
Versailles as an urban model: new court-towns in Germany *circa* 1700

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Abstract. *At the beginning of the eighteenth century in western Europe a new urbanism emerged. Modern warfare and welfare, modern centralized state administration and modern liberties demanded new urban forms: unfortified towns, safe and healthy, expressing the structure of absolutist reign, and accommodating a growing 'army' of civil servants. Neither existing fortified towns nor 'ideal towns' of the past could fulfill the new demands. New towns had to be constructed and a new model found for them that broke the ties of tradition. Versailles offered such a model - a Palladian model, transposed from country to town. The case of its first application in Germany, the newly-founded town of Rastatt, is discussed.*

Key Words: eighteenth century, modernization, urban structure, absolutism, Palladianism

Princely palaces and parks of the so-called 'baroque period' have never ceased to attract the attention of the educated art lover for their splendour and lusciousness. But palace and park were only part of a wider 'system': a contemporary term referring to the well ordered composition of parts to form a harmonious whole and being applicable particularly to spatial order. Applied to the whole of a sovereign's country it could comprise, for example, strategically well-placed fortresses and defence-lines, carefully delineated roads and canals making possible heavier and faster transport, artfully delineated visual axes allowing views from the main palace towards distant summer residences or churches, and complicated river regulations and reservoirs for the indis-

pensable water supply.¹ Within such a spatial system the palace was the place where all ideas and commands originated and all glory accumulated. To it a carefully planned town had to be attached as an indispensable element, where the population, linked to the court and its ambitious operations, was to be accommodated.²

This paper concentrates on the system of the unfortified 'court-town', made up of palace, park and town. This was a new type of town, coming into existence at almost the same time as enlightened absolutism. Versailles was the first example, after it had evolved gradually from a hunting palace, founded in 1624, into the royal residence of Louis XIV from 1682 onward (Villard *et al.*, 1991, p. 9 ff.).

Squandermania and reform

When looking at the enlightened sovereigns of the eighteenth century, we are used to seeing them as living in utter luxury, spending seemingly unlimited resources on representation and extravagance. The contemporary imperative *noblesse oblige* signified what Elias (1969, p. 103) has called a 'status-consumption-ethos' - namely to spend all one's income on representative consumption without asking the costs, because someone who could not conduct a lifestyle in keeping with his status, lost respect within the noble society. An accumulation of debts followed from this attitude and gradually eroded the noble society - but at the same time strengthened the bourgeoisie with its 'saving-for-future-profit-ethos' (Elias, 1969, p. 103). For this difference in attitude the nobility tended to detest the bourgeoisie and preferred to keep aloof - spatially as well as culturally (Elias, 1969, p. 104).

Princely 'squandermania' tinted the general view of the eighteenth century, and consequently the princely contribution to modernization has in the past been underestimated. In fact, a great number of the princely squanderers were also determined social reformers and organizers of innovations that left a mark on their times.³ Striving for rationality, efficiency and perfect performance in the military, and in economic and social affairs, they founded industrial concerns, improved canals and roads, introduced efficient methods of agriculture and forestry, and advanced hygiene and the administration of justice. After the wars, they systematically tried to reduce poverty and enhance the growth of population. Many of them combated obsolete conventions and social structures, such as the urban guilds and ecclesiastical controls. In short, in trying to overcome the medieval order by the new enlightened order, they were pushing ahead the process of modernization. Their failure, however, had been that they never could make good through reforms what they gave away by their extravagance.

With this evaluation in mind we have to

consider their palaces and parks not as places of representation and extravagance alone. The new court-towns have to be looked at as the places of an evolving modern form of centralized state-administration. They were also the places accommodating and presenting the new machinery of a well-drilled standing army - an innovation introduced largely by Louis XIV and with which he had gained such superiority in warfare. Barracks, stables, and drill- and parade-grounds had to be provided as part of a court-town. Thus at closer inspection one sees that only the central part of a princely palace, the so-called *corps de logis*, had been devoted to living and to representation. The remainder, and the adjoining 'ancillary court-buildings', had accommodated the various departments of state administration, the barracks and stables of the princely guards, the offices of lawyers and the homes of ministers. Furthermore, there were the princely stables, where horses ranked at least as high as high-ranked administrators. If all this were to be accommodated within a town, it required not only more houses but at the same time public space. In short, a new shape of town as well as a new spatial organization of it was asked for, conforming to the enlightened demands of regularity, hierarchy and harmony.

In France, the new standing armies, improved roads for faster movement of troops and new defence-lines of fortresses along the border built by Vauban (De Cambray, 1689) had gradually made heavy fortifications around towns superfluous. At the same time, Vauban's 'method' of taking towns by an infantry attack in combination with pioneers and heavy artillery (1704), had demonstrated to German sovereigns, in the case of Mannheim in 1688, that even heavy fortifications hardly had a chance of resisting such an assault (Pflueger, 1981). The peace treaty of Rastatt in 1714, promising more peaceful relations with the neighbour, had encouraged the view of German princes that towns in future could survive without fortifications, and the chance to follow up this insight in practice had finally been offered to them.

Fortified town and open town

Versailles not only showed that court life could be conducted in safety without fortifications, but demonstrated the advantages of having ample space in front of the palace, and a large park attached to it, unhampered by town walls and merging gradually with nature. The romantic desire of the nobility to have the open countryside at their feet - though fully controlled and transformed into a geometrically laid-out park - had been growing (Elias, 1969, p. 321) and a park had, as a result, become an indispensable symbol of status, including amongst German sovereigns. Having to live without one made such a court-town less desirable. With the diminishing utility of fortifications, princes perceived them as a straightjacket for a court-town and as a sign of backwardness, sensing at the same time the occasion to exchange them for a park. The case of Rastatt demonstrates the struggle over incompatible goals: the choice was between park or fortification, pleasure or safety. Yet the decision in favour of a park introduced another new urban element, demanding a new spatial organization of a town. Karlsruhe was the first court-town to be planned right from the outset in 1715 as an unfortified, so-called 'open town' - the park covering more than three-quarters of its whole surface. But this new 'ideal' gained general recognition only slowly.

The growing number of new princely demands rendered existing medieval court-towns increasingly obsolete (Keim, 1990, p. 15 ff.). Town walls made their expansion difficult and did not allow them to take in the required new population of a standing army as well as an 'army' of civil servants and servants to the court. The irregular and narrow streets did not look sufficiently imposing, and could not be transformed into the required rational 'system', expressing hierarchy and regularity. They did not allow extensive drilling and parading of a standing army, and the lack of space inside the walls precluded a park. Furthermore, many of the old court-towns had lost their function of

controlling a territory, and their locations were of decreasing importance with respect to modern warfare. Difficulties were compounded by the fact that the local population frequently refused to take in religious refugees: opposition to those of another persuasion was strong, particularly if they were highly-skilled traders or artisans, such as the huguenots from France, who were urgently needed for setting up an efficient trade and the production of luxury goods demanded by the court. Even where a great fire or heavy war damage had occurred, reconstruction on rational lines was difficult if the citizenry demanded fast reconstruction on the lines of old streets and plots. Thus the move of the court to a new location, commanding a better strategic position, where a new town could be built from scratch, conforming to modern demands, was occasionally to be preferred by a prince instead of the complicated reconstruction of his old court-town. After Louis XIV had successfully made his move from Paris to Versailles, it became quite a frequent event also amongst German sovereigns.

The basis for change

The opportunity to move court had largely resulted from the devastations of three successive wars: the Thirty Years War (1618-48), the Palatine War of Succession (1688-97) and the Spanish War of Succession (1701-14). The toll of death and destruction had been heaviest along the river Rhine in Germany, where the population had been reduced to less than two-thirds of what it had been before (Duchhardt, 1989). Re-population and building up a new economy had been a major challenge to the sovereigns, the construction of new towns being an important means to this end. Four conditions proved to be favourable at that time.

First, the devastating wars had weakened the traditional social order and its organizations, like the guilds and the estates of the country. Within a short time this allowed consolidation of absolute rule, introduction of an efficient centralized

administration and the advancement of trade, freed from the constraints of the guilds.

Secondly, vacant land, suitable for founding a new court-town, existed in abundance, since an absolute sovereign could either utilize land in his private domain or, as a feudal landlord, easily expropriate land that was not in the hands of church or nobility.

Thirdly, the existence of great numbers of religious refugees, searching for a new existence, offered the chance to build up new trade and industry (Brinckmann, 1911, p. 150). Many of the 30,000 or so refugee huguenots had brought with them capital and they were a much sought after group for populating a new town (Müller, 1990, p. 260). To sort out only desired persons bringing with them capital, heads of households 'willing to build' a house usually had to pay a specified sum of money to be recognized as new citizens. To them the princes granted privileges, such as exemption from taxes, socage and villeinage, and freedom of religion. Further, a building lot and building material for a house of a prescribed shape (a model house) corresponding to their social status was allocated to them free of charge: in exchange, the person 'willing to build' had to reserve a room in his new house for servants to the court (Müller, 1990, p. 262 ff.).⁴ The large, mainly seasonal, labour force required to do the hard and rough work of building palace, park and town houses, and constructing roads and digging canals was recruited mainly from the poorer part of a country's population (for example, from the journeymen, former soldiers, hawkers and tramps), within the system of socage or frequently by using force. Such labourers, of course, were not recognized as citizens proper.

Fourthly, although capital for the enormous investments required for building up a new town could not usually be drawn from the impoverished country itself, building work could be sustained in a number of ways: by the use of the cheap labour that abounded as soon as warfare had finally been ended in 1714; from the exploitation of local resources such as quarries and forests; and by

employing financial assets in countries not harmed by the wars but connected to the sovereign either by marriage or hereditary succession. Of course, considerable capital could be procured by raising loans - for example, from Jewish bankers (Kollmer, 1981, pp. 484-5).

The foundation of a non-fortified court-town such as has been described presented a complex task to a sovereign and required from his architect a correspondingly complex plan of its spatial organization. Not only did existing court-towns provide unsuitable models but architectural theory, which, since about 1500, had been dealing almost exclusively with fortified 'ideal towns' (Borrmann, 1990), was inadequate to the task. Schuette (1984, p. 167) tells us that, surprisingly enough, the question of urban design was not intensively debated between 1650 and 1750, though just in this period a great number of towns had to be planned within the German Empire. With regard to the unfortified town, a novelty at the time, virtually no German literature seems to have existed.

Versailles and the *villa rustica*

Whenever new demands accumulate that cannot be satisfied, a problem arises and the search for a solution ensues. Versailles was well known amongst the German nobility around 1690.⁵ Its very existence seemed to prove that a move of court from an old to a new location was not only feasible, but brought considerable advantages with it: a well ordered world, suited to the taste of an enlightened sovereign; a large park; a location at the country's centre of gravity, allowing better control over the country and giving expression to modern centralization; and unlimited admiration of a sovereign by his subjects and the nobility. Furthermore, following the shining example of Versailles meant partaking in the splendour radiating from *le roi soleil*. Thus Versailles was turned into a practical model to be followed. At the same time, it was adapted to the particular demands and means of German

princes, as soon as the idea matured of moving the court to a new location.⁶

A closer look at Versailles reveals some striking structural similarities with the *villa rustica*, proposed, for example, by Palladio in 1570 (Figure 1). Such a *villa rustica* had

been more than just the house of a simple landlord (*padrone*): it comprised the whole complex of residential as well as agricultural buildings of a latifundium, systematically grouped around the central house of the *padrone* in a hierarchical as well as a

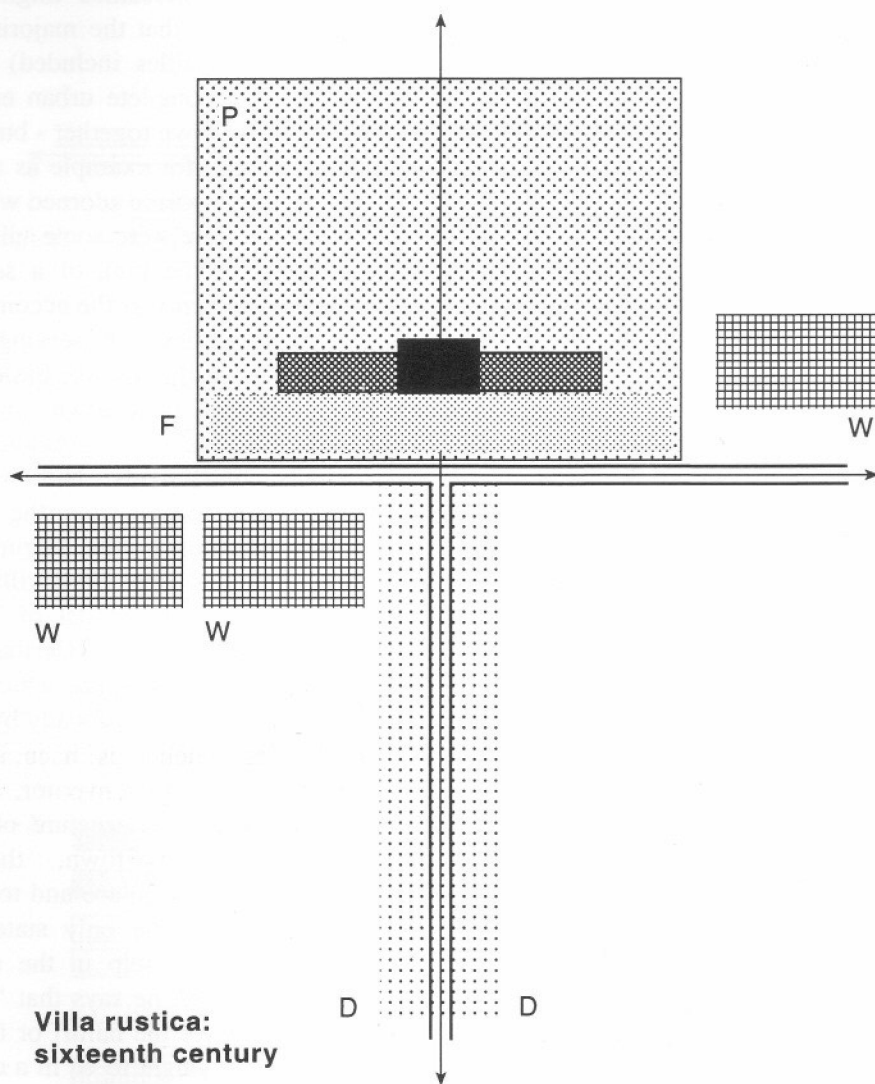


Figure 1. Diagram of the spatial structure of the Palladian *villa rustica* (mid-sixteenth century). The park (P) could have been located anywhere close to the villa; in fact, in some cases Palladio located the park behind the villa, opposite to the entrance: this location, however, only became normal in the course of the seventeenth century.

Beyond the fence of the villa some alternative locations of the compounds for farmhands are indicated (W). They had to be as far as possible 'out of view' of the *padrone*, preferably 'to the side of the villa', sometimes in front of it, away from the central axis (D), which bisects the forecourt (F).

functional order. At the same time, the villa was raised to be the crowning element of the latifundium, being sited preferably right in the centre of the estate and at the top of a slight slope. The *padrone* of such a villa from the early sixteenth-century onward was a merchant and member of the Venetian patriciat, having turned to 'agricultural capitalism' (Bentmann *et al.*, 1992, p. 22 ff.).

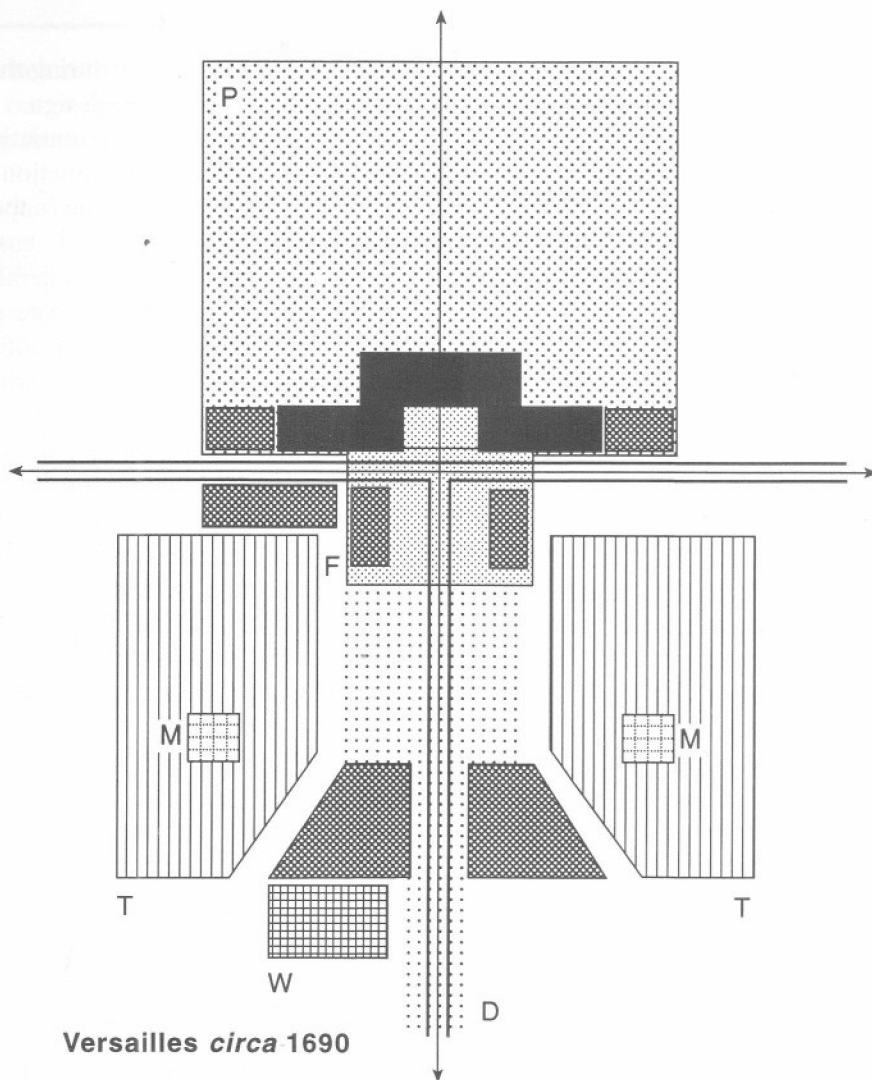
The structural elements of Palladio's *villa rustica* had, in the following century, been taken up and refined in the large summer estates of, for example, Tuscany and Piemonte. His writings and drawings had been spread in France as well as Germany; for example, Goldmann (1696, p. 5) had particularly recommended following Palladio rather than any other architect. What is surprising is that the well-known Palladian structure of the *villa rustica* had been applied to an urban context in Versailles (Figure 2). Of course, the structure had been functionally differentiated and refined. Above all its transposition from country to town corresponded with the statement by Palladio (1715, Ch. 22) that 'the city is as it were but a great villa and, on the contrary, a villa is a little city'.

Looking at what Goldmann (1696, Ch. 23) had written on 'houses in the countryside' in his fourth book on *The Art of Architecture*, one can find the basic Palladian guidelines for the villa repeated, ready for the German princes to apply them to their new unfortified court-towns. Writings like these supported, in theory, what in practice had already been realized in Versailles, encouraging further the use of the latter as an urban model. Thus the contemporary 'modern' court-town, Versailles included, had first and foremost been looked at as a villa, a princely palace combined with a park, to which some houses, accommodating the indispensable service population, had to be attached as demand required (cf. Castex *et al.*, 1980, p. 44). These houses were not considered to form a town in the traditional sense. They were not the crowded place of a strong and often annoyingly recalcitrant citizenry, but rather formed a counter-world to the palace, friendly and

spacious, but detached from the court and at the same time fully subjected to it. They formed a place for a class of serving people, neither worthwhile to speak to nor to look at, following the noble judgement that 'the town is, as one says, but the monkey of the court' (1759, cited by Elias, 1969, p. 62).

This view of Versailles might find its support in the fact that the majority of new court-towns (Versailles included) had been started not as a complete urban ensemble - palace, park and town together - but rather as a rural villa only, for example as a hunting-lodge or pleasure-palace adorned with a park. Only at a later date were some villas of this kind elevated to the rank of a sovereign's residence; only then was the accommodation of growing 'armies' of serving subjects becoming a necessity. But the basic structure of the future new court-town - location of palace and park, vistas, longitudinal axis and connecting country roads - had already been engraved on the terrain when the rural villa had been laid out in the beginning. In proceeding in this way from villa to town and by taking up the model of Versailles, absolute sovereigns in Germany were following a spatial structure which, by and large, had been practiced already by Palladio. What we are dealing with is a kind of urbanistic Palladinism (Tavernor, 1991).

By transposing the structure of the *villa rustica* to a court-town, the spatial relationship between palace and town had to be defined first. The only statements by Palladio that might help in the matter are vague: for example, he says that 'the rooms for the steward, for the bailiff or farmer and for the labourers ought to be in a convenient place near to the gates, for the safeguard of all the other parts'⁵ (Palladio, 1715, II, Ch. 13). It is not quite clear whether he recommends a location inside or outside the gates. When describing his villas in Chapters 14 and 15 he seems only to have preferred a location 'on the side of the villa'; but looking at his villas in reality it is evident that the accommodation of the bailiff used to be inside the gates, while the great number of



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|---|-------|---|
|  | = | casa del padrone/palace of sovereign |
|  | = | economato/farm buildings/ancillary court buildings (state administration, stables etc.) |
|  | = P = | park (fenced off) |
|  | = F = | forecourt of palace (fenced off) |
|  | = D = | open zone of respectful distance in front of palace (often arbourd) |
|  | = W = | compounds/colonies of farm workers/building workers/non-residents |
|  | = T = | civil town (unfortified) |
|  | = M = | civic market square |
|  | = R = | quarter of poor residents |

Figure 2. Spatial structure of Versailles (circa 1690) shown diagrammatically. The basic structure of the *villa rustica* is followed but structurally and functionally Versailles is more differentiated: for example, the two detached residential quarters (T) of the sovereign's subjects have been added 'to the side' of the palace, each with its own market square (M). Note the distant location of the compound of the building labourers (W).

'labourers' were mostly located in compounds of huts outside the gates and 'out of view' from the villa - again preferably 'on the side' of it. Where this seemed to have been impossible, the compounds were located almost in front of the villa, but never close to the axis leading towards it. Farmhands, whether they were bondsmen or not, generally had the bad reputation of being thieves and villains and consequently 'all the other parts' of the villa had to be protected against them rather than by them (Ackerman, 1990, p. 118 ff.).

With this in mind we can turn to Versailles when it was still a hunting palace. In conjunction with its construction, the overall road-system was outlined, conforming to Palladio's recommendations in his third book. A country road passed along the front of the palace and connected it on either side to nearby villages and towns. A longitudinal axis originating from the centre of the palace, crossed the country road at right angles and ran straight into the far distance of the territory (1715, III, Chs 1-3), serving as 'via triumphalis' for the approaching sovereign and representing once and forever the axis of symmetry for the whole of the ensemble: palace, park and later the town. This road, as Palladio had noted in his third book, with a glance at Roman antiquity, had to be straight, tree-lined for reasons of comfort and accompanied on either side by a wide strip of open land, preventing unexpected raids and already allowing a distant view of the villa (Palladio, 1715, Ch. 1): a linear space running right up to the villa, not to be interrupted by any building and creating a respectful distance at the same time.

The precise location of the park - being lined up on the longitudinal axis and located strictly on the rear side of the palace, opposite to the entrance - had not yet been determined by Palladio. It could have been in any location close to the villa. In fact, some of his villas, for example the villa at Maser, have the park right behind: a location that was becoming a standard for parks during the seventeenth century. In Versailles the much admired *patte d'oie* (goose foot)

had been laid out already during the 1660s as part of the overall park design. It was an element enriching and differentiating the 'via triumphalis' and, in conjunction with the Place d'Armes, created the unprecedented spaciousness of the urban ensemble of Versailles. With its two lateral radiating roads it later served to delineate clearly the areas to be kept vacant in front of the palace and the areas 'to the side of it', where houses could be built by the nobility or private persons. The lateral radiating roads were laid out in such a way that houses built along the far side of them could not be seen from the king's room in the centre of the hunting-palace. The large area in front of the palace, the Place d'Armes, had to be kept vacant to guarantee the required respectful distance, to allow for the parading of troops or the assembly of arriving coaches. Only when, from 1680 onward, the hunting-palace was greatly enlarged to accommodate the royal residence, were the two royal stables located opposite the palace, beyond the Place d'Armes. Thus the king could enjoy the views from his room of his cherished horses, which were kept at a fair distance so that they did not disturb the king with their fumes, again following Palladio (1715, II, Ch. 13). Already, before Versailles became the king's residence, the two existing small residential quarters 'to the side' of the palace had, one after the other, been transformed into two relatively independent parts of the court-town, each containing, for example, a rectangular system of town roads, a market square and a great church (Castex *et al.*, 1980, p. 10 ff.). They can be interpreted as the socially upgraded successors of the compounds for the labourers connected to a *villa rustica*.

Labourers not able to acquire the right of citizenship tended to return seasonally to their places of residence in villages and other towns. But some preferred to remain near the construction sites, where they were usually given shelter in huts similar to the ones in the compounds of the *villa rustica*, their direct forerunner. In Versailles a large fenced-in work-place can be found, tucked

away far behind the royal stables and completely out of sight from the king's room, where the palace stone-cutters both worked and slept.

New German court-towns

The new court-towns in Germany, following the 'model of Versailles', had eleven basic

spatial elements in common, each element having an indispensable place within the whole urban 'system'. These elements were arranged in space in a clear functional and geometrical structure which could be generously varied from place to place (see, for example, Figure 3).

1. The *corps-de-logis* in the centre of the new 'system' comprised the extensive

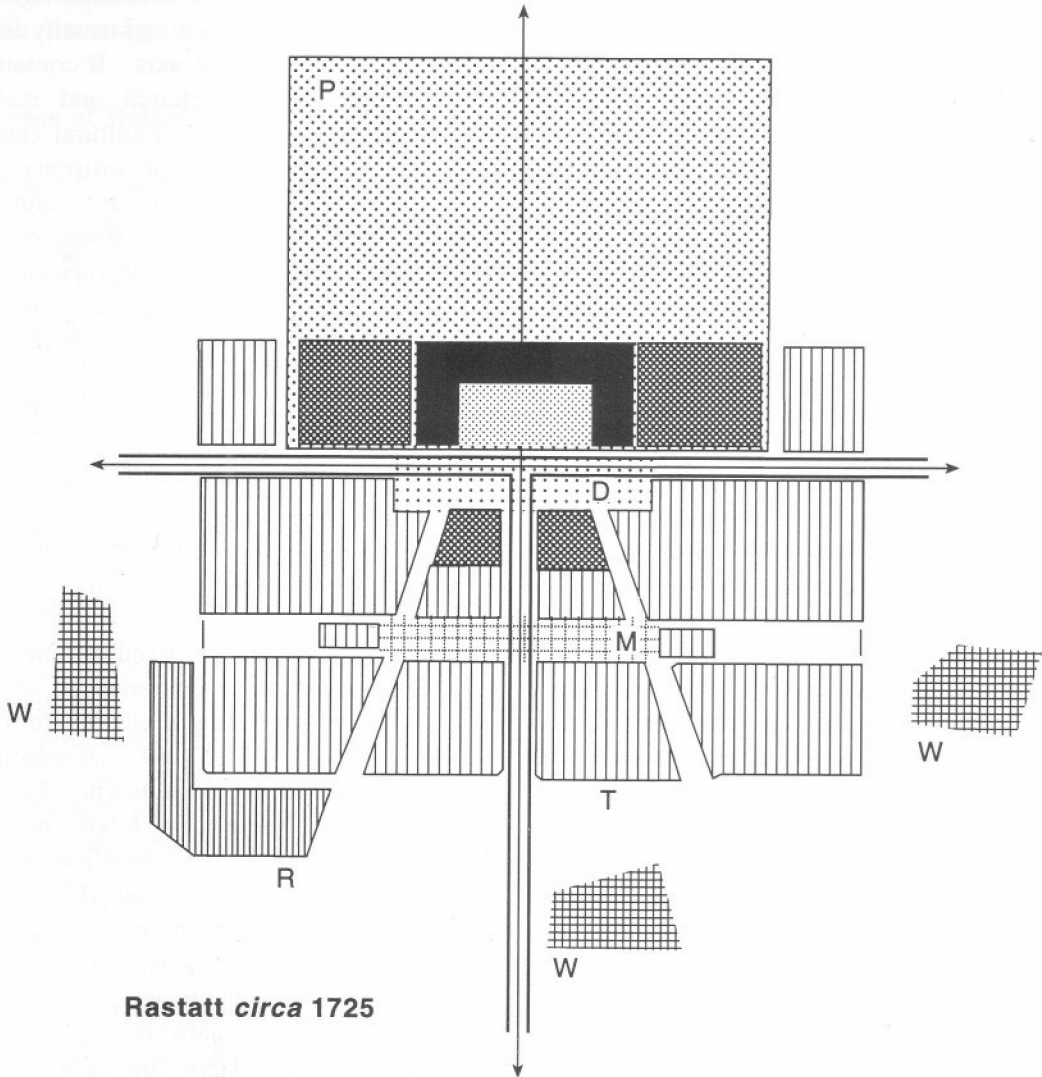


Figure 3. Spatial structure of Rastatt (circa 1725) shown diagrammatically. The basic structure of the *villa rustica* is still maintained. The location of the town in front of the elevated palace at only a minimum distance (D) is a modification of the model. The town (T) with its forum-like market square (M) was for the new citizens. The town extension (R) was for the poorer citizens of 1725. The planned 'suburban' villages (W) were assigned to relocatees and non-citizens of low social status, beyond the town's boundary. See key to Figure 2.

- residential tract of the sovereign in the most prominent central position; going back to the *villa rustica*, it represented the geometrical origin of the overall axial system.
2. The ancillary court buildings were located in the outer wings of the palace, as Palladio had shown, or in detached pavillions grouped near the entrance to the palace.
 3. The forecourt served as a guarded reception- and ceremonial-space before entering the palace, and at the same time as a space creating a respectful distance between the sovereign and the world outside. It resembled most the complex of ancillary buildings and spaces of a *villa rustica*.
 4. The park of the sovereign, serving his leisure and pleasure as well as that of the nobility, stretched along the central axis, but opposite to the palace entrance - as in some Palladian villas. It used to be a piece of 'drilled nature' in strict geometrical order, contrasting with surrounding nature (Baumgartner, 1990, p. 77 ff.). It frequently outweighed by far the town in its extent.
 5. The transverse axis of a major country road served as an access route, passing along the front of the palace and connecting it to the territorial road system, as Palladio had recommended.
 6. The longitudinal road was called the 'via triumphalis' by Weinbrenner in 1797 (cited by Valdenair, 1926, p. 88) and, according to Palladio, it was the axis of symmetry for the whole of the ensemble. It served mainly as a ceremonial access route.
 7. Along the longitudinal axis, or at least in that part of it right in front of the palace, a public space was provided, safeguarding an additional respectful distance between palace and citizens. It is similar to the vacant area of the Place d'Armes, though less spacious, and comparable to the safety-strip applied by Palladio along the central axis of some of his villas.
 8. When German sovereigns took over the 'model of Versailles', they deviated from the given spatial structure only by changing the relationship of town to palace. In most of the new German court-towns the town was located not 'to the side' of the palace, but rather facing it; of course, being clearly subordinated to it and maintaining well a respectful distance between.⁷
 9. The market square was located right in the centre of the town and usually lined up on a longitudinal axis. It contained the town hall, a church and stately monuments: all in all a cultural centre, stressing the world of citizenry, its detachment from court life and its different values. The efforts of the princes to 'embellish' their towns in this way could be interpreted as an expression of their care for their more privileged subjects and as a proud sign of their own modernity (Fehl, 1983, p. 137 ff.).
 10. A clear-cut delimitation - a wall or a fence - ran around the whole complex of palace, park and forecourt, with well-guarded gates protecting them against uncontrolled entry, in accord with Palladio's design. The unfortified town also required a delimitation of its periphery, separating it clearly from the open countryside and safeguarding controlled access to the town. Thus the openness of these new towns referred only to the absence of fortifications: in other respects they continued to be cut off from their surroundings.
 11. In German court-towns, built-up areas may be located outside the original boundaries, as was also the case with the *villa rustica*. Here the large labour force was given shelter 'out of sight' not only of the sovereign, but also of the town's citizenry. In such areas, streets were sometimes laid out to a plan and houses could be built that did not conform to the strict rules applied inside the town.

Of these eleven elements, nine corresponded directly to the Versailles model, while two had been adopted in a modified way. Eight elements corresponded with the structure of the Palladian *villa rustica*. Thus a remarkable continuity with respect to urban structure was embedded in the process of modernization. The example of Rastatt is now used to illustrate how the 'model of Versailles' was applied to the new court-town of the Margrave of Baden-Baden (Figures 3-6): the first usage of the model in Germany.

The case of Rastatt

Prompted by the demolition of his old court-town of Baden-Baden by French troops in 1689 and by strategic considerations, Margrave Ludwig Wilhelm of Baden-Baden had taken the final decision in late 1699 to move his court to a new location (Passavant, 1967, p. 11). He had chosen the village of Rastatten - about 11 km away and heavily damaged by French troops - particularly for its strategic advantages. It was sited in the wide and almost flat valley of the River Rhine, commanding a view from the high embankment of the River Murg towards the new French Fort Louis, built by Vauban on an island in the River Rhine, about 10 km to the south-west. The Margrave, having been field-marshal of the imperial troops against the Turks, knew well that his new court-town had to be fortified for strategic reasons. The process of designing and realizing the new court-town,⁸ can be subdivided into three distinct phases.

Phase 1

In 1697 the Margrave had decided to build a hunting palace with park above the destroyed village of Rastatt. The site was laid out according to a plan by his court-architect D.E. Rossi.⁹ A straight line, running from Ettlingen (another of the Margrave's palaces) to Fort Louis, exactly defined the course of the longitudinal axis on which palace and park had been neatly aligned, the major country road passing in front of the palace. A few ancillary buildings, such as the

Margrave's brewery and stables, were located 'to the side' of the palace (Roesiger, 1924, Fig. 16). Preparations for construction had started immediately, and large parts of the palace had been finished by the spring of 1699. However, in the summer of the same year, following a decision to have a larger palace than first envisaged, the central section was torn down to make room for the larger structure.

Phase 2

In March 1699 Rossi had submitted a plan for the whole of the envisaged new court-town (Roesiger, 1924, pp. 55-6). For its time it was a rather unusual plan: a large palace with the park behind, all ancillary court buildings (for the mounted guards, administration etc.) 'to the side', the town right in front of it, and the houses of ministers facing the palace. The whole was surrounded by heavy fortifications. Apparently Rossi had tried to square the circle by combining three incompatible elements: the elongated shape of the fortified perimeter did not conform fully to the requirements of contemporary warfare; the size of the park remained fairly limited, and the town seemed to be crammed into the ring of fortifications, not leaving much space for a respectful distance in front of the palace. Evidently the strategic necessity to fortify the new court-town had been given priority and the repercussions for park and town were to be tolerated. Despite much criticism (Schott, 1987, p. 18 ff.), the streets of the new town were aligned as proposed by Rossi (Figure 4). The location of the town, exactly in front of and coming up close to the palace, had clearly resulted from the imperative to keep the perimeter of the fortifications to a minimum.

Apart from the basic spatial structure, a number of additional minor elements have unmistakably been taken over from Versailles. The 'brandmark', the *patte-d'oie*, was used by Rossi in a rather decorative way to accentuate the position of the palace (Passavant, 1967, p. 151) and to delineate merely the building blocks, rather than

demarcate the area of the residential quarters in such a way as not to be seen from the palace. In Rastatt, however, the town is kept 'out of sight' from the sovereign in a different way, despite being located exactly facing the palace. Rossi had adopted from Versailles the idea of an elevated position for the palace, which in Rastatt stood almost 5 metres above the town. Thus from the palace the view across the town towards the distant countryside is not impeded by houses. Further, two well-decorated palaces of ministers were located in exactly the same position as the royal stables in Versailles: immediately facing the palace. The major problem with respect to fortification and costs was, however, the park. The north-western flank, facing France, would either have required a drastically reduced park in order to bring down its length to a minimum; or it would have required extremely expensive bulwarks. Several proposals were made (Schott, 1984) while the digging of foundations was already underway, in late 1700.

After the required land had been expropriated and the existing houses had been demolished, the first new town houses were constructed in 1701. For different locations within the town Rossi had designed three model houses of different sizes. To attract new people qualified either for the new state administration, for service at court or as artisans, announcements, containing the princely 'privileges', were made far and wide from 1701 onward, to the effect that newcomers 'willing to build' were welcome at Rastatt and would be given a plot on which to build a house, including the necessary timber, free of charge. Covenants stipulated that a house had to be built within 4 years and with four walls made of stone according to the prescribed house model. The privileges of Rastatt seem to have been unattractive in comparison with those in other German countries. For example, freedom of religion was not granted and there was only partial exemption from socage. Immigration was slow and lagged far behind need (Müller, 1990, p. 263 ff.).

Around 1705, a first suburb was planned along the River Murg to the south-east, where the original inhabitants of the village, mainly farmers, were to be relocated following expropriation of their property. Farm buildings, of course, were not tolerated any longer within the court-town (Roesiger, 1924, pp. 58-9). Two other planned suburbs followed suit. Thus palace, town and suburb were clearly separated: the three realms differed not only in status but in jurisdiction, each having its own laws, regulations and court of justice. The Margrave finally moved into his residence in late 1705, where he died in January 1707. In May 1707, French troops took the incompletely fortified town by surprise and, after capture, levelled the fortifications on the western and southern flanks. The court was moved to Ettlingen, from where the Margrave's wife ruled the country until she returned for good to her former residence in 1714, immediately after the peace treaty of Rastatt which had finally ended the Spanish War of Succession.

Phase 3

To attract a sufficient number of qualified people and capital, the Margravine, as one of her first measures, improved the conditions for settling in Rastatt. Full exemption was given from socage (Esser, 1983, pp. 65-6) and freedom of religion was conceded at least to those 'foreigners coming from the three nations of the Roman Empire' (cited by Stoll, 1986, p. 45), namely Catholics, Protestants and Jews.

Although in 1701 only 600 persons had been counted in Rastatt, the town from now on grew fast and, by 1740, had reached a population of about 5000 citizens proper - excluding labourers and the suburban population. The peace treaty had ruled that Rastatt itself was never to be fortified again (Esser, 1983, p. 39). From now on, the town had to exist as an unfortified 'open town'. An ideal situation seemed to have been reached. However, the Margravine felt unprotected in an 'open town' and, viewing the town conventionally from outside, as a self-contained body, felt the lack of a well-



Figure 4. Plan of Rastatt in 1705 by court architect D.E. Rossi, with palace, park and town surrounded by fortifications. On the north-west side of the town, the cloud-like structure indicates the steep slope that was not to be fortified. To the south east, the first planned suburb along the River Murg, assigned mainly to relocatees, has already been laid out. Reproduced, with permission, from Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe (HfK vol. V, 1.)

designed perimeter. Thus she commissioned her new court architect, M.L. Rohrer, to find an appropriate solution to this problem.

In his first plan of 1715 (Figure 5), he proposed a circumferential tree-lined boulevard so as to create a well-defined perimeter. At the same time, he took the opportunity to make the now 'open' town more spacious inside. To this end he proposed the addition of two new squares and enlargement of the market square, stressing its spaciousness and importance as a wide second transverse axis running through from one side of the town to the

other. The town hall and the church were to be inserted in the market square (cf. Keim, 1990, p. 107 ff.). This latter proposal met with the Margravine's full approval and already in late 1715 the older alignment of streets was modified accordingly. The proposal relating to the tree-lined perimeter, however, was rejected. Instead, bearing in mind the growing population, a first extension of the town had to be considered. The less well-to-do citizens, in particular, not being able to build houses conforming to the prescribed models, were in need of small, cheap houses, built of timber.

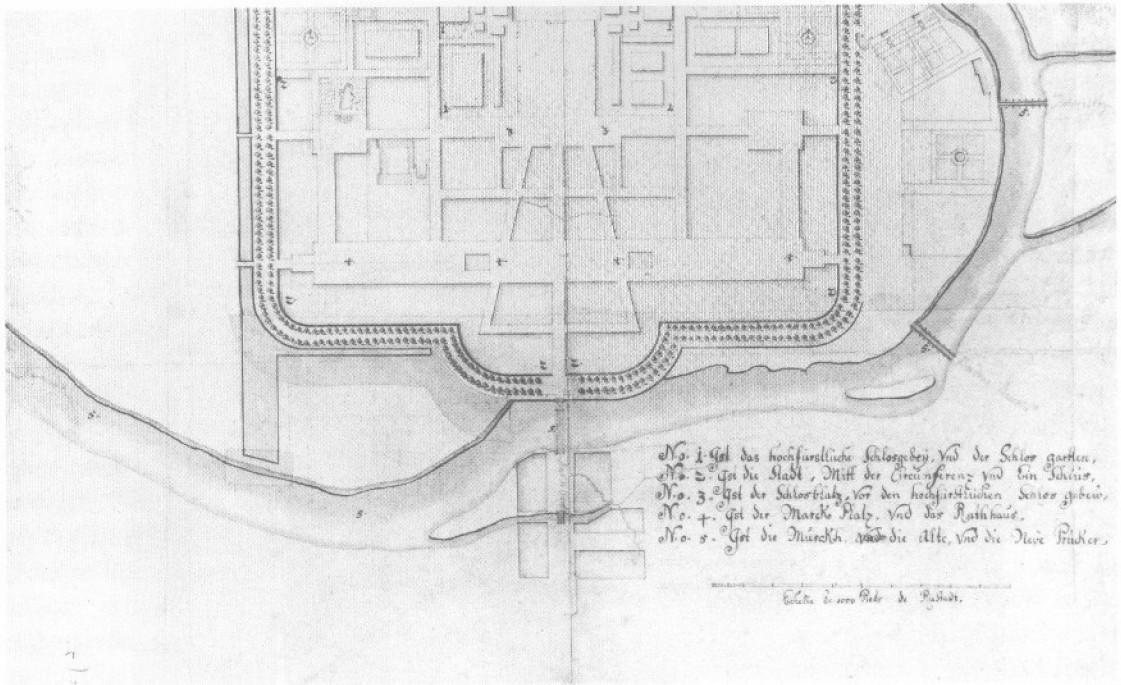


Figure 5. Plan of 1715 by court architect M.L. Rohrer for the ‘open town’ of Rastatt, showing the tree-lined perimeter and the enlarged market square running across the whole width of the town. Note one of the planned suburbs of about 1705 beyond the River Murg. Reproduced, with permission, from Archive of the Community of Rastatt (Do 11).

A plan of 1725 shows what had been called ‘circumferential houses’ (Stoll, 1986, p.51) (Figure 6), that is, a series of narrow building blocks tacked on to the western and southern sides of the perimeter. The blocks were subdivided into narrow plots where wooden houses, not conforming to the prescribed models, were allowed to be built. Here the poorer citizens proper were allocated space ‘out of sight’ from the palace, as were the labourers in the suburbs. This quarter, with its small, irregular houses, still exists, contrasting with the regularity of the rest of the town.

The town stagnated as soon as the line of the Margrave of Baden-Baden had become extinct in 1771, and the country was incorporated into the Margravate of Baden-Durlach. Having lost its court, Rastatt survived as a small provincial town. In 1819

it was to become one of the most heavily fortified towns along the German border with France. In the meantime, the ‘model of Versailles’ had become obsolete with the collapse of absolutism. The historic core of the palace, park and town of Rastatt has changed little over the years, being today in its entirety the subject of a preservation order.

Conclusion

Rastatt provides a physical record of an urban structure that, in the early-eighteenth century, had been considered ‘modern’. With respect to the transposition of the spatial structure of the *villa rustica* to an urban ensemble, it exemplifies how Versailles has had the eminent function of ‘a pivot for the evolution of urban form’ (Castex *et al.*, 1980, p. 40).

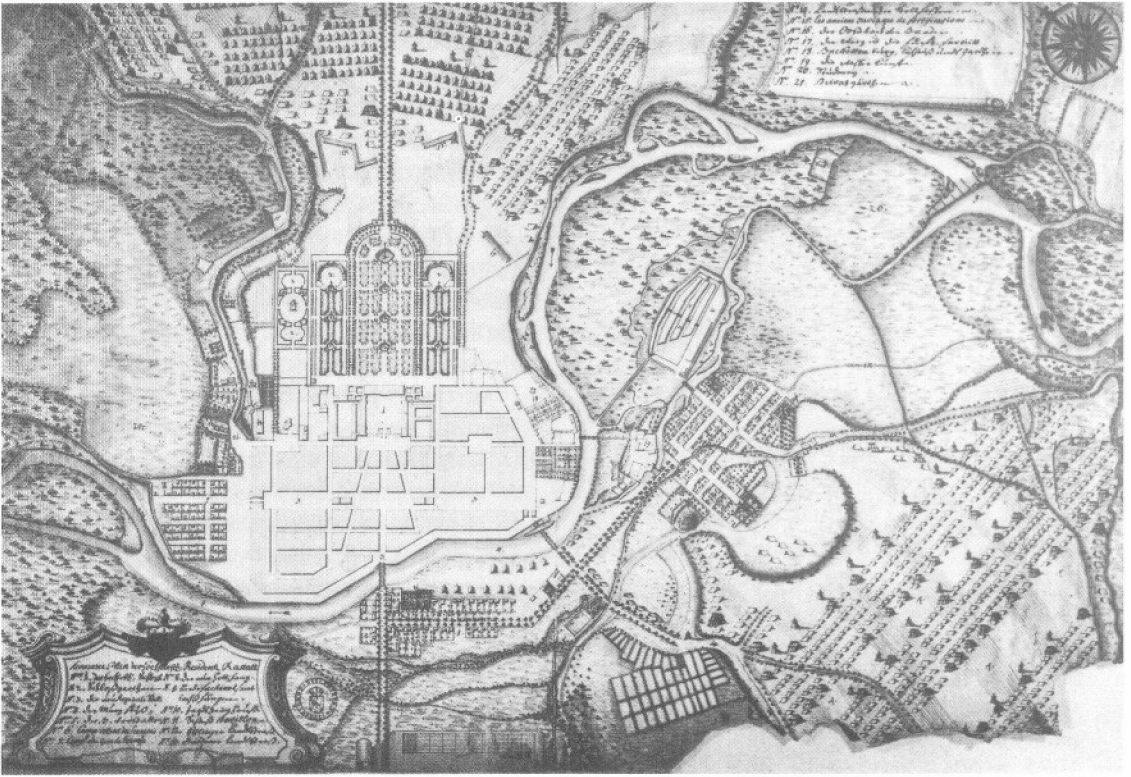


Figure 6. Plan of 1725 by court architect M.L. Rohrer for the first town expansion of Rastatt. Developments at the western and southern edges of the town were allocated to poorer people who, as an exception, were permitted to build wooden houses on tiny plots. The three suburbs laid out between 1700 and 1706 to the west, south and east of the town, and outside its jurisdiction, have grown in the meantime. Reproduced, with permission, from Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe (HfK vo. XIV, 15).

The proposal that the residential quarters in Versailles can be interpreted as the upgraded successors of the compounds of farmhands attached to Palladian villas is based on observation and inference. The analysis that has led to this proposal rests on the writings of Palladio and a few contemporary German texts (Furtenbach, 1640; Goldman, 1686; Sturm, 1752) and on comparisons between Italian villas and Versailles. The structural similarity between the *villa rustica* and Versailles with respect to the basic elements that they have in common and the topological order of these elements in space is striking. Similarly the application of the urban model of Versailles to Rastatt is a

hypothesis based on comparison of the forms of the two towns. The proposed link, like that between the *villa rustica* and Versailles, is not, as yet, supported by the recovery of documentary proof in the form of contemporary writings. However, with respect to both links the weight of circumstantial evidence is formidable.

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has been a great help in compiling the available documents.

Notes

1. The seeming rationality of absolutist spatial systems, comprising palace, park, town and territory, was rarely the result of one single plan. On the contrary, Versailles, as well as the German new towns or 'systems of places', arose from a long succession of plans and their modifications, including the elimination of plans already realized on the ground. Hence Castex *et al.* (1980, p. 14 ff.) have called Versailles a 'town made up of fragments'.
2. The enormous number of professions affiliated in one way or another to a princely court is discussed by Elias (1969, p. 74 ff.). For the palace of Versailles, the total population, according to contemporary estimates, was roughly 10,000 persons, including domestics (*ibid.*, p. 123). Of course, the German princely courts were much smaller, but still the population of a palace used to be in the hundreds (Bloss, 1984, p. 50).
3. In France, the nobility gradually lost its feudal or sovereign functions and the foundation was laid for a centrally-governed empire with the king being the first nobleman and absolute sovereign. In Germany, however, the peace treaty of Westfalia in 1648 firmly sanctioned the role of the higher nobility as autonomous sovereigns in a decentralized German Empire, represented only by the emperor and the General Assembly of Estates. Each of the roughly 300 princes with small and even tiny principalities was from then on fully responsible for his country with respect to the military, religion, taxes, trade etc.
4. Concerning 'model houses', the social status of a newcomer to a newly-founded court-town determined the location assigned to him, the size of the plot allocated to him and the house model to be applied by him. As an obedient and grateful subject of the sovereign, he had little liberty. The architect of the town plan, however, when charged with the task of determining plot size and plot shape, had to know the size and type of the house to be built upon a specified plot, the number of plots of a specified kind needed etc. This required, in the first place, the design of so-called 'house models' of different size, width and height, depending on the social status of the future inhabitants. For the design of house models and their location in particular zones of the town, the principle of nearness to the sovereign held: the closer to him the higher the social status, and the larger the house and the plot. Thus house models, appropriate zones, and type of plot with respect to location, shape and size were closely interrelated, leaving little room for manoeuvre (Fehl, 1983, p. 138 ff.; for Versailles cf. Castex *et al.*, 1980, p. 53 ff.).
5. Several well-known copper-plate prints existed which C.F. Sturm (1760, p. 109) mentions on the occasion of his visit to Versailles. Quite a number of German noblemen had been eager collectors of such prints or had even travelled to the court of Louis XIV. Further news was spread by the French huguenots. Italian architects, being frequently employed by German princes, knew contemporary architectural theory well - and, of course, they knew about Versailles.
6. German art historians from A.E. Brinckmann (1911, pp. 150-1) to the present time (Merten, 1990, p. 224) have repeatedly stressed the role of Versailles as a model for German court-towns, without, however, explaining this relation in depth.
7. The 'model of Versailles' was applied during the course of the eighteenth century to the following princely places:
Rastatt near Baden-Baden (palace begun in 1698; town in 1699),
Racconigi near Turin (palace begun in 1676; town in 1704),
Chalottenburg near Berlin (palace begun in 1640; town in 1705),
Erlangen (palace begun in 1700; town in 1706 and located to either side of the palace owing to the existence of swampy ground in front of it),
Ludwigsburg near Stuttgart (hunting palace begun in 1704; town in 1709),
Karlsruhe (hunting lodge begun in 1712; palace and town in 1715),
Nymphenburg near Munich (palace begun in 1664; town in 1728 but left unfinished),
Piazzola near Vicenza (Villa Contarini begun in 1556; town c. 1730),
Schwetzingen near Mannheim (palace begun in 1711; town in 1744).

Caserta near Naples (palace and garden begun in 1752: it had been largely finished by 1759 when King Charles III of Bourbon moved to Madrid, leaving the planned town unrealized).

8. In three public archives a whole series of plans has been documented; most of them, however, undated. Different historians have subsequently put them into varying orders (see, for example, Hirsch, 1923; Roesiger, 1924; Renner, 1937; Passavant 1967; Stoll, 1986; Schott, 1987). With respect to dating the plans, this paper mainly follows Schott.
9. Domenico Egidio Rossi. His dates of birth and death were unknown to his biographer (Passavant, 1967, p. 11). He was an architect and painter, who moved from Bologna to Prague and later to Vienna. In Vienna he made the acquaintance of the Margrave of Baden-Baden in 1696 and was commissioned by him in 1697 to design and supervise the execution of the hunting palace and later, in 1799, the residential palace and town at Rastatt. Having been dismissed in 1707 after the death of the Margrave, he returned to Bologna. From his unpublished documents it is known that he knew the architecture and architects of Northern Italy well, A. Palladio included (Passavant, 1967, pp. 123, 146 ff.); his knowledge, at least of the royal palace at Versailles, is documented (ibid. p. 65).

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