

# CAMILLO SITTE

AND ARTISTIC PRINCIPLES  
IN CITY PLANNING

TERM REPORT FOR CP 212  
THE CITY IN HISTORY, PART 2  
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## CAMILLO SITTE and ARTISTIC PRINCIPLES IN CITY PLANNING

### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- 1- Conditions in German and Austrian town planning in relation to artistic principles
- 2- Biography of Camillo Sitte and his career
- 3- A- Summary of his book "City Planning according to Artistic Principles"
  - B- Sitte's views and procedures
  - C- Contemporary figures of Sitte
  - D- Influences on Sitte's theory
  - E- Influences of Sitte's theory
    - 1- In Germany
    - 2- Abroad
  - F- Vienna's planning and relation with Sitte
- 4- Bibliography

## 1- Conditions in German and Austrian town planning

The 19th century was a period of a great deal of interest in the picturesque and archaic in architecture, painting, and the applied arts, especially in Germany and England. However, there were few picturesque street layouts - only a scattering of sinuous paths in suburbs in England and the United States, inspired by the fashionable landscape style of gardening. Perhaps the engineers and surveyors were protected against the ideas current in art and literature, but the flood was rising and was sure to break into the field of city planning sooner or later. It did, in 1889, with the publication of Camillo Sitte's "Der Staedtebau".

Sitte's book was originally intended for the public of German-speaking lands, especially of Vienna. The picture of the time on the whole was of architects who struggled, however unsuccessfully, with technical and legal aspects through their Verein's (eg. Baumeister's principles for the Berlin Verein launched German city planning according to the writer. - the 1906 version gained from the inclusion of some Sitte concepts). The sociological side of city planning was at its early stages, and utopias were not in full daylight yet. The enlightened, far-sighted city-architects had not yet emerged. Sitte's alternative was to employ artists in all categories of design - and public competitions for all projects. He attacked foremostly the "technicians and specialists", and the engineering profession which bureaucratically controlled the city-building offices; a strong feature of the era.

There was then a prevalence of only surface surveys (Grundriss or Stadtanlage) without three dimensional Bebauungsplans. The Bebauungsplan would not become important until after the 1890's. Surveyors, or "Geometers" were used to a meaningless geometrical exactitude, the Blockraum whose stereotype blocks defied basic spatial units like squares and streets, and human environments.

There was also a growing obsession with traffic considerations in laying out new and regularizing old towns, that would define the role of vehicles extant today. Maederer's plan of reorganizing Vienna with roads that ripped through old squares was criticized by Sitte. Baumeister and Stübgen gave great importance to streets and developed a hierarchy, with elements like the through-street, the diagonal street, the belt road and the traffic plaza. The traffic priority was supported also by German charter statements and the 1874 and 1906 resolutions of the Berlin Verein.

Baumeister and Stübgen admired the French school of CP for large scale technical organisation as in Haussman's Paris. But though artistically successful, Paris could not match the architectural lineage of the "Sezessionists" (a group of painter Gustav Klimt and architects like O.Wagner who "seceded" from the conservative Academy



and founded the Wiener Sezession, or Art Nouveau in 1897) and the varied and personalised character of the Ringstrasse.

Sanitation and a typically 19th cc issue, sewage, began to affect above-ground planning as an obsession of the 1870's and 1880's. A pioneer in this area, Max Pettenkofer made Munich a model town. The English were also concerned, but were more advanced in the healthy maintenance of their homes rather than workplaces. They were then more renowned for their verdured squares and large city parks. British drainage techniques and romantic surface effects were widely adapted, sometimes resulting in artificially picturesque urban scenes. Ebenezer Howard's Garden City movement and the exemplary park movement of the USA were also noticed.

Greenery in the city was an issue lacking scientific detachment and full of misconceptions. Sitte delightfully exposed the myths on the subject and the fictitious belief of the "lungs of the city".

Concerning frontage lines (Bau-/Strassenfluchtlinie), Sitte disapproved of the reliance on straight lines and preferred irregular and aesthetic building lines. In 1907, Stübben converted to Sitte's view and defended the moulding of frontage lines according to historic buildings, to be written into German laws soon after.

Among more legalistic preoccupations, the German invention of zoning was a necessity in a time of uncontrolled growth, and was highly supported by Baumeister. The expropriation law and the purchase and redistribution of lots resulted in awkward shapes and arrangements. Sitte argued that streets should conform naturally to irregular terrain and historical situations. In confrontations between Stübben and Sitte, the former said that Sitte did not understand modern traffic conditions.

The subject of "krumme oder gerade Strassen" (crooked or straight streets) was an amusing one and source of bitter debates. Associations and literature had already been dwelling on the superiority of pre-industrial and ancient patterns, but Sitte became a turning point. Significant action was taken by opposing plans that opened up the old city core of Vienna in the 1890's, but Sitte lost the battle. His advice could have saved the unique, original character of Vienna.

## 2- Sitte's Biography

Camillo Sitte had a life of intense intellectual and artistic activity, with a wide range of interests. Sitte was born on April 17, 1843 in the Landstraáe district of Vienna. Father Franz Sitte was an artist and architect, and worked in Munich, the cultural center of German and Austrian artists of the time. He was appointed by J.G.Müller to build, by an important Church, of Altlercherfeld, after the younger architects of Vienna rebelled (in 1848, what a coincidence) against the original bureaucratic appointing of a court architect and subsequently held a public competition which Müller won. This was a turning point since it reflected the breaking of bureaucratic monopoly by independent architects and the new principle of



civic projects' public competitions - it also reflected a change from a Renaissance-type, paganist, to a more ecclesiastical, medieval "Rundbogenstil" (Round-arch style, if translated) character in buildings. The competition principle was also applied in the Ringstraße.

The Sitte family was an atmosphere of rebellious, genius and artistic imagination. Camillo Sitte's book is itself a protest against established norms, and possesses a marginal position.

Sitte received his secondary school education in the Piaristen Gymnasium of the Josefstadt District (viii), in Piaristen Parish house; close friendships were made in the Gymnasium, to continue in Hochschule, as all became renowned.

In 1863, Sitte entered Heinrich von Ferstel's atelier in the Technische Hochschule, to study art, history and archeology (with R. Eitelberger), physiology of vision and space perception, three semesters of medicine and anatomy, and work on studies by Piero della Francesca. 1860-1873, Camillo helped his father in ecclesiastical projects in collaboration with artists and decorators. He took part in "Quellenschriften für Kunstgeschichte", and numerous renderings of artworks.

Sitte continued educating himself by travels to Italy and Germany (for Renaissance and Piero della Francesca art), France, Greece, Asia Minor, and Egypt. This was the major component of his character.

In 1875, he married Leopoldine Blume, an intellectual Viennese lady, and was offered to direct the State School of Applied Arts, in Salzburg (with objection from father) until 1883. He reorganized the school.

In 1877, he founded periodical Salzburger Gewerbeblatt.

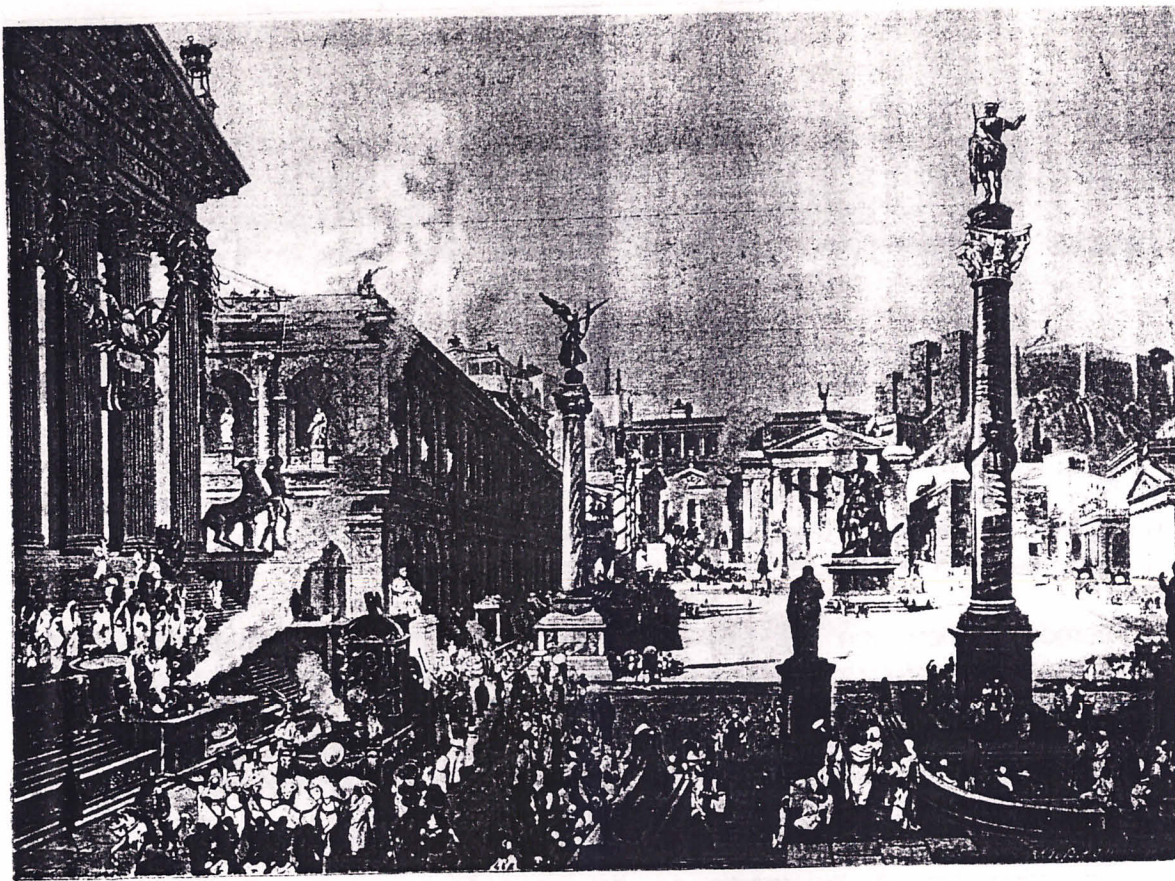
He gave lectures on various crafts, wrote countless articles of art criticism, especially for Neues Wiener Tagblatt, engaged in restoration of historical monuments.

In 1883 he was called to Vienna to organize new State School of Applied Arts; he set up vigorous artistic, intellectual center of teaching there, as well.

He was very productive and immersed with writing, he made studies with larger aspects of city planning, along with other subjects. He was stimulated by Vienna Ringstraße project, and affected by his teacher, Eitelberger.

1889, his book Der Stadtbau emerged - originating from thoughts formed through European travels which transformed Sitte's life, beyond Vienna's cultural milieu; he had an international fame, from German city planning competitions, and received invitations to plan Australian cities (i.e. Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney), Hamburg and San Francisco, industrial towns with Austrian provinces. But he had a little recognition from city planning office of Vienna.





II. Rome: The Forum Romanum. Restoration

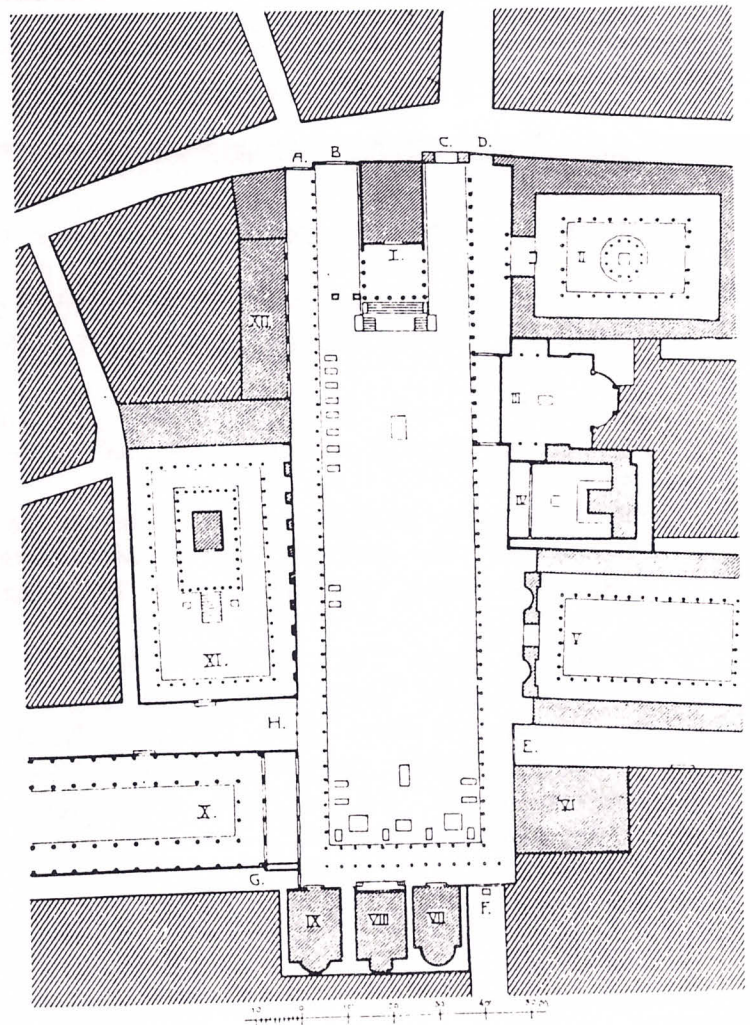


Fig. 1. Pompeii: The Forum. I. Temple of Jupiter.—II. Macellum (provision market).—III. Sanctuary of the City Lares.—IV. Temple of Vespasian.—V. Building of Eumachia.—VI. Comitium.—VII. Office of the Duumvirs.—VIII. The City Council.—IX. Office of the Aediles.—X. Basilica.—XI. Temple of Apollo.—XII. Market building

Bibliography 2



After 1890's, his interest broadened onto extra-artistic matters. The magazine Stadtebau he founded dealt with all city planning factors. Volume II, "City Planning according to Scientific and Social Principles".

He had a certain amount of aristocratic patronage and intellectual circle in Vienna, and he wrote for Vienna art periodicals, Der Architekt(1895), Kunst und Kunsthandwerk(1898), attracted many students, supervised architectural commissions with total control, his style reigned in through projects. Did not agree too well with new modernists(Otto Wagner).

He drove himself excessively hard in his work, wore his health out, suffered a cerebral stroke and soon died, November 16, 1903.

The municipality erected a bronze cenotaph in his honor; and a street was named after him that joined a "turbine plaza", a favorite form of his. Honored twice(1878, 1881) by Academie Française(though did not approve of French art), Order of Gregory from the Vatican(1901) and the Order of the Crown from own country(1898).

His wife survived, ~20 years, kept up artistic center, home. He had two sons, one a professor of classical art history, the other a city planner who continued the "Sitte School", but against the expected, failed to complete his father's Volume II, perhaps because of Camillo Sitte's very personal style.

A huge historical project also left unfinished - composing an encyclopedia of art history. Sitte viewed city planning as only a part of a great totality of the arts, "Gesamthunstwerk" (This approach probably stemmed from his admiration for Wagner). The encyclopedia was to examine art in philosophical, psychological and physiological terms and investigate pre-historic origins.

### 3 A- Summary of "City Planning according to Artistic Principles"

The following are the core of what is dealt with in each chapter of Sitte's book.

#### Introduction

There is a strong influence a physical setting has on the human soul, and, as Aristotle would say, a city must be designed to make its people *secure* and *happy*.

Concepts of Antiquity on "public open space" (the Forum or marketplace, most importantly) are to be examined, as well as city plans and monument positionings of the Renaissance and Baroque, and Greek and Roman concepts that are detected in Renaissance planning. Mainly, these are the emphasis (that Vitruvius also ardently places) on the Forum as space closed by architecture, in other words



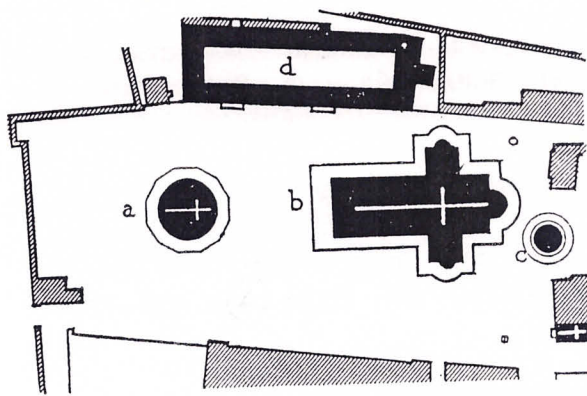


Fig. 5. Pisa: Piazza del Duomo. a. Baptistery.—b. Cathedral.—c. Leaning Tower.—d. Campo Santo

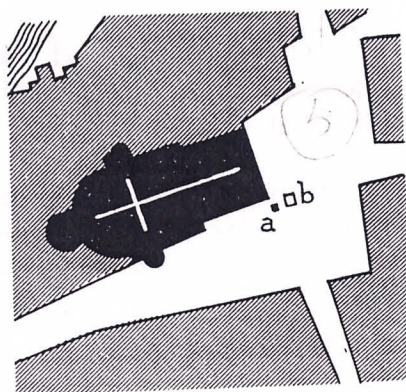


Fig. 8. Padua: Piazza del Santo. a. Column.—b. Statue of Gattamelata

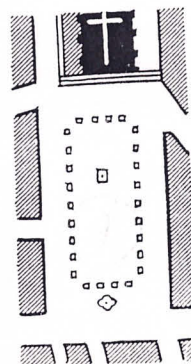


Fig. 28. Florence: S. Croce

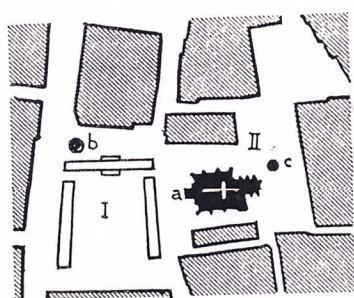


Fig. 6. Nuremberg: I. Market place (fruit market).—II. Square of Our Lady.—a. Marienkirche.—b. Der schöne Brunnen.—c. Gänsemännchen Fountain

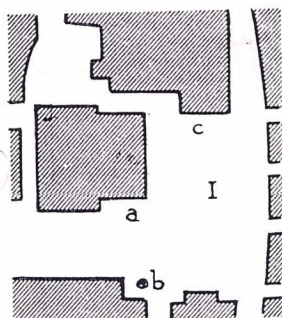


Fig. 7. Rothenburg ob der Tauber: I. Market place.—a. Rathaus.—b. Fountain.—c. Ratsherrn-Trinkstube

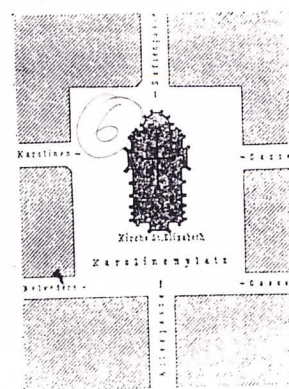
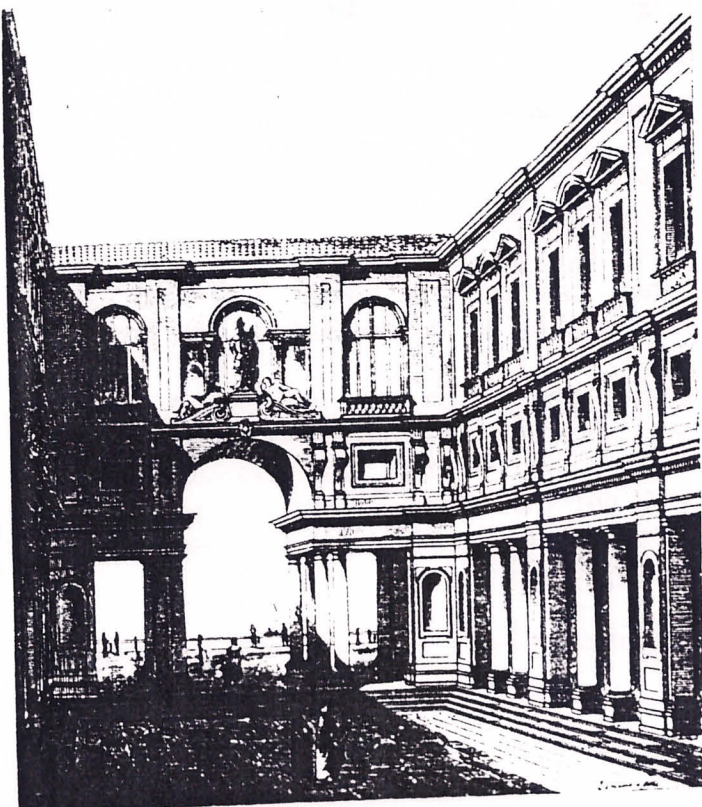


Fig. 20. Vienna: Karolinenplatz



V.b. Florence. Portico degli Uffizi

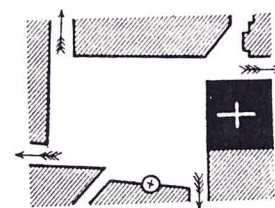


Fig. 22. Ravenna: Piazza del Duomo

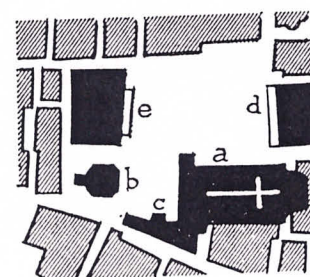


Fig. 23. Pistoia: Piazza del Duomo. a. Cathedral.—b. Baptistery.—c. Bishop's Palace.—d. Palazzo del Comune.—e. Palazzo del Podesta



enclosed by public buildings, screened with colonnades, and the openings of streets restricted with gates, arches and such. Seclusion and the defining of an open space as an entity are the guiding thoughts here. Examples of this are to be seen in cities like Athens, Olympia, Rome and Pompeii.

#### Chapter 1- The Relationship between Buildings and Plazas

South European and Italian traditions of the plaza have links with the old forum, such as the function of communal activities and public life that takes place there. The social life and the pictorial charms of art in large scale in historical plazas are to be praised. Florence (the Mercato, the Signoria and the Loggia dei Lanzi), Pisa and Asisi are just a few places to experience this.

The sculptural decoration of plazas has been abandoned in modern times for empty squares and the habit of decorating only the buildings around. As in the example Michelangelo's statue of David in Florence, the tradition used to be followed of placing a statue against neutral backgrounds like the fronts of walls in order to emphasize the statue's effect. As David was moved to an itself magnificent open place, it lost the power it commanded before.

#### Chapter 2- That the Centers of Plazas be kept Free

The creations of children at play, for instance when building a snowman, resembles primitive tribal art. It is somewhat instinctual; they choose the same spots as old monuments' placing, undisturbed by the traffic of vehicles.

Never does a fountain or monument stand in the geometric center of a plaza; Nuremberg, Rothenburg, Padua and Florence plazas demonstrate this tendency. The buildings don't usually stand central either and churches never stand freely apart from exceptions. Our modern attitude is exactly the opposite; when a building is put in the center, its effect is no more concentrated but scattered. Organic integration with the site is not possible. Moreover, expensive facade decoration comes into the picture. And to think that this is done all over the world! Sitte feels dismay at the rejection of old arrangements.

#### Chapter 3- That Public Squares should be Enclosed Entities

Modern city planners are unaware of the intentional closing off of plazas from leading streets. Today's fashion of streets intersecting at right angles makes each block look isolated, preventing a totality of effect. But older plazas usually have streets entering at an angle to the line of sight, so that buildings at the openings overlap and close the gap of the street. Intermediate alleys help the same result by narrowing down toward the plaza; examples are found at Ravenna and Pistoia. Vaulted portals are used as backdrops, closing off unwanted segregating effects but allowing traffic to pass, as in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. Colonnades are used for closing, too, like in St. Peter's square, Rome.

#### Chapter 4- The Size and Shape of Plazas

According to the position and sight direction of the spectator, there are two main categories of plazas: the *deep* and the *wide*. Deep plazas are successful only when the dominating structure at the end has similarly tall proportions. Squares in front of broad structures like town halls should also be broad. The height of a building is the minimum dimension for a plaza. Size should be in scale between the dominating building and its plaza; too large or too small plazas look awkward. But an interesting point is, the size effect doesn't increase at the same rate as a plaza's, after a certain dimension. Human perception cannot keep up, becomes static. The same rule in music applies, after 400 voices, sound cannot be intensified any further. Further rules on this subject are that the main squares in big cities are larger than those of smaller towns; that in a city, a number of squares have primacy (sizewise) the rest are less conspicuous. Concerning the width proportion of streets, huge plazas are needed to compensate for the wide boulevards of today. Lastly on this chapter, Sitte acknowledges the existence of agoraphobia, a state that many people find themselves in, in gigantic plazas.

## Chapter 5 - Irregularities of Old Plazas

He thinks that irregularities don't have an unpleasant effect but they enhance naturalism. He says that plazas have effect on memory; they are remembered on if they have regularities and are straight-lined. More statues and monuments can fit in more various ways with respect to the fact that one can see three sides of a plaza at once. According to him strict symmetry and geometric exactness are unneeded for the creation of pictorial and architectonic effects, although this is now the rage.

Antiquity's concept of symmetry was different; Vitruvius describes as "the proper agreement between members of a work with each other and the whole scheme with a certain part chosen as standart". "Proportion", a releasing quality based on feeling, is interchangeably used; also survived through Medieval Age.

An identity of right and left (modern "symmetry") began to form with real architectural drawings of the Gothic; the

Renaissance shared the same view" developed to estate when Bavarian building regulations held symmetry equivalent to morality. Sitte says that the only irregularities in modern design are mainly triangular places but

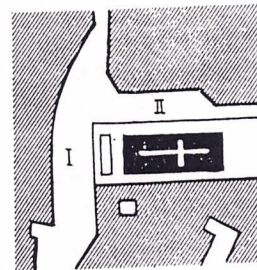


Fig. 31. Syracuse.  
I. Piazza del Duomo.—  
II. Piazza Minerva



Fig. 33. Palermo:  
Piazza S. Francesco

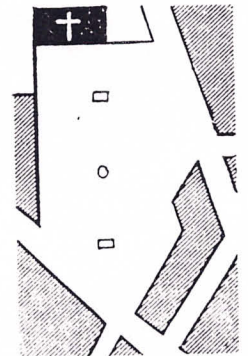


Fig. 35. Florence:  
Piazza S. Maria  
Novella



Fig. 36.  
Siena:  
S. Pietro alle  
Scale



Fig. 37.  
Siena:  
S. Vigilio

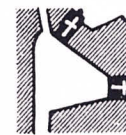


Fig. 38.  
Siena: Via  
dell'Abbadia



Fig. 39.  
Siena:  
S. Maria di  
Provenzano

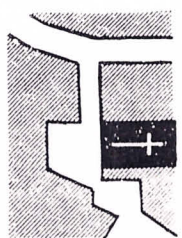


Fig. 40.  
Genoa: S. Siro



they are unattractive due to the awkward intersection.

## Chapter 6 - Plaza Groupings

The grouping of plazas is related to the enclosed character of plazas, and attaching other buildings to churches or palaces. Plazas give the impression of having been created by adjacent building façades; the Signoria in Florence is a remarkable example. It is important to have economical skill of producing great artworks with limited technology, and extracting maximum advantage from monumental buildings. However, it is not suitable at all to modern system because of principle of setting buildings free today.

Enchanting effects are attained, as in Florence, Venice and S. Marco; by means of the sea, monumental structures, sculptural decoration, polychromy, etc., and there is also an effect in walking from one plaza to another. Many variations of photography views, are hardly available in the contemporary squares, which lack all the spiritual meaning.

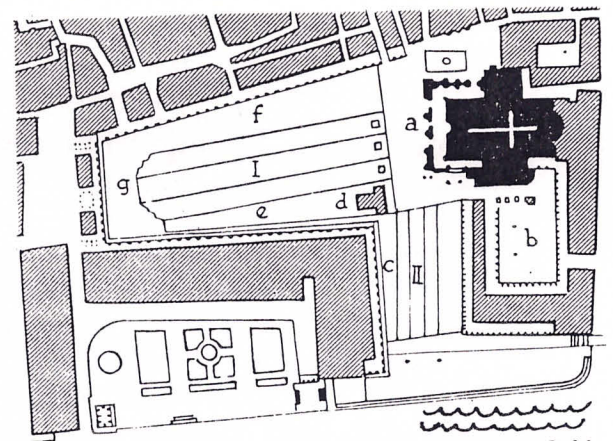


Fig. 46. Venice. I. Piazza S. Marco.—II. Piazzetta.—a. S. Marco (1073—).—b. Doge's Palace (1309—).—c. Library (1536–82).—d. Campanile (888—).—e. New Procuratie (1584–1640).—f. Old Procuratie (1840–1517).—g. Napoleonic Wing (1810)

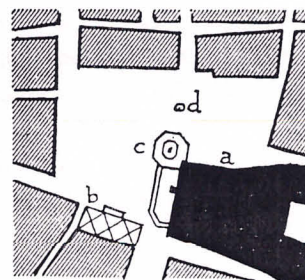


Fig. 27. Florence: The Signoria.—a. Palazzo Vecchio.—b. Loggia dei Lanzi.—c. Fountain of Neptune.—d. Statue of Cosimo I

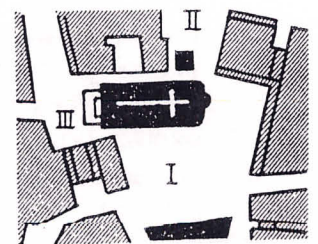


Fig. 41. Modena. I. Piazza Grande (Maggiore).—II. Piazza della Torre.—III. Piazza della Legna (Piazzale Duomo)

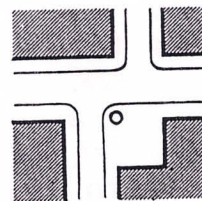


Fig. 49

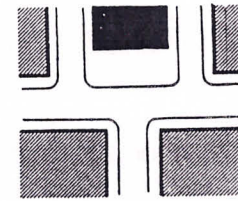


Fig. 50

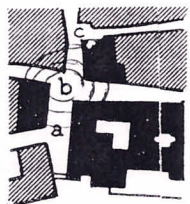


Fig. 51. Geneva

## Chapter 7A - Streets

In old cities, growth is in degrees, being very gradual (apart from Roman camps); cities are impeded by fortification walls; having few arteries, to each side of the main roads, narrow alleys lead out with less intense traffic; since blocks were larger in comparison with streets, space was left for inner courtyards, which were not usually infectious pits but actually nice gardens. All of these contributed to esthetic character and enclosure.



Enclosure, and winding streets have practical reasons of adapting to terrain and respecting existing structures. Streets have never emerged at acute angles in order to avoid inconvenient corner house plans and to preserve square characters. Interrupting a vista by displacing the street axis, splitting street in order to avoid bad effect of sloping ridges, are good methods for preventing wind from sweeping, as well; Bruges is a good example for that.

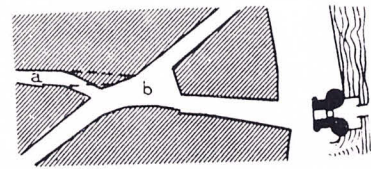


Fig. 48. Bruges

A street does not usually cut through, but runs beside a plaza; because of curves, towers draw attention by sudden appearance. Widening at places, contrary to today's belief of parallelism of street sides being best expressions of beauty; has functions like carriage stops and kiork pockets, which is a problem today.

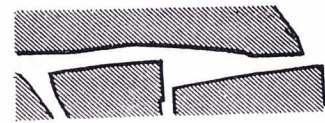


Fig. 53. Bruges: Rue Saint Amand

Renaissance artists went back to the Roman idea of straight, correct and classic streets; they have monumental and imposing effect and are necessary today. The problem is their ignoring of the local circumstances.

#### Chapter 7B - Public Squares In North Europe

We cannot surround a forum with many churches like the polytheistic Romans! Northern system of "roofed hall" structure, with many windowed façade is a determining factor. Greatest difference in church plazas is that the church stands free in the middle of the plazas (characteristic of larger towns); former existence of a cemetery is no more there. When this need disappeared, so did the isolation.

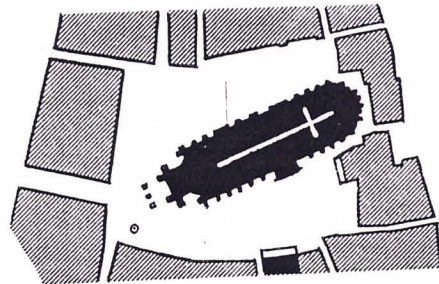


Fig. 54. Freiburg i. B.: Cathedral

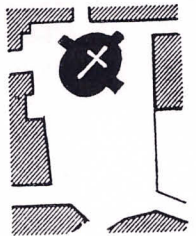


Fig. 58. Frankfurt a. M. Church of St. Paul in its square

Renaissance and Baroque return to partial placement. It is typical isolation of the Gothic, but with even that, only the front side has larger space. View of façade, grandiose, desirable to see this from greater distance, by broad streets that lead directly to the side view of a Gothic church needs exact opposite treatment - unbalanced format, and



BRUSSELS Rue de la Régence.



therefore the motion feeling. The notion that monumental buildings must be attached to others prevail in the North. Using three sides of a church to create three plazas is adopted from the Italian tradition.

Artists worked on plazas independently, but always judging and arranging at the spot of actual effect. On the other hand, one never actually sees the plazas self on the drafting board. The trademark of modernity is the "manufactured product", able to fit anywhere, without any regard for organic relations to surroundings. Old masters could also crowd so many features into a single plaza.

Model of Ancient Rome - oldest German building complex to copy is Cathedral of Hildesheim - Bishop B. Von Hildesheim took artists on Italian trips to make drawings. Although this model faded more and from memory, element of perspective was decisive for artistic development.

Three sided forecourts (earliest example is Palazzo Pitti, Florence), garden panquets, vistas, panoramic views, beauty of layout and grouping in plazas surpass individual buildings' and monuments' value.

The Baroque showed itself in large palace structures. It differed from all other periods in that, the layout did not develop slowly, but thought as one piece on drafting board - this manner of design is not to be condemned, just the ruler and geometric system. Baroque plans were well, and were thought according to eventual appearance, with the idea of theatrical perspective.

Today, large building complexes seem to have always a large courtyard in the middle, and two smaller on the sides, and as if large one belongs to building to form cubic city-block, predetermined by city plan. In Baroque, instead, a large courtyard would open up and be incongruated into the city scape. The cliché of modern city planing prevents magnifique water pieces from being seen, a shame.

## Chapter 8 - Unimaginative Character of Modern City Plans

History of city planing has diverged from history of architecture and other arts; exact imitation of Ancient structures without real need or purpose, but no mention at all of plazas and streets. Modern city planner is deprived of all resources of the

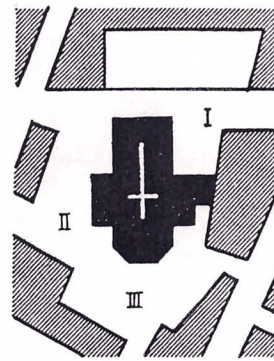


Fig. 62. Schwerin: Cathedral

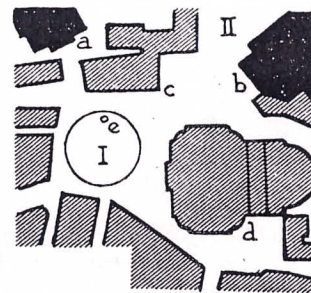


Fig. 71. Bremen. I. Market place. II. Cathedral square.—a. Frauenkirche.—b. Cathedral.—c. Rathaus. d. Bourse.—e. Roland Statue

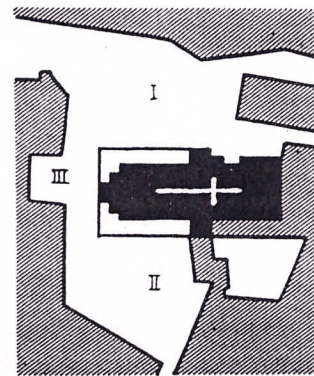


Fig. 75. Hildesheim. I. Major Cathedral courtyard.—II. Minor Cathedral courtyard

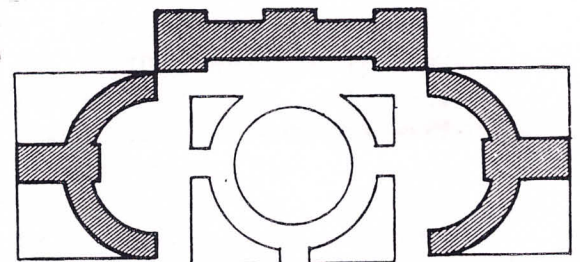


Fig. 76. Coblenz: Palace



past, except straight house line and city-block, while architecture is allowed everything. How to produce the effect of an old plaza is forgotten because of obsession with placement of monument structure in the middle of plaza, and with right-angle intersection.

Baumeister says, there are no universal rules for pleasing architecture impression, but Sitte offers, especially from Baroque masters, a whole textbook of rules; no excitement in straight lines, but Baroque uses them too without bad result; thus closure is attained. Ancient arcades run with uninterrupted continuity that's needed for large enough unity for an impact.

In modern planning, each loggia is attached to own building, and broad streets cut across; the ratio between built-up and open space is reversed. Before, open spaces were carefully calculated; now, they are what's leftover. Baumeister stated the principle of parceling. But architectural unit is afraid of irregular lot. More interesting solution, and wedge-shaped spaces for extra rooms and services. Formerly, irregularity in open space used to be absorbed and hidden by surrounding thing, just like the thickness of walls in an irregular room can vary to account.

Two kind of irregularity exists; obvious kind ( modern, ex: Trieste ), and the kind that deceives the eye. With Romanesque, Gothic and also Acients, mistakes in measurement are plenty, but have little importance, because the eye does not notice. It is senseless to avoid protusions and recessions in frontage and conformity of horizontal termination of building heights, which does not give much for visual effect.

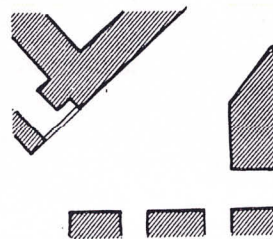


Fig. 78. Trieste: Piazza della Caserma (Guglielmo Oberdan)

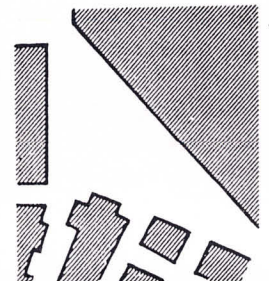


Fig. 80. Trieste: Piazza della Borsa

## Chapter 9 - Modern Systems

There are three major patterns of modern urbanism; the grid-iron, the radial and the triangular. These strictly methodical approaches are concerned solely with street patterns. But a network of streets can not be comprehended as a whole; only what can be seen is important. A pattern should never be applied so brutally, and beautiful streets can be created if sometimes the compass is set aside. A compromise is necessary between art and traffic considerations. And the two are not always contrary to each other.

The grid plan is the most frequently applied, having the disadvantages of street crossings because the paths of vehicles intersect and of pedestrians pleasant stroll is constantly interrupted to look for cross traffic. The safety

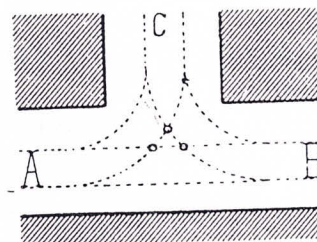


Fig. 82. Traffic pattern: intersecting streets

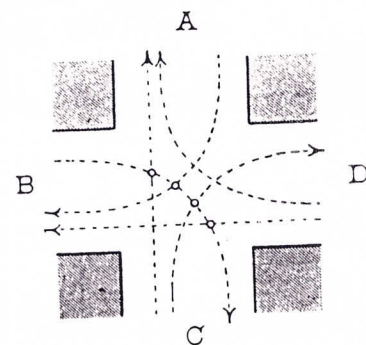


Fig. 83. Traffic pattern: crossing streets

island is a great original invention. Hazardous plans are formed when several streets intersect, because these traffic junctions are also junctions of all lines of sight and all sense of orientation is totally lost. We find ourselves looking for street names to find our bearing.

The ruthless carving out of a plaza from a web of crooked streets and broad circumvallating boulevards that developed from abandoned fortifications were also fads in modern cities. But the avenue as an old and independent form is proof that modern city planning can have artistically effective Baroque's spirited features too. The bad effect begins when gigantic streets without pedestrians become dominant and crowds congest into narrow alleyways.

The question of putting trees in the right spots comes up when towards the center of the city, a naturalistic landscape becomes unsuitable for idealistic monumental structures. The Baroque, aware of this, developed parks with trimmed trees. It is also important that trees don't obstruct the line of sight. Trees are left without proper places, just like monuments, in the modern building block. Only old

interior courtyards maintain pleasant environment.

Trees should not be planted in open spaces and be exposed to winds, dust and harmful effects, but be built in like the former private gardens of palaces.

Modern city planning follows the opposite tendency of old space enclosure: dissection of the city into separate blocks- building block, plaza block, garden block causes

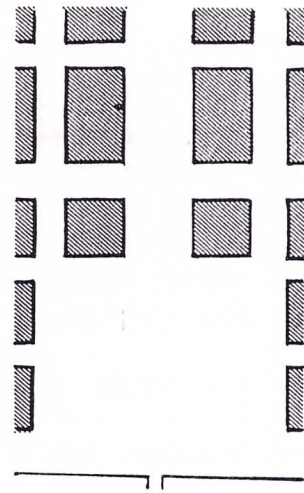


Fig. 81. Lyons: Place Morand

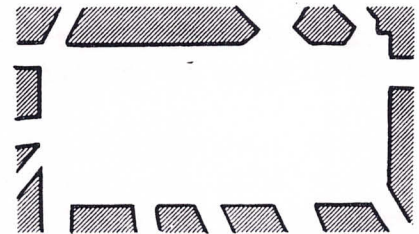


Fig. 89. Marseilles: Place Juan Juarès  
(formerly Place St. Michel)

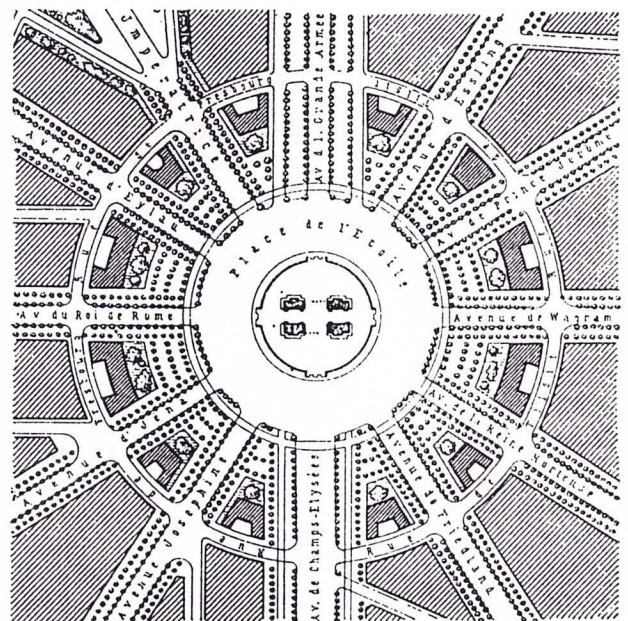


Fig. 88. Paris: Place de l'Étoile



the desire to see every monument in the center. There, a mathematical striving for maximum frontage line is provided by trees. The best geometric shape for this is the circle. The best placement for maximum placement of circles together but without excess space is reached with straight streets inbetween; like the honeycomb hexagon model. Such an appalling crazy systematicness is actually realised, ie in Chicago. The coziness of old towns is unfortunately lost.

## Chapter 10- Artistic Limitations of Modern City Planning

It is an inevitable fact of modern life that the life of the common people, including marketing, art events, infrastructure provisions has been withdrawing from public squares into private homes, which leads to a lesser feeling of sharing as citizens.

With huge populations, real estate values increase highly and regular parcelling of lots can't be avoided, and this is how aesthetic considerations have to be sacrificed; no extra space for architectural ornamentation.

We must nevertheless try to retain efforts for artistic perfection also because they are what affect the great masses of citizens, who cannot afford expensive cultural entertainment.

## Chapter 11- Improvements in the Modern System

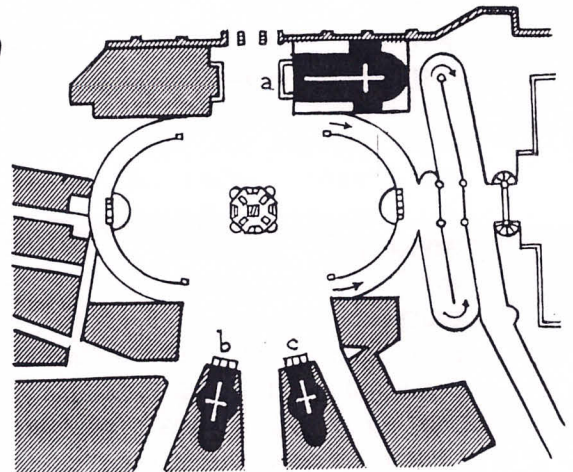
As usual, we see the confrontation between plazas and the block system, in the example of Paris which stayed mostly Baroque and possessed all the problems of vast dimensions, and of Rome, which was a metropolitan center was designed for civic use by large populations from early on, and at a period of artistic excellence at the same time. Copying of the hippodrome and amphitheatre in circus-shaped plazas is discussed.

Gottfried Semper's proposal for Dresden's Zwinger Platz was unsuccessful but a similar project was applied in Vienna's Hofburg Area Imperial Forums, showing that it was possible to achieve great beautiful things despite the unfavorable current trends. Vienna was a lucky city in this respect, with her examples like Haydn monument and Platz am Hof.

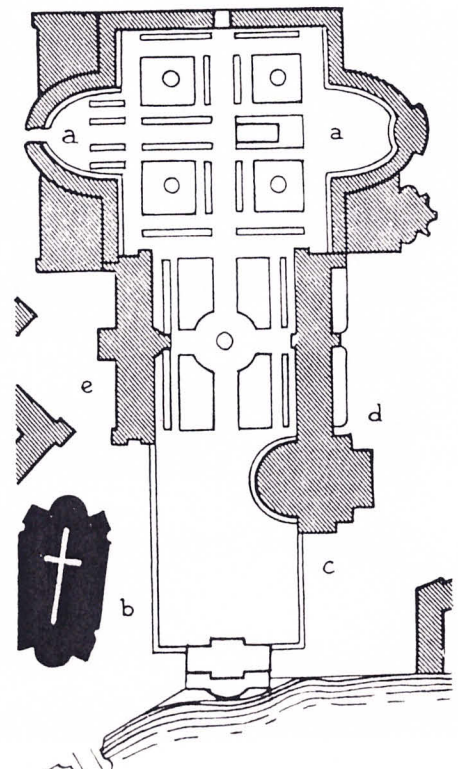
① Fig. 92. Rome: Piazza del Popolo.—a. S. Maria del Popolo.—b. S. Maria dei Miracoli.—c. S. Maria del Monte Santo

② Fig. 95. Dresden: Gottfried Semper's plan for completing the open side of the Zwinger Palace.—a-a. Zwinger.—b. Hofkirche.—c. Royal Theatre.—d. Orangerie.—e. Museum

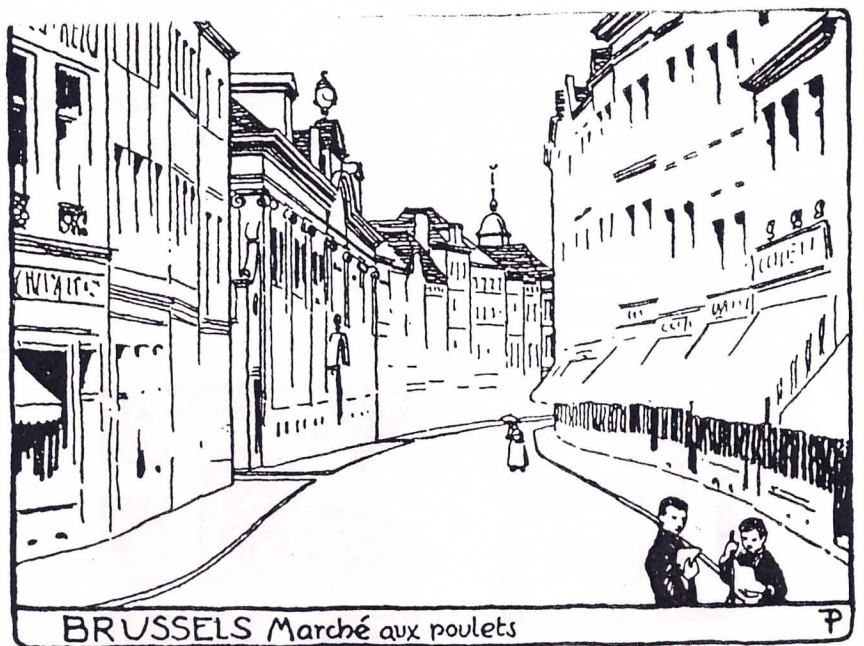
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②







BRUSSELS Marché aux poulets

The Associated German Architects' and Engineers' Society's traffic stressing regulation had one good side that existing roads would be respected. It was realised that official committees are no good at city plans but the individual artists. The role of chance and absence of premeditation produced good results, something to be learned from. But since we can't count on instinctive art any more, and must use some theoretical formulae derived from products of chance.

The lack of programs is a reason for advance parcelling. The division of North America into 50 states is the very largest example of this. A real program is needed with future population estimation and social infrastructure, preceding the amount, size and form of public building groupings to be built.

Planning would always start to tend to the block system, so constant artistic supervision is required, with competitions for public buildings and individual plazas. Investment in artistry can support local pride and maybe tourism, too.

The physiology of vision demands that the eye is at the center of perimeter of the sight field, so the façade that is looked at must be concave. The straight block façades must be skillfully modified whenever possible.

Three facts create the hope for the potential for future development: of Vienna:

- 1- Large areas left completely unbuilt
- 2- The plan resembles Paris', whose Baroque character gives spaciousness.
- 3- Work began with the least important parts and monumental projects like the Hofburg were left to the end.

### 3. B- Sitte's Views and Procedures

\*Benevolo and Collins

Sitte discussed the modern city, and his discussion was limited to so-called "artistic" field, i.e. to outward aesthetic standards to be observed in centres of civic prestige and residential quarters.

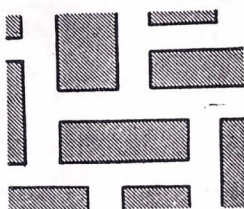


Fig. 109. Modified rectangular layout of city blocks (Sitte)

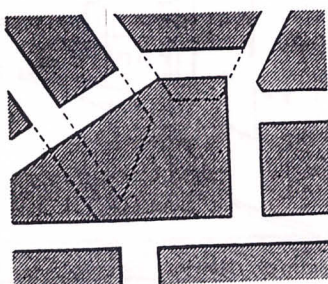


Fig. 111. Method of eliminating an awkward plaza (Sitte)

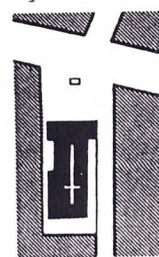


Fig. 96. Vienna: Haydn Monument in front of the Mariahilf church

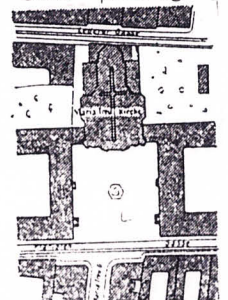


Fig. 104. Vienna: Piaristen church and its square

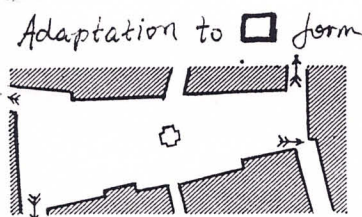


Fig. 107. Vienna: Neuer Markt, as a turbine-plaza

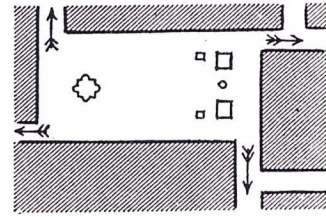
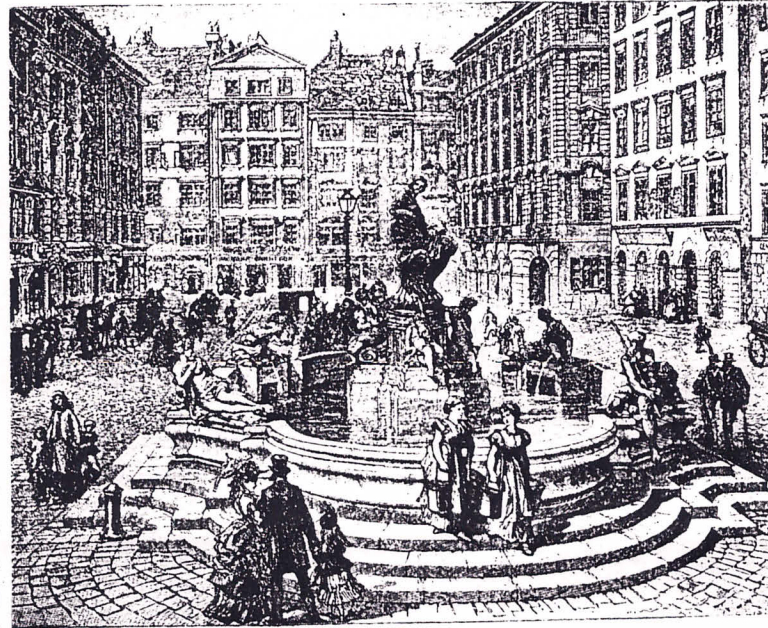


Fig. 108. Suggested modern plaza of similar design (Sitte)



VIII-a. Vienna: Neuer Markt



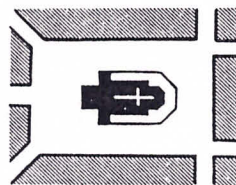


Fig. 98. Normal site  
for a church  
(Baumeister)

Baumeister's rigid plans.

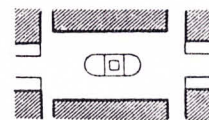


Fig. 100. Typical plaza  
with monument  
(Baumeister)

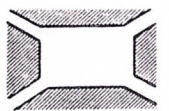


Fig. 101.  
Typical plaza  
(Baumeister)

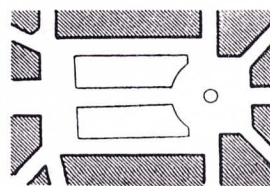


Fig. 99. A typical plaza with  
a monument (Baumeister)

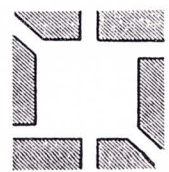


Fig. 102. Typical plaza  
(Baumeister)

He contrasted past with present, but instead of entirely rejecting the modern city on general theoretical grounds, provided a reasoned analysis of its single faults and managed to suggest some practical remedies, to re-establish in the modern city at least some of the values he so admired in the old ones;

- Spaces that were inflexible or too large could be suitably sub-divided to create clearly defined complexes of buildings.
- Ill-defined forms could be replaced by more enclosed ones.
- Symmetry could be mitigated by partial symmetry.
- Monuments could be moved from the geometrical centers of squares to less obvious spots.

Sitte's theoretical convictions were somewhat limited. For him, art and utility were mutually exclusive and he regarded the recent town-planning experiments of the 19th century as being concerned only with technical matters, which he considered as "being at odds with art". He was largely responsible for the concept of the "town beautiful" which has long weighed on town-planning thought, deflecting serious thought away from really basic problems.

His book is mainly aimed to tell that "go to school with Nature and the old masters in town planning" (Collins, 1965). Nature meant also natural features of the city/environment of man as social and artistic being. Sitte says that extracting the universal abstract principles or the reduction of urban environment to essentials beyond periods / styles are equally applicable to modernity.

He was fascinated with perspective, but preferred limited picture-like (malerisch) panorama, with "closed architectonic effect" ,what the spectator sees at a glance.

One could truly say that Sitte's book had given city planning a new orientation:

- Profound revolution- city was a work of architecture (as well as of art),with its three dimensions; means no more flat surveys.
- This was also a bit personal: continuity of fabric, spatial unity and intactness; no loose of elements, no loose of spaces.
- Streets should be screened off from plazas.
- Planted squares and parks should be uniformly and distantly distributed for sequential patterns. In Raumkunst, for example, greens are also designed in harmony with buildings, like an architectural apparatus.
- It is not comfortable to be "on axis" or "in the center". Sitte had a phobia of large open squares.

Sitte provoked an argument which is still valid; the participation of artists in matters of city layout.

As one reads the pages of Sitte's book the question ever arises as to whether Sitte's percepts still hold true for the people of today. He wrote when there was no experience of the high speed of airplanes or the towering city-silhouette of skyscrapers. It is not clear, however, whether these extended dimensions of our century have actually invalidated his point of view.



### 3 C- Contemporary Figures of Sitte

German city planning can be said to owe its early glory to the efforts of three men: Reinhard Baumeister, Joseph Stübben, and Camillo Sitte. Sitte looked at city planning as a mission the most; a trait that became clearer in 20th century with B. Taut, Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright.

R. Baumeister (1833-1917) is considered to be the first to insist that city planning was a function of vehicular traffic. He was a pioneer in zoning, especially its legal framework. In his work he also emphasized housing problems and matters of public hygiene. Although Sitte wrote quite advertisely about Baumeister's aesthetic proposals, Baumeister did stress artistic considerations in his book *Stadterweiterung* of 1876, and Sitte took over a number of his ideas. For instance the gridiron, radial and triangular categorizing of planning which Sitte used in his book is right out of Baumeister. But Baumeister had also criticized the universal use of rectangular systems, had suggested that one look back at the character of the ancient squares and the picturesqueness of the medieval streets. He recommended that streets be curved for aesthetic effect, and he stressed the importance of the shape and "walls" of public squares.

Although Joseph Stübben (1845-1936) had treated some of the same artistic problems of the city several years before Sitte's book appeared, Sitte had paid no attention to his articles, because Stübben's architectural comments and aesthetic critiques always seem platitudinous and hyckneyed in comparison with Sitte's insights. Unlike Sitte, he made little use of the study of the towns of the past.

One other important figure of the day who applied himself to practical problems of urban aesthetics, that is to say, to the architectural side of city planning is Burgomaster Charles Bulfinch. Although his book *Esthétique des Villes* is in style, organization, and sentiment remarkably like Sitte, it at no point shows any direct influence of Sitte's writing of four years earlier.

### 3 D- Influences on Sitte's theories

Ancient, medieval and Renaissance writings on the city are Sitte's main sources of inspirations. To name two important figures, one recalls Aristotle, and good old Vitruvius, many of whose comments were cited in Sitte's book, like criticizing too much of symmetry, and thoughts on wind directions. Alberti played a role with his idea that winding streets added to town's beauty, although he suggested straight and broad streets for large cities, and squares at street intersections.

But none before had as much of Sitte's delicate balance between aesthetic and practical, though. Sitte also differed in his use of classical references for solving current problems and not just as symbols. Another reason for the popularity of his book is the way he illustrates each point clearly, with visual support from plans of European cities. The graphic over-simplification and self-observed actuality poses a

striking feature, although his use of exclusively self-observed actuality causes a little blindness. Sitte used a lot of foreign material, rather than Vienna's own possibilities. He patterned examples on the existent morphology of his observed cities, but also on any indiscriminate scene of beauty. It is a mistake to see him as a strict Medievalist.

### 3. Influences of Sitte's theories

#### 1- In Germany

A remarkable thing about the influence of Sitte's book on the building of the cities is the rapidity with which it took hold in Germany and Austria.

Many municipalities had completely redrawn their plans for new city sections on the basis of Sitte's theories. Ludwigshafen and Altona were cases in point.

More important plans were actually made by followers than Sitte himself. Chief among these in the decade of the 1890's were Karl Henrici (1842-1922), a contemporary of Sitte, and Theodor Fischer (1862-1938), a member of the younger generation. Both of these men did much to propagate Sitte's ideas among succeeding generations of German architects and planners. Henrici (already an architect on his own right) was turned into a city planner by the reading of Sitte's book. He became one of Sitte's most vocal exponents, though later he was much criticized for having over-emphasized the romantic, picturesque, and medieval aspects which were characteristics of the Sittesque school. Fischer served as a bridge between Sitte and the progressive architects of the 20th century. He held unqualified admiration for Sitte, whom he considered to be "*the father of modern city planning*".

Following the publication of Sitte's book, German city planning can be divided into several tendencies:

- There remained a number of individuals who were so involved with pressing problems such as traffic and rapid transit, housing conditions, legal technicalities, and statistical surveys, that Sitte meant nothing to them.
- There were a number of planners who, like Henrici, can be designated as the "*Sittesque school*" or as exponents of the "*Sittesche Stil*". German planning of the day was nearly always informal even when designed by Sitte's opponents; later writers referred to this as the "*romantic period*" of city planning.
- There were those who were active primarily as writers—either architectural historians or city-planning reporters. The writings of some of these individuals carried so much weight that they have actually done more to shape our later image of Sitte than have his own book and the city plans by his followers.

#### 2- Abroad

Sitte took most of his illustrative material from irregular Gothic plans, but he acknowledged the fine quality of the Baroque work. In practice, however, the



designers of the Sitte school ignored the Baroque and developed a version of medieval planning, thought it is a very marked stylistic version that cannot for a moment be mistaken for its prototype. The streets are nearly straight, but they are not entirely straight either. They slight bends which occur at fairly close intervals. They are curved or bend to produce a concave façade or to close a vista. Two streets rarely cross each other, and where they come together, there is typically a little offset widening of one, or a little corner plaza, room for a tree or a fountain. The larger squares are not very large and are always irregular, with perhaps a church enclosing one corner and a statue in another, with a few small trees around it. At every opportunity there are steps, archways, terraces, low retaining walls, little rows of trees. The houses are quaintly, the public buildings austere, picturesque, and always very roofy.

Sitte made two important contributions to the town planning thought of his time:

a- By reviving interest in old towns he halted the unfortunate habit of isolating them, he provided the premises for the preservation of whole complexes, if not of whole districts, and put an important psychological barrier in the way of indiscriminate demolition of the kind carried out by Hausmann.

b- With his oversimplified formal suggestions, he offered architects a train of thought that would inevitably lead them to consider the basic problems of modern town planning; Sitte tackled problems from the outside, but by attempting to give a potential concrete reality to the comparison between the old and the new town by proposing a study of instructive cases and by suggesting a method of intervention, he was helping to bridge the gap between theory and practice, and inspired a series of experiments which were to lead to the transcending of the theory itself, by working from visible facts towards non-visible causes.

In discussing the influence of Sitte and the German city planning movement on other countries, there are several points to be considered. German city planning, when other nations became aware of it, came as a package, as a whole body of municipal matters of which Sitte was only one component. The entire 'package' was received abroad fairly late, and certain of the arguments had by then resolved themselves. The French had available their own edition of Sitte by 1902, but the English seem to have been unaware of these aesthetic developments in Germany until after Horsfall's report of 1904. The United States awakened to it even later. In England and United States students of municipal reform visited the Continent during the 1890's and made reports that emphasized the technical and administrative excellence of German cities. The American audience was not prepared to discuss the artistic implications of building cities. Literature contained scattered passages from German city planners (Buls, Stübgen, Baumeister, Sitte, et. Al.), but totally unaware that they had evolved a great body of organized theory.

Otto Wagner's essay on Modern Architecture was made available in English in America and had led to his immediate recognition in the United States, making it harder for Sitte's ideas' reception. An English translation of Sitte was not available, also the French translation had misinterpretations. More often Sitte was diluted through

'summaries' and most of these summaries had limited circulation, but it might be worthwhile to enumerate them:

- 1) First via Stübben; his handbook appeared in 1890, 1907 (containing more of Sitte), and again in 1924.
- 2) More general analyses of the German movement, of strongly Sittesque character, were also prepared. They included the transactions of the aforementioned session on 'Streets and Open Spaces in the City' at the 1906 London Congress. The *Architectural Record* of New York in 1908 printed a translation of Gurlitt's short history of German planning, and the same translator Sylvester Baxter, also made available a lecture by Theodor Fischer that focused on Sitte.
- 3) In 1922, Hegmann and Peets published *Civic Art* and a new era began. Its first chapter, "The Modern Revival of Civic Art", is a summary of Sitte's book, with the most complete presentation of his ideas until the translation of 1945. Hegmann and Peets could see that the American profession needed the corrective of European travel sketches, European tradition and historical perspective. According to them, 'Modern civic art can learn most from a study of the achievements of the 17th and 18th centuries, which in turn were deeply influenced by classic antiquity.'

It is noticed that Sitte was open to quite contradictory interpretations by his followers. Hegmann and Peets, between them, focus our attention on an old disagreement: was Sitte primarily a Romantic medievalist or an admirer of the Baroque ?

- 4) The periodical *Der Städtebau* became a very important source from 1904 on, and probably received more attention than Sitte's book itself.
- 5) The last important summary of Sitte before the American edition of 1945, was that of Eliel Saarinen; a Sitte follower in the most fundamental sense. He searched behind Sitte's statements and 'rules' for his underlying philosophy and his basic understanding of principles. His 1943 book about the city summarizes Sitte's contribution aptly and comforts him interestingly with Baron Hausmann. The quintessence of Sitte was to Saarinen: 1- an emphasis on the informal nature of classical and medieval town building; 2- an emphasis on the coherent organism of the town, achieved through proper correlation of building units; 3- a stress on the function of plazas and streets as organic, spatial enclosures.

Sitte's influence felt in how the internationalism formed from merging of indigenous movements. New, widely circulated periodicals were sounding boards for divergent views. The motivating spirits were men like Patrick Geddes - whose Outlook Tower that surveyed the world-scene represented better the new state of mind than did Sitte's Holländer Turm.

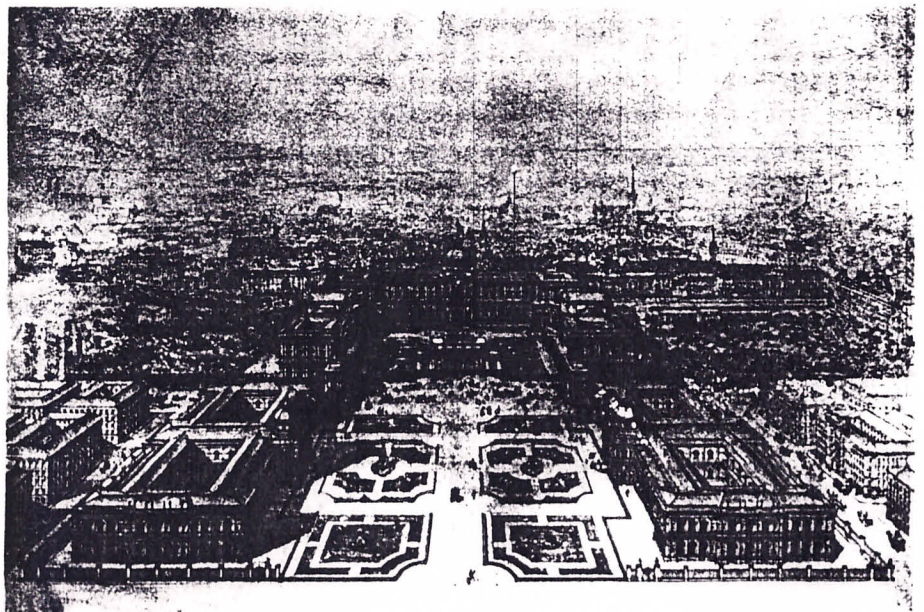
The important conclaves are:

- 1) The first Congress of Public Art, in Brussels in 1898. *Municipal Affairs* of New York in that year reprinted text and pictures from the reports of the Congress.





XXIV-a. Vienna: The Ringstrasse in Sitte's time. *Left to right:* Parliament, Rathaus, Votive Church, University, Burgtheater; Volksgarten in right foreground



XXI-b. Vienna: Semper's first design for the New Hofburg forum (1869)



- 2) Cities Exhibition at Dresden in 1903 was the next significant event. City plans shown were largely Sittesque in character. In 1904 appeared Sitte's magazine *Der Städtebau*, the first periodical devoted exclusively to problems of city planning.
- 3) The next event of consequence to the German profession was the opening of the Berlin-Charlottenburg Seminar on City Planning, with great scope (1908-1920). The *Town Planning Review* commenced publication at the University of Liverpool in 1910. During that year important articles appeared in it on the transformation of Vienna and on German Garden Cities.
- 4) In Berlin and Düsseldorf there was held in May-June of 1910 the Universal City-Building Exhibition, whose *leit-motif* was the Greater-Berlin planning competition. Numerous projects by Sitte and his followers were shown, and the Greater-Berlin prize was captured by his disciple, Hermann Jansen.
- 5) The international competition for Canberra, which was to electrify the profession, grew out of a conference held at London in 1910's October. Brinckmann and Stübgen were among the Germans who delivered papers, Brinckmann castigating the resent 'romantic' style of German planning and praising the American Burnham's new-found 'French' spirit.
- 6) The sessions on city planning at the International Congress of Architects during the decade 1900-1910 were also crucial. At Vienna in 1908 Otto Wagner was in charge, and Sitte's grave was honored in a special ceremony.
- 7) In 1913 at Ghent, the first International Congress and Comparative Exhibition of Cities occurred - with speakers from Latin America included. The preponderance of German theory was not so noticeable, although Stübgen gave two papers, citing Sitte in one.
- 8) Germany was even more dislodged, at the Conference on Reconstruction at Brussels in 1919. As this was a function of the International Garden Cities and Town Planning Association, the English pretty much took over.
- 9) Only serious competition for years came from the progressive moderns in the C.I.A.M. meetings, from 1928 on. Actually, after World War 1 these congresses became absorbed with housing and land use problems. Built-in social reform became a basis for theorizing about architecture and city planning now for several decades.

Few additions have been done to the body of aesthetic principles in planning, in the early 20th century. As planning itself expanded to a regional scale, the city and the town began to be considered less important in themselves, and we find an increasing preoccupation with the relation of the urban nucleus to its countryside. There was a good deal of talk about the silhouette of the town as seen in its landscape setting and also about the way in which city fringes merged with the hinterland. Surprisingly, Sitte had not concerned himself with either of these factors.

During these years the English Garden City idea spread, and it proved naturally attractive in Germany, where numerous cities had been for some time expanding in the form of garden suburbs. The idea of a ring of greenery had been suggested for Berlin as early as 1874; however, the Garden City was employed there more as a device for city suburbs than as a philosophy of life. The union of the Garden City theory, then, with Sittesque street layouts was a natural one for Germany. The idea of Garden City received early and sustained propagation in



France, although the French tended to extract mainly its potentialities for suburban growth. The United States absorbed the British Garden-City style without argument.

England also had its 'City Beautiful' phase of artistically oriented planning, growing largely out of the Arts and Crafts movement in her case. One important element which Great Britain contributed at that time but has never been picked up was the cosmic one present in W.R. Lethaby's *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth* of 1891-92. And then there was the venerable British tradition of verdured squares which had been amplified in the mid-nineteenth century by its public parks.

Between 1900 and 1920, city planning became involved with tendencies that at first glance have nothing to do with Sitte or German tradition of city building. There developed a technological mania about future cities, based on transit systems that bear little resemblance to the street networks that so occupied the German and British planners.

The Germans had been concerned with the rather hard-headed practical and aesthetic matters of what is often called the 'city-building' phase of modern planning. And this proved to be the case until after World War I. But immediately following the war, and as part of the German Expressionist idealism of that moment, Bruno Taut produced a series of projects that outdid them all. Taut, a student of Theodor Fischer and an admirer of Sitte, saw the planning of the whole earth itself as a purely artistic task. His group's idea of the *Stadtkrone* (crown to the city) was a characteristic 20th-century out-growth of Sitte's image of the town as a social-architectonic entity.

The scope of Taut's projects indicates to us that by 1920 our conception of architecture and planning had expanded to include interrelationships covering entire regions. Of this there was, little or nothing in Sitte. It drives instead from the tradition of the sociological and ecological surveys instituted by Patrick Geddes.

3. E-Vienna's Planning and relations with Sitte  
\*Collins

Vienna had not gone through serious changes after the 13th century, until Emperor Franz Josef launched his ambitious project. It still possessed, in 1850, the perimeter of fortifications from the time of being the Babenbergs' capital. The reason for its maintenance of its format was that Vienna had been a strongpoint of Western Europe against invasions for centuries, and became a major world capital and commercial center in the 18th century.

Changes in the 19th century did not arise from urban population explosions, but the addition of the Hofburg Court and other royal projects. The new population settling took place beyond city's "placis", in the suburbs, and became much larger than the inner city.

On December 20th, 1857, the imperial decision was to get rid of the fortifications in order to connect the inner city with outer suburbs. Instead of them, a "Ringstrasse"

was to be erected, with arterial connections to the periphery. For this, a competition was held of which the first prize went to L. von Förster, the actual plan to be realised in 1859. Sitte's main interest in all this were the individual buildings.

There were two principal churches of the Ringstrasse: Karlskirche and the Votive Church. Both were out of the inner city limits, thus presented problems of integration with the whole. The Votive Church played a special function, as a Gothic church in a country long used to the Rundbogenstil, and right in the middle of the Industrial Revolution. The Gothic revival actually found its roots both in the Altlerchenfeld Church, and the efforts of archeologists and art historians. Its effects were the establishment of a Viennese tradition of first rate artisanship, a revival of sculptural art that mixed Gothic with Renaissance, architecture with ornamentation seen on the Ringstrasse buildings.

Much comment was stimulated by the Ringstrasse. Eitelberger gave a public lecture in 1858 that stressed the architect's and public buildings' functions in the spiritual essence, and the potential contribution of the Ringstrasse's artistic buildings. This was a historical, nostalgic speech from which Sitte quoted quite a bit. The Austrian Engineers' and Architects' Association published its opinion, also stressing the artistic factors of city planning, comparing city plans from different times for a picture of basic civic beauty. Sitte was most naturally influenced from these. He himself objected to the clumsiness in the handling of space around buildings and the placing of public monuments.

The next event after the Ringstrasse project was the "Imperial Forum" by G.Semper, in the late 1860's, at the site of the royal palace in the Hofburg area. The Ringstrasse would be bisecting it and be screened by arches. The failure to carry it out would be disastrous for Vienna. Sitte hoped for its completion one day. Semper was among the influences on Sitte.

What was termed as "the Second Viennese Renaissance" started in the 1890's, which, ignoring Sitte's warnings, destroyed much of the city's charm in its attempt to improve street connections by turning the fortifications (the Linienwall) into ring boulevards (Gürtelstrassen). Vienna's districts were numbered; treatment was made on River Wien's valley which was bisected into a deep stream bed and a passage for the new railway; the Danube was also worked on to result in the new harbor of the Danube Canal, the now navigable Donau Stream, and the old Danube, near all of which Sitte wanted to rehabilitate for commerce and housing. Otto Wagner and Josef Stübben won the competition for Greater Vienna, and Maederer for the completion of the Ringstrasse, while Sitte had a marginal but active role in planning implementations, which were continued by O.Wagner, who also based his work on visual principles, but a much more "modern" concept of beauty.



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