 1919 (left), Bungalow in San Diego, California, 1927 (right). Source: Lester Walker, American Shelter: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of the American Home (Woodstock, The Overlook Press, 1996), 188]

After World War II house plans opened up even more. The front porch disappeared and was replaced by a rear patio or terrace, but picture windows allowed an unhindered view into the living room. The kitchen often had no door separating it from the living area, and large pass-throughs between kitchen and dining area became popular. Zoning in the house changed somewhat. The living and dining room remained adult areas, while a new "family" room functioned as a living room for the children. This room was usually in direct proximity to the kitchen. The back door now led directly to a carport or garage, emphasizing the kitchen and family room as "family" areas, but the flow of space between this area and the living room made the kitchen accessible to just about anyone. The bedroom zone became more private, since a bathroom was usually near the family room / kitchen area. [Illustration 3: Life Magazine's Trade Secrets House (1953). Source: Walker, American Shelter, 253. Illustration 4: Typical California "ranch house" (1955). Source: Walker, American Shelter, 235]

By the 1950s, the German single-family residency had gone through a very different history. Around the time of the industrial revolution, the separation of workplace and living quarters became the norm, and the spatial organization of the house changed accordingly. The working class and the petite bourgeoisie lived in small, single-family houses or in speculative flats, whereas the upper class ideal was the townhouse or a villa. In all classes, households consisting of a nuclear family became the norm.¹³

Although there were many regional variations, the typical German house had load-bearing, brick or stone walls, a pitched roof, and was built to last. Wall openings, such as doors and windows, were kept small. Windows were of the casement type, necessitating an air lock at the entrance to prevent their banging closed when the front door was

opened. Oven heating, common even after World War II, encouraged people to keep doors within the house closed, in order to conserve heat in the rooms occupied during the day. [Illustration 5: Goethe's Garden House, built in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. Source: Dorte Ahrendt and Gertraud Aepfler, Goethes Gärten in Weimar (Leipzig: Edition Leipzig, 1994), 59]

In Germany, a "trickle-down" effect let each class strive to imitate spatial patterns of the next higher class. A division between living area and the more private sleeping quarters had taken place by the beginning of the nineteenth century, and bathrooms moved out of the kitchen or bedrooms at the beginning of the twentieth century. The working class usually had two living spaces: the multifunctional Wohnküche (a type of eat-in kitchen),¹⁴ where the family spent most of the time they were at home, and the more formal gute Stube, a living room reserved only for special occasions.

The upper classes left the kitchen to the servants and made everyday use of the Salon, later called living room, where the family gathered and received guests. Wealthier families had additional, specialized, rooms, such as the Herrenzimmer, where the gentlemen of a party could retire to enjoy their after-dinner cigars.

The early twentieth century brought with it many reform movements to promote "healthier living".¹⁵ These reformers promoted country living and "Heimatschutz", or the protection of national and regional traditions. Rejection of an industrialized society, a closed, patriarchally-run family and an emphasis on German values and customs were central to their beliefs. Among these reformers, Social Darwinism and anti-Semitism were widespread. In contrast to American reformers of the time, who touted new household inventions, German reformers saw mechanization and rapid industrialization as a threat and rejected anything they saw as not "rooted in the soil", including new materials such as concrete, or "non-German" building forms such as the flat roof.¹⁶

An example of this pronounced "heimatschutz" housing trend is the Fischtalgrund Project in Berlin (1927-8). Although the single-family houses are, for the most part, attached, each entry was carefully separated from those of its neighbors. There was no front stoop or porch. Balconies and patios were on the private garden side, as were the living and dining rooms. The kitchen was usually to the front of the house, where the housewife could observe the area in front of the house. The houses were well-shielded from the public life of the street. Some had not only an air lock, but a front hallway as well. Rooms which were located at the front of the house generally had windows facing the side; windows facing the street had shutters or iron grilles. Although not in any plan, a proper German house would additionally have had Gardinen, or thin, gauzy curtains, to cover the windows and prevent anyone from looking in.

While the exterior of the houses suggested that the inhabitants wanted to be left alone, the interior was no less closed off. The more public rooms were on the ground floor, but the lack of transparency between front door and living area meant that a visitor had to be "shown in" by a member of the family. The kitchen was roomy, but had no place for the family to gather; rather, it was meant to be the housewife's workplace. A second, analogous, room on the ground floor, usually reached via the hallway, could ideally be used as the husband's study. Bedrooms were located on the upper floor; a lavatory by the front door meant that no visitor needed to go upstairs. [Illustration 6: House on Am Fischtal, Architect: Hans Gerlach, 1927-8. Source: Christain Carstensen, Eduard Führ, and Hans Skoda, "Heimat – süsse Heimat: Decollage architektonischer Leitbilder", in Worin noch niemand war: Heimat, ed. Eduard Führ (Wiesbaden: Bauverlag, 1985), 152]

At a time when the American house was becoming spatially more open, both in terms of interaction with its surroundings and in its interior arrangement, the German house remained hierarchically compartmentalized within and closed to the world without. It was not possible to observe what was happening in the house, although windows allowed a policing view of what was happening on the street. Despite technical innovations in

heating and construction, the German house of the late 1920s looked remarkably like its centuries-old predecessors. This traditionalism was surely intensified by what German conservatives saw as a serious threat to national stability: the avant-garde attempt at a forced opening of society.

The avant-garde's social and societal aims were sweeping. It was the modernists who, after the shock of the Great War's brutality, had called into question the architectural traditions of their respective countries. "Let us form a new trade guild – without the presumptuousness of class divisions....The new building of the future...created with millions of artisans' hands; a building which shall one day strive towards the heavens as a crystalline symbol of a new, coming belief," ("Bilden wir also eine neue Zunft der Handwerker ohne die klassentrennende Anmassung, [die eine hochmütige Mauer zwischen Handwerkern und Künstlern errichten will....erschaffen wir gemeinsam] den neuen Bau der Zukunft...der aus Millionen Händen der Handwerker einst gen Himmel steigen wird als kristallenes Sinnbild eines neuen kommenden Glaubens,")¹⁷ wrote Walter Gropius in his Bauhaus program of 1919. Gropius still spoke of the artisans and trades of traditional building, but with a choice of words which evoked revolution. Bruno Taut was more direct: "Shatter the limestone columns in Doric, Ionic, Corinthian; crush the dolls' jokes!....Oh! The phrases we use: Space, Native Land, Style – ! Phew, how they stink, the phrases! Subvert them, break them apart! Let nothing remain of them! Scatter their schools, let the professors' wigs fly....Death to all which is called Title, Dignity, Authority! Down with all Seriousness!" ("Zerschmeißt die Muschelkalksteinsäulen in Dorisch, Ionisch und Korinthisch, zertrümmert die Puppenwitze!....Oh! Unsere Begriffe: Raum, Heimat, Stil – ! Pfui Deuwel, wie stinken die Begriffe! Zersetzt sie, löst sie auf! Nichts soll übrigbleiben! Jagt ihre Schulen auseinander, die Professorenperücken sollen fliegen....Tod allem, was Titel, Würde, Autorität heißt! Nieder mit allem Seriösen!")¹⁸

Aside from a general cultural renewal, the philosophy espoused by this new avant-garde involved trying to reform humanity by improving its housing. The experiments had been

radical in countries such as Russia, where new, communal housing forms were developed to hasten societal reorientation,¹⁹ and more tempered in countries such as Germany, where light, air and sunshine became key aims in the building of new working-class dwellings. And yet even in Germany, reformers espoused a new architectural language,²⁰ one which was based on lightweight, cost-efficient construction, forms which resulted from functional demands,²¹ and above all, a new honesty, a moral transparency, in which a thing was not to outwardly try to be something that inwardly, it was not.²²

The resulting architecture was an affront to many.²³ The asymmetry, flat roofs, and a complete rejection of ornament were aesthetically unfamiliar, while open floor plans and large windows that anyone could look in through challenged established ideas of privacy. Some planners had gone so far as to suggest shared amenities such as roof gardens or communal dining rooms, which critics saw as a bolshevist threat to the traditional family.²⁴

[Illustration 7: Haus Tugendhat, Brno, 1928. Architect: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

Source: Functional Architecture: The International Style 1925-1940, eds. Gabriele Leuthäuser and Peter Gössel (Köln: Benedikt Taschen Verlag, 1990), 357]

The debate between German traditionalists and modernists over the "correct" form of housing was more emotional than rational. The roof form of houses became a central concern. Both sides fought vehemently in what became a highly politicized issue.

With the election of the National Socialists in 1933, the owner-occupied single family house, now called a Heimstätte, became the official ideal. Even multiple-unit houses were built with solid masonry walls, small windows, and pitched roofs, making them formally similar to the single-family style. As historian Joachim Petsch has stated:

"With the establishment of the owner-occupied home as the one and only ideal...the dream of the little man seemed to come true. Even if actual figures told of a different story, the own-your-own-home propaganda determined everyday life and reinforced the little man's ideas about how to live....Homeownership gave him the feeling that the threat emanating from socialism, that everything was to be shared, would finally be conquered."

("Mit der Etablierung des Eigenheims als allein gültigem Leitbild...schien sich der Traum des Kleinbürgers zu erfüllen. Obgleich die Zahlenrealität ganz anders aussah, bestimmte die Propaganda vom eigenen Haus das Alltagsleben und bestärkte das Kleinbürgertum in seinen Wohnvorstellungen....Das eigene Haus vermittelte dem Kleinbürger das Gefühl, dass die in seinen Augen vom Sozialismus drohende Gefahr, alles teilen zu müssen, gebannt sei.")²⁵

It was a fear which continued well into the post-war era.

German Housing after World War II

Cynics have said that after the war, urban planners continued what the bombs had begun: a clearing away and restructuring of major West German cities.²⁶ Never before had it been possible in Europe to try out large-scale urban theories in practice; now the time had come. "Die gegliederte und aufgelockerte Stadt,"²⁷ which can be translated as "subdivision and breaking up of the urban fabric," became the maxim of post-war planners. Their aims were ambitious: urban reorganization and the creation of new "neighborhoods", a hierarchical structuring of traffic routes, separation of functions, urban landscaping, ideal natural lighting and ventilation, the abolishment of the old block structures, and a reform of property regulations. The theories behind these aims were not entirely new. Futurists and modernists such as Antonio Sant'Elia, Ludwig Hilberseimer, and Le Corbusier had propagated much extremer "new cities," with highrises set amidst open greenery, and broad streets to allow for a quick passage of automobiles as early as 1914.²⁸

And yet, post-World-War-II planners did not necessarily see themselves as successors to the avant garde of the 1920s, since the former had generally been limited to addressing urban issues in theory while concentrating on individual buildings in practice. Now, with war damage so extensive, architecture often seemed merely a part of the general urban debate. In this vein, many different forces and movements influenced the planners of

German housing after the war. The Charter of Athens of 1933,²⁹ The Garden City Movement of Ebenezer Howard in England and his more conservative followers in Germany, housing reform movements of the 1920s³⁰ and housing ideals which had been propagated in the Third Reich³¹ all had their proponents in post-war Germany.³²

The owner-occupied, single-family residency, which pre-war "blood and soil" conservatives had seen as an ideal way of rooting the population to German soil,³³ continued to be actively encouraged by the post-war government. In 1952 the governing Christian Democratic Union introduced a bill calling for the "creation of family homes" (Gesetz zur Schaffung von Familienheimen), with the aim of promoting the nuclear family over other household forms while "rooting" large portions of the population "with the soil" (das Volk "mit dem Grund und Boden verbinden")³⁴ Subsidized rental housing and buildings with more than two units were to be discouraged, instead "family homes", houses with a garden for a single family, were to be built in a fight against "collectivism".³⁵ The pattern of the owner-occupied, single-family house was thus an established ideal in both post-war Germany and the United States, but for different reasons.

It is noteworthy that the American occupying forces exerted little direct pressure on German planners to follow certain housing guidelines. This is in marked contrast to other areas of contemporary life, where the Americans, in an attempt to remold Germany into a more "democratic" nation, directly dictated what changes they wanted made.³⁶

One area in which the Americans did become active was the ECA competitions. The Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA), working under the Marshall Plan, sponsored architectural competitions, whose aim it was to gather ideas for "the development of housing". Fifteen German cities provided tracts of land. The focus was on new, government-subsidized buildings in planned communities.

The main criterion for judging the projects seems to have been cost efficiency, a theme which dominates the competition documentation. Even in the post-occupancy evaluation, it was planned to ask the residents how satisfied they were with aspects such as heating

and other costs, or noise levels in the apartments.³⁷ Although American experts were part of the evaluating jury, it was German architects and engineers who developed the architectural projects, thirty-three house types (among them thirteen single-family types) in all.

Many of the projects were a mixture of multiple-dwelling and single-family residencies, with the latter making up almost a third of the total units. All of the single-family dwellings were row houses, again in order to keep costs down. That the relatively more expensive one-unit houses were even planned can be considered testimony to the continuing one-family, one-house ideal.

The architectural language of the fifteen winners in this American-sponsored competition remained, even by 1950's standards, mediocre to outdated.³⁸ [Illustration 8. Source: Georg Günthert, Brigitte D'Ortschy, "Die 15 Ausführungs-Projekte", in Neuer Wohnbau: Neue Wege des Wohnungsbaues als Ergebnis der ECA-Ausschreibung, 3 vols. ed. Hermann Wandersleb (Ravensburg: Otto Maier Verlag, 1952), 11] In contrast to building exhibitions such as the Weissenhof Siedlung near Stuttgart (1927-8) or the Interbau exhibit in Berlin (1957), no big-name architects were represented. Although one of the commentators claimed that, "the architecture of the Third Reich is dead," he confused the classicist style of that era's civic monuments with the "heimatschutz" style of its housing, hastening to add that the former was now the official style of socialist countries in Eastern Europe.³⁹ In fact, over 60% of the ECA houses had a pitched roof, evoking once again the "heimatschutz" style. Even larger, multi-family dwellings were planned with this roof type, continuing a Third Reich policy which gave apartment buildings the appearance of oddly oversized single-family dwellings.

As is typical for the time, urban planning considerations were emphasized over the spatial arrangement within individual buildings. All of the 725 projects submitted avoided block structures.⁴⁰ Every one of the fifteen winners called for free-standing slabs or a ribbon development, urban concepts which had been widespread in the 1920s in attempts to

improve natural lighting and ventilation. American commentaries emphasized again and again the importance of considering the automobile in planning the rebuilding of German cities.⁴¹

With one exception, all of the single-family ECA houses were planned with the kitchen facing the street and the living room facing the garden. Only one house had an eat-in kitchen,⁴² making the majority of kitchens workspaces to be occupied by the housewife. From here, she could supervise what was happening on the street. Seventy percent of the houses had a basement, which could be used as a laundry area or for storing foodstuffs. That this high-cost factor was included is an indication of the belief in the self-sustaining household. Cost-efficient communal amenities were rare.

The front of the house was usually fairly closed compared to the back, where large windows allowed a view of, and a patio door provided access to the back yard. One project assured privacy by having the kitchen and living room on the second floor, and the bedrooms on the third. The ground floor was occupied by mechanical and "housekeeping rooms". This allowed a housewife to supervise both front and back yard during the day.⁴³ Bedrooms were, again with one exception, on the upper floor.

Bathrooms were an area where costs were often cut; many had no sink. Only three houses had the bathroom on the ground floor. At least one architect was so concerned with not having visitors wander upstairs, he put a separate lavatory by the front door at the cost of having the bathtub alternatively in the kitchen or the basement. The same design suggested a bed in the living room, probably less of a "new development" than a sign of post-war poverty.⁴⁴

Few of the ECA designs offered novel solutions to spatial questions. The houses were still closed to the street and open only to the private garden zone. The kitchen and household rooms were still considered a woman's domain, from which she could see what was happening on the street. Communal amenities, such as cost-efficient central heating plants, were not planned. Laundries, which could have cut costs by eliminating the need

for a basement while reducing the housewife's workload by allowing her the use of a washing machine, were rejected in favor of individual housekeeping rooms with few, if any, appliances. At least five houses were designed with some form of central heating which, however, did not lead to experiments with open floor plans.

Only one American author wrote on the design of the individual units, remarking that typical American projects, such as the single-family row houses in the Lake Meadows project by Chicago, were characterized by open floor plans, "with no division...between the main rooms used during the day (entryway, living room, dining area and kitchen...)." Pointing out that open floor plans and large windows create a feeling of spaciousness, he continued, "Unfortunately, the German method of oven heating does not allow for such an open connection between rooms....The greatest advance in housing construction and the most important way to reduce the burden of housework in German families would be the invention and introduction of an inexpensive form of central heating, one that even the less well-off could afford." ("Grundrisse,...in welchen keine Unterteilung durch Türen und Wände zwischen den Haupttagesräumen [Eingänge, Wohnzimmer, Essplatz und Küche...] vorgesehen ist. Unglücklicherweise schliesst die deutsche Ofenheizung diese offene Verbindung von Räumen aus....Der grösste Fortschritt im Wohnungsbau und die bedeutsamste Entlastung der deutschen Familie von Hausarbeit wäre die Erfindung und Einführung einer billigen Zentralheizung, die sich auch der Minderbemittelte leisten kann.")⁴⁵ Certainly the firing and cleaning of wood or coal ovens was a tedious task, not to mention a dirty one. But could oven heating alone explain the continuing closed nature of the German house?

Summing up the results of the search for new spatial ideas from the German side, Edgar Wedepohl, calling the ECA competitions the search for a new "Volkswohnung", argued that the pluralism of all possible organizational solutions should be reduced to standardized solutions which would serve das Volk (the people) and help save costs: "The focus is on the person who, with all his personal idiosyncrasies, voluntarily accepts

the boundaries of his individual freedom in consideration of the community." ("In der Mitte steht der Mensch, der bei aller berechtigten persönlichen Eigenart die Grenzen individueller Freiheit anerkennt in freiwilliger Rücksicht auf die Gemeinschaft.") Calling special requests, "the demands of queer eccentrics" ("Ansprüche verschrobener Sonderlinge"), his idea of possible differences in housing units was limited to the unit size, to accommodate different family sizes, the kitchen type, and the types of amenities, including central heating, offered to fit various pocketbooks.⁴⁶

Wedepohl's attempts to define new standards for optimal housing units are based on a slew of tables comparing various values and ratios of the ECA houses. He comes to the conclusion that single-family houses should not be built for less than four occupants, calling smaller units, "dubious dwarf constructions which, in the long run, are not capable of life" ("bedenkliche Zwerggebilde, die auf die Dauer nicht lebensfähig sind").⁴⁷ In a comparative analysis of the thirteen different single-family houses, he emphasizes which plans provide, "protection from neighbors' gazes" ("Schutz gegen Einblick vom Nachbarn"), and which would allow for subletting rooms in the house (while maintaining occupant privacy), while also pointing out possibilities for "new forms of living: one-roomedness and connection between rooms instead of cell-like separation."

(Möglichkeiten zu neuen Wohnformen: Einräumigkeit und Raumverbindung statt zellenartiger Absonderung.)⁴⁸ He suggests that these new living forms be actively taught: "A more efficient use of the dwelling would be possible if habits which have their origins in earlier forms of living were changed. This would require a long and planned training, which would have to begin in the schools..." (Wohl aber liesse sich eine bessere Ausnutzung der Wohnung erzielen bei Änderung von Wohnsitten, die aus vergangenen Lebensformen stammen. Dies erfordert eine lange und planmässige Erziehung, die schon in der Schule beginnen müsste...) ⁴⁹

Wedepohl's use of typical Third-Reich terminology (lebensunfähige Zwerggebilde, Sonderlinge), his belief that the state should prescribe how people are to live, his concern

with what the neighbors might see, and his simultaneous acclamation of opener floor plans in the house, all within the framework of an American-sponsored program, illustrate the uncertainty of German planners after the war. Faced with the question of what future housing should look like, it seemed easier to retreat into the seemingly objective world of tables and figures rather than seriously question prevailing ideas of social hierarchy, individual privacy, and community.

The American disinterest in directly influencing the design and spatial organization of housing through the establishment of new norms or policies is surprising when one considers both what a large part "home" plays in shaping and showing people's identity, and how concerned the US policymakers were – at least in the early years – with "denazifying" German society. Either the Americans trying to shape a new, democratic Germany were not aware of how spatial and social patterns can be interrelated⁵⁰ or, in contrast to their German counterparts, they did not consider housing an adequate means to bring about social change. Surely the Americans, with their own anti-Communism taking form at home, could identify with the German fear of "collectivism". And so, either unaware of or ignoring the pre-war housing debate, they allowed decisions which led to a continuation of many aspects of traditional German housing, including those which had been adopted and encouraged by the National Socialists.

"Selling Mrs. Consumer",⁵¹ the American advertisers' strategy to change habits and introduce new housing patterns at a grass-roots level, was not attempted by American policymakers in post-war Germany, and their German partners, such as Wedepohl, continued to see social patterns as something to be imposed on the people by state regimentation. For the Germans, having gone through the strife of the Weimar Republic and what was seen as the modernists' failed attempt to better society through architecture, and with so many traditional stylistic elements contaminated by their association with the National Socialists, it seemed safer to consider housing in terms of cost-efficiency, or as an urban planning and design problem, in which, for example, a

choice had to be made between a block structure (Blockrandbebauung) and free-standing slabs (Zeilenbauweise) or between monofunctional areas (bedroom cities) and mixed-use quarters.

Official Structures

If a push for new, more open, transparent and democratic housing patterns was deemed too unimportant or too difficult by the German building trade and their American advisors, then it is all the more remarkable that when official structures were built, quite a different position was taken.

Two buildings especially illustrate the young Federal Republic's desire to demonstrate that a change had indeed come over the land: Sep Ruf's and Egon Eiermann's German Pavilion for the World Fair in Brussels (1956-8) [Illustration 9, Source: Hans Wichmann, Sep Ruf: Bauten und Projekte (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags Anstalt, 1986), 93] and Ruf's Chancellor Bungalow in Bonn (1963-4) [Illustration 10, Source: *ibid.*, 128]

The World Fair buildings, a series of eight exhibition pavilions joined together by bridges and covered passageways, were grouped around a landscaped, open yard. The pavilions had either two or three stories, were square in plan, and were based on a strict grid system. The project followed the predominant urban idea of the post-war era, structured and loosely-grouped volumes, in this case set within a park.

Modern materials and construction techniques determined the buildings. The form of the buildings, taking up ideas which had been developed by Mies van der Rohe in the 1920s, was elegant and low-slung, seeming to consist of nothing but floating platforms and a bit of glass. Transparency was high, both in an urban sense, with space flowing between and around the buildings, and in terms of the buildings themselves. An open floor plan dominated the interior of the pavilions. Stores were only used where protection was needed from the sun.

The German contribution to the World Fair of 1958 was a pronounced display of a "new Germany": a renewed, non-aggressive and progressive partner.⁵² The monumental gestures of the 1930s and early 1940s had been banned in favor of a new humility, a new openness, and an architecture which suggested that anyone might stroll through. No wonder the international press was delighted.⁵³

Sep Ruf's second official building for the Federal Republic was the Chancellor's Bungalow in Bonn, Germany's "White House", the official residence and reception building of the nation's political leader. Commissioned under Konrad Adenauer, it was inaugurated by his successor Ludwig Erhard on November 12, 1964.

The Chancellor's Bungalow was every bit as transparent as the 1958 World Fair building had been, and as different from "normal" German housing as could be imagined. By moving into this building, Erhard wanted to demonstrate to the world that Germany was an open republic, capable of producing quality design.⁵⁴

The complex consisted of two joined, one-story atrium buildings. The bearing construction was, as in the World Fair buildings, a grid of steel supports over which a flat roof seemed to float. The exterior walls were largely of glass. Again, the building had great similarities to those of the modernist Mies van der Rohe.

The smaller of the two buildings contained the chancellor's private quarters and was more introverted than the extremely open building for official receptions. Both buildings had open, flowing spaces within, which could be altered as needed by means of sliding wall panels. The bungalow's transparency fused the interior with the surrounding park: the stone floor covering in the reception hall continued out onto the terrace, uniting the two spaces, while sculptures among the park's trees evoked landscape "furniture".

Although the bungalow was meant to signal German openness and democracy, the reaction to the building within the republic was mixed. In 1967, Erhard's successor Kurt Georg Kiesinger had the house remodelled and the modern furniture replaced with period pieces. Willy Brandt never even moved in, but he had the original furniture reinstalled.

Helmut Schmidt seemed to enjoy living in the building. On the whole, public German opinion was not always kind to what was perceived as a "cross between an aquarium and an American drugstore."⁵⁵

Conclusion

German housing trends in the period following World War II were not influenced by American patterns of living as much as by traditional German structures. The spatial opening of the German house was, even in post-war Germany, associated with "un-German" and "bolshevist" housing forms which an avant-garde elite had attempted to establish in Germany during the Weimar Republic.

The traditional ideal in Germany may be described as a suburban, single-family house with a garden or yard. Whereas the typical American single-family house is characterized by openness to the street and a high degree of spatial transparency within the house, German houses were characterized by a relatively closed facade with small windows, a steeply pitched roof, and spatial barriers within the house which required visitors to be led into spaces by family members.

This German house form had been ideologically propagated during the Third Reich and continued to remain the ideal for a large part of the population after the war. Owner-occupied, single-family houses continued to be encouraged by the post-war Christian Democratic government in an attempt to firmly establish conservative living and family structures as a bastion against communism. This is in direct contrast to official buildings, even those used for housing, in which Germany attempted, through a "democratic" and spatially open architecture, to demonstrate its rehabilitation to a watching world community.

American policymakers after the war did not actively support a reorientation of German housing, despite their attempts to structurally and culturally change German society in

other ways. It is surprising that such a pronounced area of people's identity was not the focus of increased "denazification" attempts. While German housing did eventually take on certain spatial characteristics of American housing, the ideological aspects of spatially transparent versus spatially closed housing forms continued to be an issue in the Federal Republic for years to come.

¹ Esther McCoy, Case Study Houses 1945-1962 (Los Angeles, Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1977), 3

² For a chronology of other housing projects and programs, both defense and post-war, see Heather Burnham and Joel Davidson, "Chronology," World War II and the American Dream: How Wartime Building Changed a Nation, ed. Donald Albrecht (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), XXVIII - XLI.

³ Statistisches Bundesamt, Statistik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Der Bestand an Gebäuden in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland nach der Zählung vom 13.9.1950 (Stuttgart / Köln: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1950), 39:14

⁴ Cited in: Gerhard Rabeler, Wiederaufbau und Expansion westdeutscher Städte 1945-1960 im Spannungsfeld von Reformideen und Wirklichkeit: Ein Überblick aus städtebaulicher Sicht (Bonn: Schriftenreihe des Deutschen Nationalkomitee für Denkmalschutz, 1990), 39:10.

⁵ *ibid.*, 11

⁶ I use the terms "house," "residency," and "dwelling" interchangeably. The United States census uses the terms, "one-family house detached from any other house," and, "one-family house attached to one or more houses." The latter includes row houses and townhouses. I have grouped both figures together when speaking of a "single-family house," in part to make the US figures comparable to German figures.

⁷ United States Census: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/housing/census/units.html> (22 April 1998).

⁸The Statistisches Bundesamt (Federal Office of Statistics) lists Einfamilienhäuser (single-family houses) without a subdivision according to if they are detached or not. In some charts the single-family residency is termed Wohngebäude mit einer Wohnung (housing with one dwelling unit). The German figures for single-family residencies include farmhouses, which are a separate item in the German statistics, but exclude provisional shelters common after the war, such as barracks, pea-patch huts, or Quonset huts. Statistisches Bundesamt, Der Bestand an Gebäuden, 8.

⁹ Exact figures are not available.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 9. Funds permitting, it has also remained a popular form of housing. Of all new housing built in 1970, the first year for which detailed figures are available, 24% of all houses built were single-family dwellings. By 1975 this number had increased to 38% and only in the mid-1980's did this figure begin to sink again. Source: Statistisches Bundesamt, ZwB IX B2 (Erteilte Genehmigungen zum Bau von Wohnungen), 1998.

¹¹ For a discussion on the development and spread of the bungalow housing type, see Clifford Edward Clark, Jr.; The American Family Home 1800-1960 (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 171-92 and Larry R. Ford, Cities and Buildings: Skyscrapers, Skid Rows, and Suburbs (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 146-52

¹² Ford, Cities and Buildings, 155-6

¹³ For a discussion on this transition, see Joachim Petsch, Eigenheim und gute Stube: Zur Geschichte des bürgerlichen Wohnens (Köln: DuMont Buchverlag, 1989), 25-56.

¹⁴ Bettina Günter, "Küchen vor dem ersten Weltkrieg: Arbeiter- und Bürgerküchen in der Stadt," Oikos - Von der Feuerstelle zur Mikrowelle: Haushalt und Wohnen im Wandel, ed. Michael Andritzky (Giessen: Anabas-Verlag, 1992), 77-84

¹⁵ Petsch, Eigenheim und gute Stube, 98-129

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 102

¹⁷ Walter Gropius, "Programm des Staatlichen Bauhauses in Weimar (1919)," Programme und Manifeste zur Architektur des 20. Jahrhunderts, 2nd ed., ed. Ulrich Conrads (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1981), 47

¹⁸ Bruno Taut, "Nieder der Seriosismus (1920)," Programme und Manifeste, ed. Conrads, 54

¹⁹ For a discussion see: Catherine Cook, Russian Avant-Garde: Theories of Art, Architecture and the City (London: Academy Editions, 1995) and Selim O. Khan-Magomodov, Pioneers of Soviet Architecture, trans. Alexander Lieven, ed. Catherine Cooke (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 341-98.

²⁰ Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret succinctly summed up this new architecture as: separation of load-bearing and non-bearing elements, roof gardens, flexibility in the arrangement of floor plans, ribbon windows, and flexibility in the arrangement of the facade. Le Corbusier/Pierre Jeanneret, "Fünf Punkte zu einer neuen Architektur (1926)," Programme und Manifeste, ed. Conrads, 93-5

²¹ See Walter Gropius, "Grundsätze der Bauhausproduktion [Dessau] (Auszug)," Programme und Manifeste, ed. Conrads, 90-1.

²² Mies van der Rohe wrote in 1927: "We do not judge the result of, but rather the approach to a design process. It is this approach which shows us whether the form was developed from the life of an object or if it was created for its own sake." ("Wir werten

nicht das Resultat, sondern den Ansatz des Gestaltungsprozesses. Gerade dieser zeigt, ob vom Leben her die Form gefunden wurde oder um ihrer selbst willen." Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, "Über die Form in der Architektur," Programme und Manifeste, ed. Conrads, 96

²³ This rift between architects and non-architects continues to the present day and has resulted in such books as Tom Wolfe's From Bauhaus to our house (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1981), a scathing and populist attack on modern architecture.

²⁴ There are many sources which cover avant-garde architecture of the Weimar Republic. For a discussion of houses with communal kitchens, see: Günther Uhlig, Kollektivmodell "Einküchenhaus" (Giessen: Anabas-Verlag, 1981).

²⁵ Petsch, Eigenheim und gute Stube, 176

²⁶ The restructuring was not limited to West Germany. East German cities experienced rebuilding which shows remarkable parallels to what was happening in the west.

²⁷ This was also the title of a book: Johannes Göderitz, Roland Rainer, and Hubert Hoffmann, Die gegliederte und aufgelockerte Stadt (Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1957).

²⁸ In the early 1920s Le Corbusier had proposed tearing down Paris and replacing it with his new "City for Three Million Inhabitants".

²⁹ For the congress texts and a discussion of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Modern (CIAM) see Martin Steinmann, CIAM (Basle: Birkhäuser, 1979). The Athens Congress is discussed at length in: José Luis Sert, Can our Cities Survive? (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942).

³⁰ Major projects include housing developments in Frankfurt/Main under Ernst May and in Berlin under Martin Wagner.

³¹ See: Tilman Harlander and Gerhard Fehl, eds., Hitlers Sozialer Wohnungsbau 1940-1945: Wohnungspolitik, Baugestaltung und Siedlungsplanung (Hamburg: Christians Verlag, 1986).

³² See also: Thomas Hafer, Vom Montagehaus zur Wohnscheibe: Entwicklungslinien im deutschen Wohnungsbau: 1945-1970; mit ausgewählten Beispielen aus Baden-Württemberg (Basle: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1993).

³³ Petsch, Eigenheim und gute Stube, 103

³⁴ Günther Schulz, Wiederaufbau in Deutschland: Die Wohnungsbaupolitik in den Westzonen und der Bundesrepublik von 1945, (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1994), 303

³⁵ *ibid.*, 288-90

³⁶ The denazification programs are an obvious example of political reorientation. American efforts to restructure German industries to conform to the more democratic American industrial policies are traced in: Volker Berghahn, The Americanization of West German Industry 1945-1973 (Leamington Spa / New York: Berg Publishers, 1986). In the area of mass culture, the America Houses were used to explicitly spread American ideals and ideas in Germany. For a discussion see: Axel Schildt, "Die USA als 'Kulturation'. Zur Bedeutung der Amerikahäuser in den 1950er Jahren," Amerikanisierung: Traum und Alptraum im Deutschland des 20. Jahrhunderts, eds. Alf Lüdtke, Inge Marßolek, Adelheid von Saldern (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1996), 257-69.

³⁷ Hermann Wandersleb and Hans Schloszberger, "Vorspiel," Neuer Wohn-Bau: Neue Wege des Wohnungsbaues als Ergebnis der ECA-Ausschreibung, 3 vols. ed. Hermann Wandersleb (Ravensburg: Otto Maier Verlag, 1952) 1:3-4 and Helmut Döscher, "Der ECA-Wettbewerb," Neuer Wohn-Bau, ed. Hermann Wandersleb, 6-8. The role of the cost factor

in the design ratings becomes evident when reading the criteria catalog. (Erdmann Grübna, "Baukosten," Neuer Wohn-Bau, ed. Hermann Wandersleb, 102-4)

³⁸ To be fair, one of the German commentators bemoaned this as well, stating that the better designers had often not presented the most economical designs, leading to their exclusion. Hans Schoszberger, "Gestaltung", Neuer Wohn-Bau, ed. Hermann Wandersleb, 119

³⁹ *ibid.*, 119

⁴⁰ Philipp Rappaport, "Städtebau und ECA," Neuer Wohn-Bau, ed. Hermann Wandersleb, 47

⁴¹ M.A. Arnold, Walter F. Bogner, Donald Monson, Bernard Wagner, William Wittausch, "Kritik aus U.S.A.," Neuer Wohn-Bau, ed. Hermann Wandersleb, 127-9; Donald Monson, "Städtebau," Neuer Wohn-Bau, ed. Hermann Wandersleb, 129-30; Bernard Wagner, "Städtebau – die Hauptsache," Neuer Wohn-Bau, ed. Hermann Wandersleb, 130-1

⁴² *ibid.*, 23

⁴³ Georg Günthert, Brigitte D'Ortschy, "Die 15 Ausführungs-Projekte," Neuer Wohn-Bau, ed. Hermann Wandersleb, 15

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 17

⁴⁵ Walter F. Bogner, "Entwurf," Neuer Wohn-Bau, 131-2

⁴⁶ Edgar Wedepohl, "Grundriss," Neuer Wohn-Bau, 59

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 61

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 62

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 66

⁵⁰ This would not be surprising, since the ability to "read" and analyze visual and spatial material must be learned and fields such as environmental psychology or environment-behavior relations did not develop until much later.

⁵¹ Dolores Hayden, Redesigning the American Dream: The Future of Housing, Work, and Family Life (New York, London: W.W.Norton & Company, 1984), 34

⁵² Heinrich Welfing, Parlamentsarchitektur: Zur Selbstdarstellung der Demokratie in ihren Bauwerken. Eine Untersuchung am Beispiel des Bonner Bundeshauses (Berlin: Duncker & Humbolt, 1995) 91-2

⁵³ Hans Wichmann, Sep Ruf: Bauten und Projekte (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags Anstalt, 1986), 92

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 122

⁵⁵ Heinrich Welfing, Parlamentsarchitektur,