ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF URBANIST AND ARCHITECT ERNST MAY IN WROCŁAW IN THE YEARS 1919–1925 – A STAGE IN THE PROCESS TOWARDS FUNCTIONAL FRANKFURT

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The housing architecture developed by Ernst May in the years 1919-1925 in Silesia anticipated his famous realizations of functional and modern estates in Frankfurt am Meing, where from mid-1925 he held the post of the city architect2. The Wrocław suburbs and Lower Silesian towns were May’s first large experimental sites, on which he tested the principles of planning settlements and paved the way for typified, functional, healthy and economical housing construction.

May’s professional and ethical attitude was greatly influenced by his apprenticeship in 1910-1911 at the atelier of top English urbanist Sir Raymond Unwin3, during work on the design and construction of the Hampstead Garden Suburb4 project, the plan of which became a catalogue of picturesque solutions, and the published theory of town planning supplied designers throughout Europe with examples how to compose housing estates up until World War II5.

Among the canons of Unwin’s composition were: hierarchization and morphological differentiation of space, an arrangement that is treated holistically with a defined centre, an axis directed at the dominant element, symbolic borders and gateways, and a picturesque layout of streets6 and „closes”7.

Collaboration and friendship with Unwin gave direction to May’s own beliefs, what he particularly stressed, avowing that personal contact with this great figure had made a decisive impact on his own development as a human being and urbanist, not in

1 This article antecedes a book, devoted in greater extent to the professional activity of E. May in the Wrocław period.
6 J. Castex, ... op. cit., p. 55, 57.
7 „Close” is a development of houses around a dead-end street or square. It guarantees to its residents a specific, intimate atmosphere, as already indicated by the name (in English close means: an enclosed place, estate or yard, an alley or narrow way, as well as: sealed, blocked, near). The English close is answered by the French term cul - de - sac and German Hof. Par excellence English, the term close became permanently established thanks to French specialist literature; ibidem, p. 58 et al.
the way of creative fads that changed from year to year, as do the fashions for dress or hats, but in regard of the age-old rules of humanity that endure even when the architectural background is fundamentally altered8.

The formation of May’s professional preferences was certainly also influenced by an earlier contact with Friedrich Pützer in Darmstadt, a supporter of the ideas of Sitte9, also Joseph Maria Olbrich, as well as later studies at the Technische Hochschule in Munich and encounters with its excellent professors Theodor Fischer, Friedrich von Thiersch or baron von Berlepsch-Valendas, an ardent promoter of the English theory of town planning. Taking his first steps in the profession in his home city of Frankfurt (1913), May was first oriented at architects Hoffman and Messel. Later searches took him towards Peter Behrens and the path of New Objectivity (Neue Sachlichkeit)10. Early on he understood that modern architectural thinking should start with the function and the shape of a building and not the aesthetics of its façade. He was referring to the dictum „more matter, with less art”, of Hermann Muthesius, who contained within that Shakesperean idiom the entire programme of modern tectonic art11. The conviction, combined with the great importance which he attached to social considerations, placed him within the ranks of pioneers of functionalism in urban planning12.

May began his work in Wroclaw in May 1919, as the head of the construction department of the Schlesische Landgesellschaft company directed by Koeppel, which had the objective of supporting the construction of housing settlements in the countryside, in suburbs and in towns. In July of that year „Schlesisches Heim” was established, with the same board13 and construction management14, concentrat-

8 J. Buekschmitt, Ernst May, op. cit., p. 20-21.
9 C. Sitte, Der Städtebau nach seinen Künstlerischen Grundsätzen, Wien 1889.
10 J. Buekschmitt, Ernst May, op. cit., p. 20-21.
12 J. Buekschmitt, op. cit., p. 19.
14 See signature to the article: Architekt May, Leiter der Bauabteilungen des Schlesischen Heimes und der schlesischen Landgesellschaft, Siedlungspäle, in: SH, 1(1920), issue 1, p. 7.
16 Out of 13 Prussian housing societies founded in the years 1918-1925, the first was established for Westphalia (26.07.1918), the fourth for Silesia (28.07.1919) and the last for Upper Silesia (9.02.1925); see: Pauly, 10 Jahre Wohnungsfördergesellschaften – 10 Jahre staatliche Wohnungsreformpolitik, in: SH, 9(1928), issue 7, pp. 177-178.
17 Schlesisches Heim – Monatschrift des Schlesischen Heimes gemeinnützigen Gesellschaft zur Förderung des Kleinwohnungsbaues der Prov. Schlesien; the first issue was published in January 1920.
semi-rural, suburban, town, one, two and three-floor houses, single-family and multi-family, free-standing, semi-detached and terraced houses. Out of the large number of house types designated by numbers and letter indexes, sixteen types were selected, which were called by the names of famous people: reformers, architects, writers, poets, industrialists, philosophers, painters, such as: Damaschke, Langhans, Hauptmann, Freitag, Borsig, Boehme, Menzel etc. Technical and economic motivations caused the number to be reduced, with an aim to rationalize and cut the costs of realization. May additionally emphasized aesthetic aspects, claiming that the new housing estate should be a rhythmical composition of identical elements and not a theme with variations.

May’s own house was a typical one, constructed to a design project from the „Schlesisches Heim” catalogue (pic. 1, pic. 2) in the prestigious villa district of Zalesie (Leerbeutel), at Dahnstraße 8 (today Stanisława Moniuszki 6). This was a „cottage” - a detached single-family home, with a large living space (143.62m²), adapted to the needs of the middle class, with a toilet in the house, a bathroom, a study and separate kitchen.

For comparison, below are listed the areas of the „smallest dwellings” in the various categories of houses, as according to the 1925 catalogue:
- detached single-family house – type „Damaschke” – 63.20 m²;
- twin single-family house – type „Gerhard Hauptmann” – 57.11m²;
- single-family terraced house – type „Borsig” – 53.63 m²;
- house for six families with minimum dwellings - type „Jacob Boehme” – 42.0 m².

May considered the architect’s profession as a special kind of vocation in the service of humanity. He had great respect for patient creative and consistent work, resignation from ambitious and spectacular projects for the sake of small tasks undertaken in the course of the struggle for human dignity. A confirmation of this attitude was to place a quote from Wilhelm Raabe as the motto to his article on the methods of building modest „emergency” homes, published on the pages of „Schlesisches Heim”: Everyone should work and create according to one’s nature, as that is the source of one’s dignity; one should keep building within oneself and around oneself, and keep patiently rebuilding what has been destroyed by enemy forces in one’s soul and around, because that is happiness. Who lowers his hands is lost and gone forever. Who at every step resists his doom and can with dignity descend from the bright peaks to the dark valleys - without cowardly complaint and ineffective obstinacy - has won!

From Unwin, the convinced socialist, May took over the principle of supporting a design project primarily on social considerations, putting the formal profile in a more distant perspective. In his own words, he explained that New Building (Neues Bauen) architects were never offended when their architecture was criticised for being cold, heartless and soulless uniformism, but took it straight to heart if anyone denied that humans, i.e. a social approach was the main pillar on which they raised their construction; and whether it was worth anything or not was debated, but would be decided in the future.

Firstly, May emphasized a rational, functional and economic layout of the dwelling, where the kitchen took central position, composed of a living area and niche for cooking. This was a Silesian living kitchen, and the separate cooking niche was a prototype of the famous Frankfurt kitchen - laboratory, which organized in a scientific way the lady of the house’s occupations (pic. 3, 4).

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20 Most construction elements were industrially manufactured to be assembled on the building site.
22 The house design was done in April 1920. In the summer he moved in together with Ilse, neé Hartmann, from Berlin, whom he had married a year earlier; here too were born their sons Klaus (1920) and Thomas (1923); E. Herrel, Ernst May. Architekten und Stadtplaner in Afrika 1934-1935, Frankfurt am Main 2001, p. 168.
23 Mittelstandstyp - Group I, Type 1b – later type „Dahn”; E. May, Die Typen Schlesischen..., op. cit., p. 65.
24 Wilhelm Raabe (1831-1910), pseudonym Jacob Corvinuf, German writer, master of realist characteristics, deeply compassionate for human misery and suffering.
25 Freely translated by the author; see: E. May, Notheime, in: SH, 1(1920), issue 2, pp. 1-10.
Vienna, the renowned designer of the Frankfurt kitchen, had collaborated with May already in the early 1920s, in the Wroclaw period, developing on the pages of „Schlesisches Heim” the idea of a small, functional kitchen niche. Similarly, May attached grave importance to the site plans. He believed that a good layout plan for any settlement, simplest included, rural or suburban, was one of the most difficult tasks facing the architect and should be given to a talented professional. He believed that a good plan depended on the selection of the proper location, with a quadrangular site that would not be elongated like a ribbon, of good proportions, which allowed it to be parcelled into regular plots, and good placement of houses, as well as access roads on a N-S or approximate direction, to give the houses good light. The area should be dry and as flat as possible with access to potable water. Also important were the transport and communication connections. If there was a railway or tram line in the vicinity, the future estate should not be farther than 15 minutes from the station or stop. Just as short should be the distance to a shop selling the basic necessities for everyday existence.

May divided rural and suburban settlements into three basic types, in respect of the site arrangement: dispersed, linear and with a green (Angersiedlung). He advised against building the dispersed type as uneconomical and outdated, unless forced to by particularly difficult land conditions. Ribbon that is linear settlements with houses placed along one main communication route were frequently met in the highlands of Silesia; their disadvantage was that the houses were directly exposed to the dust and noise from a busy road.

May was the strongest advocate for the estate around a piazza-green lying to the side of a communications route but with a good connection to it via a main internal road. The green - an echo of the old village commons - served as a play area for children, a small pasture or gathering place for the inhabitants. The houses were concentrated around it, and in many instances so were also important buildings such as the church, school, inn and others. Greens were given strongly pronounced shapes, usually a rectangle (Ząbkowice, Jelenia Góra, Nowe Miasteczko, Brzeg, Nysa, Oltaszyn, Głubczyce), triangle (Zlotniki, Prudnik, Nowa Ruda, Boguszów), semicircle (Zlotniki), or multilateral (Olawa).

The estate in Ząbkowice (Frankenstein - 1919) is an example of the simplest site plan on a green (pic. 5). The initial design provided for dwellings along the perimeter of a triangular area, similar to a city quarter. But mindfully of the Schlesische Landgesellschaft plan, the buildings were grouped in the centre of the site, around a rectangular commons situated in the place of an old clay pit and the plots were demarcated on the back of the buildings. Two houses, flanking the entrance from the south, created a symbolic gateway to the estate (pic. 6). A similarly simple arrangement - and programme - was a feature of the Oltaszyn estate (Oltasin 1921). Originally designed for an area of some 20 morgens, it consisted of identical twin houses placed along a main street, and a rectangular green which was the culmination of the composition (pic. 7). A house with different design stood at the farther end of the green, closing the vista from the street. This axis started at the main entrance to the estate, accent with a single house placed crosswise, which guarded the composition and at the same time invited inside. This subtle, truly „English”, picturesque combination of elements to open and close the composition, awarded the rudimentary arrangement proper taste.

On bigger estates, the piazza-commons had a more complex functional programme. An example can be Nysa (Neisse - 1919), where as well as houses, a church, school and shops were drafted beside the green (pic. 8, 9). Also an estate designed some years later, in the western part of Głubczyce (Leobschütz – 1923, pic.10), with an inner square-green, included a school, a gathering hall and shops, although space for public buildings had also been provided along the city street and square on the outskirts of the estate.

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29 Ibidem, s. 8.
May preferred to group houses in close arrangements, which gave more advantages in comparison with an open plan site. Dense construction meant savings on the cost of building and exploitation, of houses as well as roads, light and water supply (one well to serve several buildings), shorter routes to trains or shops. May believed that houses in a dense development were protection for one another against wind and bad weather, suffered less heat loss, and generally looked better and were, in a certain sense, „monumental”. He also stressed the social advantages of a close-knit community that by its nature helped reinforce neighbourly relations.

The compact construction passed muster in the form of terraced houses, in ribbon arrangements as well as settlements concentrated around a piazza-green, and „closes”, as the culmination of a vista or a street extension.

Examples of this can be seen in the communal estate on Piaskowa Góra (Kleinsiedlung Ober Salzbrunn) in Walbrzych, one of May’s earliest undertakings from his period of activity at the Schlesische Landgesellschaft. An estate with the typical Silesian linear layout, enriched with English accents - „closes” - stretched along the road from Szczawno to Piaskowa Góra (pic. 11). The centre of the estate, created by six two-floor terraced houses with shops was designed on an escarpment, on the south side of the road (pic. 12). These houses differed from the other single-family and semi-detached homes on the estate by their size and compact form, as well as carefully-selected location. They stood at the highest point of the area, on a curve in the road, closing the vista from the side of Szczawno and Piaskowa Góra. On the east and west side, towards the central part of the estate led groups of detached and semi-detached houses, arranged in closes (pic. 11).

Closes, a form which derived from Hampstead (pic. 13), was popular with May in his projects, and he treated them as an element of the site plan or an individual solution. As well as the Piaskowa Góra estate, there are examples of this layout in his developments.

33 The plan was probably completed at the close of 1918. Krug, Die Bautätigkeit der Schlesischen Landgesellschaft in Kleinsiedlungssachen im Jahre 1919, in: SH, 1 (1920), issue 1, pp. 11-12.
34 The settlement belt was 1.5 km long and 170-230m wide, with differences in lay of land reaching 50m; E. May, Ländliche Kleinsiedlungen der Schlesischen Landgesellschaft in der Provinz Schlesien in: „Der Sädtebau (hereon: Stb), 16 (1919), pp. 84-86.
35 Ibidem, p. 86; in 1920 houses were built in the central part but without shops; see: E. May, Kleinsiedlung Ober=Salzbrunn, in: SH, 1(1920), issue 7, pp. 9-11; ibid, issue 11, insert, il. 3-10.

37 The working wing was reached through the washroom, also the garden and cellar; ibidem, p. 273.
romanticism altogether, as can be seen in the plans for some developments in Frankfurt.

Ernst May’s biggest early urban project, elaborated within Landgesellschaft, was Zlotecki-Zerniki rentier estate (Goldschmieden-Neukirch, pic. 18) in the suburbs of Wroclaw, near to Lesnica (Deutsch Lissa), some 10 kms west of the Old Town Market. The estate comprised of about 750 individual houses and a certain number of garden plots, altogether for 3-4 thousand inhabitants, on an area of 350 hectares. The perimeter of the estate was demarcated on the west by river Bysztym and the former manor house park; the south - the railway line which connected Lesnica with Wroclaw, the north - what is now Kosmonautów street (formerly Frankfurter Chaussee) and the east – Zernicka street. The estate’s expanse was an effect of the terrain. Rynka stream (a tributary of river Bysztyma) and the high level of ground water made a good part of the land out of bounds to construction, thus much was left in the form of meadows or destined for large vegetable plots, measuring up to 36 morgens (local land units).

The supreme formal feature of the plan for Zlotecki-Zerniki was a romantic picturesqueness that reflected an always-actual aesthetic dimension of Sitte’s urban planning, taken up and incorporated into the town planning theory by Unwin. A network of gently winding streets studded with cottages was enhanced by green places in a variety of shapes: rectangle, triangle or semicircle. May’s design for Zlotecki included a tightly-knit centre for the composition, a „crowning glory” of a kind for the estate - in the form of a piazza in the shape of a rectangle (95 x 115 m), located at the highest point of the plot. A town hall was to be raised in its centre, twinned with a water tower that dominated the settlement, clasping the vistas of three streets which ran towards the market. Along its sides were situated shops and houses, as well as a school, the back of which overlooked a large rectangular space (60 x 115m), on the opposite side of which stood a community house (Genossenschaftshaus). The estate’s services included another school, a railway station and a chapel and cemetery. The square was lined with two-storey terraced houses, homes for teachers, clerkly officials, a doctor and chemist. The remaining houses in the estate were detached bungalows, in eight design types.

The picturesque layout of Zlotecki reflected not only Unwin’s direct influence on urban planning with a: - defined centre, - dominant accented by an axis, - articulated boundaries and „gates”, and a scenic arrangement of streets, squares and closes. Evident within it were also the experiences of the German Gartenstadtshsance, which drew on the treasury of domestic examples, certainly followed closely by May. The rectangular market, rooted in the German urban planning tradition, was introduced by Paul Schmitthenner as early as in 1914, in the design for garden-city Staakken (near Berlin), considered the prototype of the modern German housing estate. Another domestic source was the idea which May applied to the Zlotecki design, of a wide (c.50 m), tree-lined esplanade rising to the east towards the market, and the water tower coupled with the town hall building. To the west the esplanade descended towards a woodland park, finishing in a small square with a monument that completed the vista. A prototype for this solution could have been the „street-cum-square” introduced to the design of the first garden-city Berlin-Falkenberg (1912) by Bruno Taut, inspired - as he said - by the old fields of Brandenburg.

In his draft for Zlotecki, similarly to Taut’s design for Falkenberg, May combined planning elements borrowed from English garden-cities and traditional German towns - with his own, new ideas. Inspired by the 18th-century Royal Crescent in Bath, May devised a variant that can be described as a „pseudo-crescent”. In opposition to the crescent, a half-moon-shaped line of houses with uniform façades, looking on an open green area, the pseudo-crescent is a fan-shaped arrangement of detached houses, standing on the edge of a semicircular field. May introduced the pseudocrescent to the design in various places, for instance at the „entrance” to the estate, street extension or closing - i.e. close (pic. 18).

In the original form, the crescent was a rare occurrence in German urban planning. It was introduced by Bruno Taut to his plans for garden-city Falken-
berg (1912), developing it after some years into an original horseshoe shape (Hufeisen), which became the compositional core of the first great Berlin estate - Britz (1925), commonly known as „Hufeisensiedlung“.

The pure form of a crescent opening on to a green expanse was also applied by Rudolf Ebertstadt and Hermann Muthesius in the design for the Hermsdorf estate (pic. 19) near Berlin (1918)\textsuperscript{42}.

Only the north-westerly part of Złotniki was realized according to the original plan. As it proved, in the existing circumstances, for public and legal reasons, it was impossible to build a rentier estate of this size. By 1920 a new and downsized design was published, reflecting a gradual reduction of the spatial objectives (pic. 20). Along Rajska street were built houses of Group II type 2h (pic. 22), around the semi-circular Kaliski place which closed it from the west Group II type 9h houses (pic. 21), and along Ciesielski place, a triangular commons, for the first time, tiny Dutch emergency houses: Group II type 10 (pic. 23, pic. 24)\textsuperscript{43}. May wrote that the small size of the Dutch house did not preclude its advantages for living, because of the rational layout and furnishing options\textsuperscript{44}. May took care for the typical, individual houses to have individual accents in the form of symbolic signs painted on the walls, referring to the profession or hobby of the owner. The pictures were painted by Lotte Hartmann from Berlin\textsuperscript{45}, just as later in Ołtaszyn or Klecina.

The remainder of the estate was built in the 1930s according to an adapted and simplified design prepared by the city. May’s extensive plans, patterned on Hampstead inadvertently anticipated the so-called Stadtrandsiedlung realized here in times of the Third Reich, which in new political conditions was to fulfill specific ideological objectives. Setting a worker on a plot that could provide food was a means to alleviate the crisis, while the sprawling layout could minimalize losses in case of an air attack and be advantageous to nurturing the young generation - the nation’s defensive force - in healthy conditions\textsuperscript{46}.

In the early 1920s, May’s draft estate developments began to show new tendencies and patterns where the rows of houses were arranged along a direction approximating the North-South axis, to guarantee the best, East-West light in the homes. The composition of these estates is dominated by Unwin’s principles of a garden-city, however there is an evident decided and consistent move towards the idea of functional development. These plans, drafted in 1921 with Herbert Boehm, concern the estates of Wojszyce (Woischwitz) and Brochów (Brockau).

The Wojszyce plan (pic. 26, 27) was drawn for a competition on the development of Greater Wroclaw and is a singular example of a satellite town, interestingly and logically designed, using existing elements: railway transport, road network and industry\textsuperscript{47}. The plan was to incorporate the old villages of Wojszyce and Ołtaszyn (formerly Oltaschin) located on an area of some 700 hectares, situated between the streets Buforowa and Agrestowa, including an enclave north of the freight rail line with an existing factory.

Among the works completed so far by May, the Wojszyce design, albeit unrealized, was his most mature spatial composition and fullest functional programme. The satellite-town connected with Wroclaw by good rail and road communications routes, was to constitute a separate unit surrounded by a belt of open land, self-sufficient, providing its inhabitants with work, housing, services and recreation. The development provided a train station, a town hall, three churches, a communal hall, a covered market, schools, a stadium and two cemeteries. Employment would be mostly supplied by the local factory.

The satellite design was dominated by an elliptical composition centre, with a main axis drawn through the middle, from north to south (pic. 27)\textsuperscript{48}. The composition axis bifurcated into a „Y“ shape, connecting the main buildings and squares. Next to

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\textsuperscript{42} Bebaungsplan für die Kleinsiedlung der Hermsdorfer Boden - Aktien Gesellschaft, in: Stb, 15 (1918), tab. 12.

\textsuperscript{43} E. May, Die Grundtypen der Schlesischen ... op. cit, in: SH, 5(1924), issue 3, p. 78.

\textsuperscript{44} The floor plan of the living space of a single house occupied the area of 4.6x7.0m. The entrance led from the yard straight into the kitchen. The ground floor was taken up by a „live-in kitchen“ with a living room and niche for cooking. Next to the niche was a chamber with a sleeping place under the stairs, which led to two small rooms in the attic. Gustav Wolf, who dealt with the economics of floor plans for RfG, described the living conditions of this house as primitive. G. Wolf, Grundrisstaffel, München 1931; after: „Dom, Osiedle Mieszkanie“, Year 3 (1931), no 11, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{45} Privately May’s sister-in-law.

\textsuperscript{46} A. Teut, Architektur im Dritten Reich 1933 - 1945, Frankfurt/M - Berlin 1968, p. 331.


\textsuperscript{48} following the route of the former main street of Wojszyce village (today Pawia street).
the railway line, at the ends of the streets, was located the market and train station. The main part of the composition, inscribed inside an oval, began with a church in the northern end and ended, in the southern, with a giant, domed People’s Hall (Volkshaus). The centre was formed by a wide, tree-lined street that became a market square with a town hall in its centre. At the extension of the axis, in the south of the estate, there was a stadium, to which a green promenade led from the centre. The area north of the railway line was drafted as an industrial zone. The streets in the housing area of the development were demarcated on the north-south direction (or approximate). Their curving courses, reminiscent of rings spreading on water, echoed the image of the elliptical centre. Distinctive in the south-western part of the development was a wide street-square oriented east-west, where the designers preserved the original main road of Oltaşyn village (today Strachowskiego), with a commons and a medieval church.

The houses situated along the streets had a specific character and height. In the centre and at major roads or squares, they were taller, three to four-storey, close-knit. Smaller houses were placed towards the outside, one and two-storey, in groups of several. The areas between the houses were filled up by gardens.

In line with Unwin’s principles, the settlement constituted a whole and was surrounded by a belt of greenery. The designers treated the outskirts of the estate in a singular fashion, creating a symbolic border with elements suggesting fortifications, separating the town from its surroundings. This characteristic method of distinguishing bordergrounds was later repeated by May and Boehm in the design for a partial development of the town of Głubczyce (Leobschütz O/S – 1923, il. 10), and also in the Römerstadt estate (1927) in Frankfurt a/M. In the case of Wojszyce and Głubczyce, on the outskirts there are groups of houses in the form of „closes”, situated with their backs to the landscape beyond, and closing the vistas of the inner streets of the settlement. With its external bulwarks and bastions, Römerstadt is reminiscent of a real fortress.

The design for Wojszyce, though it has remained a draft, shows an important stage in the development of European town planning. It is the intermediary link between the picturesque and the rational, preserving the moment of harmonious balance between the formal, social-rational and economic aspects in design projects for housing estates, right before the onset of rational schematicism. Moreover, the plan is a valuable example of the spatial disposition of a satellite town, in a specific urban situation, supporting Unwin’s theory.

The subsequent housing estate design, elaborated by May and Boehm for the Clerical Housing Association in Brochów also had rational features, in spite of the garden nature of the composition (pic. 28). It covered an area of 46 hectares in the northern part of Brochów, triangular in shape, located between a railway embankment, Ignacego Mościckiego street (formerly Brockauerstrasse) and with Warszawska street (former Winklerallee) at its base. The underlying communications network was formed by five streets oriented N-S (more or less), of which the central one became the core around which the estate was built. It had at its southern end the Protestant Church and at the northern a semicircular arrangement of houses, alike to a giant bastion placed against the hue and cry of the city of Wrocław. In the vicinity, the designers provided a wide green belt which cut into the estate, with ponds and a playing field. The houses stood on the streets. The tallest - three-storey - ringed and screened the estate along the streets on the outside; two-storey houses fronted the central street; on the remainder stood detached bungalows. The areas between the houses were filled by gardens. The design project was realized in part.

May approached problem issues of urban planning with great social sensitivity. He regretted the fact that city dwellers had lost contact with nature and the sense of neighbourhood community typical to the inhabitants of villages or small towns, writing that „a city dweller almost does not know his neighbor”, becoming „an atom of an indifferent mass, which pushes through a sea of houses to fill its existential needs, without perception of social weal”. He compared the big city to a machine devouring human strength and enslaving humans instead of serving them. He appealed for an end to unhealthy development of cities, indicating that the supreme

49 As evident in May’s later developments such as Westhausen (1929), or unrealized Goldstein (1929).
50 Schierer, Streiflichter aus dem Wohnungs- und Siedlungswesen, in: SH, 2 (1921), issue 5, p. 127.
51 Leonardo da Vinci (formerly Pultstrasse).
52 Schierer, Streiflichter..., op.cit.
54 Idem, Die internationale Städtebautagung in Amsterdam; p: SH, 5 (1924), issue 7, p. 208.
law in the development process should be: city for humans not humans for city.55

Initially, May was a supporter of the concepts of Fritz Schumacher, according to whom a big city should gradeate the height of its housing, from tallest in the centre, through an intermediate zone, down to a belt of low construction on the outskirts.56 He changed his convictions under Unwin’s influence and the concept devised together with W. R. Lethaby, George L. Pepler and others, in 1921, of a model city with satellites.57 He began to consider insufficient hitherto methods of development by the concentric system or the newer radial system, which allowed for the penetration of green wedges into the city grid.58 He claimed that the wedges of green were not equivalent to open, free space, which could be made available to the inhabitants of satellite developments. It was a radically different vision than Schumacher’s, with the city surrounded by individual green satellites, entirely different in nature. In the satellite town, limitation performed an important role, in a spatial sense as well as demographic. On the problem of formal isolation of the satellite from its surroundings, May wrote: „it is an important fact that the satellite town, because of its designated size, will differ from its surroundings. Once a traveller, entering a city, would encounter ramparts, a moat and walls, which constituted the boundaries of the urban entity; and so nowadays the satellite town is surrounded by rows of buildings or avenues, the outlines of which endow it with a specific character. The impression of a border is highlighted by groups of taller buildings flanking the entrances to streets.”59 The principle of limiting the city and reinforcing the contact of its inhabitants with nature - on the one hand expressed nostalgia for small urban communities from the pre-industrial era, rooted in the Arts and Crafts movement and Morris’s „News from Nowhere” - and on the other referred to the idea of hygenic and rational, compact Owensian estates of „harmony and cooperation”, arranged in an open landscape.60

May’s no insignificant contribution to modern town planning was a competition design for the development of Greater Wroclaw by the satellite method and an elaborated version of decentralizing the city in relation to the region. The planning competition (1921) was a grand and important event in Wroclaw. Organized by the city authorities, its purpose was to obtain a general development plan, in the form of a document61 which would delineate the areas of influence of the city and district. The district authorities with whom May worked intended to set down in the suburban areas foundations for planned settlement of the increasing Wroclaw population. Meanwhile, the city saw its chance in territorial expansion over areas that for long had been associated with it. The area covered by the competition totaled around 16 thousand hectares. Expanded Wroclaw was to accommodate around one million inhabitants expected by the year 1950.62 The competition aimed for a planned development of industrial and housing areas, communications routes and green zones.

The competition was organized by the municipal authorities. Invited to it were urban planners and architects from Germany and Austria, among them Wroclaw architects Adolf Rading, as well as

55 „Die Stadt dem Menschen, nicht der Mensch für die Stadt!” , E. May, Stadterweiterung Mittels Trabanten, in: SH, 3(1922), issue 11, p. 270.
56 J. Buekschmitt, Ernst May…, op. cit., p. 28.
58 A reference to the entry for the competition on the development of Berlin (1910), design by R. Eberstadt, B. Möhring and R. Petersen (First Prize); Ibidem.
Ernst May and his collaborator, engineer Herbert Boehm\textsuperscript{63}.

Forty projects were sent in. First prize was not awarded and the money it included was split between the authors of the best five designs, among them A. Rading’s „Bodenreform". Design no.12 by E. May and H. Boehm, inscribed with the motto: „Satellites" (Trabanten), was purchased together with two other works\textsuperscript{64}.

Two approaches became evident in the design plans, concerning the displacement of settlement areas around the built-up zones. Supporters of the so-called „academic" approach grouped closed island-like estates evenly around the city. Those who preferred the „flexible" approach believed that Wroclaw should not be expanded in all directions. Its development should start at several important sites, in consideration of natural tendencies, economic factors and links with workplaces. Wroclaw representative May and Rading took radically opposite positions.

In the design by May and Boehm, which contained a quintessence of urban decentralization, the „academic" approach presented itself in its most sublimated (pic. 29) variety. Wroclaw was surrounded with satellite settlements, which - though dependent on the mother city - had the power to lead separate existences. Wroclaw within Rading’s „Bodenreform" that represented the „flexible" approach, took on an elongated shape, following the course of the river and the main road and road direction.

May referred to Unwin’s propositions of decentralizing a city by the method of satellites and Howard’s transposed idea of a garden-city\textsuperscript{65}. He believed that decentralization was the only correct and healthy method for development of a big city, definitively stopping territorial spread and creating satellites in green surrounds, grouped around the central organism. May treated the competition as an opportunity to present a solution which broke with outdated schemes. Territorial development would be halted by the municipal authorities which would buy out a ring of land around the city, to devote it to recreational purposes or agriculture. Within this ring would be located the satellites, numbering population of 50 to 100 thousand, with the objective of housing or industry, having their own services and food sectors, situated at a distance of 20 to 30 kms from the central city and linked with it by a good transport connection\textsuperscript{66}. May claimed that because of the limits of the competition his entry could not fully present the principles of the satellites. And so, the compromise version described a city with twelve satellites, lying within a radius of 10 kms from the centre (pic. 29), these were: Szczyniki, Wojcicze, Karłowice, Różanka, Osobowice, Kuźniki, Nowy Dwór, Muchóbór Wielki, Oporów, Partynice, Wojszyce and Brochów (Scheitnig, Schwoitsch, Carlowitz, Rosenthal, Oswitz, Schmiedefeld, Maria-Höfchen, Gr. Mohchern, Opperau, Hartlieb, Woiischwitz, Brockau). The strict limits on population of the individual satellites intended to stop them from growing into big urban conglomerations. The satellites, being individual units having local self-government, could have the nature of towns, for housing or industrial purposes, or combined. May advocated mixed functions, as industry supported almost full self-sufficiency. Satellites, despite their independence, were to be parts of a comprehensive organism, connected to the central city, their source of cultural and economic effects. The service centres of the satellites provided churches, schools, communal halls, workshops and shops, and other local institutions\textsuperscript{67}. The mother city would provide central institutions, administration, unions, banks, universities, theatres, etc., as well as the offices of transport organizations, food processors, the central railway and freight station, port installations, and the main market, from which commodities would be sent out to local markets in the satellite estates. Food was to be obtained by their own means. A detailed solution, elaborated by the authors in the competition entry on the example of Wojszyce, has been described above.

The competition design by May and Boehm met with considerable appreciation from Fritz Behrendt, director of the Wroclaw Development Office and future constructor of the general plan, who wrote in his opinion: „The idea here presented strives to-

\textsuperscript{63}The jury included i.a. renowned architects and urbanists such as: B. Möhring, H. Jansen (Berlin), P. Bonatz (Stuttgart), F. Schumacher (Cologne, Hamburg) and, from Wroclaw, M. Berg, A. von Scholtz and P. Ehrlrich; \textit{Programm für einen Ideen Wettbewerb zur Erlangung eines Bebauungsplanes der Stadt Breslau und ihrer Vororte. Magistrat der Hauptstadt Breslau, Breslau, 1.03.1921.}

\textsuperscript{64}W. Kononowicz, Wroclaw. Kierunki..., op. cit., (Wroclaw. Directions) p. 34-35.

\textsuperscript{65}C.B. Purdom, \textit{The building...}, op. cit., p. 458.


\textsuperscript{67}E. May, \textit{Stadterweiterung Mittels Trabanten...}, op. cit.
wards a perfect objective in the social, economic and artistic aspect. Within this planned organism, relaxation might solve all the problems resulting from overburdening an urban centre that is too big and too crowded, transport difficulties included. Regarding this, the work constitutes an important contribution to the theoretical consideration of the problems of a metropolis’. Also the report by the competition jury contained a favourable opinion: „Particularly interesting is the mode of developing new areas, creating closed organisms - satellites, on the foundations of existing localities. The idea, as a novel way of solving the problems of a metropolis, is worthy of attention and has a specific charm in the consistency of the project’s elaboration”.

May’s design, although it did not win a prize, became famous in Europe - as the first attempt to decentralize a big city by a system of satellites. Unwin himself used the competition entry to illustrate a lecture on the principles of developing a city by the method, presented in 1923 in Berlin. In the same year, May’s design aroused much interest at the International Town-Planning Exhibition in Göteborg. In 1924, the Bureau for Urban Development used the competition entries to create a general plan for the development of Wrocław. The construction of a plan that put down the infrastructure enabling the city to proceed with expanding its borders brought forth a reaction from district authorities. In March 1925 was published a „Memorial of the land district of Wrocław on the attachment of suburban communes to Wrocław” by district governor Bachmann and architect May, representing the district’s interest as the director of Schlesische Heimstätte. In the memorial, May presented a regional plan for Wrocław with satellites located at 30 k.ms from the city, even though the idea itself had been already published three years earlier. This model of the city’s development - in his conviction - gave the only opportunity for healthy living to its inhabitants. To support his aims, May cited the results of an international urban planning competition in Amsterdam (1924), where decentralization with the use of satellites was held to be a recommended method for the development of big cities, preventing them from spreading over into giant conglomerations. May’s concept was received in Amsterdam as a good answer to one of the Congress’s questions: „how to solve the problem of big cities, so they serve humans instead of enslaving them”.

May’s concept was a singular continuation of Berg’s decentralization ideas from 1911, according to which, communes located closer should be incorporated into Wrocław, and those farther out, such as Sobótka, Oborniki or Trzebnica - bought out by Wrocław or purposefully attached to the city, but with the difference that May favoured restrictions on the growth of Wrocław as well as its satellites. He saw the future satellites of Wrocław in places such as Oborniki, Trzebnica, Brzeg Dolny, Lesnica, Kąty, Sobótka, Oława (Obernigk, Trebnitz, Dyhenerfurth, D. Lissa, Canth, Zobten, Ohlau), etc.

Satellites in the region, of constant size and population of up to 100 thousand, would have considerable independence, grounded on a fundamental administrative, economic and cultural infrastructure, own industry as well as a food-producing and recreational zone. Wrocław, offering services at a higher level, was within reach by good railway and bus connections. The green outskirts would give Wrocław inhabitants open leisure areas outside the city „gates”, while the satellite residents would have forests or a green belt within 15 minutes of home. The problem of „greater Wrocław”, connected with

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68 F. Behrendt, Der Wettbewerb..., op. cit., p. 48.  
69 Bericht über den Ideen-Wettbewerb zur Erlangung einen Bebauungsplanes der Stadt Breslau und ihrer Vororte, Breslau 1922, p. 7.  
70 The lecture was presented on 31 May 1923, at the invitation of H. Muthesius and P. Behrens, in a „full to the rim” lecture hall of the Museum of Artistic Craftsmanship and ....Unwin’s arguments, supported with magnificent photographs, met with great appreciation of the audience”; SH, 4 (1923), issue 6, pp. 138-139.  
72 W. Kononowicz, Pierwzey plan generalny Wroclavia..., (First general plan of Wrocław), op. cit.  
73 Bachmann, E. May, Denkschrift des Landkreises Breslau zur Frage der Eingemeindung von Vorortgemeinden in die Stadt Breslau, Breslau, 1925.  
75 Bachmann, E. May, Denkschrift..., op. cit., p. 16; O. Berger, Internationaler Städtebaukongreß Amsterdam vom 2-9 Juli 1924 „Östdeutsche Bauzeitung” (hereon OBZ), 1924, No. 33, pp. 234-236.  
76 E. May, Die internationale Städtebauausstellung in Amsterdam; in: SH, 5 (1924), issue 7, p. 208.  
the region, was tackled by May with involvement in daily and specialist press, criticising the concept then put forward by Rading of a city developed along industrial-settlement strips. The sharp polemics between the two brought out their significant differences in opinion on urban development.

The reaction of the City to the district’s memorial and May’s press articles, was a Memorial published by the municipal council, authors of which Martin Fuchs and Fritz Behrendt strongly criticised the publication of the district authorities, proving the legitimacy of the method adopted by the City to develop Wroclaw by territorial expansion. It was pointed out that May’s conception omitted a number of existing suburbs, dooming them for the sake of a green belt around the city. May was accused of using fashionable theories to help preserve communes attached to the district, for financial reasons.

The Urban Planning Commission of the Association of German Architects (BDA) judged May’s concept of satellites impossible to implement for administrative and technical reasons. May, abandoned in his struggle and disappointed over the lack of understanding, took advantage of an invitation from the authorities of Frankfurt am Main and that same year left Wroclaw, to assume the position of municipal construction adviser in his home city and begin a new chapter of his life, eventually crowned with success - building a new Frankfurt.

May’s Wroclaw experiences as an architect and urban planner were an important and fruitful stage on his path towards New Construction. It was an un-faltering direction confirmed by such practices as a decided preference for the social aspect in housing construction, application of typified construction elements, also whole homes and furniture, a striving for rational and cost-cutting solutions among others anticipating the „Frankfurt kitchen”, experiences with „minimum dwellings”, as well as an introduction to flat roofs. The new matter-of-factness also found its expression in town planning scale. Estates were arranged according to a rationalized „paralinear” plan, that was a link between Unwin’s picturesque compositions and the rational „linear” designs that fulfilled the postulates of new housing on „air, sun and nature”. An important achievement of his, confirming May’s contribution to modern urban planning, were the designs for decentralizing Wroclaw with the use of satellites, on a scale of city as well as region. May’s experiences gathered in Wroclaw, applied in the process of building New Frankfurt, supported on his greater organizational potential as the Stadtbaurat, contributed to his spectacular success, reached within a short time.

Translation by E. Krajewska

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81 Ibidem, p. 64.