

Civic Building Activities in Riga and Munich: Parallels in Urban Development and Stylistic History

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Abstract – Two distant towns, two founding initiators and, at least for parts of the historic development, strictly separated political systems do not actually suggest a range of similarities. Yet, in closer examination during an academic student research project on major public buildings in Riga and Munich, several remarkable references occurred: some triggered by outstanding individuals, some due to pan-European architectural flow. By comparing the key stages of urban development, mainly on the analysis of historical plans and vedutas and by detecting stylistic links in the cities' public buildings, striking parallels became visible, as well as significant differences in detail.

Keywords – Civic buildings, urban development, Riga and Munich.

INTRODUCTION

Within the narrative of European urban history, the alternation of unifying, transnational influence and interdependence with periods of separating national movements makes up a fairly regular pattern. As part of an academic student research project on public buildings in the urban context at TUM, pan-European parallels in the development of cities were analysed by a comparison of two towns: Riga and Munich. Both towns date back to a similar time of foundation and start at the common roots of Henry the Lion's municipal charter, both were founded at sites that were strategically favourable for trading. The research focuses on large public buildings as indicators and catalysts of urban and architectural development to visualize possible analogies and different aspects in the cities' history. By a detailed examination of ancient plans and vedutas, the main stages of urban and civic development, such as extensions of the walled-in medieval towns, early suburban development and defortification and the substantial growth during the 19th century, were compared. In addition, the analysis of stylistic tendencies in significant buildings and urban spaces contributed further indications to the perspective of our research.

12th Century: Foundation of Trading Posts in Medieval Europe

The interwoven history began with a vision: In the late 1150s, when Henry the Lion founded the Hansa towns Lübeck and Rostock along the northern coast of the empire, his greater plan desired a trans-continental trading route from Sweden to Italy. Medieval trading is the key to the first intersection of the towns' histories: Riga as an assembly location for Baltic Sea tradesmen and part of the Hanseatic League, Munich as the major stapling point in the Bavarian plain along the great rivers.

Munich was first to be founded, at the same time as the establishment of the Hanseatic League. As market spots in the southern part of the realm lay in the episcopal sphere of control, Henry the Lion, duke of Saxony and Bavaria and a relative of Frederick Barbarossa, called for the emperor's permission to es-

tablish a new trading right at the shores of river Isar. To the dismay of bishop Otto I, the imperial award allowed the House of Welf to settle in close neighbourhood of the diocesan town Freising at a convenient crossing of the river, to build a new toll bridge and to introduce a long-distance trading station for salt, wood, wine and cloth. Due to a restriction on long-distance trading only, the regalia could be awarded to the duke [1, 23], but revenues had to be shared, with the duke holding market and staple rights and the bishop holding toll and court rights. A constellation causing trouble for the centuries to come. Henry implemented his territorial plan with force: court records herald the destruction of the close-by bridge and local market in the existing episcopal settlement Föhring [1, 36] in 1158. Munich's foundation and the traders' security in the walled town proofed to be a catalyst for the region. The first settlement's traces, enclosed by the first wall as soon as in 1170, are still visible in the urban shape today. Set at the crossing of the important salt route from East to West and the Hansa-Italy-trading path from North to South, salt trading as the main source of income is visibly reflected in the town plan by the east-westerly main road (Neuhauserstraße) and the large market square shows the key status of the commercial crossroads (Marienplatz). Soon after the foundation, in 1180, Henry's influence was terminated by court sentence, conveying the reign over the market to the House of Wittelsbach. Despite the Wittelsbachs' rightful lordship, it took them decades to settle their ruling power, which still had to be shared with the clergy. In 1210 Munich was referred to as holding a town charter. Yet, local citizenship did not gain a voice before 1239, when the first council of lords was assembled. Amongst the most important remains of the "leonic town" are the ducal court (Alter Hof), the market square with the central mint and the churches St. Peter and St. Mary, the latter being appointed as the second parish church in 1271 to accommodate the increase of settlers.

Riga's history as a trading place began with regular summerly trade meetings fostered by the topographic conditions: a safe harbour for the ships, suitable storage sites and a stronghold [2, 19–24]. Tradesmen first brought Christianity to Livonia. The church appointed the first Livonian bishop in 1186, but it took almost two decades of fierce missionary conflicts to establish the Christian faith. Bishop Albert founded Riga finally in 1201, following a papally evoked crusade along river Duna. Soon the population increased because of the founder generously granting commercially promotional privileges and implementing the successful Lübisches municipal law [3, 40], drafted by Henry the Lion for operational excellence of his Hansa towns. Henry's extraordinary commercial laws determined the first development periods of both Munich and Riga.

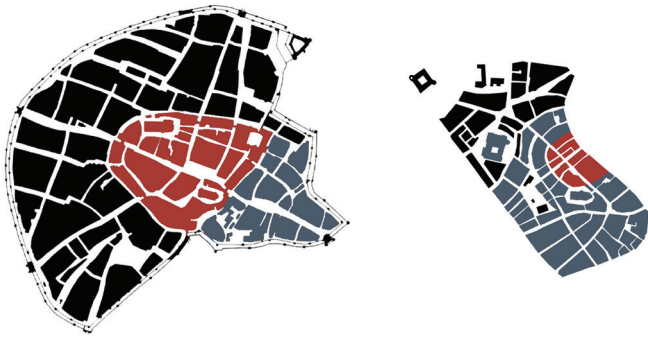


Fig. 1. Development of the medieval towns of Munich and Riga, the extensions marked in different colours [Figure: TUM, Chair for Building History, Buildings Archaeology and Heritage Conservation].

Fig. 2. Town model, built to scale by carpenter Jakob Sandtner in 1570 [Figure: I. Mühlhaus, TUM, Chair for Building History, Buildings Archaeology and Heritage Conservation].



Fig. 3. Altes Rathaus (Old Town Hall) with late Renaissance façade (copperplate engraving by M. Wenning, 1701 / before redecoration around 1860 / after renovation in Gothic revival forms 1861–1864 [5, 89, 108, 115].

13th to 15th Century: Residence and Citizenry Town

Since Munich was the sole legitimate place for mongering salt in the region, all traded salt had to be transported via the Munich bridge and had to be stapled in town [1, 77]. In consequence a first enlargement became necessary in the 13th century, absorbing the suburbium along today's street named "Tal" with the craftsmen's dwellings, such as Lederergasse (leather workshops' alley), Pfistergasse (baker alley), Fischergaßl (fishermen's alleyway). The second wall was commenced in 1301, creating protected but subordinate urban structures for the less wealthy inhabitants. The gated core within the first wall was reserved for the rich merchants. Crafts operating with fire or emitting smells were relegated to the outer quarters [1, 65]. Within the walls, Munich's municipal law allowed the citizens to trade, which boosted their influence considerably (Fig. 1).

Although switching from ministerial control to a citizen's town, the duke still held the sovereign's privileges and approved the town council [1, 62–66]. Between 1397 and 1403 the citizens hatched several revolutionary riots, which initiated the construction of a new residence, the "Neue Veste", as a north-eastern extramural extension. In the town bourgeoisie

cooperative building activity awakened, and Munich now possessed all buildings characteristic of a civic town: a town shed at the "Anger" (1410), a weigh house (1413), bread and meat markets (1426), an armoury and a grain barn (1431), a salt barn (1443), mills at the Isartor (1462), and a communal bakery (1474) [4, 22–24]. The multifunctional Munich town hall (1470) typologically represented the spirit of the medieval civic society, shaping the town centre for centuries to come. A former gate was refurbished into a tower, linking the older building of the council hall and the new representative building with a ballroom and shops. The design of the adjacent weigh house and the 16th century town treasurer's hall can be seen in the Renaissance town model built by Jacob Sandtner [5, 30] (see Fig. 2). The town hall's importance, albeit changing, can be read from the effort undertaken to keep it up to date, with stylistic redecorations ranging from the late Gothic original (J. von Halspach copied the main features of the high rising gables, a vaulted hall in the upper floor and trading arbours in the ground floor from the older Augsburg dancing hall) via a late Renaissance formal design to a French Baroque Façade (A. Demmel 1778/1779) and lastly several steps of Gothic Revival forms in the 19th century by A. Zenetti in 1861–1864 (Fig. 3) [5, 30, 109].



Fig. 4. Aerial views of the fortified towns of Munich (1642) and Riga (1637) by Matthäus Merian [Figure: LH München et. al. (2004), p. 33 / rigahistory.com].

Again, there are similarities to Riga: in 1300 a second wall was completed to enlarge the protected area. With the knightly order as second power settling in Konventhof, the episcopal reign was jeopardized constantly, culminating in a dispute over building a new bridge around 1330. Subduing the town, the order moved to a new Ordensburg. Alike the new residence Neue Veste in Munich, the order's castle was surrounded by walls on all sides to avoid attacks by the citizenship. Amongst the important 13th century buildings are the cathedral, the St. Peter and St. Jacob churches and the Franciscan and Dominican monasteries.

Thanks to the various commercial activities, within 150 years Riga quickly evolved from a market settlement into a town with all built characteristics of the aspiring citizenship: a mint, bread and meat markets, a weigh house, a town hall, the Schwarzhäupterhaus and breweries [3, 42–44]. Trade and crafts thrived, civil arts and crafts flowered and schooling institutions educated the townspeople.

In Munich the town hall was rebuilt in the 15th century as the most obvious signature building of the urban society and the new town church, “Dom zu Unserer Lieben Frau”, rose to a size worthy of a cathedral. Contemporary townscapes, such as the Schedel'sche Weltchronik or Matthäus Merian's drawings (Fig. 4), showcase the distribution of powers, with the churches, the sovereign's residence and the towered town halls rising over the town

The 16th to 18th Century: Rise of the Court

In the course of the 14th and 15th century nobility retreated from the town to the adjacent residence “Neue Veste” to avoid the plague and to withdraw from the impact of civil unrest. The court residence was constantly fortified and extended to measure up to the increasing demand for luxury and representation (Antiquarium 1569). Furthermore, the Ducal properties in

the town centre were redeveloped (Hofbibliothek, 1558; Maxburg, 1597) and partially used as economic units, such as the royal mill and bakery, creating a town in town model. Along this considerable architectural interference came societal alterations, as influential citizens turned away from the town council, hoping for promotion opportunities at the Ducal Bavarian court.

The social upheavals of the 16th century affected all of Europe, with wars overrunning the continent and the Reformation shaking up the society, subsequently leaving behind unstable power structures. In Riga the Polish and the Swedish lay siege to the town, in Munich the Swedish and the French. In 1581, Riga was besieged and conquered by the Polish. By 1621 power had shifted to the Swedish King Gustav Adolf, whose war across Europe reached Munich just a decade later.

During Riga's Swedish period mainly fortification edifices were erected, most notably the citadel and the bastions along the town wall. In Munich, the Thirty Years' War put an end to all construction activities, left the town in debt and the citizens fighting poverty. Thus, the Baroque building tasks concentrated on the nobility and church (e.g. Theatinerkirche, 1675). The Duke erected the summer castles Nymphenburg and Schleißheim, and various noble families replaced an old town quarter with palaces (Preysing Palais, Toerring Palais, Holstein Palais). [1, 114; 4, 27–49]

“The Long 19th Century”: Renewal and Expansion Periods

In 1710, the Swedish handed the town of Riga to Tsarist Russia, commencing a long period of political calmness and peace, which made the fortification redundant and enabled urban structure to grow. All over Europe, the beginning de-fortification ended the court's property monopole and marked the kick-off of spacious expansions. While both Munich and Riga kept their fortifications during the 18th century, Riga's scheduled extramural



Fig. 5. Bernardo Bellotto, named Canaletto; Munich from the East side of the Isar River, 1761 [6, 8].



Fig. 6. Munich and Riga in the 2nd half of the 18th century: No planned suburban development in Munich surrounding the historic city centre (orange) / Planned suburbs on a regular grid (blue) in Riga [Figure: Stadtatlas München / Jānis Krastiņš].

development began in the middle of the century with the Johannesvorstadt. It was followed by the Petersburg, Mitau and Moscow suburbs. However, the urban extensions were utterly at the military's and the government's mercy: in 1700 and 1812 all buildings were burned down to clear the field of fire and in 1772 parts were converted into an esplanade [9, 87–88; 7, 16].

In contrast, Munich never developed planned suburban settlements [7, 17]. At the end of the 18th century, it still offered the prototypical image of a medieval town, as painted by Canaletto in 1761: a walled in, small-scale structured urban centre, surrounded by rural landscape. Outside the walls, only sheds, barns and workshops gathered loosely as well as public gardens for the citizens' recreation (Figs. 5 and 6).

While Munich came to a standstill [6, 17], building activity flourished in Riga. Concerning the public buildings, the most remarkable is the erection of the new Town Hall (1750–1765), with its high tower and temple motifs serving as a prominent symbol for the municipality. Riga's political setting, with a distant yet undisputed Tsarist sovereign, allowed the local administration more representative buildings than the absolutist Wittelsbach dynasty did in Munich, residing almost next door from the Town Hall. The Tsarist reign in Riga evoked a widespread implementation of characteristic classicist elements: the square in front of the old castle, cleared in the course of its refurbishment, strictly differed from the medieval context both in size and uniformity. Flanked by the imperial lyceum and with the victory monument in

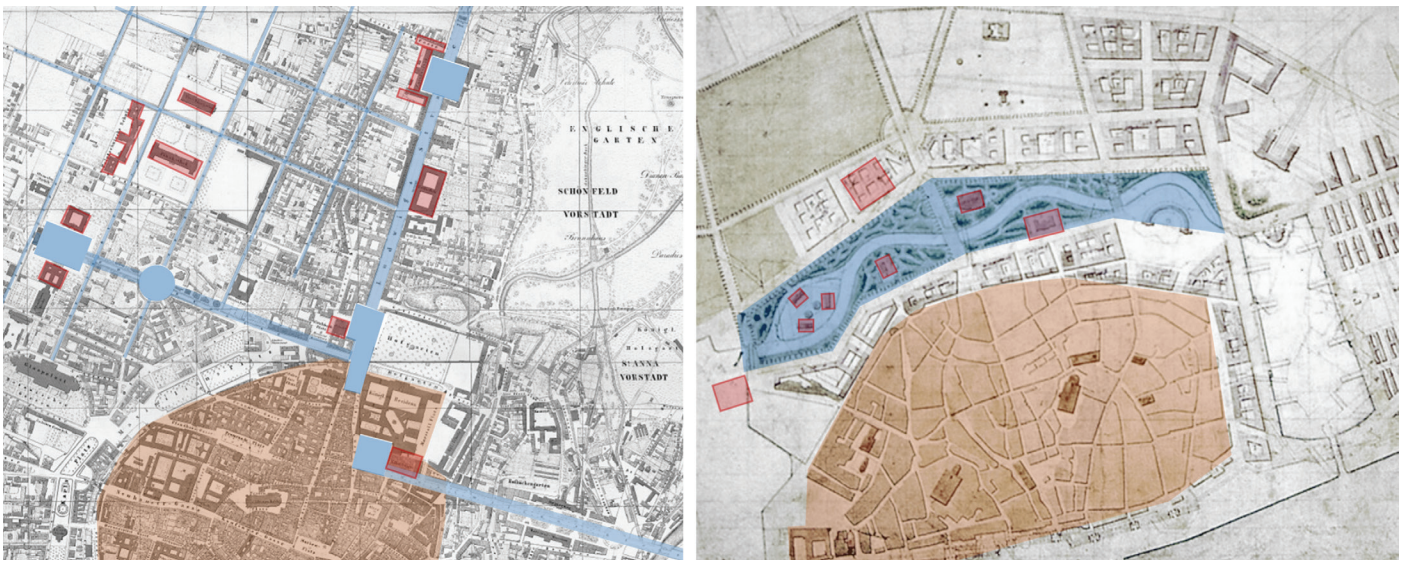


Fig. 7. Overview of Munich's new neoclassical suburb Maxvorstadt, superimposed to the fortifications with monumental axes and squares, after 1810 / Green circle boulevard in Riga with canal in place of fortifications by J.D. Felsko, 1856 [Figure: Stadtatlas München / Jānis Krastiņš].

the centre of the square, it was obviously inspired by the “modern ideal town” St. Petersburg rather than historic local traditions. While ostensibly built for the inhabitants taking their share in the representative architecture, it was still demonstrating the Tsarist power over the people.

Munich literally was freed from the lethargy in urban planning on June 2, 1795, when Elector Carl Theodor, following the ideals of the Enlightenment, ordered the demolition of the fortifications to make Munich into an “open town” [10, 38; 11, 95]. The spatial and urban opening was accompanied by a societal change: the court library became public, the painting collection was displayed in a gallery, and the ducal gardens were finally opened up to the people [12, 79]. Public green was a major topic in breaking out of the restrictive patterns: from 1789 on, the English Garden, *continental Europe's first democratic green*, was created under the council of the Earl of Rumford and the planning of Friedrich Ludwig von Sckell [14, 204]. As a garden intended for the people's recreation and not just for a look upon courtly gardening art, it was formed after Rousseau's ideal of nature. By comparison, Riga's inhabitants were permitted to stroll under the Dutch linden trees in Peter the Great's geometric garden almost a century earlier [13].

Cities like Vienna and Riga could foster extramural extensions and subsequently reuse the fortification space for boulevards and garden belts with numerous public buildings in a superordinate urban structure, buffering the historic town centre against the new suburbs (Riga, from 1856, and Vienna, from 1858) [15, 114]. However, after 1800, de-fortification in Munich triggered such a pressing urban development that it could well be called a new foundation rather than an extension [10, 37]. Landscape planner Friedrich Ludwig von Sckell and architect Carl von Fischer did not consider the former shape of the fortress and instead

implemented a strict rectangular pattern beginning right next to the old town [11, 98]. Therefore, the new large-scale public buildings were integrated directly in the suburb's structures (Fig. 7). A central place in the new Maxvorstadt also represents the political frame-work at the time of its construction. During the Napoleonic wars, Bavaria's new sovereign Maximilian I. Joseph tactically allied with the French for a short period, sparing the realm from occupation and being rewarded with kingship. After an immediate change of allegiance to the side the allied forces from 1813 on, the kingdom of Bavaria sat among the winners at the Congress of Vienna. At Karolinenplatz, a bronze obelisk was erected in memory of the Bavarian soldiers killed in Napoleon's Russia expedition and the connecting streets are named after places where Napoleon lost battles to the allied forces.

Within the historic boundaries of the town centre, the secularisation of monasteries vacated large properties on which squares were installed, e.g. the Max-Joseph-Platz (the counterpart of Riga Pils laukums) highlighting the royal residence and a new opera house, which was designed by architect Carl von Fischer (1802). The Nationaltheater was intended to be no less than a stage for all German people, democratically dedicated to the king and the people. However, it was destroyed by fire shortly after completion and had to be rebuilt by Leo von Klenze (from 1823). He altered the original concept by doubling the Corinthian portico, citing K. F. Schinkel's Schauspielhaus in Berlin, the same building that inspired Riga's first public building along the boulevard, the Latvian National Opera. Here Schinkel's influence is visible even down to the detailing of the façade decoration. In favour of a more cubic volume, however, architect L. Bohnsted did not cite the most innovative feature of the Schauspielhaus, the double portico. In general, the classicist formal vocabulary was

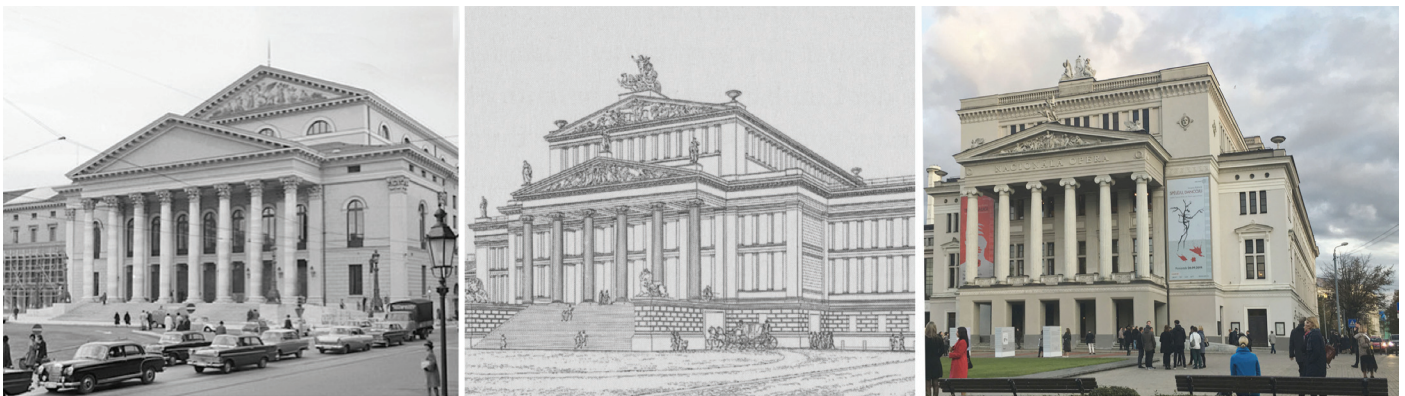


Fig. 8. Munich, Court and State Opera, neoclassic theatre building by Carl v. Fischer, 1810–1818, after severe fire damage rebuilt by Leo v. Klenze 1829 with doubled tympanon / Berlin, Schauspielhaus, neoclassic theatre building by Karl Friedrich Schinkel 1820 / Riga, Latvian National Opera by Ludwig Bohnstedt 1860–1863 [Figure: Bayerischer Rundfunk / Buttlar 1999, p.242 / P. Kifinger].



Fig. 9. Munich, neoclassical Florentine renaissance at Ludwigstraße with L.v. Klenze’s strict classicism (Ministry of War, 1830, foreground) and F.v. Gärtner round-arch-style (State Library, 1842, background) / Königsbau by Klenze after the model of Palazzo Pitti / Riga, Ritterhaus from 1867 in eclectic Florentine neo-renaissance [Figure: P. Kifinger / commons.wikimedia.org / P. Kifinger].

applied more eclectically and interpretative in the second half of the 19th century (Fig. 8).

Unprecedented and on the same level as Schinkel in Berlin and Engel in Helsinki, court architect Klenze transformed Munich towards a modern, classicist European capital. The Königsplatz (from 1816) is regarded one of the most important neo-classical squares. The surrounding architecture is meant to educate the public, featuring the three classic orders: Doric at the Propyläen (L. von Klenze 1854–1862), Ionic at the Glyptothek and Corinthian at the exhibition hall (G. F. Ziebland 1835–1845).

Klenze’s formally and conceptually pathbreaking Glyptothek, a gallery for antique sculpture, was one of the first public museums ever. Although the new Maxvorstadt suburb was still almost undeveloped, the king and his architect continued the scheme by building the Alte Pinakothek as a functionally and technically most advanced – and again public – paintings gallery.

The king’s most comprehensive project, the Ludwigstraße, was appointed the main axis of expansion (see also Fig. 7). The adaption of a Florentine Renaissance style – closely resembling Riga’s newer Ritterhaus of 1860 – characterizes the blocks along the road and the prelude monumental square. For the less

prominent and important buildings along his urban masterpiece Klenze only drafted the façades and left the remaining design with the owners, as it was customary all over Europe. Similarly, the strive for classicist uniformity had been established in Riga, where buildings had to comply with sample books from St. Petersburg architects, amongst them W.P. Stassow, later responsible for the building site of Klenze’s Hermitage in St. Petersburg. There was a turning point in the planning of Ludwigstraße, when F. von Gärtner took over as leading architect and introduced a change of scale. Under his supervision a row of large-scale public buildings arose along the Northern part of the road, with two of the most important buildings for research and education in Bavaria, the court and state library and the university. In comparison to Klenze’s Italianate Renaissance decoration, Gärtner makes use of a less sophisticated round-arch style, rendering the buildings blockier, on the verge of monotony (Fig. 9).

Across Europe a dispute arose, which H. Hübsch subsumed 1828 with the bon mot “In welchem Style sollen wir bauen?” (In what style should we build?). In Munich, following the abdication of Ludwig I in 1848, the succeeding sovereign Maximilian II implemented a more vertically structured style employing

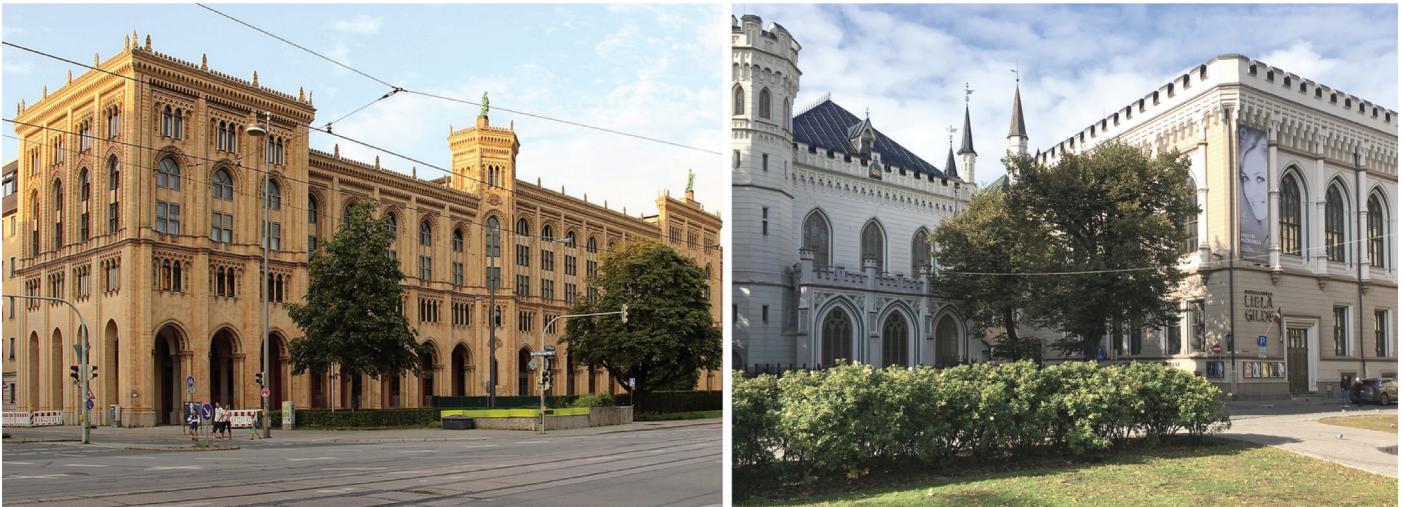


Fig. 10. Munich, Maximilianstrasse, with buildings by F. Bürklein 1856–1864, representing the “New Style” of the Maximilian-II-era, a round-arch-style with vertical disposition and neogothic decoration / Riga, Small Guild (1859, left) and Great Guild (1866, right) in a similar neogothic style [Figure: commons.wikimedia.org / P. Kifinger].



Fig. 11. “Construction of history” as a reference to great civic times: Munich, New Town Hall by G. Hauberrisser, 1868–1905 / Riga, Schwab House by K. Felsko, 1891, adjacent to the late medieval Schwarzhäupter House to the right [Figure: P. Kifinger].

Gothic Revival elements, which was mainly used along the Maximilianstraße. The contemporary edifices of the Small Guild (K. Beine 1853–1859) and the Great Guild (J. D. Felsko 1864–1866) in Riga show significant similarities (Fig. 10). The use of Romanic and Gothic elements on the building of Riga Polytechnic (G. Hilbig 1866) on the other hand equals the development in Munich. Interestingly, Munich’s counterpart, the Neue Polytechnische Hochschule (1868), was designed in a lavish Roman Neo-Renaissance style, since the Gothic influenced style of Maximilian II was quickly marginalized to military building only.

The following decades marked the late yet final breakthrough of eclecticism in Munich. The Gothic revival building of the new Town Hall (G. Hauberrisser 1868–1905) deceptively suggests a historical building process by skilfully combining its first construction phase – built from brick, and the secondary

phases – built from stone and decorated with rich Flemish influenced ornaments. A similar attempt of creating history has been made in Riga, where the Schwabhaus (K. Felsko) does not adopt the late Gothic style of the adjacent Schwarzhäupterhaus and instead implies a subsequent development by using Renaissance style. With these and other revival buildings both cities tried to celebrate their great civic periods (Fig. 11).

Ironically, by the time of its completion, Munich’s new Town Hall was already falling out of fashion as the Art Nouveau (Jugendstil) began to emerge.

For both cities, the turn of the centuries marked the beginning of an immense growth. In Riga, the increase of population manifested in an unrivalled boom of Art Nouveau quarters. Quite often, however, the lavishly decorated façades (e.g. by civil engineer and architect M. Eisenstein) belonged to ordinary apart-



Fig. 12. “Hocheder-Baroque”, a local style in Munich combining neo-baroque architecture with Art Nouveau forms (Ministry of Transport, 1905–1913) / Latvian National Museum of Art in Riga by W. Neumann, 1905, also in neo-baroque style with Art Nouveau influence [Figure: commons.wikimedia.org / P. Kifinger].

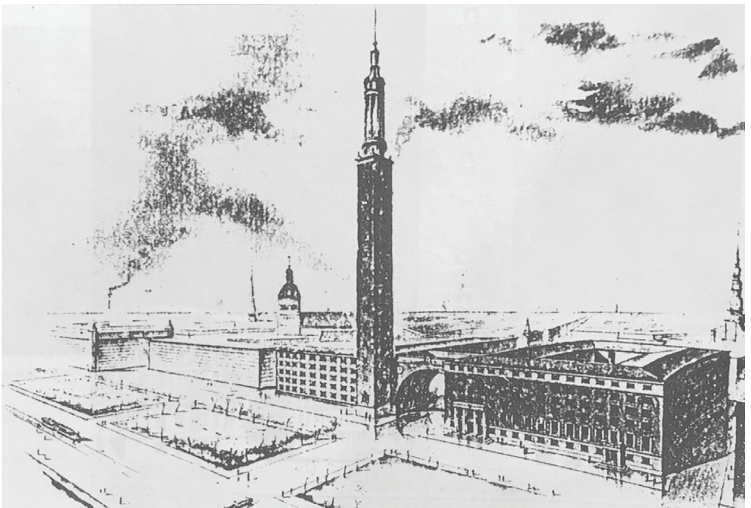
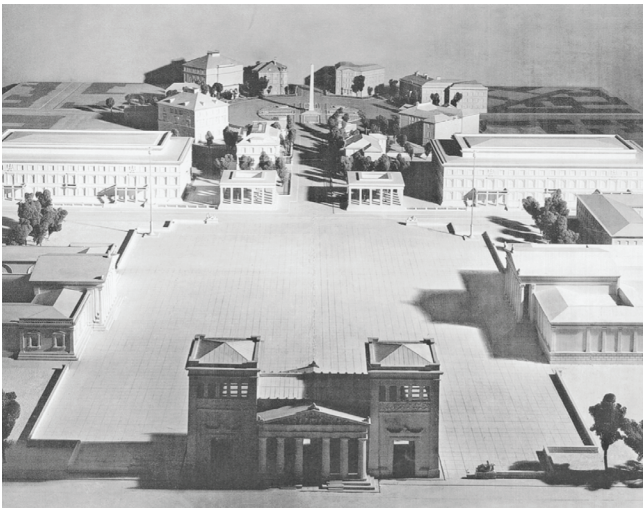


Fig. 13. Munich in the 1930’s, the acquisition of Königsplatz: as the central stage for the National-Socialist orchestration / large-sized planning for the Town Hall square in Riga as a part of neoclassic tendencies all over Europe [Figure: [6, 238] / Fülberth (2005), Abb. 74].

ment houses, while the public buildings tended to keep a more conservative appearance, e.g. the Latvian National Theatre from 1901. The National Art Museum (1905) displays an early mix of neo-Baroque and Art Nouveau, resembling a local Munich style developed by C. Hocheder (Hocheder-Baroque), which shaped Munich’s public buildings for years. The best-known examples are Müller’sches Volksbad as well as the Ministry of Transport, almost fully destroyed during World War II. In the end, the Art Nouveau movement’s influence on public building, both in Munich and Riga, remained limited to such attempts of a decent mixture with historic elements (Fig. 12).

After World War I, due to serious housing shortage, public building activity in Germany was mostly halted in favour of massive housing development programmes. Under the new political auspices in Nazi Germany and in Munich in particular, a new

planning phase set in after 1933. Amongst the vast planning, the Nazis sought to demonstrate their governmental power by implementing large administration buildings and pseudo-religious “temples of honour” along the eastern side of the Königsplatz, turning the pinnacle of Enlightenment planning and idealistic Philhellenism into the central stage for the National-Socialist orchestration. Albeit in various different political contexts, the 1930s saw monumental planning programmes all over Europe. In Riga, a new scale was to be set by spectacular monumental complexes, such as high-rise towers that would have competed with the three historic spires in the skyline (Fig. 13). As in Munich, most of them remained drafts [17, 349f].

World War II brought enormous disruption for both towns, at least for Munich the most severe in its history. Almost all the ensembles and buildings introduced in this essay lay in ruins or

were severely damaged. Riga, too, had to moan several identity-carrying historic and public buildings, such as the Town Hall and the Schwarzhäupterhaus. The subsequent reconstruction and the entire urban development in the second half of the 20th century occurred in two hermetically separated political systems. For Riga and Latvia the fall of the iron curtain and the regained independence mark another turning point at end of the last century.

CONCLUSIONS

Tracing the significant stages and elements of urban development in Munich and Riga as well as their stylistic expression in the public buildings, a lot of striking parallels became visible. Yet, by examining the historical background of those parallels, very often a certain shift of time between Riga and Munich occurred: constitutive events like suburban spread or de-fortification did not happen simultaneously, nor did the emergence of architectural styles. So, the multiple and startling similarities in the pattern of the towns and the appearance of public buildings may be truly considered as the outcome of a century-long pan-European architectural tradition fed by an intensively transnational exchange both between authorities and planners. Due to the political and social separation, the architectonic ties between Munich and Riga since 1945 are intricate and less obvious than during the centuries before. Thus, a subsequent research and comparison of the urban and architectural developments has to remain a desiderate for the time being. Just as well, the legitimately asked question, whether the European Union brought a pan-European architectural output, can hardly be answered yet.

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