URBAN SPACES AND THE COMPLEXITY OF CITIES

ed. by
Jean-Luc Fray, Michel Pauly, Magda Pinheiro and Martin Scheutz

ELEKTRONISCHER SONDERDRUCK

2018
BÖHLAU VERLAG KÖLN WEIMAR WIEN

STÄDTEFORSCHUNG

Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für vergleichende Städtegeschichte in Münster

begründet von Heinz Stoob

in Verbindung mit

U. Braasch-Schwersmann, M. Kintzinger, B. Krug-Richter, A. Lampen, E. Mühle, J. Oberste, M. Scheutz, G. Schwerhoff und C. Zimmermann

herausgegeben von

Werner Freitag

Reihe A: Darstellungen

Band 97

INHALT

II. La Ville complexe

SPACES – DIFFERENT MODES OF SPACE IN TOWNS

Michel Pauly & Martin Scheutz

For centuries, the history of towns – besides the emphasis on their legal status and "autonomy" – has also been written and recorded as the history of spaces within the town. Here the town is understood as a specific space, set apart from its surroundings; a fortification was by definition not essential for the notion of a town. The town was marked out from the land surrounding it through increased building activity and structural elements such as streets and squares. The socially stratified urban population took up residence in various parts of the town, in line with its trades and crafts. It was mostly in the centre that a political and authoritative densification of urban life took shape. Trade was plied in central places such as market squares, stores and workshops, with towns also becoming home to a range of training establishments, while cultural and ecclesiastical infrastructures helped shape the town's individual character.[1] The many and varied approaches to defining a town always attribute a key role to the town's various spaces. When drawing up his list of urban categories, German urban historian Wilfried Ehbrecht for instance drew attention to the parcelling witnessed in the layout of the towns and to the spatial interpretation of the market place as the town's economic heart. For towns from the Middle Ages and the Modern Period, fundamental criteria included a minimum of urban self-government and exercise of rights, but also the protection of urban residents through palisades, ditches, walls and gates.[2]

Every town has a plethora of political, judicial, military, social, religious and multifunctional spaces. Within the town, tangible and structurally organised spaces meet virtual spaces, while visible spaces encounter invisible spaces, and pictorial

---

[1] See as an example the definition of town by Franz Irsigler, Annäherungen an den Stadtbegriff (Approaches to the notion of a town), in: Ferdinand Opll/Christoph Sonnlechner (eds.), Europäische Städte im Mittelalter (Forschungen und Beiträge zur Wiener Stadtgeschichte 52), Vienna 2010, pp. 15–30, esp. p. 28.

[2] Wilfried Ehbrecht, "civile ius per novos iurantes consuetum est ab antiquo in Fivelgoniae". Merkmale nichtagrarischer Siedlungen im mittelalterlichen Friesland zwischen Lauwers und Weser (Characteristics of non-agrarian settlements in medieval Friesland between the rivers Lauwers and Weser), in: Peter Johanek (ed.), Der weite Blick des Historikers. Einsichten in Kultur-, Landes- und Stadtgeschichte. Peter Johanek zum 65. Geburtstag, Cologne/Weimar/Vienna 2002, pp. 409–452, esp. pp. 417–418.

spaces face imaginary and idealised ones. Some of these spaces are restricted to the town only, while other spaces can be understood as a junction in a network that extends beyond the town. Dichotomies attesting to the multifunctionality of space have in particular stood the test as analytical guiding differences in the research of urban space: centre versus periphery, interior and exterior spaces, open versus closed spaces, public versus private spaces, built-up/developed versus undeveloped spaces, ephemeral versus permanent spaces. Male-oriented spaces are confronted with female-oriented and gender-neutral spaces, sacred spaces contrast with secular spaces.[3] Various spatial values can be differentiated from a social, political, economic and cultural point of view: (1) epicentral, (2) central, (3) pericentral, (4) centripetal, (5) centrifugal, (6) decentralised and, finally, (7) concentric spaces attach themselves around an imaginary town core.[4] The spaces within the town are thus determined by human activities and subjects, since it is only through the perception of subjects that a space gains a certain value. According to German sociologist Martina Löw,[5] a space ends up the outcome of a process of constitution, in which a space is structured by people and goods, to finally be synthesised into a specific space through memory performance. In Löw's understanding, a "location" by contrast manifests in the form of the structural or natural substrate. Several "spaces" can attach themselves to a location while overlapping, for instance. Particular groups of people appropriate spaces through ceremonies and rituals, but the structural organisation of urban spaces too can undergo architectonic change for specific spatial uses and groups of people.[6] Using the example of the Vienna Town Hall, this location might stand for a party-political manifestation, given the fact that this is where May Day demonstrations and social democracy celebrations take place. The Vienna Town Hall, however, is also synonymous with Christmas markets, children ice-skating in February, circus events, the opening of the Vienna Festival, the Life Ball, which raises money for Aids research, and so forth. Space as a "social product" was already a central idea of French sociologists Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991) and Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002), who distinguished the "physical" from the "social" space. The space inhabited by urban dwellers is above all socially structured and defined[7] – social space and physical space are thus characterised by relationships and interactions.

One of the forms of representation of urban space, strongly advocated since 1955 by the "International Commission for the History of Towns", can be seen in European town atlases, which endeavour to bring urban development to light in stand-

---

3 Susanne Rau, Räume (Spaces) (Historische Einführungen 14), Frankfurt/New York 2013, pp. 145–149.

4 See the contribution by Pim Kooij in this volume, which examines this model via various categories (political, economic, social and cultural) using the example of the Netherlands.

5 Martina Löw, Raumsoziologie (Sociology of space), Frankfurt/Main 2001.

6 See the contribution by Martina Stercken in this volume on theatre appropriating urban space in the late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period.

7 Pierre Bourdieu, Sozialer Raum (Social space) [1989], in: Jörg Dünne/Stephan Günzel (eds.), Raumtheorie, Grundlagentexte aus Philosophie und Kulturwissenschaften, Frankfurt/Main 2006, pp. 357–370. For Lefebvre: Henri Lefebvre, La Production de l'espace, Paris 1974 (many translations in several languages since).

ardised town maps.[8] Nevertheless, European town atlases, which in their national configurations certainly revealed different approaches to the task at hand, are but one way in which urban development can be depicted historically and educationally, as evidenced by French examples of chronological and colour representation models of urban development, for instance.[9] Using the city of Bordeaux, Ezéchiel Jean-Courret and Sandrine Lavaud further developed the chorematic concept established by French geographer Roger Brunet, by integrating the dimension of time and publishing a chrono-chorematic town atlas, the theoretical foundations of which are outlined in an introductory chapter.

The first main part of the present volume, essentially derived from a conference of the "International Commission for the History of Towns" in Lisbon 2013 (Organisation Magda Pinheiro), presents above all specific locations and their spatial interpretation. In a next step, the spatial concept of towns from the late Middle Ages and Modern Period is studied more closely, since some urban locations (for instance town neighbourhoods, squares, houses) undergo a new interpretation as a result of social, official, economic and cultural circumstances. Thanks to the prolific output of sources even in the Middle Ages, towns have proven themselves to be suitable research objects for studying the dynamics of spatial use. For a long time, multifunctional urban spaces were investigated merely as one-dimensional research fields. For instance, churches were regarded as a playground for art history, underground railways as the domain of the history of technology, the market square as a research area for economic history. It is only more recent research focusing on cultural studies that increasingly endeavours to question the "complex interaction between spaces, spatial practices, spatial conflicts and players."[10]

In particular a town's spaces of power, i.e. the concurrence of "power" and "space", lend themselves well to the study of the spatial social formation that is a town.[11] Contemporary discourse can thus decipher public government and justice buildings, such as court houses, town halls or prisons, just as well as economic institutions (such as fish and meat halls, stock exchanges, weigh houses) or educational establishments (parish schools, schools, universities).[12] In late medieval and Early Modern Europe, these "places of power" saw conflicting tendencies emerge: on the one hand (in the sense of a monofunctional movement), a specialisation of building types became apparent (for instance the town hall as an administrative centre) while, on the other hand, there was a continued existence of multifunctional buildings,

---

[8] For European town atlases, see for example http://www.staedtegeschichte.de/staedteatlanten; for distribution map http://www.staedtegeschichte.de/portal/staedteatlanten/karte.html [accessed on 14/01/2016].

[9] See the conceptual contribution by Ezéchiel Jean-Courret and Sandrine Lavaud in this volume.

[10] Rau, Räume (cf. note 3), p. 154.

[11] For example Christian Hochmuth/Susanne Rau (eds.), Machträume der frühneuzeitlichen Stadt / Spaces of power of the town of the Early Modern Period (Konflikt und Kultur – Historische Perspektiven 13), Konstanz 2006.

[12] Konrad Ottenheym/Krista De Jonge/Monique Chatenet (eds.), Public Buildings in Early Modern Europe (Architectura Moderna. Architectural Exchanges in Europe, 16th–17th Centuries 9), Turnhout 2010. See the contribution by Martin Scheutz in this volume.

which combined uses that were occasionally contradictory in themselves (such as the town hall housing a market hall, administrative centre and weigh house all under one roof). Representation and functionality, architectonic diversity, economisation, the authority of the government as well as rationalisation were typical and defining elements for the organisation of administrative structures, educational establishments, farm buildings, etc. in the late Middle Ages and the Modern Period. Using the example of the town halls, various style regions can be identified throughout Europe: for instance, in contrast to the Dutch function councils, the Scottish tolbooths (town halls), featuring a clock tower or a campanile, did not emulate the classical Italian models, but instead sought to adopt their own national architectural language. Generally speaking, town hall designs were determined by the regional economy. On the other hand, the Early Modern examples of Nürnberg and Augsburg bear obvious witness to the fact that imperial town halls followed not "republican" but rather aristocratic examples, based on birth order models. Similarly, the belfries (beffroi) in Belgium and northern France, commonly used as bell towers, can also be understood as an architecture of power, in that these secular bell towers visibly separated the town from its rural surroundings. These belfries, which started appearing from the High Middle Ages onwards (occasionally also featuring a carillon), represented the authority of the town council as well as that of the guilds. While they provided the acoustic signal to mark the start or end of the working day and rang in local celebrations, they also served the purpose of defence.[13]

The urban house façades can be described as an outer garment that changed regularly according to fashion and social, economic and cultural circumstances. On 1 November 1755, the great earthquake of Lisbon and subsequent tsunami destroyed large parts of Lisbon's lower city. Notwithstanding the associated humanitarian disaster, this provided the authorities with an opportunity for a coherent, late Baroque redesign of the city. The façades can be understood both as a conservative element, reflecting the environment of the former owners, as well as a progressive medium of transformation, with new house owners designing their façades according to economic, but also contemporary trends. When it came to façade design, neighbouring houses also played an important role. The socioeconomic rise and decline of houses, but also of entire neighbourhoods, can thus be clearly seen in the façades, much like the conservation interventions carried out by the authorities during the 20th/21st century.[14]

The urban space as a constantly changing stage and transformative space is illustrated in two examples from the Portuguese metropolis of Lisbon. In contemporary crime statistics, Portugal's rapidly growing capital also emerged as the centre of crime, whereas the capital's poorer areas, inhabited by workers, were also home to a disproportionate number of police stations. The urban and state authorities reacted to the growing poor areas and their high crime rates through increased discipline and control.[15] Streets in particular, being focal points for recreational activities,

[13] See the contribution by Jean-Luc Fray in this volume.

[14] See the example of Rua da Prata in the contribution by Maria Clara Bracinha Vieira in this volume.

[15] For the criminal history, see the contribution by Maria João Vaz and Gonçalo Rocha Gonçalves.

experienced increased monitoring, the urban authorities deeming this space to be dangerous. During the day, the city centre was taken over by merchants, bankers and tradesmen; at night, the area was ruled by marginalised groups of people, but also by artistically progressive groups. During the 1920s, away from the usual public taverns, Lisbon's Bohemia forged new social places for itself: in different parts of Lisbon, "clubs" and "cabarets" emerged as meeting places for noblemen, rich bankers, artists and the demi-monde.[16] In addition to gambling, conversation and an artistic ambience, these clubs introduced the new music genre of jazz to Lisbon. The end of industrial production in towns saw decommissioned factories and industrial neighbourhoods acquiring a surprising new lease of life, as observed in the examples of the Finnish cities of Helsinki and Tampere during the 20th and 21st century. Former cable manufacturing plants provided space for a cultural centre; design facilities and with them new industry branches took over the old steel furnaces and the crumbling heavy industry – entire urban neighbourhoods thus witnessed not just a decline but also a slow, new orientation of urban space.[17] The industry, once instrumental in driving urban growth, with its post-industrial use once again contributes to a changed urban space concept in terms of content.

The intrinsic interaction of town, buildings and space-related appropriation strategies of subjects or groups (tradesmen, fraternities) from the Late Middle Ages to the Modern Period form the fundamental issue of the first section of this volume. Space, use of space and the change in spatial conception are addressed in the contributions, as are issues regarding public life and privacy, gender-specific use of space and the connection between topography and social status. The objective of recent urban history research is also to increasingly "describe (urban development) from a space and sociability perspective as a reciprocal, recursive process."[18]

The second part of the volume, derived from the 2014 conference of the "International Commission for the History of Towns" in Clermont-Ferrand (France), addresses the complexity of urban space design and awareness. In the introduction to this part, Jean-Luc Fray, who was responsible for the conceptual and logistical preparation of the conference, presents the theoretical issue in the context of the town-space discussion before introducing the individual contributions. At the end, a tour of the twin city of Clermont-Ferrand allowed participants to discover the manifold complexity of the urban space on foot, while an excursion through the triple cities Clermont – Montferrand – Riom had to be cancelled for financial reasons.

---

[16] See the contribution by Cecília Vaz in this volume.

[17] See the contribution by Marjatta Hietala in this volume.

[18] Susanne Rau, Räume der Stadt. Eine Geschichte Lyons 1300–1800 / Town spaces. A history of Lyon 1300–1800, Frankfurt/Main, New York 2014, p. 20. See also Michel Pauly/Martin Scheutz, Der Raum und die Geschichte am Beispiel der Stadtgeschichtsforschung / Space and history as exemplified by urban history research, in: Idem (eds.), Cities and their Spaces. Concepts and their Use in Europe (Städteforschung A/88), Weimar/Vienna 2014, pp. 1–28.