

Garden City or Gartenstadt? Introducing Urban Reform Eastwards from Germany

In 1914, Franz Kafka and his friends arrived in Hellerau, the first German garden city. Kafka, being a Jewish writer based in Prague, was attracted by the newly founded settlement with a rich cultural life which even surpassed the metropolis Dresden. Hellerau has fascinated a whole generation of central European urban planners, architects, and artists.

Originating in England, the idea of housing reform and garden cities has found vivid recognition in Central Europe, namely in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century and later also in the interwar Czechoslovakia. But how were the garden city principles implemented in the Czech lands in terms of theory and in the form of a built environment? How did the German example, namely Hellerau, influenced later development in the Czech towns? How does the success of German urban reform fit into the traditional Czech-German antagonism? And what light does the specific case of the garden city movement cast on the wider cultural and intellectual exchange between the United Kingdom, Germany, and the Czech lands at the beginning of the 20th century?

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